

# Texas pair stays in shadows of Husker stars

By Scott Ahlstrand

For seniors Nate Mason and Ricky Simmons, the limelight of Nebraska football is too bright. The two prefer the satisfaction of doing their jobs to the publicity that Cornhusker football generates.

A typical example of Simmons' play was the 54-yard wingback reverse for a touchdown, which Irving Fryar ran during the third quarter of Saturday's game. Simmons' block on Colorado defensive back Clyde Riggins helped spring Fryar for a touchdown. But Simmons' efforts, as usual, were overshadowed by Fryar's.

"The coaches call the plays, so there's no reason for me to worry about Irving getting more passes than I do," Simmons said. "All I care about is us winning, and we do that when Irving catches passes. I think it would be pretty childish to be mad because he's catching more."

Saturday's game was also typical for Mason. He came off the bench in the third quarter and led the Huskers to two touchdowns. Despite his performance, the local press said little about Mason's playing.

"I don't like a lot of attention, so it (the publicity that Gill receives) doesn't bother me at all," Mason said. "We're both trying to help the team win. When he does something good, I'm happy for him."

Mason and Simmons came to Nebraska from Greenville, Texas, in 1979. Both started for the freshman team that year and were projected as future Husker stars. In 1980, Fryar and Gill arrived on campus and Mason and Simmons have been in their shadows ever since.

"I've learned a lot at Nebraska," Simmons said. "When I first came here, I wasn't too motivated to block. The coaches were really patient with me, especially Gene Huey, and now I think blocking is one of my strengths."

For Mason, the Nebraska experience has been similar.

"I'll always remember my years at Nebraska. I think they've helped me develop into a man, and a good person," the senior quarterback said. "Everything hasn't always been roses here, but I've learned

a lot from it."

While both are considering careers as professional football players, they say winning at Nebraska is their top goal now. They said they'll help Nebraska anyway they can, whether it's with a block, a catch, a pass or a run. But Nebraska fans know little about the two. Life is quiet in the shadows.



Staff photo by John Zox

**TURNABOUT** — Nebraska reserve running back Jeff Smith corrals Colorado safety Jeff Donaldson as the latter attempts to return a fourth quarter punt. Assisting Smith on the tackle is fullback Tom Rathman.

## Homecoming hyped-up weekend ritual

What if the Huskers sucked canal water?

Another Homecoming Week (or homecoming week, depending on how enthusiastic you are about the occasion) has slipped out of town, leaving behind yet another victory against Colorado, a whole lot of



Pat Clark

crepe paper, and the hollow feeling that something big and fundamental is wrong with the way we spend our Saturday afternoons.

This is not a windy diatribe against Homecoming. With the exception of the parade on Friday, the events of Homecoming Week were magnificently well-planned, in the sense that they were as easy for the disinterested to ignore as they were for the involved to find and enjoy. Homecoming Week is only important here to the point that it is a capitalized and double-underlined version of every week;

a series of carefully planned activities to fill the time between football games.

The accent here is on the "carefully planned." Somewhere along the way, Husker football stopped being an occasion and turned into a ritual, as joyful and spontaneous as a contract. Homecoming Week is merely the most carefully orchestrated week of ritual.

Watch the people who go to Husker games. Save for the first-timers, or the crowd for the first game of the season, nobody looks terribly excited about going to the game. The overriding look on people's faces is one of grim importance, perhaps duty. It's Saturday, time to go cheer on the Huskers. It's like a second job; and a complex one at that. It's not enough to grab a ticket and go the stadium; one must prepare oneself. Mission Control has a shorter checklist for the Space Shuttle than some Husker fans go through on Saturday mornings. Handsome goes-with-anything scarlet clothes on? Check. Lucky underwear? Check. Radio tuned in to Lyell Bremser? Check. How am I going to buy food in Lincoln? Check.

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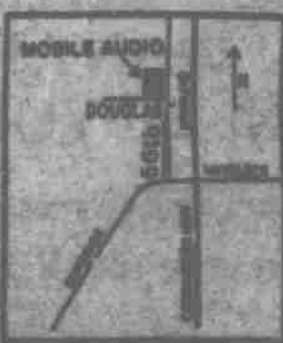
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