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Daily Nebraskan File Photo
Nebraska sophomore I-back Keith Jones runs the 40-yard dash during winter conditioning drills last semester. Jones will be vying for playing time with Doug DuBose and Paul Miles.

DuBose to pace NU backs

By Mike Reilley
Senior Reporter

Unlike the other position coaches on the Nebraska football team, offensive backs coach Frank Solich doesn't face a major rebuilding task this fall.

Solich has one starter, fullback Tom Rathman, and part-time starter Doug DuBose returning from last year's 10-2 squad. Several other experienced backs, including I-backs Paul Miles and Keith Jones, will also challenge for playing time, he said.

DuBose, who split time at I-back with Jeff Smith last year, led the Big Eight in rushing with 1,040 yards. The junior from Uncasville, Conn., was an all-Big Eight first-team selection.

Despite the strong performance last year, Solich isn't about to name DuBose as the man to succeed Doug Flutie as the Heisman Trophy winner.

"On terms of the Heisman, right now it's not on Doug's mind a great deal and it's not on ours either," Solich said. "We just want him to pick up where he left off last year and keep improving."

"It's ridiculous to talk about all-Big Eight and Heisman selections before we have even taken a snap," he said.

Jones, a former prep standout at Omaha Central, was the No. 3 I-back behind Smith and DuBose last year. During winter conditioning, he became the fastest player in Nebraska football history when he turned in a 4.33

electronically timed clocking in the 40-yard dash.

Solich said the possibility of red-shirting Jones this fall wasn't out of the question, but the situation was "still a little cloudy."

"We're going to have to wait until we get started to make a decision (on Jones)," he said. "A lot of things could enter the picture: how he performs, injuries and how the other backs perform."

Miles, who is coming off an injury-plagued season, finished spring drills as the No. 2 I-back behind DuBose. The senior from Princeton, N.J., separated his shoulder in the Cornhusker's 17-9 loss to Syracuse and missed the next six weeks of the season. He eventually recovered late in the season, but reinjured it in practice the week of the Kansas game.

Solich said Miles has put his injury woes behind him and is looking "real fine."

"He finished spring ball real well," Solich said. "He's back to 100 percent."

Jon Kelley, a sophomore from Lincoln, rated "closely" with Jones at the No. 3 I-back spot in spring drills and should see some playing time this fall, Solich said.

Tyrese Knox, a freshman redshirt from Daly City, Calif., will "probably play a lot of freshman ball," Solich said.

"He doesn't know the offense as well

as the other backs so he'll benefit more running with the freshman offense," he said.

Rathman rushed for 381 yards and scored four touchdowns as a starter at fullback last season. Solich said he expects the senior from Grand Island to "pick up where he left off last year."

Ken Kaelin, the No. 2 fullback last spring, is a "good blocker with plenty of strength," Solich said.

Micah Heibel, a redshirt sophomore from Lincoln, is another leading fullback candidate, Solich said.

"Micah graded really high last spring," he said.

Dan Casterline enters his first season at fullback after converting from monster back. The junior from Evergreen, Colo., was redshirted last fall after he injured his ankle.

The fullback corps will be without two players this fall because of academic ineligibility. Thurman Hoskins transferred after he was declared ineligible in early August and Novell Jackson failed to make the July 15 grade deadline.

Jackson was redshirted last year so he could concentrate on studies after he lost his scholarship because of academic problems.

"He (Jackson) was in a battle for the third spot," Solich said. "We just have to go on without him. We have a number of players in there with a lot of ability."

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