

Sports

Gamecocks' passing game to test Huskers

By Tim Hartmann
Senior Reporter

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said Tuesday that the Cornhuskers' next opponent, South Carolina, is even better than their 2-1 record indicates.

Osborne said although South Carolina lost to Georgia 13-6 last week, the Gamecocks should be 3-0 because they should have won.

The 3-0 Huskers will face South Carolina Saturday at Memorial Stadium. Kick off for the contest, which will be televised by ESPN, is scheduled for 3:07 p.m.

"Georgia is a very good football team, certainly a top 20 team, maybe a top 10 team," Osborne said, "and South Carolina was a better football team than Georgia. People tend to

look at the outcome, and South Carolina lost, but they just lost the ball or they didn't score on three or four occasions inside the 10-yard line."

The South Carolina game will bring Nebraska's non-conference schedule to an end. The Huskers' last two wins have come over UCLA and Arizona State, teams who were ranked third and twelfth before they played Nebraska.

Osborne said he is wary Nebraska might overlook South Carolina after the two victories over ranked opponents.

"I'm very concerned that there might be some kind of feeling that 'Gee, we've got by the two toughest teams in the Pac-Ten and now maybe we don't have as big a job,'" Osborne said during his weekly press conference. "I just don't think anybody here

can afford to think that way." Osborne said that going into the season, he felt South Carolina would be a tough test. He said he still feels that way.

"South Carolina is a team that we felt before the season began would be as dangerous as any that we had to play in the non-conference season, and we still feel the same way," he said. "We remember back from last year when we were very fortunate to win the game."

Nebraska defeated South Carolina 27-24 last season. The Gamecocks led 24-20 in the fourth quarter, but two turnovers in the last 2:08 ended their upset bid.

In last year's game, South Carolina quarterback Todd Ellis passed for 286 yards on 26 of 38 passing. Ten of those receptions were caught by

senior wingback Sterling Sharpe. Ellis and Sharpe are among 17 returning starters for the Gamecocks.

"We thought that they had probably as fine a group of skilled athletes — when you look at the receivers, quarterback, running back — as we played," Osborne said. "I don't think anybody we have played in several years had as many good receivers as South Carolina had, and most all of those players are back this year."

"We lost about half of our starters and I believe they lost two or three of their starters and last year was a very close game. Admittedly, it was in 97-degree heat down in Columbia, which was probably of some advantage to them. Still, as far as I'm concerned, it shapes up as a very challenging football game."

Osborne said South Carolina con-

trasts greatly with the teams Nebraska has played so far this season. "South Carolina is basically a throwing football team. I would imagine they have averaged around 40 to 45 passes a game, which is much higher than either UCLA or Arizona State," he said. "They use primarily one running back in the backfield which is different than what we've been seeing, and they utilize no tight end and four quick receivers."

Osborne said there are several advantages to the Gamecocks' "run and shoot" offense.

"In order to have a good 'run and shoot' offense you have to have, number one, a good quarterback, which they do in Todd Ellis," he said, "and some fine receivers and at least one good running back, and they've got an excellent running back."

McCant receives help with difficult offense

By Steve Sipple
Staff Reporter

Nebraska freshman quarterback Keithen McCant said he's still trying to master the Cornhuskers' complicated offense — and he's using a good tutor to do it.

McCant said junior quarterback Steve Taylor has helped him make the switch from being a high school quarterback in Grand Prairie, Texas, to being a starter on the Nebraska junior varsity. He said he became friends with Taylor when the two were roommates last summer and has used him as an ideal role model ever since.

"We're good friends," McCant said. "Living with him this summer was a big influence. He tells me different things about quarterbacking. He talks to me when I'm down. I really look up to him."

McCant said that although learning the Huskers' offense has been difficult, he's "getting there." He said Taylor also had difficulty understanding the offense as a freshman.

"With Steve, it took him a whole year before he was comfortable with it," McCant said. "If you don't have the offense down to where you're comfortable with it, you can't play offense."

Nebraska freshman coach Shane Thorell said McCant is an excellent passing quarterback who needs to work on running the option. He said McCant needs more option experience because he came from a high school program that emphasized the pass.

Thorell said he is pleased with McCant's progress.

"I've been impressed with his

leadership ability," Thorell said. "He's got a good attitude and he's very persistent."

Thorell said the combination of McCant and Tom Haase, a walk on from Aurora, gives the Huskers a one-two punch at quarterback. He said Haase runs the options well.

"Those two quarterbacks give the team a different look," Thorell said. "Both are real good quarterbacks."

McCant led Nebraska to 62-0 and 55-0 victories over the St. Thomas, Minn., and the Baker, Kan., junior varsity teams. McCant completed six of 16 passes for 129 yards and rushed for 112 yards in the games.

Thorell said McCant's passing statistics are misleading.

"His stats didn't do him justice," he said. "Keithen did a good job leading the team."

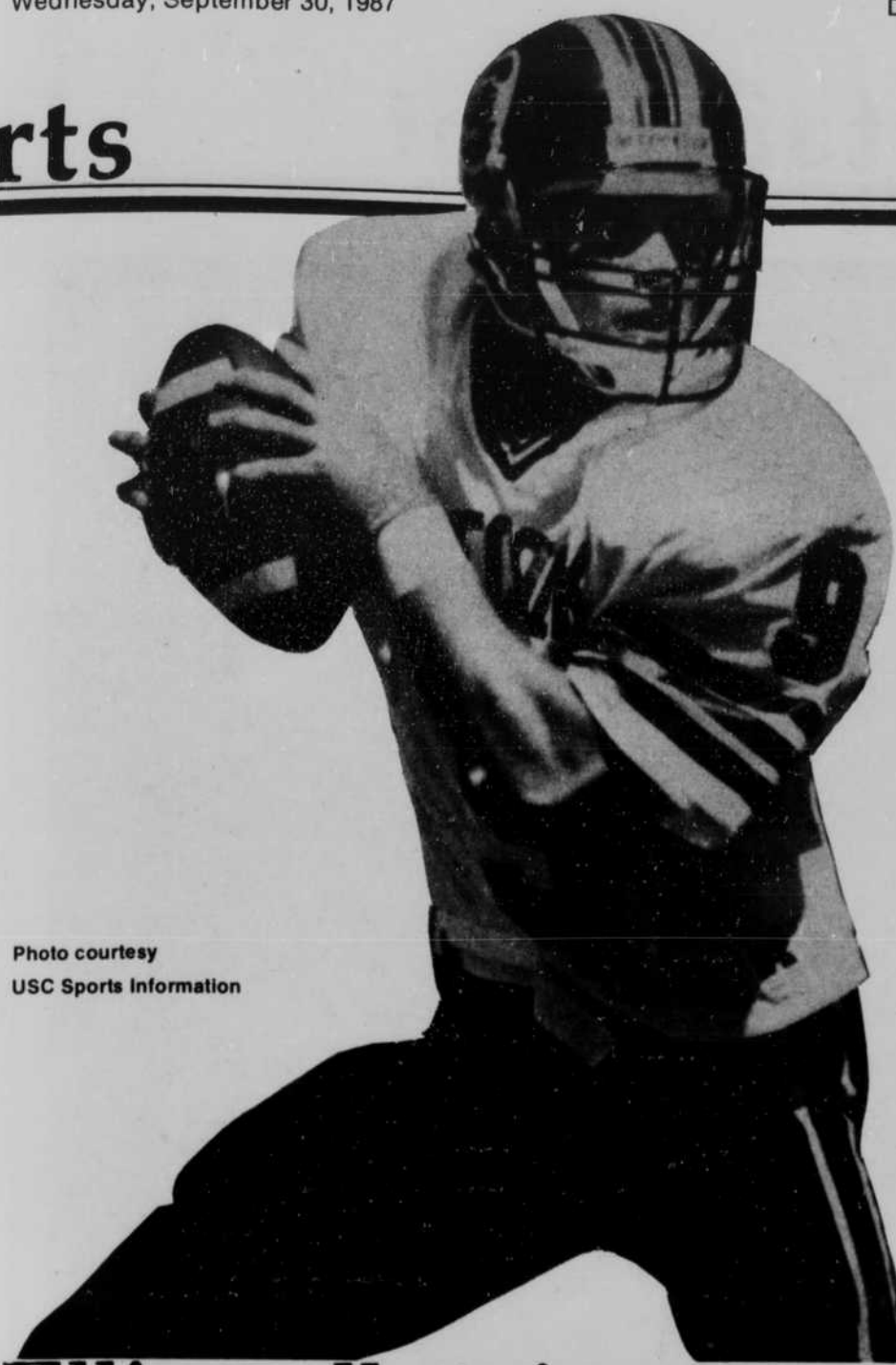
McCant, who passed for 1,500 yards and 18 touchdowns during his senior season of high school, took recruiting trips to Oklahoma State, Texas A&M and Kansas before signing with Nebraska. He said the fact that his signing was overshadowed by the signing of Mickey Joseph, a prep All-America quarterback from Marrero, La., bothered him.

"It irritated me a little," McCant said. "But I didn't let it get me down. My parents talked to me and people on the team talked to me about it. That really helped."

McCant said the presence of Joseph, Haase and the other quarterbacks at Nebraska makes him work harder.

"I really just want to play good and show what I'm made of," he said.

Photo courtesy
USC Sports Information



Ellis pulls trigger on 'Run and Shoot' offense

By Mike Reilly
Editor

On a cool autumn night in 1984, high school sensation Todd Ellis stood on the Williams-Brice Stadium field on the University of South Carolina campus, wondering what Gamecock recruiters had in store for him.

The silent stadium suddenly filled with noise. Lights cut through the dark sky and an announcer's voice rang over the stadium loudspeaker. Ellis, then an 18-year-old quarterback from Greensboro, N.C., remembered the announcer's rambling play-by-play sounding something like this:

".....South Carolina trails Nebraska 24-21 with time running out... this will be the last play... the Gamecocks have the ball first and 10 at the Nebraska 40... Ellis calls the signals... he drops back in the pocket and finds his receiver over the middle for the touchdown... South Carolina upsets Nebraska 27-24."

"It was great," Ellis said. "There were all kinds of special effects with the band and fans yelling. The ending almost worked out in real life."

Ellis left the stadium that night committed to playing quarterback at South Carolina — and to beating Nebraska.

On the same field two years later, Ellis' heart raced with panic and hope. After redshirting the 1985 season, Ellis had come on strong in his fifth game as the Gamecocks' quarterback. He rallied South Carolina from an early 10-0 deficit, picking apart Nebraska's secondary with several short passes from the Run and Shoot formation.

Nebraska led 27-24 with less than a minute remaining. Ellis, following the same script as the announcer had two years earlier, moved the Gamecocks from their 46-yard-line to the Nebraska 19.

But this ending wasn't as sweet as the one Ellis heard as a recruit. He dropped back to pass with seconds remaining and spotted teammate Kevin White near the end zone.

"I remember the (Nebraska) free safety played inside and that I kept expecting a blitz," Ellis said. "I kept looking for White to come across the middle."

White never came across the middle. He had cut the wrong way and Ellis fired the ball to tight end Steve Siedler. Siedler intercepted the pass, ending a Nebraska victory. Ellis was in the middle of the field, under the hot sun and cold stares, wondering what had happened. He had just completed 26 of 38 passes for 286 yards and played one of the best games of his young career.

"I was very disappointed after the Nebraska game," Ellis said, "but it built up my confi-

dence. I learned that I can play at the same level of a program like Nebraska's. I just hope we can pull one out like we did on the tape."

Ellis will have one last shot against Nebraska Saturday at Memorial Stadium. Kickoff is scheduled for 3:07 p.m. The teams aren't scheduled to meet again during the regular season, bowl games notwithstanding.

"I know we can't run right at Nebraska," Ellis said. "I plan to play a patient game. I'm hoping get some of my passes underneath the coverage."

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne expects Ellis to be even more of a threat in this year's game than he was in last year's.

"Ellis is a lot like (NU quarterback) Steve Taylor," Osborne said. "He has had a full year as a starter. He's a very accomplished quarterback, so he just gets better in a year's time."

South Carolina, 2-1, is coming off a 13-6 loss to Georgia while the 3-0 Cornhuskers are ranked No. 2 in The Associated Press poll.

"We lost to Georgia when we were counting on a win," said Ellis, who completed 29 of 51 passes for 306 yards against the Bulldogs. "We'll come out and play hard (against Nebraska) and evaluate our situation from there. We have dreams of going to a bowl game."

The Gamecocks' narrow loss to Nebraska last year all but ended their chances at a bowl. They finished with a disappointing 3-6-2 record.

Although South Carolina's season was clouded with losses, Ellis continued to shine. He set NCAA freshman season records for passing yardage (3,020), touchdowns (20) and total offense (2,975). He passed for 200 or more yards in 10 of 11 games, including a school record 394 yards against Virginia Tech.

Ellis' 3,020 yards passing was 463 more than Heisman Trophy-winner Vinny Testaverde of Miami threw for last year. But Ellis threw 22 interceptions while Testaverde had nine.

"I had a lot more picks (interceptions) than (Testaverde) did," Ellis said. "But I think we put the ball up more than (Miami) did. I think he's really a great quarterback and I think there is really no comparison."

South Carolina offensive coordinator Frank Sadler said Ellis may compare to Testaverde in the future.

"He's still not in a class with Testaverde because he's still growing and learning," Sadler said. "He'll be a No. 1 (National Football League) draft choice by the time he completes his schooling. By his senior year, I think he'll be ready for some national honors."

"Todd is a gifted athlete, but he still makes some immature mistakes."

Ellis' first collegiate start came against Testaverde and the Hurricanes. Testaverde passed for 231 yards to Ellis' 227, but the South Carolina quarterback had two touchdowns

passes. But Testaverde left Columbia, S.C., with the most important statistic — a 34-14 win.

"You're not a great quarterback until you start winning," Ellis said.

So far this season, Ellis has passed for 880 yards and is on schedule to break the NCAA single-season record of 4,571 yards set in 1980 by Brigham Young's Jim McMahon.

His accomplishments at Greensboro Page High School included three years as a starter at quarterback, 6,157 yards passing and playing in three North Carolina state championship games.

Marion Kirby, Page's football coach, said Ellis ran the offense almost perfectly.

"Some people try to look for flaws in him," Kirby said. "I just thanked God that we had him."

Ellis, who stands 6-foot-3 and weighs 203 pounds, played at about the same height and weight in high school. He said his size hasn't been a factor in his football career.

"Physically, I'm just another average joe," he said. "I'm not really an athlete, but just a copy cat. Quarterback is all repetition. The coaches show me what to do. Then I do it."

Kirby said Ellis was a prize pupil.

"He was a great student of the game and he was a real tough kid," Kirby said. "He always practiced his craft. He never screwed around with the game."

Ellis was recruited heavily by several schools besides South Carolina, including Notre Dame, Louisiana State, Georgia and Stanford.

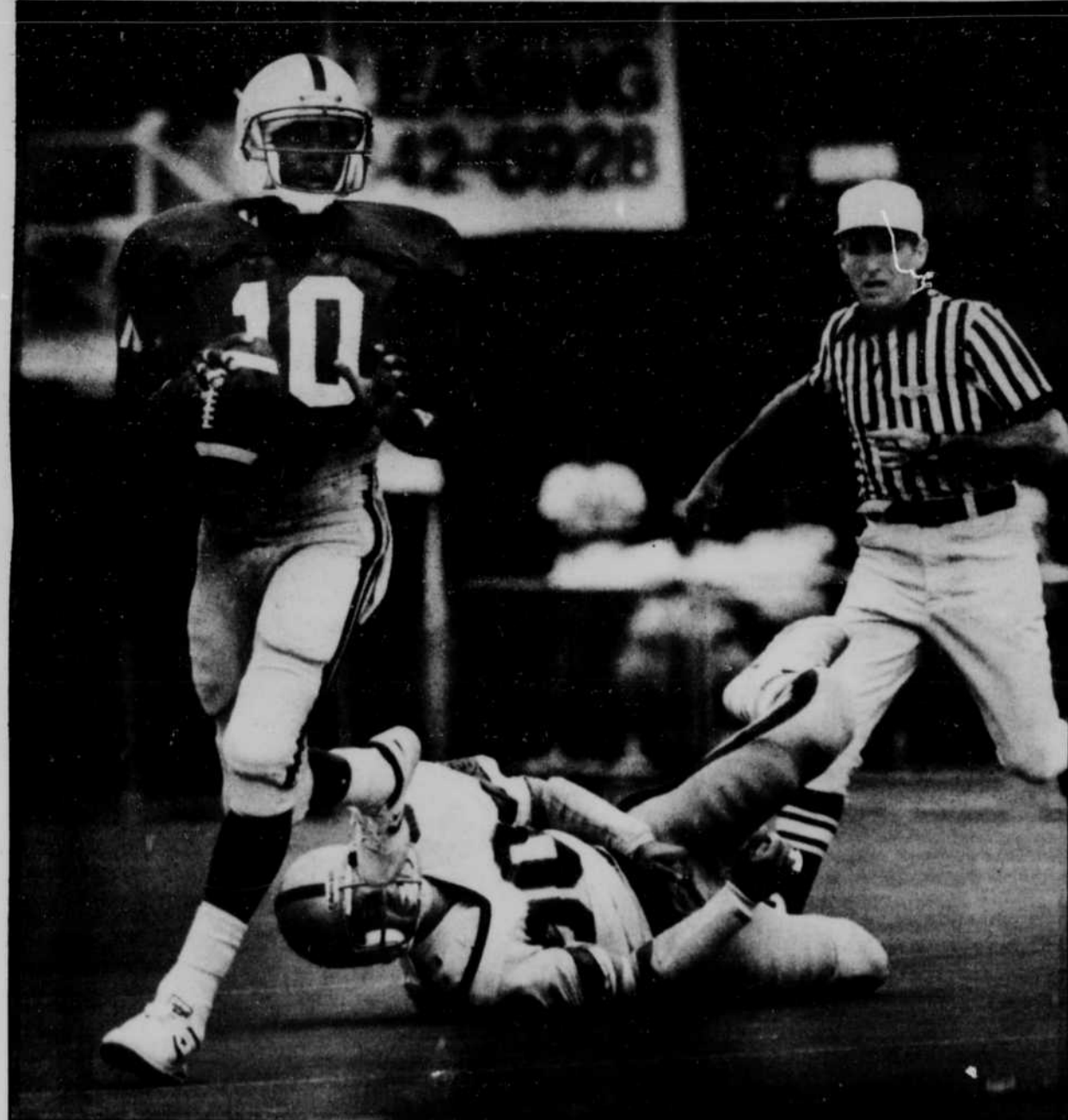
Ellis said South Carolina has been the best school for him. His parents, Charles and Daphne, moved to Columbia about the same time he did.

Ellis, who played on Page's basketball team with Kansas All-America Danny Manning, said he didn't mind leaving North Carolina.

"If I was a 6-foot-11 swing forward or center, I would have gone to North Carolina," Ellis said, "but I wanted to go to a place where football is the No. 1 sport. South Carolina is just perfect."

Kirby said he thinks Ellis will eventually turn South Carolina's winning woes around. He said Ellis is a "level-headed player."

On Saturday, Ellis will be tested again. And he plans on passing.



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska freshman quarterback Keithen McCant avoids a diving defender during the Cornhusker's 62-0 victory over the St. Thomas (Minn.) junior varsity.

'Game of the Week' boosts intramurals

By Chris McCubbin
Staff Reporter

The television crew is ready and the players are on the field. The announcer greets the audience and sets the scene as a University of Nebraska-Lincoln playing field. Both teams are introduced, and as they square off for the game, the announcer and a commentator discuss the upcoming game and other recent sporting events. Then the game begins — it's UNL vs. ...

The "Intramural Game of the Week" is a new, weekly cable television program that is produced by the Office of Campus Recreation, 1740 Vine St. It airs Thursdays at 10 p.m. on cable channel 5 and at 11 p.m. on channel 14.

The "Intramural Game of the

Week" made its debut two weeks ago with a men's slow-pitch softball game between Abel 10 and Burr 2 West. Abel 10 was forced to field a substitute team, giving Burr 2 a 13-3 victory.

Doug Engh, a UNL student who promotes advertising and publicity for Campus Recreation Department, said the idea for an "Intramural Game of the Week" came to him as he walked across the campus one afternoon. He said he discovered that the Campus Recreation Department qualified for time on Lincoln Cablevision's cable and video access.

Last summer, Engh said, he arranged to tape two of the Campus Recreation Department's Outdoor Adventure Trips — a rock climbing trip in the South Dakota Palisades and a canoeing trip down the Niobrara. The two Outdoor Adventure Trips

have already aired several times, but Engh said they will be shown throughout the semester in conjunction with the "Intramural Game of the Week."

Engh said the "Intramural Game of the Week" will have everything a professional broadcast has except an instant replay. He said players will fill out a questionnaire with their name, position and previous sports experience to aid in the play-by-play commentary.

Engh said scores and highlights from other intramural games will be shown, and an unofficial poll compiled by the Campus Recreation Department's staff will be aired.

Engh said most of the equipment necessary for the "Intramural Game of the Week" is borrowed from Cablevision, 390 N. C. Engh said other than some inexpensive editing equipment bought last summer, the

program's biggest expense is videotape.

Most of the games will be taped Monday afternoons, Engh said. He said he uses a three-person crew that handles the announcing and technical chores.

Engh said although none of the Campus Recreation Department's staff members have previous broadcasting experience, he edits the tapes at Nebraska Educational Television and the "Intramural Game of the Week" is broadcast from Cablevision's studio.

Engh said although the first two programs aired were men's softball games, the "Intramural Game of the Week" will consist of a balanced selection of men's, women's and co-rec indoor and outdoor sports. He said more Outdoor Adventure Trips —

possibly including the Apple Cider Bike Tour in Iowa and a canoe trip down the Missouri River — will be filmed.

Engh said he is considering filming the home games of Nebraska sport clubs such as rugby and soccer. He said the Lincoln-based band Silent Reply already has recorded music for use on a soundtrack during the "Intramural Game of the Week."

If work continues on schedule at the student recreation center, Engh said, the indoor practice field might be ready in time for the all-university flag football tournament during the first week of November. He said if the recreation center is completed, the "Intramural Game of the Week" will be there to record the rec center's debut for posterity.

Top 10 passing performances against Nebraska (1980-present)				
	Comp.-Att.-Int.	Yds.	Score	
1. Ronnie Williams, Oklahoma State ... 1985	27-44-2	582	34-24 NU	
2. Randy Easington, Colorado ... 1982	24-51-2	581	45-14 NU	
3. David Archer, Iowa State ... 1983	29-48-0	548	75-58 NU	
4. Dennis Kasper, Iowa State ... 1983	19-33-1	525	27-24 NU	
5. Todd Ellis, South Carolina ... 1986	24-33-1	524	27-24 NU	
6. Frank Sander, Kansas ... 1984	16-35-3	499	34-13 NU	
7. Rusty Miller, Oklahoma State ... 1984	14-28-1	342	17-3 NU	
10. Phil Bradley, Missouri ... 1981	23-45-1	329	33-18 NU	

Brian Barber/Daily Nebraskan