

# Sports

## Welniak gets his just due: a starting slot

By Kyle Schurman  
Staff Reporter

Hard work and commitment have paid off for Nebraska senior linebacker Doug Welniak.

Welniak joined the Cornhuskers as a walk-on in 1983 and was a reserve linebacker during his first three playing seasons and his redshirt year.

But things picked up this season for Welniak. He earned a scholarship, shared a starting position with fellow senior Steve Forch and was voted a team captain.

"I was real happy with the way things turned out," Welniak said. "Everything happened in one week. Now if we win it'll mean a lot more."

Welniak said earning a scholarship was his first goal when he arrived at Nebraska. He said he had to work harder than most scholarship athletes because he was a walk-on.

Welniak said not having a scholarship was good for him.

"If I had walked in here as a scholarship athlete, I probably wouldn't have worked as hard as I did," Welniak said. "(Earning a scholarship) makes you feel like you finally accomplished something."

Nebraska linebackers coach John Melton said Welniak deserves everything he has received this year.

"He stuck around through the tough times and now he's got his just reward," Melton said.

Welniak said he has had perfect attendance at practice and meetings except when there have been conflicts with school. He said attending all the practices and meetings didn't seem to be worth it in the past, but does now.

"It takes a tough mental person to really stick it out," Welniak said. "I'm seeing a lot of kids who aren't sure if it's really worth it. I was one of those kids."

Welniak said he put a lot of work into making himself better and "finally got what I deserved."

Welniak said he was "real surprised" about being elected captain. He said he tries to keep the tempo up at practice because people play as they practice.

Melton said Welniak was a "very good choice for captain."

"He leads by doing," Melton said. "He's got great toughness and he's a good leader. We're very glad to have him."

Melton said Welniak worked hard on pass drops during spring football.

"He's a great individual," Melton said. "He's a hard-working, sincere young man. He's very intelligent."

Welniak said Wyoming and the University of Nebraska-Omaha offered him scholarships. He said he didn't care for Wyoming, and UNO coach Sandy Buda kind of "turned me off."

"Buda told me my chances of playing (at Nebraska) were zero," Welniak said. "And every week I waited to decide, the scholarship money decreased. It made me mad."

He said he was pretty sure he wanted to walk on at Nebraska because if he hadn't, he would have "always wondered" whether he could have played for the Huskers.

Welniak said his biggest asset is his hitting ability. He said he played on the kickoff team during his early years as a Husker, and that's where he earned his nickname, "Maniac."

He said he learned a lot during his redshirt year in 1984.

"I practiced against the 1984 team, and I'll never play against a better offense," Welniak said. "I'd play hard against them in practice, and sometimes they'd get mad; but they also liked it because I'd give them a real picture of what they'd see in the game."

Welniak said his main goal for this year is the same as his teammates'.

"We want to win the national championship," Welniak said. "But we have to take one game at a time. We can't look too far ahead."



Oklahoma State running back Thurman Thomas leaps over a pile of North Texas State defenders. Thomas, a Heisman Trophy candidate who is the nation's leading rusher, will lead the Cowboys in their game against Nebraska Saturday in Stillwater, Okla.

Courtesy of OSU Sports Information

## Oklahoma State's Thomas primes for Saturday's game, NU's Thomas

By Steve Sipple  
Staff Reporter

Oklahoma State running back Thurman Thomas said he will be trying to avoid a confrontation with a friend when the Cowboys face Nebraska Saturday in Stillwater, Okla.

The friend is Husker defensive end Broderick Thomas, whom Thurman Thomas said he worked out with in late August in Houston. He said they ran together at The Hill — a popular training area where many professional and collegiate players prepare in the off-season.

During that time, Thurman Thomas said, "we got to know a lot about each other."

Broderick Thomas, a Houston native, said he hopes to get to know his friend from nearby Missouri City, Texas, a little more Saturday at Lewis Field.

The game, televised by CBS, begins at 1:45 p.m.

"I hope to have a lot of Thomas on Thomas," Broderick Thomas said. "It will be Thomas on the carry and Thomas on the tackle."

He said he has developed a rapport with Thurman Thomas and Cowboy receiver Hart Lee Dykes, but said the friendships will be put aside for about three hours Saturday afternoon. "They're two of my buddies," Broderick Thomas said. "I ran hills this summer (with Thurman) and I've worked out with Hart Lee."

"Thomas knows what he has to do. He's coming to run and I'm coming to hit. He knows he's going to get hit — and I won't let him down."

Thurman Thomas has proved a difficult target to hit this season, as the Cowboy running back leads the nation in rushing with a 140-yard per-game average. He has rushed 120 times for 700 yards and seven touchdowns, and has caught 12 passes for 155 yards.

Thurman Thomas said he was amused by his namesake's comments.

"It's good motivation for himself and his teammates," he said. "Basically, that's just the way he has been. It doesn't surprise me he says anything like that."

"I've heard it from the Boz (Brian Bosworth.) It's really like a challenge to me to go out and play a little harder. It's good motivation."

Thomas said he and his team-

mates have plenty of motivation heading into their clash with the second-ranked Huskers. The 5-0 Cowboys haven't defeated Nebraska since 1961, when they won 14-6 at Stillwater.

"Oh yes, we have never been in a big situation like this," he said. "All the players are excited and ready to play Saturday."

Thomas said the game will be the biggest of his collegiate career.

"No question," he said. "We had a big game in 1984 when we went to the Gator Bowl (a 21-14 Cowboy victory)," he said. "But will all the media hype and both teams coming in 5-0, it takes the place as the biggest game of all."

Thomas said he has never had very good games against the Huskers. Thomas was held to 38 yards in the Cowboys' 30-10 loss to Nebraska last season, and rushed for 71 yards against Nebraska as a sophomore and 12 as a freshman.

This season, Thomas said, he hopes to change all that.

"Nebraska has never been one of my favorite teams to play against," he said. "This Saturday, though, I'm looking forward to having a big game."

Thomas has had plenty of big games during his career. He has piled up 3,934 yards to make him Oklahoma State's second all-time leading rusher behind Terry Miller.

This season, Thomas has gone over the 100-yard mark a career-best five straight times and has again thrust himself into the Heisman Trophy chase.

The Oklahoma State Sports Information Department handed out a Heisman Trophy promotional packet this week proclaiming "Thurman Thomas: Back in the Heisman Hunt."

Thomas said although he doesn't think much about the

award, he hasn't ruled anything out.

"I really don't think much about it until writers ask me," he said. "My teammates hope I can win it. But you're speaking of the Heisman, I'm not."

Thomas said he thinks he can continue his success through the Big Eight season.

"The way things have been going, I expect to," he said. "Our passing game has been working, and that opens it up for me. I expect to continue the success I've had in the last five games."

Thomas suffered through a sub-par year in 1986 after he injured a knee while playing in a summer basketball game. He rushed for 741 yards and four touchdowns last season.

Thomas was named the Big Eight Offensive Player of the Year by both the Associated Press and United Press International after he rushed for 1,650 yards and 16 touchdowns as a sophomore.

Thomas was also named the Big Eight Newcomer of the Year and Most Valuable Player in the 1984 Gator Bowl as a freshman.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said Thomas's consistency is impressive.

"He's durable, courageous and has enough speed to break a long run," Osborne said. "We've got respect for him. He's done it for four years, and not many have been able to do what he's done for that long."

Thomas said he's ready to show his knee problems are behind him.

"Oh yes, it's 100 percent," he said. "I worked it out the whole summer. I feel as good as I have for a long time."

"I know it's going to be tough. It will be a big challenge for me and the offensive line."

## 'New triplets' lead Cowboys to 5-0 mark

By Tim Hartmann  
Senior Reporter

Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer dubbed Nebraska's offensive trio of wingback Irving Fryar, quarterback Turner Gill and I-back Mike Rozier as the "triplets" in 1983.

This season, Oklahoma State coach Pat Jones says he has the "new triplets."

Jones said Oklahoma State split end Hart Lee Dykes, quarterback Mike Gundy and running back Thurman Thomas are among the best players in the country at their positions.

"They're not the only good players we've got, but as far as three offensive players go, they're leaders, not only in the league but nationally, too," he said.

Jones said the new triplets are similar to the original triplets.

"They are three guys who are above-average athletes, very quality athletes, very productive people," Jones said. "They can make a lot of things happen. I think they're very comparable (to Nebraska's triplets)."

A comparison of the players through five games shows that both sets of triplets have similar statistics.

Thomas leads the nation in rushing with 700 yards on 120 carries and has scored seven touchdowns. After five games in 1983, Rozier had 759 yards on 95 carries and 11 touchdowns.

Dykes has caught 32 passes for 490 yards and two touchdowns. Fryar, the first pick in the National Football League draft in 1984, had 16 receptions for 415 yards and four touchdowns after five games.

Gundy has completed 91 of 143 passes for 1,150 yards while throwing six touchdowns and three interceptions. Gill had completed 35 of 59 passes for 652 yards while throwing five touchdowns and one interception after five games.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said although the Oklahoma State triplets are good players, they differ from Fryar, Gill and Rozier.

"They're different kinds of players," Osborne said. "Rozier was 210 pounds and Thurman Thomas is not that big. He's a very fine player. Hart Lee Dykes is a very tall receiver, he's probably 6-foot-4 or 6-5, and Irving Fryar was more of a runner. Irving was 5-11 or 6-0, great speed and a great reverse guy-punt returner."

"Turner Gill was a little different type of quarterback than Gundy, but I think maybe what Pat is trying to say is that to his football team these players are what those players were to our football team."

"They're great players, they're playing very, very well, and they certainly are the players that make them go."

Oklahoma State defeated Colorado 42-17 last weekend to raise its record to 5-0. Gundy was named the Big Eight player of the week after completing 21 of 28 passes for 257 yards and two touchdowns against the Buffaloes.

Gundy, a sophomore, said playing with Dykes and Thomas has benefited him this season. He said Dykes has "all the ability in the world."

"He's a very physical player," Gundy said.

Thomas, the only senior of the trio, rushed for 1,650 yards as a sophomore. He rushed for 741 yards last season after being slowed by a knee injury sustained in a summer basketball game.

Gundy said Thomas's experience shows on the field.

"I always look downfield, but if they're covered, I look to him (Thomas)," Gundy said. "He knows what's going on in the game."

"With Thurman Thomas being such a running threat, it helps me a lot. We try to balance our offensive attack."

Gundy, who said his idol is Miami

### Thomas's 1985 statistics

	Opp.	Att.	Gain	Avg.	TDs
	Tulsa	25	164	6.6	3
	Houston	21	111	5.3	1
	Wyoming	29	193	6.7	1
	SW Louisiana	22	122	5.5	1
	Colorado	23	110	4.8	1
<b>Totals:</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>7</b>

See TRIPLETS on 14