

'Tough Tony' still earns nickname

By Steve Sipple
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Andrea Hoy/First Down

Davis

Nebraska freshman defensive line coach Tony Davis says he coaches his players just as "tough" as he used to run as a fullback from 1971 to 1975.

Davis earned the nickname "Tough Tony" during his playing days at Nebraska because of the punishment he inflicted on several defenders. He rushed for 2,495 yards during his career, including 1,008 as a sophomore.

Davis, who is now in his first season as a Husker coach, is instilling that same toughness in the defensive players he coaches.

"He's still that type of person," Nebraska freshman coach Shane Thorell said. "For defensive linemen, that's the type of player they need to be. There in the trenches, it's pretty physical. Tony lets them know what it takes to get the job done and and lets them know when they don't get their job done."

Davis agreed.

"It might be that I'm tough," Davis said. "I tell my players two things: No. 1, they'd better hit, and No. 2, they'd better hustle. If they don't give me hustle and they don't hit, they won't play."

"They know if they don't meet my expectations, they'll meet my wrath," he said. "But I love them. They're my own."

Though Davis makes his players work, Thorell said, he keeps a good rapport with them.

"If you don't know him, you might think he's hard on them," he said. "But (the players) like him. He jokes around a lot with them."

Davis, who was named most valuable player in the 1974 Cotton Bowl and the 1975 Sugar Bowl, said that coaching defensive players after being involved with offense for 22 years isn't difficult because of his attitude toward football.

"My attitude is kind of a defensive attitude to start with," he said. "I wasn't a big, fast guy, but I liked hitting. I want my kids to play like that. It's kind of natural for me to coach defense, really."

Davis said he plans to coach the Nebraska freshmen this season and next, and then get a major college coaching job "as soon as possible." He said being able to put Nebraska on a resume will help.

"What do you think?" Davis asked. "If you have on your resume that you coached at Nebraska, that's about as good as you get."

Davis was a fourth-round draft choice of the National Football League's Cincinnati Bengals in 1976 and earned team mvp honors the following year. He played for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 1979 to 1982, and then finished his professional football

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