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times it's because they're too aroused, sometimes it's because they're not aroused enough. We try to give them the skills to recognize it and get in control of themselves."

Osborne, who holds a PhD in educational psychology, said the psychologists help players put mistakes behind them and concentrate on each play.

"So many times we're our own worst enemy," Osborne said. "You've heard of self talk, where people make a mistake and they can't let go of the mistake and people go around with that little voice inside them saying bad things about themselves. And as a result, a player can program himself to fail."

Ravizza said the principles he teaches the athletes also apply to life in general.

"It's just like when you are taking an essay test and you really blow the first question," he said.

"You should just try to concentrate on the next four questions and not sit there thinking, 'I'm stupid.'"

Ravizza developed a visualization technique to program players to succeed. Under the technique, which he originally developed while working with the California Angels, the players use imagination to improve on-field performance. Ravizza or Sime meet with players individually, usually the night before a game. They help the player relax. Then they show the player a videotape of himself playing in a recent game.

The player closes his eyes, leans back, and with his imagination sees himself playing. If he missed a block on a play in an earlier game, he makes the block. If he dropped a pass, it becomes a touchdown reception. A missed tackle is transformed into a sack.

"The mind does not distinguish reality from imagination," he said. "The information is processed in a similar way. . . . The player can see himself in the situation. It's like, 'I've been there before.'"

Defensive tackle Tim Rother said: "Whenever I can if I'm having a problem with, say, a four technique, I go and get relaxed. You see yourself looking out of your facemask at another guy. The next two weeks I'll see a guy in an Oklahoma uniform. And then when I come to practice tomorrow, I'll do it exactly right. . . . It's like practicing without getting hit."

Richard Bell, a wingback, also practices the imagery technique.

"On plays where we made a mistake we correct them," Bell said. "It takes a few minutes to get totally relaxed. Like when I had my reverse (for a 46-yard touchdown against Kansas State). I carried the ball in the left hand, the wrong hand. When I visualized the

play, I carried the ball in my right hand. I even ran a little faster."

The psychologists also help the players slow down. The players are under an unusually high amount of stress, Ravizza said. Some need help dealing with it, he said.

"One thing that I try to do is deal with them as a total person, that they have a total identity outside of football, although that's tough in Nebraska," Ravizza said. "There's a lot of pressure there, but they definitely seek it out. They don't have to be playing for somebody like Nebraska. They could always be playing Division III."

Bell said his performance has convinced him sports psychology works.

"If I didn't think it helped, I definitely wouldn't do it," he said.

Fullback Micah Heibel said he doesn't care if it works or not.

"It's nice having somebody around to complain to," Heibel said.

— by Kent Endacott

