

Osborne says player injuries worry him

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Tom Osborne was apologetic to the media during his weekly media luncheon.

The Cornhusker football coach just didn't have anything to say.

"I don't have anything to say that I haven't run into the ground for the last few weeks," he said. "Our preparation has been normal and we're ready to play."

Osborne said Husker offensive line coach Dan Young scouted Northern Illinois Saturday during its 26-17 win against Fullerton State.

"He said they executed their wishbone pretty well, and seemed to do all the basic things wishbone teams do," Osborne said.

Osborne said his biggest concern, other than Saturday's season-opening game, is Nebraska's injury situation.

I-back George Achola, who broke his right leg last week during a scrimmage, probably will be out for most of the season, Osborne said.

He said split end Tim McCoy, who underwent arthroscopic surgery after tearing cartilage in his knee, will return next week.

Terry Rodgers, who was projected to be among Nebraska's top three I-backs this season, is still slowed by rehabilitation from reconstructive knee surgery, which he underwent last winter.

"We'll wait and see how soon he feels ready," Osborne said. "We don't want to rush him."

Fullback Lance Lewis, who was diagnosed as having a nerve injury in his neck, "won't even practice this fall," and his career could be finished, Osborne said.

Northern Illinois is coached by former

Husker recruiting director Jerry Pettibone, who left Nebraska to accept a position at Texas A&M in 1981.

Osborne said he and Pettibone still are friends.

"I've talked to him on the phone many times . . .," he said. "There are no hard feelings, or anything like that."

Osborne said Nebraska fans shouldn't expect to see a perfect performance by the Huskers Saturday.

"It would be unrealistic for fans to expect us to go out and put on a polished performance," he said. "Northern Illinois has a good team and would do reasonably well in the Big Eight. If we don't play well, they could cause us some problems."

Quarterback Gerry Gdowski will start Saturday, Osborne said, because of his consistency throughout spring and fall drills. But

backups Mickey Joseph and Mike Grant -- if he isn't redshirted -- probably will see playing time.

"He (Gdowski) seems to know the offense the best and has been the most consistent," Osborne said. "He deserves to start. But we'll try to play at least one of the other guys a lot through the year."

"Mickey Joseph has a lot of speed, and as for Mike Grant . . . when you see a guy take the No. 2 offense against the No. 1 defense and do pretty well, it tends to raise your eyebrows a little bit."

Osborne said he knows the fans will debate the matter all season.

"By the end of the season, I'll have a lot of people that will have told me what to do," he said. "But right now, I don't know. I don't think I'll really know until about 5 p.m. Saturday."

Husker freshman Callies fills two positions

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Playing more than one position is a common practice in baseball, but rarely is seen in college football.

But Nebraska freshman Marvin Callies got a taste of it during Saturday's 23-23 tie between the Cornhuskers and Snow Junior College.

Callies, a 5-foot-10, 197-pound I-back from East Bernard, Texas, rushed for 130 yards and a touchdown while splitting time between I-back and quarterback.

"I really liked playing both positions," he said. "But I like quarterback more. Hopefully, I'll get to do this sort of thing more often."

Callies was recruited by Nebraska as a quarterback, but was moved to I-back one week before Saturday's game, the first on the junior varsity's five-game schedule.

Shane Thorell, the junior varsity's coach, said Callies did "extremely well, especially considering the short amount of time he had to practice at I-back."

"We've still got a lot of work to do at I-back," Thorell said. "Marvin still wants to play quarterback, so we're not sure what we're going to do at this point."

Callies, playing backup quarterback to Joel Cornwell, completed 3 of 7 passes for 32 yards, and was intercepted once.

Callies lost the No. 1 position on the depth chart to Cornwell during two-a-day practices last month, and Thorell moved him to I-back shortly afterward.

"I hated to see that kind of speed sitting on the bench," Thorell said.

The speed Thorell spoke of was evident in the third quarter. With the

game tied 9-9, the Huskers were faced with a second down at their own 18-yard line. Callies took a pitch to the right and immediately was met by three defenders.

Callies reversed his progress back to the right, giving ground back to the 13. He sprinted around the corner and outran the only defenders left for an 82-yard touchdown. The extra point by Pat Specht put the Huskers ahead 16-9.

"It wasn't too hard once I got to the corner," Callies said of the play. "Everybody was slanted to the other side of the play, so I had open field in front of me."

Thorell said Cornwell and Callies probably will compete for the starting job at quarterback for much of the season, if not all of it.

He said whoever plays backup to Cornwell will depend on the situ-

ation. "If we need to throw, Jeff Lindquist is probably the best passer," Thorell said. "But Marvin Callies is the guy you want in there if you want to run your option."

Callies said he does not mind playing either position.

"I'm happy wherever I play, just as long as I get some playing time," Callies said. "I don't know about pulling double time (playing two positions), but I do like playing."

"I want to be in there at quarterback. I will by the end of the season."

With the game tied 23-23, Snow had the ball at the Nebraska 20-yard line with nine seconds left. But Snow placekicker Eric Harbison missed a game-winning field goal when he shanked the ball to the left.

Snow coach Paul Tidwell said he

would take the tie over a loss, but was disappointed at the missed opportunity to win the game.

"I told the coaches it was a shame we drove 16 1/2 hours (from Ephraim, Utah, where the school is located) for a tie," he said. "But it is worth it. The kids will never forget this game."

Callies said the tie will help the Huskers more than a lopsided win would have.

"I felt good he missed it (the field goal)," he said, "but I wish we'd have had more time to get the ball back and have one more crack at it."

Thorell agreed. "You play a team where you beat them 70-0, you get a false sense of security," he said.

Callies said the tie was better than a loss, but not good enough.

"In the next few games, we want to be there for the win, not a tie."

Osborne comments on allegations made in book on Nebraska football program

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Alleged payment offers to sources and incidents "blown way out of proportion" were part of Armen Keteyian's tactics while writing "Big Red Confidential: Inside Nebraska Football," according to Cornhusker coach Tom Osborne.

Osborne said Keteyian, a former investigative reporter for Sports Illustrated magazine, allegedly offered former Nebraska quarterback Nate Mason payment for information about alleged drug use and booster payoffs to Heisman Trophy winner Mike Rozier.

Osborne said he received a phone call from Mason in the fall of 1986, at which time Mason told Osborne that he had been followed to his apartment by two men.

"They followed him to his door and began asking him questions," Osborne said. "Nate told me that they identified themselves as Sports Illustrated writers."

According to Osborne, Mason said the writers also had indicated "that there would be something in it" for Mason if he gave them information.

"They asked him questions about Rozier, if he had ever taken any payoffs or used drugs . . . things like that," Osborne said.

Mason told the writers he had no knowledge of such behavior.

"Then they said 'You don't expect us to pay for that kind of information, do you?'" Osborne said. "Nate told them that was all he knew, and then they left."

"Armen will dispute this, but I talked to Nate two days ago and he repeated the statement to me and an attorney."

Osborne said he was not certain Keteyian was one of the writers, but "when I mentioned Armen's name to

Nate, he seemed to recognize it."

After receiving Mason's call, Osborne contacted the Sports Illustrated offices and talked to the magazine's chief attorney. She told him it was against Sports Illustrated policy to pay sources for information.

"Then I asked her why they were after Nebraska," Osborne said. "She said it was their (Sports Illustrated's) opinion that college athletics was a wasteland, and they were out to expose and improve it."

Shortly after that, Sports Illustrated killed the story.

"Whether my phone call had anything to do with it, I don't know," Osborne said.

Osborne said the book -- which he had not read as of Saturday -- has an "alarming number" of unnamed sources, which upsets him.

"If someone has something worthwhile of use to say, they'll usually say it," he said. "But no one can press sources as to why they said something if no one knows who they are."

Osborne contacted Lincoln attorney Alan Peterson to check the book for libel. Peterson studied the book and contacted its publishing company -- Contemporary Books -- protesting that there was libelous content.

"I wasn't worried about myself," Osborne said. "I get called worse things every Saturday afternoon and Monday morning than I did in the book. I just thought some other people might have a problem with some of the things in it."

After the letter was written to the publisher, Osborne said, some things were changed -- but not without more difficulty.

Peterson's letter prompted the publisher's attorney to send letters to Nebraska media outlets, claiming that Peterson had threatened the company with lawsuits. Osborne said

he has not yet contemplated litigation.

The topic of an exposé on the Nebraska football program is nothing new to Osborne.

In the fall of 1985, Osborne received a phone call from the mother of Brian Hiemer, a Husker tight end that had committed suicide a week before fall drills began. She told him that a reporter had contacted her at home and began to ask her questions about the suicide and other matters.

"She was pretty upset," Osborne said.

Osborne said she told him the reporter had indicated that he was on his way to Lincoln to talk to Osborne and ask questions about the suicide and other matters.

The next day, Osborne said, he noticed a reporter interviewing players during a scrimmage, which violates Nebraska policy.

The reporter was Keteyian.

Osborne said he approached Keteyian, told him he couldn't interview until after practice and personally escorted him out of Memorial Stadium.

"So we really didn't get off to too good of a start," Osborne said.

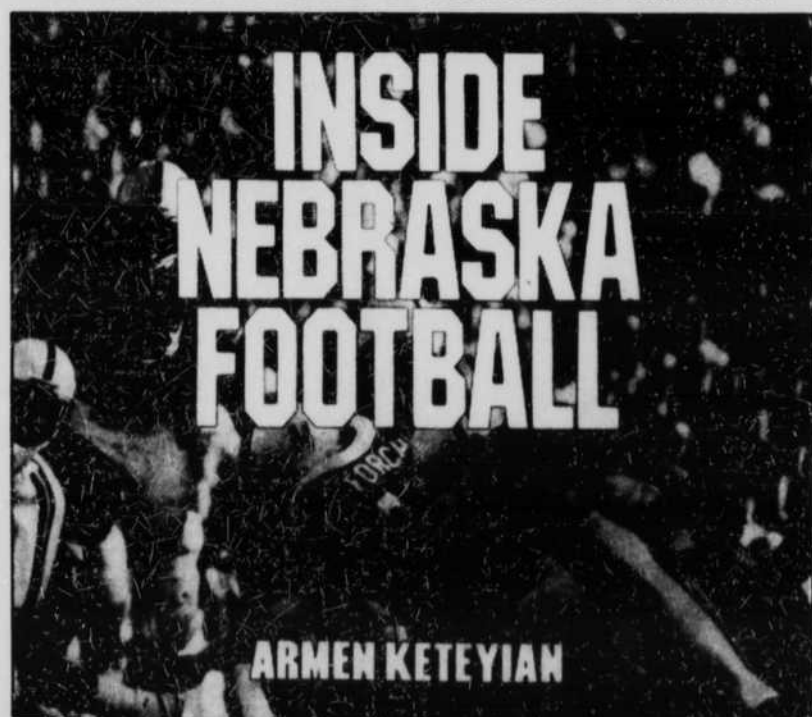
Keteyian contacted Osborne 1 1/2 years later. He came into the athletic administration building, Osborne said, and made an appointment for an interview.

"He came to me and said he knew I wasn't who I said I was," Osborne said. "He said he knew this wasn't an honest program, that I was a phoney and so on."

"He also said he was going to expose us."

Besides Mason, former Huskers Todd Carpenter and Jeff Taylor were contacted by Keteyian, as were other former players, said Osborne, who received calls from each of those players.

"They all called me and said the



Nebraska coach Tom Osborne commented Tuesday on "Big Red Confidential: Inside Nebraska Football."

line of questioning was unusual," he said.

Osborne said he and Keteyian talked on several occasions after that, including lunch and breakfast meetings, "and I got to where I liked the little guy, but I didn't like what he was doing," he said.

The book also included accusations of illegal recruitment and ticket sales by players to boosters, most notably to North Omaha businessman Everett Alger, who, according to Keteyian's book, paid several players for tickets to home games right in the locker room.

"Boosters giving payments to players was something we try to control," Osborne said. "I have personally visited with some people and asked them to stay away from our program. I talked to Everett Alger and told him things didn't look good, and that I would appreciate him not coming around the program."

Osborne said he talked to Alger in the spring of 1984, and that he didn't

see him at practice after that.

"The sale of tickets by players was something we constantly warned against," Osborne said. "But in the old days (before the gate pass list replaced the hard tickets in 1985), we had 500 tickets walk out of here (with players) every Thursday afternoon."

"I was scared to death that the NCAA would send a plainclothesman up here and he'd buy tickets from six or seven players, who would then be declared ineligible."

Despite the book's accusations against the Husker program, Osborne said he doesn't view the book as a personal attack on him.

"I don't think Armen Keteyian ever really understood me, or does now," Osborne said. "I realize that he was trying to do his job and come up with something sensational that people want to read, and he tried his best to do that."

"But this book is not representative of our football program."