

Osborne says assessing team remains difficult

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Even after two games, Nebraska coach Tom Osborne is having trouble assessing his football team.

Wins against Northern Illinois and Utah have shown that improvement still is needed in several areas, he said.

"After two games, I still feel the way I did before the season started," Osborne said. "I think we have potential, good athletes and a lot of players that haven't played a lot."

"That was never more apparent than last Saturday."

His assessment of the offensive line will continue to be difficult this week.

'Minnesota can do very well in the Big Ten this year.'

-- Osborne

Erik Wiegert, a sophomore who started against Utah in place of injured starter Doug Glaser, did not practice Monday because of a sore back. Right guard John Roschal, who has suffered from a sprained ankle since Nebraska's first game against Northern Illinois, also did not practice.

"I'm hoping they can come around and both return by Thursday," Osborne said. "If not, we're awfully thin on the offensive line."

In addition, cornerbacks Tahaun Lewis and Bruce Pickens both did not practice Monday. Lewis had sore ribs, while Pickens had a sore wrist. Strong safety Reggie Cooper has been slowed since last week by a sore knee, Osborne said.

Osborne said Minnesota's main threat on offense is tailback Darrell Thompson, who rushed for 110 yards and two touchdowns on 27 carries. He said Thompson may be one of the best running backs Nebraska faces this season.

"There's no question about it," he said. "He may be the best."

Osborne was unsure whether the Minnesota crowd would be a factor in the Metrodome.

"We've only been up there once," Osborne said, "and that thing was over with in a hurry. There never really was a crowd factor."

Nebraska played Minnesota in the Metrodome in 1983, and the Huskers won 84-13, scoring three touchdowns in every quarter.

Osborne said one of the most important improvements the Huskers must make is to play better early "on both sides of the ball."

"You can't lose 12 starters (from the previous season) and be like you were a year ago," he said. "Against Utah, we had two or three players in our dime package (the pass defense Nebraska used in the game) who hadn't played a lot who had trouble settling down."

Against Utah, Nebraska led 42-16 going into the game's final four minutes when the Huskers turned the ball over, resulting in a touchdown for the Utes. Utah scored again as time ran out to cut Nebraska's win margin to 42-30.

"We need to start playing better during the first half of the game," he said.

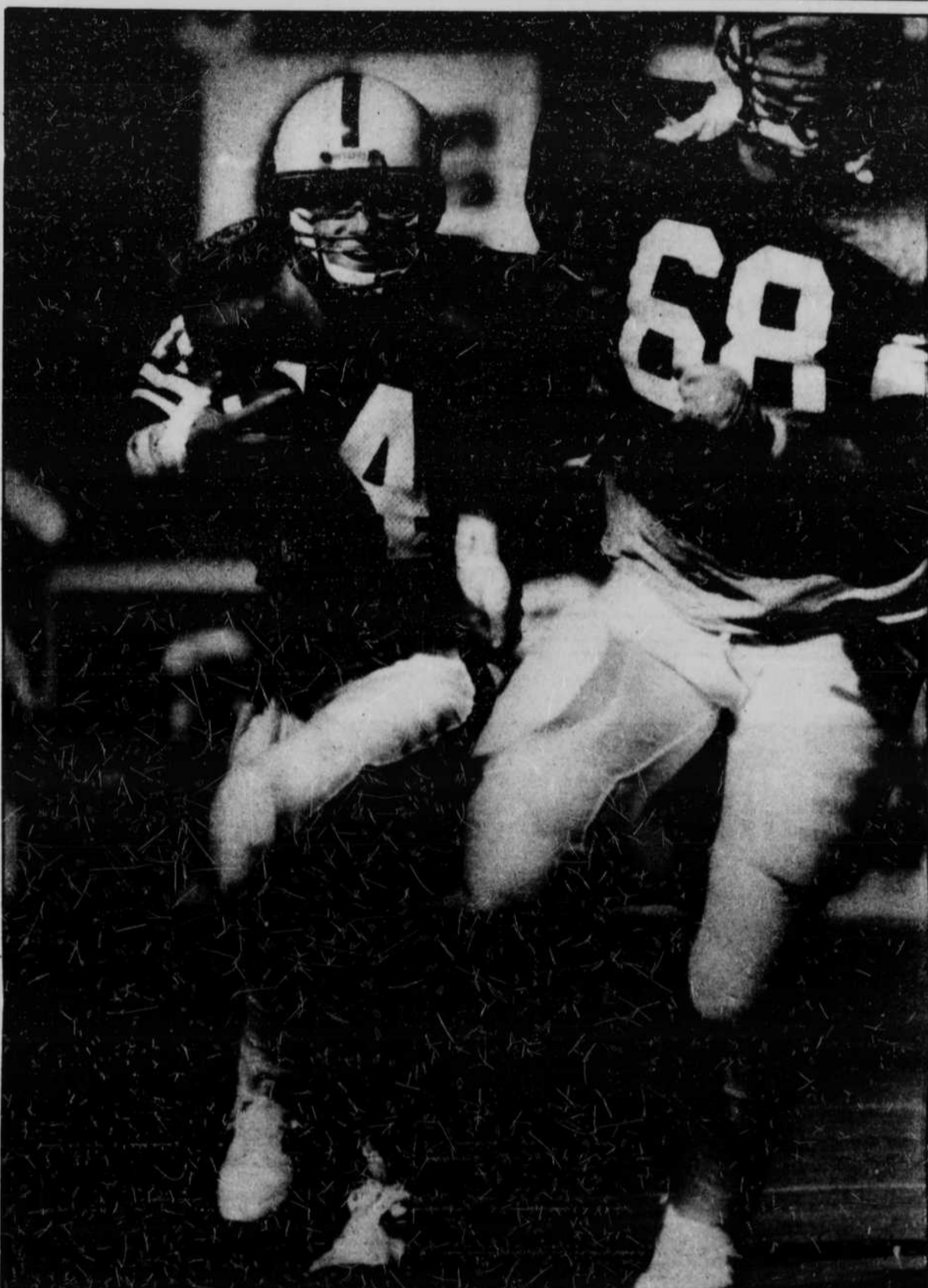
One player that has played well right from the start, Osborne said, is senior quarterback Gerry Gdowski. In two games, Gdowski has completed 9 of 14 passes for 110 yards and a touchdown, and has rushed for 172 yards and three touchdowns on 20 carries.

"He's played well right out of the box," Osborne said. "Sometimes, when you break in a new quarterback, you have some trouble and maybe lose a game or two. But Gerry hasn't had that problem."

"He's played like a veteran." For Husker football fans, Osborne gives the same advice he's given for the past several weeks: Don't underestimate the opponent.

"Other than Michigan, I don't see any teams (in the Big Ten Conference) that just jump out at you," he said. "Minnesota can do very well in the Big Ten this year. They've got the same shot everybody else has. It's just a matter of consistency, few injuries and the right balance at the beginning of the year."

"Sometimes, the difference between 2-7 and 7-3 isn't very much."



Dave Hansen/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska quarterback Gerry Gdowski turns the corner against Utah Saturday as center Jake Young looks for someone to block.

Childhood fantasy of playing for NU becomes reality for offensive lineman

By Cory Golden
Staff Reporter

Nebraska freshman offensive lineman Lance Larson always dreamed of playing football for the Cornhuskers.

Now, Larson's childhood fantasy has come true.

Larson, who is 6-foot-4 and 243-pounds, remembers clearly when he decided he wanted to play football for the Cornhuskers.

"I remember when I was about 11, I was sitting in my living room watching the Nebraska-Oklahoma game on TV," Larson said. "I told my dad I was going to play for Nebraska."

Larson, who starts at left tackle on Nebraska's junior varsity team, said he began to work toward that dream at Moorhead High School in Moorhead, Minn.

"I worked hard and things started to happen -- dreams started to happen -- like making All-State, and other awards that come to one player," he said. "A major dream that really came true was being chosen as an All-American. Those are people that you look up to, you never think it'll happen to you."

Among Larson's honors during his senior year include being named to Parade Magazine's All-America team as an offensive tackle, earning All-State honors at defensive line-

man and being named Minnesota's Player of the Year by Gatorade and the Atlanta Touchdown Club.

With that recognition came the recruiters.

Larson was highly recruited by several schools, including Notre Dame, Michigan and Ohio State.

But his heart already was set on Nebraska, he said.

Larson attended Nebraska's summer high school football camp before his senior season.

"I came down to camp because I wanted to see if I could play Division I," Larson said.

Larson not only proved to himself that he could play, but also proved it to the Nebraska coaching staff.

Husker junior varsity football coach Shane Thorell said Larson was offered a scholarship based on his performance at camp.

"We had junior films of him and looking at him in camp we could see he had all the tools to play Division I football," Thorell said. "So we let him know at that time how interested we were in him."

Nebraska on-campus recruiter Dave Gillespie said offering scholarships based on a player's performance in Nebraska's camps is rare.

Larson, who signed a letter of intent in spring 1989, said the realities of college football were shocking at first.

"It was overwhelming at first," he said. "Some of these guys are pretty big. Sometimes when you line up against them, you can beat them with good technique, how you move, and good footwork -- other times you can't. It was a big challenge. It's a big challenge to any freshman coming in because they throw a lot at you right away."

"The first two weeks are like a judging period. It's a big adjustment for people here because you have to be perfect. You have to play just like it was diagramed."

Thorell said he thinks Larson will be a "fine player."

"He's had a few nagging injuries," Thorell said. "He had a thigh bruise and some sickness that's slowed him the last couple weeks. Down the road, he'll be able to help us. He's got the athletic ability."

Gauging how long it will be until Larson plays with the varsity is difficult, Thorell said.

"If he would work hard and there were injuries on varsity, maybe he could move up sometime between the middle and end of this season. If he has a good spring, they may look at him for next fall," Thorell said. "He'll definitely play a lot for three years, I know that."

"My main concern is to help my

See LARSON on 10

Bad experience causes writer to be skeptical

Most people would be happy to go to Minneapolis this weekend to see the Nebraska-Minnesota football game. Especially if they were treated to pressbox seats, free dinner and having the trip paid for by the Daily Nebraskan.

But not me. Not even close.

But don't get me wrong. I enjoy covering the Cornhuskers, and the people that run the Metrodome are great to work with -- at least from what I know. But I guess everyone has a few bad experiences in his or her past that affects the perception of a place.

A few years ago this month, I had been working for the DN about three weeks when my sports editor assigned me to trek on up to the twin cities and cover a men's gymnastics meet. It was an Olympic team trial, and there were three or four Huskers competing for spots on the team.

We were also to cover the Oklahoma-Minnesota game while we were there, which was the following night at the Metrodome.

Another sportswriter and I left late Thursday afternoon, and already the problems began. He drove a small truck with a manual transmission. At that time, I had

never driven a stick-shift, which meant he would have to drive the entire way -- eight hours.

Rich, the other writer, said he had made arrangements for us to stay with the University of Minnesota chapter of his fraternity, so the DN wouldn't have to pick up the tab for a hotel room.

Chuck Green



The paper was pretty cheap back then, ya know . . .

"No problem," Rich assured me. "I didn't talk to the house president, but I talked to some guy named Steve, and he said it would be no problem."

If this would have been a movie, there would have been ominous, foreshadowing music after that comment.

We rolled into Minnesota about 4 a.m. Friday, and the temperature

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