

Osborne makes mistake Grant assumes reserve role

Midway through the second half of Nebraska's game against Minnesota Saturday, Cornhusker coach Tom Osborne made a fatal mistake. Osborne's error occurred when he went against his prior intentions and decided to play quarterback Mike Grant. Osborne's intentions were good -- he said after the game that Grant played because he doubted Gerry Gdowski could stay healthy all year -- but his choice was not.

had National Football League stamped on his chest since the minute he arrived on campus, more things than the immediate future should be considered.

Redshirting used to be standard at Nebraska. Players would spend their first year with the junior varsity, then all disappear into obscurity while redshirting.

Husker coaches argued that this philosophy paid off, as players would benefit from the year of maturity they gained. That philosophy is sound. The players who emerged for the third season often didn't look like the same ones who formed the freshman class two years before.

Beginning three seasons ago, Nebraska's redshirting policy began to change. For the first time in the Osborne era, a group of first-year players were redshirted.

That policy has continued into this season, as a select group of newcomers joined a large mass of second-year players and sat out. Unfortunately, Grant wasn't one of them.

Maybe Osborne can prove the skeptics wrong and show that he has a top-ranked team. He definitely has a top-notch quarterback in Grant, and Gdowski is a steady performer.

But still the question remains: Why would anyone, particularly a highly regarded coach like Osborne, pull an athlete out of a redshirt season so he could be a backup? Particularly if the athlete is destined to be a three-

year starter, as Grant was until Saturday.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect surrounding Osborne's decision is the role that the other quarterbacks will play. Apparently, Osborne doesn't have confidence in any of them, as he could have continued to play Mickey Joseph, who entered the game before Grant, or taken along a quarterback other than Grant and played him.

Nebraska has several good reserve quarterbacks. Joseph, despite being inconsistent, has great potential, and Keithen McCant is a good passer. The Huskers also have Jerry Dunlap, who owns the dubious distinction of being selected as the honorary captain of this year's all-waste team.

Some credit does have to be extended to Osborne. His point about playing Grant this year so he doesn't have to start out with an inexperienced quarterback next season is a good one, and the Husker coach showed again that he is not afraid to make decisions which are going to be blasted.

But, the point remains, if Nebraska wasn't going to redshirt Grant, it should have played him earlier in the season. To pull a player out of a redshirt year and have him run several meaningless plays in a 48-0 game is a mistake.

And a fatal one, at that.
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Things would have been different if Grant would have played during Nebraska's first two games. But instead, the highly touted sophomore from Valrico, Fla., spent the beginning of the season on the sidelines with the assumption that he was going to redshirt.

That assumption ended abruptly against Minnesota, as Grant trotted onto the field in the fourth quarter. His statistics were impressive. Grant rushed for 32 yards on four carries while passing for 34 yards, but that's insignificant.

What is significant is that he now has to give up a year of eligibility for a reserve role. That, in plain simple terms, is stupid.

This year's team already has shown that it is not national championship caliber. Nebraska is good, but it's a far-fetched dream to think that the Cornhuskers can compete with the likes of Colorado, Notre Dame or even Michigan.

With that thought in mind, Osborne should have left Grant on the sidelines. Let him learn this year while watching Gdowski, and simulate game-type conditions in practice.

Granted, practice isn't the same as a game. Things have a tendency to move much more slowly, and the constant drone of coaches can't be heard during games.

But when the career of any player is involved, particularly one who has

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there," he said.

Pettit said Novak also played a big role against Stanford, recording 47 assists and five service acts.

Kentucky coach Kathy DeBoer said Kruse was the main reason why her team squandered away a two-game lead.

Pittsburgh coach Sue Woodstra said her team's execution against Nebraska was its worst performance in the tournament.

The Huskers pounded the Panthers in three games behind freshman Eileen Shannon, who set a school record with 25 kills. Shannon also tied the record for attacks in a five-game match with 77 against Kentucky.

With the victories this weekend, Nebraska's record improves to 9-0, including a 7-0 home mark.

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