

NU athlete reaches career highlight

By Sara Bauder
Staff Reporter

After four years on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln football team, and a lot of time as an alternate, offensive guard Bill Bobbora considers his starting spot the highlight of his career.

"It's a great feeling to start," he said. "It seems like I've been a back-up to everybody, but the hard work finally paid off."

The 6-foot 3-inch, 265-pound Bobbora has been battling fellow fifth-year senior John Roschal for the starting right guard position since spring football.

In the Huskers' season-opener

against Northern Illinois, Bobbora was listed behind Roschal on the depth chart. After Roschal sprained his ankle, Bobbora became the starter.

When Roschal recovers from his ankle injury, competition for the starting job will be intense, Bobbora said.

He said that although he wants to be the starter, he does not dwell on the idea.

"I'm out there having fun and just want to do the best I can," Bobbora said. "I don't think about the competition for starting like that."

As a senior at Amarillo (Texas) High School, Bobbora chose to become a Cornhusker early in the recruiting season and canceled visits to Texas Tech, Baylor and Notre Dame. He said one reason he decided to come to Nebraska was the honesty offensive line coach Milt Tenopir showed during a recruiting visit.

"He told me I'd have to work my butt off and that if I was lucky and didn't get injured a lot, I'd start one year," Bobbora said. "Other places sugar-coated things. I liked the honesty of the coaches here."

After starting at left guard for the freshman team in 1985 and redshirting in 1986, Bobbora played in every regular-season game in 1987. During

that sophomore year, he played mostly on special teams.

As a senior, Bobbora still plays on the special teams and said it is a fun part of the game.

"Punts are a good time," he said. "Jim Wanek and Roger Fitzke -- we always challenge each other to get tackles."

Wanek is Nebraska's starting left guard, while Fitzke is a back-up center.

Bobbora said that his favorite play is the counter sweep because he can watch Doug Glaser make blocks down the field. Glaser is a 6-7, 295-pound senior who earned preseason All-America honors.

"I go out and get a cut block on the end of the line," he said. "Then Doug comes around me and goes down the field, mashing two or three guys."

"It's great because I can make my block and then see the rest of the play. I can see Kenny (Clark) cutting it up down the sidelines."

Bobbora said that while injuries have kept several starting linemen from playing time, they may have had one good effect.

He said the injuries have meant a lot of young players have seen more playing time than they normally would have. Because everybody on the line is used to playing together,

the line will play better as the season goes on, he said.

In addition to Roschal, the list of injured offensive linemen this season includes Glaser, who hyperextended his big toe against Northern Illinois, Steve Engstrom, Glaser's backup, who broke a bone in his ankle against Missouri, and center Jake Young, who missed the Kansas State game due to a sore back.

"Our inexperience will help us in the long run," Bobbora said. "We have a boyish approach to the game. Everybody loves being out there and there are no negative attitudes."

Bobbora said one of the best qualities of the offensive line is the attitude its members have toward each other.

"We are real good friends on and off the field," he said. "We have a lot of intensity and look out for each other. We are also real competitive with each other."

After a knee injury kept him out of the spring football game this year, Bobbora said he began to realize that his days as a Husker were numbered.

"I've been here five years, and I realized I needed to get my butt in gear so I could play," he said. "I'm going to miss it next year, especially when I see Tom (Punt) and Jim (Wanek) playing on television. But it will be neat to see my buddies playing."



Bobbora

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have been trying to prepare mentally, rather than physically, for the Rainbow Wahines, Novak said.

"We've been a lot more intense -- a lot more mentally focused," she said. "It'll be a great match. I think both teams are looking forward to that."

Husker outside hitter Cris Hall agreed.

"It's been very intense," Hall said. "The Huskers are going into this match wanting to win."

"I look at it as a good experience for us. We have nothing to lose. The pressure I don't think is on us. It's on them."

With both teams highly ranked, undefeated and rich in tradition, the matches have a special flavor, Pettit said.

"This match is of national interest," he said. "I think there is just a lot of genuine interest."

Playing Hawaii in back-to-back matches will be tough, but it could pay off during postseason play, he said.

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Osborne said his main concern is Oklahoma State's blitz. In 1983, when the Cowboys were having a below-average season and Nebraska was ranked No. 1, "they threw everything at us but the kitchen sink," he said.

Nebraska defeated Oklahoma State 14-7 in 1983. "I'm sure we'll see the blitz a lot Saturday, too," Osborne said.

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