

Experienced I-back leads young group

By David Moyer
Staff Reporter

The loss of two-time All-Big Eight I-back Ken Clark leaves Nebraska with a less-experienced group of I-backs. But Nebraska running backs coach Frank Solich is counting on depth to overcome that inexperience.



Flowers

Omaha was the third-leading rusher for the Cornhuskers in 1989, gaining 493 yards and seven touchdowns. His 7.5 yards per carry placed him second in the Big Eight.

Flowers said he is hungry for this season. "I've waited patiently to get my chance to take over the starter's role," he said. "Now it's time to show what I am capable of."

Solich mentioned five other players looking to compete for Clark's spot along with Flowers.

With that many capable running backs, Solich said, things could change before the Sept. 1, season opener with Baylor. Nothing is locked in place, he said.

"When we get the pads on these guys, that's when we'll find out who is who," he said.

Solich said Flowers has good balance and instincts to go with his "game-breaking speed." Flowers has the ability to turn a three-yard run into a 60-yarder, he said.

Flowers' speed again will be used in kickoff returns. He led the team with 180 return yards last season, averaging 20 yards a return.

"Returning kicks will help me,"

Flowers said. "It allows me to get mentally into the game right away."

Flowers said he feels he needs to stay at the top of his game at all times, especially because of the number of quality backs behind him.

One is No. 2 I-back Scott Baldwin, a sophomore from Roselle, N.J. After a starting I-back role on the 1988 junior varsity team, and a redshirt season last year, Baldwin had a good spring, Solich said. His 115 yards rushing in the spring game put him as a strong challenger for the top spot, he said.

"I knew I had to work hard to get to this position," Baldwin said. "My mind was focused on earning a spot."

Baldwin said he is looking forward to getting some game experience so he could see what he still needed to work on.

Terry Rodgers of National City, Calif., and George Achola of Omaha both return after fighting injuries in 1989, although Rodgers' status has been questionable since summer workouts began. The senior had reconstructive knee surgery in 1988, and has yet to practice.

Achola, who missed part of last season with a broken leg, also deserves a look, Solich said.

Gill

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State in 1982 and 31-30 to Miami in the 1984 Orange Bowl. But it was a game at Missouri in 1981, his sophomore year, when Nebraska won on a last-chance drive, that's locked in his mind.

"It was a tough game that we ended up winning 6-0, and they were blitzing a lot all day," he said. "That game was my first real test, and it sort of set the tone for the rest of my

career."

When other schools recruited him out of high school, they warned Gill about Nebraska's legacy of white quarterbacks.

"That was something that I considered, because no black quarterback had ever been a genuine starter here," he said. "I knew that I was working against the odds. I wasn't interested in redshirting for a year, and I didn't want to switch to a different position. All I asked for was a chance, and Osborne gave me that opportunity."

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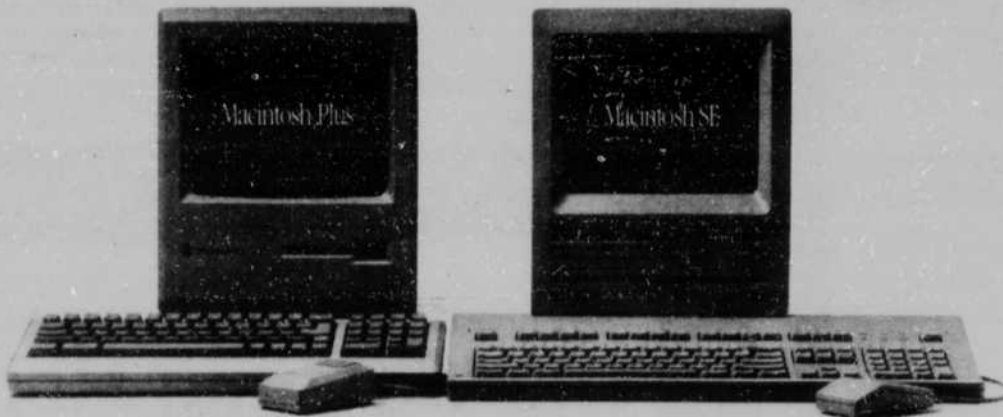
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