

Coach, here's how to beat the Buffaloes

Pay attention Tom Osborne, I'm about to tell you how to win the Colorado game. "The CU game?" you're probably asking. "We have a tough non-conference schedule to get through before we can think about Colorado. Why, we haven't even taken care of



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Baylor yet." True, except for that part about the Huskers' non-conference schedule being tough. So why start talking about the Colorado game 10 weeks prior to its kickoff? Simple. Because Nebraska's biggest game of the 1990 season will be won or lost not on

Nov. 3, but rather Saturday against Baylor -- and in the following games against perennial heavyweights Northern Illinois, Minnesota and Oregon State.

Those games will decide Nebraska's fate against the Buffaloes, and believe it or not, I have a sure-fire way to ensure a victory. And I'm about to share this wisdom with you, free of charge. Ready? OK: PASS THE FOOTBALL. It's as simple as that. Pass.

Now I know, Tom, that you've heard this advice every year for the past 17 seasons from those who would have you abandon your tried-and-true run-orientated offense in favor of an NFL-style aerial assault. But I propose nothing of the sort.

Clearly, Nebraska won't have to put the ball up even once in order to thrash most of the weenies on this year's schedule. In fact, the Huskers could probably run to the same side of the field on every play and still win. A serious size and speed advantage would see to that, so

there's no need to pass right?

Throw it anyway, Tom. Because if Mike Grant and Mickey Joseph get used to passing the football when the game isn't on the line, they will be better prepared to pass it when the game is on the line. So pass it Tom, even when you don't have to.

If your quarterbacks are even half way adept at completing passes in game situations by the time the CU game rolls around, they'll be able to pick the Buffalo secondary apart. That should have been obvious to anyone watching the the Buffs play Tennessee in the inaugural "Pigskin Classic" last Sunday.

To say that Colorado's pass defense was a little suspect would be like saying that the Titanic experienced a few navigational problems on its maiden voyage. With just more than seven minutes to play, and a 31-17 lead looking pretty safe, the Volunteers tore through Colorado's defense like hungry mice through Swiss cheese.

In less than five minutes, Tennessee quarterback Andy Kelly took his team to the end zone twice, with a short, precise passing attack. He made it look pretty easy, throwing for 368 yards on 33 completions.

Three-hundred sixty-eight, and we're not talking about Miami or Florida State here, we're talking about Tennessee. Let's take nothing away from Kelly. He played well. He certainly deserved a win rather than the 31-31 tie, but Colorado's futile pass defense made him look like Dan Marino.

There's no reason why Grant or Joseph shouldn't be able to do the same thing come Nov. 3 -- if they start now.

So remember Tom, the Baylor game may not be on the line Saturday night, but a conference championship will be. Now for bowl-game preparation.

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NU lineman doesn't want to set a trend of sitting out

By Paul Domeier
Senior Reporter

Despite the absence of "big names," the Cornhuskers' offensive line is not facing a crisis, according to one of its starters.

But All-American center Jake Young and All-American tackle Doug Glaser have used up their eligibility. The vaunted Huskers are short of superstars from the front five and some speculation says the team might not dominate the line of scrimmage.

If that's not a crisis, what is it? "Another year," said Terry Eyman, a fifth-year senior left tackle.

"I'm not worried. Everyone tells us, 'You don't have the big names.' What's the point of worrying?"

This year's line, he said, should be as good as last year's.

"It's just a matter of gelling right now," he said. "It will probably take us a couple weeks to gell. But we might gell this week."

Eyman's fall practice has been less gell than he would like, though. Viral pneumonia he contracted during the summer has taken some of his size and endurance, he said. He finally returned to practice Saturday.

He's already improving, he said, working to get back to his form from

1989, when he was the primary back-up for left tackle Tom Punt. Coach Tom Osborne has said Eyman may even get in for a few plays in Nebraska's opener against Baylor Saturday night.

"I'll sacrifice my body," he said with a grin, showing that he might be speaking the literal truth.

However, the illness has left him less body to sacrifice. The "before" Terry Eyman packed 265 pounds on a 6-foot-6 frame. The "after" Terry Eyman is down to about 250 pounds. He said that at Wednesday's practice, he ran four consecutive plays, then

sat out two.

Doctors told him he caught the illness like he would catch a cold. He said he felt too tired to do anything.

"The worst part is a cough that just takes your breath away," he said.

"I was up for three straight nights, getting about two hours of sleep a night."

Eyman couldn't run or lift weights or do anything else while he wasn't practicing.

"I basically sat on my butt for five weeks," he said.

That's what he'll do for most of the ESPN-televized game versus

Baylor. The line's depth problems were eased Wednesday when guard Will Shields returned to practice.

Eyman may be needed for a few plays, though, since temperatures on the Memorial Stadium field turf are expected to push 100 degrees for the 6:30 p.m. kickoff.

Eyman thinks the no-name line will be fine. His testimony will be total yards, since that, he said, is as much or more the doing of the line as the skill positions.

"As an offensive line, when we move the ball we think it's our doing," he said.

Two freshman quarterbacks play waiting game

By Todd Cooper
Staff Reporter

With four junior quarterbacks above them, Nebraska's two 1990 freshman quarterback recruits will have to play a waiting game during the next two seasons.

"That's kind of our plan right now," Turner Gill, junior varsity graduate assistant coach, said. "They'll have a redshirt year and a year of playing freshman ball. With four juniors in front of them, they're not going to get a lot of repetitions (with the varsity) for a while.

Instead, Matt Jones, a 6-foot-1, 187-pounder from Michigan City, Ind., will get repetitions with the junior varsity team this season. That leaves 6-1, 185-pound Todd Gragnano from Fountain Valley, Calif., with a year on the scout team as a

redshirt.

"Matt will probably redshirt next year, but by their third year, both guys will have a legitimate chance of starting," Gill said. "It'll be up for grabs."

Used mainly as passing quarterbacks in high school, Gragnano and Jones will have to work on the finer points of the option, Gill said.

"They're both giving a good effort," he said. "They throw pretty well on the run and after dropping straight back, but they both need to work on the option and getting the reads down."

Learning to read defenses can be a long process, said Gill, a former three-time All-Big Eight quarterback at Nebraska.

"Each person is different," he said. "I'd say it'll take at least a year, this fall and next spring.

"Personally, it took me a full two years of starting -- a lot of reps -- to get to the point where I thought I had everything down."

Gill has been sharing his knowledge and experience of how the quarterback spot should be played at Nebraska.

"He's been giving tips on how to read the defense; mainly how to become a better option quarterback," Gragnano said. "I just have to be patient, maybe get a couple of breaks. Just being around this program with all the hype and success makes it easier. . . . You feel like you're part of the success, so I don't think it'll be hard."

Having Gill as a coach also helps, both players said.

"He's someone I watched as a little kid," Jones said. "I mean, I

never dreamed that one day he'd be my coach."

Gragnano said: "It's great, almost unbelievable. You watch a guy on TV and now you're standing beside him."

Being an effective option quarterback requires work on individual speed also, Gill said.

"They both lack a little in quickness and overall speed," Gill said.

That may be one of the few differences between Jones and Gragnano and last year's starting quarterback Gerry Gdowski, Gill said.

"Gdowski probably didn't have as strong of an arm as these guys but he was a lot faster," he said. "It's really hard to say, since I only saw him on TV, but Gerry put it all together his senior year."

Comparisons to Gdowski also are an honor for both quarterbacks.

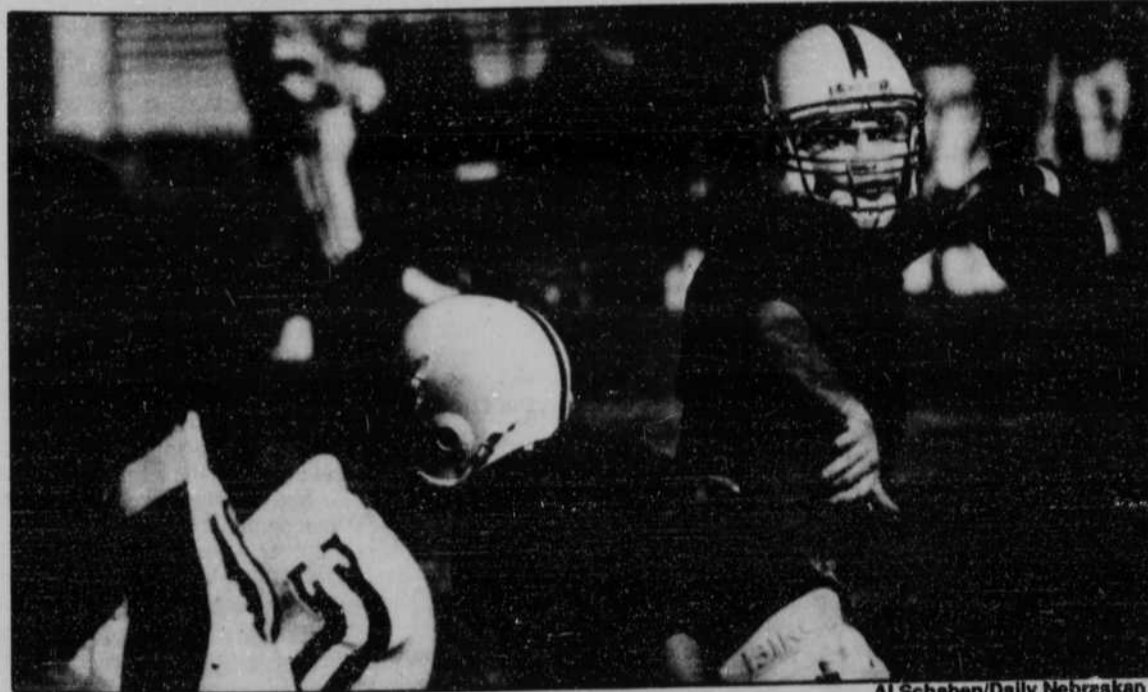
"He had a lot of success last year," Gragnano said. "I think I'm somewhat similar to him, I just hope I can be as successful or better."

Jones agreed.

Gdowski's success in both running and passing alleviated any doubts about Nebraska's passing game when he signed his letter of intent, Jones said.

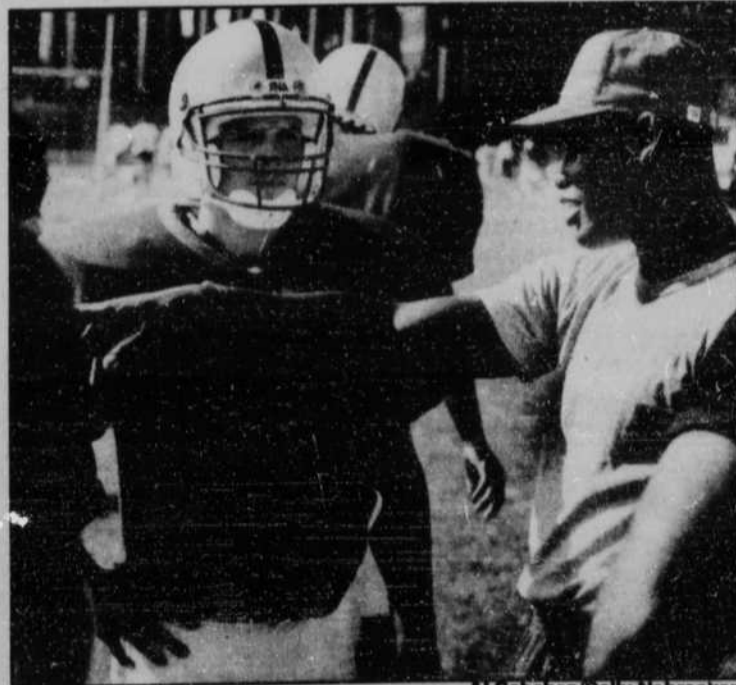
"If I could be as good as him, it would definitely be an honor," he said.

"He threw for over 1,500 yards last season. That only reinforces the fact that I think I'll see plenty of throwing. In a way, Nebraska's strong running game opens up more opportunities for passing."



Al Schaben/Daily Nebraskan

Freshman quarterback Todd Gragnano eyes his target during junior varsity practice.



Al Schaben/Daily Nebraskan

Freshman quarterback Matt Jones gets instructions from former Husker quarterback and graduate assistant coach Turner Gill.