

## Quarterback race is on

By Todd Cooper  
Senior Reporter

The battle is on . . . again. It's at the same place as last year. At least one of the participants is in the same position as last season.

And for the coach, picking from the candidates at this position is a good position to be in.

At Nebraska's annual photo day, Coach Tom Osborne said at least three, possibly four of his senior quarterbacks are all in the hunt for the starting job in the season-opener against Utah State on Sept. 7.

"The quarterbacking is still a little bit up in the air and a little bit of a concern," Osborne said. "We have athletic talent and experience there. We just don't have one guy who clearly is the guy."



Haase

Tom Haase entered fall camp at the top of the depth chart, edging out Mickey Joseph, who started 10 games at quarterback last year.

Haase, who completed 14 of 21 passes for 209 yards in the Florida Citrus Bowl last year, said he's comfortable at the top, although no lead is comfortable in this quarterback race.

"Coach Osborne evaluates every practice, and we grade out on every one, so that keeps you on your toes," Haase said.

Joseph, who suffered a severe leg cut in the Oklahoma last season, finds himself in a similar race as last fall. Joseph was a slight second to Mike Grant for last season's opener against Baylor.

But just as last fall, one thing will motivate Joseph.

"I'm not here to sit on the bench," he said. "I'm going to go out and try my best to win the job."

Both Joseph and Haase agree that whoever wins the job will have one crucial asset:

"Consistency," Haase said. "Coach Osborne wants a quarterback who runs the offense the most efficiently." And that will include handling all the new wrinkles added to the offense this spring.

"It's nice, because it's dump-off passes and bootlegs," Joseph said. "We're going to open up things this year."

Haase agreed. "You've got to respect us from sideline to sideline now if you're a defense," Haase said. "That makes it easier for us quarterbacks."

And it should create openings for a talented receiving corps, Haase said.

"We've got great receivers," he said. "If we get them the ball, they're going to get the job done."

Third-string quarterback Keithen McCant said he, too, wants the chance to get the job done.

"My arm's always been there," McCant said. "I've gotten a little stronger, added a couple more pounds. I'll just have to put it together mentally because the physical (talent) has always been there."

Grant, who started in last year's season opener against Baylor and in the Citrus Bowl against Georgia Tech, will redshirt this year, "barring something unforeseen," Osborne said.

"I feel like it will be a plus for me to redshirt," Grant said. "The only thing that it would hurt me, as far as redshirting, would be my pride."

"But it would give me a chance to build up physically and maybe take over next year."

Although he's thought of platooning quarterbacks, Osborne said someone probably will take over this year.

"It's a little more comforting to have two or three you can rely on if somebody goes down," Osborne said. "But I think eventually somebody will win out. It almost always happens."



Heeeeere's Johnny!

Tight end Johnny Mitchell is surrounded by autograph seekers at Nebraska's annual photo day.

Shaun Sartin/Daily Nebraskan

## Osborne looking for major improvements

By Todd Cooper  
Senior Reporter

Nebraska's annual football photo day gave Coach Tom Osborne a chance to air some things out.

First off, he's not necessarily going to air out the football this year.

In fact, he plans to knock the air out of opposing teams with a beefed-up line, and then go to the air.

"I promised I would throw more, but I didn't say how much," Osborne said. "It may be one more pass."

Osborne said he hopes that pass will be well directed.

"I want to get the ball to the people we've got," he said. "We have some good receivers. I want to throw more because I want to get them the ball."



Osborne

Above all, Osborne wants to be efficient with passing.

"We have worked very, very hard on our passing game," he said. "Our philosophy has been to establish the run. When you do that, you often times open up touchdown passing possibilities."

"(But) we're not going to become a BYU."

Osborne would settle for a New York Giants prototype offense.

"The Giants have gotten as many big old offensive linemen as they can, and they're going to haul it at you 40 or 50 times, and they're going to throw it 20 to 25 times."

Nebraska's top seven or eight linemen have gained an average of 20 to 30 pounds in weight and 40 to 50 pounds on the bench press, Osborne said.

"You still have to have the right technique, but we feel like, for what we were trying to do, that was important," Osborne said.

As was making a simpler, stronger defense, he said.

"Our (defensive) lineman are generally bigger. I think our linebackers are a little bit bigger," Osborne said. "(But) we'll probably lose a little bit of speed in the defensive line."

The defense, which lost seven starters from last year's team, won't be as complex, Osborne said.

"We tried to simplify the defense as much as we could from a technical standpoint because we will have quite a few new players playing there."

Above all, Osborne said, he wants those players to be unified and confident.

"When you don't do well at the end of the season and I think a lot of hard things were said about it," Osborne said. "It tends to raise some doubts."

A major objective was making sure those doubts weren't directed at other teammates, he said. Representatives from each position met once a week this summer to air out any concerns

from last season.

"It's not that we had a lack of unity last year," Osborne said. "We just felt that it was something we could improve."

Osborne said he hopes the work on unity pays off in confidence.

"Of course the thing that will enhance your confidence the most is to go out and play well and win some games," he said.

"But I think being bigger and stronger and having worked hard in the summer and having paid a price will enhance your confidence level to some degree."

Quarterback Tom Haase said he already sees the difference.

"Just over the summer you can notice it easily," Haase said. "From academics to the weightroom to any little thing you have to complain about, we're trying to iron out all the kinks."

"We're trying to unify for one common goal, and that's to get to the Orange Bowl."

## NU football schedule loses patsy lineup

A year ago, Nebraska football critics were feasting on a diet of cream puffs.

Remember the non-conference schedule?

Baylor was supposedly bad, Northern Illinois was more like Nobody Important, Minnesota was a pack of lame-duck Gophers, and Oregon State's Beavers were predicted to be the worst team in college football.

Never mind that every one of those teams went on to do well later in the year. Baylor was in the Cotton Bowl chase right up until the end, and Minnesota humbled Big Ten champion Iowa in their final regular season game.

Never mind that. The Cornhuskers played patsies, and the supposedly weak early schedule was considered a major factor in the team's late-season nose dive.

Well, a year later, the Nebraska football program has left behind the embarrassment forced on them last

year by their schedule bashers, which included national publications like Sports Illustrated.

This season, Husker fans won't have to put up with strains of "Play a real team!" or "Pick on somebody your own size!" from Colorado and Oklahoma.

Instead, Nebraska fans can shout back at their Big Eight rivals — with good reason.

First of all, the Huskers have nothing to be embarrassed about. They will kick off the season Sept. 7 against Utah State, an all right excuse for an opener. Next is wide-open Colorado State, a bowl team last year that has an outstanding coach in Earl Bruce.

Then comes the matchup that can

earn back respectability for the football program: A Sept. 21 televised home date against Pac-Ten champion Washington, which has been on or near the top of every preseason poll.

Top that off with a trip the following week to Arizona State, Nebraska's first road game of the season. Arizona State is not projected to contend for the Pacific Ten conference title, but figure in Nebraska's 2-4 lifetime record on the beaten sod of Sun Devil Stadium, and the game could be interesting.

Four Western teams, and at least two major tests early for Nebraska. Not bad, by anybody's standards.

And Oklahoma? Well, if last season was full of cream puffs for Nebraska, the Sooners have found their way to the bakery this year.

Oklahoma opens with three home games and will blow out each opponent, guaranteed. In order, Sooners fans will get treated to romps over

weak sisters North Texas State, Utah State and Virginia Tech.

In early October, the Sooners play Texas in Dallas, their only real test on the road to an Oct. 19 showdown with Colorado in Norman. In all, Oklahoma has only three true road games all season, the finale against Nebraska included.

And Colorado?

Certainly you remember Buffalo coach Bill Cartney last year, standing in the Orange Bowl locker room claiming his team deserved a national championship on the basis of their strong schedule.

Mac had a point, however weak, then. But this year he'll have to construct something new, because Colorado's 1991 schedule is duller than McCartney himself.

In fact, the Buffs have Baylor and Minnesota — patsies a year ago — on their list for this season. Colorado's