

Linebackers substitute strength for experience

By Todd Cooper
Senior Reporter

Two of Nebraska's youngest linebackers are using strength to overcome the defense's No. 1 weakness — inexperience. Sophomore Mike Anderson, last year's lifter of the year, and redshirt freshman Darren Williams, who benches 400 pounds, have emerged to help senior Mike Petko lead a young defense, inside linebacker coach Kevin Steele said.



Anderson

"We'll look at the films (Sunday)," Steele said. "But it looks like Darren played pretty solid (during Saturday's scrimmage)."

"And with Mike, I think we sometimes forget that he still has three years left, but he played solid."

Steele said Husker fans can expect great things out of Anderson, the No. 1 weaskside linebacker.

"We feel good about that spot right now," Steele said. "Mike continues to work hard and he's a very good linebacker right now."

And although he recorded just 18 total tackles in limited playing time last year, Anderson said he's ready to start this year.

"I was second the whole year last year behind Pat (Tyrance), so I ex-

pected to have the shot to start this year," he said.

Anderson said he learned a lot from Tyrance.

"He was a great linebacker," Anderson said. "He just always worked hard."

Anderson hopes he can lead the same way Tyrance did — with his work habits.

"I don't know if I'm going to be a leader," he said. "I'm just going to work hard and let that show for itself."

Steele said Williams is making strides because of his work habits. The redshirt freshman from Chicago has climbed to third on the depth chart behind Petko and junior Matt Penland, who has been hampered with

problems this fall. A true junior, Penland might redshirt, pending his health.

"We still have time on our side to see what happens with Matt," Steele said. "But based on right now, Darren will see some playing time."

Williams saw plenty of action Saturday, terrorizing the first- and second-team offense most of the day. At 6-foot-1-inch and 245 pounds, the offense saw plenty of him.

"Darren just has great natural instincts," Steele said. "He's a big guy and is very, very strong. And, most importantly, he's developing an understanding of what it takes to play linebacker at Nebraska."

Williams said he learned from

watching Tyrance.

"I'm a great admirer of his," Williams said. "He was just a great linebacker and a great leader."

Williams was a co-player of the year in the Catholic League of Chicago in his senior year. He was recruited by Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Notre Dame.

"But ever since I was in seventh grade, I always watched Nebraska," he said. "It was an easy choice."

Williams said his only goal this year is to help the defense out wherever he can.

"(Petko) has been here a long time and he's started two years," Williams said. "I'm just going to learn from him and fit in wherever I can."

Freshman quarterback will have to wait

By Todd Cooper
Senior Reporter

Rarely does a Nebraska quarterback have the opportunity to see playing time as a true freshman.

Tony Veland had that opportunity, and he has seen enough, for this year.

"I didn't do too well today," Veland said after missing on all three of his passing attempts during Saturday's scrimmage. "I had a few bad audibles and I didn't throw the ball too well."

"But I didn't expect to be there either."

Veland, a 6-foot-1, 180-pound recruit out of Omaha Benson, worked with the second offense against the No. 1 defense during the 3 1/2 hour scrimmage.

Coach Tom Osborne decided to play Veland with the second team because of his "initial test scores."

"He tested better than any freshman we've had here," Osborne said.

Veland ran the 40-yard dash in 4.6 seconds (electronically timed), Osborne said. He also had a 32-inch vertical jump, according to Osborne.

"He's just a good athlete," Osborne said. "I just wanted to give him a chance to make it into the top two (quarterbacks)."

But after two penalties, three incomplete passes and a couple of missed audibles, Veland said his playing days with the varsity may soon be over.

"After today, I'd imagine I'll be redshirted."

Osborne echoed that statement, but Veland wasn't too disappointed.

"It was fun," Veland said. "It was kind of honoring just to be in that position."

The last quarterback to have a chance to play as a freshman was Steve Taylor, who quarterbacked in Nebraska's loss to Michigan in the 1987 Fiesta Bowl. Taylor went on to



Michelle Paulman/Daily Nebraskan

Quarterback Tom Haase evades linebacker Troy Branch during Saturday's scrimmage.

earn All-Big Eight honors during his junior and senior years.

"We recruited him as an athlete," Osborne said. "We had intended to develop him as a defensive back, but he said he wanted to play quarterback. We'll keep him there."

Veland said he could tell after Saturday that, unlike Taylor, he needs a redshirt year.

"I had a real hard time reading the defenses," he said. "We didn't do much with audibles in high school, so it was tough."

"I kind of had everything thrown at me."

Veland was also recruited as a defensive back.

Veland said a year to absorb the system hopefully will alleviate the

confusion he felt Saturday.

"I hope after this year I'm in a position to compete for the No. 1 spot," he said. "My arm has to get a lot better and I have to learn how to read the coverages."

Osborne said any one of the three freshman quarterback recruits — Veland, Clester Johnson and Brook Berringer — could compete for the starting spot next year.

"All three of them are great athletes," he said. "They all placed in the top five in the freshman testing."

But for this year, Osborne will play it safe.

"I supposed if they worked hard, they'd have a reasonably good shot of playing well later on in the season," Osborne said. "But that's a hard thing to ask them to give up a redshirt year."

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