

Husker ready to battle home-state team

By David Moyer

Staff Reporter

Just as many Nebraska boys grow up dreaming of playing football for the Cornhuskers, many Washington boys grow up dreaming of playing for the Huskies, according to Nebraska split end Jon Bostick.

But for Bostick, a Bellevue, Wash., native who spent years in the heart of Husky country, things weren't that way.

"It wasn't like I grew up watching Washington football," he said. "A lot of guys dream about playing Husky football their whole life. It wasn't at all like that for me."

Bostick said he didn't move to the Seattle area until he was in the sixth grade, so he wasn't born a Husky.

At Bellevue Interlake High School, Bostick was an All-State receiver, and even earned Washington player-

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Bostick
NU split end

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of-the-year honors by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer his senior season. He caught 39 passes for 814 yards and 16 touchdowns, three times catching four touchdown passes in one game.

But after high school, he decided to turn down an offer to play for the hometown team and headed instead for Nebraska and the run-heavy offense of Coach Tom Osborne.

In Bostick's first two years in a Husker uniform, he caught 31 passes, eight fewer than he had in his senior year of high school, for 664 yards. In spite of, or perhaps because of, his number of catches, his 21.4 yards per catch coming into this season ranks him second on the all-time Nebraska charts.

So far, 1991 has been a different

story for Bostick and the other receivers. Osborne has stuck to his promise of throwing the ball more often, and the receivers are getting into the action.

"All our hard work in the summer is paying off," Bostick said. "All the drills and conditioning we did is starting to show up."

Bostick has caught six passes for 71 yards in the first two games. He is on pace for 33 receptions in the regular season.

"We can run already against the weaker teams," Bostick said. "But I think the coaches are starting to realize that against the tougher opponents, passing is the way to go."

The Huskers will get to see one of those tougher opponents Saturday night when the fourth-ranked Huskies invade Memorial Stadium.

This will be Bostick's first chance to play the team which he grew up with since the sixth grade.

But Bostick doesn't have any spite in his blood. He said he is not looking at it as a grudge match.

"It's going to be great just because it's the home-state school," he said. "I have friends who go to school there and I know some players on the team who I played against in high school."

But Bostick said he doesn't have any personal goals as far as scoring against the Huskies.

"With the way our offense is set up you never know if you're going to get the ball or not," he said. "My main objective is to play well and get a win."

Bostick said he is just looking forward to playing a highly ranked team, and he said the Husky defense could pose some problems for Nebraska.

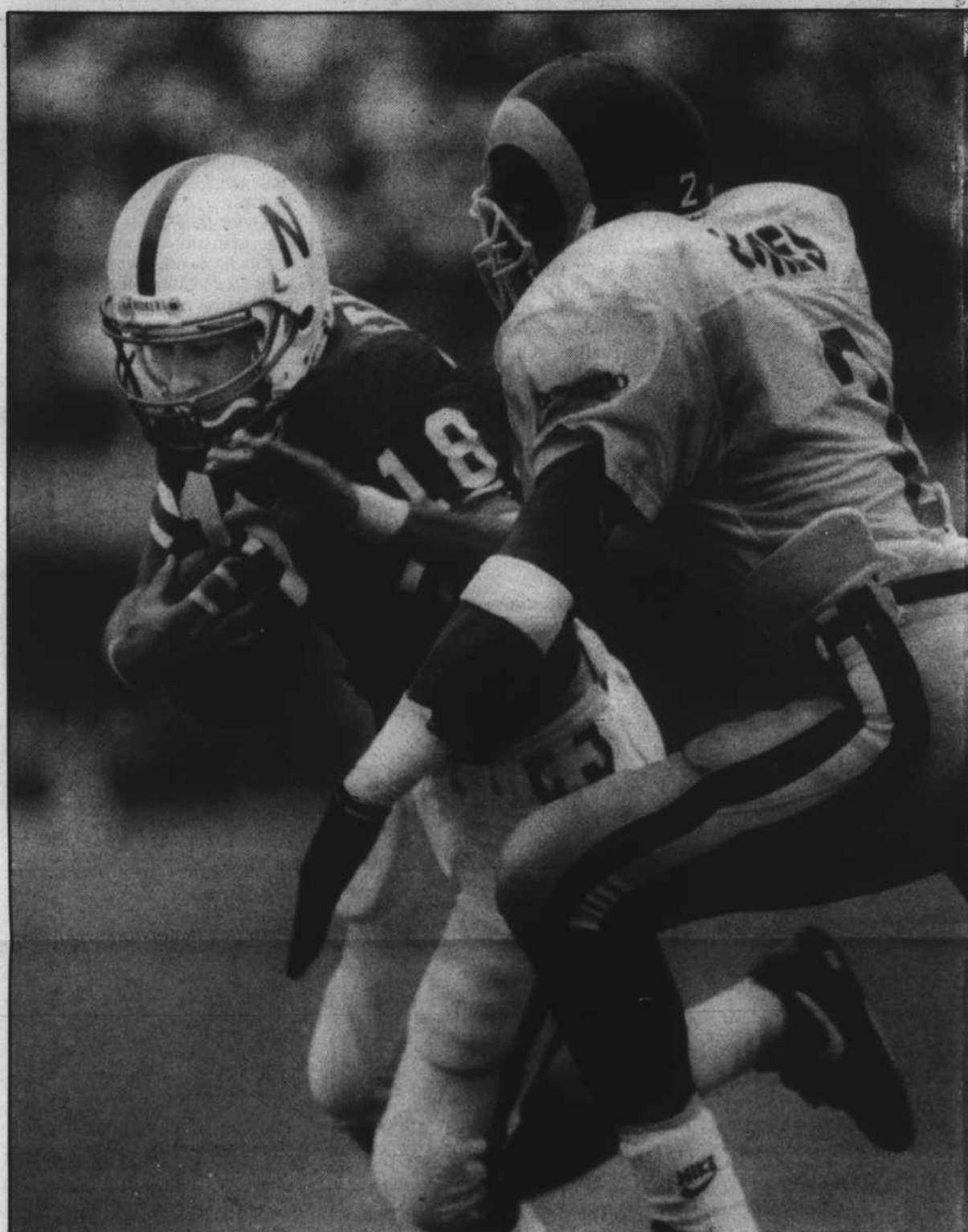
"This is probably the best team we've faced defensively in the past few years," Bostick said. "They're real aggressive with a lot of blitzing. They don't sit back and wait for you to come to them."

"We are going to have to play with a lot of poise and keep our heads on straight."

Bostick said the Huskers have some plays waiting for them.

"Obviously, in our first two games, we didn't pull out all the stops," he said. "You can't throw 30-yard posts

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Michelle Paulman/DN

Nebraska split end Jon Bostick tries to avoid Colorado State cornerback Selwyn Jones after making a reception Saturday. The senior from Bellevue, Wash., said he isn't viewing Saturday's game with Washington as a grudge match.

Former backup remains confident

By Thomas Clouse
Staff Reporter

Billy Joe Hobert is no longer a nobody.

The Washington quarterback/punter, who didn't even letter last season, will be leading the No. 4 Huskies against No. 9 Nebraska Saturday night.

Hobert said the pressure of quarterbacking a Top 10 team in front of a national television audience won't put any added pressure on him.

"I try not to look at the ranking as pressure. I watch film, get prepared and try to be a good quarterback," Hobert said.

In 1990, as the backup quarterback, he completed four of six passes for 41 yards. He also rushed for 105 yards on 12 carries.

Hobert won the punting job in spring practice with a 39.8 yard average on 27 punts and was named most improved back and kicker.

As quarterback, his goal is to complete 70 percent of his passes every game, he said.



Hobert

"That might not be realistic, but it is something I try to do," Hobert said.

Hobert eased a lot of doubts in Washington's first game, a 42-7 win over Stanford on national television. In the game, he completed 21 of 31 passes for 244 yards and two touchdowns.

The 6-foot-3, 225-pound sophomore got the starting spot during spring practice when last year's starter, Mark Brunell suffered a knee injury.

"I agree that I was inexperienced," Hobert said. "My goal is to not look inexperienced."

"I want to play like a second-year starter."

Hobert said he felt the team was hesitant and lacked confidence in him after the injury to Brunell "until I showed that I could do the job."

Hobert will try to continue his job when the Huskies pull their sled into Memorial Stadium on Saturday to take on a Nebraska offense that has outscored its first two opponents 130-42.

"Nebraska puts as many points on the board as any team in the world," Hobert said. "We understand that Nebraska is a tough team offensively, which is something Washington is trying to improve on."

"Everyone knows we have a strong defense, but we would like to get some notoriety with our offense."

Last year, Washington had the

nation's top-rated defense against the rush. After two games this season, Nebraska has the top-rated rushing and scoring offense.

"We will have to play a perfect game to beat Nebraska," he said. "It will have to be a flawless game on both sides of the ball."

The key for Washington is controlling turnovers, he said, citing Nebraska's scores against Utah State and Colorado State.

"If we turn the ball over a lot, the score could be ugly," Hobert said.

He said the two-hour time difference between Seattle and Lincoln could affect the Huskies' performance.

"The only long trip I went to last year was Purdue, but the jet lag was so bad I could hardly walk," Hobert said.

Playing on the road anytime is difficult, he said.

"We know how important it is to Nebraska to play at home," he said.

Hobert said he doesn't have any future plans other than taking one game at a time and spending time with his wife Heather.

Being married has helped him mentally, he said.

"I can leave my frustrations on the field and go home and relax," Hobert said. Being married "helps me feel more relaxed about myself."

Batting races obscure sport's real winners

Hey, Julio Franco went 2-for-4 last night.

But Tony Gwynn took the collar, going 0-for-5. His average dropped all the way down to .317.

Isn't this batting race stuff fun?

Not.

Over the past couple of years, the batting races have become bigger than baseball itself. Sportscasters are more concerned with the fact that Wade Boggs will be hitting



John Adkisson

weak pitching the rest of the way than the fact that the Bluejays have a tough schedule in front of them.

Don't be surprised if John Saunders opens ESPN's "Baseball Tonight" like this in a couple of weeks:

"Leading off tonight, we have a major development in the American League batting race. Milwaukee's Paul Molitor, hitting .326, took himself out of the Brewers' lineup tonight because of a swollen

left earlobe that has bothered him for weeks. Observers think that the swelling could affect his swing.

"Our Peter Gammons has been covering this development for ESPN at County Stadium. Peter, what's the latest on the Molitor earlobe controversy?"

(Switch to a 5-minute interview with Gammons, then a 10-minute conversation with special in-studio guest Ted Williams on the logistics of earlobes, staying back at the plate and whether Molitor is a pure hitter.)

(Afterwards, Saunders thanks Williams and turns to face the studio camera.)

"In other news, the Pittsburgh Pirates won the National League East tonight for the second time in two years . . ."

The state of the race may not be that bad, but it's getting close. Local papers have run separate tables listing batting leaders since late July, and the sports shows have nightly updates on the statistical leaders.

What positives are there in this mayhem?

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