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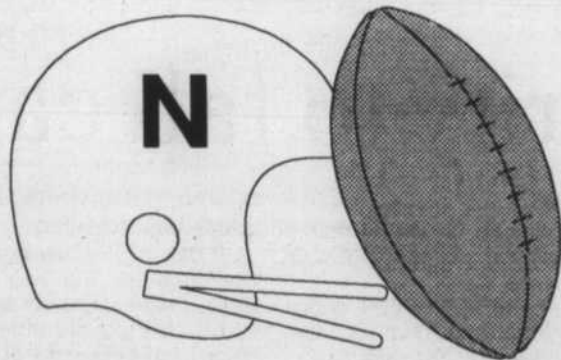
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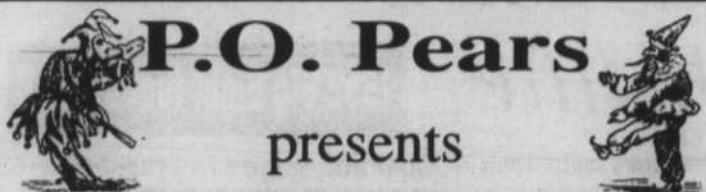
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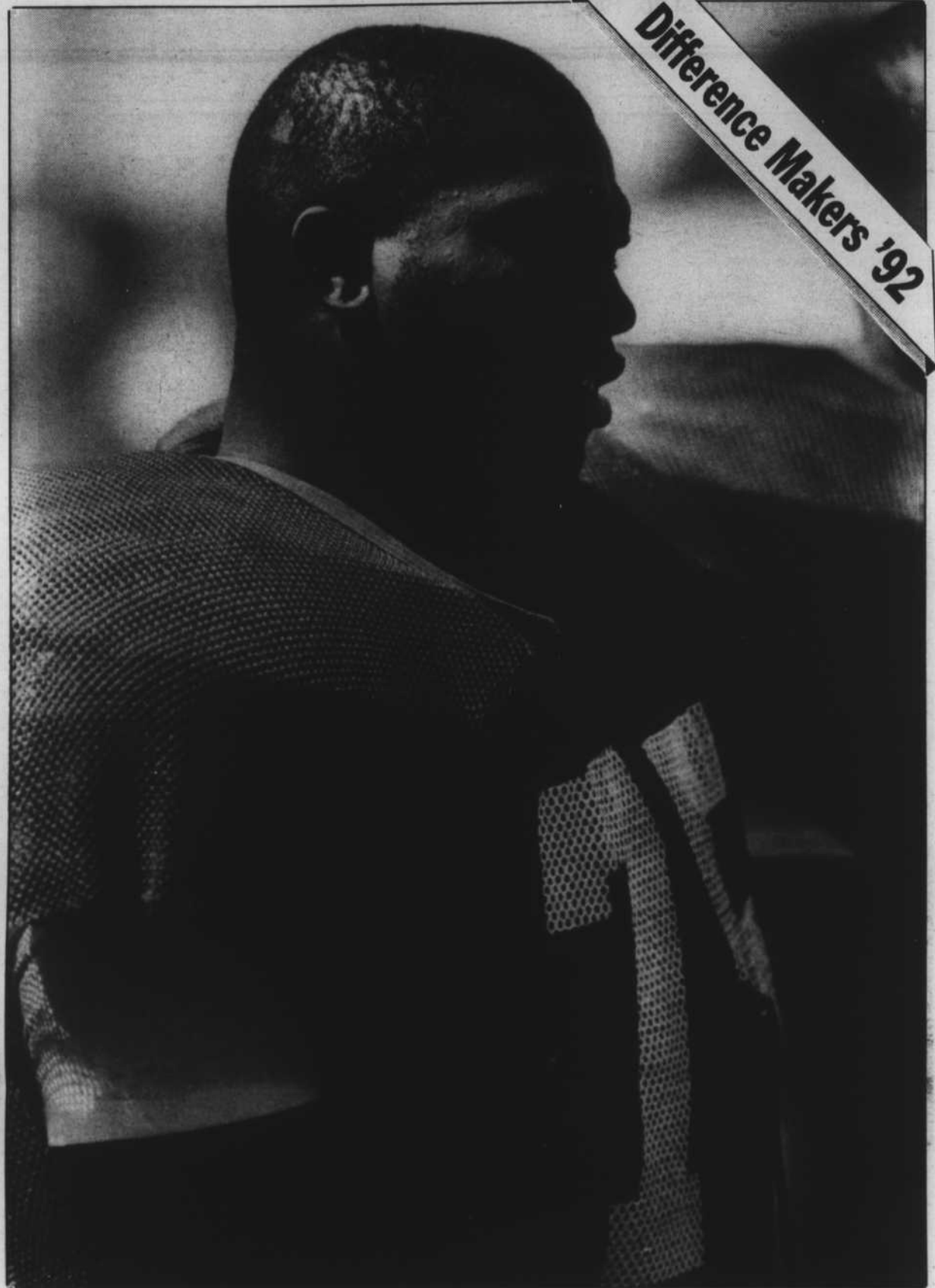
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FOOTBALL 1992

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William Lauer/DN

Nebraska right offensive guard Will Shield takes a break during a practice last season. Shields has started the past two seasons and is an early candidate for the Outland and Lombardi awards.

Strange bedfellows

Oklahoma native shares honors with Huskers

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

Nebraska football fans usually don't get too excited about anything coming out of Oklahoma.

But Nebraska right guard Will Shields has helped change some Cornhusker fans' minds about the Sooner State.

Shields, Nebraska's first player to come from Oklahoma, has a chance of becoming the first Husker since Dean Steinkuhler in 1983 to win either the Outland or Lombardi awards, both of which are given to the best linemen in the country.

His accomplishments don't stop there. Shields became the first Husker lineman since Dave Rimington in 1980 to be named first team All-Big Eight as a sophomore.

But to say that Shields, a native of Lawton, Okla., is modest would be an understatement.

"I didn't even know I was a candidate for those awards," Shields said about the Outland and Lombardi awards. "There's more than just me, there's a lot of seniors this year and all of them will be key parts to the success this year."

Nebraska offensive line coach Milt Tenopir said Shields let his play talk for itself.

"He's not a rah-rah guy — he's a leader by example," Tenopir said. "He's a very hard worker and will be a big asset for us."

Shields has been a regular for the Huskers over the last three years. He has been named All-Conference twice as well as being named as a second-team All-American last season.

The 6-foot-1, 305-pound senior said there were two reasons why he left his home state to play for the Huskers — not the least of which was the NCAA penalties handed to the Oklahoma football team in 1989.

"The academics and the OU probation weighed factors in my choice," Shields said.

Tenopir said he was expecting Shields to be a leader this season for the younger offensive linemen, especially to the three players who will be battling to play left guard.

"Will's a three-year starter coming back, and anytime you have that experience, you're going to be a very big asset," Tenopir said. "We don't anticipate having any weak cogs, but you lean on the older guys that have been through it to be your leader, and Will's that kind of person."

His reputation even led to Shields receiving praise from traditional conference rivals. Colorado football coach Bill McCartney said that if he was to choose any Big Eight player to start a program, it would be Shields.

Tenopir said Shields' dedication is why the 20-year-old senior should receive national recognition and perhaps the Outland and Lombardi trophies.

"If you go on performance, on the field what he gets done, you won't find many better than Will around the country," Tenopir said.

Tenopir said Shields didn't play football for the accolades.

"If he gets those type of honors, that's tremendous," Tenopir said. "But that's not something Will's shooting for — he just wants to play as best he can."

The former Oklahoma high school Lineman Of the Year said thoughts of playing professional football will have to wait until after his playing days as a Husker are over.

"Right now, I'm thinking more or less of this season, and what happens after that, we'll see," Shields said.