

FOOTBALL 1992

One last shot

Senior quarterback ready for starting, season battle

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

Just give Mike Grant one last — and very sweet — trip back to Florida.

That would mean two things to the fifth-year senior: First, Nebraska would be playing in the Orange Bowl. And second, Grant would have been the man to get them there.

Grant, currently in a battle with redshirt freshman Tony Veland for Nebraska's top quarterback position, is ready to take over the starting job after several years on the sidelines.

Grant said his competition with Veland to lead the Huskers this season will flush out the better quarterback in time for the season opener against Utah.

"I think it's a plus for us, because if you're out there, you've earned it," Veland said.

Grant redshirted last year while seniors Keithen McCant, Mickey Joseph and Tom Haase were competing for the starting quarterback position.

But Grant said he should be ready for the upcoming season after working hard over the summer.

"I basically tried to motivate myself to get here no matter what every day," Grant said. "Even if I was the only quarterback to make it, I was going to make it."

A broken collarbone that he sustained halfway through spring practice made returning difficult for Grant.

He said he wouldn't know if his injury had completely healed until he was hit on the football field.

"As far as strength, I am 100 percent," Grant said. "I'm still waiting to see how it feels after I get banged on it."

Grant is no stranger to injury. He suffered a shoulder separation as Gerry Gdowski's

backup in 1989 as well as a bruised knee as Nebraska's starting quarterback in 1990.

Grant said that although he is the most experienced quarterback returning, he thinks the competition has helped him.

"Your team knows you went through the competition, so that's added motivation for you," Grant said. "I always know that the competition is great, and that's the way it should be."

He said his assets that should help him this year included "my experience, my height and I like to throw the ball when I can."

Veland is listed with Grant on top of the depth chart, and Grant said he and the redshirt freshman want to help the squad win, no matter who is running the Husker offense.

"I don't feel any threat by Tony, and I'm sure Tony doesn't feel any threat by me," Grant said. "We work with each other, and it's obvious we want the best guy on the field to play the game."

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said that if Grant is his starter, he will need to accomplish a couple of things.

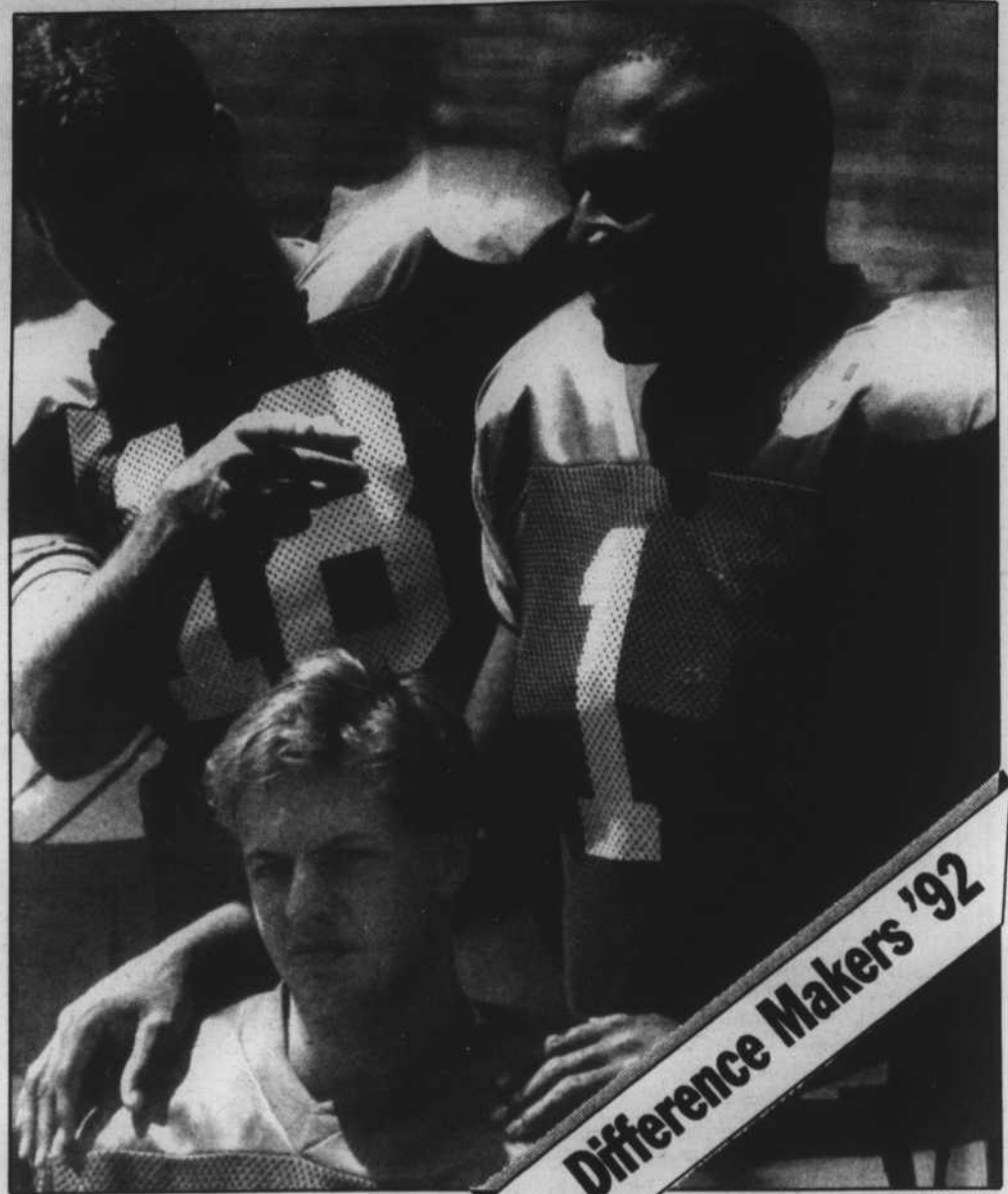
"The big thing right now is consistency at quarterback, and secondly, you look for a guy who can go out there and make the plays," Osborne said.

Osborne said he hoped that either Grant or Veland could meet the requirements necessary to be a winning quarterback.

"To win 11 or 12 games, you'd better have a guy who himself is a pretty outstanding player," Osborne said.

Grant said although it was important for him to get the starting nod at quarterback, he still had other priorities besides football.

"It means a lot to me, but there's a lot more to me than football," Grant said. "I like to play and be a part of the program, but if things would not go right, I think I'm able to walk away from the game happy."



Cornhusker quarterback Mike Grant, right, gets his picture taken with redshirt freshman Brook Berringer, left, and senior Joel Cornwell, kneeling.

Jeff Haller/DN

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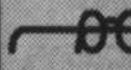
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