

FOOTBALL 1992

Coaches' expectations run high

Tickets available for Husker games

By Jeremy Fitzpatrick
Staff Reporter

It's only August, but Kenny Wilhite is already looking for a better Cornhusker secondary in 1992.

Wilhite, a senior cornerback, foresees this year's secondary covering opponents from all angles.

"We've got a lot of talent back there," he said. "It's a lot of talent. All we have to do is prepare these two weeks in two-a-days and things will come our way."

Things came hard to the secondary last year in Nebraska's two losses to passing teams, Washington and Miami. The Husker secondary gave up a combined 540 passing yards in those two games.

In the home victory over Kansas State, Wildcat quarterback Paul Watson burned Nebraska for 340 yards and two touchdowns.

Add to that the loss of two starters in cornerbacks Curtis Cotton and Tyrone Legette. Nebraska was forced to the junior college ranks to fill its holes and to shore up its passing defense.

To help Wilhite at corner and returning starters Tyrone Byrd and Steve Carmer at safety, Nebraska landed two highly touted junior college recruits who are expected to contribute this year.



SECONDARY DEFENSIVE PREVIEW

One of those recruits, Kareem Moss of Garden City Community College in Kansas, runs a 4.5-second 40-yard dash. He was one of the Jayhawk Conference's top defensive backs before breaking his leg at mid-season last year. Moss will compete for time at cornerback.

Toby Wright, a junior college All-American, played safety at Phoenix College in Arizona, and led the team in tackles. Nebraska secondary coach George Darlington said Wright could play cornerback and safety this year.

Juniors John Recce, Mike Heins and Vernon Powell will also compete for time at cornerback. Junior Ernie Beler will back up Carmer at strong safety and sophomore Troy Dumas will back up Byrd at free safety.

Darlington agreed with Wilhite about the secondary's potential.

"We expect to be real good," he said. "We expect to have an excellent secondary."

But he faces many questions heading into the season, such as who will

be starting at right cornerback.

Another concern is the status of Wilhite, who suffered a season-ending knee injury against Kansas last year. He tied for the league lead in interceptions with six — one short of a Cornhusker record — despite missing the final two games of the year.

Wilhite's problems continued a month ago when he suffered a pulled back muscle. He said the injury had been bothersome, but wasn't serious. "I feel like I'm ready," he said. "I worked real hard in the off-season to lose a lot of weight, to strengthen my knee up, so I feel like I'm ready."

Wilhite said he wasn't focusing on leading the league in interceptions again this year. But he does want to win the Big Eight and get a chance to play in the Orange Bowl that his knee injury forced him to miss last year.

"There was nothing I wanted more than to play against (Miami)," he said. "Hopefully we can repeat our performance with a Big Eight championship and get back there."

Defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said only time would tell how good the secondary would be this year.

"The thing is with our secondary right now is the depth factor," he said. "If we get some guys to help, then we will be in pretty good shape."

From Staff Reports

Football tickets remain on sale at the South Stadium Ticket Office.

Full-time students wishing to buy tickets must do so before August 25. The ticket office is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

To date, more than 5,400 student tickets have been sold, but ticket officials said plenty remain for students returning to campus.

Season tickets for Nebraska's six home games can be bought for \$48.

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Experienced kickers hope to improve

By Scott McNeal
Staff Reporter

If you're talking kicking this year at Nebraska, you're also talking experience.

Punter Mike Stigge and place kicker Byron Bennett both return from last year's team with goals of improving last year's performances and making the most of their opportunities.

Stigge, who had his best year as a Cornhusker last year, is returning for his senior season with hopes of improving his 42-yard-per-punt average.

"I would like to start right where I left off last year," Stigge said. "I'm anxious."



KICKERS PREVIEW

Last year, Stigge held the Big Eight punting title until the last week of the season, when a 26-yard punting average in the cold, windy Oklahoma game lost him the title and gave it to Kansas punter Dan Eichloff.

Stigge will be backed up by Jeff Lang, a sophomore from Papillion.

Junior place kicker Byron Bennett, who struggled through his first year as Nebraska's first-string kicker last year, said his goal for the year was to hit every field goal attempt from inside the 40-yard line and to convert on all of his point-after attempts.

Last year, Bennett converted on 11 of 18 field goal attempts, but suffered through a 1-for-5 night at Arizona State and had a game-winning attempt at Colorado blocked by free safety Greg Thomas.

Tom Sieler, a sophomore from Las Vegas, is listed second on the depth chart behind Bennett.

Kick returning positions also run deep, where split ends Tyrone Hughes and Corey Dixon are slated to return both kickoffs and punts this season.

"We have good speed at the return spots," said football coach Tom Osborne. "Both Hughes and Dixon are tremendous athletes."

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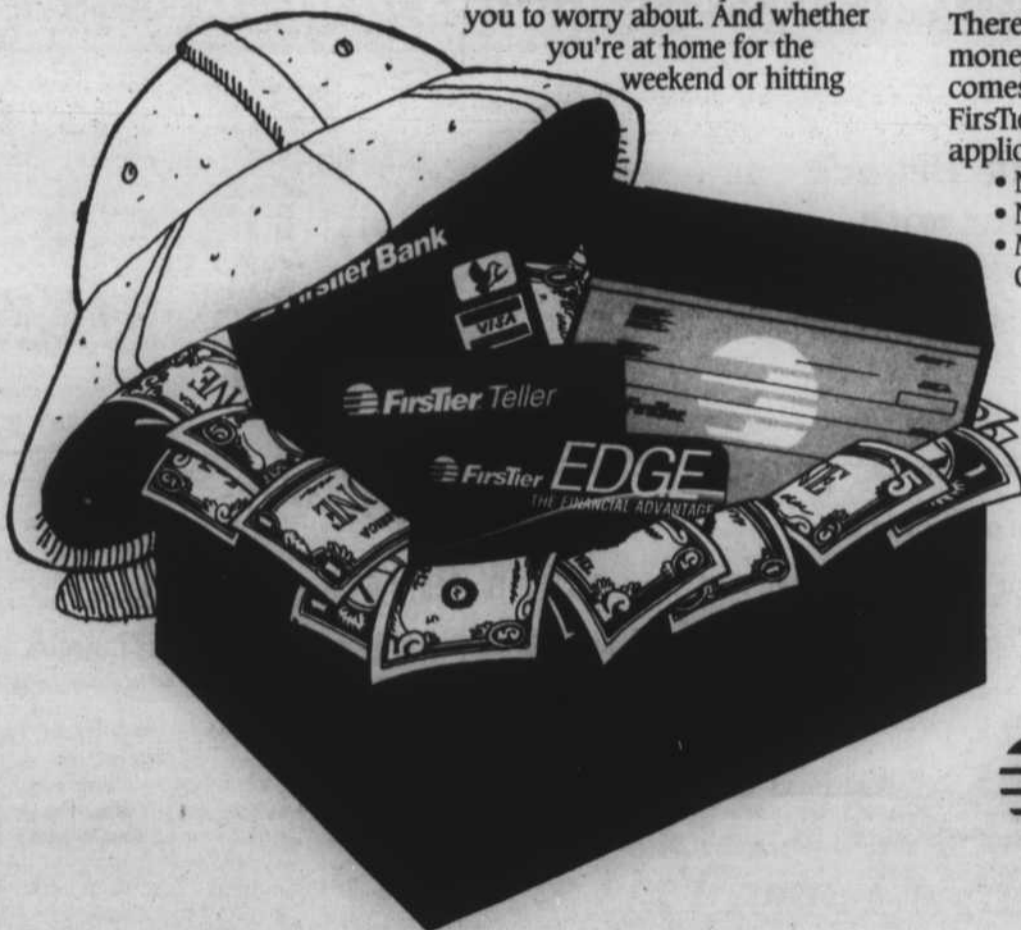
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