

## Football team is still rusty, Osborne says

By Mitch Sherman  
Staff Reporter

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne has watched his Cornhuskers sputter the past couple of practices.

And, Osborne said, he's a little bit concerned.

"I'd be really apprehensive if we had to play today or tomorrow," Osborne said. "We're just not very fine-tuned in a lot of things."

Osborne said he would like to see the speed of play increase during the next few days.

"The execution needs to pick up," he said. "The tempo needs to pick up."

"We're not practicing with the precision we need. Right now, I wish things were a little crisper."

Osborne said he didn't think the lackluster play was related to injuries.

"Right now, I don't see any major injuries that will hold us back," Osborne said. "Sometimes at this time of year you will already have key players out for the season. I don't see that."

First-string quarterback Tommie Frazier returned Wednesday after leaving practice early Tuesday with a sore back.

"He didn't throw deep, but he did throw some," Osborne said. "I'm fairly confident he'll be full-speed in a couple of days."

Calvin Jones, who is aggravated by a bruised heel, left practice early, Osborne said.

He said Jones' heel would have to improve in order for him to play in Saturday's scrimmage.



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska quarterback Ben Rutz stretches before Wednesday's practice. Rutz, who tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee, is on schedule to return to full speed two weeks earlier than expected.

## Quarterback on the mend

### Rutz's recovery ahead of schedule but not over

By Jeff Griesch  
Senior Reporter

He came to the Nebraska football program as one of the most decorated prep quarterbacks in Cornhusker history, but things haven't gone exactly as Ben Rutz planned.

First, Rutz, a 6-foot-1-inch, 185-pound redshirt freshman from Oklahoma City, entered the program with another high school All-American, Tommie Frazier.

Rutz was a SuperPrep, Blue Chip and Super Recruiting Illustrated All-American and was one of 5-Alive's top 10 players of the year, but it was Frazier who got the chance to make an impact on the Husker program when he earned the starting job midway through the 1992 season.

Rutz redshirted and watched Frazier and the rest of his Husker teammates from the sidelines.

Then after an impressive spring practice last year, Rutz tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee while making a cut in the Huskers' second spring scrimmage.

In a matter of seconds, Rutz went from challenging for the starting quarterback job to fighting just to play.

"I did it while I was trying to make something out of nothing on a broken-down pass play," Rutz said. "At first I thought I hurt it on the hit but after I watched the films I saw it go out by itself on a cut about 10 yards down field."

The injury was more serious than just a torn anterior cruciate, Husker trainer George Sullivan said.

Along with the torn ACL, Rutz also had cartilage damage to the knee and injured his medial collateral ligament.

Rutz had surgery on April 20, knowing he might not play another season at Nebraska. But he was determined to prevent that from happening.

"I was just out of my redshirt year for spring ball and then my knee went, and it was just like another blow that knocked me right back down again," Rutz said. "I made up my mind I was going to work hard to come back."

Although he was determined to return, Rutz's recovery was slowed by the

— 66 —

**Balls that I feel like I am throwing 35 yards are falling 10 yards short.**

—Rutz

NU football player

— 99 —

cartilage damage to his knee.

Sullivan said the rehabilitation had to wait until the cartilage damage was repaired and healed.

After his rehabilitation started, though, Rutz excelled like he had on the field during spring football.

Rutz said it took three weeks before he could start doing exercises with his leg and three months before he could start jogging again, but he refused to let the injury keep his spirits down.

See RUTZ on 13

See OSBORNE on 13

## Tennis team set for year despite troubled spring

By Matt Woody  
Staff Reporter

Even though its ranks are a bit thinner than last year, the Nebraska men's tennis team isn't ready to call it a match.

After a controversial spring in which three scholarship players were removed from the team, coach Kerry McDermott sought a change in attitude.

"We had some problems last year with respect and discipline," he said.

The problems surfaced when senior Karl Falkland was removed from the team early in Big Eight competition. Falkland later rejoined the team.

But the attitude problems continued, McDermott said, culminating in his removal of scholarship players Mike Garcia, Jan Anderson and Anthony Cunningham at the end of the season.

Anderson went to the University of Arizona while Garcia headed to the University of Tennessee, McDermott said.

See TENNIS on 13

## Nee's basketball program develops troubling trend

Nebraska men's basketball coach Danny Nee didn't seem too disappointed when he found out that Amos Gregory, his only returning center, had transferred to Ball State.

After all, Gregory was, at best, a marginal player last year.

Or, as Nee told a group of boosters in Omaha last season, Gregory was a "big disappointment... overweight and lazy."

Now, does anyone wonder why Gregory left Nebraska?

Certainly, Gregory didn't leave just because of Nee's comment.

As Nee said, "I just think (Gregory) never felt comfortable in the program."

Imagine that. Nee tells boosters—and subsequently the entire state of Nebraska—that Gregory is overweight, lazy and a disappointment, and Gregory somehow doesn't feel comfortable here. Go figure.

But on a broader level, Gregory's

departure is the latest in what appears to be an uncomfortable, troubling trend in Nee's program.

Since 1987, six scholarship players have left Nee's program before their eligibility expired. Since 1991, five underclassmen—including Jose Ramos, Tony Farmer, Michael Hughes, Andre Woolridge and Gregory—have flown the Husker hoops coop.

Individually, the loss of each player wasn't a huge blow to Nee. But lump them together, and it's obvious that the departures are a product of the structure of Nee's program.

Put simply, Nee has been snakebit by his own philosophy.

Ever since he arrived in 1986, Nee has made it a point to make Nebraska basketball a players' program.

Under Nee, players are put in a dangerous position—above the program.

In other words, when the players



Todd Cooper

get NCAA warm-ups and shirts—as they did before this year's NCAA tournament—they're made to be superstars, even if they end up losing by 30 points.

And if they want black uniforms—even though black is nowhere remotely close to a school color—as they did last year, they get them. No questions asked. No traditions followed.

Then, with that kind of pampering, if they don't get their way, they take off.

Case in point, Andre Woolridge. Woolridge, who announced that he was transferring to Iowa in April,

didn't think he was getting enough playing time last season.

By his play, Woolridge obviously didn't deserve any more playing time than he was getting.

But Woolridge also obviously believed he did.

It's easy to blame Woolridge's departure on Woolridge himself. After all, he didn't deal with the reality of the situation—namely, that Jamar Johnson was a much better point guard and deserved most of the playing time last season.

But, then again, how can you blame Woolridge for thinking he didn't get a fair shake?

All Woolridge heard coming in—from Nee and others—was that he was one of the best point guards Nebraska had ever recruited. Considered the No. 2 point guard in the nation by many scouts in high school, Woolridge was projected to be Nebraska's savior at point guard.

"He can score, pass the ball and handle it," Nee said. "He'll make an immediate impact on our team."

When he didn't make an impact—and when his playing time disintegrated—Woolridge whined and moaned like anyone who's pampered and spoiled out of high school. And when it looked like things weren't about to go his way, he headed to Iowa.

Again, Nee can't be entirely blamed for Woolridge's departure.

But when a coach pumps up a player to be something bigger than the program has ever had, that player suddenly thinks he's in control.

So when he doesn't get the playing time he thinks he deserves, he walks. Or flies.

Remember Ramos?

The slick-talking point guard from Miami was touted to be Nebraska's best floor leader two years ago.

See COOPER on 13