

Stigge cut, but not down

By Sam Snyder
Staff Reporter

Former Nebraska punter Mike Stigge has tasted what it's like to be an NFL rookie.

Released by the New Orleans Saints last week, the former All-Big Eight player now knows what it's like to be cut as well.

Stigge joined other former Nebraska players Kenny Wilhite, Reggie Cooper, Tahaun Lewis, Tim Rother and Lance Lewis, who were released from their teams during the preseason.

Despite losing his first NFL training camp battle, Stigge said he was not discouraged.

"It takes a while for kickers to get in," he said. "You have to try it for a few years."

Stigge said he was encouraged by Saints coach Jim Mora and punting coach Joe Marciano, who both told him he had the potential to make it as a punter in the league.

At the Saints' training camp — where Stigge was joined by former Huskers Derek Brown, Tyrone Hughes and Tyrone Legette — the differences could be seen between college and professional football, he said.

"It was a step up," he said. "Everybody had a lot of talent and was in great shape."

Eagles

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Eagles should be playing.

"We're preparing to beat Nebraska, not to just go up there and get kicked all over the field," Parker said. "We're not flying to Nebraska to be their sacrificial lambs."

While Osborne said the Huskers were in a no-win situation, Parker said he hoped North Texas could make a major gain against Nebraska.

"If we win or just play well it will give our program a lot to build on," Parker said. "We're in a position to compete in the biggest football game of our season and maybe our lives. If I told you it was just another game,

At first you're kind of in awe. But then you realize that most of those guys are nice and down-to-earth like you.

— Stigge
former Nebraska punter

Punting in the NFL also was more demanding than college, he said.

"You're expected to perform to perfection," Stigge said. "Every punt had to not only be good, but it also had to be placed in the right spot on the field."

Stigge had to do that while competing with Saints punter Tommy Barnhardt, a seven-year veteran punter like Barnhardt, whom the coaches gave plenty of second chances.

Stigge said it was a difficult task to beat out a veteran punter like Barnhardt, whom the coaches gave plenty of second chances.

Stigge said even though he kicked better than Barnhardt in several practices, he knew the coaches wanted to stay with a veteran.

Still, Stigge said his experience was unforgettable. He earned \$500 a week, traveled to Tokyo, went to training camp in La Crosse, Wis., and spent a week in New Orleans.

But Parker also said his players needed to concentrate on their duties instead of being absorbed by the atmosphere of playing what he considered one of the top five college football programs.

"We need to focus on doing our jobs and not who we're doing those jobs against," Parker said. "I don't want them to get caught looking at the big red 'N' on the helmet and the 75,000 people in the stands."

This is not the first time the Eagles have encountered a Division I football power.

Last year, North Texas battled both Southern Methodist and Texas. The Eagles fell to SMU 28-14, and lost to

ing camp in La Crosse, Wis., and spent a week in New Orleans.

He also hung around some childhood heroes.

At training camp in La Crosse, where the Saints and other NFL teams trained in the "Cheese League," Stigge said just being around Kansas City's Joe Montana, Minnesota's Wade Wilson and New Orleans' Sam Mills was an experience.

"At first you're kind of in awe," he said. "But then you realize that most of those guys are nice and down-to-earth like you."

This, however, didn't stop the veterans from carrying out a Saints tradition of shaving the rookies' heads, he said.

Despite that downside, Stigge said he would put off going to veterinarian school for another year. He said he was anxious to tryout for the NFL again next summer.

Texas 33-15.

While both those losses were respectable for North Texas, Parker said, he was disappointed with the loss to Texas.

"Nebraska this year and Texas last season don't even compare with each other," Parker said. "Texas was in a rebuilding phase, and we missed a grand opportunity to beat them."

But like last year's game with Texas, the game with the Huskers won't make or break the Eagles' season.

"If we won the game and then lost our next 10 because we were thinking about how great that game was, then we would not have accomplished anything," Parker said. "It's a game. It's not like if we lose we're going to die or anything."

Maher

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cellent decision.

"There is a much clearer focus for the first game," Maher said. "We've been preparing for Nebraska all spring and fall and we're ready to play. All year long, we've been working hard and practicing hard and that first game we're ready to let everything out."

And they're ready to play against a

crowd that Maher said will probably "let everything out."

"It will be the biggest crowd I've ever played against and that I will probably ever play in front of in my life," Maher said. "It is going to be a lot different. It will be a lot noisier, and I'm going to have to concentrate and make sure everyone can hear me."

Maher said he is most excited about playing where some of his idols have played.

don't know too much about your opponent."

The Eagles finished 4-7 and in fifth place of the Southland Conference in 1992. They return 17 starters, including nine on offense.

"They're a fairly good-sized team with reasonably good talent," he said. "They're good enough that if we're not playing well, they will give us problems. We have to come in and try to play our best."

Osborne

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dealing with the element of surprise Saturday. Nebraska coaches weren't able to get a good look at the Eagles since it is both teams' first game.

"There will be something that they do that we haven't been able to cover," Osborne said. "That always happens in the first game because you



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