

Wingback volunteers for QB but will stay put instead

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

For now, Nebraska wingback Clester Johnson will stick to catching footballs instead of throwing them.

With injuries thinning the Cornhuskers at quarterback, Johnson said he considered moving to quarterback to give Nebraska some added depth.

But the coaches decided to keep him at wingback.

"They like me where I am at right now, and I just want to do my

part and do what the coaches tell me to," Johnson said.

The coaches might tell him to start at wingback Saturday when Nebraska takes on Colorado State. First-string wingback Abdul Muhammad, who has a sore knee, is questionable for Saturday's game.

For the first time since being moved from quarterback when he joined the Huskers, Johnson said, he finally feels comfortable at wingback. He has caught three receptions for 46 yards in three games. That's three more catches than he

had last year.

"I feel like I have made a big improvement from last year," Johnson said. "Last year, I wasn't comfortable at all, and I was just kind of running around out there."

"But now I know pretty much everything that the offense asks of me."

Johnson said his suggestion to move back to quarterback was driven by his desire to help the team in any way he could. Nebraska's quarterbacks—Tommie Frazier (ankle sprain), Brook Berringer (elbow), Tony Veland (knee) and Ben Rutz

(knee) all are on the mend.

"It wasn't a thing where I wanted to show anybody up or prove anything; I just thought maybe I could help the team if Tommie got injured to the point where he couldn't play," Johnson said.

Johnson's unselfishness, ironically, is why he moved to wingback from quarterback when he came to Nebraska. It's also why he was willing to take on a foreign fundamental for a former quarterback—blocking.

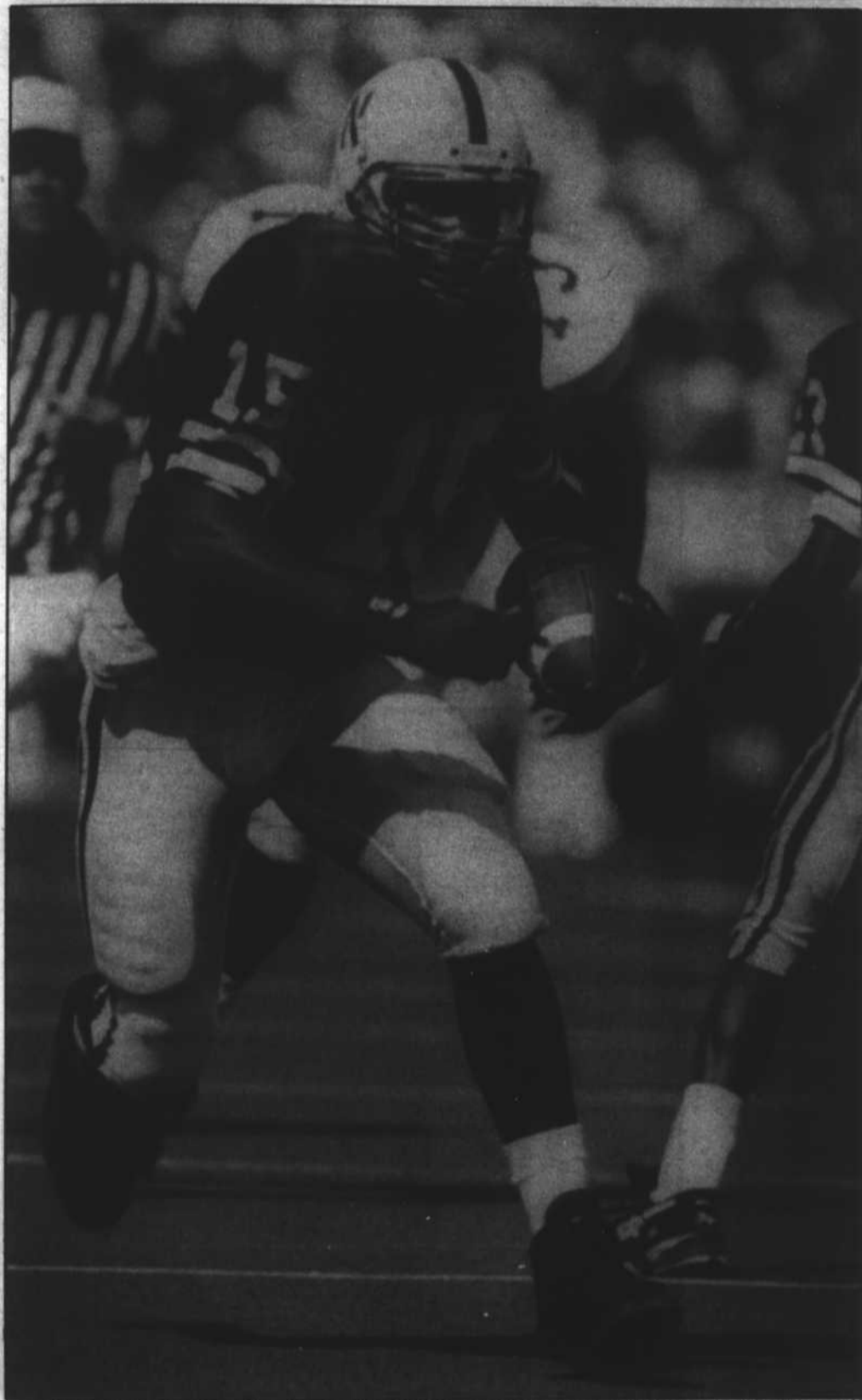
"Blocking is probably even more important than catching the ball in

our offense," Johnson said.

Although Johnson has not played quarterback since high school, where he threw for 3,757 yards in three years, he said he was comfortable passing.

And he said he still might get an opportunity to demonstrate his passing ability from the wingback position.

"We do have a play where the receiver throws the ball, and we have been working on that in practice, so I might get a chance to do that," Johnson said.



Al Schaben/DN

Tommie Frazier takes off downfield during Nebraska's win over Texas Tech. Frazier, still slowed by a sprained ankle, is expected to start Saturday.

Frazier says he'll play against Rams despite bum ankle

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

The way Nebraska quarterback Tommie Frazier sees it, he can't afford to rest now.

Frazier said he would not consider sitting out this week against Colorado State to help his ankle heal for the Big Eight opener against Oklahoma State on Oct. 7.

"I want to play this week," he said. "I can't just go out there and say, 'It's Colorado State and I can take a week off.' I think I have to go in there and stay in sync with everybody else."

Although he does not want to take the week off, Frazier said, he wouldn't mind taking it easy during the second half.

"I would like to go out there and score as many points as I can in the first half," Frazier said. "Then in the second half, I could just sit back and relax and get ready for the off-week and then hopefully be healthy for the Oklahoma State game."

Nebraska players haven't seen a healthy Frazier since the first snap of the season. Frazier sprained his ankle at the end of the first play against North Texas.

Twice during the UCLA game, Frazier laid on the Rose Bowl grass after getting hit, appearing to be done for the day.

But he returned to lead Nebraska to a 14-13 win over the Bruins.

"The first time it was like a sharp pain that went through my whole ankle," Frazier said. "Then the second time, it felt like someone just came down on the pile and caught my ankle. And that's when I felt the immediate pain and it was there for about three or four minutes."

Despite the fact that his injured ankle in on his plant foot, the sophomore from Bradenton, Fla., completed 13 of 19 passes for 145 yards and one touchdown against UCLA.

"I think that this sends a message (to the team) that they have a quarterback who's going to play through the injuries no matter what," Frazier said. "If the team needs him, he's going to be there."

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— Frazier
Nebraska quarterback

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Frazier, who has completed 25 of 47 passes for 351 yards and two touchdowns this season, said that he never considered removing himself from the UCLA game.

His attitude during the game, he said, rubbed off on his teammates.

"It makes them better," he said. "They saw me go out a couple of times, so they sucked it up. Then I got back in and it was like everyone's attitude had risen."

Not only did Frazier boost the morale of the other Nebraska players, he also impressed the coaches.

"Tommie Frazier has come up with two performances in a row that have been stellar in the area of character," assistant coach Ron Brown said. "Our players have a great deal of confidence in him as well as our coaches."

Frazier said his ankle felt better now than it felt at the same point in the previous two weeks, but it was still sore. He said that he wouldn't work the ankle too hard in practice this week.

"During the week, you just try to do your best not to aggravate it," Frazier said, "then gameday you just have to set your mind that you don't have an injury."

"If you go out there thinking about the injury that you have, you probably could get hurt worse from a different injury."

"The day of the game, I just pretend I don't have it."

Dream could foretell repeat of 1990 Husker nightmare

It must have hit me while I was dozing off during the second quarter of Nebraska's 14-13 win over UCLA on Saturday.

Go figure, I entered that nutty realm where your conscience lets you drift off into a dream rather than subjecting you to any more boredom.

I hit flashback mode.

Consider it a case of déjà NU.

Images of Nebraska playing another well-respected but equally mediocre team on television entered my mind.

1990. Baylor, led by then-coach Grant Teaff, entered Memorial Stadium with a stingy defense but very little offense—much like UCLA this year.

Visions of Baylor holding an ever-predictable Husker offense to few

points and yards in front of a television audience.

Images of the much-heralded Blackshirts getting run over up the middle by Baylor, but holding their own come crunch time.

Visions of dads everywhere in their red sweater vests and overstuffed Lazyboys falling asleep, mouth ajar with drool dribbling down their chins.

Images of boredom, with Nebraska escaping 13-0 in the fourth quarter.

Sketchy visions of ... who? ... Mel Brooks? Close, but not it ... the little guy on ESPN who spits when he talks ... the curly-haired, former below-average coach who's suddenly an expert on college football ... LEE CORSO.

Ugh. Lee Corso. Guys in commercials get to dream about leggy



Todd
Cooper

supermodels like Cindy Crawford, Rachel Hunter and Elle MacPherson. I get the curse of Corso.

And so does Nebraska. Somebody, quick, wake us all up.

Before the 1990 Baylor game—if you dare to remember—Corso predicted that Nebraska would win the national championship that season.

He revised his prediction this season—telling ESPN viewers that Nebraska could win the national championship while placing them ninth in

his preseason poll.

That jinx aside, Nebraska's real curse lies not in the mouth of a blundering broadcaster, but in a too-weak-to-be-justified nonconference schedule.

Pardon the cliché, but history does repeat itself. And in 1990, after beating Baylor, the Cornhuskers cruised through a schedule that included Northern Illinois, Minnesota, Oregon State and four Big Eight patsies. They coasted to an 8-0 record and the No. 3 ranking in the nation.

Then they hit a Rocky Mountain roadblock. Colorado came into Lincoln with a 6-1-1 record, after the nation's toughest nonconference schedule—which included a loss to No. 21 Illinois, a tie with No. 5 Tennessee and wins over No. 22 Texas,

No. 12 Washington and Stanford.

Sound familiar?

This year, Colorado beat Texas and Baylor before losing to No. 20 Stanford. This week, they take on No. 3 Miami.

Nebraska's first top 20 opponent this season will be Colorado—just like in 1990.

Unless Nebraska gets a crunch-time test in one of its Big Eight matchups, the fourth-quarter nightmare of the 1990 Colorado game—when the Buffaloes scored 27 points—could return.

The only difference this year is that once Nebraska's key players get healthy, the offense should be more potent than the sputtering 1990 Chevy

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