

Muhammad denies being a gang member

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

Nebraska wingback Abdul Muhammad denied on Tuesday an ESPN report that said the junior from Compton, Calif., was a gang member. "After viewing what the ESPN thing showed about me, I feel I need to speak out," Muhammad said, reading from a prepared statement during Nebraska's weekly press conference Tuesday. "Much of what was said about me was taken out of context. "Although I have friends who are gang members and grew up in area where gangs are common, I am not a member of a gang, as ESPN and the

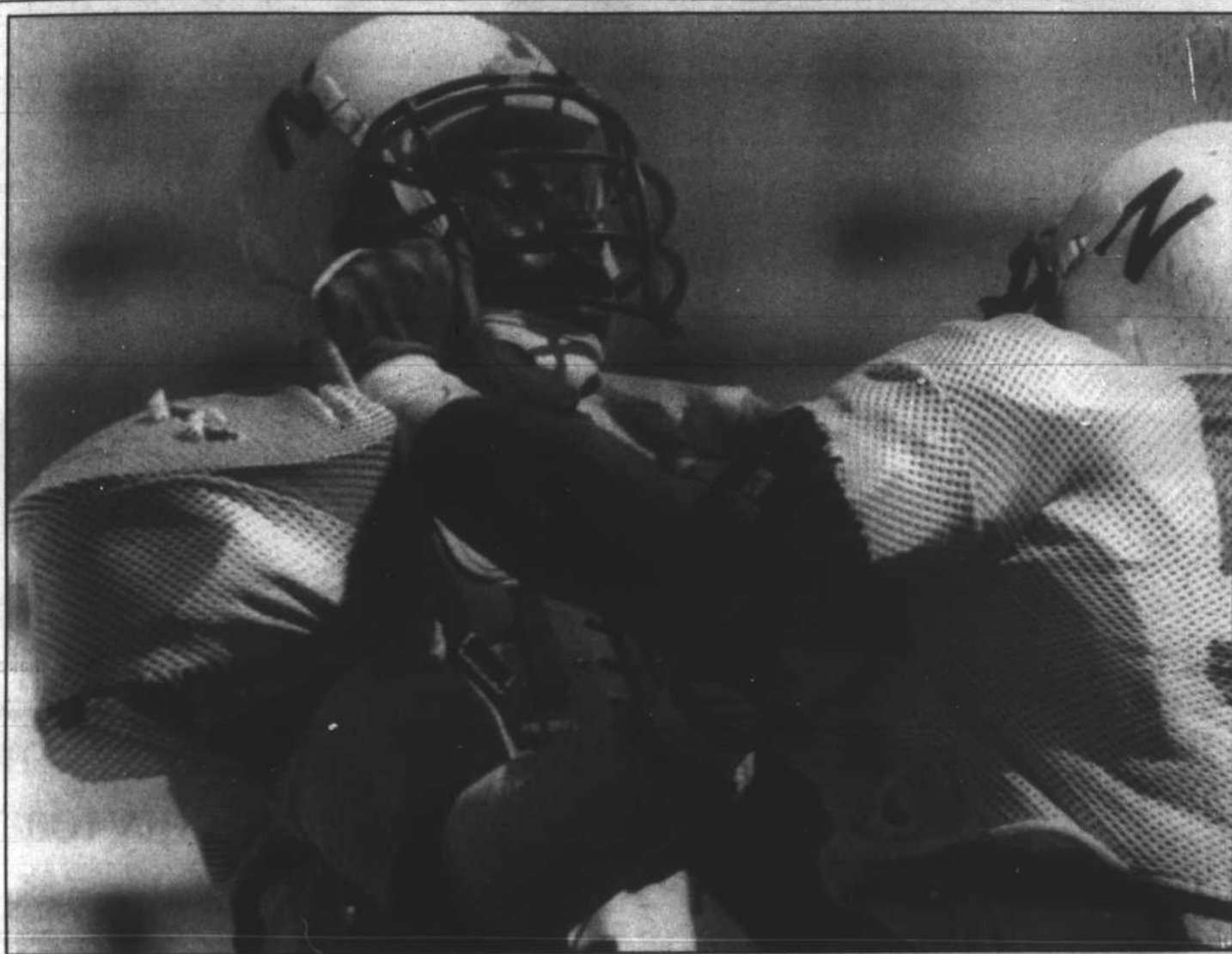
reporter said." During a preview of Nebraska's game with Oklahoma State on Thursday night, ESPN's Shelley Smith reported that Muhammad was a member of the Bloods, a prominent gang in Southern California. Muhammad said Tuesday that he had friends who were in gangs. But a comment in the ESPN report in which Muhammad said his friends watched out for him was taken out of context to imply that he also was a gang member, he said. "It is true that my friends watch out for me, but that is not because I am a member of a gang," Muhammad said. "It's because they are my friends."

Attempts to reach Smith failed Tuesday. But ESPN managing editor Steve Anderson, who oversees the production of all broadcast material, said in a statement Tuesday that the station stood behind its report. "We understand the sensitivities surrounding the issue and took great pains to address them in the presentation of this story," he said. "After reviewing the piece and discussing it with the reporter, we are confident that we accurately reported the information reported to us." Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said that Muhammad, who was shot in the buttock in July by gang members, told

Smith off-camera that he was not a gang member. Osborne also said that while most of the questions Smith asked Muhammad pertained to recruiting, the majority of those questions were cut from the story. "I wasn't real enthused about anybody from the outside coming in here in the first place," he said. "Apparently most of the questions they asked Coach (George) Darlington and Abdul were about recruiting. "(Muhammad) supposedly was asked by the interviewer if he was a gang member and he said he wasn't." Osborne said the coaching staff reviewed the tape before drawing any

conclusions. ESPN again aired the segment on the Saturday morning college football preview show. "As a coaching staff, we looked at the tape," he said, "and naturally we weren't too excited about the way it came off. It didn't go anywhere near like we'd been led to believe. "You can take an individual, and by what kind of questions you ask, you can make him into a saint or you can make him into a bum." Osborne said Muhammad got a bum rap and deserved an apology from ESPN. "I think it would be nice if some-

See ESPN on 8



William Lauer/DN

Nebraska linebacker Ed Stewart warms up during a recent practice. Stewart is coming off an 11-tackle performance in the Cornhuskers' win over Oklahoma State Thursday night.

Forgotten linebacker makes his move

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

After spending the first four games as the forgotten man in Nebraska's new 4-3 defense, Ed Stewart said he was ready to make an impact for the Cornhuskers. While Butkus Award candidates Trev Alberts and Mike Anderson stepped into the spotlight by making big plays in Nebraska's

new 4-3 defensive scheme, Stewart struggled to adjust to the system. "I think the first couple of games I was kind of slowed down by the new system because I wasn't really comfortable with it," Stewart said. Stewart, a 6-foot-1-inch, 215-pound junior from Chicago, had only 16 tackles through the first four games but broke out of his slump by leading the Husker defense against

Oklahoma State. Stewart recorded 12 total tackles, including five unassisted tackles and one tackle for loss in the Huskers' 27-13 win over the Cowboys. "Right now, I am a lot more comfortable with the defense, and I have a good feel of my responsibilities," Stewart said. "But I

See STEWART on 8

Volleyball team refocuses aim for Colorado

By Tim Pearson
Senior Reporter

The Nebraska volleyball team is in an unfamiliar position right now. And the Cornhuskers hope to get out of it as quickly as possible. The team is coming off its first Big Eight regular season loss in 62 conference matches. Oklahoma defeated the Huskers in four games Saturday. The 12th-ranked Huskers will try to start another winning streak tonight against Colorado in Boulder at 8:30. Nebraska coach Terry Pettit said the streak's end didn't matter to him. "That's a short-term issue," he said. "The most important issue is that you get things going in the other direction. "In other words, I want to see them make progress. I want them to play harder and better than they did against Oklahoma. Then on Saturday (against Kansas), I want them to play better than they did against Colorado." Pettit said playing right after the loss to the Sooners would be good for his team. "I've never enjoyed not winning, but I'm more uncomfortable not playing," he said. The Huskers lost to the Sooners, Pettit said, simply because they didn't execute. "It was a case of Oklahoma playing well and us not playing well enough to win," he said. "Mentally, we let go at some points." Pettit said he wasn't anxious just because his team lost a match. "There's no reason to panic, and there's no reason to focus on two or three matches," he said. But, he said, the players have increased their intensity in the past two practices. "The big picture is that our kids and coaches recognized that we needed to alter things," he said. "We raised the intensity level in practice, and we mentally challenged the players." With several injuries early in the season, Pettit said, the team had been just trying to get healthy. Now, he said, the goal is to keep the players

See PETTIT on 8

Huskers' Sunshine State rivals deserve crushing defeat

As I sat on my beloved couch on Saturday afternoon, watching Florida State systematically dismantle the Miami Hurricanes, I realized by about halftime that I had seen this game before. The game did not remind me of any of Florida State's games with Miami in the past, when helpless Seminole kickers were forced to carry the weight of missing field goals wide to the right. No, this game reminded me of other one-sided games that were supposed to be classic matchups. The games that came to my mind were Nebraska bowl games against both Florida State and Miami. Five of Nebraska's last six bowl games have been played against the gridiron goliaths from Florida. In those five games, the Huskers are 0-5, with the only close game coming in a 31-28 loss to the Seminoles in the the 1988 Fiesta Bowl.

Perhaps it is just a coincidence that before Saturday's stomping of Miami, Florida State had lost five of its last six games to the Hurricanes. Losing to Florida State has never seemed as degrading or as downright terrible as losing to those classless 'Canes. Maybe it's because I remember the Huskers losing to Miami in the 1984 Orange Bowl, which was such a crushing defeat to me because I thought that the Huskers were the greatest college football team ever and Miami had no right to beat them. Don't question my logic, I was only in the sixth grade. Maybe it's because the 'Canes and their coaches always seemed like finger-pointing, trash-talking, hot-dogging bad guys, while the 'Noles and Bobby Bowden always beat the Huskers with a touch of class. Unlike Miami, which would always bash the Huskers before playing



Jeff Griesch

them, Bobby Bowden always said how much the Huskers scared him, how good the Huskers were and what a great coach Tom Osborne was. Bowden's words took a lot of pain out of the hurt on the scoreboard, and his players appeared more concerned with playing football than starting fights. Perhaps it is just a coincidence that Bowden appears in the Husker media guide praising Osborne and the Nebraska football program. Maybe that's why I was rooting so hard for the 'Noles to humiliate the 'Canes on Saturday and why Miami looked more like the Husker teams

that fought hard to keep the 1989 and 1992 Orange Bowl scores with the Hurricanes respectable. In those two games, the Husker offense was nonexistent. Nebraska lost 23-3 in 1989 and 22-0 in 1992. In Saturday's game with Florida State, the Hurricane offense was stuffed time after time and the 'Canes taunting tactics were silenced. The 28-10 Florida State win was not nearly big enough to satisfy my 'Cane-crushing desires. Maybe 35-0 or 42-0 would have been enough to heal the wounds of frustrating years of losing to Miami. Despite the score, Miami was never really in the game, and Frank Costa proved to me that he will end the string of great quarterbacks at Miami. Now that mighty Miami has fallen, the three Husker losses to Florida State in the past six years loom large in my mind.

Most of the joy I had in watching Charlie Ward run over Miami has turned to rage. I can only hope that the Seminoles will run into the sharpened teeth of their other intrastate rival, the Florida Gators. If the Seminoles lose, my season would be made by seeing the two Nebraska nemeses fall. If the 'Noles do lose and Nebraska manages to go undefeated and travel to Miami for the Orange Bowl, chances are the Huskers will face either Florida State or Miami. Maybe this time, the Huskers will turn the tables on the teams from tourist-terrorism land and get some serious payback. Griesch is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and columnist.