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William Lauer/DN

Jamar Johnson follows through on a pass earlier this season. Johnson, who broke his finger while playing against Portland Saturday, may miss up to four weeks because of the injury.

Injury

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"This certainly is not good because he is such an important player," Nee said. "He has been really playing well lately. We felt he was going to have a real strong senior year, so this comes at a very bad time."

Nee said the rest of the team needed to step up because of Johnson's absence. Nee said he would move 6-foot-6-inch Jaron Boone into the starting lineup to replace Johnson.

But all of Nebraska's guards — including Boone, Jason Glock and Erick Strickland — should profit from extra playing time.

"The other players are going to need to rise up to the occasion," Nee said. "This is going to provide tremendous experience for Strickland, Glock and Boone."

Johnson, who has missed only one game in his three years at Nebraska, may have to spend up to four weeks being a fan. During that time, he could miss seven games, including Nebraska's Big Eight opener against Iowa State Jan. 3.

Nee said he was trying to find positives that might come out of the injury.

"It is a setback, but those things happen," Nee said. "We should be stronger and better when he comes back."

Johnson agreed that his injury would provide the younger players with much more experience.

"It's expected for them to step up," Johnson said. "They have to and I feel totally confident in them that they will. The sophomores will have to turn into seniors if they want this team to be good."

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NU baseball program attracts three star pitching prospects

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

Although the 1994 college baseball season hasn't begun, the Nebraska coaching staff is already preparing for the 1995 season.

Coach John Sanders received national letters of intent from three of the top pitching prospects in the country during the early signing period for 1995.

Mike Burrows, a left-handed pitcher and outfielder from American Fork, Utah, leads the class of early signees.

Burrows, a 6-3, 180-pounder, was an all-state and all-region selection last year and named one of the Team One top 100 players in the country.

Last summer, Burrows went 10-0 with a 2.25 ERA and struck out 92 batters in 64 innings in American Legion competition.

He also hit .512 with 10 homers and 58 RBIs in 129 at-bats and stole

31 bases.

Brian Zubor, a left-hander from Riverside, Ill., struck out 116 batters in 68 innings while going 7-2 with a 1.02 ERA for Fenwick High School.

Dan Vardijan, a 6-4 right-hander, went 8-1 with a 2.14 ERA in American Legion ball and was named to the Chicagoland "Cream of the Crop" along with Zubor.

Sanders said he was excited about signing the three young pitchers and that the early signees would put Nebraska in a position to have a third-straight top 25 recruiting class.

Last year's recruiting class was ranked 21st by Collegiate Baseball, and the 1992 class was ranked 19th in the nation.

"This is really the fourth class in a row that we have put together," Sanders said. "The 1991 class wasn't ranked like the last two have been, but they have put up phenomenal numbers."

Alberts

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where he is now — to accept a scholarship from the National Football Foundation and the Collegiate Hall of Fame.

On Saturday, the Huskers' all-time sack leader will move on to Orlando, Fla., where he will await announcement of the winner of the Butkus Award, given to the nation's top linebacker.

The list — which includes being named the nation's top defensive player by Football News and the 1993 Big Eight defensive player of the year — goes on. But as Alberts reflects on his career, he downplays the importance of the individual honors.

"I'd be foolish to say I didn't enjoy all of the individual awards this year," Alberts said. "But the beauty of it is we're 11-0. If our team was 2-9 and I was still getting all these honors, I wouldn't feel too good about it."

He said he still did not know whether the dislocated elbow he suffered in the first quarter of the Oklahoma game would hold him out of the Orange Bowl.

He said he wanted badly to play in the Orange Bowl against Florida State, but if his arm was not healthy, he would not risk hurting it — or the team.

"It's important for me to play,"

Alberts said. "But on the other side, I'm not going to penalize our team by going out there just because I'm a senior. I'm not going to play with one arm and be ineffective. But if I can play, I will guarantee you that I'll be on the field."

A victory in the Orange Bowl would be a perfect ending to his career, Alberts said. But he also would like to grab a national title for Coach Tom Osborne.

"Coach Osborne is the main reason 99 percent of us are here," Alberts said. "So he means a lot to all of us. We do it for each other, but we'd also like to do it for him this year."

In addition to all the honors Alberts has received as a Husker, he said, he has grown as a person because of his experiences at Nebraska.

"I can't say enough about Nebraska," he said. "And I am saying this from the heart. It all starts at the top, with Coach Osborne, and goes down to the players."

Although Alberts' Husker career is almost over, his football playing days are anything but finished. Alberts has been projected by analysts to be among the top five selections in next spring's NFL draft.

"I promised myself I wouldn't think about the NFL until my career is over here," he said. "But it's another challenge. I'd like to see whether I could do it."