

Lack of Husker depth worries Osborne

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne is hoping many questions concerning the 1994 Huskers will be answered during spring practice, which began Monday.

Although Tommie Frazier, Nebraska's Orange Bowl MVP, returns, the lack of depth at quarterback — as well as at tight end and safety — heads the list of Osborne's concerns, he said.

"We really want Tommie Frazier and our I-backs to improve a lot in the spring," Osborne said after Nebraska's 2 1/2-hour workout at Memorial Stadium Monday. "We'll need them to perform well. It's hard to point out a certain position and say they have to work harder than another position because we need everyone to work hard and improve."



Osborne might have a tough task developing depth at quarterback. Brook Berringer, who will be a junior in the fall, is the only other returning scholarship quarterback.

Tony Veland, who suffered two major injuries in his first two seasons, will switch from quarterback to a new position in the fall.

Ben Rutz, also a backup a year ago, transferred to Northeastern Oklahoma A&M Junior College in January.

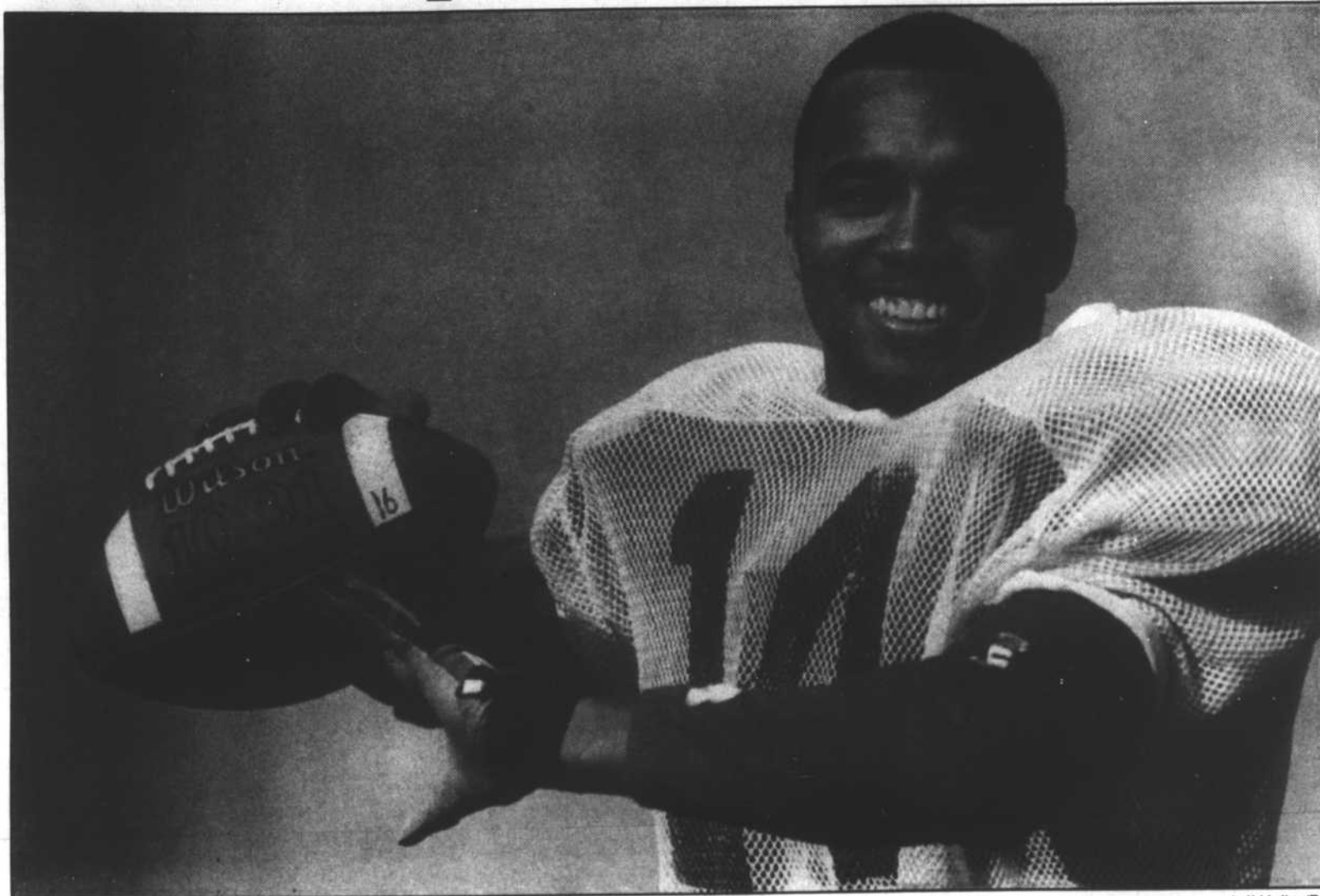
But depth at quarterback isn't his only concern, Osborne said.

"I hate to say one guy has to do particularly better than someone else in the spring," he said. "I hope we improve at every position this spring."

That includes tight end and safety. "Offensively, losing our two top tight ends is a concern, and defensively we're concerned at the safety spot," he said. "We lost quite a few linebackers also, but I think we'll be all right there."

The pre-spring depth chart listed Matt Shaw, out of Lincoln Northeast, and Mark Gilman of Kalispell, Mont., as the top two tight ends.

At free safety, senior Sedric Collins heads into the spring as the front runner, while Mike Minter is the top rover.



Jeff Haller/DN

Nebraska's Barron Miles smiles as he warms up before the Huskers' first spring practice Monday.

With the early departure of I-back Calvin Jones, who declared himself eligible in January for the NFL draft, the I-backs also will need to have a good spring, Osborne said.

Lawrence Phillips leads a group of experienced backups from last year. Phillips, Damon Benning and Clinton Childs all received considerable playing time last season.

A strong spring season last year helped Nebraska to a Big Eight championship and a 11-1 season, according to Osborne.

"Usually when you play well in the

spring, you're going to play well in the fall, barring injuries," Osborne said. "Last year we had a good spring, and we ended up 11-1."

Losing 18-16 in the Orange Bowl to Florida State could make the Huskers even more determined, Osborne said.

"If they take the right attitude out of that game, they can assume they are capable of winning any game on their schedule or beating anyone they might play in a bowl game," he said. "Coming that close to a national championship should make them want to get back to that game or to that situation."

Williams to sit out opener

From Staff Reports

Cornerback Tyrone Williams, who is awaiting trial on felony charges resulting from a Jan. 30 shooting incident, practiced with the football team Monday.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said Williams would be held out of the last week of spring practice and the April 23 spring game. Williams also will not play in the Hus-

ers' opener against West Virginia in the Kickoff Classic, Osborne said.

"A lot is pending on what the court rules in this case," Osborne said. "We feel there will be some action taken. Tyrone is undergoing some counseling. He definitely will miss the spring game, and he probably will miss at least the first game next year."

Senior leader an all-around champion at Big Eight meet

By Trevor Parks
Staff Reporter

Nebraska gymnast Dennis Harrison said he knew he had a chance to do well at Friday's Big Eight championships at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"I've been starting to build up my workouts and my routines," Harrison said. "I'm getting more and more confident with them each week."

Harrison not only helped Nebraska win its third consecutive Big Eight championship but

also won the all-around for the third straight year by scoring 57.625.

Nebraska men's gymnastics coach Francis Allen said Harrison was beginning to polish his performances.

"Dennis is starting to shine again," Allen said.

Harrison's numbers are looking bright nationally, too. The senior from Omaha is ranked fourth in the nation in the all-around with an average of 57.2167. He's also ranked fourth in the vault, 10th in the parallel bars, 11th in the pommel horse and 13th in the floor exercise.

At the Big Eight championships, the five-time All-American scored a career-best 9.9 — the highest score for Nebraska this year — in the parallel bars. That marked the second straight year that Harrison won both the all-around and the parallel bars at the Big Eight meet.

"I hit my peach basket mount better than I have done all year," Harrison said. "I felt pretty confident at that point."

Harrison went on to finish fifth in the floor exercise with a score of 9.725. He also finished fourth on both the rings and the vault.

With the NCAA regional meet in Colorado

Springs on April 9 and the NCAA championships in Lincoln on April 22-23, Harrison said he and his teammates didn't have a lot of time to savor their Big Eight title.

"We're still missing some things," he said. "We need to hit more routines. And we need to avoid the little things that were unnecessary on our routines."

Even though he has placed in the top three in the all-around six times this year, Harrison still has room for improvement, he said.

"This is definitely not the best I can do," he said. "I have a lot more left."

Final Four missing traditional powerhouse conferences

Something big seems to be missing from the NCAA tournament's Final Four this year.

Yes, the tournament has had its big upsets. Wisconsin-Green Bay stunned Cal and Jason Kidd on opening day. Tulsa surprised UCLA and then pulled off an even bigger upset by shooting down intrastate rival Oklahoma State in Oklahoma City.

Or how about Maryland over Massachusetts or Boston College over North Carolina and Indiana?

And we can't forget Pennsylvania's methodical dismantling of what appeared to be a peaking Nebraska team.

The tournament has also provided big plays, big excitement and some big near-misses.

The biggest upset of the tournament for me came when James Madison fell to Florida in the opening round, 62-60. I was sure the Gators

were going to be the first No. 3 seed to exit this season.

The College of Charleston had Wake Forest lost in the woods until it let the Demon Deacons.

Pepperdine almost got to send Michigan home with a pleasant wave goodbye in overtime. But the Wolverines' experience kept them in the tournament until they ran into Arkansas.

And Glenn Robinson showed that he was the best player in college basketball by going crazy in the early rounds of the tournament and pouring in 44 points against Kansas in the Southeast Regional Semifinal.

The Big Dance also has seen big drama after the dean of college coaches — Dean Smith — went into a rage when the Tar Heels' star point guard Derrick Phelps was dropped and knocked out with a concussion by an overzealous Boston College defender.



Jeff Griesch

Even more dramatic was the fight between Arkansas and Georgetown in the second round. Benches were cleared, players were ejected, and referees were suspended from any further tournament games.

And my personal favorite for best performance in a dramatic role goes to Lute Olson as the embittered coach of Arizona.

Lute's got a right to toot his own flute after his Wildcats achieved their season-long pursuit of the Final Four.

Sportswriters in the Tucson, Ariz., area have called for Olson's head

because the 'Cats made quick exits from the tourney the past two years. But those writers failed to give Olson credit for rebuilding a program that went 1-17 in the Pac-10 the year before he arrived and for winning more than 80 percent of his games since then.

While the tournament has had big upsets, drama and excitement, the Final Four lacks the "Big" conferences.

Despite solid runs, the Big Eight, Big Ten and Big East are all absent from the Final Four.

Ignoring, of course, the king of all conferences — the Atlantic Coast Conference — the Big Ten and Big Eight were supposed to be the best conferences from top to bottom in the country, with the Big East not too far behind.

The Big Ten sent seven teams to

the show while the Big Eight sent four and the Big East added six, but none of those 17 teams advanced to the last dance.

The Southeastern Conference, on the other hand, has two representatives in the Final Four, with Arkansas and surprising Florida heading to Charlotte.

Does any of this mean that these three conferences still weren't among the best in college basketball?

Of course not, it just shows that big pressure may be the best way to neutralize superior talent.

It's definitely a helluva lot harder to win when you're expected to than when you have nothing to lose — just ask the Huskers.

Griesch is a junior news-editorial major and is the Daily Nebraskan assistant sports editor.