

SPORTS

Wednesday, October 5, 1994

Page 7

Berringer proud of Saturday performance

By Derek Samson

Senior Reporter

When Brook Berringer dove across the goal line for a 5-yard touchdown run Saturday, he cut Wyoming lead to 21-14 just before halftime.

And that's all he cared about.

It was on that play that Berringer suffered a partially collapsed lung, but he finished the game and led Nebraska to a 42-32 victory despite the injury.

And he may finish the season as Nebraska's starting quarterback after Tommie Frazier's blood clot reappeared Tuesday.

Berringer, who was cleared by doctors Tuesday to play against Oklahoma State Saturday, said he didn't think his lung injury was very serious.

"When you watched the film, after the hit, you can tell I was a little bit stunned," he said. "I knew right away that something was wrong. It knocked the wind out of me a little bit, and when the guys stood me up I was just pretty excited about the touchdown."

"When I got to the sideline I had some pain in the ribs, but at that time I thought it was probably just some bruised ribs. I wasn't really worried about it."

Berringer came back in the second half to score two more touchdowns and finish the game with 74 yards rushing. He also threw for 131 yards on 15-of-22 passing.

"At halftime I was short of breath, but the pain wasn't all that severe," Berringer said. "It was sore, and since I've never had bruised ribs or cracked ribs, I just thought it was something along those lines. A collapsed lung never really

entered my mind."

Berringer said he didn't think about taking himself out for the second half. He wasn't about to play for only the first half in his first start ever at Nebraska.

"I thought I was just maybe a little bit banged up," he said. "I wasn't going to come out of the game. I wasn't telling them (coaches and team physicians) that I was hurt bad because I didn't think I was hurt bad. I just wanted to finish the game."

"I was happy that I finished the game. I thought I came out and did some things to get the job done in the second half. I was concerned about the game, and I just wanted to make sure we came out with a win."

Berringer said he hoped that by staying in the game after sustaining the injury that his teammates would have even more confidence

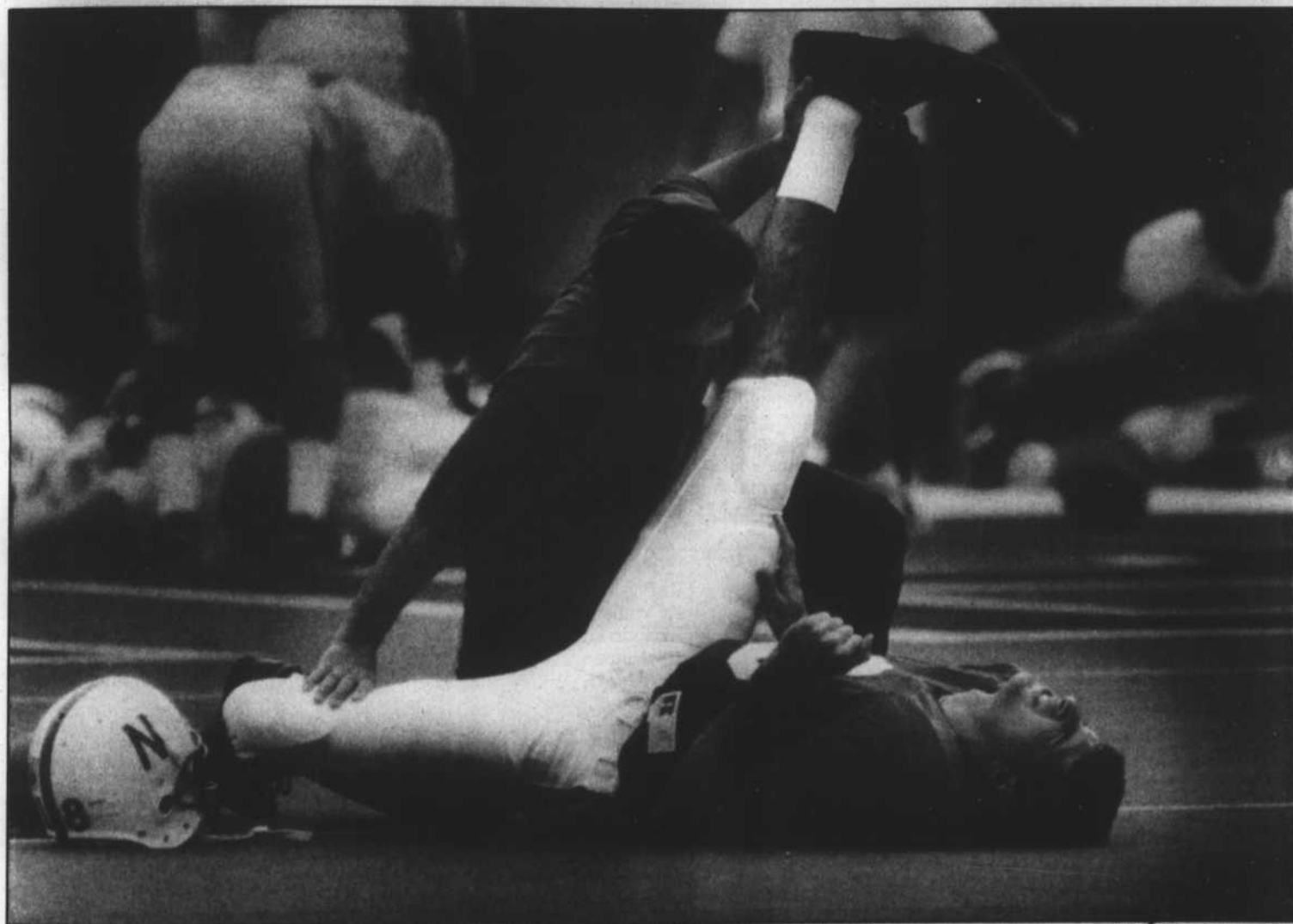
in him going into the remainder of the season without Frazier.

"Hopefully, they realize that I wanted to get down to business, and I was wanting to get the game won no matter what it took," he said. "I think we all came out a little bit flat, and we finally picked it up and showed we can come back and play through adversity."

"Hopefully, to my teammates I showed poise and leadership and showed I can play with pain. I hope that can carry through this week, and we can have a good week of practice so we can come out and play hard Saturday."

But as far as Nebraska's confidence in Berringer's ability, the junior quarterback said that was obvious before the game even started.

"Like I said before the game, I thought that everyone on the team had confidence in me," he said.



Michelle Paulman/DN

Nebraska quarterback Brook Berringer stretches with some help before practice Tuesday. Berringer practiced for the first time since he was hospitalized over the weekend for a partially collapsed lung.

Team's plague of injuries dominates talk

By Derek Samson

Senior Reporter

Brook Berringer should start Saturday against Oklahoma State.

And Tommie Frazier may not put on a Nebraska uniform for the rest of the season.

For the second week in a row, Nebraska coach Tom Osborne spent the majority of his weekly press conference answering questions on the status of his injured starting quarterbacks.

First, Frazier, and now Berringer.

This week, though, the report from Berringer's doctors Tuesday turned out to be the first good news in a while for Osborne, who said Berringer should start Saturday against Oklahoma State. Berringer spent Saturday night at Bryan Memorial Hospital with a partially collapsed lung.

"Brook Berringer has been cleared to practice, and I guess we'll just have to see what he can do," Osborne said. "He wasn't cleared to have contact, but we weren't planning any contact anyway. I assume unless something unusual develops he should be able to play Saturday."

But Osborne said Frazier's future wasn't quite as clear.

"I think it would be unrealistic to put a target date on when Tommie will play at this point," Osborne said. "That's really up in the air. There are a lot of factors that have to be considered. To say one date or another would be premature

See INJURIES on 8

Fans should worry about Frazier's health, not season

I was going to write this column about Tommie Frazier.

Tommie Frazier the football player. Tommie Frazier the hero who has captured the collective heart of the state of Nebraska. I wanted to write about Tommie the comeback kid. The Heisman Trophy candidate full of poise, resiliency and confidence. Tommie Frazier the winner.

But then last week I went to the hospital on the afternoon Frazier was scheduled to be released. I stood outside the revolving hospital door with a group of about 20 reporters, awaiting the exit of the star quarterback. But the young man who emerged from the hospital was not Nebraska's star quarterback.

Not then. He was a 20-year-old kid, 1,000 miles away from home, trying to recover from a serious injury.

Frazier walked slowly from the exit to his girlfriend's car, trying to look happy for the cameras. But he was scared—scared to think he might not play again and scared to think he hadn't seen the last of this injury. I stood there, and I was scared too. I

was scared to think what could have happened to Frazier. And I felt a little ashamed to be there watching him walk out of the hospital door.

Hadn't he had enough?

Frazier smiled, obviously relieved to be out of the hospital but not in any mood to talk to reporters. When I saw him, I understood that it wasn't important what this meant to the Huskers' dream-season chances. It wasn't important whether Tommie practiced in three days.

It wasn't important if he played against Colorado. And now it's not important if Tommie misses the entire season.

What is important is that he comes back when and if he feels comfortable—and when the doctors say it's safe.

Saturday, after backup Brook Berringer led the Huskers from behind to a win over Wyoming, Frazier sat in the south stadium lounge, where player interviews are conducted. But Tommie wasn't talking.

He sat and watched television as Colorado quarterback Kordell Stewart and the rest of the Buffs ran through, over and around the Texas defense.



Mitch Sherman

Maybe Tommie was thinking about Oct. 29, the day that those same Buffs will come to Memorial Stadium. By then Frazier was supposed to be back out on the field, running the option like a well-oiled machine.

Until Tuesday.

The blood clot found behind Frazier's knee on Tuesday morning all but put Tommie on the shelf for the remainder of the season.

Frazier is going to have to work toward next season. If doctors give him clearance to play again, then Nebraska fans will welcome Tommie back.

And if Frazier has proven anything in his two seasons as a Husker, he has proven that he is not a quitter.

So let's allow Tommie to decide. No Husker fans should pressure him into thinking he has some kind of an

obligation to play.

He will be there when he is ready, because Tommie Frazier is a winner.

Nobody knows about the pressure placed on Nebraska quarterbacks more than Turner Gill. Thirteen years ago, Gill was a 20-year-old quarterback, 600 miles away from home, when he went down with a nerve injury in his leg.

Doctors told him he had a 50 percent chance of ever walking again.

Gill had to sit and watch for almost two months as Nebraska narrowly missed a chance to win the national title, losing 22-15 to Clemson in the Orange Bowl.

Nebraska's star quarterback of the past lived a nightmare that eerily resembles what Frazier is going through right now.

Gill made it back in 1982, and he not only walked but also led the Huskers to 24 wins in the next two years.

"Yes, I was sad that I wasn't there for my teammates," Gill said of the Orange Bowl loss to Clemson. "But I was more concerned about my health and that I would be able to come back and walk again. If I was able to play

football again, that would be great."

Frazier, Gill said, has shown that he, too, has the right attitude to recover.

"Tommie's a tremendous person to go through what he has been through," Gill said. "He's a special guy that can handle it all. He has a strong heart and great character."

A 20-year-old shouldn't have to worry about football after sustaining such a serious injury, but unfortunately, Gill admitted, today's society demands it.

"It's unfortunate," he said, "but we put our athletes on a higher pedestal. We are really looked up to and put under a microscope."

A close examination of Frazier's spirit reveals that he will return if medically possible. And when he does, he will conquer a lot more teams. Just like he will overcome this blood clot.

How do I know?

Because Tommie Frazier is a winner.

Sherman is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and columnist.