

SPORTS

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Turman one hit away from No. 1 QB

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Reporter

Matt Turman is just a normal guy. The thing separating Turman from the rest of the students at Nebraska is that he is one slip, trip or hard hit away from being the Cornhuskers' No. 1 quarterback.

At 5-foot-9 and 165 pounds, Turman is hardly an imposing figure on the football field, but the sophomore from Wahoo said he was ready to play if needed.

"You always dream of playing at quarterback," he said, "and when you get the chance, you have to seize the opportunity."

As a result of Tommie Frazier's season-ending blood clot, Turman is listed at No. 2 on the depth chart behind Brook Berringer.

"You see him out there sometimes," quarterback coach Turner Gill said, "and he may

not look as good as Tommie Frazier in his quickness or Brook in throwing. But he gets the job done, and that's the bottom line."

Turman said that although he had a better chance of seeing extensive playing time at a smaller school, the decision to become a Cornhusker was not difficult.

"I could have went to Nebraska Wesleyan," he said. "Some other schools like Iowa State and Wyoming asked me to walk on. But I figured I might as well walk on for the best, somewhere I dreamed of going."

After redshirting in 1992, Turman switched from receiver to quarterback in the spring of 1993. Last year, he played in four games, throwing one pass and running the ball once. Both went for touchdowns.

"He's very, very productive in what he does," Gill said. "Can he move the football team, and can the team score when Matt Turman is in there? Yes, they can."

But the Husker coaches didn't think Turman could move the team at quarterback when he first came.

Recruited as a defensive back, Turman let it be known to the coaches he wanted to play offense. More specifically, he wanted to play

quarterback.

"I always wanted to play quarterback," Turman said. "But I was going to play wherever I could. Now that I am playing quarterback, I am a lot happier."

Turman, who has played in all five games this year, has completed three of four passes for 43 yards and one touchdown. He has run the ball six times for 37 yards.

"He has been in our program long enough that right now, Matt could go in there and run our offense and do an extremely good job for us," Gill said. "He has good quickness and has a good arm."

Monday, because of Berringer's lung injury, Turman took all the snaps with the No. 1 offense. Although he worked sparingly with the first string last week, Turman said Monday was his first extensive practice lined up behind the Huskers' renowned offensive line.

"The plays are all the same," he said. "So it's not that much different."

Turman, who holds the Nebraska quarterback record with 1,003 points in the strength index, is confident, too. And when asked how he would react to playing with the game on the line, he quickly said, "I'd love it."



With the injury to Tommie Frazier, Matt Turman has moved up to second on the depth chart behind Brook Berringer at quarterback.

18 Brook Berringer

6-4 210 Jr.

11 Matt Turman

5-11 165 So.

8 Adam Kucera

5-8 180 Fr.

10 Ryan Held

6-1 175 Fr.

Tony Veland, the starting free safety, has been taking snaps at quarterback.

DN Graphic



Turman

Frazier

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tus wasn't his major concern; Frazier's well-being was.

Osborne said the news that Frazier probably wouldn't return this season was a blow. He said he was sorry Frazier wasn't able to be with the team.

"This has been a little bit of a surprise," Osborne said. "We really thought that in a few weeks time, he'd have the chance to at least come back and play, and it looks like that's not going to happen now."

Gangahar said a small blood clot in a superficial vein behind Frazier's right calf caused the second blood clot to form just above his right knee.

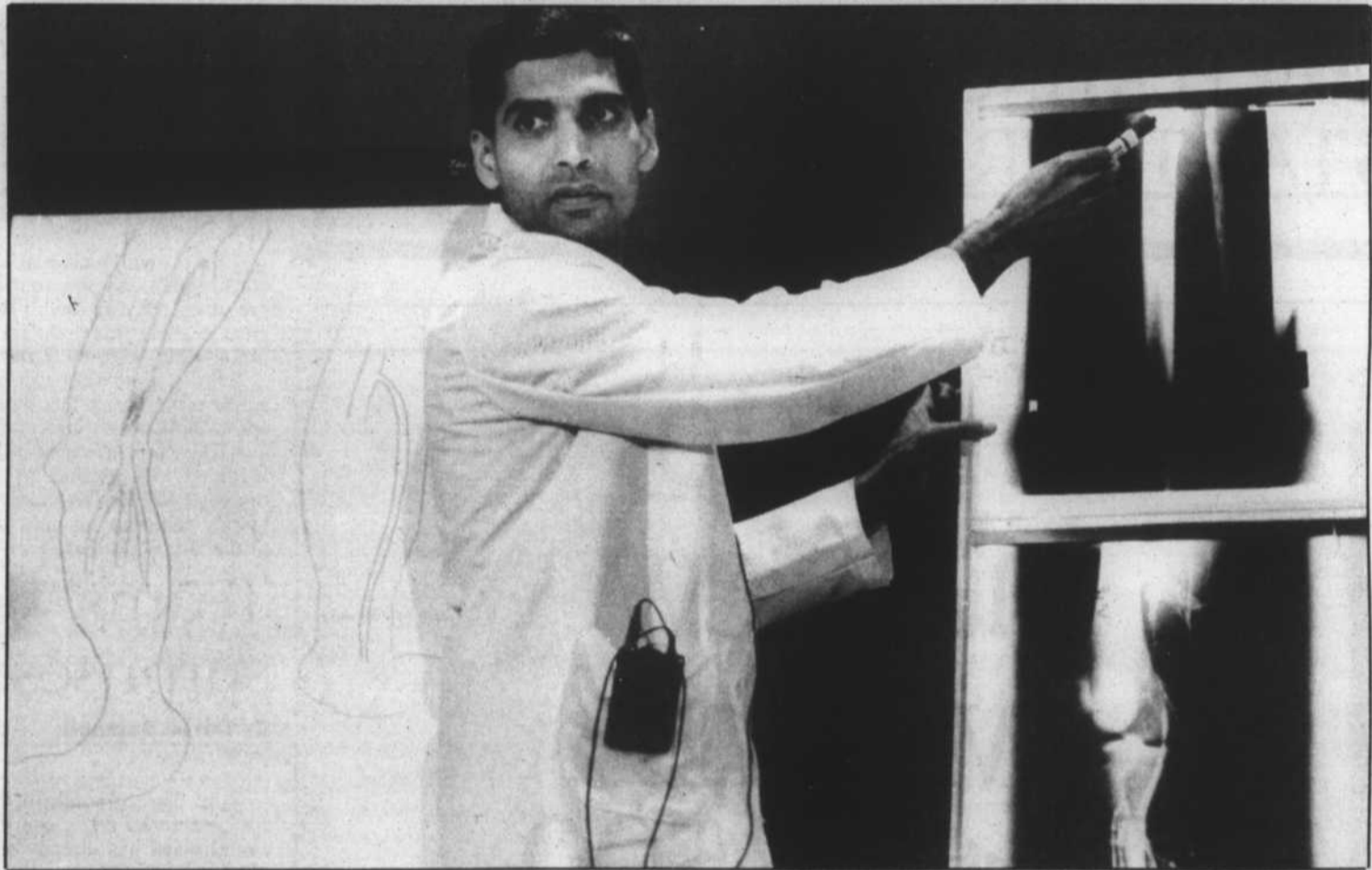
Frazier was readmitted to the hospital after he noticed the pain in his leg hadn't gone away.

"He looked quite good to me, but he did mention (while) running around the field, he felt an ache behind his right leg," Gangahar said. "There was the possibility of the reformation of the clot, and a dye test confirmed it."

Gangahar also was worried about how a person like Frazier could suffer an injury like this and what effects it might cause in the long run.

"Over the long haul, it can give him some problems," Gangahar said. "Ten to 15 years down the road, he may get sore legs, varicose veins and get tired walking."

Osborne said Nebraska would look into the possibility of getting Frazier a medical hardship, which would give him another season of eligibility.



Michelle Paulman/DN

Dr. Deepak Gangahar uses diagrams and X-rays to describe Tommie Frazier's blood clot at a press conference at Bryan Memorial Hospital Wednesday.

Dark-horse Huskers need to be hungry to win the title

Tommie is gone.

May he rest in peace.

The almighty god of the option, the thrower of lightning bolts that turned into touchdowns, the leader of the Nebraska offense that could put up points of biblical proportions, has passed.

Flags are flying at half-staff around the state as football fans mourn the passing of their hero and Nebraska's national championship hopes.

Take some deep breaths. Dry those eyes. Wipe that drippy nose. Run those flags back to the tops of the flagpoles and fly them with pride.

Tommie Frazier is not dead.

And neither are Nebraska's national championship hopes.

Frazier may not play again this season, but his absence may provide the unifying force the Cornhuskers need.

Before the game with Wyoming, Nebraska fans, and maybe even the Huskers, were taking wins for granted.

The Huskers weren't playing a 12-

game season; they were just practicing on Saturdays for another two-game campaign.

Opponents were just going to lie down and concede games to the unstoppable Huskers until Colorado came to town on Oct. 29.

If Nebraska could beat the Buffaloes, then it was just a matter of getting some calls and some breaks in the Orange Bowl, and the Huskers could make room in the trophy case for Tom Osborne's first national championship.

But Husker fans seemed to forget that more teams are in the Big Eight besides Colorado.

Frazier gave the opponents more credit than most Nebraska fans at the beginning of the season when he said the Huskers had to worry a little about Oklahoma, too.

But beating Kansas and Kansas State was a foregone conclusion, and neither Frazier nor any other Huskers were afraid to say it.

Nebraska's confidence was reassuring, but even more apparent was the loss of focus against Texas Tech,



Jeff Griesch

UCLA and Pacific.

Sure the Huskers won big, but they were flat. They were uninspired, and their emotion appeared to be forced.

The idea of taking it one game at a time last season and the emotion after every point or defensive stand both were gone.

As Nebraska's journey to the national championship game progressed last season, the Huskers won ugly.

They had to come from behind to win seven times, and it seemed like every game hung in the balance until the fourth quarter.

But last year's team had emotion. They had to work to win.

This season, with "Touchdown Tommie Frazier," it was just too easy. Now with Frazier gone for the sea-

son and the Big Eight season just getting under way, there are no more easy wins.

Brook Berringer and the Huskers will have to focus one game at a time and forget about the national championship for now.

Without Frazier, the Huskers are no longer a top contender for the national championship. They aren't even the top dog in the Big Eight.

Colorado has become a team of destiny, while the Huskers have become a tough-luck team that will have to wait until next year.

In the minds of many, Frazier was a one-man gang, and without him the Huskers are hopeless.

No respect.

Sound familiar?

Last year with a virtually unproven sophomore quarterback and a defense that was shredded by normally less than spectacular passing attacks, the Huskers cried for respect.

Now that cry should again be heard. The Huskers should rally around that cry once more.

The Huskers should realize that

Frazier is gone for the season and have faith that Berringer can do the job.

Berringer has proven that he can lead Nebraska, and with every snap, his confidence, along with his teammates' confidence in him, will grow.

But even more important than the play of Berringer will be the play of the defense.

Even with Frazier, Nebraska's national title hopes rested on the shoulder pads of the defense.

Now the defense will have to play harder, smarter and more emotionally than they showed last year.

They have the talent and the scheme; now if only they can find the right focus, the Huskers still have a chance.

Tuesday evening, the Huskers went from contender to dark horse.

And being a dark horse in the title hunt again should be exactly where the Blackshirts want to be.

Griesch is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter and columnist.