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International Greenback Exchange

Record-breaking I-back Sims ready to jump back into game

By **Derek Samson**
Senior Reporter

Even though Nebraska coaches may not know what school James Sims went to, where he's from or even how old he is, it didn't take them long to notice one important thing about Sims — he's very fast.



Sims

Sims, who will be a sophomore I-back next fall, is somewhat of a mystery.

He is listed on the spring depth chart as a 20-year-old Omaha Burke graduate.

Actually, Sims is 23, and he graduated in West Memphis, Ark., in 1989. Before moving to West Memphis for his senior year, Sims attended Omaha Central.

"I don't know why they put that I went to Burke," Sims said. "The only time I've ever been to Burke is to watch a football game."

But Sims does know how important this spring is, especially with many of Nebraska's I-backs sidelined with injuries.

And that's why Sims said it was so frustrating for him to sit out of Saturday's scrimmage with a hip flexor.

"Spring ball is really important because I have a lot to learn," Sims said. "After I tested well, the coaches want to get me into the thick of things because they felt I had some talent and could help the team."

"It's up to me to get in here this

spring and learn the things as fast as I can. I need to get back in there."

Sims, who redshirted last year, returned to Omaha the day after his high school graduation. He spent the next three years in Omaha and Milwaukee before deciding to go to school and give football a shot.

"It took me that amount of time to get my life in focus and figure out what I wanted to do, which was go to school, play football and get my degree," he said. "I'm on financial aid, ... there is one thing for sure — I'm going to get my degree before I leave here."

Sims said he contacted the Nebraska coaches at the end of the 1993 season and was told he could come for a tryout in January 1994.

Nebraska strength and conditioning coach Boyd Epley said Sims' arrival and performance were unexpected.

"He came into the program in January and posted some outstanding scores," Epley said. "He was quite a surprise."

Sims said he realized the opportunity to play I-back at Nebraska would be limited, but it was a way to prove people wrong again.

"A lot of people didn't think I'd go back to school after I didn't go right away out of high school," he said. "A lot of people doubted me and said 'You can't go to Nebraska. Those guys are too big.' All the doubters is what keeps me driving forward. I'm still on a mission."

"When I'm pushed to my best, that is when I excel," he said.

Sims made a believer out of the coaches after winter conditioning this

"But right now, I'm faster than I've ever been. So I guess I don't look like an old man or anything."

JAMES SIMS
Nebraska I-back

year.
The 6-foot-1, 204-pounder ran a 4.48 in the 40-yard dash, a 1.48 in the 10-yard dash, had a 38-inch vertical and scored 2,914 points in the performance index, an all-time I-back record at Nebraska and the third-best score of all time for any position.

Sims said the impressive test scores just came naturally.

"I just get out there and run," he said. "It seems natural to me. A lot of people think that it's something special, but I just get out there and run hard."

And as long as he's given his shot, Sims doesn't care how old people think he is.

"A lot of these guys think I'm a freshman and that I'm the same age they are," he said. "I don't tell them any different. I don't feel like an old man. After all this time, people didn't think I'd be able to come back and run. But right now, I'm faster than I've ever been. So I guess I don't look like an old man or anything."

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