

Finding enough balls to carry problem for talented backfield

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

Nebraska running backs coach Frank Solich doesn't have to worry about who wants to carry the football — he just has to find a way to keep everyone happy.

But Solich said he was glad that was his biggest concern.

"We are probably as deep at full-back as we are at I-back with quality players," Solich said. "It's a situation where everyone is going to have to perform this fall."

At I-back Heisman Trophy candidate Lawrence Phillips begins his second season as the Cornhuskers' starter.

Phillips rushed for 143.5 yards per game and totaled 1,722 yards with 16 touchdowns last season.

But the I-back spot doesn't end with Phillips.

Damon Benning returns as Phillips' back up after finishing as the team's fourth-leading rusher in 1994 with 367 yards.

Benning said the depth and competition between the I-backs was healthy.

"Everybody in a positive way is always looking over their shoulder," Benning said. "It's a situation where you have to take care of yourself, but you have to know if you're not getting the job done there is always somebody else who will."

Solich said the situation reminded him of last season.

Sizing up the defense

Jared Tomich	LOLB	6-2, 250	Junior	St. John, Ind.
Christian Peter	Nose	6-2, 290	Senior	Locust, N.J.
Jason Peter	Tackle	6-4, 275	Sophomore	Locust, N.J.
Grant Wistrom	ROLB	6-5, 230	Sophomore	Webb City, Mo.

Player to watch - Mike Rucker, ROLB

"Last year we had a lot of guys who were vying for the No. 1 spot, and they stayed very team oriented," Solich said.

Behind Benning, Todd Uhlir and James Sims could also see action in 1995.

Solich said he was pleased with the depth.

"Any school would love to have the depth at I-back that we have," Solich said. "If one goes down ... you're able to put in another one with the similar abilities to keep things going."

The most talked about of the young Nebraska backs is freshman Ahman Green.

Solich said Green had avoided putting added pressure on himself so far, and he hoped Green could continue to handle the pressure well.

To relieve the numbers at the I-back position, Clinton Childs could play fullback and I-back, Solich said.

"We hope that he's retained a lot from this past spring at running the fullback spot," Solich said. "At some

point in time we'd like to give him a few snaps at I-back."

A stream of talented fullbacks has added to the logjam in the backfield.

Senior Jeff Makovicka should replace Cory Schlesinger.

Makovicka rushed for 321 yards on 47 carries and scored two touchdowns.

Behind Makovicka, Brian Schuster and Childs should see significant playing time.

Solich said Makovicka made himself a proven player last season and should succeed in 1995.

"We expect last season to carry over this year," Solich said. "When players are talented and have a great work ethic, things work out for them."

Makovicka's brother Joel should also make an impact.

Mike Smith and Chris Norris round out the fullback position.

Phillips said the leader of the running backs was Makovicka, which was fine with Phillips.

"The senior usually assumes the leadership role," Phillips said. "That's the same with the backs."



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