

SPORTS OPINION



Jeff Griesch

"We want our names on the last Big Eight championship trophy."

MIKE MINTER

Nebraska rover

End of Big 8 will bring few real changes

Goodbye, Big Eight.

Hello, Big 12.

So, what's the big deal?

Since spring football began, sports writers and other members of the media have been babbling the same question over and over again to players and coaches.

"Does it mean anything special to you to be playing for the last Big Eight title?"

The coaches have been cordial, and the players have been courteous, colorful and even nostalgic at times.

Mike Minter seemed to speak for every Nebraska player or even every Big Eight player.

"We want our names on the last Big Eight championship trophy," Minter said.

All this talk makes for good quotes, good print and good soundbytes, but is this really going to be the death of the Big Eight Conference?

The Big Eight presents a comprehensive list of all its football champions since 1907 on page 51 in this year's conference media guide.

The heading on page 51: "Big Eight Football Championship List."

The sub-headings: "Missouri Valley", "Big Six", "Big Seven" and "Big Eight."

Wait a second.

The Big Eight sports information department has been claiming that this is the 89th year of the Big Eight.

The Big Eight media guide says that Nebraska has won or tied for 40 Big Eight titles.

But this is really only the 38th year of the Big Eight.

From 1907 to 1927 it was the Missouri Valley.

From 1928 to 1947 it was the Big Six.

From 1948 to 1957 it was the Big Seven.

And since 1958, it has been the Big Eight.

What's the difference between adding a team in these years and adding four teams next season?

The core of the conference remains the same, just like it has the past 88 years.

So, who cares if the Huskers are playing for the last Big Eight title this season, and the first Big 12 title next season. They're both conference championships.

In 20 years, their championship listings will be right next to each other in the Big 12 media guide.

This year's Big Eight championship won't even be worthy of an asterisk in the record book.

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

NU wants 66 players to travel

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Editor

Between 20 and 25 players who would normally travel to the Nebraska football team's first game may be left at home when the team leaves for Stillwater, Okla., Wednesday.

Tuesday morning, faculty athletic representatives from each of the Big Eight schools will hold a conference call to decide whether Nebraska will be allowed to take 60 or 66 players to Oklahoma State.

"The conference rule has been for years and years that you can only take 60 players on the road to conference games," said James O'Hanlon, Nebraska's faculty representative.

But once Big 12 conference play begins next fall, O'Hanlon said, 66 players will be allowed to travel to both non-conference and conference road games. O'Hanlon said Nebraska would ask to take 66 players to Stillwater.

"If we are going to do it next year,"

"We will request a few extra players because of the fact that it is an early game, and a lot of people in the Big Eight are benefiting financially from our playing."

TOM OSBORNE

Nebraska football coach

O'Hanlon said, "why not do it this year?"

Six of the eight faculty representatives must vote for the six-man extension in order for it to be approved.

Thursday's Oklahoma State game originally was scheduled to be played Oct. 7. The game was moved to Aug. 31, so it could be televised on ESPN.

About 85 players traveled to Nebraska's first road game a year ago, a 31-0 victory over West Virginia in the Kickoff Classic Aug. 28.

But an extension for a non-conference game is much more likely to be granted than an extension for a conference game, Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Byrne said.

Instead of requiring the approval of the entire league, a school must only receive permission from its faculty representative to extend its travel roster for non-conference games.

That rule will change when Big 12 play begins. Instead of being allowed to take extra players on the road to non-league games, only 66 players will be allowed to travel to all road

games, Byrne said.

Byrne said he was upset with the ruling. He said Nebraska was the only Big 12 school that voted in favor of allowing more than 66 players to travel to non-conference games.

"We lost on a 1-11 vote," Byrne said, "and it makes no sense why someone should care what we are going to travel to Notre Dame in a couple of years. We should be able to take as many people as we think to open the season in 2000, when we open the season with Notre Dame."

Since Nebraska is opening its season against a conference foe for the first time in 47 years, Husker coach Tom Osborne said the request for extra players was justified.

"We will request a few extra players because of the fact that it is an early game," Osborne said, "and a lot of people in the Big Eight are benefiting financially from our playing. We may get a 'no.' We are ready to do what-

See TRAVEL on 11

Berringer has his sights set on starting

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Nebraska quarterback Brook Berringer seems immune to harmful effects of change.

He doesn't think his ability to lead Nebraska in convincing fashion to seven victories and a national championship has affected him much.

He also doubts that starting the season as Tommie Frazier's backup — after battling for the starting job since January — changed him.

But he hopes the coaches aren't afraid of changes.

"Obviously, I'm not happy to be a backup," Berringer said. "I wanted to start, and it's going to be my goal to try to earn the starting position every game."

"I'm happy that I'll get that opportunity in the first half, to do what I can. I'll just try to execute and move the offense to the best of my ability."

"I'm not going to worry about how he (Frazier) is playing. I can't change what has happened up to this point. I'll just go out and play the best I can."

Berringer said he didn't feel much different than he did last year at this time — when his role as a backup seemed etched in stone.

"My attitude is basically the same," Berringer said. "I want to be the starting quarterback, and I want to do whatever it takes to be there. I've been working hard the whole time, and I won't change that."

And Berringer said the competition with Frazier had not ruined his commitment to his team.

"My attitude is team-orientated," Berringer said. "We're all out here with the common goal that we want to win the national championship."

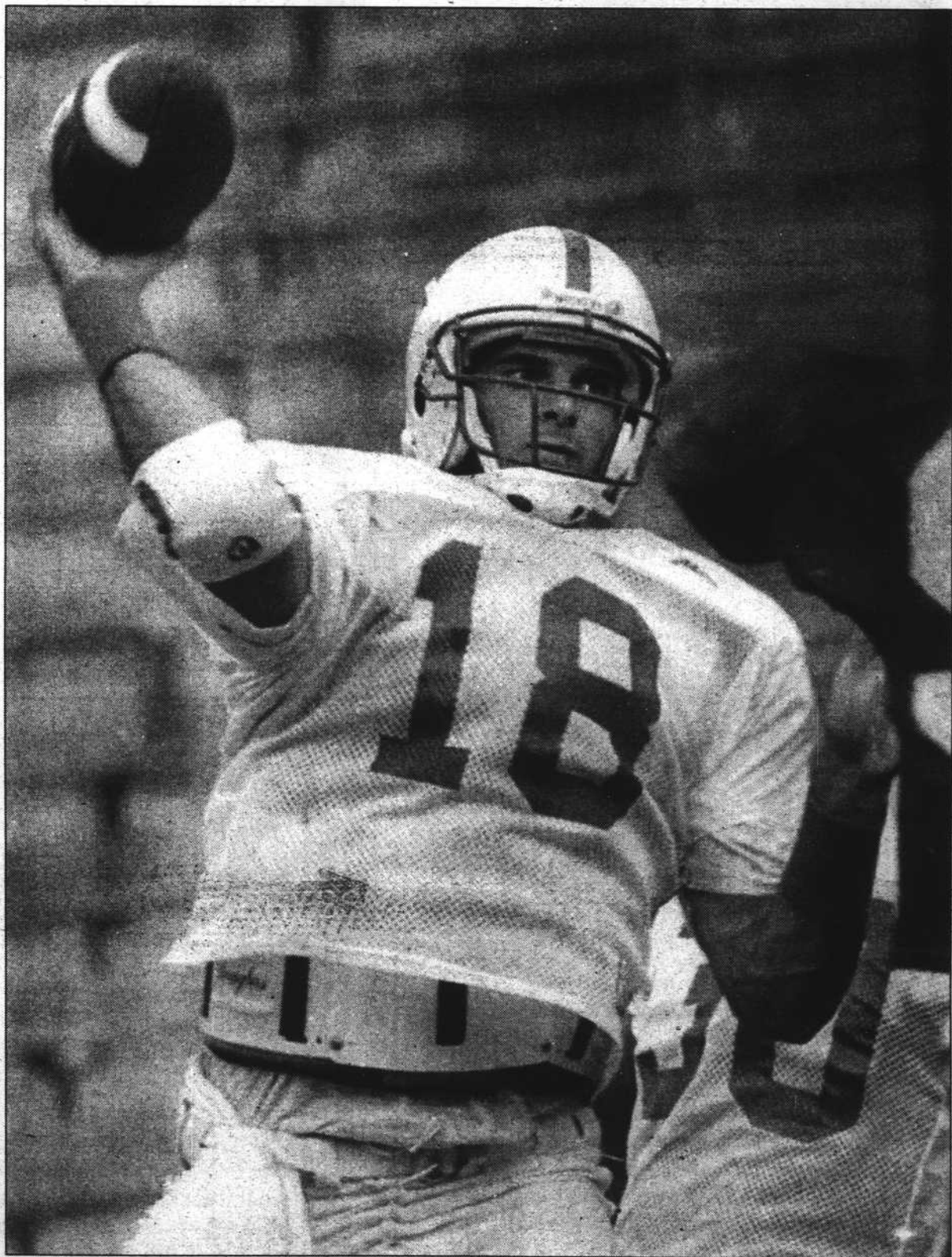
"Whatever role I play, as long as we win it, would be satisfactory to me. Obviously, I want to play as much as I can and help the team."

"But I'm not selfish enough to say it won't be sweet if we win the national championship, but I don't play as much as I want. That's the number one goal."

In his attempt to make himself a better candidate for the starting quarterback job, Berringer said he worked hard during the offseason and improved his overall ability.

"I think I've improved a little in my passing, but the most significant thing is that I feel I'm a much better runner," Berringer said. "My speed is a little bit better, but I've put on 15 pounds from last year. I think that makes me a tougher runner."

Berringer, a senior from Goodland, Kan., said Coach Tom Osborne's announcement Thursday that Frazier



Scott Bruhn/DN

Nebraska backup quarterback Brook Berringer sets and throws during practice Sunday.

would start in the opener wouldn't be the last people would hear of him.

"It's not over, said and done," Berringer said. "I'll be out there trying to win the job every game. We'll just see what happens, but I'll battle my

hardest."

And he warned that just because the starter has been named, the hype into the starting quarterback situation was probably far from over.

"I'm looking forward to going out

and playing, but I don't think it will put anything to rest," Berringer said. "It probably will just bring out more talk, depending on what happens. I'm not worried about all that. I can put all that aside and just go out and play."