

SPORTS OPINION



Todd Walkenhorst

Ripken has earned chance to set record

The countdown is on. It's been on for about five years. It seems inevitable.

In eight games Cal Ripken will own Major League Baseball's record for consecutive games played.

I'm not going to be like other columnists who have suggested that Cal should sit after his 2,130th game and share a prestigious record with one of the true greats of the game.

Ripken has earned this record and should be proud of it because it is one of the few records he will actually hold when his career is over.

You see, Ripken will never be remembered for his lifetime batting average, but he will be remembered for his 12 straight All-Star appearances.

Some people, including me, may frown on Ripken's "vacations" during the streak thanks to strikes. Eight weeks off last year may not seem like a big deal, but Lou Gehrig never got a break.

It's been well-documented that Cal has gone beyond the call of duty this season, signing hundreds of autographs after every game.

In a year when darkness has fallen over the game, Ripken has offered a glimpse of light.

Not only has he worn the hat with the orange bird on it, but he has also worn the hat of a public relations director for the Orioles and all of baseball.

I planned all summer to write a column this week about why Ripken should not break Gehrig's record; why he should never see the Hall of Fame without paying admission.

I did research all summer, looking up numbers, comparing and contrasting. There was no controversy that Gehrig was a much better ballplayer, at least offensively.

But the more I read about Ripken, the more I searched for trash about him. I'd always come up empty.

All I could find were stories about how he gave his hat to a youngster after a game on the road. Other stories would tell about his charity foundation, and the impact he was making on Baltimore.

The more I read, the more my attitude changed.

Cal Ripken is one of the classiest players in the game, but you may not know it because he is not a flamboyant figure in the media.

On Sept. 6, the record should fall. It's not a done deal, but I'm pulling for him.

He's so close now; what could stop him?

A concussion, a broken leg or two?

Probably not.

Walkenhorst is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan sports reporter.

Phillips eligible despite investigation

By Dave Zelio
Associated Press Writer

OMAHA — Nebraska running back Lawrence Phillips can play against Oklahoma State Thursday and in other games despite a continuing NCAA investigation, the NCAA's director of eligibility said Tuesday.



Phillips
Carrie Doyle said the NCAA determined that Phillips' lunch with an employee of California sports agent Steve Feldman would not affect his eligibility.

The NCAA continues to investigate two other issues involving Phillips, Doyle said. One involves the 1995 Mustang convertible Phillips has been driving.

Doyle would not identify the other issue, but the University of Nebraska has provided the NCAA with infor-

mation about Phillips' status as a ward of the state of California.

"He can play until the institution and legislative services determines that there are violations," Doyle said.

Doyle said Phillips' play would not result in the forfeiture of any games if violations were found.

"As long as the institution acts in good faith to develop the information, it doesn't seem to me that they will be held responsible," Doyle said.

Phillips has said that Jack Verner, a recruiter for Feldman, contacted him. Verner gave Phillips a ride to a Lincoln restaurant and paid for the meal last November, both of which were potential violations of the NCAA's extra-benefits rule.

Nebraska officials reported the lunch to the NCAA, which had contacted the school after learning that a Feldman employee had been in Lincoln.

Nebraska officials have said Phillips repaid Verner about \$20 for Phillips' portion of the meal. Since the

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CARRIE DOYLE

NCAA director of eligibility

money was repaid, Doyle said, the incident was considered minor.

"It's not that it's hunky-dory, but we try to look at a situation and impose similar conditions that we have imposed in the past," she said.

The NCAA's legislative services division, which determines if incidents are violations of NCAA rules, continues to work on the other two issues, Doyle said.

Legislative services director Steve Mallonee has declined comment, saying only that the case is under review.

Al Papik, Nebraska's associate athletic director in charge of compliance, said the school sent the NCAA information about the convertible, which Phillips has driven since January.

The owners of a group home in Phillips' hometown of West Covina, Calif., have said they leased it for him. Nebraska has provided information on Phillips' relationship with Tina McElhannon, the head of the group home.

The state of California was Phillips' official guardian beginning at the age of 12.

No. 2 fullback Schuster keeps low profile

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Editor

Think quick. Where is Brian Schuster listed on the Nebraska football depth chart?

If you didn't know the right answer — No. 2 at fullback — don't worry. You were in the majority.

But you may not be for long. Schuster, a junior from Fullerton, is the least visible of the Cornhuskers' top four fullbacks.

"I am kind of confused on the whole subject. I thought I was going to have a no-interview policy this year," Schuster said, "because no one has ever wanted to talk to me. It's been kind of a joke to me."

In his career as a Husker, Schuster, whose 7.5 yards a carry average last year was first on the team, said he had been interviewed once.

"That was for the Grand Island paper," he said, "and they do a story on every area guy."

Schuster enjoys the low profile. "I guess it's kind of a good thing that no one knows me," he said, "I wouldn't want to be somebody like Brook (Berringer) or Tommie (Frazier) that can't go anywhere or even have a meal."

Schuster follows senior Jeff Makovicka on the depth chart, and is listed ahead of redshirt freshman Joel Makovicka and senior Clinton Childs.

Once the off-season ends, Schuster's anonymity may suffer the same fate. As the No. 2 fullback in a run-oriented offense, Schuster said he figured to see plenty of action this fall.

"I assume Jeff will start and play the first two or three series," Schuster said. "If he gets banged up, I'll go in and play a series or two. We are all just trying to get on the field and help the team. If I was listed fourth instead of second, and I deserved it, I would just do what it took to help the team."

A year from now, Schuster will be in line to take over the starting fullback spot. But 5-foot-11, 220-pounder



Jon Waller/DN

Nebraska fullback Brian Schuster pushes a defender aside during a drill in practice Monday.

said he wasn't thinking ahead that far.

"Jeff did a really good job filling in for Cory (Schlesinger) last year," Schuster said. "If Jeff is not having a good game, I can come come in and help. If I am the starter next year, not saying that I am going to be, getting in the game this year when it's on the line will help me out."

Since the Huskers' 24-17 Orange Bowl win over Miami, a game in which Schlesinger scored two fourth-quarter touchdowns to secure the national title, Schuster said he had noticed an increased awareness of the fullback.

"We have always had the talent there," Schuster said, "but no one really noticed it until he scored the two

touchdowns. I have really noticed it. Even in practice, it seems like we get a lot more opportunities to carry the ball."

This year's batch of fullbacks, he said, has the ability to be as good as any group in school history.

"What that translates to on the field," Schuster said, "is yet to be seen."

Big Eight lets NU take 66 players to OSU

From Staff Reports

The Nebraska football team picked up an early win over the Big Eight.

The Big Eight ruled that the Cornhuskers could travel with 66 players instead of the normal 60 players for Thursday night's season opener against Oklahoma State.

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said he was surprised and pleased by the conference's decision.

"It was unexpectedly good news," Osborne said. "I was thinking that we might have to live with 60. Of course with the heat and all the two-a-days, having six more players is pretty welcomed."

Osborne said he didn't know if the Big Eight would allow the Huskers to travel with 66 players the rest of the season.

"One of the more ludicrous things is to have an airplane with 95 seats and three buses, and you have a whole bunch of empty seats," Osborne said. "It probably only costs an extra 50 or

60 dollars a person to take them on the trip."

Osborne said second-team I-back Damon Benning practiced Tuesday, but wasn't at full speed. Benning has been hindered by a hamstring injury.

NOTE:

● The Huskers released their 66-man travel roster after practice Tuesday. The roster included 67 players.