

# Unseasoned offensive line proving capability

By Mitch Sherman  
Senior Editor

Tommie Frazier figures he is qualified to pass judgment on the Nebraska offensive line.

The senior quarterback last year called signals behind a Cornhusker line considered by many to be the greatest ever.

And now, in his fourth year as a starter, Frazier stands behind an inexperienced group of linemen, only one of whom has ever started in a Nebraska uniform.

But after one game with the new line, Frazier said he did not notice any drop-off from last season.

"I knew what they could do," Frazier said. "It was just time for them

to go out there and show everyone else what they could do."

Frazier said the play of Chris Dishman, Aaron Taylor, Aaron Graham, Steve Ott and Eric Anderson was every bit as impressive as that of the 1994 offensive line.

"They were able to go out there and show everybody that you could forget last year's line," Frazier said. "This is a new year, and we focus on the line we have this year."

A year ago, behind the dominating play of Graham, Rob Zatechka, Zach Wiegert, Brendan Stai and Joel Wilks, the Huskers rumbled for a nation-leading 340 yards a game.

"They may not be as big," Frazier said, "but to me, they seem faster, and in some areas, they probably know

more than last year's line."

Three members of the 1994 group are now playing in the National Football League. Zatechka is with the New York Giants; Wiegert is playing for the St. Louis Rams; and Stai is a Pittsburgh Steeler.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said he never doubted the ability of the 1995 line.

"I felt during spring ball that we would be a decent offensive line," Osborne said. "I felt during fall camp that we had a chance to be a very good offensive line. I wouldn't say that we are great yet, but these guys are great athletes."

Last week, playing its first game as the No. 1 unit, the offensive line paved the way for 517 yards rushing, includ-

ing nearly 200 yards on the ground during a 30-point second quarter.

Osborne said depth at the line spots was a major concern before last spring. But the emergence of several backups — most notably junior tackle Adam Treu — has allowed Osborne to relax when the second-team is inserted.

"Overall, it's a pretty good group right now," Osborne said.

Frazier said it was a group capable of leading Nebraska's backfield to another rushing title — and another national title.

"Whenever someone says there are question marks at some positions, you are going to want to go out and prove them wrong," said Frazier, who ran for 65 yards and a touchdown on 10 carries in the Huskers' season-open-

ing 43-point win.

"They have taken that attitude that people don't believe they can get the job done. Now it's time for them to go out there and prove people wrong, just like we had to do last year."

### NOTE:

● No. 2 I-back Damon Benning missed practice Tuesday. Benning, who pulled a hamstring last week, reaggravated the injury during Nebraska's 64-21 win over Oklahoma State on Thursday. Defensive tackle Jason Jenkins (sore ankle) also was held out. Osborne said split end Brendan Holbein left practice early after falling on his elbow during a drill.

## UOP

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Pacific took a 3-0 lead in the second game before the Huskers rallied. After tying the game at five, Nebraska scored six straight points and nine of the next 10 to take a 14-6 lead.

But Nebraska could not put the Tigers away. Pacific fought off four

more game points and closed Nebraska's lead to 14-10. The Huskers prevailed on an Allison Weston service ace.

In the third game, the Huskers put the Tigers away in 15 minutes after jumping out to a 10-0 lead.

The closest Pacific came was 13-3 after a block by Dominique Benton-Bozman. The Huskers scored their 14th point on a tip by Weston, and

Nebraska ended the match with Winsett's 17th kill.

Pettit said winning on the road would help build confidence in his team.

"Road trips are good particularly early in the season because they allow you to focus almost entirely on what you are doing," Pettit said. "We're not going there for a vacation; we are going there to prepare for a match."

## Washington

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— either drugs or stealing ... The essence is, if you talk to people on the team and people that know him, Riley has never had the reputation of being someone to carry a weapon."

Osborne said what Washington and Muhammad had accomplished in the classroom also discredited the gang member label.

"Riley is a decent student — he has a 2.7 GPA and is scheduled to graduate in May," Osborne said. "Abdul will graduate in December, which will be four and a half years. Considering where Abdul came from (Compton, Calif.), that's pretty good. Not many people from his area graduate from college or even go to college."

Osborne said the hearing would decide whether the case should go to trial, which probably would not be until the spring.

That puts Osborne in a tough situation.

"You might say that it is a tragic

thing that a young man that shot somebody is allowed to play football," he said. "On the other hand, it is a tragic thing if the young man didn't do anything, and he is denied the right to play for a full year. That could happen too."

But Osborne said he wanted to be 100 percent confident in Washington's innocence before playing him in a game.

"He's not going to be allowed to play until we have some more clear-cut evidence," he said. "Maybe the hearing in some way will shed some more light on it. There is an awfully good chance that it won't."

"But as I said, all we ever heard for the first four or five days was one side of the story. I was a little upset that everyone was so willing to give such a great audience to strictly one side. To my knowledge, Abdul and Willis were never interviewed until five or six days after the event. That doesn't make sense."

Osborne said he wanted to make sure people started weighing both sides of the incident before making any judg-

ments.

"The reason I'm saying this is that most of what I've seen and heard so far has been very negative," he said. "I just want to make sure that there are some things out there that are factual, and people look at that. I'm not saying he's innocent and I'm not saying he's guilty, but I think it is wise for people to sit back and look at all the charges and who is bringing them forward."

Osborne said the latest incidents surrounding Nebraska football players shouldn't scar the entire program.

"In coaching today, you're dealing with young people, and we have about 140 or 150 players on our squad," he said. "Probably 99 percent of them are on track most all of the time. But there will be episodes when you're dealing with young people. We try to eliminate as many of them as we can."

"We just deal with it the best we can. I don't know that we're a model for anybody. We hope that we do more right than wrong. We're certainly as subject to problems as anybody else."

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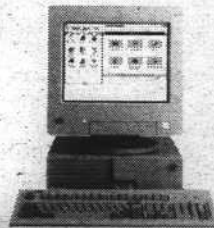


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