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Husker linebacker faces trials in life as well as on the field

By Mike Kluck
 Staff Reporter

No matter how big an opposing lineman is or how fast an opposing back is, Nebraska linebacker Ryan Terwilliger already has faced his greatest challenge.

A senior on this year's Cornhusker squad, Terwilliger's greatest challenge came last season when he was the keynote speaker at the national championship celebration in his hometown of Grant.

Terwilliger said although he didn't mind speaking in public, returning to his hometown and giving the address was a little more difficult than he expected.

"It was a little nerve-racking for me because I knew most of those kids," Terwilliger said. "A lot of my former teachers were there and some of the kids I knew, so that made me a little nervous."

The challenge for Terwilliger was after the speech when he went to the

classrooms of his former school and talked to the students.

Terwilliger said he was surprised about some of the questions the younger kids asked, including some about whether he had a girlfriend and how tall he was and if he liked school. Very few of the questions had to deal with football or the Huskers' recent championship.

Now, however, Terwilliger's full concentration is on the game he loves to play and hopefully someday coach. Terwilliger is majoring in secondary education and hopes to teach and coach in a school system after graduation.

But first for Terwilliger and the Huskers is Missouri, which faces Nebraska in a 1 p.m. contest at Memorial Stadium on Saturday.

Tiger coach Larry Smith said that after Missouri's 30-0 loss to Kansas State last Saturday, the Tigers were going to revamp their offense.

But this announcement has not affected Nebraska's preparation,

Terwilliger said.

"We kind of go into it just preparing for what we've seen them do," Terwilliger said. "If they switch their offense though, we're just going to have to adjust on the run. We're just going to have to go with what they have now and adapt."

Adapting has not been tough for Terwilliger as he had to replace All-American and Butkus Award finalist Ed Stewart at the WILL linebacker spot.

Terwilliger is second on the team in tackles with 22 and has four tackles for losses. In the Huskers' 50-10 victory over Michigan State, Terwilliger had a season-best six tackles, including one for a loss.

Since Missouri has been a run-oriented team, Terwilliger said he was looking forward to the game more because of the potential to make more plays.

"I hope as a linebacking unit," Terwilliger said, "not only me, but as a unit, we step our game up a little bit this week and continue to get better."

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Thursday
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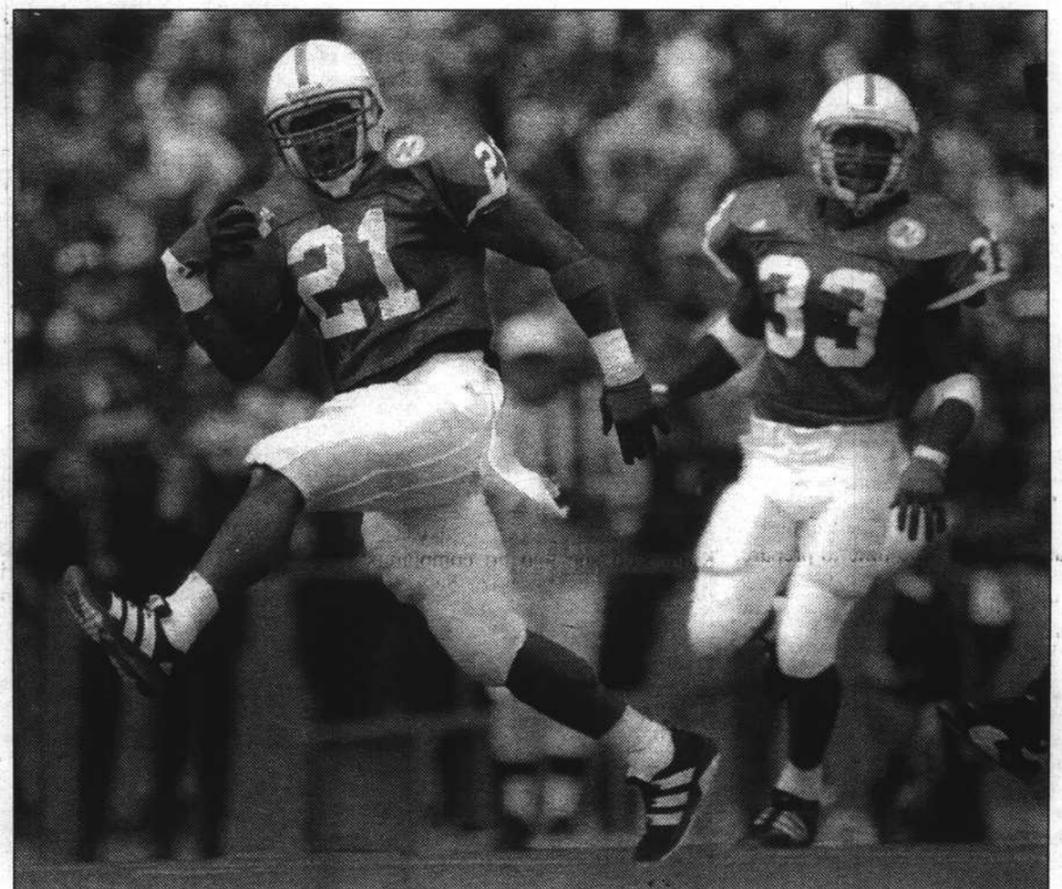
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Jeff Haller/DN

Nebraska I-back Damon Benning is battling with freshman Ahman Green for the starting nod against Missouri Saturday.

Starting I-back still undecided

By Derek Samson
 Senior Reporter

Freshman I-back Ahman Green has improved, impressed and increased his position on the I-back depth chart.



Green

But that doesn't mean he will start.

Green was listed as the co-No. 1 I-back, along with junior Damon Benning, and Osborne said he would wait until later this week to name a starter for Saturday's game with Missouri. "We're not trying to play games with anybody, but I don't think it makes much difference what kind of offense we run, as to who is playing I-back," Osborne said. "We just want to look at them in practice a couple more days. They'll both play a lot, and we want to work Clinton (Childs) in there because he's a very good football player."

Childs, a senior, started in Nebraska's third game of the season — a 77-28 win over Arizona State — and rushed for 143 yards. But he left the game early with a

strained knee, and has not returned since.

"I can't say he will be where he was when we played Arizona State, but I think he'll be well enough to play," Osborne said. "It will be nice to get him back on the field. I doubt if he'll go into the game any higher than third on the depth chart, but we want to get him in the game."

Benning took over the starting job, but has been hampered in his two starts by injuries to his hamstring and ankle.

Osborne said Benning had returned to old form, and he wouldn't be punished for injuries.

"Damon Benning has a little more experience, and has been practicing full-time for the last 10 days," he said. "He was only practicing about half the time for the better part of two weeks, and that will affect anybody. If you don't get that repetition, you're just not as sound in what you're doing. So he certainly deserves to play, and he may, or may not, start."

But Green, who was preparing for a high school game at Omaha Central one year ago, has made the biggest strides.

"Ahman has always had great ability, but he's really improved his grasp of the offense," Osborne

said. "He makes fewer mistakes, he's a lot more confident and he's a lot more physical. At first, he was a lot more tentative because he wasn't real sure what he should be doing."

"The last two or three weeks, we've seen a lot more confident and aggressive player. I thought he showed a lot of toughness against Washington State."

Green rushed for 176 yards against the Cougars, who had the fourth-best rushing defense in the country.

On the season, Green has 525 yards on 51 carries (10.3 yards a carry), seven touchdowns and a 105-yard average per game. His 525 yards ranks third in the Big Eight, even though he hasn't started a game.

NOTE:

• Quarterback Brook Berringer, linebacker Phil Ellis and split end Kenny Cheatham all missed practice Wednesday with injuries.

Osborne said Berringer's status for Saturday's game against Missouri was unknown.

"We'll see what he can do (Thursday)," Osborne said. "We'll see if he loosens up. He might be able to play, but he won't be able to do much before Friday or Saturday."

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