



Rivalry or not, CU game still special

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Editor

When Tommie Frazier sat at the rectangular table, facing a crowd armed with cameras and notepads earlier this week, the senior quarterback knew exactly what was coming.

The questions were merely a formality.

Frazier looked as if he had been through this a few times in the past. The four-year starter effortlessly handled every question thrown at him, very similar to the way the veteran Cornhusker has toyed with defenses this season.

"We approach every game the same way," he said, answering a question about Saturday's game against No. 7 Colorado. "We are going there hoping to win. Some people might say there is something special about Colorado week, but I don't think so."

Rick Neuheisel doesn't agree with Frazier.

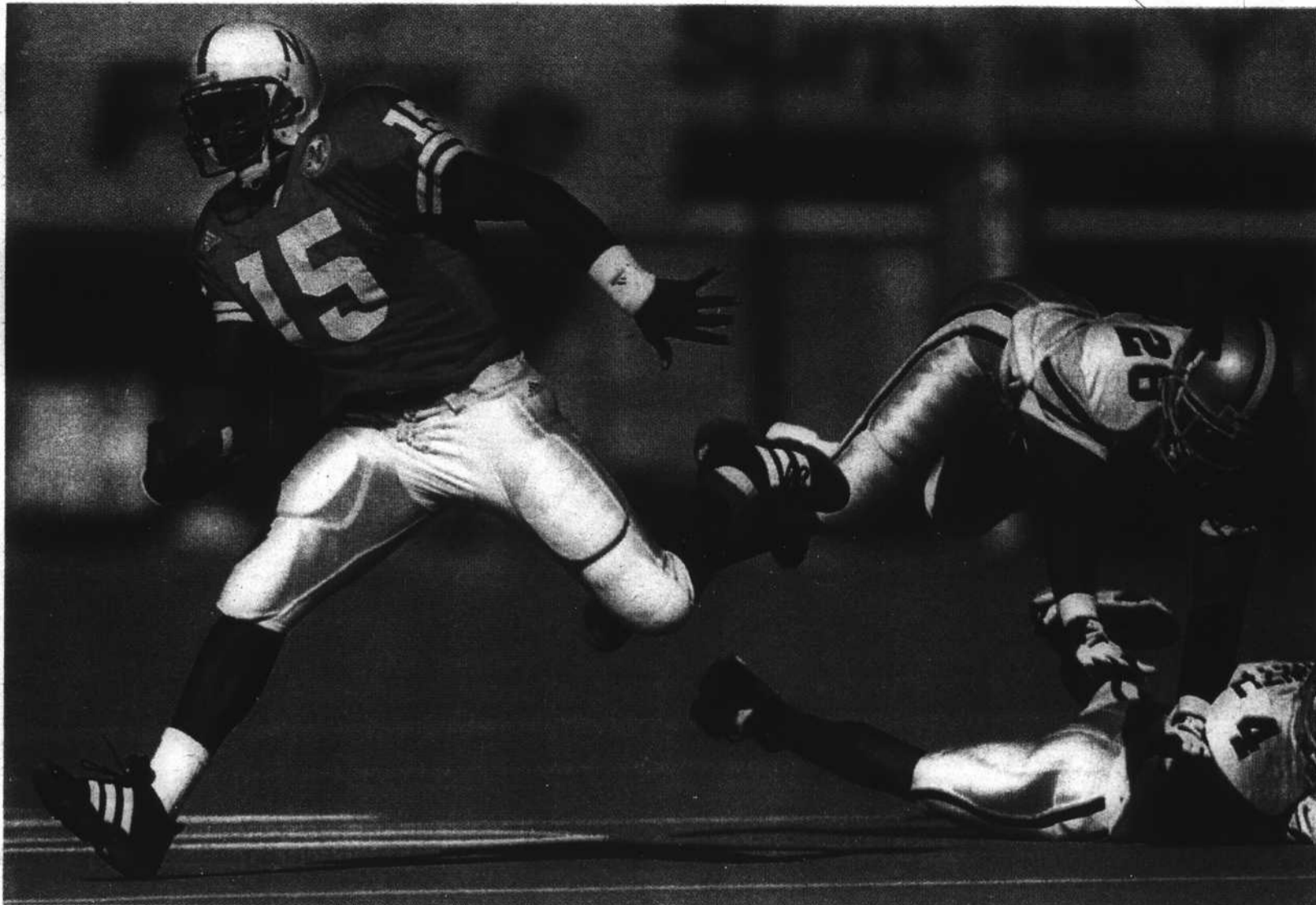
"This game has a special significance regardless of rivalry," Colorado's first-year coach said, "and it seems folly to me to have one team call it a rivalry and the other team not."

So, it's finally settled. Officially, Nebraska's yearly game against Colorado is not a rivalry. When Bill McCartney left Michigan to become the Buffalo coach in 1982, he pegged the Huskers as Colorado's red-letter game.

Red clothing was banned from Boulder, Colo., for one week each year. The word Nebraska was highlighted in red on all Colorado football schedules. Nebraska jokes became a regularity in Colorado newspaper columns and on radio talk shows.

In 1986, McCartney's work paid off. Colorado stunned third-ranked Nebraska 20-10 in Boulder. Three years later, the Buffaloes won again, and the following year, they captured a share of the national title.

But in the 1990s, McCartney's emphasis on Nebraska has backfired. The Huskers have ruined Colorado's season in each of the past three years, winning by a combined score of 97-31.



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska quarterback Tommie Frazier darts by Kansas State's Steve Hanks and Mario Smith during last Saturday's Husker win. Frazier and his teammates are hoping to make it two wins in a row over ranked opponents.

"Mac's idea was a great one," Neuheisel said. "He wanted to instill some tradition in a, at that time, depleted program. To do so, he picked a rival. He picked Nebraska because Nebraska was the elite team in the conference."

Nebraska was the epitome of college football success, Neuheisel said. The Huskers were where Colorado wanted to be.

"It worked," he said, "because Nebraska obviously never thought of Colorado as their rival, but Colorado did, so there was much more emphasis on the games being closer."

Frazier said he understood that the game against Colorado was important, but to a team with hopes of winning the national title, he said, every game carried the same amount of significance.

"It's just another Big Eight game," said Frazier, who is 2-0 against the Buffs. "I approach each game the same. If you want to see a rivalry, then you have to put Oklahoma in that category. But Colorado is a big game, and they have proven that they can play us strong."

Colorado quarterback John Hessler, who took over the starting spot after Koy Detmer suffered a

season-ending knee injury against Kansas on Oct. 7, said he was glad that both teams were on the same page this year.

"It's no longer the red-letter game," Hessler said. "We're not going to make them out to be superhuman, something they're not. They put their pants on the same way we do in the morning. They're just ranked higher."

Huskers expect hostility from Colorado on road

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Defensive tackle Christian Peter said the Cornhuskers would be playing in a hostile environment when they traveled to Boulder, Colo., for Saturday's game.

And for Peter, the more hostile, the better.

"Defensive guys like going into hostile environments," he said. "When we're getting booed and people are throwing stuff at you, it just feels good. I just like playing on the road, especially big games."

Although Peter said Colorado didn't compare to playing Miami in the Orange Bowl, he admitted the Buffalo fans could be very vocal.

Quarterback Tommie Frazier agreed that he would rather play the big games on the road.

"I'm probably one of the only people that likes playing on the road more than at home," Frazier said. "As long as we're wearing the white jerseys, I like it. Everyone is rooting and cheering against me."

"People are booing me and saying stuff. The more people boo you, the more of a chance you have

to shut them up."

In the last 10 seasons, the Nebraska-Colorado series in Boulder has been split 2-2-1, while Nebraska holds a 4-1 advantage in games played in Lincoln during that time.

Nebraska has won the last three meetings, including a 21-17 win in Boulder in 1993.

Husker center Aaron Graham said he remembered the emotional edge Nebraska had in that game.

"It requires a lot of emotion to play in a game like this," Graham said. "It always turns out that the team who wants it most is going to get it. Last time we were out there, I think we wanted it a lot more."

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said he didn't expect the crowd to be unruly Saturday because emotions in the contest were dwindling.

"When they played here on Halloween night, probably from the Nebraska fans' standpoint, it was the low point," he said. "They were starting to retaliate for some things that happened in Boulder. We probably treated their team rudely that night, off the field, as well as on. The last couple years it has been a little better."

Kelsay making big impression as Husker outside linebacker

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Editor

Chad Kelsay has come a long way since Aug. 31.

So has his jersey.

When the Nebraska football team opened its season at Oklahoma State, Kelsay, a true freshman from Auburn, was missing from the pregame roster distributed to the media. And his name was misspelled "Kelsey" on the back of his uniform.

Saturday, when Kelsay walks onto the artificial turf at Folsom Field in Boulder, Colo., his name will be spelled right. And he said he would be ready to play.

The 6-foot-3, 230-pound outside linebacker has made a positive impression on Nebraska's defensive coaches this fall. Of the 20 true freshmen who reported to camp in August, Kelsay, along with I-back Ahman Green and place kicker Kris Brown, are the only players not redshirting this season.

"I was hoping I could play," Kelsay

said. "But I was realistic. You never want to tell yourself that you are going to redshirt. That's just not the way I am, but realistically, in the back of my head, I was wondering if I could come in and play at this level."

Through seven games, Kelsay, the No. 2 right outside linebacker behind Grant Wistrom, has 13 tackles, including three behind the line of scrimmage and two quarterback sacks.

"He is improving every week," defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said. "He has made some mistakes along the way that have helped him learn, but he looks to me like he will be a big-time football player. As time goes on, he'll just get better and better."

In preseason performance testing, Kelsay placed second behind Green among all true freshman. Kelsay's 4.0-second speed in the pro-agility run ranks among the best times ever recorded by an outside linebacker, only .05 seconds behind Donta Jones' school position record.

"This summer really made me what I am now," he said. "I worked out hard and put myself in a position where I started to know people and the system. In fall camp, there was a

point where I realized that I could do this."

Kelsay said he was looking forward to his first big game road trip.

"It's a lot different in these big games," he said. "We hadn't really had a real test until Kansas State. And on the first couple of drives, I could tell it was different. Grant was just playing out of his mind. Then Jared (Tomich) got back-to-back sacks."

"Just talking to them, you know if it's a big game, it's time to step it up."

Coming from a small high school in Nebraska, Kelsay said it was always his dream to earn a football scholarship to play for the Huskers.

"I liked watching Trev Alberts play," Kelsay said. "He was a great leader and a great outside linebacker. Watching him makes you push yourself and want to be the best. And our two starters, Grant and Jared, are probably the best in the nation."

The atmosphere surrounding a college football Saturday — both at Memorial Stadium and this Saturday at Boulder — shocked Kelsay at first.

"But this is a game that people have been waiting for for a long time," he said. "It's going to be a tough game, especially being out there."

"Hopefully, we'll rise to the occasion."