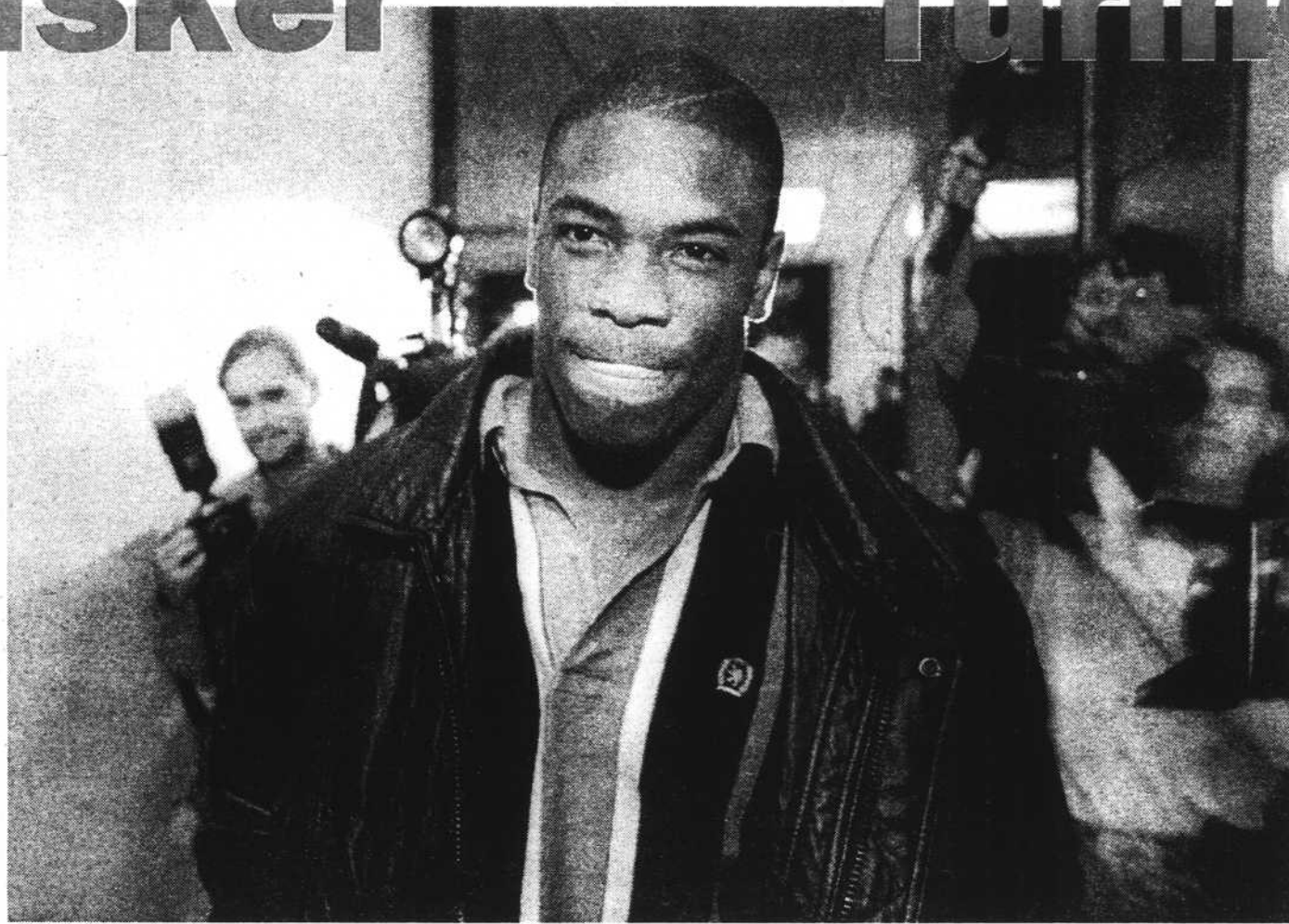


# Husker

# Turmoil



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska I-back Lawrence Phillips, followed by several members of the media, enters a district courtroom for his arraignment on Sept. 12. Phillips pleaded not guilty to three misdemeanor charges then later pleaded no contest.

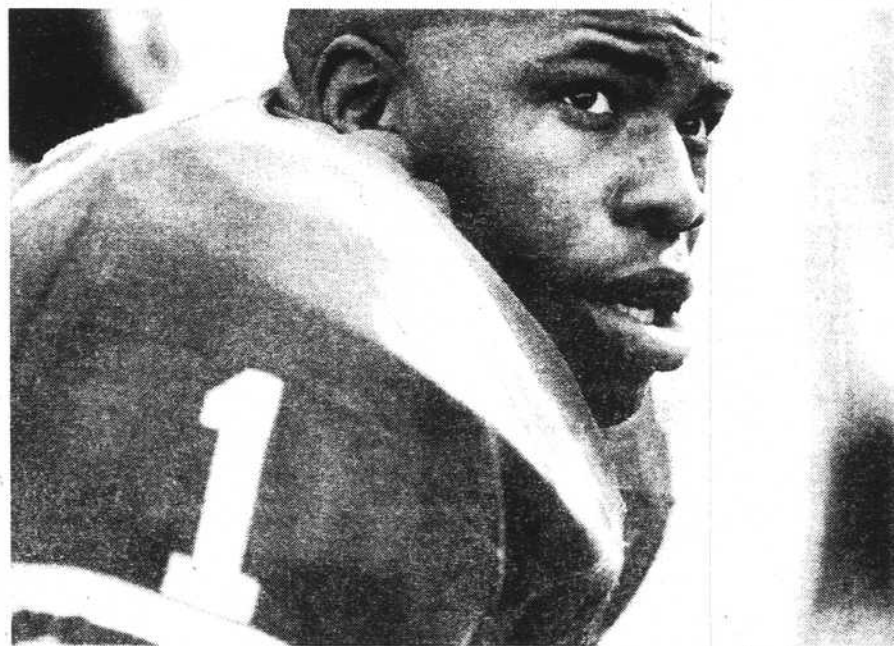
The controversy  
surrounding the  
football team all came  
to a head during one  
week in September.

By Jeff Zeleny

**W**hile the Nebraska Cornhuskers were tucked into their hotel beds in East Lansing, Mich., on the morning of Sept. 9, trouble already was brewing at home.

The 66 players who traveled to Michigan State University attended team meetings Friday night and returned to their rooms at the Radisson Hotel for a 10:30 curfew. A little more than 12 hours later, No. 2 Nebraska began its rout on the unranked Spartans.

About five hours after that curfew — and 750 miles away — a domestic



Jay Calderon/DN

Phillips takes a rest during the Huskers' game against Iowa State, his first game after being reinstated to the team.

argument was under way in Lincoln.

A pulled hamstring had kept Nebraska I-back Damon Benning at home. About 2 a.m., Vonetta Bowden, a 19-year-old former girlfriend of Benning, called police and accused him of assault. He was arrested a few hours later.

Benning was cleared 10 days later, but the damage already had been done and the trouble had just begun.

In East Lansing, though, all seemed well for the national champion Cornhuskers. Eyes were focused on Lawrence Phillips. The junior I-back

its 50-10 victory.

"Have a nice night," Mike Mulnix, executive director of university relations, recalls Osborne saying, "but stay out of trouble."

In fewer than 12 hours, those words would prove to be an ominous warning.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon on Sept. 10. Maybe too quiet.

Osborne canceled his Sunday afternoon office chat with reporters. It seemed odd, but Osborne's displeasure with the media is no secret.

Mid-afternoon, anonymous calls began trickling into newsrooms in Lincoln and Omaha. "The star player has been kicked off the team," the callers proclaimed, "because he beat up his girlfriend last night."

While the city slept early Sunday, police believe Phillips scaled the outside of a Meadow Wood Apartments building to reach the third-floor home of reserve quarterback Scott Frost, where Phillips found his former girlfriend.

Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady said Phillips came into the apartment through an unlocked sliding door on the balcony. As Frost called police, Casady said, Phillips allegedly began beating Kate McEwen, a sophomore guard on the Nebraska basketball team.

Police said McEwen was dragged across carpet, down a flight of stairs and outside the apartment complex at 4440 N. Seventh St. Witnesses later