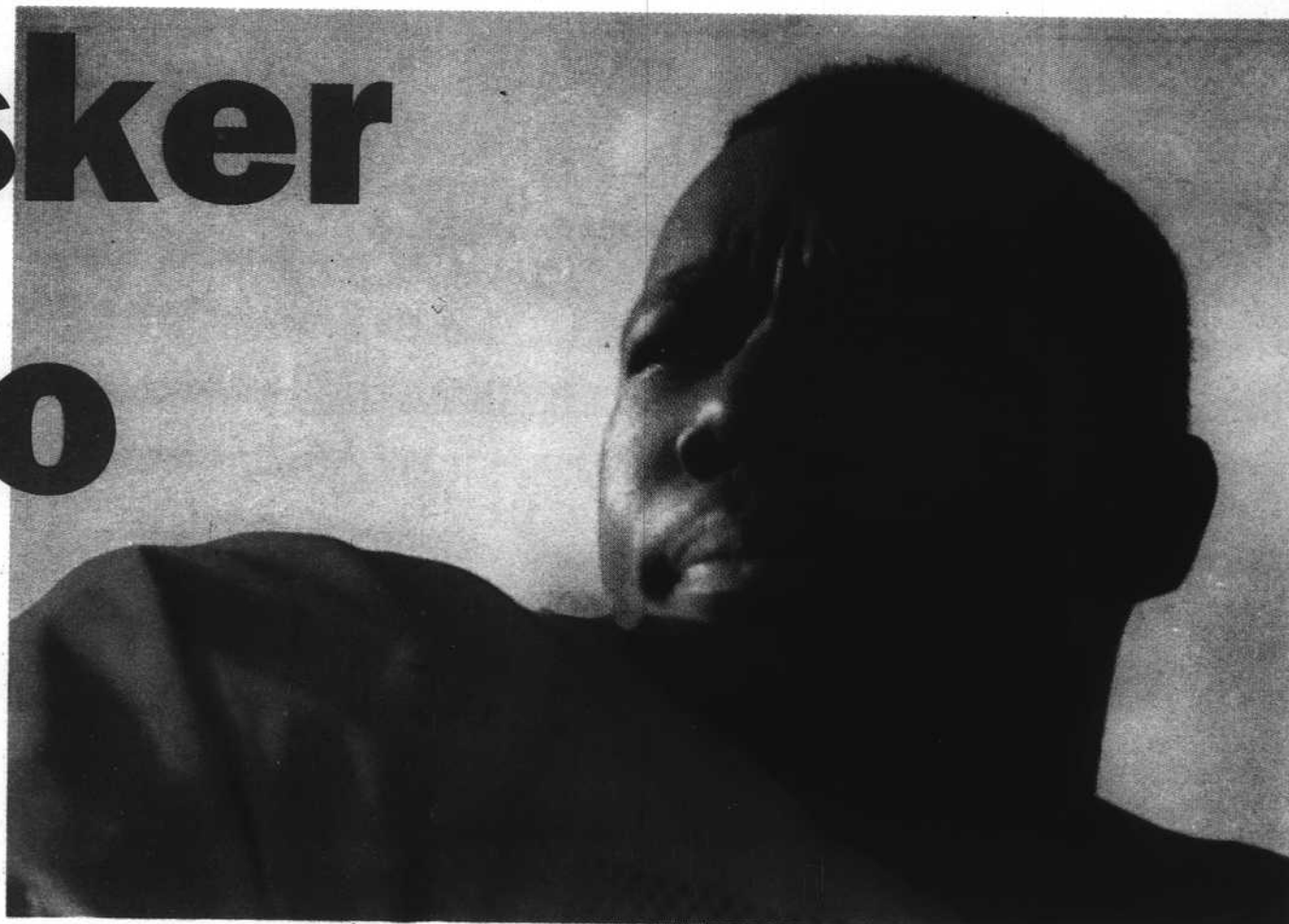


Husker Hero

An off-the-field look at the Huskers' No. 1 man

— Tommie Frazier.

By Tim Pearson



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska quarterback Tommie Frazier is more than the Huskers' all-time winningest signal caller. He's a winner at the game of life.

Tommie Frazier almost gave up football last year.

While lying in a hospital bed at Bryan Memorial Hospital after a second blood clot was discovered on Oct. 4, 1994, Frazier thought about packing his bags and going back home to Bradenton, Fla.

During his junior year, Frazier went down with blood clots in his right leg, forcing him to miss seven games, and doctors feared that his football career was finished.

And that became Frazier's worst fear as well.

"I thought last year was my last year playing," he said.

There would have been none of Frazier's fourth-quarter heroics in last year's Orange Bowl. No All-American honors

this year. And he most certainly wouldn't have been waiting for his bags with his parents at LaGuardia Airport in New York City the morning of the Heisman Trophy presentation.

But there he was on Dec. 9 waiting at Baggage Claim Area 1 in the USAir terminal listening to his Sony Discman. His plane had been delayed in Baltimore for 1 1/2 hours, but Frazier didn't mind. He was just glad to be there.

Thank his mother, who, in her son's

hospital room, talked her son out of coming home for good.

"When you've been playing a sport for 14 years," Frazier said, "it's hard for a guy my age to go through. My mom sat me down and had a long talk with me, and she said, 'You can't play football the rest of your life.'"

The discovery of the second clot devastated her son, Priscilla Frazier said. He wanted so badly to be out on the football field again.

Never had anything like this

happened to him. For his whole life, he had wanted to be on the field leading his team. Even in high school, whenever he was injured, Frazier wouldn't sit out for more than a game.

During his junior year at

Manatee High School, a strained ligament in the state semifinal game couldn't keep him out. Frazier put on a brace and played.

But four years later, nothing could be done to put Frazier back on the field right away.

"The second clot threw him for a loop," Priscilla Frazier said. "With the first, he was only going to be out five or six weeks. That was all fine with him."

So after the second clot was

"I walked into the hospital, and he was smiling on the outside. But I could tell he was hurting deep inside."

Priscilla Frazier, Tommie's mother



Jeff Haller/DN

Frazier signs an autograph at St. Vincent's Medical Center in Staten Island, N.Y. during his trip to New York for the Heisman Trophy presentation.

discovered, she made the trip to Lincoln to be with her son, to comfort him.

"I walked into the hospital, and he was smiling on the outside," she said. "But I could tell he was hurting deep inside. I had a talk with him and asked him his true feelings."

And he told her that his season was over, and that he was really down about having to undergo surgery.

"He had wanted to come home after the surgery," his mother said. "I said, 'You will stay and get an education.' I told him that he needed to catch up on

the schoolwork that he had missed, and that he had another year."

But then the tide turned. Frazier stayed in Lincoln and rehabilitated while on blood thinners. And then he was cleared to play against Oklahoma in the final game of the regular season. Coach Tom Osborne, however, told doctors that he wouldn't put Frazier in the game unless Brook Berringer was injured. Frazier still made the trip to Norman, though, much to the disappointment of his mother.