

Hard work rewards Tomich

By **MIKE KLUCK**
Senior Reporter

Patience has always been an important part of Jared Tomich's life.

It is something the senior rush end on the Nebraska football team has needed to succeed in both football and life.

"My position takes a lot of patience, and a lot of people don't realize that," Tomich said. "You're running 10 yards every play, and you might not get to the quarterback nine out of 10 times."

"You can't quit on it. You got to give it that 10th try and try to get through. That's how it is with school, too. In the past, it's been a rough road. You just can't stop."

Tomich's development as an athlete and a person started long before he walked on to the Nebraska campus as an academically ineligible freshman — a casualty of Proposition 48 — in 1992.

It began in the third grade, when he was placed in special education classes and labeled by his teachers as a lazy student who did not care about school.

It was a label that followed and haunted Tomich throughout his school years, even though he and his parents knew he wasn't apathetic toward his school work.

"I had a hard time with keeping my focus on school," Tomich said. "I tried all the time and never got any success out of it. It (school) kind of pushed me into a hole to kind of give up."

His parents, James and Cheryl Tomich, said they wouldn't let Jared give up on school. They had seen his ability to learn, and his parents knew he wasn't the same person his teachers described.

When Jared was 10 years old, he began to train his miniature schnauzer for dog shows and obedience classes, another activity requiring patience.

James Tomich said Jared's four years of working with the dog proved

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JARED TOMICH
NU rush end

that Jared could learn.

"He was better at sight learning, than book learning," James Tomich said. "But he worked hard in his dog obedience classes."

Even though he struggled in school, Jared began planning his college days as a student in junior high.

Also at that time, Jared became interested in football and weight lifting, which fueled his interest in college, Cheryl Tomich said.

"He was determined to work in the weight room, and that also gave him a drive to work harder in school," Cheryl Tomich said. "He wanted to get a good college education."

"Jared didn't know how to tell us what his problems were with learning. He didn't learn like the other children. We didn't know until his junior year in high school how to help him."

As a ninth grader, Tomich again had to rely on his patience. At 5 foot 9 and 160 pounds, he played cornerback for the freshmen team at Lake Central High School in St. John, Ind. After Jared's freshman season, James Tomich said he knew his son could play college football.

But with more than 2,500 students at his high school, Tomich did not start for the varsity squad until his senior season. That year, he earned all-state honors as defensive end.

Elmer Britton, Lake Central's football coach of 29 years, said although Tomich had a learning problem in high school, it didn't hinder him on the football field.

"Physically, he's the best player I've ever coached, period," Britton said. "He's a great kid, humble. He's everything college football ought to be."

Tomich was successful in football as a senior, but again he had to show patience. His grades scared away most college recruiters. A Purdue coach told Jared he wouldn't survive in college, his mother said.

By February 1992, Tomich hadn't received a single scholarship offer. Only Cincinnati and Nebraska asked him to walk on.

Tomich was set to go to Cincinnati before Britton talked to a friend, Tom Peterson, who trained under Boyd Epley, Nebraska's director of athletic performance.

Peterson contacted Nebraska Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride, who immediately traveled to St. John to see Jared and his family.

Cheryl Tomich said it was McBride's persistence that convinced Jared to attend Nebraska, even though he knew no one in Lincoln.

"When I came out here, I was taking a chance," Tomich said. "I didn't know anybody, and Phil (Tomich's

iguana) was the only thing I had to talk to. So it was lonely the first couple of days, especially being a prop (48) and not being able to be involved with the team at all."

During his first year, Tomich said, he questioned his college decision nearly every night and often considered transferring.

However, he did receive some good news shortly after arriving in Lincoln. He was tested and diagnosed as having attention deficit disorder, a learning disability.

"It was a great relief to know that it wasn't me being lazy," Tomich said. "But I think it was more of a relief for my parents to know. Not that they have thought that I was lazy, but it was nice to put a label on it."

Still, that didn't make it any easier for Tomich to learn.

"I have to have patience with things, school especially," he said. "I need to work through my problems with school and take my time. Most people take that hard-working attitude and put it on the field, but I had to take that football attitude and relate it back to school."

Tomich's first season was difficult, and he sat out the following season as a redshirt. But he returned to Lincoln in the summer of 1993 with his girlfriend, Lisa Walczak, who started classes at UNL.

Walczak helped Tomich study and become involved in the academic program at NU's Hewitt Center. Walczak said she noticed a difference in Tomich.

"College was an awakening for him, because in high school it was easy for him not to have to work up to the standards," she said. "Once he showed himself he could do the work, it made it a lot easier for him."

For the next 3 1/2 years, Tomich did his homework both on the field and in the classroom. He also became engaged to Walczak.

Please see **TOMICH** on 20

NU kickers no longer unproven

By **TREVOR PARKS**
Senior Reporter

Unlike this time a year ago, the Nebraska kicking game is solid.

In August 1995, the Cornhuskers were dependent on a true freshman place kicker and a sophomore punter who had no collegiate experience. But with the emergence of Kris Brown and Jesse Kosch, the kicking-game questions had been erased two weeks into the Huskers' run to a second straight national title.

"We both have a good year under our belt," Brown said. "We have some big-game experience."

"There is no fear of the unknown anymore. We know exactly what it is going to be like to perform in a game."

One of three true freshmen to play last year, Brown made 58 of 61 extra points and 13 of 16 field goals. Brown, from Southlake, Texas, also set an NU freshman record with 97 points, one more than fellow freshman Ahman Green, an I-back.

Kosch, a junior from Columbus, who took over for Darin Erstad, returns after a successful year in which he averaged 40.3 yards per kick on 27 punts.

Kosch said the year of experience improved his confidence level, especially in big games.

"Last year I always got nervous," Kosch said, "really nervous, probably more than I should have before a big game. But this year, that year of experience will really help."

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