

Sports Opinion



Gregg Madsen

Play-by-play man Pavelka passes for more dough

When Nebraska football fans tune in to the Cornhuskers on the radio this fall, they won't be listening to the familiar voice of Kent Pavelka.

After 13 years as the play-by-play man for Nebraska football, Pavelka was left behind this summer when Pinnacle Sports Productions chose Warren Swain as its new voice.

Pavelka, a part of Husker football broadcasts since 1972, was known for his enthusiastic style, a style that many times earned him more criticism than praise.

Critics of Pavelka, a six-time Nebraska sports broadcaster of the year, claimed his fast-paced style often left listeners wondering if the Huskers were on offense or defense.

And Pavelka definitely had a clear bias for the Huskers. While covering football or basketball, the excitement in his voice was directly proportional to the size of the Huskers' lead.

But whether you loved Pavelka or hated him, you could not argue that he seemed to love Nebraska football and that he brought a high level of enthusiasm to the broadcast booth.

For many faithful listeners, Pavelka's voice became synonymous with Nebraska football and lazy autumn afternoons. Despite his shortcomings, he brought an excitement to the radio broadcasts that will be hard to duplicate.

Husker games this fall won't seem complete without the sound of Pavelka's trademark, "Touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!" reverberating through the airwaves.

But, sadly, it was Pavelka himself — not his boisterous critics — who caused his own demise.

When Great Plains Media, Inc., won the rights to cover Husker sports last April, owner Paul Aaron said he hoped to hire Pavelka as his play-by-play man.

But in a move more outrageous than any play Pavelka ever described, he requested a \$165,000 salary for his first season, according to a published report this summer in the Omaha World-Herald.

The requested salary increased to \$185,000 by his fifth season AND included a yearly bonus of 1 to 5 percent of Pinnacle's operating profit, AND a \$7,500 signing bonus.

Tom Osborne's salary is less than \$185,000. When the radio announcer wants a larger salary than the head coach, something is dreadfully wrong.

But that's not all. The former voice of the Huskers also demanded a golf membership at Omaha's Happy Hollow Club, a family membership at the Westroads Club and a press box seat for his wife, Lu, at home and away football and basketball games.

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ESPN special angers NU

OSBORNE SAYS he was misled about Firestone's report, which airs tonight.

By MIKE KLUCK
Senior Reporter

In 22 years of broadcasting, Roy Firestone has never been asked not to run an interview.

Not until two weeks ago. Since that time, Firestone said he has received numerous calls from members of Nebraska's Athletic Department asking him not to televise his interview with NU Football Coach Tom Osborne.

Firestone's special, Up Close with

Roy Firestone — in which he interviews Osborne about last season's off-field problems and previews the upcoming season — is scheduled to air tonight at 8 on ESPN following a college football preview show.

Nebraska officials have also phoned top officials at ESPN, Firestone said, and four different Athletic Department officials, whom Firestone wouldn't name, have called either him or ESPN executives.

Firestone said Osborne did not call. NU Athletic Director Bill Byrne did not return a message Wednesday left by the Daily Nebraskan.

"Their athletic office has called ESPN, and I know for a fact they have gone to the top and been very threatening," Firestone said. "I think their actions are very cheap."

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It was not my intent to be malicious during the interview"

ROY FIRESTONE
ESPN broadcaster

"It would have been different if I ambushed and trapped Coach Osborne. But I didn't. He sat with me for 35 minutes, and except for feeling I beleaguered him about Lawrence Phillips, he seemed comfortable. "He smiled during the interview, seemed relaxed and was very respectful."

Osborne said he twice turned down

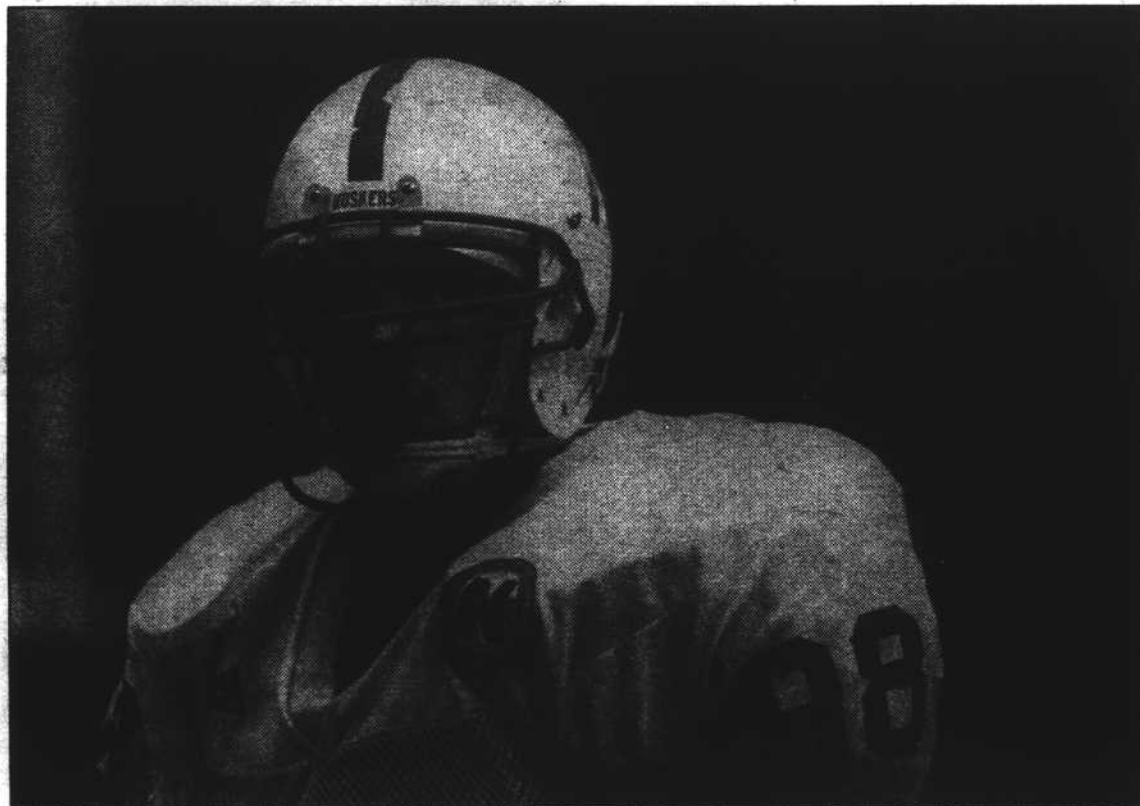
Firestone's request before finally agreeing to the interview.

"They explained that the focus would be on this year on some of the top teams in the country and kind of a preview of the season," Osborne said. "So, that's what I understood would be happening."

Osborne said he was told about

Please see ESPN on 17

Head rush



SCOTT BRUHN/DN

GRANT WISTROM, a junior rush end, is an All-America candidate.

Wistrom earns elite status Junior rush end, Tomich form dominating duo

By VINCE D'ADAMO
Staff Reporter

A word of advice for offensive linemen faced with blocking Nebraska rush end Grant Wistrom: Do not relax, not even for one down.

Wistrom takes advantage of every opportunity he sees. The 6-foot-5, 250-pound junior from Webb City, Mo., made an immediate impact as a true freshman two years ago. He has not looked back since.

"I just remember that hard work got me here," Wistrom said. "If I ever quit working hard, I can have it all taken away from me."

Tony Samuel, Wistrom's position coach, said Wistrom has the intangible goods necessary to succeed as a rush end.

"He's always practicing hard," Samuel said. "He's gotten bigger and stronger. You won't see him not hustling."

While Samuel has been instrumental in Wistrom's development, NU Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride deserves some credit for

Wistrom's success, Wistrom said.

"He knows the right buttons to push and the right words to say before the game," Wistrom said.

Sophomore Chad Kelsay plays behind Wistrom as rush end. Kelsay said Wistrom and Jared Tomich, partners in terrorizing offensive backfields, are great leaders.

"Of course you learn the technique things, but you learn a lot about leadership," Kelsay said. "To be around those kind of guys makes you a better person."

Coach Tom Osborne and Samuel said the pair were the best-ever Husker rush end (formerly outside linebacker) duo.

"You can't run away from Wistrom because you've got Jared Tomich on the other side," Osborne said.

Said Wistrom: "I appreciate Coach Osborne saying that. As long as he feels that way at the end of the season, I won't do anything to upset him."

Wistrom led the team with 15 tackles for losses last year. But even if he is not a factor statistically, he

makes up for it tactically.

The tandem of Wistrom and Tomich is sure to rattle many of the quarterbacks posed with the task of facing Nebraska this fall. Wistrom said he takes pride in causing havoc in an opponent's offensive backfield.

"I'm trying to get there as bad as anybody," he said. "If I can put pressure on the man and make him roll Jared's way, he's going to be there nine out of 10 times."

"We are always talking to each other and motivating each other," Wistrom said. "All summer, we were pushing each other in the weight room. People just see what happens on the field, but a lot goes on off the field, too."

Wistrom said the Huskers' battle-tested mentality, which has played a part in their two national titles, serves the team well.

"We've had everything that could arise and we've handled it in stride," Wistrom said. "If we can take it one game at a time, we're going to have a good chance of being there at the end."

Texas Tech ready for Big 12 action

By MIKE KLUCK
Senior Reporter

Texas Tech Football Coach Spike Dykes can't quite understand why everyone is getting excited about the Big 12 Conference.

"I was thinking the other day that we're dropping Rice, Houston and SMU," Dykes said. "Last year they won four games and lost 29. We're picking up Nebraska, Kansas and Kansas State. They won 32 games and lost four."

"Now I'm not very good at arithmetic, but there is a correlation about who you play and how many games you win. It looks to me like we got our tail to the heater."

Dykes is worried about the Red Raider schedule. In the Big 12, each team from the south division will play three teams from the north division.

Tech ended up with Kansas State and Kansas, both of which finished the season in the top 10, and Nebraska, the defending national champion.

"It always amazes me," he said. "I'm not questioning anybody's honesty, but I just want to know how it came about."

Dykes has been trying to earn respect for 10 years in Lubbock, Texas. Before becoming head coach, he was the defensive coordinator for three years.

The Red Raiders had only one winning season in the eight years before Dykes took over. Since he came, Tech has finished no lower than fourth in the Southwest Conference. Last sea-

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BIG 12 CONFERENCE

This is the fourth of a 11-day series on football in the Big 12 Conference.

Texas Tech