

London's quarterback game improves, pleases coaches

■ The second-string QB is becoming a valuable and reliable player.

By ANTONE OSEKA
Senior Reporter

Frankie London is progressing into the kind of quarterback Nebraska coaches had envisioned.

During fall camp, the sophomore from Lake Charles, La., has moved into the No. 2 position on the depth chart behind senior Scott Frost, and London is expected to see significant playing time this season.

In last Saturday's game against Akron, London was in the ball game three times, resulting in 17 points.

"I thought the three possessions that I got were a stepping stone to making myself better and getting onto the field," London said. "When I was out there for those three possessions, everybody hustled and everybody worked hard."

London said he has been progressing steadily since spring ball, most significantly in the area of confidence.

"I just want to gain confidence from the players and the coaches," he said. "I want to show them I can play."

London has shown he can play ever since the first day of fall camp. He's progressed steadily in the fall, with an impressive showing in preseason scrimmages. In a preseason scrimmage, against the No. 1 defense, London put the first points on the board with a 6-yard touchdown pass to tight end Sheldon Jackson.

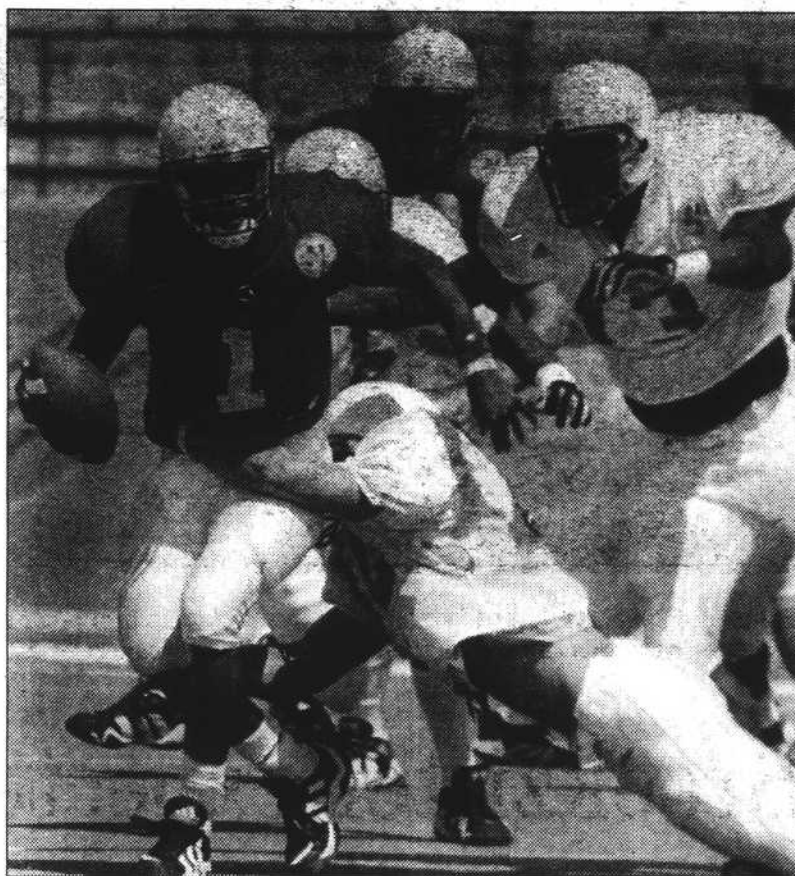
"I was a little nervous," London said after the scrimmage. "I expect myself to perform. I just wanted to do a good job."

NU quarterbacks coach Turner Gill said London has done a good job, especially in not committing a turnover in any of the first three scrimmages and the first game.

"The main thing we want our quarterbacks to do is take care of the football; he's doing that very well," Gill said.

Besides taking care of the ball, London has also shown that he can lead the team in all situations. But learning that has come with a price.

London has undergone shoulder



NEBRASKA SOPHOMORE QUARTERBACK Frankie London is brought down by the Husker defense during a scrimmage earlier this year. London has emerged as Nebraska's No. 2 quarterback.

RYAN SODERLIN/DN

surgery and has been injured several times during his first two years with the Huskers. Besides that, the 6-foot, 180-pound sophomore has struggled with keeping his weight up.

London started his NU career as the quarterback of the scout team when he redshirted in 1995.

"With the scout team, it's hard to get out there and have a good practice," London said.

Gill said he expects London to be ready to play whenever he's called on in a game situation.

"He's one play away from being in the ball game at any given time," Gill said.

That chance could have passed London by. During last year, London had considered transferring to a school closer to home, preferably Louisiana

State University.

"I wasn't happy being where I was on the depth chart; I wasn't happy just being around in Lincoln," London said. "I really just wanted to get away."

However, London decided to come back to Nebraska and give it another try. He said that God and his mother helped give him peace enough to come back and play backup for another year.

London now has a lot of advice for up-and-coming quarterbacks like freshmen Bobby Newcombe and Eric Crouch.

"Don't get your head down; don't worry about not getting a lot of snaps," London advises. "A guy like Tommie Frazier comes along once in a lifetime. But, if you're a freshman, expect the unexpected."

Degree earnings low in Big 12

LUBBOCK, Texas (AP) - Big 12 football players are less likely to earn degrees than their counterparts at other Division I universities, NCAA figures show.

Although the league's graduation rates are improving, only Nebraska, Iowa State and Baylor football players who were freshmen in 1987-91 met or exceeded the NCAA Division I average mark of 53 percent.

Nebraska led at 63 percent. Texas A&M's 35 percent brought up the rear.

"I would guarantee that where you find success, if you look at people providing services, you find people who really care,"

said Prentice Gautt, Big 12 associate commissioner for academic services and life skills.

Most Big 12 graduation rates for black football players ran 16 to 30 percentage points lower than those for whites. The mean disparity at Division I schools is 21 percentage points.

The widest racial margin occurred at Texas Tech, where 17 percent of black scholarship football players graduated compared with 67 percent of their white teammates. Baylor, Texas and Oklahoma State, conversely, have narrowed the gap to single digits.

"The thing you have to work

with is students coming from different backgrounds," said Dennis LeBlanc, an assistant athletic director at Nebraska.

"No matter what color you are, you have to adjust. If you happen to be a student of color and you're coming to an institution in the Big 12 Conference, they are all predominantly white schools. You have to assist students into making adjustments into a different environment."

Nebraska's 55 percent graduation rate for black football players was best in the league, although NCAA statistics show white Cornhuskers earned degrees at a 71 percent clip.

Huskers hope to progress

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season.

"It is a little bit peculiar," Walker said. "These games are all on the road and all against top teams."

One of those top teams is No. 14 Vanderbilt.

Last season, Vanderbilt came to Lincoln and gave the Huskers an early season scare. The two teams battled into overtime, with Nebraska sneaking out a 3-2 win.

Vanderbilt coach Ken McDonald said his team will have to focus on Nebraska, but only after getting through its game against Alabama-

Birmingham tonight.

"Our returning players remember that game," McDonald said. "I don't look at it as revenge but as a chance to play a top team again. It is always good to see how you match up."

Despite being ranked 14th, the Commodores are also one of the top teams in the Central Region, which includes Nebraska. Both Walker and McDonald said this could be a huge game when it comes to seedings for the NCAA Tournament.

"Anytime you go on the road it is a little bit more challenging," Walker said. "Good teams go on the road and find a way to win."

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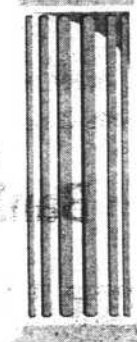
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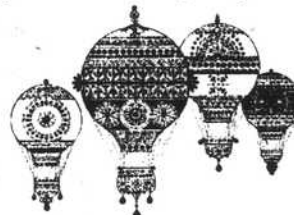
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Picks from the Hicks

The Daily Nebraskan sports staff members pick the winners (in bold) of 10 college football games this weekend. Last weekend the staff was 9-1.

Florida St.	at	USC
Colorado St.	at	Colorado
Tennessee	at	UCLA
Central Michigan	at	Florida
Georgia Tech	at	Notre Dame
Pittsburgh	at	Penn St.
Rutgers	at	Texas
UTEP	at	LSU
Northern Iowa	at	Iowa

Washington 35 at BYU 24