

# Signing Day

## Solich pleased with first recruiting class

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior Reporter

Fittingly, both Tom Osborne and Frank Solich had a hand in molding the Nebraska football team's 1998 recruiting class.

One newly retired and the other newly hired, Osborne and Solich combined efforts to ensure that a smooth transition in the recruiting ranks marked the end of Osborne's 25-year reign and the beginning of life for NU under Solich.

The result pleased Solich on national letter-of-intent signing day.

Twenty high school seniors hailing from eight different states — including nine from Nebraska — and Canada signed with the Huskers Wednesday, confirming both coaches' belief that most of NU's recruits would stick with the program through the coaching change.

"I think the recruits understood that we are still the top team in the country and we want to move forward and continue," Solich said. "For the most part, people stayed with us. And these are good people who wanted to be here."

Bobby Burton of the National Recruiting Adviser ranks NU's class tenth nationally. Burton added that the Osborne-to-Solich coaching switch was the smoothest transition he had ever seen recruiting-wise.

Solich said several factors — including NU's championships, record and graduation rate — contributed to Nebraska's smooth tran-

sition. "All of those things determine whether or not you're going to have a good recruiting year," Solich said, "and we certainly have all those things in place here."

Overall, Solich said he felt very pleased with the athletic ability and speed of the 1998 class, which includes 10 Prep All-Americans.

The Huskers placed an emphasis on speed when recruiting this year's class, Solich said.

"You can't play for a conference championship without speed," Solich said. "We have it throughout this class. But having speed is one thing. Having speed combined with athletic ability is another. And that's something we've done."

The Huskers inked 12 defensive players and eight offensive players, many of whom Solich said could



Solich

### 1998 Nebraska Football Recruiting Class

The following players have signed to play football at Nebraska next fall.

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Position	Hometown
DeMarcus Adams	6-3	220	DE	Elmo, Bluff, Ark.
Jon Bowling	6-4	215	TE	Lincoln Southeast
Josh Brown	6-1	175	K	Foyil, Okla.
Jon Clanton	6-2	280	DL	Peoria, Ariz.
Wes Cooy	6-3	255	OL	Fremont, Bergen
Keyuo Craver	6-0	180	DB	Harleton, Texas
Michael Demps	5-11	190	DB	Fort Worth, Texas
Dahran Diedrick	6-1	210	RB	Scarborough, Ontario
Haron Galloway	6-4	235	TE	York
DeAntae Grixby	5-8	180	RB/DB	Omaha Central
DeJuan Groce	5-11	195	DB	Lakewood, Ohio
Chris Kelsay	6-5	240	OL	Auburn
Nate Kohlerman	6-3	300	DL	Seward
Jason Lohr	6-3	275	DL	Jenks, Okla.
Shawn McCarroll	5-11	185	WS	Mishawaka, Ind.
Jeremy Slechta	6-5	255	DT	Papillion-LaVista
Justin Smith	6-3	240	RE	Sherman, Texas
Randy Stella	6-2	200	LB	Omaha Benson
Tony Telle	6-2	240	LB	Honolulu, Hawaii
Wilson Thomas	6-5	200	WR	Omaha North

JON FRANK/DN

Please see RECRUITS on 10



LINCOLN SOUTHEAST tight end Jon Bowling breathes a sigh of relief Wednesday after signing a letter of intent to play football at Nebraska.

## Bowling signs letter with family at side

■ The hometown recruit says a new head coach wasn't a factor.

BY DARREN IVY  
Assignment Reporter

Decked out in a Nebraska hat and red shirt, Southeast High School senior Jon Bowling made it official.

Flanked by his parents, Charles and Karen, 15-year-old brother, Jordan, and Coach Chuck Mizerski, Bowling finalized a dream when he signed his national letter of intent to become a Cornhusker Wednesday afternoon at Lincoln Southeast High School.

"Growing up in Lincoln, it is a dream come true to play for Nebraska," Bowling said. "I have watched them my whole life."

The 6-foot-4 inch, 215-pound tight end verbally committed to Nebraska in the fall.

Bowling's mother said attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has always been a high priority for her son. She also is glad she will be able to see him play at home next year.

"We consider it a blessing," Karen Bowling said. "He's been given an opportunity that doesn't come to a lot of kids."

Charles Bowling said his son

has always wanted to play Division I football and Nebraska was at the "top of his list."

"It is an honor and a privilege to play in such a great system," Charles Bowling said.

And Jon Bowling thinks it will be a great system with Solich as the head coach.

Bowling verbally committed to NU before Tom Osborne announced his retirement in December.

Bowling said after he got over the initial shock of that announcement and after the NU coaches assured him the system would remain the same, he stuck with the Huskers.

Plus it didn't hurt that Solich once coached at Southeast.

"He won a couple high school titles," Bowling said. "Hopefully he'll win a couple of collegiate titles too."

While Bowling is glad to have Solich as a coach, Solich is also happy to have Bowling.

"Jon, at 6-4, 215-pounds, is very aggressive," Solich said. "He is really a player who has received a lot of attention."

Bowling, who also is a standout basketball player, said it will be tough not playing competitively anymore, but he said it was a choice he had to make.

He said he planned to finish the basketball season and then start the Husker conditioning program.

## Slechta says there wasn't much doubt

BY SAM MCKEON  
Senior Reporter

OMAHA — Jeremy Slechta didn't treat his signing with Nebraska as any special occasion.

It just signaled closure in what has been a long recruiting process.

"I knew that I was going to go to Nebraska for long time now," Slechta said. "I'm glad this made it official."

Slechta, a defensive tackle out of Papillion La-Vista High School, signed his letter of intent Wednesday morning among family and friends.

Though there was never really any doubt where he would sign, Slechta said, he was recruited heavily by Michigan early last fall.

"They offered to me the beginning of the season, but I would have hated myself if I got to Michigan and I didn't like it," Slechta said.

Slechta played for a Papillion team that finished second in the Class A state football playoffs this season. He ran a 5.04 second electronic 40-yard dash and has a 28-inch vertical leap.

"He really has excellent movement," Nebraska Football Coach Frank Solich said. "We'll give him an early look at helping out on the defensive line."

Gene Suhr, Slechta's high school coach, said Slechta fits the mold of a typical Nebraska player.

"The NU coaches do a great job of evaluating talent and individual players," Suhr said. "They know Jeremy will fit into their system."

Nebraska coaches project Slechta as a defensive tackle at the college level, Slechta said. But he said he did not know whether or not he would play his freshman year or if he would redshirt.

"They told me I have to get stronger and faster," he said. "If they want to give me shot at playing time next year, I'll take it."

The most positive thing about coming to Nebraska will be playing on one of the nation's best defenses, Slechta said.

"Everybody's heard of the Blackshirts," Slechta said. "One day when I earn a starting job and a black shirt, that will be a really big thing for me."

## Linebacker becomes first Benson recruit since 1991

BY JAY SAUNDERS  
Assignment Reporter

OMAHA — The childhood dream of many Nebraska kids is to play in Memorial Stadium as a member of the Cornhusker football team.

For Omaha Benson senior Randy Stella, the dream has not been tainted even though there is a new head coach.

Surrounded by family, teammates and Benson Coach Lonnie Tapp, Stella signed his national letter of intent on Wednesday. The 6-foot-2, 200-pound linebacker became the first Benson player to receive a football scholarship at Nebraska since Tony Veland in 1991.

"I thought it was the right college for me," Stella said. "It is something I have always wanted to do. Now, I am going to try and take advantage

of it." Stella, who runs a 4.62 second 40-yard-dash, also considered offers from Iowa State and Michigan.

As a senior last fall, Stella recorded 120 tackles, four sacks and one interception. Offensively, Stella served as a running back and rushed for 761 yards and 11 touchdowns.

Ranked 93<sup>rd</sup> on the National Recruiting Adviser's Top 100 list, Stella said the recent coaching change from Tom Osborne to Frank Solich had no bearing on which college he was going to attend.

"My decision had never changed," Stella said. "The only difference (between Osborne and Solich) is that (Solich) will have more emotion on the field."

His mother, Annette, also said she, along with many friends of the family, was happy to see Stella

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RANDY STELLA  
NU recruit

make his decision official.

"We always knew he would go to Nebraska," Annette Stella said. "We have a lot of family and friends who have followed him from midget football until now."