

Gillespie grows into role

BY JAMES NICAS
Staff Reporter

Spring Football '98



When looking for a new running backs coach, Nebraska Head Football Coach Frank Solich looked to an old familiar face.

Dave Gillespie, a Cornhusker running back from 1974 to 1976, was hired for the position earlier this year. Gillespie also was Nebraska's recruiting coordinator from 1986 to 1993.

The familiarity with the Husker system made the choice of Gillespie a natural fit for Solich.

"I knew Dave would relate well with the players," said Solich, who served as the running backs coach under former coach Tom Osborne. "He's got a tremendous work ethic, and he would do what it takes and contribute in a lot of ways."

So far, Gillespie's performance has not disappointed Solich. Gillespie said that having the former running backs coach as head coach has been beneficial to both.

"(Solich) has given me help and

the flexibility to try different things," Gillespie said. "But certainly in no way do I feel I am ready just take it all over."

Conflict often can arise when a new coach takes over a position while the old coach is still on staff. However, the potential uncomfortable feeling between Solich and Gillespie has been a very smooth transition.

"It's different having the person there who looks over my shoulder," Gillespie said. "But he has been there to support and guide me, and I've appreciated his input."

Although Gillespie has never coached running backs, the players have been very pleased with their new positions coach, NU I-back Dan Alexander said.

"He has done a real good job jumping in and knowing the players and material," Alexander said. "Having been here before has helped

him do a great job teaching us."

Between coaching stints at Nebraska, Gillespie was a tight end and defensive backs coach at Kansas.

As a former Kansas assistant, Gillespie said it was often difficult when facing his alma mater.

"I didn't feel very good usually. It was an unusual experience being on the opposite sideline," Gillespie said. "But you have to put the emotion out of the game because you have a job to do and you have to focus on that."

Alexander said Gillespie's service as a defensive back coach may help in coaching the running backs.

"Having knowledge of the defensive side of the ball has helped us in teaching us what path in a hole to take," Alexander said.

The players, Alexander said, have not noticed any major changes. Alexander said Nebraska could not have chosen a better man for the job.

"I don't think it has really affected the backs," Alexander said. "Coach Gillespie knows how the system works, and he has fit in very well."

Transfer opens spot for recruit

From Staff Reports

Nebraska freshman guard Rodney Williams plans to transfer to another school for the 1998-99 season, NU Coach Danny Nee said.

The loss of Williams, who saw 39 minutes of action last season, made room for the Cornhuskers' second signee of the spring period, point guard Joe Holmes, from Tyler (Texas) Junior College.

"In talking with Rodney, he felt that it was in his best interest to continue his basketball career at a community or junior college next season," Nee said. "He thinks he will have a better chance of getting more time on the court at a smaller school."

Tyler Coach Kyle Kellar told the Daily Nebraskan Sunday that Holmes made a verbal commitment to Husker coaches last week.

Holmes and Rodney Fields, a guard who signed with NU last fall, were teammates at Tyler. Holmes, originally from Seat Pleasant, Md., averaged 10.4 points and 8.1 assists last season.

Nee said the addition of Holmes will help fill the hole at point guard left open by Tyrone Lue, who announced he will forgo his senior season to enter the NBA draft.

"Joe Holmes is a player we think can help fill that loss immediately," Nee said. "Joe has excellent quickness and is the type of guard who will distribute the ball to the right people."

"We think that bringing in two quality guards who were junior college teammates should make for nice chemistry in our backcourt."

Luis Truscott, a high school forward from Houston, also signed a letter of intent with Nebraska this spring.

David Murray, a 6-foot-9, 215-pound forward from Mesa (Ariz.) Community College signed a letter of intent last fall, along with Fields.

Note:

Nebraska point guard Tyrone Lue has been named the winner of the 1998 Jack Moore Award, given annually to the most valuable player on the Nebraska basketball team. Lue also earned the honor as a sophomore last season.

The 6-foot, 175-pounder helped the Cornhuskers to their first NCAA Tournament appearance in four seasons and was a first-team All-Big 12 selection.

Lue led NU, averaging 21.2 points per game, along with 4.7 assists and 4.3 rebounds. The Mexico, Mo., native finished as the school's seventh-leading scorer with 1,577 points.

Return team's goal to put points right back on board

BY SAM MCKEWON
Senior Reporter

Spring Football '98



If the Nebraska defense does its job, sophomore defensive back Joe Walker won't have a real busy season returning kickoffs.



Darlington

But just in case the defense slips up, Walker said, he and the rest of the kickoff return team have a simple remedy.

"We want to put the score right back on the board that we just lost," said Walker, who led NU with 389 kickoff return yards last season. "That's not going to happen every time, obviously, but that's the goal."

Little has been said this spring about the return teams, both kickoff and punt, but the Cornhuskers look to be solid at both positions. With the exception of Brandon Harrison, Nebraska brings back its top three returners at both positions.

George Darlington, who coaches the punt return team, said Nebraska could be looking at a season where big plays abound in the return game, especially if Nebraska can't rid itself of fumbles on the punt returns.

"We dropped a few balls, or we probably would have led the nation in total yardage on punt returns," Darlington said. "But we've been

consistent in not dropping the ball this spring."

On kickoff returns, Walker is joined by senior wingback Shevin Wiggins, who led the team with 27 yards per return last season.

Wiggins also handles some of the duties on punt returns, where the Huskers use a three-man return system rather than just one. Last season, NU averaged 11.8 yards per punt return on 51 attempts.

One addition that could help bolster the punt return game is sophomore quarterback Bobby Newcombe. Newcombe led the team with a 20.3 average on punt returns, an average that would have led the nation if he had more returns.

While Darlington said he doesn't care if Newcombe wins the quarterback job or not, he said Newcombe is a dangerous threat returning kicks.

"It's selfish to say you want him back, but he is a good returner," Darlington said. "Still, if we don't get him we've got lots of guys who can make big plays."

Walker said losing Newcombe to a quarterback job is not going to take too much away from the existing returners.

"Nothing is promised to you," Walker said. "If we don't get him back we just have to generate those big plays ourselves."

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Greek Week '98

April 19th - 25th

Thursday, April 23rd

- 5:30 - 6:30 Greek Week Banquet Social Hour @ Top of the Rock
 - 6:30 - end Greek Week Banquet @ Top of the Rock
- *silent auction to further benefit Make A Wish
*meal
*speaker (State Senator Jon Bruhning)
*award presentations

Friday, April 24th

- 11:00 am UPC Activities Begin on the Greenspace east of Stadium
- 3:00 - 6:00 FAC @ P.O. Pears, (Burgers, Triad Skit Finals, Triad Sand Volleyball)
- 6:00 National Championship Celebration
- 9:30 - 1:00 Evening Social @ Knickerbocker's (9th & O),

Other Activities going on during the week:

Food and Clothing Drive to benefit Lincoln City Missions (This will be another partnered activity with RHA)

* A box will be placed on each dorm floor and in each greek house to be filled food and clothing items.

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