

Huard: Huskers physical

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior staff writer

Brock Huard remembers Nebraska.

He remembers the road trip his family took to Omaha to visit his aunt and uncle when he was in high school.

He remembers stopping at Ole's Big Game Bar and Grill in Paxton.

He had a buffalo burger.

The junior Washington quarterback also remembers the time the Nebraska football team took a road trip to Seattle to play the Huskies last year.

He remembers being knocked out of the game in the first quarter after he was taken down by NU rush end Grant Wistrom.

"As far as Nebraska football, the image that comes to me is physical football," Huard said. "What I really remember about that game was how hard they came in those first couple of series. They were so geared up. Their engines were revving really high. They were pretty hell-bent and coming pretty hard."

"They're a physical football team. They've dominated teams for the last seven years at home."

Of course, Huard also knows that the last time the Huskers lost at home was to Washington in 1991.

He remembers that game vividly. He was a senior in high school, and his brother Damon was a freshman quarterback at Washington.

Huard also knows Saturday's matchup is a big game for the eighth-ranked Huskies, who travel to Lincoln to face Nebraska at 2:35 p.m. in Memorial Stadium.

But in his three years at Washington, Huard said he has learned not to make games out to be bigger than they are.

"I think you get into a little bit of trouble when you try to make something bigger than it is," Huard said. "I'm looking forward to this opportunity, yet at the same time, I know what we're facing. These guys are for real, and they're big, and they're physical."

He learned the big game lesson the hard way as a freshman.

The Huskies traveled to Notre Dame in 1996, where Huard hoped to prove himself.

Instead, Huard completed eight of 26 passes, threw an interception and no touchdowns in a 54-20 Washington loss.

"That was a big learning lesson for me," Huard said. "I did pretty much fall flat on my face."

Despite a less-than-spectacular performance against Notre Dame, Huard finished the season with the second most yards passing by a freshman in Washington's school history.

Last season, Huard was slowed by an ankle sprain, but still managed to finish with 2,140 yards passing. Through two games this season, Huard, a drop-back passer, has completed 43 of 80 passes for 496 yards.

The Huskies, a passing team, have no doubt been watching tape of NU's season opener against Louisiana Tech, when the Bulldogs passed for 590 yards.

So goes Brock... So goes the team

Below are Brock Huard's best and worst games as a Husky. Included, for comparison, are his stats against Nebraska. Wins are bold.

Best	Team	Comp/Att	Yds.	TD/INT	Score
1998	Arizona St.	27/47	318	4/0	42-38
1997	BYU	18/23	285	3/0	42-20
1997	San Diego St.	16/26	313	4/0	36-3
1996	Arizona	20/31	311	3/1	31-17
Worst	Team	Comp/Att	Yds.	TD/INT	Score
1996	Notre Dame	8/26	99	0/1	20-54
1996	Stanford	5/16	102	1/1	27-6
1997	Arizona St.	9/18	150	2/1	26-14
1997	Washington St.	18/36	271	4/5	35-41
1997	Nebraska	4/8	29	0	14-27

JON FRANK/DN



But that number isn't enough to get Huard too excited.

"I think I'm a realist," Huard said. "If you reevaluate that game, it was 28-0 before Nebraska was letting up much through the air."

Washington will also review game tape from the Huskers' 27-14 win in Seattle last season.

"We've been thinking about this game in our minds ever since the season got over last year," said senior guard Tony Coats, who was "manhandled" by Wistrom on the play that Huard went down on last September. "It was a tough game for our whole team. We just have to go out and get after them."

Huard agreed. "They epitomize college football in a lot of ways," Huard said. "I've already heard the term, 'Dynasty.'"

"This is what you dream of playing. This is what college football is all about."

Injury-free, Rucker ready to take field

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer



Four weeks after the Nebraska football team opened its season, Mike Rucker will officially start his.

Just as he has in each of the Cornhuskers' first three games this year, Rucker, NU's No. 1 right rush end, will compete Saturday at Memorial Stadium when the Huskers play host to eighth-ranked Washington at 2:35 p.m.

But for the first time, he won't have to limp off the field. He won't have to play with the pain that creeps into his groin or watch in frustration from the sidelines.

An off-week for the Huskers after the California game allowed Rucker the time he needed to heal from a pelvic injury that has hampered him throughout the season and limited him to just two series of play in the Cal game.

He says he is at about 90 percent and playing better than he has all season. He wants nothing more than to forget about the last three games and return to his old form.

"This is a huge game," Rucker said. "It's on TV. Everyone is going to be watching. I'll have a chance to get things started right for myself, and it's about time."

Impatience has plagued Rucker in the first few weeks of his senior season. A preseason All-American candidate and top

NFL prospect, the 6-foot-5 Rucker had hoped to impress people early.

He hasn't. Rucker totaled just three tackles in his first three games.

"This injury has been real tough on me," Rucker said. "It's the type of thing that you never know when it's going to go away and when it's going to feel good enough to go 100 percent."

Rucker has practiced every day this week and hopes to be close to 100 percent Saturday.

NU Defensive Line Coach Nelson Barnes said Aaron Wills and Travis Toline have filled in well during Rucker's absence. But Barnes is happy to have Rucker back to near full-strength for Washington.

"I always expect the same thing from any of the guys when they're on the field," Barnes said. "I don't want to put undue pressure on Mike, but he's the kind of guy that will make some plays for us."

Rucker expects to do just that on Saturday.

"It's my senior year, and you go in thinking that you want to have all of those memories with everyone on the field to cherish," Rucker said. "You set goals for yourself."

"But I can still get those things, and the good thing about goals is that they can always be reached."

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