

**Sports Opinion**



**David Wilson**

## NU's Crouch, Newcombe good friends

Eric Crouch could be a bitter man. He could have given serious thought to transferring when he was leading the scout team last fall and it appeared that he might be a career backup quarterback at Nebraska.

He could be on bad terms with fellow quarterback Bobby Newcombe, who won the starting position in the spring, partially because of the experience he gained last fall while Crouch was injured.

He could be a little frustrated that a hamstring injury prevented any sort of quarterback controversy this week as Newcombe returned from a knee strain.

He could, at least, not sit by Newcombe in class.

But somehow, despite coming to the UNL at the same time, playing the same position, and battling head-to-head for one spot last spring, the duo's off-field relationship has not been one of bitterness.

"When we first met each other last summer, people were hyping us up," Newcombe said. "We went to each other and shook hands. Now, we're pretty good friends."

The duo have two classes together and sit next to each other in both.

Crouch says they share notes. Newcombe says they sit and joke around.

Either way, that's gotta be a pretty strange sight.

"You would think people are like, 'Those guys are so competitive. Why would they want to sit next to each other?'" Crouch said. "But that's not the case."

On the field, they push each other — and their athletic abilities are very similar.

"There's really not a whole lot of differences," NU Quarterbacks Coach Turner Gill said.

Hard work saw Crouch go from a scout team player to the Cornhuskers' starting quarterback in less than a year. That was with the help of a strained ligament by Newcombe, who started in NU's season opener.

But Crouch will be the first to stand by his side this Saturday when Newcombe makes his second career quarterback start against eighth-ranked Washington in Memorial Stadium.

"You never want to see a quarterback out like that," Crouch said. "Especially with his athletic ability and big-play potential."

"It looks like he's getting back to normal and that's always good to see."

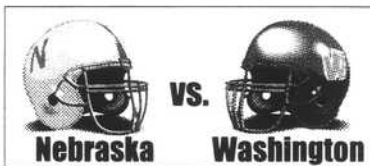
So don't be surprised if you see Newcombe rushing over to Crouch's place late Sunday night for a History of American Jazz class cram session.

(There's a test Monday).

"It's a friendship thing," Newcombe said. "We're not enemies."

Wilson is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior staff writer.

# Huskers at full strength for UW



By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior staff writer

The stage is set. Second-ranked Nebraska and No. 8 Washington. Two top-10 teams in a televised game. ESPN's Gameday crew sitting outside Memorial Stadium.

And as if that weren't enough, the Cornhuskers expect the return of possibly five starters, including No. 11-back DeAngelo Evans — who hasn't played since 1996 — and quarterback Bobby Newcombe.

Evans, for one, is ready for the show to start. "I know there are expectations," Evans said. "People expect a lot of me, and I don't have a problem with that."

The return of injured players Evans, Bobby Newcombe, Mike Rucker, Jason Wiltz and possibly Clint Finley will probably be positive for the Cornhuskers (3-0) as they prepare to play host to Washington (2-0) at Memorial Stadium.

And expectations will be high at 2:35 p.m. Saturday, because Nebraska will take the field as close to full-strength as it has been all season.

NU Coach Frank Solich said the Huskers' health is the result of a bye week last week.

"As I see our team preparing for this game, the extra week that we had I think has been beneficial to us," Solich said. "There are still some practicing now that are questionable for the game and then there are those who have come back and have responded very well. I think we will be right at 100 percent."

The five players returning — all listed at No. 1 on the depth chart at their positions — have not competed simultaneously in the same game this season.

Wiltz, a senior defensive tackle, started against Louisiana Tech but missed the Alabama-Birmingham and Cal games after spraining an ankle. Finley, the projected starter at free safety, strained his knee in fall camp and hasn't played all season.

No. 1 right rush end Mike Rucker is close to full speed after battling a groin injury, and No. 1 quarterback Newcombe will start after sitting out the last two games with a slight posterior cruciate ligament tear.

Standing on the sidelines proved particularly difficult for Newcombe, who passed for 168 yards and two touchdowns against Louisiana Tech.

"My knee didn't feel right, but I still tried to find a



MIKE WARREN/DN  
**QUARTERBACK BOBBY NEWCOMBE** is slated for the start against Washington on Saturday. Newcombe has not taken a snap under center since his start against Louisiana Tech. Since then, he has been sidelined with a knee injury.

Please see EVANS on 10

## Husker defense braces for quarterback Huard

By DAVID WILSON  
Senior staff writer

Tony Coats saw it coming. Washington's matchup last September with Nebraska was just over a quarter old when Cornhusker rush end Grant Wistrom blew by Coats.

Husky quarterback Brock Huard ended up on the turf, and he didn't return to the huddle.

"That was a tough play," Coats said. "I got kind of manhandled by Wistrom. He got me going one way, then he got me going the other way. I was looking back and yelling to Brock to look out."

"Basically, I just got beat on the play."

A senior this season, Coats said he plans to avoid a similar situation when eighth-ranked Washington travels to Lincoln Saturday to face the Huskers at 2:35 p.m. in Memorial Stadium.

"That was a turning point for me last year," said Coats of the Huskies' 27-14 loss to NU and Huard's ankle injury. "I kind of had to rethink things and do better. I did kind of have an embarrassing game last year."

Though Wistrom is now in the NFL, Nebraska rush end Chad Kelsay said the Huskers' plan of attack is the same.

Nebraska has recorded 12 sacks in three games — including two by Kelsay.

"I'm sure (Huard) is coming in here and thinking to himself that he has to prove that last year was a fluke," Kelsay said. "But it's something we're not worried about. We have to come out and play our style of game. We have to make sure we get hits on him."

"I think if we can rattle his cage a little bit at the beginning of the game, he's going to be thinking about it. It will be in the back of his mind. The more we can get to him, the better off we're going to be."

Huard threw for 29 yards vs. the Huskers last year, but backup Marques Tuiasosopo found success, completing 12 of 22 passes for 270 yards.

The NU defense knows Huard has the same chance for success, free safety Mike Brown said, and respects his talent.

Huard has completed 43 of 80 passes this season for 496 yards in two games.

"He's just a tremendous talent," NU Coach Frank Solich said. "He can hurt you with the short passes to keep drives going, and he can put the ball on the money with the long pass."

"He's very talented. He's a great leader and has the ability to come up

Please see HUARD on 10



Quarterbacks: Brock Huard is a three-year starter and as accurate a passer as there is in college football. If he can avoid the rush, he's as good as anyone in the nation. Bobby Newcombe and Eric aren't there...yet.

Edge:

Running backs: With DeAngelo Evans returning, NU has a backfield that ranks among the best in the nation. Washington's backfield is slow and unproductive. Not up to Husker standards.

Edge:

Offensive line: Both are fairly even and still learning. Whichever plays better may help determine the winner.

Edge:

Receivers: Believe it or not, NU's receivers are as good as any in the nation. They catch the ball and they block better than most. Washington's receivers are fast and can catch the ball. If Huard finds them, they make plays.

Edge:

Defensive line: Nebraska's struggling through injuries. Washington lacks experience. Neither is yet a dominating force. Considering that both will be going against evenly-rated offensive lines, playmaker Chad Kelsay will make the difference.

Edge:

Linebackers: Nebraska has an experienced corps, and they're just hitting their strides. Washington again has a lack of size, but plenty of speed. Foreman and company are the better unit overall.

Edge:

Secondary: Washington was roasted by Arizona State, Nebraska by Louisiana Tech. As an individual, Raiph Brown is the best defensive back on the field. Still, both units have plenty to prove coming in.

Edge:

Special teams: UW's kicking game is a train wreck. NU has Kris Brown. Game. Set. Match.

Edge:

Overall: Nebraska has the advantage in special teams and has a slightly better defense. What does that mean? That NU has to play under its ability to lose. The Huskies are good offensively, but they still don't have a running game. Huard will be in for a long game if UW can't sustain a rushing game. It says here he will!

Nebraska 21

Washington 10

JON FRANK/DN