

Sports Opinion**Sam McKewon**

Durability not showing in I-backs

It takes about 20 seconds to finger through the Big 12 Conference statistics sheet to notice a strange order of merit in the conference's rushing leaders.

Not surprisingly, Ricky Williams, the Texas version, is at the top. He ought to be, since he's the best in the nation. He's got 1,086 yards.

Then there's Ricky Williams, the Texas Tech version. He's pretty good, too.

Go down the list a little, and you'll see players from Missouri, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Kansas State and Texas A&M.

Clocking in at No. 9 in the conference is Nebraska's Correll Buckhalter with 337 yards.

Ninth in the conference. Not exactly something you see every day from the Cornhuskers. If they keep on going like this, NU won't have a 1,000-yard rusher for the first time since 1990. That, by the way, was the worst team NU's had in 25 years.

See a problem here? I do.

NU has had little to no continuity at the I-back position this season. First, DeAngelo Evans is hurt. Buckhalter plays fairly well. Evans comes back; Buckhalter sits. Evans looks good, then looks like he's running in pudding against Oklahoma State.

The Huskers have had enough problems at quarterback to fill a season. But, you know what? They've held up their end of the bargain. They've thrown it when they've had to and made plays when they needed to. It's called "sucking it up," folks, and Bobby Newcombe, Eric Crouch and Monte Christo have sucked pretty hard.

The I-backs need to do the same. Evans is the best back, but maybe it's time to re-evaluate just how healthy this guy is. If he needs to sit and regain his "core of strength" or whatever it is he had, then so be it. But Evans is not dangerous at 50 percent. Or maybe Evans should play hurt, and just play a little better.

Buckhalter's tough and doesn't fumble, but he doesn't evoke fear turning the corner on the option play. He's fast, but he needs 20 yards to get there. Dan Alexander has never learned how to make guys miss.

The uncertainty at I-back hinders what impact fullback Joel Makovicka can have, too. Defenses want to stop him; they know they need only one linebacker to stop the I-back. Many times this season, the fullback dive has been rendered nonexistent.

A solution needs to be calculated, and fast. One of these days, the young quarterbacks won't be able to pull NU out of the fire with the pass. That just might happen this weekend in College Station, Texas.

Sam McKewon is a junior political science and news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.

Finley loves ice cream, big hits

■ A Cuero, Texas, native battled homesickness to become a starter in the NU secondary this season.

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer

It was a crisp October morning. The Nebraska football team had just arrived in Waco, Texas, for a game against unranked Baylor. Most of the Cornhuskers knew they had to focus. They knew they had to avoid a let-down after whipping Big 12 Conference foe Kansas State by 30 points the week before.

But Clint Finley couldn't help thinking of other things.

Like ice cream. Texas ice cream, that is.

"Last year when we played Baylor, us Texas people wanted to get some Blue Bell ice cream. It's Texas ice cream. But my teammate didn't think there was anything special about that ice cream," Finley said with a smile.

"Other guys say we think we're bigger and better than everyone else. They give those of us from Texas a hard time. It's fun to joke around."

The Huskers, who list seven Texas natives on their roster, are returning to Finley's home state Saturday for a rematch of last year's league championship game. No. 18 Texas A&M (4-1 overall and 1-0 in the conference) will play host to second-ranked Nebraska (5-0 and 1-0) at 2:30 p.m. at Kyle Field in College Station, Texas.

And once again, Finley knows that while he will concentrate on the opponent, thoughts of playing in Texas also will occupy his mind.

The 5-foot-11 sophomore is looking forward to seeing his family, friends and high school coaches.

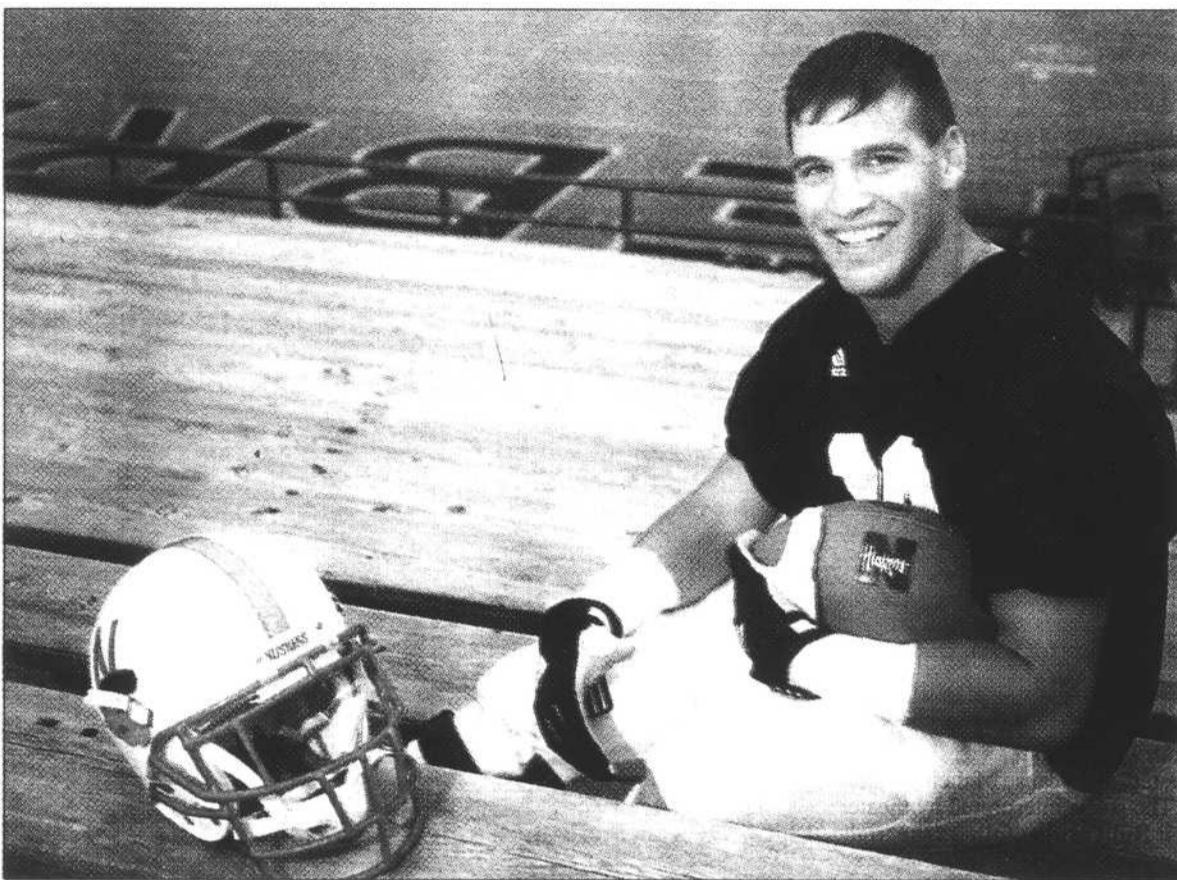
Coaches projected Finley, who is from Cuero, Texas, as the starter at free safety after playing behind Eric Warfield, who is now with the Kansas City Chiefs, last season.

But Finley missed NU's first three games and played sparingly in the last two after straining his left knee in fall camp. He expects to be close to 100 percent healthy for the first time in 1998. And Finley couldn't think of a better time to play at his best.

"It's not often you see a kid in everyday life leave and go that far away for school," Finley said. "I hope people back there will be surprised at how I'm doing."

"A lot of them didn't want me to go. Texas and Texas A&M were recruiting me as a quarterback. But I wouldn't change anything that has happened for the world."

Nebraska recruited Finley as "an athlete." A first-team all-state quarter-



MIKE WARREN/DN

CLINT FINLEY GOES HOME this weekend to his native state of Texas to face Texas A&M on Saturday in College Station, Texas. Finley has been one of the harder hitters for the Cornhuskers this season.

back, Finley suspected that Husker coaches would move him to defense.

Finley redshirted in 1996 while learning a new position. It proved a difficult time for the homesick Texan.

"I was always looking to the future," Finley said. "When I made my decision, I knew I made it to never look back. I missed home, but I had it in my mind that I was going to stick it out at Nebraska."

Finley found a friend in NU kicker Kris Brown, a fellow Texas native. Brown, who played against and beat Finley in the 1993 Texas 3-A State Football Championships, Brown showed Finley around on his recruiting visit, and the two lived together during Finley's first summer in Lincoln.

"I really tried to take him under my wing," Brown said. "I think it was kind of a tough transition for him. I haven't seen very many people who were that homesick."

But any troubles Finley had in the beginning were quickly erased after his redshirt year. Finley proved as ferocious on the field as he was mild-mannered off it. He quickly built a reputation as one of the hardest hitters to ever play in the secondary, NU Secondary Coach George Darlington said.

He had 14 tackles in a limited role last season and 2 stops in a limited role last week against Oklahoma State.

Football Starters

Nebraska starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.
QB	12	Bobby Newcombe	6-0	195
IB	4	DeAngelo Evans	5-9	210
FB	45	Joel Makovicka	5-11	240
WB	5	Shevin Wiggins	5-11	200
SE	3	Matt Davison	6-0	180
TE	88	Sheldon Jackson	6-4	245
LT	69	Adam Julch	6-5	315
LG	63	James Sherman	6-2	295
C	59	Josh Heske	6-3	290
RG	72	Ben Gessford	6-2	290
RT	65	Jason Schwab	6-1	300
PK	35	Kris Brown	5-10	205

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.
LR	57	Chad Kelsay	6-3	250
NT	96	Steve Warren	6-1	310
DT	99	Jason Wiltz	6-4	310
RR	84	Mike Rucker	6-6	260
SLB	37	Tony Ortiz	6-0	215
MLB	44	Jay Foreman	6-1	240
WLB	27	Eric Johnson	6-1	205
LCB	16	Erwin Swiney	6-0	185
FS	21	Mike Brown	5-10	205
ROV	25	Joe Walker	5-10	200
RCB	22	Ralph Brown	5-9	180
P	23	Bill Latheur	5-11	200

Texas A&M starters

Offense

Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.
QB	15	Randy McCown	6-1	210
RB	24	Jason Bragg	6-2	232
RB	34	Dante Hall	5-8	190
SE	80	Chris Coie	6-0	186
FLK	88	Leroy Hodge	6-2	204
LT	53	Rex Tucker	6-5	290
LG	73	Cameron Spikes	6-3	210
C	77	Seth McKinney	6-3	293
RG	62	Semisi Heimuli	6-2	303
RT	78	Andy Vincent	6-3	301
TE	89	Daniel Campbell	6-5	262
PK	6	Shane Lechler	6-2	220

Defense

Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.
RE	99	Ronald Fiemons	6-5	247
NT	96	Ron Edwards	6-3	262
LE	95	Rocky Bernard	6-3	269
OLB	40	Roylin Bradley	6-1	221
ILB	46	Cornelius Anthony	6-0	224
ILB	9	Dat Nguyen	5-11	215
OLB	43	Warrick Holdman	6-1	230
RCB	18	Sedrick Curry	6-2	192
FS	30	Brandon Jennings	6-1	191
SS	48	Rich Coody	6-1	210
CB	39	Jason Webster	5-10	178
P	6	Shane Lechler	6-2	220

JON FRANK/DN

"I like to be known as someone who plays hard and hits hard," Finley said. "I take pride in it. I enjoy it. But I hope people don't see me as a mean guy."

Brown said nothing could be fur-

ther from the truth.

"I feel fortunate to consider Clint a good friend," Brown said. "He's a great person. He has a great attitude, and he's fun to be with. I'm glad to have another Texas guy here."

Henk 'chased dreams' to play for NU

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer

Nikki Henk will never forget the day she chose to jump-start her stalled volleyball career.



Henk

It was April 2, 1997. She walked into the volleyball office at the College of Charleston and told her coach, Jewel Giessy, that she wanted to give up a full scholarship to walk on at Nebraska.

Volleyball

Nebraska at Texas Tech 7 p.m. Lubbock, Texas, Friday.
Nebraska at Baylor 7:30 p.m. Waco, Texas, Saturday.

It was a difficult time for Henk. As a freshman during the 1996 season, she led Charleston with 3.9 kills per game and earned first-team All-Trans-America Athletic Conference honors.

Now a defensive specialist for Nebraska, Henk doesn't enjoy the playing time she once did. She relieves middle blocker Tomia Tauke or right-side hitter Nancy Meendering in the back row. She serves, passes,

plays defense and leaves after three rotations.

Henk gave up a lot to transfer from Charleston — a 500 team her freshman year — to Nebraska. She has gone from the star of the team at Charleston to a role player at Nebraska. But the Bellevue native harbors no regrets.

"All through the (1996) season, I thought college volleyball should be about three levels higher than the one we were at," Henk said of her freshman year with the Cougars. "I wasn't satisfied with where we were playing. I had bigger plans for what I wanted to do, so I had to chase my dreams."

Henk's dreams included playing

for a top Division I team and competing for a national championship. She has accomplished the first objective, and the Cornhuskers, undefeated after 13 matches, already are talking about the second.

Nebraska (13-0 overall and 4-0 in the Big 12 Conference) will put its perfect record on the line again this weekend when it travels to Texas to battle Texas Tech and Baylor.

Henk expects a challenging weekend.

The Red Raiders (13-4 and 2-2) enter tonight's 7 p.m. match in Lubbock, Texas, riding a three-game

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