

Return teams star in Red-White game

■ **D-back Mike Demps** rouses the Memorial Stadium crowd with a 100-yard kickoff return.

BY **DARREN IVY**
Senior staff writer

When freshman Mike Demps fielded Josh Brown's kickoff six yards deep into the end zone in second-quarter action Saturday, most fans probably thought he would take a knee.

Demps said he even thought about downing the ball. Then his instincts took over, and he scored 100 yards later for the Red's first touchdown of the annual Red-White Spring Game at Memorial Stadium.

"I got the ball and turned around and there was a nice wedge," said Demps, a 5-foot-10, 195-pound speedster from Fort Worth, Texas.

"Nobody broke through the wedge so I figured I would take a chance. I was kind of hungry for a kickoff return. I've been praying for that return all week."

Once Demps decided to bring the ball out, it didn't take him long to show off his skills. He made a couple guys miss, then turned on the after burners to put some distance between him and the pursuers and coasted into the end zone from 40 yards out.

What made Demps' return extraordinary was that his left hamstring was about 65 percent and he favored it noticeably. During the run, he said his hamstring starting balling up like it was going to pull, so he shut his

speed down at the 40-yard line and coasted in.

Defensive Backs Coach George Darlington, who also works with the special teams, said he has been impressed with Demps' ability this spring.

"Demps, if he can get healthy and get strength in his leg, has a chance to be an impact player," Darlington said. "Right now it's hard to say that when he ran the ball back for a touchdown. He's nowhere near where we think he will be if he can strengthen his bad leg."

During the regular season, Demps said he probably wouldn't have taken the ball out of the end zone, but before the Spring Game, NU coaches told the kick returners to take some chances they normally wouldn't take to try to get some big plays.

With top return man Joe Walker still recovering from knee surgery and Kenny Cheatham having graduated, the coaches used the spring to try to find someone to go in place of Walker.

Demps, freshman DeJuan Groce and sophomore Keyou Craver all have seen action returning kickoffs and punts. Prior to the spring, none had done that in games. Craver said the inexperience was evident Saturday with all the bobbles and fumbles.

"I think our special teams will be a big threat," said Craver, who had three kickoff returns for 67 yards and two punt returns for 37 yards. "We have a lot of athletic players. We feel whenever we have the ball in our hands big things could happen. That's the attitude you have to have."

Spring game full of offensive miscues

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guys."

Crouch especially praised the White secondary. Of the 13 passes he attempted, two were intercepted (by cornerbacks Keyuo Craver and Erwin Swiney), four were broken up, one went for no gain and one was for a loss of four yards.

"It was frustrating throwing the ball today," Crouch said. "But sometimes that's going to happen. Erwin and Keyuo made some great interceptions."

In addition to shutting down the passing game, the White defense also kept the Red running game in check—the only big rushing play being a 26-yard jaunt by Buckhalter in the first quarter. The Red team had 137 total rushing yards.

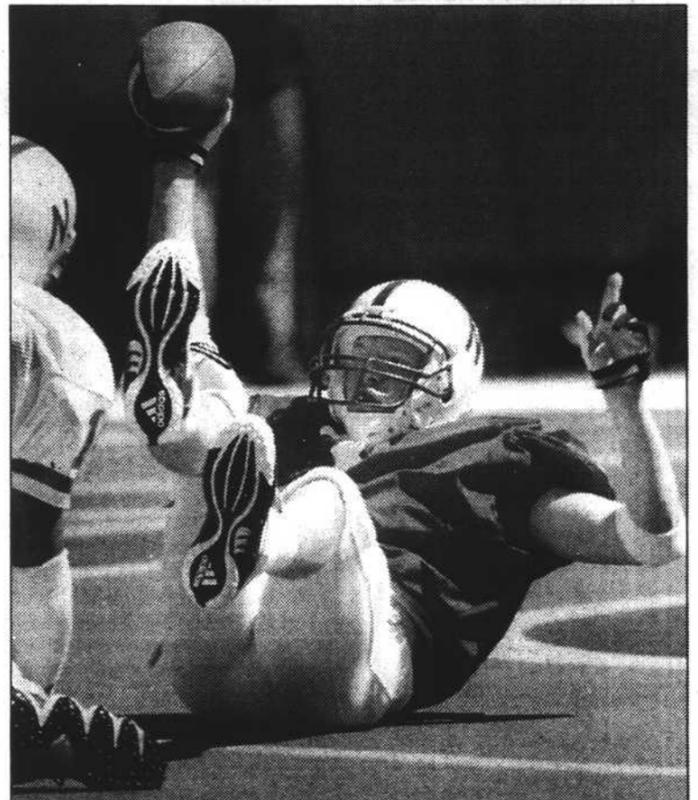
On the other side, it was the Red defense that made the real charge in the second half, as the Whites coughed up two fumbles that Greg McGraw and Jeremy Lyman returned for touchdowns to put the Red team up 21-12.

"The defense played real well today," cornerback Mike Brown said. "It was physical; we had some big hits and it was an all-around good showing of what our defense can do."

And though the offenses struggled and the defenses reigned, Crouch said it was important to remember that the spring is merely a warm-up, especially with so many missing faces on both sides of the ball.

"When you have the No. 1 offense out there, you expect everything to be perfect, but it's tough," Crouch said. "We've got injuries and players missing and we're still getting used to new things."

As Solich said, the Spring Game



SPLIT END MATT DAVISON holds his hands up in celebration after catching a 45-yard pass from quarterback Eric Crouch over the head of cornerback Erwin Swiney during the Red/White Spring Game. Davison thought he had scored a touchdown because he landed in the end zone; however, the ball was spotted on the 2-yard line.

may not have been the best measure of NU's potential.

"I didn't expect them to run up and down the field like a real first unit," Solich said. "We've got a mix of experienced and inexperienced players rotating in and out of that first

unit and it just wasn't as smooth as it might have been with some other guys.

"But we got done what we wanted them to get done in the spring and we were able to do it with a lot of players."

NU softball rides offense to sweep

BY **BRANDON SCHULTE**
Staff writer

What a difference a week makes. Last Sunday against Oklahoma St. the Nebraska softball team suffered through a 7-for-46 (.152) day from the plate en route to splitting with the Cowboys.

A week and two postponements later, the Cornhusker bats came alive to pound out 16 hits in 50 at-bats a .320 average, helping NU to beat Baylor 7-3 and 9-3 in front of 506 fans at the NU Softball Complex.

Coach Rhonda Revelle applauded Nebraska's red-hot hitting.

"It really took a lot of pressure off of our defense and our pitching to score early and keep threatening," Revelle said.

The huskers improved to 22-13 overall and 6-4 in the Big 12 Conference, while Baylor dropped to 24-18 and 3-5 on the team's senior day. The sweep also vaulted NU into third place in the conference behind Oklahoma and Texas.

Nebraska jumped out early in the opener. A single by Ginger Taylor combined with a Jennifer Lizama walk and a throwing error by Baylor catcher

Ryan Stukel led to a 2-0 lead.

NU gave the lead back in the second inning, however, as BU scored three runs, two of which were unearned.

The Huskers tied the game with a Lizama homer in the third and scored two runs apiece in the fourth and fifth for the win. Jenny Voss picked up her 13th win of the year with the complete game.

Revelle said NU's concentration and ability to maintain composure was key.

"The team is really trying to commit to concentration even when something unfavorable happens that they stay the same mentally," Revelle said. "An example of this was Leigh (Suh) error (a throwing error in the second). Typically we've turned one error into two or three this year. They scored three runs but there was only one error."

In the second game, lone Husker senior and captain Kelly Pinkepank came through with a home run and two RBI's. The Huskers scored early again, putting eight runs on the board through the first three innings.

Lizama and Jenifer Williams each contributed two RBI's to bolster pitcher Leigh Ann Walker, who moved to 8-2 on the season.

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