

Newcombe to return punts for NU

■ Lacking experience, Huskers look to quarterback to help out on special teams.

By **MATTHEW HANSEN**
Staff writer

With the injury to Joe Walker and the indefinite suspension of Shevin Wiggins — Nebraska's top two returners — it appeared the Cornhuskers would begin the season lacking a punt- or kick-returner with game experience.

Help will come, however, in the unexpected figure of quarterback Bobby Newcombe, who said Tuesday

he will also see time returning punts this fall.

"I plan on being back there for at least two or three punts per game," Newcombe said, "and I'll stay back there as long as the coaches let me."

The plan to place Newcombe at punt returner was hatched by NU

Secondary Coach George Darlington, who also coaches the punt teams. The quarterback agreed and got the OK from Coach Frank

Solich several weeks ago — before the suspension of Wiggins last Friday. Wiggins ranked No. 2 on the team in kick and punt returns last season.

Newcombe last returned punts as a freshman during the 1997 season, averaging a team-high 20.3 yards per return.

"I loved returning punts in '97," Newcombe said. "I'm excited about getting back there again this year."

Newcombe, who missed much of last season and all of spring practice with a knee injury, expressed no concerns about the unique combination of quarterback and punt returner — or the risk of injury.

"I'm not worried about an injury at all," Newcombe said. "All I am

doing is looking forward to the opportunity to help the team win. It looked like the team needed help at punt returner, so I'm ready to go."

Darlington said he is happy to have Newcombe perform double duty.

"Bobby is going to help us out in terms of experience," Darlington said. "The other guys are doing well in practice, but they have yet to see a true game situation."

In addition to Newcombe, sophomore Keyou Craver and redshirt freshman DeJuan Groce are also expected to return punts. Walker, who led the Huskers in punt returns last season, is expected back from a knee injury by midseason.

Awaiting Iowa **10** days and counting

At kick returner, the current depth chart lists Craver and redshirt freshman Randy Stella as the starters and Groce and senior Larry Henderson as the backups.

Despite the fact that none has any college experience at the position, Kick Returns Coach Dan Young isn't concerned.

"It hurts to lose two starters in Walker and Wiggins, but our young guys have the speed and instincts necessary to do well," Young said. "I feel that kick returner is a position where you either have it or you don't, so to me experience isn't a big factor."



Newcombe

Rose not concerned with poll

By **JOHN GASKINS**
Staff writer

Don't remind Penn State Coach Russ Rose that the Nittany Lions are the preseason No. 1-ranked team in the nation.

For one thing, the 21-year veteran — who guided his team to a 35-1 record and the national championship game last year — doesn't care. To him, preseason polls don't tell him a thing about how his team will actually perform on the court.

For another thing, he doesn't believe his Nittany Lions have No. 1 caliber yet as they prepare to take on No. 8 Florida in Friday's opening match of the State Farm Volleyball Classic at the Nebraska Coliseum.

"I'm not going to blow smoke," Rose said. "I'm not going to be some great optimist. This is far from the best preseason we've had. I don't think we're prepared for the level of play we're about to face this weekend."

But every team in the four-team pre-conference-season tournament will have to be prepared for that level. All four teams — PSU, No. 3 Nebraska, No. 6 Pacific and Florida — will face top-10 competition to open their 1999 campaigns.

The Lions and Gators will face off in Friday's first match at 5 p.m., followed by Nebraska vs. Pacific at 7. The two winners will advance to Saturday's 7 p.m. championship game.

Rose said despite the return of three of the nation's top players in seniors setter Bonnie Bremner, middle hitter Lauren Cacciamani and outside hitter Carrie Schonveld, he's concerned about filling the four other positions that were left vacant around them. The three are PSU's only returning starters.

"We have a lot of inexperience on our team," Rose said. "It will be tough to pull everything together in time for the tournament. There's a strong possibility we'll put together a good team this year, but I don't see any visions of that happening in August."

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Swinging with CONFIDENCE

KRAPFL LOOKS UPON SENIOR TO HELP LEAD CORNHUSKERS

By **BROCK WENDLANDT**
Staff writer

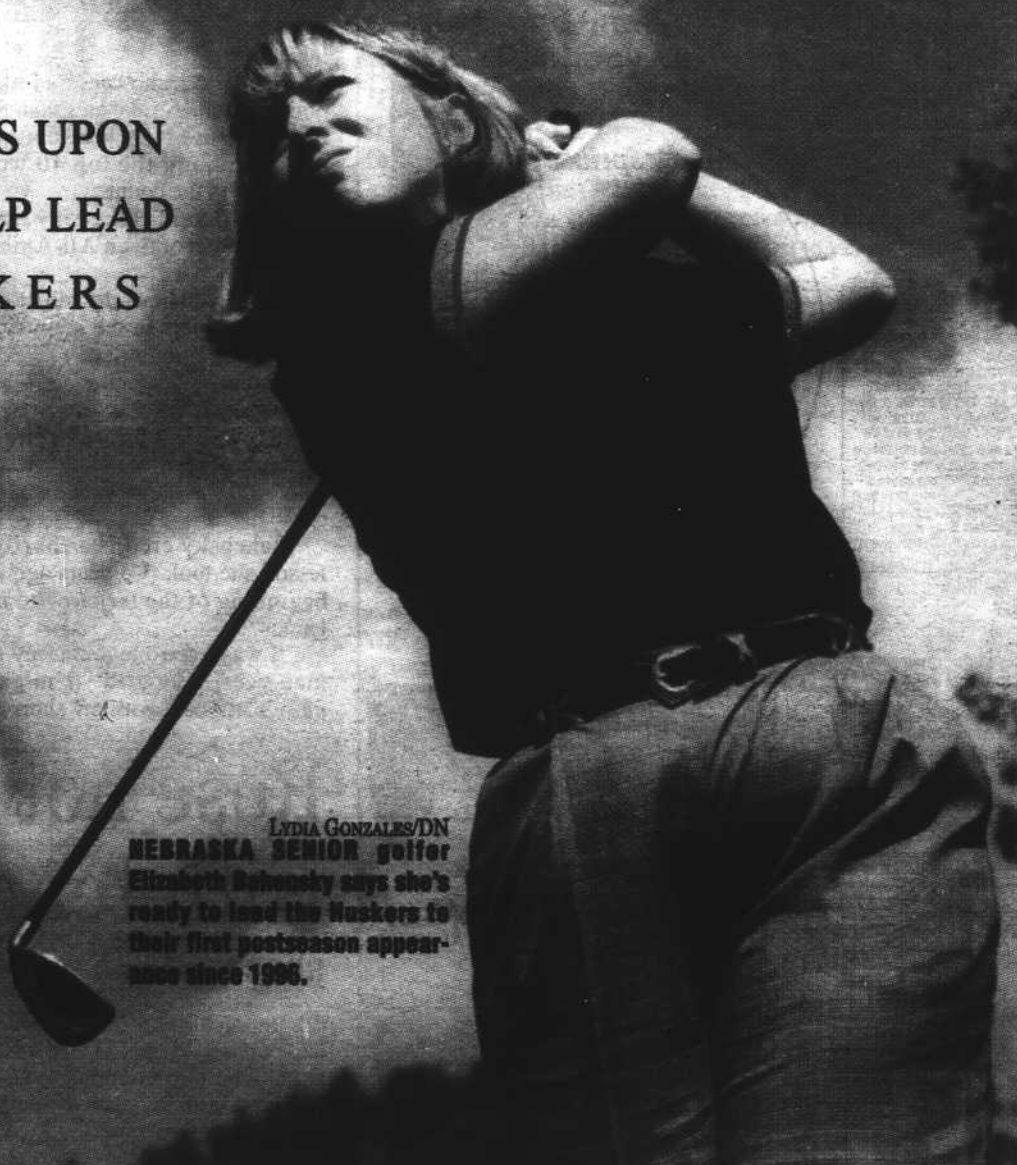
Elizabeth Bahensky remembers what it was like to be a freshman.

The unsettling feeling of being away from home and the academic rigors of school made her dread going to the golf course.

"I had to get used to college life," said Bahensky, now a senior. "Before, I let a lot of things interfere with golf, and I couldn't stay focused. Now, it's easier to enjoy the game, and I'm a lot more confident."

And Coach Robin Krapfl said she is hoping Bahensky's confidence will result in her emergence as a team leader.

"The team's counting on her," Krapfl said. "She was the lone with her serious demeanor and work ethic, and the younger players fol-



LYDIA GONZALES/DN
NEBRASKA SENIOR golfer Elizabeth Bahensky says she's ready to lead the Huskers to their first postseason appearance since 1998.

Please see **SWING** on 10

NU cornerbacks amiably vie for starting left-side position

By **BRANDON SCHULTE**
Staff writer

Whether it be in the classroom, just hanging out or helping the Nebraska football team to improve on a 9-4 record, the NU cornerbacks subscribe to the all-for-one and one-for-all philosophy.

All-American candidate Ralph Brown anchors the right-side spot, while three others vie for the starting left-side position.



Swiney

But of the players battling for the open slot — red-shirt freshman DeJuan Groce, sophomore Keyou Craver and junior Erwin Swiney — none considers it a competition.

"We are all real good friends on or off the field," Craver said. "There's no animosity, we just keep every-

thing real cool and in perspective. We're all working for the same goal."

The goal: Make Nebraska a championship-caliber team.

All three bring different strengths, but when asked about the weaknesses of his teammates, Brown refused.

"I don't throw out weaknesses of my teammates," Brown said. Instead, he pointed out positives of each.

"Keyou is the most aggressive of the three.

He's so athletic that his abilities stand out more than most people he covers.

"Swiney has the height that all of us corners want to guard those taller receivers.

"DeJuan, he just has raw speed. He's very fast out there. The way he plays, he looks lazy, but he's so fast he can make up ground."

Groce has yet to step foot onto the field, though he did suit up three times last year in case of an

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