

## Raiola brings intensity to trenches

*The first-year starter takes on leadership role for Huskers*

BY SAMUEL MCKEWIN  
Senior staff writer

Nebraska offensive lineman Dave Volk understands the question as it has been posed to him: Give his best Dominic Raiola "intense" story.

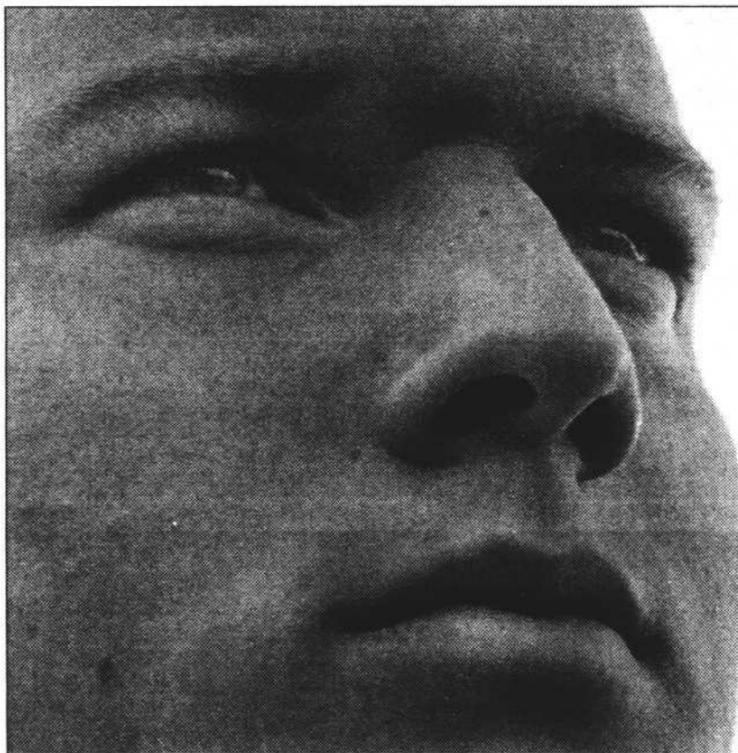
But Volk is taking his time. There's no one moment that stands out above another when considering the mentality of the sophomore NU center.

Raiola is all-intense, all the time. "Geez, where do we start?" Volk said. "Anytime we're in the weight room and he doesn't get his last rep, or anytime he doesn't make his assignment in practice. Or anytime. He's pretty much the same level, intensity-wise."

That's the way Volk likes it. With senior guard Jason Schwab out for the season, Raiola has assumed a leadership role, along with captain Adam Julch, in the trenches, an area of the field where the Cornhuskers have gathered some heat already this season.

Despite paving the way for just 114 and 119 rushing yards in the two games vs. California and Southern Mississippi, Raiola insisted the NU line was in fine shape — just a few blocks away from big yards — and they proved it with a 333-yard rushing output in a 40-10 victory over Missouri.

"Our running production isn't what we want it to be," Raiola said. "But you see guys making plays on films — guys getting after things, fin-



NEBRASKA SOPHOMORE CENTER Dominic Raiola has the opportunity to become one of the finest centers in Husker history, according to Offensive Line Coach Milt Tenopir.

MIKE WARREN/DN

ishing blocks."

If there's one element of the game where Raiola excels, NU Offensive Line Coach Milt Tenopir said, it's in his finishing ability. That takes tenacity, which Raiola has plenty of.

A native of Honolulu, Hawaii, Raiola spent his first season, 1997, as a redshirt, learning the offensive system and one of the more difficult positions on the line — center. The redshirt season allowed Raiola to play on the scout team, where he learned about intensity.

"I take this stuff seriously," Raiola said. "I take it for the team and for

myself. I look back on Jason Peter and Grant Wistrom and how they did it when I was on the scout team. Their motor was going 100 miles per hour even on Monday, even in half pads.

"I knew then I couldn't be half-intense, half the time. It had to be all the time."

That suits Tenopir just fine. "He's like we like 'em," Tenopir said. "The quality of intensity is very difficult to teach. He's certainly a guy that's going to go to the whistle. Sometimes a little after the whistle. But he's learned to control that a little bit."

But not always. Raiola's fierce demeanor boils over occasionally. He has picked two personal fouls this season, including one against Missouri for a late hit. Raiola says he's a "perfectionist" and wants to make zero mistakes, but sometimes it just can't be helped.

It's easy to see in an interview, when Raiola's motor isn't running full speed but is definitely still on. His leg bobs up and down constantly, he fidgets in the chair, leaning forward, leaning backward. He smacks his right fist into his left hand, then switches hands without noticing. He's

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DOMINIC RAIOLA  
NU center

not the kind of person who would have done well in a grocery store shopping cart as a kid.

Occasionally, Raiola gets the knock of being a dirty player, which he doesn't agree with, but doesn't vehemently deny, either.

"I don't think I am," Raiola said. "I never try to intentionally hurt someone out there."

"In the trenches, though, it's just pure hate. There's pulling and scratching and eye gouging and whatever you've got to do to get the job done."

So far this season, Tenopir said, Raiola's been up to the challenge, both in terms of his own play and in being an emotional catalyst for others. He's not a bad recruiting tool, either.

Being from Hawaii, Raiola has helped create recruiting inroads to the Aloha State, which has proved fertile for interior lineman recently. Last season, the Huskers were able to lure

Please see RAIOLA on 11

## No. 2 back records 1st 100-yard game

BY BRANDON SCHULTE  
Staff writer

At one time it was shocking for a Nebraska running back not to eclipse 100 yards on the ground in a game.

With the likes of Ahman Green, Lawrence Phillips, Derek Brown and Calvin Jones at the featured running position in the 1990s, going over the century mark was a common occurrence every week.

So far this season, a back going over that mark has been anything but common. Until the Missouri game Saturday, it had been five games (against Iowa State last year) since an I-back had eclipsed the mark.

I-back Correll Buckhalter became the first NU player to gain 100 yards in a game this season in the balanced offensive attack.

Coach Frank Solich said Buckhalter brought several dimensions to the ground attack.

"He showed great tough running inside and was able to get the tough yardage when it was needed," Solich said. "He also showed a lot of movement and the ability to make the big play. That was great to see for our football team and for Correll as well."

Against the Tigers, Buckhalter ran 14 times for 132 yards and a touchdown. For the game, the I-back

"Any time we have a long run, we take some satisfaction in the run."

DAVE GILLESPIE  
NU running backs coach

position combined to rush for 195 of Nebraska's 333 yards on the ground.

More important than the rushing totals was the big-play potential displayed by Buckhalter, NU Running Backs Coach Dave Gillespie said, which was something the running backs had been missing so far this year. In the third quarter, Buckhalter had the longest run by a back this season — a 57-yard ramble.

Gillespie said he hoped that long run signified what is yet to come from the position.

"Any time we have a long run, we take some satisfaction in the run," Gillespie said. "I'm glad it happened for Correll and for our football team. But we can't be so excited about it that we forget about how we did it. We want to have more of those."

Part of Buckhalter's and the rest

Please see BACKS on 11

## Sports Opinion

### Tiger game brings out sincere apologies



I admit it: I was a non-believer. I was sure that the 1999 Cornhuskers, much like the team that immediately preceded them, were not capable of reaching the standards placed on them by the Big Red faithful.

I tried to warn everyone. "Nebraska is not going to win 10 games," I explained to my zealot friends as they stared sadly at the floor.

"Texas and Texas A&M are not only going to beat the Huskers, they are going to beat them bad," I offered as I paid the Kwik Shop employee dressed in official Husker gear.

"Hey, look at the bright side," I chirped as I consoled a despondent Husker fan after the Southern Miss game. "I hear the trip to Hawaii for the Aloha Bowl is a fantastic one."

And, high atop my soapbox, I produced this little gem for my fellow students in Political Science 100 when asked for my Missouri/Nebraska prediction (after all, I am an expert — I write sports for the Daily Nebraskan): "I'm sorry, but

Missouri is going to win, guys. I'm sure of it."

Damn, I hate being wrong. Not just about Missouri — about all of it. I retract all negative statements I may have made to you about the current Nebraska team. Please accept my sincerest apologies.

Saturday night, the Huskers forced me to believe. I think my conversion came at some point in the third quarter, when I realized that the offensive line was dominating Missouri. Those holes were big enough for not only Correll Buckhalter, but also his mom, Ruth, to run through.

Or maybe it was when Eric Crouch connected with Bobby Newcombe for a 53-yard scoring strike. One gets the feeling that these two might hook up another time or two and manage to bring even the most jaded Nebraska fans (me) out of their seats.

Actually, it was probably when Missouri quarterback Kirk Farmer looked scared enough to pass for the fourth member of the "Blair Witch Project."

Nebraska's offense is not always going to be a beautiful thing to watch. The duo of Dan Alexander and Buckhalter isn't going to make anybody forget about Roger Craig and Mike Rozier or, for that matter, DeAngelo Evans.

It doesn't really matter all that much, though. If you haven't noticed, the defense is good. Really good. We

are talking legendary here. After four games, the Blackshirts have given up 30 points, 14 of which were not scored on the first-team defense. Every time a Nebraska opponent runs the football, he can expect an average of 1.2 yards per carry and 36.8 yards per game.

Yes, Nebraska still has much to prove against tougher competition. After all, the Tigers on the field Saturday looked like they hailed from the University of Pacific, not Mizzou.

But there are signs that we may have passed judgment a little quickly. If the defense continues to dominate as it should, and if Crouch throws the ball well enough to keep defenses honest, who knows?

That Oct. 23 trip to Texas still looks ominous. When coupled with the fact that winning the Big 12 North guarantees the Huskers nothing but another date with either the Longhorns or Aggies, the chances of an undefeated regular season seem slim indeed.

High atop my soapbox, I will offer this, though: Nebraska has a chance.

It isn't a great one, or even a good one, but it is still a chance. You non-believers left out there, jump onboard. There's room for everyone. I'll be there, too, if that helps. At least until the Oklahoma State game.

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