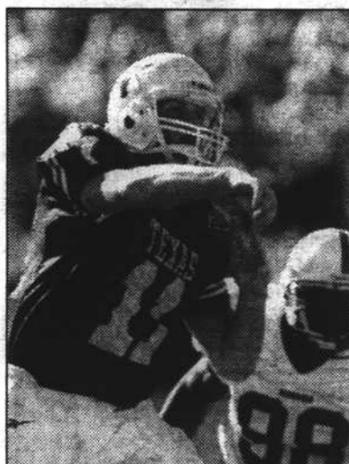


SPORTS

PAGE 12

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NU gets another shot at Applewhite



DN FILE PHOTO
QUARTERBACK MAJOR APPLEWHITE plays a key role in a Texas offense that averages 430 yards per game.

■ Nebraska players and coaches are quick to praise the Texas sophomore, who has thrown 21 TDs.

By DAVID DIEHL
Staff Writer

For the third time in two years, Nebraska's Blackshirts will line up Saturday opposite a Texas quarterback who was supposedly too short, not fast enough and lacked a lot of athletic talent.

But Major Applewhite, the Big 12's Co-Offensive Player of the Year, has beaten the Cornhuskers the last two times they've met. He handed them a 20-16 loss last year in Lincoln and led UT back from a 10-point half-time deficit to a 24-20 win in Austin

earlier this season.

Defensive tackle Steve Warren said that it is a little frustrating seeing a quarterback who isn't the biggest or the fastest or the best athlete thrive as much as Applewhite has.

"But you have to give him credit," Warren said. "He is a big playmaker, and he runs their offense very well."

Applewhite has guided the Longhorns to more than just big victories over NU the last two years. He has compiled a 17-4 record as a starter on his way to becoming one of the most prolific passers in Texas history.

Coach Frank Solich sees Applewhite as a dangerous quarterback and a good leader and sees him in a similar fashion as NU quarterback Eric Crouch.

"He certainly makes the big plays for them and moves the football," Solich said.

"Ideally you'd like to get some

pressure on him up front, but that's easier said than done. If he has time to pick you apart, he will do that."

As for UT records, Applewhite holds or has tied 29 of them. He ranks third in career passing yards, fourth in career total offense, second in touchdown passes and has five of the 11 highest single-game passing yard totals in Texas history; all before the end of his sophomore season.

Applewhite has run the offense to the best in the Big 12. The UT offense is averaging almost 430 yards per game, and he has engineered a 136.7 quarterback rating, good for second in the conference.

"He's definitely one of the best quarterbacks in the country," said Crouch, who tied Applewhite for both All Big 12 Quarterback and Offensive Player of the Year honors.

"He makes smart decisions with the ball and where to throw it. Texas is

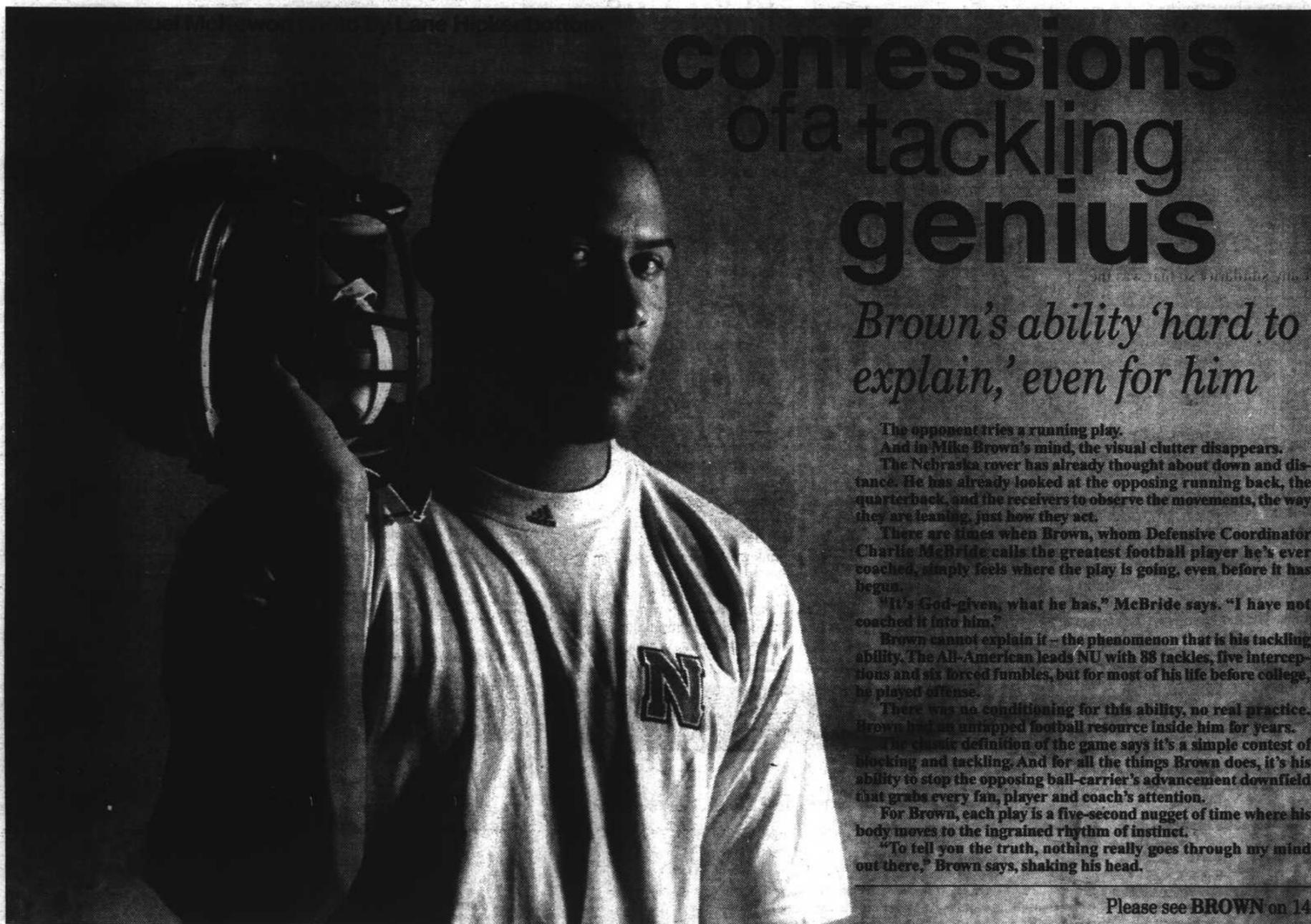


one of the best teams in the country as far as turnovers, and that says a big deal about his decision making."

Applewhite has thrown only six interceptions, five in a 35-17 loss to Kansas State, this season, compared with 21 touchdown strikes. Crouch has 1,214 passing yards, 817 rushing and 21 total touchdowns of his own.

When the two square off Saturday for the Big 12 championship, Crouch said the focus will be on the team aspect and that he avoids individual competitions.

"I just have to make plays for the team and execute the offense," Crouch said. "You're heading in the wrong direction if you get into one-on-one battles."



Concessions of a tackling genius

Brown's ability 'hard to explain,' even for him

The opponent tries a running play.

And in Mike Brown's mind, the visual clutter disappears.

The Nebraska rover has already thought about down and distance. He has already looked at the opposing running back, the quarterback, and the receivers to observe the movements, the way they are leaning, just how they act.

There are times when Brown, whom Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride calls the greatest football player he's ever coached, simply feels where the play is going, even before it has begun.

"It's God-given, what he has," McBride says. "I have not coached it into him."

Brown cannot explain it — the phenomenon that is his tackling ability. The All-American leads NU with 88 tackles, five interceptions and six forced fumbles, but for most of his life before college, he played offense.

There was no conditioning for this ability, no real practice. Brown had an untapped football resource inside him for years.

The classic definition of the game says it's a simple contest of blocking and tackling. And for all the things Brown does, it's his ability to stop the opposing ball-carrier's advancement downfield that grabs every fan, player and coach's attention.

For Brown, each play is a five-second nugget of time where his body moves to the ingrained rhythm of instinct.

"To tell you the truth, nothing really goes through my mind out there," Brown says, shaking his head.

Please see BROWN on 14

Nebraska newcomer defies heavyweight stereotypes

By DAVID DIEHL
Staff Writer

It was one of the very first morning workouts for Pat Miron at Nebraska. Coach Tim Neumann had his wrestling team in the weight room conditioning by doing sets of 15 pull-ups.

Miron didn't find the activity too much of a challenge.

So the true freshman from St. Croix Falls, Wis., strapped a 45-pound plate around his waist and pro-

ceeded to roll off chin-ups that way.

Recalling the event, Miron laughed, shrugged his shoulders and modestly said, "Well, yeah. I did a couple."

"He was getting bored with it," said Neumann of his starting heavyweight wrestler doing chin-ups without an extra 45-pound burden. "That just shows you what kind of work ethic he has. That's very uncommon for heavyweights."

In general, Neumann said, heavyweights haven't been the model of hard work. They've never had to cut

weight — "never had to do the extra stuff because they didn't have to be a specific weight," Neumann said.

Miron shattered that mold.

"He's the opposite," Neumann said. "He's trying to win the sprints, and he's in the weight room the longest, and he's always working on technique after practice."

Such an attitude is crucial, Neumann said, because the whole team looks up to the heavyweight as a major pillar inside the team.

"If your anchor is lazy, that leaves a bad taste in your mouth," Neumann

said. "If you've got a hard-working guy at the end of your lineup, it makes everybody feel like they can work that much harder."

"That's why I believe he's going to be really successful. He's going to outwork all the other heavyweights in the country."

Miron said there is no other way for him to do it.

"That's the way I've always been growing up," Miron said. "If you want to succeed, you've got to do it yourself and work for it. Nothing's going to come easy."

"If you want to be the best, you've got to work harder than everybody else."

Miron's body is the first thing noticeable about him. His legs look like tree trunks. Those legs and his torso, shaped like the world's biggest hourglass, are the product of numberless hours inside the weight room.

For Miron, lifting is fun.

"I enjoy it," Miron said. "It's kind of like a relaxer. Some people like to

Please see MIRON on 13