

TENNESSEE QUARTERBACK Tee Martin hopes to lead the Volunteers against Nebraska on Jan. 2 against-Nebraska. Martin won a national title last season with a perfect 13-0 record.

A chance to avenge loss Vols get another opportunity to beat '98 bowl champs

By **DARREN IVY**
Senior staff writer

You don't have to remind Tennessee Coach Phillip Fulmer about the last time he faced Nebraska.

It was the 1998 Orange Bowl, and his Volunteer team was thoroughly whipped by the inspired Cornhuskers wanting to send their retiring coach Tom Osborne out a winner.

All Fulmer could do was watch helplessly from the sidelines as Nebraska defenders pummeled Heisman Trophy candidate Peyton Manning, and the NU offense wore down his undersized Volunteer defense in a 42-17 defeat.

"It wasn't fun," said Fulmer, who is the winningest active coach in Div. I with a 76-13 record.

But from that defeat, Fulmer said his team learned some valuable lessons about being physical, preparing better for big games and becoming national champions.

After the "embarrassing loss," his team applied those lessons learned to offseason workouts and turned the 1998-99 season into a national championship one.

The perfect season was preserved with a 23-16 victory over No. 2 Florida State in the 1999 Fiesta Bowl.

On Jan. 2, Tennessee, 9-2, returns to Sun Devil Stadium, hoping to continue its winning ways there and avenge its 1997 loss to NU.

But Fulmer knows defeating No. 3 Nebraska, 11-1, won't be easy.

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PHILLIP FULMER
UT coach

"I haven't had a chance to see them on film this year, but I have seen them a couple times on TV," Fulmer said. "They are an outstanding football team on both sides of the ball. Just as last time, it will be a real challenge to defend them or go against them offensively."

Leading the way for the Volunteer offense is senior quarterback Tee Martin, a first-team All-Southeast Conference selection.

Martin has led the Vols to a 22-2 mark as Tennessee's starting quarterback the past two seasons. He passed for 2,317 yards this season, completing 165-of-305 passes with 12 touchdowns.

He also had success against NU in the 1998 Orange Bowl, leading Tennessee on a late fourth quarter touchdown drive. He completed 4-4 passes for 56 yards and ran one time for 11 yards.

"Tee Martin is more mobile than Peyton," Fulmer said. "Maybe we will be able to give them a little better game this time."

Protecting Martin will be a key, but perhaps the biggest change for

UT will have to come on defensive side of the ball.

In the 1998 Orange Bowl, the defense gave up 534 yards of total offense including 427 on the ground. They also surrendered six rushing touchdowns.

This season, however, UT has improved.

The Volunteers have given up only three rushing touchdowns and are surrendering just 89.6 yards per game.

The work of the defense earned first-team SEC honors for defensive end Shaun Ellis, defensive tackle Darwin Walker, linebacker Raynoch Thompson and defensive backs Deon Grant and Dwayne Goodrich.

The run defense starts up front with Ellis (6-foot-4, 275 pounds), Walker (6-3, 290 pounds), defensive tackle John Henderson (6-7, 280) and rush end Will Overstreet (6-4, 250), who have combined for 179 tackles and 27 sacks.

The Volunteers will need to continue their dominance on defense if they want to upset NU and avenge the 1998 Orange Bowl loss.

Sports Opinion

Brown's efforts to be remembered



Darren Ivy

SAN ANTONIO - Fifty-one games ago, Nebraska true freshman Ralph Brown started against Michigan State, becoming the first true freshman to start at Nebraska since World War II.

Saturday against Texas, the 5-foot-10 180-pound Brown played in his last regular season game as a Cornhusker with the same fire, reckless abandon and drive he had as a young, naive freshman. Like he had 50 times before, the first-team All American left everything he had on the Alamodome field.

It showed after the game as the senior captain limped into the interview room with his dislocated right thumb taped heavily and bruises already forming on his other hand and on numerous other parts of his body.

The right cornerback was spent, but he wouldn't have it any other way.

"You are supposed to feel like you don't have any energy left, and I don't have any energy left," Brown said. "I left it all on the field because I was playing my heart out for four quarters."

It isn't like Brown hasn't given it his all before, but this game just meant so much to the Hacienda Heights, Calif., native. He had lost to Texas in all three of the previous encounters,

and like his co-captain in the secondary, Mike Brown, he couldn't envision graduating without at least one win over the Longhorns.

Brown is one of those players who takes a Husker loss personally. After the 40-30 loss to Kansas State on Nov. 14, 1998, Brown guaranteed that Nebraska would not lose the next year. When asked about it before this year's game, Brown didn't back down from his prediction.

"I said it and I am sticking with it. If we lose, then you can come to me afterwards and ask what happened."

Nobody asked any questions as NU won 41-15.

What Brown predicts usually comes true. Brown is confident. You can tell it in the way he walks, the way he talks and the way he plays. But he is not a flamboyant or loud player, like Deion Sanders or Charles Woodson. Instead, Brown does his talking with his play.

But if Brown has something to say, he isn't afraid to say it. In fact he is brutally honest. He has taken the blame for losses in the past whether it was his fault or not.

His honesty is just one of the many qualities you have to love about him. The desire to win and be the best are other attributes that will definitely earn him a spot playing on Sundays next year.

That desire to win kept him on the field against Texas despite being in tremendous pain. You couldn't drag Brown off the field despite the fact that he played the last 35 minutes with a dislocated right thumb, bruised left thumb and injured groin.

"I was hurting in the second quarter, but this was my senior year," said Brown, who became the first player to

lead NU in pass break ups for four-straight seasons. "I just dug deep. I didn't want to go out and sit on the sidelines and watch the others win the game. I wanted to be on the field and play hard. The victory makes this pain feel a lot less than what it would be had we lost."

Brown has been a part of 44 wins in his career at Nebraska, but Saturday's victory topped nearly all the rest during his NU career as he set a Big 12 Championship game record with five pass break ups.

Those five break ups gave him 16 on the season, which surpassed his NU single-season record of 14 that he recorded last year.

He also recorded his 11th career interception, which moved him into a tie for fourth on the all-time charts. But Brown would be the first to tell you that the records rank second to the memories. Of those many memories, the 1999 Big 12 Championship game was one of the best to date.

"This game ranks close to the top because I am a senior," Brown said. "It's gratifying because it is my last (regular-season) game. As a senior I am going out as a Big 12 champion. It feels great because everyone remembers what you do last. Everyone will remember the senior class for winning the Big 12 Championship."

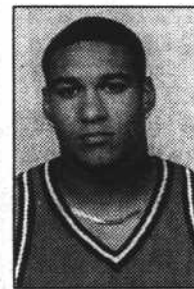
His assessment is true because who could tell you how many pass break ups or tackles he had against Michigan State in 1996. But then again who cares because Ralph Brown will go down as one of the best ever to defend the pass at Nebraska.

Darren Ivy is a senior news-editorial major and Daily Nebraskan senior staff writer.

Belcher considers medical redshirt

By **MATTHEW HANSEN**
Staff writer

Nebraska men's basketball Coach Danny Nee said Tuesday that returning leading scorer Cookie Belcher would probably use a medical redshirt after he participates in six games this season.



Belcher

The NCAA allows athletes to participate in six games before being medically redshirted. Belcher currently plans to play Thursday against Creighton, Saturday vs. Pittsburgh, vs. Arizona Dec. 18 and against Minnesota Dec. 31. He participated in two games earlier this season.

Nee said Belcher, whom he hoped could play the whole season, had not re-injured his wrist. Instead, recovery from surgery done at the Mayo Clinic May 5 has not been as fast as expected.

"I've gradually come to the opinion that Cookie's wrist isn't going to get where he needs it to be this year," Nee said.

Nee plans to use Belcher in a limited role in his remaining games. He said Belcher could provide leadership and defense, two things his team could use. What he could not do, Nee said, was provide consistent outside shooting due to weakness and pain in the wrist.

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"The doctors have told him he needs to stop if he feels pain."

DANNY NEE
NU basketball coach

outside eight feet, and he has pain if he steps out of that range," Nee said. "The wrist is at 90 percent, but the pain of one tendon if he bends the wrist back to shoot from long range is too great. The doctors have told him he needs to stop if he feels pain."

Doctors originally predicted the wrist would take four to six months to fully heal. However, as the weakness and pain persisted, they came to the conclusion that it may take as long as nine months for Belcher to recover completely.

Belcher said his aspirations to play professional basketball did factor into his decision to eventually redshirt.

"There's that possibility of the next level, of the NBA or another pro league," he said. "Now is the best time for me to recover and still have a chance to move on after next season."

Not that Belcher is happy about the arrangement. He explained that he would've never considered a redshirt season if healthy.

"It's really frustrating to not be able to help this team like I want to," he said. "This is supposed to be my last year. I was looking forward to leading this team and proving that I could play at the next level."