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Practice players sacrifice for team

Richard rides, hits books

PRACTICE from page 12

the game. It helps NU operate at its best on Saturdays by spending its time taking licks against the top units, simulating the opposition's playbook.

A three-ring binder, loaded with formations, sets and plays of that Saturday's opponent, are handed out to scout team members that they will run in practice all week.

The players get knocked around and take more than their fair share of the lumps running those plays.

But it's not done in vain, Lindstrom said. A lot of the successes the Blackshirts have on Saturdays can be traced back to the scout team practice fields.

"When I watch the defense play," Lindstrom said, "and they do well, it reflects good on us."

Lindstrom points out the defensive performance in Nebraska's 27-21 victory over Notre Dame. The defense gave up just one touchdown and held strong in overtime, forcing ND into a field goal after they were inside the 10-yard line.

Matt Albertson, a third-year sophomore who has spent time on the scout team, said the scrubs take a lot of pride when the defense looks good. That was especially the case with last year's Blackshirts, Albertson said.

"Our defense was outstanding last year," said Albertson, who plays running back. "We were probably the best in the nation. I think we contributed a lot to that."

Should that defense be shoddy or be at fault for the loss of a game, Lindstrom said he takes it personally.

"Any time we get scored on or if we were to lose, it makes me feel somewhat responsible even though it might not be my fault," Lindstrom said.

That responsibility of the scout team - doing everything they can to prepare the Huskers for success, especially coupled with the price they pay - draws admiration from the players working against them.

"Oh man," said fullback Judd Davies, who spent a week running Tennessee plays on the scout team before last year's Fiesta Bowl. "I've got a lot of respect for them."

"A lot of people talk about that making you a man in football terms. It makes you tough. If you don't quit after being on the scout team, you're going to be a tough man."

Lindstrom agreed, and had

the dressings, ice packs and bandages to prove it.

"You get blown up all the time. That's why I have all these," he said, pointing to numerous wraps that decorate his battle-scarred body.

Players such as Alberston and Lindstrom, as well as the rest of the players who prep the starting units for game day, are crucial, Solich said.

"Without guys that are willing to play that role, you just can't practice the way we practice," he said. "We understand that and appreciate the scout team players for that."

Lindstrom, who has had his father and two uncles play in the NU program, said the practice players know they are appreciated. Plaques are even given out to the scout team offensive and defensive player-of-the-week.

But sometimes you can't be handed respect with a plaque, Lindstrom said. It can be earned by standing up to the guys who knock you down.

"Sometimes we get in fights out there," Lindstrom said. "And I think you gain more respect by fighting back. They respect you for it because you don't put up with any of their crap."

"If they push you and you don't like it? Push back. Besides, if we get in a fight with them, they're the ones who run."

The scout team players use their time to hone their skills, hoping they'll eventually be stepping on Tom Osborne Field on game day.

"You work on your own game a lot," Albertson said. "Like I run the ball a lot, get a lot of touches on the ball almost every play. Whereas on first or second team, they're in there rotating."

"It's a stage of development for most people."

The scout-team members develop their skills while helping the starters develop their A-game for the weekend. Then those scout-teamers often develop into the players on Saturdays, contributing to the overall success of the program.

The scout team is, in a sense, one of the legs on a three-legged stool. Take it away, and the chair falls over.

"What they have given this program is immeasurable," Solich said. "And we recognize that whatever success we have is because of every single player in this program."

"Everyone contributes to that success."

BMX from page 12

was in Lincoln, studying and taking tests he couldn't get out of.

But when Richard does make it to some competitions, he does a pretty good job.

In 1998, as an amateur, Richard won the American Bicycle Association World Championships BMX and in July, Richard took fifth place in the ABA World Championships as a pro.

Richard turned pro at 21 and took two years off of school to live in California and compete fulltime.

After claiming the world championship title, Richard was struck down by a plethora of injuries.

He broke his femur, his tibia and tore his ACL, which sent him back to Nebraska and back to school, he said.

He plans on graduating in May and then will move to California and compete fulltime.

Next year's schedule features a stop on ESPN's XGames, among other competitions, he said.

"I'm really excited for that," he said.

Richard estimates he has about six years of racing left in him.

Then he said he hopes to take over as head of marketing at Alliant Bicycles, his main sponsor.

Despite his success and notoriety on the West Coast, Richard said he has a hard time gaining respect for what he does.

"They think I'm like a little kid, still riding a bike," he said.

Others show confusion when Richard explains his career.

"I tell people that I race, and the first thought they get in their head is that I'm in the Tour de France," he said.

But there are some perks that come with the racing lifestyle as well.

Richard's fan base includes an entourage of strippers who support him in the pit during his races.

But their presence is more for stirring up controversy than anything else, he said.

"We're known for having ladies around, and yeah, they happen to be strippers," he said.

J.P. Fellin, also a Nebraska native, was Richard's former roommate and also a professional BMX racer.

He and Richard have been to 45 states together, racing and traveling, Fellin said.

Fellin acknowledged the difficulty of Richard's balancing act of school and racing.

"It's hard on you," he said.

But traveling across the country and meeting many people has had a positive effect on Richard, Fellin said.

"Racing has made him the nice guy he is," he said.

Fellin said he foresees a long future of racing for him and Richard.

"I hope we'll be 70 years old, covered in tattoos and racing each other in wheelchairs at the hospital," he said.

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