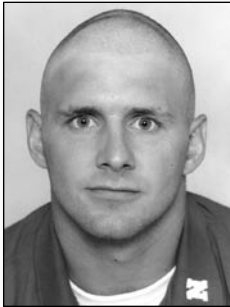


Following Nebraska Football – Phil Ellis

By Matt Smith, NU Media Relations

For most Nebraska fans, the whirl surrounding the Huskers' second of back-to-back national titles in January of 1996 was a wonderfully hectic time they won't soon forget.



Phil Ellis
Linebacker 1992-95

For former Husker Phil Ellis, a starting linebacker and captain of the 1995 squad, the week following NU's 62-24 dismantling of No. 2-ranked and previously unbeaten Florida in the Fiesta Bowl was once-in-a-lifetime.

Following the team's victory over the Gators on Jan. 2, the Huskers flew into Lincoln on Jan. 3 where they were greeted by hundreds of fans at the Lincoln Airport. Hundreds more lined the street on the way from the airport to the Bob Devaney Sports Center, where thousands were waiting to greet the team and celebrate the Huskers' second consecutive undefeated season.

While most players and fans remember the days before and after the Fiesta Bowl triumph as a whirlwind of activities surrounded by football, Ellis experienced all that and more. Just four days after the Fiesta Bowl, Ellis was married to his wife, Jennifer.

"My beautiful wife wanted a winter wedding," Ellis said. "So after the game, I flew home and had two days to recover and was married Jan. 6."

Since that eventful week, Ellis has moved back to his hometown of Grand Island, Neb., and started a family with Jennifer. Perhaps the epitome of a Nebraska boy, Ellis dreamed of playing for the Huskers, realized that dream and has kept his roots in Nebraska while taking a job in the agricultural industry.

Phil and Jennifer have two daughters, Megan, 8, and Katie, 5, and the family is just "living the good life in Nebraska," according to Phil.

The Ellis family lives in Grand Island, where he is employed with Farm Land Irrigation, a wholesale irrigating fittings company. Ellis is in sales and travels throughout the Midwest. Ellis' family and travel keep him busy, but he still tries to follow the Huskers whenever he can.

"I don't follow (Nebraska football) as closely as I would like," Ellis said. "Having young children and a career tends to focus your energy elsewhere. I still go to games and watch them on TV, but all of my old coaches have moved on, which is life. I plan on supporting the team forever."

Ellis, who started 11 games and recorded 105 tackles and three sacks in his four-year career, has many fond memories of his days at NU. The 1995 Orange Bowl against Miami that gave Coach Tom Osborne his first undefeated season and first national championship sticks out most in his mind.

"I have a lot of great memories as a Husker, but unfortunately I was a linebacker and was hit in the head a lot, so many were erased by hitting Cory Schlesinger in practice," Ellis joked. "For me, my best memory has to be the game against Miami. That game was the best one for me because of the way we played and came back in the fourth quarter.

"I know every player left everything on the field for their teammates, coaches and fans. The 1995 championship was also great, but that was over before it started."

While Ellis had many highlights and memories on the field, learning how to balance school and football has helped him succeed in life after college.

"Being a student-athlete is one of the toughest jobs in college," Ellis said. "Classes from 7:30 a.m. until Noon, then eat lunch, meetings, practice, lift weights, eat again and you then have to start studying around 8 p.m. There are not too many jobs that require that many hours in the day. You learn how to make the most of your free time and be on time."

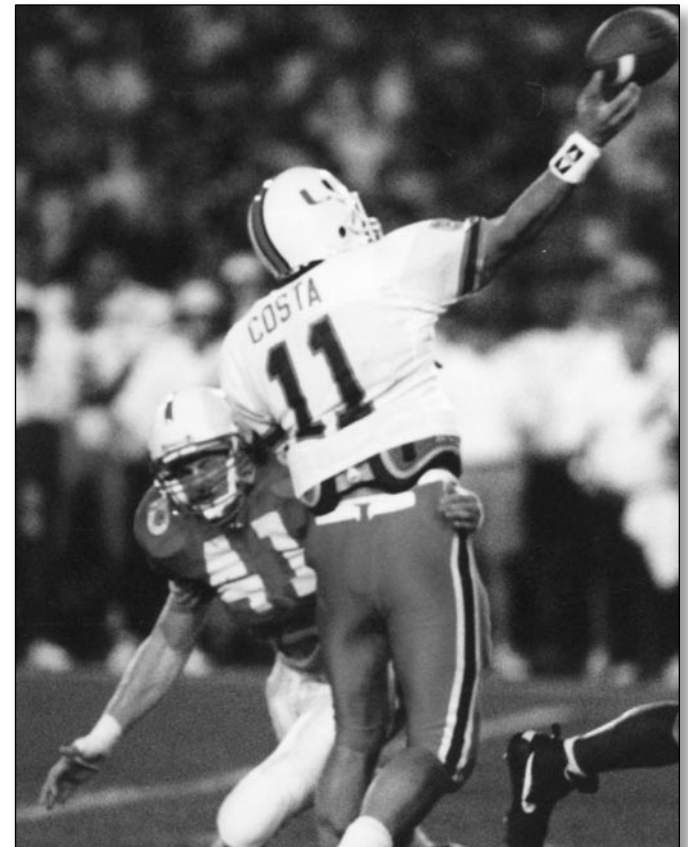
On the field, Ellis considered himself lucky to be part of a great program enjoying one of the most dominant stretches in history.

"The best part of being a Husker, was being a Husker," he said. "It was an honor to be a part of such a great program and tradition. It was about being part of history and getting an education.

"The best part was looking in the huddle and seeing 10 other guys playing their hearts out for the whole state and everyone who has ever put on a Nebraska uniform."

Ellis remains proud of his Huskers and his home state. When asked to compare the 1995 Huskers, which some consider the greatest team of all-time, to this year's USC Trojans, Ellis had no doubt who the better team was.

"Trying to compare teams that are 10 years apart is always tough," he said. "Teams change, conferences change, a lot has changed, but I do not recall our team barely winning with zero seconds left on the clock, so I would say Nebraska. It is not even a question."



Following his playing days, former Husker Phil Ellis was married and moved back to Nebraska to raise his family and work. Like so many others, he still considers the 1995 Husker squad the greatest of all-time.