

# Fan Favorite Ross Grows into Leading Role

By David Graff, NU Media Relations

When Cory Ross came to Lincoln five years ago as an undersized prep All-America cornerback who planned to play running back in the option attack, it was difficult for anyone to imagine that by the time he was a senior, he would grow into



**Cory Ross**  
I-back

one of the most beloved Huskers ever and a crucial cog in Nebraska's West Coast attack.

After playing at Thomas Jefferson High School in Denver, Ross was recruited primarily as a cornerback for college. Despite his somewhat diminutive stature, the 5-6 Ross received scholarship offers from all of the major schools including Nebraska, Texas, Michigan State, Miami and Wisconsin.

After visiting Nebraska, the choice was fairly easy for Ross.

"When I came to Lincoln, I was just so impressed by the people," Ross said. "I really bonded with the players right away. They were a group of guys that I could definitely relate to. And coming to Lincoln and seeing the fan base that Nebraska has really caught my attention."

Arriving in 2001, Ross immediately made the switch to running back and was instantly taken in by players such as Eric Crouch, Dahrran Diedrick and Judd Davies. Ross quickly began work learning the Huskers' option attack. After suiting up for the first four games in 2001, Ross ultimately redshirted, watching the Huskers run to the national championship game from the sideline.

Ross began the 2002 season as the Huskers' sixth-string I-back. In the first game of the season against Arizona State, Ross immediately got a taste of the glory that would eventually come his way.

"In the first game of the year, I scored a touchdown on the second carry of my Husker career," Ross said. "I finished the game with 44 yards, including the 34-yard touchdown run. It was a great way to start out. It was really a dream come true – playing at Nebraska, the big name college, with your first game on TV and scoring a touchdown. I had my family and all of my friends calling me, and everyone was going nuts."

Ross ended up playing in 12 games in 2002, making a start against Missouri, but seeing limited action as he played behind Diedrick, Josh Davis, DeAntae Grixby and David Horne.

Ross played in 13 games in 2003. Early in the year, Ross again saw limited action, finding himself behind Davis and Horne on the depth chart. Late in the season, however, Ross emerged from the pack.

"I really started to get a majority of the carries in the Iowa State game," Ross said. "In the Kansas game in Lawrence, I had my first 100-yard game and ended up starting

the rest of the season."

After cementing himself as a starter with a 37-carry, 138-yard, two touchdown performance in the 2003 Alamo Bowl against Michigan State, Ross was left to ponder his position on the team as the coaching staff underwent a complete overhaul.

Once Bill Callahan was announced as the new head coach, and former NFL running back Randy Jordan was named the running backs coach, Ross knew that he could benefit from the change.

"It was fun to see," Ross said. "I was one of those guys who was just in awe every time I saw Coach Callahan. It was just like 'Wow. I used to see him on TV all the time.' Just to have him here was one of those times that I definitely felt proud to be here.

"I think that every player has a dream of playing in the NFL. Knowing that he was bringing an NFL-type offense here, I was excited to learn as much as possible. I am still learning now."

Ross immediately took to Coach Jordan as well.

"He was one of those guys who I felt was just like me, or that I was just like him," Ross said. "He is always joking and laughing and is very emotional. He loves the game and just has fun coaching. You will see him running down the sideline with you on a long run. He is a great coach."

Ross started all 11 games as a junior, finishing the year with 1,102 yards, including a career-best 194 yards against



Missouri.

Entering his senior campaign, Ross had the honor of being named one of two captains for the season.

"Early on in my career, I never thought that I would be in this position," Ross said. "It is just crazy how things can change like that. I am definitely proud of the things that I have accomplished here, and the fact that the other players look to me as a leader."

Ross will finish his Husker career as the only player in school history to rank among the top 15 in both career receptions and rushing yards. Against Iowa State this season, Ross broke school records for a running back with eight receptions and 131 yards. When he came in 2001, Ross never would have considered that possibility.

"Coming here, I expected to get 20 or 25 carries a game, with option pitches being the only catching that I thought I was going to do," Ross said. "I never would have anticipated catching as many passes as I have."

Ross is on track to earn a degree in sociology in May. After the season finishes, he is looking forward to pursuing the dream of playing at the next level.

"I am excited about the future," Ross said. "I am happy. I just want a chance, another opportunity. It is just like college again. Hopefully I get a shot to do some things and to show them that I can play at the next level."

Ross is quick to acknowledge those who have helped him to achieve his dreams.

"I have to definitely say thanks to my dad, my mom and my two high school coaches – Coach James Walker and Coach Tim Cross," Ross said. "And to all the fans: I love Nebraska. Thank you all."

## Huskies Salute Seniors

The Nebraska football program is proud to present the members of its 2005 senior class that will play for the final time in Memorial Stadium today. During pregame ceremonies we will recognize the following 22 players, along with 10 support staff members, for their years of hard work and dedication to Cornhusker football.

### Players

Titus Adams, DL, Omaha, Neb.  
Chris Bryant, DL, Aurora, Colo.  
Daniel Bullocks, SS, Chattanooga, Tenn.  
Donald DeFrاند, CB, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.  
Seppo Ewwaraye, OL, Laurel, Neb.  
Tyler Fisher, FS, Grand Island, Neb.  
Jared Helming, OL, Springfield, Mo.  
Adam Ickes, LB, Page, Neb.  
Brandon Koch, OL, Gothenburg, Neb.  
Sam Koch, P, Seward, Neb.  
Mark LeFlore, WR, Omaha, Neb.  
Shamus McKoy, WR, Raleigh, N.C.  
Wali Muhammad, DE, Bloomfield, N.J.  
Matt O'Shea, DL, Dallas, Texas  
Jake Peetz, LS, O'Neill, Neb.  
Gary Pike, OL, Pueblo, Colo.  
Joey Robison, CB, Bertrand, Neb.  
Cory Ross, IB, Denver, Colo.  
Matt Schroeder, WR, Belden, Neb.  
Le Kevin Smith, DL, Macon, Ga.  
Mike Stuntz, FS, Council Bluffs, Iowa  
Blake Tiedtke, FS, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

### Student Managers

Mitch Coleman,  
Shane Edic,  
Travis Havlovic,  
Derek Kruse,  
Darrin Little,  
Chris McQuillan,

### Student Athletic Trainers

M.J. Hess-Vera,  
Rachel Luptak,  
Jeff Luther,  
John Sehi,

# Bryant Ready for Future

By Brandon Gries, NU Media Relations

The boys who come to Nebraska to play football often leave as men. While spending several years here, they develop life-long relationships and take lessons learned on and off the field to lead their lives beyond Nebraska.



Chris Bryant  
Defensive Tackle

Chris Bryant, a defensive lineman for the Huskers, had the Nebraska values in his mind his entire life.

The Aurora, Colo., native visited family and friends in Nebraska as a youngster, sharing Cornhusker football stories with his grandparents in Kearney and while visiting his aunts and uncles in Omaha and Nebraska City.

Bryant knew of the Husker traditions on and off the field, and in the fall of 2002 decided Nebraska was the place that would be able to help him achieve

his biggest goal beyond college – to become a football coach.

A walk-on, Bryant has enjoyed the challenge of making that transition to a college football powerhouse like Nebraska, while having the opportunity to learn from some of the nation's finest coaches.

"I just came here knowing that I can make it and play here," Bryant said. "I wanted to prove everybody at home wrong, and show them that I could play here when people said I couldn't. I knew that I had the heart to play here and I knew what it was going to do for me in the future, whether it is coaching or anything else."

Bryant is playing his final season with the Huskers and will run into Memorial Stadium for the Tunnel Walk one last time today against Kansas State. Following the season, he will take what he has learned from his coaches, peers and everyone associated with the Husker football program to Treynor, Iowa, where next fall he will be a student teacher and an assistant coach for the high school football team.

Bryant is ready to teach teenagers the X's and O's of football and has the ability to apply the lessons of football off the field. Bryant's current defensive line coach, John Blake, is helping him on his way to that next goal in life. Bryant believes Blake, who is in his second year with the Huskers, has had a large influence already.

"Coach Blake has really pushed me," Bryant said. "Since I am going to be a coach, I have really learned a lot from him. He really knows what he is talking about and has a lot of knowledge on what he is doing, the game of football and the defensive line position."

Bryant has also been a class act off the field. A two-time Big 12 Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll member, the secondary-education major has also volunteered his time to American Education Week, School is Cool Week and local hospital visits. He says that there is nothing better than seeing smiles on the faces of kids who look at the Huskers as heroes.

When a former Nebraska football player rolls into Treynor, Iowa, next September, there might be a whole team looking at him as a hero as well. Thanks to his training at Nebraska, it is a role that Bryant will be able to fill well.