

Sports



Joel Sartore/Daily Nebraskan

I-back Doug DuBose looks for a clear lane while Kansas' Lyndal Yarnell closes in during Saturday's 41-7 victory in Lawrence. Both DuBose and Jeff Smith went over the 900-yard mark in the game. With a good game against Oklahoma, the two could become Nebraska's first-ever double 1,000-yard backfield.

Huskers clinch tie for Big Eight title

By Jim Rasmussen

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The Nebraska Cornhuskers couldn't have dreamed of a better scenario for Saturday's college football games.

The Huskers, ranked second by the Associated Press last week, moved into a likely No. 1 ranking Saturday by beating Kansas 41-7 at Lawrence. Meanwhile, No. 1 Washington was losing to Southern California and No. 2 Texas was falling to Houston.

By the time the NU-Kansas game was finished, Texas had already lost, 29-15. USC was leading Washington 6-0, and Nebraska was celebrating its win, which clinched at least a tie for the Huskers' fourth straight Big Eight title. Nebraska can win the championship outright by beating Oklahoma Saturday.

"This was our most important game of the year," Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said. "We're very pleased to get the tie clinched."

Nebraska jumped on the Jayhawks with three touchdowns in a five-minute span in the first quarter.

The Huskers set the tone of the game from the very start, taking the opening kickoff and driving 81 yards to score in 15 plays. Quarterback Travis Turner got the first of his two touchdowns on the day, running in from the one.

The Blackshirts then shut Kansas down in three plays, forcing a punt. Once again, the offense responded, covering 42 yards in seven plays, all on the ground against a strong wind. Turner's 12-yard touchdown run made it 14-0.

Kansas fans saw their upset hopes fade even more on the ensuing kickoff, when KU's Robert Mimbs couldn't handle the ball. The pigskin rolled backwards to the Jayhawk 4-yard-line, where NU's Mark Munford pounced on it. Two runs by Doug DuBose put

another TD on the board, and gave the Huskers a 21-0 advantage.

Nebraska's first-quarter outburst provided the key to victory, Osborne said. A 25 mile-per-hour wind didn't slow the offense, which rolled for 476 total yards.

"I think our offense has been making progress," Osborne said. "We moved the ball awfully well, although we were sporadic at times. The defense played real well today, as it has all year."

The Blackshirts allowed only three first downs and 44 yards in the first half. Kansas finished the day with only 24 yards on the ground. The KU offense, led by quarterback Mike Norseth, got its

passing game going in the second half, however. The Jayhawks finished with 222 passing yards, 38



of those coming on a touchdown strike from reserve quarterback Mike Orth to wide receiver Skip Peete.

NU senior safety Bret Clark said the Huskers will have to improve defensively to beat Oklahoma Saturday.

"We had a few letdowns and mental lapses in the second half," he said. "We can't let Oklahoma have some of the opportunities we let Kansas have."

Clark praised the defensive line, which garnered four quarterback sacks and pressured KU signal-callers much of the day.

"The line has been the biggest key to our defense this year," he said. "We've played better on pass coverage, but the pressure on the quarterback has been so much better."

Defensive end Scott Strasburger preferred to praise the defensive backfield.

"Our secondary has done a great job," he said. "They're the key to

our having more sacks. We've had that extra half a second to get to the quarterback."

I-backs Jeff Smith and Doug DuBose, who combined for 213 rushing yards, were savoring the win against Kansas.

"I'm really happy and excited," Smith said. "We have a great opportunity if we beat Oklahoma."

Smith carried 20 times for 96 yards. That gave the senior 906 yards for the year. DuBose sliethered and spun for 113 yards on 17 carries, giving him 971 yards. The two-backs could become the first pair of 1,000-yard rushers the Huskers have had in one season.

"I'm really happy," DuBose said. "I'm happy because we won a share of the Big Eight title."

Smith and DuBose both said they expect a hard-hitting game against Oklahoma, but said they were confident the Huskers can get the job done Saturday.

"It might go down to the wire, or we might blow them out," Smith said. "You never know."

Several Huskers said they weren't looking past Kansas to the Oklahoma game. The Jayhawks were looking to pull off a stunning upset, like they did two weeks before by beating Oklahoma 28-11.

"I felt like we really had a good chance to win today," KU coach Mike Gottfried said. "Our defense did a good job but our offense just couldn't establish anything consistent."

Nebraska stretched its lead to 28-0 in the second quarter when Travis Turner hit Brian Hiemer with a 17-yard touchdown pass. Hiemer shook off KU's outstanding linebacker, Willie Pless, at the five yard-line before reaching the end-zone.

The Jayhawks didn't give up, though, as they held Nebraska scoreless in the third quarter.

"We didn't quit," said KU center Bennie Simecka. "We played a great team, but we made a lot of mistakes."



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That's Marc Munford from behind and Bill Weber from the side bringing Kansas' Lynn Williams to the artificial turf. Kansas gained only 28 yards rushing in the game.