

Nebraska football fan: Thanks for all of the memories

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Alabama tied the score at 17 with a field goal just 10 seconds before halftime. Berns scored twice more in the second half's see-saw scoring battle to ensure the Husker victory.

4. Nebraska 37, Oklahoma 14, 1981 — After two heartbreaking losses to Oklahoma during the regular season, as well as a teeth-grinding rematch in the 1979 Orange Bowl, Nebraska finally gave the Sooners what they deserved — a good rout. Sophomore quarterback Turner Gill was injured, so senior Husker quarterback Mark Mauer was called upon. Mauer performed near-perfectly, completing 11 of 16 passes for 148 yards and one touchdown. Nebraska led 24-7 at halftime and out-

rushed the Sooners 314-277.

5. Nebraska 28, Oklahoma 21, 1983 — Once again, it was a typical Big Eight shootout. With Nebraska leading 28-21, the Sooners had moved to the Husker one-yard line. A motion penalty moved the Sooners back to the six, and then Oklahoma quarterback Danny Bradley was sacked by Nebraska defensive end Bill Weber. After an incomplete pass on third-and-six, Bradley tried one last pass to Buster Rhymes, but it was batted away by Nebraska cornerback Neil Harris and Oklahoma's upset dreams were over.

6. Nebraska 42, Iowa 7, 1983 — Revenge was never so sweet! One year earlier, Iowa had beaten Nebraska 10-7 in Iowa City, and the Hawkeye fans weren't about to let Nebraska fans

forget it. Hundreds of letters poured into the Omaha World Herald's "Voice from the Grandstand" column. I remember hating those Iowa fans to no end. Sitting in Memorial Stadium that afternoon watching Nebraska roll to a 28-0 halftime lead was something I enjoyed too much to forget.

7. Nebraska 28, Oklahoma 24, 1982 — The Huskers trailed 10-7 early in the second quarter but scored twice to make the halftime margin 21-10. In the second half, Marcus "Take the money and run" DuPree broke loose for an 86-yard touchdown romp down the west sideline and Stanley Wilson bulled in from the one-yard-line later to make the score 28-24 at the end of the third quarter. The defenses held from there. When Nebraska defensive end Scott Strasburger intercepted a Kelly Phelps desperation pass with 26 seconds left in the game and returned it to the Sooner one-yard-line, thousands of Nebraska fans poured onto the field with time still remaining.

8. Nebraska 40, Notre Dame 6, 1973 Orange Bowl — It was Johnny Rodgers' last performance in a Husker uniform and the first bowl game I ever went to. Rodgers had been moved to I-back for his final game and made the most of it, scoring rushing for three touchdowns, passing for another and catching the final one of his Nebraska career.

9. Nebraska 42, Penn State 7, 1979 — After Penn State had jumped to an early 14-0 first-quarter lead, the Huskers unleashed a 28-point barrage in the second quarter to declaw the Nittany Lions. The two first-quarter touchdowns made the last Nebraska would give up for 20 straight quarters.

10. Nebraska 67, Kansas 13, 1983 — I know, it was a rout. But the thing I remember most about this game was the players, not the score. Irving Fryar, Turner Gill, Mike Rozier and the rest of that classic team were performing for the last time in front of the home crowd at Memorial Stadium. The senior introductions were something no true Nebraska fan will ever or should ever forget. I'm glad I was fortunate enough to be on hand to say goodbye to the members of the greatest college football offense of all time.

The 10 Most Heartbreaking Losses:

1. Miami 31, Nebraska 30, 1984 Orange Bowl — It was all there. Nebraska was undefeated, had been ranked No. 1 all year and hadn't really been tested in any of their regular-season games, simply because there was no other team in the nation in their league. Miami wasn't either, but they had the home-field advantage. That meant the Hurricanes would have thou-

sands of their loud, violently obnoxious, obscenity-spurting, sick-looking fans on hand to treat any Nebraskan in sight — on or off the field — like dirt. Miami jumped to an early 17-0 first-quarter lead, but the Huskers cut the margin to 17-14 by halftime. A Scott Livingston field goal early in the third quarter tied matters at 17. Again, Miami jumped to a two-touchdown lead, 31-17, and things looked bleak. Mike Rozier was then injured, not to mention worried about his upcoming professional football contract, and hobbled off the field with a sprained ankle. Jeff Smith nearly saved the game with two fourth-quarter touchdowns, including the final one of the 1983-84 season on fourth-and-six from the Miami 24. Turner Gill's two-point conversion pass was batted to the ground along with Nebraska's national championship hopes.

2. Penn State 27, Nebraska 24, 1982 — Can you say "rip-off?" Without a doubt, this game will go down in history as the biggest robbery in Nebraska football history. Nebraska took a 24-20 lead with 1:18 left to be played in the game. Penn State quarterback Todd Blackledge drove the Nittany Lions the length of the field until he reached a third-and-long situation. Blackledge threw to one of his receivers who caught the pass, but came down three feet out of bounds. The officials, though, ruled that the pass was caught in bounds and the drive continued. One the next play, Blackledge fired a four-yard pass to tight end Kirk Bowman in the end zone. Bowman scooped the ball up after it had bounced off the turf, but the officials didn't see it that way. The officials allowed Penn State the touchdown and the game and the Nittany Lions went on to win the national championship. It was the first of two national championships the Huskers would be denied of by one play.

3. Missouri 35, Nebraska 31, 1978 — Only a week after Nebraska had beaten Oklahoma to clinch an Orange Bowl berth and a shot at the national championship, a 7-4 Missouri team rolled into town and took the smile right off Tom Osborne's face. The Tigers' offensive attack was led by the rushing of James Wilder, who racked up 178 yards and four touchdowns.

4. Oklahoma 20, Nebraska 17, 1976 — Oklahoma discovered the forward pass and used it to the greatest possible advantage against Nebraska. With 3:30 left in the game, Nebraska led 17-13. Oklahoma quarterback Thomas Lott handed off to halfback Woodie Sheppard, who paused and then threw a 47-yard strike to split end Steve Rhodes, which put the ball on the Husker 35. Two plays later, Sooner quarterback Dean Blevins passed to Rhodes, who then lateraled to Elvis Peacock, who was coming around the left side. That play moved the ball to the Husker two-yard line, and Oklahoma scored on the next play with 38 seconds left to seal the win — again!

5. Houston 17, Nebraska 14,

1980 Cotton Bowl — Houston trailed 14-10 with 3:39 left to play but drove 60 yards in 12 plays to the Nebraska six-yard line. On fourth-and-goal Cougar quarterback Terry Elston fired a pass between two Husker defenders to Eric Herring, who bobbled the ball and then pulled it in for the winning touchdown with 12 seconds left.

6. Michigan 27, Nebraska 23, 1986 Sunkist Fiesta Bowl — Once again, Nebraska snatched defeat right out of the hands of victory. The Huskers led 14-3 at halftime, but something went wrong in the third quarter. Nebraska lost three fumbles, all of which set up Wolverine scores.

7. Florida State 18, Nebraska 14, 1980 — Nebraska's 3-0 season start was just three yards away from being a 4-0 start. The Huskers led 14-3 at halftime but the Seminoles came rallying back behind four Bill Capece field goals. Nebraska found itself on the Florida State three-yard line with 12 seconds remaining in the game, but quarterback Jeff Quinn was hit as he rolled left and fumbled the ball. Florida State recovered the ball and their first win at Memorial Stadium.

8. Oklahoma 21, Nebraska 17, 1980 — In typical Oklahoma-game fashion, Nebraska let the Sooners off the hook in the game's final two minutes. Trailing 17-14, Oklahoma scored on a one-yard Buster Rhymes run with 56 seconds remaining to send the Sooners back to Miami and the Huskers to the Sun Bowl.

9. Oklahoma 31, Nebraska 24, 1979 Orange Bowl — What does a team have to do, anyway? Nebraska had just beaten Oklahoma for the first time in seven years two months earlier, but the Orange Bowl selection committee decided that that wasn't enough and scheduled a re-match in the Orange Bowl. How courteous! Oklahoma was probably the best team in the country that year, but the regular-season loss to Nebraska kept the Sooners out of the top spot. Oklahoma showed Nebraska just how upset they were in the game that followed.

10. Washington State 19, Nebraska 10, 1977 — I still think I'm going to wake up someday and realize that game was just a bad nightmare. Washington State had no right to be on the same field with Nebraska, but they still somehow won the game. The Huskers fumbled three times inside the Cougar 10-yard line and rolled up 470 yards of offense that day.

So there you have it. Hopefully, my trip down memory lane has sparked some recollections for everyone and, more importantly, helped to ease the anxiety, if only for a few minutes, of what has happened at Nebraska the last few days.

Some memories may be good and others will certainly be on the less-cheerful side, but one thing's for certain: at this time next year, we'll have a few more memories to add to the list.

Let's all hope there are more good memories than bad ones. That's what Nebraska football is all about.



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