

Sooners praise conquered Huskers

By Steve Taylor

An umbrella of gloom set in over Memorial Stadium Saturday as Nebraska's chances of upsetting the nation's top-ranked team fizzled and eventually died.

The Huskers kept their fanatical fans in a state of exhilaration for three quarters, battling the mighty Sooners to a 14-14 standoff.

There was even a time in the tense contest when the Huskers had a chance to take a possibly insurmountable lead.

Broken play

But a broken play, then a missed field goal from extra-point range kept the score at 14-7.

The Sooners reacted to this reprieve by marching straight down the field to knot the score. After that, it was just a matter of when the dam would burst.

In the jubilant Sooner locker room, Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer said he was relieved the Huskers were not able to widen their margin.

"It might have forced us out of our game plan," he speculated. "I don't know if we could have overcome another touchdown."

In another section of the locker room, Joe Washington behaved as if he had just come in from a friendly round of golf.

No fatigue

The deadly elusive junior betrayed no signs of either fatigue or emotion.

He described Nebraska as an especially hard-hitting team, expressed confidence in his chances with the pros and declined an invitation to transfer to Nebraska next year.

"I really like the program at OU," he said. "Besides, I would have to sit out a year."

Quarterback Steve Davis wished the Huskers well in the Sugar Bowl and expressed respect for his conquered adversaries.

'True athletes'

"You love to play a team like Nebraska," he said. "They hit as hard as they can, but then they pick you up. They are true athletes."

Running back Elvis Peacock was generally ignored by the press because he played very little in the game.

"I'm still learning," explained the much heralded freshman, as if he was beginning to believe it himself.

With Peacock, Washington and almost everyone else returning next season, the Sooner wishbone is going to be twice as hard to crack.

OU win streak nation's longest

By Dennis Onnen

With their victory over Nebraska Saturday, the Oklahoma Sooners preserved their perfect record, won the Big 8 title and practically assured themselves of the national championship.

Ranked first in the Associated Press (AP) sportswriters' poll last week, the Sooners stretched their season mark to 10-0 (6-0 in the Big 8) and extended their winning streak to 19 games, longest of any major college in the country. They have not lost in their last 28 games, the only blemish being a tie with Southern California early last season.

Because of recruiting violations, Oklahoma is not ranked in the United Press International (UPI) coaches' poll and is prohibited from playing on television or in a bowl game this season.

The only obstacle remaining for the Sooners is Oklahoma State, whom they play in a home contest Saturday. Even if the Cowboys win, Oklahoma would be Big 8 champion since Nebraska and Missouri have completed their regular seasons tied for second with 5-2 league marks. The Cowboys would move into a three-way tie for second if they won.

Their defense held Nebraska to seven points earlier this season, the Huskers' worst output of the year, and could prove to be a problem for the Sooners.

Besides Oklahoma, Alabama (top-ranked in the UPI poll) is the only unbeaten, untied team in the nation following losses by previously undefeated Michigan and Yale Saturday. However, the Crimson Tide faces stiff competition against Auburn this Friday and against Notre Dame in the Orange Bowl. Each of those opponents has lost just once.

A national championship would end three years of frustration for Oklahoma. The Sooners finished second, second and third in the AP poll in 1971, 1972 and 1973, respectively.

Nebraska needs a victory over Florida in the Sugar Bowl New Year's Eve to assure itself of a spot in the AP Top Ten for the fifth year in a row. Michigan is the only other school to have accomplished that feat. A win over Florida also would give the Huskers six bowl victories in a row, another record.

They ended the regular season with an 8-3 record, their worst since 1968 when they finished 6-4.

Luck just didn't last

By Becky Morgan

Even the charms of a Husker troll decked out in scarlet and cream couldn't give Nebraska the edge Saturday as they became the tenth victim of Oklahoma's "Boomer Sooners."

Nebraska fans were superstitious about Nebraska's clash with the Big Red from the South. Rabbits' feet were numerous in Memorial Stadium and crossed fingers and closed eyes tried to help the Huskers clear goal posts and cross goal lines.

The magic power may have been with Big Red for a little while. O'Leary's Irish little people were working hard as the junior halfback completed a touchdown pass to Husker quarterback Dave Humm. The Huskers led 14-7 and the security of Sooner fans was fast becoming panic.

After Oklahoma fumbled the ball away in the next series of downs, Sooner fans began to wonder if the bad plights wished upon them by Husker fans were coming true.

Unfortunately, coach Barry Switzer's Sooners did not let a 7-point deficit threaten their composure. They held the Huskers well and prevented them from capitalizing on a third down and 1 situation within the Oklahoma 20-yard line. Coyle's 17-yard field goal was wide and the little people closed up shop.

Huskers knocked out

By Pete Wegman

Saturday's Nebraska-Oklahoma game resembled a boxing match. The field was the ring, Oklahoma was the champion, and Nebraska the upstart challenger with the fans' solid support.

The crowd reached its frenzy point in the third quarter when Nebraska scored and then recovered an Oklahoma fumble on the ensuing kickoff.

The challenger had struck and sent the champion reeling. All that remained was the knockout punch and the fans clamored for it.

The Huskers, leading 14-7, pushed inside the Oklahoma 10-yard line and shouts of, "We're number one" prematurely arose.

A Nebraska score failed to materialize, however, and the remainder of the game sent the crowd on an emotional roller coaster ride, reaching the heights when Nebraska recovered a fumble or made a long gain, then plunging when Oklahoma began to move again.

When the final bell rang, the champion was still Oklahoma, by a unanimous decision, but the Cornhuskers were still on their feet.

The crowd's feeling was summed up by an elderly woman, a 37-year fan of Nebraska football, as she left the stadium. "The boys have nothing to be ashamed of; they played a real good game. Goodness, I can't wait until next season."

Loss: momentum played big part

By Larry Stunkel

Momentum played perhaps the biggest part in Saturday's 28-14 loss to Oklahoma. When the Huskers had it, they almost put the game away. But Oklahoma took it away and scored three touchdowns. Nebraska miscues at crucial times snuffed out any hopes of upset.

The key play, according to Husker coach Tom Osborne, was the third and one situation the Huskers had on the 10-yard line after recovering a fumbled kickoff in the third quarter when they had a 14-7 lead.

Wingback Don Westbrook thought Dave Humm had changed the play at the line, and wasn't where he should have been—in the end zone waiting for the pass.

Sooner coach Barry Switzer admitted

he would have had to change his game plan if the Huskers had scored.

"Both teams made mistakes," Osborne said. "There were a couple of scoring opportunities we didn't take advantage of, and we didn't stop them a couple of times when we had to."

Osborne said he wasn't critical of any of the players. "I told them I was proud of them after the game," he said.

"Sooner quarterback Steve Davis was most impressive," Osborne said. "I didn't think Davis could carry as many times as he did. He's a great player, tough, competitive and durable. I have a lot of respect for him."

Osborne pulled out all the stops against the Sooners. The team first came out in a power-I formation with two tight ends. Two new plays resulted in easy touchdowns, other new plays accounted for long gains.



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