

Home finale finds UNL heading for Big 8 title

By Bob Barney

After last Saturday's 12-0 victory over Kansas State (KSU), the UNL football team finds itself in the driver's seat heading toward the Big 8 Conference championship.

The Huskers, 9-0 overall and 5-0 in Big 8 play, are a game ahead of defending champion Oklahoma, after the Sooners were stunned 23-3 by Kansas last weekend. Nebraska can clinch at least a tie for the title by beating Iowa State (ISU) today.

Today's contest is the last home game for the Huskers this season and marks the final Memorial Stadium appearance for 19 seniors.

They are: Jim Burrow, Tom Coccia, Rich Costanzo, Mike Coyle, Tony Davis, Dean Gissler, Tom Heiser, Brad Jenkins, John Lee, Bob Martin, George Mills, Wonder Monds, Larry Mushinski, John O'Leary, Rick Panneton, Dave Redding, Tom Thomas, Willie Thornton, and Jerry Wied.

"Most important game"

Nebraska head coach Tom Osborne said Monday that the ISU game is "the most important game of my career," since a win would achieve the Huskers' year long goal of a Big 8 championship.

It would be Nebraska's first title since 1972, when Oklahoma forfeited three games, and its first outright since 1971, when the Huskers won the second of two straight national championships.

The Cyclones will be no pushover. ISU possesses the conference's stingiest pass defense, giving up less than 100 yards a game. They limited the Big 8's leading passer, Steve Pisarkiewicz of Missouri, to just 129 yards on 10 completions in 24 attempts last Saturday.

Omaha native returns

Omaha native Jim Wingender will return to Nebraska ranked second in the conference in rushing and with a chance to become the third Cyclone in history to rush for 1,000 yards in one season.

The Huskers lead the conference in total defense, after another stellar performance against KSU. The Wildcats were limited to 131 yards total offense, (84 on the ground and 47 through the air).

Linebackers Clete Pillen and Jim Wightman led the defense with 15 and 14 tackles respectively. Pillen leads the Huskers with 90 tackles this season.

Other outstanding defensive performances helping to hold KSU out of Husker territory until the final series of the game were turned in by John Lee, Jerry Wied, Ray Phillips and Bob Martin.

Four pass completions

The Husker secondary limited the Wildcats to just four completions in 14 attempts, while Kent Smith intercepted a pass. Today the Blackshirts face a similar quarterback in Buddy Hardeman, as they did against KSU.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Brad Jenkins (92) has caught five touchdown passes for the Huskers this season.

Although the Huskers managed only 12 points against KSU, the offense rolled up 371 yards total offense.

"It wasn't the greatest game we've ever played but I wouldn't say it was a lackluster

effort," Osborne said. "I thought our effort was good. It just wasn't sharp.

"Kansas State had a fine defense that prevented long sustained drives," he added. "They also kept us from the big play, and didn't allow the home run pass."

Sophomore Anthony

Sophomore Monte Anthony picked up 104 of the Huskers 267 rushing yards. It was his second 100-yard game this season. That performance enabled Anthony to widen his team rushing lead over John O'Leary, who picked up 63 yards last Saturday. Anthony has gained 618 yards on 131 carries this year, while O'Leary has 543 yards on 108 attempts.

Fullback Tony Davis also is nearing the 500-yard rushing mark with 493 yards in 113 attempts. The "Tecumseh Tornado", rushed for 74 yards moving into second place on the all-time Nebraska rushing charts ahead of Bobby Reynolds and 196 yards behind all-time leader Jeff Kinney.

Davis also led the Husker receivers with three catches, including a 10-yarder for the Huskers' only touchdown.

Poorest showing

Ferragamo had his poorest showing as a Husker last week. He was 7-18 passing, for only 105 yards. Ferragamo leads the Big 8 with 10 touchdown passes.

All-American center Rik Bonness heads the offensive line charge against the Iowa State defense. A defense that freshman coach Jim Ross scouted last week and compared favorably with Missouri's.

Except for his final kick, a 12-yarder, punter Randy Lessman had one of his better days. He punted twice for more than 50 yards and finished with a 37.8 average. Placekicker Mike Coyle had two field goals on three attempts. On the year, Coyle is 8-12.

Sharing the nation's longest winning streak with Arizona St. (10 games), Nebraska set a milepost in Manhattan picking up its 500th win. The Huskers hope to depart Memorial Stadium for the final time this season with number 501.

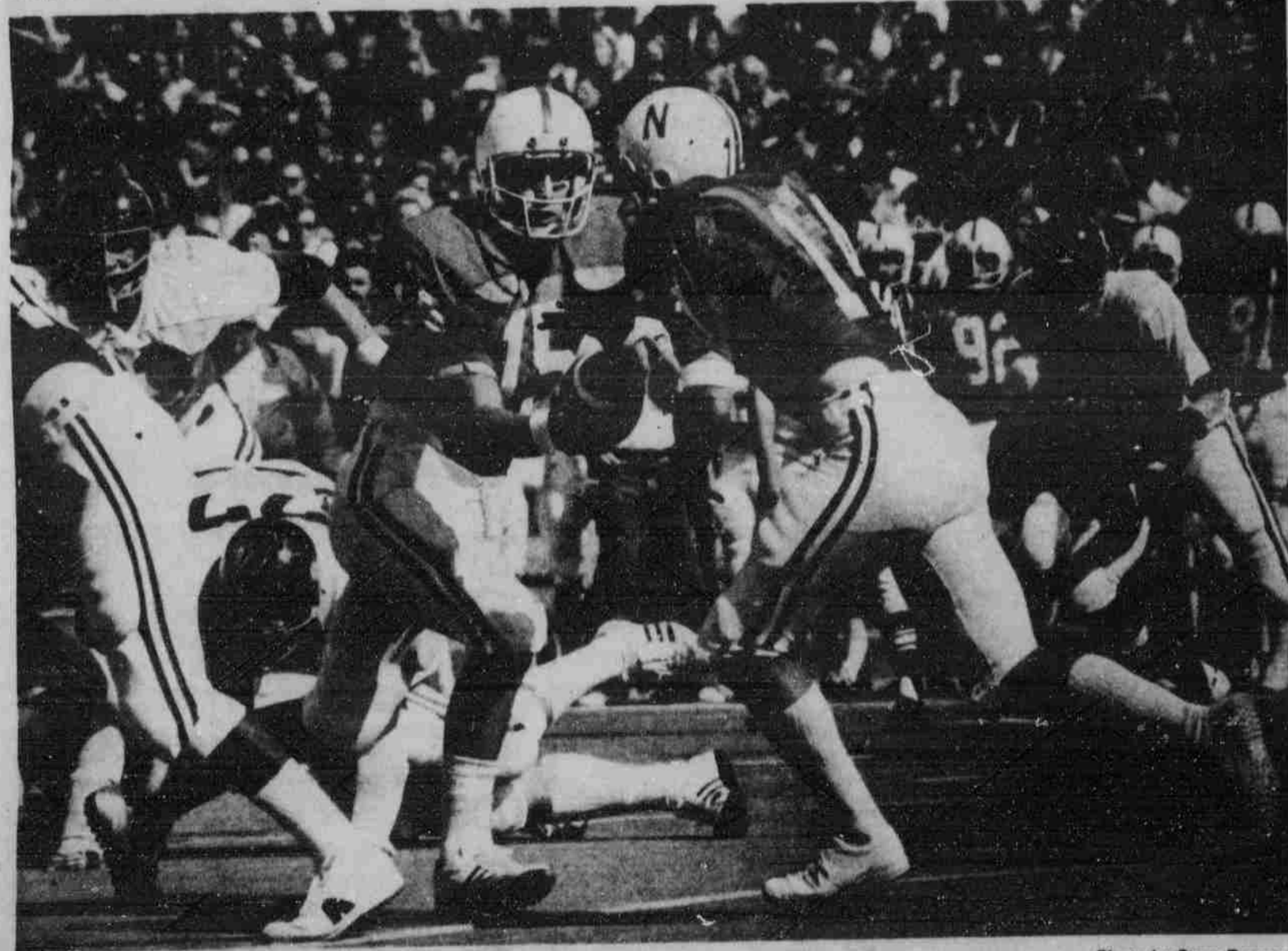


Photo by Steve Boerner

Quarterback Vince Ferragamo (15) hands the ball to I-back John O'Leary (14) during the Kansas game.