

sports

Cornhusker kickers give team an advantage, to boot

By Buck Mahoney

The importance of the kicking game was evident Saturday in Nebraska's 22-14 win over Oklahoma State University and UNL Head Coach Tom Osborne was stressing that importance Monday.

"Kicking was the major difference in the game," Osborne said.

The strength of the Husker kicking game was shown in the final statistics. Billy Tood had 10 of Nebraska's 22 points, Tim Smith had a 42.6 yard punting average to Oklahoma State's 33.5 and Nebraska had 83 return yards to the Cowboys eight, thanks to two long punt returns by Frank Lockett and Kenny Brown.

For the second week in a row, Todd kicked three field goals in one game, one short of the Husker record held by Paul Rogers in the 1969 Sun Bowl.

Todd said the importance of the kicking game varies from game to game.

Preparation different

"Sometimes it is very important," Todd said. "It depends on the opponent and the course of the game."

Todd said kickers prepare for a game differently than other players.

"You have to treat every game as being equally important, you can't rely on being emotional. Every kick has to be the same," he said.

When Nebraska won national championships in 1971 and 1972, part of the reason was the kicking of record holders Paul Rogers and Rich Sanger. Todd is approaching many of the records held by the former Huskers.

"I try not to think about it (record setting) during the year," he said. "I just try to make every one I get a chance to make."

Punter Smith said the most important factor in the punting game is the field position that the opponent has after the punt.

"The important statistic is net yardage," he said. "A punt shouldn't work like an offensive play for them."

Up, up and away

Smith also said that consistency is important to a punter.

"If you can average 40 yards per punt and be consistent, you can pin them down deep," he said. "Not having one blocked or shanked or giving up a long return is more important than your average."

Smith has not had a punt blocked in two years. He added that he thought an 18-yard shanked punt by Oklahoma State punter Kris Lugaard was one of the key plays in the game.

Although the kicking game was most visible in the win, Osborne said the team played better than the score may have indicated.

Osborne credited Oklahoma State with

having played a big part in keeping the game close.

"Jim Stanley (Oklahoma State head coach) admitted to (UNL defensive coach) Lance (Van Zandt) that they played their best game of the year," Osborne said. "But you hate to get down to where you have to count on their quarterback overthrowing their receiver in the end zone."

Burk best

In spite of Cowboy quarterback Scott Burk's bad pass on the last offensive play by Oklahoma State, Osborne said Burk was the most impressive player that Nebraska has played against this year. He called Burk an excellent runner and team leader.

"You have to give a lot of credit to Oklahoma State, and they deserve it, but we didn't tackle well and at times they controlled the line of scrimmage offensively," he said.

Injuries played an important part in determining the outcome of the game, according to Osborne.

"They lost John Corker, a great linebacker, and I think it hurt them," he said.

Injuries problem

The Huskers were also hurt by injuries. Rick Berns, Tim Wurth and Andra Franklin all left the game with injuries.

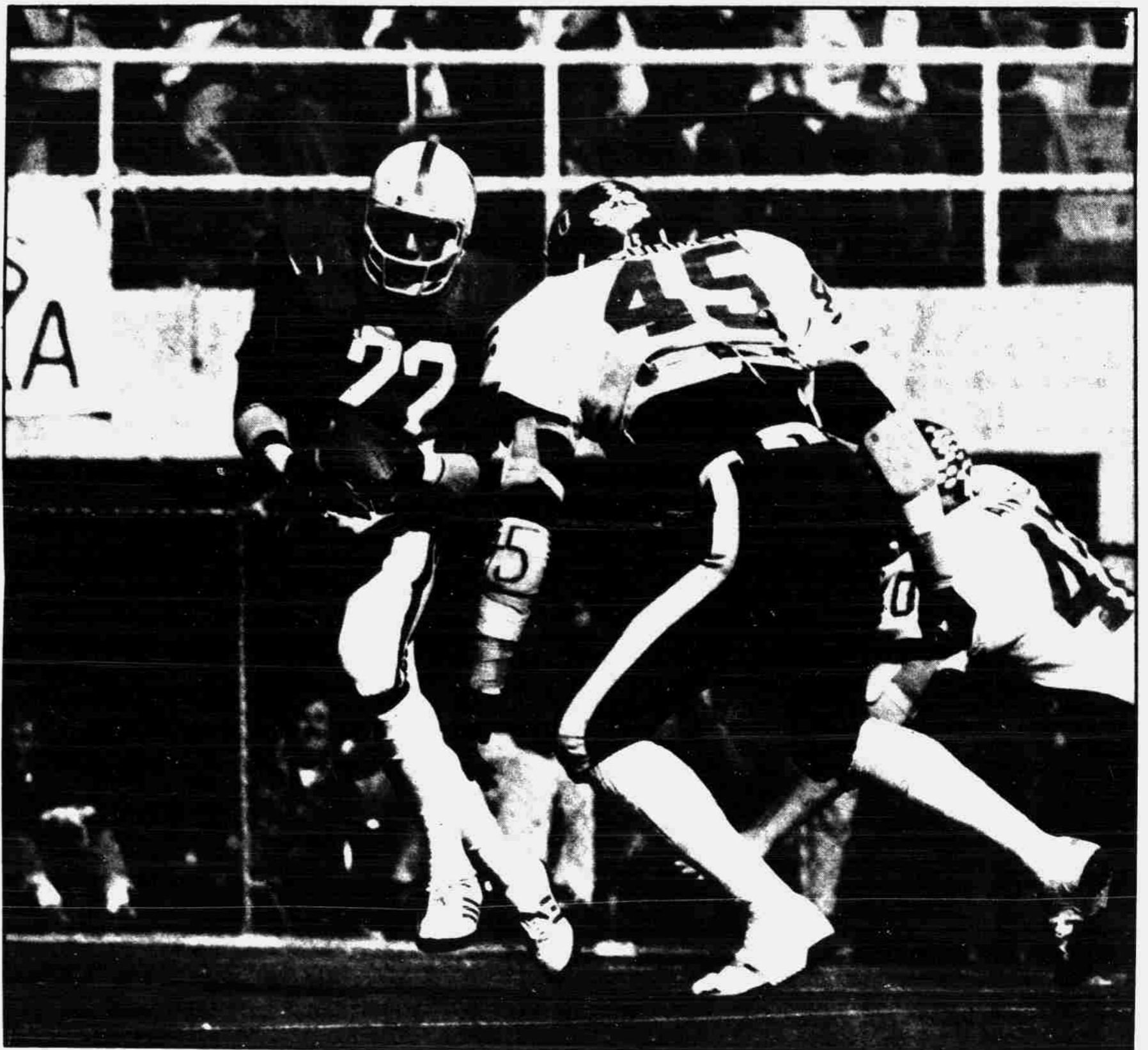
"When three out of our top four

running backs were out of there it hurt us and we weren't moving the ball," he said. "When Rick Berns was out, we weren't as good."

Osborne said the first possessions of each half were critical in determining the outcome and momentum of the game.

"In the first half, we fumbled the ball and gave them encouragement. Then they marched down the field and scored and there was no doubt they could play with us," he said. "Then in the second half they put together that 80-yard drive."

"It's the little things like momentum that make the difference," he said.



Wingback Kenny Brown (22) piles up yardage on punt returns, helping the Huskers beat Oklahoma State 22-14.

Photo by Ted Kirk

Athlete divides his time between diving and gymnastics

By Mary Ryan

Perhaps in the next edition of the *Guinness Book of World Records*, there will be a listing that will look something like this: Tumbling. Most difficult trick—a double-back somersault with a triple twist by Steve Elliott of Amarillo, Tex.

Elliott, 18, now a diver and occasional gymnast at UNL, performed the trick last year at a meet in Poland.

"It is the hardest trick ever done in tumbling," Elliott said. "I learned it on the trampoline last summer and within two months, I did it on the floor."

Attending UNL on a diving scholarship, Elliott will compete in the tumbling and vaulting events in gymnastics meets when it does not conflict with diving. He said he probably won't perform the record trick at any of the meets.

"As Francis (Allen, gymnastics coach) said, 'He is a diver and I get what is left over,'" Elliott said.

Both sports competition

He had offers from several other schools to compete in either diving or gymnastics but chose Nebraska because he would be allowed to compete in both sports as much as possible.

"I had several diving offers and I was

real confused which way to go," Elliott said. "I had always wanted to go into gymnastics but since I hadn't had any gymnastic coaching, I felt like I would go ahead and dive for a few years in college."

He also said the attention he got from the coaches at UNL helped him make his decision.

"When the coach called four or five times I began to think they were really interested and that inspired me also," he said.

First year diving coach Jeff Huber said he learned about Elliott from a friend of his who is now coaching at the University of Tennessee.

"I couldn't make the (AAU prequalifying) meet," Huber said. "It was before I was hired... fortunately Steve had been overlooked because he had not had a real good state meet. We signed Steve without ever having seen him dive."

An All-American the past two years in both tumbling and diving, Elliott competes in both the one and three meter dives.

He said he works out three hours in the afternoon on diving and on Wednesday and on Sundays he works out on gymnastics.

Tumbling different

Tumbling is different from gymnastics

in that it mainly consists of hand balancing routines. Tumbling is just one of the events performed in acrobatic competition, Elliott said.

A member of the United States International Tumbling Team the last three years, Elliott has just returned from the World Championships in Sofia, Bulgaria. He placed third in the competition with athletes from nine other countries and took bronze and silver medals in individual routines.

This past July, Elliott won three golds and a silver in the World Age Group Championships in Honolulu.

Elliott began tumbling when he was six

years old and had also done a "little diving on my own when I was a little younger."

"The main thing I like is just the active maneuvering of myself in the air where it is an individual effort," Elliott said of the two sports. "Both diving and tumbling are flipping and are not like golf where you hit a ball, or football, which is a team sport—they are individual."

Fans of the team sport of football have seen Elliott performing gymnastics tricks in the end zones with members of the gymnastics team. Elliott said he plans to lead the Cornhuskers out with a series of back handsprings down the length of the field before the Oklahoma game.

Oklahoma game on TV

ABC-TV has announced that the Nebraska-Oklahoma football game in Lincoln on Nov. 11 will be televised nationally.

The Sooners currently are ranked number one in the nation by the wire

service polls and the Huskers are ranked fourth.

The kickoff, however, has been moved up from 1:30 p.m. to noon to accommodate the coverage. ABC also announced it will air a half hour pre-game show.