

Sports

Huskers defeated in final seconds

By Cindy Gardner

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — A come-from-behind victory was snatched away from Nebraska Saturday when Penn State tight end Kirk Bowman snagged a 2-yard pass in the end zone with only four seconds remaining. The catch gave the Nittany Lions a 27-24 win in the nationally televised football cliffhanger at Beaver Stadium.

"It was a great football game," Penn State Coach Joe Paterno said. "It was a shame for either team to lose."

With just 1:18 left in the game, it appeared the Huskers had successfully overcome a 14-point deficit to claim a 24-21 victory. Nebraska quarterback Turner Gill went over the top from the 1-yard line to give Nebraska its first and only lead of the game. But 1:18 was plenty of time for the PSU passing machine, aided by a 15-yard penalty against Nebraska to engineer a final scoring drive.

Penn State began the winning drive from its own 35 after a personal foul called against Nebraska added 15 yards to the touchback. Quarterback Todd Blackledge then marched the Nittany Lions downfield to set up the game-winning touchdown pass.

"I felt somewhat relieved at the end there with a minute and something left, but I wasn't really that comfortable because I knew they (Penn State) had the capability to go the length of the field," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said. "It looked like the time would help us. Of course, the penalty gave them good field position. That 15 yards of field position was really critical."

Penn State's final drive was nearly thwarted at Nebraska's 34-yard line. On a fourth-and-11 situation, Paterno opted not to try for a game-tying field goal. Kicking specialist Massimo Manca had failed on three earlier attempts.

Lions try for first down

Paterno's fourth down decision was a pass from Blackledge to flanker Kenny Jackson that gave the Lions the first down conversion by only inches. Three plays later, the 10-play, 65-yard drive ended in fitting fashion with the touchdown pass from Blackledge to Bowman.

Police had trouble retaining the Beaver Stadium record crowd of 85,304 after the winning score. Penn State fans made quick work of the goal posts when time ran out after a 21-yard kickoff return by Nebraska I-back Mike Rozier.

"Obviously, it was a great football game, especially from the spectators' standpoint," Osborne said.

Osborne described Nebraska's earlier offensive game as sporadic. The Huskers lost two fumbles and had trouble escaping the plague of inconsistencies until the final drive of the first half.

"It's really depressing for me," quarterback Turner Gill said after the loss. "I didn't play well the first half. You've got to play well four quarters, and I didn't."

Huskers score

Nebraska's only score of the first half came on an 8-yard drive that was capped by a 30-yard pass from Gill to wingback Irving Fryar. The touchdown left Nebraska just seven points behind at the midway break, 14-7.

While the Huskers were having trouble untracking their offensive game, Blackledge set out to earn his arm a place beside Matt Bahr's foot in Penn State football history.

The junior from North Canton, Ohio, was able to find his receivers even while being dragged down by the

Blackshirt pass rush. Blackledge completed 23 of 39 passes for 295 yards in the game.

"Penn State's offense really surprised me," Husker defensive end Tony Felici said. "Their strong point was their pass protection. They were pretty quick, and that is probably one of the reasons they've thrown the ball as much as they have."

Penn State ran the ball three times on its first possession but cranked up its passing game the second time it had the ball. This second possession ended in a 50-yard field goal attempt by Manca that was wide to the left.

When the Lions got the ball back again, Blackledge threw nothing but completions. A 14-yard touchdown pass to Bowman culminated the 83-yard drive and put Penn State on the Scoreboard, 7-0.

Curt Warner, the Lion tailback who has been PSU's best offensive weapon in seasons past, got his first rushing touchdown of the fall in the second quarter. The senior Heisman Trophy contender ran for 50 of the 71 yards covered on the drive, which made the score 14-0.

The game took on a new intensity in the third quarter.

Bad snap thwarts field goal

Nebraska took its first possession of the second half the length of the field, but failed to score after a bad snap on a 35-yard field-goal attempt.

Penn State then took over the ball and mounted an 83-yard drive that ended in an 18-yard touchdown pass from Blackledge to Jackson.

With the Nittany Lions leading 21-7, Nebraska threw

a touchdown pass of its own. A 2-yard toss from Gill to Rozier and Kevin Seibel's extra point brought the Huskers within seven.

Quick turnovers by each team opened the final Nebraska linebacker Steve Damkroger recovered a Skeeter Nichols fumble at the Nebraska 44 just one play after Penn State's All Harris intercepted a Gill pass.

The recovered fumble started a Nebraska drive to the Penn State 20 where Seibel hit a 37-yard field goal. This brought the Huskers within four, 21-17.

Penn State came right back with a 60-yard drive that ended when Husker cornerback Neil Harris intercepted a 21-yard Blackledge pass in the end zone. The interception set up Nebraska's go-ahead touchdown.

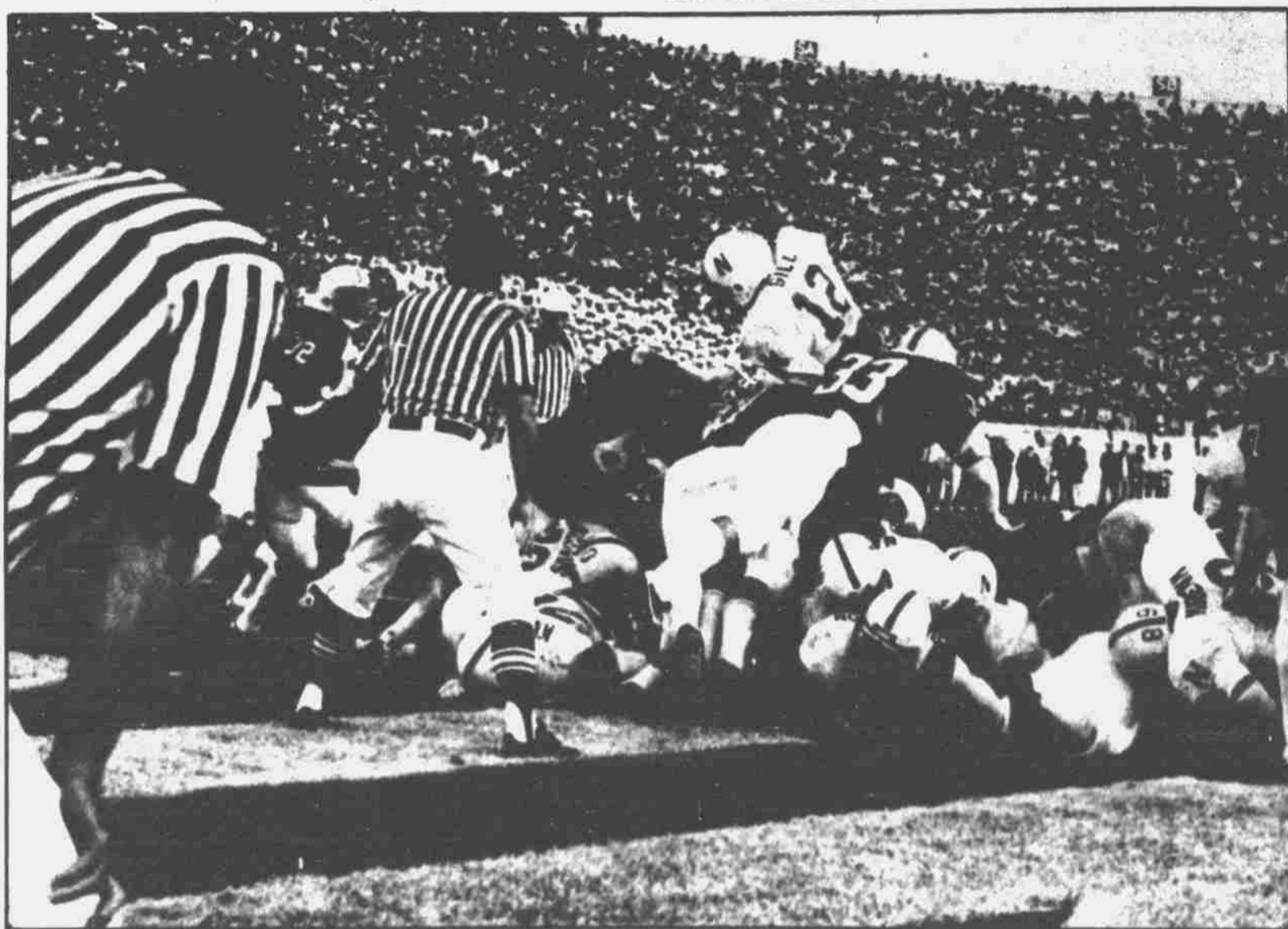
Harris said that from the time he intercepted the pass until the Huskers scored with 1:18 remaining, he "just sat on the bench and prayed that hopefully things would work out."

"I don't think we played a good game for 60 minutes," Harris said. "The defense has to give the offense field position but we didn't do that."

While Nebraska had trouble shutting Penn State down, Osborne was not totally dissatisfied with the Blackshirt pass coverage.

"We feel that our team played pretty well, particularly in the second half," he said. "We just never did stop Penn State. I think that's a credit to their great offense."

"We played a great football team. They are a class outfit," Paterno said. "There was enough glory on the field for both teams."



Nebraska quarterback Turner Gill (12) plunges over the goal line with 1:18 left in Saturday's Penn State-Nebraska game at State College, Pa., to give the Huskers their first lead of the game. The Nittany Lions came back and scored with four seconds left, however, to score a 27-24 upset win.

Fans disappointed, but sun still rises

Considering the high expectations Nebraska had for its 1982 football team, one had to wonder if the sun would come up in Lincoln Sunday morning after Saturday's 27-24 loss to Penn State in University Park, Pa.

It did, and now it's time to put the game in perspective. Nebraskans found out Saturday that this team is



only human, just like past teams, and that it is not "unstoppable" as many were saying. But, we're going to find out even more about the team this week.

Nebraska has made a habit of bouncing back from a loss with a big win during the years, but those wins usually have been against a Kansas State or a Colorado.

This week is different. The opponent is undefeated Auburn, and the game is in an unfriendly stadium, on natural turf and in the deep South, where Nebraska has never won a regular-season game. If ever a Nebraska team needed to forget the past, this is it.

It's time to take the Penn State loss for what it is worth — proof that when two top-notch teams meet, one

good team is going to come away a loser.

It is unfortunate Nebraska had to be that team but coming out on the short end of the score shouldn't distract from the quality of the game.

It was a classic in every sense of the word. Everything was there — two highly ranked teams, two very respected programs, two top coaches, a sell-out crowd and plenty of exciting plays. This is what college football is all about, not 68-0 wins against New Mexico State.

It's just too bad the Nebraska-Penn State series has to end after this year. It's been one of the finest rivalries in the country. The two teams have had great respect for each other, and showed it on the field, and no matter which team came out on top, the real winners were the fans who were treated to top-rate football every year.

Of course, games like this do have their disadvantages. Nebraska's hopes for winning that elusive national crown in 1982 were likely left on the playing field in University Park Saturday, but the Huskers did gain the experience of playing a classy football team in front of 85,000 fans who appreciate good football, no matter which team is playing it. That has to count for something.

Goodbye to a rivalry that has been good to both universities. Now bring on Auburn.

Husker-Lion Statistics

Nebraska	0	7	7	10-24
Penn State	7	7	7	6-27
PS — Bowman 14 pass from Blackledge (Manca kick)				
PS — Warner 2 run (Manca kick)				
NU — Fryar 30 pass from Gill (Seibel kick)				
PS — Jackson 18 pass from Blackledge (Manca kick)				
NU — Rozier 2 pass from Gill (Seibel kick)				
NU — FG Seibel 37				
NU — Gill 1 run (Seibel kick)				
PS — Bowman 2 pass from Blackledge (kick failed)				
Attendance 85,304				

	NU	PSU
First downs	23	30
Rushes-yards	38-233	41-210
Passing yards	239	295
Return yards	0	13
Passes	16-34-1	23-39-1
Punts	3-39	2-38
Fumbles-lost	3-2	3-2
Penalties-yards	4-35	2-10
Time of Possession	30:13	29:47

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Nebraska, Rozier 19-86, Gill 12-52, Fryar 1-45. Penn State, Warner 13-78, Williams 10-65, Nichols 7-32.

PASSING — Nebraska, Gill 16-34-239-1. Penn State, Blackledge 23-39-295-1.

RECEIVING — Nebraska, Fryar 7-112, Brown 3-60, Simmons 2-28. Penn State, Garrity 5-75, Jackson 5-73, McCloskey 4-68.