

Sports



Staff Photo by Dave Bentz

Missouri free safety Raymond Hairston (6) watches the final minutes of Saturday's football game in despair as the Cornhuskers came from behind for a 23-19 win against the Tigers in Memorial Stadium. It was the third time in four years that the Huskers have defeated Mizzou in the closing minutes. Nebraska, now 3-0 in Big Eight play, is tied with Oklahoma for first place in the league. UNL plays at Kansas Saturday.

Victory comes as a relief to Huskers after close game

By Cindy Gardner

"Relieved" was the word Bruce Mathison used to sum up his feelings after Nebraska's 23-19 victory against the Missouri Tigers Saturday in Memorial Stadium.

Mathison took over Husker quarterbacking duties with less than five minutes remaining in the first half after starter Turner Gill went down with a concussion. Mathison completed the scoring drive Gill had begun and mounted three point-producing charges of his own in the second half to lift the Huskers up and over the Tigers.

"Bruce showed a lot of class being able to come in there in that kind of a ball game," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said. "It was the first time he's ever really played when it was tough."

When Mathison was called into action, the Huskers were on the short end of a 7-3 score.

Missouri took the opening kickoff but was forced to punt eight plays later from its own 34-yard line. Nebraska then took the ball right toward the goal line on its first possession, but came away empty-handed when Tiger defensive tackle Randy Jostes recovered a Doug Wilkening fumble at the Missouri 11.

Huskers score first

After a second Tiger punt, the Huskers put the first points on the scoreboard when Kevin Seibel hit a 33-yard field goal with 5:24 remaining in the first period. Mizzou was again forced to punt on its third possession of the ball game as a stingy Nebraska defense refused to let the Tigers enter Husker territory in the opening quarter.

The quarter ended Nebraska 3, Missouri 0, after a 51-yard field goal attempt by Seibel fell short as time ran out. Osborne said the Huskers should have been out in front by a larger margin at the end of the first quarter.

"I think we ended up with three points out of maybe a chance to get as much as 17 to 21," Osborne said. "Normally, we've been able to get those in there."

Missouri opened the second quarter with a 12-play, 66-yard drive that culminated in a touchdown pass from Brad Perry to tight end Andy Gibler. The scoring catch was Gibler's 91st career reception, a new Missouri school record.

With the Tigers leading 7-3, Husker I-Back Mike Rozier entered the game for the first time. Rozier, who suffered a hip pointer in Nebraska's 42-13 win against Kansas State Oct. 16, had not been expected to play Saturday. After suffering a 2-yard setback on his first rushing attempt of the afternoon, Rozier refused to be shut down for a loss again. He covered 139 net yards en route to becoming the game's leading ground gainer and ABC television's most valuable player.

Rozier shows courage

"I don't really think very many people will probably ever realize the amount of courage that Mike Rozier showed today," Osborne said after the game. "He was really hurting bad and he's hurting bad right now."

Osborne said he had thought about starting Rozier after he told the coach before the game that he was ready to play. Osborne said he opted not to start Rozier for fear that it would be psychologically damaging to the team to lose him after just three or four plays.

Rozier, however, was able to play three quarters of football. On the final drive of the second quarter, he covered 29 of the 70 yards that set up a 24-yard Seibel field goal, bringing the Huskers within one at the half, 7-6.

Earlier in the second period, Seibel had missed a 42-yard attempt that was set up when Husker safety Bret Clark intercepted a Perry pass and returned it 20 yards to the Missouri 25-yard line.

Seibel said he tried not to let his 2-of-4 first half performance get him down.

"I was just trying not to let negative things get in the way because I figured we might have to kick some more field goals in the second half," Seibel said. "I was just trying to keep my confidence up."

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Tigers coach predicts team to make comeback

By Larry Sparks

Warren Powers would be the first to admit that his Missouri Tigers played a hard-hitting football game against Nebraska Saturday in Memorial Stadium, but he denies that any of those hits were made with the intention of hurting Nebraska players.

Powers, the Tiger coach, was heckled by a Nebraska fan as he entered the locker room following the 23-19 Nebraska victory. The comment, which brought Powers back out of the locker room with a few choice words for the fan, was centered around a second quarter hit by defensive tackle Randy Jostes that put UNL quarterback Turner Gill out of the game.

Powers, however, said that it was not a "cheap shot," as the Husker fans had claimed.

"Cheap shot is a ridiculous word," Powers said. "That's hard football out there. Nobody out there is trying to hurt anybody. They're just out there to win."

"We don't cheap shot. I don't know if Tom (UNL Coach Osborne) is in there crying about it or not, but I wouldn't think that he would be. First of all, he was on the field. He should have gotten a 15-yard penalty," he said.

Powers said other comments from Nebraska fans were directed at him and his team throughout the game, but he said he tried to ignore them.

"They (UNL fans) don't know what goes on on the football field. Half of them never compete in their life," he said. "They're up there paying their money and drinking their beer and having a good time yelling what they think they see."

Tiger fans boo ties

The Tigers, now 3-2-2, have been booed recently at their own stadium, especially last week after their second straight tie, but Powers said he has kept confidence in the team and wasn't surprised Mizzou came so close to beating the Cornhuskers.

"I am very proud of the way our team played today," he said. "But they've always given a good effort. I've never doubted this team's ability to play good."

Powers said he was pleased with Mizzou's defense and passing game. He praised the play of reserve quarterback Mike Hyde, who came into the game with 2:36 left and the Tigers trailing 23-13. Hyde moved the ball downfield for the touchdown that put MU back into the game.

"Mike Hyde is that kind of player. If you really want a pure passer, Mike can come in here and pass with the best of them. He's done it for us in the past and I'm glad he got a chance to do it today," he said.

Powers also had praise for the play of another reserve quarterback Saturday — Nebraska's Bruce Mathison. Mathison showed a lot of poise after being called upon to replace the injured Gill, he said.

"Here's a young man who came into a big game and he was behind, but he executed very well," Powers said.

Husker defense underrated

The Husker defense looked good, he said, pointing out that the Blackshirts probably have been underrated by the fans.

"Nebraska's got a good defense. People worry about stats too much," he said. "Worry about the points that people score on you and not the stats and you'll be better off."

MU tight end Andy Gibler agreed.

"It's a good defense," Gibler said. "They haven't really had to play tough games. They've been blowing people out and that kind of relaxes the defense."

Powers said the Tigers' inability to capitalize on some of Nebraska's early errors could have cost MU the game. Despite those failures, he said he "felt we were in very good shape" after Brad Burditt booted through a field goal with 9:07 left to put MU on top 13-9.

Nebraska took the ensuing kick and drove the length of the field, but Powers said the Huskers made several third down conversions by just a few inches.

If UNL had missed on one of those attempts, the Tigers probably could have held onto the ball long enough to run out the clock, he said.

Powers had stressed last week that beating Nebraska was vital to keep Mizzou's Big Eight title hopes alive. So

where do the Tigers go from here?

"You just go on and play the rest of your games and win them all, and go to some other bowl unless Nebraska loses to somebody else, which is a possibility," Gibler said.

Powers also doubts that there is a chance his team will fold after three straight weeks without a win.

"This football team has got a lot of character. If there was any chance of their folding, they would have done so a long time ago with the way people have been down on them," Powers said.

"We believe in ourselves," he said. "We'll come back."

Husker-Tiger Statistics

Missouri	0	7	3	9-19
Nebraska	3	3	3	14-23
NU - FG Seibel	33			
MU - Gibler 1 pass from Perry (Richmond kick)				
NU - Seibel	23			
MU - FG Burditt	23			
NU - FG Seibel	29			
MU - FG Burditt	51			
NU - Schellen 1 run (Seibel kick)				
NU - Mathison 16 run (Seibel kick)				
MU - Gibler 24 pass from Hyde (pass failed)				
Attendance	76,406			
	MU	NU		
First downs	20	22		
Pushes-yards	40-86	54-319		
Passing yards	211	77		
Return yards	0	120		
Passes	21-41-3	9-20-0		
Punts	6-45	3-38		
Fumbles-lost	0-0	4-3		
Penalties-yards	4-15	4-19		
Time of Possession	31:16	28:44		

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING - Missouri, Snowden 11-48, Mack 13-36, Malvern 3-8. Nebraska, Rozier 17-139, Smith 8-52, Mathison 8-37.

PASSING - Missouri, Perry 18-34-150-3, Hyde 3-7-61-0. Nebraska, Gill 4-10-42-0, Mathison, 5-10-35-0.

RECEIVING - Missouri, Caver 7-90, Gibler 4-68, Snowden 4-21. Nebraska, Rozier 3-24, Williams 2-19, Fryar 2-14, Brown 1-14.