

Sports

Huskers squander chances in loss to Sooners

By Mike Reilley

Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

They should have.
They could have.
But they didn't.

That was the feeling of players and fans alike after the Huskers dropped a heartbreaking 17-7 decision to Oklahoma Saturday.

Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne, whose team was favored by five points, said the Huskers made too many mistakes to defeat a team of the caliber of Oklahoma.

"Obviously, we made more mistakes than they did," Osborne said. "We had some in the kicking game and some in the plain scrimmage plays. And, of course, too many missed scoring opportunity plays, but I guess I have to take the blame for some of that."

The loss was particularly tough on the Husker seniors, many of whom have never lost to the Sooners.



David Creamer/Daily Nebraskan

Right end Scott Strasburger, whose interception in the waning seconds of the 1982 shoot-out preserved a 28-24 Nebraska win, had difficulty swallowing the bitter taste of defeat.

"This is my last game here," Strasburger said. "A lot of good things have happened to me in this stadium the last two years. It's kind of tough to end it this way."

Osborne said the loss was one of his biggest disappointments as the Husker coach.

"This is about as disappointing a loss as we've had," Osborne said. "We've had some over the years that have hurt, and this one probably hurts as bad as any of them."

While Nebraska remained in a state of shock, Sooner Coach Barry Switzer was applauding his team's defensive efforts.

"Our defense rose to the occasion," Switzer said. "If I had to say one reason for winning this game, it would be defense, defense, defense!"

Trailing, 10-7, Nebraska took possession of the ball on its own 11-yard line with nine minutes remaining in the game.

The Huskers drove to mid-field, where quarterback Craig Sundberg threw a strike to I-back Doug DuBose.

DuBose shook a tackler and shot down the left sideline before being driven out of bounds at the Sooner 8-yard line.

"When DuBose broke that one, I thought 'Heck, we're in there,'" left guard Harry Grimminger said.

A first and goal at the Sooner 8-yard line, I-back Jeff Smith carried a pitch around the left side for 3 yards. Sundberg followed with a 4-yard keeper to the one.

With their backs to the wall, the Sooner defense stiffened.

Freshman linebacker Brian Bosworth stopped Husker fullback Scott Porter for no gain to set up a fourth and goal situation.

"You could lay a hair down on the goal line," Grimminger said. "That's how far we had to go."

Smith took a pitch from Sundberg and ran to the left side looking for daylight, but all he found was a cloud of white jerseys. Smith was stopped for no gain.

"We thought about that a lot," Osborne said. "We felt they'd stack the middle and thought we might be able to run a pitch, which is basically an off-tackle play and we'd had some success with that."

Osborne described the play as "a basic goal-line play we practice all the time." He admitted the thought of running up the middle had crossed his mind.

"I thought about going straight ahead," Osborne said. "And I wish we had gone straight ahead now."

Sooner cornerback Brian Hall, who was the first to hit Smith, said he and his teammates were ready for the goal-line stand.

"We just looked at each other and said we got to do it now," Hall said. "They couldn't get over the middle, we thought they might do something like that. It was the same kind of thing Texas tried on us. We stopped them, and we stopped Nebraska too."

Oklahoma drew first blood, capitalizing on a Travis Turner fumble to take a 7-0 lead with 2:40 to play in the first quarter.

The Sooners marched 26 yards in seven plays, capped by a 1-yard scoring plunge by quarterback Danny Bradley.

Nebraska got on track in the second quarter, moving 84 yards in 10 plays.

A 5-yard draw play to DuBose highlighted the drive. The sophomore from Uncasville, Conn., twisted, spun and jitter-stepped the Sooner defense into a tizzy.

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Joel Sartore/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska quarterback Travis Turner meets the turf via Sooner pursuers Sonny Brown (8), Brian Bosworth (44) and Tony Rayburn (35).

Sooners celebrate 'their time'

By Ward W. Triplett III
Daily Nebraskan Senior Editor

Barry Switzer came on like evangelist Jim Bakker turned football hero. Danny Bradley prayed and thanked God. George Rhymes laughed and joked with the ease of Eddie Murphy.

Saturday's 17-7 win over Nebraska was no ordinary victory for the Oklahoma Sooners. They had beaten a team even they thought might be better, and they had done it after several adversities and injuries appeared to have killed their season's momentum.

The Sooners finally had the

breaks go their way after three years of frustration. As the coach so loudly and proudly put it, "It was our time."

The Sooner celebration started as soon as Nebraska I-back Jeff Smith was nailed to the Memorial Stadium turf by an Oklahoma defensive back who was only playing because a car accident had removed the starters from the line up. Brian Hall had been in several plays during the long afternoon, including a last-second tripping of Smith just before the Husker back turned upfield in the first quarter, and an ankle tackle of Doug DuBose. Both had had clear sailing ahead.

But the fourth-quarter play that that killed Nebraska's last legitimate chance to win was Hall's brightest moment. Was he surprised the Sooners were able to hold the Huskers?

"No. We've done it before against Texas. Before they lined up for that last play, we looked at each other and said 'We've got to do it now.' We knew they were running it. We were ready for it."

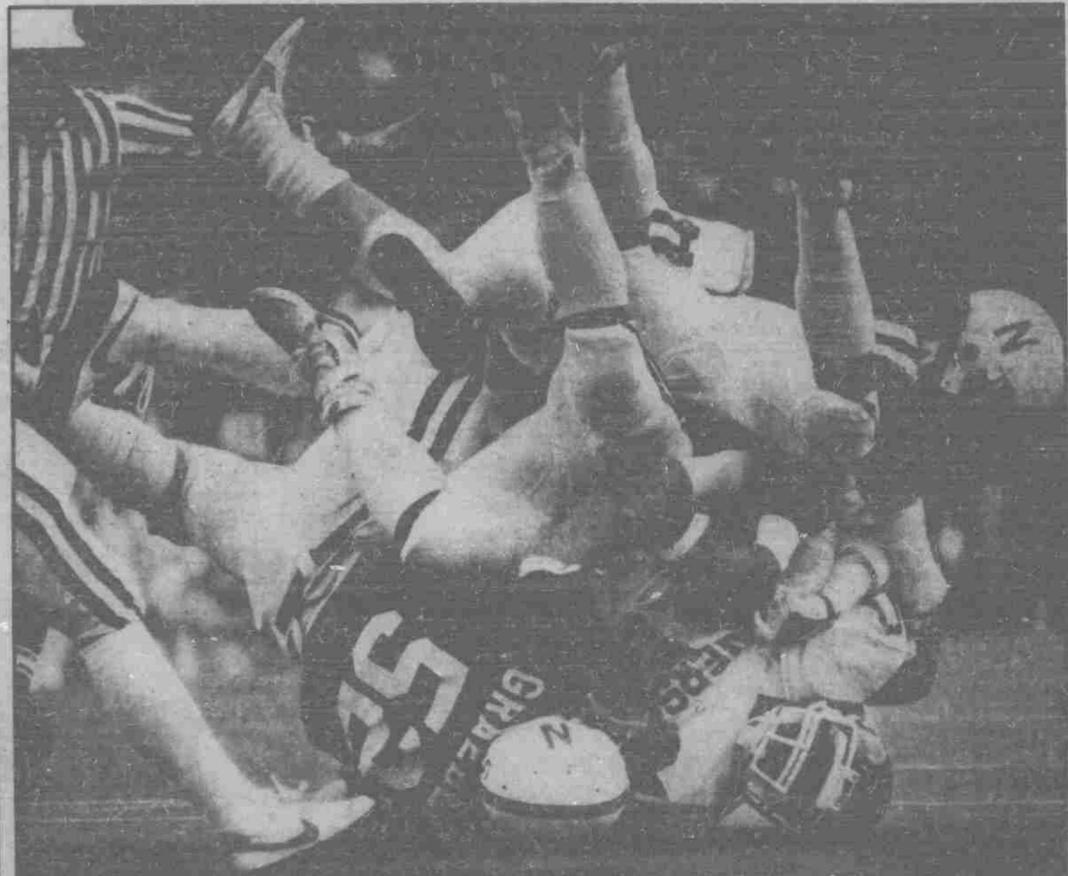
Was he surprised the Huskers went to the outside?

"I wasn't. I was supposed to look for something like that. When the play started, I just followed the man in motion. I fought off

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Mark Davis/Daily Nebraskan

Above: In a twisted mass of muscled legs, Oklahoma's Jerome Ledbetter grinds to a halt with the help of Ken Graeber and Rob Stuckey. Sooner Levell Carr is sandwiched in the middle. At left, Sooner quarterback Danny Bradley gets two fingers. Guess which one was a Husker fan.