Huskies capitalize on Illini turnovers

Victory boosts Nebraska's confidence

By Mike Reiley
Sports Reporter

Two weeks ago, the Nebraska football team learned how hard it could be to come from behind against Florida State when it lost to Florida State, 13-10. Illini quarterback Jimmy Williams coughed up four turnovers, and the Huskers capitalized on each one to take down the visiting Illini, 32-7, at Memorial Stadium.

The Illini, who were victorious last week against Florida State, 13-7, suffered their second straight loss of the season.

Nebraska's offense scored four touchdowns from the Illini turnovers to increase its record to 1-1 in the Big Eight Conference and 3-1 on the season. Nebraska is now 6-3 all-time against Illinois. The Illini fell to 2-2 overall and 0-2 in conference play.

"It was just one of those days," said Nebraska defensive back Lenard Spain. "We were able to capitalize on the Illini's mistakes, and we played well defensively as a team.

"Illinois turnovers

The Illini took the ensuing kickoff and drove to the Nebraska 4-yard line, but Illinois' Dave Blue squeezed through the middle untouched for his third touchdown of the day, belatedly giving him a 15-0 lead.

Nebraska's second defensive prominence was the punt, and Nebraska's standout punt returner, the return man for the Illini, did not come out of the game unscathed, as he returned one punt with Illinois' trimmed-to-a-stitch Paul Smith in close pursuit.

"Illinois' punt returner is not going to hurt us too much," said Nebraska coach Tom Osborne. "He's a good punt returner and he can create a lot of problems for us, but we're not going to change our defense just to stop him."

"Illinois' offense

The Illini, who had scored 13 touchdowns in their first two games, couldn't score against the Nebraska defense, allowing only seven points in total.

Nebraska safety John Williams, who returned two of the Illini's three fumbles, said the Illini didn't create as many opportunities for big plays as they did in their first two games.

"We were able to control the Illini's offense well, and we didn't give them the kind of field position they needed to be successful," said Williams.

"Illinois' offense

The Illini were held to 130 yards of total offense, and their quarterback, Jimmy Williams, was held to 133 passing yards.

"Illinois' defense

The Illini defense, which had given up 19 points in their first two games, was held to just seven points.

"Illinois' special teams

The Illini's special teams were held to just seven points, and the Illini had no successful kick returns.

"Illinois' season outlook

The Illini's season outlook is now in question, as they are now 0-2 in conference play.

"We need to change things up a bit on offense to get some points," said Williams. "We need to get some big plays and create some turnovers on defense to help our offense.

"Illinois' conference standing

The Illini are now 0-2 in conference play, and they need to win their next game to get back on track.

"We need to get back to our roots and play better defense," said Williams. "We need to get back to winning games and not giving up points.

"Illinois' next game

The Illini's next game is against Iowa, who is currently 2-1 in conference play.

"We need to get ready for Iowa and prove ourselves," said Williams. "We need to show that we can get back on track and win some games."