

Sports

Talent shows at Nebraska scrimmage

Offense improves, scores 38 points

By Tim Hartmann
Senior Reporter

The situation was the same, but the outcome was vastly different during the Nebraska football team's scrimmage Saturday at Memorial Stadium.

The Cornhusker's No. 1 offense, which on Tuesday scored one touchdown against the defense, tallied 38 points as quarterbacks Steve Taylor and Clete Blakeman threw a combined four touchdown passes. The Husker offense also scored on I-back Ken Clark's 3-yard touchdown run and on a 39-yard field goal by sophomore Chris Drennan.

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said he was not concerned about the number of points because the defense has played well throughout the fall.

"Last Tuesday you were worried the other way around. It looked like we might scrimmage all day and not score at all," Osborne said. "Some of the things that bothered the first defense were just a couple of broken coverages, and I think they did have a lot of different combinations in the secondary. We were rotating guys in and out, so it wasn't necessarily our top four guys back there all the time."

Taylor produced the scrimmage's first score when he hit tight end Tom Banderas with a 47-yard touchdown pass during the No. 1 offense's second series.

Taylor completed six of nine passes on the day for 115 yards and three touchdowns. Blakeman connected on four of five passing attempts for 53 yards and led all rushers with 59 yards.

"I thought both the top two quarterbacks did a nice job, and we have some receivers who are pretty good players at the present time," Osborne said.

The Red team, comprised of all the offensive players, was forced to resort to Drennan's field goal on its third offensive series when a 12-yard touchdown pass from Blakeman to split end Rod Smith was nullified by a holding penalty.

The next time the No. 1 offense got the ball, Smith was able to score. On a drive highlighted by a 12-yard run by Clark, Smith scored on an 8-yard touchdown pass from Taylor.

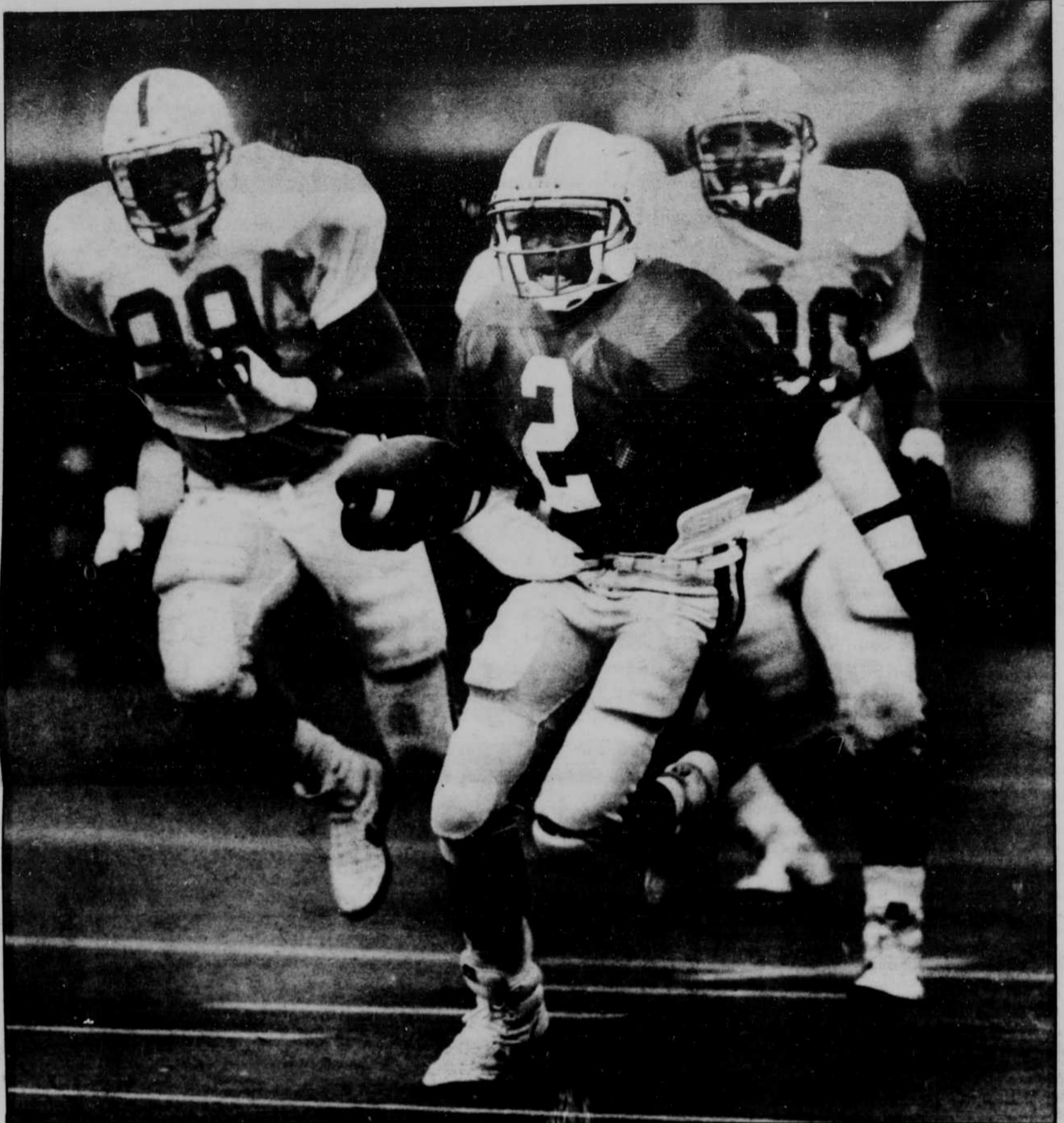
Osborne said he is pleased with the improvement of Clark, a redshirt sophomore from Omaha Bryan.

"Ken's playing really well," Osborne said. "He's hard to knock down. We'll have to look at the film, but he may be our No. 2 I-back right now."

Blakeman's 29-yard run with 22 seconds left in the second quarter gave the Red team 24 points in the first half. The final scores of the scrimmage came on a 6-yard pass from Taylor to Banderas and Clark's run.

Osborne said he was pleased with the scrimmage, which included officials and piped-in crowd noise.

"I think it was a good workout," he said. "We had a little crowd noise and officials add a dimension to a ball game you don't have at a normal scrimmage."



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska freshman quarterback Mickey Joseph (No. 2) eludes Neil Smith (No. 99) during the Cornhuskers' scrimmage Saturday at Memorial Stadium. Joseph finished with 22 yards rushing on four carries.

"Offensively, I think the first unit executed pretty well," Osborne added. "We had a few penalties which you don't like to see. The first defense was maybe not as dominant as they were last Tuesday and had a couple of broken coverages that hurt badly and just a few bad plays. The second defense generally did a good job against the second offense."

Osborne said the scrimmage also

gave the coaches a good chance to evaluate the kicking game.

"We got a pretty good look at the kicking game," he said. "I guess that was a little rough yet, but that's to be expected at this point. We really hadn't run any kickoffs until yesterday and that was in sweat clothes, so we looked at some of those things today. We had a fair amount of punting and punt returns."

There were a number of injuries at the scrimmage, but none were considered very serious. Lineman Andy Keeler and I-back Terry Rodgers both had strained knees. Safety Mark Blazek had a fractured finger, wingback Dana Brinson sprained his ankle, and I-back Tyreese Knox bruised his shoulder. None of the injured players are expected to miss much time, trainer George Sullivan said.

Two other injured players, defensive tackle Tim Rothe (hamstring) and cornerback Lorenzo Hicks (shoulder), did not scrimmage but should return to practice Monday.

Nebraska will scrimmage for the final time next Saturday in preparation for their opening game Sept. 5 against Utah State. The scout squad will imitate Utah State's offensive and defensive sets in the scrimmage.

Aggies to play percentages against NU

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne ranks third on the active coaches winning list, but the percentages still will be in Utah State's favor when the teams meet this fall.



Osborne, who became coach in 1973, has compiled a 137-32-2 record for an .807 winning percentage. That mark trails only Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer

and Penn State coach Joe Paterno, who have .837 and .816 winning percentages.

But Osborne's coaching record on opening day is 9-4-1, which means that Utah State improved its chance of victory by .164 percentage points when its contest with the Huskers was moved to Sept. 5.

The game, which originally was scheduled for Sept. 19, was moved back because Nebraska wanted two weeks to prepare for Arizona State. The Cornhuskers will face the Sun Devils Sept. 26.

Utah State coach Chuck Shelton said he never thought about the different percentages when he agreed to change the game date.

"I just don't think that fast," Shel-

ton said.

He said the schedule change "isn't that big of a deal" because none of the Aggie coaches will have to play against Nebraska. He said Utah State will approach the game with the Huskers as a great opportunity.

"We have to keep it in perspective," he said. "It's an opportunity to play a great football team."

Shelton said the Aggies' offense improved enough during spring practice that they won't have to call a drive a "hell of an outing" if they make three consecutive first downs.

Shelton said Utah State's offense will be built around wide receiver Kendal Smith and running back Demetrius Brown. Smith caught 25 passes for

474 yards and seven touchdowns last season, while Bron rushed for 289 yards on 97 carries.

Shelton said both players' statistics should improve this season.

"Our offense is going to be good," Shelton said. "It's not going to be great or outstanding, but it's going to be good."

Defensively the Aggies have to fill two linebacker and two defensive line positions, Shelton said. Utah State finished spring practice without anyone stepping forward at those positions.

Shelton said the strength of the Aggies' defense will be the secondary, where free safety Darren Long and corner back Tony Brown return. Long

made 63 tackles and intercepted six passes last season, while Brown had 45 tackles and five interceptions.

"The difference we're going to have this year is in physical ability," Shelton said. "We're going to have more of it."

Shelton said that Utah State's improvements on both offense and defense will improve its 3-8 record from last season.

Utah State last season defeated New Mexico State 42-9, UNLV 7-6 and Pacific 14-10.

"We will be improved in every aspect of the game," Shelton said. "I have no way of telling just how successful we're going to be, but it should be an interesting season."