

Sports

Taylor breaks tradition, NU pass record

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

A quick analysis of Nebraska football history will reveal that the Cornhuskers have built their tradition around a strong running game and a stingy defense.

But on Saturday, the Huskers stepped away from that tradition as quarterback Steve Taylor broke a school record and tied a Big Eight record by throwing five touchdown passes to lead Nebraska to a 42-33 victory over UCLA.

Taylor burned the Bruin secondary and broke the Nebraska record of four touchdown passes in a game. The record was previously held by Turner Gill, Dave Humm and Vince Ferragamo. He also tied a conference record that was set in 1938 by former Kansas quarterback Ralph Miller. Taylor completed 10 of 15 passes for 217 yards.

"I thought Steve Taylor had a fine day," Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said. "Steve played very well."

Taylor said he thought his passing shocked the Memorial Stadium crowd of 76,313. He said he had no idea he was approaching either record. "I knew our passing game needed some work,

but it wasn't anything that needed a large amount of work," Taylor said.

Osborne said Taylor's passing enabled Nebraska to overcome a running attack that he described as "terrible" and a defensive effort that was "kind of hard to figure." Nebraska gained only 117 yards rushing while the Husker defense surrendered 16 points in the fourth quarter.

"We've got a lot of room to improve," Osborne said.

Osborne attributed Nebraska's inability to establish a consistent running attack to the UCLA defense. He said the Bruins were keying on the run.

"We normally run the ball pretty well, but we didn't get a whole lot done on the ground," Osborne said. "We do really need to improve our running game."

Osborne said the Huskers' problems on defense arose from fatigue. He said Nebraska wore down in the second half.

Nebraska defensive tackle Tim Rother agreed.

"The fatigue got to us because last week (during Nebraska's 56-12 win over Utah State) we didn't have to play the whole game," Rother said. "It was something different."

UCLA took a 7-0 lead in the first quarter when Bruin tailback Gaston Green capped an 11-play, 41-yard drive with a 4-yard touchdown run.

The Bruins had taken possession at the Nebraska 41-yard line following a 31-yard punt by Nebraska's John Kroeker. UCLA then used six runs by Green and two runs by fullback Mel Farr Jr. and quarterback Troy Aikman to take the lead with 1:21 remaining in the first quarter.

Nebraska tied the score 7-7 with 12:16 remaining in the second quarter when Taylor threw a 9-yard touchdown pass to tight end Tom Banderas.

Taylor began the drive by completing a 14-yard pass to Nebraska wingback Dana Brinson. Taylor also completed a 24-yard pass to Brinson, a junior from Valdosta, Ga., later in the drive.

Taylor said he attributed his passing success to the fact that he threw 15 times against the Bruins.

"By throwing the ball, it really helped our rhythm," he said.

Nebraska took a 14-7 lead in the second quarter when Taylor threw an 11-yard touchdown pass to I-back Ken Clark, following a blocked punt by Husker cornerback Cartier Walker.

Nebraska began its drive at the UCLA 34-yard line and needed only five plays to score. Brinson rambled 19 yards on a wingback reverse, and Taylor then passed to Clark to give Nebraska the lead with 7:49 remaining in the first half.

UCLA cut Nebraska's lead to 14-10 in the first half when the Bruins' Alfredo Velasco kicked a 23-yard field goal.

UCLA had taken possession at its 37-yard line and used a 25-yard pass from Aikman to split end Mike Farr and a 12-yard pass to split end Willie Anderson to advance to the Nebraska 6-yard line.

But the Nebraska defense forced the Bruins to settle for a field goal as it stopped Green for no gain on a third and three play from the six.

Rother said he wasn't impressed with Green, a Heisman Trophy candidate who finished with 46 yards on 19 carries.

"He's just like any other back to me," Rother said. "I didn't think he was anything special."

Nebraska defensive end Broderick Thomas agreed.

"Gaston, he's going to get his yards somewhere else," Thomas said. "When you get hit as hard as he did, you kind of want to save him."

Nebraska extended its lead to 28-10 in the third quarter when Clark scored on a 1-yard run and Taylor threw a 48-yard touchdown pass to split end Rod Smith, but UCLA cut Nebraska's lead to 28-17 when reserve tailback Eric Ball scored on a 6-yard run with 2:37 left in the third quarter.

The Huskers then rebuilt their lead to 42-17 when Taylor threw 33- and 35-yard touchdown passes to tight end Todd Millikan.

Nebraska scored its final points of the game when I-back Tyreese Knox rushed for 13 yards and Taylor threw to Millikan to give the Huskers a 25-point lead with 5:37 remaining.

But the Bruins used two touchdown runs and two two-point conversions by Green to bring the contest to its 42-33 outcome.

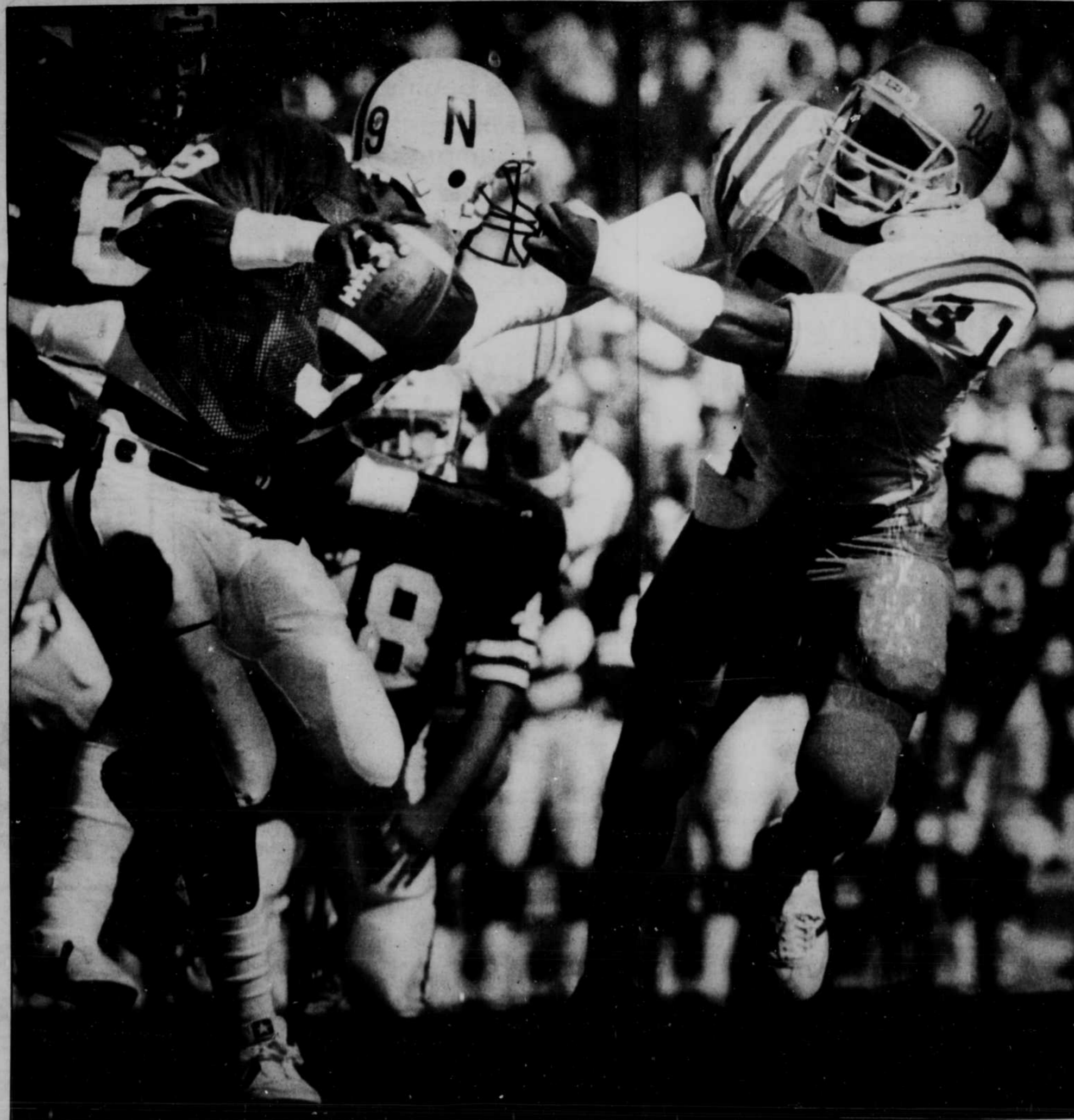
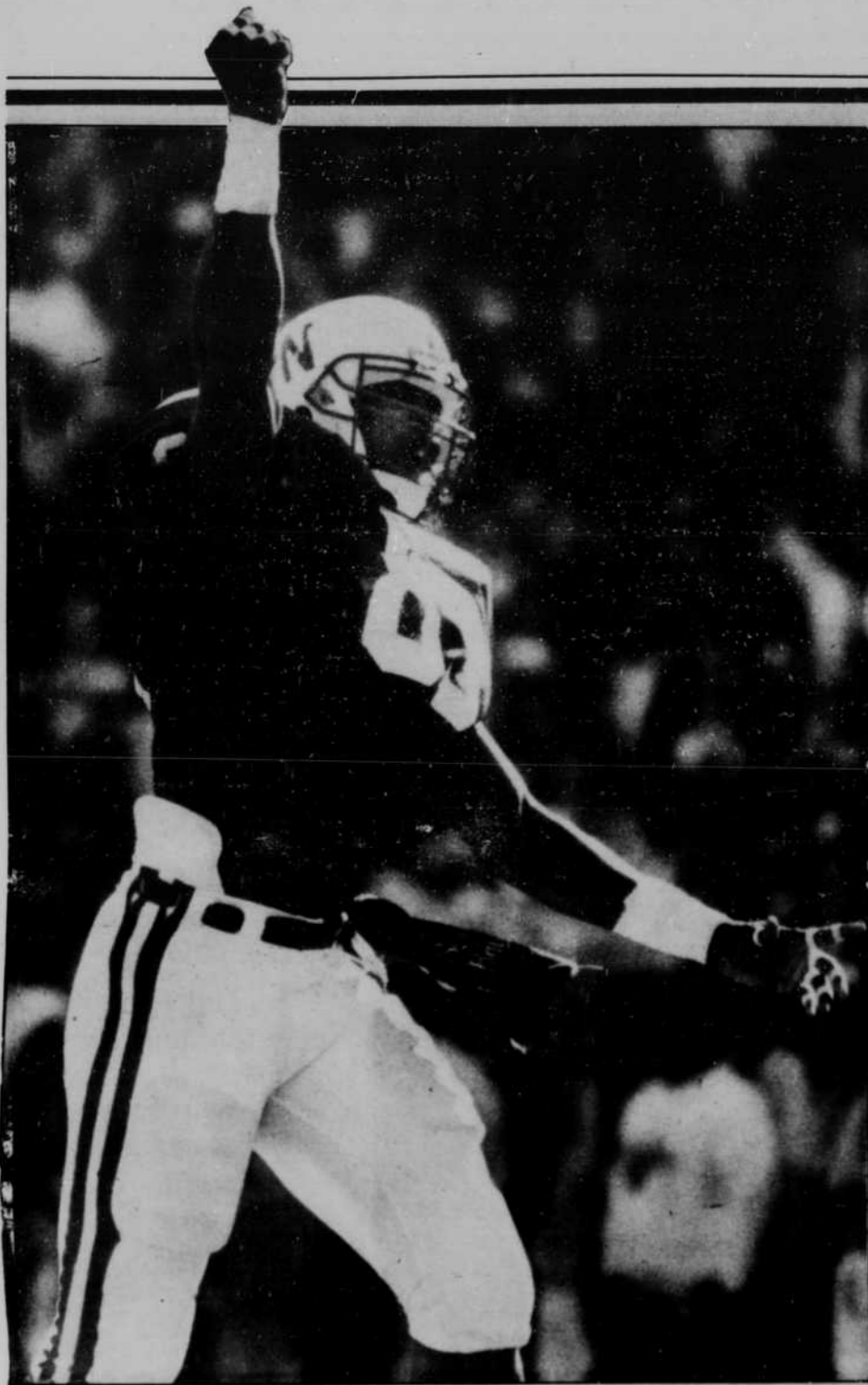
Osborne said he thought the 1-1 Bruins deserved their No. 3 ranking.

"I think UCLA will do very well this year," he said.

Taylor agreed.

"A lot of people thought they might be over-rated. We didn't want to take any chances," Taylor said.

"They have great team unity."



UCLA finds NU pass attack as potent as its running game

By Mark Derowitsch
Senior Reporter

UCLA sacrificed too much pass coverage in an attempt to stop Nebraska's running game during the Cornhuskers' 42-33 win Saturday, said Bruins coach Terry Donahue.

And as a result, Husker quarterback Steve Taylor had the best passing game of his career, completing 10 of 15 passes for 217 yards and a school-record five touchdown passes.

"When you play Nebraska you know that they're going to run the football, and they're going to have some play-action passes," Donahue said. "I thought that we could hold off and I thought that they would have to throw the ball."

"I thought we forced them to throw, but I didn't think their receivers were going to be as open."

UCLA linebacker Ken Norton Jr. said Taylor ran the Husker offense well.

"Taylor's a good quarterback who can run and pass well," Norton said. "He's just an all-around player. We concentrated on the run and we were able to beat them on the line. They just caught us off guard."

But while the Bruins were stopping Nebraska's running attack, the

Husker defense was equally successful in stopping UCLA's Heisman Trophy candidate, Gaston Green.

Green was held to 46 yards on 19 carries, but scored three touchdowns. Two of his scoring runs came in the fourth quarter when Nebraska had a comfortable lead.

"I thought (Nebraska) would be hard to run against," Donahue said. "We ran well early, but they made some adjustments and shut us down."

Donahue said there were two reasons why the Bruins were unable to run against Nebraska.

"It was a combination of good defense by Nebraska and we didn't make all our blocks or get the right holes," Donahue said. "Nebraska is a real good defensive football team and when you play that kind of team, you're going to have trouble running the ball."

"When you don't generate enough yardage running you get behind on the down and distance, and then you can't run anymore."

Donahue said Nebraska was able to adjust better after UCLA's running game was shut down.

"We put Nebraska in the same situation, but the difference was they were able to hit their play action passes we didn't execute as well as they did," Donahue said.

In the first quarter, UCLA held Nebraska to 13 yards rushing and led 7-0 when Green scored on a 4-yard run. But the Huskers scored 14 points in the second quarter on two touchdown passes from Taylor to Tom Banderas and Ken Clark.

UCLA then cut Nebraska's lead to 14-10 on a field goal late in the second quarter.

"At halftime we thought we had a chance, but the third quarter got away from us," Donahue said.

On the second play of the third quarter, Nebraska linebacker Doug Welniak recovered a Troy Aikman fumble at the Bruin 12-yard line.

"I thought the momentum really shifted toward Nebraska in the third quarter," Donahue said. "We fumbled and the pass we dropped across the middle that would have given us a first down was crucial. Plus, the bobbed snap on the field goal was crucial and those three things hurt our chances to win."

Norton said the Bruins didn't expect the Huskers to pass as often as they did in the second half.

"We were surprised in the third quarter," Norton said. "Their passing caught us off guard. We didn't jump back as quick and their receivers caught the ball behind our defense."

Clockwise from left:
Broderick Thomas celebrates a first-half quarterback sack.
John Makinson, a senior mechanical engineering major, waits with his tuba for the band's halftime show to begin.
Nebraska's Broderick Thomas chases UCLA's Brendan McCracken during fourth quarter action Saturday.
UCLA's Carnell Lake face masks Nebraska's Steve Taylor during first quarter action as Taylor makes a run around the right side.
Husker Dana Brinson (33) runs behind tackle Bob Sledge to gain yards in the first quarter.

Photos by Andrea Hoy
and
Doug Carroll
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