

Sports

Missouri chases ghosts dressed in red



Dotti Krist/Daily Nebraskan



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Above: Nebraska defensive end Broderick Thomas chases Missouri kicker Tom Whelihan during a fake kick. Nebraska's Neil Smith (99), Steven Forch (38) and Tim Rother (78) chase Missouri's Tony VanZant.

By Kent Endacott
Staff Reporter

COLUMBIA, Mo. — The Missouri defense might just as well have been chasing a ghost.

Nebraska quarterback Steve Taylor completed eight of 13 passes for 139 yards and four touchdowns as the Cornhuskers defeated Missouri 42-7 on Halloween Saturday at Faurot Field.

Missouri football coach Woody Widenhofer decided before the game he was going to stop the Nebraska rushing attack.

He tried a 9-1-1, a nine-man defensive front with the defensive backs in man-to-man coverage. It wasn't the answer.

"We felt that our only chance to win was to stop the running game," Widenhofer said. "We did stop the run early, but they were able to throw on us."

Nebraska advanced to the Missouri 14-yard line on its first possession before a bad exchange between Taylor and center Jake Young ended the drive. The Huskers' second possession also ended with a Taylor fumble.

But with the Tigers concentrating on stopping the run, Taylor hit tight end Todd Millikan on a bootleg play-action pass for a 54-yard touchdown with 3:55 remaining in the first quarter.

"We didn't see anybody run the ball consistently on them all year," Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said. "We ran the ball fairly well, but the play actions kind of again bailed us out, kind of like against UCLA...I think they were trying to support the run with their secondary. They were rolling with it, therefore the bootlegs hurt 'em some."

Taylor hurt Missouri again on another bootleg play-action touchdown pass to Tom Banderas to give Nebraska a 14-0 lead with 12:47 left in the half.

After Nebraska kicked off to Missouri, cornerback Lorenzo Hicks intercepted a John Stollenwerck pass and returned the ball to the Tigers' 42-yard line.

Taylor again took control. On the second play of the possession, he was forced to scramble. After breaking a tackle behind the line of scrimmage, Taylor spotted wingback Dana Brinson alone in the end zone for a 29-yard touchdown.

"I was determined not to get sacked," Taylor said. "I got out of it and I saw Dana waving at me and I was able to get the ball to him. For a while I thought I'd overthrown him."

Brinson said he was waiting alone in the end zone long enough that he had time to get nervous and think about dropping the pass. He said he breathed a sigh of relief after catching it and then finished off the touchdown with a deep bow to the Nebraska fans

who had turned the south end of Faurot Field red.

"That was appreciation for the fans. You know, being there," Brinson said.

Taylor threw a 4-yard touchdown pass to Banderas to give Nebraska a 28-0 lead with 4:46 left in the half.

Missouri answered with a 43-yard pass from Stollenwerck to fullback Tommie Stowers for a 45-yard pass play to the 9-yard line. Three plays later Robert Delpino scored to make it 28-7 with 1:56 left in the half.

After forcing Nebraska to punt, Tiger defensive back Pat Ray blocked John Kroeker's punt and the ball rolled out of bounds at the Husker 3-yard line.

On the Tigers' first play, the Nebraska defense stopped halfback Darrell Wallace for a 1-yard gain. Missouri called a time-out with 46 seconds remaining.

But on the next play, Nebraska cornerback Charles Fryar forced Stollenwerck to fumble. Defensive end Broderick Thomas jumped on the loose ball.

Osborne said that was a key play.

"We'd kind of lost the momentum because it looked like it was going to be 28-14 at the half," Osborne said. "But obviously their fumbling the ball at that point hurt them very badly. I didn't think they were going to win the game necessarily, but it would have made it interesting."

Nebraska defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said he was encouraged that the defense was able to shut down Missouri's wishbone offense. The Tigers were limited to 75 rushing yards and 101 yards of passing.

"Overall I was real happy with our effort," McBride said. "We made the big, big play there when they blocked our punt and that took the steam out of it right there. If they score they go into halftime down 14. But shoot, the way they scored 14 in three minutes, that didn't look so good."

Taylor scored on a 22-yard touchdown run off an option to give Nebraska a 35-7 lead with 7:14 left in the third quarter.

That one sparked a mass exodus of Missouri fans. Missouri came into the game 4-3, with all of their losses coming against ranked opponents. Widenhofer had assured the fans before the game that the Tigers had a chance against No. 2 ranked Nebraska.

He was wrong, he said. Clete Blakeman closed out the scoring on a 4-yard pass to Banderas with 4:48 left in the game.

Osborne said he was also expecting a closer game.

"I was really surprised we could win as easily as we did," he said. "I thought that our defense did a surprisingly good job of shutting down Missouri's running game because every film we'd looked at they'd moved the ball quite well."

NU 'best team' yet for Tigers — coach

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

COLUMBIA, Mo. — Missouri football coach Woody Widenhofer has faced four nationally ranked opponents this season, but said he has no trouble distinguishing Nebraska as the best team the Tigers have played.

Widenhofer said the Cornhuskers are "by far the best team" Missouri has faced because of their "superior" passing and running games. He said the Tigers would remember those two dominant elements when analyzing their 42-7 loss to Nebraska Saturday at Faurot Field.

"There is no sense in being upset about this one," Widenhofer said. "This will be a test of how well we can bounce back."

Widenhofer said Nebraska is "a cut above" Indiana, Syracuse and Oklahoma State — the three other ranked teams Missouri has faced this season. The Tigers lost 20-17 to Indiana, 24-13 to Syracuse and 24-20 to Oklahoma State.

Widenhofer said the Huskers have too much explosiveness to be beaten by any of those teams.

"Without a doubt they (Nebraska) are very good," Widenhofer said. "They are a great football team."

Missouri cornerback Adrian Jones agreed. He said if Nebraska faces Syracuse in the 1988 Orange Bowl, the Huskers would win because of their depth.

Syracuse became a New Year's Day bowl contender Saturday by defeating Pittsburgh 24-10. The 8-0 Orangemen's remaining three games

are against Navy, Boston College and West Virginia.

"Both Syracuse and Nebraska are good," Jones said. "But I would give Nebraska the edge because they can play everybody with their depth."

Missouri quarterback Jeff Henningsen agreed that Nebraska would defeat Syracuse. He said that while the Orangemen rely heavily on quarterback Don McPherson, the Huskers are more balanced because of their multiple weapons on offense and defense.

"There's no doubt about it," Henningsen said. "Nebraska is a dominating team."

Henningsen, from Omaha, said Missouri's 11-point loss to Syracuse was "misleading" because the Tigers committed six turnovers in the game. He said the score would have been even if Missouri hadn't repeatedly

stopped themselves.

"You can't win a game that way," Henningsen said.

He said the key to Nebraska's victory over Missouri was the Huskers' ability to overcome two early turnovers. Missouri stopped two Nebraska drives in the first quarter by recovering a pair of snaps fumbled by Husker quarterback Steve Taylor.

"Nebraska showed what type of team it is," Henningsen said. "(Nebraska) came back from the fumbles and showed its size and strength advantage."

Widenhofer said he was surprised by Nebraska's victory because he didn't think Taylor could repeat the performance he had earlier this season against UCLA.

But Taylor, who threw five touchdown passes to lead Nebraska to a 42-

33 victory over the Bruins, threw four against Missouri to raise Nebraska's record to 8-0.

"They took advantage of our weaknesses in the pass defense," Widenhofer said. "We were hoping that we could cover them, but they hit some passes down the middle that hurt us."

Widenhofer said Taylor was successful passing because Missouri used an eight- and nine-man defensive line in hopes of stopping the Husker running game. He said that while the defense didn't allow any Nebraska back to gain more than 90 yards, it failed because of Taylor's success through the air.

"We felt that our only chance to win was to stop the running game," Widenhofer said. "We did stop the run early, but they were able to throw on us. Their passing game was superior."