

Osborne embarrassed by NU loss

By Nick Hodge
Staff Reporter

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said Sunday that the Cornhuskers got whipped by Oklahoma Saturday at Memorial Stadium.

Osborne said the Huskers were manhandled by a physically better, faster Oklahoma team. He said the Sooners controlled the front of both the offensive and defensive lines — where football is won or lost.

"I'm not saying we played poorly on the offensive or defensive line," Osborne said. "But we generally got knocked off the ball on both sides."

Oklahoma racked up 444 yards of offense against Nebraska, 419 of which came on the ground. Meanwhile, the Sooner defense limited Nebraska to 235 yards — 177 on the ground.

Osborne said the Huskers didn't deserve to win because they weren't dominant enough. He said Nebraska might have won if it had played a perfect game without turnovers.

Osborne said he felt embarrassed by the loss because he thought the Huskers could win.

"That was probably as difficult a loss as I've been associated with," he said.

Osborne said the players also be-

lieved Nebraska could win.

"The players did some talking, and I'm sure it will be thrown in their faces," Osborne said. "I didn't encourage that, but I didn't discourage too much of it either because I felt like sometimes in the past maybe they had lacked confidence."

"Since now they did seem to feel they had confidence, I didn't want to pour cold water on them and tell them 'Maybe you guys really aren't that good' and put them down in the papers."

Two key plays hurt Nebraska, Osborne said.

He said the first occurred with 12:48 left in the third quarter when Sooner defensive back Rickey Dixon intercepted a quarterback Steve Taylor. Dixon returned the ball to the Husker 13-yard line, and two plays later halfback Anthony Stafford scored on an 11-yard run that tied the score 7-7.

Osborne said the interception drained Nebraska's momentum after its 7-0 halftime lead.

He said the other key play was a 65-yard touchdown run by Oklahoma's Patrick Collins.

Osborne said there would be some talk that Nebraska should have passed more against Oklahoma. He said that although the Huskers had wanted to

establish the running game and then intermix a pass or two, they did not establish their running game against the Sooner defense.

"I felt very bad because I couldn't find anything that worked. I tried everything," Osborne said. "I didn't feel the answer was to haul off and throw every play. It was more of a matter of not being able to execute."

Osborne said field position is crucial to scoring when teams face opponents with defenses like Oklahoma's. Nebraska's only scoring in the game came on a 10-play, 84-yard drive in which the Huskers were forced to overcome a 10-yard holding penalty.

"That was a pretty good drive," Osborne said. "I don't think we ever took over the ball on their side of the 50-yard line, whereas they did."

Osborne said that although the Sooners lost three fumbles in the game, they all occurred deep in Nebraska territory. The Husker defense recovered fumbles on their own 5-, 9- and 25-yard lines.

Nebraska never controlled the ball, Osborne said. The Huskers' defense was on the field more than Oklahoma's, he said.

Oklahoma ran 79 offensive plays compared with Nebraska's 59, and

controlled the ball for 35:11 of the game's 60 minutes.

Osborne said a positive aspect of the game was Nebraska punter John Krocker's performance. Krocker averaged 46.2 yards per kick.

"John Krocker's punting was outstanding," Osborne said. "He's taken his shots this year. I thought he held up very well."

Osborne said he is concerned now about where the Huskers go.

He said life is not always fair. "A lot depends now on the attitude and character of the players," Osborne said. "We'll find out what we're made of."

"Life's that way — not always perfect. You can't spend very much time dwelling on the past or you don't make this your future."

Osborne said Nebraska has a tough game ahead next Saturday in Boulder, Colo. He said Colorado has done a lot to make this their big game.

"We'll be in a situation that we'll get their best effort," Osborne said. "We need to concentrate on Colorado. We need to get some momentum back."



Clockwise from top: Nebraska quarterback Steve Taylor scrambles to get away from an Oklahoma defender. Members of the Nebraska Yell Squad mourn Nebraska's loss to Oklahoma. Husker Neil Smith goes after quarterback Charles Thompson on the third down of the Sooners' first drive, only to gain a 15-yard penalty for face masking at the NU 12-yard line. Oklahoma's Charles Thompson hands off to fullback Rotnei Anderson during second-quarter action. Nebraska's Keith Jones breaks away from Sooner Darren Kilpatrick to gain yards for the Huskers.

Layout By:
Andrea Hoy

Photos By:
Eric Gregory
Andrea Hoy
Butch Ireland

Cornhuskers impressed by Oklahoma's Thompson

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

Oklahoma quarterback Charles Thompson carried on an 11-year tradition during the Sooners' 17-7 victory over Nebraska Saturday at Memorial Stadium.

Thompson, who replaced an injured Jamelle Holieway earlier this season, used the victory to become Oklahoma's third replacement quarterback to have a chance to lead the Sooners to a national championship.

The first time that happened was in 1976, when Thomas Lott replaced Dean Blevins and led the Sooners to the national title in '78. Holieway replaced Troy Aikman in '84 and led Oklahoma to the No. 1 ranking.

Saturday's win gave Oklahoma, 11-0, its fourth consecutive Orange Bowl birth. The No. 2-ranked Sooners will face the Miami Hurricanes on Jan. 1, 1988.

The loss forced Nebraska, 9-1, into a New Year's Day date against the Florida State Seminoles in the Fiesta Bowl.

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said the loss was disappointing because the Cornhuskers "just didn't get in the ball game." He said Nebraska "just got whipped."

"Unfortunately, there's not a whole lot I can say," Osborne said. "I really don't know what to apologize for."

Osborne said part of the Huskers' problems could be traced to Thompson, who rushed for a career-high 126 yards.

"I think their quarterback played very well," Osborne said.

Nebraska defensive end Broderick Thomas said he was also

impressed by Thompson's play. He said Thompson's speed gave the Sooners a new dimension in their vaunted wishbone.

"As far as I'm concerned, he (Thompson) is a better quarterback than Jamelle," Thomas said. "Jamelle just doesn't have the speed he has."

Nebraska defensive tackle Neil Smith said it was difficult for him to compare Thompson and Holieway. He said he hasn't seen either quarterback enough to make such a comparison.

"Thompson did great — as you see, he can play," Smith said. "But I just can't compare them because I don't know them that well."

Husker defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said Thompson was the fastest Oklahoma quarterback he has seen during his 11-year coaching career at Nebraska. He said the speed of Thompson and halfbacks Anthony Stafford and Patrick Collins posed problems for Nebraska.

"Their speed beat us," McBride said. "We really didn't slow them down. They didn't have any trouble moving the football."

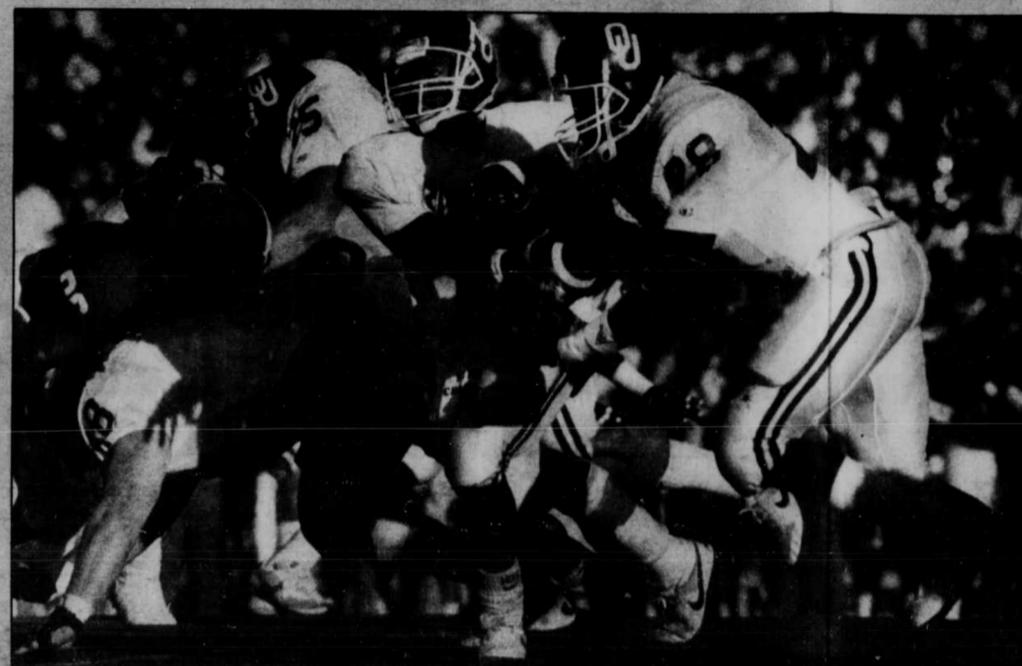
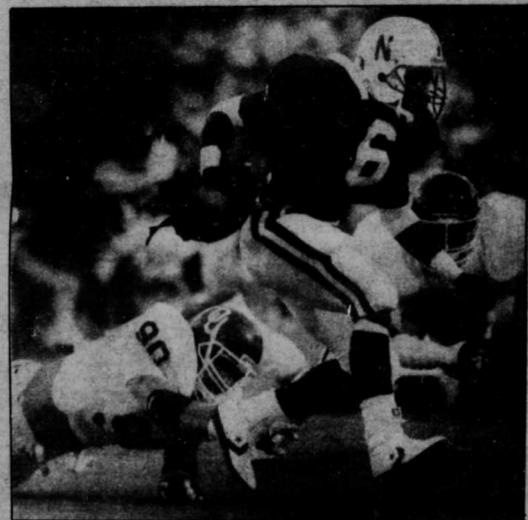
McBride said the loss was the most lopsided Nebraska-Oklahoma game he could recall.

"It was one of those old-time rear-end shots," McBride said. "It was a butt-kicking."

"I think Oklahoma, in all rights, gave us a legitimate whipping. It wasn't a fluke."

Nebraska quarterback Steve Taylor said the loss resulted from a lack of execution. He said things just didn't click late in the game.

"They stopped us," Taylor said. "We didn't play today like we did our previous nine games."



Oklahoma win draws mixed reactions

By Mike Reilley
Editor

No matter where a person went in Lincoln Saturday night, there were constant reminders of what happened in Memorial Stadium earlier in the day. Postgame celebrations were delayed for at least another year.

And nowhere was the disappointment more evident than in the South Stadium lounge, where Nebraska players meet the press after games.

Thomas, the usually outspoken defensive end, whispered so low that reporters had to strain to hear him talk. "My heart is hurting right now," Thomas said. "If it was my fault, I apologize."

Nebraska quarterback Steve Taylor, who rushed for 54 yards and passed for 58 more, also was frustrated with the loss.

"I don't regret anything," Taylor said. "Now I have to eat my words."

Taylor's comments were in reference to a pregame war of words he had with the Sooners. Taylor told reporters earlier this week that the game "wouldn't even be close."

"I thought we could move the ball against them," Taylor said. "They just stopped us."

"We've lost to Oklahoma all three years I've been here," Taylor said. "I only have one year left."

The loss was even more disappointing for Nebraska's 29 seniors —

who will leave the university without beating the Sooners. It was the Huskers' fourth consecutive loss to Oklahoma.

One of those seniors, offensive tackle Keven Lightner, said he wasn't bothered by the loss so much as by how badly the Huskers played.

"It wouldn't have been so bad if we would have played them close," Lightner said. "We were dominated. It's disappointing to go out being dominated by them."

Another senior, I-back Keith Jones, who scored Nebraska's only touchdown, said he will recover from the loss.

"Sports is winning and losing," Jones said. "You've got to be able to accept losing to be a good winner. We'll come back and we'll be ready to play Colorado next week."

In the Oklahoma locker room, players spoke not of Colorado or Miami, the site of the 1988 Orange Bowl. Instead they talked about following through on goals.

"We faced the challenge," Switzer said. "I like that. It points out that comparing scores and point spreads like that doesn't mean bull."

The Sooners lost their No. 1 ranking to Nebraska last week when they struggled to a 17-13 win against Missouri. Nebraska defeated the Tigers

42-7 earlier this season.

While the Sooners lost the top spot in the polls, they never lost their composure. With starting quarterback Jamelle Holieway and fullback Lydell Carr sidelined with knee injuries, Oklahoma relied on strong performances from two underclassmen.

Freshman quarterback Charles Thompson gained 126 yards rushing on 21 carries in place of Holieway.

"You don't have to be a fifth-year senior to lead a team to a national title, and that has been proven here," Thompson said.

Rotnei Anderson, a junior, replaced Carr and rushed for 119 yards on 24 carries.

"Our offensive line was a big factor," he said. "We've got a great offensive line and they blocked real hard. And as long as they're blocking, we'll run as hard as we can."

Anderson and fellow running back Patrick Collins, who rushed for 131 yards and scored one touchdown, said they were motivated by pregame comments by Nebraska's Thomas and Taylor, who predicted a Husker win.

"Broderick Thomas is a great player, but I think he got himself into a little trouble this week with a lot of talk, and evidently he didn't back it up," Collins said.