

Osborne: Huskers lived nightmare

By Nick Hodge
Staff Reporter

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said Sunday that UCLA's 28-point, first-quarter scoring outburst in its 41-28 victory over Nebraska was the worst quarter of Cornhusker football he can remember.

"That first quarter was like a nightmare," Osborne said.

The only other time Osborne could recall a similar first quarter was in the 1983 Orange Bowl when the Miami Hurricanes opened a 17-0 first-period lead. Miami hung onto its lead and won the game, as well as the national championship, by defeating the Huskers 31-30.

Osborne said Nebraska's inability to stop UCLA forced the Huskers out of their game plan early in the contest.

"We got taken out of what we wanted to do so early," he said. "We didn't hold defensively and had some bad things happen offensively. Once it got 28-0, and even 21-0, we had to do a lot of throwing, run a lot of draw plays, and run lots of options and reverses - things we don't do so much."

Osborne said poor defensive execution resulted in more long scoring plays against a Nebraska team than he has ever seen before.

"I've never seen so many big plays where we just missed some key tackles," Osborne said. "We were almost too aggressive in our pursuit because the secondary was up within a couple, three yards of the line-of-scrimmage that once (the Bruins) got out of there they were gone."

Big Eight goes 5-3 in 1st week

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) - For the first time in five years, the Big Eight Conference has cracked the .500 mark on its first full weekend of the football season.

Since 1984, the league had gone 4-4 on opening weekend. But Saturday's action counted only three losers. Kansas State and Kansas were expected to lose. But the third Big Eight team to come up short not only lost a game but, temporarily at least, saw national championship aspirations fly out the window as well.

Nebraska, which manhandled UCLA in their previous meeting, got hit with a 28-point first-period salvo and never recovered en route to bowing 41-28 to the Bruins.

"I've never been down that many points in the first quarter in any game in my life," Nebraska linebacker Jeff Mills said. "I don't see any big difference in UCLA from last year. Our execution just wasn't crisp. They shouldn't even beat us."

While the Huskers are certain to tumble far from the No. 2 national ranking they've been occupying, the fourth-ranked Sooners of Oklahoma will doubtlessly remain at least among the top five. With quarterback Jamelle Holieway and Charles Thompson both looking sharp, the Sooners carved out a workmanlike 28-0 victory at North Carolina.

Oklahoma State and Colorado, both bidding for national recognition, were also big winners. The Buffs got a big night from Barry Sanders in crushing Miami of Ohio, 52-20, and Colorado clobbered Fresno State, 45-3.

Missouri, also hoping to regain some long-lost respectability, rallied to open its season with a 35-21 conquest of plucky Utah State. And Iowa State exploded for 17 quick points to put away Tulane 30-13.

Kansas State and Kansas both gave good accounts of themselves in the first half against heavily favored opponents. Stan Parrish's Wildcats trailed No. 17 Iowa by only seven points at halftime, but suffered five interceptions and finally bowed 45-10. Glen Mason made his debut as Kansas coach by leading his youthful Jayhawks to a mighty effort before Baylor emerged with a 27-14 victory.

Oklahoma, already hit hard by injury, lost all-Big Eight center Bob Latham for 6-8 weeks with a knee injury. But in the meantime, the fourth-ranked Sooners showed better execution on offense than they sometimes do early in the season.

UCLA amassed 344 yards of total offense in the first half in taking a 38-13 lead. The Husker defense limited UCLA to just 94 total yards in the second half and only three points.

Osborne said he thought Nebraska played respectively once the "nightmare" first quarter ended.

"I think we probably played a little better than they did in the second half, and we maybe played them fairly evenly in the second quarter, but they had some 330 yards or so at half," he said.

'That first quarter was like a nightmare'

—Osborne

Osborne said Nebraska's week of preparation prior to the UCLA game led him to believe the Huskers would play well.

"I thought we were ready to play," he said. "The players had a good attitude, they practiced well. It's kind of unexplainable."

Osborne said the Huskers' offense also struggled in the opening quarter, enabling the Bruins to build their lead.

"The few times we had the ball in the first quarter we didn't execute," Osborne said.

On Nebraska's initial drive following the Bruins' first touchdown, the Huskers were faced with a third down and eight on UCLA's 38-yard line. Split end Morgan Gregory

dropped a pass thrown by quarterback Steve Taylor that would have given Nebraska a first and ten inside the Bruins' 30-yardline. Instead, Nebraska was forced to punt and UCLA scored on tailback Shawn Wills' 50-yard touchdown run six plays later to make the score 14-0.

Osborne said he thought the Huskers would have gotten some points on the board had Gregory held onto the ball, which would have taken some momentum away from UCLA.

On the Huskers' first play from scrimmage after the kickoff, the Bruins recovered a fumble by wingback Dana Brinson on Nebraska's 47-yardline. Three minutes later, UCLA led 21-0. On Nebraska's next series, the Bruins' defense held the Huskers to four downs and a punt. UCLA's Darryl Henley returned the punt 75 yards for a touchdown, giving UCLA a commanding 28-0 period advantage.

Osborne said he expects his players to bounce back from the loss.

"If they'd have laid down in the second half, I wouldn't feel very good," he said. "If you look at the second half and the effort they gave us, I think you would have to say they aren't quitters."

Osborne said there are changes that need to be made if Nebraska is to be successful the rest of the season.

"We're going to have to get some things improved in a hurry or we could be looking at a real tough year," he said. "Arizona State will probably come in here 2-0 — with a good team."

"I was figuring it would take the offense the second quarter, maybe the third, to get going," said Thompson, who scored Oklahoma's second touchdown late in the first period. "I was surprised by our team's performance."

Oklahoma rushed 71 times for 391 yards and lost only two of their seven fumbles.

Sanders made sure Oklahoma State fans are not worried about replacing Thurman Thomas. Sanders, the successor to last year's leading rusher in the Big Eight, carried 18 times for 178 yards and two touchdowns and also returned a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown the first time the Cowboys touched the ball. He also did the very same thing in the Cowboys 1987 game against in Tulsa.

"Thurman Thomas is a great player," said Sanders. "I didn't come here to replace Thomas. I came here to contribute."

Colorado, abandoning its wishbone for a power-I set, finished with 508 total yards, including 446 on the ground, and held Fresno to 177 total yards.

"Our defense controlled the game," said Colorado coach Bill McCartney. "We kept constant pressure on the quarterback, and that was the key. Offensively, we weren't hitting on all cylinders. We weren't in sync at times. We made progress, but we're not there yet."

Utah State scared Missouri, rallying to tie the game 21-21 in the second half. But junior halfback Smiley Elmore may have emerged as the Tigers' newest star by rushing for 187 yards and two touchdowns. It's the fifth-highest single-game rushing total in school history, and Elmore gave credit to his teammates.

"I commend them for doing a great job," Elmore said. "The line was blocking and my fellow backs were blocking really well."

Elmore had touchdowns runs of 1 and 2 yards, including the go-ahead tally in the fourth quarter.

Iowa State needed three games to score a touchdown last year and five to get a victory. Judging from the victory over Tulane, Coach Jim Walden is right when he says his second Iowa State team is better than his first.

"We played much better than we did a year ago," said Walden, who lost to Tulane 25-12 last year. "We were able to score some touchdowns and move the ball down the field. It feels really good to have scored some

touchdowns in the opening game because it took us so long to get them on the board last season."

Brad Quast tied an Iowa record with a 94-yard interception return against Kansas State and teammate Brian Wise returned another interception 81 yards to score.

"We have to learn which color jersey our guys wear and which color the other guys are wearing," Parrish said.

Baylor did not break in front of Kansas' freshman-laden squad until it got a touchdown with 1:36 left.

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