

Missouri coach: Extra effort cost us

By Jeff Apel
Senior Reporter

An extra effort that has been lacking all season hurt Missouri during its 26-18 loss to Nebraska Saturday at Memorial Stadium.

Missouri coach Woody Widenhofer said he couldn't fault the Tigers' five fumbles because they were the result of extra effort. He said his team's backfield was trying for additional yardage after appearing to be stopped when the fumbles occurred.

The fumbles didn't take anything away from his team's effort, Widenhofer said. The Tigers, who dropped to 2-5-1 overall and 1-3 in the Big Eight, gave 5th-ranked Nebraska everything it could handle, he said.

"I didn't know if we would get this kind of effort but I thought we played Nebraska tough," Widenhofer said.

"We weren't in awe of Nebraska. We weren't intimidated by them."

Widenhofer said Missouri used several new defensive alignments to hold Nebraska scoreless in the first half. He said the alignments involved blitzing strong safety Otis Smith and stunting linebackers A.J. Miller, Darren MacDonald and Brian Reeves.

Widenhofer said the strategy worked early as Missouri took a 6-0 lead while holding Nebraska to 15 yards of total offense in the first half.

But the Tigers' stunting defense got burned in the second half, Widenhofer said. Nebraska quarterback Steve Taylor set up the Huskers' second touchdown with a 24-yard run midway through the third quarter, and fullback Bryan Carpenter rambled 49 yards for a touchdown that gave the

Huskers a 23-18 lead with 8:24 remaining in the game.

"We were blitzing on both of those plays," Widenhofer said. "Our defensive staff did a good job of coming up with a scheme. We were really aggressive."

Widenhofer and Missouri quarterback Corey Welch said the loss would build the teams confidence, even though it was difficult to accept.

"We needed to win one like that," Widenhofer said. "I just thought our kids played as hard as they could play."

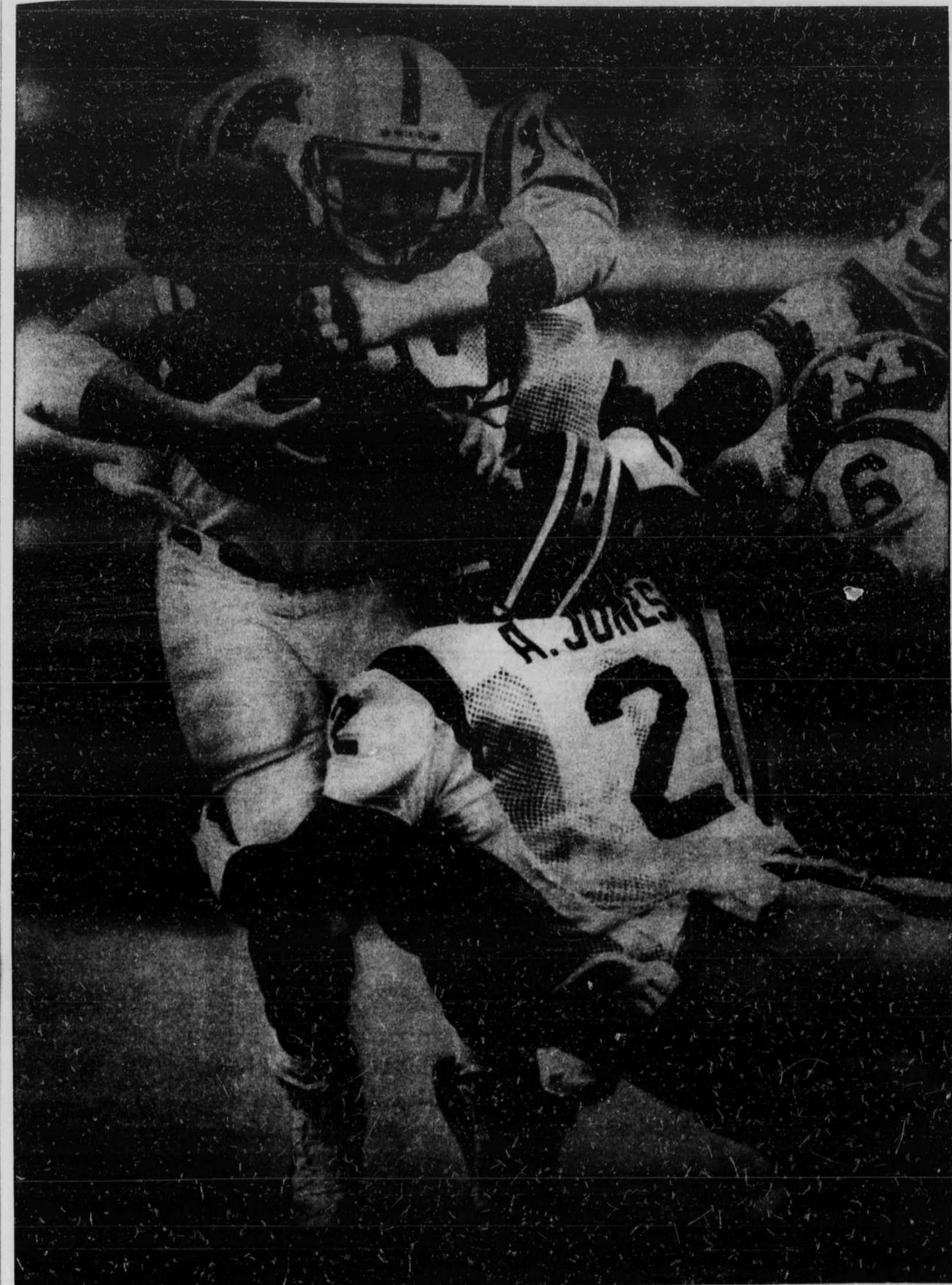
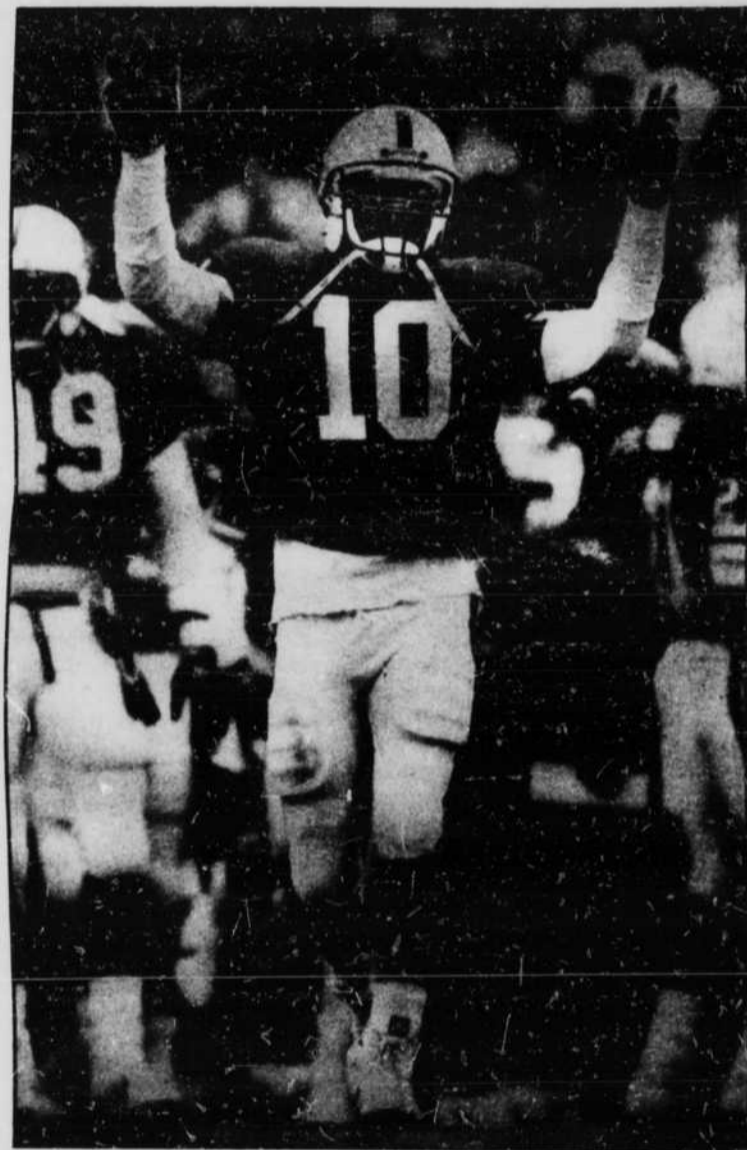
Welch, a redshirt freshman who made his first start during Missouri's 21-3 loss to Iowa State on Oct. 15, said the game would serve as a confidence builder for him. He said he felt good even though he and Taylor both had problems.

Welch completed 6 of 14 passes for 97 yards while Taylor completed 3 of 9 for 153 yards. Taylor also fumbled three times.

"(Taylor) had his problems," Welch said. "I had mine, too. That's a credit to both defenses."

Welch said the game was frustrating because of all the turnovers. Missouri and Nebraska combined to commit 12 turnovers, six of which were lost. "That was very frustrating," Welch said. "I didn't know what we had to do."

Missouri cornerback Adrian Jones said Nebraska's fumbles were the result of a tough Tiger defense that confused Taylor. He said the game showed that Missouri can play with any team in the country. "I think we had them on the ring ropes," Jones said. "That was no big surprise."



Clockwise from above - Nebraska's Bryan Carpenter is tackled by Missouri's Adrian Jones and Ron Walters.

Nebraska's Chris Caliendo tackles Tiger halfback Michael Jones as LeRoy Etienne and Lawrence Pete help out.

Nebraska players try to keep warm on the sideline as over-cast skies and a brisk wind combined to make conditions chilly throughout most of the game.

Charles Fryer signals touchdown after recovering a fumble in midair and running it in for an apparent touchdown. A personal foul nullified the touchdown.

Missouri quarterback Corey Welch looks desperately for a receiver as Caliendo brings him down.



Photos by Doug Carroll and Eric Gregory