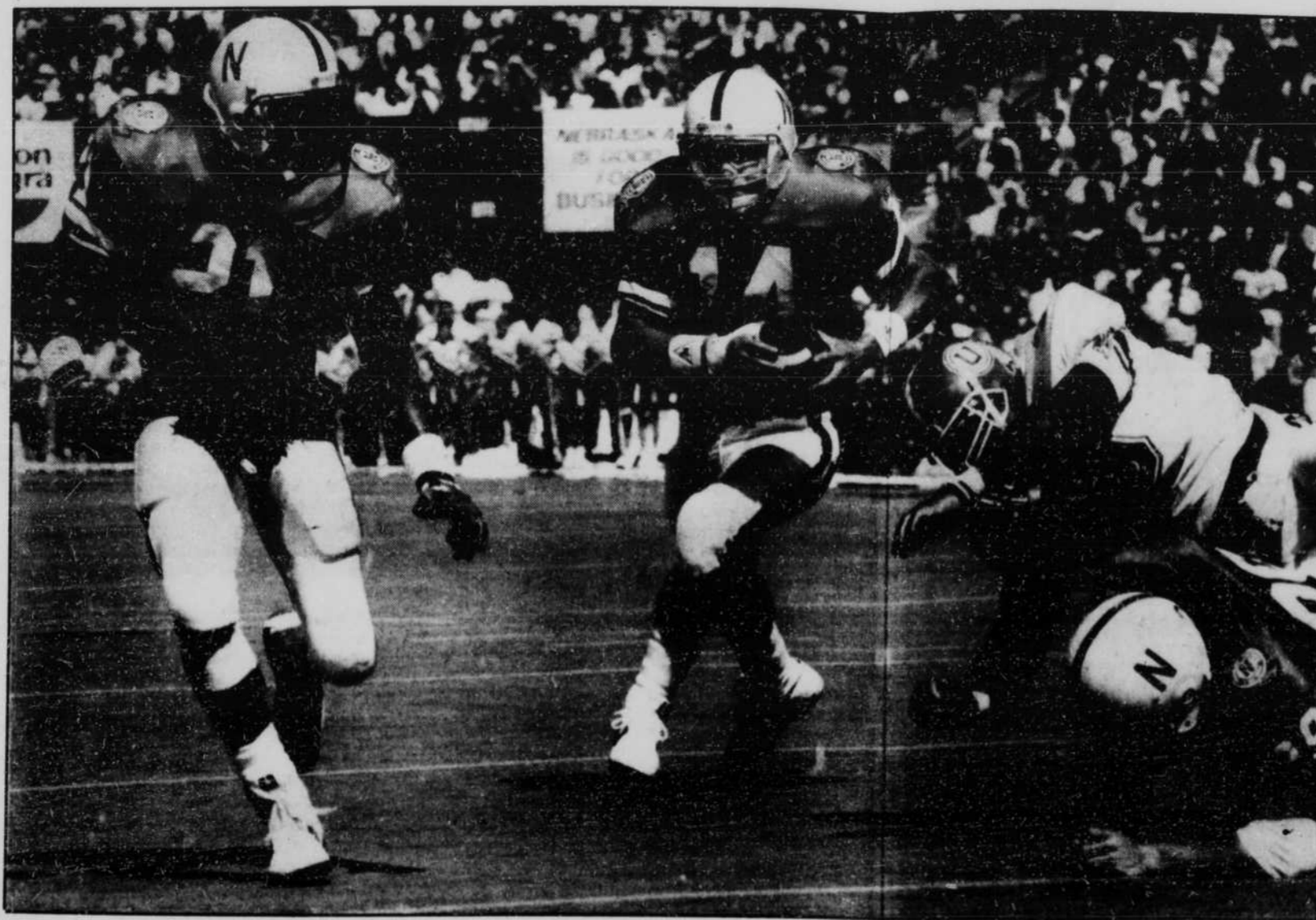
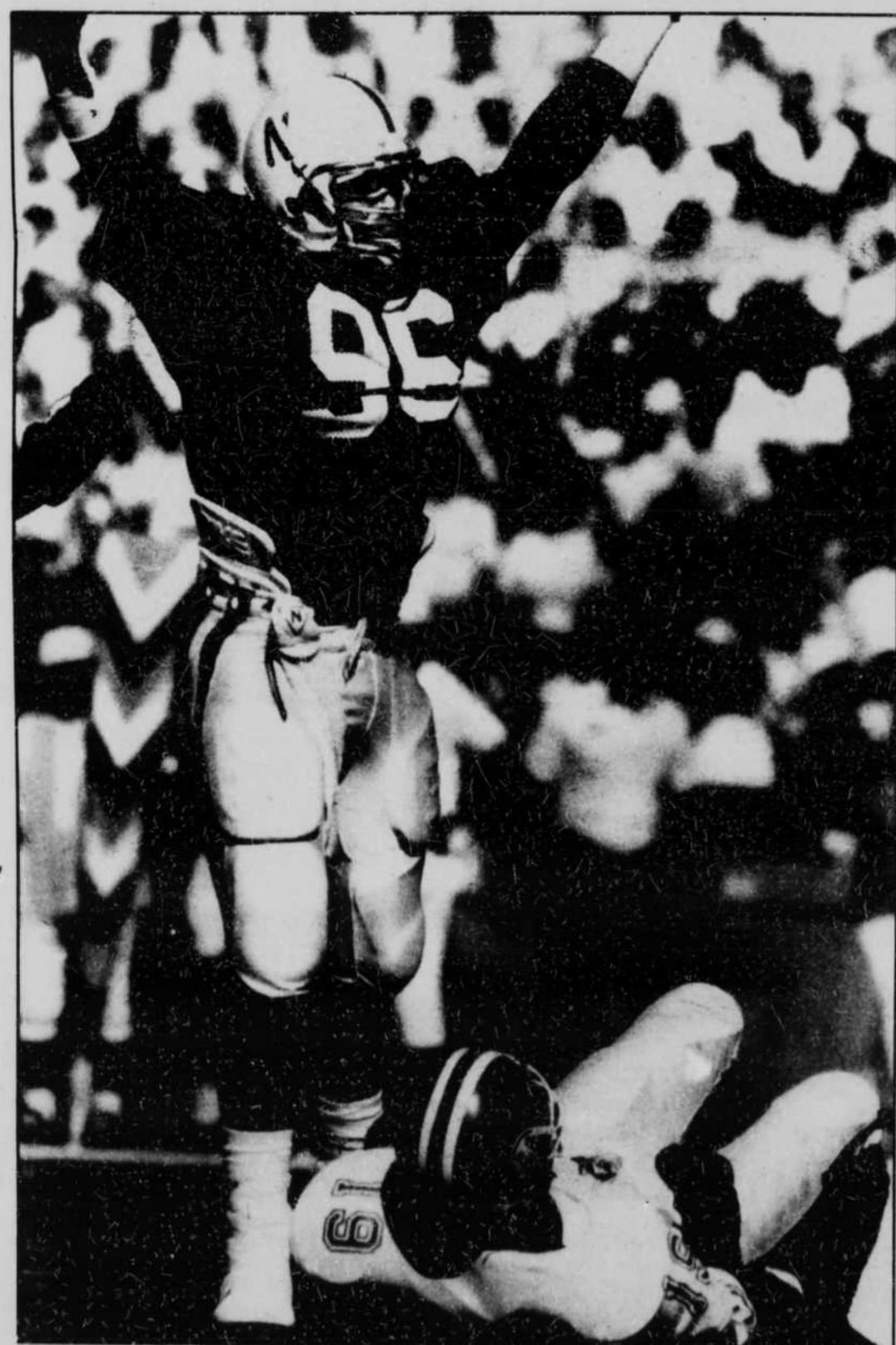


Defensive tackle Ray Valladao sacks Utah quarterback Scott Mitchell.



Fullback Bryan Carpenter takes out Utah's Koba Afu, setting up a touchdown run by quarterback Gerry Gdowski.



Freshman outside linebacker David White raises his arms in triumph after sacking Utah quarterback Scott Mitchell.

Utah quarterback and offense pose surprise for Cornhuskers

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Las Vegas bookmakers, college football fans and media personnel all knew No. 4-ranked Nebraska would rout Utah Saturday. They were all sure of it.

But there was one problem: Somebody forgot to tell Utah's team.

Especially quarterback Scott Mitchell. Mitchell passed for 297 yards and four touchdowns, leading the Utes to 402 yards of total offense against the Cornhuskers in a 42-30 Nebraska win at Memorial Stadium.

"We played a pretty good team today," Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said. "I know a lot of people will be upset with the score, but I'm pleased with the win."

Osborne was not pleased, however, with the Huskers' "defensive breakdown" at the end of the game, which resulted in two Utah touchdowns in the game's final 3:38.

Nebraska led 42-16 when Utah linebacker Howard Reeve intercepted a pass from Husker quarterback Keithen McCant and returned it to the Nebraska 16-yard line. Three plays later, Mitchell drilled a 1-yard pass to Darrell Hicks for the touchdown.

The ensuing two-point conversion attempt was stopped when Nebraska defensive tackle Kent Wells sacked Mitchell.

After failing to convert on fourth down, Nebraska turned the ball over to the Utes with 1:06 left in the game. A 20-yard pass to Bryan Rowley capped a six-play, 64-yard drive to end the game.

"I'm sorry we let a little bit get away at the end, but that's to Utah's credit," Osborne said.

Utah's offense caused problems for Nebraska's defense throughout the game with its variety of offensive formations, shifts and motions. Three Utah receivers had more than 60 yards receiving, and tailback Clifton Smith rushed 17 times for 82 yards.

Nebraska defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said the defensive players "knew they were in a football game" after Utah's first offensive drive.

"I think (Mitchell) is the best quarterback to come out since (former Stanford quarterback John) Elway," McBride said. "He moved around better than I thought."

Utah's receivers are a primary reason for Mitchell's success, McBride said.

"They run as good of pass patterns as any team we've seen," he said. "The only difference between them and Miami is that Miami's faster."

Utah scored on its first possession of the game, capping a nine-play, 59-yard drive with a 5-yard pass from Mitchell to Dennis Smith with 9:24 left in the first quarter.

The Huskers came back two drives later to tie the game on an 8-yard touchdown run by quarterback Gerry Gdowski with 4:00 left in the quarter. Chris Drennan added the extra point.

Gdowski rushed for 104 yards and three touchdowns on 15 carries. He also completed 3 of 6 passes for 27 yards.

Utah took the lead again with 1:43 left in the first quarter on a 43-yard pass from Mitchell to Smith, but a bad snap on the extra-point attempt kept the score 13-7.

Gdowski scored on an 8-yard run, and outside linebacker Mike Croel returned an interception six yards for another score in the second quarter, extending Nebraska's lead to 21-13. The interception was Mitchell's first of the season.

Utah cut Nebraska's lead to 21-16 with 5:16 left in the first half on a 45-yard field goal by Wayne Lammle.

Osborne said Nebraska's pass rush improved during the second half.

"We seemed to be more confident on defense in the second half," he said. "It was hard, because Utah gave us so many formations and sets and motions. But we settled down a little bit and started to execute."

I-back Ken Clark scored the only touchdown of the third quarter, a 2-yard run with 6:57 remaining in the quarter.

Clark rushed for 130 yards on 22 carries. Fullback Bryan Carpenter carried five times for 102 yards and a touchdown.

Osborne said Carpenter's high rushing output was due to Utah's defensive slants.

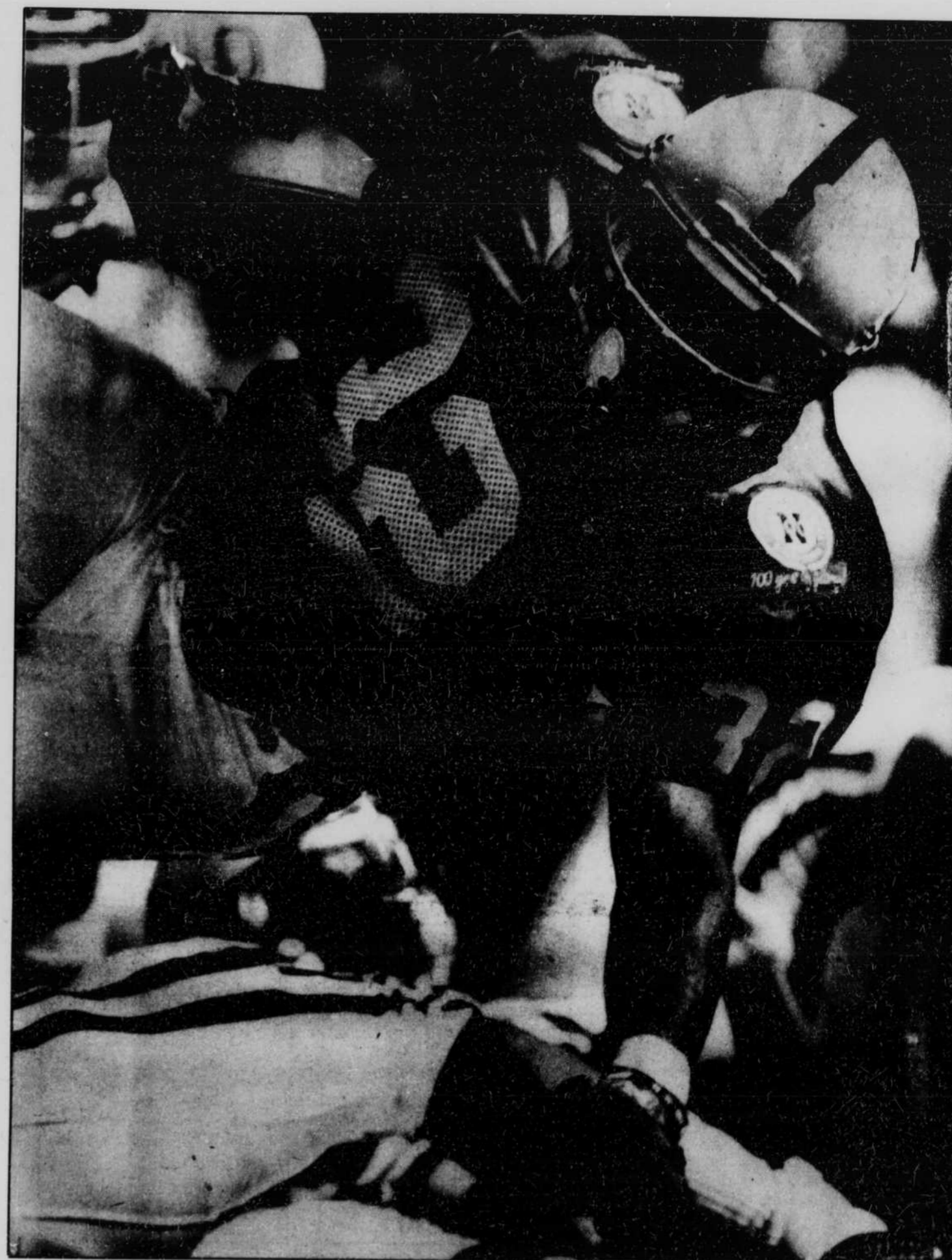
"Most of his yards came on read options," Osborne said. "If the (defensive) tackle pulls out, the quarterback hands off. Gerry did a good job of reading that today."

Carpenter bolted 29 yards for a touchdown on the first play of the fourth quarter on the same type of play. The score extended Nebraska's lead to 35-16.

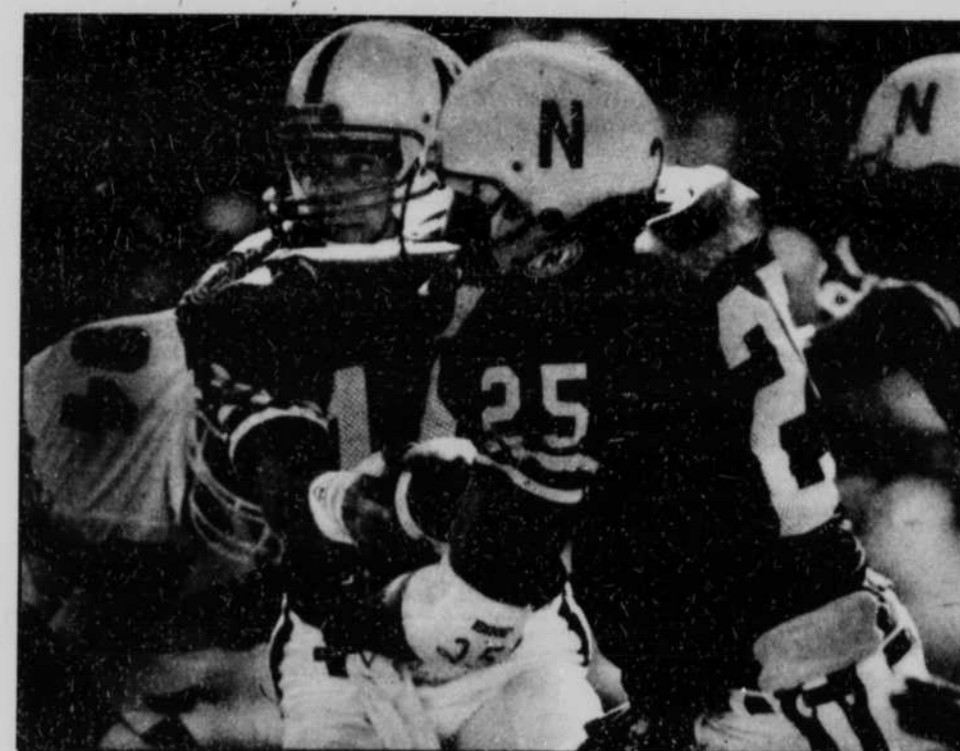
Gdowski scored his last touchdown four minutes later on a 4-yard run.

Nebraska strong safety Reggie Cooper, who led the Husker defense with 10 tackles, said he didn't expect the variety of offense Utah used in the game.

"I wasn't ready for a lot of what they were doing in the first half," he said. "Scott Mitchell is about the best I've ever seen. He has good touch, but he can wing the ball in there, too. He's the best I've ever played against."



Heisman hopeful Ken Clark dives for extra yardage.



NU quarterback Gerry Gdowski hands off to fullback Sam Schmidt.

Photos by
Al Schaben
and
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