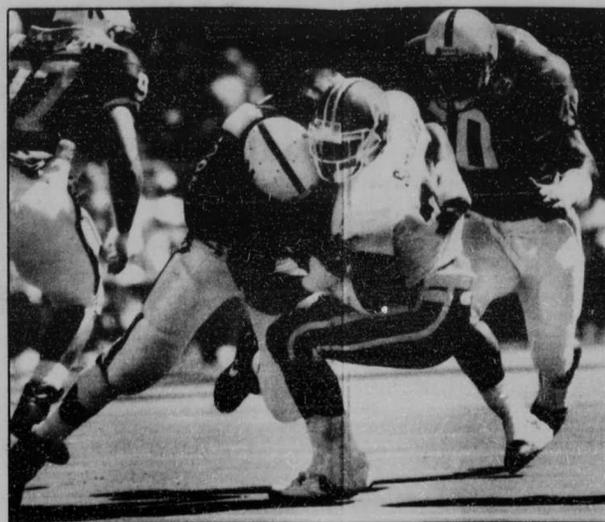


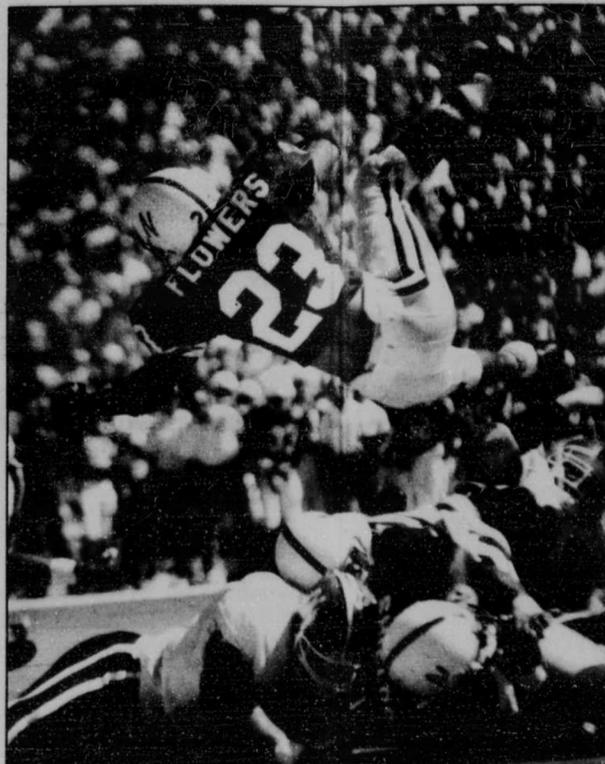
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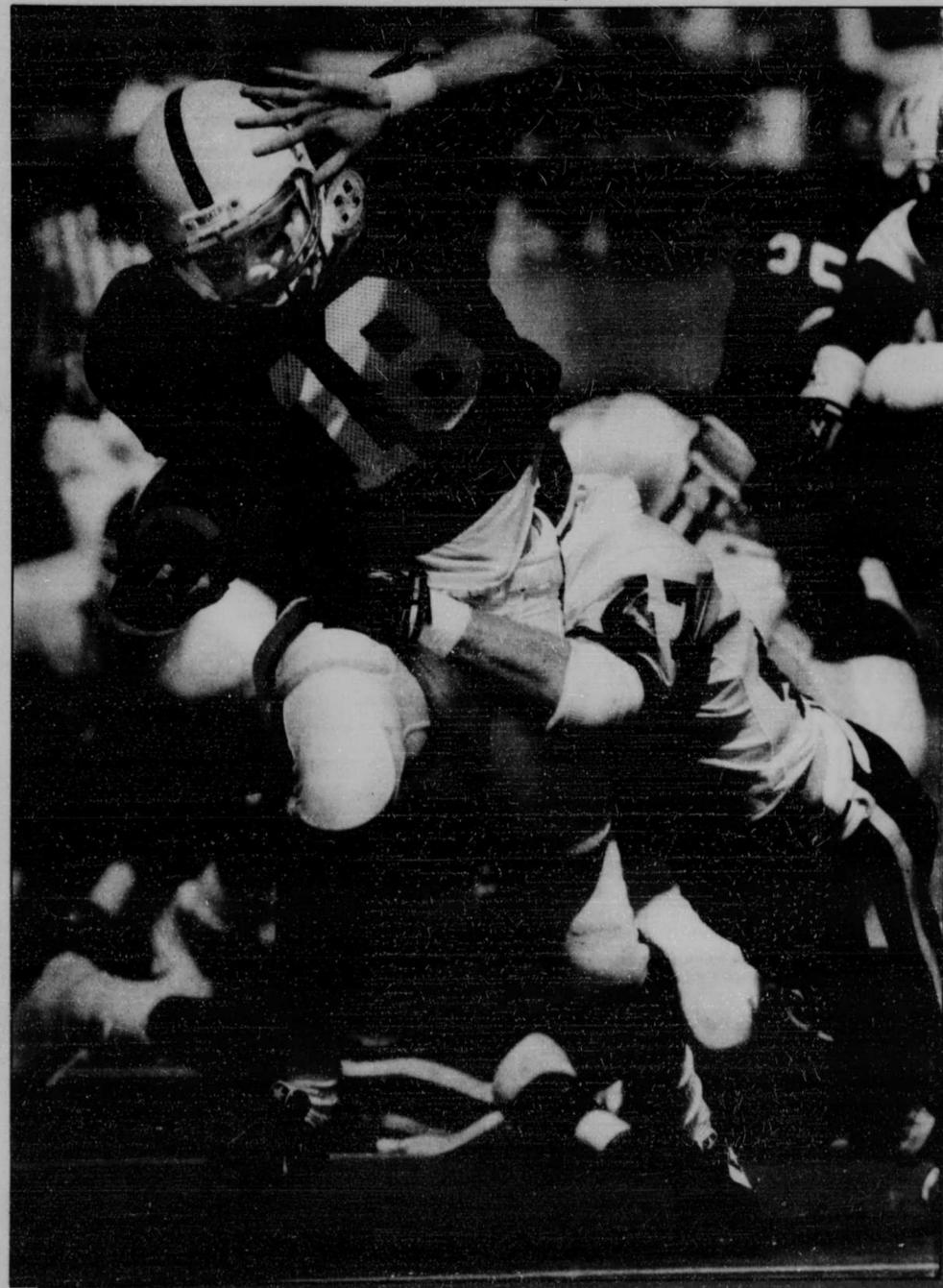
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Clockwise from bottom: Nebraska's Jon Bostick (18) drives through Huskie defenders as Northern Illinois' Steve Wild loses grip during the first quarter.

NU I-back Leodis Flowers dives over defenders to the goal line to score during the second quarter.

NU's Matt Pendland (52) celebrates after sacking NIU quarterback Rob Rigai in the fourth quarter.

NU's LeAndre Anderson (90) takes down NIU's Brett Schroeder (38) during the second quarter.

Flowers struggles unsuccessfully to stay in bounds as wingback Tyrone Hughes blocks NIU defenders during the first quarter.

NU offense rolls over Huskies

By Paul Domeier
Senior Reporter

From the first play, a 65-yard kick-off return by Tyrone Hughes, Nebraska's 60-14 win over the Northern Illinois Huskies on Saturday showed signs of being different from the Cornhuskers' 13-0 victory over Baylor the week before.

This game was for the offense. After Hughes' return put Nebraska at the Northern Illinois 34-yard line, the Huskers marched in for their first touchdown, something that didn't come for 59 minutes against Baylor.

Seven players scored touchdowns for Nebraska. The Huskers rolled up 549 yards of total offense, 424 on the ground, and Nebraska improved in short-yardage situations.

"We knew we would because we can knock these people off the ball," Husker coach Tom Osborne said. "A lot of it has to do with relative strengths of your opponent."

For a moment Saturday's game started looking like the defense-dominated Baylor contest. The Huskies stopped Leodis Flowers on fourth

down at the Northern Illinois 3-yard line. Nebraska countered with a safety sack by Travis Hill, Mike Croel and Pat Tyrance.

But Nebraska returned with the explosive offense. After the safety Jon Bostick returned the free kick 30 yards to the Northern Illinois 36. Six plays later, quarterback Mickey Joseph faked a hand-off and threw to tight end Chris Garrett for a 20-yard touchdown. Nebraska led 16-0.

And the Northern Illinois wishbone showed that it could move the ball, too. Using an offensive set they had never used before, the Huskies went on an 82-yard scoring drive capped off by a 48-yard run by fullback Adam Dach. Dach led Northern Illinois with 89 yards on 13 carries.

Quarterback Stacey Robinson ran in the two-point conversion. Defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said Oklahoma ran the same set a few years ago, but Saturday was the first time this Nebraska defense had seen the formation.

"Until about halfway through the series, we didn't get adjusted," McBride said. "We didn't get fully adjusted until halftime."

Most of Nebraska's second-team defense was playing when Northern Illinois unveiled the new unbalanced line set, which looks like a wishbone with two tight ends, except both ends are on the same side of the line.

Starting inside linebacker Tyrance, who led Nebraska with 12 tackles, said the youthfulness may have hindered the Huskers as they tried to adapt.

"At times I think some of the younger guys may have had trouble with calls, with their check calls," he said, then added with a smile, "You need to have all 11 guys playing the same defense."

The next time Northern Illinois had the ball, Robinson led a 59-yard march toward John Iwanic's 42-yard field goal, making the score 16-11 Nebraska.

Osborne said he was pleased with the final outcome, but the Huskers had occasional rough spots. Northern Illinois gained 295 yards.

"When their good people went

against our good people, sometimes they moved the ball," Osborne said. "At times they didn't make us look bad, but they did make us look suspect."

The Huskies fumbled on their next possession, Tyrance recovered at the Northern Illinois 28 and Nebraska drove in for a touchdown. I-back Leodis Flowers, who rushed for 124 yards, dove over the top from a yard out for the score.

Nebraska added a 32-yard field goal from Gregg Barrios with one second left in the half.

The Huskers dominated the second half. The defense, having solved the new Husky formation, held Northern Illinois to 103 yards in the second half.

Nebraska gained 336 yards in the second half and piled on the last 34 points of the game. Omar Soto, Tim Johnk, Robert Glantz and Derek Brown (twice) scored their first touchdowns as Huskers, and Byron Bennett contributed his first two extra points.

Nebraska used 96 players, including four quarterbacks: Joseph, Tom

Haase, Keithen McCant and Jerry Dunlap.

Quarterback Mike Grant, who suffered a bruised knee against Baylor, didn't play. He has two weeks to recover before the next game, at home against Minnesota, and Osborne said Grant could have played Saturday if needed.

He wasn't needed. Joseph completed 4 of 11 passes for 103 yards and rushed 11 times for 75 yards.

If Joseph had completed a couple of long passes to Hughes that were narrowly broken up, his passing statistics would have looked much better. Joseph, who is from Marrero, La., also threw an interception trying to get another play-action pass to Garrett.

"That really kind of spoiled it for me," Joseph said.

He said he didn't know how his performance affected the battle for the starting quarterback spot and he didn't know how he would grade on film.

"The only thing that counts is that we won," he said. "We're 2-0."