

# NU kicking, defense punts Wildcats

## Huskers lack teamwork against KSU, coach says

By Paul Domeier  
Senior Reporter

MANHATTAN, Kan. — With an offense described as disjointed by Coach Tom Osborne, Nebraska needed stellar special teams and defense to pull apart Kansas State on Saturday, 45-8.

The Cornhuskers, cheered on by about one-third of the 35,757 spectators, returned eight punts for 170 yards and three kickoffs for 153 yards, setting up 31 of the team's points.

"Take away a few plays in the kicking game, we would have won by maybe 10, 14 points," Osborne said.

Sophomore Tyrone Hughes returned the three kickoffs and brought back five punts for 94 yards. The 153 yards and the 51-yard average returning kickoffs were school records for one game.

The Husker defense held Kansas State to 40 yards rushing and 119 yards passing. Of the Wildcats' 70 plays, 31 went for a loss or no gain.

The kicking teams and defense kept the Huskers together while the offense sputtered. "This may sound bad with 45 points, but I'm not very happy with the way we moved the football," Osborne said.

In the game's first 27 minutes, Nebraska had three points and 67 yards. The 33-yard field goal from Gregg Barrios came because of a 66-yard punt return by Hughes.

Kansas State's two points came on a blocked punt that bounced through Nebraska's end zone. The Huskers finally put together an 81-yard touchdown drive at the end of the second quarter to make the score 10-2 at halftime.

Quarterback Mike Grant completed 4 of 6 passes for 46 yards in the drive, capping it off with a 5-yard touchdown toss to Jon Bostick with 11 seconds remaining.

But the Huskers managed only a season-low 243 yards rushing and 372 total yards, the second-lowest output of 1990.

"We were not functioning as a unit," Osborne said. "Five games into the season, you hate to see that."

The Husker defense put the team in position for a touchdown early in the third quarter. Tackle Joe Sims intercepted a pass that had been batted into the air. Sims, who had eight

tackles and 2 1/2 sacks, returned the ball 7 yards to the Kansas State 31-yard line.

Leodis Flowers, who rushed for 112 yards, gained 21 yards up the middle. Quarterback Mickey Joseph ran in for the touchdown on the next play.

Two possessions later, after a 28-yard punt return by Nate Turner, Flowers scored on another 21-yard run up the middle.

Nebraska's next touchdown came in the fourth quarter on a 45-yard touchdown pass from Grant to Bostick. The key was Bostick's leaping catch, reaching over a Kansas State defender to snap the ball away before he tumbled into the end zone.

Hughes provided Nebraska's first-from-last touchdown with a 99-yard kickoff return. The return came with 3:52 left in the fourth quarter, after Kansas State's Tate Wright kicked his second and final field goal to make the score 31-8.

Kansas State at first faked an onside-kick alignment, so Nebraska replaced five linemen up front with five receivers. Hughes said he was surprised that with those smaller blockers, he was able to break the run.

The total success of the kicking game, though, did not surprise him.

"We work on it a lot, so when the blocks are there, all I have to do is read the blocks," Hughes said.

Joseph scored the final touchdown on a 26-yard run.

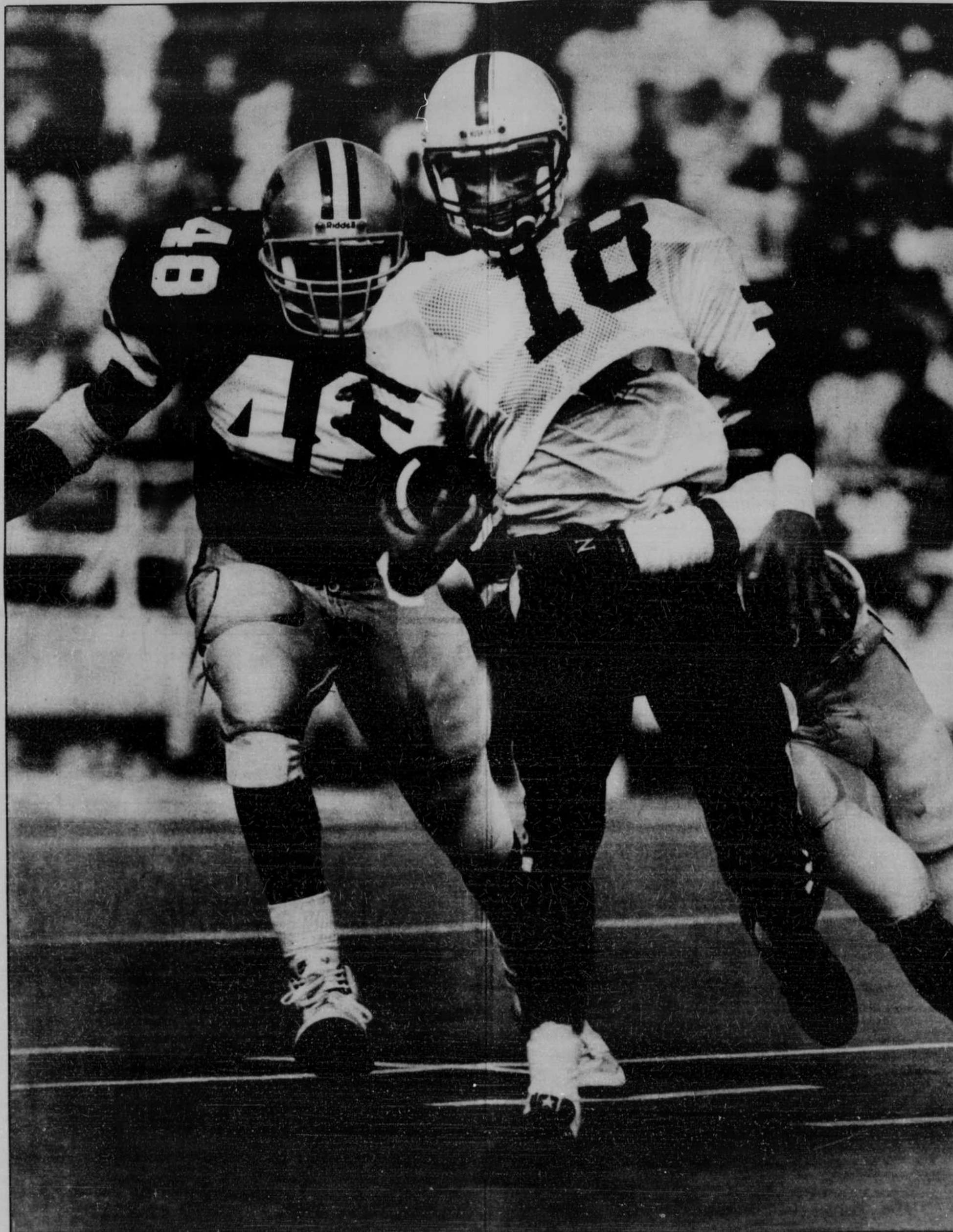
The win, Nebraska's 22nd straight over Kansas State, makes the Huskers 5-0. Osborne, though, gave credit to the new-and-improved, 3-2 Wildcats.

"I was proud of their football team," he said. "It's not my job to be proud of them, but their defense played tough."

But so did Nebraska's defense, the top unit statistically in the nation. Substitute quarterback Paul Watson and regular starter Carl Straw, who played in the second half despite a sore ankle, completed 15 of 34 passes and threw two interceptions. Nebraska recorded six sacks.

And whenever the Huskers needed better field position, the special teams provided it.

"We had the safety on a blocked punt," Osborne said. "Other than that, our kicking game was pretty dominant."

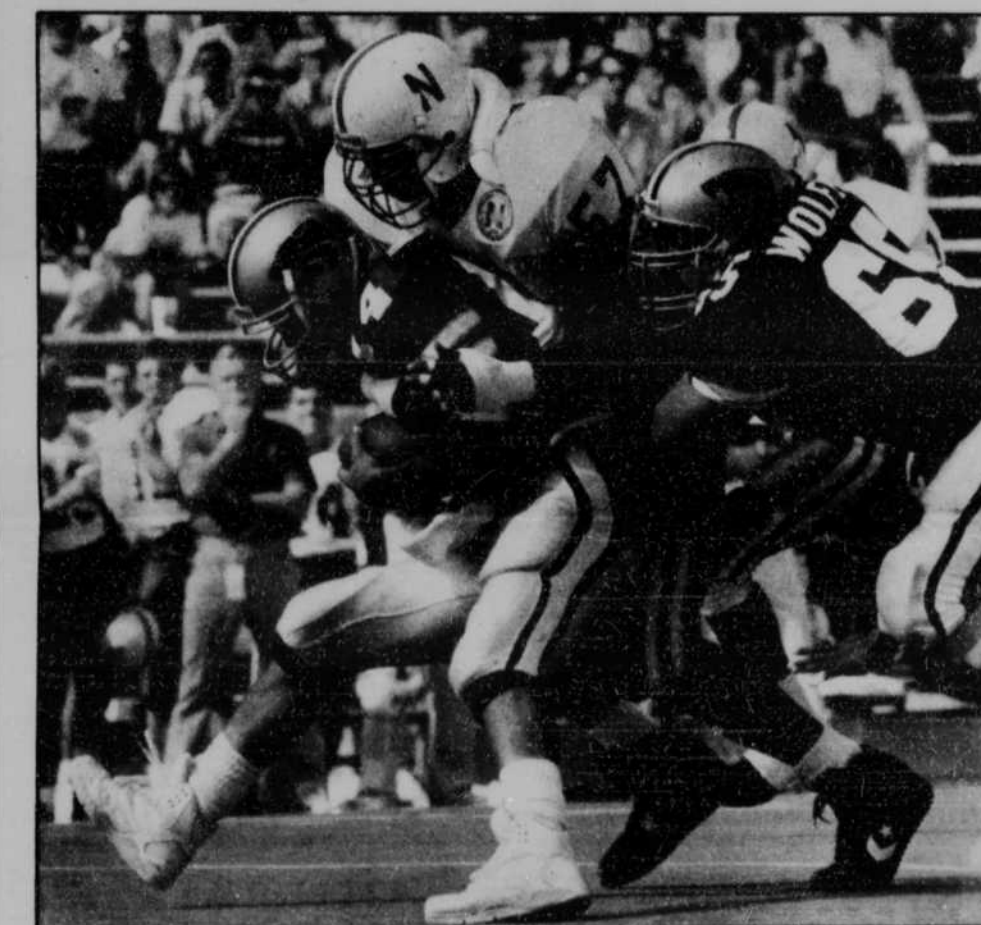
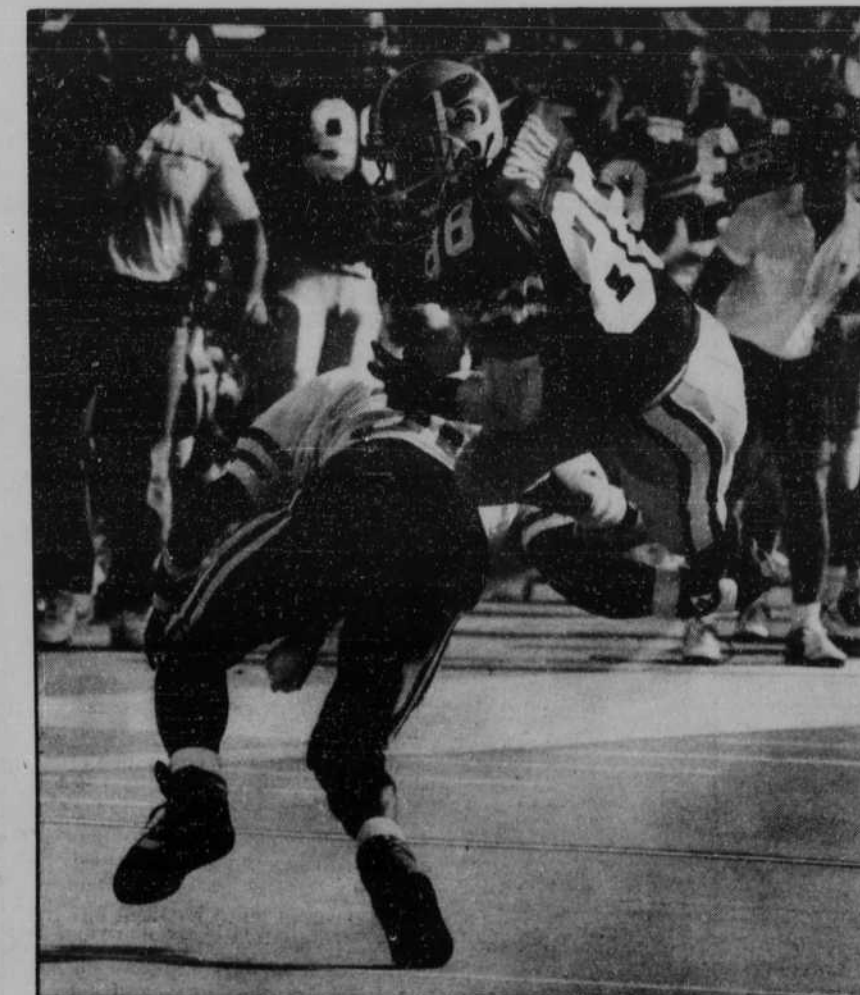


Clockwise from center: Kansas State's Billy Ray Smith (48) and Rogerick Green attempt to drag down Nebraska's Jon Bostick during a fourth quarter punt return.

Kansas State's Michael Smith is stopped in the air by NU's Bruce Pickens early in the fourth quarter.

Nebraska's Kenny Walker brings down KSU quarterback Paul Watson.

NU'sLeodis Flowers avoids Kansas State defenders Danny Needham (21) and C.J. Masters in a fourth-quarter dash



## Husker offense sputters in beginning, then clicks

By Paul Domeier  
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MANHATTAN, Kan. — Nebraska followed the axiom that a team plays like it practices, according to Cornhusker wingback Tyrone Hughes.

Hughes said the offense struggled in practice on the Monday and Tuesday before the team's 45-8 victory over Kansas State on Saturday.

In the second half of the week's practices, Wednesday and Thursday, the offense started to click.

That was the way the game against the Wildcats went: 67 total yards for Nebraska in the first 27 minutes, 305 yards in the last 33 minutes.

I-backLeodis Flowers rushed for 112 yards, 30 in the first half and 82 in the second half.

"Now we just have to concentrate on the first half," Flowers said. "It's not really a concern. I know we can move the ball."

This was the second straight game where Nebraska's offense sputtered at the start, though. Against Oregon State, Nebraska had 131 yards and three points at the half.

The Huskers were playing without their regular tight ends. Chris Garrett broke his ankle the week before and did not play, and starter William Washington injured his leg on the third play of the game.

That left Daryl Leise and freshman Johnny Mitchell the team's only two tight ends.

But the rest of the offense was healthy, and the Kansas State defense, which had been giving up an average of 390.3 yards a game, kept Nebraska from making a first down on five possessions.

Neither Mike Grant or Mickey Joseph stood out at quarterback.

Joseph rushed for 28 yards and two touchdowns, but threw three passes and completed one, for four yards. Grant rushed for 10 yards and passed for 125 yards. He completed 7 of 17 passes.

Beyond the statistics, though, neither quarterback moved the team consistently. Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said Grant, in his second game back since missing three weeks with a sprained knee, looked awkward.

"I don't feel like Mike is in the flow right now," Osborne said. "He's still feeling his way, and that's a concern."

Photos by Shaun Sartin