

McCant's relentless passes prevail

By Todd Cooper
Senior Reporter

STILLWATER, Okla. — Although Nebraska's 49-15 victory over Oklahoma State was far from a shootout, Cornhusker quarterback Keithen McCant never quit firing.

And nearly every Husker took his bullets Saturday.

McCant finished with 231 yards passing on 17 for 19 passes. His receivers profited from the machine-gun barrage.

"We spread it out to keep everybody happy," tight end Johnny Mitchell said. "And Keithen was great. He threw the ball right on the nose; we couldn't help but catch it."

Five Nebraska receivers couldn't help but catch the football at least twice Saturday.

● Mitchell had four receptions for 47 yards, including a 17-yard touchdown in the third quarter.

● Wingback Nate Turner doubled his season catch total, hauling in four passes for 30 yards.

● Freshman wingback Abdul Muhammad caught two passes for 38 yards, including a 31-yard touchdown catch in the third quarter, the first score of his career.

● Split end Jon Bostick added two catches for 39 yards.

● Wingback Tyrone Hughes caught five passes for 77 yards, including his first touchdown catch of the season.

That touchdown came on Nebraska's nine-play, 63-yard opening drive. Facing third-and-four at Oklahoma State's 34-yard line, Hughes cut across the middle, caught a McCant bullet in the middle of the defense and trotted into the end zone.

"With their blitzes, we used the slant a lot," Hughes said. "(McCant) read the blitz and he has been finding the open people."

After Nebraska's defense held the Cowboys on their opening possession, McCant gave the ball to I-back Derek Brown. Brown ran five times for 69 yards in the drive, on his way to 143 yards on 18 carries.

On third down at the Nebraska's 39-yard line, Brown squirted through the middle for 61 yards — the longest rush of his career — putting Nebraska up 14-0 with 2:29 left in the first quarter. His 143 yards made him the first Husker back since Bobby Reynolds in 1950 to open the season with five straight 100-yard games.

"That's what passing does," said Brown, who didn't catch a pass Saturday. "It keeps the defense off balance and opens up the rush."

But Brown deserves some credit of his own, Oklahoma State Coach Pat Jones said.

"He knocked the breath completely out of me today," Jones said. "He might be the best back in this league."

While Brown kept Oklahoma State's defense dizzy most of the first half, McCant dazzled — completing his first eight passes.

His first miscue stalled Nebraska's opening drive of the second quarter. Facing fourth-and-two at the 31, McCant just missed a streaking Vincent Hawkins at the Oklahoma State 15-yard line.

"According to Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne, that was one of McCant's few mistakes.

"I wouldn't say he was flawless," Osborne said. "But, boy, he audibled a lot and was right 95 percent of the time. Keithen played very well."

After two stalled possessions by both teams, outside linebacker David

White recovered Cowboy fullback Rod Sanders' fumble at Oklahoma State's 30-yard line.

Four plays later, Brown leaped in from a yard out to put Nebraska up 21-0. The Cowboys capped a late second-quarter drive with a field goal.

By halftime, Nebraska had racked up 282 total yards, 155 of them through the air. Meanwhile, Brown had 100 yards on 16 carries and the feeling that the Cowboys were doomed.

"After the first drive of the third quarter we felt we could run about any play and bust them up the middle," Brown said. "We were feeling pretty confident and comfortable."

The Huskers took their first possession of the second half 67 yards for a score. McCant accounted for 57 yards on the drive, including a 28-yard option down the sideline. His 8-yard touchdown pass to Mitchell capped the six-play drive.

"After that, we got kind of loose because we were putting up a lot of points," Mitchell said. "But Coach (Osborne) got us back on track."

Osborne said he was concerned with the offense's consistency.

Oklahoma State blitzed its way to McCant in the end zone on Nebraska's next possession. The safety made it 28-5 with 5:11 left in the third.

After Oklahoma State's Rick Myers nailed a 37-yard field goal on the Cowboys' ensuing possession, Nebraska's offense again sputtered, this time at the Husker 26-yard line.

"But a lot of that had to do with their blitzing and stunting," Osborne said. "Sometimes they won. Sometimes we won."

Osborne said Nebraska won most of the time Saturday because of one-back formations.

"You can't send the strong safety and linebacker consistently against the one-back," he said. "You've got to pull the strong safety out because of four quick receivers."

"We were able to throw well out of it."

McCant finished his barrage with a 31-yard touchdown strike to Muhammad in the fourth quarter.

Nebraska's defense preserved the lead, snatching three second-half interceptions that led to 14 points, on a 40-yard run by Brown and a 11-yard option by back-up quarterback Mickey Joseph.

Defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said Nebraska blitzed about 25 percent of the time, but usually to stop Oklahoma State's running backs.

"They're really quick," McBride said. "And if you give them any room, they're dangerous."

But the Cowboys didn't get much room to roam, finishing with just 100 rushing yards on 37 carries. Of Oklahoma State's 354 total yards, 141 came against Nebraska's reserves in the fourth quarter.

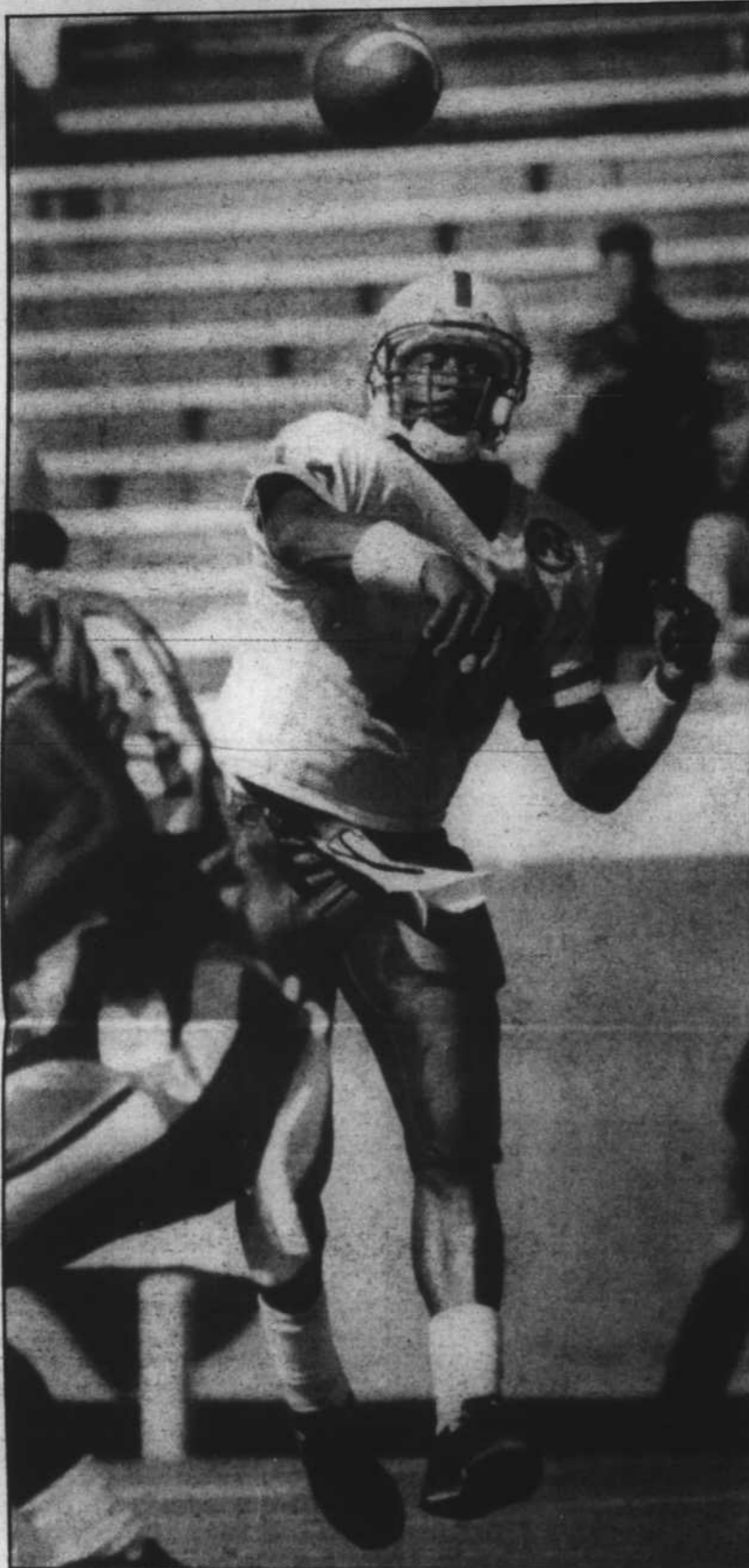
Cowboy quarterback Kenny Ford finished 18 for 44 with three interceptions. His offense finished with 63 yards in penalties, including four delay-of-game calls.

"I think they were giving a dose of our own medicine to a degree," Jones said. "They'd show blitzes and come out of them."

Mitchell said Nebraska came out of Stillwater Saturday with a new notion.

"Our offense looked good and our defense played well," Mitchell said. "It's great when everyone out there is playing together."

"That's the best feeling and it's hard to beat a team that way."



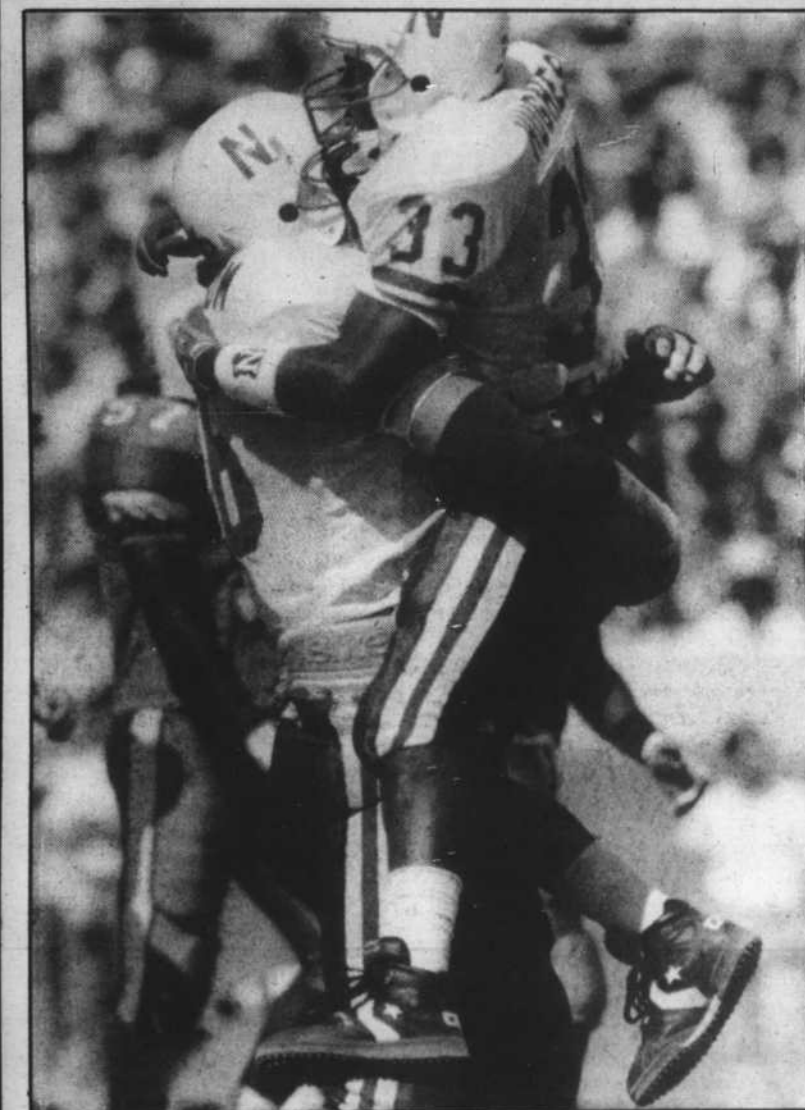
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Robin Trimarchi/DN



Staci McKee/DN



Staci McKee/DN

NU vs. OSU stats

FINAL SCORE: NU 49, OSU 15

Scoring by quarter:	
OSU	NU
0	14
3	7
5	7
7	21

Attendance: 30,150

- NU — Hughes 34 pass from McCant (Bennett kick)
- NU — Brown 61 run (Bennett kick)
- NU — Brown 1 run (Bennett kick)
- OSU — FG Myers 33
- NU — Mitchell 8 pass from McCant (Bennett kick)
- OSU — Safety, McCant tackled in end zone
- OSU — FG Myers 37
- NU — Brown 40 run (Bennett kick)
- NU — Muhammad 31 pass from McCant (Bennett kick)
- OSU — Denson 14 run (Myers kick)

	OSU	NU
First downs	20	21
Rushes-yards	37-100	40-273
Passing yards	254	231
Total yards	354	504
Return yards	25	46
Passing	18-44-3	17-23-1
Punts	7-34.4	4-47.3
Fumbles-lost	2-1	1-1
Penalties-yards	8-63	4-48
Time of possession	34:50	25:10

Amie DeFram/DN

Cowboys fail to stop Huskers

By Chris Hopfensperger
Senior Editor

STILLWATER, Okla. — Oklahoma State football coach Pat Jones knows what it takes for his team to beat Nebraska.

"We've got to do things basically perfect," Jones said, "with no margin of error."

"It's hard for this team to do that," Oklahoma State was far from perfect Saturday. The Cowboys committed four turnovers and converted only four of 16 third-down plays as Nebraska rolled to a 49-15 win.

Jones said the first turnover was a key part of the game.

Down 14-0, the Cowboy defense held Nebraska on fourth- and-two, taking over at the Cowboy 31-yard line. On first- and-10, Oklahoma State fullback Rod Sanders coughed up the

ball, and David White recovered. Four plays later, Nebraska led 21-0.

"At that point it looked like we would get out of the half down 14-3. But when they scored it was too much for us to overcome," Jones said.

Quarterback Kenny Ford, who completed 18 of 44 passes, threw three interceptions which led to 14 Cornhusker points and finished the last Cowboy drive of the game.

Jones said Oklahoma State's defense continued to play its "cat-and-mouse game with blitzes" against Nebraska, but produced only one sack of quarterback Keithen McCant — a two-yard loss for a safety.

"We'll invent some new blitzes next year," Jones said.

Offensively, the Cowboys had to work against a Nebraska blitz that produced one 8-yard sack and sty-

mied the Cowboy running game, holding Oklahoma State to 100 rushing yards.

The Huskers are not as good at pass rushing as they have been, he said, nor is the 1991 squad as good as former teams.

"It's not vintage Nebraska," he said. "I don't mean that derogatorily, but I think I've seen them when I thought they were better."

Jones said Nebraska isn't doing anything new on offense despite tailoring their offense to the passing ability of McCant.

"They're geared a little differently. It's obviously something they worked on, but they came in as the leading rushing team in the country," Jones said. "They're more well-equipped to do things like passing the ball than I've seen them, probably more than ever."

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Nebraska I-back Calvin Jones searches for the ball after fumbling during the fourth quarter. Quarterback Keithen McCant attempts a pass early in the third quarter. McCant finished the day with 231 yards on 17-for-19 passing and three touchdowns. Linebacker Mike Petko pursues Oklahoma State running back L.G. Thompson as Thompson makes a shoestring catch early in the third quarter. Split end Tyrone Hughes celebrates with tackle Brian Boerboom. Hughes had just scored the first touchdown of the game, a 34-yard pass from McCant.