

Defensive gem gives Huskers reason to smile

By Nick Hytrek
Senior Reporter

It was domination, pure and simple. Few other words accurately describe Nebraska's 55-0 thrashing of Oklahoma State Saturday at Memorial Stadium.

The No. 14 Cornhuskers showed no weaknesses on either side of the ball as they improved their record to 4-1 and 1-0 in the Big Eight. Oklahoma State dropped to 2-3, 0-1.

"I thought we played well today," Husker coach Tom Osborne said. "I'm pleased with the effort. There weren't any lapses, which is good. In a game like that it's easy to let down and not play well."

Nebraska defensive tackle John Parrella said the win was nice, but the Huskers couldn't afford to be satisfied with the effort.

"I think we played fair, but we've got some tough teams coming up and we're going to have to play even better if we want to win the Big Eight," he said. "I think today puts a smile on your face, but we've still got a lot of work to do."

Throughout the game, the Nebraska defense went about its work efficiently and set several season bests. Among them:

• The first shutout since a 56-0 win over Minnesota in 1990. It was the first shutout of a Big Eight opponent since a 7-0 win against Colorado in 1988.

• The defense held the Cowboys to 155 total yards and gave up no passing yards.

• Oklahoma State managed only seven first downs and was able to cross midfield just once.

Nebraska I-back Calvin Jones, who ran for 176 yards on seven carries, had nothing but praise for the defense.

"The defense played a tremendous game, the scoreboard shows it for itself," Jones said. "Our defense was kind of down about what happened in the Arizona State game late in that game and they came out and they showed a lot of people that they're one of the top defenses in the Big Eight, if not in the country."

Against Arizona State, the Huskers gave up 514 yards of total offense and saw a 38-10 lead shrink to 38-24 in the third quarter.

But against the Cowboys, Nebraska wanted to make sure that wouldn't happen again, Parrella said.

"This week we didn't want to come out and have the same thing happen," he said.

And the Cowboy defense? Well, there was little it could do to stop the Huskers.

Nebraska rolled up 506 yards — 366 rushing and 140 passing. Husker quarterbacks Mike Grant and Tommie Frazier each threw two touchdown passes and were a combined 12 of 22. Nebraska also made it through the game without a turnover.

"I felt that the throwing was generally better," Osborne said. "We recognize the fact that we need to throw it better than what we have. I think this was probably one of our better performances."

Grant agreed.

"I guess (the passing) was more effective this week than in the past," he said. "We've been working on it a lot and Coach Osborne's been stressing consistency a lot in practice."

"With all the work, it's nice to see it work in the games."

From the beginning, everything the Husker offense did worked.

The Huskers took the opening kickoff and

marched 81 yards for their first score, a 5-yard touchdown pass from Grant to William Washington.

Later in the first quarter, after a Cowboy punt pined Nebraska at its 10-yard line, Jones burst through the middle of the Cowboys' line, broke to the outside and outran two defenders down the left sideline to give Nebraska a 13-0 lead.

Jones gave all the credit on the run to his teammates.

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—Jones
NU I-back

“On that particular play, the offensive line did a great job of blocking,” he said. “You have to give them a lot of credit.”

It only got better for Nebraska in the second quarter. Frazier entered the game and engineered another scoring drive. He capped it with the first touchdown pass of his career — a 42-yard strike to Corey Dixon.

Osborne said one of his plans going into the game was to give Frazier some playing time while the outcome was still in question.

“We told him we were going to do that because we felt like with him being the No. 2 quarterback, it's important that he — in this point in the season — get a little playing time when the game isn't decided,” Osborne said.

Nebraska scored two more times before halftime. Grant scored on a 15-yard run and then hit Trumane Bell with a 14-yard pass in the corner of the end zone with 11 seconds left in the half to put the Huskers up 34-0.

That score before halftime helped the Husker offense do something it hadn't done yet, Grant said.

“After the big lead a lot of times our offense hasn't had that killer instinct to put it away after the big lead,” he said. “We tried to stress that at half that we're not going to let up.”

And the Huskers didn't.

Nebraska scored twice more in the third quarter to go ahead 48-0. Jones ripped off a 48-yard scoring run and Frazier hit Gerald Armstrong for an 8-yard touchdown.

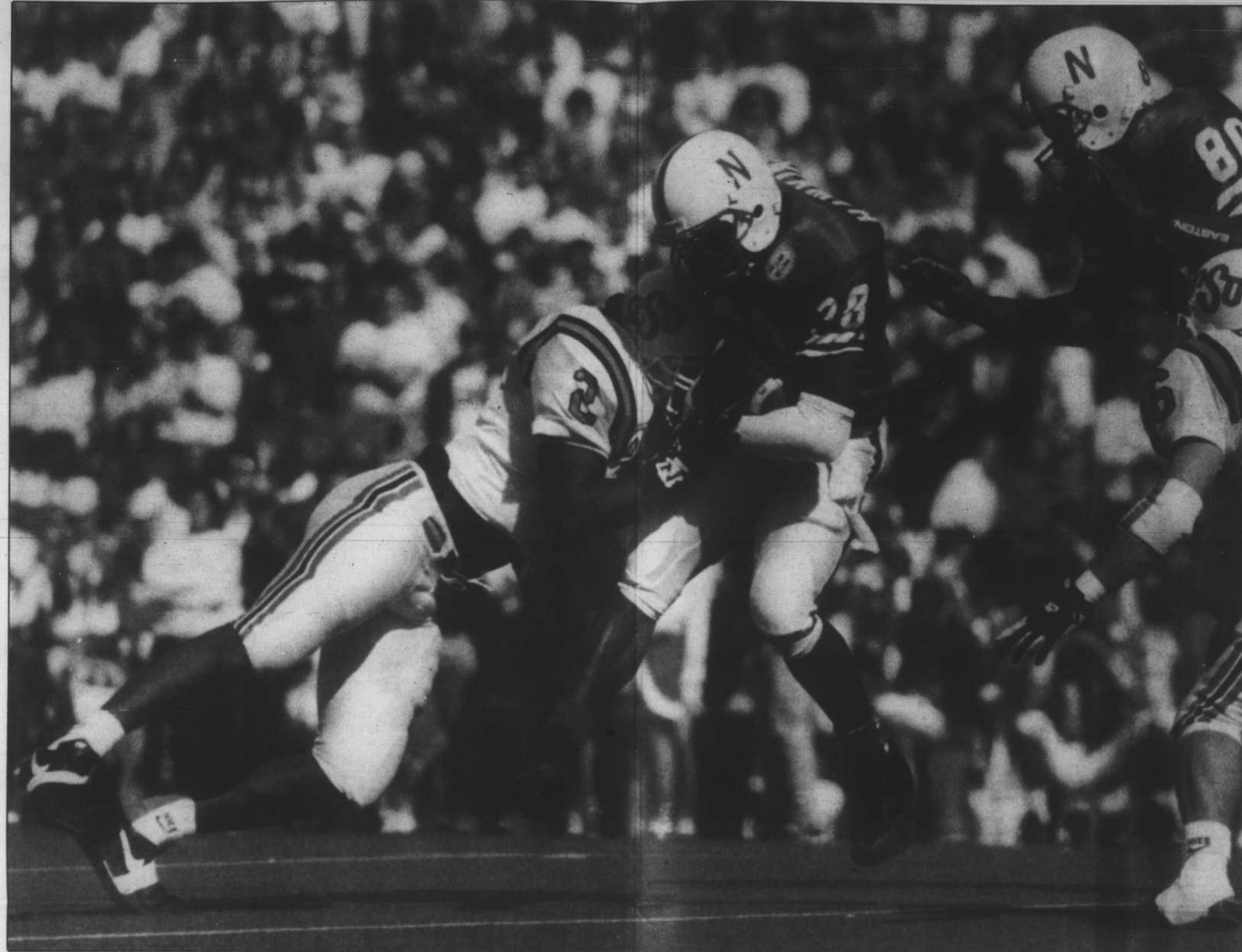
After quarterback John McMillen scored on an 11-yard run to make the score 55-0 in the fourth quarter, the only thing left to wonder about was how many people would actually stick around in the stands for the final gun.

Jones said the win eased concerns the coaching staff had because of the week off the Huskers had.

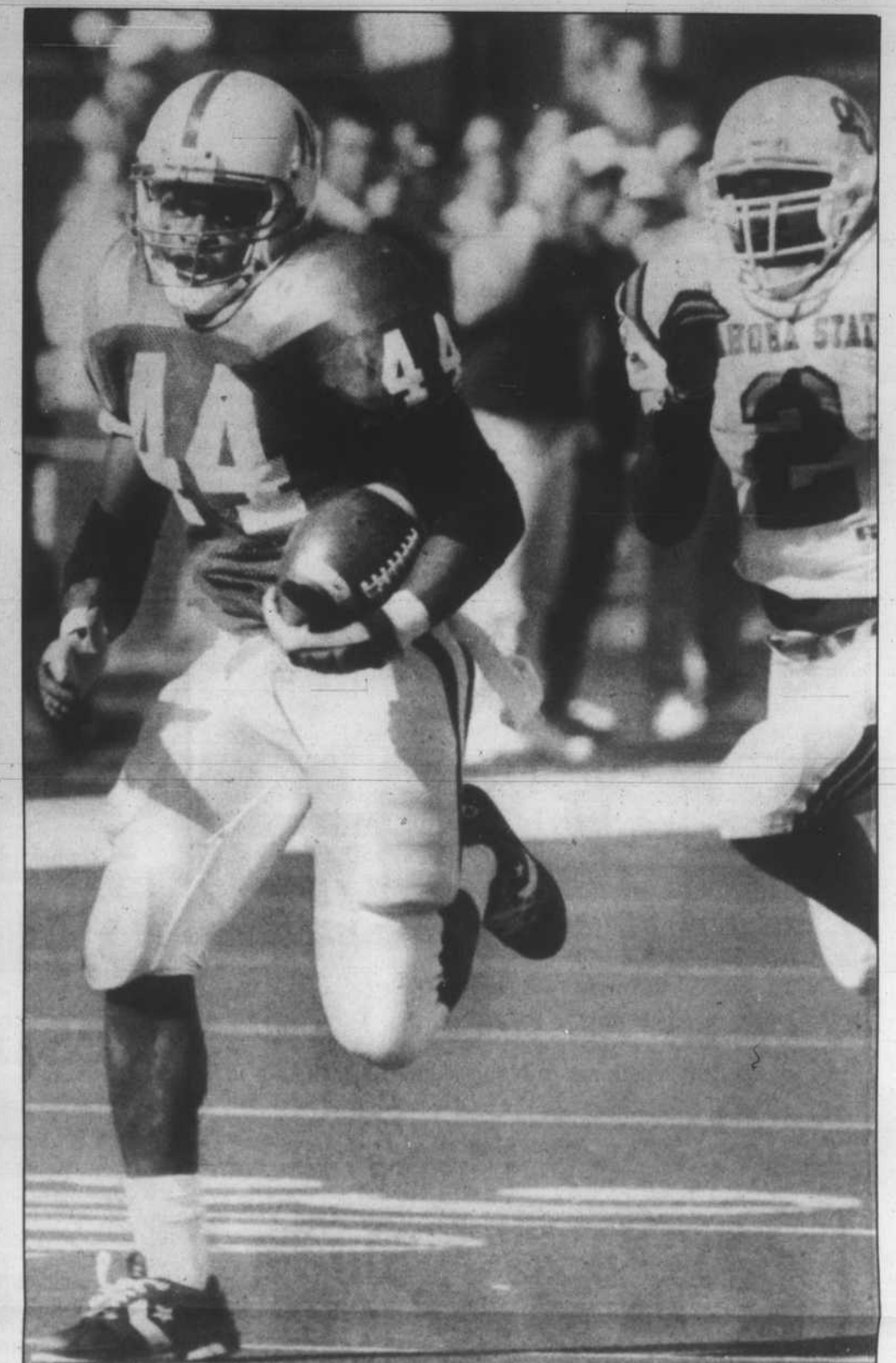
“I think one of the things the coaches were worried about was about having the two weeks off,” he said. “During the two weeks off you can either improve or you can basically throw everything down the drain.”

Now, Jones said, the Huskers must prepare to take the best shots from the rest of the Big Eight teams.

“Since we won the Big Eight championship last year, I think a lot of teams in the Big Eight are going to test us each week and we're going to have to perform and improve each week.”



Julia Mikolajcik/DN



Shaun Sartin/DN



Jeff Haller/DN



Shaun Sartin/DN

Clockwise from top left: Oklahoma State linebacker Carlos Erving tackles Nebraska wingback Vincent Hawkins. Cornhusker I-back Calvin Jones runs away from Erving during one of his two touchdown runs. Nebraska linebackers Troy Branch (54) and Donta Jones (84) tackle Oklahoma State tailback Mark Williams. Husker wide receiver Trumane Bell is dragged down by Cowboy defensive back Todd Fisher.

Nebraska-Oklahoma State Scoring Summary

Points by quaters

Nebraska	13	21	14	7	55
Oklahoma St.	0	0	0	0	0

Scoring stats

- ☑ NU— Washington, 5 pass from Mike Grant (Bennett kick)
- ☑ NU— C. Jones, 90 run (Bennett kick)
- ☑ NU— C. Dixon, 42 pass from Tommie Frazier (Bennett kick)
- ☑ NU— Grant, 15 run (Bennett kick)
- ☑ NU— Trumane Bell, 14 pass from Grant (Bennett kick)
- ☑ NU— Jones, 48 run (Bennett kick)
- ☑ NU— Gerald Armstrong, 8 pass from Frazier (Tom Sieler kick)
- ☑ NU— Jon McMillen, 11 run (Sieler kick)