

Breaking Free

Big-game troubles evaporate; Huskers rout Colorado 52-7

By Nick Hytrek
Senior Reporter

Sometime during the fourth quarter of the Nebraska-Colorado game, you could hear the chains breaking — the chains that have held the monkey on the Nebraska football team's back.

The monkey that said the Cornhuskers couldn't win the big game, couldn't beat a Top 10 team.

But glowing in the mist and the darkness at Memorial Stadium Saturday night, the numbers on the scoreboard set free the Huskers and the 76,287 dripping fans in attendance: Nebraska 52, Colorado 7.

"It's nice to finally win the so-called big one," I-back Calvin Jones said. "I think this is going to give Nebraska a big boost for the games down the road and the rest of the Big Eight."

"To go out and beat them like we did took a lot of the burden off our shoulders, hearing every week that we can't go out and win the big game," cornerback Kenny Wilhite said.

Fullback Lance Lewis summed it up in simpler terms.

"Just beating them this bad is just great," he said.

Also broken during the game was Colorado's 25-game unbeaten streak in Big Eight play.

And maybe, Husker coach Tom Osborne said, the win broke the string of criticism that followed his defense into the game.

"I really want to mention our defense," he said. "I think they've been maligned somewhat here lately, somewhat unjustly and maybe somewhat deservedly."

Last week against Missouri, the Husker defense gave up 424 yards passing, the most ever against Nebraska.

But against Colorado, the defense gave up only 136 yards through the air and 144 total.

"We told (the players) to back up a bit and not give up the big ball and we didn't do that," Osborne said. "We wanted to keep them in front of us and make them pay for everything they got and make them work their way down the field."

Also key, Osborne said, were the six turnovers the Huskers forced. Nebraska had no turnovers.

"Turnovers make you look bad," Osborne said. "Colorado is a better football team than what they showed today, but the turnovers just make you look like you're not getting anything done."

Thanks to a fired-up Husker defense, the No. 8 Buffaloes, now 6-1-1, 2-1-1 in the Big Eight, didn't get anything done.

Outside linebacker Travis Hill wasn't surprised with the defensive domination.

"I knew they were going to have a hard time passing because of the

weather. If you don't have a good running game when the weather's like this you can't throw the ball 50-some times to win the game," he said.

One of the reasons for the defense's success, Osborne said, was pressure on the quarterback.

"I think the big key to our pass defense was our pressure," he said. "If we didn't sack the quarterback, we were rushing him most of the time."

And that rushing made a difference, Hill said. Especially against freshman Koy Detmer.

"A quarterback is different once he gets pressure," Hill said. "If you hit him every play, then he's going to start feeling it after a while and then he starts feeling the heat and he just starts throwing it up for grabs."

And that's exactly what happened in Detmer's case. The freshman com-

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-Wilhite
NU cornerback

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pleted only 9 of 26 passes for 119 yards and three interceptions.

"We were after him," Hill said. "We were going to put a message in his mind that we were coming and we were coming every play."

"I think he was getting rattled." The No. 8 Huskers rattled Colorado from the first play of the game to raise their record to 6-1, 3-0.

Hill intercepted a Detmer pass and returned it to the Buffalo 15-yard line. Four plays later, Jones scored from three yards out and Nebraska had a 7-0 lead.

The interception gave the Huskers a big boost, Wilhite said.

"It gave us a lot of momentum," he said. "I got goosebumps."

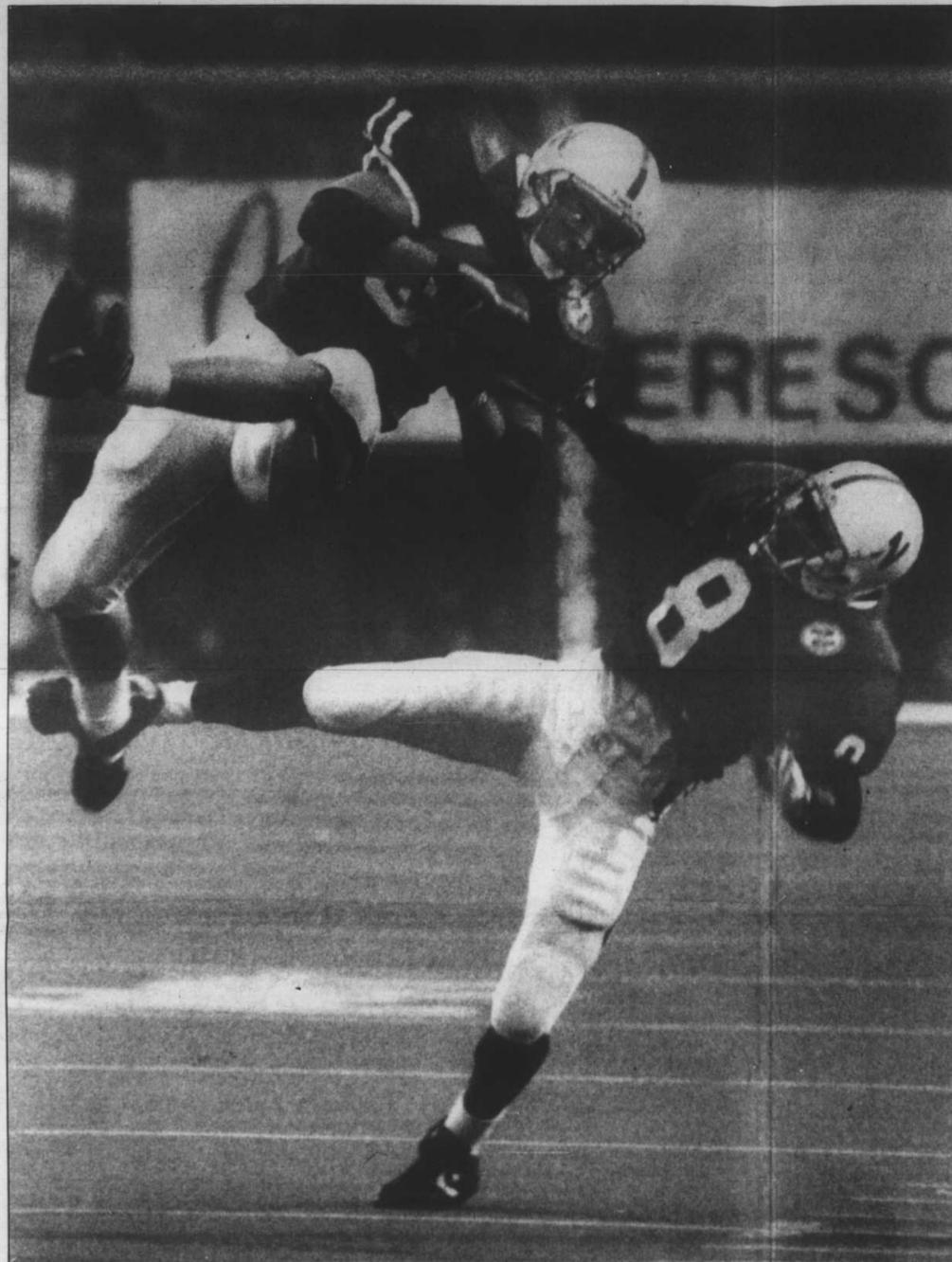
Midway through the second quarter,

Husker fans were given reason to get goosebumps of their own after Jones ripped

through the Buffalo defense for a 47-yard score and a 14-0 Nebraska lead. Jones finished the day with 101 yards on 21 carries. The other half of the Husker I-back duo, Derek Brown, rushed for 80 yards on 20 carries.

After a Steve Carmer interception on Colorado's next possession gave Nebraska the ball on the Buffalo 36, the Huskers drove to the 1 before settling for a 24-yard Byron Bennett field goal.

On Colorado's next possession, Detmer and the Buffalo offense finally



Al Schaben/DN

showed up. Operating out of the no-huddle offense, the Buffaloes drove 81 yards in 12 plays to cut the Husker lead to 17-7 after James Hill's 3-yard touchdown run.

The Buffaloes got the ball back with 1:49 to go until halftime, but Travis Hill stripped the ball from Detmer and recovered it at the Colorado 27.

The Huskers took it down to the 1 and with one second left, Jones scored his third touchdown of the day and Nebraska had a 24-7 lead at halftime.

That score enabled Nebraska to take the momentum into halftime, Jones said.

"If they would have stopped us then maybe they would have come out with the momentum in the third quarter," he said. "By scoring on the players I think that really took some of the heat out of the balloon for them."

Still, Nebraska players weren't at ease with the 17-point

lead.

"You never feel safe at halftime," Wilhite said. "You just try to give the same effort you gave in the first half. You don't let up and that's what we said: don't let up."

And the Huskers didn't.

A 5-yard touchdown pass from Tommie Frazier to Gerald Armstrong in the third quarter put Nebraska up 31-7. From there, things only got worse for Colorado.

Nebraska kept the ball on the ground and wore down the Buffalo defense.

Colorado's defense was on the field so much," Osborne said. "They've got a great defensive football team but you can only take so much pounding and they had to take a lot of it."

Osborne said, "We're pleased we won it like we did."

And all talk of a rivalry with Colorado can cease, Hill said.

"I wouldn't say it's a rivalry," Hill said. "I think things are back to normal now."

Buffaloes out.

"Fatigue played a big factor in the game," he said. "As the game went on, they just wore down."

Nebraska wore the

Michelle Paulman/DN

Old memories haunting for Figures, CU seniors

By John Adkisson
Senior Editor

A rain-soaked Deon Figures sat alone on the Colorado bench Saturday just after Nebraska scored its seventh touchdown.

He looked into the stands, where red-clad Cornhusker fans were already celebrating the 52-7 Nebraska victory.

And maybe, he thought, things hadn't changed after all.

"I sat down there on the bench all by myself when I was a freshman and we lost 7-0 (in 1988)," Figures said. "It seems like right now it's a re-creation, except this loss feels much worse than the other one ever was."

"When I was out on the field, I was pinching myself to see if I would wake up, if it was a dream," he said. "But sure enough, it was reality. Nebraska whooped our ass."

Figures, a senior cornerback, was part of a Buffalo defense that gave up 428 yards and 52 points to Nebraska — the most points a Colorado team has surrendered since a 52-7 loss at Missouri in 1984.

The game was also a missed chance for Figures and his senior teammates to beat Nebraska for the third time in four years.

"Now I've got to sit here and tell my kids — my grandkids, even — that the last time I played Nebraska, I lost," he said. "That's something I can't get back. It's over. It's done."

The week before, Colorado had routed Kansas State 54-7. But the loss to Nebraska ended the Buffaloes' 25-game Big Eight unbeaten

streak and was the Cornhuskers' first win over Colorado since 1988.

"It's weird. It's really weird. We've been blowing people out and now we got blown out," Figures said. "I guess this gives you a taste of how they feel."

Figures said Saturday's game was decided early, when the Buffalo offense gave Nebraska good field position to start the game.

The Huskers started four first-half drives in Colorado territory — at the Buffalo 15, 36, 47 and 27 yard lines. Nebraska turned three of those possessions into points, and built a 24-7 halftime lead that all but iced the game.

"When you've got running backs like Calvin Jones and Derek Brown, and they've got field position like that," Figures said, "that's just like throwing a piece of meat in a lion's den."

It got no better for CU in the second half. Freshman quarterback Koy Detmer couldn't escape a swarming Nebraska defense, and the Buffaloes weren't able to manage a first down in the third quarter.

As a result, Figures and the rest of the Colorado defense were on the field for 46 minutes of the game and wore down in the second half.

"It's humiliating," Figures said. "I've been playing football since I was seven and I've never gotten beaten this bad."

"I have to give (Nebraska) credit tonight," he said. "They earned my credit tonight, and they haven't earned my credit since I've been at Colorado."



Michelle Paulman/DN



Al Schaben/DN

Scoring Summary				
Scoring by Quarters	1	2	3	4
Colorado	0	7	0	0
Nebraska	7	17	7	21

- NU—Jones, 3 yd. run (Bennett kick)
- NU—Jones, 47 yd. run (Bennett kick)
- NU—Bennett, 24 yd. field goal
- CU—Hill, 3 yd. run (Berger kick)
- NU—Jones, 1 yd. run (Bennett kick)
- NU—Armstrong, 5 yd. pass from Frazier (Bennett kick)
- NU—Lewis, 34 yd. run (Bennett kick)
- NU—Washington, 1 yd. pass from Frazier (Bennett kick)
- NU—Schlesinger, 5 yd. run (Sieler kick)



Scott Maurer/DN

Clockwise from top left:

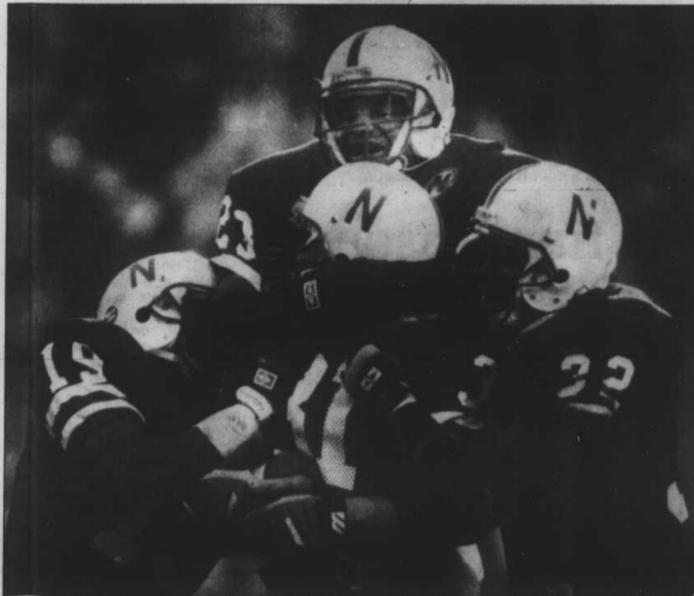
NU strong safety Steve Carmer grabs a Koy Detmer pass during the first half as free safety Tyrone Byrd backs him up.

NU quarterback Tommie Frazier outruns CU's Ron Woolfork during the third quarter.

Husker fans bring down the goal posts following NU's 52-7 victory over Colorado. The win snapped NU's eight-game skid against Top 10 opponents.

NU players Kenny Wilhite (19), Ernie Beler (23), Steve Carmer (31) and Ed Stewart (32) celebrate Carmer's second quarter interception.

CU's T.J. Cunningham bobbles the opening kickoff.



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