

Frazier passes test; Huskers win 'dogfight'

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

The final score was no indication of the scare Texas Tech put into the Nebraska football team at Memorial Stadium on Saturday.

Despite beating the Red Raiders 50-27, the Cornhuskers trailed Texas Tech 21-20 with 8:37 left in the third quarter.

A 26-yard touchdown pass from Texas Tech quarterback Robert Hall to fullback Bruce Hill gave Texas Tech a 21-20 lead. It was the first lead of the game for the Red Raiders, and the first time the Huskers had fallen behind this season.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said that he was not surprised that the Huskers fell behind the Red Raiders.

"This was a good football team that I think has a very good shot at winning the Southwest Conference championship," Osborne said. "We thought we were in for a dogfight coming into the game."

But the Red Raiders' lead was short-lived as the Huskers retaliated with an 11-play, 68-yard drive that resulted in a Byron Bennett field goal to put Nebraska ahead 23-21 with four minutes left in the third quarter.

On the next series, Texas Tech's chances for an upset began to unravel.

Husker outside linebacker Trev Alberts sacked Texas Tech quarterback Robert Hall on the third play of the series, forcing a fumble.

Alberts disrupted Texas Tech offense with 10 total tackles, including three sacks of Hall and another tackle for loss. Nebraska recovered Hall's fumble and the Huskers took possession at the Red Raider 23-yard-line.

Tight end Gerald Armstrong gave the Huskers a 30-21 lead five plays later, scoring on a five-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Tommie Frazier.

On the day, Frazier completed 12

of 27 passes for 206 yards and one touchdown.

Senior split end Corey Dixon was Frazier's number one target. Dixon caught six passes for 116 yards.

Despite Frazier's 200-yard passing day, the Huskers could have been more proficient, Osborne said. It was the second consecutive game Nebraska passed for more than 200 yards — the first time Nebraska had thrown for more than 200 yards in two consecutive games since 1976, when Vince Ferragamo did it against TCU and Miami, Fla.

"We had 217 yards passing, but that figure should have been 317 yards," Osborne said. "The way they played us, we had to throw the ball to win."

Osborne said Frazier's inconsistency Saturday may have resulted from Frazier's injured ankle.

"Frazier just wasn't in his rhythm and as the game went on he got better," Osborne said. "Frazier didn't do anything in practice until Thursday, and I think it showed a little bit."

Frazier saw almost all of the action at quarterback for the Huskers, despite his sore right ankle.

Back-up quarterback Brook Berringer attempted only two passes and had limited playing time. Tony Veland took only three snaps before leaving the game with a ruptured Achilles Tendon.

After the Armstrong touchdown, Texas Tech returner Derrell Mitchell bobbled Tom Seiler's kickoff, and the Huskers recovered the ball at the Red Raiders' five-yard-line.

Osborne said Mitchell's fumble may have been the key play of the game for the Huskers.

"If we wouldn't have gotten that fumble, I think it could have come down to the last series of the game," Osborne said.

Running back Damon Benning scored two plays later on a pitch to the

left side which gave the Huskers a 36-21 lead with :34 remaining in the third quarter.

For the game, Benning had 127 yards on 19 carries and two touchdowns in the first start of his career.

Lawrence Phillips, a true freshman, saw the first action of his career and gained 80 yards on 14 carries. As a team, Nebraska rushed for 317 yards despite the absence of starting I-back Calvin Jones who sat out with a knee injury.

Osborne said he was pleased with the performance of the back-up running backs.

"I thought Damon Benning played well and the other young backs showed that they can play, but they're still raw and you can see it in the mistakes they make," Osborne said.

The Huskers jumped to an early 7-0 lead on an eight-play, 80-yard drive, capped by a 45-yard touchdown run by Benning.

Confusion among the Texas Tech returners on Seiler's kickoff gave the Red Raiders poor field position at its own 12-yard-line.

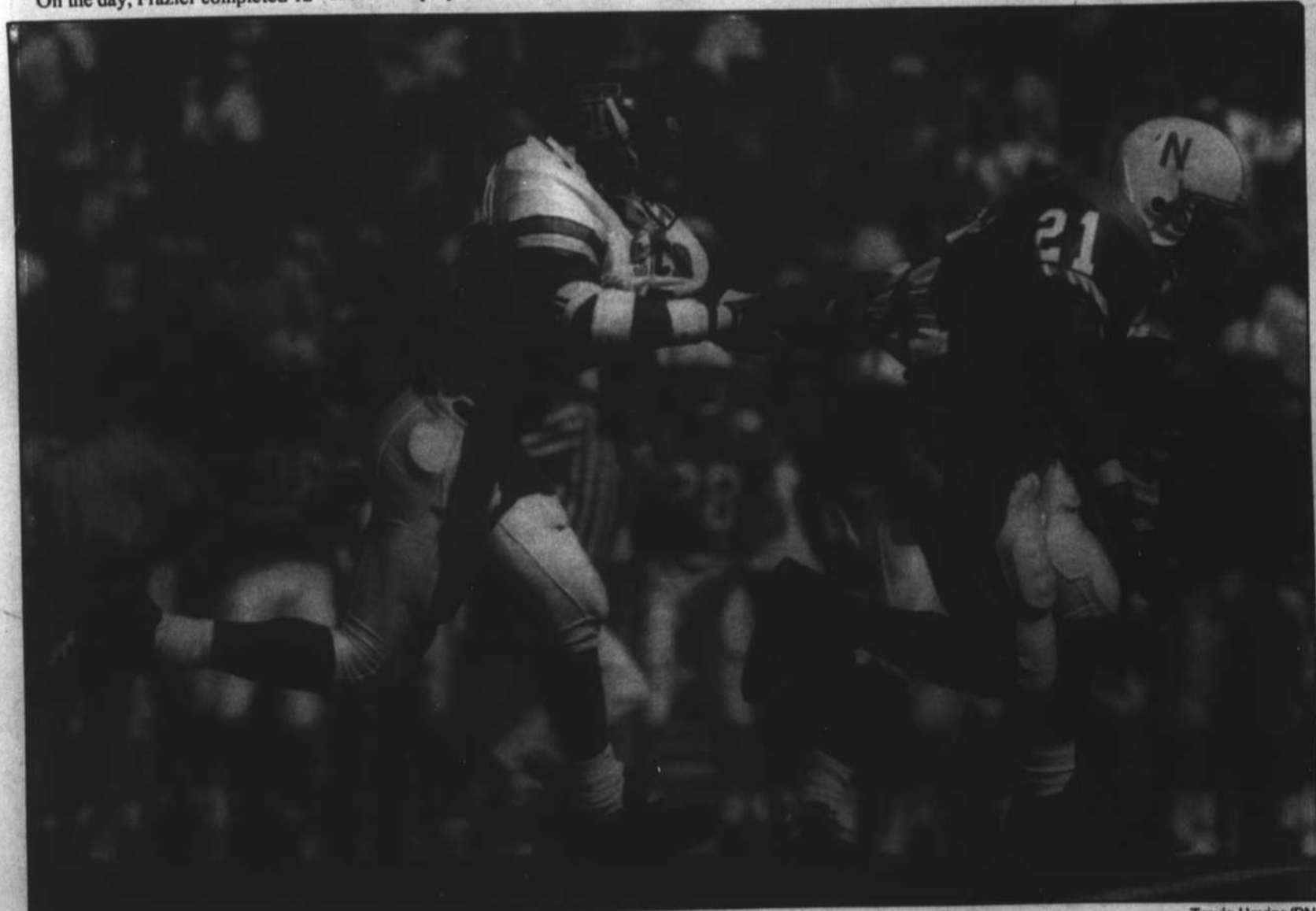
The Red Raiders were forced to punt three plays later, and Nebraska took over at the Texas Tech 40-yard-line.

After only five plays and 16 yards, Nebraska had to settle for a 41-yard Bennett field goal, which gave the Huskers a 10-0 advantage with 7:45 remaining in the first quarter.

Texas Tech got on the board before the first quarter ended, as Mitchell caught a 34-yard touchdown pass from Hall with three seconds remaining.

After Tommie Frazier scored on a one-yard run to give the Huskers a 17-7 lead, the Red Raiders answered with a 51-yard touchdown pass from Hall to split end Lloyd Hill to cut the Husker lead to 17-14.

Bennett added a 45-yard field goal with :23 remaining in the first half to give Nebraska a 20-14 at halftime edge.



Travis Heying/DN