

Tough victory gives Huskers chance at title

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

Nebraska has been unspectacular, unappreciated and on Friday, the Cornhuskers were unable to move the football.

But, somehow, they remained undefeated.

The Huskers stumbled for only 179 total yards offense in their 21-7 win over Oklahoma, which moved Nebraska to 11-0 on the season.

The offensive output was the fifth-lowest ever by a Tom Osborne-coached Nebraska team and the lowest yardage ever in a Husker win, but it was enough to give Nebraska a national-title shot against Florida State in the Orange Bowl on New Year's Day.

"One way or another, we have got the job done," Osborne said. "We have played well together all year, and the resiliency and resolve of this team sets it apart from other teams."

The Huskers finished the season No. 1 in the coalition poll released Sunday. Nebraska was No. 1 in the USA Today/CNN poll and No. 2 in the Associated Press poll. Florida State finished second in the coalition poll, edging out undefeated West Virginia, which finished third.

The defense picked up the slack for a sputtering offense Friday by holding the Sooners to 294 total yards — 94 in the second half — while forcing four turnovers.

The turnovers turned out to be the difference in the game, as the Huskers converted two of the four Sooner miscues into touchdowns.

Oklahoma, which was seventh in the nation in turnover margin, forced two Husker turnovers but were unable to convert them into scores.

The Nebraska defense's play was even more impressive considering the loss of the Huskers' defensive playmaker, Trev Alberts, who left the game after suffering a dislocated elbow during the ninth play of the Sooners' opening drive.

Despite his absence, Alberts said, he knew the defense would come together.

"I knew that we would win because I could see it in my teammates' eyes," Alberts said. "All year we just keep overcoming obstacles. When it comes down to it, we keep finding a way to win."

Coalition Bowl Poll

| Coalition Poll | Point Total |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Nebraska (11-0) | 3,005 |
| 2. Florida State (11-1) | 2,956 |
| 3. West Virginia (11-0) | 2,887 |
| 4. Auburn (11-0) | 2,732 |
| 5. Notre Dame (10-1) | 2,706 |

| CNN/USA Today Poll (First-place votes) | Point Total |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Nebraska (43) | 1,525 |
| 2. West Virginia (8) | 1,477 |
| 3. Florida State (10) | 1,448 |
| 4. Notre Dame (1) | 1,367 |
| 5. Tennessee | 1,276 |

| AP Poll (First-place votes) | Point Total |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Florida State (42) | 1,508 |
| 2. Nebraska (17) | 1,480 |
| 3. West Virginia (1) | 1,410 |
| 4. Auburn (2) | 1,366 |
| 5. Notre Dame | 1,339 |

DN graphic

Dwayne Harris, a 6-foot-2, 215-pound, junior outside linebacker from Bessemer, Ala., replaced Alberts and made some big plays of his own for the Husker defense.

Harris finished the game with six tackles including three sacks of Oklahoma quarterback Cale Gundy.

Nebraska tied the score 7-7 earlier in the second quarter after Toby Wright intercepted a Gundy pass and returned it 25 yards to the Oklahoma 15. Tommie Frazier dove in for the touchdown four plays later.

After a quiet third quarter for both teams, Frazier connected with wingback Abdul Muhammad for an 11-yard touchdown to give the Huskers a 14-7 lead.

On the ensuing kickoff, Mike Minter forced Oklahoma return man Darius Johnson to fumble and David Scyzys recovered for the Huskers.

On the next play, Calvin Jones, who finished with just 85 yards on 25 carries, scampered 20 yards to give the Huskers a 21-7 lead.

No matter how ugly it was, Jones said, Nebraska was happy with the win.

"I'm just glad my teammates have given me a chance to play for the national championship," he said. "I couldn't even put into words what it would mean for me and for this whole team to win it."



Shaun Sartin/DN



Shaun Sartin/DN

Sooner player says

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

The magic in the Oklahoma-Nebraska rivalry finally may have switched sidelines.

Oklahoma's "Sooner Magic," which spoiled Nebraska's national championship hopes many times in the past, looked as if it had returned for the first three quarters of Nebraska's 21-7 victory Friday.

But when Nebraska broke a 7-7 tie by running off 14 points in 13 seconds during the fourth quarter, the Sooners' hopes of upsetting the top-ranked Huskers were ruined.

Oklahoma coach Gary Gibbs said Oklahoma gave Nebraska too many opportunities.

"Nebraska made some key plays when they needed to and got the turnover that led to an easy score to wrap it up," Gibbs said. "You can't turn it over and miss opportunities like this and expect to beat a team like Nebraska."

The Sooners' turnovers helped

Nebraska improve to 11-0. Oklahoma gave up three fumbles and threw one interception.

With Oklahoma up 7-0, Sooner runningback Jerald Moore coughed up the ball after rambling 47 yards to the Nebraska 14.

"We turned it over a lot in another game we played, which was a defeat," Gibbs said. "Field position played a major role, and then the turnovers played a major role in the outcome of the game."

Oklahoma gained 294 total yards compared to Nebraska's 179, including outgaining the Huskers 220 to 78 in the first half.

"I thought in the first half, we probably controlled both sides of the ball," Gibbs said. "In the second half, their defensive front took charge. I thought our guys, from a physical standpoint, played excellent."

Gibbs said he was impressed with his defense, which held Husker I-back Calvin Jones to 83 yards