

Cornhuskers win battle of defenses

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

NORMAN, Okla. — The combination of quarterback Brook Berringer and wingback Abdul Muhammad proved costly for Oklahoma, as the Cornhuskers overcame a disastrous second quarter to capture a 13-3 win Friday and a fourth straight trip to the Orange Bowl.

Thanks to Berringer and Muhammad, the Huskers remained No. 1 in both polls, collecting 41 more first-place votes than Penn State. Nebraska is 43 points ahead of the Nittany Lions in the coalition poll.

Berringer connected with Muhammad five times for 98 yards to help Nebraska bounce back from a sluggish second quarter in which Oklahoma gained 117 yards. The Huskers finished the second quarter with minus 8 total yards.

Despite the Huskers' lack of offense, Nebraska was able to ride its defense into the locker room with the game knotted 3-3 at the intermission.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said the defenses should be credited rather than the offenses criticized.

"I was real proud of our defense; I thought they carried the day," Osborne said. "We felt the strongest part of Oklahoma's football team was their defense. We were concerned about moving the ball. I guess they didn't miss our prediction by much. The story of the game was the two defenses."

But it was Nebraska that came up with the big plays.

After a scoreless first quarter, the Huskers opened the second quarter by finishing off a 30-yard drive with a 46-yard Darin Erstad field goal.

Nebraska got a big play on Oklahoma's next possession.

The Sooners drove 76 yards but were denied points when Barron Miles blocked Scott Blanton's 33-yard field goal attempt.

Oklahoma, however, managed to tie the game on its next field goal attempt — Blanton's 25-yard field goal with 2:19 left in the half.

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NU football coach

ing up a field goal was three points too many for the Husker defense.

"As a defense, if we get three points or whatever (from the offense), we've got to try to make that hold up," Stewart said. "We just try to take it upon ourselves to stop the other team from any kind of scoring and let the offense do their job."

Muhammad then began producing the big plays in the second half, when he had four of his five receptions.

Nebraska took its first drive of the second half 76 yards in 11 plays and ended it with a 26-yard Tom Sieler field goal.

On a third-and-five play from the Sooners' 39-yard line, Berringer hit Muhammad for a 24-yard gain, which put the Huskers in field goal range.

Muhammad, who hung onto the ball after taking a hard hit in the back immediately after making the catch, said practice paid off in situations like that.

"As soon as I caught the ball, I locked it up," he said. "I didn't see the guy behind me. I didn't really know he was even there. We do drills like that in practice, and it worked in the game."

On Nebraska's next possession, Muhammad hauled in a pass on a third-and-10 play for a 44-yard gain down to the Oklahoma 13-yard line.

Two plays later, Berringer's 1-yard plunge put Nebraska up 13-3 with 13:25 left in the game.



Jeff Haller/DN
Jeanette Johnson of Valley raises an orange in triumph outside Memorial Stadium in Norman, Okla., after the Huskers defeated the Sooners on Friday.

Osborne said the second half demonstrated the attitude Nebraska had displayed all season.

"Our team, as a whole, has done an outstanding job of working together," Osborne said. "If there is any one strength of it (the team), it's been that they've been a real team. I've been real proud of their attitude and work ethic."

"Obviously, they've been really goal-oriented. We've got one more step to go, and hopefully we'll get that

done."
Nebraska ran 24 plays on its next two possessions to run the clock out on the Sooners.

The victory gives Nebraska its first two consecutive unbeaten and untied seasons in 91 years.

"We're glad to be 12-0," Osborne said. "Not too many teams go undefeated through the regular season back-to-back. These guys (captains) have done an outstanding job of leadership."



Barron Miles takes to the air to field goal attempt in Friday's game.



Jeff Haller/DN
Nebraska's Barron Miles, right, dives to successfully block a field goal attempt by Oklahoma's Scott Blanton in the first half.



Nebraska I-back Lawrence Phillip rushes for yards during Friday's game.