

National Champions

Second to none

NU makes second title look easy

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Editor

TEMPE, Ariz. — The Nebraska football team needed all of about one hour to make those who predicted that Florida would win the national title look like fools.



Osborne

Playing before a Fiesta Bowl- and Sun Devil Stadium-record crowd of 79,864 fans, No. 1 Nebraska turned the national championship game into a farce, routing the second-ranked Gators 62-24.

The 12-0 Cornhuskers rolled into Tempe on a mission. Florida was unlucky enough to get in the way.

In claiming its second straight national title and fourth championship in school history, Nebraska grabbed 12-1 Florida by the neck early and never let go, leaving only one question unanswered.

Would any team, from any year have been able to beat the 1995 Huskers?

Billed for nearly a month as the game of the decade, the 25th Fiesta Bowl turned into another routine thrashing for Nebraska, which firmly claimed its spot in history as one of college football's all-time most dominant teams.

Nebraska became the first squad in 39 years to capture back-to-back consensus national titles and the first team ever to win 36 games over a three-year period.

More than 50,000 Nebraska fans invaded Central Arizona, prompting more than one member of the local media to remark that never before had as much red been worn in Sun Devil Stadium, home of the NFL's Arizona Cardinals.

Other than two missed extra points and a blown coverage on a meaningless fourth quarter kickoff return, the Huskers executed to near perfection.

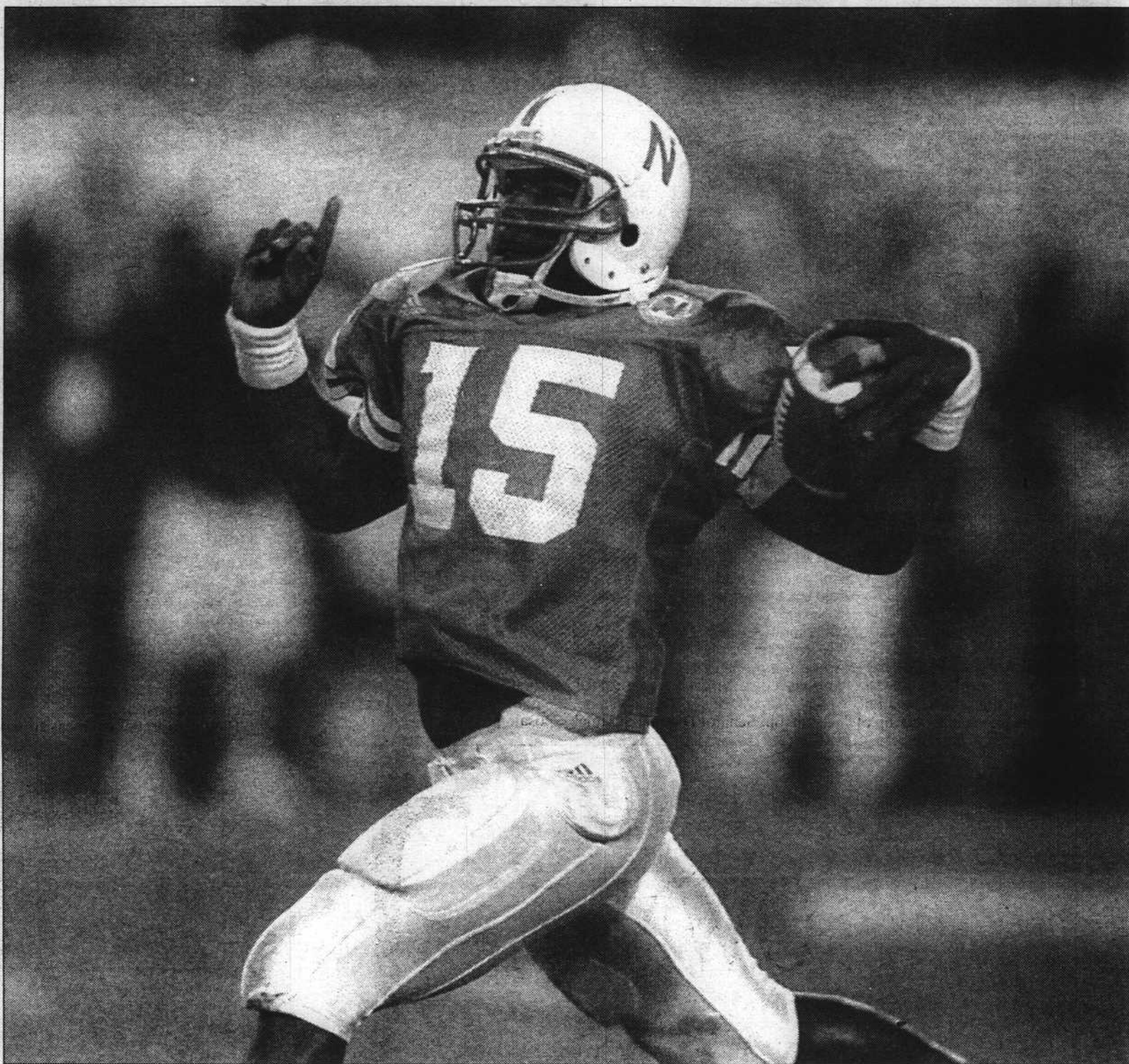
Nebraska amassed 629 yards of total offense, including 524 yards rushing, and broke school records for yards rushing, total yards and points scored in a bowl game.

Florida's Fun 'n' Gun offense, which trounced its first 12 opponents this season, crumbled at the feet of Nebraska's Blackshirts. After leading 3-0 and 10-6 in the first quarter, the Gators were held to a season-low 269 yards and could not withstand the heat of the Huskers' pass rush.

Nebraska sacked Florida quarterback Danny Wuerffel seven times and held the Gators to minus-28 yards rushing.

"I really didn't think it would be any kind of a blowout," Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said. "I thought it would go down to the wire; maybe we could win by a couple touchdowns. It's just one of those nights. We play another night, maybe they win."

I-back Lawrence Phillips, who ran for 165 yards, and quarterback Tommie Frazier, who rushed for a career-best 199 yards on 16 carries, both topped Mike Rozier's school bowl record for rushing yards.



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska quarterback Tommie Frazier scores on a 35-yard run to give Nebraska a 42-10 lead over Florida in the third quarter of the Fiesta Bowl. Frazier ran for a career-high 199 yards on 16 attempts.

Frazier, whose two touchdowns on the ground included a career-long 75-yard run, also threw for 105 yards and two scores, earning his third straight bowl game most valuable player award.

During the first two quarters, Nebraska scored on five straight and six of seven possessions and did not punt, jumping to a 35-10 halftime lead. In the first half alone, Nebraska held the Gators to minus-13 yards rushing, sacked Wuerffel five times, averaged 7.2 yards a carry and outscored the Gators 29-0 in the second quarter.

But in the clash pitting two of the nation's most explosive offenses, it was the Husker defense that swung the momentum clearly in Nebraska's favor midway through the first half.

Leading 13-10 early in the second quarter after a Phillips 42-yard touchdown scamper, the Huskers pinned Florida deep in its own territory. A holding call and a false start left the Gators facing a first-down-and-28 at their own 4-yard line.

Wuerffel was hammered by blitzing Husker linebacker Terrell Farley in the end zone. But the junior Heisman Trophy finalist fell forward to the 1-yard line to escape a safety. On the next play, Jamel Williams blitzed

"He couldn't take the pressure that we were giving him. You could see it in his eyes, the way he was looking at us."

TERRELL FARLEY

Nebraska linebacker

Wuerffel, sacking him seven yards deep in the end zone, giving Nebraska a 15-10 lead with 12:42 to play before halftime.

"We got into his head just like we have got into everybody else's head," All-American outside linebacker Jared Tomich said. "They underestimated our defensive line. We did the same thing we have done all year. We just took control."

Farley, who led Nebraska with eight tackles and two sacks, said Wuerffel turned into a different quarterback after the pressure began to mount.

"He couldn't take the pressure that we were giving him," Farley said. "You could see it in his eyes, the way he was looking at us."

Nebraska marched 54 yards in seven plays after the safety, scoring on a 1-yard plunge by Ahman Green to take a 22-10 lead. At that point, the Huskers — whose first touchdown

came on a 16-yard crossfield pass from Frazier to Phillips — had scored 22 points on 21 offensive plays.

A 26-yard Kris Brown field goal put Nebraska on top 25-10, and on the ensuing possession, cornerback Michael Booker returned an interception 42 yards for a touchdown to give Nebraska a commanding 32-10 lead with 2:40 remaining until halftime. Brown added a 24-yard field goal in the closing seconds of the half to put the Huskers up 35-10.

"We just stuck to our game plan, and we didn't change anything," Phillips said after his first start in nearly four months. The 6-foot, 220-pound junior declined to say after the game if he would turn professional and forego his senior season.

"I knew that we were going to run the ball a lot and wear them down, and that's what we did."

Frazier was intercepted in the end

zone by Anthonie Lott on the Huskers' first possession of the second half, but after an Eric Stokes' interception of Wuerffel, Frazier scored on a 35-yard run to put Nebraska on top 42-10.

"If you go out there and defend your title," Frazier said, "that makes it more special. There haven't been too many teams that have been able to win back-to-back titles."

Wuerffel hit Ike Hilliard for a 35-yard touchdown strike with 52 seconds to play in the third quarter. By that time, however, the destruction was nearly complete. Less than a minute had passed before Frazier took off again — this time for a 75-yard gallop, during which he ran through more than half of the Gator defense and was nearly dragged to a stop at one point.

"This points out that there is still a place in college football for a running quarterback," Osborne said.

Phillips and Brook Berringer added scoring runs in the fourth quarter, and Florida wide receiver Reidel Anthony returned a kickoff 93 yards, putting a merciful end to the romp.

"They clobbered us on both sides of the ball," Florida coach Steve Spurrier said. "They were definitely 30 or 40 points better than us. They had better coaches, better players, and that's all you can say about it."