

Gameday Notebook

Five true freshmen and sophomore Will linebacker Eric Johnson made their first appearances in Nebraska uniforms Saturday, eliminating the possibility of a redshirt year.

Ralph Brown of Hacienda Heights, Calif., started at right cornerback; Lincoln Southeast graduate J.R. Edwards, a split end, caught one pass for 10 yards; DeAngelo Evans, an I-back from Wichita, Kan., had one carry for two yards; left cornerback Mike Brown, from Scottsdale, Ariz., had one tackle playing both special teams and defense; and defensive tackle Steve Warren of Springfield, Mo., had one stop for a three-yard loss.

Johnson, who was academically ineligible last season, backed up Ryan Terwilliger.

Ralph Brown, whose parents Debra and Ralph, sister and girlfriend were in the stands, said starting in his first game at NU was something he will never forget.

"I didn't know what it would feel like," he said. "It's an unexplainable experience with all those people and the music."

Only four Cornhuskers suffered injuries of note in Saturday's game, Coach Tom Osborne said. Octavious McFarlin, a rover, suffered a back strain; tight end T.J. DeBates had a strained knee; fullback Josh Cobb sprained an ankle; and guard Jeff Lake bruised his thigh.

After not allowing a sack last season, the Nebraska offensive line gave up one in its first game this year. With six minutes left in the third quarter, Scott Frost was sandwiched by Michigan State's Chris Smith and Dimitrius Underwood on a third down and 14 from the Nebraska 46-yard line.

The Nebraska offense did not have a touchdown drive longer than 50 yards against the Spartans. NU's longest drive of the game came at the end of the first quarter and the beginning of the second quarter, when the Huskers marched 63 yards in 14 plays. The drive, which ended with a 35-yard Kris Brown field goal, took 6 minutes and 19 seconds off the clock.

NU rushed for its lowest total (184 yards) since a 136-yard performance against Oklahoma in 1994. Nebraska's 298 yards of total offense was the first time since the 1995 Kansas game that the Huskers finished with less than 300 yards.

With the 55-14 win, Nebraska extended many streaks. The Huskers won their 37th straight regular season game, they won a nation's best 26th consecutive game and they won for the 31st straight time at home.

The crowd of 75,590 was the 208th straight sellout at Memorial Stadium and it was the 11th straight successful season opener for Nebraska. NU last lost an opener to Florida State in 1985.

Michigan State Coach Nick Saban said he has only seen one team better than the one the Spartans played on Saturday.

"Maybe their team last year," Saban said. "It's hard to make comparisons, but they have so much team speed and depth. It's hard to believe."

Gameday notebook compiled by senior reporters Trevor Parks and Mike Kluck.

Defense, special teams shine as NU wins opener

By **TREVOR PARKS**
Senior Reporter

Nebraska's 55-14 win over Michigan State Saturday afternoon went exactly as the top-ranked Cornhuskers had said things would go.

Great defense, great special teams, but a sluggish offense.

Much to the delight of the 75,590 fans at Memorial Stadium, the defense and special teams were more than enough to beat the Spartans (1-1), getting the two-time defending national champion Huskers over their first hurdle on the road to a third straight title.

"Our defense is real focused on making things happen," said Mike linebacker Jon Hesse, who had a team-high nine tackles. "The nature of our defense is to try to dictate the pace."

Most of the afternoon that was apparent. Of NU's 55 points, the defense scored 14 — on interception returns by rover Mike Minter and rush end



Minter

"If we keep improving each week, we'll be pretty darn good at the end of the season."

GRANT WISTROM
NU rush end

Grant Wistrom — and the Blackshirts set up the first offensive touchdown of the day.

The special teams scored a touchdown on a 62-yard return by Mike Fullman and set up a 16-yard drive when Eric Warfield blocked a Paul Edinger punt early in the third quarter. Good returns also set the table Nebraska's two second half touchdown drives of 49 and 34 yards.

The Huskers finished with 152 punt return yards on eight kicks.

Minter gave Nebraska great field position to score its first touchdown of the season by stepping in front of Derrick Mason to intercept a Todd Schultz pass at the Michigan State 22-yard line with 8 minutes and 32 seconds remaining in the first quarter.

On the play, Schultz was hit by Jason Peter and Wistrom and missed the rest of the game with a sprained left knee.

One play later, Stanford transfer

Scott Frost scored on an 11-yard option-keeper around the right side.

Special teams stepped up for Nebraska's next score.

On fourth down and 7 from the Michigan State 23-yard line, Edinger punted to Fullman at the NU 38.

Despite having only nine teammates on the field for the return, Fullman did his best Johnny Rodgers' impersonation, avoiding two defenders and beating three Spartans around the left corner before a Warfield block sprung him for a 62-yard touchdown to give the Huskers a 17-0 lead.

Frost said the special teams and the defense made his job easier.

"There is no sense in taking chances when you have a defense and special teams that are playing like that," he said. "That's kind of a luxury for me as a quarterback."

Frost ran for 58 yards on 10 attempts and completed 5 of 11 passes for 74 yards and one touchdown in his

Michigan St.	14
Nebraska	55

first game since November 1994. After Fullman's score, it was the defense's turn to put up points.

Michigan State was driving when Minter stepped in front of a third-and-15 pass by Spartan quarterback Gus OrNSTEIN intended for Nigea Carter. Minter raced untouched 84 yards with the ball he said was "up in the air like a gift from heaven," making the score 24-0 with 3:06 left in the half.

Hesse said that play may have broken the Spartans' backs.

"It was 17-0, and it's looking like they are going to score a touchdown, or maybe a field goal," Hesse said. "That's huge. It kind of takes the wind out of their sails."

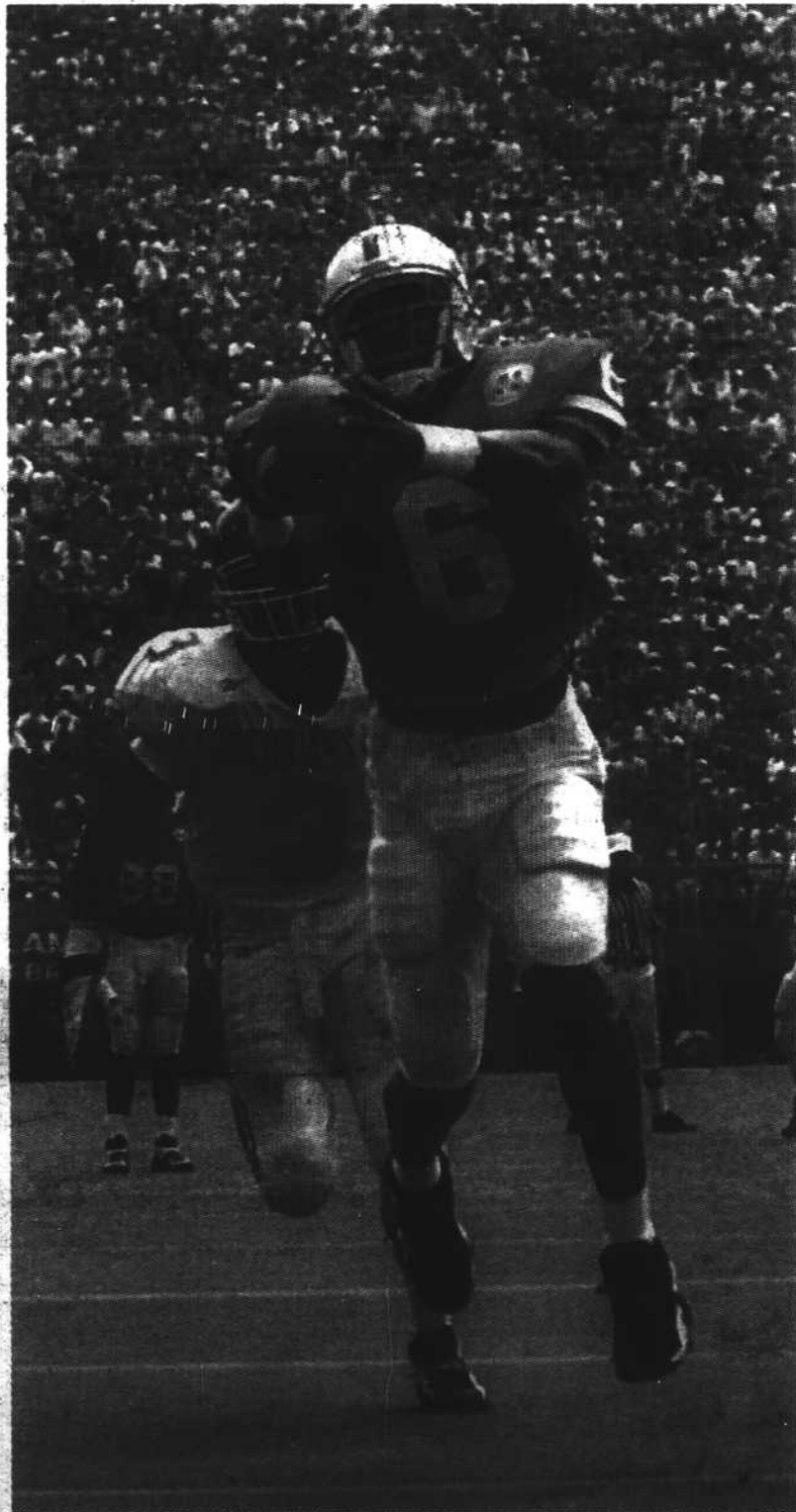
A Kris Brown field goal gave NU a 27-0 halftime lead.

Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride said his defense graded well in its first game.

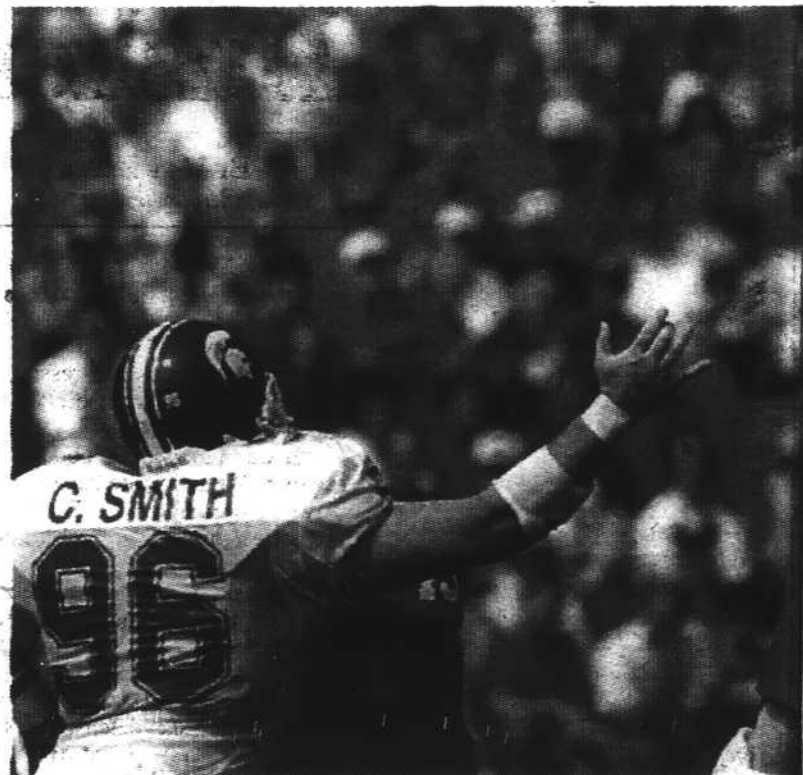
"If I had a grade to give our kids," McBride said, "it would be a B-plus or A-minus for the effort, even though we did have quite a few errors."

NU had seven sacks for 47 yards, keeping Michigan State quarterbacks on the run all game. The Spartans finished the game with 246 total yards.

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SCOTT BRUBB/DN



Football Polls

School	Pts.	Pvs. Rank	School	Pts.	Pvs. Rank
2. Tennessee (1)	1,415	2	2. Tennessee (4)	1,557	2
4. Florida (3)	1,391	4	4. Florida	1,509	4
6. Penn St. (1)	1,206	6	6. Penn St.	1,315	7
8. Texas	1,119	8	8. Ohio St.	1,182	10
10. Notre Dame	856	7	10. Miami	1,038	11
12. Alabama	743	13	12. North Carolina	856	24
14. Kansas St.	664	15	14. Brigham Young	708	16
16. Auburn	614	17	16. USC	646	19
18. USC	491	21	18. Arizona St.	526	20
20. Louisiana St.	323	19	20. LSU	412	17
22. Kansas	309	24	22. Iowa	352	23
24. Syracuse	214	11	24. Kansas	207	-