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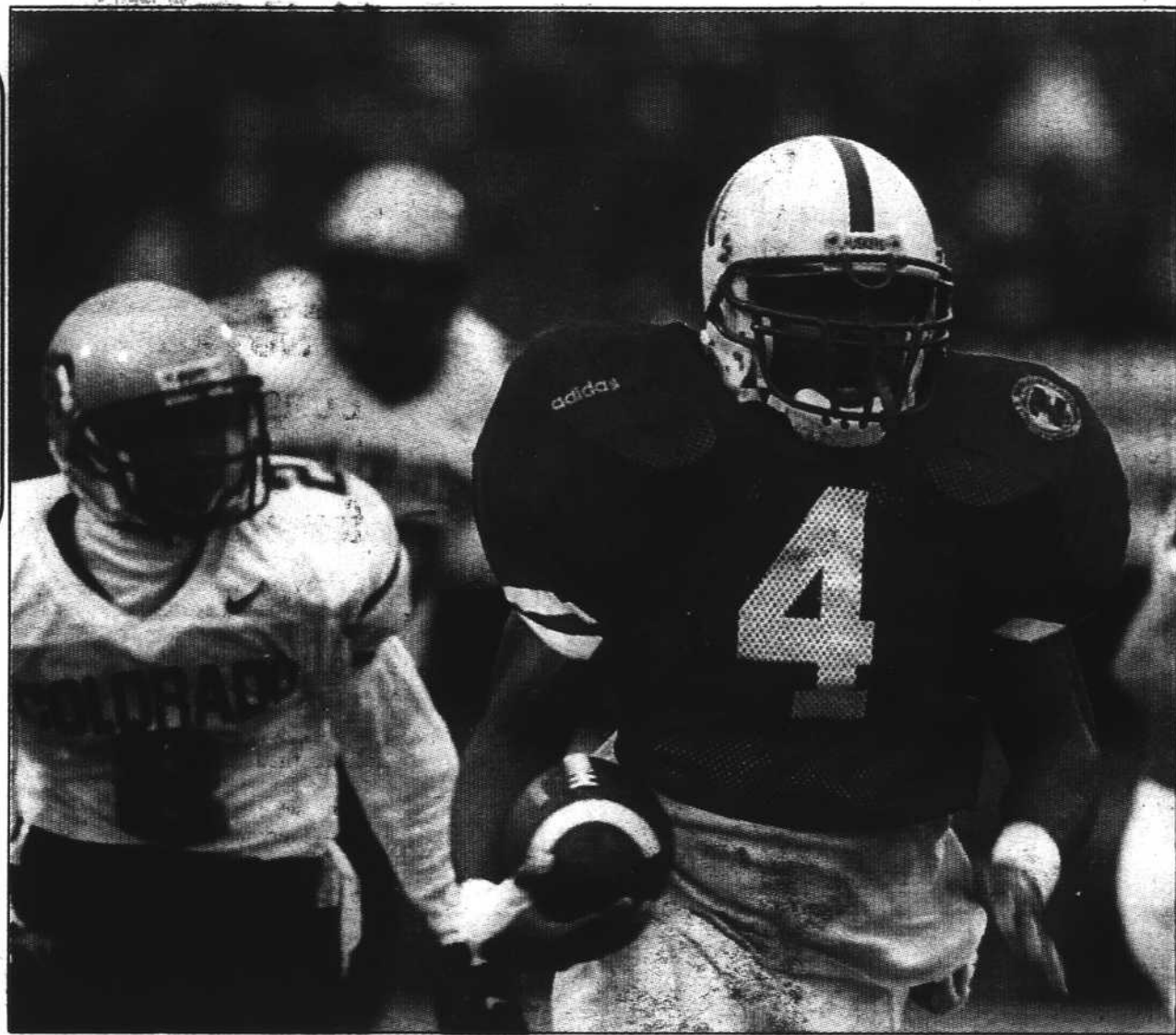
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DEANGELO EVANS runs away from Colorado's Hannibal Navies (left) and Ron Merkerson in NU's 17-12 win last week.

NU defense seeks to halt Texas run

Saturday's winner earns a berth in the Bowl Alliance.

BY TREVOR PARKS
 Senior Reporter

With Texas showcasing one of its best offenses ever, and Nebraska's defense being mentioned among the best of all time, Saturday's Big 12 title game is the perfect time for two of college football's most storied programs to meet.

NU and Texas have won seven national titles — including a shared championship in 1970 — and 66 conference titles. So it's only natural that the two would meet for the first-ever Big 12 championship.

Third-ranked Nebraska, 10-1 overall and 8-0 in the Big 12, will play unranked Texas, 7-4 and 6-2, at the Trans World Dome in St. Louis, Saturday at 12:10 p.m.

The winner earns a spot in one of the alliance bowls. If NU wins Saturday, that's the Sugar Bowl, Jan. 2 against No. 1 Florida State. A Cornhusker loss fogs the bowl picture.

One clear aspect of Saturday's battle is the key matchup: Texas' offense against Nebraska's defense. UT has been dominant lately, winning four straight games and rolling up 500 yards per game in its last seven contests.

NU Coach Tom Osborne has noticed.

"Right now, they are probably playing as well as anybody in the league," Osborne said.

Grant Wistrom, who had a career-high 15 tackles against Colorado last Friday, said both teams are playing at a high level.

"I guess if there was an argument for a championship game," said Wistrom,

Saturday, 12:10 p.m.
 Trans World Dome
 St. Louis

Nebraska Offense				Texas Offense			
Pos.	No.	Name	Ht. Wt. Yr.	Pos.	No.	Name	Ht. Wt. Yr.
LT	77	Adam Treu	6-6 305 Sr.	LT	75	Octavious Bishop	6-5 305 So.
C	67	Aaron Taylor	6-1 305 Jr.	C	58	Ryan Fiebiger	6-3 282 Jr.
RT	70	Eric Anderson	6-4 305 Jr.	RT	67	Jay Humphrey	6-7 295 So.
QB	7	Scott Frost	6-3 215 Jr.	QB	5	James Brown	6-0 190 Jr.
IB	4	DeAngelo Evans	5-9 210 Fr.	RB	11	Ricky Williams	6-0 220 So.
PK	35	Kris Brown	5-10 205 So.	PK	4	Phil Dawson	5-11 193 Jr.

Nebraska Defense				Texas Defense			
Pos.	No.	Name	Ht. Wt. Yr.	Pos.	No.	Name	Ht. Wt. Yr.
DT	97	Jeff Ogard	6-6 310 Sr.	NG	64	Casey Hampton	6-1 317 Fr.
RR	98	Grant Wistrom	6-5 250 Jr.	OLB	43	Jonathan Hickerson	6-0 230 Sr.
MIKE	44	Jon Hesse	6-4 250 Sr.	ILB	50	Tyson King	6-0 230 Sr.
LCB	20	Michael Booker	6-2 205 Sr.	RCB	2	Taje Allen	6-11 188 Sr.
ROV	16	Eric Stokes	5-11 195 Sr.	SS	17	Tre Thomas	6-2 207 Sr.
P	19	Jesse Koch	6-0 185 Sr.	P	15	Mark Schultz	6-1 200 Jr.

who was named Thursday as The Associated Press Big 12 defensive player of the year, "this is it."

The Longhorns lead the Big 12 and rank 13th nationally, averaging 456.6 yards per game. For the season, UT has 5,022 yards, less than 200 shy of the school record set last year.

So it's up to NU's defense to bring the Texas juggernaut to a grinding halt.

"We're still trying to show people how good we are," linebacker Jon Hesse said. "Every game we go out and try to make a statement."

That firepower figures to make for an exciting ending to the Big 12's debut season.

"We're going to come out intense," center Aaron Taylor said. "There is a lot at stake. They are going to hit us hard, and we are going to have to hit

them hard if we want to come out on top."

Note:

Hesse, Wistrom, Jason Peter, Jared Tomich and Mike Minter, Chris Dishman and Taylor earned first-team Associated Press all-conference honors Thursday.

NU's second-team members include Kris Brown, Eric Anderson, Jeff Ogard, Jamel Williams and Michael Booker. On the third team were Ahman Green and Terrell Farley.

Ralph Brown, Eric Stokes, Scott Frost, Vershan Jackson, Brian Schuster and DeAngelo Evans — who will start Saturday — made honorable mention.

Brown was the league's defensive newcomer of the year.