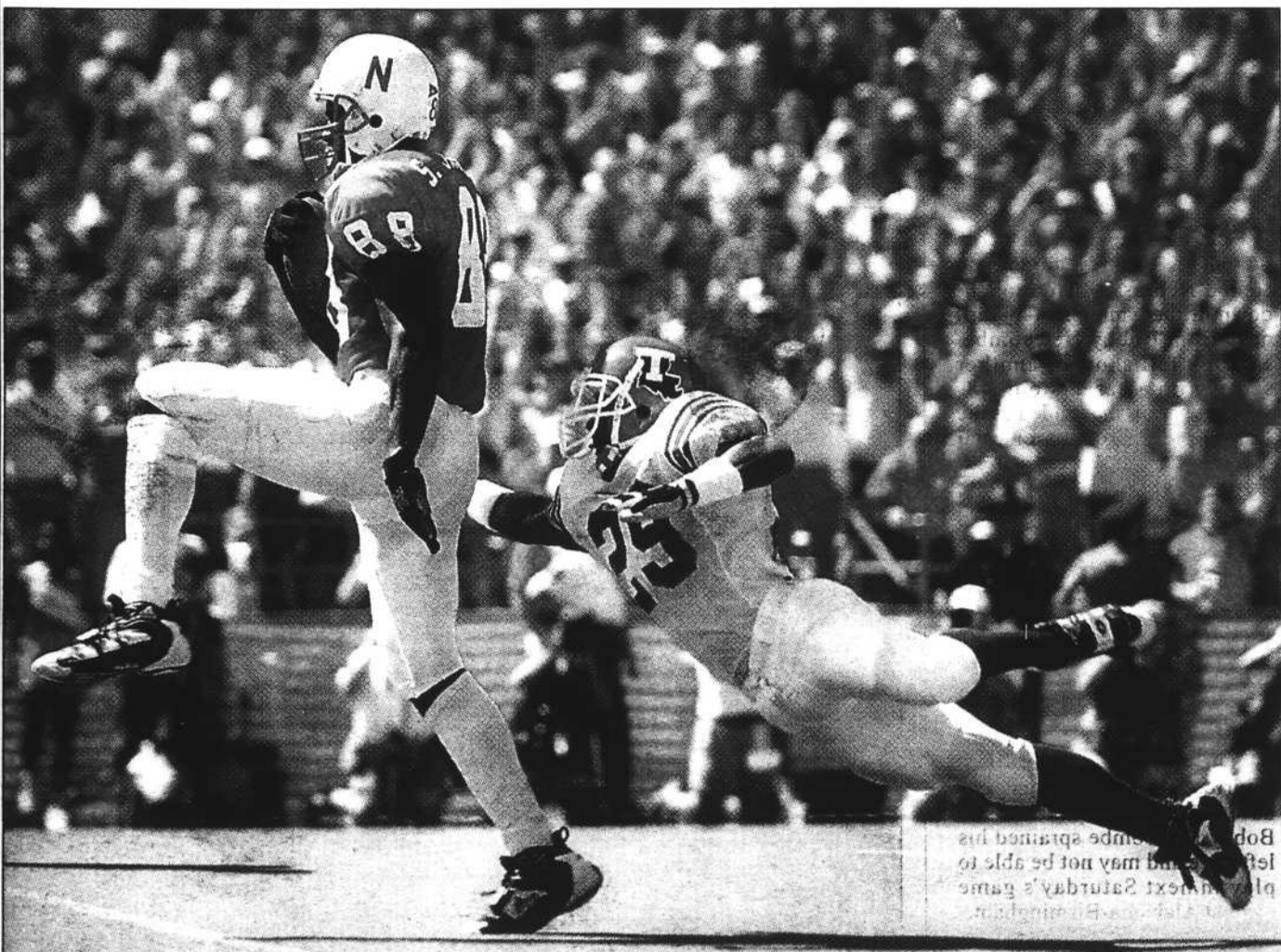


# Louisiana Tech 27



## Solich pleased with opener

*Louisiana Tech's offense can't spoil day for new coach*

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior staff writer

Sometime in the third quarter of the Eddie Robinson Classic on Saturday at Memorial Stadium, Louisiana Tech's Troy Edwards crashed a game that, up to that point, had been a Nebraska celebration of everything that was new.

The third-ranked Cornhuskers opened their 1998 season with a 70-yard scoring drive that took only 48 seconds, calming the nerves of first-year Coach Frank Solich, first-year quarterback Bobby Newcombe and an inexperienced offensive line. And for its part, the NU defense held Tech to minus-7 yards rushing and 156 yards passing in the first half, good for a 35-6 Husker lead.

Then Edwards intruded on the party, scoring on receptions of 52 yards and 94 yards on his way to an NCAA-record 405 yards receiving, 21 receptions and three touchdowns.

But the first-half lead proved too much to overcome as Nebraska (1-0) defeated the Bulldogs 56-27 in front of 76,021 at Memorial Stadium.

The numbers for Louisiana Tech (0-1) may have been large, but for Solich, the day was still a good time — under the circumstances, that is.

"I'm glad it's over and I think our players certainly are," Solich said. "It was pretty difficult in terms of all of the media attention.

"In a program like Nebraska's, you're going to attract a certain amount of attention, but when a new guy comes in and takes over, it's going to be virtually impossible to prepare for.

"All in all, I was pleased with the team and their performance. Louisiana Tech has a very fine football team, and I don't think there is any questions about that. All in all, it was a win, and we are delighted."

The solid performance of several inexperienced players highlighted a sloppy game, Solich said. In his first start at quarterback, Newcombe, who suffered a left knee injury during the game, completed 9 of 10 passes for 168 yards, including a 46-yard touchdown bomb to Sheldon Jackson on the third play of the game.

Sophomore I-back Correll

### Turning point:

Joe Walker's 99-yard kickoff return after Louisiana Tech cut NU's lead to 21-6. Walker's return put Nebraska back up by three touchdowns and out of serious harm for the rest of the game.

JON FRANK/DN

Buckhalter, making his first start in place of injured DeAngelo Evans, rushed for 143 yards on 19 carries behind four new starters on an offensive line that drew only one penalty.

"I thought Bobby did a great job for his first start," Solich said. "He showed a lot of composure, a great deal of poise and great deal of athletic ability. He threw the ball well, and I thought we probably put it up a little more. But we had some success running the ball. And we saw enough passes from them."

Forty-six too many, to be exact. Tech quarterback Tim Rattay passed for a career-best 590 yards, completing 46 of 68 attempts. It was the most passing yards ever gained by an NU opponent.

Rattay and Edwards dominated the Husker secondary in the third quarter. Rattay hit Edwards for a 52-yard touchdown reception on the Bulldogs' first drive of the second half.

On Tech's next drive, Rattay threw over NU's Mike Brown and Ralph Brown and found Edwards again, who scored on the 94-yard reception to close Nebraska's advantage to 35-21. Edwards averaged 19 yards per reception.

"I think they set us up and they caught me relaxing in that long one," Ralph Brown said. "They had been throwing Edwards short passes the whole game. The play before the bomb, Rattay threw long, but Edwards wasn't even near the ball. Then boom. He's by me and gone."

"In all my days, I have never seen a person do what (Edwards) did to us today. That is the most impressive performance I have even seen in my life."

The Huskers countered with two scoring drives, the first a nine-play, 77-yard drive that culminated in a Dan Alexander four-yard touchdown run to put NU ahead 42-21.

Tech struck one more time when Rattay hit Edwards down the right side-

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RALPH BROWN  
NU cornerback

line for an 80-yard score, Rattay's fourth touchdown pass of the day.

Edwards impressed Mike Brown so much that he apologized for the secondary's performance.

"He kept telling us that we couldn't cover him and that he was the best, and he is the best," Mike Brown said. "We're embarrassed by the way we played and we have to apologize to all of our teammates for not holding up our end of the bargain."

NU Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride labeled NU's tackling "pathetic," and said the Huskers' makeshift secondary accounted for some of the defensive problems.

An injury to starting free safety Clint Finley forced McBride and Defensive Backs Coach George Darlington to move No. 1 rover Mike Brown to the position. No. 2 rover Joe Walker, who would have played nickelback against Tech's impressive passing attack, moved to No. 1 rover.

Solich, however, downplayed Nebraska's defensive lapses.

"That's a tremendous amount of yards, but that's the way it goes on a first game," Solich said. "We have work to do, but I'm satisfied with the effort of our team. Certainly we need to work on some areas of the game. For a first game, it's OK."

"Rattay and Edwards are truly great players. People have had trouble slowing them down, and we did also.

"But all in all, it was a win. Now we're ready to move on."