

Nebraska 38,

OSU mistakes aid Husker win

■ **Fumbles and penalties** by OSU gave Nebraska room to shine in the first half of the game.

BY SAMUEL MCKEWON
Senior staff writer

Doubt in the outcome of this year's Nebraska-Oklahoma State game never quite made it to the final play. In fact, it never really got out of the first quarter.

Unlike the tight 24-17 decision of 1998, the Cornhuskers feasted on OSU errors, spiced up their offense and even had time for reserves in their 38-14 victory over the Cowboys on Saturday at Memorial Stadium.

A lackluster second-half performance was overshadowed by a brilliant 30-minute opening, which saw NU sprint out to a 31-0 lead in front of 77,740 fans and never look back. It was just how the Huskers intended it.

"We watched the film last week of last year's game," Nebraska middle linebacker Carlos Polk said, "and that was something we knew we could never let happen again. We can't let it come down to one play, where we make a tackle or miss a tackle and it's a different score."

The Huskers (5-0 overall and 2-0 in the Big 12 Conference) got a little help from Oklahoma State, which started its first drive of the game on the NU 49-yard line. OSU tailback Nathan Simmons promptly fumbled on the first play, free safety Clint Finley recovered, and Nebraska's points came tumbling after.

Helped by a face mask penalty and key third-down reception by wingback Sean Applegate, quarter-

back Eric Crouch capped off a nine-play, 51-yard touchdown drive with a 4-yard run - with nine minutes, 36 seconds remaining in the first quarter - to give NU a 7-0 lead.

Two minutes later, the Huskers struck again. From the OSU 49, Crouch found tight end Tracey Wistrom wide open, completing a 47-yard pass to the sophomore. I-back Correll Buckhalter scored on the next play from the 2.

Once again, Crouch and the Nebraska offense benefited from a more diverse game plan, which took advantage of an aggressive Oklahoma State defense. NU Head Coach Frank Solich sprinkled passes,

reverses and various option plays into the customary power rushing attack, keeping the Cowboys off-balance for much of the first half.

"We had a pretty good mix today," said Solich, whose Huskers had 240 rushing yards and 145 passing yards. "That's the kind of offense, to a degree, that we need to have. It may not be a deal where we get 300 yards rushing. But we were able to make some big plays, which is really a key."

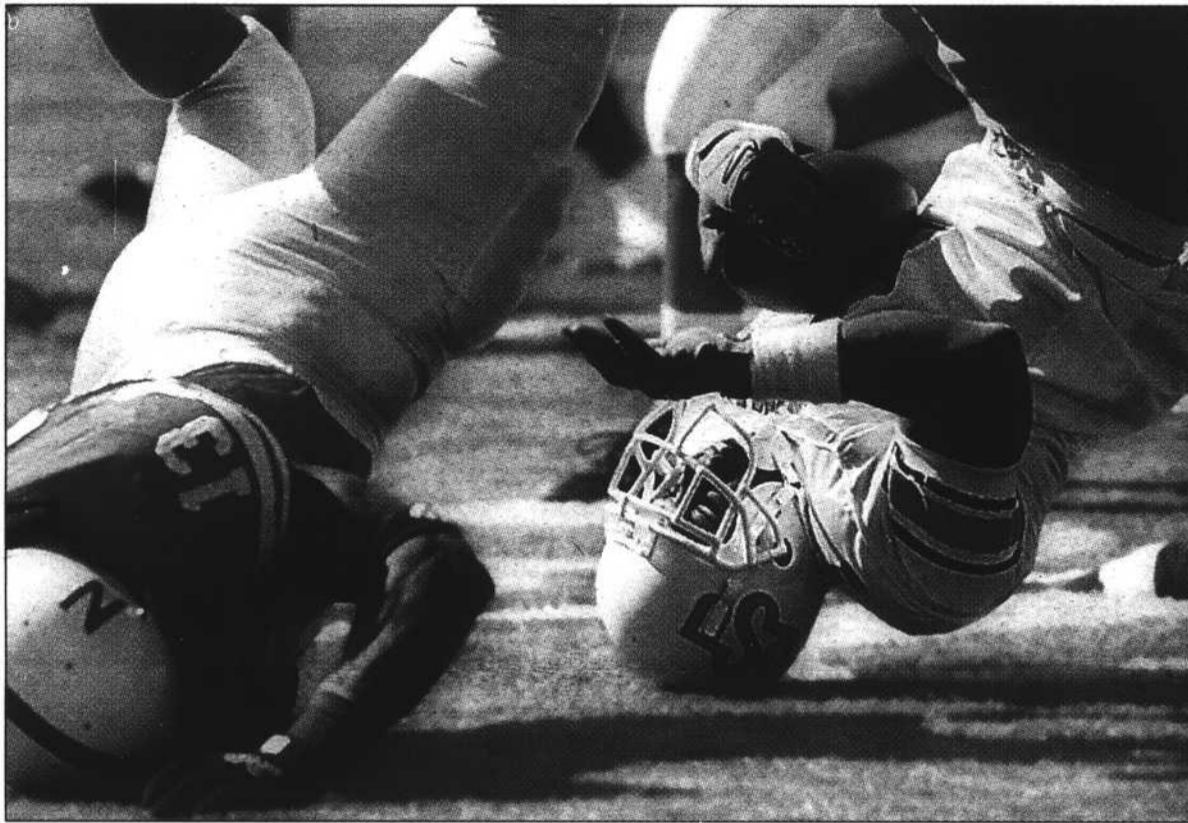
Nebraska got its next big play from the special teams, as linebacker Brian Shaw blocked his second punt of the year, this one recovered at the OSU 8-yard line, which set up another Buckhalter touchdown.

For every first-half error Nebraska capitalized on, Oklahoma State (2-2 and 0-1) compounded it with another. The Cowboys had 11 penalties, including several personal fouls that helped prolong Husker drives.

It didn't help much that OSU gained only 45 yards in the first half and didn't complete a pass. Like last year, Oklahoma State employed an unbalanced line and tried to run cutbacks against the speed-oriented Blackshirts. Unlike last year, it didn't work.

"The first half, we played lights

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Injuries limit two top Cowboys to sidelines

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

Dressed in bright orange sweat pants with his hands buried in his pockets, injured Oklahoma State quarterback Tony Lindsay could only watch from the sidelines as his teammates struggled to move the ball against then-No. 5 Nebraska.

At the opposite end of the Cowboy bench, starting defensive signal caller Kenyatta Wright also was in sweat pants and wearing a backward visor turned upside down.

In last year's 24-17 loss, Lindsay and Wright were instrumental in giving the Cowboys a chance to win. Wright made 10 tackles, and Lindsay completed 10 out of 23 attempts for 158 yards and one touchdown.

This year, all they could do was watch and be coaches. Wright sat with the defense between series and paced the sidelines when the defense was on the field, signaling if he saw something his teammates were missing.

"The hardest part is looking at him and knowing that he's hurting not being out there," said fellow senior linebacker Jack Golden. "We try to keep his morale up and do the things we need to do as a teammate and friend to Kenyatta. When we get him back, we will be happy to have him."

Wright, an inspirational leader, was out with an injured hand suffered against Mississippi State on Sept. 18. Meanwhile, Lindsay, a two-year starter, had to sit out as he continued

"The hardest part is ... knowing that he's hurting not being out there."

JACK GOLDEN
OSU linebacker

to rehabilitate his left knee, which was injured in the opening game.

OSU coaches and players differed on the impact the two missing players had on the outcome of the game.

"I don't think it hurts us too much," Golden said. "Yeah, we miss Yatta, and of course if he were out there, you feel things would go a lot smoother. But we had guys who stepped up in his place and did a good job."

That is debatable.

Wright's replacements didn't do a good job in the first half of defending the option, a skill that Wright does well. NU ended up with 256 first-half yards.

OSU's defense actually started well, shutting down the Huskers on three straight plays to start the game, but the rest of the half got ugly.

The first words out of Coach Bob Simmons' mouth in the post-game press conference were "two halves." As bad as the first half was, the

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