

Colorado 30

Huskers escape Boulder with narrow win

BY SAMUEL MCKEWN
Senior editor

BOULDER, Colo. — Nebraska rover Mike Brown's analysis of NU's 33-30 victory over Colorado was a straight shot, chased down with zero excuses.

"I feel lucky," the newly anointed All-American said. "We got lucky."

"This is disappointing, and a lot of guys were down in the locker room. I guess you could say that a 'W' is a win. But I think we all know this game shouldn't have come down to that."

"That" referred to NU's second great overtime escape in three years. This one was just as fortunate as the Missouri miracle in 1997.

Colorado had turned a 27-3 deficit into a 27-27 tie late in the fourth quarter, thanks to

three touchdowns in a little under six minutes. Pinned near the end zone with two minutes remaining, CU running back Cortlen Johnson was stripped of the ball by Brown. The Cornhuskers recovered at the Buffaloes' 16.

As it had all season, Nebraska let fortune slip right through its hands, as I-back Dan Alexander mishandled an option pitch from quarterback Eric Crouch, lost one of NU's five fumbles and gave the ball right back to Colorado.

"That was my fault," said Alexander, who had a career-high 180 yards. "I just lost focus on the ball."

CU wasted no time in moving down the field. Johnson took a draw play for 27 yards out of the 42-yard line. Then quarterback Mike Moschetti, who had 188 passing yards in the final quarter alone, hit John Minardi for a 36-yard gain to the Nebraska 22-yard

"We got in a dogfight. You have to give them credit, they made some plays. We had the effort."

CHARLIE MCBRIDE
defensive coordinator

line. It put the Buffs in position for victory with less than a minute remaining.

It was left up to Colorado kicker Jeremy Aldrich, who had a 34-yard field goal try as time expired to give CU the improbable win.

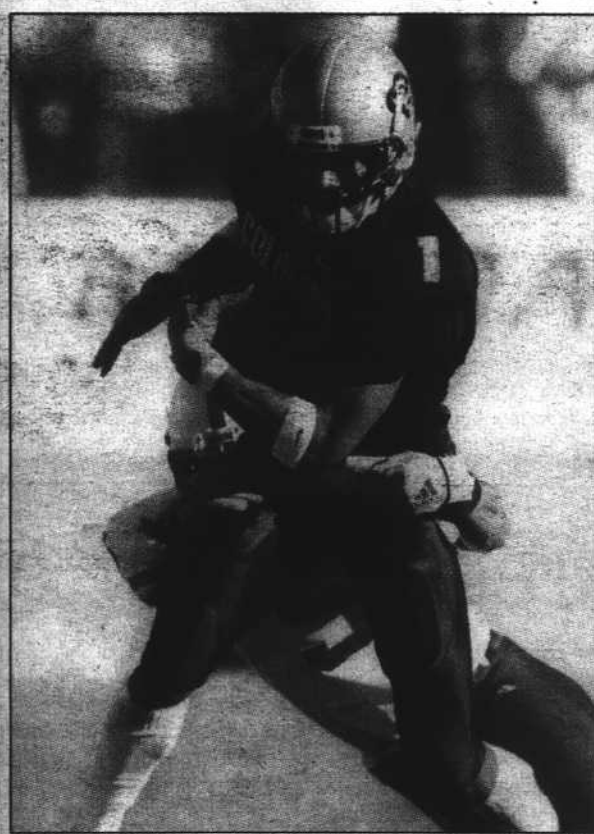
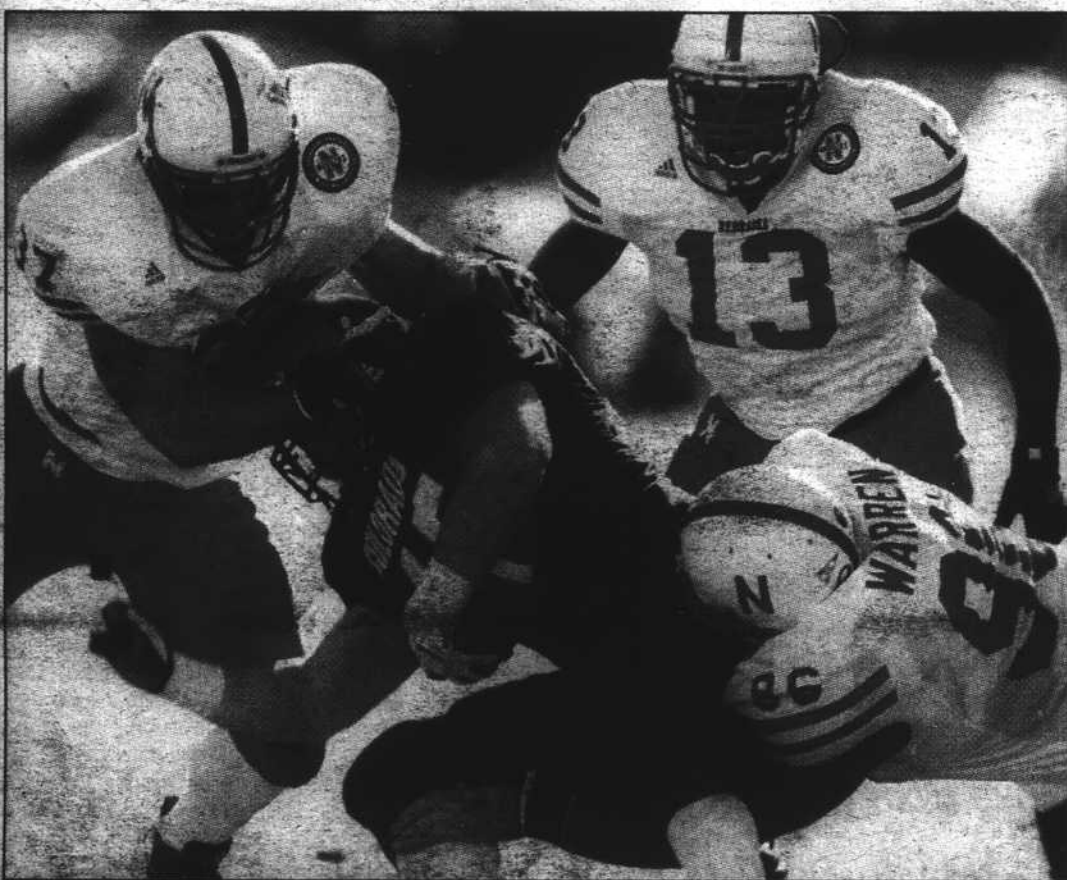
"I was thinking, 'We're gonna block it,'" All-Big 12 defensive tackle Steve Warren said.

Nebraska didn't block it, but Aldrich missed wide to the right. Just barely. NU had life again.

The overtime, then, served as an anti-climax. The Huskers, who are now 10-1 overall, 7-1 in the Big 12 and will face Texas in the conference championship game, won the toss. They elected for defense.

Strangely, CU never tried a pass on the possession that started at the 25-yard line. Coach Gary Barnett went with three straight runs, the final of which fell short by 1 yard.

Please see HUSKERS on 12



LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DAN ALEXANDER rumbles his way into the end zone Saturday in Boulder. Alexander finished the game with 180 yards and three touchdowns.

ERIC CROUCH and the rest of the Nebraska offense fumbled their way to a team record, coughing up the ball more than any other previous Husker team for a season.

COLORADO WIDE RECEIVER John Minardi pushes the ball forward against Carlos Polk during a late fourth-quarter scoring drive for the Buffaloes.

NEBRASKA STOPPED Colorado's return threat Ben Kelly, who gained 15 yards on three punt returns and 16 yards on one kickoff return.

BLACKSHIRTS TONY ORTIZ, Carlos Polk and Steve Warren gang-tackle Colorado player Eric McCready.

Missed kick mars CU's spectacular comeback

■ Colorado scores 24 points in the fourth quarter, but still falls short in bid to upset Nebraska.

BY ADAM KLINKER
Staff writer

BOULDER, Colo. — A strange thing about fourth quarters is how they so often never resemble first quarters.

For some on the Colorado football squad that found itself trailing Nebraska 27-3 at the start of the fourth quarter in Saturday's 33-30 overtime loss to the Cornhuskers, the last period was an illumination, a small victory in a world of defeat.

For the Buffalo seniors, who are winless against NU teams, it was a drop of rosewater in a pool of tar.

Anyway, it was yet another oh-so-close defeat.

"I'm at a loss for words," CU Head Coach Gary Barnett said after the game. "So many guys played great football. I don't think I've ever seen more heart and resolve in a team."

At the end of the first quarter, CU was looking down the barrel of the Husker offensive cannon that was already battering away at the Buffs for 205 yards and a 17-0 lead.

"You know you're in for a bad day when the buffalo won't come out," said Barnett, commenting on Ralphie, CU's 700-pound buffalo

mascot that refused to lead the team on the field before the game. He shook his head. "Suspicious beginnings," he said with a smile.

And auspicious endings because it wasn't all bad.

For a shimmering moment in the fourth quarter, it seemed the Buffaloes could do no wrong.

Down 27-3, CU's Jeremy Aldrich started the Buffaloes' 24-point scoring bonanza with a 49-yard field goal to cap a 40-yard, penalty-wracked drive that included CU's first big gains of the day with two passes of 27 and 20 yards from quarterback Mike Moschetti to wideout Marcus Stiggers.

Talk about your suspicious beginnings.

"Coach Barnett wanted to throw everything at Nebraska: reverses, on-sides, going long," said Colorado wide receiver Roman Hollowell. "And in the fourth quarter we started going downfield, and that loosened us up and gave us a running game, too."

Thereafter, the Buffs were getting breaks and making some of their own. With 10:17 left in the fourth and Nebraska with the ball at its own 43, CU linebacker Jashon Sykes stripped the ball from Husker wingback Bobby Newcombe.

Moschetti jumped right back in the loop, completing an 8-yard pass to Stiggers and hitting wide receiver Javon Green for a 25-yard pickup before finding wideout John Minardi

Please see CU on 12

Nebraska		Colorado			
Rushing		Rushing			
Name	Yds Avg TD	Name	Yds Avg TD		
Dan Alexander	180 10.6 3	C. Johnson	134 5.4 0		
E. Crouch	123 6.5 1	D. Andrews	13 2.2 0		
W. Miller	25 3.1 0	M. Moschetti	11 1.0 0		
Receiving		Receiving			
Name	No Yds TD	Name	No Yds TD		
M. Davison	2 28 0	J. Green	5 100 1		
T. Wistrom	1 12 0	R. Hollowell	5 56 0		
B. Newcombe	1 4 0	J. Minardi	3 66 1		
Passing		Passing			
Name	Att Cmp Int Yds TD	Name	Att Cmp Int Yds TD		
E. Crouch	12 4 0 44 0	M. Moschetti	41 21 0 317 3		
Game Stats					
First downs	12	22	Fumbles lost	4	2
Rushing attempts	51	47	Interceptions	0	0
Passing attempts	12	42	Punt returns / yards	3 / 6	4 / 16
Passing yards	44	338	Time of possession	26:14	48:46
Total yards	400	503	Fourth-down conversion	0 of 0	2 of 2
Average yards per play	33	11	Score	33	30