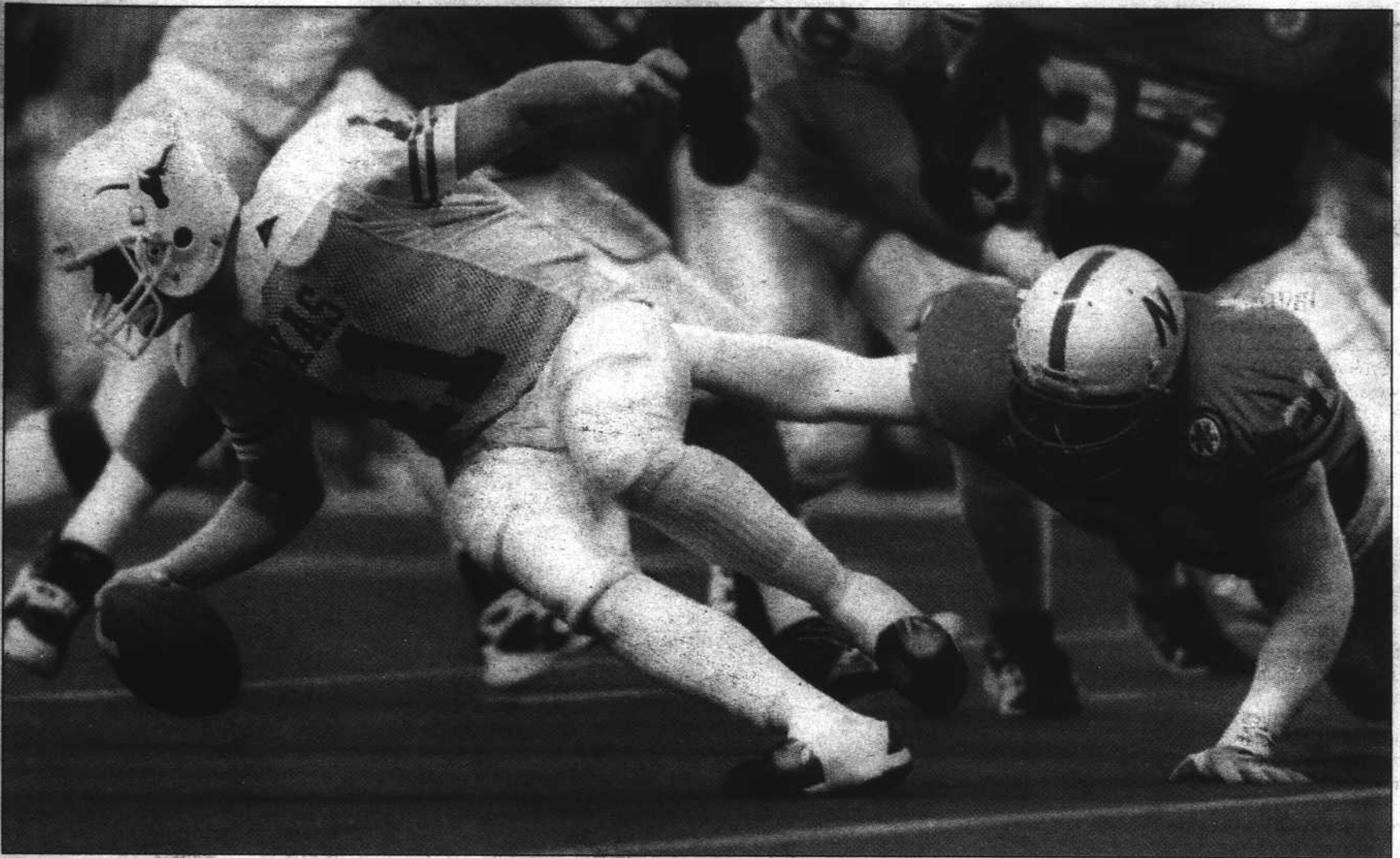


Texas 6



Huskers get their vengeance on Texas

■ A strong first drive and the intense defense combined to give NU a decisive victory.

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — The down-with-the-Longhorns celebration started with one minute and one second remaining in the Big 12 Conference Championship game Saturday.

As the Blackshirts jogged off the artificial turf in the Alamodome following sophomore safety Dion Booker's fourth-quarter interception of a Major Applewhite pass, they did their own version of the Hook 'Em Horns, pointing their pinkie and pointer fingers down at the ground.

After having the Longhorn symbol thrown in their faces following three straight losses, it was the Cornhuskers' turn to celebrate following their 22-6 victory over No. 12 Texas before a Big 12 Championship game record crowd of 65,035.

"I knew I didn't want to leave (Nebraska) without beating Texas," senior rover Mike Brown said. "I finally got them. I can die now."

That's doubtful because NU, 11-1 and 8-1 in the Big 12, still has to play Tennessee in the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl Jan. 2 in Tempe, Ariz. It will be a homecoming for Brown, who played at Sun Devil Stadium as a youth.

Brown's relief about beating Texas was felt by all the NU players after the game. Senior linebacker Julius Jackson, a Gainesville, Texas, native, held up his Big 12 champions shirt and hat and saluted the more than 20,000 Nebraska fans in attendance as he walked off the field.

Offensive Line Coach Milt Tenopir found all of his linemen and gave each a big hug. Center Dominic Raiola, who was criticized for saying he hated Texas before the first meeting, yelled "How about them Huskers?" three or four times in the tunnel leading back to the locker rooms so all the Texas players walking by could hear him.

It was a game the Huskers wanted. It showed from the opening series of the game. On that drive, NU moved the ball from its own 11-yard line to the Texas 43-yard line before being stopped. Despite not scoring any points, that drive was one of the most important in the game, said sopho-

more Eric Crouch.

"It was important to start off this game with a great drive like that to show Texas that we were going to come down the field and drive on them," said Crouch, who looked like Rocky Balboa after the game with a bruised right eye, cut lip and scrapes all over his face and neck. "It was a good momentum-booster for this team."

Josh Brown got NU on the board first in the next Husker possession with a career-best 42-yard field goal. Then Crouch got one of his big plays, a 31-yard touchdown run on fourth and one, to put NU ahead 10-0 with four minutes and 30 seconds remaining in the first quarter.

Another Brown field goal and an NU safety in the second quarter gave the team its 15-0 halftime lead. On the Huskers' third play of the second half, NU junior running back Correll Buckhalter, filling in for an injured Dan Alexander, rumbled 55 yards down to the UT 3-yard line to set up Crouch for his second score. Buckhalter finished with 136 yards on 20 carries.

Nebraska's defense played with the intensity of a squad that was fighting for its life rather than to win a football game. The defensive line was relentless.

Unlike last week against Colorado when NU surrendered 28 fourth-quarter points, the pressure was there for all four quarters.

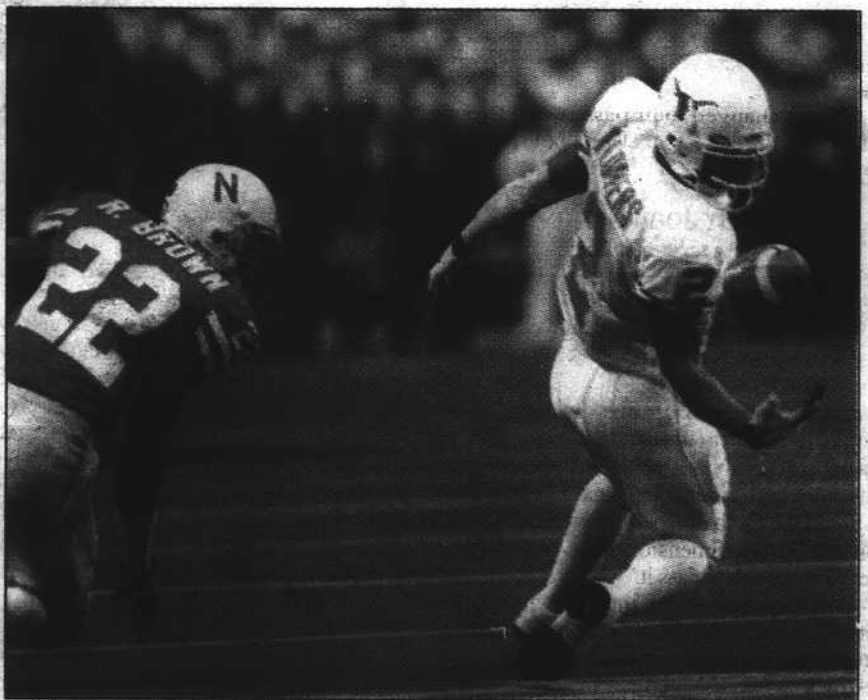
"We played a complete game today," said Brown, who led NU with six tackles, including one sack for a 10-yard loss. "We really got a lot of pressure on Major Applewhite. We pretty much dominated them from the first quarter to the fourth quarter. We had a mission today. We knew it was up to us to dominate them and get the victory."

And dominate the fourth-ranked NU defense did. At halftime, Texas had 26 yards on 33 plays. The Blackshirts held the Longhorns to 173 total yards, including nine rushing yards.

The mastermind of the defensive gem was defensive coordinator Charlie McBride. The 23-year veteran felt challenged this week by Applewhite, who called the NU defensive plan simple and said it wasn't like calculus in breaking it down.

McBride sent his defensive troops after Applewhite from every angle and nearly every play, much the way Kansas State had when it defeated Texas 35-17 on Oct. 2.

NU got results similar to the Wildcats'. Applewhite was sacked seven times and



MIKE WARREN/DN

TEXAS SPLIT END Montrell Flowers struggles to make a catch against NU corner Ralph Brown in the second quarter. Flowers did not make the catch, and on the next play Texas snapped the ball through the end zone and NU was awarded a safety.

Scoring summary

Team	Qtr.	Scoring play	Score by quarters				Total
			Nebraska	Texas	Plays - yards	Score NU TX	
NU	1	J. Brown 42 yd Field Goal	10	0	7 - 12	7 - 0	
NU	1	Eric Crouch 31 yd Run (J. Brown kick)	6	0	6 - 51	10 - 0	
NU	2	J. Brown 21 yd field goal	4	0	4 - 7	13 - 0	
NU	2	Team Safety				15 - 0	
NU	3	Eric Crouch 4 yd run (J. Brown kick)	5	0	5 - 66	22 - 0	
TX	4	Ahmad Brooks 20 yd Fumble Return				22 - 6	

completed only 15 of 42 passes for 164 yards, including three interceptions.

"Coach McBride really wanted to get after him and pressure him and see how he could react to the pressure," said Mike Brown, who became the first Husker defensive back and third NU player all-time to lead Nebraska in tackles three-straight years. "We shook him up a little bit early. We didn't stop pressuring him. He made some bad throws."

Those bad throws resulted in three interceptions that stopped each of the Texas drives into NU territory, including the final one with one minute and 25 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter. The 37-yard return by Booker on that pick was a

new Big 12 record, topping Mike Brown's 27-yard return in 1997.

Until Booker made that final interception though, there were many uneasy NU fans who wondered if Applewhite would lead the Longhorns back.

But this Saturday belonged to NU. The Blackshirts did their job on Applewhite and sent the seniors out as champions.

"For the seniors we knew this was our last game," said Ralph Brown, who set a Big 12 championship game record with five pass breakups. "We wanted to beat Texas and win the Big 12 Championship. We didn't want to have any regrets after the game, and we don't have any now because we played our hearts out the whole game."