

Gameday: Nebraska 42, Missouri 24



Farmer has game of life before injury

■ The Missouri quarterback tears up Husker secondary before breaking his clavicle.

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

One voice started singing. And then another, and suddenly the entire Missouri locker room was in unison, echoing the Missouri fight song off the visitor locker room walls.

And who was going to tell this Tiger choir to mute their voices?

It was halftime, and the score stood 28-14 in Nebraska's favor. And aside from wide receiver Bobby Newcombe's second quarter 94-yard punt return jig to the south end zone, the score probably would have been closer.

The Nebraska defense was on its heels, with Mizzou's sophomore quarterback Kirk Farmer running and gunning the Tigers up and down the field, occasionally resorting to sandlot trickery.

"We felt like we had them. We felt like we could play with anybody," Farmer said. "I felt real confident. I felt like they couldn't stop me. I was upset with the way it ended."

The ending for Farmer and, in all reality, the end of the Tigers' upset dreams, came on a 33-yard third quarter run by Farmer down to the Nebraska 13.

Farmer slowly crept to the sidelines after the play with a banged up left arm. It was later diagnosed as a broken left clavicle that will sideline the signal caller for at least a month.

"It's very upsetting. It's hard to swallow this after things were just coming together," Farmer said.

Farmer had to be kept from making a return trip to the field after his injury.

"He's a tough young man. If he had his way, he would have been out there on the next play," Missouri Coach Larry Smith said.

Before the injury, Farmer had done everything but sell popcorn in the stands, throwing for a career-high 214 yards on 13-25 passing, running nine times for 85 yards and catching a pass for 35 yards.

"That was the best game he's ever played here. He is maturing into what we thought he would become," Smith said.

After Farmer's injury, Mizzou could only muster a field goal under the direction of untested freshman Darius Outlaw.

Outlaw had thrown only four passes and ran four times for minus-20 yards in two games before being forced into action against the Huskers midway through the third quarter.

"I was a little nervous when I first got in there, but I knew the offense just as well as Kirk did," Outlaw said.

Outlaw came into the game down two touchdowns instead of one because of Missouri running back Zack Abbron's third quarter fumble. The fumble was picked up and ran 28 yards for a touchdown by NU linebacker Jamie Burrow.

"I think the big difference in that game was two plays that Nebraska made," Smith said. "The punt return was definitely a big play, and I think the fumble that they took in for the touchdown was the difference."

The other difference in the game Tiger players and coaches all pointed to was Nebraska quarterback Eric Crouch.

"I have total respect for him," Smith said of Crouch. "I think he's a great football player and he'll take Nebraska a long, long way."

Senior Missouri nose tackle Pat Mingucci pointed out how Crouch pasted 283 of NU's 484 total yards of offense on the Tigers.

"He's so fast and before you know it, he cuts into a hole," Mingucci said. "He's like a running back at the quarterback position."

So, it was turnovers, injuries and Crouch that kept Missouri from singing all the way back to Columbia.

However, Smith saw the game as a positive sign for the future.

"I think we learned to fight tonight and to play hard, and if we take that into every game this year, we're going to win a heck of a lot of football games," Smith said.

Mingucci agreed, but wasn't about to settle for a moral victory.

"It definitely builds confidence," Mingucci said. "But a loss is a loss."

Perhaps, but it is a loss that will forever sit vividly in Smith's mind.

"In all my 38 years of coaching, I've never had a football team that's played as hard, fought so hard to win a game."

Scott McClurg/DN

TOP: Bobby Newcombe leaves a pack of Missouri defenders in the dust while running a 94-yard punt return for a touchdown in the second quarter. Newcombe's return broke the school record for longest punt return set by Johnny Rodgers in 1971.

LEFT: NU students Stephanie Borman, Kate Jensen and Melanie Mitzel cheer during the final minutes of Saturday's football game at Memorial Stadium.

Steven Bender/DN

LEFT: Correll Buckhalter struggles to grab a pitch on a third down play in the third quarter. The second-string I-Back rushed for 94 yards.

David Flacon/DN