

Oklahoma 31, Nebraska 14



LEFT: Nebraska rover Joe Walker is brought down by a pair of Sooner defenders after a kickoff return. Walker accounted for 24 of Nebraska's 29 yards on kick returns.

BELOW: The Oklahoma student section becomes a sea of red and white pom-poms before kickoff on Saturday.

...by Sooner magic

Mystique revealed in Heupel, firm defense

BY DAVID DIEHL

NORMAN, Okla. —Oklahoma proved that there still remains some Sooner magic in the Oklahoma-Nebraska rivalry, once thought dead from nine straight losses in Sooner country.

But each day leading up to Saturday's nationally televised game, Coach Bob Stoops showed his OU team highlights from the historic series, hoping to educate his players of how Sooner Magic worked in the old days.

Stoops' quarterback Josh Heupel and the OU defense responded by adding their own set of highlights by rolling off 31 unanswered points en route to OU's first victory against NU since 1991.

"I guess that's just the mystique of Sooner Magic," said Heupel, the magician, as he completed 20 passes for 300 yards and one score.

With Heupel masterfully conducting the offense and the Oklahoma defense shutting down NU, those in attendance had little else to do by mid-way through the fourth quarter but launch oranges onto Owen Field and target the south goal post as the next thing to fall to Oklahoma.

But each point that Heupel's offense put up was just insurance after kicker Tim Duncan's 19-yard field goal put OU up for good with 6:06 left in the second quarter.

Thanks to OU's suffocating defense for the game's last three quarters Nebraska's two first-quarter scores would be its only points.

Amazingly, Oklahoma didn't change anything tactically in attacking the Husker offense, Stoops said. It just had to calm down, the second-year coach said.

"We didn't change anything," Stoops said, who is undefeated at home. "We just got out of position on plays in the first quarter. More than anything we calmed down. We didn't change our defense."

Two plays that Stoops blamed directly on overzealous OU players were a 44-yard trap by fullback Willie Miller, which set up a 37-yard TD by Eric Crouch. NU's other score, a Matt Davison's 39-yard catch from Crouch was also due to an overly-pursuant defense.

Defensive Coordinator Brent Venables said OU just had to get "under control."

"We just had to slow a couple of our guys down, get our position on the field. I know that sounds pretty generic and simple, but that's what it was," Venables said.

After getting his players to take their excitement down a notch, Stoops said he was pleased most with how they tackled and kept Nebraska players

from breaking loose.

At one point, the OU defense corralled Crouch on 15 consecutive runs for only one gain more than four yards — an 18-yarder in the third quarter, followed immediately by back-to-back sacks of minus-eight and nine yards.

"Players calmed down and got used to the speed of Nebraska and the their execution," Stoops said. "They started to see the plays like they had practiced."

From that point, the Cornhuskers were put in several difficult situations.

NU Coach Frank Solich tipped his hat to the Sooners' defense.

"We had second-and-long and third-and-long all day," said Solich, facing OU for the first time as head coach. "We do not like our offense to be in that position."

From the end of the first quarter, Oklahoma's defense held NU to 136 yards of total offense after it put up 196 in the first quarter.

They put the reigns on Nebraska's nation-leading rushing attack, holding it to just 195 yards, well below its 379 yard average.

The defensive game-ball was presented to redshirt freshman safety Derrick Strait, who returned an interception 32 yards for a touchdown and stripped Davison of the ball late in the fourth quarter, killing any comeback chances.

Strait said the Oklahoma players knew what kind of a day they would be in for if they didn't shape up.

"Pretty much we knew if we didn't refocus, Nebraska is the type of team that can put you away real fast."



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