

Kansas State 29, Nebraska 28



FAR LEFT: Alexia Bonte, a freshman Nebraska cheerleader, cheers for NU in the closing minutes of the fourth quarter. Players and fans had to battle wind, snow, rain and sleet with a game-time temperature of 34 degrees and a wind chill estimated at 14 degrees

LEFT: Kansas State students cling to the goal post in the north end zone as the snow continued to fall immediately following K-State's 29-28 victory over NU. Students were able to bring down only one upright, not the entire goal post.

Mike Warren/DN



Scott McClurg/DN



Scott McClurg/DN

Morgan, KSU defense stop NU

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

It was as if God stood in heaven with his purple Quincy Morgan jersey on, stomping on the clouds, causing snow to turn green AstroTurf into a powdery white Slip 'N Slide obstacle course as 50,000 purple-clad parka wearers screamed for an early Christmas present.

When Kansas State senior wide receiver Quincy Morgan scampered across the barely visible snow-covered goal line on a 12-yard reception with 2:52 remaining, the white flakes began to fall more rapidly.

It was up to the KSU defense now, the same KSU defense that had reverted from Mr. Hyde to Dr. Jeckyl in the fourth quarter.

For three quarters, Wildcat defenders had tossed the mighty Nebraska offense around like rag dolls, allowing quarterback Eric Crouch and Co. only 105 total yards.

"You stop Crouch, and you stop Nebraska," Kansas State safety Jarrod Cooper said. "We keyed on him and took him out of the game."

Then, the purple menaces underwent a change of character, offering no resistance to the power running game that Nebraska finally discovered. NU began to pass up Crouch option plays and decided instead to give the Wildcats a dose of locomotive running back Dan Alexander, who would compile 132 yards on 18 carries, including a 45-yard touchdown run that put Nebraska in front 28-23.

"You look up, and all of a sudden they're running the ball north and south and getting big chunks of yardage and getting the ball into the end zone," Kansas State Coach Bill Snyder said of the sudden change.

Snyder said his defense had lost its mental edge after seeing the offense go three and out on successive possessions.

But with 2:52 left, Snyder's defense had the Huskers where it wanted them. Thanks to a Jonathan Beasley to Morgan pitch and catch, Crouch was going to have to throw Nebraska into the Big 12 championship game amidst the winter-wonderland atmosphere.

If Crouch had fleet-footed Quincy Morgan on his team, perhaps Nebraska never would have been in this situation, or perhaps Nebraska fans would have been tipping beers all night long Saturday celebrating their team's magical comeback.



Scott McClurg/DN

Wildcat running back Josh Scobey pushes away Husker linebacker Scott Shanle on Saturday. Scobey led the Wildcats with 62 yards rushing.

But Morgan was a Wildcat, and, undeniably, "Q," as his teammates affectionately refer to him, was the difference in the game.

Playing in his last home game, Morgan sped by Nebraska defensive backs, notching seven catches for two touchdowns and 199 yards. It was the second most receiving yards in KSU history and the fifth most ever rendered by a Blackshirt defense.

Morgan couldn't help but smile afterwards, flashing his gold teeth as he hugged family members who held decorated "Morgan 4 President" signs. After Saturday, Morgan might have been the projected presidential winner in Kansas.

"I asked the Lord to help me have a big game, but I had to deliver my half, and I think I did," Morgan said.

Most leaving the stadium would tell you without hesitation that Morgan delivered his half of the bargain.

The speedy wideout dropped a few passes early, including a costly mishandle that was eventually plucked out of the air by Nebraska defensive tackle Loran Kaiser, who returned the ball to the K-State 17.

"I told Coach Snyder on the sideline that I dropped a few passes, but you go to me again, and I'll make the big play, and they called my number," Morgan said.

When there was a big play on Saturday for K-State, Morgan was probably in it.

Besides the eventual game-winning

touchdown, he hauled in a 41-yarder on a first-quarter possession that moved the ball to the NU 7-yard line. KSU running back Josh Scobey took it in for the touchdown three plays later to knot the game at 7-7.

It was Morgan who kept alive an 18-play drive with a 35-yard grab that moved the ball from the KSU 2-yard line to the 37 and turned the fan's teeth chattering into a roar. KSU cut the lead to 14-10 on that possession.

"He made some spectacular plays," Kansas State quarterback Jonathan Beasley said. "He was making diving catches, spectacular catches. That's what we count on Quincy for ... to make the big play."

Morgan made it 17-14 when he caught an inside screen, made a move that left NU safety Troy Watchorn grasping for air and jetted in for the 49-yard touchdown reception.

Morgan humbly gave the credit to his offensive line and to "Beas" for sticking in the pocket.

"Beas" would be KSU's Beasley, the senior who had obsessed about avenging Nebraska for the 41-15 butt-kicking they delivered to his team a year before in Lincoln.

Beasley could finally tear down the Husker red sheet of paper that was taped to his locker door. All that was written on the paper was "41-15."

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