

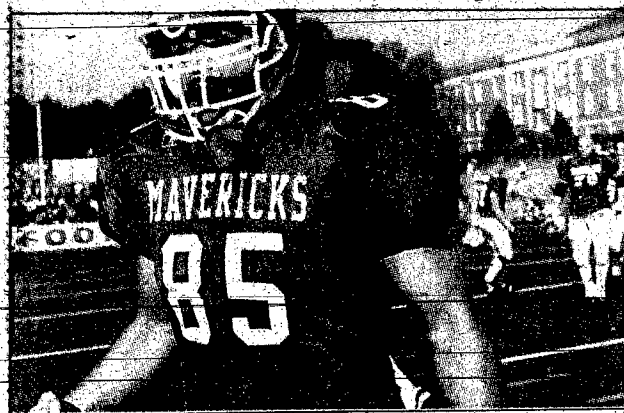
College Football

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TIME TO CELEBRATE: UNO tight end Andy Damkroger is a fired-up Mav as the team leaves Caniglia Field. The Mavs won their seventh straight game.

Mavs Grit It Out in Defensive Gem

Defense is stalwart again as UNO takes over first place with a 6-3 win over North Dakota State

BY RICH KAUFST
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Defense hasn't won a championship for UNO yet, but it certainly did a little more of the legwork Saturday.

With no margin for error in a tight football game, the Mavericks held North Dakota State to 189 total yards and a field goal in a 6-3 victory at

Caniglia Field. The UNO defense limited its fourth straight opponent to seven points or fewer by stopping one of the best offenses in NCAA Division II football.

The immediate reward for the Mavs was sole possession of first place in the North Central Conference for the first time since the end of the 1996 season.

"We won this game on defense, without a doubt," UNO end Chris Cooper said. "That's just an outrageous performance to keep that good of a team out of the end zone."

Back-to-back defensive stops in the third quarter helped set up the two Troy Severson field goals that pushed the University of Nebraska at Omaha ahead. Two forced turnovers in the

fourth quarter helped preserve the lead before NDSU kicker Aaron Pederson missed a 45-yard field goal with 4:14 left in the game.

"You can't ask for much more than that," UNO quarterback Seth Jorman said. "Our defense played unreal. They deserve all the credit for this game. They've just been playing their tails off. It's amazing to watch them."

No. 2-ranked North Dakota State (7-1, 5-1 NCC) came in averaging 427.9 total yards and 39.3 points a game. Bison tailback Lamar Gordon was leading the NCC in rushing with 161.6 yards a game.

But NDSU didn't come close to getting any of those numbers before a crowd of 9,200.

"It's just hard to take that we didn't put any points on the board," Gordon said. "Those missed field goals, those happen. Our offense just didn't play like we should have. It never should have come down to a field goal in my book."

Gordon was held to a season-low 62 yards on 24 carries. Senior quarterback Ryan Johnson, meanwhile, completed just 3 of 15 passes and was sacked five times before being benched after losing two fourth-quarter fumbles.

"We wanted to try to establish the run," NDSU Coach Bob Babich said. "That's what we do. That's who we are. We weren't going to change anything, although we probably needed to."

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Aggies Shock Cyclones

Blocked punt lifts Texas A&M to a fast start in victory at Iowa State

BY LEE BARFKNECHT
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Ames, Iowa — Big game. Big hype. Big crowd. Big hopes. Big thud.

Iowa State's plans to become bowl eligible for the first time in 22 years will have to wait at least another week after Saturday's 30-7 loss to Texas A&M.

The Cyclones, who two weeks ago played No. 1 Nebraska within one point into the fourth quarter, fell behind the Aggies by 20 points in the first 21 minutes and never showed signs of catching up.

Iowa State's offense, ranked 12th nationally with 446.5 yards per game, produced nearly twice as many punts (12) as first downs (five) through three quarters. The Cyclones finished with 239 yards and seven points. Their previous lows had been 383 yards against Nebraska and 24 points against Iowa.

Defensively, ISU (5-2, 2-2) gave up 469 yards to Texas A&M (5-2, 3-1). The Aggies gained 55 fewer yards in their previous game against Big 12 basement-dweller Baylor.

Cyclone coaches and players admitted to shock, surprise and sadness at their performance.

"We thought if you can match up with Nebraska for three quarters, you ought to be able to match up with anybody in college football," Iowa State Coach Dan McCarney said. "We thought we matched up pretty well with A&M."

"But A&M was a much better team than we were today. They were faster, more physical, made more plays and did a much better job."

Why? With a homecoming crowd of 48,931 — the fourth-largest since Jack Trice Stadium was reconfigured in 1996.

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JEFFREY Z. CARNEY/THE WORLD-HERALD

Ouch!

Huskers Pound Baylor In Record-Setting Rout

BY STEVEN PIVOVAR
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Lincoln — Baylor proved to be little more than a speed bump Saturday on Nebraska's road to Oklahoma.

The top-ranked Huskers tuned up for this Saturday's showdown with the Sooners by dominating hapless Baylor 59-0. In winning before a crowd of 77,959, the 237th straight sellout crowd at Memorial Stadium, Nebraska set a school record by blitzing the Bears for 38 points in the first quarter.

"We wanted to come in with a knockout blow right from the get-go," Husker Defensive Coordinator Craig Bohl said. "We wanted to make a statement and knock them out of the boat. Our guys had that mentality, they bought into it and we accomplished that."

With apologies to Yogi Berra, Saturday's game was over long before it was over. In fact, the Huskers found themselves ahead 21-0 after running just six offensive plays.

Blocked the first of Baylor's 11 punts and recovered the football in the end zone to give Nebraska a 7-0 lead 2 minutes and 48 seconds into the game. After Baylor got its second punt off, Nebraska needed Dan Alexander runs of 30 and 15 yards to make it 14-0 with 11:24 to play.

After the Bears' next possession ended with a fumble at their 15-yard line, Nebraska needed just four plays to hike its lead to 21-0 on Alexander's 2-yard scoring run. And it didn't get any better the rest of the way for the 2-5 Bears, who finished with just 84 total yards while running their string of shutout minutes to 19:27.

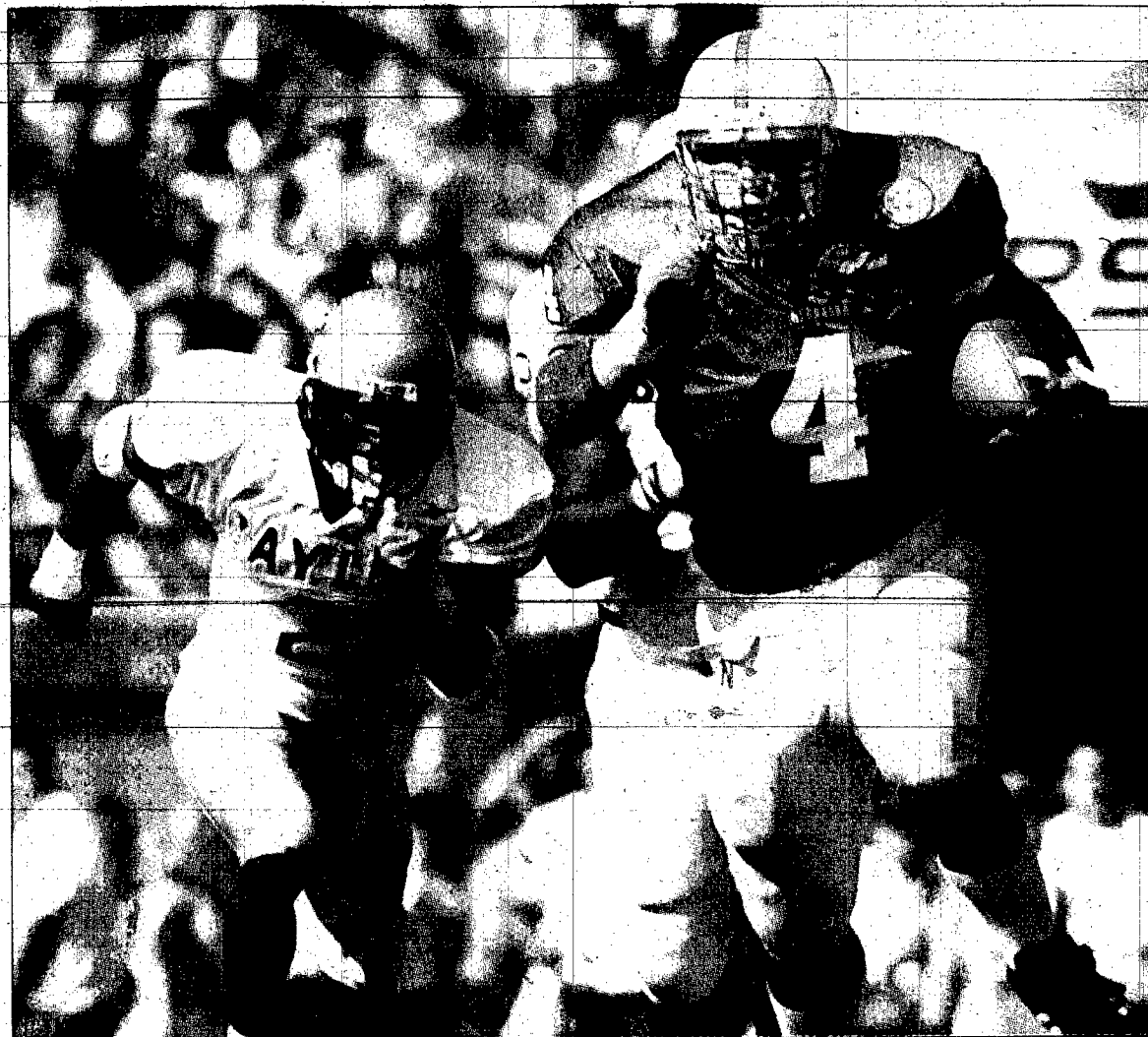
Baylor's total yardage was the lowest since Nebraska held Kansas to 48 yards in a 35-0 win in 1997. The Bears finished with a net total of 55 yards rushing on 27 attempts. They never got closer than 44 yards from Nebraska's goal line as the Huskers recorded their first shutout of the season and fourth since Frank Solich took over as head coach in 1998.

"It was vintage Nebraska defense," said Baylor Coach Kevin Steele, who spent six seasons as the Huskers' linebackers coach. "There are no points on the board. There are very little rushing yards and very little passing yards. That is pretty typical for them."

Nebraska combined its suffocating defense with an offense that produced 508 yards, 459 of which came on runs from 15 different ballcarriers. Nebraska unofficially used 115 of the 132 players who suited up for the game, with most of the starters seeing action in just the first half.

The notable exception was starting quarterback Eric Crouch, who played just the first quarter. The junior from Millard North had accumulated his share of bumps and bruises in Nebraska's first six games, and he said he actually welcomed the opportunity to watch backup Jammal Lord take most of the snaps in the game's final 45 minutes.

"I played only one quarter, and I know it kind of sounds like not a lot," Crouch said. See NU Page 11



SETTING 'EM UP: Nebraska's offense and defense each set up scores Saturday. Above, fullback Judd Davies breaks a 57-yard run to the Baylor 16 that set up a Correll Buckhalter TD. At top, Nebraska's Carlos Polk, top, and Jeremy Slechta force a fumble at Baylor's 15 that led to NU's third touchdown.

Syracuse Lets Vick, Hokies Rally to Win

Syracuse, N.Y. (AP) — Never give Michael Vick and the Virginia Tech Hokies too many chances. Syracuse did Saturday night and the Orangemen lost a chance at supreme retribution.

Lee Suggs scored twice in the third quarter on short runs and Vick added a 56-yard scoring run in the final two minutes as the second-ranked Hokies (7-0, 5-0 Big East) rallied to beat the Orangemen 22-14 to remain in the hunt for the national title.

A year after suffering a humiliating 52-0 loss at Virginia Tech, the worst shutout defeat by a ranked team in the 64-year history of the AP poll, Syracuse (3-4, 1-2) was determined to return the favor.

The Orangemen had overcome four penalties and driven 93 yards to forge a 7-0 lead. Everything was going their way when Jackson, who runs a 4.18-second 40, beat Ronyell Whitaker for a 78-yard touchdown catch on a third-and-18 play for a 14-0 lead with 2:21 left in the period.

Meanwhile, Vick was sacked three times in the first half and eight in the game as defensive ends Dwight Greeney and Duke Pettijohn harried him at every turn.

Vick finished the game 6-for-11 for 75 yards passing and gained just 9 net yards rushing on 16 carries. He entered the game averaging 234 all-purpose yards.

Steele on Wrong Side Of NU Romp This Time

Lincoln — As he walked off the field and into uncharted territory, you couldn't help but wonder what was going through Kevin Steele's mind.

Steele had seen this before. He had been on this field, in this stadium, and felt the air go out of a team and seen the momentum building and that utterly helpless feeling of being on the wrong end of a Nebraska steamroll.

But he had never been here before. Not on this end. The North end. The losing end.

Steele walked off with the grim reality — Nebraska 59, Baylor 0 — lit up on the Memorial Stadium scoreboard behind him. And now came the hard part. For everyone.

The former Nebraska assistant coach, now in Baylor white and green, entered the tunnel walkway toward the visitor's locker room. As usual, the Nebraska fans were lined up on either side of the ropes, clapping. They do that every game. But this was different.

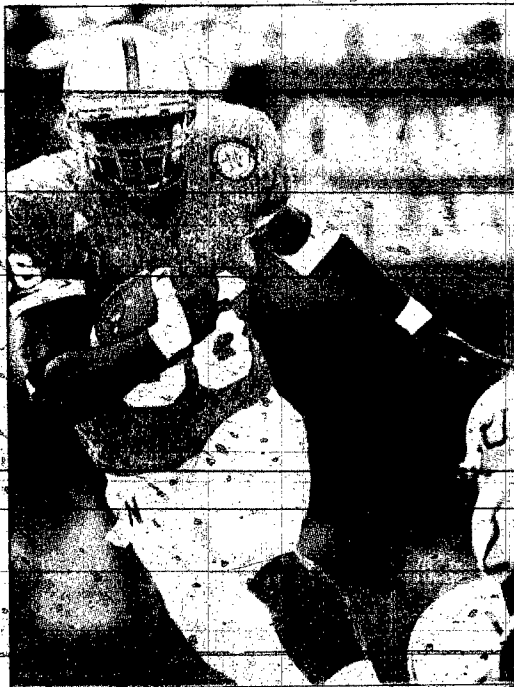
This applause was wrapped in heart-tugged emotion. But Steele couldn't look. He walked through with his head bowed, arms outstretched to shake the hands and touch the people who shouted words of encouragement. "Keep your head up, Kevin." "Go get

Tom Shatel



em Kevin." Their faces were sad. Some looked like they wanted to cry. This was family. This was hard. As good as the Huskers felt about their No. 1 team heading to Red Clay Armageddon next Saturday and there is reason to feel very, very good — they had to feel as bad about the awful embarrassment that one of their own suffered in the process on Saturday. Baylor-Nebraska was as bad as advertised: The Huskers pounced, the Bears flinched and it got out of hand early and often. The base offense was flowing, straight handoffs were going for scores. The Husker bench emptied in the second quarter. And suddenly it was one of those games that gets away, and the Nebraska coach has the dilemma of trying not to embarrass one

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GAMBLE? WHAT GAMBLE? Nebraska's Correll Buckhalter rumbles toward the end zone on a 36-yard first-quarter scoring run that came on fourth-and-13.