

# College Football

BIG 12, 2

SCORES, SUMMARIES, 4

OMAHA, NEBRASKA, OCTOBER 19, 1997

PAGE 1-FOOTBALL



## NU Deserves No. 1 Ranking

Lincoln — It was looking like another sleepy, old time in this sleepy, old season. And then the scoreboard went off like an alarm clock.

Minnesota 6, Penn State 0, Minnesota 9, Penn State 3, Minnesota 12, Penn State 3, Minnesota 15, Penn State 3.

Could it happen? Normally, the No. 1 question is not that compelling an issue to a No. 2 Nebraska team on a mid-October afternoon with Texas Tech the entree of the day. Unless Numero Uno happens to be a member of the Anti-Alliance and can stow the mythical No. 1 ranking away in a Pasadena, Calif., warehouse until Jan. 2.

And unless the alarm keeps going off.

Minnesota 15, Penn State 10, Penn State 16, Minnesota 15. Oops. False alarm.

By then, the Huskers had awakened from an early game slumber and were on the way to dismissing the Red Raiders, 29-0. But was it enough to leap-frog them over the Nittany Lions, a la 1994, when a No. 2-ranked NU beat a No. 3 Colorado and jumped over a PSU team that didn't win by enough over Indiana?

## Paterno Sentiment

Your guess is as good, if not better, than Jason Peter's.

"I'm guessing they'll still be No. 1," said the senior defensive tackle, referring to Penn State. "I think they want Coach (Joe) Paterno to have it. Unless they lose, they won't take it away from them."

Won't they? That's the question of the day, today. True, there will be sentiment to make sure JoePa doesn't get railroaded again with an undefeated team. Then again, when you have to come from behind to wipe the red off your face against Minnesota's Gophers—at home—sentimental hearts get a waiver.

"It's easy to have a letdown after winning a big game like they did last week," Nebraska quarterback Scott Frost said. "Then again, I don't think Minnesota is a very good football team."

No. Not at all. So let's just say it right now: Nebraska should be No. 1 today. Why? Because I'm a notorious homer. And because the Huskers have earned a bigger share of the ranking than anyone.

## No Super Teams

Because, as autumn's days grow shorter, there is still no team that grabs you by the throat and says "We're No. 1." No super team. Florida lost to LSU. Penn State played nobody and then rallied at home to beat a good Ohio State team and then the goofy Gophers. Florida State beat USC and Clemson. North Carolina beat Stanford, but no one is still sure if that was in academic bowl or football.

The best victory of this college season by a contender belongs to Nebraska: Sept. 20 at Washington. It's a subjective debate, depending on whether your bar stool resides in Happy Valley or O Street in Lincoln. But even the Huskers seem to feel that they belong at the top more now than a year ago.

"This year I think we would have earned it," Frost said. "Last year, we hadn't done anything to earn it. This year, we went on the road and beat a good Washington team and we beat a good Kansas State team."

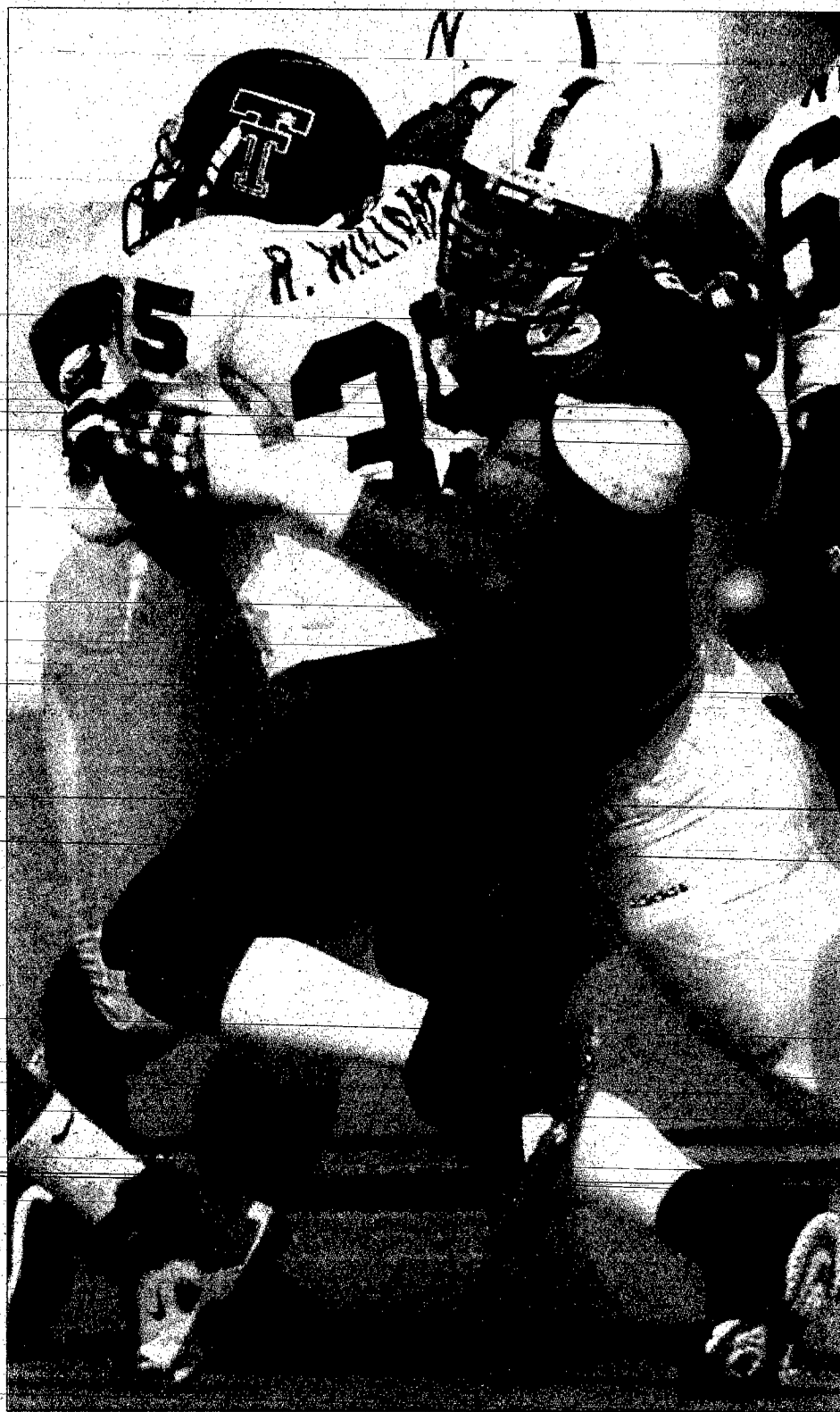
## Osborne Vote

There is no question how the vote would go in the Peter-Grant-Wistrom household: Both roommates said they thought NU stood for Numero Uno. But the one Husker who has a vote—Coach Tom Osborne—allowed that he voted Nebraska No. 1 in the USA. Today-ESPN coaches' poll after the Washington win but wouldn't say how he planned to vote today. We can guess. "I get so tired of coaches saying we deserve this," Osborne said. "What do we deserve? I think we have a good team, and I think we are playing well. We are not unbeatable."

But they are unbeaten. That's what made their uninspiring, clock-punching, mouth-smashing victory so number-oneish. This is a team that never slips up. It's not fancy. But it's not Houdini, either, against the rummies of the conference. When in doubt, go with consistency. That's the Nebraska philosophy anyway.

"I have a great respect for our kids," Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride said. "Week after week after week, they keep coming. How good are we? Who knows? I don't have a clue."

They're as good as any choice for No. 1. Right now, the best choice.



DEFENSE DOES IT: Nebraska picked up its first shutout of the season with the help of tackle Jason Peter, who stopped I-back Ricky Williams on this first-quarter play. NU allowed six first downs, 17 rushing yards and 127 total yards.

## Breakdown On Offense Costs Iowa

BY ROB WHITE  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Ann Arbor, Mich. — Don't blame the Iowa defense for this one.

Even though three second-half Michigan touchdowns erased a 21-7 Iowa halftime lead, the Wolverines' thrilling 28-24 come-from-behind victory Saturday — capped by Brian Griese's 2-yard touchdown pass to Jerome Tuman with 2:55 left — had less to do with the Hawkeye defense and more with the offense.

"We didn't execute on offense," Iowa tailback Tavian Banks said. "I feel real bad for the defense, because they went all out today. They put us in a position to win."

Banks helped give Iowa one last chance with a 30-yard pass reception that carried to the Michigan 26 in the final minute before a tense Michigan Stadium crowd of 106,505.

But Hawkeye quarterback Matt Sherman fired an interception into the waiting arms of linebacker Sam Sword — one of three Wolverines surrounding intended receiver Tim Dwight — to seal the win for fifth-ranked Michigan (6-0 overall, 3-0 in the Big Ten).

"We had a chance there at the last, but we didn't do a good enough job of pass protection," Iowa Coach Hayden Fry said. "Sherman had to step up (in the pocket). His primary receiver (Banks) was wide open and he couldn't get him the ball."

"It's just a shame to lose like that. We still had 40 seconds to go and it was only first down."

Banks said he was in the clear five yards from the goal line and five yards behind the nearest defender. Fry said Damon Gibson was open in the end zone, too, but that Sherman didn't have time to see him.

Still, the interception capped a horrible day for Sherman, a senior who was 8 for 21 for 86 yards with three inter-

## How The AP Top 25 FARED

1. Penn State (6-0) beat Minnesota 16-15.
2. Nebraska (6-0) beat Texas Tech 29-0.
3. Fla. St. (6-0) beat No. 21 Ga. Tech 38-0.
4. N. Carolina (7-0) beat N.C. State 20-7.
5. Michigan (6-0) beat No. 15 Iowa 28-24.
6. Auburn (6-1) lost to No. 7 Florida 24-10.
7. Florida (6-1) beat No. 6 Auburn 24-10.
8. LSU (5-2) lost to Mississippi 36-21.
9. Tennessee (5-1) beat Alabama 38-21.
10. Washington (5-1) beat Arizona 58-28.
11. Ohio State (6-1) beat Indiana 31-0.
12. Mich. St. (5-1) lost to Northwestern 19-17.
13. Wash. St. (6-0) beat California 63-37.
14. Texas A&M (5-1) lost to K-State 36-17.
15. Iowa (4-2) lost to No. 5 Michigan 28-24.
16. Oklahoma State (6-0) did not play.
17. UCLA (5-2) beat Oregon State 34-10.
18. Air Force (7-1) lost to Fresno State 20-17.
19. Georgia (5-1) beat Vanderbilt 34-13.
20. Kansas St. (5-1) beat Texas A&M 36-17.
21. Ga. Tech (4-2) lost to No. 3 FSU 38-9.
22. Virginia Tech (5-1) did not play.
23. West Virginia (5-1) did not play.
24. Wisconsin (6-2) lost to Purdue 45-20.
25. Stanford (4-3) lost to Arizona St. 31-14.

## Football Inside

- Penn State has to score twice in the fourth quarter to beat Minnesota 16-15. Page 2.
- Brock Olivo runs for two first-half touchdowns and Missouri got three more scores on the ground in the fourth quarter to beat Texas 37-29. Page 2.
- Hastings stops Nebraska Wesleyan 42-7. Page 10.

## Mavs Escape Jackrabbit Trap

BY RICH KAIPUST  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

UNO did a lot of things wrong before finally getting it right Saturday in a 21-21 victory over South Dakota State.

The Mavericks fumbled and stumbled their way into a 21-10 hole at Caniglia Field. It took a solid finish for the

## More on UNO, Page 5

University of Nebraska at Omaha to catch up and pass the 2-4 Jackrabbits before a crowd of 7,600.

"We just don't seem to look very good at what we do — with fumbles and mistakes and poor coaching decisions on my part," UNO Coach Pat Behrens said. "And nobody feels worse about it than me right now."

"But I guess if we can overcome that and still win, it gives us something to work with next week and not have to worry about a loss."

UNO tailback Adam Wright, a red-shirt freshman from Omaha North, ran for a career-high 185 yards to help spark the comeback. Junior quarterback Ed Thompson added three touchdowns and 161 yards rushing.

The win pushed UNO (6-1) into a four-way tie for first place in the North Central Conference at 4-1.

A 10-play, 80-yard drive capped by Wright's 14-yard touchdown run cut UNO's deficit to 21-16 in the third

## Blackshirts Deliver Shot At Top Spot

BY STEVEN PIVOVAR  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Lincoln — On a day when Nebraska's defense notched a shutout it has been waiting a year to get, Husker offensive guard Jon Zatechka got a touchdown he's been waiting for all of his life.

The Blackshirts' blanketing of Texas Tech and Zatechka's first touchdown Saturday afternoon were featured elements of a 29-0 Big 12 Conference victory that strengthened the Huskers' argument for No. 1. The victory came before 75,764 fans, the 218th straight sellout crowd at Memorial Stadium, and improved second-ranked Nebraska to 6-0, 3-0 in the Big 12's North Division.

Defensively, Nebraska put on a brilliant performance that allowed the Huskers to notch their first shutout since a 49-0 win over Baylor on Oct. 12, 1996.

"It's a monkey off our back to get this shutout," Nebraska defensive tackle Jason Peter said.

Texas Tech finished with just 127 yards. Tech might have been held under 100 yards if cornerback Jerome Peterson had not missed a tackle that contributed to a 33-yard gain, the Red Raiders' longest of the day. The 127 yards were the fewest Nebraska has allowed since Baylor gained 117 last season.

Offensively, Nebraska overcame periodic struggles to finish with 446 yards — 400 on the ground — and claimed a 13-minute advantage in time of possession. Ahman Green banged his way for 178 of the yards, marking the fifth straight game in which the junior from Omaha Central has topped the 100-yard mark.

Green, who had scored eight touchdowns in the previous two games, got one Saturday on a 7-yard run. He might have had a second touchdown, but he fumbled when he was hit 4 yards from the goal line. The football bounced forward into the waiting arms of Zatechka, a 290-pound senior from Lincoln East.

Zatechka became the first Nebraska offensive lineman to score a touchdown since Dean Steinkuhler scored on a 19-yard run on a "fumblerooski" in the 1984 Orange Bowl. The last time a Husker lineman scored in a regular-season game was in 1980, when offensive guard Mike Mandelko covered a fumbled punt in the end zone against Iowa State.

## Climb to No. 1

■ Days during the regular season in which Coach Tom Osborne's Nebraska teams ascended to No. 1 in the Associated Press poll:

■ Oct. 31, 1995—No. 2 NU defeated No. 7 Colorado 44-21 and replaced Florida as the top team.

■ Nov. 1, 1994—No. 3 NU defeated No. 2 Colorado 24-7 and replaced Penn State as the top team.

■ Sept. 6, 1994—No. 4 NU defeated No. 24 West Virginia 31-0 in the Kickoff Classic and replaced Florida as the top team.

■ Nov. 17, 1987—No. 2 NU defeated unranked Iowa State 42-3 and replaced Oklahoma as the top team.

■ Sept. 11, 1984—No. 2 NU defeated unranked Miami of Florida as the top team.

■ Nov. 11, 1984—No. 2 NU defeated unranked Kansas 41-7 and replaced Washington as the top team.

"There's not a whole lot to tell about it," said Zatechka, when quizzed about the touchdown. "I just fell on the ball."

Zatechka's being in the right place at the right time merely was part of a day of good fortune for the Huskers, who posted their 40th straight win at home, their 34th consecutive regular-season conference victory and their 29th straight triumph on homecoming.

Top-ranked Penn State kept it from being a perfect day for NU when the Nittany Lions rallied from a 15-3 deficit to post a 16-15 win over Minnesota. A loss by the Nittany Lions undoubtedly would have moved Nebraska into the top spot in the national polls. Now the Huskers must wait until today, when the ratings are released.

"We saw at halftime that Penn State was losing," Husker rush end Mike Rucker said. "We would have liked to have seen Penn State lose, but they must have played a good game. I guess. We'll just let the voting take care of itself. If we keep doing what we did today, we're going to be all right."

Nebraska trailed Penn State by 56 points in last week's Associated Press poll.

See HUSKERS Page 8



OB IN TROUBLE: South Dakota State quarterback Noel Bouche runs away from UNO defensive end Chris Cooper in the first quarter. Cooper sacked Bouche and forced a fumble, which the Mavericks' Jason Morris recovered.

quarter. Junior free safety Ben Titus' interception then set up Thompson's 13-yard TD as UNO took its first lead at 24-21 with 13:59 left.

The Mavs added a 28-yard scoring run by Thompson with 4:48 remaining. "I think the good teams stay poised," Titus said.

## KSU Defense Gives Aggies Agony

BY LEE BARFKNECHT  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Manhattan, Kan. — Behind Nebraska, 20th-ranked Kansas State is staking its claim to the title of next-best team in the Big 12 Conference.

The Wildcats held 14th-ranked Texas A&M, owner of the highest-scoring offense in the country, to four first downs Saturday in a 36-17 romp that could have been 50-3. The Aggies, averaging 46.6 points and 440.8 yards a

game, gained 90 total yards. Their lone offensive touchdown came on a 1-yard drive set up by a 29-yard interception return.

"To dominate these guys is a very gratifying feeling," KSU Defensive Coordinator Mike Stoops said. "Everybody wanted to talk about A&M's 'Wrecking Crew' defense."

"But we showed we can play a little defense, too."

A&M played without its starting offensive tackles because of injury, and

then lost leading rusher Dante Hall, averaging 112 yards a game, to a knee strain on the game's first play.

But guard Steve McKinney said those factors don't explain why the Aggies, fifth nationally in rushing at 278 yards a game, had a long run of 3 yards and finished with minus 35 yards on the ground — their worst effort in at least 25 years.

"To say the least, I'm stunned," McKinney said. "This was very frustrating."

See WILDCATS Page 2