

Lions shuck Nebraska with late TD

By RON GARDNER
Collegian Sports Writer

Teammates will have to come up with a new nickname for Penn State reserve tight end Kirk Bowman, who has been shuffled through seven position changes in his Lion career. "I was concerned that the officials weren't going to call it. I came up with the ball right away and showed it to the official to show him that I scored."

With 1:18 to play in the fourth quarter, Nebraska quarterback Turner Gill snuck into the end zone from one yard out to give the Cornhuskers their first lead of the game at 24-21. But there was plenty of time remaining for Air Paterno to mount one last airborne assault.

"I wasn't nervous and I wasn't worried," said Blackledge, who is quickly emerging as one of the nation's premier quarterbacks and a

record home crowd of 85,304 into a frenzy. "I caught it about six inches above the ground," said Bowman, who has been shuffled through seven position changes in his Lion career. "I was concerned that the officials weren't going to call it. I came up with the ball right away and showed it to the official to show him that I scored."

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"I wasn't nervous and I wasn't worried," said Blackledge, who is quickly emerging as one of the nation's premier quarterbacks and a

move swiftly on the field on a pair of 16-yard passes to tailback Skeeter Nichols and flanker Kenny Jackson. Then the drive abruptly stalled at the Cornhusker 34, as the Lions faced a fourth-and-11 situation. But Blackledge, who completed 23 of 39 passes for 295 yards and three touchdowns, drilled a strike to Jackson cutting across the middle to give Penn State the first down with just inches to spare.

Blackledge then scrambled out of the pocket for six yards on the next play, before hitting tight end Mike McCloskey just inside the left sideline at the Nebraska 2 to set the stage for Bowman's game-winning heroics.

Paterno, who said he briefly considered going for a tying field goal when the Lions faced the fourth-and-11 situation, was elated with his

team's come-from-behind effort. "I thought we had enough time, but I knew we had to make some plays," Paterno said. "The penalty helped — anytime you start on your 35, it helps."

"It was a great football game. It was a shame for either team to lose it. They (Nebraska) are a class outfit. There was enough glory on that field for both teams. It was such a great football game, you're sorry to see anyone lose."

Bowman, who has bounced between offensive guard, middle guard, defensive tackle and several other positions during his college career, got Penn State on the scoreboard first against the Cornhuskers, reaching high and twisting to pull down a 14-yard touchdown pass from Blackledge with 1:43 remaining in the first quarter to put the Lions up 7-0.

Paterno then went up 14-0 in the second quarter when tailback Curt Warner, who returned to form gaining 78 yards on 13 carries before cramps forced him to sidelinings midway through the third quarter, turned on the speed to sweep past a Nebraska defender on a 2-yard touchdown run.

But Nebraska quickly came back to narrow the halftime margin to 14-7 when Gill (16 of 34 for 239 yards and two TDs) hit wingback Irving Fryar with a 30-yard touchdown pass just 38 seconds before intermission.

The Lions scored first in the third quarter as Blackledge hit Jackson between double coverage with an 18-yard scoring pass, but the Cornhuskers managed to go ahead as they sandwiched touchdowns by back Mike Rozier (2-yard TD catch) and Gill, around a 37-yard field goal by placekicker Kevin Seibel.

But Penn State came through on its final desperation drive to drop Nebraska from the ranks of the unbeaten, lowering the Cornhuskers' record to 2-1.

The Lion defense, which has been labeled as suspect throughout the season, played exceptionally against offensive-minded Nebraska, limited the Cornhuskers to 23 points after they rolled up 42 and 68 points, respectively, in their first two games against defending Big 10 champion Iowa and New Mexico State.

"Our defensive kids really played a solid football game," Paterno said. "They didn't give up any big plays."

They were aggressive and tackled better."

And the Penn State running attack, a traditional strong suit that had yet to impress this fall, got its act together as well, churning out 210 yards on the ground — its best production of the season.

"I think we've tied things down," Paterno said. "We've gotten better each week. We kept people out of the backfield and stayed with our boots."

The Lion running attack also got a boost from the bench as sophomore reserves Nichols (seven carries for 32) and Tom Mumford, who came through on two short-yardage sweeps for first downs to sustain a pair of drives.

Starters Warner and fullback Jon Williams were both bothered by leg cramps, which held them out of the game throughout much of the second half.

"I kept saying (to Warner) 'Are you all right?'" Paterno said. "He added a dimension to our offense anyway you twist it. But I think sometimes you can work too hard. Curt may have worked too hard this summer. This week off should help."

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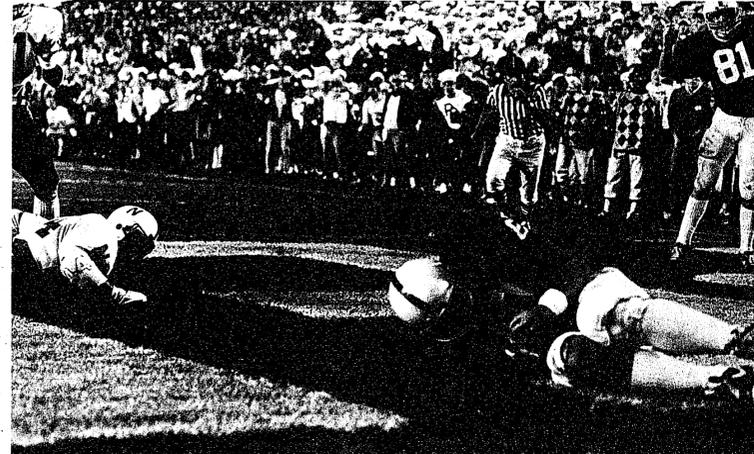
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Penn State tight end Kirk Bowman clutches a low loss from Todd Blackledge deep in the end zone for the winning touchdown Saturday at Beaver Stadium.



Penn State defensive tackle Mark Fuehan (92) heads in to help defensive end Walker Lee Ashley (37) tackle Nebraska's runningback Mike Rozier in the second half Saturday at Beaver Stadium. The Lions' defensive squad stopped the usually explosive Cornhusker offense.

Defense develops under pressure

By GREG LODER
Collegian Sports Writer

Sixty minutes can make anyone nervous, especially when it is the same 60 minutes that were played in Beaver Stadium on Saturday.

In one afternoon or so we say evening, 11 young, "inexperienced" people developed more than anyone expected.

These 11 were the Penn State defense, which had to go up against the Nebraska offense, which was previously ranked No. 1 in the nation.

And although they showed some sign of immaturity, they did a lot of aging.

Penn State Head Coach Joe Paterno was well aware of the difference of the Nittany Lion defense from its first three lackluster performances.

"Our defensive kids really played a solid football game," Paterno said. "They didn't give up any big plays and they were aggressive and tackled better."

Linebacker Al Harris said there was enough pressure to make anyone grow up.

"It was the greatest game I was ever in," Harris said. "There was so much intensity on both sides of

the ball. We knew the whole game was going to be a scrap and a dogfight."

"This was a big test and a lot of pressure because we were on TV. This game was a quick way to grow up," the Villanova transfer said.

Harris said there was also a lot of difference the Lions saw in the films from the Penn State defense and the Cornhuskers first two opponents.

"The first two teams (Nebraska) played didn't have disciplined defense," Harris said. "That was the key, we are disciplined."

In its first two games Nebraska averaged more than 500 yards total offense and was still able to rack up 472 yards in Saturday's game. But there were two specific signs where the Penn State defense showed it was getting better with every click of the scoreboard.

With Nebraska driving on its first possession of the second half the Lion defense held on three downs on its own 18-yard line forcing Nebraska to attempt a 35-yard field goal. The snap was fumbled by holder Turner Gill and Nebraska ended up with no points.

One more sign of maturity for the young Penn State defense came when the Cornhuskers were driving in the beginning of the fourth quarter.

The Lions held on their own 20, forcing Nebraska to kick a field goal.

As a team on defense the Lions showed signs of growing up, but so did a lot of individuals.

One position which has been Penn State's forte in the past but a weakness this year has been the linebackers. Against Nebraska, this position kept the Lion defense from dying young.

Along with Harris, both Scott Reddic and Dave Paffenroth played superb games, keeping the Nebraska backs from breaking open in the flat. In the first three games, the Lions were most vulnerable on defense to the short pass.

"The linebackers were just so much better," Paterno said.

One other player who had all the reason to grow up was junior defensive lineman Greg Gattuso, who had to play helmet-to-helmet all day with Nebraska center Dave Rimington. Last year Rimington was the Outland Trophy winner for the best lineman in the country and an All-American.

Paterno called the battle of Gattuso and Rimington a draw.

"I don't know if (Gattuso) handled him," Paterno said. "But he played a strong football game. A

very determined football game. Gattuso is really competitive and he rises to the occasion."

After the war between the two, the Cornhuskers pulled ahead of Penn State for the first time after intercepting Blackledge's only errant pass of the day. Some people sat shaking their heads in disbelief and wondering how the Lions, who played with such intensity, could end up being losers.

Some people, but not Blackledge.

"When we got the football back I knew we had enough time to take it in — we had two time-outs — plus the personal foul penalty against them helped us," he said. "Once we hit the fourth-and-11 pass to Warner, I knew we would go with it."

"The game is never over until the final gun. We felt all along we went into the game with the attitude that we were better than Nebraska and we were going to win the football game."

"That wasn't going to be proved wrong to me," Blackledge said, "or proved wrong to anybody else there. There was double zero up on the board. So we just kept it until..."

And he is sure glad they did.

"I think the drive was so good for our team and our confidence," Blackledge said, "because we

PSU—Nebraska Statistics

Nebraska	0	7	7	10	24
Penn State	7	7	7	6	27

PSU — Bowman 14 passes from Blackledge (Manca kick)
NEB — Warner 2 run (Manca kick)
PSU — Fryar 30 pass from Gill (Seibel kick)
NEB — Jackson 18 pass from Blackledge (Manca kick)
NEB — Rozier 2 pass from Gill (Seibel kick)
NEB — Fogel 37
NEB — Gill 1 run (Seibel kick)
PSU — Bowman 2 pass from Blackledge (Manca kick no good)

RUSHING
Nebraska — Rozier 19-88, Gill 12-52, Craig 7-27, Williams 8-23, Fryar 1-5, Smith 1-0, Totals 48-223
Penn State — Warner 17-78, Williams 10-65, Nichols 7-33, Coles 4-20, Blackledge 5-8, Mumford 2-7, Totals 41-210

PASSING
Nebraska — Gill 16-24-1 for 239, 2 TDs, Penn State — Blackledge 23-39-1 for 295, 3 TDs

PASS RECEIVING
Nebraska — Fryar 7-112, Brown 3-60, Simmons 2-28, Williams 1-18, Wilkinson 1-8, Keen 1-1, Rozier 1-2, Totals 16-239
Penn State — Gattuso 5-75, Jackson 5-73, McCloskey 4-66, Warner 3-47, Bowman 2-16, Nichols 1-16, Williams 3-0, Totals 23-295

Lions' Bowman an unlikely hero

By MARIA MARTINO
Collegian Sports Writer

Sometime it's just a matter of playing the right position at the right time that makes someone a hero.

After exploring seven positions at Penn State, Kirk Bowman is finally back at tight end — and loving it.

"Maybe I've found a home," he said. "I was recruited as a linebacker and I was linebacker for a day."

"Then I moved to defensive end, then to the other defensive end, played tackle, nose guard, offensive guard and now tight end again."

And Saturday, when just four seconds remained on the clock and the electricity of the moment wasn't generated by CBS-TV's portable lights, Bowman, at tight end, watched quarterback Todd Blackledge look toward Mike McCloskey, the primary receiver, then turn and flat a pass low to him.

Bowman dove, scooped up the winning touchdown half a foot from the ground at the very back of the end zone to push the Nittany Lions past Nebraska 27-24 in one of the finest Penn State football games in history.

"It's an incredible feeling," Bowman said. "You can hear the crowd cheer and your teammates all mob you. But it hasn't sunk in yet... it will later, just not yet."

Blackledge's pass for two yards capped a 80-yard drive in 10 plays after Nebraska took its first lead of the game with 1:18 left to play.

But the Cornhuskers suffered an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on the kickoff that put the Lions on the Nebraska 35 and ready for their comeback.

After passes to Kenny Jackson and McCloskey, Bowman brought the play into the huddle.

"I was thinking (Blackledge) would throw it to Mike," Bowman said, "and I just got open and turned around and started waving my arms and yelling."

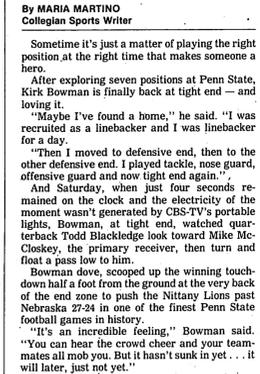
"I was just supposed to get off the ball and find an open spot behind the linebacker. I gave the defensive end a counter step, faking with my head like I was going to go flat and he took it."

"I was coaxing the ball," he said with a good-natured grin. "I was saying, 'Come on.' It was a little short and I think more important than that being short, I was concerned with the linebacker tipping it."

But Bowman rescued it six inches from the grass.

"I was concerned the officials weren't going to call it," he explained. "I just got up as quick as I could and showed them the ball and said, 'I caught it.'"

Bowman, the one some people nicknamed



Kirk Bowman is mobbed by fans after catching the winning touchdown in the waning seconds of Saturday's 27-24 win over Nebraska.



Photo by Barb Petyan

"Stone Hands" when he dropped a pass last week, also reeled in the first touchdown of the game — a 14-yard pass from Blackledge with just under two minutes left in the opening quarter.

"Kirk caught two touchdowns on the same pass and both times he got a clean release and went to the back of the end zone and just made a super play of it," Blackledge said.

Bowman's pair of receptions were the first of his career, and he became only the 17th Lion to catch two TD passes in a game, tying the school record.

Not bad for someone who lettered at defensive end last year.

"He played tight end in high school. We recruited him as a linebacker, but he got so big we made him a defensive tackle," Coach Joe Paterno said of the 6-1, 246-pound junior. "Then he had a knee injury and we couldn't get a good look at him (in spring practice)."

But when Paterno decided the Lions needed another defensive end, he turned to John Walter, the third tight end, and asked Bowman to return to his high school position.

"When Coach Paterno moved me to tight end he said, 'You'll be there mainly to block,'" Bowman said. "But I said, 'Joe, you might be surprised because I caught the ball well in high school... I really did catch the ball well.'"

A second-team all-state pick from Mechanicsburg High, Bowman followed his father's path to Penn State. Wayne Bowman played offensive guard for the Lions in 1929-33.

But Saturday was a day for the versatile tight end to shine.

"I was the primary receiver, but I was covered," McCloskey said. "I looked right over to Kirk. I knew he would be over my shoulder like that."

"It was ecstasy, I guess. That's as good a game as I've ever been involved in. (This year) there are a lot of guys who are believers out there. They played with a lot of confidence, especially on the line."

Blackledge agreed: "It was just a great catch and a great ending for a game."

And a great new beginning for a revitalized tight end.

Nebraska's Gill guides record-setting offense

By PAUL ALEXANDER
Collegian Sports Writer

There was never any doubt in anyone's mind about whether Nebraska was going to score against Penn State. In fact, the question was, could Penn State manage to stop the nation's most potent offense?

In the Cornhuskers' first two games against Iowa and New Mexico State, quarterback Turner Gill and Co. had been nothing short of awesome — amassing one of the most impressive statistics in NCAA history.

Against New Mexico State, the Huskers had the ball 13 times and scored on 12 of those possessions for a total of 65 points. In the process, they tied a NCAA record of 883 yards in total offense and a record 43 first downs. The only glimmer of optimism for the Lions was the fact that they're not New Mexico State.

As one of the nation's biggest football games of the young season unfolded in front of a national television audience and a record crowd of 85,304 at Beaver Stadium, one couldn't help but wonder where this omnipotent offense was.

Just as it started to look as though Penn State was going to blow the second-ranked Huskers right off the field, Gill marched Nebraska 80 yards in seven plays to put the Huskers right back into the game. The Huskers had narrowed the deficit to 14-7 and the momentum seemed to head into the visiting locker room for halftime.

Gill, a stereotypical sprint-out quarterback, is as much of a threat to run as he is to throw. On the day he threw for two Husker scores and plunged over from the one for what appeared to be the winning touchdown with only 1:18 remaining in the game.

"We should have thrown more earlier," Gill said after the game. "But we were running the ball well. We just made some mistakes. We mixed our game plan up in the second half. We threw the ball well, but we just had a lot of turnovers."

In the second half, the Huskers outscored Penn State 17-13 and the offense that was the talk of the country last week, was on a roll.

"We made too many mistakes," Gill said. "We played two good quarters and you can't win the good games by only playing two quarters. You have to play all four quarters."

Although neither defense was really capable of shutting down the opposition's offense, Gill felt the Lion defense played them tough. The record crowd also contributed by making it impossible for the Husker quarterback to audibly at the line.

Gill, aside from being a threat to run and pass, has one other facet to his game that no other team pos-

sesses — an Outland Trophy winner right in front of him.

Center Dave Rimington has been called by many the best lineman ever to play college football and quite conceivably, he could become the first player to ever have Outland Trophies as bookends. Even at 6-3 and 290 pounds, life in the trenches was never easy.

"Things in the trenches were tough," Rimington said. "It was a super game. We did a pretty good job in the second half. We stopped ourselves in the first half. This is a good team (Penn State) and we have to give them credit. They played us tough."

The Huskers could now be labeled as a second-half team. After scoring right before the end of the first half, the Huskers' offense was off and running.

Nebraska took the second half kickoff and pushed the Lions all the way down to their own 18 yard line in five plays, but that's as far as they got. After Irving Fryar's 45 yard gain on a reverse, the drive sputtered and Kevin Seibel came in to attempt a 35-yard field goal. Gill fumbled the snap and Nebraska came up empty.

Penn State made it obvious that there were two dynamic offenses featured in this game. The Lions covered 85 yards in seven plays to take a 21-7 lead, and the complexion of the game was changed for good. It looked like it was time to get out the calculators.

Nebraska took over on its own 20 and Gill engineered a perfect time-consuming drive that culminated in a two-yard field goal to Mike Rozier touchdown pass. The highly acclaimed Husker offense was beginning to appear unstoppable.

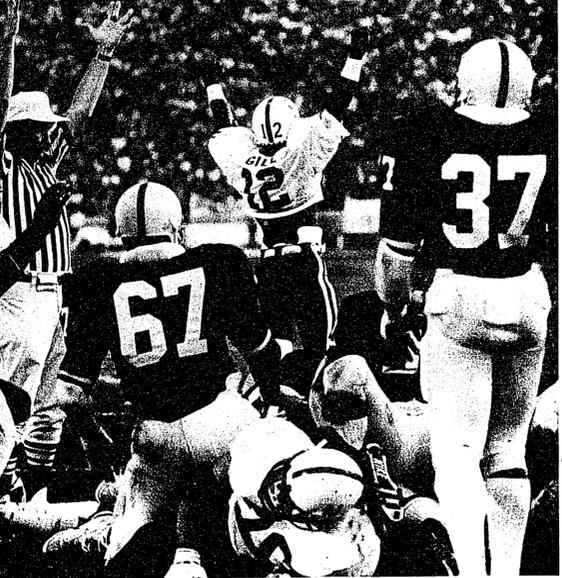
On the very next series, Jon Williams fumbled and Nebraska had three more points in just seven plays. Trailing 21-17, the Huskers' defense got Gill the ball again via a Neil Harris interception of Penn State quarterback Todd Blackledge's pass in the Nebraska end zone.

The Gill and Rozier show traveled the distance for another score and the first Nebraska lead of the game. The drive covered 80 yards in 13 plays with Gill hitting Irving for an 11-yard gain on a crucial third down and nine.

Rozier, a native of Camden, N.J., took a pitch from Gill on the next play for a twelve yard gain to the Lion 3. Penn State held off two Husker surges before Gill plunged over the top for what appeared to be the all four quarters.

Penn State, taking full advantage of a personal foul penalty on the ensuing kickoff and the 1:18 the Huskers left on the clock, registered one of its finest come-from-behind victories ever.

Fortunately for the Lions, their scoring drive consumed all but four seconds and the Huskers were out of time.



Nebraska quarterback Turner Gill (12) raises his arms in jubilation after he rushed one yard for the Cornhuskers' go-ahead touchdown with 1:18 left in the final quarter Saturday at Beaver Stadium. Penn State defensive tackle Dave Oplar (67) and Lion defensive end Walker Lee Ashley (37) stare in disbelief as Nebraska takes its first lead of the game.