

OPINION

Disheartening Loss Puts Buckeyes At Crossroads

It will be interesting to see where the Ohio State football team goes after its epic collapse at Nebraska because a game like the one the Buckeyes let slip away in Lincoln can put a team on one of two paths. It can become a rallying point or it can crush the very life out of you.

The 2002 national championship team used a 31-28 loss in the Outback Bowl at the end of the previous season as a rallying point. Same with the 1994 team that got taken to the woodshed at Penn State to the tune of a 63-14 shellacking. John Cooper's team that year responded with three straight victories to finish the regular season, including a rare win over Michigan.

You can go as far back as the 1957 season when Woody Hayes' team was shocked by TCU in the season opener and used that loss as a pivot point to win its next nine games, including a Rose Bowl victory over Oregon, and capture the national championship.

No one believes the 2011 Buckeyes can rally to win the national championship, of course. Three losses pretty much puts an end to that discussion before it begins. But the fact remains Ohio State can not only be competitive, it can win more than its share of games during the back half of the season.

The promise of what kind of team the Buckeyes can be was on full display for 2½ quarters at Nebraska as OSU rolled out to a 27-6 lead. Not only were the Buckeyes winning the game, they were physically dominating the Cornhuskers as several NU players had to be helped off the field during the first half.

Despite some serious holes on both sides of the football, Ohio State has a lot of talent in a lot of places, and when things are clicking, the Buckeyes can be an entertaining and efficient team.

Obviously, a lot of that excitement centers around freshman quarterback Braxton Miller, for whom the light seemed to burn brightly against the Cornhuskers. The offensive coaching staff finally figured out a game plan tailored to Miller's strengths, and the result was a three-touchdown lead over Nebraska that looked ridiculously easy.

Unfortunately, when Miller went out with an ankle injury late in the third quarter, the Buckeyes had no backup plan when fifth-year senior Joe Bauserman struggled. Sophomore third-stringer Kenny Guiton was available and presumably ready to play – he donned a headset and relayed offensive signals from the bench to the OSU huddle all night – but head coach Luke Fickell indicated there was no thought of ever putting him in the game.

From a fan standpoint, that seems ludicrous. If Guiton or redshirt freshman Taylor Graham cannot get playing time, especially with the way Bauserman has performed his last couple of times out, one has to wonder why they were recruited in the first place.

If Miller is out for any length of time, the Buckeyes are going to have to formulate a Plan B and C and perhaps even a D. Maybe direct snaps to tailback Jordan Hall, who does have a touchdown pass on his college résumé.

Miller under center gives the team its best chance to win, of course, but even with the talented freshman doing his thing, the Buckeyes will have to play better on defense.

Yes, they were gassed in the fourth quarter against Nebraska, and a tired defense is at the mercy of a spread team such as the Cornhuskers. But even the week before, when it held Michigan State to only 10 points, the defense made some glaring errors that

wound up being amplified by the fact the offense couldn't muster any kind of punch at all.

The Ohio State defense is a unit populated by youngsters and first-time starters, but that excuse begins to ring hollow six games into the season. The message for those players – indeed any starter on a 3-3 team – is to grow up quickly or get out of the way for someone else.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

With the 2011 season now at the midway point, all anyone can say with any certainty is that the Buckeyes remain a work in progress. That is a bitter pill for fans who have experienced almost nothing but success since 2002, but reality is reality.

Following the debacle in Lincoln, Ohio State travels to Illinois, a team that has started 6-0 for the first time since 1951. Even during the recent past when the Fighting Illini were struggling, they always seemed to play the Buckeyes tough. That includes a 28-21 shocker in 2007 when OSU was ranked No. 1.

Two weeks later, after an open week, the Buckeyes host fourth-ranked Wisconsin, a team playing as well as any in the nation right now.

November opens with a home game vs. Indiana, a team that has lost 16 in a row to Ohio State, but the following week the Buckeyes must travel to Purdue, another team that gives OSU fits for no particular reason. The Boilermakers have won two of the previous five games in the series, including a 26-18 upset in West Lafayette two years ago.

Finally there is the regular-season finale at Michigan against a team feeling extremely rejuvenated under first-year head coach Brady Hoke. Yes, the Buckeyes have beaten the Wolverines nine of the last 10 years, and U-M's defense still isn't where it needs to be. But does anyone seriously believe OSU can outscore a Denard Robinson-led attack especially if Miller's ankle injury lingers for the remainder of the season?

And yet with all of that uncertainty there is hope – hope because of the way Ohio State toyed with overmatched Akron, hope because of the way the Buckeyes responded to late adversity vs. Toledo and hope because of the way the team clicked on all cylinders for the first 2½ quarters at Nebraska.

Make no mistake, though. During put-up-or-shut-up time, hope won't get it done. The Buckeyes are going to have to figure out a way to put four quarters together or that hope will quickly evaporate into despair.

One And Done?

Fickell certainly doesn't need (or probably even want) my sympathy, but if this is truly going to be his one and only season as head coach of the Buckeyes, I feel bad for him and his family.

When he was offered the job as Jim Tressel's successor, it was sort of a left-handed compliment in that the university gave him a one-year contract and announced it would conduct a nationwide search for a new coach after this season.

No university would even dream of placing those restrictions on any other coach, but Fickell had little choice. He really couldn't say no to his alma mater, all the while knowing the tough hand he had been dealt.

But Fickell also has to know that barring something miraculous this will be his final season as a coach in his hometown. Ohio State will accept its NCAA punishment, move on to Urban Meyer or some other so-called big name, and Fickell will be like millions of other Americans – on the unemployment line.

I have no doubt he will resurface elsewhere quickly, perhaps as a defensive coordinator. And when sufficient time has passed, some university will give him another chance at being a head coach.

But Fickell will likely never again get an opportunity to coach at Ohio State – in his hometown, at his alma mater, in the place where his children were born.

And that's a shame.

Some Final Thoughts

- I don't understand why Carlos Hyde doesn't get more carries. After running for 88 yards and a pair of touchdowns in the first three quarters, Hyde got exactly four attempts in the fourth quarter when things were slipping away from the Buckeyes. Meanwhile, Bauserman threw seven times. Seems like letting Hyde run a few more times would have slowed down Nebraska's charge and allowed OSU to take a couple of breaths.

- The most impressive thing about Miller's first-quarter throwback screen to tight end Jake Stoneburner was the way the offensive line blocked it to perfection. The final piece in that puzzle was supplied by center Mike Brewster, who ranged far to his left to pick off NU cornerback Andrew Green, springing Stoneburner to the end zone.

- How effective was Miller against the Cornhuskers? He ran 10 times and six of those attempts resulted in first downs. Four of those were third-down conversions, and a fifth resulted in a 29-yard scramble that set up a field goal right before halftime.

- Lost amid the defensive meltdown in the fourth quarter was an excellent game turned in by sophomore tackle Johnathan Hankins, whose quickness belies that of a guy listed at 6-3 and 335 pounds. In the second quarter, Hankins moved far outside the hash marks to chase down Nebraska receiver Tim Marlowe from behind and hold him to a meager 2-yard gain. Hankins finished the game with six tackles, including two for loss and a sack.

- I have often heard that Nebraska fans are among the most polite in college football and I have to agree. Following the game, when dejected Ohio State players were filing back to their locker room, several NU fans joined those making the trip from Columbus to applaud the Buckeyes' efforts.

- Most former jocks and coaches employed during football telecasts give tepid commentary while former Ohio State All-America linebacker Chris Spielman typically provides critical analysis. During the Oct. 7 telecast of Penn State's 13-3 win over Iowa, Spielman took the Hawkeyes' All-Big Ten defensive back Shaun Prater to task following a half-hearted tackle attempt. "If you're not going to make any contact," Spielman said, "go ahead and check yourself out of the game."

- Texas employs a pair of freshman quarterbacks, and the youngsters certainly had their hands full Oct. 8 as a hard-charging Oklahoma defense totaled eight sacks and forced five turnovers during the Sooners' 55-17 victory. How bad was it for the Longhorns? At one point late in the third quarter, Texas faced a fourth-and-49 situation.



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OHIO STATE VS. NEBRASKA

Buckeyes Lose Miller, Game At Nebraska

By MARCUS HARTMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State lost its second consecutive game to open Big Ten play by following an incredible start with an even harder to believe collapse.

The Buckeyes fell to No. 14 Nebraska 34-27 on a rainy Oct. 8 night in Lincoln.

A much-maligned Ohio State offense torched a previously proud Nebraska defense early and often while building a 27-6 lead early in the third quarter, but a costly Buckeye turnover and repeated defensive breakdowns left the Buckeyes (3-3, 0-2) and head coach Luke Fickell searching for answers at the midway point in the season.

"I was asked what we had to do better in the second half and I said a lot," Fickell said. "We needed to keep leverage and tackle."

He was sorry to see none of his players were able to step up and make something happen to halt the Huskers' progress as the second half wore on and the game slipped away.

"You have to rely on some guys," Fickell said. "It is about leadership. I don't know. It is something we will have to look back at and see if there is something we can pull out of film. It all comes down to stopping the momentum."

The men of the match were Nebraska quarterback Taylor Martinez and I-back Rex Burkhead, who found great success by land and by air while leading the Cornhuskers (5-1, 1-1) to the first Big Ten win in school history.

Martinez, a sophomore whose three interceptions in a 48-17 loss at Wisconsin a week earlier made him a target of significant criticism among his own fan base, started the Cornhuskers' comeback with an 18-yard touchdown run midway through the third quarter that cut the Buckeyes' lead to 27-13.

He kept it going by hitting wide receiver Quincy Enunwa on a 36-yard play-action touchdown pass then tied the game with a 30-yard touchdown pass to Burkhead, who later capped the game's scoring with



SONNY BROCKWAY

BETTER TIMES – Ohio State sophomore tailback Carlos Hyde (34) provided a highlight early in the second quarter when he ran for a 63-yard touchdown that gave the Buckeyes a 17-3 lead. Ohio State led 20-6 at halftime and 27-6 early in the third quarter before eventually losing 34-27 to host Nebraska.

a 17-yard touchdown run that put the home team ahead for good.

Burkhead led all rushers with 119 yards on 26 carries and was the leading Husker receiver with five grabs for 59 yards.

"Rex played like he always does," Nebraska head coach Bo Pelini said. "He's a heck of a football player, a great football player. I thought our offense played phenomenal."

Pelini also praised the adjustments offensive coordinator Tim Beck made in the second half when he chose to put the ball mostly in the hands of Martinez and Burkhead.

"I thought Tim called a phenomenal game in the second half," Pelini said.

Martinez added 102 yards on 17 rushes and completed 16 of 22 passes for another

91 yards. He eclipsed 100 yards rushing for the eighth time in his career.

The late Nebraska explosion obscured what looked like a breakout day for the Ohio State offense.

Freshman quarterback Braxton Miller ran for 91 yards on 10 carries and added 95 yards through the air while completing 5 of 8 passes.

With Miller at the controls, the Buckeye offense seemed to have much more life than it did a week earlier in a 10-7 loss to Michigan State.

"That is what we know he can do," Fickell said. "We put him in a good situation and he got to run the ball early. But it is a team game and with the young guys, especially, you have to have a good team around them and put him in a good situation."

As is often the case with youth there were ups and downs. Miller opened the door to the Nebraska rally when he lost the ball to Nebraska linebacker Lavonte David at the end of a 7-yard run deep in Ohio State territory.

Miller left the game during the follow-

ing series after suffering an ankle injury, and senior Joe Bauserman was ineffective in relief. Bauserman completed only 1 of 10 passes for 13 yards and threw an interception.

The Buckeyes nearly ran the ball well enough not to need much contribution from the passing game as tailback Carlos Hyde rumbled for 104 yards on 13 carries and Jordan Hall added 49 yards on 17 tries. Hyde went over 100 yards for the first time in his career and contributed a career-long 63-yard touchdown run.

Wide receiver Philly Brown led the Buckeye pass catchers with 61 yards on three grabs while Jake Stoneburner had a 32-yard touchdown catch and fullback Zach Boren and wide receiver Devin Smith added single receptions of 11 and 4 yards, respectively.

Sophomore safety Christian Bryant led the Ohio State defense with 10 tackles while senior linebacker Andrew Sweat added nine and defensive backs C.J. Barnett and Tyler Moeller logged seven stops apiece.

Defensive linemen Johnathan Hankins and Michael Bennett both sacked Martinez once and finished with a pair of tackles for loss while linemen Garrett Goebel and John Simon along with cornerback Bradley Roby also had one stop apiece behind the line of scrimmage.

Safety Orhian Johnson had an interception and broke up a pass in the end zone in the second quarter.

David led Nebraska with a game-high 13 tackles, including one for loss, while fellow linebacker Will Compton added 10 stops and safety Daimion Stafford had six. Defensive lineman Chase Rome notched the Cornhuskers' only sack.

Quick Out Of The Gate

After Nebraska won the toss and deferred to the second half, Ohio State took the opening kickoff and drove 56 yards for a field goal.

Miller was a major contributor as he moved the chains with a 21-yard pass to Brown, an 11-yard connection with Boren and a 12-yard run on a third-and-10.

The Buckeyes advanced to the Nebraska 19-yard line and faced a third-and-2 until left guard Andrew Norwell was whistled for a false start. Miller missed Stoneburner badly on the ensuing third-and-7 pass, and the Buckeyes settled for a 41-yard field goal by Drew Basil.

The Cornhuskers enjoyed great field

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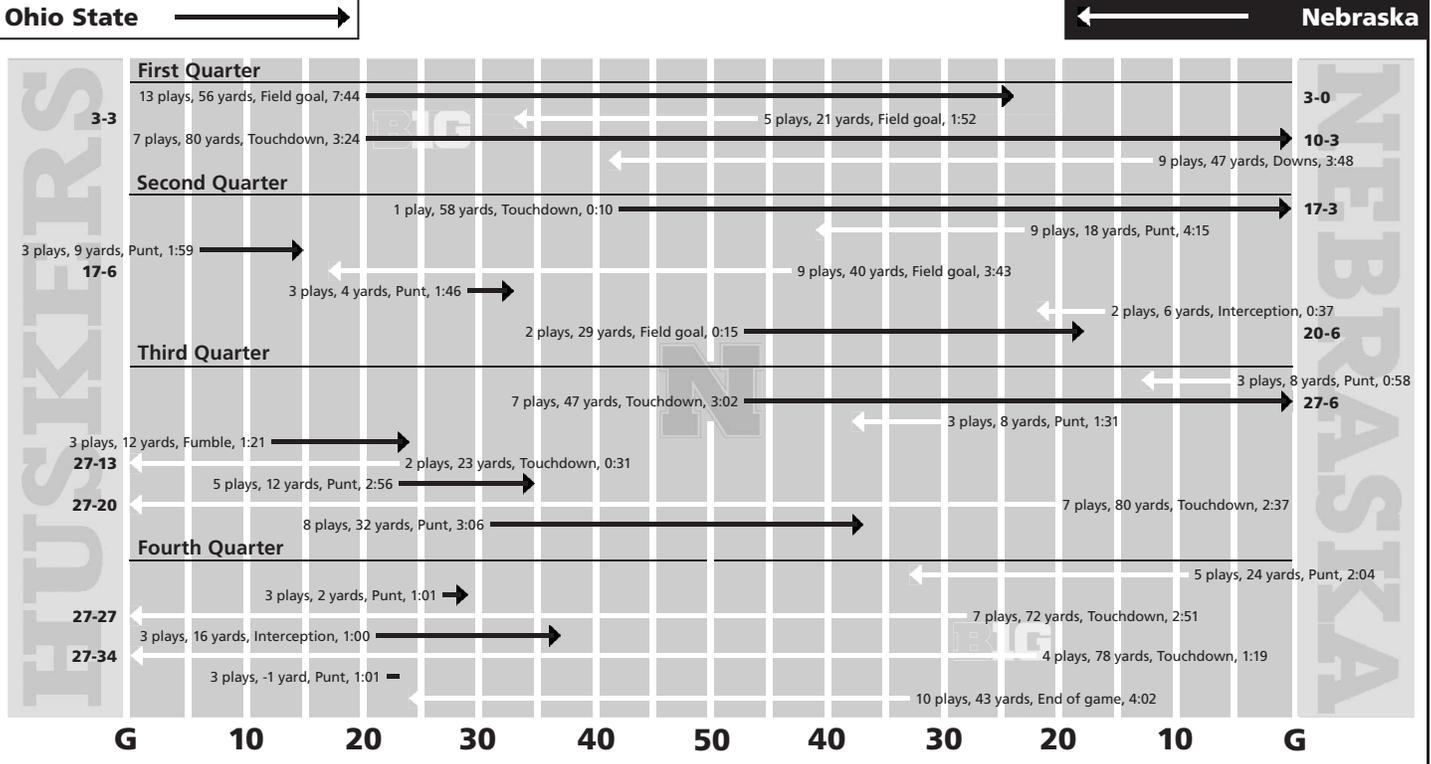
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OHIO STATE VS. NEBRASKA

Drive Chart



position at their own 46 to start their first possession thanks to a 35-yard kickoff return by freshman running back Ameer Abdullah, and they were soon on the Ohio State 36 thanks to a personal foul penalty on Ohio State cornerback Travis Howard on the first play from scrimmage.

That would be the only first down they would pick up, however, and the home team settled for a 50-yard field goal by Brett Maher.

The Buckeyes went right back to work on their next possession, driving 80 yards in a tidy seven plays and 3:31. Miller was again a catalyst as he first converted a third-and-1 with a 12-yard run then converted a third-and-7 with a 24-yard scamper on a quarterback draw.

One play later, he executed a nice play fake, rolled to his right then turned to find Stoneburner all alone on the other side of the field. The junior tight end hauled in the pass and rumbled down the sideline, outrunning bewildered Nebraska defenders to the goal line for his fifth touchdown catch of the season. This one covered 32 yards and gave the Buckeyes a 10-3 lead with 1:51 remaining in the opening quarter.

They would soon add more after the defense, led by cornerback Bradley Roby, stuffed Burkhead on a fourth-and-1 run on the next Nebraska possession.

The Buckeyes took over at their own 42 but had to retreat five yards after right tackle J.B. Shugarts was whistled for a false start. The senior atoned on the next play, however, as he teamed with tight end Reid Fragel to open a massive hole on the left side of the Nebraska defensive line and clear the way for Hyde to burst loose for a 63-yard touchdown.

The 6-0, 238-pound sophomore showed some serious speed as he outraced both Nebraska safeties down the sideline to score his fourth touchdown of the year, and the Big Red fans in the crowd of 85,426 at Memorial Stadium were sufficiently stunned at seeing their team trailing 17-3 with 12:46 left in the second quarter.

The home team made up some ground with another Maher field goal, this one a 34-yarder with 2:44 left in the half, but the progress was soon undone when Ohio State took advantage of a Martinez miscue.

With less than a minute left before halftime, the Nebraska quarterback overshot an intended receiver and found OSU safety Orhian Johnson instead near midfield. The Buckeye junior returned the interception to the Nebraska 47-yard line, and Miller ran for 29 yards on the ensuing first down to set up a 35-yard Basil field goal that split the uprights as time expired in the half.

The Buckeyes not only led 20-6 at the half, they held a big edge in most of the statistics.

They piled up 246 total yards, including 178 on the ground, and averaged 9.1 yards per play.

Miller was an efficient 4 for 6 for 68 yards and the touchdown along with 79 yards rushing on seven carries.

Martinez, who completed his first 10 passes, was 10 for 13 passing for 80 yards with the interception and absorbed two sacks in the opening half. Burkhead ran 11 times for only 10 yards.

"We were our own worst enemies time after time after time in the first half," Pelini said. "Especially defensively, but even offensively I thought we left some drives out there."



Orhian Johnson

The Bottom Line

The game was over when ... Nebraska I-back Rex Burkhead rumbled 17 yards for a touchdown to give the Cornhuskers a 34-27 lead. Another 5:10 remained in the game, but the Buckeye offense had not shown any signs of life since freshman quarterback Braxton Miller left with an injury in the third quarter.

Game ball goes to ... Nebraska quarterback Taylor Martinez. He completed 16 of 22 passes for 191 yards and two touchdowns and ran 17 times for 102 more yards and a touchdown. He stayed patient early as the Buckeyes played mostly zones and took away his deep throws and then struck when given the chance in the second half.

Stat of the game ... 195. The Cornhuskers rolled up 195 yards on 32 carries in the second half as they got their option-flavored attack going in a big way behind the talents of Martinez and Burkhead.

- Marcus Hartman

Momentum Shift

After forcing a three-and-out to start the third quarter, the Buckeyes wasted little time padding their lead.

Miller drove them 47 yards in seven plays, with Hyde bullying over the line from 1 yard out to cap the drive.

Basil's PAT gave the Buckeyes a 27-6 lead with more than 25 minutes left in the game. All the momentum seemed to be on their side, particularly after the defense forced another three-and-out, but the tide would turn abruptly.

After a pair of Hyde runs netted 5 yards to open the next drive, Miller kept the ball on a zone read play and ran around end for another 7. He had picked up the first down by the time he was stopped, but David snatched the ball out of his right hand as the freshman went to the turf.

With the Nebraska fans newly energized, the Cornhuskers took the ball at the Ohio State 23-yard line. Burkhead picked

up 5 yards on a first down counter run, then Martinez sliced through the defense and went 18 yards to pay dirt after faking a handoff and keeping the ball on the option. The touchdown made it 27-13 with 7:23 left in the third quarter.

The nightmare was just beginning for the visitors as they lost their young field general on the following possession.

With the Buckeyes facing a second-and-6 at their own 37, Miller faked a handoff and kept the ball over right end, where he was swallowed up by Nebraska linebacker Sean Fisher.

As he strained to pick up more yards, Miller appeared to twist his right leg in the artificial surface. He remained down for several minutes and was in obvious pain as Ohio State personnel tended to him. They eventually helped him off the field with him unable to put weight on the right leg.

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OHIO STATE VS. NEBRASKA

Wind, Basil's Youth Force OSU To Punt Late

Continued From Page 9

Miller's night would turn out to be over, and the Buckeyes were never the same.

"I thought it helped us obviously that Miller went out, because I think their game plan was built around him," Pelini said. "That kid was playing a heck of a game. I give him a lot of credit. I hope he's OK."

The Ohio State offense was definitely not OK. After gaining 312 yards on 41 plays with Miller at the controls, the Buckeyes picked up only 39 yards on 18 plays without him.

"I thought he made a lot of big plays," offensive coordinator Jim Bollman said of Miller. "I know he ran some draws and made some really big plays. He had a big one at the end of the first half right before we kicked a field goal, and on the play when he fumbled the ball he had made a big first down there that would have been a key play if we hadn't turned it over."

Letting It Get Away

The Cornhuskers took no pity on the wounded Buckeyes.

Bauserman threw a ball away with no one open on his first play in Miller's place, and Ohio State had to punt.

The Cornhuskers took over at their own 20 and went 80 yards in less than three minutes. They covered the final 36 yards on a play-action pass from Martinez to Enunwa, who slipped behind the Ohio State safeties who were looking in the backfield. Enunwa's touchdown and Maher's PAT kick pulled Nebraska within seven points at 27-20 with 1:44 to go in the third.

While Nebraska was charging, Ohio State saw only one realistic chance to score the rest of the way.

The Buckeyes had a first down at the Nebraska 39 after Bauserman hit Brown for a 13-yard pass and an additional 15 yards were tacked on for a face-mask penalty. Hyde picked up 10 more yards with carries of 7 and 3 yards, but that was as close as Ohio State would get to the end zone.

David threw Hyde for a 3-yard loss on the next play, then Stafford broke up a pass intended for Brown in the end zone.

Bauserman was hurried into another incomplete pass on third down, and Fickell opted to take a 5-yard delay of game penalty to make room for a Ben Buchanan punt instead of letting Basil try a 49-yard field goal. The head coach said the distance as well as the wet and windy conditions played roles in the choice.

"Drew is a young guy and he was kicking well, but it was a little bit out of his range," Fickell said.

After the teams traded punts, Martinez engineered another long scoring drive with his feet and his arm to tie the score at 27.

He ran three times for 16 yards, including a critical 4-yard run on a third-and-3 at the OSU 34, and completed 2 of 2 passes for 39 yards during a seven-play, 72-yard scoring march.

On the final play of the drive, Martinez faked an option then dropped back to throw. Finding no one deep, he evaded the Ohio State rush before dumping off a short pass to Burkhead in the flat.

Bryant had Burkhead lined up but missed him completely thanks to a sharp cut by the Husker runner, who then had nothing but green turf in front of him and rambled to the end zone for a game-tying 30-yard touchdown with 7:35 left in the game.

Ohio State's answer on offense did not take very long to complete.

After Hyde picked up 16 yards on two carries to open the drive, Bauserman took a shot for Brown deep down the sideline to his right but underthrew the ball. That let Nebraska cornerback Stanley Jean-Baptiste catch up for a diving interception at the Nebraska 22-yard line.

"We weren't real comfortable defensively anyway, so we knew we had to stay after them a bit," Fickell said when asked about putting the ball in the air despite a running game that was working. "You have to have the ability to take some shots and make plays. Those are all things we will go back and look at and wish we did different. It is a one-on-one matchup and the guy made a good catch."

By then, the Buckeyes were all but finished. The Cornhuskers needed less than a minute and a half to cap their comeback with a four-play, 78-yard drive that

included two Ohio State penalties but no Nebraska passes.

Burkhead capped it by taking a toss and scampering around left end from 17 yards out with 5:10 remaining.

"We stayed the course," Pelini said. "That's kind of the motto of our program. It's about the culture, it's about the process, about staying the course. There was no panic. I'm proud of how they came out and played the second half. I give Ohio State a lot of credit. I thought they played one heck of a football game."

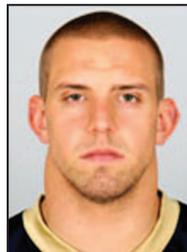
Bauserman was sacked on the first play of the ensuing possession then threw a pair of incomplete passes before the Buckeyes punted, and the Huskers ran out the last 4:02 of the game.

Miscellaneous Notes

- Ohio State ran for more than 200 yards and lost for the first time since a 24-21 setback against Texas in the 2009 Fiesta Bowl, snapping a streak of 17 consecutive wins when bettering that mark.

- Sweat, Moeller and senior center Mike Brewster served as team captains for Ohio State. Brewster was a captain for the third time this season while Sweat and Moeller made their second appearances in the position.

- St. Louis Rams linebacker James Laurinaitis, a three-time All-American and winner of the



James Laurinaitis

- Butkus, Nagurski and Lott trophies during an Ohio State career that spanned 2005-08, served as honorary captain for the Buckeyes.

- Ohio State made its first appearance in Lincoln and fell to 2-1 in the all-time series with the Huskers. The Buckeyes beat Nebraska in Columbus to open the 1955 and '56 seasons.

- Ohio State fell to 61-33-5 all time in Big Ten road openers.

- The Buckeyes led at the half for the fourth time this season and suffered their first defeat in that situation.

- Hyde became the first Ohio State player to rush for more than 100 yards in a game this season.

- Brown's 27-yard catch in the third quarter was a career long. Stoneburner's 32-yard catch was also the longest of his career.

- Basil was 2 for 2 on field goals to run his streak of consecutive makes to seven.

- Barnett's 10 tackles represent a career high.

- Ohio State gave up more than 200 yards rushing for the second time this season, something it had not done twice in one campaign since 2001.

- Nebraska's victory marked the largest comeback in Husker football history, surpassing a 17-point comeback at Texas A&M midway through third quarter in 2002 (31-14, won 38-31). Nebraska also trailed 17-0 in the first quarter at Kansas in 1991 before winning 59-23. The last time Nebraska trailed after three quarters and won was against Colorado in 2008, when the Huskers trailed 31-27 before winning 40-31.

- Martinez has eight 100-yard rushing games in his career, tied for second most by a quarterback in school history with Jammal Lord. Eric Crouch holds the record with 18.

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Nebraska 34, Ohio State 27

Oct. 8, 2011 — Memorial Stadium; Lincoln, Neb.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	10	10	7	0	—
NEBRASKA	3	3	14	14	—

First Quarter

OSU — Basil, 41 yard field goal, 7:16; 13 plays, 56 yards, 7:44 TOP.
NEB — Maher, 50 yard field goal, 5:15; 5 plays, 21 yards, 1:52 TOP.
OSU — Stoneburner, 32 yard pass from B.Miller (Basil kick), 1:51; 7 plays, 80 yards, 3:24 TOP.

Second Quarter

OSU — Hyde, 63 yard run (Basil kick), 12:46; 1 play, 58 yards, 0:10 TOP.
NEB — Maher, 34 yard field goal, 2:44; 9 plays, 40 yards, 3:43 TOP.
OSU — Basil, 35 yard field goal, 0:00; 2 plays, 29 yards, 0:15 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU — Hyde, 1 yard run (Basil kick), 10:53; 7 plays, 47 yards, 3:02 TOP.
NEB — Martinez, 18 yard run (Maher kick), 7:23; 2 plays, 23 yards, 0:31 TOP.
NEB — Enunwa, 36 yard pass from Martinez (Maher kick), 1:44; 7 plays, 80 yards, 2:37 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

NEB — Burkhead, 30 yard pass from Martinez (Maher kick), 7:35; 7 plays, 72 yards, 2:51 TOP.

NEB — Burkhead, 17 yard run (Maher kick), 5:10; 4 plays, 78 yards, 1:19 TOP.
Att. — 85,426.

Weather — 70 degrees, overcast, rain; wind, SSE 5 mph.

Team Statistics

	OSU	NEB
First Downs	16	25
Rushing	9	13
Passing	5	9
Penalty	2	3
Rushes-Yards	41-243	51-232
Passing Yards	108	191
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	6-18-1	16-22-1
Offensive Plays	59	73
Total Net Yards	351	423
Third Down Efficiency	5-13	7-15
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-1
Punts-Avg.	6-43.3	4-44.2
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	2-0
Penalties	9-75	6-50
Time of Possession	29:17	30:43

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — OSU: Hyde 13-104; B.Miller 10-91; J.Hall 17-49; Bauserman 1(-1). **NEB:** Burkhead 26-119; Martinez 17-102; Abdullah 2-16; Green 1-7; Marlowe 1-2; TEAM 3(-7); Turner 1(-7).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — OSU: B.Miller 5-8-0-95-1; Bauserman 1-10-1-13-0. **NEB:** Martinez 16-22-1-191-2.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — OSU: P.Brown 3-61; Stoneburner 1-32; Boren 1-11; D.Smith 1-4. **NEB:** Burkhead 5-59; Bell 3-33; K.Reed 3-28; Kinnie 2-14; Enunwa 1-36; Cooper 1-17; Cotton 1-4.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) — OSU: Buchanan 6-43.3-55. **NEB:** Maher 4-44.2-53.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: None. **NEB:** Abdullah 2-6.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: J.Hall 5-116. **NEB:** Abdullah 5-111.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds) — OSU: None. **NEB:** David 1-0.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: Johnson 1-7. **NEB:** Jean-Baptiste 1-0.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: Bennett 1.0-6; Hankins 1.0-2. **NEB:** Rome 1.0-1.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: Bennett 2.0-10; Hankins 2.0-6; Roby 1.0-3; Goebel 1.0-3; Simon 1.0-1. **NEB:** David 1.0-3; Fisher 1.0-2; Rome 1.0-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) — OSU: Bryant 6-4-10; Sweat 5-4-9; Barnett 6-1-7; Moeller 4-3-7; Hankins 2-4-6; Sabino 2-4-6; Bennett 4-1-5; Roby 4-1-5; Simon 1-4-5; Goebel 0-4-4; Cash 2-0-2; Shazier 2-0-2; Howard 2-0-2; Clarke 1-1-2; Johnson 1-1-2; Bellamy 1-1-2; Klein 1-1-2; Oliver 1-0-1; J.T.Moore 1-0-1; Wood 1-0-1; D.Grant 0-1-1; Domicone 0-1-1. **NEB:** David 6-7-13; Compton 4-6-10; Stafford 3-3-6; Cassidy 1-4-5; Meredith 0-5-5; Jean-Baptiste 1-2-3; Steinkuler 1-2-3; Crick 1-2-3; Dennard 1-2-3; P.J.Smith 0-3-3; Fisher 1-1-2; Osborne 0-2-2; H.Jackson 1-0-1; Burkhead 1-0-1; Rome 1-0-1; Thorell 1-0-1; Martin 0-1-1; Stoddard 0-1-1; May 0-1-1; Evans 0-1-1; Whaley 0-1-1; Ebke 0-1-1; Green 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME — OHIO STATE: Offense, Adams, Norwell, Brewster, Mewhort, Shugarts, Stoneburner, B.Miller, Boren, J.Hall, Fields, P.Brown, Basil, Defense, Simon, Bellamy, Goebel, Hankins, Sweat, Klein, Howard, Bryant, Barnett, Roby, Moeller, Buchanan. Reserves, C.Brown, Berry, Clarke, Sabino, Allen, Shazier, D.Grant, Cash, Bauserman, C.Grant, D.Smith, Domicone, Johnson, Oliver, Wood, Hagan, Rice, Ebner, Hyde, Erwin, T.Jackson, Sp.Smith, Homan, J.T.Moore, Makridis, Bennett, Linsley, Heuerman, Fragel. **NEBRASKA:** Offense, Bell, Kinnie, Hardrick, Rodriguez, Caputo, Long, Jones, Cotton, Martinez, Burkhead, Legate, Maher, Defense, Martin, Crick, T.Moore, Steinkuler, Meredith, Compton, David, Stafford, Cassidy, Dennard, Green. Reserves, Cooper, H.Jackson, Green, Mitchell, Marlowe, Abdullah, Ankrh, Turner, Washington, Osborne, P.J.Smith, Jean-Baptiste, Evans, Enunwa, Richards, Thorell, K.Reed, Zimmerer, Ebke, May, Thomsen, Stoddard, Blatchford, Long, Fisher, Roach, Whaley, Sirls, Qvale, Choi, Thompson, Mangieri, Rome, J.Williams.

Season Statistics

2011 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 3 (18)	AKRON	W, 42-0	105,001
Sept. 10 (15)	TOLEDO	W, 27-22	105,016
Sept. 17 (17)	at Miami (Fla.)	L, 24-6	66,279
Sept. 24	COLORADO	W, 37-17	105,096
Oct. 1	MICHIGAN STATE	L, 10-7	105,306
Oct. 8	at Nebraska (14)	L, 34-27	85,426
Oct. 15	at Illinois	3:30 p.m.	
Oct. 29	WISCONSIN	8 p.m.	
Nov. 5	INDIANA	TBA	
Nov. 12	at Purdue	TBA	
Nov. 19	PENN STATE	TBA	
Nov. 26	at Michigan	TBA	

* OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	107	90
Rushing	53	34
Passing	44	50
Penalty	10	6
Average Per Game/Rush	169.0	116.7
Average Per Game/Pass	146.3	191.5
Total Offense	1,892	1,849
Total Plays	383	374
Average Per Game	315.3	308.2
Average Per Play	4.9	4.9
Penalties-Yards	34-289	44-355
Fumbles-Lost	9-4	10-3
3rd Down Efficiency	30-81	27-86
Percentage	37%	31%
4th Down Efficiency	3-6	7-12
Percentage	50%	58%
Sacks-Yards	12-75	15-95
Time Of Possession Avg.	31:03	28:57

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	34	54	34	24	—	146	24.3
Opponents	39	13	24	31	—	107	17.8

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Individual Statistics				
	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Carlos Hyde	75	400	5.3	5	63
Jordan Hall	67	265	4.0	1	20
Braxton Miller	49	209	4.3	0	29
Rod Smith	29	116	4.0	1	19
Joe Bauserman	19	19	1.0	1	15
Verlon Reed	2	8	4.0	0	12
Jaamal Berry	3	5	1.7	0	4
Chris Fields	2	2	1.0	0	2
TEAM	3	-10	-3.3	0	0
OSU Totals	249	1,014	4.1	8	63
OPP Totals	197	770	3.6	4	54

Passing

	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Joe Bauserman	40	86	46.5	492	5-1	111.43
Braxton Miller	25	47	53.2	386	4-2	141.75
OSU Totals	65	134	48.5	878	9-3	121.23
OPP Totals	102	177	57.6	1,149	9-7	121.03

Receiving

	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Jake Stoneburner	11	133	12.1	5	32
Devin Smith	9	187	20.8	3	36
Verlon Reed	9	132	14.7	0	28
Carlos Hyde	9	65	7.2	0	12
Chris Fields	6	75	12.5	0	33
Philly Brown	5	78	15.6	0	27
Reid Fragel	4	44	11.0	0	16
T.Y. Williams	3	46	15.3	0	23
Evan Spencer	2	66	33.0	1	33
Zach Boren	2	19	9.5	0	11
Rod Smith	2	15	7.5	0	10

Jaamal Berry	2	14	7.0	0	9
Jordan Hall	1	4	4.0	0	4
OSU Totals	65	878	13.5	9	36
OPP Totals	102	1,149	11.3	9	66

Scoring

	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Drew Basil	0	17-17	—	—	7-9	38
Carlos Hyde	5	—	—	—	—	30
Jake Stoneburner	5	—	—	—	—	30
Devin Smith	3	—	—	—	—	18
Joe Bauserman	1	—	—	0-1	—	6
Chris Fields	1	—	—	—	—	6
Jordan Hall	1	—	—	—	—	6
Rod Smith	1	—	—	—	—	6
Evan Spencer	1	—	—	—	—	6
OSU Totals	18	17-17	—	0-1	7-9	146
OPP Totals	13	12-12	—	1-1	5-8	107

FG Distance

	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Drew Basil	4-4	1-1	2-4	0-0	7-9
OSU Totals	4-4	1-1	2-4	0-0	7-9
OPP Totals	1-1	1-1	1-3	2-3	5-8

Punting

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Ben Buchanan	36	1,462	40.6	1	60
OSU Totals	36	1,462	40.6	1	60
OPP Totals	37	1,567	42.4	0	58

Interceptions

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Bradley Roby	2	21	10.5	0	17
C.J. Barnett	2	2	1.0	0	2
Storm Klein	1	18	18.0	0	18
Orhian Johnson	1	7	7.0	0	7
Andrew Sweat	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	7	48	6.9	0	18
OPP Totals	3	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Chris Fields	5	88	17.6	1	69
Jordan Hall	4	59	14.8	0	27
Philly Brown	2	28	14.0	0	17
Devin Smith	1	3	3.0	0	3
OSU Totals	12	178	14.8	1	69
OPP Totals	14	112	8.0	0	24

Kickoff Returns

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Jordan Hall	9	303	33.7	0	90
Jaamal Berry	7	150	21.4	0	28
Philly Brown	1	44	44.0	0	44
Chris Fields	1	15	15.0	0	15
Tony Jackson	1	10	10.0	0	10
OSU Totals	19	522	27.5	0	90
OPP Totals	24	413	17.2	0	42

Def. Leaders

	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Andrew Sweat	20	23	43	5.0-13	—
Christian Bryant	17	11	28	—	—
Etienne Sabino	16	12	28	4.5-20	2.0-12
Johnathan Hankins	9	18	27	4.5-14	2.0-8
C.J. Barnett	19	4	23	—	—
Bradley Roby	18	2	20	3.0-22	—
Storm Klein	11	8	19	1.0-9	1.0-9
Tyler Moeller	11	7	18	—	—
Travis Howard	10	8	18	0.5-1	—
John Simon	9	9	18	3.5-5	1.0-3
Orhian Johnson	11	7	18	—	—
Garrett Goebel	3	13	16	2.5-11	1.0-7
Ryan Shazier	11	2	13	3.0-10	1.0-7

OHIO STATE VS. NEBRASKA

Buckeye Game Analysis

Play Of The Game

Ohio State was sitting pretty as the clock ticked down to the midway point of the third quarter and the Buckeyes held a 27-6 advantage when things changed at the drop of a hat.

The Buckeyes had just forced a Nebraska punt and faced a third-and-5 that should have ended with an OSU first down. Instead, Lavonte David made the individual play of the game to turn momentum, stealing the ball from OSU quarterback Braxton Miller to give the Huskers good field position.

The clock had just ticked under eight minutes when Miller took the snap with the team at its own 17-yard line. The OSU quarterback went over the right side on an option keeper, broke a tackle and had more than enough yardage for the first down.

But as Miller crossed the first-down line, he spun over a tackler, pointing his back downfield. At the same time, David came over from his linebacker spot and had a view of Miller from the front.

As the quarterback started to fall to the ground, David reached in and simply ripped the ball from the Huskers hands to take over possession.

"I'm chasing the quarterback down," David said. "He had his back turned and I had the chance to strip it. So I went out there. That's something that we've been working on all week. I did it the same way they told us to do it in practice. I just took a shot at it and I got it."

After taking over at the 23-yard line, Nebraska scored two plays later, claiming momentum and slicing OSU's advantage to two touchdowns at 27-13. Miller was injured on Ohio State's next possession and the Cornhuskers never looked back after David's strip.

"That was a game-changing play," Huskers coach Bo Pelini said. "That was a huge play in the football game. He's been doing it since he got here. He's a heck of a football player."

What Worked Well

- **Calling the tight end screen:** After a game in which there were plenty of huge plays, this space would be remiss without mentioning perhaps the most well-designed. Ohio State's first touchdown of the day was a play that hasn't been completed in recent years, a throwback screen to tight end Jake Stoneburner that played off the Buckeyes' power run play with a pulling guard. Miller rolled right behind left guard Andrew Norwell then threw back left to Stoneburner, who picked up two blocks and wasn't touched until the goal line on the 32-yard TD pass.

- **The offensive line:** Credit has to go to the big guys up front for Ohio State's early dominance. Offensive linemen Mike Adams, Andrew Norwell, Mike Brewster, Jack Mewhort and J.B. Shugarts along with tight ends Stoneburner, Reid Fragel and Jeff Heuerman and fullback Zach Boren repeatedly cleared the way for big Ohio State runs by both Miller and the tailbacks. The quarterbacks also had time to throw, as there was only one sack by the Huskers.

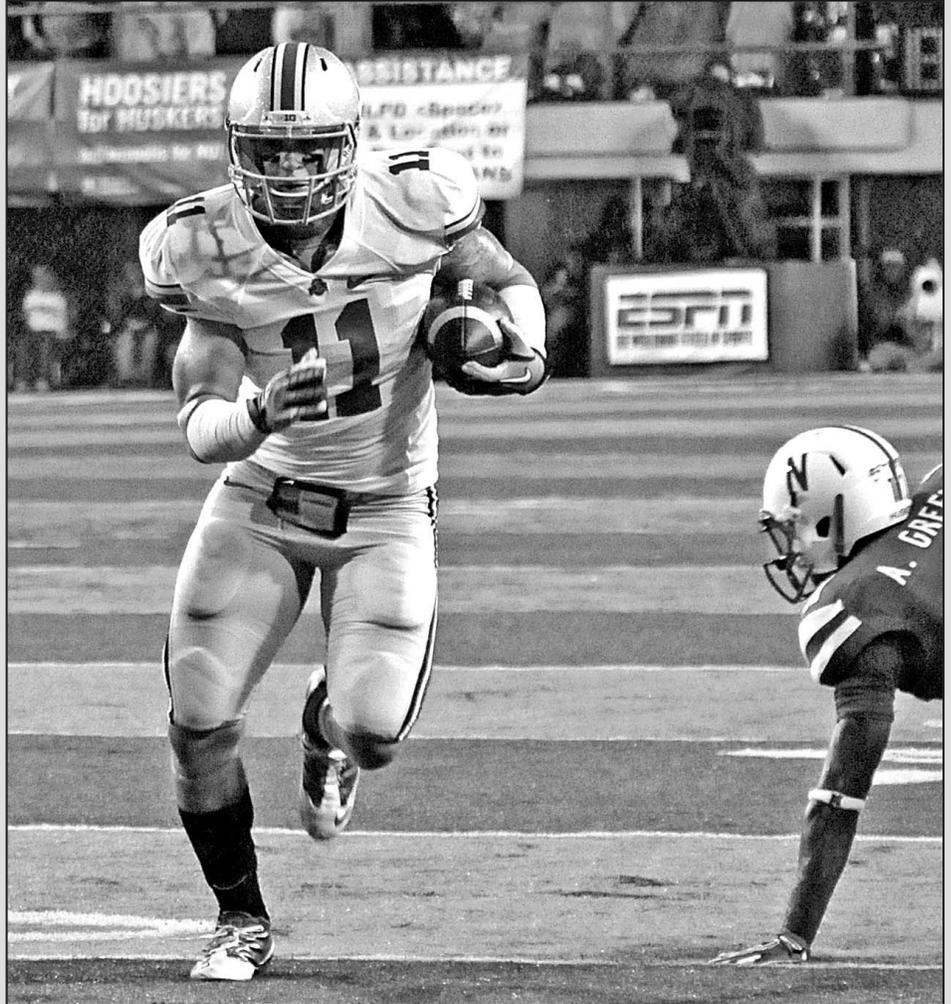
What Didn't Work

- **Defending 30 personnel:** That describes Nebraska's offensive personnel grouping that included three running backs and no tight ends, a look the Huskers switched to in the third quarter to score a pair of touchdowns. The formation featured quarterback Taylor Martinez lined up 4 yards behind center with backs to either side and another behind him. The first score was an option play on which Martinez kept the ball, running through a hole the width of a car for an 18-yard touchdown. On Nebraska's next possession, Martinez hit Quincy Enunwa for a 36-yard scoring pass after play-action out of the formation froze OSU safety Christian Bryant.

- **Giving up on the run:** When Joe Bauserman came in following Miller's injury, it seemed like the Buckeyes could have stayed on the ground and still ground out yards given the push the offensive line had produced all night. Instead, Ohio State went to the air, calling 11 passes against seven runs with Bauserman in the game. The result was a total of 39 yards and no points in four possessions.

Reviewing The Matchups

Ohio State rush offense vs. Nebraska rush defense: Nebraska never really stopped Ohio State on



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIG PLAY – A tight end screen to junior Jake Stoneburner (11) led to a 32-yard touchdown in the first quarter. Nebraska defenders, including cornerback Aaron Green (11), were fooled by the play.

the ground. The Buckeyes finished with a sterling average of 5.9 yards per carry as a team. Miller finished with 9.1 yards per carry and Carlos Hyde had his best day as a Buckeye, earning 8.0 yards per tote. Other than David, who had a monster game, the Huskers showed little ability to get off blocks or make tackles. **EDGE: Ohio State**

Nebraska rush offense vs. Ohio State rush defense: Ohio State was excellent in defending Nebraska's option plays for the first 35 minutes before things fell apart. Losing middle linebacker Storm Klein to injury hurt as the linebackers were blocked cleanly on many of the Huskers' big plays in the second half. The Buckeyes also talked of getting in the wrong gaps, one reason the Huskers had six rushes of more than 10 yards in the last 25 minutes. Nebraska must be credited for pushing the right buttons in the second half, as the Huskers put Martinez and running back Rex Burkhead in position to succeed with excellent play-calling. **EDGE: Nebraska**

Ohio State pass offense vs. Nebraska pass defense: Miller showed progress in throwing the ball, finishing 5 of 8 and hitting a few downfield passes in traffic that he had not yet completed. Things took a decided turn south, however, when Bauserman came in. He finished 1 for 10 and missed his last seven passes, either throwing the ball away or forcing passes into tight coverage even when he had time in the pocket. It's becoming clear the senior just isn't the answer. **EDGE: Nebraska**

Nebraska pass offense vs. Ohio State pass defense: The game plan said to force Martinez to the air, but the Nebraska sophomore had one of the best passing days of his career. Despite a funky throwing motion that made it look as though he were hurling a shot put instead of a football, Martinez put the right touch on his passes in the second half, hitting a few big plays but also some underneath throws that kept the chains moving in critical situations. **EDGE: Nebraska**

Special teams: Despite the presence of two explosive return men in Nebraska's Ameer Abdullah and OSU's Jordan Hall, there were no game-changing plays in this area of the game. The two return men finished with almost equal kickoff return stats, while both punters topped 40 yards per net punt and both kickers were 2 for 2 on the day. **EDGE: Even**

Intangibles: What a tale of two games. Nebraska looked like it couldn't do a thing right the first two-thirds of the game; the rest of the way, Ohio State looked like it had never seen an oblong spheroid much less knew what to do with it. Although OSU was competent for longer, the Huskers made the most of their time in the ascendency, coming back from three touchdowns behind to post the win. Luke Fickell deserves credit for getting the team to put the distractions of the week behind it, but Pelini gets even more for presiding over a team that shrugged aside 35 minutes of awful play and earned a historic win. **EDGE: Nebraska**

– Jeff Svoboda

OHIO STATE VS. NEBRASKA

BSB Quotebook: Nebraska 34, Ohio State 27

OSU head coach Luke Fickell on the major difference between the way his team played in the first and second halves: "This is something we're really going to have to look at. We'll pull out the film and look at it, but I'm sure there won't be anything magical that we did in the first half that we didn't do in the second half. Ultimately, it comes down to stopping their momentum. Whether that's offense, defense or special teams, we have to find a way to stop that momentum, make a play and put them back on defense."

Nebraska head coach Bo Pelini's assessment of the game: "I've been a part of some pretty great ones and this one's right up there. I'm proud of our football team, I'm proud of the character on our team. They just kept fighting. We've got a lot to fix, we've got a lot of areas we can get better at, but I think our kids showed a lot of character. I'm proud of that group of guys in the locker room."

OSU junior tight end Jake Stoneburner on if he knew the Buckeyes were in trouble when freshman quarterback Braxton Miller went out of the game with a third-quarter ankle injury: "I didn't think we were in trouble but my heart did sink a little bit. He was out there making plays, leading us and converting third downs. But when he went down, we knew we had to play for (senior QB Joe Bauserman)."

OSU junior tight end Reid Fragel on the team's emotion after Miller was sidelined: "Obviously you care about your quarterback so it's only natural to lose a little bit of focus at that point. Not that it changed the whole game entirely, but it did change things there for a little bit."

Fickell on why the Buckeyes continued to throw the ball in the fourth quarter despite the fact Bauserman was clearly struggling: "I think we did still try to run the football. The only thing we were doing was try to get them on the edge a little bit to give them an option. Again, those are things we'll go back and take a look at. We have to do a better job all the way around. It's not just one aspect, not any one person, not any one position. It's the whole group."

Fragel on the same subject: "You can't run the ball every single play because they'll just load up the box on you. You have to throw it at least a little bit."

Fickell on the play call that resulted in Bauserman's interception: "We weren't real comfortable defensively at that point and we knew we had to stay after them (offensively) a little bit. You have to have the ability to take some shots and hit some plays. Obviously those are things you'll go back and look at and wish maybe you'd done differently. But that was a one-on-one matchup and their guy made a great play."

Fickell on if there was ever any discussion about putting third-string quarterback Kenny Gupton into the game with Bauserman struggling: "No. We go with the guys we've got. That was the plan. We have to get a few stops on defense. That's really what it comes down to. We really didn't put (Bauserman) in a real good situation, and they knew he wasn't as mobile (as Miller), so they played a little different pass coverage. We have to do a better job of putting him in a situation where he can handle it better."

OSU offensive coordinator Jim Bollman on if his game plan changed after Miller was sidelined: "We changed a little bit. Had Braxton



SONNY BROCKWAY

TOUGH QUESTIONS – Ohio State head coach Luke Fickell said his Buckeyes will have to "do a better job all the way around" after losing to Nebraska.

been in there, we might have run him a little bit more in some of those situations. We were running him a little more at the time when he hurt his ankle."

Fragel when asked if he thought the Buckeyes would have won had Miller been able to play the entire game: "It's tough to say that we would have, but I certainly think it would have helped in certain areas. Obviously he was making some big plays in the first half, and it's tough to think that he wouldn't have made a big play or two in the second half."

OSU defensive coordinator Jim Heacock on if the loss to Nebraska was worse than the 10-7 defeat the week before against Michigan State: "They're all bad. Any loss is bad. This one is bad because we looked to have control of it and both halves were totally different. We just have to find ways to get off the field. We just have to play better. We have to coach better and we have to play better."

OSU senior center Mike Brewster on the same subject: "I don't want people to take this the wrong way, but after a game like this I can sleep better. It's still a loss and it still hurts – don't get me wrong. Last week, though, I just felt like we didn't do anything and it showed. At least after tonight we know we're going in the right direction. It's just too bad that Braxton turned his ankle on that play and turned the ball over. After that, it was just downhill."

Fickell on if he had ever experienced a similar setback during his playing or coaching career: "We got beat pretty bad when I was in school up at Happy Valley (a 63-14 loss at Penn State in 1994) and we rallied and came back and had a heckuva season. There are a lot of things we can do to get these guys pulling on their strings to make sure they know the pride and love they feel for one another is stronger than anything they're feeling right now."

OSU senior linebacker Andrew Sweat on whether he had ever been on a team that had been ahead by 21 points in the second half only to lose the game: "No. I've never been in anything like that before. I don't know

what the magic words are. We just didn't get it done."

Brewster on the same subject: "The only one I can think of that even comes close is the USC game my sophomore year in '09 (an 18-15 loss to the Trojans in Columbus). We had that one in the bag and let it get away. We didn't have as big a lead as we had tonight but it didn't hurt any less."

OSU senior safety Tyler Moeller on the same subject: "There have been some games in my career where this has happened. It's unfortunate because we were playing great in the first half and then they started getting some plays on us. It hurts."

OSU senior left tackle Mike Adams on making his season debut following a five-game suspension: "It felt great to finally be out there again. I really felt like we were controlling things out there."

Fragel on the return of Adams: "Just him being a senior and being out there is huge. It helped a lot in several situations, and I thought he dominated out there. It was great to have him back."

Brewster on the same subject: "It was great. We have three seniors on the line now, and that gives us just that much more experience for those young guys. It helps a lot."

Nebraska quarterback Taylor Martinez on his team's performance a week after losing a 48-17 decision to Wisconsin: "I just knew that we had to come back. Our offense knew we had to step up. We were just playing together as a family. That was our motto all week – togetherness and family. We just came together and I'm glad we could come through with the win."

Fickell on allowing Martinez to have such an outstanding second half: "We had him where we wanted him (in the first half). We were playing well and doing what we planned on doing. We were keeping him contained and making him throw it where we wanted him to throw it. Then the floodgates started to open and you start to panic a little bit. We never got ourselves quite back on track."

Sweat on what led to Nebraska's second-half success: "They changed up formations on us and they obviously hit a couple of big plays. It was small stuff for us – a guy not being in his gap or something like that – but it was enough."

Stoneburner on his 32-yard touchdown catch-and-run on a throwback screen late in the first quarter: "We've had that thing in for like three weeks now and I've been champing at the bit for that to be called. We ran it and scored on our first-team defense a couple of weeks ago and we knew it would work."

Fragel on the up-and-down performance of the Buckeyes: "That's what has been so frustrating about the past couple of weeks. We know as a family and as a team what we're capable of. That's why it stings so bad right now. We were dominating them up front in the first half. We were just having our way with them. Then how we played in the second half just makes us feel that much worse."

Stoneburner on the mood of the team: "We were so excited to be out there. We were out there having fun and making plays and it felt like we were clicking on all cylinders. We were rolling so well, it's actually hard to believe we lost that game."

Does Not Matter How – All Losses Are The Same

Ohio State's stunning loss to Nebraska begs the question: Is it worse to be blown out by a supposedly superior opponent or let an upset win slip away?

From the standpoint of OSU fans, I'm not sure it makes a difference.

The mood among a large part of Buckeye Nation is so toxic right now that nothing short of winning out this season is going to make that segment happy – and probably not even then. In my 30-plus years here at BSB, I don't know that I remember a week when so few fans gave Ohio State any chance of winning a game as was the case heading into the historic clash with the Cornhuskers in Lincoln.

While those fans were predicting a Nebraska blowout, they seem just as upset the team let the win slip away even though their dire predictions were proven ill-founded and there were a lot of positives that came out of the game. Those fans will definitely take a glass half-empty feeling from the game.

As for the team itself, which type of loss would be more devastating will depend on what the players and coaches take from the trip to Nebraska and how they go about their business the rest of the way.

There is no question that letting a game slip away as Ohio State did can have a damaging effect on a team, especially a team with a fragile psyche. But if the coaches can use the loss to build up that fragile psyche, there could still be some hope for this season.

The staff, with Luke Fickell at the helm, has taken its share of criticism so far, and the remainder of the season will be a real test for Fickell and his crew. Can they convince the team that despite the loss the Buckeyes proved they are capable of beating the best the Big Ten has to offer? Can they take the good from the game and move forward or will the bad ending continue a path to chaos and mediocrity?

Fickell was dealt a bad hand when he agreed to take the job. I don't think anyone disputes that. Whether his team gets better each week or slides backward will go a long way toward determining his fate as OSU's head coach – assuming that fate hasn't already been decided.

I don't know that I have ever seen a season when the backup quarterback has been such a big issue, and that was one of the biggest stories coming out of the Nebraska game. That controversy seemed to overshadow even the emergence of starter Braxton Miller as a bona fide Big Ten starter.

There is the old adage in football that the most popular player on any team is the backup quarterback. It is the exact opposite at Ohio State with Joe Bauserman. The fan base has already made up its mind as to whether the fifth-year senior can do the job. The question is how much longer the staff keeps trotting him out there.

Personally, I have really pulled for Bauserman. I kept hoping that he would come around primarily because I hate to see any player take the type of abuse from the home fans that he has taken. A storybook ending would have been nice, and the game with the Cornhuskers was a perfect opportunity for Bauserman to write that happy ending. But it is painfully obvious that he just can't do the job.

I'm not at practice every day, so I don't know what the other quarterbacks are doing, but it is hard to believe either Kenny Guiton or Taylor Graham could do any worse than Bauserman. After all, his combined 3-for-24 passing mark against Miami (Fla.) and Nebraska – a 12.5-percent completion average

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

and just 26 yards – is nothing short of staggering. He even undercut what is supposed to be one of his strengths when he threw an interception against the Huskers, which they promptly converted into the game-winning touchdown drive.

Additionally, Bauserman is gone after this season and the Buckeyes aren't contending for the national championship. Isn't it time to start getting someone else some reps in preparation for next season?

I also keep thinking back to something 2002 national championship quarterback Craig Krenzel told me when he and I appeared together on a Toledo television show this summer. Krenzel said it is very difficult for an offense when your starting quarterback is suited for one style of offense and your reserve is suited for another. Guiton would seem to be more similar to Miller, so why not go with him as the reserve to provide more continuity?

This was Miller's breakout game, and while we'll never know for sure, the Buckeyes would probably have beaten Nebraska had he not had to leave the game with an ankle injury. In addition to Bauserman's struggles, the team seemed to deflate on both sides of the ball after Miller's departure.

On the one hand, I want to give the offense staff kudos for helping put Miller in a position to excel with one of its more creative game plans of the season. The return of Mike Adams to the offensive line after serving his five-game suspension also seemed to have a major impact as the Buckeyes controlled the line of scrimmage for much of the game. That performance came after being completely overwhelmed in the previous week against Michigan State.

That said, I'm left wondering why the OSU brain trust didn't stick to the ground in the late going especially given Bauserman's inability to get a pass even remotely close to any of his receivers. The combination of the offensive line and running backs Jordan Hall and Carlos Hyde could not have done much worse than the 13 yards the passing game generated.

The drive that ended with the interception was a perfect example of what might have been. It opened promisingly with Hyde rushing twice for 16 yards, but on the third play, Bauserman turned the ball over with the pick although it was apparently the quarterback who checked into that play.

Not only might the Buckeyes have had a better chance of moving the ball on the ground, they would have burned up more clock. The four drives Bauserman led took only 6:07 off the clock. (The longest of his last three drives lasted 1:01.) With momentum having clearly swung to the Huskers' favor in a game where momentum was everything, anything that could have slowed Nebraska down would have been a plus for the Buckeyes.

Instead, the Ohio State defense appeared to get more and more desperate and less and less effective as the pivotal fourth quarter unfolded. It was that desperation that might have led to the two costly personal fouls that helped Nebraska score the winning touchdown and then run out the clock on its final two drives.

While the defenders were repeatedly

forced back on the field by the ineptitude of the offense they are the supposed strength of the team and had proved they could stop the Nebraska offense throughout much of the game. Someone needed to step up and make a play to protect Ohio State's lead or at least force the game into overtime.

"I thought we had some opportunities," OSU defensive coordinator Jim Heacock said. "That's one of those times somebody has to make a play, and we didn't quite come up with them. We came up short. It seemed like the longer it went, we just couldn't get them off the field."

With the season at the halfway point, the Buckeyes are definitely at a crossroads. Are they going to build on the positives from the game with the Cornhuskers or dwell on the potentially devastating negatives coming from the defeat? One thing for certain is they are a better team when Miller is at the controls, so his availability is crucial.

Hopefully, senior center Mike Brewster's positive outlook is typical of the rest of the team.

"I don't want people to take this the wrong way, but after a game like this I can sleep better," Brewster said. "It's still a loss and it still hurts. Don't get me wrong. Last week, though, I just felt like we didn't do anything and it showed. At least after tonight we know we're going in the right direction. It's just too bad that Braxton turned his ankle on that play and turned the ball over. After that, it was just downhill."

Other Thoughts

• While Bauserman looked like he wasn't going to be able to hit them even if his receivers were open, they didn't necessarily help him as the young players continue to struggle to get separation. DeVier Posey would definitely help if he were available, and the return of Philly Brown was a plus. The sophomore had three catches for 61 yards in his first action after returning from an ankle injury suffered in the second game of the season.

As I watch the young receivers continue to struggle, I wonder if the fact that new receivers coach Stan Drayton did not have previous experience at the position has been a factor.

It was a positive to see tight end Jake Stoneburner turn in a big play against Nebraska, a nifty 32-yard touchdown reception. Unfortunately, that was Stoneburner's only reception of the day. A good way to jump-start the passing game and take pressure off the young receivers would be to get the veteran tight end more involved with the passing game.

• Anytime an Ohio State opponent features a good kick returner, I get nervous given the recent problems the Buckeyes have had in defending on kicks and punts. Nebraska's Ameer Abdullah entered the game leading the nation with a 35.1-yard return average, including a touchdown, and he took his first kick against the Buckeyes back 35 yards to the NU 46 to help set up a Husker field goal in the opening quarter.

After that, however, the Buckeyes really tightened up, limiting Abdullah to a 19.0-yard average on his other four returns. After the first return, Nebraska's best starting point

after a kickoff the rest of the game was its own 30.

• When Fickell was asked if he had experienced any similar setbacks as a player, he noted the Buckeyes' 63-14 loss to Penn State in 1994. That game was a little different in that Ohio State was taken to the woodshed by the Nittany Lions as opposed to letting the win slip away as the Buckeyes did against Nebraska.

An important lesson for Fickell to impart to his team from that whipping by Penn State is that the Buckeyes bounced back from that game to win their final three regular-season contests and most importantly beat Michigan for the first time in John Cooper's tenure at OSU.

It is mandatory for the Buckeyes to defeat Michigan this year, not just to salvage something from the season but to keep the enemy up north from getting too cocky, which I think they might be.

• Much is made about the need to get freshmen into a college weight room.

When NU senior Lavonte David ripped the ball away from Miller in what proved to be a pivotal play in the game, it marked the second week in a row that an Ohio State freshman had the ball yanked away at a crucial time.

Against Michigan State, freshman Devin Smith had a reception pulled away for an interception on a play that would have given OSU the ball at the Spartan 6. Will Miller and Smith be giving up those balls next season?

• Leading up to the Nebraska game, former Ohio State head coach Earle Bruce was asked about Huskers head man Bo Pelini, whom Bruce recruited to play for the Buckeyes. Bruce noted that he had Pelini only for his freshman season, lamenting one play the former coach said Pelini was not on the field for.

Bruce claimed Pelini was not in the lineup when Iowa's Chuck Hartlieb hit tight end Marv Cook for a 27-yard touchdown pass on a fourth-and-23 with six seconds remaining to give the visiting Hawkeyes a stunning 29-27 victory in 1987. That loss led to Bruce's firing days later.

Accounts in BSB from the game, however, indicated that Pelini was in on the play and that he and fellow defensive back David Brown had a shot at Cook at the 2-yard line but could not corral the big tight end.

By the way, Pelini was the poster child for what Cooper referred to as the "slow white guys" he complained he was left with when he took over for Bruce, a comment that met with much disdain from the Buckeye faithful.

Pelini finished that freshman year in 1987 with 13 tackles, good for 16th on the team. Chris Spielman led the team in stops that year with a whopping 156.

Scarlet And Gray Paper

Don't forget that when important Ohio State sports news breaks, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will publish online special Scarlet and Gray Papers to give our readers a timely and reliable source for any important stories.

The most recent such Scarlet and Gray Paper was published Oct. 3 when OSU athletic director Gene Smith met with reporters to announce the latest NCAA violations, this time involving players being paid for work they allegedly did not do.

The Scarlet and Gray Papers are in addition to the 36 electronic issues of BSB, all of which are free to current Buckeye Sports Bulletin print subscribers. To find out how to access these special benefits to BSB subscribers, look for the information on page 4 of this issue.