

WEEK SEVEN
NEBRASKA at MINNESOTA

Rodney Smith, unbeaten Gophers run over Huskers 34-7

MINNEAPOLIS -- All week long at Minnesota's practice facility, players were doused with frigid water as they took the field. The thermostat was turned down to the max in the mid-50s. Fans were on full blast. Quarterbacks and receivers stuck their hands in ice buckets between drills. Footballs were soaked and frozen.

The Gophers were sure ready for the wintry weather, and their three-man threat in the backfield was more than enough to topple the Huskers. Rodney Smith, Shannon Brooks and Mo Ibrahim took turns helping Minnesota overpower Nebraska to stay undefeated with a 34-7 victory on Saturday night on the strength of 322 yards rushing in the second-coldest October game in the 11-season history of TCF Bank Stadium.

"We prepare for this all the time," Minnesota coach P.J. Fleck said. "We love our weather, and we think it's an advantage."

The kickoff temperature was 37 degrees with gusty wind and a rain-snow mix, so the Gophers turned their senior tailbacks Smith and Brooks loose with a solid dose of the powerful sophomore Ibrahim as well. This was the first time all three players were healthy for the same game.

"All three of us out there is tough for defenses, and we know that," Smith said. "We have three different running styles, and we have fresh bodies rolling in."

Smith ran for 139 yards and a touchdown, Brooks rushed for 99 yards, Ibrahim had 84 yards and three touchdowns, and the Gophers (6-0, 3-0) stayed in a tie for first place in the Big Ten West Division with rival Wisconsin behind an all-around performance that had the Huskers (4-3, 2-2) on their heels all evening. Minnesota's last 6-0 start was in 2003, and the eight-game winning streak including the last two contests of last season is the longest for the program since 1948-49.

With Nebraska quarterback Adrian Martinez sidelined by a left knee injury, Noah Vedral took over for his first career start and was under pressure often. He went 14 for 23 for 135 yards and rushed 15 times for 49 yards, but the Gophers had four sacks and kept the Huskers from scoring until early in the fourth quarter. Leading receiver Wan'Dale Robinson left on a cart with an injury to his lower left leg in the second quarter, one of an endless string of setbacks for the Huskers. "I thought we had a team that was ready to play," Nebraska coach Scott Frost said. "We got pushed around on both sides of the ball."

After a well-covered Maurice Washington dropped a fourth-and-2 pass by a heavily pressured Vedral from the 29 on the opening drive, the Gophers went the other way in five plays and 71 yards to score on a 15-yard tunnel screen pass from Tanner Morgan to Chris Autman-Bell. Vedral found JD Spielman wide open off a crossing route for a 51-yard gain on the following possession to reach the 26, but then he was sacked on back-to-back plays. Still with a prime opportunity to tie the game on their next series, Robinson scampered down the sideline on a run that ended inside the 5 on the first play of the second quarter, but fellow wide receiver Kanawai Noa wiped that out with an illegal block on the second. On the first play of the third quarter, Morgan froze the Huskers with a hard run fake and found Tyler Johnson wide open for 45 yards to set up Ibrahim's second touchdown. On third-and-44 at their 44, trailing 21-0, the Huskers tried a fake punt, but tight end Austin Allen was stopped short after taking the snap. With a three-score lead, the Gophers just kept on running. "It was really fun. I had the best view in the house," Morgan said, later adding: "Just giving these guys two more inches, they're going to make a 12-yard gain 50."

ON THE LINE
With Gophers right tackle Daniel Faalele out with an injury, left guard Blaise Andries took his spot, center Conner Olson slid over for Andries, and John Michael Schmitz started at center for the first time. The reshuffled front manhandled an all-senior Huskers defensive line that averages 320 pounds between the three of them.

"We felt if we could get them running sideways and their backers wouldn't fit right, then we could be able to run well," Fleck said. "I felt like we did that, and then our backs broke tackles."

Huskers nose guard Darriion Daniels was in the thick of it. "Once you get out of position, it messes up everything," Daniels said.

THE TAKEAWAY
Nebraska: The troubling trend of stumbling out of the locker room at halftime continued, with a five-play, 63-yard touchdown drive for the Gophers followed by a punt for the Huskers. They've been outscored 75-41 in the third quarter this year, including 37-7 in the last three games. Frost, past the halfway point of his second season of this renovation project, is 8-11.

"Things are never as good as you think, never as bad as you think," Frost said, "but I knew we need to get a lot better."

Minnesota: The Gophers are bound to crack the next Associated Press Top 25 poll, after being the first team below the cut in the latest edition. They haven't been ranked by The AP since the last week of the 2014 season, and they're surging toward an unbeaten record for the Nov. 9 matchup at home against Penn State. The play calling by offensive coordinator Kirk Ciarrocca was superb, and the Gophers are scoring at their highest rate since 2005, an average of 35 points per game.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
NEB	0	0	0	7	7
MINN	7	7	20	0	34

Scoring Summary -----					
FIRST QUARTER			NEB	MINN	
MINN TD 7:31 Chris Autman-Bell 15 Yd pass from Tanner Morgan (Michael Lantz Kick)					
5 plays, 71 yards, 2:43			0	7	
SECOND QUARTER			NEB	MINN	
MINN TD 10:15 Mohamed Ibrahim 15 Yd Run (Michael Lantz Kick)					
6 plays, 80 yards, 3:16			0	14	
THIRD QUARTER			NEB	MINN	
MINN TD 12:41 Mohamed Ibrahim 5 Yd Run (Michael Lantz Kick)					
5 plays, 63 yards, 2:19			0	21	
MINN TD 3:16 Rodney Smith 1 Yd Run (Michael Lantz Kick)					
9 plays, 45 yards, 5:16			0	28	
MINN TD 1:41 Mohamed Ibrahim 1 Yd Run (Michael Lantz PAT failed)					
2 plays, 46 yards, 0:18			0	34	
FOURTH QUARTER			NEB	MINN	
NEBRASKA TD 12:32 Dedrick Mills 2 Yd Run (Lane McCallum Kick)					
14 plays, 80 yards, 4:09			7	34	

Team Stats	NEB	MINN
First Downs	16	20
Passes for First	5	4
Rushes for First	10	16
Penalties for First	1	0
Third Down Efficiency	6-16	8-13
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-4	0-0
Total Yards	299	450
Total Plays	72	62
Avg Gain Per Play	4.2	7.3
Net Yards Rushing	151	322
Rushes	43	49
Yards Per Rush	3.5	6.6
Net Yards Passing	148	128
Comp-Att	15-29	8-13
Yards Per Pass	5.1	9.8
Times Sacked	0	4
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	-29
Interceptions	0	0
Punts	6	5
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	5	4
Penalty Yards	33	42
Fumbles	2	1
Fumbles Lost	0	0
Time of Poss	27:13	32:47

Individual Stats

RUSHING

NEBRASKA

RushYdsAvgTDLONG

Noah Vedral15493.3022

Brody Belt4297.3022

Dedrick Mills9283.1113

Wan'Dale Robinson6244.0011

Maurice Washington6203.305

Austin Allen122.002

Andrew Bunch2-1-0.506

MINNESOTA

RushYdsAvgTDLONG

Rodney Smith181397.7135

Shannon Brooks13997.6028

Mohamed Ibrahim15845.6321

Tanner Morgan144.004

Team2-4-2.000

PASSING

NEBRASKA

CompAttYdsY/ATDTIntQBRat

Noah Vedral14231355.90041.7

Andrew Bunch16132.2000.3

MINNESOTA

CompAttYdsY/ATDTIntQBRat

Tanner Morgan8131289.81073.6

RECEIVING

NEBRASKA

RecYdsAvgTDLONG

JD Spielman35919.7051

Kade Warner33812.7026

Jack Stoll4184.509

Dedrick Mills11313.0013

Wan'Dale Robinson2105.008

Maurice Washington155.005

Jaron Woodyard155.005

MINNESOTA

RecYdsAvgTDLONG

Tyler Johnson510921.8045

Chris Autman-Bell11515.0115

Jake Paulson188.008

Rashod Bateman1-4-4.000