

# Seminoles outplayed, but win

MIAMI (AP) — Nebraska deserved to win.

That's what Florida State coach Bobby Bowden said. Cornhuskers coach Tom Osborne agreed.

But Bowden and his heavily favored Seminoles escaped with an 18-16 victory in the Orange Bowl, then won their first national championship Sunday by a lopsided margin in the final rankings.

"We're very thankful we won that game," Bowden said. "You could say we could have lost. You could say we should have lost."

Statistics suggest as much. Nebraska had the ball more than the Seminoles and outgained them 389 yards to 333. On the ground the margin was 183-47, even though two-time 1,000-yard rusher Calvin Jones of Nebraska missed more than half the game with a shoulder injury.

Cornhuskers quarterback Tommie Frazier outplayed his Florida State counterpart, Heisman Trophy winner Charlie Ward. Nebraska held the nation's highest-scoring team to one touchdown — and it came on a controversial call, one of several to go against the Huskers.

"As far as I'm concerned, we won," Osborne said.

In fact, Nebraska lost because of penalties and field goals.

The Seminoles, only near-champions in 1991 and 1992 because kicks sailed wide right, this time won by a foot. Freshman Scott Bentley kicked four field goals, including a 22-yarder with 21 seconds left.

After Frazier's 29-yard completion to Trumane Bell kept Husker hopes alive, senior Byron

Bennett hooked a 45-yard field goal attempt wide left on the final play.

"You wait all your life for a chance to kick the winning field goal, and it just didn't happen," Bennett said. "I think maybe God has something better for me in my life."

Penalties kept 17-point favorite Florida State in a position to pull out the game at the end. The Cornhuskers were flagged 11 times for 115 yards, more than twice their season average, and the timing of several calls couldn't have been worse for Nebraska.

"I was absolutely amazed by some of the officiating," Cornhuskers linebacker Trev Alberts said. "I think it was the worst I've ever seen."

Even Florida State's lone touchdown was tainted. Fullback William Floyd lost his grip on the ball diving into the end zone and Nebraska recovered, but officials ruled the fumble occurred beyond the goal line.

Among the pivotal penalties was a clip negating a 71-yard punt return by Corey Dixon that would have given Nebraska a 7-0 lead. Replays failed to pinpoint the infraction.

A third-down pass interference penalty on John Reece sustained Florida State's first scoring drive. Nebraska was penalized twice on the Seminoles' desperate final possession, which began at the Florida State 35-yard line with 76 seconds left and the Huskers leading 16-15.

After Warrick Dunn made a 21-yard reception, cornerback Barron Miles hit him out of bounds for a 15-yard penalty to Nebras-

ka's 18. Ward's next two passes fell incomplete, but Toby Wright prematurely tackled intended receiver Kez McCorvey on second down and was called for interference.

That advanced the ball 15 yards to the 3, and Bentley's game-winner came two plays later.

The scoreboard clock ran out after Bell was tackled at the Florida State 28, and the Seminoles dumped a bucket of ice water on Bowden in celebration. Players, coaches and fans swarmed the field, but officials ruled Nebraska called timeout with one second to go.

That's all the Huskers needed for a field-goal attempt.

"I said, 'Oh my God, they robbed us,'" Floyd said. "I said, 'Dear Lord, please don't let them take the game from us like this.' I guess the Lord was a Seminoles fan tonight."

When Bennett's kick missed, Bowden and his players again ran onto the field in jubilation.

"I got to celebrate the win twice," said Bowden, who extended to nine his NCAA record for consecutive bowl victories.

Osborne, still looking for his first national title, lost in a bowl for the seventh consecutive year. Nebraska slipped to third behind Notre Dame in the final rankings.

"I'm glad Bobby Bowden got his national championship," Osborne said. "I'm sorry we didn't."

Ward was picked as the game's most valuable player and became the first Heisman winner to play for a national championship since Tony Dorsett in 1976.

# Bowden finally holds national championship

MIAMI (AP) — Bobby Bowden posed with a national championship trophy Sunday, joked with reporters and said how grateful he was to finally win it all. Lou Holtz wasn't so happy.

"It's going to be nice that people won't remind me every day that we never won a national championship," Bowden said after Florida State finished first in The Associated Press media and USA Today-CNN coaches' college football polls.

"You know, 'He can't win one, he can't win the big one.'"

Bowden won the biggest game of his career Saturday night in the Orange Bowl, but it was also one of the most nerve-wracking. After taking an 18-16 lead with 21 seconds left on a 22-yard field goal by freshman Scott Bentley, Florida State had to sweat out a 45-yard field goal attempt by Nebraska that went wide left.

"We're very thankful we won that ballgame," Bowden said. "You could say we could have lost, you could say we should have lost. It's amazing to win a national championship with the way that game ended."

Holtz wasn't feeling very thankful after his Notre Dame team, which beat Texas A&M 24-21 in the Cotton Bowl, finished second in both polls. He thought the Fighting Irish should have won the title because they beat Florida State 31-24 in South Bend on Nov. 13, and both teams finished the season with one loss.

"The game obviously didn't mean anything," Holtz said. "Everybody billed it as the Game of the Century. I guess it was the Game of the Century only if the right team won."

Holtz was upset that poll voters didn't use the same standard they did in 1989, when Miami edged Notre Dame for the championship because the Hurricanes won their head-to-head meeting in the regular season.

"I did not think there was any way we wouldn't win it, not after what happened in '89," he said. "I hurt. I hurt as bad as I've ever hurt for our

players."

Bowden, whose teams finished No. 2 in 1987 and 1992, said he sympathized with Notre Dame, which lost its regular-season finale to Boston College 41-39.

"I've been there," he said. "(Holtz) might have deserved it more than when I was there, but that's the way the poll works."

Florida State is the first team since Oklahoma in 1975 to win the national championship after losing a game in November. The Sooners lost to Kansas 23-3 on Nov. 8, but went on capture the championship with a 14-6 Orange Bowl win over Michigan.

Florida State easily won the AP title, but the voting was closer in the coaches' poll.

The Seminoles (12-1), who were No. 1 all season except the week after the Notre Dame loss, received 46 of 62 first-place votes and 1,532 points in the AP poll. Notre Dame (11-1), which moved up from No. 4, got 12 first-place votes and 1,478 points.

In the coaches' poll, Florida State topped Notre Dame in first-place votes 36-25. No. 3 Nebraska got the other first.

Nebraska dropped one spot to No. 3 in the AP poll. The other four first-place votes went to No. 4 Auburn (11-0), the only undefeated team in Division I-A. The Tigers, coached by Bowden's son Terry, were barred from post-season play.

West Virginia (11-1) fell from No. 3 to No. 7 in the AP poll following a 41-7 loss to Florida in the Sugar Bowl. The victory moved the Gators (11-2) up three spots to No. 5.

Wisconsin (10-1-1) jumped three notches to No. 6 with a 21-16 victory over UCLA in the Rose Bowl. Rounding out the Top 10 were Penn State (10-2), Texas A&M (10-2) and Arizona (10-2).

Penn State climbed five places after toppling Tennessee 31-13 in the Citrus Bowl; Arizona rose six spots after blanking Miami 29-0 in the Fiesta Bowl.

Miami fell from No. 10 to No. 15, ending a streak of 137 consecutive appearances in the Top 10 that began in 1985.

# FSU kicker finally on the mark

MIAMI (AP) — Bobby Bowden brought Scott Bentley 2,000 miles for one reason: to kick Florida State to a national championship.

When Bentley got his chance Saturday night, the freshman connected for a 22-yarder with 21 seconds remaining, giving the Seminoles an 18-16 victory over Nebraska in the Orange Bowl.

"I was just thinking about the kick, not the history of anything," said Bentley, a freshman from Aurora, Colo. "It was in the back of my mind, that titles had been lost by Florida State in the past because of field goals, but I had to worry about kicking the ball straight."

Bentley, who had four field goals against the Cornhuskers, missed his first try of the game from 47 yards.

"It made me mad at myself, because I'd been kicking so well in the pregame," Bentley said. "I said to myself this game could come down to anything."

The Seminoles' previous two kickers — Gerry Thomas and Dan Mowrey — had chances to give Florida State national titles the past two seasons, but each missed right with last-second field goal attempts against Miami.

"Different personnel," Bentley said. "You get a different outcome."

Faced with a tight angle from

right of the goalpost, holder Danny Kanell assured his roommate it was something they'd rehearsed for all year.

"We usually practice that kick every day about five or six times from that exact same point," Kanell said. "I said, 'It's just like always, the snap will be there and the hold will be there.'"

Haunted for years by a poor kicking game, Bowden went to Colorado where he lured Bentley to Florida State with the promise of starting.

The 19-year-old was thought to be headed for his father's alma mater at Notre Dame until Bowden sweetened the pot with a guarantee he'd be Florida State's kicker this season.

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