

1994 National Champions — 13-0

Byron Bennett's 45-yard field goal attempt sailed wide left in the final second of Nebraska's 18-16 loss to Florida State in the 1994 Orange Bowl game. With that miss, an 11-game Cornhusker winning streak ended. And the run to Coach Tom Osborne's first national championship began.

1994 National Champions (13-0)

Head Coach: Tom Osborne
Captains: Terry Connealy, Ed Stewart, Zach Wiegert, and Rob Zatechka

Date	Opponent	Result
A 28	West Virginia	W, 31-0
S 8	at Texas Tech	W, 42-16
S 17	UCLA	W, 49-21
S 24	Pacific	W, 70-21
O 1	Wyoming	W, 42-32
O 8	Oklahoma State	W, 32-3
O 15	at Kansas State	W, 17-6
O 22	at Missouri	W, 42-7
O 29	Colorado	W, 24-7
N 5	Kansas	W, 45-17
N 12	at Iowa State	W, 28-12
N 25	at Oklahoma	W, 13-3
	Orange Bowl	
J 1	Miami	W, 24-17

Nebraska's focus for the 1994 season was finishing the business that had been left incomplete on the night of Jan. 1, 1994, in Miami. The actual process started with a 31-0 victory against West Virginia in the Kickoff Classic in late August, and it concluded with a come-from-behind, 24-17 victory against Miami, on the Hurricanes' home field, in the 1995 Orange Bowl game. To a degree, that game characterized the season.

An important subplot of 1994 involved the Cornhusker quarterbacks. Junior Tommie Frazier, a two-year starter, opened the season as if he might run away with the Heisman Trophy before being sidelined by blood

clot problems in his right knee after the fourth game.

Frazier's misfortune represented an opportunity for junior Brook Berringer, who came off the bench to lead Nebraska to the Big Eight championship and the Orange Bowl game. Berringer was 7-0 as a starter, passing for 1,295 yards (14th on Nebraska's all-time, single-season list) and 10 touchdowns, in what amounted to only eight full games. He threw just three passes in the first three games.

When Berringer was slowed by a partially collapsed lung, a problem that occurred in back-to-back games, sophomore walk-on Matt Turman stepped up and directed the Cornhuskers. Although Berringer had been cleared to play, Turman gained a 7-6 lead against Kansas State at Manhattan that ended 17-6.

Turman had come on to replace Berringer the previous week, directing Nebraska to 23 second-half points in a 32-3 victory against Oklahoma State in the Cornhuskers' Big Eight opener.

The quarterback sequence was somewhat similar in the Orange Bowl victory. Frazier, who had been included on the travel roster for the final regular-season game at Oklahoma (but did not play), started against Miami. Berringer replaced him and got Nebraska on the scoreboard in the second quarter, with a 19-yard touchdown pass to tight end Mark Gilman. Then Frazier returned to finish it and earn game MVP honors.

Nebraska trailed the Hurricanes 10-7 at halftime and fell behind 17-7 less than two minutes into the third quarter. But during the intermission, Osborne had described to the Cornhuskers the way the second half would go if they maintained their composure and continued to play smart physical Husker football. They did.

Afterward, Osborne's halftime speech was made public. It was eerily prophetic.

Even though Nebraska finished its business by going 13-0, it remained for voters in the Associated Press and USA Today/CNN polls to certify the Cornhuskers as national champions. Penn State also went through the season undefeated and untied at 12-0. The Nittany Lions argued to no avail.

Nebraska began the season ranked No. 4 by the Associated Press, moved to No. 1

after the Kickoff Classic, then inexplicably dropped to No. 2 following a 42-16 victory at Texas Tech. Sophomore safety Mike Minter suffered a season-ending knee injury during the game televised by ESPN.

In many ways, Minter was to the defense what Frazier was to the offense. His loss was significant; a fact underscored during an unexpectedly close, 42-32 victory against pass-happy Wyoming.

The Cornhuskers dropped to No. 3 in the AP poll after the Kansas State victory, before finally moving to No. 1 following the Colorado game. The Buffaloes came to Lincoln undefeated, untied and ranked No. 2 by the AP and No. 3 by USA Today/CNN. Nebraska was No. 2 according to the coaches. The Cornhuskers remained No. 2 in the USA Today/CNN rankings another week, before ascending to the top spot on the strength of a 45-17 victory over Kansas, despite a Penn State victory against Indiana.

Nebraska earned the voters' respect with an offense that featured one of the best lines in school history and a new 4-3 defense that allowed only 55 points in conference play. Led by linebacker Ed Stewart, a consensus All-American, the Cornhuskers ranked second in the nation in scoring defense, fourth in total defense and rushing defense and 10th in pass defense.

The offensive line included Outland Trophy winner Zach Wiegert at tackle. Along with winning the Outland, Wiegert was a consensus first-team All-American. His linemate Brenden Stai earned All-America honors of his own at guard.

Rob Zatechka, the other tackle, was a four-time academic All-Big Eight selection who graduated with a perfect 4.0 grade-point average in biological sciences. Along with Joel Wilks, the other guard, and center Aaron Graham, the only non-senior among the starters, the group was nicknamed the "Pipeline."

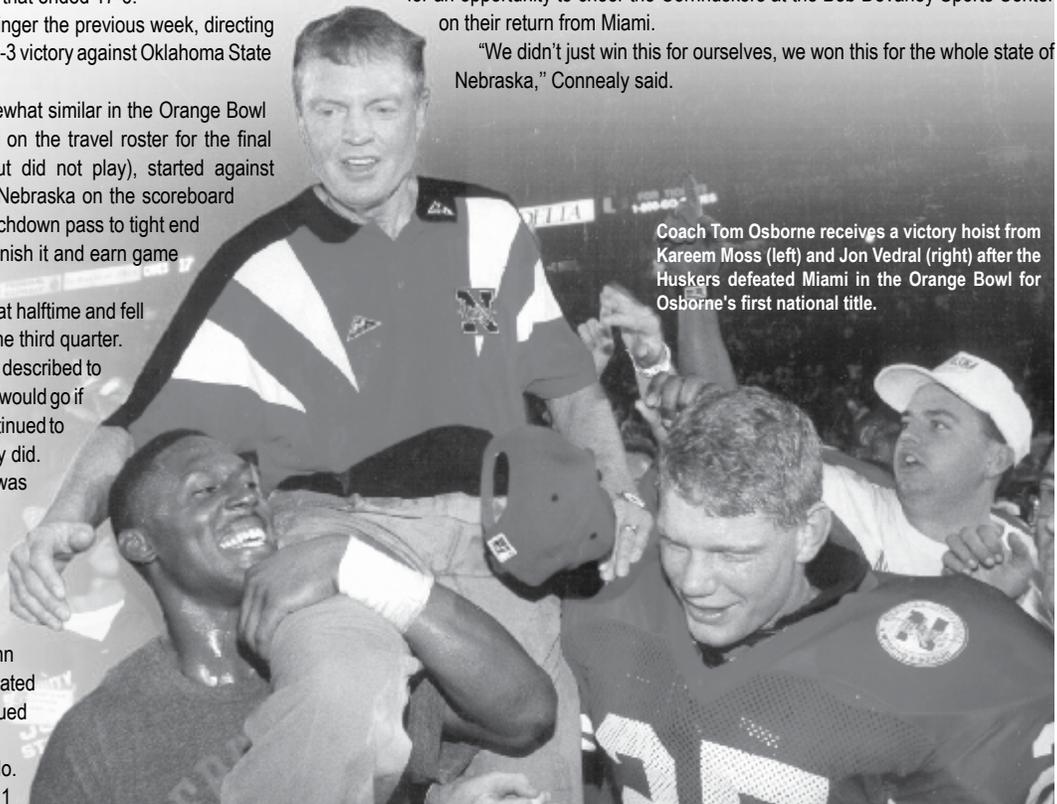
Nebraska led the nation in rushing, with sophomore Lawrence Phillips gaining 1,722 yards, the third-highest single-season total in Cornhusker history. He finished eighth in the Heisman Trophy voting.

Phillips, Graham, Wiegert and Stai all earned first-team all-conference honors on offense.

Stewart, Troy Dumas, Donta Jones, Barron Miles and Tyrone Williams represented the defense on the All-Big Eight first team. Stewart, Wiegert, Zatechka and Terry Connealy were the Husker captains.

A crowd estimated at 14,000 to 15,000 stood in line and braved frigid temperatures for an opportunity to cheer the Cornhuskers at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on their return from Miami.

"We didn't just win this for ourselves, we won this for the whole state of Nebraska," Connealy said.



Coach Tom Osborne receives a victory hoist from Kareem Moss (left) and Jon Vedral (right) after the Huskers defeated Miami in the Orange Bowl for Osborne's first national title.