



Big 12 title game no symphony, but it's sweet music to Sooners

By Charles Durrenberger
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ARLINGTON, Texas -- *"So long, farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, good night."*

The sound of music Saturday night at the Big 12 title game was that of *Boomer Sooner* as Oklahoma handed Nebraska a nice parting gift for the Cornhuskers' move to the Big Ten.

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The No. 9 Sooners rallied from a 17-0 deficit for a 23-20 victory against the 13th-ranked Cornhuskers in the final Big 12 title game -- for the foreseeable future.

"It was the last chance for a Big 12 championship," said Oklahoma receiver Ryan Broyles, who had three catches for 61 yards. "With Nebraska trying to leave, we felt like we needed to send them out with a loss, and we did."

In a game filled with misplays, stumbles, bobbles and wobbles, OU (11-2) took advantage of four turnovers to punch its ticket to the Fiesta Bowl, where it will likely face Big East champion Connecticut.

It wasn't the prettiest matchup in the storied history between these two teams.

Oklahoma and Nebraska had squared off 85 times, dating back to 1928. Now, unless they meet in a bowl game, the two will go their separate ways, although they have informally discussed a possible home-and-home series for 2020-21.

The Sooners have now won seven Big 12 championships in 11 seasons. More poignant, they saved conference commissioner Dan Beebe the indignity of handing over the trophy to the short-timing Huskers. Beebe spent the bulk of the fourth quarter on the OU sidelines, and glad-handed school and Fiesta officials as the final seconds clicked off.

"It's really neat," Sooners coach Bob Stoops said. "It's pretty special to have the last championship, and to add to the number we already have is really pretty special for sure."

The Big 12 title game had all the drama of a TV mini-series: death threats, combustible personalities, conspiracy theories, revenge.

The Huskers (10-3), likely bound for the Insight Bowl, were hell-bent on getting revenge after last year's Clockgate controversy when officials put a second back on the clock, allowing Texas to kick the game-winning field goal.

Cornhuskers coach Bo Pelini would have liked nothing more than to strut out of Texas with the trophy after the school had felt ostracized by conference higher-ups and the men in stripes.

Pelini publicly apologized for his sideline antics against the officials in a 9-6 loss at Texas A&M two weeks ago, when the Huskers were flagged 16 times for 145 yards. Then last week, Beebe declined to visit Lincoln to present NU with its North Division championship trophy, citing e-mail from irate Cornhusker fans -- some threatening serious bodily harm.

"It's pretty obvious what the level of disappointment is," Pelini snapped at a reporter who asked how disappointed he was. "We came in here to win the Big 12 championship. We didn't get it done. The kids are hurting, and it's a pretty obvious question, isn't it?"

Returning to Cowboys Stadium a year later, Nebraska let more than time slip through its fingers. The Huskers lost three fumbles and quarterback Taylor Martinez suffered a costly second-quarter interception into the end zone with Nebraska trying to extend a 17-7 lead.

The ball landed in the hands of linebacker Travis Lewis, leading to an Oklahoma field goal. The 10-point swing made it 17-10, and more important, swung the momentum clearly to the crimson and cream.

"They ran a route that we expected to come and kind of baited them into throwing it," Lewis said.

Nebraska would manage only three points from the 12-minute mark of the second quarter. Lewis recovered two Martinez fumbles -- one of which came with the Huskers driving in the fourth quarter with the score 20-20.

Eleven plays later, the Sooners took a 23-20 lead on Jimmy Stevens' third field goal of the night with 8:28 to play.

Nebraska had two chances to move into field position, but Oklahoma's defense -- employing a five-man front for the second successive week -- pressured Martinez again and again.

Pelini eschewed a possible game-tying 62-yard field goal try on the Huskers' next-to-last possession -- on the edge of Alex Henery's range -- with 3:36 to play.

"I wish we would have [tried the kick]," Pelini said. " ... If you kick it there [and miss], they have field position [at midfield], and the game's over."

Nebraska was held to 145 yards rushing on 43 attempts -- 124 yards below its season average. Included in that total was seven sacks, three by OU defensive tackle Pryce Macon. The suffocating defense was needed on a night when the Sooners converted only one third down in 16 tries despite totaling 454 total yards.

"We knew we had to just do our jobs on defense," said safety Jonathan Nelson, who led the Sooners with 11 tackles. "We had to slow the game down and make sure we didn't hang our heads."

The 17-point comeback was the second-largest in Big 12 Championship Game history -- second only to Colorado's 19-point rally against Texas in 2001.

"I just told them to keep playin' ball," Stoops said of the 17-0 deficit. "Because it's going to be a long night."

At the end of a long night, it was a different, albeit similar, tune ringing out as the Sooners faithful serenaded the Huskers as they walked toward the tunnel and their Big Ten future.

"Nah nah nah nah, nah nah nah nah, hey hey hey, good-bye. Nah nah nah nah, nah nah nah nah, hey hey hey, good-bye ... "

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