For the first 35 minutes, Ohio State's Big Ten road opener at Nebraska went wonderfully- better, in fact, than even could have been hoped. With Braxton Miller making dynamic plays and the defense shutting down the occasionally explosive Cornhusker offense, the Buckeyes rolled toward the midway point of the fourth quarter with a three-touchdown lead that was looking more and more insurmountable by the minute.

Then, with shocking swiftness, it all fell apart. Offensively, defensively, the collapse was total and comprehensive. When the dust from the wreckage cleared Ohio State had suffered its second consecutive defeat, 34-27. It took about a quarter's worth of football to turn a season-turning win into the biggest comeback in Nebraska football history, the first Big Ten win in Nebraska football history and a game probably seen by Cornhusker faithful as an all-timer. Good for them- bad for Ohio State.

And all it took was one play to set the entire disaster in motion.

One Play Changes Everything: Ohio State had this game almost won until Lavonte David ripped the ball away from Braxton Miller at the Buckeye 23 with 7:54 left in the third quarter. The Buckeyes led 27-6 with a quarter and a half- remaining. They had a first down on Braxton's keeper- improved field position and the football with time running and a big lead. Even three more plays and a punt from there would have run a couple of more minutes off the clock and forced Nebraska to drive the field- something the Huskers had been unable to do to that point.

Nebraska almost instantly converted the gift into a touchdown. Thirty seconds after the fumble Taylor Martinez bamboozled the Buckeye defense on a read-option and raced in almost

untouched from 18 yards out. It was a completely. The game changed completely in that sequence. Combined with Miller's ankle injury and the return to the fray of the unfortunate Joe Bauserman, it became Nebraska's game. Everything came apart after that play.

One play in a football game can make that big of a difference.

Braxton Breakout: It's unfortunate that the play was incurred by Braxton Miller- because he was the biggest reason Ohio State was in a position to win. Playing against a Nebraska defense that admittedly has not been impressive, Miller compiled 186 total yards in two-and-a-half quarters, 95 through the air and 91 on the ground. His running ability was the biggest factor. Braxton repeatedly made big plays with his legs- three third-down runs to extend scoring drives in the first half and a dazzling 29-yard gain to set up the field goal that made it 20-6 Scarlet & Gray over the Big Red of the North at halftime.

Injury to Insult: Miller's fumble was obviously a turning point. But it's one Ohio State may yet have survived. Nebraska still trailed by two touchdowns and still hadn't driven the field on Ohio State's defense. The turnabout became complete when Miller came up lame on a scramble with 4:21 left in the third. That brought Joe Bauserman into the football game, which insured the offense would do nothing- worse than nothing- the rest of the night. Everything went from there.

Poor Old Joe: I have no idea why Jim Tressel settled on Joe Bauserman as Terrelle Pryor's backup. Bauserman cannot play at this level- he just can't. He doesn't have the game. He could be legitimate at the Mount Union level, and I really don't think that's an outlandish assessment of his talent. Yet of all the guys he could have had as Pryor's understudy- and I understand the best and brightest wouldn't want to cling to Pryor's ermine robes for multiple seasons, but still- the Vest settled on Joe Bauserman. Maybe it was another aspect of Tressel's weirdly dysfunctional relationship with Pryor, I don't know.

Whatever it was, Bauserman was a disaster on Saturday night. The aging senior completed 1-of-10 for 13 yards and was intercepted once, setting up Nebraska's go-ahead touchdown. In Ohio State's two road games, both losses, Bauserman is 3-of-24 passing for 26 yards.

It's clear at this point that, regardless of what happens with Miller and the rest of the quarterbacks, Joe Bauserman should not see the field again. He brings nothing, he adds

nothing, the team has no confidence in him- the man is just a train wreck out there. Give Kenny Guiton the opportunity to back up Braxton Miller and put Bauserman out to pasture. It isn't fair to the team or to him to keep sending him out there to fail game after game.

Carlos Hide: Aside from Braxton Miller, Ohio State's other offensive standout was Carlos Hyde. The big Floridian broke things open early with a 63-yard second-quarter touchdown run, taking a counter and simply running away from the Nebraska defense to make it 17-3. Hyde rumbled for 104 yards and two touchdowns- but for whatever reason he only got 13 carries. Jordan Hall, who was ineffective with 49 rushing yards, carried it 17 times. Joe Bauserman, meanwhile, threw ten passes while playing much of that span with a lead.

Tale of Two Defenses: Considering how many times Ohio State has either wittingly or unwillingly shut it down offensively late in games over the last decade, Saturday's effort on that side of the ball shouldn't be too much of a shock. What is shocking is what happened to Jim Heacock's defense. Ohio State swarmed Nebraska's offense in the first half, shutting off the running lanes for Taylor Martinez and Rex Burkhead and, led by Jonathan Hankins, whipping the Huskers up front. Midway through the third quarter, with the Buckeyes leading 27-6, Nebraska had barely a hundred yards of total offense, with the two big guns sporting a combined fifty yards on the ground.

In the quarter-and-a-half that followed Braxton's fumble, Nebraska gained 322 yards of total offense. Its four touchdowns came in a span of seventeen minutes. Martinez and Burkhead combined for 171 rushing yards, a cool 7.4 yards per clip and passed or ran for all of the Cornhusker touchdowns- including the thirty-yard connection that tied the game midway through the fourth. Martinez's other touchdown toss, the 36-yard strike off play-action, made it 27-20 late in the third; Burkhead's 18-yard rumble put the Huskers ahead for good with 5:10 left.

For the most part Nebraska ran variations on two plays: Martinez keeping off the read-option or Burkhead on the toss sweep. Ohio State never found answers to these two plays. Gap responsibilities vanished. So did the good tackling that is the hallmark of Jim Heacock defenses. The biggest miss, Christian Bryant's failure to bring down Rex Burkhead in the open field, led directly to Nebraska's tying touchdown. Bryant complained about the offense last week but found comeuppance in Lincoln- he was also burned on the Martinez-to-Quincy Enunwa bomb that made it a seven-point game.

Some people think Ohio State's defense was "tired." Why? It's not as if Nebraska took much time on its scoring drives. When your opponent scores four touchdowns in seventeen minutes- three on drives of 72 yards or longer- you aren't exactly making them work hard for it. It wasn't fatigue, it was bad football. It was missed tackles and blown gap assignments.

Maybe they panicked after Braxton Miller left the game and Nebraska started making some plays. Maybe they pressed, knowing they wouldn't get any help from the offense. Who cares? Ohio State's defense has put in far more harrowing positions and come through. This defense fell apart.

At some point: This team is going to get body-slammed on both sides of the ball. Think 35-0, 42-10, scores like those. It's going in that direction, it really is. Wisconsin is a likely candidate to do the honors when the Badgers come to Columbus three weekends from now.

Around the Nation

Game of the Week- Virginia Tech/Miami: The old Big East rivals staged a good old-fashioned thriller in Blacksburg, with three quarters of Hokie domination

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