

# 1970 National Champions – 11-0-1

Early in the 1970 season, Jerry Murtaugh predicted Nebraska would win the national championship. Murtaugh was a senior linebacker and co-captain who, in just three seasons, set the Cornhusker career record for tackles. It took more than 30 years before Murtaugh's mark was finally surpassed by Barrett Ruud.

It was obvious that Murtaugh was capable of backing up whatever he said, and Murtaugh and the Huskers provided plenty of support for his statement on the

1970 National Champions (11-0-1)		
<b>Head Coach:</b> Bob Devaney		
<b>Captains:</b> Dan Schneiss and Jerry Murtaugh		
Date	Opponent	Result
S 12	Wake Forest	W, 36-12
S 19	at USC	T, 21-21
S 26	Army	W, 28-0
O 3	at Minnesota	W, 35-10
O 10	Missouri	W, 21-7
O 17	at Kansas	W, 41-20
O 24	Oklahoma State	W, 65-31
O 31	at Colorado	W, 29-13
N 7	at Iowa State	W, 54-29
N 14	Kansas State	W, 51-13
N 21	Oklahoma	W, 28-21
<b>Orange Bowl</b>		
J 1	Louisiana State	W, 17-12

field. Nebraska had been 9-2 the previous season, winning its final seven games, including a decisive 45-6 victory against Georgia in the Sun Bowl.

After the Sun Bowl game, Georgia coach Vince Dooley said the Cornhuskers hadn't belonged in El Paso, Texas. They deserved better competition than his team could provide.

Still, 1970 was a new season. And though Nebraska had several starters returning on offense, Murtaugh was one of only three defensive starters returning. Dave Walline and Jim Anderson were the others.

Besides, winning a national championship wasn't something

loss to USC, in a rematch of the previous year's Cotton Bowl. And Ohio State drew Stanford in the Rose Bowl.

Nebraska's hopes of earning the AP version of the national championship were slim. Both Texas and Ohio State would have to lose, and the Cornhuskers would have to win. But it happened.

Notre Dame upset Texas 24-11, and Stanford staged a fourth-quarter comeback to defeat Ohio State 27-17. Nebraska learned of the latter result during the Orange Bowl's pregame warmups.

The Cornhuskers appeared ready to seize their opportunity, jumping ahead of LSU 10-0 in the first 13 minutes of the Orange Bowl. But the Tigers controlled the ball during the second and third quarters, scoring on a 31-yard pass on the final play of the third quarter to take a 12-10 lead.

Nebraska responded by driving 67 yards for the winning touchdown, scored by Tagge from one yard away with 8:50 remaining. Junior linebacker Bob Terrio, a junior college transfer who had arrived at Nebraska as a fullback, preserved the victory by intercepting a Bert Jones pass with 45 seconds left.

Notre Dame Coach Ara Parseghian argued that his team should be the AP champion because it had defeated No. 1 Texas. But NU was a decisive No. 1 in the final AP poll. "I was afraid Ara's comments might influence the voters, but I guess the writers are too smart to take some coach's word," Cornhusker Coach Bob Devaney said. "The writers knew who was best."

Nebraska also received an endorsement from President Richard Nixon, who proclaimed NU No. 1, to the delight of 8,000 fans at the NU Coliseum, on Jan. 14, 1971. Murtaugh and fullback Dan Schneiss, NU's co-captains, joined Devaney with Nixon.

It was just as Murtaugh had predicted.

over which a team had complete control. It would depend not only on being successful, but also on the votes of writers and broadcasters in the Associated Press poll or of selected coaches in the United Press International poll.

Two games into the season, Murtaugh's brash prediction became a longshot, at best. After opening with a 36-12 victory against Wake Forest, the ninth-ranked Cornhuskers played Southern California to a 21-21 tie at the LA Coliseum. The Trojans tied the score with 8:16 remaining, after a failed 12-yard field goal attempt, resulting from a poor center snap, kept Nebraska from putting the game away.

"We should have won the game," Johnny Rodgers said years later.

Rodgers was a sophomore in 1970, his first varsity season.

A tie at USC was certainly no disgrace. Coach John McKay's team was ranked No. 3. Nebraska even moved up in the next week's Associated Press poll. But No. 8 was still a long way from No. 1.

And the Cornhuskers' record had a blemish, no matter how slight.

Nebraska returned to Memorial Stadium to defeat Army 28-0 the next week, beginning what would be a 23-game winning streak and include not one but two national championships.

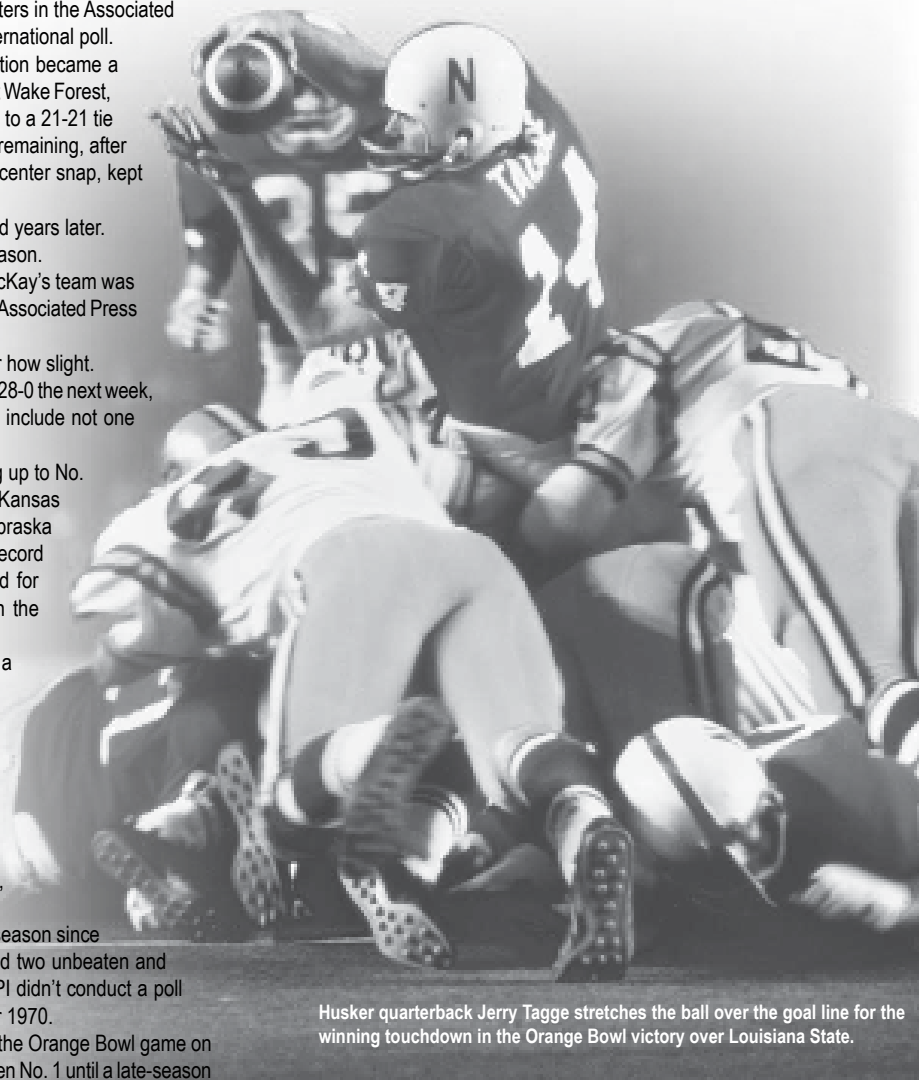
The Cornhuskers rolled through the Big Eight, moving up to No. 3 in the AP rankings after a 51-13 victory against No. 20 Kansas State in the next-to-last game of the regular season. Nebraska intercepted Wildcat quarterback Lynn Dickey a school-record seven times, and Cornhusker I-back Joe Orduna rushed for 105 yards and four touchdowns against what had been the conference's best defense.

Orduna, a senior who sat out the 1969 season as a medical redshirt, led Nebraska in rushing in 1970.

A week later, the Cornhuskers won the Big Eight championship outright by defeating Oklahoma 28-21 at Memorial Stadium. Though unranked, the young Sooners could have earned a share of the conference title with a victory. Nebraska had to come from behind twice during the game. Junior quarterback Jerry Tagge scored the winning touchdown, capping a 53-yard drive, with 7:42 remaining.

Nebraska finished 10-0-1, its first undefeated regular season since 1965, and ranked No. 3 in both wire service polls, behind two unbeaten and untied teams: No. 1 Texas and No. 2 Ohio State. The UPI didn't conduct a poll after bowl games, so Texas was its national champion for 1970.

The Cornhuskers were matched against No. 5 LSU in the Orange Bowl game on New Year's night. Texas played Notre Dame, which had been No. 1 until a late-season



Husker quarterback Jerry Tagge stretches the ball over the goal line for the winning touchdown in the Orange Bowl victory over Louisiana State.