

= 1996 Orange Bowl (December) =

The 63rd Orange Bowl , also known as the 1996 Orange Bowl , was a 1996 ? 1997 Bowl Alliance game played on December 31 , 1996 between the Nebraska Cornhuskers and the Virginia Tech Hokies . Virginia Tech , champions of the Big East Conference , came into the game with a 10 ? 1 record and # 10 AP ranking , whereas Nebraska , members of the Big 12 Conference , came into the game with a 10 ? 2 and No. 6 ranking . In a high @-@ scoring affair , Nebraska defeated Virginia Tech , 41 ? 21 .

Due to Bowl Alliance (predecessor to the Bowl Championship Series) rules , the Orange Bowl following the 1996 season was played on December 31 , instead of January 1 or later . This marked the first time that an Orange Bowl was played prior to New Year 's Day : there were two Orange Bowls in the same calendar year ? one in January , following the 1995 season , and the other in December , following the 1996 season . The Orange Bowl Committee , which had the fourth and sixth selections of eligible Bowl Alliance teams , selected Big East champions Virginia Tech and Nebraska , an at @-@ large selection that appeared to be a national championship game contender before its loss to Texas in the inaugural Big 12 Championship Game .

The weeks before the game were filled with controversy , as both teams had multiple players arrested or charged with crimes . Despite having lost their last game before the Orange Bowl , Nebraska was heavily favored over Virginia Tech , as spread bettors favored the Cornhuskers by 16 or 17 points , depending on the source used . The Cornhuskers had won the 1994 and 1995 national championships , and presented an imposing history when compared with that of Virginia Tech , which had posted its most important win in school history at the end of the previous season , defeating Texas in the 1995 Sugar Bowl .

On December 31 , the weather was clear and warm at the start of the game , though a light rain began to fall in the fourth quarter . Virginia Tech scored first , taking a 7 ? 0 lead at the end of the first quarter ? its only advantage in the game . In the second quarter , Nebraska scored three times for 17 points , taking a 17 ? 7 lead before Virginia Tech quarterback Jim Druckenmiller threw a touchdown pass with 19 seconds remaining in the first half , cutting Nebraska 's lead to 17 ? 14 . In the third quarter , the two teams alternated scores , with Nebraska maintaining a three or 10 @-@ point lead throughout . At the end of the third quarter , Nebraska had a 31 ? 21 lead . In the final quarter of the game , Nebraska scored 10 unanswered points as the Cornhuskers used their large number of backup players to advantage . The final score was 41 ? 21 , Nebraska .

= = Team selection = =

During the 1996 season , the Orange Bowl was a member of the Bowl Alliance , a precursor to the modern Bowl Championship Series . The Bowl Alliance was formed prior to the 1995 college football season in an effort to match the No. 1 and No. 2 teams at the conclusion of the regular season while also ensuring other high @-@ ranking teams were allowed to participate in high @-@ profile bowl games . The Alliance included the Southeastern Conference , Big 12 Conference , Atlantic Coast Conference , and Big East Conference . As agreed , the champions of each conference would play in one of three Bowl Alliance games : the Orange Bowl , Sugar Bowl , and Fiesta Bowl . The Big Ten and Pac @-@ 10 conferences , which had a separate agreement with the Rose Bowl , were not included in the Bowl Alliance until 1998 , when the Alliance became the Bowl Championship Series .

In 1996 , the Orange Bowl had the fourth and sixth selections from eligible Bowl Alliance teams . The Sugar Bowl had the top two picks , while the Fiesta Bowl , which had the top picks in 1995 , received the third and fifth picks . Due to Bowl Alliance restrictions , the Orange Bowl at the end of the 1996 season had to be played on December 31 , marking the first time in the history of the Orange Bowl that the game was not played in January and that there were two Orange Bowls in the same year ? one at the end of the 1995 season , and the other at the conclusion of the 1996 season . The only other time was in 2014 , the first year of the college football playoffs .

= = = Nebraska = = =

The Nebraska Cornhuskers began the 1996 season having won the national championship in both 1994 and 1995 . Though Nebraska was now a member of a new conference ? the former Big Eight Conference had been merged with four Texas schools to become the Big 12 ? it was widely expected that Nebraska would repeat the performance for a third time in 1996 .

Nebraska was ranked No. 1 in the Associated Press preseason poll , and lived up to the ranking in its first game of the season . On September 7 , Nebraska overwhelmed the Michigan State Spartans , 55 ? 14 . After an off week , however , Nebraska fans were shocked by one of the first big national upsets of the season as Nebraska was shut out by No. 17 Arizona State , 19 ? 0 . The loss dropped Nebraska to No. 8 in the rankings , but as the season wore on , Nebraska rose through the ranks as the Cornhuskers won seven consecutive games . Nebraska 's 10 ? 1 record to that point earned it a trip to the first @-@ ever Big 12 Championship Game in St. Louis , Missouri , against the Texas Longhorns .

Despite Nebraska 's early @-@ season loss , the Cornhuskers still had a chance to win a record @-@ setting third consecutive national championship . A win against Texas would earn Nebraska a bid to the Sugar Bowl and a game against No. 1 Florida State to decide the national championship . Unfortunately for Nebraska , the underdog Longhorns upset heavily favored Nebraska , 37 ? 27 . Eight days after losing to Texas , Nebraska was awarded a bid to the Orange Bowl .

= = = Virginia Tech = = =

The Virginia Tech Hokies entered the 1996 season having ended 1995 with a victory over No. 9 Texas in the 1995 Sugar Bowl (December) , considered to be the most important game in Virginia Tech history to that point . Following the victory , hopes were high that the Hokies would repeat the performance in the 1996 season .

Virginia Tech kicked off the 1996 season in Akron , Ohio , against the Akron Zips . The Hokies were nearly upset by the Zips , but eventually won the game , 21 ? 18 . Tech dropped in rank due to the close finish , and traveled next to Boston , Massachusetts to play the Boston College Eagles . In a nationally televised game , Tech defeated the Eagles , 45 ? 7 . The Hokies followed that win with a home @-@ opening victory against Rutgers , then traveled to Syracuse , New York , to play the Syracuse Orangemen . Though the Hokies lost , 21 ? 52 , they recovered to win their final seven games of the regular season , securing a Big East championship and a trip to the Orange Bowl .

= = Pregame buildup = =

Nebraska was heavily favored to win the contest , as the point spread favored Nebraska by 16 points to 17 points . Heading into the Orange Bowl , the two teams presented a study in contrasts . The Cornhuskers boasted a string of 28 seasons with nine or more victories , received 28 straight bowl bids , spent 256 consecutive weeks ranked in the AP poll , and had recorded 214 straight sellouts in their 75 @,@ 000 @-@ capacity home stadium . Virginia Tech , meanwhile , had a bowl streak dating back just three years , to the 1993 Independence Bowl , and while the game was Nebraska 's 16th Orange Bowl , it was Virginia Tech 's first . Nebraska and Virginia Tech were among the winningest seven teams in Division I @-@ A college football during the two seasons prior to the Orange Bowl . Virginia Tech had 20 wins in those two seasons , while Nebraska had 22 victories .

In the first weeks after the matchup was announced , Virginia Tech sold its allotment of 15 @,@ 000 tickets , while Nebraska sales lagged , only reaching the 5 @,@ 000 mark in the time it took Tech to sell its allotment . The slow Nebraska sales were largely due to fans who had booked trips to the Sugar Bowl in anticipation of a victory by the Cornhuskers in the Big 12 championship game . Disappointed by the loss , many people elected not to make the trip to Miami . By December 27 , four days prior to the game , Tech had increased its total to 15 @,@ 500 , while Nebraska improved to 8 @,@ 000 sold . The game was the first Orange Bowl to be played at Miami 's professional

football arena , Pro Player Stadium , instead of Orange Bowl stadium . The move was made in order to secure the Orange Bowl 's place in the Bowl Alliance , as Pro Player Stadium was a more modern facility with a larger seating capacity .

== Off @-@ field problems ==

In the months , weeks and days prior to the Orange Bowl , the Virginia Tech and Nebraska football teams were affected by multiple criminal incidents . In the 15 months immediately prior to the Orange Bowl , Virginia Tech players accumulated 22 arrests , six convictions , and four charges dropped . The most notable of these arrests came on December 16 , slightly more than two weeks prior to the Orange Bowl , when Brian Edmonds , the Hokies ' starting fullback , and James Crawford , a backup wide receiver , were arrested on charges of rape and attempted sodomy . The two players were immediately suspended from the football team . The day before the Orange Bowl , Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer announced further suspensions , indicating that backup defensive tackle Nat Williams , backup linebacker Tyron Edmond , and backup receiver Angelo Harrison would not participate in the Orange Bowl .

== Offensive matchups ==

=== Nebraska offense ===

At the conclusion of the 1996 regular season , the Nebraska Cornhuskers boasted the No. 4 rushing offense in Division I @-@ A college football , averaging 292 rushing yards per game and 422 overall yards per game . Despite those figures , the Cornhuskers ' two leading rushers were hampered by injury and their participation was in doubt . Ahman Green , who led the Nebraska offense with 155 carries , 917 rushing yards , and seven touchdowns , suffered a stress fracture in his foot during the second @-@ to @-@ last Nebraska regular @-@ season game . The No. 2 rusher , DeAngelo Evans , had 776 rushing yards and a team @-@ high 14 rushing touchdowns , but was limited by a groin injury . Because of the injuries , Damon Benning , who earned 465 yards and seven touchdowns during the regular seasons , was anticipated to see significant playing time . Wide receiver Brenden Holbein also suffered an ankle injury in practice , but was able to play .

At quarterback , Nebraska had Scott Frost , a transfer player from Stanford who had 1 @,@ 440 passing yards , 13 passing touchdowns , three interceptions , and 578 rushing yards in his first season with the team . Frost 's three interceptions were the third @-@ least in Division I @-@ A ; only Army and Ohio University had fewer . Overall , Nebraska totaled 5 @,@ 069 yards of offense and 42 @.@ 7 points per game , the most in the Big 12 .

=== Virginia Tech offense ===

Virginia Tech was led on offense by quarterback Jim Druckenmiller . During the 1996 season , he completed 142 of his 250 pass attempts for 2 @,@ 071 yards , 17 touchdowns , and five interceptions , boosting his career total to 4 @,@ 383 yards and 34 touchdowns . Because of these numbers , he was considered one of the top quarterback prospects in the upcoming NFL draft . Despite Druckenmiller 's success , it was the Hokies ' rushing game that received most of the attention . The Hokies averaged 4 @.@ 8 yards per rushing attempt and produced 2 @,@ 504 yards rushing and 27 touchdowns during the regular season . Tech 's 227 @.@ 6 @-@ yards @-@ per @-@ game rushing average was No. 2 in the Big East Conference and No. 19 among 111 Division I @-@ A schools .

Three players in particular contributed to that rushing success . Running backs Ken Oxendine , Marcus Parker , and Shyrone Stith combined for 1 @,@ 831 yards of Tech 's total . Oxendine , who missed 2 ½ games due to injury , accumulated career highs of 890 rushing yards and 13 touchdowns . Parker , who missed four games due to a discipline @-@ related suspension , earned

467 yards and four touchdowns . Stith , meanwhile , had 474 yards and five touchdowns . Helping block the way for the rushers was center Billy Conaty , who was named an All @-@ American by the Sporting News and who was playing in a then @-@ school record 48th straight game .

= = = Defensive matchups = = =

= = = = Virginia Tech defense = = = =

The Hokies were led on defense by All @-@ America defensive end selection Cornell Brown , who accumulated eight sacks , five other tackles for loss , 19 quarterback hurries , and 58 total tackles during the regular season and was named a first @-@ team All @-@ Big East selection , signifying his status as the best player at his position in that conference . This followed being named National Defensive Player of the Year at the end of the previous season . Tech 's leading tackler was linebacker Brandon Semones , who accumulated 88 during the season . Free safety Torrian Gray also was a significant presence on the Virginia Tech defense . Gray ranked No. 1 on the team in solo tackles with 58 , and was No. 3 in total tackles , with 76 . He started every game for Tech during the three seasons immediately prior to the Orange Bowl and was a second @-@ team All @-@ Big East pick in 1996 . Gray was supported in the defensive secondary by Antonio Banks , who caught a Tech @-@ best four interceptions during the regular season .

In a December 26 practice , Virginia Tech linebacker Myron Newsome suffered an ankle injury that threatened to force him to sit out the Orange Bowl . Newsome , who had been a starter during the regular season , eventually recovered to participate in the game , but his injury was a point of media interest in the days prior to kickoff . Two other Virginia Tech defenders were injured during practice prior to the game . Cornell Brown suffered a minor leg injury , while defensive end John Engelberger broke his nose .

= = = = Nebraska defense = = = =

The Nebraska Cornhuskers ' defense was ranked No. 5 in the country in rushing defense and scoring defense , allowing averages of just 83 @.@ 8 rushing yards and 12 @.@ 8 points per game . Nebraska also was ranked No. 7 in total defense , permitting just 255 @.@ 4 yards per game . The cornerstones of that defense were Nebraska 's two All @-@ American defensive ends , Jared Tomich and Grant Wistrom . Tomich recorded five sacks , 10 tackles for loss , and a team @-@ best 23 quarterback hurries during the 1996 regular season . In recognition of his performance , he was named a second @-@ team AP All @-@ American and was a finalist for the Lombardi Award . Wistrom , meanwhile , led Nebraska with 9 @.@ 5 sacks and 20 tackles for loss . He was named a consensus All @-@ American , indicating his selection as a first @-@ team All @-@ American by all the major selection panels . Neither man was Nebraska 's leading tackler , however . That honor went to defensive tackle Jason Peter , who had 58 and was named a first @-@ team All @-@ Big 12 selection .

In the defensive secondary , defensive back Mike Minter led the Cornhuskers in interceptions , catching five and returning one for a touchdown during the regular season . Supporting Minter was cornerback Ralph Brown , who had 12 pass breakups .

= = Game summary = =

The 1996 Orange Bowl kicked off on December 31 , 1996 at 7 : 17 p.m. EST . The game 's attendance was announced as 51 @,@ 212 , giving it the lowest attendance for an Orange Bowl since 1947 . This poor attendance was despite the fact that more than 64 @,@ 000 tickets were sold for the game . Many of the unused tickets were purchased in blocs by corporations that failed to use them . The game was televised on CBS , and Mike Mayock , Sean McDonough , and Dave Logan were the broadcasters . Approximately 8 @.@ 8 million people tuned in to watch the game

on television , earning the broadcast a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 8 . The temperature at kickoff was 75 degrees , and the weather was clear , with 75 percent humidity and wind from the east at six mph . Dick Honig was the referee , the umpire was Jim Augustyn , and the linesman was Ed Peters .

= = = First quarter = = =

Virginia Tech won the traditional pre @-@ game coin toss and elected to kick off to Nebraska to begin the game . The Hokie kickoff was returned to the Nebraska 25 @-@ yard line , where the Cornhuskers ran the first play of the game . On that first play , Frost completed a five @-@ yard pass to Brendan Holbein . This was followed by two rushes by Benning , who picked up 18 yards and a first down in the process . Benning then crossed into the Virginia Tech half of the field with a five @-@ yard rush . Frost then threw an incomplete pass , and Benning was unable to pick up another first down after gaining two yards on a pass from Frost . Nebraska punter Jesse Kosch came on to the field to punt to Virginia Tech . The kick sailed into the end zone for a touchback , and Virginia Tech began its first possession at its 20 @-@ yard line .

Tech 's first drive began inauspiciously for the Hokies . Druckenmiller threw an incomplete pass on the first Tech play , then was sacked for a four @-@ yard loss . Facing third down , Druckenmiller evaded another sack and connected with Oxendine on a 41 @-@ yard pass that picked up a first down and pushed Tech into the Nebraska side of the field . Despite the gain , the Hokies were unable to gain another first down as Oxendine ran for one yard before Druckenmiller threw two successive incomplete passes . Virginia Tech punter Jimmy Kibble kicked the ball back to Nebraska , which returned it to its 15 @-@ yard line , and the Nebraska offense returned to the field .

With 9 : 28 remaining in the quarter , Nebraska 's second possession of the game mirrored its first . The Cornhuskers picked up a first down on a Scott Frost throw , but were unable to gain another after being stopped for a loss on one play and had to punt . Following the kick , Virginia Tech took over at its 28 @-@ yard line . The Hokies performed better than their first possession , picking up a quick first down on two rushes by Oxendine . Druckenmiller then completed a first @-@ down throw that pushed the Hokies into Nebraska territory for a second time . Druckenmiller rushed for eight yards on the next play , then ran an option with Oxendine that saw the players combine for 20 yards and a first down . Now at the Nebraska 20 @-@ yard line , Oxendine ran for a yard , pushing the Hokies into the red zone . On the first play inside the Nebraska red zone , Druckenmiller completed a 19 @-@ yard pass to Marcus Parker for a Virginia Tech touchdown ? the game 's first points . Virginia Tech placekicker Shayne Graham kicked the extra point , and Virginia Tech took a 7 ? 0 lead with 3 : 14 remaining in the first quarter . The drive covered 72 yards and had taken eight plays and 4 : 06 of game time .

Following the post @-@ touchdown kickoff and a short return , Nebraska 's offense began work at its 21 @-@ yard line . Three rushes by as many different players ? Joel Makovicka , Damon Benning , and Jay Sims ? resulted in 11 yards and a first down . During Sims ' run , Tech 's Loren Johnson committed a 15 @-@ yard personal foul facemask penalty that pushed Nebraska to the Nebraska 47 @-@ yard line . From there , Frost threw an incomplete pass , then Sims ran twice for fifteen yards and a first down , crossing into the Virginia Tech half of the field in the process . Now at the Tech 38 @-@ yard line , Frost completed a 23 @-@ yard throw to Lance Brown , who picked up another first down at the Tech 15 @-@ yard line . With time running out in the quarter , the Cornhuskers executed a quick four @-@ yard rush to the Tech 11 @-@ yard line . At the end of the first quarter , Virginia Tech led Nebraska , 7 ? 0 , but the Cornhuskers were in scoring position .

= = = Second quarter = = =

The second quarter began with Nebraska in possession of the ball at the Virginia Tech 11 @-@ yard line and facing a second down and needing six yards . On the first play of the quarter , Nebraska rusher Brian Schuster was tackled for a five @-@ yard loss in a failed trick play , pushing Nebraska back to the 16 @-@ yard line . Sims rushed for eight yards on third down , but failed to pick up the first down and Nebraska sent kicker Kris Brown into the game . Brown 's 25 @-@ yard

field goal was successful , and Nebraska cut Virginia Tech 's lead to 7 ? 3 with 13 : 25 remaining before halftime .

The post @-@ score kickoff rolled into the end zone for a touchback , and Virginia Tech began at its 20 @-@ yard line . On the first play , Nebraska committed a five @-@ yard offside penalty . Shyrone Stith and Parker then ran for a combined six yards on the next two plays , picking up a first down with the shortened yardage provided by the penalty . From the first down at the Tech 31 @-@ yard line , Druckenmiller threw three consecutive passes : The first was incomplete , the second gained one yard , and the third gained nine yards and a first down . After that gain , however , Tech lost yardage on a rush by Oxendine , Druckenmiller threw an incomplete pass , then was sacked for a loss of nine yards during the third down play . Kibble punted , and Nebraska began at the Tech 45 @-@ yard line after the kick was returned 26 yards by Michael Hawkes . The Cornhuskers took quick advantage of the good field position . Ahman Green ran 17 yards for a first down , then Frost passed for 23 yards to Kenny Cheatham , pushing Nebraska inside the Virginia Tech red zone . On just the third play after Virginia Tech 's punt , Frost ran the remaining five yards , crossing the goal line for a touchdown . The extra point was good , and with 9 : 14 remaining , Nebraska took a 10 ? 7 lead .

Before the subsequent kickoff , Virginia Tech committed a 15 @-@ yard personal foul penalty , allowing Nebraska to kick off from the 50 @-@ yard line instead of the regulation 35 @-@ yard line . The kick resulted in a touchback , and Tech started from its 20 @-@ yard line . Oxendine picked up nine yards on a rush , and Parker earned another seven yards for a first down at the Tech 36 . Oxendine then ran three consecutive times for 17 yards and a first down . After Parker was stopped for no gain , Druckenmiller ran the ball himself for a seven @-@ yard gain and a first down at the Nebraska 40 @-@ yard line . Oxendine gained one yard on a carry to the left , but on the next play , Druckenmiller was sacked for an 11 @-@ yard loss , negating the minor gain . Druckenmiller then completed a 24 @-@ yard pass to Oxendine , but the play was negated by a holding penalty against Virginia Tech , effectively resulting in a loss of 34 yards and pushing the Hokies back to their 33 @-@ yard line . On the first play after the holding penalty , Druckenmiller fumbled the football after he was jarred by Nebraska defender Mike Rucker . The loose ball was picked up by Cornhusker Jason Peter , who ran 31 yards for a defensive touchdown . The score gave Nebraska a 17 ? 7 lead with 3 : 36 remaining in the first half .

Following the kickoff , Virginia Tech 's offense began work to cut Nebraska 's lead before halftime . The Hokies started at their 20 @-@ yard line after a touchback , and Druckenmiller completed a 20 @-@ yard throw to Bryan Jennings after Oxendine was stopped for no gain on a carry to the left . From the Tech 40 @-@ yard line , Oxendine carried the ball 39 yards for another first down deep inside Nebraska 's half of the field . Nebraska committed a five @-@ yard offside penalty , but Virginia Tech was stopped for short gains on the two plays following the penalty . Virginia Tech was forced to use a timeout in order to stop the clock from moving and to allow time to plan the third @-@ down play . With 57 seconds remaining in the first half , Parker ran the remaining two yards for a first down at the Nebraska 11 @-@ yard line . Druckenmiller then completed a five @-@ yard pass to Cornelius White , but because White was unable to get out of bounds or cross the goal line , Tech was again forced to call a timeout to stop the clock with 25 seconds remaining . On the next play , Druckenmiller completed a six @-@ yard pass to Shawn Scales for Tech 's second touchdown of the game . The score came with 19 seconds remaining in the first half , and the extra point was good , cutting Nebraska 's lead to 17 ? 14 .

With just a few seconds remaining in the first half , there appeared to be little chance that Nebraska would have a chance to score . But Nebraska received the kickoff at its 24 @-@ yard line and returned it to the Nebraska 42 . Frost attempted a long pass to get Nebraska into position for a field goal attempt , but the throw fell incomplete . Instead of trying another long pass , Nebraska proceeded to run out the clock , and the Cornhuskers went into halftime with a 17 ? 14 lead .

== = Third quarter == =

Because Nebraska received the ball to begin the game , Virginia Tech received the ball to begin the

second half . Following the kickoff and return , Virginia Tech began at its 19 @-@ yard line . On the first play of the second half , Oxendine broke loose for a 36 @-@ yard run to the Nebraska 45 @-@ yard line and a first down . Despite that strong opening play , Tech was unable to gain another first down and was forced to punt after gaining only two additional yards . The Tech punt rolled out of bounds at the Nebraska 26 @-@ yard line .

The Cornhuskers ' subsequent drive did not have the initial offensive explosion of Tech 's drive , but it was in the end more successful . Benning rushed for five yards and Jeff Lake caught a 10 @-@ yard pass for a first down at the Nebraska 41 @-@ yard line . Frost then threw two incomplete passes and a nine @-@ yard toss to Vershan Jackson . Facing fourth down and needing one yard , Nebraska head coach Tom Osborne elected to attempt to gain the yardage rather than punt the ball . Benning rushed for three yards , and Nebraska was able to convert the fourth down into another first down . Benning followed that success with another , breaking loose for a 33 @-@ yard run and the first touchdown of the second half . The extra point was good , and Nebraska extended its lead to 24 ? 14 with 4 : 58 remaining in the quarter .

Following the Nebraska kickoff , Tech tried to answer the Cornhusker score with one of its own . The Hokies started at their 20 @-@ yard line after a touchback . Parker caught an eight @-@ yard pass from Druckenmiller , then ran for three yards and a first down . With a first down at the Tech 31 @-@ yard line , Druckenmiller threw an incomplete pass . This was followed by a four @-@ yard run by Oxendine and a ten @-@ yard completion by Druckenmiller for another first down , this time to the Tech 45 @-@ yard line . Oxendine picked up three yards on two short runs , then Druckenmiller advanced the Hokies into the Nebraska side of the field with a 19 @-@ yard pass to Jennings . Oxendine was stopped for no gain and Druckenmiller threw an incompleteness , but on third down , Druckenmiller connected with White for a 33 @-@ yard gain and Tech 's first touchdown of the second half . The extra point was good , and the Hokies again trimmed Nebraska 's lead to three points : 24 ? 21 . Tech 's drive covered 80 yards in 12 plays and 4 : 56 of game time .

The Cornhuskers ' offense returned to the field with 4 : 58 remaining in the third quarter . Nebraska began at its 39 @-@ yard line after the kickoff was returned 23 yards . Frost ran four yards , and Benning earned eight yards with two rushes , giving Nebraska a first down at the Tech 49 @-@ yard line . Frost 's first pass of the drive fell incomplete , but Benning ran seven yards and Frost completed his second pass of the drive for nine yards and another first down , this time to the Tech 33 @-@ yard line . Three more rushes created 10 more yards and another first down , but a bigger loss came to the Tech defense when Hokie All @-@ American Cornell Brown was injured . Nebraska 's offense inexorably pressed onward , aided by a 15 @-@ yard pass interference penalty against Virginia Tech , and Nebraska capitalized on a six @-@ yard rush by Benning , giving Nebraska a touchdown with 20 seconds remaining in the quarter . The extra point was good , and Nebraska returned to a 10 @-@ point lead , 31 ? 21 .

Nebraska 's kickoff was returned to the Tech 19 @-@ yard line , and Oxendine ran one yard on the last play of the third quarter . With one quarter remaining in the game , Virginia Tech was in possession of the ball , but trailed , 31 ? 21 .

= = = Fourth quarter = = =

The fourth quarter began with Virginia Tech in possession of the ball and facing a second @-@ and @-@ nine at its 20 @-@ yard line . On the first play of the quarter , Druckenmiller completed a 20 @-@ yard pass to Oxendine for a first down at the Tech 40 @-@ yard line . Parker ran for three yards , but Tech was forced to call a timeout before the next play . During the timeout , a light rain began to fall that would last through the remainder of the game . Coming out of the timeout , Druckenmiller threw an incomplete pass , but made it up on the next play by rushing for 16 yards , picking up a first down at the 41 @-@ yard line of Nebraska . This was followed by another rush by Druckenmiller , this time for nine yards . The two gains were negated on the next play , however , as Virginia Tech committed a penalty that pushed the Hokies back to their 41 @-@ yard line . Druckenmiller then threw two incomplete passes , and Tech was forced to punt .

Nebraska began its possession at its five @-@ yard line after the returner was tackled for a three

@-@ yard loss and the Cornhuskers were assessed six yards of penalties during the return . Frost threw an incomplete pass , Schuster ran for four yards , then Frost completed a 14 @-@ yard pass to Shevin Wiggins for a first down at the Nebraska 23 @-@ yard line . Frost continued the drive by earning nine yards on an option , then Schuster picked up three yards for another first down . Sims followed this by gaining 22 yards and two first downs on the next three plays . Frost then completed a 17 @-@ yard throw to Jeff Lake for a first down at Tech 's 26 @-@ yard line . Just outside Tech 's red zone , however , the drive petered out . Sims was stopped for a short loss , Frost ran for eight yards , and threw an incomplete pass , causing a fourth down . Kris Brown kicked his second field goal of the game , this time a 37 @-@ yard kick , which was successful . With 7 : 52 remaining in the game , Nebraska had a 34 ? 21 lead .

With time running out , Virginia Tech 's offense returned to the field needing to score . Nebraska 's kickoff was downed in the end zone for a touchback , and the Hokies started at their 20 @-@ yard line . The Hokies ' need for quick points was foiled by an injury to Druckenmiller , who left the game after throwing an incomplete pass on the first play of the drive . Backup quarterback Al Clark was unable to gain a first down , and neither was Druckenmiller , who returned to the game for third down . Tech punted back to Nebraska , which returned the kick to its 45 @-@ yard line .

Cornhusker Ahman Green , who had started most of Nebraska 's games during the regular season , entered the game and ran three straight plays for 24 yards . On the third play , Green fumbled the ball , which was recovered by a Nebraska player . Frost then completed an 11 @-@ yard pass for a first down to the Tech 21 @-@ yard line . The Cornhuskers were stopped for losses on two consecutive running plays , but Frost broke free for a 22 @-@ yard touchdown run . The score and subsequent extra point gave the Cornhuskers a 41 ? 21 lead with 3 : 26 remaining in the game .

The limited time left in the game meant there was little chance the Hokies could make good the 20 @-@ point deficit . Tech 's hopes flared after Nebraska 's kickoff was returned 67 yards to the Nebraska 25 @-@ yard line , providing a chance for a quick score . Druckenmiller completed a 14 @-@ yard pass after the long return , giving Tech a first down at the 11 @-@ yard line , but the Hokies were unable to advance the ball much further . Oxendine ran for five yards , but Druckenmiller threw three incomplete passes , turning the ball over on downs . With a firm lead , Nebraska proceeded to run four short rushes , running out the clock and bringing the game to an end . Nebraska won the 63rd Orange Bowl , 41 ? 21 .

= = Statistical summary = =

From 1970 through 1998 , the Orange Bowl Committee , organizers of the Orange Bowl , recognized two most valuable players . Following the 63rd Orange Bowl , Virginia Tech running back Ken Oxendine and Nebraska running back Damon Benning were awarded the honor . Oxendine carried the ball 20 times during the game for a total of 150 rushing yards ? an average of 7 @. @ 5 yards per carry . He also caught three passes for 60 yards , making him the game 's leading receiver as well as its leading rusher . Benning , meanwhile , carried the ball 15 times for 96 yards and two touchdowns . He also caught one pass for two yards and returned one kickoff 23 yards .

Oxendine accounted for the majority of Virginia Tech 's 193 total rushing yards , but Nebraska had many more players run the ball than just Benning , who accounted for just over one @-@ third of Nebraska 's 279 @-@ yard rushing total . Scott Frost carried the ball nine times for 62 yards and two touchdowns for the Cornhuskers , and Ahman Green , despite being hampered by his injured foot , managed seven carries for 52 yards . All told , seven Nebraska players managed to carry the ball at least once . Virginia Tech , on the other hand , saw just four players carry the ball , and its No. 2 rusher , Marcus Parker , had eight carries for 22 yards .

Though behind in the rushing game , Tech 's passing offense finished ahead of Nebraska 's . Hokie quarterback Jim Druckenmiller completed 16 of his 33 pass attempts , earning 214 passing yards and three touchdowns . On the opposite side of the ball , Nebraska quarterback Scott Frost earned just 136 passing yards from 11 completed passes and 22 attempts . Combining the rushing and passing totals results in a similar total offensive performance from both teams . Virginia Tech finished the game with 407 net yards from 72 offensive plays , while Nebraska eked 415 net yards

from 71 offensive plays . The Hokies had a slight advantage in the time of possession , 31 : 02 to 28 : 58 . The real statistical difference comes in penalties ? Tech committed five for 89 yards , while Nebraska had just three for 16 yards ? and turnovers . The sole turnover in the game was a Virginia Tech fumble returned for a touchdown . Neither quarterback threw an interception .

Oxendine 's 150 rushing yards for Tech were the fifth @-@ highest total in the history of the Orange Bowl to that point . Druckenmiller 's three touchdown passes came behind only Notre Dame quarterback Danny Kanell 's four touchdown passes in the previous season 's Orange Bowl . Virginia Tech center Billy Conaty set a Virginia Tech record by making his 48th consecutive start in a game .

On defense , Virginia Tech 's Torrian Gray led all defenders with 12 total tackles . Second was Nebraska 's Mike Minter , who had 11 tackles and a pass breakup . Two Nebraska players had nine tackles apiece , and one of those players , Octavious McFarlin , recorded two tackles for loss . Nebraska recorded three sacks of Jim Druckenmiller , while the Virginia Tech defense was unable to sack Scott Frost . The Hokies did manage seven tackles for loss , compared to Nebraska 's five .

= = Postgame effects = =

Nebraska 's win pushed it to a final 1996 record of 11 ? 2 , while Virginia Tech 's loss dropped it to 10 ? 2 on the season . In the final Associated Press poll of the season , the Hokies finished 13th nationally .

Thanks to its appearance in the Orange Bowl and a revenue @-@ sharing agreement with other Big East schools , Virginia Tech earned \$ 3 @. @ 981 million for playing in the 1996 Orange Bowl . \$ 3 @. @ 5 million of that total came directly from the bowl , while the remaining \$ 481 @, @ 000 came from the revenue @-@ sharing pool generated by all the Big East teams that participated in bowl games . The almost- \$ 4 million payout made Virginia Tech 's football team the wealthiest of the 36 schools that participated in bowl games after the 1996 season .

Multiple players from each team were selected in the 1997 NFL Draft , which took place April 19 ? 20 , 1997 . Nebraska had eight players selected : Michael Booker , Jared Tomich , Mike Minter , Adam Treu , Chris Dishman , Jamel Williams , Eric Stokes , and Jon Hesse .