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LONGHORNS FOOTBALL

Charles runs wild as Longhorns edge Nebraska 28-25

His 216-yard, three-touchdown fourth quarter pulls Horns out of a deep hole, on to narrow victory

By Suzanne Halliburton AMERICAN STATESMAN STAFF

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After a jubilant Jamaal Charles hugged a teammate and slapped high-fives with the band in the north end zone to celebrate his final touchdown, he trotted to the sidelines to seek his mentor's approval.

It was then that Charles, the Texas tailback, and Ken Rucker, the Longhorns' running backs coach, embraced and broke down, allowing the emotions of a frustrating season to overwhelm them both.



Ralph Barrera AMERICAN-STATESMAN

(enlarge photo)

Texas Longhorns running back Jamaal Charles tries to stay one step ahead of a quartet of Nebraska defenders while picking up some of his 290 yards on Saturday.



Ralph Barrera AMERICAN-STATESMAN

(enlarge photo)

Jamaal Charles turns the right corner and uses his blazing speed to outrun the Nebraska defense 86 yards to the end zone for the second of his three fourth-quarter touchdowns. After a two-point conversion

With his spectacular fourth-quarter performance, Charles led Texas past an upset-minded Nebraska, 28-25, in front of a sellout crowd of 85,968 at Royal-Memorial Stadium.

Texas fans hadn't witnessed such a rushing performance since Ricky Williams was in the midst of his Heisman campaign in 1998.

Charles rushed a career-high 33 times for 290 yards, with 216 of them coming in the fourth quarter. He scored three touchdowns in the final 15 minutes on runs of 25, 86 and 40 yards to erase the remnants of what had been a 14-point Husker lead.

"I was breaking down — crying," Charles said. "It was my time to show everybody what I can do. And I felt good today. Coach Rucker came by my side, and he told me he was happy for me that I got over all that adversity and that I just wanted to go out there and play like that."

Until Saturday, Charles was best known this season for his fumbles, including his touchdown-nullifying mistake against Oklahoma. After Saturday's game, he's now known as the back who gained the most yards ever against a Nebraska defense, surpassing the 247 gained by Oklahoma's Billy Simms in 1979.

His game was the fourth-best in Texas history, and he came within seven yards of breaking Corey Dillon's 11-year-old NCAA record for best-ever quarter.

No. 17 Texas needed every one of Charles' yards to up its record to 7-2 (3-2 in Big 12 conference play). The Huskers, who appeared to be in control of the game before Charles' late heroics, fell to 4-5 (1-4).

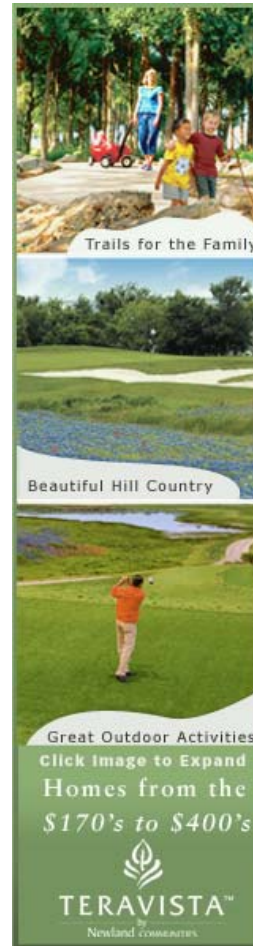
The victory also was Mack Brown's 100th as a Longhorn head coach.

"The players made sure I'd remember this one for a while," Brown said. "One hundred is nice. Seven is nicer."

It took some significant halftime adjustments to spring Charles free and give the Longhorns a reason to celebrate a seventh win.

The Cornhuskers showed a new defensive look against Texas, junking their conservative approach and going for broke with the blitz. According to Texas offensive coordinator Greg Davis, the Huskers had blitzed only a benign 19 percent in their previous eight games.

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attempt failed, the Horns trailed just 21-17.



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Texas' Quan Cosby, right, makes a leaping catch over Nebraska's Amando Murillo in the second quarter. Cosby finished the day with four catches for 108 yards.



Ralph Barrera
AMERICAN-STATESMAN

[\(enlarge photo\)](#)

Texas quarterback Colt McCoy and running back Jamaal Charles celebrate their comeback victory over Nebraska. Charles, who gained 216 yards in the fourth quarter, said of his career game, 'It was my time to show everybody what I can do.'

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Against Texas, the percentage was closer to 75 or 80. Nebraska's lone goal was to frustrate quarterback Colt McCoy and keep him from getting into a smooth rhythm with his receivers.

The strategy worked for the first three quarters, as the Cornhuskers clogged all running and passing lanes.

"I've never been in a game where they're going to blitz on every play," McCoy said. "They had nothing to lose coming here, and you've got to give them credit for what they did against us."

Texas also couldn't find the end zone for the first three quarters, relying instead on three Ryan Bailey field goals to stay within 17-9 of the Huskers.

Statistically, McCoy suffered through his worst Saturday of the year, completing 12 of his 28 passes for 181 yards, with one interception and no touchdowns. It was his season low for completions and yards, and it was also the first time in 11 games that he hadn't thrown a touchdown pass.

But the Longhorns' zone-read running play — a staple during the 2005 national championship season — finally made Nebraska pay for its blitzing ways.

The Huskers briefly knocked McCoy out of the game early in the fourth quarter, when a Nebraska defender fell on his throat. But that play, oddly enough, prompted the Longhorns' comeback.

With McCoy on the bench, Texas sent in backup John Chiles and ran a zone read for Charles, who gained 25 yards. McCoy returned, called his own name on first down, and rushed for 24.

Then Charles completed the drive with a 25-yard scoring dash on another zone read to bring Texas to within two at 17-15 with 12:23 to go.

Five minutes later, the Longhorns took their first lead of the half at 21-17, when Quan Cosby's key block sprung Charles around the right side for his 86-yarder, the fifth-longest run in program history.

On Nebraska's next possession, Texas relied on its defense to maintain the momentum. On a second-and-10, tackle Frank Okam twisted through a gap and, using his left hand, knocked the ball from Nebraska quarterback Sam Keller. Okam then recovered the fumble at the Texas 43.

Six plays later, Charles burst through the middle of the Husker defense for his third touchdown of the quarter.

Nebraska scored one final time with 1:55 to go. But from there, the Longhorns ran out the clock.

Appropriately enough, Brown allowed Charles to leave the game one play before the final gun so that the sellout crowd could acknowledge his dazzling day. This time, there were no tears.

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