

Nebraska Postgame Notes

Nebraska vs. Illinois, Aug. 28, 2021, Memorial Stadium, Champaign, Ill.

- The August 28 game is Nebraska's earliest ever conference game and the earliest conference game in Big Ten history.
- Nebraska lost for the first time in a game played in the month of August and is now 14-1 all-time in the month. Nebraska dropped to 13-5-1 all-time against Illinois, including 6-3 against the Illini as Big Ten foes.
- Nebraska lost its season opener for just the fourth time in the past 36 seasons and dropped to 6-5 in Big Ten openers since joining the conference.
- True freshman running back **Gabe Ervin Jr.** made his first career start. Ervin Jr. is the first Nebraska true freshman running back to start a season opener in the modern era. Ervin Jr. is just the seventh position player to start a season opener as a true freshman joining Ralph Brown (CB, 1996), Terrence Nunn (WR, 2004), Tyler Moore (OT, 2011), Dedrick Young (LB, 2015), Adrian Martinez (QB, 2018), Wan'dale Robinson (WR, 2019).
- Outside linebacker **Garrett Nelson** finished the game with a career-high 2.5 tackles for loss, including a half-sack. His previous high was 2.0 tackles for loss in a game. Nelson has had at least one tackle for loss in four straight games.
- Outside linebacker **Pheldaius Payne** had two sacks for 11 yards lost in the first quarter, marking his second and third career sacks. Payne had his first career sack in last year's season finale at Rutgers.
- Inside linebacker **Nick Henrich** recorded a game-high 11 tackles to post the second double-digit tackle game of his career in his second career start. Henrich had 12 tackles in last year's season finale at Rutgers in the first start of his career.
- Defensive end **Deontre Thomas** shared a sack in the first quarter, marking his first career sack.
- The first quarter safety by Illinois was the first by a Nebraska opponent since Northern Illinois scored a safety against Nebraska in 2019.
- Nebraska recorded three sacks for 17 yards. Nebraska's season high for sacks in 2020 was three each against Ohio State and Purdue.
- **Markese Stepp** had a 30-yard reception in the first quarter to set up a Nebraska touchdown (Stepp 2-yard run). The catch was the longest of Stepp's collegiate career. Before today's game he had four receptions for 35 yards in his college career, with a long catch of 16 yards.
- Receiver **Oliver Martin** set career highs with six receptions and 103 receiving yards, eclipsing his previous career highs of three receptions (twice) and 38 receiving yards (vs. Rutgers) while playing at Michigan in 2018. Martin had a 43-yard reception in the second quarter, marking his career long reception. His previous long was 22 yards last season against Minnesota.
- Quarterback **Adrian Martinez's** 75-yard touchdown run in the third quarter was career-long run for Martinez, bettering a 56-yard run vs. Ohio State in 2019. Martinez's 75-yard run was the longest by a Husker since Taylor Martinez had a 76-yard touchdown run against Wisconsin in the 2012 Big Ten Championship Game.
- Martinez finished the game with 343 total yards (232 passing, 111 rushing). It marked his 14th career game with 300 yards of total offense, the most in Nebraska history. Martinez has totaled more than 300 yards of offense in each of his three career starts against the Illini, including 789 yards of offense in two career starts at Illinois' Memorial Stadium.

- With his 232 passing yards, Martinez passed Zac Taylor (5,850) for third on Nebraska's all-time passing list with 5,860 yards.
- Players making their first career start at Nebraska today included RB Gabe Ervin, OT Brant Banks, OG Matt Sichterman, WR Samori Toure, WR Wyatt Liewer.