

Pack takes to the ground, defeats Rebels

by Nick Haley

Frank Hawkins enjoyed a homecoming of his own at Saturday's UNR-UNLV showdown. The Las Vegas native and former Nevada-Reno running back watched from the stands as his alma mater defeated the Rebels 14-10 before a crowd of 28,790 at the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl.

While his allegiances were mixed, Hawkins, who is currently a Las Vegas City Councilman, left no doubt about who he was rooting for—the Wolfpack.

"I'm Silver and Blue all the way," he said. "I told them (the team) how important this game was. It's the biggest game of the year and this is how it should be played."

Not only did the Pack win it, they won it his way—on the ground. UNR, a pass-oriented for the past few years, racked up a net 214 rushing yards on 53 carries. Running backs Dedric Holmes and Cornel West carried the team on their backs with a combined 239 yards.

"We gave them the run," said Jim Strong, UNLV head coach. "We blitzed low and gave them the run."

But overall, Strong was pleased by the performance of his defensive squad, which held UNR to 14 points. The "Pack attack" that averaged 416 yards through five games was held to 324.

The victory lifts UNR, or Nevada, high alone in first place in the Big West Conference title race with a 3-0 record, 4-2 overall. San Jose State and Utah State are tied for second, both at 1-0.

"I think they (UNR) can win this conference, hands down," Hawkins said. "I'd like to see Reno win it and UNLV come in second."

But the toughest test is still ahead for the Wolfpack. UNR's final road game of the year will be against conference powerhouse San Jose State, the favorite to win the conference. Even worse, UNR can no longer count on the mainstay of the team—its passing.

The air game that nearly carried the Pack to a NCAA Division I-AA title last year added up to a mere 110 yards, 208 below average this season. Starting quarterback Chris Vargas completed just four passes and tossing two interceptions. Fred Gatlin came in to replace Vargas in the second half but to no avail—he also threw four completions and two interceptions.

The Rebels fared no better offensively. While UNLV netted 213 yards from rushing, they tallied just 41 yards from the pass. Tailback Shannon McLean was the workhorse, carrying 29 times for 159 yards with the

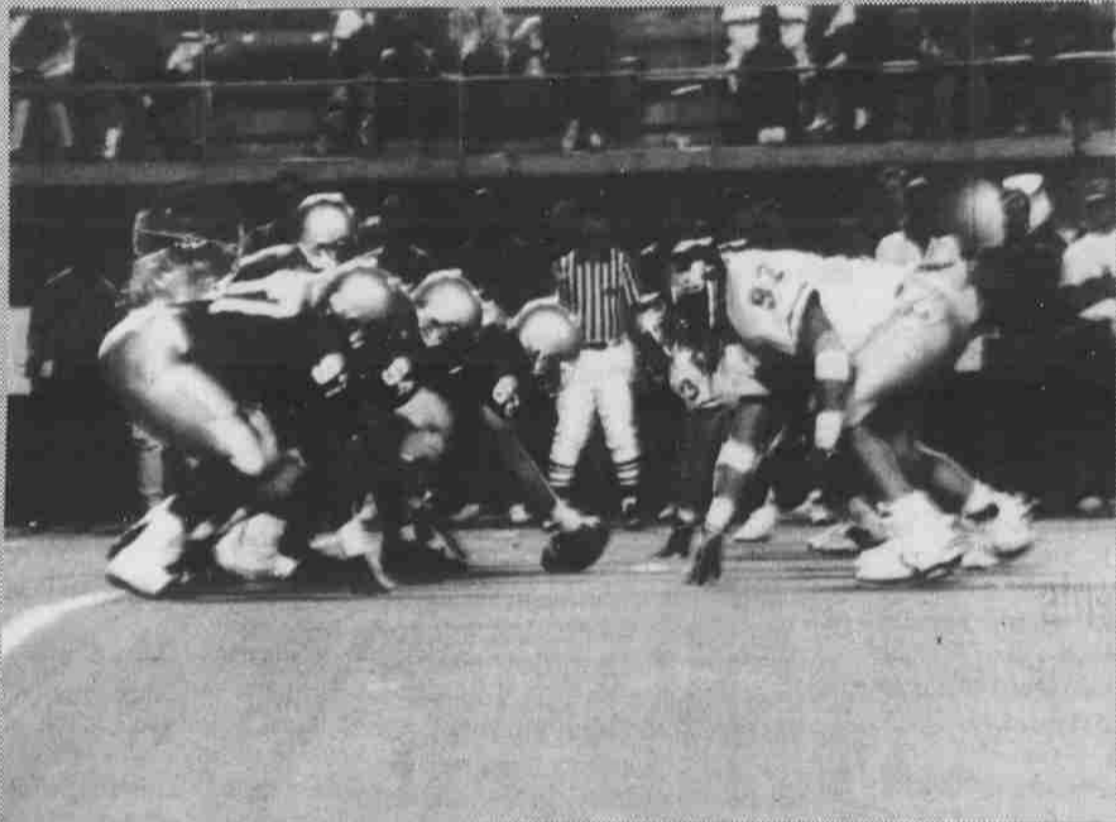


photo by Wray Halterman

The Rebels fell to 3-3 with Saturday's 14-10 Homecoming loss to arch-rival Nevada-Reno.

only Rebel touchdown of the night. Quarterback John Ma'ae went the distance, completing 5 for 13 with two interceptions, one on a late, fourth quarter drive that clinched the victory for the Wolfpack. Strong credited the play of UNR's protection for making the difference in the game.

"They start seven senior defensive backs. It's going to be hard to replace them," he said. "I love the way they hit and run. When your defense is playing well you ride that."

UNLV protected the pass, too. The Rebel defensive back trio of Donnell Porter, Clarence Mack and Rodney Mazion produced four interceptions. Mazion caused another turnover by stripping the ball from UNR wide receiver Cornell West.

Rebel defensive tackle William "Tiger" Townes made the cover-up.

"Our defense gave us every opportunity to win it," Strong said.

At halftime it appeared they would. UNLV headed for the locker room with a 7-0 lead.

The only scoring drive of the half started with a botched field goal attempt by UNR. The Rebels drove 69 yards for their only touchdown of the game. McLean marched off 45 of those yards on five carries, including a 19-yard scoring run.

The second half, however, belonged to the Wolfpack. UNR outgained the Rebels in yardage 193-99.

The Wolfpack struck twice in the third quarter. The first came on the opening drive of the

half with Gatlin taking the helm for the ineffective Vargas. Gatlin made three of his four completions on this drive for 33 yards but relied on UNR rusher Dedric Holmes to punch it in for the touchdown. Reno's other score came on a two-yard fumble recovery by cornerback William Lackey.

UNLV rapped up the scoring with a 36-yard field goal by Nick Garritano to begin the fourth quarter.

The Rebels final chance to win the game came on a possession with 3:18 to go in the game. With the ball at UNR's 47, Ma'ae

handed off to McLean four straight times to reach the Wolfpack 33 yard-line. But all hope for UNLV was lost when on second and seven, Ma'ae threw a cross-body pass straight into the hands of Reno defender Brock Marion.

The loss was UNLV's fourth straight to UNR. The Rebels are now 1-2 Big West and 3-3 overall.

It doesn't get any easier for the Rebels who travel to Hawaii this Saturday. UNLV's next home game will be Oct. 31 against Big West rival San Jose State.

1992 Battle for the Cannon

	1	2	3	4	Final
UNLV	0	7	0	3	10
Nevada-Reno	0	0	14	0	14
Final Stats	UNLV		UNR		
Net yards rush	213		Net yards rush 214		
Net yards pass	41		Net yards pass 110		
Total Net Yards	254		Total Net Yards 324		
Fumbles	3		Fumbles 1		
Interceptions	2		Interceptions 4		
Penalties-yards	12-102		Penalties-yards 8-75		
Time of Possession	25:10		Time of Possession 34:50		

Highlights: 1st Qtr. Defensive Struggle - No Scoring. 2nd Qtr. Shannon McLean (UNLV) 19-yd run. 3rd Qtr. Dedric Holmes (UNR) 5-yd run. William Lackey (UNR) fumble recovery 2-yd run. 4th Qtr. Nick Garritano (UNLV) 36-yd field goal.

Attendance: 28,790

BIG WEST CONFERENCE

	Conference			Overall		
	W	L	T	W	L	T
Nevada-Reno	3	0	0	4	2	0
San Jose State	1	0	0	4	2	0
Utah State	1	0	0	2	4	0
New Mexico State	1	2	0	4	3	0
UNLV	1	2	0	3	3	0
Pacific	1	2	0	2	5	0
CS Fullerton	0	2	0	2	5	0

Saturday, Oct. 17

Nevada-Reno 14, UNLV 10
Pacific 49, New Mexico State 17
Utah State 28, Kansas State 16
CS Fullerton 14, SW Louisiana 10

Saturday, Oct. 24

UNLV at Hawaii, 10 p.m.
New Mexico State at Nevada-Reno
San Jose State at Utah State
Pacific at Washington