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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

November 17, 2007

Illinois Spoils Senior Day

Perfect Season Eludes OSU After 28-21 Loss

By ADAM JARDY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

As most stories about this season's Ohio State football team typically do, this one begins and ends with Kirk Barton.

OSU's senior right tackle, the only one of a handful of Buckeyes who considered an early jump to the NFL after last season to return to school, has been a stabilizing force on a team replacing a wealth of talent, and his consistent play was a big reason the Buckeyes were talking national championship in 2007.

As Ohio State trotted out 15 seniors for their final game in Ohio Stadium, Barton was the last player to embrace head coach Jim Tressel near midfield. The crowd roared its approval, giving Barton the most applause – by far – of any of the duly honored members of the senior class.

Sixty minutes of football later and with one perfect season down the tubes, it was Barton who stood alone.

The top-ranked Buckeyes, one game from entering their annual rivalry game with Michigan with a perfect record, had just dropped a 28-21 heartbreaker to unranked Illinois on senior day.

As is the tradition since Tressel took the helm, the Buckeyes assembled in front of the south stands to face the band for the singing of "Carmen Ohio." There was Tressel front and center, standing in front of his team and singing along – although few of the players appeared to be moving their lips.

Standing a solid 10 yards away was Barton, staring straight into the stands as if he was burning the entire situation into his memory. Then, as the song wound down, he began heading toward the tunnel.

Throwing out an abbreviated "O-HI-O" cheer with his arms in the air, he ducked into the tunnel leading to the locker room as the band was playing the final three notes of the song. His final game at Ohio Stadium had come and gone, and with it nearly all the goals the team had set at the beginning of the season.

And Barton knew it. "You feel like a failure as a captain when you lose a game like this," he said. "You really hope that you can lead the guys out of the murky waters that we were in, but we just couldn't do it.

"It takes a little bit away from your captaincy if you can't lead your team the way you need to."

There was plenty of blame to go around, however. When the dust settled, the Illini had out-rushed the Buckeyes 260-180,



JOSH WINSLOW

PICK ON THE WAY – Ohio State quarterback Todd Boeckman (17) eyes receiver Ray Small (4) in the end zone during third-quarter action, but by the time the ball gets to its destination, Illinois defenders have closed in to make a crucial interception. It was one of three picks Boeckman threw in the game as the Illini upset the No. 1-ranked Buckeyes.

committed no turnovers to OSU's three and held the ball for 33 minutes en route to the upset.

Two plays into the game, though, it looked like the Buckeyes were going to cruise to another big win on their home turf after they covered 76 yards and scored on an 11-yard touchdown run from Chris "Beanie" Wells.

It would take the Fighting Illini three plays and 45 seconds to knot the game at 7, and the fifth-largest crowd in Ohio Stadium knew it would be witnessing a battle.

But a multitude of factors all added up for a big loss that more than likely has knocked the Buckeyes from the national title picture.

"We've got to rebound from here," senior captain Dionte Johnson said. "I think we've got a lot of little things to adjust. We can't turn the ball over, next week especially. We've got some problems."

Junior defensive end Vernon Gholston said the loss felt different compared to the last time OSU was defeated – last year's 41-14 loss at the hands of the Florida Gators in the BCS National Championship Game.

"I really can't compare the two," he said. "We made it to the national championship last year, and this was a regular-season game. It's kind of different. We're out of the national championship race. My mind goes straight to next week."

Dashed national title hopes aside, the loss brought several streaks the Buckeyes had going to a halt. Since its last conference loss against Penn State in 2005, OSU had reeled off a conference-record 20 consecutive Big Ten victories. The Buckeyes were enjoying a 28-game regular-season winning streak that also dated back to the loss to the Nittany Lions.

Gift Guide's In This Issue
Buckeye Sports Bulletin's Annual Holiday Gift Guide is included in this issue. This guide has a wealth of gift ideas for the OSU fan on your list.

But the only fact the team seemed to care about following the game was that it would not be sending its seniors out with a win in their final home game.

"It's very tough," junior quarterback Todd Boeckman said. "I think we let down the seniors. We wanted to get a victory for them in their last game in the 'Shoe, and we let them down."

Boeckman shouldered a bit more of the blame himself after the game, something Barton said he would talk to him about. After being tabbed as a dark-horse candidate for the Heisman Trophy based on his solid, consistent play on the nation's top team, Boeckman tossed three interceptions in the loss.

The final one came on the third play of OSU's only drive of the fourth quarter, giving Illinois possession with 8:09 left. The Buckeyes never regained possession.

"We definitely wanted to get out there and show this team that we can go out there and put some points on the board," Boeckman said of being on the sidelines for the final drive. "Credit their O. They kept the drive alive and kept the clock moving. I thought our D would hold them, but our offense put our defense in some bad situations out there."

The vaunted OSU defense could not get off the field and

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COVER STORY: ILLINOIS SPOILS SENIOR DAY

Barton, Seniors Have Bitter Home Finale

Continued From Page 1

the Illini were able to run out the clock. Following the game, Barton was the first person to arrive for interviews. He sat on the dais at the front of the room for a solid three minutes before he was joined by Tressel and the team's other captains.

Once everyone arrived, junior linebacker James Laurinaitis, as the lone non-senior at the dais, expressed regret for letting the seniors down.

"Whenever you lose as the No. 1 team, it's a terrible feeling, especially when you control your own destiny and let something like this happen on Senior Day," he said. "It's something that you're going to have to look yourself in the mirror.

"I feel bad for our seniors. (We) wanted to send them out the right way today."

The loss marks the first suffered on Senior Day at Ohio Stadium since 2001, when – ironically – No. 12 Illinois dropped the Buckeyes by a 34-22 margin.

During Barton's tenure, OSU had been 4-0 when playing on senior day. That mark included two victories over Michigan, with perhaps a 37-21 upset of then-No. 7 Michigan in 2004 serving as the most unexpected victory.

"I hope the young guys remember this feeling," Barton said. "I've been here five years and this is the first time that we've lost on Senior Day. In '04 when Michigan was a 21-point favorite or whatever against us in our place, we were able to pull that one off for

them. It hurts losing on Senior Day. It's a tough gig. It's something that I'll never forget.

"We didn't leave the young guys like we needed to. A lot of them came up to me in the locker room after the game and said sorry and were crying and whatnot. You hope that they remember how this feels. We don't lose in the Horseshoe at all. It's a rarity and you wish it didn't happen on senior day."

Up Next: 'The Game'

If there was a potion concocted to help the Buckeyes get past a disappointment such as the one suffered against Illinois, it would likely feature a healthy dose of beating Michigan.

Luckily for the Buckeyes, then, they can immediately focus on preparing for their biggest game of the season. The 104th meeting between OSU and Michigan will once again decide the conference crown.

As the Buckeyes were preparing to get things under way with Illinois, the Wolverines were being handed a 37-21 road loss to Wisconsin. An OSU victory would have guaranteed it at least a share of the conference crown, but now for the 21st time The Game will exclusively decide the conference champion.

A victory over the Wolverines would earn the Buckeyes the conference's automatic BCS bid and likely send them to the Rose Bowl. Rather than view a trip to Pasadena as just a consolation prize, Laurinaitis said that scenario would still accomplish some goals the team had set.

"It's not what you want at the beginning of the season, but I think a Rose Bowl and a BCS



JOSH WINSLOW

FRUSTRATING FINISH – OSU co-captain Kirk Barton looks skyward during pregame ceremonies honoring him and his fellow seniors. After the game, Barton couldn't hide his disappointment after Illinois had ruined the Buckeyes' chances for a perfect season with a 28-21 victory.



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game and winning the Big Ten is definitely one of the goals we start out with," he said.

Following the game, Tressel said he did talk about the fact that it was now Michigan week, but it was not the first thing he mentioned to his players. But any player asked about how difficult it would be to stomach the loss pointed to the upcoming game against the Wolverines as a reason they could not be in mourning long.

"It's going to be tough," Boeckman said. "(Sunday) we're going to look at the film and then after that it's all Michigan. We have an opportunity to go out there and win an outright Big Ten championship."

In that respect, the importance of the game does not appear to be diminished despite OSU's loss to Illinois. If anything, the Buckeyes are even more determined to finish strong to help

send the team's seniors out on a more positive note than they did in Ohio Stadium.

"Different people have different situations," Gholston said. "Me personally, I'm a little mad about the loss, a little sad for it, but there's still a Big Ten championship to be had and that's something to focus on."

A victory over the Wolverines goes a long way toward erasing any negative thoughts about the season, and Barton knows that.

"Obviously, that's the game that defines your career at Ohio State," the senior said. "Obviously, they're disappointed today as well. I'm sure they're thinking about us and we're thinking about them as of now."

Despite that sentiment, Barton spoke during the week leading up to the Illinois game about how he already had an outright Big Ten championship ring and had his eyes set on a

different ring this time – one for a national championship.

That does not mean the Buckeyes were looking past the Illini to the Michigan game, however.

"We weren't looking forward to Michigan, which is something most people are going to think and want to write," Barton said. "I don't think that was the case at all. Illinois gave us all we could handle last year. They're a good football team. They easily could be undefeated. We were ready for them. They executed today."

And although the loss will stick with the Buckeyes, Barton said it will hinder neither the team's preparations for the Wolverines nor their effort during the game.

"I'll have my guys ready," he said. "I promise you."

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OHIO STATE VS. ILLINOIS

Juice Gets Loose Often In Illinois' Upset Win

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

For 10 straight weeks, Ohio State relied on a smothering defense that simply refused to allow opposing teams to breathe. On Nov. 10, though, the Buckeyes could not solve the puzzle that was Illinois quarterback Isiah "Juice" Williams.

As a result, the Illini came up with their first victory over a No. 1-ranked team since 1956, Ron Zook got his first signature win as Illinois head coach, and OSU went down to defeat for the first time this season, absorbing a 28-21 defeat in front of the fifth-largest crowd ever to witness a game in Ohio Stadium.

The loss snapped Ohio State's school-record regular-season winning streak at 28, broke its Big Ten-record 20-game victory streak, and most importantly put a likely end to any hopes the team had about returning to the BCS National Championship Game for a second season in a row.

The outcome also narrowed the Buckeyes' postseason possibilities. They can still win the outright Big Ten championship and earn a Rose Bowl bid with a Nov. 17 victory at Michigan since the Wolverines also went down in defeat Nov. 10, dropping a 37-21 decision to Wisconsin. A loss by OSU in Ann Arbor would likely relegate the team to the Capital One Bowl in Orlando, Fla., on New Year's Day.

Postseason destinations were the last thing on anyone's mind, however.

"Hats off to Illinois," Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel said. "They did the things that you need to do to win a tough battle, and unfortunately we didn't do all the things that you need to do."

"I feel bad that we didn't come through for those guys playing for the last time here at Ohio Stadium, but nevertheless I'm still proud of how hard they go after it and how much it means to them. This stings, but we've got to pick up and move on."

The Buckeyes came out like gangbusters early, drawing first blood with a touchdown just 23 seconds into the game and crossing the goal line again at the 9:37 mark of the first quarter to take a 14-7 lead.



JOSH WINSLOW

JUICE ON THE LOOSE – Illinois quarterback Juice Williams (7) flips the ball outside on an option play while Ohio State defensive end Vernon Gholston (50) gives pursuit. Williams had the Buckeyes on their heels much of the afternoon as he threw for four touchdowns and added 70 yards on the ground, leading the Illini to a 28-21 upset victory.

But the Illini came roaring back each time. They answered OSU's quick score at the beginning of the game with one of their own less than a minute later and then went ahead with two touchdowns in the final 19-plus minutes of the first half.

The teams traded scores in the third quarter, but when it came time for the Ohio State defense to make a stop when the team needed it most, it couldn't handle Williams. In the fourth quarter alone, Williams rushed for 37 yards – 34 of it on four important third- or fourth-down situations – to keep

the ball away from the Buckeyes. Illinois held the ball for all but one minute and 14 seconds in the fourth quarter.

That final period was a microcosm of the game itself. Williams was a consistent thorn in Ohio State's side, completing 12 of 22 passes for 140 yards and four touchdowns and adding 70 yards rushing on 16 carries. The sophomore QB led the Illinois offense to 400 total yards and four touchdowns. None of the Buckeyes' previous 10 opponents had cracked the 350-yard mark or scored more than 17 points.

Zook, who had replaced Williams in the lineup during a couple of games in midseason, praised his quarterback for his field generalship especially during that fourth quarter.

"He managed the game well, and after today you can all see why he is our starter," Zook said. "When the game is on the line, he does what needs to be done. He is a tough competitor who plays the game well."

In addition to Williams, the Illini got excellent production from twin tailbacks Daniel Dufrene and Rashard Mendenhall,

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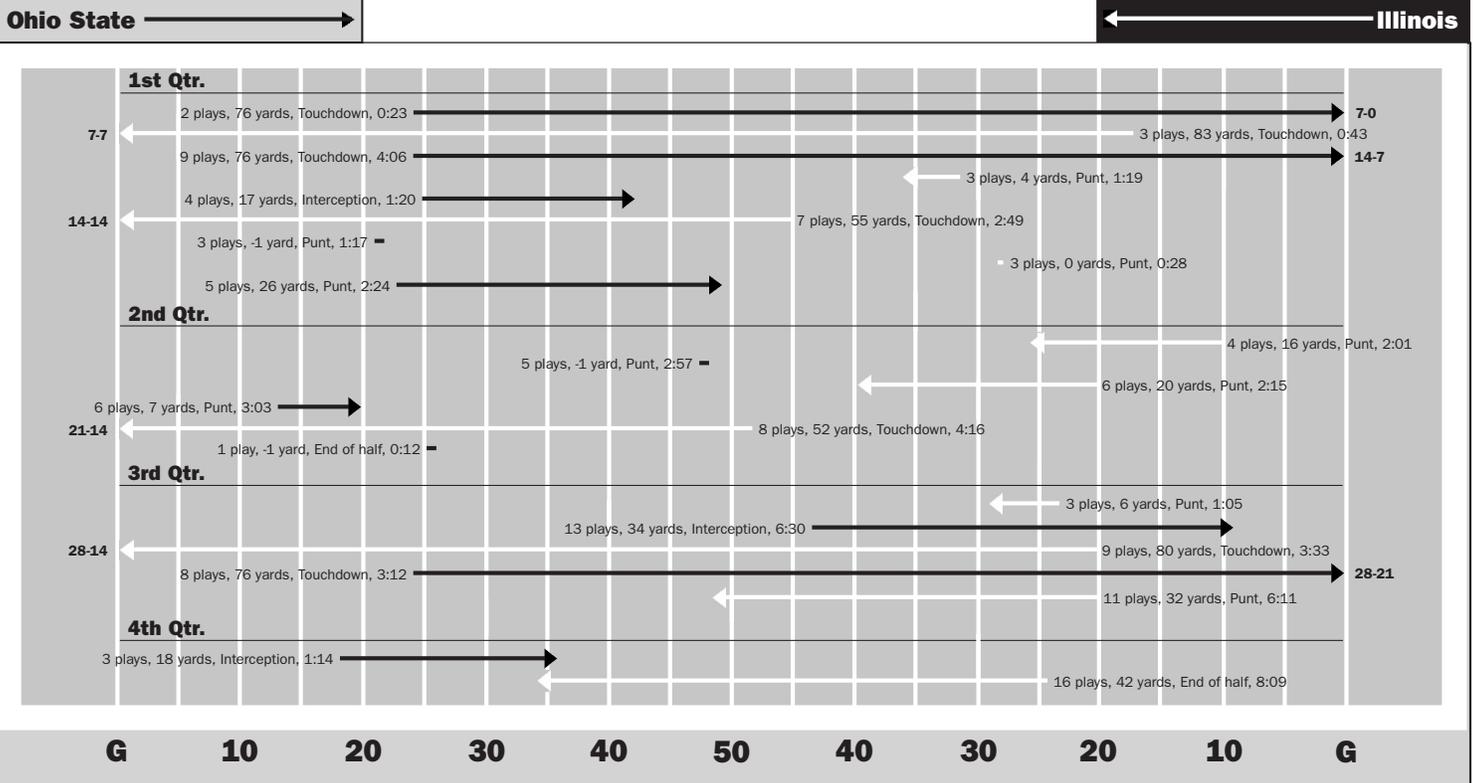
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OHIO STATE VS. ILLINOIS

OSU-Illinois Drive Chart



who combined for 194 yards on the ground. That Mendenhall was able to break loose for 88 yards on 26 carries was not that much of a surprise. After all, he entered the game as the Big Ten's second-leading rusher with an average of 131.4 yards per game. Dufrene was a different story altogether. He rushed for 106 yards on just eight carries after averaging only 19.5 yards in the Illini's 10 previous games.

The 5-11, 197-pound sophomore figured prominently in one of the game's key plays. On Illinois' second offensive play, Dufrene broke loose for an 80-yard run. But television replays appeared to show him losing control of the football while being tackled by OSU cornerback Donald Washington. The possible fumble was not reviewed, however, and the Illini scored their first touchdown on the next play.

While Illinois was piling up the yardage, the Buckeyes also appeared to move the ball well. They had 336 yards of total offense, including an almost 50-50 split of 180 yards on the ground and 156 through the air.

However, the Illini almost completely shut down the OSU passing game after quarterback Todd Boeckman and receiver Brian Hartline hooked up for a 65-yard gain on the first play of the contest. And after piling up 194 yards in the first quarter alone, the Buckeyes managed only 142 more the rest of the way.

Boeckman finished with 13 completions in 23 attempts for 156 yards, no touchdowns and three costly interceptions. The first two led to Illinois touchdowns and the third occurred in the fourth quarter, after which the Buckeyes never got the ball back.

"I'm disappointed," Boeckman said. "These kinds of losses are hard to take. It's even tougher being a leader on this team and knowing you could have played better and helped out the team."

Sophomore tailback Chris Wells gave the Buckeyes what he could on the ground

despite going in and out of the lineup with what appeared to be hand and ankle problems. Wells wound up with 76 yards and a pair of touchdowns on 20 carries.

Boeckman was also a threat in the running game, scrambling for a career-high 68 yards on eight carries.

Illinois successfully neutralized Ohio State's defensive line, leading to a host of tackles for linebackers and safeties. Outside linebacker Marcus Freeman established a new career high with 18 stops, including 10 solos, while middle linebacker James Laurinaitis added 12 tackles. Outside linebacker Larry Grant and defensive end Cameron Heyward had seven tackles apiece.

Unfortunately, the Buckeyes couldn't get any kind of sustained pass rush on Williams. Just one week after registering 10 sacks against Wisconsin, Ohio State tallied only one against the Illini.

"I don't think they did anything we hadn't seen," Freeman said. "I think the thing that they were doing was that they were executing. (Williams) was making plays with his feet and his arm. That's tough. He's a great quarterback, and he was the best today."

Heating Things Up Early

The bundled-up crowd of 105,453 filed into the Horseshoe under the overcast November sky before the two teams suddenly turned up the thermostat. In fact, the first 5½ minutes featured as much action as many games do over the course of their entire four quarters.

After winning the coin toss and electing to receive, the Buckeyes struck so quickly that it seemed the last notes of the national anthem were still echoing in C-deck.

On the first play from scrimmage, Hartline got loose down the sideline and Boeckman hit him with a 65-yard completion. Then on the very next play, Wells played off blocks

The Bottom Line . . .

It was over when ... the Ohio State defense could not stop Illinois quarterback Juice Williams from converting first downs in the final eight minutes of the game. During the Illini's final drive, Williams personally converted a fourth-and-1 before third downs of 7, 10 and 2 yards. If the Buckeyes stop Williams on any one of those plays, they get the ball back with at least a chance to tie the game. But they couldn't, and Illinois ran out the final 8:09 of the game.

The game ball goes to ... Williams. He threw for 140 yards and four touchdowns and added 70 yards on the ground. He also played a very controlled and heady game on the road in a hostile environment. Not bad for a guy whose starting job was in jeopardy just a few short weeks ago.

Stat of the game ... 9.24. That was the average gain on second down for Illinois in the game. It is extremely difficult for a defense to get the other team off the field when they are going at that rate on any down. Illinois scored three of its four touchdowns and had three gains of 30 yards or more on second down.

— Mark Rea

from tight ends Rory Nicol and Jake Ballard and scampered into the end zone with an 11-yard touchdown.

Junior kicker Ryan Pretorius added the extra point, and the Buckeyes were seemingly off and running with a 7-0 lead just 23 seconds into the contest.

But if anyone entertained the notion of an Ohio State rout, they had another thing coming.

Illinois answered with a quick-strike touchdown of its own. After Williams threw incomplete on his team's first offensive play, Dufrene broke through a hole in the line on a draw play and rumbled 80 yards before Washington was able to catch up and push him out of bounds.

Before the play could be reviewed, the Illini got to the line of scrimmage and snapped the ball, allowing Williams to find tight end Michael Hoomanawanui in the end zone for a 3-yard touchdown. It capped a three-play, 83-yard drive, and after UI

kicker Jason Reda added the PAT, the score was knotted at 7 and the game was less than a minute and a half old.

The offensive onslaught continued when Ohio State went right back to work on its next possession. The big plays were a 23-yard scramble by Boeckman on a third-and-7 and a 22-yard reception by Ballard on the play after that.

Two plays later, junior tailback Maurice Wells knifed his way between two Illinois defenders and scored on a 19-yard touchdown run. Pretorius booted the extra point, and OSU was back in front at 14-7 with 9:37 remaining in the first quarter.

After the initial fireworks, things settled down — but only briefly. The Buckeyes forced the Illini to go three-and-out on their next possession, but Boeckman's first interception four plays into Ohio State's next

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OHIO STATE VS. ILLINOIS

Illinois Played Keep-Away With Ball Late

Continued From Page 11

drive touched off another scoring march for Illinois.

Taking over at his own 45, Williams took advantage of a short field and engineered a drive that took seven plays and just under three minutes. During the possession, the Illini QB completed a 14-yard pass to receiver Kyle Hudson on a third-and-12 and ran for an 8-yard gain on a second-and-7 play.

But his best play came after executing a fake and then throwing a perfect spiral to wideout Jacob Willis, who had broken free down the middle of the field. Willis gathered in the 33-yard touchdown pass, and after Reda added the conversion kick, the score was tied at 14 with 4:04 remaining in the first quarter.

The dizzying pace of the game's opening 15 minutes featured four touchdowns, 336 total yards and an average of 12.0 yards per offensive play.

Perhaps the two offenses got tired after

all of the early fireworks, but things settled down considerably in the second quarter. The teams punted five times between them before the Illini got good field position after OSU punter A.J. Trapasso got off a 32-yarder and Illinois started a possession at its own 48.

Zook elected to gamble a bit by going for a fourth-and-1 at the Ohio State 43 with 2:37 left until halftime. But the gamble paid off handsomely when Mendenhall broke around right end for a 25-yard gain.

Two plays later, Williams hooked up with freshman receiver Arrelious Benn for 7 yards and a first-and-goal, and then two plays after that, Williams was at it again, this time finding receiver Brian Gamble in the end zone for an 8-yard score. Reda again added the PAT, and Illinois had taken a 21-14 lead with just 17 seconds left in the half.

Unable To Get It Done

The Buckeyes emerged from their locker room after halftime with what appeared to be a renewed purpose. They forced the Illini to go three-and-out on their first possession

and took over in excellent field position after a short punt and 16-yard return by sophomore Ray Small.

OSU moved toward the goal line in small but efficient increments, converting a pair of third downs and a fourth-and-1 before pushing to the Illinois 9 with a first-and-goal. But after failing to move the ball on first or second down, Boeckman went back to pass on third down.

He was pinned in the pocket but managed to escape, sprinting out to his right and finally catching a glimpse of Small in the back of the end zone. But by the time Boeckman's pass got to his receiver, Illinois cornerback Marcus Thomas was there to deflect the ball into teammate Antonio Steele's arms.

The Buckeyes had held the ball for 6½ minutes and come away empty.

That situation was exacerbated when the Illini took over and marched 80 yards the other way to go ahead by two touchdowns. Dufrene had a 13-yard run early in the drive, and Williams did most of the rest of the damage. He ran the ball four straight times for 16 yards before connecting with Gamble for a 15-yard gain that pushed Illinois past midfield.

Two plays later, Williams connected with receiver Marques Wilkins for 31 yards and another touchdown. Reda's extra point gave the Illini a 28-14 lead with 3:52 remaining in the third period.

But Ohio State answered again. Boeckman got things started with a 35-yard scurry on the first play of the drive and then completed a 4-yard pass to fullback Tyler Whaley. That was and followed by a 5-yard flip to Brian Robiskie.

Chris Wells took over from there, carrying four straight times and topping off the drive with a 17-yard bolt through the right guard hole. Pretorius added the PAT, and the Buckeyes were behind by only a touchdown at 28-21 with 34 seconds left in the third quarter.

But that was as close as the comeback would get.

Illinois took over and held the ball for nearly six minutes of the final period before OSU got another chance. And that last chance lasted only three plays before Boeckman tried to get the ball deep to Robiskie and was intercepted by Thomas. That was at the 8:09 mark of the fourth quarter, and thanks to Williams and his shifty feet, the Illini never relinquished possession.

It looked as though Ohio State would get another possession with 6:53 remaining. Illinois faced a fourth-and-1 at its own 33 and lined up in punt formation. The Buckeyes, however, seemed confused on defense and Tressel called a timeout from the sideline. When play resumed, Zook had elected to go for the first down, and Williams sneaked ahead for 2 yards to sustain the drive.

He converted three more third-down plays in the final minutes as Ohio State burned its remaining timeouts.

Game Notes

- Ohio State and Illinois have one of the oldest rivalries in college football, playing one another 94 times since 1902. The victory was No. 30 for the Illini, the Buckeyes have 60 wins and there have been four ties.

- Illinois has had success at Ohio Stadium in recent years. Since 1988, they have now won seven of the last 10 times they have visited Columbus.

- As previously mentioned, the loss ended Ohio State's various winning streaks including the nation's longest current streak in Division I-A at 10. The defeat also ended the Buckeyes' 28-game regular-season win streak, leaving them tied for the conference record with Michigan, which had its streak in 1901-03.

- Another streak also died with the loss. OSU had been atop the Bowl Championship Series standings for a record 12 straight weeks dating back to last season.

- The Buckeyes lost for the first time on Senior Day since a 34-22 loss to Illinois in 2001.

- Tressel is now 3-2 against the Illini and 19-4 in November games as Ohio State head coach.

- Illinois notched only its fourth victory in 18 games all-time against the nation's No. 1 team. The last time the Illini upset the top-ranked team in the nation was in 1956 when they scored a 26-10 victory over Michigan State.

- The game marked the 10th time in history that Illinois was taking on a No. 1-ranked Ohio State team. The team's record in those contests is now 2-8 with the only other victory coming in the first of those games, a 14-7 decision in 1950. The Buckeyes had won the other eight in a row by a combined score of 249-65.

- Mendenhall broke the Illinois single-season rushing record with his 88 yards against OSU. He pushed his total to 1,402 yards for the season, surpassing Antoinene Harris, who had 1,330 in 2002.

- The Buckeyes should have known they were in trouble when they trailed the Illini at halftime. Illinois is now a perfect 8-0 this season when leading at the break.

- The victory gave the Illini their eighth win of the season, the most since the team's 2001 Big Ten championship team won 10 games.

- With his 76 yards, Chris Wells moved up the Ohio State single-season rushing chart. His total for the season is now 1,241 yards, the 14th-best total in school history. He needs 91 more to break into the top 10. The 10th spot is currently occupied by Antonio Pittman, who had 1,331 yards as a sophomore in 2005. Archie Griffin holds the OSU record for most yards by a sophomore with 1,577 in 1973.

- Boeckman moved past the 2,000-yard mark with his performance against the Illini and became only the ninth Ohio State QB to throw for that many yards in one season. Art Schlichter, Jim Karsatos, Greg Frey, Bobby Hoying, Joe Germaine, Steve Bellisari, Craig Krenzler and Troy Smith are the others. Karsatos, Hoying, Krenzler and Smith each had a pair of 2,000-yard seasons while Frey is the only Ohio State quarterback ever to throw for 2,000 or more yards in three seasons.

- His 156 yards moved Boeckman's season total to 2,114 and that ranks 11th on the OSU single-season list. Germaine is the school record holder in that department with 3,330 during the 1998 season.

- Ohio State's honorary captain was former All-America linebacker Thomas "Pepper" Johnson, who was a two-time team captain in 1984 and '85. Johnson played 13 NFL seasons with four different teams and won two Super Bowls with the New York Giants. Since 2000, he has been a defensive assistant coach with the New England Patriots and has won three more Super Bowl rings.

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The Numbers Game

Illinois 28, Ohio State 21

Nov. 10, 2007 — Ohio Stadium; Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F	
ILLINOIS	14	7	7	0	—	28
OHIO STATE	14	0	7	0	—	21

First Quarter

OSU — C. Wells, 11 yard run (Pretorius kick), 14:37; 2 plays, 76 yards, 0:23 TOP.

UI — Hoomanawanui, 3 yard pass from I. Williams (Reda kick), 13:48; 3 plays, 83 yards, 0:45 TOP.

OSU — M. Wells, 19 yard run (Pretorius kick), 9:37; 9 plays, 76 yards, 4:06 TOP.

UI — J. Willis, 33 yard pass from I. Williams, 4:04; 7 plays, 55 yards, 2:49 TOP.

Second Quarter

UI — Gamble, 8 yard pass from I. Williams (Reda kick), 0:17; 8 plays, 52 yards, 4:16 TOP.

Third Quarter

UI — Wilkins, 31 yard pass from I. Williams (Reda kick), 3:52; 9 plays, 80 yards, 3:33 TOP.

OSU — C. Wells, 17 yard run (Pretorius kick), 0:34; 8 plays, 76 yards, 3:12 TOP.

Att. — 105,453.

Weather — 48 degrees, cloudy; wind, NW 7 mph.

Team Statistics

	UI	OSU
First Downs	19	18
Rushing	13	13
Passing	6	5
Penalty	0	0
Rushes-Yards	51-260	36-180
Passing Yards	140	156
Passes (Att.-Comp.-Int)	22-12-0	23-13-3
Offensive Plays	73	59
Total Net Yards	400	336
Third Down Efficiency	8-17	5-13
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-2	2-2
Punts-Avg.	6-38.3	4-43.8
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	1-0
Penalties	1-10	2-9
Time of Possession	33:00	27:00

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — **UI**: Dufrene 8-106; R. Mendenhall 26-88; I. Williams 16-70; TEAM 1(-4). **OSU**: C. Wells 20-76; Boeckman 8-68; M. Wells 6-30; Hartline 1-7; TEAM 1(-1).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — **UI**: I. Williams 12-22-0-140-4. **OSU**: Boeckman 13-23-3-156-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — **UI**: Gamble 3-27; Hudson 3-26; J. Willis 1-33; Wilkins 1-31; Morgan 1-9; Benn 1-7; R. Mendenhall 1-4; Hoomanawanui 1-3. **OSU**: Hartline 4-86; Robiskie 4-31; Ballard 1-22; Small 1-8; Sanzenbacher 1-7; Whaley 1-4; M. Wells 1(-2).

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) — **UI**: Santella 6-38.3-50. **OSU**: Trapasso 4-43.8-53.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **UI**: Warren 2(-2). **OSU**: Small 2-16; Hartline 2-8.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **UI**: Benn 1-25; V. Davis 1-15; J. Willis 1-13. **OSU**: Small 4-63; Saine 1-10.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds) — **UI**: None. **OSU**: None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) — **UI**: Hicks 1-0; M. Thomas 1-0; Steele 1-0. **OSU**: None.

SACKS — **UI**: Brown 1-0-11; W. Davis 1-0-4. **OSU**: Grant 1-0-2.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) — **UI**: Leman 2-5-2; Brown 1-0-11; W. Davis 1-0-4; Sanders 1-0-2; V. Davis 1-0-2; Lindquist 0-5-1. **OSU**: Heyward 1-5-4; Freeman 1-0-3; Grant 1-0-2; Chekwa 1-0-1; Worthington 1-0-0; Laurinaitis 0-5-1; Larimore 0-5-1; Russell 0-5-0.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) — **UI**: Leman 8-4-12; Sanders 4-3-7; Hicks 4-1-5; V. Davis 2-3-5; M. Thomas 4-0-4; Harrison 3-1-4; Pilcher 2-2-4; W. Davis 3-0-3; Miller 3-0-3; Lindquist 2-1-3; Steele 2-0-2; M. Wilson 1-1-2; R. Smith 1-1-2; Mitchell 0-2-2; Carson 1-0-1; Brown 1-0-1; Norwell 1-0-1; Knezetic 1-0-1; Bussey 0-1-1. **OSU**: Freeman 10-8-18; Laurinaitis 3-9-12; Grant 5-2-7; Coleman 0-7-7; Heyward 3-3-6; Russell 4-1-5; D. Washington 3-2-5; Gholston 2-3-5; Abdallah 1-4-5; Worthington 0-2-2; M. Williams 1-0-1; O'Neal 1-0-1; Denlinger 1-0-1; Chekwa 1-0-1; Lane 1-0-1; Barrow 0-1-1; Jenkins 0-1-1; Larimore 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME — **ILLINOIS**: Offense, Fulton, O'Donnell, McDonald, Asamoah, Millington, I. Williams, R. Mendenhall, Hudson, Benn, J. Willis, Hoomanawanui, Reda. Defense, Norwell, Lindquist, Pilcher, Miller, Leman, Steele, Hicks, Harrison, Mitchell, W. Davis, V. Davis, Santella. Reserves, Judson, M. Wilson, Wilkins, Warren, Morgan, M. Thomas, Cumberland, Bussey, Dufrene, McMahon, Flowers, Sanders, Gamble, R. Smith, W. Mendenhall, Cklamovski, Weil, Carson, Pittman, Rouse, Robertson, Knezetic, Block, Nabolotny, Ware, Palmer, Lenti, A. James, Walker, Nurse, Brown. **OHIO STATE**: Offense, Robiskie, Boone, Rehiring, Cordle, Person, Barton, Nicol, Ballard, Boeckman, C. Wells, Hartline, Pretorius. Defense, Heyward, Worthington, Abdallah, Gholston, Freeman, Laurinaitis, Chekwa, Jenkins, Russell, Coleman, D. Washington, Trapasso. Reserves, Rose, Hines, Saine, Small, Pettrey, Schwartz, Rolfe, O'Neal, Grant, Gant, B. Smith, Sanzenbacher, Amos, Robinson, Patterson, M. Williams, Moeller, Lane, M. Wells, Spitzer, Whaley, Thoma, Johnson, Makridis, Haas, Browning, Larimore, C. Smith, Barrow, Daly, Denlinger.

Season Statistics

2007 Game-By-Game				Scoring						
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS	
Sept. 1	(11) YOUNG. ST.	W, 38-6	105,038	—	43-44	—	—	—	17-21	94
Sept. 8	(12) AKRON	W, 20-2	104,317	12	—	—	—	—	—	72
Sept. 15	(10) at Washington	W, 33-14	74,927	10	—	—	—	—	—	60
Sept. 22	(8) N'WESTERN	W, 58-7	105,178	6	—	—	—	—	—	36
Sept. 29	(8) at Minnesota	W, 30-7	51,611	4	—	—	—	—	—	24
Oct. 6	(4) at Purdue (23)	W, 23-7	65,497	3	—	—	—	—	—	18
Oct. 13	(3) KENT STATE	W, 48-3	105,051	2	—	—	—	—	—	12
Oct. 20	(1) MICHIGAN STATE	W, 24-17	105,287	1	—	—	—	—	—	6
Oct. 27	(1) at Penn State (24)	W, 37-17	110,134	1	—	—	—	—	—	6
Nov. 3	(1) WISCONSIN	W, 38-17	105,449	1	—	—	—	—	—	6
Nov. 10	(1) ILLINOIS	L, 28-21	105,453	1	—	—	—	—	—	6
Nov. 17	(7) at Michigan (23)	Noon		1	—	—	—	—	—	6

* OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	235	147
Rushing	119	65
Passing	101	74
Penalty	15	8
Average Per Game/Rush	198.1	82.7
Average Per Game/Pass	209.7	154.7
Total Offense	4,486	2,612
Total Plays	755	695
Average Per Game	407.8	237.5
Average Per Play	5.9	3.8
Penalties-Yards	62-451	45-402
Fumbles-Lost	14-7	14-8
3rd Down Efficiency	74-152	55-171
Percentage	49%	32%
4th Down Efficiency	7-11	8-13
Percentage	64%	62%
Sacks-Yards	38-244	14-100
Time of Possession Avg.	31:48	28:12

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	111	91	84	84	—	370	33.6
Opponents	26	24	48	27	—	125	11.4

Attendance	Games	Total	Avg.
Home	7	735,773	105,110
Away	4	302,169	75,542
Total	11	1,037,942	94,358

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Chris Wells	215	1,241	5.8	12	47
Maurice Wells	102	365	3.6	3	26
Brandon Saine	51	247	4.8	2	37
Todd Boeckman	40	76	1.9	0	35
Ray Small	2	56	28.0	0	37
Antonio Henton	9	41	4.6	0	10
Brian Hartline	5	40	8.0	0	9
Marcus Williams	14	38	2.7	0	6
Rob Schoenhof	10	32	3.2	1	16
K.C. Christian	5	31	6.2	0	13
A.J. Trapasso	1	18	18.0	0	18
Joe Gantz	3	3	1.0	0	2
Dionte Johnson	1	-1	-1.0	0	-1
TEAM	6	-8	-1.3	0	0
OSU Totals	464	2,179	4.7	18	47
OPP Totals	353	1,910	2.6	2	80

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Brian Robiskie	48	864	18.0	10	68
Brian Hartline	45	610	13.6	5	65
Ray Small	18	248	13.8	2	60
Rory Nicol	16	84	5.2	0	11
Jake Ballard	11	141	12.8	2	22
D. Sanzenbacher	11	82	7.5	1	15
Maurice Wells	10	47	4.7	1	20
Brandon Saine	9	91	10.1	1	35
Chris Wells	5	21	4.2	0	8
Devon Torrence	4	31	7.8	0	17
Taurian Washington	3	46	15.3	1	37
Brandon Smith	3	30	10.0	0	11
Trevor Robinson	3	10	3.3	1	9
Marcus Williams	1	11	11.0	0	11
Tyler Whaley	1	4	4.0	0	4
Todd Boeckman	1	-13	-13.0	0	0
OSU Totals	189	2,307	12.2	24	68
OPP Totals	185	1,702	9.2	9	50

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Rating
T. Boeckman	169	260	65.0	2,121	23-11	154.26
R. Schoenhof	17	25	68.0	129	0-0	111.34
Antonio Henton	3	6	50.0	57	1-0	184.80
OSU Totals	189	291	64.9	2,307	24-11	151.20
OPP Totals	185	342	54.1	1,702	9-10	98.73

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Ryan Pretorius	5-6	6-8	5-6	1-1	17-21
OSU Totals	5-6	6-8	5-6	1-1	17-21
OPP Totals	3-3	1-1	2-4	0-0	6-8

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
A.J. Trapasso	39	1,638	42.0	0	63
Jon Thoma	1	13	13.0	0	13
OSU Totals	40	1,651	41.3	0	63
OPP Totals	88	3,364	38.2	1	58

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Malcolm Jenkins	3	30	10.0	1	24
James Laurinaitis	2	16	8.0	0	14
Donald Washington	1	70	70.0	1	70
Nick Patterson	1	34	34.0	0	34
Larry Grant	1	19	19.0	0	19
Chimdi Chekwa	1	9	9.0	0	9
Doug Worthington	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	10	178	17.8	2	70
OPP Totals	11	56	5.1	1	54

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brian Hartline	17	209	12.3	1	90
Ray Small	16	114	7.1	0	21
Brian Robiskie	7	60	8.6	0	14
Malcolm Jenkins	3	16	5.3	0	21
Larry Grant	1	8	8.0	0	0
Devon Torrence	1	6	6.0	0	6
OSU Totals	45	413	9.2	1	90
OPP Totals	12	50	4.2	0	16

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ray Small	15	240	16.0	0	22
Maurice Wells	3	62	20.7	0	22
Brandon Saine	3	60	20.0	0	39
Anderson Russell	2	47	23.5	0	29
Tyler Whaley	1	10	10.0	0	10
Rob Schoenhof	1	1	1.0	0	1
OSU Totals	25	420	16.8	0	39
OPP Totals	56	1,208	21.6	2	99

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
James Laurinaitis	37	60	97	8.0-33	5.0-29
Marcus Freeman					

OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

Buckeyes Suffocate Michigan's Offense

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

One week after being skewered by Illinois and barbecued by its own fans, the Ohio State defense came back with a vengeance, completely smothering Michigan and leading the Buckeyes to a 14-3 victory before 111,941 fans in Michigan Stadium.

How stifling was the OSU defense? The Wolverines were held to just 91 yards of total offense, the first time totaling less than 100 yards since getting 97 against Purdue during a 37-0 loss in October 1962.

To go along with its paltry yardage total, Michigan had only eight first downs including just three in the second half, two of which came on Ohio State pass interference penalties.

"Our defense was not going to let them control the game with the run," said OSU head coach Jim Tressel, who became the first coach in school history to beat Michigan in six of his first seven tries.

With the victory, Ohio State clinched the program's first back-to-back outright Big Ten championships since 1954-55 and won its third straight crown. That is the longest string since the Buckeyes won six in a row between 1972 and '77.

"It's special to be able to win the outright Big Ten championship two years in a row, and three years in a row being part of it," Tressel said. "We're the first ones to do that since Penn State joined the league, so I'm pretty proud of those guys for being able to do that."

The win also clinched the fifth Bowl Championship Series berth in seven seasons



SONNY BROCKWAY

PLUGGING THE HOLE – With Michigan tailback Mike Hart (20) running in his direction, Ohio State defensive end Vernon Gholston (50) fights through a double-team. Gholston had five tackles, including four for loss and three sacks, as the Buckeyes shut down the Wolverines during a 14-3 victory.

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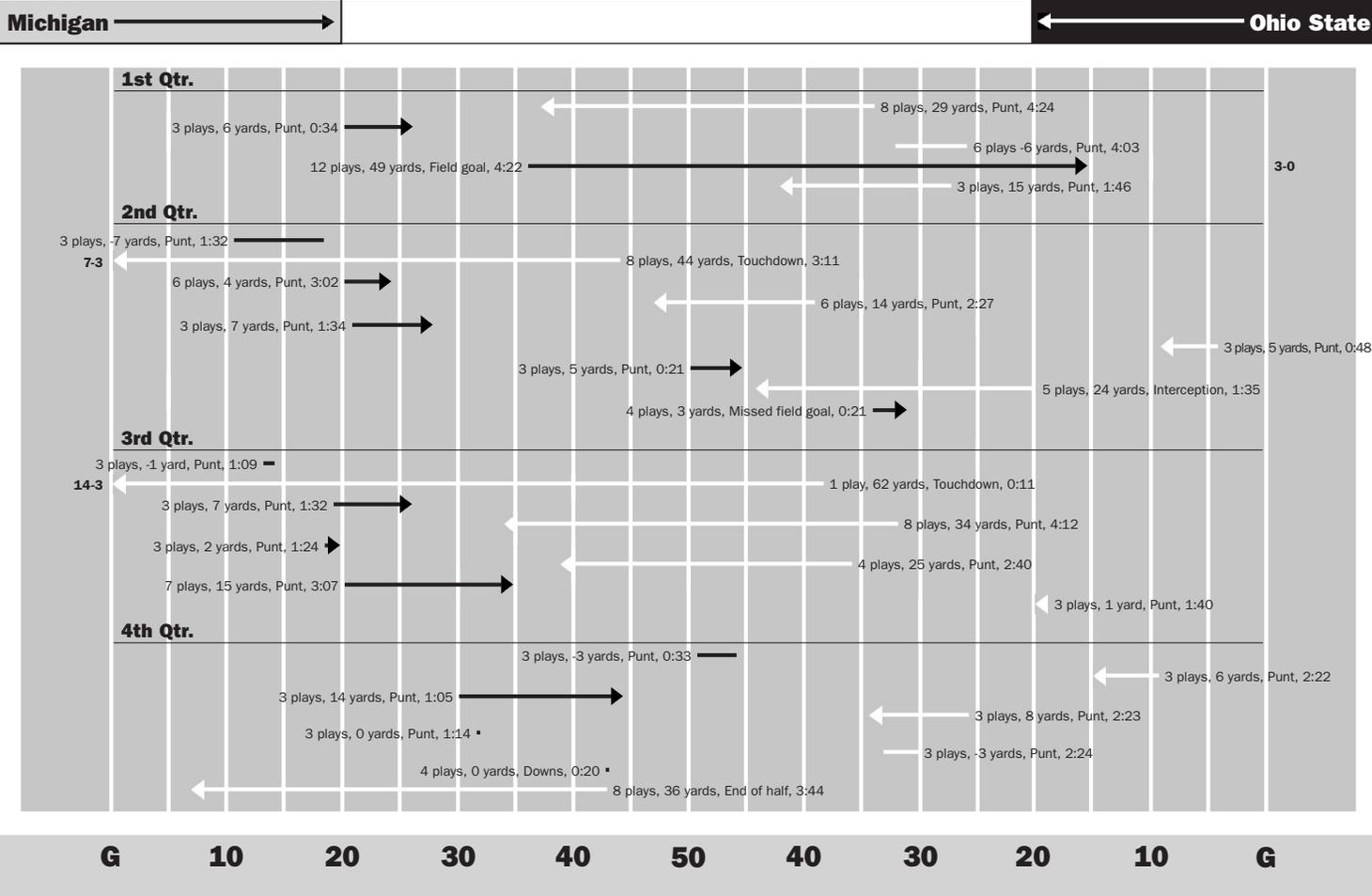
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OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

OSU-Michigan Drive Chart



under Tressel. Ohio State sewed up its first appearance in the Rose Bowl since New Year's Day in 1997 and still had an outside chance to make its second straight appearance in the BCS National Championship Game, set for Jan. 7 in New Orleans.

From almost the outset, the Buckeyes appeared intent upon exerting themselves on defense. They allowed 55 yards in the first quarter and only 36 the rest of the way.

Michigan seniors Chad Henne and Mike Hart were among those who struggled during the afternoon. Henne battled his way through a chronic shoulder injury but managed to complete only 11 of 34 pass attempts for 68 yards. Hart, bothered in recent weeks by a bad ankle, carried 18 times for only 44 yards.

"We didn't think we were going to be this bad off," Hart said. "Give credit to the (Ohio State) defense. They came up with a great game and had a good scheme against us. The defense did a great job."

The Michigan senior refused to use his ankle injury as an excuse for a lack of production.

"I was fine today," Hart said. "I was good enough to play and it definitely wasn't a problem. Chad was out there throwing the ball fine, so it's definitely not the reason why we lost today."

In addition to the defensive effort, Ohio State got a superlative effort from sophomore tailback Chris Wells. He set career highs with 39 carries for 222 yards and scored both of the Buckeyes' touchdowns. Wells' previous career highs of 31 carries and 221 yards were set against Michigan State earlier this season.

Ohio State quarterback Todd Boeckman

attempted only 13 passes in the game, completing 7 for 50 yards. Each of those totals represented season lows for the junior quarterback, who also pitched an interception.

"We did a pretty good job of moving the chains a little bit," Tressel said, noting the Buckeyes finished with 279 total yards. "I wish we would have scored a little more, wish we would have been a little more consistent (on offense). But we did what we needed to do, and 14 points was enough to win the Big Ten."

Ohio State was led on defense by a trio of juniors, each of whom talked during the week before the game about sending the team's seniors out on a winning note.

Outside linebacker Marcus Freeman led the Buckeyes with nine tackles, eight of which were solos, while middle linebacker James Laurinaitis totaled six stops. Meanwhile, defensive end Vernon Gholston was a tough assignment for the Michigan offensive line. The 6-4, 264-pound Detroit native chalked up three sacks against the Wolverines and moved his season total to 13. That ties the school single-season mark set by Mike Vrabel in 1995.

"Vernon is a special guy, and this was an important day for him coming back home to play," Tressel said. "I'm sure Henne will see him in his sleep."

Gholston began to flex his prodigious muscle early, sacking Henne for a 6-yard loss in the first quarter as the Wolverines were positioning themselves for a score. The play helped the Buckeyes hold Michigan to an early field goal.

The second sack came when Gholston grabbed redshirt freshman Ryan Mallett and

The Bottom Line . . .

It was over when ... the Buckeyes scored their first touchdown at the 10:08 mark of the second quarter. Michigan didn't know it then, but it was in for a long, tough afternoon against the Ohio State defense. After Chris Wells scored from the 1-yard line to make it 7-3, the Wolverines got exactly 43 yards of total offense on their next 44 plays from scrimmage.

Game balls go to ... Wells and Vernon Gholston. The sophomore tailback carried 39 times for 222 yards – both career-high totals – to help the Buckeyes play ball control throughout the game. On defense, Gholston had three sacks and spearheaded an attack that blanketed the Wolverines for less than 100 yards of total offense.

Stat of the game ... 1.5. Michigan's offense entered the game averaging 399.2 total yards and 28.2 points per game. The Buckeyes held them to 91 yards of total offense, a single field goal and an average of just 1.5 yards on 61 offensive plays.

– Mark Rea

threw him for a 6-yard loss near the end of the third quarter.

But the third sack was perhaps the OSU defensive end's most satisfying. With 7:42 remaining in the game and chances running out for Michigan, Henne faded back only to be completely run over by Gholston. That was for an 8-yard loss and put the exclamation point on the victory for the Ohio State defense.

After the game, Gholston preferred to talk about the gold pants charm the team would receive for beating the Wolverines again and the gold trophy it would get for winning another Big Ten championship.

"With a team like Michigan, winning four years in a row is big," he said. "Not too many teams have done it. Stuff like this doesn't happen too often."

Not too often indeed. Ohio State hasn't enjoyed a four-game winning streak over Michigan since 1960-63. The Buckeyes have never beaten their archrivals five times in a row.

Off To A Slow Start

In the early going, it was difficult to tell whether the game was a burgeoning defensive battle or just a contest where neither team could muster anything offensively. In the first quarter, the Buckeyes totaled 23 yards on 17 plays while the Wolverines were only marginally better with 55 yards on 14 plays.

First blood was finally drawn late in the

Continued On Page 12

OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

Wolverines Managed Only 14 Second-Half Yards

Continued From Page 11

first period when U-M moved 49 yards in 12 plays to the Ohio State 15 before getting a 33-yard field goal from kicker K.C. Lopata. That gave the Wolverines a 3-0 lead with 1:37 remaining in the first period.

The possession could have been better, though. Michigan got to the Ohio State 13-yard line with a first-and-10. But then Hart was stopped for a 1-yard loss by OSU safety Anderson Russell, Gholston sacked Henne back to the 20, and then Freeman brought down tight end Carson Butler after a short 5-yard pass completion. That set up fourth-and-12, and the Wolverines were forced to settle for Lopata's three-pointer.

The Buckeyes finally got on the scoreboard early in the second quarter after playing the field-position game. OSU got to near midfield on its first possession after Michigan's field goal and followed with a 47-yard punt from A.J. Trapasso that pinned the Wolverines inside their own 20-yard line.

The defense forced a three-and-out, and

after a Michigan punt, the Buckeyes' offense was back in business at the U-M 44.

After a 1-yard run by Wells, Boeckman completed three consecutive passes - 5 yards to tight end Jake Ballard, 9 yards to sophomore Brian Hartline and 7 yards to freshman Dane Sanzenbacher.

That gave the Buckeyes a first down at the 22. Wells followed with back-to-back carries for 17 yards, and after Boeckman scrambled for 4 to the Michigan 1, Wells finished off the drive with a 1-yard touchdown plunge.

Ryan Pretorius added the PAT, pushing Ohio State into the lead at 7-3 with 10:08 left in the second quarter.

That was all the scoring in the first half, although the teams did provide some excitement in the final minutes before the break.

OSU's defense forced another Michigan three-and-out with 1:57 left in the first half, and the Buckeyes moved to their own 44 before taking a timeout with 31 seconds left. But on the next play coming out of the timeout, Boeckman threw deep under a heavy rush and U-M safety Brandent Englemom made the

interception.

Englemom returned the ball 33 yards back to the Ohio State 34-yard line, giving the Wolverines one last first-half possession with 21 seconds remaining. But Michigan managed only 3 yards before calling upon Lopata again. His 48-yard field-goal attempt fell short.

By halftime, the game's momentum as well as its total yardage figures had turned in the Buckeyes' favor. Michigan gained only 22 yards in the second period for 77 at the break while OSU gained 87 during the second quarter and had 110 for the first half.

Sewing Up The Championship

In the second half, Ohio State never allowed the Wolverines to breathe. The Buckeyes forced six three-and-outs in eight U-M possessions and allowed only 14 yards in the final 30 minutes.

OSU sophomore Ray Small appeared to break things open when he returned a punt 65 yards for a touchdown early in the third quarter. But the Buckeyes were penalized for an illegal block on the play, pushing them back to their own 38-yard line.

But on the very next play, Wells provided the only second-half offensive highlight when he broke over left tackle, shed Michigan linebacker Shawn Crable near the line of scrimmage, ran over Englemom and then turned on the jets for a 62-yard touchdown run. It was his longest career run from scrimmage, and after Pretorius added the PAT, the play gave the Buckeyes a 14-3 advantage at the 13:40 mark of the third quarter.

As it turned out, that was all the Ohio State defense would need.

The Wolverines crossed over into OSU territory only once in the second half. After a 15-yard punt return by Greg Mathews, Michigan began a possession at the Ohio State 46-yard line with 14:05 remaining in the game. But Henne's first-down pass attempt to Mario Manningham was broken up by safety Kurt Coleman, a reverse by Manningham was snuffed out for a 1-yard loss and Henne fumbled on third down for a 2-yard loss.

The Wolverines punted the ball away and never crossed midfield again.

Game Notes

- Ohio State notched its 41st victory in the 104th renewal of the rivalry. Michigan has won 57 times and there have been six ties. Since 1947, however, the series is dead even at 29-29-3.

- While Tressel moved to 6-1 against the Wolverines, Michigan head coach Lloyd Carr dropped to 6-7 in the series after beginning his career with wins in five of his first six tries against the Buckeyes.

- Michigan had called a press conference for 10 a.m. Nov. 19 to discuss Carr's future with the program. If the suppositions are true and Saturday represented his final regular-season game with the Wolverines, he became the fourth of the last five U-M head coaches to lose their finale to Ohio State - Bennie Oosterbaan in 1958, Bump Elliott in 1968 and Gary Moeller in 1994. Only Bo Schembechler won his final game against the Buckeyes, a 28-18 triumph at home in 1989.

- Tressel moved his record to 29-8 (.784) against all ranked teams. Carr's record against top-25 teams is now 40-24 (.625). Break it down even further to games in November and you have Tressel at 20-4 (.833) and Carr at 29-14 (.674).

- When it comes to playing top-10 opponents, Tressel is 8-3 (.727) in his OSU career while Carr is now 17-9 (.654). The loss to the Buckeyes was only Carr's second in 11 home games against top-10 opposition. The only other blemish was the 25-21 loss two years ago to Ohio State.

- Ohio State has now won three of its last four games in Ann Arbor, the first time it has accomplished that feat since a stretch between 1975 and '81.

- The crowd of 111,941 was the second-largest crowd ever in Michigan Stadium, surpassed only by the 112,118 who squeezed into the facility to watch the 2003 version of The Game - the largest crowd ever to watch an NCAA football game. The stadium's official capacity is 107,501. It is the largest football stadium in the United States and the fifth-largest stadium in the world, surpassed only by soccer stadiums in North Korea, India and Mexico and a cricket stadium in India.

- The two teams have now won 33 outright Big Ten championships between them - 17 by Ohio State and 16 for Michigan. Illinois is next with eight, and the Illini last won the title by themselves in 2001. This year's game represented the 43rd time in the series that Ohio State and Michigan have played to decide the Big Ten championship.

- During a 13-year span from 1979 to 1992, the record for the team entering the game with the higher ranking was 9-3-1. In the 15 years since, the higher-ranked team has managed only a 7-8 mark.

- With his 222 yards, Wells moved into seventh place on the OSU single-season rushing list. His 1,463 yards also represents the second-highest total ever for an Ohio State sophomore, surpassed only by Archie Griffin, who had 1,577 yards in 1973.

- Boeckman didn't have his most productive game, but he accomplished something that had been done only once in the previous 20 years. A first-year starting quarterback hadn't led an Ohio State team to victory in Michigan Stadium since Craig Krenzler did it in 2001. Before that, you have to go all the way back to Tom Tupa in 1987 to find a quarterback who went to Ann Arbor and won as a first-year starter for the Buckeyes.

- A commemorative coin featuring Woody Hayes on one side and Schembechler on the other was used in the pregame coin flip.

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 14, Michigan 3

Nov. 17, 2007 — Michigan Stadium; Ann Arbor, Mich.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	0	7	7	0	— 14
MICHIGAN	3	0	0	0	— 3

First Quarter

U-M — Lopata, 33 yard field goal, 1:37; 12 yards, 49 yards, 4:22 TOP.

Second Quarter

OSU — C. Wells, 1 yard run (Pretorius kick), 10:08; 8 plays, 44 yards, 3:11 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU — C. Wells, 62 yard run (Pretorius kick), 13:40; 1 play, 62 yards, 0:11 TOP.

Att. — 111,941.

Weather — Low 40s, rain/snow; wind, W 5-10 mph.



Team Statistics

	OSU	U-M
First Downs	16	8
Rushing	12	3
Passing	3	3
Penalty	1	2
Rushes-Yards	59-229	24-15
Passing Yards	50	76
Passes (Att.-Comp.-Int.)	13-7-1	37-12-0
Offensive Plays	72	61
Total Net Yards	279	91
Third Down Efficiency	7-18	3-18
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-1
Punts	11-37.4	12-45.9
Fumbles-Lost	3-0	2-0
Penalties	3-40	4-45
Time of Possession	37:50	22:10

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — **OSU:** C. Wells 39-222; Saine 9-20; M. Wells 1-2; TEAM 1(-2); Boeckman 7(-6). **U-M:** Hart 18-44; Manningham 1(-1); TEAM 1(-2); Mallett 1(-6); Henne 3(-20).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — **OSU:** Boeckman 7-13-1-50-0. **U-M:** Henne 11-34-0-68-0; Mallett 1-3-0-8-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Robiskie 2-21; Ballard 2-8; Hartline 1-9; Sanzenbacher 1-7; Small 1-5. **U-M:** Manningham 5-34; Butler 4-24; Arrington 2-13; Mathews 1-5.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) — **OSU:** Trapasso 11-37.4-49. **U-M:** Mesko 12-45.9-68.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Small 5-39; Hartline 2-11. **U-M:** Mathews 6-32.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Small 2-56. **U-M:** Harrison 2-36.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds) — **OSU:** None. **U-M:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** None. **U-M:** Englemann 1-33.

SACKS — **OSU:** Gholston 3.0-20; Larimore 1.0-6. **U-M:** None.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Gholston 4.0-21; Larimore 1.0-6; Denlinger 1.0-3; D. Washington 1.0-1; Russell 1.0-1; Jenkins 1.0-1; Heyward 1.0-1; Laurinaitis 0.5-1; Abdallah 0.5-0. **U-M:** Jamison 3.0-9; Crable 2.5-7; W. Johnson 1.0-1; Taylor 1.0-1; Adams 0.5-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) — **OSU:** Freeman 8-1-9; Laurinaitis 2-4-6; D. Washington 5-0-5; Gholston 4-1-5; Russell 3-1-4; Jenkins 3-0-3; Heyward 3-0-3; Lane 1-0-1; Hines 1-0-1; Larimore 1-0-1; N. Patterson 1-0-1; Grant 1-0-1; Denlinger 1-0-1; Spitzer 1-0-1; Abdallah 0-1-1. **U-M:** Ezech 8-4-12; Adams 5-7-12; Crable 7-3-10; C. Graham 4-6-10; Jamison 5-4-9; Englemann 2-5-7; W. Johnson 3-3-6; Taylor 1-3-4; Trent 2-1-3; Pollock 2-0-2; B. Graham 2-0-2; Stewart 1-0-1; Moudros 1-0-1; Criswell 1-0-1; Banks 1-0-1; S. Brown 1-0-1; Warren 0-1-1; A. Patterson 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME — **OHIO STATE:** Offense, Robiskie, Boone, Rehring, Cordle, Person, Barton, Nicol, Boeckman, C. Wells, Hartline, Small, Pretorius. Defense, Heyward, Worthington, Abdallah, Gholston, Grant, Laurinaitis, Freeman, Jenkins, Coleman, Russell, D. Washington, Trapasso. Reserves, Pettrey, Thoma, Makridis, Haas, Ballard, D. Johnson, Whaley, M. Wells, Saine, Sanzenbacher, Rose, Chekwa, Schwartz, Hines, Gant, Scott, Amos, Robinson, N. Patterson, M. Williams, Moeller, Lane, Gantz, Rolle, Spitzer, M. Johnson, Christian, Lukens, Moses, Mitchum, Kerr, Dye, C. Smith, B. Smith, Daly, Denlinger. **MICHIGAN:** Offense, Manningham, Long, Boren, Kraus, Mitchell, Schilling, Butler, Arrington, Mathews, Henne, Hart, Lopata. Defense, Jamison, Taylor, W. Johnson, Crable, Ezech, C. Graham, Trent, Harrison, Adams, Englemann, Warren, Mesko. Reserves, Wright, Griffin, Minor, Ortmann, McLaurin, Mallett, Helmuth, Slocum, Kates, Ferrara, B. Graham, Banks, A. Patterson, Pollock, Mouton, S. Brown, Stewart, Campbell, Rogers, Dutch, Patilla, Moudros, Kraus, Griffin, Gallimore, Zirbel, Savoy, Criswell, North, Banks.

Season Statistics

2007 Game-By-Game				Scoring					
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Sept. 1	(11) YOUNG. ST.	W, 38-6	105,038	—	45-46	—	—	17-21	96
Sept. 8	(12) AKRON	W, 20-2	104,317	14	—	—	—	—	84
Sept. 15	(10) at Washington	W, 33-14	74,927	10	—	—	—	—	60
Sept. 22	(8) N'WESTERN	W, 58-7	105,178	6	—	—	—	—	36
Sept. 29	(8) at Minnesota	W, 30-7	51,611	4	—	—	—	—	24
Oct. 6	(4) at Purdue (23)	W, 23-7	65,497	3	—	—	—	—	18
Oct. 13	(3) KENT STATE	W, 48-3	105,051	2	—	—	—	—	12
Oct. 20	(1) MICHIGAN STATE	W, 24-17	105,287	1	—	—	—	—	6
Oct. 27	(1) at Penn State (24)	W, 37-17	110,134	1	—	—	—	—	6
Nov. 3	(1) WISCONSIN	W, 38-17	105,449	1	—	—	—	—	6
Nov. 10	(1) ILLINOIS	L, 28-21	105,453	1	—	—	—	—	6
Nov. 17	(7) at Michigan (23)	W, 14-3	111,941	1	—	—	—	—	6

* OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	251	155
Rushing	131	68
Passing	104	77
Penalty	16	10
Average Per Game/Rush	200.7	77.1
Average Per Game/Pass	196.4	148.2
Total Offense	4,765	2,703
Total Plays	827	756
Average Per Game	397.1	225.2
Average Per Play	5.8	3.6
Penalties-Yards	65-491	49-447
Fumbles-Lost	17-7	16-8
3rd Down Efficiency	81-170	58-189
Percentage	48%	31%
4th Down Efficiency	7-11	8-14
Percentage	64%	57%
Sacks-Yards	42-270	14-100
Time of Possession Avg.	32:18	27:42

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	111	98	91	84	—	384	32.0
Opponents	29	24	48	27	—	128	10.7

Attendance	Games	Total	Avg.
Home	7	735,773	105,110
Away	5	414,110	82,822
Total	12	1,149,883	95,824

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Chris Wells	254	1,463	5.8	14	62
Maurice Wells	103	367	3.6	3	26
Brandon Saine	60	267	4.4	2	37
Todd Boeckman	47	70	1.5	0	35
Ray Small	4	49	12.2	0	37
Antonio Henton	9	41	4.6	0	10
Brian Hartline	5	40	8.0	0	9
Marcus Williams	14	38	2.7	0	6
Rob Schoenhof	10	32	3.2	1	16
K.C. Christian	5	31	6.2	0	13
A.J. Trapasso	1	18	18.0	0	18
Joe Gantz	3	3	1.0	0	2
Dionte Johnson	1	-1	-1.0	0	-1
TEAM	7	-10	-1.4	0	0
OSU Totals	523	2,408	4.6	20	62
OPP Totals	377	925	2.5	2	80

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Brian Robiskie	50	885	17.7	10	68
Brian Hartline	46	619	13.5	5	65
Ray Small	19	253	13.3	2	60
Rory Nicol	16	84	5.2	0	11
Jake Ballard	13	149	11.5	2	22
D. Sanzenbacher	12	89	7.4	1	15
Maurice Wells	10	47	4.7	1	20
Brandon Saine	9	91	10.1	1	35
Chris Wells	5	21	4.2	0	8
Devon Torrence	4	31	7.8	0	17
Taurian Washington	3	46	15.3	1	37
Brandon Smith	3	30	10.0	0	11
Trevor Robinson	3	10	3.3	1	9
Marcus Williams	1	11	11.0	0	11
Tyler Whaley	1	4	4.0	0	4
Todd Boeckman	1	-13	-13.0	0	13
OSU Totals	196	2,357	12.0	24	68
OPP Totals	197	1,778	9.0	9	50

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Rating
T. Boeckman	176	273	64.5	2,171	23-12	150.28
R. Schoenhof	17	25	68.0	129	0-0	111.34
Antonio Henton	3	6	50.0	57	1-0	184.80
OSU Totals	196	304	64.5	2,357	24-12	147.76
OPP Totals	197	379	52.0	1,778	9-10	93.95

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Ryan Pretorius	5-6	6-8	5-6	1-1	17-21
OSU Totals	5-6	6-8	5-6	1-1	17-21
OPP Totals	3-3	2-2	2-5	0-0	7-10

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
A.J. Trapasso	50	2,049	41.0	0	63
Jon Thoma	1	13	13.0	0	13
OSU Totals	51	2,062	40.4	0	63
OPP Totals	100	3,915	39.2	1	68

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Malcolm Jenkins	3	30	10.0	1	24
James Laurinaitis	2	16	8.0	0	14
Donald Washington	1	70	70.0	1	70
Nick Patterson	1	34	34.0	0	34
Larry Grant	1	19	19.0	0	19
Chimdi Chekwa	1	9	9.0	0	9
Doug Worthington	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	10	178	17.8	2	70
OPP Totals	12	89	7.4	1	54

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ray Small	21	153	7.3	0	21
Brian Hartline	19	220	11.6	1	90
Brian Robiskie	7	60	8.6	0	14
Malcolm Jenkins	3	16	5.3	0	21
Larry Grant	1	8	8.0	0	0
Devon Torrence	1	6	6.0	0	6
OSU Totals	52	463	8.9	1	90
OPP Totals	18	82	4.6	0	16

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ray Small	17	296	17.4	0	29
Maurice Wells	3	62	20.7	0	22
Brandon Saine	3	60	20.0	0	39
Anderson Russell	2	47	23.5	0	29
Tyler Whaley	1	10	10.0	0	10
Rob Schoenhof	1	1	1.0	0	1
OSU Totals	27	476	17.6	0	39
OPP Totals	58	1,244	21.4	2	99

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
James Laurinaitis	39	64	103	8.5-34	5.0-29
Marcus Freeman	60	35	95	9.5-23	1.5-9
Anderson Russell	35	23	58	7.0-29	3.0-23
Kurt Coleman	21	33	54	3.5-5	1.0-2
OSU Totals	443	326	769	100-391	42-270
OPP Totals	523	398	921	80-248	14-100

Fumbles Forced: 1 — Kurt Coleman, Shaun Lane, Cameron Heyward, Jamario

OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

Beanie, Buckeyes Ran Past Soggy Michigan

Precipitation that started shortly before either band took the field and varied in strength throughout the day made the 104th game between Ohio State and Michigan a run-oriented affair.

Although the Buckeyes were coming off their worst performance as a rush defense in the Jim Tressel era and the Wolverines had the nation's active career rushing leader, those weather conditions ended up being conducive to a fourth straight Buckeye triumph in the series.

Ohio State suffered through some tense moments early when the pigskin proved difficult to handle and the FieldTurf hard to stay upright on, but the Buckeyes persevered by taking over at the point of attack.

Offense Revolved Around 'Beanie'

How would Woody Hayes have loved this game? Let us count the ways.

The Buckeyes ran the ball 59 times for 229 yards and threw 13 passes.

Rarely bothering to deploy more than two receivers at a time, particularly in the second half, Ohio State stuck with an I-formation that could have included Archie Griffin and Pete Johnson as easily as it did tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells and either fullback Dionte Johnson or Tyler "Tank" Whaley.

They so physically dominated the Wolverines that late in the fourth quarter, even a weary Wells was able to shake off the effects of what would be a 39-carry day to dash for runs of 4, 2, 6, 5 and finally 17 yards as the Buckeyes ran the final 3:44 off the clock.

Brandon Saine and Maurice Wells also toted the ball on the final drive, an eight-play, 38-yard march that well represented the game as a whole: The Wolverines knew the Buckeyes were going to run the ball, but there was not much they could do about it.

As it turned out, that drive ended short of the end zone perhaps only because of the one detail from the contest that Hayes might not have approved of: Tressel instructed quarterback Todd Boeckman to kneel on the ball at

the Michigan 5 in the final seconds rather than attempt to tack on one more score.

Given Ohio State's far less-than-fabulous start to the game, such an ending was hard to imagine.

The Buckeyes punted the first three times they had the ball.

Those possessions included two Boeckman fumbles, another instance where he slipped and fell for a loss of 8 despite not being touched and a run when Wells also lost his footing and went down behind the line.

Although neither fumble ended up in the hands of a Wolverine, the miscues certainly set the Buckeyes back. All in all, they stumbled their way to 110 yards in the first half, gaining 87 yards rushing but losing 27. Boeckman was 7 of 11 passing for 50 yards and one interception.

That pick represented a major bullet the Buckeyes dodged.

Thinking he had a free play because of a flag on the turf, Boeckman underthrew a pass that landed in the arms of Michigan safety

Brandt Englemont, who returned it 33 yards to the OSU 34.

The flag, however, was on Wells for an illegal shift, meaning the interception stood.

"I tried to throw the ball as far I could and

I kind of got hit a little bit and I couldn't get it all into the throw," Boeckman explained. "I probably should have just thrown the ball away. You can't have mistakes like that and give Michigan an opportunity like that, but our defense did a good job to bail me out."

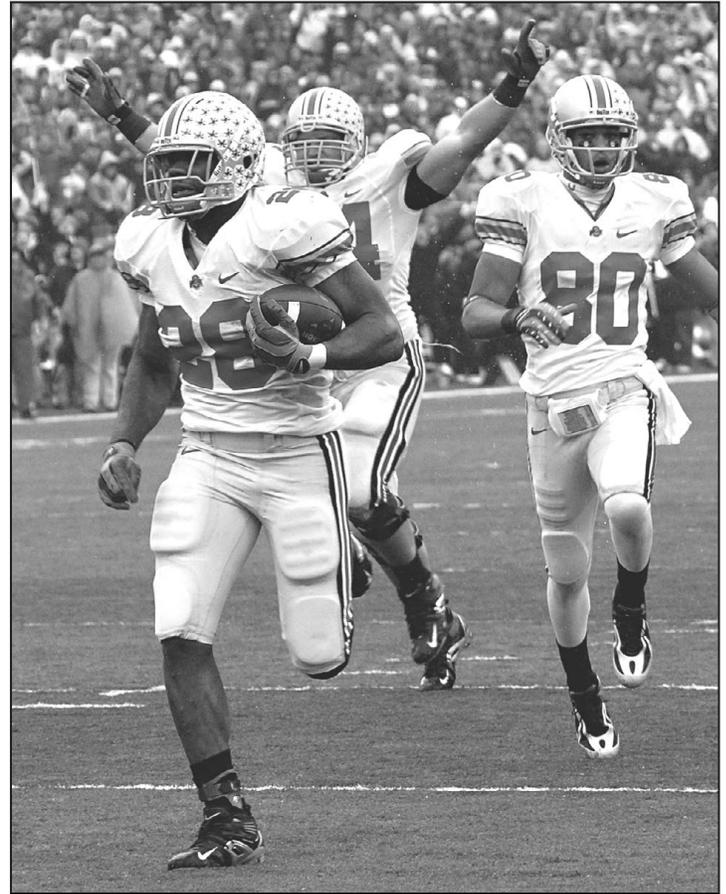
The OSU defense held, forcing a 48-yard field-goal attempt by K.C. Lopata that fell short as time expired.

That reprieve was all the Buckeye offense would need.

The first time Wells touched the ball in the second half, he scooted 62 yards for a touchdown.

On a simple isolation play, Wells followed a crushing block by Johnson, juiced Englemont, then simply outran the rest of the Wolverines to the end zone.

Center Jimmy Cordle said that is a play the Buckeyes love to run.



SONNY BROCKWAY

BYE-BYE, BEANIE – Ohio State tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells is escorted to the end zone by teammates Kirk Barton and Brian Robiskie during the third quarter of the Buckeyes' 14-3 win over Michigan. Wells rushed for a career-high 222 yards, the most ever by an OSU running back against the Wolverines.

"I pinned my guy and I just looked up and I just watched," Cordle said. "It's beautiful to see him run with those big arms just chugging down the field. It's unreal. He's a great back. I can't wait for things to come with him."

"He beat the safety," OSU offensive coordinator and line coach Jim Bollman said. "They were in a man-to-man coverage where there was one safety down over there. All the other guys were out over our wideouts and he beat (Englemont), then he outraced the rest of them. We got him through the hole and then he had to be so slow to make that cut but then he ended up getting away from that safety and breaking a tackle."

Wells credited the offensive line, saying he simply ran through a gaping hole to come up with a play he called a momentum-shifter.

With an 11-point lead, any thoughts to put

the ball in the air more often were sabotaged by the wet conditions.

"We couldn't throw it," Bollman said with a hearty laugh. "You saw (Michigan) try to throw it, and even if the guy could throw it the guys couldn't catch it."

"It was definitely tough to throw the ball today, as you could tell," Boeckman said. "Both sides struggled a little bit, but I think our ground game carried us and so did our defense."

Good thing for the Buckeyes, then, that they had Wells, a 235-pound battering ram with nimble feet who was able to beat Michigan defenders on his own for extra yardage time and time again.

"He made some big runs when we needed them," Bollman said. "He made certainly that big run at the beginning of the second half that

INSIDE THE GAME with Marcus Hartman

I kind of got hit a little bit and I couldn't get it all into the throw," Boeckman explained. "I probably should have just thrown the ball away. You can't have mistakes like that and give Michigan an opportunity like that, but our defense did a good job to bail me out."

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OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

really gave us a little comfort, at least put a little bit more strain on them to have to score a couple times, and that was a good deal.”

He told his sophomore prodigy that he would be leaned upon in the second half, and Wells did not mind at all.

“Whenever we get the ball in these types of circumstances, it’s a great feeling for me,” Wells said.

Boeckman threw only two passes in the second half, one in each quarter. Neither was complete, but it didn’t really matter.

With his defense back to its impenetrable self and the rain wreaking havoc on his desire for a balanced attack, Tressel went to Wells over and over and over again.

Not wanting to put his defense in any more situations like the one at the end of the first half, Tressel stayed conservative despite some admitted misgivings. That meant even with Michigan crowding the line of scrimmage, Wells carried 19 times for 155 yards after the intermission.

The Buckeyes ground out just six first downs in the second half but had nearly a 2-to-1 advantage in time of possession.

It worked largely because the OSU offensive line was able to open holes despite having to deal with eight and nine defenders in the box at a time.

Wells, as he did on the touchdown run, often beat the defender unaccounted for or powered his way for extra yards when met with multiple would-be tacklers.

That took adjusting to the wet track, Bollman said.

“That play that broke for the long run? You’d be amazed how slow he went through the hole so that he could make a move on the safety,” Bollman said. “He couldn’t be going full speed because he wouldn’t be able to make a cut. They had the same kind of difficulties trying to make tackles.”

For the offensive line, Cordle said taking the mind-set of being more physical than the opposing defense was essential.

“That’s what this game is about,” Cordle said. “It was more physical – who wants it more, who can control the guy across from him, who can win the man-to-man battles. That’s what running the football is all about. That’s what Big Ten football is.

“We knew that it was going to be tough. It’s like in this game 1 yard is worth 2 and 5 is worth 10. It’s hard to get yards in this game.”

Defense Drowned Wolverines

Uneasy moments accompanied Michigan’s 12-play, 49-yard drive that resulted in a field goal in the first quarter.

The Wolverines drew first blood with a methodical drive that included Mike Hart runs of 5, 9, 6 and 12 yards, during all of which he not only enjoyed sizable holes but also dragged tacklers for extra yardage.

An Ohio State rush defense that was gutted for 260 yards by Illinois a week earlier and gave up 142 yards to Hart last season looked to be at the mercy of the Michigan offensive line and the school’s all-time leading rusher.

However, the scoring drive was not a total negative for the Buckeyes.

Michigan had a first down at the Ohio State 12-yard line when the same wet conditions that made Boeckman’s day miserable caught up with Hart.

The diminutive Wolverine slipped trying to make a cut and went down for a 1-yard loss.

On second down, Vernon Gholston sacked Chad Henne for a loss of 6.

That slowed a Wolverine offense that had been rolling to the point that a completed 5-yard pass from Henne to Carson Butler was harmless and resulted in Lopata’s 33-yard field goal.

The kick was the last play Michigan ran before the end of a first quarter that saw the



SONNY BROCKWAY

BOTTLED UP – Ohio State defensive tackle Todd Denlinger (92) wraps up Michigan tailback Mike Hart (20) in the backfield, one of 11 tackles the Buckeyes had behind the line of scrimmage. Hart was held to just 44 yards on 18 carries while the Wolverines totaled only 91 yards as a team in their 14-3 loss to OSU.

Wolverines rush for 31 yards and pass for 24 more.

From that point on, U-M gained just 36 total yards.

Only two of Michigan’s eight second-half possessions did not result in three plays and a punt, and one of those was a four-down series that gained no yards.

Michigan could neither run nor pass, and afterward all the Buckeyes agreed there was nothing tricky about why.

“We just pretty much played our base defense and let our defensive line get after theirs, get penetration and make sure everyone was in their right gap, everybody makes the tackle they’re supposed to make,” cornerback Malcolm Jenkins said. “I think as a whole defense we did a good job of executing.

“Nothing really changed. We continued to just go at it, line up and play smashmouth football.”

Defensive tackle Todd Denlinger, one of nine Buckeyes credited with a tackle for loss, chose not to focus attention on the performance by him and his mates up front.

“Our defense has been one,” he said. “We couldn’t get pressure if it weren’t for the secondary and linebackers. It’s a defensive effort and I’m not putting credit to anybody.”

He said after Michigan’s scoring drive the defenders got together and, encouraged by leaders such as Jenkins, Gholston and linebacker James Laurinaitis, resolved to firm things up.

“We started to get away from our type of

football, which is attacking,” Denlinger said of the team’s start.

Michigan’s zone running offense, one that allows a running back to get behind his blockers and scan for holes rather than head for one designated spot, has a way of getting a defense back on its heels. That left the team needing to refocus.

“It’s going side to side and you never really know when he’s going to cut back,” Denlinger said. “You have to be gap-sound in that type of offense. When you first see it, it’s a little bit different, but after you start getting a little bit of a push, things will take care of themselves.

“They have a great offensive line and after a couple series we came together as a defensive line and said, ‘Hey, we’ve got to buckle down and start playing our type of defensive line football.’ After that point, things took care of themselves. We shut down the zone play and made them one-dimensional, which is nice, and in this type of weather it’s hard to really throw the ball.”

The rain that fell throughout most of the day made throwing the football difficult, but the consistent pressure Ohio State was able to get on Henne was not exactly conducive to a good day for the senior quarterback, either.

Already suffering from a separated throwing shoulder, Henne was sacked four times and hit on many more occasions.

“I don’t know if he was 100 percent,” Denlinger said. “I know we affected him quite a bit as the game went on. Our ends got great pressure and everybody was covered so the

secondary did great and it allowed the defensive line to get after him a little bit.”

The man who got the best pressure on Michigan passers – including freshman Ryan Mallett, who relieved Henne for one series in the second half – was Gholston. The big junior from Detroit sacked Henne twice and Mallett once. By the end of the day, Michigan was using as many as three blockers to try to contain him.

At least one of Gholston’s sacks came against Michigan left tackle Jake Long, a likely high first-round draft pick in the next NFL draft, but the Buckeye refused to give that much significance.

“I don’t really worry about that,” Gholston said. “My job is to get pressure no matter who is lined up in front of me.”

He agreed with the assessments of Denlinger and Jenkins that nothing terribly special led to the bounce back by the Buckeye defense.

“We just got more comfortable out there,” Gholston said. “We had a lot of young guys up front that really haven’t played in a game of this magnitude. As they got comfortable, their talent was able to show.”

A fourth-year junior and two-year starter, Gholston is the elder statesman of the defensive line. Denlinger and Doug Worthington are sophomores while Dexter Larimore is a redshirt freshman and Cameron Heyward is a true frosh.

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Ohio State's Defense Dominated Michigan

Continued From Page 15

Nader Abdallah is a junior but only broke into the regular defensive tackle rotation near midseason when Denlinger first became slowed by an upper leg injury.

Heyward, Denlinger and Larimore all were credited with a tackle for loss along with Gholston's four while Abdallah had a half stop for a loss. Larimore's was a sack on which he darted past Long on a stunt.

Jenkins, safety Anderson Russell and cornerback Donald Washington all got credit for one stop apiece and Laurinaitis behind the line of scrimmage as well.

Linebacker Marcus Freeman led the team in tackles with nine, including eight solos.

"We just came in with the mentality that we had to attack these guys on the run and the pass," Denlinger said. "Third down we had an idea they were passing so we just put our butts up in the air and we were going, trying to do everything we can to get to them."

When Henne did have time to throw, he was often off target. To make matters worse, when he guided the ball where he wanted it to go, his receivers often dropped it.

"I think some balls that he was trying to make earlier in the game, it seemed like he couldn't put as much touch on them as he wanted to," Coleman said. "I think that shoulder definitely affected him a little."

The worst offender with regard to dropped passes was Michigan star Mario Manningham, a junior from Warren, Ohio, who caught five passes for 34 yards but was guilty of at least four drops. His day went

so poorly that what was arguably his best play of the day came when he broke up a potential Kurt Coleman interception.

After making a play-action fake, Henne lofted a pass deep down the middle for Manningham. Coleman, patrolling his usual safety spot, had the best bead on the ball and leapt for the interception, but Manningham knocked it away.

Coleman and Jenkins both could sense Manningham's frustration every time he let another ball slip through his hands to the wet artificial turf.

"I didn't want to say too much to him, but you could see in his face every time he dropped a ball and went back to the huddle," Coleman said.

All in all, the conspiring of the weather and Henne's health made the Wolverines much easier to defend.

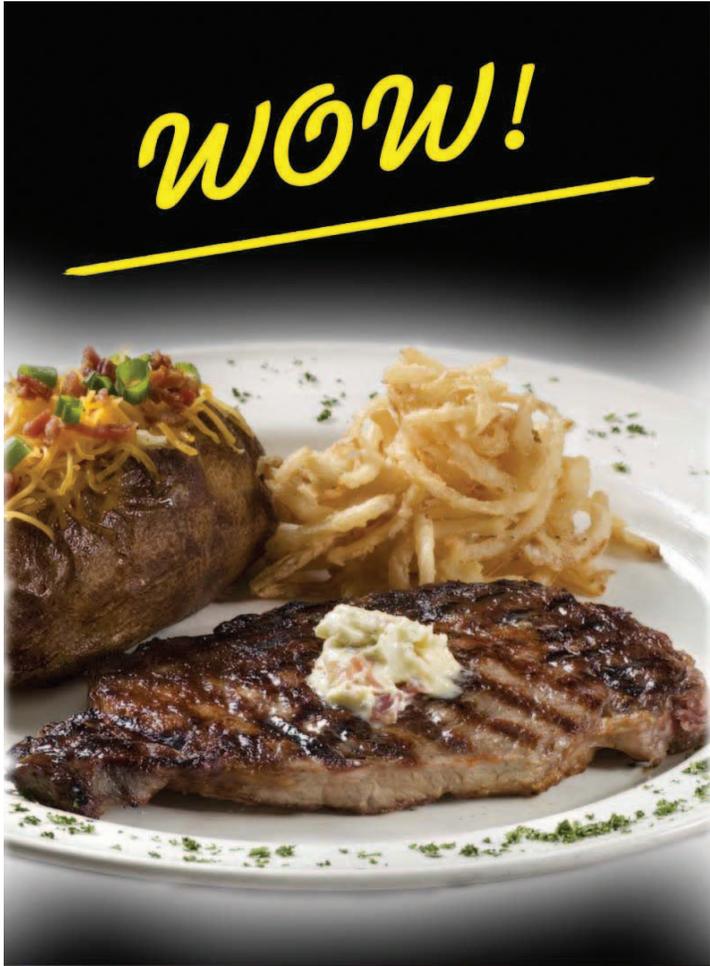
"He has a bad shoulder so we knew they weren't going to come light it up or anything like that," Jenkins said. "He's banged up so that helped us out making them one-dimensional."

The Buckeye corner attributed the case of the drops to the wet conditions.

"We dropped a couple interceptions that we could have easily caught, but the weather played a big part in that," he said.

Thanks in large part to those dropped interceptions, Ohio State failed for a third consecutive year to force a Michigan turnover, but for the third year in a row the Buckeyes did not need to.

"It was clear after the first half that when we did what we were supposed to do, if we executed and continued to play as if it was our last play, then we would be successful," Jenkins said.



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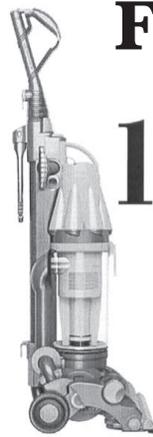
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