



**BSB Reprints: Keith Byars Leads Thrilling
24-0 Ohio State Comeback, Breaks Single
Game Rushing Record**

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Byars' 274 Yards Nets Fourth Key Buck Award

Griffin's Record Falls From Books

By Rich Exner

Keith Byars had his name put up there along side Archie Griffin's last year when he rushed for 1,199 yards, becoming only the second sophomore — Griffin was the first — to rush for more than 1,000 yards at Ohio State.

Byars' best game was a 174-yard performance against Wisconsin, well off Griffin's single game rushing mark of 246. But Byars didn't think Griffin's record was out of reach.

"Over the summer, I had a copy of a program that showed all the records," The 6-2, 233-pound speedster said. "I never set a game in which I wanted to break it, but it's a goal — if you are a running back — that you always want. If one person could do it, I was sure another one could do it."

Bramble, as his teammates call him because of what they think is a combination of Jim Brown and Earl Campbell, got that record against Illinois. He also surpassed the 1,000-yard rushing mark, checking in with 1,074 after six games.

Byars' totals of 274 yards on 39 carries earned him his fourth Key Oldsmobile Subaru/Rent-A-Wreck Key Buck of the Week award.

Byars was still well behind the Big Ten single-game rushing record of 350 yards set by Michigan State's Eric Allen in 1971.

"I didn't break the record," Byars said of eclipsing Griffin's single game mark. "I just happened to be the person running the football. I think the whole team broke the record," he proclaimed.

"I didn't know I was even that close until I looked up at the scoreboard and it said 274. I was just amazed that I had done it."

It was not a tainted record, either, in which a back is kept in the game only to get a record. The record came on a 23-yard run that got the Buckeyes' final, game-winning drive going.

His last three yards won the game for the Buckeyes.

The final run came with less than a minute left on the clock and the game knotted at 38. On third down, a time out was called and the offense looked to its leader.

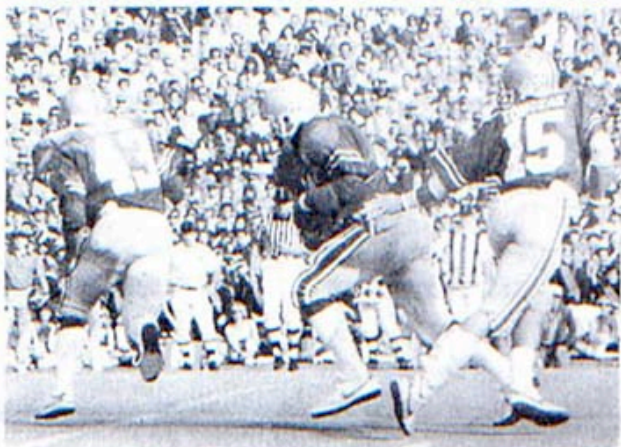
According to Byars, "Mark Krewowicz said, 'Keith, can you get three yards? Can you get three yards?' I said, 'Mark, I can get the three yards.'"

The play — 49 pitch — was called, and Byars swept around left end before cutting into the end zone behind a fine block from fullback George Cooper.

"I said, 'Hey, I've got to go get it. Stop me.'"

The touchdown was Byars' fifth of the day, tying the Big Ten scoring record of 30 points. He shares that record with Pete Johnson of Ohio State (1975), Mike Northington of Purdue (1973), Ron Johnson of Michigan (1968) and Red Grange of Illinois (1924).

The record update shows Bramble leading the country in rushing (179.3 yards per game), all-purpose running (243.5) and scoring (16.0). If Byars can stay anywhere close to his current pace, he will smash Griffin's Big Ten rushing record of 1,695 yards



Barry Walker Leads Keith Byars On His Way

and Pete Johnson's Big Ten scoring record of 156 points. He would finish the season with 2,148 yards and 192 points at his current rate.

Erasing a Griffin record seems like a dream come true for a kid who grew up in Dayton as a Griffin fan.

"Everybody was an Archie Griffin fan in my neighborhood," Byars said.

The summer before Byars' senior year at Dayton Roth High School, Griffin threw a recruiting pitch Keith's way.

"I went down to the Cincinnati Bengals training camp and had the opportunity to talk to him. He told me all about his experiences here at Ohio State. They were all good. He said all the good high school running backs in Ohio should go to Ohio State. He said, 'Be part of the tradition.'"

The longest run Byars turned in on the day was the longest from scrimmage of his career and put Ohio State up by eight, 35-27, midway through the third quarter. On this 67-yard scamper, Byars took the handoff on a draw going right, headed to the sideline, cut back down the middle of the field, lost his left shoe, and out-ran the Illini defensive backs into the end zone.

"I felt the shoe slip, and it just popped off," Byars explained. "I wasn't about to slow down to go

back and get it. I tried to get to the end zone as quick as possible and hope no one would step on my size 14."

As usual, both coaches were in awe of another great Byars performance.

Illinois coach Mike White: "It settled down to the last few minutes to what we did and what we didn't do. But Byars did it all. He is so sudden, so versatile and has everything a good running back needs."

Asked if Byars is the best running back in the country, Ohio State's Earle Bruce said, "If there's another one, I don't know where he is. I know who I'd take. I see him give great effort every, every practice."

And when the game was on the line, Byars came through. Although carrying the ball 39 times — five short of Harold "Champ" Henson's Ohio State record — Byars appeared as fresh as could be on the last drive. Fortynine of Ohio State's 80 yards on last drive were Byars yards.

Following the game, Byars was asked if he was tired.

"Yah, right now," he said. "During the fourth quarter I wasn't tired at all. I felt myself getting stronger. I felt the momentum shifting our way. I knew I had to stay in there and help the team."

The Big Ten Record Chase

Archie Griffin, 1974			Keith Byars, 1984		
Game	Att-Yds	Totals	Totals	Att-Yds	Game
Minn., 34-19	26-133	26-133	34-182	34-182	Ore. St., 22-14
Ore. St., 51-10	16-134	42-267	60-327	26-145	Wash. St., 44-0
SMU, 28-9	24-156	66-423	83-447	23-120	Iowa, 45-26
Wash. St., 42-7	21-196	87-619	111-611	28-164	Minn., 35-22
Wis., 52-7	18-112	105-731	141-802	30-191	Pur., 23-28
Ind., 49-9	22-146	127-877	180-1076	39-274	Ill., 45-38
North., 55-7	18-173	145-1050			Michigan St.
Ill., 49-7	20-144	165-1194			Wisconsin
Mich. St., 13-16	23-140	188-1234			Indiana
Iowa, 35-10	23-175	211-1509			Northwestern
Mich., 12-10	25-111	236-1620			Michigan
USC, 17-18	20-75	256-1695			

Griffin's 1974 rushing total is a Big Ten record. Griffin, as Byars is in 1984, was a junior during his record-setting season.

Thirty-five years ago, Ohio State running back Keith Byars led the Buckeyes to an exhilarating 45-38 comeback victory against Illinois at Ohio Stadium after trailing 24-0.

Not only did Byars help the Scarlet and Gray erase a 24-point deficit, the talented tailback broke the Ohio State single game rushing record held by none other than two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin.

Byars gained 274 rushing yards and five touchdowns on 39 carries, breaking Griffin's record of 246 yards. Byars' record would later be broken by Eddie George's 314-yard outburst against Illinois in 1995. Twenty years later, Ezekiel Elliott tied Byars' second-place mark of 274 yards at Indiana.

Along the way to his record-breaking performance, Byars even scored on a 67-yard scamper, in which he lost his shoe.

"I felt the shoe slip, and it just popped off," Byars explained. "I wasn't about to slow down to go back and get it. I tried to get to the end zone as quick as possible and hope no one would step on my size 14."

This installment of BSB Reprints travels back to mid-October 1984 when Byars put the Buckeyes on his back and carried them to one of the greatest comeback victories in program history.

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