

J.T. Tuimoloau Named Big Ten Defensive Player Of The Week



As Penn State gave the Buckeyes all they could handle during the first three quarters, defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau remained a steady force for Ohio State by playing a key role in all four of the Nittany Lions' turnovers while also adding a pair of sacks, six tackles (three for loss). Tuimoloau's dominant performance against Penn State earned him Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week.

Tuimoloau got started early, batting Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford's fourth pass attempt into the air and in the arms of fellow defensive end Zach Harrison. On Penn State's very next drive, Tuimoloau picked an interception of his own — dropping back into zone coverage before jumping between Clifford and his target to come up with the interception. Ohio State found the end zone just three plays later.

After comparatively quiet second and third quarters, Tuimoloau exploded in the game's final frame. As the Buckeyes pulled ahead 23-21 with 8:51 to go in the fourth quarter, Tuimoloau helped put the game on ice. On Penn State's ensuing possession, Tuimoloau bull-rushed through tackle Penn State tackle Bryce Effner before jarring the ball loose from Clifford's hand and recovering the fumble himself. The Buckeyes scored just one play later on a 24-yard touchdown strike from Stroud to tight end Cade Stover. However, Tuimoloau wasn't done there. After a 7-yard touchdown run from TreVeyon Henderson to lift Ohio State's lead to 37-24 with 2:52 remaining in regulation, Tuimoloau decided to take matters into his own hands, rising for an interception on a similar screen play to his first pick, and taking it the distance on Penn State's first play of the possession. Tuimoloau's touchdown put any hope of a Nittany Lion comeback to rest and secured the status of one of the greatest defensive individual performances in Ohio State history.

Tuimoloau is the seventh Buckeye to earn Big Ten Weekly honors, joining Marvin Harrison Jr. (Sept. 12 vs. Arkansas State), C.J. Stroud (Sept. 19 vs. Toledo, Oct. 10 vs. Michigan State), Tommy Eichenberg (Sept. 25 vs. Wisconsin), Miyan Williams (Oct. 3 vs. Rutgers) and Noah Ruggles (Oct. 24).