

OHIO STATE VS. NORTHWESTERN

Buckeyes Back To Form In Blowout

Northwestern Not A Major Challenge For Ohio State

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

One week after looking ripe for an upset, Ohio State looked every bit the top-ranked team in the nation, using superior offensive and defensive efforts Nov. 11 to squash Northwestern 54-10 on a cold, windy day in Evanston, Ill.

Coupled with Michigan's 34-3 win at Indiana, the Buckeyes and Wolverines, both an unblemished 11-0, will meet Nov. 18 in their traditional showdown, playing as the nation's No. 1 and 2 teams for the first time in the storied rivalry's history.

"It's Ohio State and Michigan, and that's always big," OSU head coach Jim Tressel said after the game. "Someone asked me if it was going to be even bigger this year. I guess maybe it is in some people's eyes because of our rankings. But this has nothing to do with the BCS or anything else. This is Ohio State and Michigan. This is why we come here and they go there. It's always big."

One final hurdle stood in the Buckeyes'

path before they could begin to fully channel their concentration to the Wolverines. Although it had won only three games all season, Northwestern was coming off an emotional road victory over Iowa and was playing some of its best football of the season.

But early turnovers immediately stripped the Wildcats of any upset dreams they may have harbored.

"I thought our kids played hard," first-year Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald said. "We made some mistakes early and you just can't do that against a team as good as Ohio State. If you make a mistake, they're going to make you pay, and that's exactly what happened."

The Buckeyes created three turnovers in the first quarter, including a fumble on the fourth play of the game when linebacker James Laurinaitis stripped NU receiver Shaun Herbert of the football following a 21-yard gain. Television replays later showed Herbert's knee was down well before Laurinaitis caused the fumble, but the play was never reviewed and Ohio State scored its first touchdown five plays later.

Also in the first quarter, Northwestern quarterback C.J. Bachér fumbled, leading to the Buckeyes' second TD, and OSU safety Brandon Mitchell returned an interception 46 yards to the end zone.

In all, the Ohio State defense created five turnovers and the offense cashed in 34 of its



I GOT IT! — OSU defensive back Antonio Smith (14) prepares to pounce on a fumble by Northwestern quarterback C.J. Bachér (18). Smith's recovery was one of three first-quarter turnovers forced by the Buckeyes as they rolled to a 54-10 victory over the Wildcats. (Photo by Jeff Brehm)

points off those changes of possession. The defense has now generated 27 turnovers, which the offense has turned into 127 points, almost exactly one-third of the team's 394 points scored this season.

Conversely, OSU has given the ball away 13 times on offense, twice against the Wildcats. But the defense has yet to yield a single point off turnovers the entire season.

"When your defense creates pressure and your offense gets to play on a short field, good things can happen," Tressel said. "I thought Northwestern had a good game plan today, but our guys keep coming. They keep coming and eventually they're going to make something happen."

Sophomore cornerback Malcolm Jenkins led the Buckeyes with eight tackles in the

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The Bottom Line . . .

It was over when ... Brandon Mitchell returned a first-quarter interception 46 yards for a touchdown. It was the third turnover created by the Buckeyes in the opening period and made the score 21-0, and Ohio State did pretty much whatever it wanted to do – offensively, defensively and on special teams – the rest of the afternoon.

Game ball goes to ... Chris Wells. After a week during which almost all anyone wanted to talk about was the freshman's penchant for fumbling, Wells racked up a career-high 99 yards and scored a touchdown against the Wildcats. Best of all: Nothing even resembling a fumble on 11 carries.

Stat of the game ... 54. The point total for the Buckeyes represented only the third time in the Jim Tressel era that the team had topped 50. The other two came during the 2002 national championship run – 51-17 against Kent State and 50-7 over San Jose State. The point total was also the largest for OSU since a 72-0 romp over Pittsburgh in 1996.

— Mark Rea

game while 15 Buckeyes came up with at least two stops. Freshman linebacker Ross Homan and Laurinaitis had five each while defensive back Antonio Smith and linebacker Marcus Freeman were credited with four apiece.

Pressure from up front has been an Ohio State defensive calling card all season, and that was true once again versus Northwestern. Sophomore defensive end Vernon Gholston had two of the Buckeyes' three sacks on the day with senior defensive tackle Quinn Pitcock getting the other.

While the defense was setting the tempo, the Ohio State offense did its part, rolling up its largest point total since Sept. 21, 1996, a span of 133 games.

Senior quarterback Troy Smith rebounded from his first so-so performance in a year and a half with a 12-for-19 day, throwing for 185 yards and matching a career high with four touchdowns.

Redshirt freshman Brian Hartline was on the receiving end of two of those scores – the first touchdowns of his career – while the others went to old reliables Anthony Gonzalez and Ted Ginn Jr. Nine different Buckeyes caught at least one pass with Hartline leading the team with three for a career-best 47 yards. Gonzalez, Ginn and tight end Rory Nicol each had two receptions for a combined 101 yards.

On the ground, Ohio State was much more efficient than the week before against Illinois. Against the Wildcats, the Buckeyes rushed for 231 yards and averaged 5.2 yards on 44 carries. Leading the way was freshman Chris Wells, who shook off his recent fumble woes with a career-high 99 yards on just 11 carries. He also scored a touchdown as did junior tailback Antonio Pittman, who added 80 yards on 19 carries, all but 10 of those coming in the first two periods as he was rested for much of the second half.

Tressel took advantage of the large point spread to get most of his starters out of the lineup by the fourth quarter. Backup quarterback Justin Zwick saw enough action to complete a couple of passes, and third-stringer Todd Boeckman scored his first collegiate touchdown on a 4-yard run to cap things in the fourth quarter.

"It was good to get a decisive win, especially on the road, and we got to play a lot of guys," the OSU coach said. "When you're playing a team that is on the rise like Northwestern is, I thought it was important that we needed to play well, and I think we did today."

Removing All Doubt

Although it seemed a relatively easy win, the Buckeyes were faced with several obstacles before arriving at Ryan Field.

Inquiring media minds grilled them throughout the week about the narrow vic-

tory over Illinois the week before, constantly bringing up the team's overtime loss to Northwestern on its last trip to Evanston.

But those distractions were minor compared to the ordeal of simply getting to the game. Scheduled to leave Columbus at 3:30 p.m. the day before, the Buckeyes' traveling party had to wait for another plane to arrive from Miami after a truck accidentally backed into the nose of their charter.

Bad weather in the Chicago area then kept them on the ground in Columbus until 8 p.m. and forced them to land in Milwaukee instead of O'Hare International Airport. A 2½-hour bus ride later, they finally arrived at their hotel at 10:30 p.m. local time.

Once Saturday finally arrived, however, Ohio State's troubles seemed to be over. The sellout crowd of 47,130 had barely gotten comfortable before the OSU defense started making things happen.

Northwestern started well when Bachér connected with Herbert for 11 yards and a first down on the initial play from scrim-

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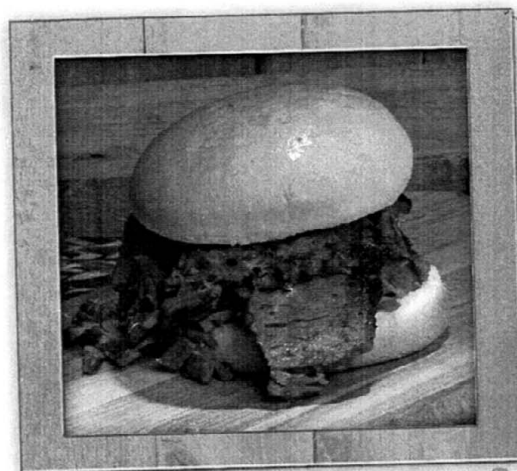
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Turnovers Helped OSU Roll Past Wildcats

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mage. But three plays later, after the duo hooked up again, Laurinaitis played the spoiler, ripping the ball from Herbert's grasp as he fell to the turf. Mitchell smothered the loose football, and the Buckeyes were suddenly in business at their own 45-yard line.

Smith didn't waste any time, throwing to Gonzalez for a 28-yard gain on first down. Four plays later, he zipped a pass to Hartline in the corner of the end zone for a 14-yard touchdown. Kicker Aaron Pettrey added the extra point, giving the Buckeyes a 7-0 lead just a little more than 3½ minutes into the game.

Things quickly went from bad to worse for Northwestern. On the second play of its next drive, Bachér was pressured in the pocket by Ohio State defensive end

Jay Richardson and lost the handle on the football. Antonio Smith was right there to pounce on the fumble, and the Buckeyes had the ball back at the NU 27-yard line.

Troy Smith connected with Nicol for a 9-yard gain on first down before handing things over to Pittman. The tailback rushed for 3 yards on second-and-1 and then pounded ahead for 14 yards to take the ball to the 1-yard line. From there, he finished the drive, and after Pettrey's PAT, the Buckeyes had increased their lead to 14-0 with 9:25 still left in the first period.

After the teams exchanged possessions, disaster struck NU again. As the Wildcats moved toward midfield, Bachér tried to find wide receiver Ross Lane along the sideline. However, the throw was a little late and Mitchell was able to jump the route. The OSU senior grabbed the interception and streaked 46 yards untouched to pay dirt.

Pettrey added the extra point for a 21-0 Ohio State lead at the 3:38 mark of the first quarter.

Despite falling behind by three touchdowns, the Wildcats were moving the ball. They had 144 yards in the first quarter to just 84 for the Buckeyes.

"I thought the game plan was excellent," Fitzgerald said. "Turnovers just killed us. We moved the ball well (early), but you have to respect the ball. We really hurt ourselves the last few weeks.

"You look at all the games we've lost, we've killed ourselves in turnover ratio, and you just can't do that against good football teams and expect to win."

To their credit, the Wildcats did not give up. Sophomore tailback Tyrell Sutton picked up 12 yards on the first play of their next possession, and then Bachér went back to the air, completing five straight passes to move his team into Ohio State territory with a first down at the 11-yard line.

But the drive stalled and Northwestern had to settle for a 29-yard field goal from Joel Howells to get the Wildcats on the board. That made it 21-3 with 13:59 left in the second quarter, but the Buckeyes were unrelenting. Smith came right back, engineering a 12-play, 81-yard drive.

Early in the march, Nicol caught a pass that was good for 18 yards while Hartline caught one for 24, pinballing off two Northwestern defenders while coming up with the reception. The rest of the damage was done by the ground game with Pittman, Chris Wells and Maurice Wells taking turns moving the ball to within scoring distance.

But on second-and-goal from the NU 6, Pittman was stripped of the ball as he tried to lunge over the goal line. This time, it was the Wildcats creating the turnover with defensive end Corey Wootton coming up with the loose football in the end zone to stop the threat.

Their good fortune was fleeting, however. The Ohio State defense forced a three-and-out, and then linebacker Larry Grant blocked a punt by Northwestern's Slade Larscheid, giving the Buckeyes the ball at the Wildcats' 16.

This time, OSU would not be denied. On third down, Smith found Hartline parked in the back of the end zone and delivered a 9-yard strike for the touchdown. Pettrey's PAT was blocked, but the Buckeyes still enjoyed a 27-3 lead with 4:35 left until halftime.

It was an eventful final 4½ minutes, though. Bachér moved his team 75 yards in just six plays, completing five passes during the drive for all of the yardage. His 8-yard swing pass to Sutton made it 27-10 with 2:34 remaining.

But Ohio State later matched that touchdown. After Smith pitched an interception with just 44 seconds left in the half, the Wildcats decided not to play out the clock and it cost them. Bachér completed a flare pass to receiver Rasheed Ward, but Ward fumbled when he was met hard by Jenkins.

Richardson managed to grab control of the ball, and with just 0:03 showing, Smith laid a perfect pass into Ginn's hands from 34 yards out. Holder A.J. Trapasso mishandled the snap on the extra point, leaving the score at 33-10 in favor of the Buckeyes

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Rolling To Victory

Ohio State continued to add to its lead with a pair of third-quarter touchdowns, the first set up thanks to another turnover. This time, Homan snagged a Bachér pass, grabbing his first career interception and giving his team possession at the Northwestern 39-yard line.

Smith took over from there. After Pittman lost a yard on first down, the OSU quarterback scrambled 11 yards and got 15 yards more when the Wildcats were penalized for grabbing his facemask on the tackle. On the next play, Smith ran for eight more yards, and two plays after that, he sent a laser beam Gonzalez's way for a 6-yard touchdown.

Pettrey added the PAT for a 40-10 advantage with 8:52 remaining in the third period.

The Buckeyes added more as the third period was winding down, topping off a nine-play, 80-yard drive with a Chris Wells 1-yard plunge. Wells did most of the damage during the possession, carrying five times for 60 yards, including a career-best 33-yard burst. But the drive was also aided by a nice toss from Smith to Maurice Wells in the flat, a pass that Wells turned into a 25-yard gain.

The extra point was tacked on by Pettrey again, bulging the Buckeyes' lead to 47-10 with just 15 seconds left in the third quarter.

With the outcome already decided, both teams emptied their benches in the fourth quarter and traded giving up possessions on downs. However, when the Wildcats were stuffed on fourth-and-1 at their own 42 with 6:22 to play, Ohio State put together one last scoring drive.

Chris Wells helped sustain things with a 25-yard burst on a fourth-and-1, then the Buckeyes even tried to stall themselves by taking a delay penalty on first-and-goal at the NU 8. But four plays later, Boeckman found a huge hole on fourth down and walked into the end zone from 4 yards out. Backup kicker Ryan Pretorius came on to close out the scoring, tacking on the final PAT.

In addition to the lopsided final score, the Buckeyes wound up winning every statistical battle. They piled up 425 total yards to just 297 for the Wildcats and lim-

ited Northwestern to only 68 yards rushing. Sutton, who entered the game averaging 83.3 yards per game, managed only 57 on 12 carries against the Buckeyes.

Bachér finished with 17 completions in 28 attempts for 212 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions. But he did most of his damage early, throwing for 206 of those yards in the first half before being relieved midway through the third period after pitching his second interception. Bachér's back-up, Mike Kafka, was treated just as rudely. He finished 4 for 8 for 17 yards and was sacked twice.

Game Notes

- The victory stretched Ohio State's winning streak to 18 games, the nation's longest in Division I-A. It is the third-longest streak in program history and just one off the second longest of 19, set during the 2002 and '03 seasons. The Buckeyes' longest streak was set between 1967-69 at 22 consecutive victories.

- This year's team is only the fifth in school history to reach the 11-0 mark. The last was the national championship team of 2002, which finished a perfect 14-0, while the others were 1975, 1979 and 1995. The '75 and '79 teams finished 11-1, losing to UCLA and USC, respectively, in the Rose Bowl, and the '95 squad wound up 11-2, losing to Michigan and then Tennessee in the Citrus Bowl.

- Outscoring the Wildcats by 44 points matched the 44-0 win over Minnesota for largest margin of victory this season. OSU's average margin of victory over its 11 opponents this year is 28.0 points, and the Buckeyes have outscored the opposition 232-27 over their last six games.

- With exactly 200 yards of total offense against Northwestern, Smith moved into third place on Ohio State's career list in that category. He now has 6,554 total yards and passed Steve Bellisari (6,496, 1998-2001). The school's top two in terms of career total offense are Art Schlichter (8,850, 1978-81) and Bobby Hoying (7,151, 1992-95).

- Pittman's 80 yards pushed him past the 1,000-yard mark for the season, making him only the fifth Ohio State player ever to enjoy back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons. The others: Archie Griffin (1973-75), Tim Spencer (1981-82), Keith Byars (1983-84) and Eddie George (1994-95).

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Fumbling Wildcats Hurt Their Own Cause

After the most lackluster performance of the season, a 17-10 win at Illinois a week earlier, and with a massive showdown looming with fellow unbeaten Michigan, observers were curious which Ohio State team they would see in Evanston, Ill., against Northwestern.

Would OSU coach Jim Tressel turn loose his offensive weapons and try to bury the Wildcats early, or be content to play conservative and merely escape with a win as he appeared to do against the Fighting Illini?

As it turned out, the coach chose the former, with an assist from a butterfingers bunch of Wildcats who set up Ohio State within 55 yards of the goal line after both of their first two possessions.

The defense, meanwhile, faced a tough individual talent in Northwestern running back Tyrell Sutton and the type of spread offense that at times gives them fits moving the ball up and down the field.

Offense Takes Gifts, Runs With Them

This was what the Buckeyes needed, a tasty sandwich game between struggling at Illinois Nov. 4 and the faceoff Nov. 18 with unbeaten and No. 2-ranked Michigan.

A week after being held to 29 total yards and kept off the scoreboard in the second half at Illinois, the Buckeyes came out with one of their more consistent showings of the year.

Troy Smith turned in his usual above 60 percent passing day (12 for 19) and equaled his career high with four touchdown passes. Ted Ginn Jr. scored his first receiving touchdown since Oct. 21, and Antonio Pittman averaged a more characteristic 4.2 yards per carry.

Ohio State even regained its short-yardage power back as Chris "Beanie" Wells shook off some fumbling woes and ran for a career- and game-high 99 yards. Perhaps more importantly, the burly freshman was able to

hand the ball to an official after each of his 11 carries.

He was noticeably absent from the backfield the first time Ohio State faced a third-and-short, with Pittman getting the call and picking up the 2 yards needed to keep the drive alive.

But Wells entered on another third-and-1 at the Wildcats' 12-yard line and barreled for the first down.

"It's huge," Smith said of Wells' bounce-back game. "Anytime you get into a situation where a young back can step up to the forefront and display his talent, and Beanie especially because of what kind of kid he is — he walks around all day with a smile on his face — he's getting that much closer to being another great back here."

The offensive line was still without its usual starter at left tackle, Alex Boone, but played



LOOKING FOR RUNNING ROOM — Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith (10) puts a move on Northwestern free safety Brendan Smith (39) during the Buckeyes' 54-10 win in Evanston. Smith accounted for 200 yards of total offense in the victory. (Photo by Jeff Brehm)

INSIDE THE GAME with Marcus Hartman

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much better than it did in Champaign.

Senior Tim Schafer, Boone's replacement as the sophomore recovers from what is believed to be a knee injury, alternated with redshirt freshman Jim Cordle in the first half before getting the call for the bulk of the time the starting unit was in the game in the second 30 minutes.

After the intermission, both the first- and second-team lines were able to plow the way as Ohio State amassed 150 rushing yards to finish with 231 for the game.

Even the lone Northwestern second-half sack of Smith was the result of superior coverage down the field rather than a breakdown along the front line.

"This was a good game after everything that happened last week," center Doug Datish said. "It was kind of good to answer some questions and get rolling on a better vibe going into next week."

Besides getting both Schafer and Cordle time with the No. 1 line, Ohio State also brought back the unbalanced line it used earlier in the season and unveiled a variation of the statue-of-liberty play in which Smith faked a throw deep and handed to Pittman on a draw up the middle. The first time the latter was run, Pittman sliced through the Northwestern line down to the 1-yard line, which came one play before he bounced an inside run out to the corner for Ohio State's second touchdown of the day.

With more time to throw, Smith was able to bounce back from his poorest performance of the season, and his 34-yard touchdown pass to Ted Ginn Jr. with 0:03 remaining in the first half was a key blow after the Wildcats had started to get back into the game by cutting the Buckeyes' lead to 17.

It was also Smith's longest touchdown pass since a 57-yarder to Ginn against Bowling

Green Oct. 7.

The speedy junior receiver had Northwestern cornerback Sherrick McManis, who had already broken up one pass headed Ginn's way and intercepted another, in man-to-man coverage but plucked the ball away from him just inside the 5-yard line and took it the rest of the way.

It was a perfectly placed ball from Smith, who had been off target on a deep ball earlier that McManis picked off and struggled a week earlier against the Illini when he threw for just 108 yards and no touchdowns.

"Ted made a great play on the ball," Smith said of the touchdown catch. "What more can you ask for from a guy who's fighting to get away from a defender than to make a great play right before the end of the half?"

On the interception, Ginn was double-covered and could not jump quickly enough to knock the ball away from McManis.

"Coach always says to make sure you beat your man first, and I was working on that and when I looked up, the ball was there," said Ginn, who was anticipating getting a shot at McManis one-on-one. "They do come out and play a lot of Cover-1 and Cover-0 down in the red zone, so we just took advantage of that."

Smith, who has already built quite a legend with his exploits against the Buckeyes' last regular season opponent, graded his last tune-up before facing the Wolverines "a strong 'B.'"

"Any player who I hope is a humble player will talk and say that he can still do better within his game because I want to be the best that's ever played this game," he said. "Decision-making as a quarterback is everything. Every time you drop back with the ball and every time you come up to the line and read a coverage, the decision-making process that you go through develops you into the type

of player that you want to be."

Defense Shatters Screen After Intermission

In the first half, the Ohio State defense bore an uncanny resemblance to the unit that opened the season rather than the one that has been slamming opponents for the last two months.

On Sept. 2, Northern Illinois piled up 343 yards, including 285 all-purpose yards by tailback Garrett Wolfe.

For its trip to Evanston, Ohio State found itself facing another small-but-mighty running back in sophomore Tyrell Sutton. He and his teammates – in particular quarterback C.J. Bachér – gave the Buckeyes a test early on.

Bachér led two long scoring drives, one of 69 yards that resulted in a field goal and another of 75 yards that resulted in a touchdown.

The Wildcats went to the locker room with

Continued On Page 16



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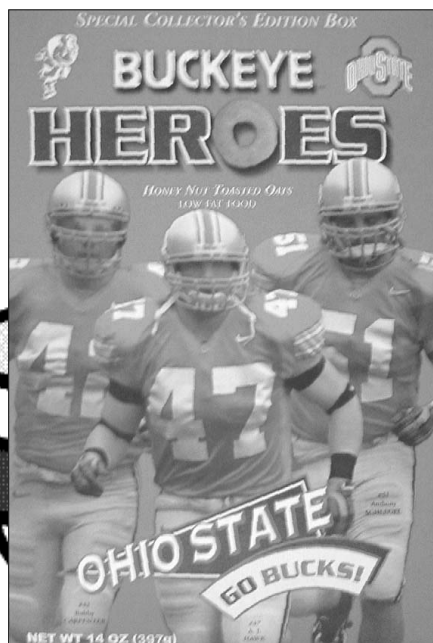
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OHIO STATE VS. NORTHWESTERN

OSU's Halftime Adjustments Stopped NU

Continued From Page 15

235 total yards, more than Ohio State had allowed in any of the last four whole games.

Sutton had 113 of those yards and scored on an 8-yard catch in which he sneaked out of the backfield into the flats. Getting the ball in space on screen passes, tosses and draw

plays, the Akron native and former Ohio Mr. Football showed why he is one many Ohio State fans think got away.

"He's tough," senior safety Brandon Mitchell said. "He's a hard runner. He has that low center of gravity, which really makes it hard to get ahold of him."

To offset those yards allowed in the first

half, Ohio State recovered three fumbles and had an interception.

Mitchell returned the pick 46 yards for a touchdown, and the Buckeye offense followed all three fumble recoveries with six-pointers as well, giving Ohio State a comfortable 33-10 halftime advantage.

Mitchell attributed the interception to the same thing he does most of his success this season – pregame work.

"We knew that they were an outside throwing team – coaches talked about that all week – and based on that play I was a flat defender and I dropped into the flats and he threw it out there," Mitchell said.

That 23-point halftime margin was earned despite the Wildcats having outgained the Buckeyes by 6 yards overall.

In the second half, the story was decidedly different. The Wildcats gained just 62 yards after the intermission, though they did manage to avoid putting the ball on the ground.

The only second-half miscue Northwestern made was when Bachér was intercepted by freshman linebacker Ross Homan, who athletically snared the ball just before stepping out of bounds.

Homan, seeing as much or more action with the first-team defense as he has during Big Ten play and playing in the nickel package for the first time, tied for second on the team with five tackles.

Mitchell said the team improved against the screen passes by getting off blocks better and taking better angles to the ball.

Sophomore linebacker James Laurinaitis, who made five tackles and forced a fumble, said stopping the screen

pass in the second half was mostly a matter of familiarity.

"Just getting a feel for it," he said. "When you see stuff on film and you see it in real life, it happens a lot faster out on the field, so by the time you react to it maybe in the first half you're not as fast to react to it and you have to see what the steps are exactly. Then in the second half you can be a lot quicker. It's just getting a good feel for what the line is doing. We got a good feel for it in the second half."

The pass rush also got more heated as front-line starters Quinn Pitcock, David Patterson, Jay Richardson and Vernon Gholston made themselves regular visitors to the Wildcat backfield.

Gholston had two sacks on the day and was in Bachér's face on Homan's interception. Pitcock also had a sack as the two continue to battle for the team lead in sacks. Pitcock holds the slimmest of margins with eight on the year, while Gholston has nabbed 7 1/2.

"Last week, we didn't play as well as we wanted to," Mitchell said. "We always talk about taking one step forward every week, and last week we felt like we took a step back. So this week we thought we wanted to take two steps forward, and I think we did that. We played well. We forced turnovers. We had a couple of bad drives, but other than that we felt we played pretty well."

"We had some guys who were out of position – me included," he said of the first half. "The execution may not have been as good as we wanted it to be, but we came out and we improved in the second half, and that's all you can ask for."



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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 54, Northwestern 10

Nov. 11, 2006 — Ryan Field, Evanston, Ill.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	21	12	14	7	— 54
NORTHWESTERN	0	10	0	0	— 10

First Quarter

OSU — Hartline, 14 yard pass from T. Smith (Pettrey kick), 11:28; 5 plays, 55 yards, 2:09 TOP.

OSU — Pittman, 1 yard run (Pettrey kick), 9:25; 4 plays, 27 yards, 1:24 TOP.

OSU — Bra. Mitchell, 46 yard interception return (Pettrey kick), 3:38.

Second Quarter

NU — Howells, 29 yard field goal, 13:59; 12 plays, 69 yards, 4:39 TOP.

OSU — Hartline, 9 yard pass from T. Smith (Pettrey kick blocked), 4:35; 3 plays, 16 yard, 0:00 TOP.

NU — Sutton, 8 yard pass from Bacher (Howells kick), 2:10; 6 plays, 75 yards, 2:25.

OSU — Ginn Jr., 34 yard pass from T. Smith (Trapasso rush failed), 0:03; 3 plays, 24 yards, 0:29 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU — Gonzalez, 6 yard pass from T. Smith (Pettrey kick), 8:52; 5 plays, 39 yards, 2:10 TOP.

OSU — C. Wells, 1 yard (Pettrey kick), 0:15; 9 plays, 80 yards, 5:21 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

OSU — Boeckman, 4 yard run (Pretorius kick), 2:29; 8 plays, 42 yards, 3:53 TOP.

Att. — 47,130.

Weather — 41 degrees, cloudy; wind, N 12 mph.

Team Statistics

	OSU	NW
First Downs	22	17
Rushing	12	4
Passing	9	13
Penalty	1	0
Rushes-Yards	44-231	24-68
Passing Yards	194	229
Passes (Att.-Comp.-Int.)	24-14-1	36-21-2
Offensive Plays	68	60
Total Net Yards	425	297
Third Down Efficiency	8-13	3-11
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-3	0-1
Punts	2-38.5	4-25.2
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	3-3
Penalties	3-30	2-17
Time of Possession	31:52	28:08

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — **OSU:** C. Wells 11-99; Pittman 19-80; M. Wells 7-32; T. Smith 5-15; Boeckman 2-5. **NW:** Sutton 12-57; Conteh 4-17; Jordan 2-8; Bacher 3-(-2); Kafka 3-(-12).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — **OSU:** T. Smith 12-19-1-185-4; Zwick 2-4-0-9-0; Boeckman 0-1-0-0-0. **NW:** Bacher 17-28-2-212-1; Kafka 4-8-0-17-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Hartline 3-47; Ginn Jr. 2-40; Gonzalez 2-34; Nicol 2-27; M. Wells 1-25; Pittman 1-6; Robiskie 1-6; Hall 1-5; Ballard 1-4. **NW:** Sutton 7-75; Herbert 4-57; Ward 4-38; R. Lane 4-28; Cobb 1-26; Peterman 1-5.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) — **OSU:** Trapasso 2-38.5-41. **NW:** Larscheid 3-33.7-45.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Robiskie 1-0; Grant 1-9. **NW:** Bre. Smith 1-21.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Ginn Jr. 3-82. **NW:** McManis 2-31; Woodsum 1-12; Conteh 1-13.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds) — **OSU:** A. Smith 1-0; Bra. Mitchell 1-0; Richardson 1-0. **NW:** Wootton 1-0.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Homan 1-5; Bra. Mitchell 1-46. **NW:** McManis 1-0. **SACKS** — **OSU:** Pitcock 1-2; Gholston 2-12. **NW:** Eaton 0.5-5; Wootton 0.5-4.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** A. Smith 1-1; Pitcock 1-2; Gholston 2-12. **NW:** Kadela 1-1; Eaton 1-5; Bre. Smith 1-0; Wootton 1-4.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) — **OSU:** Jenkins 4-4-8; Homan 3-2-5; Laurinaitis 2-3-5; A. Smith 3-1-4; Freeman 3-1-4; Bra. Mitchell 1-2-3; B. Smith 1-2-3; Pitcock 2-0-2; Gholston 2-0-2; Washington 2-0-2; Richardson 2-0-2; O'Neal 1-1-2; Kerr 1-1-2; Grant 0-2-2; Gant 0-2-2; Larson 1-0-1; Ginn Jr. 1-0-1; Hartline 1-0-1; Worthington 1-0-1; Hall 1-0-1; Spitler 1-0-1; N. Patterson 1-0-1; Ballard 0-1-1; Amos 0-1-1; Denlinger 0-1-1. **NW:** Kadela 5-7-12; Simpson 6-2-8; McPherson 3-4-7; Eaton 4-2-6; Gill 2-3-5; Cole 3-1-4; Battle 2-2-4; McManis 2-1-3; Hahn 2-1-3; Bre. Smith 1-2-3; Rothrauff 2-0-2; Arrington 2-0-2; Kennedy 1-1-2; Heinz 1-1-2; Dinard 0-2-2; Mims 1-0-1; Sutton 1-0-1; Oredugba 0-1-1; Wootton 0-1-1; Peterman 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME — **OHIO STATE:** Offense, Robiskie, Schafer, Rehling, Datish, Downing, Barton, Nicol, Ginn Jr., Gonzalez, T. Smith, Pittman, Pettrey. Defense, Richardson, D. Patterson, Pitcock, Gholston, Freeman, Laurinaitis, Washington, A. Smith, Bra. Mitchell, O'Neal, Jenkins, Trapasso. Reserves, Small, Dukes, Grant, Hall, Gant, Hartline, Zwick, Amos, Robinson, Boeckman, Underwood, N. Patterson, M. Williams, C. Wells, S. Lane, M. Wells, Spitler, Larson, Johnson, Homan, Kerr, Terry, Norman, Person, Cordle, Mitchum, Barrow, Skinner, Worthington, Pretorius, Ballard, White Jr., Denlinger, Garnier, Penton. **NORTHWESTERN:** Offense, Herbert, R. Lane, Thiry, Tripodi, Rees, Crum, Keenan, Peterman, Bacher, Sutton, Cobb, Howells. Defense, Wootton, Gill, Hahn, Mims, Simpson, Kadela, Eaton, McManis, Bre. Smith, McPherson, Battle, Larscheid. Reserves, Dixon, Dious, Yarbrough, Ward, Brewer, Kafka, Oredugba, Phillips, Cole, Heinz, Jordan, Conteh, Dinard, R. Black, C. Black, Rothrauff, Arrington, Malleo, Thomas, Ngene, Bre. Mitchell, Jones, Woodsum, Koehn, Kennedy.

Season Statistics

2006 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 2	(1) NO. ILLINOIS	W, 35-12	103,896
Sept. 9	(1) Texas (2)	W, 24-7	89,422
Sept. 16	(1) CINCINNATI	W, 37-7	105,037
Sept. 23	(1) PENN STATE (24)	W, 28-6	105,266
Sept. 30	(1) Iowa (13)	W, 38-17	70,585
Oct. 7	(1) BOWLING GREEN	W, 35-7	105,057
Oct. 14	(1) MICHIGAN STATE	W, 38-7	73,498
Oct. 21	(1) INDIANA	W, 44-3	105,267
Oct. 28	(1) MINNESOTA	W, 44-0	105,443
Nov. 4	(1) at Illinois	W, 17-10	53,351
Nov. 11	(1) at Northwestern	W, 54-10	47,130
Nov. 18	MICHIGAN	3:30 p.m.	

* 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	229	164
Rushing	105	60
Passing	118	93
Penalty	6	11
Average Per Game/Rush	179.5	90.2
Average Per Game/Pass	221.8	171.5
Total Offense	4,414	2,879
Total Plays	713	654
Average Per Game	401.3	261.7
Average Per Play	6.2	4.4
Penalties-Yards	53-464	38-292
Fumbles-Lost	15-9	18-6
3rd Down Efficiency	71-139	44-144
Percentage	51%	31%
4th Down Efficiency	7-10	8-13
Percentage	70%	62%
Sacks-Yards	33-238	13-90
Time of Possession Avg.	31:56	27:55

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	104	112	68	110	—	394	34.8
Opponents	13	30	10	33	—	86	7.8

Attendance

Games	Total	Avg.
Home	6 629,966	104,994
Away	5 333,986	66,797
Total	11 963,952	87,632

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Antonio Pittman	214	1,032	4.8	12	48
Chris Wells	97	511	5.3	6	33
Troy Smith	58	221	3.8	1	34
Maurice Wells	46	171	3.7	1	32
Anthony Gonzalez	2	28	14.0	0	29
Ted Ginn Jr.	3	17	5.7	0	16
Todd Boeckman	3	14	3.5	1	5
TEAM	1	0	0.0	0	0
Justin Zwick	2	-1	-0.5	1	1
Rob Schoenhoft	1	-19	-19.0	0	0
OSU Totals	428	1,974	4.6	22	48
OPP Totals	311	992	3.2	3	54

Receiving

	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Ted Ginn Jr.	51	677	13.3	8	58
Anthony Gonzalez	45	673	15.0	7	33
Brian Robiskie	22	294	13.4	4	37
Brian Hartline	13	222	17.1	2	32
Antonio Pittman	12	117	9.8	0	30
Rory Nicol	11	143	13.0	3	38
Roy Hall	10	109	10.9	1	16
Ray Small	8	68	8.5	1	36
Stan White Jr.	7	50	7.1	0	11
Maurice Wells	3	55	18.3	0	30
Chris Wells	2	16	8.0	0	10
Albert Dukes	2	11	5.5	0	12
Jake Ballard	2	5	2.5	1	4
OSU Totals	188	2,440	13.0	27	58
OPP Totals	195	1,887	9.7	6	65

Scoring

	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Antonio Pittman	12	—	—	—	—	72
Aaron Pettrey	0	47-50	—	—	8-11	71
Ted Ginn Jr.	9	—	—	—	—	54
Anthony Gonzalez	7	—	—	—	—	42

Chris Wells	6	—	—	—	—	36
Brian Robiskie	4	—	—	—	—	24
Rory Nicol	3	—	—	—	—	18
Brian Hartline	2	—	—	—	—	12
Jake Ballard	1	—	—	—	—	6
Roy Hall	1	—	—	—	—	6
Maurice Wells	1	—	—	—	—	6
Antonio Smith	1	—	—	—	—	6
Ray Small	1	—	—	—	—	6
Brandon Mitchell	1	—	—	—	—	6
Todd Boeckman	1	—	—	—	—	6
Malcolm Jenkins	1	—	—	—	—	6
Justin Zwick	1	—	—	—	—	6
Troy Smith	1	—	—	—	—	6
Ryan Pretorius	0	2-2	—	—	1-2	5
OSU Totals	53	49-52	—	—	9-13	394
OPP Totals	9	8-8	0-1	—	8-11	86

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Rating
Troy Smith	170	256	66.4	2,191	26-4	168.69
Justin Zwick	14	23	60.9	187	0-0	129.17
Todd Boeckman	2	3	66.7	19	0-0	119.87
Ted Ginn Jr.	1	2	50.0	38	1-0	374.6
Rob Schoenhoft	1	1	100.0	5	0-0	142.0
OSU Totals	188	285	66.0	2,440	27-4	166.34
OPP Totals	195	343	56.9	1,887	6-21	96.59

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Aaron Pettrey	0-1	3-3	3-4	2-3	8-11
Ryan Pretorius	0-0	0-0	0-0	1-2	1-2
OSU Totals	0-1	3-3	3-4	3-5	9-13
OPP Totals	4-4	4-4	0-2	0-1	8-11

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
A.J. Trapasso	40	1,649	41.2	0	60
OSU Totals	40	1,649	41.2	0	60
OPP Totals	68	2,582	38.0	0	68

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
James Laurinaitis	5	56	11.2	0	25
Malcolm Jenkins	4	99	24.8	1	61
Marcus Freeman	2	5	2.5	0	5
Antonio Smith	2	63	31.5	1	55
Brandon Mitchell	2	59	29.5	1	46
Larry Grant	1	49	49.0	0	49
Vernon Gholston	1	8	8.0	0	8
Ross Homan	1	5	5.0	0	5
Jamario O'Neal	1	0	0.0	0	0
Anderson Russell	1	0	0.0	0	0
Andre Amos	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
OSU Totals	21	342	16.3	3	61
OPP Totals	4	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ted Ginn Jr.	22	266	12.1	1	60
Malcolm Jenkins	2	7	3.5	0	2
Larry Grant	1	9	9.0	0	0
Anthony Gonzalez	1	11	11.0	0	11
Brian Robiskie	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	27	293	10.9	1	60
OPP Totals	11	91	8.3	0	34

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ted Ginn Jr.	12	242	20.2	0	37
Anthony Gonzalez	4	42	10.5	0	16
Jamario O'Neal	2	48	24.0	0	31
Roy Hall	1	21	21.0	0	21
OSU Totals	19	353	18.6	0	37
OPP Totals	37	684	18.5	0	53

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
James Laurinaitis	41	50	91	8.5-44	4.0-40
Antonio Smith	32	26	58	9.0-33	1.0-10
Marcus Freeman	23	30	53	2.5-8	1.0-6
Brandon Mitchell	26	21	47	3.0-8	—
Malcolm Jenkins	30	14	44	2.5-8	—
OSU Totals	345	334	679	83-342	33-238
OPP Totals	397	412	809	45-165	13-90

OHIO STATE VS. NORTHWESTERN

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 54, Northwestern 10

Ohio State linebacker James Laurinaitis on forcing an early fumble: "We work a lot on that in practice. On that play right there (OSU safety) Jamario (O'Neal) already had him held up and it just came back to the way we practiced and I ripped it out, and fortunately it came out and we got the ball."

OSU wideout Ted Ginn Jr. on the Northwestern game: "After coming off the Illinois game, we showed a lot of things that we needed to get better, and this week we tried to come out and just be perfect all the way around the board. To jump off to that 21-0 start, with the help of us and our 'D,' when we jump out on anybody like that we're going to play as hard as we can and just be unstoppable."

Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald on the large contingent of Ohio State fans: "I didn't notice it. I don't know what you are talking about. That's a joke. That was my joke, and you guys didn't get it. You guys have to have a better read on me than that."

OSU defensive tackle Quinn Pitcock on Brandon Mitchell's interception return for a touchdown: "It definitely is a turning point when somebody makes a play like that. A lot of turnovers helped set forward what we wanted to accomplish today."

Northwestern quarterback C.J. Bachér, who was benched in the third quarter, on his performance: "I couldn't wait for the game to just get over so we could get on to Illinois (next week). I was pretty disappointed in my performance."

Fitzgerald on who will start at quarterback next weekend: "I don't know why I wouldn't go with Bachér. He's our quarterback. He's our guy. We just need him to make better decisions with the ball, that's all."

OSU center Doug Datish on the game: "Thanks to

Northwestern for coming out and playing hard the whole time. There was no letup."

OSU head coach Jim Tressel on the team's progression this season: "We can feel the excitement about where we are heading into game 12, and we still have a chance to reach our goals. We understand we haven't reached them but we have a chance, and there's not many teams out there right now that have a chance to reach all the goals they've set."

OSU quarterback Troy Smith on OSU's last trip to Northwestern, a 33-27 loss in 2004: "The last time we were here wasn't a great feeling. Not to say that that was our emphasis today, but it was definitely in the back of some guys' minds."

Tressel on Smith's interception: "Probably a poor call, asking him to throw a home run into the wind."

OSU tailback Antonio Pittman on the importance of a big win: "You can't have two games like (the Illinois game) in a row and expect to go into a game like next week in that kind of shape."

Northwestern linebacker Adam Kadela on the OSU offense: "They have a lot of talent on offense. They're probably the most talented players on one offense we've seen all year and when you have a quarterback like Troy Smith and you can get them the ball and he's also a threat on the run, you can make a lot of things happen."

Fitzgerald on playing the No. 1 team in the country: "We thought if we went out and played our style of football, going into the fourth quarter in our house, we'd give ourselves a chance to win."

Pittman on passing 1,000 rushing yards this season:

"That's huge. With all the weapons on this team, it's still possible for me to get 1,000 yards for the second year in a row. That was one of my goals, and now I've accomplished that. I owe it all to the offensive line."

Smith on wideout Brian Hartline, who had two touchdown catches: "Anytime a young guy can make key plays for you, it's a tremendous boost for his confidence and also the offense, knowing we have another guy we can lean on. Hartline has been there the whole season, and he's going to continue to blossom as a great receiver."

Northwestern wideout Shaun Herbert on the game: "I think this year it just hurts more just because we didn't give ourselves a chance to be in the game at all. We turned the ball over five or six times, and every time we turned it over they scored a touchdown. They did what a team's supposed to do when we turn the ball over. It was a frustrating day. We basically beat ourselves. Northwestern beat Northwestern today."

Smith on the defense: "Defensively, I say time and time again, 'What more could we ask for?' The defense shows up day in and day out holding (teams) back."

OSU senior defensive lineman David Patterson on playing his final game next weekend against Michigan: "It's really kind of sad. I was in the locker room thinking I'm happy to be playing Michigan again this week but I'm sad because it's going to be my last time in the 'Shoe.'"

Pittman on the Michigan game: "Every week, they say, 'Don't worry about getting me tickets to this game, just get me one for the Michigan game.' But I only have four, so there's going to be a lot of unhappy people. Everybody asks you questions about it, and you find yourself thinking about it a lot, but it was always one week at a time. Now that week is here, so we can think about it a lot now."

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