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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

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Singing In The Rain

OSU Opens Big Ten With Wet Win Over No. 7 Penn State

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In the wee hours of the first Saturday in October, a cool rain began to fall in Columbus.

A pessimist could have construed it as a bad omen, that Ohio State's top ranking and look of dominance would be washed away with lunch pail Penn State in town.

Sure enough, the drizzle never let up all afternoon, and the soggy Ohio Stadium turf proved to be an equalizer of sorts as OSU never geared up its running game and previously deadly pass plays lost their timing.

But the Buckeyes, as relentless as the moisture from the sky, continued to play the role of champion and mustered up enough to sock Penn State 28-9. The gaudy yardage figures and All-American-like performances were not on display; big plays at key times were.

OSU head coach John Cooper, who improved to 4-2 against walking legend Joe Paterno, has been surprisingly comfortable with his team's position at the apex of the national polls all season, content with the idea that ugly wins will still pave a path to the Fiesta Bowl.

Why not prove his point in a game that opened the Big Ten season fittingly on national television and with enough mud and grime to make John Madden want to join Keith Jackson and Bob Griese in the booth?

The Buckeyes didn't come close to matching Nebraska's statement from a week before, when the Cornhuskers annihilated Washington 55-7, but no one seemed to mind.

Hey, this is Big Ten football, and a 19-point win over a league contender is going to have to be good enough.

"I don't worry about that," Cooper said afterward when asked if it was an ugly win, his red ball cap still soaked. "You can call it whatever kind of victory you want to. I thought it was a good, solid victory over the No. 7-ranked team. If you tell me before the game we're going to beat them like we did, I'll take it in a minute."

Added linebacker Joe Cooper, "This is why you come to Ohio State, to play teams like Penn State. And when it's muddy and all that, you just know it's going to be a smash-mouth game."

That became evident early on, when both teams proceeded to unearth the field in a scoreless first quarter. When the Lions continued to slow down play-makers Michael Wiley and David Boston and took a 3-0 lead in the second period, OSU and its fans knew it was time for the home team to turn the tide.

What ensued was a teamwide effort that produced touchdowns by linebacker Jerry Rudzinski on a fumble recovery, Wiley on a slant pass before the half, and Joe Cooper on a blocked punt recovery that put OSU back in command at 21-3. Penn State's only touchdown was set up when receiver Joe Nastasi made a deep over-the-shoulder catch against OSU All-American Antoine Winfield, not the



JEFF BREHM

LION TAMERS — Senior safety Damon Moore (13) shows his glee after splattering Penn State running back Cordell Mitchell in OSU's impressive win in Ohio Stadium. Na'il Diggs (32) and Andy Katzenmoyer (45) offer defensive support.

Buckeyes Say Ohio Pride Part Of What They're Fighting For

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Under John Cooper, Ohio State has gained a national reputation. The roster is now littered with players from California, Texas, Florida, Illinois and many other states.

But there are still plenty of Ohioans doing their job to make the Buckeyes better, and it seemed only fitting that on a classic Ohio day — drizzle, cold and wind — the Buckeyes turned to their native sons to turn the game against Penn State.

Linebacker Jerry Rudzinski, a native of Kettering, opened things with a fumble recovery in the end zone, his first touchdown since his final high school game as an option quarterback at Kettering Alter. He was later

joined by central Ohioans Percy King and Joe Cooper, who teamed on a punt block and recovery to give the Buckeyes another score. Their schools — King prepped at Columbus Marion-Franklin, while Cooper is a Columbus Independence grad — have hooked up in some classic City League battles, but now they're working for a common cause.

And though he didn't score, receiver Dee Miller, a Springfield native, had another big day against Penn State, grabbing six passes for 108 yards.

All in all, Ohio spoke loud and clear in its battle with Pennsylvania.

"I think there's a little bit of state pride, especially

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PUBLISHER
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachman

EDITOR
Steve Helwag

NON-REVENUE SPORTS EDITOR
Mike Wachman

SENIOR WRITER
Jeff Rapp

PHOTOGRAPHY
Jeff Brehm Kevin Dye
Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam

CONTRIBUTORS
Nicole Burch Bob Roehm
Gary Houstau Steve Siegfried
Rich Leonardo Stacey Stathulis
John Redd Paula C. Weston
Rebecca Roberts

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
Ron Friedman Jack Woodworth
Cindy Osborne Amy Bernhardt
Andrew Moore Patrick Uchman

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OPINION

Defense Comes Full Circle Vs. PSU

Ohio State's rain-soaked win over Penn State was what I like to call a defining moment.

The Buckeyes clearly established that they are in the national title hunt after easily disposing of the highest-ranked team on their schedule this season.

But for defensive coordinator Fred Pagac, I think it was more than that.

In Pagac's two-plus years as OSU's defensive guru, last year's 31-27 loss at Penn State was by far the defense's worst effort. The Lions, riding power backs Curtis Enis and Aaron Harris, rushed for 316 yards.

In 28 games under Pagac, only one other team, option-oriented Missouri in 1996 (226 yards on 48 carries), has broken the 200-yard barrier on the ground. The 31 points allowed were later tied by powerful Florida State in the Sugar Bowl.

The gruesome Penn State tape was hard to watch, linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer said.

"I remember coming into films, and Coach Pagac just had no emotion," Katzenmoyer said. "He was so disturbed he couldn't say anything. He was very upset with our performance, and I think he was upset with the coaching he did that week."

When asked recently if Pagac had gotten over that game yet, Katzenmoyer replied:

"I don't think he has, to be honest with you. He still talks about it. Every time we watch film of last year's game, he gets a little tight and gets some more vigor in his voice."

Penn State's scheme was to bottle up Katzenmoyer. He finished with eight tackles, but he fought heavy traffic all day.

"They were able to get the center, fullback and the tight end, it seemed, always on me," Katzenmoyer said. "They were double-teaming and cutting me."

"I remember what they did. I wasn't disappointed in the way I played. I was disappointed because we lost and the way we lost. We gave up a lot of yards on the ground and a lot of points."

This time around, though, Pagac and his defensive troops were prepared. Keeping in mind that the conditions were less than favorable — and that Enis is now in the NFL and Harris is slowly coming back from an injury — the Buckeyes were in complete control. OSU held PSU to just 79 rushing yards on 30 attempts.

"This was a total opposite," Pagac admitted afterward. "I'm just like the players. I hate to lose. I take it personally when we lose."

"I was happy with how our kids fought and played today. I thought it was a hard-hitting football game on both sides of the ball."

Comparisons to OSU's senior-laden 1996 defense that carried the Buckeyes to Pasadena are beginning to hold some water.

"This group is now capable of making adjustments very quickly," Pagac said. "I think we're getting more physical right now."

Katzenmoyer added, "I think this year we're more in tune with each other. We know where our support's at and where our help's at. It seems like everybody knows more about the defense."

Mr. Indispensable

After four games in this Ohio State season, it has become more than apparent whom the Buckeyes could least afford to lose and still maintain a course toward Tempe and the Fiesta Bowl.

In my humble opinion, OSU would have a lot of scrambling to do if, for some reason,

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

with

Steve Helwag

Joe Germaine couldn't finish the year.

Although he has not set the world on fire in OSU's first four games, his mistakes have been few and far between. He fumbled against Missouri and he hesitated a bit and threw a pick — his only one thus far — against Penn State. Otherwise, he has been as steady as advertised.

And this really isn't a knock on his backup, Mark Garcia. We still don't know what he can do, and there's the rub. That uncertainty is just fine for me.

Because Germaine is so dangerous, defenses cannot gang up to stop the run. If Garcia would replace him, opposing defenses would come after him with reckless abandon.

There are a lot of other guys I would put in this category, although none holds the importance Germaine does.

Left tackle Tyson Walter also deserves mention in this category. He has protected Germaine's blind side well — I don't recall any sacks with his name on them, although he was nailed for a blatant holding penalty for body-slaming a PSU lineman.

If he goes down, Brooks Burris would maybe move across from the right side or Henry Fleming or Tam Hopkins would draw in. I'm iffy on whether any of those three is ready for the firing line Walter faces.

Nobody catches the jump ball pass like David Boston. He is an incredible weapon. But if he went down, OSU would have Dee Miller, Reggie Germany and Ken-Yon Rambo to throw to.

Michael Wiley is playing great tailback right now. His success is due, in part, to greatly improved offensive line play and his own personal improvement — strength-wise and football smarts-wise. But Joe Montgomery and Jonathan Wells stand at the ready here.

Over on defense, Andy Katzenmoyer and Antoine Winfield would be difficult to replace.

Let's face it, Katzenmoyer is a genetically gifted monster who creates match-up problems for every opposing defense.

This media-perpetuated myth that just because his tackles are down he's not playing well is preposterous. Penn State again threw everything it had at him. Nobody notices, but he's the one who was in Kevin Thompson's grill when he threw the interception to Ahmed Plummer.

What can you do with him? Not much, offensive coordinators everywhere are finding out.

What would OSU do without him? This

is the \$64,000 question. The options seem limited — because of Chris Kirk's academic flame-out — to moving Jerry Rudzinski inside or playing untested youngster Jason Ott. We like to think Andy is indestructible. Let's forget we even brought this up.

Winfield's reputation has preceded him everywhere he's been this year because opponents had not even tested him with the pass until Penn State threw a couple his way. And he's still tough as ever on the run. Just ask Amos Zereoue.

But if he went down for any extended period, OSU would have a few options. Gary Berry could move over from safety to play corner, while Central McClellion and Percy King replace Berry at safety. Or, McClellion or freshman Nate Clements could be thrown into the fire at corner.

Honestly, though, nobody in the Big Ten seems able to complete a forward pass with any regularity. Late last year, in fact, OSU's corners almost seemed bored as Northwestern, Indiana, Illinois and others tried to do so in vain.

That isn't to say just anybody can play back there — especially when, say, Florida, Florida State or UCLA could be on your dance card later on.

If I had to rate them by indispensability, it would go Germaine, Walter, Katzenmoyer, Winfield, Boston and Wiley.

Honorable mentions go to Rob Murphy (he's back to abusing people), Damon Moore (he's back to his 1996 form — a great run stopper once again), and Dee Miller (in Boston's shadow, but shouldn't be).

Thanks, Disney

I counted at least 10 television timeouts during ABC's national broadcast of the Penn State game.

They are a necessary evil for big-time college athletics. And, as Keith Jackson correctly railed when Florida State built its TV booth too small, "We pay for everything... but they didn't even ask us about the booth."

But the network needs to invoke some common sense. My complaint stems from the final 1:11 of the OSU-Penn State game. It was 3:22 p.m. Mind you, it's still pouring down rain.

But the Mickey Mouse network needed to get one more spot in. So, they took another TV timeout.

They should have allowed OSU to run its final two anticlimactic plays and then, during the five-minute segment before the 3:30 games started, they could have easily fit those commercials in.

ABC also needs help picking its games, it seems. For the Oct. 10 weekend, OSU — the nation's No. 1 team at last check — was relegated to syndicated TV for the game at Illinois, a surprise winner. Meanwhile, Penn State and Minnesota, both losers Oct. 3, will play on ABC.

Some would argue ESPN2 also has a better game with Purdue-Wisconsin.

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COVER STORY: SINGING IN THE RAIN

Buckeyes Take Care Of Business

Continued From Page 1

kind of thing that happens every day.

"It was one of those days where with the conditions the way they were and facing a good football team, anything can happen," John Cooper said.

"You can't get too worried about the conditions and all that kind of stuff. If it's raining, it's raining on both sides of the field. But I don't think there's any question the weather was a factor in the way the game was played.

"They were set to stop our running game, there's no question about that. We really weren't able to get any plays."

Tale Of Two Reactions

OSU managed only seven first downs rushing and 17 overall, but that was still nearly twice Penn State's first down total of nine. And while the Buckeyes were held well below the 500-yard barrier of total offense with 326, the Lions amassed only 181, netting just 3.1 yards per play.

Needless to say it was a defensive struggle, but that's to be expected on such a dreary day.

"When I woke up in the hotel this morning, I looked out the window and said, 'It's a good day for some Big Ten football,'" said OSU safety Percy King, who blocked the punt on the Cooper TD. "I knew everybody was going to be muddy and people were going to slip and fall."

Conversely, wide receiver Dee Miller knew he would be competing on a slowed-down track.

"I woke up and looked out the window and was like, 'Aw, man.' I saw the rain trickling in the street and knew we were going to have to adjust," he said.

Miller did, leading all pass catchers with six grabs for 108 yards. It was a nice follow-up for the senior, who had a career day in Happy Valley last year with eight receptions for 149 yards and a long touchdown.

"For some reason I just love playing against Penn State," he said. "Even when I didn't used to play, I just loved the atmosphere."

"Last year I had a real good game and I just wanted to come out and show that that was not a fluke. I made some catches and kept some drives going."

October Dandy

Miller isn't the only one who doesn't mind seeing Penn State's boring blue and white uniforms across the field, especially when it's in the Horseshoe.

Combined with a 24-6 win in the rain and snow in 1993 and the 38-7 spanking in 1996, the Buckeyes have now outscored the Nits 90-22 at home since PSU has joined the conference.

Paterno seemed mesmerized after the rout two years ago, and he was mightily impressed with the Buckeyes again this time, especially after being stymied on offense.

"They're good," he said. "They're quick. They tackle well in the open field. We tried to beat them deep, and then when we tried to run some hitches and things like that because they were blitzing, their corners played great."

"That's a good defensive football team. I thought they were good coming in, and I didn't see anything out there to change that."

In the preconference, OSU beat two ranked teams, but questions lingered as to how much the Buckeyes had been tested. How good Penn State is also remains to be seen, but certainly there was enough talent on field to alter the way Ohio State likes to play.

Joe Germaine threw his first interception of the season, and the OSU run game was basically shut down, but there was no need to panic. After all, the Lions may end up being the best of the lot that the Buckeyes have to face.

"Penn State is a good team, and they're not going to lose many games," said Cooper, who improved his coaching record in Big Ten games to 56-21-4. "Hopefully, by the way we played today, we showed we deserve this No. 1 ranking."

"I think we can play a little bit better offensively than what we played, but we did what we had to do to win the game. It was a real good, solid football game between two outstanding universities and

football teams."

Schedule Appears Kind

By handling Penn State and with the current underwhelming state of the Big Ten, it would be easy for the Buckeyes to relax and expect a smooth ride until Michigan invades Columbus Nov. 21.

For that very reason, they are promising to keep plugging toward greatness.

"If you think you're over the hump right now ... as soon as you feel good about your football team you better check your hole card," Cooper said.

"I just told our squad we're going to have a great week of practice, and I guarantee there won't be any letdown next week. We've got to get better."

That message seems to be well-received, which spells doom for an Illinois team that finally got to feel good about itself with a win over rival Northwestern.

OSU figures to be a multi-touchdown favorite Oct. 10 in Champaign, but the Buckeyes claim they won't come in complacent.

"Well, honestly, I think that Illinois is rated No. 1 right now," said tailback Joe Montgomery, who punctuated the win over Penn State with the final TD. "That's in my mind and the team's mind. We're not No. 1; they're No. 1."

"Anything can happen on any given Saturday. People don't understand. Just because you have the No. 1 ranking, that doesn't mean anything. They don't care if we have the No. 1 ranking. They're going to come in and try to knock us off."

As a team captain, Rudzinski plans on hammering home words of warning. He knows that with no slip-ups, the Buckeyes will be in position for the national championship game.

"We're going to keep worrying about ourselves, and if we keep winning all of



UPLIFTING SCORE — Lineman Rob Murphy (left), fullback Matt Keller (23) and center Kurt Murphy (63) congratulate Michael Wiley after a second-quarter score that gave OSU a 14-3 halftime lead.

our games, we're going to be where we want to be."

Certainly the Buckeyes can't take too much for granted, especially with the Michigan game looming larger every week.

"When I land in Arizona, it will be real," left tackle Tyson Walter said. "Until then, it's not. It's just a figment of the media's imagination."

"It's a goal we're shooting for. We've said all along, since the Sugar Bowl, that the next bowl we want to go to is the Fiesta Bowl. We made a good step today and cleared a hurdle. Was it pretty? Not really. But we got it done."

Added cornerback Ahmed Plummer, "It's a huge win and the biggest game on our schedule to this point. But we've still got a point to prove. There are other teams out there playing just as good of football as we are."

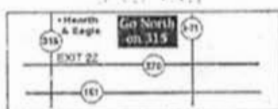
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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

OSU 'Rains' Supreme

Defense, Special Teams Stand Tall As Buckeyes Top Penn State 28-9

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

While conditions were not favorable for offensive football, Ohio State's defense and special teams hardly minded the rain.

In fact, those two units reveled in it. OSU linebacker Jerry Rudzinski recovered a Penn State fumble in the end zone and teammate Percy King blocked a punt for a score as the top-ranked Buckeyes turned back No. 7 Penn State 28-9 before 93,479 rain-soaked fans Oct. 3 in Ohio Stadium.

"I'm really proud of our football team," said OSU coach John Cooper, whose Buckeyes improved to 4-0 overall by winning their Big Ten opener. "I thought our special teams play really improved from two weeks ago, and that may have been the thing that won us the game."

"We blocked a punt, Ken-Yon Rambo did a nice job returning punts, and our kickoff coverage was outstanding."

Where OSU's special teams had sputtered in the team's non-conference wins, nearly everything — save for a blocked field goal — came together against the Nittany Lions.

"One area of their team I wondered about was their special teams, and they were outstanding today," said PSU coach Joe Paterno.

The game was reminiscent of the 1993 game between the schools. That game, the first Big Ten meeting after Penn State joined the conference, was a physical contest played in a sleet/snowstorm. This game was played under steady showers. The conditions were partially to blame for OSU's slow start — the Buckeyes trailed 3-0 late in the first half.

But the defense turned in another command performance, limiting Penn State (3-1, 0-1) to 181 yards total offense and just 79 of those on the ground.

"It was a better day to play defense," said cornerback Antoine Winfield. "We knew they were going to try and run the ball at us. One of our goals was to keep them under 100 yards, and we did that."

Offensively, OSU's string of 500-yard games was snapped at three. But quarterback Joe Germaine braved the elements and completed 16 of 30 passes for 213 yards. He threw a touchdown pass to tailback Michael Wiley, but suffered his first interception of the year.

"We weren't very sharp today," Germaine said. "We had some spurts. We definitely can play a lot better. Our defense did a tremendous job. That blocked punt for a touchdown gave us some momentum and kind of took some pressure off us."

"It was a good team effort today."

Wiley found the turf — not to mention PSU's nine-man front — tough to run on. He finished with 62 yards on 19 carries. Backup Joe Montgomery rushed eight times for 40 yards, including a 1-yard touchdown run.

"They did play a nine-man front today," Wiley said. "They did a good job. The offense didn't get rolling as far as the ground game, but we passed the ball pretty well and got the job done today."

To that end, OSU flanker Dee Miller had a big day. He caught six passes for 108 yards.

As It Happened

Ohio State missed a big scoring opportunity on its second possession, driving 51 yards down to the PSU 21. The key play



DON'T BOTHER — Punter Pat Pidgeon has no chance while trying to launch a punt past a hard-charging Percy King, whose rejection led directly to a touchdown. Tim Cheatwood (49) also was in pursuit.

was Wiley's 22-yard pickup. But he was stopped for a loss of two yards on third-and-1. OSU opted for Dan Stultz to attempt a 40-yard field goal, but the kick sailed wide left.

OSU's next possession ended similarly after the Buckeyes drove 47 yards down to the PSU 33. But Stultz's 50-yard field goal attempt was blocked by David Macklin and returned 10 yards to the PSU 47 by Anthony King. Stultz never had a chance on the play as the snap was high, causing him to pause before attempting the kick.

Penn State capitalized on this break, moving 28 yards in six plays before settling for Travis Forney's 42-yard field goal and a 3-0 lead with 8:08 left in the first half.

Things looked as bleak as the weather for OSU on its next possession when it was forced to punt. PSU took over on its own 13. On second down there, quarterback Kevin Thompson faked a handoff and looked to pass on a naked bootleg near his own goal line.

As he took the ball back to throw it, it came out of his hand. He was hit immediately by blitzing OSU linebacker Jerry Rudzinski, who scrambled to fall on the ball in the back of the end zone for a touchdown.

"That was the big play in the ball game," Cooper said. "We had a blitz called and Jerry came untouched. That play really woke us up."

Rudzinski said Thompson's eyes widened in disbelief when he closed in on him.

"I don't think he was expecting me," he said. "I just came free that time. I was lucky to read that, and we got six points off of that."

"I just saw the ball in the end zone. However it popped out, I felt the pressure paid a big part on that play."

Stultz's PAT kick gave the Buckeyes a 7-3 lead with 3:55 left in the half.

Ohio State regained possession after a Penn State punt with 1:48 left. Rambo gave the Buckeyes good field position at their own 49-yard line with a 24-yard punt return.

OSU went into its two-minute offense, needing eight plays to traverse the remaining 51 yards to take a 14-3 lead just before halftime. Germaine hit Miller for gains of 16, 19 and 11 yards on this drive. The last one converted a fourth-and-8 situation at the PSU 33.

Three plays later, Germaine hit Wiley on a circle route out of the backfield for the 20-yard score. Wiley got behind PSU linebacker Mac Morrison and dove at the goal line to avoid safety James Boyd's shoestring tackle attempt.

"It was a halfback option (pattern)," Wiley said. "I had the choice to either go inside or outside. They were playing Cover-2 deep. I was one-on-one with the linebacker. I faked outside and went

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

inside.

"He made a great pass, and I just held on tight and ran into the end zone."

The touchdown, coming with just 23 seconds left in the half, put an exclamation point on the first 30 minutes.

Then the Buckeyes scored off Penn State's first possession of the second half.

Safety Damon Moore, who joined linebacker Na'il Diggs in leading OSU with seven tackles, corralled PSU's Joe Nastasi for a 9-yard loss on a reverse. That pinned the Nittany Lions back at their own 8-yard line for fourth down.

PSU's Pat Pidgeon attempted a punt, but King came unblocked off the left side and smothered it. Teammate Joe Cooper pounced on the ball in the end zone for the touchdown to push the lead to 21-3 with 12:44 left in the third quarter.

"(Assistant coach Jim) Heacock saw something on the film and Joe Cooper was moving around," King said. "He was trying to get their punt protection to switch up and to scheme them."

"Fortunately they end up blocking the wrong people. It worked and we got the block."

Penn State's lone touchdown was set up later in the third when Germaine suffered his first pick of the year. He was throwing a slant to David Boston, but Macklin made a great play to step in front of the pass and tip it to himself, putting PSU in business at the OSU 38.

On first down, Thompson threw down the right sideline to Nastasi for a 37-yard gain to the OSU 1. Fullback Mike Ceremele then powered in for the touchdown.

PSU then attempted a two-point con-



JEFF BREHM

QUICK SIX — Unable to break off any big plays from the backfield, OSU's Michael Wiley still makes an impact with a stretching touchdown just before halftime. In the area but too late are PSU linebackers Mac Morrison (left) and Brandon Short (43).

version, but Thompson's pass to Nastasi was incomplete. Still, PSU had trimmed the lead to 21-9 with 9:41 left in the third.

OSU's final touchdown was set up by an interception as well. Linebacker Andy

Katzenmoyer hit Thompson as he threw, and cornerback Ahmed Plummer made a sliding grab of a deep pass intended for Chafie Fields at the OSU 39.

The Buckeyes needed four plays to cover the 61 yards. On first down, Germaine went deep down the left sideline to Miller for 34 yards. Montgomery took it the rest of the way with gains of 6, 20 and the touchdown of 1 yard to extend the

margin to 28-9 with 3:08 left in the third.

"When I saw the end and the line-backer split down, I knew it was going to be one-on-one with me and the DB," said Montgomery, who shrugged off PSU safety Shawn Lee to get the score. "All over again, I felt if I can't get through (him), I can't feed my family."

Penn State went to Rashard Casey at quarterback in the fourth quarter, but the Lions never really threatened to score after that.

Meanwhile, OSU was content to keep the ball on the ground and shorten the game.

Game Notes

- Defensive tackle Ryan Pickett made his first career start in place of Clinton Wayne, who had missed some practice time due to a knee injury. Pickett notched two tackles, including one for a loss.

- Wayne did play, however, as part of OSU's defensive front rotation.

- "Ryan started because Clinton's knee had been bothering him," defensive coordinator Fred Pagac said. "But I think Ryan and Mike Collins and all of those kids are really playing well right now."

- Linebacker Courtland Bullard saw his first action of the year after recovering from a lingering groin pull.

- King notched his third career blocked kick, while Rudzinski and Cooper both scored their first career touchdowns.

- "A lot of things went through my mind in a short amount of time on that play," Rudzinski said. "But I looked up and looked straight at the referee to see if his arms went up or if it was an incomplete pass."

- "He was right there and called it a fumble. It was just a lifelong dream to score in Ohio Stadium."

- OSU improved to 4-2 in Big Ten games played between the schools — including a perfect 3-0 at Ohio Stadium — since 1993.

- Penn State retains the series lead over OSU at 8-6, although Paterno — a winner of 301 games in his 33 years at Penn State — dropped to 4-6 lifetime against the Buckeyes.

- OSU's record under Cooper against ranked teams improved to 23-23-3. This marks the first time that record has moved above .500 in his tenure.

- The Buckeyes also improved to 7-9-1 against top-10-ranked teams under Cooper.

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Offense Survives Tough Playing Conditions

In the chaotic world of college football, where defense is king and offenses play catch-up, many teams try to fool superior foes with window dressing, gimmicks and the like, hoping to catch a break that might lead to a win.

That's why it was so refreshing to see a good old-fashioned, line-up-and-beat-us Big Ten clash between top-ranked Ohio State and No. 7 Penn State. The Lions were committed to stopping the run and keeping the Buckeyes' offense holstered, but even Wyatt Earp didn't have this many bullets at his disposal.

"There's not just one guy on our offense who can make big plays," quarterback Joe Germaine said.

Although he didn't have his best game, Germaine was able to guide the Buckeyes to their fourth win in as many starts. And even with an interception and some shaky decision-making, Germaine again came up big, turning the game with a simple flick of his wrist.

Clinging to a 7-3 lead with under a minute to play in the half, Germaine play-faked to Michael Wiley, drawing Penn State's linebackers in. Wiley ran a simple circle route out of the backfield, caught Germaine's pass in rhythm, and dove for the end zone.

That 20-yard play gave the Buckeyes a 14-3 lead and a big boost going into the locker room.

It says something about your team when you can win even without your

INSIDE THE OFFENSE with Mike Wachsman

most productive player — in this case Wiley — coming up big.

"The thing we have going for us is a great system," Germaine said. "We executed as best we could."

OSU finished with a season-low 326 yards of offense, its first game under 500 yards this year. Though there were fits and starts, the Buckeyes came up big when necessary.

Spreading The Wealth

While not exactly forgotten men, full-back Matt Keller and tight end John Lumpkin haven't been given too many opportunities this season.

That changed against Penn State, with Keller getting five carries and having a couple of passes thrown his way, and Lumpkin catching one and missing on a couple of others. Wiley caught five balls, and Jamar Martin and Joe Montgomery each had one reception.

Penn State was pinching everything underneath, meaning the Buckeyes weren't able to go long as they had hoped.

That meant flares and screens to the backs, which still often proved ineffec-



CUNNING AS A FOX — Dealing with a muddy field and defenders like Penn State safety Derek Fox (4), OSU wide receiver Dee Miller still managed a big day against the Nittany Lions with six catches for 108 yards.

tive.
"We've been working the past couple of weeks on getting the ball out of the

backfield," Wiley said. "I kind of figured they would throw the ball to me a couple times, but I didn't know it would be as much as it was today."

With Penn State's active, speedy linebackers, getting to the perimeter was nothing more than a pipe dream for the Buckeyes. It worked in three previous contests because foes didn't have great outside pursuit. But that changed against Penn State, which meant the game plan had to change.

"We saw that, through our reads and by designed plays, we could go to our backs and tight end more," offensive coordinator Mike Jacobs said. "We designed some plays for them, it wasn't just what Penn State did. They'd play more man coverage and we could do some things."

Running Into A Wall

Ohio State has long been known to hang its hat on the ground game, and it tried to attack Penn State's defense that way in the beginning.

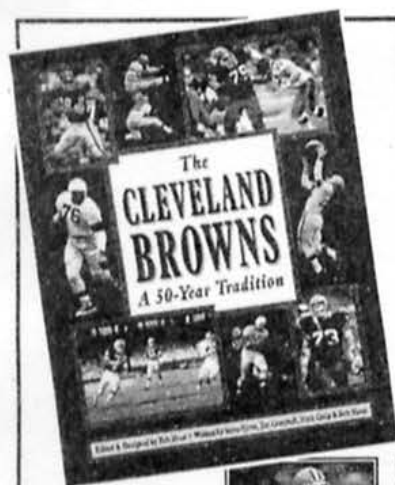
The Lions were grudging at best, stacking the line and playing surprisingly well on the corners. That allowed Penn State to shut down the Buckeyes' running game. OSU ended the afternoon with a season-low 113 ground yards.

"They were keying on the running game because we've been running the ball so well," Germaine said. "That was their approach."

The offensive line took a lot of the blame for OSU's fizzling ground game.

However, some of the onus has to be on the offensive staff, which called a lot of plays to the outside, seemingly playing to Penn State's strength.

"They've got excellent team speed," tackle Tyson Walter said. "But at the same time, as an offensive lineman you've got to get downfield and get a vertical crease so a back can hit it and take it to the house. We didn't do that. They kept stretching the plays out, and that was our fault."



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Continued On Page 16

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 28, Penn State 9

OSU quarterback Joe Germaine on hooking up with flanker Dee Miller six times for 108 yards: "Dee's the kind of guy who has a knack for getting himself open. He runs great routes. We had a good game plan coming in for the passing game. Put those two things together and it was pretty successful for us."

Miller on what was working for the OSU passing game: "We've been running the digs real successfully against them. They were playing a lot of Cover-2 with the safety back on the hash, so we felt we could get that play. On fourth down we called a dig play to my side, Joe put it right there, and it was an easy catch for me."

OSU tailback Michael Wiley on how difficult it was to establish the run: "We definitely knew we had to run the ball. They put nine men on the line and on every play somebody came unblocked. They played a great game. No. 11 (LaVar Arrington) had a great game and No. 43 (Brandon Short) had a great game."

Wiley on how his Heisman Trophy hopes were affected by his 62-yard rushing performance: "I really wasn't worried about the Heisman talk. I just went out and played a good game. Their defense played a great game. I don't think I was too much concerned about the Heisman out there."

OSU safety Percy King on how important it was to score on his blocked punt early in the second half: "It was great, especially in their first series of the second half. That set the tone for the half. That took the momentum away from them."

OSU linebacker Joe Cooper shared his thoughts on recovering King's blocked punt for a touchdown: "It was a real great feeling. I thought Percy had the touchdown originally, but he lost the ball. I was just trying to secure it as fast as I could."

Penn State running back Cordell Mitchell on what the Nittany Lions felt after King's blocked punt: "We never felt like we were out of it. We gave them two touchdowns, basically."



Joe Cooper



Percy King

PSU coach Joe Paterno summed up his perspective of the game: "I thought both defenses played well. You saw two great defensive football teams out there. If you take 14 points off the board that we gave them, that's a tough football game."

OSU tailback Joe Montgomery on the problems posed by the poor conditions: "We have a lot of weapons on this team, but at the same time we knew it was somewhat limited in what we could do because of the field conditions."

OSU linebacker Na'il Diggs on pacing himself after making nifty tackles on two early Penn State plays: "I knew I couldn't get ahead of myself and make a bunch of plays early and then do nothing the rest of the game. I had to stay focused. I got very excited, but I knew I had to stay calm and relax."

Montgomery on how loud the Ohio Stadium crowd was for the Big Ten opener: "The crowd was extra motivation, it was like having another man on the field. When they have the ball and they can't hear the plays, you know it's going good. A couple of times I couldn't hear the plays and I said, 'Joe, check, I can't hear you.' The crowd is something else here."

Penn State quarterback Kevin Thompson shared what happened on his fumble, which resulted in an OSU touchdown when Jerry Rudzinski recovered it in the end zone: "I was trying to get rid of it real quick out in the flat. It just slipped out of my hands and fell right backwards. I was thinking, 'Please go out of the end zone.' It wasn't a throw. It wasn't part of the throwing action. It's just one of those things that happens, and we have to move on."

Penn State linebacker Brandon Short shared his feelings on the loss: "I am extremely disappointed. We felt like we were capable of coming in here and winning. But they just came up with the big plays when they had to."

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Continued From Page 14

Penn State's two difference-makers on defense were linebackers LaVar Arrington and Brandon Short, combining for 19 tackles, five for lost yardage and three sacks.

Every time the Buckeyes looked like

they might break something, there were No. 11 and No. 43 standing at the ready.

"They put nine men on the line and on every play somebody came unblocked," Wiley said. "They played a great game."

"It was very disappointing," Jacobs said. "We felt coming in we needed to have a balanced attack, run and keep them a little more honest. In the same vein, they were putting a lot of men in the box along with blitzes that got to us. So it was hard."

Line Takes A Step Back

After progressing nicely through three games, the Buckeye offensive line took a pounding from Penn State.

The Lions finished with three sacks and numerous hurries and smacked Germaine whenever possible. Ends Courtney Brown and Brad Scioli were at times too much for Walter and Brooks Burris, OSU's tackles, and the Lions did a nice job collapsing the pocket.

Changing up defenses did plenty to discombobulate the Buckeyes, but that didn't soften the blow.

"They brought a lot of different things," Walter said. "They did a lot of twists, a lot of line stunts. That was the most we've seen in the last couple of years. Florida State played straight up most of the game, but it seemed like every other play these guys were twisting the ends and the tackles. They brought a lot of heat to try to screw us up, and in some respects it worked."

Germaine was hassled into his first ordinary day of the year, going just 16 of 30 for 213 yards and an interception. He was running for his life on a few occasions and admitted it was difficult for his blockers to pick up everything.

"They did a lot of linebacker stunts and blitzes where they crossed linebackers," Germaine said. "It was pretty confusing for our offensive line."

Ohio State seemed prepared for the Nittany Lions onslaught — the Buckeyes often had a running back pick up a blitzing end or went to two tight end formations. It was simply a case of Penn State getting it done.

"We figured we'd see a lot of blitzing today," Jacobs said. "All their pregame comments centered on getting to the quarterback, so we knew that's what they were going to do."

Miscellaneous Notes

• Through four games, the Buckeyes were averaging 479.5 yards, not far off the pace of the all-time single-season mark of 493.2 yards set by the 1969 squad.

• The Buckeyes converted 8 of 18 third downs against Penn State, nearly all of them out of third-and-long. The Buckeyes had third and more than 5 on 16 occasions, converting on seven. The last play of the game was a third-and-11, but the clock ran out.

• Two streaks ended for the Buckeyes, both pretty impressive in their own right.

OSU has never had four straight games of over 500 yards of offense, and the 326 against Penn State put that one to rest at three straight; and there was no scoring drive of over 90 yards, which happened in the first three contests.

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Defense Redeems Itself Against Nittany Lions

Ohio State players have only about one hour a week to meet with the local media prior to a game, and in that short amount of time a recurring theme was smack on the lips of the members of the defense.

Simply put, there was no way the Buckeyes were going to look like practice dummies in the rematch with Penn State.

Curtis Enis has taken his power running show to the NFL, and the other culprit from last year's 31-27 loss in Happy Valley, Aaron Harris, was still nursing a sore knee. But the Buckeyes still slogged onto the Ohio Stadium turf intent on healing the year-old wounds by caging the Nittany Lions.

"It wasn't that they beat us with tricks or were confusing us," safety Damon Moore recalled earlier in the week. "They flat lined up, we knew where they were going with the ball, that's where they ran the ball, and we couldn't stop them."

"That really hurts — when you know what a team is going to do and you still can't prevent them from gaining first downs."

Last year PSU moved the chains 26 times; this time the Lions had just nine first downs. PSU's total yardage of 445 was by far the most yielded by the Buckeyes all last season and included a whopping 211 on the ground by Enis. In the Horseshoe a year later, Penn State was held to 181 yards of total offense.

"This game was taken a little more personally by the defense because of what happened last year," said outside line-

INSIDE THE DEFENSE

with
Jeff Rapp

backer Jerry Rudzinski, who helped prove the point with a defensive touchdown. "We felt embarrassed when we walked off the field, especially because the offense had an excellent game last year."

"We wanted to make a statement and, most importantly, prove to ourselves that we're better than what we showed last year."

By the look of all the smiling faces in the OSU locker room, the mission was accomplished.

"We made a statement in this game," fellow OLB Na'il Diggs said. "They may have run through us last year, but here we are this year, a different defense."

What was different was a muddy field, a rotating front four that kept running lanes closed, and a core of linebackers and safeties who logged tackles well enough to make Vince Lombardi grin.

Penn State garnered just 79 yards in 30 attempts for a poor 2.6 per tote. Cordell Mitchell actually gained 81 yards, but three others — including Harris — were saddled with negative yardage.

Quarterbacks Kevin Thompson and Rashard Casey were kept in check as well with a combined 13 completions in 29



JEFF BREHM

TOUGH SLEDDING — Intent on atoning for last year's inability to stop Penn State, the Buckeyes clogged running lanes and wrapped up ball carriers. Here, Andy Katzenmoyer (45), Joe Brown (73) and Antoine Winfield (11) pursue fullback Mike Cerimele.

attempts for 102 yards. The only toss that hurt was a 37-yarder to Joe Nastasi over OSU's Antoine Winfield that set up PSU's only touchdown.

The red zone was never penetrated again.

"Every week we go in with an attitude that we have to come through on defense," said Moore, who finished with seven tackles and two for loss. "The offense might not get it all the time. Defense wins championships."

Rudzinski said film of last year's game was more motivating than that of two years ago, when OSU dominated Penn State from start to finish.

With that in mind, defensive coordinator Fred Pagac encouraged his stop troops to cue up the film like a father making his sons wash out their mouths with soap.

"We used it some," he said with a shrug. "People don't like to get beat. Our kids were going to play hard because they have pride, and our job is to win every week."

Opening The Scoring

The game took on a defensive tone almost before the opening kickoff as the grass field was subjected to a steady downpour.

"I told our defensive team before the game that today's a great day to play defense," head coach John Cooper said.

He also ordered the Buckeye D to score, which was obliged when Rudzinski forced Thompson to drop the ball deep in his own end and fell on the pigskin in the end zone for OSU's first points.

After being mobbed by his teammates, Rudzinski scanned the crowd to soak in the magnitude of the play.

"I was just caught up in the moment," he said. "It was a lot of fun. When you make a play happen it makes football fun, and that's the whole reason you're out there."

But such euphoria is expected each time out at Ohio State.

"We talk about it a lot," Diggs said. "It comes up often. Early in the game Jerry told us, 'OK, D. We've got to score.'"

A co-captain on defense along with Winfield, Rudzinski said he also gave the command before the game while addressing the team.

"I told the defense there was no reason why we couldn't take one in ourselves," he said. "I've seen Andy (Katzenmoyer) do it and Ahmed (Plummer) do it and Clinton Wayne do it, and today it just happened to be me."

"Coach Cooper always comes up to the defense and asks, 'What do we want to do as a defensive unit?'"

"The defense will say, 'Stop them three-and-out,' and he'll shake his head and say, 'No, your first job is to score on defense.'"

"It's a big momentum change when the defense scores."

Wrapped Up Like A Burrito

Even with their undefeated record and national ranking, the Nittany Lions knew they were going to need a few breaks to pull off an upset. But OSU was not in a giving mood defensively, especially after failing to wrap up in so many key moments in last year's loss to Penn State.

"We knew we had to get focused on tackling and wrapping up," said Diggs, who tied Moore for team-high honors with seven tackles. "We did what we had to do. I thought we did a hell of a lot better than last year."

OSU spread the wealth with Plummer and Winfield logging six stops, Katzenmoyer and Rudzinski adding five apiece, and Joe Brown and Gary Berry chipping in four each.

"Of course it makes you feel good after the way we played against them last year to come in here and shut down their offense," Plummer said. "Tackling well was the key, and all you have to do is look at the film from last year to see that."

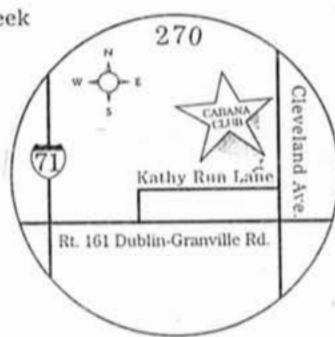
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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

fellow corner Winfield when it comes to stopping ball carriers, but he made his presence felt with a couple of hard hits and one fourth-down play where he snuffed out a swing pass to Corey Jones and spun him around like a rag doll for a 7-yard loss.

Living In The Backfield

Plummer had plenty of company as the Buckeyes logged 12 tackles-for-loss on the day and stuffed the Lions out of their negative yardage 55 percent of the time.

"They try to recruit play-makers here at Ohio State, not necessarily guys who are just going to line up in base defense and plug holes up," Rudzinski said. "We've got guys who can make things happen, and I think we showed that today."

Rudzinski estimated OSU blitzed at least 60 percent of the time counting zone blitzes. That took the Lions out of their game and all but eliminated downfield pass patterns except for an occasional heave down the sideline.

"We kept running it and brought more and more people," Moore said of the blitzing. "When their backup quarterback came in, he's very athletic and we had to keep bringing contain. The guys up front really made the difference in the ball game. When Ahmed Plummer can step in front of four or five passes like that, guys up front are doing things right."

Like Plummer and Rudzinski, Moore was rewarded greatly by all the aggression when he came free on a safety blitz and happened to be just in the right position to drill Nastasi for 9-yard loss on an end around on the first possession of the second half.

"It just so happened they ran right into the mouth of it and Na'il Diggs, I saw him hit the quarterback and I knew there was only one other person left," Moore said.

OSU may have sealed up the win on the very next play when Percy King smothered a Pat Pidgeon punt and Joe Cooper recovered it for a touchdown as OSU opened a 21-3 lead.

"That happens when you have a belief in yourselves and you have so many great athletes on one team, and at the same time you have 11 people trying their hardest to make a play," Joe Cooper said. "All week we talk about that, and on game day we just come out hard and try to achieve it."

Miscellaneous Notes

• Plummer added three passes broken up to his stats and one very important interception, especially considering he missed on the same chance at a key moment against Penn State last year.

"I was determined to get at least one," said Plummer, who last year tied for team honors with five picks. "Maybe I should have had a couple other ones. I just praise God I was able to get it."

• Katzenmoyer's tackle totals have not been especially All-American-like, but that doesn't mean his play has been second-rate. The junior once again caused several hurries and disrupted plays in the backfield from his middle linebacker spot. He also helped set a second-half tone by blasting Mitchell on a swing pass for a 1-yard loss.

Cooper and Pagac both came off a little testy when Katzenmoyer's performance was questioned, saying the overall play of the defense speaks for itself.

"How many yards did they get rushing?" Pagac shot back at one reporter. "He must have played pretty well, along with 10 other guys."

For the year, Katzenmoyer has 23 tackles, which ties him for second on the team with Winfield and Diggs. Moore now leads with 25.

• Much was made during the week of Penn State's dual quarterback system that features Thompson, a classic drop-back QB, and the more athletic Casey. OSU used the shared role to success with Joe Germaine and Stanley Jackson the last two seasons, and Penn State had its pair coming in with good credentials.

But Joe Paterno elected to go with Thompson until the fourth quarter, and by then Casey was dealing with a 28-9 deficit and a splashy field.

"We pretty much thought that Thompson was going to play and they'd bring Rashard in at times," Pagac said. "We thought they'd maybe do some of that early on, but it didn't happen."

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Cooper Pleased With Defense, Special Teams

Throughout the season, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is publishing excerpts of Ohio State head football coach John Cooper's postgame press conferences. Here is what Cooper had to say following the win over Penn State.

COOPER: "Again this week, I'm really proud of our football team."

"Defensively, this was a real good, solid defensive performance. The only time they scored a touchdown was when we gave them the ball in good field position. I told Coach (Joe) Paterno after the game that they've got a real good football team. We beat a real good, solid football team today. If

they play with the same intensity that they played against us, they aren't going to lose many football games."

"We had a lot of tackles-for-loss. Our goal was to make them throw the football, take their running game away. They were doing the same thing to us, crowding the line of scrimmage and blitzing those linebackers an awful lot, putting a lot of pressure on our quarterback. Joe (Germaine) took a couple shots back there today, and you hate to see that happen as many times as it happened today. We have to protect him a little better, and we can play a little better offensively."

Q: You've been doing so well running the ball, but you had problems today. Was there

anything specific they did to cause problems for you?

COOPER: "Absolutely. Their defense was set to stop our running game. We couldn't get any big plays. The most disappointing play was early in the game when we have the ball third down and half a yard and we don't get it. We missed a field goal after that. They're a good defensive football team, and their corners played better today than I thought they would."

Q: What were your thoughts on Jerry Rudzinski's big play?

COOPER: "I should have mentioned Jerry earlier. That was the big play in the game. We had a blitz called and Jerry came in unblocked. They were trying to run a bootleg and the quarterback got hit. That was the big play of the game, and I thought it really woke us up."

Q: Percy King came almost untouched on the punt block. Did you guys see that on film?

COOPER: "They had a punt blocked earlier in the year, against Bowling Green, I think. We worked hard on punt block and punt returns. We have some athletes on that team that when they come free, they ought to block it. The way the conditions were today, it was a good day to try to block a kick. In fact, we had a bad snap and had a field goal blocked."

Q: Joe Germaine got hit a few times today, but he didn't seem particularly sharp. How would you assess him?

COOPER: "Their coverage, they were up there in bump and run, like we do a lot, and there was a little hesitation on our part. You've got to throw the ball in rhythm or you're going to get hit. That happened time after time, and they brought more people than we could block. When they do that, you either have to sight adjust or you're going to get hit."

Q: How big was the touchdown before



JEFF BREHM

MEETING OF THE MINDS — Penn State coach Joe Paterno (left) confers with OSU's John Cooper prior to the Buckeyes' 28-9 win Oct. 3. Cooper improved to 4-2 overall against JoePa.

halftime?

COOPER: "That was big, no question about it. We had them backed up and I was ready to take some timeouts. They hit the tight end over the middle, but we end up stopping them and got a good punt return. We went into our two-minute offense, hit some key passes, and we felt good. They were getting the ball in the second half, so that put us up 14-3 and they'd have to score two touchdowns to beat us."

Q: Even though you had trouble running the ball, did you feel good because of what your receivers did last year against Penn State?

COOPER: "I was hoping we could run



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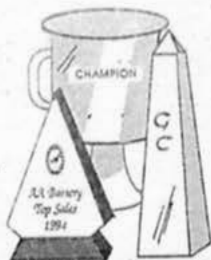
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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

the football a little better than we did. When you put eight or nine people at the line of scrimmage, it makes it tough to run. Both of us were playing the same type of defense. Their corners are taking the wideouts out of the game, and if you can't throw, you can't run either because there are eight or nine guys in the box."

Q: Can you assess the progress the defense has made?

COOPER: "We've got a good, solid defensive football team. Guys can run, our secondary is pretty talented, and we can line up and play man coverage. If you can man up with our corners, you've got eight or nine guys who can stop the running game."

Q: Was beating Penn State like getting over a hump for you? It seems like the next few teams you play aren't quite as touted.

COOPER: "Are you kidding me? I know Illinois beat Northwestern today, and we go to their place next week. There won't be any letdown next week. We've got to get better."

Q: There seemed to be no injuries. Are

you aware of what happened to Coach (Tim) Salem in the press box right before halftime?

COOPER: "Coach Salem doesn't count. He'll be all right, he'll bounce back."

Q: Given the success of the Penn State blitzes today, might we down the road expect more screens and flares like we saw today?

COOPER: "We faced some really good linebackers and a defensive coordinator, Jerry Sandusky, who's a guru. They had a good game plan. We were trying the screens and flares early in the ball game and weren't having any luck. We threw the ball outside to Michael (Wiley) two or three times, but they stopped it. The thing we hoped to do a little more was go downtown. We had Dee (Miller) open once and overthrew him."

Q: Was there a sense of urgency right before the half, before you scored?

COOPER: "It was one of those days where, with the conditions like they were

and facing a good football team, anything could happen. I was concerned, don't get me wrong, but that's why you've got to have a good, solid defense. Defense wins championships. If you can be really solid on defense and make plays, you've got a chance to be successful."

Q: Could you evaluate Andy Katzenmoyer's play today?

COOPER: "Andy doesn't have many bad games. Andy does what we ask him to do. They tried to hit the fullback coming out of the backfield and he's all over him."

"Anytime you line up and hold Penn State to nine points and less than 200 yards of offense, your defense played a great game."

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16	(Fri)	at Lake Superior	7 pm
17	(Sat)	at Ferris State	7 pm
23	(Fri)	at Notre Dame	7 pm
24	(Sat)	at Michigan State	7 pm
November			
6	(Fri)	at Michigan State	7 pm
13	(Fri)	MICHIGAN STATE	7 pm
20	(Fri)	MIAMI	7 pm
21	(Sat)	at Miami	7 pm
December			
4	(Fri)	NOTRE DAME	7 pm
January			
2	(Sat)	MICHIGAN	7 pm
4	(Thurs)	LAKE SUPERIOR	7 pm
12	(Tues)	at Miami	7 pm
15	(Fri)	at Cornell	7 pm
17	(Sun)	at Colgate	Noon
21	(Thurs)	FERRIS STATE	7 pm
23	(Sat)	Bowling Green	7 pm
29	(Fri)	MICHIGAN	7 pm
February			
5	(Fri)	at Bowling Green	7 pm
6	(Sat)	at Michigan	7 pm
12	(Fri)	at Northern Michigan	7 pm
13	(Sat)	at Northern Michigan	7 pm
19	(Fri)	FERRIS STATE	7 pm
March			
2	(Tues)	BOWLING GREEN	7 pm
6	(Sat)	at Bowling Green	7 pm
12-14	(F-Sa-Su)	CCHA OTR FINALS	TBA
19-20	(F-Sa)	CCHA SEMI & FINALS	TBA
26-28	(F-Sa-Su)	NCAA REGIONALS	TBA
April			
1 & 3	(F-Sa-Su)	FINAL FOUR	TBA

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COVER STORY: OHIO PRIDE

OSU's No. 1 Team Has 16 Starters From Ohio

Continued From Page 1

today," said tackle Tyson Walter, a Chagrin Falls native. "We knew some guys from Ohio we played with in the Big 33 game, and they were over with Penn State."

"You can say to them, 'Maybe you should have stayed at home and played for Ohio State.'"

Playing for your school is one thing, but when state pride is involved, too, it becomes even bigger.

"It's a big deal to me because I'm from Ohio," Rudzinski said. "Especially when we're in the Horseshoe, I want to represent the state well. Whether we play Michigan or Indiana or Illinois or Penn State — someone in the Midwest — we want to prove to people that we're the best. I'm sure they're thinking the same thing. That makes for some neat rivalries within the league."

The breakdown of Ohioans for the Buckeyes is pretty impressive.

The entire starting secondary — judged by some as the nation's best — is from within the borders with Antoine Winfield from Akron, Damon Moore from Fostoria, Ahmed Plummer from Cincinnati, and Gary Berry from Columbus. Also, two of the three starters

at linebacker — Rudzinski and Andy Katzenmoyer from Westerville — are Ohio boys.

Sophomore Rodney Bailey is the only Ohioan among the front-line starters on defense, but reserves Matt LaVar and Mike Collins are also trying to show their state pride.

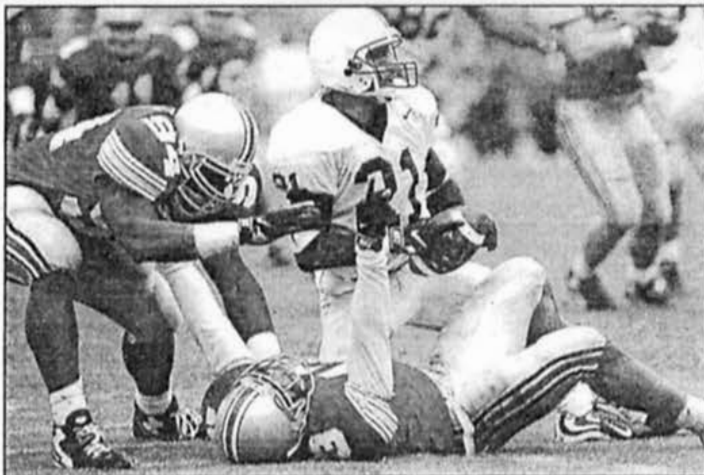
Offensively, the entire line is made up of Ohioans, with Rob Murphy (Cincinnati), Kurt Murphy (Columbus), Ben Gilbert (Lancaster) and Brooks Burris (Logan) joining Walter. Tight end John Lumpkin (Trotwood), fullback Matt Keller (Mason) and kicker Dan Stultz (Orville) round out the Ohio starters. All told, 16 of OSU's 24 starters are home grown.

The fact so many Ohioans came up big against Penn State made for a few puffed-up chests.

"We have a lot of pride in being from Ohio, especially playing teams like Penn State, where most everybody is from Pennsylvania," King said. "Every freshman class plays them in the Big 33 game. As we get older and to be No. 1 in the country and to be from Ohio kind of unifies us. It gives us a good rallying point sometimes."

Putting Up A Border Patrol

Since Penn State entered the Big Ten



OHIO CONNECTION — Several home-grown players came up big in the win over rival Penn State. Here, Ohioans Damon Moore and Rodney Bailey celebrate after Moore stuffs an end around by Joe Nastasi, a native of Woodbury, Pa.

in 1993, it has been the one school that has gone head to head with Ohio State for more Ohio and national football prospects than any other.

Ohio State has held its own, luring the likes of Katzenmoyer and Canton McKinley standouts Jamar Martin and Kenny Peterson away from Penn State.

But through the years Penn State has scored nicely in Ohio with the likes of tailbacks Ki-Jana Carter (Westerville) and nose tackle Bob Jones of Wadsworth, started against OSU.

"There are a lot of them we'd like to have," OSU coach John Cooper said. "I'm sure we have a lot of guys Joe (Paterno) would like to have."

"They've got players from Ohio every year. They've got one commitment (Warren Harding's Deryck Toles) already this year."

"Mike Buzin from Cleveland St. Ignace was a big-time recruit. We tried

hard to get Marc Kielmeyer (a prep teammate of Katzenmoyer). Sam Crenshaw (Youngstown), we tried real hard to get him. They got Lewie Sessions (from Troy)."

Derek Fox, his uncle (Tim) played for us. We did everything we could to try and get him to change his mind. They got Tem Gholston out of Cincinnati last year."

"We didn't try real hard on (Joe) Hartings (St. Henry) because his brother played there."

In recent years, however, Cooper and his staff have done a respectable job of keeping Ohio's very best for themselves.

"I think we've done a better job of keeping our players at home than we used to," Cooper said. "Michigan doesn't have nearly as many players from Ohio that they used to. They got (Charles) Woodson."

"Unfortunately, some of the players we've lost like Woodson, Enis and Carter have turned out to be great players."

"They work hard in this state, particularly in the Youngstown area. That area is actually closer to State College than Columbus."

Cooper said he understands why top prospects look at Penn State.

"If a kid in this state is going to leave the area, he is probably going to go to Michigan or Penn State," he said. "Notre Dame has only gotten one or two players that we've really wanted. Penn State, we've gone head to head with them more than anybody and lost more kids to them than anybody, and vice versa."

"I've always said it helped them in recruiting when they came into the Big Ten. They already had the East Coast. All of a sudden, you're playing Big Ten schools and you're on national TV. That's helped them. They even have a few players from Michigan."

OSU and Penn State have butted heads on a number of national prospects, including linebacker Shamar Finney of North Carolina, who eventually signed with Penn State.

Cooper was asked recently who he would take off Penn State's roster.

"If I could have any of their players? I could go down the list. I'd like to have that big old Kareem McKenzie, 6-7, 313, a sophomore who starts for them," he said.

"Floyd Wedderburn, 6-7, 328, I spent a little bit of time in his home. Ryan Pagan, LaVar Arrington, Brandon Short, Courtney Brown — do you want me to go on?"

"But our guys aren't too bad, either," he said.

BSB editor Steve Helwag contributed to this story.

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