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TKO: Texas Knockout

Buckeyes Drop Longhorns By 24-7 Count Before Stunned Crowd In Austin

By MARK REA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

Championship teams typically choose the largest stage to make their biggest statement.

That was true of Ohio State on a warm, humid September night in Texas as the Buckeyes did what championship teams are supposed to do. They took the ball with 12:18 remaining in the fourth quarter and drove 72 yards for the decisive blow in a 24-7 knockout of defending national champion Texas.

Played before a Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium-record crowd of 89,442, the contest rang the probable death knell for one title reign and may have signaled the beginning of another.

Texas entered the game with the NCAA's longest overall winning streak at 21 games and the nation's second-longest home winning streak at 16. The Longhorns were also working a 14-game streak of consecutive wins in night games as well as a perfect 4-0 all-time mark in games featuring the Nos. 1 and 2 teams according to The Associated Press.

While all of those streaks were going by the boards, Ohio State was staking its claim as perhaps the front-runner to take over Texas' title as national champions. With the win, the Buckeyes now own the nation's second-longest overall win streak at nine (tied with West Virginia and three behind TCU's 12). They moved their record to a perfect 3-0 in No. 1 vs. No. 2 games and protected their No. 1 ranking in both major polls.

Following the game, several reporters asked if the victory over the Longhorns validated the Buckeyes being chosen as the preseason favorite to win the national championship.

"I don't think so," said OSU sophomore linebacker James Laurinaitis. "We came down here and played a great team and beat them. That's all it means right now. Don't get me wrong – it's a tremendous feeling to come into this stadium and beat a team that has as many talented players as Texas. It's a huge confidence-builder for us.

"But it only means that we're moving forward, moving in the direction we want to go. I thought we made a lot of mistakes tonight, and maybe that's to be

Continued On Page 8

SONNY BROCKWAY

IN THE CROSSHAIRS — Ohio State middle linebacker James Laurinaitis spies Texas quarterback Colt McCoy during the game in Austin in which OSU's defense stifled the Longhorn offense, holding it to one touchdown.

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OPINION

Latest Victory Proves OSU's For Real

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK with Mark Rea

Heading into the 2006 season, the huge question mark surrounding Ohio State's legitimacy as a national championship contender concerned the defense.

It was extremely difficult to believe that any team could lose nine defensive starters – including three NFL first-round picks – and still be able to compensate enough to contend for the national title, much less win it.

Standard reasoning would dictate that at least some period of time would be needed before all of the individual talent on the OSU defense could or would jell into one cohesive unit. I just never thought that period of time would be a scant seven days.

The team that slogged its way to a sloppy opening win over Northern Illinois bore little resemblance to the one that showed up in Austin, Texas, on the night of Sept. 9. For the most part, gone was the shoddy tackling, the incessant overpursuit and repeated missed assignments.

In their places were tactical plays designed to keep the Longhorns and head coach Mack Brown guessing – and they guessed wrong much of the night.

Meanwhile, a bunch of young, fresh-faced defenders long on ability and short on experience seemed to morph into a single entity all at once, and when that happened, Texas no longer had a chance to win the ballgame.

What resulted was a surprisingly easy 24-7 rout for the top-ranked team in the nation over the supposed second-best team in the country, a verdict that either exposed the Longhorns as a tad overrated or signaled an oncoming freight train whose potential power may have somehow been overlooked despite earning preseason No. 1 rankings from nearly every major poll, magazine and news service.

If Ohio State is really as good as it looked in dispatching the defending national champions on their home turf, you might as well start making plans right now to return to the Arizona desert next January.

To put this in a little perspective, Texas hadn't lost a night game at home since 1999. Before the Buckeyes came to town, they had won 13 in a row at home against top-25 teams and were 15-1 against ranked competition in the Mack Brown era. I haven't even discussed the fact the Longhorns were working on a 21-game winning streak overall, the longest in the nation.

Yes, I know this is a vastly different team this year without star quarterback Vince Young. And I also know that before last year's perfect season, Brown had the reputation of being able to beat up on lesser teams with regularity but could never win "The Big One."

But this was no middle-of-the-road, up-and-coming program that the Buckeyes dispatched with relative ease. The Longhorns are one of only three NCAA schools to record more than 800 victories in their long history. Coming into the game, they were 57-8 over the past five years.

This was not a victory to be compared with one over Northern Illinois or Minnesota or Indiana. When it comes to storied programs in college football, Texas is the real deal and Ohio State went into its stadium, affectionately known as "The Ranch," and flattened them like a semi does an armadillo in the western part of the state.

What does all this mean? It means that the Buckeyes are now the undisputed pick of the litter in terms of the national championship race, and with all due respect to the USCs, Notre Dames, Auburns and West Virginias of the world, you may all be simply vying for the right to face Ohio State in the BCS Championship Game, set for Jan. 8 in the Arizona Cardinals' new retractable-roof stadium.

How can I make such a claim with 10 games left on the Buckeyes' schedule? Easy. I've seen that schedule, and with precious few exceptions, there just aren't that many land mines on it.

OSU returns home this week to take on Cincinnati, which lost at home by 18 to Pittsburgh in its Big East opener Sept. 8. Mark Dantonio's group will undoubtedly play their hearts out, but there is no way the Bearcats can stay on the field with the Buckeyes.

> "Meanwhile, a bunch of young, fresh-faced defenders long on ability and short on experience seemed to morph into a single entity all at once, and when that happened, Texas no longer had a chance to win the ballgame."

A week later, the Big Ten season opener against Penn State is in Columbus, a game that was being advertised as a redemption game for Ohio State. Last year, one of only two losses for the Buckeyes came at Happy Valley. The other, of course, was against Texas. But the bloom is off this one slightly after Notre Dame – another team the Buckeyes handled with relative ease in last January's Fiesta Bowl – exposed the Lions' young defense Sept. 9 to the tune of 41-17.

One more thing: JoePa has gone home a loser the last six times he has visited Columbus.

Then, it's on to Iowa City for the Buckeyes, the site of what is probably the low point in the Jim Tressel era in Columbus, a 33-7 woodshed experience two years ago that probably wasn't even that close.

But the Hawkeyes may have a huge problem in matching that performance, especially if quarterback Drew Tate doesn't get healthy. An abdominal strain kept him out of Iowa's game at Syracuse Sept. 9, and the Hawkeyes needed overtime before they could beat an Orange team that can only be described as one of the weakest Division I-A programs in America.

After that, another Mid-American Conference team comes to town when Bowling Green visits. I won't bother telling you that the Falcons needed three overtimes Sept. 9 to beat lowly Buffalo. I will mention, however, that a MAC school hasn't beaten the Buckeyes since 1894.

What follows the second weekend in October could be one of the potential hurdles with Michigan State. The Spartans match up well against OSU in certain areas, but that Oct. 14 date is right around the time that John L. Smith's teams experience an annual swoon.

Additionally, MSU struggled in its Sept. 2 season opener against Idaho, beating the Vandals by only 10 points. Washington State, projected to be a middle-of-the-road Pac-10 team, dispatched Idaho by 46 the following week.

After the Buckeyes return home from East Lansing, and if they are undefeated at that point, they face a four-week stretch that could only be described as a victory lap. It includes back-to-back home games with Indiana and Minnesota followed by a two-game road trip through Illinois to face the Illini and Northwestern.

Only one of those four teams won Sept. 9, and that was the Hoosiers barely squeezing past Ball State. Not only will Ohio State be favored in all four of those contests, odd-smakers will likely set the spread in double figures.

All of that sets up perfectly for the Michigan game, scheduled for a not-so-traditional 3:30 p.m. kickoff Nov. 18 in Columbus. It goes without saying that this game will be a struggle regardless of the situation.

It should be even more so, especially if the Buckeyes are looking at a potential perfect season as well as trying to beat the Wolverines for a fifth time in six years, a feat they haven't been able to accomplish since 1960-65.

Of course, we've been down the path before – gotten the proverbial cart before the horse so to speak. Ohio State's talent up and down the roster blew everyone in the country away in 1998 and no one could foretell what happened that year against Michigan State.

Still, I'm here to tell you that if everything is even, no stars collide and the sun continues to rise in the east, the smart money would be on the Buckeyes running what appears to be a fairly mediocre table.

One Minor Complaint

This seems so petty – especially coming from me – but I'm a little uneasy about what is being described as the "new" Troy Smith.

All I hear from the Ohio State quarterback these days is how he wants to improve as a pocket passer and how he wants to beat opponents with his arm. In the wake of his nearly flawless performance against Texas, which included 269 yards, two touchdowns and running his streak to 122 consecutive attempts without an interception – not to mention the fact I have been touting him for the Heisman Trophy since late last season – it seems ridiculous to find fault with Smith.

But I continue to believe that the Buckeyes' best offensive weapon should not limit himself. Smith has made himself into an excellent dual-threat quarterback, but when he does not even attempt to scramble – and it looked like he was intent not to run against the Longhorns – I think it's done at the team's peril.

There is going to come the time during that schedule I just mentioned when one of those teams will figure a way to stop Ohio State's passing game. When that happens, I hope Smith is not content to simply hand the ball off and realizes he is still a very important part of the Buckeyes' running attack.

COVER STORY: TKO: TEXAS KNOCKOUT

Even After Win, OSU Tries Not To Look Ahead

Continued From Page 1

expected when you go on the road and play the team that's ranked No. 2 in the country. But we still have a lot of games to play. We haven't even played a Big Ten game yet, so as far as the national championship goes, it's too early to even be thinking about that."

Many of the Buckeye faithful who followed their team to Austin didn't necessarily agree. While family and friends waited outside the locker room after the game, many fans joined a hearty "We're No. 1!" chant. After the other outcomes of games played Sept. 9, they may have had a point.

Those teams perceived to be the most difficult on Ohio State's upcoming schedule were either throttled or barely squeaked by with victory. Those included conference rivals Penn State and Iowa, who serve as the first and second Big Ten opponents for the Buckeyes.

The defending league co-champion Nittany Lions fell victim to Notre Dame by a 41-17 score, Penn State's eighth straight road loss to a ranked team. Joe Paterno's team has not beaten a ranked opponent on the road since a 34-31 win at No. 19 Wisconsin on Oct. 5, 2002, and the Lions haven't won in Columbus since 1978.

Meanwhile, Iowa barely overcame the loss of quarterback Drew Tate, needing double-overtime to beat a Syracuse team that extended its school-record losing streak to 11 in a row. The Hawkeyes eked out a 20-13 victory while Tate's replacement, Jason Mason, pitched four interceptions. Just before the game, Tate was pulled from the lineup with a strained abdominal muscle. Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said he hoped that by sitting his star quarterback, Tate could rest the injury and be ready to go once the Big Ten season started.

But abdominal strains are usually difficult injuries to predict in terms of how long they will last, and Tate has been bothered by the strain since preseason camp.

The Buckeyes will return home to face Cincinnati – a 33-15 loser at home to Big East foe Pittsburgh on Sept. 8 – before hosting Penn State on Sept. 23 and traveling to Iowa City the following week.

After the calendar turns to October, Ohio State finishes the nonconference portion of its schedule with Bowling Green, which had to go to three overtimes Sept. 9 just to beat lowly Buffalo by a 48-40 score. After that, the Buckeyes finish Big Ten play with only two bona fide tests – Oct. 14 at Michigan State and Nov. 18 at home with Michigan – and neither of those teams has seemed to distinguish themselves in the early going despite undefeated records. In fact, each still has a date with Notre Dame this season – the Wolverines travel to South Bend on Sept. 16 while the Spartans host the Irish the following week – and those games may provide a better barometer for just how good the Michigan teams are going to be.

Even so, just two weeks into the 2006 season, the pieces would seem to fit nicely into a scenario that puts Ohio State in position to run the table and glide into the BCS Championship Game, set for Jan. 8 in Glendale, Ariz.

You would get no argument from Texas head coach Mack Brown.

"Applaud Ohio State," he said. "They are a great football team, and the way they played tonight, they deserve to be No. 1. It's still early in the season, and anytime you have a tailback, wide receivers and quarterback like they have, you've got a chance.

"They have a lot of things that would help them have a chance to win the rest of their games."

Texas safety Michael Griffin agreed.

"What can I say? They have two Heisman candidates (quarterback Troy Smith and receiver Ted Ginn Jr.) on one team, so they're going to be No. 1," Griffin said. "There's not much more to say – great quarterback, great receivers. Ohio State is a great team all around."

Nevertheless, veteran players refused to try to predict after only two weeks how the season would unfold

"We've only played two games, so let's not talk any more about that kind of stuff," OSU safety Brandon Mitchell said. "Let's talk about this game and let's let this one sink a little bit before we start getting ahead of ourselves.

"We've still got a lot of work to do and a long road ahead. If we start getting cocky and looking ahead to what might be, it might never be. Right now, the only thing I want to think about is getting on that plane and enjoying this victory – because when we wake up tomorrow, Texas will be in the past and Cincinnati will be on our minds."

SONNY BROCKWAY

WAITING FOR THE HOLE TO OPEN — His patience increasing with each game, OSU tailback Antonio Pittman kept Texas' aggressive defense honest with 74 yards on 16 carries.

Living Up To The Hype

Before the Buckeyes could turn their attention to returning home to host the Bearcats, they had to endure a hype-filled week that accompanied the earliest No. 1 vs. No. 2 matchup in college football history.

The week began with a pair of Texas players, including starting cornerback Tarell Brown, being suspended after being arrested on drug and weapons charges. The drug charges were later dropped, but the suspensions were upheld, and Brown's absence was felt since he would have drawn the assignment of covering OSU speedster Ted

Ginn Jr.

Ginn wound up catching five passes for 97 yards in the contest, including a 29-yard touchdown pass right before halftime over cornerback Aaron Ross.

About the closest Ohio State came to any controversy during the week was when head coach Jim Tressel told reporters during his weekly press conference that he had placed the Longhorns atop his ballot in the USA Today coaches poll. It turned out that Tressel had misspoken, and his ballot – filled out by staff members with the head coach's input – had the Buckeyes No. 1 and the Longhorns No. 2.

By the time the game started on a muggy evening in the Texas capital city, most of the players were simply anxious to get the action under way.

"It's tough to sit around all day and wait for a night game," Laurinaitis said. "It gives you a chance to relax a little and watch some of the other teams around the country, but it seemed like every time they'd break away, there was somebody talking about our game. After you talk about it for so long, you just want to play."

The hype for the game began almost immediately after the two teams had easily dispatched their season-opening opponents. Some scarlet and gray revelers didn't need any hype to get their parties started. While some early predictions of as many as 40,000 Ohio State fans invading Austin seemed a little high, the number probably approached half that as they swarmed into the city's restaurants and hotels and clogged the streets and highways.

Some tailgaters set up shop as early as Thursday afternoon, but the festivities really got going some 12 hours before kickoff when crowds were allowed to assemble to watch ESPN's College GameDay.

Approximately 10,000 people watched as hosts Chris Fowler, Lee Corso and Kirk Herbstreit breezed through a two-hour show topped off shortly before 11 a.m. local time by Corso picking the Longhorns to win, touching off an eruption of approval through the throng. (Since Herbstreit was part of the announcing crew for ABC's national telecast, he was prohibited from making a prediction.)

That still left some eight hours until kickoff, and the crowd wandered off to mingle, attend one of the hundreds of tailgate parties large and small or haggle with one another over tickets, some of which went for as much as $700 each. Evidently, there weren't many who balked at the prices because by the time the game began, people were jammed into every nook and cranny of DKR-Texas Memorial Stadium, breaking the attendance record the Longhorns had set just the week before in their season opener against North Texas by more than 5,000.

There were small pockets of scarlet within the massive sea of burnt orange and white, but the fans seemed extremely cordial to one another, allaying many fears that arose after stories circulated that Texas fans had been mistreated in Columbus last year. In fact, many of the Longhorn faithful who stuck around to the end actually applauded the efforts of the Buckeyes and congratulated Ohio State fans on a game well-played.

"It was a great game to play in," said OSU defensive tackle David Patterson. "I think you have to give a lot of credit to Texas. It was a great stadium and a great atmosphere."

Many of his teammates agreed.

"The atmosphere was great," said OSU receiver Anthony Gonzalez. "Playing in games like these, against this kind of opponent in this kind of venue, is what the game is all about. It's why you come to Ohio State in the first place.

"Like they say, if you want to be the best, you've got to try and beat the best. Our hats are off to Texas. They've got some great players – some of the best in the country – and to come in here and beat them at their place is something that doesn't happen very often. But that was one of our goals this season and we're proud to have accomplished it."

Revenge No Motivator

During the week leading up to the game, Ohio State players insisted that last year's 25-22 loss to Texas – a winnable game marred by several mistakes on the part of the Buckeyes – would not serve as a motivational tool for this year's game.

After the contest, the mood remained the same.

"What I have always said about so-called 'revenge games' is that you cannot truly want revenge against someone unless they have wronged you in some way," Gonzalez said. "Texas didn't wrong us last year. Actually, we beat ourselves. So, for me, revenge wasn't a factor at all.

"For me, it was just another opportunity like every game even though the opposition was a little bit better than usual and the stakes were a little higher. But as far as revenge is concerned, you can ask the other guys but there wasn't any on my part."

Mitchell agreed, swearing that revenge was the last thing on his mind.

"If you get caught up in all that, you can't concentrate on what you have to do," he said. "They won last year and there's nothing we could do about that. Whether we think we should have won or not doesn't matter. The only thing we had control over was how we played this year, and we wanted to make sure that we eliminated our mistakes and try to force them into some turnovers.

"Now, if you want to say that we used what happened last year and learned from those mistakes, I think that's right. But there wasn't any revenge as far as we were concerned."

OSU's philosophy toward last year's defeat could stem from the fact that the starting defense had been almost totally rebuilt and there were five new faces on offense from the unit that started against the Longhorns in 2005.

"I know this was a big win for our seniors and a lot of the older guys," said OSU freshman linebacker Ross Homan. "But it was a big win for us, too. We knew what happened last year, but we weren't around last year. The thing we wanted to do – and the thing the coaches talked about all week – was taking another step up.

"We think we did that and we're happy about the win. But there were still lots of things we could do better. Next week, we'll want to take another step and hopefully continue to improve throughout the season."

Tressel agreed, saying his team simply passed the second hurdle in a marathon that features 12 of them.

"We're not laying claim to anything except the fact that we're 2-0," the coach said when asked if the victory made his team the nation's clear-cut No. 1 pick. "I said last week (after the win over Northern Illinois) that we took a step, and this week we took a bigger one.

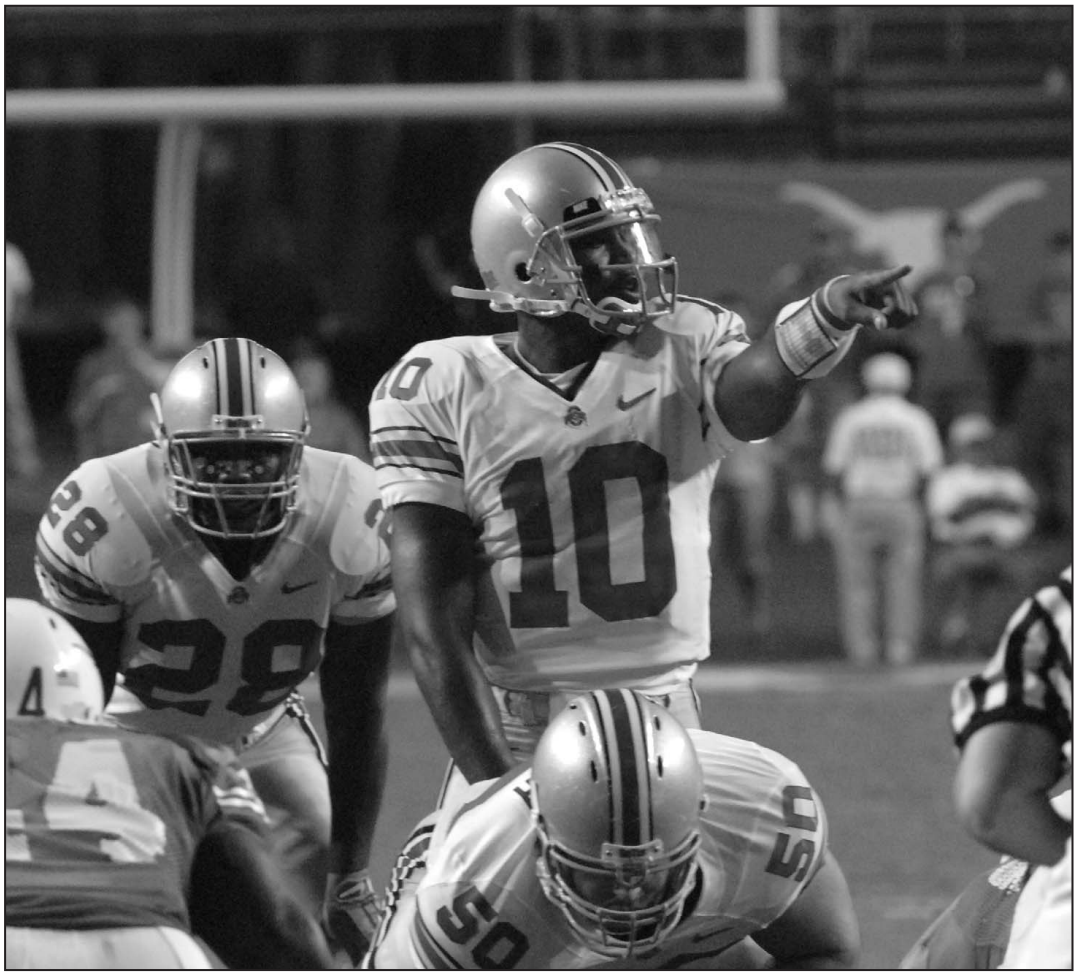
"But the reality of football is that each step gets a little bigger. We'll go back home, and next week, we'll try to take another step."

OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

Smith Shows Pinpoint Passing Touch

Senior QB Has Quieted His Happy Feet

By MARK REA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor



SONNY BROCKWAY

READING THE DEFENSE — Ohio State Heisman hopeful Troy Smith may be known as a running and passing quarterback by many sports pundits, but he showed the Texas defense that he is one of the country's most accurate passers by hitting 17 completions in 26 attempts during the much-hyped night game in Austin, Texas.

The new Troy Smith continued to make amends for a mistake more than a year old, and Ohio State rode high out of Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium with its No. 1 ranking intact.

Just as he said he wanted to during the week, Smith eschewed his old running ways and instead sat back in the pocket and picked apart an experienced and talented Texas defense Saturday night, leading his team to a 24-7 win over the second-ranked Longhorns in front of a stadium- and state-record 89,422 fans in Austin, Texas.

Last season – due in part to an out-of-sync Smith, who missed the season opener while serving the second of a two-game suspension for taking money from a booster in 2004 – the Buckeye offense failed to fully capitalize on multiple Texas mistakes, leaving time for Vince Young and the Longhorns to rally in the fourth quarter and sneak out of Ohio Stadium with a 25-22 win, launching themselves to a national championship run in the process.

From the first snap, that was not the case this year. On his first throw of the night, Smith fired a dart to Ted Ginn Jr. that the Buckeye speedster turned into a 46-yard gain, immediately putting the Buckeyes in Texas territory.

Although that drive failed to produce points, Smith continued to lead an aerial assault on the 'Horns, who entered the season with seven starters back on defense but faced the Buckeyes without cornerback Tarell Brown, who was suspended by coach Mack Brown for his involvement in a traffic stop in which police found drugs and a handgun in the vehicle.

Smith took advantage early, first finding Anthony Gonzalez for a 12-yard touchdown for the game's first points, then late in the first half hooking up with Ginn on a fly pattern for what turned out to be the game-winning touchdown.

The 29-yard rainbow to Ginn concluded a two-minute drill perfectly executed by the Buckeye quarterback, who was 4 for 4 for 73 yards on the drive.

"Ginn had an inside release on that play, and he did a great job of using his speed to get over top," Smith said afterward. "I just put the ball in the air, and he made a great play."

Besides putting the Buckeyes back on top before intermission, the drive was crucial as it followed a Longhorns' scoring drive in which Texas quarterback Colt McCoy looked to be finding a comfort zone.

McCoy, a redshirt freshman making his second collegiate start, engineered a 13-play, 78-yard drive that ate up nearly half the second quarter and ended on a two-yard pass from him to Billy Pittman.

That pass was made possible by a questionable roughing-the-passer penalty that came two plays earlier when OSU defensive end Jay Richardson was judged to have made helmet-to-helmet contact on McCoy after the quarterback had fired a third-down pass into the end zone that was incomplete.

It was the only touchdown given up by a young Ohio State defense that was maligned during the week leading up to the game after giving up 285 yards from scrimmage to one player, Northern Illinois' Garrett Wolfe, in the team's opener.

Sophomore linebacker James Laurinaitis led the charge for the defense, making his unit's two biggest plays of the game. With the game scoreless and Texas driving in the first quarter, Laurinaitis forced a Billy Pittman fumble at the OSU 2-yard line that was scooped up by Buckeye cornerback Donald Washington and returned to midfield.

From there, Smith moved his team to

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the Texas 12, where he connected with Gonzalez for the game's first score.

On the Longhorns' first drive of the second half, Laurinaitis picked off a McCoy pass, setting up an Aaron Pettrey field goal that put the Buckeyes ahead, 17-7.

Texas, which had the nation's longest winning streak snapped at 21 games, could get no closer as the Buckeyes stiffened time and again in the second half.

"Our guys played hard," Ohio State coach Jim Tressel said after the game. "The defense kept hanging in there and caused some turnovers. Anytime you hold a team to seven points in their stadium, it's incredible. I thought we did a good job of making some big plays offensively. Our offensive line did a nice job of protecting and made a lot of good decisions. We got the running game going a little better towards the end of the game, and I think we are in pretty good shape. We had our special teams up, and our defense was relentless.

"All in all we did not make many mistakes."

Smith completed 17 of 26 passes for 269 yards and 2 touchdowns.

Ginn also atoned for a lackluster 2005 showing against the Longhorns, this year hauling in five passes for 96 yards and the winning touchdown. In going 46 yards with his first catch of the game, Ginn eclipsed his total for the entire 2005 contest, when he caught two passes for nine yards.

More importantly, Ginn's presence made room for Gonzalez, who had career-highs of eight catches and 142 yards to go along with his touchdown catch.

"Gonzalez did a great job today making plays on the ball, and the guys up front did a great job blocking for us," Smith said. "Without those guys up front, I can't make passes to Gonzalez, and Gonzalez can't make plays on the ball."

Smith's praise for the line covered not just the starting unit of, from left to right, Alex Boone, Tim Schafer, Doug Datish, T.J. Downing and Kirk Barton, but also the No. 2 unit of Schafer (who switched from his left guard spot to left tackle), Kyle Mitchum, Tyler Whaley, Ben Person and Jon Skinner. That unit spelled the starters for the entirety of the first Buckeye scoring drive.

Though Smith entered the season considered one of the country's top dual-threat quarterbacks, he told the media in the week prior to the Texas matchup, "Any and every week that comes up, I would much rather just be a surgeon and pick the other team apart."

After carrying once in the opener against Northern Illinois, Smith ran just seven times against Texas, a total that included three sacks. Three times he scrambled for short gains and once he lost three yards on a draw, with the latter representing what appeared to be the only called running play of the game for the quarterback.

After the game, Texas coach Mack Brown said Smith's staying in the pocket caught his team off guard, as did Gonzalez's ability to hurt them when they put too much emphasis on stopping Ginn and tailback Antonio Pittman.

"(Gonzalez) and Troy were probably the difference in the ball game," Brown said. "It was a surprise for us. Good for them to go to (Gonzalez) when they knew he would have a chance to be open."

Brian Robiskie added three catches for 28 yards, including a crucial third-down conversion on the Buckeyes' final scoring drive.

McCoy completed 19 of 32 passes for 154 yards, a touchdown and an interception. The Buckeyes kept him on the run much of the second half as he struggled to move his team with any consistency.

McCoy was sacked just once, by Quinn Pitcock, but hurried often throughout the night. The Longhorns picked up 20 first downs, but only four of their 12 drives included more than five plays.

The Buckeyes outgained the Longhorns 348-326 overall, although Texas had the advantage on the ground, 172-79. That marks the first time a Mack Brown-coached Texas squad lost when outrushing its opponent.

Laurinaitis finished with a game-high 13 tackles, forced two fumbles and had an interception. He also broke up a pass.

Safety Brandon Mitchell followed Laurinaitis with nine tackles, the most critical coming on Billy Pittman's fumble. McCoy slung the ball out to Pittman in the flats, and it appeared he would have a shot to get into the end zone, but Mitchell closed on him in the open field and wrapped him up at the waist. With Pittman stretching the ball toward the goal line, a hustling Laurinaitis closed on him and punched the ball out with his right hand. From there it bounced into the arms of Washington, who was off down the field to set up the Buckeyes to take the lead.

"We always talk about winning the turnover margin and causing turnovers," senior Ohio State defensive tackle David Patterson said. "On that particular play, James just came up and made a great hit. Donald was there, and he just scooped it

Continued On Page 12

The Bottom Line . . .

It was over when… Antonio Pittman slipped into the end zone from two yards out with 6:31 to go in the game. The touchdown put the Buckeyes up by three scores.

Game ball goes to… Troy Smith. The senior quarterback burned himself into the memories of Heisman voters by scorching Texas defenders with throws all over the field. Whether he was going deep to Ginn or finding Anthony Gonzalez or Brian Robiskie underneath for short gains, the Longhorns had no answer.

Stat of the game… The Buckeyes averaged 15.8 yards per reception compared to 8.1 for Texas. That helped Ohio State outgain the Longhorns through the air by more than 100 yards despite throwing six fewer passes.

— Marcus Hartman

OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

Buckeyes Shut Door On UT In Second Half

Continued From Page 11

up. It was a great play for us to hold them out right there. We talk about tightening up our defense in the red zone, and I think we did a good job of that."

In the second half, the Ohio State defense didn't even need to worry about the red zone: Texas advanced the ball into Buckeye territory once, and that drive ended at the 28-yard line with a missed field goal, the Longhorns' only legitimate chance to score in the final 30 minutes. Other than that drive, the closest the Texas offense got to scoring was its own 41-yard line.

Ohio State gave up 116 total yards in the second half after surrendering 210 in the first.

After the missed field goal, Smith drove the Buckeyes 72 yards in 10 plays, with Antonio Pittman crossing the goal line from two yards out for the score that slammed the door on any hopes of a Texas comeback.

It was Pittman, who had game-clinching runs last season against Michigan and Notre Dame, reprising his role as closer for the Buckeyes. Five of his 16 carries came on the final drive, including a 12-yarder down to the Texas 22 that got his team firmly into field-goal range and the final two yards that reached paydirt.

The junior finished with 74 tough yards on the night.

That was less than half the total of Texas' two-headed tailback attack of Selvin Young (11 carries for 94 yards) and Jamaal Charles (16 for 70), but Pittman's came largely when his team needed them most to melt away clock with the lead.

Games Notes

• The Buckeyes moved to 3-0 in games matching the nation's top two teams. The first was a 27-16 victory (OSU No. 1) Jan. 1, 1969 vs. No. 2 Southern California and the second was the double-overtime victory by No. 2 Ohio State vs. No. 1 Miami (Fla.) Jan. 3, 2003 (31-24).

• Ohio State forced two turnovers and committed none to run its record to 25-3 under Jim Tressel when winning the turnover battle.

• The Buckeyes snapped a four-game losing streak in regular-season night games. The last three years all saw Ohio State suffer its first loss of the year in its first night contest.

• Ohio State was the first team to hold Texas under 40 points since the Buckeyes themselves did it last season. The Longhorns had scored 40 points or more in all 12 games since last season's 25-22 clash in Columbus.

• While McCoy's interception was the first of his career, Smith now has attempted 122 consecutive passes without throwing a pick, dating back to the first half of the Nov. 12, 2005 contest with Northwestern and covering four full games.

• With 269 yards passing against the Longhorns, Smith passed the 200-yard passing mark for the ninth time in his career, good for seventh all-time in school history and two behind No. 6 Mike Tomczak. Bobby Hoying holds the OSU record with 16 200-yard games.

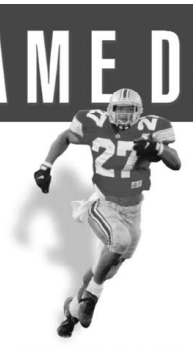
• After snapping the Longhorns' national-best 21-game winning streak, Ohio State has the second-longest active streak. The Buckeyes' nine wins in a row trail only TCU, which has 12 consecutive victories.

• Aaron Pettrey's 31-yard field goal in the third quarter was the first of his career and first of the season for the Buckeyes. He started the season missing his first two attempts, including a 28-yarder in the first quarter against Texas.

SONNY BROCKWAY

BECOMING A VIABLE OPTION — While opposing defenses concentrate their efforts on stopping Ted Ginn Jr. and Anthony Gonzalez, Brian Robiskie (80) is becoming a viable option as a third receiver, catching three passes against Texas.

Eddie George
Book Signing & Discussion
Tuesday, September 19th
7:00 PM to 8:30 PM



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OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

Gonzalez, Laurinaitis Have Standout Game

Although both of Ohio State's Heisman Trophy hopefuls played meaningful roles in the Buckeyes' 24-7 victory over second-ranked Texas, it was a pair of more unsung players who helped set the stage for Troy Smith and Ted Ginn Jr.

Junior receiver Anthony Gonzalez and sophomore linebacker James Laurinaitis each played vital roles in the game and

INSIDE THE GAME with Mark Rea

helped serve notice to the Longhorns – and the college football world as well – that No. 1 Ohio State is more than just a couple of marquee players.

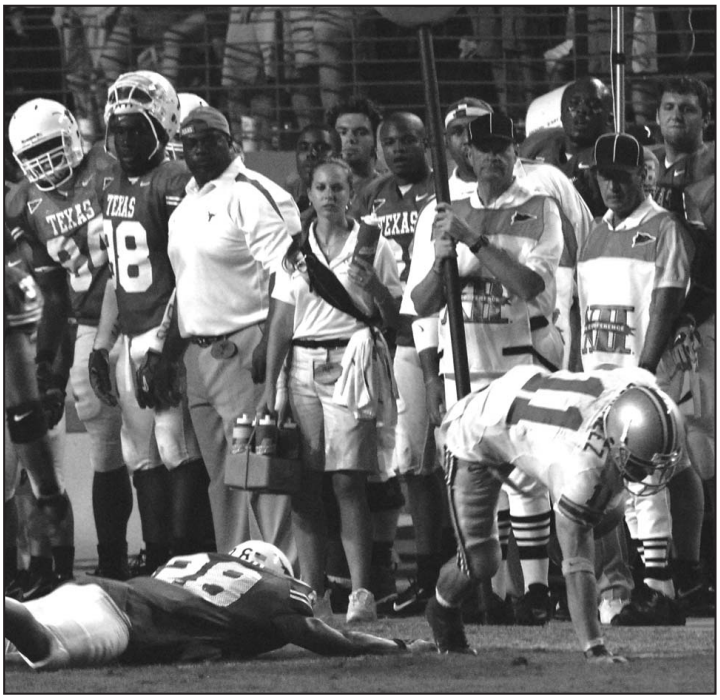
In the early part of the game, while Texas was concentrating much of its defensive energy toward stopping Ginn, Gonzalez became a primary target for Smith, catching five passes for 85 yards and a touchdown in the first quarter alone.

He wound up with eight receptions for 142 yards, both career-high figures, but almost as importantly he made the Longhorns pay enough attention to him that Ginn got loose for five catches, 97 yards and a touchdown.

"He's a great guy over there and he was making the plays tonight, especially early in the ballgame," Ginn said. "I wouldn't say that Texas necessarily overplayed me in the beginning, but they were in zone (coverage) a lot and he was getting free. That helped open up some things for all of us later."

Actually, things opened up for Ginn on the second play of the game. He turned a simple slant pattern on a second-and-6 into a 46-yard gain, first losing cornerback Aaron Ross on initial coverage and then outrunning safety Michael Griffin down the middle of the field.

"I thought that was a great call," Gonzalez said. "We knew we wanted to get Ted open in the middle of the field, and he hit that seam right off the bat. After that, they were making a conscious effort to keep track of him and then I started seeing the open space."



SONNY BROCKWAY

BUZZ BURGLER — Despite being the second receiver on the Buckeyes squad, junior Anthony Gonzalez was quarterback Troy Smith's favorite target in the first half catching seven passes for 122 yards.

Ginn's long gainer didn't amount to anything after the Buckeyes squandered the drive when kicker Aaron Pettrey yanked a 28-yard field-goal attempt. But when OSU got the ball for its next possession, Smith began to find Gonzalez. The duo hooked up for a 16-yard gain on the first play of the drive then came back three plays later for a 12-yard pickup. Each time, Gonzalez found a seam in the Texas zone coverage.

That drive fizzled as well, but when the Buckeyes got the ball for the third time in the game, Smith knew he had found a good thing. He went right back to Gonzalez on first down, connecting with the junior receiver for 26 yards then hitting for 12 yards just two plays later to set up a first down at the Texas 12-yard line.

One play later – a 2-yard loss on a quarterback draw – the duo finished the drive. Gonzalez ran a simple square route to the near end zone pylon and gathered in a 14-yard touchdown pass in front of UT cornerback Brandon Foster.

"It wasn't anything fancy," Gonzalez said of the play. "In fact, it was a play we probably ran 50 times in practice during the week and I never got the ball thrown to me. But sometimes that's how it goes. You never see it in practice, and the first time you run it in the game, it comes to you.

"But it was nothing special. We caught them in man coverage, and I had a double move on. Troy delivered the ball to me perfectly and all I had to do was stay inbounds and catch it. Pretty simple, really."

The result gave Ohio State a 7-0 lead at the 1:04 mark of the first quarter and helped the Buckeyes establish momentum in the game.

It also helped to establish Gonzalez as a bona fide threat in the receiving game, allowing Ginn the freedom to work a little magic of his own later in the first half.

After the Longhorns had come back to tie the game at 7 with 1:55 left in the half, the Buckeyes came right back down the field. Smith first found sophomore Brian Robiskie – who is quickly settling into the third receiver role at which Gonzalez excelled so well last season – for 23 yards.

Unfortunately, that play was wiped out by an OSU holding penalty, but Smith went back to Gonzalez for a 14-yard gain then, two plays later, found him again for 23 more to push the Buckeyes to the Texas 29-yard line with 22 seconds left in the first half.

That was when the Longhorns made an error in judgment. Perhaps believing that Smith would again look for Gonzalez, Ross inched up toward the line of scrimmage to apply press coverage to Ginn. But the Texas cornerback never touched the Ohio State speedster, who made one juke and then raced by as Smith floated a perfect spiral in his direction.

Ross never had a chance. Ginn ran untouched into the end zone with the touchdown, topping off a drive that covered 66 yards in only 99 seconds and snatched momentum back away from the Longhorns.

"We know Ross is a great cornerback, and he made some great plays tonight," Smith said. "On that one, though, Ted did a great job of moving his feet off the line to get open. Then you have to give credit to the offensive line. I had plenty of time to throw and we got it. It was a big boost for us going in at halftime."

Ginn explained it much the same way.

"I had an inside release and (Ross) went for it," he said. "Troy made a great throw and all I had to do was catch it."

Ross admitted he simply lost that battle.

"Ginn is a great athlete," he said. "I knew what I was getting into tonight, and I was up for the challenge. But my hat is off to Smith and Ginn. They have a great connection, and that was a great play on their part."

By halftime, Smith had already completed 13 of 19 passes for 219 yards and two touchdowns. Eleven of the completions, 207 of the yards and both scores had gone to Gonzalez and Ginn. The passing game was working so well that the Buckeyes ran the ball only 12 times in the first half for just

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OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

27 yards.

That was something that seemed to take the Longhorns by surprise.

"We really felt that Troy would run the ball more," said Texas head coach Mack Brown. "We had such a focus on (Antonio) Pittman and Troy running the ball and stopping Ginn that Gonzalez got so many plays tonight – and he didn't miss any. He has sure hands and he gets open.

"Probably, he and Troy were the difference in the ballgame. That was a surprise for us. Good for them, though, to go to him when they knew he'd have a chance to get open."

In fairness, the Longhorns were hampered by the absence of veteran cornerback Tarell Brown, who was suspended earlier in the week after being arrested on drug and weapons charges. Still, no one on the Texas defense wanted to use that as an excuse.

"Nothing changed," Griffin said. "We have 85 scholarship players, and all 85 were recruited for a reason. We feel like if somebody goes down, then somebody else needs to step up. You can't say that's the reason why we lost."

Smith preferred to give the credit to his offensive line, which gave up three sacks to an active Longhorn defensive line but for the most part held together to give the OSU quarterback time to find his receivers.

"It's the guys up front," he said. "I can't make the throws and Gonzalez can't make the catches if the guys up front aren't doing the job, and tonight they were doing the job."

Coming Of Age

While the offense was finding ways to exploit cracks in the Texas defense, Ohio State's own defense was coming of age. It had a "bend but don't break" mentality and held the potent Longhorns attack to 326 total yards and just seven points. The week before, UT had racked up 410 yards and 56 points against North Texas.

SONNY BROCKWAY

COMING OF AGE — Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Heacock said the young Buckeye defense stepped up in a big game situation. Maligned after giving up lots of yardage to Northern Illinois the week before, they wanted to prove themselves.

"We've got a good mix of younger guys and some veterans out there, and I think they did very well for themselves," OSU defensive coordinator Jim Heacock said. "I thought the young guys really stepped up and the seniors did a great job of leading.

"Anytime you can come into a place like this and hold a team this talented to just seven points, that's good. That's real good."

Stepping into the spotlight was Laurinaitis, the 6-3, 244-pound sophomore linebacker who seems to be getting better and better each week. Against the Longhorns, he established a new career high with 13 tackles, including 10 solos, and also added two game-changing plays.

In the first half when the game was still scoreless, Texas had a second-and-goal at the Ohio State 7. UT quarterback Colt McCoy dumped a short pass in the right flat to wideout Billy Pittman, who was covered by OSU safety Brandon Mitchell. As Mitchell made the tackle near the 1-yard line, Laurinaitis came over to clean up the play and was credited with forcing a fumble. Defensive back Donald Washington scooped up the loose ball and returned it all the way out to midfield, a play that set up the Smith-to-Gonzalez touchdown and the Buckeyes' first score of the game.

Then in the third quarter, as Texas was driving with the first possession of the second half, Laurinaitis stepped in front of a McCoy pass at the UT 46 and returned it 25 yards. That helped set up a 31-yard field goal from Pettrey that made it a two-possession game.

Both times, Laurinaitis seemed to be in the right spot at the right time, a trait that has set apart other great Ohio State linebackers of the past. But before he's ready to be compared with the Gradishars, Spielmans or Hawks of the world, he says he still needs a lot of work.

"Obviously, we made some good plays because we got the win – and that's the most important thing," Laurinaitis said. "But there were so many mistakes out there today. I know I made a lot of them, so for every good play you're talking about, I can think of two or three others where I didn't do as well as I thought I should have.

"I think we're moving forward, though, and I guess that's all you can ask."

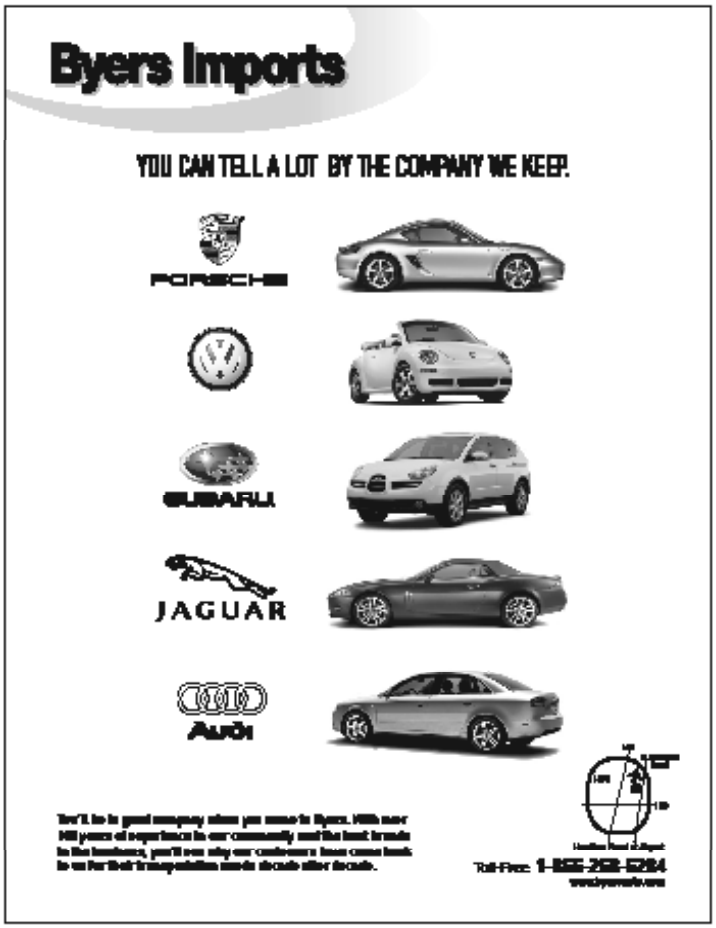
Several times after the game, Laurinaitis mentioned the fact that while the OSU defense played well at times, they were far from perfect. Then when asked if he was a perfectionist, he smiled and nodded.

"Oh, yeah," he said. "Most definitely."

That attitude has endeared him to his coaches and teammates.

"James is so eager to learn that you love having a guy like that on your team," Heacock said. "You teach and he soaks it up. I think what you saw from him today is part of his maturing process, and you have

Continued On Page 16



OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

Tressel Gets 57 Different Players On The Field In First Quarter, Keeps Team Fresh

Continued From Page 15

to realize he's still young and he's still learning. But we think the sky's the limit for him.

"He made a couple of plays today that helped change the momentum of the game, and that's exactly what we want out of our defensive guys. He made the plays when we needed them."

Mitchell said the kinds of plays made by Laurinaitis help not only a young player's confidence, but the entire defensive unit's psyche as well.

"We put a lot of emphasis on getting turnovers," the senior safety said. "They're momentum-stoppers. They are ways for us to help the offense out. Then when you get one, you feel a little better about yourself.

"We got two today, and against this kind of offense with all the weapons they have, it helps our whole team's confidence. It gives our defense a kind of swagger, to tell you the truth. We go against one of the best offenses in the country every day in practice, but to come down here and do it against a team like Texas in their home stadium – I think that's just going to lift everybody up a little bit more than normal."

Mitchell added nine tackles for the Buckeyes as nine different players were credited with three or more. The defense also recorded seven tackles for loss, pushing its season total to 20 in just two games.

Still, many on the unit saw room for improvement. When a reporter asked if the Ohio State defense came of age against the Longhorns, senior defensive tackle and co-captain Quinn Pitcock said he wasn't sure.

"I thought we gave up way too much yardage and way too much yards rushing," Pitcock said. "It seemed like they drove the ball a lot on us, too. But we held them to seven points, and that was good. But we need to get better. We have to if we're going to get to the goals that we've set for ourselves."

Depth Played A Factor

Mindful of the hot and humid playing conditions, OSU head coach Jim Tressel said his team's goal was to get 57 different players on the field by the end of the first quarter.

That mentality led to the fact that the second-team offensive line played an entire series early in the game. In fact, a line that featured Jon Skinner at left tackle, Ben Person at left guard, Tyler Whaley at center, Kyle Mitchum at right guard and Tim Schafer at right tackle was in the game during the Buckeyes' first scoring drive.

Heacock also used a liberal rotation, utilizing four defensive ends throughout the game and shuffling DBs in and out as Ohio State played much of the game in their nickel package.

"They put a nickel back on me most of the game and I wasn't expecting that," said Pittman, who wound up with just three catches for 11 yards. A year ago in Columbus, the 6-0, 200-pound flanker had five catches for 130 yards against the Buckeyes.

"We had a bunch of guys in and out, trying to keep us all fresh for the end," Mitchell said. "I think it surprised them, though, just how much we played nickel. It seemed to get to their quarterback a little bit because he couldn't get to a primary receiver."

The rotation in the secondary for the Buckeyes included such youngsters as sophomore Jamario O'Neal, redshirt freshmen Andre Amos, Anderson Russell and Washington and true freshman Kurt Coleman. They combined with more seasoned players like Antonio Smith and Mitchell to form an extremely deep defensive backfield.

And while the team was in its nickel package much of the game, it gave Heacock a chance to rotate his linebackers, too, using veterans such as Marcus Freeman, Curtis Terry and John Kerr in tandem with newcomers Ross Homan and Larry Grant to complement Laurinaitis.

"We are gifted with a lot of young talent, a lot of which doesn't have a whole lot of experience," Heacock said. "The best way to fix that problem is get as many guys as much experience as you can. They're all working hard in practice and deserving of the playing time they're getting. And the more experience we get them now, the more it's going to help us down the line."

The heavy rotation employed by the Buckeyes seemed to rattle the Longhorns at times, effectively stunting their play-calling. They had some success running the ball during different times of the game but never stuck with it. Running backs Selvin Young and Jamaal Charles accounted for 94 and 70 yards, respectively, and collectively averaged 6.1 yards per carry.

But Texas ran the ball only 31 times in the game while passing 32.

In just his second game as Vince Young's successor, McCoy put up creditable numbers by going 19 for 32 with a touchdown and an interception. But his passes accounted for only 154 yards, an average of just 8.1 yards per completion. Conversely, Smith's 17 completions were worth an average of 15.8 yards.

But the young quarterback pointed to his team's turnovers as the turning point in the game.

"Unfortunately, we made mistakes and turned the ball over on the 2-yard line early," McCoy said. "They took advantage of our turnovers and we didn't capitalize on their mistakes. I give all the credit to Ohio State. They are a really good team and had a good game plan, but we made too many mistakes."

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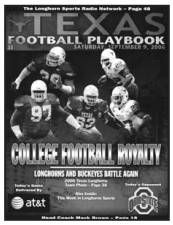
Ohio State 24, Texas 7

Sept. 9, 2006 — Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium; Austin, Texas

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4		F
OHIO STATE	7	7	3	7	—	24
TEXAS	0	7	0	0	—	7



First Quarter

OSU — Gonzalez, 14 yard pass from T. Smith (Pettrey kick), 1:04; 5 plays, 50 yards, 1:22 TOP.

Second Quarter

TEX — B. Pittman, 2 yard pass from C. McCoy (G. Johnson kick) 1:55; 13 plays, 78 yards, 7:05 TOP.

OSU — Ginn Jr., 29 yard pass from T. Smith (Pettrey kick), 0:16; 5 plays, 66 yards, 1:39 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU — Pettrey, 31 yard field goal, 11:03; 4 plays, 7 yards, 2:27 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

OSU — A. Pittman, 2 yard run (Pettrey kick), 6:31; 10 plays, 72 yards, 5:47 TOP.

Att. — 89,422

Weather — 85 degrees, clear skies; wind, 5 mph from the E.

Team Statistics

	OSU	TEX
First Downs	17	20
Rushing	3	12
Passing	13	6
Penalty	1	2
Rushes-Yards	29-79	31-172
Passing Yards	269	154
Passes (Att.-Comp.-Int.)	26-17-0	32-19-1
Offensive Plays	55	63
Total Net Yards	348	326
Third Down Efficiency	3-11	3-10
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-0
Punts	6-50.8	6-42.2
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	2-1
Penalties	8-55	4-39
Time of Possession	29:34	30:26

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — OSU: A. Pittman 16-74; C. Wells 5-17; M. Wells 1-1; T. Smith 7-(-13). **TEX:** Young 11-94; Charles 16-70; C. McCoy 4-8.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — OSU: T. Smith 17-26-0-269-2. **TEX:** C. McCoy 19-32-1-154-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — OSU: Gonzalez 8-142; Ginn Jr. 5-97; Robiskie 3-28; Nicol 1-2. **TEX:** Young 6-41; Charles 4-43; Sweed 3-37; Cosby 3-22; B. Pittman 3-11.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) — OSU: Trapasso 6-50.8-59. **TEX:** G. Johnson 6-42.2-52.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: Ginn Jr. 3-5. **TEX:** Ross 2-20.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: Gonzalez 1-15. **TEX:** Young 1-13.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds)— OSU: Washington 1-48. **TEX:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: Laurinaitis 1-25. **TEX:** None.

SACKS — OSU: Pitcock 1-6. **TEX:** Robison 2-17; Crowder 1-1.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) — OSU: A. Smith 1.5-4; Terry 1.5-3; Pitcock 1-6; Jenkins 1-2; Laurinaitis 1-1. **TEX:** Robison 2.5-18; Crowder 1-1; Lokey 0.5-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) — OSU: Laurinaitis 10-3-13; Mitchell 5-4-9; Jenkins 4-1-5; Washington 3-2-5; A. Smith 3-2-5; Homan 2-2-4; Russell 3-0-3; Freeman 2-1-3; Gholston 2-1-3; Terry 1-1-2; Pitcock 1-1-2; D. Patterson 1-0-1; Grant 1-0-1; Barrow 1-0-1; O'Neal 1-0-1; Lane 1-0-1; Richardson 0-1-1; Penton 0-1-1. **TEX:** Mi. Griffin 9-1-10; Bobino 4-3-7; Ma. Griffin 4-3-7; Ross 4-1-5; Muckelroy 2-2-4; Foster 3-0-3; Robison 2-1-3; Killebrew 2-1-3; Lokey 1-2-3; Jackson 2-0-2; Palmer 2-0-2; Charles 1-1-2; Derry 1-0-1; Crowder 1-0-1; Okam 1-0-1; Joseph 1-0-1; C. McCoy 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME — OHIO STATE: Offense, Ginn Jr., Nicol, Barton, Downing, Datish, Schafer, Boone, A. Pittman, White Jr., T. Smith, Gonzalez, Pettrey. Defense, Richardson, D. Patterson, Pitcock, Gholston, Freeman, Laurinaitis, A. Smith, Jenkins, Washington, Russell, Mitchell, Trapasso. Reserves, O'Neal, Coleman, Small, Grant, Hartline, Rose, Amos, Robinson, C. Wells, Lane, M. Wells, Spitler, D. Johnson, Homan, John Kerr, Whaley, Terry, Norman, Person, Mitchum, Rehring, Barrow, Skinner, Robiskie, Ballard, B. Smith, Wilson, Denlinger, Penton. **TEXAS:** Defense, Crowder, Lokey, Okam, Orapko, Killebrew, Bobino, Muckelroy, Foster, Ma. Griffin, Mi. Griffin, Ross, G. Johnson. Offense, B. Pittman, Tweedie, Blalock, Dockery, Sendlein, Studdard, Hills, Sweed, Young, C. McCoy, Cosby. Reserves, Joseph, Ogbonnaya, Shipley, Jones, Norton, G. Smith, Finley, Melton, Oduegwu, Jackson, Charles, Palmer, Derry, Houston, Robison, Watts Jr., McWhorter, Janszen.

Season Statistics

2005 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 2	(1) NORTHERN ILLINOIS	W, 35-12	103,896
Sept. 9	(1) Texas (2)	W, 24-7	89,422
Sept. 16	CINCINNATI	Noon	
Sept. 23	PENN STATE	TBA	
Sept. 30	at Iowa	8 p.m	
Oct. 7	BOWLING GREEN	3:30 p.m.	
Oct. 14	at Michigan State	TBA	
Oct. 21	INDIANA	TBA	
Oct. 28	MINNESOTA	3:30 p.m.	
Nov. 4	at Illinois	TBA	
Nov. 11	at Northwestern	TBA	
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	39	35
Rushing	14	21
Passing	24	11
Penalty	1	3
Average Per Game/Rush	126.0	161.5
Average Per Game/Pass	292.0	173.0
Total Offense	836	669
Total Plays	118	126
Average Per Game	418.0	334.5
Average Per Play	7.1	5.3
Penalties-Yards	11-95	8-74
Fumbles-Lost	2-2	3-1
3rd Down Efficiency	9/21	4/23
Percentage	43%	17%
4th Down Efficiency	1/1	3/3
Percentage	100%	100%
Sacks-Yards	5-30	3-18
Time of Possession Avg.	29:15	30:45

Score By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	28	14	3	14	—	59	29.5
Opponents	0	10	3	6	—	19	9.5

Attendance	Games	Total	Avg.
Home	1	103,896	—
Away	1	89,422	—
Total	**2**	**193,318**	**96,659**

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Antonio Pittman	35	185	5.3	2	14
Chris Wells	15	67	4.5	1	12
Maurice Wells	6	16	2.7	0	7
Justin Zwick	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
Troy Smith	8	-14	-1.8	0	3
OSU Totals	**65**	**252**	**3.9**	**3**	**14**
OPP Totals	**64**	**323**	**5.0**	**0**	**51**

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Anthony Gonzalez	12	195	16.2	2	26
Ted Ginn Jr.	9	220	24.4	3	58
Brian Robiskie	6	60	10.0	0	12
Ray Hall	3	19	6.3	0	8
Rory Nicol	3	16	5.3	0	9
Brian Hartline	1	32	32.0	0	32
Maurice Wells	1	30	30.0	0	30
Albert Dukes	1	12	12.0	0	12
Antonio Pittman	2	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	**37**	**584**	**15.8**	**5**	**58**
OPP Totals	**35**	**34**	**69.9**	**2**	**65**

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Ted Ginn Jr.	3	—	—	—	—	18
Antonio Pittman	2	—	—	—	—	12
Anthony Gonzalez	2	—	—	—	—	12
Aaron Pettrey	0	8-8	—	—	1-3	11
Chris Wells	1	—	—	—	—	6
Ryan Pretorius	0	—	—	—	0-1	0
OSU Totals	**8**	**8-8**	**—**	**—**	**1-4**	**59**
OPP Totals	**2**	**1-1**	**0-1**	**—**	**2-3**	**19**

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Rating
Troy Smith	35	51	68.6	566	5-0	194.2
Justin Zwick	2	2	100	18	0-0	175.6
OSU Totals	**37**	**53**	**69.8**	**584**	**5-0**	**193.5**
OPP Totals	**35**	**62**	**56.5**	**346**	**2-2**	**107.52**

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Ryan Pretorius	0-0	0-0	0-0	0-1	0-1
Aaron Pettrey	0-1	1-1	0-1	0-0	1-3
OSU Totals	**0-1**	**1-1**	**0-1**	**0-1**	**1-4**
OPP Totals	**0-0**	**2-2**	**0-1**	**0-0**	**2-3**

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
A.J. Trapasso	7	348	49.7	0	59
OSU Totals	**7**	**348**	**49.7**	**0**	**59**
OPP Totals	**12**	**480**	**40.0**	**0**	**52**

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
James Laurinaitis	1	25	25.0	0	25
Larry Grant	1	49	49.0	0	49
OSU Totals	**2**	**74**	**37.0**	**1**	**49**
OPP Totals	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ted Ginn Jr.	5	49	9.8	0	22
Anthony Gonzalez	1	11	11.0	0	11
OSU Totals	**6**	**60**	**10.0**	**0**	**22**
OPP Totals	**2**	**20**	**10.0**	**0**	**15**

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ted Ginn Jr.	2	25	12.5	0	15
Jamario O'Neal	2	48	24.0	0	31
Anthony Gonzalez	1	15	15.0	0	15
OSU Totals	**5**	**88**	**17.6**	**0**	**31**
OPP Totals	**4**	**79**	**19.8**	**0**	**30**

Defensive Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Brandon Mitchell	13	6	19	1.0-2	—
James Laurinaitis	12	5	17	1.0-1	—
Marcus Freeman	6	6	12	0.5-1	—
Antonio Smith	4	5	9	2.0-7	—
Anderson Russell	7	2	9	1.0-1	—
Vernon Gholston	4	4	8	2.5-14	1.5-9
Malcolm Jenkins	6	2	8	1.0-2	—
Ross Homan	4	3	7	1.0-2	—
Donald Washington	4	2	6	0.5-3	—
Jay Richardson	3	2	5	2.5-8	1.0-3
Quinn Pitcock	1	2	3	1.0-6	1.0-6
David Patterson	2	1	3	1.0-3	—
Alex Barrow	3	0	3	1.0-2	—
Jamario O'Neal	2	1	3	0.5-4	0.5-4
Larry Grant	1	1	2	—	—
OSU Totals	**77**	**46**	**123**	**20-70**	**5-30**
OPP Totals	**80**	**44**	**124**	**6-22**	**3-18**

Fumbles Forced

2 —James Laurinaitis.

Fumbles Recovered

1 —Donald Washington.

Blocked Kicks

None

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Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Heacock on the defense holding Texas to 326 total yards: "I don't know anything about the yards, I know we held them to seven points. I thought it was great determination."

OSU defensive tackle David Patterson on the young defense: "I was really happy with some guys stepping up. This was the biggest game some guys have ever played in, and we stepped up to the challenge."

Texas quarterback Colt McCoy on the Buckeyes: "They were a really good team. We made some mistakes. They took advantage of our turnovers. I give all the credit to Ohio State."

Texas coach Mack Brown on turnovers: "I felt like the two differences in the ballgame were their ability to make plays at the end of drives, like before the end of the first half, and our inability to make them. We had the ball inside the 5 and we fumbled it. They run out to the 50 and it leads to points. We had turnovers that led to points. We had two turnovers and gained none."

OSU wide receiver Anthony Gonzalez on preparation: "I had a pretty good idea what coverages they were running, and if I know what someone's doing, it makes it a lot easier."

Texas safety Michael Griffin on playing without Tarell Brown, who was arrested: "We could have lost Tarell Brown to an injury; we could have lost him to anything so you can't look at that. You can't look at it like a distraction. You can't say that's the reason why we lost. All we can do is start preparing tomorrow for next week."

OSU head coach Jim Tressel on the national championship: "We haven't claimed anything yet. We still have to go back to the Horseshoe and keep winning games."

Texas wide receiver Limas Sweed on having the Longhorns' 21-game winning streak snapped: "We've been winning so much, I forgot how it feels to lose."

OSU quarterback Troy Smith on the Texas defense: "Defensively I can't say enough about them. They define the word physical in every way that you can do it."

Brown on OSU's playmakers: "(Anthony) Gonzalez made so many plays tonight – he just caught everything. They deserve to be No. 1. Troy Smith made play after play and Ted Ginn was as good as advertised. And Gonzalez – he and Smith were probably the biggest factors for them offensively."

OSU linebacker James Laurinaitis on his forcing a fumble: "I was just trying to pursue to the ball a little bit. I knew he was going to try to cut it up, and I knew on a play like that you don't let them get any momentum going toward the end zone. So I just laid my body and threw my arms through and luckily the ball popped out and Donald (Washington) made a good play scooping it up."

OSU free safety Brandon Mitchell on the fumble: "Once I saw it was a fumble, I was like, OK, let's score. That changed the momentum."

OSU defensive tackle Quinn Pitcock on the Longhorns: "They are a great football team and definitely deserve to be ranked high in the standings. They are a very physical team and play hard every down. Defensively, we knew coming in that we needed to create turnovers and put pressure on the quarterback, which we were able to do."

OSU cornerback Malcolm Jenkins on breaking up a pass in the end zone intended for Sweed: "When he fell on top of me, that whole play flashed through my mind from last year. All I wanted to do was get the ball out."

Brown on OSU's two Heisman candidates: "Ted Ginn and Troy will both be fighting for the Heisman at the end of the year. They showed you what they were about tonight."

Smith on this game vs. last year: "I tried not to think about last year's game. We didn't go into this game with the revenge factor or a chip on our shoulder. This year's game was totally different, in a sense that now this is a whole different set of seniors. This is a whole different group of guys, and we just have to win with the guys that we have now."

SONNY BROCKWAY

OVER THE SHOULDER — Just before the end of the first half, Ted Ginn Jr. hauled in a 29-yard pass from quarterback Troy Smith for a touchdown.

Texas defensive coordinator Gene Chizik on Smith: "Whatever we threw at him, he had an answer for. He was everything he was billed to be. This was his night."

Brown on comparing Smith to Vince Young: "When I look at the film of Ohio State, sometimes I think they are the same guy. They make plays when nothing seems to be there. They make them with their feet, and just because they run the football so well, these guys don't get credit for how well they throw the football. Troy Smith makes all the plays you want from your quarterback, just like Vince Young did."

Tressel on the play of Smith: "When you've got a guy like Troy back there, you feel really good about your chances."

Texas Longhorns' hometown newspaper Austin American-Statesman sports section headline the morning after the loss to top-ranked Ohio State: "Aw Nuts!"

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