

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

January 17, 2009



SONNY BROCKWAY

**DESERT HEAT** – Ohio State defenders Nathan Williams (43) and Rob Rose apply pressure to Texas quarterback Colt McCoy (12) during the Fiesta Bowl. Williams and Rose forced McCoy into an intentional grounding call on this play, but the QB managed to rally his team in the final two minutes for a come-from-behind 24-21 victory over the Buckeyes.

## Fiesta Bowl Frustration

### Texas Spoils Rally, Wins 24-21

By MARK REA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

After four consecutive losses to highly ranked opposition in nationally televised games, Ohio State was given very little chance to keep up with a third-ranked Texas team that had nearly stamped its way to an undefeated season.

Yet for nearly the entire Fiesta Bowl, played Jan. 5 in Glendale, Ariz., the Buckeyes took the best the Longhorns could give and then some. In the end, however, OSU succumbed to a night-long aerial onslaught from Heisman Trophy runner-up Colt McCoy, whose touchdown pass with 16 seconds left sealed a 24-21 victory for Texas.

Unlike their previous prime-time losses, including to Florida and LSU in the 2006 and '07 BCS National Championship Games, the Buckeyes earned a measure of respect in defeat. They held the Longhorns to a season-low three points in the first half then, after falling behind 17-6 after three quarters, stormed back to grab a 21-17 advantage with

2:05 remaining in the game.

Amid his team's celebration, Texas head coach Mack Brown made a point after the game to find several members of the Ohio State defense and congratulate them on playing an excellent game.

Brown sought out OSU cornerback Malcolm Jenkins and linebacker Marcus Freeman, hugging them near to him and whispering accolades not only for their game performances but for their successful careers as well. A few moments later, the Texas coach was embracing Ohio State linebacker James Laurinaitis.

"I just wanted to congratulate them on their outstanding careers," Brown said. "We knew with the pride they've got and the tough games they've had in the BCS the last couple of years that they would come in and play hard and play great. And they sure did."

Jenkins, Freeman and Laurinaitis were among 28 seniors who played their final games in scarlet and gray, and they made their last hurrah a memorable one.

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## Beanie Declares For NFL Draft

By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Considering that the Jan. 5 Fiesta Bowl was the last game for 28 seniors, including 11 that started at least one game this year, the Ohio State football team knew that turnover would be a major part of its offseason.

But just three days after that loss at the hands of No. 3 Texas, the Buckeyes found out that the retooling process will go deeper than replacing just those players who had exhausted their eligibility when star tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells declared he would skip his final season to enter the NFL draft.

Wells is just the first of a handful of Buckeyes who could call it a day in favor of chasing NFL dreams, and his departure was not a surprise given that many draft analysts expect the 6-1, 237-pound tailback to be chosen in the top half of the first round of April's NFL draft.

"This has been a difficult decision, but in the best interest of my family, I have decided to enter my name into the 2009 National Football League draft," Wells said in a statement announcing his

decision. "I want to thank my teammates, my coaches, my teachers and the academic advisors for all they have done, and I definitely want to thank the Buckeye fans for all their support."

"Ohio State has become like a family to me, and it will always be that way."

Though he should be in line for a hefty paycheck from the NFL, Wells indicated that he might at least have been giving some thought to staying for his final season. He often has talked about making his mark at Ohio State and leaving as the best running back ever at a place known for producing outstanding runners, and he echoed those words in the days leading up to the bowl game.

"It's really not big enough yet for my satisfaction," Wells said when asked about his legacy. "I have so many more things I would like to accomplish. Whether that happens remains to be seen. I wanted to be the best running back at Ohio State. I feel like I haven't done that."

Instead, he leaves Ohio State as the team's two-time most valuable player, having won the award each of the past two seasons, and as the fourth-leading rusher in school history with 3,382 yards. Wells leaves with 16 career games of 100 yards or more and 30 career touchdowns.

Even more impressive have been his performances against Michigan. As a backup during 2006's matchup of the nation's top two teams, he sprung for a 52-yard first-half touchdown that gave the top-ranked Buckeyes a lead they would not relinquish.

He set the Ohio State record for rushing yards against Michigan with 222 in 2007 and scored the team's two touchdowns, including a 62-yarder, during a 14-3 win. This past season, he opened the scoring with a 59-yard touchdown run and ended the day with a team-high 134 yards on 15 carries.

Experiences such as those, Wells said, are the hardest things to give up with his choice.

"There are a lot of things I know I will miss – just being in the locker room, spending time with my teammates, playing in the Michigan game, just all the aspects of being at Ohio State that make it such a special place," he said. "But in the best interest of my family, it's time to move on and take a chance at fulfilling my lifetime dream of playing in the NFL."

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**OPINION****Buckeyes Earned Moral Victory In Defeat**

Ohio State fans have played the glass half-full, half-empty game for so long that some seem to have lost all perspective when it comes to their favorite team. Winning is the obvious goal, but contrary to what many people believe, winning isn't everything. Sometimes – not very often, but sometimes – you can be glorious in defeat.

The Buckeyes walked off another big stage Jan. 5 with another defeat, marking the program's third consecutive Bowl Championship Series game loss and fifth straight defeat to a top-five team.

Unlike those previous setbacks, though, the team was able to hold its head high. There are those who will tell you there is no such thing as a moral victory at Ohio State. There are others who will say that third-rated Texas was not that good, underserving of such a high ranking, and that the Buckeyes should have easily disposed of their Fiesta Bowl opponent.

Moral victories are in the eye of the beholder, and anyone who believes Texas was not one of the top teams in college football this season knows nothing about college football. The Longhorns are a very good team, well-schooled in their preparation and comfortable in both their offensive and defensive schemes. From what occurred three nights later in the national championship game, it probably should have been Texas and not Oklahoma taking on Florida.

Nevertheless, Ohio State stood toe-to-toe with Colt McCoy's aerial onslaught, which included a Fiesta Bowl-record 58 pass attempts for 414 yards. Yes, McCoy managed to rally his team in the final two minutes for the winning touchdown. But make no mistake – young Mr. McCoy had more than few bruises when he tried to get out of bed the next morning, many of them bearing the indentation of Buckeye leaves.

To its credit, the OSU defense gambled with a lot of man coverage against McCoy, who finished second in this year's Heisman Trophy balloting by picking apart man defenses. However, he had not played against a unit that used its speed and quickness to blitz from a variety of angles, and the talented Longhorns offensive line was thoroughly confused throughout the first half. Holding Texas to three points before halftime was a major accomplishment since the UT offense had averaged more than 23 in the first half during the regular season.

Also during those initial 30 minutes, Ohio State discovered it could run the ball effectively against the Longhorns, something few other teams had been able to do against a team that ranked No. 2 in the country against the rush. Beanie Wells set the tone on the team's second possession of the game, breaking through the line and making safety Blake Gideon whiff before dragging linebacker Rodrick Muckelroy with him for a 22-yard gain.

Later in the first quarter, Wells introduced cornerback Chykie Brown to his patented stiff-arm during a 26-yard romp.

Wells had three runs in the first half that were good for 20 yards or more, picking up 96 yards while averaging 8.0 yards on 12 carries.

Despite the good fortune, however, OSU squandered some opportunities to seize the first-half momentum. One possession after he drilled a 51-yard field goal that would have been good from about 60, long-range kicker Aaron Pettrey misfired badly on another 51-yard attempt that resembled a wounded bird as it fluttered to the ground.

In the second quarter, the Buckeyes

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

### with Mark Rea

marched to the Texas 7-yard line and spent a timeout before a crucial third-and-2 play. Unfortunately, right tackle Bryant Browning was called for a false-start penalty coming out of the timeout, pushing OSU back to the 12-yard line and forcing a change in the play-call. Rather than freshman Terrelle Pryor in the shotgun, the Buckeyes elected to go with Todd Boeckman and the senior quarterback threw incomplete. Senior Ryan Pretorius came on to kick a 30-yard field goal to give Ohio State a 6-3 lead, but it meant another four points had slipped through the Buckeyes' hands.

One of the most crucial junctures of the game occurred just before the half. Texas head coach Mack Brown had rolled the dice on a fourth-and-7 play at the OSU 37, but the gamble came up snake eyes when James Laurinaitis pressured McCoy into the waiting arms of Thaddeus Gibson, who bulldogged the Texas quarterback to the ground for an 11-yard loss.

The Buckeyes had the lead at 6-3, their defense was stoning one of the most potent offensive attacks in college football, and they had the ball near midfield with 2:25 remaining in the half. Further enhancing their prospects was an offside penalty against Texas that gave OSU a first-and-5 situation inside Longhorn territory.

Rather than try to seize on that advantage and land a haymaker to Texas' jaw, Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel decided to take his foot off the accelerator. Two straight runs by Wells netted the first down, but the ensuing first-down call was something of a head-scratcher. Boeckman returned to the lineup and heaved a deep ball down the middle of the field to a double-covered Brian Robiskie.

Luckily for the Buckeyes, the ball fell incomplete, but the momentum was lost. Pryor threw incomplete on second down and then was forced to dump his third-down pass under heavy pressure. OSU punted the ball away, and with the football went some of the team's mental focus.

While Ohio State seemed reluctant to go for the jugular, Texas stayed on the attack. Beginning on his own 9-yard line with 56 seconds to go in the half, I think we all know what Tressel would have done. Brown, on the other hand, kept firing and McCoy drove his team down the field and likely would have pulled UT in front by intermission if not for an ill-advised pass that was picked off by Anderson Russell at the goal line with just 0:03 left.

The emotional charge the Longhorns got from moving nearly 90 yards on the Buckeyes in less than a minute carried over to a game-altering third quarter. Texas turned two possessions in that frame into long touchdown drives, including an 85-yard march that took only two minutes and 47 seconds. UT was an offensive juggernaut in the third period, running 31 plays, totaling 14 first downs and amassing 179 total yards.

Meanwhile, OSU remained in its conservative shell. During the same 15-minute period, the Buckeyes ran eight plays, had no first downs and netted a measly 2 yards.

By the time the third quarter came to a merciful end, Texas had grabbed a 17-6 advantage and the Scarlet and Gray faithful in attendance must have been experiencing a severe case of Arizona desert déjà vu.

Then something strange happened. During the break between quarters, senior co-captain Malcolm Jenkins took it upon himself to break into an offensive huddle. Jenkins ripped off his helmet and appeared to give his teammates an earful. Whatever the OSU cornerback said must have been the wake-up call the Buckeyes needed. On the first play of the fourth quarter, Boeckman heaved a pass down the right side of the field and Robiskie made a diving stab of the ball that was good for 48 yards.

The drive later stalled, and the Buckeyes were forced to settle for a 44-yard field from Pettrey, but the tide had been turned. As poorly as OSU had performed in the third quarter, it had pulled within eight points of the Longhorns and set up what turned out to be a fantastic finish.

The Buckeyes were a completely different team in the final frame. They marched 80 yards in only two minutes and 40 seconds to get within two at 17-15 with 7:26 to go and then moved the ball 73 yards in just under 4½ minutes to take a 21-17 lead with 2:05 remaining.

Both of those scoring drives were engineered with Wells sidelined after taking a shot to the head, and perhaps it wasn't such a bad thing to have the junior tailback on the bench. His unavailability forced Tressel to alter his play-calling. After Wells' initial success, the OSU coach began to rely too much on his running game. Without his stud, Tressel had to look for other ways to move the ball against the Longhorns.

As a result, the Buckeyes went back to rolling Pryor out of the pocket, and the freshman responded by throwing a 16-yard pass to Robiskie. Later, he turned simple zone/option reads into a 15-yard gain through the left tackle hole and a 26-yard scramble around right end and then finished things off by grabbing a touchdown pass from Boeckman.

During the team's go-ahead scoring drive, Tressel even got his tight end involved as Boeckman pitched a ball over the middle to Jake Ballard, who made a fingertip catch to turn a simple drag route into a 21-yard gain.

By the time Boom Herron finished off the touchdown drive with runs of 8 and 15 yards, the Longhorns defense was out of gas. Unfortunately, the Buckeyes left too much time on the clock for McCoy.

So, the game goes down as a loss for Ohio State, and the criticism of the Buckeyes will undoubtedly continue, both from the national media and a good chunk of the fan base. Likewise, Tressel will be scrutinized for some of the decisions he made during the game.

But the simple truth is that someone has to win and someone has to lose. Winning is much more gratifying, of course, and the Buckeyes have done more than their share over the past several years. Over the last four seasons, the team is 43-8 (that's an .843 winning percentage) with four straight Big Ten championships and four straight victories over Michigan.

Sure, it would be great to once again bask in the glow of victory on the big stage against the so-called elite teams. But does the Buckeye Nation really want to get to the point where a conference title, a win over Michigan and a big-money BCS bowl berth every year isn't good enough?



## COVER STORY: FIESTA BOWL FRUSTRATION

## Laurinaitis, 27 Others End Ohio State Careers

Continued From Page 1

"I think it has been an amazing career for all of us," Laurinaitis said later. "We have done a lot of special things – being a part of two outright Big Ten championships, four BCS games, two national championship games, never losing to Michigan. We've done some good things."

"Obviously, we wish we could have had this one tonight. We just fell a few seconds short."

Laurinaitis, who finished the game with nine tackles, including 1½ for loss, earned *Giant Eagle Buckeye of the Week* honors and was part of an OSU defense that constantly harassed McCoy. The Texas QB managed to set Fiesta Bowl records with 41 completions and 58 attempts, but the Buckeyes pressured him relentlessly, sacking him four times and knocking him down on countless other occasions.

Shortly after Brown had finished congratulating Jenkins, Freeman and Laurinaitis, McCoy knelt with the OSU trio near midfield for a brief postgame prayer.

"I don't think you can give enough credit to Ohio State," McCoy said. "We got only three points in the first half, and then when it felt like we were starting to pull away a little bit there in the third quarter, here they came again. We were really fortunate to have enough time to get the ball down the field there at the end."

"We were pretty confident about getting that last score because we fight to the end. But so did Ohio State. I thought it was a great game to be involved in."

McCoy was able to gain a measure of revenge against the Buckeyes, who dealt him his first career defeat in 2006. In only his second start as a freshman replacing superstar quarterback Vince Young, McCoy completed only 19 of 32 passes for 152 yards, one touchdown and one interception in a 24-7 loss to OSU in Austin.

Since that time, he has matured into a bona fide superstar himself, finishing the 2008 regular season with 291 completions in 375 attempts (77.6 percent) for 3,445 yards and 32 touchdowns against only seven interceptions. McCoy was also the Longhorns' leading rusher for the year, totaling 576 yards and 10 TDs on the ground.

Those talents were on full display in the Fiesta Bowl as McCoy and his stable of sure-handed receivers dinked and dunked their way to 414 of the team's 468 total yards. Senior Quan Cosby did the most damage, catching 14 balls for 171 yards and two touchdowns, including the game winner.

McCoy also did some damage with his feet, carrying eight times, including a 14-yard third-quarter touchdown that gave the Longhorns their first lead of the game.

"He is a great quarterback and you have to be alert at all times," said OSU safety Kurt Coleman, who tied for game-high honors with 11 tackles. "They've got a good scheme and Colt runs it very well. Watching them on film, you know that they're on the same page in what they're trying to do."

"At the same time, I thought we did a pretty good job tonight, especially getting after Colt and manning up with their wide receivers."

McCoy's favorite target throughout the season was his roommate Jordan Shipley, and the 6-0, 190-pounder totaled 10 catches against the Buckeyes. But while Shipley averaged 12.4 yards per reception during the regular season, he averaged only 7.8 yards in the Fiesta Bowl. He was also held out of the end

zone after grabbing 11 touchdown receptions in the Longhorns' 12 regular-season contests.

"They converted on a couple of crucial third and fourth downs, especially when we needed to get them off the field," Coleman said. "But I thought we did a good job of limiting the big plays that they're accustomed to and stopping their wide receivers from making the huge plays."

Ohio State's defensive philosophy was a simple one – get pressure on McCoy from a variety of angles to prevent the quarterback from finding a comfort zone and lay the wood to any ball carrier as quickly as possible. That worked to perfection early when the Longhorns had a three-and-out series on their first possession of the game.

Texas running back Chris Ogbannaya broke off a 7-yard gain on first down, but he was stripped of the ball when OSU safety Anderson Russell came up to make the play. Luckily for the Longhorns, Ogbannaya managed to fall on his own fumble.

On the next play, McCoy flipped a quick pass in the flat to Shipley. Laurinaitis and Coleman both pounced on the Texas receiver, throwing him for a 2-yard loss. Then on third down, pressure up the middle caused McCoy to throw behind Ogbannaya, and UT was forced to punt.

The Longhorns' next series featured more of the same. After gaining a couple of first downs, Ogbannaya was stopped by Coleman after a 2-yard gain. Laurinaitis threw Shipley to the ground after a 6-yard reception and then Coleman stoned Shipley for no gain after a third-and-2 catch.

"Our game plan was to be aggressive the whole night," said OSU defensive end Thaddeus Gibson, whose two tackles in the game each went for loss. "We knew we had the kind of defensive line that could take those guys on, so we just went after it."

## OSU's New-Look Offense

While the defense was stopping Texas early, the Ohio State offense was displaying a personality change. Senior co-captain Todd Boeckman hadn't started a game since the mid-September loss to USC, yet there he was taking the team's first snap of the contest with regular starting QB Terrelle Pryor split out wide to the left as a receiver.

That the new-look set, dubbed "The Fox and the Hound," found its way into the Columbus media during the week before the game didn't seem to matter. The Longhorns seemed confused when Boeckman calmly threw a 14-yard completion to fellow co-captain Brian Robiskie on the Buckeyes' opening play.

"It felt pretty good to get back out there," said Boeckman, who finished the game with 5 completions in 12 attempts for 110 yards and a touchdown. "It felt good to get out there with the guys and contribute again."

When Boeckman was out of the lineup, Pryor returned to the backfield and provided the offense with some much-needed spark. Although he managed to complete only 5 of his 13 pass attempts for 66 yards, the 6-6, 235-pounder constantly baffled the Texas defense with his running ability.

Pryor totaled 15 carries in the game for a net of 78 yards, and taking out two sacks would have cracked the century mark. Coupled with the performance of junior tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells, who carried 16 times for 106 yards, the Longhorns were peppered with a

running attack the likes of which they had not seen all year.

Texas entered the Fiesta Bowl as the nation's No. 2 defense against the run, allowing an average of only 73.6 yards per game.

The Buckeyes nearly tripled that figure, piling up 203 yards for the second-highest total against UT all year. Ohio State also averaged 5.2 yards on its 39 carries; the Longhorns had surrendered an average of only 2.8 yards per carry during the regular season.

"I thought our running game was going pretty well," Wells said. "The offensive line was blocking well and there were some pretty big holes. Then when you put your quarterback into the mix and he starts breaking off some runs, it opens everything up."

Pryor set the tone for his scrambling early. Two plays after Boeckman had opened things with his completion to Robiskie, Pryor avoided a Texas rush and scampered for 17 yards. He added a 12-yard run later in the first quarter during which he simply ran away from UT defensive tackle Aaron Lewis.

Pryor also had a 15-yard run through the left side of the line and a 26-yard gain around right end during a seven-play, 80-yard drive early in the fourth quarter that got the Buckeyes back within two points at 17-15 with 7:26 left in the play.

"Terrelle Pryor played an unbelievable game – the best I have seen him – and I think that's a preview of what we will see from him in the future," Brown said. "There is no doubt at some point he has a chance to lead them to a national championship."

"He will be a guy that's in the Heisman race, and it may be sooner than we think."

While Pryor drew praise from the opposing coach, Boeckman was on the field during some of the Buckeyes' most important plays in the game.

His sneak on an early third-and-1 play helped sustain the drive that resulted in Ohio State's first points, a 51-yard field goal from Aaron Pettrey to make it 3-0 at the 7:28 mark of the first quarter.

Boeckman also completed a 48-yard heave to Robiskie on the first play of the fourth quarter, a throw that seemed to breathe new life into the Buckeyes, who had fallen into a 17-6 hole. It was also Boeckman who kept Ohio State's final scoring drive alive with a 21-yard completion to tight end Jake Ballard and a 22-yard pass to Robiskie after the senior QB had eluded a furious Texas rush and stepped up in the pocket to deliver the ball.

And, of course, Boeckman topped off the team's first touchdown drive of the fourth quarter when he hooked up with Pryor for a 5-yard touchdown – a perfectly thrown fade in the corner of the end zone that the freshman leaped high in the air to grab over Texas safety Blake Gideon.

"I thought it was a pretty good one-two punch for us," Pryor said, "and I thought Todd played well. I'm proud of him. I'm proud of him that he came back strong, threw a touchdown and played really well."

The freshman added that he couldn't say the same for himself.

"Poor," Pryor replied when asked to critique his performance. "I think I did poor. I thought I was poor at the quarterback position. I mean, you look at the game and tell me. I thought I played badly."

Boeckman disagreed.

"I think he's being a little too hard on himself," the OSU senior said. "Was he per-

fect tonight? No, but none of us were. He started some great drives out there tonight, he's a smart player and he's only going to get better."

"Terrelle is a heck of a player and he's going to be making so many plays here for years to come. I'm excited where he is and where he's going. To be that talented and that poised, and to perform as well as he did on the big stage – he's just special."

## A Few Seconds Short

Ohio State's two most recent postseason memories were of mistake-filled, double-digit losses, and it seemed – at least at the end of the third quarter – the Fiesta Bowl might become a nightmarish three-peat.

Texas had wiped out a 6-3 halftime deficit with a pair of third-quarter touchdowns to grab a 17-6 advantage. Even worse was the way the Buckeyes had performed in that third period. While the Longhorns ripped off 31 offensive plays, garnering 179 yards and 14 first downs, OSU was limited to just eight plays, 2 yards and no first downs.

But Jenkins lit a torch under his teammates between quarters when he burst into an offensive huddle, ripped off his helmet and screamed, "We can't let it end this way!"

Facing third-and-18, Boeckman threw deep down the right sideline and Robiskie laid out for the ball, cradling the 48-yard reception that seemed to get the Buckeyes going again. Four plays later, Pettrey booted a 44-yard field goal to make it a one-score game at 17-9 with 13:22 remaining.

"That just seemed to give us new life," OSU offensive tackle Alex Boone said. "As bad as we played in the third quarter, we were still in it. We knew if we were ever going to step up and show them what we were all about, that was the time."

The defense stepped things up a notch to force punts on each of the next two Texas possessions. Each punt was followed by an Ohio State touchdown march, the first culminating in Boeckman's scoring pass to Pryor and the second topped off by a 15-yard romp by backup tailback Dan "Boom" Herron.

That gave the Buckeyes a 21-17 lead with 2:05 remaining in the game. Unfortunately, that was 1:49 too much.

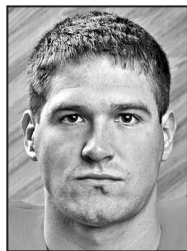
McCoy moved his team back down the field, converting an important third-and-8 with 1:07 showing on the clock and an even more crucial fourth-and-3 at the 0:43 mark, a play that was spotted so close to the first-down marker that Ohio State head coach Jim Tressell challenged the ruling.

After a review upheld the call on the field, McCoy hit receiver Brandon Collins for a 14-yard gain and then avoided another heavy rush from the OSU defense to find Cosby over the middle about the 20-yard line. Russell leaped to make a stab for the ball but missed, allowing the Texas receiver to make the grab, turn and head for the goal line.

As Russell lay face-down and motionless on the turf, Cosby made a dive into the end zone with the 26-yard touchdown. There were only 16 seconds showing on the game clock.

"It's a shame that somebody has to lose this kind of game," Brown said later. "We're happy that we won, of course, but we've been on the other side a few times, so we know how Ohio State is feeling. Someone has to win and someone has to lose, but the people in the other locker room have nothing to hang their heads about."

"This was just a great football game. A classic, really, and when you're talking about Texas and Ohio State, that's the way it should be."



Todd Boeckman

## OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

## BSB Quotebook: Texas 24, Ohio State 21

**Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel's assessment of the game:** "You saw a great football game out there with two teams going at it extremely hard. ... The problem in tight ballgames like this with two outstanding teams is that sometimes the game ends when you are the one ahead and sometimes the game ends when you're not."

**Texas head coach Mack Brown's assessment of the game:** "We knew our guys had a tremendous amount of pressure on them and they just didn't quit. It has been the way this team started. It is the way they have worked throughout the year."

**OSU quarterback Terrelle Pryor on the same subject:** "It's a loss. We can't be proud of staying close to a team. We had a chance to win and we have to take control and go out and win the game. We came close, yeah, but hanging with them isn't good enough."

**OSU offensive tackle Alex Boone on the same subject:** "I'm at peace with the way we played tonight. Maybe some people in Columbus will be upset with that because we lost, but I'm at peace. We fought to the end and I'm proud of everybody in this locker room. If just a thing here or there goes differently, we win that game."

**Texas quarterback Colt McCoy on the play of the Ohio State defense:** "Those guys are big, strong and physical – the best defense we've played all year. They were coming after us especially in crunch time when the crowd was so loud."

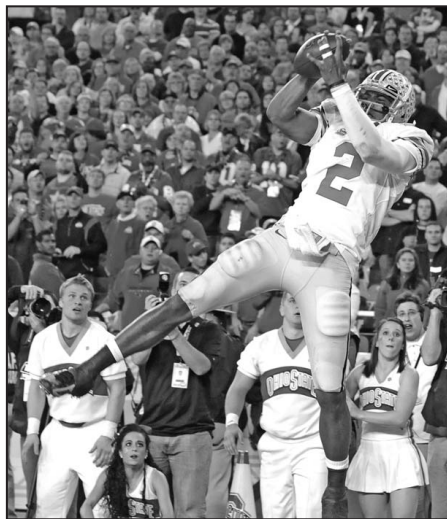
**Texas receiver Quan Cosby on catching the winning touchdown:** "We knew they would bring a lot of pressure and be in man coverage. So Colt told me, 'If they bring the linebackers, try to get behind them, break a tackle and see what happens.' After that, it was just Colt believing in me and making a great throw."

**OSU safety Anderson Russell, who had coverage on Cosby, on that play:** "We were in all-out man coverage and I went for a swipe on the ball. I just got there a split-second too late. You just feel like it's all your fault that your team has lost the game. That's how I felt. Everybody has been talking to me and telling me to keep my head up, but it hurts. The problem is that we don't have another game until September, so that's going to be the last memory in my mind – our minds – for a long time."

**OSU safety Kurt Coleman on the same play:** "We were in man coverage and my guy went outside. When I looked inside, I saw (Anderson's) guy on a slant and it looked like he went for the ball. It's tough to make a play on the ball and make the tackle at the same time, and like I've said before, you're going to win some of those battles and you're going to lose some of them. You can't get mad about it. He had an interception at the end of the first half and knocked a couple of balls down. It's just that one play that everybody is probably going to want to talk about, but he made some great plays in this game."

**OSU defensive end Thaddeus Gibson on the Longhorns' game-winning drive:** "McCoy just got rid of the ball so quick. It seemed like as soon as you took a couple of steps toward him, the ball was gone. Like I said before, he is a great quarterback and did what he needed to do. You have to give credit where credit is due."

**Tressel on challenging a fourth-down spot during Texas' final drive:** "We thought we had them stopped. The (official) closest to the ball spotted it one place and the guy from the other side said he had a better vantage point. So we had them review it."



SONNY BROCKWAY

**NEW TARGET** – Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor (2) flashed his athletic skills against Texas by turning into a receiver and grabbing a 5-yard touchdown pass from senior QB Todd Boeckman. Pryor also caught a two-point conversion pass, but it was nullified by offsetting interference penalties.

**McCoy on the same subject:** "On that fourth down, we felt we were going to get man-to-man (coverage from Ohio State) and James (Kirkendoll) made a great catch. And we got a great spot."

**Boone on the Buckeyes' offensive game plan:** "We went into this game thinking that no one really knows who we are and how good we can be, so let's show everyone tonight. I thought we ran the ball really well, threw it really well, and with the exception of about 16 seconds, we win that ballgame."

**OSU tailback Dan "Boom" Herron on the Buckeyes' running attack:** "Texas is a very tough team to run the ball against, but we were doing some things up front that confused them a little bit. It seems like people always get on our offensive line, but I thought those guys played a great game today."

**OSU tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells on getting knocked out of the game in the second half with a concussion:** "It was definitely a bummer. Nobody thought we could run the ball against them, and we were doing pretty well in the first half. I went to the locker room expecting to have a great second half and then it happened. I don't know how it happened. All I know is that I got hit and just kind of went numb. I was trying to tell them I was fine, but they were asking me all these questions and I guess I didn't give them the right answers. Then when I tried to stand up, I knew I couldn't do it. I couldn't see straight."

**OSU quarterback Todd Boeckman on his fourth-quarter touchdown pass to Pryor:** "He was my primary receiver on that play. We'd been practicing that for the last couple of weeks where I just let him go up and get it. When you're 6-5 or 6-6 and that athletic, it's fun to watch him go up and get the rebound."

**Pryor when asked to compare himself with McCoy:** "Colt McCoy is a great quarterback. He made plays when his team needed him to. But I don't see myself as being him. I want to be better. We'll see how that goes."

**Gibson on McCoy:** "He's a great quarterback. You have to give him credit. He delivered the ball where it needed to be when it needed to be, and he had great

receivers working with him. They made plays when they needed to make them. They made the plays you expected them to make."

**McCoy on Gibson, who had a sack and several pressures on the Texas QB:** "He is a tremendous player. Going into the game, we knew we had to know where he was. We were sliding our protection to where he was and he was still finding ways to get back there. He is a great player."

**Gibson on his second roughing-the-passer penalty, which replays seemed to indicate was a clean hit on McCoy's shoulder pads:** "I don't know. I was just trying to be aggressive. I wasn't paying any attention to where I was hitting him. I just wanted to hit him."

**Boone on matching up against Texas defensive end and Lombardi Award winner Brian Orakpo:** "You know what? He got me on two plays and I'll admit that. On one, I got caught for holding and the other I just screwed up. But for the rest of the game, I think I locked him down. I thought I did a good job against a guy a lot of people think is the No. 1 defensive lineman in the country."

**Boone on the Longhorns' strategy to move Orakpo to the other side of the line later in the game:** "After the second series, I was kind of like, 'Where'd my boy go?' I noticed that he wasn't there anymore. Of course, we were talking back and forth during the game – I like to talk a little bit, as you know – and I was asking him where he went. He came back over on my side a couple of times but not many. And he wasn't talking back as much. That told me that I was locking him down, and that told me we were doing a good job against him. When he moved over to the other side, I took that as a compliment."

**Russell on his interception at the end of the first half:** "Thad (Gibson) got some pressure on Colt and forced him to throw maybe a little before he wanted to. The ball seemed like it was up in the air for a while, and since I was underneath the receiver, I went up and made a play for the ball. The credit for that play really goes to Thad. If he doesn't put the pressure on Colt, I probably don't have a chance to make a play on the ball."

**Boeckman on losing his final collegiate game:** "We have 43 wins and that's one of the best totals in school history over a four-year period, but the hard thing to take is the last three bowl games. We weren't very successful in those. We didn't win those and that's probably what people will remember."

**Boone on playing his final game for the Buckeyes:** "It really hasn't hit me yet. It's been a great four years. We've had a lot of fun, we've had a couple of bad times, but I have no regrets. We've played some great games, played in a lot of places, played for national championships – those are memories that I'll take and relive the rest of my life."

**Tressel on his team's seniors:** "I can't tell you how proud I am of the leadership of guys like James (Laurinaitis) and Brian (Robiskie) and those other seniors. We wanted so badly to send them out in a big way, and we didn't get that done on the scoreboard. But I think they know by how hard their teammates played and prepared how much we all care about them."

**Pryor on his focus for 2009:** "We're going to be on a mission. That's the only way I can put it – a mission. And we'll be on that mission until we complete it by playing great on offense, putting points on the board, winning games and winning a national championship. That's our mission."



## OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

# Breaks Go Texas' Way In Fiesta Bowl

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Football is a game measured in yardage yet remains a battle decided by mere inches.

So it was with the 38th annual Fiesta Bowl, held Jan. 5 before a sellout crowd of 72,047 at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. Twice during a crucial fourth-quarter drive, third-ranked Texas squeezed out razor-thin edges over No. 10 Ohio State and then parlayed those advantages into a come-from-behind 24-21 victory.

First, the Longhorns converted a controversial fourth-and-3 play that appeared to be spotted in two different places by two different officials. The final ruling on the field, which gave Texas a first down by the nose of the football, was reviewed and confirmed following a challenge by OSU head coach Jim Tressel.

Two plays later, with the game clock ticking under 30 seconds, Ohio State safety Anderson Russell lunged for a pass that almost seemed to graze his fingertips. The ball wound up in the hands of Texas receiver Quan Cosby, who broke past the diving Russell for the game-winning touchdown.

Russell had made a touchdown-saving interception at the end of the first half and had broken up a pass intended for Cosby in an earlier fourth-quarter drive. But the junior safety admitted he came up just an inch or two short at the end of the game.

"I thought I had it," Russell said in the OSU locker room after the game. "I thought I could get my hand in there and make a play, but somehow it got past me. I feel awful because it ended up costing us the game. But I really thought I had it."

The fact that the Longhorns were forced into making such a late comeback seemed far-fetched after the third quarter when they seized control of the game and took a 17-6 lead. But the Buckeyes stormed back with a field goal and two touchdowns in the fourth quarter to grab the advantage at 21-17 with just 2:05 remaining in the game.

That was more than enough time, however, for Texas to mount a comeback. Junior quarterback Colt McCoy, who had moved his team nearly the length of the field in less than a minute at the end of the first half only to be intercepted by Russell at the goal



SONNY BROCKWAY

**TO THE HOUSE** – With head coach Jim Tressel signaling in the background, Ohio State tailback Dan "Boom" Herron (1) breaks free for a 15-yard touchdown late in the fourth quarter. The score gave the Buckeyes a 21-17 lead with just 2:05 left in the game, but Texas rallied for a 24-21 victory.

line, set up shop at his own 22-yard line with 1:58 showing on the clock and two timeouts remaining.

"We felt pretty confident at that point because we did the same thing at the end of the first half," McCoy said. "I can't think of a better place to be at that point. I want to be part of that last drive, going for a championship."

McCoy, who completed 7 of 10 passes for 76 yards on that final drive, finished the game with gaudy numbers. He connected on 41 of 58 attempts for 414 yards and two touchdowns, taking home offensive MVP honors in the process. The completions and attempts each set Fiesta Bowl records while the yardage figure was the third-best total in game history. Each of the totals also represented new highs for an Ohio State bowl opponent.

"What can I say? McCoy's a great player," said OSU defensive end Thaddeus Gibson, who registered one of the Buckeyes' four sacks and pestered the Texas QB throughout the game. "Our game plan going in was to get as much pressure as we could on him. We got to him a couple of times, but he's a tough guy. He kept coming back and coming back. You have to give him the credit."

Safety Kurt Coleman added, "The thing about (McCoy) and his receivers is that they always seem to be on the same page. And he doesn't lock up on one guy. You have to account for everybody on every play."

Cosby was on the receiving end of 14 of McCoy's passes for 171 yards and both scores while fellow senior receiver Jordan Shipley added 10 receptions for 78 yards. Sophomores Brandon Collins and James

Kirkendoll combined for 12 catches for 101 yards, and running back Chris Ogbannaya turned four receptions into 56 yards as McCoy used a short, precise passing attack to help pile up 468 yards of total offense.

The Longhorns were especially effective in the second half after the Ohio State defense stoned them during the opening 30 minutes. Texas, which entered the game averaging 43.9 points and 476.4 yards per game, was limited to only 189 yards and a single field goal in the first half.

"I thought we had a great game plan going in," said OSU linebacker James Laurinaitis, who totaled nine tackles, including 1½ for loss. "I thought we executed very well, especially in the first half."

But after the Buckeyes took a 6-3 lead into the locker room, the game turned in the third quarter. While Texas rolled up 179 yards, 14 first downs and two touchdowns, Ohio State sputtered with only 2 yards, no first downs and no points, turning a close game into a burgeoning rout.

As soon as the fourth quarter began, however, the Buckeyes were a different team. They got a 44-yard field goal from kicker Aaron Pettrey to pull to 17-9 with 13:22 remaining and then put together scoring drives of 80 and 73 yards to take the lead at 21-17 before McCoy came on for his late-game heroics.

## Changing Things Up

Ohio State threw a monkey wrench in the proceedings early, starting the game with a lineup that featured senior co-captain Todd Boeckman lining up in the shotgun formation with freshman quarterback Terrelle Pryor split out wide to the left at a receiver spot.

Pryor seemed to play the role of decoy to perfection as Boeckman threw a 14-yard completion to fellow co-captain Brian Robiskie on the first offensive play of the game.

"We were just trying to give Texas some different looks," Boeckman said. "We thought we'd try something a little out of character, and it seemed to work pretty well."

Boeckman and Pryor shared the quarterbacking duties during the Buckeyes' initial drive, and Pryor had a big scramble for 17 yards on a second-and-19 play. But on third-and-2, OSU was penalized for an illegal substitution and then Boeckman threw incomplete to Robiskie on the next play.

The Ohio State defense held Texas to a three-and-out series, and then the Buckeyes went back to work on offense, this time with Pryor mostly under center. He completed a 16-yard pass to Robiskie to open the drive then connected with fellow freshman DeVier Posey for an 8-yard gain.

Two plays later, OSU tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells made his presence felt for the first time. He burst through the middle of the Texas line for 22 yards, making safety Blake Gideon miss at the line of scrimmage and then carrying linebacker Rodrick Muckelroy on his back for the last few yards.

The Buckeyes eventually pushed to the UT 25, but on a third-and-7, Pryor was sacked by linebacker Sergio Kindle and Ohio State was forced to attempt a 51-yard field goal. Pettrey came on and split the uprights with plenty of yardage to spare, and OSU was on the board first with a 3-0 lead at the 7:28 mark of the first quarter.

Pettrey got another chance from the same distance later in the opening period after the Buckeyes had stopped Texas on its second

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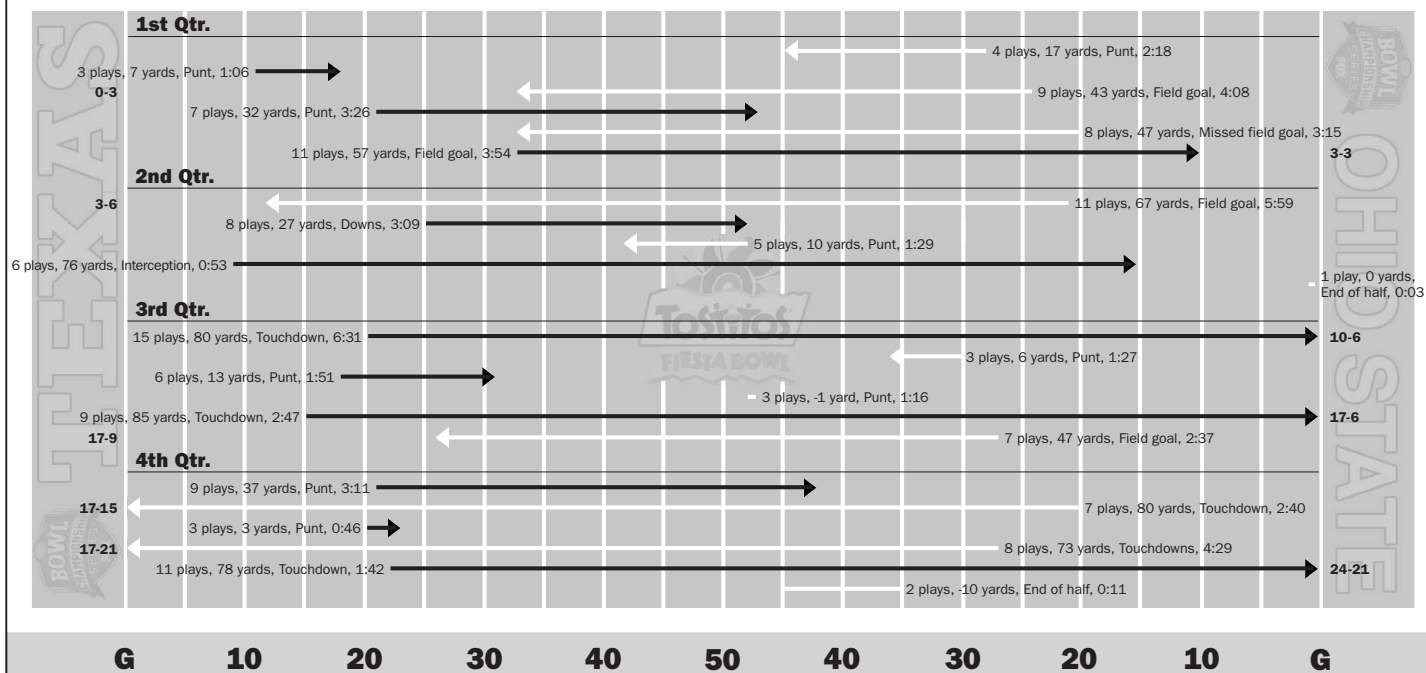
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## OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

## Fiesta Bowl Drive Chart

Texas →

← Ohio State



possession. Wells moved the team to near midfield with a 26-yard gallop that featured a stiff-arm to keep cornerback Chykie Brown at bay, and Pryor added scrambles of 12 and 8 yards during the drive.

But when the march bogged down at the Texas 33 with less than a minute remaining in the first quarter, Pettrey was summoned again for another 51-yard field goal try. This time, however, the junior kicker failed to find the sweet spot, and the ball fluttered away short and way left.

The Longhorns seemed to draw some life from the field-goal miss, and McCoy responded with completions of 13 and 9 yards to Kirkendoll sandwiched around a 15-yard pitch to Cosby. That gave the Texas QB eight straight completions to begin the game, and after two consecutive incompletions, Cosby made a one-handed stab over the middle for a 20-yard gain to the OSU 9.

That was as close to the goal line as the Longhorns would get, though. Ohio State defensive tackle Doug Worthington sacked McCoy for an 8-yard loss on the next play, and Texas eventually settled for a 27-yard field goal from kicker Hunter Lawrence.

With the score tied 3-3 at the 11:45 mark of the second quarter, the Buckeyes went back to work on offense with an 11-play drive that took nearly six minutes. Wells did most of the heavy lifting – a 10-yard bolt to kick things off, a 21-yard gain off a screen pass from Pryor and a 24-yard scamper off a crushing seal block from tight end Jake Ballard on Muckelroy.

OSU eventually pushed to the Texas 7-yard line and called timeout to make a third-and-2 call. However, offensive tackle Bryant Browning was whistled for a false start to push the Buckeyes back, and Boeckman's pass to junior split end Brian Hartline fell incomplete.

Senior kicker Ryan Pretorius came on for a 30-yard field goal, and the Buckeyes had a 6-3 lead with 5:39 remaining in the first half.

Ohio State had a chance to build on that lead before intermission when the Longhorns gambled and lost on fourth down. Laurinaitis got initial pressure on McCoy, which flushed the Texas quarterback right into the arms of Gibson, who threw him for an 11-yard loss.

That gave the Buckeyes possession at their own 48-yard line with 2:05 left in the half. An offside penalty on Texas pushed the ball past midfield, and two short runs by Wells got OSU a quick first down. But Boeckman's deep throw down the middle to Robiskie was broken up, and Pryor threw incomplete under heavy pressure on second and third downs, forcing the Buckeyes to punt.

McCoy nearly made them pay, moving his team out from its own 9-yard line with just 56 seconds left and getting the Longhorns to the Ohio State 15 with 0:09 showing on the clock. But pressure from Gibson caused McCoy to throw off his back foot, and Russell stepped in front of the pass intended for Cosby.

"I made a bone-headed mistake," McCoy said. "I had the guy open but threw off my back foot. I shouldn't have done that. Luckily, it didn't hurt us."

The first half ended with the teams almost evenly matched. Ohio State had the 6-3 advantage on the scoreboard and a 204-189 edge in total yardage. Each team had 11 first downs, and they were an identical 3 of 8 in third-down efficiency.

#### Second-Half Fireworks

After playing a pitched defensive battle for much of the first half, someone threw a torch into the explosives shack after halftime. The teams combined for 36 of the game's 45 points in a seesaw battle that started with a third quarter that was all Texas.

The Longhorns went to a no-huddle attack to start the second half and seemed to catch Ohio State off-guard. As a result, McCoy picked the Buckeyes apart, engineering a 15-

## The Bottom Line . . .

**It was over when ...** Texas defensive end Brian Orakpo sacked OSU quarterback Todd Boeckman on the game's penultimate play. Because of an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty after the Longhorns' late score, the Buckeyes got the ball at their own 45-yard line with 11 seconds left. They needed only to get about 15 yards to give Aaron Pettrey the chance at a long, game-tying field goal, but Orakpo's sack for a 10-yard loss ended any hopes Ohio State had for a miracle finish.

**The game ball goes to ...** James Laurinaitis. The epitome of a guy who left everything on the field in his final game, Laurinaitis totaled nine tackles, including 1½ for loss, and continually spurred his defensive teammates on against a ferocious Texas passing attack.

**Stat of the game ...** 179-2. The Longhorns stormed out of the locker room at halftime and took control of the game, totaling 179 yards and a pair of touchdowns in the third quarter. During that same period, the Buckeyes went three-and-out twice and totaled only 2 yards. Ohio State eventually made a fourth-quarter comeback, but it likely wouldn't have been necessary without the third-quarter meltdown.

– Mark Rea

play, 80-yard march that consumed the first 6:31 of the second half.

Texas was aided by a pair of major OSU penalties – pass interference on cornerback Chimdi Chekwa on a third-and-11 play that the Longhorns an automatic first down and the second of two roughing-the-passer calls on Gibson. That penalty moved Texas to the Ohio State 14 where McCoy took off to his right, shed one would-be tackler and spun away from cornerback Malcolm Jenkins on the way to the end zone.

Lawrence added the extra point and the Longhorns had their first lead of the game, a 10-6 advantage with 8:29 remaining in the third quarter.

Later in the period, McCoy was back at it again. With Ohio State's offense temporarily grounded, the Longhorns put together an 85-yard drive that took only two minutes and 47 seconds.

McCoy completed all four of his pass attempts during the march, including a 15-

yarder to Cosby and one good for 20 yards to Shipley. Cosby was on the receiving end of the 7-yard touchdown pass to complete the drive, and after Lawrence's PAT, the Longhorns had stretched their lead to 17-6 with 1:04 left in the third period.

The Buckeyes seemed on the verge of collapse, especially when Pryor was sacked for an 8-yard loss on the final play of the third quarter. But they received a jolt of new life on the opening play of the final frame when Robiskie stretched out between two Texas defenders to reel in a 48-yard heave from Boeckman.

That seemed to send a charge of electricity up and down the Ohio State bench and set up a 44-yard field goal from Pettrey to make it 17-9 with 13:22 to go. Meanwhile, the defense played with a renewed purpose, forcing a Texas punt to give the ball back to the OSU offense.

Continued On Page 12



## OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

## Fourth-Quarter Rally Not Enough For OSU

Continued From Page 11

Pryor immediately hooked up with Robiskie for 16 yards, and then the freshman quarterback took a keeper through a hole at left tackle for a 15-yard gain. Two plays later, it was Pryor scrambling around right end for 26 yards to get the ball to the Texas 23.

Two plays after that, the Longhorns buckled on defense. Cornerback Deon Beasley shoved Robiskie during a pass play that drew an interference penalty, and then fellow corner Ryan Palmer was called for a subsequent dead-ball personal foul, pushing the ball to the Texas 5.

From there, the Buckeyes went back to the formation with which they began the game – only this time, Boeckman flipped a pass to Pryor, who easily outleaped Gideon in the corner of the end zone for the touchdown. Pryor's pass on the two-point conversion try fell incomplete, leaving OSU with a 17-15 deficit with 7:26 left in the game.

After Ohio State forced only its second three-and-out series of the game, the Buckeyes continued to press the issue with Boeckman and Pryor alternating snaps. Boeckman connected with Ballard for 21 yards and tossed a quick pass to Robiskie in the right flat that the senior receiver turned into a 22-yard gain.

That got the ball to the Texas 23, and backup tailback Dan "Boom" Herron took care of the rest. Herron ran for 8 yards on first down and followed with a 15-yard touchdown bolt to put the Buckeyes back in front by a 21-17 score with 2:05 remaining.

OSU went for two points again, and Pryor caught another pass in the end zone from Boeckman. But there were offsetting interference calls on the play, and Pryor's pass attempt was no good on the second try.

Pettrey sent the ensuing kickoff to the goal line which Shipley returned to the 22-yard line with 1:58 remaining. McCoy took over from there, driving the Longhorns for the game-winning score with just 16 seconds left.

For the Buckeyes, the double-quarter-

back system netted 10 completions in 25 attempts for 176 yards and one touchdown. Boeckman went 5 for 12 for 110 yards and the score while Pryor was 5 for 13 for 66 yards. The freshman also added 78 yards rushing and caught his first career touchdown pass.

Despite missing much of the fourth quarter, Wells finished with a game-high 106 yards on 16 carries. He became only the third running back this season to break the century mark against a Texas defense that entered the game No. 2 in the country against the rush.

Robiskie capped his OSU career with a performance that included five catches for 116 yards.

Defensively, Chekwa and Coleman tied for game-high honors with 11 tackles each. Chekwa set a new career high with his total while Coleman tied his career best, equaling the 11 stops he had earlier in the season against Illinois.

Freshman safety Earl Thomas led Texas with nine tackles. Senior nose tackle Roy Miller had three tackles, including one of the Longhorns' three sacks, and was named the game's defensive MVP.

## Game Notes

- Ohio State lost its third consecutive bowl game and watched its all-time postseason record drop to 18-22. The Buckeyes are 4-4 in bowls under Tressel.

- Texas moved to 25-21-2 in bowl games overall and 8-3 under head coach Mack Brown. The Longhorns are tied for fourth all-time in bowl victories with Georgia and Tennessee. USC and Alabama are tied for first with 31 postseason wins followed by Penn State with 26.

- Wells, who announced Jan. 8 that he would forgo his senior season of eligibility, finished his career with 3,382 yards, fourth on the OSU all-time list. His 106-yard effort against the Longhorns marked his 17th game with 100 or more yards.

- Boeckman threw for 110 yards against Texas and pushed his career total to 3,085. The senior co-captain is only the 10th Buckeye quarterback in history to throw for 3,000 or more career yards.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**GAME-CHANGER** – Ohio State receiver Brian Robiskie stretches out between Texas defenders Earl Thomas (12) and Curtis Brown (3) on the first play of the fourth quarter. The 48-yard reception lit a fire under the Buckeyes, and they scored two touchdowns and a field goal in the final period to nearly steal a Fiesta Bowl win away from the Longhorns.

- Robiskie's team-high five receptions for 116 yards gave him career totals of 127 catches for 1,866 yards. He finished eighth all-time at OSU in receptions and 10th in receiving yardage. His 24 career TD catches ranks fourth behind David Boston (34, 1996-98), Cris Carter (27, 1984-86) and Antonio Holmes (25, 2003-05).

- The 414 passing yards by Texas was by far a season high against Ohio State. The previous high was 241 yards by Illinois.

- Pettrey's 51-yard field goal in the first quarter was his second from 50 or more yards this season and the fourth of his career. Mike Nugent (2001-04) holds the school record with eight field goals from 50 yards or more.

- The 51-yarder from Pettrey was also the second longest from an OSU kicker in a bowl game. Rich Spangler kicked one from 52 yards in the Buckeyes' 20-17 loss to USC in the 1985 Rose Bowl.

- The 6-3 halftime score represented the second-lowest first-half point total in Fiesta

Bowl history. The lowest occurred in 1979 when Pittsburgh led Arizona, 6-0, on its way to a 16-10 victory.

- Texas failed to score in the first quarter for only the second time this season. The Longhorns also failed to score in the first quarter of their 39-33 loss at Texas Tech on Nov. 1.

- McCoy's 41 completions shattered the existing Fiesta Bowl record previously set by John Congemi of Pittsburgh against Ohio State in 1984 and equaled in 1985 by Bernie Kosar of Miami (Fla.). Each quarterback completed 31 passes in losing efforts – OSU beat Pitt, 28-23, and UCLA downed the Hurricanes, 39-37.

- The 58 passes thrown by McCoy also eclipsed the Fiesta Bowl mark of 51, accomplished twice previously. Florida State's Danny McManus put up 51 attempts in a 31-28 win over Nebraska in 1988, and Ell Roberson of Kansas State threw 51 times in 2004 when his Wildcats lost a 35-28 decision to Ohio State.

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## COVER STORY: BEANIE DECLARES FOR NFL DRAFT

## Wells Says Farewell

Continued From Page 1

Wells, Scout.com's No. 1 recruit in the class of 2006 who finished the 2008 season with 1,197 yards and eight touchdowns on 207 carries in 10 games, previously had told reporters that he wasn't sure of his future plans because of how much he enjoys the collegiate life at Ohio State.

"You only get that time once in your life," he said before the bowl game. "Once you leave college, you're never ever going to get back. Me personally, I love college. I'm enjoying it to the best of my ability."

In the end, the allure of plying his wares in the NFL proved to be too much to pass up.

Head coach Jim Tressel often has talked about how he encourages players who expect to be taken in the first round to go, and his advice to Beanie was no different at all. After Wells' announcement, Tressel was effusive in his praise of the running back.

"Ohio State football will miss Beanie's big runs, but we will also miss his big smile," Tressel said. "He has been a tremendous teammate and one of the all-time great performers in the greatest rivalry in college football. He will always be an ambassador for Ohio State, and all of us wish him well."

While Wells averaged 5.8 yards per carry in his three years, his draft status could be adversely affected by a laundry list of career injuries that included lingering wrist and ankle injuries at the start of 2007, a foot injury that robbed him of three games this season and a concussion that knocked him out of the final quarter of the Fiesta Bowl.

Scout.com lists Wells as a five-star draft prospect and places him 15th among players who are entered in the draft as of Jan. 11. The

rankings on ESPN.com by Scouts Inc. place Wells as the No. 28 player eligible with a grade of 91. Analyst Todd McShay has Wells as his No. 2 underclassmen at running back behind Georgia's Knowshon Moreno and lists his biggest concern as Wells' toughness and durability.

## More Could Be On Way Out

Wells did not submit paperwork with an NFL committee that evaluates the potential draft statuses of underclassmen, but six junior Buckeyes did. That list comprises wideout Brian Hartline, tight end Jake Ballard, offensive lineman Jim Cordle and defensive backs Anderson Russell, Kurt Coleman and Donald Washington. No one from that group had made a decision public as of press time.

Hartline has been a conundrum all season long. He indicated before the season that he could see himself and other juniors, unlike the current senior class that returned mostly intact for this season, leaving early because of their close friendships with the older players who are now departing.

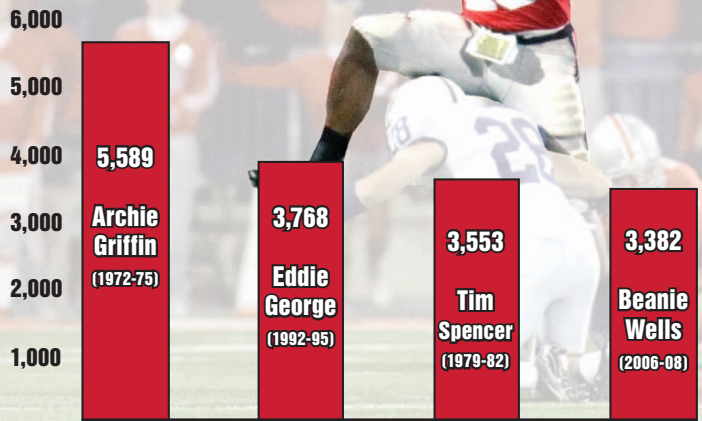
In addition, Hartline's production slipped this year from 52 catches a year ago to just 21 this year for 479 yards and four touchdowns. He had no grabs in the Fiesta Bowl days after a reported dustup with members of the coaching staff for missing curfew.

But he has also spoken in the past about how he would like to be a captain and what a senior year would mean to him.

"If you're good enough, the NFL is always going to be there," Hartline said. "But once you leave college, that's it. I have my degree, so it's a little different for me, I guess. I also know that if you don't play that senior year, that's something you can't get back. It's gone forever."

## Bye-Bye, Beanie

Chris "Beanie" Wells will leave Ohio State with the fourth-highest career rushing total in school history, trailing only Archie Griffin, Eddie George and Tim Spencer.



Washington was one of two defensive backs suspended for the opening two games of the season, and he never regained from Chimdi Chekwa the starting spot he owned last year. He ended up splitting time with the sophomore and made 22 tackles as well as an interception and a fumble recovery.

Losing Washington would be a major blow to a secondary that already will be without Malcolm Jenkins, the Thorpe Award winner as the nation's best defensive back. Throwing Russell and Coleman into the equation would hurt even more, though both insisted at the

team's bowl media day before leaving for Arizona that they were simply curious to find out their projected draft statuses.

Cordle and Ballard would seem to be poised to be important cogs in the 2009 offense after the former started every regular-season game this year at left guard and center while the latter filled in for senior Rory Nicol to make three starts and catch six passes.

For the latest on the juniors who have yet to declare their intentions, check out up-to-the-minute reports on our [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com) premium website.

## Tee Off for Much Less in Santee, South Carolina

- The Cleveland Plain Dealer

## BREAKING NEWS

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# The Numbers Game

## Texas 24, Ohio State 21

Jan. 5, 2009 — University of Phoenix Stadium; Glendale, Ariz.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4		F
OHIO STATE	3	3	0	15	—	21
TEXAS	0	3	14	7	—	24

### First Quarter

**OSU** — Pettrey, 51 yard field goal, 7:28; 9 plays, 43 yards, 4:08 TOP.

### Second Quarter

**TEXAS** — Lawrence, 27 yard field goal, 11:45; 11 plays, 57 yards, 3:54 TOP.

**OSU** — Pretorius, 30 yard field goal, 5:39; 11 plays, 67 yards, 5:59 TOP.

### Third Quarter

**TEXAS** — McCoy, 14 yard run (Lawrence kick), 8:29; 15 plays, 80 yards, 6:31 TOP.

**TEXAS** — Cosby, 7 yard pass from McCoy (Lawrence kick), 1:04; 9 plays, 85 yards, 2:47 TOP.

### Fourth Quarter

**OSU** — Pettrey, 44 yard field goal, 13:22; 7 plays, 47 yards, 2:37 TOP.

**OSU** — Pryor, 5 yard pass from Boeckman (Pryor pass failed), 7:26; 7 plays, 80 yards, 2:40 TOP.

**OSU** — Herron, 15 yard run (Pryor pass failed), 2:05; 8 plays, 73 yards, 4:29 TOP.

**OSU** — Cosby, 26 yard pass from McCoy (Lawrence kick), 0:16; 11 plays, 78 yards, 1:42 TOP.

**Att.** — 72,047.

**Weather** — Roof closed.

### Team Statistics

	OSU	TEXAS
First Downs	21	33
Rushing	11	7
Passing	8	23
Penalty	2	3
Rushes-Yards	39-203	29-54
Passing Yards	176	414
Passes (Att.-Comp.-Int.)	25-10-0	58-41-1
Offensive Plays	64	87
Total Net Yards	379	468
Third Down Efficiency	4-12	6-17
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	3-4
Punts-Avg.	4-40.2	5-46.8
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	2-0
Penalties	7-67	8-65
Time of Possession	30:13	29:47

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** — **OSU:** C.Wells 16-106; Pryor 15-78; Herron 5-30; M.Wells 1-(-2); Boeckman 2-(-9). **TEXAS:** Ogbonnaya 11-42; Whittaker 6-23; C.Johnson 3-2; Bobino 1-2; McCoy 8-(-15).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** — **OSU:** Pryor 5-13-0-66-0; Boeckman 5-12-0-110-1. **TEXAS:** McCoy 41-58-1-414-2.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** Robiskie 5-116; Posey 2-13; Ballard 1-21; C.Wells 1-21; Pryor 1-5. **TEXAS:** Cosby 14-171; Shipley 10-78; Collins 7-60; Kirkendoll 5-41; Ogbonnaya 4-56; Ullman 1-8.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** — **OSU:** Trapasso 4-40.2-46. **TEXAS:** Tucker 5-46.8-58.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** Small 1-16. **TEXAS:** None.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** L.Thomas 5-102. **TEXAS:** Shipley 4-82; Cosby 1-11.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds)** — **OSU:** None. **TEXAS:** None.

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** Russell 1-0. **TEXAS:** None.

**SACKS** — **OSU:** Rose 1-0-18; Gibson 1-0-11; Worthington 1-0-8. **TEXAS:** Orakpo 1-0-10; Kindle 1-0-8; R.Miller 1-0-8.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** Gibson 2-0-14; Laurinaitis 1-5-2; Rose 1-0-18; Worthington 1-0-8; N.Williams 1-0-8; Abdallah 1-0-1; Coleman 0-5-1; Freeman 0-5-1; Jenkins 0-5-0. **TEXAS:** Melton 2-0-5; Orakpo 1-0-10; Kindle 1-0-8; R.Miller 1-0-8.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.)** — **OSU:** Chekwa 11-0-11; Coleman 7-4-11; Russell 7-2-9; Laurinaitis 6-3-9; Freeman 5-3-8; D.Washington 6-0-6; Homan 3-0-3; Jenkins 2-1-3; Worthington 2-1-3; Gibson 2-0-2; Hines 2-0-2; Oliver 1-1-2; Sweat 1-1-2; Rose 1-0-1; Abdallah 1-0-1; Sabino 1-0-1; N.Williams 1-0-1; Heyward 1-0-1; Lane 1-0-1. **TEXAS:** E.Thomas 6-3-9; Norton 5-1-6; Muckelroy 3-3-6; Gideon 3-2-5; Kindle 3-0-3; Melton 3-0-3; Bobino 2-1-3; R.Miller 2-1-3; Robinson 2-0-2; Palmer 2-0-2; Scott 2-0-2; Orakpo 2-0-2; Houston 1-1-2; Beasley 1-1-2; N.Brewster 1-0-1; Cosby 1-0-1; Cu.Brown 1-0-1; Ch.Brown 1-0-1; Acho 0-1-1.

**PLAYERS IN THE GAME** — **OHIO STATE:** Offense, Boone, Person, M.Brewster, Rehling, Browning, Nicol, Robiskie, Pryor, Boeckman, B.Smith, Hartline, Pettrey, Defense, Heyward, Worthington, Abdallah, Gibson, Laurinaitis, Freeman, Jenkins, Chekwa, D.Washington, Russell, Coleman, Trapasso, Reserves, Herron, L.Thomas, Posey, Rose, Oliver, Schwartz, Hines, Gant, Torrence, Sabino, D.Sanzenbacher, Mar.Williams, Moeller, C.Wells, Lane, M.Wells, Rolfe, Spitzer, Sweat, N.Williams, Thoma, Homan, A.Miller, Mitchum, Larimore, C.Smith, Small, Pretorius, Ballard. **TEXAS:** Offense, Ulatoski, Tanner, Hall, Dockery, Hix, Shipley, Cosby, Ogbonnaya, McCoy, Mal.Williams, Kirkendoll, Lawrence, Defense, Orakpo, R.Miller, Lewis, Melton, Kindle, Norton, Muckelroy, Palmer, Ch.Brown, E.Thomas, Gideon, Tucker, Reserves, Acho, Robinson, Cu.Brown, A.Williams, B.Wells, Collins, Beasley, Scott, N.Brewster, Whittaker, C.Johnson, Jones, Houston, Earnest, Bobino, A.Smith, Allen, Harvey, Huey, Mitchell, Moore, McGaskey, Snow, Acho, G.Smith, Ullman, McWhorter, Alexander.

## Season Statistics

### 2008 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 30	(2) YOUNG. ST.	W, 43-0	105,011
Sept. 6	(3) OHIO	W, 26-14	105,002
Sept. 13	(5) at USC (1)	L, 35-3	93,607
Sept. 20	(13) TROY	W, 28-10	102,989
Sept. 27	(14) MINNESOTA	W, 34-21	105,175
Oct. 4	(14) at Wisconsin (18)	W, 20-17	81,608
Oct. 11	(12) PURDUE	W, 16-3	105,378
Oct. 18	(12) at Mich St. (20)	W, 45-7	77,360
Oct. 25	(10) PENN STATE (3)	L, 13-6	105,711
Nov. 8	(12) at Northwestern	W, 45-10	47,130
Nov. 15	(10) at Illinois	W, 30-20	62,870
Nov. 22	(10) MICHIGAN	W, 42-7	105,564
Jan. 5	(10) Texas** (3)	L, 24-21	72,047

\* OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

\*\* 2009 Fiesta Bowl — Glendale, Ariz.

### Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	230	232
Rushing	133	96
Passing	82	117
Penalty	15	19
Average Per Game/Rush	192.5	110.2
Average Per Game/Pass	150.2	183.5
Total Offense	4455	3819
Total Plays	807	846
Average Per Game	342.7	293.8
Average Per Play	5.5	4.5
Penalties-Yards	68-567	60-507
Fumbles-Lost	15-7	24-14
3rd Down Efficiency	74-172	66-187
Percentage	43%	35%
4th Down Efficiency	4-9	11-18
Percentage	44%	61%
Sacks-Yards	28-223	29-195
Time of Possession Avg.	31:42	28:18

### Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	97	90	47	125	—	359	27.6
Opponents	24	60	51	46	—	181	13.9

Rushing	Individual Statistics				TD	Long
	Att.	Net	Avg.			
Chris Wells	207	1197	5.8	8	59	
Terrelle Pryor	139	631	4.5	6	38	
Dan Herron	89	439	4.9	6	49	
Maurice Wells	39	129	3.3	0	18	
Brandon Saine	26	65	2.5	1	14	
Brian Hartline	3	17	5.7	0	18	
Joe Bauserman	3	16	5.3	0	8	
Marcus Williams	2	11	5.5	0	8	
A.J. Trapasso	1	9	9.0	0	9	
Todd Boeckman	23	8	0.3	0	16	
Joe Gantz	1	3	3.0	0	3	
Ray Small	1	-1	-1.0	0	0	
TEAM	6	-22	-3.7	0	0	
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>2502</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>59</b>	
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>1433</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>32</b>	

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
T. Pryor	100	165	60.6	1311	12-4	146.50
T. Boeckman	57	93	61.3	620	5-2	130.73
Joe Bauserman	3	6	50.0	22	0-0	80.80
TEAM	0	3	0	0	0-0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>1953</b>	<b>17-6</b>	<b>137.88</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>2386</b>	<b>12-15</b>	<b>105.23</b>

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Brian Robiskie	42	535	12.7	8	48
Brian Hartline	21	479	22.8	4	56
Dane Sanzenbacher	21	272	13.0	1	53
Ray Small	18	149	8.3	0	23
DeVier Posey	11	117	10.6	1	25
Brandon Smith	8	79	9.9	0	21
Chris Wells	8	47	5.9	0	21
Rory Nicol	6	60	10.0	2	22
Maurice Wells	6	42	7.0	0	18
Dan Herron	6	29	4.8	0	12
Jake Ballard	5	73	14.6	0	25
Lamar Thomas	4	29	7.2	0	16
Brandon Saine	3	37	12.3	0	20
Terrelle Pryor	1	5	5.0	1	5
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>1953</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>2386</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>49</b>

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Ryan Pretorius	—	38-39	—	—	15-19	83
Brian Robiskie	8	—	—	—	—	48
Chris Wells	8	—	—	—	—	48
Terrelle Pryor	7	—	—	—	—	42
Dan Herron	6	—	—	—	—	36
Brian Hartline	4	—	—	—	—	24
Aaron Pettrey	—	1-1	—	—	7-8	22
Rory Nicol	2	—	—	—	—	12
Thaddeus Gibson	1	—	—	—	—	6
Etienne Sabino	1	—	—	—	—	6
D. Sanzenbacher	1	—	—	—	—	6
Brandon Saine	1	—	—	—	—	6
DeVier Posey	1	—	—	—	—	6
Ray Small	1	—	—	—	—	6
Jermale Hines	1	—	—	—	—	6

**OSU Totals** 42 39-40 — — 22-27 359  
**OPP Totals** 21 20-20 — 1-1 11-14 181

\*\* Malcolm Jenkins recorded a safety.

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Ryan Pretorius	8-8	5-6	1-3	1-2	15-19
Aaron Pettrey	0-0	1-1	4-4	2-3	7-8
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>8-8</b>	<b>6-7</b>	<b>5-7</b>	<b>3-5</b>	<b>22-27</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>6-6</b>	<b>3-4</b>	<b>1-2</b>	<b>1-2</b>	<b>11-14</b>

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
A.J. Trapasso	58	2390	41.2	0	67
Jon Thoma	2	55	27.5	0	32
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>2445</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>3114</b>	<b>38.9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>58</b>

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Kurt Coleman	4	18	4.5	0	18
Malcolm Jenkins	3	7	2.3	0	7
Anderson Russell	2	15	7.5	0	15
James Laurinaitis	2	0	0.0	0	0
Donald Washington	1	34	34.0	0	34
Lawrence Wilson	1	24	24.0	0	24
Brian Rolle	1	7	7.0	0	7
Chimdi Chekwa	1	0	0.0	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>48</b>

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ray Small	24	364	15.2	1	80
Brian Hartline	4	22	5.5	0	8
Brian Robiskie	4	17	4.2	0	9
Malcolm Jenkins	2	28	14.0	0	0
DeVier Posey	1	4	4.0	0	4
Etienne Sabino	0	20	0.0	1	20
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Lamar Thomas	16	341	21.6	0	37
Brandon Saine	8	141	17.6	0	28
Dan Herron	4	73	18.2	0	24
Maurice Wells	3	53	17.7	0	35
Brian Robiskie	1	11	11.0	0	11
Rory Nicol	1	10	10.0	0	10
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>1015</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
James Laurinaitis	52	78	130	7.0-34	4.0-28
Marcus Freeman	39	45	84	9.5-45	3.5-24
Kurt Coleman	43	35	78	4.0-13	1.0-4
Anderson Russell	38	29	67	—	—
Ross Homan	35	32	67	6.0-17	1.0-8
Malcolm Jenkins	34	23	57	4.0-23	1.0-8
Cameron Heyward	13	23	36	4.5-22	3.0-21
Doug Worthington	11	23	34	5.0-22	1.5-10
Nader Abdallah	12	21	33	6.0-21	1.0-11
Jermale Hines	23	8	31	2.0-4	—
Chimdi Chekwa	28	2	30	—	—
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>76-338</b>	<b>28-223</b> </

## OHIO STATE VS. TEXAS

## Many Fans Decided To Stay Home For Bowl

By MATTHEW HAGER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

If you thought about making the trip to Arizona to watch Ohio State in the Fiesta Bowl but decided against it, you were not alone.

Interest was down for the matchup between the Buckeyes and Texas Jan. 5 compared to previous trips by OSU to Arizona. It was down so much that Ohio State returned tickets to the Fiesta Bowl because the school could not sell its entire allotment. According to Bill Jones, assistant athletic director for ticketing and premium seating, 3,000 tickets out of OSU's allotment of 17,500 were sent back and distributed to charities.

"I think there's a lot of things that go into (the decreased interest in the game), but I think the economy is the main reason people didn't travel like they have in the past," Jones said.

Those in the Columbus area who sell tickets at brokerages and others who put together travel packages also noticed a steep decline in interest. Thousands of Buckeye fans still made the trip back to the Southwest, but not at the rate they had two years ago when Ohio State played Florida in the BCS National Championship Game.

"We took 703 two years ago," said Lisa Cisco, owner of Travel Partners in Dublin. "You'd figure you'd get at least 20 percent to go this time, but we took 64 and I think that's the most of any one group that traveled down there."

"We had a great time. The people who went enjoyed themselves and it was a great game, but the numbers were way down. I've never seen anything like it in almost 30 years in the business."

Cisco cited a "perfect storm" that created the relative lack of interest. She attributed the struggling economy, a fifth trip to Arizona in seven years and a lack of confidence in an Ohio State victory as reasons fans were hesitant to go.

"Also, when you lose two games in the season, you can't get totally fired up for a bowl game," Cisco said. "We're so spoiled playing for national championships two of the last three years. People have shelled out a lot of money the past couple of years to go to national championship games. Plus a lot of people went to USC. We took a couple of hundred people to USC, and you can't turn around and spend the big bucks again."

The destination was another issue, according to ticket brokers. While the Fiesta Bowl does a great job treating fans to a good time, there was a feeling of "been there, done that."

"Arizona's a great place, but we've been there a lot," said Ryan Forgacs, owner of Columbus-based ticket broker The Main Event. "I think that had something to do with it."

Forgacs said he sold only four tickets to people in Columbus. The rest were sold online to fans in Arizona and Texas.

"Even our regulars who are 60 years old and retired and go to every bowl game didn't go this year," Forgacs said. "Tickets were so easy to get. You could still get them by calling Ohio State. That hurts us because there's no reason to use us if you can buy them directly from the university."

"We actually sold some tickets, but we were buying them below face value and selling them below face value. That was the only reason we could sell tickets. We could beat Ohio State's price."

It was not only the Fiesta Bowl that strug-



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREW ELLIS

**STANDING OUT** – Buckeye fan Andrew Ellis (center), flanked by friends Doug Fleagle (left) and Dale Eversman (right), made a 32-hour drive to make it to his first Ohio State bowl game. Ohio State fans had a presence in Arizona, but interest in the Fiesta Bowl was down.

gled to create business for ticket brokerages. Jamie Kaufman, president of Dream Seats Inc., sells tickets for every bowl and said prices were down across the board.

"Demand was way down," Kaufman said. "If you don't have to travel right now and spend all the money to do so, you're just not doing it. It is what it is right now. It affects everything. Every business is struggling."

Kathy Bickel, vice president of outreach for the Ohio State Alumni Association, said the numbers on the association's bowl tour were down, but not all of the news was bad.

"The Buckeye Bash was very successful this year," Bickel said of the party the association threw near the game site before the game. "We had a great crowd for that of about 4,000. We were thrilled with that."

#### Making First Bowl Trip Memorable

Though many Buckeye fans stayed home to watch the Fiesta Bowl, 24-year-old Andrew Ellis and three friends decided to make the 32-hour drive from Columbus to Glendale. Ellis, a graduate student at Bowling Green, made the cross-country trip to see Ohio State in a bowl game for the first time.

"I was on break, and I'm going to be done with school soon," Ellis said. "I'm going to be working and hopefully starting a family in a few years. I figured it was now or never basically, so a couple of friends and I decided to go."

Ellis, known as TeddyHeisman on the BuckeyeSports.com forums, let fans take an inside look at his trip on the Ask The Insiders message board. Through friends posting his messages, Ellis kept people abreast of where he was and what he was doing.

Ellis and his friends stopped only for gas and food and arrived in the Phoenix area in the early-morning hours of Jan. 4. A day later, Ellis made sure he stood out from the

crowd by breaking out his recently purchased scarlet and gray bodysuit. He had gotten the idea to buy the suit after watching an episode of the FX show "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia," which featured a character named "Green Man" who wore a green full bodysuit.

"The day after that episode we all said if we ever get enough money to get Ohio State season tickets, we'd get scarlet and gray suits," Ellis said. "We were going to wear them every game and be those people who look like idiots, basically. That was the plan."

"When the Fiesta Bowl matchup came out, we decided to go and we found the suits on eBay."

Ellis and his friends found a woman in China selling custom suits. They bought suits, but only Ellis got his before the trip.

"It ended up being a big fiasco," Ellis said. "The lady was impossible to communicate with. One of my friends ordered one before me, but for some reason he never got his. I guess I was just lucky in that I got one."

"I wish they had gotten theirs. All three of us in those suits would have been perfect."

The only concern Ellis had was whether he would be allowed into the stadium wearing the suit. Initially he was going to wear clothes over it and change once inside. However, he changed his mind. Ellis wore three shirts and a pair of long Johns under the suit to make it less revealing.

Ellis and his friends took a taxi to the game, and as soon as they exited, Ellis was the center of attention.

"I knew I would get attention, but I didn't know it was going to be that intense," said Ellis, who accented the look with a Brutus Buckeye fanny pack to hold his wallet and tickets. "I took pictures with hundreds of people, Ohio State and Texas fans alike. It was fun and crazy."

Ellis was not completely covered by the suit during the game because of one major drawback to the outfit. He couldn't see, so he pulled the suit down over his face during the game.

"The lady who sold it said she could put holes in it for my eyes and mouth, but I didn't do it," Ellis said. "In hindsight, I probably should have."

While Ellis was not on camera during the Fiesta Bowl itself, he was interviewed on Phoenix-area Fox News before the game.

"It was a really fun experience," Ellis said. "I haven't seen it yet, but someone is supposed to send me a copy of the interview. A few people have told me they saw it."

Overall, Ellis said his trip was a memorable one.

"I really enjoyed it," he said. "It was a long drive, but it was worth it."

And will Ohio State fans see the suit again?

"I didn't buy it just to wear it once," Ellis quipped.

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## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

## Two Quarterback Plan Did Not Pay Off

Several days have now passed since Ohio State's loss in the Fiesta Bowl, and I continue to be bugged by something that started bothering me on the Buckeyes' first play of the game. It is something that I believe had an effect on the outcome of the game with Texas and might have longer-term implications as well. It is also something that bothers me more than it seems to have bothered other Buckeye fans, and that is the use of the quarterbacks.

Back in week four of the 2008 season, OSU head coach Jim Tressel made one of the boldest and most decisive moves of his eight-year tenure in Columbus. He installed freshman Terrelle Pryor at quarterback, benching Todd Boeckman, the senior signal caller who had earned All-Big Ten honors and led the Buckeyes to the national championship game the year before.

Once Tressel put Pryor under center, Boeckman never saw meaningful action in the regular season again, though there was that feel-good moment in the Michigan game when the veteran came off the bench to throw a touchdown pass against the archrival Wolverines.

The Buckeyes went 8-1 with Pryor at the helm, thrashing Michigan, winning a share of the Big Ten championship and earning an attractive BCS bowl bid against the Longhorns. In fact, Ohio State was just one overly aggressive play in the Penn State game away from being undefeated under Pryor.

After the debacle at USC, it seemed like Tressel made a move that he thought would be the most beneficial for the Buckeyes this season and certainly for the future as Pryor would get the experience that might help make him a superstar in seasons to come.

If the decision to go with Pryor wasn't absolute, then why didn't the coaches bring in Boeckman in the Penn State game when, with the Buckeye running game sputtering, his passing might have loosened up the Nittany Lion defense and helped Ohio State salvage a victory in a hard-fought game?

And if the Buckeyes were going to use Boeckman against the Longhorns, why did Tressel and his offensive brain trust insist upon shuffling the two quarterbacks in and out on a play-by-play basis? It didn't work against USC and I believe it hampered the Buckeyes against Texas. You can't get any offensive continuity that way. It keeps your own team as off-balance as it does the defense – if not more so.

I don't think anyone would argue against the notion that the OSU offensive line was one of the most inconsistent units on the team this season. It has to be hard on the guys in the trenches to get any rhythm when two quarterbacks with such distinctly different styles as Pryor and Boeckman are being rotated in and out.

At least the last time Ohio State used a two-quarterback system, in the mid-1990s with Stan Jackson and Joe Germaine (and I didn't like that rotation either), John Cooper would let each QB work several series in a row.

The mention of Jackson and Germaine, co-quarterbacks in 1996, brings up an interesting analogy.

When Buckeye fans think back to the 1996 Michigan game, a 13-9 loss that cost Ohio State a shot at the national championship, they remember the game's turning point as Shawn Springs slipping and allowing Tai Streets to score on a 69-yard touchdown pass from Brian Griese early in the second half.

Similarly, Buckeye fans will remember Anderson Russell going for the ball against Texas and missing, allowing Quan Cosby to score the 26-yard winning touchdown.

But the 1996 Michigan game was not lost

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH  
Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

on Springs' slip. It was lost in the first half when the Buckeyes ventured into the red zone three times, including once to the Wolverine 2-yard line and another time to the 4, and came away with just three field goals. The Buckeye defense held Michigan to just 62 yards of offense in the first 30 minutes and yet led only 9-0 despite their forays deep into Wolverine territory.

Fast-forward to the 2009 Fiesta Bowl.

I think this game also was lost in the first half. The Buckeyes held the vaunted Texas offense to just three points in the first half, yet led only 6-3. If your defense stifles a powerful offensive unit like that, you need to be leading by more than three points.

And I come back to the quarterbacks.

I think everyone would agree that Ohio State's two most dangerous weapons on offense were Pryor and Chris Wells. You need to have both those players on the field together at all times – or at least as often as Beanie's health allows. And when I say have Pryor on the field, I'm not talking about playing him at receiver. If I have a talent like Pryor, I want the ball in his hands on every play.

"Terrelle is a heck of a player and he's going to be making so many plays here for years to come," Boeckman himself said after the game. "I'm excited where he is and where he's going. To be that talented and that poised and to perform as well as he did on the big stage – he's just special."

Then why wasn't he out there leading his team as he did for most of the season?

I point to one series in particular that I think made a difference in the outcome of the game.

Late in the first half, after some outstanding defense by the Buckeyes, OSU took over at its own 48 with 2:26 to play before the break. An offside call on Texas immediately put the Buckeyes into Longhorn territory with a first-and-5. It took Wells two plays to get the first down, but then out trotted Boeckman to throw a long incomplete pass to Brian Robiskie.

That left Pryor with a second-and-10, not a down-and-distance favorable to an offense featuring Pryor and Wells. Pryor threw two incomplete passes and the Buckeyes were forced to punt, leaving Texas star quarterback Colt McCoy nearly a minute to march his team 76 yards before Russell – the same player who would end up being the goat in some eyes – came up with an interception to preserve OSU's slim lead.

Rather than having Boeckman, who was no McCoy through the air as he completed just 5 of 12 passes in the game, throw the long ball, I would have taken my chances with Pryor and Wells. Beanie seemed to be in sync with his offensive line when allowed to get some rhythm, and he was breaking off good runs with regularity. Even if the Buckeyes had not scored points there – one first down would have put them in field-goal range – they at the least would have run off more clock, keeping the ball away from McCoy and his explosive teammates.

There was talk about how the coaching staff was going to use the time between the Michigan game and the Fiesta Bowl to work on Pryor's passing fundamentals. I thought the freshman seemed to regress as a passer by the time the Fiesta Bowl rolled around and it showed in his stats. He was just 5 of 13 passing for 66 yards, causing some to even speculate that his hand, arm or shoulder was injured.

Maybe he regressed because he spent so much time during practice working out at receiver. Why would you waste valuable reps for your franchise quarterback by working him out at receiver? And if you were going to do that, why would you spend all that time for basically one play although Boeckman's toss to his fellow quarterback did give the Buckeyes a crucial touchdown in the fourth quarter.

Is that Ohio State's idea of being creative on offense? Using arguably their best offensive player as a decoy for much of the game with the threat of some gimmick play and then going to him just once on a play that could probably have worked more often?

Ohio State needs to be very careful about how it uses Pryor. If the Buckeyes don't get the most out of him, future offensive players of his caliber will not come to Ohio State. I saw that happen under Earle Bruce.

Early in his tenure, Bruce brought in players such as John Frank, Keith Byars, Kris Carter, Jim Lachey, Mike Tomczak and Jim Karsatos. But Earle got stubborn on offense and it seemed like the really good prep players stopped coming to Columbus, leaving a bare cupboard for his successor and – as Cooper so famously put it – with "too many slow white guys."

Tressel and his staff need to make sure history doesn't repeat itself.

And before all of our readers in Boeckman's native St. Henry and Mercer County – among our most loyal readers anywhere – start thinking I'm picking on Boeckman, I'm not. Boeckman's demeanor this season was nothing short of amazing in such a difficult situation, and he is someone who should be held up as an example to athletes – and nonathletes – everywhere.

This is not about Boeckman. It's about winning football at Ohio State, now and in the future.

Todd Boeckman is a coach's son. I believe he understands that.

## Bantering About Wells

There was an interesting exchange on the eve of the Fiesta Bowl between WBNS-Radio's Bruce Hooley and Chris Spielman concerning Wells.

"In terms of the combination of speed and power, Chris Wells is the most talented running back I've seen at Ohio State," Spielman, the former Buckeye linebacker great, stated emphatically.

"Aren't you forgetting a guy you played with at Ohio State?" Hooley asked.

"In terms of speed and power, Chris Wells is the best I've seen," Spielman repeated.

"I don't know. I think I'd take Keith Byars his junior year," Hooley said, referring to Spielman's teammate in 1984 and '85. "He'd carry three, four and five tacklers at a time and he caught passes. I don't think we've seen that from Beanie."

"I'm saying Chris Wells is the best."

"What about durability?"

"I'm talking combination of speed and power."

The two then bantered about other names such as Archie Griffin and Eddie George, and Hooley continued to question Wells' durability, wondering if the soon-to-turn-pro's draft status would be hurt by concerns about his durability. He went on to press Spielman after

the durability discussion on which Buckeye running back he would have drafted first if he owned a pro team.

"Eddie George," Spielman replied.

It will be interesting to see how much the questions about Wells' ability to stand up to the rigors of the NFL affect his draft position. No one questions his ability, though singling him out from the likes of Griffin, Byars and George would certainly generate plenty of discussion – pro and con – among Buckeye fans.

For the record, Byars and George were both very durable pros. Byars played 13 years in the NFL and appeared in all 16 regular-season games in eight of those years. George played nine seasons in the NFL. He appeared in all 16 regular-season games the first eight of those years, averaging nearly 342 carries a season before capping his career with 13 games and 132 carries for the Dallas Cowboys in 2004.

At the college level, Byars carried the ball 336 times for 1,764 yards in 12 games in 1984, though he did miss much of the 1985 season with a broken foot. George carried the ball 328 times in 13 games in 1995 for 1,927 yards. Wells' most active year came last season, when he toted the ball 274 times for 1,609 yards in 13 games.

Only time will tell if Wells just had a run of bad luck, if his style of play leaves him open to bangs and bruises, or if he lacks the toughness to take the pounding that is football, both at the college and pro level.

One thing is for sure. When he is healthy – and sometimes even when he is not at 100 percent – he is one heck of a running back.

## So Long, Jimmy

Many in Columbus and beyond were saddened at the recent passing of noted sports-caster Jimmy Crum.

While my career overlapped Jimmy's for more than a dozen years, I really got to know him better after his retirement. He was present at one of my speeches to an OSU alumni club in Florida, and we got to know each other there. I would also speak to him from time to time when he would call in subscription orders to BSB.

Two instances come to mind when I think of Jimmy.

He was one of the speakers at a roast for Buckeye Boosters president Dick Smith several years ago. New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner was also one of the ones roasting Smith, and as a veteran of the more rowdy roasts of New York City, "The Boss" was clearly unhappy with the gentle nature of the roast of Smith. After leveling several pointed jabs at his friend Smith, Steinbrenner turned to Crum.

"Would somebody please buy Jimmy Crum a blue blazer?" he said in reference to Crum's trademark loud sports coats.

My other memory is a more recent lesson in humility. My friend Pete Anderson had invited me to speak at a breakfast at the Forum at Knightsbridge. In attendance were both Crum – in another colorful sports coat – and longtime Ohio State sports information director Marv Homan. It was a little embarrassing speaking in front of those two as I knew they had forgotten far more about OSU football than I had experienced. At least they didn't embarrass me by taking me to task about some of my insight.

If I had to sum up Jimmy Crum with one trait, it would be something that is one of the highest compliments I believe you can pay a man, and I believe it is something you don't see enough of these days.

Jimmy Crum was a gentleman.