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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

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Arm & Hammer

Clutch Pass Gives OSU Victory In Physical Battle

By JEFF SVOBODA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Sometimes, the gap between elation and despair can be as little as one point.

After No. 14 Ohio State and No. 20 Michigan State traded body blows for three hours and 12 minutes Sept. 29, the scoreboard had the Buckeyes holding a 17-16 victory.

Battered and bruised after a game that had enough hard hits and excellent defense to extend the stereotype about Big Ten football for another year or two, the Spartans trudged off their home turf slowly and dejectedly.

On the other side of the field, the Ohio State players followed the postgame prayer with an excited jaunt to the northeast corner of the stadium to sing "Carmen Ohio" with the fans and the marching band.

Behind them, head coach Urban Meyer practically skipped across the Spartan Stadium grass, pumping his fist after racing onto the field at the final gun to embrace quarterback Braxton Miller.

The Buckeyes had survived the battle and earned the spoils that come with it.

"It's going to make a lot of people less hurt tomorrow," OSU center Corey Linsley said with a smile and a chuckle. "Just the level of enthusiasm we all have right now, that locker room was crazy afterward. It's real satisfying."

And no one appeared to be more satisfied than Meyer. Retired coaches don't get the feeling he got on the perfect autumn afternoon in East Lansing – the chance to prowl a sideline against a ranked team in their building with 70 players at his back for three roller-coaster, gut-wrenching hours, and then the combination of relief, excitement and satisfaction that comes when victory is finally clinched.



SONNY BROCKWAY PHOTOS

CAUSE AND EFFECT – Ohio State sophomore Devin Smith (15, above) caught a 63-yard touchdown pass in the third quarter at Michigan State that gave Urban Meyer (right) his first Big Ten win, a 17-16 victory over the Spartans.

With that in mind, this type of win seemed to be exactly what Meyer was missing when he was skipping from college town to college town last season as a television analyst. To have gone through it and emerged with a 5-0 football team put Meyer on an obvious high as he walked into the postgame press conference with wife Shelley and son Nate.

"That was a great game," Meyer said. "This ranks as one of the great ones. I've been very lucky to be around great players and great teams. This ranks as one of the top wins. This was fantastic."

It wasn't just the fact that the Buckeyes had emerged with the win but the way they did it that left their head coach so fulfilled.

On this day, scores across the country ballooned. The leading example was West Virginia's 70-63 home win against Baylor in the Mountaineers' Big 12 debut, but the trend was clear across the country. Up the road from Columbus, Miami (Ohio) beat Akron, 56-49, while No. 5 Georgia beat Tennessee, 51-44, and 12th-ranked Texas edged Oklahoma State by a 41-36 margin.

In all, seven Football Bowl Subdivision schools posted at least 40 points and still lost.

Even in the Big Ten, every other winning team on the day posted at least 30 points, with Northwestern setting a school record for total yards during a 44-29 win vs. Indiana and Purdue racing to a 51-41 victory against nonleague foe Marshall.



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OPINION

Miller Proved His Toughness At Michigan State



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Charter Member

You can complain about Braxton Miller's mentality as a run-first quarterback. You can criticize his throwing mechanics. You can even find fault with some of his decision-making.

But you had better never, ever question the kid's guts.

Miller's intestinal fortitude was never more on display than when he led Ohio State to a pressure-packed 17-16 victory Sept. 29 over a hard-hitting Michigan State team that some would say pushed the boundaries of clean, hard tackle football.

Just like the guy who keeps coming off the mat to win a heavyweight bout, Miller sucked it up and finally delivered the knockout blow. There was a reason Urban Meyer immediately went to his quarterback after the clock finally reached 0:00, leaving Michigan State head coach Mark Dantonio to wait a few extra seconds for his postgame handshake. Meyer was the beneficiary of one of the grittiest, gutsiest performances delivered by an Ohio State football player in quite some time.

Miller ran the ball 23 times against the Spartans, threw it 23 more and absorbed an inordinate amount of punishment countless other times. And he just kept coming.

He was first subjected to Michigan State aggression during the opening drive of the game after making a couple of veteran defenders look silly.

On the first play of the contest, Miller faked a handoff to tailback Jordan Hall before dancing his way to a 20-yard gain. Two plays later, the OSU quarterback squirted away from senior nose tackle Anthony Rashad White, who wound up grabbing at nothing but air.

Two plays after that, Miller started to run to his right before reversing himself, leaving several Michigan State defenders in the dust before he was pelted out of bounds by strong safety Isaiah Lewis.

Lewis was hit with a 15-yard personal foul, but Miller stayed on the ground for several minutes after banging his head against a big equipment locker. Backup Kenny Guiton finished off the touchdown drive with three straight handoffs to Hall, but Miller was back in the huddle on the Buckeyes' next possession, showing no worse for the wear. He even completed a couple of quick flips to Corey "Philly" Brown – appearing to purposely work plays into Lewis' area – before picking up a first down on a sweep around left end that netted 7 yards.

Miller continued to poke and prod the Spartans, who tried a variety of ways to bring down the elusive sophomore including some that seemed to occur well after the whistle had blown.

And still the sophomore kept coming – almost to the point of embarrassing the MSU defense.

With the Buckeyes protecting a 17-13 lead, an illegal block on a punt return had pinned them back at their own 15 at the 14:46 mark of the fourth quarter. Michigan State dialed up a blitz, and pressure from defensive end William Gholston and linebacker Denicos Allen appeared to have Miller corralled around his own 7 for a critical sack.

Somehow, though, Miller escaped the clutches of both defenders and managed to flip a short pass to Brown, who then turned the broken play into a 24-yard gain.

Five plays later, when Miller escaped the pocket on a third-and-6 from the MSU 46, the quarterback was on his way to a first-down run and the Buckeyes appeared ready to salt away the victory. But as Miller tried to squeeze between safety RJ Williamson and linebacker Max Bullough, the QB stumbled

and his left knee crashed into the Spartan Stadium turf.

Miller stayed on the ground for several minutes as head trainer Doug Calland and team physician Dr. Chris Kaeding examined his knee. Finally, Miller got to a seated position before he was able to stand and walk a few feet to the sideline under his own power. As Calland and Kaeding continued to ask him questions about how he felt, Miller, whose face had by now tightened into a painful grimace, flexed his leg – gingerly at first before he finally put his full weight on it. After a few more minutes, the quarterback walked back to his place on the bench and donned a headset.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

When the Buckeyes got the ball back, Miller took his place under center.

After the game, when reporters asked about his knee, the sophomore QB replied simply, "It's no big deal," although his teammates knew differently.

"To see him play through that pain and to now know how much pain he was in, that's awesome," center Corey Linsley said. "That's a hell of a player right there."

A hell of a young man, too.

Big Ten Having Its Problems

What we have learned so far from the first five weeks of the 2012 college football season is that a flawed Ohio State team represents the cream of the crop in the Big Ten.

The Buckeyes and Northwestern are the only remaining undefeated teams in a conference that boasted five teams ranked among the nation's top 18 in The Associated Press' preseason poll. Those rankings are but a distant memory now in a Big Ten that has more problems than a screen door in a hurricane.

No conference team resides in the top 10 of either major poll with the Buckeyes at No. 12 in the AP rankings. OSU is not eligible for the USA Today coaches' poll, meaning Nebraska is the highest-ranking Big Ten team there at No. 20.

After the first month of the season, eight teams rank 54th or lower nationally in terms of total offense, and six of those are 79th or below. That includes two-time defending conference champion Wisconsin, whose once-vaunted offensive attack now ranks dead last in the Big Ten and 109th nationally.

But the 3-2 Badgers, who were once as high as No. 12 in both preseason polls, aren't the only conference team with issues. Michigan State is so offensively challenged that the Spartans have scored exactly one touchdown in their two losses this season. And both of those losses – 20-3 to Notre Dame and 17-16 to OSU – have come in home games.

Nebraska is 4-1, but it needed to erase a 17-point third-quarter deficit at home against Wisconsin on Sept. 29 to claim a 30-27 victory. The Cornhuskers' famed Blackshirts defense is only a middle-of-the-pack unit this season, giving up averages of 20.6 points and 340.8 points per game.

NU is also a decidedly different team away from Lincoln. The team's only loss this season was a 36-30 defeat at UCLA, and the Huskers were 2-2 on the road last year in their first season as Big Ten members.

Minnesota is also 4-1, but Goldy got exposed in a 31-13 loss at Iowa. The Gophers

fell behind 24-0 at halftime to a Hawkeyes team that had been ranked No. 105 in the nation in scoring. Even with its outburst against Minnesota, Iowa moved up only to a tie for 97th.

Michigan has seemingly taken the step back many predicted this season. In fact, the argument could be made that quarterback Denard Robinson has taken a couple of steps backward. Robinson is still U-M's primary playmaker, but he played extremely poorly against Alabama and Notre Dame, combining to complete only 24 of 50 pass attempts for 338 yards and one touchdown against six interceptions. He did contribute 117 rushing yards in those games but failed to score.

Simply put, if you find a way to stop Robinson, you beat Michigan.

Northwestern and Purdue are the current dark horse darlings. The Wildcats are 5-0, but they have yet to reach the meat of their schedule. They take on Nebraska, Iowa, Michigan and Michigan State in successive games beginning Oct. 20. Meanwhile, the Boilermakers haven't even begun conference play yet and already have a half-game lead over the other three eligible teams in the Leaders Division. But they jump into the frying pan Oct. 6 by hosting a rested Michigan team coming off an open week, a game that begins a three-week stretch that includes a home game vs. Wisconsin and a road match at Ohio State.

Illinois appears to be struggling mightily under first-year head coach Tim Beckman, while Indiana is ... well, Indiana.

Finally, no one knows how much is left in Penn State's emotional tank. The Nittany Lions are currently on a three-game winning streak, but their next three games are interesting ones – at home vs. Northwestern on Oct. 6, at Iowa on Oct. 20 and home against Ohio State on Oct. 27. Penn State usually handles the Wildcats pretty well, but it has lost three of its last four to the Hawkeyes and four of its last six to the Buckeyes.

What we have learned about the Big Ten so far? That it has a couple of good teams, a couple of bad ones and several that are very average, so don't be surprised if the conference sends a team with three losses (or more) to the Rose Bowl.

Some Final Thoughts

- One week after Reid Fragel turned in a career-best performance against UAB, the senior right tackle might have done even better vs. Michigan State. Fragel started his afternoon with a first-quarter recovery of a Brown fumble at the OSU 34, had a key protection on Miller's 63-yard touchdown strike to Devin Smith, and then threw the crucial seal block that allowed Carlos Hyde to pick up the game-clinching first down with the game clock winding under two minutes.

- No one should have been that surprised when the Buckeyes were able to hold Bell to just 45 yards rushing. No Michigan State player has rushed for 100 or more yards against Ohio State since 1988. That year, Hyland Hickson rushed for 187 yards and Blake Ezor added 147 as Michigan State piled up 372 yards on the ground during a 20-10 victory over the Buckeyes in Spartan Stadium.

- Aware of the fact I'm scratching at an unhealed wound, who exactly was the genius at Ohio State who thought playing in a bowl game last year was a good idea? The general consensus always was that the NCAA was going to levy a one-year postseason ban on the Buckeyes, so it's at least worth asking why the university didn't self-impose its own ban for last season.

COVER STORY

Buckeyes Come Through When Needed

Continued From Page 1

But Meyer's game in East Lansing was nothing like that. Ohio State's win was a battle of wills, a pad-popping affair screaming that the two sets of players would be facing a sore Sunday no matter who emerged victorious.

"The Big Ten has taken some heat but that was a great game, a great atmosphere and a bunch of great players on the field who will play at the next level," Meyer said. "That was good for the conference and good for the Big Ten."

When asked if he had any interest in taking part in the shootouts across the country, Meyer had a quick answer.

"Oh, no, no, no," he said. "Our plan to win is play great defense. We have to score more points on offense, but that's a good defense. I'd like 70 every once in a while, but right now, we're happy to be 5-0 with a chance to be 6-0."

His team got there by playing a style of ball that might best suit it. While much – perhaps too much, in fact – has been made of Ohio State's adaptation to a spread offense, there is little doubt the principles of tough football are still preached in Columbus.

Offensively, the spread Ohio State runs also features a fair share of power plays and inside running, while Meyer is attempting to create the type of rugged, dominating defenses Florida used to emerge from the Southeastern Conference to capture national championships in 2006 and '08.

The way the coaching staff challenges the players on a day-to-day basis also is designed to instill toughness in a team. From the intense offseason training regimen to the famous one-on-one "circle drill" in practice to brutally honest player performance reviews both in person and to the media, no stone is unturned when it comes to challenging the resolve of the players.

Considering all that, perhaps it's not hard at all to figure why Meyer's smile went from nearly ear to ear when he left the Spartan Stadium turf. When going toe-to-toe with a Big Ten rival, the Buckeyes passed their first major test of the season.

"Oh, he knew it was a slugfest," Linsley



SONNY BROCKWAY

TIME TO PARTY – Members of the Ohio State marching band celebrate as sophomore wide receiver Devin Smith races by en route to his key third-quarter touchdown in the Buckeyes' 17-16 win at Michigan State.

said. "We knew it was a slugfest. We came out on top and it was just awesome. This is what I grew up doing, coming from Youngstown and getting coached the way I've been coached. This is what I know and love – just ground and pound. It was an awesome, satisfying feeling to win this game."

In fact, a year ago, the Buckeyes might not have left East Lansing with the win secured. Of Ohio State's seven losses last year, six came by seven points or fewer, a fact that didn't escape junior left tackle Jack Mewhort as he discussed the game.

"I've lost games like this," Mewhort said. "Last year, as Coach Meyer puts it, we got kicked a lot, and we were in battles that we lost. To just go out there and really just

put it all on the line and rip it open and play four hard quarters, it was sledgehammer football.

"It feels good to come out of here with a win. It makes it well worth our while."

Making The Plays

The last five minutes and change of the game continued to show that while this might not be the most talented or consistent Ohio State outfit of all time, the Buckeyes make the plays they need to make when the chips are down.

Michigan State took over the ball at their own 20-yard line with 5:39 to go and the Buckeyes holding only a one-point lead at 17-16. With kicker Dan Conroy already showing his leg – he nailed a 50-yarder with plenty of distance to spare in the third quarter – the

Spartans likely needed to move only a few yards into Ohio State territory to have the chance to kick a field goal that would give them the lead.

But as the Ohio State defense took the field, there was nothing but confidence for a unit that has stiffened when necessary at pretty much every opportunity in 2012.

"Oh yeah, definitely," senior cornerback Travis Howard said when asked if he was sure the Buckeyes would make the stop. "We do this in practice all the time, and our coaches believe in us and know what we're capable of doing. We just had to go out there and leave it all on the field."

That's exactly what happened.


Michigan State quarterback Andrew Maxwell did connect with Tony Lippett on the first play of the drive to gain 11 yards,



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COVER STORY

but Maxwell tried again to hit Lippett on the next play and threw an incompletion to set up second-and-10. Ohio State replied by stopping Le'Veon Bell, holding the MSU standout to his 45h and final rushing yard to leave the Spartans in a third-and-9 situation.

Ohio State chose to go with a blitz on the ensuing play, and linebacker Etienne Sabino got there, completing one of the finest games of his career by forcing Maxwell to throw incomplete under heavy pressure.

Faced with fourth-and-9 and with more than four minutes left on the clock, Michigan State chose to punt the ball, but the Spartans would never see it again.

Ohio State rumbled for three first downs to close out the game, gaining at least 6 yards on each of the three first downs and finishing things with a 5-yard gain by Carlos Hyde on third-and-4.

The fact the Buckeyes were able to grind out those yards with Michigan State's impressive front figuring they would run the ball on every play brought a smile to Linsley's face.

"It was awesome," the OSU center said. "It didn't feel like they quit at all. It didn't feel like their defensive line let up or their play-calling let up at all. It was just one man against another man, and our men won."

It was the latest example of Ohio State doing what it has to do to emerge victorious. Each of the last three games of the nonconference schedule against Central Florida, California and UAB had a point or two in the second half when it looked like things could get away from the Buckeyes, and each time Ohio State shut down the opposing hopes.

"All year, every game, that's what we do so far," Linsley said. "When we need to win it and we need it, we finish every drive. We might not score every drive, but when it comes time to win the game, we win. I think that's our M.O. right now, to be honest with you."

The result was a very pleased Meyer, who has talked numerous times this season about the importance of winning even without style points.

"He was very ecstatic," senior defensive end John Simon said. "It means a lot for us to see him that excited about a win. We went out there knowing we were going to do whatever it took to get that win."

Creating Identity

In college football, identity might be the hardest thing to create and sustain.

There are few programs in football that can hang their hat on the same thing from week to week, and those that are able to establish a style of play are often the ones who wind up being the most successful.

Ohio State certainly had that under Jim Tressel, as the Buckeyes became known for having excellent defenses that shut down the run and kept opposing teams from hitting big plays while doing enough on offense to win the closest, most important games. That identity led to seven Big Ten titles and eight BCS bowl berths in eight seasons, one of the most successful runs ever in a program that stresses excellence.

Over the past two years, though, that characteristic started to wane a bit. In a span of 14 games, five different opponents cracked the 200-yard mark on the ground, and going into the Michigan State game, Ohio State sat dead last in the Big Ten in total defense.

For a unit that has worn the name "Silver Bullets" with pride for well over a decade, it was time to make a stand.

"We challenged ourselves," Simon said. "We knew this was a big game for us, and we haven't played up to our potential the last couple of weeks. We wanted to come out here and make a statement, and I think as a collective group we did that and we played well together."

The job Ohio State did shutting down Bell was the most impressive part. The MSU running back, who lists his hometown as Columbus, had topped 600 yards in his first four games, but Ohio State never let him get untracked. His longest run was a mere 8 yards, and he actually finished with more yards receiving (58) than rushing (45 on 17 carries).

The Buckeyes also brought the wood in the passing game. Michigan State's young wide-outs dropped a number of passes, especially when the Ohio State secondary was near. The OSU safeties delivered numerous big hits that jarred the ball loose and some others for good measure after the MSU receivers had a case of alligator arms.

The physical style of play was something Ohio State was pleased with after the game.

"It's definitely a thing we can hang our hat on," Howard said. "We know we have the defensive players and the defensive line to do that kind of stuff. I'm just happy that they came out and showcased their talent today."

"Our coaches always believed in us and told us we're capable of doing anything, but this

was the game we had to go out and showcase our talent on national TV. We wanted to go out there and leave a statement and show them how the Silver Bullets defense goes."

That identity might last as long as one week. The Ohio State defense faces a challenge with Nebraska's potent offense due to invade Ohio Stadium on Oct. 6. On the other hand, another excellent defensive performance against the Cornhuskers might show the Bullets are back in town.

"We're not satisfied," cornerback Bradley Roby said. "We have to get better at some things, but we're going to get better and play Nebraska."

That was a week away, though, as the team enjoyed the victory in East Lansing. When asked if at least the win against the Spartans was satisfying, Roby answered in the affirmative.

"Definitely," he said. "It was our first big win for the season, and we have to build off that."

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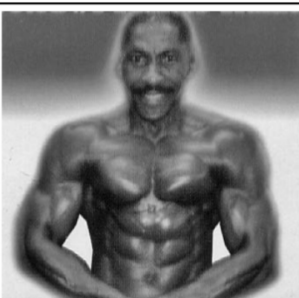
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OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN STATE

Ohio State Answers Challenge At MSU

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

Ohio State managed to blunt Michigan State's vaunted running game and somehow overcame three turnovers, six penalties and a host of mental errors to score a hard-fought 17-16 victory Sept. 29 before 76,705 fans at Spartan Stadium in East Lansing.

The Buckeyes moved to 5-0 for the season but more importantly gave head coach Urban Meyer a win in his Big Ten debut.

"We found out something about our team today," Meyer told reporters after the game. "To go on the road, in a hostile environment against a quality, quality football team and find a way to win and answer every drive with another drive ... when it was time to go make a play, they did."

"This was a war, and this was two sledgehammers going at each other. I thought that was a great game."

OSU limited Michigan State to only 34 yards on the ground after the Spartans entered the game averaging 176.2 per game. MSU junior tailback Le'Veon Bell, who was the nation's third-leading rusher with an average of 152.5 yards per game, finished with only 45 yards on 17 carries. The Spartans had 17 first downs in the game, but not a single one of them was manufactured by the running game.

The Buckeyes were led once again by sophomore quarterback Braxton Miller, who was knocked out of the game a couple of times but kept coming back like a scarlet and gray Energizer bunny. Miller rushed 23 times for 136 yards, and completed 16 of 23 pass attempts for 179 yards and a touchdown.

But while Miller was notching his sixth career 100-yard rushing game and going over the 300 mark in total yardage for the third time in five games this season, the sophomore QB turned the ball over three times – twice on fumbles and once with an interception – as the Buckeyes struggled to maintain control of the game.

In addition to the turnovers, Ohio State also committed six penalties for 65 yards

and had trouble once again defensively with tackling and missed assignments. But the Buckeyes were able to total 383 yards of offense and make just enough plays on defense to preserve the win.

In addition to Miller, OSU got superlative offensive performances from a pair of juniors – wide receiver Corey "Philly" Brown and tailback Carlos Hyde.

Brown caught a career-high 12 balls for 84 yards while Hyde took over for an injured Jordan Hall and ground out 49 yards on 11 tough carries. Hyde converted two crucial first downs on the Buckeyes' final possession, including a slicing 5-yard run up the middle on third-and-4 with the game clock winding under two minutes that clinched the game for the Buckeyes.

Sophomore receiver Devin Smith added two catches for 79 yards, including a 63-yard touchdown catch with 3:05 remaining in the third quarter that accounted for the game-winning points.

Defensively, the bend-but-don't-break Buckeyes allowed 303 total yards to the Spartans, but Michigan State penetrated the OSU red zone only once in the game and then had to settle for a field goal.

Ohio State got excellent individual performances from the likes of cornerback Bradley Roby and linebacker Etienne Sabino to close out Michigan State when the Buckeyes needed it most.

Roby, the sophomore playmaker who missed the UAB game with a shoulder injury, totaled nine tackles and also blocked a punt. Meanwhile, the fifth-year senior Sabino turned in a career performance with eight tackles and a sack. He also was credited with a pair of quarterback pressures, including an important one on third down during Michigan State's final possession.

Michigan State was led offensively by junior quarterback Andrew Maxwell, who completed 22 of 42 passes for 269 yards and a touchdown. Those numbers were just shy of single-game career highs for the first-year starter.

Bell did far more damage as a receiver than as a runner, gathering in a career-best eight catches for 58 yards. Sophomore receiver Keith Mumphery added five catches for 79 yards and a touchdown. The yardage was a single-game best, and the TD reception was a highlight-reel, catch-and-run during which Mumphery broke at least six tackles.

"Give credit to Ohio State," Maxwell said. "They did a good job stifling our run game a little bit. They just played physical. I thought they had a good pass rush all day. That's a good defensive line. They're going to cause a lot of people some problems."

Back-And-Forth Battle

The No. 14 Buckeyes wasted no time getting on the board early and even appeared they might be on their way to an easy victory. OSU took the game's opening possession and marched 75 yards in eight plays to take a quick lead.

Miller set the tone on the first play from scrimmage, faking a handoff to Hall before taking off toward the left sideline for a 20-yard run. Three plays later, Brown gathered in his first reception of the game, an 8-yarder that converted a third-and-5.

Miller followed with a 13-yard run that was followed by a 15-yard personal foul penalty against Michigan State that briefly knocked Miller out of the game. That gave



SONNY BROCKWAY

MOMENTUM CHANGE – Sophomore Bradley Roby (1) made one of several big plays for the Ohio State football team at Michigan State when he blocked a Mike Sadler (3) punt in the second quarter.

the Buckeyes a first-and-10 at the MSU 14 and, with Kenny Guiton at the controls, Hall did the rest. He carried three straight times – for 11 and 2 yards before diving over the goal line from the 1 for the game's first touchdown.

Junior kicker Drew Basil booted the extra point to give Ohio State a 7-0 lead at the 12:09 mark of the first quarter.

But as quickly as the Buckeyes seized the early momentum, No. 20 Michigan State took it away by responding with a score on its opening possession. Maxwell moved his team 50 yards in nine plays that included back-to-back throws to Bell that gained a total of 18 yards and pushed the Spartans to the OSU 15.

But Bell was stopped for a 2-yard loss by Ohio State senior lineman John Simon on second down, and a third-and-7 pass from Maxwell intended for Mumphery fell incomplete, so the Spartans were forced to settle for a 34-yard field goal from senior kicker Dan Conroy.

That made it 7-3 with 8:23 remaining in the first period, and the crowd sensed it was in for an offensive battle. It couldn't have been more wrong.

After the opening scoring salvos from both teams, neither team dented the scoreboard again in the first half although each had excellent scoring opportunities.

Early in the second quarter, Ohio State moved methodically from its own 20 to a first down at the MSU 25. It was an all-Miller drive with the quarterback rushing four times for 19 yards and completing three straight pass attempts for 36 more yards.

But Miller got a little too greedy. On first-and-10 from the 25, he tried to get a quick flip to Hyde but the ball was intercepted by Spartans sophomore safety

Kurtis Drummond at the 17-yard line to end the threat.

The Buckeyes had another chance go by the boards later in the second period. Two plays after Roby blocked a Michigan State punt to give OSU possession at the Spartans' 35-yard line, Miller fumbled on an aborted option read and MSU senior linebacker Chris Norman recovered at his own 37 with 1:42 left in the half.

Norman's recovery seemed to stir what had been a largely dormant Michigan State offense, and the Spartans quickly moved back into Ohio State territory thanks to Maxwell completions to junior tight end Dion Sims for 19 yards and Mumphery for 18 yards.

But the drive stalled at the OSU 24 when Maxwell fired incomplete on three straight plays, the last one while being pressured by Sabino. That caused the Spartans to call upon the normally reliable Conroy, but the senior pushed his 42-yard field-goal attempt wide to the right with 33 seconds remaining until the break.

Michigan State pulled within a single point for the first time at 7-6 when Conroy topped off the first drive of the second half by thumping a 50-yard field goal through the uprights at the 11:04 mark of the third quarter.

But the Spartans could have had more. After Maxwell found junior receiver Bennie Fowler behind an umbrella of OSU defenders for a 35-yard gain on third-and-10, the signal caller connected with Sims for 24 more yards to the Ohio State 9. But Michigan State was flagged for an illegal receiver downfield on the play, pushing the Spartans back to the 38-yard line. The subsequent three plays netted only 5 more yards and MSU was forced to settle for Conroy's field goal.

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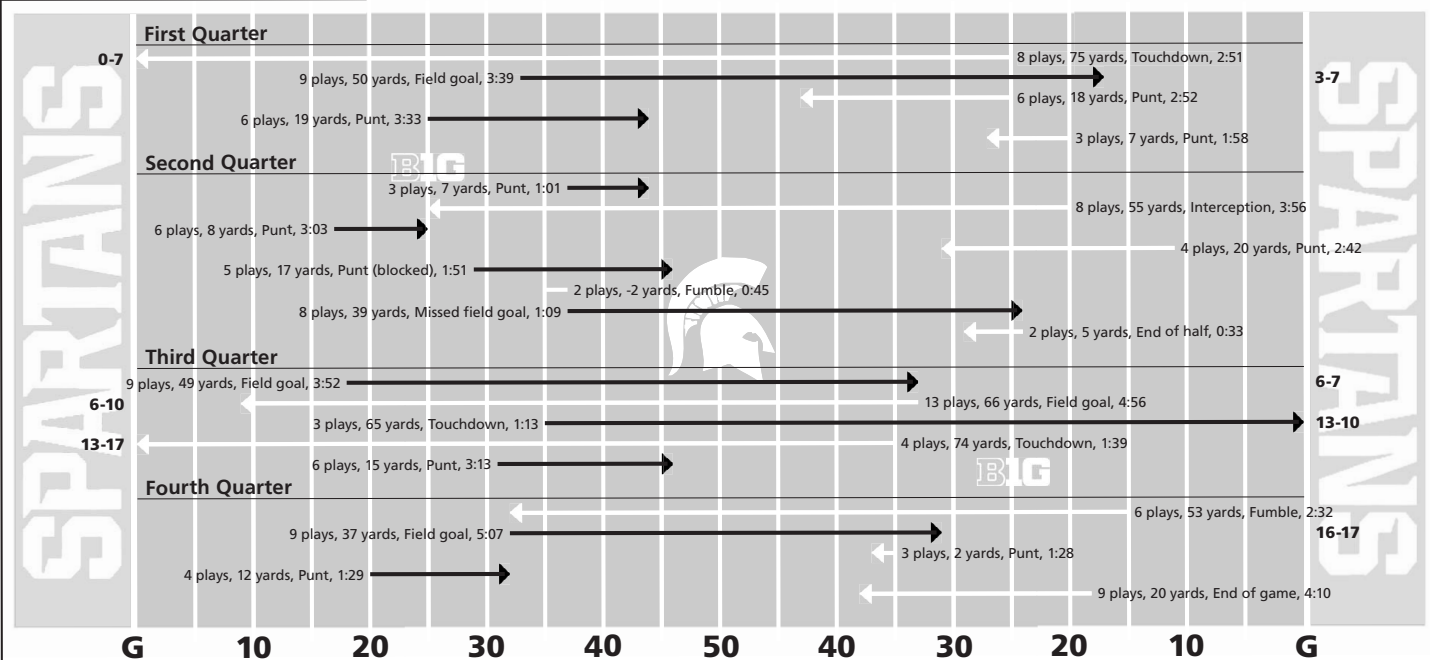
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OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN STATE

Drive Chart

Mich. State →

← Ohio State



Ohio State had to settle for three points of its own following its next possession. Miller led a 13-play drive 66 yards to the doorstep of the Michigan State goal line, but after reaching the 12-yard line, the QB misfired twice and got only 3 yards out of a bubble screen to Brown. On fourth down, Basil came on for a 26-yard field goal to make it 10-6 with 6:08 left in the third quarter.

The Spartans came right back to seemingly take control of the game with a 65-yard drive that took exactly 73 seconds. Sophomore Nick Hill returned a Basil kick-off to the 35 after which Bell took a direct snap and picked up 4 yards. Maxwell followed with a 17-yard completion to Sims that got an extra 15 yards tacked onto the end when Roby was flagged for a facemask penalty.

Then on the next play, Mumphrey gathered in a pass from Maxwell and muscled his way through six would-be tacklers on his way to a 29-yard touchdown romp. It was Mumphrey's first career touchdown catch, and once Conroy tackled on the PAT, Michigan State had a 13-10 lead with 4:49 to go in the third quarter.

It didn't take long for the Buckeyes to answer, however. Miller moved the team 74 yards in only four plays, the big one coming when Smith got loose down the sideline behind MSU senior cornerback Johnny Adams for a 63-yard touchdown bomb. Basil came on to add the extra point, and Ohio State had retaken the lead at 17-13 with 3:05 to go in the third period.

The Buckeyes threatened to add to that lead early in the fourth quarter when they moved out from their own 15 to cross midfield. But on a third-and-6 at the MSU 46, Miller crashed to the ground after a 12-yard gain and lost control of the football. Drummond made the recovery for the Spartans at his own 32 with 12:14 left in the game.

Michigan State quickly went the other way and benefited from an Ohio State

defensive holding call on an aborted fourth-and-1 play. That pushed the Spartans to the OSU 34, and they made it as far as the 28-yard line before Maxwell was corralled for a third-down sack by senior defensive end Nathan Williams.

The 3-yard loss forced the Spartans to call upon Conroy again, and this time the MSU kicker converted a 48-yard field goal to make it 17-16 with 7:07 to play.

The Spartans had one more chance to pull out the victory. After forcing a three-and-out series by the Buckeyes after Conroy's field goal, Maxwell completed an 11-yard pass to sophomore Tony Lippert to give MSU a first down on its own 31.

But the quarterback threw incomplete on the next play, Bell managed only a 1-yard run on second down and then Sabino hit Maxwell as he threw a third-down pass, a throw that fell harmlessly incomplete. Michigan State was forced to punt the ball away with 4:10 remaining, and the Spartans never got the ball back.

The Buckeyes converted a trio of first downs on their final possession, including a 6-yard run by Hyde on a second-and-3 and a 14-yard scamper by Miller on the following play.

Michigan State called its final two timeouts following the next two plays, but then Hyde iced the game by following a block from senior right tackle Reid Fragel and slicing through a would-be tackler for a 5-yard gain on third-and-4.

That gave OSU a first down with 1:29 remaining, and three kneel-downs later, the Buckeyes had the victory.

Game Notes

- Ohio State moved its advantage over Michigan State to 28-13 in the overall series. That includes eight out of the last nine and 13 of the last 16 meetings. The Buckeyes also upped their record to 14-5 all-time in Spartan Stadium, including four wins in a row. Ohio State hasn't lost in East Lansing since a 23-7 decision in 1999.

The Bottom Line

The game was over when ... Carlos Hyde followed a block from right tackle Reid Fragel and powered through Michigan State defensive end Marcus Rush for a 5-yard gain late in the fourth quarter. Hyde's run converted a third-and-4 play and gave the Buckeyes a first down inside the two-minute mark, clinching the victory.

Game ball goes to ... Braxton Miller. Yes, he committed three turnovers, but he took Michigan State's best shots on several occasions and just kept coming. The sophomore QB ran the ball 23 times and threw the ball 23 times, accounting for 315 yards of total offense and practically willing the Buckeyes to the win.

Stat of the game ... 0. The Spartans totaled 17 first downs in the game, but nary a one came via the running game. Before being stoned by the Ohio State defense, the MSU running game had accounted for 36.4 percent of the team's first downs (31 of 85).

— Mark Rea

- Meyer is now 1-0 against the Spartans, evening the record since 1951 of first-year Ohio State head coaches against Michigan State. Earle Bruce (1979) and Jim Tressel (2001) each beat the Spartans in their initial meetings, while Woody Hayes (1951), John Cooper (1988) and Luke Fickell (2011) all lost.

- Dantonio dropped to 1-5 lifetime against the Buckeyes. His team's victory last year broke a streak that included losses in 2004 and 2006 while at Cincinnati in addition to defeats in 2007 and 2008 with the Spartans. Dantonio, of course, was defensive coordinator on Tressel's OSU staff from 2001-03 and won the Frank Broyles Award in 2002 as college football's top assistant coach.

- Dantonio is now 47-24 in his five-plus seasons with the Spartans, including a 31-8 mark at home. Michigan State's 20-3 loss to Notre Dame on Sept. 15 snapped a 15-game home winning streak, the fifth longest in school history, and now the Spartans have

lost two games at home for the first time since 2009.

- Meyer has his team off to a 5-0 start for the fifth time in 11 seasons as a head coach. The others were Bowling Green (2002), Utah (2004) and Florida (2006 and '09).

- With his 5-0 record, Meyer now has the third-best start to a career by an Ohio State head coach. Carroll Widdoes won his first 12 games in 1944 and '45, while Earle Bruce won his first 11 in a row in 1979.

- Some more Meyer stats: The coach improved to 39-4 all-time in September, 22-10 against ranked teams, 95-5 when his team is leading at halftime and a perfect 17-0 when his team blocks a punt.

- The game was the Big Ten opener for Ohio State, which is entering its 100th season as a conference member. The Buckeyes are now 72-24-4 in league openers, and that includes wins in 11 of their last 13.

Continued On Page 12

OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN STATE

Miller Continues Attack On OSU Record Book

Continued From Page 11

• Michigan State kicked off its 60th season of Big Ten competition, and it now has a 32-24-4 record in league openers.

• The Buckeyes are now 5-1 in Big Ten openers vs. Michigan State, including 2-0 at Spartan Stadium. The only other opener in East Lansing was a 21-0 decision in 1975. Tailback Archie Griffin rushed for 108 yards in that game, fullback Pete Johnson scored two touchdowns and defensive halfback Craig Cassidy tied the school's single-game record by nabbing three interceptions. Cassidy is the son of 1955 Heisman Trophy winner Howard "Hopalong" Cassidy.

• Since joining the Big Ten in 1913, Ohio State head coaches are now 7-5-1 in their Big Ten debut games, including 3-2-1 on the road. John W. Wilce's team lost a 7-6 decision to Indiana in 1913, the Buckeyes' inaugural season as Western Conference members. Sam Willaman won his conference debut with a 7-6 win over Iowa in 1929, and Francis Schmidt's team gave him a 33-0 victory over Indiana in the 1934 season opener. Paul Brown took over in 1941 and his team eked out a 16-14 win over Purdue in the league opener, and three years later, the 1944 team gave Widdoes a 34-0 win over Iowa in his Big Ten debut. Three straight coaches then failed to win their first conference game – Paul Bixler, 20-7 at Wisconsin in 1946; Wes Fesler, 24-20 at Purdue in 1947; and Hayes, whose team fought Wisconsin to a 6-6 tie in Madison in 1951. Bruce broke that string with a 21-17

win at Minnesota in 1979 before Cooper lost his conference debut in 1988, a 31-12 defeat to Illinois. Tressel won his Big Ten debut at Indiana, a 27-14 victory in 2001, and Fickell lost last season to Michigan State.

• The game marked the first time this season Ohio State had faced a ranked opponent. Michigan was No. 18 in the USA Today coaches' poll and No. 20 in the Associated Press writers' poll.

• When Ohio State is the higher ranked team, it now has a 23-6 record against Michigan State. When the Spartans enter the game as the higher ranked team, they are 5-0. When neither team is ranked, OSU had a 5-2 edge.

• The Buckeyes were 2 for 2 in the red zone against the Spartans and have now scored on each of their last 15 trips inside the opponent's 20-yard line. That includes 13 touchdowns and only two field goals. Michigan State's previous four opponents had combined for only one touchdown and three field goals in just six trips to the red zone against the Spartans.

• With the trip to Spartan Stadium, Ohio State played its first game of the 2012 season on natural grass. The Buckeyes were 0-3 on grass fields last season – at Miami (Fla.), Purdue and the Gator Bowl – and they hadn't won on a natural surface since a 26-17 win over Oregon in the 2010 Rose Bowl. OSU is scheduled to play one more game this season on natural turf – the Oct. 27 contest at Penn State.

• The Ohio State defense knew going into the game it would do well to keep

Michigan State under 24 points. Since 1990, the Spartans are 125-33-1 when scoring 24 or more. When they are held to fewer than 24 points, their record is now 21-90-1.

• The Spartans have 28 Ohio players on their roster while Ohio State has only two players from Michigan – defensive lineman Johnathan Hankins (Dearborn Heights) and Fragel (Grosse Point Farms).

• Dantonio's coaching staff features plenty of assistants who have ties to Ohio State. Running backs coach and recruiting coordinator Brad Salem's older brother, Tim, was quarterbacks coach at OSU from 1997-2000. Linebackers and special teams coach Mike Tressel is the son of former Ohio State running backs coach Dick Tressel and nephew of former head coach Jim Tressel. Offensive line coach Mark Staten was a graduate assistant at OSU in 2002 and '03. Michigan State strength coach Ken Mannie was a graduate assistant on Bruce's OSU staff in 1984, MSU director of personnel/player development and relations Dino Folino began his coaching career as a GA for Hayes in 1974 and '75, and the Spartans' head trainer Jeff Monroe spent four years as a student trainer for the Buckeyes from 1969-72.

• Brown had a career-high 12 receptions for the Buckeyes, tying him for the fourth-best single-game total in program history. David Boston holds the school record with 14 catches at Penn State during a 31-27 OSU loss in 1997. Boston also had a 13-catch game at Indiana in 1996, matching the total Gary Williams had against

Florida State in 1981. Others with 12-catch performances are Bob Grimes (1952), Billy Anders (1966) and Brian Stablein (1992).

• Brown's 12-catch game was the first time an Ohio State receiver cracked double digits since Ted Ginn Jr. had 10 receptions during a 35-7 win over Bowling Green in 2006.

• Brown now has 32 catches this year, a pace that would put him at 77 for the season. That would be the second-best total in school history. Boston has held the single-season mark since 1997 with 85 receptions.

• Smith had only two catches against the Spartans, but they went for 79 yards. That gives the sophomore receiver 33 career receptions for 645 yards, an average of 19.5 yards per catch.

• Miller's 136 rushing yards vs. Michigan State pushed his career total to 1,292 and vaulted him from 49th to 45th place on Ohio State's all-time list. He passed Troy Smith (1,168, 2003-06), Derek Combs (1,231, 1997-2000), Champ Henson (1,235, 1972-74), Maurice Clarett (1,237, 2002) and Ricardo Volley (1,252, 1977-79).

• Miller needs only 12 more yards to become the fourth-leading rusher of all time among Ohio State quarterbacks. Terrelle Pryor (2008-10) holds the record with 2,164 yards, followed by Cornelius Greene (2,080, 1972-75), Rex Kern (1,714, 1968-70) and Art Schlichter (1,303, 1978-81). Note: The school no longer recognizes Pryor's record after erasing his totals from the 2010 vacated season.

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OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN STATE

Miller's Growth Tangible Against Spartans

As Tom Herman meticulously reviewed game tape from last year's Michigan State game, he might have come to the realization that it was only halfway helpful.

Sure, Ohio State's first-year offensive coordinator got a better feel for the way the Spartans' defense would likely attack the Buckeyes in this year's matchup in East Lansing, but the other half wasn't quite as useful.

INSIDE THE OFFENSE

Ari Wasserman

He wasn't watching the same Braxton Miller who eventually led the Buckeyes to a 17-16 win in Spartan Stadium in this year's matchup, helping Ohio State achieve its first Big Ten victory under head coach Urban Meyer to improve to 5-0 on the season.

"You watch the film last year and it was like a deer in the headlights and for good reason," Herman said, critiquing the quarterback's performance in what was only his second career start. "He was also 195 pounds and really didn't know much about what he was doing."

Measured in weight alone, Miller has come 25 pounds from the freshman version of himself who was overwhelmed by the Michigan State defense. The Buckeyes lost that game, 10-7, and the offense scored its only touchdown late in the fourth quarter once the game had already been decided – and Miller wasn't even in the game at the time. He was relieved in the fourth quarter by Joe Bauserman, who threw a 33-yard pass to Evan Spencer with 10 seconds remaining to avoid the shutout.

The stakes were higher for Miller this year. Ohio State hadn't yet lost a game and the Spartans fielded a defense that Meyer considered to be one of the top 10 units he's ever faced. And the game was on the road.

Miller didn't pass the test with flying col-

ors, as he turned the ball over three times in Michigan State territory and seemed to make the occasional wrong decision on Ohio State's zone read plays.

He was also knocked out of the game twice, briefly succumbing to the physicality of the Michigan State defense, but he returned both times and helped close things out on the Buckeyes' final possession.

"A gutsy effort by our quarterback," Meyer said. "He's banged up, but he just kept coming back."

Late in the third quarter, Miller connected with receiver Devin Smith for a 63-yard touchdown strike, a pass that was arguably the best the QB has thrown in his still-brief Ohio State career. Michigan State kept bringing the blitz, so Meyer called for the shot downfield and Miller hit Smith's fly route in stride over the top of MSU's standout cornerback Johnny Adams.

More important than just Miller's throw was the timing of the play. Michigan State had just taken a 13-10 lead when wide receiver Keith Mumphy caught a pass and broke several tackles before finding his way into the end zone.

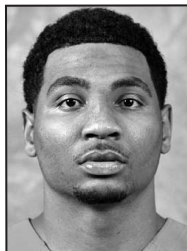
The Buckeyes' lone passing touchdown on the day served as a much-needed counterpunch in a hostile road environment.

"There's no doubt that he's the fuel in our engine," Herman said of Miller, who threw for 179 yards and ran for 136. "I am telling you, the kid can throw it."

There were instances during the game when the Buckeyes looked a lot like they did a year ago. Miller sometimes had the ball in his hands in the backfield and was forced to make things happen, which didn't always end ideally for Ohio State.

There was some cause for concern for Herman, but he said it was mostly a result of Michigan State's defense forcing the Buckeyes to do things differently. The Spartans would likely have preferred Ohio State to throw the ball more – 60 times, Herman said – but OSU refused to turn its back on the running game.

That wound up setting the stage for Smith's game-changing play.



Braxton Miller

"When you're playing a defense this good and this talented and this well-coached and is also aggressive, it becomes really difficult to find ways to run the football," Herman said. "And we're still a work in progress throwing the football, so saying we're going to go out there and throw it 60 times because that's what they're giving you, that wouldn't be a good recipe for success. We had to manufacture some ways to run the football."

The Buckeyes manufactured that through their quarterback. Though Carlos Hyde and Jordan Hall were healthy in the same game for the first time this season, Miller carried the ball 23 times. Granted, Hall suffered an injury later in the game after he capped Ohio State's first possession with a 1-yard touchdown run, but Ohio State kept the ball in Miller's hands.

That led to some turnovers at crucial points in the game, and indeed Miller's three turnovers came at times when the Buckeyes looked poised to score some much-needed points. Herman, however, sees a quarterback who is far from perfect, yet primed to potentially become one of the most impressive players at the position in college football.

"We have to look at the turnovers and correct that," Herman said. "But that's an easy fix. The kid played tough, he played hard and he put the entire team in on his back."

Smith Back At It

The Ohio State passing attack has certainly come a long way from a year ago when the team's three leading receivers had only 14 receptions each at the end of the season. Against the Spartans, Corey "Philly" Brown had 12 all by himself.

But it was one of Smith's two receptions that continued what is now turning out to be the norm – the sophomore wide receiver making a big play when the Buckeyes' backs are against the wall.

"It was unbelievable," Smith said of his post-touchdown emotions. "Coach Meyer always talks about making plays for this team. At halftime, he was telling everybody to make a play. And I made a play."

It wasn't new territory for Smith. Dating back to his freshman season, he caught the last-minute Hail Mary that lifted the Buckeyes

over Wisconsin in Ohio Stadium. This season, Smith caught a long touchdown pass late in the fourth quarter against California to help Ohio State escape that near-upset.

Then it was business as usual for Smith against the Spartans. Michigan State was playing heavy in the box, and Meyer turned to him to use his speed to get down the sideline and make a big play.

Smith ran past Adams, a fifth-year senior from Akron Butchel, caught the fly route along the sideline and dashed to the end zone.

"All game I knew I could beat him deep," said Smith, who said he remembered playing against Adams in high school. "We were hoping we were going to get something. Coach Herman didn't call any (deep passes early), but they called it at the right time. We made the play."

"You've just got to be ready when opportunity comes. I made a play for this football team, and I couldn't ask for anything better."

Smashmouth Ending

Clinging to a one-point lead, Ohio State got the ball on its own 18-yard line with 4:10 remaining in the game. Michigan State had two timeouts, but all that stood between the Buckeyes and a win was a couple of first downs.

OSU lined up against the tough Michigan State defense that spent the entire day dedicated to stopping the run. The Spartans knew what was coming, but Herman didn't care.

"The way our offensive line was playing, I was really confident we could do it," he said. "The way Braxton and Carlos were running the football, we felt really good about our chance to get three first downs. When we needed them the most, we got them."

Hyde took a handoff from Miller on first down and rushed for 7 yards. The next play, the Buckeyes went right back to the junior running back, and he gained another hard-fought 6 to move the chains for the first time.

The statement was made.

"We wanted them to know we could move the ball on them when it mattered," Hyde said. "We ended up doing it."

Miller wasted no time picking up the Buckeyes' second first down on the drive, taking a designed keeper up the middle for a 14-yard gain. On the following play, Miller again kept it for a 6-yard gain, and Michigan State called timeout with 2:10 remaining.

After the 30-second break, Miller trotted back out knowing that Ohio State needed only 4 more yards to claim the victory. The quarterback, however, was stuffed for no gain, and the Spartans burned their final timeout at the 2:06 mark.

At the Michigan State 49 facing third-and-4, Hyde churned out 5 yards to convert the first down.

"Coach Meyer told me we needed the first down, and I knew I was going to work hard to get it," said Hyde, who returned after missing the last two games with a knee sprain. "Nothing was going to stop me from getting the first down and I did it."

The Buckeyes weren't always able to move the ball efficiently on the ground against Michigan State, but Meyer was elated that his first victory in the conference was sealed by old-fashioned Big Ten football.

"I think every coach wants that," he said. "Against that front, when they knew it was coming, to just take the ball and end the game like that, that tells you a little bit. I didn't know if we could do that. That was a heck of an effort."

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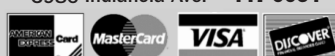
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OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN STATE

Silver Bullets Silence Bell, Limit MSU Attack

The single-game career highs Le'Veon Bell set against Ohio State tell much of the story of the Buckeyes' defensive effort and their opponents' game plan Sept. 29 in East Lansing.

Michigan State's junior running back caught more passes (eight) for more receiving yards (58) than he had in any other game in his two-plus college seasons, but those totals were more a result of Spartan failings than successes during a 17-16 Ohio State victory.

INSIDE THE DEFENSE

Marcus Hartman

Since Mark Dantonio took over as head coach of Michigan State in 2007, the Spartans have worked to establish a run-first identity. "Pound Green, pound" is a pet phrase for Dantonio, and it fits well within his overall program because he is a defense-minded head coach, and it has served the Spartans well for much of his tenure.

With that being the case, the hosts might have been licking their chops at the thought of taking on an Ohio State defensive unit being recognized more for its shortcomings prior to the game than its superlatives.

Bell entered the contest leading the Big Ten and ranked third nationally with an average of 152.5 yards per game while the Buckeyes were an uncharacteristic seventh in the league in rushing defense (117.5 yards per game).

They had been even worse against the pass, though, giving up 277.2 yards through the air, a total that ranked better only than Northwestern's 294.8.

Add it all up and Ohio State entered the conference slate allowing more yards total - 394.8 per contest - than any other Big Ten team.

"I've been around here for five years, and I don't think we ever have been in that position," senior defensive end Nathan Williams said. "We take things personal, and I think we showed that today. We stopped the run and did what the game plan asked us and did what the team needed, so it was a great win."

The Michigan State offense was no juggernaut itself, ranking seventh in the

league in total offense (405.2 yards) as it leaned heavily on Bell with junior quarterback Andrew Maxwell easing into his first season as a starter. But the Spartans could have looked at the Buckeyes with thoughts of getting well.

That was not what played out. Rather than attack Ohio State on the ground, where the Buckeyes had received stellar play from the line this season but spotty contributions from their linebackers, MSU offensive coordinator Dan Roushar chose to spread the ball around and move through the air.

That did not surprise the Buckeyes too much for two reasons, the first being the success teams had against them earlier in the season with a variety of screen passes and short throws.

"I always felt like they were going to find a different way to attack," defensive tackle Johnathan Hankins said. "They tried to attack our defense with the bubble (screens), but I felt like we did a good job of being aware of what they were doing."

Sophomore linebacker Ryan Shazier explained the second reason.

"They really didn't throw more than I expected them to because we wanted to stop the run to cause them to throw it," he said.

Hankins tackled Bell after a 1-yard gain on the Spartans' first play from scrimmage, and Roushar went to the air for each of the next five snaps.

Those netted 51 yards (including 31 by Bell on three catches), but Bell lost 2 yards on a second-and-5 at the Ohio State 15-yard line and the Spartans had to settle for a field goal after Maxwell threw incomplete on third down.

That score would be Michigan State's only one of the first half.

The Spartans tacked on three more points to start the third quarter, but they were still unable to get Bell in gear as he ran three times for 4 yards on the nine-play, 49-yard scoring drive.

When the hosts finally dented the end zone later in the quarter, Bell was mostly a decoy.

The Spartans scored when Maxwell faked a handoff to the running back and then rolled out to his left, where he found Keith Mumphery running a short out pattern. The sophomore receiver gathered in the pass and headed up the east sideline, where he broke six tackles on his way to the end zone.



SONNY BROCKWAY

RINGING BELL - Ohio State fifth-year senior Nathan Williams (43) was one of several Buckeyes to make life difficult for Michigan State tailback Le'Veon Bell (24).

The 29-yard touchdown gave the home team the lead and served as a painful reminder of why the visitors found themselves with such dubious statistics entering the contest. No fewer than six Buckeyes had a shot at Mumphery, but no one could bring him down. Safety Orhian Johnson meekly put two hands on him before letting him go by, and then linebacker Etienne Sabino tried to strip the ball before getting hold of Mumphery's body. After that, the receiver slipped past a diving attempt by safety Christian Bryant and stepped over cornerback Travis Howard before stumbling across the goal line past linebackers Storm Klein and Shazier, who appeared to try to push him out of bounds.

"In that situation, we've just got to get them down, but the good thing is we didn't panic," Sabino said. "We just got together and had to stop them. We just said, 'Next play.' You can't dwell in the past. You've just got to move on. I think we had people there. We've got to wrap up. People try to rip the ball out, but we've got to get them down first."

As painful and familiar as that play was, the Buckeyes were happy with their overall effort.

They held the Spartans to a season-low 34 yards on 22 rushes while Bell finished with 45 yards on 17 totes.

"I think we did a good job of forcing him lateral, and we have some guys in the back end who are able to run," senior end John Simon said. "They can really run, so they were able to go out hard and wrap him up. Our job in the front four was to make him bounce wide."

Maxwell completed 22 of 42 passes for 269 yards with the touchdown. He did not turn the ball over, but the first-year starter appeared to lose confidence as the game progressed and the Buckeyes dialed up more pressure. They sacked him twice and hit him at least five other times, including a third-and-9 in the fourth quarter with the Spartans attempting a rally from a one-point deficit.

Sabino broke through and forced an errant throw that led to a punt.

"We were in man coverage and I had

the back and he blocked so I went," Sabino said. "I think that's a testament to our defensive coaches drawing stuff up so we can get at the quarterback. We have a great D-line, too."

That proved to be the last play the MSU offense ran as the Buckeyes' offense bled the last 4:10 off the clock.

OSU held the Spartans to 303 total yards, the fewest by an Ohio State opponent this season and Michigan State's second-worst output of the campaign to date.

"Somebody sent us a text last week showing us that we were last in the Big Ten," cornerback Bradley Roby said. "We're like, 'This is crazy.' We didn't give up that many points, just the yards. We tried to come out here and make a statement. Michigan State is supposed to have one of the top defenses in the Big Ten. We just wanted to come out here and show we're the best defense in the Big Ten."

Michigan State might have gone with a different run-pass ratio (22 to 42) than expected, but Williams said the game plan prepared the Buckeyes for what they saw. They felt they had a good feel for the Spartans' tendencies depending on what formation Roushar called.

Although some of the plays came out of sequence, they were what the players expected to see for the most part, particularly in terms of tendencies by formation.

"We knew what was coming when it was coming," said the senior defensive end, who described the game plan as the best he could remember in his years in scarlet and gray.

That, too, was noteworthy after a week in which the defensive coaching staff headlined by coordinator and linebackers coach Luke Fickell as well as co-coordinator and safeties coach Everett Withers, line coach Mike Vrabel and cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs came under fire for what was perceived as too passive a scheme.

With the Spartans playing a more traditional two-back offense, the coaching staff took advantage by committing more defenders to stopping the run and leaving the cornerbacks to play one on one. Though Maxwell found some holes over the middle, the scheme worked for the most part.

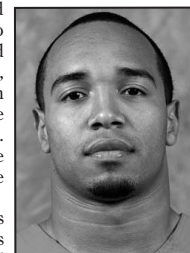
"I've been around here for five years and Coach Fickell is one of my favorite guys," Williams said. "I definitely have his back. I know the whole defense does. We take things personal when you say that we can't do something."

"It's kind of crazy to me that our own fans would question our coaching staff. Everything is relatively new with this regime."

Although there were few drastic changes in strategy, the Buckeyes found it difficult to install some new coverages and techniques while also having to adjust to different offenses from week to week during the nonconference schedule.

With more familiar foes on tap, game-planning just might get easier.

"Nonconference play was just crazy with the spread and the ridiculous amount of times they ran screens," Williams said. "Michigan State tried to run screens today, but we sniffed them out a lot. That helped us out a lot. Taking away the screens and the running game really helped us out."



Etienne Sabino



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OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN STATE

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 17, Michigan State 16

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer on his first Big Ten victory: "I think we beat a good team. That was a really good team we played. Anytime you hold a quality running back to whatever it was, I think (45) yards, that's a great effort. A great team win."

Michigan State head coach Mark Dantonio's opening statement: "Good football game today. I thought our guys played extremely hard and I'm proud of them. When you lose a game, 17-16, you have a tendency to say 'what if' a lot and look at single plays and how they would have made a difference. But I was very proud of our football team. We have to stay balanced as a team and run the ball more effectively."

Meyer when asked if he would have been happy if he had known before the game that the Buckeyes would hold MSU standout tailback Le'Veon Bell to 45 yards: "If we knew? We didn't know. If I knew that, then why practice? We're good, we'll win the game. You know, not to pump his tires, but that's a good back. I'll venture to say that won't happen again to that guy. He's a good player."

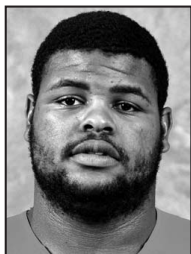
OSU fifth-year senior defensive lineman Nathan Williams when he learned the defense held Bell to only 45 yards: "It's amazing, isn't it? It's incredible. We played our butts off up front, and the DBs were covering great. We got lucky with a couple of dropped balls on their offense, but it's a great team win. Our offense did a heck of a job. Our defense played solid. It's a great day to be a Buckeye"

OSU sophomore linebacker Ryan Shazier on silencing Bell: "I think he probably got a little frustrated because he's used to averaging 150 yards a game and he got shut down today."

MSU offensive coordinator Dan Roushar on OSU's success in slowing Bell: "They dropped an eighth defender down into the box. When we motioned, they moved heavily to where our strength was. They made a commit-

ment to stop the run, and I think they did a good job."

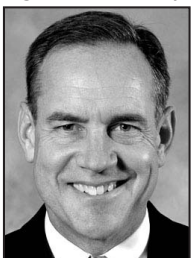
OSU junior defensive lineman Johnathan Hankins on the performance by the defense: "The defense was really aggravated and really frustrated about the way we played the first four weeks. We were trying to show everybody in the world that we are a really good defense and we can stop the run and the pass. We showed them a little bit of that today, and we've just go to keep going strong."



Johnathan Hankins

Meyer on whether he had thought the OSU defense was good enough to put up the performance it did against the Spartans: "Absolutely I did. I thought our defense was good enough to play better in the first four games. That's how much confidence I have in our players and coaches. I think we have really, really good players. Do we have great players? I think a few of them. But I did have confidence in them."

Dantonio on OSU quarterback Braxton Miller's performance: "Braxton Miller is a very exciting player as we knew coming into the game, and he took a lot of bad plays and made them good ones. He got out of trouble quite often and is a very good player as we knew."



Mark Dantonio

Meyer on Miller's 63-yard touchdown pass to sophomore Devin Smith in the third quarter: "That was my deal. It was a blitz-a-thon. We had some deep throws we didn't hit earlier. When the ball is getting moved against them, they blitz. It was one of three blitzes they were bringing. We knew it. We just had to execute better. They have good corners, that No. 5 (Johnny Adams) is a good corner. I was kind of watching and said it was the right time."

Smith on catching the game-winning TD: "Words can't explain how good I feel right now, making plays for this football team and getting a win."

Meyer on if his heart stopped when Miller left the game with a fourth-quarter knee injury: "Yeah, close to stopping. I saw his knee jam right in front of me. I love Braxton. Braxton is my guy. I have a great relationship with him. He's family now. When something like that happens, I guess it's no different than John Simon. We're family now. You spend this much time together, you see what these kids do, they're family."

OSU junior center Corey Linsley on whether he learned anything about Miller's toughness from the game: "No. We already knew that. Come on. We already knew he was tough. It was awesome. He was in the locker room showing emotion after the game. He was hurting. I saw that look on his face. I went over to try to cheer him up, but he was hurting. Just to see him play through that pain and to know how much pain he was in after the game, it's awesome. He's a hell of a player right there."

Linsley on OSU's time-killing drive late in the fourth quarter: "I feel like that last four minutes was everybody ripping their heart out, everybody giving it to the team and doing what we talked about all week. Putting the team on our back as an offensive line, it felt great."

Smith on the same subject: "I just felt like we wanted it more than those guys. That's a great football team, Michigan State. The coaches coached them well, but I feel like we wanted it a little more. We went out there and showed it."

OSU senior offensive tackle Reid Fragel on the win: "It was a good test for us today. We just have to build on this game and move forward. Obviously there was a real sour taste in our mouths from last year, so it feels good (to win). We still have some things to work on, but it's great to get a win in a game like this with all the turnovers."

Linsley on the importance of the win: "We knew going into the game that this was going to be one of the best teams we'd face all year in the conference. We had to win it. If we win this, it starts to snowball in the right direction. If we don't win it, it starts to snowball in the wrong direction. So we knew the importance and the significance of this game, coming out on top. And we did it."



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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 17, Michigan State 16

Sept. 29, 2012 — Spartan Stadium; East Lansing, Mich.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	7	0	10	0	17
MICHIGAN STATE	3	0	10	3	16

First Quarter

OSU — J.Hall, 1 yard run (Basil kick), 12:09; 8 plays, 75 yards, 2:51 TOP.

MSU — Conroy, 34 yard field goal, 8:23; 9 plays, 50 yards, 3:39 TOP.

Third Quarter

MSU — Conroy, 50 yard field goal, 11:04; 9 plays, 49 yards, 3:52 TOP.

OSU — Basil, 26 yard field goal, 6:08; 13 plays, 66 yards, 4:56 TOP.

MSU — Mumphrey, 29 yard catch from Maxwell (Conroy kick), 4:49; 3 plays, 65 yards, 1:13 TOP.

OSU — D.Smith, 63 pass from B.Miller (Basil kick), 3:05; 4 plays, 74 yards, 1:39 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

MSU — Conroy, 48 yard field goal, 7:07; 9 plays, 37 yards, 5:07 TOP.

Att. — 76,705.

Weather — 69 degrees, partly cloudy; wind, NNW 7 mph.



Team Statistics

	OSU	MSU
First Downs	21	17
Rushing	14	0
Passing	6	14
Penalty	1	3
Rushes-Yards	44-204	22-34
Passing Yards	179	269
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	16-23-1	22-42-0
Offensive Plays	67	64
Total Net Yards	383	303
Third Down Efficiency	6-13	4-15
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-0
Punts-Avg.	4-44.0	6-46.2
Fumbles-Lost	3-2	0-0
Penalties	6-65	4-35
Time of Possession	30:27	29:33

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — **OSU:** B.Miller 23-136; Hyde 11-49; J.Hall 6-26; P.Brown 1-6; TEAM 3-(-13). **MSU:** Bell 17-45; Caper 1-2; Hill 1-(-3); Maxwell 3-(-10).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — **OSU:** B.Miller 16-23-1-179-1. **MSU:** Maxwell 22-42-0-269-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — **OSU:** P.Brown 12-84; D.Smith 2-79; J.Hall 1-10; Hyde 1-6. **MSU:** Bell 8-58; Mumphrey 5-79; Lippett 4-46; Fowler 2-46; D.Sims 2-36; Lang 1-4.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) — **OSU:** Buchanan 4-44.0-47. **MSU:** Sadler 5-55.4-70; TEAM 1-0-0.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** D.Smith 1-16; Roby 1-11; J.Hall 1-6. **MSU:** Hill 1-10.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** D.Smith 1-21. **MSU:** Hill 4-102.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds) — **OSU:** None. **MSU:** Norman 1-0; Drummond 1-0.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** None. **MSU:** Drummond 1-0.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Sabino 1-0-7; N.Williams 1.0-3. **MSU:** Norman 1.0-6.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Sabino 1-0-7; N.Williams 1.0-3; Simon 1.0-2; Shazier 0.5-2; Bryant 0.5-1. **MSU:** Norman 2.0-9; Gholston 1.0-6; Drummond 1.0-2.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) — **OSU:** Roby 4-5-9; Sabino 4-4-8; Shazier 1-7-8; Bryant 0-7-7; Howard 3-2-5; N.Williams 1-4-5; Johnson 1-4-5; Simon 2-2-4; Goebel 0-4-4; Klein 1-2-3; Hankins 0-3-3; Basil 1-1-2; C.Brown 0-2-2; Reeves 1-0-1; Rice 1-0-1; Hyde 1-0-1; Griffin 1-0-1; C.Williams 0-1-1. **MSU:** M.Bullough 8-4-12; Lewis 5-5-10; Norman 5-4-9; D.Allen 2-4-6; Rush 2-3-5; J.Jones 3-1-4; Gholston 2-2-4; A.R.White 2-1-3; Drummond 2-1-3; Reynolds 2-1-3; Adams 1-2-3; Dennard 2-0-2; Williamson 1-0-1; Gardiner 1-0-1; L.Thomas 1-0-1; Kittredge 1-0-1; M.White 0-1-1; T.Jones 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME — **OHIO STATE:** Offense, D.Smith, Mewhort, Norwell, Linsley, M.Hall, Fragel, Z.Boren, Stoneburner, P.Brown, B.Miller, J.Hall, Basil. Defense, Simon, Hankins, Goebel, N.Williams, Shazier, Klein, Sabino, Roby, Bryant, Johnson, Howard, Buchanan. Reserves, C.Brown, C.Williams, Griffin, D.Grant, Guiton, Domicone, Spencer, T.Williams, Dunn, Reeves, Tanner, Rice, Bogard, Hyde, Marcus, Perkins, Homan, Hale, Makridis, Bennett, Decker, Kramer, Carter, Baldwin, Fields, Vannett, Heuerman. **MICHIGAN STATE:** Offense, France, J.Allen, Jackson, McDonald, Burkland, D.Sims, Mumphrey, Lang, Maxwell, Lippett, Bell, Conroy. Defense, Rush, Reynolds, A.R.White, Gholston, Norman, M.Bullough, D.Allen, Dennard, J.Jones, Lewis, Adams, Sadler. Reserves, Allen, L.Thomas, Fowler, Muma, Hill, A.Sims Jr., Caper, Williamson, Drummond, M.White, T.Jones, Elsworth, Drone, Davis, Harris, Gainer, Gardiner, Pepper, Kruse, Treadwell, Dennis, Ruhland, Klatt, Hoebing, Calhoun, Kittredge.

Season Statistics

2012 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 1	(18) MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 56-10	105,036
Sept. 8	(14) C. FLORIDA	W, 31-16	104,745
Sept. 15	(12) CALIFORNIA	W, 35-28	105,232
Sept. 22	(16) UAB	W, 29-15	105,019
Sept. 29	(14) at Mich. State (20)	W, 17-16	76,705
Oct. 6	NEBRASKA	8 p.m.	
Oct. 13	at Indiana	8 p.m.	
Oct. 20	PURDUE	TBA	
Oct. 27	at Penn State	6 p.m.	
Nov. 3	ILLINOIS	TBA	
Nov. 17	at Wisconsin	TBA	
Nov. 24	MICHIGAN	Noon	

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

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	107	89
Rushing	64	22
Passing	40	56
Penalty	3	11
Average Per Game/Rush	224.2	100.8
Average Per Game/Pass	194.0	275.6
Total Offense	2,091	1,882
Total Plays	348	361
Average Per Game	418.2	376.4
Average Per Play	6.0	5.2
Penalties-Yards	37-325	29-252
Fumbles-Lost	8-4	4-2
3rd Down Efficiency	29-67	29-81
Percentage	43%	36%
4th Down Efficiency	2-3	1-8
Percentage	67%	12%
Sacks-Yards	12-106	8-52
Times Of Possession Avg.	29:13	30:47

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	27	59	38	44	—	168	33.6
Opponents	22	13	30	20	—	85	17.0

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Braxton Miller	90	577	6.4	7	65
Jordan Hall	40	218	5.4	1	15
Carlos Hyde	35	158	4.5	2	16
Bri'onte Dunn	12	60	5.0	1	13
Rod Smith	12	50	4.2	1	12
Philly Brown	5	48	9.6	0	19
Zach Boren	11	33	3.0	2	8
Kenny Guiton	5	14	2.8	0	11
Devin Smith	1	2	2.0	0	2
TEAM	7	-39	-5.6	0	0
OSU Totals	218	1,121	5.1	14	65
OPP Totals	140	504	3.6	3	81

Passing

Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Eff.
Braxton Miller	76	121	62.8	933	8-3 144.44
Kenny Guiton	5	9	55.6	37	0-0 90.09
OSU Totals	81	130	62.3	970	8-3 140.68
OPP Totals	134	221	60.6	1,378	5-7 114.14

Receiving

Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Philly Brown	32	317	9.9	1 38
Devin Smith	19	351	18.5	4 72
Jake Stoneburner	7	92	13.1	3 40
Evan Spencer	5	70	14.0	0 44
Zach Boren	4	35	8.8	0 14
Nick Vannett	4	19	4.8	0 7
Jordan Hall	3	31	10.3	0 14
Jeff Heuerman	3	28	9.3	0 10
Carlos Hyde	2	8	4.0	0 6
Verlon Reed	1	13	13.0	0 13
Michael Thomas	1	6	6.0	0 6
OSU Totals	65	791	12.2	7 72
OPP Totals	112	1,109	9.9	4 58

Scoring

TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Braxton Miller	7	—	2-2	—	46
Drew Basil	—	20-21	—	—	26
Devin Smith	4	—	—	—	24

Jake Stoneburner	3	—	—	—	—	18
Zach Boren	2	—	—	—	—	12
Carlos Hyde	2	—	—	—	—	12
Philly Brown	1	—	—	—	—	6
Bri'onte Dunn	1	—	—	—	—	6
Jordan Hall	1	—	—	—	—	6
Bradley Roby	1	—	—	—	—	6
Rod Smith	1	—	—	—	—	6
OSU Totals	23	20-21	2-2	—	2-2	168
OPP Totals	9	7-9	—	—	8-14	85

FG Distance

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Drew Basil	2-2	0-0	0-0	0-0	2-2
OSU Totals	2-2	0-0	0-0	0-0	2-2
OPP Totals	2-3	2-2	1-5	3-4	8-14

Punting

No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Ben Buchanan	27	1,126	41.7	1 55
TEAM	1	0	0.0	0 0
OSU Totals	28	1,126	40.2	1 55
OPP Totals	25	998	39.9	1 70

Interceptions

No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Travis Howard	3	26	8.7	0 17
Christian Bryant	1	38	38.0	0 38
Orhian Johnson	1	3	3.0	0 3
Etienne Sabino	1	2	2.0	0 2
Doran Grant	1	0	0.0	0 0
OSU Totals	7	69	9.9	0 38
OPP Totals	3	3	1.0	0 3

Punt Returns

No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Philly Brown	3	12	4.0	0 10
Devin Smith	2	14	7.0	0 16
Bradley Roby	1	11	11.0	0 0
Jordan Hall	1	6	6.0	0 0
OSU Totals	7	43	6.1	0 16
OPP Totals	6	50	8.3	1 20

Kickoff Returns

No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Devin Smith	5	101	20.2	0 26
Armani Reeves	2	45	22.5	0 26
Bri'onte Dunn	1	22	22.0	0 22
OSU Totals	8	168	21.0	0 26
OPP Totals	20	417	20.9	0 35

Def. Leaders

Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Ryan Shazier	27	21	48	2.5-12 1.0-9
Etienne Sabino	19	17	36	2.0-17 2.0-17
Christian Bryant	14	18	32	0.5-1 —
Bradley Roby	18	10	28	2.0-13 1.0-11
Johnathan Hankins	10	18	28	2.0-12 1.0-10
Orhian Johnson	10	9	19	— —
Garrett Goebel	6	12	18	2.0-8 1.0-3
Travis Howard	12	6	18	— —
John Simon	7	10	17	2.5-9 1.0-7
C.J. Barnett	9	8	17	1.0-2 —
Nathan Williams	6	8	14	1.5-4 1.0-3
Doran Grant	10	2	12	1.0-8 1.0-8
Corey Brown	5	6	11	— —
Storm Klein	3	4	7	— —
Curtis Grant	2	5	7	— —
Jamal Marcus	5	0	5	— —
Adam Griffin	4	0	4	— —
Drew Basil	2	2	4	— —
Tommy Schutt	2	1	3	— —
Joshua Perry	1	1	2	— —
Camren Williams	1	1	2	— —
David Perkins	2	0	2	— —
Noah Spence	2	0	2	1.0-20 1.0-20
Steve Miller	2	0	2	1.0-10 1.0-10
Najee Murray	2	0	2	— —
Adolphus Washington	2	0	2	1.0-8 1.0-8
Devin Smith	1	1	2	— —
Carlos Hyde	1	0	1	— —
Craig Cataline	1	0	1	— —
Taylor Rice	1	0	1	— —
Bryce Haynes	1	0	1	— —
OSU Totals	193	162	355	20-124 12-106
OPP Totals	200	152	352	24-101 8-52

Fumbles Forced: 1 — Christian Bryant, Etienne Sabino, Ryan Shazier.

Fumbles Recovered: 1 — Doran Grant, Bradley Roby.

OPINION

Miller's Performance Should Worry Big Ten Foes

Terrelle Pryor always had a flair for the dramatic, saving his best performances for the biggest stage. He won two BCS-game MVP awards and engineered wins over Michigan with his arm (a little) and feet (a lot).

Braxton Miller seems to be gaining that same label, only he seems a lot more likable than his petulant, immature predecessor.

Still a work in progress, Miller made great strides and was instrumental in Ohio State's 17-16 road victory over Michigan State. Miller finished with 136 yards rushing and 179 passing, including a pinpoint deep throw to Devin Smith that resulted in a 63-yard touchdown that proved to be the game winner.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

More importantly, Miller wasn't a victim of the nerves that haunted him last year during a forgettable 10-7 loss to the Spartans in which OSU gained only 178 total yards and allowed nine sacks. Miller was nicked up late in that game and replaced by Joe Bauserman, who tossed an oh-by-the-way touchdown in the game's closing moments.

More confident as a sophomore, Miller ran the Ohio State offense into the teeth of the Big Ten's best defense and came out on top. It's a testament to the kind of player he is that Michigan State couldn't stop him, even when it knew he was getting the ball.

"There's no doubt that he's the fuel in our engine," offensive coordinator Tom Herman said after the game. Plagued by erratic throws for much of this year, Miller had only a couple of head-scratching moments against the Spartans. His pass to Smith — who is no slouch himself when it comes to clutch play — was evidence Miller is more than just a runner holding down the quarterback position.

"I'm telling you, the kid can throw it," Herman said. "We had a key third-down conversion on the first drive where we scored a touchdown. He did a lot of nice things in the throw game. We have to look at the turnovers (one pick, two fumbles) and correct that. We're not going to win many games on the road in the Big Ten turning the ball over three times, but that's an easy fix."

Miller went out of the game a couple of times, once on what the officials ruled a late hit out of bounds in the first quarter and the second on a run to the sidelines — a play that had Buckeye Nation holding its collective breath after Miller came up clutching his knee. It looked more serious than it was, and he returned to the game to help run out the clock.

"The kid played tough, he played hard, he put the team on his back," Herman said. "We can fix the turnovers, but the attitude and effort and ability that he has can't be taught."

Urban Meyer never got to work with Pryor, and maybe things would have been different had that opportunity been presented. But Meyer has to work with what he has, and it sounds like he's fine with the team-first Miller, who is a stark contrast to his me-first predecessor.

"I love Braxton," Meyer said. "Braxton's my guy. I have a great relationship with him. He's family now, and when something like that (knee injury) happens ... I guess it's no different than John Simon. It's no different. We're family now."

Miller's effort didn't go unnoticed by his teammates, either.

"We already knew he was tough," OSU center Corey Linsley said. "He was in the locker room showing emotion after the game, hurting. To see him play through that pain and to know how much pain he was in, that's awesome. That's a heck of a player right there."

Not to slight backup Kenny Guiton, who by all accounts has made great strides, but he's no Miller. So when the Buckeyes' star QB was down and in obvious pain, flashbacks to last season's anemic offense surely had to be going through the minds of most ardent OSU supporters. When Miller limped (initially) back into the huddle to guide the offense down the stretch, one had to think that this kid has something.

That something is a winning attitude, and if the Michigan State game was an indicator of things to come, the rest of the Big Ten had better be on alert.

Hard To Root For

I want to like Michigan State. I really do. Everything is in place for that to happen — a hard-hitting defense, a solid, ball-control offense, a picturesque campus and support from the student body. It should be so easy.

But then I watch Mark Dantonio in action and remember why I can't throw my arms around the Spartans.

Dantonio is a sourpuss, someone who makes prickly Chicago Bears quarterback Jay Cutler look personable by comparison. I like to say Dantonio is Jim Tressel without the personality. He's curt in interviews, offers nothing in the way of quotes outside of coach-speak and often blames others for the shortcomings of his own team.

Dantonio whined during the offseason about Meyer breaking the "gentleman's agreement" league teams have in recruiting as the OSU coach went after committed players, even though several coaches have indicated there is no such agreement.

For the second year in a row, MSU play-

ers were cut off from the media prior to the Ohio State game. Dantonio said it was an effort to bring his team closer together, so it wouldn't have to deal with all of the adversity from the outside.

That's all fine and good, but Dantonio is also a teacher who failed to use the early-season hardships as a lesson in perseverance. Rather than having his players face questions about a stagnant offense or a home loss to Notre Dame, Dantonio figured it would be best to just nip it in the bud. The problem is that teaches players the worst possible lesson — that it's OK to run from tough situations and not address them head-on.

The whining hit new heights after the 17-16 loss to Ohio State when assistant coach Pat Narduzzi charged the Buckeyes with doctoring the video they sent to the Spartans. Narduzzi said that the OSU versions of the films "all cut off and you don't get to see shifts or motions or anything else."

Big Ten teams are required to send complete game tapes to opponents for scouting purposes, but Narduzzi said he knew something was amiss when he watched the version the Buckeyes sent.

"A few other teams we talked to that they played, and we compared what they were looking at on tape to what we were looking at," he told the Detroit Free Press. "We're like, 'We don't see any of that. We see it on their tape but not on our tape.' So that's something I'm sure the Big Ten office will hopefully take care of."

Meyer told the Free Press he knew nothing about a video issue.

"I don't handle the video," the OSU coach said. "What are they saying?"

When asked if he was concerned about a Big Ten inquiry, Meyer replied, "There is no video issue here."

You have to wonder if Narduzzi would have said anything had the Spartans won the game. It's funny that the ones who lose are the ones who, instead of taking their defeat and moving on from it, whine the loudest.

While Michigan State hasn't yet reached the Michigan/Penn State/Wisconsin level of disdain for me, it won't take much more childish behavior for them to get into that group.

Best Defensive Effort

In the days leading up to the game, all the talk centered around two things: How would Ohio State move the ball against the stingy Spartans defense, and how would it stop powerful running back Le'Veon Bell?

To the former, the Buckeyes showed that they had just enough. As for the latter, linebacker Ryan Shazier shed some light on the matter.

"It all starts with the D-line. They made it hard for him to bounce out and do anything," Shazier said after the game. Shazier had eight tackles, equaling fellow linebacker Etienne Sabino. Both played their best games of the season, which was crucial given that the 244-pound Bell was the key to the MSU offense.

The Buckeyes have been a shoddy tackling team much of the year, and that didn't bode well coming into the game. But with the notable exception of a 29-yard touchdown catch-and-run by Keith Mumphery, in which at least six tackles were missed, the Buckeyes buckled down and played perhaps their best defense of the year.

"I really believed our defense could win a game like this because nobody really had

seen how good we are yet," Shazier said. "But we still have a lot more to go."

OSU showed a toughness that had been lacking, and beat MSU at its own game, running out the clock in the final 4:10 with a one-point lead.

"Against that front, when they know it's coming, to just take the ball and end the game like that, that tells you a little bit," Meyer said. "I didn't know if we could do that. That was a heck of an effort."

Quick Hitters

- It's hard to believe but the start of basketball practice is just around the corner. I know that because I saw a couple of pre-season magazines on the newsstand, and all the folks lamenting how bad the Big Ten is on the gridiron this year should be smiling because in hoops the league will be very good.

Athlon Sports had four league teams in its top 10, including Indiana in the top spot. The Cody Zeller-led Hoosiers were followed by Michigan at No. 4, the Buckeyes at No. 8 and Michigan State at No. 10.

It will be interesting to see how OSU does without Jared Sullinger inside. The guess here is that the offense will flow through Deshaun Thomas, with help from Lenzelle Smith Jr. and LaQuinton Ross.

The Buckeyes' schedule is solid, too, with games against Marquette, a possible tilt with Washington, a marquee contest at Duke, NCAA qualifier Long Beach State and a rematch with Kansas, the squad that knocked the Buckeyes out of the NCAA Tournament last year in the Final Four.

The same magazine had Jim Foster's women's squad ranked fourth nationally, though it did say it might be a bit of a struggle early as OSU learns to cope without dynamic point guard Samantha Prahalis.

- Scoreboard operators were working overtime Sept. 29, and it's hard to say whether that's a good thing.

Purdue beat Marshall, 51-41, Georgia knocked off Tennessee by a 51-44 final, and Texas nipped Oklahoma State, 41-36. But all of those games paled in comparison to West Virginia's 70-63 victory over Baylor, the Mountaineers' inaugural Big 12 game. WVU quarterback Geno Smith had more touchdown passes (eight) than incomplections (six) in a game that highlighted the increased offensive firepower of squads around the nation.

I'm a bit of a purist when it comes to football. I don't mind a 14-10 defensive struggle with guys in the trenches getting dirty and linebackers and safeties knocking receivers into next week. I can see where casual fans might be drawn in by the pinball-type contests, but is it really doing anything for the game? Can a team really be considered a contender when its defense is so laughably bad?

In today's numbers-driven society there will be the perception that West Virginia is one of the best teams in the country because it can score with anyone. That theory will be put to the test Oct. 6 when the Mountaineers play Texas, but it seems like offense is here to stay.

It used to be that a team reaching 40 points was a wow moment. But with 30 teams reaching that number Sept. 29 — including seven games where both dropped 40 or more — it's invoking more yawns.

Wake me when they start playing defense again.

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OPINION

Win Over Spartans Unofficial Start To Meyer Era

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH

Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

The Urban Meyer era at Ohio State may have technically started Sept. 1, 2012, when the Buckeyes waxed the Miami RedHawks. But for many, the Meyer era began in earnest four weeks later when his Buckeyes traveled to East Lansing and earned a hard-fought 17-16 victory over Michigan State.

Through all the ups and downs experienced by the Buckeyes during the four undefeated weeks of the nonconference schedule, I think everyone – fans, coaches, players and pundits alike – were looking toward the confrontation with the Spartans as the first measuring stick of how Ohio State was going to fare under Meyer, the wunderkind from Bowling Green, Utah and Florida who was returning to Ohio to coach his home-state Buckeyes.

And if you were among the few who failed to see the significance of this first true test for Meyer and his men, you need only to have looked at the raucous celebration among the OSU players, coaches and fans after the game. It was as if the Buckeyes had defeated the other school from that state up north – and then some.

What was interesting was that the Buckeyes scored the victory in almost Jim Tressel-like fashion, coming together as a team, digging down deep and doing what they had to do to record the win, especially at key times.

After months and months of talk and speculation and hope among Buckeye fans about the creative, wide-open offense Ohio State was going to run under Meyer and his new offensive coaching staff, there was nothing to compare to Sid Gillman, Bill Walsh or Walt Harris in this game.

It was pretty much Braxton Miller left, Braxton Miller right, Braxton Miller up the middle, a long pass to Devin Smith and a good-old fashioned late-game pounding by Carlos Hyde and the offensive line to generate enough yards, first downs and points to secure the one-point win. I suspect Jim Bollman could have drawn up that game plan.

And what about the defense – so maligned, and rightfully so, during the nonconference part of the schedule – shutting down Le'Veon Bell, the nation's third-leading ball carrier? The Columbus area product tallied only 45 yards on 17 carries, an average of just 2.6 yards per attempt. That was more than 100 yards below his game average for the first four games and half his 5.2-yard per carry average.

That forced the Spartans' offense to go away from its strength to try to beat Ohio State, and while MSU managed to rack up 269 yards through the air, it scored only one touchdown. That TD, a 29-yard third-quarter reception by Keith Mumphrey that put Michigan State in a position to win the game, will still be a source for concern from OSU critics and coaches alike as the missed tackles that have plagued the Buckeyes all season were in abundance on the catch-and-run.

Other than that play, though, the bend-but-don't-break Buckeyes turned in their best performance of the season, holding the Spartans to four field-goal attempts on their other trips into OSU territory, three of which kicker Dan Conroy converted. On Michigan State's other six drives, all of which ended in punts, the Green and White averaged five plays and 11.8 yards before punting.

The Ohio State defense, which has been strong when it had to be all season, was especially tough when the game was on the line, even overcoming a serious gaffe in the fourth quarter.

With the Buckeye clinging to a 17-13 lead, Michigan State was forced to go for it on fourth-and-1 at the OSU 44. Ohio State forced an

incomplete Andrew Maxwell pass and should have taken over on downs, but the Buckeyes were called for defensive holding and the Spartans had new life on the OSU 34. The defense stiffened again, with Nathan Williams sacking Maxwell on third down, and MSU had to settle for a Conroy field goal to make it 17-16 with 7:07 remaining.

The Buckeyes were quickly forced to punt themselves, and Michigan State set up shop for what would prove to be the last time, taking over at the MSU 20. Maxwell immediately hit Tony Lippett with an 11-yard pass for a first down, but that would be the Spartans' last hurrah. The Buckeyes forced a third-and-9 and OSU linebacker Etienne Sabino came barreling in on Maxwell, forcing an incomplete pass and a punt with 4:10 to play.

Then behind Hyde and Miller, Ohio State ran out the clock.

Sabino added a key sack and had eight total tackles as the Ohio State linebackers had an impact on the game for the first time all season. Fellow linebacker Ryan Shazier also had eight tackles, and Storm Klein added three.

Speaking of Bollman, maybe some of his influence robbed off on Michigan State head coach Mark Dantonio in the eight years they coached together at Youngstown State and OSU. That's because I thought the Spartans stubbornly continued to run Bell, whose longest run was a gain of only 8 yards, when it was clear that his type of straight-ahead running is something the Buckeyes are – and always have been – geared to stop. Bell was much more effective as a receiver coming out of the backfield – the type of play the Buckeyes have struggled against – catching eight passes for 58 yards to lead the Spartans. He also could have been used as a decoy with play-action fakes into the line.

While the Buckeyes were bottling up Michigan State's top weapon, the Spartans, who entered the game sixth in the nation in total defense, did not have as much success stopping the Buckeyes' main weapon.

Miller called his own number 23 times, racking up 136 yards on the ground, more than two times the total of the highly-touted Bell. He also picked up another 179 yards through the air on 16 completions, giving him 315 yards of total offense on the day, 82.2 percent of Ohio State's total output of 383 and better than Michigan State's team total of 303.

The Buckeyes' brain trust, or perhaps Miller himself on some of his option decisions, appears to have embraced the fact that the quarterback is Ohio State's best offensive weapon and seems prepared to go to that well as often as necessary to emerge victorious. If that is the strategy, the 6-2, 220-pound Miller proved his toughness against the rugged MSU defense, getting knocked out of the game twice but returning quickly on both occasions.

Still, if the Buckeyes are in the Big Ten race for the long haul, you would think they will need to develop some of their other weapons.

Smith continues to show that "wow" factor that Meyer so dearly craves, scoring the decisive touchdown on a 63-yard bomb but gathering in only one other pass on the day. His 79 yards gave him 351 yards on 19 catches for the season, good for an 18.5-yard average, and it would be nice to try to get the ball in his hands more.

Corey "Philly" Brown had a solid, possession receiver-type day, catching 12 passes for 84 yards, giving him 32 receptions on the year and establishing himself as another viable option for Miller.

Jordan Hall and Hyde also each had catches out of the backfield, good for 10 and 6 yards, respectively. But Jake Stoneburner, he of the 12 career touchdown catches, was shut out for the second game in a row, and Miller did not complete a single pass to a tight end.

Hall, before he was knocked out of the game with a knee injury, and Hyde also had some success on the ground, though obviously not to the level of Miller. Hall carried six times for 26 yards with a long of 14, good for a 4.3-yard average, while Hyde bulled his way to 49 yards on 11 carries for a 4.5-yard mark with a long of nine. While those aren't game-breaking numbers, they are marks that add up to first downs, which in turn add up to victories. (By the way, if you rewatch the game, check out Hyde's blocking. It was outstanding.)

The options are there. The question seems to be whether Miller or Meyer and Co. have the confidence in those other options or would prefer to continue to ride Miller as far as he'll take them. It would seem, though, that using the others more would not only save wear and tear on the quarterback but increase his productivity by keeping defenses from keying on Miller.

Things don't get any easier as the Buckeyes prepare to host Nebraska on Oct. 6 in a prime-time showdown of traditional powers.

But as Meyer himself would say, the best thing about being 5-0 (and 1-0 in the Big Ten) is you have a chance to be 6-0 (and 2-0).

Game Notes

- Nathan Williams was credited with five tackles and a sack against Michigan State, but his stat line doesn't reflect his presence during the game. His pressure was relentless and his continued improvement following a return from knee surgery has put opponents in the position of having to pick their poison when it comes to blocking.

The defensive line also features John Simon, who is already an established star and relentless performer, and big Johnathan Hankins, who is emerging as one of the top defensive line talents in the country. I know you hear a lot about defensive lines in the SEC, but how much better can a defensive line be than the one the Buckeyes have put together?

- The on-field meeting between Meyer and Dantonio following the OSU victory might have been the shortest on record between two coaches at the end of a game. It's clear that the days of the cozy relationship between Michigan State and Ohio State that existed when Jim Tressel, who was Dantonio's boss for eight years at Youngstown State and Ohio State, is over.

- As you saw players from both sides repeatedly being felled by injuries in East Lansing, along with a little extracurricular pushing and shoving, you knew that Big Ten football had started. It may not be SEC football, but it is *our* football.

Looking Back

Those of you who are regular readers of this column know that I love our "From the

Pages of BSB" feature that runs in each issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin. It is always interesting to see things that I have forgotten or to look back at events with 10, 20 or even 30 years of perspective and see the frequent irony.

This issue, I was struck by something that shows how, for all its supposed innovations, football hasn't really changed.

Former Ohio State head coach John Cooper was lamenting 20 years ago that his team couldn't pound out a yard and a half against Wisconsin on a penalty-shortened two-point conversion attempt.

"In my opinion, with our big offensive line and the big backfield we had in there, if we can't make a yard and a half, we probably don't deserve to win the game, and it really boiled down to that," Cooper said.

Fast-forward to this season and current coach Meyer sounded the same after his Buckeyes couldn't pound the ball in from the 1 against Miami (Ohio).

"Ohio State should be able to knock it in from the 1," Meyer said after the 56-10 win over the RedHawks. "That's bad. That's absolutely nonnegotiable. Nonsense."

Enjoy "From the Pages of BSB" on page 2 of this issue.

In our ongoing celebration of the 10th anniversary of Ohio State's 2002 national football championship, this issue we look back as the Buckeyes, with Maurice Claret returning to the lineup, bounced back from their near disaster against Cincinnati to roll to a 45-17 victory over visiting Indiana.

Claret scored three touchdowns while racking up 104 yards just 11 days after undergoing knee surgery, to help vault Ohio State into the top five in both major polls.

We also learned that even a tough guy like Claret could be a wuss, as he got squeamish at halftime when doctors were forced to give the running back stitches after he opened his surgical wound on a TD run late in the first half.

Don't forget that there will be additional coverage of the win over Indiana in our Oct. 5 electronic issue of BSB. Included will be my column from 10 years ago, as well as Mike Wachsmann's column from the same issue where he boldly warns readers after just five weeks, "If you wait too long to secure those tickets to Tempe for the Fiesta Bowl, you'll be priced out of the market."

I'll let you read Mike's column to see where he was coming from.

A Win Is A Win

I will guarantee you there are Buckeye fans out there, especially some of those who got completely caught up in the Meyer hiring frenzy, who are unhappy Ohio State defeated Michigan State by only one point. Now that Meyer is here, those fans reasoned that lopsided victories would automatically follow.

Out of curiosity, I checked Meyer's record against Alabama and LSU while he was at Florida to see if he was beating the SEC's best by multiple touchdowns. The average score in a game between the Gators and either Alabama or LSU during Meyer's tenure was 22-21 – in favor of the Crimson Tide and Tigers.

Meyer was 5-6 against the SEC's Big Two, in fact losing to both of the teams in his inaugural year of 2005.

It should be noted, however, that in his two national championship years, Florida dominated its rivals. In 2006, the Gators beat Alabama by a 28-13 final and LSU, 23-10. In the championship year of 2008, the Gators crushed LSU, 51-21, before downing the Tide in the SEC Championship Game, 31-20.