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Champs At Last

Ohio State Claims Big Ten Title, Berth In Inaugural Playoff



SONNY BROCKWAY

ANOTHER FOR THE TROPHY CASE – Members of the Ohio State football team and head coach Urban Meyer (center) celebrate after routing Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game.

By RYAN GINN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Standing in the home locker room of Lucas Oil Stadium, covered in streamers, Ohio State safety Tyvis Powell let out a howl of protest.

It had been suggested to him that, following a 59-0 dismantling of Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game, Ohio State had finally won something other than the Illibuck trophy under third-year head coach Urban Meyer.

"We got those gold pants!" Powell said. "You can't forget about those."

Up until that Dec. 6 night in Indianapolis, Ohio State's three wins against Michigan ranked among the program's most significant accomplishments over the last four seasons.

The 2011 team, playing under interim head coach Luke Fickell, finished 6-6 in the regular season before losing to Florida in the Gator Bowl. The 2012 group ran the table but was banned from the postseason. The unbeaten streak eventually morphed into a 24-game run, but Ohio State lost both postseason games in 2013 to Michigan State in the Big Ten title game and to Clemson in the Orange Bowl.

Other than fifth-year senior right tackle Darryl Baldwin, who didn't play during the 2010 season that ended with a league title and Sugar Bowl win, nobody on the team had won a conference crown or a bowl game.

When the clock ticked down to zero in the fourth quarter, members of the 2014 Ohio State Buckeyes could no longer say they were a group without a ring. Sure, there were division titles in three consecutive years, but the Buckeyes hadn't been able to capitalize on that for reasons on the field (2013) and off (2012).

The last five minutes on the sideline felt like a party. Players crept over to the Gatorade jugs and attacked their coaches from behind, while others exchanged hugs or danced on benches.

Continued On Page 10

BSB's Annual Bowl Preview

Buckeye Sports Bulletin's 64-page bowl preview issue is overflowing with information about Ohio State's College Football Playoff bid as well as features, news and updates on all of OSU athletics, including:



- A preview of the Sugar Bowl against Alabama, including our staff prediction, season stats, bowl notes, a feature about the hyped coaching matchup between Urban Meyer and Nick Saban, and more
- A recap and stats from the Buckeyes' satisfying Big Ten Championship Game blowout of Wisconsin
- A rundown of the top moments from the 2014 season and an update on injured quarterback J.T. Barrett
- For those of you traveling to the game, a rundown of attractions in the New Orleans area from Louisiana native and BSB staffer Ryan Ginn
- A feature on Ohio's new Mr. Football, OSU commit Joey Burrow, as part of nine pages of recruiting and high school football coverage
- Reports on the men's and women's basketball, men's hockey and wrestling programs
- Plus all of BSB's regular briefs, columns and features

COVER STORY

Seniors Get First Taste Of Championship Glory

Continued From Page 1

"We've been waiting for this for four years," senior defensive tackle Michael Bennett said. "It means so much to me to be able to do this with these senior guys. And all these young guys that have contributed and take it seriously, you don't see that in every program where the young guys look up to the seniors and respect them the way our young guys do. That just means a lot to me because it shows how close this team is and how much we care about each other."

"We've been hyped up before a lot of games, but this game was different – the way guys looked at each other, the way guys cared about each other. Just so much intensity, and people have taken ownership in what they do. It was incredible. I'm blessed to be a part of it."

Ohio State celebrated though it did not know its playoff fate, an answer that became clear about 12 hours later when the Buckeyes were picked as one of the four teams that will compete for the inaugural College Football Playoff.

But for one night in Indianapolis, the potential of what was to come didn't matter. Ohio State had won the championship it so deeply coveted, and done so at a place that held harsh memories.

In 2013, the Buckeyes trudged off the field as Michigan State players pranced around with roses in their teeth after an unexpected 34-24 victory over Ohio State. The loss hurt, and some players stuck around on the field afterward to soak in the disappointment.

After the Wisconsin game, the Buckeyes

stayed on the field for a different reason. Celebratory hats and shirts were passed around and donned, and players clambered up to the dais for the trophy presentation. There, the silver football that adorns the conference championship trophy was passed around, kissed one at a time as it made its way through the masses. Meyer held it up as confetti and streamers shot upward in the background.

"It's truly special," senior tight end Jeff Heuerman said. "Your senior year, being a captain, this is what you set out to do at the beginning of the year and we accomplished it and that's truly special. I can't thank these guys enough on this team and this coaching staff for putting in so much work and getting us to here. It truly paid off tonight as you can see. We played nine units strong, and you can see what happens when we do that."

Heuerman was just one of the seniors who helped the Buckeyes navigate an unlikely road that now could lead all the way to the top and for whom the championship ring holds such great meaning.

Recovery Mode

The fact that Ohio State even put itself in a position to win a conference championship and compete for a national title is a minor miracle on its own.

When the dust settled after the second week of the season, the Buckeyes were in as about as bad a position as they could have been up to that point. They'd just lost 35-21 to Virginia Tech at home, plummeting to a No. 22 ranking in the Associated Press writers' poll.

The hill to climb became even greater because Michigan State lost at Oregon that same day, lessening the impact of a potential win against the Spartans and leaving the Big Ten the butt of jokes across the country. To top it off, the Buckeyes were forced to navigate these obstacles without their starting quarterback, who happened to be the two-time reigning conference MVP.

Meyer said Dec. 7 that college football programs are the most complex organizations in the world, more so than major corporations or any other complicated entity. As such, direction has to be set at the top.

"When you talk about 18- to 22-year-olds, what made that (success) happen? You see a lot of times where that doesn't happen and everyone's intention is for it to happen," Meyer said. "I think it's a combination of things. We spent an inordinate amount of time on leadership training for our coaches in the offseason. We've never done that before. I'm glad we don't have selfish coaches or people that are above and beyond it. They went to class. Our coaches went to workshops on leadership training, on how to develop the room – we call it power of the unit, and I saw improvement."

"The linebackers were a very poor unit a year ago. They're one of our strongest now. It's the same coach, coaching better. It's phenomenal the way they've improved. I think that's one reason – our unit leaders have done a phenomenal job developing our units. We also, for two years now, put our players through leadership training as well, and I think it's paying off."

Ohio State began reeling off victories one after the next, but the end of the season presented a myriad of challenges. Luckily for the Buckeyes, the senior captains helped guide the underclassman-heavy team to safe harbors week after week. Against Minnesota, Bennett gave an impassioned speech at half-time of what became a 31-24 win against the Golden Gophers.

Two weeks later, he was back at it in the third quarter of the Michigan game as Ohio State went back-and-forth with the toothless Wolverines. The Buckeyes corrected course and finished with a 42-28 triumph.

In addition to those wins, victories on the



SONNY BROCKWAY

TITLE TIME – Ohio State senior defensive lineman Michael Bennett, wearing the No. 53 of late teammate Kosta Karageorge, helped lead the Buckeyes to a 59-0 win in the Big Ten Championship Game vs. Wisconsin.

road against Michigan State and Penn State put the Buckeyes in position to erase the bad memories from one year ago and to show the country just how much they'd grown since the loss to Virginia Tech.

"This doesn't happen without the leadership demonstrated by the guys who usually sit in the front row who are called seniors," Meyer said after the win over the Badgers. "Mike Bennett, he just finished his best three weeks as a Buckeye. I don't know how he played – I think he played pretty good, but I'm not talking about that."

"I'm talking about his development as a leader, a guy that I can count on, a guy that doesn't whine and moan and complain about stuff. That's kind of how he got through it in the old days, and that's not the case now."

The seniors had some help from some of the younger players, too. Meyer said in the Dec. 7 press conference that he didn't

COVER STORY

College Football Playoff

No. 2 Oregon vs. No. 3 Florida State
Rose Bowl • Pasadena, Calif. • Jan. 1, 2015 • 5 p.m.

No. 1 Alabama vs. No. 4 Ohio State
Sugar Bowl • New Orleans • Jan. 1, 2015 • 8:30 p.m.

CFP National Championship Game
Arlington, Texas • Jan. 12, 2015 • 8:30 p.m.

anticipate the success of redshirt freshmen such as linebacker Darron Lee, quarterback J.T. Barrett and cornerback Eli Apple, all of whom were chosen as Freshman All-Americans.

"I didn't think Darron Lee would perform like an All-Big Ten outside linebacker," Meyer said. "He's not quite there but darn close. To see the development of Eli Apple, I thought he was a very average player. He's not an average player anymore, he's a pretty good player. We had two sophomore safeties that never started before. J.T. Barrett, I thought he'd be OK.

"It is a long journey. When did it start? I started seeing it, but I didn't believe it completely until the experience that we had against Wisconsin."

The seniors helped bring out that play in the underclassmen, though. Speaking after the Big Ten Championship Game, Apple said that the redshirt freshmen made it their mission to live up to the example set by the leaders on the team.

"I love the seniors," Apple said. "I love all those guys. They're maybe the best group of seniors in Ohio State history right now. We just made it a mission as underclassmen, because we're a young team, to play hard for them. It's a great feeling."

Playoff Payoff

After 11 wins in a row, Meyer and his players still had to sweat out a playoff announcement.

With one spot left, the floodgates of relief opened when ESPN announced that the Buckeyes had received the fourth and final spot and would be taking on No. 1 Alabama in the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans. It capped a torturous morning for Meyer, who watched the announcement at his house alongside Ohio State director of athletics Gene Smith.

Meyer pressured Smith for information, figuring his boss would be plugged in. At that point, Smith had the unhappy task of telling Meyer that not even Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany knew whether the Buckeyes would be in or out.

"Gene came over to my house and I said, 'What do you got?' He said the commissioner doesn't even know," Meyer said. "I thought, 'Come on.' I thought he was going to wink or give me the thumbs up like he's done in the past. It wasn't that way at all."

While players confessed to nerves about the announcement, senior linebacker Curtis Grant played it cool hours after the pairings were made public.

"I just didn't know if we would be three or four," he said. "It didn't really matter to me as long as we were in there. If you look, we had a championship game and the other two (Big 12 teams), they're sharing a championship. Which team would you go with? The team that actually fought the last game or two teams that are sharing a championship?"

Bennett expressed a similar belief beforehand, saying in the Indianapolis Colts' locker room after the win against Wisconsin that he

didn't think it was possible that the playoff selection committee could leave out the Buckeyes.

"Watch the film. Watch the film of what we just did," Bennett said. "We functioned on all cylinders tonight, and when you see something like that happen you have to take a step back and wonder, 'Who can't they beat

2014-15 OSU Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Opp. Record	Bowl Game, Date
Aug. 30	vs. Navy (at Baltimore)	W, 34-17	7-5	Poinsettia vs. San Diego State, Dec. 23
Sept. 6	VIRGINIA TECH	L, 35-21	6-6	Military vs. Cincinnati, Dec. 27
Sept. 13	KENT STATE	W, 66-0	2-9	None
Sept. 27	CINCINNATI	W, 50-28	9-3	Military vs. Virginia Tech, Dec. 27
Oct. 4	at Maryland	W, 52-24	7-5	Foster Farms vs. Stanford, Dec. 30
Oct. 18	RUTGERS	W, 56-17	7-5	Quick Lane vs. North Carolina, Dec. 27
Oct. 25	at Penn State	W, 31-24 (2OT)	6-6	Pinstripe vs. Boston College, Dec. 27
Nov. 1	ILLINOIS	W, 55-14	6-6	Heart of Dallas vs. La. Tech, Dec. 26
Nov. 8	at Michigan State	W, 49-37	10-2	Cotton vs. Baylor, Jan. 1
Nov. 15	at Minnesota	W, 31-24	8-4	Citrus vs. Missouri, Jan. 1
Nov. 22	INDIANA	W, 42-27	4-8	None
Nov. 29	MICHIGAN	W, 42-28	5-7	None
Dec. 6	vs. Wisconsin*	W, 59-0	10-3	Outback vs. Auburn, Jan. 1
Jan. 1	vs. Alabama**	8:30 p.m.	12-1	Sugar vs. Ohio State, Jan. 1

* - Big Ten Championship Game (at Indianapolis) ** - Sugar Bowl (at New Orleans)

when they are functioning on all cylinders?" I personally think we can beat anybody."

Thanks in part to his leadership and the guidance of the other three team captains as well, the group that lost by two touchdowns

at home to an eventual 6-6 team will get up to two more games to prove themselves against the best teams in the country.

If the Buckeyes find themselves down at any point, they'll know whom to turn to.

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OHIO STATE VS. WISCONSIN

Redemption: Buckeyes Blast Badgers, Claim Crown

By JEFF SVOBODA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

As the Ohio State football team danced, high-fived and screamed its way joyously throughout its locker room Dec. 6 in Indianapolis, there were a lot of emotions in play after the team's 59-0 slaughter of Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game.

There was jubilation. There was relief. There was excitement for what was likely to come.

And in some ways, there was astonishment at the lopsided final score of the game, a drubbing that went down as one of the largest demolitions of a ranked team in college football history.

"If you would have told me earlier this week that we would shut them out 59-0, I wouldn't have believed you," senior Michael Bennett said after OSU won its first-ever league title game. "I think it would have been a hard-fought battle, but we would have come out on top.

"But seeing the guys before the game and what was going on in the locker room and how just hyped up everyone was and how everyone bought in to what we were saying, maybe I thought they would get seven points. A shutout is a big deal against this offense."

Anything that could go right did go right for the No. 5 Buckeyes (12-1) against the 13th-ranked Badgers. Sophomore Cardale Jones, making his first start in his career after the Michigan game injury to J.T. Barrett, threw three touchdown passes and was in complete command of the Ohio State offense from the beginning. On the other side of the ball, the Heisman campaign of Wisconsin running back Melvin Gordon came to an emphatic end as the Big Ten's all-time leader in single-season rushing yards finished with just 76 on 26 carries, a meager average of 2.9 per carry.

And when it was over, two of the team's larger objectives were accomplished. First, Ohio State washed the bitter taste of last year's title-game loss to Michigan State in Lucas Oil Stadium away, and the Buckeyes were impressive enough to move from fifth in the College Football Playoff rankings to fourth, punching a ticket to the inaugural event.

"To be here and see this right now, I don't even know what to say," offensive guard Pat Elflein said. "It's just really satisfying that we came together as a team. Everybody did their jobs, everybody played hard and we're Big Ten champs. That's always the ultimate goal is everybody to play their best game, and that's what happened."



BATTERING THE BADGERS – Ohio State senior wide receiver Devin Smith (9) caught three touchdown passes during the Buckeyes' 59-0 win vs. Wisconsin, and sophomore Cardale Jones (inset) claimed the game's MVP trophy.

Sweet Revenge

Sitting at home while nursing a season-ending injury a year ago, then-true freshman linebacker Darron Lee had tears in his eyes as he watched his crestfallen teammates walk off the field 52 weeks prior vs. Michigan State and swore that he would help make amends.

"What a difference a year can make, right?" he said in the locker room this time around. "I'll never forget when I watched on TV last year, I cried. I cried a lot, and I vowed one day to get a championship for my leaders and for my brothers, so it's crazy what a year can make.

"It feels good. Watching it from the TV and then coming out and winning it a year later, the feeling is indescribable."

Lee's smile was nearly a mile wide as the party around him was in full swing. The entire game – by far the largest shutout win vs. a ranked team ever for OSU and second-biggest beating ever put on a top-15 team in college football history – was essentially a celebration for the team and its fans, who swarmed the home of the Indianapolis Colts looking to wash away the lingering feelings from the year before.

The team jubilantly cheered Devin Smith's touchdown catch that started the shellacking just 1:59 into the game and was equally thrilled when Wisconsin's last-gasp drive ended just short of the end zone against OSU's second unit to keep the shutout intact.

After celebrating on the field and receiving the Big Ten championship trophy from commissioner Jim Delany, the Buckeyes retreated to the team locker room for a team dance party captured by reporters. Later, as reporters milled about, music blared as hugs were exchanged throughout the night.

"It's just a great feeling," senior linebacker Curtis Grant said. "Reality still hasn't hit me yet. I think it's all a dream. But I wouldn't trade this team for the world."

The thought that this year would be different entered the team's mind from the second it returned to Lucas Oil Stadium. A year ago, Ohio State was the visiting team, meaning it stood on the east sideline of the stadium, used the opposing locker room and wore its road white uniforms.

When the Buckeyes arrived this year, they were the home team, which meant using the Colts locker room and donning the team's iconic scarlet tops.

"We had that bad taste from last year," Grant said. "Coming out of the opposite tunnel (in walk-through before the game), the first thing I thought about was (Michigan State) coming out with their roses last year, and they were excited, man. It just hurt to be on the other end and to see it. Now we see what we can do."

That Michigan State loss motivated the team throughout the year. Before the Indiana contest Nov. 22 that allowed OSU to clinch a share of the Big Ten East Division title and return to the conference

championship game, the Buckeye players spoke unprompted about how important the goal to return had been to the team through winter workouts.

Once that mission was accomplished, the elders of the team spoke of how much they were looking forward to returning to Indianapolis to exorcise the demons of the past year. They did so in grand fashion against the Badgers.

"I think a lot had to do with how we finished the year last year," said senior tight end Jeff Heuerman. "We didn't forget that feeling, and they made sure of that in the offseason. We would watch before workouts, before mat drills, video of them celebrating out there and us losing and stuff like that.

"It was terrible at the time, honestly, but it truly motivated us the whole offseason. We learned from our mistakes and came out today and showed what we've been working for for the last year."

Jones Shines

Odds makers made Wisconsin the favorite before the game thanks largely to the fact Ohio State entered the game with a first-time starter at quarterback in Jones.

It was a fair move considering that when Barrett went down late in the Michigan game with a broken bone in his right ankle, Jones – who had thrown 16 career passes in nearly three years in the program before the U-M contest – was suddenly the No. 1 guy.

If there was any weight on his shoulders considering the OSU season hung in the balance, he didn't show it. Jones was superb from his first throw and finished with three touchdown passes on deep balls to Smith while completing 12 of 17 throws for 257 yards and no interceptions. More



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OHIO STATE VS. WISCONSIN

importantly, he was in command of the OSU offense throughout the game.

Teammates and coaches alike said they knew the 6-5, 250-pounder had the potential in him to shine, and most said they weren't surprised by his standout performance.

Then there was head coach Urban Meyer.

"I don't use the word surprised," Meyer said. "I guess I'll use it for the first time – I was a little bit surprised."

Jones was asked if he played with an edge considering how his presence as the starter had led many to decree OSU the underdog in the game, but he said that was not the case.

"I wouldn't say a chip on my shoulder," he said. "I played with confidence because of the confidence my teammates had in me, the confidence my coaches had in me, my family, close friends, Buckeye Nation."

"It was very fun, going out there showing everybody what we can do when we all come together as one."

During the week before the game, Meyer and his offensive staff went to great lengths to explain that a quarterback is the product of those around him while noting that the Ohio State offense had improved around Barrett throughout the first 12 games. That included a running back in Ezekiel Elliott who went from solid to a standout, an ever-improving group of receivers and an offensive line that jelled into a unit that brought back memories of 2013's dominant squad.

Jones was also lauded before the game for how he handled being the No. 2 quarterback this season, and his mature approach to preparation was consistent during the week leading up to the title game.

"To see the way he focused this week, he wasn't at the house like he usually is," roommate Tyvis Powell said. "He spent a lot of time at the Woody. He did a lot of throwing and a lot of film study. He stayed overtime at the Woody, so the work he put in this week, I knew he was leaving no doubt that he'd be ready to play."

Whether his gaudy numbers were a surprise or not, Jones got the job done when the spotlight was the brightest.

"He delivered just like I thought he would," offensive coordinator Tom Herman said. "We worked all week to make sure that his confidence level was up and that he prepared like a pro, which he did. He did all those things. When he did all those things it fills you with confidence."

"He still made some first-time blunders. He certainly didn't play a perfect game. The thing I was most proud of was when he did make some bonehead mistakes, he came right back and never got in the tank and continued to play extremely well."

Blow By Blow

The underdog Buckeyes thoroughly dominated the Badgers in every facet of the game. Ohio State outgained Wisconsin (10-3) by a 558-258 margin and limited Gordon to the 76 yards and no touchdowns.

The Buckeyes chose to play a safety near the line of scrimmage to limit the Badgers rushing attack, and that move along with the standout play of the defensive line almost totally shut down the Heisman finalist.

The Buckeyes forced four turnovers, two coming during a dominant first half. Sophomore safety Vonn Bell and Lee led the unit with seven tackles apiece. Bennett, who wore the No. 53 of late teammate Kosta Karageorge, recorded two sacks and four tackles for loss and forced a pair of fumbles.

"It all starts up front with a game like this," defensive coordinator Luke Fickell said. "To have the ability to be able to stop Melvin Gordon, you've got to be able to do a lot of things, and those guys did an incredible job. As a whole everybody did a great job, but to finish the way they did, there was more energy on that sideline in the last 45 seconds than there was the whole second half."

Smith, long known as a deep-ball threat for the Buckeyes, had immediate chemistry with Jones. He caught just four passes, but three of them went for touchdowns of 39, 44 and 42 yards. Elliott outshone Gordon, rushing for career-high 220 yards and a pair of touchdowns, and the Buckeyes outrushed the run-heavy Badgers 301-71.

Even the special teams broke OSU's way. Sophomore punter Cameron Johnston had two punts downed inside the UW 5-yard line and recorded a career-long boot of 73 yards.

"I've been asked a lot, 'Did I see this happening?' " Meyer said. "I saw a team that prepared very well and is playing at a very high level right now."

Wisconsin (10-3) got little from its passing game. Quarterback Joel Stave completed 17 of 43 passes for 187 yards with no touchdowns and three interceptions. The Badgers were shut out for the first time since Aug. 24, 1997, vs. Syracuse, and it was the team's worst loss since a 59-0 setback against Earle Bruce's OSU squad in 1979.

"We're going to bounce back, take care of business," said Wisconsin head coach Gary Andersen, who instead took the Oregon State job days later. "I'll do a lot better job as a head football coach. I failed the kids tonight. So I'll come back, fight, and away we go."

It did not take Jones long to make an impact in the game.

Wisconsin won the opening toss and deferred, and Jones quickly led the Buckeyes 77 yards to a touchdown in just six plays. He completed all three of his pass attempts, including a 39-yard touchdown pass to Smith. Jones took a shotgun snap, faked a QB run by taking a step toward the line of scrimmage and dropped back to pass. He flung the ball deep into the end zone, and Smith muscled past

Wisconsin cornerback Sojourn Shelton for the ball in the end zone for a TD.

Freshman Sean Nuernberger came on to add the extra point, giving the Buckeyes a 7-0 lead just 1:59 into the game.

"After the first touchdown, I knew the game was over," Smith said. "I went to Coach Meyer and I told him it was over. Their demeanor wasn't, 'We can still win this.' I feel like they were kind of scared of us, and we just came out and kept our foot on the throttle the whole game."

The Ohio State defense passed its first test against Gordon, holding him to a single yard on a pair of carries on Wisconsin's first drive, which ended with a punt after a three-and-out.

Ohio State extended its lead later in the first quarter.

This time it was Elliott taking a starring role. The Buckeyes started the drive at the OSU 7 and gained 12 yards on an Elliott run up the middle. The next play was much like the first, only Elliott went untouched up the middle 81 yards for a touchdown.

Continued On Page 28

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OHIO STATE VS. WISCONSIN

Ohio State Cruises To Victory After Big First Half

Continued From Page 27

Elliott took the Jones handoff and immediately had plenty of room to run. OSU senior right tackle Darryl Baldwin had a key pulling block, and sophomore center Jacoby Boren had another crucial block to spring Elliott, who outraced the Wisconsin defense down the field.

Nuernberger's PAT made it 14-0 Ohio State with 4:06 remaining in the opening quarter.

A Stave interception by Bell turned into points early in the second quarter. Jones drove the Buckeyes from the OSU 41 to the UW 1 before a false start penalty and a dropped potential touchdown pass by Elliott forced Ohio State to settle for a 23-yard field goal by Nuernberger that upped the lead to 17-0 with 14:14 left before halftime.

Jones continued his stellar play with another deep touchdown pass that extended the lead to 24-0 with 11:09 remaining in the first half. It was another quick TD drive, lasting just three plays. At the UW 44, Jones dropped back and stood tall in the pocket, taking a hit as he threw deep for Smith again. And again, Smith came down with the ball in the end zone for another score. Nuernberger added the extra point to give the Buckeyes a commanding lead.

After throwing his second TD of the night, Jones had completed 7 of 9 passes for 165 yards – and one of those incompletions could have been caught for a third TD.

The onslaught continued with another

Ohio State touchdown later in the second quarter. The Buckeyes marched 69 yards in six plays, facing little trouble against the Wisconsin defense. Elliott capped the drive with a 14-yard touchdown run that, following the Nuernberger PAT, made it 31-0 with 6:36 left before halftime.

Ohio State concluded a near perfect half with another key play in the final minute of the second quarter. Following another impressive punt by Johnston that was downed at the Wisconsin 5, the Badgers had the ball at the UW 12 when Bennett forced a Gordon fumble. The ball was scooped up at the UW 4 by sophomore defensive end Joey Bosa, who rumbled into the end zone with just 36 seconds left in the half.

"Honestly I was desperate to make a big play," Gordon said. "I lost focus on the ball. That's how it came out. I was just trying so hard to make a play, get the team going."

Following the Nuernberger PAT, the Buckeyes boasted a 38-0 lead that they took into halftime.

The first-half stats told the story of Ohio State's dominance. The Buckeyes outgained the Badgers 364-91, and Jones completed 10 of 13 passes for 211 yards and two touchdowns. Elliott scored a pair of touchdowns and had 150 yards on 12 carries. Smith caught three passes, including two for a TD, for 95 yards.

Conversely, Gordon was limited to 43 yards on 14 carries, an average of 3.1 yards per carry. Stave completed just 5

of 14 passes for 58 yards and an interception.

Jones and Smith connected again for a third touchdown in the third quarter. The Buckeyes extended their lead to 45-0 with 9:24 on the clock on the 42-yard touchdown pass. On a play-action play, Jones again threw a ball up for Smith to beat a Wisconsin defender in a one-on-one situation. And again, Smith won the battle, bringing down the ball in the end zone for a third time.

Freshman Curtis Samuel capped the scoring with a pair of fourth-quarter touch-

downs. The first came on a 12-yard run with 11:39 remaining, one play after a 60-yard run by Elliott in which he lost his shoe during the run to bring back memories of Keith Byars' famous run vs. Illinois in 1984. Nuernberger added the PAT after Samuel's scamper over the left side to up the OSU lead to 52-0.

With 2:25 remaining, Samuel added a 1-yard run that set the final score at 59-0.

"I'm almost really at a loss for words," Lee said. "I don't really know what to do because I'm still trying to figure out what just happened."



SONNY BROCKWAY

KNOCKOUT PUNCH – Ohio State sophomore Joey Bosa (97) provided the exclamation point on the Buckeyes' dominant first half with a 4-yard fumble recovery for a touchdown in the final minute of the second quarter.

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 59, Wisconsin 0

Dec. 6, 2014 – Lucas Oil Stadium; Indianapolis

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
WISCONSIN	0	0	0	0	0
OHIO STATE	14	24	7	14	59

First Quarter

OSU – D.Smith, 39 yard pass from C.Jones (Nuernberger kick), 13:01; 6 plays, 77 yards, 1:59 TOP.

OSU – Elliott, 81 yard run (Nuernberger kick), 4:06; 2 plays, 93 yards, 0:42 TOP.

Second Quarter

OSU – Nuernberger, 23 yard field goal, 14:14; 7 plays, 53 yards, 2:41 TOP.

OSU – D.Smith, 44 yard pass from C.Jones (Nuernberger kick), 11:09; 3 plays, 63 yards, 1:17 TOP.

OSU – Elliott, 14 yard run (Nuernberger kick), 6:36; 6 plays, 69 yards, 2:52 TOP.

OSU – Bosa, 4 yard fumble recovery (Nuernberger kick), 0:36.

Third Quarter

OSU – D.Smith, 42 yard pass from C.Jones (Nuernberger kick), 9:24; 5 plays, 77 yards, 2:47 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Samuel, 12 yard run (Nuernberger kick), 11:39; 2 plays, 72 yards, 0:34 TOP.

OSU – Samuel, 1 yard run (Nuernberger kick), 2:25; 7 plays, 61 yards, 4:02 TOP.

Att. – 60,229. **Weather** – Indoors.

Team Statistics

	UW	OSU
First Downs	18	24
Rushing	6	12
Passing	11	10
Penalty	1	2
Rushes-Yards	37-71	38-301
Passing Yards	187	257
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	17-43-3	12-18-0
Offensive Plays	80	56
Total Net Yards	258	558
Third Down Efficiency	5-18	2-8
Fourth Down Efficiency	3-5	0-0
Punts-Avg.	8-41.1	4-53.0
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	1-0
Penalties	3-23	5-44
Time of Possession	33:55	26:05

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **UW**: Gordon 26-76; Clement 5-14; Doe 1-6; Erickson 1-4; McEvoy 1-2; Stave 3-(-31). **OSU**: Elliott 20-220; Dunn 5-47; Samuel 4-23; C.Jones 8-9; Marshall 1-2.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **UW**: Stave 17-43-3-187-0. **OSU**: C.Jones 12-17-0-257-3; Marshall 0-1-0-0-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **UW**: Erickson 7-83; Doe 3-41; Fumagalli 2-24; Arneson 2-23; Clement 2-12; Traylor 1-4. **OSU**: D.Smith 4-137; Thomas 3-41; Marshall 2-36; C.Smith 2-30; Spencer 1-13.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – **UW**: Meyer 8-41.1-57. **OSU**: Johnston 4-53.0-73.

KICK RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: None. **OSU**: Marshall 2-1.

PUNT OFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: Doe 6-114; Fumagalli 1-8. **OSU**: Samuel 1-23.

MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.) – **UW**: None. **OSU**: Nuernberger (29).

FORCED FUMBLES – **UW**: None. **OSU**: Bennett 2, Lee.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: None. **OSU**: Bosa 1-4.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: None. **OSU**: D.Grant 2-60; Bell 1-7.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: Landisch 1.0-9. **OSU**: Bennett 2.0-16; Frazier 1.0-8.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: Landisch 1.5-10; Schobert 1.0-5; Ma.Trotter 1.0-4; Herring 1.0-1; Obasiah 0.5-0. **OSU**: Bennett 4.0-18; Apple 2.0-4; Frazier 1.0-8; Washington 1.0-4; C.Grant 1.0-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **UW**: Ma.Trotter 7-3-10; Landisch 4-3-7; Caputo 1-5-6; Hillary 3-2-5; Jean 2-3-5; Shelton 2-1-3; Doe 1-2-3; Herring 2-0-2; Schobert 2-0-2; Figaro 2-0-2; Keefer 1-1-2; Jacobs 0-2-2; Zagzebski 1-0-1; Gaulden 1-0-1; Tindal 1-0-1; Gordon 1-0-1; Fredrick 1-0-1; V.Biegel 0-1-1; Jordan 0-1-1; Obasiah 0-1-1; Musso 0-1-1. **OSU**: Lee 5-2-7; Bell 4-3-7; McMillan 4-2-6; Apple 4-1-5; Bennett 4-1-5; Perry 3-2-5; Bosa 4-0-4; C.Grant 2-2-4; Washington 2-2-4; E.Smith 3-0-3; D.Grant 1-2-3; Burrows 2-0-2; C.Williams 1-1-2; Powell 1-1-2; Fada 1-1-2; Dunn 1-1-2; S.Miller 1-0-1; Frazier 1-0-1; Tanner 1-0-1; Conley 1-0-1; Carter 1-0-1; Marshall 1-0-1; Samuel 0-1-1; Lewis 0-1-1; Booker 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – **WISCONSIN**: Offense, Stave, Gordon, Erickson, Fredrick, Arneson, Marz, Lewallen, Voltz, Costigan, Havenstein, D.Watt. Defense, Gaulden, Zagzebski, Herring, Schobert, Ma.Trotter, Landisch, V.Biegel, Shelton, Caputo, Jean, Hillary, Meyer. Reserves, Jordan, Doe, McEvoy, James, Clement, Wheelwright, Love, Rushing, Baretz, Musso, Ogunbowale, Tindal, Straus, Hudson, Figaro, Jacobs, Obasiah, Ferguson, Endicott, Hayes, Mi.Trotter, Traylor, Fumagalli, McGuire, Ruechel, R.Ball, Maly, Keefer, Sheehy, Goldberg. **OHIO STATE**: Offense, C.Jones, Elliott, Thomas, D.Smith, Spencer, Heuerman, Decker, Price, Boren, Elflein, Baldwin, Nuernberger. Defense, Bosa, Washington, Bennett, Frazier, Lee, C.Grant, Perry, Apple, Powell, Bell, D.Grant, Johnston. Reserves, E.Smith, McMillan, Samuel, Webb, Holmes, Bell, Burrows, Marshall, Conley, Tanner, Dunn, Reeves, Booker, Worley, Fada, Clinton, Haynes, Munger, C.Williams, Lewis, Carter, Hill, Brown, Vannett, C.Smith, S.Miller, Schutt, Sprinkle.

Season Statistics

2014-15 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 30 (5)	Navy**	W, 34-17	57,579
Sept. 6 (8)	VIRGINIA TECH	L, 35-21	107,517
Sept. 13 (22)	KENT STATE	W, 66-0	104,404
Sept. 27 (22)	CINCINNATI	W, 50-28	108,362
Oct. 4 (20)	at Maryland	W, 52-24	51,802
Oct. 18 (13)	RUTGERS	W, 56-17	106,795
Oct. 25 (13)	at Penn State	W, 31-24 (OT)	107,895
Nov. 1 (13)	ILLINOIS	W, 55-14	106,961
Nov. 8 (13)	at Mich. State (7)	W, 49-37	76,409
Nov. 15 (8)	at Minnesota	W, 31-24	45,778
Nov. 22 (7)	INDIANA	W, 42-27	101,426
Nov. 29 (7)	MICHIGAN	W, 42-28	108,610
Dec. 6 (6)	vs. Wisconsin^ (11)	W, 59-0	60,229
Jan. 1 (5)	vs. Alabama^ (1)	8:30 p.m.	

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

** at Baltimore ^ Big Ten Title Game at Indianapolis

Sugar Bowl at New Orleans

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	335	242
Rushing	187	101
Passing	132	114
Penalty	16	27
Average Per Game/Rush	260.8	139.8
Average Per Game/Pass	246.8	188.2
Total Offense	6,599	4,264
Total Plays	937	891
Average Per Game	507.6	328.0
Average Per Play	7.0	4.8
Penalties-Yards	75-657	65-574
Fumbles-Lost	19-10	18-8
Third Down Efficiency	85-165	69-187
Percentage	52%	37%
Fourth Down Efficiency	10-19	8-15
Percentage	53%	53%
Sacks-Yards	40-284	24-165
Time Of Possession Avg.	31:04	28:56

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	162	151	135	126	14	588	45.2
Opponents	62	66	55	85	7	275	21.2

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Ezekiel Elliott	217	1,402	6.5	12	81
J.T. Barrett	171	938	5.5	11	86
Curtis Samuel	56	376	6.7	6	34
Cardale Jones	34	215	6.3	0	21
Jalin Marshall	20	131	6.6	1	30
Rod Smith	24	101	4.2	4	14
Dontre Wilson	18	100	5.6	0	21
Warren Ball	18	85	4.7	0	12
Br'onte Dunn	9	63	7.0	0	28
Johnnie Dixon	4	20	5.0	0	9
Evan Spencer	1	9	9.0	0	9
Jeffie Johnson	1	2	2.0	0	2
TEAM	14	-52	-3.7	0	0
OSU Totals	587	3,390	5.8	34	86
OPP Totals	470	1,818	3.9	21	90

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
J.T. Barrett	203	314	64.6	2,834	34-10	169.83
Cardale Jones	22	34	64.7	375	5-0	205.88
Jalin Marshall	0	1	0.0	0	0-0	0.00
OSU Totals	225	350	64.3	3,209	39-10	172.36
OPP Totals	230	421	54.6	2,446	13-21	103.65

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Michael Thomas	43	680	15.8	8	79
Devin Smith	30	799	26.6	11	80
Jalin Marshall	28	392	14.0	6	57
Ezekiel Elliott	26	208	8.0	0	22
Dontre Wilson	21	300	14.3	3	40
Jeff Heuerman	17	207	12.2	2	32
Corey Smith	17	174	10.2	0	25
Nick Vannett	15	188	12.5	4	26
Evan Spencer	14	142	10.1	3	22
Curtis Samuel	10	87	8.7	0	30
Jeff Greene	1	13	13.0	0	13
Noah Brown	1	9	9.0	0	9
Rod Smith	1	8	8.0	1	8
Marcus Baugh	1	2	2.0	1	2
OSU Totals	225	3,209	14.3	39	80
OPP Totals	230	2,446	10.6	13	83

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Sean Nuernberger	–	79-79	–	–	–	11-18 112
Ezekiel Elliott	12	–	–	–	–	72
J.T. Barrett	11	–	–	–	–	66
Devin Smith	11	–	–	–	–	66
Michael Thomas	8	–	–	–	–	48
Jalin Marshall	8	–	–	–	–	48
Curtis Samuel	6	–	–	–	–	36
Rod Smith	5	–	–	–	–	30
Nick Vannett	4	–	–	–	–	24
Evan Spencer	3	–	–	–	–	18
Dontre Wilson	3	–	–	–	–	18
Jeff Heuerman	2	–	–	–	–	12
Darron Lee	2	–	–	–	–	12
Eli Apple	1	–	–	–	–	6
Marcus Baugh	1	–	–	–	–	6
Joey Bosa	1	–	–	–	–	6
Raekwon McMillan	1	–	–	–	–	6
OSU Totals	79	79-79	–	–	–	11-18 588
OPP Totals	36	35-35	–	–	–	8-13 275

* – Ohio State recorded a team safety.

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Sean Nuernberger	6-8	0-0	5-10	0-0	11-18
OSU Totals	6-8	0-0	5-10	0-0	11-18
OPP Totals	0-0	5-7	2-4	1-2	8-13

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Cameron Johnston	39	1,759	45.1	0	73
OSU Totals	39	1,759	45.1	0	73
OPP Totals	83	3,453	41.6	1	64

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Vonn Bell	5	22	4.4	0	15
Doran Grant	5	106	21.2	0	37
Tyvis Powell	3	20	6.7	0	20
Darron Lee	2	36	18.0	0	26
Eli Apple	2	0	0.0	0	0
Raekwon McMillan	1	24	24.0	1	24
Erick Smith	1	5	5.0	0	5
Curtis Grant	1	2	2.0	0	2
Joshua Perry	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	21	215	10.2	1	37
OPP Totals	10	224	22.4	2	63

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Jalin Marshall	19	241	12.7	1	54
Dontre Wilson	14	136	9.7	0	32
Jeff Greene	2	10	5.0	0	0
Ron Tanner	0	22	0.0	0	9
OSU Totals	35	409	11.7	1	54
OPP Totals	8	48	6.0	0	35

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Dontre Wilson	22	528	24.0	0	43
Curtis Samuel	9	200	22.2	0	38
Jalin Marshall	2	56	28.0	0	30
Noah Brown	1	23	23.0	0	23
Rod Smith	1	17	17.0	0	17
Ezekiel Elliott	1	16	16.0	0	16
OSU Totals	36	840	23.3	0	43
OPP Totals	59	1,053	17.8	0	31

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Joshua Perry	67	46	113	8.5-31	3.0-18
Vonn Bell	46	32	78	1.0-2	-
Darron Lee	43	23	66	13.5-59	5.5-44
Tyvis Powell	38	26	64	2.0-4	-
Curtis Grant	28	25	53	5.0-23	1.0-11
Doran Grant	39	12	51	-	-
Joey Bosa	34	16	50	20.0-114	13.5-96
Raekwon McMillan	27	22	49	6.0-22	2.5-15
A.Washington	23	20	43	9.0-37	3.5-23
Eli Apple	24	17	41	5.5-11	-
Michael Bennett	22	14	36	12.5-55	6.0-41
Steve Miller	19	14	33	6.5-20	1.0-9
Cam Burrows	10	7	17	-	-
Gareon Conley	10	4	14	-	-
Armani Reeves	8	5	13	-	-
Rashad Frazier	7	5	12	3.0-12	2.0-11
OSU Totals	533	338	871	100-416	40-284
OPP Totals	552	460	1,012	62-287	24-165