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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

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Unhappy Ending

Orange Bowl Defeat Completes Difficult Finish To Season

 By BEN AXELROD
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For the second time in as many series, Braxton Miller lay on the Sun Life Stadium field, clutching his side while being attended to by Ohio State trainers.

Nearby on the Buckeyes' sideline, wide receiver Corey "Philly" Brown expressed his dismay, running back Carlos Hyde removed his jersey and shoulder pads and wideout Chris Fields headed to the locker room.

This wasn't the storybook ending to the season that any of them imagined.

To be honest, Miami wasn't even where they wanted to be in the first place, with the national championship game being played three days later in Pasadena. But after a Big Ten Championship Game loss to Michigan State a month prior rerouted Ohio State to the shores of Biscayne Bay for the Orange Bowl, the Buckeyes had a shot at redemption and to end the season on a positive note but ultimately found neither in their 40-35 loss to Clemson on Jan. 3.

"The loss is devastating for me," senior left tackle Jack Mewhort said. "I'm going to wake up tomorrow and I'm not going to be these guys' teammate anymore. That's the hardest part for me right now."

It might have been the OSU offense that had the last chance to win the game – an ill-fated effort that ended when Miller was picked off by Clemson linebacker Stephone Anthony – but it was again the Buckeyes' defense that did the most damage to Ohio State in its second loss in as many games.

A month after surrendering 438 yards to what had been a struggling Spartans outfit – and 603 to Michigan a week before that – the Buckeyes again struggled when it came to making stops, as quarterback Tajh Boyd and the Tigers offense racked up 576 yards.

The effort was enough for Buckeye coach Urban Meyer to admit that what he had in his defense wasn't good enough this



SONNY BROCKWAY

THE END – Ohio State linebacker Ryan Shazier (2) walks off the field for the final time as a Buckeye after the team fell 40-35 in the Orange Bowl vs. Clemson.

season, at least not when it came to the team's preseason goal of a national championship.

"We're not a championship-caliber defense right now," Meyer said. "Although we think about the last two games, we were in position to go win that game."

Being in position to and actually doing so, however, are two different things.

The mood in the Buckeyes' locker room after the game was understandably somber, as seniors tried to piece together the legacies that they were leaving mere moments after their college careers had come to an end. Miller deflected inquiries into whether or not he'd be entering the NFL draft, while a few feet away freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett answered questions about the future of Ohio State.

Even as safeties coach and co-defensive coordinator Everett Withers hugged his players for one final time before leaving for the head coaching position at James Madison University, one thing in the Buckeyes' locker room stood out over everything.

A white board with some plays and instructions scribbled upon it seemingly had been punched out, leaving a gaping hole that was impossible not to notice.

Players attributed the damage done to some pregame excitement, but whether that was actually true was irrelevant. As players packed their bags and cleaned out their lockers – some for the final time of their college careers – the

defaced white board symbolically served as a reminder of the imperfection that was the 2013 Ohio State season.

Ranked second in the nation a mere month earlier, the Buckeyes were in line to play for their first BCS National Championship Game since the 2007 season but concluded their 2013 campaign with the first two losses of the Meyer era in Columbus.

Given the state that the program was in when Meyer took it over two years ago, there are certainly worse things that Ohio State could lay claim to than a 24-2 mark in two seasons, even if the last two games left a sour taste in the Buckeyes' mouths heading into the 2014.

"We had a team meeting two years ago, and if you'd have told me when I walked out of that team meeting that this group would buy in and we'd go on a nice run and have the highest-scoring offense in program history and 24 straight wins and all that, I'd have looked at you and said you're out of your mind," Meyer said.

"Sometimes you have to go through things. I'd rather not, but that's part of it. We played a good team in the Orange Bowl, and it was a high-scoring game with a lot of great plays. We didn't finish it."

Weird Week Leads To Loss

It might not have been an enjoyable one, but the Ohio

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COVER STORY

Loss Wraps Up Challenging Trip To Miami

Continued From Page 1

State loss might have been a fitting end for what was ultimately a strange week for the Buckeyes in South Beach.

It started when the Ohio State team plane landed five days before the game without defensive end Noah Spence in tow. Meyer explained that the All-Big Ten defender was dealing with a "personal matter" and that he was hopeful Spence would rejoin the team in time to play in the Orange Bowl.

Spence's return never came to fruition, however, as Ohio State announced on New Year's Day that the sophomore had been

suspended by the Big Ten not only for the Orange Bowl but the first two games of the 2014 season as well. The conference would only specify that Spence had violated league rules, while his father, Greg, revealed to WHTM-TV in Harrisburg, Pa., that his son had accidentally ingested the drug ecstasy, which he tested positive for at the Big Ten Championship Game.

Greg Spence also said that his son had originally been suspended for a full season but that an

appeal reduced it to three games. Ohio State and Spence had been hopeful that another appeal would make him eligible for the Orange Bowl, but that one proved to be less successful.

"I'm disappointed that the appeal didn't go through," Meyer said. "Noah's one of my favorite players. Great family, great player, great person. We've got to move forward."

The loss of Spence wasn't the only sting that the Buckeyes felt in Florida, as a bone bruise in



Noah Spence

his left knee prevented cornerback Bradley Roby from playing in the Orange Bowl, effectively ending his college career. The absence of Roby, another All-Big Ten defender, was noticeable on game day, as Clemson star receiver Sammy Watkins lit up the Buckeyes with Orange Bowl records of 16 receptions and 227 receiving yards to go along with two touchdowns.

The bad news for the Buckeyes seemed to come by the day in the Sunshine State, as shortly after Ohio State arrived in South Beach, multiple players were affected by what was described by Meyer as a 24-hour virus. The illness prevented Miller from fulfilling some media obligations throughout the week and left tight end Jeff Heuerman with IVs in each of his arms during the game's halftime.

"I haven't eaten since New Year's Eve," Heuerman told BSB after the Orange Bowl, while pointing to the bruises on each arm. "I got it on New Year's morning. Nick (Vannett), my roommate, he had it the first day we were here. Some of the guys got it worse than others. I got it pretty bad."

"I was sick all day Wednesday, all day Thursday, didn't practice Thursday, didn't do anything with the team Thursday or Friday. I was sick this morning, I was throwing up at breakfast. Four bags of IV at noon, lay down for a little bit, came here, sick before the game, sick during the first quarter. Came in a little bit early before halftime and got one IV in this arm, one IV in that arm, two more bags. I went from there."

The news that senior safety Christian Bryant's appeal for a medical redshirt had been denied, the intestinal bug, Spence's suspension and Roby's injury created a negative energy that seemed to emanate from Ohio State in the days leading up to the game. Given the circumstances in which they played, it's safe to say that the Buckeyes' hardships affected them on game day and played a significant role in the outcome of the Orange Bowl.

Where To Now?

Even back in Columbus the Buckeyes couldn't seem to get away from bad news, as on Jan. 9, defensive line coach and ace recruiter Mike Vrabel announced that he was leaving Ohio State to become the linebackers coach for the NFL's Houston Texans. Vrabel's departure came as a surprise to many who had seen the OSU great recruit and develop the likes of Spence and star freshman Joey Bosa during his three-year coaching stint in Columbus.

Just a few hours later, however, Buckeye fans were treated to perhaps the first positive news that they had heard since Tyvis Powell intercepted Devin Gardner to seal a win over Michigan on Nov. 30.

Miller had finally made a decision and the verdict was that he'll be returning to Ohio State for his senior season. It may not have come as a shock – especially considering that reports saying as much were made public mere hours after the Orange Bowl game clock struck zero – but the news that Miller would be returning for a fourth and final season was reason enough for a feeling of relief in Columbus.

"I want to help this team win a Big Ten championship next year," Miller said in a release. "Plus I want to improve as a quarterback in all aspects of my game. I'm looking forward to working for another year with Coach Meyer and Coach (Tom) Herman. And I want to graduate, so this will help get me closer to my academic goal."

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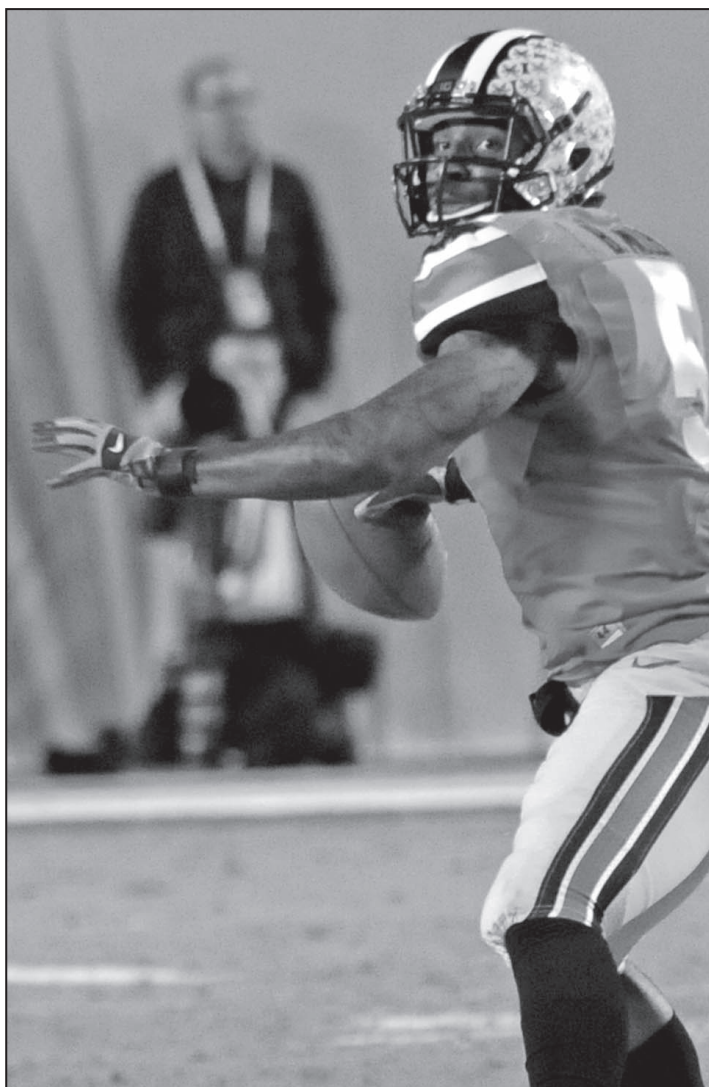
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COVER STORY



SONNY BROCKWAY

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR – Junior quarterback Braxton Miller (5) will return to Ohio State for his senior season and will lead the Urban Meyer/Tom Herman offense in 2014.

So where does that leave the Buckeyes heading into the 2014 season?

With the mere presence of Miller, the reigning two-time Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year, Ohio State will again find itself firmly in the thick of the national championship hunt. With Miller's ability and Meyer's experience, the Buckeyes will likely be the favorites to represent their division in the Big Ten Championship Game next December, and a top-five preseason ranking in the first year with a playoff format in the postseason is also on the table.

That's not to say, however, that Ohio State doesn't have holes to fill and improvements to make.

Even with Miller's return, the Buckeyes will be replacing their leading rusher in Hyde, their leading receiver in Brown, as well as their leading tackler in linebacker Ryan Shazier, who announced Jan. 4 that he would be forgoing his senior season to enter the NFL draft.

Ohio State will also lose four starting offensive linemen who helped pave the way for one of the nation's top rushing offenses over the past two seasons, in addition to Roby and a pair of three-year starters at safety in Bryant and C.J. Barnett.

More than that, the Buckeyes are losing a load of leadership, with the eligibility of a senior class that Meyer has raved about having expired. Replacing that will fall on the shoulders of Miller as well as seniors-to-be such as Heuerman, who already has his eyes set on the upcoming year.

"As soon as we get back, we have to hit the ground running," Heuerman said after the Orange Bowl. "This is a feeling no one wants to feel. Obviously it will have a lot of impact in the offseason in how hard we work."

Meyer, too, is aware of the challenges that lie ahead. And despite the low note that the Buckeyes left the 2013 season on, he maintains the belief that the future is as bright as it's ever been in Columbus.

"I think it will be great," Meyer said of the upcoming offseason. "A student-athlete at Ohio State University – you get a great degree, and go on and build for the future. It's going to sting for a while, probably a long while, because we just didn't finish. And it was right there to finish."

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OHIO STATE VS. CLEMSON

Freshly Squeezed – OSU Falls In Orange Bowl

By JEFF SVOBODA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The Orange Bowl between Ohio State and Clemson just about had it all.

The Jan. 3 showdown in Miami Gardens, Fla., between the one-time national title contenders included 1,003 yards of total offense, 51 first downs, 21 penalties, six turnovers, three second-half lead changes, two missed extra points and a safety.

By the end, the only thing missing, at least for Ohio State, was a victory.

Clemson linebacker Stephone Anthony intercepted a Braxton Miller pass with 1:18 to play, allowing the Tigers to earn a 40-35 triumph against the Buckeyes.

It was the first loss in Ohio State history in which the Buckeyes scored at least 35 points, dropping the team to 284-1-1 in such contests.

"Thank the Orange Bowl and congratulate our opponent," Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer said after his first bowl game in charge of the program. "They played really hard. That was a great coach and a great friend. Great game. We didn't finish the job."

It was a deflating ending to a season that had contained such promise for Ohio State, which appeared to be one win away from the BCS National Championship Game before a Big Ten title contest loss to Michigan State dropped the team to the Orange Bowl.

But the defense, beset by injuries and a lack of depth, never came around, and in south Florida, the stop troops were ripped apart by Clemson. The high-powered Tigers offense racked up 576 yards, with quarterback Tajh Boyd posting 505 yards of total offense and six touchdowns while wide receiver Sammy Watkins set Orange Bowl records with 16 catches for 227 yards.

Yet the defense still made a number of big plays, including one with less than 90 seconds to play when senior C.J. Barnett stepped in front of a wayward pass by Boyd with the Buckeyes trailing by five points. He returned the third-down pass to the Clemson 48, putting Ohio State (12-2) in position to escape with what would have been a stunning victory.

But quarterback Braxton Miller, who took a pounding throughout the game, could not direct a game-winning drive to conclude his junior season. Miller threw incomplete to senior Corey "Philly" Brown on first down then tried to hit Brown again on second down on a post pattern only to underthrow the pass and hit Anthony right in the hands.

"He's a fighter," Meyer said of his quarterback. "He fought through it. It was a (post) pass to the No. 2 receiver."

The victory moved Clemson, a national title contender throughout the first half of the season that was once ranked above unbeaten



SONNY BROCKWAY

REACHING FOR IT – Freshman Vonn Bell (11), making his first career start at nickel back, made an athletic one-handed interception of a Tajh Boyd (10) pass in the first half.

Ohio State in the rankings, to 11-2 and provided the program its first BCS win.

"It means we're one stop closer to our

goal, which is to be the best in the country," head coach Dabo Swinney said. "We knew it was going to be an incredibly hard-fought game. We felt like if we could get it to the fourth quarter and have the lead or be close, then we could win it."

"It was a lot of fun, man. It was a lot of fun. That's the way it's supposed to be."

Boyd, a one-time Ohio State recruit, stole the show, completing 31 of 40 passes for 378 yards, five touchdowns and two interceptions while running for 127 yards and a career-long 48-yard TD.

"I can't think of a better way to give back to this school than a victory in this game," Boyd said. "It was a very impressive victory for this team, this university."

Ohio State's offense moved in fits and starts at times but still had a number of long

gains that kept the team in the contest. Miller finished with 16 completions in 24 attempts with 234 yards, two touchdowns and two picks, while Carlos Hyde carried the ball 25 times for 113 yards and a touchdown while passing the 100-yard mark for the ninth consecutive game to end his career.

Eight of Miller's completions went to Brown, who had eight grabs for 116 yards, while linebacker Joshua Perry led the Buckeyes with a career-high 10 tackles and a sack.

Bizarre First Half

Ohio State entered the game missing a pair of first-team All-Big Ten choices on defense in end Noah Spence (suspension for testing positive for a banned substance) and cornerback Bradley Roby (knee injury), and questions about how the team's defense would hold up were abundant entering the contest.

In other words, it wasn't good news when Clemson won the toss and chose to receive, and the Tigers made that look like an intelligent choice when they took the opening kickoff and marched 75 yards in 2:10 to take an early advantage.

Boyd obliterated his career-long rush on the scoring play, following his right guard through the line of scrimmage and racing right up the gut of the defense for a 48-yard TD. Chandler Catanzaro came on and nailed the extra point and Clemson had an early 7-0 lead.

Ohio State answered with a touchdown on its opening drive, but it took some doing. First, it appeared the Buckeyes would have to punt when Miller was sacked by Vic Beasley on third-and-6 at the OSU 40, but two penalties on the Tigers after the play – an unsportsmanlike conduct call levied against Beasley for his celebration as well as a delay-of-game penalty on the sideline – kept the drive alive.

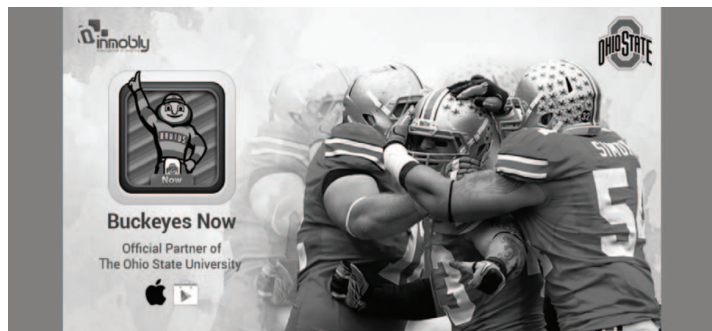
Clemson again stopped the Buckeyes, forcing a fourth-and-2 at the Clemson 49, but tight end Jeff Heuerman took the punt snap as one of the upbacks and ran through a hole in the line to gain 6 yards and a first down.

Finally, Ohio State hit pay dirt on the 13th play of the drive when Miller faked a handoff to freshman Dontre Wilson then ran back to the left side, making safety Robert Smith miss in the open field, using a stutter-step to freeze linebacker Quandon Christian and finishing the 33-yard scoring run by running over cornerback Darius Robinson at the front pylon. Drew Basil came on and his point-after touchdown knotted the score at 7 with 5:44 left in the opening frame.

Clemson's response was swift. Boyd hit Watkins on a screen for 27 yards, completed passes to Watkins and back C.J. Davidson for a total of 14 yards, and then finished the drive with a 34-yard pass to Watkins – who had gotten behind true freshman nickel back Vonn Bell, who was making his first career start and appeared to be expecting safety help – for a touchdown that made it 14-7 with 4:56 on the clock.

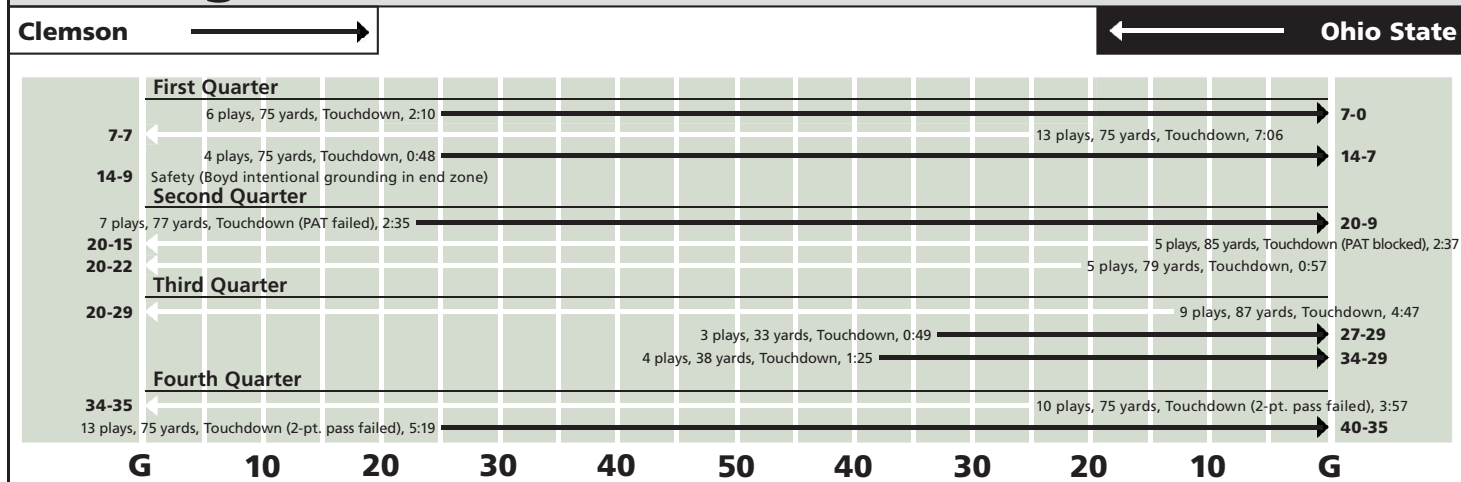
Brown caught a 15-yard pass from Miller and added a 15-yard rush to start the next drive, but Ohio State bogged down, forcing a punt. It was a beauty, though, from freshman Cameron Johnston, and an athletic play by cornerback Armani Reeves allowed the Buckeyes to down the ball at the 1-yard line.

Emboldened by its early success, Clemson thought it could still take advantage of its passing offense despite the field position, but a play-action pass on first down ended in disaster for the Tigers when Perry and end



OHIO STATE VS. CLEMSON

Scoring Drives



Joey Bosa met at Boyd in the end zone, forcing an intentional grounding penalty that gave OSU a safety.

"We had a stunt on front," Perry said. "I got through there and tried to make something happen. I grabbed on and was holding on for dear life, and thankfully Joey came in and cleaned him up."

That play cut Clemson's advantage to 14-9 at the end of the first quarter. The Tigers seemed well on their way to adding to their advantage when they went 63 yards to the Ohio State 6 on their first drive of the second quarter. But Ohio State's defense held when Bell made a leaping, one-handed grab at the goal line of a pass for Watkins to give the ball back to the Buckeyes.

The Tigers still did take the first two-score lead of the game, though, when they scored a touchdown on their next possession at the 6:16 mark. Boyd completed passes of 29 and 13 yards to Watkins and 22 yards to Martavis Bryant, setting up a 3-yard score to Bryant on a fade route that gave the Tigers a 20-9 lead. It stayed at that score, though, when Catanzaro's PAT drilled the left upright.

Wilson's presence continued to prove important when the Buckeyes got the ball back, as he was again a decoy when Miller faked a handoff to him, stepped up in the pocket and lofted a pass down the middle of the field to Heuerman, who had no one near him as he hauled in the ball and finished off a career-long 57-yard TD catch-and-run. Basil's extra point was blocked, though, so Ohio State trailed 20-15 with 3:39 left.

Clemson drove on its ensuing possession, but Reeves knocked running back Roderick McDowell out of bounds a yard short of the line to gain on fourth-and-5 at the OSU 40 to give the Buckeyes the ball back with 1:09 to go in the half.

A personal foul moved OSU back to its 21, but it didn't matter, as the Buckeyes needed just 57 seconds to go 79 yards for a score. Miller completed his first three passes of the drive for 55 yards, and mixing in a Clemson personal foul penalty and a 6-yard Hyde rush, the Buckeyes had the ball at the 3 when Miller followed Hyde through a hole on the left side of the line for a touchdown that returned the lead to the Scarlet and Gray. Basil made the extra point and Ohio State held a 22-20 lead at halftime.

"I definitely felt like we had momentum after those two touchdowns," Hyde said. "I feel like the offense started getting clicking at that point, and I thought we could make it happen more."

The head coach agreed, admitting he felt good at the half after the Buckeyes scored late to take their first lead of the game.

"If you ask me how I felt at halftime, I felt fantastic," Meyer said.

Entertaining Ending

Meyer's good vibes continued when the Buckeyes got off to a good start in the second half. After the teams quickly exchanged punts, Ohio State marched 87 yards in nine plays to increase its lead to two scores.

The key play was a fourth-and-1 at the Clemson 32 in which Hyde took an option give, cut left, hesitated, found the hole and used his size and speed to shed tacklers until he got to the 1. A play later, he went over the line and the Buckeyes had a 29-20 lead with 5:50 to play in the third following Basil's PAT.

Ohio State then stoned Boyd on a quarterback power run on third-and-1 on Clemson's next drive, forcing a punt. But just when it looked like the Scarlet and Gray was asserting its dominance, Brown muffed the Bradley Pinion punt at the Buckeye 33-yard line and the Tigers recovered.

"Philly is one of those guys I'd rather not (assign blame)," Meyer said. "He's one of those skilled athletes and really wanted to make a game-changing attempt to do something. He's not coached to do that, but we're not playing the blame game, guys."

Clemson needed just three plays – and an acrobatic, NFL-caliber effort – to take advantage of the miscue. On third-and-7 from the 30, Boyd rolled right and lofted the ball to the end zone, where Watkins skied over OSU corner Doran Grant to make a leaping grab. Catanzaro made the kick and Clemson was back within a score at 29-27 with 2:47 on the third-period clock.

The Tigers continued the onslaught when Jayron Kearsa intercepted Miller at the Ohio



SONNY BROCKWAY

SIX MORE – Ohio State senior tailback Carlos Hyde (34) leaps into the end zone for a second-half touchdown, one of two he scored in his final collegiate game. Hyde finished with 113 rushing yards and two scores.

State 38 on the next possession. It took just four plays for Clemson to retake the lead after that, as Boyd tossed a 3-yard touchdown pass to Bryant on another fade route with just 32 seconds to go in the quarter. Catanzaro's extra point gave Clemson a 34-29 lead and set up a frantic final stanza.

Ohio State drew first blood, going 75 yards in 10 plays to grab the lead back. A 25-yard pass to Hyde out of the backfield got the ball into the red zone, and Miller again hooked up with the back two plays later for a 14-yard score. The OSU quarterback rolled left,

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OHIO STATE VS. CLEMSON

Clemson Earns Statement Win, Drops Buckeyes

Continued From Page 11

stopped and fired back to the right sideline while taking a brutal hit to connect with a wide-open Hyde to make the score 35-34 with 11:35 left.

It stayed that way on the two-point conversion. Senior Kenny Gupton came onto the field as Miller received medical attention for the hit, which drew a roughing the passer penalty, but his rollout pass intended for Devin Smith was nearly intercepted.

As it had all day, Clemson battled back

from there, going 75 yards in 13 plays to take a 40-35 lead with 6:16 to play. The Tigers faced just a pair of third downs on the drive, including a third-and-goal from the 5 in which Boyd rolled right then threw back to his left to find tight end Stanton Seckinger wide open for the score.

Just as Ohio State failed on its two-point conversion, Clemson could not grab the extra points, either, after the touchdown. The Tigers ran a trick play with Watkins taking a reverse pitch and throwing a pass to Boyd, but the receiver put too much air on it and

Grant broke up the pass at the last moment.

Though that touchdown set the final score, there were still three turnovers to come. Miller was stripped on a third-down corner blitz by Bashaud Breeland with 3:12 to go, allowing Spencer Shuey to make the recovery at the OSU 47, but Barnett set up what he thought would be late-game heroics when he pulled in Boyd's third-down pass with 1:27 to go.

But from there, Anthony picked off Miller's second pass on the drive. When Boyd rushed for 11 yards on the next two plays, Clemson's

statement win was in the books, while Ohio State ended a season that had started with such promise with a pair of losses.

Game Notes

- Ohio State concluded a season with consecutive losses for the second time in three seasons. The Buckeyes lost four straight to end the 2011 campaign. The Buckeyes did not lose two straight games at the end of a season anytime from 2001-10 under former head coach Jim Tressell.

- The Orange Bowl was Ohio State's 10th BCS game in the 16 years of the BCS era, most among all teams in college football. Counting the vacated win vs. Arkansas in the 2011 Sugar Bowl, the Buckeyes finished 6-4 in BCS contests.

- The loss dropped the Buckeyes to 1-1 all-time in the Orange Bowl. The previous game was a 27-10 victory against Colorado in the game that followed the 1976 season.

- Clemson, meanwhile, improved to 3-2 all-time in the Orange Bowl. The Tigers previously beat Miami in 1951 and Nebraska in '82 while losing to Colorado in 1957 and West Virginia in 2012.

- The Buckeyes fell to 0-2 all-time vs. Clemson, with both contests occurring in the postseason. Ohio State lost, 17-15, to Clemson in the 1978 Gator Bowl.

- Meyer fell to 4-1 as a head coach in BCS games and 7-2 all-time in bowl contests.

- Both teams topped 35 points in the Orange Bowl for the first time ever. The two teams fell 29 yards shy of the all-time record for combined yards in an Orange Bowl with 1,003, just short of the mark set by Clemson and West Virginia in 2012.

- Hyde finished his career with 3,198 rushing yards, sixth all-time in OSU annals. He fell 2 yards short of passing Keith Byars (1982-85) for fifth. Miller, meanwhile, finished the game with 3,054 career rushing yards, good for eighth behind Pepe Pearson (3,076, 1994-97).

- Hyde's total of 1,521 rushing yards this season is good for seventh in OSU's record book.

- Miller's two touchdown passes moved him into sole possession of fifth all-time at Ohio State with 52 career scoring strikes. Troy Smith (2002-06) is fourth with 54.

- Miller upped his career mark for total offense to 8,346, allowing him to pass Terrelle Pryor, who had 8,341 yards from 2008-10, for second all-time at Ohio State. He trails only Art Schlichter (8,850, 1978-81).

- Miller finished the season with 36 touchdowns (24 passing, 12 rushing) responsible for, breaking the record of 31 set by Bobby Hoying in 1995 and matched by Troy Smith in 2006 and Terrelle Pryor in 2010. He is one away from tying Schlichter's career record of 85.

- Brown finished his senior season with 145 career receptions, fifth in Ohio State's record book.

- The win was the 11th of the season for Clemson, giving the Tigers consecutive 11-win seasons for the first time in school history.

- The victory was Clemson's fifth against a top-10 team over the past three seasons.

- Watkins' performance also allowed him to set Clemson records for single-season (101) and career receptions (240) and tie the mark for career TD receptions (27).

- Boyd became the first quarterback in ACC history to have three seasons of at least 30 touchdown passes. He finished with 34 on the season and an ACC-record 107 in his career.

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OHIO STATE VS. CLEMSON

Early, Late Miscues Ruin Night For Offense

For nearly a month leading up to the Orange Bowl, talk centered on the Ohio State offense keeping up with a stellar Clemson scoring unit.

The Buckeyes put 35 points on the board, but a smattering of mistakes in the first and fourth quarter kept them from keeping pace with the high-powered Tigers.

"We knew it was going to be a pretty high-scoring game," tight end Jeff Heuerman said. "We had two dynamic offenses coming in with a lot of skill players, and that's what it turned out to be. Obviously we didn't capitalize on all of our opportunities and it didn't fall the way we wanted it to at the end. We've got to harness it and move into the offseason and use it to our advantage."

INSIDE THE OFFENSE

Marcus Hartman

The Buckeyes drove 75 yards in 13 plays for a touchdown the first time they had the ball, but the march was anything but efficient. It required a personal foul for taunting on Clemson defensive end Vic Beasley and a successful fake punt run by Heuerman.

Then quarterback Braxton Miller and running back Carlos Hyde took over, combining for 43 yards on the ground thanks to their unique rushing talents. Miller scrambled for a yard then Hyde powered through a tackle for seven. After a short run by Hyde, Miller finished things off with a 33-yard touchdown run in which he darted through a hole on the left side, froze Quandon Christian with a stutter step and plowed through Darius Robinson at the goal line to tie the game.

Then the Buckeye offense went into a freeze with Ohio State's next four possessions ending in punts, drives that included only 14 plays, two first downs and 25 yards.

Finally the Buckeyes found themselves late in the second quarter as Miller engineered scoring drives of 85 and 79 yards to take a 22-20 lead.

The quarterback capped the first drive with a 57-yard touchdown pass to Heuerman, who was all alone deep over the middle as the Clemson coverage broke down in the face of a play the Buckeyes had not run during the regular season. The play, which included a fake jet sweep handoff to freshman speedster Dontre Wilson, worked not only on that scoring play but also for healthy gains by Hyde and wide receiver Philly Brown later in the game.

"We just installed it in bowl practice," Heuerman said. "The first time we hit me, the second time we hit Philly and the third time we hit Carlos. I was going right up the hash with Philly going down the sideline and Carlos (coming in behind out of the backfield) so however the defense plays it ... it's like a double wheel for them and then me down the middle."

"The first time the safety jumped it and went over to Philly. The second time he covered me and left Philly open, and the third time they covered me and Philly and left Carlos open, so it was a good play that opened things up for us a little bit and got us going."

The Buckeyes got the ball back at their own 21 after a turnover on downs with only 1:09 to work before the end of the half, but that was no problem for Miller.

He completed three passes for 55 yards and capped the drive with a 3-yard touch-



SONNY BROCKWAY

NOT GOING TO GET HIM – Ohio State junior tight end Jeff Heuerman (86) outran Clemson safety Jayron Kearse (20) en route to a 57-yard touchdown in the second quarter.

down run with 12 seconds left. That was set up by a 24-yard pass utilizing the same play as Heuerman's touchdown from Miller to Brown, who was wide open inside the 5-yard line and would have easily scored had Miller's pass been on target. Instead, he had to adjust and lost his balance making the catch, but Miller cashed in on the following play.

Ohio State added to its lead in the third quarter with a nine-play, 87-yard drive that featured the rushing prowess of Miller, Hyde and Wilson. The Buckeyes did not complete a pass, though they twice got first downs from Clemson penalties committed during pass plays. Miller ran three times for 14 yards while Wilson added 11 yards on a pair of carries. Hyde had 37 yards, including 31 on a crucial fourth-and-1 from the Clemson 32-yard line. Hyde was caught from behind but capped the drive with a 1-yard run on the next play.

"I think that was a big momentum shift for us," senior left tackle Jack Mewhort said. "That's kind of our bread and butter to go up there and pound it with Carlos. He bounced it outside and had a big gain. Another great run."

The Tigers came out looking to take away Ohio State's inside running game, forcing them to attack the edge instead. After a slow start running the ball, Hyde finished with 113 yards on 25 carries.

"I feel like in the second half we started hitting it out on the perimeter," Hyde said. "We started getting some plays on the outside, and a huge thing was our passing game. Braxton making plays down the field made it so those safeties have to play back now because basically it was just loading the box, playing run real hard."

Miller completed 16 of 24 passes for 234 yards and two touchdowns, but he was sacked five times and pressured many more.

Beasley led the charge with a sack and four tackles for loss while teammates Grady Jarrett, Bashaud Breeland, Spencer Shuey and Shaq Lawson all got to Miller as well.

"I give a lot of credit to Vic Beasley, the guy who lined up against me all day," Mewhort said. "He's the best defensive end I've played against since I moved to tackle. A lot of credit to him. He's a great football player. I know I should have played a lot better."

Mewhort was not the only Ohio State lineman to struggle, though. The unit as a whole had problems both making holes in the running game early and protecting Miller as the Tigers varied their attack throughout the night.

"I know they were bringing a lot of blitz packages," right tackle Taylor Decker said. "They were walking guys up and doing some odd stuff with how they were veering their defensive line. They obviously committed to stopping the run, which is something we've done well all year. They just had good players on that side of the ball, good athletes and a good front seven."

The success the Buckeyes enjoyed in the second and third quarters was tough to maintain in the fourth, however, as mistakes proved to be their undoing.

Late in the third, Brown muffed a punt that was recovered by Clemson on the 33-yard line, and the Tigers capitalized with a 30-yard touchdown pass from Tajh Boyd to Sammy Watkins.

Miller exacerbated his team's problems on the following drive when he was flushed from the pocket and threw an out pass that was undercut by Clemson cornerback Jayron Kearse. The interception set up another Tigers touchdown that put Clemson on top 34-29 in the final minute of the third quarter.

The Buckeyes answered with a 75-yard

scoring drive that featured mostly Miller's arm. The junior signal caller completed 5 of 6 passes for 57 yards.

The biggest plays were both passes to Hyde, first a 25-yarder when he sneaked out of the backfield on the same pass play that had resulted in Heuerman's long touchdown in the first half.

That gave the Buckeyes a first down at the Clemson 13. After Miller was sacked for a 1-yard loss, he dropped to pass again and found Hyde open in the end zone for a 14-yard touchdown that put Ohio State on top 35-34 with 11:35 left in the game.

Miller held the ball an extra tick before finding Hyde, and he paid the price as he was driven into the turf by Shuey on the play. That action that drew a 15-yard personal foul penalty and left the quarterback lying on the grass in considerable pain.

Kenny Guiton replaced Miller for the ensuing two-point conversion attempt, but his pass was broken up in the end zone. Guiton was seen on the sidelines warming up during the following Clemson possession, but head coach Urban Meyer and offensive coordinator Tom Herman both said they always intended to put Miller back in the game if he was physically able to play.

"The question was, 'Can he walk?' and, 'Can he throw?'" Herman later explained about the thought process behind sticking with the starter.

The answer to both questions proved to be yes, but Miller did not look 100 percent and confirmed afterward he did not feel it, either.

"Things happen throughout the game," he said. "You get injured and you've just got to fight through it. I'm really competitive and I don't like to lose and I don't like to sit down either. You fight through it and if the outcome isn't like you want it, you've just got to fix it."

He was first injured on Beasley's sack on the first possession of the game, estimating his pain level at 9½ out of 10, and the hit by Shuey left him with sore ribs.

"The first time I think I bruised my shoulder and then I had a likely cracked rib," he said. "It's tough, so I fight through it."

He did not say if his pain hindered his ability to perform at the end, but the last two drives were not ones to write home about as both ended in turnovers. First, Miller lost the ball while being sacked by Breeland, and on the other, Miller was intercepted by Stephon Anthony with 1:18 to play.

Brown was the intended receiver both times and looked to have a chance to make a big play on the second. Working against man coverage, he had some separation running up the hashmark but never got a chance to make a catch as Miller's pass was underthrown and picked off by Anthony out of his linebacker spot.

"It was a nice route and the guy made a great play on it," Miller said. "I saw him at the last minute and I got discouraged about that, but things happen in the game and that's what football is all about, making plays."

That quickly brought an end to optimism created by a Clemson turnover with less than 90 seconds to play.

"I felt very confident until the guy got in front of my ball, man," Miller said. "It's all good; he's a good player, too. That's why he's on the field. I saw him at the last second. I thought I had Philly on a 'bender' and it was my mistake. I'm not going to complain about anything, I've just got to fix it."

OHIO STATE VS. CLEMSON

Buckeye Defense Unable To Pick Up Team

So many times this season, a young and error-prone Ohio State defense enjoyed the luxury of having the nation's third-ranked scoring offense to bail it out of any mishaps.

When the Buckeyes trailed at halftime against Iowa and Northwestern, senior running back Carlos Hyde was there to rally the Buckeyes. When Michigan scored 41 points in what many predicted to be a lopsided OSU win, junior quarterback Braxton Miller managed to account for five touchdowns in a one-point victory.

INSIDE THE DEFENSE Ryan Ginn

But on the rare occasions in which the offense slipped up? The Buckeye defense was unable to get the job done. That was a painful lesson learned in the loss to Michigan State in the Big Ten title game, and it was reinforced in a 40-35 loss to Clemson in the Orange Bowl.

After the Buckeyes seized a 29-20 lead against the Tigers in the third quarter and were prepared to get the ball back with a chance to extend the lead to double digits, back-to-back mistakes at the most critical juncture of the game left the OSU defense with a short field to defend.

Standing at his own 37-yard line, OSU wide receiver Corey "Philly" Brown muffed the punt, allowing Clemson to recover at the OSU 33. Three plays later, Clemson senior quarterback Tajh Boyd found junior wide receiver Sammy Watkins in the end zone for a 30-yard touchdown.

Miller threw an interception at the OSU 38 on the ensuing drive, giving the ball back to Clemson once again. This time, it took Boyd four plays to reach pay dirt, connecting with junior wide receiver Martavis Bryant for a 3-yard score that allowed the Tigers to retake the lead.

In both instances, the Ohio State defense was thrown into a disadvantaged situation. At no point, however, did it provide resistance to the plays dialed up by Clemson offensive coordinator Chad Morris, the highest paid assistant coach in the country.

At the end of the day, it wasn't enough for the defense to play capably. It also needed things to break its way.

"We're a bit young, so unfortunately we need some good things to happen for us," OSU defensive coordinator Luke Fickell said. "When adversity hits, you've got to stop the bleeding. I think that's probably the biggest thing that you look at this team and this defense - I would say we weren't good enough to do those things. Our offense had bailed us out so many times this year. When something hits and the defense has to go make a play, that's where we weren't successful."

A Rough Start

To the credit of the OSU defense, it might have exceeded the expectations of some simply by forcing multiple punts by the Tigers given all it had been through in the month since the loss to the Spartans.

During the second half of that contest, junior cornerback Bradley Roby sustained a bone bruise on his left knee that ultimately kept him out of the bowl game. When the team landed in south Florida, it did so with-



SONNY BROCKWAY

ALL WRAPPED UP - Ohio State freshman Joey Bosa (97), with an assist from sophomore Adolphus Washington (92), takes down Clemson quarterback Tajh Boyd (10).

out sophomore "Viper" Noah Spence, the team leader in sacks.

The Buckeyes also attempted to fix their secondary problems by shuffling senior safety Corey "Pittsburgh" Brown to the bench, setting off a chain reaction of promotions that was further complicated by Roby's absence. Redshirt freshman Tyvis Powell was moved from nickel back to safety alongside senior C.J. Barnett, true freshman Vonn Bell entered the lineup at nickel back and sophomore Armani Reeves started at cornerback, moving starter Doran Grant across the field to Roby's position.

Even the linebackers were not immune to change, as injured junior Curtis Grant saw the majority of his playing time go to sophomore Camren Williams when the team used its rare three-LB sets.

"I think they did a remarkable job in a short period of time of adjusting to new positions," cornerbacks coach Kerry Combs said. "We had a new starter at nickel, we had a new starter at free safety, we had a new starter at field corner and we had a new starter at boundary corner. We had a lot of interchangeable parts."

The inexperience showed almost immediately. As Clemson faced third down on its opening drive, OSU brought on Williams. Boyd barreled straight up the middle and ran virtually untouched through the heart of the defense for a 48-yard touchdown run, the longest of his career.

On the next drive, Boyd found a wide-open Watkins for a 34-yard score after the wide receiver easily overmatched Bell, who did not have safety help over the top. Between those two home-run plays, Clemson repeatedly attacked the Buckeyes' perimeter, gaining huge chunks of yardage at a time.

"They schemed us up a little bit," Barnett said. "They were getting down on the edge a little bit, and we were losing leverage. Our tackling could have been better, and they had some short fields. It's tough, but we're

expected to get the job done. We gave up too many yards and too many big plays."

Replacements Flash Improvement

After giving up two quick-strike touchdowns to start the game, the OSU defense found its bearings. Over the next eight Clemson possessions, the Tigers netted just one score and also yielded a safety when sophomore linebacker Joshua Perry and freshman defensive end Joey Bosa harassed Boyd into committing intentional grounding in the end zone.

"We just rebounded because we knew we had to stick together," junior cornerback

Doran Grant said. "We knew if we could stick together, we could get back in the game."

One of those seven defensive stops came from the very man who had been beaten for a score earlier in the game. On the second drive following the safety, Boyd marched the Tigers all the way down to the OSU 6-yard line. On third-and-3, Boyd rolled to his right before charging toward the line of scrimmage, at which point he lofted a floater toward Sammy Watkins in the end zone. Just 3 yards from Boyd, Bell went airborne and tipped the pass to himself to secure the touchdown-saving interception.

"They stepped up," junior defensive tackle Michael Bennett said of the younger players. "I don't get to watch the back end too much, but I know they made plays, especially Vonn with that clutch interception on the goal line. Guys really were stepping up. Jamal Marcus had a great game (finishing with six tackles and a pass breakup in place of Spence), and that was great to see."

Clemson's scoreless streak was eventually broken by the pair of short-field touchdowns, and the Tigers took the lead for good with six minutes left on a drive that spanned 13 plays and 75 yards.

Miller was sacked and fumbled on the ensuing drive, but Barnett gave the offense one final chance when he intercepted Boyd and ran it back 11 yards to the Clemson 48.

"We dropped into coverage and knew they were going to pass," Barnett said. "I made a read on the ball, made a break on the ball and was able to catch the ball and got the interception."

His play left the Buckeyes with 1:27 left to produce a game-winning drive. Instead, Miller threw an interception - the fourth turnover of the game for Ohio State.

"At one point, you just have to understand you've done everything you can for the team," Bennett said. "With C.J. getting the pick, it felt like he put the offense in a good position to go win the game. It didn't work out, but you just have to look back on it and feel like, 'Did I do everything I could for the team?'"

The answer to that question may have been yes - but in this game, it still wasn't enough.

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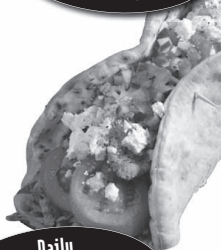
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BSB Quotebook: Clemson 40, Ohio State 35

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer on the senior class: "We just said an emotional good-bye to them. It's not because they're seniors, it's because of what they've done. I tried to make that perfectly clear. Just because you stay someplace for a couple of years doesn't mean you deserve that respect. It's what you did and how you did it."

OSU QB Braxton Miller on his interception with 1:18 left that ended the Buckeyes' last threat: "It was a nice route and the guy made a great play on it. I saw him at the last minute and I got discouraged about that, but things happen in the game and that's what football is all about, making plays."

OSU center Corey Linsley on Miller's final interception: "We were pumped, but unfortunately they ran a scheme on the last play that I didn't expect them to run. Obviously, their line-backer made a heck of a play."

Clemson linebacker Spencer Shuey on attacking Miller: "That definitely was part of our game plan, to be able to get some pressure on him. He's an unbelievable quarterback, and they have an unbelievable offense and team overall. So we knew we had to do something to try to make some plays. By doing that, we were able to try to get a little pressure on him and try to get him to feel uncomfortable."

Tight end Jeff Heurman on the hits Miller took all game: "The kid is tough as nails. There's

no one else in the country I'd want to be my quarterback. I would do anything for him, and I think he feels the same way, so we ride together, we die together. He's my quarterback."

Miller on the injuries he sustained: "The first time I think I bruised my shoulder and then I had a likely cracked rib. It's tough, so I fight through it."

OSU defensive coordinator Luke Fickell on the inexperienced defense: "You love what you saw in some things. They've got a great demeanor. Those guys fought for every single one of those seniors, and you knew they would. They had a great week of practice and they had some great preparation and they were excited to play. Sometimes you can sit and dwell about the things you don't have, but then you can get excited about the things you do have. I think we found some guys that we know will be really good players in the future."

Clemson QB Tajh Boyd on preparing to face OSU's secondary: "Obviously, the preparation heading to a bowl is important, and with any team you're going to find weaknesses and weak spots, but it's not solely about them. It's about us and what we're trying to accomplish. It's about us going out there and executing our game plan."

Clemson coach Dabo Swinney on Boyd's rushing performance: "I told him not bad for a fat boy. It was awesome. We were going to put the ball in No. 10's hands, and we felt like that

was going to be a key. This was the seventh-best team in the country vs. the rush, so we felt like that was our best chance to run the football."

OSU LB Ryan Shazier on the mind-set of the defense late in the fourth quarter: "We were just saying that all we've got to do is stop him because they're going to try to run the ball. We've just got to get the offense back the ball, and we just didn't seal the deal."

Clemson wideout Sammy Watkins on his record-breaking performance: "We saw the young cornerback out there and how far he was off us. I think the wide receivers and tight ends did a great job of blocking downfield, and Coach did a great job of just coming back to the same thing and giving us success. We definitely handled that well."

Meyer on Watkins' 16 catches: "I don't know all the receivers in the country, but I can't imagine any better than that guy."

Swinney on Clemson's offensive approach: "Guys did a great job of blocking on the edge and on the perimeter. We had enough to where we hit some plays down the field, but that's what was there. And so, no, we didn't really come into the game thinking we were going to throw as many screens as we did, but once we kind of got them on their heels a little bit, we just kept taking it."

OSU LB Joshua Perry on bouncing back from two losses: "We're a team with a chip on our shoulder because we've lost our last two games, so that's all we need right now. We'll see how everything falls into place. Going into the offseason, we've got to have a little attitude."

OSU cornerback Doran Grant on the back-to-back losses: "These were championship games and we didn't win them. Plain and simple."

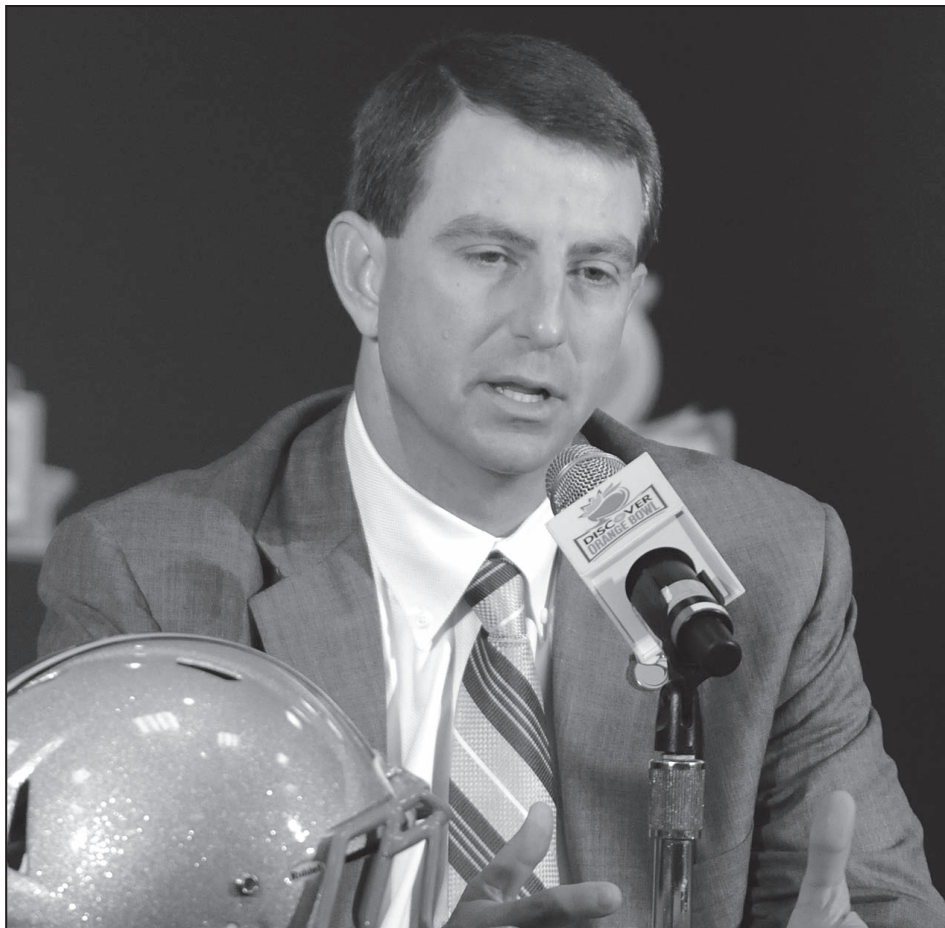
Perry on the disappointing end to the season: "All in all, you come here and you want it so bad. When it doesn't happen, it's not a good feeling, but you've got to move on."

OSU right tackle Taylor Decker on a possible move to left tackle next season: "I'd like to. I'm sure the coaches will do whatever they want with me, and I'll be happy to do whatever they think is best. Obviously, they know a lot more about football than I do."

Grant on why a whiteboard in the OSU locker room sported a large hole after the game: "Pregame excitement."

OSU cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs on the play of the defense: "We've got to improve. We can't give up that many points. In order to be a championship-caliber defense, we've got to improve – and we will. That's the exciting thing about these kids. They're not afraid to walk around the locker room and talk to each other. They're eager to get back to work. We know there are some areas we've got to shore up, and it's critical that we address that and work on that immediately. I believe that we will, and I know that we will."

OSU defensive tackle Michael Bennett on the emergence of defensive end Jamal Marcus, who made six tackles: "It means we have more depth on the D-line and not all the burden is on Noah. It's good to see young guys stepping up in the place of older guys and not being too caught up in what's happening and just going out and making plays."



SONNY BROCKWAY

LONG TIME COMING – Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney led the Tigers to their first victory in the Orange Bowl since 1982.

The Numbers Game

Clemson 40, Ohio State 35

Jan. 3, 2014 – Sun Life Stadium; Miami Gardens, Fla.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4		F
CLEMSON	14	6	14	6	—	40
OHIO STATE	9	13	7	6	—	35

First Quarter

CU – Boyd, 48 yard run (Catanzaro kick), 12:50; 6 plays, 75 yards, 2:10 TOP.

OSU – B. Miller, 33 yard run (Basil kick), 5:44; 13 plays, 75 yards, 7:06 TOP.

CU – S. Watkins, 34 yard pass from Boyd (Catanzaro kick), 4:56; 4 plays, 75 yards, 0:48 TOP.

OSU – Perry safety (Boyd intentional grounding in the end zone), 2:25.

Second Quarter

CU – M. Bryant, 3 yard pass from Boyd (Catanzaro kick failed), 6:16; 7 plays, 77 yards, 2:35 TOP.

OSU – Heuerman, 57 yard pass from B. Miller (Basil kick blocked), 3:39; 5 plays, 85 yards, 2:37 TOP.

OSU – B. Miller, 3 yard run (Basil kick), 0:12; 5 plays, 79 yards, 0:57 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU – Hyde, 1 yard run (Basil kick), 5:50; 9 plays, 87 yards, 4:47 TOP.

CU – S. Watkins, 30 yard pass from Boyd (Catanzaro kick), 2:47; 3 plays, 33 yards, 0:49 TOP.

CU – M. Bryant, 3 yard pass from Boyd (Catanzaro kick), 0:32; 4 plays, 38 yards, 1:25 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Hyde, 14 yard pass from B. Miller (Guiton pass failed), 11:35; 10 plays, 75 yards, 3:57 TOP.

CU – Seckinger, 5 yard pass from Boyd (S. Watkins pass failed), 6:16; 13 plays, 75 yards, 5:19 TOP.

Att. – 72,080.

Weather – 64 degrees, mostly cloudy; wind, N 10 mph.

Team Statistics

	CU	OSU
First Downs	24	27
Rushing	9	10
Passing	15	12
Penalty	0	5
Rushes-Yards	36-198	48-193
Passing Yards	378	234
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	31-40-2	16-24-2
Offensive Plays	76	72
Total Net Yards	576	427
Third Down Efficiency	7-13	2-13
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-1	2-2
Punts-Avg.	3-37.7	5-48.2
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	2-2
Penalties	15-144	6-60
Time of Possession	27:09	32:51

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – CU: Boyd 20-127; McDowell 12-69; Davidson 1-3; S. Watkins 1-3; TEAM 2-(-4). OSU: Hyde 25-113; B. Miller 18-35; Wilson 3-24; P. Brown 1-15; Heuerman 1-6.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – CU: Boyd 31-40-2-378-5. OSU: B. Miller 16-24-2-234-2.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – CU: S. Watkins 16-227; McDowell 4-32; M. Bryant 3-28; Davidson 3-27; Seckinger 2-14; Hopper 2-7; Leggett 1-43. OSU: P. Brown 8-116; Hyde 2-39; Vannett 2-22; De. Smith 2-5; Heuerman 1-57; Wilson 1-(-5).

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – CU: Pinion 3-37.7-42. OSU: Johnston 5-48.2-63.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – CU: None. OSU: P. Brown 2-(-5).

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – CU: S. Watkins 2-38; McDowell 1-35. OSU: Wilson 1-25; J. Hall 1-13.

MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.) – CU: None. OSU: None.

FORCED FUMBLES – CU: Breeland. OSU: Bennett.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – CU: Rob. Smith 1-0; Shuey 1-0. OSU: None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – CU: St. Anthony 1-0; Kearse 1-0. OSU: Barnett 1-11; V. Bell 1-4.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – CU: V. Beasley 1.0-17; Shuey 1.0-9; Lawson 1.0-9; Breeland 1.0-8; Jarrett 1.0-1. OSU: Bosa 1.0-9; Perry 1.0-1.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – CU: V. Beasley 4.0-27; Shuey 1.0-9; Lawson 1.0-9; Breeland 1.0-8; St. Anthony 1.0-1; Jarrett 1.0-1; Crawford 1.0-1. OSU: Bosa 1.0-9; Perry 1.0-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Assist.-Tot.) – CU: St. Anthony 8-0-8; Rob. Smith 6-1-7; Kearse 6-1-7; Jarrett 3-3-6; V. Beasley 4-1-5; J. Watson 3-2-5; Breeland 3-1-4; Crawford 2-2-4; Shuey 1-3-4; Lawson 2-0-2; Christian 2-0-2; Faigenbaum 1-0-1; D. Williams 1-0-1; Cooper 1-0-1; Davidson 1-0-1; Robinson 1-0-1; Peters 1-0-1; Seckinger 1-0-1; J. Williams 1-0-1; Reader 1-0-1; Greenlee 1-0-1. OSU: Perry 7-3-10; Shazier 7-2-9; V. Bell 7-0-7; Powell 5-1-6; Marcus 3-3-6; Barnett 5-0-5; Bosa 2-3-5; Reeves 3-1-4; Bennett 2-2-4; D. Grant 1-2-3; Washington 1-0-1; C. Grant 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – CLEMSON: Offense, Br. Thomas, Davis, Norton, Shatley, Battle, Cooper, S. Watson, Boyd, Humphries, Hopper, M. Bryant, Catanzaro. Defense, Crawford, Jarrett, J. Watson, V. Beasley, Christian, St. Anthony, Shuey, Breeland, Kearse, Rob. Smith, Robinson, Pinion. Reserves, Steward, M. Williams, Barnes, Boulware, Wiggins, M. Jenkins, Leggett, J. Johnson, Howard, Dye, Brooks, McDowell, Tankersley, Peters, Davidson, C. Jenkins, J. Williams, C. J. Jones, Da. Smith, Burrell, Greenlee, Reader, Faigenbaum, K. Jones, Aiken, Thurlow, D. Beasley, Sobek, Webster, E. Mac Lain, Seckinger, Green, Rodriguez, S. Mac Lain, McCullough, Lawson, D. Williams. OHIO STATE: Offense, B. Miller, Hyde, Spencer, P. Brown, Fields, Heuerman, Mewhort, Norwell, Linsley, M. Hall, Decker, Basil. Defense, Shazier, Bennett, V. Bell, Barnett, Reeves, Marcus, Washington, Powell, Bosa, D. Grant, Perry, Johnston. Reserves, Wilson, Rod Smith, C. Brown, J. Hall, Moore, De. Smith, Guiton, C. Grant, Elliott, Burrows, Tanner, Ball, Doup, Haynes, Cataline, Hale, T. Brown, C. Williams, Makridis, Blackman, Elfein, Kramer, C. Carter, Baldwin, Vannett, S. Miller.

Season Statistics

2013 Game-By-Game				Scoring						
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS	
Aug. 31	(2) BUFFALO	W, 40-20	103,980	18	—	—	—	—	108	
Sept. 7	(3) SAN DIEGO STATE	W, 42-7	104,984	—	77-79	—	—	9-10	104	
Sept. 14	(4) at California	W, 52-34	62,467	12	—	—	—	—	72	
Sept. 21	(4) FLORIDA A&M	W, 76-0	103,595	10	—	—	—	—	60	
Sept. 28	(4) WISCONSIN (23)	W, 31-24	105,826	8	—	—	1	—	48	
Oct. 5	(4) at N'western (16)	W, 40-30	47,330	8	—	—	—	—	36	
Oct. 19	(4) IOWA	W, 34-24	105,264	6	—	—	—	—	32	
Oct. 26	(4) PENN STATE	W, 63-14	105,889	5	—	1	—	—	24	
Nov. 2	(4) at Purdue	W, 56-0	51,423	4	—	—	—	—	18	
Nov. 16	(3) at Illinois	W, 60-35	44,095	3	—	—	—	—	18	
Nov. 23	(4) INDIANA	W, 42-14	104,990	3	—	—	—	—	18	
Nov. 30	(3) at Michigan	W, 42-41	113,511	2	—	—	—	—	12	
Dec. 7	(2) vs. Mich. State** (10)	L, 34-24	66,002	1	—	—	—	—	6	
Jan. 3	(7) vs. Clemson# (12)	L, 40-35	72,080	1	—	—	—	—	6	
* OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.										
** Big Ten Championship Game (Indianapolis)										
# Orange Bowl (Miami)										
				OSU Totals	87	80-82	1	1	9-10	637
				OPP Totals	42	36-37	—	1	9-12	317

* – Ohio State recorded a pair of safeties.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	361	283
Rushing	216	102
Passing	126	166
Penalty	19	15
Average Per Game/Rush	308.6	109.4
Average Per Game/Pass	203.3	268.0
Total Offense	7,167	5,284
Total Plays	1,003	1,000
Average Per Game	511.9	377.4
Average Per Play	7.1	5.3
Penalties-Yards	73-638	77-621
Fumbles-Lost	18-10	17-8
3rd Down Efficiency	79-169	73-205
Percentage	47%	36%
4th Down Efficiency	14-22	13-24
Percentage	64%	54%
Sacks-Yards	42-292	22-136
Times Of Possession Avg.	31:18	28:42

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	229	169	149	90	—	637	45.5
Opponents	69	94	55	99	—	317	22.6

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Carlos Hyde	208	1,521	7.3	15	55
Braxton Miller	171	1,068	6.2	12	70
Jordan Hall	81	536	6.6	8	49
Kenny Guiton	40	330	8.2	5	44
Ezekiel Elliott	30	262	8.7	2	57
Dontre Wilson	31	250	8.1	1	26
Cardale Jones	17	128	7.5	1	20
Rod Smith	22	117	5.3	1	27
Warren Ball	13	76	5.8	0	12
Corey "Philly" Brown	4	42	10.5	0	15
Devonte Butler	4	14	3.5	0	10
Jeff Heuerman	1	6	6.0	0	6
Cameron Johnston	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
TEAM	12	-27	-2.2	0	0
OSU Totals	635	4,321	6.8	45	70
OPP Totals	466	1,532	3.3	9	48

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Braxton Miller	162	255	63.5	2,094	24-7	158.08
Kenny Guiton	75	109	68.8	749	14-2	165.24
Cardale Jones	1	2	50.0	3	0-0	62.60
TEAM	0	2	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	238	368	64.7	2,846	38-9	158.82
OPP Totals	330	534	61.8	3,752	31-16	133.98

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Corey "Philly" Brown	63	771	12.2	10	58
Devin Smith	44	660	15.0	8	90
Jeff Heuerman	26	466	17.9	4	57
Evan Spencer	22	216	9.8	3	25
Dontre Wilson	22	210	9.5	2	32
Chris Fields	16	193	12.1	6	47
Carlos Hyde	16	147	9.2	3	25
Jordan Hall	12	53	4.4	0	11
Nick Vannett	8	80	10.0	1	16
Rod Smith	4	16	4.0	0	12
Ezekiel Elliott	3	23	7.7	1	11
E. Pfitztopoulos	1	6	6.0	0	6
Kato Mitchell	1	5	5.0	0	5
OSU Totals	238	2,846	12.0	38	90
OPP Totals	330	3,752	11.4	31	85

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Drew Basil	5-5	3-3	1-2	0-0	9-10
OSU Totals	5-5	3-3	1-2	0-0	9-10
OPP Totals	4-4	1-2	4-6	0-0	9-12

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
C. Johnston	49	2,156	44.0	0	71
OSU Totals	49	2,156	44.0	0	71
OPP Totals	79	3,182	40.3	3	78

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
C.J. Barnett	4	29	7.2	0	17
Bradley Roby	3	120	40.0	1	63
Doran Grant	3	40	13.3	1	33
Vonn Bell	1	4	4.0	0	4
Armani Reeves	1	4	4.0	0	4
Corey "Pitt" Brown	1	0	0.0	0	0
Christian Bryant	1	0	0.0	0	0
Tyvis Powell	1	0	0.0	0	0
Ron Tanner	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	16	197	12.3	2	63
OPP Totals	9	60	6.7	1	45

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Philly Brown	23	179	7.8	0	65
Bradley Roby	2	26	13.0	1	0
Chris Fields	2	17	8.5	0	9
Jordan Hall	2	10	5.0	0	10
Doran Grant	1	4	4.0	0	0
Ron Tanner	0	7	0.0	0	7
OSU Totals	30	243	8.1	1	65
OPP Totals	7	115	16.4	1	67

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Dontre Wilson	21	523	24.9	0	51
Jordan Hall	5	122	24.4	0	47
Jeff Heuerman	1	13	13.0	0	13
Devin Smith	1	0	0.0	0	0
Bradley Roby	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	29	658	22.7	0	51
OPP Totals	74	1,361	18.4	0	42

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ass.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Ryan Shazier	101	42	143	22.5-77	6.0-46
C.J. Barnett	56	28	84	0.5-0	—
Bradley Roby	54	15	69	2.0-6	—
Joshua Perry	38	26	64	2.0-3	1.0-1
Doran Grant	43	15	58	2.0-2	—
Corey "Pitt" Brown	33	22	55	1.0-1	—
Noah Spence	24	28	52	14.5-83	8.0-67
Curtis Grant	24	28	52	4.0-18	2.5-15
Tyvis Powell	26	22	48	1.0-1	—
Joey Bosa	29	15	44	13.5-71	7.5-58
Michael Bennett	18	24	42	11.5-62	7.0-50
Adolphus Washington	18	36	54	4.0-12	2.0-9
Armani Reeves	16	10	26	—	—
Christian Bryant	11	11	22	—	—
Jamal Marcus	13	8	21	2.0-10	2.0-10
Vonn Bell	16	3	19	1.0-1	—
OSU Totals	600	370	970	91-38	42-292
OPP Totals	607	398	1,005	56-286	22-136

Last Look Back At Stumble In South Beach

Call this my Orange Bowl ramble. I have so many thoughts about the game and the Buckeyes.

First of all, I have to go back to a couple of weeks before the game, when I was helping edit the pre-bowl issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin. Because I am wrapped up in following Ohio State on Saturdays, I didn't know that much about Clemson at the time other than that, like the Buckeyes, they had contended for a potential spot in the BCS National Championship Game for at least part of the season.

As I was reading our preview of the Tigers, I was thinking to myself, "Ohio State is really going to have problems with this team."

If the Buckeyes had struggled on pass defense against mediocre passing teams such as Michigan and Michigan State – not to mention just about anybody else they played this season – how were they going to stop Clemson, which entered the game as the top-rated passing team in the ACC and 12th in the nation while averaging 329.3 air yards per game? Not only did they feature Tajh Boyd, who had gone on to star for the Tigers after nearly signing with Ohio State in 2009, but also receiver Sammy Watkins, who led his conference and was 12th in the nation with 1,237 receiving yards.

Buckeye fans tend to look past such obvious obstacles and assume their team is going to win every game. And as the game grew nearer, I got a little caught up in their enthusiasm. I drew up a scenario in my mind where the Buckeyes would prevail. Carlos Hyde, boosted by his veteran offensive line, would rush for 200 yards – heck, maybe 300 – and the Buckeyes would keep the ball away from Clemson long enough to limit the carnage that would be inflicted by the Tiger passing attack.

Unfortunately, the Clemson defense, which appeared to be well-prepared for the Buckeyes and negated the strength of the OSU offensive line, limited the carnage inflicted by the vaunted Ohio State rushing attack, holding Hyde to a solid but unspectacular 113 yards that, coupled with Braxton Miller's 35 net yards including five sacks, was hardly enough to compensate for the deficiencies of the Buckeye defense.

The defense ended up looking much the same as it had all season, yielding huge chunks of yardage through the air, periodically making a big play or key stop, but ultimately giving up 378 passing yards, 576 total yards and 40 points.

The Buckeye offense had its moments and a solid output, but you are not going to win a lot of games giving up 40 points. In fact, it was the first time in the long and storied history of Ohio State football that the Buckeyes had lost a game in which they scored at least 35 points.

Watkins ended up being, arguably, better than advertised, setting Orange Bowl records with 16 receptions for 227 yards and scoring twice. Or did the Buckeye defense, which had to know he was coming, just make him look better than advertised?

As he continued to rip through the Ohio State defense, I wished that the Buckeyes would just sell out to stop Watkins and make somebody else beat them.

And I don't think the loss of defenders such as Bradley Roby or Noah Spence was the difference for the Buckeye defense. Roby hadn't done much all season – I'm still trying to figure out how he won All-Big Ten honors – and there was plenty of talent along the defensive line to make up for Spence's absence. Jamal Marcus had a fine game, with six tackles and a pass breakup.

The problems with the Ohio State defense seem to be more fundamental than the loss of

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

key personnel. The Buckeyes weren't stopping teams when they were at full strength – and that includes with Christian Bryant

"We're not a championship-caliber defense right now," Buckeye coach Urban Meyer said after the Orange Bowl, in one of the season's leading understatements.

Throughout the season, I have wanted to point out in this space how good a job Cameron Johnston has done punting for the Buckeyes. Each issue, it seemed that I ran short of space, but each issue I could have pointed out his fine play – he was that consistent.

The Orange Bowl was no different as far as his performance. He averaged 48.2 yards on five punts, putting three of those inside the 20, including one of the plays of the game. He combined with coverage man Armani Reeves to bury a punt at the Tiger 1 in the first quarter which resulted in a safety just a play later.

For the season, Johnston led the Big Ten and was 16th in the country with a 44.0-yard punting average. In perhaps more telling stats, he put 31 of 49 (63.3 percent) punts inside the 20 and he helped Ohio State to a 40.8-yard net punting mark, which was good for fifth in the nation.

Just as I could have pointed out Johnston's punting at virtually any time during the season, I could also have pointed out what I believe to be struggles by Corey "Philly" Brown on punt returns. Aside from a pedestrian 7.8-yard per return mark, which was fifth in the conference and 37th in the nation, Brown seemed to have problems deciding which punts to fair catch and which to return, not to mention which kicks that hit the ground to pick up and which to let roll.

Of course I bring this up because his dropped punt in the third quarter of the Orange Bowl, which gave the ball and momentum over to the Tigers, was to my way of thinking the key play of the game. The Buckeyes owned a two-score, 29-20 lead at the time and had just made one of their sporadic stops on defense. Another Buckeye score at that point would have really put Clemson behind the eight ball.

Instead, Brown and the Buckeyes gave the Tigers new life, and they scored three-plays later to pull within two.

Obviously, Brown just wanted to make a play for his team. But with an offense like the Buckeyes feature, an offense that was rolling with touchdowns on three of its previous four possessions, you just secure the ball and let Miller, Hyde – and Brown himself – do their thing.

The muffed punt was not the only reason Ohio State lost the game.

"Philly is one of those guys I'd rather not (assign blame)," Meyer said. "He's one of those skilled athletes and really wanted to make a game-changing attempt to do something. He's not coached to do that, but we're not playing the blame game, guys."

But rival coach Dabo Swinney knows what all of us – including Philly Brown – know.

"The spark to me was the punt return fumble," Swinney said. "We were down. We were minus-one in the turnover margin, and that was a huge thing."

Outside of the fumble, Brown had a terrific game. He caught eight passes, six more than the nearest Buckeye, for 116 yards and also carried the ball once for a 15-yard gain.

Speaking of receivers, where has Devin Smith been lately? One of the Buckeyes' best deep threats, he caught a combined three passes for 16 yards in the losses to Michigan State and Clemson including two for 5 yards vs. the Tigers.

Smith, who seemed to be one of Miller's favorite targets dating back to their freshman year of 2011 and had 38 catches for 542 yards and six touchdowns after nine games this season, reeled in just six balls in the final five games, though two of them – a 53-yarder against Michigan and a 39-yarder vs. Indiana – went for long touchdowns.

Miller seemed to regain a bit of his passing touch against Clemson, completing 16 of 24 passes for 234 yards and a pair of touchdowns. He repeatedly found wide-open receivers, receivers he might not have picked out in his earlier days at Ohio State, but he also surrendered two costly picks.

Some of his erratic play might have been at least partially attributed to the pounding he took throughout the entire game, the type of beating I don't remember an Ohio State quarterback taking since Joe Germaine and Stan Jackson were battered by Andre Wadsworth and Florida State in a 31-14 loss to the Seminoles at the Sugar Bowl following the 1997 season. Say what you want about Miller, but he is a tough customer.

In fact, that toughness brought about one of the most prevalent questions among Buckeye fans following the loss to the Tigers. Should Meyer have gone to super sub Kenny Guiton in place of the obviously hurting Miller?

I am of two minds on this one.

If it had been anyone other than the proven Guiton on the sidelines, I would never have given it a thought, sticking with Miller. A fresh Guiton might have trumped a less than 100 percent Miller, however.

On the other hand, sometimes you go with the guy who got you there, the guy with the magic – and that's Miller. One of his patented highlight-reel plays instead of one of his turn-overs, and it's a completely different ballgame.

I'm going to have to trust the coach with the two national championships on this one, though I am convinced that when asked if they are OK, virtually every player worth his salt answers "yes" whether they are or they aren't. I have to think, after all these years and victories, Meyer can glean the veracity of the player's claim.

The gutsy play of Miller, as well as the hobbled Joey Bosa, showed me one thing for certain. I think the Buckeyes are a team with heart, a team that continued to battle until the final whistle, and I remain impressed with that.

Elsewhere in this issue, BSB managing editor emeritus Mark Rea wraps up our season-long look at the John Cooper era at Ohio State upon the 25th anniversary of his hiring. Mark closes the article with many of Cooper's favorite quotes, quotes that are now a part of Buckeye lore.

And as I have listened to all of the criticism of the Ohio State defense and offense – much of it justified – following the disappointing losses to Michigan State and Clemson, I can't help but think of a famous Coopism that Mark didn't mention.

"Sometimes we don't give enough credit to

the other team," Cooper used to say. "Their players are on scholarship, too."

Were Michigan State and Clemson better teams than the Buckeyes? On two particular evenings, the answer was yes.

Coop Years Wrap-Up

I hope you have enjoyed our recap of the Cooper era, and I want to commend Mark Rea for the comprehensive job he did in presenting the good and the bad from those 13 years.

I think, blinded by Cooper's 2-10-1 record against Michigan, we sometimes forget the many big wins the Buckeyes recorded during that time span. But as you look at it year-by-year, you also realize that it was a star-crossed stay at Ohio State for the hall-of-fame coach, a stay that got off on a poor foot, a start he was never able to really recover from – especially in the eyes of the fans.

But Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer both owe a debt of gratitude to Cooper, as their success in Columbus has been fueled by not only the best players in Ohio but top players from Florida, in particular, as well as across the nation.

"Ohio State was primarily focused on the Midwest before John arrived," said former recruiting coordinator Bill Conley, who helped Cooper expand the Buckeye brand. "After that, he expanded into Florida big-time and went into other areas like Texas, Louisiana and California. He went to the East Coast where Penn State had pretty much had its way for years."

"He was told that he was wasting his time, that Ohio State could never and would never have a strong recruiting presence in those areas. I think he proved that statement wrong."

While an expanded recruiting base may be Cooper's biggest contribution to Ohio State football, I think the thing I will always respect him for is the poise and dignity with which he conducted himself, frequently in the face of what can be described only as abuse from Buckeye fans.

As Cooper said with an uncharacteristic bit of sarcasm in another of his famous quotes, "You have to love our great Buckeye fans. They're with you, win or tie."

Despite a record 24 straight wins, Meyer is finding that out himself.

Recruiting Reprints Added

January marks the return of our popular Friday electronic recruiting newsletters. These newsletters give readers a chance to pick up any breaking recruiting news, as well as get a preview of the upcoming recruiting weekend for Ohio State and its coaching staff.

The first such newsletter of the year, posted Jan. 10, informed readers of the staff's need to continue to court a duo of prospects from Cleveland Glenville, despite verbal commitments from the two. This report is archived and available if you missed it.

We are also including reprints of recruiting profiles of Buckeyes who will not be returning next season. The first such set of reprints includes stories about C.J. Barnett, Chris Fields and Jordan Hall from 2008 BSBs.

Look for the Friday recruiting newsletters on Jan. 17, 24 and 31, as well as on Feb. 7, the Friday following National Signing Day. There will also be complete electronic issues of BSB Quickly on Jan. 21, Feb. 4, Feb. 18 and Feb. 25.

All of these electronic offerings are free to current paid BSB print subscribers. If you are not enjoying these additional issues, see the instructions on page 5 or give us a call at (614) 486-2202.