

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

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# Escape From Happy Valley

## Ohio State Survives Scare At Penn State

By RYAN GINN  
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Even though a soft four-game stretch made it seem so, it won't always be easy for Ohio State as it tries to fight its way back into the national title picture.

Penn State showed as much. The Nittany Lions, who entered as two-touchdown underdogs Oct. 25 in Happy Valley, climbed out of a 17-point halftime deficit to force a tie with nine seconds left before falling 31-24 in double overtime.

It was Ohio State's fifth straight win, but the No. 13 Buckeyes didn't post the impressive winning margin of the previous quartet of games, a dominating stretch that might have quickly raised expectations for a young team that may not have been as good as the scores indicated.

"I tried to keep telling you guys," Ohio State offensive coordinator Tom Herman said. "You guys wouldn't listen. We certainly are a work in progress, like I said. We're playing with a quarterback that now has seven games under his belt, and we're playing with a few guys up there that this was really their first road test in a ridiculously hostile environment."

"Hats off to Penn State. They played their tails off, and obviously their crowd is a big factor in what they do. It was exciting to see us keep responding, keep responding, keep responding. Although it took some time, at the end of the day our guys pulled it out when they needed to."

Luckily for the Buckeyes, they have sophomore defensive end Joey Bosa, a one-man wrecking crew whose laid-back demeanor turns into a ruthless disposition once he steps on the field. The Florida native made the play that won the game, charging into the backfield on fourth down in double overtime and driving helpless running back Akeel Lynch into quarterback Christian Hackenberg, who went down for the game-ending sack.



SONNY BROCKWAY PHOTOS

**GETTING IT DONE** – Redshirt freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett (16, above) rushed for two touchdowns in overtime, and sophomore defensive lineman Joey Bosa (97, right) recorded a game-ending sack to help the Ohio State football team earn a 31-24 double-overtime win at Penn State.

Bosa's walkoff wallop in Happy Valley was just another highlight in a short career filled with them. It was just more than one year ago when Bosa announced his arrival onto the college football scene in another tense road night game, tallying the first two sacks of his career against Northwestern and recovering a fumble in the end zone as time expired to turn a nail-biter into a 10-point win.

This one was bigger in every way.

"That wasn't what I was supposed to do, I was supposed to hit the guard and wrap up, but he blocked down so the hole opened so I just took it," Bosa said. "I was tired of trying to work my way around the back so I just ran him over."

After the game, with postgame television interviews complete on the field, Bosa sought out redshirt freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett for a hug before the duo headed back to the locker room. Bosa teased Barrett about saving the game, and Barrett let him know just how thankful he was to have Bosa on his side.

It was a sentiment that Barrett repeated in the postgame interview room.

"Joey Bosa, one thing I can say is I'm really glad he's on our team," Barrett said. "That's for sure. He's a great player on defense and really kept us in the game tonight. We just appreciate those guys. Without them, it definitely would have been a whole lot worse."

While it was easy in hindsight to see how Ohio State could have left Beaver Stadium with a second loss, that wasn't the case at halftime. The Buckeyes didn't run Penn State off the



field in the first half the way they had done to Rutgers and Maryland, but the statistical comparisons were still clearly pointing toward OSU dominance.

The Nittany Lions gained just five first downs in the opening two quarters and amassed 11 rushing yards on nine attempts. Their shining area of play offensively was Hackenberg, who completed 10 of 16 passes for 67 yards, no touchdowns and one interception – although officials later admitted the interception stood because of technical difficulties in the replay process.

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## OPINION

## Learning To Win In Tough Road Game Good Thing



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Charter Member

See if this sounds familiar. Ohio State is ahead or tied in the fourth quarter only to see the other team take the lead because the defense cannot come up with an opportune stop and get the opposing offense off the field.

Urban Meyer now has a 30-3 record with the Buckeyes, and all three of his losses – to Michigan State and Clemson last year, and against Virginia Tech earlier this season – featured the aforementioned scenario. That's why it was nearly déjà vu Oct. 25 for the third-year coach when his team squandered a 17-0 halftime lead and then failed to protect a 17-14 advantage late in the fourth quarter against an injury-riddled Penn State offense before the Buckeyes managed to pull out a 31-24 victory in double overtime.

Some pundits jumped at the opportunity to criticize Ohio State's so-called improvement over the past month, chalking it up to playing inferior competition. Likewise, they opined that playing against a tougher Penn State defense made quarterback J.T. Barrett – tweaked knee or not – look a lot more like a redshirt freshman than a Heisman Trophy candidate.

Perhaps the pundits have a point.

The Nittany Lions took advantage of Barrett on his first interception, confusing him first with a pressure rush and then disguising their coverage enough that the throw went right to defensive tackle Anthony Zettel, who turned it into a 40-yard touchdown return.

Another deceptive coverage from Penn State early in the fourth quarter resulted in Barrett's second interception when the Ohio State threw a pass to linebacker Mike Hull, who dropped into a zone in front of intended receiver Evan Spencer.

The first two of the two picks ended Barrett's streak of 116 consecutive passes without an interception and pretty much silenced (at least for now) the Braxton Miller deniers. Not that Barrett was helped very much by his receivers, who couldn't consistently get open, as well as some conservative play-calling from offensive coordinator Tom Herman.

Midway through the fourth quarter, with the Buckeyes protecting a 17-14 lead and facing a third-and-6 situation, Herman called for running back Dontre Wilson to take a direct snap in the Wildcat formation. But instead of trying to use Wilson's speed to get to the outside for first-down yardage, the sophomore tried to weave his way through traffic up the middle and was stopped well short of the marker.

Tell me again the point of recruiting speed if you're not going to use it, especially in late-game situations against a tiring defense?

And while we're on the subject of addressing problems we thought had already been addressed, when are Ohio State defensive backs going to begin contesting passes rather than just playing the opposing receiver? Redshirt freshman corner Eli Apple never turned his head to look for the ball on Penn State's fourth-quarter touchdown pass, while gun-shy Nittany Lions QB Christian Hackenberg completed 9 of 13 attempts for 63 yards during his team's late drive for the field goal.

Maybe the game exposed a still-young, still-growing Ohio State team as still not ready for prime time. In addition to Barrett's mistakes, there were too many missed assignments along the offensive line, redshirt freshman Jalin Marshall turned virtually every punt return into a near-disaster, there was a lot of shoddy tackling on defense, and true freshman kicker Sean Nuernberger missed a 41-

yard field goal in the third quarter that would have altered Penn State's offensive strategy at the end of regulation.

Then again, maybe the Buckeyes' second-half struggles against the Nittany Lions will pay a dividend down the road. Meyer's young team didn't respond very well when Virginia Tech bloodied its nose in early September, and it was at least encouraging to see the Buckeyes react to adversity in a much better fashion in late October.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK  
Mark Rea

Overcoming hardship on the road at night in front of a hostile crowd? That's huge for a young team and could go a long way toward creating something positive Nov. 8 in East Lansing.

## Game Notes

- Meyer is the fastest Ohio State head coach to achieve 30 victories, taking only 33 games to reach the mark. Jim Tressel (2001-10) was previously the fastest OSU coach to 30 wins, reaching the milestone in 36 contests. Third on that list is Earle Bruce (1979-87), who won 30 of his first 37 games.

- The game featured two of the winningest college football teams in history. Counting vacated seasons, Ohio State ranks fifth all-time with 867 wins while Penn State ranks sixth with 846. Michigan is first all-time with 913 followed by Notre Dame (881), Texas (877) and Nebraska (872).

- The higher ranked team has won 22 of the last 24 meetings. OSU entered the game ranked 12th in the coaches' poll and 13th by the Associated Press writers while the Nittany Lions were unranked. Penn State has not been ranked since the end of the 2011 regular season.

- OSU sophomore defensive end Joey Bosa had 2½ sacks against the Nittany Lions, including one on the final play of the game when he bull-rushed running back Akeel Lynch and knocked the hopelessly mismatched 60, 221-pound junior backward into Hackenberg. Bosa has recorded at least one tackle for lost yardage in 13 consecutive games, one off the school record set by Andy Katzenmoyer in 1996-97 and equaled by Ryan Shazier in 2012-13.

- When Nuernberger converted a 49-yard field goal in the second quarter, it was the longest three-pointer by an Ohio State kicker since Drew Basil's 52-yarder during a 26-21 win against Michigan in 2012. It was also the longest field goal for an OSU kicker in a Big Ten road contest since Ryan Pretorius kicked one 50 yards in Beaver Stadium during a 37-17 win against Penn State in 2007.

- Lost amid the defensive troubles in the second half were a couple of huge hits by OSU defenders. Junior nickelback Armani Reeves broke up a late first-half pass over the middle by leveling Penn State receiver Geno Lewis, while sophomore safety Vonn Bell rattled tight end Mike Gesicki's bones on a third-quarter sideline throw. Both were clean, hard hits, and the 5-11, 200-pound Bell's was especially noteworthy because it came against Gesicki, who goes 6-6 and 240 pounds.

- Ohio State's school-record streak of scoring 50 or more points ended at four games. Had the Buckeyes topped the 50-point mark against Penn State, it would have marked the first time since 1903 that a Big

Ten team had scored 50 or more points in five consecutive games. Michigan turned the trick that season against the likes of Albion (76-0), Beloit (79-0), Ohio Northern (65-0), Indiana (51-0) and Ferris State (88-0). Making the feat even more remarkable was the fact the Wolverines played those five games over the span of just 14 days.

## Some Final Thoughts

- While watching Michigan State add to the woes of in-state rival Michigan, it was difficult to tell just how good Sparty really is. A couple of takeaways from that game, however. First, it will be extremely loud at Spartan Stadium for the Ohio State-MSU showdown, and secondly, the Buckeyes might want to think about double coverage on receiver Tony Lippett, whose three catches against the Wolverines covered 103 yards with a touchdown. Lippett is averaging 20.2 yards on his 39 receptions this season, and he has eight TD catches.

- Speaking of the Michigan-Michigan State rivalry, I initially saw no reason why Markantonio would keep his offensive starters in the game on the Spartans' final drive, which resulted in a 5-yard touchdown run by Jeremy Langford with just 28 seconds remaining. That was, of course, until I discovered that Michigan players had disrespected the rivalry by planting a stake in the Spartan Stadium turf before the game. During his postgame comments, Michigan head coach Brady Hoke said he was aware something might have happened before the game but was unsure of the details. Attention to every detail is part of a head coach's job, and one more indication that Hoke will likely be replaced at season's end.

- One more thing about that 35-11 victory for Michigan State. Dantonio notched his 71st win with the Spartans, pushing him all alone into second place on the school's all-time wins list behind Hugh "Duffy" Daugherty (109, 1954-72). Coach Dino also now has a 42-18 record in Big Ten play during his seven-plus seasons in East Lansing, a remarkable turnaround from the meandering 19-37 conference mark the program had recorded during the seven-year period preceding his hire.

- While high-octane passing attacks continue to grab headlines, the Big Ten remains primarily a run-oriented conference. Heading into the final weekend of October, three of the top seven rushing teams in the country were Big Ten teams – Wisconsin at No. 1, Nebraska at No. 6 and Indiana at No. 7. While the Hoosiers were idle Oct. 25, the Badgers and Cornhuskers continued to pad their rushing stats. Bucky rolled for 311 yards on the ground during a 52-7 wipeout of Maryland while the Huskers rushed for 292 yards as part of a 42-24 rout of Rutgers.

- The next time some tradition-challenged youngster floats the idea of Ohio State wearing black uniforms during a game, remind them that such a practice would be borrowing a page from That School Up North. Before Fritz Crisler got to Ann Arbor in 1938, Michigan wore predominantly black uniforms that included black helmets. That changed only after Crisler brought the familiar winged helmet design with him from Princeton, where he coached from 1932-37. Unlike today, however, where every uniform tweak represents some kind of marketing gimmick, Crisler had practicality in mind. The College Football Hall of Fame coach believed the distinctive maize-colored wing pattern would be helpful to his halfbacks as they tried to spot their receivers downfield.



## OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

# Buckeyes Punish Top-Ranked Run Defense

If Ohio State was worried about facing Penn State's top-ranked rushing defense Oct. 25, the Buckeyes didn't show it.

The Nittany Lions entered their game with the Buckeyes with the No. 1 rush defense in the nation, allowing just 60.8 yards per game on the ground. Ohio State topped that mark on its third drive of the game, finishing the first quarter with 84 yards rushing.

## GAME NOTEBOOK

### Blake Williams

"We knew coming into Penn State they were going to be a loud crowd so we had to take the crowd out of the game," running back Ezekiel Elliott said. "So the solution is you've just got to run the ball and run the ball effectively. We did that really well when we first came out. That's our plan every time we come out. We want to run the ball to set up the passing game."

Elliott finished with 109 yards on the ground, becoming the first 100-yard rusher the Nittany Lions have allowed this season. The Buckeyes finished with 219 yards on the ground. Prior to the game against Ohio State, Penn State had allowed a total of 365 yards rushing on the season.

Penn State entered the game allowing just 2.0 yards per carry, while Ohio State gained 3.8 yards per rush in Beaver Stadium. After Penn State's game against the Buckeyes,



SONNY BROCKWAY

**GOOD GAME** – Sophomore tailback Ezekiel Elliott (15) led the Ohio State football team with 109 yards rushing and a touchdown. He accomplished the feat against a Penn State team that entered the night allowing a nation-best 60.8 yards per game.

the Nittany Lions' rushing yards allowed per game ballooned to 83.4.

"I definitely had a rhythm in the first

half," Elliott said. "The line was blocking really well, and everything was hitting well."

The Buckeyes excelled on the ground in the first two quarters, amassing 119 yards before intermission. The Nittany Lions made some adjustments after halftime, doing more interior twists along the defensive line, Elliott said, which slowed down Ohio State's inside run game.

"Early on, they were able to make some plays inside on us," Penn State head coach James Franklin said. "Early on, they were really getting some push. They have a big, physical offensive line."

"I think, as the game went on, the fact that we were rotating our defensive line was helpful. We made slight adjustments, not really anything we're doing at halftime, just different calls. It was a combination of all those things, but it's not like we went in there and reinvented the wheel at halftime."

The Buckeyes pushed the ball to the edge more in the third and fourth quarter but still gained just 63 yards on the ground in the second half. They regained their form in overtime, gaining 37 yards and scoring both of their extra-time touchdowns on the ground on just six carries.

Ohio State finished below its season average of 259.8 rushing yards per game but was still able to exploit the vaunted Nittany Lions run defense.

"We just come in every game and we want to run the ball," Elliott said. "That's how we get momentum. It opens up the play-action pass, so I mean, just coming out and running the ball was very important for us."

### Passing Problems

While the Buckeyes excelled on the ground, they posted their worst passing performance since they netted just 55 yards through the air on four attempts in a 34-20 victory against Indiana on Nov. 5, 2011.

Braxton Miller started at quarterback in that game as a freshman. The offense and the team were struggling to stay above water

as Luke Fickell served a year as interim head coach.

The Buckeyes' escape against Penn State was the worst passing performance since Meyer and coordinator Tom Herman took over the offense. It's only the second time a Herman-led passing attack registered less than 100 yards as the Buckeyes passed for just 97 yards in a Nov. 12, 2012, win at Wisconsin.

J.T. Barrett completed 12 of 19 passing attempts to get to 74 yards against Penn State. He threw one touchdown and tossed two interceptions. Both of the redshirt freshman's costly miscues came in the second half and helped the Nittany Lions overcome a 17-0 halftime deficit.

The first interception came on the first drive of the third quarter when Barrett didn't see defensive tackle Anthony Zettel drop into coverage and the 6-4, 274-pound senior snagged an ill-advised pass out of the air and rumbled 40 yards for a touchdown. The second Barrett turnover was on the Buckeyes' first offensive snap of the fourth quarter as linebacker Mike Hull hauled in the throw.

"The last one, that was a dumb mistake," Barrett said of the interception. "I saw the Mike (linebacker) and was trying to throw over him. You don't throw over guys, you throw through windows. The first one, they did a good job of preparing a blitz on us. We got a no-deep and my reads were hot and the 3-technique (defensive tackle) bailed. It was a good scheme by the defense, but we'll get better at that."

While the two interceptions were bad throws (and Barrett missed five other passes), the 19 passing attempts were the lowest total for the redshirt freshman since he had just 14 throws in his first start vs. Navy.

Herman said the offense called a more conservative game because of how well the Buckeyes were playing on the other side of the ball.

"It felt like we were playing really good defense, and we didn't want to take a ton of chances in the throw game because we knew it was kind of hit or miss whether we could block them up front for as long as we needed to," the offensive coordinator said. "We took our shots and didn't connect. J.T. had some poor throws, and then obviously we got pressured each time he threw. I didn't think the receivers played poorly at all. It was a tough game to manufacture ways to hit anything."

Ohio State's longest completion of the day was just 14 yards, and the offense didn't attempt many throws down the field. The leading receiver on the night was tight end Jeff Heuerman with just three catches for 19 yards. Jalin Marshall had two catches for 9 yards while seven other players had one catch.

When asked about what lessons the team could take from the narrow victory, Elliott was quick to refer to the passing game, and the running back did point out his own shortcomings in protection.

"We've just got to tighten up in the passing game," the sophomore said. "When we're not balanced, we don't really go that well. You saw tonight. We've just got to tighten up our protections and get ready for next week."

### Officiating Fiasco

While the seven-point, double-overtime contest featured a number of game-changing plays, two of the most prominent snaps were marked by the game's officiating.

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## OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

## 2014 OSU Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result	TV	Record, Oct. 23-25	Results
Aug. 30	vs. Navy* (at Baltimore)	W, 34-17	CBS Sports Net.	4-4, 41-31 win over San Jose State	
Sept. 6	VIRGINIA TECH*	L, 35-21	ESPN	4-4, 30-6 loss to Miami (Fla.)	
Sept. 13	KENT STATE^	W, 66-0	ABC/ESPN2	1-7, 10-3 loss to Miami (Ohio)	
Sept. 27	CINCINNATI*%	W, 50-28	BTN	4-3, 34-17 win over South Florida	
Oct. 4	at Maryland*	W, 52-24	ABC	5-3, 52-7 loss to Wisconsin	
Oct. 18	RUTGERS*#	W, 56-17	ABC/ESPN2	5-3, 42-24 loss to Nebraska	
Oct. 25	at Penn State	<b>W, 31-24 (2OT)</b>	ABC	4-3, 31-24 loss to <b>Ohio State</b>	
Nov. 1	ILLINOIS	8 p.m.	ABC	4-4, 28-24 win over Minnesota	
Nov. 8	at Michigan State*	8 p.m.	ABC	7-1, 35-11 win over Michigan	
Nov. 15	at Minnesota*	TBA	TBA	6-2, 28-24 loss to Illinois	
Nov. 22	INDIANA	TBA	TBA	3-4, Open week	
Nov. 29	MICHIGAN*	TBA	TBA	3-5, 35-11 loss to Michigan State	

^ - Alumni Band Day \* - 2013 Bowl team % - Hall of Fame Day # - Homecoming

State linebacker Darron Lee pressured Penn State quarterback Christian Hackenberg into a bad throw. Vonn Bell broke on the ball and made what the officials ruled a diving interception. Replays appeared to show that the ball hit the ground before the sophomore safety secured it, and before Ohio State was able to run an offensive play, the officials went to review the play.

To the anguish of more than 100,000 Penn State fans in attendance, the play stood as an interception. Seven plays and 39 yards later the Buckeyes had a 7-0 lead.

"The play technically was not thoroughly reviewed due to some technical difficulties with the equipment," head official John O'Neill explained after the game. "The feeds that the replay team looks at are the feeds you get at home. We can't create our own rules. The replay rules are clear that we have to use the equipment provided. So, (replay official Tom Fielder) and the team reviewed what they had."

More officiating mishaps would follow.

With 11:07 left in the second quarter Ohio State lined up to kick a field goal and Sean Nuernberger drilled a 49-yard try, his career long. Replays, however, showed that the play should not have counted as it appeared that the play clock expired about three seconds before the Buckeyes snapped the ball. The play should have been blown dead for a delay-of-game penalty, and the freshman kicker would have been forced to try a 54-yard kick.

"That is not reviewable in terms of when the ball is snapped in relationship to the zeros on the clock," Fielder said.

Directly or indirectly, the Buckeyes' first 10 points against the Nittany Lions were a result of dubious officiating. Franklin was clearly upset after the game but was careful not to blatantly criticize the officials, which would result in a league fine.

"All of that equals 10 points, right? I would love to come in here on a weekly basis and tell you exactly what I think, and it goes against everything that I am," the Penn State

coach said. "I tell people the truth, but I'm not able to do that. I'm going to focus on the things that we can correct as a program and our kids. I'm going to fight for our kids and our program."

While the Buckeyes' field goal should have been flagged and wasn't, there was plenty of yellow laundry on the field throughout the remainder of the game. Ohio State committed eight penalties for 70 yards while Penn State was flagged four times and penalized 42 yards. Both teams made mistakes at costly times.

On the Nittany Lions' fourth-quarter touchdown drive, sophomore lineman Joey Bosa was flagged for roughing the passer after Hackenberg completed a 3-yard pass on second-and-20 from his own 45, giving the Nittany Lions the ball in Ohio State territory for just the third time on the evening.

On Penn State's final drive, the Buckeyes again were called for roughing the passer. On second-and-17 from the 50-yard line with just 47 seconds left, Hackenberg threw a 7-yard completion, but senior captain Curtis Grant was flagged. That drive ended in the game-tying field goal as the Nittany Lions forced overtime.

"First of all that should have never happened; we made some stupid penalties," Bosa said of the final drive of regulation. "I wasn't very excited to go into overtime, to be honest."

Penn State had its own costly personal foul in the extra session. After Ohio State scored in the first overtime, Nuernberger came on the field to attempt to tie the game with an extra point. The point-after try sailed through the uprights, but the Lions were called for a leaping penalty.

The personal foul was applied on the next possession, giving Ohio State the ball at the 12-yard line in the second overtime rather

than the 25. The Buckeyes needed just three plays to register what would be the game-winning touchdown.

## Buckeyes' Biggest Road Test

Much was made of how the Buckeyes would handle Beaver Stadium, by far the biggest road environment they have faced this season.

It was the second true road game for Ohio State this year, but the 107,895 in attendance at Penn State was more than double the number that attended the Buckeyes' game at Maryland, and there seemed to be fewer scarlet-and-gray-clad supporters in State College than there were in College Park.

The Buckeyes attempted to simulate the hostile environment leading up to the game by piping in crowd noise and music during practices throughout the week of preparation. Despite those efforts, there were still some crowd-related mistakes including delay-of-game and procedure penalties.

"When you're out there you really don't pay attention that much, but we did make a lot of mistakes because of the crowd, false starts," Elliott said. "We've got a lot of stuff to tighten up."

Beaver Stadium will be the largest crowd Ohio State faces this season as its remaining road games at Michigan State and Minnesota will be held at stadiums with capacities of 75,005 and 50,805, respectively.

Bell was happy he got to experience the intensity of the environment against Penn State.

"It was a great atmosphere," he said. "This was my first time here. It was beautiful. It did live up to the expectations. It very much did. Those fans, this coaching staff, they prepared us for everything. It was a great atmosphere for a young guy like me."

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# Ohio State Keeps Playoff Hopes Alive With OT Win

Continued From Page 1

The Buckeyes didn't move the ball as efficiently as they had in past games, but they still found a way to put points on the board in a loud environment. Sophomore running back Ezekiel Elliott got the Buckeyes on top with a 10-yard touchdown run on OSU's first possession. It was a sign of things to come for the St. Louis native, who rushed for 109 yards on the night.

Freshman Sean Nuernberger knocked a 49-yard field goal through the uprights early in the second quarter, and senior tight end Jeff Heuerman caught a 1-yard touchdown pass from Barrett with 3:58 until halftime to put Ohio State up by three scores.

Everything looked to be going well for the Buckeyes, who had the added bonus of receiving the opening kickoff of the second half. One thing had changed, though – Barrett sprained his knee late in the second quarter. It wasn't serious enough to keep him out of the game, but Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer said it did have an impact on the team's play-calling in the second half.

"We tried to manage the game," Meyer said. "I didn't like the way we went about business in the second half. When you're not moving people and then they start teeing off on you, that's kind of what it felt like was happening. We have good skill, but we could not get them the ball. We've got to re-evaluate a bunch of stuff we're doing."

Everything changed on the third play of the third quarter. Facing third-and-6, Barrett failed to see Penn State defensive tackle Anthony Zettel drop back into coverage. In fact, three Penn State players were in front of intended receiver Michael Thomas by the time the ball got there, but it was Zettel who snatched it out of the air and raced 40 yards for a pick-six to put the Nittany Lions back in the game. It was the first of several teachable moments to come.

"It was actually a Cover-0 blitz that they spied the two inside guys out for your hot throws and your slants and all that," Herman said. "We've got to recognize that and change the protection. So it's a very teachable moment because that certainly is not

something we've never seen as coaches or anything like that. In the heat of the moment, we didn't do what we should have."

That ball marked the first interception Barrett had thrown since the Kent State game Sept. 13. In the four games between the Virginia Tech loss and Penn State win, Barrett had thrown 17 touchdowns and just the lone interception. That span helped erase the memories of the loss to the Hokies and vaulted Barrett into the Heisman conversation if not actual consideration.

The second half in Happy Valley put an end to that talk for now, but Ohio State learned more about the man thrust into the spotlight just two weeks before the opener thanks to a season-ending injury to would-be starter Braxton Miller. But before those lessons, there were more struggles. The results of all second-half drives by Ohio State read, in order: interception, punt, missed field goal, punt, interception, punt, punt.

The final punt came when Ohio State gained exactly 1 yard on three plays and put the Nittany Lions in position to win or tie the game down three points with three minutes to play. Luckily for Barrett, the defense bent but didn't break. Penn State marched down to the Ohio State 14 but couldn't reach pay dirt, and senior kicker Sam Ficken gave the 107,895 in attendance the chance to watch some free football when he converted the 31-yard field goal with nine seconds to play.

When it came time to take the field for overtime, Barrett hit the reset button. Playing in his first true hostile road environment and facing the white wall of the Penn State student section in the first overtime series, Barrett told Herman over the headset that he was ready.

"Otherwise (the win) wouldn't have happened," Barrett said. "I would have been on the sideline or something."

Reassurances were given but weren't necessary. Despite the two second-half interceptions and despite his quarterback's relative lack of experience, Herman never wavered in the belief that the first quarterback he recruited to Ohio State would get the job done.

"Not him. Not him. No. No concern," Herman said. "We believe in him. He's done



SONNY BROCKWAY

**FIRST-HALF SUCCESS** – Ohio State built a 17-0 halftime lead, thanks in part to a second-quarter 1-yard TD reception by senior tight end Jeff Heuerman (5), before Penn State rallied to send the game to overtime.

too many good things in his seven games here for us to not. He'd be the first to tell you he didn't play well at times, but when we needed him, boy did he ever."

With the crowd reaching ear-splitting levels and Ohio State needing a touchdown to stay in the game, Barrett quickly turned cheers into silence. His 17-yard rush on the second play of OSU's possession put the Buckeyes at the 5-yard line, and he plowed into the end zone one play later.

Getting the ball back to start the second overtime, he produced a mirror image of the first extra period. Barrett's rush on the second play put OSU 4 yards from the goal line, and he hit for six one snap later.

Barrett has become known for his locker room speeches to teammates, and overtime gave him a showcase to back up his words with actions when so much was on the line.

"I had no doubt that that was going to happen, and I don't know that his teammates did, either," Herman said. "Again, it's kind of like when he leads or when he talks. As a guy who hasn't played much football around here, he better go back it up with his performance on the field. At times he didn't play very well, but when the game was on the line he certainly did, and I think he earned the respect of his teammates."

The rushes came in part because the coaching staff felt the offensive line's blocking was hit or miss, but Barrett never entered any of the plays with the predetermined notion that he'd be getting the ball. He made his reads and took what the Nittany Lions gave him, running the OSU offense exactly as the coaches hoped.

"Just read it each time," he said. "If you go out there with an idea and you play that idea (without reading the defense) and then you're wrong – that's Coach Herman right there for you. Just playing the play and not thinking about the pass plays because they were giving us different looks all night."

That was followed by Bosa doing Bosa things. Soon after, Ohio State was singing another a cappella version of "Carmen Ohio" – the band hasn't made the trip to Penn State since 2005 – in celebration of another victory. While Ohio State fans might have felt lucky after that second half to escape with a

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## COVER STORY

win, Meyer refused to bring the idea of good fortune into the equation.

"I don't use that term luck," Meyer said. "I never call someone and say good luck because why do you work? 'Good luck and go home early tonight and put that rabbit's foot in your pocket and hope things work out?' We don't do that. It's not luck. I mean, it was a tough game. Penn State is a very rugged defensive unit. Boy, do they play hard. If we would have not turned the ball over and took care of business, then we'd see what would happen. But that's part of the game and we didn't play very well."

Nobody in the visiting locker room – at least none who spoke to the media – harbored any illusions about the Buckeyes being a perfect team seven games into the season. If anything, both players and coaches are thankful to have the time to correct the team's issues before the looming battle against Michigan State on Nov. 8.

The good news for the Buckeyes is simple. They learned they have a quarterback who could put points on the board while

playing in the center of a drum that was determined to keep banging away at him and his teammates. They also learned just how far they have to go to get ready for the Spartans – the mistakes that need cleaning up, the injuries that need healing, the need to show they can step on a decent team's throat.

As he spoke in the bowels of Beaver Stadium, Herman sounded happy to be teaching those lessons after a win.

"I said to Barrett and said to our staff in the locker room, 'I like teaching moments more after we win than after we lose,'" Herman said. "There were plenty of them tonight. When the game was on the line, he made it very clear that he was going to go out and put us on his back and go win the game for us."

With the biggest game of the season growing closer with each passing day, the Buckeyes now know they'll have to be better in every way in order to give Barrett and Bosa a similar opportunity in East Lansing.



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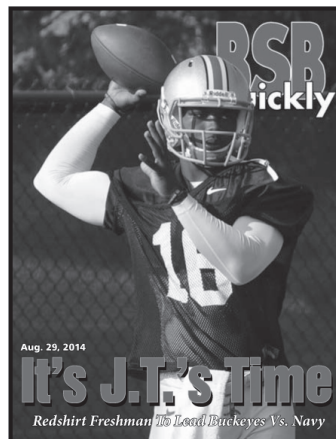
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## 2014-15 BSB Quickly Schedule

Aug. 30	Jan. 20
Sept. 5	Jan. 23
Sept. 12	Jan. 30
Sept. 26	Feb. 3
Oct. 3	Feb. 6
Oct. 17	Feb. 17
Oct. 24	Feb. 24
Oct. 31	March 10
Nov. 7	March 24
Nov. 14	April 7
Nov. 21	April 21
Nov. 28	May 5
Dec. 5	May 19
Dec. 9	June 16
Jan. 6	July 14
Jan. 9	Aug. 4
Jan. 16	Aug. 11

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# The Numbers Game

## Ohio State 31, Penn State 24 (2OT)

Oct. 25, 2014 – Beaver Stadium; University Park, Pa.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT1	OT2	F
OHIO STATE	7	10	0	0	7	7	31
PENN STATE	0	0	7	10	7	0	24

### First Quarter

OSU – Elliott, 10 yard run (Nuernberger kick), 10:15; 7 plays, 39 yards, 2:52 TOP.

### Second Quarter

OSU – Nuernberger, 49 yard field goal, 11:07; 14 plays, 59 yards, 7:31 TOP.

OSU – Heuerman, 1 yard pass from Barrett (Nuernberger kick), 3:58; 6 plays, 39 yards, 2:20 TOP.

### Third Quarter

PSU – Zettel, 40 yard interception return (Ficken kick), 13:37.

### Fourth Quarter

PSU – Blacknall, 24 yard pass from Hackenberg (Ficken kick), 11:08; 8 plays, 45 yards, 2:16 TOP.

PSU – Ficken, 31 yard field goal, 0:09; 19 plays, 77 yards, 2:49 TOP.

### First Overtime

PSU – Belton, 1 yard run (Ficken kick); 7 plays, 25 yards.

OSU – Barrett, 5 yard run (Nuernberger kick); 3 plays, 25 yards.

### Second Overtime

OSU – Barrett, 4 yard run (Nuernberger kick); 3 plays, 25 yards.

Att. – 107,895.

Weather – 57-71 degrees, pleasant and breezy; wind W 9-15 mph.

### Team Statistics

	OSU	PSU
First Downs	19	20
Rushing	14	5
Passing	4	11
Penalty	1	4
Rushing-Yards	57-219	31-16
Passing Yards	74	224
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	12-19-2	31-50-2
Offensive Plays	76	81
Total Net Yards	293	240
Third Down Efficiency	7-18	8-18
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-2	0-1
Punts-Avg.	6-45.0	8-34.5
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-0
Penalties	8-70	4-42
Time of Possession	34:33	25:27

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** – OSU: Elliott 26-109; Barrett 20-75; Wilson 5-20; Marshall 3-19; C.Jones 1-0; TEAM 2-(-4). **PSU:** Lynch 13-38; Belton 9-8; Hamilton 1-(-3); Hackenberg 8-(-27).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** – OSU: Barrett 12-19-2-74-1. **PSU:** Hackenberg 31-49-2-224-1; TEAM 0-1-0-0-0.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** – OSU: Heuerman 3-19; Marshall 2-9; Wilson 1-14; Samuel 1-9; De.Smith 1-8; Elliott 1-7; Vannett 1-6; M.Thomas 1-3; Spencer 1-(-1). **PSU:** Hamilton 14-126; Blacknall 4-34; James 4-22; Godwin 3-16; Belton 2-5; E.Lewis 1-11; K.Carter 1-4; Lynch 1-3; Gesicki 1-3.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** – OSU: Johnston 6-45.0-59. **PSU:** Gulla 4-37.5-43; Pasquariello 4-31.5-45.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Marshall 3-(-4). **PSU:** Della Valle 2-5.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Wilson 3-81. **PSU:** Haley 2-35.

**MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.)** – OSU: Nuernberger (41). **PSU:** None.

**FORCED FUMBLES** – OSU: Apple. **PSU:** None.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: None. **PSU:** None.

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Powell 1-0; V.Bell 1-0. **PSU:** Zettel 1-40; Hull 1-12.

**SACKS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Bosa 2.5-18; Lee 1.5-10; Washington 1.0-7. **PSU:** Barnes 1.0-9; B.Bell 1.0-7; Zettel 1.0-3.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Bosa 2.5-18; Lee 2.5-13; Perry 2.0-7; Washington 1.5-8; Schutt 1.0-3; Powell 1.0-2; S.Miller 0.5-1. **PSU:** Hull 2.5-7; Barnes 1.5-10; B.Bell 1.0-7; Nassib 1.0-6; Zettel 1.0-3.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.)** – OSU: Perry 12-6-18; Powell 5-2-7; Bosa 4-2-6; Lee 4-1-5; C.Grant 4-0-4; Apple 3-1-4; Reeves 3-1-4; Washington 2-2-4; S.Miller 1-3-4; V.Bell 3-0-3; Bennett 2-0-2; McMillan 0-2-2; De.Smith 1-0-1; Spencer 1-0-1; Clinton 1-0-1; C.Worley 1-0-1; Schutt 1-0-1; Haynes 0-1-1; Karageorge 0-1-1; TEAM 0-1-1; D.Grant 0-1-1. **PSU:** Hull 7-12-19; B.Bell 5-8-13; Marcus Allen 4-7-11; Olaniyan 2-7-9; Wartman 2-7-9; Amos 3-4-7; Barnes 1-6-7; Della Valle 2-2-4; A.Johnson 0-4-4; T.Williams 1-2-3; Lynch 2-0-2; Haley 1-1-2; Zettel 1-1-2; Lucas 0-2-2; Nassib 1-0-1; Walker 1-0-1; Zanellato 0-1-1; Cothren 0-1-1; Bars 0-1-1.

**PLAYERS IN THE GAME** – **OHIO STATE:** Offense, Decker, Price, Boren, Elflein, Baldwin, Heuerman, Spencer, Barrett, Elliott, M.Thomas, De.Smith, Nuernberger. Defense, Bosa, Washington, Bennett, S.Miller, Lee, C.Grant, Perry, Apple, Powell, V.Bell, D.Grant, Johnston. Reserves, Webb, E.Smith, C.Jones, Wilson, Samuel, McMillan, R.Smith, Holmes, Marshall, Conley, Reeves, Ball, C.Worley, T.Johnson, Fada, Clinton, Haynes, Rock, Burger, C.Williams, Farris, M.Jones, N.Brown, Vannett, C.Smith, Baugh, Greene, Schutt. **PENN STATE:** Offense, Nelson, Gaia, Mangiro, Mahon, Do.Smith, Hackenberg, Belton, James, E.Lewis, Hamilton, Godwin, Ficken, Defense, Olaniyan, Zettel, A.Johnson, Barnes, Wartman, Hull, B.Bell, Lucas, Allen, Amos, T.Williams, Gulla. Reserves, C.Campbell, Golden, Wooten, Gesicki, Blacknall, Haley, Dudas, Lynch, Walker, Zwinak, Bars, De.Thompson, Della Valle, Cabinda, Cothren, Yazujian, Laurent, Hall, Zanellato, K.Carter, Sickels, Barney, Pasquariello, Schwan, Nassib.

## Season Statistics

### 2014 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 (2OT)	107,895
Nov. 1	ILLINOIS	8 p.m.	
Nov. 8	at Michigan State	8 p.m.	
Nov. 15	at Minnesota	TBA	
Nov. 22	INDIANA	TBA	
Nov. 29	MICHIGAN	TBA	

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

\*\* at Baltimore

### Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	192	123
Rushing	111	54
Passing	72	55
Penalty	9	14
Average Per Game/Rush	254.0	120.4
Average Per Game/Pass	245.4	187.7
Total Offense	3,496	2,157
Total Plays	536	465
Average Per Game	499.4	308.1
Average Per Play	6.5	4.6
Penalties-Yards	41-349	33-294
Fumbles-Lost	10-4	8-4
Third Down Efficiency	43-91	35-98
Percentage	47%	36%
Fourth Down Efficiency	7-14	3-5
Percentage	50%	60%
Sacks-Yards	21-154	16-114
Time Of Possession Avg.	32:37	27:23

### Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	89	82	76	49	14	310	44.3
Opponents	31	35	31	41	7	145	20.7

### Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Ezekiel Elliott	117	640	5.5	5	28
J.T. Barrett	98	458	4.7	6	33
Curtis Samuel	36	251	7.0	2	34
Cardale Jones	17	141	8.3	0	21
Rod Smith	24	101	4.2	4	14
Dontre Wilson	18	100	5.6	0	21
Warren Ball	11	48	4.4	0	12
Jalin Marshall	9	46	5.1	0	12
Johnnie Dixon	4	20	5.0	0	9
Bri'onte Dunn	4	16	4.0	0	6
Jeffie Johnson	1	2	2.0	0	2
TEAM	7	-45	-5.0	0	0
OSU Totals	348	1,778	5.1	17	34
OPP Totals	239	843	3.5	9	67

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
J.T. Barrett	119	183	65.0	1,689	21-7	172.77
Cardale Jones	3	5	60.0	29	0-0	108.72
OSU Totals	122	188	64.9	1,718	21-7	171.07
OPP Totals	134	226	59.3	1,314	8-12	109.19

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Michael Thomas	22	380	17.3	5	63
Dontre Wilson	15	235	15.7	1	40
Ezekiel Elliott	15	144	9.6	0	22
Devin Smith	13	363	27.9	5	80
Nick Vannett	11	126	11.5	3	26
Jalin Marshall	11	106	9.6	2	31
Corey Smith	9	113	12.6	0	25
Jeff Heuerman	8	101	12.6	1	28
Evan Spencer	8	72	9.0	2	19
Curtis Samuel	8	68	8.5	0	30
Rod Smith	1	8	8.0	1	8
Marcus Baugh	1	2	2.0	1	2
OSU Totals	122	1,718	14.1	21	80
OPP Totals	134	1,314	9.8	8	83

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Sean Nuernberger	–	41-41	–	–	7-11	62
J.T. Barrett	6	–	–	–	–	36
Ezekiel Elliott	5	–	–	–	–	30
Devin Smith	5	–	–	–	–	30
Rod Smith	5	–	–	–	–	30
Michael Thomas	5	–	–	–	–	30
Nick Vannett	3	–	–	–	–	18
Jalin Marshall	2	–	–	–	–	12
Curtis Samuel	2	–	–	–	–	12
Evan Spencer	2	–	–	–	–	12
Eli Apple	1	–	–	–	–	6
Marcus Baugh	1	–	–	–	–	6
Jeff Heuerman	1	–	–	–	–	6
Darron Lee	1	–	–	–	–	6
Raekwon McMillan	1	–	–	–	–	6
Dontre Wilson	1	–	–	–	–	6
OSU Totals	41	41-41	–	–	7-11	310
OPP Totals	19	19-19	–	–	4-6	145

\* – Ohio State recorded a team safety.

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Sean Nuernberger	3-4	0-0	4-7	0-0	7-11
OSU Totals	3-4	0-0	4-7	0-0	7-11
OPP Totals	0-0	2-3	1-2	1-1	4-6

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Cameron Johnston	19	844	44.4	0	69
OSU Totals	19	844	44.4	0	69
OPP Totals	49	1,945	39.7	1	57

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Doran Grant	2	18	9.0	0	18
Eli Apple	2	0	0.0	0	0
Vonn Bell	2	0	0.0	0	0
Tyvis Powell	2	0	0.0	0	0
Raekwon McMillan	1	24	24.0	1	24
Darron Lee	1	10	10.0	0	10
Erick Smith	1	5	5.0	0	5
Joshua Perry	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	12	57	4.8	1	24
OPP Totals	7	150	21.4	2	63

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Dontre Wilson	14	136	9.7	0	32
Jalin Marshall	9	107	11.9	0	51
Jeff Greene	1	10	10.0	0	0
Ron Tanner	0	22	0.0	0	9
OSU Totals	24	275	11.5	0	51
OPP Totals	5	37	7.4	0	35

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Dontre Wilson	15	348	23.2	0	38
Jalin Marshall	2	56	28.0	0	30
Rod Smith	1	17	17.0	0	17
Ezekiel Elliott	1	16	16.0	0	16
OSU Totals	19	437	23.0	0	38
OPP Totals	32	557	17.4	0	26

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Joshua Perry	39	24	63	5.0-19	0.5-6
Tyvis Powell	24	16	40	1.0-2	–
Vonn Bell	24	14	38	–	–
Curtis Grant	17	19	36	3.0-18	1.0-11
Darron Lee	19	12	31	8.5-39	3.5-28
Joey Bosa	13	13	26	11.5-75	8.0-62
Doran Grant	19	6	25	–	–
Raekwon McMillan	11	11	22	3.5-14	2.0-10
Eli Apple	13	8	21	–	–
A.Washington	8	10	18	5.5-20	2.0-12
Steve Miller	10	7	17	2.5-4	–
Armani Reeves	8	5	13	–	–
Michael Bennett	7	5	12	3.0-11	1.0-6
Cam Burrows	5	7	12	–	–
Rashad Frazier	6	5	11	2.0-4	1.0-3
Chris Worley	6	2	8	–	–
Jalyn Holmes	5	2	7	0.5-0	–
OSU Totals	280	194	474	52-231	21-154
OPP Totals	332	260	592	38-193	16-114

**Fumbles Forced:** 3 – Joey Bosa; 1 – Eli Apple, Rashad Frazier, Joshua Perry, Damon Webb.

**Fumbles Recovered:** 1 – Eli Apple, Cam Burrows, Rashad Frazier, Darron Lee.



# BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 31, Penn State 24 (2OT)

**Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer on the Buckeyes' offensive line against Penn State's defensive line:** "They outplayed us up front, I think. I was a little upset with the way we played up front, and we've got to get that fixed. That has always been a strength of Ohio State football and has been for quite a while. Without making too big a deal of it, we need to evaluate that and play better as we hit this stretch run here."

**Redshirt freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett on his mind-set entering overtime:** "I just found a way. Anything you have to do to win a game. It wasn't just me. This whole offense as a unit just looked at each other like, 'Hey, we haven't been playing very well. Let's go finish it.'"

**Meyer on Barrett's confidence level throughout the game:** "His confidence got a little rattled there in the second quarter, and then obviously the third quarter, the opening drive was, I think, a pick-six. In that kind of environment, to say he was walking around like an extremely confident quarterback in the third quarter, that wasn't the case. Once again, the way this kid was raised, I just have so much admiration for people like that. He's wasn't overly confident in the third quarter, but I tell you, at the end of the game, when he needed to go make a play, he did it for us."

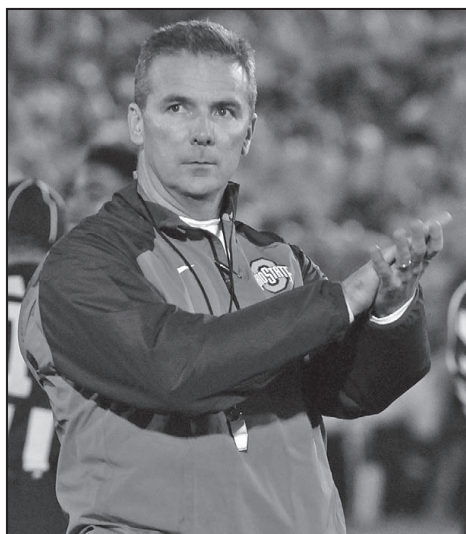
**Penn State head coach James Franklin on the environment in Beaver Stadium:** "I want to thank the fans. We had an unbelievable environment tonight. We created a really, really tough environment for a very good football team to come in and deal with."

**Ohio State sophomore safety Vonn Bell on the aggressiveness of the defensive play:** "We played aggressive tonight because we were going to make them throw the short game and come up and tackle, and that's what we made them do. We executed that, but we have to get a little better at open-field tackling."

**Penn State sophomore wide receiver DaeSean Hamilton on his school-record 14 receptions against Ohio State:** "I didn't even know I had the school record. I was just trying to get open. Whatever play is called, it's my job to get open and catch the ball whenever the opportunity presents itself."

**Meyer on Joey Bosa's game-ending sack in overtime:** "I'm at field level so I just saw him beat a guy and the QB couldn't step up in the pocket. That's when you have good interior pressure. Not discounting anybody else but you expect with as good a player as Joey Bosa is, you kind of expect him to go make a play to win the game. That's how talented he is."

**Bosa on how he felt entering the first overtime:** "I was dead tired going into it, but you can't let that get in your head. You just have to go



SONNY BROCKWAY

**IMPRESSED** – Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer was happy with how redshirt freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett played in overtime after getting 'a little rattled' earlier in the game.

out there as a defense and play every play as hard as you can."

**Barrett on the back-and-forth nature of the game:** "This is just part of the game. There's going to be highs and lows in any game. When the lows are coming, you have to react to that and respond. That's what we're trained to do. That's all it was as far as the offensive unit. It wasn't just me. Bad things happen in games. You just have to respond."

**Co-defensive coordinator/linebackers coach Luke Fickell on the play of freshman cornerback Eli Apple, who gave up a touchdown and had a pass-interference penalty in the second half:** "We backed him off a little bit. We had a couple of shots where we rolled him up out there to the field, which really probably helped us. Not so much to really take the heat off of him, but backing him off sometimes. You know, that's a tough position. If you are one-on-one all the time you've got to have no conscience. You're talking about a redshirt freshman that kept battling and kept battling. A guy's going to catch a ball on you. We've said from the beginning of the year if we are going to do this and we are going to play this (aggressive style), we are going to stick with it. We can't shy away if somebody catches a ball on you."

**Running back Ezekiel Elliott on Barrett's play in overtime:** "He's a warrior, man. That's the only way you can describe him. He's a warrior. He had a tough game, he was getting hit a

lot, took a lot of hits. In overtime he came and he balled. He did what he had to do."

**Barrett on how the Penn State game compared to the team's Sept. 6 loss to Virginia Tech:** "(Games like) Virginia Tech, those are things you learn from. That right there was just a learning experience with the Virginia Tech loss. With that being said, it was the same situation here – backs against the wall, got to make a play and we found a way as a team to make the plays we needed to win."

**Bell on his first-quarter interception and the perception that the ball hit the ground:** "I thought I caught it. My hand was under the ball. I rolled over. I did it for my unit, my coaching staff, my coaches, the whole back end, the whole defensive staff. We're all in this together. I made the play. I believe in what I got, and God blessed me."

**Penn State defensive tackle Anthony Zettel on his 40-yard interception return for a touchdown:** "(Defensive coordinator Bob Shoop) called a good play call for what the offense was doing. The quarterback didn't see me. It was a good cover up by the other blitzers, and he threw the ball right to me. It was more of a play call than anything else. I was just in the right spot."

**OSU offensive coordinator Tom Herman on the play of Zettel and Penn State linebacker Mike Hull:** "Hull's a very instinctive player – very fast, very quick with a nose for the ball. The D-tackle (Zettel), boy, he's a tremendous player. He showed me a lot tonight in terms of what a good player he is. We knew going in on video that he was a good player, but he played outstanding for them."

**Fickell on co-defensive coordinator/safeties coach Chris Ash communicating from the booth to field level:** "Chris Ash does an unbelievable job from the top. On the field it's hard to see and really tell exactly what's going on. But I'll tell you what, I've never seen someone from the box who knows exactly what's going on so fast, so quick they can get the adjustments down to us on the sidelines."

**Elliott on the offense's performance:** "We didn't play up to par today. We didn't play well at all. We didn't protect well in the pass game. I even had a couple mistakes in the pass game. We've got a lot to fix for next week."

**Meyer on how his team handled the hostile environment of 107,895 fans:** "Really well. We had a couple of mistakes. I just go back to the overtime, I stared at a young team out there on offense that was down seven points and facing that student body and they found a way to put it in the end zone."

**Bell on Penn State fans blaring air horns outside the team hotel at 4 a.m. before the game:** "I slept well."

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# Buckeye Game Analysis

## Play Of The Game

Joey Bosa's sack brought an end to a frustrating night for Ohio State on both sides of the ball as the Buckeyes survived Happy Valley with a 31-24 win Oct. 25.

As head coach Urban Meyer said, it was the type of play you expect a special player to make, and as the game wore on, it became apparent that was the only thing that was going to get the Buckeyes out of State College with an unblemished conference record.

There was nothing too fancy about how it went down ultimately. Bosa lined up inside as opposed to at his usual defensive end spot, and perhaps that is why Penn State's offensive line forgot to block him. His free shot at Penn State quarterback Christian Hackenberg was interrupted by running back Akeel Lynch, but only briefly. Bosa charged through Lynch, knocking him into the legs of Hackenberg, who went down for a game-ending sack.

How did Bosa end up free? The Buckeyes loaded up the inside with Michael Bennett over the center, Bosa over one guard and Steve Miller over the other in the team's 3-3-5 nickel look. Then linebacker Darron Lee blitzed up the middle behind him, causing confusion among the Penn State offensive linemen.

## Hidden Play Of The Game

Quarterback J.T. Barrett's keeper on the second play of overtime, with OSU down 24-17, felt like the run that broke the dam for the Buckeyes. They had been paddling upstream since the beginning of the third quarter, finding it hard to get any rhythm going in the run or pass game, but the most basic play in their playbook proved to be one that got them out of their doldrums.

Penn State showed the "Bear" defensive front that had bothered the Buckeyes when they lost to Virginia Tech – five men on the line of scrimmage, including three covering the center and both guards – but Barrett changed the play with the guidance of the sideline.

The Nittany Lions fell back into their normal defensive alignment with four down linemen, including only one to the left of the offensive center, and Ohio State took advantage as Barrett faked a handoff to Ezekiel Elliott, who was tackled by PSU end C.J. Olynyan – the aforementioned lone defensive lineman on the left side of the offensive center.

With the help of a block by wide receiver Michael Thomas on Penn State cornerback Jordan Lucas and a pancake block by left tackle Taylor Decker on linebacker Nyeem Wartman, Barrett scampered up the left sideline for 17 yards and a first-and-goal at the 5.

## What Worked Well

- **Ohio State's zone read:** The Nittany Lions managed to confuse Barrett's reads a few times in the second half, but he got the better of them early when he continually gave the ball to Elliott for big gains up the middle and late when he kept it on back-to-back plays on the first overtime touchdown drive.

- **Ohio State's screen pass defense:** A major weakness a year ago has been shored up, and it was never more apparent than in Happy Valley, where Penn State threw more than a dozen wide receiver screens that rarely added up to more than a gain of a couple of yards.

## What Didn't Work

- **Ohio State's passing game:** Part of the Buckeyes' early success running the ball was a result of Penn State playing both safeties deep to avoid big plays downfield, and Ohio State never found a way to consistently attack the Nittany Lion secondary. Pass protection issues were part of this as well.

- **Penn State's punting:** The Nittany Lions tried two different punters in Chris Gulla and Danny Pasquariello, but neither had much success and consistently gave the best field-position team in the nation short fields. Gulla averaged 37.5 yards on four punts before giving way to Pasquariello, who was even worse with 31.5 yards per try.

## Inside The Numbers

2½: Redshirt freshman linebacker Darron Lee's 2½ tackles for loss are nice but don't tell the whole story of his impact on the game. He was a frequent blitzer from the



SONNY BROCKWAY

**KEEP IT OR GIVE IT? – Ohio State redshirt freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett (16) ran the zone read option well against Penn State, primarily with sophomore tailback Ezekiel Elliott (15).**

edge or the middle, often hurrying Hackenberg or freeing up teammates to make plays.

5: Ohio State sacked Hackenberg five times, including 2½ by Bosa. Lee combined with him on the half-sack and was also able to tie up a blocker while Bosa charged through on the last play of the game.

18: Ohio State linebacker Joshua Perry was an unsung hero with 18 tackles. He helped make sure Penn State never got its running game going, and he helped slow down the screen game.

70: Ohio State's eight penalties for 70 yards were damaging, whether they were early procedure penalties on the offense or drive-extending roughing-the-passer calls on two of Penn State's scoring drives.

74: Ohio State's passing yardage total was the lowest of the Meyer era. No one area seemed to be to blame for the woes as Barrett was often under pressure but also struggled to find open receivers when he had time and missed a couple of throws.

## Reviewing The Matchups

**Ohio State rush offense vs. Penn State rush defense:** With 219 yards, the Buckeyes more than tripled Penn State's national-best average of 60.8. There were some bumps in the second half, but Ohio State did all its damage on the ground in overtime. **EDGE: Ohio State**

**Penn State rush offense vs. Ohio State rush**

**defense:** The Nittany Lions' 16 rushing yards were their fewest of the season and the least they have gained against the Buckeyes since the turn of the millennium. **EDGE: Ohio State**

**Ohio State pass offense vs. Penn State pass defense:** No one has flustered the Buckeye passing game this season as well as the Nittany Lions did, including Virginia Tech. The key was limiting big plays as Barrett's longest completion was 14 yards. **EDGE: Penn State**

**Penn State pass offense vs. Ohio State pass defense:** Hackenberg held up well against the pressure, but it did limit how much he could try to go downfield. His cadre of big receivers and tight ends gave the Buckeyes some problems, but for the most part the visitors played well. **EDGE: Even**

**Special teams:** Ohio State's average starting position was its 35-yard line, thanks in large part to a very rough night for Penn State's two punters. OSU also averaged nearly 10 more yards per kickoff return as well, and Sean Nuernberger made a big 49-yard field goal. **EDGE: Ohio State**

**Intangibles:** The Nittany Lions nearly rode their raucous home crowd to victory, but Barrett proved his resilience with his play in overtime. That he needed to is a greater credit to the home team, though. **EDGE: Penn State**

– Marcus Hartman



# Hard-Fought Win Could Be Good Or Bad

As kickoff got closer and closer, I started to feel really good about Ohio State's chances at Penn State despite some trepidation in the days leading up to the game.

I had, like so many others, been concerned about the crowd at Beaver Stadium, which is intimidating in the afternoon but even more so at night, especially when your team is being led by a freshman quarterback with little experience on the road like J.T. Barrett. And I think as you look at a game with the Lions, you are always influenced by the Penn State name, even if the team is not as good in a particular year as some of the great PSU squads of the past.

But in the hours approaching the game, I found myself convinced that Ohio State simply had the superior team and the talent gap would prove too much for the Lions to overcome, even with the wind of 107,000 rabid fans at its back.

After nearly four hours of combat, I still believe the Buckeyes have the better team. The better team doesn't always win, however, which is why they play the game, though in this case Ohio State *did* win 31-24 in double overtime. It was just more of a struggle than I had ultimately predicted. I'm sure many of you also were expecting something that more closely resembled a blowout than a nail-biter.

A win is a win, however, and they all count the same in the standings, so sometimes you have to chalk it up as a learning experience, be pleased that your team has grit and fight at the end of a tense game, and move on. Few successful seasons by any team have been absent of some drama.

This game had been billed as a battle of Ohio State's offense vs. Penn State's defense. In the end, to me it was *Ohio State's* defense that tipped the equation. The Nittany Lions defense, for the most part, lived up to its billing, especially in the second half. The same can hardly be said for the Ohio State offense, especially in the second half. And I would call the Buckeye play-calling curious at best.

Even though Penn State came into the game noted for its run defense and the Buckeyes featured balance between running and passing as they were racking up record numbers in the previous four games, it appeared Ohio State came out with the intention of playing good old-fashioned hardball against the Lions. They ran the ball 28 times in the first half against only nine passes, gaining 119 yards rushing to 52 through the air.

The coaching staff seemed reluctant to let Barrett use his full passing arsenal. Mostly it was Ezekiel Elliott into the heart of the PSU defense, with a little bit of Barrett doing the same mixed in.

In fairness to Tom Herman and Co., their possible concerns about Barrett may have been founded, as he threw two interceptions, both of which resulted in Penn State touchdowns, one of the pick-six variety. However, if the Buckeyes had mixed things up a little more in the first half, maybe Barrett could have gotten into some sort of passing groove, or better yet the Buckeyes might have put up more points in the first half, which could have changed the course of the game both from a score and momentum standpoint.

Once Barrett banged up his knee, all bets were off as far as the play-calling because one of the Buckeyes' best options – Barrett running – was seemingly off the table. The Buckeyes used a variety of Wildcat plays – a formation of which I have never really understood the benefits – with little success. Of course, using others to run the ball at that juncture may have been the wisest coaching

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH

Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

move of the day as saving the wear and tear on Barrett may have been the key to his having the stamina to pull off his gutsy performance at the end of the game.

But in the interim, it was up to the previously mentioned defense to try to hold off the Nittany Lions' surge.

"It felt like we were playing really good defense, and we didn't want to take a ton of chances in the throw game because we knew it was kind of hit or miss whether we could block them up front for as long as we needed to," Herman said. "We took our shots and didn't connect. J.T. had some poor throws, and then obviously we got pressured each time he threw. I didn't think the receivers played poorly at all. It was a tough game to manufacture ways to hit anything."

It didn't hurt the Buckeye cause that the defense held the Lions off the board in the first half. Unfortunately, the Buckeye offense wasn't doing the defenders favors in the final 30 minutes of regulation.

Not only were there the interceptions that led to points. I think the OSU defense was tiring rapidly as the Lions mounted their 19-play, 77-yard game-tying drive to end the fourth quarter. The Buckeye offense had a trio of three-and-outs in the second half and only one drive of more than six plays, a 12-play, 47-yard march that resulted in no points as Sean Nuernberger missed a 41-yard field goal. The defense was not getting the blows that it had been used to when its offensive brethren had been marching up and down the field in the previous four games.

It helped that after Sam Ficken sent the game into OT with his 31-yard field goal, there was the break before overtime. In the extra sessions, there was a lengthy review of one of Barrett's TD runs, and with the alternating possessions the Buckeye offense had the ball two times in a row in overtime, all of which gave the defense a bit more rest before its final stand.

Some naysayers are going to point to the fact that the defense gave up 224 yards passing, but that came on 49 passes by Christian Hackenberg, thought to be one of the league's best passers, and 31 completions. The Buckeyes for the most part managed to keep the Lions' passing game in front of them, giving up a 24-yard touchdown pass to Saen Blacknall on a good individual-effort play but otherwise yielding a long of just 18 yards after proving susceptible to the long pass in much of the early going.

Hackenberg averaged just 7.2 yards per completion. Contrast that to the 16.8 yards that Cincinnati's Gunner Kiel averaged on 21 completions earlier in the season against the Buckeyes and you see just how far the pass defense has come. Couple that with completely shutting down the Penn State rushing attack, allowing the Lions only 16 net yards on 31 carries, and you have reason to feel that the defense is rounding into form at the right time.

The offense, on the other hand, might be reason for concern as the line appeared to take a step back for the first time since its debacle against Virginia Tech. The run blocking was frequently there, as Elliott and Barrett helped the Buckeyes put up 219 yards rushing, including 182 in regulation, against a team that had

been yielding just 60.8 yards on the ground per game.

The pass blocking, however, left something to be desired. Barrett was sacked three times and was under duress much of the evening – not a good situation for a quarterback who, despite his amazing performance so far this season, is a redshirt freshman still learning the game.

How well the line bounces back against Illinois – hardly Michigan State, but the next available opponent – will be a strong indicator of things to come, as upcoming opposing coaches will be analyzing every move the Nittany Lions made to befuddle the Buckeye big guys.

While the Ohio State offense may have raised questions among the faithful, the strides by the defense, coupled with the resolve the team demonstrated as the game went into overtime with the opposing crowd in a frenzy and momentum favoring the Lions, would seem to be two pluses against one minus as we head to the final five games of the season.

While that resolve displayed was team-wide, the overtime was really dominated by two players – two players whom you would expect to step up when the game was on the line in Barrett and defensive end Joey Bosa.

I have always maintained that big-time players make big-time plays in big games, and this Buckeye duo lived up to that credo.

The gimpy Barrett gained 32 yards on four carries in overtime, scoring both of OSU's touchdowns. Bosa, who dominated the game far more than his six tackles and 2½ sacks would indicate, added another highlight-reel play to his growing catalog when he smashed the 221-pound Akeel Lynch into Hackenberg to end the game.

A win is a win is a win. But will this victory prove to be a teaching moment or an example of unfavorable things to come?

### Bold Prediction, 1989

As most of you know, we have been running reprints from Buckeye Sports Bulletin featuring games from five, 10, 15, 20, 25 or 30 years ago in each Friday edition of our electronic BSB Quickly. In the Oct. 24 edition, we reprinted stories from Ohio State's Oct. 28, 1989, game at Minnesota in which the Buckeyes overcame a 31-0 deficit to defeat the Gophers, 41-37. At the time, it was the second-greatest comeback in major-college football history.

The Buckeyes trailed 31-0 at the 4:29 mark of the second quarter but closed the gap to 31-8 at the half before outscoring Minnesota 33-6 in the final 30 minutes. Quarterback Greg Frey led the Buckeyes with 20-of-31 passing for 361 yards and three touchdowns, including the game winner to Jeff Graham from 15 yards out with 51 seconds remaining.

That is still the third-best passing yardage figure in OSU history, trailing only Art Schlichter's 458 against Florida State in 1981 and Joe Germaine's 378 against Penn State in 1997. Frey also ran for a touchdown and completed three two-point conversion passes in the victory.

"Never in my life have I been in a game like this," said Frey, who had taken his share of fan criticism as the Buckeye starter since John Cooper's arrival in 1988. "This tops everything. It was unbelievable, just unbelievable."

Added Cooper, "I guarantee I've never been more proud of a football team than I am of this one today. They never gave up. They kept fighting back and fighting back."

The win lifted Ohio State's record to 5-2 on the '89 campaign, including 3-1 in Big Ten play, with the losses coming to Southern Cal (42-3) and Illinois (34-14) following a 4-6-1 season the year before.

Of the many stories reprinted, a column by longtime BSB columnist Rich Exner really stood out to me.

Under the headline "Cooper, Program Safe After Exciting Win," Exner predicted, "Oct. 28, 1989, will go down in Buckeye football history as the day John Cooper secured his job and turned the Ohio State program around in the positive."

"A lot of people, me included, were drawing up a list of coaching candidates while watching the Buckeyes fall behind 31-0."

"There is no way, the reasoning went, that this football team could recover from getting blown away by a clearly inferior Minnesota team."

The Buckeyes would go on to put together six wins in a row before falling to No. 3 Michigan and No. 9 Auburn in the Hall of Fame Bowl to finish 6-2 in the conference and 8-4 overall.

And Exner was sort of right.

The Ohio State football team would go on to great heights under Cooper in the '90s, and Cooper would hold the head job in Columbus for another 11 years. But the win over Minnesota proved to be part of what always seemed like the "one step forward, two steps back" plight of the Buckeyes under Cooper – the two steps back frequently coming against the archrival Wolverines and in the bowl game.

But sometimes lost as fans recall the Cooper era at Ohio State is the fact that he led the Buckeyes to many great wins, and the comeback victory over Minnesota was certainly one of those.

To read all about the game, as well as enjoy features on Paul Brown, Les Horvath and Warren Ambling from the decade of the 1940s, see the Oct. 24 BSB Quickly, which is archived for your convenience. If you are not enjoying the electronic BSB Quickly, posted 36 times a year in addition to our regular print schedule and free to all paid print subscribers, see the simple sign-up instructions on page 5 of this issue.

### Big Games Coming

One thing that always amazes me as I look back at past issues of BSB is that it seems each year I lament that the postal delivery is "the worst ever." This year is no different as even people in Ohio have been complaining about slow delivery. I want to assure all readers that BSB is mailed at the same time as it always has been, and I am at the plant to make sure the papers go out in a timely fashion.

If you would like to upgrade your delivery to speedy first-class mail in an envelope for the BSBs covering the Michigan State, Minnesota, Indiana and Michigan games, you can do so for just \$10. This would be especially beneficial for the many of you snowbirds who have already started to head to points south and west. Don't forget, there is a postal holiday on Tuesday, Nov. 11, which is sure to slow up delivery of the issue covering the game with the Spartans.

Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 for credit card orders or mail your check to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212 and mention "Big Game Upgrade."