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STILL STANDING

Buckeyes Survive As Undefeateds Fall

 By BLAKE WILLIAMS
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Two weeks after delivering a knockout blow against Rutgers in its most lopsided win of the season, Ohio State left its game against Minnesota bruised and battered.

Without the quarterback who had finally seized the starting job in a 49-7 demolition of the Scarlet Knights, the Buckeyes looked flat in a 28-14 win over the Golden Gophers. In what has become a recurring observation for the 2015 season, Ohio State didn't play its best. The team that entered the season with historic expectations looked pedestrian at times under the bright lights of Ohio Stadium on Nov. 7.

Cardale Jones, starting for the suspended J.T. Barrett at quarterback, was sacked four times on the night. Running back Ezekiel Elliott cleared the century mark on the ground once again, but nothing came easy for the junior as his long run of the night was just 15 yards and his average of 4.4 yards per carry was the second lowest of the season.

The Ohio State offense was scoreless for the first 29 minutes of the game, and even when it did get moving it did so in fits and starts. Minnesota, a team that fell below .500 on the season with the loss and is just 1-4 in Big Ten play, was within one score with two minutes left on the clock. A failed onside kick prevented the visitors from getting one last shot to knock off the undefeated Buckeyes.

But the Gophers didn't get that shot and Ohio State stretched its nation-best winning streak to 22 games. While the expectations are higher for the Buckeyes – both within the program and certainly outside it – the defending national champions are still standing.

"The hard thing is, we don't want to just survive, we want to thrive around here," linebacker Joshua Perry said. "We know how serious it is in November. The Big Ten, we've got tough games coming up. It's going to be tough for everybody, but we know that you can't really achieve your goals at the end of the year if you're not playing well in November."

That point was driven home around the country Saturday as three Power 5 conference teams fell from the undefeated ranks. LSU entered its game with Alabama second in the College Football Playoff rankings and the final remaining undefeated team from the Southeastern Conference. The Crimson Tide



JOSH WINSLOW PHOTOS

STAYING UP – Junior Ezekiel Elliott (15) proved difficult to bring down with 26 carries for 114 yards and a touchdown, helping Urban Meyer (below center) improve to 47-3 as Ohio State's head coach.

took care of that, earning a 30-16 home win over the Tigers. Texas Christian, No. 8 in the CFP rankings, had its 16-game winning streak shattered with a 49-29 defeat at the hands of Oklahoma State. Hammering home the fact that winning in November is tough regardless of the competition was Michigan State. Ohio State's most imposing conference foe in recent seasons, the Spartans fell by a point to 4-6 Nebraska – a team just one week removed from an embarrassing loss to Purdue.

The Buckeyes didn't look their best against the Gophers, falling below the expectations of head coach Urban Meyer, but ask the Tigers, Horned Frogs and Spartans if they'd sign up for an ugly Week 10 win given the chance to do things over and the formerly undefeated squads would certainly take what Ohio State got against Minnesota.

"It wasn't pretty at times, but we got our ninth win and continue that streak and our kids fought hard," said offensive coordinator Ed Warinner. "We were just inconsistent here and there. We had to work our butts off and kids played hard."

"It was a grinder. Not every win is always going to be as beautiful as you like. But wins are wins, and that's a good win against a well coached, good football team."



Continued On Page 8

OHIO STATE VS. MINNESOTA

Despite Win, Jones Could Lose Starting Spot

By TIM MOODY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The last time Cardale Jones replaced J.T. Barrett as Ohio State's starting quarterback, he took the college football world by storm and won a national title.

Jones replaced the sophomore Barrett again for the Nov. 7 game against Minnesota, but this time he was off the pace by his own admission.

"Below average," Jones responded when asked to assess his own performance.

Despite subpar play on his part, the Buckeyes still came away with a 28-14 win and Jones moved to 11-0 as Ohio State's starter. He finished the game 12 of 22 for 187 yards and a touchdown without throwing an interception. With Ohio State coming off an open week which came after Barrett-led thrashings of Penn State and Rutgers, there was something different about the Buckeyes with Jones at the helm.

Head coach Urban Meyer admitted after the game that things felt a little different with Jones in and Barrett suspended, even in spots that hadn't been noticeable earlier in the year. Meyer mentioned that the read option isn't one of Jones' strengths, but whereas the Buckeyes were willing to pass on that aspect of the game plan early in the year, Meyer now called it one of the foundations of the Buckeyes' offense.

"You have to get those yards somewhere else," Meyer said.

Offensive coordinator Ed Warinner agreed that there are differences between the two quarterbacks as well, and he conceded that switching from Jones to Barrett and back to Jones presented some challenges for Ohio State.

"It does make it a little bit more complicated when you have to shift back and forth," Warinner said.

That tone was in contrast to statements from the coaching staff earlier in the season.

At times they claimed Ohio State's offense would be run in a similar fashion with either quarterback and that they had utmost confidence in either to perform. But with Jones sent out against the Gophers, the Buckeyes often called running plays on third down and twice took last-second timeouts before Jones managed to get the ball snapped in time as the play clock ran down.

The biggest knock against Jones in the game seemed to be his accuracy, especially on downfield throws. While the Buckeyes did hit on two long passes – one to Jalin Marshall and the other to Braxton Miller – they struggled to stretch the field and force Minnesota to commit to defending the pass ahead of the run.

Meyer said the Buckeyes expected the Gophers to load the box and let their cor-



JOSH WINSLOW

SUBPAR – Junior Cardale Jones (12) admitted that he was below average against Minnesota, potentially leading sophomore J.T. Barrett to an immediate return as the starter after his one-game suspension.

nerbacks play man coverage, but Ohio State was unable to find the right combination to open the field.

"We were trying to be as creative as we can to get some runs going," Meyer said. "But then you've got to hit those passes."

While he certainly had his misses, Jones managed a few bright spots against the Gophers as well. Perhaps ironically, the brightest of those came in the run game.

On third-and-18 with 2:02 to play in the first half, the Buckeyes seemed prepared to settle for a punt with a called quarterback run. But punt they did not as Jones plowed his way up the middle for 19 yards. Three plays later he hit Marshall over the middle for 44 yards, placing the ball on the money to give Ohio State its first trip of the night to the red zone. A play after that, junior Ezekiel Elliott cut through the Minnesota defense for a 15-yard touchdown to give the Buckeyes' a 14-0 lead and cap a drive remindful of the Sugar Bowl win over Alabama.

"I was kind of waiting on someone to block that turf monster," Jones said. "He almost tripped me up. But it was cool because I knew that was a call, with our defense kind of playing lights-out the whole night. They gave up a couple big plays on some missed assignments, but it happens. But after that run, I knew it was kind of over."

Although Jones found it difficult to move the ball at times and despite not being known for his running ability, Warinner said he was pleased to ice the game on that play call.

"That was good for him, that was good for the team," Warinner said of Jones' touchdown. "I was really happy that we closed out the game like that and that he was part of that."

Despite closing out the game, as soon as the teams left the field and Meyer arrived for the postgame press conference, Jones' starting spot was once again in question. Meyer said Barrett will be thrust immediately into consideration to start against Illinois after his suspension, meaning the Buckeyes could – and probably will – be looking at yet another switch under center.

For Jones that would mean returning to his role on the bench, but he stressed he wasn't trying to audition to win the job back against Minnesota. Instead, he wanted to put the team and its needs first.

"I want to do whatever it takes to help the team win," Jones said. "I mean, if it calls for handing the ball off, or throwing it downfield or running the ball myself. Whatever it takes to help the team win."

Against Illinois, and going forward for the rest of the season, that role could well be as the backup. But as Jones learned last season and once again this week, he could be called upon at any time.

Warinner said it can be tricky to keep a player focused if their role isn't guaranteed, but he added he won't be worrying about Jones in that capacity just yet.

"The good news is that he has continued to work hard and he is a good kid and he is team first," Warinner said. "So he'll do whatever we need him to do."

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COVER STORY

Sloppy Win Likely Enough To Stay In Top 4

Continued From Page 1

Call it what you want – ugly, disappointing, tough or to use Warinner's terminology, grinding – but the Buckeyes got a win and kept their ultimate goals very much within reach. That's more than many teams around the country can say. With three weeks left in the regular season for most teams, only five teams from the Power 5 conferences remain unbeaten and Ohio State is counted among them (joined by Baylor, Clemson, Iowa and Oklahoma State). Former Ohio State assistant Tom Herman, now the head man at Houston, happens to coach the lone unbeaten outside the Power 5 ranks.

The Buckeyes were No. 3 in the first playoff rankings, and while their lackluster win over Minnesota did little to make a case for the Scarlet and Gray to climb that poll, the victory likely allows them to keep their spot among the top four. As Ohio State proved last year, that's all you need when the season ends.

Once again the Buckeyes have plenty to improve upon after a less-than-stellar win, but this time of year outscoring your opponent – whether it's by 1 or by 50 and regardless of whom it comes against – is all that matters.

"I mean, I don't really think we came out and played the way we should have," Elliott said. "We could have played a lot better. I wouldn't say we made steps forward today, I wouldn't say we made steps backward. We still have so much to work on. We could be so much better as a ball team, which is kind of scary when you see the weapons we have.

Once we get back clicking again, we've got to keep that train rolling as we head into the stretch of the schedule."

Without Barrett, who against Rutgers led the Buckeyes to by far their best performance with 324 yards of total offense and five touchdowns, the team treaded water offensively. Ohio State's offense was held scoreless for nearly the entire first half, punting on its first four drives.

The Buckeyes gained just 57 yards on their first 23 plays from scrimmage. They still held a 7-0 lead at that point courtesy of a 16-yard interception returned for a touchdown by safety Vonn Bell with less than five minutes remaining in the second quarter, but little else had been done to inspire the 108,075 fans who constituted the fourth-largest crowd in Ohio Stadium history.

The offense got going from there as Jones lumbered for 19 yards on a quarterback draw on third-and-18 from the Ohio State 15-yard line with 2:02 left on the first-half clock. That seemed to jump-start the team and give the quarterback confidence after he had completed just 4 of 8 passes for 36 yards up until that point. Including the draw, the Buckeyes reeled off five plays for 85 yards as their last drive of the first half ended with a 15-yard Elliott touchdown, giving Ohio State a 14-0 halftime advantage.

The weapons that Elliott spoke of weren't consistently present throughout the Buckeyes' win, but they showed up enough to get Ohio State the victory. Jalin Marshall caught a 44-yard pass during the team's first scoring drive, Michael Thomas snatched a

touchdown out of the air in Ohio State's first trip to the red zone in the second half and Braxton Miller hauled in a deep ball from Jones good for 45 yards early in the fourth quarter.

While that final drive of the first half and those big plays from Ohio State's best weapons were a sign of the offense's starts, the fits returned as the Buckeyes failed to score on five of their first six drives of the second half. The defense showed some cracks as well, allowing 14 fourth-quarter points to keep the Gophers within striking distance.

"It's a fine line between winning a lot of games and not winning them, and a lot of it is the mental side of it," Warinner said. "I think Coach Meyer does as good a job as anybody in the country at preparing teams mentally. So he's really good at that and that's an edge for us. You can't get bored with winning. You've got to keep enjoying wins and keep working hard. Nobody gives you wins, you've got to earn that. That was a tough, hard-fought gritty win, and I imagine there's going to be quite a few of those ahead if we can find a way to do it."

Following a road contest against Illinois on Nov. 14, the Buckeyes will get what are expected to be their two biggest tests of the regular season in the final two weeks. While the Spartans fell from the unbeaten ranks against Nebraska, they still control their own destiny in the Big Ten East and a win in Columbus on Nov. 21 would go a long way to securing a trip to Indianapolis for Michigan State. If the Buckeyes and Wolverines both win out until they meet, Michigan would be

playing for a trip to the conference title game when it hosts Ohio State in the regular-season finale.

The thinking is that Ohio State will have to play better than it did against Minnesota to finish the month of November unscathed.

"We all want things to look pretty, and the reality is we're going to get everybody's best shot," defensive coordinator Luke Fickell said. "Not that we didn't in the past, but the way things went last year we're going to get a lot of people's best shots and we're going to have to be prepared.

"We don't have to worry about the psyche of most of the team. That's Coach Meyer's strong suit. That's what he does. He controls it to a tee and we just follow suit. He's not going to overplay it, but the reality is he knows this is about becoming a team and getting tighter and coming through adversity and situations that may not be as pretty, and if we do that, the better we'll be in the long run."

So far this season that adversity has come in the form of quarterback rotations, off-field incidents and sloppy play. Through it all, however, the Buckeyes, who maintain aspirations of become the first repeat champion in school history, have kept churning out wins.

A 14-point win over Minnesota on Nov. 7 counts the same in the win column as a 42-point thrashing of Rutgers on Oct. 31. The Buckeyes have shown their flaws, whether it be the 7-for-16 third-down conversions and seven punts against the Gophers or the inconsistencies on

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COVER STORY



JOSH WINSLOW

STREAKY PLAY – Despite a few big hits, including this 44-yard catch by sophomore Jalin Marshall (7), Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer said the Buckeyes expect to perform better than they did against Minnesota.

both sides of the ball that have appeared throughout the season, but no other team in the country has won as many consecutive games as Ohio State.

Although the Buckeyes are well positioned for the stretch run, that doesn't mean the team was happy with its performance against the Gophers.

"That's not what we would expect," Meyer said. "We expect to play better. I hate to say that because that sometimes sounds like we're taking away from our opponent, because they're a pretty rugged group. But we just expect much more efficiency out of our offense."

Ohio State couldn't gain chunk yardage

as often as it would have liked against Minnesota, the defense struggled against the pass in the fourth quarter and punter Cameron Johnston got more work in against the Gophers than the staff would have liked. All of that will need to be addressed if Ohio State is to realize its ultimate goal, although the return of Barrett should help assuage some of those concerns.

But if the confetti falls on the Buckeyes in January for the second straight season, what happened on Nov. 7 against Minnesota will matter not because of Ohio State's struggles, but because at the end of the night the Buckeyes were still standing.

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OHIO STATE VS. MINNESOTA

Bell's Playmaking Form Returns For OSU

Ohio State safety Vonn Bell has never tried to hide his self-confidence.

The playmaker who coined the term "Vonn Bell Academy" in 2014 – a reference to his self-appointed position as the teacher of the Ohio State secondary – introduced himself to Buckeye fans with a spectacular interception during the Orange Bowl, which was the first start of his career.

GAME NOTEBOOK

Ryan Ginn

After following up that preview of his potential with six interceptions in 2014, the "VBA" reference exploded in popularity. Naturally, after picking off a Mitch Leidner pass that he returned for a touchdown to open the scoring in OSU's 28-14 win against Minnesota, the loquacious junior name-dropped his football version of higher education.

"VBA?" a television reporter replied, looking for clarification.

"He didn't know? You've got to inform him," Bell joked to the group assembled after explaining the acronym.

Those unfamiliar with Bell's on-the-field lesson plans could be forgiven for that minor transgression given the slight drop in big-play production for the Chattanooga, Tenn., native. Although he's scored two touchdowns this season – with the other coming on a fumble return against Hawaii – the pick-six against the Gophers was just his second interception this fall.

That doesn't mean he's not playing well, however. Take, for example, the touchdown-saving tackle he made late in the fourth quarter, with Minnesota down 21-7 and looking to close the gap. Wide receiver KJ Maye found the open field and was streaking for the end zone before Bell (who should perhaps include geometry lessons at VBA) used a good angle to chase him down.

"No doubt, he was going down," Bell said. "It's a tackle every time."

He's shown that he can be a dependable presence in one of the nation's best defensive secondaries, a far departure from the 2013 season in which the play of the safeties was a constant source of headaches for OSU fans.

After bringing some much-needed playmaking ability to the back end, he's also shown he can consistently shut down opposing receivers, even if it doesn't always come via an interception.

"What he's done, we've always thought he had that playmaking ability," defensive coordinator Luke Fickell said. "What you've seen from him more is consistency, the way he practices, the way he studies, the way he goes about his business. He's really raised his level. The preparation has kind of fallen in suit with how he's playing on the field."

"Everybody sees him on Saturdays but we get to see how he is on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and the way he prepares and what he does is a direct reflection of the way he plays on the field."

Sometimes, success as a defensive back can be defined by the throws that don't come your way instead of the ones that do.

"I just challenge myself every game, eliminate everything, don't let my guy catch anything around me, make the quarterback look the other way immediately," Bell said. "It's a little goal of mine, make sure I have that edge each week."



JOSH WINSLOW PHOTOS

PICK SIX – Junior safety Vonn Bell (11) got the scoring started against Minnesota when he returned a second-quarter interception 16 yards for a touchdown. The play was nearly called back after senior linebacker Joshua Perry (37) was flagged for targeting (below), but the officials ended up reversing the call.

Added Fickell, "I've been here long enough to know there's few guys who go down in history as being big-time playmakers, but at times coaches are pulling their hair out about the things that they do and how they do them. Vonn is not like that. He's a guy who studies the game and has become a real pro in handling things the right way."

Being more consistent and making plays aren't mutually exclusive accomplishments, however, and it was still a good sign for the secondary to see Bell back in the end zone. He said he recognized the play call from earlier in the game and baited Leidner into a throw that never got to its intended target of Maye.

"He made a great play picking the ball off, and he is one of those guys where you never know what is going to happen when he gets the ball in his hands," linebacker Joshua Perry said. "He dove into the end zone, had a little extra juice there at the end, so that was definitely cool. We had a good pressure called there, and the guy made a play."

It was the first score of the game for Ohio State and came as a big relief for a team just minutes away from entering halftime with no points against a struggling team.

"I just want to be that spark and the guy that they look at to make plays," Bell said. "I did that and we got going a little bit and came out with a win."

Barrett Gives Halftime Talk While Suspended

J.T. Barrett wasn't on the field for Ohio State, but he still had an impact on the Buckeyes' triumph against Minnesota.

The sophomore captain, known for his emotional pregame speeches, didn't deliver one before the Buckeyes took the field.



A one-game suspension relegated him to watching the game from the press box while Cardale Jones directed the offense, but he wasn't completely shut out from his teammates. Barrett was allowed to address the team at halftime with OSU holding a 14-0 lead.

"I was thinking it was kind of weird (when he wasn't there to give a pregame speech)," running back Ezekiel Elliott said. "He gave one before the second half though. Cardale did a great job of picking up where J.T. left off and getting us motivated before we stepped out on the field."

Ohio State prepared for a challenge against the Gophers, who had given Michigan all it could handle one week prior, and Barrett's advice was to stay the course and finish the game strong.

"Just that they were playing the way they practiced against and we've just got to execute and make plays," Elliott said of Barrett's message. "Anytime one of my guys gets up there and speaks from the heart, it gets me going."

It culminated a week in which Barrett was forced to help the team in ways other than his on-field play. Offensive coordinator Ed Warinner declined to elaborate on Barrett's

OHIO STATE VS. MINNESOTA

2015 Ohio State Football Schedule

| Date | Opponent | Time (ET) | TV | Record, Last Result |
|----------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| Sept. 7 | at Virginia Tech* | W, 42-24 | ESPN | 4-5, 26-10 win over Boston College |
| Sept. 12 | HAWAII | W, 38-0 | BTN | 2-8, 41-21 loss to UNLV |
| Sept. 19 | NORTHERN ILLINOIS* | W, 20-13 | ABC/ESPN2 | 6-3, 32-27 win over Toledo |
| Sept. 26 | WESTERN MICHIGAN* | W, 38-12 | ABC/ESPN2 | 6-3, 54-7 win over Ball State |
| Oct. 3 | at Indiana | W, 34-27 | ABC/ESPN2 | 4-5, 35-27 loss to Iowa |
| Oct. 10 | MARYLAND* | W, 49-28 | BTN | 2-7, 31-24 loss to Wisconsin |
| Oct. 17 | PENN STATE* | W, 38-10 | ABC | 7-3, 23-21 loss to Northwestern |
| Oct. 24 | at Rutgers* | W, 49-7 | ABC | 3-6, 49-16 loss to Michigan |
| Nov. 7 | MINNESOTA* | W, 28-14 | ABC | 4-5, 28-14 loss to Ohio State |
| Nov. 14 | at Illinois | Noon | ABC | 5-4, 48-14 win over Purdue |
| Nov. 21 | MICHIGAN STATE* | TBA | TBA | 8-1, 39-38 loss to Nebraska |
| Nov. 28 | at Michigan | Noon | TBA | 7-2, 49-16 win over Rutgers |
| Dec. 5 | Big Ten Title Game | 8:17 p.m. | Fox | |

* - 2014-15 bowl team

halftime talk but said the Texan spent the previous week at practice trying to help his fellow quarterbacks prepare for Minnesota.

"He's there every day," Warinner said. "He's trying to be a positive influence, trying to help young Joey Burrow and Cardale with thought processes and working the game and things like that. So he just tried to provide his knowledge and leadership and observations from a player's perspective."

Elliott Continues Run Of Success

With 26 carries for 114 yards, it was just another day at the office for Elliott.

The junior has now rushed for at least 100 yards in 14 straight games, a streak that dates back to Ohio State's win against Minnesota in 2014.

"He's an animal," Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer said. "I love that kid. He's a

team player. You can see how he was holding onto the ball because they were trying to strip it there at the end. And he's excellent in pass protection again tonight. And he's a workhorse that we're very glad he's going to be with us for a while."

His showing against the Gophers bumped up his season total to 1,244 yards through nine games. More importantly, he moved up one spot to fourth on the program's list of career rushing yards. His career total of 3,384 yards now sits behind only Archie Griffin (5,589), Eddie George (3,768) and Tim Spencer (3,553).

"I think about it from time to time, but right now we are focused on getting to the Big Ten championship," Elliott said about his ranking. "It's an honor to play at a great program like Ohio State and just to be able to have my name out here mentioned with the greats. I'm just honored to go out there every week and better my reputation. I've got to thank my O-line for paving the way."

"Eddie George is a guy I am really close with, and he's keeping me motivated and telling me this is crunch time."

Webb Returns From Six-Game Absence

It was announced prior to Ohio State's game against Northern Illinois that sophomore cornerback Damon Webb had been suspended by the athletics department for a violation of athletics department policy.

Although Meyer declined several times to elaborate on the nature of the absence, it was announced Nov. 3 that Webb had returned to practice one day earlier and had been cleared to play against the Gophers.

"Damon is a guy that was playing well for us and that we have a lot of trust in," Meyer said. "That's a big plus, as well as having him available for special teams as well."

He didn't have to wait long to make his return, coming in as the nickel back on the first defensive series of the game for the Buckeyes. He didn't make a tackle, but he still provided an experienced presence to a secondary that has been hampered by injuries that led to playing time for two true freshmen.

"It was all right," Bell said of Webb's return. "He's a guy who has a feel for that spot. It's going to be all right."



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OHIO STATE VS. MINNESOTA

Buckeyes Start Slow, Hold Off Minnesota Late

By TIM MOODY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

With starting quarterback J.T. Barrett suspended, things didn't get rolling off the bat for Ohio State against Minnesota.

It took the No. 3 Buckeyes (9-0, 5-0 Big Ten) more than 25 minutes to score, but the slow start proved to be good enough as they held off the Golden Gophers (4-5, 1-4 Big Ten) for a 28-14 win Nov. 7.

"I don't think we played a clean game," head coach Urban Meyer said. "I thought our defense — we gave up some pass yards there. Certainly too many at the end, because offensively we're sloppy and not executing at a high level."

Ohio State's first points came on defense when junior safety Vonn Bell returned an interception 16 yards for a touchdown before the Buckeyes took a 14-0 halftime lead via a 15-yard run by junior Ezekiel Elliott.

"Once we got going, we had some big plays and scored enough points to win the game," Meyer said.

The cushion became 21 in the third quarter after junior Cardale Jones — filling in for Barrett — found junior receiver Michael Thomas for a 6-yard touchdown, but the Buckeyes' didn't score again until Minnesota had pulled within seven points. The Gophers' onside kick attempt ended up out of bounds after their second touchdown, and Jones iced the game three plays later with a 38-yard touchdown run.

Despite coming out with a win, Meyer stressed that the Buckeyes were below their best.

"That's not what we would expect," he said of Ohio State's play. "We expect to play better."

Ohio State senior linebacker Joshua Perry called the game a grind, and said the Gophers played to a slightly different game plan than the Buckeyes expected.

"We thought they were going to come out and run the ball on us," Perry said. "They started doing some other stuff.



JOSH WINSLOW

ENOUGH TO WIN — Junior quarterback Cardale Jones (12) struggled at times and took four sacks, but he added a touchdown through the air and another on the ground to account for the 14-point difference in the game.

Their defense was playing really well so we just had to find a way to make some plays."

Jones finished the game with 12 completions on 22 attempts for 187 yards to go with 12 carries for 65 yards. Elliott proved

to be the workhorse on offense, totaling 114 yards on 26 carries, while Thomas had four catches for 39 yards. Fifth-year senior Braxton Miller had a 45-yard reception in the second half, but his head appeared to

hit the turf hard and he didn't return to the game.

Meyer said he thought Miller would be OK, but he wasn't sure of the exact nature or extent of his injury.

Minnesota quarterback Mitch Leidner completed 27 of 44 passes for 281 yards and two scores and receiver KJ Maye had 10 catches for 116 yards and a touchdown, but the Gophers totaled just 33 rushing yards in the loss.

How It Happened

After Minnesota opened the game with a 23-yard kick return, neither team managed a first down until the fourth drive of the game when Elliott rushed for 8 yards on third-and-2. But the Buckeyes' second drive of the night still ended with a punt, as did the ensuing Minnesota drive.

Ohio State took over and picked up one first down before having to punt once again, setting the Gophers up for an 11-play, 47-yard drive that led to a 50-yard field-goal try by Ryan Santoso that drifted left of the uprights, keeping the game tied at zero.

Junior punter Cameron Johnston was called on for the fourth time in the first half after the miss, and he pinned the Gophers at their own 8-yard line. After runs of 1 and 3 yards by Shannon Brooks, Perry hit Leidner as he threw on third down, leading to Bell's interception return for a touchdown for the game's first points. The play briefly seemed to be called back when

Continued On Page 14

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OHIO STATE VS. MINNESOTA

Defensive Touchdown, Timely Offense Are Enough

Continued From Page 12

Perry was called for targeting, but the flag was waved off after further review.

After another Minnesota punt, the Ohio State offense came to life. A loss of 7 yards by Miller put the Buckeyes in an 18-yard hole on third down, but Jones found space up the middle for a 19-yard carry to keep the play alive. Three plays later he connected with Marshall for 44 yards before Elliott scampered in from the 15-yard line to give Ohio State a 14-0 halftime lead.

Much like the first half, each of the first two drives of the second half ended in punts.

The Buckeyes ended that streak with a nine-play, 59-yard drive that included two trips to the end zone by Thomas. He initial-

ly seemed to score from 7 yards out after a quick pass from Jones, but the play was called back for a penalty. Two plays later Jones found Thomas once again, this time on a fade to the left sideline in the end zone on third down, making it 21-0 with 6:43 to play in the third quarter.

The Buckeyes' defense kept the momentum with the home team, forcing a three-and-out as sophomore linebacker Darron Lee got free on a blitz and hit Leidner as he threw on third down.

Ohio State found its way back to the red zone on the ensuing drive, but it didn't end in points. After Minnesota's Brian Boddy-Calhoun broke up a pass to Marshall in the end zone and Elliott picked up 3 yards on second down, Jones fumbled on third down, leading to a Gopher recovery. Three

plays later the Buckeyes' had the ball back, though, as the defense forced Minnesota's seventh punt in the first three quarters.

An Elliott 6-yard run sandwiched by two incomplete passes led to a Buckeye punt of their own in the opening seconds of the final quarter before Leidner found Rodrick Williams for 31 yards on Minnesota's first play of the ensuing drive. He connected with Brandon Lingen for 25-yards two plays later, putting the Gophers in the red zone for the first time.

Sophomore Damon Webb – playing for the first time since the Hawaii game in week two – broke up a third-down pass in the end zone, before Leidner found Maye for 8 yards to convert on fourth down. The duo connected again three plays later, this time for a 4-yard touchdown to break up the shutout.

Jones connected with Miller for 45 yards on third down on the ensuing drive, but the former quarterback was slow to get up and was helped off the field by two members of Ohio State's training staff. The drive stalled from there, and the Buckeyes came up empty when fifth-year senior Jack Willoughby missed a 35-yard field-goal try, keeping the score at 21-7 with 7:46 on the clock.

Despite a 15-yard personal-foul call against sophomore defensive end Tyquan Lewis, Ohio State forced a fourth-and-9 and Minnesota elected to punt.

Elliott broke the 100-yard barrier on first down after the boot, but the Buckeyes' drive stalled before they could get to midfield when Jones' deep pass to sophomore Curtis Samuel was broken up on third down. Johnston punted for the seventh time with 4:19 to play in the game, setting the Gophers up with 78 yards to cover.

That's exactly what Minnesota did, though, in six plays, taking 2:03 off the clock. The drive was sparked by a 57-yard Leidner completion to Maye on third down before he found Rashad Still from 10 yards out to pull the Gophers within seven points with 2:10 to play.

After a couple of shifts, Minnesota attempted an onside drop kick, but the ball ricocheted out of bounds, giving Ohio State the ball at the Gopher 39-yard line. After Elliott gained a net yard total on first and second down, Jones' third-down carry up the middle put the Buckeyes up by 14.

"We knew they were going to be blitzing and it was called," Meyer said of Jones' finisher. "That was a direct run, Q run where you just gap everybody down. We knew they'd be all over the place. And we wanted to keep the clock running."

Minnesota responded with an eight-play drive but turned the ball over on downs before Ohio State took a knee to run out the clock.



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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 28, Minnesota 14

Nov. 7, 2015 – Ohio Stadium; Columbus, Ohio

| Score by Quarters | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | F |
|-------------------|---|----|---|----|---|
| MINNESOTA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | – |
| OHIO STATE | 0 | 14 | 7 | 7 | – |

Second Quarter

OSU – Bell, 16 yard interception return (Willoughby kick), 4:53.

OSU – Elliott, 15 yard run (Willoughby kick), 0:54; 7 plays, 77 yards, 2:28 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU – Thomas, 6 yard pass from Jones (Willoughby kick), 6:43; 9 plays, 59 yards, 4:19 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

MIN – Maye, 4 yard pass from Leidner (Santoso kick), 10:25; 10 plays, 77 yards, 4:17 TOP.

MIN – Still, 10 yard pass from Leidner (Santoso kick), 2:10; 6 plays, 78 yards, 2:03 TOP.

OSU – Jones, 38 yard run (Willoughby kick), 1:53; 3 plays, 39 yards, 0:17 TOP.

Att. – 108,075

Weather – 47 degrees, partly cloudy; wind N 11 mph.

Team Statistics

| | MIN | OSU |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|
| First Downs | 13 | 18 |
| Rushing | 0 | 9 |
| Passing | 12 | 9 |
| Penalty | 1 | 0 |
| Rushes-Yards | 26-33 | 44-189 |
| Passing Yards | 281 | 187 |
| Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.) | 27-45-1 | 12-22-0 |
| Offensive Plays | 71 | 66 |
| Total Net Yards | 314 | 376 |
| Third Down Efficiency | 7-19 | 7-16 |
| Fourth Down Efficiency | 1-2 | 0-0 |
| Punts-Avg. | 8-44.0 | 7-40.3 |
| Fumbles-Lost | 1-0 | 1-1 |
| Penalties-Yards | 3-25 | 5-45 |
| Time of Possession | 31:28 | 28:32 |

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – MIN: Brooks 11-27; Smith 6-9; Williams 5-9; Maye 1-1; Leidner 3-(-13). OSU: Elliott 26-114; Jones 12-65; Miller 5-11; TEAM 1-(-1).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – MIN: Leidner 27-44-1-281-2; Croft 0-1-0-0-0. OSU: Jones 12-22-0-187-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – MIN: Maye 10-116; Still 6-41; Lingen 4-50; Williams 2-44; Wolitarsky 2-12; Brooks 2-11; Wozniak 1-7. OSU: Thomas 4-39; Marshall 2-56; Samuel 2-26; Vannett 2-12; Miller 1-45; Elliott 1-9.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – MIN: Mortell 8-44.0-53. OSU: Johnston 7-40.3-53.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – MIN: Hardin 1-11. OSU: Marshall 5-64.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – MIN: Myrick 1-23; Maye 1-15; Hartmann 1-10. OSU: Samuel 1-21.

MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.) – MIN: Santoso 50. OSU: Willoughby 35.

FORCED FUMBLES – MIN: Lynn. OSU: None.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – MIN: Ekpe. OSU: None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – MIN: None. OSU: Bell 1-16.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – MIN: Campbell 1.0-10; Lynn 1.0-5; Ekpe 1.0-1; Myrick 0.5-6; Boddy-Calhoun 0.5-5. OSU: Hubbard 1.0-1.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – MIN: Lynn 2.5-7; Campbell 1.0-10; Ayinde 1.0-7; Cockran 1.0-5; Hardin 1.0-2; Ekpe 1.0-1; Myrick 0.5-6; Boddy-Calhoun 0.5-5; Pooock 0.5-1. OSU: Bosa 1.0-6; Hubbard 1.0-1; Perry 1.0-1; Washington 0.5-2; Lewis 0.5-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – MIN: Pooock 4-6-10; Johnson 7-2-9; Campbell 6-3-9; Boddy-Calhoun 4-3-7; Lynn 4-3-7; Hardin 3-2-5; Murray 3-1-4; Cockran 1-3-4; McGhee 2-1-3; Ekpe 1-2-3; Ayinde 1-2-3; Timms 1-2-3; Huff 1-1-2; Christenson 1-0-1; Stelter 1-0-1; Beebe 0-1-1; Huff 0-1-1; Myrick 0-1-1. OSU: Bell 7-3-10; Perry 4-6-10; McMillan 2-7-9; Lewis 4-3-7; Powell 2-3-5; Conley 1-4-5; Lee 1-4-5; Hubbard 3-0-3; Bosa 2-1-3; Washington 1-2-3; Apple 1-1-2; Ward 1-1-2; Samuel 1-0-1; Dunn 1-0-1; Hooker 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – MINNESOTA: Offense, Christenson, Moore, Maye, Bush, Lingen, Leidner, Smith, Wolitarsky, Thomas, Wozniak, Santoso. Defense, Cockran, Stelter, Ekpe, Campbell, Pooock, Murray, Myrick, Johnson, Ayinde, Boddy-Calhoun, Timms, Mortell. Reserves, Maye, Croft, Hardin, McGhee, Keith, Celestin, Ja. Huff, Ju. Huff, Jordahl, Brooks, Edwards, Shenault, Williams, Cashman, Hartmann, Beebe, Colton, Weber, Lynn, Rallis, Ma. Leidner, Bjorklund, Scarver, Elmore, Still. OHIO STATE: Offense, Decker, Price, Boren, Elflein, Farris, Vannett, Marshall, Jones, Elliott, Miller, Thomas, Willoughby. Defense, Bosa, Washington, Hale, Lewis, Lee, McMillan, Perry, Conley, Bell, Powell, Apple, Johnston. Reserves, Baker, Ward, Webb, Samuel, Prince, Hubbard, Holmes, Glover-Williams, Hooker, Dunn, Ball, Booker, Worley, Fada, Haynes, Munger, Williams, Parry, Jones, Lisle, Hill, Knox, Clark, McLaurin, Baugh, Greene, Sprinkle.

Season Statistics

2015 Game-By-Game

| Date | Opponent | Result/Time | Crowd |
|----------|-----------------------|-------------|---------|
| Sept. 7 | (1) at Virginia Tech | W, 42-24 | 65,632 |
| Sept. 12 | (1) HAWAII | W, 38-0 | 107,145 |
| Sept. 19 | (1) NORTHERN ILLINOIS | W, 20-13 | 104,095 |
| Sept. 26 | (1) WESTERN MICHIGAN | W, 38-12 | 106,123 |
| Oct. 3 | (1) at Indiana | W, 34-27 | 52,929 |
| Oct. 10 | (1) MARYLAND | W, 49-28 | 107,869 |
| Oct. 17 | (1) PENN STATE | W, 38-10 | 108,423 |
| Oct. 24 | (1) at Rutgers | W, 49-7 | 53,111 |
| Nov. 7 | (1) MINNESOTA | W, 28-14 | 108,075 |
| Nov. 14 | at Illinois | Noon | – |
| Nov. 21 | MICHIGAN STATE | TBA | – |
| Nov. 28 | at Michigan | Noon | – |
| Dec. 5 | B1G Championship | 8 p.m. | – |

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

Team Statistics

| | OSU | Opp |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|
| First Downs | 200 | 140 |
| Rushing | 101 | 65 |
| Passing | 89 | 59 |
| Penalty | 10 | 16 |
| Average Per Game/Rush | 240.6 | 138.7 |
| Average Per Game/Pass | 214.2 | 163.9 |
| Total Offense | 4,093 | 2,723 |
| Total Plays | 618 | 618 |
| Average Per Game | 454.8 | 302.6 |
| Average Per Play | 6.6 | 4.4 |
| Penalties-Yards | 56-512 | 52-401 |
| Fumbles-Lost | 18-8 | 9-4 |
| Third Down Efficiency | 45-114 | 48-149 |
| Percentage | 39% | 32% |
| Fourth Down Efficiency | 6-12 | 6-15 |
| Percentage | 50% | 40% |
| Sacks-Yards | 27-148 | 14-74 |
| Time Of Possession Avg. | 29:11 | 30:49 |

Score

| By Quarters | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | OT | Tot. | Avg. |
|-------------|----|-----|----|-----|----|------|------|
| Ohio State | 45 | 100 | 90 | 101 | – | 336 | 37.3 |
| Opponents | 20 | 40 | 27 | 48 | – | 135 | 15.0 |

Individual Statistics

| Rushing | Att. | Net | Avg. | TD | Long |
|-----------------|------|-------|------|----|------|
| Ezekiel Elliott | 193 | 1,244 | 6.4 | 14 | 80 |
| J.T. Barrett | 42 | 329 | 7.8 | 7 | 40 |
| Braxton Miller | 35 | 218 | 6.2 | 1 | 53 |
| Cardale Jones | 63 | 193 | 3.1 | 2 | 38 |
| Curtis Samuel | 12 | 103 | 8.6 | 1 | 40 |
| Bri'onte Dunn | 12 | 81 | 6.8 | 1 | 19 |
| Warren Ball | 10 | 28 | 2.8 | 0 | 7 |
| Jalin Marshall | 1 | 15 | 15.0 | 0 | 15 |
| TEAM | 12 | -46 | -3.8 | 0 | 0 |
| OSU Totals | 380 | 2,165 | 5.7 | 26 | 80 |
| OPP Totals | 355 | 1,248 | 3.5 | 7 | 79 |

| Passing | Comp. | Att. | Pct. | Yds. | TD-INT | Effic. |
|----------------|-------|------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Cardale Jones | 108 | 174 | 62.1 | 1,453 | 8-5 | 141.64 |
| J.T. Barrett | 41 | 62 | 66.1 | 472 | 7-2 | 160.88 |
| Braxton Miller | 1 | 1 | 100.0 | 3 | 0-0 | 125.20 |
| C. Johnston | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 | 0.00 |
| OSU Totals | 150 | 238 | 63.0 | 1,928 | 15-7 | 145.99 |
| OPP Totals | 129 | 263 | 49.0 | 1,475 | 10-10 | 101.10 |

| Receiving | Rec. | Net | Avg. | TD | Long |
|-----------------|------|-------|------|----|------|
| Michael Thomas | 39 | 575 | 14.7 | 7 | 50 |
| Ezekiel Elliott | 24 | 169 | 7.0 | 0 | 19 |
| Jalin Marshall | 23 | 357 | 15.5 | 3 | 48 |
| Braxton Miller | 20 | 325 | 16.2 | 3 | 54 |
| Curtis Samuel | 17 | 235 | 13.8 | 2 | 40 |
| Nick Vannett | 11 | 100 | 9.1 | 0 | 26 |
| Dontre Wilson | 7 | 63 | 9.0 | 0 | 21 |
| Corey Smith | 5 | 62 | 12.4 | 0 | 22 |
| Johnnie Dixon | 1 | 29 | 29.0 | 0 | 29 |
| Jeff Greene | 1 | 10 | 10.0 | 0 | 10 |
| Warren Ball | 1 | 3 | 3.0 | 0 | 3 |
| Bri'onte Dunn | 1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 |
| OSU Totals | 150 | 1,928 | 12.9 | 15 | 54 |
| OPP Totals | 129 | 1,475 | 11.4 | 10 | 58 |

| Scoring | TD | EPK | EPR | EPRC | FG | PTS |
|------------------|----|-------|-----|------|------|-----|
| Ezekiel Elliott | 14 | – | – | – | – | 84 |
| Jack Willoughby | – | 45-45 | – | – | 7-11 | 66 |
| J.T. Barrett | 7 | – | – | – | – | 42 |
| Michael Thomas | 7 | – | – | – | – | 42 |
| Braxton Miller | 4 | – | – | – | – | 24 |
| Curtis Samuel | 3 | – | – | – | – | 18 |
| Jalin Marshall | 3 | – | – | – | – | 18 |
| Vonn Bell | 2 | – | – | – | – | 12 |
| Cardale Jones | 2 | – | – | – | – | 12 |
| Bri'onte Dunn | 1 | – | – | – | – | 6 |
| Adol. Washington | 1 | – | – | – | – | 6 |
| Darron Lee | 1 | – | – | – | – | 6 |
| OSU Totals | 45 | 45-45 | – | – | 7-11 | 336 |
| OPP Totals | 17 | 15-16 | – | 0-1 | 6-11 | 135 |

| FG Distance | 0-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50+ | Total |
|-----------------|------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| Jack Willoughby | 4 | 3-4 | 0-3 | 0-0 | 7-11 |
| OSU Totals | 4-4 | 3-4 | 0-3 | 0-0 | 7-11 |
| OPP Totals | 0-1 | 5-6 | 1-2 | 0-2 | 6-11 |

| Punting | No. | Yds. | Avg. | Bk | Long |
|------------------|-----|-------|------|----|------|
| Cameron Johnston | 41 | 1,840 | 44.9 | 0 | 67 |
| OSU Totals | 41 | 1,840 | 44.9 | 0 | 67 |
| OPP Totals | 71 | 2,907 | 40.9 | 0 | 61 |

| Interceptions | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD | Long |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|----|------|
| Tyvis Powell | 2 | 25 | 12.5 | 0 | 25 |
| Vonn Bell | 2 | 16 | 8.0 | 1 | 16 |
| Gareon Conley | 2 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 |
| Darron Lee | 1 | 41 | 41.0 | 1 | 41 |
| Adolphus Washington | 1 | 20 | 20.0 | 1 | 20 |
| Eli Apple | 1 | 8 | 8.0 | 0 | 8 |
| Sam Hubbard | 1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 |
| OSU Totals | 10 | 110 | 11.0 | 3 | 41 |
| OPP Totals | 7 | 100 | 14.3 | 0 | 33 |

| Punt Returns | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD | Long |
|-----------------|-----|------|------|----|------|
| Jalin Marshall | 22 | 292 | 13.3 | 0 | 38 |
| Ezekiel Elliott | 2 | 13 | 6.5 | 0 | 10 |
| OSU Totals | 24 | 305 | 12.7 | 0 | 38 |
| OPP Totals | 7 | 46 | 6.6 | 0 | 14 |

| Kickoff Returns | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD | Long |
|-----------------|-----|------|------|----|------|
| Dontre Wilson | 7 | 167 | 23.9 | 0 | 25 |
| Curtis Samuel | 6 | 137 | 22.8 | 0 | 27 |
| OSU Totals | 13 | 304 | 23.4 | 0 | 27 |
| OPP Totals | 36 | 571 | 15.9 | 0 | 30 |

| Def. Leaders | Solo | Asst. | Tot. | TFL-Yds. | Sacks |
|--------------------|------|-------|------|----------|--------|
| Raekwon McMillan | 38 | 45 | 83 | 2.0-7 | 1.0-4 |
| Joshua Perry | 33 | 31 | 64 | 6.0-26 | 3.0-22 |
| Vonn Bell | 35 | 14 | 49 | 0.5-2 | – |
| Tyvis Powell | 26 | 19 | 45 | – | – |
| Adol. Washington | 20 | 20 | 40 | 6.0-29 | 3.0-19 |
| Tyquan Lewis | 24 | 15 | 39 | 9.5-39 | 5.5-33 |
| Darron Lee | 18 | 20 | 38 | 7.0-33 | 2.5-18 |
| Gareon Conley | 20 | 13 | 33 | 0.5-2 | 0.5-2 |
| Joey Bosa | 23 | 10 | 33 | 12.0-50 | 3.5-16 |
| Eli Apple | 14 | 7 | 21 | 1.0-3 | – |
| Sam Hubbard | 11 | 10 | 21 | 6.0-27 | 4.5-24 |
| Tommy Schutt | 5 | 15 | 20 | 4.0-9 | 1.5-5 |
| Dante Booker | 10 | 8 | 18 | 1.0-1 | – |
| Chris Worley | 9 | 3 | 12 | 1.5-4 | 1.0-3 |
| Cam Williams | 7 | 3 | 10 | 0.5-2 | – |
| Joel Hale | 2 | 8 | 10 | – | – |
| Michael Hill | 3 | 5 | 8 | 0.5-1 | – |
| Damon Webb | 1 | 7 | 8 | – | – |
| Jalyn Holmes | 3 | 5 | 8 | 1.0-2 | 1.0-2 |
| Malik Hooker | 5 | 3 | 8 | – | – |
| Erick Smith | 5 | 1 | 6 | – | – |
| Terry McLaurin | 3 | 2 | 5 | – | – |
| Marshall Lattimore | 4 | 1 | 5 | – | – |
| Denzel Ward | 3 | 2 | 5 | – | – |
| Craig Fada | 1 | 3 | 4 | – | – |
| Parris Campbell | 2 | 2 | 4 | – | – |
| Bri'onte Dunn | 3 | 1 | 4 | – | – |
| Tracy Sprinkle | 1 | 2 | 3 | – | – |
| Cam Burrows | 3 | – | 3 | – | – |
| Curtis Samuel | 3 | – | 3 | – | – |
| Jerome Baker | 2 | – | 2 | – | – |
| Jack Willoughby | 1 | 1 | 2 | – | – |
| Pat Elflein | 1 | – | 1 | – | – |
| Corey Smith | 1 | – | 1 | – | – |
| Joe Burger | 1 | – | 1 | 1.0-3 | – |
| Taylor Decker | 1 | – | 1 | – | – |
| Dontre Wilson | 1 | – | 1 | – | – |
| OSU Totals | 343 | 276 | 619 | 60-240 | 27-148 |
| OPP Totals | 346 | 286 | 632 | 52-182 | 14-74 |

Fumbles Forced: 4 – Darron Lee, Jalyn Holmes, Tommy Schutt, Adolphus Washington.

Fumbles Recovered: 4 – Sam Hubbard 2, Vonn Bell, Eli Apple.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 28, Minnesota 14

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer's opening comments after defeating Minnesota: "Thanks for coming. We appreciate our fans and incredible atmosphere at nighttime in the Horseshoe. I don't think we played a clean game. I do not want to take anything away from our opponent, because that's two weeks in a row that they just swung as hard as they possibly could, with very good players."

"I thought our defense – we gave up some pass yards there. Certainly too many at the end. For the most part they just kept us – because offensively we're sloppy and not executing at a high level. And then once we got going, we had some big plays and scored enough points to win the game."

Ohio State offensive coordinator and offensive line coach Ed Warinner on quarterbacks Cardale Jones and J.T. Barrett: "They're different players, and you can't make them the same guy. So you just have to figure out what the strengths are. We just have to play better in certain areas, coach better and just do a little better job overall. But it presents challenges, two different quarterbacks, two different strengths, two different skill sets."

Warinner on the development of true freshman quarterback Joey Burrow: "He's growing tremendously. The bye week was good for him, because he got a lot of work in the bye week. And then this week, because of circumstances he got a lot more reps. So over the last two weeks I saw a lot of growth out of him."

Warinner on the growth of the young offensive linemen: "I think the bye week helped us grow a lot. I thought we made a lot of progress with some of those young guys. Isaiah Prince is another one that I think is starting to come on, and I think he's shown progress. And Demetrius Knox. Those guys have all made great strides. Then we have a couple of young guys that have been with injuries that are back and they got to practice so it's coming. I definitely think Jamarco (Jones) is ready to play at any time that we need him and Evan (Lisle) both would be our sixth and seventh men. And then after that I'd say Knox and Prince."

"And I'd say that the bye week is good for those guys, usually comes earlier in the year and you get to really ramp them up and get a lot of work. And then this year it just came late, week nine of the season, so we gave those guys a lot of reps and you can see that they're starting to come around."

Ohio State senior linebacker Joshua Perry on having to cover running backs out of the backfield one-on-one: "They saw us playing all man, so they knew they were going to try and attack us on a couple of those things. The interesting part about that is, we had three linebackers on the two backs and they sent them different ways. Initially, I kind of stepped one way, realized someone was coming out the back. They tried me, I think two or three times on wheels tonight so I don't know. They didn't get anything on them but we know teams are going to do that, especially in the boundary, there is not a lot of space so they kind of sneak around out there."

Perry on the play of sophomore defensive end Tyquan Lewis: "He plays really well all the time. That kid is a beast, he is really coming on. He's somebody that we count on and depend on to make plays. It's really interesting because people think, 'We are going to try and find a way to go away from No. 97 (Joey Bosa), we are going to do this, that and the



JOSH WINSLOW

BREAKOUT SEASON – Senior linebacker Joshua Perry called sophomore defensive end Tyquan Lewis (59) a beast after Lewis had seven total tackles against Minnesota.

other,' but now they have to worry about No. 59 (Lewis) over on the other side and he is just doing a great job."

Lewis on how Minnesota climbed back into the game: "I don't think anything really changed. We still made efforts to stop the run. I think we held them to 33 yards rushing. It was just play action passes, we had a few missed coverages I guess. I don't really control the back end. We did what we can do best."

Lewis on halftime adjustments: "At half-time, we knew they were going to make adjustments so we knew we had to keep pushing forward and do what we had to do because nothing really changed for us. We knew we had a few plays we had to stop. We knew what was coming. They just changed a few blocks, but we still fitted up right."

Ohio State junior safety Vonn Bell on his interception: "They had run that play earlier. I knew it was in man so they were going to try to pick me. Being their No. 1 guy, they were going to get the ball to him (KJ Maye). I took a picture in my head and said, 'They're going to run that play again.' I jumped in front of it and made a play for the guys."

Bell on his reaction to the overturned targeting call on Perry: "I took a deep breath. I was like, 'I need to see this replay.' It wasn't targeting. I knew Josh was a smarter player than that, so it was just a relief to me."

Minnesota interim coach Tracy Claeys on the game: "When you play the No. 1

team in the country and you're on the road, the margin for error is so small and we talked about that all week. We just made one or two mistakes that we didn't counter with our own big plays in the first half. It still comes down to somehow we have to find a way to get some points on the board in the first half, finish one or two drives out to get some points and then you're in a lot better shape. They're a good football team and we battled with them foot to foot and had a chance to have our opportunities."

Minnesota quarterback Mitch Leidner on battling back in the second half: "It was good to see us battle back in the second half, especially when things weren't exactly going our way offensively. I give our defense credit for giving us the opportunity to get back on the field and get a few drives together, and it was good to see the offense battle back."

Leidner on handling the emotions leading up to the game after the retirement of coach Jerry Kill and a tough loss to Michigan: "That is definitely something Coach Claeys emphasized. After last week and all the things we went through, to be able to come back this week and prepare at a high level and come into a place like this and compete at such a high level against such a good football team really says a lot about the character of our team overall. We have guys who compete hard and battle hard every play. It is really great to see."

Buckeye Game Analysis

Play Of The Game

Vonn Bell's interception return for a touchdown late in the second quarter pulled the game out of a scoreless rut.

The play not only had a huge impact on what did happen in the game, it could have turned things in a completely different direction for the Buckeyes and Golden Gophers.

As it happened live, Bell made a tremendous play, taking the ball away from the intended receiver across the middle then outrunning his pursuit to the goal line for the first score of the game, giving Ohio State a 7-0 lead with 4:53 left in a first half that would ultimately feature eight punts.

But even before Bell crossed the goal line, there was a question of whether the play would stand as the official behind the play dropped a flag near where linebacker Joshua Perry had hit Minnesota quarterback Mitch Leidner, forcing a bad throw that Bell took advantage of. After a conference, the officiating crew determined Perry had illegally contacted Leidner in the head and/or neck area and was guilty of targeting. That meant Perry would be ejected from the game and both the turnover and the touchdown would not count.

When the replay official determined Perry had not been guilty of targeting, the call was reversed and Ohio State's early lead stood up.

Hidden Play Of The Game

If Bell's interception shook the team out of doldrums, Cardale Jones' first successful long pass play of the game seemed liked a sigh of relief for the offense.

Jones had completed five of his first nine passes and absorbed three sacks prior to finding Jalin Marshall streaking down the field with just over a minute left in the second quarter.

Leading up to the play – a quick drop and fire by Jones to a speedy receiver who was able to get behind Eric Murray, one of Minnesota's two talented starting cornerbacks – most of Ohio State's passing game was predicated on play action and deep dropbacks. With his pass protection somewhat shoddy, Jones looked hesitant and indecisive on many of those first 12 attempted pass plays (including the sacks), but not on this one as he lofted a perfect throw to Marshall for a gain of 44 yards.

One play later, Ezekiel Elliott scored on a 15-yard run that gave Ohio State a 14-0 lead with 54 seconds left in the first half and sent the Buckeyes to locker room with fewer questions than if they had kept spinning their wheels for the entirety of the opening 30 minutes.

What Worked Well

Creative blocking and misdirection: Likely expecting the Golden Gophers to crowd the line of scrimmage to try to take away its base running game, Ohio State was ready. Rather than try to stuff the ball up the middle, the Buckeyes used fake jet sweeps to hold pursuit on the outside and frequently used misdirection and pulling offensive linemen to create holes for Elliott.

What Didn't Work

Pass protection: An issue for most of the season, Ohio State could not give Jones consistent time to go downfield early in the game. Whether it was an offensive lineman losing an individual battle or the protection scheme being unable to account for everyone Minnesota was sending, the Buckeyes had issues.

Inside The Numbers

5.4: Jones averaged 5.4 yards per rush despite being sacked four times, providing a reminder he can be a threat with his legs if used judiciously.

33: Minnesota's 33 yards rushing are the fewest for an Ohio State opponent this season. Hawaii had 80 yards in week two, the only other instance an OSU opponent has failed to reach triple digits this season.

281: Minnesota's 281 passing yards are the most a team has posted against Ohio State this season and the most since Oregon had 333 in the national championship game to end last season.

376: Ohio State's total yardage was its lowest since a 298-yard day against Northern Illinois in the third week of the season. The Huskies have still held the Buckeyes to their worst offensive output of the season.



JOSH WINSLOW

SPARK PLUG – Sophomore Jalin Marshall (7) had a 44-yard reception and a 33-yard punt return for the Buckeyes.

Reviewing The Matchups

Ohio State rush offense vs. Minnesota rush defense: The Buckeyes managed to grind out 189 yards on 44 attempts (counting four sacks that cost them yardage). That came after totaling 596 yards on the ground the previous two weeks, largely with the presence of J.T. Barrett at quarterback helping to open things up. But Jones did manage to make his presence felt, chipping in a couple of key long runs, including a 38-yarder that put the game away.

EDGE: Ohio State

Minnesota rush offense vs. Ohio State rush defense: The Gophers never got anything going on the ground as the Buckeyes' front seven largely won the battle in the trenches. Shannon Brooks and Rodney Smith combined for only 36 yards on 17 carries, both running hard but finding barely any room to operate at the point of attack or on cutbacks. Defensive coordinator Luke Fickell said he felt facing a third consecutive power run offense helped the Buckeyes.

EDGE: Ohio State

Ohio State pass offense vs. Minnesota pass defense: Ohio State ended up with a productive 187 yards on 22 pass attempts (including 12 completions). Perhaps the best thing Jones did was avoid throwing an interception, but he was again plagued by inconsistency with his accuracy. He also lost a fumble. Shaky pass protection did not help matters

either, making it difficult for the Buckeyes to go down the field because of a lack of time for routes to develop.

EDGE: Even

Minnesota pass offense vs. Ohio State pass defense: Leidner threw for 281 yards and two touchdowns, though he completed only 27 of 44 passes. He also threw a crucial interception, but he hung in and put together a pair of scoring drives in the second half that relied largely on his ability to find open receivers. Small, shifty receiver KJ Maye proved to be a tough cover as he was utilized all over the field and caught 10 passes for 116 yards and a touchdown.

EDGE: Even

Special teams: Cameron Johnston put three of his seven punts down inside the 20-yard line and averaged 40.3 yards per attempt. Minnesota's Peter Mortell countered by averaging 44.0 yards on his eight punts, including a 53-yarder. Both teams missed field goals while Marshall's 33-yard punt return was the only big play in that department.

EDGE: Even

Intangibles: The game got off to a slow start as neither offense was able to find anything it could do consistently early on. The Buckeyes seemed discombobulated much of the night, as has been the case in many of the games Jones has started. Minnesota did not appear to suffer any sort of letdown from an emotional loss to Michigan a week earlier.

EDGE: Even

– Marcus Hartman

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Barrett Working To Atone For Mistake

By RYAN GINN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

On the one Saturday this fall he could have slept in, Urban Meyer instead woke on Halloween morning to a 6 a.m. text message that was the stuff of nightmares.

J.T. Barrett, who had just emphatically seized the starting quarterback role and brought stability to Meyer's offense, had been arrested a few hours earlier for operating a vehicle under the influence.

He attempted to avoid a DUI checkpoint at N. High and Tompkins near Ohio State's campus. When stopped by police, Barrett registered a blood-alcohol content of .099 and was eventually released to fellow quarterback Cardale Jones after being cited for a misdemeanor.

Given Barrett's reputation, Meyer must have wondered if he was dreaming. The Texas native is believed to be the first team captain in Ohio State history with sophomore eligibility. No player has ever been selected three times.

"I got up, I actually called the person who texted me and I said, 'Did I read this right?'" Meyer said.

Barrett will be back in consideration to start against Illinois, but his one-game suspension for a serious mistake cost him the chance to continue the momentum that he established in a 49-7 win against Rutgers on Oct. 24.

It also dealt him a blow in the eyes of the public, forcing him to deal with a problem much tougher than anything he's faced previously.

"When they say you're too short, you don't run fast enough, your arm strength



JOSH WINSLOW

EARNING IT BACK – Sophomore quarterback J.T. Barrett (16) is in the mix to start against Illinois on Nov. 14 in his return from a one-game suspension for an OVI citation.

isn't good enough, you're just an average quarterback, you can deal with that," Meyer said. "You just outwork it."

"When they start attacking who you are,

especially people who don't know who you are, and I told him, that's the toughest thing he'll ever have to deal with is that now there's some question as to who you are. And I imagine he's never had to deal with that. Because J.T.'s always been J.T. And, yes, he may be a little too short, his arm strength maybe not (good enough). He can deal with that. How do you deal with this? You work a little harder."

The weekend of his arrest, he took the first steps toward battling back from the biggest mistake of his Ohio State career.

"He came to my house on whatever day that was, the next day," Meyer said. "Blown away. Devastated. All his concern was about the team, as you can imagine."

He also spoke to his teammates, apologizing to them in phone calls so they could hear it from him.

"You woke up hearing the news and I really didn't expect that from J.T. and then I got a call from him like an hour or two later and we talked," right guard Pat Elflein said. "He just told me what happened, he told me how he was going to respond and how this was going to affect the team, and we kind of talked about what we are going to do and how we are going to handle it."

"It was a really mature move by him, and that's what I expect from J.T., to handle it like that. He just talked about how the team is going to move forward from this and what we've got to do as leaders to keep this train rolling."

Senior left tackle Taylor Decker, a captain alongside Barrett, also received a phone call from the sophomore quarterback.

"You could just tell that he was pretty bummed out," Decker said. "He didn't have an answer for what happened, because, again, mistakes, stupid mistakes. He wasn't worried about himself, he's going to be fine. He'll handle it fine. He's worried about what it does to everybody else. While his act was selfish, right now he's taking a selfless approach to it. So I think that's important that even though it is about him, he's not trying to make it about him, if that makes sense."

Because Barrett is so well respected among his teammates, peers who voted him

captain, he appears to have survived the court of opinion among those close to him in the wake of the incident.

Decker, one of the most admired players on the team, said he had forgiven Barrett for the mistake and believed Barrett would still have respect in the locker room.

"Like I said, I know that everybody is going to make mistakes," Decker said. "Yeah I was (ticked) when I heard that he did that, but I've had so many repeated experiences of his high character and him doing the right thing and being a good person, being a great leader. I'm going to move on from it. I'm not OK with what he did, but I'm going to move on from it. I'm going to forgive him, and I think the way he's handled it so far and the way he handles it moving on will be really telling because (others) don't maybe have as much experience with J.T."

"But I think everybody's heard him as that voice in the locker room. I think guys still respect him and they understand that he made a mistake. But me personally, I'm going to be able to forgive him and move on. But I think for some of the younger guys that haven't been around as much, the way he handles it, which I know he handled it great, will show them the type of person he is."

Meyer said it's yet to be determined whether Barrett will be a permanent captain or lose that honor, but that will largely depend on how he responds from a leadership standpoint.

How he reacts and carries himself in the coming weeks will also determine how his teammates respond to him as a leader.

"It's 100 percent important for him to handle it the proper way," Decker said. "He can just be (ticked) about it and say, 'Oh I got screwed.' But he's accepted responsibility, he knows he did something wrong, and he's going to deal with the consequences on that. But I think for him to step up and man-to-man call one of his teammates, I think that's big. Not a lot of guys would have done that."

On the weekend of the worst mistake he's made, Barrett took the first steps toward coming back from it.

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Price Excelling After Adjustment Period

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Billy Price knows that nothing worth-while comes easy.

Ohio State's third-year sophomore right guard was a standout defensive player in high school who opted to switch to the other side of the ball and became part of the early-season struggles for the offensive line in 2014 before a turnaround helped the Buckeyes win the national championship.

He's also a serious student who knows that football is only part of the total college experience.

As such, the two-time OSU Scholar-Athlete majoring in operations management said he should write a book about the transition from high school.

"It's wild," he said. "For me it took a lot. You've got academic goals. You've got to get into business school. You have to understand football. Learn the playbook. Understand your coaches and manage time. Get out of practice at 7:30 (p.m.) and then you have a project due, two papers due, a midterm coming.

"Once you are able to understand that and have the people here at Ohio State to be able to help you, it's so well worth it."

Price was the Associated Press 2012 Division I co-defensive player of the year in Ohio at Austintown Fitch and had Ohio State in his sights for a long time, beginning his sophomore year when he visited the campus and then-coach Jim Tressel.

"You're overwhelmed at that point so you're, 'Oh my God, this place is huge. Nike this, Nike that,'" Price said. "But once you start understanding the recruiting process a little more, start seeing other schools, for me I came and had a tour. I saw the business school. My grandfather really liked it. That was a huge influence for me on that."

Tressel was a successful coach at Youngstown State so Price, having grown up in the area, had a tie with him and vice versa.

"He understands what it takes to recruit a guy out of Youngstown and to have those qualities that's he's looking for," Price said. "It was a good fit. After I visited one school it was over."

"The reason I chose Ohio State was mostly academic standing. The Fisher College of Business was huge for me. Then to play for a prestigious program like this, that was a secondary choice. And to have Jim Tressel have that connection. He originally recruited me so it was more or less you get that feeling."

Of course, Tressel was fired for NCAA violations in May 2011 and was replaced by Urban Meyer six months later.

"Coach Meyer said, 'Hey, you want to win?' I said, 'Absolutely,'" Price said. "He said, 'I'm your guy.' Thanks, Coach, I appreciate it."



FILE PHOTO

CONSTANT STARTER – Sophomore right guard Billy Price (54) started the 2014 season opener and hasn't looked back as one of the Buckeyes' key offensive linemen for every game since.

When Price committed to Ohio State he was immediately compared to former OSU player John Simon, now with the Houston Texans, in part because Simon was a Youngstown Cardinal Mooney product.

Same neck of the woods, same type of player, right?

"John and I are completely two different people," Price said. "He's a spectacular defensive lineman. The categories are kind of different. Those comparisons aren't made anymore since I'm not playing defense anymore."

"But it is nice to hear those representations from the Youngstown area and represent Youngstown the way he did. It's an honor and responsibility to uphold that representation."

Price feels he does have something else in common.

"You take certain qualities from defensive linemen," he said. "You want to have that relentless effort, that toughness, that nasty attitude on the offensive line just as well."

He moved to the offensive line during the fall of 2013 when he was redshirting,

and Price is now versatile in that he can play right or left guard and center.

"I wanted to do it," Price said of the switch. "In order for me to stay here and be happy, I had to make a change. That was a personal change."

Last season he joined four other first-time starters on the offensive line. Their inexperience showed in the upset loss to Virginia Tech in the second game.

The unit eventually jelled, and the rest

is history as the O-line blew up holes for Ezekiel Elliott en route to winning the College Football Playoff title.

Price played well enough to earn freshman All-America honors

"Billy Price became a legitimate all-conference candidate by the end of the year," Meyer said before this season. "At the beginning of the year, he wasn't very good."

Because four of five on the line returned this season, it was surprising that they underperformed in the early part of the schedule before finding a rhythm.

"You're going to have a little bit of rust," Price said. "You're going to have those moments where you're going to get things behind you again. It takes some time. Midway through the season we started hitting those strides."

He said the turnaround was the 38-10 win against Penn State on Oct. 17 when the Buckeyes accumulated 429 total yards.

"Once you start moving guys and really gaining that momentum and energy in the offense, you really start to see things move," Price said. "The offensive line, we really get hungry and keep the ball rolling."

Left tackle Taylor Decker said it was a matter of time.

"There's more chemistry because we've had guys with continuity at the same positions," Decker said.

Price has no regrets about his decision to leave the defense to others but does remember what it was like to be a hotshot freshman who thought he would immediately start.

"That's our job as older guys to take those guys underneath us and say, 'Hey, it's going to be OK. Follow your lead. You're getting better. Take a step, take a step,'" he said.

He credited former teammate and current Green Bay Packers center Corey Linsley with providing guidance through the tough times.

"He did a great job with me, and you see where he's at right now," Price said. "Just follow those steps. You've got to contemplate quitting several times before you go, 'Oh, wow, it's worth it.'"

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