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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 1, 2014

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

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 of 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 6-0, 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 Mark Dantonio 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.

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Charter Member

COVER STORY

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.

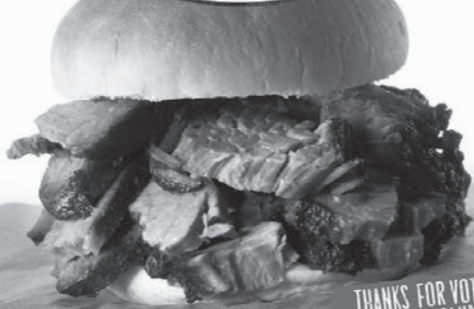
As he spoke in the bowels of Beaver Stadium, Herman sounded happy to be teaching those lessons after a win.

"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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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Happy Valley Almost House Of Horrors For OSU

By **MATTHEW HAGER**
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

J.T. Barrett and Joey Bosa came through in the clutch to allow the Ohio State football team to earn a 31-24 win in double overtime Oct. 25 at Penn State.

The redshirt freshman quarterback and sophomore defensive lineman made big plays in overtime to help the No. 13 Buckeyes (6-1, 3-0 Big Ten) escape Happy Valley after blowing a 17-0 halftime lead.

Barrett, who suffered a sprained knee in the first half, led a pair of touchdown drives in overtime play, and Bosa brought the game to a conclusion with a highlight reel-worthy sack of Penn State quarterback Christian Hackenberg on fourth down in the second overtime.

"Credit to our opponent," head coach Urban Meyer said. "They played their tails off. We'll take it. A great win against a quality opponent in one of the toughest environments that you'll have. We'll certainly get on a plane tonight and regroup but enjoy the win. We'll regroup as we continue on."

Overtime began with the Nittany Lions on offense after the Buckeyes won the coin toss and chose to play defense first. Ohio State seemingly caught a big break at the start of the possession when PSU lineman Brendan Mahon was flagged for a holding penalty on the first play of the drive. Unfortunately for the Buckeyes, Hackenberg quickly put the Nittany Lions back in business with an

18-yard pass to DaeSean Hamilton on first-and-20 at the 35.

Hackenberg rushed for 2 yards on a QB sneak on third-and-1 two plays later, and the quarterback then moved his team to the OSU 2 with a 12-yard connection to Hamilton. Three plays later, Penn State had the lead thanks to a 1-yard TD run by Bill Belton out of the wildcat. A Sam Ficken PAT gave PSU a 24-17 lead, its first of the game, and sent the white-clad portion of the 107,895 in attendance into a frenzy.

Despite deafening noise from Penn State's "White Out" crowd, Ohio State answered with a touchdown on its possession in the first OT. After Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 3 yards on the drive's first play, Barrett took care of the rest. First, he kept on an option run that went 17 yards, and Barrett then called his own number again for a 5-yard TD. Sean Nuernberger's PAT knotted the game and sent the teams into a second overtime.

Penn State was flagged for leaping, a personal foul, on the extra-point attempt, which allowed Ohio State to start the second overtime on offense at the 12½-yard line. Again, it did not take the Buckeyes long to reach the end zone. Elliott rushed for 2 yards on first down, and Barrett added 6 more on a scramble. Facing third-and-2 at the 4, Barrett again rushed on a QB keeper and this time pushed his way into the end zone.

Following the extra point, the Buckeyes held a 31-24 advantage.

The Ohio State defense made the lead hold.



SONNY BROCKWAY PHOTOS

EARLY BREAK – Ohio State sophomore safety Vonn Bell (11) was credited with an interception in the first quarter, but the ball hit the turf (inset), which should have negated the original call.

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Running back Akeel Lynch was swarmed by OSU linebackers Joshua Perry and Raekwon McMillan for no gain on Penn State's first play, and after Hackenberg threw a 5-yard pass to tight end Jesse James, the Buckeyes brought the game to an end. Hackenberg's third-down pass to Hamilton near the goal line fell incomplete, and on fourth down Bosa pushed Lynch into Hackenberg, forcing the quarterback to his knee to end the play and the game.

"Oh man, I was happy to win that game," freshman linebacker Darron Lee said of the final play. "When I saw who sacked the quarterback, I was like, 'Not surprised.' I was just really happy we got the win in a hostile environment. I'm just ready to go home."

There were a number of standouts in what was a defensive slugfest, as the game featured just 533 yards of total offense even with the two overtime periods. Ohio State saw its school-record four-game streak of 50-point games come to a close, and the Buckeyes – who finished with 290 yards – were held below 500 for the first time since a Sept. 6 loss to Virginia Tech.

Hamilton established a new Penn State record with 14 catches, while Nittany Lions senior Mike Hull had 19 tackles, one more than his OSU counterpart at linebacker, Perry.

Tale Of Two Halves

Ohio State got a big gift from the officials early in the first quarter. The Buckeyes won the toss and deferred. Penn State began on offense and recorded two first downs before facing a first-and-10 from its own 36. Hackenberg dropped back to pass and was almost immediately under pressure from Lee. Hurried, Hackenberg threw an off-bal-

ance pass that was intercepted by a diving Vonn Bell.

The officials ruled that the OSU sophomore safety caught the pass, but replays showed that the ball clearly hit the turf. However, officials said the replay review equipment was not working properly and thus they could not overturn the call, keeping the ball in the Buckeyes' possession.

The Buckeyes took advantage of their good fortune. Taking over at the PSU 39, the Buckeyes needed seven plays to reach the end zone. Elliott rushed four times for 21 yards, the last 10 coming on a touchdown run behind tight ends Nick Vannett and Jeff Heurman over the left side. Nuernberger's PAT made it 7-0 Ohio State with 10:15 left on the first-quarter clock.

The visitors later added to their lead with a 49-yard field goal by Nuernberger. The career-long boot by the freshman came at the end of a 14-play, 59-yard drive that began at the OSU 9 and encompassed the end of the first quarter and beginning of the second. The Buckeyes drove all the way to the PSU 17 before a pair of false start penalties and a sack of Barrett on a third-and-16 pushed the ball back to the 32.

The Buckeyes actually caught another break on the field goal, as the kick came well after the play clock had expired. The officials did not see the infraction, however, and Ohio State extended its lead to 10-0 with 11:07 left before halftime.

The Ohio State defense helped set up the Buckeyes' next score.

A 48-yard punt by OSU sophomore Cameron Johnston was caught at the PSU 10-yard line, and the Buckeyes defense forced two incompletions before Lee and Bosa combined on Ohio State's first sack of Hackenberg on the night. That 6-yard loss

forced a punt from the Penn State end zone, giving the Ohio State offense a short field to work with.

Barrett then led a short touchdown drive. With OSU taking over at the PSU 39, Barrett and Elliott had a hand in all of the yards on the way to the end zone. Elliott rushed for 19 yards on three carries, Barrett rushed for 5 yards and completed two passes for 15 yards – including a 1-yard TD connection with Heurman.

After Nuernberger added the PAT, the Buckeyes held what looked like a commanding 17-0 lead with 3:58 remaining in the second quarter. That score held into halftime, marking the first time Penn State had been shut out at home in the first half since Nov. 12, 2011, vs. Nebraska.

The Nittany Lions stole momentum early in the third quarter.

The Buckeyes started the second half on offense and quickly faced a third-and-6 from the OSU 37, where Barrett was picked off by Penn State's Anthony Zettel. The PSU defensive tackle dropped back into coverage, and Barrett threw the ball right to him. Zettel rumbled all the way down the field for a pick-six which, following a Ficken PAT, cut the Penn State deficit to 17-7 just 1:23 after halftime.

The interception was Barrett's first in 111 pass attempts and his first since the Kent State game Sept. 13. It was also Penn State's first pick-six since 2009.

Ohio State saw a scoring opportunity go by the wayside later in the third quarter. Taking over after a Penn State punt at the OSU 30, the Buckeyes drove 47 yards – all on the ground – with four different players lining up at quarterback for at least a play. In addition to Barrett and sophomore backup quarterback Cardale Jones, hybrid players

Jalin Marshall and Dontre Wilson each took snaps in the wildcat formation.

The drive was halted at the PSU 23, though, and Nuernberger attempted a 41-yard field goal, which sailed wide right.

Following the field-goal miss, Penn State drove 32 yards aided in large part by a 15-yard pass interference penalty by OSU cornerback Eli Apple on a third-down play. But the Ohio State defense stood tall, forcing a turnover in OSU territory. Hackenberg was picked off for the second time on the night, this time by safety Tyvis Powell at the 30.

The Nittany Lions' offense finally got moving early in the fourth quarter, thanks in part to the Buckeyes. Barrett was intercepted on his first pass attempt of the final quarter, giving Penn State the ball at the OSU 45 following the pick by Hull. It took Penn State eight plays to reach the end zone for the first time on offense. Hackenberg, on a rare play during which he had plenty of time in the pocket, threw a ball to the right side of the end zone. That's where Penn State freshman Saeed Blacknall and Apple engaged in a one-on-one battle for the jump ball, one that Blacknall won for a touchdown.

Ficken's PAT made it 17-14 with 11:08 left in regulation.

Both teams struggled to find any more offensive success until Penn State's final drive of regulation. The Nittany Lions began the march on the PSU 9 after a 41-yard Johnston punt with 2:58 remaining. Hackenberg converted three third downs – twice on QB sneaks and one on a 5-yard pass to James – in guiding the Lions down the field. Ohio State also gave Penn State a first down on a roughing-the-passer penalty. In all, Penn State needed 18 plays to set up a 31-yard Ficken field goal that tied the game with nine seconds left in regulation.

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Defense Stood Tall To Help Buckeyes

By JEFF SVOBODA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Under former coach Jim Tressel, the Ohio State football team occasionally would "win the surest way," as the head coach called it. The coach, who abhorred critical mistakes seemingly more than he enjoyed big plays, would see his team take a lead and then batten down the hatches on offense, content to put the game in the hands of his generally more-than-capable defense.

On the other hand, things have been different under head coach Urban Meyer, an aggressive, foot-on-the-throat, offense-loving marauder who has overseen record-shattering attack units and shaky defenses in his two previous years at the helm.

It's not that Meyer doesn't enjoy a good defense, as well, it's just that his first couple of teams for a variety of reasons were led by the offenses. By the end of last season, injuries, a lack of depth and coaching miscommunications left the defense as the clear trouble spot on the team, and the number 110 – the team's ranking in passing yards allowed per game by the end of last season – was what people thought of when it came to the Silver Bullets at the end of 2013.

Even at the start of this season, the offense and redshirt freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett were the ones making headlines. OSU scored at least 50 points in four games in a row to set a new school record and also topped 500 yards in the same four contests to reach that mark in consecutive games for the first time since 1998.

So when the offense couldn't get things going for much of the night in Happy Valley on Oct. 25, for the first time in quite a while, it was up to the defense to bow up and make the plays needed to win the game.

It wasn't always pretty, but in the end, the defense felt like it could puff its chests out after the 31-24, double-overtime victory.

"We know that if the offense can't convert on some stuff, we have to go out there and stop them," redshirt freshman linebacker Darron Lee said. "That's our job. That's what Coach Meyer reiterates to us, to stop them, and that's our job. I felt like we did that for a long time in the game. I felt we were dominating a lot of the game, and we knew at the end in OT, we had to finish and we did just that."

There was a lot to like about the defense's performance, with the fact that it held Penn State to just 208 yards of offense through the 60 minutes of regulation. For the entire game, the Buckeyes allowed just 16 rushing yards on 31 tries to the Nittany Lions, and quarterback Christian Hackenberg had to

work for his yards, needing 31 completions and 49 passes to reach 224 yards through the air.

The defense was nearly impenetrable through the opening three quarters, holding Penn State to just seven first downs and 89 yards of total offense on nine possessions in that span. The stress also increased on the unit as the OSU offense struggled to get in gear in the third quarter, and the Buckeyes allowed only a pick-six in the opening 45 minutes when it came to the scoreboard and intercepted Hackenberg twice.

"They relied on us and we stepped up to the challenge," sophomore safety Vonn Bell said. "We kept on getting three-and-outs, three-and-outs. We told them put the game on us and we'll get it for you."

The foundation did crack some in the fourth quarter, especially as another OSU turnover added to Penn State's increasing momentum. Barrett threw an interception on his first pass of the fourth quarter to Mike Hull, who returned the ball to the OSU 45. Eight plays later, the Nittany Lions were in the end zone courtesy of a 24-yard pass from Hackenberg to one-time OSU recruit Saeed Blacknall in a drive kept alive by a roughing-the-passer penalty on Joey Bosa.

Penn State also moved 77 yards in 19 plays in 2:49 in the dying moments to tie the game. The Nittany Lions never netted the big play that made their comeback bid easier but did move down the field in small chunks, converting three third downs and again being bailed out of a long down-and-distance scenario by a roughing-the-passer penalty, this one on Curtis Grant.

But the Buckeyes stiffened and had solid coverage on Hackenberg's one throw into the end zone, forcing a field goal that led to overtime. There, OSU gave up a touchdown on its first possession but answered the bell in the second, holding the Nittany Lions to a four-and-out that ended the game.

"When you've got the momentum you've got to keep it, and when you lose it you've got to find a way to get it," defensive coordinator Luke Fickell said. "The momentum shifted there going into the overtime. Our guys bowed up, our offense bowed up and as a group and as a team I think they all just came together. It's great to see."

Lee said that allowing three scores in four drives after not allowing any through the first nine Penn State possessions was frustrating, but the goal when the team took the field for the second overtime was to make sure the offense didn't have to take the field again.

"We just buckled down," said Lee, who had 1½ sacks and was a constant presence in the PSU backfield. "We couldn't give up



SONNY BROCKWAY

UNDER PRESSURE – Ohio State sophomore Adolphus Washington (92) was one of several members of the Buckeye defense to put pressure on Penn State quarterback Christian Hackenberg (14). Washington recorded a sack.

a touchdown (at the end of regulation), we knew that for sure. We gave up the field goal, and it was like, 'All right, let's go to overtime and finish the game.' We did just that. We were all looking around at each other like, 'Let's buckle down and go win this game and finish this game.'"

Lee was far from the only standout on defense, a list that also included Bosa and his 2½ sacks including the game winner. Junior linebacker Joshua Perry was around the ball all game, finishing with a career-high 18 tackles, while sophomore safety Tyvis Powell had seven tackles and an intercep-

tion and Adolphus Washington chipped in a sack.

Team efforts such as that are exactly what the Buckeyes will be looking for as they come down the stretch.

"Anytime you go through adversity like that, it's going to help you in the long run," Fickell said. "This is still a young group of guys, a young team that's – things like this that you go through are what really make you great. You can't get this any other way other than doing it on the road in a great environment like this. This is a great learning experience and growing experience for all of us."

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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."

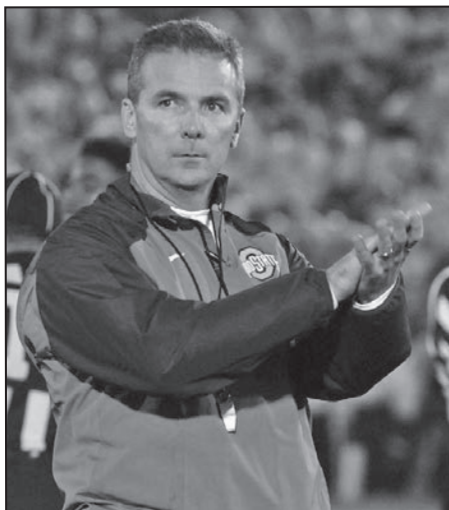
Penn State head coach James Franklin on the environment in Beaver Stadium: "I want to thank the fans. We had an unbelievable environment tonight. We created a really, really tough environment for a very good football team to come in and deal with."

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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Vol. 42, No. 8

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 5, 2022

Sophomore DE Has Breakout Game In 44-31 Win Over PSU

By **BRADEN MOLES**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

During the chaos of Ohio State's win at Penn State on Oct. 29, a 44-31 victory that moved the Buckeyes to 8-0 on the season and a perfect 5-0 mark in Big Ten play, there was one Buckeye who stood head and shoulders above the rest.

Sophomore defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, a quiet yet consistent presence on Ohio State's defense this season, exploded for not only the best game of his young career, but one of the best performances by an Ohio State defender in recent memory.

On Penn State's first offensive drive of the game, Tuimoloau batted a ball into the air thrown by quarterback Sean Clifford, and it was intercepted by defensive end Zach Harrison. Tuimoloau, not wanting to be left out of the festivities, intercepted a pass of his own on the Nittany Lions' next drive, the first pick of his career. They were the first of several disruptive plays accrued by Tuimoloau.

"It was a great game," he said. "The defense, we just trusted each other and just stuck together and came out strong."

The most pivotal plays, though, came in the fourth quarter. With Ohio State holding just a 16-14 lead entering the final frame, by far the closest game played by the Buckeyes this season due to some anemic offensive play in the first half, Tuimoloau could not be contained in the final 15 minutes.

He opened the quarter with a 9-yard sack of Clifford, and on Penn State's next drive – with the Nittany Lions threatening to take the lead with a 23-21 deficit – he again got to Clifford, dropping him for 7 yards and forcing a fumble, one that Tuimoloau also recovered, that led to another Buckeye score on the next play by Ohio State.

However, he still wasn't done making plays. Later in the fourth, with the clock winding down and the final result no longer in question after a shaky start to the game, he stepped in front of yet another pass from Clifford and hauled in his second interception of the game, which he took back for a 14-yard touchdown and a 44-24 Buckeye lead.

"It's all kind of a blur the way it happened," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "To intercept balls like that as a defensive end and then get a defensive score, I don't know if I've ever



SONNY BROCKWAY

ONE FOR THE BOOKS – Ohio State defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau had one of the most impressive individual defensive performances in program history in the Buckeyes' 44-31 win over Penn State on Oct. 29. The sophomore finished with six tackles (three for loss), two sacks, a forced fumble and subsequent recovery, a pair of interceptions – one of which was returned for a touchdown – and a pass breakup that led to another interception by defensive end Zach Harrison.

seen that before. That's big time.

"(Tuimoloau) has put so much hard work into this. He's an unbelievable player, but he's a better person, and you can see his talent. This is kind of his coming-out party today. Nobody wants it more than he does, so at this stage, for him to play the way he did means a lot to him. I think his teammates are very proud of him."

The Edgewood, Wash., native has flown all around Ohio State's defense this season but has been just a few feet away from making several plays through the first seven games. He had just nine tackles (3½ for loss) entering this game

with half a sack, not the production one would necessarily expect from the five-star prospect, but his play has opened up opportunities for others on the defensive line.

"J.T. is that combination of get-off quickness and strength kind of like Mike (Hall Jr.) has on the inside," defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said earlier this season. "I think J.T. has that on the outside. So he's being accounted for and uses up a lot of blocks (and) makes initial penetration a lot in the

Continued On Page 10

OPINION

Time To Learn How To Pronounce Tuimoloau

During an afternoon when for long stretches the No. 2 team in the nation didn't play very much like the No. 2 team in the nation, the country's No. 1-rated high school player in the 2021 recruiting class had his official coming-out party and helped Ohio State carve out a 44-31 victory against a determined and up-set-minded Penn State.

There have been a number of outstanding individual defensive performances in program history, Chris Spielman registering 29 tackles during a losing effort against Michigan in 1986 readily comes to mind. There was Chase Young's four-sack game vs. Wisconsin in 2019, a 38-7 victory during which Young also forced two fumbles. And the legendary Chic Harley had four interceptions during the 13-3 win at Michigan in 1919, a single-game record the university for some reason fails to recognize.

But perhaps surpassing them all was the stat sheet stuffing by second-year defensive end Jaylahn (better known as "J.T.") Tuimoloau against the Nittany Lions. His tipped pass in the first quarter led to an interception by fellow DE Zach Harrison, and then Tuimoloau got a pick of his own later in the opening period. That interception set up an eventual touchdown run by Miyan Williams to give Ohio State an early 10-0 lead.

And the engine inside the 6-4, 270-pound dynamo was just getting revved up.

On the first play of the fourth quarter, Tuimoloau motored past Penn State tight end Brenton Strange to throw quarterback Sean Clifford for a 9-yard loss. It's highly likely Clifford had "44" nightmares after the game because Tuimoloau wasn't finished acquainting himself with the Penn State signal-caller.

The Buckeyes had just taken a 23-21 lead on TreVeyon Henderson's 41-yard touchdown run when Tuimoloau abused Nittany Lions offensive tackle Bryce Effner on his way to a strip-sack of Clifford. The OSU defensive end then pounced on the loose football for good measure, and Ohio State scored on the very next play to pad its lead to a more comfortable 30-21 margin.

Then, after another Henderson scoring run made it 37-24 with 2:52 remaining, Tuimoloau put the icing on his coming-out cake by spear- ing a Clifford pass out of the air and returning it 14 yards for the Buckeyes' final touchdown of the afternoon.

It was a dreamlike sequence for a youngster who was among the top five prospects of nearly every recruiting service's 2021 rankings, including the No. 1 overall prospect according to 247Sports.com. But until the Penn State contest, he really hadn't done very much in an Ohio State uniform. In 20 previous games, the native of Edgewood, Wash., a small city of about 12,000 in the western part of the state, had never registered more than three tackles, had never forced or recovered a fumble, and never had an interception.

Against the Nittany Lions, Tuimoloau finished with six tackles, including two sacks, a forced fumble, a fumble recovery, and two interceptions, one of which he returned for a touchdown.

After a game during which quarterback C.J. Stroud threw for more than 350 yards for the 11th time in his career (all other OSU quarterbacks in program history have 11 such games combined), Marvin Harrison Jr. caught 10 passes for 185 yards (no Ohio State player has ever had more receiving yards during the 38-game series against Penn State), and linebacker Tommy Eichenberg totaled a game-high 15 tackles (the third time in his last nine games he has registered double-digit tackles), most of

the spotlight was reserved for Tuimoloau.

Reporters repeatedly asked him to talk about his breakout game, but Tuimoloau demurred mostly to answers about the team and teammates. After claiming that his favorite play in the game was his tipped pass that resulted in Harrison's interception, he said, "Seeing Zach get that pick made me very happy. I just try to play to the best of my ability every play."

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

It was an expected response from a guy who said this upon his first meeting last year with Ohio State beat writers: "My goal is just to compete and be the best version of myself that I could be. Keep your head down, stay humble and stay close to God."

Talent and humility. Commodities often in short supply these days. Maybe it's long past time we all learned how to correctly pronounce Tuimoloau. It's "Too-ee-mo-lo-ow," and I'm pretty sure opposing offensive coordinators are beginning to hear it in their sleep.

Uptempo ... Finally

Since the midseason break in the schedule, Ohio State has increasingly become a one-dimensional offense. Neither Henderson nor Williams is 100-percent healthy, but no one is at this time of the season. There really isn't much of an excuse for averaging a measly 2.2 yards on 30 rushing attempts against Iowa, and then just 1.9 on 19 carries through three quarters against Penn State. The Hawkeys and Nittany Lions are admittedly pretty good on defense, but come on.

Some of it might have had to do with the approach the Buckeyes were taking offensively. There seemed to be a lot of starting, stopping, adjusting and starting again within the 40-second play clock – too much window dressing in my opinion that prevented the attack from gaining any sort of continuity.

Then, faced with a 21-16 deficit with 9:26 remaining, it was as if Ryan Day suddenly remembered how well his offense performs when it plays with tempo. Rather than have players look over the defense, look to the sideline, look back at the defense and then run the play, the Buckeyes shifted into high gear and quickly traversed 75 yards, taking only three plays to do it.

Stroud connected with Harrison for 21 yards down the right sideline and then quickly found Emeke Egbuka breaking away to his left for another 13 yards. As soon as the offense got back to the line, Henderson was on his way to the end zone. The 41-yard touchdown run – Ohio State had only 37 rushing yards in the entire game to that point – jump-started an attack that scored three touchdowns in a matter of 5:59 of game clock.

The OSU running game might be problematic over the remainder of the season. Henderson finished with 78 yards and two touchdowns on 16 carries, but it appears he is not fully healthy. Meanwhile, Williams continues to nurse a sore knee and apparently added a hand or finger injury that limited him to just two carries for 9 yards. One of those carries was a 5-yard touchdown, though.

Perhaps Stroud will finally become a greater threat to run. His official totals against Penn State were six carries for 5 yards, but take

out his two sacks, and the QB scrambled four times for 18 yards, including an 11-yard run up the middle late in the first half.

Eighteen yards on four carries isn't a whole lot to get excited about, but for a quarterback heretofore reluctant to tuck the ball and run under any conditions, it's at least a start.

Glaring Errors

During the same game in which Tuimoloau had such an outstanding performance, there were too many defensive stinkers, many of which had to do with poor tackling.

Safety Tanner McCalister and cornerback JK Johnson pinballed off Penn State receiver Parker Washington early in the second quarter, allowing Washington to escape with a 58-yard touchdown play that put the Nittany Lions on the scoreboard for the first time. Washington finished the game with 11 catches for 179 yards, with 80 of those yards coming after the catch. Penn State finished the game with 371 yards through the air, and nearly half of that (184 to be exact) came after the catch was made.

As well as Eichenberg has played so far this season, even he was subject to missing tackles. He let Clifford escape early in the fourth quarter on a fourth-and-1 that the Penn State quarterback turned into a 4-yard pass play for a first down. And four plays later, on fourth-and-goal at the 1-yard line, Eichenberg had a clear shot in the backfield on freshman running back Kaytron Allen but whiffed again as Allen shed the OSU linebacker and scooted into the end zone to give his team a 21-16 lead at that point.

I couldn't help watching the OSU defense surrender nearly 500 total yards to the Nittany Lions – including an average of 7.0 yards on first down – while giving up seven plays of 20 yards or more and wondering how that kind of effort is going to get it done against Michigan.

Up-And-Down Day

Speaking of a mixture of marquee plays and cringe-inducing ones, that pretty well sums up the afternoon for OSU tight end Cade Stover. His six catches not only represented a new career best, but the output was the best for an Ohio State tight end since Rory Nicol had six receptions during a 37-17 win at Penn State in 2007.

Stover converted his catches into 78 yards and a touchdown, the score coming during the Buckeyes' fourth-quarter barrage. It was a 24-yard touchdown on which the 6-4, 255-pounder broke three tackles on his way to the end zone.

It's likely, however, that the fourth-year tight end still wasn't too comfortable in his seat while the coaching staff graded game film.

Stover whiffed badly trying to block Penn State safety Zakee Wheatley on a first-quarter receiver screen, a missed block that nearly got Egbuka decapitated and led to a missed 53-yard field-goal try by kicker Noah Ruggles. Stover left Egbuka out to dry on another third-down screen, this one midway through the second quarter when Nittany Lions cornerback Kalen King blew up the play and forced an Ohio State punt.

Then, there were a pair of false starts by Stover on successive two-point tries in the fourth quarter, penalties that changed Day's strategy from going for two to trotting Ruggles onto the field for PAT kicks.

Stover can be a tremendous weapon for the Buckeyes as they navigate the final month of the regular season. But like his teammates, he still has several things he needs to address before becoming a finished product.



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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 44, Penn State 31

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on the importance of being tested into the fourth quarter: "It's huge, because nothing comes easy in this environment against Penn State, who does a tremendous job. There are times where things may become a little bit easy for us, and that's a different experience than this (game) right here. This is totally different. To respond the way we did and figure out what was going on is great, because really the last time that happened a little bit was in the Notre Dame game."

Penn State head coach James Franklin on what swung the game: "To me, it starts with the turnovers. You can't give that type of team a short field that many times and be successful. It's going to make it pretty challenging."

Day on what the win said about his team's toughness: "That's what means everything to us because there's a lot of things that come into play here. We're talking about the best quarterback in the country in C.J. Stroud, J.T. (Tuimoloau)'s coming-out party and Marvin (Harrison Jr.) and then the score and what we did in the first half. That's, to me, the difference between winning a championship, reaching our goals or not, and we responded tonight."

Day on how satisfying the win was: "Every game has its own story, and this is one we'll be telling for a while. The feeling of the emotion that was on the sideline during that fourth quarter when J.T. got that pick, when

Cade (Stover) broke those tackles for the touch-down, it reminded me of (Binjimen Victor) when he cut that one out here (in 2018). They believed. We knew it was going to take four quarters. We don't always have to play four quarters. We knew we were going to have to play four quarters today."

Stroud on Penn State's secondary: "I definitely think we've got to be better in the red zone. But Joey (Porter Jr.) is a hell of a player, along with (safety Ji'Airy Brown and linebacker Curtis Jacobs), and players like that. It feels good to go against them and have a little bit of success. I definitely think that they'll continue to do great, great things over at Penn State."

Day on what he saw on Ohio State's sideline while down in the fourth quarter: "We had leadership. Cade was there, but C.J. led it. I don't know what C.J.'s numbers were in the fourth quarter. I mean, he was tremendous. To come in and play like that in this environment and go put the offense on his shoulders like this - it's everybody on offense - but boy, he was gutsy in this game. I'm proud of him."

Stover on his touchdown catch: "It's nice to get trusted with the ball in that situation, so you better make the most of it when you get it."

Stover on tight ends being a passing threat for Ohio State: "All the tight ends at

Ohio State, we've always tried to pride ourselves on being well-rounded tight ends. And it's nice to finally make plays in the passing game like that and be able to keep showcasing our blocking skills."

Tuimoloau on his breakout performance: "I told myself to let God handle it and just let it come to you. I think that's what happened today."

Stroud on his willingness to run the ball: "I'm willing to do anything to win. So I'm blessed to have the ability to be able to run and things like that. But at the same time, I tried to do what's best to win, and if that's staying in the pocket and giving my guy a chance, I'll do that."

Harrison on why slant routes thrown to him have been successful: "Just a lot of repetition, getting on the same page (with Stroud). There's a lot of communication that you guys probably don't see during the play that helped a lot today."

Ohio State defensive end Zach Harrison on how the defense hung in the game: "We just keep playing, keep playing and never pull up. Never stop. It's a long game. It's a game of momentum. Early on, we were playing well, and then we kind of stalled out a little bit. Coach Day said, 'Just keep playing, keep playing. Next play, next play, next play, next play.' And eventually, the offense opened up and we got the stops for them."

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Bubble Bursts For Ohio State Offense

Continued From Page 1

pass rush.

"I'm sure you guys see it a lot of times that he draws holding calls or (what should have been a) holding call. He's one of those guys that kind of makes things happen initially at the play but doesn't always get the credit. But he's making the ball redirect or the quarterback do something different right at the snap."

Tuimolou's final stat line in this game read six tackles (three for loss) with a pair of sacks, his two interceptions and a forced fumble and recovery and a pass breakup. It's just the seventh time since 2000 that an Ohio State defender recovered a fumble and had an interception in a game.

Playing for his second defensive coordinator in two seasons, Tuimolou credited his coach for being able to take another step this year.

"I've got to shout out Coach Knowles," Tuimolou said. "He's allowed us to show that versatility, and he has trust in me to do those things. I've got to thank him."

Ohio State Overcomes Offensive Struggles In Win

It may seem strange to categorize a team that finished with 452 total yards of offense – including 354 passing yards courtesy of quarterback C.J. Stroud – as one with a struggling offense, but early in Ohio State's eventual win over Penn State, the Buckeyes looked nothing like the team that has be-

come known as one of the top offenses in college football.

The Buckeyes settled for a field goal on their opening drive after stalling in Penn State territory, a combination of questionable play calling and the impact of the 108,433 fans in attendance at Beaver Stadium. Ohio State saw three plays go for no gain on the drive, and the Buckeyes also had a delay of game penalty at Penn State's 23-yard line. In total, Ohio State was called three times for delay of game and once for a false start, and in general they looked to have difficulty at times getting a play in from the sideline.

"We definitely haven't had a lot of road games," Stroud said. "This is our second one of the year. We did a great job preparing early on with the noise, and we weren't going off of a silent (count). Matt (Jones) and Luke (Wypler) had great communication up there. Luke had a lot of protection, a lot of times I would come up there and try to veto it or confirm it. I think we had constant communication in practice. It's where it started with just being focused in so in the game it wouldn't rattle us."

The Ohio State defense forced turnovers on each of Penn State's next two possessions – interceptions courtesy of Harrison and Tuimolou – setting the Buckeyes up in Nittany Lion territory. Harrison's pick led to a missed 53-yard field goal from kicker Noah Ruggles after the offense gained just 4 yards, but after forcing the second turnover, Ohio State took just three plays for Mi-



SONNY BROCKWAY

BRIGHT SPOT – Ohio State wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. was one of the few constants for the Buckeye offense against Penn State, pulling in 10 catches for 185 yards, both career highs for the sophomore.

yan Williams to find the end zone following gains through the air of 18 and 19 yards for wideout Marvin Harrison Jr.

Both of Harrison's catches on that drive – he finished the game with a team-high 10 receptions for 185 yards, both career highs – were between the numbers, and that's where Ohio State's passing attack found the most success against Penn State. The Buckeyes had a nasty habit against the Nittany Lions of running far too many plays for loss, including several on screens and runs outside.

They were numerous throughout the first half and even into the third quarter, but once Ohio State started operating the offense almost exclusively between the numbers in the fourth quarter, the offense was able to take off.

"I thought we finally got into rhythm, finding those seam routes in there," Day said. "We hit a couple shots on the outside of the protection when it was clean. I felt like we would have done a better job of the perimeter run game, with the bubble throws that just – we got blown up on those a few times. That really hurts. We struggled on third down early on. We got that solved, which was huge, because it kept the drives going."

Day said the bubble screens and gener-

al plays outside the numbers served Ohio State's rushing attack – or would have, at least, if the plays had gone according to plan.

"What it does is it forces everyone to run to that side of the field if you complete it," he said. "It sounds crazy, but it's true. We want them to defend the entire field, and if they put a lot of guys in a box then we need to spread them out to the perimeter. We always say that we want to be able to take them inside, attack them outside and then throw the ball down the field."

"We probably could have done that more in the game, but I think if we had done a little bit better job on the perimeter in that area, we could have cracked the rock sooner."

Speaking of the run game, it was another up-and-down performance for Ohio State's rushing attack. Miyan Williams got all of two carries before exiting the game with an apparent hand injury, and Day provided no update after the game on his status.

That left TreVeyon Henderson with the bulk of the carries, and it wasn't a pretty sight early on. In the first half, Henderson had eight carries for just 19 yards, with five of those attempts going for either no gain or a loss. He was also tackled in the backfield for a 5-yard loss after hauling in one of Stroud's aforementioned screens.



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COVER STORY



SONNY BROCKWAY

POWERING ON — Ohio State running back TreVeyon Henderson's day got off to a slow start against Penn State, but he eventually responded with a 41-yard touchdown to put the Buckeyes up in the fourth quarter against the Nittany Lions.

To his credit — as well as Day's for not abandoning the run despite the struggles — Henderson kept pushing. After just three carries for 4 yards in the third quarter, he took his first carry of the fourth quarter — which came with under nine minutes remaining in the game and Ohio State facing a 21-16 deficit — 41 yards for a score, his first of the game to put the Buckeyes up 23-21.

"That's huge," Day said of Henderson's touchdown. "We're going to have to figure out what's going on with a couple of things, but in that moment right there, we started to kind of wear them down a little bit up front and started to move the pile a little bit."

Henderson's day wasn't finished, though,

as he added another touchdown two drives later, this time on a 7-yard tote. While Henderson's first rushing score was one of the pivotal moments in Ohio State's win, it doesn't tell the full story of his day or that of the rushing attack for the Buckeyes.

Outside of his 41-yard score, Henderson had just 37 yards on 15 carries, an average of just 2.5 yards per attempt. Part of the issue was with Ohio State's blocking, which far too often got blown up by the Nittany Lion defensive line, though Henderson was culpable as well with several missed holes — at least when they were available — and a few instances of him slipping on Penn State's grass field.

Over the last two games against Iowa and Penn State, the Buckeyes have accounted for just 164 yards on 56 carries, a hair under 3 yards per attempt. Even with Henderson's highlights against the Nittany Lions, the run game is approaching a concern for Ohio State entering the back stretch, especially if Williams — who was seen with fingers taped up on his right hand — was to miss time.

Asked about the impact of the running game on his play calling, Day said they will assess the running game after enjoying the win.

"Some things, certainly, we want better, but at the end of the day, it's great to get a win," he said. "When we go into these games, the expectation is to win. I know that's not everybody's expectation. That's our expectation. Do we want to play perfect? Yeah. Do we want to win by four touchdowns? Yeah. But the expectation coming in here has to be to win, and that's what we did.

"When you look at the scoreboard at the end and it says 44-31, what's the story? This story has its own unique tale. We always come out and want to do things better, but to play the way we did in the fourth quarter was tremendous."

Confusion Costs OSU Points Before Halftime

Lost amid the chaos of the game and the eventual 44-31 win was a confusing sequence that took place as the teams were preparing to go to the locker room at the half.

With Penn State holding a 14-13 lead, the Buckeyes got the ball back at their own 31 with just over a minute remaining with a chance to put points on the board. There was extra significance because the Nittany Lions were to receive the ball in the second half, so the deficit could have grown by the next time Ohio State had the ball on offense.

The Buckeyes started the drive off with a 23-yard gain to tight end Cade Stover, and after the Penn State defense worked Ohio State down to fourth-and-7 following an 8-yard sack of Stroud, the quarterback responded with a 14-yard pass to Harrison to keep the drive alive, and he followed it up with another 21-yard gain to the PSU 8.

After spiking the ball to stop the clock with just six seconds remaining and time for one more play before settling for a field goal, Stroud did the one thing he couldn't do: take a sack. He was dropped for a 5-yard loss and fumbled the ball away, ending any chance of Ohio State coming away with points before the half. The play was meant to develop quickly and have Stroud throw the ball up in the corner of the end zone, but with unfavorable numbers for the Buckeyes, Penn State cornerback Johnny Dixon came off the edge and was on Stroud in an instant, forcing the fumble that was recovered by Wypler.

"We had six seconds left," Day said. "I thought that we could take a shot in the end zone. We knew they were in zero coverage, and I was going to take the delay game and then just kick the field goal, but then felt like maybe C.J. would want to throw the fade up and see if we get it vs. zero coverage.

"We were not on the same page, he and I, but I'll take all the blame for that. It's totally not his fault. He shouldn't have been in that situation. Six seconds left, just kick the field goal, get some momentum going into halftime."

Day considered calling a timeout but then realized he did not have one — perhaps due to some confusion between the officials, the in-house scorekeepers and even the FOX broadcast, which were not in consensus about how many the Buckeyes had remaining in the first half — and said it was not a good feeling.

Stroud echoed his coach's comment and said it was just a miscommunication, though he also admitted he should have thrown up the fade.

"I knew I was going to get zero (coverage) and I just had to get the ball out of my hand," Stroud said. "I wanted Emeka (Egbuka) to run a one-step slant right away and catch them off guard. They were backed up 3 yards in the end zone. But it is what it is. I appreciate Coach Day having the trust in me to move the ball down the field. I think we did that pretty well."



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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Buckeyes Utilize Wild 4th Quarter in Win

Ohio State and Penn State entered the game's final quarter with 30 points combined and the Buckeyes ahead 16-14. However, neither team was prepared for the nature of the final frame.

The Buckeyes and Nittany Lions produced 45 total points in the fourth quarter, while both teams combined to churn out 368 yards of offense during the final period. Although Ohio State and Penn State slogged through the first three quarters, with neither team getting much separation on the other, it was the Buckeyes who reigned supreme in the game's wild final act, outscoring the Nittany Lions 28-17 in the contest's last 15 minutes.

"It was Buckeye football," quarterback C.J. Stroud said. "We know that it gets tough in the fourth quarter. I think we're a fourth quarter-type of team, at least we try to be. We work for that in the offseason, pushing sleds, lifting weights with (the strength staff). So those are the dudes who are why we are so good in the fourth."

It wasn't necessarily a ceremonious start for the Buckeyes in the quarter, though. After the Buckeyes retook the lead with 10 seconds to go in the third thanks to the leg of kicker Noah Ruggles, the Nittany Lions found themselves backed up deep in their own territory and facing a third-and-16 after a sack from defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau. Although Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford's third-down attempt fell to the turf, Ohio State cornerback JK Johnson was flagged for pass interference, giving the Nittany Lions a free set of downs. Aided by gains of 14 and 26 yards, Penn State reached the red zone, where the Buckeyes hardened and held the Nittany Lions to a field-goal attempt. Again, Penn State was bailed out by an Ohio State mistake, as kicker Jake Pinegar's missed 35-yard attempt was wiped off the board due to an illegal formation on the Buckeyes.

The Nittany Lions then converted a fourth-and-1 from the Buckeyes' 13-yard line before reaching the goal line for a huge fourth-and-goal three plays later. It appeared that fourth-

GAME NOTEBOOK Jack Emerson

down attempt was doomed to fail when linebacker Tommy Eichenberg corralled running back Kaytron Allen in the backfield, but Allen slipped away from his grasp and fell into the end zone to give Penn State the 21-16 lead with 9:26 remaining in regulation.

Although it appeared to be a demoralizing possession for the Ohio State defense, especially due to the several penalties that allowed the drive to continue, Stroud noted that the Buckeye offense kept calm on the sideline and rallied together to prepare for their next possession.

"Coach (Ryan) Day has a lot of trust in me, along with my teammates," Stroud said. "I definitely think that when those moments come, I definitely try to look at myself in the mirror and be like, 'C.J., this is your time. God made you for this.' But on the sideline, I'm just trying to give everybody positive feedback and give confidence. That's what I think I did, and that's why we went out there and scored."

The Buckeyes showcased that confidence on the very next drive, going 75 yards in just three plays and benefiting from a 41-yard touchdown run from running back TreVeyon Henderson, who had largely struggled up until that point, to retake the lead, 23-21.

Just two plays later, the Ohio State defense came up big. Tuimoloau, who had already registered an interception during the first half, bull-rushed through Penn State tackle Bryce Effner before slapping Clifford's arm and jarring the ball free. Tuimoloau then landed on the ball himself, giving the Buckeyes possession at the Penn State 24-yard line. One play later, Stroud found tight end Cade Stover, who bounced off a trio of would-be tacklers before plowing into the end zone to extend Ohio State's lead to 30-21.



SONNY BROCKWAY

WATCH HIM GO — Ohio State tight end Cade Stover provided one of the most exciting moments during the Buckeyes' win over Penn State, weaving through several Nittany Lion defenders on a 24-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter to extend Ohio State's lead to 30-21.

The Nittany Lions quickly made it a one-possession game again as Pinegar drilled a 44-yard field goal to make it 30-24 with 5:49 remaining in regulation. However, the Buckeyes responded yet again, driving 75 yards in 2:57 to set up a 7-yard touchdown run by Henderson. The scoring possession was boosted by a 42-yard connection between Stroud and wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, placing Ohio State in the red zone.

But lightning struck twice for the Nittany Lions, and it was Tuimoloau delivering the dagger into the heart of the Beaver Stadium crowd.

The Nittany Lions regained possession down 37-24, and Clifford, once again, tried to make something happen with his arm. Looking to find wideout Parker Washington, Clifford instead found Tuimoloau, who rumbled into the end zone with a pick-six on his second interception of the afternoon. Tuimoloau's pick-six put the cap on a huge day for the sophomore. He tallied six tackles (three for loss) and two sacks along with his pair of interceptions, fumble recovery and pass breakup.

"It was a great win," Tuimoloau said. "This is not an easy place to play. I know you guys heard the fans were rocking. We played a great defense and came out with the win."

Day relished his team's ability to come together in the final quarter and make the necessary plays needed to emerge victorious.

"I'd say it was crazy, but we expect when we play this game here it to be that way," Day said. "We think about our game in 2018

here, the game we played in 2017 back at our place. It comes down to the fourth quarter. We knew that was going to be the case. There are a lot of things in the first half we wish we'd done better, no question. But that's playing football. That's competing. Penn State's got one heck of a team. They played really hard, and it doesn't come easy. That being said, I'm very proud of the way the team played, especially in the fourth quarter.

"I thought C.J. Stroud was unbelievable in the fourth quarter, the way he played. (Tuimoloau) was off the charts, Marvin Harrison (Jr.) — but it was everybody. Cade Stover, what can you say about that run he had? Clutch. Just the way we played in that fourth quarter was tremendous. I'm proud of our guys."

Buckeyes Allow Clifford To Get Into Rhythm

At the game's onset, it appeared Clifford was doomed for a difficult outing. The Penn State quarterback threw a pair of interceptions in his first six attempts, with Tuimoloau playing a hand in both.

On Clifford's first pick, Tuimoloau got between him and Washington and batted the ball into the air toward fellow defensive end Zach Harrison, who bobbled it once before reeling it in and setting up the OSU offense at the Penn State 39-yard line. The Buckeye offense was unable to produce points off that turnover, though, as a 53-yard attempt from Ruggles landed wide right and short.

With the Buckeyes clinging to a 3-0 lead

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Aerial strikes into the middle of Penn State's defense proved most effective for quarterback C.J. Stroud and the Ohio State passing attack against the Nittany Lions.

Wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. was the biggest beneficiary of such plays, finishing with 10 catches for 185 yards on the day. Each catch Harrison made went for at least 10 yards, and a vast majority came on in-breaking routes. Perhaps no such route was more effective for him in Beaver Stadium than the slant.

That's the route head coach Ryan Day drew up for Harrison on a crucial third-and-10 with less than five minutes to play, and he made use of soft Penn State coverage on a 12-yard first-down gain.

Tight end Cade Stover, Stroud's biggest target over the middle in terms of size, set a career high for receptions against the Nittany Lions, hauling in six passes. He went for 78 yards, five short of his career best.

Stover also notched the touchdown that put the Buckeyes up two scores with 8:17 to play. Blocking and releasing on a short route over the middle, he found plenty of space as all of Penn State's linebackers were either blitzing or in man coverage elsewhere. Stroud hit him, and Stover turned and rumbled up field, bowling over not one or two, but three Penn State defenders as he tumbled into the end zone for a 24-yard score.

Even graduate tight end Mitch Rossi got in on the over-the-middle action, hauling in a catch between the hashes with plenty of space in the third quarter. He picked up 16 yards on the reception.

What Didn't Work

A deficiency running the ball one week against a good defense can be written off. In back-to-back weeks, though, with the latter against a team that's struggled previously to stop opposing ground games in Penn State, there's an issue.

For a second straight contest, Ohio State couldn't establish its rushing attack. The Buckeyes finished with 98 yards on 26 carries – a mere 3.8 per attempt – with running back TreVeyon Henderson on a dreadful pace of 2.1 yards per carry through his first 11 runs.

Particularly, outside runs were Ohio State's kryptonite. Henderson had his longest runs of those first 11 totes, gains of 8 and 9 yards, on handoffs heading straight up the middle. Ohio

routes, the Buckeyes' signal caller noted that wasn't the team's initial plan against Penn State's vaunted secondary.

"It was something we kind of felt on the fly," Stroud said. "We knew they were in zero coverage, and we had a plan for that, but it wasn't really working. We kind of got away from that and had another plan for it and talked about it on the sideline. That just shows you what type of coaches we have in Coach Day and Coach (Brian) Hartline, people like that just showing how much they trust in us on plays."

Harrison got going from the game's start, hauling in three catches for 74 yards in the opening frame. His ability to pick up chunks of yardage extended beyond just the first quarter, however, as each of his 10 receptions went for 11 or more yards. Harrison finished the afternoon with an average of 18.5 yards per reception.

Harrison was also sure-handed for the Buckeyes on third and fourth down, snagging three first-down receptions in third-and-long situations. The Philadelphia native also added a conversion on fourth-and-7 during Ohio State's final drive of the first half.

He also showcased his physical and mental toughness, tweaking his shoulder during the first half but ultimately opting to remain in the game.

"We know Marvin is talented, but to play tough the way he did says a lot about him,"

Day said. "He was gutsy today."

In terms of the mental aspect, Harrison dealt with the emotions of playing in his home state as a native of Philadelphia.

"It means a lot," Harrison said. "This might be one of the only times I'm able to come back here to Penn State and play here, so I try to make the best of it."

Buckeyes Handle Beaver Stadium

Entering their dance with the Nittany Lions, the Buckeyes had been challenged on the road only once in a comparatively sleepy atmosphere at Spartan Stadium in East Lansing, Mich., on Oct. 8.

Although Ohio State passed its visit to Michigan State with flying colors, outpacing the Spartans 49-20 on the road, its trip to Beaver Stadium was a whole different beast. For starters, the Buckeyes played in front of just 72,809 fans at Spartan Stadium – a number that pales in comparison to the 108,433 people who trekked to Happy Valley to see Penn State take on Ohio State.

While the Buckeyes had to deal with the raucous Penn State crowd all afternoon, Zach Harrison emphasized that he was just happy to leave Happy Valley with a win.

"It feels good just to get a win," he said. "Penn State is always a tough team to play, tough place to play. It was rocking a few times in that stadium. And to just come out with a

State ran three bubble screens and a swing pass in the first half, all outside throws behind the line of scrimmage that head coach Ryan Day has said he considers extensions of the running game. Those combined for 7 yards of losses on four plays.

Trailing 14-13 late in the third quarter, the Buckeyes moved to Penn State's 30-yard line for a first down. They dialed up two such bubble screens, one which gained 4 yards and another that went for no gain, before running on third-and-6 and settling for a field goal on fourth-and-2.

Ohio State did manage to bust a big run when it needed to, however, on Henderson's 12th carry of the day. The Virginia native dashed through an open hole and outran the back end of Penn State's defense for a 41-yard touchdown that put the Buckeyes up 23-21 with 8:51 to play. He added a second touchdown run from 7 yards out with 2:52 remaining.

Still, concern lingers about the long-term viability of the Buckeyes' ground game, particularly when Michigan managed 418 yards rushing against the same Penn State team.

Play Of The Game

A certain former five-star defensive end named J.T. Tuimoloau had a breakout performance against Penn State. One play served as the exclamation point, not just in terms of said breakout but in terms of Ohio State's victory as well.

The Nittany Lions had the ball at their own 19-yard line with 2:47 to play. Screens had picked up consistent yardage much of the day for Penn State, and that's where the squad went on a first-and-10, where wide receiver Parker Washington quickly turned open for a tunnel screen behind the line of scrimmage.

Meanwhile, Tuimoloau had flattened Penn State right tackle Bryce Effner and stood in quarterback Sean Clifford's passing lane. The signal caller still thought he could fit the ball in over Tuimoloau, however, and he thought wrong. Tuimoloau, flexing his basketball background, leapt up and snagged the throw with his fingertips, then proceeded to run untouched for a 14-yard pick-six. The defensive score, the second in as many games for the Buckeyes, put the contest out of reach at 44-24 before the eventual 44-31 final.

— Andy Anders

win, that's what we worked all week for."

Although Ohio State came away with the win, the Buckeyes still showed some ineptitude when dealing with a hostile environment. Ohio State's offense was called for delay of game on three separate occasions while also picking up a false start and offsides penalty during the course of the contest.

Stroud acknowledged that some miscommunication took place during the win, specifically on the Buckeyes' final possession of the first half. As OSU operated within the two-minute offense, Stroud was able to march Ohio State 61 yards to the Penn State 8-yard line with six seconds remaining.

Although the Buckeyes had the opportunity to take a chip-shot field-goal attempt and head into the locker room with the lead, Ohio State opted to run one more offensive play while seeking to find pay dirt. Stroud instead succumbed to pressure caused by the Penn State defensive front and took a sack, and the Buckeyes were unable to stop the clock as they did not possess a timeout at the time.

The Buckeyes showed momentary lapses against the sea of white and blue, but Day was pleased with his team's resilience in a hostile environment.

"A lot of respect for Penn State and James Franklin and his staff," Day said. "In this environment, this is a hard place to play, and it always is. For us to do that – I mean, that locker room was on fire afterwards."

with 4:42 remaining in the opening frame, Tuimoloau again showcased his threatening presence in pass defense. This time, he dropped back into zone coverage before jumping in front of Clifford's checkdown target, Allen, and intercepting the ball. The Buckeyes went on to score three plays later and take an early 10-0 lead.

But Ohio State was unable to hold Clifford, and Washington for that matter, down the whole way through. After his second interception, Clifford went on to complete nine of his next 11 pass attempts, including a 58-yard touchdown pass to Washington in which he bounced off a pair of would-be tacklers in safety Tanner McCalister and Johnson. Clifford capped off that run with another touchdown, this time to KeAndre Lambert-Smith to give Penn State its first lead of the afternoon, 14-10.

Clifford managed the game well from there, until disaster struck with his previously mentioned pair of turnovers in the fourth quarter. While Clifford was up-and-down for much of the afternoon, he completed 32 of 47 attempts for 371 yards, three touchdowns and three interceptions.

"I thought he played gutsy and made some big-time plays," said Penn State head coach James Franklin. "Obviously, you can't have the turnovers. The (fumble), I don't know if it was necessarily his fault, it was a pressure and a strip sack. The other ones, whether he left the ball inside or whether he has to find a throwing lane around really athletic, long defensive ends, you have to find a throwing lane."

Despite their inconsistency against Clifford and his band of receivers, the Buckeyes remained steady against the Nittany Lions' rushing attack, holding Penn State to just 111 rushing yards and an average of 3.4 yards per attempt.

Although Ohio State's defensive performance against Clifford also took a roller-coaster trajectory, Day was largely pleased with the way his defense held up at key points in the game.

"I thought they competed," Day said of the defense. "(The Nittany Lions) had their big plays, but they also had their turnovers too. We could feed off each other like we did. That's when we can flip the scoreboard, and would we like to have done it more? Sure. But that's a great challenge today that we responded to."

Zach Harrison also noted that the Buckeyes needed to regroup after Clifford's pair of touchdowns but all-in-all registered a strong day on the defensive side of the football.

"We just keep playing, just keep playing and never fold," Harrison said. "Early on, we were playing well and then we kind of stalled out a little bit. But Coach Day just said, 'Keep playing.' It's just the next play, next play and next play. The offense opened up and we got them stops."

'Route-Man Marv' Strikes Again

While the Ohio State offensive attack was largely limited through much of the first three quarters against Penn State, Marvin Harrison remained a steady hand for the Buckeyes throughout their visit to State College, Pa.

Harrison largely contributed through his prowess across the middle and in slant routes, snagging 10 of Stroud's 26 completions and accounting for 185 yards against the Nittany Lions. Although Stroud and Harrison largely connected through slant

OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Buckeyes State Their Case In 4th-Quarter Surge

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Quarterback C.J. Stroud, after a slow start, did his thing. Running back TreVeyon Henderson, after a slow start, did his thing. Defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau really did his thing the entire game, and as a result, No. 2 Ohio State remained on course for a spot in the College Football Playoff after a dramatic and pulsating 44-31 win over No. 13 Penn State in State College, Pa., on Oct. 29.

For the second game in a row, Stroud couldn't find a rhythm in the first half but clicked after halftime to finish with 354 yards and a touchdown, which came during a 28-point fourth quarter explosion in a 6:09 stretch that included two rushing TDs by Henderson and a pick-six from Tuimoloau as the Buckeyes (8-0, 5-0 Big Ten) overcame a 21-16 deficit against the pesky Nittany Lions (6-2, 3-2).

Peaks and Valleys

Just as they had started against Iowa the previous game when the Buckeyes had to settle for field goals on three of their first four trips to the red zone, they took the opening kickoff and marched from their 25 to the PSU 20 before Noah Ruggles kicked a 38-yard field goal at 9:47 for a 3-0 lead.

After a completion for no gain and an incompletion to begin the drive, Stroud found Marvin Harrison Jr. for 37 yards to the Penn State 38. Henderson then rushed for 5 yards, and Cade Stover had a catch for 10 yards to the 23. Henderson gained nothing on two carries, and a delay of game pushed the ball back to the 28 before Stover's grab gained 8 yards to set up the field goal.

The Buckeyes got the ball back when quarterback Sean Clifford, on third-and-9 from the PSU 47, was intercepted by Zach Harrison after the pass was tipped by Tuimoloau. Harrison made a return of 2 yards to the Penn State 39.

But the Lions defense stiffened, and Ruggles missed from 53 yards after Henderson was stuffed again for nothing and a completion each to Stover and Emeka Egbuka netted 4 total yards.

On PSU's third snap of the ensuing drive after the kickoff, Tuimoloau cut in front of Kayron Allen for an interception at the Nittany Lions' 43 and returned it 2 yards.

"He really stepped up," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said of Tuimoloau. "You're seeing what he is capable of now. This was a coming-out party for him. It's well deserved, and I'm happy for him. He's been working hard, and I'm glad all of his hard work is paying off."

From there, Harrison made catches of 18 and 19 yards to the 4. Miyan Williams bulled his way in to make 10-0 with 2:48 left in the first quarter. He was initially ruled short of the goal line, but video review overturned the call on the field. The three-play drive took 1:54.

Following a touchback on a Penn State punt, Stroud scrambled for 4 yards, and Williams rushed for 5 yards but was tackled along the left sideline and suffered an injury and left the game at the end of the quarter before an Ohio State punt.

Parker Washington ignited the stadium with a 58-yard catch-and-run TD for a 10-7 score at 11:13 of the second quarter. Facing a 3rd-and-4, Clifford tossed a pass to Wash-



SONNY BROCKWAY

FIVE-STAR TALENT — Ohio State defensive end Zach Harrison (9) put an early stop to Penn State's offense, intercepting quarterback Sean Clifford after defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau batted a pass up in the air. It was the first of four turnovers on the day by Clifford.

ington at the PSU 46. He shirked two would-be defenders in cornerback JK Johnson and safety Tanner McCalister and sprinted to the end zone.

Penn State took a 14-10 lead at 6:50 on a 23-yard reception by KeAndre Lambert-Smith to complete a six-play, 79-yard drive in 1:49. On the previous play, Clifford had rolled left and connected with tight end Theo Johnson for 42 yards.

Ohio State didn't fully capitalize on another red-zone opportunity after Penn State gifted the Buckeyes 15 yards on a pass-interference penalty, and Ruggles nailed a 37-yard field goal to make it 14-13 at 3:14.

It had started with the kickoff out-of-bounds to give the Buckeyes possession at their 35. The pass interference moved the ball to the 50. Stroud would later have a 23-yard pass to Julian Fleming to the 32. Stover's catch gained 9 yards, and Henderson rushed for 9 more to the 14 only for Ohio State to have an incompletion, a 5-yard loss on a screen to Henderson and an incompletion.

The Buckeyes blew a chance to take the lead going into halftime, driving to the 8 but failing to put points on the board.

An 8-yard Egbuka punt return placed the ball at the OSU 31 with 1:07 left in the half. Stover had a catch for 23 to the PSU 46, but the drive was in peril on fourth-and-7 following a Stroud scramble for 11 yards on third down while needing 18. From the 43 and after an Ohio State timeout, Harrison hauled in a 14-yarder to the 29, and he made another

catch to the 8. Stroud spiked the ball with six seconds left, and the Buckeyes decided to go for a TD, but Stroud was sacked for 5 yards by Johnny Dixon and fumbled the ball. Center Luke Wypler recovered at the 13, but the clock expired.

Nit Picking

The Buckeye defense got a fourth-down stop early in the third quarter. PSU moved to the OSU 19 with the aid of a 27-yard catch by Washington, but Tyleik Williams tackled running back Nick Singleton for no gain, and the Buckeyes took over on downs only to have to punt it back.

Later, Ruggles kicked a 40-yard field near the end of the third quarter to put the Buckeyes ahead 16-14.

Starting from the OSU 33, Harrison caught a ball for 16 yards, and Mitch Rossi later added another 16 yards to the Lion 30. Fleming had a 4-yard catch, but Egbuka's reception went for no yards before Henderson rushed for 4 yards to the 22 to set up the field goal.

Penn State regained the lead in a most unique way, going up 21-16 with 9:26 to play on a 1-yard run by Allen. Penn State had faced fourth-and 1 from the OSU 13, and Jake Pinegar missed a 30-yard field goal to the right, but a false start nullified the play. Pinegar then missed to the right from 35, but OSU was called for an illegal formation, setting up another fourth-and-1.

Given new life, Clifford passed 4 yards to

Tyler Warren to the 9 for the first down. Allen ran for 1 yard, and on second down, Mitchell Tinsley caught the ball at the 5 and appeared to get into the end zone, but he fumbled at the goal line and a review showed tight end Brenton Strange recovered it just short of the line. Clifford was stopped for no gain, but on fourth down, Allen took it in. He slipped away from linebacker Tommy Eichenberg at the 4 then pushed his way past three more Buckeyes. The drive used 5:44 and 13 plays to go 75 yards.

The Buckeyes responded in stunning fashion, going 75 yards in three plays and 35 seconds for a 23-21 lead with 8:51 remaining.

Harrison got a 21-yarder from Stroud, and Egbuka had 13 more before Henderson rushed 41 yards for the score. The Buckeyes wanted to go for two, but a false start changed the plans and Ruggles made the point after.

When PSU got the ball back, Tuimoloau strip-sacked Clifford and recovered the fumble at the 24. On the first play of the ensuing drive, Stroud spotted Stover open in the middle at the 18, and the tight end scored from 24 yards out with 8:17 remaining to extend the lead to 30-21.

A Pinegar field goal then made it 30-24 with 5:49 left. The big play was a 27-yard run by Allen.

Back came the Buckeyes, and on third-and-10 from the OSU 41, Harrison made a 12-yard catch. Three plays later, Egbuka had a 42-yard catch to the 2. Following a delay of game, Henderson ran in from the 7 with 2:52 left for a 37-24 advantage.

Tuimoloau then intercepted Clifford on the first play and returned it 14 yards for the score with 2:42 left to make 44-24 before Allen had a 5-yard TD catch with 1:12 left for the 44-31 final. The series consumed eight plays over 75 yards in 1:30.

Penn State then had an unsuccessful on-side kick when the ball went out of bounds. Starting from the PSU 40, Henderson had 9 yards on two runs, and Rossi gained 8 prior to Stroud taking a knee at the Penn State 25 to conclude the game.

Tuimoloau finished with six tackles, three of them for losses, a forced fumble and a recovery, two interceptions, two sacks and a tipped ball that led to an interception.

Stroud was 26 of 33 for 354 yards with Harrison making 10 catches for 185 yards.

Clifford was 32 of 47 for 371 yards with three touchdowns, three interceptions and a lost fumble, and he was sacked three times while Washington had 11 catches for 179 yards and a score.

Notes

Stover had six catches for 78 yards and a touchdown. Egbuka made six catches for 53 yards. ... Henderson netted 78 yards off 16 carries. ... Jesse Mirco averaged 52.0 yards for three punts. ... Allen gained 76 yards on 12 rushes for Penn State. ... Eichenberg had a game-high 15 tackles (10 solo), and linebacker Steele Chambers was second with nine (five solo). ... Ohio State totaled 452 yards (354 passing, 98 rushing) with 21 first downs. Penn State gained 482 yards (371 passing, 111 rushing) and 24 first downs. ... OSU was 4 of 12 on third-down conversions and 1 of 1 on fourth. Penn State was 6 of 16 on third and 3 of 4 on fourth.

