

Stroud's Use Of Legs Opened Up Offense In Peach Bowl



For much of his Ohio State career, quarterback C.J. Stroud faced scrutiny for his unwillingness to scramble when lanes opened.

On several occasions, Stroud showed he had the ability to carry the ball with grace. During his true freshman, the Buckeye signal caller took a 48-yard carry to the house against Michigan State. As recently as this season, Stroud turned to his legs against Northwestern — churning out 79 yards on six attempts — while whipping winds and rain impacted his ability to throw. But, he never provided a consistent threat with his legs, opting to extend plays but hardly taking off on runs.

However, when the Buckeyes were in need of a spark against Georgia in the Chick-Fil-A Peach Bowl on Saturday, Stroud delivered with his legs. The Inland Empire, Calif., native rushed for 34 yards on 12 carries, a number greatly deflated due to four sacks netting -37 yards to his final, providing Ohio State with several timely plays on the ground.

“At the end of the day, we had the mindset of we were going to let everything hang,” Stroud said. “We were going to go out and fight as hard as we can and swing as hard as we can. I felt we did that.

“We were very efficient in the passing game. In the run game, started rolling a little bit, and got a lot of positive runs. I felt we were very efficient,” he continued. “I’m proud of my guys. I can’t say too much about how we fought. Like it was time and time and time again that we kept swinging, kept fighting, kept swinging, kept fighting, and it is what it is.”

While Stroud netted just two carries for six yards during the first three quarters, he devastated the Georgia defense on the ground in the final frame — registering 64 yards on six attempts in the fourth quarter.

Stroud’s 17-yard carry during Ohio State’s penultimate drive, pushed the Buckeyes to the Georgia 34-

yard line and helped set up a 48-yard field goal from kicker Noah Ruggles to lift OSU's lead up to six with 2:43 to play in regulation.

The Bulldogs snatched a 42-41 lead with 54 seconds remaining, thanks to a 10-yard touchdown strike from quarterback Stetson Bennett to wide receiver Adonai Mitchell. With two timeouts remaining, Ohio State was forced to drive into Georgia territory quickly in order to set up Ruggles for a game-winning attempt.

Stroud did just that, primarily thanks to a 27-yard scamper on first-and-10 from OSU's 42-yard line. Stroud's run pushed Ohio State to the Georgia 31-yard line, but the Buckeyes could move no further as a one-yard loss on a carry by Dallan Hayden and a pair of incompletions forced Ruggles into a career-long 50-yard field goal attempt, which sailed wide left.

"The last drive, man, I saw how much time we had with timeouts, and I knew we could do it. I tried my hardest to get us down here," Stroud said. "I got to maybe split somebody else, make another move, just try to get a little more, but I tried my hardest."