

Buckeye Leaves: Caleb Downs, Jack Sawyer, Cody Simon Stand Out In 38-15 Win Over No. 5 Indiana



Ohio State left no doubt that it was the better team than No. 5 Indiana on Saturday, beating the previously undefeated Hoosiers 38-15.

With no shortage of impressive performances on both sides of the ball, here are our picks for players worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves:

Patrick Engels: Ohio State fifth-year linebacker Cody Simon has quietly put together a strong season in the middle of the Buckeyes' vaunted defense, and against the Hoosiers he was by far the most active and most valuable player on the field

Simon, who had earned the "Block O" and team captain label before this year, further earned his stripes as the unquestioned team leader of the defense by excelling all over the field. He was particularly lethal rushing the passer, often going unblocked both off the edge and on interior blitzes to bring home Kurtis Rourke on three different occasions (one of the sacks was a combined sack with JT Tuimoloau), including one in the second quarter that forced a Rourke fumble and set up an eventual game-tying touchdown.

But Simon was almost equally as effective in open space often catching up to Hoosiers running backs and wideouts to stop them in their tracks before they could gain any more yardage. This was evidenced by his team-high nine tackles, four of those solo.

Simon was a huge part of what may have been Ohio State's most impressive defensive outing of the year, and he will continue to be a big part of their championship push moving forward this year.

Bobby Gorbett: My Buckeye Leaf is going to the man who finally ended the Buckeyes' 10-year punt-return drought.

Downs, a sophomore safety and, as of late, the team's punt returner, scored on a 79-yard punt return touchdown to put the Buckeyes up 21-7. Downs' long return was marked by a sensational spin move

after he fielded the punt after a few bounces. Downs used his speed to surge through the second line of Indiana's punt team and finished the lengthy return off, cutting back behind his blockers. All Downs had to do the last 20 yards was waltz into the end zone to the delight of head coach Ryan Day.

Downs was as effective as usual at the safety position where he came up with five total tackles, the third-highest on the team.

Greg Wilson: Indiana came into the game without having to play against a very tough defense, Michigan the best it had gone against. The Hoosiers had not had to deal with a unit that - when it is clicking - is one of the most complete defenses in the country.

That effort was led by an impressive performance from the defensive line, especially Jack Sawyer, who gets my Buckeye Leaf. He was part of a pass rush that gave Ohio University transfer quarterback Kurtis Rourke a lot of trouble in the pocket, sacking him five times as a team and totaling eight tackles for loss along with a quarterback hurry.

Sawyer was responsible for four tackles and 1 1/2 sacks, but as is often the case for Sawyer, he was involved a lot more than the stat sheet shows. He was also effective at forcing Rourke to get rid of the ball when there were no good options, helping the Buckeye defense get off the field quickly by forcing five punts and allowing just 15 points from a team that was second in the country in scoring offense coming into the contest.