

Buckeye Leaves: Mirco, Simon, Smith-Njigba And Stroud Earn Leaves In Loss



Chase Brown: Jesse Mirco

Jesse Mirco put together a phenomenal effort against Oregon. Ohio State called upon the Perth, Australia, native three times during the contest. He responded with three punts that traveled 130 yards for an average of 43.3 yards. Mirco's longest punt bounced and rolled a total of 62 yards.

While Mirco's distance plays a significant role in my decision to give him a Buckeye leaf, I look more to how those punts affected Oregon's field position. His first two punts pinned the Ducks inside their 1-yard line, and his final punt landed just before the Oregon 20-yard line.

Mirco's success would undoubtedly put a smile on former head coach Jim Tressel's face.

Wyatt Crosher: Jaxon Smith-Njigba

Ohio State may have fallen to Oregon at home, but there were still some highlights to be found within the team.

Those were more difficult to find on the defensive side of the ball, but on offense, the passing attack was mostly strong, with C.J. Stroud throwing for the second-most passing yards in program history.

Typically, Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson are the primary targets, but today it was Jaxon Smith-Njigba who led the way with a game-high 145 yards on seven receptions, two of which were touchdowns. Smith-Njigba was excellent all game long and got open when the Ducks were able to slow down both of Ohio State's two main wideouts, and he was able to be a key cog in the comeback effort.

It may have not been enough against Oregon, but Smith-Njigba flashing the way he did can only mean good things for the Buckeyes moving forward through the rest of the season.

Patrick Mayhorn: Cody Simon

It's hard to take much in the way of positives away from the defensive performance that Ohio State put on display in its 35-28 loss to Oregon, but it does have at least one capable to build around in sophomore linebacker Cody Simon. Simon's six tackles (only one solo) don't pop off the box score, but his Buckeye Leaf is more about competence than anything else.

While his position mates found themselves frequently lost in the wash, overreacting to Oregon's fakes in the backfield, Simon stood strong, often serving as the only man in the correct gap against the run. His play against the pass was strong too, including on a pass breakup in the fourth quarter that returned the ball to Ohio State's offense - even if that offense squandered its opportunity.

On the few times he was tasked with pressuring the quarterback he again flashed his athleticism, never arriving home but posing much more of a threat to quarterback Anthony Brown than Ohio State's standard four-man rush ever did. For the second straight game, Simon stood out like a healthy, articulate thumb on a defense of sore fingers.

Mark Rea: C.J. Stroud

Being as old-school as I am, I would prefer to follow the lead of Woody and Earle - no victory, no Buckeye leaves. However, if I must award one or two, I'll go with C.J. Stroud and his OSU freshman-record 484 yards passing. There were several missed throws and a lack of clock awareness at the end of the first half.

But Stroud seemed to make the best of some bad situations he was forced into by the OSU coaching staff. Chris Olave also probably deserves a leaf. A dozen catches for 126 yards, including 37 yards after the catch, is an outstanding performance for most receivers. For Olave, just another ho-hum day at the office.