

Buckeye Leaves: TreVeyon Henderson, Quinshon Judkins, Jack Sawyer, JT Tuimoloau Stand Out In 28-14 Win In Cotton Bowl



It was a much closer game than the previous two playoff games for the Buckeyes, but they were still able to leave the Cotton Bowl with a 28-14 win over Texas, advancing to the National Championship game where they will match up against Notre Dame.

In a semifinal win, many players are going to be deserving of Buckeye Leaves, but here's the four players who the BSB staff decided were worthy:

Patrick Engels: Ohio State did not have its most dominant defensive performance, but it was still a very strong one, and those efforts were in large part due to senior defensive end JT Tuimoloau. Tuimoloau continued his elite play in the College Football Playoff by being very productive off the edge, getting pressure on Texas quarterback Quinn Ewers while also being a nuisance in the run game.

He was most impactful in the pass rush, where he recorded 1½ sacks in the first quarter, both coming off the edge, that resulted in a combined loss of 8 yards. Tuimoloau then had to sit out a bit after going down with a lower-body injury, but he came back with a vengeance and was dominant in the run game, recording a key tackle for loss on Quintrevion Wisner that resulted in a loss of 2 yards.

Tuimoloau finished with 1½ sacks, seven tackles and 2½ tackles for loss, a strong performance that definitely deserves some recognition.

Bobby Gorbett: My Buckeye Leaf is going to the 75-yard touchdown scorer himself. Senior running back TreVeyon Henderson didn't have a ton of touches, but he made a tremendous impact with those he did have.

Henderson's best play came on a screen pass right before halftime, where he hauled in a ball from senior quarterback Will Howard a few yards behind the line of scrimmage. Henderson swiftly cut through a hole created by a convoy of Buckeye blockers and had a clear path ahead of him toward the end zone. Henderson's speed proved too much for the Texas defenders unsuccessfully playing catch-up and he gave the Buckeyes a 14-7 lead before halftime.

Henderson's score was the third-longest reception in College Football Playoff semifinal history and tied for the longest score in his career at Ohio State.

Henderson only received six carries in the 28-14 win, but he managed to make the most of them. Henderson finished the game with a team-high 42 rushing yards while adding the 75 receiving yards.

Cameron Moore: Waiting for his shining Ohio State moment, running back Quinshon Judkins turned in his pinnacle performance for the Buckeyes this season, earning my Buckeye Leaf while rushing for 36 yards and two touchdowns en route to Ohio State's 28-14 win over No. 5-seed Texas in the CFP semifinals.

Judkins scored the opening touchdown of the day, scampering in from 9 yards out to give the Buckeyes a lead they would never relinquish.

The former Ole Miss Rebels ball carrier added a touchdown from 1 yard out at 7:02 in the fourth quarter to put Ohio State up 21-14 before Jack Sawyer would add the cherry on top with his 83-yard scoop-and-score.

Judkins further cements his name into Buckeye lore while helping launch the team into its first national championship berth since the 2020 season while it searches for its first national crown since the 2014 season.

Greg Wilson: When the Buckeyes marched down to score in the middle of the fourth quarter, all of the weight was put on the defense's shoulders to close the game out to send the team to the National Championship. That looked to be in question when the Longhorns were able to put together another long drive and get all the way down to the 1-yard line.

But with a strong goal-line stand, OSU was able to get to a fourth down and Columbus-area native Jack Sawyer had the heroic moment he had been waiting for his entire career. He was able to get around the edge and chase Quinn Ewers down to knock the ball out before he could make the throw. Sawyer picked the fumble up and ran it all the way back for a scoop-and-score touchdown that put the Buckeyes up by 14 with just over two minutes remaining.

Sawyer almost had his signature Buckeye moment in the loss to Michigan when he had a goal-line interception, but the team couldn't capitalize on the big play. He took matters into his own hands this time and took it to the house alone to secure the win, the longest fumble return in the history of the College Football Playoff.

He finished the game with just three tackles, but also had a sack and a pass break up with two quarterback hurries and the forced fumble.