

# Game Analysis: Howard Throws For Over 300 Yards As Buckeyes Dismantle Ducks 41-21



## What Worked Well:

From the very first snap of Ohio State's 41-21 win over Oregon on Jan. 1, Ohio State's high-flying passing offense was firing on all cylinders. It took just three passing plays for the Buckeyes to score first against Oregon, thanks to a beautiful play that sprang tight end Gee Scott wide open for a 30-yard gain and freshman wide receiver Jeremiah Smith showing he's one of the most - if not *the* most - talented players at his position in the country on a 45-yard touchdown on a screen pass, with an incomplection sandwiched in between.

Great play design and Smith's generational talent were the themes of Ohio State's tremendous 34-point first-half offensive performance.

Those themes were perfectly exemplified by a 43-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Will Howard to Smith early in the second quarter. On the play, Ohio State used some misdirection, as Howard rolled to his left while Scott and senior wide receiver Emeka Egbuka ran their routes in that direction, allowing Smith to be isolated one on one with Oregon defensive back Tysheem Johnson. Smith faked left before cutting past Johnson in the other direction to become wide open as Howard flipped his hips and threw a solid pass right into Smith's arms for the team's third touchdown of the game.

Howard also deserves credit for Ohio State's efficiency in the passing game. The former Kansas State Wildcat delivered a couple of lengthy passes put in the perfect spot during the win. His best throw might have come on a 42-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter when he threw a line drive pass right in stride into a minuscule window for Egbuka, despite the senior receiver being very well-covered. Howard's pass was even deflected right before getting to Egbuka, but it was no issue for the All-Big Ten receiver, who still was able to score.

Howard ended his day with an impressive stat line. The Downingtown, Pa., native threw for 319 yards and three touchdowns while completing 17 of 26 passes.

## What Didn't Work:

Ohio State's blowout of Oregon was probably the team's best game of the season, but the middle eight

stretch - the last four minutes of the first half and the first four minutes of the second half - went about as poorly as they possibly could for the Buckeyes.

The Buckeyes started the ending of the first half with a disappointing field goal after having the ball in the Ducks' red zone on first down.

The Buckeye field goal was followed by a 10-play 75-yard touchdown drive from Oregon to end the first half. What was particularly frustrating for the Buckeyes was that the Ducks picked up a third-and-16 on the drive and scored their touchdown as time expired from the 5-yard line.

The Ducks got the ball to start the second half, and like their closing drive of the first half, they had plenty of success moving the ball down the field. Once again, it looked like the Buckeyes wouldn't concede points on the drive after backing up the Ducks well behind the sticks to force a third-and-22. However, Oregon quarterback Dillon Gabriel improvised on the play to find receiver Justius Lowe for a 21-yard completion. The Ducks picked up the first down on a 1-yard rush from Gabriel one play later, and they slowly made their way down the field before scoring their second touchdown in as many drives on a 2-yard run by running back Noah Whittington.

Even after the poor stretch, the Buckeyes still held a 19-point cushion, but they'll want a better middle eight in their Cotton Bowl clash against Texas, something Ryan Day has said in the past is very important to this team.

### **Play Of The Game:**

It's hard to choose one play from the Buckeyes' outstanding performance in their 20-point win, but senior running back TreVeyon Henderson's 66-yard touchdown run stands out as the play that solidified the Buckeyes' dominance over the Ducks.



Up 24-0 on first-and-10 with 8:59 to go in the first half, Howard handed the ball off to Henderson, who - after picking up a couple of great blocks from offensive lineman Donovan Jackson and tight end Bennett Christian - found a huge hole to run through on the right side of the offensive line. After surging through the hole, Henderson easily got past the one defender in front of him with a swift cut toward the

sideline. A couple of Ducks had a chance at Henderson, but the senior running back's straight-line speed allowed him to sprint down the sideline untouched for his first touchdown of the game.

Henderson's 66-yard run was not just his longest of the season, but the longest by any Ohio State player in Rose Bowl history.