

Ohio State's Defense Gets Best Of The Offense In 40-31 Victory In Spring Game



It was a beautiful day on Saturday for Ohio State's annual Spring Game at Ohio Stadium, where the team and fans - all 75,422 of them - got their first look at this upcoming season's iteration of the Ohio State Buckeyes.

In the scrimmage, it was Ohio State's defense - or the Gray squad - that dominated, leaving the exhibition with a 40-31 win over the offense, or the Scarlet, that struggled to sustain drives throughout the scrimmage.

Points were scored as follows: standard scoring for the offense, and for the defense, scores via takeaway touchdowns (six points), takeaways (three points) three-and-outs (three points), quarterback sacks (two points) and forced punts (one point).

The First Half

Ohio State's offense, led by quarterback Kyle McCord, went three-and out on the first drive of the game as McCord's third-and-7 pass was broken up and nearly intercepted by linebacker C.J. Hicks, and the next drive ended with a punt as well, pushing the defense to a 5-0 lead.

The offense found some sustained success on the third drive of the game, with running back Miyan William as well as a trio of completions to Marvin Harrison Jr. to move into enemy territory.

After a drop by tight end Cade Stover on first down and incompletions thrown toward Williams and wideout Carnell Tate, the latter broken up by cornerback Denzel Burke, kicker Jayden Fielding missed from 40 yards out to keep the offense off the board.

The offense, led by quarterback Tristan Gebbia on the next drive, responded with a scoring drive that ended in a 38-yard field goal by kicker Parker Lewis, though the defense did get a sack of Gebbia from defensive end Kenyatta Jackson earlier in the drive, meaning the defense led 7-3 at the end of the drive.

Ohio State's offense sputtered over the next four drives, going three-and-out on each one. The defense picked up a pair of sacks over those drives from defensive tackle Tyliek Williams and linebacker C.J. Hicks, and led 23-3 through the eighth drive of the exhibition.


The offense's most sustained drive of the day came on the ninth drive of the first half. McCord connected with running back Dallan Hayden and later with wideout Kaleb Brown to convert a fourth down, and he then hit wide receiver Jayden Ballard on a 9-yard gain for the most impressive catch of the game.

The @OhioStateFB WR room is, once again, deep and talented.

We give you this sweet Jayden Ballard (@J_Ball21) grab.  pic.twitter.com/V2F2YGLxAg

— Big Ten Network (@BigTenNetwork) April 15, 2023

Unfortunately for the offense, the drive ended after a 3-yard run from Chip Trayanum followed by three consecutive incompletions from McCord. The offense quickly responded, though, with Trayanum going for a 65-yard touchdown run just two plays later for the first touchdown of the game, making it 23-10 in favor of the defense.

Trayanum TD  @Chipperrz_ x @OhioStateFB pic.twitter.com/aco1BY7Yu4

— Ohio State on BTN (@OhioStateOnBTN) April 15, 2023

The defense continued to dominate the remainder of the half, though, forcing a punt on the next drive and then getting a sack from defensive tackle Hero Kanu to end the half with a 26-10 lead.

The Second Half

The defense continued to overpower the offense early in the second half, forcing back-to-back three-and-outs to increase their advantage to 32-10. But on the next drive, the Spring Game provided perhaps one of the greatest highlights in the scrimmage's history.

After big gains by Trayanum, Ballard and Hayden, Ohio State's offense worked close to the red zone before calling in a surprising substitution at running back: two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin. Griffin took the handoff and went 25 yards for the score, cutting into the defense's lead to make it 34-17.


That's 2-time @HeismanTrophy winner and @OhioStateFB legend Archie Griffin running for a

TD.  pic.twitter.com/hta1Z0xz3G

— Big Ten Network (@BigTenNetwork) April 15, 2023

The Buckeyes then turned the ball over on downs on their next drive. After 9- and 10-yard gains by running back Chase Brecht, Gebbia's next two passes fell incomplete, and after a 4-yard gain to Bryson Rodgers, Gebbia's throw on fourth down to wideout Kyion Grayes falling incomplete.

The following drive saw the Buckeyes make it down to the opposing 37-yard line as the third quarter ended, and to begin the fourth, McCord connected with Tate for a 37-yard touchdown to make it 34-24 in favor of the defense with 9:09 left in the game.

Scale of 1-10: How excited are you about Carnell Tate?  @carnelltate_ x @OhioStateFB
pic.twitter.com/yoZ70X7pFP

— Ohio State on BTN (@OhioStateOnBTN) April 15, 2023

The defense then forced another pair of three-and-outs, making it 40-23, but the offense did not go out without a fight, as Gebbia connected with wideout Noah Rogers, who broke out for a 57-yard touchdown to make it 40-31 with under three minutes remaining, but time ran out on the offense as it attempted a comeback.