

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 29, No. 10

“For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More”

November 14, 2009

Who’s Crying Now?



SONNY BROCKWAY

PLEASANT RETURN – Sophomore quarterback Terrelle Pryor (2) was all smiles – mouth guard included – in the late stages of Ohio State’s 24-7 victory over Penn State in Pryor’s return to his native Pennsylvania.

Pryor Leads Buckeyes To Win In His First Trip Back To Pa.

By **ADAM JARDY**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In the end, one unhappy Penn State fan got in the final word.

The game was over, and the battle had been won. Ohio State had gone into Beaver Stadium and closed out a 24-7 victory under the cover of darkness. In the process, sophomore quarterback and western Pennsylvania native Terrelle Pryor had exacted his revenge on the fan base of a program that had reviled him immediately upon his decision to sign with the Buckeyes.

After making what amounted to a victory lap along the northern portion of the stadium, Pryor and his teammates made their way through the tunnel into the bowels of the steel and iron structure en route to the locker room. At that point, the few thousand fans remaining inside the stadium were primarily dressed in scarlet and madly congratulating their team for the victory.

But leaning over the railing as Pryor approached was one middle-aged Nittany Lions fan, clad in a gray Penn State sweatshirt and dark blue hat adorned with the team logo. This fan had seen the Buckeyes play a near-flawless game by committing zero turnovers, outrushing the home team by a 3-to-1 margin and controlling the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball.

This fan was going to let Pryor have it. “Hey, Terrelle!” he bellowed. “Terrelle!” With junior offensive lineman Bryant Browning following Pryor, the sophomore came to a halt as the man’s words reached the ears of his intended target. Pausing for a second – long enough for Browning to nearly run into him – Pryor looked up and saw the man’s finger pointed at him. Smiling back, Pryor simply waved as the fan got in his parting shot.

“You’ll never win here again!” After a game like the one he had just witnessed, it was all the Penn State fan had left to hang his hat on. The native son had returned home and done what he could not do in his own stadium one year earlier. Pryor engineered a key victory and put the Buckeyes in the driver’s seat for an outright Big Ten championship.

It was a far cry from the year before and the enduring image from Penn State’s 13-6 victory against the Buckeyes in a late October night game at Ohio Stadium. After committing a critical fourth-quarter fumble that led to the lone and winning touchdown

for the Nittany Lions, Pryor was inconsolable on the sidelines with his head in his hands. It was a fact he said the OSU strength and conditioning coaches constantly pointed out to him during summer workouts in an effort to make him work harder.

If he needed any further reminder, it arrived the week before the Nov. 7 rematch with the Nittany Lions in the form of a T-shirt courtesy of a student marketing group at Penn State. Four days before the game, a photo of a shirt depicting Pryor and the Nittany Lion mascot arm-in-arm with the lion holding a box of tissues above the heading “The Nutcracker: A Terrelle Cryer Story” started making the rounds on the Internet.

The shirts were quickly recalled, but Pryor said it had been his goal to acquire one. It was one of the few things he was not successful with during the trip to Happy Valley.

Surrounded by more than two dozen reporters from across the country in a cramped interview room after the game, Pryor looked back on the situation and laughed.

“It’s all fun and games,” he said. “When you go somewhere else, they’ve got to find something to rag on you. I did mess up last year, and you learn off that kind of stuff.”

The shirts were just one part of what was an emotional week for the quarterback, the origins of which stretch back a few years. One night before National Signing Day during Pryor’s senior year of 2008, he famously opted to delay picking a school after having a disagreement with his father.

Pryor had his mind made up, presumably for the Buckeyes. His father, having become quite taken with the PSU coaching staff and longtime assistant Tom Bradley in particular, wanted him to play his college ball at State College.

The decision was made to postpone Pryor’s final choice until he could take an official visit to see the Nittany Lions. The trip was never scheduled, however, and Pryor eventually signed with the Buckeyes. Upon doing so, he remarked that Penn State was “too country” for his tastes.

Those words have followed the quarterback ever since. In the middle of his weekly interview session Nov. 4 with media members, Pryor was interrupted by a reporter’s cell phone ringing and playing a twangy tune. It caused the quarterback to crack, “(Sounds like) you’re about to go horse riding.”

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OPINION

Pryor Remains On Track For Great OSU Career

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK
with
Mark Rea

What would you say about a quarterback who had a career record of 16-3 as a starter? What would you say if he was at the controls of the top-rated offense in his conference? How would you feel about him if he was leading the league in pass efficiency and among its top 10 in rushing?

Would you thank your lucky stars he chose your favorite school to play for, or would you suggest he was better suited to play another position? Would you delight in the victories and championships that he has been able to help bring your team so far, or would you bemoan the fact he still makes mistakes?

Would you marvel at how such a young football player could take care of the behind-the-scenes things necessary to win over the hearts and minds of teammates, or would you simply mock him, criticize his every misstep and compare him to perhaps the most divisive player ever to wear scarlet and gray?

After you have answered those questions, here's one more: What would you do if you were Terrelle Pryor? I must admit that if I were in Pryor's shoes, I'd be more than tempted to tell Ohio State fans what they could do with their Horseshoe. Luckily for the Buckeye Nation, I'm not Pryor and he's not me.

To say the young quarterback has had a tumultuous first two years at Ohio State would be something of an understatement. A chart of his popularity would feature more hairpin twists and corkscrew turns than a blueprint cooked up by some crazed builder of roller coasters.

During the past month alone, Pryor has gone from messiah to pariah and back again a few times. Woody Hayes once remarked, "Fans are fickle," but this is getting to be ridiculous. He's great, he's terrible, he's great, he's terrible. Who can keep up?

Even the most myopic of fans can surely see Pryor's upside. He was blessed with a vast array of raw physical talents that make him the most gifted player on the field almost every time he puts on a uniform. Over the past year, he has worked hard to hone those physical gifts and meld them with the mental aspects of playing quarterback at one of the elite programs in college football.

Most of the time, he excels. Other times he doesn't and underlines the fact there is still much work to be done.

After what he has accomplished in such a short career so far, however, you would think Pryor would be among the most popular Buckeyes. Instead, he seems to be the most polarizing – both in the fan base and the national media.

The criticism began after last year's Fiesta Bowl loss to Texas when Pryor completed only 5 of 14 passes for 66 yards. It continued following the Buckeyes' 18-15 defeat against USC earlier this season and reached full meltdown status in the wake of the mid-October loss at Purdue.

Never mind that most of Pryor's critics wouldn't know how to properly grip a football much less be able to stand in against an all-out blitz without soiling themselves. They offer the solid opinions that his mechanics are terrible, he will never become a big-time college quarterback and he doesn't even seem interested in bettering himself.

Somehow, the youngster has managed to take all that vitriol and venom and turn it into a positive. He still takes losing personally but now manages to keep things in better perspective. As a result, he is able to bounce back quickly from mistakes, strengthening his resolve to get better, eliminate the mistakes that plagued him during the Purdue loss and become the complete quarterback he knows he can be.

rect defensive call in that situation and Pryor still turned the play into a touchdown.

Let me tell you that this guy is already the real deal and he's only going to get better. I'll tell you one more thing: Pryor is going to be a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate beginning next season. In fact, he should be one of the preseason favorites.

Before you pass that off as sheer folly, understand that I have shared that kind of opinion before. In early November 2005, I wrote in this very space I thought Troy Smith should be one of the preseason favorites for the 2006 Heisman.

That premise wasn't exactly embraced by the masses. Several subscribers wrote in to ask if I was off my medication, while one suggested, "It is very possible that Smith will not be next year's (starting) quarterback."

Sound familiar?

Don't Mess With Tradition

Ohio State has announced its intention to wear quote-unquote throwback uniforms during the Nov. 21 season finale at Michigan.

The uniforms won't be available for official public scrutiny until Nov. 15, but the university has revealed they are in tribute to the 1954 national championship team and will supposedly feature the look the Buckeyes had more than a half-century ago – white helmets, white jerseys with large scarlet numbers and slate-gray pants.

Wearing old-style uniforms for one game can be fun, even if the throwbacks are not actually what the tribute team actually wore. If the preliminary photos I have seen are any indication, Ohio State hasn't really even come close to duplicating the '54 uniforms.

Nevertheless, it's a nice little moneymaker for the university and uniform designer Nike, and I have no problem if Ohio State wants to go old-school for a home game against an opponent such as Minnesota or New Mexico State.

But there is a time and place to wear them and that time is not against Michigan and that place is not in Ann Arbor. As if anyone has to be told, The Game needs no gimmicks and quite honestly doesn't deserve to be treated as just any other college football contest.

I understand money drives the train in college football, but tradition has to be worth something. If it's not, how long will it be before players begin to look like NASCAR drivers and it's the Ford F-150/Netflix/Mountain Dew Ohio State-Michigan Game sponsored by Outback Steakhouse and brought to you by Budweiser?

And Finally

• I love it when conferences announce they will fine coaches who criticize officiating. I don't suppose it would occur to these conferences that better performances from their officials would negate the need for such fines.

• The latest losses at Michigan and Notre Dame got me to wondering. Does Jim Harbaugh have a buyout clause at Stanford and how much would it take to lure Urban Meyer away from Florida?

• The top three on my Heisman ballot hasn't changed much over the past couple of weeks. If I had to turn in my ballot tomorrow, it would have Texas QB Colt McCoy at the top followed by Alabama running back Mark Ingram and Boise State quarterback Kellen Moore.

• One final note on Ohio State's game against New Mexico State. The Aggies were paid \$850,000 to play the Buckeyes – about \$13,710 for each of the 62 yards of total offense they gained.

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

Vol. 29, No. 10
November 14, 2009
www.BuckeyeSports.com

Buckeye Sports Bulletin (USPS 705-690, ISSN 0883-6833.) is published 28 times a year (weekly September through November and January through early March, biweekly mid-March through May and monthly June through August and December) by:

Columbus Sports Publications
1350 W. Fifth Ave., Suite 30
P.O. Box 12453
Columbus, Ohio 43212
(614) 486-2202

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$74.95/year.

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2009-10 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 29)

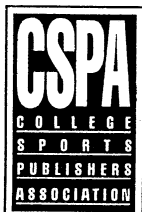
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The next issue (Nov. 21 cover date) will be mailed on Nov. 17.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a privately owned newspaper and is not affiliated directly or indirectly with The Ohio State University.

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COVER STORY: WHO'S CRYING NOW?

Pryor Finally Earns His First Win In 'Big One'

Continued From Page 1

OSU quarterbacks coach Nick Siciliano quickly seized the moment and tried to set straight any possible misconceptions about the athlete's comments.

"Just to make that clear," the coach said with a smile, "he wasn't talking about somebody going to Beaver Stadium."

After the OSU loss to Penn State last year, Siciliano emerged for postgame interviews along with Pryor in a sign of support. Arm around the quarterback, the coach reassured him that the loss was not on his shoulders.

This year, Siciliano was standing in a different corner of the room while Pryor was

seated at a table, answering questions about the victory and reflecting on how he felt after last year's loss.

"I didn't cry or anything but I wanted to cry," he said. "When you lose, it drops on the quarterback. If we win in a tight game, it comes on the quarterback somehow leading the team. Last year was part of the growing process. I wish I didn't go through it, but that's what people go through."

Preparing For Homecoming

Pryor said he put on blinders during the week and tried to focus on the game at hand, but he admitted there was pressure that came along with making his first trip back to Pennsylvania. After all, he had taken in more

games as a recruit at Beaver Stadium than he had at Ohio Stadium.

The game divided loyalties in his hometown, which has apparently undergone a change over the past three years. According to Jeannette head coach Roy Hall, who served as Pryor's quarterbacks coach and remains close to him, signs of Ohio State fandom are continually popping up around town.

"One time up here the biggest seller was Penn State," Hall said. "Now there's such a demand for Ohio State stuff at the stores. You never saw Ohio State stuff in the stores before (but now) you're seeing it all over. Honestly, you can't go anywhere without seeing an Ohio State T-shirt, hat, jacket or something."

As a result, Pryor knew what to expect when he returned while lining up on the opposite sideline. Not only that, he knew the opportunity at hand was one he had not yet taken advantage of. Although he entered the game with a record of 15-3 as a starter, he had not yet won "the big one."

Leading up to the game, OSU head coach Jim Tressel described Pryor as being as dialed in as anyone he had ever seen for a game. Upon leaving the team's quarterbacks meeting two days prior to the game, Tressel said his hope was that the coaching staff was as ready for the game as Pryor was.

"I was impressed with his understanding of what we're trying to do and why we're trying to do it and how we should decide on things accordingly," Tressel said.

That feeling carried over to game day. After the final pregame meeting, Siciliano told Tressel that Pryor's mental state had not changed.

"It was much like it's been most of the

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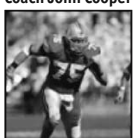
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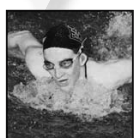
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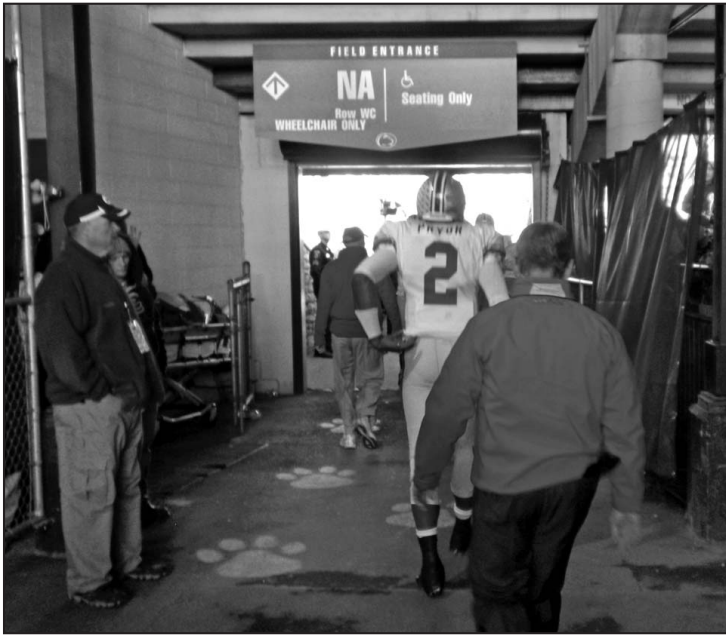
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COVER STORY: WHO'S CRYING NOW?



ADAM JARDY

READY FOR BATTLE – Ohio State sophomore quarterback Terrelle Pryor (2), followed by head coach Jim Tressel, enters the field at Beaver Stadium for warmups. Pryor overcame a hostile environment Nov. 7 and led the Buckeyes to a 24-7 victory.

year,” Siciliano said. “He has not come into a game when he hasn’t been focused. He was just a little more homed in this morning than normal. He was very dialed into what we were doing.”

There was one minor change in his pregame drills, however. Pryor typically lines up close to the sideline to practice snaps with starting center Michael Brewster. Meanwhile, the other quarterbacks and centers form two lines that stretch toward midfield.

The order was reversed this time, with Pryor closest to midfield and farthest from the fans. It did not deter one fan in the front row of the east stands from yelling, “Welcome to the big time, Ty-RELL!”

As the team lined up for its customary pregame hive, Pryor grabbed a spot on the far

left end of the second row, linking his right arm with freshman wideout Duron Carter. Waving his left arm in the air to encourage the crowd, the quarterback could no longer contain his excitement. The only player bouncing up and down in the air, he charged the field with his teammates, holding his right arm aloft as he pointed skyward.

It was time for the festivities to begin.

Satisfying Trip Home

“Nothing to take away from Penn State, but it was good to just come back home,” Pryor said. “I haven’t been back to Pennsylvania in a long time, and to play in front of so many people who came here that I gave tickets to and to see the crowd – it felt good.”

A little more than three hours later, the

sun had already set and the Buckeyes were again in position to bring home a Big Ten title to Columbus.

For that, a lot of credit was due their quarterback.

“He’s a guy that really cares,” said sophomore wide receiver DeVier Posey, one of Pryor’s closest friends on the team. “Coach Tressel talks about how caring he is and he really does. What he means by that is like, we had a bad day in practice this past week and you could just tell. Terrelle didn’t talk to anybody. He just stormed out of the locker room after practice.

“When you have a guy like that who cares so much about the game and your progress on a day-to-day basis, you’re bound to get some of that magic rubbed off on you.”

That enchantment came despite an injury Pryor had suffered one week prior against New Mexico State that was more serious than anyone on the OSU roster was willing to admit leading up to the game.

After the win over Penn State, Tressel said his play calling was limited because of Pryor’s ankle injury. The QB finished with a season-low five carries that picked up 50 yards and one touchdown, and he avoided any sacks.

“I’m glad they didn’t touch me,” Pryor said. “It was really hard for me to run. I had to wobble and skip with it. I still ran pretty fast and you probably didn’t notice it (but) it was hurting. It was a lot of pain, but sometimes you’ve got to play with pain.”

His 7-yard touchdown run got the Buckeyes on the board in the first quarter, but it came around the right end for a reason.

“We couldn’t really run to the left because my leg was hurting pretty good,” he said. “Every time I cut, it hurt my ankle pretty good. (On the touchdown run), I was hoping (tight end) Jake Stoneburner would turn (for the ball) because they brought a zone blitz. But I broke a tackle and ran.

“I tried to dive because I didn’t think I was going to make it. I thought my ankle was going to give out.”

When not on the field, Pryor rode an exer-

cise bike on the OSU sideline in an effort to keep his ankle as loose as possible. Seated there, not more than a few feet from the stands, the quarterback said he heard some choice words from the fans in the first few rows of the west stands.

With his team in command as the game went on, Pryor admitted to engaging in a little back-and-forth.

“I was sitting on the bench playing around,” he said. “I was talking back at them, but not in a smart way. They would say something like, ‘Who’s going to win?’ and I’d say, ‘Steelers.’ They messed around with me pretty good today but it’s all fun.

“I had a lot of fun today. It was very fun talking to those guys and trying to concentrate on the game. I was concentrated on the game but sometimes they were laughing back.”

It was exactly that kind of approach Tressel lauded after the game.

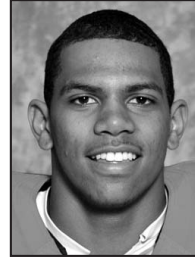
“Terrelle is a focused guy,” the coach said. “Even though he was hyped, he knew he had to have his awareness and his focus if he was going to leave here happy. He was happy he was coming here, he was excited. But he wanted to leave here happy as well.”

That much was evident as he exited the field. Following a live interview on national television from near midfield, he sprinted to the northeast corner of the stadium to join his teammates as they saluted the OSU cheering section. Arm in arm, the Buckeyes first sang a few bars from “Seven Nation Army” by the White Stripes and jumped along with the tune – Tressel included.

The song was then followed by the traditional singing of “Carmen Ohio” that culminated in wild applause. On his way out, Pryor made a point to shake hands with every person gathered in the first row of the north end of the stadium including any Penn State fans humbled enough to extend their hands.

It ended when he met up with that final fan. While the man yelled at the quarterback, Pryor said nothing, choosing instead to simply smile.

What else was there to say?



Terrelle Pryor



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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Win Puts Pasadena In Ohio State's Sights

By MARK REA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

In the course of just a few hours Nov. 7, Ohio State went from underdog status to front-runner for its first Rose Bowl appearance in more than a dozen years.

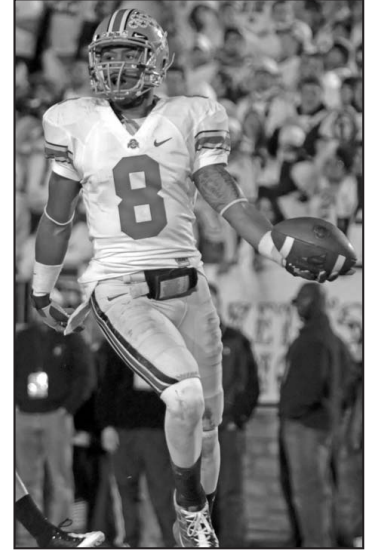
The afternoon began with No. 8 Iowa absorbing a two-pronged loss at home to Northwestern – a 17-10 defeat that ruined the Hawkeyes' undefeated season and an ankle injury to starting quarterback Ricky Stanzi that will reportedly sideline him for the remainder of the regular season.

Later, OSU broke open a tight game with a pair of second-half touchdowns and rolled to a 24-7 victory at No. 11 Penn State. The Buckeyes had been 4½- to five-point underdogs in the contest.

As a result, an Iowa team likely without its starting quarterback will travel to Columbus next week to play Ohio State with the Big Ten championship and the conference's automatic Rose Bowl berth on the line.

"This was a gratifying game," OSU head coach Jim Tressel said. "It's hard to come over here and win. You play Penn State anytime and it's hard. But being gratified is halted the minute you start thinking about what's next because we've got Iowa coming in. They're the Big Ten co-leaders. You know how much respect we have for them."

The Buckeyes held a precarious 10-7 halftime lead as the two heavyweight teams traded body punches most of the afternoon. Ohio State finally tagged the Nittany Lions on the button late in the third quarter when



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIG PLAYS – Sophomore receiver DeVier Posey (8, above) and senior Ray Small (82, left) had two of the game's biggest plays. Small returned a first-quarter punt to the Penn State 9-yard line that set up Ohio State's first touchdown while Posey caught a 62-yard touchdown pass in the third quarter from sophomore quarterback Terrelle Pryor. Both plays helped give the Buckeyes a 24-7 victory at Penn State Nov. 7.

quarterback Terrelle Pryor connected with receiver DeVier Posey for a 62-yard touchdown pass.

OSU then landed the knockout blow at the 9:37 mark of the fourth quarter when Pryor hit tailback Brandon Saine with a 6-yard touchdown toss.

Pryor made a triumphant return to his home state, where he won state high school

football and basketball championships at Jeannette High School. The sophomore QB completed 8 of 17 passes for 125 yards and the two scores but hurt Penn State even more with his feet. He ran the ball only five times but turned those scrambles into 50 yards. Even more importantly, three of the runs went for first downs and a fourth was good for a 7-yard, first-quarter touchdown.

In addition to Pryor, the Buckeyes got some good, hard running from twin tailbacks Brandon Saine and Dan "Boom" Herron. They combined for 126 yards on 36 carries as Ohio State totaled 228 yards on the ground. The Nittany Lions had entered the game as the top rushing defense in the Big Ten and ranked No. 5 in the country against the run. They had allowed an average of only 84.1 yards to their previous nine opponents.

The Buckeyes finished the game with 353 total yards, only the third Penn State opponent this season to top the 300 mark. The Nittany Lions entered the game as the

top defense in the Big Ten and ranked fifth nationally.

While the offense was poking holes in Penn State's previously impenetrable defense, the Ohio State D turned in a virtuoso performance against the Nittany Lions, who also had boasted one of the top offensive units in the conference. The Buckeyes limited the Big Ten's No. 1 team in total offense to a season-low 201 yards, including only 76 on the ground.

"They have a real good defense and they showed it today," longtime Penn State head

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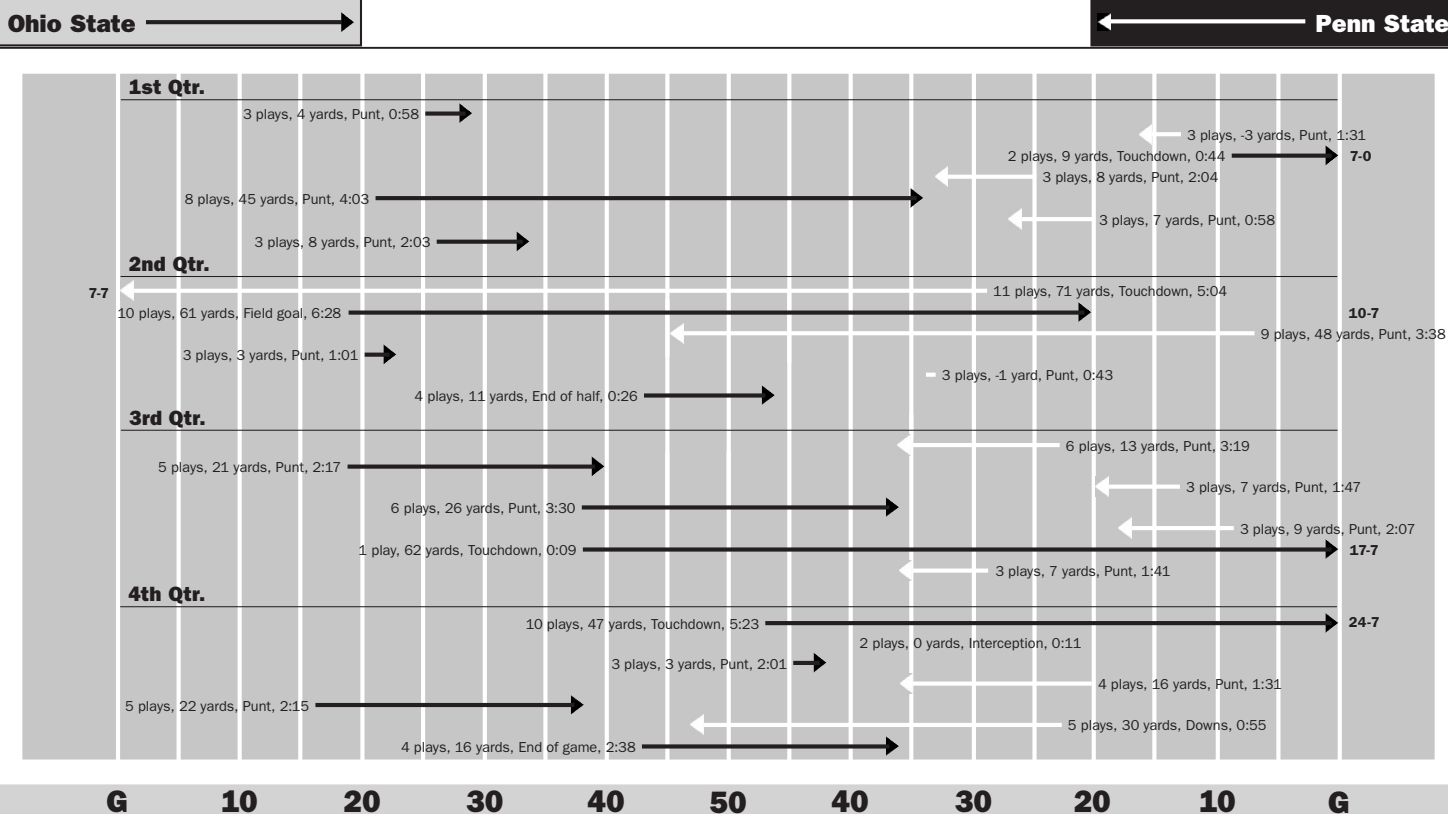
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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Drive Chart



coach Joe Paterno told reporters after the game. "Give Ohio State credit. They had a good plan and they executed it well. They were aggressive and played well. Give them credit."

Penn State senior quarterback Daryll Clark, the Big Ten leader in pass efficiency heading into the game, was limited to 12 completions in 28 attempts for 125 yards, no touchdowns and one interception. He was also sacked twice.

Junior receiver Graham Zug was about the only offense the Nittany Lions could muster. He caught seven passes for 96 yards, accounting for 47.8 percent of his team's attack. Junior tailback Evan Royster, who entered the game with three consecutive 100-yard games, was held to only 36 yards on 13 carries.

Defensive end Cameron Heyward and linebacker Ross Homan led the defensive charge for the Buckeyes. Heyward totaled a game-high 11 tackles, including three for loss and both sacks. Homan had 10 tackles, broke up two passes and snagged the game's only interception.

Middle linebacker Brian Rolle also had 10 tackles while defensive end Thaddeus Gibson had six stops, including one for loss.

The Buckeyes also had a solid game on special teams. Senior punt returner Ray Small averaged 18.6 yards on seven returns, twice setting up Ohio State touchdowns. Meanwhile, punter Jon Thoma consistently kept Penn State pinned deep in its own territory. He averaged 38.0 yards on eight punts and dropped three inside the Nittany Lion 20-yard line. Only one of Thoma's eight kicks was returned and it went for no gain.

Also, junior walk-on kicker Devin Barclay had a flawless game in place of injured regular Aaron Petrey. Barclay converted all three of his PATs, booted a 37-yard field goal and averaged 65.8 yards on his five kickoffs.

Small Return Keys First TD

A crowd of 110,033 was on hand for the 300th game in Beaver Stadium, and they were treated to a defensive struggle early. The teams traded three-and-out series on their opening possessions before Ohio State got the first break of the game.

Penn State senior punter Jeremy Boone got off a line-drive kick that Small fielded at the 50 and quickly returned 41 yards to the Penn State 9-yard line. Two plays later, Pryor went back to pass with redshirt freshman tight end Jake Stoneburner in his sights but quickly pulled the ball down when pressured by PSU junior outside linebacker Navorro Bowman.

Pryor danced away from Bowman, eluded junior defensive tackle Ollie Ogbu and raced around right end before diving into the end zone for a 7-yard touchdown. Following the extra point from Barclay, the Buckeyes had drawn first blood with a 7-0 lead at the 11:47 mark of the opening period.

Meanwhile, the Nittany Lions were going nowhere. Their first three possessions each featured three plays and a punt, and by the time they got the ball for a fourth time with 2:32 to go in the first quarter, they had gained 12 total yards in nine plays.

PSU finally broke out after Clark picked up a third-and-1 with a 2-yard sneak. On the ensuing play, the Penn State QB hooked up with Zug for a pitch-and-catch that resulted in a 31-yard gain.

That was the big play in a drive that eventually covered 71 yards, 11 plays and just over five minutes. Clark finished things off by jumping over the pile on a fourth-and-goal from the 1 for the touchdown. Television replays appeared to show the PSU quarterback was stopped by a swarm of Ohio State defenders before crossing the goal line, but the touchdown stood and after junior kicker Collin Wagner added the PAT,

The Bottom Line . . .

It was over when ... OSU receiver DeVier Posey beat a pair of Penn State defenders down the sideline to gather in a 62-yard touchdown. The play came with 1:47 remaining in the third quarter and broke open what had been a tight defensive struggle. The Buckeyes scored again early in the fourth quarter and the Nittany Lions never recovered.

The game ball goes to ... the Ohio State defense. Penn State entered the game as the top offensive unit in the Big Ten and was stoned by the Buckeyes to the tune of a season-low 201 total yards. That figure was the lowest for the Nittany Lions since they had 201 yards in a 13-3 loss to Wisconsin in 2006.

Stat of the game ... 125. Penn State quarterback Daryll Clark, who was the conference leader in pass efficiency, was pressured all afternoon by the likes of OSU defenders Cameron Heyward, Ross Homan and Thaddeus Gibson and threw for only 125 yards. That was Clark's lowest total of the season and his worst showing at home in his two seasons as the starting QB for the Nittany Lions.

— Mark Rea

the score was tied at 7 with 12:28 remaining in the second period.

Ohio State immediately answered with a 10-play, 61-yard drive that included an important 24-yard scramble by Pryor on a third-and-5 early in the march, and a 22-yard reception by junior receiver Dane Sanzenbacher.

Back-to-back penalties – a false start followed by holding – stalled the drive, but the Buckeyes still managed to get a 37-yard field goal from Barclay for a 10-7 advantage with 5:54 left until intermission.

OSU had one more chance to score late in the first half, but Pryor overthrew Sanzenbacher on a deep sideline pattern in the final seconds.

The first-half stats were as close as the score. The Buckeyes had a slight 156-124 edge in total yardage, and each team had only six first downs.

Defense continued to dictate tempo as the second half began with neither team able to gain a foothold. The first five possessions each ended with a punt although the Buckeyes were beginning to establish a small advantage in field position as the Nittany Lions played all 15 of their third-period plays in their own territory.

Following another Penn State punt, OSU was able to set up shop at its own 38, and that's when lightning struck. Out of an unbalanced formation they had used almost exclusively for the run, the Buckeyes crossed up the Nittany Lions as Pryor faded to pass.

Down the sideline, Posey broke free from sophomore cornerback D'Anton Lynn, and

Continued On Page 12

OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Saine's Score Provided Exclamation Point

Continued From Page 11

when safety Nick Sukay was late in providing backup coverage, the Ohio State receiver gathered in the pass and went in for the score.

The 62-yard touchdown play broke open what had been a tight game, and after Barclay added the extra point, Ohio State suddenly had pushed its advantage to 17-7 with 1:47 remaining in the third.

Following the touchdown, OSU went for the dagger. The defense forced another three-and-out from the Penn State offense, and that was followed by a 45-yard punt return by Small on the final play of the third quarter.

The return gave Ohio State possession at the Penn State 47, and Pryor directed a methodical 10-play drive for the knockout blow. Along the way, the quarterback converted a pair of third downs – a third-and-11 with his own 12-yard scramble and a third-

and-3 with a 5-yard toss to freshman fullback Zach Boren.

The final play of the drive was another third-down conversion, a 6-yard flip from Pryor to Saine, who hurtled over Penn State free safety Drew Astorino near the goal line. Barclay's extra point made it 24-7 with 9:37 remaining, and the Nittany Lions never threatened again. They ran only one play in Ohio State territory in the entire second half – their final play from scrimmage that resulted in a fourth-down incompletion by Clark at the OSU 47.

- Tressel is now 6-3 against Penn State, including a 3-2 record at State College. Paterno fell to 8-13 all-time against Ohio State. That includes a 5-5 record against the Buckeyes at State College.

- Tressel is now 25-4 in November games at Ohio State (a .862 winning percentage) while Paterno is now 112-34-2 (.764) during the month.

- Ohio State's victory ended a couple of trends in the series. The higher-ranked team had won 17 of the previous 18 meetings and the home team had won 12 of the 16 games played since the Nittany Lions joined the Big Ten.

- The game featured the first-ever regular-season matchup between coaches who had combined for 600-plus career wins. Heading into the contest, Paterno (391) and Tressel (225) had combined for 616 career victories. That broke the previous record of 591 set last season when Florida State's Bobby Bowden squared off against Frank Beamer of Virginia Tech. At that time, Bowden had 377 career victories and Beamer had 214.

- The 62-yard touchdown pass from Pryor to Posey was the longest play given up by the Penn State defense this season.

- The game marked the 300th in Beaver Stadium's 50-year history, and the Nittany Lions had done well in previous milestone home contests. They won their first game at the facility, a 20-0 victory over Boston University on Sept. 20, 1960, and followed with wins in the stadium's 100th, 150th, 200th and 250th games. The only blemish on that slate before No. 300 came in game No. 50, a 24-7 loss to Syracuse in 1970.

- Speaking of milestone victories, the Nittany Lions' win Oct. 31 over Northwestern gave Paterno his 144th victory as a member of the Big Ten. That pushed him past former Iowa head coach Hayden Fry and into fourth place on the conference's all-time wins list. The four winningest coaches in Big Ten history are Woody Hayes of Ohio State (205, 1951-78), Amos Alonzo Stagg of Chicago (199, 1896-1932), Bo Schembechler of Michigan (194, 1969-89) and Fielding Yost of Michigan (165, 1901-23, '25-26).

- Penn State is traditionally one of the least-penalized teams in the nation, and that is true again in 2009. The Nittany Lions entered the game No. 4 nationally with only 36.7 penalty yards per game. Against Ohio State, they were flagged four times for 31 yards while the Buckeyes had nine penalties for 86 yards. In its last four games played against OSU, Penn State has incurred only nine penalties for 60 yards. During the same three games, Ohio State has been flagged 23 times for 221 yards.

- OSU is now 129-104-12 all-time against ranked teams, including 40-41-7 on the road. Under Tressel, the Buckeyes are 35-13 overall and 13-6 on the road against ranked competition.

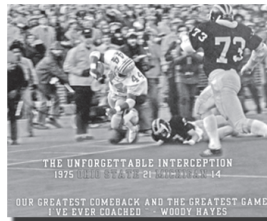
- Midway through his sophomore season, Pryor is on pace to shatter the school's all-time record for total offense. Pryor has already eclipsed the 4,000-yard mark and needs 201 more to pass Cornelius Greene (4,414, 1972-75) and move into 11th place on the career list. Art Schlichter (8,850, 1978-81) is the longtime school record-holder for career total offense.

- Sanzenbacher served as the offensive captain for the Buckeyes. Former OSU safety Doug Plank (1972-74), now an assistant coach with the New York Jets, served as honorary captain.

Game Notes

- The game marked the 25th overall meeting between Ohio State and Penn State, and the Buckeyes forged ahead with a 13-12 advantage. The series is now tied 5-5 in games played at Happy Valley, while the Buckeyes enjoy an 11-6 edge in games played since Penn State joined the Big Ten in 1993.

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Battle In Trenches Told Story

A year after seeing Penn State control the line of scrimmage and eke out a 13-6 victory in Columbus, Ohio State turned the tables in Happy Valley.

In a 24-7 win this time around, the OSU offensive line more than held its own against a good Penn State front, something left tackle Jim Cordle figured came as a surprise to at least a couple of national commentators he heard on ESPN the morning of the game.

"You have to thank Kirk Herbstreit and Todd McShay for getting the line all fired up," said the senior left tackle. "When you have a 3:30 game you can watch '(ESPN College) GameDay,' and those guys were talking about how the O-line was going to be the reason we were going to lose today. That got us fired up and we contributed to the win big-time."

On the other side of the ball, Ohio State's defensive line destroyed most of what Penn State wanted to do, similar to the effect Iowa was able to create during the Nittany Lions' only previous loss of the season.

"I knew we would have troubles," Penn State head coach Joe Paterno said. "We had felt that the front seven of Ohio State played the run about as well as anybody we had seen, including Iowa. We knew we would have our hands full."

The success of the defense, which held Penn State to only 201 total yards and allowed the Nittany Lions to cross midfield

a mere three times all day, meant all Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel's offense had to do was be opportunistic, and that's just what the unit did.

Mix in solid situational punting with a couple of long punt returns and one could say the victory was the perfect game of Tresselball.

Dane Sanzenbacher smiled at that suggestion.

"That does seem like his kind of game," the junior wide receiver said. "I'm sure he's happy with it. The offense is happy to be able to put points on the board, but in games like this you've got to be able to take care of the ball."

"I think it can be looked at as conservative, I guess, but I think it's a smart way to play, especially in a game like this when field position is so important and possessions are so important. I think being able to hold onto the ball, punting in some situations, and playing for field position was really important."

Run, Run, Pass, Punt, TD

For most of the afternoon, critics of Tressel's close-to-the-vest style of offense were building evidence to file a case that changes must be made in the offensive hierarchy.

After the Buckeyes took an early lead on a 7-yard touchdown run by quarterback Terrelle Pryor, they made a habit of keeping



SONNY BROCKWAY

READY TO GO – Members of Ohio State's defensive line wait for their next opportunity to take the field during the Buckeyes' 24-7 victory at Penn State. The defensive line played a big part in holding the Nittany Lions to only 201 yards of total offense and seven points.

INSIDE THE GAME with Marcus Hartman

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE



SONNY BROCKWAY

TWO TOUGH – Penn State linebacker Navarro Bowman (11) was not strong enough to bring down Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor (2) on a second-and-goal play from the Penn State 7-yard line in the first quarter. Pryor shook off Bowman's tackle and sprinted to the end zone to give the Buckeyes an early lead. Ohio State's offensive line did not allow a sack against the Nittany Lions.

the ball on the ground on early downs and held a scant 10-7 advantage with most of the third quarter having passed.

Then came the bomb that blew up Penn State's hopes for victory.

The Buckeyes took possession at their own 38 with 1:56 remaining in the third quarter and came out looking poised to continue to pound away at a defense that entered the day first in the Big Ten and fifth nationally against the run and had thus far yielded 151 yards on the ground.

On the first play of OSU's 10th drive of the game, the Buckeyes came out with an unbalanced line, two backs in the I-formation and a pair of receivers aligned to Pryor's left.

That has generally been a running formation for Ohio State this season, something most of the Penn State defenders seemed to know as well because just about every one of them seemed to be peeking into the backfield at the start of the play.

All three linebackers as well as cornerback D'Anton Lynn, who was lined up over split end DeVier Posey, and safety Drew Astorino, who was covering Sanzenbacher in the slot, took steps toward the line of scrimmage at the start of the play. That proved to be the Nittany Lions' undoing.

Posey streaked past Lynn straight down the sideline while Sanzenbacher took Astorino with him toward the middle of the field and the goalpost. Both Buckeyes got past their defenders, leaving deep safety Nick Sukay with quite a quandary in deciding whom to cover.

Pryor stepped up in the pocket and lofted one deep for Posey, who hauled it in just behind Sukay then raced into the end zone to give the Buckeyes what would become a 10-point lead after Devin Barclay's successful PAT.

"I think the safety stayed on me long enough for it to open up for DeVier," Sanzenbacher said of Sukay. "I think that's what ended up killing them in the end – the little indecision by the safety. DeVier was

already behind the corner so that was the only guy he had to beat."

Though Pryor did not fake a handoff to a running back on the play, there seemed little doubt a night full of being bludgeoned up front helped ripen the Nittany Lions for being beaten deep.

"We knew the same thing everyone else knew – that we'd been running a lot on first down," Tressel said. "We felt like if we had decent field position, it was time to try to strike. We were out near the 40, I think, and we felt that we could get behind them."

The head coach pointed out the play would not have been possible without right guard Bryant Browning showing a defensive lineman out of Pryor's way so the quarterback could step up.

That was not the only time the OSU offensive line stood out.

Along with paving the way for 228 yards rushing by the time the night was over, the offensive front prevented Pryor from being sacked.

Left guard Justin Boren confirmed that zero sacks was especially satisfying after the Penn State defense had its way with the Buckeyes in last year's meeting between the two teams.

"We always watch the last couple of films from the previous two or three years, so we were aware we needed to step up to be able to play with those guys and I thought we did all right," said Boren, who did not play last season while sitting out because of NCAA transfer rules.

Boren, Browning and center Michael Brewster took it upon themselves in particular to bring their best against Penn State defensive tackles Jared Odrick and Ollie Ogbu, one of the best pairs in college football.

"Odrick and Ogbu are great," Boren said. "They have good defensive ends, too. The linebacking corps is always great, so we knew we were going to have to get after their front seven to have a chance to win."

The Buckeyes did not exactly pound the ball down the Lions' throats. They piled up their yards in a variety of ways, whether it was tailbacks Brandon Saine (20 carries for 68 yards) and Dan "Boom" Herron (16 carries, 58 yards) rushing up the middle from

the familiar I-formation or trying the edges on plays from the shotgun.

Every little bit helped.

They sprang Ray Small loose for a 13-yard end around, and two quick screen passes from Pryor to Posey totaling 19 yards were counted toward the rushing total because the official scorer ruled the tosses laterals.

Ohio State even debuted a package that called for direct snaps to Saine or Herron with Pryor split out wide.

Though they did not have much success with those plays, they served their purpose. With Pryor nursing a sore left ankle, the coaching staff was reluctant to call for him to run the ball as much as he had most of the season.

"We kind of work on the wildcat (formation) all year because we run our quarterback-backs," Tressel said. "It's the same plays – just running with quarterbacks. Had we done it with a back before this week? No. We just weren't sure how much (Pryor) was going to be able to run. He probably ran about as much as we thought he would."

Pryor entered the game averaging about 12 carries per game, but he toted the ball only five times against Penn State, including four times he left the pocket after finding no one to throw to.

Most of those forays from the pocket proved fruitful, however.

For the Buckeyes' first touchdown, he dodged a blitzing linebacker and then outran and dived past two more defenders into the end zone after dropping back to pass. Two other times he got loose for healthy gains to convert third-and-long situations.

The final time he did that was a 12-yard scramble on third-and-11 that kept alive Ohio State's last touchdown drive, one that gave the Buckeyes a commanding 24-7 lead in the fourth quarter.

"We knew we couldn't let him break contain, and that's exactly what he did. He broke open a couple of real big plays," Penn State linebacker Josh Hull said. "We worked all week in practice to get to his level and make him step up in the pocket so he wouldn't break contain. We knew he was dangerous on the perimeter, and he did today what he's done in the past."

Hull and fellow linebacker Sean Lee both looked like they might have a bead on Pryor

on his touchdown run, but they could not get to him before he stretched the ball over the goal line.

"He's deceptively fast," Hull said. "His legs don't move that quickly but his strides are so long that if you don't take the right angle, you get in trouble."

Pryor's ability to beat the Nittany Lions with his arm surely deceived more than a few in attendance, too, especially with Ohio State's run-heavy plan early, but that made the big play that much sweeter for the offensive line.

"A couple of guys were saying that we were running every time on first down, but we were moving the ball," Cordle said. "And then that set up the big pass. On that one we actually had a tackle over, so we had two tackles on one side and that's definitely a run formation for us. It was first down, where we were running, running, running, and then we were able to hit that big one."

"It was great that we were able to hit that because their defense was still talking all that trash. We were running the ball but we hadn't thrown much, and then Terrelle was able to shut them up with that big pass."

Defense Devastates Up Front

Ohio State shut down Penn State's multifaceted offense in elementary fashion. The Nittany Lions could not run the ball because they could not open holes for running backs, and they could not throw it much because they could not protect the quarterback.

The first Penn State play of the game, when defensive lineman Cameron Heyward threw PSU quarterback Daryll Clark for a 6-yard loss with two other Buckeyes in the backfield, served as a pretty strong hint about how things would go down in the trenches.

The game belonged to the Buckeye big uglies.

"I think we just failed to develop a rhythm early on in the game," said Clark, who completed 12 of 28 passes for 125 yards with an interception. "They did a good job of getting to the backfield with just rushing four guys a couple of times. When that happens, it's kind of tough to execute an offense both running the ball and passing."

Continued On Page 16

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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

Ohio State's Defensive Line Dominated Play

Continued From Page 15

Heyward finished with a team-high 11 tackles. He had a career-high two sacks and three tackles for loss overall, but he was far from the lone Buckeye to excel up front.

End Thaddeus Gibson had six tackles, including one for loss, and end Lawrence Wilson had five stops.

That pair was fourth and fifth, respectively, on the team in tackles, while second and third honors went to Brian Rolle and Ross Homan, linebackers who not coincidentally had impactful games in part because of the good work being done in front of them.

"We came into the game knowing it was going to be won in the trenches, and that's how it turned out," Homan said. "Our D-line did a great job for us."

The Ohio State defense entered the game averaging 5.7 three-and-outs per game, best in the land according to numbers compiled by the Ohio State sports information office, and the Buckeyes wasted little time boosting that average.

They forced the Nittany Lions to punt after running three plays on each of their first three possessions and seven times in all.

Penn State finally got something going on its fourth drive of the game with a 71-yard, 11-play drive that seemingly gave the home team and its fans something to feel good about, but there turned out to be little else from where that came.

The next time the Lions got the ball, they returned to Ohio State territory but had to punt, and the hosts would not run another play on the Buckeyes' side of the field until less than three minutes remained in the game and Ohio State had built a 17-point lead.

"We talked about our defense having to outplay their defense," Homan said. "We think going into every game we have to outplay the other team's defense. I think we did a great job tonight from top down. We had a great scheme going with our defensive coaches, but once again our defensive line made the game for us."

As is often the case, inability to do one of the basic functions of football lent itself to making the other more difficult.

There were a handful of times the Nittany



SONNY BROCKWAY

WATCH OUT – Junior defensive lineman Thaddeus Gibson (90) bears down on Penn State quarterback Daryll Clark (17). Gibson and the rest of the Ohio State defense made Clark's final game against Ohio State a tough one.

Lion offensive line was able to create some room inside for running backs Evan Royster, Stephfon Green and Brandon Beachum, but more often they were stuffed and left with long down-and-distance.

"Coming into this game, we knew they wanted to establish the run right off the bat," Homan said. "They have an excellent offen-

sive line and great running backs. The D-line did a great job for us all night, and we had great calls by our coaches. I think it was our attacking defensive line that really did a good job for us tonight."

When Clark dropped back to pass, he was often at the mercy of a relentless Ohio State pass rush, in particular Heyward and Gibson. While Heyward often did his damage inside, Gibson controlled the edge.

"There was something about Cam the whole night," Homan said. "He pinned his ears back and was just attacking, constantly attacking whether it was run or pass. We had four-man pressure. He and the rest of the D-line did a great job tonight."

Asked what got into him, Heyward could only smile.

"I don't know, I just wanted to attack," he said. "I think everybody just wanted to and we came out on the better end of the deal. They have a great offensive line, great quarterback and great tailback, but I thought we had a great defense as well. We just wanted to go out there and play our best and that's what we did."

On the outside, Gibson could not simply crash inside whenever he pleased. He had to rush Clark under control and from an outside angle because the Penn State quarterback is adept at breaking the pocket and making big plays either on the run or by firing the ball down field.

"He is a dual-threat quarterback," Gibson said. "You never know if he's going to tuck it and run it, so containing him was the key to this game, and we did it for the most part."

Using those principles of containment,

Gibson made one of the big defensive plays of the game when he stayed home on a key third down in the third quarter.

Clark faked a handoff inside to fullback Joe Suhey and then pitched the ball to Royster, who wanted to try to get outside. But he was quickly chased down by Gibson, who threw the Penn State tailback for a 2-yard loss and forced a punt.

"Just doing my job," Gibson said. "That's my 1/11th. If everybody does their 1/11th on this defense we'll be a great defense."

None of the Buckeyes sounded surprised they were able to control Penn State up front, and all said they were happy with the relatively simple game plan defensive coordinator Jim Heacock and his staff drew up.

"Definitely," Heyward replied when asked if he thought the defensive line could win the battle so thoroughly up front.

Such a decisive victory was made nicer by what happened the last time the two squads got together. In the 2008 tilt in the Horseshoe, Ohio State's defense was stellar for three quarters before yielding 10 points in the fourth quarter.

"I thought if we executed, which we did, we would be successful," Heyward said. "Last year we made a lot of mistakes but we improved this year. Last year we had a lot of unfinished business, but we just wanted to come out and fight."

With two games left on the docket, Gibson said there is more work to be done.

"The scary part about it is I think we could play better," he said. "We're going to work on it this week for Iowa."



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OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 24, Penn State 7

Sophomore receiver DeVier Posey on what was different this season than in last season's home loss to the Nittany Lions: "I definitely felt like this year was going to be different. I felt that the night before in the hotel. You could just see it in the guys' faces. Our captains gave us great speeches, and it was just a great feeling coming into the game. We weren't really pressing. We were relaxed coming into this stadium. We were just trying to take the crowd out of it. You could just see that everybody was relaxed. There weren't any feelings of last year. We knew every year is a new year."

Penn State head coach Joe Paterno on the game and whether Ohio State's defensive line affected his team's performance: "I don't think we were off a little bit anywhere. I just think for the whole ballgame, they gave us a good licking. They played better than we did today."

Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel on what Paterno told him when the two met at the end of the game: "You know him. He's a perfect gentleman. His comment was, 'Hey, Jimmy, your kids played really well.' That's the way he is. He's great for the game. He's a legend. Sometimes I pinch myself to think that I've had the chance to coach against him."

Tressel on the game-changing 62-yard touchdown play to Posey: "The guy that made the play in my mind was (junior offensive lineman) Bryant Browning because (Penn State defensive tackle Jared Odrick) was rushing like a son of a gun, and Bryant hooked onto him and just pushed him past. (Sophomore quarterback) Terrelle (Pryor) stepped up and was huge."

Browning on his efforts on that play: "My job was to block down on him because everyone else was gapping to the left. He was in my gap. I tried to get onto him and hold onto him. I had him long enough that we could get the pass off."

Pryor on the play: "We knew they were biting up and we knew DeVier could run past a lot of guys. I just had to move the safety a little to the right. We got it in there and DeVier made a great catch. That's great balance and concentration with the ball. The lineman had a real good block. I just stepped up in the pocket and let it go."

Posey on how long he thought the pass hung in the air: "It felt like forever."

Junior defensive lineman Thaddeus Gibson on the reaction on the sideline when Posey caught the touchdown pass: "It was a great feeling. I was sitting next to (senior defensive lineman) Doug Worthington at the time, and he said he had just prayed for it. He said, 'God is good.'"

Tressel on the play: "(Pryor) got back, stepped up in the pocket with people whizzing by his ears and it didn't bother him. And then he laid it – I don't know how far in the air it was – but it was out there. I'm sure it made him feel a little bit better after having missed that one at the end of the half."

Junior wide receiver Dane Sanzenbacher on Pryor's on-field leadership: "I think it was as good as it's ever been. I said last week, coming off the New Mexico State game, you can bring a lot of confidence out of games like that. I think Terrelle has carried that over into tonight, and I think he'll be able to carry it over for the rest of year."

Gibson on the first defensive play from scrimmage, in which several Buckeyes pressured Penn State quarterback Daryll Clark: "We just let those guys know we were here. We were going to give it everything we had. It's a great place to play, and their fans were out of control. We wanted to shut them up quick."

Fifth-year senior linebacker Austin Spitler on the play of junior lineman Cameron Heyward, who had 11 tackles and two sacks: "Every time I turned my head it seemed like Cameron was back there rushing the



SONNY BROCKWAY

WELL WISHES – Longtime Penn State head coach Joe Paterno greeted Ohio State counterpart Jim Tressel following OSU's 24-7 victory at Penn State. Tressel improved to 6-3 against the legendary Paterno.

passer. It was unbelievable to see these guys. We've got a great defensive line – everybody is aware about that – but they played lights out tonight."

Heyward on his big night: "I just wanted to attack. I think everybody just wanted to and we came out on the better end of the deal."

Sanzenbacher on whether the success of the defense fueled the offense: "Our whole defense makes it so much easier for us because you can always come off the field and know the defense is going to get you out of trouble. We don't like to rely on that. We want to make our own plays, but the defense has helped us out all year."

Tressel on junior placekicker Devin Barclay, who made a 37-yard field goal in the second quarter and successfully converted three extra-point attempts: "Devin's been good all year. He's been good in the kick scrimmages, which we think are a lot of pressure. He's been good when called upon in games. He's a veteran."

Barclay on making his first collegiate start in front of more than 110,000 in a hostile environment at Beaver Stadium: "It was pretty up there, pretty up there in terms of sports feelings. I'm pretty speechless. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I'm just happy to have gotten the opportunity to do it."

Barclay on his made field goal: "I just told myself to swing easy. I had plenty of leg to make it there. It was just like practice."

Tressel on how important Pryor's first-quarter touchdown run was in the victory: "That was huge. If we would have been limited to a field goal there, I think emotionally in their stadium that would have almost been a victory for them."

Sanzenbacher on what he felt was the play of the game: "There were a lot of big plays, but I think the biggest momentum shifter was (Ray Small's) first punt return that took it down way inside. It's a tough place to play when the crowd's in it, but when you can make plays like that early, it set us up to score and we got going from there."

Junior linebacker Ross Homan on the importance of Ohio State grabbing an early lead: "It was

a big thing taking their fans out of the game. We knew it was going to be a hostile environment – 110,000-plus crazy fans – so it was great to get them out of the game."

Barclay, a former professional soccer player, on the atmosphere: "I've never played anywhere near that many people in a soccer game. It was a hostile environment and I was not able to hear a lot when I was on the field, but that actually was fine."

Posey on the Beaver Stadium atmosphere: "It was great. This was my first time coming to another stadium that is similar to ours. It was just a great feeling. I love going away. Everybody going against you gives you a different feeling."

Junior offensive guard Justin Boren on singing Carmen Ohio with OSU fans at an opposing stadium: "That's the best part after we win a game like that going over there with our fans. That's a great feeling."

Posey on the conservative offensive play calling both teams utilized through most of the game: "I think that's always Ohio State-Penn State. They're never really high-scoring games. Coach Paterno and Coach Tressel, that's just the way they coach in these games. We knew that every possession was big, and coming in we knew that every pass thrown your way you have to catch. Every time you got the ball in your hands, you have to be smart with it. I credit our offense because we didn't have any turnovers today."

Sanzenbacher on whether the victory could silence critics of Tressel's conservative offensive philosophy: "I don't think anybody on this team or Coach Tressel himself is too worried about what people think of his theories. I think his record speaks for itself. He's won plenty of big games to put himself in a position where he doesn't have to defend himself."

Boren on the efforts of the OSU offense: "Terrelle was real comfortable. He was a leader out there today. He did some good things, and our running game I think improved today."

Boren on the offensive line having success even after sophomore right tackle J.B. Shugarts went out with an injury: "We've got guys in our two-deep who are always ready to go. They know they're one snap from playing and they do a good job preparing for that."

Boren on his younger brother, freshman fullback Zach, who caught two passes: "I love it when he catches a pass. I'm proud of him. For a freshman doing what he's doing this year, I'm real proud of him."

Sanzenbacher on having a trip to Pasadena on the line against Iowa: "I think we'll prepare like any other week. Obviously there's that little thing in the back of your mind that says it's a bigger game, but Iowa's obviously going to be hungry coming off a loss. There's nothing tougher than losing a big game, and the next week is your big week to try to redeem yourself. So they're going to be ready to go."

Tressel reacting to his team's success in the first of three crucial November games: "November is for contenders. We always say that. That's why it's kind of hard to get too ecstatic right now because you know the Hawkeyes are coming to town."

Tressel when reminded his team is close to a Rose Bowl berth: "Yeah, you still have that opportunity, but man, you're a long way from that happening. We're going to go to work for it. We still have a chance. All you can ask for in life is a chance."

Paterno at the end of his postgame press conference when a reporter asked if he said anything special to his team to keep their heads up: "Do you want to go in and talk to them? Huh? After I stopped crying and wiped my eyes and threw up a couple of times ... OK, you guys have enough. At least I have."

OPINION

Pryor's Development Showed At PSU

"Woke up with a heavy head,
"And I thought about leavin' town,
"I could have died if I wanted to,
"Slipped over the edge and drowned."
— Don Henley, "I Will Not Go Quietly,"
1989

A lot had been made of Terrelle Pryor's play, decision-making and seemingly laissez-faire attitude as the Ohio State football team headed into the crucible of November.

There was a camp who felt the Buckeyes might not win again because of Pryor's penchant for lofting the ball to the heavens and praying it would come down in friendly hands as well as his seeming inability to listen to the most basic coaching fundamentals.

Despite Jim Tressel saying that his team was still focused on the task at hand and that it didn't listen to anything outside the program, Pryor had been affected by the outside chatter – so much so that he has offered himself each week during media sessions.

OSU normally hand-picks the players who will be interviewed during a certain week, but Pryor has made it a point to be available and speak his mind on the state of the Buckeyes offense. He has appeared much looser and easygoing than he did in the middle of the Big Ten season – say right around the moment the Purdue game was finished – as if a switch was flipped and the game was allowed to come to him rather than him forcing the action.

Whatever the reason, Pryor has shown resiliency and toughness – and the ability to make some throws – and that was one big reason the Buckeyes left Happy Valley beaming.

Yes, the offense was pared down to its most basic elements – zone reads, quick slants, quick outs and the occasional deep pass – but that was a good thing. It's been the thought from this corner that Pryor was being asked to do too much, not taking what the defense was giving, and that was getting him into trouble.

Against Penn State, which statistical-

ly had the league's best defense, Pryor chipped away, satisfied with a 4-yard gain and living for another play. He put most of his passes where only his guys could catch them and didn't make any truly egregious errors. And his touchdown run was just a contest of wills as he stepped out of Navorro Bowman's tackle and beat everyone else to the end zone.

It was the kind of homecoming every athlete hopes for but few truly get.

The catcalls and epithets hurled at Pryor – who picked OSU over Penn State after saying Happy Valley was, in his words, "too country" – were blocked out during the game but actually seemed to serve as motivation in the days leading up to the contest. When the game was still in the balance, the sophomore played his best and threw it back in the face of those who expected and wanted him to fail.

"They were making a big deal about it and people were doubting us, saying 'Buckeyes can't do this or that,'" Pryor said. "A lot of that stuff motivates us, but we knew we could do it."

After setting Penn State up with a steady diet of running plays, Pryor helped break the game open with a 62-yard scoring strike to DeVier Posey in the closing moments of the third quarter. The touchdown put Ohio State up 17-7, and the way the Buckeyes were playing on defense it may as well have been 40-7.

There was a method to Tressel's play-calling madness even if it was maddening for Ohio State fans. The Buckeyes ran on first down 13 straight times prior to the Posey touchdown grab, so it proved to be the classic setup – the body puncher landing the knockout blow to the melon of his opponent.

OSU fans have been waiting, fairly thirsting, for Pryor to make good on the hype that made him the nation's top schoolboy player in Jeannette, Pa. Though he had shown glimpses of that promise,

THE FACTS MAN

Mike Wachsman

there had never been a full game played with consistency and poise. While the performance against Penn State may or may not be a sign that Pryor is finally settling in, it can't be denied that this is his signature game – at least for the moment.

A very vocal faction of Ohio State backers has questioned whether Pryor is the right guy for the quarterback position, and while cautioning that this was just one game – albeit a big one – this may have put those questions to rest.

Tressel was not among the wonderers. "He's done a good job every week," the coach said. "(He's) understanding more and more and more, and I've never wavered in my thinking of his progress. I know others have, but I get to be at practice and I get to be at meetings, so I'm not complaining that others have wavered. Still, we've got another big test. You're only as good as the next one."

That next one is Senior Day at the Horseshoe against an Iowa team that not only fell with a thud Nov. 7 against Northwestern, it lost its heart and soul in quarterback Ricky Stanzi, an Ohio native who would have loved nothing more than to beat the team that never gave him a scholarship offer.

Don't be surprised if Pryor makes more noise.

Defense Demoralizes Daryll

The game had been billed as a clash of defensive titans, but only the Buckeyes held up their end of the bargain.

Ohio State got great pressure on PSU quarterback Daryll Clark, forcing him into a pedestrian 12-of-28 passing performance. The numbers show only two sacks, but there were countless hurries and other big hits, and by the second half Clark was at his wit's end trying to elude the Buckeye pass rush.

Cameron Heyward was an especially frequent visitor to the Penn State backfield, netting 11 tackles, three tackles for loss and a pair of sacks, but it was a complete team effort that got to the Nittany Lions. As steady as Pryor was, it was the defense that was most responsible for the victory.

"Those guys were just getting after it and getting a little bit of a push early on," Clark said. "It just disrupted the whole offense early. When you're not able to have a rhythm, you can't really get anything off of that. We were just in a little bit of disarray the whole game."

It has to please defensive coordinator Jim Heacock to no end that his troops can get pressure without frequent blitzing, and the inability of the Nittany Lions to stifle the Buckeyes' pass rush was a big reason for the outcome.

"We just couldn't handle them," Penn State running back Evan Royster said. "They were getting pressure on Daryll, they were getting to me in the backfield. We just really couldn't handle them today."

Quick Hitters

- Was I the only one who thought Clark never broke the plane of the end zone on his touchdown?

It certainly appeared the Penn State quarterback came up short when extending

the football, and he certainly didn't get in on second effort as the ball was tucked into his stomach and his helmet was barely in the end zone.

The fact that replay couldn't overturn that call shows once again just how poor the officiating is in the Big Ten.

- Penn State was built up to be much better than it really was, and that was probably due to eye-popping defensive numbers. Upon closer inspection, however, the Lions had put up great numbers against inferior opponents.

Four of their nine previous foes ranked lower than 100th in total offense for the season, including all three Division I-A nonconference opponents – Akron (114), Syracuse (107) and Temple (101). Meanwhile, the Buckeyes did face New Mexico State, which is at the bottom of the 120-team offensive rankings, but OSU's other nonleague opposition at least had decent offensive attacks – Navy (77th), USC (40th) and Toledo (18th).

The best offense Penn State had played was Michigan, which ranks 44th, the only team on the Nittany Lions' schedule among the top 60. OSU has gone against Wisconsin (45th) and Purdue (59th), so the Buckeyes had actually faced stiffer offensive competition and thus had the better defense.

- Should OSU indeed get to the Rose Bowl – and who would have dreamed that it would be more than a decade since the last appearance? – it will likely face an opponent that loves to put points on the scoreboard.

While it still seems too early to sort out, the Pac-10 champ should come from the trio of Oregon, Arizona or Stanford (though truth be told Oregon State and USC still have a shot at things).

The Ducks are eighth in the nation in scoring (36.3 points per game), Stanford is 18th (34.0) and Arizona is 22nd (32.3). Whichever team makes it from out west will be an interesting contrast to OSU's ball-control offense and swarming defense.

- Hard to believe that basketball season is already upon us, but it is.

While I never truly get dialed into the guys on the hardwood until after football season is over, I will be interested to see how the Buckeyes do in the early portion of their 2009-10 campaign.

A lot of people are wringing their hands about Thad Matta's decision to play Evan Turner at the point, lamenting that it's not best for him and doesn't allow him to do what he does best – slash to the basket.

On point one, just as it isn't Tressel's job to prepare Pryor for the NFL, it isn't Matta's job to get Turner ready for the NBA. A coach's job is to win games, and Turner at the point presents the best opportunity for OSU to do so. Isn't it actually a good thing to have the ball in the hands of your best player more often? Turner will probably be a small forward in the NBA, but his responsibility right now is to run the Buckeye offense.

Turner has good court savvy, a high basketball IQ and the ability to score in crunch time. Scoring point guards aren't as abundant in college basketball as they were a few years ago, but there are a few still around and Turner could be the next great one.

I agree with the move, and it wouldn't be a shock if the Buckeyes are on a roll at the end of the season with their floor leader leading the way.



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THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Sound Play Led Pryor, Buckeyes In Win

No turnovers.

You heard throughout the week leading up to Ohio State's football game with Penn State that if the Buckeyes didn't commit any turnovers they had a good chance of beating the Nittany Lions.

The OSU defense was good enough that if the offense didn't put it in any bad positions the defense would put the team in a position to win. Terrelle Pryor and the offense would do something sometime in the course of the 60 minutes that would be enough to win the game as long as there were no turnovers.

The Buckeyes didn't have any, the defense was incredible, Pryor and the offense did what they had to do and the result was an impressive 24-7 victory. Ohio State was superior to Penn State in all three aspects of the game – offense, defense and special teams – and the Buckeyes passed the first test of their drive toward the Rose Bowl.

As brilliant as Ohio State's defense was, fans and football observers from around the nation will probably be more inclined to talk about Pryor just as they have all season. Many Buckeye fans wondered if this game would be a coming-out party for the native Pennsylvanian, who had yet to lead Ohio State to a signature win.

In the end, the game proved to be what I believe was a "coming-in" party because Pryor played within himself and within the OSU offense.

Instead of trying to be a combination of Johnny Unitas and Jim Brown, he seemed to understand that he just needs to be patient, not force things, and the yards and points will come. Pryor is going to make his plays – he always does. He just needs to stop shooting himself and his team in the foot by trying to force the action.

His numbers against Penn State weren't the type that are going to move him up any national statistical charts. He totaled only 175 yards and was 8 of 17 passing for 125 yards. But a closer look shows that within those modest numbers he dominated the game, hopefully proving to himself and the world that he does not have to have at least 200 yards passing and 100 yards rushing every week.

He dominated this game.

Two of his eight completions went for touchdowns, both of those tosses coming in the second half when the contest was on the line, including the game-breaking 62-yard bomb to DeVier Posey. His first four runs either went for a score or a first down, and at that point he was averaging 13.5 yards per carry. After the game was well in hand, he took a meaningless 4-yard loss to drop his average to 10.0 on the day. Most importantly – and it bears repeating again – he threw no interceptions and did not fumble the ball away.

It's really the turnovers that have kept him from the type of greatness that was expected when he was chosen the Big Ten's preseason offensive player of the year. Players of the year may put up more impressive lines than Pryor did against Penn State, but the QB was responsible for all three Ohio State touchdowns and had a 24-yard run and threw a 22-yard pass to help set up the team's other points that came on a Devin Barclay field goal.

You just can't ask for much more from your quarterback in a big game.

You also can't ask for much more from the Ohio State defense.

The stop troops have been impressive all season, but this was a step up in class

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

from some of the other offenses they have faced this season. The Buckeyes stopped the Nittany Lions on the ground and through the air, holding the conference's leading offense – entering the game averaging 429.1 yards per contest – to a season-low 201 yards. The Buckeyes also came darn close to pitching their fourth shutout of the year.

On the Lions' lone scoring drive, they drove from their own 29 to a first-and-goal at the OSU 2. The Buckeyes stopped them three straight times from there and appeared to stop them on fourth down, but the play was ruled a 1-yard touchdown run by quarterback Daryll Clark to even the score at 7. Penn State would not make it past the Buckeyes' 45 again.

You knew a game between Jim Tressel and Joe Paterno would become a field-position battle, and the Buckeyes clearly held the edge there. Led by the defense and punter Jon Thoma, Ohio State forced PSU to start at about its own 22-yard line on average. That average would have been even worse had the Lions not been able to start at their own 40 after Barclay was forced to kick off from the OSU 15 after an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

The Buckeyes negated that field position, however, when Ross Homan intercepted Clark on the second play of the drive. For the game, Ohio State's average starting point was past its 36, giving the Buckeyes a better than 14-yard advantage in initial field position.

A dominant defensive performance such as the one OSU turned in against Penn State was obviously a team effort. Yet there is no question that team effort was spearheaded by junior defensive lineman Cameron Heyward. Heyward led Ohio State with 11 tackles, including three for loss and two sacks. As good as that line is, it doesn't demonstrate Heyward's full impact. He hurried, harassed and hit Clark many other times during the game, further disrupting the flow of the Nittany Lions' attack.

The OSU defensive line completely dominated the trenches, always a key to important Big Ten victories. The line's continued ability to develop pressure on its own, without blitzes and other gimmicks, has been a big reason for the team's defensive success this season. The back seven are free to man their positions and make plays instead of vacating their zones to try to apply pressure.

And speaking of dominating the trenches, the Ohio State offensive line, while not as dominant as its defensive counterpart, won its battle as well. The unit, often criticized this season, kept Pryor's jersey clean with no sacks and also allowed the Buckeyes to grind out 228 rushing yards to only 76 for PSU. That helped Ohio State hold better than an eight-minute edge in time of possession.

I heard some people say after the game that Penn State with its weak schedule perhaps came into the game overrated. When I heard that, I couldn't help but think of the words of former Buckeye head coach John Cooper.

"Sometimes we don't give enough credit to the other team," Cooper used to say. "Their players are on scholarship, too."

Coop was usually talking about the Buckeyes' opponent. In this case, however,

the statement may apply to Ohio State. Was Penn State overrated or did the Buckeyes make them *look* overrated? I think we need to give credit to Ohio State.

As an aside, wasn't it nice to hear another team booed by its home fans for an unimaginative offense?

As impressive as the win was, it will be meaningless if the Buckeyes don't take care of business against Iowa and Michigan. It would be foolish to overlook either of these clubs regardless of whether their injury situation or win-loss record might indicate an easy Ohio State victory.

Here is a case where the disaster at Purdue may help lead the Buckeyes to Pasadena instead of hinder their path. It is very unlikely that this Ohio State team will take any team – especially the 9-1 Hawkeyes or the archrival Wolverines – lightly after the debacle in West Lafayette.

'Most Important Play'

While Tressel is far less quotable than his predecessor, one of the sayings most often attributed to him is, "The punt is the most important play in football."

Many ridicule the coach for that statement, but his point was certainly given validity in the first quarter against the Nittany Lions.

Penn State held the Buckeyes to a three-and-out on their first possession of the game, forcing a punt from their own 29. Thoma then drilled a 55-yarder, pinning the Lions at their 16.

The Buckeye defense drove PSU back to its 13, forcing Jeremy Boone to punt. He hit a returnable 37-yarder that Ray Small took 41 yards to the Penn State 9, setting up Pryor's 7-yard touchdown run.

Two punts and two completely different outcomes.

It is so important to get off to a quick start on the road, especially in a hostile environment such as Beaver Stadium. While in the end those seven Buckeye points were not needed in the victory, that sequence clearly set the tone for the game.

Small, as explosive a player as there is on the OSU roster, had a big impact on the victory. He had another long return in the second half, taking the ball 45 yards to the Penn State 47. From there, the Buckeyes marched 10 plays to their final touchdown with Pryor hitting Brandon Saine from 6 yards out.

For the game, Small returned seven punts for 130 yards and an 18.6-yard average. Like Pryor, he did not mishandle any returns as he had done in the loss to Purdue. He added a catch for another 7 yards and a 13-yard run.

Thoma did not have his most dominating game of the season, but he did his job well. He booted the ball eight times for a 38.0-yard average with three inside the 20, and Penn State had no return yardage. The Lions' best field position after a Thoma punt was their own 34-yard line, and in the pivotal third quarter they started one drive at their 13 and another at the 9.

Choose A Back

Saine and Herron both had their moments in the game, though neither was spectacular, and wound up with similar lines on the stat sheet.

Saine led all ball carriers with 20 carries for 68 yards, good for a 3.4-yard average. Herron, who appeared to have tweaked a recurring ankle problem late in the game, followed with 16 carries for 58 yards and a 3.6-yard average. Most importantly, like Pryor and Small, neither of them lost a fumble.

I still think the Buckeyes need to choose a featured back, be it Saine, Herron or one of the others on the team. I'm not a big running back-by-committee guy. I think a running back needs to get in a groove, and it's hard to do that when you come out after a series or two.

If you are following our series on the 1984 Ohio State Rose Bowl team, you know those Buckeyes had two strong tailbacks in Keith Byars and John Wooldridge. Wooldridge got his chances with 633 yards on 108 carries for a 5.9-yard average, but Byars with his then-record 1,764 yards was the man. Obviously neither Saine nor Herron are Byars – they may not even be Wooldridge – but I say give one of them a shot at carrying most of the load.

One running back who stood out in the win over Penn State was freshman fullback Zach Boren. Not only did he throw some big blocks, he also caught two passes for 9 yards. Will we see him carry the ball in the future?

Larson To Be Roasted

WTVN Radio personality Larry Larson, known to one and all as "Mr. High School Sports," will be roasted at the Agonis Club's Flowers for the Living Roast set for Nov. 18 at the Buckeye Hall of Fame Caf e.

Doors will open for a social hour at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:30. Tickets are \$35 and guests will have an opportunity to buy tickets to a reverse raffle with a chance to win \$5,000.

Don't miss this chance to see the affable Larson on the hot seat and help support a worthy cause.

For more information, call Jeff Norris at (614) 262-4317 or (614) 565-4634.

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