

Ohio State Spring Game Recap: QB Justin Fields Leads Gray To 35-17 Win Over Scarlet



COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Ryan Day era, sort of, began under mostly sunny skies at Ohio Stadium on Saturday in the annual spring game when the Gray recorded a 35-17 win over the Scarlet.

Day, who replaced Urban Meyer as head coach on Jan. 2, was interim coach for the first three games of the 2018 season when Meyer was suspended but this was the first time on the sideline with “his” program.

The glorified scrimmage drew 61,102 to the reduced capacity of 76,000 (because of renovations) with a kickoff temperature of 61 degrees.

There were modified rules, including 10-minute quarters with a running clock in the second half and no live tackling. Instead, the players were mostly grabbed and held. And, of course, no contact with the quarterbacks, who wore black jerseys.

Everyone came to see the expected quarterback duel between Georgia transfer Justin Fields and redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin, who missed last season while recovering from knee surgery.

Fields, playing exclusively for the first-team Gray was the frontrunner coming into replace Dwayne Haskins and did nothing to discourage that.

Fields was 4 for 13 for 131 yards, including a 98-yard touchdown to Binjimen Victor — all in the first half. He also rushed eight times for 38 yards and a TD.

Baldwin played for both teams, He was 9 for 15 for 119 yards and a TD for the Gray and 11 for 231 for 127 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions with the second teamers.

Master Teague of the Gray led all rushers with 75 yards and two TDs on seven rushes. The Scarlet’s Marcus Crowley gained 50 yards on 10 totes with a score.

Victor’s two grabs went for 107 yards. The Scarlet was led by Jaelen Gill (seven catches for 95 yards). Elijah Gardiner had 72 yards on two catches and Garrett Wilson added 44 yards with four catches for the Scarlet.

First Quarter

Fields got the first snaps for the Gray to start the game and went 3-and-out. J.K. Dobbins rushed for 4 yards, Fields first pass to Victor was tipped incomplete and Field was then "sacked" by Davon Hamilton for a 4-yard loss.

Chris Chugunov guided the second-team Scarlet on their first possession and on second down had a 19-yard strike to Gill but the drive ended at Scarlet 46.

Baldwin's first series for the Gray included 33-yard toss to K.J. Hill at the 50 that was under-thrown but four more plays netted only 5 yards.

Baldwin stayed on the field to quarterback the Scarlet in a drive that ended when Xavier Johnson lost a fumble at the Gray 35 after running for no gain. The turnover was caused by defensive end Javontae Jean-Baptiste and recovered by cornerback Sevyn Banks.

Second Quarter

On the second play of the period, Baldwin still in for the Scarlet, was intercepted by Amir Riep at the Scarlet 45. He returned it 25 yards.

It took the Gray three plays to go the 20 yards for 7-0 lead with 8:52 left in the half. Teague, a second-year sophomore, rushed for 10. Fields found Victor for 9 and Teague carried it in from the 1.

Baldwin engineered a six-play, 65-yard drive in 2:11 to tie the score 7 for the Scarlet. The first of two big plays was a 19-yarder to Jaelen Gill, the redshirt freshman from Westerville (Ohio) South, to the Gray 18.

On the next snap, Wilson made a spectacular leaping grab in the right corner of the end zone over Banks with 6:41 left.

Fields used his arm and feet to take the Gray 65 yards in nine plays, using 2:22 of the clock for a 14-7. He opened the possession with a 16-yard dash around the left end to the Scarlet 49. After two incompletions he connected with Austin Mack for gains of 13 and 11 to the 25. Teague ran for 7 and 13 before Fields ran to the right pylon and scored from 5 yards at the 4:19 mark.

Baldwin had a poor next drive for the Scarlet. First, he lost 4 yards on a fumble at the Gray 33 then on the ensuing play was intercepted at the 2 by Jahsen Wint.

Fields then took over. On third-and-10 from his own 2, Fields found Victor down the right sideline at the Gray 43 and he sped the rest of the way for a 98-yard TD and a 21-7 lead with 1:32 left.

The Gray lead was extended to 28-7 with 37 seconds left after the Scarlet turned it over when Wint intercepted Chugunov at the Gray 48.

Baldwin returned to the Gray side and had a 29-yarder to tight end Rashod Berry to the Scarlet 8. After an incomplete pass, Baldwin hit an 8-yard TD pass to C.J. Saunders to cap a six-play, 52-yard drive in 54 seconds.

Chugunov made amends when the Scarlet got the ball back when he spotted Gardiner for 59 yards to the Gray 6. Chugunov missed Gardiner and Jake Hausmann on consecutive plays and Blake Haubeil made a 23-yard field goal as time expired to make it 28-10. The drive was 59 yards in five plays in 32 seconds.

Third Quarter

The Scarlet closed to within 28-17 at 5:05 of the quarter with Baldwin taking the group 65 yards in 11 plays in 4:55.

Baldwin looked more comfortable and had two passes to Gill for a total of 20, and another of 14 yards to the freshman Wilson, a former teammate at Austin (Texas) Lake Travis. Crowley completed the drive with a 2-yard run.

Teague and Fields collaborated to make it 35-17 with 2:24 left. Fields ran for 30 to the Scarlet 35. Teague rushed for 17. After Fields was sacked for a 4-yard loss, Teague ran 22 yards for the Gray score at the end of 65-yard drive that used five plays and 2:41.

Fourth Quarter

There was very little of note in the quarter although fourth-string quarter back Daniel Vanatsky got into game and had a nice 18-yard sideline pass to Gill for the Scarlet. Vanatsky was 2 for 5 for 23 yards.

The game took a tidy 1:54 to play.

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