Ohio State outscored Illinois 24-0 in the second quarter to take control of the game, and went on to rout the Fighting Illini 52-22 to stay unbeaten in ten tries. The Buckeyes followed the 2012 script by keeping it close for a quarter, but the relentless rushing duo of Braxton Miller and Carlos Hyde accounted for 210 of the team's 330 yards on the ground, and Illinois simply had no answer for them as Ohio State (10-0, 6-0) built a 31-6 lead at the half.

Hyde ran for 137 yards and three touchdowns, two of those in OSU's second quarter spurt. Miller added 73 more and a rushing TD of his own, but it was the big plays Miller made with his arm that showed how Urban Meyer's work on the passing game in recent weeks is paying off.

Braxton's Day

The sophomore Heisman contender completed 12 of his 20 passes (with a couple of drops) for 226 yards, connecting on TD passes of 51 yards to Rod Smith and 37 yards to Corey Brown. Among his other completions were gains of 31, 24, 32, and 14 yards, and he appears to be throwing the ball with more confidence and accuracy as the season progresses.

It goes without saying that Miller also showed off his usual array of stop, start, spin, juke, flash and dash moves on his way to 96 positive rushing yards (before 4 sacks are subtracted). He repeatedly frustrated Illini pass rushers with his uncanny elusiveness, either buying more time to throw, or deciding to take off with the ball himself.

When Brown took an early 4th quarter throw from Miller and weaved his way 37 yards into the endzone to give OSU a 45-14 lead, Meyer pulled his star quarterback for the day, and Kenny Guiton mopped up for the final 12 minutes.

Competing for a Quarter

Quarterback Nathan Scheelhaase and the Illini were able to put together a first quarter drive resulting in a field goal that gave them a 3-0 lead, their only lead of the game, and a short-lived one at that. Ohio State answered immediately with a 79-yard touchdown drive that featured a bruising 19-yard run by Hyde, and the junior running back later bulled over for the score from three yards out.

The Illini took advantage of a good kickoff return and a personal foul on OSU safety Christian Bryant to move into position for another field goal, and the opening quarter ended at 7-6. Then the floodgates opened, as the Buckeyes got rolling on offense, and Illinois (2-7, 0-5) started to look and play like a team on a six game losing streak.

It didn't help the already overmatched Illini when their best defensive player, linebacker Jonathan Brown, was knocked out of the game after suffering a head injury in the first half. From that point on, OSU moved the ball pretty much at will. In the end, OSU had rolled up 567 yards of total offense to the Illini's 170.

Defense Prevents Big Plays

A lot of the credit for shutting down the Illinois offense has to go to...the Illinois offense...which is terrible, the worst in the Big Ten by far. But the Ohio State defensive line pushed them around all day long, as John Simon, Nathan Williams and Johnathan Hankins dominated up front, living in the backfield, helping to limit the Illini to 74 yards rushing. Scheelhaase completed 19 passes in 34 attempts, but generated just 96 yards through the air, and had no completion longer than 12 yards.

Speaking of dominance, it was wearing #10 in scarlet on Saturday. Sophomore linebacker Ryan Shazier just keeps getting better, and he had perhaps his best day as a Buckeye against Illinois, registering 11 solo tackles and 14 total to lead the team. Shazier also had 2 tackles for loss, and broke up a pass. Zach Boren is another linebacker improving with every game. The senior captain and erstwhile fullback chipped in with eight tackles while delivering maximum effort on every single play.

Backups Get a Chance

A four touchdown lead in the 4th quarter allowed Meyer to finally give his first team offense a break and get his second unit some much-needed time on the field in a game situation. It’s something he had hoped to do during those early season non-conference blowouts that never happened this year. “You try to get one or two of those early in the year, but we were so lousy it was hard to do that,” the coach said afterwards. “It's priceless to be able to do that. We'll lose all that for the Bowl practices, we'll lose … a minimum of 15 practices.”

Most of the work over the final 12 minutes went to freshman tailback Bri’onte Dunn, who got 13 carries, and made the most of them, running hard for 73 yards and a touchdown. Guiton and Dunn moved the ball 62 yards in 10 plays the first time they had it, but Guiton misfired on an option pitchout and Illini safety Ashante Williams returned his fumble 77 yards for the final

Illinois points of the day. Dunn carried the ball on all seven plays of the ensuing OSU possession, and finished it off with a 3-yard touchdown run to close out the scoring.

Back to Work

With the open date coming up this week, Meyer will give his unbeaten Buckeyes some time off on Sunday, but then it's right back to the routine. No postseason for the Buckeyes means no valuable practice time in December. Meyer said that's the reason his players will be back at work during the bye week. "That's going to be hard for us to recoup that. You can't just say those [practices] are gone. Somehow you've got to recoup them. That's why I've been going so hard on Sunday with the young players. I'm not going to do it tomorrow but we'll do it again."

Meyer says he wants his players to get their body weights back up during the off week, noting that some of them are "hitting a wall" after ten straight games without a break. The players are also dealing with their first experience with the new semester system at OSU, and Meyer hopes they can "un-hit" the wall for a week, and get their academics in order.

Something to Play For

Early in the season, some observers of the OSU program wondered how Meyer would be able to motivate a team with no postseason to shoot for...no tangible reward for their effort or their excellence. With each passing week though, that big fat zero in the loss column seems to have provided more and more of that motivation for these Buckeye players. Two difficult games remain...at Wisconsin, and at home vs Michigan...but any doubts that these Buckeyes will be motivated down the stretch have been put to rest by their 10-0 start.

OSU Official Box and Stats

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Dan's OSU Links and Resources

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