Braxton Miller threw for two 4th quarter touchdowns after California had taken the lead late in the game, and the Buckeyes held off the Bears 35-28 to stay unbeaten under Urban Meyer. Miller accounted for all five Ohio State touchdowns, with a career-high four TD's through the air, and a 55-yard TD run that opened the scoring.

The OSU defense gave up 512 total yards to the Bears, and the Buckeyes saw a 20-7 halftime lead evaporate when Cal scored the first 14 points of the second half. After Cal's backup tailback Brendan Bigelow bolted 81 yards for a touchdown in the 3rd quarter, senior QB Zach Maynard sneaked it in from a yard out early in the 4th to give the Bears a 21-20 lead.

Miller and the Buckeyes shook off their 3rd quarter doldrums, marching for the go-ahead TD, and tacking on a 2-point conversion to make it 28-21, but Bigelow struck again moments later with a 59-yard touchdown run, and the game was tied with just over eight minutes to play.

The game-winning score came two possessions later, after Miller had thrown what looked like a fatal interception, setting the Bears up in OSU territory at the 44-yard line. But Cal kicker Vincenzo D'Amato cooperated with his third field goal miss on the day in as many tries, pulling it wide left and giving the Buckeyes another opportunity.

With less than four minutes on the clock, Miller extended a 3rd and 7 play by rolling out right, and found Devin Smith all alone behind the Cal secondary for a 72-yard completion and the

sophomore receiver's second touchdown of the afternoon. Christian Bryant sealed the win with an interception of Maynard on the Bears' final possession, and the assembled 105,232 breathed a collective sigh of relief. It wasn't supposed to be this difficult.

Tedford's Plan

Cal coach Jeff Tedford deserves credit for a well-schemed and well-called game. He used a lot of play-action short passing, and his backs got to the edge in the running game numerous times. He adjusted to the Buckeyes' early success on offense by going to the "46" defensive front in the second quarter, which gave the OSU line problems and virtually shut down the Buckeye offense for most of the middle two quarters.

Miller put on another dynamic performance, and while his stats for the game weren't quite as gaudy as the previous two games...75 net yards rushing, 1 TD.... 249 yds passing, 4 TD's, 1 INT...there is the matter of the five touchdowns. It really was a story of two games for Miller. He completed 10 of 14 in the first half, with two TD's, and three of those four incompletions were drops by his receivers. Then came the middle portion of the game, when OSU went seven consecutive possessions without scoring and generating just one first down.

Hall Relieves the Pressure, Smith Shines

OSU did succeed in taking some of the burden off of Miller in the rushing attack. The return to the lineup of Jordan Hall gave Meyer a veteran presence to run the football, and they called Hall's number 17 times. The senior tailback showed some rust, but still gained 87 yards (5.1 avg) and more importantly, limited Miller's rushes to just 12 carries.

Devin Smith is starting to emerge as the playmaker Meyer has been craving. Smith *(#15 at top)* had two drops, but made the big plays expected of him. The first was a 25-yard TD catch on a beautiful back-shoulder throw by Miller to give the Bucks a 13-7 lead in the 2nd quarter. The two

sophomores hooked up again later in the quarter on a streak pattern that was good for 35 yards and set up the Buckeyes' third TD. Counting his 72-yard game-winner, Smith had five receptions for 145 yards and two TD's.

Tackling Still an Issue

The two big TD runs by Bigelow kept the Bears in this game, and even though you have to credit great individual effort by the running back, especially on the first TD, there was some shoddy tackling by the OSU defenders that helped make the long gains possible. Ryan Shazier led the Buckeye defenders 13 tackles (10 solos) with a sack and 2 TFL. Johnathan Hankins and Bradley Roby turned in winning performances as well.

As a team, the defense registered six sacks, which is twice as many as they had accumulated in the first two games combined. They blitzed quite a bit more, and paid the price a few times as the middle of the field opened up for Maynard to exploit with his passing, and their running backs had more room to maneuver at the second level.

Meyer Postgame

It looked for a time as if the PAC-12 might continue its 2012 dominance of the Big Ten, but Meyer said he stayed confident. "Our guys found a way. I have been in games before where I thought we were going to lose, where I just kept waiting...I thought someone would make a play, I really did."

More Meyer after the game...

On the development of Braxton Miller: "*having an athletic quarterback to get you out of trouble sometimes gets you in trouble. But what is going to happen is we're going to have to be throw the ball, become efficient throwing....But since Braxton became our quarterback, he's much*

better. But we've got a long way to go. It's kind of turning into that kind of a world for us right now that there's a lot of players, people, numbers, committed to stopping the run."

On his unabashed man-love for John Simon: (this one's worth quoting at some length): *John Simon played hurt today. Gave a little emotional speech in there. He had a sore shoulder. They kept telling me all week, it should be fine, it should be fine; it just didn't heal as fast as we hoped. Boy, he just lost it in the locker room as far as just sharing,opening up his soul for this team. And I've done this a long time, man, and he's as good...you mark that down there, can you put a jersey up there or something that says John Simon, because that's a grown ass man...excuse my language...that's a guy.*

If we have another child I want to name him, what is it, Urban John Simon Meyer or something like that....can't wait for that headline. But that's how much I love that guy. I'm not ashamed to say I love him. Love that guy. ...Makes all of us look in the mirror and say: Are we doing enough for our team?. That guy, what he just did in there, not to give you too much of what went on in there, but am I doing enough? When I say I, as our coaching staff, are we doing enough? Are we doing as much as he's doing? No. We've gotta do more. Gotta do more.

On his defense giving up 512 yards to Cal: *"Terrible. Terrible. I wish I had some magic answer for you. Don't tackle very well right now. Stupid penalties. We had some personal fouls, 15 yard penalties. Better get that cleaned up or we're going to lose a game. Once again, I don't have a magic answer for you. Are we going to do ten pushups after we commit a penalty, I don't know. We'll get better, though. I promise you we're going to get better. How long will it take, there's a lot of moving parts to get better."*

OSU Official Box Score and Stats

---

on Twitter at @dwismar

Dan's OSU Links and Resources

--

(photo credits: Dan Harker - The-Ozone.net)