To the list of Terrelle Pryor "firsts" this season, we can now add...first Big Ten road start...and first fourth quarter, come-from-behind, game-winning touchdown drive. Pryor weathered the crowd and the pressure, and in a game often marked by his own hesitance and indecision, pulled it together in the end, and ran in the winning touchdown on an 11-yard option keeper with 1:08 left in the game. Buckeye Dan recaps the Bucks 20-17 win over the Badgers.

Unfazed

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Pryor led the Buckeye offense on a 12-play, 80-yard drive, starting with 6:26 left and Ohio State down 17-13. After throwing incomplete on the first play, he moved the team into scoring position with completions on his next three throws, hitting Brian Hartline for 19 and 27-yard gains, and Ray Small for a 13-yarder, mixing in the running game with Chris Wells before scoring the game-winner himself.

Wells is Well

The game had been billed as a matchup between two premier big backs, Wells and Wisconsin's P.J. Hill, but Beanie took the top billing on this night, rushing for 168 yards on 22 carries for a 7.6 yd. average. He scored the first touchdown of the game on a 33-yard run, straight-arming Badger safety Shane Carter for the

final five yards into the end zone. Then he added a 54-yard dash in the third quarter, and had four carries for 17 tough yards in the final drive, showing no lingering problems with the toe injury that had caused him to miss three games.

Hill pounded out 64 yards on 16 carries, with a long run of 9 yards, and just a 3.9 yard average. He split the Badgers' rushing duty with John Clay, who had 69 yards on ten carries in an impressive showing. The Badger running attack ripped off big chunks of yardage as Wisconsin drove for the go-ahead score in the fourth quarter, setting the stage for the Pryor heroics.

## Still Learning

Facing by far the best defense he has seen as a starter, Pryor had several tentative moments in his decision-making in the backfield, and got mixed results in the running game. He had positive yardage of 57 yards rushing, including runs of 11, 9, 10, and 11 yards, the last for the winning score. But seven of his 15 rushing attempts went for negative yardage, including a 16-yard sack and a fumbled hand-off that cost him five yards. The 37 yards in losses resulted in a net 20 yards rushing for the freshman, but that figure hardly reflects how much running around he did on the night.

Pryor was 13 of 19 passing, for 144 yards, with one interception, and was sacked a total of four times. A couple of those sacks were caused by his own indecision, trying in vain to stay upright long enough to make a play downfield, but with the exception of the one 16-yard sack on an all-out Badger blitz, he limited the lost yardage and held onto the ball. He made it hard on himself in the final drive with two negative plays on first downs, but came back each time with big pass completions to keep the drive going.

## Another Fast Start

The Buckeyes scored on their first possession, and the 7-0 score held up until just before halftime, when Wisconsin mounted a scoring drive that ate up most of the second quarter, ending on a 9-yard TD pass to tight end Mickey Turner. Pryor's two quick incompletions in the ensuing OSU possession allowed Wisconsin to get the ball back at their 20 with about a minute to play in the half. Evridge then passed them quickly to the Ohio State 3-yard line, where they

settled for a go-ahead field goal with five seconds to go, giving the Badgers a 10-7 halftime lead.

Wisconsin had dominated the second quarter with the long scoring drive, as the Buckeyes had two three-and-outs and a fumble on their three possessions in the period. OSU receiver Dane Sanzenbacher gave up the football after a 23-yard completion, when he was smashed by three Badger defenders simultaneously. Several players on both sides of the field had to be reminded what day it was, as the hitting was ferocious all night.

Taking Control

The Buckeye defense reasserted itself in the second half and OSU took the momentum back with two drives that resulted in Ryan Pretorius field goals and a 13-10 OSU lead. Wisconsin could muster just one first down on each of two third quarter possessions, and had a three-and-out on the third one. On offense, the Bucks squandered an opportunity to take the lead on their first possession of the half, when they failed to cash in for six on a first-and-goal from the 3-yard line. Pryor took a loss on first down when he ran out of time and field on a rollout, and then after a short run by Wells, just missed connecting with Hartline in the end zone when the pass arrived a split second late.

The fourth quarter began with OSU moving in for the go-ahead field goal, and this time it was Ray Small who single-handedly cost the Buckeyes a touchdown. He stepped out of bounds on his pattern, resulting in an illegal touching penalty, which he then compounded by dropping a perfectly-thrown 14-yard TD pass from a scrambling Pryor. Small had a couple of receptions in the game, but a muffed punt and the late mental and physical mistakes showed why he continues to frustrate the coaches with tentative and inconsistent play.

The Buckeye defense then faltered badly on the ensuing Wisconsin possession. The Badgers gashed the middle of the OSU defensive line, driving from their 37 down to the Buckeye three without the benefit of a pass completion, and P.J. Hill powered in for the score on a 3rd and goal play. John Clay did most of the damage with runs of 14, 5 and 17 yards, and receiver David Gilreath ran it down inside the five on a 15-yard reverse, a play call that hurt the Bucks several times during the game.

That was when the young quarterback for the Buckeyes took over. (You know, the one who was supposed to be intimidated by the raucous Camp Randall Stadium crowd and the pressure of a big road game in Big Ten play.) On the first series of the winning drive, Pryor converted a third-and-six with a pressure throw to Hartline for 19 yards, and then twice bailed himself out of second-and-long situations with completions to Hartline and Small.

The defense played well overall, with the exception of the fourth quarter lapse and the inexplicable 'prevent' alignment at the end of the half which allowed Wisconsin to take the lead. The linebackers did what they're supposed to do, getting to the ball carriers for a majority of the tackles. James Laurinaitis and Ross Homan both had strong games with 10 tackles each, and the play of the Buckeye safeties contined to improve in this game, as Kurt Coleman and Anderson Russell tackled very well, chipping in with 8 and 7 stops respectively.

What Streak?

The win for the Buckeyes (5-1, 2-0) snapped the Badgers streak of 16 straight home wins, dating back to 2005. It was just the second home loss for Wisconsin since the 2003 season. More importantly, it dropped Wisconsin (3-2, 0-2) two games behind in conference play after just two games. Coach Tressel evened his career mark against the Badgers at 3-3, and in the process recorded his tenth consecutive road win in Big Ten play.

The closeness of the game was reflected in the statistics, which were remarkably even in most every area. Ohio State edged the Badgers in time of possession, 30:32 to 29:28, and barely outgained Wisconsin in total yards, 327 to 326. The Bucks had a small edge in rushing yardage (183 to 179) but were outgained in the passing game (147 to 144)

OSU had 17 first downs to 19 for the Badgers, and both teams averaged 4.6 yards per rushing attempt. The Buckeyes stuck with their recent winning formula of running the ball about twice as much as they pass it, attempting only 19 passes in the game.

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A couple of notes about the officiating: To these (admittedly biased) eyes, the

decision by the officials to allow offensive holding to be committed with complete impunity in this game disproportionately harmed the Buckeyes. And my understanding of what constitutes pass interference apparently needs some adjustment. I wasn't aware that a defensive back is now permitted to repeatedly hack at the arms of the receiver while the ball is in the air, pinning the receivers arms down, preventing him from reaching up for the ball. On two key plays in the game, the interception of Pryor on a long pass in the first quarter, and another deep ball intended for Robiskie, Wisconsin cornerback Allen Langford mugged the OSU receivers without getting a call. "Well played" said the clueless Todd Blackledge on the second of these assaults.

By the way, I thought no TV commentator could make me long for Brent Musberger, but Mike Patrick pulled it off. His pro-Wisconsin sentiments spilled out all over the place, and he made repeated mistakes in the play-by-play.

For the Buckeyes, a home date with Purdue is next on the slate before the trip to East Lansing to face the rejuvenated Spartans on October 18. Wisconsin will have the best wishes of Buckeye fans from this point on, especially this week when they host the high-flying Nittany Lions of Penn State.

Links:

OSU Official Game Stats - OSU 20, Wisconsin 17