Terrelle Pryor put on a record display of passing accuracy and the Buckeye defense forced five turnovers as Ohio State (3-0) humbled the Ohio U. Bobcats 43-7 on Saturday at the Shoe.

Pryor completed 17 of his first 18 passes, including an OSU record 16 in a row in the first half. The streak of completions is the 2nd-longest in Big Ten history, behind Chuck Long's record of 22 straight at Iowa. Pryor finished 22 of 29 for 235 yards, with two TD's and two interceptions.

Pryor added a rushing TD on a 13-yard run...one of those cut-back, improvised glides to the corner that are becoming his signature, and he did it all in three quarters. He rushed for 54 yards, netting just 35 after 19 yards in sacks are deducted, and yet still somehow managed to come off as the best running back on the field...again.

The Ohio State defense got their first turnover on the game's second play, and didn't allow a Bobcat first down until mid-2nd quarter. They forced five fumbles, recovering three, picked off two passes, and threw in a safety for good measure. If it were a fight, they'd have stopped it.

On special teams, the Buckeyes had a punt blocked and proved yet again that their kickoff man can't tackle, but at least this week it didn't cost them any points.

Don't Give Em Hope

The Buckeyes took the suspense out of this one early, asserting themselves on both sides of the ball and racing out to a 34-0 lead after a quarter and a half of football. The Bobcats' offense proved even more inept and turnover prone than most people thought they'd be...which is saying something. It was pretty clear after a couple of series that Ohio U. was no threat to move the ball consistently on the Buckeye defense.

The big early lead left the OSU offense in what amounted to an enhanced practice session, allowing them to drill their ball-control passing attack in preparation for the meatier portion of the schedule. And drill they did.

Pryor's Day

Pryor completed passes to seven different receivers, including five each to DeVier Posey, Dane Sanzenbacher and tight end Jake Stoneburner. Backup Joe Bauserman hit three more targets as ten different Buckeyes had at least one pass reception.

It was an impressive display of patience and accuracy for Pryor, and for all the junior's many strengths, those two attributes haven't been placed at top of the list in his first two seasons as the OSU quarterback. Next time someone tells you easy wins over bad teams don't help the winners at all, consider the learning experience still going on for this quarterback, and how much he advanced in this game.

Along with Good Pryor, sometimes you still get Bad Pryor. He underthrew a wide open Sanzenbacher to end his completion streak on what might have been a touchdown, and then threw two ill-advised but harmless interceptions, both after it was 34-0, that ended up costing OSU exactly nothing.

Cam Heyward destroyed them for a safety on the first play after Pryor's second pick at the Bobcat 4-yard line. And the first one was one of the few deep attempts Pryor made all day, and resulted in a touchback with six seconds left in the half. To even mention them seems like nit-picking a really strong performance overall.

It's worth remembering that on every one of those completions by Pryor, there was a guy making a catch on the other end...and these OSU receivers have hands. Posey and Sanzenbacher each made one spectacular catch in this game...and all the unspectacular ones too, and Stoneburner catches everything thrown his way. Saine had another TD catch, and Jordan Hall is another back with natural hands. By the way, linebacker Ross Homan has great hands too.

Even a stopped clock is right twice a day

This was also the day the long-predicted new emphasis on getting the tight ends and running backs involved in the passing game officially arrived. Stoneburner is looking more comfortable each week, and his career high five grabs went for 61 yards and his first career touchdown catch. Dare I call it a breakout game?

And OSU running backs caught seven balls out of the backfield, with Herron, Saine and Jordan Hall getting two apiece and Zach Boren grabbing one. All in all, 13 of the 26 OSU pass completions went to tight ends or backs. *(Just goes to show you, if you keep predicting something over and over, it will eventually come true.*)

Methodical on Defense

What do you say about the OSU defense except that they show up every week, and they hit people? Ohio U. accumulated just 158 total yards on the day, and more than half of it (82 yards) was gained in the 4th quarter against OSU's second team defenders. The Bobcats simply didn't have the athletes on offense to make it a fair fight.

The turnover machine that is the OSU defense continued without letup with five total for the game, on three fumble recoveries and interceptions by Ross Homan and Tyler Moeller. Set those against Pryor's two interceptions, and OSU was +3 for the game, putting them at +10 for the season (12 takeaways, two turnovers).

Ross Homan had a forced fumble, an interception, and he led the team with seven total tackles in his best game of the young campaign. Cam Heyward got five yards on a fumble recovery, and his one TFL on the safety, but so much of his game....disrupting the offense....just doesn't show up in the stat book. His consistent high motor is amazing to watch.

The only bad news on defense for the Buckeyes was that their cornerbacks were dropping like flies out there. Starter Devon Torrence got banged up twice early, but managed to return both times. But Travis Howard and Donnie Evege, the #3 and #4 corners for this team, went down with what appeared to be more serious injuries. Redshirt freshman Corey Brown was victimized on the only Bobcat score of the afternoon, an 11-yard fade from Boo Jackson to Terrence McCrae as the game wound down, and all of a sudden, the cornerback depth that had been a team strength becomes a concern.

Lots of Kids Playing

Games like this are invaluable for the extended playing time they make available for some of the younger players. Against Ohio U., Tressel stayed with his preferred practice of giving the entire second team offensive line a series sometime in the first half. In this case, he inserted the entire second offensive unit, and they drove to a field goal early in the second quarter with Joe Bauserman at the controls.

By the end, just about everybody who is going to play this year got in the game for the Buckeyes, giving the players priceless game experience, and giving the coaches game film on them to work with. From that standpoint, this game couldn't have been scripted any better.

Random Ramblings

This is still a quirky OSU offense, with the rushing attack (by the running backs, at least) not yet really uncorked. Saine broke two long runs in the Marshall game, but the traditional OSU running game hasn't blossomed yet this year, and we're at the quarter-pole.

This team has a quarterback whose game plan calls very few plays designed for him to run, but

ends up being the best running back on the team in spite of it. They have a No. 1 running back in Brandon Saine whose most important contributions continue to be primarily on pass receptions.

Saine had 48 yards rushing on 12 carries in this one, plus the receiving touchdown, while Dan Herron chipped in with 27 yards on nine carries, with touchdown runs of one and two yards. Still the commitment to the power running game seems to have given way to practicing the possession passing game.

They seem to be content to pass the ball in order to set up the run, and so far it's working. I'm also reminding myself that they didn't get the ground game really clicking last year until the second half of the season. When the weather turns cold, they'll need to be better at executing in the rushing game, and something tells me they will be.

There's another breather coming up next week as Eastern Michigan visits Columbus to pick up a paycheck and a pasting, so more of the same kind of grooming of younger Buckeye players is on the agenda. The Big Ten slate starts out softly as well, with @Illinois (10/2) and Indiana (10/9) the first two dates on the conference schedule.

October 16 in Madison begins to loom larger now, even as the Badgers have sort of stumbled to 3-0. I just found out yesterday that your humble correspondent will be representing TCF on my first trip to Camp Randall that day, so I'm sort of hoping for two unbeatens to be there.

For now though, we'll settle for watching this group perform and grow every Saturday, with the knowledge that Jim Tressel teams usually get better as the season goes along.

Links:

OSU Official Stats and Game Detail

ESPN Box

OSU Game Story

Photo credit: Marvin Fong - Plain Dealer