Terrelle Pryor accounted for six touchdowns, including four touchdown passes to Dane Sanzenbacher, as the 2nd-ranked Buckeyes ran their record to 4-0 with a 73-20 rout of the defenseless Eagles of Eastern Michigan on a perfect fall Saturday in Columbus.

Pryor bolted for a 53-yard touchdown on OSU's third offensive play, and then hooked up with Sanzenbacher four times before finishing off his day with a 20-yard TD reception on a pass from tailback Jordan Hall. Pryor and Sanzenbacher each tied OSU records for touchdowns in a game, as the Buckeyes scoring total was the highest ever for a Jim Tressel team at Ohio State.

Eastern Michigan (0-4, 0-2) proved to be more adept on offense than anyone expected, throwing the ball effectively down the middle of the field against a youthful OSU secondary, scoring more touchdowns against the first-team Buckeye defense than that group had given up in their three previous games combined.

As expected though, the outcome was never in doubt after Ohio State scored the game's first 24 points in the first quarter. Pryor's offensive output may have vaulted him to the forefront of the Heisman conversation, despite the relative haplessness of the opposition. OSU's junior quarterback finished the game 20 for 26 passing, for 224 yards and 4 TD's. He added 104 yards rushing on seven carries, with one rushing touchdown, and no sacks or interceptions.

Stacking Up

Through four games, Pryor has completed 66.4% of his passes for 939 yards, with 10 TD's against two interceptions, for a 167.18 quarterback rating. Add to that his 269 yards rushing on 43 carries, for a 6.3 yd. average, with three rushing TD's. With his junior season less than half over, Pryor is taking dead aim on several career offensive records at Ohio State. With 40 career TD passes, he has now moved past Greg Frey into 5th place in the record book. (Bob Hoying holds the record with 57).

Pryor has now also accounted for 58 total touchdowns in his OSU career, placing him just 10

behind 2nd place Troy Smith's 68, and putting Art Schlicter's record of 85 well within striking distance, assuming he plays another season in Columbus. As they say...stay tuned.

Dane's Career Day

When a reporter mentioned Dane Sanzenbacher's four touchdown day to Jim Tressel after the game, the coach appeared to be unaware of the accomplishment. "Dane caught four?", he asked, "...well....Dane's good", Tressel deadpanned, drawing a laugh from the assembled media. Indeed it's hard to remember the last time the senior wideout dropped a ball or made any kind of noticeable mistake on the field for the Bucks. "I don't know what to tell you," Tressel continued. "He's where he's supposed to be."

On this afternoon, where he was supposed to be was the endzone. By the time it was over, Sanzenbacher had scored on a 31-yard post, a 8-yard slant from the slot, and two quick out patterns to the pilon on catches of 9 and 7 yards, to finish with a career high nine receptions for 108 yards.

Secondary Concerns

The Buckeyes came into this game with their defensive secondary a little banged up, and that situation was complicated further when starting cornerback Chimdi Chekwa went out in the first quarter with back spasms. That left OSU with a relatively inexperienced safety in Orhian Johnson and an even greener player at corner in redshirt freshman Corey Brown subbing for Chekwa. EMU quarterback Alex Gillett went right after the younger Buckeye defenders, and had some success throwing the ball, especially in the 2nd quarter when he was able to drive the Eagles to two touchdowns, almost exclusively through the air.

Gillett found his tight end and leading receiver Ben Thayer down the middle a total of five times for 75 yards in receptions, mostly off of play action, and his two young wide receivers, Kinsman Thomas and Donald Scott had three catches and a touchdown each. The OSU defense gave up pass completions of 41, 32 and 26 yards in this game, which is something many teams with stronger passing attacks have been unable to accomplish against the Buckeyes.

It was apparent that OSU's safety Johnson was slow to rotate and give inside help on his deep coverage a couple of times, and Brown and fellow freshman corner Dominic Clarke were victimized a few times as well. But just as much credit is due Gillett for making some excellent throws under a heavy rush, and to his receivers for some pressure catches downfield.

Chekwa returned in the 4th quarter, so his injury situation shouldn't be a long term issue, and the good news is that the young OSU secondary members got some extended game action in a blowout win.

There's No Rush, But The Streak Could End Soon

This EMU offense didn't show much of a rushing attack, as their two running backs, Dwayne Priest and Javonti Green, combined for just 47 yards on 23 carries against the rugged OSU front seven. For the game, EMU netted just 40 rushing yards total, with a long run from scrimmage of 11 yards on a keeper by the quarterback Gillett. Still there's no doubt they are a better offensive team than Ohio University.

The last two teams to be vanquished by Ohio State will meet next week when Ohio U. visits the Eagles in Ypsilanti, and I believe the 16-game EMU losing streak could very well end that day. The Bobcats have nothing remotely resembling the passing game of the Eagles, and the 73-point outburst by Ohio State notwithstanding, I think the Eagles may have enough pluck and determination on defense to somehow squeeze out a win at home this Saturday. The only question is whether anyone will show up to watch it. *(My rough count from high atop The Shoe yesterday had about 37 identifiable EMU fans among the 105,017 in attendance)*

Young Backs Stand Out

The absence of the traditional tailback-centered power rushing attack at OSU so far this season has frustrated many of the faithful, and has caused a fair amount of clamoring to see how the younger kids in the tailback corps would do if given the opportunity. Young OSU backs Jordan Hall, Jaamal Berry and Carlos Hyde each got some chances in Saturday's game to show their stuff, and all three made very positive impressions.

Jordan Hall is rapidly becoming one of the more versatile and productive of the young offensive contributors for this team. Against EMU he rushed four times for 26 yards (6.5 yd. avg), and caught a 17-yard touchdown pass from backup quarterback Joe Bauserman. As noted above, he also threw a 20-yard TD pass to Terrelle Pryor on a throwback pass to the left after taking a pitchout in the backfield going right.

Hall has also become the Bucks' primary kick returner in his sophomore season, and on Saturday he returned three punts for 14 yards, with a long of 11, and one kickoff for 26 yards. In his limited duty at tailback, Hall has already shown the ability to make the first defender miss, with his lateral quickness and head faking, a talent that has eluded a certain starting tailback in his four years at OSU. Hall has excellent hands and more than adequate speed, and he continues to give the impression that he is just now scratching the surface of his potential as a player for Ohio State.

Speaking of just scratching the surface, Jaamal Berry touched the ball just seven times against EMU, but accounted for 74 rushing yards and 86 more on kickoff returns. After picking up seven yards on his first three carries in the 4th quarter, Berry bounced it outside on his next attempt, got the corner, and sprinted 67 yards down the right sideline for his first touchdown as a Buckeye. A couple of Eagle defenders thought they had an angle on the redshirt freshman tailback, but his trademark acceleration left them in the dust. Berry also looked good on three kickoff returns, nearly breaking the last one before getting tripped up by the last EMU defender to have a shot at him.

Another freshman running back, Carlos Hyde made his Buckeye debut against EMU, and contributed 32 yards on five carries, including one very impressive 14-yard gain on which he broke several tackles and displayed the kind of strength and power that could make him a unique option in the OSU rushing game going forward.

Veteran tailback Dan Herron had a solid day running the ball as well, with 55 yards on 12 carries (4.6 yd. avg.) including a 7-yard TD. Herron also caught three balls for an additional 30 yards in receptions. Brandon Saine also caught three passes for 18 yards, mostly on "stretch" type long screens in the flat, but was largely invisible in the running game.

You Figure it Out

Take it as a given that EMU has one of the worst run defenses in the nation over the course of the last two seasons. Take it as another given that no Buckeye player is as talented running with the ball as is Terrelle Pryor. It is also now clear that the Buckeyes have some excellent young talent at the running back position, and this game gave them a rare opportunity to give those guys some valuable game experience. Still...consider this...

Ohio State rushed for 342 yards against Eastern Michigan on Saturday, and their starting tailback Brandon Saine had 11 yards on three carries. How does that happen?

More Firsts

OSU backup quarterback Joe Bauserman looked more productive than he has anytime in the recent past, going 5 of 6 for 59 yards passing, and converting on a third down play with an option run. He threw the first touchdown pass of his Ohio State career in the 4th quarter, connecting with Jordan Hall from 17-yards out.

And 3rd-stringer Kenny Guiton got his first career touchdown on a 15-yard quarterback draw call up the middle for the 10th Buckeye touchdown of the afternoon. He put a nice move on the EMU defensive end on the play to spring him into the clear, and went in untouched.

True freshman defensive tackle Jonathan Hankins got his first career sack.

Statistically Better

The Buckeyes improved in a couple of areas that have proven troublesome so far this season. They held EMU to an 18.7 yd average on nine kickoff returns (there were three touchbacks...also an improvement), although the statistics look a bit better than the reality, which showed some ongoing kick coverage breakdowns.

And OSU scored seven TD's on seven trips to the red zone. Kicker Devin Barclay was perfect on the day with one field goal on his only attempt, and 10-10 on extra points.

The Big Ten is next. At Illinois this Saturday.

Links:

OSU - Official Box Score and Game Detail

ESPN Game Recap

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