Someone had to pay for the way the Ohio State players felt after losing last week, so it was probably fitting that last season's upset winner over OSU was in town Saturday at the Horseshoe. The Buckeyes demolished Purdue with six first half touchdowns to celebrate Ohio State's 89th Homecoming Game, shutting out the punchless Boilermakers 49-0. Six different players scored touchdowns for the Buckeyes, and the OSU defense didn't allow the Purdue offense to cross midfield until after halftime.

Asked after the game if the memory of losing to the Boilermakers last year made this game special for his players, or if the team was just angry about last week's loss, Jim Tressel admitted he didn't know for sure, but his theory was that "the most recent misery probably trumps past misery." If that's the case, then schooling Purdue was just a bonus for the Buckeyes (7-1, 3-1).

Early and Often

Tailback Dan Herron got the Ohio State offense off to a fast start with 63 rushing yards and two touchdowns in the 1st quarter, and then Terrelle Pryor took over with the passing game. After Jordan Hall opened the 2nd quarter scoring with a 1-yard TD run, Pryor connected for three touchdown passes in the last five minutes of the period.

Pryor hit DeVier Posey with a 22-yard strike to the left sideline off play action to make it a 28-0 game, and then after a quick three-and-out by Purdue, the junior quarterback followed up with a 3-play drive that featured a 56-yard catch and run by Dane Sanzenbacher. After a facemask penalty on the long reception put the ball at the Purdue 7-yard line, Pryor rewarded Sanzenbacher on the next play with a TD pass on a quick slant over the middle.

The Boilermakers, who were unable to register a single first down in the 2nd quarter, kept the football for all of eight seconds on their next possession, as quarterback Rob Henry was intercepted by Orhian Johnson on the first play. Starting on the Purdue 40-yard line, it took Ohio State five plays to score this time, with the touchdown coming on a 15-yard post pattern to wide receiver Corey Brown. The freshman wideout they call "Philly" went high to make a nice catch in

traffic right at the goal line for his first career TD reception.

One statistic is sufficient to tell the story of the Buckeyes' first half domination. Total yards at halftime: OSU: 415, Purdue: 47. The OSU total yardage was a record for one half for Tressel's career at Ohio State.

Pryor's Ups and Downs

Pryor rebounded from his sub-par passing performance against the Badgers by going 16 of 22 passing, for 270 yards, with the three TD's, and two interceptions. The first pick came on a throw that was hurried by an onrushing Ryan Kerrigan, and tipped up in the air by the OSU receiver Brown. Still it was a ball that probably shouldn't have been thrown. His second interception was on a zone blitz by Purdue and was caused by his failure to see the Purdue defensive end who had dropped into coverage, and stepped right in front of Pryor's short slant pass.

For most of the day though, Pryor had time to throw, and wide open receivers on the other end of his passes. He spread the ball around to nine different receivers in one half of football, hitting Sanzenbacher (86 yds) and Posey (84 yds) four times each, and Corey Brown twice, with six other Buckeyes registering one catch apiece. Pryor told reporters afterward that there were only two running plays designed for him in the game plan, and that he wanted to run more often than he did, but that they didn't need to use him that way. He finished with -2 net rushing yards on four official attempts, and was sacked once for a 4-yard loss.

Playing Time for the Backup RB's

After Herron carried the bulk of the rushing load early in the game, the entire stable of OSU running backs got to see significant action in the game. Jordan Hall came on in the 2nd quarter, and found it pretty tough sledding, carrying the ball eight times, and managing just 13 net yards against a Purdue defense stacked against the run.

Brandon Saine came out running with purpose, looking like a former No. 1 tailback who hadn't had a single rushing attempt for two full games. The OSU coaches were making a concerted effort, it seemed, to get him outside to take advantage of his speed, giving him the ball on deep handoffs when he was in motion toward the sideline. He had 41 yards on 5 carries (8.2 avg) with a long of 12 yards. They're learning, at long last, how to make the most of what Saine can do well.

Jaamal Berry (6 att, 27 yds, 4.5 avg) and Carlos Hyde (5 att, 23,yds, 4.2 avg) got the majority of the second half action at running back, gaining valuable game experience in what amounted to two quarters of garbage time for Ohio State.

Backup quarterback Joe Bauserman had a couple of series, and was 2 for 2 passing, including a 23-yard strike to third-string tight end Spencer Smith to close out the OSU scoring.

Right Game, Right Time for OSU Defense

The Purdue offense was hapless, to be sure, which made it the perfect matchup for an OSU defense that was seriously beaten up and trying several players at different positions. All in all, the OSU coaches had to be fairly pleased with how things went with their defensive experimentation.

Andrew Sweat looked very much at home playing the weakside linebacker in relief of the injured Ross Homan. So much so that he led the Buckeyes in tackles with eight, including five solos and 2.5 TFL. The other major question mark going into the game was senior Aaron Gant getting just his second career start at safety, with the normal starter Jermale Hines moving to the Star back spot for this game. Gant responded with six tackles to finish right behind Sweat for the team leadership, and Hines said after the game that Gant had not missed any of his assignments.

Hines, by the way, reminded everyone why he was a Star back in his first two seasons as a major contributor at OSU with a solid all around game.

You saw the halftime total yardage numbers...here are a couple more Purdue stats bad enough to make Bob Griese and Drew Brees...hell, even Mike Phipps cringe...

The 15 of 28 passing numbers for Boilermaker quarterbacks Rob Henry and Sean Robinson don't look disgraceful on their face, but they went for just 88 yards, or 3.1 yards per attempt, and 5.9 yards per completion. That's awful. They didn't have a pass completion longer than 14 yards.

Purdue generated 9 total first downs...one of those on a penalty They averaged 2.1 yards per play (versus 6.7 for OSU). The deepest Purdue penetration was to the OSU 39-yard line, and that was on a 15-yard penalty against OSU, coming on their last possession of the garbage time second half. Their one scoring chance came three plays (and one yard gained) later...a 56-yard field goal attempt with 24 seconds left in the game. Need I say it? Wide left.

These Guys Were 2-0 in the Big Ten?

Set aside the revenge motivation for the Bucks in this one....and set aside their emotion and their determination to bounce back strong after a very tough loss last week. Set aside also the fact that Purdue has suffered some tough injuries to key offensive players.

Still...these Boilermakers are a bad football team. Eastern Michigan looked better against Ohio State than Purdue did Saturday. Big Ten-watchers were scratching their heads by halftime, trying to figure out how in the world this team beat Northwestern, a feat they accomplished while lacking the same three offensive performers, QB Robert Marve, WR Keith Smith and RB Ralph Bolden that they were missing Saturday.

So it's unclear if the Buckeyes really fixed any of what was wrong up in Madison last week, or if

they just cruised past another lower-tier Big Ten team without breaking a sweat. For the moment, OSU fans can enjoy the fact that revenge has now been visited on the Purdue Boilermakers in classic beatdown fashion, and that the next two Saturdays promise relatively smooth sailing for the Buckeyes.

It's a date in Minnesota next week...then the bye week for Ohio State the following Saturday...and it's debatable which might prove the more relaxing weekend.

The other piece of good news for OSU was that Wisconsin hung a conference loss on Iowa, leaving Michigan State as the only Big Ten team without a loss in league play. Iowa would seem to have the best shot at taking care of the Spartans unbeaten conference mark, so the Buckeyes are still in the chase for at least a share of the Big Ten title.

It's Not All Good News

On the injury front, a couple of things to report: Corey "Pitts" Brown, the redshirt freshman defensive back who had been shifted to safety from cornerback this past week to firm up the rapidly thinning safety ranks for the Bucks, went down with a knee injury late in the game, and could be out a while. The thinning continues...that's *four* OSU safeties knocked out of action in eight games.

J.B. Shugarts, the starting right offensive tackle, continues to have foot problems which have been causing him enough pain to limit his playing time, and if Saturday against Ryan Kerrigan is any indication, his effectiveness as well. He left the game before halftime Saturday and did not return. Freshman Andrew Norwell finished the game at right tackle, and played pretty well.

Links:

OSU Athletics Communications - Game Box and Complete Stats

ESPN Recap

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