Youth was served in Ohio State's 37-17 win over Colorado Saturday, as Braxton Miller threw two touchdown passes to fellow freshman Devin Smith in his first start as the Buckeyes' quarterback. Junior tailback Jordan Hall added 231 all-purpose yards, including a 90-yard kickoff return and a rushing touchdown, and the Buckeyes dominated special teams play and field position to help them finish their non-conference schedule with a 3-1 record.

The new OSU quarterback didn't complete a pass until the second quarter, but he established himself early as a dynamic running threat, with 78 net rushing yards in the first half while the Buckeyes were building a 20-7 halftime lead. Hall (84 rushing yds, 1 TD) and Carlos Hyde (40 yds, 1 TD) took over most of the rushing duty in the second half, and Miller finished with 83 yards rushing and 83 yards passing on 5 of 13 with the two TD throws, and no interceptions.

Miller got a rousing ovation from the assembled 105,096 when he hit tight end Reid Fragel for an 8-yard gain for his first completion and a first down. Just three plays later, he ended a five-quarter Buckeye streak without a completion to a wide receiver when he dropped back out of an option look, and hit Smith down the middle for a 32-yard score to give OSU a 17-0 lead. The long overdue burst of offensive effectiveness all took place before the Buffaloes had managed a single first down.

Buffalo Hunt

The OSU defense held the Buffaloes to 76 yards rushing, and limited the Buffs' star receiver Paul Richardson to 4 catches and 38 yards. They surrendered some yardage in big chunks when QB Tyler Hansen (22 of 39, 238 yds, 2 TD) was able to find his tight ends and backs

running free of Buckeye linebackers in the middle of the field a few times, but there just weren't enough weapons in white shirts to seriously threaten the Buckeyes on this day.

The Buffaloes were able to put together two long touchdown drives, one in each half, and the statistics will show that they were barely outgained by the Buckeyes in total offense 336-314, but that stat sheet is the only place this game was ever close. The Bucks enjoyed the field position advantage all afternoon, making for shorter yardage scoring drives, while the Buffs spent most of the day backed up near their own goal line, complicating their troubles with nine penalties for 83 yards.

Learning to Finish?

Miller would hook up with Smith *(pictured)* for the second time on the first OSU possession of the second half on a beautifully thrown 17-yard fade to put the Buckeyes up 27-7. Smith and Miller came very close to a third TD connection when a quick out from the Buffaloes 15-yard line was barely broken up by the Colorado cornerback in the first quarter. This combo could be very special before their days in Columbus are done.

After Colorado answered with a field goal, Hall ran back the ensuing kickoff 90 yards to the Buffalo 5-yard line. Hyde took it into the endzone on a pitchout on the first play, and the lead swelled to 34-10.

The Buffs would put up a fourth quarter TD, but Fickell showed some class by letting the clock run out with his Buckeyes on the Colorado 1-yard line at game's end. The coach also allowed his much-maligned senior quarterback some mop-up duty on the last OSU possession, and Joe Bauserman made a couple of nice throws (2-2, 27 yds) to get a taste of success after his

awful outing a week ago.

Buckeye kicker Drew Basil contributed three field goals in as many tries, including a 47-yarder to cap the OSU scoring in the fourth quarter. Basil has now hit five straight after missing his first two attempts of the season.

Random Notes:

- Braxton Miller's passing stats (5-13, 83 yds, 2 TD) could well have been better. He had at least two balls dropped (Berry, Williams) and a nice completion to Smith at the sidelines was ruled a drop by the official. He does need to learn to take a little something off the shorter throws, and for some reason the nice tight spirals we saw all spring and summer out of him were absent today. OSU fans should not be getting the idea that those wobblers are the norm from Braxton.

- Miller rushed 14 times in the first half, and was scintillating, if a little reckless. He will not be able to run the ball that much in Big Ten play if he wants to play all of the remaining eight games and stay in one piece (as Denard Robinson learned a year ago). The coaches reined him in in the second half after seeing him risking life and limb a few times in the early going.

- Jordan Hall is a threat to score in so many different ways. My recurring thought as I watched the junior play the last two games is to wonder how the heck he rode the bench in favor of Brandon Saine last season. There were some injury issues, but come on...

- Defensively, a couple of young *(are you seeing a trend here?)* Buckeyes must be singled out for stellar games against the Buffs...Christian Bryant started at safety in place of Orhian Johnson, and the sophomore from Glenville responded by leading the Buckeyes in tackles with six, plus a pass breakup.

- Right behind Bryant on the stat sheet was freshman linebacker Ryan Shazier, who got a few series from scrimmage subbing for Will backer Andrew Sweat, and tallied five tackles, some of which were on kick coverage. Shazier's speed, instincts and aggressiveness just jump out at

you in everything he does on the field. His skill set is unique on this OSU roster. This is another special freshman.

- John Simon got credit for just three stops in the game, but anyone watching knows that he was the dominant defensive player in this game. He pressured Tyler Hansen numerous times, and absolutely creamed him after the throw on several occasions. I suspect Hansen is still feeling the hurt #54 put on him Saturday afternoon.

Links:

Official OSU Box Score and Statistics

ESPN Recap

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on Twitter at @dwismar

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