

## Buckeyes Back On Top

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**TEMPE, Ariz. (AP)** - Perfectly shocking! Perfectly thrilling!

Ohio State worked two overtimes to rip the national championship from the confident 'Canes in one of the greatest college football games ever.

Maurice Clarett ran 5 yards for the winning touchdown, and Ohio State's defense turned back one final Miami bid to tie the game. With that, the Buckeyes completed an unlikely, unbeaten run to their first national title in 34 years with a 31-24 win Friday night at the Fiesta Bowl.

The Buckeyes, 11<sup>7</sup>-point underdogs, ended the Hurricanes' bid for a second straight title and their winning streak at 34.

"It's no different than what we've done all year," Ohio State quarterback Craig Krenzel said. "We make plays in the big games when we have to."

But it would have never happened if not for a late pass interference call at the end of the first overtime - which came with Miami players already celebrating an apparent championship.

Instead, the fourth-down call gave Ohio State the chance it needed to tie the game and send it into the second overtime.

By then, it already was a classic - the first national championship game to go into overtime, in a matchup of the nation's last two undefeated teams.

The greatest ever?

"It's got to be right up there if it's not," Krenzel said.

Miami's Todd Sievers sent the game into overtime with his 40-yard field goal on the final play of the fourth quarter.

The Buckeyes' punishing defense had rattled and pounded Miami quarterback Ken Dorsey all night.

And on the last play of the game, on fourth-and-goal at the 1, Cie Grant blitzed and forced Dorsey to heave a desperation pass that linebacker Matt Wilhelm batted to the ground.

A few plays earlier, Wilhelm hit Dorsey with such force it sent the quarterback to the sideline for one play. He came back in, but the Buckeyes would not be denied against a team trying to secure its place in history as one of college football's great dynasties.

"It feels unreal," Miami fullback Quadtrine Hill said. "After the game was over, it felt like we had one play left. It can't be over. It's something I never want to feel again."

While Miami coach Larry Coker lost for the first time in 25 games, Ohio State's Jim Tressel now has a major college title to add to the four he won in Division I-AA at Youngstown State.

Nine times since Woody Hayes coached the Buckeyes to the 1968 title, Ohio State lost a late-season season that cost it a possible championship. But the Buckeyes finally brought the title back to Columbus with a conservative offense and fierce defense that Hayes would have loved.

Miami (12-1) nearly had its 35th straight victory in the first overtime after scoring a touchdown on its first possession.

Trailing 24-17, Ohio State (14-0) converted a fourth-and-14 on a pass by Krenzel. But the Buckeyes then faced a fourth-and-3 at the 5 when Krenzel threw to the right corner of the end zone for Chris Gamble, who was being covered Glenn Sharpe.

As Gamble reached back for the ball, he got his hands on it but couldn't hold on. Seconds later, field judge Terry Porter threw a flag from the back of the end zone indicating pass interference even as Miami players and fans spilled onto the field.

Order was restored quickly, and three plays later Krenzel scored from the 1 to send the game to a second OT.

After losing All-American running back Willis McGahee to an injured left knee early in the fourth quarter, Miami had the ball first in overtime. The Hurricanes went ahead on Dorsey's 7-yard TD pass to Kellen Winslow Jr., but the Buckeyes answered with Krenzel's 1-yard score.

In the second OT, the Buckeyes went first from the 25 and Clarett capped off a five-play drive with his spinning, slithering cutback through the Miami defense.

Dorsey, a Heisman Trophy finalist, finished off his career with just his second loss in 40 starts. Even though he was groggy from Wilhelm's hit, he came back into the game to try and pull the 'Canes even.

The Associated Press poll of sports writers and broadcasters was to be released early Saturday, with the second-ranked Buckeyes a lock to move up to No. 1.

Ohio State didn't have to wait to pick up the trophy awarded by the USA Today/ESPN coaches' poll, which automatically goes to the Fiesta winner, this season's designated Bowl Championship Series title game.

Ohio State led 14-7 at the half, and extended the margin to 10 points on Mike Nugent's 44-yard field goal. The 'Canes closed to 17-14 on McGahee's 9-yard scoring run with 2:11 left in the third quarter. And that set the stage for Sievers' kick, leaving the Sun Devil Stadium crowd of 77,502 breathless.

When the game ended, players and red-clad Buckeyes fans converged on the field to celebrate their first national title since 1968.

The Buckeyes' ferocious defense had Dorsey in trouble from the opening series with two sacks. Although Ohio State fell behind 7-0, the constant pressure paid huge dividends in the second quarter as the Buckeyes took a 14-7 halftime lead, turning two turnovers into touchdowns in a 78-second span.

Ohio State failed to capitalize on Dorsey's first interception - an overthrown pass right into the arms of cornerback Dustin Fox near midfield - but a second led to the Buckeyes' first score.

All-American safety Mike Doss picked off a pass that went off the hands of intended receiver Andre Johnson and raced 35 yards up the right sideline to the Miami 17.

From there, it took seven plays before Krenzel fought his way into the end zone on fourth down from the 1 with 2:28 left in the half. Two Miami defenders, Roger McIntosh and Jamaal Green, hit Krenzel at the 2, but he twisted his way in for the score.

The Buckeyes were back in business on the next play. Dorsey dropped back to pass, but defensive tackle Kenny Peterson came around from the right side and spun him to the ground as the ball came loose. Darrion Scott recovered at the Miami 14.

Two runs and an offsides call later, Clarett finally broke free for a 7-yard touchdown run with 1:10 left and just like that the Buckeyes were ahead, fireworks were shot off and the Buckeyes fans rocked the stadium.

Dorsey threw a 25-yard touchdown pass to Roscoe Parrish in the first quarter, thanks to a block by McGahee on blitzing safety Donnie Nickey.