

Ohio State Survives Scare from San Diego State, Wins 16-13

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COLUMBUS, Ohio - Strong safety Will Allen returned an interception 100 yards for a score and kicker Mike Nugent added three field goals as No. 2 Ohio State survived for a 16-13 victory against San Diego State Saturday in front of 104,433. The Buckeyes ran their win streak to 16 games, including eight wins which were decided by seven points or less.

Turnovers were key for both teams from the opening kick. San Diego State had four turnovers in the game, while the Buckeyes committed two of their own, including their first on their opening play of the game.

On that opening play of the game, Buckeye quarterback Craig Krenzel's pass was picked off by Jacob Elimimian and returned 14 yards to the Ohio State 23-yard line. Four plays later and after a personal foul on OSU, receiver Wesley Williams caught a Matt Dlugolecki pass for the 11-yard score to give the Aztecs the early 7-0 lead just 1 minute, 18 seconds into the game. It was Krenzel's first interception at home since the 13-7 victory over Penn State last October.

A 38-yard field goal by Nugent on their next possession put the Buckeyes on the scoreboard, 7-3, with 9:54 to play in the first quarter.

San Diego State drove the ball 77 yards on its next possession before Allen intercepted a Dlugolecki pass in the end zone and returned it 100 yards for the score, which gave the Buckeyes a 10-7 lead with 6:36 to play in the first quarter. The 100-yard interception return is an Ohio Stadium record, topping Howard Cassady's 88-yard run against Wisconsin in 1954. The return equaled the school mark set by David Brown at Purdue in 1986 and tied by Marlon Kerner, also at Purdue, in 1993.

OSU linebacker Robert Reynolds picked off Dlugolecki again to set up another Nugent field goal, this time from 32 yards to extend the lead to 13-7

with 3:25 to go in the opening period.

Neither team scored in the second quarter. San Diego State out-gained Ohio State on offense 132 to 76, though the Buckeyes had 119 yards after two interception returns, one for the Buckeyes' only TD of the first half.

The Aztecs took advantage of a Krenzel fumble in the third quarter and turned it into a field goal to pull within 13-10 with 9:17 to go in the quarter. Facing third-and-13 from the OSU 41, Krenzel was sacked by Va'ati Maka for a loss of 15 yards and lost the ball. It was recovered by Brandon Rager at the 26 and then four plays later, J.C. Mejia snuck a 47-yard field goal over the cross bar to pull within three.

The Buckeyes drove 68 yards after San Diego State was forced to punt following a sack of Dlugolecki, which took the Aztecs out of field goal range. The drive stalled on the SDSU 11-yard line after Nugent's field goal attempt sailed wide right. It was the first miss for Nugent at home since the 2001 season. He had made 17 field goals in a row dating back to the Texas Tech season opener last year.

He found redemption though as the Buckeye defense gave him good field possession following a fumble recovery by David Patterson at the SDSU 21-yard line. After gaining four yards, Nugent poked a 35-yarder through the uprights to extend the Buckeye lead to six, 16-10.

The Aztecs responded with a field of their own after taking the ball from their own 14 to the OSU 20, before a Bobby Carpenter sack pushed them back to the 28-yard line. Mejia converted on a 46-yard field goal to return to within three points of the Buckeyes.

Following an exchange of punts, San Diego State's final drive crossed into Buckeye territory as Dlugolecki found wide receiver Devin Pitts for a 23-yard completion on third down to the OSU 46-yard line. The Aztec offense combined for two incompletions and a Hamilton run for zero yards as they stared at fourth-and-10, where Dlugolecki could not connect with Pitts at midfield as the Buckeyes took over

on downs.

Ohio State ran out the clock as Krenzel found Jenkins for a 14-yard pass on third-and-6 for the Buckeyes' first third-down conversion on the afternoon. Hall rushed for nine yards on the ensuing first down before Krenzel's two-yard sneak yield a first down allowing the Buckeyes to run out the clock.

Hall carried the ball 19 times for his 91-yard game. That included a long of 33 yards near the end of the third quarter that resulted in Nugent's missed field goal.

San Diego State out-gained the Buckeyes 216 yards to 196 yards for the game. Ohio State ran for 120 yards and added 76 yards through the air as Krenzel completed just 5-of-20 passes with one interception. The Aztecs threw for 188 yards, but managed only 28 yards on the ground.

Ohio State will play host to North Carolina State Saturday at 12:10 p.m. The game will be televised by ABC-TV.