

## **Buckeyes Outlast N.C. State 44-38 in 3-Overtime Thriller**

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**COLUMBUS, Ohio** - Ohio State's defense stuffed North Carolina State's T.A. McLendon on 4th-and-1 at the goal line to preserve a wild 44-38 triple-overtime victory for the Buckeyes Saturday afternoon in front of 104,890 fans at Ohio Stadium. OSU's Will Allen and A.J. Hawk met McLendon just short of the goal line, ending the first overtime game in stadium history and extending the nation's longest winning streak to 17 games.

The winning points came on senior quarterback Craig Krenzel's fourth touchdown pass of the afternoon, a 7-yard toss to Michael Jenkins. The mandatory two-point conversion try failed as Krenzel's pass was tipped at the line and fell incomplete, leaving OSU with a precarious 44-38 lead. Krenzel finished with 273 yards passing, completing 26-of-36 attempts. He was also the team's leading rusher with 37 yards on 13 attempts and one touchdown.

Ohio State had built a 24-7 lead with 11:25 remaining in regulation before Wolfpack quarterback Philip Rivers led a furious N.C. State comeback in the fourth quarter. Rivers forced overtime when he guided the Wolfpack on an eight-play, 86-yard drive to tie the score with 21 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter. T.J. Williams nabbed a five-yard pass from Rivers to tie the score at 24-24. Rivers' arm accounted for all but seven yards on the drive.

Rivers ended the day completing 36-of-52 passes for 315 yards, four touchdowns and a pair of interceptions.

The N.C. State comeback began as the Wolfpack recovered a fumbled punt return by Santonio Holmes on the OSU 17-yard line at the 9:42 mark. Five plays later Rivers converted on 4th-and-2 by finding a wide-open Jerricho Cotchery for a nine-yard score. The extra point narrowed the lead to 24-14 with 8:26 remaining in the game.

Krenzel threw his third interception of

the game on the Buckeyes' next possession and A.J. Davis returned it to the OSU 12-yard line. The Buckeye defense held and Adam Kiker booted a 24-yard field goal to pull the Wolfpack to within 24-17 with 5:51 remaining.

Ohio State went three-and-out on its next possession, but punter B.J. Sander boomed a 57-yard kick that pinned the Wolfpack on their own 14-yard line and set the stage for N.C. State's tying scoring drive.

Ohio State opened the overtime session with a touchdown on a 10-yard scoring pass from Krenzel to senior tight end Ben Hartsock. Mike Nugent's extra point gave the Buckeyes a 31-24 lead. N.C. State answered as Rivers found Tramain Hall for a 17-yard touchdown. The point after again tied the score at 31.

T.A. McLendon sprinted around right end for a two-yard touchdown in the second overtime and a 38-31 N.C. State lead. The TD was set up following an interference call on the OSU defense giving the Wolfpack a first down on the 2-yard line. Ohio State answered, moving 25 yards on four plays with Krenzel finding sophomore tight end Ryan Hamby in the back of the endzone from two yards out. Nugent's kick once again tied the game, this time at 38-38 and setting up the dramatic final overtime.

OSU opened the scoring in the first quarter when Krenzel found a streaking Jenkins across the middle of the field and the senior took the ball 44 yards to the end zone. The reception, the longest by a Buckeye this year and the first passing touchdown of the season, and the subsequent point after gave OSU a 7-0 lead with 4:13 to play in the first quarter.

The ensuing kickoff bounced off the helmet of N.C. State's Richard Washington and was recovered by Will Allen on the 3-yard line. Two plays later, Lydell Ross carried the ball two yards up the middle for the Buckeyes' second TD of the game, and a 14-0 Ohio State lead with 2:47 in the first period.

The Buckeyes built their lead to 24-7

after consecutive N.C. State drives were ended with interceptions, and lead to 10 OSU points. Linebacker A.J. Hawk came up with the first interception at the OSU 38 and returned it 55 yards to the Wolfpack 7-yard line with 6:34 remaining in the third quarter. Mike Nugent kicked a 22-yard field goal four plays later to extend the Buckeye lead to 17-7 as time expired in the third frame.

N.C. State began its next drive at its own 38-yard line, but a Rivers pass over the middle on second down was intercepted by redshirt freshman Brandon Mitchell at the Wolfpack 42. The Buckeyes took advantage of the turnover when Krenzel sprinted six yards over left end for a touchdown with 11:25 remaining in the game. Nugent's extra point gave the Buckeyes a 24-7 lead.

N.C. State had only 97 total yards in the first half as the Buckeye defense held the Wolfpack to -1 yard rushing. For the game OSU held the Wolfpack running attack to just 21 yards on 30 attempts. Ohio State managed 317 yards of total offense, all but 44 yards through the air.

The Buckeye defense was led by Hawk, who in addition to his interception and return, had 12 tackles on the day. Tackle Tim Anderson added six tackles and two sacks.

The game was the third overtime in Ohio State history, and the Buckeyes have prevailed in each. Last season Ohio State won 23-16 at Illinois in one OT, and used two overtimes to defeat Miami for the national championship 31-24 in the Fiesta Bowl.

The third-ranked Buckeyes move to 3-0 on the season. N.C. State (No. 24/22) is now 1-2. Ohio State will play host to Bowling Green Saturday at 12:10 p.m. at Ohio Stadium. The game will be televised by ESPN Plus.