

Jenkins Late TD Reception Pushes Buckeyes Past Penn State

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STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) - Off-balance and falling backward in the corner of the end zone, Michael Jenkins caught a 5-yard touchdown pass from Scott McMullen with 1:35 left to lift Ohio State to a 21-20 win over Penn State on Saturday.

Lucky catch?

"We've been working on that in practice - it's called a fade-jump," McMullen said. "Mike kind of makes a kind of fade, and then a hard jump. Most of the time the defensive player, he doesn't really have his eye on me, so Mike sees the ball.

"Mike's 6-5 he's going to make those kinds of plays. I just wanted to get it up to him."

With another close victory, No. 8 Ohio State (8-1, 4-1 Big Ten) kept alive its league title hopes as well as a berth in a Bowl Championship Series game.

The loss gave the Nittany Lions (2-7, 0-5) their first five-game losing streak since Joe Paterno came to Penn State as an assistant coach in 1950; he's in his 38th season as head coach.

Penn State had a chance to win, but David Kimball's 60-yard field goal try on the final play of the game was just short and wide right.

Despite the distance, Ohio State coach Jim Tressel was worried.

"Did you see his kickoffs? I thought, for sure, if they had the ball across the 50, we were in trouble," Tressel said. "Man, I was glad he got under it."

The Nittany Lions held off Ohio State for most of the game, with Buckeyes' quarterback Craig Krenzel leaving late in the second quarter after a hard hit.

But Ohio State, as it has so many times before, eked out another close game on its final possession. McMullen's 20-yard pass to Santonio Holmes put Ohio State at the Penn State 15. The two

hooked up on another completion, a 5-yarder to the 5, before McMullen turned to Jenkins.

Penn State's Alan Zemaitis looked like he might get a hand on McMullen's pass to the corner of the end zone, but Jenkins went over the top for the ball for his second touchdown catch - both in the second half.

"I thought it went out of bounds," Jenkins said of the game-winning pass. "I just wanted to make a play on it, and it was a great play from Scott."

Ohio State's Lydell Ross had his second-consecutive 100-yard rushing game, scoring one touchdown and gaining 110 yards on 24 carries.

The Buckeyes are tied with Purdue and Michigan State at 4-1 in league play; Michigan is 5-1.

Zack Mills completed 27 of 42 passes for 253 yards in his first start since he sprained his left knee against Minnesota on Sept. 27. He also broke Tony Sacca's career completions record, finishing the game with 405 completions. Sacca completed 401 passes from 1988-91.

For Penn State, the loss means the fourth losing season under Paterno, and the third in the last four years.

The Nittany Lions went up 20-14 with just over 10 minutes left on Kimball's 48-yard field goal, his second of the game.

But Paterno again complained about the officiating, including the third-down incompletion on that drive, which forced the field goal try, in which tight end Matt Kranchick appeared to be interfered with.

"I thought they played a hard game," Paterno said of his team. "I won't get into a couple things - some people who were supervising the game did in order to make it a little tougher for them."

McMullen brought the Buckeyes within 17-14 on a 4-yard touchdown pass to Jenkins with 9:17 left in the third quarter.

Zemaitis had a 78-yard interception return for a touchdown to make it 14-7 in the second quarter, and Kimball's first career field goal, a 42-yarder, made

it 17-7 at the half.

Penn State tied the score 7-all on Zack Mills' 2-yard pass to Sean McHugh at the end of the first quarter. A 28-yard pass to Terrance Phillips and a 14-yard shovel pass to McHugh set up the score.

Ross gave Ohio State a 7-0 lead with a 1-yard touchdown run. He set up the score with a 31-yard run right through the middle of the Penn State line.