

## **Buckeyes Open Gridiron Season with 27-6 Win vs. Cincinnati**

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**COLUMBUS, Ohio** - The No. 9/9 Ohio State football team (1-0; 0-0 Big Ten) opened the 2004 season with a 27-6 victory over Cincinnati (0-1; 0-0 CUSA) in front of 104,604 at Ohio Stadium in Columbus, Ohio.

The Buckeye held the Bearcats to 238 total offensive yards and expanded a 10-3 halftime lead, scoring the game's final 17 points for their 26th-consecutive victory in season openers at Ohio Stadium. Senior Lydell Ross led the offense with 141 rushing yards on 17 carries with one touchdown. The balanced OSU offense gained 220 yards rushing and 242 passing yards on the afternoon while extending the series record against Cincinnati to 12-2, and 7-0 in Columbus.

In the first quarter Cincinnati capitalized on a fumble by OSU sophomore quarterback Justin Zwick, who was making his first career start. Jamar Enzor forced the fumble for Cincinnati, recovered it and was credited with a sack. Enzor pounced on the ball with 1:26 remaining in the first quarter and then five plays later Kevin Lovell converted on a 27-yard field goal just six seconds into the second period to give the Bearcats an early 3-0 lead.

Mike Nugent tied the game with a 27-yard field goal with 10:15 to play in the second quarter. Ross set up the play on a 68-yard run over the right tackle. On first down from the OSU 20-yard line, Ross galloped for a career long run, topping his previous long run of 51 yards against San Diego State in 2001. That put the ball on the UC 12-yard line and after a 2-yard pickup by Maurice Hall and two incomplete passes, Nugent came in to connect on his first field goal of the season.

Zwick found junior tight end Ryan Hamby wide open in the middle of the field for a 17-yard scoring strike to lift the Buckeyes to a 10-3 score with 1:11

to play in the first half. Zwick hit Hamby three times for 46 yards on the nine-play, 80-yard scoring drive capped by a Nugent PAT. Bam Childress reeled in a Zwick pass for 28 yards on the play, moving the Buckeyes across midfield.

In the first half, Ohio State out-gained Cincinnati by 147 total yards, 237-90. The Buckeyes ran for 95 yards and picked up an additional 142 yards by the pass. The Bearcats threw for 49 yards and were held to 41 yards on the ground. Ross carried the ball eight times for 82 yards and Hamby had four receptions totaling 75 yards to pace the Ohio State offense in the opening two quarters.

A third turnover by the Buckeyes led to another three points by the Bearcats. Zwick was picked for the second time of the game, this time by Doug Monaghan, who snagged the ball at the OSU 40 and returned it 5 yards. Five plays later, Lovell added his second field goal of the game to pull within a 10-6 margin with 6:16 to play in the third quarter.

The Buckeyes answered the score by driving 57 yards in nine plays and scored on a 1-yard run by Ross. The score, combined with another PAT by Nugent, with 2:27 to play in the third quarter, gave the Buckeyes an 11-point advantage, 17-6.

In the fourth quarter, Buckeye sophomore quarterback Troy Smith connected on a 23-yard pass to Santonio Holmes to make the score 23-6 with 5:54 remaining. The Holmes touchdown marked the first completion and TD pass of Smith's career. Nugent added the PAT for a 24-6 Buckeye lead. With 1:51 remaining, Nugent tacked on a 23-yard field goal to move the score to 27-6.

The Buckeyes play host to Marshall (0-0; 0-0 MAC) at 3:30 p.m. next Saturday in Ohio Stadium. The game will be broadcast on ABC. Marshall will take on Troy State at 4:30 p.m. EST today.