

Ohio State Garners 21-10 Win Over Penn State

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COLUMBUS, Ohio - Ohio State returned a punt and an interception for scores and fullback Branden Joe scored his first career touchdown to lead the Buckeyes to a 21-10 victory over Penn State in front of 104,947 fans Saturday at Ohio Stadium. The win was the second straight for Ohio State, which improved to 5-3 on the year and 2-3 in the Big Ten.

Penn State out-gained the Buckeyes 246 total yards to 202 total yards. The Buckeyes rushed for 143 yards, led by tailback Maurice Hall, who carried 14 times for 65 yards. Quarterback Troy Smith, who rushed 12 times for 26 yards, completed 6-of-8 passes for 59 yards. Hall also had two kickoff returns for 83 yards and became the school's leader in kick return yardage with 64 attempts for 1,476 yards. He surpassed Ken-Yon Rambo's total of 1,410 with a 62-yard runback that led to the third Buckeye touchdown of the day.

Ted Ginn Jr. gave the Buckeyes a 7-0 lead with 5:18 to play in the first quarter with a 67-yard punt return. The true freshman picked up two key blocks and then raced down the right sideline, out-running the Penn State coverage for his second punt return of the season. It was the first time a player returned two punts for touchdowns at Ohio State since Jeff Graham did so in 1990.

Tyler Everett picked off a pass by Penn State quarterback Michael Robinson on the ensuing Nittany Lion possession and returned it 24 yards for a touchdown and a 14-0 lead. It was the first defensive touchdown of the season and the first defensive score since Mike Kudla pounced on a fumble recovery in the end zone last season in the fourth quarter against Purdue.

With Ohio State driving toward Penn State territory, PSU defensive tackle Matthew Rice sacked Smith for a 9-yard loss and forced a fumble that was recovered by linebacker Derek Wake. Six plays later Penn State scored on a 3-

yard run by tailback Tony Hunt to pull the Nittany Lions within a 14-7 score with 5:55 to play in the first half.

Hall returned the ensuing kickoff 62 yards to the PSU 35-yard line. Seven plays later, fullback Branden Joe scored from four yards out to give the Buckeyes a 21-7 lead with 1:57 to play before halftime. The score was the first for a Buckeye fullback since 2001.

Ohio State made the most of its first-half opportunities putting 21 points on the board from 63 total yards of offense and only 18 plays. Penn State gained 157 total yards, including 123 rushing yards, while taking a 21:02 to 8:58 advantage in time of possession. The story in the first half, however, was the Ginn punt return and the Everett interception return, which both went for scores.

Neither team scored in the third quarter, but Penn State finally added to the scoring with 9:31 to play in the game. A 21-yard field goal by Robbie Gould made the score 21-10, Ohio State. Kicker Mike Nugent, who converted on all three point after attempts, had a 49-yard field goal attempt blocked with 4:42 to play in the game. It was just his third miss in 18 tries this season and the first since missing on a 40-yard try at Northwestern, snapping a string of five straight. His other miss was from 53 yards in the opener against Cincinnati.

A.J. Hawk, a semifinalist for the Butkus and Lombardi awards, again led the team with his 13 tackles. Anthony Schlegel added 10, including seven solo stops and 3 1/2 tackles for loss. He also had the first multiple-sack game of the season by a Buckeye defender with 1 1/2.

This marked the first time that Penn State (2-6 overall, 0-5 Big Ten) scored in double figures in Ohio Stadium as a Big Ten team. Since 1993 when the Nittany Lions joined the conference, and scored six points, they have scored seven points in 1996, nine in 1998, six in 2000 and seven in 2002.

Ohio State travels to Michigan State next Saturday for a noon kickoff on ESPN.