

Buckeyes Take Down Longhorns In Austin

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AUSTIN, Texas (AP) -- Troy Smith and the Ohio State Buckeyes showed the defending champions who's No. 1.

Now comes the burden of holding on to the top spot. In the first regular-season matchup of No. 1 vs. No. 2 in a decade, Smith riddled Texas for 269 yards passing and two touchdowns, leading the Buckeyes to a 24-7 win Saturday night.

The victory keeps the Buckeyes (2-0) in perfect position for a run to a national title. Keep winning and they should stay right where they are.

The Buckeyes' defense, which replaced nine starters this season, looked championship caliber, holding a Texas team that had scored at least 40 points in 12 consecutive games to a single touchdown.

As for No. 2 Texas (1-1), which saw its 21-game winning streak snapped, the Longhorns will need some help if they hope to go back to the national title game.

The Longhorns' new starting QB Colt McCoy was no Vince Young in the rematch of last season's 25-22 Texas win in Columbus. He threw for 154 yards with an interception and a touchdown.

"It's not a revenge thing, any and every win we get during the course of the season is a good win," said Smith, who split time at quarterback in last year's game, his first after a suspension.

Smith was everything Texas feared this time: a leader and a playmaker.

He threw first half touchdown passes of 14 yards to Anthony Gonzalez and a 29-yard to best friend and high school teammate Ted Ginn Jr. The second was a perfect strike just before halftime that sucked the life out of the home crowd.

Gonzalez had eight catches for 142 yards, both career highs, against a defense concentrating on stopping Ginn, who finished with five catches for 97 yards.

"We didn't make the plays we needed to make," Texas coach Mack Brown said. "We had our chances there, even in the fourth quarter. Everyone tried, everyone played hard. Give Ohio State credit."

The Longhorns used their win in Columbus last season as the springboard to their first undisputed national title since 1969. But that

win and that season came with Young at quarterback.

McCoy, the redshirt freshman from West Texas, showed he can take a hit, but he couldn't pull off the type of comeback that Young had made legendary in his Texas career.

The last time 1-2 met in the regular season, No. 2 Florida State beat No. 1 Florida, but the Gators won the rematch in the Sugar Bowl to win the national championship.

Saturday night's game was an unusual early-season blockbuster with two of college football's heavyweights both on the field and in tradition.

Ohio State was the first No. 1 to come to Austin since SMU in 1950.

The Longhorns unveiled a nifty option with McCoy and Jamaal Charles and were picking up big chunks of yardage on the ground. Texas drove to the Ohio State 7 before receiver Billy Pittman fumbled at the 2.

Donald Washington returned the ball to midfield and might have gone all the way if McCoy didn't track him down on the sideline to save the TD.

Smith made quick work from there, hitting Gonzalez three times on the short drive. The last was a 14-yard touchdown after the receiver escaped cornerback Brandon Foster, one of the players Texas used to replace the suspended starter Tarell Brown.

McCoy led the Longhorns to their only TD with a 13-play drive, twice taking vicious hits from Buckeyes pass rushers, including a shot to the head from defensive end Jay Richardson that drew a flag. The quarterback popped up and waved his arms to pump up the crowd, then fired a 7-yard TD pass to Pittman.

The Buckeyes immediately answered.

Smith hit Gonzalez with a long gain, then floated a perfect 29-yard TD pass to Ginn, who slipped behind Aaron Ross and didn't have to break stride as the ball dropped in over his shoulder in the end zone to make it 14-7 at halftime.

Ginn, who had only two catches against the Longhorns last season, completely swung momentum back to Ohio State with the TD.

McCoy made a rookie mistake when he was intercepted by James Laurinaitis, one of the Buckeyes' news starting linebackers replacing A.J. Hawk and Co., on Texas' first possession of the third.

The turnover led to Aaron Pettrey's 31-yard field goal to make it 17-7.

It stayed that way until late in the fourth when Smith drove the Buckeyes 72 yards in 10 plays for Antonio Pittman's 2-yard touchdown run that sealed No. 1 for Ohio State.

It was a good thing the Buckeyes brought their band.

A Buckeyes booster put up \$225,000 to bring the Ohio State band, and fans groups estimated that as many as 40,000 Buckeyes faithful made the 1,200-mile trip from Columbus, with or without tickets for the game.

The Royal-Memorial Stadium record crowd of 89,442 was on its feet 30 minutes before kickoff while a couple hundred more watched Wrigley Field-style from the roof of the parking lot next door. Seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, who lives in Austin, was an honorary captain for the coin flip and LeBron James watched from the Ohio State sideline.