

## No. 1 Ohio State Clinches Outright Big Ten Title in 42-39 Victory over No. 2 Michigan

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**COLUMBUS, Ohio** - Ohio State Heisman Trophy candidate Troy Smith completed 29 of 41 passes for 316 yards and four touchdowns to lead the top-ranked Buckeyes to three straight victories over Michigan with a 42-39 win against the second-ranked Wolverines Saturday in front of a record crowd of 105,708 fans at Ohio Stadium.

The win clinched the first outright Big Ten title for the Buckeyes since 1984 and is its 31st conference title in school history. The victory extended the nation's longest win streak to 19 games. Ohio State now is 12-0 overall and finished 8-0 in the Big Ten.

Ohio State improved to 5-1 against Michigan under sixth-year head coach Jim Tressel and heads to his fourth BCS game. Michigan finished 11-1 overall and 7-1 in conference games to tie Wisconsin for second place in the Big Ten.

Smith is the first player to quarterback Ohio State to three straight victories against Michigan since William H. "Tippy" Dye, who led the Buckeyes to wins from 1934-36. Dye, 94, who now lives in California, was in attendance to watch Smith match his feat. In Smith's three games vs. Michigan, he has 1,051 total yards and has thrown for seven touchdowns and rushed for another. Smith has completed 69 of 101 passes for 857 yards and has 33 rushes for 194 yards.

Smith's 41 passes and 29 completions were career bests. He has thrown 30 touchdown passes to set the school season record, besting Bobby Hoying's 28 TD passes in 1995.

The 6-foot-1-inch senior signal caller hit four different receivers Saturday, including Ted Ginn Jr., who finished with eight catches for 104 yards. Brian Robiskie caught seven passes for 89 yards as the Buckeyes totaled 503 yards of total offense. Antonio Pittman carried the ball 18 times for 139 yards and a touchdown as Ohio State finished with 187 rushing yards. Chris Wells had the other rushing touchdown and finished with five carries for 56 yards.

Michigan had little problem moving the ball on the opening possession of the game, covering 80 yards in seven plays to take a 7-0 lead just 2 minutes, 28 seconds into the game. On the drive, Michigan quarterback Chad Henne completed four passes for 67

yards, including three passes to Mario Manningham for 58 yards. Two passes went for 24 and 25 yards, the latter putting the ball on the OSU 1 before tailback Michael Hart provided the score.

The Buckeyes answered the score to tie the game, 7-7, on a 1-yard catch by Roy Hall from Smith. Hall caught three passes on the drive for 38 yards, but none was bigger than a 27-yard reception with Ohio State facing third-and-16 from its own 49-yard line. Hall picked up another first down on a 10-yard catch. Smith hit Stan White Jr. for a 7-yard pick up and Pittman rushed to the 1-yard line before Hall's equalizing score with 6:03 on the first quarter clock.

Neither team scored on their next possession and Michigan was forced to punt the next time it had the ball. The Buckeyes had great field position when Anthony Gonzalez fair caught the punt at the OSU 42-yard line. After Smith's 6-yard carry, Wells raced 52 yards to the end zone to give his team a 14-7 lead.

Michigan was forced to punt on its next possession and this time Ohio State had to start at its 9-yard line. After a 4-yard rush by Pittman, Smith completed a 39-yard pass to Brian Robiskie to the Michigan 48. Pittman rushed over the left end for 9 yards and Smith hooked up with Ginn for a 39-yard score that put the Buckeyes in front 21-7 with 6:11 to play in the first half.

Henne hit Adrian Arrington for a 37-yard scoring strike to pull the Wolverines within seven points with 2:33 to play before intermission. It was the sixth play of the scoring drive that covered 80 yards in 3:27.

The Buckeyes reclaimed a two-touchdown advantage, scoring a touchdown with just 20 seconds to play before halftime. Smith threw his third touchdown of the game, this time an 8-yard pass to Gonzalez to give Ohio State a 28-14 lead. Gonzalez had four receptions on the nine-play, 80-yard drive, and all four were for first downs. He caught passes of 12, 14 and 16-yards before the 8-yard score.

With a 14-point halftime lead, Ohio State had outgained Michigan 320 to 181 in total yards in the first two quarters. The Buckeye defense held Michigan to only 37 yards rushing in the first half while Smith completed 21 of 26 passes for 241 yards and three touchdowns. Ginn had six first-half catches for 74 yards and a score.

Nothing came of Ohio State's opening possession of the second half and the ensuing 31-yard punt sailed out of bounds at the Michigan 40-yard line. It took only five plays for the Wolverines to cover 60 yards and Hart's 2-yard carry pulled his team within a

touchdown, 28-21, with 12:12 to play.

On third-and-9 from the OSU 13-yard line, Smith was trying to find Robiskie but the ball was tipped into the air and picked off by Alan Branch. The INT was just the fifth of the season for Smith. Michigan moved the ball just three yards on the drive before Garrett Rivas converted on a 39-yard field goal to pull within a 28-24 score. Those were the first points allowed this season after a turnover by the Buckeye offense.

Another huge play extended the Buckeye lead to 35-24 with 8:04 to play in the third quarter. After a 9-yard pass from Smith to Ginn, Pittman ran over the right end for a 56-yard touchdown.

Michigan was able to turn a second Ohio State turnover, this time a fumble, into seven more points to pull within 35-31 with 14:41 remaining in the game. Troy Smith could not corral the high snap and Michigan's Branch fell on the ball at the OSU 9-yard line. Three plays later, a 1-yard rush by Hart provided the 10th points off 15 Ohio State turnovers this season, all in this game.

Smith threw his fourth touchdown of the game, finding Robiskie in the front left corner of the south end zone to give Ohio State a 42-31 lead with 5:38 to play in the game. Robiskie stopped on a dime making the defender slide past him and turned to catch the Smith pass with one foot in the end zone.

Michigan scored on a 16-yard pass from Henne to Tyler Ecker with 2:16 to play in the game and converted a two-point conversion by hitting Steve Breaston just across the goal line to pull within a 42-39 score. Michigan moved 81 yards in 11 plays and was aided by a pass interference call going down the far sideline on fourth-and-16. The ensuing onside kick was fielded by Ginn.

The Wolverines had 397 yards of total offense as Hart completed 21 of 35 passes for 267 yards and two touchdowns. Hart had 23 carries for a game-high 142 yards and three touchdowns.

Buckeye linebacker James Laurinaitis led his team with nine tackles. Antonio Smith had eight tackles and an 18-yard sack. Lawrence Wilson, Jay Richardson and Joel Penton also had sacks.

With the win, the Buckeyes will play in the title game of the Bowl Championship Series Jan. 8, 2007, at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. The official announcement will not be made until Dec. 3, which also is when an opponent would be announced.