

No. 1 Ohio State Downs No. 25 Penn State, 37-17

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STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) -Most of the fans inside Beaver Stadium headed for the exits quickly at game's end except for a sliver of red-clad diehards in the corner of the end zone.

With gleeful Ohio State players leading the way, the crowd threw up their arms to spell out each letter in "Ohio."

Happy Valley belonged to the top-ranked Buckeyes, who cruised to a 37-17 victory over No. 24 Penn State on Saturday night.

[Todd Boeckman](#) threw for 253 yards and three touchdowns and [Chris Wells](#) ran for 133 yards to lead Ohio State to another easy win in its toughest test of the season so far.

Maybe now the Buckeyes (9-0, 5-0 Big Ten) will get the respect they're looking for.

"It doesn't matter," Ohio State coach [Jim Tressel](#) said. "We have to prove whatever we are at the end of 2007, so we're nine games out 12 we're through. We've got a lot to prove beginning with game 10."

The Buckeyes' vaunted defense didn't need to be at its best with Boeckman on a roll and Ohio State's massive offensive line dominating.

Several Buckeyes earlier this week complained they weren't getting enough respect despite their No. 1 ranking in the polls and Bowl Championship Series standings.

"We keep on winning, and that'll take care of itself," Boeckman said.

Penn State (6-3, 3-3) was only the second ranked team Ohio State has faced. While the competition has been so-so, the Buckeyes have been blowing out their opponents.

A crowd of 110,134, the second-largest in Beaver Stadium history, greeted the Buckeyes at one of the most raucous venues in the country. The Penn State fans started out loud but were quieted

quickly and the Buckeyes went on to their seventh double-digit victory.

The Buckeyes were so good on offense they never punted.

"They were one step ahead of us all night," Nittany Lions coach Joe Paterno said.

Ohio State has won 19 straight Big Ten games, tying the mark set by Michigan in 1990-92. The Buckeyes' last Big Ten loss came Oct. 8, 2005, 17-10 at Penn State.

This time, they left Happy Valley in a very good mood.

Boeckman, a first-year starter, silenced the Nittany Lions' rowdy white-clad student section early with two long first-half touchdown drives. He finished 19-of-26 passing with one interception.

Tressel attributed much of Boeckman's success to his offensive line. Penn State, which entered the night leading the nation with 35 sacks, got to Boeckman just once on Saturday.

Boeckman "threw with a lot of confidence, and that starts with not having a whole lot of people in his face," Tressel said.

Wells softened the defense by getting Ohio State into short-yardage situations on second or third downs, and Penn State's experienced secondary was burned for long completions.

"It's eating at me right now," Nittany Lions cornerback Justin King said. "Everybody feels like they could have done better."

Penn State, seventh in the nation in total defense coming in, had breakdowns on numerous third-down plays. Ohio State was 7-of-8 alone in the first half on third-down conversions and finished with 453 yards.

Nittany Lions defensive coordinator Tom Bradley took the blame.

"I think a lot of that may have to do with some of the things that I'm doing with them," Bradley said. "I've got to take a good, hard look at myself."

Penn State linebacker Dan O'Connor did all he could with 18 tackles and an interception.

Still, the Buckeyes scored on five of their first seven possessions, each scoring drive starting at no better than their own 22.

A 15-play, 91-yard drive that ate up 6:26 of clock in the first half exemplified the Buckeyes' success.

After three straight runs by Wells of at least 6 yards, Boeckman rolled right from the Penn State 31 and threw a perfect pass through coverage to [Brian Robiskie](#) for a 19-yard gain.

Three plays later, a holding call negated Wells' touchdown from the 4 and pushed the Buckeyes back to a third-and-14 from the 16.

No matter.

With Penn State playing back in a zone, Boeckman hit [Brian Hartline](#) for a short pass left. Left tackle [Alex Boone](#) threw an open-field block on cornerback Lydell Sargeant, and Hartline eluded safety Anthony Scirrotto's tackle to get into the end zone for a 17-7 lead.

A 13-play, 87-yard drive in the third quarter proved to be decisive, when Boeckman hit tight end [Jake Ballard](#) in the end zone - on third down, of course - for a 21-yard touchdown to put the Buckeyes ahead 24-7.

"It's very nice to go up here in a hostile environment and get a 'W,'" Boeckman said.

Buckeyes cornerback [Malcolm Jenkins](#) intercepted a wobbly pass by quarterback Anthony Morelli and returned it 24 yards for a touchdown to increase the lead to 34-10 with 9:36 left in the game.

Morelli was 12-for-21 for 111 yards and sacked twice.

A.J. Wallace's 97-yard kickoff return for a touchdown late in the fourth quarter provided one of the few bright spots for the Nittany Lions.