

No. 1 Ohio State Loses, 28-21, to Illinois

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COLUMBUS, Ohio – Illinois came into Ohio Stadium and did what no other team has been able to do all season: run its offense to perfection, limit Ohio State's chances and capitalize on turnovers which all led to a 28-21 upset win over No. 1 Ohio State.

Quarterback Isiah "Juice" Williams led a 400-yard effort by the Illini with four touchdown passes – each one to a different receiver – and the Illini ground game struck for a season-high 260 yards against a defense that was allowing just 65 rushing yards per game.

Ohio State managed just 336 total yards. [Todd Boeckman](#) threw for 156 yards and three interceptions and the rushing attack scored three times, but was limited to 180 yards by an Illinois defense that was led by [James Laurinaitis](#)-like J Leman's 17 tackles.

"This was a hard-fought football game like we knew it would be," [Jim Tressel](#), Ohio State coach, said. "Our hats are off to Illinois. They did the things they needed to do to win a tough battle. We didn't do the things we needed to do. We're extremely proud of our kids. They've done everything we've asked them to do this year. This stings. We've got to pick up and move forward."

The day started in typical 2007 Ohio State fashion. Boeckman hit [Brian Hartline](#) for 65 yards down the right sideline on the game's first play from scrimmage and Beanie Wells hammered over the left side and into the end zone from 11 yards for a 7-0 Ohio State lead.

Illinois served notice on its first series that this game was going to be anything but typical, though. On its second play, Danie Dufrene burst up the middle and gained 80 yards, setting up a Williams-to-Michael Hoomanawanui touchdown pass of 3 yards that tied the score at 7-all.

On this one rushing play, Illinois would gain more yards rushing than five teams – Akron (3), Northwestern (0), Purdue (4), Michigan State (59) and Wisconsin (12) – would combine to rush for all game against the Ohio State defense.

All seemed fine, though, after Boeckman engineered a 9-play, 76-yard drive on the Buckeyes' second series that ended with [Maurice Wells](#) blowing through a hole on the right side, compliments of a [Ben Person](#) block, and bursting untouched for a 19-yard touchdown.

Two Ohio State series later, Illinois capitalized via the turnover. Dere Hicks intercepted Boeckman, giving Illinois the ball near midfield. Seven plays later, Williams hit Jacob Willis over the middle for 33-yards and a 14-all tie with three minutes remaining in the first quarter.

In the first 11 minutes of the game, Illinois had scored as many touchdowns against the Ohio State defense as six previous opponents in Ohio Stadium had combined to score.

Neither team got anything going offensively in the second quarter until Illinois went for it on 4th-and-1 from its own 43. Rashard Mendenhall picked up 25 yards over the right tackle and four plays later the Illini were in the end zone. Williams hit a wide-open Brian Gamble for his third touchdown pass of the game and a 21-14 lead going into intermission.

Boeckman led the Buckeyes to a first-and-goal at the Illinois 9 on the first series of the second half. But the drive ended as Boeckman, scrambling out of a swarm of harassing defenders, created space and fired a pass into the end zone that was tipped by an Illini before being intercepted by Antonio Steele.

From there, Williams marched his team 80-yards for a touchdown – a 31-yard Williams-to-Marque Wilkins strike – and the Buckeyes were in trouble.

Trailing 28-14, Ohio State went back to Beanie Wells and the sophomore delivered. He capped a 76-yard touchdown drive with a 17-yard touchdown run to bring Ohio State to within 7. He would finish with 76 yards

rushing.

Illinois ran 6:11 off the clock on its next series before finally punting.

Ohio State took over with 9:23 to play, but a third Boeckman interception gave the ball back to Illinois at its own 24 with 8:09 to play. The Illini held the ball for the rest of the game, running 16 plays and converting four third down plays and one fourth down conversion to run the clock out.

End of game. And end of record winning streaks of 28 regular season games and 20 Big Ten Conference games for Ohio State.