

## Sanchez, McKnight lead USC past Ohio State 35-3

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By JOHN NADEL

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Southern California turned the game of the year into another Trojans' victory march.

Mark Sanchez threw four touchdown passes, Joe McKnight rushed for 105 yards on 12 carries, and the top-ranked Trojans crushed No. 5 Ohio State 35-3 Saturday night in a matchup of two of college football's most successful programs.

On this pleasant summer night, one looked like a champion, the other ordinary.

"It worked out beautifully for us," USC coach Pete Carroll said. "Over the years, when we prepare this well and we have our guys, we're hard to beat. It doesn't matter who we play when we do that. This is what we're capable of doing, we didn't do anything out of the ordinary to get there. We had a nice night."

Ohio State played without star tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells, sidelined with an injured right foot. But moving the ball wasn't the Buckeyes' biggest problem before the Trojans made it a rout. Instead, they were done in by a handful of crucial mistakes.

A holding penalty nullified a touchdown in the second quarter, and an errant throw by Todd Boeckman was intercepted and returned for a touchdown by Rey Mauluga.

And with that, the outcome was all but decided by halftime.

"We played as well as we could, with or without Beanie," Ohio State coach Jim Tressel said. "We played against a great team tonight. We were never able to take control on offense or defense. We must now roll up our sleeves and realize we can't play like this and win."

By the time it was over, the only question left was: Can anybody left on USC's schedule beat these Trojans (2-0)

and keep them from playing for a national championship in January for the fourth time this decade?

"If we can keep this momentum going and we can keep our playmakers showing up, we're going to be really tough," said Carroll, who led USC to national titles in 2003 and '04. "This game is a nice win, but it doesn't mean more than another game. Our players understand that. I think that's why they prepare properly."

And that's what makes the Trojans so scary good.

Ohio State (2-1), a decisive loser in the last two national championship games, probably won't have to worry about another BCS title game failure. Getting there for a third straight year after this beating will be a long shot, no matter how well the Buckeyes do in the Big Ten.

Ohio State had the ball for more than 20 minutes in the first half and gained 177 yards to USC's 172, but left the field trailing 21-3. Sanchez threw two touchdown passes to Damian Williams in the third quarter to put the Buckeyes away.

Once they fell behind, the Buckeyes were helpless against Mauluga and the swarming Trojans. Ohio State gained only 30 yards in the second half.

At one point late in the third quarter, the right-handed Boeckman tried a desperation left-handed pass as he was being tackled by Kyle Moore. The result was an intentional grounding penalty. Everson Griffen sacked Boeckman on the next play.

The Trojans won for the 39th time in their last 40 home games before a partisan crowd of 93,607 at the Los Angeles Coliseum. In the first game between the storied programs since 1990, USC won its sixth straight against Ohio State and eighth in a row against the Big Ten.

Sanchez finished 17-for-28 for 172 yards with one interception in three-plus quarters of work.

McKnight carried only five times for 22 yards in the second half, spending most of his time on the sideline with a

migraine. But he wasn't needed.

"He's so explosive," Sanchez said of McKnight. "When he's got time, when he's got a little space, anything can happen."

Boeckman completed 14 of 21 passes for 84 yards with two interceptions. Freshman Terrelle Pryor, who split time at quarterback, provided some spark and had to leave some Buckeyes fans wondering if their quarterback of the future may soon be Ohio State's starter.

"We were a little surprised that he played that much," USC linebacker Brian Cushing said. "He's going to be real good."

The highly touted Pryor went 7-of-9 for 52 yard and also gained 40 yards on 11 carries. Dan Herron, filling in for Wells, led the Buckeyes in rushing with 51 yards on 11 carries.

USC sacked Boeckman four times and Pryor once.

"Tough team, and we did not execute very well at all," Pryor said. "We did not pick up their blitzes very well. Tonight, we beat ourselves. I still feel like we have the best defense in the country."

The Buckeyes certainly missed Wells, who ran for over 1,600 yards last season. It's doubtful even he would have made that much of a difference.

Ryan Pretorius kicked a 29-yard field goal on Ohio State's second possession, capping a 69-yard, 17-play drive that ate up nearly 8 1/2 minutes. But keeping the Buckeyes out of the end zone only seemed to get the Trojans riled up.

USC moved 74 yards on seven plays, scoring on a 35-yard pass from Sanchez to fullback Stanley Havili for a 7-3 lead.

After the Buckeyes went three-and-out, Sanchez threw a 1-yard touchdown pass to freshman Blake Ayles. McKnight provided the big play with a 24-yard run.

Ohio State moved deep into USC territory on its next possession, but the Buckeyes stopped themselves by committing two holding penalties —

the first nullifying a gain to the USC 3, the second a touchdown pass by Boeckman. Pretorius then missed a 46-yard field goal.

"Had we got it to 14-10, it would not have ended up 35-3," Tressel said. "I don't know what would have happened."

The Trojans made it 21-3 with 2:49 left before halftime when Maualuga stepped in front Brian Hartline for his fourth career interception and returned 48 yards for his first touchdown.

"I turned around, saw the ball, took it," Maualuga said. "I was hoping the receiver wouldn't catch me. It looked like I was Marcus Allen, with my Heisman skills and 4.2 speed."

Sanchez threw a 34-yard scoring pass to Williams with 6:02 left in the third quarter and a 17-yarder 4 1/2 minutes later. The rest was garbage time.

And Ohio State went home with yet another humbling loss on a big stage.