

Ohio State Opens 2009 Season with 31-27 Win Over Navy on Military Appreciation Day

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COLUMBUS, Ohio - The No. 6 Ohio State Buckeyes hosted the U.S. Naval Academy for the first time in 78 years to open the 2009 season, with the Buckeyes coming out of the hard-fought game with a 31-27 win before an opening game record crowd of 105,092 in Ohio Stadium.

Navy, which had trailed by as many as 13, drew to within two points with 2:23 remaining in the fourth quarter on a 24-yard touchdown run following an interception. Buckeye junior Bryan Rolle, who tied for the team lead with a career-best nine tackles, intercepted the 2-point attempt and ran it back for two points to give the Buckeyes a four-point lead (31-27).

The final statistics were virtually equal, with 363 total yards for Ohio State and 342 for Navy. Buckeye quarterback Terrelle Pryor ended the day 14-for-21 for 174 yards and one touchdown and also rushed for a TD. Dan Herron was the leading rusher with 72 yards, including a touchdown, on 17 carries, along with 29 receiving yards on four catches. Brandon Saine had nine rushes for 53 yards for Ohio State. Kurt Coleman was the team co-leader with nine tackles and also had an interception.

For Navy, quarterback Ricky Dobbs accounted for all four touchdowns, with two passing and two rushing. He was 9-for-13 through the air and had 18 rushes for 83 yards on the ground. Marcus Curry led the Midshipmen with 101 yards receiving on just two catches, converting both for TDs.

The home team and the home crowd made a point of paying much respect to one of our nation's service academies with a dignified lead-up to the game that included a patriotic game program, a team handshake line, both teams

coming onto the field at the same time, a military flyover featuring three F/A 18Ds and former astronaut and Senator John Glenn ceremoniously "dotting the I" at halftime during the Marching Band's incomparable Script Ohio.

Then came the game, played under brilliant sunshine and San Diego-like, 78-degree weather. San Diego, it should be noted, is home to no less than five naval stations, including Naval Station San Diego, which is home to U.S. air craft carriers, and Point Loma, a submarine port.

The game was fun. It was festive. It was a feature attraction on ESPN. And it kicked off the 120th season of Ohio State football. And it didn't take long for the Buckeyes to have the home team cheering. Less than three minutes in, Pryor hit Dane Sanzenbacher over the middle for a 38-yard touchdown pass and a quick 7-0 lead on Ohio State's opening drive.

Back came Navy, the nation's best rushing team the past four years running, with a 15-play (14 rushes) drive that covered 80 yards. Quarterback Ricky Dobbs scooted the last 16 yards for the tying score.

Trailing 10-7 after an Aaron Pettrey field goal (the first of three on the day for the senior), Navy took its second possession early in the second quarter at about the 50. Dobbs fumbled, however, and Ross Homan recovered the ball for the Buckeyes. Pryor marched the team down the field, including another big hook-up with Sanzenbacher (19 yards), and ended up scoring from the 2 for a 17-7 Ohio State lead.

A 25-yard Pettrey field goal just before halftime extended Ohio State' lead to 20-7.

After a halftime that included quadruple Script Ohios and a tribute to Chris Spielman for his selection into the College Football Hall of Fame, Navy struck first in the second half. Dobbs ate up most of the third quarter by directing a 15-play, 99-yard drive that took 8:38 off the clock. Dobbs hit Marcus Curry for a 16-yard touchdown pass to close the gap to 20-14.

Pettrey gave the Buckeyes some

breathing room moments later, converting on a 52-yard field goal - his fifth career of 50-or-more yards - for a 23-14 Ohio State lead.

Navy fumbled on its next possession and Ohio State quickly drove 30 yards in three plays with Dan "Boom" Herron going in from the 6 for a 29-14 Buckeye lead. Pettrey's extra point attempt hit the right goal post and was no good.

After Ohio State turned the ball over on downs, the Mids pulled within eight when Marcus Curry ran a Dobbs pass 85 yards to the end zone, the third-longest passing play in school history. On the ensuing drive Navy's Emmett Merchant picked off a Pryor pass and started the drive at the OSU 33. After two plays, Dobbs kept the ball on third down and 5 and ran 24 yards for a TD to cut the score to 29-27.

Navy went for the two-point conversion, but Bryan Rolle picked off the attempt on the 1 and returned it 99 yards for two points, giving Ohio State a 31-27 lead with 2:23 left. Navy attempted an onside kick but the ball went out of bounds at the Navy 44. After two rushing plays, including an 18-yard Herron run, Ohio State ran out the clock to secure the season-opening win.