

## No. 8/7 Ohio State Edged by No. 3/3 USC, 18-15, in Fourth Quarter

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**COLUMBUS, Ohio** - No. 3 USC came from behind in the fourth quarter to hand No. 8/7 Ohio State an 18-15 defeat before an Ohio Stadium record crowd of 106,033.

The Buckeyes led 15-10 heading into the final quarter, but a Stafon Johnson touchdown with 1:05 remaining put the Trojans on top and Ohio State was unable to piece together a comeback in the final seconds.

"That was a tough ball game, no question about it," Jim Tressel, Buckeye head coach, said postgame. "Our kids prepared extremely hard and played extremely hard but didn't come up with enough of the things you need to do to win a ball game like that. You need to score more than five points in the second half.

"They came up with the plays on that last drive they needed to and they go home with the spoils. Our kids prepared and played hard. They were in a dog fight. What we need to do is keep working and stick together and get better. That's what life's about and that's what our guys will do."

The game, televised in standard, high and three-dimensional definition, was electric from the start and had the feel of a title matchup between two heavyweights. And that is what it was.

At the end of the day Ohio State had 265 yards of total offense, with Terrelle Pryor going 11-for-25 for 177 yards. DeVier Posey had six catches for 81 yards, with Dane Sanzenbacher hauling down two passes for 58 yards, including a career-best 56-yard grab. Dan Herron was the workhorse on the ground, with 18 carries for 44 yards. Pryor rushed for 36 yards on 10 carries.

Defensively, Ross Homan led the way with nine tackles, followed by Devon Torrance and Brian Rolle with eight

apiece. Torrance's total stands as a new career high, while Rolle ties his personal-best after also tallying eight last week against Navy.

USC freshman quarterback Matt Barkley was 15-for-31 for 195 yards on the day. Damian Williams had five catches for a team-high 51 yards. Joe McKnight had 16 carries for 60 yards, along with two catches for 45 yards, with Johnson running for 50 yards on 11 carries, reaching the end zone twice.

USC took an early 7-0 lead. Sophomore linebacker Chris Galippo intercepted Terrelle Pryor's second pass of the game and returned it 51 yards to the OSU 2. On fourth down, Johnson bulled over from the 1 for a quick lead that quieted the huge Ohio State crowd ... but only momentarily.

Three-consecutive runs by Dan Herron gave the Buckeyes some working space on OSU's second series before Pryor hit Dane Sanzenbacher on a slant pass over the middle for 56 yards down to the USC 3-yard line. Herron finished the drive off two plays later with a two-yard burst up the middle, tying the game at 7-all.

Near the end of the first quarter, and the first play after USC All-American safety Taylor Mays left the game with a leg issue (he would return), Pryor hit DeVier Posey in stride slanting over the middle for a 33-yard gain and a first down at the USC 2. An incomplection and two Herron runs could not produce a touchdown and Aaron Pettrey booted an 18-yard field goal for a 10-7 Buckeye lead.

Freshman quarterback Matt Barkley and USC controlled the second quarter, outgaining the Buckeyes by a 178-12 margin, but the Trojans could only net three points and a 10-all tie at halftime. Ross Homan intercepted Barkley to stop one second-quarter USC drive that had reached the Ohio State 42. But the Buckeyes could not capitalize, going three and out before punting.

USC later marched to the Ohio State 26, but a 44-yard field goal attempt by Jordan Congdon hit the cross bar and

bounced away. After another three-and-out by Ohio State, Barkley marched the Trojans 77 yards in 48 seconds with Congdon connecting from 22 yards out for the game-tying field goal as the second-quarter clock read 00:00.

Ohio State struck first in the second half with a safety on USC's second possession for a 12-10 lead. Punter Billy O'Malley, the only Trojan from Ohio (Novelty; near Cleveland), could not bring down a high snap and the ball bounded into the end zone. The fourth down play was set up after Thaddeus Gibson batted away a Barkley third-down pass and Doug Worthington pressured Barkley on second down.

A big 3rd-and-8 completion to Posey extended Ohio State's drive on the ensuing free kick, giving the Buckeyes a first-and-goal at the 10. The drive stalled, though, and Pettrey kicked a 22-yard field goal for a tenuous, 15-10 lead.

In the fourth quarter, Ohio State opened with a nine-play, 27-yard drive that earned the Buckeyes a pair of first downs before Jon Thoma was forced to punt with 11:12 to play. The teams swapped possessions over the next few minutes, with the Trojans taking over control at their own 14-yard line at the 7:15 mark. Five first downs and 86 total yards later, Johnson used a 2-yard rush to give USC a 17-10 lead.

Choosing to go for a two-point conversion, Barkley passed to McKnight, who finished with a game-high 61 yards rushing, to stretch the lead to 18-15. The Buckeyes were unable to mount a comeback, going 4-and-out.