

## No. 8/9 Ohio State's Defense Leads Buckeyes Over Badgers, 31-13

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**COLUMBUS, Ohio** - No. 8/9 Ohio State got 21 points from its defense and special teams to knock off previously unbeaten and 24th-ranked Wisconsin, 31-13, Saturday in front of 105,301 fans at Ohio Stadium. Ohio State is now in sole possession of first place in the Big Ten with a 3-0 record (5-1 overall). Wisconsin is 5-1 and 2-1 in conference action.

"It was an obviously different type football game," Jim Tressel, Ohio State head coach, said postgame. "Our defense came after them. They're good on offense but our defense just kept coming. When you get two defensive touchdowns and a kick return touchdown, you couldn't ask for more."

Kurt Coleman and Jermale Hines returned interceptions for touchdowns and Ray Small had a 96-yard kickoff return to spark Ohio State. The points were needed and welcome on a day when the Buckeyes' offense managed 184 yards (97 rushing, 87 passing).

Wisconsin, behind the 250 yards passing from Scott Tolzien and the running of John Clay (20 carries for 59 yards), controlled possession the entire game but the turnovers along with two missed field goals hurt the nation's 22nd-ranked offense. Wisconsin held the ball for 42:47 and finished with 368 total yards. Ohio State managed eight first downs and a possession time of 17:13.

The Buckeye defense combined for 106 tackles, led by Ross Homan (15, including two sacks), Coleman (14), Brian Rolle (14) and Hines (11), who all had career highs. The group had 10 tackles for loss for a total of 51 yards.

The Buckeyes led 14-10 at the end of the first half. The defenses dominated at the start, with four of the first six possessions an even split of three-and-outs followed by interceptions that led to each team's first score.

Wisconsin reached the Ohio State 31 on its third possession when, on first down, quarterback Scott Tolzien was pressured by Doug Worthington into under-throwing his target. Coleman waited on the pass at the 10, intercepted it and took off to his right for an 89-yard touchdown run and a 7-0 lead. It was the Buckeyes' first interception return for a touchdown since Oct. 27, 2007 at Penn State (Malcolm Jenkins).

Culmer St. Jean intercepted Terrelle Pryor early in the second quarter to set the Badgers up with a first down at the Ohio State 12. The Ohio State defense held, but Wisconsin ran a fake field goal attempt with holder Chris Maragos scooting around the left end, diving at the pylon and hitting it with the football for a touchdown and a 7-all tie.

Wisconsin took the lead with a 50-yard field goal by Philip Welch with 1:53 to go in the first half. The three-pointer capped a 14-play, 45-yard drive that took 6:53 off the clock.

At this point Ohio State had just 36 offensive yards and one first down. But Pryor directed the Buckeye offense flawlessly in the final two minutes of the half to lead Ohio State on a 7-play, 88-yard drive and the go-ahead touchdown.

He started the drive with a 27-yard rush that almost doubled the team's total offensive yards up to that point. Three plays later, Pryor hit DeVier Posey for 22 yards and a first down at the Wisconsin 27. Then on third-and-15, Pryor found Posey with a 32-yard touchdown pass for a 14-10 lead. The throw was perfect and the catch was even better, with Posey looking over his left shoulder and then twisting left to haul in the pass with Wisconsin defender St. Jean draped around Posey and supplying excellent coverage.

Hines intercepted Tolzien on Wisconsin's first series of the second half and returned it 32 yards for a touchdown and a 21-10 lead. Hines leapt and tipped the ball with his right hand to himself and then wove his way into the end zone for the touchdown.

Undeterred, Tolzien came right back on the next series to lead the Badgers on a

four-play drive that was culminated by a 46-yard Welch field goal, bringing the Badgers to within eight at 21-13.

Small took the ensuing kickoff right up the middle for his touchdown and a 28-13 lead. Aaron Pettrey's 37-yard field goal to open the fourth quarter extended the lead to 31-13.

Wisconsin had a long fourth-quarter drive, going from its 39 to the Buckeyes' 8-yard line, but Ohio State's defense forced two sacks for nine yards each and kept the Badgers out of the end zone as they turned the ball over on downs.