

Buckeyes Win Outright Big Ten Title; Beats Michigan 21 - 10

Ohio State has sixth win in a row over Michigan

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By Tim May, Columbus Dispatch

ANN ARBOR, Mich. -- Ohio State intercepted four passes by Michigan freshman Tate Forcier, and the OSU offense did just enough today to offer some breathing room as the Rose Bowl-bound Buckeyes gained their sixth straight victory in The Game, 21-10.

Senior safety Kurt Coleman had two of the picks, but Devon Torrence's interception in the end zone stopped a Michigan scoring attempt early in the fourth quarter, and defensive end Thaddeus Gibson's pick with 3:34 left at the Michigan 42-yard line sealed it.

Played in front of 110,922 in a Michigan Stadium populated heavily by Ohio State fans, the win by OSU (10-2, 7-1) assured Michigan (5-7, 1-7) of not going to a bowl game for the second straight season under second-year coach Rich Rodriguez and finishing in at least a tie for last in the Big Ten.

On the other hand, OSU coach Jim Tressel earned his eighth win against Michigan in nine tries, further extending the best start by an OSU coach in the rivalry.

But this wasn't as easy as many had expected it to be for the Buckeyes, who topped 200 yards rushing (253) for the fifth straight game.

And Terrelle Pryor's first turnover in four games, a high pass off the hands of DeVier Posey that was snatched by linebacker Jonas Mouton, helped make it a game. It set the Wolverines up at the OSU 49 early in the second half. They took advantage eight plays later when a scrambling Forcier hit running back Vincent Smith back to the right for a 18-yard touchdown pass that cut the OSU lead to 14-10 at 10:05 of the third.

The Buckeyes answered immediately, and they went a long way to do it. Starting at their 11 after a penalty during the kickoff return, they marched the 89 yards in 12 plays. The drive included a 13- and 12-yard run by Pryor, a 17-yarder by Brandon Saine and a 13-yarder by Daniel "Boom" Herron.

The touchdown came on a screen, which a retreating Pryor lofted over leaping defense Bryan Van Bergen. Herron caught it at the 12 and raced untouched to the end zone, pushing the OSU lead back to 21-10 at 4:46 of the third.

Coleman later gained his second interception of the game with 12:11 left, falling backward as he did at the OSU 6. At first ruled out of bounds, review proved it was a clean pick.

Torrence's interception was more critical. Michigan had driven to the OSU 6 midway through the fourth quarter. Forcier, chased by Gibson, tried to throw back to his left toward Junior Hemingway in the end zone, but Torrence intercepted.

OSU led 14-3 at the half, which started with defensive tackle Cameron Heyward scoring the first touchdown. But it was otherwise a fitful first two quarters for the OSU offense, which had only one drive of note.

Midway through the second quarter, after Michigan's Jason Olesnavage had made a 46-yard field goal to cut the OSU lead to 7-3, Saine kicked the OSU offense into gear. From the Michigan 20 he took an inside handoff out of the shotgun, ran through a tackle attempt in the backfield and plowed 14 yards.

Pryor followed with runs of nine and 25 yards in the several plays, then Saine broke free. With the Buckeyes deploying three receivers to the right plus a tight end, Saine took a counter handoff to the left out of the shotgun, cut up behind the block of left tackle Jim Cordle and found a wide-open path to the end zone.

The 29-yard run upped the OSU lead to 14-3 with 5:22 left in the half.

The Buckeyes had an immediate chance

again when Coleman made a strange interception on Michigan's next play from scrimmage. A deep pass down the right sideline intended for Denard Robinson was first tipped by cornerback Chimdi Chekwa. Rushing over to help, Coleman grabbed the ball out of the air at the OSU 32.

But the offense could do nothing with it, as was the case on most of the first-half possessions.