

Toledo to Tackle Another Tough Task

Written by {ga=mikeperry}

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The University of Toledo Football program has a well-earned reputation as a “giant killer.” Since the 2000 season the Rockets have taken down more than their fair share of teams from BCS “automatic qualifier” conferences, and continued that tradition last weekend when they handed Purdue a 31-20 loss in West Lafayette.

It was Toledo’s third consecutive victory after a humbling season-opening home loss to Arizona, 41-2, and a win Rockets coach Tim Beckman felt his team really needed.

“We’re so young. We just have to play one game at a time. To go into Purdue, into West Lafayette, and to win a football game was a great challenge and one that our team definitely took as a challenge,” he said.” To come away with a victory no question was a great win for us. I think it speaks volumes for Toledo and this is what UT has been known for. I’m just proud to be a part of a tradition of winning football games.”

Toledo has won football games this season the old fashioned way...with competent offense and stellar defense. The Rockets rank 17th in the nation in rushing defense, allowing its opponents to rush for just 96.0 yards per game. Toledo also has four players with two interceptions or more, paced by sophomore linebacker Dan Molls with three. Molls has done a bit of everything

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for the Toledo defense this season, ranking second on the team in tackles (33), first in tackles for a loss (3.5), is tied for second in sacks (2.0) and has forced a fumble.

Offensively, Toledo has relied on the steady hand of sophomore quarterback Austin Dantin. Dantin has completed 61 of 87 passes for 587 yards and five touchdowns against four interceptions. Dantin is also second on the team in rushing with 137 yards, and leads the Rockets in rushing touchdowns with four.

Dantin was a difference-maker against Purdue. He helped the Rockets build an early 17-0 lead over the Boilermakers by throwing a pair of first quarter touchdown passes...a 5-yard toss to Eric Page and a 7-yard throw to Danny Noble.

Dantin scored on a 58-yard touchdown run in the third quarter to increase the Toledo lead to 24-3. Then, after a furious Purdue comeback that saw the Boilermakers cut the score to 24-20 in the middle of the fourth quarter, Dantin led a 7-play drive that took 2:43 off the clock, capping the drive with a 1-yard touchdown plunge with 5:24 showing on the clock.

"I was very proud of the way Austin Danton handled the game this last week," Beckman said. "I think it was, by far, the best game that he has played. Managing it, that's hard sometimes for a sophomore to come in and manage a football game but I thought he did an exceptional job.

"He has definitely improved each and every week and his composure and how he handles the game has been the biggest thing that we've seen him get better at each and every game. He's very important to this football team."

This week the Rockets will face another stiff test when Wyoming invades the Glass Bowl. Though the Cowboys have just one win this season and are ranked near the bottom of the NCAA in total offense (119th) and total defense (111th), two of their three losses have come to top 10 teams (34-7 to Texas and 51-6 to third-ranked Boise St.). Beckman is not deceived by Wyoming's record.

"They've had a very, very tough schedule to start off with. I think they're a very good football

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team,” he said.” They’ve faced Texas and they’ve faced Boise, two pretty good football teams. I see them as a team that plays extremely hard and can put some points on the board. We’re up for a big challenge this week, there’s no question.”

Beckman is making sure his young Rockets are not dwelling on the road win against Purdue. The team, as it does after every win, had a victory celebration together Sunday. Then, Monday, everyone got to work on Wyoming.

“The biggest challenge this team has is to prepare for the next week and not be concerned about what happened in the past,” Beckman said. “I brought that up all season. We did not play well last year after a win, and our players have turned that into a challenge and have ended up tying three games together.

“It was a team effort and one that we’re very proud of, but there definitely are things we need to improve on. But it’s a start and we’re finally getting back to the Glass Bowl this weekend against Wyoming.”