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Michigan (3-9, 2-6) limps back to Ann Arbor with a school-record ninth loss and no bowl invitation, to begin an off-season of soul-searching after a calamitous 2008 campaign. While Buckeye Nation savors one of the more satisfying victories ever over their arch-rivals, Michigan fans are left to wonder how they can expect it to get much better next year. For the Buckeye seniors who were playing their last game in Columbus, and have never tasted defeat against Michigan, it just can't get any better.

Hanging Tough

The Michigan defense came out playing inspired football, and threw an early scare into the 105,564 assembled at the Horseshoe, intercepting Pryor on his second pass of the game, and returning it to the OSU 13-yard line. But the Bucks avoided falling behind early when the OSU defense held, and Michigan's K.C. Lopata missed a short field goal.

It wasn't until the fourth OSU possession of the game that the Buckeyes' big-play offense would click for the first time. On the first play after a punt to the OSU 41,

Chris Wells burst through a hole on the right side, and out-raced the Wolverine defenders to the end zone for a 59-yard touchdown, and a 7-0 Buckeye lead. Wells, who has tormented Michigan in his three years at Ohio State, finished with 134 yards on 15 carries to lead an OSU rushing attack that amassed 267 yards as a team.

On the next OSU possession, the Buckeyes started out on their own 22, and had moved it out near midfield, when quarterback Terrelle Pryor found slot receiver Brian Hartline open on a deep post route, and hit him in stride with a 53-yard touchdown pass. The Ohio State offense had been largely frustrated by Michigan to that point, but on the strength of those two plays, the Bucks had a 14-0 lead.

Momentum Changes

At that point in the game, Michigan was still looking for their initial first down of the afternoon, but momentum was about to take a turn in favor of the Wolverines. Ohio State failed to convert a 4th and 3 at the Michigan 35-yard line, and Michigan began a 65-yard drive that generated four first downs and sliced the Buckeye lead in half when Brandon Minor scored on a 4th and goal from the one. Michigan would get the ball back again before the half and couldn't score, but they went to the locker room down just 14-7.

The Wolverines then took the second half kickoff, and had the Buckeye faithful squirming in their seats a bit, moving the ball down to the Ohio State 38-yard line with three quick first downs on rushing plays. Even though the drive stalled there, the Michigan punt backed the Buckeyes up on their own 9-yard line, and the heavy underdog Wolverines had to feel they were still in the game. But that's when old "Mo" switched jerseys again.

Ending the Suspense

It took two plays for Ohio State to cover the 91 yards to the end zone. Beanie took a pitch to the left, cut it up inside a great kick-out block by left guard Jim Cordle, and sprinted 42 yards across midfield to the Michigan 49. With Wells catching his breath on the sidelines for the next play, the Buckeyes ran left again, and backup tailback Boom Herron took it to the house from 49 yards out. On both runs, OSU tight end Jake Ballard sealed off the inside pursuit with crunching blocks, and no Michigan defender laid a hand on a Buckeye running back on either play.

It was over right then, because the Buckeye defense had already had their one lapse for the day, and the Wolverines would not threaten to score again. They would reach the OSU 34-yard line later in the third quarter, but the ensuing Zoltan Mesko punt was returned 80 yards by OSU's Ray Small, down to the Michigan 8-yard line. Pryor would hit Brian Robiskie on a rollout pass to the right for an 8-yard TD, and the rout was on, 28-7.

Senior Day

Freshman quarterback Terrelle Pryor had a relatively quiet day statistically, with 5 of 13 passing, for 120 yards, and a minus-7 yards rushing, owing to three sacks. He made the completions count though, with two touchdown passes, and the defense bailed him out on the early interception. When Boom Herron scored his second TD of the game two plays into the 4th quarter, Pryor was done for the day, and senior Todd Boeckman would take his final Ohio Stadium bows by finishing up the game for the Bucks.

It was kind of fitting for the freshman prodigy to take a back seat to the seniors on this day. The fans responded warmly to Boeckman's appearance, and the 6th-year senior ended his OSU home career in style, completing all three of his pass attempts, including a 46-yard completion to Robiskie and an 18-yard TD strike to Hartline for the game's final points.

Robiskie had two catches for 54 yards and a touchdown in his final home game, and senior offensive linemen Alex Boone and Steve Rehring will also leave Columbus 4-0 against Michigan.

On defense, the trio of senior Buckeyes, James Laurinaitis, Marcus Freeman and Malcolm Jenkins all contributed to a stellar defensive performance for OSU. Laurinaitis had 12 total tackles, although it seemed like 20, and Jenkins had five tackles and a pass break-up, while helping hold the Wolverines' best receiver Greg Matthews without a catch on the day. Freeman had seven total tackles and a fumble recovery.

Special mention is also due for Shaun Lane, special teamer *extraordinaire*. The senior cornerback had two more tackles on kick coverage Saturday, causing a fumble on one of them that led to a Buckeye touchdown. Never a starter in the secondary in his four years as a Buckeye, Lane was without question the special teams MVP in 2008 for Ohio State. From the first game to the twelfth, Lane was a

demon on kick coverage teams. He's a textbook example of a senior stepping up in his last year, and excelling in the role he is assigned by the coaching staff.

No Roses

The Bucks still have a chance to land an at-large BCS Bowl invitation by virtue of their 10-2 record and a tie for the Big Ten championship, but they won't be going to Pasadena. Penn State locked down the automatic BCS bid and a Rose Bowl appearance by [mauling Michigan State 49-18](#) .

Notes:

The 35-point margin of victory was the third largest in the history of the series, and the largest since the 50-14 win in the National Championship year of 1968.

Chris Wells moved past Keith Byars into fourth place among the all-time rushing yardage leaders for Ohio State, with 3,276 yards. He now trails only Archie Griffin (5,589), Eddie George (3,768) and Tim Spencer (3,553).

Links:

[OSU Athletic Communications - Game Stats](#)

[OSU Athletic Communications - Game Story](#)

[ESPN.com game story](#)

[BuckeyeSports.com game story](#)

[Bucknuts.com game story](#)