



The Toledo Rockets and an OSU-friendly crowd in Cleveland were just what the doctor ordered Saturday for an Ohio State team that needed a win they could feel good about. A tenacious Buckeye defense held the Rockets spread offense to 210 total yards, and Terrelle Pryor led a balanced Ohio State offensive attack to an easy 38-0 win on the lakefront.

Pryor was 17 of 27 passing, for 262 yards, career high numbers for him in all three categories. His two first quarter touchdown passes to Dane Sanzenbacher, including a 76-yard bomb on OSU's third offensive play, helped lift the Bucks to a 21-0 lead before the Rockets got their second first down. From that point on the only question was whether or not the Buckeyes would allow an out-manned Toledo team to sneak back into the game. When OSU made it 31-0 on their second third quarter possession, Toledo had their answer.

Pryor added a third TD pass, a 4-yarder to DeVier Posey in the second half, and also rushed for 110 yards and a touchdown on 12 carries, at times flashing the open-field wizardry that Buckeye fans had missed in the sophomore's first two outings of the season. Pryor had a weaving, 43-yard scamper up the middle in the third quarter, and added rushes of 13, 11, and 19 yards on a variety of scrambles and options. On the down side, he also threw two interceptions, both on passes that were ill-advised....examples of Pryor trying to make something out of nothing, when nothing was preferable to a turnover for his team. The extraordinary effort is constant with Pryor...better judgment should come with time.

### Defensive Dominance

The Rockets' offensive juggernaut that had averaged 558 total yards per game in the first two weeks of the season was nowhere to be found Saturday, as Rocket quarterback Aaron Opelt was constantly pressured, hit and harassed by the OSU defensive front seven, to the point that he started regularly unloading the ball to the sidelines and to unpopulated areas of the field.

In fact, the Toledo attack was so inept that they didn't run a play from scrimmage in Ohio State territory until they picked off Pryor and started a possession at the OSU 37 with four minutes to go in the 3rd quarter. And three plays later, that possession ended with a sack of Opelt by OSU defensive end Cam Heyward. If more examples of Rocket rejection are needed, how about just three first half first downs...or 13 net rushing yards for *the entire game*? How this Toledo team scored 54 points on Colorado a week ago is a mystery to anyone watching them on this day.

The Buckeye defensive line deserves a large share of the credit for the shutout. Heyward, Thad Gibson, Todd Denlinger, Dexter Larimore, Doug Worthington, Rob Rose, Nathan Williams and promising freshman Johnny Simon manhandled the Toledo offensive line, getting pressure on Opelt all day, with only occasional help from blitzes by linebackers Ross Homan, Jermale Hines and Brian Rolle.

The Rockets' rushing game was non-existent, as noted above, and Opelt was held to 77 first half passing yards, finishing with just 197. He was sacked twice, hurried at least a dozen times, and finally, intercepted by reserve linebacker Andrew Sweat with just over a minute to go in the game. All in all, a forgettable day for the Toledo QB.

Meanwhile, Chimdi Chekwa blanketed Stephen Williams downfield on several attempts to go deep, and the Rockets leading receiver was held to 3 catches for 30 yards. Safety Kurt Coleman, arguably the best defensive player this season for the Bucks, had six tackles and forced a fumble by Eric Page on a play that would otherwise have been a Toledo touchdown. Page caught a pass from Opelt that looked like it would result in a 27-yard TD, but Coleman stripped him of the ball just before he crossed the goal line, and Homan recovered in the end zone for a touchback.

As a result, the next point Toledo scores in their history against Ohio State will be their first. Their next chance will be in the third meeting of the two teams, on a Toledo visit to Columbus in 2011.

### Impressive Debut for a Freshman

Ohio State put together their first strong team rushing effort of the season, amassing 247 net rushing yards, and Pryor led the way with his 110 yard, 1 TD performance. Brandon Saine had several short runs among his nine carries, but broke one for a 31-yard gain, ending with 45 yards rushing. Saine also had two receptions for 18 receiving yards. Starter Dan Herron scored a touchdown in his seventh consecutive game, and collected 42 yards rushing on 15 carries.

But it was the game debut for true freshman running back Jordan Hall that had Buckeye Nation sitting up and taking notice. Hall got one carry in the first half, but it was his performance on the final OSU touchdown drive that made the big impression. Hall carried the ball six times in eight plays in that drive, and showed the aggressiveness, the strength, and the lateral quickness that have made him the fall surprise of the 2009 group of incoming recruits.

Hall hit the hole hard for a nine yard gain on his first attempt in that drive, and then after losing four yards on the next play, ran off consecutive play gains of 10, 9, and 17 yards to set the

Buckeyes up with a first and goal at the UT 4-yard line. The ability to break tackles and/or make the first man miss is something we have not seen consistently in either Herron or Saine yet this year, so the example of Hall was promising. He finished with about the same rushing yardage (44 yds.) as Herron (45 yds.), on less than half the carries. That's not a huge deal...but it's not nothing either.

### Great Dane

Nearly half of Pryor's passing yards were recorded on completions to slot receiver Dane Sanzenbacher, who has to be singled out as one of the top performers of the day. He had a career day receiving, with 126 yards on five catches, including touchdowns of 76 and 18 yards. On top of that, he took over as the holder for field goal and extra-point attempts when regular holder, punter Jon Thoma, missed the game due to illness. As he did when filling in admirably as punt returner in the absence of Ray Small in the opener, Dane just does what the team needs him to do...but mainly that's just to get open, and catch the ball.

DeVier Posey also had five catches and a touchdown on the afternoon, and is starting to look the part of a #1 wide receiver. Ray Small and freshman Duron Carter had two catches each, and the two Jakes at tight end (Ballard and Stoneburner) had one catch each.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention linebacker Brian Rolle, who once again led the Buckeyes in total tackles with eight. He and Ross Homan (six tackles) contributed to the penetration and pressure on Opelt, and tackled with attitude all day long. Count Jermale Hines in that group as well.

The shackling by the OSU defense of a Toledo offense that had averaged 558 yards and 42.5 points per game coming in, tells us that one or both of these propositions are true. That a) this OSU defense is truly special, and b) Purdue and Colorado are really, really bad defenses. I suspect both are true to a degree, but OSU fans can count on this defense keeping them in every game going forward.

So for a day or two at least, all is well with the Buckeyes. Coach Tressel didn't take his boot off the opponent's neck after taking a double-digit lead, even though the guy across the field is a friend of his.....Terrelle Pryor can relax a little, and work on fixing the mistakes he made in an otherwise strong performance, having gained confidence and more game experience...and OSU fans can sleep well knowing their coach has discovered a running back...and rediscovered the quarterback sneak.

*Next up: Juice Williams and the Illinois Fighting Illini invade the Horseshoe this Saturday for the Big Ten opener.*□

[OSU Athletic Communications - Game Stats \(pdf\)](#)