

## The Week That Was: Half Off, Half On

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

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You won't see many much more of a contrast between a first half and a second half than in Ohio State's 38-14 victory over Penn State at the Horseshoe Saturday evening. The Buckeyes were beaten soundly for the first thirty minutes, unable to get into a rhythm offensively and befuddled defensively by sophomore quarterback Matt McGloin, who did something no Joe Paterno team had ever done in the Horseshoe- twice over. At halftime the Buckeyes trailed 14-3, the crowd was completely out of the game, and Penn State was getting the football to start the second half.

That second half would be a completely different story. The Buckeyes got down to business on the ground, with Daniel Herron having a career day and Terrelle Pryor and Brandon Saine chipping in for support. The defense came down on McGloin like a ton of bricks, intercepting him twice for touchdowns before chasing him from the game altogether. After being whipped up front the entire first half, Ohio State repaid the Lions with interest on both sides of the ball in the second. The result was 35 unanswered points, a rout on the scoreboard, and continued life for BCS and Big Ten title hopes in Columbus.

**Good-but-not-Good-Enough Start:** The first half didn't begin like one that would be fraught with anxiety for the home team. After Herron opened his big game with two gains for 19 yards, Pryor found DeVier Posey deep down the near sideline for 49 yards and a first down at the Penn State 12. Had the Buckeyes taken it in from there they might have avoided what followed. But they didn't. Three plays resulted in a gain of one yard and Devin Barclay had to come on for a 26-yard field goal and a 3-0 lead. That would be the start of a very frustrating half of football for Ohio State.

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**Matthew Mc-Who?** Penn State's response- and a remarkable stretch for unheralded sophomore Matt McGloin- came on its second possession. McGloin moved the Lions 67 yards in ten plays, hitting five different receivers on the impressive drive. The last three completions went to receiver Justin Brown; including the 23-yard touchdown in which Brown turned around Andrew Sweat and got wide open for the easy score. All of a sudden Penn State, a three-touchdown underdog going in, owned a 7-3 first-quarter lead.

**Say What?** The McGloin-to-Brown connection was the first touchdown pass a Joe Paterno-coached Penn State had ever completed in Ohio Stadium. That's in ten games dating back to the 1975 season. (No, [Zach Mills's touchdown toss to Chris Gamble](#) in 2002 doesn't count.)

**It Gets Worse:** McGloin continued to show his hot hand after Ohio State punted on its next possession. The youngster from Scranton drove the Lions 82 yards on eleven plays, completing all four of his pass attempts on the drive. The fourth, a six-yard strike to Derek Moyer, made it 14-3 early with less than four minutes gone in the second quarter. McGloin was on fire, hitting on nine consecutive attempts at one point, and Evan Royster and the rest of the Penn State running game was doing just enough to open up play-action opportunities for the youngster. McGloin repeatedly picked on cornerback Devon Torrance, who was burned often and committed the pass-interference penalty that set up the touchdown to Moyer.

**A Turning Point:** After Ohio State's next possession petered out in Penn State territory the Lions came out looking to perhaps land an early knockout punch. Starting at his own twenty McGloin guided his team sixty yards to a fourth-and-one at the Buckeye 20-yard line. Unwilling to settle for a field goal and a 17-3 lead, Penn State went for it on fourth-and-short for the third time in the half. The first two attempts were successful. This one was not. Jermale Hines stonewalled Silas Redd for no gain and Ohio State was off the hook. It was the first Buckeye counterpunch after Penn State's opening flurry- and it would not be the last.

**Ugly Numbers:** Penn State's first-half domination showed up on the stat sheet as well as the scoreboard. The Lions ran 39 plays to Ohio State's 23 and outgained the Buckeyes 212-147. McGloin completed 13-of-17 in the half, including the two touchdown passes. Ohio State was fortunate not to be down by more than eleven points.

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**The Game Changes:** Leading 14-3, Penn State got the ball to start the second half and drove into Ohio State territory before being forced to punt. The Buckeyes took over at their own four-yard line and promptly lost half the narrow distance to the goal on Bryant Browning's false start, placing the ball at the two. Three plays later, on third-and-six from the eight, Dan Herron caught a flare pass, made a couple of defenders miss, and picked up the first down. That play finally got the Buckeyes rolling. Showing some rhythm for the first time all game they marched 96 yards in eleven plays, Herron doing the honors with a five-yard blast right up the middle. With more than half of the third quarter gone it was now 14-10.

**Play of the Game:** It came two minutes after Herron's score and it was made by none other than Devon Torrance, who had such a woeful first half. On second-and-nine from his own 37-yard line McGloin's coach-and-four finally turned back into a pumpkin. Torrance jumped a sideline route, juggled the ball several times, pulled it in and raced 34 yards for the go-ahead touchdown. Pick-sixes [have played huge parts](#) in several of Ohio State's wins over Penn State at the Horseshoe. This one proved to be the game-winner.

**All He Does is Catch Touchdown Passes:** Dane Sanzenbacher was the invisible man for much of Saturday's action. Not only did he not make a catch for three quarters-plus, he was rarely even targeted. Nor was he targeted on his eighth touchdown reception of the season five minutes into the fourth. Facing second-and-long from his own 42-yard line Pryor went deep to Posey, who was double-covered at the goal line. The pass deflected off Posey's hands and went right to Sanzenbacher, who was trailing the play. Dane neatly picked the ball out of the air and raced into the end zone, giving Ohio State a 24-14 lead with 9:58 to play.

**Knockout Punch:** It came barely a minute after Sanzenbacher's freak touchdown and again it came courtesy of the defense. On second down from the Penn State 19-yard line, McGloin was intercepted again, this time by Travis Howard. The redshirt sophomore from Florida weaved his way thirty yards for Ohio State's second defensive touchdown of the half, and at 31-14 the rout was on.

**Boom Shaka-laka:** As well as the defense played, the second half really belonged to Daniel Herron. The junior from Warren piled up 121 rushing yards on fourteen attempts after halftime, scoring the touchdown that started the revival. Boom totaled a career-high 190 yards on 21 carries for the game and more than any other player provided the jump-start to what had been a flat, listless Buckeye football team.

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**Quite the Turnaround:** The competitive difference in the second half was vividly reflected not only in Ohio State's 35-0 advantage on the scoreboard, but in the overall statistics. The Buckeyes outgained Penn State 306-60 and ran 33 plays to the Lions' 26. After his brilliant first half Matt McGloin experienced a nightmare in the second, hitting 2-of-13 passes for 18 yards and getting intercepted twice for touchdowns before being benched late in the fourth quarter. Penn State went 0-of-6 on third-down conversions in the second half as well.

Part of the problem for the Lions was injuries that knocked both Evan Royster and reserve running back Stephfon Green out of the game for the balance of the last thirty minutes. With Penn State's rushing game crippled the Buckeyes had no need to honor the play-fakes that had been so profitable in the third period. Ohio State's front four turned up the pressure while the secondary eschewed the soft zones that had been the bane of their existence in the first half. The result was a Buckeye runaway.

**Terrelle Pryor's Line:** 8-of-13 passing for 139 yards, two touchdowns and an interception; 49 rushing yards on nine carries. With Penn State's offense dominating the ball Pryor was almost a non-factor in the first half. He got it going in the second, especially with his legs, but also threw a bad interception early in the fourth quarter with Ohio State driving and the game still in doubt at 17-14. It was, on the whole, not a vintage performance for the junior from Pennsylvania, who will be returning for his senior season and, hopefully, another shot at that elusive second BCS Championship for the Ohio State program.

**Running Wild:** Led by Boom's big day the Buckeyes rolled up an imposing 314 yards on the ground. Pryor helped with his 49 yards while Brandon Saine, the forgotten runner, added a productive 46 on eight carries, including a 19-yard end-around that set up Ohio State's first touchdown. The Buckeyes averaged a brisk 7.3 yards per carry on the day.

### *Around the Nation*

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