



In a complicated scoring system that only Jim Tressel understands, Ohio State's defense dominated the Buckeyes' offense 87-72 in a scrimmage held at Ohio Stadium Saturday morning. The defense came up with four sacks, three interceptions and two fumble recoveries while never allowing their counterparts to reach the end-zone in an incredible performance.

Senior offensive tackle Mike Adams talked about what went wrong for the offense afterwards, "Offensively, it's fundamentals basically. We've got guys dropping passes, we've got guys dropping snaps, fumbling... Just things that you work on everyday, and we weren't good enough today."

The offense was not only disrupted by a motivated defense -- any chance of a comeback was eliminated when flashes of lightning dashed through the Columbus sky.

The unplanned, early ending was probably a good thing for the offense. Multiple defensive players had standout performances, including a few guys who are looking to break the two-deep roster on a defense that lost seven starters from last year's squad.

Colleague [Dan Wismar](#) and I watched the scrimmage from the stands, and our consensus

MVP was redshirt freshman Bradley Roby, who picked off two passes from receivers who had tipped the ball in the air.

Along the defensive line, Jonathan Hankins and John Simon looked absolutely unblockable. Simon in particular had a great play where he beat his man off the line and got to quarterback Kenny Guiton, sacking the mobile passer while stripping the ball out of his hand. Simon then pounced on the loose ball to complete the holy trifecta for defensive lineman.

“That was just a great job by the whole defense,” Simon later said of his sack, fumble and recovery. “With [the secondary] back there giving me good coverage, I was able to get a one-on-one matchup and make a play.”

Dorian Bell had a spectacular outing as well, recording a sack when he dashed through the line untouched on his way to Guiton. A few series later, he took part in one of the most entertaining plays of the day. Bell dropped back in coverage while Braxton Miller connected on a 20 yard pass to Verlon Reed. Reed turned up the field when he was hit by Jeremy Cash from behind, jarring the ball loose and popping it in the air. Bell displayed great awareness and snatched the ball out of the air and returned the fumble recovery 10 yards before being *blasted* by Braxton Miller.

The rough day on offense could be explained by Ohio State’s shortage of offensive lineman. The Buckeyes have just 10 big men to put in the trenches up front, and with Shugarts sitting out of Saturday’s scrimmage with a sore ankle (nothing serious -- just resting) the limited numbers were even worse. In the later stages of the scrimmage, the O-lineman looked absolutely gassed.

Senior center Mike Brewster confirmed this with his post-scrimmage comments, “You’ve got guys playing everywhere. You’ve got 8-10 linemen just trying to mix it up just to get guys out on the field. And then TP’s not getting any reps right now.”

Oh, right. When you throw in the fact that one of the countries best quarterbacks isn’t taking snaps this spring (still recovering from offseason foot surgery), it takes the offense a little time to find its groove.

Pryor's replacements looked quite bad on Saturday, although their skill position guys weren't helping matters by dropping very catchable passes. All four guys (Joe Bauserman, Kenny Guiton, Taylor Graham and Braxton Miller) saw the field and none of them were able to sustain a drive longer than 30 yards.

If you had to pick one, Taylor Graham probably had the best day, but that's not saying much. Graham is more of a pocket passer, but he showed some decent athleticism by escaping pressure on a few plays and finding a receiver down the field. Guiton had a miserable day, getting sacked multiple times while being picked off twice, although both interceptions were the result of his receivers not being able to bring the ball in. One of the passes in particular was a perfectly thrown, back-shoulder bomb to Berry. It would have been a huge play, maybe even a touchdown, if Berry hadn't let the pass bounce off of his pads and into the hands of a defender.

Braxton did see the field quite a bit, but a lot of the playcalling for him was run plays out of I-formation sets (Dave) or zone read plays out of the shotgun. Braxton still also needs Pryor in the huddle with him to relay every call from the sideline, which isn't a good thing (but it's still very, very early). Miller is the best and most natural talent at the quarterback position (behind Pryor), but he'll need to learn/study the playbook this summer if he wants a shot at the starting spot the first five games while Pryor serves his suspension.

Despite the tired offensive linemen blocking in front of them, the runningbacks performed pretty well. Rod Smith in particular ran the ball very well, showing great speed to compliment his tough running style. Smith's legs, as Dan pointed out, are absolutely enormous. It will be a rarity to see any opposing defense tackle Smith on first contact this fall. The redshirt freshman continued his strong spring push for playing time with multiple solid runs against a swarming defense. By my count, Smith had runs of eight, six and seven yards in limited carries caused by a crowded backfield and a coaching staff with a desire to share the load. Still, Smith will be one to watch this year and will be a very good running back for the Buckeyes.

With the shortage of offensive linemen, this Saturday's annual spring game will take on more of a scrimmage feel rather than the traditional game where Ohio State uses a draft to split the team into two smaller squads that face off against each other. And with another opportunity to go up against the full strength of the defense, Brewster wants to make the plays he knows this offense is capable of, "I think the defense had a nice day, but you'd expect that from our defense. But, it's like that one play with the back-shoulder pass to [Jaamal] Berry, that could have maybe went for a touchdown if he just looks back a little sooner and doesn't let it bounce off him for an interception." He later added, "I wouldn't say today is going to dictate anything in the future."

Random Tidbits:

- Before the scrimmage started, the special teams units took the field for about 15 minutes and practiced kickoffs. Whether it's a sign of the continued horrible coverage we saw in last year's team (against Miami, Wisconsin, etc...), Jaamal Berry had a fantastic 97 yard kick return for a touchdown.
- Jonathan Hankins is going to be an absolute load at defensive tackle this year. The sophomore big-man had a huge day, causing a safety on the first play from scrimmage while consistently creating pressure on the passer. He isn't just a run stuffer, Big-Hank can wreak havoc on the passing game as well
- Dionte Allen, the transfer from Florida State, is turning some heads and making a push for the third cornerback spot. Allen made some huge plays and absolutely drilled Jaamal Berry as he was trying to catch a screen pass. The hit was the hardest, loudest pop of the day and left Berry dazed for nearly two minutes.
- A lot of people forget how good Marcus Hall was his freshman year two years ago. After redshirting last year, Hall will likely play a huge role along the offensive line this year with the departures of Boren and Browning, and he might even be the top candidate to replace Adams at tackle while the senior serves his five game suspension.
- Drew Basil had a good day kicking field goals on Saturday, drilling everything within 40 yards while showing good accuracy on his longer field goal attempts. Huge leg on that kid.

- A couple of guys were banged up during the scrimmage, namely Melvin Fellows and Jamie Wood. Nothing that looked too serious, but both will probably rest during Saturday's spring game/scrimmage.