

WEEK FOUR
ILLINOIS AT PENN ST

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. -- Miles Sanders burst through the hole, bounced off a defender trying to grab his ankles and sped up the right side for the go-ahead touchdown.

That’s when No. 10 Penn State started to hit its stride, too.

Sanders set career highs by rushing for 200 yards and three touchdowns, Trace McSorley threw for three TDs and ran for a personal-best 92 yards, and the Nittany Lions scored 35 points in the fourth quarter to pull away for a 63-24 victory over Illinois on Friday night.

Penn State (4-0, 1-0 Big Ten) scored the final 42 points after Illinois went up by three early in the third quarter, breaking it open after getting all it could handle from a team showing signs of a turnaround in coach Lovie Smith’s third season.

Illinois (2-2, 0-1) opened the second half with a 75-yard touchdown drive. Sanders answered with a 48-yard scoring run , and Penn State put this one away with two TDs in the opening minute of the fourth. It was the Nittany Lions’ third straight game with more than 50 points.

“I don’t think we’ve played a complete game,” said coach James Franklin, in his fifth season. “I don’t know if we’ve played many complete games since we’ve been here. I think we are getting better. There’s certain plays, there’s certain series, there’s certain quarters that we’re not happy. I’ve watched a little bit of the NFL. It seems it’s the same way at that level.”

McSorley threw a 16-yard TD to Juwan Johnson on the first play of the quarter. Jan Johnson intercepted Illinois’ M.J. Rivers, and McSorley hit KJ Hamler with a 21-yarder on the next play, making it 42-24.

Sanders easily surpassed his previous highs of 118 yards and two TDs. He had 113 yards and two scores in the first half alone.

McSorley showed why he is a Heisman Trophy hopeful, eclipsing his previous rushing high of 81 yards against Maryland in 2016. The senior also completed 12 of 19 passes for 160 yards with an interception.

Ricky Slade added a 61-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter, and the Nittany Lions racked up 591 yards.

“I think we’re close,” McSorley said. “Obviously, you’re putting up 63 points and not playing full, complete games -- you’re close to that. When we talk about a complete game, it’s having the success for the full four quarters.”

Rivers, a true freshman, was 17 of 28 for 149 yards, a touchdown and an interception in his second start with AJ Bush nursing a hamstring injury.

Reggie Corbin ran for 87 yards. Mike Epstein finished with 73 after back-to-back 100-yard rushing games.

“I think we can all see what kind of a team we can be,” Smith said. “We have a lot of potential. Right now, we’re playing with our backup quarterback. Hopefully with the bye week, AJ (Bush) will be ready to go.”

TIGHT START

Sanders broke a tackle and plowed through three defenders near the goal line for a 14-yard touchdown that gave Penn State a 7-0 lead.

Illinois tied it on a 2-yard run by Corbin. Then the Nittany Lions scored back-to-back touchdowns and looked ready to blow it open.

Sanders scored from the 2 after the Illini’s Sydney Brown got flagged for interference on an overthrown pass intended for Hamler in the end zone. McSorley then threw a 5-yard TD to Pat Freiermuth, who skidded into the end zone as he lost his footing, to make it 21-7.

But a 51-yard run by Corbin set up a 6-yard touchdown pass from Rivers to Ricky Smalling, after the Illini’s Daniel Barker fumbled a reception near the goal line, to make it a seven-point game midway through the second quarter.

Illinois’ Delano Ware intercepted a deep pass by McSorley into double coverage with about 30 seconds left in the half when Penn State could have opted to run out the clock. That led to a 42-yard field goal by Chase McLaughlin as time expired, making it 21-17.

THE TAKEAWAY

Penn State: The Nittany Lions have outscored their past three opponents by a combined 177-40, pulling away late in this one after blowing out Pittsburgh and Kent State.

Illinois: Rivers is showing he could be a major contributor for the Illini even though Smith indicated Bush will return to the lineup once he’s ready.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
PSU	7	14	7	35	63
ILL	7	10	7	0	24
Scoring Summary -----					
FIRST QUARTER				PSU	ILL
PSU TD 9:17					
Miles Sanders 14 Yd Run (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
9 plays, 70 yards, 3:32				7	0
ILL TD 2:16					
Reggie Corbin 2 Yd Run (Chase McLaughlin Kick)					
6 plays, 74 yards, 1:31				7	7
SECOND QUARTER				PSU	ILL
PSU TD 12:52					
Miles Sanders 2 Yd Run (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
11 plays, 75 yards, 4:24				14	7
PSU TD 8:11					
Pat Freiermuth 5 Yd pass from Trace McSorley (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
8 plays, 66 yards, 3:14				21	7
ILL TD 6:47					
Ricky Smalling 6 Yd pass from M.J. Rivers II (Chase McLaughlin Kick)					
5 plays, 75 yards, 1:24				21	14
ILL FG 0:00					
Chase McLaughlin 42 Yd Field Goal					
5 plays, 32 yards, 0:28				21	17
THIRD QUARTER				PSU	ILL
ILL TD 10:36					
Ricky Smalling 17 Yd pass from Trenard Davis (Chase McLaughlin Kick)					
9 plays, 75 yards, 4:24				21	24
PSU TD 8:36					
Miles Sanders 48 Yd Run (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
5 plays, 80 yards, 2:00				28	24
FOURTH QUARTER				PSU	ILL
PSU TD 14:53					
Juwan Johnson 16 Yd pass from Trace McSorley (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
11 plays, 60 yards, 6:11				35	24
PSU TD 14:09					
KJ Hamler 21 Yd pass from Trace McSorley (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
1 play, 21 yards, 0:09				42	24
PSU TD 9:58					
Ricky Slade 61 Yd Run (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
2 plays, 66 yards, 0:36				49	24
PSU TD 4:24					
Ricky Slade 1 Yd Run (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
6 plays, 54 yards, 2:48				56	24
PSU TD 1:56					
Journey Brown 6 Yd Run (Jake Pinegar Kick)					
2 plays, 10 yards, 0:50				63	24

Team Stats	PSU	ILL
First Downs	31	26
Total Yards	591	411
Total Plays	71	76
Avg Gain Per Play	8.3	5.4
Net Yards Rushing	387	245
Rushes	51	45
Yards Per Rush	7.6	5.42
Net Yards Passing	204	166
Comp-Att	13-20	18-31
Yards Per Pass	10.2	5.4
Times Sacked	2	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	-12	-14
Interceptions	1	2
Punts	1	4
Punt Average	42.0	44.8
Penalties	8	7
Penalty Yards	72	81
Fumbles	2	2
Fumbles Lost	1	0
Possession	29:55	30:05

Individual Stats

RUSHING						
PSU	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
24 Miles Sanders	22	200	9.1	48	3	
4 Ricky Slade	10	94	9.4	61	2	
9 Trace McSorley	15	92	6.1	16	0	
32 Journey Brown	2	10	5.0	6	1	
14 Sean Clifford	2	-9	-4.5	1	0	
ILL	Rush	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
2 Reggie Corbin	11	87	7.9	51	1	
26 Mike Epstein	13	73	5.6	18	0	
21 Ra’Von Bonner	4	42	10.5	16	0	
8 M.J. Rivers II	10	24	2.4	12	0	
12 Matt Robinson	4	17	4.3	9	0	
25 Dre Brown	2	4	2.0	4	0	
15 Trenard Davis	1	-2	-2.0	0	0	

PASSING								
PSU		Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
9 Trace McSorley		12	19	160	8.4	3	1	175.5
14 Sean Clifford		1	1	44	44.0	0	0	469.6

ILL	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
8 M.J. Rivers II	17	28	149	5.3	1	1	110.1
15 Trenard Davis	1	1	17	17.0	1	0	572.8
12 Matt Robinson	0	2	0	0.0	0	1	-100.0

RECEIVING						
PSU	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
18 Jonathan Holland	3	53	17.7	21	0	
84 Juwan Johnson	4	51	12.8	19	1	
12 Mac Hippenhammer	1	44	44.0	44	0	
1 KJ Hamler	2	41	20.5	21	1	
3 DeAndre Thompkins	2	10	5.0	5	0	
87 Pat Freiermuth	1	5	5.0	5	1	
ILL	Rec	Yds	Avg	Long	TD	
5 Carmoni Green	4	49	12.3	16	0	
9 Sam Mays	3	26	8.7	11	0	
4 Ricky Smalling	2	23	11.5	17	2	
87 Daniel Barker	3	19	6.3	20	0	
26 Mike Epstein	2	19	9.5	13	0	
15 Trenard Davis	2	17	8.5	19	0	
2 Reggie Corbin	2	13	6.5	12	0	