

**WEEK SIX
ILLINOIS AT RUTGERS**

PISCATAWAY, N.J. -- After a career that included stops at Nebraska, Iowa Western Community College and Virginia Tech, AJ Bush is getting a chance to play as a graduate transfer at Illinois, and he's helping to turn the program around.

Bush ran for 116 yards and two touchdowns and threw for another in his return to the lineup as Illinois used a big ground game to beat Rutgers 38-17 Saturday, sending the Scarlet Knights to their fifth straight loss.

The win not only snapped a two-game losing streak for Illinois (3-2, 1-1 Big Ten), but it also ended a 13-game losing streak in the Big Ten, dating to 31-27 decision over Michigan State in 2016.

"It's important because they need to know how to win," Bush of his young team. "They need to know what it takes to win and how it feels to win, so when we win, then we can build that culture, build that experience with them and that just takes over and that's how you change the program."

Bush, who missed the last two games -- both losses -- with a hamstring injury, scored on runs of 3 and 41 yards in the first half. He iced the game with an 11-yard TD pass to Ricky Smalling early in the fourth quarter.

Reggie Corbin ran for a career-high 137 yards, including a 73-yard scoring dash, as the Illini rushed for 330 yards and had 419 yards in total offense. Mike Epstein added 41-yard touchdown run with 5:07 to go.

"That's exactly who we'd like to be -- our personality," Illinois coach Lovie Smith said of the running game. "This is who we want to be. Offensively when you rush for over 300 yards, you have to be really excited about that."

The three wins in a season ties the most for Smith in his two-plus seasons. The Illini were 2-10 last season and winless in the league.

"It's huge for the program," senior guard Nick Allegretti said. "Really excited for everyone in that locker room to experience that first one and it won't be the last."

Jonathan Hilliman scored on a 32-yard run and freshman Art Sitkowski added a 7-yard touchdown pass to tight end Travis Vokolek to get Rutgers (1-5, 0-3) within 24-14 at the half. Gavin Haggerty added a 20-yard field goal with less than six minutes to play, but Epstein scored on the first play after Illinois recovered an on-side kick.

Illinois, which had seven interceptions coming into the game, picked three more, including one on the first pass of the game by Sitkowski (29 of 49 for 267). It set up a 39-yard field goal by Chase McLaughlin for a 3-0 lead after less than four minutes.

Hilliiman's TD run gave Rutgers its only lead, but Bush scored twice and Corbin went the distance in opening a 24-7 Illini lead.

"No one likes the feeling of losing," Rutgers defensive end Kevin Wilkins said. "It's hard, but we have to go back to work and correct the mistakes that we've made week in and week out. We have no one to blame but ourselves."

THE TAKEAWAY

Illinois: If Bush (10 of 18 for 89 yards) can stay healthy, the Illini can score and win more games.

Rutgers: Things are looking bleak. The Scarlet Knights may not win another game this season.

ILLINI SUPPURLATIVES

It has scored 30 or more points three times this season, tying its most 30+ point games since 2013 (7). It marked the first time it has had two 100-yard rushers in a game since at Purdue on Nov. 7, 2015, when Ke'Shawn Vaughn had 180 and Josh Ferguson 133.

OFFICIAL HURT

Center judge Mike Conlin left the field in the third quarter to be examined on the Rutgers' bench. He returned the next series. He had apparently been hit in the head in the first half when a ball was thrown in from the sideline to be marked. There was an extra official who replaced him briefly on the eight-man crew.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
ILL	10	14	0	14	38
RUTG	7	7	0	3	17

Scoring Summary -----

	ILL	RUTG
FIRST QUARTER		
ILL FG 11:33		
Chase McLaughlin 39 Yd Field Goal		
4 plays, 5 yards, 1:52	3	0
RUTG TD 5:18		
Jonathan Hilliman 32 Yd Run (Gavin Haggerty Kick)		
12 plays, 75 yards, 6:15	3	7
ILL TD 1:44		
AJ Bush Jr. 3 Yd Run (Chase McLaughlin Kick)		
8 plays, 75 yards, 3:28	10	7
SECOND QUARTER		
ILL TD 9:36		
AJ Bush Jr. 41 Yd Run (Chase McLaughlin Kick)		
3 plays, 47 yards, 0:54	17	7
ILL TD 7:17		
Reggie Corbin 73 Yd Run (Chase McLaughlin Kick)		
1 play, 73 yards, 0:11	24	7
RUTG TD 0:57		
Travis Vokolek 7 Yd pass from Artur Sitkowski (Gavin Haggerty Kick)		
11 plays, 80 yards, 3:24	24	14
FOURTH QUARTER		
ILL TD 14:10		
Ricky Smalling 11 Yd pass from AJ Bush Jr. (Chase McLaughlin Kick)		
12 plays, 74 yards, 5:42	31	14
RUTG FG 5:15		
Justin Davidovicz 20 Yd Field Goal		
13 plays, 61 yards, 3:42	31	17
ILL TD 5:07		
Mike Epstein 41 Yd Run (Chase McLaughlin Kick)		
1 play, 41 yards, 0:07	38	17

Team Stats	ILL	RUTG
First Downs	17	25
Total Yards	419	386
Total Plays	62	76
Avg Gain Per Play	6.8	5.1
Net Yards Rushing	330	119
Rushes	43	30
Yards Per Rush	7.7	4.0
Net Yards Passing	89	267
Comp-Att	10-19	29-46
Yards Per Pass	4.7	5.8
Times Sacked	2	0
Yds Lost To Sacks	-12	0
Interceptions	0	3
Punts	4	4
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	7	10
Penalty Yards	80	105
Fumbles	2	1
Fumbles Lost	0	0
Possession	29:03	30:57

Individual Stats

RUSHING					
ILL	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Reggie Corbin	11	137	12.5	1	73
AJ Bush Jr.	18	116	6.4	2	41
Mike Epstein	9	63	7.0	1	41
Ra'Von Bonner	4	18	4.5	0	7
Carmoni Green	1	-4	-4.0	0	0
RUTG	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Jonathan Hilliman	10	76	7.6	1	32
Raheem Blackshear	15	34	2.3	0	7
Bo Melton	1	7	7.0	0	7
Isaih Pacheco	1	3	3.0	0	3
Artur Sitkowski	3	-1	-0.3	0	6

PASSING							
ILL	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
AJ Bush Jr.	10	18	89	4.9	1	0	82.8
Trenard Davis	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	2.6
RUTG	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Artur Sitkowski	29	46	267	5.8	1	3	29.6

RECEIVING					
ILL	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Trenard Davis	5	59	11.8	0	21
Ricky Smalling	2	17	8.5	1	11
Sam Mays	2	11	5.5	0	7
Carmoni Green	1	2	2.0	0	2
RUTG	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Bo Melton	6	70	11.7	0	28
Travis Vokolek	5	47	9.4	1	22
Raheem Blackshear	6	44	7.3	0	16
Shameen Jones	3	37	12.3	0	15
Eddie Lewis	4	28	7.0	0	10
Jonathan Hilliman	3	20	6.7	0	7
Daevon Robinson	1	12	12.0	0	12
Everett Wormley	1	9	9.0	0	9