

WEEK TEN
ILLINOIS at MICHIGAN ST

Illinois storms back to beat Michigan State 37-34

EAST LANSING, Mich. -- Lovie Smith and Illinois are now eligible for a bowl after the biggest comeback in school history.

The Illini did it by forcing turnovers -- no surprise there -- and when that wasn't enough, Brandon Peters and Josh Imatorbhebhe were there to keep the rally going.

Peters threw a 5-yard touchdown pass to Daniel Barker with 5 seconds left, giving the Illini a 37-34 victory over Michigan State on Saturday night. Illinois trailed 28-3 in the second quarter and 31-10 entering the fourth. The Illini had never completed a comeback from more than 20 points behind.

"They don't crown champions after one half of ball," said Smith, now in his fourth season as Illinois' coach. "We knew going out that we would have to stop them."

Down 34-30, Illinois (6-4, 4-3 Big Ten) converted fourth-and-17, then drew a pass interference flag in the end zone on another fourth-down pass. It was second-and-goal when Peters patiently rolled out to his right and found Barker open in the back of the end zone.

"They played zone coverage," Peters said. "The play was built that if they played zone to look to the back of the end zone. They covered it up pretty well, but I extended the play and the DB flowed with me and (Barker) did a good job stepping into the hole, and I just found him."

Peters threw for 369 yards and three touchdowns.

The Illini are bowl eligible for the first time since 2014. They've forced 26 turnovers this season, including four Saturday. This was their fourth straight win.

Down 28-3, Illinois began its comeback when Peters threw a 46-yard touchdown pass to Imatorbhebhe on the final play of the first half. It wasn't so much a Hail Mary as it was just a long pass to a single-covered receiver deep down the field -- one of several puzzling mistakes by Michigan State.

"We moved the ball effectively, had 500-plus yards," Michigan State coach Mark Dantonio said. "You can't turn the ball over, and then you can't give up big plays."

Down 31-10, Imatorbhebhe scored on an 83-yard catch-and-run with 14:48 left in the fourth. Then Reggie Corbin scored on a 6-yard run to make it 31-24.

The Spartans (4-5, 2-4) then lost a fumble, giving the Illini the ball at the Michigan State 8-yard line. But Peters' pass to the end zone was intercepted by Shakur Brown.

The reprieve was only temporary for the collapsing Spartans. Brian Lewerke's third interception of the game was returned 76 yards for a touchdown by Sydney Brown. That would have tied the game, but James McCourt missed the extra point.

"There's definitely a shift in momentum, and we tried to get it back on our side," Lewerke said.

Michigan State's Matt Coghlin kicked a 46-yard field goal with 3:17 remaining to make it 34-30. Peters completed a 37-yard pass to Imatorbhebhe on fourth-and-17, and before long, it was first-and-goal from the 1.

The Spartans forced Illinois into a fourth-down situation from the 4, and Peters' pass to Caleb Reams fell incomplete. But Reams and Josh Butler got tangled, and the Michigan State defensive back was called for pass interference. The Illini finally scored with 5 seconds left.

EARLY PROBLEMS

Illinois could actually have been down a lot more by halftime. Linebacker Milo Eifler was ejected in the first quarter for what the official said was a punch he threw.

Michigan State could have added more points in the second quarter, but Lewerke had a pass intercepted in the end zone, and another picked off at the Illinois 19.

NO COMMENT

Dantonio was in no mood to discuss big-picture issues about Michigan State's future. He answered "next question" to a query about what he'd say to fans concerned about the state of the program, and what needs to happen to turn things around.

THE TAKEAWAY

Illinois: What a way for the Illini to qualify for a bowl. Peters, Imatorbhebhe and Barker had big games offensively, and a winning streak that began with a shocking upset of Wisconsin on Oct. 19 is still going.

Michigan State: It was simply an appalling loss for the Spartans, who now have dropped four straight as their season has gone from bad to worse. They turned the ball over and allowed long passes in situations when only a long pass could really hurt them.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
ILL	3	7	0	27	37
MSU	14	14	3	3	34

Scoring Summary -----

	ILL	MSU
FIRST QUARTER		
MSU TD 10:07 Elijah Collins 1 Yd Run (Matt Coghlin Kick)		7
10 plays, 78 yards, 3:31	0	
ILL FG 7:10 James McCourt 40 Yd Field Goal		7
9 plays, 53 yards, 2:57	3	
MSU TD 5:39 Brian Lewerke 42 Yd Run (Matt Coghlin Kick)		14
4 plays, 75 yards, 1:31	3	
SECOND QUARTER		
MSU TD 12:41 Tre Mosley 18 Yd pass from Brian Lewerke (Matt Coghlin Kick)		21
11 plays, 80 yards, 4:19	3	
MSU TD 11:24 Elijah Collins 6 Yd Run (Matt Coghlin Kick)		28
3 plays, 21 yards, 1:10	3	
ILL TD 0:00 Josh Imatorbhebhe 46 Yd pass from Brandon Peters (James McCourt Kick)		28
4 plays, 81 yards, 0:32	10	
THIRD QUARTER		
MSU FG 10:59 Matt Coghlin 23 Yd Field Goal		31
9 plays, 70 yards, 4:01	11	
FOURTH QUARTER		
ILL TD 14:48 Josh Imatorbhebhe 83 Yd pass from Brandon Peters (James McCourt Kick)		31
3 plays, 91 yards, 1:02	17	
ILL TD 11:06 Reggie Corbin 6 Yd Run (James McCourt Kick)		31
5 plays, 53 yards, 1:08	24	
ILL TD 4:53 Sydney Brown 76 Yd Interception Return (James McCourt PAT failed)		31
8 plays, 45 yards, 4:43	30	
MSU FG 3:17 Matt Coghlin 46 Yd Field Goal		34
5 plays, 47 yards, 1:36	30	
ILL TD 0:05 Daniel Barker 5 Yd pass from Brandon Peters (James McCourt Kick)		34
13 plays, 75 yards, 3:12	37	

	ILL	MSU
Team Stats		
First Downs	16	27
Passes for First	13	12
Rushes for First	2	13
Penalties for First	1	2
Third Down Efficiency	4-17	4-15
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-1	2-2
Total Yards	403	526
Total Plays	69	87
Avg Gain Per Play	5.8	6.0
Net Yards Rushing	36	275
Rushes	27	51
Yards Per Rush	1.3	5.4
Net Yards Passing	367	251
Comp-Att	22-42	19-36
Yards Per Pass	8.7	7.0
Times Sacked	0	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	-14
Interceptions	1	3
Punts	9	6
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	9	3
Penalty Yards	94	30
Fumbles	2	2
Fumbles Lost	1	1
Time of Poss	22:16	37:44

Individual Stats

RUSHING							
	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
ILLINOIS							
Reggie Corbin	7	29	4.1	1	11		
Dre Brown	9	19	2.1	0	6		
Ra'Von Bonner	1	1	1.0	0	1		
Brandon Peters	8	-4	-0.5	0	11		
Team	2	-9	-4.5	0	0		
MICHIGAN ST							
Elijah Collins	28	170	6.1	2	40		
Brian Lewerke	11	96	8.7	1	42		
Anthony Williams Jr.	5	19	3.8	0	8		
Julian Barnett	1	9	9.0	0	9		
Brandon Wright	3	5	1.7	0	2		
Cody White	1	-3	-3.0	0	0		
Team	2	-21	-10.5	0	0		
PASSING							
ILLINOIS	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Brandon Peters	22	42	369	8.8	3	1	46.6
MICHIGAN ST	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Brian Lewerke	19	36	251	7.0	1	3	76.0

RECEIVING						
	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG	
ILLINOIS						
Josh Imatorbhebhe	4	178	44.5	2	83	
Donny Navarro	7	49	7.0	0	12	
Justice Williams	2	42	21.0	0	33	
Caleb Reams	2	31	15.5	0	17	
Reggie Corbin	2	28	14.0	0	23	
Daniel Barker	2	21	10.5	1	16	
Dre Brown	2	16	8.0	0	12	
Casey Washington	1	4	4.0	0	4	
MICHIGAN ST	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG	
Cody White	7	128	18.3	0	31	
Tre Mosley	3	32	10.7	1	18	
Matt Seybert	3	27	9.0	0	14	
Laress Nelson	2	20	10.0	0	19	
Julian Barnett	1	19	19.0	0	19	
Matt Dotson	1	18	18.0	0	18	
Elijah Collins	2	7	3.5	0	4	