

WEEK FIFTEEN
OHIO ST vs WISCONSIN

No. 2 Ohio State rallies for 3rd straight Big Ten title

INDIANAPOLIS -- Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields looked frazzled and frustrated in the first half Saturday night. So did the rest of the Buckeyes.

Then the Big Ten's offensive player of the year started trusting himself -- and his teammates. Fields threw three touchdown passes and the Buckeyes defense pitched a second-half shutout and beat No. 10 Wisconsin 34-21 to help No. 2 Ohio State claim an unprecedented third straight outright Big Ten championship and likely their first playoff trip in three years.

The only real question is where the undefeated Buckeyes will be seeded.

"I think we deserve to be No. 1," first-year coach Ryan Day said on the podium, moments after hoisting the championship trophy.

The Buckeyes (13-0) certainly make a compelling case. They were ranked No. 1 by the College Football Playoff selection committee last week and now enter the postseason on a 19-game winning streak. They're the only team in the Football Bowl Sub-division with five wins over five programs ranked in the CFP's top 25 last week, and they've beaten three consecutive top-10 teams -- all by double digits -- and beat the Badgers for the second time this season.

But an unsteady first half, in which the Buckeyes faced their biggest deficit of the season, may have opened the door for two other unbeaten, LSU and defending national champion Clemson, to try and supplant the Buckeyes as the No. 1 seed.

Ohio State believes scoring the final 27 points should be good enough.

"We took their best shot but we still had a half," running back J.K. Dobbins said. "It would be cool to be No. 1. We're a complete team, I think."

The Badgers (10-3, No. 8 CFP) can't quibble with that argument after losing their seventh straight in the series. After winning the first two Big Ten title games, the Badgers have now lost in each of their last four championship appearances, including three times to Buckeyes.

But this one didn't follow the usual script. The Badgers scored the first 14 points, putting Ohio State in its deepest deficit all season, and still led 21-7 at the half. Ohio State changed everything with a quick-hitting flurry in the third quarter.

Jeremy Ruckert started the comeback with a spectacular one-handed catch in the back of the end zone on the fifth play, cutting the deficit to 21-14.

Four plays later, Wisconsin punter Anthony Lotti dropped the ball and was tackled at the Badgers 16. Ohio State converted that miscue into a 27-yard field goal to make it 21-17.

And after Wisconsin missed a 48-yard field goal wide left on its next series, Fields hooked up with K.J. Hill for a 16-yard pass and 24-21 lead with 2:23 left in the third quarter. Fields added a 13-yard TD pass to Hill early in the fourth.

Dobbins finished with 33 carries for 172 yards and one score while Fields was named the game's MVP after going 19 of 31 with 299 yards.

"I think the whole team knew we didn't play to our potential in the first half," Fields said. "We got together and came out with confidence in the second half and just played our game."

Jack Coan ran for two touchdowns in the first half and Jonathan Taylor rushed for 148 yards and one touchdown for the Big Ten West champions.

"We let it slip away," Taylor said. "Just disappointed, like I said, because that (a championship) was my goal coming into the season."

THE TAKEAWAY

Wisconsin: For 30 minutes, the Badgers put themselves back in the playoff debate. But they couldn't finish and now the Big Ten runner-ups must wait to see what their consolation prize will be.

Ohio State: The Buckeyes looked completely out of sorts in the first half. But a halftime speech and some second-half adjustments helped the Buckeyes revert to their more familiar form -- and give themselves a chance to claim the top seed in their quest for another national championship.

STAT SHEET

Wisconsin: Coan was 17 of 33 with 232 yards, no touchdowns and no interceptions but scored two touchdowns on seven carries. ... After rushing for 194 yards in the first half, Wisconsin was held to 6 yards in the second half. ... The Badgers were outscored 31-7 in the third quarter of their two games against Ohio State this season.

Ohio State: Fields has thrown 40, Brees threw 39. He has thrown at least three touchdown passes in 12 of 13 games this season. ... K.J. Hill caught seven passes for 83 yards and two scores, becoming the Buckeyes career leader in receptions. He passed David Boston (191) and now has 195. ... Chris Olave had five catches for 94 yards. ... Punter Drue Chrisman completed his only pass for 21 yards and a first down.

TAYLOR'S TREK

Taylor became the seventh player in FBS history to reach 6,000 yards rushing in his career when he ran for 6 yards early in the second quarter. The junior finished the game with 6,080 career yards.

The last player to join the club was Donnell Pumphrey of San Diego State in 2013.

Wisconsin is the only school to produce two 6,000-yard rushers. The other is Ron Dayne, the career rushing leader, with 7,125 yards.

HE SAID IT

"We got punched in the mouth in the first half," Hill said. "We didn't come this far to come this far."

Final	1	2	3	4	T
OSU	0	7	17	10	34
WIS	7	14	0	0	21

Scoring Summary -----

Quarter	Time	Player	Yards	Result	OSU	WIS
FIRST QUARTER	12:57	Jonathan Taylor	44	Run (Zach Hintze Kick)	7	0
					0	7
SECOND QUARTER	9:41	Jack Coan	14	Run (Zach Hintze Kick)	0	14
					0	14
THIRD QUARTER	13:21	Jeremy Ruckert	16	Pass from Justin Fields (Blake Haubeil Kick)	14	21
					14	21
FOURTH QUARTER	12:09	K.J. Hill	13	Pass from Justin Fields (Blake Haubeil Kick)	24	21
					31	21

Team Stats	OSU	WIS
First Downs	28	23
Passes for First	16	10
Rushes for First	10	10
Penalties for First	2	3
Third Down Efficiency	6-14	7-15
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-3	1-3
Total Yards	492	432
Total Plays	78	71
Avg Gain Per Play	6.3	6.1
Net Yards Rushing	172	200
Rushes	46	37
Yards Per Rush	3.7	5.4
Net Yards Passing	320	232
Comp-Att	20-32	17-34
Yards Per Pass	10.0	6.8
Times Sacked	5	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	-34	-11
Interceptions	0	0
Punts	2	4
Punt Average	43.0	40.3
Penalties	4	4
Penalty Yards	40	41
Fumbles	1	1
Fumbles Lost	1	0
Time of Poss	31:46	28:14

Individual Stats

RUSHING

Player	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
OHIO ST					
J.K. Dobbins	33	172	5.2	1	24
Justin Fields	12	1	0.1	0	11
Team	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
WISCONSIN					
Jonathan Taylor	20	148	7.4	1	45
Jack Coan	8	27	3.4	2	14
Aron Cruickshank	1	17	17.0	0	17
Danny Davis III	1	5	5.0	0	5
Kendric Pryor	2	5	2.5	0	4
Garrett Groshek	4	2	0.5	0	3
Anthony Lotti	1	-4	-4.0	0	0

PASSING

Player	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
OHIO ST							
Justin Fields	19	31	299	9.6	3	0	47.8
Drue Chrisman	1	1	21	21.0	0	0	100.0
WISCONSIN							
Jack Coan	17	33	232	7.0	0	0	74.0
Team	0	1	0	0.0	0	0	--

RECEIVING

Player	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG
OHIO ST					
Chris Olave	5	94	18.8	0	50
K.J. Hill	7	83	11.9	2	27
Binjimen Victor	3	55	18.3	0	28
Austin Mack	1	34	34.0	0	34
Luke Farrell	1	21	21.0	0	21
Garrett Wilson	2	17	8.5	0	11
Jeremy Ruckert	1	16	16.0	1	16
WISCONSIN					
Quintez Cephus	7	122	17.4	0	27
Danny Davis III	3	38	12.7	0	18
Jake Ferguson	2	33	16.5	0	24
Kendric Pryor	2	22	11.0	0	19
Garrett Groshek	1	9	9.0	0	9
Jonathan Taylor	2	8	4.0	0	6