

Despite errors, PSU slides by UCF for the win

By Dan Lewerenz
The Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) A win is a win, but this didn't look good.

Tony Hunt rushed for three touchdowns, leading a mistake-prone Penn State to a 37-13 victory over Central Florida.

The Nittany Lions (2-1) overcame a dismal offensive performance that included six turnovers by Zack Mills, four fumbles and two interceptions - the most in a game by Penn State since a 42-21 loss at Alabama in 1982. Only Hunt's consistent running and an equally poor showing by UCF (0-3) spared Penn State.

"On one side, it's nice to know that even if you don't have your A-game, you can pull out the win," Mills said. "On the other side, it's frustrating to know we could have put a lot more points on the board."

Without Hunt, the Nittany Lions might have been lost. Hunt's first touchdown, a 4-yard run in the second quarter, gave Penn State the lead. On his second, a 26-yard run, he started left, then cut back to the right, spun around a defender and dived past two more into the end zone, making it 14-3.

"I kind of started making a move on him, and he started kind of going low, almost like he didn't want to stay up," Hunt said. "When he went down, I just spun off."

Jon Bronson, a former defensive end, made his first career catch for a 1-yard touchdown

and a 21-3 lead late in the second quarter.

But when Mills' pass bounced off Terrance Phillips' chest, Mike Walker returned his second interception of the game 59 yards to set up Matt Prater's last-second, 22-yard field goal. That

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made it 21-6 at halftime.

Tavaris Capers fumbled a punt return on UCF's 2-yard line, and Calvin Lowry recovered for Penn State. But Mills fumbled the snap on Penn State's first play, and Stanford Rhule recovered for the Golden Knights.

It was the second time Mills had lost a fumble on the center exchange, something Penn State coach Joe Paterno called "very disturbing."

"We spend every day - the quarterbacks and centers come

out 10 minutes before everyone else - just to work on the snaps," Paterno said.

But on most of those turnovers, UCF couldn't capitalize.

UCF went three-and-out after Mills' fumble, and punter Aaron Horne let the snap sail through his hands and out the back of the end zone for a safety and a 23-6 Penn State lead.

"I thought the game got very sloppy on both sides of the ball in the second half," UCF coach George O'Leary said. "We took some careless penalties and had some plays we'd like to have back from a defensive standpoint."

Hunt scored his third touchdown on a 33-yard run up the middle late in the third.

"He read the hole pretty good," Rhule said. "He made some good cuts, and hit the hole pretty hard."

Capers made up for his mistake in the fourth quarter, slipping past four would-be tacklers on a 54-yard punt return, bringing UCF within 30-13.

Mike Gasparato scored the final touchdown on a 22-yard run.

Hunt finished with 125 yards rushing, and Mills completed 19 of 29 passes for 229 yards, with one touchdown and two interceptions.

Mistakes put Penn State behind in the first quarter. On their first drive, the Nittany Lions got to the UCF 13 before Mills fumbled. Later, a 6-yard punt by Jeremy Kapinos gave the Golden Knights a short field, setting up a 33-yard field goal by Prater for a 3-0 lead.

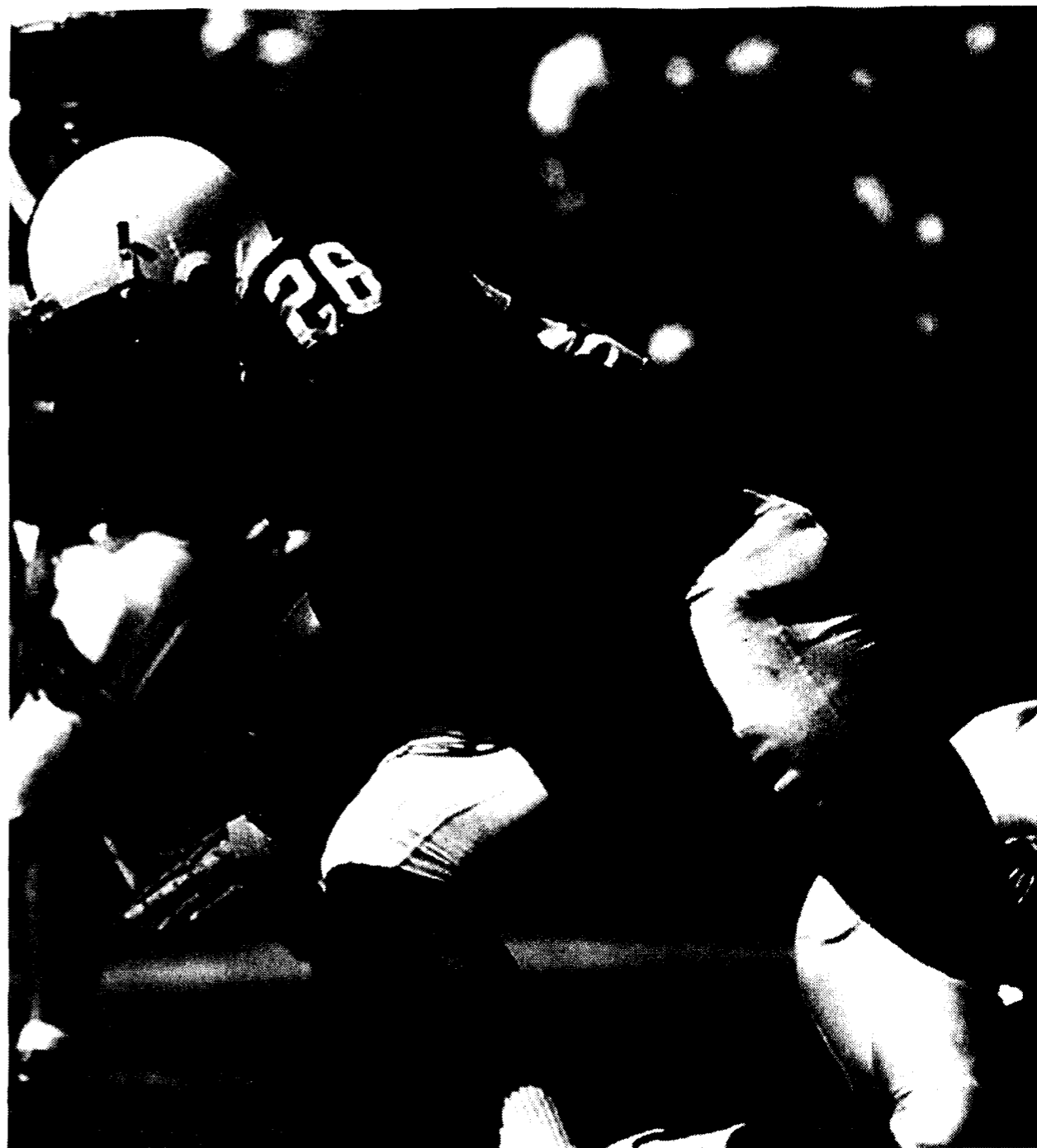


Photo courtesy of the Penn State football Web site

Another big day for Tony Hunt; 16 carries for 125 yards. Hunt is an essential part of the Penn State football team. Tony Hunt rushed for three touchdowns, leading a mistake-prone Penn State to a 37-13 victory over Central Florida.



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