

PENN STATE



FOOTBALL

Michigan game a sweet homecoming for PSU

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The Nittany Lions couldn't have asked for a better weekend for football.

The weather for Homecoming weekend was wonderful. It was bright and sunny but in the 50s and had a chilling wind that let you know winter was coming. Beaver Stadium was the house for nearly 110,000 crazed fans including a student section white out with the classic Black and Pink "S" and thousands of white pom-poms in the crowd. With one of the biggest turnouts in school history you could tell that this game was going to be big.

This game was important for both teams. For the Lions, they are defending their undefeated record and hopes for a BCS Championship Bowl game. For the Wolverines, they were hoping to turn around and chalk up another big upset for their season. Despite Michigan's huge upset of, then No. 9, Wisconsin they are still one of the worst Michigan teams in recent memory. Their 9 game winning streak against PSU was going to be put to the test.

The first half for PSU looked terrible. Now we all know that for the most part the Lions are a second half team. However, they were making Michigan look amazing. The first couple Lions drives were awful. They had numerous "three and outs," a fumble by Clark, and a missed field goal.

On the other hand, Michigan scored on their first three drives. Landing two touchdowns and a field goal. PSU never gave up and a despite some lackluster playing in the first half managed to get 14 points on the board by a 44 yd run by Royster and a 3 yd reception by Norwood.

Going into the half you could tell something was off, perhaps it was because JoePa wasn't on the field for the third week in a

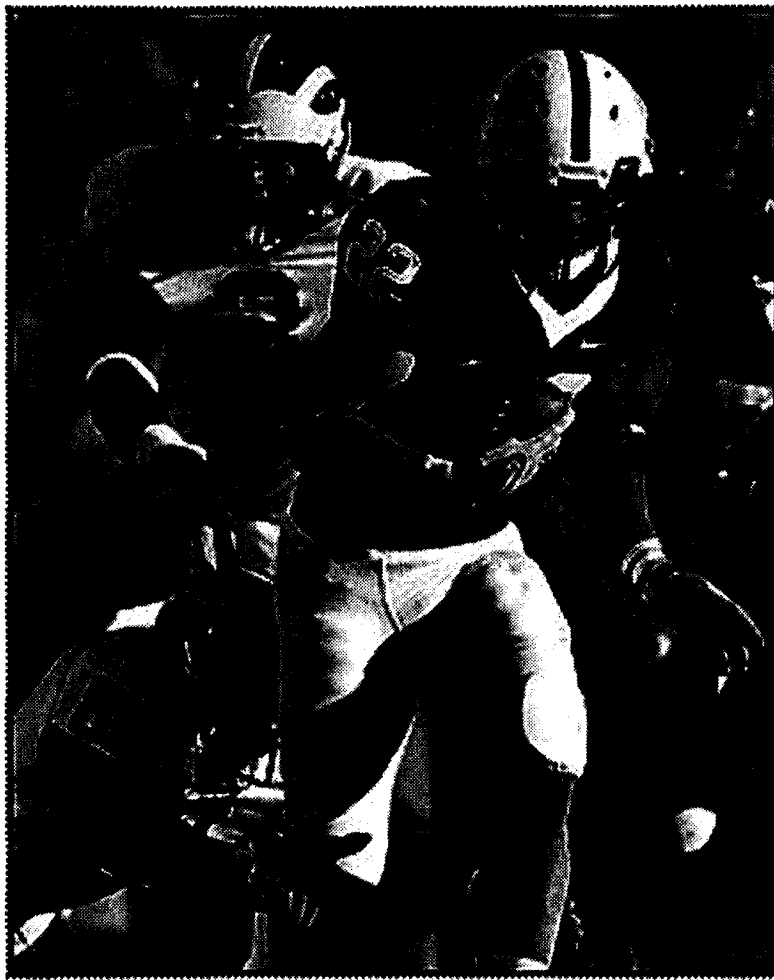


Photo courtesy of washingtonpost.com

PSU runningback, Even Roster scores a 24 yard touchdown against Michigan this past Saturday to help bring the Lions to win.

row. Joe Paterno, PSU's 81 year old coach, still recovering from a sore leg and hip was coaching from the press box on Saturday. However, he got his team ready for the second half and the Lions took Michigan to the woodshed for some beatings. The offense started where they left off late in the first half. They had a great drive into the red-zone, however, after a couple attempts at the end zone they had to settle for a field goal.

Fortunately, the Lions' defense really stepped it up in the second half. After a bobbled kickoff return and a holding penalty on Michigan. PSU's defense pinned them inside the 5 yard line and collected two points on a safety. "two points! Why? Cause you get none!" Penn State's defense was flawless in the second half, and Michigan failed to put any points on the board. They made a statement with the safety,

a blocked punt and a forced fumble on consecutive Michigan possessions.

The offense also made a statement in the second half. They put up 32 unanswered points, on the performances of Royster who had 174 yards rushing on 18 carries including a TD and Clark who was 18 for 31 171 yards passing including 1 passing and 2 rushing TD.

It looks like Penn State survived the early flurry of points from Michigan. They made a statement on both sides of the ball and remain the only top 10 team in the BCS standings with both a top 10 defense and offense.

Unfortunately, the Lions didn't move up and remain No. 3 in the nation behind Texas and Alabama respectively. They bring their undefeated record to Ohio State next to take on the red-hot No. 10 Buckeyes.

Showdown with Ohio St. next as Penn State rolls

By GENARO C. ARMAS
AP SPORTS WRITER

Joe Paterno coaching from the press box may not be such a big deal after all for No. 3 Penn State.

With his team down 17-14 at halftime Saturday to Michigan, the hobbled Hall of Fame coach didn't make it down to the locker room to personally deliver a pep talk, instead relaying messages over a microphone to an assistant coach.

It took a little longer than usual, but Penn State delivered another knockout blow. Thirty-two unanswered points and a dominating second half later, the Nittany Lions (8-0, 4-0 Big Ten) stayed perfect and ended a nine-game losing skid to the Wolverines with a 46-17 win.

"In fact, I think some of the kids are going to take a vote, 'When we're home, can you stay on McKee Street?'" Paterno quipped, referring to his house a short drive from Beaver Stadium.

Penn State was third in the first BCS standings released Sunday. The Nittany Lions will need to win their last four regular-season games, likely by big margins, and hope for losses by either Texas or Alabama — the two undefeated teams ahead of them — in order for Paterno to have a shot at a national title.

Next up for Penn State: a showdown with No. 10 Ohio State at the Horseshoe that may likely decide who wins the Big Ten and locks up the conference's automatic BCS berth.

"Obviously, we'll have a tough one this week," Paterno said.

A sore right leg and hip have bothered Paterno since the first week of the season, when he hurt himself while demonstrating an onside kick in practice. He's been relegated to the press box the past three games.

Yet this squad might have the perfect mix of veteran assistants and strong team leadership to withstand the sideline absence of Paterno. It's quieter down there without Paterno using his shrill voice to bark at officials or encourage his players.

That first half might have been the right time for his unique brand of communication.

Michigan (2-5, 1-2) scored all 17 of its points and gained 204 yards of total offense on its first three drives. The struggling spread offense was off to an encouraging start.

Momentum began to fizzle midway through the second quarter, in part after the insertion of Michael Mauti and Bani Gbadyu at linebacker gave Penn State an energetic defensive jolt.

The Nittany Lions D adjusted, and young quarterbacks Steven Threet, a redshirt freshman, and Nick Sheridan, a sophomore, started struggling again. It's a typical storyline this season for the Wolverines.

Michigan's last 11 drives of the game were a disaster: 87 total yards, seven punts and a momentum-shifting safety by defensive tackle Jared Odrick with 4:39 left in the third quarter that put Penn State up for good, 19-17.

"It's frustrating when you don't execute. It's frustrating when you don't tackle," Michigan coach Rich Rodriguez said. "A lot of guys played their tails off and played hard. We got something there that we can build on."

Penn State has been rolling all season even with Paterno hobbled. He has used a cane the last couple weeks, and he has been monitoring practices from