

# Wolverines have success swinging ball to the 'A'-Train



Michigan running back Anthony Thomas gets past the defense against Rice on Saturday.

By Jim Suhr  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Another 100-yard rushing game behind him, Anthony Thomas is solidifying the argument that as he goes, so goes third-ranked Michigan.

The 6-foot-2, 225-pound senior rolled up another 131 yards on 14 carries — two of them for touchdowns — in the Wolverines' 38-7 victory Saturday over Rice.

Perhaps no big deal to Thomas. He's done it all before for a team now 14-1 when Thomas gains at least 100 yards on the ground. The only blemish: last October's 35-29 upset to Illinois, when Thomas amassed 130 yards on 21 carries, two of them for scores.

Thomas and Michigan (2-0) swiftly quashed any Rice notions of an upset Saturday, scoring a school-record 28 first-quarter points en route to a 35-0 halftime lead. By then, Thomas — the guy known as the "A" Train — already had 78 yards.

He added a 32-yard third-quarter run moments before being pulled for good, leaving Rice defenders — some of them he had juiced, others he had dragged into the end zone — remarking how Thomas made it look so easy and feel so punishing.

"Anthony Thomas is a good back, and we expected that," Owls linebacker Rashard Pittman said. "He was patient, and he did a

good job looking to find the holes. He made a lot of guys miss. Rarely did the first guy get him."

Saturday's matchup was to have been about establishing the run and controlling the clock — certainly by Rice (1-1), which a week earlier rushed 61 times — gaining 198 yards — and threw just 16 in a season-opening victory over crosstown rival Houston.

Rice's option offense was to be the only one Michigan would see this season, and the Wolverines saw the matchup as a test on how well their defense could stop it. They did, though the undermanned Owls of the Western Athletic Conference never found a way to stop Thomas.

"I thought Anthony ran very hard. It's a good sign," said Michigan coach Lloyd Carr, though the object of his kudos wasn't quite as satisfied.

"I'm all right with what we're doing so far, but obviously we can get better," Thomas said.

Thomas quickly proved to be a load for Rice. After Owls quarterback Corey Evans fumbled away the game's first snap, Michigan needed just 10 seconds and two plays — Thomas runs of 8 and 10 yards — to reach the end zone, stretching to 10 his streak of games with a rushing touchdown.

Then, after a Michigan touchdown pass, Thomas rumbled 27 yards for another score that pushed the margin to 21-0. Michigan

later closed out the opening-quarter blitz with a touchdown pass, capping a 65-yard, eight-play drive powered by two Thomas 15-yard runs.

In the end, Michigan rolled up 230 yards on the ground, including 69 on Chris Perry's 12 carries — support Thomas appreciates, even if it means fewer chances he gets with the pigskin.

"Yeah, I think anybody does better with less carries. They stay fresher," Thomas said. "I try to adjust to fewer carries, but we've got young guys who need to play, because I want to watch on TV and see them playing well" in maize and blue after Thomas' college days are gone.

Still, Carr knows a far tougher test is ahead for Thomas and the Wolverines, who on Saturday play at the Rose Bowl against No. 14 UCLA (2-0) and a rushing force of their own in DeShaun Foster.

Foster gained a career-high 187 yards on a school record-tying 42 carries in UCLA's season-opening victory over Alabama, then racked up 140 yards on 29 attempts and two fourth-quarter touchdowns — one covering 49 yards — in Saturday's edging of Fresno State.

"Foster runs with power, leverage, breaks tackles," Carr said. Against Alabama, "he ran through what I thought was one of the best defenses in the country."

Mr. Foster, meet the "A" Train.

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