

Verdell, No. 12 Oregon stun No. 3 Ohio State 35-28

■ Oregon upsets
Buckeyes despite missing
two top defensive players

By MITCH STACY

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — C.J. Verdell watched on TV last week as Minnesota's Mohamed Ibrahim shredded Ohio State's disheveled defense early. The Oregon running back thought he could take advantage in the same fashion.

Verdell, who has struggled with injuries the past two seasons, made it happen. He ran for 161 yards and scored three touchdowns as shorthanded No. 12 Oregon stunned No. 3 Ohio State 35-28 on Saturday, Sept. 11.

"We saw the Minnesota running back was having a good game, and we wanted to do the same thing," the 5-foot-8, 211-pound Verdell said.

Verdell and quarterback Anthony Brown exploited holes in Ohio State's defense and handed the Buckeyes their first regular-season loss in nearly three years and the first of third-year coach Ryan Day's tenure.

The Buckeyes' last loss in the regular season came at Purdue in October 2018 under Urban Meyer.

Ohio State (1-1, 1-0 Big Ten) never led the game it was favored to win by 14 1/2 points despite gaudy numbers from freshman quarterback C.J. Stroud. Its front seven struggled to contain Verdell, control the edge and get after Brown in front.

"They quickly adapted and just played with grit and toughness, knowing this was going to be a slugfest," Oregon coach Mario Cristobal said.

The Ducks (2-0, 0-0 Pac-12) were without star defensive end Kayvon Thibodeaux and linebacker Justin Flowe.

"It's hard to express in words the magnitude of coming out here down a couple of guys due to injury, and just playing really, really gutsy football, executing at a high level," Cristobal said. "A tremendous job of



Kyle Robertson/Columbus Dispatch-TNS

Ohio State Buckeyes wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba (11) gets tackled by Oregon Ducks linebacker Noah Sewell (1) in the second quarter of their NCAA Division I game on Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021, at Ohio Stadium in Columbus, Ohio.

preparation and turning it into a reality by our players and coaching staff."

The Buckeyes had a chance to tie it late after pulling within a touchdown with 7:55 to go. But when they got the ball again, Stroud took his first sack of the day and then was intercepted by Verone McKinley III on a desperation sideline pass on third-and-18 at the Oregon 35 with 2:50 left as a crowd of more than 100,000 sat stunned.

Stroud, trying to show he is a worthy heir to Justin Fields, likely will be fine. It's the Ohio State defense that needs work.

Twice in the first half Verdell scurried around the left end — one of them was a pitch pass on fourth-and-1 — and went untouched into the end zone from 14 yards out. Travis Dye exploited the left side again, running from 5 yards out to give the Ducks a 28-14 third-quarter lead.

Three plays into the second half, Verdell blasted through the middle untouched and outran defensive backs for a 77-yard score. He went left again for a 7-yard gain and a first down in the fourth quarter; one play before Brown connected with Moliki Matavao for a 14-yard touchdown to give the Ducks a 35-21 lead with 12:46 left.

"This is not fatal," Day said. "Certainly, it hurts."

BRIGHT FUTURE

Stroud, in his second start, was 35 of 54 for 484 yards and three touchdowns. That was the second most yards in Ohio State history, just 15 short of Dwayne Haskins Jr.'s 499 against Northwestern in 2018. Stroud's success was partly due to some brilliant catches by receivers Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba. He threw two touchdown passes to Smith-Njigba and one to Wilson.

THE TAKEAWAY

Oregon: The Ducks were better than they showed in their opener when they struggled with Fresno State. Brown made smart decisions; Verdell, who was plagued by injuries the last two seasons, had a stellar day; and the O-line controlled the line of scrimmage.

Ohio State: Stroud is adept at finding his star receivers and making throws but is still getting comfortable with decision-making. He could be the next offensive star for the Buckeyes in a long line. But the defense needs improvement, especially linebackers. This loss is squarely on their shoulders.

"You ask yourself, is it personnel, is it scheme or is it coaching?" Day wondered. He said coaches would watch the tape and get to work on the problems.

HE SAID IT

"When you go through adversity, you find out a lot about your team," Day said.

POLL IMPLICATIONS

Ohio State likely will take a considerable tumble, while the Ducks move into the top 10.

UP NEXT

Oregon: Returns home to face FCS team Stony Brook of the Colonial Athletic Association on Saturday.

Ohio State: Hosts Tulsa, which lost 19-17 to UC-Davis in Week 1 and was beaten by Oklahoma State 28-23 on Saturday.

Homedale handles Bulldogs

By COREY KIRK

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Homedale capitalized on Baker's defensive mistakes early, and the Trojans went on to a 56-6 win over the Bulldogs in a nonleague football game Friday, Sept. 10, at Homedale, Idaho.

"We just struggled defensively, to deal with them up front, and then of course they hit a couple long passes early," Ramos said. "We did a pretty good job stopping the run early, but they hit a couple of deep passes on our young secondary, having some coverage issues."

On the other side of the ball, the Bulldogs were unable to gain any momentum offensively in the first half to cut into the Trojans' lead.

"(Quarterback) Paul (Hobson) hit a nice throw over the middle, first or second drive and it kind of stalled out after that, we just couldn't get anything going," Ramos said.

Trailing 49-0 at halftime, Baker had a stronger second half, allowing one early touchdown via an interception return.

In the fourth quarter Baker drove the field, and senior running back Gauge Bloomer took it in for the Bulldogs' lone touchdown.

Bloomer led Baker with 60 yards on 20 carries.

"We got Gauge going a little bit, he popped a few runs, and then we were able to march the ball to the red zone, and gave the ball to Gauge, and he just kind of took it in for us," Ramos said.

Hobson, who's a sophomore, was 8 of 15 passing for 88 yards.

Freshman Jaron Long had three catches for 61 yards. Sophomore Dash Bloomer had one catch for 16 yards, and sophomore Malaki Myer had one catch for 11 yards.

The Baker coach said he wants to make sure his young team, with multiple sophomores and freshmen on the roster, doesn't get discouraged by an 0-2 start.

"What we've been talking about so far these last couple of weeks, we have to use these moments as a learning experience," Ramos said. "We've got to learn what we could do better, we've got to have a growth mindset, we have to continue to progress and to get better as a team. We haven't arrived and we all have things we can work on, and we have to use it to get better."

Baker returns to Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium Friday, Sept. 17, hosting the 3-0 Weiser Wolverines for a 7 p.m. kickoff.

Baylor, Nolan help Oregon State beat Hawaii 45-27

By GARY HOROWITZ

Associated Press

CORVALLIS — Chance Nolan passed for 302 yards and two touchdowns, and B.J. Baylor ran for a career-high 171 yards and three scores to lead Oregon State to a 45-27 victory over Hawaii on Saturday night, Sept. 11.

Nolan replaced starter Sam Noyer late in the third quarter of the Beavers' season-opening loss at Purdue last week and provided a spark. Coach Jonathan Smith opted to stay with the hot hand against Hawaii (1-2, 0-0 Mountain West).

Good decision. Nolan completed his first 13 passes as the Beavers (1-1) took a 24-7 halftime lead at the break. He finished 21 of 29 and also ran for 38 yards.

"I did think he was sharp," Smith said. "We're going with stuff he's really comfortable with and it showed up. He came out really effective."

Nolan, who started the last three games last season after an injury to Tristan Gebbia, learned Thursday that he would be in the starting lineup.

If Saturday's performance was indicative, he could become a fixture as OSU's starting signal caller.

"In our position you've got to prepare like you're gonna go in no matter what," Nolan

said. "You never know what's gonna happen."

It didn't take long for Oregon State to retain control in the second half.

Linebacker Riley Sharp intercepted Chevan Cordeiro's short pass over the middle on the first play of the third quarter at Hawaii's 30-yard line.

Baylor's 30-yard touchdown run up the middle on the ensuing play gave OSU a 31-7 advantage.

But Hawaii responded with consecutive touchdowns to get back in the game.

Calvin Turner Jr. scored on a 1-yard run. Baylor's fumble at the Beavers' 36-yard line set up a 10-yard touchdown pass to Nick Mardner, and Hawaii trailed 31-20 at 3:46 of the third quarter.

Hawaii linebacker Darius Muasau was called for targeting while tackling Nolan on an 11-yard run, and that penalty helped ignite a drive that culminated with a 13-yard touchdown pass to Anthony Gould on the first play of the fourth quarter, giving the Beavers a 38-20 lead.

Oregon State amassed 558 yards and had excellent balance with 302 yards in the air and 256 on the ground.

"Defensively we were just terrible," Hawaii coach Todd Graham said. "So frustrating defensively. That was the difference in the game."



Sean Meagher/The Oregonian-TNS

Oregon State running back B.J. Baylor scores on a 66-yard touchdown run during the first quarter as the Beavers face the Hawaii Rainbow Warriors on Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021, at Reser Stadium in Corvallis.

Nolan served notice early in the game that he was in command of the Beavers' offense.

He completed all three of his passes on the game's opening drive, which culminated with Jack Colletto's 2-yard touchdown run on a direct snap.

The Beavers went up 14-0 on their next possession following Baylor's 66-yard scamper down the right sidelines, and a 6-yard touchdown pass to Zeriaha Beason increased the lead to 21-0 with 22 seconds left in the opening quarter.

Hawaii found some offensive rhythm early in the second quarter, scoring on a

12-yard pass from Cordeiro to Turner, cutting the lead to 21-7.

THE TAKEAWAY

Hawaii: Hawaii's defensive struggles continued against Oregon State. After giving up 44 points in the opener at UCLA and 35 points to FCS opponent Portland State last week, the Rainbow Warriors were scorched for 558 total yards by Oregon State.

Oregon State: Nolan gives the Beavers a dual-threat at quarterback and he took advantage of his opportunity to supplant Noyer, a senior transfer from Colorado who was a second

team All-Pac-12 selection last season.

Wide receiver Anthony Gould emerged as a major target in a breakout game.

NOTES

Hawaii: Cordeiro didn't complete a pass in the first quarter, misfiring on three attempts.

Linebacker Darius Muasau, Hawaii's leading tackler in the first two games, was called for a targeting penalty late in the third quarter and was ejected. He'll miss the first half of next Saturday's game against San Jose State.

The Rainbow Warriors were looking for their first win in Corvallis after losses in 2008 and 2013.

Oregon State: Gould came into the game with one career reception. He had six catches for 106 yards in the first half and finished

with seven for 119 yards and his first career touchdown.

Sharp had a sack in the second quarter and an interception in the third quarter.

The Beavers' 330 first-half yards was the most in the first half since they amassed 385 at Arizona on Nov. 2, 2019.

OLYMPIAN IN THE HOUSE

Olympic gold medalist Jade Carey, the newest member of the Oregon State gymnastics team, received an enthusiastic reception from fans at Reser Stadium when she was introduced on the field after the first quarter. The Oregon State freshman won floor exercise at the Tokyo Olympics.

UP NEXT

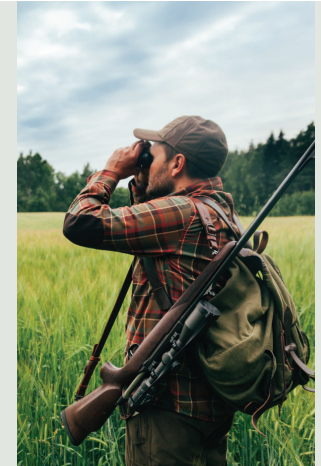
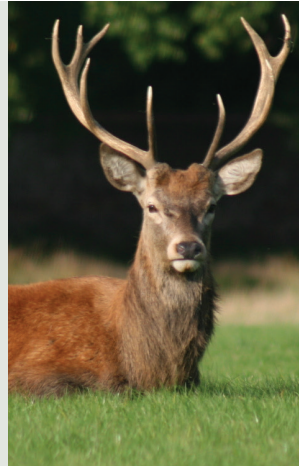
Hawaii: Home vs. San Jose State next Saturday.

Oregon State: Home vs. Idaho next Saturday.

With summer here, there is lots of traveling. Be safe & have fun!



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