THE WOLVERINE NOW
COVERING UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SPORTS
DEC. 1, 2019

56	*11/30/2019 • ATTENDANCE 112,071*					
27	*MICHIGAN STADIUM ANN ARBOR, MI*					
QT	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Tot
Ohio State	14	14	14	14	56
Michigan	13	3	3	8	27

Michigan Wolverines Football: Stunning Sequel Leaves Michigan Vanquished

John Borton • TheWolverine

If the film "Groundhog Day" happened to have been put in the hands of Wes Craven or another horror film director, it might have looked like this.

One year after Michigan (9-3, 6-3 Big Ten) suffered a beatdown in Ohio Stadium, allowing 62 points, they were primed for revenge. Senior quarterback, offensive talent, statistically strong defense, momentum in the back half of the season, and…

And the Buckeyes (12-0, 9-0) did it again. Ryan Day's crew made it a nightmare once again, this time 56-27 in front of 112,071 fans, way too many of them clad in scarlet.

The Wolverines hung within a dozen at halftime, 28-16, despite some significant errors. In the second half, the hordes of hades turned up the heat, and Michigan melted.

"It was a good football fight," Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh offered. "It got away from us today. Give them credit for playing well."

In this instance, "well" translates to dominating. The Buckeyes rolled up 577 total yards to Michigan's 396, outrushing U-M, 264-91.

OSU back J.K. Dobbins did most of that damage, bolting away for 211 yards and four touchdowns, both personal highs. The Wolverines countered with 305 yards and a touchdown through the air from senior QB Shea Patterson (18-of-43 passing), but he went 4 for 24 in the second half, amid a torrent of dropped passes.

"The first half, we came out firing and had things rolling a little bit, offensively," Patterson said. "It's very frustrating not to be able to get this win."

For the second straight year, they didn't come close.

Michigan came out firing, covering 75 yards in seven plays for a game-opening touchdown. Patterson's seven-yard toss to sophomore wideout Ronnie Bell (six catches, 78 yards), combined with a late hit out of bounds by OSU cornerback Jeff Okudah, set the Wolverines up at the Buckeyes' 30.

Two plays later, freshman wideout Giles Jackson jetted into the south end zone on a 22-yard end-around. Redshirt junior placekicker Quinn Nordin missed the extra point, but the Wolverine still served notice, going up 6-0 in the opening 3:17.

The Buckeyes answered right back, taking nine plays to go 75 yards for a touchdown. U-M's defense had the visitors at third-and-14 from the Michigan 33, but quarterback Justin Fields (14-of-25 passing, 302 yards, four TDs) flipped a short pass over the middle to Dobbins, who got twice the yardage he needed to move the chains.

On the very next play, Dobbins rushed in from five yards out, OSU ripping away the lead and grabbing a 7-6 edge at 8:50 of the first quarter.

Fields then unloaded a 57-yard bomb to Chris Olave, streaking down the eastern sideline behind the Michigan defense. The explosive-play touchdown put OSU in control, 14-6, with 1:27 left in the first quarter.

If the Buckeyes were hoping to see cracks in Michigan's armor, the Wolverines instead cracked back. They scored on a three-pass, 75-yard drive, Patterson floating one to uncovered senior tight end Sean McKeon for 41 yards before gunning a 25-yard scoring toss to junior wideout Donovan People-Jones (three catches, 69 yards).

The answer arrived with 19 seconds left on the clock in the opening quarter. If the Buckeyes were going to get this one, the Wolverines indicated they'd have to take it.

Ohio State kept demonstrating the capacity to do just that.

Facing second-and-19 in his own territory, Fields again waited behind strong protection and flipped a toss to an uncovered crossing receiver. Garrett Wilson sprinted away 41 yards down to the Michigan 12, and three plays later, Dobbins swept into the end zone from six yards out.

Down 21-13 with 10:12 left in the half, the Wolverines found themselves in a full-fledged shootout. They then dropped the next bullet.

Patterson drove them from their own 22 to the Ohio State nine, but couldn't hang onto a shotgun snap. The ball tumbled away, Buckeyes defensive tackle Robert Landers corralling it at the OSU 16.

"We knew we were going to have to put up points," Patterson said. "We needed to score a couple of touchdowns in the red area. The turnover on myself was huge. You can't fumble the ball down there."

That one hurt. The next one crushed.

U-M stopped OSU's march on the succeeding possession — apparently. But on fourth-and-four, senior captain and viper Khaleke Hudson jumped early on the punt, giving the Buckeyes a first down. Two plays later, they celebrated in Michigan's end zone.

Fields unleashed a 47-yard bomb to Wilson, followed by Dobbins' five-yard touchdown run. The Buckeyes stood fully in control, 28-13, with 3:15 left in the half.

"The first half was being played pretty tight, and then the difference?" Harbaugh said. "We were down in the red zone and came away with no points. The next drive, we extended their drive on the punt. We gave them that and took some points off the board ourselves. That was a pretty big difference. That was the difference in the first half."

Michigan refused to give in, driving from its own 25 to the OSU 5. But on third down, Peoples-Jones couldn't handle an on-the-money throw from Patterson, forcing U-M to settle for Nordin's 23-yard field goal with 19 seconds left in the half.

What-ifs peppered the Wolverines' 28-16 halftime deficit, but they saw 30 minutes remaining to flip the script.

The Buckeyes had other ideas. They're writing a script that calls for a ghoul in a red hockey mask to come back every Thanksgiving weekend and kill Michigan's last game of the regular season.

It took a half-dozen plays of the second half for OSU to again find the end zone. Dobbins' 41-yard bolt on the first play started the 75-yard drive, and Fields' six-yard TD toss to K.J. Hill Jr. ended it.

"He's a really good back," Harbaugh said of Dobbins. "He's got tremendous ability, and he's really fast. We made some mistakes in the defense. That particular play, we didn't have an edge. We got sucked down inside, had a soft edge and he ran around us."

At 35-16, it looked over for U-M. But with 26:18 remaining, Michigan refused to concede anything.

What the Wolverines thought didn't matter moments later, when Fields unloaded a scrambling, 30-yard touchdown pass to Wilson. At 42-16 with 3:46 left in the third quarter, there wasn't a comeback coming.

Nordin did cash in a 45-yard field goal after Wilson muffed a punt, and junior wideout Jake McCurry covered it at the Ohio State 26.

The Wolverines then drove 60 yards in seven plays for a touchdown, redshirt freshman running back Hassan Haskins (12 carries, 78 yards) scoring from two yards out on a wildcat snap, then doing the same with the two-point conversion. At 42-27 with 14:23 left, Michigan saw a glimmer of hope.

That got torn away like a Michigan jersey in Ohio Stadium when the Wolverines failed to make fourth-and-one from their own 29. Haskins' wildcat attempt got tossed for a one-yard loss.

Three plays later, Fields found wideout Austin Mack for a 16-yard touchdown throw, pushing it back to 49-27 with 10:11 remaining. Moments later, they added a 33-yard Dobbins touchdown run, pushing it to 56-27.

The Wolverines simply couldn't keep up — again.

"We didn't really put them in a position to have the pressure on them," Harbaugh said. "And they played really well. They made those plays, they had those drives, they got those stops. They played good football."

Report Card: Grading Michigan Wolverines Football In A Loss To Ohio State

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Grading all aspects of Michigan football's 56-27 loss to Ohio State:

Michigan Football Rushing Offense: C+

Michigan's Hassan Haskins ran hard and managed 78 yards, though 33 came on one carry. He rushed 11 times for 45 yards on his other carries, still respectable, but the Wolverines just aren't explosive enough in the running game.

Freshman Giles Jackson's 22-yard touchdown on the end-around was a nice wrinkle and got the offense off to a great start, but the attack became one-dimensional while the Buckeyes took control.

Michigan's running backs managed five yards on six first-down carries following the first drive until late in the third quarter, when OSU had taken a 42-19 lead.

Michigan Football Passing Offense: C+

Senior quarterback Shea Patterson notched his third straight 300-yard passing game, and that was with his receivers dropping six or seven passes — an unacceptable showing from a group that was supposed to be the catalyst for the offense. Junior Donovan Peoples-Jones dropped three, including a touchdown, sophomore Ronnie bell dropped two or three, junior Nico Collins missed one … it was an epidemic.

The game plan was outstanding and the pass protection solid for the most part. There were a handful of explosive plays, too, including two over 30 yards, and receivers were running free. Once again, though, drops were critical, and it's happened too often in this game over the last several years.

Michigan Football Rushing Defense: F

Ohio State's big offensive line versus Michigan's smaller defensive line was one of the biggest concerns going into this game, especially with explosive running back J.K. Dobbins in the backfield. It was similar to the Wisconsin game with Jonathan Taylor, and it played out that way — they got beat up front, lost some confidence, lost some focus, fit poorly, blew assignments and got run over.

Dobbins ran for 211 yards and four touchdowns, averaging 6.8 yards per pop, and had two huge runs when the Wolverines lost contain on the edge. One, on the first series of the second half, was a backbreaker for a team that desperately needed a stop to start the half. The defense did a decent job containing quarterback Justin Fields, though he still managed 25 yards on the ground.

Michigan Football Passing Defense: F

The Buckeyes picked on senior safety Josh Metellus, took shots against U-M's corners (and beat them with their speed, including Ambry Thomas, who runs a 4.3) and protected Fields extremely well. He was only sacked once, no matter how much the Wolverines blitzed.

OSU's Garrett Wilson was the latest 100-yard receiver against the Wolverines, going for 118. The final tally — 313 passing yards and four scores — tells the story, along with the 20.9 yards per completion.

The Buckeyes were three for six on third-down conversions passing.

Michigan Football Special Teams: C

A missed extra point, a botched attempt to down the ball at the one and a block in the back penalty on a nice Peoples-Jones punt return were memorable disappointments from this one.

On the bright side, redshirt junior Quinn Nordin made both of his field goals, including one from 45 yards, and sophomore kicker Jake Moody had four touchbacks with booming kickoffs.

Offense Notes: Patterson's 305-Yard Passing Effort Not Enough In Loss

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

Michigan Wolverines football senior quarterback Shea Patterson recorded his third straight 300-yard passing outing with 305 in Saturday's loss to Ohio State, but it wasn't enough to come out with a win in a 56-27 loss.

The senior completed 18 of his 43 attempts with a touchdown and a pick, with his lone scoring toss going to junior wideout Donovan Peoples-Jones on a 25-yard strike in the first quarter.

Patterson carved up the Ohio State secondary in the first half with Buckeye redshirt sophomore cornerback Shaun Wade out with injury, registering 250 of his 305 yards in the first two quarters alone.

The signal caller was also incredibly efficient before the break, completing 14 of his 19 passes (73.6 percent), but was only four of 24 for 55 yards after halftime (16.6 percent).

"We came out firing in the first half and had things rolling a little bit offensively," Patterson said. "It's very frustrating not to be able to get this win."

The QB also connected with seven different targets on Saturday afternoon, with sophomore wideout Ronnie Bell leading the way in both catches and yards (six and 78, respectively).

Patterson became the first U-M signal-caller to log at least 300 passing yards in three straight games, after throwing for 366 at Indiana last week and 384 against Michigan State on Nov. 16.

"I thought we played pretty well in the first half," senior tight end Sean McKeon added afterward. "We made a lot of plays, though some plays didn't go our way.

"We just have to find a way to get on top and play with a lead — that'd make it easier on our offense if we would've had a lead. You can't be forced to throw the ball every play because it closes off half our offense."

Michigan's Rushing Attack Shut Down For The Third Straight Game

U-M's ground game was largely nonexistent on Saturday against the Buckeyes, rushing for just 91 yards and only averaging 3.5 yards per carry.

This weekend's loss marked the third straight outing the Wolverines compiled 97 yards or fewer on the ground, rushing for 55 on Nov. 16 against Michigan State and 97 last week at Indiana.

Redshirt freshman running back Hassan Haskins led the way with 78 yards and a score on 12 carries, but the club's next leading rusher was freshman wideout Giles Jackson with just 26.

Rookie running back Zach Charbonnet, meanwhile, compiled just seven yards on four attempts, while Patterson logged minus-20 (he was sacked twice and gained only five yards on the ground).

An especially discouraging rushing sequence occurred early in the fourth quarter when Michigan went for it from its own 28-yard line on fourth-and-one while trailing 42-27. U-M was stopped short when Haskins wasn't able to convert out of the wildcat formation.

"I just didn't make the play," the redshirt freshman said in the postgame when asked what went wrong on the rush. "We knew coming in they had a good defense and defensive line. I don't know what else I can say."

Miscellaneous Michigan Football Offense Notes

• Michigan racked up 396 total yards and 305 passing yards, both of which were the most Ohio State had allowed all season. The previous highs OSU had yielded were both to Michigan State on Oct. 5 — 285 of the former and 218 of the latter.

• Patterson now owns eight career games with at least 250 passing yards at Michigan, tying him with Tom Brady for the third most in program history. Chad Henne (12) and John Navarre (11) are the only two quarterbacks with more.

• The senior QB's 43 passing attempts were his most in a game at Michigan. His previous high had been 41 in the Oct. 19 loss at Penn State.

• Jackson's 22-yard rushing touchdown in the first quarter was the first of his career on the ground, but his third overall. His other two came through the air in the Sept. 28 blowout of Rutgers and on a 97-yard kick return in the 38-7 win at Maryland on Nov. 2.

Jackson is now only one of two freshmen in Michigan history to score touchdowns through the air, on the ground and on a kick return, joining Gil Chapman in 1972.

• McKeon's 41-yard reception in the first quarter was the longest of his career, breaking his old high of 36 in the 2017 loss to Michigan State. His 66 yards on the day were also the second most he had ever registered in a game, trailing only the 82 he logged in the 2017 win at Purdue.

• Peoples-Jones' 25-yard touchdown reception in the first quarter was his sixth of the season and third in the last three games. It was also the junior's longest TD catch of the campaign.

• Michigan has posted at least 396 yards of offense in six of its last seven outings, after doing so only twice in its first five contests.

• The Maize and Blue committed two turnovers in a clash for the first time since the Oct. 12 win at Illinois (also two). Michigan gave the ball away at least twice in its first three tilts of the season, and four times in its first six.

• Patterson's 1,055 combined passing yards are the most ever by a U-M signal-caller over a three-contest span, with Jake Rudock holding the old record in 1,033 in 2015 (337 against Rutgers on Nov. 7 that year, 440 at Indiana on Nov. 14 and 256 at Penn State on Nov. 21).

• Haskins' TD run in the fourth quarter was his fourth of the season, while his 33-yard scamper in the third quarter was the second-longest run OSU had allowed all year.

• U-M tallied two touchdowns in the first quarter against Ohio State for the first time since 2013. Devin Gardner and Fitzgerald Toussaint each notched a rushing score in the opening frame of that year's contest.

• Patterson moved up to eighth on Michigan's all-time career passing chart with 5,428 yards. He passed Brady's 5,351 and needs just 21 more to reach the seventh spot, which is held by head coach Jim Harbaugh (5,449).

Defense/Special Teams Notes: Michigan's Defense Gashed In Loss To OSU

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

The Michigan Wolverines' football team put on an incredibly poor defensive effort during Saturday's loss to Ohio State, yielding 56 points and 577 yards of offense.

The dismal results came one year after U-M allowed OSU to score 62 points and register 567 yards during a 62-39 loss in Columbus.

The Buckeyes had no problem moving the ball through the air and on the ground on Saturday, tallying 313 yards of the former and 264 of the latter.

Sophomore quarterback Justin Fields and junior running back J.K. Dobbins each had huge afternoons, with the signal-caller throwing for 302 yards and four touchdowns with no picks, while the rusher accumulated 211 yards on the ground and found the end zone four times.

"He's a really good back," head coach Jim Harbaugh noted. "He's got tremendous ability and is very fast. We made some mistakes in the defense.

"On [a 41-yard touchdown run], we didn't have an edge and got sucked down inside, and he just ran around us."

The Buckeyes scored 14 points in all four quarters and were only forced to punt on four of their 15 possessions.

U-M had only allowed one opponent to eclipse 321 yards of offense all year (Wisconsin's 487 on Sept. 21), with OSU setting new season-worsts for the Wolverine defense in yards (577), points (56) and passing yards (313).

The Maize and Blue's front seven was especially ineffective, tallying just one sack and five tackles for loss and allowing Ohio State to average 5.3 yards per carry.

"It's hard to look at," sophomore defensive end Aidan Hutchinson said afterward, referring to the stat sheet. "We're just a better defense than this and a better team than this.

"We're a lot better than the numbers on the sheet."

Ohio State's Special Teams Gaffe One Of Its Few Miscues

Ohio State's lone turnover of the day occurred when freshman wideout Garrett Wilson muffed a punt at 3:30 of the third quarter, allowing U-M redshirt sophomore receiver Jake McCurry to recover at the OSU 26-yard line.

McCurry originally ran the fumble all the way back for a touchdown, but rules don't allow muffed punts to be advanced.

Redshirt junior kicker Quinn Nordin, meanwhile, continued to serve as the Wolverines' primary kicker, handling both of the club's field goals and all three of its extra points. He converted kicks from 23 and 45 yards out, but missed the extra point following Michigan's touchdown on its opening series of the game.

Head coach Jim Harbaugh chose to employ two different punters on Saturday, with redshirt junior Will Hart only handling one attempt and redshirt sophomore Brad Robbins attempting four.

Hart's lone try went for 58 yards, while Robbins averaged 42.8 yards on his four tries, including a long of 48.

Miscellaneous Michigan Football Defense/Special Teams Notes

• Fifth-year senior linebacker Jordan Glasgow and redshirt junior defensive tackle Michael Dwumfour combined for a four-yard sack in the first quarter, it was Dwumfour's first QB takedown of the year and Glasgow's fifth.

• U-M's 577 yards allowed were the most it had given up in a game since 2007, when Oregon posted 624 in a 39-7 Ducks win at The Big House.

• Michigan fell to 58-52-6 in the all-time series with OSU, with the Buckeyes having won eight in a row for the first time in the rivalry's history.

• Robbins' four punts were his first four since the Jan. 1, 2018 Outback Bowl loss to South Carolina. He missed all of last season with an injury.

• Redshirt freshman linebacker Cam McGrone and junior defensive end Kwity Paye

each posted 1.5 tackles for loss to tie for the team lead.

• The most points any opponent had scored on Michigan in 2019 prior to Saturday was 35 by Wisconsin on Sept. 21.

• Saturday's announced attendance of 112,701 marked the 293rd consecutive game at Michigan Stadium with at least 100,000 fans in attendance.

• The 56 points Michigan allowed were the most it had yielded in a home game since the 67-65 triple-overtime victory over Illinois in 2010.

• Nordin's missed extra point was the fifth of his career.

• The loss snapped U-M's 13-game home winning streak, which dated back to the 2017 loss to Ohio State on Nov. 25. Harbaugh's record in Ann Arbor now sits at 30-5.

• Junior safety Brad Hawkins missed his second straight contest with injury, with freshman Daxton Hill once again starting his place. Hill tallied three tackles.

Michigan Wolverines Football: Top Five Players Of The Game

John Borton • TheWolverine

The top five players in this one reflect the final score of the game. In other words, the visiting team dominated.

1. Ohio State running back J.K. Dobbins — Dobbins ran wild, carrying 31 times for 211 yards and four touchdowns. His quickness and speed were simply too much for Michigan to handle.

2. Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields — Fields went 14-of-25 passing for 302 yards through the air, tossing four touchdown passes. The Buckeyes averaged 20.9 yards per completion, a stunning number.

3. Ohio State wide receiver Garrett Wilson — Wilson made just three catches, but they covered 118 yards and produced one of the eight Buckeye touchdowns.

4. Ohio State defensive tackle Davon Hamilton — Everyone talked about OSU defensive end Chase Young, but for the most part, Michigan handled him. It was Hamilton, the OSU defensive tackle, who came up with a sack and two tackles for loss among his five stops.

5. Sophomore defensive end Aidan Hutchinson — Hutchinson gave great effort on a lost afternoon. He led all tacklers with 10 and put a quarterback hurry on Fields. He also garnered more emotional motivation for another day.

Wolverine Watch: Humbled And Hurting (Again)

John Borton • TheWolverine

You never know what you'll hear on the brisk walk to the stadium for The Game.

Sometimes, it's obscene (hello Columbus). Sometimes, it's poignant: "Win this one for Bo."

Sometimes, it makes you think about the dynamic that renders this game at once exhilarating and maddening.

This time, a pointed comment spurred reflection. A random tailgater in Michigan garb looked at a neutrally clad passer-by and said, "You already have your story written?"

Many had, at least in their minds. The Buckeyes were unbeatable, remember? Maybe the best team in the country. Michigan would be lucky to stay within two touchdowns of the nation's No. 1 offense.

The response wasn't cynical, pointed or harsh. Just truthful.

"No, not a word. In this game, they can write their own story."

They did that, sadly for themselves and their fans. The 15th unsatisfying chapter of a 16-chapter (and counting) tome will forever read Ohio State 56, Michigan 27. At this point, there's no happy ending in sight.

In fact, it's turning into a horror novel. The Buckeyes aren't just beating the Wolverines — make it a school-record eight years in a row — they're embarrassing them. That's 118 points in two years, for those keeping the gruesome tally.

Somewhere, Bo Schembechler is shaking his head — minus a headset, thrown to the ground and shattered.

The gap appeared to be closing in 2016 and even 2017, the Wolverines were in those games until the end. Now, Jim Harbaugh's crew looks farther than ever from toppling the evil empire.

Don't put all that on Harbaugh & Co., either. Clearly, they haven't gotten the job done, and that was the case again Saturday. They gave away points on a missed extra point, a fumbled shotgun snap in the red zone and a multitude of dropped passes, including one in the end zone.

They handed the Buckeyes scores, via a foolish drive extension (jumping offsides on a punt), and falling behind enough to have to go for fourth-down conversions in their own territory. It appeared desperate — and it was.

"Too many mistakes and drops," senior tight end Sean McKeon offered. "We didn't get in a rhythm or execute like we have been the past couple games. We just need to be confident catching the ball and make the tough plays."

There's a flip side to all that, assured sophomore defensive end Aidan Hutchinson.

"You aren't going to win ball games when you're letting up 50, 60 points," Hutchin-

son said. “It’s just not going to happen. We have to be better.”

They’ve got to be better, arguably, than most Michigan teams in the long history of the OSU series. That’s because the Buckeyes are on an historic run, a little like Genghis Khan, when he introduced the spread offense early in the 13th century.

Michigan Wolverines football coach Jim Harbaugh

Jim Harbaugh faces the task of taking down Ohio State amid a string of unparalleled success by OSU.

They’ve won at least 10 games in 14 of the last 15 seasons, losing two or fewer games in nine of the last 10. Think about that. The Wolverines have lost at least three in eight straight seasons and 11 of the last 12.

The Buckeyes have come away with eight Big Ten titles since Michigan won its last one, along with a pair of national championships since the Wolverines won it all in 1997.

Some say those strings of data go together. Michigan went away for a time, and the Buckeyes rose up. But it’s at another level right now.

The last time the Buckeyes strung two consecutive wins over the Wolverines by 21 points or more? Try the dark days of the early 1960s, in ’61 (50-20) and ’62 (28-0).

The worst loss a Schembechler squad ever suffered against the Buckeyes? Seventeen points, 23-6 in 1984, the year his quarterback broke his arm.

That quarterback now has to try and break Ohio State’s stranglehold on the series, which seems to feed on itself like a spreading pandemic.

Harbaugh figures he owes precisely nothing to the media, one of whose ranks wanted to know if the present gap involves more players, coaches or recruiting.

“I’ll answer your questions, not your insults,” he retorted.

Fair enough. But Harbaugh, like his coach before him, has to answer one mammoth, looming question — can he take down the giant? Schembechler did it, first against his old mentor and then against Woody Hayes’ successors.

Harbaugh’s job is arguably tougher. He’s also dealing with Penn State, vastly improved programs at Wisconsin and Michigan State (this year notwithstanding), and others popping up at any given time. Beyond all that, he has to punch back against the insult the OSU match-up has become.

Fifty years earlier, Michigan players wrote their own script against a supposedly invincible Ohio State squad. They’re still talking about 1969.

U-M’s next breakthrough against the Buckeyes just might be thought of similarly. Right now, it seems farther away than ever.

What They're Saying: Michigan Wolverines Football 27, Ohio State 56

Ryan Tice • TheWolverine

A look around the internet at what they're saying about the Michigan Wolverines after a 56-27 loss to Ohio State:

Chris Balas, The Wolverine.com: Notes, Quotes & Observations

Instead of a 21-20 (or closer) barnburner at the half, the Buckeyes had all the momentum, were set to get the ball after the half and — the way they were moving it — it seemed like there was little doubt they'd score again to take full control.

They did … and they did.

"The first half was being played pretty tight … then the difference was we were down in the red zone and came away with no points," head coach Jim Harbaugh said. "The next drive we extended their drive on the punt.

"We gave them that, took some points off the boards ourselves. That was a pretty big difference. That was the difference in the first half."

OSU, meanwhile, did just about everything right, as they usually do in the game they live and breathe 365 days a year. They put up 56 points and 577 yards, averaging 20.9 yards per completion and a whopping 7.5 yards per play in emphatically proving what most already knew after an eighth straight win against Michigan …

This really isn't a rivalry anymore, other than the names on the jersey. It doesn't matter who's coaching on either sideline or what's at stake. The Buckeyes have had more talent, operate like a football factory, having joined the Alabamas, Clemsons (and the occasional Johnny-come-lately like Georgia) of the college football world, and everyone is playing for fifth or sixth.

But to be clear, that doesn't mean U-M shouldn't steal a game here and there in this rivalry, or at least keep games competitive.

Bob Wojnowski, The Detroit News: Buckeyes pummel Wolverines again, and Harbaugh grasps for answers

Against most opponents, Michigan is better, and Harbaugh can notch his fourth 10-win season in five years. That's fine, but as he likely hears daily, not good enough. This is the block that must be hurdled to quell the noise.

For the Wolverines, it's more than a mental block, although they made enough mindless gaffes Saturday to support the theory. It's a talent block, a scheme block, a blocking block.

There were mental errors and coaching errors, no doubt. But it begins with the talent gap, as the Buckeyes are loaded again, and their recruiting machine hums along. Michigan has landed its share of top-10 classes but the Buckeyes land top-three classes, and the difference is pronounced.

It's most notable on the defensive fronts, where the Wolverines are undersized and the Buckeyes are uber-talented. Their best player is defensive end Chase Young, a legitimate Heisman candidate. Michigan held him without a single tackle, yet couldn't run the ball. Instead, Patterson threw and threw, and at halftime, Michigan had 285 total yards, the most Ohio State had surrendered in an entire game all season. Think about that. The Wolverines were moving the ball better than anyone had, and basically were getting nowhere.

At times they were skittish and undisciplined — mental block, preparation, coaching? Eventually, the Buckeyes undressed them, although the Wolverines tried to do it first. In the second quarter, defensive tackle Carlo Kemp did what a frustrated player does. After tackling Dobbins, he undid one of the running back's shoes and yanked it off. The unsportsmanlike conduct penalty accelerated Ohio State's drive for another touchdown.

In the second half, Patterson completed only four of 24 passes, as Michigan's receivers suddenly couldn't hang onto the ball. The Wolverines were beating themselves, sure, but the Buckeyes were beating them worse.

Jeff Seidel, Detroit Free Press: Michigan football outcoached, outplayed and out-recruited by Ohio State

The gap between Michigan and Ohio State is like a canyon that just keeps widening, at the same time every year. The Buckeyes are the No.1 team in the country for a reason. They are talented, highly skilled, elite and complete — and the Wolverines are far from it.

After five years, the Harbaugh experiment continues to fail in a most significant way: He can't recruit well enough, or prepare his team well enough, or get it to play perfect enough, to win the biggest game of the year.

That's not an insult. That's the brutal truth. The Buckeyes have now beaten Harbaugh five years in a row, and there is no sign that will change anytime soon.

"We will regroup and come back and play our next game," Harbaugh said. "Regroup and retool."

But here's the root of the problem: the Buckeyes just have more talent than Michigan. And the Wolverines won't be able to beat Ohio State until they start to beat the Buckeyes in recruiting.

All you had to do was look on the field the past two years to see the gap. From Chase Young, the best defensive player in the nation. To Justin Fields, the five-star quarterback transfer from Georgia. And that's just the beginning of it.

"They were better today," Harbaugh said.

No, they've been better for years.

This time, the Buckeyes beat Michigan on the road, with a rookie coach. And that's the really scary part for U-M fans: The future looks ominous, and there is no sign this is changing.

Aaron McMann, MLive.com: Jim Harbaugh still can't solve Ohio State

Five years later and a Jim Harbaugh-coached football team, unlike his predecessor, remains winless against his program's biggest rivals.

Michigan fell to 0-5 against Ohio State under Harbaugh following a 56-27 loss at home,

Subscribe to *The Wolverine!*

The Wolverine covers all sports at U-M with an emphasis on football, basketball and recruiting.

Subscriptions start at $39.99 Makes a terrific gift for your Michigan Fan!

A one-year subscription includes:

- 11 monthly full-color, information-packed issues (double issue in June/July).
- *The Wolverine Football Preview,* 160 full-color, action-packed pages filled with great information about the upcoming season. (Mailed in July.)
- 26 issues of *The Wolverine Now,* our digital newsletter, published every pre-game Thursday and post-game Sunday during football season.
- Digital access to current and archived editions of *The Wolverine* through the FREE apps as well as at www.TheWolverineOnDemand.com.

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

Overtime

Get this new book for only $19.95 with FREE shipping* when you subscribe, renew or give a gift subscription

With unprecedented access to Jim Harbaugh's U-M football team, *Overtime* is a riveting insider's chronicle of Michigan's Jim Harbaugh era, and a deeply reported human portrait of a big-time college football program at the crossroads.

(432 pages, Hardback) Regularly $28.99 plus shipping.

**FREE Economy Shipping (Allow up to 3 weeks for delivery)*
Offer only available in U.S. Limit one book per subscription
Please call 800-421-7751 for faster shipping options.

SAVE OVER $10! ONLY $19.95 WITH SUB ORDER

Book Offer Expires Dec. 31, 2019. Order yours today!

1-800-421-7751 • www.TheWolverineOnDemand.com

the program's eighth straight game against the Buckeyes without a win.

It's a drought that looms large over Harbaugh and the program, which has had its Big Ten title hopes dashed in two of the last five years. While Saturday's game had no effect on the standings, it was the difference between Michigan concluding its regular-season schedule with 9 and 10 wins.

"They played really good," Harbaugh said in his six-minute, sometimes testy, news conference. "They played better today."

Michigan (9-3, 6-3 Big Ten) surrendered 577 yards of total offense, 10 yards more than last season and the most under Harbaugh. The Buckeyes outscored Harbaugh's team 42-14 over the final three quarters, after Michigan trailed by just a point after the first.

But first-half mistakes combined with second-half desperation led to Michigan's second-straight lopsided loss to its chief rival, the No. 1-ranked team in the country.

Andrea Adelson, ESPN: Michigan's Jim Harbaugh testy after his fifth consecutive loss to Ohio State

Harbaugh refused to give much else in response to his team's struggles to beat Ohio State, saying only, "I thought our team was well prepared. I thought they were playing good football. I thought it was a good football fight, and it got away from us today. Give them credit for playing well."

After another question about how much he personally wants to beat Ohio State, Harbaugh offered, "We really want to win the game. Yes."

Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields believes something else might be in play.

"We take it more seriously than they do," Fields said. "Like (strength coach) Mickey Marotti said, 'We're preparing for them next year right now.' It just means more at Ohio State. That's pretty much the big reason.

"I know a few players on (Michigan), and I just know the things we do in terms of workouts and how serious we take it at Ohio State. So, talking to those guys, and getting their perspective on things, I definitely see we take it more serious."

Those on the Michigan sideline would certainly take exception to that notion, but it is hard to argue with the way Ohio State has made a once-competitive rivalry so one-sided. That has led to renewed criticism about Harbaugh and whether he can get Michigan to the same level as Ohio State.

Five years in, this is his team, with his players and his vision, yet the Wolverines have looked lost with so much on the line. His players batted down the idea that there is a mental roadblock when it comes to playing Ohio State despite their recent frustrations.

Tom Fornelli, CBS Sports: Buckeyes win eighth straight in another rout of Wolverines

4. Michigan's biggest problem in this rivalry is its defense: There was so much attention on the Michigan offense coming into the 2019 season. Harbaugh hired Josh Gattis as his offensive coordinator and handed him the keys to the unit. Michigan had to modernize to survive. The offense got off to a slow start, but it had been humming ever since the second half of the Penn State loss.

Against Ohio State, it got off to a hot start as well, though it was not perfect. There were two turnovers, including the red zone fumble. It's hard to beat great teams when you managed only 11 points out of three red-zone possessions. So the offense is somewhat culpable for this loss. But honestly, I'm not sure it would have mattered. Ohio State had 577 yards and 56 points on Saturday. It had 13 possessions in which it wasn't running clock at the end of a half. Only three of those 13 possessions ended with a punt. Eight ended with a touchdown, including five straight from late in the first quarter until halfway through the third.

In the last two seasons, Don Brown's Michigan defense has allowed 118 points and 1,144 yards to Ohio State. It has forced two turnovers and seven punts. Overall, it's been a fantastic unit, but that's not good enough. Until Michigan's defense figures out a way to slow down the Ohio State offense, it's not going to matter what the Wolverines offense is doing.