

Top Ranked Buckeyes Look To Stay Perfect Against Wildcats

Contributed by Benton Vale
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The top-ranked Ohio State Buckeyes survived a trip to Illinois last week by winning over the Illini 17-10 and must return to the State of Illinois the second time in as many weeks as they travel to Evanston to battle the upstart Northwestern Wildcats Saturday, (Nov 11) upset winners over Iowa, also last Saturday.

The Buckeyes have covered well for their supporters in 2006 going 8-2 against the spread (ATS) only failing to cover the spread in games against Bowling Green back on Oct 7 and at Illinois last Saturday where they did not come close to covering a –25-point line. Ohio State finds itself a double-digit road favorite again as odds makers installed the Buckeyes favorites with a –23-point chalk.

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Northwestern began 2006 poorly, both on the field and on the betting board, losing six-of seven games ATS and seven of 10 Straight up (SU). The Wildcats are similar to Illinois because of the youth who make up the team and although losing on the field is also showing improvement especially in recent games. The Wildcats covered a whopping +30-point line ATS at No.2 Michigan Oct 28 only losing SU by 14 (17-3). The Cats took the confidence gained from the Michigan game to Iowa City and spanked the Hawkeyes of Iowa 21-7 SU and easily covering the +20.5 line ATS. Get the latest college football point spreads here

In the victory at Iowa the Wildcats used a balanced rushing attack led by C J Bacher and Tyrell Sutton along with some solid defense to upend the Hawkeyes.

With Saturday's win at Illinois, Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith is now 23-2 as the Buckeyes' starting quarterback, including a 9-1 mark against ranked teams. Smith has completed 158 of his 237 passes this year, good for 2,006 yards and 22 touchdowns. Smith is the leading Heisman Trophy candidate.

Ohio State tailback Antonio Pittman has 952 rushing yards on the year. The 5-foot-11-inch junior, who rushed for 1,331 yards a year ago, is bidding to become the first running back since Eddie George (1994-95) to put together back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons. Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald is in his first season as the head coach at his alma mater, succeeding Randy Walker, who died suddenly on June 29 at the age of 52. A two-time national defensive player of the year for Northwestern and an assistant football coach since 2001, Fitzgerald was named Northwestern's 29th head coach July 7, 2006.