



It's an abbreviated Wrap this week as half of it was written in a van doing 75mph on I80 while the other half comes after a long weekend of revelry and college football that finds me about ready to collapse. But I did watch Ohio State improve to 9-0 in a setting I've really grown to love and I did follow along on GameCast on the iPhone (just like our parents used to) to a 'stirring' Browns win.

They All Count

Put two bad/disappointing teams on the field and have them commanded by Pat Shurmur and Norv Turner, in weather more suited to duck hunting than football, and a 7-6 final score probably shouldn't surprise anyone. The fact the Browns actually came out on top of that 7-6 game might raise a few eyebrows around the league.

I'm quite sure that eyebrows (and voices and anger levels) were raised at Chargers headquarters in San Diego.

If you're a Packers fan or a New England fan you might look down the end of your nose at the sloppy, boring, poorly played punt-fest down at CBS, but as a Browns fan you couldn't really care less about the semantics when you consider this Monday won't suck as badly as most do given it was the Chargers who found a way not to win the ball game.

I followed the game on GameCast and via texts with my 11-year old daughter who kept a van full of people apprised of the game situations before GameCast could and who supplied better commentary than Rich Gannon. At one point, with the Browns punting on the 78th time, I texted

her that this game really sucked. Her response: "At least YOU don't have to watch it."

But at the end of the day, after the Chargers 4th and 10 play from the Browns 45-yd line came up begging and a Browns win was assured, I received the text that appropriately conveyed the thoughts of all Browns regardless of how poorly played the game was: "Woohooooo!!! Browns Win!!!!"

Woohooooo!!! indeed.

The Chargers and Turner can swallow all the angst from Sunday while we woohooooo!!! despite not having witnessed an artistic treasure.

Browns fans can appreciate the 100-yd day of Trent Richardson who scored the game's only TD on a nice 27-yard run and Browns fans can relish in the fact that rookie Brandon Weeden, while not doing a hell of a lot to win the game, did nothing to lose it despite numerous drives starting deep in his own territory and with wind and rain hitting him in the face all afternoon. Weeden finished just 11/27 for 129 yards and while he didn't have a TD pass and did get sacked twice, he DID NOT turn the ball over and a couple throws extended enough drives to shorten the clock and put San Diego into some less than optimal situations.

You also have to give the Browns defense a big tip of the cap too. They got an assist from the weather but they kept Phillip Rivers in check all day and didn't allow Rivers to develop a rhythm nor did they let a likely Hall of Fame TE in Antonio Gates beat them either. The line-backing trio of D'Qwell Jackson, Kaluka Maiva and James Michael Johnson combined for more than 30 tackles and Joe Haden supported on run defense to the tune of eight tackles, five of them solos.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Sunday's game wasn't Kate Upton. But the Chargers are looking at a much uglier lady than the Browns are and you have to wonder if Norv Turner is still the Chargers coach when the team's plane lands in a few hours.

And Pat Shurmur vs. Norv Turner in that weather? Does it get any scarier than that as Halloween approaches?

Alive and Well

Rumors of the death of Penn State football in light of the Jerry Sandusky sex scandal have been greatly exaggerated. I can attest to that personally after spending the weekend in State College, PA for the Ohio State vs. Penn State that the Buckeyes won Saturday night, 35-23.

I can think of approximately 108,000 reasons that Penn State is just as healthy today as it was a year ago. That and the fact that I still find it difficult to hear from the level of noise generated (during the first half anyway) told me all I needed to hear in terms of the effect the events of the last year have had on State College and the program.

Like at most big football schools, the student body drives the energy level and the students at PSU go all-in for every home football Saturday. The huge parking lots and tail gate areas opened by 8am for the 530pm start and they filled up quickly and completely. PSU is situated on thousands of acres of wide open countryside framed alongside Mt. Nittany, and the tailgating and partying is dizzying. E-Z Ups and tents, RVs and folding tables, karaoke machines and huge stereo set-ups litter every lot and the entire region for as far as one can see.

I wondered when we headed out on Friday if the raucous environment would be more subdued. It wasn't in any way. Maybe ignorance is bliss, maybe ignorance is ignorance or maybe football is just that important to this central Pennsylvania community, but whatever the reason and whatever the circumstances, it was business as usual.

For the students that means beer pong, shot-gunning beers at the top of every hour and playing flip-cup with beers in between the beer pong and the shot-gunning beers. But as a guy who wore an Ohio State sweatshirt in the midst of that sea of white and blue, I'm not sure I have met, on the whole, a friendlier group of 'adversaries' than you'll find at PSU. The group set up across from us, in their "Ineligi-Bowl: Penn State vs. Ohio State, 10-27-12" white shirts, included our group in their activities all day long, offered best wishes and discussed both programs knowledgably. The older alum were a bit bitter about the sanctions handed down against PSU

but were more than willing to compartmentalize that element of the meeting and discuss how they thought the Nittany Lions would try and stop OSU Q Braxton Miller (not much of any it worked).

In four annual trips to State College, always wearing the Cleveland or OSU colors, I've never been treated poorly. Not while tailgating and not while walking the iron and concrete corridors of Beaver Stadium. Yes, every large crowd, especially one consisting mostly of young, college –age kids, can have its idiots, but by and large I come away impressed with the students and the alum at PSU every time I'm amongst them. They're passionate, hard-charging and boisterous as hell, but they're respectful. That's a rare combo. I'm a Buckeye fan and clearly disposed to hating all things Pennsylvania, but I love making the trek to State College every year. The place truly is different and magical and just a terrific place to experience a college football game day. Part of it is the rural setting and part of it is the culture there that likely contributed to the issues the school currently faces, but as an experience it always delivers.

The game itself was a tale of two halves. In the first half PSU blocked a Buckeye punt for a TD to take an early 7-0 lead and the place exploded. Beaver Stadium is loud as hell to begin with given a huge student section and numerous ways they interact with the game. But from there on out it was pretty much the Braxton Miller show, at least on the ground. PSU had no answer for the Buckeye's read-option offense and Miller threw the ball just well enough to keep the Nittany Lions off balance. Miller only completed 7/19 passes but one went for a long TD to Jake Stoneburner. PSU QB Matt McGloin also helped the Buckeye cause with a horrible throw to start the first half that Ryan Shazier picked off and returned for a TD. What was a raucous Penn State crowd lost their wind and their will as the second half progressed and the Buckeyes ran their record to 9-0. Very few complained about a couple 50/50 calls that didn't go PSU's way but more told me that Miller and the OSU line was just too much for this PSU team to deal with.

Tip your cap to Miller and OSU. Penn State is still a force on the field and that is as difficult a venue to play in as you'll likely find. Hopefully the school and community have learned some lessons over the past year that will allow the tradition and atmosphere to continue to shine on. But overall, the Penn State fans seem to have come up with the proper balance of remorse for what happened and enthusiasm for the future. Scholarship numbers and bowl eligibility aside, PSU football is still what it's always been which is one of the most prominent and prideful programs in college football.

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