

Twas a busy Labor Day weekend in the world of Cleveland sports. We got to see Michigan's season ended three hours into the opening weekend of the college football season. The 17 of us with The Big Ten Network got to see the Buckeyes open the season with a workmanlike 38-6 win over Youngstown State. The Indians took two of three from Chicago, beat Johan Santana AGAIN ... and the Browns cut down to 53. Brian McPeck hits on all of these events in The Weekend Wrap.



Good Luck in 2008 Fellas- Seldom do you see a prominent major college football team eliminated from BCS contention in week one. But to the glee of Ohio State fans everywhere, Michigan accomplished exactly that on the 1st

of September, before most people in the Eastern Time zone had settled down for dinner.

The Wolverines were soundly beaten for 58 out of 60 minutes on Saturday before a sellout crowd in the Big House. Appalachian State, a FCS (formerly known as Division 1-AA) school from North Carolina, shocked the college football world and beat the Wolverines 34-32 in a game that really should not have been *that* close.

As one of the 12 people in NE Ohio able to get the Big 10 Network via DirectTV, I tuned into the game in the 3rd quarter after hearing that Appalachian State held a 28-14 halftime lead.

In games like that, you're just waiting for the other shoe to drop. The big school typically grinds down the little guys with bigger, stronger, better athletes and recovers in time to win the game, often by big numbers. But you could see that wasn't going to be the case Saturday. Appalachian State moved the ball at will on the Michigan defense and also pressured Michigan QB Chad Henne into numerous mistakes.

Most telling was the fact that Appalachian State never appeared to be in danger of being physically dominated by Michigan. And they certainly were not intimidated. If anything, they were put into a bad situation when their coaching staff decided to try and nurse a lead as opposed to maintaining the aggressiveness that had procured them the lead in the first place. Once Michigan scored late to take the lead, you could almost see a collective sigh of relief from the Appalachian State players who knew they would open up the offense again and rely on sophomore QB Amanti Edwards to move them down the field.

Appalachian State made far more big plays than their opponent from Ann Arbor, including blocking the final UM field goal attempt. Michigan was simply outplayed in every area, offense, defense and special teams, enroute to their most embarrassing loss in school history.

The spin machine will be going full bore in Ann Arbor for a few weeks. You'll hear how they lost early enough to recover and compete for a national title. But make no mistake. Even if the UM field goal had been successful and they'd have beaten Appalachian State, this UM squad is not a title contender. And with Oregon coming to Michigan this weekend and bringing with them an athletic squad complete with actual scholarship players as well as a spread offense similar to what Appalachian State employed, the Wolverines could be reeling again this time next week.

Taking Care of Business- Down in Columbus, there was neither shock nor surprise. The Buckeyes came out against Youngstown State and handily beat them 38-6. This was a typical Jim Tressel opening victory. An extension of summer practice, if you will. The Buckeyes were neither flashy nor prone to big mistakes and eased their way into the fall schedule with a victory that was expected, efficient and less than embarrassing to YSU, Tressel's old coaching grounds.

QB Todd Boeckman looked capable and confident against the Penguins and freshman running back Brandon Saine also excelled. The Buckeyes have what amounts to another preseason game Saturday against Akron in the 'Shoe before heading to the Great Northwest to face off against the Huskies

of Washington.

Hopefully, Chris “Beanie” Wells finds his form before going out to face the Pac-10 foe. Wells rushed 16 times for 46 yards and at the half had carried 9 times for 9 yards. This Ohio State team is going to need a lot more from Wells when the weather and the schedule stiffen.

Creating Some Separation- Monday’s Labor Day win over the Twins gave the Tribe a 6 game lead over the Tigers with each team having 25 games to play. The Indians continued to play outstanding baseball in the past week, winning 8 straight at one point and 9 out of their last 10 with Monday’s win.

That means if the Indians finish the year by going 12-13 the Tigers still have to win 18 of their final 25 games to get even. No small task for the Tigers who are finding creative ways to lose games, including blowing a 7-0 lead against the A’s on Sunday before losing 8-7 in 10 innings.

The Indians seem content to worry about themselves. This is a team that continues to get excellent starting pitching and has seen the bats come around enough to get the job done. They efficiently beat Johan Santana Monday, the fifth time this season they have knocked off the 2-time Cy Young winner. To put that into perspective, in 2004 and 2006, Santana lost a *total* of six games in each of those Cy Young seasons. The Tribe has shown signs exhibited by good, veteran ball clubs in their approach against Santana. They've gotten to him early before he's settled down and they've maximized their opportunities against the Twins lefty. That portends well should the Indian reach the playoffs.

It still wouldn't hurt for Travis Hafner to get hot. Hafner showed some signs of salvaging his season over the past week but he's still yet to take over a series or a calendar month the way he's capable of doing.

Go With What You've Got- The Browns cut down to their 53 man roster over the weekend and there weren't many surprises. The one move that did raise some eyebrows was the cutting of veteran QB Ken Dorsey in favor of keeping QB Derek Anderson. I'm not sure what the Browns hope to accomplish with retaining Anderson. He showed next to nothing last season or in this preseason and, with Brady Quinn's tenure set

to begin here sooner rather than later, it's strange to see the Browns get rid of the QB who acted as more of a mentor to Quinn than either Charlie Frye or Anderson. One could reasonably believe that having Dorsey sit with Quinn on the sidelines while defenses are dissected and tutoring is being done would be more productive than having Quinn talk those things over with Anderson, who has never exhibited that *he* understands it.

This may be a case where the Browns are protecting what they believe to be an asset. Anderson does have the physical gifts required to play QB in the NFL. Dorsey does not. The Browns may believe that they can either harness Anderson's potential (eventually) or they can get something for him when the other QB-hungry teams in the NFL look to fill their voids.

Jerome Harrison did win the 3rd running back job over Chris Barclay and Josh Cribbs saved a roster spot by winning the punt return job over Syndric Steptoe by virtue of his performance in last Thursday's final exhibition game. The Browns did sign both those cut-down day casualties to the practice squad.

While the Browns are deeper in the secondary, at linebacker and on the offensive line, don't think there is not some serious scouring of the waiver lists going on in Berea right now. This team can't be happy with the receiving corps or the defensive line if they're looking to see improvement his season. Braylon Edwards has a lot to prove in his 3rd season, Joe Jurevicius is entering his 10th year and Travis Wilson has shown nothing other than that he has trouble holding onto the football. 10th year receivers like Jurevicius typically don't climb the ladder from 3rd

receiver to 2nd

receiver on the depth chart. As to the defensive line, the Browns are banking on aging veterans like Ted Washington and Orpheus Roye to get or stay healthy and to produce. Neither is a given.

But ready or not, it's a short workweek filled with meaningful September baseball games and leading up to another dress rehearsal for the Buckeyes. And it culminates on Sunday with the Browns opening up the season against the hated Steelers. Any way you slice it, it's a good week to be a sports fan in NE

Ohio.