

It's football season baby. And naturally, that's going to be the focus of the Labor Day edition of the Weekend Wrap. The biggest news this weekend? The Buckeyes too close for comfort 31-27 win over the Naval Academy on Saturday afternoon. And the end of the first Camp Mangini, and the team getting down to 53 players over the weekend. Naturally, Peeker has thoughts on both events, and he gives them to our readers in The Wrap.



Buckeyes Survive Navy's Attack & Friendly Fire

Before any of you doomsday whack-job nut balls declare the Ohio State season done and over due to their less than convincing win over Navy on Saturday, understand you could make the argument that Navy has had a better football team than Michigan and Notre Dame over the past five years. And if the Buckeyes squeaked out an opening game win over either of those two teams you'd be feeling just fine.

Navy has played in six straight bowl games and finished the year ranked in the Top 25 just a few years back. It was just last season when they beat Rutgers and Wake Forest in back to back weeks on their way to an 8-4 season.

So it's not like the Buckeyes were rolling out there against Appalachian State. Navy can play and their Triple Option offense is a bear to defend

if you see it once every 25 years or so. A 31-27 win (that easily could have been a football game that went to overtime) is one you'll take against the U.S. Naval Academy and you'll be thankful for it while you vow not to play another service academy for a couple decades.

That said, and with all due respect to the unbelievable kids that make up the Navy football team (most of whom your kids will work for one day), it's going to take a bit more than that to beat the next opponent in the 'Shoe, the Trojans of USC.

Hey Coach, a 15-point lead with seven minutes left begs for a 32-yard field goal attempt as opposed to yet another unsuccessful dive. Kick the ball. Not only is kicking what you're famous for but it was actually the right play in the situation.

Enough said about Navy. Except that if your power running game isn't all that successful against Navy it doesn't bode well for the OSU linemen blowing the Trojans off the ball. So let's hope the Buckeyes are working out the kinks and getting ready to give more of an inspired effort Saturday night than they did in their opener.

Much like last season, Week 2 will be where BCS Championship aspirations either kick into high gear or where they die. And much like last season, I'm not as confident in the Buckeyes chances after watching their season opener as I would have been if USC was the opener.

Browns Roster Takes Shape

4-12 teams rarely have a great deal of drama when it comes to final cut downs. So it was this weekend when the Browns got down to 53 players by getting rid of David Patten, Charles Ali and a bunch of other guys most fans never heard of and won't miss at all.

Eric Mangini will lead a team of about 23 new guys out of the tunnel at Cleveland Browns Stadium on Sunday and no one outside of Cleveland is expecting a great deal of success. We'll have time to dissect every single play of every single game later on but Sunday is the opener and with that comes license for optimism.

I know it may seem childish regarding the shell game Mangini is playing with the announcement of a starting quarterback, but I have to tell you, I like the way he ran his first training camp in Cleveland and I like the fact that there is clearly one man and one man only that is running the show in Berea.

I love that a hump like Shaun Smith was sent packing to Detroit for being disrespectful to coach Bryan Cox (and I find it amusing that Smith was cut by the Lions on Saturday) and I'm

fine with this quarterback crap.

There's not a soul between here and Minneapolis who doesn't know that Quinn is starting Sunday but Mangini gave each of those two guys nearly equal and identical opportunities to compete in camp. And who cares that the man isn't announcing which QB will be under center to start Sunday? What's more important is the virtual silence on the subject from any of the players. Not a peep out of that locker room. It appears Mangini's focus on discipline may be spreading throughout the clubhouse.

My money is on the fact that the team knows who the QB is by now. And I'm betting they've been instructed that talking about it is against their better interests. Fans don't care about any of that if they see the team win and improve. But if Mangini doesn't win he's going to be just another prick with an ego issue.

Don Quixote is Looking For You

I took my three witches down to the Tribe-Twins game

Friday night. Good seats were free as was the parking. It was almost still too high a price to pay to watch Kelly Shoppach swing the bat. I know Shoppach is a fine defensive catcher who calls a great game (at least if a former AL Cy Young winner now blowing up with Philadelphia can be trusted on such matters) but as a hitter he's William Hung. He's Eddie the Eagle with a bat instead of skis.

He's a windmill is what he is.

Shoppach struck out swinging in three straight at bats Friday night and then drew a rousing ovation in his fourth at bat when he made contact with one stitch on the baseball and topped it in front of the mound. And by 'ovation' of course I mean a derisive cheer meant to mock the guy, which he completely deserves at this point of the year.

In 287 plate appearances this season Shoppach has struck out 90 times. That's nearly 1/3 of all his plate appearances that have ended without a baseball being

put in play. That's frightening. I know you hit 21 homers last year Kelly but damn brotha, change something up and actually put something in play occasionally.

Etcetera

- Cool moment to end the night Friday night in the Indian's 5-2 win over the Twins. Kerry Wood gets the final out and you look to short centerfield behind second base and Trevor Crowe, Michael Brantley and Matt LaPorta are converging for a running chest bump and congratulatory handshakes. All those guys began the year in the minor leagues and found themselves making up the Indians outfield in the 9th inning of an early September major league ballgame.

- Brantley is a pretty cool character. You can watch the kid go about his business before a game and during a game and tell that he's been around major league parks all his life and that there's no intimidation about playing at this level.

Brantley's old man, Mickey Brantley, played four seasons with Seattle in the late 80's, kicked

around the minor leagues and Japan for a spell and then began a major league coaching career so the kid has been around the life and understands it pretty well.