



If I told you that that here in Cleveland we have what appears to be about half a football team I doubt too many of you would object too strenuously. The defense has been above average all season and the offense has sputtered. Half the time Colt McCoy looks like a guy who can lead a playoff team and half the time he looks like a candidate to be replaced by a 2012 draft pick.

It's a young team with holes but a team that's also been somewhat Jekyll & Hyde in its performances this season.

But on Sunday against the Bengals they took it to a whole different level.

They were two different teams against Cincinnati, taking a lead against the Bengals in the first half and looking like they were playing really solid football on both sides of the ball.

But after the half (there's that word again) they looked like the 1999 Browns in nearly every facet of the game and ultimately lost a game they should have won, 23-20. It was more than just the two halves that showed the Browns two sides though.

I'd be kind in saying Greg Little caught half the balls thrown to him, including his first NFL TD reception, and dropped the other half. I'd be generous in saying that half the time he dropped Colt McCoy had time to throw, that half the time he dropped back he didn't get hit and that half the time he threw the football he seemed to know where it was going.

Even more problematic with this coin flip team is that only about half of long snapper Ryan

Pontbriand's snaps seem to be reaching their intended destination without bouncing, rolling or hitting a teammate in the leg.

Pontbriand's bad snap on a potential game-winning Phil Dawson field goal skidded, bounced and rolled to holder Brad Maynard and Dawson's ensuing stab at the ball from 56-yards was not even close. It's bad enough that Dawson never truly had a chance to attempt a clean kick, but what was worse was the Bengals got the ball at the spot of the failed attempt and drove down the shortened field for a game winner of their own.

McCoy was beaten senseless during the entire afternoon. When given time he threw a couple of nice balls to Little and Jordan Norwood for scores in the first half. But the Bengals unleashed the hounds in the second half and McCoy was erratic. His biggest blunder was an interception he threw in the second half that had no business being thrown.

But aside from the offensive line doing McCoy no favors his receivers and backs also took turns killing drives. Little was targeted 13 times Sunday afternoon. A couple of balls thrown his way were off target to some degree or other but the rookie from North Carolina legitimately dropped at least five balls all on his own. I wouldn't be surprised if he dropped the ball he claimed as a trophy after his first half TD catch on the way out of the locker room.

Josh Cribbs also dropped a ball or two as did Chris Ogbonnaya and Norwood. In this offense, as limited as it is by scheme and lack of playmakers, you can't afford to drop the football and set McCoy and this sieve-like offensive line up for longer downs and distances. Instead of being 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3

rd and short situations after catchable balls are dropped, you're asking guys that have a tough enough time getting open, making plays and protecting QBs to do make tougher plays.

If you want to see a true play making wide receiver look on the sideline at AJ Green. The Georgia rookie was held in check (again) by Joe Haden for most of the afternoon, but when the Bengals needed a big play they basically threw the ball up somewhere in Green's vicinity and the kid did the rest (again). He had four balls thrown his way and made three catches, two of them critically important in getting the Bengals either into the end zone or on the scoreboard.

The Browns don't have that guy on this team. And if Little is to be anything close to an approximation of Green he better get over this case of the dropsies real fast.

~ Jabaal Shear had a big game for the Browns. The 2<sup>nd</sup> round pick had four solo tackles, a sack, a tackle for a loss and he also caused a fumble.

~ McCoy dropped back to pass 34 times on the day and completed 16 throws. At least half a dozen were flat-out dropped, he was sacked twice and he was hit six other times after delivering the ball. We've said it here before, but while you can question whether McCoy will ever be the QB to lead this team to the playoffs, you cannot question his toughness and his competitiveness. His bruises are now bruising and there's no way he can sustain this kind of beating and last the season. McCoy also had a terrific 20-yard run on a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 18 that kept a scoring drive alive.

I'd still really like to see what he's capable of given some decent receivers and without getting his head handed to him every time he drops back to throw.

~ Peyton Hillis got the bulk of the carries Sunday afternoon after returning from his hamstring injury. Hillis rushed 19 times for 65 yards into a stout Bengal defense that compressed the field and was waiting for him. Most of those 65 yards came after contact.

## The Game

*On rare occasions, Venus can actually be seen in both the morning (before sunrise) and evening (after sunset) on the same day. This scenario arises when Venus is at its maximum separation from the [ecliptic](#) and concomitantly at inferior conjunction; then one hemisphere (Northern or Southern) will be able to see it at both times. This opportunity presented itself most recently for Northern Hemisphere observers within a few days on either side of March 29, 2001, and for those in the Southern Hemisphere, on and around August 19, 1999.*

***These respective events repeat themselves every eight years pursuant to the planet's***

***synodic cycle.***

*“Observations and Explorations of Venus”*

Congratulations to the Michigan Wolverines for hitting their venutian synodic cycle. It must feel great to have a respite from what had to seem like a permanent menstrual cycle and to get that win this past Saturday.

As a Buckeye fan I may have to come to grips with the fact that kicking Michigan’s ass seven out of every eight years might be the best I can expect. I’m good with that. It keeps the Wolverines relevant instead of perpetually pitied and it reminds me just how much I despise Michigan football and Michigan football fans.

Every eight years (or so) the UM upper classmen will be just talented enough and just experienced enough to beat a Buckeye team that’s been through hell (self-inflicted or otherwise), has a true freshman quarterback who will miss wide open receivers for TDs literally four or more times in a game and whose head coach was overwhelmed from the day he was named the head coach and who never became any more...umm... ‘whelmed’ during the course of the year.

Every eight years or so the typical Michigan fan will have reason at the end of the game to put down the Wall Street Journal and the chardonnay and actually get a verbal lick in on Buckeye fans.

What’s really cool for them is that for the first time since Facebook and Twitter were created they can actually post about a Wolverine victory on one of those social media sites. That means ‘huge’ Michigan fans who wouldn’t know a slant pattern from a china pattern finally get their glory and get to post a status update that doesn’t involve another embarrassing loss to the Buckeyes.

YOU GET TO POST ON FACEBOOK GUYS!!!!!! FIRST TIME EVER!!! WOOOT!!!

Seriously, to those who follow Michigan football like many of us follow the Buckeyes, congratulations. A win in this series is to be celebrated and it never, ever matters how you get it. You can walk a little taller, food tastes better and all is right for a little while when your team wins that game.

As an Ohio State fan (and not in any attempt to demean the Wolverine win or be condescending), I was literally stunned the game was that close. I truly saw the Wolverines putting up 40+ on the Buckeyes but never saw Ohio State's offense approaching that same number. I predicted a 42-10 type of drubbing. I did so knowing how bad Michigan's defense is but believing Ohio State's offense is worse.

At least it was until parts of yesterday when the Buckeyes actually attacked somewhat creatively and exposed UM's defense as even worse than I thought. I'm telling you, if Braxton Miller hits on just one of the four wide-open deep throws that he missed badly, the Buckeyes win that football game in a year where they have no business playing that close a game with Michigan.

But, alas, Miller, though wildly talented, is but a true and raw freshman who did miss on four throws and who did leave probably 20+ points on the field with those misses. And the Buckeyes defense was worse than the Wolverines and couldn't get off the field most of the day.

That's how you lose and the Buckeyes failure to contain Denard Robinson and to hit on their own wide open opportunities cost them the football game.

Every eight years or so that shit will happen.

Fear not Buckeye fans. Braxton Miller will probably leave Ohio State as the most accomplished player and passer in school history. Yes, I watched Troy Smith and I saw Terrelle Pryor. But Miller is better. He's more physically gifted than Smith and he's a better passer than Pryor even though you'd be hard-pressed to show that this season.

Keep in mind the true freshman part of the equation. And Miller is a true freshman who took the reins during a horrible transition year in which the coaching staff was in chaos and depth charts changed daily every week for most of the season. Miller didn't have the talent surrounding him that a freshman can lean on because Boom Herron and Devier Posey, et al, were sitting out for violating NCAA rules. Miller was at the mercy of Luke Fickell's inexperience and offensive coordinator Jim Bollman's archaic approach to offense.

Braxton Miller, to put it simply, was thrown into the middle of the college football ocean with no paddles and asked to navigate the 2011 Buckeye season the best he could.

But the kid can play. He can throw too. I watched him throw a really good ball last year at this time in the high school state playoffs. He threw then with far better form and mechanics than he did the season when he had the weight of the world dumped on him. Miller will benefit maybe more than anyone else on the roster from the Urban Meyer hire.

He's going to be great. Not good, great.

Mark it down. Also, mark down Saturday, November 24<sup>th</sup> on your 2012 calendar. That's when the next seven year itch starts for Michigan fans. They barely scraped by in a year when they should have run away and hid.

That doesn't bode well for their future.

### **Get Off of Luke Fickell**

Seriously Buckeye fans, leave the man alone and stop with the 'goodbyes' and 'good riddance' shit.

Luke Fickell took a huge bullet in the head for Ohio State this season. He did so willingly and he did so knowing how the situation would likely end up.

Yes, he was in way over his head when he was tabbed as the interim coach to replace Jim Tressel. Yes, he looked like he'd seen Jesus a few times on the sideline and his clock and game management skills in games with Miami and Michigan immediately reminded me of Romeo Crennel's inability to tell time and keep track of timeouts.

So what?

Fickell is Ohio State through and through and he knew he wasn't ready for this prime time gig. The 6-6 record is a clear indication of that.

But Fickell did make sure that Buckeye pride and everything that goes into being Ohio State was maintained in a season where it would have been easy for that football team to lose their identity while losing those games.

Over the long haul that's worth far more than wins over Purdue or Michigan State would have been. It's far more important than gagging away a big lead at Nebraska. Fickell maintained all that is scarlet and gray in the locker room and in the city. The Buckeyes lost games but they never lost that identity. It made me proud as a Buckeye fan to hear Boom Herron and Devier Posey talk in radio interviews after the game Saturday about what kind of man, person and leader Luke Fickell was when they were asked to comment on the Urban Meyer rumors.

It made me proud to hear Posey, when asked about Braxton Miller's big misses on a number of open throws Saturday, talk about going up to Miller and telling him that he had been proud to play with the freshman and telling Miller never to take one, single day as a Buckeye for granted because you never get them back.

On a day when Devier Posey, whose ten games lost to suspensions this season really hurt the Buckeyes and his own numbers, could have been a selfish prick, he reached out and paid it forward in an unselfish way that wasn't forced or cliché but was heartfelt and genuine.

Those are the things that could have easily been lost if there wasn't a capable caretaker in place to make sure they weren't. Fickell knows what it means to be a Buckeye. Fickell loves being a Buckeye and he may love it more deeply than any Buckeye fan truly understands.

I honestly hope the guy is rewarded for that love and that loyalty. I hope he has a prominent spot on the Meyer staff and that he continues to coach and continues to recruit the same, efficient, effective way he did before he was cast into a role he simply wasn't ready for.

I think when the emotion from the season and the UM game settles that any true Buckeye fan who feels deeply about the team and the program will come to appreciate what Fickell did for this team and the institution. At the end of the day he deserves our appreciation and respect far more than he deserves the derision over his clock management lapses and deer in the headlight sideline demeanor.

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