

Who's Got Next?

Written by {ga=pup}

Saturday, November 18 2006 7:00 PM -

Simply amazing. What an atmosphere down in Columbus and inside the Shoe. And what a ball game. Sykes checks in with his thoughts on the game and the possibility of a rematch. And Furls and I, who were seated in section 11A for this epic showdown, will do the same tomorrow.



Glendale, here we come. Are you ready for The Best Damn Team in the Land to bring The Best Damn Band in the Land and The Best Damn Fans in the Land to your stadium on January 8, 2007?

Saturday's game against the Wolverines was billed as the "Game of the Century". The pre-game hype was so over the top, it would be nearly impossible for this game to live up to it. In over 100 previous meetings, never before had they been the top two ranked teams in the country. There has never been a time where the winner, undoubtedly would play for a National Championship, no matter who won. The stakes could not be any higher.

Somehow, these two storied programs found a way to deliver. Maybe it was best that Mr. Bo Schembechler was not around to watch. I just hope he made it to Heaven in time to sit down with Woody Hayes to watch this one, the pair likely wondering what ever happened to "three yards and a cloud of dust". The tragic passing of the Michigan legend and Ohio State alum on Friday managed to add a little something extra to this game, when nobody thought that was possible.

Was it the greatest football game ever played? No, it wasn't. There were plenty of mistakes made and sloppy defense played by both teams. However, it was two great teams playing with every ounce of energy and emotion they could muster for 60 minutes. It was a chess match; just add some bone jarring hits and plenty of trash talking. It was a tough man contest; just add some cerebral gamesmanship. It was about doing to the other guy, what everyone said you couldn't do. All in all, it was a CLASSIC Ohio State - Michigan game.

For all the pre-game hype about Jim Tressel "owning" Lloyd Carr, this game wasn't about that.

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It was about a lot of kids 22 years of age and younger, doing what they do best. It was about Troy Smith and Mike Hart, making plays for their teams. Neither made plays because of their coaches, or their rankings, or future implications. They made plays, because that's what they do.

It was about a freshman running back doing what nobody had done all year. Chris Wells, who has made a bigger name for himself for not being able to hold onto the football than actually running it in recent weeks, made a play and left the vaunted Wolverine defense in shock. And then it was Wells mentor, Antonio Pittman, not to be outdone by his protégé and making a spectacular run of his own.

There was Chad Henne, hearing all week that he was 0-2 against Ohio State and that his job was simply to not screw up. Henne's 21-35, 267 yards with two touchdowns and no interception performance was enough to win most games in this storied rivalry, just not this one. And there was Anthony Gonzalez, who looks nothing like a prototypical receiver, but plays like the position like one. One big drive is all they needed from him on this night, and he delivered, answering a Michigan touchdown with one of his own right before halftime.

This game was about Ohio State seniors, playing their final game in the 'Shoe. It was about Troy Smith running onto the field and into the arms of his Head Coach. And most importantly, it was about those seniors leading the chorus once last time at home during the postgame singing of "Carmen, Ohio";.

The only question left to answer is if there will be a rematch. Before the game, I thought it would have to be a once in a lifetime type of game to set up a rematch. I thought they would have to be a near dead heat in the stats and score to allow the loser the right to get another shot. After the game, I do not think a re-match should happen, even though we came pretty close to that once in a lifetime game. I find it extremely difficult to imagine these two teams being able to provide another classic battle that would not serve as an injustice to the memory of this game. I also don't think the re-match would involve Ohio State turning the ball over twice at their end of the field, allowing Michigan to hang around until the end.