



I'm getting reports out of Columbus that the Buckeyes team Easter Egg hunt resulted in very few baskets being filled for the first couple hours of the event. Those reports indicate that there was a panicked rush toward the end of the hunt for players to find their eggs and complete the mission, but that they never did quite get the job done and gather all the eggs.

I'm also hearing that despite excellent effort and the ability to see eggs everywhere, PG guard Aaron Craft couldn't manage to get his eggs in a container all day and when all was said and done Craft had on filled about two of the twelve spaces in the carton.

It's the Weekend Wrap.

## **Brutal**

There are varying types and degrees of losses. As people who have 'The Drive' and 'The Fumble' and 'The Mesa' constantly shoved down our throats, we understand that. Those losses were tougher than some May of 2009 Tribe loss or some January 2011 loss by the Cavs, to put it mildly.

Saturday's Buckeye loss to Wichita State in the Elite 8 won't go down in the pantheon of worst losses ever. But it wasn't easy to watch and it does fall on the 'brutal' side of the spectrum for no other reason than you can't look back at the game and think the loss wasn't avoidable with so very much on the line.

Sometimes you get beat. Sometimes you beat yourself in a meaningless game because you played down to the level of competition or weren't prepared properly. But it's really difficult to watch a team that had every break in terms of seeding and upsets in the bracket ahead of them just not show up for the first 30 minutes of a 40 minute game against a team that had no right to beat them.

But that's what Ohio State did Saturday evening. And that group of players will have a hard time not chewing through their couch cushions when they watch the Shockers play for a spot in the national championship game next Saturday night, knowing full well that even 15 minutes of intensity and urgency as opposed to the ten minutes they gave Saturday against WSU probably would have been enough to get the Buckeyes through.

The Buckeyes missed nearly 70% of the shots they took in the game and that was with a relatively 'hot' second half. Aaron Craft and LaQuinton Ross were a combined 6/24 from the floor. The Buckeyes hit only 5 of the 25 3-point shots they threw up and DeShaun Thomas was 0-6 from deep.

It was a complete offensive breakdown for the Buckeyes that led to a 13-point halftime deficit and a 20-point Shockers lead with just over 14 minutes left in the game. And it was well-earned by the Buckeyes. The Shockers weren't too big or better athletically or any more blessed with officials' calls than OSU. They simply played harder longer and made more shots.

The Buckeyes did mount a furious rally with about ten minutes left that actually allowed them to cut the deficit to just three points with about three minutes left. OSU got back in the game because they started taking the ball to the rim instead of settling for perimeter jumpers. Wichita State was teetering precariously until Tekele Cotton hit the biggest shot of the game, a left wing three ball, to stop a 23-6 Buckeye run and restore the Shockers six point lead. If Cotton misses that shot at that moment I believe the Buckeyes win that game and probably by four to six points. But the Cotton jumper snapped Wichita State out of their funk and Cotton then made the next biggest play of the game, grabbing a missed shot with 1:20 left and the Shockers clinging to a four point lead. Again, the Buckeyes get that rebound they may win the basketball game.

But they didn't and they didn't.

Why in the world the Buckeyes couldn't play with the same urgency and with the same intensity, and why they couldn't (or wouldn't) force the play inside against Wichita State is a question I simply can't answer.

But it's one that will probably be asked right up until the Buckeyes tip off the 2013-2014 season seven long months from now.

### **Brutal II**

I knew CBS and their tournament coverage was going to suffer when Gus Johnson went to call sports for FOX. But good God has the product CBS presented ever slipped in quality.

Start in the studio where Greg Gumbel is fine but Greg Anthony seems to be the most over-exposed analyst on the network. Anthony is okay in small doses and he at least knows the college game, but I don't know who the hell decided he was charismatic enough to put in every damn commercial the network runs. He's not charismatic and he's not funny. But at least he and Gumbel are good at what they're supposed to be doing.

You know who's not good at analyzing and evaluating college basketball? Charles Barkley. He blows. And he blows because he clearly doesn't know the game, the coaches, the schools or the players. Aside from that he's a fountain of knowledge.

Barkley's one move during March Madness is to alienate fan bases or say stupid shit that will at least generate some interest. It's too bad because I think Barkley is genuinely interesting and genuinely funny. But he mails it in in terms of preparing for the annual three week college basketball orgy and it shows.

Another guy I can't listen to is Doug Gottlieb. He's tough to listen to as a studio host and he was worse an analyst. If there was a tournament for condescending assholes that are unlikeable and unlistenable, Doug Gottlieb would be the consensus overall #1 seed.

Again, too bad, because Gottlieb puts in time. I mean, the guy is almost the anti-Barkley in that he can tell you tendencies of New Mexico on in-bound plays against Pac-12 opponents. He works at the game and he knows it better than likely anyone this side of Jay Bilas.

But he's a dick and you can feel the guy talking down to you every time he's on screen. He's the pretentious, prick of a professor you had no use for in college who could talk all day about theory and concepts but who never measured up as a researcher or a writer. Great, you know the game and the theory and the details. Now quit punishing all of us for the fact you couldn't play it for shit.

Which brings to me to the biggest bag of gas and the biggest douche-bag on the college front: Reggie Miller. Miller actually combines the condescending delivery of Gottlieb with the lack of knowledge that Barkley has and, when you team him up with the boring Len Elmore, that gives you a lethal combination of pure suck.

At various times Saturday Miller told millions that one Wichita State player (I think it was Cleanthony Early) had clearly suffered an Achilles injury right before the player walked off the court and returned minutes later, diagnosed Shockers F Carl Hall with a concussion (despite Hall actually being on the court at the time), called Shockers PG Malcolm Armstead "Armstrong" at least half a dozen times and then bitched about Wichita State coach Gregg Marshall putting the ball in freshman PG Fred Van Vleet's hands instead of Armstrong's....errr...Armstead's, when OSU was in the midst of that 23-6 run to get back in the game.

Unfortunately for Miller's rant, Armstead had come off the floor moments ago and wasn't available to handle the ball because he was sitting next to the guy Miller was criticizing.

Just awful. Far worse than even Thursday night when Elmore asked DeShaun Thomas if being a senior made Thursday night's win even more important. Thomas responded with, "Umm..I'm a junior, man".

Good job. Good effort, CBS.

### Silver Lining

I'd much prefer to be looking forward to next Saturday with the Buckeyes battling Louisville for a spot in the title game on Monday, but Indians baseball is back starting Tuesday night and that's not a bad consolation prize at all.

You don't have to live and breathe baseball to understand there's a buzz right now with the Tribe. Maybe that's the entire point: casual fans are optimistic and interested. It's not just us, not just the die-hards and the lifers who are anted-up and ready to see how the cards fall.

That didn't seem possible to me 6 months ago and I wondered aloud why the hell a guy like Terry Francona would be sought after and (even more so) why the hell he'd want to come here. But he clearly had some ideas and he clearly had an indication from management that they had some money to spend and some creative thoughts on how to do that. The combination of money and Francona brought some key pieces here this winter.

Where you see the creativity and the thought process involved is that most of the signings are multi-faceted. The acquisitions of Mark Reynolds, Nick Swisher, Brett Myers, Drew Stubbs and Michael Bourn provide the Indians with more versatility in terms of lineups and defensive alignments but it goes deeper than just that. Swisher and Francona give them a 180 degree different personality on and off the field, a fact that can be verified by looking at some of the promotional material the Indians have put out. Myers is the third starter who's also closed successfully should the need arise. Swisher and Reynolds can play multiple positions which allows Carlos Santana to do the same to get an occasional respite from his normal catching duties. If Stubbs struggles offensively again then Swisher can play RF. On and on it goes in terms of versatility and impact on and off the field.

Casual fans will love the fact the Indians spent money. Sabremetric fans will point to the numbers and tell you improvement can be expected. Others will have an appreciation for how the Indians completely turned around the mood of the fans with a multi-faceted approach that began with the hiring of Francona. All of it's good. All of it's healthy for a franchise that was in desperate need of a shot in the arm.

It all starts Tuesday night in Toronto with high hopes and moderately high expectations. Even the biggest optimist would have a hard time justifying picking the Indians to supplant the Tigers in the AL Central but the Indians are better on paper. As usual, how high the Indians climb will all come down to the starting pitching so you cross your fingers and pray that Justin Masterson and Ubaldo Jimenez regain the form that made them dominant at one point or another in their careers.

But you just get a feeling that if those two guys are going to rebound from disappointing seasons a year ago that Francona and his staff have a puncher's chance to get it out of them.

They say the sun shines on every dog's ass every once and a while. And a look at the extended forecast for the Tribe's home opener on April 8<sup>th</sup> currently shows sunshine and 55\* for that Monday. Maybe that's a sign of good things coming. And even if it isn't, it's just great to have baseball back and part of nearly every day or night for the next six months.