

## Preview: Youngstown State at Ohio State

Written by {ga=furls}

Friday, August 31 2007 7:00 PM -

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It's Buckeye season!!!! The Bucks kick things off today as they welcome the Youngstown State Penguins to The Horseshoe for a payday and punishment. In this morning's game preview, Furls talks about how this matchup came to be, and about NCAA scheduling in general. And as always, breaks down the matchups, tells us what to watch, and makes his predictions ... which were \$\$\$ in the bank last season.



An exercise in the ridiculous, a regular season scrimmage, an in state football welfare payment. Any one of these would be an adequate subtitle to today's game, but I prefer to call it the "Scrap for Second." The problem is that most people are not familiar with the series of events that preceded the scheduling of this year's clash of last year's salutatorians.

After a very disappointing showing in the National Championship Game, Jim Tressel was surprised and angered to hear that Youngstown State Head Coach, Jon Heacock, was talking crap about his team. A source close to Tressel and Heacock, perhaps Heacock's brother (and Jim Tressel's defensive coordinator), Jim, is rumored to have heard the YSU head coach remark that Ohio State played so poorly that he was convinced that his team was really the only true second place team in the nation.

Having heard this, Tressel was bound by the code of men to action. He called

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YSU and set this thing up, and now it is ON. The Mighty Ducks...errrr Water Fowl of YSU are now on a collision course with Jim Tressel's Buckeyes. There could only be one survivor, one true second place finisher as IA meets IAA.

That sure does sound a lot more interesting than what really happened. A lot of folks have accused Ohio State of scheduling an in-state patsy in Youngstown State to bolster their record, and there are many that feel that Youngstown State is lining up their Penguins for slaughter in the Horseshoe just to make a few bucks. It is pretty interesting that they basically have it exactly backwards.

A couple of years ago, the NCAA decreed that teams could schedule a twelfth game every year and ever since, major programs throughout the country have been hustling to line up a team that they could bully into coming to their home for an unreciprocated home game, basically just handing them an appearance fee, while the home team walks away with most of the proceeds. So basically, Ohio State is the side that is walking away with the big payday, sending the Penguins home with a not so modest \$350,000 in cab fare. While it is true that Penguins should not be on the same field as the Buckeyes, it is nice that a lot of their players will fulfill dreams of playing in front of 105,000 fans and \$350,000 goes a long way for a IAA program.

So without further ado here meet the 2007 Youngstown State Penguins...

Youngstown State is one of the most successful 1AA programs in the country. Tressel himself led the Penguins to 4 Division IAA Championships, and Heacock was able to lead them to brink of a championship last year, eventually falling to Appalachian State (coincidentally Michigan's week one fodder) in the finals.

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The Penguins do possess a couple of very good players, players who would probably be able to compete favorably at the division IA level in major programs, specifically, guys like Louis Irizarry. Irizarry actually started his collegiate career at Ohio State before being sidetracked by a felony conviction and subsequent six-month prison sentence for robbing another student on campus.

Mychal Savage (6'2" 300lb) is probably the best player on the team. He plays defensive tackle so his effect on the field is probably not going to be as noticeable, but he is a difference maker, and he actually has the talent to provide some insight into how good Ohio State's interior line is. He showed very well last year in Youngstown State's game against Penn State.

I would be remiss if I did not at least mention YSU's three-year starter at quarterback, Tom Zetts. Zetts holds or is approaching every major passing record at YSU, so he is obviously a capable passer. I am not sure that he will have much time to throw or any open receivers, but he is a good player with a lot of experience.

### **The Matchups:**

Ohio State Defense vs. YSU Offense: YSU is going to have some serious problems upfront. Ohio State's defensive line is ENORMOUS, averaging 6'5" 275lbs across the front. Vernon Gholston is actually the most "petite" of the Buckeye linemen at 6'4" 265. To put the mismatch into perspective, YSU's tackles are actually smaller than Ohio State's defensive tackles. If YSU can move the ball in the first half I will be shocked. If they can move it against the second/third team in the second half, I will just be surprised.

Ohio State Offense vs. YSU Defense: This is actually going to be the most interesting part of the game. It will be fascinating to see if Ohio State uses this game as a chance to practice running against a 9-11 man run defense or if they try to get Todd Boeckman some much needed meaningful throws.

I am not a fan of Ohio State scheduling a team that is this far below their level because the work is not as meaningful. I am sure that this will offend some YSU fans, but Ohio State would get a better workout going against their scout team, or scrimmaging 1's vs. 2's. At least this will give us all a chance to see the 3's and 4's.

### What to watch for:

1. The Depth Chart: I guess if there is one nice thing about this game, it really allows us to see into Ohio State's future. We should be able to see a lot of underclassmen on the field tomorrow, and it will definitely help confirm which players will be redshirted and which ones will play immediately.

2. Speed on the Outside: If YSU's pocket lasts more than 3 seconds I will be shocked, expect big plays from Barrow, Rose, Gholston, and Wilson. Even with YSU's size problems, the athleticism of these guys should be obvious.

3. The Conundrum: How will Tressel deal with his old school? Will he go Louisville on them and run the score into the 70s? I think we all know the answer to that question, but that raises a new question: How far will Tressel go to get his guys a good "gamesworth" of work? I think we will see the starters in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters.

4. The Backfield: Wells & Wells and Boom & Zoom. Brent Mussburger will have a field day with this later in the year. Ohio State's backfield is LOADED. I think we will see Ohio State go over 400 yards on the ground tomorrow. I know it seems excessive, but I have a feeling that even when the Buckeyes are trying to manage the score by running, they are still going to break a couple of long ones.

5. Kick Returning: This may be the biggest hole left by last years

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departing players. Who is going to cover the Kicks. It was supposed to be Ray Small, but he is out indefinitely (again) and right now it is a toss up between Kurt Coleman, Anderson Russell, and Malcolm Jenkins. I am not crazy about using any of them. Ohio State's secondary is already a bit shallow, a special teams injury would be devastating.

If I were a betting man (record vs. the number: 0-0) Bucks win by as much as Jim Tressel wants. I am guessing somewhere in the 40's to 0, so we'll say Ohio State 48-0. Unfortunately, there is no number for this game.