

Jim Tressel and the Buckeyes have landed in Phoenix for final Fiesta Bowl preparations for their Monday night game against Texas. The two football powerhouses have only played each other twice, but those games were recent, and very memorable. In this week's Buckeye Leaves, Buckeye Dan talks Fiesta Bowl, Buckeye hoops, and gives our readers some updates on the 2009 football recruiting class. Dan's Fiesta Bowl preview will post this weekend.



Rubber Match

Jim Tressel and the Buckeyes have landed in Phoenix for final Fiesta Bowl preparations, although a few Buckeye players had [travel snafus](#) temporarily holding them up back in Ohio. Ohio State's meeting with Texas on Monday night will be third time the two football powers have ever played...but also their third game in the last four years. Here's hoping this year's game is as memorable as the other two.

In the 2005 game in Columbus, it was Vince Young who carried the day with a late scoring pass to Limas Sweed for the decisive points in [a 25-22 Texas win](#) . Buckeye fans will forever remember the dropped 8-yard TD pass by Buckeye tight end Ryan Hamby that could have given the Bucks a 10-point lead late in the third quarter. Instead, the Longhorns were able to stay in striking distance, down just 22-16 after the Buckeyes settled for the field goal.

And we'll always wonder how things might have been different that day if Troy Smith had been playing his second game of the season instead of his first. Smith had missed the first game of the year as part of his suspension during the 2004 season, and was seeing his first action of the year against Texas. As it turned out, neither OSU quarterback was very effective, and the Buckeyes' repeated failure to score touchdowns instead of field goals was their undoing in the end.

With the OSU scalp on their belt, Texas went on to win the national title. And we didn't know it at the time, but we were watching that year's Heisman Trophy

runner-up and the eventual 2006 Heisman winner squaring off on national TV. It doesn't get much better than that.

Troy Smith took the Bucks to a 12-0 regular season in 2006, and that run included his revenge over the defending national champion Longhorns, this time in Austin. Smith threw for 269 yards and two TD's in a dominating [24-7 Buckeye win](#), with 239 of those yards coming on receptions by the 7/11 (Always Open) Boys, Anthony Gonzalez (142 yards) and Ted Ginn Jr. (97 yards).

The drama for the second straight prime-time match-up of these teams was off the charts. It was the first of three times in 2006 that No. 1 Ohio State would play the 2nd-ranked team in the nation, and the Buckeyes cemented their top ranking with Smith's Heisman coming out party, and a defensive performance that made life miserable for freshman Longhorn quarterback Colt McCoy. I don't think McCoy has a game that bad ever since, and it is he who will be looking for payback on Monday night...as the Heisman runner-up no less.

Jim Tressel and Texas coach Mack Brown have been blowing kisses at each other for days now, but the mutual admiration between the two coaches and programs really does seem more sincere than the usual bowl game niceties. But enough already....bring on the rubber game.

Check back for a game preview this weekend. In the meantime, some links:

[OSU Game Notes \(pdf\)](#)

[ESPN Game Preview](#)

[Buckeyes Arizona Practice Notes](#)

[Bucknuts Game Data](#)

[Dallas Morning News article - Colt McCoy](#)

Freshman Point Guard Leaving OSU

Anthony Crater is leaving the OSU basketball program, after becoming dissatisfied with his playing time. Junior college transfer student Jeremie Simmons has been Matta's regular starter at the point guard position, a job [Crater says he](#)

[was "promised"](#) during his recruitment.

Crater had assumed his minutes would increase with the injury to junior David Lighty, and when that didn't happen in the OSU loss to West Virginia last weekend, Crater asked for and received a release from his scholarship at Ohio State.

The move thins Matta's roster even further as the Big Ten schedule gets underway, and with the Buckeyes (9-1) still searching for a team identity, with no upperclassmen in the rotation.

The lack of experience showed on Saturday, as the Buckeyes 14-game winning streak ended in a [76-48 blowout loss to West Virginia](#) in Columbus.

Even with a 9-1 record at the moment, 20 wins and/or a spot in the NCAA's look a long way off for the Buckeyes right about now. They'll [open the conference slate](#) on New Year's Eve at home against the Iowa Hawkeyes. ([Iowa Game Notes - pdf](#))

Tony Gerdeman has a nice [wrap-up of the basketball team's week](#) , at The O-Zone.

Buckeye Recruits at A-A Game

Five of Ohio State's 2009 recruits are in San Antonio for the All-American Bowl this Saturday, and Rivals lists OSU commits Dorian Bell, the linebacker from Monroeville (Pa) Gateway, and Youngstown Ursuline defensive tackle Johnny Simon among the [East squad's "Hot 11"](#) players based on early practice sessions.

Cleveland Glenville offensive tackle Marcus Hall is also listed among the standouts. Hall is officially uncommitted, but he is widely thought to be headed to Columbus to play his college ball.

Other OSU commitments playing in the A-A Bowl are Bell's Gateway teammate, wide receiver/cornerback Corey Brown, defensive back Justin Green from

Louisville, KY, and Pickerington safety Jamie Woods. Also looking good according to Rivals is one Ohio kid who got away - Massillon safety Justin Turner, who is headed to that school up north in the Fall.

Loose Leaves

- OSU senior linebacker [Marcus Freeman has been named](#) one of three finalists for the 5th annual Bobby Bowden Award, given by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes to "the player who epitomizes the student-athlete who conducts himself as a faith model in the community, in the classroom, and on the field."

- With a win over Texas, the current group of Ohio State seniors would set a school record for the most wins ever by a single class of players. The current senior class has amassed 43 wins over four seasons, tying them with the 1995-98 teams and the 2002-2005 teams.

Quotable

Jim Tressel, asked about running a scout team with OSU backup Joe Bauserman in the role of Longhorn quarterback Colt McCoy...

"it's hard to simulate 80% completions"