

The state of Ohio and that state up north went to war this weekend. Leg one, the much more important leg, went to the good guys ... when the Buckeyes went into Ann Arbor and ran all over the Wolverines, winning their sixth straight game in the rivalry and keeping Michigan home for the holidays. On Sunday, the Browns also traveled north, losing 38-37 to the Lions on the final play of the game after a pass interference call in the end zone with no time left on the clock. In The Weekend Wrap, Peeks hits on both football games, as well as the Cavs winning ugly without Shaq and Delonte.



## Quit Being Greedy

Let's get two things straight right from Jump Street in regard to Ohio State-Michigan:

1. Ohio State did not play very well
2. It didn't matter because Michigan is a really, really bad football team

All I know is that the Buckeyes, with Saturday's 21-10 over the reeling Wolverines, accomplished the following:

They won their 10<sup>th</sup> game of the season.

They won an outright Big10 title.

They won one of the least emotional OSU-Michigan games I've ever seen. On the road.

They beat Michigan for the sixth straight time.

They added to the upheaval and ill will in Ann Arbor.

They ended Michigan's hopes for a bowl game.

That last one is one of the more important elements in the mix. Yes, it's great to deprive your hated rival of any win or solace whatsoever and a bowl game would have validated Michigan Coach Rich Rodriguez's season. But more importantly it deprived UM of the five weeks of practices leading up to their bowl game.

And with Michigan practices, Rodriguez could have probably squeezed seven weeks of practice time into those five weeks.

Think about it. A truly terrible Michigan team would have had five more weeks to practice. That's five more weeks of incorporating players into the system, five more weeks of working together and developing unity and camaraderie and five more weeks to try and bridge the gap between what Michigan football is today and what Rodriguez and Michigan fans want it to ultimately be.

They don't get that opportunity.

I know it was an ugly effort. I know people longing to see Jim Tressel open up the offense and stick it to the Wolverines were disappointed.

But I wasn't. I think it says more about one team's dominance over the other when OSU could go in to Ann Arbor, abandon all but a few attempts at establishing a passing game and rely solely on a power running attack and an opportune defense to win without worry. When Michigan QB Tate Forcier fumbled away the football and that fumble resulted in a Buckeye touchdown that game was ostensibly over.

Forcier felt the pressure all day and responded by turning the ball over to OSU four additional times. There was no need to do anything other than run the ball down the throat of 84<sup>th</sup> ranked rushing defense in the country.

And that's what the Buckeyes did. They didn't play one of their more inspired games of the season (when you compare Saturday to their efforts in State College, PA) and they didn't execute offensively like they will need to against better opposition.

But that's the point. Against a Michigan team in complete disarray they didn't have to. And that speaks volumes.

It won't always be that way. The rivalry and the dominance are cyclical. Michigan will inevitably rise again. Rodriguez is capable, if not likeable, and he will, if given the time, redevelop the program.

So you kick them while they're down. Even if it's a disinterested kick to their solar

plexus as opposed to a vengeful boot to the head.

Just keep kicking them.

That's what the Buckeyes did Saturday. And now they go off to the Rose Bowl presented by Citi. And the Wolverines are headed to the No Bowl sponsored exclusively by The Second Year in a Row.

Perfect.

## **I've Been to Two World's Fairs...**

And a Pig poking contesting and I haven't ever seen a loss quite like the Browns loss to the Lions on Sunday afternoon.

I mean, when the clock ran out the game was won by Cleveland 37-31. Then fate and Hank Poteat conspired to give the Lions an un-timed play. Still, Matthew Stafford, the Lions QB, had been separated from his health and well being on the play that Poteat committed pass interference and Daunte Culpepper came out to run Detroit's final play.

Only fate and Eric Mangini conspired to call a timeout to set the defense and that allowed Stafford to come out onto the field like John Wayne and sling a game winning TD pass to Brandon Pettigrew.

38-37 Lions. Another chapter in the Book of Browns Losses.

You may have noticed the final score and determined I was experimenting with psychedelic drugs. Nope. It's true. The Browns scored 37 points on the Lions Sunday. 24 of those points came in the first quarter. 21 of those came on Brady Quinn TD passes. Two of those TD passes were of 40 yards or more (40 and 59yards). One of those TD passes was caught by Chansi Stuckey.

I know. I know. But the truth is stranger than peyote-induced internet columns.

On the day was Quinn was 21-33 for 304 yards and four TDs. He didn't throw an interception and his passer rating was 133.1. You can likely add up Derek Anderson's last four games worth of passer ratings and be well shy of 133.1.

Yes, it was against the Lions. But Quinn actually played the position like someone who had done it before on Sunday. He was excellent. He floated a few balls and missed a few throws but for the most part he delivered balls crisply, downfield and on time.

Unfortunately the defense apparently took a group bus to Windsor and the casinos. They were scorched all day long and it was the defense that yakked up a 21 point lead to Detroit.

Oh well, look on the bright side. The Raiders beat the Bengals and the Chiefs beat the Steelers which puts a nice cushion between Cleveland and Oakland/Kansas City for the rights to draft higher next April. Now we need the Rams and Buccaneers to stop jerking around and notch a couple of wins. Unfortunately the Browns don't have their destiny in their own hands by playing those teams this season.

But if Sunday (and the rest of the season) are any indication, these Browns just have that special 'something' when it comes to losing.

## Winning Ugly

The Cavs are winning basketball games at an acceptable clip but my hopes of evaluating this team after 20-25 games to see where they really stand has been derailed; Mostly by Shaquille O'Neal's injury and Delonte West's penchant for being nuts.

O'Neal hasn't played in over a week with a bad shoulder and West's play has been as inconsistent and erratic as his behavior.

The Cavs are 10-4 which is tied for the second most wins in the league at this point, but they'd be better served if O'Neal and West were healthy, functional and developing some chemistry with the rest of the fellas.

Still, I'm not going to complain about leading the Central Division of the Eastern Conference while sorting through a few nagging injuries and player behavioral issues. There's still plenty of time to get O'Neal engaged and in tune with his teammates. West is another issue altogether and it's still a 'cross your fingers and hope for the best' thing with Delonte.

Hopefully the three days off between Saturday's win over Philadelphia and Wednesday's game at Detroit will serve to get Shaq healthy and back on the practice floor.