



Ohio State took the court against the Michigan Wolverines this past Saturday; a match up of two teams going in different directions.

After the Buckeyes started the Big Ten regular season with a 1-3 record, they've come on strong winning 11 of their next 12. Led by Evan Turner, the Buckeyes have forced their way into the upper echelon of the conference.

Michigan began the season with high hopes and NCAA tournament aspirations. The Wolverines were ranked 15th in the preseason standings, and key players like Manny Harris and DeShawn Sims had folks excited in Ann Arbor. After the first three games, it was apparent that the Wolverines wouldn't be able to live up to those expectations. This season has produced more losses than wins as Michigan stumbled into Saturday's game with a 13-14 record.

With Ohio State still a half game behind league leading Purdue, the Buckeyes couldn't afford a loss to the outmatched Wolverines. Let's jump into our review!

Starting out red, nay, Scarlet hot...

Ohio State began the game shooting the ball very well, making their first four shots while racing out to a 9-0 lead.

*Side note -- right after Buford's layup put Ohio State up by nine, Michigan head coach John Beilein called a timeout. Before the television cut to the commercial break, the camera man found an Ohio State fan sitting next to a Michigan fan, and both were eating nachos. The Ohio State fan was politely chewing with his mouth closed as the Michigan fan talked and ate at the same time. Not only does Ohio State have superior football and basketball teams, our fans can

pass the Julia Childs' manners test. End side note.*

Evan Turner got things going for himself early, breaking a string of shooting struggles during the first half of recent games. After Turner scored four straight points for the Buckeyes, Ohio State held a 13-6 lead.

Michigan bringin' the blues...

When a Dallas Lauderdale layup put Ohio State up by 9, the Wolverines put together a solid stretch of basketball. Stu Douglas scored five quick points and Michigan caught fire from behind the three point line (the Wolverines shot 4/6 from behind the arc in the first half). Ohio State cooled off shooting the ball and committed three turnovers during the run. In a span of just over four minutes, Michigan outscored the Buckeyes 14-4 and took a 26-25 lead.

It was around this time that I started feeling like one of the insane people from *The Crazies* (a bit of foreshadowing -- this won't be my only zombie reference of the article).

The two teams traded buckets in the final minutes of the half, and Michigan went into intermission with a 33-32 lead.

Is anyone else having deja vu right now?

The Buckeyes came out in the second half shooting the ball just as well as they had in the first. After eight minutes of play, Ohio State outscored Michigan 15-4. Of the Buckeyes 15 points, Evan Turner and William Buford accounted for 11 of them. As the game went on, it started feeling more and more like the *Turner & Buford* show. The two absolutely shredded Michigan's defense the entire game, but aside from Dallas Lauderdale, there wasn't much else coming to the Buckeyes in the way of scoring. David Lighty and John Diebler failed to contribute much of anything, combining for only 10 points on 27% shooting. Usually when those two struggle, Ohio State struggles.

It was one of the reasons that Michigan was within striking distance at the end of the game.

It's like killing a zombie...

Statistically speaking, Ohio State was dominating Michigan in most of the major areas during this game. The Buckeyes finished the afternoon shooting 59% on field goals compared to Michigan at 37%. Ohio State out-rebounded the Wolverines 35-20 and out-assisted them 17-7. They were even able to limit Michigan's two best players (Harris & Sims, Attorneys at law) to 21 points combined. These stats would lead you to think that Ohio State routed Michigan. However with just over four minutes to play, the Wolverines only trailed by seven and could easily go on a run and steal the game away from Ohio State.

It was like an old fashioned zombie movie, back when all the zombies were slow and dumb. As a normal, uninfected person, you think you'd have all the advantages in the world against that kind of zombie. You have the speed to get away from their attack and the brains to think of a

plan or strategy to eliminate their threat. You have all the tools to get out of the situation alive, but time after time, we have seen the zombies gaining the upper hand and having their way. The slow, dumb zombies would use two small things to achieve their success; fear and hunger. They would strike fear into their victims, and said fear would cause those victims to make bad decisions. Then the zombies would use their hunger and determination to persist until they succeeded.

Now, I'm not saying that the Buckeyes were afraid of Michigan, and I'm not saying that Michigan was hungrier than the Buckeyes. But the Wolverines were able to take advantage of two less significant statistical areas to keep the game close. Michigan had better success at the free-throw line, and they turned the ball over less than the Buckeyes.

If this were one of those old fashioned zombie movies, Ohio State (fortunately) played the roll of the handsome/nothing-to-lose character that impresses the only living girl (who of course is 'out-of-this-world' beautiful) by outwitting the slow and dumb zombies. Behind the stellar play of Turner and Buford, Ohio State escaped their zombie death with a 66-55 victory.

And then there was one...

I want you to find a moment to take this in: The Ohio State Buckeyes have climbed to first place in the conference standings. With Michigan State beating Purdue this past Sunday, the Buckeyes took sole possession of the top spot and can earn at least a share of the regular season conference title with a win against Illinois this Tuesday. Either Michigan State or Purdue could sneak into a co-leader spot by virtue of winning both of their remaining games.

In their first match up this season, Ohio State routed Illinois in Champaign by 19 points. The Fighting Illini struggled to contain the Buckeyes athleticism on the perimeter as Ohio State cruised to an easy win. Don't expect things to be as easy when Illinois visits Columbus this Tuesday. I anticipate both teams to come out with a lot of energy, giving us a great season finale as Ohio State tries to capture a Big Ten championship.