



(Over the next few weeks, our Buckeye writers will preview some of the key matchups on the 2010 OSU football schedule. Today: Ohio State-Wisconsin; Oct. 16, 2010)

The third week of October will provide a great match-up between the Wisconsin Badgers and the Ohio State Buckeyes, a game that will most likely set two highly ranked teams against each other. The Buckeyes will be rolling into this game with what appears to be an easy four game stretch behind them (Indiana, Illinois, Eastern Michigan, Ohio). Wisconsin is coming into the season on a high note after *drubbing* Miami in the Champs Sports Bowl last year, and will be battle tested entering this contest, having already played (rival) Minnesota and an improved Michigan State team.

With the Big Ten already announcing some of its prime time games, we know that this one will be played under the lights in Camp Randall (7:15 PM kickoff) on ESPN or ESPN 2. Night Games at Camp Randall can produce some of the [loudest and most hostile environments in the nation](#), and with the Buckeyes coming to town, you know the Badger faithful will be bringing the noise. The stage will be set for what should be one of the best conference games of the year, but before we get into that, let's take a look back at the last few meetings between these two teams.

Pesky little badgers...

No (Big Ten) team has given Jim Tressel more trouble during his tenure at Ohio State than the Wisconsin Badgers. The Senator was only able to manage one victory against Wisconsin in his first four attempts, a 19-14 win during the Buckeyes march to a National Championship in 2002. But after a two year scheduling break and a coaching change at Wisconsin (Barry Alvarez to Bret Bielema), Tressel found success against the Badgers, winning the last three contests (two of which were played in Ohio Stadium).

The last time the Buckeyes played Wisconsin at Camp Randall, [it was a classic](#). Terrelle Pryor was making his first start on the road as a true freshman, and got some serious help from Chris "Beanie" Wells, who carried the ball for 168 yards on 22 carries. With just over six minutes

remaining in the game, the Buckeyes had possession of the ball, trailing by four (17-13). Under a tremendous amount of pressure, Pryor was able to put together an 80 yard touchdown drive that was capped off by a

[perfectly executed 11 yard option play](#)

. Wisconsin wasn't able to do anything with the 68 seconds Ohio State left to them, and the Buckeyes escaped Madison with a 20-17 victory.

That was then, this is now...

Wisconsin brings back the most starters of any Big Ten team with 18 (10 on offense), including star running back and Heisman hopeful, John Clay. Quarterback Scott Tolzien gives the Badgers a passing attack to go along with their *always bruising* running game, which gives Wisconsin its most dynamic offense in recent memory. The Badgers have always been a team that looks to the tight end in the passing game, and one would think that Wisconsin would miss last year's first team All-Big-Ten selection in Garrett Graham, but Lance Kendricks will be stepping into a starting role and should fit the spot well. If this group can stay healthy and build off of last season's success, they have the potential to be

scary
good.

Wisconsin's defense, on the other hand, lost some big time players from last year's team. Although the group returns 6 starters, the losses of defensive end O'Brien Schofield, linebacker Jaeverly McFadden, and safety Chris Maragos will hurt this unit. The defensive line has enough depth across the front, and if Wisconsin's tandem of tackles (Dan Moore and Jeff Stehle) step up their play, Schofield's loss won't seem that big come fall. McFadden will be tough to replace, but maybe the biggest hole this defense needed to fill was the one left by Maragos at safety. A team captain a year ago, Maragos led the Badgers in interceptions (4), but it's his leadership that one of the remaining members of the secondary, perhaps Jaw Valai, will have to pick up and bring to this team.

The case for Wisconsin...

Wisconsin could (and most likely would) win this game if they could do everything they did last year in Columbus... only with [fewer interceptions returned for touchdowns](#) . Bret Bielema had a fantastic game plan drawn up which centered on grinding out first downs and keeping the ball away from the Ohio State offense. Wisconsin chewed up almost 75% of the game clock with this style of play, and without the costly interceptions and a kickoff returned for a touchdown, last year's game could've ended poorly for the good guys.

With almost the entire offense back, Wisconsin would be smart to again try and control the tempo of the game on that side of the ball. Don't be surprised to see some trickery from coach Bielema, who has admitted his disdain for the Buckeyes:

"I hate losing to these guys," Bielema said after Wisconsin's 31-13 loss to Ohio State last year. " *Absolutely, it's something I can't stand for whatever reason.* "

I'm not sure what Ohio State did to draw the ire of Wisconsin's head coach ([twirling thumbs and looking away innocently...](#)), but look for Bielema to pull out everything he has to beat the Buckeyes.

The case for the Buckeyes...

Ohio State, as stated in the introduction, should be coming into this game in good position. After their tough matchup with Miami in week two, the Buckeyes will have four relatively easy games before they travel to Madison in week six. If Ohio State can use those four games to build their rhythm on offense, they should be in as good of shape as they could hope to be at that point of the season.

Regardless, this Wisconsin team will give the Buckeyes a very tough test. Year after year, this matchup is one of the hardest hitting games of the season (for visual proof, see picture above). The Buckeyes will be facing a team that will be trying their hardest to force themselves into the upper echelon of the Big Ten conference. For Ohio State, they have to force their will against a very motivated and hungry team. Look for the Buckeyes to steal the momentum early, as they have the last two times they visited Madison, to take the crowd out of the game and *maybe* take the fight out of Wisconsin. If Ohio State can do this, Coach Bielema might have to wait another year to try and crack these Buckeyes.

Key Matchup Archive - In case you missed our previous breakdown: [The Miami Hurricanes](#)