



As Ohio State prepares to face Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl on Jan 4, let's take a quick look in the rearview mirror at how they got to The Big Easy. From where I was sitting, the season blew by like a Blue Angels flyover on opening day, and it's hard to believe there's just one more kickoff to come.

It is a measure of the unreal expectations of Jim Tressel's Buckeyes that an 11-1 regular season record and No. 6 national ranking are deemed a disappointment by so many of the team's fans...but that's where we are. While Texas, Florida and USC, the three teams that joined with OSU to dominate the last decade of college football, struggled to a combined 20-17 record in 2010, Tressel's Buckeyes recorded their sixth consecutive season of 10 or more wins.

So remember...disappointment is relative. One road loss to a top five, BCS qualifier with an 11-1 record isn't a reason to write off the program as an overrated pretender to elite status. It's just a reminder that it's hard to win twelve straight, as 117 out of 120 FBS programs found out over the last four months. So although the 2010 OSU season isn't going to conclude with a confetti shower and the hoisting of a cut-glass football, it was better than a sharp stick in the eye. And sorry as they may be, six straight over the Ugly Hats is cause for a mini-celebration all by itself.

Let's review...

9/2/10 - Ohio State 45, Marshall 7

Terrelle Pryor looked sharp, throwing three TD's and passing for 247 yards, as the Bucks opened the season at home with an easy 45-7 win over the Thundering Herd. Brandon Saine rushed for 103 yards, as OSU led 35-7 at the half, the only points for the Herd coming on a blocked field goal returned for a touchdown, a harbinger of special teams problems to come.

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9/11/10 - Ohio State 36, Miami 24

The Buckeyes and Hurricanes battled in this much anticipated showdown between celebrated dual-threat QB's, the first meeting between the schools since the 2002 season title game. OSU trailed early, but the Bucks scored 23 points in the second quarter to lead 26-17 at the half. The game turned on Cam Heyward's interception and 80-yard return to reverse the momentum early in the third quarter after Miami had driven deep into OSU territory. OSU picked off Miami's Jacory Harris four times, and won the turnover battle 4-0. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)

9/18/10 - Ohio State 43, Ohio University 7

Pryor set an OSU record with 16 straight pass completions and the OSU turnover machine continued as they picked off three Bobcat passes and recovered two fumbles in a 43-7 romp over Ohio U. at the Horseshoe. OSU picked up a modest 158 yards on the ground with Dan Herron scoring twice, as the Bucks decided instead to hone their passing attack. The Buckeye defense was dominant, giving up just 82 passing yards and seven total first downs for the game. Don't even ask me how this punchless Ohio U. team qualified for a bowl game. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)

9/25/10 - Ohio State 73, Eastern Michigan 20

The Buckeyes point total was their highest in over 60 years as they fattened their record to 4-0 with a glorified scrimmage against the Eagles of EMU. Pryor accounted for six TD's, with four touchdown passes to Dane Sanzenbacher along with one rushing score and another on a pass reception. OSU's safeties were turned around a few times by the downfield passing of the Eagles, resulting in several long completions and two TD passes. OSU fans got their first good look at freshman tailback Jaamal Berry who broke out with a 67-yard TD run in the fourth quarter. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)

10/2/10 - Ohio State 24, Illinois 13

The Fighting Illini gave the Buckeyes all they wanted in OSU's first road game of the campaign, but after giving up an early touchdown to Illinois, the OSU defense settled down and allowed just two field goals the rest of the way. The Bucks fought back behind Pryor's running to grab a 14-10 lead at the half, and held off the Illini after intermission to stay unbeaten. Pryor strained his quad muscle on a running play and was limited by pain the rest of the game, but Dan Herron ground out 95 yards on 23 carries, and scored the clinching TD with less than two minutes to play. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)

10/9/10 - Ohio State 38, Indiana 10

The Buckeyes finished the first half of the schedule unbeaten at 6-0 after toying with Indiana in Columbus. OSU ran out to a 31-0 lead at the half and coasted home 38-10, as the defense snuffed out what was purported to be a high-powered passing attack led by IU quarterback Ben Chappell. The Buckeyes held Chappell to 106 yards passing and Terrelle Pryor babied his sore quad by completing 24 of 30 pass attempts and not running the ball at all. A loss by No. 1 Alabama on the same day elevated the Buckeyes to the top spot in the polls, but they would stay there for just one short week. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)

10/16/10 - Wisconsin 31, Ohio State 18

You could say the Buckeyes' unbeaten season was over 15 seconds into this game, after David Gilreath ran the opening kickoff back for a touchdown for the Badgers. Ohio State never recovered on this crisp fall night in Madison, falling behind 21-0 before halftime on the strength of two long TD drives against the previously stout OSU rush defense. The Badgers did everything right, while the Buckeyes were squandering two excellent first half scoring opportunities in the red zone, coming away with just three points for their trouble. They got within three in the second half at 21-18, but couldn't stop Wisconsin when it counted, and the season's only blemish spoiled their national championship dream. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)

10/23/10 - Ohio State 49, Purdue 0

The Bucks bounced back from their deflating loss in Madison with a dominating performance against the Boilermakers on Homecoming Saturday at the Horseshoe. The telling stat was the total yardage in the first half; OSU 415, Purdue 47. The Buckeye yardage total was a school record for a half, and they led at the break 42-0. Pryor hit nine different receivers, including the first career TD catch for freshman receiver Corey "Philly" Brown. The defense completely stifled the Boilermakers, allowing just 2.1 yards per play for the game, and holding Purdue to 118 total yards. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)

10/30/10 - Ohio State 52, Minnesota 10

Ohio State dispatched the Gophers early in this one, as they did with most of their lesser opponents throughout the season. It was 31-7 at halftime, and then the defense and special teams also got into the scoring spree in the second half with a fumble return for a score and another TD off a blocked punt. Pryor was 18 for 22 passing for 222 yards and two TD passes in one of his more efficient games of the season. Jordan Hall had a brilliant 70-yard punt return, and the young OSU tailbacks, especially Carlos Hyde, got some action and showed well. [TCF](#)

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11/13/10 - Ohio State 38, Penn State 14

OSU came out flat following their week off and fell behind the Nittany Lions early, prompting an out-of-character Jim Tressel diatribe at halftime. The chastened Buckeyes came out after halftime and turned a 14-3 deficit into a 38-14 rout with 35 unanswered points. Young PSU quarterback Matt McGloin had a reversal of fortune after a stellar first half, throwing two interceptions for touchdowns after the break, with cornerbacks Devon Torrence and Travis Howard doing the honors for OSU. Dan Herron had a career day with 190 yards rushing as the 9-1 Buckeyes stayed in the Big Ten title chase with two games to go. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)



11/20/10 - Ohio State 20, Iowa 17

With the Buckeyes fighting to stay alive in the Big Ten race, the matchup in Iowa City was crucial, and the game was just as tight as the overtime thriller in 2009. Iowa led 7-3 at the half, and the game was tied 10-10 going into the fourth quarter. Iowa took a 17-10 lead early in the 4th, but the Buckeyes scored the last ten points of the game to pull it out. Terrelle Pryor made what may have been the play of the year for OSU when he ran for 14 yards on a 4th-and-10 play on the final Buckeye drive. Dane Sanzenbacher was the receiving star for the Bucks, with six catches for 102 yards, including a clutch grab at the Iowa 2-yard line to set up the game-winning TD. [TCF](#) - [ESPN](#)

11/27/10 - Ohio State 37, Michigan 7

Ohio State wrapped up their 11-1 regular season with another ho-hum pasting of the Wolverines. The Game has proven anti-climactic in recent years, and the Buckeyes were able to send Michigan off to the opposite division of the Big Ten with their sixth straight win over the Maize and Blue. The Bucks kept Michigan from scoring despite two long first quarter drives, and after the Wolves finally did score to make it 10-7 OSU, Jordan Hall broke it open with an 85-yard TD on the kickoff return. OSU made it 24-7 by halftime, and the defense totally shut down the Wolverines after the break. The second half featured a record-tying 89-yard run by Dan Herron.

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Postseason Recognition

Eight Buckeyes were named to the [All-Big Ten first team](#), and once again someone other than Jim Tressel was named Big Ten Coach of the Year...this time it was Michigan State's Mark Dantonio (so at least it was a member of the Tressel coaching tree.)

Also notable is the record set by Tressel's Buckeyes in 2010 for being the first team in Big Ten history to win 10 or more games in six consecutive seasons.

As for my own thoughts on OSU players in the 2010 season, here are the guys that get my vote for the categories below:

MVP - Offense: Dane Sanzenbacher - Lil' Dane won the team MVP award as voted by his teammates...and they say the vote wasn't close. It's hard to disagree, although Dan Herron gets Honorable Mention.

MVP - Defense: Jermale Hines - This one is tough, because Heacock's defense is so balanced and there wasn't one true standout, but Hines' consistency and toughness is what gets him my vote here. Hon. Mention: Brian Rolle, Cam Heyward.

Most Improved - Offense: Mike Adams - Adams finally delivered on his immense promise this season, and was rewarded with all-conference first team recognition. And you don't often think of a fourth-year player getting talked about as most improved, but you have to consider Dan Herron in this category as well. He really picked up his game in 2010.

Most Improved - Defense: Tie: Nathan Williams and Johnny Simon - Both guys elevated their games in 2010 and helped make up for the loss of five defensive line contributors from the 2009 team. Plus, Heyward was consistently double-teamed this year, making it all the more important for these two guys to take it up a notch...and they did.

Best Freshman - Offense: Andrew Norwell - the right tackle didn't play much, but when he did sub in for J.B. Shugarts at right tackle, he looked like a force to be reckoned with. The only other true freshman to get significant playing time on offense was wide receiver Corey Brown, which is enough to land him in second place.

Best Freshman - Defense: Jonathan Hankins - Big Hank was able to work his way into the defensive tackle rotation early in the season, bringing a run-stuffing presence that the other DT's just don't possess. Safety Christian Bryant might have been the man here had he not gone down with an injury and missed most of the second half of the season.

Miscellany

Congrats to OSU wide receivers coach and assistant head coach Darrell Hazell, who was named the new head coach at Kent State this week.

It's possible that Tressel could lose another of his valued assistants in the near future, as linebackers coach and co-defensive coordinator Luke Fickell is reportedly one of the finalists in consideration for the head coaching vacancy at Miami University.

As this article goes to the front page, the OSU player suspensions are just hitting the news. More to come on that in the days ahead, I'm sure.

Back next week with a Sugar Bowl preview.

All Ohio State football regular season team and individual player statistics are available as part of the PDF linked below:

[OSU Athletics Communications - Sugar Bowl Game Notes \(pdf\)](#)
