

Troy Smith - welcome to Heisman frontrunner status. Mack Brown - welcome to life without Vince Young. And The Sweater Vest ... is there a better big game coach in the country? I take a look at last night's game, and the rest of the path to another potential national title for the Bucks in my morning wrap. Something tells me Colt McCoy woke up this morning with a bad case of Laurinaitis.



Big touchdown strikes at the end of the first and second quarters. No turnovers. Key last second play changes at the line, which included the key TD strike to Ted Ginn Jr just before the half. No turnovers. Not trying to do too much, and taking what the Longhorn defense gave to him by capitalizing on Ginn double teams and utilizing Anthony Gonzalez early and often. The big game moxie. Going on the road and defeating one of the nation's best defenses ... on their turf, and sporting a 21 game winning streak.

Troy Smith - meet Heisman trophy frontrunner status.

Once an afterthought in the minds of Buckeye fans eager for The Justin Zwick Era, Troy Smith is now poised to finish his Ohio State career as one of the greatest Buckeye signal callers in the long illustrious history of this university. And if he beats Michigan again and wins a national championship and the Heisman trophy this year, Smith will be remembered as one of the greatest Buckeye football players ever.

Not bad for a kid that most fans wanted to try at wide receiver due to the fact he came to Columbus the same year as the much more highly hyped Zwick.

Last night's quarterback matchup was a big time mismatch. Smith played a near flawless game, in the most difficult of environments and circumstances. Texas freshman Colt McCoy ... well, he played like a redshirt freshman from a town of 700 people that was playing in his first big game.

Harrassed and hit hard all night, McCoy came down with a bad case of Laurinaitis last night. McCoy looked badly shaken to start the game, skipping his first pass in the dirt, and having his second attempt nearly intercepted by Buckeye linebacker James Laurinaitis, who had a monster game for the Bucks. Laurinaitis caused a huge fumble inside the five yard line, as Texas was just about to take a 7-0 first quarter lead. He later would get his hands on a McCoy pass, intercepting the overmatched Texas youngster right at the beginning of the second half ... a play that essentially kicked the dirt on the Longhorns graves. McCoy ended 20-33, but the vast majority of those completions were of the dink and dunk variety that Browns fans are so used to.

And last night was another glaring example of why Jim Tressel is the best big game coach in all of college football. Often criticized for his conservative nature in less high profile games, The Sweater Vest always seems to attack his foes in huge games like this with a gameplan that they are not expecting whatsoever. After the game Mack Brown flat out admitted that they were expecting a heavy assault of Troy Smith and Antonio Pittman on the ground, and Ted Ginn through the air. The Buckeyes instead made Anthony Gonzalez the focus point of their first half offensive strategy, and got even more aggressive in their play calling as their lead started to swell. The coaching mismatch last night was just as great as the mismatch at QB.

With this huge hurdle now in the Buckeyes rear view mirrors, a quick glance at the remaining schedule reveals the following obstacles:

September 23rd vs Penn State

September 30th at Iowa

October 14th at Michigan State

November 18th vs Michigan

The Penn State and Iowa games, which follow a home game against Cincinnati this coming weekend, have been the games that have made most Buckeye fans feel uneasy since this schedule was released. However, both teams looked awful yesterday. Penn State was shellacked in South Bend by the Fighting Irish. And Iowa needed an overtime goal line stand to hold off a Syracuse team that most prognosticators are picking to win three or four games this season.

Of course, the Michigan State game serves as a cruel reminder of the 1998 season, when an absolutely loaded Buckeye team was shocked late in the season by the Spartans, giving the team their only blemish on what would have otherwise likely been a national championship season. And the Michigan game ... well, there's no need to offer up any explanation of that one.

Let's just say that after beating them in The Big House last year, the Wolverines may be a tad motivated to give us that first loss should we roll into that contest undefeated.