

Burned Orange

Written by {ga=furls}

Saturday, September 09 2006 7:00 PM -

In Furls wrap of the big Buckeye win last night, he gives some credit to the Buckeye defender no one is talking about that he saw as a big key to last night's game. And as always, he grades the Buckeyes by position, and grades himself as a prognosticator. Man ... that one felt good last night.



So I was watching a football game. And after a field goal, following a turnover to start the second half, a scrimmage broke out. OK, so I understand that this beginning is not nearly as poetic as my last wrap, but anytime you thrash the #2 team in the country any wrap is a good wrap.

I am sure that all over the media you are going to hear about how the Bucks exploited the situation with Tarell Brown's suspension, but frankly, most of us here in Columbus have known for sometime that "Gonzo" is the best receiver in town. He is nearly as fast as Ginn, has better hands, and catches those tough passes over the middle. There is no team in the NCAA that can contain this offense. If they sell out to cover the homerun threat; then they will pay over the middle.

While I was explaining the Longhorns dilemma to my eleven-year-old son, it dawned on me how dominant this offense is. I told him, "How many men are on the D-Line for Texas?" He said, "Four." Next I said, "How many linebackers do you need to contain the run?" He said, "Three." Then I said, "How many guys do you need to double cover Ginn?" He said, "Two" (because he is not as stupid as a couple of defensive coordinators feeling right now). I then said, "How many does that leave?" He said, "Two." I asked, "How many WR's does OSU usually use? (Mark May does not know, but my son does)." He said, "Three." So I asked, "Who is in single coverage?" He said, "Gonzo and someone else."

There you have it, my son is pretty smart, but he pointed out the obvious. With an experienced offensive line, you cannot sell out to stop the pass and maintain a reasonable run defense against a team with two very good wide receivers and a veteran, "Heisman Candidate," quarterback.

Unfortunately, I think that Brady Quinn may have made some ground on Troy Smith in the Heisman race. The normal sportswriter will look at the stats and see that Troy's numbers were not insane, but they could have been much better. He had 219 yards in the first half, but he could have and would have had more if Texas had scored.

What did I see in this game? What is the rare insight that I gained that will set me apart from Mark May? I saw a defense immerge and a defensive leader step up. No, I am not talking just talking about James Laurinaitis. Antonio Smith really made some smart, heads up plays. I am

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not discounting the effect of the Laurinaitis turnovers, they were obviously big plays, but Smith's play does not appear in the box scores.

Smith came out of nowhere to land the starting corner job, opposite of Malcolm Jenkins, and in the last two weeks he has stepped up and made the plays. In particular, he came in on one play on a corner blitz, but sensed the "dump to the flat," he abandoned his blitz, picked up the runner and made the play in the back field. While the effect is not as great as the turnovers, these plays are almost every bit as big.

Here is my question for the fans, Did anyone else feel like the Ohio State offense was like a giant anvil that could be dropped on the Texas defense at any time? I was expecting more fireworks in the game, but true to history, once staked to the lead, Coach Tressel traded his high flying jet set offense for his old trusty sweater vest offense (By the way, he did wear the sweater-vest in the 85 degree Austin heat). Even while the Buckeyes were obviously in chewing up the clock, there was still this feeling of potential energy.

Grading the Positions:

Quarterbacks: A+. While Troy Smith was just 17 of 26, it actually could have been better if not for a couple of drops. Aside from one bad deep throw to Ginn, where he somehow found a way to overthrow him, he had pinpoint accuracy and made terrific decisions. He looked better yesterday than Brady Quinn against a much better team.

Receivers: A. Would have been an A+, but you cannot drop passes in a big game like this. Robiskie looked pretty darn good, and Roy Hall had better hurry back or he will lose his starting job, unless he goes to Tight End.

Tight End: I. TE's really were not part of the game plan, so there is not much to grade. I will say that the blocking on the outside in support of the run was not great though.

Offensive Line: B. Troy got plenty of time to throw, but the Buckeyes were not as successful at running the ball as they need to be. The holes just did not open and in order for this offense to reach its true potential, the Bucks will need to run the ball or they will begin to see a LOT of nickel.

Running Backs: C. It is tough to get anywhere when there is no hole, and while they did not fumble, they must share some of the burden for the complete lack of a running game last night.

Defensive Line: B. McCoy did not get a ton of pressure and the 'Horns basically ran the ball at will. The line penetration was not great, but you cannot expect as much from the D-Line against a Texas front four.

Special Teams: C-. This missed field goal thing is getting very old, especially chip shots. If/when we need to count on the kickers they are going to need to come through. Now that being said, A.J. Trepasso should probably be co-MVP of that game. He averaged over 50

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yards per punt against a team that blocks a lot of kicks. He is the only reason that the special teams gets a passing score.

Linebackers: C. Laurinaitis' play is the only reason these guys pass. Someone needs to teach these guys how to get off of a block, and Jon Kerr is looking VERY slow. I am not sure if he has the speed to play on the outside. What a lot of folks will miss is that James Laurinaitis was not only came up big with the turnovers; he also made 13 tackles.

Secondary: A. Malcolm Jenkins is a stud and Antonio Smith might be the smartest player on that defense. It is a good thing, because in this game, Texas' inability to get the ball down field at all made it a lot easier for the defense to step up and make plays in front.

Coaching: A+. Jim Tressel proved again why he is the best big game coach in college football. He so severely out coached Mack Brown that it proved to me, that Mack Brown gets way to much praise for Longhorn's national championship. He did not look so good without someone, VY, carrying the team. The OSU game plan on both sides of the ball was perfect. Why did Texas stop running? Well that is anyone's guess.

Overall: A. The Buckeyes went on the road and beat the number two team in the country. They held the highly regarded Longhorns offense to 7 points... at home, with their "suspect" defense. I think the 'Horns can blame their cushy first week opponent as much as anyone else for the loss here. You are not going to convince me that a very bad division IAA team is a good warm up for the number one team in the country.

Grading the Grader:

I said, "Don't be surprised if McCoy is baited into two interceptions by the secondary." Mack Brown never even gave him the chance. They didn't really throw into the secondary at all. I give myself a C on that one.

I said, paraphrased, that Gonzo would have a bigger game than Ginn. I was 100% correct and that appeared to be the game plan. A+

I said, "Don't be surprised if the Buckeyes make a field goal." Again, I nailed it. No grade on this one though for the sheer obvious nature of the statement.

I said, "Don't be surprised if Troy Smith gets 300 in the air and 100 on the ground." I was correct that in the beginning it did look like the Buckeyes were going to use the pass option offense, but Smith never had to run. There was always someone open. I am going to give myself a pass on the running part, I thought the Texas secondary would be able to cover someone. C+ on this one.

I said, "Don't be surprised if Smith leaves as the hands down Heisman favorite." He should be, but Brady Quinn had a good week and he plays for Notre Dame, so I am sure he will still win. C+ on this one, because he should be but he isn't.

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I said, "Don't be surprised if the linebacker play is better." It was, but not by much. Laurinaitis was a game saver and really seemed to settle in. I think the next Buckeye linebacking star was born, now if we could just make Kerr faster....

I said, "Don't be surprised if the offense scores more TD's than Trepasso punts." I lose 6 -3. I did not foresee that the 'Horns would not be able to score enough to force us to stay out of the conservative "Tressel-ball." I failed you all, and I apologize. F.

Overall: I was pretty much right. Mack Brown is not a good big game coach and the game was not as hard as most people thought. I picked the Bucks by two TD's (although I thought it would be a higher scoring game) and they won by 17. All in all, I would have to say that was pretty good. Now, can someone explain to me why a team whose running backs are averaging over six yards per carry should stop running the ball? I think the national championship honeymoon in Austin is going to end pretty soon (probably at the Red River Shootout).