

In his weekly college football wrapup column, Cris Sykes breaks down what went down on Separation Saturday yesterday. There were some great games and some surprise outcomes, including Michigan going into South Bend and laying an ass whooping on Jabba The Weis, Pretty Boy Quinn, and the rest of the Irish. Sykes also updates his Heisman ballot, adding a couple of new names on there courtesy of yesterdays action.



“Separation Saturday” has come and gone as we have completed the third week of the college football season. What I didn’t know was that “separation” was the description of the newest trend in college football: 5-yard splits between linemen on punt formations. Why is this happening? How long until this actually costs someone a big game?

What a game in Eugene, Oregon! Oklahoma and Oregon battled each other for four quarters like it was the last time they would ever play a game of football. Adrian Peterson carried the Sooners to a 13-point lead with just over 3 minutes left with a bruising 35 carry, 214 yard performance. In the end though, Dennis Dixon threw the Ducks onto his back and carried them away into the Oregon night. Dixon ended the game 25/40 for 348 yards and 2 touchdowns, plus he carried the ball 4 times for 44 yards and a score. After cutting the Sooner lead to 6 on Dixon’s TD run with one minute left, Oregon recovered the onside kick and drove the ball 42 yards on 3 plays for the go ahead touchdown with 45 seconds left on the clock, apparently ending the game. Oklahoma was not done though, and after returning the squib kick 54 yards, had a chance to win this classic battle. Sooner kicker Garrett Hartley (4-4 on the day so far) lined up for a 44 yard attempt, but the Ducks got through the line and got a hand on the kick to hold on for the 34-33 win.

Brady Quinn’s Hiesman Campaign, meet the proverbial brick wall. Charlie Weis, please introduce yourself to Ty Willingham. Notre Dame fan, get ready for the Sun Bowl. Michigan has played its way into the National Championship conversation with a dominating performance ... even though it comes against the most overrated of the top ranked teams in the country. How big is Ohio State versus Michigan on November 18th starting to look now? Michael Hart, all 5’9” of him, is as much of a big time workhorse as there is in college football right now. 81 carries in 3 games, while averaging around 5 yards per carry is pretty impressive. Can he keep it up? I don’t know, but with Lloyd Carr’s job potentially on the line this year, I bet we are going to find out.

Good night Larry Coker. You have officially tarnished one of the greatest programs of the last 20 years, culminating yesterday with another terrible loss, this one coming by a count of 31-7 at the hands of Louisville. The only hope for the University of Miami is that the assistants that Coker sold out to keep his job will be brought back by the new head coach. I would throw Greg Schiano out there as the top candidate. Schiano, who led Rutgers to their first bowl game in 27 years in 2005 and has the Scarlet Knights off to a 3-0 start in 2006, is a former defensive

coordinator at the U. Also worth a look will be Gene Chizik, currently the defensive coordinator at the University of Texas. Chizik coached defenses have consistently been at the top of the defensive rankings, and have won 27 of their last 28 games. Louisville Head coach Bobby Petrino will be called, but I would not expect him to leave Louisville, where the weak Big East will give him a chance to play in a BCS game every year. The long shot could be Butch Davis. He left Miami with the program at its peak, but will his struggles in the NFL hurt his chances? If Davis is a longshot, there is one more option, but he is not even on the board, but don't be surprised to hear Jimmy Johnson's name mentioned.

What did Bobby Petrino do in a former life? First Michael Bush breaks his leg and will miss the rest of the season. Now QB Brian Brohm sprains his thumb and will miss 4-6 weeks. Fortunately, Brohm will only miss 4 games, even if he has to sit for 6 weeks, and Louisville should handle all those games pretty handily without him. If it is the full 6 weeks, that would put Brohm on target to return November 2. It just so happens that November 2 is the day West Virginia comes to town to play the Cardinals for the Big East title and a BCS, possible National Championship, berth.

I am not sure how to tell the difference between great defense and terrible offense, but I am pretty sure the definition would look a lot like the LSU/Auburn game. Auburn averaged 3 yards per carry, and 3.8 yards per pass and WON the game. That is possible when you hold your opponent to 33 yards on 23 carries. I know all the SEC jonesers out there will talk of how great the defenses were in this game, but I think both offenses should share a game ball for making those defenses look so good.

The other big game in the SEC involved Florida traveling to Knoxville to face Tennessee. The Vols were looking to prove their season opening domination of Cal was not a fluke and that they simply overlooked Air Force last week. Florida was just looking to get through the first test in an absolutely brutal schedule coming up. The game did not disappoint, as Florida rallied behind Heisman contender Chris Leak to pull out the 21-20 victory. Florida needed this win in a big way ... because after a tune up with Kentucky next week, their next 4 games, over a 5 week stretch, are against Alabama, LSU, at Auburn, and Georgia. If they get through that stretch of games unscathed, you can count Florida in as one of the two teams to play in Tempe on January 8.

In the day's biggest upset, son Tommy Bowden pulled off the win against his daddy Bobby Bowden. The best part of the game itself could have been the halftime interview when Tommy announced he would no longer send out his kicker for field goals or extra points after Florida State returned Clemson's first PAT for a 2-point conversion and then blocked a field goal and returned it for a touchdown. True to his word, Clemson went for a 2-point conversion after their third quarter touchdown, and then elected to go for the touchdown with 10 seconds left in a tie game instead of kicking the field goal. Tommy did go back on his word and kick the extra point after that touchdown. Guess he didn't want to rub it in the old man's eye.

Hiesman Ballot

1 Troy Smith – Still hasn't had the eye popping statistical game, but continues to do enough of everything to lead a field that nobody else is standing out in. Two big weeks coming up to

further distance himself from the field.

2 Steve Slaton – 503 yards and 6 touchdowns in 3 games, albeit against weak opposition. The only guy making a “numbers” run at the trophy so far.

3 Adrian Peterson – With no other options on that Oklahoma offense, Peterson is facing 8, sometime 9 men in the box. All he has done is average 30 carries a game and almost 6 yards a carry.

4 John David Booty – It just would not be a Heisman Ballot without a USC quarterback on the list. He has picked up right were Leinart and Palmer left off.

5 Michael Hart – Welcome to the race Mike. Impressive start to the season for the diminutive back from “That School Up North”.

MAC Team of the Week

Once again, a member of the Mid-American Conference went on the road and beat someone from a “premier” league (even if it was not a premier team within that league). Western Michigan won at Virginia, 17-10. They got the win, in spite of the fact that they completed 7 passes, all game, and got only 9 first downs. Western held a 14-10 lead at the half, but had only managed to gain 52 yards on offense.