



In the fall of 2006, the Ohio State Buckeyes were ripping through everyone on their schedule, going wire to wire through the regular season with an unbeaten record. The Buckeyes came into that season with the top ranking and had finished it with a brilliant 42-39 victory over the second ranked Michigan Wolverines. Everything was right in Buckeye land until the second Monday of January came around. What should have been the end to Jim Tressel's second perfect season with Ohio State turned into a 41-14 nightmare that I still can't really comprehend.

That was *our* season, and something went terribly wrong that night.

During that same time frame, there was a certain high school prospect turning heads all around the country. He was a 6-6 junior quarterback from Jeannette, Pennsylvania who was rumored to be the second coming of Vince Young, only faster. Terrelle Pryor had finished that season with over 3,000 yards of offense with 28 total touchdowns, collecting a scholarship offer from pretty much every school that mattered. Oregon, Alabama, Penn State, Michigan, Florida, USC, and of course, Ohio State.

One year later, the Buckeyes found themselves back in the National Championship game with a shot at redemption. The 2007 team was nothing like the '06 edition, lacking the star-power with Heisman winner Troy Smith and the electrifying Teddy Ginn Jr. graduated and moved on to the

NFL. The '07 squad used a dominant defense and a solid running game built on the legs of Beanie Wells for another shot at glory.

The only thing the two teams had in common was the heart-breaking end to each season. And with that -- an already starved fan-base became *rabid* for perfection.

Meanwhile, Terrelle Pryor was destroying anything in his path on his way to Pennsylvania's Class AA championship. He had become the nation's top high school prospect, leaving dozens of fan bases guessing as his recruitment stretched past National Signing Day.

Buckeye Nation wanted him to pick Ohio State so badly. We viewed him as the guy who could push us over the top. The 2008 team was loaded, and many thought he could come on board much like Tim Tebow did his freshman year at Florida to help the Buckeyes get that elusive National Championship.

When it came time to make his decision, Pryor ignored offensive systems that would have fit his skills (Michigan, Oregon) and chose the Buckeyes.

"Alright, every one's here for it," Pryor said during his announcement in 2008. And when he unzipped his jacket, revealing an Ohio State shirt while putting a Buckeye ball-cap on his head, he said, "The University of Ohio State."

And so it began. With Terrelle Pryor's first act as a Buckeye -- something was just... off.

*"The University of Ohio State."*

Rival fan bases chuckled and made jokes toward Terrelle Pryor for saying the name of the school wrong, but we didn't care. We had our guy. 2008 was our year.

Of course, that turned out to be very, very wrong. Ohio State was blitzed by USC in the third game of the season. With nowhere else to turn, Tressel took the keys away from senior Todd Boeckman and handed them over to the talented freshman. He would finish that season leading the Buckeyes to eight victories in 10 games. He only threw 13 touchdown passes in a limited offense, but the upside was there. Everyone could see it.

During his sophomore year, we watched Pryor shuffle between being [absolutely dominant on the field](#) to being [frustratingly inconsistent](#)

. We watched him have a few moments of grace away from the gridiron, but those moments were crowded in [a sea of stuff like this](#)

But things seemed to be coming together during his junior season. Of course there was the hiccup in Madison, but you can't put that loss entirely on Pryor's shoulders. The defense and special teams were more to blame for those cows mauling us that cold October night. Even considering that though, Pryor and the 2010 Ohio State football team put together one of the most dominant seasons of the Tressel era.

I'm being serious. People get caught up with that one loss and the fact that Ohio State didn't win a National Championship. But outside of that game at Wisconsin, Ohio State beat their opponents by an average of just under 28 points per game. Think about that. The offense scored over 30 points *nine times* last year, and you bet your ass I wrote that with every intention of triggering Ed Rooney's irritating voice inside your head.

If you compare this year's offense with the one Troy Smith orchestrated in 2006, Pryor's offense produced more points. And of course, Pryor was instrumental in slaying the SEC demon hanging over our heads. The offense was absolutely unstoppable before Tressel started *Tresseling* things up in the second half against Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl.

I know a lot of people are happy to see him go. I know a lot of people blame him for Tressel getting fired and view him as a stain on the university. Articles are going to start pouring out about his "legacy" and how he'll be remembered in infamy.

I think we set the bar too high for Pryor.

Because of the insane expectaions we put on him to lead the Buckeyes to a National Championship, everthing short of that was going to be a disappointment. In ten years, when I look back and think about Terrelle Pryor, I won't blame him for Tressel's demise and I won't think of him as a coward for ditching his senior season. Was he perfect? God no. His actions during his tenure at Ohio State have to rank with some of the worst I've ever seen. It's as if there was no good little angel sitting on his opposite shoulder to counteract the devil that was hiked up on three super sized lines of cocaine. And if there's any validity to this [autograph scandal](#) ESPN is screaming at me about, then that just adds to the facepalm that Pryor's career has become. In the end though, everyone kills people, steals from you, steals from me... wait. Nevermind.

In all seriousness -- when I think back on Terrelle Pryor, I'll think about what could have been. Maybe that's just me. I'll think about what could have happened had he not had the interviewing skills of a twelve year old child. I'll think about what could have happened had he shown a little pride in his achievements by keeping his championship ring and gold pants. I'll think that if everything had come together and he had played his senior season, he would have easily owned every record in the school record book.

I'll think about a marriage between him and "*The University of Ohio State*" that just seemed doom from the start.

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