

The Week That Was: Meltdown in Miami

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

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Anyone who has watched Ohio State football this season should have seen this coming. But that doesn't make it easier to swallow.

Luke Fickell has his first loss as a head coach, and it couldn't have been uglier. With an all-timer of a bad quarterback performance providing the anchor the Buckeyes sank on South Beach Saturday night, falling to Miami by an every-bit-as-decisive-as-as-it-looks score of 24-6. Nothing went right. The defense couldn't stop the Hurricane ground game and couldn't get off the field on third down. The offense couldn't take advantage of good field position and a couple of gifts given out by the always generous Jacory Harris. The clock and game management by the coaching staff left a ton to be desired.

And the passing game... oh, my. Bad doesn't begin to describe it.

Brutal: That's a kind way to describe the performance of Joe Bauserman, who completed 2-of-14 attempts for 13 yards. There's no need to use adjectives here. That statistical line says it all. Look, Joe Bauserman just has no business playing major-college football. I don't even

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think he'd be more than a middle-of-the-road quarterback in the MAC. He doesn't have a strong arm, he isn't mobile and he doesn't read defenses for squat. He isn't good enough to play at Ohio State. That isn't a knock. I'm sure he's trying. He just doesn't have the talent.

Serious Question: Did Jim Tressel actually offer a scholarship to Joe Bauserman? Or did he put out an ad for the backup quarterback position on Careerbuilder?

No Relief: And Braxton Miller, frankly, was no better- and when factoring in the negative plays, he may have been worse. The heralded freshman competed 2-of-4 for 22 yards and accounted for both Ohio State turnovers, the first an ill-advised throw down the middle that was deflected and intercepted, the second a fumble that killed the last Buckeye attempt to get back into the game early in the fourth quarter. Miller has talent, far more talent than Bauserman can dream of having, but right now he's as raw as sushi. He didn't make good decisions and he didn't protect the football. He did run for 32 yards on seven carries, flashing the added dimension of his mobility. Turnovers can be un-learned: talent cannot be.

Bush League: That's a pretty good way to describe Luke Fickell's unceremonious yanking of Braxton Miller after the freshman botched an end-around and was forced to fall on the ball on the first play of a series late in the third quarter. Give me a break. Fickell has to know the kid is going to make some mistakes. Better to leave him on the sidelines than show him up in that manner.

Not Impressed: You probably heard and read laudatory things about the effort of Ohio State's defense Saturday. You will not hear or read them from me. They did not play well. They were gashed on the ground, giving up 240 rushing yards- 184 of those from Lamar Miller, who got loose for 54 on Miami's first play from scrimmage. They took poor angles, didn't contain, didn't tackle well, and, most significantly, didn't get off the field. Miami's offense converted 9-of-15 on third downs and controlled the ball for more than 34 minutes. Obviously the offense didn't do the defense any favors- but the defense didn't help its own cause either.

Finished at the Start: Indeed, Ohio State's defense pretty much lost the game in the first ten minutes when the Hurricanes put together touchdown drives of 63 and 53 yards to take a 14-0 lead. Miami went 4-of-4 on third downs and ripped the Buckeye run-stoppers to the tune of more than ten yards per carry on those fatal first two drives. With the offense bound to struggle, the worst possible scenario involved Ohio State falling into a deep early hole. That's exactly what happened. The Buckeyes needed an extraordinary performance out of their defense to

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have any chance of winning, and they didn't even get an ordinary one- especially in the early going.

Finished at the Finish: With 9:21 remaining and Miami holding a 17-6 lead the Canes took possession at their 31-yard line following Braxton Miller's fumble, leading 17-6. After Christian Bryant dropped what likely would have been a pick-six on the first play, the Hurricanes embarked on a 14-play, 69-yard march that used up all but 33 seconds and ended in an exclamation-point touchdown. Miami converted three third-downs on the drive and punched it in on a weary Buckeye defense on fourth-and-goal from the one.

Quitting on the Job: Either Luke Fickell thinks you can roll over timeouts like cell-phone minutes- or he was running up the white flag. Because even while Miami ground down clock on the final scoring drive the first-year coach didn't utilize any of the three timeouts in his pocket.

[Back in 1990](#)

John Cooper agreed to stop play because of lightning with more than two minutes remaining in a game the Buckeyes trailed by just nine points. Fickell's actions Saturday- or lack of actions- weren't as bad as those of his old head coach. But the sight of Fickell standing on the sideline, staring blankly out at the field, holding onto those timeouts while the clock ran out, was a galling one. Losing is one thing. Flat-out quitting is another. And Luke Fickell quit on Saturday.

One Bright Spot: It was the little tailback Jordan Hall, who returned to the lineup after a two-week suspension. Hall virtually was the offense, rushing for 87 yards on 14 carries, adding a reception for four yards and compiling 32 yards on punt returns. On a night in which no one else on Ohio State's offense distinguished himself- at least not in a positive way- Jordan Hall was a ray of light. Unfortunately, cramps and conditioning issues limited his play in the second half.

Jacory Tried to Help: Ohio State's best potential offensive threat may have been Miami quarterback Jacory Harris, who returned to the lineup after his own suspension. Harris threw four interceptions in last season's Buckeye victory over the Canes in the Horseshoe, and after starting hot with two first-quarter touchdown passes, uncorked two more in an effort to get the Buckeyes back in the football game. Unfortunately, Ohio State couldn't take advantage of Harris's compulsive gift-giving: the two interceptions resulted in only three points.

Dash of Cold Water: Here's a disquieting bit of reality- Ohio State was shut down and dominated by a football team that, frankly, isn't that good. Miami won't win more than eight

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games this year and won't contend for the title in the ACC.

Which Means: Ohio State isn't that good either. The Buckeyes will get some playmakers- Boom Herron, DeVier Posey- back in a few weeks and the defense will recover from last Saturday's uncharacteristically sloppy performance. But the quarterback issues aren't going away. Bauserman sure as hell isn't getting any better and while Braxton Miller will, he's no miracle worker- he won't come in and save a BCS bid the way Terrelle Pryor did as a freshman. And this schedule is daunting. I'm not pointing at the sky and claiming it's falling, but wouldn't be a surprise to see Ohio State's season wrapped up before the New Year. Get ready for late-December football for this team.

Knock Me Over With a Feather: For the first time since late in the 2004 season, Ohio State has dropped out of the AP Top 25 poll. They might not be back for a while.

Around the Nation



Dave Martin, Getty Images

Game of the Week- Iowa/Pittsburgh: Iowa has made some big-time comebacks over the last

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few years, especially at home, but last Saturday's 31-27 victory over the Panthers ranks right up there in the annals. Late in the third quarter the Hawkeyes trailed 24-3, and they were still behind 27-10 after Kevin Harper drilled a 24-yard field goal with 12:09 to play. With the previous week's sickening triple-overtime loss to Iowa State still fresh in the memory Kirk Ferentz's team was suddenly staring face-to-face with a season on the brink.

Enter James Vandenberg. Iowa's junior quarterback had already completed three straight passes on his team's previous drive, a march he had ended with a one-yard touchdown plunge. Now, with Iowa's season on the line, Vandenberg raised his game to new heights, completing six straight and ending a quick 73-yard drive with a 14-yard strike to Keenan Davis to make it 27-17 with just under ten minutes remaining. Pitt responded by driving to the Hawkeye 36 but failed on fourth-and-three to give the ball back to Iowa in good field position and 7:56 still to play. Vandenberg promptly whipped his team 64 yards in seven plays, cutting the deficit to 27-24 with a 25-yard scoring toss to Kevonte Martin-Manley. There were still more than six minutes to play.

After the Panthers went three-and-out Vandenberg got it back at his 36-yard line with 4:22 left. What followed was all-but-inevitable. With 2:51 left Vandenberg found Martin-Manley for his third touchdown pass in seven minutes, putting the Hawkeyes in front 31-27. Micah Hyde's interception a minute later sealed the comeback. On his last four drives after falling behind 24-3, James Vandenberg completed 17-of-22 attempts for 217 yards, threw three touchdown passes and ran for a touchdown. His eleventh-hour brilliance might have saved Iowa's season.

Player of the Week- Seth Doege, Texas Tech: Beating the stuffing out of hapless New Mexico isn't impressive in itself- but Droeg's performance in the 59-13 rout of the Lobos certainly was. Texas Tech's junior quarterback completed a dizzying 40-of-44 for 401 yards and five touchdowns, setting a NCAA completion-percentage record for forty or more attempts. The previous record was held by Droeg's fellow Red Raider Kliff Kingsbury.

They Went to Jarrett: The felony arrest and suspension of LSU starting quarterback Jordan Jefferson obviously wasn't good for Jordan Jefferson- but it may have been just what the doctor ordered for the Bayou Bengals. LSU certainly doesn't seem to miss the senior quarterback after moving to 3-0 with a 19-6 win at Mississippi State Thursday night. Indeed, the key to the Tigers possibly making a run to the BCS title might lie in the man who has replaced Jefferson under center.

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When last seen, Jarrett Lee was a shaky redshirt freshman who became infamous during the 2008 season for throwing seven interceptions that were returned for touchdowns. In the two years following that not-so-illustrious debut, Lee threw just 129 passes as Jefferson's understudy. Forced back into the lineup, however, the once-scattershot passer has been a revelation, a cool, efficient and, most importantly, mistake-free leader. Thus far Lee has completed 67.8 percent of his passes with just one interception in 59 attempts. He may lack Jordan Jefferson's big-play ability, but his crispness and command are big reasons why LSU looks like one of the teams to beat in college football.

And the way the Tigers play on the line of scrimmage, they don't need pyrotechnics at quarterback. They overpowered Mississippi State on both sides of the ball Thursday, holding the Bulldogs to 52 yards rushing while hammering away offensively with Spencer Ware, who abused defenders to the tune of 107 yards on 22 carries. LSU's defensive line is as good as any in the game, they can run the ball and they've got a potential big-play receiver in sophomore Reuben Randle. When you physically dominate opponents in the trenches the way the Tigers can, Jarrett Lee is more than adequate as your starting quarterback. Think Craig Krenzel or, for longtime observers of God's Conference, Jay Barker, the quarterback for Alabama's 1992 National Champion.

Atlantic Coast Party: Throughout the last several months, as every other BCS conference either added schools or were rumored to add them, the ACC- which started this latest realignment with its 2005 raid of the Big East- remained quiet, seemingly content with its round, twelve-school arrangement. That state of affairs ended over the weekend, when the Atlantic Coast again went to its northern neighbor for reinforcements, [heisting Syracuse and Pittsburgh](#)

Football-wise the move doesn't help the ACC all that much. Syracuse and Pitt are gridiron has-beens, programs whose glory days are in the past. Bringing them in does expand the conference's New York City footprint, but NYC isn't really a college football town anyway, and what passion it does have for the game is mostly reserved for Notre Dame and Penn State. Basketball is where the move really benefits the ACC- Syracuse and Pitt are excellent hoops programs and there is a lot of interest in both programs in New York City. It's a real coup for a hoops-crazy conference that, aside from Duke and North Carolina, has struggled a bit in that area the last few years.

The biggest story around the move in terms of football is the devastating effect it has on the Big East. With the exception of West Virginia every one of the conference's flagship football

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programs from its early '90s foundation- Miami, Virginia Tech, Syracuse, Pitt, Boston College- has been purloined. There's not even the pretence of a true BCS-caliber league anymore. The only chance this conference has to remain viable is to merge with the rump of the Big 12, and even that is a dubious proposition. Here is what a combined Big East-Big 12 would look like:

East

Connecticut

Rutgers

West Virginia

Cincinnati

Louisville

South Florida

West

Iowa State

Missouri

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Kansas

Kansas State

Baylor

TCU

Look appealing to you? Yeah, me neither.

Winners of the Week



Iowa State: Another week, another stirring win for the Cyclones, who are 3-0 for the first time since 2005 after their come-from-behind 24-20 victory at Connecticut.

Wide receiver Darius Reynolds provided the fireworks with four catches for 128 yards and two touchdowns, including the game-winning score early in the fourth quarter. One week after leading his team to a triple-overtime upset of Iowa, Paul Rhoads provided more evidence that he's one of the best under-the-radar coaches in college football.

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Texas: After a year-plus of shaky football Texas finally looked like Texas in a 49-20 road rout of UCLA. What's more, the Longhorns might have finally found the heir apparent to Colt McCoy- his little brother Case. The younger McCoy was near-perfect in victory, completing 12-of-15 for 168 yards and two touchdowns. It was a sweet bit of revenge for Texas, whose 2010 season began its downward slide with an embarrassing home loss to the Bruins.

Illinois: Despite being outgained 362-240 and committing three turnovers, the Illini- who more often than not finds ways to lose- found a way to beat 22nd-ranked Arizona State, topping the Sun Devils 17-14. Illinois is now 3-0, and with Western Michigan, Northwestern and Indiana coming up, have a great chance to be 6-0 when they host Ohio State on October 15.

Utah: The first pre-November Holy War since 1967 resulted in the rivalry's most lopsided outcome in more than three decades, as the Utes spotted BYU a 10-7 lead late in the first-half before exploding for 47 unanswered points on the way to a 54-10 thrashing of the Cougars in Provo. Utah's defense forced seven turnovers, including six lost fumbles, while John White IV rumbled for 174 yards and three touchdowns.

Tulane: At 2-1 the Green Wave are off to their best start since 2005 after burying Alabama-Birmingham in Legion Field, 49-10. Tulane racked up 540 total yards in the win, 281 of those off the arm of Ryan Griffin, who also threw three touchdown passes. Embattled head coach Bob Toledo needed this start, and he'll need to keep winning in order to keep his job.

Losers of the Week

Auburn: Or to be more specific, Auburn's defense. The Tiger stop troops were ragged for the third straight week and the result was a 38-24 loss at Clemson and the end to the program's 17-game winning streak. In three games against Utah State, Mississippi State and Clemson the Tigers have allowed 110 points- an average of nearly 37 per game. That's no way to defend a BCS Championship.

Florida State: It was a marvelous opportunity for the fifth-ranked Seminoles- at home, at night and a sellout crowd to carry them in a program-defining showdown with top-ranked Oklahoma. But they weren't up to the challenge. After falling behind by ten points Florida State rallied to tie the game 13-13 early in the fourth, but the Sooners then put it away on a [Landr](#)

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[y Jones-to-Kenny Stills touchdown strike](#)

and a clinching field goal to win, 23-13. Another year will go by without national-championship contention for the Seminoles, who haven't played for the title since the 2000 season.

Northwestern: Even with Dan Persa out of the lineup it's tough for a team with Big Ten division-title aspirations to justify a loss to Army- particularly a loss in which the title-aspirant in question was physically manhandled. The Black Knights pounded the Wildcat defense for 387 rushing yards and held the ball for more than forty minutes in a 21-14 victory at West Point. It was Army's first win over a Big Ten school since 1988, when the Black Knights defeated these same Northwestern Wildcats by a score of 23-7.

Temple: At home, against a weakened Penn State team, this may have been the best opportunity yet for the Owls to break a 28-game losing streak against their in-state rivals. But they couldn't do it: Temple mustered just 197 total yards and committed three turnovers as Michael Zordich's one-yard run with 2:42 left gave the Lions a 14-10 victory.

Boston College: You'd think a home game against Duke would be a perfect way for the Eagles to get on track after an awful start to their season. And for nearly two quarters that appeared to be the case, as BC built a 19-7 lead late in the first half. But quarterback Sean Renfree brought the Blue Devils back, with two touchdown passes to go with 359 yards through the air. Down 20-19, the Eagles had one last chance to win it at the end. But Nate Freese's 23-yard chip-shot clanged off the left upright- and at 0-3, Boston College is off to its worst start in two decades.

Next: Saturday at 3:30, when Ohio State returns home to face the Colorado Buffaloes. The crisis is at hand. How will this team respond?