



- *Saturday, November 5, 2011*

- *Ohio Stadium, Columbus, OH*

- *12:00 p.m. (ET)*

- *TV: Big Ten Network -*

After playing ranked opponents four games in a row, Ohio State gets a breather of sorts this Saturday, when the [Indiana Hoosiers](#) come to town for a noon kickoff at Ohio Stadium. Luke Fickell's charges will have to guard against a letdown after last weekend's gripping comeback

win over Wisconsin, but Indiana (1-8, 0-5) is so young and injury-riddled that the Buckeyes (5-3, 2-2) should be able to get by this week without too much trouble, and on to the meat of the remaining Big Ten schedule.

Fickell will be trying to continue the recent OSU tradition of November football excellence. Ohio State is 17-1 in the month of November since the start of the 2005 season. They have won 16 straight over the Hoosiers, dating to a 1990 tie, and have not lost to Indiana since consecutive losses in 1987 and 1988. Last year Ohio State ran out to a 31-0 halftime lead and cruised to a 38-10 victory in Columbus. *(The above streak totals have not yet been adjusted to pretend last year's games didn't happen)*

The Hoosiers under first-year coach Kevin Wilson have started nine freshmen so far this year, and several others are playing regularly, in part due to a large number of upperclassmen leaving the program or being lost to injury or discipline since Wilson took over the program in the offseason. In the past week alone, Wilson's two top wide receivers have been lost to the Hoosiers for the season. Preseason All-Big Ten pick Damarlo Belcher was kicked off the team for rules violations, and then on Tuesday, [Wilson confirmed](#) that No. 2 receiver Duwyce Wilson will also be lost to the team due to a serious knee injury.

The Buckeyes, meanwhile, have played themselves back into contention in the Leaders Division of the conference, and are currently tied with Wisconsin and Purdue at 2-2 in league play. All three teams trail Penn State (8-1, 5-0) by 2.5 games in the division, but the Nittany Lions have remaining games against Wisconsin, Ohio State and Nebraska. If Ohio State can go 4-0 this month, and either the Badgers or the Cornhuskers can hang a second Big Ten loss on Penn State, then the Buckeyes will hold the tie-breakers with the other contenders, and would qualify for the Big Ten title game.



State of the Bucks - *(in which we briefly discuss off-the-field matters concerning OSU)*

That the Buckeyes “would qualify” for the conference championship game is a loaded phrase. That’s because the program is still waiting to hear from the NCAA about their eligibility to take part in any postseason football this season. Before the latest flurry of player violations...what

we'll call the ["DiGeronimo File"](#) ...it looked as though Ohio State would avoid any postseason ban. But there is less certainty about that since the recent disclosures concerning players being overpaid for work they performed for a long-time OSU booster.

As far as I can see, the key word there is "booster". None of the previous player violations involved people who were officially connected to the program in any way. DiGeronimo brings the problem closer to home. A one-year ban...probably this season, but depending on the timing of the announcement of final sanctions, possibly next season....remains an option for the NCAA Committee on Infractions. And don't expect NCAA action anytime very soon. Doug Lesmerises of [the PD reports](#) this week that OSU has yet to formally respond to the latest round of violations, and the NCAA won't act until some weeks after they get that response. All that said, the Buckeyes should be "bowl eligible" *(six wins)* by about 3 p.m. Saturday afternoon.

Back to the IU game...On the injury front, the biggest thing to report is Jordan Hall's ankle sprain, suffered on his big 42-yard kickoff return in the final moments against Wisconsin. Hall will almost certainly sit out the Indiana game, which should allow some carries for Carlos Hyde. Hyde remains the team's leading rusher, with 408 yards (5.2 yd. avg) even though he has had only three carries in the two games since his 104-yard, two touchdown effort at Nebraska. Dan Herron's return has been the biggest factor in Hyde's inactivity, and the big sophomore was reportedly unhappy last week about his lack of playing time. But Herron and others have taken him aside and assured him that his time will come...and that time may well be this weekend.

To observe the OSU offense against a good Wisconsin team on Saturday was to watch Braxton Miller growing up as a college quarterback. Miller picked up several key first downs with scrambles and designed running plays. He showed a bit more touch on some of his shorter throws, and some tighter spirals on the longer ones. Most impressive to me though was his apparent calm and poise in what was an extremely tense situation.

He is reportedly an emotional kid, but he has found a way to mask that emotion, and his face and his demeanor under center and in the huddle show a young man unfazed by all the tension and the distractions around him. None of that would matter a lick if he still didn't perform in the clutch like he did Saturday, but OSU fans have to be encouraged by his development so far.

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