



Ohio State and Florida meet on Monday in the Taxslayer.com Gator Bowl, (1 p.m., ESPN2) in what will be just the second game ever between the two programs. You may remember the first meeting, just five years ago, on a much larger stage. Memories of that night still sting for Buckeye fans, but their pain is eased these days knowing that the coach who trounced them 41-14 in the 2007 BCS title game will be plying his trade in Columbus from this day forward.

The Buckeyes and the Gators come in to [EverBank Field](#) in Jacksonville with identical 6-6 regular season marks, each trying to salvage a record on the positive side of the ledger. When your bowl game is being broadcast on The Deuce, and it's named after a tax-preparation website, it's a clue that your season didn't go the way you wanted it to. For Ohio State, a victory Monday would mean avoiding their first losing season since 1988, when they were 4-6-1 in John Cooper's first year in Columbus.

The humbling 2011 season for the Ohio State football program is coming to a merciful end in Jacksonville. The entire up-and-down campaign of 12 games was overshadowed from the start by the scandals surrounding NCAA violations by Ohio State players, and Jim Tressel's failure to report his knowledge of those violations. Tressel's dismissal after a decade of excellence on the field remains the top story in OSU sports for 2011, even after the high-profile hire of Urban Meyer in November.

The first season of the post-Tressel era at OSU concludes with a match-up of first-year coaches in Luke Fickell and the Gators' Will Muschamp. But the man who links these two programs, Urban Meyer, isn't going to be in Jacksonville at all. That's largely because he would be the center of attention if he were. Nobody at Ohio State wants that...and Luke Fickell doesn't deserve it.



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