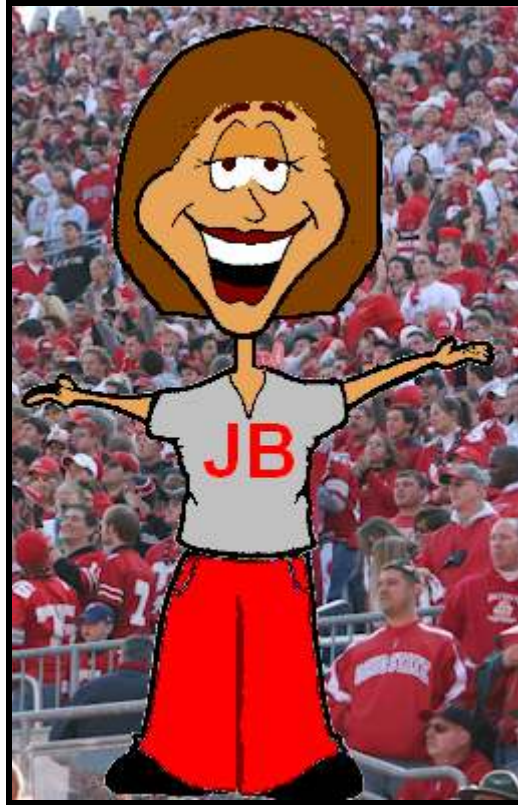


JENNY BUCKS

09/16/07



Greetings from C-bus:

Fall is in the air here in Columbus ... not only because of the cool air (we had scattered frost last night) but also because football is the number 1 topic among the residents. Plus, we could *finally* see a Buckeye game on TV (no thanks to the Big Ten Network but thanks to ESPN) ...

The acronym initially used for the first 4 games of the year was Y-A-W-N - Youngstown St., Akron, Washington, and Northwestern but suddenly the Huskies appeared to be no walkover as they started out the season a surprising 2-0 thanks to their redshirt freshman QB Jake Locker. Well, Jake Locker was all that was advertised and maybe Washington was a bit underestimated at the beginning of the season ... but the Bucks proved victorious in a bit of a closer game than I would have liked. But the Bucks, for the third game in a row, have no one really to blame but themselves for the close contest. Again, Buckeye miscues made the first half a very, very close contest.

Joining the Buckeyes on the sideline as Honorary Captain for this contest was a familiar face, Andy Geiger. The retired AD lives about 70 miles northwest of Seattle on the Pacific coast. He seemed a bit unaccustomed to the sideline, telling the local radio sideline reporter that he wasn't sure of his duties. But he sure could stand on that sideline proudly, knowing that he put in motion those things that put that Buckeye brain trust there.

The Buckeyes named as their second defensive captain for the week, Vernon Gholston, and I think the theme of the week was again, defense. The Buckeye defense again kept the Bucks in the game, while the offense pushed the gear shift out of neutral in the second half. And the D clearly focused on turnovers during weekly practice with 3 turnovers on defense, 2 from the clear defensive star, James Laurinaitis. His two interceptions, the second a very athletic grab, stopped two potential scoring drives for the Huskies and clamped the door shut on any hopes for a Husky victory. But it started with special teams play ... and there is probably a weak link or two still on special teams ... more on that later.

The play of the game was probably the block of the Washington FG with 10:25 left on the clock in the third quarter. Kurt Coleman had a big game but none bigger than that play! And did you see that excitement on the sideline from Tress?!?! I haven't seen him that excited since the 2002 NC game ...

That subsequent drive ended on its second play with a 68-yard strike from Boeckman to Robo. Tressel noted that it was a run-pass option. Boeckman stated in the post-game that he saw single coverage on Robo and knew that the mis-match presented opportunities to get the ball to where Robo could run underneath it. Boeckman also came out in the second half with better command of the long ball - in the first half some opportunities were there but Boeckman seemed to be short with the ball and/or a bit off target. Boeckman was in fact very lucky that the Huskies seemed to have the same problem getting those potential INT's corralled as the Bucks did last week!

Then the kickoff ended with a fumble recovery by freshman James Scott and in 2 plays featuring the rejuvenated Beanie Wells for 28 yards, the Bucks shut the door on any 1st half hangover and put up 14 quick ones on the Huskies. Playing from behind, Jake Locker isn't the same QB - he's a really good QB but I think that closed the playbook

at bit to some of his scripted runs and his passing game isn't "all that" ... yet.

Back to the defense ... Laurinaitis is a beast. He's a real gamer ... soft-spoken, polite in the media; he really is an animal on the field and clearly a leader both on the field and off. He never panics - he makes plays and credits the other 10 on the field when he does. It's no wonder the defense took the unusual step of naming him a captain as a junior. The Lil' Animal finished with 8 tackles, 1 for a 5 yard loss. Anderson Russell is also making a statement in the secondary. Coming off his ACL injury against Iowa last year, Russell has come back strong and hardly timid making great, sure tackles and swarming to the ball anywhere and everywhere. He also came in to pressure Locker several times on the safety blitz. He reminds me a bit of Michael Doss out there, only Russell is speedier. Another great improvement I saw was in the play of Donald Washington. He emerged with some sure tackles in the secondary and the defense seems for comfortable with him out on an island, confident when called upon he will make some stops. The Huskies also seemed to want to try Chimdi Chekwa's skills going to his man several times when the Bucks were in the nickel. In case you haven't noticed, the Bucks made a change from last year in their nickel package, moving the always-steady Malcolm Jenkins to safety in the set and bringing in Chekwa as a corner. Jenkins is really emerging as a leader in the secondary, as the old-hand that he is as a junior, and I think putting him out with Russell at safety allows him to roam the field in the package. He made a great INT with such an athletic move, you can see why they have such confidence in his closing speed. Jenkins and Russell each had 8 tackles as well.

On offense, it seems that Kirk Barton did a good thing in "calling out the offense" last week in the post-game. He appears to be an "in-your-face" leader; probably good to have that nastiness on the O-line. And they did play better this week, opening some holes for Beanie to get him in gear quite a bit earlier this week. I had some confidence at the half having seen Beanie getting some of the much-needed yards early, knowing the Bucks could probably run the ball on the Huskies in the second half. Beanie had his second-consecutive 100-yard game with a stout 135 yards on 24 carries for a 5.6 average. That's what we expected of Beanie this season. Beanie appeared to leave the game with a bit of a hip-pointer/thigh bruise or perhaps a helmet to the back type of injury in the fourth quarter but the Bucks were clearly in control of the game at that point. He seemed fine in the post-game ... we'll see if there is any media discussion on an injury. It might be

one of those nagging things. I tend to think that the game plan is to give Beanie 20-25 carries in a game with Mo Wells and Brandon Saine scripted for another 10 a piece. Saine is showing increasing promise running the ball with the size to blow through and over the tacklers. He had 9 carries for 83 yards, with the TD in the final play. Tressel said in the post-game that he apologized to Ty Willingham after the game for that last TD. It was just an off-tackle play and of course you're not going to tell a true freshman not to run for the open field when it presents itself. Obviously when Tressel didn't field the team for the extra point, you knew that the TD wasn't by design. He's just a fast guy (Saine). Mo Wells is more of a change-up back. He's the guy they like to get the ball to in space, because he doesn't have the size to break tackles but he's got speed to burn.

Boeckman had a good outing, particularly in the second half. The Buckeye offense put up over 300 of its 481 yards of total offense in the 2nd half. He was 14 of 25 for 218, 2 TDs and the most important stat - no turnovers! He looked a bit shaky early but the second half got him some confidence and he looked to be in command. You could tell that he's been given some leverage to check-off at the line ... there were several audibles at the line and few negative plays. I'd like him to show some better accuracy early but he might be one of those guys who needs to get his legs under him. Note too the change now two weeks in a row ... the Bucks win the toss and take the ball on O!!! Might it be that the coaches have a bit more confidence in this offense than we fans do? It might also be their confidence in the Buckeye kick return group to get good field position with the new kickoff distance ... not sure ...

Areas to shore up ... kickoff coverage. When Ryan Pretorius needs to make a tackle, things are not going as planned. A little more lane discipline, a little better tackling. Did you know that the coverage unit features 4 true freshmen? That might tell you that there's some coaching/teaching going on. Other issues were some bad snaps on the FG attempts - the ball was low and not spun correctly on the one block - Pretorius never wants to kick the laces. I think we'd also like to see a bit more depth on the kickoffs from Pretorius. Perhaps the hoped-for return of Petrey to the kicking corps (from injury) might keep their respective legs fresher for the long ones. I thought AJ Trapasso had a good outing (handling some bad snaps) with his career long 63 yarder coming in the game. He's a tough kid - played RB and LB in high school where he was all-state. I'm waiting for him to rumble with the ball sometime this season in a fake ... I'm waiting.

And a real need is an end to the stupid, stupid penalties we are seeing again and again. And these are drive-stalling types. "No more procedure penalties" has got to be posted in the locker room for this next game. The coaches have also got to work out the player rotation a bit more to eliminate some of the 12-men situations and some confusion over personnel that occurred again this past game. Can't waste those valuable time-outs either to get the right personnel in the game.

Next up ... Northwestern. The Mildcats have the distinction of helping Duke break its 22-game losing streak in football in Evanston yesterday! Ugh. And the Mildcats do play a spread offense, a bit like that of the Huskies, with a mobile QB. I think we have a remedy for that ... Mr.

Bacher, meet the Lil' Animal. Bacher had a 30-50, 368 yard passing outing in their 20-14 loss to Duke.

And did you know that Marcus Aereilius of Gladiator fame, yes, Russell Crowe, is a "special friend" of the UM football program. He gave their pregame speech before their drubbing of ND. And here I thought it was all about Hart's guaranteed victory ... and, now I know that they had to call upon the ghost of Caesar's gladiator to get it done.

GO BUCKS from JennyBucks!