In Part III of Furls' breakdown of The Game Of The Century, he takes a look at the matchup that I feel will determine the outcome of this game. Michigan's wide recievers versus the Ohio State secondary. Will Chad Henne be able to move the Wolverine offense through the air against Jenkins, Smith, O'Neal, and Mitchell? Furls gives us his assessment.

Click here for Part I - Ohio State Defensive Line vs. Michigan Offensive Line

Click here for Part II - Ohio State Offensive Line vs. Michigan Defensive Line

Part III - Ohio State Secondary vs. Michigan Wide Receivers

Time for another Mark May-esque quip ...

If the Michigan wide receivers are able to beat the Buckeyes secondary deep and hold on to the ball, they will score some touchdowns!

Here is the million-dollar question, can Chad Henne and his wide receivers pull it together and beat this Ohio State secondary? The Buckeyes have proven susceptible to the run, but not so much that you can beat them solely on the ground. In order to keep pace with the Buckeyes offense, Michigan will have to come up with some big plays.

The short answer, NO. Short of Mario Manningham, Michigan has no viable options at wide receiver. Steve Breaston is not good for anything but returning kicks and Adrian Arrington is not particularly good either. Breaston is fast and is definetly a home run threat, but he runs horrible

routes and can't seem to break the big one.

The Buckeyes may actually have the best secondary in college football. Ohio State's second best corner, Antonio Smith, was recently selected as a Thorpe semifinalist, and somehow, Malcolm Jenkins was omitted from that list.

Jenkins may be the best cover corner in college football today. He makes the kind of plays that only elite corners even attempt, in particular his defense of a jump ball against Limas Sweed in the Texas game speaks volumes for his technical skills. He has not been beat down the field yet this year and has recorded four interceptions.

Smith plays a very cerebral game at cornerback, not surprising considering he is majoring in mechanical engineering. Smith has played his way from walk-on, to special teams player, to backup, to starter, and ultimately to NFL prospect. He is exceptionally alert on the field and has demonstrated the ability to step up and stop the run, cover receivers, and come in hard on the corner blitz.

Ohio State's safeties are good as well and due to the teams depth at safety, the loss of Anderson Russell did not affect this team as bad as it would have affected most other teams. Jemario O'Neal has been very good, recording an interception and continuously ending up in the right place at the right time to make the play. Brandon Mitchell has played well this year as well and has lent significant leadership to this secondary from his safety slot.

Ohio State has done a very good job of keeping the routes in front of them all season long. The philosophy on defense seems to be to give up the play in front and make a team beat them with consistently good execution and ten play drives. This philosophy has been exceptionally successful and as a result this team leads the nation in scoring defense.

So what can the Wolverines do? Well if I were Lloyd Carr, I would first resist the temptation to

kill myself, then I would try to get on Jim Tressel's staff as an equipment manager. After these failed, I would accept my fate in hell as the Wolverines coach and I would try very hard to first establish the run and then use delayed routes in conjunction with play action pass, hoping to get the corners to bite on the run giving the receivers a step.

Additionally, Carr needs to accept what the Buckeyes give. In general the Buckeyes secondary will give up the short stuff on the outside, 5-7 yards, but on the negative side, Henne has NOT demonstrated the ability to consistently throw the screen or dangerous out routes well. As a matter of fact he has tossed a couple of "pick 6's" as a result of lazy, inaccurate out routes of this exact distance.

Therefore, the answer for Carr is to try to pound the ball and mix in play action on 1st down periodically. If he can do this, he may be able to keep the Buckeyes from bringing eight into the box, but given Ohio State's secondary and Michigan's weaknesses at WR and QB, I am not sure that even this strategy would be effective.

Look for the Buckeyes to play Jenkins on Manningham with help over the top to help him take away the intermediate routes. Jenkins will concede the five yard routes except in short yardage situations. Look for Antonio Smith to play Breaston tight at the line with some help over the top also, possibly a cover two look since Michigan has not been very active in the middle seam with a tight end and even if they were to use a tight end down the middle, I like our linebackers chances in coverage.

In obvious passing situations look for the Buckeyes to continue to use the "double nickel" dubbed thusly, because this particular nickel look involves number 55, Curtis Terry. Terry has been terrific lately and his play has really picked up. He has been equally as likely in this look to drop into coverage from his outside linebacker slot, or blitz outside the outside shoulder of the defensive end.

In summation, the Buckeyes hold a decisive advantage in this match up, regardless of formation or motion. The only way Michigan will be able to do anything substantial in the

passing game is on a bad beat down the field (think Lee Evans vs. Chris Gamble), or if the Buckeyes get caught overplaying the run.