Furls has spent this entire week breaking down this game in every way humanly possible. At the end of the day, what does it all mean? What's going to happen at 3:42 Saturday afternoon when the kickoff flies in the air amidst the screaming and yelling of 106,000 strong? Furls tells you what's gonna happen, who's gonna win, and how they're gonna do it ... in THIS - his preview of The Game. GO BUCKS!!!!!!!!

I have been breaking this game down all week. I looked at numbers from common opponents, history, significance, and even tossed in a BCS breakdown, but what this game really comes down to is who can stand up to the pressure, which team will execute when it is all on the line, when the nation is watching, when the national title hangs in the balance?

In the red corner we have the sweater vest and the Buckeyes. This team has worn the #1 bullseye all season long and survived and excelled in every challenge. This team is not new to big games, not this season. When you wear the #1 tag, you are every teams biggest game of the year. It doesn't hurt that Jim Tressel is probably the best big game coach in recent history.

In the blue corner we have the perpetual scowl of Lloyd Carr and his mighty Wolverines. I knew from the beginning of the season that this Michigan team was good, but I had no idea that they were going to be this good. They have also played in a couple of big games this season, vs. Notre Dame and of course the rivalry game against the Spartans, but I am not sure that they took everyone's best punch, like Ohio State did and I am not sure that Lloyd Carr is anywhere near the big game coach that Jim Tressel is.

Don't discount Lloyd Carr completely though. All week long he has been smiling like the cat that swallowed the canary, like the poker buddy that has figure out your "tell." Does he have some master scheme figured to slow Troy Smith, the man who has single-handedly beat Michigan the last two seasons? I think he has a plan, but we will get there in a little bit.

The hype for this game has been unbelievable and the game itself could not possibly live up to the hype, even in three overtimes, but the importance of this game cannot be overstated. At least half of the national championship picture will be decided, here in Columbus, in front of 106,000 fans in what many people feel is the greatest rivalry in sport.

The Match Ups ...

Ohio State Offense vs. Michigan Defense:

All week long I have said that Ohio State will have trouble running the ball, and that is an obvious statement, no one has had any success on the ground against Michigan. I am not sure that Barry Sanders would move the ball against them. That having been said, it is still an important part of the game for the Buckeyes. If the Wolverines don't have to watch for the run, they will blitz at will, and given the trouble that their front four can cause, that would be very problematic for the Buckeyes. The question is, how and when will the Buckeyes run it?

I do not think that the Buckeyes will come right out of the shoot and try to run the ball. I look for them to try to establish the pass first with short and intermediate passes mixed with the occasional designed quarterback run. I am sure that Smith also has a laundry list of hot run reads to counter Wolverine blitzes, particularly from four and five wide receiver formations.

I believe that Lloyd Carr has studied a bit too much film and believes that the key to beating Troy Smith is pressure and I think he will sell out and run a very aggressive blitz scheme. Look for Michigan to bring two regularly, but this will expose them elsewhere. Blitzing linebackers leave holes over the middle and blitzing corners leave holes in the secondary. Smith has improved by leaps and bounds and reading blitzes and he will make Michigan pay.

Look for the Buckeyes to incorporate a handful of screen passes into the game to slow down the defenders. Screen passes take advantage of a defenders aggressiveness by allowing them to run past the play that is getting ready to go right over their heads. Now, regardless of whether or not a screen works, it is still effective because it causes a defender to hesitate and that one second of hesitation may be all that it takes to make the play.

All week long we have heard that if Troy Smith gets time, than he will beat the Wolverines. I will tell you that Troy Smith will get time and will beat the Wolverines. While the Buckeyes offensive line appears overmatched on paper, they will get the job done and Troy Smith will buy the time that he needs to win the game. Michigan's front four will make some plays, but in the end they will not be able to make every play and Michigan's weak secondary will be exposed.

Ohio State Defense vs. Michigan Offense:

Chad Henne has been better this year, but he is still susceptible to the lazy pass or the late pass. Balls that are slightly off target against this Ohio State secondary will become big problems for Henne, and ultimately, I believe the match up between Ohio State's secondary and Michigan's wide receivers will force Michigan to win this game on the ground or with the short passing game.

Last year Mike Hart was much more involved in the passing game, this year he has not been. Look for Michigan to get Hart the ball in the flat and on screens. Ohio State was vulnerable to these types of plays early in the season and I think that Michigan will try to capitalize on this. Ohio State has improved against the screen mightily and I think Carr will be disappointed.

I think all Ohio State's defense has to do is avoid giving up the big play while limiting Hart to about 3-4 yards per carry and they will keep the Wolverines from breaking 17 points and win this game. Watch for Michigan to run a lot of zone left, hopefully the linebackers will be up for it

and will maintain their gap assignments because Hart will kill them on the cutback if they flow to much with the play.

Don't Be Surprised If…

Ohio State throws more screen passes in this game than they have all season (three by my count).

Troy Smith is Ohio State's leading rusher.

Troy Smith sets the all time Ohio State record for passing yards in a Michigan game (330).

Michigan's defensive game plan hinges on blitzing on nearly every play.

Ohio State's secondary picks Henne 3 times.

Ohio State puts up 125 rushing yards on Michigan.

Rory Nichol and Brian Robiskie are an important part of the offense. When the Wolverines blitz, Hall will be single on either Gonzo or Ginn and the linebacker blitzing should create the hole in the middle for Nichol.

If I were a betting man…

I would take the Buckeyes –6.5 and the over (40.5). I like the Buckeyes to win big in a game that will be easier than most people think, like the Texas game. Michigan is vulnerable down the field and with an aggressive blitz oriented game plan, the door will be open for big plays on the outside down the field. I like Ginn, Gonzalez, and Robiskie down the field against any of Michigan's DBs not named Hall. Luckily there is only one Hall in Michigan's defensive backfield, so two of them should be open.

My Score Prediction ...

Ohio State 34

ScUM 16

Conservative play call in the second half keeps it closer than it is.