- Saturday, October 27, 2012

- Beaver Stadium - State College, PA

- Ohio State at Penn State

- 5:30 PM ET

- TV: ESPN -

The Buckeyes travel to Happy Valley Saturday for a nationally televised showdown against the Nittany Lions of Penn State. At stake is a leg up in the race for Big Ten's Leaders Division championship, the only prize either team is eligible to claim in 2012. Penn State has won five in a row after dropping their first two games of the year, while Ohio State is unbeaten in the first eight games of the Urban Meyer era in Columbus.

The 9th-ranked Buckeyes are the nation's only 8-0 team, but getting there has been anything but easy. They have squeaked out wins over Indiana and Purdue, two of the lesser lights of the conference, the last two Saturdays. Slow starts have been the rule, as OSU has been outscored in the first quarter of their games 56-51.

Needless to say, the way this Ohio State team has managed to overcome that disadvantage so often, and keep coming out on top has been something special to watch. Like most people watching, I thought the other shoe was finally dropping last week against Purdue, but the Buckeyes had yet another comeback in them.

Holding it Together

Meanwhile, first-year Penn State head coach Bill O'Brien has the Lions playing good football on both sides of the ball after a shaky start, and they'll have the home crowd behind them, plus the confidence born of a winning streak of their own. The Lions' five wins have not exactly come against the murderer's row of college football, and their path to a division title remains decidedly easier than that of the Buckeyes. They avoid both Michigan schools, although contests with Nebraska and Wisconsin await them after this weekend.

The schedule aside though, the job O'Brien has done is truly admirable, considering the numerous player defections, only having eight starters returning, all on top of the turmoil that has been swirling around the whole program for the last year, not least the passing of their iconic leader. The NCAA sanctions haven't taken effect yet, and it may be get worse before it gets better, but not if O'Brien can help it.

Ohio State leads the all-time series with Penn State 14-13, with a 12-7 edge since PSU joined the Big Ten. The teams have split the ten games in University Park 5-5. The road team has done well in recent years, with the Buckeyes posting wins at Beaver Stadium in 2007 and 2009, while the Nittany Lions beat the hosts in Columbus in 2008 and 2011. Steve Helwagen of Bucknuts.com has a terrific retrospective of the OSU-PSU series history that's well worth a look before Saturday's 5:30 pm kickoff.

State of the Bucks

[redacted]

[redacted]

[illegible] Game Notes - (pdf) [illegible]