The Buckeye hoops team opened Big Ten play last night, hosting the Indiana Hoosiers last night in what ended up being a very physical game and a hard fought Buckeye win. It was the first Big Ten game for Indiana natives Mike Conley Jr and Greg Oden, and both had great games. Furls was there, and is here to tell us about it.

Ohio State once again showed the Indiana Hoosiers who baby daddy is, but this time in a sport that is more near and dear to Hoosier fan's hearts. Most people would expect Ohio State to plaster Indiana in football every year, but in years past the Hoosiers were able to lift the spirits of their entire state by returning the favor in basketball. I am not so sure about that anymore.

Since Thad Matta took the reigns two years ago, Ohio State's basketball program has risen to national prominence, a position that should be secure for some time given his recruiting classes for 2007 and 2008. What was a bit surprising last night (and against Florida) is how unrefined the Buckeyes basketball team has been. They are exceptionally talented, but they seem to lack an identity. Perhaps the team is unsure of its identity and this is an identity crisis of sorts.

Before Greg Oden emerged from his wrist injury, the Buckeyes appeared smooth and coherent, even in their loss against the highly ranked North Carolina Tarheels. Since Oden's return the team has struggled on the offensive side of the ball as it attempts to decide if it is an inside-out team or a perimeter team with an inside option. This is a problem that most coaches would kill to have, as their decisions are usually forced by a limitation either inside or outside, but it is a problem none the less; a problem that needs to be resolved by March.

The Buckeyes clearly out-talented the Hoosiers last night, but it was a lack of identity that allowed the Hoosiers to stay in the game. The Buckeyes shot 50% from the field, but were a meager 4-15 from behind the arc. What was more disturbing was that the Hoosiers shot 54% from behind the arc. It is particularly important that the Buckeyes shore up their perimeter defense because teams are becoming increasingly leery of taking the ball inside against Oden.

Joey Shaw single-handedly carried the Hoosiers and kept them in the game with his timely 3-point shooting before fouling out late in the second half with 16 points. It seemed as though every time the Buckeyes would start to pull away ... Shaw would bury a three to keep Indiana in a game that was a lot closer than the 74-67 final score would indicate. Lost in the box score is the fact that Indiana actually led this game 55-54 until Ohio State took the lead for good following an easy Greg Oden lay up with 6:44 remaining in the game.

Mike Conley was masterful, finishing with nine points, ten assists, ZERO turnovers and also contributed a couple of timely steals on defense the defensive end. Daequan Cook contributed an additional twelve points off the bench on 4-6 shooting and demonstrated another aspect of his impressive skill set. It seems that every game Cook reveals another polished element of his game and last night it was his post play.

Oden was impressive, scoring 21 points, but he was not as effective on the glass as he will need to be against stiffer competition in the NCAA tournament. Oden was an animal on the defensive end, blocking four shots (including a rejection underneath that actually crossed the timeline) and altering about five more.

Indiana did a terrific job of slowing the pace of play to a crawl. The Buckeyes are going to have constantly be wary of teams using this tactic and push the pace of play as they seem to be more coherent when they are running the court.

Next up for the Buckeyes? The Illinois Fighting Illini in Champagne this Saturday at 2:00 EST.

Playing in Champagne is never an easy proposition, and the Bucks will have to play a little better in that game or they will lose.