Back from Arizona, Gary Benz delivers his take on Monday's disaster, which he witnessed live from section 242. Gary says that there's alot to be learned from the debacle, and expect many of the games top coaches to begin stealing pages from Urban Meyer's playbook. And that despite the outcome, this is still one of the greatest Buckeye football teams in the schools history, a fact likely to be lost in the wake of the blowout.

Everyone had a theory and given how poorly the Ohio State Buckeyes played in Monday's national championship game, save for the first 16 seconds, there was plenty of time during the game for such discussions.

But at half time is when the debates really started. First, the temporary residents of Section 242, most clad in Buckeye Scarlet and Grey, wondered whether the defense could stop the Florida Gators long enough to allow the Buckeyes to get back into the game. Most figured that was unlikely. Next, the questions came about the 52-day layoff since the Michigan game. A few "Troy Smith was distracted by all the Heisman stuff" made the rounds. Eventually, the discussions drifted into what was harder to take: a beat down or a last second loss. Naturally, the answers were just as varied and hardly conclusive.

What happened Monday was unanticipated by everyone, which is why the collective shock and the armchair philosophy. Even Florida fans after the game and at the airport were hard pressed to say what happened. To a person, they all admitted that they didn't believe the Gators had this kind of firepower in them.

But the Buckeye fans seemed particularly distraught. The common theme was that somehow both head coach Jim Tressel and quarterback Troy Smith had let them down when they needed them most. Most seemed to forget though that this team has lost exactly three games in two years, including signature wins over Michigan (twice) and Notre Dame. That's a lot of good that doesn't get undone by a dispiriting loss to a Florida team that was clearly ready to play and anxious to prove their mettle.

In looking back and thinking about the game, this much seems clear: the Buckeyes were beaten at the point of attack on both sides of the ball. Forget about the motion and odd formations of Urban Meyer's offense, Florida blocked better than we did. Florida's offensive line

not only proved to be more superior, but more importantly Florida's receivers put on a clinic on how to downfield block, allowing rather short throws to turn into decent gains time and time again. Defensively, the Gators line had the Buckeyes line on its heels from the first series on. As a result, the Gators had more time to pass, more holes to run through, and better penetration and pressure and Troy Smith. In a game that many worried would come down to gimmicks, it would old fashioned football that won it for the Gators.

The bigger question of course is what to make of such a defeat. In one sense, it's the kind of game where the first instinct is to burn the tape and write the whole thing off as an anomaly. In another, though, it's important not to lose sight of the lessons to be learned. For the Buckeyes, they need to do both.

The team most people saw last night was not the team that steamrolled through their first 12 games. In fact, the Buckeyes play was so uncharacteristic in virtually every respect of a Tressel-era team, there is little justification for losing much sleep over its hidden meanings, at least until the Buckeyes start laying eggs on a weekly basis like the Lerner-era Browns.

That being said, however, don't burn the tapes. Just as Patton learned much from Rommel during World War II, there were lessons to be learned from Meyer from last night's game. Fortunately for Buckeye fans, Tressel, like New England's Bill Belichick is as much a student of the game as a coach. It won't be much of a surprise if, sometime next year, there isn't just a little bit of the Florida Gators motion and blocking schemes showing up in the Buckeyes playbook. And it will be even less of a surprise to see a more innovative use by Tressel of the four and five wide receiver sets to combat the umbrella like defense that Florida used to neutralize the Buckeyes on Monday.

Despite the outcome, this is still one of the better teams in Buckeye history. They were one game away from being the best of all time. The status may be gone but their significant place in history is more than secure. And fret not for Troy Smith. He's still a winner who is unlikely to be defined by this one bad game. His draft status may be impacted but as he's shown throughout his young career, he's at his best when underestimated. If he drops to the second round and is available and the Browns still don't pick him, that's all the more reason to burn your season tickets and campaign loudly and openly for a whole new regime.

Finally, resist the temptation to somehow conclude that Tressel has lost his mystique as a result of Monday's loss. Assuming he remains at Ohio State, he'll probably end up as the greatest coach in Buckeye history. Everyone wants championships, but to win one you have to get there and Tressel has done that twice, in a short period of time. His extensive track record is ample proof that he knows how to win. It is also a strong indicator that Monday night's game is unlikely the last to feature the Buckeyes vying for the National Championship.

These next few days may look bleak to Buckeye fans, but when the distaste of this most humiliating defeat wears off, and it will, it's still clear that of all the teams that Cleveland fans follow, this is the least likely to disappoint or the most likely to consistently win, depending on whether your glass is half full or half empty.