With the Buckeye necklaces stuffed back into sock drawers for the winter and the last notes of "Hang On Sloopy" fading from the air, it's time for some 20/20 hindsight. This 2006 Ohio State team was very good. Perhaps, as some have asserted, the best in school history, which is saying a mouthful. But perhaps they weren't as perfect as we wanted to believe. Papa Cass chimes in with his thoughts on Monday night's disaster in the desert.

We never saw it coming. Not like this.

Sure, Florida could win. It's not like, in our legendary Northeast Ohio paranoia, that we never entertained the thought of something going horribly wrong and Florida snatching the national championship away.

It's just that we prepared ourselves for something like a Tony Romo botched hold on a game-deciding field goal attempt. We conditioned ourselves for Antonio Pittman to play the role of Earnest Byner on third-and-goal in the fourth quarter.

Forty-one to 14, we couldn't have seen coming. Ted Ginn Jr. getting injured by friendly fire in a touchdown celebration, we couldn't have predicted. The crystal ball didn't show Troy Smith looking like Charlie Frye, overmatched and running scared.

And no clairvoyant could have sensed that Jim Tressel would look like a high school JV coach pitted against Urban Meyer.

Maybe we should have.

With the Buckeye necklaces stuffed back into sock drawers for the winter and the last notes of

"Hang On Sloopy" fading from the air, it's time for some 20/20 hindsight.

This 2006 Ohio State team was very good. Perhaps, as some have asserted, the best in school history, which is saying a mouthful. But perhaps they weren't as perfect as we wanted to believe.

This was not an all-time great college football team all along. A lot of what they accomplished, they accomplished with timing first and talent second.

This was a team fortunate enough to not have to face Vince Young when they played Texas. This was a team that cut a wide swath through the Big Ten when the conference was in a down period.

They clobbered Minnesota and Northwestern, but let Illinois scare them and let Penn State hang close until late.

Much like the 2002 Buckeyes, the '06 edition relied on the Houdini qualities of its quarterback and big, talented receivers to create big plays that frequently eliminated the need for long, clock-controlling drives. But the '02 Buckeye offense was backed by a dominant defense that carried the team.

The '06 Buckeye offense, perhaps more talented than their '02 counterparts, had no such luxury.

Say what you will about the stats, about the Buckeyes having one of the stingiest defenses in the nation this year, but the defense wasn't really challenged by a BCS bowl-caliber offense until they faced Michigan. Then, they were exposed.

Michigan proved that a good offense can score against the Buckeye defense. Even though Michigan was well-aided by turnovers in scoring 39 points, Florida coach Urban Meyer probably locked in on footage of the Michigan game when preparing for Ohio State. Whatever he saw, and whatever he taught his team, it worked better than anybody's wildest dreams.

In their last two games of the season, the Ohio State defense surrendered 80 points. Those particular numbers don't lie. When Ohio State's defense was truly challenged, they were exposed as not being national title-worthy.

But if the roster had its shortcomings, it still doesn't explain the egg laid by Tressel, a coach who has gotten deficient teams to play over their heads in the past.

Tressel looked as bad as he's ever looked as the Ohio State coach. Right now, Tressel is, by a sizeable distance, the second-best coach in college football. Meyer simply overmatched Ohio State's accomplished coach. Why that happened is a riddle that might never be solved.

Everything that Tressel normally excels at -- game preparation, mid-game adjustments, keeping his players calm and collected in the heat of battle -- he failed at miserably on Monday night.

Everybody has an off day on the job, and perhaps Tressel just had one at the worst possible time. With superior athleticism at key positions, Florida might have beaten Ohio State had Tressel been on his game. But the fact that Tressel wasn't on his game is the reason Florida won by 27 points.

We seemed to think, heading into the game, that Tressel and his team would have to be caught napping at the wheel to lose this game. ESPN's Lee Corso came right out and said as much. Well, Tressel was napping at the wheel. And Meyer was wide awake, with a faster, hungrier, and in some cases, a more talented team.

You saw the result. If I didn't know better, I'd say that Ohio State, from the coach down, didn't deserve to be the favorite heading into the game. They sure as heck didn't play like anybody's favorite.