Mike Furlan is one of about twelve Buckeye fans who actually watched the National Championship Game a second time. He thought it would be therapeutic; he was wrong, it was equally painful the second time. While Furls doesn't get wrapped up in breaking down the game again in his latest, he does take some time to look back on the season as a whole. And also to look ahead to next season, when a favorable schedule could really help the Buckeyes surprise some people despite massive losses to the NFL on the offensive side of the ball.

I think that I may be one of twelve Buckeye fans who watched the National Championship Game a second time. I thought it would be therapeutic; I was wrong, it was equally painful the second time. It didn't start getting better until the fourth time.

See for me, I knew what happened, but I really needed to know why. I finally figured it out and have now put it behind me. I am not going to tear open the scabs by dissecting the game, but let's just say that I attribute the outcome in large part to Ohio State's game plan (and lack of adjustments) and Florida's excellent execution.

We all lost something in that title game. The superficial would say it was trust in the Buckeyes, Jim Tressel, and Troy Smith. Personally, I would say it is perspective. Despite all the complaining since the game, the 2006 Ohio State football season was a success, an outrageous success. How many other teams in the country would have loved the chance at a title, and the season that the Buckeyes had? The answer, 118. Don't forget, Jim Tressel did beat Michigan for the fifth time in six seasons.

I am not stupid, I know my little admonition to the perpetually unhappy fan is not going to change the way they look at the 2006 season, but I will share with you, my fellow Cleveland fan, the one thing that has truly made that game bearable: optimism for 2007. Optimism is something that all Cleveland fans have in common; no matter how much they hate to admit it. In Philadelphia, the fans are every bit as surly as Cleveland fans, the only difference is that deep down inside every Cleveland fan thinks that his Browns, Indians, or Cavs is just one or two players away from really competing, "…maybe just one more good off-season and they will be right there."

The first inclination of any Cleveland fan would be to wonder what there is to be optimistic about for the Buckeyes in 2007. After all, they did lose their Heisman Trophy quarterback, two best receivers, center, and running back. Well, at the risk of sounding like a homer, there is a lot to be optimistic about.

Remember last year after A.J. Hawk and the rest of the defense left for the NFL? Do you remember the question marks and pessimism? I do. The question all season for 2006 would be whether or not this defense would cost the Buckeyes a few games this year, well they rose up and played pretty well and next year, nearly the entire defense will return a year older and a year better.

On the offensive side of the ball the losses are huge, but it is not as though the Buckeyes will be devoid of talent. Most of the offensive line will return, Chris Wells will be the featured back, and Ray Small, Brian Robiskie, and Brian Hartline appear ready to step into the void at wide receiver left by Hall, Gonzo, and Ginn's departure. Although replacing Troy Smith will be hard, there is still plenty to be optimistic about.

Also working in the Buckeyes favor next year is that this team will not face any exceptionally difficult games until the Penn State game on the 27th of October, after the team has had eight games to establish an identity. A road game in Seattle against the University of Washington will replace this season's game in Austin, so the Buckeyes will get a brief, one year, reprieve from their difficult schedule of home and homes. Am I optimistic enough to predict another title? Probably not, but I am optimistic enough to say that the Buckeyes should still have a great shot at Michigan in November and in the end is that all that really counts?

So keep your chin up Buckeyes fans, take solace in the fact that Lloyd Carr will be back in Ann Arbor next year and remember there is much to look forward to in the coming months, including signing day, February 7th. But alas, that is an article for a different day.