Down nine with a little over three minutes left, the Buckeyes were dead and buried. I actually spit at my TV. Then, the improbable happened ... as the Buckeyes made a majestic comeback, capped off by a Ron Lewis three ball at the horn to send the game into overtime. And in overtime, it was the Mike Conley Jr. show. As Furls notes in his latest column, it feels weird being on that side of an amazing and improbable win. What a game.

In case you were in a coma, fell in a well, or have short term memory loss, Ron Lewis hit a pretty important shot for the Buckeyes yesterday completing an improbable ending to a game that appeared to be the end of Ohio State's season.

It finally happened to us!!! A Cleveland sports team (more accurately Ohio team) came through in the clutch and won a huge game! Can you believe it? I am still in a state of disbelief nearly 24 hours later, but maybe now the Earnest Byner and Tony Fernandez nightmares will go away. Maybe this is how it felt to be a Bronco fan in 1987 (without the Brokeback Mountain "friendships" and marriage to "kin folk").

In a conversation early this year, a friend asked me if there were any Buckeyes on the team, aside from Oden who would end up in the NBA. I told him that I thought that freshman Daequan Cook and senior Ron Lewis both had the game to go to the next level. After impressive starts, both had essentially vanished, so much so that last week I wondered aloud (actually in print, but you get the point) where Ron Lewis has been this season. Apparently he was already in Lexington waiting for the rest of the team.

I will spare you the details, as I am sure you have been lambasted with them by ESPN, but to make a long story short, the Buckeyes were trailing the X-men by 9 points with 2:54 remaining. After the Buckeyes had crawled back to within two, Justin Cage found himself on the free throw line with 9.3 seconds remaining. Cage made the first free throw, but missed the second. The Buckeyes got the ball up the floor quickly, Conley handed it off to Lewis near the top of the key with about 5 seconds left. Lewis fired up a three from about 23 feet and buried it with 2 seconds to go, forcing the game into overtime. After that it was the Mike Conley show.

Conley played a pretty good game in regulation, but he kicked it up a notch and dominated in overtime; the freshman phenom became something of a one-man highlight real in overtime, scoring eleven of Ohio State's sixteen points.

Most people will remember Lewis' performance yesterday only for his game tying three, forgetting that he scored 27 points a game in which they desperately needed someone to step up. Offensively, the Buckeyes looked sloppy and confused for much of the game, not even Greg Oden was immune to the difficulties. He turned the ball over four times and shot just 5-12. The bunnies and hooks that he usually drops were not falling, and he was struggling to get up and down the floor. In short, Oden's performance was pretty representative of the team's performance as a whole.

The Buckeyes had every chance to throw it in or lose their composure yesterday, but they didn't. When their back's were against the wall, that team played with a looseness that we have not seen since before Greg Oden hit the floor this season, and it all came together for the Buckeyes again, without their big man on the floor. It was as if they just ran out there and played ball, without trying to force something to happen.

Now before you flood my email address with hate mail, I am not implying that Ohio State is a better team without Oden on the floor. That is lunacy. I am saying that it seemed that once Oden was off the floor, they were quick, fluid and composed again. These are words that I have not used to describe Ohio State since their loss to UNC.

Before I get too excited about the win, it is important to note that Xavier did expose a road map to beating the Buckeyes to anyone that was watching. To beat the Buckeyes, you must get the ball up floor quickly and attack Greg Oden. He is a very aggressive defender and will pick up fouls. Several players may have to eat basketballs before you get him into foul trouble, but if you attack him, he will end up on the bench.

Although Ohio State was heavily favored going into this game, it is clearly the type of win that can propel a team for weeks; it is clearly the type of win that Ohio State needed. The Buckeyes took the best shot from a pretty good team on a day when they had their "C" game in what was essentially a road game (special thanks to the tournament committee for that one). Hell, I think most Xavier fans walked home after the game.

Now, it is also interesting to note that the much-maligned Big Ten conference has actually stood up pretty well in the tournament; better than its 6-3 record this year would imply. The Big Ten was ranked 4th in the RPI as a conference, but has performed well even in defeats. Michigan State gave North Carolina all they could handle for 35 minutes; that is something that will get lost in the 81-67 final score. Indiana played UCLA to the last seconds before falling to the regular season PAC 10 champs in a low scoring affair, 54-49, and Illinois should have won its first round game against Virginia Tech. The Illini went cold and were outscored 12-0 down the stretch, sealing their fates. I think it is pretty apparent that the Big Ten is quite a bit stronger than a lot of people, myself included, have given them credit for.

Up next for the Buckeyes is the winner of the Virginia/Tennessee game. I am not sure if it really matters which team they play. Both teams will try to push the tempo against the Buckeyes and score in transition, before Oden gets back. They are both very talented and feature terrific guard play, and it will be interesting to see how they fare against an Ohio State

team that has done very well shutting down opposing guards recently. Should the Buckeyes win that one, they will most likely be rewarded with another road game, Texas A&M in San Antonio (thanks again to the committee).

The Cleveland fan in all of us had all but given up on this one. Let's be serious, miraculous comebacks and big shots dropping are something that we are not familiar with. It just does not happen to us, well it did yesterday… enjoy it. I know I was expecting Lewis' shot to hit the front of the rim and land squarely in Justin Cage's hands, so he could redeem himself with two more free throws.

Twenty-five years of conditioning by Cleveland sports teams has made it nearly impossible for the reality of this to set in.

Like every other Cleveland fan, I am used to being on the "agony of defeat" side of the remarkable play.