The first week of the NCAA tournaments results are in, and in case you weren't paying attention ... it was not a very kind weekend for the Big Ten. As a matter of fact, if you listened to any of the talking heads, you would think that Big Ten (and the ACC) were no better than the mid majors. Heck, after the first weekend of the tournament, the Big Ten, ACC, and Horizon conferences all have the same number of teams remaining, one. In Furls latest, he argues that a closer look at the performance of the Big Ten teams seems to buck what the critics are saying about the conference.

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I would argue the converse. I would say that this weekend was actually a pretty impressive display by the Big Ten (Wisconsin's loss withstanding). Ohio State, the conference's flag ship program advanced, Wisconsin stumbled, but the middle of the Big Ten pack actually did pretty well, in spite of the selection committee's best efforts.

In numerous articles I have implored the readers of this site to get off their butts and do their own research, look behind the over-generalized numbers and records, and to question the "experts." This is just another instance when you have to wonder what the national media

pundits were actually looking at.

Did you watch the games? I did. On thing that really stood out to me was that Big Ten teams probably play some of the best defense in the country. I am becoming increasingly convinced that the low Big Ten scores are the by-product of good defense, not necessarily poor offense. Have you ever seen so many high powered offenses held into the 50s and 60s? Hang on while we take a look while we recap the Big Ten's performance.

#1 Ohio State: The Buckeyes soundly defeated their first round marshmallow and proceeded onward toward a de facto road game in Lexington. Yeah, Lexington is not that far from Columbus, but it is a hell of a lot closer to Cincinnati. You have to wonder why Xavier, a nine seed, was rewarded with home games in the first two rounds. I guess the selection committee thought reuniting Thad Matta with his former employer would be fun. In any case, the Buckeyes advanced with the help of a minor miracle. Overall, given the circumstances, Ohio State did not do too badly (or too well for that matter).

#2 Wisconsin: After back-to-back losses to Michigan State and Ohio State, Brian Butch was lost for the season in the Ohio State game; Wisconsin was never able to recapture its early season form. Coming into the tournament they were highly overrated and probably did not deserve the two seed they received. Had they not had that two seed, they probably would have lost in the first round. What was the selection committee supposed to do? They were kind of stuck giving Bucky the Badger a two seed, and Wisconsin squandered it horribly and gave the Big Ten a black eye in the process. I will say this in Wisconsin's defense, UNLV is a pretty tough draw as a seven seed, but the Badgers still looked like crap.

#3 Indiana: Here is where the tournament draws get just a bit ridiculous. After handily dispensing of Gonzaga in the first round. Indiana, the third best team in the country was rewarded for a pretty solid regular season with a second round match up against the RPI's third ranked team in the country. The Hoosiers were outgunned by the Bruins, but they hung with them every step of the way. The Bruins, the PAC-10's regular season champions, won this game by the thinnest of margins. The game was actually tied at 49 with 49 seconds remaining. This was hardly a poor performance; Indiana was the victim of a difficult match up with one of the nation's best teams. I smell the beginning of a trend.

#4 Illinois: The Illini jumped out early on an overrated Virginia Tech squad, but ultimately squandered their lead by scoring 0, yes zero, points over the last 4:29 of the game. Actually, the slump was even longer than that; the Illini closed the game with a mere six points over the last eleven minutes of the game. You are not going to win many games that way. Yet, was this game a disappointment? Illinois was a twelve seed; probably the 63rd or 64th team selected, and they played one of the better teams in the ACC (another conference struggling in the tournament) right down to the wire. I wasn't expecting much and I didn't get much from Illinois, yet I would hardly call their performance an embarrassment.

#5 Purdue: After dispensing of Arizona, in a game in which nearly led from beginning to end, the Boilermakers "won" the right to face the defending national champion, Florida Gators. This game had all the makings of a blow out, after listening to the talking heads at ESPN; I was actually hoping that the Boilermakers had kept their life insurance policies paid up. It didn't sound like they would even get out with their lives. It is a good thing that I never believe those idiots. The Boilermakers were in this game until the end, and only trailed by three with 2:29 remaining. Again, the Big Ten was represented well in a loss against one of the nation's top tier programs. The moral of the story? If you are not going to play well in the regular season, at least suck bad enough to avoid the dreaded eight/nine seed.

#6 Michigan State: Well, maybe if I had typed my advice about sucking bad enough to avoid the eight/nine seed Sparty might still be alive in the tournament today. Still, Michigan State successfully knocked off a pretty decent Marquette team (costing me a game in every bracket) and played North Carolina pretty tough. Michigan State, who finished seventh in the Big Ten, played the ACC champions very closely in a "neutral" environment that had all the ambiance of Chapel Hill, who would've thought that the Carolina fans would drive ALL the way to Winston-Salem? In any case, Sparty was in the game late, only trailing by five with about 2:30 to play. Is that really a poor representation of the Big Ten?

It is frustrating when you see mindless compilation of statistics like this. What is lost in this is the actual effort placed by the match ups and how well these teams actually did against the nation's finest teams. I could understand the harsh criticism of the Big Ten if mid majors were soundly defeating its teams, but that is clearly not the case.

So in closing, I thought I would leave you with some meaningful numbers: two, three, and six. Those are the RPI rankings of three of the teams that eliminated Big Ten teams last week, now you tell me, which conference would have fared better?