10 PM tonight, Buckeyes vs. Volunteers with a trip to the Elite Eight hanging in the balance. The game is actually a rematch of a contest in mid-January that saw the Buckeyes hang on for a two point win at home, albeit while Greg Oden was still getting into the swing of things. Our Buckeye Insider Mike Furlan takes a look at tonights game, and tells us what to expect.

Ohio State vs. Tennessee, man what a match up.

Phil Fulmer and his boys matched up against the sweater vest and the silver bullets. Man, I get fired up just thinking about it. Oh, that's right ... it's still basketball season. When I see these two schools matched up it is hard for me to think about anything but football. I guess old habits die hard, and maybe they should.

Neither of these schools is "rich" in basketball tradition, but that doesn't mean that this game is without intrigue. This game is one of those match ups where the two teams are so different stylistically that it is really hard to determine what will happen. Tennessee plays an up tempo game while the Buckeyes play a half court game that slows the pace to the point where minutes seem to take hours.

The Volunteers won have won 22 games this year and have done so by averaging 79.2 points per game while allowing 74. The Buckeyes on the other hand average 73 a game, but only allow a mere 60.2 points per game. I am not sure the Buckeyes get the credit that they deserve for the defense they play.

Bruce Pearl, Tennessee's head coach, remembers what it was like to play against Greg Oden and has concluded that he will focus his efforts on the other four guys. I think it is a novel approach, but I am not sure that Pearl is being completely forthright, and why should he? Would you divulge your game plan to the media?

Introducing the Volunteers!

You will continuously hear idiots in the media, guys who get big fat paychecks, say this game or that game is a dangerous match up for a team. Thanks for the update Captain Obvious. It kind of reminds me of the time John Madden said, "If that guy comes down with the ball in the endzone, that is gonna be a touchdown." Any team that gets into the sweet sixteen (or beyond) is dangerous; Tennessee is no different.

The Volunteers are a much smaller team than the Buckeyes, and as a result their guards generate most of their offense from the outside. They are quick and play an up and down the court style that is not even similar to anything that Ohio State has seen this year, outside of their first matchup with the Vols.

Pearl has his own superstar, junior guard Chris Lofton. Lofton has range, vision, and can kill you if he gets hot. Lofton is shooting eight three pointers per game and making 41% of them. I think Tennessee could potentially heave 30 three pointers; it would not be a stretch, they average 25 per game.

The Match Ups

Ohio State defense vs. Tennessee offense

I look for the Volunteers to try to follow the roadmap that was laid out for them by the Xavier Musketeers: get the ball up the court in transition quickly in an attempt to nullify the “Oden Factor.” If there is nothing available - set up for the three. It is a scary strategy because it might work. If the shots are dropping for Tennessee the Buckeyes could find themselves in trouble quick. I expect to see Ohio State play more man coverage against the Volunteers out of respect for Tennessee’s range.

The 2-3 zone that has been so successful for Ohio State this year in spots will not be as effective against Tennessee. They have too many shooters and since they really don’t feature a center, the fact that Oden has shut down the paint really will not affect the Volunteers to any great extent.

Ohio State offense vs. Tennessee defense

Ohio State has an obvious size advantage on the inside. The first time these two teams matched up, Greg Oden had 24 points and 15 rebounds. I expect that the Buckeyes will go back to this game plan, as it seemed to work out pretty well the first time. I know that is some hard hitting analysis (throw the ball to your superstar center against a team that doesn’t have one), but sometimes the facts are just obvious.

Now, in a perfect world, Ohio State will be able to keep the Vols in the sixties and that will be enough to allow them to stick with their half court offense, but should the Vols get hot on the other end of the court, I look for the Buckeyes to run with them. In the Xavier game, the Buckeyes showed that if they need to get small and run, they have the capability to do so.

What I expect to see

I expect to see the Buckeyes come out and dominate in the first half, much like the first match-up, on the back of Greg Oden. This Buckeyes team has a habit of getting off to a quick start, only to slow down in the second half. I am not sure that this game will be much different.

Mike Conley will continue his run of extremely productive games and will continue to show the nation that he has the best first step in the NCAA. I am not sure how Bruce Pearl will attempt to defend him, particularly on dribble penetration, but I am fairly sure that it will be ineffective. Conley has shown that he knows when to continue strong to the rim and when to dump the ball off after he penetrates.

I have a feeling that we have not seen the last of Ron Lewis either. He seems to be playing with great confidence now, and I expect to see 20 points from him again as the Buckeyes go on to win 75-64.