March Madness officially begins tomorrow at noon. Hands down, the next two days are two of my favorite days of the year.

The excitement is enhanced this year, as my Buckeyes go into the tournament as a two seed. Despite that lofty ranking, no one is talking about this team when discussing the contenders to win the whole thing. And that's just the way I like it.

Maybe it's because of their lack of size. Terence Dials is their only true post player, and he's the only guy on the roster taller than 6'7. Maybe it's because of their lack of tournament experience. Again, Dials is the only player on the roster to have been to the tournament, and that was as a bit player in 2002. Ironically, the Buckeyes first round opponent was Davidson, who they meet again in round one this Friday afternoon. The Buckeyes were a #4 seed that year, and barely fought off the #13 seeded Wildcats by a 69-64 count, thanks to 33 points from Brian Brown. The Bucks went on to get smoked by #12 seed Missouri in round two.

What the talking heads on television fail to realize is that the Buckeyes have many of the fine qualities that are essential come tournament time. They are phenomenal defensively. Fundamentally sound. Well coached. And they start

four fifth year seniors. All of whom are foaming at the mouth for this, their one shot at one shining moment.

The Buckeyes lost only five games all season. And those five losses were by a combined 22 points. This team was not only competitive in every single one of their 30 games ... they had chances to win every one in the final minutes. They finished the season winning eight of their final nine games, losing only the Big Ten Championship to a strong Iowa team. And they shot the ball TERRIBLY from the outside during that run. Here are the three point percentages of the Buckeyes main gunners over those final nine games:

Je'Kel Foster 14%
Matt Sylvester 28%
Ron Lewis 28%
J.J. Sullinger 30%
Jamar Butler 32%

Couple quick addendums. The Buckeyes were shooting 40% from long range as a team before this slump. And they still won eight of those final nine games. While Ohio State proved to the country that they could still win when their jumpers weren't falling, what many forget is that they've been just about unbeatable when they are. Je'Kel Foster in particular has been in an awful funk. Before it started, he was the front runner for Big Ten player of the year honors. Foster's lockdown defense stayed strong, but he made just 9 of his final 62 three point attempts of the year. And amazingly hit just 2-24 in the Big Ten tournament.

Personally, I think the emotion of so many close games, and the physicality of the Big Ten schedule wore this team down as they approached the finish line. With five full days off to rest, and their first two games in state, I expect the Buckeyes to recapture that outside shooting touch, and win the four straight games required to make it to the Final Four.

Stay tuned to Swerb's Blurbs for previews and recaps of all the Buckeyes NCAA tournament contests. Tomorrow, we will look at the Buckeyes first round opponent, the Davidson Wildcats.