The Buckeyes have an interesting matchup tonight, traveling to West Lafayette, Indiana for a 8 PM tilt with the undefeated and nationally ranked Purdue Boilermakers. Both teams are 5-0. Both teams have been untested to this point. Tonight's game will be a solid barometer of where these two contenders for the Big Ten title are at ... and Furls previews the game for here this morning.

If you listen the national media talk about Ohio State, you would think that they have no claim to their current #4 ranking; they are just there by “default.” I think a compelling argument could be made that the Buckeyes have done more to ascend in the polls than those who started in front of them have done to maintain their lofty positions. Maybe, just maybe, the “experts” were wrong. Maybe this Ohio State team is better than they thought and maybe, just maybe, they were wrong about every other team in the nation.

The Buckeyes and Boilermakers are untested; that is a fact. In route to 5-0 records, both the Buckeyes and Boilermakers have played no teams of any credibility. There is really nothing to rank either of these teams against other than how they looked, and since college football analysts don’t actually watch very much college football outside of the top five teams in the country, they really don’t know how good either of these teams actually are.

Fortunately for our dedicated readers, with the aid of the Big Ten Network, I have been able to watch nearly every game that both teams have played this year, and they are a lot better than the experts would have you believe. Is Ohio State really the fourth best team in the country? I am not so sure, but what I can tell

you is that this defense is very good, and the offense is as balanced as I can ever remember seeing in Columbus.

Purdue is much better than most people expected. It is the same basketball on turf offense that Joe Tiller has featured for about a decade in West Lafayette and for the first time in years the Boilermakers faithful have something to cheer for. The defense is what it is, but the offense is diverse enough to keep them in just about any game. This Boilermaker team is nowhere near as good as those Jack Mollenkopf teams of the late 60's that featured Bob Griese (64-66) and later Leroy Keyes and Mike Phipps, but they are still the most significant team that Ohio State has played to date.

In the end, the experts will appear to be right, one of these two teams will lose this game and the Big Ten will be further cast asunder as a conference having a tough year. Should Purdue win, the experts will say that Ohio State was exposed, not that they lost to a good Purdue team at night on the road. Should Ohio State win, Purdue will drop from the top twenty-five and the experts will say that Ohio State took care of business. It really is a no win game, so what will end up being the Sportscenter lead in; the fall of the "Luckeyes" or the "Boilerfakers" return to the ranks of the unknown?

Without Further Ado, Introducing the Purdue Boilermakers….

From the Big Ten Preview:

5. Purdue: Buy. This team is pretty good, in fact they are much better than most people think. Curtis Painter is the best quarterback in the Big Ten and and Joe Tiller is grossly underrated as a coach. The Boilermakers are a bit below average

on the defensive side of the ball, but they should be able to make up for it on the offensive side of the ball.

Most people do not realize that Purdue has averaged nearly 28 points per game over the last 6 seasons. Think about it, that is an astonishing number. Unfortunately, they have given up an average of 21 points per game over the same span. This year is going to be more of the same, but you have to like Joe Tiller with a veteran quarterback.

There is a national misconception that Michigan, Penn State, or Wisconsin is the second best team in the Big Ten. I disagree; I think that distinction belongs to either Illinois or Purdue. The Boilermakers are playing terrific football on the offensive side of the ball and so far they appear to be better than anticipated on the defensive side.

Joe Tiller installed his basketball on turf offense shortly after assuming his position as head coach in 1997. Since then the results have been impressive; succinctly, the Boilermakers put up good numbers on offense. Tiller installed his spread in West Lafayette about seven years ahead of his contemporaries and in the process he has developed a couple of pretty good quarterbacks.

Not all spread offenses were created equally; some are run oriented, some are pass oriented, but in the end they all aim to create personnel mismatches. Joe Tiller's spread is designed to eliminate physical disadvantages through game planning; the point is to eliminate athletic advantages that schools like Ohio State and Michigan have by forcing them to either pull a big, fast linebackers out of the game in favor of a nickel back and then attack the resulting zone defenses. In a lot of ways the spread offense has turned into the great equalizer in college football, allowing teams at a talent disadvantage to overcome it with gameplanning.

Purdue is no different. The Boilermakers will attack the Buckeyes with three receivers on the field for most of the game, but that does not mean that the Boilermakers are passing. The intent is to put the Buckeyes into a nickel zone and run and throw the ball. Let's face it, the Boilermakers have a much better chance of running the ball against a 4-2-5 alignment than a 4-3-4.

Offensively the Boilermakers feature second year junior starter Curtis Painter under center. Painter can capably run a spread offense, but he is not as mobile as Jake locker, so he does not bring that game-breaking, running quarterback dimension to the offense. Painter is an accurate passer and has a strong arm, but he does have a tendency to make mistakes, throwing 19 interceptions last year.

Painter is complimented by standout senior wide receiver Dorien Bryant. Bryant, who will be an early draft pick this year, has the size and skills to make an impact but at 5-10, 175, he will struggle against Ohio State's big, physical corners. Bryant, who has brought in 80+ receptions in each of the last two years, ranks among the Big Ten leaders with 40 catches for 450 yards in Purdue's first five games.

Purdue will try to establish a running game from the spread behind the efforts of 6'0", 205lb running back Kory Sheets. Sheets is a smaller shifty back with good hands out of the back field. Look for Tiller to try to use Sheets' hands for some screen passes to slow down the Ohio State defense.

Purdue's defense is what it is, it is not pretty, and it does not really defend. If I were to spend more time writing about it, you would have to spend more time reading about it and then we would all lose. It is very average.

The Matchups:

Ohio State's Offense vs. Purdue's Defense: Advantage Ohio State. The Buckeyes should be able to do what they want offensively. Purdue's corners are small (5'9 and 6'0) and do not match up well with either Robiskie or Hartline.

Purdue's defensive line is overmatched physically, but the Buckeyes offensive line has not been impressive lately as they have failed to consistently open holes. Wells' and Saine's averages do not accurately reflect the situation as both running backs boast averages over 5ypc, but the Buckeyes have been unable to consistently get them 5 yards on carries. Most carries seem to go for 1-3 yards with a couple of carries for 30+ yards that seem to bring the averages up. This is a trend that Buckeyes need to reverse. If they are going to compete nationally, they are going to have to be able to consistently move th ball on the ground.

Ohio State's Defense vs. Purdue's Offense: Advantage Ohio State. I am sure that I will get some flack for this, but I am not really sure how this will play out. I see three possible scenarios:

1. Ohio State comes out conservative. The Buckeyes play this one close and try to keep the plays in front of the defense. It is very frustrating to watch as the Boilermakers pick up first downs on five yard check downs, but their drives seem to always die out due to holding calls, an explicable run play to the outside (that fails), or dropped passes. This is the most likely choice and outcome.
2. Ohio State comes out aggressive. The Buckeyes blitz, take risks, and force Painter to make quick decisions. In the end, as much as we all would love to see this, I don't think we will, it just is not Tressel and Heacock's style. We will see some blitzes, but not as many as the national pundits require for "total domination."
3. Purdue is able to exploit Ohio State's soft underneath zones consistently and quickly before the three and four man rush can get to Painter. The

Boilermakers play the offensive game of their lives, executing on every opportunity and steal a big one at home, at night, on national television. Not likely, but possible.

What to watch for:

-The depth chart. The Buckeyes are hurting. I cannot remember the last time I have seen them endure injuries like this.

-The Buckeyes defensive game plan. I expect to see more of the same soft zone complimented with the three man rush that we saw against the Gophers last week. This could be a dangerous plan, as the Buckeyes are essentially betting that the Boilermakers will be unable to consistently execute. It is the essence of the “bend don’t break” mentality.

-Watch to see if Purdue attempts to shut down the run with eight in the box, and even more importantly, when you see Purdue cheating to stop the run, watch to see if Boeckman audibles out.

-Watch to see if the interior line can finally open some lanes for Brandon Saine (who should be in for 15-20 plays) and Chris Wells. The rushing average is not telling the true story about Ohio State’s running game, it may be time to start considering some personnel moves inside if we don’t see some improvement.

Don’t be surprised if:

-Curtis Painter puts up 250 yards of meaningless offense through the air. Points win games, not yardage.

-We see more touches for Ray Small. That kid is dynamite when he is actually playing. He has a spark that Ginn never had. Don't get me wrong, Ginn was a fast play maker, but he danced to much, Small is dangerous because he is quick up the field and elusive.

-Purdue is dismissed as a pretender by halftime. Fret not Boilermaker fans, they will be back, but they will be handled early by a Buckeyes team that is on the brink of turning the corner.

If I were a betting man:

I would take Ohio State –7.5 and the under (52). Easy picks here, Bucks win running a way holding Purdue under 14 points.

This is your last shot to earn Props as the Prognosticator of the Week. If you are the best you will get your props in my wrap. Enter here . There is no prize accept knowing that you are smarter than everyone else, isn't that enough?

Ohio State 33 Purdue 10.