You lose one game 41-14 and all of a sudden you are the rabble of the college football landscape. Suddenly the 11 first round draft picks in the last four NFL drafts, tops in the NCAA, are forgotten, just don't seem to matter; your team is just too slow to compete. To hear the media talk anymore you would have to believe that the Buckeyes are the most overrated, talentless team in the nation. Furls examines the national perception of the Buckeyes in his latest column.

This year's Ohio State team does not have a chance. Just listen to Mark May and company; Ohio State just doesn't have the athletes to compete. This year's team only has thirteen juniors exploring their options with the NFL, granted not all of them will go, but I count three more potential first round picks in this year's draft among them. I guess the Buckeyes are not too slow to compete in the NFL, just with the SEC.

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Like all stereotypes, the image of the slow, trudging Big Ten and the fast, athletic SEC has some basis in history. About fifteen years ago that was the way it was. The SEC teams were built for their climate; they put linebackers at defensive end, defensive ends at tackle, safeties at linebacker. It was a conference built to run in the sun, while the Big Ten was built to plow through the frozen tundra of the

Midwest in November.

I cannot remember the last time that a single game had this big of an affect on the national perception of a team and more amazingly, an entire conference. It just isn't sound, nor is it rational.

It is clear that the Florida Gators were the better team on the field last year in Arizona. That is a fact, but what was lost in the media's damnation of the Buckeyes and the entire Big Ten conference was the fact that the Wisconsin and Penn State beat SEC teams. Yes, you heard it here first, two slow, plodding Big Ten teams knocked off SEC teams in bowl games.

The pundits have consitently pointed to a disappointing Big Ten bowl record last year (2-5), while at the same time proclaiming the Big East a very good conference based on their bowl record (5-0). A perfect bowl record is always a good feat, you cannot do much better, but in the end the Big East bowl record rings as hollow as Rich Rodriguez's contract with West Virginia. The Big East's wins came against Wake Forest, East Carolina, Kansas State, Georgia Tech, and Western Michigan. The Big Ten's opponents last year; Florida, USC, Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas, Texas Tech, and Maryland. Get ready Big Ten fans, it is coming again this year too. The Big Ten's bowl opponents this year are LSU, USC, BC, Texas A&M, Florida, Oklahoma State, and Tennessee. The only non BCS opponent is CMU (MAC Champions). It is a brutal line up indeed.

All this makes you wonder what if. What if the Buckeyes would have won last year against Florida? The 2006 Buckeyes would probably be enshrined as one of the best NCAA teams in the last 25 years. Had the Buckeyes won that game, I can pretty much guarantee you that we would not be hearing about what an inferior conference the Big Ten is, as a matter of fact, the Big Ten would have been 3-0 vs. the SEC in head to head match ups. Had the 2006 Buckeyes won the National Title game, the 2007 Buckeyes would not be 4 point underdogs in

this year's game, but none this really makes sense.

A typical college football team rotates its entire starting line up every three years, so it is sheer lunacy to project anything from one year to the next without paying insanely close attention to the turnover on a team. Most analysts spend a lot of attention on a team's personnel loses and very little on the most important part, the replacements. What is a more accurate reflection of a team's ability to play in 2007, the guys who are on the team or the one's that left?

The Buckeyes started this season as darkhorses in their own conference. Most analysts projected them to finish 3rd or 4th to some combination of Wisconsin, Penn State, and Michigan due to those personnel loses from 2006, but in the end the one thing that this team did not lose was the stink of the 2006 Championship Game. People just cannot believe that this team is different than last year's and that is their loss. History is exactly that, history.

So as you listen to yet another nauseating report about SEC Speed or Ohio State's 0-8 record against the SEC in Bowls, remember these are the same guys who said that Ohio State could not win its conference. These are the same guys who said Michigan was a national contender, but only if they could get past this year's real question mark in the Big Ten, Wisconsin. Coming into this season these same analysts said that the Trojans were going to be the best team Pete Carroll has put on the field, yep the same USC that lost to Stanford and nearly lost to Washington. Remember when Louisville was in the top 10? I could go on, but you get the point.

Wrong is a way of life for these guys, after all, last year it was the Florida Gators who had no shot against the Buckeyes, and the year before that it was the Texas Longhorns with no chance against USC. Come to think of it, I remember a team from Columbus that had no shot back in 2002, whatever happened to them?