Yesterday's season opener for the Buckeyes had no shortage of drama. The offense scored on each of its six first half possessions and the Beanie Wells Heisman campaign was off to a solid start as he rambled for 90 yards and a score. The Terrelle Pryor Era had a very promising beginning as the talented freshman signal caller looked great in leading the team downfield with ease. Then in the second half, Beanie was carried off the field with a foot injury and the Buckeye defense held in there for a shutout of YSU. Buckeye Dan recaps the opener for us.

The script for the Buckeyes 2008 season opener was being followed to the letter for the first half Saturday. Chris Wells was off to a solid start with 90 yards and a touchdown. Terrelle Pryor had driven the team to a score in his Ohio State debut. The Buckeyes had scored on all six first half possessions. Youngstown State had not crossed midfield, and their lone first down had been the result of a penalty.

The Buckeyes were up 26-0 in the third quarter, and were poised to put the game out of reach with a first-and-goal at the YSU three on their first possession of the second half, when the Ohio Stadium walls seemed to cave in on the Buckeyes and their 105,011 sun-drenched fans. On a first-down handoff, a non-contact foot injury knocked the Buckeyes' star tailback Beanie Wells out of the game, putting a damper on the crowd, and on OSU's dominating 43-0 win over the Penguins.

Although x-rays were negative on Wells' right foot, and he returned to the field in the fourth quarter, he was wearing a walking boot, and limping noticeably. The junior running back from Akron who struggled with injuries all of last year had already gained 111 yards on 13 carries in the game, including a 43-yard touchdown burst on a 4th and one play on the Buckeyes' first possession.

The pumped up crowd went dead quiet as Wells lay on the field, and as he was

carted off to the locker room, a pall set in on Ohio Stadium that couldn't be lifted even with a scintillating performance by freshman Terrelle Pryor. In the South Stands I was far from the only one holding my head in my hands. But the injury may turn out to be less serious than feared by the Bucks and their faithful. It was reported to be to the toe, or the front part of the foot, and it is uncertain how long he'll be out of action, but there seems to be some sense of relief tonight in Columbus amid reports that Wells' injury does not appear to be very serious.

Here's the way the Wells and the university responded to press inquiries: "I may have rolled it or planted wrong a play or two before," Wells said through Ohio State spokeswoman Shelly Poe. "Something just didn't feel right. Then I think I felt a pop. But the X-rays are OK, so we'll see how it feels in a day or two."

The Pryor Story

A day or two may be longer than it takes for Buckeye Nation to begin clamoring for more of Terrelle Pryor. The freshman quarterback entered the game in the first quarter, taking the helm on OSU's third possession, as one of six *(that's right, six!)* true freshmen in the lineup at the time. He drove the Bucks to scores in his first two opportunities, only once in those drives having to deal with a third down play. Expected to be primarily a running threat, Pryor completed passes on two of his first three snaps from center, connecting with fellow freshman Lamaar "Flash" Thomas on his first play. He then took off on a quarterback draw over the left side for a 14-yard gain and a first down, and the "Wow"'s started to echo around the stadium.

He hit Rory Nicol for a 14-yard completion over the middle, and then ran two consecutive option plays, pitching back to a trailing Brandon Saine for a combined 20 yards, before the drive bogged down on a failed QB draw and a sack, forcing the Buckeyes to settle for three points. With the Bucks up 33-0 late in the third quarter, Pryor again took center stage at the OSU 32, and six plays later had the Buckeyes in the end zone. He picked up a first down on a completion to Mo Wells, another on a QB keeper, and finished it off on an 18-yard twisting, slashing run on another designed quarterback keeper, stretching his full 6'6" frame to place the ball over the goal line.

Pryor completed his first four passes, and finished the day 4 of 6 for 35 yards. His rushing totals were 9 carries for 52 yards and a touchdown, with a long of 21

yards. Like I said....Wow.

The Rest of the Story...

Starter Todd Boeckman was no slouch either, although he had a few shaky throws, including a couple that ended up as completions anyway. He did throw two picture perfect long balls, however. The first one hit Brian Hartline in full stride for a 47-yard completion inside the YSU ten yard line on OSU's second possession. Then late in the half he zipped a 31-yard strike to a well-covered Brian Robiskie for a touchdown. Boeckman also showed no hesitation about taking off running when things broke down in the backfield. He got off to a slow start passing though, looking as if he was sort of guiding his throws in the early going, and then he completely missed seeing a wide open Boom Herron at the goal line pilon on a scrambling rollout, throwing high to Hartline in the back of the endzone instead. Boeckman finished 14 of 19, for 187 yards and 2 TD's.

While Hartline and Robiskie managed to do their thing, a couple of other Buckeye receivers stood out on this day. DeVier Posey looked more like an upperclassman than a true freshman Saturday. Not long after Beanie's injury, Posey caught a quick out from Boeckman on the right side, left the defender grasping at air with a sweet juke move, and dashed to the goal line for a 25-yard score. He had three other grabs, and made some nice moves after the catch, finishing with 4 receptions for 47 yards, with the one TD.

Ray Small looked good too, as the Bucks ran several four and five-receiver sets, and flashed enough pure speed to give comfort to the folks who had worried that all the fastest Buckeye receivers would be relegated to the bench. He finished the game with three catches for 35 yards, but also had two nifty punt returns, though a big chunk of the longest one was negated by a penalty. Small returned four punts for 79 yards, with a long of 45 yards.

Also encouraging was the fact that the passing game involved the backs and the tight ends. Chris Wells had three catches before going down with the injury, which amounts to 60% of his total for all of last season. Also catching one ball each were fullback Brandon Smith, tight ends Rory Nicol and Jake Ballard, and tailback Mo Wells. Much more of this and we'll have ourselves a trend.

We got a look at the Buckeyes' offensive line of the future, when all three of their

promising true freshman linemen entered the game along with Pryor, Posey and Thomas. They lined up with Mike Adams at left tackle, J.B. Shugarts at right tackle, and Mike Brewster at center, and helped Pryor march the Bucks down the field.

The three backup running backs got five carries each, and while they all showed that they are capable running backs, they also showed that none of them is the equal of Chris Wells. Boom Herron had 17 yards, Brandon Saine 21 yards, and Mo Wells 32 yards in relief of the injured Wells.

Shutout!

The Buckeye defense was so dominant that the Penguins seemed more than happy to let the clock run down at the end of each half while they were in possession of the ball. They had only one first down in the first half, and that resulted from a pass interference call on Jermale Hines. YSU crossed midfield, to the OSU 45, on the very last play of the game. Prior to that, they reached OSU territory only once, crossing over to the OSU 49 in the fourth quarter, only to be dumped for a two-yard loss on the next play, and never revisited the Buckeye side of the field until that last play. The Penguins finished the game with just five first downs.

The last-minute starter Hines made his presence felt right away at safety, making several nice stops on running plays and breaking up a pass play with a jarring hit. Lawrence Wilson and Thad Gibson showed well, with each getting a sack and several hurries. Rob Rose looked like he could be a real force from inside, and Brett Larimore, Nader Abdullah and Todd Denlinger all looked like their play at the DT spots could be improved as well. Cam Heyward had a nice game too, forcing the action into his teammates' hands.

The Bucks experimented with all kinds of defensive line combinations, including one with a three-man line of Denlinger, Larimore and Rose, and one four man front with Denlinger at one of the ends.

Marcus Freeman and Tyler Moeller stood out in the linebacker group. Freeman was everywhere, blitzing the passer, chasing down running plays from the backside, and stringing out wide passing plays from the YSU spread. He and Moeller led the Buckeyes with 6 tackles each. Moeller seemed to always be

around the ball, and his hits usually left me looking for the number of the tackler, and the opponent looking for his mouth guard. Moeller even took a few snaps at a cornerback position. Laurinaitis had five total tackles and Brian Rolle and Shaun Lane had four each, all four of Lane's being solos. The corners were pretty much untested by the YSU passing game, although Malcolm Jenkins had occasion to make a couple of textbook hits.

Has This Ever Happened Before?

I'm wondering tonight if any college football team has ever before had two different kickers kick field goals of 50 yards or more in one game. (Anyone?...anyone?) Ryan Pretorius had a 50 yarder in the second quarter, and Aaron Pettrey drilled one from 54 yards out in the fourth quarter. (Both kicks slammed into the endzone nets looking as if they might have been good from 10 yards farther out.)

Official Game Statistics - OSU Athletic Dept.