It's time once again for your weekly dose of all things Ohio State athletics, as Buckeye Dan Wismar checks in with some Buckeye Leaves for our readers. In this week's piece, Dan hits on the 8-0 start for the hoops team, who has fueled that start, and the injury to guard David Lighty that could keep him out for the season. Dan also starts to talk about the Fiesta Bowl matchup with Texas, and also gives some updates on the 2010 recruting class.

Bucks Roll to 8-0

Ohio State got 21 points from sophomore Evan Turner, and pulled away in the second half Saturday for a 71-53 victory over Iona to run their record to 8-0 for the season. The Buckeyes led by just four at the break, but Turner picked up the Bucks with scoring and with defense in the second half after Iona had taken a lead with a fast start after halftime.

Starting guard Jon Diebler played the entire game, contributing 16 points for the Buckeyes, most of it coming at the free throw line where he was 11 of 12. Freshman William Buford scored 10 off the bench, including two 3-pointers in 32 minutes, and point guard Jeremie Simmons had a nice game with 8 points, 5 rebounds and 4 assists. Freshman center B.J. Mullens started the game and chipped in with 9 points and 4 rebounds.

Ohio State looked sluggish and tentative in the early going, as you might expect when a team is playing the better part of the game with two sophomores and three true freshmen on the floor. Such is life for Chad Matta though, as he tries to adjust to

the absence of David Lighty.

Lighty out

Losing their most most experienced player was the last thing Matta and his young Buckeyes needed, but that's exactly what has happened. Junior forward David Lighty , the only Buckeye to have played in a game for OSU prior to last season, will miss 6-12 weeks with a broken bone in his foot.

Lighty had his best scoring game of the young season with 21 points against Jacksonville, as the 17th-ranked Buckeyes ran their record to 7-0. Thinking it was just a sprain, Lighty played on after the injury, which occurred with six minutes to go in the 81-68 OSU victory . The small break of the fifth metatarsal bone was discovered after the game, and required surgery and the insertion of a screw.

Even if his recovery takes the entire 12 weeks, Lighty could potentially return to the lineup in time for the NCAA Tournament, which starts March 19. But playing for 2-3 months without Lighty, arguably the team's best defensive player and a leader on and off the court, will make just getting into the NCAA's a real uphill climb for Ohio State.

Lighty led the Bucks in minutes per game, having played at least 34 of the game's 40 minutes in five of seven starts, including going the full 40 against Miami. Until the ill-fated Jacksonville game, he had not yet found his outside shooting touch, and he's averaging 9.7 points per game, along with 5.7 rebounds and just under two assists per game.

Matta has plenty of young talent to pick up the minutes made available by Lighty's injury, and he won't try to do it with just one player. Freshman swingman William Buford figures to get more court time, and another true freshman, center B.J. Mullens might also see his minutes increase if Matta decides to go 'big' more often, by pairing Mullens with Dallas Lauderdale in the front court.
But Lighty's leadership and game experience will be impossible to replace, at least in the short term. There just isn't anyone on the roster to turn to with the qualities Lighty brings to the team. Thad Matta's job just got a lot harder.

Turner is POW

Even as the Buckeyes were temporarily losing one team leader, another one was clearly emerging. Sophomore guard Evan Turner has been the best player for Matta's 2008-09 Buckeyes, leading the team in scoring (16.3 ppg), rebounding (7.4 avg.) and steals (22). He has become the 'go to' guy for Ohio State on the offensive end, and he leads the Big Ten in steals per game. Evan Turner is, as they say, the complete package.

And no player was more instrumental in launching the Bucks into college basketball's Top 25 over the last two weeks than Turner, who was named Big Ten Player of the Week for the first week of December, after leading the Buckeyes to upset road wins over No.21 Miami (FL) and 7th-ranked Notre Dame. On the strength of those wins and a home victory over Butler, Ohio State entered this week ranked 17th in the AP poll, and 16th in the ESPN/USA Today coaches poll.

Also notable (if not terribly important) is the fact that Ohio State now has the longest unbeaten streak in college basketball at 13 games. After losing to MSU in the Big Ten Tournament last season, the Buckeyes ran off five straight wins to capture the NIT, and have started the 2008-09 season with eight more victories.

Loose Leaves

-Observers of the Buckeyes' bowl game practice sessions are saying that two of the young OSU receivers have had 'the light' come on in recent weeks, and it looks like freshman DeVier Posey and sophomore Taurian Washington are ready to step up to larger roles in the offense. Terrelle Pryor has done a lot of work on his throwing mechanics, and is said to look very comfortable passing the ball and running the offense in practice scrimmages.

- The Buckeyes will practice in Columbus until next Tuesday, and then will have five days off for the holidays before heading to Phoenix next weekend to begin final preparations for the match-up with Texas on Jan. 5. Ohio State is a 10-point underdog against the 4th-ranked Longhorns.

- Ohio State added another commitment to their 2010 recruiting class with the announcement that Jamel Turner , a defensive end/outside linebacker from

Youngstown Ursuline, will play his college football in Columbus. The 6'2" 210 lb. Turner had 23 sacks as a sophomore, and took his team to the state finals in his junior campaign. He is rated as one of the top defensive players in the Midwest, and chose Ohio State over offers from Illinois, Michigan State, Wisconsin and Notre Dame.

Quotable:

"I don't think there's any doubt that Jim (Tressel) will win a national championship with Terrelle (Pryor) before he leaves, when you look at his ability and his confidence and Jim's ability to put things together." **-- Mack Brown,** Texas football coach