It was complete and utter domination Saturday afternoon at the Horseshoe. The Wisconsin Badgers ran 99 plays to Ohio State's 40, held the ball for 42 minutes and 47 seconds, enjoyed a 22-8 edge in first downs and out-gained the Buckeyes 368-184. It was one-sided, it was decisive. And oh, by the way, it was a 31-13 Ohio State victory. Jesse Lamovsky looks back at Saturday's win by the Buckeyes and all the rest of Saturday's college football action in The Week That Was.

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There is more than one way to win a football game. On a day in which the offense was, to put it charitably, offensive, Ohio State got it done using the time-honored tenets of Tressel Ball: get pressure with the front four, take away the running game and the big gains, make the small gains painful, and get game-changing plays from the defense and special teams. The Buckeyes got two interception returns and a kickoff return for touchdowns, and those three plays, along with another sensational performance from the defense, made the difference.

It wasn't balanced and it wasn't pretty. But it damn sure was effective. And at 5-1, 3-0 in the Big Ten, it's tough to do *too* much complaining about this Ohio State football team.

Terrelle... Bellisari? Let's not pull punches when it comes to Terrelle Pryor's performance on Saturday. Facing a Wisconsin defense currently ranked 85th in the nation against the pass, Pryor was simply dreadful. Locking in on receivers and throwing inaccurately to them, the sophomore quarterback was 5-of-13 passing for just 87 yards. He set up Wisconsin's tying touchdown with a second-quarter interception, committed an embarrassing grounding penalty, and was fortunate not to have a couple more picked off as well. It was probably his worst performance of the season.

Some of the blame must go to Ohio State's flu-weakened offensive line- particularly left tackle Mike Adams, who had a game to forget. But Pryor brought a lot of his problems on himself, with his constant telegraphing of passes, inaccuracy and poor decision making. It really doesn't look as if he's made any progress in the passing game, and that isn't a good thing. Because even as stout as this defense is, the Buckeyes won't be able to count on 21 points from the non-offensive units every week. At some point this young man is going to have to help shoulder the load, and do it consistently.

But oh, this defense: Stop me if you've heard this before: Ohio State's defensive line might be the best in the country. They flat-out whipped Wisconsin's heralded offensive line, consistently getting pressure on Badger quarterback Scott Tolzien with just four men, sacking him six times, hounding him countless others and forcing the Big Ten's leader in passing efficiency into two interceptions- one fewer than he'd thrown in the previous five games- and a meager 5.6 yards per attempt.

It wasn't just Tozien that felt constrained by the Buckeye stop troops. Big John Clay was totally shut down, rushing for 59

yards on twenty carries, with a long gain of just eight yards. Dominating the scrimmage line and tackling brilliantly, particularly in space, the Buckeyes held Wisconsin's meat-grinding rushing attack to 2.7 yards per carry, barely half that of their pre-game average of 5.0.

Most impressive, as always, was the depth, especially on the line. Late in the fourth quarter, having been on the field for more than two-thirds of the game, Ohio State was still winning the battle up front and doing it with reserves like Lawrence Wilson and Nathan Williams. Even without Dexter Larimore, the key to their run defense, the Buckeyes held one of the nation's top running backs in check. Pay no attention to the 368 total yards allowed- this defense was simply superb. Wisconsin moved the ball superficially well but was never able to get a big play, and their only touchdown came on a fake field goal in the second period.

And oh, by the way- props to Austin Spitler, a young man I've been critical of due to a shortage of impact plays this season. Spitler played a whale of a game on Saturday, picking up two tackles for losses and making his presence felt all afternoon. All three Buckeye linebackers were stellar, with Ross Homan picking up the team's first Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week award since 2007.

Play of the Game: Welcome back, Kurt Coleman. Fresh off his one-game suspension, the senior safety made his presence felt early and in a huge way- with a lot of help from his buddies up front. Late in the first quarter Wisconsin was on the move with a first down at Ohio State's 31-yard line when Tolzien, pressured by Doug Worthington, air-mailed a pass over the middle. Coleman picked off the errant toss at the eleven, picked up a convoy of blockers, and raced 89 yards down the sideline for the game's first touchdown. Thanks to Coleman's pick-six the Buckeyes got out of the first period with a 7-0 lead, despite gaining just 24 yards on offense and looking bad doing it.

Speaking of Looking Bad: Here are Ohio State's cumulative offensive numbers through their first five possessions in the opening half: 18 plays, 31 yards, one first down and an interception. If statistical lines were women, this one would be Anne Ramsey. Sounding more like a Browns crowd than a Buckeye crowd, the hundred thousand-plus in the Shoe booed the offense lustily throughout the first half.

Credit Where it is Due: If there's one positive thing to be said about Terrelle Pryor's performance, it's that he was able to put together a successful drive when he had to, or at least
kind of
had to. With less than two minutes remaining in the first half Wisconsin took a 10-7 lead on a 50-yard field goal by Phillip Welch. Shrugging off his miserable start, Pryor responded by leading the Buckeyes on a seven-play, 88-yard drive, running for 33 yards and passing for sixty, and ending the march with a
32-yard touchdown strike to DeVier Posey
on a 3
rd
-and-15 play. Ohio State was back in front for keeps, 14-10. It was the only offensive touchdown of the game for the Buckeyes, but it couldn't have come at a more opportune time- especially since Wisconsin was set to receive the second-half kickoff.

Cue the Defense, Again: Having opened the scoring in the first period, Ohio State's defense- specifically, Jermale Hines- broke the game open in the third. Trailing 14-10 on their first possession of the second half, Wisconsin faced a 2
nd

-and-17 on its own 25 when Tolzien threw a sideline pass into coverage. Hines conducted a one-man tip drill, deflecting the football into the air, intercepting it, and rambling 32 yards for a touchdown. You know, Jermale Hines can play a little bit. Heck, he might even be good enough to play in the SEC.

And Cue the Special Teams: The Badgers bounced back from the defensive score and, thanks to their

longest play of the afternoon, a 33-yard completion to Nick Toon, drove to a field goal that cut the deficit to 21-13. Ray Small took the ensuing kickoff at his four-yard line, sped straight up the middle and

broke away untouched

for a 96-yard touchdown. It was now 28-13 and Ohio State had scored two touchdowns in the third quarter despite not running a single play from scrimmage. As a matter of fact, the Buckeye offense didn't get on the field in the second half until the 1:40 mark of the third quarter, by which time the game was effectively in the bag.

Aw, Poor Bret: Frustrated by his inability to beat the Browns in the old AAFC, San Francisco 49ers coach Buck Shaw wryly quipped of Cleveland patriarch Paul Brown, "I dream of beating him, scheme to beat him, and wind up screaming because I haven't beaten him." Bret Bielema probably wants to do his own screaming over his 0-3 record against Ohio State, a mark that has included some exasperating turns of fortune. Two years ago in Columbus, Wisconsin led the Buckeyes 17-10 late in the third quarter before melting under a Beanie Wells onslaught. Last season in Madison, the Badgers led 13-10 in the fourth quarter before

having victory snatched away by Terrelle Pryor's eleventh-hour heroics. Last Saturday Wisconsin owned Ohio State in every statistical category except the one which matters- the scoreboard. Bedeviled by big plays and bad breaks, Coach Bielema has been unable to duplicate the success Barry Alvarez enjoyed against the Scarlet and Gray.

On the Offense: I'm a big fan of the show "Air Crash

Investigation" on the Discovery Channel. They spend a lot of time on that program talking about "redundancies." An aircraft has many thousands of moving parts, and when any one of those parts fail another component is designed to pick up the slack, perform the same function, and keep the plane in the air.

Ohio State, as coached by Jim Tressel, is a team equipped with its own redundant components. When one area of the team fails-

as the offense did on Saturday, and frankly, as it has done numerous times throughout the Vest's tenure- another area, be it the defense, the kicking game or the return unit, steps up and keeps the team on a winning track. The ability to get it done in different ways has always been a hallmark of the Tressel Era. Very seldom does the entire concern get brought down by one malfunctioning unit.

This isn't to excuse the woes of Ohio State's offense. Believe me; I don't like to watch it any more than you do. With the talent at hand, the Buckeye attack can and should be far more prolific. But Coach Tressel deserves credit for building a team that, more often than not, finds a way to win even if every part of the machine isn't in perfect running order. The built-in redundancies of Tressel Ball are what keep this Scarlet and Gray craft landing safely on the runway, week in and week out.

Around the Nation

Game of the Week- Washington-Arizona: There weren't many barnburners last weekend- the cost of Notre Dame having a bye- so I'm going with Washington's come-from-behind 36-33 victory over Arizona in Seattle. Trailing 33-21 late in the fourth period, the Huskies first drove 59 yards to a touchdown on a Jake

Locker-to-Kavario Middleton strike from 25 yards, then stunned the Wildcats with an interception return for a score with 2:37 to play. Washington had no business winning this game- they were out-gained 461-256 and didn't take their first lead until Mason Foster's 37-yard return of a deflected screen pass - but after several lean years in Montlake, the Huskies are finally figuring out ways to

finish on the right side of the scoreboard.

Good Fantasy Numbers: I picked Kansas to win the Big 12 North at the beginning of the season thanks largely to senior quarterback Todd Reesing and the receiver duo of Dezmon Briscoe and Kerry Meier, and thus far the

battery has made me look awfully smart- never more so than in the undefeated Jayhawks' 41-36 victory over Iowa State on Saturday. Reesing picked apart the Cyclones defense for 442 yards and four touchdowns and both of his primary receivers had monster games, with Briscoe catching 12 passes for 186 yards and two

touchdowns and Meier hauling in 16 passes for 142 yards and two more scores. Kansas's defense is suspect- they were torched for 512 yards by Iowa State- but that might not matter with the way Reesing and his two top targets are playing.

Better Fantasy Numbers:

Bowling Green wide receiver Freddie Barnes put together what would be a decent season for some players in last Saturday's 36-35 victory over Kent State. The senior from Chicago Heights, Illinois, racked up 22 receptions for 278 yards and three touchdowns as the Falcons overcame a 35-23 fourth-quarter deficit. With 75 catches after six games,

Barnes is on pace to shatter the NCAA single-season receptions record of 142 set by Manny Hazard for the Run ‘n Shoot Houston Cougars of 1989. As for the Golden Flashes, they figured out a way to lose a game they should have won. What else is new?

The Wild Wild North: The most interesting divisional race in college football might be in the Big 12 North, where Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas duel for supremacy. The Cornhuskers got a huge win over the Tigers in Columbia last Thursday, but they face tough back-to-back November contests at Kansas and in

Lincoln against Oklahoma and must straighten out an inconsistent offense. Kansas is the only undefeated team remaining in the North, but the Jayhawks have been ragged on defense and have Texas and Oklahoma on the schedule in addition to Nebraska and the neutral-site donnybrook with Missouri on November

28th.

Missouri is still very much alive despite the loss to Nebraska, but the Tigers have Oklahoma State and Texas in the next two weeks and Blaine Gabbert suddenly looks vulnerable after a dreadful second-half performance against the Cornhuskers. Each of these teams is flawed in some way;

capable of winning the division, incapable of blowing away the field. Stay tuned.

The Battle of Who Could Care Less: Sad but true- someone is going to win the ACC's Atlantic Division. It simply

can't be avoided. No one in the division looks formidable: not Wake Forest, losers at home to Baylor; not Boston College, losers of two ACC road games by a combined score of 73-21; not Maryland, losers to Middle Tennessee State; not Clemson, losers to Maryland; not N.C. State,

losers by 21 at home to Duke; and certainly not Florida State, owners of their first 0-3 ACC record since joining the conference in 1992. Of the division's six members, only Wake Forest and Maryland have fewer than two losses in the conference.

At least three members of the Coastal Division- Virginia Tech, Miami and Georgia Tech- are better than anyone in the Atlantic. In effect, the race for the Coastal title is also the race for the Atlantic title, and at 3-0 in the conference the fourth-ranked Hokies have a leg up on

everyone, with a chance to virtually clinch the division with a win at Georgia Tech next Saturday evening. No one in the Atlantic will have much of a chance to knock off Virginia Tech in the ACC Championship Game, a contest that from here looks like little more than

Frank Beamer's ace in the hole when it comes to a BCS title shot. Indeed, it can be said that the real winner of the Atlantic Division actually resides in Blacksburg.

This Team Will

Self-Destruct in Five Seconds: Under first-year head coach Danny Hope Purdue has built an identity as a team that will do whatever it takes to lose. Two weeks ago the Boilermakers saw a 21-3 lead over Northwestern immolated by six turnovers, and they were

at it again last Saturday against Minnesota in chilly TCF Bank Stadium. After jumping out to a 10-0 second-period lead, Purdue gifted the Gophers 28 points on an interception, a seven-yard punt, a fumbled kickoff, and a blocked field-goal

attempt that was returned 47 yards for a touchdown. Thanks to the generosity of their guests Minnesota walked away with a 35-20 victory. Now 1-5 on the season, the Bumbling Boilers will have a golden opportunity to continue their implosive ways

next week when Ohio State visits West Lafayette.

Winners of the Week

Florida: God's

Quarterback returned from his concussion to lead a prosaic 13-3 victory over LSU in Death Valley on Saturday night. Mr. Tebow wasn't spectacular- 11-of-16 for 134 yards with another 38 on the ground- but he didn't

need to be, what with the nation's best defense shutting down the Tigers to the tune of 162 yards allowed. Only one major hurdle stands in the way of an undefeated regular season in Gainesville- a road tilt at South Carolina on November

14th.

Alabama: The Crimson Tide improved to 6-0 by overwhelming Mississippi in Oxford, 22-3. Mark Ingram

ran through the Rebel defense for 172 yards while Alabama's defense terrorized Jevon Snead, holding him to 11-of-34 passing and intercepting him four times in the rout. Three ranked

opponents remain on the schedule, but two of those- South Carolina and LSU- have to come to Tuscaloosa. I said it at the beginning of the season, and I'll say it again- it's very likely that both

Florida and Alabama will be undefeated when they meet in the SEC Championship Game the first week of December. And they may very well be the only two undefeated teams left in

major-college football at that point.

Iowa: The Hawkeyes won their tenth game in a row-second longest streak in the country

after Florida's fourteen straight wins- with a sc intillating 30-28 victory over Michigan in Iowa City. Once again they did it with an opportunistic

defense, turning the Wolverines over five times and so frustrating Rich Rodriguez that he yanked Tate Forcier early in the fourth period. Kirk Ferentz's team now

goes back on the road for the next two Saturdays, with tough games at Wisconsin and at revitalized Michigan State.

Nebraska: It's taken a year and a half, but Bo Pelini finally has a signature win with the Big Red. Spurred by their outstanding front four, the Cornhuskers

exploded in the fourth quarter Thursday to turn a 12-0 deficit into a 27-12 romp over Missouri in rainy Columbia. The Nebraska defense made life

miserable for Blaine Gabbert, holding him to 17-of-43 passing, pressuring him constantly and intercepting him twice. The offense is still a little

somnambulant- they did absolutely nothing in the first three quarters against Missouri- but Bo's defense, anchored by tackle Ndamukong Suh, is definitely

BCS-caliber.

Temple: Water finds its level, and so has Temple, which after a futile stint in the Big East

and a miserable sojourn as an independent is finally punching its weight in the Mid-American Conference. The Owls moved to 3-0 in the MAC with

their third straight win, a 24-19 victory over Ball State. Al Golden's team has now won five of seven since late in the 2008 season and looks like a real threat to win

the wide-open MAC East.

Losers of the Week

Georgia: The Bulldogs looked more like Pomeranians in a horrendous 45-19 loss to Tennessee in Knoxville.

Georgia's defense accomplished what many thought was impossible- they made Jonathan Crompton look

like a good quarterback. The much-maligned Crompton riddled the Dawgs for 310 yards and four touchdowns on 20-of-27

passing, part of a 472-yard effort for the Volunteer offense. At 3-3, Georgia is off to its worst start since 1996, the first year of the

Jim Donnan era, when the Bulldogs went 5-6.

Colorado: You

know you're having a rough season as a coach when you're 1-4 and you've been forced to bench your own son.

Such is the sad state of Colorado's Dan Hawkins, who watched a possible upset at third-ranked Texas frittered

away by turnovers and special-teams breakdowns. The Buffalos led 14-10 early in the third quarter when Matthew

DiLallo's punt was blocked and scooped by Texas's Ben Wells for the go-ahead touchdown. Moments later,

having regained possession at the Texas 17-yard line thanks to an interception, Dan's son Cody threw an ill-advised pass in

the flat that was picked off and returned 92 yards for a score by Earl Thomas. When Cody's next attempt was intercepted by

Blake Gideon, Dan swallowed fatherly pride and told his offspring to grab some pine. Jordan Shipley's 74-yard punt return for a

touchdown early in the fourth period made the move academic as the Longhorns rolled, 38-14.

Indiana: Preseason expectations, meet Indiana. Indiana, meet preseason expectations. After five solid,

competitive weeks, the Hoosiers went on the road at Charlottesville and were hammered 47-7 by a Virginia

squad that can be generously described as mediocre. The Cavaliers blitzed Bill Lynch's team for 536 total yards and 29 first

downs in compiling their largest margin of victory in a non-conference game since a 51-3 rout of Temple in 2005.

One can imagine Indiana's crushing defeat generating some consternation in Ann Arbor, Michigan: "We

needed to come back at home against *these* guys?"

Rice: Last year the Owls won ten games for the first time since 1949 and copped a bowl win for the first time since 1954.

This year it's payback time. Following a brutal 63-14 shellacking by Navy, Rice is 0-6, has been outscored

266-99, and hasn't lost by fewer than 17 points yet this season. The Midshipmen, who hadn't been running the ball

with their usual aplomb in 2009, racked up 471 rushing yards against the Owls, who are dead last in the FBS in scoring

defense, 115th

in total defense, 111th

in rushing defense and 103rd

in passing defense.

Undefeated Teams:

Missouri,

Wisconsin, Auburn and LSU were all knocked from the ranks of the unbeaten last weekend. Nine

teams- Kansas, Texas, Iowa, Cincinnati, South Florida, Florida, Alabama, TCU, and Boise

State- remain perfect, with the Bearcats and Bulls meeting this coming Thursday in Tampa.

Next Week: Ohio State looks for their record-tying 17th consecutive Big Ten road win in

West Lafayette against error-prone Purdue. Dan Wismar and I will preview Bucks-Boilers

and take our own look back at the week that was on the next Buckeye Friday podcast.