Sad but true- Ohio State hasn't experienced a great deal of success in bowl games over the last twenty-five years. The Buckeyes are just 9-13 in the postseason since 1984, and a number of the losses have been downright embarrassing for the program and its fans. All twenty-two of those games, from the glorious to the disgraceful, are here in the final installment of Jesse Lamovsky's unofficial "Quarter-century of Buckeye fandom" series, ranked from the worst to the best.

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22.) 2007 BCS Championship- Florida 41, Ohio State 14: I don't think I've ever been as surprised by the outcome of a Buckeye game as I was by this one. At the time I was too stunned to really comprehend the full extent of the catastrophe- it only sunk in later. I'd rather not go into too much detail about this game. Let Orson Swindle and Stranko Montana brag about it if they want- not this Buckeye fan. Shall we move on? Sure we shall.

21.) 1990 Liberty Bowl- Air Force 23, Ohio State 11: To me, this loss is just about as bad as the Disaster in the Desert; maybe the lowest point for the program in my time as a fan. The conduct of the Buckeyes prior to and during the game was contemptible. They didn't want to play in the Liberty Bowl, considered the game and the opponent beneath them, and made no bones about it. They came out flat and were whipped- out-gained on the ground 254-80- by an opponent that was hungrier, better-coached, and more physical. It was bad enough that Ohio State took a beating from a service academy that was 6-5 and a 17-point underdog going in. The fact that they deserved the beating, deserved it richly, made it worse.

20.) 2001 Outback Bowl- South Carolina 24, Ohio State 7: Some losses are adorned with silver linings. This wasn't one of them, unless of course you consider the end of John Cooper's regime to be a silver lining. The Buckeyes went into this game in turmoil and ended it in humiliation, torn apart by a Gamecock team that hadn't won a single game the year before and by
Ryan Brewer
, a backup tailback and Ohioan who Cooper didn't even try to recruit. Juvenile offenders picking up trash along the highway put forth a better effort than the Buckeyes in this game.

19.) 1985 Rose Bowl- USC 20, Ohio State 17: This loss hurt for two major reasons. One, it was the Rose Bowl. And two, the Buckeyes were the better team. Ohio State was loaded with future NFL stars- Cris Carter, Keith Byars, Jim Lachey, Pepper Johnson, Chris Spielman, William White- but gift-wrapped this one for a nondescript USC team with four turnovers and repeated failures in the red zone. It was a golden opportunity to break the Pac-10's then-stranglehold over the Rose Bowl- and Ohio State flat-out flubbed it.

18.) 2009 Fiesta Bowl- Texas 24, Ohio State 21: Some of the worst losses are the ones that shouldn't be. And Ohio State should have won this game. They had the lead in the final minute, needed only to keep the Longhorns out of the end zone, and they couldn't do it. A win would have gone a long way toward resurrecting the program's tattered national image. But the Buckeyes couldn't close the deal. They blew it.

17.) 2008 BCS Championship- LSU 38, Ohio State 24: Losing this game was no shame, because LSU had a superior team and for all intents and purposes was playing at home. It was the way the Buckeyes lost- blowing an early 10-0 lead, losing their composure with five personal-foul penalties, reportedly fighting amongst themselves in the locker room at halftime - that really stung. And getting housed by SEC opponents in bowl games was getting really, really old.

16.) 1996 Citrus Bowl- Tennessee 20, Ohio State 14: The Volunteers packing their extra-long cleats, Eddie George getting stuffed at the goal line by Bill Duff, the Buckeye defense giving up a 69-yard touchdown run by Jay Graham when Tennessee was just trying to run out the clock in the first half, the crappy weather in Orlando... this one leaves a foul taste. Combined with the Michigan loss, it was a lousy way to end what had been a brilliant season for the '95 Buckeyes. By the way, Ohio State and Tennessee were both ranked in the top five going in; unusual for a non-premier bowl.

15.) 1995 Citrus Bowl- Alabama 24, Ohio State 17: Under John Cooper, Ohio State refined the art of the fourth-quarter bowl loss to an SEC opponent. Facing an Alabama team that had been undefeated before a conference-championship loss, the Buckeyes led 17-14 early in the fourth period. But they couldn't contain Sherman Williams, who ran up 359 all-purpose yards and turned a short pass into a fifty-yard touchdown sprint with less than a minute left.

14.) 1993 Citrus Bowl- Georgia 21, Ohio State 14: Yet another example of a John Cooper team finding a way to lose a game it should have won. With the game tied 14-14 in the fourth quarter the Buckeyes looked to be on their way to scoring the go-ahead points- until Kirk Herbstreit botched a handoff deep in Georgia territory. The Bulldogs promptly drove right downfield for the winning touchdown, sending Coop to 0-4 in bowl games. With its offensive troika of Eric Zeier, Garrison Heart and Andre Hastings, Georgia was the better team- but Ohio State should have won this game. Thanks a pant-load, Herbie.

13.) 1998 Sugar Bowl- Florida State 31, Ohio State 14: This might be the worst physical beating I've seen the Buckeyes take in any game. It's definitely the worst physical beating I've seen a Buckeye
quarterback
take in any game. Joe Germaine was absolutely abused all night long by a blindingly fast Seminole defense led by Andre Wadsworth. I still can't believe Germaine got back up after some of the shots he took from Wadsworth and Company. There was one positive legacy from this rout- it convinced Coop of the need to recruit speed on the defensive line. Before long, guys like Will Smith and Darrion Scott were trickling into the program- and the rest, as they say, is history.

12.) 1990 Hall of Fame Bowl- Auburn 31, Ohio State 14: John Cooper's first foray into the postseason was a rather one-sided one. The Tigers spotted the Buckeyes a 14-3 lead, then rolled to 28 unanswered points and a convincing win. Still, it was nice to see Ohio State playing postseason football after a three-year hiatus- and very nice to see
Zach Dumas extract his pound of flesh
from Auburn's Stacy Danley.

11.) 1992 Hall of Fame Bowl- Syracuse 24, Ohio State 17: The Buckeyes were badly outplayed for most of this game but still managed to tie the Orangemen at 17 in the fourth quarter. Then, in true Cooper-era fashion, they broke down late, giving up a 60-yard touchdown bomb from Marvin Graves to Antonio Johnson that proved to be the backbreaker. Ohio State did gain a measure of revenge the following September, when they went up to the Carrier Dome and thumped the Orangemen, 35-12.

10.) 2002 Outback Bowl- South Carolina 31, Ohio State 28: In Jim Tressel's postseason debut the Buckeyes fought back from a 28-0 second-half deficit and seemed on their way to an amazing comeback win, only to see it slip away when Steve Bellisari threw a horrible interception which the Gamecocks parlayed into the game-winning field goal. Dropping back-to-back bowls to a second-rate program like South Carolina was no fun, but the Buckeyes did show major character to even be in this game at the end. Ohio State wouldn't lose another football game for nearly two years.

9.) 1985 Citrus Bowl- Ohio State 10, Brigham Young 7: The Buckeyes scored their only touchdown on an interception return by nose guard Larry Kolic and hung on to beat the Cougars in probably the most boring postseason game I've ever seen Ohio State play. Other than the heroics of the defense- which shut down Robbie Bosco and collected six turnovers- and some sideline wizardry on the part of Cris Carter, there was absolutely nothing memorable about this game.

8.) 1999 Sugar Bowl- Ohio State 24, Texas A&M 14: Bound for a second-place ranking in the final poll, Ohio State jumped out to a 21-7 first-quarter lead then, in a desperate attempt to impress the pollsters, tried and failed to run up the score the rest of the way. A win is a win, but this was a pretty anticlimactic way to end a season the majority of which the Buckeyes spent as the odds-on favorite to win the National Championship. Texas A&M wasn't exactly a premier opponent, either- the Aggies had been unimpressive during the season until they stunned Kansas State in the Big 12 Championship Game.

7.) 1993 Holiday Bowl- Ohio State 28, Brigham Young 21: John Cooper finally won a bowl game at Ohio State, but he didn't exactly look good doing it. The Buckeyes got a huge scare from the 6-6 Cougars, holding on only because of a couple of dropped potential touchdown passes in the final minute. Raymont Harris did put on a memorable performance in the otherwise blasé victory, rolling up 235 yards on BYU's undersized defense. Thank Jehovah for BYU, by the way- Ohio State is 3-0 all-time in bowl match-ups with the Cougars.

6.) 2004 Fiesta Bowl- Ohio State 35, Kansas State 28: Craig Krenzel, Michael Jenkins and Santonio Holmes lit up the Wildcat defense in a game that wasn't as close as the final score indicated. It was a solid win, but I for one was hoping for a re-match with Miami in the Orange Bowl, not a return trip to Tempe to take on a K-State team that had upset top-ranked Oklahoma in the Big 12 Championship Game.

5.) 2004 Alamo Bowl- Ohio State 33, Oklahoma State 7: Other than ESPN's halftime wilding of the Buckeye program in the wake of Maurice Clarett's allegations, this was a fun night. It was Ted Ginn's introduction to the nation- the speedster scored a touchdown and had a spectacular, 42-yard cross-country reception, while Josh Zwick filled in admirably for the suspended Troy Smith, the defense shut down the Cowboy offense and Mike Nugent set the Buckeye career scoring record. It was a very satisfying way to end a somewhat frustrating season and opened up a new era with new stars like Ginn, Anthony Gonzales, Santonio Holmes, A.J. Hawk and Bobby Carpenter.

4.) 2006 Fiesta Bowl- Ohio State 34, Notre Dame 20: Give Charlie Weis a month to prepare and he still won't figure out a way to keep his defense from giving up 617 total yards. Troy Smith, Ted Ginn, Santonio Holmes and Antonio Pittman ran away from the Irish all night, with two blocked field goals and a fumble inside the Notre Dame ten-yard line the only things keeping the score cosmetic. Ohio State's four touchdowns came on plays of 56, 60, 68 and 85 yards. It was a spectacular offensive showing for the Buckeyes and showed that, while beating Notre Dame might not be what it used to be, it's still pretty damned enjoyable.

3.) 1987 Cotton Bowl- Ohio State 28, Texas A&M 12: I've talked at length about this game in earlier columns and, in the interest of avoiding redundancy, won't do it again here. Suffice to say, seeing the Buckeyes go down to Dallas and wax A&M in its own bowl, in its own state, was very, very satisfying. By the way, two days after this game the Browns beat the Jets in double-overtime in the AFC Divisional Playoffs, making this perhaps the best football weekend of my life.

2.) 1997 Rose Bowl- Ohio State 20, Arizona State 17: I'll tell you what- had the Ohio State teams of this era played more bowl games- or more Michigan games- with the focus, determination, and crunch-time grit they displayed against the Sun Devils, John Cooper's tenure would be remembered with a whole lot more warmth. Where was this team in all the Citrus Bowl pratfalls against SEC opponents? Where was this team against the Wolverines?
Que sera sera.

1.) 2003 Fiesta Bowl- Ohio State 31, Miami 24 (2 OT): I truly believe that I could re-write this piece in ten, twenty, or fifty years, and the win over the Hurricanes will still be sitting right here in the top spot. This game can't be topped.