If you haven't heard the good news already, and you somehow skipped the headline -- The Ohio State Buckeyes basketball team captured at least a share of the Big Ten Conference Championship this past Tuesday. I will give you approximately 30 seconds to stand up and do your happy dance, celebration dance, Irish jig or whatever it is you do when something amazing happens. After your 30 seconds expire, dutifully report back to reading the article.

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Now that you've appropriately celebrated Ohio State's championship and attained a *solid* amou nt of cadrio (David Regimbal, promoter of healthy living), we can look back at Tuesday night's game against Illinois.

Oh yes it's Senior night, and the feelings right...

Value City Arena was *hoppin'* on Tuesday night, for many reasons. Namely, Ohio State could clinch at least a share of the league championship (which you already knew), but also because it was the Buckeyes last home game of the season (meaning it was Senior Night). Ohio State doesn't have any senior starters, but key contributors off the bench like Kyle Madsen, P.J. Hill, Jeremie Simmons, and true *be nch*
players Danny Peters and Mark Titus were all playing their last game on their home court. The goosebumps, feel good moment of the night came when Mark Titus, whose famous blog

Club Trillion
has
raised thousands of dollars for the charity group
A Kid Again
, was honored at half court.

It was an emotional night all around, and when the cheers died and the tears dried (you better believe I meant to display my rhyming ability there), the ball was tipped and the game began.

Remind me, which one is supposed to be the star?

An interesting side story has developed whenever Illinois and Ohio State play each other. The leaders of each team (Evan Turner & Demetri McCamey) actually played high school basketball together at St. Johns (Chicago). The evolution of their college careers has led them to being two of the best players in the Big Ten. Coming into college, McCamey was the higher rated recruit, but Turner has developed into the better player.

In the first half of this game, you couldn't tell.

McCamey came out motivated and scorched the Buckeyes early. In the first 10 minutes, he hit three triples and dished out three assists. It was a stretch that saw him either scoring or assisting on 17 straight points for the Fighting Illini, and the Buckeyes stumbled to an early 19-13 deficit.

Meanwhile, Turner was struggling. Illinois used an effective strategy of double teaming him late in possessions, and you could tell that Turner was frustrated. However this defensive strategy left John Diebler *wide open,* and he made Illinois pay. My theory is that John Diebler suffered from a temporary case of mistaken identity since he played the game on Senior Night like everything was about him. I was waiting for someone to remind him that he's only a junior, but I guess they wanted him to keep shooting the ball as well as he was. Diebler hit five triples in the first half alone and gave Ohio State the spark they were looking for.

The most important foul in the history of basketball...

With 9:58 to play in the first half, McCamey was called for his second foul and was forced to go to the bench. Although it seemed that his absence gave Ohio State a little energy, McCamey was only off of the floor for a few possessions. Ohio State was in the midst of putting together an impressive 15-2 run that started two minutes before McCamey's second foul. When he returned to the floor three possessions later, the Buckeyes were still pouring it on. The announcers calling the game insisted that the reason the Buckeyes went on this run was because of this foul call. Did I mention that McCamey only missed three possessions?

That stretch gave Ohio State a 28-21 lead, but the Fighting Illini were able to close that gap to one (34-33) with under a minute to go in the half. You would think that whatever advantage or upper-hand Ohio State gained by McCamey's brief absence in this game would have been neutralized by then, *but just you wait*. The implications of this single foul have not yet finished wreaking havoc all over Illinois basketball.

Alright now, I don't want them to gain another... uh... point!

With a slight adjustment to Coach Yoast's speech from *Remember the Titans,* these were the words of encouragement I gave to the Buckeyes at halftime (delivered from my living room to their ears). Things were going well and it seemed like the guys were really responding to my advice until about a minute into the first half, when Illinois' Mike Davis tipped in a two point shot. I guess I'll have to give up my coaching aspirations and stick with the 'article writing' gig. Bummer.

The first 10 minutes of the second half were very "back-and-forth" as Ohio State and Illinois traded baskets. You could almost see how that foul call on McCamey in the first half was effecting every play. Turner continued to struggle, but the Buckeyes defense on McCamey tightened and Illinois was forced to find some offense outside of him. Ohio State started to pull away after David Lighty was fouled during a (made) layup, and when Lighty hit the floor, one of his contact lenses fell out. I mention this because Lighty has now lost a contact in four straight games. This is amazing. I think this stat is more impressive then Evan Turner's bazillion Conference Player of the Week awards. David Lighty loses his contacts more than any player I've ever had the pleasure of watching. I don't even understand how it happens; does he have like... loose eyes or something?

Regardless, Lighty's three point play was the beginning of the end for Illinois chances in this game. Next stop, Championship-town.

*Side note -- if I see Charles Barkley's Taco Bell commercial one more time, I might go insane. First of all, the man is a walking insult to anything related to fitness (and I've already been named a promoter of healthy living). Secondly, his "five-bucks-box-it-rocks-it-rocks" comment is the weakest attempt at a rhyming scheme ever (and you've all borne witness to my rhyming ability). Watching that commercial is like getting slapped in the face, twice, by some overweight guy that I can hardly understand. It's *tuurrible.*

Let's make like Halle Berry and cue the wrap up music...

The final nine minutes of this game seemed like a formality. The Buckeyes were putting the clamps down on defense and were making their shots and getting to the free throw line on offense. With Ohio State already leading by six, they closed the game out on an 18-8 run. Somewhere along the way, when Ohio State was outclassing Illinois in every facet of the game, the announcer went back to McCamey's second foul in the first half and said, "it's the reason Ohio State is winning". I then suffered a nose bleed for being subjected to such stupidity.

The night ended with all of the seniors getting on the court in the final minute, their last minute played at Value City Arena. You could tell by the energy in the building that the fans were going to storm the court, and I was sitting at home, silently praying that no one would bump into David Lighty and knock his eyes right out of their sockets.

When the final horn sounded, the camera man found Evan Turner waving/motioning to the Ohio State student section for them to storm the court. It was the perfect ending to Ohio State's championship regular season, and a symbolic gesture from Turner to all of Buckeye Nation to follow him and his team through the conference and national tournaments.

What's next?

Ohio State clinched the "1 seed" in the Big Ten tournament, which begins March 11. Early next week, I'll be previewing both the conference and NCAA tournaments, so make sure to check back with us. Until next time; GO BUCKS.