With one of the most exciting opening weekends of March Madness behind us, most everyone, including President Obama, is throwing away their brackets and just *watching the fun*. The weekend was filled with upsets and buzzer beaters galore, and I think I can speak for everyone when I say "thank you!" to the NCAA for giving us a three day break before the tournament resumes. Holding my breath as much as I have during the last 72 hours can't be healthy.

With Ohio State's section of the bracket wide open, let's take a look at back at how they fared against their first two opponents.

First Round: UC Santa Barbara -- Ohio State's first match up of the tournament paired them with the UC Santa Barbara Gauchos, so I was half hoping/half expecting their team mascot to be some sort of mupppet or Sesame Street character. To my chagrin, their mascot looked like a cartoon cowboy with a creepy mustache. With a team name like the Gauchos, the school's...mascot creator... really dropped the ball on that one. I was also expecting to, you know, watch a basketball game, but that barely happened. What we experienced on Friday night was a two and a half hour time slot comprised mostly of commercials that were occasionally interrupted by an actual game. Very annoying.

When the game finally started, Ohio State came out sharp. The Buckeyes built an 11-3 lead in the first five minutes thanks to the Gauchos' poor shooting. At the fifteen minute mark, UCSB

made a substitution and brought in 7'3 Greg Somogyi. I wasn't aware that Zyldrunis Ilgelkissis had an illegitimate son. Regardless, Big Z Jr. gave the Gauchos a lift and they went on a 10-3 run of their own. The Buckeyes were giving up a ton of offensive rebounds and UCSB was feasting off of that.

After the 38th commercial break of the game (10 minutes in), Ohio State clamped down the interior defense. Dallas Lauderdale was a monster inside, recording five blocks in the first half alone. Apparently, scouting opponents is illegal in the land of the Gauchos, because they continually challenged the Buckeyes inside, and time after time, Lauderdale held strong.

While the defense was tightening, John Diebler was going bonkers on the offensive end. '*Deepler'* hit four triples and scored 14 total points in the first half. His strong performance gave Ohio State a 30-17 advantage going into intermission.

The second half started slowly for the Buckeyes. Evan Turner had his first off night in... forever, struggling from the floor to the tune of 2/13 shooting. A good sign for the Buckeyes was the pinpoint shooting of Diebler and William Buford, who combined for 14/26 on field goal attempts. Dallas Lauderdale continued his goal of blocking everything, everywhere, and finished the night with a career high eight rejections. Whenever it seemed like Ohio State was building momentum, it was crushed by the numerous commercial breaks. There was a sequence in the game that went as follows:

Commercial break...

The Gauchos passed the ball in and advanced it across half court, with an errant pass sending the ball out of bounds. It was five seconds of game time. The game was then sent to...

Another commercial break.

What made it worse was the fact that this wasn't the Super Bowl, so the commercials were *awful*.

Every company is trying to tap into the
March Madness
theme, but in most instances, the advertisements just come off awkwardly:

Aren't these lawnmower sales we're having during march... madness?

No.

Back to the game – the Buckeyes were able to build a 15 point lead and kept it that way for a majority of the second half. Every time Ohio State threatened to blow the game open, the Gauchos hit a shot and kept the score respectable. Diebler finished the game with seven three pointers, one of the best performances of his career. In the end, the Buckeyes were able to finish UCSB off, 68-51, and advance to the second round.

Second Round: Georgia Tech -- Ohio State squared off against ACC member Georgia Tech with a berth into the Sweet 16 on the line. With Georgetown being knocked off by Ohio University and Kansas falling to Northern Iowa, the Buckeyes found themselves the highest ranked team in the Midwest region by a wide margin.

The Buckeyes came out playing sloppy basketball in the first half. Three of Ohio State's first four possessions resulted in turnovers, and the Yellow Jackets connected on two 3 pointers and raced out to a 10-2 lead. Fortunately, Ohio State was able to get the Yellow Jackets' big men into foul trouble, which affected the entire game. The Buckeyes closed the gap by getting to the free-throw line and tightening the defense.

Evan Turner shook off a bad first round performance with a huge first half against Georgia Tech. Turner was extremely aggressive, shooting the ball 15 times in the first 20 minutes. He ended the half with 16 points, giving the Buckeyes a 28-26 advantage going into the break.

The roles were reversed during the start of the second half as Georgia Tech struggled with turnovers while Ohio State was hitting its shots. The Buckeyes led by nine after five minutes of play and stretched the lead to 14 by capitalizing on their fast break opportunities.

Much like the Gauchos in the first round, Georgia Tech did just enough to keep themselves in this game. In a span of two minutes, the Yellow Jackets put together a 7-0 run to cut Ohio State's lead in half. Also, just like the Gauchos in the first round, Ohio State kept their opponent at bay by hitting their three point shots. In the second half alone, the Buckeyes connected on six 3 pointers. John Diebler was responsible for four of those, and once again by asserting himself, became the difference in the game.

The Buckeyes led by 15 with four minutes to go, but Georgia Tech wasn't ready to quit. In a span of two and a half minutes, they created turnovers and did their best John Diebler impression by catching fire behind the three point line. With just under two minutes to go, they had cut the lead to 4 and captured the momentum. But when the Yellow Jackets weren't able to create turnovers, they had to start fouling. Ohio State got the job done at the line (17/23) and closed out the game for a 75-66 victory.

Evan Turner finished the afternoon with a near triple double -- 24 points, nine rebounds and nine assists. With the win, Ohio State advances to the Sweet 16 and will face off against the Tennessee Volunteers. The last time these two teams met was during Ohio State's last march to the Final Four. The Bucks and the Vols met in the Sweet 16 that year as well, and Ohio State came back from a 20 point second half deficit to win the game. Let's keep our fingers crossed that the Buckeyes can repeat history and capture another win.

Think about this, Buckeye fans -- Ohio State is two wins away from the Final Four. *Let's go Bucks !*