Ohio State's 45-7 Thursday-night romp over Marshall wasn't completely flawless, but it will certainly do for starters. The Buckeyes dominated in every facet, out-gaining the Herd 526-199, forcing three turnovers and keeping Marshall's offense off the scoreboard entirely. Terrelle Pryor opened his third season in stylish fashion, Tyler Moeller made his triumphant return, Brandon Saine and Dane Sanzenbacher racked up 100-yard games on the ground and through the air… other than the 87-degree mugginess that created oceans of perspiration among the players, coaches, officials and 105,040 spectators, it was all good in the Shoe.

It was over when: Marshall fumbled away the opening kickoff at its own 22-yard line. Four plays later Pryor found DeVier Posey in the end zone for a 7-0 Buckeye lead, and that was pretty much it. Unfortunately for Marshall and its first-year head coach Doc Holliday, that *wasn't* it as far as mistakes were concerned.

Blundering Herd: Certainly Ohio State's superior size, strength, speed and depth had something to do with Marshall's sloppy performance, but a number of the Herd's wounds were self-inflicted as well. The boys from Huntington committed eight penalties (including four dead-ball violations in punt formation) and dropped at least four passes, including three in a row to kill a first-period drive. Twice Marshall got inside Ohio State's 25-yard line without scoring points, missing a 40-yard field goal attempt and fumbling the ball away at the Buckeye 6. With West Virginia coming to Huntington next Saturday, they'd better get it cleaned up in a hurry.

Not-so-special teams: That isn't to say the Buckeyes didn't have their warts. They did,

particularly on special teams. The coverage unit did force the turnover that led to Ohio State's first touchdown, but it also gave up a 63-yard kickoff return; more damaging, the Buckeyes had a 53-yard field-goal attempt blocked and returned for Marshall's only touchdown late in the first period. There were bright spots- sophomore Ben Buchanan had a solid night punting the ball and Jordan Hall flashed some nice moves in the punt-return game- but blocked field goals for scores will obviously get you beat by a quality opponent.

Pryor on Fire: Jim Tressel showcased an aggressive passing attack in Ohio State's Rose Bowl victory in January and he didn't play it much closer to the sweater vest Thursday night. Terrelle Pryor came out dealing, airing it out on four of his first five snaps, and he looked sharp. Pryor's line for the night: 17-of-25 for 247 yards and three touchdowns with no interceptions. The big Pennsylvanian threw some beauties too- especially the third scoring pass, a gorgeously thrown fade to Posey that he squeezed into a tight window between the ground and a Marshall defensive back. In addition to throwing short passes with aplomb, Pryor went up top to Dane Sanzenbacher for a 65-yard touchdown that made it 21-7 and really broke the game open.

As usual Pryor spread it around, hitting eight different receivers. Posey was Ohio State's leading receiver in terms of catches with four; Sanzo was the yardage leader with 113 on his three grabs. Even the tight end got involved, a rarity for the Buckeyes- Jake Stoneburner had three catches for 41 yards on the night. It was a crisp, businesslike performance for the Ohio State offense- good to see, even against a middle-of-the-pack Conference USA opponent. Terrelle Pryor has looked brilliant against quality opposition and ordinary against, well, less-than-quality opposition; what he needs is consistency. He looked very consistent in the opener.

In-Saine in the Membrane: Brandon Saine got most of the first-half work, and he made the most of it indeed. The former Piqua Indian set up Ohio State's second touchdown with a 40-yard burst to the Marshall 4 and his 45-yard touchdown run made it 28-7 midway through the second period. Overall Saine rushed for 103 yards on just nine carries with two touchdowns. The Buckeyes rolled up 280 yards on the ground, with Jamaal Berry compiling 80 on seven carries, Dan Herron 44 on seven carries, and Jordan Hall 32 on five totes. As usual Zach Boren cracked skulls from his fullback position. (The Zach Attack on Saturdays, Lawrence Vickers on Sundays; this is a good time to be a Browns/Buckeyes fan if you enjoy watching fullbacks abuse linebackers.) 280 yards rushing, 249 passing; you've got to like that balance, as well as the fact that the Buckeyes didn't turn the ball over. The only smudge on this otherwise sparkling effort was a 4-of-12 conversion rate on third down.

As for the Defense: It's hard to ask much more of a unit that outscored Marshall's offense by

itself. With Dexter Larimore and sophomore freak John Simon leading the way up front, the Buckeyes held the Herd to just 44 yards rushing on a Lilliputian 2.1 yards per carry. Marshall quarterback Brian Anderson gleaned just 135 yards out of 28 pass attempts and threw a pick-six to Brian Rolle, who displayed his uncanny speed and vision on the 30-yard return that made it 35-7 Buckeyes at the half. The Buckeyes hardly missed Nathan Williams, who sat out with an injury, although Solomon Thomas didn't make anyone forget #43 in relief. Other than a blatant roughing-the-passer penalty, Thomas was undistinguished in his performance.

Feel-Good Story: That would be Tyler Moeller, who made several Marshall offensive players feel anything *but* good in his return to action after sitting out last season with a serious head injury. Moeller was all over the field Thursday night, making big hits in space and picking up Ohio State's only sack of the night (dislodging the ball in the process.) It was hard not to wince every time Moeller delivered a blow, knowing what he's gone through physically; but it appears that this young man only knows one way to play. It'll be fun watching Moeller and Nate Williams on the field at the same time; both are the definition of "high-motor" players.

Down on the Corners: Dan Wismar is a little bit concerned about Ohio State's cornerback play- and so am I. Marshall barely challenged the Buckeye secondary on Thursday night, but Jacory Harris, Leonard Hankerson and the rest of Miami's high-octane attack certainly will. The last time Ohio State faced a bona-fide passing offense- Iowa, last November- Chimdi Chekwa and Devon Torrence were roasted by the Hawkeye duo of Marvin McNutt and Darrell Johnson-Koulianos. Much of that was due to Iowa's offensive line holding the Buckeye front four at bay. Miami's line probably isn't as good as Iowa's. It had better not be- Ohio State badly needs to get pressure on Jacory Harris with the front four, because the cornerbacks are going to need all the protection they can get.

Oh, and By the Way… Terrelle's Kid-n-Play, multi-level, 1988-vintage hairstyle is absolutely superb.

Around the Nation

Game of the Week- Boise State/Virginia Tech: Talk about putting a capper on opening

weekend. After a rash of Virginia Tech errors helped Boise to a 17-0 first-half lead the Hokies roared back to turn a laugher into a thriller. The teams combined for four lead changes in a sensational second half. Virginia Tech had an opportunity to put the game away late but couldn't get the first down that would have put it on ice. And as history has shown, you can't give the Broncos an opportunity to steal one, because that's what they'll do. Sure enough, Kellen Moore hit Austin Pettis for the game-winning score with 1:09 to play- and Boise is still alive for the BCS, 33-30.

I know there's a certain amount of resentment toward Boise State. They're in an awful conference (true), they play one or two tough games a year (also true), and for those reasons they don't deserve to be considered a viable national-championship contender. Hell, I've made those arguments before, maybe even in this column. But at some point you have to give them credit. They just win. They can't control the quality of their conference. Yes, they can take more chances with their non-conference schedule- more games against quality BCS schools east of the Mississippi, like the one they played Monday night. But they just win. They're innovative, poised and exceptionally well-coached.

And from the standpoint of this Buckeye fan, what Boise State does, win or lose, has no affect on my team of choice. If Ohio State wants a crack at the crystal football, they'll need to do what they've always needed to do- win out. If the Buckeyes lose a game and get jumped by the Broncos, they'll have only themselves to blame. That's the way this system works. And that's the way it's worked since Boise was losing to Youngstown State in the I-AA title game.

Drubbing of the Week- Oregon over New Mexico: Hopefully Mike Locksley is renting and not owning down in Albuquerque. The New Mexico coach endured a strife-filled 1-11 season in 2009 and things don't look promising for him this season either- not after their 72-0 opening-day loss at Oregon. The Ducks had out-gained the Lobos 429-45, Kenjon Barner had 147 rushing yards, 60 receiving yards and and five touchdowns, quarterback Darron Thomas had thrown for 223 yards and two scores, Cliff Harris had two punt-return touchdowns, Oregon led 59-0- and it was only halftime. The final yardage disparity was an obscene 720-107.

Player of the Week- Denard Robinson, Michigan: We've been teased before by Rich Rod's Wolverines- they looked pretty impressive at the beginning of last season as well- but it's tough to take away the performance of sophomore quarterback Denard Robinson against a Connecticut team supposedly on the upper echelon of the Big East. Robinson single-handedly outgained the Huskies 383-343, compiling 186 yards through the air (on 19-of-22 attempts) and adding 197 on the ground in Michigan's 30-10 romp. The Wolverines looked sharp all around, converting 14-of-19 third downs, committing just one penalty and not turning the ball over-

impressive numbers for opening day.

Some other squads were not so efficient. Which leads us to…

Can't Anyone Snap This Here Ball? Traditionally the opening week has always been the sloppiest at every level of football, and week one of the 2010 college season was no exception. But the problems with the most basic of maneuvers- the center-quarterback exchange- went beyond even the lax standards of the first weekend. Blown shotgun snaps resulting in safeties figured heavily in the outcomes of both the LSU-North Carolina and TCU-Oregon State games, a fumbled snap led to Boise's first score in their win over Virginia Tech, while Florida's opener against the O.G. Miami was characterized by an almost endless series of poor exchanges between senior center Mike Pouncey and new quarterback John Brantley. It's often said that teams improve the most from the first to second week; let's hope that's the case, especially when it comes to the snap.

Runs in the Family: Chase Minnifield, University of Virginia cornerback and son of former Browns great Frank Minnifield, had himself a nice game in the Wahoos' 34-13 opening-day conquest of FCS power Richmond. Minnifield, who wears number 13 (inverse of his old man's 31), had seven tackles and a 65-yard interception return as Virginia won its first game under new head coach Mike London. A win over an FCS school- even one as distinguished as Richmond- might not seem like much, but considering the Cavaliers lost their opener last year to William & Mary, the victory represents definite improvement in Charlottesville.

Coach Akey, Please Come to the White Courtesy Phone: With his team's 65-17 loss at Oklahoma State, Washington State head coach Paul Wulff is now 3-23 in his tenure at Pullman. The Cougars have been outscored 1,097-326 in those 26 games, an average score of 42-13- and that's with the victories included, mind you. The average score of the 23
losses
is 46-10. Yes, the talent level on the Palouse had slipped badly from the Mike Price era when Wulff arrived. But at some point you have to at least be competitive- and the Cougars haven't even sniffed competitiveness under the ex-Eastern Washington coach.

Winners of the Week

Boise State: Obviously. Other than a matchup with Oregon State on the Smurf Turf later this month, it's pretty much smooth sailing to the BCS- and possibly to the title game- for Chris Peterson's team.

The Mountain West: Other than New Mexico, Colorado State (losers to Colorado) and UNLV (losers to Wisconsin) the BCS conference-that-isn't had a pretty solid week, scoring two victories over Pac-10 opponents and a victory over the Big East.

Kansas State: The Wildcats roared back from a 10-7 halftime deficit to beat UCLA behind 234 rushing yards from Daniel Thomas. The win is K-State's first over an out-of-conference BCS opponent since way back in the opening week of the 2003 season , when they topped another Pac-10 school, Cal. The Wildcats went on to win the Big 12 title that year.

North Carolina: The depleted Tarheels performed admirably in a losing cause against LSU in the Georgia Dome, nearly coming all the way back from a 30-10 fourth-quarter deficit before falling, 30-24. Carolina actually had two shots to win the game from the LSU six-yard line in the final seconds but tight end Zack Pianalto couldn't hang on to a pair of potential game-winning catches in the end zone. Much-maligned quarterback T.J. Yates was sensational, throwing for 412 yards and three touchdowns. It was a clear moral victory for the Tarheels, who might have won an actual victory if not for a six-minute second-quarter meltdown that resulted in 23 unanswered Tiger points.

Galloping Okies: There's an illustrious running back tradition at both Oklahoma and Oklahoma State- Billy Vessels, Greg Pruitt, Joe Washington, Billy Sims, Adrian Peterson, Bob Fenimore, Terry Miller, Thurman Thomas, Barry Sanders- and both schools currently possess able guardians of that tradition. Sooner senior DeMarco Murray gashed Utah State for 218 yards on 35 carries with two touchdowns, with Cowboy Kendall Hunter did even better with 257 yards on 21 carries with four touchdowns in his team's 65-17 demolition of Washington State.

Losers of the Week

Turner Gill: The new Kansas coach was tagged with an embarrassing 6-3 loss to North Dakota State, an FCS team that went 3-8 last year. So explosive under ex-coach Mark Mangino, the Jayhawks committed three turnovers, were 4-of-15 on third down and turned five possessions in

Bison territory into a lone field goal. It was Kansas's lowest point total in a game since the 2005 season. With a ton of firepower gone from last year's team no one expected the Jayhawks to resemble the scoring machine Gill orchestrated as Nebraska's quarterback in the early '80s- but three measly points against an FCS team is still a rather unpleasant surprise to the folks in Lawrence.

The Big East: The conference went 0-for-2 in statement games last week, with Pittsburgh falling in overtime at Utah and Connecticut getting routed at Michigan. Overall the Big East went a respectable 4-4, but the victories came over Akron, Stony Brook, Norfolk State and Coastal Carolina- not exactly Murderer's Row.

Florida & Oklahoma: The Gators were college football's most successful program in the second half of the last decade, but they looked downright toothless to start 2010. Facing an O.G. Miami team that won a single game last season, Florida amassed a grand total of 26 total yards in the first three periods of play. Had it not been for nine penalties, four turnovers- three of which set up Florida touchdowns- and an inability to get into the end zone, the Redhawks might have had a chance to actually win the game. As it was, the Gators didn't put things away until early in the fourth quarter, when Jeff Demps ran 72 yard for a touchdown to make it 27-12. Florida's final margin of 34-12 was deceptive, as the Gators were outplayed for much of the afternoon.

Florida's major malfunction came on offense. Oklahoma's problems, on the other hand, were defensive. The Sooners allowed 421 yards of total offense and nearly frittered away a 21-0 first-half lead before hanging on to beat WAC weak sister Utah State, 31-24. The Aggies had four possessions to tie the score, got as close as the Oklahoma 33-yard line at one point in the fourth quarter, but were unable to complete the comeback. For programs like Florida and Oklahoma it's not just about winning, it's about *how* they win- and the how had to be very discouraging for fans in both Gainesville and Norman.

Western Kentucky: The Hilltoppers ran the nation's longest losing streak to 21 in a 49-10 loss at Nebraska. WKU's last victory came back on September 20, 2008, when they beat Murray State. With games coming up against Kentucky, Indiana and South Florida an end to the streak doesn't seem to be in sight either.

Next Week: Ohio State and Miami of Florida reunite at the Horseshoe at 3:30.