On Saturday afternoon some of the country's biggest bastions of liberalism rallied in Washington DC .
And on that same Saturday afternoon one of college football's biggest bastions of conservatism improved to 5-0 in Champaign, Illinois.

Ohio State's 24-13 victory over the Fighting Illini in chilly Memorial Stadium was a game only William F. Buckley could love. With the weather treacherous and Terrelle Pryor's health precarious, Jim Tressel buttoned it up as tight as he possibly could, pounding the ball on the ground, playing field position and relying on his superb defense to keep Illinois at arm's length. He also relied on Illinois, and not his own team, making the big mistakes down the stretch- and the Illini certainly did not disappoint in that regard.

It worked. It wasn't pretty, it wasn't particularly satisfying, but it worked. And the Buckeyes have their first road win and first Big Ten win of the young season.

Rough Start: It didn't take long to realize that this game wouldn't be a walk on the park. After forcing the Buckeyes to go three-and-out on their first possession, Illinois took the ball and drove 55 yards in nine plays to the touchdown that gave the home team a 7-0 advantage. The point man for the Illini on that impressive first series was quarterback Nathan Scheelhaase. The redshirt freshman converted his first three pass attempts- including a third-down toss to Jarred

Fayson- caught a throwback pass from Fayson for a 23-yard gain and finished the drive with a three-yard keeper on the read-option. With the score Ohio State found itself trailing for the first time since the second period of the Miami game back on September 12th.

Rapid Response: Fortunately it didn't take long for the Buckeyes to make up that early deficit. On the first play of Ohio State's next possession Terrelle Pryor got loose down the far sideline for a career-long 66-yard gain. Three plays later Pryor found Brandon Saine in the end zone and just like that, the score was tied at 7-7. At that point it looked as if Pryor was on the way to another big afternoon. It wouldn't work out that way.

Silver-Bullet Statement: After allowing Illinois to drive the field for their first touchdown- a march aided by over-pursuit and sloppy tackling- the Buckeye defense clamped down hard. On their next ten possessions after the touchdown the Illini ran 35 plays for 94 yards and picked up just four first downs. They did get three points out of those ten possessions- a 27-yard Derek Dimke field goal late in the first half set up by an interception at the Ohio State 24- but for the most part Ron Zook's offense got nothing and liked it.

Rapid Response II: Illinois took its second lead of the game at 10-7 on Dimke's field goal with 1:50 remaining in the half. Again Pryor and the Buckeyes struck back quickly. After a 31-yard Jaamal Berry kick return and a five-yard illegal procedure penalty put Ohio State in good field position at its 43-yard line, Pryor got to work in a way eerily reminiscent of his opening touchdown sally. On the first play the big quarterback took off down the near sideline for a 35-yard gain. Three plays later Dane Sanzenbacher made a diving catch in the end zone for his fifth touchdown in two games and the Buckeyes were in front for the first time, 14-10.

With just 290 yards of total offense- an anemic 77 through the air- Ohio State's offense didn't do much on Saturday. One thing it did do, however, was counterattack. Every time Illinois scored the Buckeyes came right back with a score of their own on their next possession. More importantly, Ohio State was able to counter Illini field goals with touchdowns. The Buckeyes didn't get into the red zone often on Saturday, but when they did they were able to cash in with sevens instead of threes.

Running on Empty: When it comes to Brandon Saine, it's getting to the point where the Buckeyes might as well give Yours Truly the ball. After an eight-carry, 14-yard effort against Illinois the Artist Regrettably Known as Zoom had 80 yards on 35 carries (2.3 YPC) in the last four weeks. Saine has plenty of value as a receiver- he notched his third touchdown reception

of the season to open the scoring for the Buckeyes- but as a runner he's increasingly a losing proposition. Yet for some bizarre reason Jim Tressel continues to lean on him, especially early in the game.

Air Raid or it's Your Ass: For the first three quarters of Saturday's game DeVier Posey, ostensible Buckeye play-making king, performed more like Parker Posey, indie queen. DeVier's contributions for the first 45 minutes consisted of a catch for minus-one yard, a dropped sideline shot that would have been a first-down, a blatant gator-arm of an over-the-middle toss and a fifteen-yard penalty for an illegal crack-back block. The talented junior didn't make a reception for positive yardage until early in the fourth period- a crucial 15-yarder on third-and-nine to keep alive the drive that resulted in a field goal and a 17-10 lead.

Oh Dear God No: Buckeye Nation saw its life flash before its collective eyes early in the third period, when Terrelle Pryor rolled out for a first-down, fell on his face without being touched, stayed on the ground and was helped off the field. After a short sojourn in the locker room Pryor was back in the huddle- but he was by his own admission severely limited with a quadriceps injury. Prior to pulling up lame Pryor had rolled up 104 rushing yards. He didn't even attempt to run the ball after coming back in the game- and that isn't good, because the Buckeyes really don't have a functioning ground game without him.

No, Joe: Pryor's backup, Joe Bauserman, didn't exactly make them forget fabled Buckeye relief pitchers like Bret Powers and Scott McMullen after entering for Pryor. The former Pittsburgh Pirate farmhand was 1-of-2 for one yard and threw an interception as Ohio State's offense went into full cardiac arrest in Pryor's absence.

Conscience of a Conservative: With Pryor gimpy and the Champaign weather unkind, Tressel Ball was in the house-with a vengeance. Ohio State's 26 plays after Pryor's re-entry into the fray consisted of four passes and 22 runs. The offense became a one-man show, with Dan Herron the feature attraction. After carrying the ball four times in the first two-and-a-half quarters Boom toted it 19 times in the last quarter-and-a-half, including on eight consecutive plays late in the third period. He wound up with 95 yards on 23 carries and a touchdown, and although he didn't break any big runs- his longest went for a gain of 13- he wore down the Illinois defense and helped the Buckeyes control the clock in the fourth quarter.

A Little Help from Their Foes: With Pryor banged up and Ohio State in a shell offensively Illinois had a golden opportunity to pull an upset similar to their 2007 surprise of the Buckeyes in

Columbus. The Illini couldn't do it, though, and untimely penalties were a big reason why. In the last quarter-and-a-half, with the outcome in the balance, Illinois was whistled for six critical penalties, four of them fifteen-yard personal fouls. Ohio State was essentially handed 62 free yards at a time when they were desperately needed.

Senseless Decision: With less than five minutes to play and trailing 17-10, Illinois faced a fourth-and-seven at the Ohio State 13-yard line. Instead of going for it Ron Zook elected to take the field goal, which made it 17-13 but still left the Illini needing a touchdown in order to win the game. It's one thing to play it safe when you're the superior team, you're winning and your best player isn't 100 percent. It's quite another when you're the inferior team and you're losing. A field goal didn't do Illinois any good in that situation. By the time the Illini got the ball back it was 24-13 and the game was essentially over. Why wouldn't you go for it there?

Deceptive Number: The statistics say Ohio State rushed for 213 yards on Saturday- a nice figure. But those yards looked a lot less impressive in live action than on paper. Take away the 66-and-35-yard runs by Terrelle Pryor and the Buckeyes have 112 yards on 40 attempts- a meager 2.8 yards per tote. The lack of a bell-cow running back has the potential to hurt this team badly.

Sad News: Tyler Moeller's comeback season, it appears, is over. Moeller suffered a torn pectoral muscle
against Illinois, one that will probably sideline him for the rest of the regular season. It's yet another setback for the gutsy player who came back from a life-threatening head injury to play very well for the Buckeyes this season. If there is a silver lining to this dark cloud, it's that freshman Christian Bryant came in and played extremely well in Moeller's absence. But this team really can't afford to many more injuries on the back line of the defense.

Around the Nation

Game of the Week- Michigan/Indiana: If you're a fan of the type of game in which defense is optional, the type of game in which the last team with the ball wins, the shootout in Bloomington was right up your alley. The Wolverines and Hoosiers combined for 1,142 yards of total offense.

Shoelace Robinson was once again spectacular - 277 passing yards and three touchdown tosses, 217 rushing yards and two scores- and Ben Chappell was nearly as good, riddling the Michigan defense for 480 yards and three touchdowns. The Wolverines ran up 574 total yards despite having the ball for only eighteen minutes and averaged a near-obscene 12.9 yards per play. The winning score in their 42-35 victory came with 17 seconds left. At 5-0 Michigan has all but clinched its first bowl bid since 2007. But man, that Wolverine defense is
putrid
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Louisiana Lame-Brains: Two of the immutable rules of life are thus:

1. God watches over drunks, children and Les Miles.
2. Stupidity is contagious.

For proof of both look no further than the ending of the LSU-Tennessee game in Baton Rouge. The underdog Volunteers clung to a 14-10 lead while the Tigers mounted a last-ditch drive that carried all the way to the Tennessee two. With 32 seconds left and no timeouts Jordan Jefferson attempted a keeper but was stuffed at the one. Here the Les Miles Clock-Management Farce began anew- players frantically running on and off the field, crowd screaming, seconds ticking. LSU didn't get another play off until the three-second mark- and the play consisted of a bad snap launched right by Jefferson's ear. Tennessee recovered the ball and the game was over. Derek Dooley had his first big win as Volunteer head coach.

Only he didn't. In looking at the final play again officials discovered something they hadn't noticed in the last frantic seconds: Tennessee had too many men on the field- thirteen, to be exact. The Volunteers were penalized and, since of course a game can't end on a defensive penalty, that meant LSU had another shot to win from the one-yard line. This time the Tigers punched it in and this time the game really was over- LSU 16, Tennessee 14.

Up to that point Dooley had managed the game beautifully. Tennessee had no turnovers and one penalty prior to the final sequence, letting the Bayou Bengals make almost all of the major mistakes. But in the final seconds, almost as if Leslie the Hat's befuddlement had spread to the opposite sideline, the Volunteers had messed up their substitutions and ended up with two more than the legal allotment of eleven. Once again LSU had achieved victory in spite of its coach.

Comeback City: It was a weekend of decimated deficits throughout college football. On Thursday night Oklahoma State overcame a 21-7 halftime deficit to edge Texas A&M, 38-35. Two days later Temple came back from 28-13 down to beat Army; Virginia Tech spotted N.C. State a 17-0 lead before winning; Oregon fell behind to Stanford 21-3 before roaring back to dominate the Cardinal, 52-31; UC-Davis overcame a 13-0 halftime deficit to stun San Jose State; and Washington, Northwestern, LSU, UCLA and Georgia Tech came from behind in the fourth quarter to win.

Off the Bench: With star running back Bernard Pierce on the shelf after suffering a high ankle sprain in last week's loss to Penn State, things looked grim for Temple. Then Pierce's backup, 5'5" sophomore Matt Brown, stepped to the fore. Brown, who had gained a total of 158 yards in the first four games, exploded for 226 yards and four touchdowns as the Owls came from behind to beat Army, 42-35. One of the marks of a quality program depth, and Temple has it at the running back position.

Wally Pipp Lives: Dion Lewis, the sensational Pitt freshman of a year ago, might have trouble getting his job back when he returns from a shoulder injury. Sophomore Ray Graham has been brilliant in relief, averaging 9.5 yards per carry and scoring five touchdowns. Graham racked up 277 yards and three touchdowns in Pitt's 44-17 victory over Florida International on Saturday. Lewis, meanwhile, has averaged a paltry three yards per carry this season.

Winners of the Week

Alabama: The Tide sent a message to Florida, to the SEC and to all of America Saturday with a 31-6 pounding of the Gators in Tuscaloosa. Florida actually out-gained Alabama 281-273 but the Gators went 3-of-13 on third downs and committed four turnovers in the defeat.

Oregon: In an early battle for Pac-10 supremacy the Ducks spotted Stanford a 21-3 lead and then exploded in the last three quarters, outscoring the Cardinal 49-10 and running away to a 52-31 rout. The Quack Attack rolled up 626 total yards, LaMichael James leading the way with 257 on 31 carries and three touchdowns. Thanks to the impressive performance the Ducks leapfrogged Boise State and took over the third spot in the AP poll, behind only Alabama and

Ohio State.

Baylor: The Bears are 4-1 and two wins away from their first bowl bid since 1994 after mauling Kansas in Waco, 55-7. Robert Griffin led the way as usual, compiling a program-record 444 total yards in the victory.

Washington: Erik Folk drilled a 32-yard field goal at the gun as the Huskies beat USC in Los Angeles for the first time since 1996, 32-31. Jake Locker led a 62-yard drive in the last two-and-a-half minutes to set up Folk's winning attempt. It was the second year in a row that Folk had beaten the Trojans with a last-second field goal. Last season in Seattle the brother of NFL kicker Nick Folk drilled a 22-yarder with three seconds left to send USC to a 16-13 defeat.

Utah State: The Aggies defeated cross-state rival BYU for the first time since 1993, snapping a ten-game losing streak against the Cougars.

Losers of the Week

North Carolina State: The undefeated Wolfpack had a huge ACC victory in its back pocket as it jumped out to a 17-0 second-quarter lead over Virginia Tech. But they folded down the stretch, getting outscored 34-13 in the second half as the Hokies rallied to win, 41-30. N.C. State racked up 507 total yards but committed nine penalties and three turnovers to turn a potential win into a devastating loss.

Boise State: Apparently a 59-0 victory isn't worth much these days, especially when it's over hapless New Mexico State. The Broncos crushed the Aggies in Las Cruces but still dropped a spot in the AP poll thanks to Oregon's decimation of Stanford.

Rutgers: Four years ago Greg Schiano was one of the hottest young coaches in the game, and the Scarlet Knights were the rising program in the Big East. Not anymore. Schiano's team fell to 2-2 on Saturday with an embarrassing home loss to lowly Tulane.

Georgia: The nightmare continues for Mark Richt and his Bulldogs, who are 1-4 for the first time since 1993 after a 29-27 loss to struggling Colorado. Georgia was in position to take the lead in the final minutes until Caleb King fumbled the ball away at the Colorado 30-yard line.

Clemson: The Tigers self-destructed in Death Valley on Saturday, committing six turnovers in a disheartening 30-21 loss to Miami of Florida. Three of the turnovers came in a roughly seven-minute span of the second period, a span that saw Miami turn a 14-14 tie into a 27-14 halftime lead.

Next Week: The Buckeyes host Indiana at high noon. Ohio State hasn't lost to the Hoosiers in the Horseshoe since 1988; if Terrelle Pryor is reasonably healthy this should be a relative cakewalk, Indiana's offensive firepower notwithstanding.