Somebody had to pay, and that somebody was cop-stached Danny Hope and his Purdue Boilermakers. A week after being embarrassed at Wisconsin and having their National Championship hopes likely scotched in the process, Ohio State took their foul mood out on Purdue, demolishing the Boilermakers with a 42-point first half and rolling to a 49-0 shutout. It was the program's most lopsided shutout win since September 12, 1998, when the Buckeyes beat Toledo by the same 49-0 count.

It was a good win, and it was necessary, because the Big Ten race isn't waiting around for the Buckeyes to catch up. After Saturday's action Ohio State is tied for second in the conference with Wisconsin (which holds the tiebreaker) a game behind undefeated Michigan State and a half-game ahead of Iowa and Purdue. As of now it looks as if the Buckeyes are going to have to win out to have any shot at the Big Ten title and the automatic BCS bid- and they might have to win out to get an at-large BCS bid as well.

It isn't the National Championship but it's pretty much the best we can hope for.

Boom Go the Buckeyes: Like they did in their win over Indiana two weeks ago, the Buckeyes set the tone early on the legs of Daniel Herron. Every play of Ohio State's five-play, sixty-yard opening touchdown drive was a run by Boom, whose ten-yard scoring blast made it 7-0 less than two minutes into the proceedings. The hard-running junior from Warren finished the

afternoon with two touchdowns to go with 74 yards on 16 carries, part of a 184-yard effort from the Buckeye ground game. Herron, by the way, has a sneaky-quiet eleven touchdowns this season.

Play of the Game: That would be the muffed punt early in the first quarter. Purdue only trailed 7-0 at that point and had just stuffed Ohio State's offense, knocking them backwards on three straight plays. The Boilermakers would have gotten the ball at midfield had they handled the punt cleanly. Instead the Buckeyes recovered at the Purdue 39, quickly drove to Herron's second touchdown- and the rout was officially on.

Drive of the Game: The Buckeyes put Purdue's lights out on their final possession of the first period, marching 91 yards in 11 plays to Jordan Hall's one-yard plunge that made it 21-0 early in the second. Terrelle Pryor got the drive kick-started with three straight completions off of broken plays for 68 yards. The first, on 3rd-and-12 from the Ohio State seven, came when Pryor escaped the grasp of all-everything defensive end Ryan Kerrigan and found Corey "Philly" Brown for a 23-yard gain.

Onslaught Continues: Ohio State's next drive, a 66-yarder, was ended when Pryor forced a pass over the middle and was intercepted. No matter: the Buckeyes went 61 yards in six plays on their next possession and scored again when Pryor found DeVier Posey in the end zone from 22 yards out. That made it 28-0 with five minutes remaining in the half. On their next possession the Buckeyes went 76 yards in just three plays, with Dane Sanzenbacher's 56-yard catch and run and subsequent seven-yard touchdown reception the highlights. When rattled Purdue quarterback Rob Henry was intercepted on the next play from scrimmage Ohio State was set up at the Boilermaker forty. It took five plays, the last "Philly" Brown's first collegiate touchdown, to make it 42-0 at halftime.

Halftime Numbers: At the intermission the Buckeyes led 42-0, had outgained Purdue 415-47, had 25 first downs to Purdue's three, and had snapped off 49 plays from scrimmage as opposed to Purdue's 21. It was clearly the best half of football Ohio State has played this season, coming one week after the worst half of football- the first half in Madison.

Terrelle Pryor's Line: 16-of-22 passing for 270 yards, three touchdowns and two interceptions. All of the yards, completions and touchdowns came in the first half, a stanza in which Pryor hit nine different receivers. There was only one designed run, which Pryor unenthusiastically ran horizontal for a minimal gain.

D&D Productions: Both of Terrelle Pryor's primary receivers got healthy at the expense of Purdue's defense. DeVier Posey shrugged off a bad performance in Madison with four receptions for 84 yards and a touchdown; Dane Sanzenbacher had four catches for 86 yards and his eighth touchdown of the season.

Defensive Bounce-Back: A week after getting manhandled in Madison the Buckeyes pitched their first shutout of the season, holding Purdue to 118 total yards and 3-of-14 on third downs. The Silver Bullets demoralized quarterback Rob Henry, pressuring him constantly and holding the freshman to 58 yards on 9-of-18 attempts with an interception.

Fun with Numbers: Ohio State's 49-point margin was its largest ever in 53 meetings with Purdue dating back to 1919. The shutout was the first in the series since 1977, when the Buckeyes whitewashed the Boilermakers in Columbus, 46-0.

Around the Nation

Game of the Week- Wisconsin/Iowa: The lead changed hands nine times in this furious battle between Big Ten title contenders, and at the end it was Wisconsin's ability to execute the key plays- and Iowa's inability to do the same- that made the difference in the 31-30 Badger win. Wisconsin's perfectly timed fake punt, with Brad Nortman racing for 17 yards in true Reggie Hodges fashion, set up the go-ahead score with 1:06 to play. Counting the fake punt, the Badgers came through twice on fourth down during the 15-play, 80-yard drive that gave them the lead.

Meanwhile Iowa found itself killed by simple mistakes: a blocked extra point, a flubbed snap on what should have been a chip-shot field goal, and some poor clock management in the final moments. Trailing by one, the Hawkeyes had driven to a first down at the Wisconsin 39-yard line with twelve seconds left. Instead of spiking the ball to stop the clock Ricky Stanzi lined up in a shotgun formation, a mistake which forced Iowa to burn its final timeout. Adam Robinson was unable to get out of bounds

after a short reception on the next play and the game was over.

Both teams probably need to win out from here to have any shot at the Big Ten title. Wisconsin's road is comparatively easy: the remaining road games are at Purdue and at Michigan. Iowa, meanwhile, still has games upcoming against Michigan State (next Saturday) and Ohio State on November 20th. Both of those games are in Iowa City, but the Hawkeyes also have to travel to Northwestern, the team that ruined its unbeaten season last year and nearly ruined Michigan State's this year.

Spartan Steel: Unlike Iowa, the Spartans made all of the clutch plays in their 35-27 win at Northwestern - and they had to. Northwestern jumped out to a 17-0 lead midway through the second quarter and it should have been more, considering the Wildcats had also fumbled the ball away on a first-and-goal. At that point Michigan State had been outgained 209-65. The Spartans still trailed by ten going into the fourth quarter and didn't take their first lead until there were two minutes remaining in the game.

The 11-play, 88-yard march that gave them the lead was a concise resume of their season thus far. Wide receiver Keith Nichol made two clutch catches in traffic- the first for 18 yards on 2nd-and-20, the second for 14 yards on 3rd-and-15- to get the Spartans out of down-and-distance holes. Tight end Charlie Gantt, the recipient of the fake-punt pass that won the Notre Dame game- made another catch over the middle to pick up a fourth down. And B.J. Cunningham applied a spectacular capper when he made a one-handed grab of a deflected pass for the go-ahead touchdown. Kirk Cousins completed 7-of-8 passes on the drive, but much credit goes to the guys who were catching those passes, because they made some tough ones.

One thing, though: Michigan State's final touchdown, a 25-yard run by Edwin Baker in which he broke several Wildcat tackles on his way to the end zone. It was a great effort, but it could have been costly. Baker's touchdown with 1:08 left came on a third-down play, and Northwestern didn't have any timeouts left. Had Baker gone down prior to reaching the end zone the Spartans could have kneeled down a couple of times to end the game. Instead, leading by only a touchdown and a two-point conversion, they had to kick the ball back to Northwestern. The Wildcats didn't score on their final possession, which makes it a moot point. But the smart play would have been for Edwin Baker to *not* score.

Road Stunners: Maybe Texas should play the rest of their games away from Darrell K. Royal Stadium. Fresh off their upset of Nebraska in Lincoln, the Longhorns came home for the first time since the UCLA debacle and promptly fell 28-21 to an Iowa State team coming off consecutive losses in which they had been outscored 120-27. The Cyclones had a 28-6 fourth-quarter lead before Mack Brown's team realized it was in a football game. Texas committed four turnovers and averaged 3.3 yards per carry against a defense that came into the game ranked 114th nationally against the run.

Syracuse's 19-14 upset of West Virginia in Morgantown wasn't quite as surprising; the Mountaineers should have lost to Marshall earlier this season, after all. What's interesting is the opportunity that the Orangemen have created for themselves. They've already played arguably the three most talented teams in the conference already in South Florida, Pitt and West Virginia. The only remaining road games are at Cincinnati and at Rutgers- neither unwinnable by any stretch- while Louisville and Connecticut come to the Carrier Dome.

Believe it or not Syracuse, they of the 11-45 record from 2005-09, actually has a decent chance to win the Big East and steal a BCS bid. It's a happenstance that would be par for the course in this topsy-turvy season.

No Big Deal: The only surprise about Navy's 35-17 hammering of Notre Dame on Saturday is that anyone thought it was a surprise. For all the talk about the paucity of FBS-caliber athletes on the Midshipmen roster, they are a *good* football team. They are disciplined, well-coached and have an offense that is archaic and tough to prepare for- an offense that they know as second-nature. The Midshipmen drubbed Missouri in last season's Texas Bowl, and if they can dominate the Tigers they can certainly dominate a Notre Dame team that, for roughly the 97th consecutive season, is slow and weak on the defensive side of the ball. Really, Navy *should* beat Notre Dame. They're a better team.

Hooray for the Hilltoppers: After 26 consecutive losses dating back to September 20th, 2008, Western Kentucky is finally off the shneid. The Hilltoppers crushed Louisiana-Lafayette

54-21 on Saturday, punishing the Ragin' Cajuns with 409 total yards. Western's victory leaves only two FBS teams in the winless column: New Mexico and Akron. The Zips likely blew their shot at avoiding a goose-egg season when they lost to Gardner-Webb, which currently sits at 3-4, 1-1 in the Big South, after a home defeat to Presbyterian.

The Unbeatens

In place of the usual "Winners/Losers of the Week" section, we're going to look at the seven remaining unbeaten teams and gauge their chances of finishing the season that way, in order of probability.

Boise State (6-0)

Louisiana Tech, Hawaii, @ Idaho, Fresno State, @ Nevada, Utah State

Assessment: No one is beating the Broncos on the Smurf Turf and Nevada is the only team with any chance of beating them on the road. Boise's chances of remaining undefeated are EXCELLENT.

TCU (8-0)

@ UNLV, @ Utah, San Diego State, @ New Mexico

Assessment: It's basically a one-game season for the Horned Frogs, with that one game the trip to Salt Lake City in two weeks. If they win that game- and with the Mountain West's best defense and best quarterback in Andy Dalton they'll be favored- they'll have their second

undefeated regular season in a row. Their chances are VERY GOOD.

Oregon (7-0)

@ USC, Washington, @ California, Arizona, @ Arizona State

Assessment: The one visible red-flag game is at the L.A. Coliseum this coming Saturday, although USC has not been impressive. Cal is a straw dog against good competition, Oregon State doesn't have James Rodgers and Arizona has to go to Autzen. I do think, for whatever reason, that Washington can give the Ducks a game even in Eugene. And Oregon's defense has proven vulnerable, even against competition that isn't exactly formidable. Still, the Ducks should win out. I'd rate their chances as GOOD.

Utah (7-0)

@ Air Force, TCU, @ Notre Dame, @ San Diego State, BYU

Assessment: Aside from the monster match with the Horned Frogs this slate is a little tricky, with tough road games against Air Force and much-improved San Diego State. (That trip to South Bend shouldn't be a problem.) Considering they've averaged 54 points in their last five games, you have to like the Utes in every remaining tilt except TCU. Their chances are DECENT.

Michigan State (8-0)

@ Iowa, Minnesota, Purdue, @ Penn State.

Assessment: The Spartans needed a trick play in overtime to beat Notre Dame at home and

needed a comeback from a 17-0 deficit to beat Northwestern on the road. In my two-plus decades of watching college football I've learned never to utter the sentence "Michigan State is unbeatable!" They're a good team with a touch of magic about them, but they're going to have a hard time winning in Iowa City this coming Saturday. Their chances of remaining undefeated are MEDIOCRE.

Auburn (8-0)

@ Mississippi, Chattanooga, Georgia, @ Alabama

Assessment: Those first three games should be lay-ups. But the trip to Tuscaloosa is a very, very tall order, especially for a defense that has not been particularly good this season. Based on the Alabama game alone Auburn's chances to stay unbeaten are SLIM.

Missouri (7-0)

@ Nebraska, @ Texas Tech, Kansas State, @ Iowa State, Kansas

Assessment: Missouri's win over Oklahoma may have only deprived the Big 12 of an undefeated representative and a slot in the BCS Championship Game. The Tigers have an uphill climb to stay perfect, with a trip to Lincoln this Saturday and a probable re-match with Oklahoma in the conference title game even if they beat the Huskers and win out. I'd rate their chances as MINISCULE.

By my reckoning there is going to be one undefeated BCS team- Oregon- and at least one, probably two undefeated non-BCS teams. That doesn't mean it'll be Oregon-Boise or Oregon-TCU in the Championship Game, though. The door is still wide-open for Alabama to crash the party as a one-loss team: the Tide are currently ranked seventh in the BCS and with LSU, Auburn and a possible SEC title game still on the docket there is ample opportunity for Nick Saban's team to move up, provided the rest of the dominos fall as expected.

On that note, I like Oregon and Alabama in the title game.

Next Week: Halloween Eve at 8:00, when the Buckeyes make their first appearance in TCF Bank Stadium against the Minnesota Golden Gophers.