When you commit eight penalties, give up two turnovers, drop passes all over the lot and still win a football game on the road over a ranked opponent, you'll take it. Ohio State didn't exactly bring their A-game to Kinnick Stadium on Saturday afternoon against Iowa. But thanks to some timely defense and a gut-check late drive directed by Terrelle Pryor, the Buckeyes were good enough to spirit away a tingling 20-17 victory over the hard-luck Hawkeyes. With one week left in the regular season- Michigan Week- hopes for a share of the Big Ten title and a probable BCS bid are still very much alive for the Scarlet & Grey.

**Hawkeye Pierce:** After trading punts with the Buckeyes on the teams' first possessions, Iowa got down to business late in the first quarter with an impressive eight-play, 87-yard touchdown march. Ricky Stanzi got the Hawkeyes going with a clutch 15-yard completion to Derrell Johnson-Koulianos on 3rd-and-13 from his own ten and went on to hit on three-of-three on the drive, including the 19-yard touchdown strike to Marvin McNutt that gave Iowa a 7-0 lead with 1:05 left in the opening period.

Stanzi, the kid from Mentor who missed last season's overtime thriller in Columbus with an injury, started fast with completions on eleven of his first twelve attempts. He was greatly aided by the early play of Iowa's offensive line, which controlled the Buckeye front and opened up running lanes for backup tailback Marcus Coker, who slashed for 47 yards in the first period as Adam Robinson, suspended for the quarter, rode the bench.

**Field-Goal Jimmy:** Ohio State responded quickly after Iowa's opening salvo. After a nice Jordan Hall kickoff return got the ball to the 41 the Buckeyes drove 58 yards to a fourth-and-goal at the Hawkeye one-yard line. With less than three feet of turf separating his offense from the tying touchdown, Jim Tressel elected to kick the field goal. Devin Barkley's chip shot made it 7-3 in favor of Iowa. As it turned out the three points would be the difference in the final score. At the time I would have preferred to see the Buckeyes go for the touchdown. Terrelle Pryor certainly thought they should have gone for it: he was voicing his displeasure with volume on the sideline. It would not be the last spasm of frustration for Mr. Pryor on this afternoon.

(I've said it before, I'll say it again: Terrelle Pryor needs to control his emotions a little bit better. He comes off as extremely petulant and immature when he's flailing his arms and yelling at teammates and coaches. I understand he's competitive. But a quarterback, at least to this fan, is like the captain of a jetliner. He's the guy who needs to keep his cool at all times, good and bad.)

**Dropsies Galore:** After Iowa kicker Michael Meyer missed a forty-yarder that would have made it 10-3 late in the second period the Buckeyes had a chance to take the lead before halftime. On second-and-ten from his own 35-yard line Pryor lofted a perfect spiral deep down the middle of the field for Corey Brown, who let the ball go off his hands deep in Iowa territory. Three plays later Pryor threw a duck that was picked off in acrobatic fashion by Micah Hyde in the end zone. Drops would plague Ohio State's receivers- even their most sure-handed- all day.

**Halftime Adjustment:** Just as they did last week against Penn State, the Buckeyes changed the momentum of the football game on their opening possession of the second half. Still trailing 7-3, Ohio State ground out a 12-play, 77-yard drive that consumed six-and-a-half minutes off the clock. Pryor finished the marathon march with a five-yard touchdown flip to Reid Fragel, whose first collegiate score gave the Buckeyes a 10-7 lead midway through the third quarter.

**Disaster Strikes:** With the score tied 10-10 early in the fourth Terrelle Pryor made his biggest

mistake of the game. On third-and-ten from his own twenty Pryor forced a pass into traffic that was tipped and intercepted by Iowa's Shaun Prater. The Hawkeyes set up shop at the Ohio State 27 and were in the end zone two plays later courtesy of Marcus Coker's one-yard scoring plunge. Iowa now led 17-10 with less than twelve minutes remaining in the game.

**Killer Drop:** After Devin Barclay's second field goal of the day cut Iowa's lead to 17-13 midway through the fourth quarter Ohio State's defense put the clamps down. A John Simon sack led to a quick Hawkeye three-and-out and the Buckeyes got the ball back at their own 24-yard line with six minutes remaining. They needed a touchdown. Six plays later it looked as if they had it. On third-and-ten from midfield Pryor rolled right and went long for DeVier Posey, who was breaking wide open in the end zone. Pryor's perfect pass hit Posey in stride for what looked like a fifty-yard, go-ahead touchdown…

And Posey dropped it.

At the time the muff looked like the killer. Ohio State now faced fourth-and-ten from midfield. Time was becoming a factor and the Buckeyes needed a touchdown, not a field goal, to win. With three timeouts left Tressel could have elected to punt. Instead he went for it.

**Play of the Game:** Pryor rolled right on the fourth down, saw nothing, cut back left and ran for fourteen yards before being dragged down at the Iowa 36.

**Play of the Game II:** Three plays later, on first down from the Iowa 26, Pryor went long down the far sideline for Dane Sanzenbacher. The little receiver, who himself had dropped a third-down pass earlier in the half, now made a spectacular leaping grab at the two-yard line. It was a play strongly reminiscent of Anthony Gonzalez's late catch against Michigan in 2005- and it set up the same result. Two plays later Dan Herron barged over for the score and it was 20-17, Buckeyes, with 1:47 left. Iowa couldn't produce a first down on it final draft and the game was over.

**Pryor's Line:** 18-of-33 for 195 yards, a touchdown and two interceptions; 15 carries for 78 yards. He ran more than he usually does, which is good, and he led a clutch drive for the winning touchdown, which is also good. The passing numbers aren't great, and he did throw two bad interceptions, one of which nearly lost the game for Ohio State, but in Pryor's defense

he was also victimized by a poor game from his receivers. Thanks to Posey's dropped touchdown, Pryor basically had to win the game twice in the final minutes- and he did.

**On a Rolle:** Ohio State's tough little middle linebacker Brian Rolle was all over the field on Saturday, reaching double-digit tackles and making several stops behind the line of scrimmage. The Buckeyes tightened up considerably on defense as a whole after a rough start, giving up just 150 yards in the final three quarters. They only got two sacks but both came in the fourth quarter when they were absolutely needed. After converting 4-of-6 on third down to start the game the Hawkeyes finished up just 5-of-12 in that category. On its last two possessions, with the game in the balance, Iowa failed to even pick up a first down.

**Homer Hankies:** Penalties were a major problem for the Buckeyes, especially early in the game. They were nailed for three false starts, two by J.B. Shugarts. Chimdi "Face-Guard" Chekwa was also hit with a pair of pass-interference penalties. On the day Ohio State was penalized eight times for 73 yards; Iowa committed just four penalties for 25 yards.

It was not an artistic performance from Jim Tressel's team. But it was a road win over a quality opponent and it keeps the Buckeyes alive in the race for the Big Ten Championship. Go ahead and take it and move on to Michigan.

**Around the Nation**

**Game of the Week- LSU/Ole Miss:** Leslie the Hat continues to live a charmed life. His Tigers avoided their first three-game losing streak to Ole Miss in more than a decade and kept their BCS hopes alive with a wild 43-36 victory over the Rebels in Baton Rouge. The lead changed hands five times in a wild fourth quarter which saw the two teams combine for 33 point and 274 yards of offense. Steven Ridley's seven-yard touchdown run with less than a minute to play proved to be the difference.

LSU has now won six games by a touchdown or less this season. The Tigers aren't getting much from their quarterbacks- seven touchdowns and ten interceptions- but Steven Ridley is on a 1,000-yard pace, the defense has been fantastic and the Hat just continues to live dangerously and get away with it. They aren't the most imposing team in the world- but they're 10-1 and could all but clinch an at-large BCS berth with a win over Arkansas next Saturday.

**Spartan Spunk:** It was almost one of the greatest afternoons in the history of Michigan State football. With a win over Purdue and an Ohio State loss at Iowa the Spartans could turn the tide of the Big Ten race completely in their favor, needing only a win at Penn State next week to clinch the title and their first trip to the Rose Bowl since 1987.

Sparty took care of its own business in East Lansing against Purdue in heart-pounding style. Trailing the Boilermakers 28-13 when the fourth quarter began, Michigan State roared back with three touchdowns in the final period on two touchdown passes and a touchdown run by Kirk Cousins. The 35-31 victory moved the Spartans to 10-1 on the season and gave the program its first ten-win season since 1999, Nick Saban's last year at the helm.

Now the Spartans needed Iowa to take down Ohio State. Unfortunately, it didn't happen- barely. The Hawkeye loss crippled Michigan State's BCS chances. Now Sparty needs Ohio State to lose at home next week to Michigan- not exactly a likely proposition. Winning in Happy Valley won't be easy either. Michigan State's season of dreams is probably going to wind up in a non-BCS bowl in rainy central Florida- not exactly the optimum.

**Bo Knows Meltdowns:** I didn't watch but the last couple minutes of Texas A&M's 9-6 victory over Nebraska so I really can't be authoritative on the officiating in that game. It is a little bit… strange that one team can get sixteen penalties and another two. It might have been a last parting gift by the Big 12 to the Huskers- at least until the conference championship game, that is. If it was it came in an appropriate place: College Station, Texas, one of the hearts of the conference's South division, the cynosure of the competitive and financial imbalance that so

embittered Nebraska it chose to jump ship to the Big Ten.

Most of the talk centers around Nebraska head coach Po Belini's behavior during the game- particularly his vigorous scalding of quarterback Taylor Martinez , a rant so severe it generated rumors about the freshman star quitting the team. Pelini's sideline outbursts are old hat at this point. So too is an offense with a habit of misfiring at the most inopportune times.

Nebraska has lost six games since the beginning of the 2009 season; four last year, two this year. In those six games the Cornhuskers have averaged barely over ten points and scored a total of two offensive touchdowns. Four of those losses have come by three points or fewer. Turnovers and penalties have plagued the Big Red in those losses. Pelini had restored pride and toughness to Nebraska football and for that he should be commended. But he has built only half of a team. And he needs a complete team, one that can expand offensively as well as contract defensively, if he is to bring the Huskers back to true elite status.

**Climactic Week:** The game went into a holding pattern over the weekend, with no major shakeups at the top- but that state of affairs won't last for long. Thanksgiving weekend will be one of teams made and unmade, both at the conference-championship and BCS level. Some crucial games to look forward to while leftover turkey and dinner rolls are being hammered:

***West Virginia @ Pittsburgh (Friday, noon):*** The Mountaineers can force a first-place tie in the Big East with a win at Heinz Field, but it's Connecticut that stands to gain the most. The resurgent Huskies have beaten both Pitt and West Virginia and still have only two losses in conference play. If there's a three-way tie for first in the Big East at the end, UConn will get the automatic BCS berth the conference so richly does not deserve.

***SMU @ East Carolina (Friday, 2:00):*** The Mustangs can win the C-USA West with a victory in Greenville- quite a feat for a program that was in a two-decade coma before June Jones arrived from Hawaii. East Carolina has given up an average of more than 57 points in its last four games, three of them losses. The Pirates are bowl-eligible and dangerous, having beaten N.C. State earlier in the season.

***Auburn @ Alabama (Friday, 2:30):*** The Tigers have clinched the SEC West but need a win to stay in the driver's seat for a BCS title-game bid. It'll be tough in Tuscaloosa against an

experienced Tide team. Of course, even if Auburn wins out it may only be a matter of time before its National Championship is vacated anyway.

***Boise State @ Nevada (Friday, 10:15):*** The Broncos may very well clinch a BCS Championship berth if they beat one-loss Nevada in Reno. Lose to the Wolf Pack and any BCS hopes at all, let alone title hopes,, are dashed. Boise hasn't won a WAC game by fewer than 29 points and they'll be expected to win big on Friday, even on the road against a ranked opponent.

***North Carolina State @ Maryland (Saturday, 3:30):*** The 'Pack can clinch the ACC Atlantic with a win in College Park. If they lose Florida State wins the division and heads to the conference championship game in Tampa, where Virginia Tech will await.

***Arkansas State @ Florida International (Saturday, 3:30):*** The Golden Panthers can clinch a Cinderella Sun Belt title with a win over the visiting Artists Formerly Known as the Indians.

***Oklahoma @ Oklahoma State (Saturday, 8:00):*** Bedlam is going to be extra-special this season. The Cowboys can clinch their first-ever Big 12 South title and first title of any kind since they won a share of the Big Eight in 1976. The Sooners win the division on tiebreakers if they beat their cross-state rivals at T. Boone Pickens Stadium. The Cowboys haven't beaten Oklahoma since 2002, when Leslie the Hat was the head coach in Stillwater.

***Next Week:*** And then, of course, there's the Game. Saturday, high noon, the Horseshoe; right as it ought to be.