As I write this, it's Thursday evening...St. Patrick's Day...and I'm just now starting to feel a bit better. I could have sworn this morning that I was starting to come down with something. Thinking only of the well-being of my co-workers, I decided to get out of the office...around noon it turns out....and get someplace where I could just relax over a little lunch, and something soothing for my hint of a cough. And I'll be damned if there wasn't some NCAA Tournament basketball on the eight big screen TV's there. And it was just getting started. What a stroke of luck!...except for the fact that I was, you know, slightly under the weather.

The Buckeyes tip off at about 4:40 p.m. on Friday, so my grueling work schedule shouldn't interfere with taking that one in. But I'm not gonna lie...one sneeze before noon, and I'm out of there. You can't be too careful.

It's the Roadrunners of UT-San Antonio providing the opposition for Ohio State in the first round (yes, this is still the first round....the new "First Four" idea has gone over like a fart in the elevator, from all I can gather). Our man David Regimbal will

be there in Cleveland to bring you first-hand reports, as the Bucks will play again Sunday, barring a historic, unprecedented upset.

For all the “pride of place” that is supposed to accompany being the top seed in the entire tournament, the powers that be still managed to load up the East Regional with North Carolina, Kentucky, Syracuse, Washington, WVU and Xavier, so there will be plenty of drama and challenge for the Buckeyes before they can even start thinking about Houston in April. I’m not complaining...you’ve got to beat the best to be the best, they say. But it sure seems like both Pitt and Kansas have a softer road to the Final Four as 1-seeds.

Three Points to Make

OSU’s Jon Diebler has demolished the Big Ten record for career 3-point field goals this season, and that accomplishment is the one that has garnered the most attention for the senior from Upper Sandusky. But plenty of guys throw a lot of them in because they throw a lot of them up. As impressive as Diebler’s raw numbers are, his accuracy this year is even more striking. Diebler leads the nation in 3-point shooting percentage at 50%, making 102 of his 204 attempts (ranking based on a minimum of 2.5 field goals made per game). Only three players have made more 3-point field goals, and none of the three is remotely close to Diebler in accuracy.

If a shooter can make 40% or better from 3-point range, his coach isn't going to tell him to stop shooting them. That's a pretty respectable number. 50% is an unreal number for any player with more than a couple of attempts per game.

Zach Filzen of Buffalo has made 109 field goals from 3-point range, but he's shooting 41.9% on his attempts. You may have heard of Andrew Goudelock of the College of Charleston, the long range threat for the Cougars in this year's NIT. Goudelock leads the nation with 124 made 3-pointers, but his 41.2% completion rate is well off Diebler's scorching pace.

And everyone by now knows who BYU's Jimmer Freddette is. He's got a reputation as a dead-eye shot from behind the arc, and he has made 112 field goals from there this season. But the Jimmer can barely see Diebler off in the distance when he looks at the accuracy rankings, with his 40.4% rate for the year. Freddette has made ten more 3's than Diebler has this season, but it has taken him 73 more attempts to do it.

Part of Diebler's secret to accuracy is that he won't force his 3-point shot. The two teams that have beaten the Buckeyes this season have done so in part by limiting Diebler's looks from the 3-point line. Averaging six 3-point attempts per game for the season, he had only seven in those two games combined, going 1 for 3 against Wisconsin and 2 for 4 against Purdue. The Buckeyes' NCAA opponents would do well to take note.

By the way, the emphasis on the quality of 3-pointers rather than their quantity carries over to the team statistics for the Buckeyes. They are not to be found in the Top 50 schools in 3-point field goals per game, but as a team they rank 2nd in the nation in 3-point accuracy at 41.3%.

And before your eyes glaze over from statistical overkill...note that Diebler has taken a third of all OSU 3-pointers this season, and the rest of the OSU team, which is regarded as an excellent perimeter shooting team as a whole, is shooting 3's at a 36.8% clip. You'd think that all of this argues for the Buckeyes to maximize Diebler's long range attempts (and Buford's too...43%) and think twice about the other guys.

On closer examination though, David Lighty's (39.0% on 105 attempts) and Aaron Craft's (39.4% on 66 attempts) percentages turned out to be better than I thought they were. It's Sullinger (3 of 12, 25%) , Deshaun Thomas (18 of 58, 31%) and the rest of the bench players that are dragging down the team average.

When you're the No. 1-ranked team, there are obviously numerous reasons why, and the national commentators have variously pointed to the Buckeyes balance on offense...their unselfishness...their strong perimeter shooting...their blend of youth and experience...their swarming man-to-man defense....and their senior leadership.

All true enough of course, but a couple of statistics jump out at you when you see how Ohio State ranks nationally among all Division I programs . They don't turn the ball over very much, and they don't put the opponent on the free throw line.

I've made a point of it before, but I think it bears repeating going into the NCAA's...Ohio State leads the nation's 335 D-I basketball programs in fewest personal fouls at 14.3 per game. An OSU player has fouled out of a game just five times all season. It's a stat you might expect to see from a team playing a lot of zone defense...packing it in and forcing a lot of outside shots. For a Buckeye team that usually plays 40 minutes of straight man-to-man, it's pretty remarkable.

In addition, OSU is 6th nationally in fewest turnovers per game (10.2), and 5th in turnover margin (4.9 per game). That reflects their patience and unselfishness on the offensive end, and the way their defense creates turnovers in the half court, and in transition.

In keeping with that theme, this stat should be no surprise - OSU ranks 4th in the nation in assist-to-turnover ratio at 1.53 per game.(Four Big Ten teams are in the top six in this category, Northwestern and Wisconsin are 1-2)

I was a little surprised to see that the Buckeyes are shooting free throws at 70.5% for the

season, ranking them 130th out of 335 schools in Div I. I would have guessed their numbers were worse than that. At the line, the best of the Bucks are William Buford (84%), and Diebler (82%). (OSU Team and Individual Stats)

The other thing we've been seeing lately from the Buckeyes is second half scoring spurts. After a stretch of several tight Big Ten games in a row early in the campaign, the Bucks have been winning in double digits more often than not. They currently rank 2nd (behind Belmont) in scoring margin at +17.3 points per game, and they're 11th in scoring defense, allowing 59.8 ppg.

The individual accolades are starting to roll in for Jared Sullinger. This week he won the USBWA Waymon Tisdale Award
as the National Freshman of the Year. It would have been difficult for the writers to explain giving it to anyone else after the same group named him
First Team All-American
as well. Congrats, Jared. Stick around...it could be fun again next year.

Streit View

Kirk Herbstreit announced last week that he is moving to Nashville from his longtime home in

Columbus, and he says it's because "a vocal minority" of "relentless" OSU fans has driven him to this decision. And predictably, a small vocal minority of OSU fans are ripping him for doing it, suggesting among other things that he is merely leaving for a destination with no state income tax, and then using some (presumably invented) criticism from OSU fans as an excuse for this act of selfishness.

For my part, I take him at his word (read the whole statement at link) that he never wanted to leave, and I can't blame him one bit for doing what he did. First of all, he's a wealthy man now, and he can choose to live wherever he wishes. And once he made the decision to leave Ohio, why wouldn't he select a location that made sense financially for him, while also allowing him to sell the snow blower?

Ever since Herbstreit landed the top college football analyst job at ESPN, there has been a cohort of OSU fans that has deemed him insufficiently loyal to the Buckeyes on the air...which is to say, he has refused to wear a red sweater with a block "O", and be a shill for the program at every turn. Understandably, he has at times appeared to bend over backwards so as not to be seen as a Buckeye "homer", and for this attempt at even-handedness and balance he cannot be forgiven by a certain variety of OSU rooter.

Buckeye Nation has always had a bad case of the "ESPN Hates My Team" Syndrome, an affliction felt by the partisans of most every major collegiate athletic program (yes, even USC). These folks would not be satisfied unless Herbstreit did a Lee Corso imitation and donned the Brutus Buckeye head every Saturday on the GameDay set. When he is out and about in Columbus with his four sons (10-year old twins, and aged 7 and 4) and he is set upon by purported "fans" angry with him for some perceived slight of the Buckeyes, he is put off by it, and doesn't want to continue putting up with it. He calls them relentless...and who among us doubts it?

It has long been known in OSU circles that Herbstreit is, as they say, "all Buckeye", off the ESPN airwaves. His kids are usually dressed in OSU garb out in public, and he does all manner of pro bono work benefiting the university, almost all of it beneath the radar of media coverage...for obvious reasons. He needs to maintain the perception nationally of being objective, even if it's not entirely so. He's not a play-by-play guy. He's an analyst and commentator....an "opinion" guy. I'm sure his employer has an interest in having him not be perceived as a big fan of Ohio State.

Some people don't get that, because some people are blinkered...and don't see the whole picture.

Bruce Hooley has "agreed to part company" with 97.1 The Fan in Columbus. He hasn't said as much in his explanation of his leaving the station at his blog, but it is widely assumed that intense fan reaction to his outspoken criticism of Jim Tressel last week had a lot to do with the station management's decision.

I have never been a big-time member of the Bruce Hooley Fan Club. I've always felt like his version of "telling it like it is" seemed more like a knee-jerk negativism about all things OSU, dressed up as journalistic objectivity. Or maybe that's just the homer in me coming out.

But if there were ever a justifiable occasion to rip Jim Tressel and OSU Athletics, last week was it. It seems a shame that Hooley lost his job because he was speaking certain uncomfortable truths about the coach and the program that the fan base didn't want to hear. I wish him well wherever he lands next.

You Can't Spell Tsunami Without TSUN