The Setting: It's a strange place. A dark place where joy and gleeful expectations are shattered by a streaking 49 yard bullet. It's 49 yards that connected Russell Wilson and Jared Abbrederis while simultaneously disconnecting an already downtrodden fan base.

The feeling is familiar for Buckeye Nation, but familiarity does not translate to tolerance.

Jordan Hall's kickoff return to midfield provides some hope, but that hope is a needle in the proverbial haystack of disappointments. With less than sixty seconds, the Buckeyes are inching their way toward a field goal opportunity. That's the best case scenario. A miracle field goal from the foot of Drew Basil to tie the game.

"Boom" Herron has just rushed for three yards and a first down. The clock is plummeting toward the half minute mark and Ohio State's receivers are still not set. After everyone finds their place, there's a brief moment where everyone on the playing field is still.

Then, the ball is snapped.

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Braxton Miller takes the shotgun snap and drops back. It's a five step drop-back, just like he's practiced a million times. One step, two, three, four... As soon as he hits his fifth step, there's pressure. *Crap*, Braxton thinks. Mewhort was beaten by the tackle on the right side. His pocket is collapsing, so he tries to run around the closing defender. The angle isn't right, so he darts inside between the incoming defensive end to extend the play. No. 97 from

Wisconsin is behind him, the same guy he embarrassed on his first touchdown run, and Braxton can hear him grunting and laboring in his pursuit.

Should I run? Braxton is heading toward the left sideline while absentmindedly looking down the field. He remembers how his high school coaches screamed at him as a freshman, commanding him to always look down the field while he was scrambling. The angle is right, he could get at least eight yards before running out of bounds. He makes up his mind and is about to dash past the line of scrimmage when he sees it. *No, that can't be right*, he thinks. But he looks again and sees a wide open receiver in the endzone.

It's now or never. Braxton sets his feet as much as he can and releases the ball into the dark, open sky.

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Luke Fickell's hopeless feeling has morphed into a leaking lemon stuck in his throat, something he tries to swallow as the ball is snapped. The game has been forcefully taken from him and carefully placed in the hands of Jim Bollman. *God help us all*.

He can't believe it's happening again. After all the preparation, hard practices, motivational speeches... after everything his team went through since Nebraska, it's happening again. His thoughts are screaming, h*ow the hell did we blow a 12 point lead in three damn minutes*?!

He can't let his thoughts leak through to his face. He watches as Braxton starts racing toward Wisconsin's sideline and prays that he doesn't turn the ball over. Luke just wants 10 yards. He can't see from his perspective, but Braxton might be able to get that if he hurries. *God, how did it come to this*
?
Luke thinks. He thought about the zone defense he called for Wisconin's last two possessions. *What in the hell was I think*
...

That thought is interrupted by a change in his quarterback's momentum. Before Luke could process what was happening, that damn lemon in his throat triples in size as he watches Braxton release the ball.

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The two Wisconsin safeties watch the ball snap and begin to backpedal. No. 12 is replaying the conversation he had with No. 7 in his mind, and he swore to himself that he would keep everything in front of him. He remembers the film session the day after the Michigan State game and how his coaches said they did everything right except batting the ball down. All he had to do was make the right play.

No. 7 watches Braxton scramble to his side of the field and begins to creep up. The only receiver on his side is well covered by the corner, and even if he were to break his route, he'll

still be in good position over the top. Braxton is running out of room and No. 7 figures he'll probably get five yards before getting pushed out of bounds.

No. 12 on the other side has watched Braxton scramble to the the far side of the field and sees that a wide receiver for Ohio State has slipped behind a linebacker. He knows that he needs to keep everything in front of him, but there's no point in letting this guy float wide open. No. 12 closes in a little bit because the corner back on his side is supposed to play man-to-man on the outside receiver... Or at least, that's what he thought when he watches Braxton launch the ball.

As No.7 and No. 12 hear the crowd swell with anticipation, their thoughts become one; *Oh God. What have we done*?

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Bret Bielema finds it strange how calm he feels as he watches the ball snap into Braxton's hands. He knows after last week that anything can happen, obviously, but these two situations are incredibly different. He tried to convince himself that it wasn't arrogance, but rather *fact*.
A true freshman can't recreate the magic Kirk Cousins did last week. There's just no way.

That doesn't mean he's not being careful. He told his safeties before the drive started that they couldn't let anything get behind them. If they handle that, they were golden. Bret watches Braxton scramble to his side of the field, almost directly at him, so he takes a step back to avoid any potential contact. He looks at the angle and figures Braxton might run for the first down.

That's when Bret sees it. Panic shoots through his body and all he can hope is that Braxton hasn't seen the same thing. Bret watches Braxton get closer and closer to the sideline and thinks, *Oh thank God, he's gonna run!* But in that moment, the damn freshman pulls up to release the ball.

Bret looks back down the field to see if his safety has recovered yet, but he hasn't. The strength in his legs begins to give as he prays for inaccuracy.

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Devin Smith explodes into motion as soon as the ball is snapped. His route is a simple streak, meaning the chances of him getting the ball are about as likely as his team winning this game. That doesn't mean his route is pointless though. He's supposed to occupy the two safeties so Chris fields can be open in the middle of the field. That's the only reason he's running as hard as he is down the field. Occupy the safeties.

Midway through his route, something happens. Devin asks himself, *Why in the hell is the safety going up the field*? He looks

behind him, figuring the corner back that was covering him must be matching him step for step, but to his surprise, the corner back is heading up the field too.

Oh my God, I'm completely wide open, Devin thinks. He sees Braxton racing to the sideline, so he breaks his route and runs to the middle of the field in the hopes that his quarterback sees him. *Come on Brax, I'm wide open*! Devin watches hopelessly as Braxton inches closer and closer to the sideline, thinking there's no way he'd be able to get the ball off in time.

That's when he watched Braxton set and launch -- rocketing the ball in the air toward him. *Pleas e God*
,
Devin thought,
please let this come down in time
.

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The crowd erupts as the ball lands securely in Devin Smith's waiting arms. Braxton races down the field and smiles at Luke Fickell, who is standing on the sideline, stunned speechless. The two Wisconsin safeties cradle their head in their hands, cursing themselves as Bret Bielema races toward the referee out of desperation -- begging for a call he knows he won't get. And Devin? Devin Smith just raises his arms and lets his teammates tackle him, knowing that he just gave Buckeye fans everywhere a break from the heart break.

(photo credits: Dan Harker - The-Ozone.net)

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