

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 22, No. 15

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

January 11, 2003

National Champs!!

OSU Ends 34-Year Title Drought With Thriller Over Miami

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

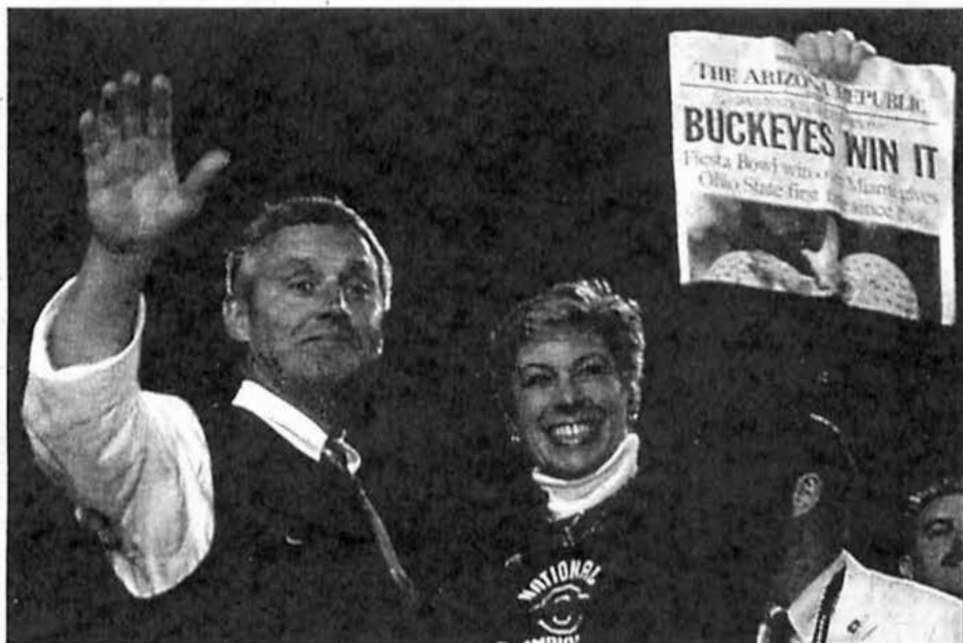
After 34 years of near misses and close calls, the wait is finally over for Ohio State and its legion of fans.

The Buckeyes defied the odds by pulling off a 31-24 double-overtime upset of top-ranked Miami (Fla.) to claim the national championship Jan. 3 at the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl in Tempe, Ariz.

The victory, cheered on by as many as 50,000 OSU fans who made the cross-country journey to see the Buckeyes in person, gave Ohio State its fifth consensus national championship and seventh overall (see chart, page 16).

In typical OSU style, it came in heart-stopping fashion. Miami rallied to force the game into overtime with a final-play field goal then surged ahead 24-17 in the first overtime.

OSU converted a pair of tricky fourth downs — including one on a controversial pass interference penalty — before tying the game. Then, in the second OT, OSU's Maurice Clarett powered in on a 5-yard run before the defense stopped Miami on downs inside the



ON TOP OF THE WORLD — As his wife, Ellen, shows off a local newspaper proclaiming the Buckeyes' victory over Miami, OSU head coach Jim Tressel waves to the Sun Devil Stadium crowd.

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Krenzel Confounds Miami With His Running Ability

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The list of Fiesta Bowl Offensive MVP award winners is long and distinguished.

It includes quarterbacks such as Notre Dame's Tony Rice, Nebraska's Tommie Frazier and Eric Crouch, and Oregon's Joey Harrington.

Ohio State quarterback Craig Krenzel added his name to that illustrious list with his play as the Buckeyes knocked off Miami 31-24 in double overtime to win the national championship at the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl.

It should be noted that Krenzel did not win the award on the basis of his

passing skills. After all, he completed just 7 of 21 passes for 122 yards with two interceptions.

Yet he was most definitely Ohio State's leading offensive player in the victory after rushing 19 times for a career-high 81 yards and two touchdowns. Only one of those rushing attempts ended as a quarterback sack.

"All I know is that Craig Krenzel does for us what we need done," said OSU coach Jim Tressel. "He made plays when we needed and he's tough. The number one characteristic a quarterback has to have, especially a quarterback at Ohio State, is they'd better be tough. Craig Krenzel is tough and he played a tough game tonight."

"We have had a lot of great quarterbacks here at Ohio State who just know how to win. Craig Krenzel knows how to

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OPINION

Team's Place In College Lore Is Secure

Ohio State's 31-24 double-overtime win over Miami (Fla.) in the Fiesta Bowl cemented more than just the school's first national championship since 1968.

It cemented this 2002 Ohio State team's place in college football history. This upset victory — remember, the Buckeyes were a prohibitive 13-point underdog — is a game that college football fans will point to for years to come when discussions come up regarding thrilling games.

As the game wore into overtime, I found myself asking the question, "Has a game this good ever meant this much?" Hmmm.

The Buckeyes seemed to be following a game plan left behind by Penn State in 1986 and Alabama in 1992. In each of those cases, heavily favored Miami was expected to wrap up a national championship season.

But strong defensive efforts kept the Hurricanes in check, allowing the underdog teams to dance off into the night with all of the hardware.

In the days leading up to the Fiesta Bowl, I heard two prevailing questions: "Can they do it?" was the first one.

And that one was usually followed by "What possessed you to pick Ohio State?"

Well, the answer to the first question was (obviously) "yes." The answer to the second, truly, is "I don't know."

I honestly believe I got caught up in the post-Michigan game euphoria. I can even remember saying at the time, "I don't care who they play, I'm picking Ohio State to win the Fiesta Bowl."

As the weeks went by since that Michigan win, the Buckeyes were derided in every way imaginable. "They have no chance," the supposed experts would say.

When my colleagues at BSB, Jeff Rapp and Mike Wachman, took their turns and each picked Miami, I was overcome, perhaps, with the sentiment that somebody from our newspaper should pick the Buckeyes. In that sense, maybe I took one for the team.

I spent a good bit of time looking at Miami's last several games, and I have to admit that the Hurricanes were legitimate. But it was that tape study that led me to believe an OSU upset was certainly possible.

Here were some of my points of emphasis going into this game and how the Buckeyes fared with them.

• **The Buckeyes had to be able to run the football effectively** — OSU ended up with 145 yards rushing with quarterback Craig Krenzel leading the way with a career-high 81. So Maurice Clarett was unable to get his standard 100.

That didn't matter because Krenzel was keeping the sticks moving with use of the quarterback draw, which we had seen several Miami opponents use effectively.

• **OSU had to contain Miami's big-play ability** — This proved prophetic as Ken Dorsey's 28-yard pass to tight end Kellen Winslow Jr. ended up being the 'Canes' longest play of the game.

Andre Johnson, a big, strong receiver who abuses weak DBs, never got out of the starting gate against OSU two-way man Chris Gamble. He caught four passes for 54 yards and was not a major factor in the outcome, as he had been all year.

At the same time, tailback Willis McGahee's longest run from scrimmage was 10 yards. In nearly every Miami

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

with

Steve Helwag

game this year, McGahee was able to break a long gainer. Not so fast, my friend, against Ohio State.

• **OSU had to maximize its advantage in the kicking game** — This one nearly bit OSU as Mike Nugent misfired on a field goal and Miami's Roscoe Parrish returned a punt 50 yards to set up the game-tying Todd Sievers field goal that sent the game to overtime.

• **It goes without saying that Ohio State could not turn the ball over** — Turnover margin proved to be a huge deciding factor. Krenzel threw a pair of interceptions. Dorsey also threw a pair and lost a fumble. The 'Canes also lost two other fumbles.

OSU was hoping for a plus-2 turnover margin and got plus-3 instead. OSU got all 17 of its points in regulation as a result of turnovers.

Much of this was due to the heavy pressure OSU's front four exerted on Dorsey, who wasn't sacked once in 2001 and just 11 times this past year.

• **OSU had to withstand Miami's early surge** — The 'Canes seemed on the verge of breaking the game open, intercepting Krenzel after already grabbing a 7-0 lead. But the OSU defense forced three second-quarter turnovers and Miami found itself in a 14-7 halftime hole.

• **Summing Up** — This game was over on three different occasions. OSU had it wrapped up until the long punt return set up Sievers' field goal. The kick curled just inside the right upright and sent the game to OT.

Then the Buckeyes were twice all but dead in the first OT. On the first one, Krenzel converted a fourth-and-long with a 17-yard pass to go-to man Michael Jenkins.

Next came the pass interference penalty. Krenzel drilled a pass into Gamble, who could not haul it in. The line judge made the initial signal of incomplete, touching off a fireworks display overhead and prompting the Miami team to storm the field. Jarrett Payton had even gone into the stands.

But field judge Terry Porter had other ideas. His deliberate, 3-1/2 second wait before tossing his penalty flag seemed to say what we were all thinking: "This game is just too good to end."

OSU capitalized on the break moments later, when Krenzel scored the tying touchdown to force the second OT.

In the second OT, the Buckeyes moved it right down and scored on Clarett's 5-yard run. Then the defense delivered one of the school's best goal-line stands, capped by Cie Grant's near sack of Miami's Ken Dorsey on the final incomplete.

Now, finally, it was over and Ohio State, after 34 years out of the championship picture, had had all its hopes and dreams answered.

This was, perhaps, the greatest of what I like to call "Ohio State moments."

I'll go so far as to call it the school's biggest win ever. That was Miami, a winner of 34 straight, that watched OSU

essentially steal the win and the title right out of its hands.

Quite A Scene

Ohio State fans paid dearly — some as many as \$700 a ticket or more — to see their team make history.

It was stunning to look around Sun Devil Stadium or outside the stadium or around Tempe all week and see how OSU fans had virtually taken the city by storm.

This was like a game at Ohio Stadium — Miami had its little sliver of 5,000 or so seats in the northeast corner of the end zone. Otherwise, the stadium was firmly behind Ohio State.

There are several lessons to learn from this.

First, this game — which drew record TV ratings for a Bowl Championship Series game — shows what Ohio State means to the world of college football.

It is my good bet that next season's Aug. 30 season opener with Washington will be picked up by ABC as a prime-time event.

Plus, if OSU can win nine or 10 games some year soon and not make it to the Rose Bowl, I think you'll see the Buckeyes as a BCS at-large team at, say, the Orange Bowl with no questions asked.

At the same time, I doubt you will likely ever see OSU fall past the Outback Bowl, unless the season is a complete disaster (6-5 or 6-6).

Finally, we now know that bowl tickets are a hot commodity. Just imagine if OSU gets matched up with Alabama or Oklahoma or Notre Dame at a major bowl. Miami hardly traveled anybody. In fact, many OSU fans got their tickets directly from Miami or via UM fans on the secondary market.

But schools like I listed above will travel 20,000 or more fans for a big game. Ticket prices for such a match-up could extend over \$1,000 apiece.

Celebrating A Title

I have a round of toasts to make on the occasion of Ohio State's first national championship in nearly two generations. Here goes:

• My first salute is to the OSU fans. They turned out in droves to support their team. On at least two occasions, Miami had to burn timeouts because the crowd noise was too much to call out signals.

How neat was it to hear the "O-H-I-O" chant going full force an hour before kickoff?

You have to admit that the OSU-partisan crowd may have had a factor in field judge Porter throwing the flag on the pass interference penalty that kept OSU's hopes alive in the first overtime.

• This victory was for and due to the work of so many people.

Jim Tressel came to OSU with a belief that the Buckeyes could become a national power once again. That belief was manifested for all the world to see.

As our Gary Houstau told me not long ago, however, this season is not the end — it is only the beginning. Sit back and enjoy this ride. Just as he did at Youngstown State, Tressel will be keeping OSU in the national hunt for years to come.

• This also was for Mark Dantonio, OSU's brilliant defensive coordinator; Bill Conley, OSU's outstanding recruiting coordinator; and Jim Bollman, OSU's stellar offensive coordinator and line coach.

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OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

'It's Nothing But Red'

Stars, Fans Help Turn Tempe Into Columbus, Arizona

By STEVE HELWAGEN
and JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writers

The stars turned out for Ohio State's Tostitos Fiesta Bowl national championship victory over Miami.

Among the former OSU athletes in attendance were golf legend Jack Nicklaus, former basketball stars Jim Jackson and Lawrence Funderburke, and ex-football standouts David Boston, Keith Byars, Joey Galloway, Eddie George, Raymont Harris, Tito Paul, Alonzo Shavers, Shawn Springs, Mike Tomczak and Jonathan Wells.

Jackson and Funderburke, teammates with the NBA's Sacramento Kings, made the trek down from Denver, where they had a game the next day. George appeared during an off week for his playoff-bound Tennessee Titans.

The Miami sideline was just as star-studded with the likes of Jessie Armstead, Phillip Buchanon, Randall Hill, Cortez Kennedy, Russell Maryland, Bryant McKinnie, Clinton Portis, Warren Sapp and Lamar Thomas.

Prior to the game, former OSU quarterback Kirk Herbstreit asked his close friend and former teammate Galloway as well as Miami alum Hill to join him on the set of ESPN's "College Gameday" to handicap the match-up.

"I like both you guys, so I'm going to take it easy on you," Hill said. "So I'm going to say Miami 37, Ohio State 12."

Galloway said, "Twelve?" Herbstreit followed, "It doesn't sound like you're taking it easy on us."

Hill replied, voice rising, "I gave you 12, baby."

For the record, Herbstreit predicted the OSU upset. Lee Corso, his "Gameday" colleague, picked Miami by placing the mascot head of Ibis over his head.

At halftime, George and Sapp appeared on the ABC broadcast to discuss the NFL playoffs.

Prior to the game, several former college stars were honored as Legends

of the Bowl Championship Series. A player was selected from each BCS conference as well as Notre Dame. Those honored included OSU's Archie Griffin, Miami's Jim Kelly, Pittsburgh's Tony Dorsett, Washington State's Mark Rypien, Nebraska's Tommie Frazier, South Carolina's George Rogers and Notre Dame's Paul Hornung.

Luminaries from outside the college sports world included major league baseball players Roger Clemens, Gary Sheffield and Luis Gonzalez, who stars for the hometown Arizona Diamondbacks. Former baseball star Cal Ripken Jr. also was on hand to conduct the pregame coin toss.

Pro golfer Jim Furyk, the reigning Memorial Tournament champion, also attended the game. Furyk attended with his wife, a Columbus native.

Also, actor Matthew McConaughey, a known Texas Longhorns supporter and a friend of Herbstreit's, was roaming the sideline.

The rift between comedian Richard Lewis and his alma mater, OSU, seems to have subsided. Lewis returned to his familiar position on the field for this game, predicting a 24-17 OSU victory to reporters before the game.

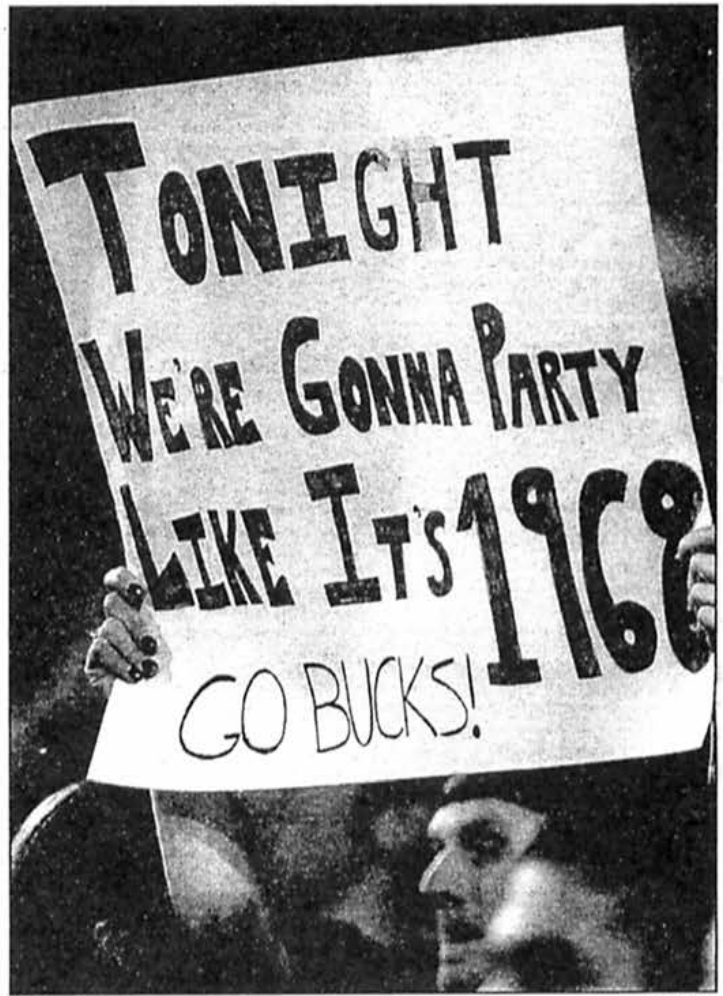
Lewis nearly sued the school for defamation several years ago when he was listed as a "drunk" in a compilation of prominent alumni in an OSU media guide.

Viewpoints On The Win

BSB tracked down former OSU coach Earle Bruce after the game. Bruce was overjoyed that his coaching protege, Jim Tressel, an assistant under Bruce from 1983-85, had completed his mission.

"Winning the national championship is unbelievable," Bruce said. "They were 14-0. What a great job the team and the coaching staff did in that season and this football game."

"To stay in there and win it in double overtime, what an exciting football game. What a great defensive stand there at the end. There are a lot of



WISHING AND HOPING — Sun Devil Stadium was filled with Ohio State fans who made the trip west. Many came bearing signs to lend kind words to their team or razz certain television analysts.

things to remember about this game and this team. They have been very exciting."

Bruce credited OSU fans for supporting their team in Tempe.

"They must have seen it coming because they turned out in droves," he said. "They were here in great numbers to witness. Give them a lot of credit. They are great fans. They do care whether they win or lose. It's been tremendous."

"Coach Tressel has done everything right. He has said all the right things and not said all the right things."

Bruce sees no reason the Buckeyes can't make playing in the title game a regular occurrence.

"I think if we just get the great players from Ohio to come here with a couple from outside, that will be great," he said. "I like what he's doing as far as the players are concerned with their education."

"A kid like Michael Doss comes in here and stays his extra year rather than going to the pros because he wants to win the national title. That

means a lot."

George, OSU's 1995 Heisman Trophy winner, also was overwhelmed by the Fiesta Bowl appearance.

"You've got to be here to believe this, and I still don't believe it," George said. "It was a hard-fought game on both sides. My heart goes out to Miami because they played their hearts out. I'm a big fan of Miami as well, but I can't go against my boys."

"It was a well-fought game with a lot of dramatics involved and we came out on the winning edge. I'm just really happy for them. I really am."

George spent part of the game counseling OSU tailback Maurice Clarett — that is, when George wasn't acting like a nervous wreck and pulling a towel over his head in disbelief.

Griffin, connected to the program as an associate athletic director, also was excited over the outcome.

"I am so very, very proud," he said. "These guys, they've done a terrific job

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Respect Is Back For OSU

Continued From Page 1

OSU 2.

The final play saw OSU linebacker Cie Grant pressure Miami's Ken Dorsey, a Heisman Trophy finalist, into an incompletion.

Miami's string of 34 straight wins was history, while OSU's wait of 34 years — dating to the 1968 national championship season — was also complete.

"I tell you what, we are so proud of these young men," said OSU coach Jim Tressel, who won a national championship in his second year on the job. "We have always had the best damn band in the land. Now we've got the best damn team in the land."

Tressel's Buckeyes (14-0), ranked second nationally coming into the game, were the only Division I-A team to finish the year undefeated.

"Anytime you stand alone at the top of the mountain with the people you love, it is a great feeling," said Tressel, who previously won four Division I-AA national championships at Youngstown State.

Ohio State had been a player on the national scene under John Cooper throughout much of the 1990s, finishing second in the AP poll in both 1996 and '98.

But OSU's rise to championship status this season seemed unlikely just five months ago. The Buckeyes, coming off a disappointing 7-5 campaign, were ranked just 13th in the initial Associated Press poll.

The team's 13 seniors had seen upheaval in the program, missing a bowl game after a 6-6 season in 1999 and seeing Cooper fired after an 8-4 year in 2000.

Since the inception of the AP poll in 1936, OSU had never failed to make the final poll in more than three straight years. But OSU was looking at just such a string headed into this season.

"It was important for us to get the respect back in our program," said Claret, who ended a dynamic freshman year with 1,237 yards rushing and 18 touchdowns. "After this, people will look at us and take us more seriously."

Tressel noted how everything came into proper alignment for the Buckeyes this season.

"We are so proud of those 13 seniors and of those coaches," Tressel said. "The leadership that both of these groups gave, credit them. Throw in the fact that the younger players believed, throw in the fact that our crowd was electric and energized us."

OSU became the first Big Ten team to play in the designated championship game in the brief five-year history of the Bowl Championship Series. The Buckeyes emerged from this dramatic win with the conference's first unanimous national championship since 1968. (Michigan split the 1997 national title with Nebraska.)

"This is such a great feeling," said OSU tight end Ben Hartssock. "I think it's



IT'S OURS, BABY — Ohio State safety Michael Doss (center), linebacker Cie Grant (right) and defensive lineman David Thompson celebrate together in front of the Fiesta Bowl trophy.

important to understand what this means to our whole state. Every away game we go to, there are people waiting to meet us at the airport.

"It is a worldwide thing. It is neat to see the way Ohio State reaches out to people. It's amazing."

OSU safety and co-captain Mike Doss set the tone for this title run when he decided last January to stick around for his senior year. He could have joined teammates Derek Ross and Darnell Sanders in leaving school early for the NFL. But he was rewarded for his decision by earning All-American honors for the third time as well as a national championship ring.

"I believed in our team," said Doss, who set up OSU's first touchdown with an interception. "Twelve months ago on Jan. 9, my mom's birthday, I made the decision to come back. I had one goal in mind and that was to win a national championship."

"I have won a championship on every level since I was 8 years old. I was able to come back and we got it done."

The Buckeyes also were aided by an unprecedented showing of support. It was estimated that as many as 80 percent of the 77,502 in attendance at Sun Devil Stadium were rooting for OSU. Many of those fans had paid \$500 and up for their tickets to the title game.

"This was like the Ohio State branch

campus today," Hartssock said. "This was the 'Shoe for the day. It seemed like there was a 1,000-to-1 ratio of Ohio State fans. That really was a spark for us, offensively and defensively."

A Fitting Conclusion

Between the Bowl Alliance (1995-97) and the first four years of the BCS, only one of the designated title games was decided by a touchdown or less, as Tennessee edged Florida State 23-16 in the 1999 Fiesta Bowl.

But after the Buckeyes rallied to defeat Miami, many college football pundits were calling the game — which lasted a robust three hours and 56 minutes — perhaps the greatest title game ever.

"Miami is a great football team and that's what the national championship game should go like — double overtime," Tressel said.

Miami (12-1) was bidding to become the game's first repeat national champion since Nebraska in 1994-95. The Hurricanes were installed as a 13-point favorite.

But if the Buckeyes were supposed to roll over and become Miami's 35th

OSU's National Championships

Here is a look at Ohio State's seven full or partial national championships.

Year	Record	Poll Titles
1942	9-1	AP
1954	10-0	AP (UCLA won UPI, FWAA)
1957	9-1	UPI, FWAA (Auburn won AP)
1961	8-0-1	FWAA (Alabama won AP, UPI)
1968	10-0	Unanimous
1970	9-1	NFF (Nebraska won AP, FWAA; Texas won UPI)
2002	14-0	Unanimous

Note: AP, Associated Press media poll; UPI, United Press International coaches poll; FWAA, Football Writers Association of America; NFF, National Football Foundation.

straight victim, they never got that memo.

"I never thought of us as underdogs," Claret said. "We all believed in ourselves."

The championship game was the kind of back-and-forth affair Ohio State thrived upon during the regular season.

"It was tough, but that's why you play this game," said OSU offensive tackle Shane Olivea. "To come out here and have this opportunity, it was unbelievable. Hey, no one gave us a chance. Not

COVER STORY: NATIONAL CHAMPS!!

one person gave us a chance and that's why you play the game."

Miami opened the scoring with a first-quarter touchdown drive. OSU then grabbed a 14-7 halftime lead after capitalizing on a pair of UM turnovers.

OSU led for the entire second half until a 50-yard punt return by Roscoe Parrish set up Todd Sievers' 40-yard field goal on the final play of regulation, which tied the game at 17 and forced overtime.

Miami opened the first overtime with a touchdown to go up 24-17. OSU converted a sticky fourth-and-14 predicament with a 17-yard pass from Craig Krenzel to Michael Jenkins.

Moments later, OSU faced fourth-and-3 at the Miami 5. Krenzel threw incomplete in the end zone to Chris Gamble, but UM cornerback Glenn Sharpe was flagged for pass interference. Miami had already begun its victory celebration when the field judge made his call, throwing the flag 3-1/2 seconds after the play ended.

Given new life, OSU knotted the score at 24 on a 1-yard Krenzel quarterback sneak.

"We didn't panic," said OSU safety and co-captain Donnie Nicky. "We didn't do that all season, either. We had it in our minds to never surrender and not to give up all season."

OSU went first in the second overtime and scored in a methodical five plays. Claret's 5-yard TD run put the Buckeyes up and set the tone for the defense, which allowed Miami to get all the way down to the OSU 1 before stopping the 'Canes cold.

When Dorsey's final pass fell harmlessly to the ground, a raucous OSU celebration ensued on the field. After accepting the various championship trophies, Tressel convened his team for its usual postgame ritual — a rendition of "Carmen Ohio" with the OSU marching band.

"It feels real good," said Gamble, OSU's two-way star and a native of the Miami suburb of Sunrise. "Ever since I went back home for the holidays everyone was like, 'Oh, you all are going to lose to Miami.'"

"I just want to let everybody back home know I did it and the team did it."

For Doss and several of the seniors, beating Miami was a fitting way to go out: They opened their careers with a 23-12 loss to the 'Canes in the 1999 Kickoff Classic.

"All the teams I've played against in my career, I've ended up either .500 or with a winning record against them," Doss said. "Miami was the last one I needed. They had a 34-game winning streak, but we knew if we snapped that we would be national champions."

A Season To Remember

Ohio State led the nation with seven games decided by a touchdown or less, including the title game victory.

Over the course of the year, these Buckeyes were in and out of tough spots more than Harry Houdini.

But where other teams would have fractured or folded, this OSU team typically pulled together.

"These guys were so willing to grow together and learn to care about each other," Tressel said. "They have been through transition and a lot of adversity."

"They each have a role, not one more important than the other."

Hartsoc added, "Just about every game has been tight for us. We haven't won pretty, but we've won."

While few outside the program

believed a national championship was in the cards, the players themselves began to believe.

"Everyone deserves credit," said defensive end Simon Fraser, who sacked Dorsey late in regulation. "Everyone believed we could get it done. Right out of camp, we had the mind-set and the attitude to go the whole way."

"We grew together as a team. The camaraderie on this team is unbelievable. This is something that books are written about."

OSU survived close calls at Cincinnati and Wisconsin early in the season. The 23-19 win at UC was predicated by a late defensive stand in the red zone, capped by a Will Allen interception in the end zone.

The Buckeyes then rallied for wins over Penn State and at Purdue and Illinois. OSU went to overtime for the first time in school history to secure the 23-16 win over the Illini.

"We'd been in overtime before," noted OSU defensive tackle David Thompson. "Miami hadn't been in overtime before. I knew we had to just keep fighting and keep playing. Our team stuck together. That's the thing about Ohio State football this year. We play to the last minute. We stick together."

The 14-9 season-ending victory over Michigan — also capped by a late interception by Allen near the goal line — gave the Buckeyes a school-record 13 wins and secured their spot in the national title game.

"After the Michigan game, we had written a chapter in history," Hartsoc said. "I think we would have been remembered even if we had lost the national championship game."

"But we hung in and got the win here. I think we'll be one of the teams that people will always talk about. It is a new era of greatness at Ohio State. To be part of that is overwhelming."

No team in the previous 112 years of Ohio State football had ever won more than 11 games. So, yes, it seems this 14-game winner will be revered for quite a while.

"I think we all had that in the back of our minds going into the game that we'd be part of Ohio State history for a very

long time," said OSU linebacker Matt Wilhelm. "We were out to get some respect and out to make history."

Can They Repeat?

One of the obvious questions in the afterglow of the Miami victory was whether the Buckeyes could repeat in 2003.

At least on paper, each of the nation's final top five — OSU, Miami, Georgia, USC and Oklahoma — will go into the off-season with serious designs on winning the national title at next year's Sugar Bowl.

"We want to start a winning streak like Miami did," Gamble confirmed. "We want to be back here in the championship game again next year."

Tressel said those questions are inevitable, although he wanted his team to savor this win for a short while before getting back to work.

"These guys are going to enjoy this, celebrate with class and they'll be very proud of their accomplishments," Tressel said. "Those younger guys go back to school on (Jan. 6) and I don't think we'll throw them into the weight room right away but a lot of this is about what comes next. We'll go to work pretty soon."

Now that the underclassmen have a taste of a championship, it may be hard to accept anything less.

"I think the only way to top this is to do it two more times," said OSU kicker Mike Nugent. "I've got two years left, so hopefully we can keep doing it."

EDITOR'S NOTE — In the weeks ahead, BSB will take an early look at OSU's 2003 football team, provide profiles on key returning players and examine the team's nonconference opponents and Big Ten competitors.

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OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

From Dejection To Elation, Thanks To Late Flag

By STEVE HELWAGEN
and MIKE WACHSMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writers

Excluding extra points, there were nine different scoring plays in Ohio State's Tostitos Fiesta Bowl double-overtime win over Miami (Fla.).

But none of them registered as the play of the game.

Rather, the most talked about play of the game simply helped prolong the contest in the first overtime.

OSU trailed Miami 24-17 and, for the second time in the first OT, faced sudden death with a fourth-down predicament. Quarterback Craig Krenzel had converted the first one with a 17-yard pass to Michael Jenkins just moments earlier.

But the game was on the line again as OSU faced fourth-and-3 at the Miami 5. The Canes spent their only timeout to set up their defense, while Krenzel suggested the play to OSU coach Jim Tressel.

"We knew that they were going to be looking for the fade, so we went for a fade stop," said OSU tight end Ben Hartsock.

Krenzel rolled to his right and threw to flanker Chris Gamble, who broke off his route near the goal line and the right sideline.

Replays were inconclusive as to when Miami cornerback Glenn Sharpe initiated contact with Gamble, but he made strong contact and broke up the pass. Replays did show Sharpe wrapping a hand around Gamble's waist before knocking the ball down.

Line judge Derick Bowers from the Big 12 crew signaled incomplete pass from his spot on the goal line. Field judge Terry Porter did likewise from the corner of the end zone. But Porter then also sent his

penalty flag flying toward the area of the play.

"I was a little sad because I thought he interfered and I didn't see a flag," Gamble said. "I thought we had lost. Then I looked around and saw the flag and was happy again."

"He was holding me the whole time. I think the official was trying to get the flag out and he finally got it. (Sharpe) was into my face mask and my shoulder pads. I still tried to make the catch."

ESPN replays determined Porter's flag flew into the screen 3-1/2 seconds after the play ended. In the meantime, Fiesta Bowl organizers had sent up fireworks to celebrate Miami's supposed win. Miami players stormed the field as well.

Porter said he was deliberate with the call because he wanted to get it right.

"I saw the guy (Sharpe) holding the guy (Gamble) prior to the ball being put in the air," Porter said. "He was still holding him, pulling him down while the ball was in the air. I gave the signal for holding. Then I realized it should be pass interference because the ball was in the air."

"I replayed it in my mind. I wanted to make double sure it was the right call."

Krenzel had an obstructed view of the play, but joined Gamble in looking for a flag.

"As I threw that, I got hit," Krenzel said. "I saw a lot of contact. While I was laying on the ground, I saw it fell incomplete. Their team rushed the field and I was feeling dejected about how much effort we had put into it."

"I didn't see the flag until after I got up. I thought it was the right call and fortunately we took advantage of it."

Hartsock had a view of the play as well.

"When you've got an athlete like Chris Gamble, it's hard to stop somebody like that and they ended up interfering," he said. "It just shows that you shouldn't put yourself in a position for a judgment call to determine the outcome of the game."

Tressel also was adamant that his receiver had been fouled.



JEFF BREHM

CONTROVERSIAL PLAY — On what may have been the most important turn of events in the game, OSU's Chris Gamble (7) went up for a fourth-down pass, was met by Miami cornerback Glenn Sharpe and the ball fell to the turf. But then a flag was thrown.

"I thought there was interference but I didn't see a flag, so for a moment I thought it was a bad way to end a game," the coach said. "I thought Craig put it on the money and did think Chris got interfered with. We don't complain about things that don't go our way, but it was good to see that guy come from the back of the end zone and make what I thought was a good call."

The Miami sideline seemed to disagree with Porter's call.

"I did not have a chance to see the call," Miami coach Larry Coker said. "I don't know. I know the call was made."

That's what we have to deal with. We have to adjust and go on to the next play.

"Obviously on fourth-and-long, it was a huge, huge play in the game. You hate for an official to have to make that call. You would like it to be a legitimate call."

The penalty gave the Buckeyes a first down at the Miami 2. Play was delayed while officials cleared the field. Plus, Miami safety Sean Taylor had to leave the game after breaking his helmet during the abbreviated celebration.

"Officials make the calls," Taylor said. "That wasn't a turning point. We should have never been in that position."

Once play resumed, five Miami defenders teamed to shove OSU's Maurice Clarett out of bounds at the 1 on first down. Clarett got no gain on second down before Krenzel churned in from the 1 on third down to tie the game at 24 and force the second overtime, when OSU ultimately won.

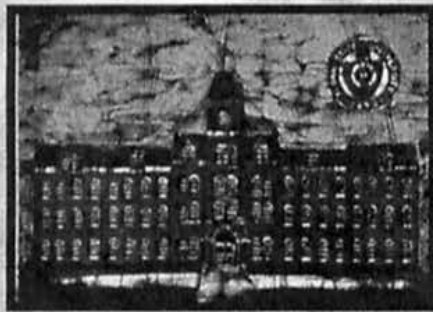
"That's how you win championships, to keep playing and to make plays," Tressel said. "Our guys keep playing and we were fortunate to make plays. Miami has nothing to hang its head about because that's a great football team."

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OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

Perfect End To Perfect Season

Buckeyes Faze 'Canes, Capture National Title

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

If ever there was such a thing as an "Instant Classic," this was it.

Ohio State's stunning 31-24 double-overtime victory over top-ranked Miami in the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl — regarded by the Bowl Championship Series as the national championship game — left college football historians wondering if there had ever been a game that meant so much that was so good.

"That's what the national championship game should look like," OSU coach Jim Tressel remarked after his second-ranked Buckeyes pulled off the upset before 77,502 at Sun Devil Stadium Jan. 3 in Tempe, Ariz.

Ohio State (14-0) claimed its first consensus national championship since 1968 and its fifth overall. It denied Miami (12-1) a second consecutive national title and its sixth crown in 20 years.

The victory also snapped Miami's 34-game winning streak, dating to early in the 2000 season. The streak stood as the sixth longest in Division I-A history.

"I want to congratulate Coach Tressel and his staff for an excellent effort," said Miami coach Larry Coker, a former OSU assistant who suffered his first defeat in 25 games as a head coach. "They're a great football team and well-coached. I'm really proud of our football team, the way we fought back and gave our team a chance to win. But it just wasn't meant to be tonight."

For the seventh time this season, the resilient Buckeyes needed late-game heroics to pull out the win. This time, Miami rallied from a 17-7 deficit to tie the game at 17 on Todd Sievers' 40-yard field goal on the final play of regulation.

After the Hurricanes grabbed a 24-17 lead in the first overtime, OSU was twice down to its final play before getting fourth-down conversions. One of those was on a controversial pass interference penalty.

OSU quarterback Craig Krenzel tied the game at 24 with a 1-yard touchdown run.

Then the Buckeyes moved ahead for good in the second extra period on a 5-yard touchdown run by Maurice Claret. The 'Canes drove all the way down to the OSU 1-yard line but lost the ball on downs after an incomplete pass by Heisman Trophy finalist Ken Dorsey ended the game.

"We knew our kids would play all day long and never stop," Tressel said after the three-hour, 56-minute affair had reached its thrilling conclusion.

Krenzel was named the game's Offensive MVP award winner. He completed just 7 of 21 passes for 122 yards and two interceptions.

But he dinged Miami for a game- and career-high 81 yards rushing and two touchdowns on 19 carries.

"Our guys gave an outstanding effort on every play," Krenzel said. "Sometimes when things aren't working you go on to others. Tonight, we made those plays when we had to."



GO-AHEAD SCORE — Ohio State freshman running back Maurice Claret (13) plows in for a 5-yard touchdown to give the Buckeyes a 30-24 lead in the second overtime. It was Claret's second score of the evening.

Claret finished with 47 yards and two touchdowns on 23 carries for the Buckeyes.

"That was a good game, the most intense game I've been a part of," he said.

Claret was responsible for one of Miami's five turnovers after stripping Miami defensive back Sean Taylor, who had intercepted a Krenzel pass. The play set up a third-quarter OSU field goal.

The OSU defense came up big with four more turnovers. Dorsey was 28 of 43 passing for 296 yards with two touchdowns and two interceptions. He also lost a fumble, which led to an OSU touchdown and a 14-7 halftime lead.

"Ohio State is a great team," Dorsey said. "They deserve a lot of credit. We made a few mistakes and that's what cost us the game. If we hadn't turned the ball over, we would have been in great shape."

Dorsey and fellow Miami Heisman finalist Willis McGahee, a 1,686-yard rusher during the regular season, each paid a heavy price against the Buckeyes.

Dorsey, 38-1 as Miami's starting quarterback prior to this loss, left the game briefly after a hit in overtime. He accepted the Fiesta Bowl's Sportsmanship Award before heading to a nearby hospital for treatment for dehydration and a possible concussion.

But that was tame in comparison to McGahee's fate. The third-year sophomore was likely headed into the 2003 NFL draft as a first-round pick. But that all changed when he suffered torn knee ligaments on a fourth-quarter tackle by

OSU's Will Allen with 11:39 left.

McGahee finished with 67 yards rushing and a touchdown on 20 carries. His replacement, Jarrett Payton, managed just 17 yards on eight carries over the remainder of the game.

"(The Ohio State defense) didn't surprise us that much, but they're very good at what they did," said Coker, whose team was held to 369 yards total offense after averaging 475.4 in the regular season.

"It sort of caused us some problems. Losing McGahee hurt us. We didn't have enough offense to finish it off."

As It Happened

Miami gained an early field-position advantage by downing a punt at the OSU 1-yard line midway through the first quarter.

The 'Canes got the ball back after an OSU punt on their own 48-yard line and needed just five plays to open the scoring.

Dorsey exploited OSU's zone with a 28-yard pass to tight end Kellen Winslow Jr., who ended up with 11 catches for 122 yards.

Three plays later, Roscoe Parrish lined up as the middle receiver in a trips right formation. He ran a slant route in front of OSU's Mike Doss and hauled in a 25-yard touchdown pass from Dorsey, carrying Doss with him for the last 5 yards. The play helped Miami grab a 7-0 lead with 4:09 left in the first quarter.

Things looked bleak for OSU moments later as Krenzel tried to throw a deep pass to Chris Vance. Miami's

Taylor tipped the pass to himself and intercepted it.

The OSU defense quelled the threat and, one Miami possession later, struck for an interception of its own as corner Dustin Fox hauled in a Dorsey overthrow.

"Dorsey is a great player," Fox said. "But sometimes when you can get pressure on him, he'll just chuck it up there. When he does that, you have to make plays on the ball."

OSU used Krenzel runs of 9 and 11 yards to move down to the Miami 17-yard line. On fourth-and-1, the Buckeyes lined up to try a 35-yard field goal. Holder Andy Groom tried to run for the first down on a fake but was stopped short, and OSU lost possession with 7:58 left in the first half.

Once again, the OSU defense came up big. Dorsey threw to go-to man Andre Johnson in the left flat but saw the pass go through his hands and right to Doss, who returned it 35 yards to the Miami 17 with 5:36 left in the half.

"Dustin Fox was fortunate to get one and then I got a blessing with a tipped pass," Doss said. "Our defensive line played well and got some pressure on Dorsey and he put the ball up where we could get it."

OSU needed seven plays to find the end zone. Krenzel converted a first down with an 8-yard pass to Chris Vance down to the Miami 4.

Once again, Tressel rolled the dice and went for the touchdown on fourth-and-goal inside the 1. Krenzel went behind right guard Bryce Bishop and, on a second effort, got the touchdown to tie the game at 7 with 2:28 left in the half.

After Mike Nugent backed the 'Canes up to their own 20 with a touchdown on the kickoff, the 'Canes coughed up the ball again. On first down, Dorsey dropped to pass. OSU's Kenny Peterson brought pressure and punched the ball out to teammate Darrien Scott, who recovered it at the Miami 14 with 2:15 left.

"We knew coming into the game we had to get pressure on Dorsey," Peterson said. "I was fortunate to come through. I give all the credit to my guys in the backfield for giving me time to get back there."

OSU's Lydell Ross got 2 yards on first down before a Miami offside penalty moved the ball down to the 7. On second down, Claret took the ball up the middle, juiced a defender and took Miami linebacker D.J. Williams into the end zone with him on a 7-yard TD run that put the Buckeyes up 14-7 with 1:10 left in the half.

Miami tried to mount a last-second drive to end the half but got only as far as its own 32-yard line. The OSU-partisan crowd sent its team into the locker room

OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

at the intermission with a standing ovation.

The OSU defense stopped Miami on its first possession of the third quarter before the offense moved into scoring position at the Miami 6 after Krenzel found Chris Gamble for a 57-yard bomb down the left sideline.

But on first down, Krenzel tried to force a pass into tight end Ben Hartsock. Miami's Taylor intercepted and started the other way only to have Claret track him down and take the ball away at the Miami 28.

"(Running backs coach Tim) Spencer always talks about trying to strip the ball away when that happens," Claret said. "Coach Spence came through with that tonight."

"I saw him running with the ball and I didn't want him to score a touchdown. I did my best to try and catch him."

That play set up Nugent's 44-yard field goal, which pushed the OSU lead to 17-7 with 8:33 left in the third quarter.

Late in the third quarter, Miami put together a seven-play, 55-yard scoring march. Dorsey found Winslow for gains of 23, 5 and 7 yards on the possession, setting up McGahee's 9-yard TD run, which cut the OSU lead to 17-14 with 2:11 left in the third quarter.

The Buckeyes clung to the lead, withstanding a missed 54-yard field goal by Sievers with 11:26 left in the game.

Nugent then misfired on a 42-yard field goal of his own with 6:36 left.

The 'Canes threatened as Dorsey found Parrish for a 29-yard gain down to the OSU 23. But OSU's Fox succeeded in knocking the ball away after the catch and Allen recovered it at the OSU 18 with 5:08 left.

"I was just trying to tackle him and the ball was there," Fox said. "I just got it out. It was like a perfect tackle, and Will was there to pick it up."

OSU managed one first down but was forced to punt. Parrish atoned for his fumble by returning the punt 50 yards down the right sideline to the OSU 26 with 2:02 left.

Once again, the OSU defense stiffened with defensive end Simon Fraser sacking Dorsey for a 4-yard loss at the OSU 30. After Dorsey threw underneath to Payton for a 7-yard gain down to the 23, the 'Canes allowed the clock to dwindle down to 3 seconds before calling timeout.

OSU then called two timeouts of its own — icing Sievers for a total of nearly five minutes — before he kicked the game-tying 40-yard field goal just inside the right upright to send the game to overtime.

The First Overtime

OSU won the toss and chose defense, while Miami elected to use the "open" south end of the stadium.

"I wouldn't say we were really chipper, but we had a sense that we had been there before and we could handle the situation," OSU tight end Ben Hartsock said of his team's mind-set headed into the extra period.

Miami needed just five plays to find the end zone. Dorsey capped the drive with a 7-yard TD pass to Winslow, who shrugged off interference by OSU's Allen to put his team up 24-17.

OSU was behind the eight ball quickly as Krenzel was sacked at the Miami 29. But his pass to Michael Jenkins on fourth-and-14 netted 17 yards and a first down at the Miami 12.

"They were playing us with a Cover-2 zone, and we called a comeback route,"



UNCHARTED WATERS — It's fair to say that Miami quarterback Ken Dorsey (11) had never seen a defense like Ohio State's this season. He was pressured for most of the night by the Buckeyes, including linebacker Cie Grant (6) who forced a wild incompletion here on the game's final play.

Krenzel said. "The offensive line did a great job of protecting me. That gave Mike a chance to get into the route. I threw it on time and he caught it."

Jenkins added, "It was fourth-and-14 and we had to have it. But that hurt. I messed up my foot a bit when I came down, but that was cool."

Krenzel sandwiched a 7-yard run around two incomplete passes, leaving the Buckeyes with fourth-and-3 at the Miami 5.

Krenzel threw to Gamble in the right corner of the end zone, but Miami's Glenn Sharpe broke up the pass. The game appeared to be over as fireworks exploded overhead and Miami players stormed the field.

But field judge Terry Porter, standing in the back corner of the end zone, seemingly overruled himself and tossed a late pass interference flag on Sharpe.

Given new life, the Buckeyes capitalized. Krenzel tied the game at 24 with his 1-yard TD plunge behind left guard Adrien Clarke.

The Second Overtime

OSU had the ball first and needed just five plays to score. Krenzel converted a third down with a 5-yard gain on a keeper. He then found Jenkins for a 6-yard gain, setting up Claret's 5-yard TD burst up the middle to give the Buckeyes a 31-24 lead.

"Number 36, the safety (Maurice Sikes), tried to sideswipe me," Claret said. "I just dove to the end zone and got in."

Miami seemed poised to force a third overtime, despite losing Dorsey for a

play due to an injury. Backup Derrick Crudup completed an 8-yard pass to Quadtrine Hill before Dorsey converted a fourth down with a 7-yard pass to Winslow.

OSU face mask and pass interference penalties helped move the 'Canes down to the OSU 2. Payton got 1 yard on first down before Dorsey's second-down pass to Eric Winston was wide and incomplete.

A quick give to fullback Hill was snuffed by OSU's Matt Wilhelm for no gain on third down.

Finally, Dorsey dropped and tried to throw on fourth down. But OSU linebacker Cie Grant came unblocked off the right edge — his first blitz of the game — to pressure Dorsey into throwing wildly. Dorsey's pass glanced off OSU safety Donnie Nickey with no receiver even close.

The game was over and Ohio State had finally — at long last — realized its championship dream.

Game Notes

- Ohio State snapped a two-game bowl losing streak and improved its all-time bowl record to 15-19.

- That mark includes a 2-1 record in the Fiesta Bowl. The Buckeyes lost the 1980 Fiesta Bowl to Penn State but won the 1983 game over Pittsburgh.

- OSU also is 2-0 in BCS bowl games. The Buckeyes won the 1999 Sugar Bowl over Texas A&M.

- Miami's bowl record dropped to 16-13 all-time, including 0-4 in the Fiesta Bowl. OSU snapped Miami's five-game bowl winning streak.

- Ohio State improved to 4-7 all-time against the top-ranked team in the Associated Press poll.

- Other OSU wins over No. 1-ranked teams include a 1952 triumph over Wisconsin, a 1968 victory over Purdue and a 1985 win over Iowa.

- Since the inception of the AP poll in 1936, the nation's top two teams have now met 34 times. OSU became the 12th No. 2 team to upset the No. 1 team.

- No. 2-ranked teams now have a record of 12-20-2 in such games.

- Top-ranked OSU defeated No. 2 USC 27-16 in the 1969 Rose Bowl in the only other 1-vs.-2 game involving the Buckeyes. Miami fell to 3-3 in such games, including 0-3 as the No. 1 team.

- OSU improved to 2-1 all-time against Miami. OSU defeated Miami 10-0 in 1977 in Columbus, while the 'Canes evened the series with a 23-12 win in the 1999 Kickoff Classic.

- Miami trailed at halftime for just the third time all year. Florida State and Rutgers each led the 'Canes at intermission during the regular season.

- Miami's seven first-half points were the fewest of the season and the least it has scored since it trailed Washington 21-3 at halftime of a 34-29 loss in 2000, the last time the Hurricanes had tasted defeat.

- This was OSU's second all-time overtime game. The Buckeyes defeated Illinois 23-16 in a single-overtime game earlier this year.

- No current Miami player has ever played an OT game. The 'Canes last went to overtime in 1998, when Virginia Tech prevailed 27-20.

OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)



JEFF BREHM

LOW DOSE OF THE DEUCE — Though he had a touchdown and 67 net yards rushing, Miami sophomore running back Willis McGahee (2) didn't have the type of game that made him a Heisman Trophy finalist. In fact, he had to be carted off the field in the fourth quarter with a knee injury.

Dantonio, Staff And Defense Rise To Occasion

After an emotional, clutch and historic victory in the Fiesta Bowl, the Ohio State football team had much reason to rejoice.

That especially applied to the Buckeye defense, which stood up to the ultimate challenge, the vaunted Miami scoring machine, and played with the same searing intensity for four quarters and two overtimes.

When the defense found itself with a chance to finally put a wrap on the 31-24 upset, it didn't flinch. But what else could be expected from a group that had to hold on in the final moments in tight wins over Cincinnati, Wisconsin, Penn

INSIDE THE GAME

with

**Jeff Rapp and
Mike Wachsman**

State, Purdue, Illinois and Michigan?

"Our guys play with great character, great character," said OSU defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio, a finalist for

the Frank Broyles Award that honors the top assistant coach in the country. "I cannot say enough about how we've handled adversity in some situations and keep playing and playing hard. If you play hard and you play with toughness and effort and you believe in each other, you've got a chance."

That message obviously was sold on Dantonio's troops before the ball was even kicked. The task at hand was monumental — Miami boasted two Heisman trophy finalists in quarterback Ken Dorsey and tailback Willis McGahee, a qualified star at wideout in Andre Johnson, a match-up nightmare in tight end Kellen Winslow Jr., and one of the best offensive lines in the nation — but so was the effort by the Buckeyes.

Dantonio, who somehow maintained his trademark calm during and after the game, said the performance stemmed from focusing on very high, yet attainable, goals for the defense.

"We talked going into the game," he said, "that our four keys to victory were turnovers, coming up plus-two, which we did do that; affecting the quarterback, and we felt we had to pressure the ball to affect the quarterback because their offensive line had not given up very many sacks; eliminate the long run and

long pass, which I think we did a pretty good job of because they have a tremendous football team with very good skill players; and then stop the run, which I think we did that. We definitely shut the run down."

"It was a tremendous job by everybody."

The Hurricanes managed just three first downs via the rush, converted only 6 of 18 third downs and committed four turnovers on offense. Miami's 369 yards of total offense was more than 100 below its season average of 475.4 coming into the game.

McGahee, a fluid and jet-quick sophomore, was held to 67 yards rushing, his lowest output of the season with the exception of a nothing-to-prove six-carry outing vs. Division I-AA Florida A&M in the season opener. He was knocked out of the game with a major knee injury in the fourth quarter and left averaging just 3.3 yards per carry.

Backs Jarrett Payton and Quadtrine Hill had even less success thereafter, combining for 17 yards in nine carries.

"That didn't really change anything for us," Dantonio said. "They still ran the ball. Payton had a nice run to get them

Continued On Page 24



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Game Will Go Down As D's Masterwork

Continued From Page 22

down there (in the first overtime)."

Dorsey, meanwhile, succumbed to pressure at times and threw a pair of interceptions. His receivers either found themselves cut off from their routes or smacked as soon as they made the catch.

"Miami hasn't seen that," nickel back Will Allen said. "Most times when Miami catches the ball, based on the film, they're running upfield for 6- or 7-yard gains."

"They weren't doing that tonight. They got the ball and we had somebody right there tackling them to the ground every single time."

Applying Pressure

Even with the Buckeyes being able to match up better than many expected on the outside, Dantonio wasn't about to let Dorsey drop back and have his pick of receivers as he had in so many games this season.

The OSU coordinator decided instead to conduct a symphony of defensive pressure with every member of the front seven wielding their own important instrument.

It was yet another masterpiece by Dantonio as the unpredictable changes

in attack were just enough to keep normally dominant Miami off-balance.

"We felt like we needed to pressure the quarterback," Dantonio said. "He's too good to stand back there and just let him throw it. He's got Winslow and he's got Johnson and those other guys are good, too. It's a tough situation."

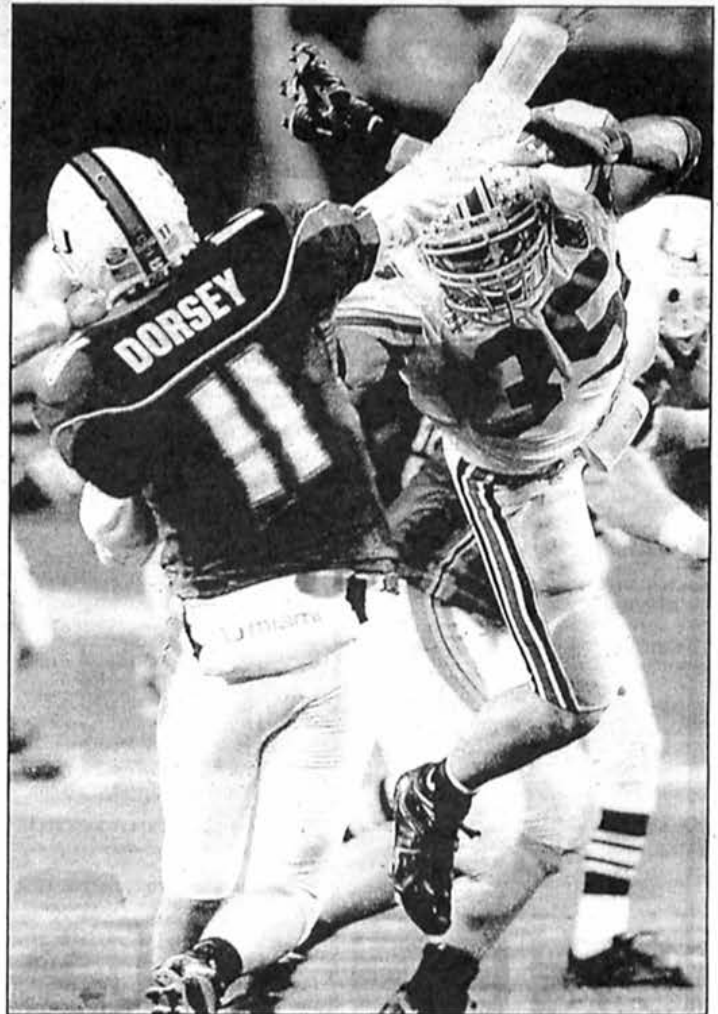
OSU's use of linebacker blitzes proved timely, including two very key plays in the second overtime — a crushing tackle by middle man Matt Wilhelm that temporarily knocked Dorsey out of the game and a storming of the Miami QB by OLB Cie Grant that forced an incompletion on the very last play of the game.

"We played man free on the last one — Tight Will Tulsa Red Nine — and we told our middle field safety to double the tight end," Dantonio explained.

"That's the first time we called that defense all day where (Grant) came off the open side. When he came free and nobody touched him I thought, 'It's over. That's it.' That's exactly what I thought."

"I knew that he wouldn't miss, I knew that the guy was going to be hurried and it was just going to be a matter of whether he made a great play, which he's capable of doing."

The Buckeye defense turned the momentum of the game in the second quarter by forcing Dorsey to throw off his



JEFF BREHM

GOING OUT IN STYLE — All-American Matt Wilhelm, playing his final game at linebacker for Ohio State, recorded a team-high 10 tackles and three tackles for loss in the Buckeyes' national championship-clinching victory over Miami.

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OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

back foot on several pass plays and picking him off twice with thefts by Dustin Fox and Mike Doss. Dorsey was jittery on both of those plays as OSU hemmed him in with its defensive line.

"We felt like our front four was pretty good and we would get some pressure, that if we could make the quarterback look twice, hold the ball another second or so, we were going to get pressure," Dantonio said. "They started throwing some three-step passes early in the second half."

"I felt in the first half we were getting to him. The second they did a better job of throwing the ball quick."

However, the defense made its statement immediately with regard to Dorsey. Defensive end Will Smith, in fact, planted him for a sack on the first snap of the game by the Hurricanes. Later in the series, Kenny Peterson dropped him. Peterson added a second sack late in the half and Simon Fraser made it four against a Miami team that came in allowing 11 sacks all season.

"We just stepped up today," said defensive tackle David Thompson, who also played a key role with several QB pressures. "We played big. It's our last game, me and Kenny Peterson, the seniors on the D-line. We had to play our best and we played our heart out. The younger guys — Darrion (Scott), Tim Anderson, Will Smith, Simon Fraser — all of them came up big for us."

Fraser was most happy for teammates Peterson and Thompson, two of the team's 13 seniors who went out on top.

"Kenny Peterson and Dave Thompson have faced a lot of adversity throughout their whole careers and for them to come out and have career-best senior years and go out champions at 14-0 ... these are what books are written about, these type of kids," Fraser said. "Their leadership skills and the type of people they are totally represents what this program is all about and is going to become."

Secondary Comes To The Fore

Also impressive in keeping Miami at bay was the play of the OSU secondary. Not only did Fox pick off a pass from his cornerback position and Doss do likewise at strong safety, the other DBs — Chris Gamble, Donnie Nickey and Allen — also were instrumental in the effort.

Dorsey was 28 of 43 for 296 yards but completed only 11 for 10 or more yards, six of those coming before halftime.

"We did a good job of stopping the big pass all year and, as you can see, the great wide receivers of Miami didn't go deep on us," Allen said. "They couldn't do it. They just dinked it and got Winslow in the game and we just broke to the ball. I don't think Miami's seen a defense as quick and as fast as we were. We were able to compete with their speed."

"I don't think the nation has seen our speed like that, and I think they're going to be talking about that for the year to come."

Added Fox, who was tested deep repeatedly and came up big, "They didn't have any big plays, and that was crucial for us. For the most part all game we were in our position and making plays. We played solid. When you don't hear a player's name from the secondary called that much, that's not a bad thing."

However, Miami nearly found an answer to the OSU game plan in Winslow, who looks like a young version of his Hall of Fame father. Winslow gave Miami a 24-17 lead in the first overtime with a 7-yard touchdown grab despite

interference by Allen.

"I commend him," Allen said of Winslow, who finished with 11 catches for 122 yards. "He's a great player. He looked like he wanted it more than anyone on the team."

"On that play I had my back turned and at the last second he just kind of pushed off to get separation. It was a great throw, a great pitch and catch. That's what he's there for. He's 6-5 and it's like a wide receiver playing tight end."

"I was disappointed, but I knew our offense would come back and score."

Offense Proves Efficient

Efficient beats flashy, and Ohio State was definitely the former in its stunning national championship victory.

Despite the fact they were outgained by over 100 yards, the Buckeyes were able to score when it counted and, most importantly, hang on to the football.

Miami's explosive offense imploded by coughing up the ball four times — OSU's Maurice Clarett forced a fumble after a Miami interception for a fifth turnover — while the Buckeyes were content to play the field position game.

"We didn't run as well as maybe we wanted to, but we came up with plays when we had to," OSU offensive coordinator Jim Bollman said. "There was some inconsistency, but the biggest thing for us is that we didn't put the ball on the ground. We chose to punt or throw it away when we got into trouble."

The Buckeyes averaged just 3.7 yards per play but got tough in the red zone, scoring four times from inside the 10.

Craig Krenzel wasn't so much a quarterback as he was a field general, deploying his troops perfectly and giving them the confidence and will to win with timely passing and outstanding running. Krenzel led everyone with 81 yards rushing.

"He did what we needed to get done," OSU coach Jim Tressel said. "He led the team."

Clarett, the center of a firestorm in the days leading up to the game after making comments that Ohio State didn't have his best interests in mind by denying him a chance to return home for a friend's funeral, had a subpar game with just 47 yards on 23 carries.

But he found the end zone twice, including the game winner from 5 yards out in the second overtime that included a nice juke past Miami safety Maurice Sikes and a stumble into the end zone.

"We were just beating ourselves, we were missing blocks," said Clarett. "They were in a different scheme than we had prepared for. We did a good job of adjust-

ing. I was trying to make too many things happen."

Jenkins Da Man — Again

Michael Jenkins had been the hero of many Ohio State victories this season, and though he didn't find the end zone

Continued On Page 26

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OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

Jenkins' Grabs Were Certainly Timely

Continued From Page 25

against the Hurricanes, his contributions were still huge.

The junior finished the evening with four catches for 45 yards, including a dramatic 17-yard sideline grab as OSU faced a fourth-and-14 in overtime.

Three of Jenkins' grabs went for first downs, which is all in a day's work.

"I just went out and tried to make some plays," Jenkins said. "I told Craig I could beat my man (on the fourth-down play), and he did a great job getting me the ball. It really kept things going for us."

Bollman said the decision to go to Jenkins was a no-brainer after everything he has done.

"We know what kind of player Michael is and that's why we wanted to get him the ball," Bollman said. "We had run that same play on first down (on the same series), but Craig got flushed out and had to run."

I Dare You To Step Across This Line

Much of the pregame discussion centered on how Ohio State's line would hold up against Miami's athletic, attacking defense, a unit that had collected 46 sacks.

The Buckeyes had allowed 33, the second highest figure in the Big Ten, and looked overmatched against a Hurricanes defense that had quickness to spare.

Those lambs turned into lions, limiting Miami to just one sack and keeping holes open just long enough for Krenzel to dart through.

"We knew they were aggressive, so if we just let them go to the outside we knew that would open things up for us up the middle," center Alex Stepanovich said. "If they don't get by you with their speed you can get leverage on them and take them out of the play. They also play man coverage, so that leaves the middle open a lot of the time."

OSU may have been dominated in the yardage department (369 to 267), but Tressel will gladly take that if his team wins the time of possession battle the way it did.

The Buckeyes held the ball for 46:27 to Miami's 28:33.

Miami's Matt Walters felt his defensive linemen would be able to dictate tempo against what was thought to be a plodding Ohio State front line.

"They played a tough game," he said. "My hat is off to Ohio State. They did what they needed to when they needed to and won the football game."



JEFF BROWN

HUGE, HUGE PLAY — Facing fourth-and-14 in the first overtime, quarterback Craig Krenzel hit wide receiver Michael Jenkins (12) for a 17-yard gain and a first down. OSU went on to score and keep the game alive.

Also Notable

- Wilhelm led OSU with 10 total tackles followed by nine from Doss. Those two played like the senior All-Americans that they are, but they certainly didn't do it alone.

Nine other players logged at least four tackles, including Smith with eight, and Fox and Grant with seven.

- Doss' second-quarter interception was the eighth of his career and second of the season. He was named the Defensive MVP award winner in the game.

Meanwhile, Fox's interception was his third of the year and fourth of his career.

- Miami's Johnson came into the game with more than 1,000 yards receiving and a gaudy average of 21.6 yards per catch. He finished with four grabs for 54 yards.

- Miami lost only 9 fumbles in the regular season but lost all three against Ohio State, albeit one was by defensive back Sean Taylor, who was stripped by Claret after an interception.

Peterson caused one fumble by Dorsey that was recovered by Scott late in the first half and set up a go-ahead touchdown. Fox poked out another after a com-

pletion to Roscoe Parrish, and Allen jumped on the loose pig.

- The five turnovers forced gave OSU 30 for the season. The Buckeyes got 17 points off turnovers in this game, giving them 80 points off turnovers this year.

- Kicker Mike Nugent's 44-yard field goal in the third quarter was his OSU-record 25th this year. It also was his 10th 40-yard kick this year, also an OSU mark.

Nugent later missed on a 42-yarder in the fourth quarter to end his sophomore year with 25 makes on 28 attempts.

- OSU flanker/cornerback Chris Gamble enjoyed a big game. His 57-yard catch from Krenzel went down as the team's longest play of the season, beating a 50-yard Krenzel-to-Jenkins pass against Illinois.

Gamble participated in 120 of the game's 178 plays — all 77 on defense, 32 on offense and 11 on special teams.

- The 'Canes bothered to take a stab at just eight fourth downs all regular season, converting five. Against OSU, Miami was 1 of 2, the unsuccessful attempt bringing an end to the college football season.

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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 31, Miami 24

OSU flanker/cornerback Chris Gamble on mistakenly running on the field as the 12th offensive man to start the game: "I thought they had called the personnel group where I'm the third receiver. But they weren't screaming, 'Gray,' like I thought they were. It was just the first play. We were able to get it adjusted."

Miami coach Larry Coker on the feeling after suffering his first defeat as a head coach in his 25th game: "This is about what I expected. It's very painful. You play a lot of these plays for a long time. That's the way it should be."

OSU defensive end Kenny Peterson on the helpless feeling he felt as the Buckeyes faced must-have fourth downs in the first overtime: "I just got down on my knees and left it in God's hands. All we could do was leave it up to him. I thank God we were able to come through with the big plays."

Miami quarterback Ken Dorsey on committing three of his team's turnovers: "I should have made some more throws. I take responsibility on that. That's on me."

OSU's 325-pound offensive guard Adrien Clarke, sometimes maligned for his weight problems, answered his critics: "Make sure you put it in the paper — Clarke is getting slimmer; Clarke did a good job tonight."

OSU's Peterson on seeing tailback Maurice Clarett track down Miami's Sean Taylor and force a fumble after Taylor had intercepted an OSU pass: "That explains what kind of player he is. He never gives up. He's always going 100 mph. If he wants the football, he's going to get it."

Clarett on possibly taking a turn on defense, a la Gamble: "Hopefully, they'll let me play some at linebacker. (Linebackers coach Mark) Snyder talked about letting me come off the edge and blitzing. I'm more of an athlete than to play on just one side of the ball."

OSU safety and co-captain Donnie Nicky on how he planned to celebrate the national title: "I'm going to go and find my family as soon as I can and just get lost in the moment for a while."

Miami's Dorsey on the overtime rules in college football: "It's fair. We got our shot there at the end. We had our opportunity to win the game and we didn't do it."

OSU offensive tackle Shane Olivea on the outpouring of support the Buckeyes felt in Tempe: "That's why we came to school here. We have the best fans in the country and today they showed us why."

Dorsey on tight end Kellen Winslow Jr., who finished with 11 catches for 122 yards and a touchdown: "Kellen is a great player. He is something special. He has a chance to be a great player here for a long time. Anytime I can get him the ball, I do it. He has the ability to win the game for us."

Miami's Winslow on matching up with the Buckeyes: "They had some good athletes, but they couldn't match up with our talent. But talent only takes you so far. That's what we found out tonight."

OSU safety and co-captain Mike Doss on his team's perceived lack of speed: "We feel we have enough speed to line up in a track meet with anybody. But this is football. On the field, there is game speed and football speed. We feel we can play with anybody in the country when it comes to that."

OSU's Clarett on the same topic: "I didn't think they were that fast. I thought that was blown out of proportion. They were fast, but I think we were able to run with them."

Miami linebacker D.J. Williams on OSU's ability to move the ball: "We knew they were going to try and run the ball, but we thought our speed would shut that down. We didn't count on the little intangibles that sometimes happen in a game."

Dorsey on if he'll ever appreciate how great this game was: "Not now and probably not ever."

OSU tight end Ben Hartsock on having one more of his team's games go down to the wire: "This was a storybook ending. I think we may need to ask for some type of royalty or something from ESPN Classic after this one."



DOSS GETS THINGS ROLLING — With his second-quarter interception and subsequent 35-yard return to the Miami 17-yard line, OSU safety Michael Doss put the Buckeyes into position for their first touchdown of the game.

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Throughout the football season, BSB has published excerpts of head coach Jim Tressel's postgame press conferences. Here is what Tressel had to say following his team's national championship game victory over Miami (Fla.) in the Fiesta Bowl.

Jim Tressel: "We are so proud of those 13 seniors and of those coaches. The leadership that both of these groups gave, credit them. Throw in the fact that the younger players believed, throw in the fact that our crowd was electric and energized us."

"Miami is a great football team and that's what the national championship game should look like — double overtime."

Q. When you were hired at Ohio State, you told a story of how, after your first Division I-AA national champi-



A PAIR OF GENERALS — Ohio State coach Jim Tressel takes in the action with quarterback Craig Krenzel (right). Tressel was ever-calm for most of the game but also displayed large amounts of emotion on the Buckeyes' scoring plays.

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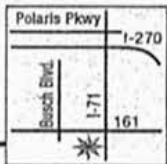
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onship win at Youngstown State, a reporter immediately asked about your chances of repeating. So, keeping with that tradition, what do you think about winning another I-A championship next year?

JT: "You guys were a little slow asking me that because they asked me before we came off the field. They hustled a little more."

"These guys are going to enjoy this, celebrate with class and they'll be very proud of their accomplishments. Those younger guys go back to school on Monday and I don't think we'll throw them into the weight room right away, but a lot of this is about what comes next. We'll go to work pretty soon."

Q. Talk about the two fourth-down plays in the first overtime and how big they were at the time you called them.

JT: "If we don't make them, we're not sitting here. They were pretty key. Craig Krenzel stepped up, Michael Jenkins ran a great route, we had him on a comeback route and he got the first. On the next one, Chris Gamble got interfered with. Craig called that play. The ball was there and there was interference, and then

OSU VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

Maurice Clarett scored the last one.

"That's how you win championships, to keep playing and to make plays. Our guys keep playing and we were fortunate to make plays. Miami has nothing to hang its head about because that's a great football team."

Q: Talk about the play of Krenzel. He really outplayed a Heisman Trophy finalist (Miami's Ken Dorsey) tonight.

JT: "I don't know about that. All I know is that Craig Krenzel does for us what we need done. He made plays when we needed and he's tough. The number one characteristic a quarterback has to have, especially a quarterback at Ohio State, is they'd better be tough. Craig Krenzel is tough and he played a tough game tonight. I think their guy, No. 11, played a tough game, too."

Q: Being 14-0 is unprecedented, but you mentioned before the season that a long season was kind of what you liked. Do you still feel that?

JT: "We felt we needed a long season because we were young in a lot of areas. We knew our two-deep would be filled with young players. A long season was going to be to our benefit if we stayed

Continued On Page 30

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OSU VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

Look Out, Here Come Cornrows

Continued From Page 29

healthy and had the time to get better."

Q. How much of a difference did the crowd make here tonight?

JT: "We felt we were in a home game. It really felt like a home game. The crowd was loud when we needed it loud and not quite as loud when we needed it softer. We came out a little bit hyped up. We had a couple of penalties, but once we got our feet on the ground and felt the electricity of that crowd, our guys played like crazy."

Q. Are we going to see the cornrows now?

JT: "Yep. I've got to grow my hair a little longer they say. I'll grow it out and then put in some cornrows, some gray cornrows."

Q. Did you let some emotion go in the locker room?

JT: "The game was over so late that I didn't have time to get ready to emote. We wanted to find all the people who were special in our lives and let them know that we appreciate them. We reminded each other how much we love one another."

Q. A lot of people said Ohio State didn't have a chance in this game. What did you do to keep that from affecting the players?

JT: "We knew we could do the things we needed to do and we would compete. It was a pretty even match-up, two great heavyweights slugging it out, and our guys had every confidence in our ability to get it done."

Q. When did you start to know you matched up well with Miami?

JT: "The more you get to know a team, you feel as if you can put things together to match up with them. I thought we had a good plan offensively and special teams-wise. We wanted to punt out of bounds and we did it pretty well except for that one that almost cost us the football game."

"We had a good plan and our guys were focused on studying film, but you still have to come out and do it on game night."

Q. Did you think the game was over before the flag came out on the interference?

JT: "I thought there was interference but I didn't see a flag, so for a moment I thought it was a bad way to end a game. I thought Craig put it on the money and did think Chris got interfered with. We don't complain about things that don't go our way, but it was good to see that guy come from the back of the end zone and make what I thought was a good call."

Q. Did you have a timetable for getting to this point?

JT: "We had hoped to win it in 2001 but we didn't do the things we had to do to win. We set out to learn from those things, and our guys started in late January on what needed to be done. They deserve everything they get."

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 31, Miami (Fla.) 24 (20T)

Jan. 3, 2003 — Sun Devil Stadium; Tempe, Ariz.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	20T	F
OHIO STATE	0	14	3	0	7	7	31
MIAMI (FLA.)	7	0	7	3	7	0	24

First Quarter

MIAMI — Parrish, 25 yard pass from Dorsey (Sievers kick), 4:09; 5 plays, 52 yards, 2:12 TOP.

Second Quarter

OSU — Krenzel, 1 yard run (Nugent kick), 2:28; 7 plays, 17 yards, 3:08 TOP.

OSU — Claret, 7 yard run (Nugent kick), 1:10; 2 plays, 14 yards, 1:05 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU — Nugent, 44 yard field goal, 8:33; 4 plays, 1 yard, 2:00 TOP.

MIAMI — McGahee, 9 yard run (Sievers kick), 2:11; 7 plays, 55 yards, 2:54 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

MIAMI — Sievers, 40 yard field goal, 0:00; 4 plays, 3 yards, 2:02 TOP.

First Overtime

MIAMI — Winslow, 7 yard pass from Dorsey (Sievers kick); 5 plays, 25 yards.

OSU — Krenzel, 1 yard run (Nugent kick); 11 plays, 25 yards.

Second Overtime

OSU — Claret, 5 yard run (Nugent kick); 5 plays, 25 yards.

Att. — 77,502.

Weather — 70 degrees, clear; wind 9 MPH.

Team Statistics

	OSU	MIAMI
First Downs	14	19
Rushing	7	3
Passing	6	14
Penalty	1	2
Rushes-Yards	52-145	33-65
Passing Yards	122	304
Passes (Att.-Comp.-Int.)	21-7-2	44-29-2
Offensive Plays	73	77
Total Net Yards	267	369
Third Down Efficiency	6-18	6-18
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-3	1-2
Punts	6-47.7	4-43.2
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	3-3
Penalties	9-49	6-30
Time of Possession	46:27	28:33

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — **OSU:** Krenzel 19-81; Claret 23-47; Ross 9-17; Groom 1-0. **MIAMI:** McGahee 20-67; Payton 8-17; Hill 1-0; Dorsey 4-19.

PASSING (Att.-Comp.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — **OSU:** Krenzel 21-7-2-122-0. **MIAMI:** Dorsey 43-28-2-296-2; Crudup 1-1-0-8-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Jenkins 4-45; Gamble 2-69; Vance 1-8. **MIAMI:** Winslow 11-122; Parrish 5-70; Johnson 4-54; Sands 3-34; McGahee 3-5; Hill 1-8; Payton 1-7; Geathers 1-4.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) — **OSU:** Groom 6-47.7-63. **MIAMI:** Capshaw 3-43.3-44; Crudup 1-43.0-43.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Gamble 1-1; **MIAMI:** Parrish 2-56.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** M. Hall 1-15. **MIAMI:** Johnson 1-39.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES — **OSU:** Allen 1-0; Claret 1-0; Scott 1-0. **MIAMI:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Doss 1-35; Fox 1-12. **MIAMI:** Taylor 2-28.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Peterson 2-10; Fraser 1-5; Smith 1-3. **MIAMI:** Green 1-4.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) — **OSU:** Peterson 3-12; Wilhelm 3-5; Smith 2-4; Fraser 1-5; Doss 1-1; Allen 1-1; Anderson 1-1; Thompson 1-1. **MIAMI:** McIntosh 2-3; Wilfork 1-7; Green 1-4; Williams 1-2; McDougale 1-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Assist-Tot.) — **OSU:** Wilhelm 6-4-10; Doss 3-6-9; Smith 6-2-8; Fox 5-2-7; Grant 4-3-7; Peterson 4-1-5; Gamble 3-2-5; Nickey 3-2-5; Allen 3-2-5; Reynolds 3-1-4; Anderson 1-3-4; Thompson 0-3-3; Everett 1-0-1; Childress 1-0-1; Claret 1-0-1; Scott 1-0-1; Fraser 1-0-1; Groom 0-1-1; Kudla 0-1-1; Team 0-1-1. **MIAMI:** Vilma 5-9-14; Sikes 2-10-12; Taylor 2-9-11; Williams 3-5-8; McIntosh 2-6-8; Walters 4-3-7; Rolle 2-2-4; Harris 1-3-4; Joseph 2-1-3; Green 2-1-3; Haji-Rasouli 2-0-2; Sharpe 1-1-2; Williams 1-1-2; McDougale 1-1-2; McGahee 1-0-1; Wilfork 1-0-1; Marshall 1-0-1; Scott 1-0-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME — **OHIO STATE:** Defense, Smith, Anderson, Peterson, Scott, Grant, Wilhelm, Reynolds, Fox, Gamble, Nickey, Doss, Groom, Offense, Jenkins, Sims, Clarke, Stepanovich, Bishop, Olvea, Hartsock, Gamble, Krenzel, Claret, Joe, Nugent, Reserves, Childress, Moore, Vance, D'Andrea, Carter, Conwell, Salley, Allen, Hall, Ross, O'Neill, Carpenter, Schnittker, Hawk, Tucker, Underwood, Kne, Douglas, Mangold, Kudla, Andrews, Fraser, Hamby, Arden, Caldwell, Bond, Green, Thompson, Everett. **MIAMI:** Offense, Johnson, C. Joseph, Haji-Rasouli, Romberg, Myers, Carey, Winslow, Parrish, Dorsey, McGahee, Hill, Sievers. Defense, Green, Walters, W. Joseph, McDougale, D.J. Williams, Vilma, McIntosh, Marshall, Rolle, Taylor, Sikes, Capshaw, Reserves, Geathers, Sands, Crudup, Jennings, Maxey, Threat, Scott, Sharpe, Payton, Peattie, Humphrey, L. Williams, Clark, McClover, Weaver, Kunz, Harvey, Rodriguez, Wilfork, Jolia, D. Williams, Winston, Harris, A. Williams.

Season Statistics

2002 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent (AP Rank)	Result	Crowd
Aug. 24	(13) TEXAS TECH	W, 45-21	100,037
Sept. 7	(8) KENT STATE	W, 51-17	98,689
Sept. 14	(6) WASHINGTON ST. (10)	W, 25-7	104,553
Sept. 21	(6) at Cincinnati	W, 23-19	66,319
Sept. 28	(6) INDIANA	W, 45-17	104,194
Oct. 5	(5) at Northwestern	W, 27-16	43,489
Oct. 12	(5) SAN JOSE STATE	W, 50-7	104,892
Oct. 19	(4) at Wisconsin	W, 19-14	79,729
Oct. 26	(4) PENN. STATE (18)	W, 13-7	105,103
Nov. 2	(6) MINNESOTA (23)	W, 34-3	104,897
Nov. 9	(3) at Purdue	W, 106	65,250
Nov. 16	(2) at Illinois (OT)	W, 23-16	58,810
Nov. 23	(2) MICHIGAN (12)	W, 14-9	105,539
Jan. 3	(2) Miami (1) (20T)	W, 31-24	77,502

#OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	245	243
Rushing	133	72
Passing	106	155
Penalty	6	16
Average Per Game/Rush	191.3	77.7
Average Per Game/Pass	173.2	243.1
Total Offense	5,103	4,492
Total Plays	909	964
Average Per Game	364.5	320.9
Average Per Play	5.6	4.7
Penalties-Yards	76-571	66-561
Fumbles-Lost	17-10	20-12
3rd Down Efficiency	64/179	78/219
Percentage	36%	36%
4th Down Efficiency	12/18	11/27
Percentage	67%	41%
Sacks-Yards	40-227	32-167
Time of Possession Avg.	32:48	28:17

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	75	112	120	82	21	410	29.3
Opponents	59	53	31	33	7	183	13.1

Attendance	Games	Total	Avg.
Home	8	827,904	103,488
Away	6	391,099	65,183
Total	14	1,219,003	87,072

Individual Statistics

	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Rushing					
Maurice Claret	222	1,237	5.6	16	59
Lydel Ross	166	619	3.7	6	36
Maurice Hall	78	370	4.7	4	28
Craig Krenzel	125	368	2.9	3	29
Chris Gamble	3	49	16.3	1	43
Jala Riley	12	44	3.7	0	10
Donnie Nickey	1	28	28.0	0	28
Roshawn Parker	1	6	6.0	0	6
Jim Otis	1	2	2.0	0	2
Scott McMullen	4	1	0.2	1	7
Brandon Schnittker	1	1	1.0	0	1
Brandon Joe	1	1	1.0	0	1
Andy Groom	2	-16	-8.0	0	0
Team	12	-32	-2.7	0	0
OSU Totals	629	2,678	4.3	31	59
OPP Totals	418	1,088	2.6	5	46

	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Receiving					
Michael Jenkins	61	1,076	17.6	6	50
Chris Gamble	31	499	16.1	0	57
Ben Hartsock	17	137	8.1	2	20
Chris Vance	13	178	13.7	3	37
Maurice Claret	12	104	8.7	2	26
Drew Carter	10	147	14.7	0	28
Lydel Ross	10	75	7.5	0	28
Maurice Hall	5	43	8.6	0	16
Redgie Arden	4	50	12.5	0	19
Bam Childress	4	47	11.8	0	17
Ryan Hamby	2	29	14.5	1	18
Brandon Schnittker	2	27	13.5	0	15
John Hollins	1	14	14.0	0	14
Scott McMullen	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
OSU Totals	173	2,425	14.0	14	57
OPP Totals	315	3,404	10.8	14	58

	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Mike Nugent	—	45-46	—	—	—	25-28 120
Maurice Claret	18	—	—	—	—	108
Lydel Ross	6	—	—	—	—	36
Michael Jenkins	6	—	—	—	—	36
Maurice Hall	4	—	—	—	—	24
Craig Krenzel	3	—	—	—	—	18
Chris Vance	3	—	—	—	—	18

Chris Gamble	2	—	—	—	—	12
Ben Hartsock	2	—	—	—	—	12
Mike Doss	1	—	—	—	—	6
Ryan Hamby	1	—	—	—	—	6
A.J. Hawk	1	—	—	—	—	6
Scott McMullen	1	—	—	—	—	6
Team	—	—	—	—	—	2
OSU Totals	48	45-46	0-1	0-1	25-28	410
OPP Totals	19	16-17	—	1-2	17-25	183

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	INT	TD	Rating
Craig Krenzel	148	249	59.4	2,110	7	12	140.90
Scott McMullen	25	31	80.6	315	0	2	187.29
OSU Totals	173	280	61.8	2,425	7	14	146.04
OPP Totals	315	546	57.7	3,404	18	14	111.93

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Mike Nugent	6-6	9-10	9-11	1-1	25-28
OSU Totals	6-6	9-10	9-11	1-1	25-28
OPP Totals	5-7	8-8	7-8	0-2	17-25

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Andy Groom	60	2,697	45.0	1	74
Team	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	61	2,697	44.2	1	74
OPP Totals	76	2,821	37.1	4	57

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Chris Gamble	4	40	10.0	1	40
Dustin Fox	3	12	4.0	0	12
Mike Doss	2	80	40.0	1	45
A.J. Hawk	2	44	22.0	1	34
Will Allen	2	0	0.0	0	0
Matt Wilhelm	2	0	0.0	0	0
Cie Grant	1	23	23.0	0	23
Tyler Everett	1	0	0.0	0	0
Will Smith	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	18	199	11.1	3	45
OPP Totals	7	87	12.4	0	28

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Chris Gamble	35	293	8.4	0	27
Mike Doss	4	25	6.2	0	14
Donnie Nickey	1	14	14.0	0	0
Chris Vance	1	5	5.0	0	5
Dustin Fox	1	10	10.0	0	0
Michael Jenkins	1	11	11.0	0	0
OSU Totals	43	358	8.3	0	27
OPP Totals	33	423	12.8	0	52

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Maurice Hall	19	434	22.8	0	45
Chris Gamble	11	253	23.0	0	56
Brandon Joe	2	10	5.0	0	10
Mike Doss	2	37	18.5	0	24
Brandon Schnittker	1	11	11.0	0	11
Jack Tucker	1	0	0.0	0	0
Chris Vance	1	2	2.0	0	2
OSU Totals	37	747	20.2	0	56
OPP Totals	33	711	21.5	0	67

Defensive Leaders Solo	Ass.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks	
Matt Wilhelm	79	42	121	20-49	3-15
Mike Doss	65	42	107	5-7	—
Dustin Fox	67	17	84	3-4	—
Cie Grant	50	21	71	10-47	4-36
Donnie Nickey	44	23	67	1-2	—
Robert Reynolds	39	23	62	4-16	1-4
Will Smith	41	18	59	13-42	6-31
Darrian Scott	22	21	43	10-44	9-42
Kenny Peterson	26	17	43	10-40	6-31
David Thompson	23	19	42	8-28	5-24
Tim Anderson	16	20	36	3-10	3-9
Will Allen	22	10	32	3-25	1-11
A.J. Hawk	13	13	26	4-16	1-5
Chris Gamble	21	3	24	1-2	—
E.J. Underwood	17	4	21	—	—
Simon Fraser	13	7	20	7-32	5-19
OSU Totals	639	345	984	10368	40-227
OPP Totals	611	434	1045	85-285	32-167

OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

OSU Was Sure QB Draws Would Work

Continued From Page 1

win."

Krenzel capped a perfect junior season with a 14th straight victory. Including two starts at the end of the 2001 season, his lifetime mark as a starter is now 15-1.

But Miami, with its athletic defensive unit, was supposed to be the ultimate test.

In scouting the Hurricanes, though, the OSU coaching staff found Miami's seven-man defensive front was vulnerable to quarterback draws.

Pittsburgh's Rod Rutherford and Virginia Tech's Bryan Randall each rolled up nice yardage against Miami in the season's final weeks.

"We came into the game with some designed quarterback runs," Krenzel said. "We knew coming into the game we were confident in our abilities. We felt like we matched up with them well."

The Buckeyes wasted no time in unveiling the draw and it worked to the tune of 31 yards on three first-half attempts.

"I think they wanted to make sure they left two men on Michael Jenkins," Tressel said. "We felt that was something we could take advantage of by letting Craig run. He executed it well."

Offensive tackle Shane Olivea added, "We had planned to start using Craig more running the ball and he just happened to come through."

Krenzel got OSU on the scoreboard with his second effort on a fourth-down quarterback sneak from the 1-yard line. The play tied the score at 7 with 2:28 left in the first half.

In the first overtime, OSU was in a bind: After suffering his first sack of the game, Krenzel and the Buckeyes faced fourth-and-14 at the Miami 29. Miami already had scored to go up 24-17, so the season was on the line.

Just as they had done to pull out the Purdue game, Krenzel played pitch-and-catch with Jenkins, who hauled in an out pass and got his feet inbounds at the Miami 12 to pick up the first down.

On the subsequent series, Krenzel kept the ball for a 7-yard gain down to the Miami 5. Miami linebacker Jonathan Vilma delivered a crushing hit, peeling Krenzel backward. It was a play some guys would not have gotten up from.

"We sure didn't expect him to run that much or that well," Vilma told reporters later.

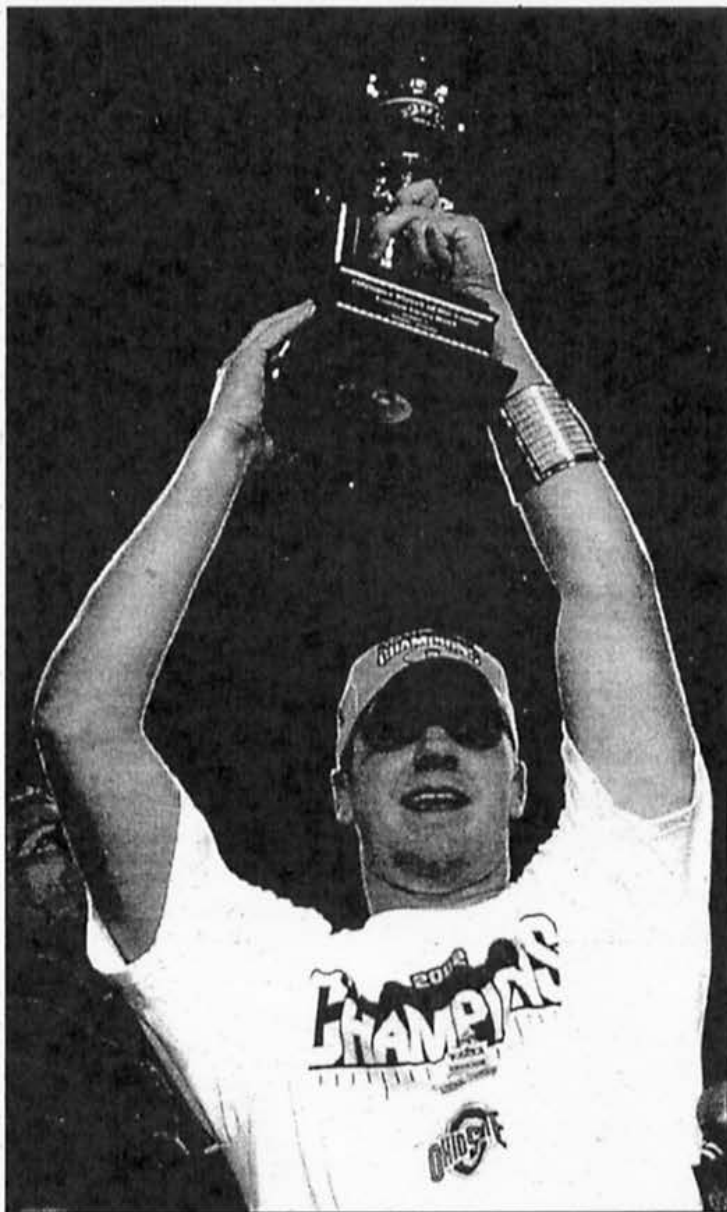
Two plays later, OSU faced fourth-and-3 at the Miami 5. During a timeout, Krenzel suggested an out pass to Chris Gamble.

He threw the pass and it fell incomplete. But Miami's Glenn Sharpe was flagged for pass interference, giving OSU new life with a first down at the 2.

Three plays later, Krenzel followed left guard Adrien Clarke into the end zone on a 1-yard sneak to tie the score at 24 and force the second overtime.

Krenzel's last running play of the night — a 5-yard sneak blast behind center Alex Stepanovich — gave the Buckeyes a first down at the Miami 11. He then found Jenkins for a 6-yard gain, setting up Maurice Clarett's 5-yard go-ahead touchdown in the second overtime.

After all the dust had settled — and the OSU defense had succeeded in stop-



JEFF BREHM

A DIFFERENCE MAKER — The gritty play of quarterback Craig Krenzel was a huge factor in OSU's 31-24 win over Miami. Here, he holds up one of the many trophies awarded to the Buckeyes after the game.

ping the 'Canes on downs at the OSU 1-yard line to end the game — Krenzel's teammates hailed their quarterback for his grace under extreme fire.

"He did a good job," Clarett said. "He was the MVP and he deserved it in every right."

Tight end Ben Hartsock added, "He has never been dubbed a super athlete. He is a smart quarterback, however, and tonight was a credit to his decision making."

Even Krenzel's defensive teammates recognize his importance.

"Craig, to me, is the toughest guy on the team," said defensive end Kenny Peterson. "Some of those hits he took were pretty bad. He is the smartest guy on the team, too. He made some great decisions tonight."

"Craig is a leader. He's a born leader."

Tressel sees many of the same qualities. In a year when the coach opted to use rotating game captains on offense, Krenzel got the nod on four different

occasions. They were, arguably, the team's four biggest games — the season opener with Texas Tech, Penn State, Michigan and the Fiesta Bowl against Miami.

He would have to be considered a shoo-in to return as the starter at quarterback next fall and to be one of the team's full-time captains as well.

For the record, Krenzel ended his 14-game junior campaign by throwing for 2,110 yards and 12 touchdowns against seven interceptions. He also was fourth on the team in rushing with 368 yards.

After the Fiesta Bowl, Krenzel was basking in the glow of helping OSU end a 34-year national championship drought.

"The people in my family are the greatest people in the world," he said. "I want to be with them tonight and tomorrow."

Then he added, "And I also want to enjoy the weather here and get a round of golf in before I go home."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Clarett, OSU At Odds Over Friend's Funeral

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After a contentious week marked by a war of words with school officials, OSU freshman tailback Maurice Clarett helped deliver on his immense promise — he and his teammates captured the national championship with a 31-24 double-overtime win over Miami (Fla.) in the Fiesta Bowl.

But Clarett was not in any mood to celebrate after his school's landmark victory.

Earlier in the week, Clarett and his school were at odds over his request to return home from Arizona to the Youngstown, Ohio, area to attend the Dec. 30 funeral of a childhood friend.

While school officials say they approved of Clarett's decision to leave the team to attend the funeral, they contended the player needed to fill out federal paperwork to be eligible for NCAA Special Assistance Fund money to pay for his airline ticket.

Clarett had not filed the Free Application For Federal Student Aid form until just before leaving for the bowl trip, not giving the government or Ohio State officials time to properly process it.

The entire dispute left Clarett stewing in Arizona as OSU coach Jim Tressel and athletic department officials were left to explain their side of the issue to the media.

The unseemly dispute lingered much of the week, although it ultimately had no impact on Clarett or the Buckeyes: He had two touchdowns in his team's Fiesta Bowl win over the Hurricanes.

Here is a chronology of how this controversy unfolded during Fiesta Bowl week.

Dec. 30 — Clarett was among a small group of players transported from the team hotel at the Scottsdale Fairmont Princess Resort to the media hotel at the Phoenix Airport Marriott for a morning news conference.

Toward the end of the press conference, Clarett was asked by an Associated Press columnist about growing up in Youngstown.

He volunteered the information that it was a rough upbringing, noting that a close friend had been gunned down and he was unable to go home to Ohio for the funeral, which was scheduled for that very day.

Clarett would not give the name of his late friend, but his mother told the AP that it was 23-year-old Juan Bell, who was shot Dec. 21. The shooting was reportedly drug-related.

"I'm kind of messed up because they jerked me kind of," Clarett told the AP. "I really wanted to go back. I'm not really supposed to be here. But it's cool. Things happen in life, there's bumps in the road like everything else. But I'll be all right."

Clarett said the university "told me it was (an NCAA) compliance issue."

"They didn't really give me an answer to the question," Clarett said, referring to OSU officials. "I guess football's more important than a person's life to them. That's why I'm ready to get this game over and go back home."

Ohio State officials countered after the team's practice. They said they told Clarett he could buy an airline ticket and then ask for reimbursement through the NCAA's Special Assistance Fund. The fund exists to pay for such emergencies as long as an athlete demonstrates need.

"We told Maurice that he could fly home ... if he could buy a ticket home and back we would reimburse him later," OSU ath-

letic director Andy Geiger said. "He elected not to do that, or couldn't afford that, or there wasn't anybody in his family who could do it."

"We were stuck in a place where the rule is we couldn't go forward and buy a ticket."

OSU coach Jim Tressel told reporters Clarett was never denied the chance to go home for the service.

"The best thing for all involved is to say it didn't work out," Tressel said.

Tressel said he was disappointed about Clarett's comment about football being more important to Ohio State officials than life.

"That's something we talk quite a bit about is that football is a part of life," Tressel said. "Football is one of the things we do. It certainly isn't everything we do."

Geiger also was sympathetic to Clarett's plight.

"The human experience is not put on hold because we're playing in the Fiesta Bowl," he said.

OSU compliance officer Heather Lyke Catalano filled in some of the blanks for CBS Sportsline.com. Clarett wanted the school to pay for the ticket, something it simply could not do by NCAA rules.

"He wanted the easy way," Catalano said. "He didn't want to pay for it."

Dec. 31 — Clarett joined his teammates by appearing at Sun Devil Stadium for the official Fiesta Bowl media day.

As many as 100 reporters surrounded his podium on the field and they hung on his every word for almost an hour.

He did not back down on his stance that OSU did him wrong in handling his request to return home.

Clarett began the session by saying the situation was "nothing to stumble over."

"I'm cool," he said. "I think it was what it was. I think everybody is past it."

Clarett said he did not sense a backlash from coaches or his teammates over the flap, which drew nationwide media attention on ESPN and in USA Today.

"I think people took it the way they wanted to take it," he said. "I just said what I said and however people perceive it or take it is on them."

Clarett was then asked if he filled out the necessary paperwork to make emergency fund aid available.

"They didn't tell you I filled out the paperwork before I left. You can go ask them about that," he said.

"I'm not going to sit here and let them lie about that. My paperwork is on file. My mother just filled it out. You can call her and ask her about that."

"I filled it out so I can get a Pell Grant beginning with winter quarter."

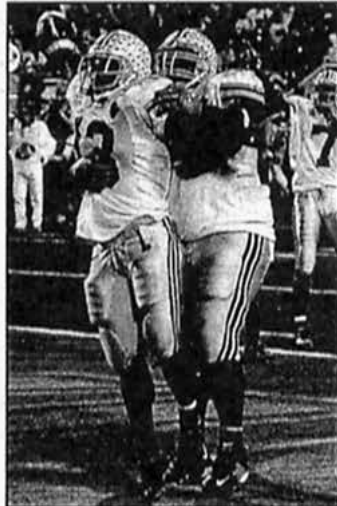
Clarett told reporters he was directed by Tressel to speak with Catalano. But she never got back to him, he alleged.

"They didn't talk to me," Clarett said. "I talked to the coach and he pointed me in the direction of the compliance lady. The compliance lady told me she would get back to me at my room (at the team hotel)."

"But she never got back to me at my room or on my cell phone. That's the real reason I was mad — she said she would call me back, but nobody ever returned my call."

Tressel tried to do damage control from his podium, just 10 feet away from Clarett's.

"I know it's the job of the people here to discuss those things," Tressel said. "It's the job of our folks to make sure we're there for each other."



DISTRACTIONS BE DAMNED — Though he captured a lot of headlines during game week, Maurice Clarett (left) delivered when it counted most.

"Anytime someone in your family or a friend is in the grieving process, they need to know we're here for them. I would never tell them how to handle the situation. That's a personal issue."

"Of course, they're going to make themselves look better than me," he said. "They're going to make me look stupid like I did something to put myself in this position."

Hours later, Geiger issued a statement to try to further clarify the school's stance on the matter.

"It is absolutely essential that everyone understand the process involved with this form," Geiger said. "First and foremost, this is a federal document, not a university document."

"Each of our student-athletes at the time of their orientation is encouraged to complete this form. This can be done either online or by completing the necessary paperwork."

"The document requires full financial disclosure of the parents' or guardians' income for the previous tax year. It must be filed annually and signed by the student-athlete and the parent or guardian."

"Once the document is filed, it is evaluated by the proper agency to make sure it has been properly completed. The institution is then notified that the student-athlete has a FAFSA on file. That information is kept on file in the Financial Aid Office at Ohio State."

"As of Dec. 30, 2002, there was no FAFSA on file for Maurice Clarett. Maurice may have begun the process but at the time we had to make the decision, there was no indication of a FAFSA on file for Maurice in our Financial Aid Office. We were therefore compelled to follow the NCAA rules as they apply to this situation."

"We care deeply about all of our student-athletes and we did everything possible to assist Maurice Clarett in this time of his personal grief. Unfortunately, given the

circumstances, we had no choice other than to react in the manner in which we did."

"I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for our student-athletes to complete this form."

Jan. 1 — Several of Clarett's teammates picked up the ball and ran with it during interview sessions.

"He's got some things he needs to work through," said OSU tight end Ben Hartsock. "But it's nothing that hasn't been said before this happened. But every time, we've been able to move on from it."

"Everybody is confident he knows his assignments in the game and will play his hardest."

"He's the kind of guy that drama kind of follows him around, I guess."

Jan. 3 — Miami geared up to try to stop Clarett, limiting him to 47 yards on 23 carries. But he did score a pair of touchdowns and turned in one of the key plays in the game when he tracked down Miami defensive back Sean Taylor after an interception and stripped him of the ball.

"Maurice Clarett is a tremendous competitor," Tressel said. "He cares a lot about the team and he gives a tremendous effort as evidenced by his strip on that interception."

"He is probably relieved to be walking out the door as a national champion."

In the moments following the game, Clarett watched the postgame trophy celebration onstage at midfield by leaning against a restraining fence 30 feet from the stage.

"This doesn't mean anything to me," he muttered to reporters. "I just want to go home. I'm all about winning games."

Moments later, he responded to requests by ABC's Lynn Swann and OSU associate athletic director Archie Griffin to appear onstage. He answered one question about the strip on Taylor before Swann signed off.

After dressing, Clarett answered questions for reporters in the interview room. He said he sought some advice after a slow start in the game.

"I talked with Eddie George and Jonathan Wells," Clarett said. "They said I should be patient and things would start going my way. At the beginning of the game, I was trying to rush everything and trying to make too many things happen."

"I didn't have the game I wanted to, but I made a couple of plays when I needed to."

He then appeared in a taped segment on ESPN's "SportsCenter" coverage of the Fiesta Bowl. Initially appearing tentative, Clarett eventually warmed to questions from one of his confidants, former OSU quarterback Kirk Herbstreit.

Following the interview, reporters caught up with Clarett's mother, Michelle, in a tunnel underneath the stadium.

"I think Maurice had an awesome game," Michelle Clarett said. "He was out there 100 percent plus. His desire showed today."

"He had an up-and-down week. He saw an opportunity to pull it together and he did."

Michelle Clarett told reporters she had been counseling her son on the tiff with the school.

"Motherly advice is every day and this week was no exception," she said. "It may have been a little more for support and for what he had on the inside."

When asked if this was a simple misunderstanding, Michelle Clarett said, "We have a national championship. We are not going to go backwards."

OHIO STATE VS. MIAMI (FLA.)

In The End, A Helluva Day For The Scarlet & Gray

Continued From Page 3

They, and the rest of this staff, have worked hard to make this program what it is today — a national champion.

- This win was for Krenzel, OSU's not-so-flashy quarterback. His 7-of-21 passing line may not look too gaudy. In fact, it looked just like something, say, Rex Kern or Cornelius Greene would have turned in for Woody Hayes. But Krenzel got the job done.

- This win was also for Clarett, OSU's wunderkind freshman sensation. After the game, Clarett was almost dazed. He seemed emotionally spent and understandably so after the death of a close friend.

We all put expectations on Maurice for him to do the things we want him to do. But he needs the support of his teammates, coaches and OSU fans now more than ever.

- Clarett came to OSU with one goal in his mind — winning a national championship. And in his first year, he delivered.

- This is for the rest of the offense, which also delivered, particularly the line. This unit should return intact in 2003, when the Buckeyes will take on a new identity.

- This was for OSU's battle-tested defensive front. I'm sure many of you are hoping this was not the last game for juniors Darrin Scott and Will Smith, who each came up huge against the 'Canes.

- Unfortunately, it was the final game for seniors Kenny Peterson, Matt Wilhelm, Cie Grant, Donnie Nicky and Mike Doss. They each played a huge role in OSU's upset win as well as this national championship season.

Doss, in particular, has earned a lifetime of praise from OSU fans. He set the

tone for 2002 almost a year ago when he decided to stay at OSU for his senior year. He almost willed OSU to this championship.

This title also was for All-American specialists Andy Groom, who will be sorely missed, and Nugent, who has two more years left.

- This victory was for John Cooper. Those were his players, in many cases, making the pivotal plays out there.

- This victory was for Andy Geiger. He made the right decision to replace Cooper two years ago and followed it with the decision to hire Tressel, soon to be college football's next millionaire (or millionaire-and-a-half) coach.

- This also was for all former OSU players, particularly the likes of Eddie George, Jonathan Wells and Raymont Harris, who were coaching Clarett on the sideline. Others of note in attendance included Kirk Herbstreit, Joey Galloway and Keith Byars.

- This also was for everybody out there who never gave Ohio State the time of day this year. ESPN know-nothings Trev



NO LOVE LOST — Ohio State fans really seemed to take genuine displeasure with comments made by college football analysts like Trev Alberts and Mark May, both of ESPN and both of whom said Miami would throttle OSU in the Fiesta Bowl. Of course, a Hurricanes win never happened, but signs jeering Alberts did.

Alberts and Mark May should retire their microphones after their embarrassing statements about the Buckeyes (vis-a-vis Iowa and Miami) this season.

Likewise, Tim Brando of CBS and The Sporting News showed his acumen for the game he covers so closely — although he

broadcasts only bad SEC football — by saying Miami would roll 48-10. Guess again, Timbo.

- Most of all, this Ohio State victory was for all of you — the OSU fans. Without your undying devotion, none of this would have ever happened.

Archie Saw The Upset Coming All Along

Continued From Page 14

all year long, they never gave up, and even in times where it looked like it wasn't going to go our way, they just beared down and said, 'Hey, we're going to win this football game.'

"They did it. I'm so very proud of them. They're a terrific bunch of guys. And to Coach Tressel and his staff, they are fabulous. They find a way to win. They brought these guys together, and I've got to believe we've got a tremendous future ahead of us."

Griffin was asked if he had any inkling that the Buckeyes would pull off the upset.

"Oh, I really did," he said. "I watched them practice and I tell you, they actually had some wonderful practices. They were spirited and every day after practice I would ask one of the coaches, 'How'd it go?' and to a man each of them told me we had a great practice."

"So I felt very, very good about this football game and how our players would play."

The Fans Speak Out

A Fiesta Bowl official crossing Tempe's Stadium Drive before the game made an obvious observation when he told his companion, "It's nothing but red."

The official was referring to the sea of scarlet-clad OSU supporters who flooded the city's streets in the days leading up to the Fiesta Bowl.

BSB caught up with several OSU fans, who shared their views on the weekend's events.

Sheri Bugher of Columbus came into town the night before the game with her husband, sister and brother-in-law. They did not come up with game tickets but were allowed into the stadium to watch the ESPN postgame show.

"I thought they were going to win," she said. "In the overtime I was a little hesitant, but I still thought they were going to do it."

"I can't imagine it any better. Even if they wouldn't have won, it was absolutely amazing that they made it here. But they just did awesome in that game. It was spectacular. Great game."

"When you look in the crowd and see that pretty much everything was red, I can't see how that could not affect the team and help them. They know they have a great fan base. The fans did a great job and I think that does help."

Paul Moore of Susanville, Calif., near the Nevada border, made the 12-hour drive to Tempe on New Year's Day.

"I'm a high school football coach and we won the state championship this year, and for us to win the state championship and the Buckeyes to win the national championship in the same year is like the most amazing thing ever and I will never forget it," Moore said. "If I die tonight, I die a happy man."

Moore said the dramatic climax of the game was hard to watch.

"I died several times," he said. "When they were kicking the field goal to send it to overtime, I was just praying that they would miss because I knew that would give us the national championship. The two fourth downs in the first overtime, we thought it was over. We didn't see the flag for the pass interference. And then the last play, great call by the coaching staff to blitz there on fourth down and put pressure on (Miami quarterback Ken) Dorsey."

"It was just an unbelievable feeling." Moore was still in the stadium over an hour after the game. He and his friends weren't sure how to celebrate.

"That's why we're still here, actually," he said. "It's like, 'What do you do?' You almost don't know how to act when something as special as this happens."

OSU student Eddie DeBarr of Montville, N.J., also enjoyed being a part of history.

"The atmosphere at the stadium was like a home game," DeBarr said. "Everybody was going nuts. We were chanting O-H-I-O. All across the country, people heard that and all they saw was the red."

George Gulgas, the athletic director at Youngstown (Ohio) Liberty High School, is well acquainted with Tressel's teams and was glad to see the coach capture his first Division I-A title.

"That was a great game," Gulgas said. "It all came down to defense and the kicking game. You can't run on the Bucks."

"I was there since Tuesday (Dec. 31). That was so fantastic. It was almost as good as the Michigan game."

Pat King of Dublin, Ohio, took her son and his family to Arizona as a Christmas present.

"This couldn't happen to a nicer guy," King said. "I love Jim Tressel. I love his demeanor. He's a class act."

"That was an emotional game with all of the ups and downs. But to watch him, it's so calming. When it got all exciting, he didn't get too wild. He really does conduct himself well and the players react to it."

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Buckeyes' Physicality Trumped Miami's Speed

First and foremost, congratulations to the Ohio State football team. National Champions! Congratulations to everyone involved with the program — the players, coaches, support staff and, last but not least, the fans.

The fans did their part. To say that the Buckeyes played Miami on a neutral field is like saying that the OSU basketball team played Duke on a neutral court in Greensboro, N.C., earlier this season. For a week, the scarlet and gray horde made Tempe look like a far western suburb of Columbus and Sun Devil Stadium became Ohio Stadium West. In a neck-and-neck game, that intense fan support had to have given Ohio State an edge.

Congratulations given, I have to say if I had heard Miami's "speed" mentioned one more time, I would have throttled somebody. That's all any of the so-called experts (you know, the experts who said Ohio State didn't have a chance) seemed to want to talk about — Miami's speed and how the Buckeyes had yet to see anything like it.

Correct me if I'm wrong here, but the Buckeyes and Hurricanes were meeting in a football game, not a track meet. Speed is great. In fact, the so-called experts seemed to forget — or never knew — that the Buckeyes have plenty of it themselves.

Yet while Ohio State might not have seen — as we were so often reminded — a team with as much speed as Miami, I don't think the 'Canes had seen a team that was as physical as Ohio State. There is no better way to slow a speedy opponent down than to hit them and hit them again, and that's what OSU did in the Fiesta Bowl. In fact, the Buckeyes knocked both of Miami's Heisman Trophy candidates — Willis McGahee and Ken Dorsey — out of the game with good, clean hits, though Dorsey was able to stagger back into the contest.

I also don't think that Miami had played against a defense as good as Ohio State's. The Buckeye defensive line was sensational in the Fiesta Bowl. The guys in the trenches had their moments this season, but they just took charge against the Hurricanes.

You also have to believe that all those nail-biters during the regular season helped prepare the Buckeyes for this ultimate game. I know, when Miami scored its first touchdown in the first quarter and then Krenzel quickly threw an interception, the national naysayers thought the rout was on.

If Ohio State is anything, however, it is composed. The Buckeyes didn't get flustered then, nor were they flustered late in regulation or in overtime. The team has been a reflection of its coach, the unflappable Jim Tressel, the entire season. If any team looked flustered during the Fiesta Bowl, I would have to say it was the defending national champions.

You have to give the Hurricanes their due. They were a really good football team. That's what makes this victory so significant and so much sweeter.

There are those who point to the key pass interference call in overtime that afforded the Buckeyes the chance go on to win the game, a penalty they question, as the only reason Ohio State won the game. To say that the game turned on one play — a penalty that many neutral

observers felt was a good call — is to minimize the fact that the Buckeyes played college football's top-ranked team and the defending national champions toe-to-toe for 60 minutes and then some.

To those who still don't believe, who are still trying to justify why Miami didn't "obliterate" the Buckeyes, I point to something I said in this space last issue.

"I don't think that those who minimize Ohio State's chances against Miami have seen the Buckeyes play as often as we have, nor are they as familiar with the character of the team as followers of the program are."

I doubt that anybody who followed the Buckeyes on a regular basis this season is completely surprised at the Fiesta Bowl's outcome. Most Buckeye fans truly believed that Ohio State could beat Miami, and not just because, as Buckeye fans, they were looking at the match-up through rose- (or in this case, Fiesta-) colored glasses. I think most Buckeye fans believed that Ohio State had the discipline and the mental and physical toughness to win the game.

And that they did. Again, congratulations, Buckeyes!!

The Healing Of Winning

Most of you saw the game, either in person or on TV, and it will be eloquently recapped throughout this paper. So rather than recapping game details, I wanted to focus on the tremendous healing process that this whole season, capped with the national championship, has been for the Buckeye nation.

The Ohio State football community had really become fractured in the '90s. The repeated losses to Michigan and other failures had led to a large number of disgruntled Buckeye fans. Then came the battle over who was really a Buckeye fan — those who wanted a coaching change because they thought it would be for the better and those who insisted that a true Buckeye fan had to accept the team and its coach, regardless of outcome. It wasn't pretty.

Many fans just seemed to lose interest.

Things seemed to turn with last year's surprise win over Michigan and the spirit continued to build, game after nail-biting game through the 2002 season. By the time the Buckeyes beat their archrivals a second time to clinch a berth in the national championship Fiesta Bowl, the scarlet and gray army had been reassembled and was ready to take over Tempe. There were plenty of reserves back in Columbus, throughout Ohio and in every state ready to raise the Buckeye banner.

I'm sure that there have been 40,000 or more Buckeye fans in the Los Angeles area for Rose Bowls before. But recent figures show that the Los Angeles metropolitan area includes 15.8 million people, while the Phoenix area has just 2.9 million. That made the Buckeye contingent far more visible than they have ever been at a remote site. This created a sense of community thousands of miles

from Columbus and added to this sense of pride that you feel everywhere you go right now.

The fact that all of the accomplishments this season were made by a blue-collar group of guys that fans of all ages and backgrounds can be proud of makes it that much better. If these Buckeyes had been a group of trash-talking thugs, would we be as proud? Sure we'd be proud. Everyone covets a national championship. But would a team of less character than the current bunch of Buckeyes have done as much to bring Ohio State fans back together? I don't think so.

If you look at OSU's past national champions, they've always been groups of very special people — both coaches and players — who went on to make an impact off the field, in addition to the accolades they earned on it. I have a feeling this group will be no different.

And the fact that Tressel was able to lead Ohio State to its first national crown in 34 years in just his second season at the helm should, hopefully, eradicate that guerrilla army of Glen Mason backers who refused to throw their support behind Tressel even as the victories mounted this season. They could have been a problem in the quest for unity in Buckeyeland, but I would guess that group has been silenced for the time being.

There is a lesson from the past that I believe it has been proved still holds true. It used to be said that the goals of any Ohio State football team were to beat Michigan, win the Big Ten title and go to the Rose Bowl. The Rose Bowl thing is a little muddled now with the BCS. But the road to OSU's return to prominence, the road to the Fiesta Bowl, the road to a unified Buckeye faithful all started with wins over Michigan. The Game is still a key component of any Ohio State season.

Next year's battle in Ann Arbor — with the Wolverines seeking double revenge against the defending national champions — should be a doozy.

Game Notes

- After all the hubbub surrounding Maurice Clarett in the week leading up to the Fiesta Bowl, I had a feeling he would have a monster game. He's the type of player who would excel with a chip on his shoulder.

- A 200-yard day didn't materialize, but Clarett scored two touchdowns and had one of the plays of the game — one of the hustle plays of the season — when he came from nowhere to strip Sean Taylor of the ball after he had intercepted a Craig Krenzel pass.

Many had worried whether the firestorm surrounding Clarett would be a distraction to the Buckeyes in preparation for the game. Obviously it wasn't too big a distraction, as the Buckeyes won. I think the team is used to Clarett and his antics by now. They probably just roll their eyes and move on.

I'm not going to speculate as to who

was right or wrong in the flap over Clarett's desire to go home for a friend's funeral. There seemed to be a bit of "he said, she said" to all of it. Regardless of who, if anyone, was at fault, Clarett needs to learn to keep some things private rather than letting them play out in the media.

And don't think that he is manipulated by journalists. He has already proved in his brief career that when he doesn't want to talk, he won't talk.

Clarett is a very special athlete. He also appears to be very high-maintenance. I worry sometimes that he is so high-strung that coaches are reluctant to be as firm with him as others for fear of the consequences. Does he remind anyone beside me of Robert Smith, whose OSU freshman rushing record Clarett broke? Hopefully, Clarett will end up accomplishing more than Smith did at Ohio State.

He's got a national championship under his belt, so I guess he already has.

By the way, as I visualize the Clarett of earlier in this season who racked up the yards and touchdowns, I see a player who was always moving forward. He seemed to dance too much against the Hurricanes, something he appeared to start doing after he injured his shoulder. Is he protecting the shoulder?

Clarett should take a lesson from his position coach, Tim Spencer, who was one of Ohio State's better straight-ahead runners.

- The biggest fear of many Ohio State observers coming into the game was that Miami would jump out to a quick lead and the Buckeyes would not be able to recover. While the Hurricanes jumped out to a 7-0 lead, the rout never happened.

One reason was the outstanding punting of Andy Groom in the early going, when the Buckeyes were still getting untracked.

Groom boomed a 56-yarder on Ohio State's first possession and took the Buckeyes from the shadow of their goal line with a 44-yarder that Miami was unable to return on the second possession. Early in the second quarter, he blasted a 63-yarder that helped pin the Hurricanes back at their own 13. A couple of plays later, Dorsey fired an interception to give the Buckeyes the ball on the Miami 37.

Groom was key in helping the Buckeyes hold their own in the early battle for field position.

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