

# THE END ZONE: Focus on college football



Maureen Fulton

**A**s the University of Toledo football players checked scores from other Mid-American Conference games last weekend while the Rockets were idle, what they found might help them come Saturday.

MAC teams went 6-6 in Week 1, highlighting that it's a conference of returning starters. It could be a confidence boost for the Rockets that so many of their rivals had convincing wins, a few more near-misses.

The Rockets could need the hit of aplomb after seeing that their first opponent beat a team 70-0. Arizona's crushing of Idaho is the first step for the Wildcats, a team that is the vogue pick to make some noise in the Pac-10 despite no bowl appearances since 1998. Arizona surely won't be lacking in self-assurance on Saturday.

The Rockets have the farthest journey of any MAC team in their season opener, nearly 2,000 miles to travel the day before the game. The warmer temperatures and three-hour time difference for a night game will also be factors, whether it's an excuse or not.

No matter what happens in Tucson, the UT coaching staff will think the trip's a success if they return with no injuries to their key players. Losing four starters in last year's season opener is a nightmare no one wants to recur.



Ryan Autullo

**W**ith great success come great expectations.

So would it not be a fairly big disappointment if Bowling Green was to lose to Minnesota on Saturday? It wouldn't be the end of the world, as nothing in athletics truly is. But the Falcons just beat a Top 25 team on the road and a setback to the rebuilding Gophers would cancel out some of that momentum.

The know-it-alls in Vegas have BG winning by a TD, but do you feel that optimistic about the Falcons' chances? After all, the Gophers hail from the Big Ten and are expected to be one of the more improved teams in the country this year (although they weren't too impressive in needing a late touchdown to beat an iffy Northern Illinois team last week). They played BG even for four quarters in last year's opener and return a quarterback that gave the Falcons fits with his running ability. Make no mistake, a win for BG would be every bit as exciting as a loss would be frustrating. To start the season 2-0 would mean the Falcons can finish no lower than .500 against a challenging non-conference slate.

This week, students are back on campus and are enthusiastic after the Pitt win. Right or wrong, a loss to a one-win team from a year ago could deflate that optimism.



Matt Markey

**T**he national media likes to call Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel "The Senator." With the gray suit, button-down collar, the perfect windsor knot and his stoic demeanor, Tressel looks the part. He could win any election in Ohio by a landslide, but Tressel is not a good fit for the senator gig.

This is a CEO, a governor, a honcho, the big kahuna. Tressel would not be comfortable walking down the hall and trying to massage a bunch of other people into agreeing with him on how much he should play freshman sensation Terrelle Pryor, or whether to kick the field goal or go for it on fourth-and-goal at the 5. Senators find consensus, but with the Buckeyes, the general in the scarlet sweater vest calls all the shots.

In OSU football, the revenue stream is robust, the stockholders love the boss, and the employees would charge into a burning building at his command.

Success and a new contract have made Tressel the highest paid coach in the Big Ten at \$3.5 million per year. The negotiations went like this: athletic director Gene Smith called Tressel into his office, said he was giving the coach a raise, and Tressel's salary jumped by a million bucks.

That's how they treat a prized executive at Ohio State. No mere senator is worth that kind of money.



Joe Vardon

**A** must-win game? In week 2? Against Miami (Ohio), no less? It depends.

If you are in the "This is Michigan, where mediocrity is never acceptable" camp, then, yeah, the Wolverines had better win.

If you're in this camp, you don't care that Rich Rodriguez is in his first year at UM, that he's installing an entirely new offense, or that just about every big name from last year's team went to the NFL.

You were disgusted UM lost a season opener — again — and may stick pins in your Rodriguez doll if the Wolverines fall this week.

But if you're of the belief that Rodriguez gets a pass in his first year, that he simply doesn't have the players to operate his spread-option offense, that UM has to get a little worse before it gets a lot better, what's another early loss in the grand scheme of things?

Give Rodriguez a full year or two of recruiting, you say, and the Wolverines will literally be running circles around all opponents. That seemed to be the attitude of many fans after UM's loss last week to Utah.

With Notre Dame looming next week and Big Ten play coming soon, I have a feeling Rodriguez apologists will switch camps if UM loses to a Miami.