



Eric Kumerow (second from right) is honored as Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year, as selected by Big Ten football broadcasters during ceremonies before Ohio State's home basketball game with Florida International. Also present for the ceremony were (l-r) Kumerow's father, Ernie, Ohio State athletic director Rick Bay and Kumerow's mother, Marie.

Harrison Wants Part Of OSU Fullback Lore

By Jim Wharton

Tyrone Harrison wants to add his name to the list. The list is rather long already, but Harrison would be extremely happy four or five years from now if his name would someday be mentioned in the same breath with the others.

Let's see, there is, in no particular order: Pete Johnson, John Brockington, Hubert Bobo, Champ Henson, Bob Ferguson, Paul Campbell, Vaughn Broadnax and George Cooper. It goes on and on. All are great fullbacks in Ohio State football history.

Harrison, who signed in February to play his college football at OSU, will try to add his name to the list.

"He's a big, raw, talented football player, which is what we wanted," said OSU assistant coach Chuck Heater, who recruited Harrison out of Highland Park (N.J.) High School. "He's really the big fullback we were looking for."

Harrison, a 6-3, 225-pounder who has been clocked in 4.6 seconds in the 40-yard dash, rushed for 850 yards and scored 13 touchdowns as a senior, leading Highland Park to a 9-1-1 record and the state championship in its division.

"He's an excellent football player," said Highland Park coach Joe Policastro. "We feel he'll contribute to Ohio State. He's very fast, very strong. He's just a pure athlete."

Policastro and Heater agree that Harrison's senior statistics are not as impressive as some would like. But there is a reason.

"That's deceiving because we had another great tailback," said Policastro, speaking of John Johnson, who will be a senior at Highland Park next fall. "So we shuttled them a little bit."

Harrison tells how it was carrying the ball for the Owls last fall.

"When I wasn't at tailback, I was at fullback," he said. "But for every time I'd get the ball, he'd get it like two or three times. He was faster and he led the county in every category."

Fear not, however. Harrison is going to fit the Buckeye fullback mold quite nicely.

"I think his success is really ahead of him as a football player," said Heater. "He'll be very good, but I think it's all ahead of him. If he really improves and gets better and comes along, I think he's got great prospects in him to be an outstanding player. I'm kind of excited about seeing how he competes. If he's really a competitive guy, he'll be outstanding."

Coming into Buckeye camp the same year that Cooper is a senior will help Harrison.

"I know pretty much all there is to know about him," said Harrison. "I met him when I came up there. I got to know him pretty good."

Harrison did not go as far as warning Cooper that he was going to take his job away from him.

"I didn't tell him, but I'll sure try," said Harrison, who as a junior played alongside his brother, Terry, in the Highland Park backfield. Terry played for Mesa Community College, a junior college in Mesa, Ariz., last season.

Tyrone Harrison, along with James "Scotty" Graham, and second-year freshman Chris Boddie, will be groomed to replace Cooper in 1988.

"That's what they told me," said Harrison, who also played outside linebacker in high school. "That's why I'm anxious to get up there. Hopefully, I can do well up there."

His high school coach thinks Harrison, who also is a shot-putter on the track team, will do what it takes to be successful on the collegiate level.

"He's going to get better and better," said Policastro. "In high school, we didn't have the coaching he's going to have in college. You ask a kid to play defense, offense. You ask a kid to play special teams. When he starts working with just his backfield coach, he's going to be super."

Policastro was asked what Harrison has going for him.

"This Harrison kid is huge," said Policastro. "You'll be amazed when you see him. But he also blocks well, he runs well and he has soft hands. He catches passes very easily."

Finding Harrison in the middle of New Jersey, an hour west of New York City, was not as hard as one might think. In fact, he will be the second Highland Park player to play at Ohio State recently.

Felix Lee, also a running back, was recruited by former Buckeye coach Woody Hayes. Lee, who played high school ball with Raymond Harrison, another older brother of Tyrone's, saw action for only three minutes in one game as a freshman in 1977. Lee carried twice for 13 yards late in the game during a 46-0 victory over Purdue and then suffered a knee injury in spring ball prior to the 1978 season, never to play again.

"We feel like we have a little bit of a connection with Ohio State," said Policastro, who also coached Lee.

"Those people are very pro Ohio State people," said Heater. "They have a fine coach and the AD, the former coach, is a great Woody Hayes guy. It was a matter of us wanting him, really. A lot of people were pushing him to Ohio State."

Harrison, the fourth of six children, opted for Ohio State over offers from Arizona State, Maryland, UCLA and Miami of Florida.

"It came down to Ohio State and Arizona State," said Harrison, who will pursue a degree in criminal justice. "I didn't even visit Miami or UCLA. I made my decision before I took those visits."

It was not a hard-sell to get Harrison to Ohio State.

"The high school has a strong connection with Ohio State," said Harrison. "I liked it up there when I visited. I liked the program and I liked everybody I met. I'm honored to get a scholarship to Ohio State."

Policastro added an insight to the recruiting process.

"Chuck Heater," he said rather emphatically. "He's a nice young fellow. A very nice person. That came across during the recruiting and Tyrone got a feeling that was how it was going to be at Ohio State. I think Chuck Heater was the difference — plus the fact they have a great institution up there."

With scholarship in hand, Harrison now is readying himself for the opening of fall practice in August.

"I'm working on it now," he said. "I'm playing in an all-star game this summer, so I'll get ready for that and that will just carry over when I come up there. I'm very anxious about coming there. Hopefully, I can contribute to the program, help make it get better."

Heater can't wait.

"He's big and fast," said Heater. "I've seen him breakaway 70 yards for a run and I've seen him run over three or four people at one time. The physical attributes are there."

Senior Fullback Trying To Make Up For Prop 48 Year**Soft-Spoken Harrison Makes Presence Felt**

Ohio State senior fullback Tyrone Harrison (39) is being given more of an opportunity to play this season due to injuries to starter Scottie Graham. Harrison, shown here with teammate Jeff Graham, had gained 20 yards on four carries in 1990.

By Mike Wachman

Speak softly but deliver a big hit. That's the motto of Ohio State senior fullback Tyrone Harrison, the number two man to starter Scottie Graham.

However, with Graham nursing a sprained ankle suffered in the season opener against Texas Tech and re-aggravating it against Boston College Sept. 15, Harrison has had a chance to play a little more.

He gained 20 yards on four carries against the Raiders on opening day and he saw action against BC, though he did not carry the ball.

However, gaining yardage was not his main priority when he arrived on the Ohio State campus in 1987. An all-state selection as a fullback at Highland Park (N.J.) High School, he was a casualty of Proposition 48 when he came to college.

"That certainly changed my outlook on things," Harrison said. "My initial reaction was that I was crushed. With that Prop 48 year, that put me a year behind the other running backs here.

"I still feel like I'm a step behind and this is my final year. So I do sometimes wonder what could have been if I had been eligible that first year.

"I've always had the motivation to be successful. I've never had to be jump-started in that regard. You find that you have more motivation if you've been a Prop 48 player. Coming over here by myself for weight training, when I knew I wasn't playing that year, was not easy. But I looked within myself and knew I had to do it to be successful. Now I'm playing."

Although Harrison came to the Buckeyes as a running back after having led his high school to its state championship, he began his college career as a linebacker. He wasn't moved back to fullback until the end of his sophomore campaign.

He showed more improvement than any of the OSU running backs, according to the coaches, and is now thought of as an invaluable backup to Graham.

Harrison doesn't have blinding speed, and at 6-2 and 235 pounds, he isn't a huge package, either. But he does enough to get the job done, gaining 57 yards on 15 carries last year and having the distinction of being the only OSU runner to not lose yardage.

"My running style isn't really like anyone else's I can think of," Harrison said. "It's a little luck, basically. I try to look for the open holes and then put my head down and run over people. It's pretty basic stuff."

In his last year of competition on the collegiate level, Harrison would like to experience a Big Ten title. He feels there is the right combination of youth and experience to make that wish come true.

Harrison has benefited from the tutelage of OSU running backs coach Bobby Turner. In turn, Turner feels, without a doubt, that Harrison is the most improved back that Ohio State has.

"Tyrone played some last year, but it was mainly in blowout roles," Turner said. "But now we have confidence in Tyrone that he can go into a game and be a force for us. Texas Tech was a good example of that.

"Scottie Graham got injured and had to leave the game, and we put Tyrone in and he did the job. He has improved a great deal, and while it's hard for anyone to be on Scottie's level, Tyrone does have a lot of ability. We like what he's done for us and he'll have many chances to run the ball this year."

While Graham has been given superlative after superlative this year, Harrison hasn't let up in his Avis impersonation: number two, trying harder to be number one.

"My goal is to be the starting fullback for Ohio State," Harrison said. "Everybody knows that Scottie Graham is a great fullback, and I'm going to do whatever I can to help the team. If that means starting or coming in off the bench to throw a block, as long as we win, that's what I'll do."

Harrison says his improvement on the gridiron has been good, but there are still some things he is working on.

"The one thing I definitely have to work on is getting my pads lower," he said. "I'm a pretty tall running back, which hinders me when I'm blocking sometimes. That's basically for my blocking style, because if I stay upright, I won't block the guy in the right place. I think my running style is fine."

Harrison admits, though, that blocking is not nearly as much fun as running the ball.

"There is some diversity with this offense," he said. "I like the fact that the fullback is utilized in running the ball. The tailback still does the bulk of the running, but the fullback is more than just a blocker. That's one of the things that turned me on to this offense. The good backs get the ball a lot."

Just getting his eligibility is a tribute to Harrison's work ethic. But working hard has its ultimate reward, and Harrison would like to find the reward at the end of the season.

"Being a senior, obviously the top thing is to get to the Rose Bowl," he said. "You don't feel like you've had a complete career unless you've gone to the Rose Bowl. I'm just hoping to contribute enough so that we get there."



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