



**BSB Reprints: Ohio State Falls To Georgia In Citrus Bowl**

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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## (No) Thanks For The Memories

To the best of my memory, I have never willfully criticized players in this column. It very rarely serves any purpose to find fault with a kid who is trying his best but somehow comes up short.

The people who berated Eddie George for his fumbles against Illinois are the same ones who cheered for him when he scored three touchdowns against Syracuse. Likewise, the ones who bad-mouthed Jeff Cothran for the Citrus Bowl fumble or are critical of Kirk Herbstreit for throwing poorly against Georgia are the same ones who marveled at Cothran's blocking and Herbstreit's leadership all season long.

Those guys are all classy individuals on a team that has a lot of classy guys.

Steve Tovar has a lot of class. He has spoken his mind about many topics, has been eloquent about his feelings about choosing Ohio State over Michigan, and has been gracious both in victory and defeat. He also honored his commitment to play four seasons for the Buckeyes and, in so doing, is on time to graduate.

Tim Williams has a lot of class. After missing a potential game-winning field goal against Illinois, he faced questions from reporters for several minutes despite the fact he seemed to be on the brink of tears. That was likely the worst time in Williams' young life, but he stood there like a man and answered every question put to him.

There are those on the team, however, who do not measure up to their teammates. Some may have all the talent in the world, but simply do not measure up on the character issue.

There are those players who would lead you to believe one thing when, in reality, they represent something else entirely. That, ladies and gentlemen, is being hypocritical.

Webster's defines a hypocrite as "a person who pretends to be what he is not." For me, that pretty well sums up the tumultuous three-year ride we have had with Robert Smith.

As a high school senior, he always seemed very gracious during the difficult recruiting process. He remained that way throughout his freshman season while he was setting records and earning awards.

Then something seemed to change Smith. He left the team just before the 1991 season began under circumstances that remain a bit cloudy to this day. I continue to defend his decision to leave. If he truly thought that he was being forced to decide between academics and athletics, he had every right to do what he did. Every athlete at every school in America has that same right.

What I do not defend is the way he went about leaving the team. He trashed everything and everyone in sight, laying the Ohio State program to waste in nearly every major newspaper in the country.

Then he visited Southern Cal and Stanford last winter before deciding he'd come back to the Buckeyes. No problem there. Any team would welcome a player of his caliber.

And Smith came back, and although he didn't equal the numbers he had as a freshman, he appeared to play at a different level. He gained the tough yards, he played hurt, and he led by example.

Unfortunately, he continued to be enamored of the sound of his own voice. He granted interviews to many publica-

### Editor's Notebook with Mark Rea

talk to several reporters who covered the Buckeyes on a day-to-day basis.

Smith once refused to talk to a reporter because that reporter's brother, who worked in a different medium, had dared to criticize him. When he did talk, he was either pontificating on the Ohio State tradition or comparing himself favorably to a pair of running backs who finished second and third in the Heisman Trophy balloting.

After the next-to-last game of the regular season, played at Indiana, Smith entered a packed press tent, then quickly exited, telling a member of the OSU sports information department he would talk to only two reporters. One of those two reporters gently but firmly told Smith he could not ignore the rest of the media that day.

Then he decided to talk to the rest of the reporters — with the notable exception of yours truly. The previous week, I had written a column which — I thought — praised Smith for being a free thinker and one who would stand beside his comments despite the fact some of what he said was unpopular with the masses.

Whether or not he took umbrage with something I wrote in that column, or whether he disliked our letters to the editor critical of him or the OSU program, I still do not know. Through several third parties, I asked what was bothering Smith about *BSB*. I never got an answer and I don't expect to get one now.

It bothers me not in the least that Smith refused to talk to me. There are more than 100 other players on the Ohio State football team who make for good stories.

What bothers me is that Smith made himself out to be something of a champion for the college athlete against the nasty establishment that uses up players to make money, then throws them away like yesterday's garbage when their eligibility is gone. Now he's using that establishment to further himself by leaving school early to enter the NFL draft.

Once again, I have no problem with that. No one has ever questioned the fact that Smith is an exceptionally gifted football player. He will probably become an excellent professional player. And he should not be prevented from starting his professional career whenever he chooses.

But just as the way he left Ohio State the first time leaves a bad taste, this time leaves an equally sour taste. Here is a guy who repeatedly said how much an education meant to him — and even left football for a year to concentrate on that education — and now he has decided to shuck that schooling for a while to pursue a professional sports career.

Ohio State football was here long before Robert Smith came on the scene, and I suspect the Buckeyes will be playing football long after Smith's career is over.

It was a pleasure to watch Smith perform for two seasons, and the impact he had on the OSU program on the playing field will continue to live on in the record books.

Hopefully, though, the lifespan of the impact he had on the program off the field will not be nearly as long.

## Most Valuable Player Award for 1992



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Ohio State [scheduled a home-and-home series with Georgia](#), announcing the games Nov. 7 for 2030 and 2031.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin looks back at the last time the Buckeyes and Bulldogs squared off.

Nearly 17 years ago, the Scarlet and Gray fell in the Citrus Bowl, 21-14, to Georgia with Kirk Herbstreit and Robert Smith leading the offense and Steve Tovar leading the defense.

This installment of BSB Reprints travels back to January of 1993 when Ohio State last faced Georgia, which ended in unfortunate fashion for the Buckeyes.

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