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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Sept. 7, 1991

## *BSB's 1991 Ohio State Football Preview*

# OSU Glad Tovar Wound Up A Buckeye

By Mark Rea

Steve Tovar is already a finalist for the Lombardi Award, one of a handful of postseason honors given out to the upper echelon of individual talent in college football, and figures to be one for the Butkus Award.

Also a consensus preseason All-American, Tovar was the leader of the Ohio State defense last year, earning first-team All-Big Ten honors after making 125 total tackles, 78 of them solos.

He will undoubtedly lead by example again this year on a unit that is expected to be the Buckeyes' best in many years.

All this from a guy who nearly ended up at Michigan.

"We nearly lost him to Michigan," said OSU assistant coach Ron Hudson, who recruits the Cleveland area, which includes Tovar's hometown of Elyria, Ohio. "It came right down to the wire and, thankfully, he decided to come here. Wouldn't he have looked awful in that other uniform?"

Awful, indeed, for Buckeye fans, but had Tovar opted for Ann Arbor instead of Columbus, he would be sporting two Big Ten championship rings by now. Somehow, though, that doesn't matter to him.

"I have no regrets about the decision I made," Tovar said. "No regrets at all. Besides, I'll get my ring before I'm through."

Despite the fact that nearly everyone is picking Michigan to win the Big Ten crown again this year, Tovar believes that the Buckeyes have an opportunity to challenge the Wolverines.

"We've progressed the last couple of years, and I think our defense is as good now as it's been since I've been here," he said. "Besides that, we have some unfinished business left over from last year."

"We got beat by Michigan and then got down on ourselves and couldn't pick it back up in time to beat Air Force, and we got embarrassed. They embarrassed us, we embarrassed ourselves and then the negative stuff started about the team and we were embarrassed again."

"Now, we have a chance to get back at all of those teams who beat us, all of those people who embarrassed us and all of those others who said bad things about us."

"You just get mad about last year and take it out on people this year. That's the only way I can think about it. Some of the bad things that happened to us last year were flukes, things we really couldn't control. But we have to live with those kinds of things."



Ohio State junior linebacker Steve Tovar will be one of the main reasons why the Buckeyes' defense should be the best it has been in several seasons this year. Tovar, who has already been selected as a finalist for the Lombardi Award, registered 125 tackles last season and has been named on several preseason All-American teams.

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# Young's Optimism Stems From Veterans

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"You can't let those things take you out of your game plan, and we did last year. We won't let that happen this year. This year, we'll be the ones making bad things happen to our opponents."

Tovar's optimism stems from the Buckeyes' defensive unit, which returns starters at all three line positions and three of four linebacking spots.

Up until the end of last year, Ohio State's defensive motto went something like this: "Bend, but don't break so often that the offense can't bail us out."

Actually, the Buckeyes' woes on defense led to some wild finishes for the team, such as the last-second victories over LSU in 1988 and Minnesota in 1989.

However, the unit finally began to turn the corner last season and put up its best numbers in the three years that Bill Young had been defensive coordinator under head coach John Cooper.

The Buckeyes were second in the Big Ten in total defense, finishing behind only Rose Bowl representative Iowa. OSU was also second in scoring defense, allowing just 220 points, a far cry from the 297 it gave up only a year before.

In fact, as the season progressed, the defense continued to get better. After a three-game stretch against Southern Cal, Illinois and Indiana that produced two losses and a tie and more than 400 yards in total offense to each opponent, the unit tightened up.

It did not allow any opponent to crack the 300-yard mark in total offense during the last three games, including a 248-yard effort against Michigan, the Big Ten's total offense champion with an average of just over 432 yards per game.

"The first two years we were here, we were god awful on defense, and I'll be

the first to admit that," Young said. "But we did improve last year, and I look for us to be even better this year. That's our goal."

"This year, we should be a much tougher football team. Our off-season program last winter was as tough mentally and physically as you can have for young guys."

"I think that will have an impact on us in the fourth quarter this year. You can see that we're going to rise up. If we're ahead of somebody 10 points in the fourth quarter like we were last year against Indiana, we won't have the same result. Our philosophy this year is that we're going to win all of the games that are decided in the fourth quarter."

Young's optimistic views for his defense stem from players such as Tovar, nose guard Greg Smith, defensive end Alonzo Spellman, linebacker John Kacherski and a host of others.

Tovar is undoubtedly the Buckeyes' best inside backer since Chris Spielman graduated in 1987, while the entire defensive unit could be the finest since 1979. That year, OSU allowed just 126 points in 12 games while posting an 11-1 record and nearly winning a national championship.

"I think this is the best defense Ohio State has had in quite awhile," Young said. "I don't think there's any doubt that the talent we have on defense this year is the best we've had since we've been here. We still have to prove that we have improved on the field, but we certainly have much, much better players now than we did three years ago, or even last year."

While the front line and linebacking corps is deep with experience, the defensive backfield lost three starters and features a bunch of young, inexperienced players. But Young doesn't anticipate the secondary being a problem, but rather, an asset.

"A lot of people are talking about how physical our secondary can be, but the thing that's most impressive about our secondary to me is their speed," he said. "That's been a problem for us in the past in the secondary, but I don't anticipate it being one in the future."

Young attributes the improvement in his defense to good old-fashioned hard work during the off-season.

"We have gotten some good players during recruiting season," he said, "and once they're here, they work hard in our winter and summer conditioning programs."

"We're bigger, we're stronger and we're faster, and that doesn't just happen. It comes about from hard work, and our players have worked hard. Now they're anxious to see all of that hard work pay off."

While Tovar will be the leader, the heart and soul of the defensive unit will likely be Kacherski, who is attempting a second comeback from major knee surgery. He missed all of the 1989 season and then came back with a vengeance in last season's opener against Texas Tech, registering two sacks in the first half before suffering another knee injury.

If Kacherski can remain injury-free and can even come close to the level of intensity he exhibited in the first half against Texas Tech, the Buckeyes' defense will be a fearsome unit.

That is, of course, if Kacherski can even win his starting job back. When he went down, redshirt freshman Jason Simmons came off the bench and proceeded to have an outstanding rookie season that included 56 tackles, 12 of them for losses, and five sacks.

At the other outside position, sophomore Mark Williams gets his chance to start in place of the graduated Jay Koch. Backing him up is redshirt freshman Preston Harrison, an imposing 6-4, 235-pounder with breakneck speed for a big man. Harrison, of course, switched over to defense from quarterback last spring, but must prove he is over a groin injury which plagued him all of last season and early in this year's preseason camp.

At the inside position alongside

Tovar should be a trio of top-notch players. Senior Judah Herman and junior Tom Lease have waged a battle for the number one position since the spring of 1990, and that friendly war continues.

This year, it is joined by senior Andy Gurd, who has missed most of the last two seasons with four separate shoulder operations. Like Kacherski, though, if Gurd can remain healthy for a full season, it would provide another booster shot in the arm for the Buckeyes' defense.

While the linebackers patrol the middle of the field, the Buckeyes have some tried and true performers up-front.

Smith came into his own at nose guard last season, finishing second in the Big Ten with seven sacks and fourth in tackles for loss with 15. A former walk-on, Smith improved tremendously throughout the season, making eight tackles against Michigan and 10 against Air Force in the Liberty Bowl.

Flanking Smith are probably the most and least heralded of the veterans.

Of course, everyone knows all about Spellman. The 6-6, 285-pounder has added about 15 pounds of muscle to his Adonis-like frame and seems primed for another outstanding year.

At defensive tackle, senior Rich Primel is back for his final season as probably the steadiest of the defensive linemen. Primel's 65 tackles and 250 minutes of action were tops among all the defensive linemen last year. His streak of 19 consecutive starts is also tops on the line.

In the secondary, as has been mentioned before, the players are short on experience. The projected starters — junior cornerbacks Foster Paulk and Bryan Cook and sophomore safeties Chico Nelson and Roger Harper — have started only 11 games among them, nine of them by Paulk.

But what those players lack in experience, they make up for in desire. Nelson is rapidly gaining the reputation for delivering crushing tackles, while the 6-3, 190-pound Cook and Harper, at 6-4, 224, give the Buckeyes a bigger look in

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the secondary than they have had in recent years.

In addition to what is projected to be better coverage, Tovar said that opposing teams had better be able to protect their quarterback and run block.

"You might throw it over our heads for 100 yards, but you're going to know we've been there," Tovar said. "We're going to come up and hit you. We want to be more physical and we're going to be more physical. Hopefully, that will be the mark of our defense."

"There will probably be some teams that try and test our secondary because those guys haven't played a whole lot going into the season. But in order to win, you have to be able to run the ball, and that's the thing we want to shut down this year."

The starting lineup could add up to an exciting season on defense for the Buckeyes, and the players could contend for many Big Ten honors.

"The hallmark of the Big Ten has been great defenses," Young said. "With that in mind, some of our goals this year include leading the league in scoring defense and leading the league in forced turnovers."

"We'd also like to be up there in total yardage, but that's sort of a third goal. The primary goals are to keep the opposing team out of the end zone and, whenever possible, take the ball away from them."

Tovar was as good as any defender taking the ball away last season, causing three fumbles and recovering two others.

But perhaps the most telling thing about Tovar is his speed. He set the tone for his season last year in the opener against Texas Tech. Tech quarterback Jamie Gill had been flushed out of the pocket and had 10 yards in which to set up again. Out of nowhere came Tovar, who hit Gill with such force it looked as if the opposing quarterback had been cut in two.

Plays such as that were highlights last year, but Tovar expects them to be routine this year, especially with the healthy return of Kacherski and Gurd.

"I think John and Andy can make the difference for us," Tovar said. "The last two years, we haven't had them and

we've fallen short of our goals. If we can keep them healthy all season, I think they can help put us over the top."

"We have some very good players on this defense in addition to John and Andy. If we all play the way we can, I don't know of any reason why we can't challenge for the title."

Tovar is coming back himself from an injury. He broke the fifth metatarsal bone in his left foot during the last week of spring practice, the same injury that befell former OSU running back Keith Byars prior to the 1985 season.

However, Tovar has not had to rush back like Byars did, using the past four and a half months to rehabilitate his injury. For that reason, he pronounces himself fit and ready for the 1991 season to begin.

"The foot feels great," he said. "I have some soreness in there every once in a while, but I talked to the doctors about that and they say that was to be expected. I haven't missed a day of summer conditioning and I feel I'll be 100 percent by the time the first game starts."

Some preseason publications make Tovar the prohibitive favorite to win not only the Lombardi Award, but the Butkus Award as well. He doesn't claim to ignore all of the preseason publicity, but he doesn't ascribe much to it, either.

"What I have done in the past doesn't mean a thing right now," he said. "When April 1993 rolls around and draft day comes, if I'm number one then, that will be important."

"But until then, it's nice for my mother, who reads all of those things and cuts them out. But they don't really mean much to me right now."

"I'm not going into this season thinking I've got to win one of those awards. I'm going into the season thinking we have to win football games at Ohio State some way or another."

And if the Buckeyes go to the Rose Bowl and Tovar wins the Lombardi, Butkus or both, would he consider leaving school early for the NFL?

"I can't honestly say I wouldn't consider it," he admitted. "If someone was going to offer me a whole lot of money, I would have to think about it. After all, what is college for? The whole reason is so you can make more money in your chosen profession than you can with just a high school diploma."

"The NFL, though, is like the individual awards. It's not something I'm thinking about right now. I'm only interested in one thing right now and that's winning football games at Ohio State. If that goal is accomplished, then all of those other things should take care of themselves."



Nose guard Greg Smith, shown here draped around the leg of Minnesota quarterback Marquel Fleetwood, has made the transition from being a walk-on player to one of the top defensive linemen in the Big Ten.



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## OSU Enters 1991 Season With Several Question Marks

## Many Positions Hold Key For Buckeyes

By Mark Rea

As the Ohio State football team prepares for its 1991 season, most experts agree that a fully stocked stable of running backs and a stout defense will be the strengths of the squad.

While there is no doubt that the Buckeyes have one of their deepest backfields in years — even with the loss of sophomore tailback Robert Smith — and undoubtedly their best defensive unit since John Cooper has been head coach, there are several other positions that hold the key to victory as well.

How will the quarterback race shape up? Will the eventual starter be Kent Graham, or will Kirk Herbstreit finally get a chance? Maybe Joe Pickens can start as a redshirt freshman. Can rookie Bob Hoying elbow his way onto the depth chart?

What about the offensive line? Can it be more consistent than it was last season? How will it handle the graduation loss of center Dan Beatty and the academic loss of Roy Nichols, another of last year's starters?

Can the receiving corps overcome the graduation losses of Jeff Graham and Bobby Olive? Can a talented but inexperienced secondary rise to the occasion? Who will handle the punting chores this year?

There are many questions about the Buckeyes going into the 1991 season, but Cooper and his coaching staff believe they have most of the answers with talent at every position.

Here is a look at scholarship players and selected others at each position for the Buckeyes this season, minus incom-

ing freshmen, with players listed in order of the depth chart expected to open the season:

**Quarterback**

Kent Graham (6-5, 220, Sr.) was the number two man behind starter Greg Frey last season, seeing action in six games. He completed 15 of 26 (57.7 percent) passes for 195 yards and three TDs. Since transferring from Notre Dame after the 1988 season, Graham hasn't had much of a chance to show what he could do, but he has shown signs of brilliance on occasion, such as the Liberty Bowl when he briefly sparked the team.

Kirk Herbstreit (6-2, 213, Jr.) has tried hard to distance himself from the "runs well, throws OK" tag. He hasn't seen much playing time at quarterback since he signed at OSU, but his hard work may pay off this year. His biggest attribute continues to be mobility. Some of Herbstreit's scrambles in scrimmages and spring games have been memorable.

Joe Pickens (6-3, 220, Fr.) is obviously the Buckeyes' quarterback of the future, but when does the future begin? Pickens struggled a bit during spring drills with the OSU offensive scheme. He has never struggled, though, with his talent. He is a classic drop-back passer, but has enough agility to get out of

trouble. He reminds many of a young Bernie Kosar.

**Tailback**

Butler Bynote (5-11, 185, Soph.) would have undoubtedly been the starting tailback on many Division I teams before and now gets his chance in Smith's absence. After breaking into the lineup slowly last year, Bynote came on to gain 239 yards on just 53 carries, an average of 4.5 yards per carry. One of the fastest players on the team (4.37 in the 40), Bynote will carry more than his share of the load this year, especially as a starter.

Carlos Snow (5-9, 200, Sr.) is coming off major hip surgery and has been termed by Cooper as being "about 80 percent, but Carlos at 80 percent is better than some players at 100 percent." OSU's leading rusher in 1988 and 1989, Snow is as good as any tailback in America when he's healthy. Occasional trouble holding onto the football is this blend of power and speed's only fault. If he can hold up throughout the season, the Buckeyes have three potential 1,000 yard rushers at one position.

Raymont Harris (6-2, 220, Soph.) blew onto the scene last year when Scottie Graham was having his troubles. Harris divided his time between tailback and fullback last year and expected to spend most of it at fullback this year until Smith went AWOL. Now Harris will probably get a lot of playing time at tailback. Since Harris played in Smith's shadow last year, many people forget he gained 519 yards and scored eight TDs. He spent his summer in school trying to retain his academic eligibility.

**Fullback**

Scottie Graham (5-10, 220, Sr.) is ready for another good season. Nursing a bad ankle and some self-doubt last season, he managed only 253 yards and two touchdowns after gaining 977 yards and scoring 10 TDs the year before. The fact remains that Graham is an excellent blocker and, in 294 career carries, he has lost only seven total yards.

Jeff Cothran (6-2, 215, Soph.) could move up the depth chart rapidly if the way Cooper talks about him is any indication. Cothran's name was the most mentioned by the OSU head coach during the week first-year players were alone in camp. Cothran missed last season because of Proposition 42, but looks like he has never been away from the game. He ran for 1,850 yards and 22 TDs as a senior at Middletown, gaining 348 yards in one game.

Tyrone Harrison (6-2, 232, Sr.) is a solid backup player who remains a powerful inside runner despite his lack of playing time. He has carried the ball only 24 times during his OSU career, but has never been thrown for a loss. A former Proposition 48 student, Harrison is on schedule to graduate at the end of winter quarter.

**Wide Receiver**

Brian Stabilein (6-1, 186, Jr.) has been waiting in the wings to get his chance to start and that chance appears to have arrived. Stabilein's athletic ability and speed will never be sparkling, but he has the qualities of getting open and catching the football that have made great receivers out of players without the greatest physical tools.

Joey Galloway (5-10, 170, Fr.) is a promising prospect who could push Stabilein for the starting position. Red-shirted last year, Galloway has great speed, excellent hands and a penchant for fighting his way to the football. He caught 32 passes for 608 yards and eight TDs as a senior in Bellaire, Ohio.

Chris Sanders (6-1, 165, Soph.) missed last season due to Prop 42, but has reminded the coaching staff of Olive with his slender build and acrobatic catching ability. His vertical jump of better than 37 inches was tops on the team during the preseason.

Aaron Payne (5-8, 165, Soph.) is extremely dangerous with the football in his hands and an open field in front of him. Acknowledged as the Buckeyes' fastest player, Payne has made most of his collegiate reputation as a sprinter for the track team. However, he has worked on catching the football during the summer. He was in line to get more playing time this season, but suffered a broken wrist during practice Aug. 19



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and is expected to be sidelined up to six weeks.

### Flanker

Bernard Edwards (6-5, 205, Sr.) has been as much in the shadow of Jeff Graham as Stablein has of Olive. Not as flashy as his predecessor, Edwards has been a reliable receiver, catching at least 10 passes in each of his three seasons as a backup. His 12 receptions was third on the team last year and represents the highest total among returning players this season. He has worked hard to improve his blocking, a lack of which got him benched two seasons ago along with Olive.



EDWARDS

Greg Beatty (5-11, 180, Jr.) is making a comeback from major knee surgery performed just before last season began. In fact, had Beatty not blown out a knee right before the Buckeyes' first game, he would likely be a returning starter and Olive would never have had the year he had last season. When healthy, Beatty has been one of the team's best receivers in terms of speed and running precise routes. If he's physically right, he'll play a lot.

Dante Lee (5-10, 185, Jr.) is simply too talented to languish on the bench the way he did for most of last season. So the Buckeyes moved him to the flanker position and may use him some at a wingback-type spot. Lee rededicated himself to football over the summer and worked extremely hard on pass routes and catching the football. He may surprise as many people as a receiver as he did in 1989 as a tailback.

Allen DeGraffenreid (6-3, 200, Jr.) has consistently impressed the OSU coaching staff over the years with his determination and hard work. That perseverance paid off Aug. 19, when DeGraffenreid was awarded a scholarship. One of the Buckeyes' better blocking receivers, he needs only a chance in game situations to become a reliable pass-catcher.

Norman Williams (6-0, 185, Fr.) is another outstanding prospect with outstanding speed. He showed good hands and ability during all of spring practice and simply needs more experience to become an excellent receiver. A superlative athlete, he lettered in football, track, basketball and swimming in high school.

### Tight End

Jeff Ellis (6-4, 245, Sr.) should be the starter Sept. 7 against Arizona, but was reportedly facing an uphill climb in summer school to retain his academic eligibility. If Ellis can return for his final season, as well as return to the level of play he exhibited in 1988 before being felled the following year by a knee injury, the Buckeyes will have one of the nation's finest tight ends.



ELLIS

Cedric Saunders (6-3, 238, Soph.) could be the starter if Ellis cannot be. Even if Ellis can be, Saunders figures to get plenty of playing time. He needs

more weight and more consistency in his blocking, but Saunders is an excellent receiver who the Buckeyes may even split out off the line on occasion this year.

Joe Metzger (6-2, 235, Jr.) is in just his second year at the position, but is perhaps the finest overall athlete the Buckeyes have at tight end. He still holds his high school's record for the 100-meter dash and needs only to improve his blocking skills to merit more playing time.

Travis Lutz (6-4, 220, Sr.) is a walk-on player and fifth-year senior. Although he saw action in nine games last season, most of it came on special teams. That may not be the case this season, especially if the Buckeyes continue to be thin at the tight end position. Lutz may get plenty of playing time in the wake of sophomore Chris Roy's latest knee injury.

William Houston (6-1, 240, Soph.) was moved to tight end from fullback on the first day of preseason practice. Houston does not have the height the Buckeyes would like at the tight end position, but his weight and strength will be assets in two tight end formations.

### Center

Paul Long (6-5, 270, Jr.) had an excellent spring camp to become the leading candidate to replace Beatty at center. Strength, desire and size are his main attributes. With only seven minutes of actual game action at center under his belt, his major weakness is inexperience.



LONG

Jack Thrush (6-4, 260, Soph.) will go into the season as the number one backup at center. He saw 35 minutes of action last season at the position and needs only to improve his consistency to dent the starting lineup.

### Right Tackle

Mick Shoaf (6-5, 280, Sr.) is the most experienced of all Buckeye linemen, starting all 12 games at strong tackle last season. This year, under new offensive coordinator Elliot Uzelac, the linemen will not switch sides, so Shoaf will always be on the right. Lower body strength for blocking power is one of his best assets, and he uses that power to his advantage.



SHOAF

Jason Winrow (6-6, 290, Soph.) was one of the most pleasant surprises of 1990 when he showed signs of becoming an excellent offensive lineman. His only problems have been an excess of weight and a lack of intensity at times, things he has worked hard to fight against through the off-season.

John Schilling (6-3, 285, Jr.) has not seen any game action in the three years he has been a Buckeye, but that has not deterred him from making big efforts in

practice to impress the coaching staff. This may finally be the year Schilling fights his way onto the two-deep roster.

### Left Guard

Len Hartman (6-2, 280, Jr.) performed well last season in his first campaign as a starter and should be one of the line's mainstays this year. The Buckeyes' most powerful lineman (he squat lifts 675 pounds), Hartman is a superlative run blocker and has worked hard in the off-season to improve his pass protection skills. He tired a bit at the end of last season, so he has also worked hard on his conditioning.



HARTMAN

Dave Monnot (6-5, 265, Soph.) made the switch from defense to offense early during preseason drills and began picking up the offensive system quickly. He moved over to offense to provide more

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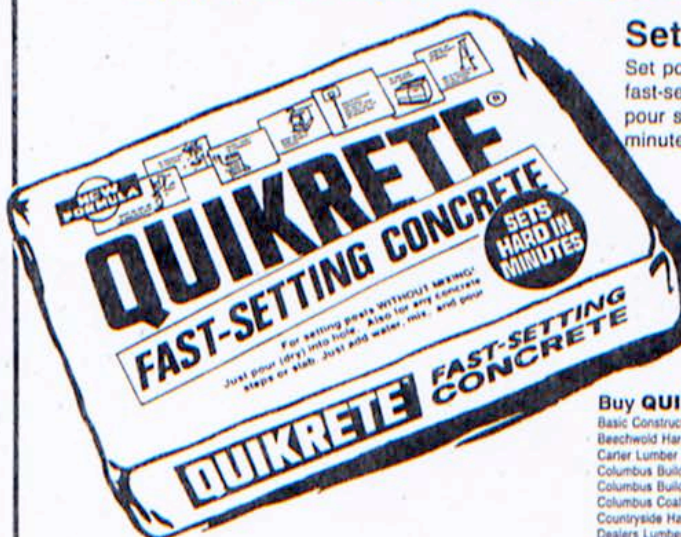
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# Defensive Line Features Three Veterans

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depth after Nichols left the team and since he played the position in high school, should vie for playing time this season.

## Right Guard

Rod Smith (6-3, 285, Soph.) is one of the Buckeyes' outstanding crop of young offensive linemen. Inexperience and inconsistency have been the only things holding Smith back to this point. Now, with eight games of experience under a belt that is nearly 40 pounds lighter than it was a year ago, Smith could be ready to have an outstanding season. He spent the summer in school trying to retain his academic eligibility.

Mark Bean (6-5, 270, Fr.) is another former defensive lineman who switched to offense to provide added depth. During spring practice, Bean made a quick impact on offense, despite getting only about a week at the position. He improved enough to move into the number two position and, if something happens to Smith, he could start.

## Left Tackle

Alan Kline (6-7, 280, Soph.) has been the darling of the OSU coaching staff for the past couple of years and this may be the season when he comes into his own. He started in five games last year and had stretches in which he completely dominated opposing linemen. He has gained about 20 pounds this season and could be an Outland Trophy candidate

in the near future.

Mike Dully (6-5, 280, Fr.) is an extremely tough competitor who plays offensive line with the mentality of a defensive lineman. He spent last season as a redshirt but learned while on the sideline, as evidenced by the way he quickly picked up the Buckeyes' blocking schemes this spring.

Paul Sherrick (6-8, 300, Jr.) is still one of the Buckeyes' biggest players, but he hasn't had much of a chance to show his talent. Back surgery in 1989 and follow-up surgery last year have robbed him of most of the last two seasons. If he can stay healthy, he can help the team along the line.

## Defensive End

Alonzo Spellman (6-6, 285, Jr.) is easily the most talked about member of the Buckeyes' defensive unit. Still considered a diamond in the rough by the OSU coaching staff, most experts agree that if Spellman reaches his full potential, there will be instant stardom in the NFL awaiting him. After having

some initial growing pains moving from outside linebacker to defensive end, Spellman finished 1990 with 52 tackles, 8.5 tackles for loss and two sacks, stats comparable to the ones he posted in '89 as a freshman. Should he break out with a big year, all of those stats could double.

Derrick Foster (6-5, 255, Jr.) has had knee, shoulder and hip injuries during his OSU career. Had it not been for those injuries, experts might talk about Foster the same way they do about Spellman. Despite the injuries, Foster remains an extremely capable backup with enough quickness to shut down the run and put occasional pressure on the quarterback.

Pete Beckman (6-5, 235, Fr.) had an excellent spring after he moved over

from the tackle position. An excellent prospect, he needs only to gain game experience. With Spellman and Foster as upperclassmen, Beckman could be the defensive end of the future for the Buckeyes.

## Defensive Tackle

Rich Frimel (6-3, 250, Sr.) has been one of the steadiest defensive linemen for Ohio State since 1988. He has seen action in 35 consecutive games, the longest streak on the team, and has improved his production each year. Many expect Frimel to have a 100-tackle season this year.

Matt Bonhaus (6-5, 250, Fr.) has added 10 pounds of muscle to his frame since last season and with Monnot's switch to offense, should find himself playing quite a bit behind Frimel this season. He was redshirted last season after an All-American prep career at Cincinnati Elder. He was another player who impressed the OSU staff last spring.

## Nose Guard

Greg Smith (6-2, 250, Jr.) is one of the best rags-to-riches stories in college football. Overlooked out of Canton (Ohio) Glen Oak, Smith walked on with the Buckeyes in 1988 and has gone on to not only win a scholarship, but also to become one of the Big Ten's top defensive linemen. He had seven sacks in conference games last year, more than anyone else in the league, and was third in tackles for loss with 14.5. And he kept getting better as the season wore

on. His finest efforts came against Michigan, when he had eight tackles, and Air Force, when he registered a career-high 10 stops.

Sean Carden (6-1, 260, Fr.) is easily the biggest nose guard the Buckeyes have. An avid weightlifter, Carden is also one of the most physical players on the entire squad. He was another who made significant strides during spring practice sessions and should see playing time behind Smith.

Randall Brown (6-3, 240, Fr.) was switched to the position early in preseason camp since top backup Corey Pargo was rendered academically ineligible. Brown spent his redshirt season at inside linebacker and was going to be a reserve at the rush outside spot this year. However, because of his talent, the coaching staff wanted to find a place where he could play this year and nose guard was that position.

## Rush Outside Linebacker

John Kacherski (6-3, 240, Sr.) is one of the finest pass rushers in all of college football when he is healthy. His biggest problem is that he has not been healthy for most of the last two years, felled by separate injuries to his right knee. His first-half performance against Texas Tech last season (four tackles, two sacks) led some people to believe that had Kacherski played the entire season, the Buckeyes would have been in the Rose Bowl.

Jason Simmons (6-5, 240, Soph.) was pressed into action last season when Kacherski went down and had an excellent season. He finished second on the team in tackles for loss (12) and quarterback sacks (5), and earned Big Ten defensive player of the week honors against Iowa with eight tackles and two sacks. With Kacherski working his way



SMITH



SPELLMAN



FRIMEL



KLINE



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back from the knee injuries, Simmons may not equal last year's total of 273 minutes of action, but he'll be close.

### Inside Linebacker

Steve Tovar (6-4, 240, Jr.) is one of the premier linebackers in the country and many experts pick him as one of the favorites to contend for Lombardi and Butkus awards. He had double-figure tackle performances in nine games last year and finished with 115 total stops, the first OSU defender to record 100 or more tackles in a season since Chris Spielman in 1987. The broken bone he suffered in his left foot last April has completely healed.

Alex Rodriguez (6-1, 224, Fr.) established himself as a solid number two linebacker behind Tovar last spring. He was initially recruited as a fullback, but played enough linebacker in high school to make the switch easily midway through last season. Despite his size, he is very physical, thanks in part to lower body strength that keeps him from getting swept off his feet by opposing offensive linemen.

### Inside Linebacker

Judah Herman (6-1, 225, Sr.) is probably the most underrated player for the Buckeyes. In three seasons, he has been up and down the depth chart, but still manages to contribute his share of tackles. This year, he enters the season as the number one inside backer, a position he held in 1989, but lost last season to teammate Tom Lease. His lack of height sometimes works against him to some extent, but he makes up for it with heart and determination. With 32 games of action behind him, Herman is the Buckeyes' most experienced inside backer. With few exceptions, Herman is one of the most dedicated and hard-nosed players the Buckeyes have.

Tom Lease (6-5, 240, Jr.) has started the last two years and figures to see a lot of playing time if he retains his academic eligibility in summer school.



TOVAR



HERMAN

Lease has started 23 of the 24 games he has played for the Buckeyes. He finished with 53 tackles last year, seven of them against Iowa in his finest performance of the season.

Andy Gurd (6-3, 230, Sr.) was moved briefly to outside linebacker in the spring to protect his shoulder, which has been surgically repaired four times in the last two years. When healthy, Gurd is one of the finest defenders for the Buckeyes. Perhaps he is finally back. Gurd was one of the few bright spots in last year's Liberty Bowl when he registered nine tackles.

### Drop Outside Linebacker

Mark Williams (6-4, 220, Soph.) has been one of the Buckeyes' budding stars for the past couple of years. Now, with the graduation of Jay Koch, Williams gets his chance to shine this year. His main attribute is quickness when covering running backs or tight ends on short pass patterns. But Williams can establish himself against the run as well. He came on strong at the end of the 1990 season, getting a career-high five tackles in the Liberty Bowl.



WILLIAMS

Preston Harrison (6-4, 235, Fr.) switched from the quarterback logjam last spring and found himself a home at linebacker. Despite a groin injury that hampered him all of last season, Harrison showed no ill effects from the injury last spring and expects to fight Williams for playing time this season.

### Boundary Cornerback

Bryan Cook (6-3, 190, Jr.) switched over from safety in the spring and immediately made an impact. Cook gives the Buckeyes a larger look at the strong side of the field and has enough power and speed to play speedy receivers one on one. It's unlikely he can be outjumped for the ball with his 36-inch vertical leap.



COOK

Brent Johnson (6-1, 218, Jr.) has moved from his inside linebacker spot this year to give the Buckeyes added strength at cornerback. Johnson, who was an all-state running back at Bexley (Ohio), often had trouble maintaining enough weight to play linebacker, so he should be more comfortable in the secondary. The mentality he has built through the last two seasons as a linebacker, though, could work to his advantage when making tackles on opposing receivers.

### Open Side Cornerback

Foster Paulk (5-11, 190, Jr.) has been a part-time starter the past two seasons and figures to be a full-time one this year. The fastest of the Buckeye defensive backs, Paulk is expected to be called upon for more one-on-one coverage this season and he expects to add to his career interception total this year. He should also replace Vinnie Clark as the Buckeyes' top punt blocker this year.



PAULK

Tim Walton (6-0, 165, Soph.) has made great strides in the past year and may get even more experience this season. Walton has proved himself to be a ball hawk, as evidenced by his three interceptions last year in just 89 minutes of action. He missed almost all of spring practice due to a pulled hamstring and spent his summer in school attempting to retain his eligibility for the upcoming season.

### Strong Safety

Roger Harper (6-4, 224, Soph.) made the switch from offense to defense a successful one last year and is now being praised as one of the top up-and-coming defensive back prospects in the entire nation. His size and speed give the Buckeyes' secondary a bigger look, one which it hasn't had in recent years. Harper also appears to have the ability to provide man coverage on deep routes, another facet of the OSU secondary that has been lacking in the past.



HARPER

Tim Patillo (5-11, 170, Fr.) can play either safety position, but is expected to concentrate mainly on the strong safety position this season. Despite his size, he can deliver big hits and has the speed to be able to help out on coverage assignments.

He should be used quite a bit in the Buckeyes' nickel coverages.

### Free Safety

Chico Nelson (6-1, 190, Soph.) came out of spring practice with the number one position, solidifying it with a bone-jarring tackle of teammate Cedric Saunders in the annual spring game. Nelson is an exciting crowd pleaser who sacrifices his body to great lengths to make the big hit. In addition to his tackling prowess, Nelson also has excellent coverage skills.



NELSON

The second-team free safety will likely come from the pack of incoming freshman defensive backs signed by the Buckeyes last winter.

### Special Teams

Tim Williams (5-9, 180, Soph.) led the Buckeyes in scoring last season with 79 points. He made 13 of 18 field goal attempts, including seven of his last eight during the regular season. One of Williams' kicks was a 52-yarder against Boston College, tying him for fourth-longest field goal in OSU history. He enters 1991 with a streak of 40 consecutive PATS, just 23 behind Pat O'Morrow's school record of 63 in a row. His only problem seems to be lack of distance on kickoffs, but he hopes to improve upon that this season. He is also expected to be the team's punter this year, although incoming freshman Mike Crissy could get that job.



WILLIAMS

Jon Berger (5-11, 190, Sr.) will be Williams' backup again this year. Although he has never attempted a collegiate field goal or extra point, he provides insurance in the event Williams gets injured. Berger also kicked off 13 times last season.

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## Senior Thinks He Has Served Apprenticeship Long Enough

## Graham Enters Year With Slight QB Edge

TIM CALISON



When you are fighting for the starting quarterback position at Ohio State, it seems that everyone wants to talk with you. Long-time Columbus sportscaster Jimmy Crum (center) and his photographer interview Kent Graham (11) during photo day.

By Rich Leonardo

If you enjoy life on the edge, then you might consider trading places with Ohio State quarterback Kent Graham.

Graham knows something about edges.

The 6-5, 220-pound senior seems to have a slight edge in the battle being waged to become the Buckeyes' starting quarterback this fall. But if he has more than just a slight edge, nobody in charge is saying.

"If Kent has an edge, it's simply because he's older and has been in there a little," said OSU quarterbacks coach Ron Hudson. "He still has to prove to us that he won't make some of the careless mistakes he made in the spring. If he doesn't throw interceptions and force the ball, then I'd say he's got a real good chance of starting."

Last season, Graham battled Kirk Herbstreit for the backup job to starter Greg Frey. Graham won the battle for number two, and the former Notre Dame backup played in six games, completing 15 of 26 passes for 195 yards and three touchdowns.

This season, Frey is gone, but Graham is still battling Herbstreit, with redshirt freshman Joe Pickens thrown into the fray as well. So far, during a battle that began last spring and, according to head coach John Cooper, may continue well into the regular season, Graham seems up to the task.

"I've been preparing hard all summer to be the best I can possibly be, both mentally and physically," he said. "I've studied the play book intensely and I've lost weight (27 pounds), so I feel I'm better prepared to play than at any time in my career."

Graham's weight loss is apparently in answer to those who questioned his mobility last year. When offensive coordinator Elliot Uzelac came on board last winter, one of his first edicts was that several players rid themselves of excess baggage. Graham was one, and he did so.

"It's a bonus to have a quarterback who can move around well," Hudson said. "With Kent's loss of weight, I think you'll see some real improvement there."

Improving the quarterback position from last season might be a tall order, considering Frey's experience and his three straight 2,000-yard passing seasons. Yet his failure to get the Buckeyes to the Rose Bowl in three seasons as a

## Top Guns

Single-season passing yardage for Ohio State starting quarterbacks:

QB	Yr.	Yardage
Art Schlichter	1981	2,551
Jim Karsatos	1985	2,311
Jim Karsatos	1986	2,212
Greg Frey	1989	2,132
Greg Frey	1990	2,062
Greg Frey	1988	2,028
Mike Tomczak	1984	1,952
Mike Tomczak	1983	1,942
Art Schlichter	1980	1,930
Art Schlichter	1979	1,816
Tom Tupa	1987	1,786
John Borton	1952	1,555
Art Schlichter	1978	1,250
Bill Long	1966	1,180
Cornelius Greene	1975	1,066
Don Unverferth	1965	1,061
Rod Gerald	1977	1,016
Rex Kern	1969	1,002
Rex Kern	1968	972
Cornelius Greene	1974	939
Anthony Curcillo	1951	912
Don Unverferth	1964	871
Greg Hare	1972	815
Tom Matte	1960	737
Don Lamka	1971	718
Don Unverferth	1963	586
Pandel Savic	1949	581
Bill Leggett	1954	578

starter led to his disfavor with many OSU fans.

"Greg was a good quarterback, and he had a ton of experience," Cooper said. "But Kent has done everything we've asked of him, and we're anxious to get him out there and see what he can do."

"Having to start the season with a brand new quarterback is really one of the great things about college football. You get to start over, start anew. We'll be just fine with whomever is our new quarterback."

Cooper's referral to "whomever" leaves a lingering doubt about who will be the starter.

"I'm confident Kent can do the job," Hudson said. "But to predict how many games we might win with him at the helm is unfair. However, it is fair to say

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that we have the nucleus, especially at quarterback, to be in contention for the title in November."

A title in November would be sweet music to the Buckeye faithful and would keep the hounds away from Cooper's front door as well. In a season in which every game is rumored to be a "must win," the play of OSU's quarterback must be impeccable.

"People can speculate all they want, but they don't know what they're talking about," Hudson said. "It's all in how you define win. Teams just don't go out and win 12 games anymore. It's just not done. There's only one or maybe two teams a year that manage to win 11, so to say that this young team will go out and win 11 or 12 games to save somebody's job that's not in jeopardy anyway is ludicrous."

"We're going to play the guy who best fits our needs with no conscious effort to worry about jobs or a certain number of wins."

OSU's needs in the past have sometimes simply been the ability to hand off to great running backs, but the strength of Graham's right arm is no secret.

"I think we'll throw long on occasion, but mostly we'll go with a controlled passing attack," Graham said. "But other teams shouldn't take for granted that we won't go deep, because we certainly can."

While the deep pass is the crowd pleaser, the running of Scottie Graham, Carlos Snow, Butler Bynote and Raymond Harris assures the Buckeyes of a strong running game. Again, a mobile quarterback would fit in nicely with that running game.

"I've always felt comfortable rolling

out and moving around in the pocket," Graham said. "I've gotten a label as someone who can't move, but I've never felt that way. In fact, last fall I put on a couple of scrambling exhibitions."

Being mistaken for Rex Kern or Cornelius Greene is not, however, one of Graham's problems.

"People shouldn't expect Kent to run around back there and make things happen," Hudson said. "We have to utilize what he does best, and that's throwing the football downfield. If he's consistent and executes the game plan, then he'll be doing his job and leading by example as well."

Graham, who transferred to Ohio State from Notre Dame, would like to lead the Buckeyes to the same kind of success his former school has enjoyed. Graham is the proud owner of a national championship ring and would love to have another.

"As a leader, my teammates know exactly what I can do," he said. "I'm sure they're confident with me as their quarterback."

Highly touted out of Wheaton (Ill.) North and labeled a blue chip prospect at Notre Dame, Graham is now at the beginning of the end of his college career, and he hopes it has a happy ending.

"There is obviously a lot of pressure, no doubt about it," he said. "I mean, this is my last go-round and I want it to be my very best. Yet I'm trying to keep things in perspective because I can't perform to the best of my abilities if I let unnecessary pressure get to me."

"When I'm out there, I'll play as hard as I can and that will hopefully be good enough to please everybody and put us in the Rose Bowl."

## GRAHAM AT A GLANCE

**KENT GRAHAM - 11**

**6-5, 220, Senior**

**Wheaton, Ill.**

**North H.S.**

**Born 11-1-68**

**Major - Business**

**FILE NOTES -** Hoping to succeed

three-year starter Greg

Frey as the Buckeyes' number

one quarterback this season.

Spent last year as Frey's back-

up, seeing action in six games.

Completed 57.7 percent of his

passes last season (15 of 26) for

195 yards and three touchdowns.

Transferred to Ohio State from Notre Dame following the 1988 season.

Has a national championship ring from his days as a backup quarterback to Tony Rice with the Fighting Irish. Strong arm always makes him a

threat to go deep.

**PERSONAL -** Lost more than 20 pounds during the off-season to help

increase his mobility. Was one of the most sought-after quarterbacks in

the nation out of high school. Got his first collegiate start with Notre

Dame against Boston College and, three years later with Ohio State,

threw his first collegiate touchdown pass against Boston College. One of a

handful of married players on the roster. He and his wife, Courtney,

had their first child just before the annual Big Ten Kickoff Luncheon in

Chicago, a 7-pound, 12-ounce son named Taylor Zachary.



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*Frequently Written Off, Herbstreit Battles For Top Spot***QB Knows What It's Like To Come Back**

Kirk Herbstreit (4) hopes to see more game action at quarterback this year than he has the last two seasons. Herbstreit, who was limited to special teams action last year, is fighting for the starting quarterback spot with Kent Graham and Joe Pickens.

By Mike Wachsman

There are comebacks, and then there are comebacks.

Ohio State has a couple of players — most notably linebackers John Kacherski and Andy Gurd — who are making comebacks from serious injuries.

Then there is junior quarterback Kirk Herbstreit. Although he has never been injured while at Ohio State, the 6-2, 213-pounder knows quite a bit about comebacks.

Herbstreit has yo-yoed his way up and down the depth chart at quarterback since signing with the Buckeyes in 1988. He has always had the "option style" tag, something that didn't exactly fit well into Ohio State's pro style passing attack of the past three years.

Herbstreit competed and competed, but never saw any action. He had to accept the number three position last year and was even relegated to the kickoff coverage team.

Players with lesser hearts might have given up the dream of becoming the starting quarterback at Ohio State. Some may question his ability, but no one questions Herbstreit's heart.

He's back again, this time competing for the starting position and demanding notice from the OSU coaching staff.

He is in the thick of a three-way battle with senior Kent Graham, the number one backup last year, and red-shirt freshman Joe Pickens, touted by experts as the next great OSU passer.

Many figure the ultimate decision will come down to one between Graham and Pickens. But if you feel that way, keep your opinion to yourself. The only opinions that matter to Herbstreit are those of the coaching staff.

"It doesn't bother me that people are thinking about Kent and Joe first," he said. "I don't let it affect me at all. I just hope it doesn't affect any of the coaches' thoughts and what they do. I still think

I'm in the race, and it's going to be a good battle."

Ohio State head coach John Cooper and quarterbacks coach Ron Hudson have repeatedly stated that all three will get a chance for substantial playing time during the three-game non-conference schedule.

Still, there remain doubters.

"Knowing Kirk like I do, I think it makes it tough on him," Hudson said. "It's like anything else. You want to be accepted by the public, and he's pretty sensitive about those things. He has a lot of pride."

"He is a person that probably lets this bother him, but at the same time, he's letting it pump him up because he wants to show everybody what he can do."

"He's coming in with a good attitude, but at the same time, he wants to show people, 'Hey, I'm not third here, and I'm going to get this position.'"

One of the prerequisites for playing quarterback is the ability to throw the football. To hear Hudson and Herbstreit tell it, there was a lot of schooling in "Passing Technique 101" when Herbstreit came to Columbus.

"When he came in here, he couldn't throw a lick, to be honest with you," Hudson said. "In high school, all he did was run the option. He has to improve a little bit in the drop-back scheme, but he worked real hard this summer. He can throw on the move, because that's what he did in high school."

"But he has improved drastically his technique, his confidence, his presence, everything. I wouldn't hesitate at all to play Kirk."

You'll get no argument from the pupil.

"I'm much more confident in my passing ability now, especially the drop-back," Herbstreit said. "I feel much more at ease. It's like Coach Hudson said. It's been a 180-degree turn. When

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I came in, I was strictly option and I wasn't really comfortable with throwing. Now I don't have any problem with throwing the ball."

Like any good field general, Herbstreit has a plan mapped out for his assault on the starting job.

"My goal is to start by the time the Big Ten season starts," he said. "Hard work and not making mistakes should

get me there. I would love to take us to the Rose Bowl and go undefeated. That's my main goal. The dream of anybody who has grown up wanting to be a Buckeye is to go to Ann Arbor undefeated, beat Michigan and go to the Rose Bowl.

"It would be the best, the greatest feeling ever. And I think we can do it."

Herbstreit — or Graham or Pickens for that matter — will have to work with almost entirely new receivers, as starters Jeff Graham and Bobby Olive went to the NFL. Projected starters Bernard Edwards and Brian Stablein caught just 22 passes between them last year.

The inexperience that runs rampant throughout the OSU passing game doesn't really worry Herbstreit. In fact, he thinks the Buckeyes may be the surprise team of 1991.

"There's no doubt we can contend for the title," he said. "Once we get into fall practice, the quarterbacks and receivers should be on the same page. With the schedule we've got, we should go into Michigan 10-0, no doubt in my mind, especially if the defense can stay healthy. We have a lot of talent over there."

"That first conference game being with Wisconsin is a real advantage. Plus, all four of those first games are at home, which is another advantage. It should just carry over. Everything is in our hands right now and we just have to take advantage of it. The table's set for us."

There has been speculation about how the devastating 23-11 loss to Air Force in the Liberty Bowl might affect the Buckeyes this season.

"We don't think about it," he said. "It's not really brought up at all. It's not an issue. We just kind of dropped it after that night. We build a little more on the Michigan game. We were one inch away from being in the Rose Bowl."

"We can build on that, I suppose, but this is a new team. There's a new foundation. We're putting the old traditions behind us. We're forgetting about the old and bringing in the new."

## HERBSTREIT AT A GLANCE

### KIRK HERBSTREIT - 4

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FILE NOTES - Played his way

into the battle for the starting

quarterback position with a

strong showing last spring. He

completed four of seven passes

for 37 yards in the annual

spring game. Herbstreit came

to the Buckeyes as strictly an

option quarterback, but has

worked hard to perfect his

skills to fit in with OSU's pro-style offense. Handled the team's holding

assignments on place-kicks and will do so again this season. His only

pass attempt last season came on a botched extra point attempt and was

intercepted. Has seen only 52 minutes of game action in two seasons.

PERSONAL - The first player to commit to John Cooper as head coach

at Ohio State, Herbstreit verbally committed Dec. 31, 1987, the same

day that Cooper was hired. Led Centerville to a perfect 10-0 record in

1986 and was named Ohio's player of the year in '87. His father, Jim,

played at OSU from 1958-60 and coached under Woody Hayes in 1961

and 1962. Hobbies include baseball, fishing and video games.



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# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

Vol. 11, No. 1

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Section 2

RECRUITING COVERAGE  
BEGINS ON PAGE 36

## *Levels Charges Against Philosophy Of Coaching Staff*

# Smith Quits Team During Preseason Camp

By Mike Wachman

Sophomore tailback Robert Smith quit the Ohio State football team Aug. 23 amid allegations that members of the coaching staff care little about academics and that players are being unnecessarily injured.

Smith claimed head coach John Cooper and assistant coach and offensive coordinator Elliot Uzelac were at the root of the problem, saying he would not consider returning to the team if the two coaches remained in their positions.

However, by Aug. 27, when *BSB* went to press, Smith's stance had softened slightly. He had a meeting with athletic director Jim Jones Aug. 26 and another with Cooper at 6:30 a.m. the following day. Those meetings fueled speculation that Smith, named national freshman of the year by *United Press International* in 1990 after gaining 1,126 yards, may be back on the team before the opening game with Arizona Sept. 7.

Smith told *The Columbus Dispatch* in the Aug. 27 issue, "I'd love to come back," but when *BSB* contacted the tailback at his Columbus apartment, all he would say was, "I've already said too much the way it is. I'm not going to say anything more about it."

Several newspapers later reported Smith had indicated his problem was with Uzelac, not Cooper.

Neither Jones nor Cooper would comment on their meetings with Smith, but Cooper went out of his way to defend Uzelac.

"He has done a great job for us since he's been here," Cooper said. "Elliot and I are on the same page regarding academics, discipline, toughness and hard-nosed football. He's teaching the kind of football that I love, that I played and I've taught myself."

According to reports, Smith said Uzelac, the first-year offensive coordinator who replaced Jim Coletto, told Smith he was at Ohio State to play foot-

ball and was taking academics too seriously. On a separate occasion, Smith said he was studying in his dorm at 10:30 p.m., curfew time for the players, and Uzelac told him to turn his lights out, even though he was studying.

Uzelac refused all requests for interviews.

"Robert did say he didn't feel like we were doing enough for our athletes academically," Cooper said, "that we didn't care about an athlete's academic progress until he was in trouble. As far as I'm concerned, that's completely false."

"I have never in my coaching career asked a young man to miss an academic appointment of any kind for anything related to football. Period."

"The first goal we have at Ohio State is to earn a degree. That's the thing I emphasize almost every time we have a team meeting. Go to class, go to study hall and graduate from Ohio State. Our seniors this year are all scheduled to graduate."

Tom Banc, Smith's high school coach at Euclid, Ohio, backed Smith on the charges about Uzelac.

"I back him 100 percent," Banc told *BSB*. "I've made a lot of phone calls and talked to a lot of people. Robert made a comment about one of the coaches caring about football before academics, and I've talked to several people, and everybody I've talked to, without knowing Robert Smith, would believe that his comments are 100 percent accurate, knowing the coach that is involved."

However, Banc was quick to point out that criticism leveled at Cooper was unfounded.

"During the recruitment process," the Euclid coach said, "John Cooper said that if a class conflicted with football, the class would take precedence. I believe John Cooper. But the kid gets down there and another coach is telling him to miss class."

Continued On Page 51



Ohio State sophomore tailback Robert Smith quit the team Aug. 23 amid allegations that members of the coaching staff, particularly offensive coordinator Elliot Uzelac, stressed athletics over academics.

## *Put Academics First? Don't Be So Naive*

By Mark Rea

On more than one occasion, I have been labeled a pessimist. I prefer to think I'm a realist. In any case, I never knew just how many naive people there are in the world.

Whether or not Robert Smith was justified when he walked off the football team at Ohio State Aug. 23 is irrelevant. As we went to press Aug. 27, it appeared that Smith was on his way toward mending some fences with head coach John Cooper, indeed, perhaps on his way toward rejoining the team.

The question I have is not how circumstances could have arisen to lead Smith to his decision to leave the team, but, rather, how could this bright, articulate young man who will most likely make a fine doctor someday be so naive when it

### COMMENTARY

comes to the big business of college football.

I am in no way, shape, or form advocating that college football players should not be made to attend classes. They should be encouraged to attend them. After all, they are trading upon their talents in that particular sport to obtain the college education and the degree that will serve them long after their bodies can no longer stand up to the rigors of football. And that is precisely the point. Young

Continued on Page 51



# Smith's Prep Coach Defends His Decision

Continued From Page 29

"It's very simple. Robert Smith will play for John Cooper, but he won't play for Elliot Uzelac. He told me he would have no problem coming back and playing for John Cooper. But under no circumstances would he compromise his principles and play for Elliot Uzelac."

In addition to the charges he leveled at Uzelac, Smith also charged that the coaching staff was putting players in danger with all the preseason contact, and that players were getting injured unnecessarily.

"The other comment that was made, about the safety of our football players by the coaches, I'll say it again," Cooper

said. "My son played for me, and we treat our football players exactly like I would treat my own son."

"Sure, we run a tough, physical football camp. We work these players hard. We do have a curfew. And if that's wrong, then in Robert's opinion, maybe we're wrong."

Some of Smith's teammates answered his charges. They appeared to support his decision, but some had a few problems with the way he went about it.

"Robert probably went a little bit further than he needed to," said senior linebacker Andy Gurd. "Sure, winning is very important here. That's why you come to Ohio State to play football. You also come here to get a great education, and that's what the majority of us do here."

"Rob may have concentrated on his education a little bit more than others and maybe he put more emphasis on it. I've never had any problems juggling football and academics."

Junior linebacker Steve Tovar seemed to echo Gurd's sentiments.

"He's maybe more concerned about his academics than most people," Tovar said. "I'm concerned about my academics, too, but I want to play football. I want to graduate with a degree and I want to go on to play professional football someday. I have to keep them both in perspective and balance them any way I can."

Some players indicated that Smith's actions might have stemmed from an incident that occurred at a recent practice involving senior linebacker John Kacherski.

According to Kacherski, he jumped offside on a particular play, was yelled at by Cooper, argued with the coach and was told to run laps. But instead of running the laps, he left the field and went into the locker room of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. There, he encountered Smith.

Some have claimed that incident cemented Smith's decision to quit the team, but Kacherski didn't agree. In fact, although the two players talked about Smith pondering a decision to leave the team, Kacherski said his being thrown out of practice should not have cemented the decision.

"If you get a little bit older, you can understand that coaches look at you as a player," Kacherski said. "If any other player had done it, I'm sure the exact same thing would have been done. What a lot of people don't know is that I ran my mouth to Coach Cooper. I got ripped for it."

"If you're on a team, you can't have a leader running his mouth to the coaches. And that's why he kicked me off the field. I ran a lot for it. I talked to him about it. He was disappointed with me. I took my medicine and lived with it."

As for Smith's charges that Uzelac's disciplined camp was too tough and encouraged injuries, many players disagreed with the star tailback.

Kacherski went on to say that maybe things are better when a tougher camp is run. Early in his career, the senior linebacker played for former OSU head coach Earle Bruce, and those preseason practice sessions were rough.

"This is the way I always remembered camp being," Kacherski said. "I always heard the hell stories about camp. That's just the way it is. Camp is

hard on everybody. It's exactly like Earle's last camp five years ago, my freshman year. We would be up in the morning bright and early and he would keep us until about 10 at night in meetings."

"The younger guys don't know that. The only thing they remember is being up at seven and being done after dinner. That's the way they think camp is everywhere, but it's not."

"I'm disappointed about that statement, guys saying camp is hard. Camp is not hard. There are probably guys who will wake up in the morning aching and paining and thinking about quitting. But I don't think about that stuff when Saturday afternoon rolls around. I'm sure what we're doing now will help us in the end."

Not every player was sympathetic toward the sophomore running back. Junior nose tackle Greg Smith, no relation to Robert Smith, but a premed major like the tailback, said his former teammate placed blame unnecessarily.

"If he would have said he was sick of football and wanted to concentrate on something else, that would have been fine," Greg Smith said. "But the way he went and did it, and then he tries to bad-mouth our coaches and team. He says our whole team is dissatisfied. That's when I got mad and wanted to say something."

Greg Smith said he understood Robert Smith's academic situation, including failing a chemistry class during summer quarter, but also said he should face the music and take responsibility for his own plight.

"Robert is taking the same classes I've already taken," Greg Smith said. "As a matter of fact, the class he was failing this summer is the same class I took last summer. I had an 'A' going into the final, but we got into two-a-days, I kind of messed the final up and ended up with a B-plus."

"Robert is failing the class. He admitted to me several times that he

never goes to class, but to blame Coach Cooper and Coach Uzelac is ridiculous. He was missing practice once a day for that class. They were letting him and they were giving him a tutor — he wanted a tutor. He's got an 'F.' He needs to study harder to get an 'A' on the final so he can get a 'C' in the class."

Banc later confirmed that Smith was having problems in the chemistry class, which was an advanced level class, and had been receiving tutoring.

Greg Smith added that he felt sorry that Robert Smith quit the team, but quickly said that the team will continue toward its goal of winning the Big Ten championship and going to the Rose Bowl.

"I feel bad for him," Greg Smith said. "I'm not totally hating him, but I think he made a big mistake and jumped to conclusions and went ahead with something without really thinking about it."

Banc said Smith did not jump to conclusions without thinking about the consequences.

"He told me he had thought about it for a long time," Banc said. "I know when Robert does something he thinks it through. The only thing I wish he had done differently was said, 'I'm leaving the team,' and left it at that. Let the comments come from the Ohio State people and then retort to that. This way, he looks like the villain."

The bottom line, according to Banc, is that Smith's statements have substance and that the youngster is being unfairly vilified by people who don't have knowledge of the situation.

"He's getting ripped as being a prima donna for all this," Banc said. "People better realize something. Here's a kid who last year, they were talking about three years down the road, he was going to win a Heisman Trophy and be a number one draft pick."

"You're talking about him walking away from a million-dollar-a-year contract. If that doesn't take guts to do what he did, I don't know what does."

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