

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 16, No. 14

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

January 11, 1997

Rose Bowl Champs

Buckeyes Rally To Rose Bowl Victory, No. 2 Finish In Polls

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

It is a fact of life that few people remember who finishes second.

However, few people who witnessed the 1997 Rose Bowl will forget its thrilling finish.

Ohio State drove 65 yards in the closing seconds to the winning touchdown in a 20-17 Rose Bowl win over Arizona State on Jan. 1 in Pasadena, Calif. That result propelled the Buckeyes to a No. 2 finish in both major college football polls for the 1996 season.

The win marks a major breakthrough for Ohio State, which won the Granddaddy of 'Em All for the first time in 23 years and the sixth time overall.

It also means a lot for OSU coach John Cooper, who had won just one previous bowl game in seven tries at OSU after winning the 1987 Rose Bowl at Arizona State.

"We've won some big games," Cooper said. "We haven't won one this big. Maybe you guys will quit writing about us not being able to win the big game."

"It can't get any better than this."

The Buckeyes (11-1) were one of five major Division I teams to finish the season with one loss. Florida (12-1) was the overwhelming choice for the top spot in both The Associated Press media poll and the USA Today/CNN coaches poll after walloping previously unbeaten Florida State 52-20 in the Sugar Bowl.

Those poll results were not popular in Columbus despite the fact Florida garnered 123 1/2 of the possible 129 first-place votes between the two polls.

"You are looking at a team with more heart than any team in America," said OSU linebacker and co-captain Greg Bellisari at a Jan. 3 rally at St. John Arena. "Not only do we have more heart than any team in America, we're the best team in America."

Ohio State's heart and determination were never more evident than in the closing moments of the Rose Bowl.

The second-ranked Sun Devils had driven to a go-ahead touchdown with 1:40 left when their elusive quarterback, Jake "The Snake" Plummer, scrambled in from

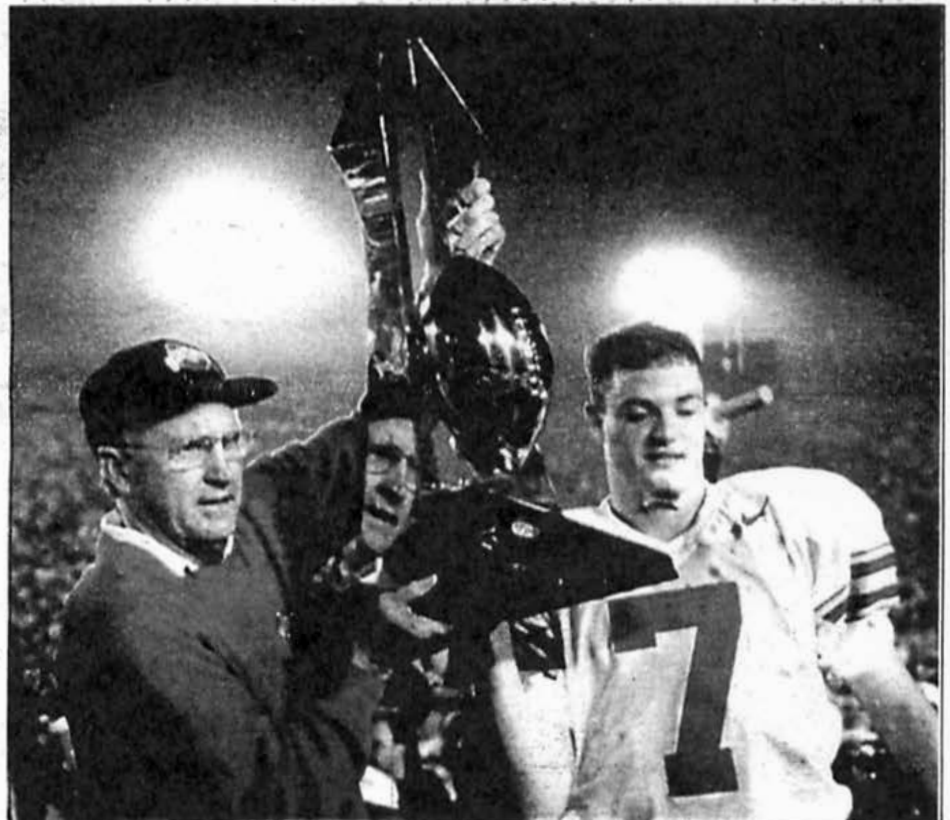


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KEVIN DYE

CHAMPIONSHIP MOMENT — Ohio State head coach John Cooper and sophomore quarterback Joe Germaine hoist up the Rose Bowl championship trophy after Germaine guided a last-minute scoring drive in OSU's 20-17 win over Arizona State.

Germaine Makes Rose Bowl History

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

He grew up in Mesa, Ariz., 15 minutes from the Arizona State campus.

Growing up, he had season tickets for the Arizona State Sun Devils.

He was even offered a scholarship to play at ASU — but it would have been as a defensive back, not a quarterback.

Instead, Joe Germaine attended a nearby junior college with hopes of latching on somewhere as a major-college quarterback, which he did with Ohio State.

And, as fate would have it, Germaine became the hero, rallying the Buckeyes past Arizona State 20-17

in the Rose Bowl Jan. 1 in Pasadena, Calif.

"How about a guy from Scottsdale who comes back and beats his hometown people?" OSU coach John Cooper asked.

Germaine wasn't recruited by ASU as a quarterback, mainly because the Sun Devils already had a threat in Jake "The Snake" Plummer.

In the Rose Bowl, Germaine watched helplessly as Plummer, a Heisman Trophy finalist this year, scored the go-ahead touchdown on an 11-yard scramble with 1:40 left.

The OSU sophomore then went out on the field and did the Snake one better, giving Buckeye backers their own version of "The Drive" to seal away in their football memory bank.

**THE
DRIVE**

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PUBLISHER
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachsman

EDITOR
Steve Helwag

NON-REVENUE SPORTS EDITOR
Mike Wachsman

SENIOR WRITER
Jeff Rapp

PHOTOGRAPHY
Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
Jeff Brehm Mike Greer
Kevin Dye

CONTRIBUTORS
Nicole Burch Bob Roehm
Rich Leonardo Steve Siegfried
Jason Paquet Stacey Stathulis
Rebecca Roberts

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
Wendy Craver & Associates
Jan Jager Cindy Osborne

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OPINION

Rose Bowl Win Should Satisfy

Let's get one thing straight right now. I'm driving in from Detroit, two days after the Rose Bowl, and I'm listening to some of the insufferable radio talk show prattle and one of the insane callers utters these immortal words:

"That win at the Rose Bowl almost makes up for the Michigan loss."

Almost!!
I almost fell out of my car when I heard that.

Let me come right out and tell you something: Anybody who feels that way *wasn't* there.

That was a religious experience, people. The 50,000 OSU fans who were at the Rose Bowl were louder than any group of 90,000-plus I heard all year at Ohio Stadium.

Let me point out a few things:

- Ohio State won the Rose Bowl for the first time in 23 years and only the sixth time in school history.

- The Buckeyes showed incredible heart — Luke Fickell playing with a ripped pectoral muscle, Joe Germaine courageously leading the team down the field in the waning seconds. That was as exciting a football game as you will ever see anywhere, and Ohio State won.

- Nobody finished unbeaten this year. In fact, only five top Division I teams finished with one loss.

- The Buckeyes ended the year No. 2 in the country, their highest final rating in 23 years.

I can understand people being hung up on Michigan to an extent. It cost OSU the national title, it is OSU's main rival, and the Buckeyes have had real problems trying to beat the Wolverines in recent years.

But I will remind you Ohio State plays Michigan every year.

This was only the school's third Rose Bowl trip in 21 years and its first since 1985.

My advice to people like the one above is to savor the things that are worth savoring in life. This is a team and a result you should take pride in and enjoy, instead of looking for shortcomings.

Buckeye fans should bask in the Rose Bowl glow for the next eight months. Their patience has finally been rewarded.

And let's look at this bottom line:

Michigan just graduated a group of seniors who never went to a Rose Bowl; Ohio State has sent off a group of seniors who won more games than any other senior class in OSU history.

Enough said.

A Week To Remember

While back, a fan asked us to do a time line of what a week in the life of *BSB* is like. I thought this would be a good time to do it.

I'll start with my trip to OSU's practice at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, Calif., Dec. 30.

• Dec. 30 — Orange Coast is a five-minute trip from the team hotel, the Westin South Coast Plaza, in Costa Mesa.

At practice this day, OSU coach John Cooper announces Stanley Jackson will start the game at quarterback, creating a stir among the media.

From there, we drove an hour up the freeway to Century City, where 20,000 OSU fans congregated at the ABC Entertainment Center for the Buckeye Bash.

The band played all of the usual favorites and you could feel momentum starting to build for the football game.

• Dec. 31 — The team participated in the Rose Bowl luncheon and cavorted on the field. I used this day for sightseeing and a trip

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK with Steve Helwag

south to Dana Point, Calif., to do a whale watch. Then, we shifted our base of operations north to Burbank and celebrated an early New Year's Eve at 9 p.m. Pacific time.

• Jan. 1 — Most of the people in my party were up at 5:45 a.m. to board buses for the Rose Parade. I opted for some additional sleep and some work while watching Alabama drop Michigan in the Outback Bowl.

At 11 a.m., I began my 10-mile trip to the Rose Bowl, arriving in my parking spot just before noon.

Outside the stadium, tickets, priced at \$80 in Columbus, seemingly weren't worth the cardboard they were printed on. I had a family member who couldn't get \$40 for a single.

Inside, the teams wrap up warm-ups at about 1:40. The ASU band comes on followed by the OSU band, which performed a pair of Script Ohio's.

The game begins promptly at 2:05 p.m. Exactly 34 hours later at 5:35 p.m., the Buckeyes were Rose Bowl champions.

The late game and postgame scenes were nearly surreal. The Rose Bowl took on a dreamlike appearance due to the darkness and the fog. Afterward, the TV lights shined brightly on Cooper and hero Germaine as they held up the Rose Bowl trophy.

Cooper sent the ASU partisans into a fury with his now-famous comment, "How about a Scottsdale boy coming back to beat the hometown folks?"

After a prolonged postgame routine, talking to coaches, players, OSU officials and fans, we make the hourlong trip to Ontario, Calif.

There, we spend most of the night writing and recalling this incredible game.

• Jan. 2 — We wake up at 6 a.m. and prepare to board a flight to Minneapolis. On board, I use my laptop computer to continue the writing process. We connect with a flight to Detroit, arriving in Motown at about 6 p.m. Eastern time.

We grab a bite to eat and I head to Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor to watch the basketball Buckeyes tackle No. 8 Michigan. My wife decides to stay behind at the hotel to watch the Florida-Florida State game — bad choice.

As far as I know, only broadcasters Terry Smith and Mike Gleason, OSU officials Michelle Willis and Gerry Emig, football/basketball player John Lumpkin and I did the LA-Detroit double shot, although I heard OSU lineman Larry Waldon, a cousin of Michigan's Robert Traylor, was also in the house.

Now, they've been talking Fab Five with this Michigan group, but on this one night Randy Ayers was able to squeeze out a win.

His game plan — pushing the ball against the exhausted Wolverines, two days removed from a three-game Hawaiian road trip — was a nice stroke.

By midnight, it was the Buckeyes — not the vaunted, droopy drawers Wolverines — who left Crisler Arena with the swagger and all the bravado.

One of the Buckeyes writes "Show Me The Money" on the locker room blackboard, a reference to the must-see Tom Cruise hit "Jerry Maguire" and who knows what else pertaining to the UM program. (Did you get a full powertrain warranty on your Ford Explorer?)

• Jan. 3 — We awake and start the trek back to Columbus. It turns into an all-day trip with stops to eat, but I keep pounding on my computer in the back seat as my wife drives. Thank you, dear.

I make it into the office at 4 p.m. to tie up some loose ends, then head to St. John Arena for the welcome home party. The team receives a thunderous reception from 10,000 OSU fanatics.

"Coach Cooper, welcome home to Ohio," Gov. George Voinovich says.

Indeed, Coach, welcome home.

Lumpkin got a hero's welcome from his teammates, hugging and high-fiving each one a day after helping the basketball team beat hated Michigan.

• Jan. 4 — I begin my first full day back in the office, writing, editing stories and assisting with page layout.

A midday break takes me back to St. John to watch the Lady Buckeyes dispatch No. 17-ranked Notre Dame. OSU's resolve struck me as much as anything. They don't have Katie Smith to rely on anymore. They have to earn everything they get.

All good things must come to an end, though, as the men's basketball team comes down from Cloud Nine and falls to Illinois.

• Jan. 5 — This is a major work day. This is the day, traditionally, when we put *BSB* together.

This involves more writing, editing, page layout and tedious tasks like scanning in photos and typing in box scores and football and basketball stats.

The issue you are reading, one of our larger ones at 60 pages, is a toughie. Close to 40 of the pages — maybe more, I lost count — hinged on action that occurred while the staff was in California.

That leaves just three days for us to put it together upon our return.

• Jan. 6 — This is our deadline day. The important thing about this edition of *BSB* is the fact many people will likely hold on to it since OSU won the Rose Bowl — the first Rose Bowl title in *BSB*'s 16 seasons.

We want everything to be perfect, so we set about checking and rechecking everything.

As we finally head to our cars and drive off into the Columbus night, the first of 10 weekly issues for the winter season is done.



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OHIO STATE VS. ARIZONA STATE

Offense Comes Through In Clutch At Rose Bowl

Cheerleaders had hands over their mouths in utter disbelief. Athletic director Andy Geiger was choking up. Gordon Gee bear-hugged the victorious coach, John Cooper, who in turn smooched the president's wife. Fans were bouncing and screaming. The Best Damn Band In The Land was blaring.

But no group could have been more thrilled with OSU's 20-17 win over Arizona State in the Rose Bowl than the Buckeye offense.

In a season that long will be linked with an aggressive defensive breakthrough, the offense — with the exception of decorated left tackle Orlando Pace — has been a tad maligned.

The struggle to find a clear-cut quarterback raged on into the final quarter of the season. The offensive line — except that guy Pace, of course — often didn't play up to its capabilities in the second half of the season. Fullbacks and tight ends weren't much impact at times. And most of all, the scoreboard stayed a little dim late in the year thanks to lackluster showings on offense.

It got to the point where many fans were actually happy to hear offensive assistants Joe Hollis and Walt Harris had landed head coaching jobs elsewhere (see page 7).

But when the bowl bug seemingly bit hard again and all was on the line in the final moments in Pasadena, the Buckeyes marched to victory like a Super Bowl champion. Best of all, they did it while heeding monthlong advice: Just have fun.

"We were real relaxed and we just said, 'Hey, we've got to go win this ball game for our seniors and for ourselves.' We figured we were going to go ahead and do it," senior center and offensive captain Juan Porter said.

"As a unit, you want to have that pride and bear all the pressure. It's a personal game and you live for the clock winding down and everything going against you. We felt like we wanted to put the game on our shoulders, especially the offensive line."

"To play in an atmosphere like this and then come through, it's the best feeling any athlete could ever have."

Players will tell you they come to a school like Ohio State to get an education and play in a big-time program, but heroism has its merits, too. That's what the offense gained when quarterback Joe Germaine hit David Boston for a 5-yard scoring play with just 19 ticks remaining.

INSIDE THE OFFENSE with Jeff Rapp

"The defense has been there all year and the offense has been under fire a little bit lately to the point where people were questioning us," admitted Matt Keller, who set up the game-winning drive with a 14-yard kickoff return to the OSU 35. "Arizona State plays great defense and so do a lot of the defenses we've played. We pulled it together and pulled it out and it means a lot."

The burden began piling up on the defense again in the Rose Bowl just as it did in the loss to Michigan, when the offense twice did nothing with field position starting inside UM territory in the fourth quarter. That same sinking feeling came back when ASU blocked a Josh Jackson field goal, then took a 17-14 lead on a Jake Plummer touchdown run with just 1:40 to play.

The strain of the situation was obvious on the faces on the bench while OSU began its winning trek.

"It's so ironic it happened this way because the defense has been carrying the offense all year," cornerback Shawn Springs said. "We've been pulling them out. Now they sort of redeemed themselves at just the right time. I'm happy for the offense."

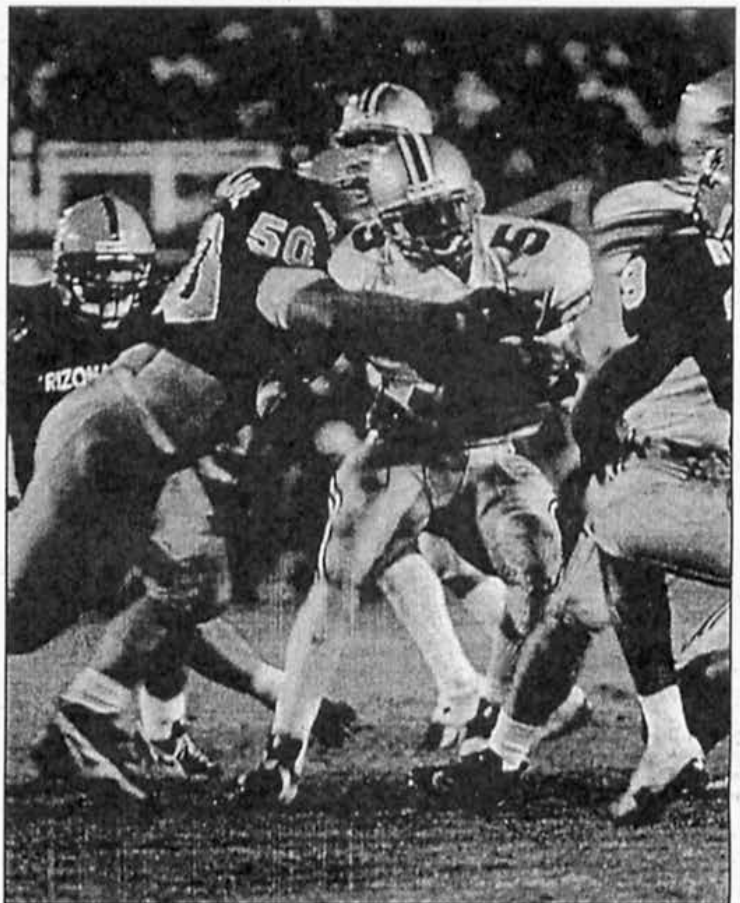
Newly named offensive coordinator Mike Jacobs wasn't able to participate in the sideline celebration after Boston's score — he was calling plays from the press box — but he immediately understood the significance of the moment, one of the program's greatest in many years.

"This team's done so many great things in the last few years, but when you lose that last one it leaves such a sour taste in your mouth," said Jacobs, named to succeed Hollis prior to the trip west. "The seniors really hung in there and showed their true character."

Those other than the seniors seemed to want it just as much.

"When you looked in everybody's eyes on that last drive, you could see everybody wanted to win and everybody was very determined," Pace said. "Those are the type of things you play college football for."

"It was a war. And we engaged in it and won the war."



WILEY GETS THE BALL — OSU freshman tailback Michael Wiley looks for running room as Arizona State's Scott Von der Ahe closes in. Wiley served as Pepe Pearson's backup for the Rose Bowl, carrying seven times for 32 yards.

Call Him 'Joe Cool'

If the Rose Bowl was indeed warfare, that still wasn't enough reason to expect any primal screams or conquering poses from Germaine.

The ultrasmooth sophomore from Mesa, Ariz., was never rattled despite rotating in and out of the game with Stanley Jackson and dealing with unexpected pressure from the ASU defense. If anything, he looked more composed than ever in the final drive, a 12-play gem that covered 65 yards.

"Joe's calm, one of the calmest guys I've ever seen," right guard LeShun Daniels said. "He's a leader out there, him and Stan. But that last drive, what can you say? The offensive line blocked, Joe threw the ball, and the receivers caught it."

Rather than quote General Patton or Woody Hayes, Germaine simply calmed his troops in the huddle and refused to

rush decisions from the pocket. On one play, he tossed the ball away rather than scurry up the sideline.

When the Buckeyes did the unthinkable, Germaine silently pumped his left fist, patted a few helmets and headed for the sideline. Mission accomplished.

"It's just quiet confidence with Joe," Keller said. "When we were at Illinois, he was on fire. He was completing passes all over the place, he threw a couple touchdowns, and he broke a tackle scrambling, running for a touchdown. Everyone's up jumping around and Joe has his hands in his hand-warmer just walking back to the sideline. That's Joe, and that's the kind of QB he is."

Even after it seemed the officials missed two separate pass interference calls on the drive — though two were flagged — Germaine came right back with strikes.

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"We thought there might have been a couple other interference situations," Jacobs said. "I guess they wanted the game to drag out so Arizona State didn't have too much time with the football."

With the tranquil Germaine at the signals and OSU in the red zone with 40 seconds to play, the Buckeyes were thinking victory.

"We felt like we needed to do what we had to do to win," Jacobs said. "We just had a field goal blocked, so we were concerned about that. We wanted to score a touchdown. We said that going into the game, that when we get down there we need to come away with touchdowns and not field goals."

The game winner was set up not only by a pass interference on ASU, but also a slant route by Boston. He lined up wide on the other side and faked the same pattern before breaking out and hauling in Germaine's accurate dart.

"We knew they'd expect a slant; that's why we did it," Jacobs said. "We schemed that up. We also went with maximum protection — both backs were called in to stay and block."

But on the fateful play, called 240 Smash in the huddle, Boston actually was supposed to continue inward toward the post, creating an open area for fellow receiver Dimitrious Stanley.

"Dimitrious was supposed to go to the corner of the end zone right there and I don't know where the DB was going," Boston explained. "Dimitrious is the primary target on that play and I'm supposed to go in and clear it out for him. Really, I'm not supposed to go back out on that play."

Quarterback Still A Question

Even with Germaine's excellence down the stretch, the quarterback position should be quite interesting next season. Germaine finished 9 of 17 for 131 yards and two touchdowns, but Jackson, a junior, wasn't bad at 6 of 14 for 59 yards and a score, an on-the-run strike near the pylon to Boston in the first half. The biggest difference in the stats was that Germaine hit Stanley for a 72-yard TD in the third quarter.

"Stan worked hard all week and thought he earned his job back, then he had a couple rough situations on third down, but he did a good job," Boston said. "Joe came in and threw a nice ball to Dimitrious and he had a pretty good game."

Added Stanley, who finished with five catches for 124 yards, all from Germaine, "They understand what the situation is and neither one of them takes it to heart. We have confidence in both of them, but usually one of them is playing better than the other and today it was Joe Germaine."

Not only did Germaine manage to get OSU 65 yards in less than a minute and a half, but he did it without benefit of a timeout and picking up two critical third-and-longs, both to Stanley. The senior wideout also got the Buckeyes to the ASU 29 with a 12-yard grab on the near sideline.

"I definitely wanted it. We all did," Stanley said. "We go against one of the best defenses every day in practice, so we know we can do anything in that situation, and we wanted to."

The Buckeyes averaged a whopping

9.5 yards per play on first down, but a paltry 1.7 on second and 1.2 on third for the day. Still, they managed to convert three third-and-10s on the winning drive.

"That was very weird, but there were two good defenses out there, so you should expect a few third-and-longs," Daniels said. "As long as we pass-blocked it was all right and we were able to pick things up."

Young Influence

Players like Daniels ended their college careers in style at the Rose Bowl, but the youngsters showed they were just getting started, most notably on offense the aforementioned Boston, Michael Wiley (seven rushes for 32 yards) and redshirt fresh-

men Rob Murphy and Matt Keller.

"Our freshman class is going to be a good class," Boston said. "We hope to come back to the Rose Bowl a couple more times."

Daniels added, "This sets us up for the future because we've got some young guys out here, a lot of young guys. They needed to see us win. We had a winning season, but to come out here and win the Rose Bowl, I think it's going to start a legacy at Ohio State."

The immediate future looks bright as well. Fans partied in the stands and roared during the on-field awards presentation. Knowing an equally rowdy bunch would be awaiting in Columbus, athletic director Andy Geiger chuckled and said, "Maybe the banquet will be fun this year."

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OHIO STATE VS. ARIZONA STATE

Buckeyes Find Way To Slow Down ASU

When you have an unstoppable force meeting an unwavering object, something has to give. This time it was the unstoppable force, indeed stopped by an Ohio State defense turning back the clock to the 1970s, when running was a no-no, passing was risky and scoring was infrequent.

Arizona State, long on both talk and talent, came into the Rose Bowl harboring grand aspirations of winning at least a share of the national championship, pinning hopes on a high-octane offense that averaged over 440 yards per game. When things were wrapped up and the scoreboard read Ohio State 20, Arizona State 17, Sun Devil egos weren't the only bruised items.

"Their defense was relentless," said ASU quarterback Jake Plummer, nearly the hero of the day after an 11-yard TD scamper put his team up 17-14 with under two minutes to play. "It kept me out of rhythm to a certain extent. But we were prepared for everything they did."

That seems a little hard to believe since OSU dusted off some little-used wrinkles against a lethal Arizona State offense spearheaded by Plummer, tailback Terry Battle and receiver Keith Poole.

When ASU lined up in a three-wide set, OSU countered with a nickel package, running linebacker Ryan Miller off

INSIDE THE DEFENSE with Mike Wachsman

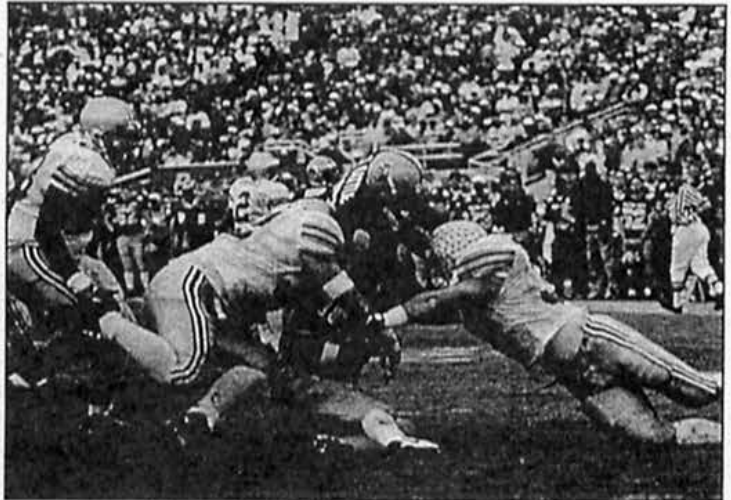
the field and replacing him with extra cornerback Antoine Winfield. The little sophomore did the damage, getting to Plummer unfettered on two separate occasions, forcing big plays both times.

"We've had that in pretty much the whole season but we haven't called it a lot," defensive coordinator Fred Pagac said. "It worked for us. We started sending a little pressure from our nickel package and it did some things for us."

The normally unflappable Plummer was sacked six times, hurried numerous others and didn't get help from much of his supporting cast. Battle tallied just 34 yards and Poole, shackled by corner Shawn Springs, came up with one meager reception for 10 yards.

Arizona State just didn't get it done, especially on first down, where it averaged a paltry 3.2 yards per attempt.

"We saw in some of their tendencies that when they came out with viper personnel (three receivers and one back), we felt our better match-up was to take me out and put another back in," Miller



STEVE HELWAGEN

PLUMMER GOES DOWN — Ohio State defenders Matt Finkes (left) and Greg Bellisari sandwich Arizona State quarterback Jake Plummer for one of OSU's six sacks in the 20-17 win. ASU tailback Terry Battle comes to his quarterback's rescue.

said, sounding ever like the coach. "We didn't anticipate them doing as much of that as they did. They ran that more than half the game. They threw everything at us, but our coaches did a great job of game planning for them."

The Snake Nearly Bit

When Plummer took matters into his own hands, dashing around frantically before taking off up the middle for his seemingly winning score, it was just another in a long line of heroic efforts.

Of course the play of Arizona native Joe Germaine spoiled Plummer's day, but he had nothing to hang his head about after going 19 of 35 for 201 yards and a touchdown, albeit questionable, to receiver Ricky Boyer.

"I have a lot of respect for Jake Plummer," Pagac said. "He made a lot of

plays today. He's one of the best competitors we've ever faced."

Plummer's best throw of the day may have come on fourth-and-4 at the Ohio State 37 with just under three minutes to play. Plummer waited for Lenzie Jackson to rub off Ty Howard, lobbed the ball to the left sideline and completed it for a 29-yard gain. Three plays later he was lying in the end zone, his Sun Devils in the lead.

On the touchdown, Buckeye linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer, who finished with five stops behind the line, had a bead on the elusive Snake but couldn't corral him.

"I blitzed up the middle, got my hands on him and he just slipped out," Katzenmoyer said, noting his gloves were wet from the previous play. "The next thing I know he's running in for a

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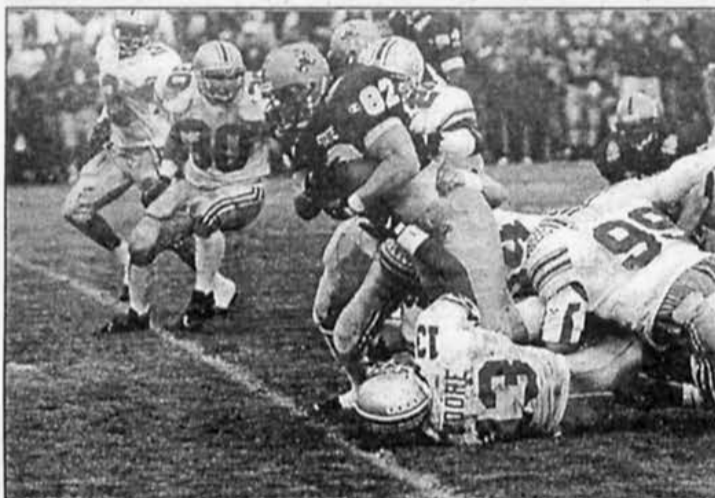
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OHIO STATE VS. ARIZONA STATE



KEVIN DYER

CLOSING IN — Arizona State tight end Steve Bush is ambushed by OSU defensive backs Shawn Springs (24) and Damon Moore (13). Bush caught three passes in the game, including one on ASU's last-ditch drive in the closing seconds.

touchdown and I'm thinking the game is over."

The effervescent Springs, seldom tested during the year, was surprised Plummer had the moxie to try him since he's known for shutting down opponents' best receivers. That's exactly what he did to Poole, a big-play type whom Springs followed like a big brother.

"I'm happy he tested me more than usual," said the grinning Springs. "I'm a little upset with myself because I dropped three picks today. I should have three. Jake Plummer is a great player, though."

The running commentary between Poole and Springs must have been something, but the Buckeye let everyone in on a little of the witty repartee.

"I told him don't try to outrun me because I run a 4.2. I might let you catch one pass. Don't cut me and we'll be all right," Springs said. "Things like that."

Fantastic Finish

After a slight bobble at home against

Michigan to end the season, conventional wisdom said the Buckeyes would do what they do in bowl games nearly every year — lose.

But they were having none of that.

"We showed today that we can win a big game when the pressure's on," said Springs, who finished with five tackles and four deflected passes. "Another thing thought about Ohio State was that we couldn't bounce back after the Michigan game. This year I think we bounced back."

Senior end Mike Vrabel, who stepped up and played maybe his best game of the year with eight stops, believed all the naysayers finally got their just desserts.

"We were just sick and tired of hearing, whether or not it was true, that we tailed off in the last two weeks of the season," he said. "We played three great seasons and never finished it right. I'm glad we came back after Michigan and finished strong."

Another impetus for the Buckeye defense was the loose-lipped Sun Devils'

pregame speech patterns.

All during game week, ASU lobbied for the national title, dismissed OSU as all right but not great and said nothing could stop the march to the top.

The Buckeyes had other plans.

"All week they really hadn't given us any respect," said tackle Luke Fickell, playing with a torn left pectoral muscle that required surgery upon return to Columbus. "That was all right, though. We wanted to be the lay low kind of guys and pump them up. We knew when it came down to it we'd be ready to play."

There is a little satisfaction on the Ohio State side, one that too often has gulped the foul taste of defeat in the postseason. Four points separate the Buckeyes from a likely national championship and to have the final win come on a national stage, in the tradition-rich Rose Bowl, makes it that much sweeter.

"It's a great feeling for Ohio State," Pagac said. "We got the monkey off our back about the last two games and all that stuff. We've faced some good teams the last couple years and they've just played better than us. Not today."

But Pagac was among the many worried that this bowl game, like so many others he has coached in, would end in heartbreak. His demeanor was just a front for a stomach fermenting with all sorts of potentially catastrophic ailments.

Then he brought out the secret remedy.

"I had a set of rosaries and a buckeye in my pocket, I kissed it and we went down and scored," Pagac said.

Seniors Strut Their Stuff

While everyone associated with the Buckeyes' win over Arizona State was pleased, there was a little extra good will emanating from the Ohio State seniors.

For too long the Avis of the Big Ten, Ohio State used a remarkable work ethic by a senior-laden defense, a sprinkling of freshman magic from Katzenmoyer and a boatload of talent to get by an Arizona State team many felt was one of destiny.

So you'll understand if the words lean a little toward hyperbole.

"It's been everything I thought it was going to be," Miller said. "It lived up to

all the expectations. From the bowl committee on down to the last person on our staff, everybody's been hyping this game up and we came through."

Spiritual leader Greg Bellisari, with nine tackles, added, "With all the ups and downs we've had, this is definitely the best up."

ASU tackle Juan Roque, called by many the second best tackle in college football behind OSU's Orlando Pace, felt the experience factor might have had something to do with the Buckeyes will to win.

"They've been in a lot of bowls," said Roque, who allowed four of OSU's sacks. "Maybe their experience kicked in. I don't know. Whatever, it doesn't feel too good for us right now."

Sophomore strong safety Damon Moore, who led all Buckeyes with 12 tackles, knew how special the victory was for the seniors. One in particular was Moore's driving force.

"I'm just ecstatic for them, especially Rob Kelly. That's my best buddy," Moore smiled. "I wanted to do this for him as much as for anybody else."

People talked all year about Pagac's gambling, show-no-mercy defensive schemes, but even the best plans fall apart if the talent isn't there.

"I'm not sure how many great players we have, but I'll tell you one thing — we have a lot of great kids," Pagac said. "They work their butts off and we have some talent, but our kids are workers. They're the kind you want in a foxhole with you."

Fickell set a school record with his 50th consecutive start, one that might not have come if the coaching staff hadn't left it up to the senior.

"They asked if I could go and I said yes," he said. "I wasn't about to let the biggest game of my career go by and not play."

With a few moments to savor and reflect on the win an entire legion of Buckeye fans had waited years for, Fickell was succinct.

"It's every bit as great as I thought it would be," he said through pain. "You can't explain it. It's been a long time coming, not just for us and for the coaches but for the city of Columbus."

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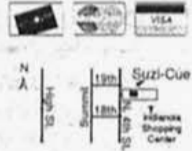


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OHIO STATE VS. ARIZONA STATE

Cooper Delivers Rose Bowl Win

Throughout the football season, *BSB* has published excerpts of Ohio State head coach John Cooper's postgame press conferences. Here is what Cooper had to say following OSU's win over Arizona State in the Rose Bowl:

COOPER: "I've been in it a long time as you know — 35 or 36 years — and I've been a head coach 21, and it can't get any better than this."

"First of all, I can't say enough about Arizona State. Without a doubt, that's the best football team that we've played in a long, long time. They're gutsy, they played their heart out, and they were extremely well coached. They came with more pressure than we've seen in a long, long time, more pressure than we'd seen against any other teams they played."

"(Jake) Plummer is every bit as good as advertised. Give our defense credit. I thought our defense just played great football throughout the course of the game. Any time you can hold Arizona State, a team that was averaging 42 points a game coming into this game, to two touchdowns — and one of them was a little bit controversial — I think you've got to be proud of your defense."

"The offense did what we had to do to win the game. We're backed up there late in the game with a minute and a half or so left in the ball game with one timeout. Some of you are wondering why we put Joe in the ball game. We think Joe's probably the best at dropping back and reading coverages and getting the ball to the open receiver, things like that. That's the reason we played Joe."

"The offensive line finally gave him time to throw the football, we went to a four-wideout offense, used our running back coming out of the backfield, and Joe got the job done. It's just a Cinderella story for a guy like Joe Germaine to be raised in Mesa, Ariz. Apparently he wasn't offered a scholarship out there and came back and won the big one today."

Q. What does this win mean for you personally? You've had some troubles in the postseason and late season.

COOPER: "We could lose some games during the season and play in a lesser bowl game and go play somebody who isn't any good. In the last four or five years, we've had real good seasons and we end up playing a Tennessee or an Alabama or an Auburn or Georgia or somebody like that down in the Citrus Bowl. And those teams are playing good. I mean, ask Northwestern how good Tennessee is. Ask Michigan today

how good Alabama is."

"We came out here and played a great football team, but nobody has a monopoly on college football. There's great football played all over the country — the Pac-10, the Big Ten and the Southeast, all over."

"I can tell you that our players were on a mission to win this game. I don't think people respected us enough this week. We lost to an outstanding football team in Michigan and you guys want to talk about the one we lost and not the 11 we won. We beat some good football teams. You beat Notre Dame, Penn State, teams like that, you've played some pretty good football."

"Maybe we didn't play as well in the second half against Michigan as we should have, but give them credit."

"I can't say enough about these senior football players. They've won 41 football games at Ohio State, and that's more than any senior class in the history of Ohio State. Of course, there have been some great, great football players there."

"I can't say enough about Luke Fickell. A lot of you may not know that he tore the muscles in his shoulder this week, he was strapped up, and he'll have surgery this week when we get back. This guy started his 50th straight ball game today, that's how tough he is. That's why we won the football game. You talk about true grit and perseverance and hard work and dedication and all the other terms you want to use in athletics, they paid off today."

Q. Your freshmen (David) Boston and (Andy) Katzenmoyer, they didn't seem to have any jitters today.

COOPER: "Well, I'm going to guarantee you they had jitters. I've been in it 35 years. If you don't have jitters, you're playing at the wrong school."

Q. Could you assess how they played, though?

COOPER: "Well, they played like they have all year. Andy is the freshman player of the year in our conference and, as far as I'm concerned, in the country. He's second- or third-team All-American this year and probably as good as any middle linebacker in the country right now as a freshman. Here's a two-time All-American (pointing at Mike Vrabel) and over there is, I think, the best offensive lineman ever to play college football (pointing at Orlando Pace). What else can I say?"

Q. What did it mean for you personally to win today?

COOPER: "Obviously, I'm happy we won the football game, but we've won a lot of big games. We haven't won any more big than this, but maybe some of

you guys will quit writing that stuff about us not being able to win a big game and all that kind of stuff."

"Obviously, it means a lot to me. It means a lot to my wife over there and certainly my family. But it means more to me for these seniors. These seniors won't ever play another game at Ohio State. I hope to be coaching there a few more years."

Q. Could you comment on the play of (Shawn) Springs?

COOPER: "Shawn's the most valuable defensive player in the Big Ten conference and I think he proved today why. (Keith) Poole didn't catch many balls, I don't think, and Poole's a great wide receiver. Shawn's a great football player."

Q. Your defense obviously won this game against a team that had been averaging 450-500 yards a game. I know in three quarters they only had 165. Is that surprising?

COOPER: "Are you kidding me? I think this is the best defensive team in the country. We're only giving up 10 points a game. I didn't see much about that. I read how great they are offensively, but not much was said about how good we are defensively. We don't lead the Big Ten in defense against scoring, defense against the rushing game and stuff like that without having some great people. A lot of these guys on defense are seniors and they played their heart out."

Q. When Plummer crossed the goal line, can you go through your thoughts at that moment?

COOPER: "I thought we were going to sack him and they were going to have to go on fourth down, but this guy's a great, great competitor, one of the best in college football. That's why he's the most valuable player in this league, and it's a great league."

Q. Did you want this one especially because it was Arizona State?

COOPER: "No, not really. Those people were great to John Cooper. Obviously, the day you're playing them you want to win the football game. But give those guys credit. In my opinion, they're a top-five football team."

Q. Can you talk about the run defense and what the plan was?

COOPER: "Our plan was to make them beat us by throwing the football. We played the same kind of defense today that we've been playing all year long, pressure defense where we bring a lot of people and play in man coverage in the secondary. They made two great throws to get the touchdowns and on



John Cooper.

one of them it looked to me like the ball might have bounced. They're a great offensive football team."

Q. Are you surprised with how well your offense handled that final drive?

COOPER: "No, no. The credit goes to our offensive football coaches. That's something we work on every Thursday, what we call the two-minute drill. We put Joe in and told him, 'Hey, you've got one timeout left.' We were moving the ball down the field with a couple of key third-down plays and then a couple of key interference penalties, a couple in my opinion that weren't called. We finally got a call and the ball's on the 5-yard line."

"We debated there whether we were going to run the ball and maybe take a timeout, or maybe take one more shot at the end zone and if we didn't make it kick a field goal and go into overtime."

"Mike Jacobs, I thought, did a great job of calling the game today, and I'm sure he kept them a little bit more off balance than they expected. These wide receivers we've got, if we can protect, Joe can throw the football, and I guarantee David Boston and guys like that can catch the ball."

Q. On the game-winning score, Boston said he was supposed to cut inside but then went outside when he saw the play develop.

COOPER: "Well, we had David open a couple times on the post. As a matter of fact, we felt we should have thrown it to him maybe a few more times than we did on that last drive. The credit goes to the people upstairs — Walt Harris, Mike Jacobs, Chuck Stobart — I'll tell you, Chuck is a really good football coach. He coaches those wide receivers and he's very, very knowledgeable about how to attack certain defenses. We made a route adjustment, got open, and it helped us win the game."

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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 20, Arizona State 17

OSU flanker Dimitrious Stanley, who burned Arizona State for a 72-yard touchdown among his five catches, on the lack of respect the previously unbeaten Sun Devils had for the Buckeyes: "All week, we heard them talking, 'They're great this, they're confident that.' It was a lack of respect everywhere, but we fought through that and did what we do best."

OSU linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer on his hopes that the Rose Bowl becomes an annual ritual for the Scarlet and Gray: "I think this sets the standard for the freshman class for the next three years. It will be a No. 1 priority to reach the Rose Bowl and be national championship contenders."

OSU coach John Cooper on ASU quarterback Jake Plummer's 11-yard touchdown run that gave the Sun Devils a late 17-14 lead: "That's why he is a great football player, to make a play like that. We were coming after him. I thought we were going to sack him. He's just a great competitor."

OSU safety Damon Moore's thoughts after Arizona State took the lead on Plummer's TD run: "Our first thought is 'Not again.' I'd be lying if I didn't say that. But then we went over and supported our offense and they came through."

OSU linebacker Greg Bellisari on the defense's mind set after allowing Plummer to score: "We were just hoping they could get a field goal so we could go to overtime. We were prepared to play lights out in overtime if we needed to."

OSU defensive end Matt Finkes crediting the offense for saving the day: "When they scored, we hit rock bottom for a minute. We came back to the sidelines and just thought, 'God, not again.' This has happened three years in a row. The offense got the ball and made something happen. They deserve all the credit."

Cooper ventured into the ASU locker room after the game, telling Plummer: "You're the most unbelievable guy I've ever coached against."

Katzenmoyer on the pressure the Buckeyes put on Plummer, who was sacked six times: "I feel like we



Dimitrious Stanley



Greg Bellisari



Damon Moore

got into his head a little bit. We came at him from all angles and blitzed him a lot, probably more than usual."

OSU freshman running back and California native Michael Wiley on his seven rushing attempts for 32 yards in the Rose Bowl win: "They showed a lot of confidence by putting me in the game in some key situations. Hopefully next year, I'll get to carry the ball a little more and be a bigger contributor to the team."

OSU quarterbacks coach Walt Harris on his affinity — or lack thereof — for the two-minute offense: "I don't like those situations, but maybe I like them a little better now."

Finkes sums up his battles with ASU's heralded tackle Juan Roque: "I don't want to say anything bad about him. He's a good football player, but he's not comparable to Orlando (Pace). He's still a good football player. I think he was waiting for us to speed rush a little more. I found out he was a little soft, so I just bull rushed him and pushed him back toward the quarterback."

Roque on how Ohio State's previous bowl experience may have helped the Buckeyes prevail: "They've been in a lot of bowls. Maybe their experience kicked in, I don't know. Whatever, it doesn't feel too good for us right now."

ASU defensive back Marcus Soward on the two pass interference calls that were made on OSU's final scoring drive: "The ball was way over their guys' heads, and everybody knows you don't throw flags on something like that. (The officials) were awful. It's so sad to see the refs take the game from the hands of the players. You should always let the players decide the game. Those were terrible, terrible calls."

ASU coach Bruce Snyder on the placement of the ball at the Sun Devils' 5-yard line after the second interference penalty, instead of at the 9 for half the distance: "The fellow ran over and said, 'Coach, the ball is going to be on the 5.' I asked why, but I didn't get an accurate answer. I don't know why the ball was placed there."

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Continued From Page 1

"We didn't play him enough in the first half to make an evaluation on how he played," OSU's outgoing quarterbacks coach Walt Harris said of the decision to start Germaine in the second half. "He

By the time the OSU offense took the field for its final possession, nightfall

• **Third-and-10, ASU 19** — Germaine threw left incomplete to the ASU 5 for Boston, who was essentially mugged by ASU's Marcus Soward.

"We moved the ball downfield, hit a couple of key third-down plays and then had a couple of key pass interference penalties. We finally got a call and the ball was on the 5-yard line."

"He came back and won the big one here today."

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OHIO STATE VS. ARIZONA STATE

Boston, Katzenmoyer Shine At Rose Bowl

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

When the final gun sounded on the 1997 Rose Bowl, there were any number of candidates who could have stepped forward when the call went out for Ohio State's player of the game.

The media voted quarterback Joe Germaine as the game's most outstanding player for his direction of OSU's game-winning drive in the amazing 20-17 win over Arizona State.

Germaine's Rose Bowl experience — including recollections of what will certainly become known within OSU annals as "The Drive" — is chronicled in one of the two BSB cover stories in this edition.

Here, we will highlight several other OSU players who turned in "player of the game" caliber performances:

David Boston

Boston capped off his freshman season by catching just four passes for a scant 20 yards in OSU's Rose Bowl win.

But two of the catches were touchdowns — both on great individual plays, including the game winner from Germaine with just 19 seconds left.

"I never thought I'd make the winning catch in the Rose Bowl," Boston said. "I'm just happy for these seniors, especially after I saw their faces after the Michigan game."

Boston's first Rose Bowl catch saw him barely keep a foot inside the sideline of the end zone while hauling in a 9-yard TD pass from OSU starting quarterback Stanley Jackson midway through the first quarter.

Immediately, members of the OSU press corps recalled Cris Carter's record-setting receiving performance as an OSU freshman in the 1985 Rose Bowl.

But Boston — with his game-winning TD pass added in — etched his own name in the Rose Bowl record book, tying the bowl mark with two TD catches.

"I heard a lot of talk about Cris Carter and all that," Boston said. "I didn't try to pay too much attention to all that. I just tried to go out there and do my job."

Boston's 5-yard TD grab of a Germaine pass in the closing seconds will go down as one of OSU's greatest gridiron highlights, complete with his post-catch end zone strut.

Boston, who finished the year with seven TD catches, should have plenty of chances to perfect that celebratory strut in the years to come.

"All I ever talked about in high school was getting two rings," he said. "Now I have a Big Ten championship and the Rose Bowl. What a great way to celebrate New Year's."

Andy Katzenmoyer

As good a game as Boston had, he may not have been OSU's top freshman performer.

That distinction could go to Katzenmoyer, a second-team All-American who seemingly took his game to another level in Pasadena.

"Andy Katzenmoyer, wow, that's all I can say," said OSU safety Damon Moore. "He just flew around and made plays."

Katzenmoyer tallied eight tackles, including an outstanding five for losses.

PLAYER(S) OF THE GAME

Among that total, he sacked Arizona State's elusive Jake Plummer three times.

Oh, and for good measure, he collected a deflected pass for an interception, snuffing an ASU second-half threat.

"He's been doing that all season," said OSU linebacker Greg Bellisari, a senior who tutored Katzenmoyer all season from an outside linebacker spot.

Besides the interception, all three of Katzenmoyer's sacks stand out.

His first one came on ASU's first drive after the Sun Devils had already picked up a first down and moved to midfield. As Plummer dropped to pass on second-and-7, Katzenmoyer sprinted through a seam and knocked him for a 7-yard loss, setting the tone for the game.

His second sack saw Plummer try to roll right and get around the corner, only to be dragged down from behind by a sprinting Katzenmoyer for a 4-yard loss.

Finally, with ASU facing a second-and-19 predicament in the third quarter, OSU sent the house and Katzenmoyer rolled through to drop Plummer for a 5-yard loss.

However, while he looks like a man among boys at times, Katzenmoyer recognizes he is not perfect — at least not yet.

"I still have a lot of things to improve upon," he said. "I set goals for myself every day. My main goal is to reach the NFL, and hopefully I can do that. Our goal this year was to reach the Rose Bowl, win the Rose Bowl and win the national championship."

Nonetheless, OSU nose guard Luke Fickell marveled: "Everybody is going to know who he is. He plays like that all the time. There's always that freshman hype, but he is the real thing."

Dimitrios Stanley

While Boston's game-clinching TD catch will be the one that is replayed over and over, Stanley also made a nifty touchdown grab.

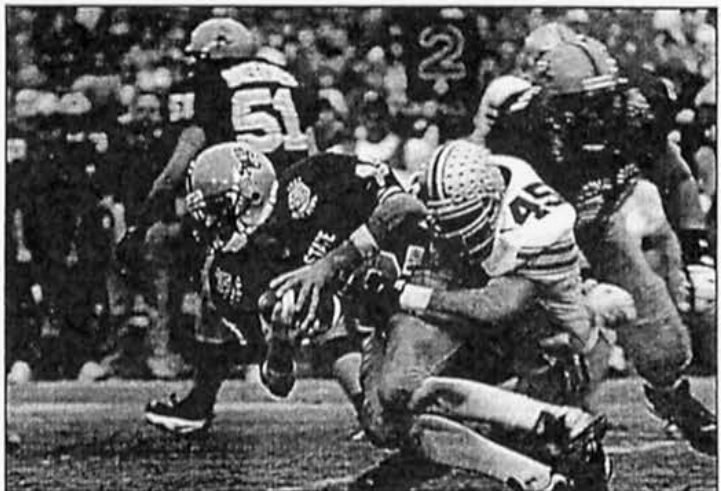
OSU trailed 10-7 in the third quarter when Germaine went play action and threw deep down the middle to Stanley on a post pattern.

Stanley simply got behind ASU's Jason Simmons, hauled in the pass in stride and rolled for a 72-yard touchdown.

"Joe just put it out there, and I took it to the house," said Stanley, who finished with five catches for 124 yards. His TD was OSU's longest pass play of the year and the school's longest ever in 29 bowl games.

Stanley also came up big on OSU's final drive, converting two touchy third downs, catching three passes for a combined 36 yards and drawing a critical pass interference penalty in the ASU end zone.

"Dimitrios is a great receiver," Germaine said. "Any time you need a play, you can count on him to get open. We found some holes and took advantage of it."



STEVE HELWAGEN

OSU'S SACK MAN — OSU freshman middle linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer registered three sacks on ASU quarterback Jake Plummer, lifting his season total to a team-high 12. Katzenmoyer also had two other tackles-for-loss in the game.

Shawn Springs

Springs was the unlikely goat in the Michigan game, slipping to allow Michigan's Tai Streets to escape for a game-turning touchdown in the 13-9 loss.

On New Year's Day, though, Springs never faltered.

He gave new meaning to the term "blanketing," completely frustrating ASU's leading receiver Keith Poole. Poole, who caught 46 passes — 11 for touchdowns — during the regular season, ended the Rose Bowl with one catch for 10 yards.

In the second half, ASU resorted to giving the ball to Poole on a reverse since it had become clear Springs wasn't going to let him touch it otherwise.

"I told him if he was good and didn't try to cut me, I would give him one catch for charity," an especially brash Springs said afterwards. "I told him I've got 4.2 speed, and I would be with him all day."

Springs was credited with four passes defended, a total that seemingly eclipsed his pass opportunities for the rest of the year combined. Also, it doesn't make the final box score, but Springs deflected a pass intended to Poole right to Katzenmoyer for his interception.

More than anything, though, Springs played like a man scorned.

"I told them they shouldn't have talked so much trash," he said. "Now we're going to talk trash after the game. Wait until I get on ESPN."

Springs made one of the best plays of his three-year OSU career in the fourth quarter. The play occurred on the drive that eventually gave ASU the lead, but it

still merits attention.

Poole got behind Springs down the left sideline on first down at the ASU 42. Plummer lofted a bomb to the OSU 10, but Springs used every bit of his closing speed to get back to Poole and knock the ball away.

For more on Springs, see the story on him on page 25.

Others Worth Noting

Some other Buckeyes who shined on a dreary day in Pasadena — weather-wise, that is:

• **Greg Bellisari** — He went out with a nine-tackle effort. Plummer's go-ahead scoring run came one play after Bellisari broke through and sacked him for a 5-yard loss.

• **Damon Moore** — Moore finished with a team-high 12 tackles, including a pivotal stop on ASU's powerful Terry Battle for no gain on a third-and-1 to force a third-quarter field goal.

• **Pepe Pearson** — Mr. 100-Yard Game came through again with a 13-carry, 111-yard effort highlighted by a 62-yard scamper that got OSU off its own goal line in the fourth quarter.

• **Orlando Pace** — What more can be said about the Lombardi Award and Outland Trophy winner, except he kept vaulted ASU sack man Derrick Rodgers out of the backfield. He also opened a gigantic hole, pancaking an ASU defender on Pearson's long run. For more on Pace, see story on page 25.

• **Luke Fickell** — Fickell tore a pectoral muscle during a pre-bowl practice in California, but he refused to miss the game — his OSU-record 50th start. For more on Fickell, see story on page 27.

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Congratulations
Rose Bowl Champs

COVER STORY — ROSE BOWL CHAMPS

Debate Rages (Somewhat) Over Final Polls

Continued From Page 1

11 yards out.

Trailing by three, the Buckeyes sent their "other" quarterback, Joe Germaine, who served as a relief pitcher of sorts all season, into the fray to guide the Buckeyes into the end zone — or at least into field goal range to force overtime.

Germaine delivered.

He completed four passes on the drive, three to Dimitrios Stanley and the 5-yard, game-winning touchdown to David Boston with just 19 seconds left in the game.

The scene of Boston's end zone strut, amid the pandemonium of 100,635 fans at the Rose Bowl, will go down as one of OSU's all-time highlight reel plays.

For the reserved Germaine, it was just another day at the office.

"It's always been a dream to come here," said Germaine, named the game's most outstanding player. "I'm just happy for my teammates. It's a great feeling. The bottom line in team sports is to win, no matter who plays."

All season long, the OSU defense made headlines, and its battle with Plummer and the high-powered ASU offense lived up to its billing.

But in the end, it was the much-maligned OSU offense — thanks to a pair of timely pass interference penalties on

ASU — that took center stage.

"Defense wins championships, and you're awfully blessed when you have an offense that can run and throw like we do," OSU safety Damon Moore recognized.

The result made a winner out of Mike Jacobs, who helped orchestrate the winning drive in his first game as OSU's offensive coordinator.

"This is the greatest win, right now, that I've been associated with, and I'm just glad to be a Buckeye," Jacobs said.

No. 2 With A Bullet

The wacky 1996 college football season ended with no unbeaten teams and just five major conference schools surviving with one loss.

Two of those schools, Florida State and Arizona State, lost their bowl games, so they were eliminated from title contention. Another, Brigham Young, won more games than anybody, sporting a 14-1 mark. But BYU's soft schedule as a member of the WAC kept the Cougars from even earning a bowl alliance bid, let alone contending for the title.

That left just Florida and Ohio State as serious contenders.

Florida probably got the nod over OSU for two key reasons:

- Its impressive bowl win over previous No. 1 Florida State; and

Who Is Number One?

Here is a comparison between No. 1 Florida and No. 2 Ohio State, the top two teams in the college football polls for 1996 (Weekly AP rankings for these two teams are in parenthesis before their opponent; their opponents' rankings and final records are in parenthesis after the opponent's name):

FLORIDA (12-1)			OHIO STATE (11-1)		
Date	Opponent	Score	Date	Opponent	Score
Aug. 31	(3) SW Louisiana (NR, 5-6)	W, 55-21	Sept. 7	(9) Rice (NR, 7-4)	W, 70-7
Sept. 7	(3) Ga. Southern (NR, 4-7)	W, 62-14	Sept. 21	(7) Pittsburgh (NR, 4-7)	W, 72-0
Sept. 21	(3) at Tennessee (2, 10-2)	W, 35-29	Sept. 28	(4) at Notre Dame (5, 8-3)	W, 29-16
Sept. 28	(1) Kentucky (NR, 4-7)	W, 69-0	Oct. 5	(3) Penn State (4, 11-2)	W, 38-7
Oct. 5	(1) at Arkansas (NR, 4-7)	W, 42-7	Oct. 12	(2) Wisconsin (NR, 8-5)	W, 17-14
Oct. 12	(1) LSU (12, 10-2)	W, 56-13	Oct. 19	(2) at Purdue (NR, 3-8)	W, 42-14
Oct. 19	(1) Auburn (16, 8-4)	W, 51-10	Oct. 26	(2) at Iowa (20, 9-3)	W, 38-26
Nov. 2	(1) Georgia* (NR, 5-6)	W, 47-7	Nov. 2	(2) Minnesota (NR, 4-7)	W, 45-0
Nov. 9	(1) at Vanderbilt (NR, 2-9)	W, 28-21	Nov. 9	(2) at Illinois (NR, 2-9)	W, 48-0
Nov. 16	(1) S. Carolina (NR, 6-5)	W, 52-25	Nov. 16	(2) at Indiana (NR, 3-8)	W, 27-17
Nov. 30	(1) at Florida St. (2, 11-1)	L, 24-21	Nov. 23	(2) Michigan (21, 8-4)	L, 13-9
Dec. 7	(4) Alabama* (15, 10-3)	W, 45-30	Jan. 1	(4) Arizona St.* (2, 11-1)	W, 20-17
Jan. 2	(3) Florida St.* (1, 11-1)	W, 52-20			
Average Score Per Game: 50.9-16.8			Average Score Per Game: 37.9-10.9		
Record Vs. Ranked Teams: 5-1			Record Vs. Ranked Teams: 4-1		
Record Vs. Top-10 Teams: 2-1			Record Vs. Top-10 Teams: 3-0		
Opponents' Combined Record: 90-60 (.600)			Opponents' Combined Record: 78-61 (.561)		
*At Jacksonville, Fla.			*Rose Bowl at Pasadena, Calif.		
@SEC championship at Atlanta					
#Sugar Bowl at New Orleans					

• The fact its loss was a three-point defeat Nov. 30 at Florida State, then the nation's No. 2 team, while OSU's loss was a four-point defeat suffered at the hands of then-No. 21 Michigan Nov. 23 at Ohio Stadium.

"I didn't think they were going to give it to us because they're stuck on those SEC teams, Southern teams, whatever," Stanley said. "But in my mind, we are national champions. I don't care what anybody says."

Other Buckeyes joined Bellisari and Stanley in stumping for the top spot.

"We've got a legitimate claim for the national championship," OSU senior safety Anthony Gwinn said. "(Arizona State) was a top-five team. We won the Rose Bowl and beat the Pac-10 champions. I think that speaks for itself."

OSU senior nose guard Luke Fickell, who strapped it up and played the Rose

Bowl with a torn pectoral muscle suffered in pre-bowl practice, said a split championship would have at least been nice.

"I think we should be No. 1 in the country in one of the polls," he said. "Anybody who gets two shots at it... If we had another shot at the game we lost, I'm sure we could win it, too."

"I guess that's not up to us. It's up to the media. I just thought that maybe we'd get more votes just from maybe the Big Ten coaches and everybody else, but we're happy with what we could do."

In two years, the Big Ten and Pac-10 will join the bowl alliance, giving rise to an annual bowl game that will be designated as the No. 1-vs.-No. 2 match-up. Short of that day, the polls are the only way to determine college football's top dog.

"It's not a perfect system," Fickell said. "Everybody puts their faith in (the polls)

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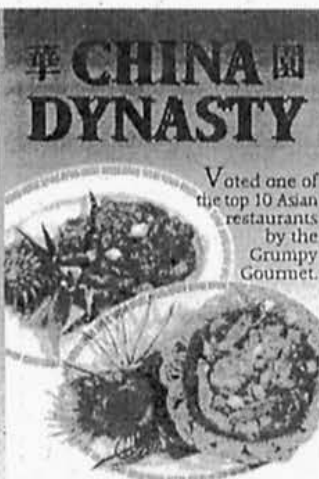
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COVER STORY — ROSE BOWL CHAMPS



STEVE HELD/ANGEN

HAPPY MOMENT — OSU freshman linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer raises his arms to celebrate after a sack of Arizona State quarterback Jake Plummer. Buckeyes Antoine Winfield (11) and Winfield Garnett come over to join him.

and the people who vote.

"It's almost like the judicial system — if it works for you, it's good."

For a long time, Cooper has stumped for a one-game playoff after the bowl games are over. That format would allow, for instance, the Rose Bowl to retain its allegiance with the Big Ten and Pac-10.

It would also settle, he says, the burning issue of who really is No. 1.

"Let's get Florida, and let's go play them in two weeks for the national championship," Cooper said. "Let's decide this national championship on the field."

"I've been advocating this for years. I don't know why it can't happen."

Cooper Basks After Win

Much has been made of Ohio State's inability to defeat Michigan or win bowl games in the nine seasons of the Cooper regime.

But no one can now dispute that Cooper and his staff delivered something special for Buckeye fans.

"This is for all our great fans. They're with us win or tie," Cooper mused moments after the Rose Bowl while also taking a gentle shot at the bandwagon jumpers.

His players were also happy for Cooper.

"This shows a turning point," Moore said. "For all those non-believers that say Coach Cooper can't win a big game, there you have it."

Cooper's Rose Bowl win brings him out of the shadow of his predecessor, Earle Bruce, whose teams failed to win in two Rose Bowl trips. He joins coach Wes Fesler as one-time Rose Bowl winners at OSU. Of course, Woody Hayes captured four Rose Bowls during his 28-year tenure.

What's more, OSU's No. 2 finish is its best in 23 seasons.

"It's great because the fans are always on him when we lose," said OSU tailback Pepe Pearson, who carried for 111 yards in the win. "It's so sweet that he won the Rose Bowl. People can't say anything because he can always say he won the Rose Bowl."

Seniors Celebrate

Ohio State's senior class needed the Rose Bowl victory for their own selfish cause: They wanted to leave OSU with more wins than any other class in school history.

The victory gave the departing seniors a four-year record of 41-8-1, one win better than the groups that departed in 1975 (40-5-1) and 1976 (40-5-2).

"It feels great," Stanley said. "Finally. Finally, we're here. They said we couldn't do it and we did it. We are the winningest class ever."

Bellisari added: "I couldn't have written a better ending. It's the type of thing that you dream about being champions, and we are truly champions. We are going out with the most wins of any class ever at Ohio State."

When Plummer scored his go-ahead touchdown, many Buckeyes — and certainly, most of their fans — quickly recalled failures in their last three bowl losses at the Citrus Bowl.

There were memories of Garrison Hearst's long run for Georgia in 1993, Sherman Williams' mastery for Alabama in 1995, and the Peyton Manning-to-Joey Kent combo for Tennessee last year.

"The trouble we've had in the past is we never could finish it off," OSU senior defensive end Mike Vrabel said. "We've had three great seasons that we've put together. I'm glad we could bounce back like we did after the loss to Michigan and finish it off."

The Buckeyes didn't die quietly this

College Bowl Schedule

Date	Bowl	Scores, Final Records
Dec. 19	Las Vegas	Nevada (9-3) 18, Ball State (8-4) 15
Dec. 25	Aloha	Navy (9-3) 42, California (6-6) 38
Dec. 27	Liberty	Syracuse (9-3) 30, Houston (7-5) 17
Dec. 27	Carquest	Miami (Fla.) (9-3) 31, Virginia (7-5) 21
Dec. 27	Copper	Wisconsin (8-5) 38, Utah (8-4) 10
Dec. 28	Peach	Louisiana State (10-2) 10, Clemson (7-5) 7
Dec. 29	Alamo	Iowa (9-3) 27, Texas Tech (7-5) 0
Dec. 30	Holiday	Colorado (10-2) 33, Washington (9-3) 21
Dec. 31	Sun	Stanford (7-5) 38, Michigan State (6-6) 0
Dec. 31	Independence	Auburn (8-4) 32, Army (10-2) 29
Dec. 31	Orange	Nebraska (11-2) 41, Virginia Tech (10-2) 21
Jan. 1	Outback	Alabama (10-3) 17, Michigan (8-4) 14
Jan. 1	Gator	North Carolina (10-2) 20, West Virginia (8-4) 13
Jan. 1	Citrus	Tennessee (10-2) 48, Northwestern (9-3) 28
Jan. 1	Cotton	Brigham Young (14-1) 19, Kansas State (9-3) 15
Jan. 1	Rose	Ohio State (11-1) 20, Arizona State (11-1) 17
Jan. 1	Fiesta	Penn State (11-2) 38, Texas (8-5) 15
Jan. 2	Sugar	Florida (12-1) 52, Florida State (11-1) 20

Final College Football Polls

Associated Press Top 25				USA Today/CNN Preseason Top 25			
Here is the final Associated Press media Top 25 for the 1996 season (first-place votes in parentheses):				Here is the final USA Today/CNN coaches Top 25 poll for the 1996 season (first-place votes in parentheses):			
Rank	School	1996	Pts. Previous	Rank	School	1996	Pts. Previous
1.	Florida (85N)	12-1	1,673N	3	Florida (58)	12-1	1,546
2.	Ohio State (11K)	11-1	1,585N	4	Ohio State (4)	11-1	1,466
3.	Florida State	11-1	1,529	1	Florida State	11-1	1,408
4.	Arizona State	11-1	1,486	2	Arizona State	11-1	1,341
5.	Brigham Young	14-1	1,360	5	Brigham Young	14-1	1,261
6.	Nebraska	11-2	1,316	6	Nebraska	11-2	1,235
7.	Penn State	11-2	1,293	7	Penn State	11-2	1,205
8.	Colorado	10-2	1,228	8	Colorado	10-2	1,128
9.	Tennessee	10-2	1,172	9	Tennessee	10-2	1,077
10.	North Carolina	10-2	1,070	10	North Carolina	10-2	971
11.	Alabama	11-3	977	11	Alabama	11-3	906
12.	LSU	10-2	849	12	Virginia Tech	10-2	791
13.	Virginia Tech	10-2	786	13	LSU	10-2	746
14.	Miami (Fla.)	9-3	690	14	Miami (Fla.)	9-3	636
15.	Northwestern	9-3	663	15	Washington	9-3	622
16.	Washington	9-3	643	16	Northwestern	9-3	594
17.	Kansas State	9-3	625	17	Kansas State	9-3	564
18.	Iowa	9-3	535	18	Iowa	9-3	549
19.	Notre Dame	8-3	511	19	Syracuse	9-3	446
20.	Michigan	8-4	466	20	Michigan	8-4	390
21.	Syracuse	9-3	451	21	Notre Dame	8-3	381
22.	Wyoming	10-2	314	22	Wyoming	10-2	259
23.	Texas	8-5	169	23	Texas	8-5	141
24.	Auburn	8-4	130	24	Army	10-2	106
25.	Army	10-2	71	25.	Auburn	8-4	103

Others receiving votes: West Virginia 43, Navy 41, East Carolina 37, Southern Mississippi 22, Stanford 16, Wisconsin 14, San Diego State 4, Virginia 3, Clemson 2.

time.

"The way it ended up and the way we fought back and showed some heart just shows what this senior class is all about," said OSU senior defensive end Matt Finkes.

"That's the special part, to go out with these guys that I've sweated with and worked with for four years now. That's a really special thing. I don't think I can put it in words."

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THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Good Feelings Surround OSU's Rose Bowl Win

Wow! What an exciting football game. You always hear that expression about "sitting on the edge of your seat." Well, in the closing minutes of the Rose Bowl, I was definitely on the edge of my seat.

Now, admit it. Most of you were like me and said "here we go again" when Jake Plummer scored his dramatic touchdown. But a funny thing happened on your way to find a pen and paper to write a letter to the editor bemoaning another excruciating Buckeye loss: Ohio State came back and scored a dramatic touchdown of its own to secure the victory.

Buckeye fans would have been excited with any victory in the Rose Bowl. But to win the game in the fashion that they did, grabbing the game from the jaws of defeat, sent the OSU faithful into a far greater frenzy than I think anyone could have imagined.

It wasn't just grabbing the win in such stirring fashion. It was the dramatic win coupled with so many humiliating defeats over the last few seasons that created such pandemonium. All that pent-up Buckeye pride just came spilling out and is still pouring out as I write several days later.

In fact, one of the greatest things coming out of the Rose Bowl win, in my mind, is the tremendous good will and good feeling that will surround the team and program during the off-season. With the last few Ohio State seasons ending on down notes, the off-seasons have pretty much been engulfed in complaining, criticism and a general negative aura.

Things are bound to be more positive this time around, and that has to help in recruiting and preparation for next season, which should be challenging with many key holes to fill.

There were a couple of other things I took as real positives coming out of the game.

While the defense held the high-powered Arizona State offense in check for the most part and left the Buckeyes in position to win the game, it was the offense, often maligned in recent weeks, that actually won the game. This has to be a great confidence-builder for the ball-movers going into next season, and if the Buckeyes find themselves in another two-minute situation, they will know that the game is winnable.

I was also pleased to see that the Buckeyes seemed to take offense to the talk and swagger of the Sun Devils out in California. They were also disturbed by the media attention that ASU seemed to receive. They used this as motivation in the game. All too often in the past, I've felt that the Buckeyes were not bothered enough by slights and insults, especially those coming from Michigan and its fans.

No Turmoil This Time

One of the keys to the big win for the Buckeyes, in my mind, was the smooth and professional way that the changes on the OSU coaching staff were handled while preparing for the Rose Bowl. I think this is especially apparent when you consider that the changes were on the offensive side of the ball. It was the offense that was probably the weaker unit, and it was the offense that ended up winning the game.

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

If you don't think that the cooperation among the departing Walt Harris and Joe Hollis and the rest of the staff was an issue in one of OSU's biggest wins, just think back to one of the team's most embarrassing setbacks in recent years. One of the reasons given for the Buckeyes' humiliating defeat at the hands of Air Force in the 1990 Liberty Bowl was the turmoil created by the departure of several coaches.

I think it's a tribute to the magnitude of the Rose Bowl, as well as a tribute to head coach John Cooper, that Hollis and Harris elected to stay for the Jan. 1 game, rather than get a jump on their new jobs.

So Long, Julie!

I want to send best wishes to Julie Roy, who called it a BSB career on Christmas Eve. I doubt, when she started here as an intern more than six years ago, that she thought she would last here this long. But she ended up making a significant impact on our company.

There are three aspects to our business — editorial, circulation and advertising — and Julie had a hand in all three. She was here during a time of growth in our company, including the acquisitions of *Bike Midwest* and *Reds Report*, and she was instrumental in the assimilation of those publications into our system, especially *Bike Midwest*, of which she served as editor.

Her stay here was also a time of change and growth in Julie's personal life. She met and married her husband, Gene — on the night of the first OSU-Notre Dame game, no less — during her stay here, and she and Gene also bought their first house.

Julie is taking some time to review her future options, but I am confident she will do well in whatever she chooses to pursue, and we wish her the best of luck. I know we will continue to realize the many things she did here as we endeavor to move forward without her.

We're Number Two!

I was on the radio a couple of days after the Rose Bowl and a listener called in to say that he didn't really care where the Buckeyes finished in the polls. He said that the win over Arizona State was so dramatic and exciting and made him so proud to be a Buckeye that the polls were insignificant. I thought that was a really positive attitude, especially given the fact that, in my mind, the chances of OSU winning the national championship were somewhere between slim and none.

The Buckeyes had several things going against them heading into the Rose and Sugar bowls. First of all, they lost at home to a team that would finish with four losses. Florida's one loss was by three points on the road to championship contender Florida State.

Second, there seems to be a bias in the polls toward the Florida schools and perhaps Nebraska. And finally, while the Rose Bowl was certainly a game with championship implications, the Sugar Bowl was the alliance-created

"championship" game. Thus the winner of that game was going to be at an advantage with regard to the polls.

About the only way the Buckeyes would have been even able to make the polls close would have been if they had crushed the Sun Devils and Florida barely edged the Seminoles. Once Florida ran up the score against FSU, the wide margin for the Gators in the polls was all but guaranteed.

But I'm with the caller. Who cares? Isn't this a great time to be a Buckeye fan?

Rose Bowl Notes

• I thought that was one of the best games I've seen Shawn Springs play. Often, you don't get to see just how good he is because teams don't throw his way. Not true with Jake Plummer and the Sun Devils. They kept coming at Springs, usually with the same, unsuccessful results.

If Springs wasn't a top-10 NFL pick going into the game, surely he is coming out, which is bad news for Buckeye fans.

• There aren't too many negatives coming out of a dramatic win like the one at the Rose Bowl. But OSU's kicking game, an ongoing problem, would have to be considered one. Josh Jackson's blocked field goal was a turning point in the game, and he also had an extra point blocked.

And Brent Bartholomew, despite a 44.9-yard average, had his problems. He was unable to bury several punts that

ended up going into the end zone for touchbacks and also shanked a punt for just 28 yards.

• Speaking of kicking, I disagree with the strategy of squib kicking when protecting a lead like ASU did before OSU's Rose Bowl-winning drive, which the Buckeyes started on the Devil 35. You're all but guaranteeing your opponent good field position. After Arizona State's other three kickoffs, the Buckeyes started on the OSU 33, 20 and 28.

• All season long, people talked about the unflappable nature of Joe Germaine. The guy did not change his expression or demeanor over the course of the entire season. His composure certainly came in handy in that game-winning drive. Check page 17 of this issue. We actually caught Germaine smiling!

It's a good thing the Buckeyes won the game. If they hadn't, we certainly would be hearing about the quarterback controversy. We would also be hearing plenty about the officiating if the Bucks had lost. As any longtime reader of this column knows, I'm not a big one for blaming officiating for losses. But I must admit, there were some bizarre calls in that game.

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