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Vol. 16, No. 26

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

April 26, 1997

Rams Take Pace No. 1 In NFL Draft

Springs Completes OSU Perfecta As Third Pick

By STEVE HELWAGEN and JEFF RAPP
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Members

Orlando Pace's football career has been built around a lot of firsts, so it wasn't a surprise when the St. Louis Rams selected the massive Ohio State offensive tackle with the first pick in the 1997 National Football League draft.

"I think one thing that you guys may or may not realize is that my whole career has been full of firsts — the first offensive lineman in a long while (29 years) to be drafted first, the first two-time Lombardi Award winner, the first one to win it as a sophomore," Pace said moments after the April 19 announcement of his selection.

"This isn't too surprising to you guys, I hope. Hopefully I'll continue to do firsts and do well in the NFL."

The 6-6, 330-pound Pace leaves Ohio State a year early as a draft-eligible junior. He was joined in New York City for the draft by his teammate, cornerback Shawn Springs, who was taken just minutes after Pace as the third overall pick by the Seattle Seahawks.

Pace and Springs led a parade of seven OSU players who were drafted.

The others included safety Rob Kelly, a second-round pick by the New Orleans Saints; cornerback Ty Howard, a third-round choice by the Arizona Cardinals; defensive end Mike Vrabel, a third-round pick by the Pittsburgh Steelers; fullback Nicky Sualua, a fourth-round choice by the Dallas Cowboys; and defensive end Matt Finkes, a sixth-round selection by the Carolina Panthers.

Pace and Springs give Ohio State 12 first-round picks in the 1990s, the most of any college program. Pace, the first



JEFF RAPP

DRAFTED — Ohio State football stars Shawn Springs (left) and Orlando Pace were two of the top three players selected in the 1997 NFL draft April 19. Pace was the top overall pick by the St. Louis Rams, while Springs went third to the Seattle Seahawks.

lineman taken No. 1 since Ron Yary in 1968, is also OSU's third No. 1 overall pick following linebacker Tom Cousineau in 1979 and defensive lineman "Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson in 1994.

"It's a little bit of a pride deal," said OSU coach John Cooper, who has now seen a whopping 10 OSU underclassmen go to the draft in six years. "I'm happy for each one of those guys."

"They busted their behinds for us and laid it on the line, played great for us, and obviously I'm happy to see them go as high as they can go."

The talent-rich OSU program has withstood early defections by the likes of Wilkinson and wide receiver Terry Glenn to post a 22-3 mark over the last two seasons, including a Rose Bowl championship last year.

"People ask me why we have so many high draft choices," Cooper said. "Obviously, we recruit good players. You can't make chicken salad out of chicken feathers."

"And I think that weight room in there, our off-season pro-

Continued On Page 16

Pagac Begins To Reload On Defense

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The scheme took the college football world — and especially a pair of top-five rated powers in consecutive weeks — by total surprise.

There was the Ohio State defense, playing on the hallowed ground of Notre Dame Stadium, unveiling a theretofore unseen blitz package to confound the Fighting Irish in a dominating OSU win.

A week later, Penn State suffered a similar fate at Ohio Stadium. And, as the year continued, Ohio State built its Big Ten and Rose Bowl championship team around a defense that controlled its opponents.

Now as the Buckeyes begin to retool

• Katzenmoyer ponders his future (Page 11)

• Tenuta molds secondary into shape (Page 12)

for the 1997 season, one of the key concerns is whether or not OSU will field a defense close to the one that led the Big Ten in most every key statistic.

After all, eight starters have departed, including cornerbacks Shawn Springs and Ty Howard, cover men who allowed defensive coordinator Fred Pagac to turn most of his front seven — not to mention free safety Rob Kelly — loose to terrorize opposing quarterbacks.

Will the Buckeyes still utilize the blitz? One of the three returning starters has the answer.

"We're going to come out there with

the same scheme," said safety Damon Moore, who became the first non-linebacker since 1970 to lead OSU in tackles. "Everybody is going to fly to the ball, more so this year, probably because we don't have as much talent."

"We have to get to the ball quicker. It's pressure just like last year. We have to make plays like Buckeyes do."

Pagac, beginning his second year as the defensive coordinator and 16th on the OSU staff, remains coy when discussing how his defense will line up — even though it's clear he intends to keep the pressure on.

"I think we'll be OK," Pagac said. "We'll be all right somehow. We'll just

Continued On Page 6

This Is Third Biweekly Issue Of BSB

This is the third of four biweekly issues of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* scheduled for the spring season.

BSB will return in two weeks with an issue dated May 10. That issue, covering the spring game, will be mailed May 6. After that, BSB will move to a monthly schedule for the summer. The June issue will be mailed on June 3.

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No. 6 Oct. 19	No. 21 March 1
No. 7 Oct. 26	No. 22 March 8
No. 8 Nov. 2	No. 23 Mar. 15
No. 9 Nov. 9	No. 24 Mar. 22
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OPINION

Spring Answer Man Returns

As always at this time of the year, we welcome in the Spring Answer Man. He is here to answer a number of the pressing questions of the day from spring football. Here goes:

Q. How do the quarterbacks look?

A. By all accounts — remember, our access to practice is limited to warm-ups and what selected eyewitnesses, coaches and players tell us — each of the quarterbacks is flourishing this spring under new QBs coach Tim Salem.

It doesn't hurt that Stanley Jackson and Joe Germaine have a year's worth of playing experience under their belts and that Mark Garcia is hungry to make a positive impact.

You may see Jackson playing to his strengths by running the option, while Germaine and Garcia — with an inexperienced line in front of them — will be operating out of the shotgun in some obvious passing situations.

I honestly believe Jackson will likely start every game this fall with Germaine getting the first nod off the bench and Garcia probably getting more than just mop-up time. Yep, it will be a three-headed monster, but I'm convinced they can make it work.

Q. Has there been any sign of putting Jackson in a Kordell "Slash" Stewart role at receiver?

A. Not from what we understand. He has been practicing exclusively at quarterback. And, truly, the analogy does not apply. The Steelers' Stewart is a bit bigger than Jackson, not that we don't feel Jack could handle the job.

Moreover, the Rose Bowl proved to this scribe that Jackson's forte is to attack opposing defenses early in the game before they can adapt. You can't simulate his speed in practice. His 20-yard run and subsequent scrambling TD pass to David Boston got OSU off to a good start against Arizona State.

Q. What about Pepe Pearson and Michael Wiley at tailback?

A. This will not be a platoon situation. Pearson is showing signs of having a big year. Coach John Cooper is bringing out his old "I'd like to see him hit a few more home runs" line to spur Pearson. The last time he did that Eddie George made history.

I feel we never saw Pearson's game-breaking speed — the 62-yard carry in the Rose Bowl where he was tackled from behind was an example — because he was beaten up too much. Coop, Tim Spencer, Mike Jacobs and Co. would like to see Pearson carry 20 to 25 times a game. They'll use Wiley — as well as Jermon Jackson, Nick Goings and a healthy Joe Montgomery — to caddy for Pearson and keep him fresh.

Here's another hot tip: Look for Goings to get a look at fullback. He has the skills, but maybe needs to work on the blocking aspect.

Q. How is the offensive line holding up?

A. It looks like Eric Gohlstein's transformation from tackle to center is complete. Gohlstein has been absolutely dominant and is ready for a big year.

You can see Rob Murphy's confidence level from a year of starting. They tell us Tyson Walter and Benji Gilbert have also been impressive at tackle and guard, respectively. The Spring Game

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK with Steve Helwag

with live conditions will be this group's proving ground.

Q. We know Boston can play, but have any of the other receivers stepped up?

A. From what we hear, Dee Miller has made some nice plays, Vanness Provitt has been a huge target, Jimmy Redmond — despite missing a week with off-field problems — has been a constant contributor with great speed and even Kevin Griffin has done some nice things.

This group could be a pleasant surprise, even with Ken-Yon Rambo and Reggie Germany coming in.

Q. What about the defense? Will they keep the pressure on?

A. Puh-leeze. If you think Fred Pagac harbored even half a thought of backing off this throttle, guess again. I like what Jerry Rudzinski said, something to the effect that the new defense matches or exceeds the old one in terms of 40 times and raw athletic ability. It lags only in game experience.

Should be fun to watch this group grow into something this fall.

Q. Who have been the surprises on defense?

A. Well, we want to know what the guy wearing No. 97 these days has done with John Day. This guy has been pretty impressive. His playing time at end will not be a senior gift.

All Clinton Wayne does is make plays. They'll have to find a spot for him. Same goes for Marcel Willis, but the outside LB spots are a crowded house.

Ahmed Plummer, with a year of college experience on Gary Berry, may be nosing Berry out for the cornerback spot alongside Antoine Winfield.

Q. What does Dan Stultz look like at kicker?

A. Stultz is healthy, he's regained the weight and strength he lost due to Graves disease and he's booming the ball well in excess of 55 yards.

OSU fans will like what he brings to the table this fall.

Q. How are the new coaches fitting in?

A. Ends coach Shawn Simms is energetic and seems to be meshing really well with the staff and his troops.

The high-pitched Salem has made practices challenging and fun for the quarterbacks in spite of their battle for playing time. Sure, he lacks Walt Harris' experience, but like Harris he teaches on every rep.

Sure, these guys had their jobs snatched out from underneath them at Illinois and Purdue, respectively, but it's my opinion these guys were on the way up anyway.

In the same vein, Bill Conley seems enthused to be over on the offensive side. He's working the tight ends hard and expecting perfection every time out.

Q. Looking into your crystal ball, what do you think about the 1997 season?

A. Well, I think the 1997 Big Ten season has the potential to be one of the

best ever. Ohio State has the championship and Rose Bowl experience to build on, even though the Buckeyes must reload.

Realistically, I think you could put OSU, Penn State, Michigan, Wisconsin, Northwestern and maybe Iowa in the hat and they could finish in just about any order. The four schools with new coaches must start from scratch, but Minnesota won't lie dormant for long under Glen Mason.

You want marquee players? They don't come any bigger than OSU's Andy Katzenmoyer, PSU's Curtis Enis, Michigan's Charles Woodson and Wisconsin's Ron Dayne (literally in Dayne's case).

As a testament to the league's strength, Northwestern and Wisconsin — two schools with meager followings in years past — were tabbed for preseason games and OSU will likely host the Black Coaches Association game. That's a power rating bonus in and of itself.

A loaded Penn State may be my choice after a dominating bowl win over Texas. For OSU, it comes down to having to win at Penn State and at Michigan. Then again, what year hasn't it come down to those games?

Better yet, when will Michigan's Rose Bowl drought — now at four years and counting — end?

Basketball Answer Man

As an added bonus, the Spring Answer Man will field a couple of basketball questions. Here goes:

Q. Have you met Jim O'Brien and what were your impressions?

A. Yes, I touched base with the new coach at the Ohio North-South All-Star game April 13 at St. John Arena. I found O'Brien to be a nice, accommodating guy.

He wants to make a great first impression with everybody he comes in contact with and his appearance at the Ohio coaches association hall of fame banquet couldn't have been more advantageous. They say he hit a home run there.

Here's something to think about: Peruse a list of Division I basketball coaching changes. About the only names you will recognize as new coaches will be Tommy Amaker at Seton Hall, Kevin O'Neill at Northwestern and O'Brien at OSU. The guy is coming off a Big East title, while Amaker was an assistant and O'Neill's star has faded a bit.

Maybe OSU really got the best guy available.

Q. How about the new assistants?

A. These guys — Rick Boyages, Paul Biancardi and Dave Spiller — are all extremely personable and that is important for their work with prep coaches and top prospects.

Improving this program's recruiting pool is the only way it will get back on track, and I think these guys will achieve that in fast order. Heck, they had two quality juniors lined up for Boston College before they left there. That says a lot.

Even more, one of the new assistants was adamant the returning players, none of whom have ever enjoyed a winning season at the college level, need to adjust their thinking, aim higher and work harder — beginning right now.

I like that kind of thinking.

COVER STORY: THE OSU DEFENSE

Pagac Reshapes OSU Defense

Continued From Page 1

have to wait and see. I don't want to make any statements right now because we don't have to make any statements right now."

As a rookie coordinator a year ago, Pagac had the luxury of eight returning starters. Five of them were two-year starters, while nose guard Luke Fickell was a three-year starter.

But nowadays, as Pagac surveys the scene at Woody Hayes Athletic Center, he finds just Moore, defensive tackle Winfield Garnett and middle linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer as returning starters.

"It's a lot different, obviously," Pagac said. "We had a bunch of really good football players a year ago who were really intelligent and knew the system real well. This year, we're trying to find out who can play in the system. It's a whole lot more evaluation."

The massive Garnett, at 6-6, 305 pounds, is not into excuses. He is expecting the defense to come through again.

"Reality says we lost a lot of people, but every year we lose a lot of people," he said. "We just have to reload. If we lose a Silver Bullet, we reload with another one. There's always people waiting for that chance here."

This spring has been marked by strong competition at a number of spots, all of which were deemed open when spring practice began on April 1.

"I think we're coming along," Pagac said. "I like the attitude of the kids. The kids are working hard. We're still experimenting with some people, moving them around to different positions. Obviously, we're still trying to find the edge people on our defense."

"As far as pleasant surprises up to this date, (defensive end) Tony Eisenhard is coming along pretty well. (Cornerbacks) Ahmed Plummer and Gary Berry are both working really hard."

One of the players hoping to find his way into the rotation, outside linebacker Jerry Rudzinski, feels the Buckeyes have the manpower on defense to make a smooth transition.

"I think if you look at these guys, their physical ability, their 40 times and how they can lift weights, this defense is as good as any other defense we've had here," he said.

"But the key is game experience. We are losing that game experience. Some of these guys have seen the field before, but it's mainly been in lopsided games."

Up front, the Buckeyes lost Fickell and defensive ends Matt Finkes and Mike Vrabel. Outside linebackers Greg Bellisari and Ryan Miller join Springs, Howard and Kelly on the departed list as



GETTING IN SYNC — OSU defensive coordinator Fred Pagac twists to show linebacker Kevin Johnson (52) which way he is going during a walk-through drill. Pagac begins his second year as coordinator after guiding the Big Ten's top defense in 1996.

well.

Now it's up to a new wave of Buckeyes — guys like Rudzinski, Berry and Plummer — to make it happen.

"I think we have players who can step in and fill these spots," Rudzinski said. "They have to learn the system. They have to learn what it's like to go in there in front of 90,000 people against a Big Ten-caliber team."

"We have a fall off in game experience, but if we have a good spring, a good summer and a good fall camp, the pieces are there."

Finding Leaders

With Springs, an early departee for the NFL draft, and all of those seniors gone, new leaders must emerge. The prime candidates are Moore, Garnett and Katzenmoyer, a freshman who earned second-team All-American honors.

"I definitely feel Damon, Andy and I have to step up," Garnett said. "We felt we played well as a defense last year, but now the three of us have to move up to the upper echelon and take on some of that leadership that guys like Rob Kelly and Mike Vrabel did in the past."

"It's our turn to step up in play. Those people made big plays for us and we have to replace those big plays that they made."

Moore, who will be counted on to call the secondary signals after moving from strong safety to free safety, also seems

ready to accept the mantle of leadership.

"The thing I can tell the young guys is, 'Hey, you're going to make mistakes and more than likely you're going to make a lot of them. But the most important play is the next one. If you let that last one get on you, you're going to be ruined for the rest of the game,'" Moore said.

"That's my job back there as a leader to say, 'You messed up. I'm going to come back there and pat you on the back and tell you what you did wrong, but forget about it. Go ahead and make a play on this one, get an interception or cause a fumble so we can get the ball back and erase that feeling.'"

Moore fell victim to a broken thumb during the April 15 practice and will miss the rest of spring practice, but he is expected to recover fully by the fall.

Plugging The Gaps

Sophomore Matt LaVrar is one example of the experimentation that is going on at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center these days.

A linebacker by trade, the 6-3, 220-pound LaVrar is also getting a look this spring at defensive end.

"We're bouncing him around, playing him a little bit at defensive end," Pagac said.

With Katzenmoyer entrenched at middle linebacker and senior Kevin Johnson all but penciled back in at the boundary linebacker spot he manned in 1995, LaVrar suddenly becomes a viable option at end. It's all about getting the best 11 players on the field, Pagac said.

"We're trying to find out where he can help the team the best," he said. "We only had seven scholarship players for three linebacker spots to begin with. I wouldn't call that great depth, but maybe he can help us (at end)."

The fiercest competition this spring has probably been at nose guard, where Jimmy Bell, Randy Homa and Clinton Wayne have done battle. Likewise, Rudzinski has faced challenges from Marcel Willis and Na'il Diggs at the wide-side LB spot.

But the biggest battle has been at cornerback. Junior Antoine Winfield has

nailed down one spot, while sophomores Ahmed Plummer and Gary Berry and junior Central McClellion are locked in battle at the other.

"I think one corner we have right now that we know we can play with and win with is Antoine Winfield," Pagac said. "What we have to do is find out who the other guy is. We have three guys battling for that spot. We're mixing them up and moving them around with Berry, Plummer and Central McClellion."

"We aren't going to make any type of decision until later on. We'll evaluate them and go from there. The guy who makes the fewest mistakes, provides the best coverage and learns the system best is going to be the guy."

"I'd say it's a three-horse race right now."

Pagac summed up each of the corner contenders:

"Gary Berry is what we think is a fine athlete. He's a young kid. He's got to come on, learn our system and play with some confidence and go from there."

"Ahmed Plummer has been in the system for a couple of years now. He's probably a little more aware of what's happening in the system. He's probably playing a little better technique right now."

"Central McClellion is along the same lines. He's been in the system and he knows what's going on. But I think all three have a chance to help us and play."

One unbiased observer, Moore, said it seems like Plummer may hold a slight edge. Regardless, the whole cornerback landscape could change in the fall when junior college transfer Ashanti Webb arrives.

"Antoine has always expected it more," Moore said. "He should have been there a year or two ago, but he's had some great people play ahead of him. Ahmed Plummer has separated himself a little bit, in my opinion, but they're all competitors. They're here every day busting their butt."

"Antoine started a couple games the last two years. For the other guys, it's going to be a learning experience. The first couple of games are going to be testers for all of us."

"If the front can apply pressure like Mike Vrabel, Matt Finkes and Luke Fickell did and the linebackers can move around like Greg Bellisari and Ryan Miller did, it will be a lot less pressure on the corners," he said.

Plenty Of Time Left

Schematically, OSU fans can expect the defense to again force the issue. Who will carry out that battle plan remains a mystery.

Last year, the Buckeyes used the 11 starters and nickel back Winfield almost exclusively in a 12-man rotation. This season, all indications point to platoons or situational substitutions at several spots being the rule rather than the exception. The regular rotation could include as many as 15 men.

"I think we've got a lot of talent, a lot of young talent," Pagac said. "The way I look at it, 11 jobs are open. Eleven people are going to be playing — the best 11."

"It's going to be guys hustling, flying around, running to the ball, doing the things we want done."

One reason for Pagac's reluctance to be pinned down on strategy or personnel is the fact the calendar says OSU's season opener is still at least four months away and a lot can happen in that period of time.

"It's still spring ball. We don't play for a couple of months," he said.

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OSU SPRING FOOTBALL: ANDY KATZENMOYER

Katzenmoyer Already Thinking About Future

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

We'll start with the obvious — Andy Katzenmoyer is an outstanding linebacker, so skilled and full of promise that the Butkus and Lombardi awards this fall are not out of the question, so imposing and capable on the field that NFL scouts are already drooling.

Which brings us to the rumor — Katzenmoyer will bolt from Ohio State after this season, some say, and try to become the first college sophomore to enter the NFL draft since rules were put in place to prevent just such an occurrence.

Andy?

"I'm going to play the season, hope for a national championship and then see what happens," he told *BSSB*. "I can't say right now what I'm going to do or what my options are, but the thought has crossed my mind, though."

In other words, that nasty rumor happened to have some validity to it.

But thinking about taking on the NFL-NCAA agreement that prohibits football players from being eligible for the draft until they are three years out of high school and actually delving into that legal mess are two entirely different things.

"Legally you could talk to those parties, hire a lawyer, take the whole thing on and perhaps win," said Andy's father, Warren Katzenmoyer. "But even if you do win, you still might lose."

"Andy and I have talked about it and looked into it. You can sue, but it would probably cause a lot of grief and a lot of headaches."

And this is no "hardship" case. Andy's parents live in the Columbus suburb of Westerville, which could be described as upper-middle class. Warren is a fiscal officer for the Ohio Natural Resources Department and an educated man. He'd like his son to be the same, even if that means going back to OSU to finish up an undergraduate degree after a lengthy career in the NFL.

"I want to see Andy go to school at least another two years," Warren Katzenmoyer said. "I'd rather he do that for a multitude of reasons. It's a matter of getting as many courses under his belt as possible."

"He's not ready (for the NFL). He may be ready physically, but not mentally in my view when you look at all the things college does to develop you as a person. He'd argue that with me, of course."

The 6-4, 250-pound Katzenmoyer is a sight to behold in spring drills these days, flying to ball carriers like a trapeze artist and plugging up gaps like Hoover Dam. Sure enough, he's already starting to wonder if he wouldn't embarrass himself in the pros.

"I don't see how you can stop somebody from making a career decision," he said. "If I feel like I'm ready and if everything works out here, then why not? You might as well try it."

Destined To Land In The NFL

One reason that the subject of an extraordinary departure has come up is that the Big Ten has featured a few players so physically mature for their age in the last couple of years that they could refute the notion 19-year-olds simply couldn't hold up in the NFL.

One example, of course, is former Ohio State tackle Orlando Pace, who bypassed

his senior season and was just picked No. 1 in the NFL draft. Pace was a man among boys last season for the Buckeyes, but he was on that same plane as a sophomore and admitted he likely would have left after two years were it not for the rules.

If Pace's on-field maturity is a glaring exception, then Wisconsin running back Ron Dayne's pro outlook is downright freakish. The 260-pounder ran over and around all comers as a freshman last season, setting Big Ten and national freshman rushing records along the way, and seemed to get stronger as the season wore on.

Dayne has been outspoken on the subject of taking on the NFL admissions policy, even hinting he's preparing to retain a lawyer to work on bending the rule in time for next year's draft.

That, no doubt, stirred Katzenmoyer's thoughts a bit.

"A kid like that, it's obvious he's going to have a pro career. I don't know if he wants to challenge the system or not," said former OSU linebacker Chris Spielman, who is observing OSU's spring practices. "I would enjoy watching him play just as I enjoy watching Shawn (Springs) and Orlando and all the great players that have played here."

Katzenmoyer proved to be so gifted last year — he won the coveted middle linebacker spot as a true freshman and racked up 85 tackles, 23 tackles for loss, 12 sacks and four interceptions — that many followers of the game believe he'd be a top-five NFL draft pick right now.

Beyond the stats lie hungry eyes and a body with the strength, stamina, balance, agility and speed to handle any gridiron challenge well.

Spielman set numerous OSU records in his legendary four-year career, but he still had to wait for the second round of the 1988 draft to be selected. After standing out with Detroit, he's set to embark on his second season in Buffalo and is setting the standard for MLBs in a 4-3 NFL system.

Does the prototypical OSU linebacker believe the latest Buckeye to challenge his legend is ready to join him in the pros?

"It's hard to say. I'd have to see how he did this year," Spielman said. "If I was him, I'd stay, enjoy this, and at least play the three years. Then obviously after your junior year you have to sit back and at least seriously consider (leaving)."

"You need to understand offenses and what offenses are trying to do to you and understand blocking schemes. That's going to make you a better player. Once he really understands that, then he'll be ready."

"I think he's going to be as good as he wants to be," Spielman added. "He's a hard worker, he's focused and he's got a world of talent. The more experience he gets, the more he sees the more difficult offenses and things like that and he's just going to get better and better. And he's already good. He's got all the physical tools."

Cause For Great Debate

Spielman's daily presence at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center only incites more debate about who is the greatest middle linebacker in OSU history. Some believe Katzenmoyer may already deserve that honor, lofty praise indeed.

"There's been a lot of great ones if you look at it: Randy Gradishar and Marcus Marek and Pepper Johnson. That's just a great, great tradition," Spielman said. "You don't really want to say one guy was

better than the other because every one was a great player while he was here. How do you say who was better and who wasn't?"

"I know I got better than Randy Gradishar just because people remember me and Andy will be better than me because people remember him. That's how that works."

Katzenmoyer swears he's merely trying to excel on the field instead of building an OSU legacy.

"I don't really think about it," he said.

"There's been a lot of great players here and a lot of great middle linebackers — Chris Spielman, Pepper Johnson and everyone else. I just go out there and play football and try to do my assignment."

Defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Fred Pagac played three seasons with Gradishar at OSU (1971-73) and has seen the subsequent greats firsthand. He doesn't know how to stack them up, but he does know he's got a keeper right now.

"Andy's a good football player," Pagac said in his signature understated tone. "He has excellent instincts, he's a great athlete who can run and hit, and he has a great attitude."

"I think there's no doubt he has the ability and drive to get (to the NFL). He just has to stay focused and work on what he needs to do at Ohio State, and he's been very good about doing that so far."

Katzenmoyer, in fact, reported to winter conditioning eight pounds heavier and buzzed by just about every one of his teammates in sprint drills. Now he has the privilege of working in front of Spielman, a first-class warrior in his own right.

"He's just giving us little tips that maybe Coach Pug hasn't, since he didn't play linebacker in college or professionally. It's just extra help," Katzenmoyer said.

But Pagac knows Spielman is garnering extra attention.

"It's a presence, there's no question about it — and it doesn't hurt to have a guy like that around showing you the ropes," he said. "I'm sure he's sort of a role model to Andy because he represents what Andy wants to be and where he wants to go."

Sophomore Stardom Just Ahead

But since that next level will have to wait awhile, Katzenmoyer is challenged to better a freshman season that earned him second-team All-American honors from *The Associated Press*.

While his tackle total figures to go up, he'll be hard-pressed to better his 23 tackles-for-loss, the second most ever by a Buckeye and easily a freshman record.

"I feel like I have the ability to do those



STEVE HELWAGEN

THE PRODIGY AND THE LEGEND — OSU linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer (45) receives a word of encouragement from former OSU All-American linebacker Chris Spielman. The two have been compared since Katzenmoyer was a high school junior.

kind of things," he said. "It was just a matter of assuring myself that I could make the plays. When they put in a defense and you learn new things, a lot of times you're a little hesitant about it. You've got to learn it, you've got to do it, and you have to be part of the team while you're doing it."

Katzenmoyer somehow became a reliable performer when it came to big plays and figures to produce a lot more of them if he is to elevate his play in 1997.

"I just want to take my game up to another level. That's my main goal," said the former *USA Today* national prep defensive player of the year. "I'm going to be stronger, faster and bigger, and I'm going to try to be more of a complete package, more of, I guess, what the ideal linebacker would want to be."

Should he reach that level, Katzenmoyer may redefine the position. For now he'd settle for emulating his childhood heroes, Spielman and Mike Singletary.

"They were real intense and always around the football," he said. "They were pretty much the center of their defense, and it's great to be in a system where — I don't want to say the middle linebacker's a key, because in this defense you have to have good players around you — but where you have to be a solid middle for it to work."

"It's nice to have that kind of responsibility."

It's also nice to have a world of talent, so much that the NFL just can't wait for it to arrive.

COVER STORY: THE NFL DRAFT

Pace Leads Parade Of 7 Buckeyes At Draft

Continued From Page 1

gram, has a lot to do with this."

Pace added: "I think that's good for Ohio State (to have the most first-round draft choices in the '90s). You have to give due credit to the program and Coach Cooper and the job they do recruiting. I think that's tremendous."

The Pace Setter

Pace was clearly the top player on the board and the Rams, led by new head coach and general manager Dick Vermeil, had to make a trade two days before the draft with the New York Jets to acquire the top pick.

"St. Louis is a good fit for me," Pace said. "From what I understand, they have a good offensive line coach there that can help me and groom me through the first couple of years. Knowing the coach well, having that type of understanding is always a plus."

Pace and Vermeil became regular acquaintances during Vermeil's recent stint as a color commentator on ABC's college football broadcasts.

"He came to the locker room a few times," Pace said of his new coach. "Even though he was watching films before the game, he was coaching me on little points, showing me little differences."

"Dick knows a lot about our players," Cooper said. "Dick was in here an awful lot with ABC and, unlike a lot of those other guys, Dick comes in on Wednesday. He studies film, watches practice, visits with us and visits with the players one on one."

"Besides that, you like the Big Dog. He's always got a smile on his face. He's got a good personality. You know what type of athlete he is."

Vermeil admits Pace "has no limitations." He said Pace would be inserted at left tackle immediately, moving former first-round pick Wayne Gandy to right tackle and allowing ex-Outland Trophy winner Zach Wiegert to move to right guard.

"This one pick shores up our whole line considerably," Vermeil said.

For Rams quarterback TONY BANKS' sake, it better. Rams quarterbacks were sacked an NFL-high 57 times last year.

Pace emphasized his resolve to "get my fair market value," but says he does not foresee any type of contract holdout. His agents, Carl and Kevin Poston, will begin negotiations right away on a deal that could mirror the six-year, \$15 million contract last year's top pick, the Jets' Keyshawn Johnson, received.

Although Pace was a distant fourth in last year's Heisman Trophy balloting, he is glad

Buckeyes In The Draft

Here is a look at the Ohio State football players selected in the 1997 National Football League draft:

Player	Pos.	Round	Pick	Team
Orlando Pace	OT	First	1	St. Louis Rams
Shawn Springs	CB	First	3	Seattle Seahawks
Rob Kelly	S	Second	33	New Orleans Saints
Ty Howard	CB	Third	84	Arizona Cardinals
Mike Vrabel	DE	Third	91	Pittsburgh Steelers
Nicky Sualua	FB	Fourth	129	Dallas Cowboys
Matt Finkes	DE	Sixth	189	Carolina Panthers

to see that a lineman is recognized for his work.

"I think average people and fans don't realize that offensive and defensive linemen pretty much win games," Pace said. "If it weren't for the offensive line, some of those skilled guys wouldn't be some of those skilled guys today."

Pace won over the New York media with a witty, engaging and funny interview session backstage. After he was asked whether he compares himself to Rams sure-Hall of Fame lineman Jackie Slater, Pace said, "I don't compare myself to anybody. I'm Orlando Pace and I'm going to bring my own style to the game."

Later, a reporter pressed Pace, asking, "What is Orlando Pace?" Said Pace: "I can sit up here all day and tell you about Orlando Pace." He paused. "But I'm on a tight schedule."

Hope 'Springs' Eternal

Moments after his selection by the Seahawks, Springs reflected on the long road he took to this point as well as on his father, former Buckeye and Dallas Cowboys running back Ron Springs.

"You know, growing up, especially with my father Ron being a professional football player, I always wanted to grow up to be like my father and become a professional football player," he said. "I always thought about this day."

Springs was the center of much speculation in the weeks leading up to the draft. Originally projected as a top-10 pick, Springs jumped past Texas' Bryant Westbrook — chosen fifth by Detroit — to become the top corner in the draft.

Speculation had the Jets or possibly the Oakland Raiders, picking second, taking him. But the Rams snagged the top pick and the Raiders opted for USC defensive lineman Darrell Russell, also a draft-eligible junior.

But Seahawks coach Dennis Erickson was impressed with what he saw of Springs at a pre-draft OSU workout. Erickson's interest caught Springs' attention.

"I feel Seattle is a team that makes some moves, some trades," he said. "They want to win. I'm happy about the fact that Coach Erickson showed a lot of interest in me. I'm excited about that."

Springs will be joining former OSU teammate and wide receiver Joey Galloway in Seattle.

"Better to be with him than against him," Springs said. "The last thing I told Joey was we would discuss rent when I got back."

Prior to the draft, ESPN analyst Mel Kiper Jr. mentioned Springs in the same breath as featured NFL corners such as Deion Sanders and Dale Carter. Has corner become a glamour position, thanks to Deion?

"If you have a cover corner, you make your line-backer better, your safety better," Springs said. "You just make the whole side better. I mean, it helps your running defense. Before, when I visited the Oakland Raiders, Al Davis told me two corners can make a whole

Kelly in the second round after meeting him at the NFL combines.

Kelly, however, thought Jets coach Bill Parcells would take him two picks earlier since the two had a memorable visit in New York.

"I had absolutely no idea he (Ditka) was going to take me," Kelly said. "I remember meeting him at the combine, which was real intimidating. He was just staring at me."

"When I heard all the things he said about me after they took me I was really blown away."

Howard was less giddy. He hoped to go somewhere in the middle of the second round but had to settle for 84th overall when the Cardinals jingled him. At one point, the Lions told him they'd take him with the 54th pick, then grabbed Syracuse DB Kevin Abrams instead. Carolina made the same promise but opted for Nebraska corner Mike Minter two picks later.

Particularly disturbing was the fact that Arizona took Iowa cornerback Tom Knight ahead of him with the ninth pick overall. Kiper slammed that decision on the live ESPN broadcast, saying Knight was barely in his top 120.

Howard also was a tad skeptical.

"I met Tom at the combine and he's a nice guy, but as far as covering ability — and this isn't me being cocky — I don't think he can cover like I can," he said. "Maybe they liked his size."

Howard is just 5-9 1/2 but was the fastest corner in the draft, in the flat 4.3 range according to most listed times. He had to watch DB after DB go ahead of him, but he ended up going to a team that has several talented young players.

"When you drop down a little below where you think you should have gone, it hurts your pride a little bit, but I'm pleased with the pick and looking forward to some sunny weather," said Howard, who prepped at Briggs High School in Columbus.

The Cardinals also took local hero Jake Plummer in the second round. Howard gained a lot of respect for Plummer after facing him and Arizona State in the Rose Bowl.

"He's a nice guy and a heck of a competitor," Howard said.

Sensing Howard might be down, Springs called after the second round and told him to keep his head up and he soon joined Springs and Kelly among the drafted.

The last time the Buckeyes had three DBs go as high was 1971, when Jack Tatum (Oakland) and Tim Anderson (San Francisco) went in the first round and Mike Sensibaugh was tabbed in the eighth round by Kansas City.

"We were given the opportunity to play in a defense where everybody could show off their skills," Kelly said. "I was given the freedom to run around and make plays, and Shawn and Ty can cover people all day. I'm real happy for them, for all of us."

Added Howard, "Rob called me right after he got the call from Ditka and we just started talking about how much we've been through together. It means a lot to me to see those guys get picked high like that because we all put in the work."

Vrabel, OSU's career sack leader and the Big Ten defensive lineman of the year in '96, was the fifth Buckeye to be taken on the first day of the proceedings, going 91st overall to the Steelers.

The stalwart defensive end was a model of production throughout his career, which included senior numbers of 56 tackles, 18 for

team."

By having Springs go third instead of second, the Buckeyes just missed becoming the third school to ever have players go 1-2 in the draft. Heading into last year's draft, college teammates had been plucked in the top 10 just six times in history. But Kevin Hardy and Simeon Rice of Illinois became the seventh tandem and OSU's Terry Glenn (seventh) and Rickey Dudley (ninth) upped the mark to eight.

Pace and Springs, of course, extended it again and Florida State's Peter Boulware (fourth) and Rickey Jones (sixth) became the 10th such pair.

Another unlikely trend is that teammates have been taken in the top five of the last three drafts, which has never happened before. All three instances involved Big Ten schools with Ki-Jana Carter and Kerry Collins of Penn State going first and fifth in 1995, Hardy and Rice going 2-3 in '96, followed by Pace and Springs this year.

Kelly Leads The Second Wave

With Kelly's stock on the rise, the Buckeyes had a legitimate chance to produce a trio of first-rounders for the third straight year (Galloway, Corey Stringer, Craig Powell in '95, and Eddie George joining Glenn and Dudley last year), an unprecedented feat at OSU.

Kelly was not taken through the end of the first round but didn't have to wait long after that, being taken with the third pick of the second round by New Orleans.

"I think I've got a lot to prove being a second-round pick," said Kelly, who packs a wallop for his less-than-200-pound frame and runs in the 4.5 range in the 40-yard dash. "I've got to work like I've been working."

Kelly was the first safety taken and the top such player on the board for many teams after a stellar senior season at the free spot — 66 tackles, five passes broken up, three interceptions and a pair of fumble recoveries. He elevated himself the old-fashioned way with hard work, improvement each year, and outstanding showings in all-star games and combines.

"I remember asking myself, 'Can I do this?' But I put in a lot of hard work and did it the right way," said Kelly, an outstanding athlete out of Newark, Ohio. "Sometimes I didn't feel I got the respect I deserved, but I think a lot of teams liked my intensity and the fact that I had to work up to where I am."

Those were precisely the reasons cited by new Saints coach Mike Ditka, who said Kelly reminded him of former Bears great Gary Fencik and that he made up his mind to take



Rob Kelly

Buckeyes In The First Round

Here is a look at the Ohio State football players selected in the first round of the NFL draft in the 1990s:

Year	Player	Pos.	Team
1991	Vinnie Clark	CB	Green Bay
1992	Alonzo Spellman*	DE	Chicago
1993	Robert Smith*	RB	Minnesota
1994	Dan Wilkinson*1	DT	Cincinnati
1995	Joey Galloway	WR	Seattle
	Korey Stringer*	OT	Minnesota
	Craig Powell*	LB	Cleveland
1996	Terry Glenn*	WR	New England
	Rickey Dudley	TE	Oakland
	Eddie George	RB	Houston
1997	Orlando Pace*1	OT	St. Louis
	Shawn Springs*	CB	Seattle

*Underclassman; 1-No. 1 pick overall

Continued On Page 34

BUCKEYE BRIEFS

Men's Lacrosse On A Roll Heading Down Homestretch Of The Season

Ohio State has been hot of late, beating Virginia Military Institute 11-7 April 20 to push its winning streak to four games. The Buckeyes got three goals apiece from Tim Johnson and Kevin Johnson, the pacesetters all year.

OSU also knocked off Mount St. Mary's 17-11 at home April 12, getting six goals from Tim Johnson and 17 stops from goalie John Kuss, and beat Wooster 14-8 at home April 8, with Tim Johnson scoring three times.

Tim Johnson's mammoth totals — 56 points in 10 games — is 10th in school history and, with two games left, Johnson has an outside shot at making the top five.

"Tim's a good kid and a great player," OSU coach Paul Caldwell said. "Tim's a guy who stays focused on the task at hand, and that's helping us win. He loves winning, and he's one reason we're playing so well right now."

Volleyballs Fall Just Short, Won't Be Part Of NCAA's

It's always great to participate in an event you're hosting, but that won't happen for the OSU men's volleyball team.

Ohio State is hosting the NCAA



Tim Johnson

Championships May 1-3, but, by virtue of a 3-0 loss to Ball State April 18 at Fort Wayne, Ind., the Buckeyes won't be part of the final four.

OSU lost in the MIVA semifinals to the Cardinals 15-6, 16-14, 15-6, getting 18 kills from Dan Mihacevich and 12 from Jose Bengoa. Ball State outthrew the Buckeyes .336 to .229 and served 10 aces to OSU's three.

The Bucks got to the semis after beating Loyola (Ill.) 17-16, 15-11, 11-15, 14-16, 15-12. OSU got 25 kills from Mihacevich and placed four other starters in double figures.

Ball State won the tournament and will be going to the NCAA Championships, along with Penn State, whoever wins the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation tournament and an at-large team.

Softball Takes It On Chin From Two Of Big Ten's Best

No one said it would be easy.

Ohio State has found tough sledding through the Big Ten wars, with the most recent setbacks coming at the hands of the fifth-ranked Iowa Hawkeyes April 19-20 in Columbus.

OSU gave Iowa all it wanted on the first day, falling 6-2 in Game 1 and going 11 innings before losing 3-2 in Game 2. Jodi Dolan went all 11 innings, allowing just eight hits, and went 2-for-5 with a double and RBI.

The final game was an easy 6-0 Iowa victory.

OSU took an 8-4 decision from Miami (Ohio) at home April 17, with the second game canceled due to cold weather. Amy Haug led the Buckeye charge, going 2-for-3

with two doubles and one RBI, and Renae Weigel went 2-for-3 with a two-run homer, her third round-tripper of the year.

Dolan threw a no-hitter in a 10-0 win over Morehead State April 15 in Columbus, striking out eight and going 3-for-3 at the plate, just missing the cycle by a home run. Game 1 was an easy 7-2 Buckeye victory.

OSU had the tough task of traveling to East Lansing to take on 12th-ranked Michigan State April 13 and, though giving the Spartans fits, dropped a pair of one-run, extra-inning decisions.

MSU won Game 1 2-1 in eight innings, with Stephanie Giroux coming across with the winning run. Buckeye Meghan Robinson scattered three hits but took the loss.

The Spartans won Game 2 3-2 in 12 innings, getting the game-winner on Dolan's fifth wild pitch of the game. Weigel clubbed a solo homer for the Buckeyes, but it wasn't enough. The scheduled Saturday twin bill was canceled due to weather.

The Buckeyes knocked off Toledo 11-10 and 8-0 in a double dip April 9 in Columbus, capitalizing on seven Rocket errors in the opener and racing out to a 7-0 lead through two innings of the finale.

Streak Of Top Two Finishes Ends At Arizona State Tournament

The OSU men's golf team was on fire heading into the Thunderbird/Savane Invitational at Arizona State, finishing first or second in its last three tournaments. At that tournament, a bad first round had OSU playing catch-up, and resulted in a sixth-place finish at 875.

Arizona State won the 15-team tourney at 854, edging Arizona by five shots. Oklahoma's Jeff Mixon was the winner with a seven-under 209. OSU's top finishers were Chris Wollmann and Ryan Armour, tied for 12th at 217.

Craig Matthew carded a 218, Didier deVoight was at 224 and Jeff Brown finished at 234.

Despite shooting the final day's best round, a 289, Ohio State fell just short at the Marshall Invitational in Huntington, W.V.

Northwestern won the 18-team event at 868, five shots better than the Buckeyes. Wildcat Scott Rowe was the individual champ, shooting a 3-under 210, one stroke better than Wollmann.

OSU also got a fine performance from deVoight (219), who finished eighth, and Matthew (221), who finished 13th. Armour (223) and Brown (235) rounded out the Buckeye contingent.

Women's Golf Storms To Victory Against Big Ten Foes At Iowa

In what might be called a tuneup for the Big Ten Championships, Ohio State won the Hawkeye Invitational by 19 shots April 19-20.

The Buckeyes faced seven Big Ten teams and posted a 907, easily beating runner-up Indiana (926). OSU's Jessica Luciak won the tournament at a 1-over 220.

Natalie Mosher and Amber Amstutz tied for third (229), Amy Langhals took 12th (234) and Marisa Wilhelm finished 13th (236).

OSU wasn't quite as good at the Liz Murphy Classic in Athens, Ga., April 11-13, finishing ninth out of 19 teams.

Georgia (907) squeaked by Auburn (912) for the title, with OSU tying Texas at 947.

Wilhelm led the way for the Buckeyes at 235, followed by Langhals and Luciak (236), Mosher (240) and Amstutz (252).

Tennis Teams Prepare For Big Tens On Different Paths

The OSU women's tennis team finished

the season on a high, beating Purdue in West Lafayette 6-1 in the last match of the season. They'll be heading back to Purdue for the league championships April 24-27.

Kristen Jordan topped Mary Beth Maggett 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, and Chrissy Splawnyk won over Shannon Taheny 3-6, 6-2, 6-1, the toughest two matches of the day. Amanda Yelley, Kadri Kanepi and Carolina Nahuz were also singles winners for the Buckeyes. OSU swept the doubles point, winning all three contests.

OSU lost to Illinois in Champaign 4-3, with Jordan, Splawnyk and Nahuz winning in singles.

The Buckeyes blanked Bowling Green 9-0 April 15, winning all but one contest in straight sets; lost to Wisconsin 6-1 April 13; and beat Northwestern, ranked 35th nationally, 4-3 April 12.

The men are spiraling downward, losing the last three matches of the year, including the finale to Penn State 5-2 in State College. Ben Basil and Pari Laxminarayan were the only winners for Ohio State.

OSU also fell to Purdue at home April 13, losing 6-1, with Basil and Laxminarayan and Jordan Freedman and Shaun Crichtlow picking up the doubles point with wins.

Because of a late start, OSU and Illinois played just five matches, but the Illini came away with a 5-0 win April 12, though the singles matches were close, with two going to three sets and the others have a tiebreaker.

Buckeyes Looking To Finish Above .500 In Second Season

The OSU women's lacrosse team has run into some obstacles of late, dropping two of its last three, including a 14-7 road contest against Vanderbilt April 18. That put the Buckeyes at 5-6 for the season, and with just two games left, both at home, the goal now is for a .500 finish.

Against Vandy, OSU managed a 3-3 tie at intermission before the Commodores began flying high, tallying 11 second-half goals. OSU was led by Stacy Cook and Becky Gerhardt with two goals apiece.

Ninth-ranked Penn State demolished the Buckeyes 14-3 at State College April 13, blasting out to a 10-1 lead at halftime. Two of Ohio State's three goals were by Lorena Opitz.

The Buckeyes beat Duquesne 18-7 April 9 in Pittsburgh, getting six goals from Mara Simpson and three from Cook. Simpson leads the team in scoring with 18 points.

Buckeye Gymnast Niemi Finalist For Scholarship

Men's gymnast Neil Niemi was named one of 15 finalists for the annual NACDA Preseason Games Scholar-Athlete Postgraduate Scholarships by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics.

The 15 finalists were chosen from 256 nominees from all NCAA divisions, from all sports other than football. Earlier this year, 20 football finalists were selected, and 10 winners will be chosen from these 35 finalists and receive a \$5,000 grant to use toward postgraduate studies.

Niemi has a 3.94 grade-point average in psychology, is a four-year letterwinner and a three-time Academic All-American.



Mara Simpson

Finkes Headed To Carolina

Continued From Page 16

loss (for a team-high 107 yards), nine sacks, two fumbles caused and one recovery.

Vrabel did not return several phone messages from BSB.

Second Day Somewhat Uneventful

As many as 11 Buckeyes still had reasonable hope of being picked on day two, but only two — Sualua and Finkes — got the call.

Sualua was expecting to be gobbled up any minute by Detroit when Cowboys coach Barry Switzer phoned his apartment with the news.

"I couldn't even hear him because everybody was over here celebrating," Sualua told BSB the following day. "They said they'd be in touch, so I hope they call back."

Sualua quit the football team and school last spring, but a half dozen teams flew the fullback in for an interview and several teams such as Dallas were awed by his blocking prowess on film.

It also didn't hurt that Sualua, who weighed in excess of 265 pounds while clearing paths for George in his Heisman Trophy winning season of 1995, trimmed down to a still-solid 245.

"I knew teams were suspect of the year off, but I showed I was committed to getting in shape and doing the work. I definitely overcame it," he said.

Dallas was hoping to get a backup fullback for veteran Daryl Johnston, one who specialized in talking out linebackers as a lead blocker, and decided to roll the dice. That's why Sualua will now toil for Emmitt Smith instead of Barry Sanders.

(Dallas offensive coordinator) Ernie Zampese said he's the best college blocker he's seen in a long time, and I agree with him," Switzer told *The Dallas Morning News*.

Finkes also dealt with a radical weight change in an attempt to make the draft, only he beefed up more than 15 pounds to 275 to show he had enough size to play defensive end.

But what really earned Finkes' selection were his versatility and outstanding performances in senior all-star games. He had a sack in both the East-West Shrine Game and the Hula Bowl and also returned an interception for a score in the East-West, staged in Palo Alto, Calif.

Finkes moved along the line in those events and now is pegged to play outside linebacker in Carolina's 3-4 defense. That means all of that added weight is going to have to come back off.

"I'm going to have to drop 10-15 pounds pretty quick and study a lot of film," said Finkes, who was scheduled to fly in for rookie meetings April 24.

"But I'm very happy to be picked by them. The Panthers have a young team, but they've put together a winning program in a short time and they're real committed to winning."

Finkes actually took some reps at middle linebacker for OSU in the spring of 1995 before the job was won by Greg Bellisari. He also played some linebacker at Piqua (Ohio) High School.

He met with Carolina officials three weeks before the draft and left assured he would be taken by the Panthers.

"I thought I had a chance when their pick came up in the fourth round, but I waited it out and I'm real happy now," he said.

Finkes wrapped up his outstanding OSU career with 71 tackles, 16 for loss and six sacks as a senior. He also had one very big fumble recovery, icing OSU's first Rose Bowl berth in 13 years with a fourth-quarter touchdown at Indiana.

Continued On Page 40

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Miller Became Big Wrestling Star

Professional wrestling has always been some sort of hybrid of sports and entertainment.

Perhaps it's the difficulty the media have in categorizing pro wrestling that has limited its mainstream coverage through the years, and perhaps that is why the passing of Dr. Bill Miller warranted just a few lines in the last issue of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* and was noted in even fewer lines in *The Columbus Dispatch*.

Make no mistake about it, the former three-sport standout at Ohio State was a huge star in professional wrestling in both the United States and Japan for more than 20 years and his death at age 69 merited a lengthy obituary in the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter*, perhaps the most respected newsletter in the business.

Miller was also a success outside the ring, where he was a veterinarian, working many years for the state of Ohio.

"He was a heck of a guy," said Lou Thesz, another wrestling legend, in the *Observer*. "When a lot of the guys were out booing and chasing the broads, he was hitting the books," added Thesz, who wrestled Miller for the NWA championship on numerous occasions.

"He was a big guy who could move and was very colorful. A great performer. We had a lot of great matches. He was a very competitive guy and commanded a lot of respect in the dressing room."

At 6-4 and 250 pounds, he was one of the largest pro wrestlers of his day, but also one of the best all-around athletes, and he held several versions of the world championship during his career, a career in which he attained some of his greatest success while wrestling under a mask.

According to the *Observer*, Miller first learned to wrestle as a teenager while in the Navy at the end of World War II. He earned three letters on the mat at Ohio State, winning Big Ten championships as a heavyweight in 1950 and 1951 and earning All-American honors in 1951 when he finished fourth in the country. He also lettered twice in track for the Buckeyes, winning the Big Ten discus title and All-American honors in 1949. Miller lettered three times for Wes Fesler's football Buckeyes from 1948-50, as well.

"His success at Ohio State led to him being recruited by Al Haft, the famous promoter of that era out of Columbus, and he was given an immediate push due to his size and legit athletic ability," the *Observer* noted. "As a rookie in 1952, he won a version of the world heavyweight title recognized in several Northern states from Don Eagle in Pittsburgh, before losing the crown to his longtime rival Buddy Rogers later that year. He also traded the Eastern states and Midwestern states belts with Rogers on the Ohio circuit during the early '50s."

According to the newsletter, Miller's biggest success came later in the decade as the masked Mr. M.

"The masked monstrous Mr. M, billed at 6-6 or 6-7 and over 300 pounds (he probably weighed in the 280-285 range at this time and wore a

size 54 jacket) with both speed and wrestling skill arrived in the Omaha circuit in 1958 and plowed through the competition with the boast that he would unmask if anyone could beat him."

As the masked Miller knocked off one opponent after another, he became a mainstay of the wrestling magazines of the day, a monstrous masked man whose true identity generated tremendous speculation. He won the Omaha area's version of the championship from Wilbur Snyder in August 1959 and held it until February 1961, when he lost to the equally large Don Leo Jonathan.

After trading the belt back and forth with Jonathan, Mr. M became Mr. X for a successful run in Japan in the spring and summer of 1961.

Miller's success with the mask prompted promoter Verne Gagne, also a former Big Ten wrestling champion, to bring Miller to Minneapolis to repeat the same promotional formula later in 1961. Miller became the first masked wrestler to win the AWA championship, one of the world's most prestigious championships, when he won the belt from Gagne in Minneapolis on Jan. 9, 1962. Gagne won the belt back in the same city on Aug. 21 of that year, forcing Mr. M. to unmask.

According to the *Observer*, Miller's name and his athletic ability were well enough known that it wasn't a letdown for the fans when the identity of the man dominating the promotion was revealed.

After earning his degree in veterinary medicine, he became known as Dr. Bill Miller and was one of the most noted bad guys in the country. He feuded with WWWF (now WWF) champion Bruno Sammartino for much of 1965 and also had a famous Texas Death Match with Ray Stevens for the U.S. title in the Cow Palace in San Francisco around that time.

By the late '60s, Miller was working full time for the state but continued to wrestle on weekends, and in 1970 he reprised his most famous role, this time as the Crimson Knight in the St. Louis area for famed promoter Sam Muchnick. The interest built for 11 months as the Knight, billed as a well-known national star that the big names avoided, beat all comers and remained masked.

He was finally defeated and unmasked by NWA champion Dory Funk Jr. in front of 14,000 fans in a match that had to be moved from St. Louis' Kiel Auditorium to the larger Checkerdome.

Miller continued to wrestle for Muchnick in St. Louis until 1975, usually wrestling just below the main event. According to the *Observer*, "Beating Miller in St. Louis was a sign to the fans that the wrestler was about to get a world title shot."

Miller had his last major title run in Japan in 1971, winning the International Wrestling Enterprises belt by defeating Thunder Sugiyama

in Kokura on March 4, 1971.

Miller had been in poor health in recent years with back and circulatory problems that had caused him to lose five inches in height. He died in nearby Reynoldsburg of an apparent heart attack.

Coleman Carries On The Tradition

Speaking of former Buckeye wrestlers turned pro, former Ohio State All-American Mark Coleman is making quite a name for himself as one of the top names in the so-called ultimate or no-holds-barred wrestling, a controversial mixed martial arts competition noted for its extreme violence.

While it is not pro wrestling, for lack of other outlets the sport is covered in newsletters like the *Observer*. Coleman recently finished seventh in that publication's wrestler-of-the-year balloting, ahead of such mainstream pros as Steve Austin, Bret Hart and Ric Flair, who has won the honor nine times in the last 15 years.

Coleman's reputation in the sport is becoming such that many speculated that noted tough-guy Ken Shamrock's recent decision to join the more traditional WWF was spurred by his fear of facing Coleman — who won a national championship for Ohio State at 190 pounds in 1988 — in a no-holds-barred match.

It will be interesting to see if Coleman, too, ultimately goes for the bigger money and greater stability of the WWF or Turner Broadcasting's World Championship Wrestling.

Watch for a feature on Coleman in an upcoming issue of *BSB*.

Still Want Huggins?

Those of you still longing for Cincinnati's Bob Huggins as the OSU basketball coach might be interested in a brochure I recently received in the mail.

Huggins, a former Ohio State assistant, might not have the OSU job, but he apparently has an autobiography out, "Bob Huggins: Pressed for Success."

"Take an inside look at the No. 1 coach in the country as he chronicles how he turned around the University of Cincinnati program with never-before-revealed details of how he attracted recruits such as NBA players Nick Van Exel, Corie Blount and Donte Wingfield."

"The many sides of Huggins' personality come through, when he addresses all of the questions that have surrounded him over the years, who he is and why you may not know him, and how he got where he is."

Sounds like a must-read. Can an Eldon Miller book be far behind?

If you just have to have this one, send \$22.95 plus \$5 shipping and handling (\$49.95 for the leatherbound version) to Sagamore Publishing Inc., 804 N. Neil St., Suite 100, P.O. Box 647, Champaign, Ill. 61824 or call (800) 327-5557.

NFL DRAFT

Several Bucks Get Free Agent Looks

Continued From Page 34

"My contract, I'm not worried about that stuff," he said. "I just want to familiarize myself with the system and the surroundings down there during minicamp. If they like what they see, I'm sure we'll get something multiyear."

Remaining Buckeyes Free To Roam

Several other Buckeyes were hoping to be taken in the draft's seven rounds and 240 picks, only to be left hanging. But that doesn't mean the dream is over just yet. A listing of draft-eligible Buckeyes who are likely to be invited to camps as free agents follows:

• **Dimitrios Stanley, WR** — Stanley seems to stand a good chance at sticking in the NFL. Chicago, Indianapolis and Miami all called him before the draft was over expressing interest.

"We talked it over with his agent and we felt the team that expressed the most interest was Miami, so I'd say he's leaning on them," said Dimitrios' father, Wayne Stanley, a former assistant coach at Ohio State.

"After the fourth or fifth round it's probably better to be a free agent anyway because you can pick the place where there is a need at that particular position and the opportunity to make the team is a lot better. With his knowledge of football and skill level, I'm sure he'll make a team."

• **Greg Bellisari, LB** — A Florida native, Bellisari expects to work in with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, where former OSU assistant Lovie Smith serves as the LB coach.

"From what I've heard, Lovie was a very integral part of Tampa Bay being interested in me," Bellisari told *BSB*. "It's nice to be playing close to home and going to Tampa really is the best situation for me from a numbers standpoint."

• **D.J. Jones, TE** — Jones is tough, as his recovery from open-heart surgery attests, and that alone makes him a good fit for the Pittsburgh Steelers. But more enticing was the fact that the Steelers are in the market for a least one rookie tight end and did not draft one.

"I'm just happy I'm getting any sort of chance," he said. "They'll have five tight ends in camp (including veterans Mark Bruener and Jonathan Hayes) and they'll keep three and put one on the developmental squad. I want to be one of the three."

• **Matt Calhoun, FB** — A sturdy lead-blocking back from Heath, Ohio, Calhoun could be tailor-made for the Giants. In fact, the G-Men gave all appearances of drafting him, but Calhoun will have to settle for being a free-agent invitee.

"I was a little disappointed because the Giants had called me three times saying that they might take me in a late round. You hear a lot of BS," he said. "But I'm over that and I'm looking forward to getting in."

The Giants have just one true fullback in Charles Way, but fan favorite Keith Elias has served as a two-way back.

• **Juan Porter, C/G** — Porter latched on with agent Neil Cornrich, who represents Vrabel and several other ex-Buckeyes such as Robert Smith and Kirk Lowdermilk. Word is that he'll take a shot with defending AFC champion New England.

Also, nose guard **Luke Fickell** is on his way to New Orleans and wide receiver **Buster Tillman** may follow Stanley to Miami. As of press time, outside linebacker **Ryan Miller** was discussing his future with Houston. *BSB* knew of no immediate offers for offensive guard **LeShun Daniels**.

Mike Wachman and Ed Petoniah contributed to this report.