

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 17, No. 21

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

February 28, 1998

# So Long, St. John

## Ohio State Ends An Era At Arena After 42 Seasons

By STEVE HELWAGEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

For nearly four years, St. John Arena's fate has been sealed — the basketball Buckeyes, both the men and women, are moving out.

Ohio State's men's basketball team will host its final game ever at St. John Arena Feb. 28 against Penn State. The OSU women already have closed their locker room door at the venerable 41-year-old hall, defeating rival Michigan on Feb. 22.

Built in 1956 at a cost of just \$4 million, St. John will be replaced by the \$105 million Schottenstein Center. That building is currently under construction one block west of St. John.

This move is the result of years of behind-the-scenes lobbying and careful planning by OSU officials. Former OSU president Gordon Gee started the ball rolling earlier this decade as the Buckeyes enjoyed back-to-back men's Big Ten titles and stretched the limits of their basketball home.

Gee pressed the issue hard and, in May 1994, outdid the city of Columbus to win state support for \$15 million in seed money for the new arena. A month later, the charismatic president brought Andy Geiger on board as the athletic director to implement the plan to phase out St. John and phase in what would later become known as the Schottenstein Center.

"When I came in here, the negotiation between the city, the state and the university was over," Geiger said. "It was determined that the university was going to go ahead and build the building."

"Gordon Gee said to me, 'Go out and build us the best arena in the country.' That's where we are and what we're doing."

When it was built, St. John was the Big Ten's pre-eminent basketball arena. The building allowed OSU to bring its men's team back on campus after a 37-year sojourn at the Fairgrounds Coliseum.

Today, though, it stands 10th in the conference in capacity at 13,276 and has only limited uses.

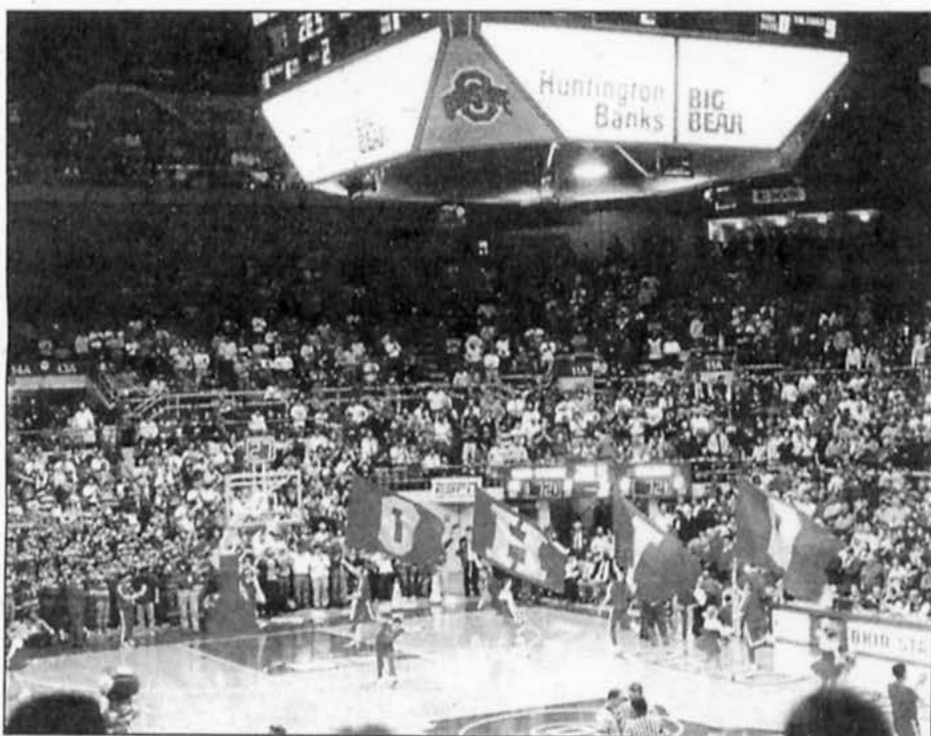
"It's a nice arena, but I think that what the university wanted was a sports and entertainment center — an entirely different building than St. John Arena," Geiger said.

"St. John Arena is not a multipurpose building from the context of having a place to play ice hockey and build an ice hockey program. Plus, we'll have major entertainment opportunities at the Schottenstein Center. St. John is not suited to that sort of thing."

"That was part of the decision to go forward with a multipurpose facility."

Paul Krebs, OSU's senior associate athletic director, has been on board since 1985. He has watched the campaign for a new arena closely since its infancy in the late '80s.

"From my perspective, what really got the Schottenstein Center going was the \$15 million from the



STEVE HELWAGEN

**ERA WINDING DOWN** — Above, St. John Arena explodes with Buckeye enthusiasm during a time out in the Feb. 19 game against Indiana. That game was the next-to-last men's game scheduled at St. John. At right, the arena's facade is pictured while the Schottenstein Center, the future home of OSU basketball, rises in the background.

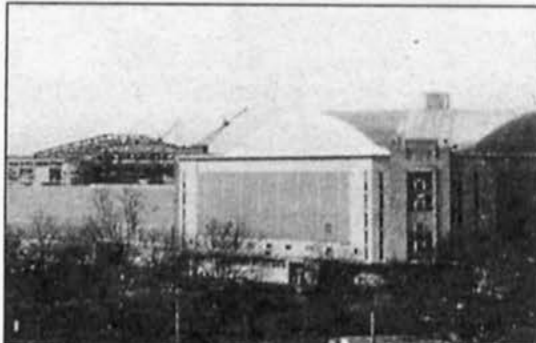
state," he said. "Heretofore, we had never gotten any money from the state for athletic facilities."

"My understanding was the speaker of the house, Vern Riffe, was retiring. He recognized a need for a multipurpose facility and a larger facility on this campus. We got that grant from the state. That's what got the ball rolling. That happened at about the same time Andy got here."

According to Krebs, Geiger hit the ground running. A new arena was not his top priority, though. It was just one critical part of his bigger plan.

"I think Andy made it clear from the beginning that we will have a first-class athletic program," Krebs said. "Our goal is to be the best program in the country. To do that, we had to have the best facilities in the country."

"I think everybody recognizes that St. John is a great basketball facility. But with a 34-sport program, we need-



STEVE HELWAGEN

ed more and we needed several venues so our gymnastics, wrestling, volleyball and basketball teams weren't all using the same facility."

"I don't recall a discussion where Andy said, 'We've got to have a new arena.' It was a combination of factors that have led to where we are today."

Alex Shumate, chairman of the OSU board of trustees, said the timing was right for the university to take this

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PUBLISHER  
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS  
Karen Wachsmann

EDITOR  
Steve Helwag

NON-REVENUE SPORTS EDITOR  
Mike Wachsmann

SENIOR WRITER  
Jeff Rapp

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jeff Brehm Terry Gilliam  
Sonny Brockway Mike Greer  
Kevin Dye

CONTRIBUTORS

Nicole Burch Bob Roehm  
Rich Leonardo Steve Siegfried  
John Redd Stacey Stathulis  
Rebecca Roberts Paula C. Weston

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES

Ron Friedman Bill Rucker  
Cindy Osborne Jack Woodworth

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P.O. Box 12515 • Cincinnati, OH 45212  
1-800-792-3216

## OPINION

# Growing Up With St. John Arena

After 42 years of meritorious service, Ohio State is moving its men's basketball games from the cozy confines of St. John Arena to the palatial Schottenstein Center.

I just turned 30 years old not too long ago, so St. John Arena and I only go back a little over 20 years together.

Like many people of my era, my first memory of St. John Arena was watching OSU games on Channel 4 with Jimmy Crum in the mid-'70s.

I can't pinpoint the date or opponent of my first live OSU game there, other than to say the name "Jim Ellinghausen" stuck with me. I'm thinking it had to be 1979 or 1980. My dad and I tagged along with a YMCA group. We sat in the balcony on one end — don't ask me which one.

I have a little more recall of my next foray to St. John Arena for the state high school tournament a year or two later. My uncle took my brother and me up to the game. I thought it was neat the way the people from each school sat on opposite sides of the massive arena and tried to outcheer each other.

Once again, who was playing failed to stick with me. All I could do was marvel at how high the ceiling was.

My next St. John Arena memory came in 1984 as Ohio State hosted Minnesota for a Big Ten game. The Buckeyes struggled that year, but this was one of their 15 wins. I think Dave Jones, who graduated from the same high school as my mom at Jewett-Scio, led OSU with 20 points that day.

A year later, I was in the house as OSU entertained Tulane for a non-conference game. Ohio State won the game 76-71 over the Green Wave, which featured John "Hot Rod" Williams. Months later, allegations would surface over point-shaving at Tulane. I don't recall what the point spread was that night, though.

## The Williams Era

I enrolled at Ohio State in the fall of 1986 and sporadically attended games that first year — which was also Gary Williams' first on campus.

I was there his first game against Bucknell, when, with the game safely out of reach, Williams drew his first technical on the OSU bench — a sign of things to come.

When OSU knocked off Arkansas, Kansas and Florida in succession to win the Aloha Classic, a buddy and I were in line first thing Monday morning to purchase tickets for four of the biggest remaining games — Indiana, Purdue, Illinois and Iowa. If we had bought them before the season, we could have gotten them for \$6 each. Now all bets were off and they were \$15 apiece.

Needless to say they lost them all, but it was still a treat to watch Dennis Hopson carve up the Big Ten. And, yes, I was there the night he broke OSU's career scoring mark, fittingly in his final home game against Florida International — it was eerie how they scheduled that crappy game in early March just for that reason.

That OSU team achieved more with less — that was Hopson surrounded by bit players Jay Burson, Jerry Francis, John Anderson and Curtis Wilson — than any in recent memory. They made the NCAA and beat Kentucky and Rex

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK with Steve Helwag

Chapman.

A year later, I bought the season ticket. Who could forget the Michigan Big Monday game where Dick Vitale screamed that it was a Volvo, Scooter Anderson, pickpocketing a Rolls Royce, Gary "Jesus" Grant?

Or the ESPN "Late Night" 9:30 p.m. start where the Bucks waylaid No. 2-ranked Purdue.

The following year, 1988-89, proved to be Williams' last. I spent that season earning my stripes as the *Lantern's* basketball beat writer. With Burson well on his way to All-American status, the Buckeyes were riding high at 17-6 and well on their way to a high seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Then came Burson's neck injury, suffered at Iowa on a Monday night. I showed up at practice the next day and, for some reason, Burson was not around.

I didn't think much of it at the time, but I sure learned a valuable journalism lesson that day — there was a reason he wasn't there: He was at University Hospital getting his neck checked out.

I had the story of the year in my lap and neglected to ask why he wasn't around.

I can remember vividly two days later, showing up at the arena for the teary-eyed Williams press conference where he and Burson's doctors delivered the sad news that he would never play again for the Buckeyes.

The Buckeyes took a major turn for the worse, losing nationally televised muggings at home in succession to Michigan, Illinois and Indiana on their way to closing the regular season with eight straight defeats.

They missed the NCAA and, a few months later, they were missing their coach as Williams bolted for Maryland. He was kind enough, though, to leave behind assistant Randy Ayers — elevated to the head job — and star recruit Jim Jackson.

The ultra-intense Williams left quite an impression on me. I don't think I've ever met anybody with that kind of drive. I can remember spending time between classes just lounging in seats in the mezzanine on a Tuesday afternoon, reading a textbook or preparing for a test, all the while keeping an eye on his team's practice sessions.

One time, then-freshman Chris Jent carelessly allowed the ball to be stolen from him. Williams stopped practice and began screaming, "Chris, this is not New Jersey, Chris. People are not afraid to guard you here."

I felt the coach's wrath another day. I was localizing a Big Ten story about how Bobby Knight had made public his disdain for the ESPN Big Monday 9:30 start. It cost kids valuable class time and nearly cost him a game at Wisconsin.

I ambled over to Williams and began my question with, "Coach Knight at Indiana is on record..."

That's all the further I got before Williams, taking his right hand and

grabbing his forehead as he would when he wanted to make a point, blurted, "This is Ohio State. We don't care what Coach Knight thinks here..."

I regrouped, got my question out and got a viable response — Williams liked those games for exposure. But I learned never to throw Knight — whom he'd not been able to beat — in his face.

Still, Williams' mark on Ohio State basketball is indelible. He put the students back down near the floor. He had them paint the outline of the state and the words "Ohio State" on the floor so nobody could mistake exactly whose game they were watching.

He and many others helped make it — as I used to say — the basketball shrine of Ohio.

## The Ayers Era

As we all know, Ayers led OSU to three straight NCAA berths and two Big Ten titles in his first three years before things fell miserably apart.

Williams left the program on solid ground with the likes of Jackson, Jent, Mark Baker, Jamaal Brown, Perry Carter and Treg Lee. Jackson's coming-out party of sorts was a rare February non-conference game against Louisville where he tipped a missed free throw in to steal a key game.

Jackson also led OSU to wins over powerful Michigan and Illinois down the stretch as the Buckeyes cemented their NCAA bid.

The following year, 1990-91, OSU served notice by eclipsing the 100-point mark in five of its first six home games. OSU went on to win 15 of its first 16 Big Ten games, most notably the double-overtime 97-95 win over Indiana on Feb. 17.

This is the game that validated Ohio State as one of the nation's best and locked down a No. 1 seed in the NCAA despite the team's losses at Iowa and Purdue in the final week of the season.

Knight delivered one of my favorite quotes of all time after this game: "I was an English major here at Ohio State, and I don't use this word much, but G — Jackson was marvelous."

He sure was with 30 points as well as the driving basket to send the game to overtime — off a play called "Wide Right" where he simply was to drive and improvise — and the pass to Lee for the game winner at the end of the second OT.

SJA popped like mad for nearly three hours. This was the game — above all others — that illustrated OSU's need for a new basketball arena. The standard sellout crowd of 13,276 attended the game, but with OSU's head among the hoops elite, as many as 20,000 or more would have paid to see it.

Two Sundays later, there was Brown making a free throw with a second left to defeat Michigan State 65-64 and ice OSU's first Big Ten title in 20 seasons. Legend has it MSU forward Dwayne Stephens bet Brown his hightops he'd miss 'em both.

A much different OSU team returned a year later with Carter and Lee gone and Lawrence Funderburke stepping in at midseason. The results were largely the same, though, as OSU rolled through the Big Ten again. OSU lost

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## OHIO STATE INSIDER



## Knight, Brandewie See Brighter Days Ahead

A night before his team would escape St. John Arena with a 74-72 win, Indiana coach Bob Knight shared his thoughts on the adversity OSU has faced in this 7-20 season.

"I really like Jimmy O'Brien," Knight said. "I like him as a person and as a coach. I think he does an excellent job with this team. They're not a lot different than we are other than we've won a few more games. They have a lot of quickness and they play hard. That's about all you can ask for."

"As these kids grow into playing in the Big Ten, I think they're going to be pretty good."

Knight was asked how the Buckeyes can deal with a school-record losing streak that now numbers 17 games after a Feb. 21 loss at Northwestern.

"If you're any good, it shouldn't be difficult at all," Knight said. "You just come and play. You play as well as you can play and if you get beat, you get beat. But you don't get beat because you don't come in ready to play."

Knight said it will take O'Brien some time to get the program going in the right direction.

"The thing you have to keep in mind is he's here because there were a lot of problems," he said. "Things aren't just going to snap into place for him. When you come into a situation like this it's going to be tough, and he understands that."

"But I think he is looking toward what things are going to be like, not what things are like. I'm sure that will get going in the right direction and I think he has that going in the right direction."

"But in terms of games, you'll see that take place next season and the season after that. He'll be in the position eventually where he'll say, 'We got a lot of things started that first year.'"

Former Buckeye captain Tom Brandewie, now a commentator on WBNS Radio's pre- and postgame coverage, deals with callers after every game who want to know what the future holds.

He gave BSB his take on what lies ahead.

"I think, realistically, they are not going to come out and win 20 games (next year)," he said. "They have an opportunity to probably win 16 or 17 games, including a lot of the pre-conference games."

"They've had an opportunity to be more successful this year when you look at how four or five Big Ten games have slipped away."

OSU loses senior guard Carlos Davis

to graduation but figures to add veteran guards Damon Stringer and Scoonie Penn plus at least three new recruits to the mix.

"If they don't get Al Harrington to help out inside, the guard play with Scoonie Penn and Damon Stringer will have to compensate for the lack of an inside game," Brandewie said.

"This team has learned a lot this year, specifically how they do not want to have that feeling of losing again. They have an opportunity to win 16 to 18 games. If they get things going in the Big Ten and win a couple games they lost this year, who knows, they might pull out 20 wins."

"I think they'll win a lot of home games with the new facility. They could be an NIT team or a bubble NCAA team. I think that's realistic."

## Ohio State, Indiana Opt To Skip Big Ten/ACC Challenge

It appears that the Big Ten and the ACC will launch their long-awaited nine-game basketball series in December 1999.

It does not appear, though, that Ohio State or Indiana will be participating.

"It's pretty much a go," Big Ten assistant commissioner Mark Rudner told *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer*. "We're now into seeing what we can do to implement it. There's a great deal of interest on our part."

"We have nine schools who want to participate from the Big Ten and the ACC. If we had more or less, we would have thought about doing it differently. We just tried to come up with a format everyone could agree to."

As it stands, the Big Ten/ACC series would be played at campus sites for at least a two-year basis. But because it would not be an NCAA exempted game, it will create scheduling problems for Ohio State and Indiana.

In principle, OSU coach Jim O'Brien likes the idea. But with Ohio State gearing to play as many games as possible at the new Schottenstein Center, the school did not want to risk giving up a home game.

"I have some concerns about the thing, but in general I think there's a feeling this will be a good thing to do," O'Brien said.

When pressed for a reason why OSU will likely not participate, he said, "There are a lot of different reasons. We would probably have to play a game away from home and we have a brand-new facility. We would like to get a game like that and play it at home."

"It's not that I'm concerned about playing somebody at that level. I wouldn't mind playing somebody at that level. But I also want to utilize the new building."

O'Brien recalled a similar series from his days at Boston College.

"We were not in it for two of the three years they did it when we were at Boston College," he said. "The concern I have about this is if you're not in it, you get hammered in recruiting. That's something I voiced to the Big Ten and something we're concerned about."

In his meeting with the Columbus media, Knight also admitted that schedule constraints — the Hoosiers always host two two-game tournaments and play the likes of Notre Dame and Kentucky every year — are a factor in his school's decision to pass up the ACC series.

"Our schedule is probably set for three years, and I am adamantly

opposed to having to call somebody and saying, 'We're not going to play you,' and then they have to find somebody else to play," Knight said.

"I've only done that once in all the years I've coached, and I did it with a really good friend of mine, Bob Donnewald, who is at Western Michigan now. He was at Illinois State at the time. When I did it, I was able to tell him that Wisconsin needed a game. They could replace us on the schedule."

"We've had all kinds of things come up before when you did your own television work, but I would never do it. If somebody set up a TV game and we had an opening, we would always do it."

"Right now, to play a year from now we'd have to call somebody and say we can't play, and I just won't do that."

## State Tourneys Mean OSU Won't Be In Hunt To Host NCAAs

Ohio State and the Ohio High School Athletic Association have contracted to hold the boys high school basketball tournament at the Schottenstein Center for the next three years.

In March, the boys tournament will be held at St. John Arena for the 40th time in the arena's 42 years.

The OHSAA will also hold its state wrestling meet at OSU's new arena for two years (2000 and 2001). That tournament used to be held at SJA, but has been at Wright State University's Nutter Center for the past several years.

The state girls basketball tournament, which draws an average of 7,000 fans per session, will remain in 13,276-seat St. John Arena.

Contracting for these high school tournaments means Ohio State will not be in the running to host NCAA men's basketball tournaments anytime in the near future.

The boys tournament would conflict with the NCAA regional round and the wrestling meet and girls tourney at SJA would be hard to schedule around for opening- and second-round NCAA games.

"If we asked Jim O'Brien and Beth Burns if they would rather host the Ohio high school tournament — which

will have players who could play here at Ohio State — or an NCAA Tournament — which we can't play in — I'm sure they would want us to have the high school tournament here," said an OSU official.

That unnamed OSU official also intimated that the university could be interested in one day hosting NCAA Tournaments at the Nationwide Arena downtown. That arena is due to open in 2000.

## OSU Receives Award For CHAMPS/Life Skills Program

Ohio State's athletic department was one of four nationwide to recently receive a program of excellence award from the Division I-A Athletic Directors Association.

The awards were presented to institutions that have established CHAMPS/Life Skills programs of particular accomplishment. These programs are co-sponsored by the Division I-A Athletic Directors Association and the NCAA.

Besides Ohio State, Arizona, North Carolina State and Texas were also recognized from a field of 46 nominated programs.

"A jury from the athletic directors association picks this award," said OSU athletic director Andy Geiger. "I am proud for us to get it in one sense."

"But I know how far we still have to go. We have a tremendous number of youngsters in our program who are doing a good job."

The CHAMPS/Life Skills program comprises five components, providing personal development and preparation for life for student-athletes:

- A commitment to academic excellence;
- A commitment to athletic excellence;
- A commitment to personal development;
- A commitment to service; and
- A commitment to career development.

The award was presented to Geiger and Kate Riffe, OSU's assistant athletic director for student-athlete support services.

## Arena Provided Many Great Moments

## Continued From Page 3

twice to Indiana but still held on for the Big Ten crown.

Two memorable SJA moments stand out from that year. First was OSU's 77-66 win over Michigan's Fab Five on March 3. UM gave the veteran Bucks a run for 34 minutes, but a 10-0 run where all five OSU starters scored turned the momentum. The big play was Funderburke's steal of a wing pass and coast-to-coast jam. Jackson scored 25 in what would be — unfortunately for OSU, a UM upset victim later that month in an NCAA Regional — UM's last defeat until the national title game.

The other memorable moment was the home finale March 11. The seniors, Baker, Brown, Jent, Steve Hall and Bill Robinson, were saluted prior to the game with an ovation that went on for several minutes and delayed the game. Then, after OSU had dismantled Illinois 82-70, the seniors congregated on the court for one last bow.

I was standing in front of the OSU

locker room and noticed how juniors Jackson and Alex Davis were also watching the celebration. Jackson came within two steps of the door, turned back toward the arena for a second or two — almost to say his own goodbye — and headed in.

Months later, I was summoned to another teary-eyed SJA presser where Jackson announced he, too, would be leaving early for the NBA.

Although OSU would upset an overrated No. 1-ranked Indiana team a year later on that same arena floor, nothing has been the same since the day Jackson left.

## Final Thoughts

I consider myself lucky to be among the people invited to attend OSU's final home game at St. John Arena with Penn State Feb. 28.

A few months ago, I stated here that I was nearly brought to tears when I saw ABC's incredible opening to the 1997 Rose Bowl on television.

Well, I'm crying now.



## OHIO STATE INSIDER



COURTESY: OSU PHOTO ARCHIVES

### As Arena Era Winds Down, Just Who Was Lynn St. John?

Everybody knows about St. John Arena, but who was this Lynn St. John character it was named after?

Lynn St. John was the OSU athletic director for 35 years from 1913 to 1947.

He was credited with bringing the school's athletic facilities into national prominence. He was the mainstay behind the building of Ohio Stadium in the early 1920s, he planned and made possible the building of the Ohio Natatorium (now the Mike Peppe Aquatic Center), he planned and financed the 36-hole OSU Golf Course and was a major factor in launching plans for the men's gymnasium, which became St. John Arena.

Born in Union City, Pa., on Nov. 18, 1876, St. John graduated from high school in Monroe, Ohio. He enrolled at OSU in 1900 and briefly played half-back for the football team.

But when his father died, St. John went home to Fostoria, Ohio, and served as a coach at the high school. He went on to attend classes and coach at Wooster, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1906.

He then became athletic director and coached at Ohio Wesleyan for three years until Ohio State beckoned in 1913. His first task was hiring John Wilce as the football coach.

St. John remained a hands-on administrator, serving as the head baseball coach for 16 years and the head basketball coach for eight years. He also helped out as a line coach in football when needed.

He retired from OSU in 1947 at age 70. At that time, he was presented with a Chrysler sedan, a scarlet leather chair, a console radio and the first-ever Varsity "O" for merit from the Varsity "O" association.

"The most worthwhile thing in intercollegiate sports is character — call it integrity, honesty, sportsmanship or what you will," St. John once said.

He was honored posthumously and represented by his wife, Ruth, when OSU dedicated St. John Arena and adjacent French Field House, named for Thomas E. French — OSU's first Big Ten faculty representative — on Feb. 25, 1957.

### Miscellaneous Notes

• According to sources, Notre Dame and Georgetown have both turned down offers to play Ohio State in the initial men's basketball game at the Schottenstein Center.

O'Brien and his staff could be looking at another Big East school to play that game. St. John's, coached by former OSU assistant Fran Fraschilla, could be a possibility, especially with the recent history between the two schools — they met three times between 1989 and '91, including the 1991 NCAA Tournament.

Cincinnati was also bandied about, but O'Brien reportedly shot that down on a recent edition of his radio show. He reportedly said OSU officials would likely oppose scheduling UC.

• It was a busy week for all three former Buckeye basketball players in the NBA.

First, on Feb. 18, the Philadelphia 76ers sent former Buckeye guard Jimmy Jackson and forward Clarence Weatherspoon to the Golden State Warriors for former No. 1 pick Joe Smith and Brian Shaw.

The Warriors became Jackson's fourth NBA team. He was the fourth pick in the 1992 draft by Dallas. Ironically, the Mavericks dealt him to New Jersey exactly one year previous to the recent trade on Feb. 18. The Nets then sent him to the Sixers in a draft-day trade where the Nets got the rights to No. 2 pick Keith Van Horn.

The 6-6 Jackson's scoring average has declined every year since a career-high 25.7 with Dallas in 1994-95. He was averaging a career-low 13.7 for the Sixers.

"Jimmy made a lot of sacrifices playing here," Sixers coach Larry Brown said. "He's a quality player and a lot of teams with a chance to win were after him. I think Jimmy has great skills and we were fortunate to have him. But we had a chance to get a guy (Smith) who was the No. 1 pick in the draft."

Jackson had 15 points and seven assists, playing 42 minutes in his Golden State debut — a 95-88 win over Denver on Feb. 20. Unfortunately for Jackson, who has played for losing teams throughout his six-year NBA career, the Warriors were 11-42 as of Feb. 23.

Former Buckeye Herb Williams, in

**ARENA DEDICATION** — These dignitaries attended the St. John Arena/French Field House dedication in February 1957. Pictured are, left to right, Jake Taylor, Novice Fawcett, Janet French Houston, Jim Huffman, Ruth St. John, K.L. (Tug) Wilson and Dick Larkins. The portraits depict Thomas French (left) and L.W. St. John.

his 17th pro season, was dealt by the New York Knicks to the Sixers in a trade for Buck Williams on Feb. 19. Herb Williams, it appears, was included in the deal only to meet salary cap rules as the Sixers released him two days later.

Herb Williams, 40, was expected to re-sign with the Knicks, as he did when a similar trade was made with Toronto in 1996. He had played in only 13 games for the Knicks as a backup center.

"We have much respect for Herb, and once his playing days are over he will have a role in some capacity in our organization," said Knicks general manager Ernie Grunwald.

Finally, former Buckeye Lawrence Funderburke was activated from the injured list by Sacramento on Feb. 20.

• BSB caught up with former OSU coach Eldon Miller recently to discuss St. John Arena.

Miller also supplied a report on his Northern Iowa team, which stood at 10-15 through games of Feb. 22.

"We are banged up a little bit and we're struggling," Miller said. "We're not playing at the level we can play at, but we're getting better."

"We've beaten all the in-state

schools, Iowa, Iowa State and Drake twice. We've got some injuries to overcome, but hopefully we'll play our best basketball in these next two weeks."

Miller hopes his UNI team will make a splash at the Missouri Valley Conference tournament Feb. 27-March 2.

Time has healed many of the wounds for Miller, who reached an agreement with then-athletic director Rick Bay to step down from his OSU post in February 1986.

"Basketball is huge at Ohio State," said Miller, who would stay on with the Buckeyes and secure an NIT championship that spring. "We won 21 and 19 games my last two years, and I got fired. The expectation level there is so high, and I'm not sure that's all bad."

• The final game in the Ohio State Ice Rink, Feb. 26 against Miami, will be broadcast by WBNS Radio beginning at 7 p.m. Dwight Burgess and former Buckeye John Mowat will call the action.

Despite being idle the weekend of Feb. 20-22, Ohio State jumped to No. 10 in the Pairwise Rankings — the statistical system used by the NCAA to determine the 12 participants in the Division I hockey tournament.

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## COVER STORY: ST. JOHN ARENA

## Arena Era Winds Down

Continued From Page 1

bold step. Yet, he vows St. John will not stand dormant — at least five of the school's Olympic sports programs will soon be calling it home.

"This shows us that we are getting ready for the 21st century," Shumate said. "With gender equity and the number of sports we have here, we will get a lot of use out of this arena."

## Where It All Began

Ohio State men's basketball enjoyed unparalleled success in the 1960s and early 1970s, as coach Fred Taylor's teams won seven Big Ten titles in 12 years.

Yet, the program slipped both on the court and in fan enthusiasm for nearly 15 years until then-AD Rick Bay lured Gary Williams in as the coach in the spring of 1986.

"It started probably during the Gary Williams era and then continued with Jimmy Jackson in the early '90s," OSU sports information director Steve Snapp said in pinpointing the program's return to prominence. "Then, those two championship teams that Randy Ayers had really changed things."

"The demand for tickets, the media coverage and just how crazy this town was over basketball at the time showed this building simply was not going to be big enough."

Williams was in town for only three tumultuous years. Only one of his teams reached the NCAA Tournament, but in that time he succeeded in getting people interested again in Buckeye basketball.

"I always thought St. John Arena was a good fit for the way I like to coach," Williams said recently. "They had blue-collar fans in there who were very supportive and weren't afraid to make some noise. And I always felt the way that balcony went all the way around the arena had a way of making the court seem smaller, which was great for a pressing team like us that went after you all over the court."

"When that student body is down there yelling and getting involved, it's hard not to be excited in there."

Williams lobbied to bring student seats down into the lower sections of the arena, a move that was met with resistance at first by the administration but eventually gave the building a frenzied game-day atmosphere.

"It was a real fight to do that and I understand that somewhat because it's difficult to force people to change their policies and habits sometimes," Williams said. "But I pressed the issue because I just thought we could make it a real pit. When you go to Illinois, Indiana, Purdue and places like that where the students and people are right on top of you, you feel like you have to fight to get out of there alive."

"I think that's what St. John became once we got the students where they could be more involved, and I personally loved coaching in that building."

At the end of the 1988-89 season, Williams left town for his alma mater, Maryland. He left behind one very important person, though, in Toledo prep sensation Jimmy Jackson, arguably the program's biggest signing since Clark Kellogg in 1979.

With Jackson starring and Ayers as the coach, OSU's 1991 and '92 teams shot to the top of the national polls and claimed a pair of Big Ten crowns. Interest in OSU hoops was suddenly at an all-time high.

"It probably started with Jimmy's junior year," Snapp said. "After they won the first championship, we probably could have sold 18,000 tickets a game that second year."

Krebs, then OSU's ticket director, has vivid memories of the demand for tickets those two years.

"We were selling student season tickets in

splits and three-way splits," he said. "We were refunding faculty/staff applications. Demand was incredible. There is no doubt in my mind we could have sold 16, 17 or 18,000 season tickets without much effort in terms of marketing."

Jackson left the program for the NBA in 1992, and Ayers, in the next five years, could not keep the program on solid ground. He was fired nearly one year ago, leading to the hiring of Jim O'Brien.

The new coach is finding the going just as rough — the Buckeyes are in the throes of a school-record 17-game losing streak. But Krebs is confident O'Brien is the man who can rebuild the program and make the decision to leave St. John for the 19,500-seat Schottenstein Center a winner.

"When our program gets back to that level, I expect us to have that kind of demand," he said. "I expect us to be there soon with the direction Coach O'Brien is taking things."

But Williams has nothing but fond feelings for St. John.

**"It's a nice arena, but I think that what the university wanted was a sports and entertainment center — an entirely different building than St. John Arena"**

• Andy Geiger,  
OSU Athletic Director



"I was coaching in a place where guys like Jerry Lucas, John Havlicek, Clark Kellogg, Bill Hosket and Larry Siegfried played," he said. "It was a privilege."

"All I know is if they ever tear up that floor I'd like a piece of it."

## Change Isn't Always Bad

Many former OSU players and fans are viewing the move to the Schottenstein Center — complete with an aggressive personal seat license campaign, luxury suites and a donor concourse — as a somewhat mind-boggling move.

It doesn't have to be that way, though, said one relatively famous ex-OSU athlete.

"You think of some really great things that have happened there and some frustrating things as well," said Indiana basketball coach Bob Knight. "You have a lot of memories, but you go on."

"You don't quit playing golf just because you can't play at Cypress Point."

Havlicek, one of Knight's teammates on OSU's 1960 NCAA championship team, recalled the furor when his beloved Boston Celtics announced they were leaving historic Boston Garden.

"I think a lot of people were concerned with moving out of the old Boston Garden and that the new arena would never be the same, but now I'm not sure you'd find that many people that really miss it," Havlicek told BSB.

"Nostalgia is something that works both ways. I think change like this is OK, especially at a place like Ohio State, which is considered to be a forerunner for athletic facilities. I'm sure the Schottenstein Center is going to be state-of-the-art just like St. John was when it was first used. If this is something that can help the university, so be it."

Times change, and the top programs adapt to those changes.

"I think it's time for a school like Ohio State, which is a leader in athletics in terms

of facilities, to move onward," said former Michigan State coach Jud Heathcote, who made many trips to St. John. "But St. John Arena served that school well."

You can forgive those close to the program for getting a bit sentimental, though.

"It is sad for me personally," said Tom Brandewie, a 1993 OSU captain. "I'm not a big women's basketball fan, but I planned to attend the last women's game just so I can get that feeling. I want to take it in two nights."

"I'm happy that the Schottenstein Center is being built. That will take us into the next century. By no means is St. John Arena obsolete. But it will be exciting for the program next year and the following years to play in a new facility."

## St. John Exudes History

Named for legendary OSU athletic director, basketball and baseball coach L.W. St. John, the wooden-chair-back facility has been one of college basketball's most storied and respected basketball theaters. Nearly 6.5 million men's basketball fans have enjoyed games there.

But over the years, it has been more than just the home of the OSU men's program. For 23 years, the OSU women have

though Jenison was a great place to play, because it was so depressing looking," Heathcote said. "I remember when we had (former Buckeye) Granville Walters in on his recruiting visit and we took him to Jenison and he was dumbfounded and said, 'You really play in here?'"

## A Topflight Facility

Taylor signed Havlicek along with Lucas as part of a dynamite recruiting class in 1958. Playing in St. John — then a state-of-the-art facility — was one of the big factors, Havlicek said.

"It was probably the No. 1 arena in the country at the time," he said. "We would go to places like Northwestern and Jenison Field House and Yost Arena and the old place at Illinois and none of them compared. Everyone always looked forward to coming to our place."

Luke Witte, a Buckeye center from 1971-73, said St. John's locker rooms were considered first-rate back then.

"Coach Taylor would always remind us that the other teams sat on cold metal chairs," he said. "I will always think of St. John as one of the warmest places ever to play in, even during practice. There was just something about that building and the way it was set up that made you feel warm and secure. You knew you were on your home court."

"It was just a great arena to play in. I don't know about the seats at the top, maybe they weren't the best, but I just think of the band being at one end, the football players at the other and the fans right down by the floor. It was a neat setting with great ambience."

"I love St. John."

Heathcote added: "Even the seats up in the nosebleed sections weren't that far from the court and had a pretty good view of the action and you felt like those people were almost right on top of you. I think it's still a great arena to play in."

## Future Use

No one should be mistaken — St. John Arena will not lie dormant. OSU's men's and women's volleyball teams, men's and women's gymnastics teams and wrestling team will call it home.

"It will be a terrific addition to the landscape for those programs," Geiger said.

"This building will continue to serve a vital purpose," Snapp added. "Other teams will practice and play here on a regular basis. They will have a venue that is first-class. There is plenty of parking available, and even though it may be 40 or 45 years old, it certainly has not outlived its usefulness."

Krebs said that by maintaining St. John Arena, the university will have flexibility in hosting a wide range of events and functions.

"Whether it's a fund-raiser for the Wexner Center, which we've had over here, or a convocation where a speaker comes into town, something like the National Town Meeting we had on CNN last week, we now have some options about where we can do those things," Krebs said.

"It's in good shape. There's been a lot of money invested in it over the past five to eight years, a new roof, a fine scoreboard. We've probably put more maintenance into it in terms of painting and cleaning in the last five to eight years than we did in the first 25 years."

## One Final Bow

A group of 45 former OSU women's basketball players returned for that program's curtain call at St. John.

A similar throng of former OSU men's players is expected, as well as a sellout crowd for the men's final game.

"We've invited back a lot of former players for the last game," Snapp said. "Anybody who ever played at St. John Arena, we will introduce them at halftime."

"It should be great."



## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: 1968 FINAL FOUR

## '68 Buckeyes Made Unlikely Final Four Run

By STEVE HELWAGEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State has sent eight teams to the NCAA Tournament's Final Four, but none of them likely made a more improbable run than the 1967-68 Buckeyes did.

Thirty years have passed since the Buckeyes made that last Final Four appearance and many still say that this may have been coach Fred Taylor's finest coaching job in his 18 years on the OSU bench.

"We always used to joke that we were the team that put Fred Taylor in the Hall of Fame," said All-American center Bill Hosket, now a television commentator for OSU games.

"A lot of guys could have coached (Jerry) Lucas and (John) Havlicek, but he got to the Final Four with us."

"Us," as Hosket referred to, was OSU's standard lineup that season of point guard Denny Meadors and four high school centers.

Taylor had won five consecutive Big Ten titles from 1960 to '64. The three following years saw OSU win just 12, 11 and 13 games, falling as far as eighth in the conference in 1965-66.

"I was a sophomore that season, and that was a year they weren't used to having at Ohio State," Hosket said.

The prospects were not great for Ohio State in 1967-68, either. *Inside Basketball*, published by Sport Magazine, listed OSU ninth in the Big Ten.

Yet, the Buckeyes defied the odds. They went 21-8 that season, winning the Big Ten's automatic NCAA berth in a special playoff game and upsetting No. 3-ranked Kentucky on the Wildcats' home floor to advance to the Final Four.

"The 1968 team was a tremendous testimony to Fred Taylor's offensive genius," said Lee Caryl, who authored *The Golden Age of Buckeye Basketball*, which chronicled Taylor's incredible run from 1960 to '71.

"He developed a system to fit his personnel. They may have been the first team in Ohio State history to shoot better than 50 percent from the field — and they did it with a team that had four high school centers and a guard."

On paper, it wasn't supposed to be that way. Taylor was working from behind the eightball from late November on that season when 6-4 junior forward Jeff Miller injured his knee during a walkthrough in practice.

Miller, who averaged 14.7 points a game, was supposed to complement Hosket's strength inside. But it was not to be.

"We were walking through an emer-



MALCOLM EDMONS

**LEADERS OF THE BAND** — Two of the key members of OSU's 1968 Final Four team, center Bill Hosket (25) and guard Denny Meadors (14), battle for a rebound in a game at St. John Arena.

gency scoring play," Taylor said in Caryl's book. "No one was running. There was no defense. His knee just gave out and he was never able to come back."

"If it had been nowadays, he would have had arthroscopic surgery and been back in two or three weeks," Caryl said. "But it wasn't like that back then."

Another case of what might have been involved lightning-quick guard Larry Hiale. Taylor recruited Hiale out of Portsmouth, Ohio, in 1966 and he would have been eligible in 1967-68. But Hiale accepted a big bonus to sign a pro baseball contract a year earlier and never made it to the hardwood.

"Fred told me he was the best defensive guard he ever saw," Caryl said. "When he left, they lost their two guard."

Two days after Miller went down, the varsity played its annual scrimmage against the freshmen. The freshmen had only one player — guard Jim Clemons, who would become a Big Ten MVP in 1971 — who would ever make a strong contribution to the varsity. But the freshmen dropped the varsity 71-68.

Maybe the critics were right; this ship was going down.

#### The Players

Four of the five starting positions were pretty well set all season. When Miller went down, 6-5, 240-pound junior Steve Howell, a Columbus Eastmoor graduate,

stepped into his place at small forward.

"He was a deadly jump shooter," Caryl said of Howell, who would average 17.5 points per game.

The 6-7 Hosket, of course, was the mainstay. The Dayton native and son of former Buckeye Bill Hosket Sr. averaged team highs in points (20.1) and rebounds (11.4).

"Fred wanted the ball in his best player's hands, so a lot of things were built around Hosket," Caryl said. "At the same time, he was teaching Dave Sorensen how to play center. It was kind of like on-the-job training."

"They say there has never been a triple-double in the history of Ohio State basketball. I'm not sure if that's true. They didn't really keep good assist totals at that time. I would bet that Hosket probably had at least one or two that nobody really knows about."

The 6-7 Sorensen, a Findlay, Ohio, native, was a sophomore, newly eligible for varsity action. He responded by averaging 16.3 points and 10 rebounds per contest.

Meadors, a 6-0 junior, was recruited out of Dayton Stebbins High School. But a freak accident left him blind in his left eye. Undaunted and with Taylor's assurance he would honor his scholarship offer, Meadors was determined to become one of the league's top guards.

"Obviously, Denny was not the best shooter in the world," Caryl said. "In fact, Hosket said they joked in practice that he should put the ball up softly because they would be lucky to find his last couple of misses."

"But Meadors made a boatload of clutch free throws. He had a heart of a lion. He was the only ball handler on the team."

Taylor never really settled on the fifth starter at the two guard. Senior Mike Swain, junior Bruce Schnabel and sophomores Jody Finney and Jim Geddes all shared time at that spot. Swain was probably more famous as a pitcher on OSU's 1966 NCAA championship baseball team, while Finney went on as an upperclassman to develop a reputation as one of the top outside shooters in school history.

Sophomores Ed Smith, Dan Andreas and Craig Barclay provided depth.

#### The Strategy

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## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: 1968 FINAL FOUR

## Taylor Tailored Offense For Hosket, Sorenson

Continued From Page 10

clear offensive firepower, Taylor designed a stack offense.

"He created an offense that allowed them both to be a center and both to be a forward," Caryer said. "They would decide literally on each possession who would play where."

Meadors would set up the stack by dribbling to the left wing. Hosket and Sorenson would line up near the block. Then, using spoken or unspoken signals, they would spring into action.

"We pretty much kept it on the left side," Hosket said. "Dave and I were each very fundamentally sound to play in Fred's system. There was a lot of footwork involved."

They would pick for each other or one would break quickly to the corner or the high post to accept an entry pass.

"Usually, the player with the smaller man or the worst defender on him would stay at the center position and receive the second pass," Caryer said.

"If Hosket was open in the corner, a lot of times he would go ahead and shoot it."

When teams would double down on the center, that player would look backside and hit Howell for a foul line jumper.

"If he was open, they would find him for a wide-open 15-foot jumper," Caryer said. "It was a perfect offense."

Meadors' decision-making in accurately delivering the first pass was critical.

"My key was eye contact," Meadors said in Caryer's book.

The Buckeyes needed a strong offense that season — they averaged 82.3 points per game, nowhere near the 90.4 standard set by the 1960 NCAA champs but still respectable — because they lacked quickness on the defensive end.

"It's like the old saying — you drive for show and putt for dough," Caryer said. "This team was not a great defensive team, but they had pretty good offense."

The thing is you are never going to play great on offense every game. That's

why coaches stress defense — it's the one thing you can control. And that's what made it so remarkable about why this team won."

Defensively, Taylor eschewed zone defense.

"Every day in practice they would come to the end and Taylor would say, 'Let's practice the zone in case we need it,'" Caryer said. "Then in the games they'd start out in man but almost always end up going to the zone."

## The Games

Despite the lackluster showing in the freshman scrimmage, OSU rolled through its first five games, including a 76-69 win over a Florida State team headlined by future NBA star Dave Cowens.

A 1-2 foray to Hawaii followed as the Buckeyes lost to Al McGuire's Marquette team 64-60 in its opener, whipped Bradley and were upset by host Hawaii 80-76 in the getaway game.

The Buckeyes atoned by opening the Big Ten with a 108-80 thumping of Purdue and standout Rick Mount. Hosket scored 35 and grabbed 17 rebounds in the win.

But he went from hero to goat seven days later in a 74-72 overtime loss at Iowa. OSU led throughout but needed a pair of Meadors free throws after time expired to force overtime. Geddes then made a steal and Hosket converted with a layup and was fouled to tie the game. Iowa was assessed a technical as well, meaning Hosket would have two free throws (T's were just one free throw then) and the ball.

"I missed the first one long and then I miss the second one short — I aired it, no rim," Hosket said.

OSU turned the ball over and Iowa converted to steal the win.

The season wore on with a pair of wins over Michigan and one over Georgia Tech before an inexplicable 76-64 home loss to Cornell. Two weeks later, the Buckeyes

hit rock bottom with road losses at Wisconsin and Minnesota.

"It was the low point of my Ohio State career," Barclay said in the Caryer book.

But the Buckeyes closed the year on a 4-1 stretch — including a 107-93 win over Indiana in the home finale with Hosket going out with 25 points and nine rebounds — to finish 10-4 in the Big Ten.

OSU ended the year with a 67-64 win at Illinois on March 4. Howell led the way with 25 points and 14 rebounds. A day later the Buckeyes held their banquet believing the season was over.

After all, Iowa was heavily favored to beat Michigan March 9 and win the Big Ten title and its single NCAA berth outright. But Taylor vowed to send the Michigan coach a Varsity O blanket if the Wolverines could pull off the upset.

That's probably not the incentive that turned the trick, but UM edged Iowa 71-70, setting the stage for the Big Ten's first-ever playoff game to determine the NCAA rep.

The game was set for March 12 at Purdue.

"It was kind of a strange game because there was a big snowstorm and there was hardly anybody there," Hosket said. "We felt good going in because we lost a close game at Iowa. We felt we could probably beat them on a neutral floor."

Hosket and Howell answered the challenge with 24 and 22 points, respectively, as OSU nipped Iowa 85-81 to claim the Big Ten and end OSU's six-year NCAA Tournament drought.

## The Tournament

OSU ventured south to Lexington, Ky., for the Midwest Regional at Kentucky's Memorial Coliseum.

The Buckeyes stopped Ohio Valley Conference champion East Tennessee State 79-72 behind Howell's 22 points and Hosket's 18-point, 20-rebound effort.

Meanwhile, Kentucky manhandled McGuire's Marquette team 107-89. McGuire had infuriated UK coach Adolph Rupp by using his option to wear white on UK's home court. Wisely, Taylor avoided any such controversy and the Buckeyes slipped out of town with an 82-81 win over the Wildcats, who were led by super soph Dan Issel.

"Al pushed all of the buttons, and they concentrated on beating Marquette," Hosket said.

With five seconds left, OSU trailed 81-80 but had the ball under its own basket.

"We ran the same play we had been running all year," Hosket said. "I took the

## Charting The '68 Buckeyes

1967-68 Ohio State Basketball Roster						
No.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Cl.	Hometown	
10	Jack Walkey	G	5-10	Sr.	Lafayette, Ind.	
12	Steve Howell	F	6-5	Jr.	Columbus, Ohio	
14	Denny Meadors	G	6-0	Jr.	Dayton, Ohio	
15	Dave Sorenson	C	6-7	So.	Findlay, Ohio	
20	Tom Spies	G	6-2	So.	Columbus, Ohio	
21	Jody Finney	G	6-3	So.	Springfield, Ohio	
22	Dan Andreas	F	6-3	So.	Sugar Creek, Ohio	
24	Ed Smith	F	6-5	So.	Warren, Ohio	
25	Bill Hosket	F	6-7	Sr.	Dayton, Ohio	
30	Jim Geddes	G	6-1	So.	Darbydale, Ohio	
31	Bruce Schnabel	G	6-0	Jr.	Williamstown, W.Va.	
32	Joe Sadelfeld	G	6-2	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio	
34	Ted Bauer	C	6-7	Sr.	Troy, Mich.	
40	John Halley	G	6-2	Jr.	Vermillion, Ohio	
41	Jeff Miller	F	6-4	Jr.	Lima, Ohio	
42	Mike Swain	G	6-4	Sr.	S.Zanesville, Ohio	
43	Gary McDavid	G	6-0	Jr.	Galion, Ohio	
44	Craig Barclay	G	6-3	So.	Newark, Ohio	
45	Steve Barnard	C	6-7	Jr.	Columbus, Ohio	

1967-68 Ohio State Basketball Results (21-8, 10-4 Big Ten)		
Dec. 1	CALIFORNIA-DAVIS	W, 95-82
Dec. 4	FLORIDA STATE	W, 76-69
Dec. 9	SOUTH DAKOTA	W, 97-54
Dec. 19	NEW MEXICO STATE	W, 78-75
Dec. 22	at Butler	W, 71-69
Dec. 27	Marquette*	L, 64-60
Dec. 29	Bradley*	W, 85-62
Dec. 30	at Hawaii*	L, 80-76
Jan. 6	PURDUE	W, 108-80
Jan. 13	at Iowa	L, 74-72 (OT)
Jan. 20	MICHIGAN	W, 103-70
Jan. 22	GEORGIA TECH	W, 66-55
Jan. 27	at Michigan	W, 95-92
Jan. 29	CORNELL	L, 76-64
Feb. 3	WISCONSIN	W, 86-64
Feb. 5	at Indiana	W, 78-77
Feb. 10	MICHIGAN STATE	W, 90-62
Feb. 12	at Wisconsin	L, 86-78
Feb. 17	at Minnesota	L, 83-79
Feb. 20	NORTHWESTERN	W, 87-67
Feb. 24	at Purdue	L, 93-72
Feb. 26	ILLINOIS	W, 95-75
March 2	INDIANA	W, 107-93
March 4	at Illinois	W, 67-64
March 12	Iowa*	W, 85-81
March 15	East Tennessee State*	W, 79-72
March 16	Kentucky*	W, 82-81
March 22	North Carolina*	L, 80-66
March 23	Houston*	W, 89-85

\*Hawaii Tournament; @-Big Ten playoff game at Purdue; #-NCAA Midwest Regional at Lexington, Ky.; S-NCAA Final Four at Los Angeles.

ball out and threw it into Sorenson. It hit him in the chest, but he was able to grab it and banked one in from about five feet for the win."

The Cinderella Buckeyes were heading to Los Angeles for the Final Four. But OSU arrived as the clear long shot with top-ranked Houston, No. 2 UCLA and No. 4 North Carolina also in the field.

UNC, led by Larry Miller and Rusty Clark, proved too tough, winning 80-66 in the national semifinal.

"We just didn't play very well," Hosket said. "They were just a good, quick team."

In the other semifinal, UCLA avenged its loss to Houston earlier in the season in the Astrodome by knocking off the Cougars.

"That was really the game of interest in the tournament," Hosket said. "Houston came in No. 1 at 31-0. Then UCLA beat them and we beat them the next night in the consolation game."

The OSU front line of Howell (26), Hosket (19) and Sorenson (19) totaled 64 points. Elvin Hayes tallied 34 for Houston.

"It wasn't a big deal to anybody else, but it was to us," said Hosket, who would go on to star for the 1968 U.S. gold medal-winning Olympic team and play with the NBA's New York Knicks. "We felt like we belonged."

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## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES

## BSB Finds Different Viewpoints On St. John

In preparation for this special St. John Arena send-off edition of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin*, staff members Steve Helwagen, Jeff Rapp and Mike Wachsmann surveyed 42 different people for their memories and/or observations of St. John.

The number 42 is significant — one for every season SJA has been in existence. Here's what these people, listed alphabetically, had to say:

• **Henry Bibby, USC men's coach** — "This is a neat building to play in. Our kids were kind of wondering why they'd want to leave this place."

• **Tom Brandewie, former OSU captain (1993)** — "I think first and foremost about the tradition in the building. Even though some of these places may be bigger and newer, they may not be nicer."

"For me, I spent so much time here it was like a second home. I've sat in the stands all over the place, too, and there isn't a bad seat in the place. I've had a lot of experience in other arenas, but this one really brings in the combination of loudness and knowledgeable fans."

"I think the Indiana game in 1991, the double-overtime game, depicted the entire scenario. That was one of the most amplified crowds I ever heard anywhere. It was a nationally televised game and it decided the Big Ten championship. That was the biggest game I was a part of."

• **Beth Burns, OSU women's basketball coach** — "My first vivid memory is probably the year before I came up here. I was up here at a men's game, I scammed my way into the front row and watching Clark Kellogg, being three feet away from him, close enough to touch him, and hearing a louder crowd than I have ever experienced in my life."

• **Jay Burson, former OSU captain (1989)** — "I think one of my most vivid memories is when I came back for the first time wearing my halo (neck traction brace) and getting a standing ovation and warm feeling from everybody. Then for Senior Night I got to go out on the court and put my arm around my dad, who was a big influence on me, and we listened to 'Carmen Ohio.'"

"I also remember a number of Monday night games when the game started at 9:30 and we had people in the stands that were in their pajamas fired up and ready to go. It was a great atmosphere to play in. There were some fun times here and it's hard to see it go."

• **Liz Cook, women's basketball SID** — "There's just a lot of character here. Whether or not you had a crowd, they were always excited and into the game. The way it was constructed, there really isn't a bad seat here. The sellout with Iowa (1988) was a big one — my ears are still ringing from how loud it was, and the win over Virginia (1993) was big from an impact standpoint because it gave people a hint at how good that team could be. The Iowa game that year was memorable for one thing — scalpers and huge lines at the ticket office. When you've got scalpers, you know you've arrived."

• **Nancy Darsch, former OSU women's coach (1986-97)** — "It's a very special facility. I have great memories there. How could you not? The fact the fans are so close to you and the acoustics can make the place so loud is something you don't see at a lot of arenas. I understand progress and everything, but there's no way I can believe you'll get the same atmos-

phere next year as you have in St. John."

"The Penn State and Iowa games the year we went to the title game were big for us. It was all on the line and we came through, after both had beaten us on the road."

• **Dick Furry, former OSU captain (1960)** — "I have two memories of this building, one being my freshman team was the first freshman team in this building and that was a big thrill. The second was when I was a senior and we came back to beat Indiana at the buzzer on an inbounds play to (John) Havlicek. That kept us undefeated at home that year."

• **Bob Goldring, former OSU men's basketball SID and OSU graduate** — "I remember I was working as a grad student (in 1981) and Clark Kellogg had a tooth knocked out earlier in the week against Kent State. They were able to save the tooth, but he wasn't able to play the next game, which was a big CBS game against Kentucky. Actually, neither he nor Kentucky's Sam Bowie played in the game (a 78-62 OSU loss)."

"What I remember from when I was a student there, I always joke I came in with the same freshman class as Herb Williams, Carter Scott, Jim Smith, Todd Penn and Marquis Miller. I distinctly remember camping out outside the arena the night before the student packages went on sale that year (1977)."

• **Archie Griffin, former OSU football star and associate athletic director** — "My No. 1 memory has to be that 1991 Indiana game where Jimmy Jackson won the thing at the end. He made the shot in regulation and the pass at the end of the second overtime. That was just an awesome basketball game."

• **John Havlicek, former OSU captain (1962)** — "One of my best memories is the first game I played in there because Dick Furry took an elbow above the eye and had to get stitches. I did well and was in the starting lineup ever since."

"My sophomore year (1960) we beat Indiana by one point when (Larry) Siegfried made a last-second shot and my senior year we beat Wichita pretty handily at home when they were No. 3 in the country and we were No. 1. After that we went to Wake Forest when they were No. 2 and took care of them. Wichita had a lot of good players including Gene Wiley, who went on to play for the Lakers for a number of years, and Wake had a good team that featured Billy Packer."

"Really, a lot of our home games were ho-hum because we never lost there. Some of my best memories of playing there were when I was out of school and we'd have workouts there with guys like (Jerry) Lucas, Furry, Joe Roberts, Mel Nowell, Larry Siegfried. There were some pretty good players going at it."

• **Jud Heathcote, longtime Michigan State coach who retired in 1995** — "The thing I remember is when I first came into the league it was amazing how well we did there, even with both of us being in the lower echelon of the Big Ten. Then the pendulum really swung when (Ronnie) Stokes and (Troy) Taylor and those guys arrived. Suddenly it was like we couldn't win a game there."

"But I think the memories and nostalgia associated with that building touch everyone who was involved in basketball, especially when you think about people like Fred Taylor, Jerry Lucas, Larry Siegfried and then, of course, Jim Jackson."



COURTESY: OSU PHOTO ARCHIVES

**ST. JOHN ARENA** — This is an early interior photo of St. John Arena, the home of Ohio State men's basketball from 1956-57 to this season.

• **Allan Hornyak, former OSU captain (1973)** — "I think you realize how much your home floor means to you when you go away and play. When we played there it was a better atmosphere, guys seemed to play better and the fans really help you. When we'd come out for warm-ups and the band would play the fight song, that gets you pumped up."

"I can remember games I played there where I would get close to 40 (points), but I could never quite get there. And I saw the (1968) UCLA game there on a recruiting trip and I just remember staring at Lew Alcindor. I went to the practice the day before and they were using tennis rackets to simulate how tall he was."

• **Bill Hosket, former OSU captain (1968)** — "The No. 1 thing for me were the practices. Fred Taylor was at his best in practice. There was so much teaching involved. That's when you got a full appreciation of him. Plus, he was comical in his own way."

"I also remember going over there in the summertime when I lived here. I would go in at night, flip the lights on and just shoot by myself. I'd be the only person in there in that special atmosphere where all those great players and great games had been played."

• **Herb Howenstine, radio voice of women's basketball for eight years** — "I came as an undergrad in 1971 and watched the men's games then. I got to call three years of games for the student station and got to work with Fred Taylor and Eldon Miller, good people. Gradually I developed an interest in women's basketball, and when we finally got to do the games, it was a great experience."

"Up until the time I actually did my first women's game, I always thought St. John Arena was a hard place to play from what I had seen from the men. I didn't realize how loud a place this could be until women's basketball got the crowds in here and got everyone pumped. To this day, the loudest crowd I've ever heard here was the sellout against Iowa in my first season. It was unbelievable. I'll never forget that because the sound was absolutely deafening."

• **Gene Keady, Purdue men's coach** — "I about broke my foot here my first game in 1981. Goaltending should have been called and the referee says, 'Well, if I had been back I wouldn't have called it either,' and I said, 'Well, then you would have been wrong twice.'"

"But there are a lot of great memories here, the fans mainly because of their treatment of coaches in fun."

• **Clark Kellogg, former OSU captain (1982)** — "My first game there I had, I think, 35 (points) in the high school semifinals vs. Cincinnati LaSalle, but clearly my great memory is the championship game against Columbus East (in which he scored a finals-record 51 points for Cleveland St. Joe's). There was a lot of buzz about my ability and it was kind of neat to be able to come down and have a memorable tournament when people were wondering how good I was, although it's still a sore point that we didn't win."

"As far as my playing days with Ohio State, I would have to say all the Indiana games were the most memorable. They always had great players there and there was just that extra electricity in the arena when Coach Knight would come back because he played here and the great job he did with coaching those teams."

• **Bob Knight, Indiana men's coach and former OSU player (1960-62)** — "One time we played against them there, Coach Taylor was really upset with a call. He charged the guy at the foul line and he had his clipboard, shaking it at the official. I stood and watched this and there was no technical foul called. They didn't have the boxes for coaches back then."

"I was down past the scorer's table and when he came off the floor I asked him, 'How the hell do you do that? You never taught me that. How do you get away with that?'"

"I broke the foul marker on the scorer's table on the way back. I figured I needed to do something to add to the bizarre situation. I think (athletic director) Ed Weaver

Continued On Page 14



## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES

## Arena Has Dazzled Visitors For 42 Years

Continued From Page 13

even sent me a bill for it, but it went unpaid."

• **D.C. Koehl, assistant SID and former men's team manager (1968-70)** — "One of the most bizarre practices I ever saw happened here before the UCLA game in (December 1968). Fred's innovation to simulate Lew Alcindor was tennis rackets. Whoever was playing Lew had two tennis rackets to try to extend their arms. They wanted to create something where they could practice against that height. We lost the game (83-74), but it's something I distinctly remember."

• **Paul Krebs, senior associate athletic director** — "No. 1 is the Indiana game, the double-overtime game. That's the most exciting event I've ever been to and I've been to World Cup, NHL finals, NBA finals, the World Series — everything but a Super Bowl."

"That day, the emotion, the energy ... every play was contested. It was the most incredible athletic event I've ever seen."

"Then I think of some of the performances by Katie Smith, Jim Jackson, Glenn Robinson and Scott Skiles. From the competition, Skiles probably stands out the best. The fans got on him so bad, and he would come back and answer with three after three. He was a tough kid. The more the fans would get on him, the better he would play."

• **Nikita Lowry, former OSU player (1986-89)** — "I had a lot of great memories

there, but the sellout against Iowa (1988) was probably the best. But the fans were also great and evidence of that is when the USA team came here and Sheryl Swoopes got a standing ovation. Here's a woman who beat you, scored 47 points, and she gets a standing O."

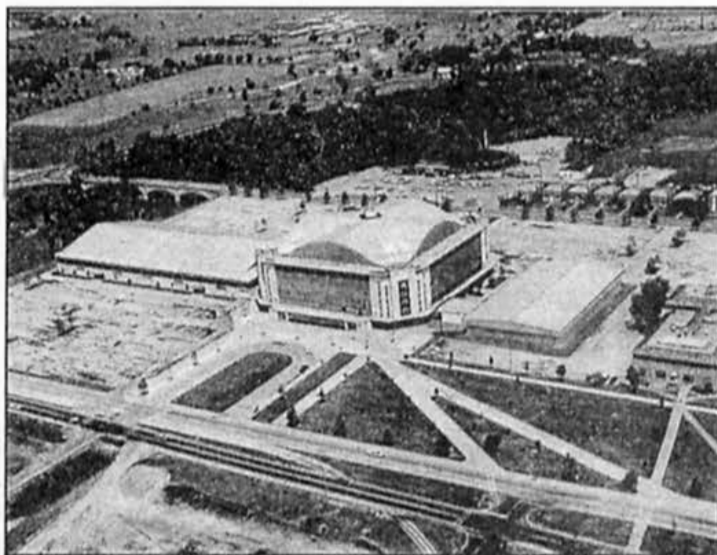
• **Matt McCoy, St. John public address announcer and sports reporter for WTVN Radio** — "I'd have to say Indiana in 1993 when (Derek) Anderson and (Greg) Simpson and all those guys were freshmen. I think I remember that because it was really the last great win for Ohio State in this building. They were the No. 1 team in the country and I remember people storming onto the court."

"I was sitting next to Mark Howell (of WBZZ Radio) and (Jamie) Skelton hit a shot that looked like it would win it and I looked over at Mark to say something and all I saw was this foot from a fan trying to jump over the media tables. But the game wasn't over."

• **Gene Millard, former OSU captain (1957)** — "I helped in the construction of the place and had an opportunity to play here, coming from the Fairgrounds Coliseum to this state-of-the-art facility. That was quite a thrill and we did have a good team."

• **Brad Miller, Purdue basketball player** — "My best memory is not losing here. That's always a good thing to say about a Big Ten arena."

• **Eldon Miller, former OSU men's coach (1977-86)** — "High school kids, boys



COURTESY: OSU PHOTO ARCHIVES

**AERIAL VIEW** — This is an early aerial view of St. John Arena, the French Field House and the OSU Ice Rink. Note the old Big Bear store across Lane Avenue. That is where Riverwatch Towers stands today. The adjacent Holiday Inn replaced the row of houses.

and girls, in that state grew up wanting to play in that arena. I think about the great programs at Middletown, Toledo Scott, Canton McKinley, the Columbus schools and even the smaller schools like Indian Valley South, where I played for Charlie Huggins."

"It was the center of basketball in the state. Maybe no building in the country has the same type of charisma in-state as that building has."

• **Rusty Miller, Associated Press state sports editor** — "I can remember as a high school kid trying to find tickets for the state playoffs for an affordable price. A buddy and I would drive down here in an old, beat-up Fiat 124 Spider. It was freezing cold, we didn't have blankets or anything. Tickets were \$3 or \$4 apiece, but we didn't have the books of tickets so we were always scrounging around for tickets. At the end of the night, we didn't have enough money to go to a hotel so we'd just sleep in the car."

"Of the moments I've been here in terms of Ohio State, I'll never forget that feeling and the roar of the crowd and the anticipation when Jimmy Jackson brought that ball down the floor at the end of regulation against Indiana (1991). You knew it was him against Damon Bailey and he was going to take the shot."

"When I was coming tonight (for the '98 Indiana game), I was just thinking to myself, 'How many times have you made this trip to St. John Arena? Sometimes you look forward to it, sometimes you haven't felt well, but it was all about seeing friends while you were here. Now it's all going to change."

"At least I don't have to sleep in my car anymore."

• **Jim O'Brien, OSU men's coach** — "It's amazing when we come from the Northeast and look at some of the facilities around the country we've played in. I saw St. John Arena and thought that looked pretty good."

• **Dave Parr, men's games PA announcer for 10 years** — "The highlight is obviously the Indiana game (1991). After that it all runs together for me. But I remember people coming over the scorer's

table at the end of the game, which I don't think I've ever seen before. Also, in Eldon's era Purdue played OSU to three overtimes (in 1981) and that was an incredible game."

• **Toni Roesch, former OSU player (1983-86)** — "There's a cozy atmosphere here and I know from talking to opposing players that they get frustrated by that. You're trying to get the ball inbounds and someone's right behind you. Because of that atmosphere, everyone who's ever played here has felt a part of the place. I know I love St. John Arena and I'll miss it."

• **Larry Romanoff, assistant athletic director** — "I can remember as a student, standing outside in line to get the best seats."

"My best memory as a student was probably in 1971 when they beat Indiana for the Big Ten championship. George McGinnis went into the crowd in the front row and was standing face-to-face with Stan White from the football team. They were ready to go at it."

"I also remember the Clark Kellogg Show in the state championship game. He had a hell of a game that day."

"And there was the Elton John concert here in 1971 or '72 — that was my first date with my wife."

• **Alex Shumate, chairman of the OSU board of trustees** — "My favorite memory had to be the double-overtime game with Indiana. I've got that game on tape and I've watched it several times. That was just a great victory for Ohio State."

"Another great moment I remember was the seniors' last game for Chris Jent, Mark Baker and Jamaal Brown. There was such a strong feeling of pride and attachment for that one particular team. When it was over, people did not want to leave. It was just a great outpouring of respect."

• **Larry Siegfried, former OSU captain (1961)** — "I would probably say that Indiana game in 1960 sticks out because that was our first real Big Ten championship with that group of kids. For a couple years there we didn't lose a home game and I just remember we had a hard time with not getting very many shots because so many of us were used to being big scorers in

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## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES

high school. You may have hit eight field goals but only taken 10 shots. It was an adjustment for us.

"I have those types of memories about our gym because we always shot well there because it was our home. The power we could generate there on any given night was awesome."

• **Katie Smith, former OSU player (1993-96)** — "My best memory was probably the state championship my senior year. You saw all the people, it was filled up and it was really loud. That atmosphere was one reason I picked Ohio State. I felt comfortable in St. John and it's a great place to shoot."

• **Rick Smith, former OSU captain (1979)** — "There have been too many times of running the stairs here to make you not forget the arena. I do have fond memories of all the pickup games we played after practice where we'd stay around for hours afterward and shoot and play against the assistant coaches. I miss that."

• **Terry Smith, men's play-by-play announcer from 1986-97** — "For me personally, my biggest thrill was my first broadcast. It was Gary Williams' first game as Ohio State coach and the Buckeyes beat Bucknell 90-62. Then, of course, the '91 double-overtime game was truly memorable and a great game when you think of Treg (Lee) hitting the big shot and Jimmy playing a tremendous game. I think another thing that's special about it that people may forget is that OSU had beaten Indiana a month earlier in Bloomington, so that was a pretty rare season sweep."

"The Louisville (1990) game was huge too because I can remember fans coming over the broadcast table. Having the chance to call every game in Jimmy Jackson's great career will always mean a lot to me, and just thinking back to the years of the Big Ten titles because every week there was anticipation for the next game."

• **Steve Snapp, longtime OSU sports information director** — "In 1971 when we won the Big Ten championship with that group of sophomores and Jim Clemons, we beat Indiana here to sew it up. We beat them decisively and they had a pretty good team with George McGinnis."

"Jerry Lucas came back to speak at one of Coach Ayers' summer camps probably in 1993 or '94. A lot of the kids didn't know who he was, but he starts shooting jumpers from the top of the key and he makes five in a row. He gets up to 10 in a row, then 15 in a row and he has everybody's attention. He makes 20 in a row before he missed and even then he called it: 'I'm going to miss this shot, and I'm going to miss it to the right.'"

"He positioned one of the kids exactly where the rebound would be. I was just stunned. Then he took a hook shot, a shot he said he hadn't taken in a while, and of course he made that, too."

"We've had some great women's games. In Katie Smith's freshman year (1992), they defeated Virginia and she had a sensational game with 35 points. Before that in 1986, we played USC. They had Cheryl Miller and we had Tracey Hall. That was a great basketball game and the place was sold out."

• **Mike Sullivan, men's beat writer for The Columbus Dispatch from 1988-97** — "Some of mine are from practices. One I'll never forget was one day three guys collided on a play and were just wiped out. I know two for certain were Jackson and Jamaal Brown. They were just lying there and you were thinking that the era has just ended. Then (trainer) Mike Bordner went over to Jamaal and said, 'I want you to know that the franchise is over there but I

came to you first.' They were all OK as it turned out."

"As far as games go, the double-OT one with Indiana is unavoidable. I can remember things like Jamaal going to the line with OSU down five with a minute left. Treg Lee gets a steal and later Damon Bailey hadn't missed a free throw all day and then hits one of two to set up the Jackson play. And then you had Skelton hitting a pair of threes in overtime and he was just a freshman."

"And the '93 Indiana game is right up there. I think sometimes you invert memories based on the outcome of seasons. They didn't have a great season, but that really was a great game by any standard."

• **Craig Taylor, former OSU captain (1976)** — "In terms of my games I'd have to say when we beat Indiana my sophomore year (1974). Jerry Lucas was the TV analyst for that game and the crowd was great. Wardell Jackson was our captain and he played a good game — so did Bill Andreas and myself. That was a good win right at the end of the year and it kept them from going to the NCAA Tournament because at that time only one team from each league went."

• **Tara VanDerveer, former OSU women's coach (1981-85)** — "One of the few regrets I had when I took the Stanford job was knowing I'd never be able to walk out into that place and listen to the band ever again. Nothing could match the intensity you felt when you walked in there and heard them playing. Even when we didn't have huge crowds it was electric."

• **Kristin Watt, former OSU women's player (1983-85)** — "Every time I ran out of that locker room — every time — I got goose bumps before the game. I was playing in St. John Arena, which, to me, was the greatest basketball house in the world. I came here for the first time when Clark Kellogg was a junior and he and his teammates were hot, and I remember coming in and thinking I'm playing on the same floor as Clark Kellogg. I thought that was pretty cool."

"I remember Tracey Hall against Cheryl Miller and they opened, for the first time, the balcony, and this place was rockin'. That was one of the biggest games I remember. I also think all the pictures and trophies make for a very, very tradition-filled place."

• **Tony White, former OSU captain (1989)** — "I'll never forget Dennis Hopson breaking the (OSU career scoring) record against Florida International. He needed a lot of points, but we all expected him to do it and Herb Williams was down at the end of the bench waiting for the minute. Dennis was a little tense before the game but he goes out and, of course, has a great game."

"I still remember the shot. He came off a down screen and hit a turnaround 15-foot jumper and he had to hang in the air a little bit. That place just went bananas, probably one of the top five crowds I've ever heard. Dennis was not a guy to show a lot of emotion but you could tell it meant a lot to him."

"Then, of course, the '88 Michigan game because of the crazy ending. Grady (Mateen) gets the dunk, then celebrates downcourt and screens off the guard who was supposed to be cutting off Rumeal Robinson. Jerry (Francis) went out and tripped him and the ball squirted loose. I overran it and Terry Mills picked it up, saw I couldn't do anything and fired a shot. It bounced around and came out. Ten minutes after the game there are still 12,000 people in the building screaming."

"I have practice memories, too, because we were all used to Eldon Miller and then Gary Williams comes along my sophomore

year. The first week of practice we weren't doing particularly well in a scrimmage and he kicks the ball into the balcony. The next day he kicks it into the old scoreboard where the visitors slide-in plate is and just shatters it. We were like, 'Eldon never did that.'"

• **Gary Williams, former OSU men's coach (1987-89)** — "I think I'll always remember the atmosphere our team had with the students down by the floor. That was something I asked the school officials to put in and I think it helped make it one of the great arenas in the country."

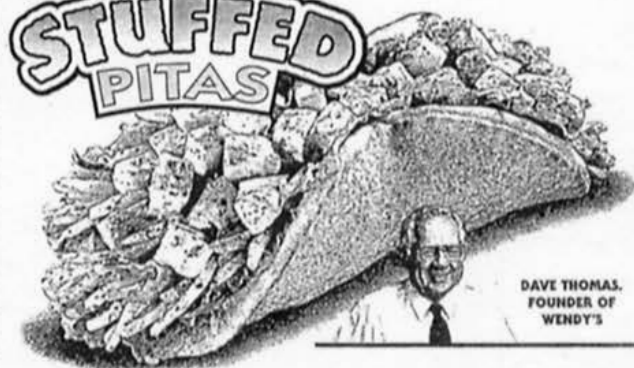
"As far as specific games, I remember us beating Michigan my second year there (1988). They missed a deep shot at the buzzer and it was a pretty wild scene after the game. I'd also say losing to Michigan State at home that year and Steve Smith took over in overtime and won the game. I remember running after the officials right

after the game because I thought Jay got fouled at the end of regulation."

• **Luke Witte, former OSU player (1971-73)** — "Probably my first great memory of that arena was going to a game in fifth grade. Ohio State had an outstanding team, of course, and I can guarantee you I had fantasies on that day of someday playing there for Ohio State. That's a dream not many people get to realize."

"Then there were so many great games there during my career. It's hard to single them out, but I know one year we beat Purdue on a tip-in off a missed free throw and we beat Indiana to clinch the Big Ten title in 1971. My senior year (1973) we played Minnesota the year after the unfortunate incident there and there was this incredible tension in the air. It was a good game, but I honestly don't remember who won, just that it was real heated and tense (the Gophers won 80-78)."

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## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: FRED TAYLOR

## Taylor Helped Bring OSU Into Prominence

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — *BSB* asked Lee Caryl, author of "The Golden Age of Ohio State Basketball: 1960-1971," to introduce our readers to the Fred Taylor he had come to know while interviewing him and his former Buckeye players.

The idea of a book on Fred Taylor's Ohio State teams had been on my mind for months. It was finally time to present it to him and see how he felt.

In September 1990, we discussed the project at The Golf Club in New Albany, Ohio, where he was manager. With the understanding that the book would be based primarily on interviews with his players, he was willing to participate. He told me about Fred's Formers, a group of his players, managers and coaches who met for golf annually. They had an outing coming up in just a couple of weeks. He would endorse the project then.

Pleased with the results so far, I asked to attend.

"No," came the immediate reply. Not "I'll think about it and let you know," or "I'll check," but "No." He went on to explain that the outing was only for men who had competed under him. There had never been any exceptions.

While disappointed then, I look back on that as the time I really began to know the man. He never tried, or tries, to be what others think he should be. His priority, then and now, has been to be who he thinks he should be. In this case, honest, direct and clear. I never saw those three traits vary.

As it turned out, he provided a glowing endorsement for the idea and explained his total commitment to it. When I contacted them, players repeatedly said, "I was looking forward to your call," or "I wondered why you had not called yet."

One player who was less than thrilled at my call was John Havlicek, the greatest professional basketball player OSU ever produced. Though pleasant, he was distant.

Later that day, I met with Fred for one

of our many interviews. He mentioned that John had called him earlier in the day, apparently immediately after we spoke. Fred suggested I call again.

When I did, it was as comfortable as if I were talking to my college roommate. We discussed Ohio State, then and now; the Boston Celtics, then and now; officiating; the playoffs; everything which came to mind. John could not have been more helpful, as soon as he knew Fred Taylor liked the idea.

Fred and I had a routine whereby we would discuss two years at a time, and I would leave the draft of two previous years when I left. He would check for errors and have a chance to provide an alternate viewpoint if he considered that necessary. One time he corrected a fact I was certain was accurate, causing me some concern.

Jerry Lucas had talked about competing with college and NBA players on the playground in Middletown as a youth. He said the games were primarily the result of the efforts of Eric Back and Owen Lawson, who played for the hometown Middies before going to Western Michigan.

Fred noted that the two players went to Western Kentucky, which presented a dilemma. Since Luke followed them in school and had written several memory books, I was certain he was right. But if I did not make the change, Fred would probably notice in the final book. What to do?

I called Western Michigan to request a media guide to show Fred. However, the director could not find their names on a list of lettermen. I tried Western Kentucky. Fred was right and Jerry was wrong. Fred Taylor's recall never took me by surprise again.

Another memory of working with him came after the book was completed. The time had come for the cover to be finalized. The problem was that he was a professional artist and I am, well, graphically challenged. When I asked for input on my best effort he invited me to lunch at The Golf Club.

As we walked into the dining room with a paste-up of the cover, one of his friends



SONNY BROCKWAY

**PUPIL AND COACH** — Former Ohio State coach Fred Taylor (right) worked as a commentator on NBC broadcasts after serving 18 years as the Buckeye coach. Here, he interviews one of his former players, Indiana coach Bob Knight, before a game.

called out, "Hey, Fred, is he writing your life story?"

"No, no, no, no," he replied, clearly uncomfortable with the idea. Talking about his players was one thing but never a book about himself. As we worked together on the book, or I have observed since, in public or in private, his players have always come first.

By the way, he liked the cover, with pictures of Jerry Lucas and Jim Clemons, stars of his first and final conference championships, on the front and the 1960 NCAA champs on the back.

#### The Coach

In Columbus, with its fascination for football as well as a football coach who received constant attention from national and local media, Fred Taylor was never fully recognized for his coaching accomplishments. However, knowledgeable basketball people across the country have no doubts about his impact on the game.

"Nobody was more affected by Fred Taylor than I was," says Indiana coach Bob Knight, a former OSU player under Taylor. "He taught me that the approach to play is more important than offense or defense."

"He did more to determine how basketball would be played in the Big Ten than any coach in any conference. Coaches changed their approach to defense and their thinking on shot selection because they couldn't beat Ohio State if they didn't."

Knight adds that IU's defense is "very similar or identical to the way we played in college," and "his approach to practice is my approach today."

On the other side of the ball, 1968 captain Bill Hosket believes, "Fred had the best half-court offensive scheme I ever saw. Olympics, NBA, 1970s, '80s, '90s, ever. When we played Michigan, Fred would tell us, 'Now we're going to score 90 points tonight.'"

Clemons, 1971 captain and longtime Chicago Bulls assistant, says Taylor taught the Bulls offense to the Buckeyes when he played, and adds, "There was not a better coached team in the Big Ten — Fred out-coached people. We out-rebounded Indiana because Fred Taylor understood the game. He taught the fundamentals of rebounding."

"He was an 'old time' coach, who concentrated on discipline, teaching and education," says former Michigan State coach Jud Heathcote.

On the way to Middletown High School for a celebration of the athletic program, as well as to see Jerry Lucas and watch his son J.J. play, I asked Fred if he recruited players to suit his system.

"No," he replied, "we just asked ourselves if a player could play in the Big Ten then made a system to suit the players."

A review of his teams shows that to be an understatement, no matter how remarkable.

The Lucas teams (1960-62) used a high post offense to utilize Jerry's total game — passing, rebounding, cutting, screening, inside and outside shooting touch, as well as astute decision-making.

The Gary Bradds teams (1963-64) had

Continued On Page 18

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## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: FRED TAYLOR

## Taylor Adapted Strategy To Team

Continued From Page 16

less talent and required heavy scoring production from the center position.

The 1968 Final Four team started four high school centers, and two All-Big Ten centers in Bill Hosket (1967) and Dave Sorenson (1969-70). For them, Taylor developed the stack offense, which opponents never solved.

Then, he adjusted the stack in 1971 to blend the talents of Luke Witte inside and Allan Hornyak outside. The result still works for the Bulls.

"Fred was able to evaluate players' talents and abilities then devise an offense to suit that talent," recalls Sorenson. "He wouldn't ask you to do something you couldn't do. That allowed us to do as well as we could as a group, which was true every year I played."

Taylor knew what he wanted in a player. Press clippings were optional. Clemons did not even make honorable mention All-Ohio while leading Linden McKinley to a state title. At Ohio State, Clemons started at three perimeter positions, twice making second-team all-conference before receiving the MVP award.

Taylor recruited competitors, so he did not spend time on unnecessary talk. When an Illinois player held Clemons to two points in a 1969 game then was quoted as saying, "I held him the whole game. When the refs didn't call it, I knew I had him," Taylor merely handed the article to his sophomore. The result was 37 and 35 points for the youngster in the next two games.

Likewise, after Mark Minor threw a behind-the-back pass in his second game, Taylor said, "I'll forget about that because you're a sophomore."

When Minor threw his second one, more than a year later, Taylor welcomed him to the bench with, "Have a seat."

Minor remembers, "I hadn't planned to throw either one, but I guess the point is I didn't throw any more, planned or not."

Taylor was also outstanding at making adjustments for individual games. He once said some of his ideas came to mind while he was soaking in a hot bath the night before a big game.

In the national championship game with California in 1960, he told Mel Nowell not to guard his man but to double-team the ball. Cal guard Bobby Wendell was 0-for-6 from the field and Nowell was a disruptive force in the victory.

Against the Illinois zone of 1971, Minor was moved to "point forward" so Clemons and Hornyak could hit 18 of 35 from the wings. The result was a 20-point win. For No. 2-ranked Marquette, the 1971 Bucks had a verbal command to change between zone and man defense within each possession. The 60-59 victory meant moving on in the NCAA Tournament.

If Jacuzzis had been around, Ohio State might never have lost.

Besides planning, Taylor had the ability to react immediately to unforeseen circumstances. Craig Barclay remembers the end of practice before a big 1968 game at Indiana.

"We were shooting fouls like we always

did after practice and Fred said, 'Make seven straight, then we go eat.' Barclay recalls. "We'd make five, or six, or four, then somebody would miss. It was getting late, and we had dinner reservations. That added to the pressure of our poor foul shooting in recent games — we just couldn't get to seven."

What to do? Either staying and struggling or giving up and leaving could result in a complete loss of confidence by the team.

"After a miss Fred called for the ball we were using and 'threw out' an invisible ball. I don't remember who 'caught' it, but Fred said, 'Go ahead, shoot it, we have to go.' So the player 'shot' it. Then Fred said, 'Did you make it?' Now we understood. We 'made' seven straight and went to dinner, loosened up," Barclay smiles.

The next night Ohio State made 20 of 24 foul shots in a one-point victory.

Any former player has a favorite "Fredism" like, "Your man can't hurt you without the ball. If your man goes to the refreshment stand to get a drink, are you going to go with him?"

Or, "Move around before someone walks up and ties a horse to you," or "Shooters shoot and passers pass," or "Grab a root and growl." Such phrases make a deeper impression than help-side defense, offensive movement, know your role or play harder.

His penchant for asking questions like, "Did you ever think we might be asking you to set that screen for a reason?"



CHANCE BROCKWAY

**TIMEOUT, PLEASE — A young Fred Taylor signals for a timeout during a game from the early portion of his career as the OSU head coach.**

required players to think and absorb an idea.

Though a sound teaching method which certainly proved successful at Ohio State, it did backfire once during the 1963 season.

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## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: FRED TAYLOR

Several players had gone into a restaurant for dinner when a woman walked to the front and began a striptease.

Taylor called the players in the next day, got the facts and concluded by saying, "Did you ever think about leaving when she started to take off her clothes?"

When one of the players replied, "Yes, Coach, you know we did think about that," Fred decided to drop the matter.

Taylor had clear ideas of his responsibilities as opposed to those of the players. When Joe Roberts recalled the defense of sophomore Bob Knight in practice, he said, "He would beat on me and hold me all the time. I used to yell, 'Fred, get him off me.'"

Seeing that quote, Taylor muttered, "Get him off yourself," though Roberts was 3,000 miles and 30 years away at the time.

When Bill Hosket blocked a Dick Ricketts shot in practice, Taylor shouted, "I don't think he understands you're the captain of this team."

Ricketts responded by faking the young freshman off his feet, jumping into him, knocking him down and scoring. It was expected of seniors and captains.

On the other hand, after the infamous mugging at Minnesota in 1972, Taylor told his players, "Settle down, don't worry. I'll take care of this."

He taught them to be men, but there was no question in his mind that this was beyond their control. When the matter was not satisfactorily addressed, I feel he believed he let the team down. He set higher standards for himself than he ever did for his players.

## The Man

John Wooden, winner of 10 NCAA championships in a 12-year period at UCLA, was asked to comment on the Ohio State teams of Fred Taylor, but Coach Wooden had a different priority.

"Who someone is as a person is more important than what kind of coach he is," said Wooden. "Fred Taylor was a credit to the coaching profession."

"I try to judge coaches by how close they come to getting the most out of their material," Wooden then continued. "He always got the most out of his material. One other thing I remember about Fred is the good rapport he had with his players. You have to have that to teach well."

When Wake Forest coach Bones McKinney called to say that Ohio State would have to stay on campus in December 1961 because North Carolina hotels would not house African-Americans, Taylor replied, "Bones, if you can't get a hotel we will cancel the game."

His response was just as immediate when Southern restaurants had a problem serving certain Buckeyes. The team traveled together. After accommodations at a Howard Johnson motel were arranged, OSU defeated the highly ranked Demon Deacons 84-62.

Some former players have very definite memories of their coach.

In John Havlicek's autobiography, "Hondo," Celtic teammate Tom Sanders wrote in the foreword that John always referred to himself as an "Ohio State player."

Why would he choose such a term to describe himself?

"When I called myself an Ohio State player," explained Havlicek, "it referred to a standard of excellence we had under Fred Taylor, as people, players and teammates."

Coach Taylor did not have any problem with priorities.

Shortly after Denny Meadors verbally accepted a scholarship, but before it was signed, he suffered a severe injury to his

left eye. Long before the first of four surgeries, Fred Taylor called and traveled to see him.

"He said, 'If you never put on a uniform, you still have a grant. Don't worry about a thing, just get well,'" recalls Meadors. "That gave me a great sense of comfort and later even more incentive to contribute to the team to repay his kindness."

The rules of the time were that scholarships for injured athletes were lost. Today the athlete would be transferred to non-competitive status and another athlete could be recruited. Then, fulfilling a verbal commitment to a high school athlete could have placed Taylor and Ohio State at a competitive disadvantage. Fortunately for all concerned, things worked out better than that.

Though legally blind in that eye today, Meadors became the primary ball handler on Fred's 1967-69 teams. He simply dribbled to the left side of the floor, where he could see opponents. Simply? Try that at the YMCA, much less in the Big Ten.

Following Meadors' graduation, the 1970 team shot 54.4 percent from the floor to tie an NCAA record for team field goal percentage and set a national mark at the foul line with an 80.8 percent mark. But lacking a strong post player to go with captain Dave Sorenson, rebounding was a yearlong problem. The Bucks finished with a 17-7 record.

The "power forward" was 6-4 Dan Andreas. Though outsized, Taylor appreciated the competitive fire he showed.

Late in the season Andreas banged his elbow while diving on the floor for a loose ball. Infection set in. Before the final game of the season, Dan couldn't lift his arm above his shoulder and told Taylor he couldn't play.

"Just before the lineups were introduced, Fred came up to me and said, 'You're starting,'" recalls Andreas. "I was surprised but didn't say anything."

The first time the ball went out of bounds to stop the clock, Andreas was replaced.

"Fred said, 'I wanted you to remember that you started every game your senior year.' And I do remember that," said the father of heavily recruited junior Jason Andreas. Like his father did, Jason attends Sugarcreek Garaway; unlike his father, Jason is a 6-9 post player.

Gary Bradds, 1964 UPI college player of the year, died of cancer July 15, 1983. Taylor arranged several fund-raising efforts to assure a college education for each of his children, with help from several former Buckeyes.

Gary's father, Donald, said, "Fred Taylor was a fine coach, but after Gary died he has proven to be one of the finest men I've ever known."

Personally, two stories about Fred Taylor, the man, come to mind.

When the book was printed I asked Fred how many copies he would like. He said, "Would four be all right? I have four daughters." He did not ask for one for himself.

Then, during the 1995 basketball season I traveled with the Ohio University basketball team during their preseason NIT championship year.

Dick Schorr, the voice of the Bobcats, has been a close friend of Fred's for decades. I gave him a copy of the book and we traded Fred Taylor stories. Later that week, Dick stopped to say, "I went to lunch with Fred today." Faking a look of puzzlement, he added, "Fred said you're a good kid."

The puzzlement was because Schorr was then addressing a guy pushing 50 years of age, whose hair was both turning

gray and falling out. Kid? But we both knew Fred Taylor well enough to know that once he decides someone is OK, their specific limitations do not really matter.

It is a compliment I will never forget.

## Today

It does not seem fair that Fred Taylor is in Mill Run Care Center, continuing a nearly two-year recovery from a brain aneurysm. I see his family often. They never show dismay at what must be an enormous challenge. But the situation does have one, positive aspect.

Fred Taylor did so much for so many as a friend, coach, father-figure, teacher and mentor. He was a role model for people who cheered his teams but never met him. A very self-sufficient man who seldom needed help, and accepted it less often, it had always been difficult to find a way to show our appreciation to him. Now we have a chance. We can send a card, a note, a clipping to him (3399 Mill Run Drive, Hilliard, Ohio 43026). With permission of his family, we can stop and see him.

Though in no way desirable, it is an opportunity to give a little something back to an outstanding man.

## The Taylor Legacy

Fred R. Taylor spent 18 years as Ohio State's men's basketball coach, guiding the Buckeyes from 1958-59 through the 1975-76 season.

During his tenure, he helped Buckeye basketball achieve an unprecedented wave of popularity and success.

From 1960 to '71, Taylor's teams won seven Big Ten championships, made four NCAA Final Four appearances and won the 1960 NCAA title.

Among the notable records established in Taylor's career, the Buckeyes won 32 straight games, 47 straight regular season games, 27 straight Big Ten games and 50 consecutive home games.

His career mark of 297-158 (.653) is the best among OSU men's basketball coaches with at least three years on the job. He was the national coach of the year in both 1961 and '62.

Taylor is a native of Zanesville, Ohio. He enrolled at OSU in the fall of 1946 and enjoyed success in both basketball (played center for three years, including for OSU's Big Ten championship team in 1950) and baseball (earned All-American honors as a first baseman in 1950).

After graduation, he spent four seasons playing pro baseball in the Washington Senators' organization. He even enjoyed a brief stint with the Senators before returning to OSU in the fall of 1953 as the freshman basketball coach and baseball coach.

He was elevated to the head coaching position in June 1958, beginning an incredible run.

After leaving OSU in 1976, Taylor served as the manager of The Golf Club in New Albany, Ohio. He is currently convalescing in a Columbus-area nursing home after suffering a brain aneurysm nearly two years ago.

He and his wife, Eileen, have four daughters, Janna, Krista, Nicola and Sharla, and several grandchildren.

Ohio State names its annual basketball academic excellence award in Taylor's honor and the university will name the road beside the Schottenstein Center in his honor.

Taylor's year-by-year record is listed on page 32. Here is a recounting of his teams' championships and NCAA Tournament appearances:

• **Big Ten championships (7)** — 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963 (tie), 1964 (tie), 1968 (tie, won playoff), 1971.

• **NCAA Tournament appearances (5)** — 1960 (won title), 1961 (reached title game), 1962 (reached title game), 1968 (reached Final Four), 1971.

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## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: GENE MILLARD

## Millard Recalls Scoring First At St. John Arena

By RICH LEONARDO

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

From Elvis Presley to Eric Clapton, Ronald Reagan to Bill Clinton, and Lew Alcindor to Jim Jackson, St. John Arena has been the venue of choice for some memorable moments exhibited by some of the most renowned individuals of their respective times.

Interestingly enough, however, before the "King" gyrated his way to "Heartbreak Hotel" or Alcindor became Abdul-Jabbar and launched his first sky hook, history was made by a little-known guard from Dayton Stivers High School named Gene Millard.

Millard, the senior captain of the 1956-57 Ohio State Buckeyes, etched his name permanently in the OSU record books by scoring the first regulation basket ever at St. John Arena.

"It was the opening tipoff and I was just fortunate enough to have the ball tipped my way and I took it in for a layup," Millard said. "They certainly didn't stop the game or anything like that. In fact, I don't think anyone really gave it much thought, including myself, until many years later."

In this, the 42nd and final season that St. John Arena has been home to the Buckeyes, many fond memories are surfacing about the venerable facility, including those from that first game on Dec. 1, 1956, when OSU defeated Butler 98-82 in front of a crowd of 9,600.

"Bill Hosket has said that I got more out of that one bucket than a lot of players got out of their whole careers," Millard said. "Hosket may have been right about me and that shot, and while it's now the answer to a trivia question, I'm very proud of having been the player to make that first bucket."

Millard went on to score more than his share of buckets that season as he, along with Buckeye All-American forward Frank Howard, helped the team jump out to a 6-0 mark in the Big Ten before Millard went down with a knee injury that kept



**BUTLER DID IT** — This photo is from one of several meetings between Ohio State and Butler in the early years at St. John Arena. Butler was OSU's initial opponent at the arena, losing to the Buckeyes 98-82 on Dec. 1, 1956.

him out of action for four games.

Unfortunately, during Millard's absence the Buckeyes lost three of four games and finished the season at 14-8 with only a season-ending loss at Minnesota keeping them from being co-champions of the Big Ten.

"We had lost Robin Freeman from the year before, so we all knew we'd have to really pull together to be successful and,

for the most part, we did just that," Millard said. "I believe all five of our starters averaged in double figures, so that kind of made up for no longer having Robin's scoring."

"At that time, only the Big Ten champion got to go to the NCAA Tournament, and Michigan State, which was led by 'Jumpin'' Johnny Green, ended up in the Final Four. However, we were a team that really played well together and I think that showed throughout the year. We were just a break or two away from possibly being right where Michigan State was at the end of the season," he added.

Despite coming up just shy of earning a Big Ten championship, Millard (who was named the team's MVP following the 1957 season) and the rest of the Buckeyes compiled a 10-2 record at St. John while playing before an average of 10,237 fans per game.

"Playing in the confines of St. John Arena, which at the time was one of the top facilities in the nation, in front of about 10,000 fans every game was something very unique, especially after having played our games at the Fairgrounds Coliseum prior to the opening of St. John," Millard said. "I'll tell you, the fans were pretty loud that season, too, especially when our games were close or we were playing against a rival, but we had played in many different arenas all over the country and none of them could hold a candle to St. John."

"In some places, like Iowa and Illinois, the fans were right down on the floor and they could literally reach up and pull your

shorts down when you were taking the ball out if they wanted to. Really, St. John Arena was a great place to play basketball period. I mean it was great for both us and our opponents," he said.

After graduating from Ohio State, Millard spent one year working on the staff of then-OSU coach Floyd Stahl before moving on to Washington Court House, Ohio, where he coached varsity basketball for four years. His next job as head coach at nearby Bexley High School spanned a total of 31 years and included four trips to the regionals and a Class AA state championship in 1983, when his Blue Lions defeated Oak Harbor 77-58 at St. John Arena.

"In 1983, I was thrilled for the young men on our team and for the people of our community as they reveled in our being in the Final Four as well as winning the state title that year," Millard said. "However, my being a former Buckeye player didn't really play into our games, despite their having been played at St. John. I mean, I was glad to be there, but I was more glad for everyone associated with the program rather than myself."

Millard's unselfish nature wouldn't allow him to be overwhelmed at coaching in a state championship game, on the same floor on which he had made history 26 years prior. If ever a team took on the attitude of its coach, it was Millard's 1983 state champions.

"The 1983 squad was a very unselfish team who genuinely liked one another and who shared the same goal of winning the state title," Millard said. "No one cared who scored the most points or who grabbed the most rebounds, but rather each member of the team would do whatever it took to help us win. With that in mind, I guess it wouldn't have been right if that team didn't end up at St. John, playing for the state championship."

Over the years, Millard has been back to St. John Arena as often as possible, viewing as many Buckeye games as his coaching schedule would permit. Last season, Millard retired from coaching and is now looking forward to enjoying even more OSU games as the Buckeyes prepare to move into the new Schottenstein Center next season.

"Any time you go from one facility to another, you go with a bit of apprehension, but the Schottenstein Center will be a state-of-the-art facility, just as St. John was 42 years ago," Millard said. "St. John Arena is still a great place to watch a basketball game. There's not a bad seat in the house. Sometimes, however, change is good and with St. John Arena, I guess it's time to move on. Plus now more people will be able to come out and see the Buckeyes, which should benefit both the team and the fans."

While it's true that more fans will be able to fill the \$105 million Schottenstein Center, with its 19,500-seat Value City Arena, it will, for the time being, lack the charm and history of the \$4 million, 13,276-seat St. John Arena.

"St. John Arena was a great facility," Millard said. "It housed some great teams and great players and now hopefully as the Buckeyes move over to the Schottenstein Center, they will take all the good memories of St. John and push their games up to an ever higher level."

"I'm looking forward to the new generation of Buckeye basketball players to remember the past, while also creating even greater memories for the future."

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## ST. JOHN ARENA MEMORIES: BEFORE ST. JOHN

# Before St. John, Bucks Played At Fairgrounds

By JEFF RAPP and  
STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Members

While much of the hoopla this week concerns the end of a 42-year run for Ohio State basketball at St. John Arena, there was, in fact, Buckeye basketball before SJA.

The Buckeyes called the Ohio State Fairgrounds Coliseum home for 37 years before moving back on campus to St. John for the 1956-57 season. Prior to the Coliseum, the Buckeyes played in the old armory on campus.

The armory was a nice facility for the early 1900s, seating 2,000 — that's if folding chairs were placed in every nook and cranny.

OSU began competing for Big Ten championships in basketball in 1912-13 and, despite not winning a conference title, the number of regular spectators at OSU contests was far outstripping the tiny armory's capacity.

In January 1918, the school's athletic board voted to move games to the Fairgrounds Coliseum, which had been dedicated the previous September. OSU played its first season in the Coliseum in 1919-20.

"The move to the Coliseum was originally intended to be only a temporary matter until the university could make arrangements for a field house of its own," Columbus Dispatch columnist Bob Hunter wrote in his 1981 book "Buckeye Basketball." "But as it turned out the 'temporary' arrangement lasted almost 40 years."

According to Hunter's book, the university had to design a special sectional floor that could be laid down and removed as needed. Heating was also a problem, since the coliseum was never intended to be used during the winter months. OSU had to provide it with four large coal stoves to heat the building and several potbellied stoves to heat smaller rooms, such as the locker rooms.

The move was rewarded, though, as coach Harold Olsen's Buckeyes regularly competed for conference crowns, winning five in his 24 years on the job. The Coliseum enjoyed its first sellouts of near 10,000 as OSU claimed its first-ever Big Ten crown behind All-American Johnny Miner in 1924-25. OSU's popularity continued to swell as All-American Jimmy Hull led the Buckeyes to the 1939 NCAA title game and Olsen's 1944, '45 and '46 teams all reached the Final Four.

Coaches Tippy Dye and Floyd Stahl presided over the final 10 years OSU spent in the Coliseum before the program moved to St. John.

Even today, as OSU plans to bid goodbye to St. John, fans recall what it was like to watch the Buckeyes at the Coliseum.

"The Fairgrounds Coliseum was a great place to watch a college basketball game," longtime Columbus basketball fan Bob Swenson said at the OSU-Indiana game.

"But the only bad thing was the floor. You never knew where the ball was going to go when you dribbled it because one time it would go this way and the next time it would go the other."

## Freeman's Perspective

Perhaps the best Ohio State player to never play in St. John Arena was sharpshooting guard Robin Freeman from Cincinnati. He missed christening St. John

by one year.

Stahl lured Freeman to Ohio State in the fall of 1952, at about the same time plans were announced to build St. John Arena.

"They had St. John on the drawing board," he said. "They showed you a mock-up of the thing when they were recruiting you. It looked nice and neat, but it wasn't anything on my mind. I wished I would have gotten to play there, but what can you do?"

Freeman made the most of his time at the Coliseum, earning All-American honors in 1955 and '56. His 32.9 scoring average as a senior remains an OSU single-season record.

"The Coliseum had two things that were good for shooters," Freeman said. "It had a springy floor because it was an elevated, portable floor. It was almost like a springboard."

"Plus, we had the best lighting in the Big Ten."

Freeman said it was not that much of a hardship to play off campus at the Coliseum.

"We never knew what it was to play on campus," he said. "For years and years, Ohio State hadn't played on campus. No one knew anything different."

"The Coliseum is sort of a nostalgic-type place. It looks like a horse barn where they showed animals, and that's really what it was for."

Freeman said OSU had a big following and was still able to attract talented players despite its off-campus home.

"In my time, they heated the locker rooms with potbellied stoves," Freeman said. "People came to Ohio State in spite of that, not because of it."

"I know we drew such good crowds there. In terms of a home court, we would have 7,500 to 10,000 people in the stands. In those days, they would play a freshman game before the varsity and usually it was already packed for the freshman game."

"It was definitely a good place to play at home because the people were so close," he said.

Freeman currently resides in Columbus but continues to practice law in Springfield, Ohio. As one of the former players invited back, he plans to attend the final game in St. John Feb. 28 against Penn State.

"It kind of bugs me that this is the end (for St. John)," he said. "When they built it they said it would last 100 years and it's obsolete in 40."

According to Hunter's book, Stahl was a bit nostalgic about two of his favorite players when St. John opened.

"All I could think about when I first walked out there was that it was just too bad that Freeman and (fellow 1950s All-American Paul) Ebert couldn't have played in this," Stahl said. "I felt a little remorse that those two boys couldn't have played in there. They deserved to play in a place like that."

## Best Of Both Worlds

Former Buckeyes Gene Millard and Jim Laughlin were lucky enough to play in both venues.

"You couldn't really get that many people in Fairgrounds Coliseum as compared to St. John Arena," said Millard, who had the honor of scoring the first basket at St. John in December 1956. "Even when we had 10,000 people in there it would get pretty loud."

Through the years, Millard's Bexley High School basketball teams have fared



**FUN AT THE FAIRGROUNDS** — Ohio State played its home games at the Fairgrounds Coliseum for nearly 40 years before moving to St. John Arena. Here, the Buckeyes take on Purdue at the Coliseum.

well in district tournaments held at the Coliseum. But as for OSU's move to St. John, it did not happen any too soon.

"When we were at Fairgrounds Coliseum it couldn't really measure up to the other facilities in the Big Ten," he said.

Laughlin was a co-captain in 1957-58 with Frank Howard. He played in St. John his junior and senior years after starting as a sophomore at the Coliseum in 1955-56.

"The game I remember most is the first time I got to start," said Laughlin, an OSU graduate and chemical engineer living in Mendham, N.J. "We were playing Washington (Dec. 22, 1955), which had a pretty good team, and I scored 16 points and never came out of the starting lineup from there."

"I also remember when we beat Illinois at home in 1956 because we had lost to them on TV a couple weeks before. I'll never forget the score — we lost 111-64. But Robin scored a bunch of points and we played real well and won 87-84."

OSU went 16-6 that final year at the Coliseum as Freeman led the nation in scoring. But OSU didn't win the Big Ten, finishing third. Iowa represented the league in the NCAA Tournament. The Hawkeyes went all the way to the finals before losing to San Francisco, which had Bill Russell and K.C. Jones.

The following year, OSU was without the high-scoring Freeman but had shiny new St. John to call home.

"It gave you a tremendous sense of pride

knowing you were on the first team to play in there," Laughlin said. "It was like going from a Model T to a brand-new Thunderbird."

Laughlin went on to be an assistant freshman coach for OSU in 1958-59. Frank Truitt led the frosh and, of course, legendary Fred Taylor handled the varsity.

"I still have the letter from (then-athletic director) Dick Larkins. It says my salary would be \$405 — that was for the season," he said. "But I used it to buy an engagement ring for my wife, Sandi."

They've been married for 39 years.

Laughlin was recently in for OSU's captains dinner and plans to return for the final game.

Among other things, Laughlin remembers having to get rides to and from practice at the Coliseum.

"I was a poor boy from (Charleston) West Virginia, so I didn't have a car," he said.

He also remembers the elevated floor and that the dressing rooms were cold and drafty. But he never really had misgivings about the old barn.

"Coming from the high school ranks in West Virginia, it was still a step up," he said. "And even though the place was kind of like a barn, I never really dwelled on the fact that it was old and outdated. We had a job to do and that was to try to win games."

"And the crowds there were great. I mean that place would really rock. I'm still not sure it was any less loud than St. John Arena."

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