

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 18, No. 25

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

April 10, 1999

## The Unforgettables

### Bucks Make History With Final Four Run

By STEVE HELWAGEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

In the annals of college basketball, historians note the accomplishment of Kentucky's 1991-92 team known as The Unforgettables.

That Kentucky unit, led by third-year coach Rick Pitino, included obscure seniors named Richie Farmer, Deron Feldhaus, John Pelphrey and Sean Woods.

As freshmen, these Wildcats had endured a 13-19 season — the school's first losing mark in 61 years. Over the next two years, the Wildcats had to operate under the cloud of NCAA probation and the decimation of their roster.

But Pitino slowly rebuilt the program and, by the time these players reached their senior year, the NCAA-imposed sanctions had been lifted and superstar sophomore Jamal Mashburn had joined the mix. The result was a 29-7 season, punctuated by the Christian Laettner buzzer beater in the NCAA's East Regional finals that sent Duke to the Final Four.

Still, that UK team had restored respectability to their school's tradition-laden program. The Wildcats would play in four of the next six Final Fours and claim two national championships.

Much the same way, Ohio State returned to respectability in 1998-99, led by its own version of The Unforgettables.

After five largely forgettable losing seasons, marked by its own bout with NCAA probation and a spate of off-the-court problems, the Buckeyes returned to prominence in college basketball with an unlikely NCAA Final Four run, perhaps doing UK's Unforgettables one better.

OSU seniors Jason Singleton and Neshawn Coleman had endured three straight losing seasons. But they, along with superstar talent like transfer point guard Scoonie Penn and sophomore shooting guard Michael Redd, helped second-year coach Jim O'Brien do the unthinkable.

"I'm hoping that in some small way we were able to restore some of the respectability to Ohio State's basketball program," O'Brien said after his team's national semifinal loss to eventual NCAA champion Connecticut.

"If that's the case, maybe some of the younger players in the state of Ohio will take a closer look at our program. That is going to continue to be the lifeblood of our



#### IN THIS EDITION OF BSB:

- A look at OSU's breakthrough season (Pages 10-11)
- Buckeyes fall to UConn in national semifinal (Pages 12-13)
- Penn, Redd share spotlight (Pages 14-15)
- Final Four photos (Page 16)
- Court Report (Pages 18-19)



STEVE HELWAGEN

ONE MORE YEAR! — OSU junior point guard Scoonie Penn (right) flashes a smile as he and coach Jim O'Brien listen to a chant of "One more year!" for Penn during the team's appreciation rally April 1 on the Oval.

### BSB Mourns Staffer's Death Karen Wachsmann, 54, Helped Build Columbus Sports

Longtime Buckeye Sports Bulletin assistant publisher Karen Wachsmann died on March 30 in Boulder City, Nev. She was 54.

"We were all shocked and saddened at the news of Karen's death," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "When this company was in its infancy, Karen's strength, loyalty and vision helped it survive when similar ventures would have failed. That loyalty and her quest for excellence never wavered."

Wachsmann started at BSB in 1982, helping with typesetting and layout. She later took over management of the circulation department. She was promoted to assistant publisher in 1985 and eventually oversaw the editing of all parent Columbus Sports Publications products.

In June 1996, she elected to decrease her workload and move to the Las Vegas area. From there she continued to be the company's key copy editor until her untimely death.

"This is a tremendous blow, both on a personal

and a professional level," said BSB editor Steve Helwagen. "Karen was such a rock for everybody associated with our company. My sincere condolences go out to her family."

Added former BSB editor Mark Rea, "I was deeply saddened to hear of Karen's passing. I worked with her for nearly seven years and learned very early on that while many of us in the BSB family took turns being the paper's backbone, Karen was most certainly always its soul. She was indefatigable, unfailing, good-hearted and I was proud to have called her a friend."

Wachsmann was born in Bismarck, N.D., in 1944. Her family moved around during her youth and she resided in such places as St. Paul, Minn., and Moline and Peoria, Ill., before graduating from Akron Buchtel High School. She came to Columbus to attend the Ohio State University and eventually

Continued On Page 20

Continued On Page 4

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No. 5	Oct. 10	No. 20	Feb. 20
No. 6	Oct. 17	No. 21	Feb. 27
No. 7	Oct. 24	No. 22	March 6
No. 8	Oct. 31	No. 23	March 13
No. 9	Nov. 7	No. 24	March 27
No. 10	Nov. 14	No. 25	April 10
No. 11	Nov. 21	No. 26	April 24
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## OPINION

# UConn Defense Was Dominant

There is so much to talk about this time, so let's get right to it.

### The Game

Ohio State ended its 31-year drought from the Final Four and very nearly derailed Connecticut's national championship run.

But in the final analysis, it was UConn's defense that ruled the day. What can be said about the job Ricky Moore did on Scoonie Penn? And, on offense, Richard Hamilton and Khalid El-Amin just put on a clinic.

Late in the game, OSU finally moved Jason Singleton over on to Hamilton after he had pretty much had his way with everybody else.

Poor Penn. Think about the shots he made — a three-pointer off an offensive rebound by Michael Redd, a 24-foot trey when Moore wasn't expecting it and a driving, scoop, underhand shot with Moore draped all over him. That's it. I have three or four photos of Penn struggling to get a good look at the basket. The best of them is on page 19.

Billy Packer pointed out how Penn wasn't getting much help from his teammates as far as screens to get Moore away from him for even a split-second.

Other than Redd, nobody on the OSU side lifted their game. The first half went about as well as the Buckeyes could expect, a late run giving them some momentum and just a one-point halftime deficit.

But the start of the second half was, at best, regrettable. OSU's first four shots were well ones off the hands of Brian Brown and Ken Johnson. Before you could blink, the Buckeyes were down 10.

Then, after OSU finally got the lead back down to three in the closing minutes, Hamilton and El-Amin each hit clutch jumpers to seal it. With that type of poise, it was hard for me to understand why everybody just assumed Duke was going to win the title game.

As far as the Penn jersey caper, it's hard to believe something like that could happen at the Final Four, especially with a guard in the hallway. Sounds to me like somebody working in the building got his hands on a piece of history. And, no, I don't blame the jersey on Penn's play — even though it was three sizes too big (you'd think they'd have extras in everybody's size). Again, blame Ricky Moore.

For a positive note, games don't hit much bigger than the national semifinal. That experience should serve the Buckeyes well next season.

### The Season

Everyone recognizes how difficult it is to make a repeat Final Four appearance. OSU will have to sift through another tough Big Ten season — this time as the hunted — followed by the league tournament and four NCAA games just to make it to Indianapolis.

In fact, Jim O'Brien already started his spin to try to lower expectations for next year. I would agree with the coach — this was an experience that should be cherished. Even though things look good on paper for next year, that will mean nothing next March.

Penn is a big piece of the puzzle, obviously, if OSU expects to make it back. Call it a hunch, but I expect him to return. I would look at him as a late

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK with Steve Helwagen

first-round pick at best right now. I can't knock his game — he handles the ball well, runs his team impeccably and can hit the long-range jumper. He had just an amazing year.

But he is still only 5-10, albeit the best 5-10 player I've seen.

As we waited for our plane to come home from Tampa, we bumped into former Illinois coach Lou Henson at the airport. Henson, now at New Mexico State, was amazed with the progress OSU made this year.

Henson's NMSU team defeated the Buckeyes last season in a Hawaii tournament. He noted Penn's importance in the turnaround and credited O'Brien as well for his work.

Finally, the appreciation rally on the Oval April 1 was such a neat and deserving sendoff for this team. OSU vice president for student affairs David Williams served as the moderator, telling Penn, "Scoonie, whether you come back or not, you'll be a Buckeye for life."

Amen.

### The Final Four

I've been watching the Final Four on television for at least 20 years, dating back to the Magic Johnson/Larry Bird game in 1979.

I considered the whole trip and everything I saw in Tampa/St. Pete as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The regulars, those who cover these events every year and grouse about everything, were put off by the way the various events were spread out across a 30-mile radius. For instance, the games were at Tropicana Field in downtown St. Pete, while the Hoop City and most of the hotels were a half-hour away in Tampa.

Everybody was looking forward to next year in Indy, where it seems like 6,000 hotel rooms, the mall, the entertainment center, the convention center and the RCA Dome are all within a six-block radius.

But you won't see me complain about that.

I do take issue with this Final Four being the lowest rated one on TV in recent memory. Maybe I lead a sheltered existence, but everybody I know watched the games. The Duke-UConn title game was among the best ever.

Yet the pundits argue that the college game lacks the star power necessary to attract the casual viewer. Elton Brand? Isn't he the Rocket Man?

I'll agree — there aren't any Christian Laettner or Chris Webbers or Grant Hills on the college scene these days. Losing players early to the NBA seems to be the prevailing reason for the perceived lack of interest.

That brings me to the Duke-UConn game and coach Mike Krzyzewski's curious decision to not call a timeout in the closing seconds with his team down two. Instead, he watched Trajan Langdon — not a reputed driver — try to create something off the dribble.

Even better was the way all of the national analysts covered for Coach K

and didn't even broach the decision afterwards. Henson, playing devil's advocate, said the thinking is if you have the right players on the floor, let them play it out. The offense, Henson says, has the advantage because they know what they're going to do and the defense doesn't have time to adapt.

I can kind of see that logic. But then I think about all the meaningless Tuesday night ESPN games I see all year where, with six seconds left, a coach with a five- or six-point lead will burn a timeout. There isn't any strategy to discuss, other than where everybody's going to eat after the game. Rather, this is the coach's opportunity to smile for the national cameras for a couple of minutes.

Coaches will take those kind of timeouts, but they won't take one before the biggest possession of their professional lives? Seems out of whack, huh?

### Spring Football

I will get into football more next time.

The spots to watch, as far as I'm concerned, are quarterback, wide receiver and middle linebacker. In a couple of weeks, we'll know more about what's happening at each of those spots.

Let me say, I like Rob Murphy. He is, literally, a reporter's dream to talk to — always available, always honest.

He missed the spring last year with a knee injury, so that shouldn't hurt him. But after all the flak he, Andy Katzenmoyer and others faced last year, you would think he'd want to avoid that stuff again.

John Cooper is taking a hard line on this one, and that's probably the right move.

### Losing Karen

My emotions the last week or two have been high and low.

The positive was obviously OSU's first Final Four trip in 31 years.

The low, though, was coming back from that trip and learning that Karen Wachsman, our semi-retired assistant publisher and still a vital part of our operation, had died unexpectedly in her Nevada home.

Karen, the mother of staff member Mike Wachsman, was just 54 years old when she passed away. It's hard to come to grips when somebody you've worked closely with for over a decade dies suddenly.

I had spent five years working for BSB as a part-timer before I became editor in 1994. Suffice to say, I arrived here for my new job believing I knew everything.

I learned right away that I did not. In fact, Karen taught me the importance of being a good listener as well as being a team player.

We could have cut a lot of corners to shave an hour or two off our work load, but the final product was what counted the most and, Karen, through her tireless efforts, never let us lose sight of that. In our business, she was a consummate professional.

My sincere condolences go out to Mike, his wife, Stacey, and his sister, Beth.

BSB will go on without Karen Wachsman. But, on a lot of levels, it will never quite be the same without her.

OHIO STATE INSIDER



**Crowd Of 3,000 Gathers For Final Four Appreciation Rally**

A collection of about 3,000 fans, students and university employees braved the threat of rain and 50-degree temperatures to give one last public thank you to OSU's Final Four men's basketball team.

The appreciation pep rally was held April 1 at noon on the Oval.

The OSU basketball band and cheerleaders performed throughout the rally, where coach Jim O'Brien and his team took one more bow.

Among the dignitaries in attendance were Ohio Gov. Bob Taft, OSU board of trustees member Michael Colley and Columbus mayor Greg Lashutka.

"They believed in themselves and they put teamwork above individual



STEVE HELWAGEN

**ADDRESSING THE MASSES** — OSU coach Jim O'Brien speaks to a crowd estimated at 3,000 for the men's basketball team's Final Four appreciation rally. The rally was held at noontime April 1 on the Oval at the center of campus.

glory," Taft told the crowd. "They set high goals and exceeded those goals."

Lashutka presented O'Brien with a proclamation, declaring April 1 as Buckeye Men's Basketball Day in Columbus.

OSU president William "Brit" Kirwan added his analysis.

"I grew up in the state of Kentucky, where they think they know something about basketball," Kirwan said. "I've been watching basketball for 50-plus years and I've never seen a coaching job as good as what Jim O'Brien did this year at Ohio State."

Kirwan added, "I did a little computation today — we have 196 days until next season starts. Are you ready? Let's go, Bucks!"

O'Brien used the rally as a way to thank the OSU faithful for their support.

"When they told us a few days ago we would have a rally, they said it would be a chance for the fans to say thanks to us," he said. "But I also think this is important on the other side for us to say thank you for your tremendous support."

"Our goal is to have the type of program the entire community, Ohio State, the city of Columbus and the state of Ohio can continue to be proud of."

OSU's three captains, Neshawn Coleman, Scoonie Penn and Jason Singleton, also took turns at the microphone. Penn, a junior who may be considering turning pro, was besieged by the chant "One more year!" (see story, page 15). Coleman and Singleton, both seniors, reflected on their time at OSU.

"It's definitely been a blessing to have an opportunity to play ball here," Coleman said. "The fans stuck behind us through thick and thin. We couldn't have done it without you."

"I'll definitely be rooting for every-

body next year."

Singleton chimed in, "Ohio State will be in my heart forever. Thank you for a beautiful four years."

**Missing Jersey Creates Mystery For Penn, OSU**

Prior to OSU's national semifinal game with Connecticut, Penn followed his normal pregame routine.

But as he came back to the locker room to put on his usual No. 12 road jersey just before game time, it was nowhere to be found.

Instead, the OSU point guard had to wear No. 35, the team's designated "blood" jersey for when a player gets drops of blood on his regular jersey. He refused to blame his play on the switch: He hit just 3 of 13 shots in OSU's 64-58 loss.

"I really don't know what happened to the jersey," Penn said. "We came in from warming up and I wanted to put my shirt on, but we couldn't find it. We didn't have time to look for it."

"I don't think that had anything to do with the game, me not having my jersey."

Although stories floated around that the jersey was not packed — CBS' Bonnie Bernstein said that could have been the problem — witnesses said they saw Penn's jersey in the locker room before they went out for warmups.

"I saw the jersey hanging up, we came back, it was gone and nobody knew where it was," Coleman said. "We go out with 25 minutes on the clock and we go back in with 10. Before we went out the first time I'm positive — I'm ready to bet the house — that I saw that jersey hanging up."

"It just wasn't there when we came back."

Days later, O'Brien was still unsure of what transpired in his team's locker room.

"I don't even know what happened," he said. "He said he brought it in and hung it up and we just couldn't find it. I don't think that factored in at all."

"I've been meaning to find out what happened, but I still don't even know what happened."

"There's only a period of about four minutes after we come back in from warmups so everybody's looking through bags and looking around for it. And then we had to take a little time because one of the managers had to go out on the bus and find what they refer to as 'the blood jersey.'"

"Scoonie was fine about it. He just kept saying, 'It's no big thing; just get me that other jersey.'"

The jersey's disappearance begged the obvious questions — was it stolen and, if so, by whom?

"It's conceivable," O'Brien said. "They had a couple different guys walk-

**BSB Mourns Staffer's Death**

Continued From Page 1

made the city her permanent home.

She worked for such publications as Trading Times and The Columbus Free Press before joining BSB. She also worked for several area attorneys including current Franklin County Municipal Court Judge Anne Taylor.

She had been active for many years with ComFest, the long-running local community festival, and was an avid fan of the OSU women's basketball team.

Wachman is survived by her son Mike, non-revenue sports editor of BSB, and his wife, Stacey, and a daughter, Elizabeth, who is an attorney in Nevada.

She is also survived by her mother, Elaine Roschman of West Palm Beach, Fla., as well as brother and sister-in-law, David and MaryAnn Roschman, also of West Palm Beach; sister and brother-in-law, Leslie and Thom Fogarty of New York City; and sister and brother-in-law, Jill and Jim Young of Susanville, Calif.

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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

# Loss Doesn't Dim Bright Year

## Buckeyes Put Final Four Loss In Right Perspective

By JEFF RAPP  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The photographers pushing through the OSU locker room to snap off photos of despondent Buckeye players after a loss to Connecticut thought they were illustrating Ohio State's participation in the Final Four.

They weren't even close. No photo could sum up what OSU's appearance in Florida meant to the program.

Sure, the Buckeyes were disappointed to lose a winnable game. Yes, it hurts to have a deep tournament run come to an abrupt end. And certainly all the emotion and meaning of March Madness includes the agony of defeat. After all, when you get to the end of the month it's a shame — as the cliché goes — that someone has to lose.

But while UConn turned Duke's locker room into a morgue two nights later in winning the national championship — could ESPN's Jay Bilas, a former Blue Devil, whisper any softer while conducting interviews? — the Buckeyes for the most part managed to keep their heads relatively high.

"I just told them to not lose sight of the big picture," OSU men's basketball coach Jim O'Brien said after his team finished 27-9. "I told them I was proud of them again. Obviously it's a disappointing loss, but when you focus on the big picture, I am very happy about that."

"The thing that you really need to understand is when you get to this point, you never know when you're going to get the opportunity to get back into this Final Four setting."

"When you think about being one game away from playing for the national championship, it's almost a surreal expression for me."

"That's the disappointing thing to get

this far and not win the whole thing. But I think about when we first started practice in September with the running, (losing) is not that big a deal to me right now."

Ohio State's accomplishments amazed even O'Brien, who has administered a cautious but focused approach since taking over the program in April 1997.

With transfer Scoonie Penn — who also made a name for himself at Boston College — ready to take over at point guard, Michael Redd back to score in droves once again and a developing front line and bench, the Buckeyes entered the season with modest hopes of having their first winning season since 1992-93. When the Buckeyes logged early wins over Alabama and Penn State and started 6-0, O'Brien treated talk of his team being ranked as preposterous.

As it turned out, OSU was a mainstay in the national rankings throughout the Big Ten season, slotted as high as 10th



STEVE HELWAGEN

**TOUGH DEFENSE** — UConn guard Khalid El-Amin takes the ball up as OSU's Boban Savovic (left) and Scoonie Penn (35) converge. El-Amin had 18 points and six assists to help lead the Huskies to a 64-58 win over the Buckeyes.

late in the year. Even though the Buckeyes couldn't catch eventual league champion Michigan State, their bubble never really burst until a semifinal loss to 11th-seed Illinois in the Big Ten Tournament.

But that seems like months ago now as the Buckeyes regrouped in time to post four straight NCAA Tournament wins and one of the school's most memorable postseason runs in capturing the South Region.

OSU had the same chance in 1992 under O'Brien's predecessor, Randy Ayers, but came up short in overtime to Michigan, which built the Fab Five legend. The victory over St. John's in Knoxville, Tenn., this time around had national beat writers digging into the record books to find OSU had clinched its first Final Four berth since the Fred Taylor/Bill Hosket-led season of 1967-68.

"I think this was a great opportunity, the ride we've had, and we have nothing to hang our heads about," Penn said moments after the UConn loss. "I think this was a great experience. This was a tough game."

"The more I think about it the more happy I am with the way things turned out. We had a great season. A lot of people did not think we could do this this year."

### Defying The Odds

While the Buckeyes were blowing out teams at home and scraping by in Big Ten road venues that normally served as houses of horrors, the media and viewing public slowly but surely took notice. Even with Penn and a group of newcomers including George Reese, Brian Brown and Boban Savovic, it was quite a transformation to witness considering the Buckeyes were a dismal 8-22 the previous season, including a 1-15 mark in Big Ten play.

"We came out, worked hard and gained a lot of respect," said Reese, a Columbus native who came from the JUCO ranks, played in all 36 games and averaged 5.5 points and 4.3 rebounds. "We came from 8-22 a year ago to this. I credit everybody in this organization for coming out and giving all they had this year."

"I think about our work ethic and the combination of us being a close-knit team on and off the court."

Helping the continuity were the sacrifices of senior guard Neshawn Coleman and sophomore forward Jon Sanderson, who both gave up more than 10 minutes a game from the previous season to allow the newcomers into the mix. The nation's leading freshman point producer (21.9 per game) last year, Redd gave up some of his scoring and was asked to do much less ball-handling with Penn at the lead.

A 5-10 pest to the opposition with his long-range shooting, passes on the move and competitive fire, Penn fit better than a Tyra Banks bikini. He hounded opposing dribblers, hit big shot after big shot

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## OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

and got everyone else involved. Along with scoring 16.9 points per game, he led the team in minutes (34.6), three-point shooting (38.4 percent), and assists (4.3). He also shot a team-best 74.1 percent at the free-throw line, discounting Coleman's 83.3 on only 12 shots.

"What can you say about the year he had?" Redd said of Penn, who was named the Big Ten player of the year by the media while Michigan State's Mateen Cleaves was so honored by the league coaches. "Scoonic proved time and time again he's a great player and he obviously makes us go."

And the two players who needed to step up their game for the Buckeyes to contend — junior center Ken Johnson and senior forward Jason Singleton — did that and more.

The 6-11 Johnson was as raw as a plate of sushi out of high school but became a true force in the pivot by blocking an even 100 shots (a school single-season record) and greatly improving his rebounding. Singleton finished third on the team in scoring (8.9) and rebounding (4.6), but more importantly served as the team's defensive stopper and added efficiency to the offense with his passing and 63.5 percent field-goal shooting.

And the constant, of course, was the coaching staff. The media recognized as much by naming O'Brien the Big Ten coach of the year.

Then again, the effort was pretty consistent in the gloomy season of 1997-98, O'Brien's first in Columbus.

"I'm so happy for Coach O'Brien," Penn said. "The reason why is last year, even though we only won once in the conference, the coaching staff never stopped coaching. They coached every day in practice. They kept pushing guys and tried to make everybody improve."

"They didn't say, 'We'll wait till next year.'"

#### Long, Prosperous Season

When the season commenced in November, it was obvious there was a lot more molding to do. Brown and Savovic, for example, had to become acquainted with game plans that required multiple offensive sets, several options on out-of-bounds plays and a bevy of defensive looks.

Reese had to show he could hold up inside against the bangers of the Big Ten. Singleton needed to fit into the system, even in halfcourt games. Penn and Redd needed to mesh. Johnson had to show up on a regular basis. And the team and fans had to break in a new home, the posh Jerome Schottenstein Center.

It all started coming to a head as the Buckeyes downed Penn State in a unique November league game in The Schott. The Nittany Lions had dumped OSU in overtime to end the 1997-98 regular season, sending St. John Arena out with a loss. This time, OSU prevailed, matching its league win total from a season ago.

The fans began to see signs of a winner, as did O'Brien, a conference co-coach of the year while at St. Bonaventure and BC.

"For me, it began with two games early in the year," O'Brien said. "We played Penn State and Alabama at home. Penn State beat us twice a year ago and was picked as high as fifth in the conference. Alabama won 16 games a year ago. But we came out and won both of those games to get things going."

"Then, we go to Puerto Rico and beat three very good teams and win that tournament. We lose a close game at Miami (Fla.), then we won at Wisconsin. We

were on the road for five games and we won four of them.

"It was at that point where I thought things started to come together."

Not only was the team poised for a run at a postseason tournament, the style of play was truly pleasing to the eye. The left-handed Redd was silky smooth with his drives to the basket and Penn was hitting clutch bombs and turning up the tempo whenever necessary. Johnson began to swat shots in bunches and Singleton was finishing fast breaks with electrifying dunks.

When things slowed down, the Buckeyes had the answers, often working for a good shot when they weren't scoring out of timeouts and off inbound plays. But most of all, OSU frustrated teams on defense, holding them to 40.4 percent from the field and logging 297 steals to their opponents' 195.

"We have more depth now, we're able to play a bit faster and we can be in the backcourt defensively," O'Brien said. "Those are all things we couldn't do a year ago."

The all-around improvement buoyed OSU to a 12-4 mark in conference play that was good for second place. Still, the Big Ten season was fraught with the usual bloodbaths and nail-biters.

"The conference play was very tough," Penn said. "I don't think there's a game that we prepared for that we were like, 'OK, this game won't be that hard.'"

Early league blowouts of Indiana, Minnesota and Purdue at home showed OSU was for real, but the regular season was defined when OSU played 5 of 6 on the road from Jan. 27 to Feb. 17 and won five, including euphoric wins at Purdue, Iowa and Indiana. That feat had never been done in the history of the program, but the Buckeyes pulled it off in successive road games.

The home schedule ended with gutsy wins over slow-down teams Northwestern and Wisconsin, the latter marking a send-off for Coleman and Singleton that won't soon be forgotten. The final bow for the senior captains came at Tropicana Field against UConn.

"This shows that hard work will definitely pay off," Coleman said proudly as he took off his uniform for the last time. "I've worked hard for the four years that I've been here and to make it to the Final Four is my payoff."

"This game is still in my head right now but I'll definitely remember the run in this tournament. To me, this is a dream fulfilled."

Added Singleton, "Words probably can't express how I feel right now but I'm definitely thankful that we were able to pull together and get this far. That will always mean the world to me."

Exemplary to the end, the two players avoided being overemotional after the game, in a way a gesture that said to the younger players, "This is your time now."

"We just gave each other a handshake and a hug," Coleman said. "We're roommates so we'll talk about it in private. We definitely had a great run and a great season and we feel like everybody is proud of us. This has been tremendous for us to be a part of something like this."

#### Looking Ahead

It didn't take long after the UConn loss for members of the team to look ahead to next season. Redd was among the enthused.

"This helps us out a lot to do this this year because we have basically the same team coming back next year," Redd said. "This should give us confidence to do it

again next year.

"This inspires me to work even harder. I'm ready to start back up right now."

Added Penn, "This just gives everybody on our team coming back a tremendous amount of confidence."

"This came at a good time for us. This will be a lot for us to shoot for. We know what we're able to accomplish."

Like Penn — provided he comes back (see story on page 15) — and walk-ons Kwadjo Steele and Devon Smith, Reese will be a senior next year and he's already talking about going out with a bang.

"I know everybody here will be left with a nasty taste in their mouth," he said. "It will be up to us to stay together, believe in ourselves and stock up for another run at it."

When asked what improvements he needs to see for next year to be another special season, O'Brien immediately responded, "We have to get bigger."

That is all but taken care of as OSU already has inked 7-3 junior college star Aleksandar Radojevic, who would be the tallest player in program history if he arrives next season. Reports have him tempted to jump straight to the NBA, but O'Brien says he's getting good feedback on the issue.

Also in the fold next year will be 6-8 Slobodan Ockoljic and 6-0 Brent Darby, who just wrapped up impressive prep careers. Doylan Robinson, a 6-5 swingman, will join the squad after sitting out the past season for academic reasons.

But OSU will have to make up for the loss of Coleman, the school record-holder for three-pointers made and attempted, and Singleton, who guarded all-league players ranging from 6-0 Louis Bullock to

6-11 Evan Eschmeyer.

"I think we can definitely get those elements back and I think what they brought was heart and dedication," Penn said of the seniors. "Although those guys had a rough three years in the past, they love the game, they play hard every day in practice and they were dedicated to help this team. I think that's rubbed off."

O'Brien echoed his point guard. "We have most of our guys returning and we have a good group of kids coming in," he said. "I think that we're going to miss Neshawn and Jason but I'm very optimistic with the type of team that we're going to have next year."

The networks no doubt will agree. With so much accomplished and so much coming back, the Buckeyes will be picked to contend for the Big Ten title and should be regulars on CBS, ESPN and the like.

The Buckeyes are signed up for the Preseason NIT and could take part in the Great Eight and/or the ACC-Big Ten Challenge. Another natural for national television will be the rematch with fellow Final Four participant and league rival Michigan State, Cleaves or no Cleaves. OSU lost by five in East Lansing in the only meeting between the teams this year.

Then, come tournament time, the OSU players and fans will be looking for another deep run.

"The potential for next year is unbelievable," Penn said. "We have just about everybody coming back if everything works out. We go into this off-season and know we have to work hard."

"We'll want to taste this again next year. We won't want anything less."

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OHIO STATE VS. CONNECTICUT

# The End

## Loss To Eventual Champions Wraps OSU's Dream Season

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It's difficult when you get to college basketball's biggest stage for the first time in 31 years and forget to bring the bottle of magic you used to get there.

Then again, Ohio State had little to be ashamed of after a hard-fought 64-58 loss to Connecticut in a March 27 national semifinal game before 41,340 in Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Fla. The Buckeyes also proved that coming so far and falling just short always stings a bit, especially when it happens in the Final Four.

"The closer you get the more it hurts, I think," said OSU guard Michael Redd, who once again led OSU in points (15) and rebounds (eight). "Usually you just want to put a loss behind you, but I just want to soak all of this up right now, the good and the bad."

With the defeat, Ohio State closed out one of its most improbable seasons ever with a mark of 27-9. The win total tied for the most ever in OSU history and came on the heels of last year's 8-22 campaign.

UConn (33-2), playing in its first-ever Final Four, stole away OSU's chance to post the biggest turnaround in recorded NCAA Division I history. The Huskies also stole Ohio State's magic and grabbed the role of popular underdog just in time for the March 29 finale with mighty Duke, which they won 77-74 to claim the national title.

Someone even managed to swipe Scoonie Penn's now-famous No. 12 jersey just before the game, offering an eerie precursor to the entire evening.

Penn instead wore a nameless No. 35 and the Buckeyes followed suit, shooting a percentage just over that (36.5) during a rather nondescript offensive showing.

Meanwhile, UConn hit 26 of 55 shots, a field goal percentage of 47.3 that was greatly aided by several layups in transition and the ability of stars Richard Hamilton and Khalid El-Amin to hit pull-up jumpers and runners in traffic.

"They hit some tough shots, some back-breakers and we saw how it felt because we've been doing that to teams all season," Penn said. "That's just the way the game goes."

Hamilton, a 6-6 two-time Big East player of the year, scored 24 points on 10-of-17 shooting en route to one of the best six-game showings ever in the NCAA Tournament. The flashy El-Amin, probably a couple of inches under his listed height of 5-10 and several pounds above his listed weight of 203, also tallied at all the right times. He hit 8 of 15 shots, scored 18 points, dished out six assists and registered three steals.

"They're both great ballplayers."

Redd said. "You can't say enough about them."

OSU's offensive execution and team defense were things of beauty at key times in the four NCAA wins that earned the team a ticket to St. Pete. But this time the artistry was handed by OSU's opponent as the Huskies resembled the 1982 Lakers on the break.

"When you play Connecticut you have to take care of the basketball and be efficient with the shots that you take," OSU head coach Jim O'Brien said. "When you take shots that you're unaccustomed to taking and you turn the ball over, those are baskets for them. They turn your mistakes into baskets as well as anybody in America."

"I thought we did a pretty good job of guarding them in the halfcourt but there's no defense when they get break-aways."

Running to perfection when the opportunity presented itself, the Huskies built leads as high as 32-23 in the first half and 51-41 in the second. But the Buckeyes battled back each and every time before running out of answers in the final two minutes.

"I think we had them on the ropes two times and never put them away," El-Amin said, "but we're happy we got the 'W.'"

### Backcourt D Tames Redd, Penn

The Huskies confounded Penn and Redd throughout the semifinal, holding the talented pair to 32 percent shooting (10 of 31) and a combined 26 points. With those two struggling, OSU was a woeful 8 of 33 from the field in the second half.

"From our standpoint, this game came down to their ability to guard us, particularly in the second half," O'Brien said. "We really had problems scoring in the second half."

"We've relied on Scoonie and Michael all year long, which is a tremendous burden on them. You just have to try to make up for it collectively when they aren't scoring a lot and that is tough to do for our team. Tonight it just didn't happen for us."

That was due in large part to the efforts of UConn guard Ricky Moore, who worked hard to hold Penn to 11 points on 3-of-13 shooting.

"Moore was tremendous — I think he was the MVP of their team tonight," Penn said. "I only got one or two open looks throughout the game. He did a great job on defense and stuck with me the whole game."

"I think he was so good because he didn't have anything else to do. His job was to stay on me, stay on my shirt. Usually when we play teams they give help defense. When Mike has the ball up top and is doing his thing, he draws my guy off a lot of the time. But Ricky Moore, even when Mike was penetrating, he didn't offer help defense. He



STEVE HELWAGEN

**JUST MISSED** — OSU point guard Scoonie Penn just misses a chance to block a layup attempt by UConn guard Rashamel Jones. The Huskies survived a late OSU run and prevailed 64-58 in a national semifinal game.

stayed with me."

UConn coach Jim Calhoun also credited Moore.

"Ricky Moore is the best defensive player I've ever coached," Calhoun said. "Scoonie Penn is one of the best players we've ever gone against. He ended up 3 for 13, and he's a great player."

"Scoonie Penn will play professional basketball. He will go and make a lot of money playing basketball."

"But Ricky not only led us in rebounding, but he also cut the head off of the dragon. Scoonie to me is all about what happens with them. As Scoonie goes, so goes Ohio State."

The 6-2 Moore, who had at least 4 inches on Penn, described his team's strategy.

"We know Penn was a great offensive player," he said. "I knew he would come out and try and attack me. I was prepared to attack him. I just wanted to make him make tough shots. He did make some acrobatic shots."

"I got a lot of help from my teammates. They did a good job of hedging

out on picks and helping me with him when he would come off screens."

### Tense Game Unfolds

Penn looked like he was up to his old tricks when he nailed a three off a save by Redd to give the Buckeyes a 20-18 lead.

But UConn quickly embarked on a 14-3 run keyed by a Hamilton three. Seconds later, Kevin Fresman completed a three-point play off a behind-the-back, fastbreak pass from El-Amin, a play that made all the late-night highlight reels.

A Hamilton follow on another fast break gave UConn a 32-23 lead and caused O'Brien to burn his second timeout with 7:14 left in the half.

"We really needed to just get a little bit stable at that point," O'Brien said. "There was so much game left. We needed to calm everybody down. We turned it up defensively and got a couple of breakouts ourselves."

His calming influence paid off as the Buckeyes ripped off a 10-0 run with

**OHIO STATE VS. CONNECTICUT**

their own fastbreak flair. Penn smacked a Freeman shot attempt to ignite one of the transition hoops, a Redd dunk off a Penn lob. Moments later, a steal by Brian Brown led to a Jason Singleton layup and Redd completed the surge by grabbing a loose ball and driving for a hoop that gave OSU a 33-32 lead with 2:07 on the clock.

Hamilton answered on cue with a jumper and El-Amin later banked in a runner to put Connecticut up 36-33, but Singleton dunked off a perfectly executed inbound pass and Ken Johnson and Singleton kept the halftime score at 36-35 with blocked shots on the other end.

"We felt real good at halftime," Penn said. "We felt this was a game we could win and that we were right back in the hunt. We fought our way back into it instead of lying down and letting them blow us out."

Calhoun chided his team to turn up the heat in the second half, especially on defense. It worked.

The Huskies opened the second stanza with a 15-6 run over the first nine minutes to take their biggest lead at 51-41. The capper was a precision fast break as El-Amin hit a streaking Rashamel Jones with a lob for a layup with 11:48 left.

The Huskies still led 55-46 after El-Amin's hanging bank shot with 6:39 remaining. But OSU chipped away, scoring eight of the next 10 points. Redd's driving layup off a pass from Singleton after an El-Amin turnover cut the lead to 57-54 with 4:16 left.

"I was happy about the character of our guys," O'Brien said of his team's comeback. "We had to overcome eight- or 10-point leads on four or five different occasions. We could have gone away, but we stayed in there and kept coming back and coming back."

But the Buckeye would get no closer.

El-Amin hit an off-balance jumper in the lane with Singleton's hand directly in his face to push the lead to 59-54. Penn then made 1 of 2 free throws to cut the lead to four.

Out of a controversial UConn timeout (see below) with 2:29 left, El-Amin missed a shot, but the long rebound came out top to center Jake Voskuhl. The Huskies then wound the clock down before Hamilton, sensing a mismatch with Penn guarding him after a switch, pulled up and hit a 12-foot jumper just before the shot-clock buzzer.

That deflating sequence put OSU behind 61-55 with 1:42 to play.

"I think that was a critical possession," O'Brien said. "There were a couple of possessions at the end of the game that were real, real big."

Voskuhl fouled out trying to stop Redd on a backdoor layup with 1:24 left. Redd made 1 of 2 free throws with his missed second shot coming down to Singleton and Johnson. When they controlled it simultaneously, the ball was awarded to UConn on a traveling violation.

Hamilton missed a shot with 45 seconds left and OSU had a chance to trim the lead. But Penn missed a driving layup and Johnson's follow shot also was off the mark. OSU fouled Moore, whose two free throws put the Huskies up 63-56 with 32.8 seconds left.

Penn made 2 of 3 free throws to cut it to 63-58 with 25.9 seconds left. Moore missed the front end of a one and one with 24.8 seconds left, but the Buckeyes could not capitalize when Penn's ensu-

ing three-point shot bounded away.

**National Semifinal Notables**

• OSU's record in games where it held its opponent under 70 points dipped to 23-2. Poor second-half shooting by OSU and sound defense by both teams led to the total score of 122 points, the lowest in a national semifinal since Villanova beat Memphis 52-45 in 1985.

• The Huskies set a school record for wins by claiming their 33rd of the season over Ohio State. They improved to 20-0 away from home this season (11-0 on the road and 9-0 on neutral floors).

• With UConn's win, Big East Conference teams improved to 6-0 all-time in national semifinals against non-conference teams.

• Free throws once again hurt the Buckeyes as they connected on just 9 of 18 attempts at the line. OSU's evening there was summed up when George Reese clanged a pair with five seconds to play and OSU trailing 63-58.

"A couple more free throws could have made it a one-possession game," O'Brien said. "If we go 14 for 18 or 15 for 18, maybe that changes it a little bit. The free-throw shooting has let us down all season so today was no different."

But O'Brien wasn't about to put all the blame on the free throws.

"I'm not going to reflect all that much on the free-throw shooting as the thing that really hurt us because it's not surprising," he said. "If we had been a 75 to 80 percent free-throw shooting team and had come into this game and gone 9 for 18, then you say, 'Oh my god, that's the thing that really hurt us.' But this has been going on all season long."

The Buckeyes ended the season with a team percentage of 61.1.

• UConn's possession while leading 59-55 was one of the game's key moments as Voskuhl lost control of the ball while trying to pass to El-Amin on the left wing. A mad scramble ensued where Voskuhl regained control before the ball headed out of bounds. UConn was granted a timeout despite appearing to not have full control.

Plus, there was debate whether Voskuhl should have been whistled for

traveling for passing the ball to himself.

"Jake had possession of the ball, and I was so scared that he had the ball that I called timeout," El-Amin said. "That was a heads-up play that Jake was able to come back and get the ball."

Calhoun maintained that El-Amin had called timeout before Voskuhl lost the ball.

"Khalid called timeout when Jake still had the ball in the jump circle," the coach said. "But the play continued on before the whistle blew."

Penn did not see it that way, responding, "No, what I know was I was denying Khalid El-Amin the ball. Voskuhl was looking for somebody to throw the ball to. He kind of threw it and committed, and then he went and grabbed it, which I would think would be traveling."

"They didn't call the timeout until Voskuhl got the ball back."

O'Brien added, "I thought it was a travel, but obviously they didn't."

• The only Buckeye close to double figures besides Penn and Redd was Singleton, who finished with nine points. However, he took just one shot and did not score in the second half.

The senior forward added six rebounds and four assists in his final collegiate game. Fellow senior and co-captain Neshawn Coleman failed to score in his last game as a Buckeye. He played just two minutes and did not shoot.

• One of the more surprising occurrences of the game was that OSU forward Jon Sanderson failed to play for the first time in his two-year career. Sanderson started 30 games this year and all but one in the regular season, giving way to senior Coleman in the home finale.

But O'Brien inserted the freshman Brown for him for a three-guard look in the NCAA Tournament and Sanderson's minutes dropped off as a result.

Sanderson looked utterly dejected in the locker room after the game but didn't complain about not seeing the floor.

"I'm just really disappointed that we lost," said the 6-7 sophomore. "It's been a long season and we made a great run at it. It just hurts a lot to make it all this way and lose. We definitely could have beaten that team."

**Connecticut 64, Ohio State 58**

National Semifinal Game  
March 27, 1999  
Tropicana Field; St. Petersburg, Fla.

Ohio State	min	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp
Singleton	36	4-8	1-3	2-6	4	3	9
Redd	37	7-18	1-2	5-8	3	2	18
Johnson	30	3-8	0-0	3-5	0	1	6
Brown	21	2-8	1-2	0-2	2	1	5
Penn	40	3-13	3-5	2-5	4	3	11
Savovic	20	2-4	2-2	1-3	1	3	7
Reese	14	2-4	1-4	2-3	0	2	5
Coleman	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>23-63</b>	<b>9-18</b>	<b>17-35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>58</b>

Percentages: FG: .365, FT: .500, 3-point goals: 3-14, .214 (Redd 0-2, Brown 0-2, Penn 2-7, Savovic 1-3). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 6 (Johnson 3, Singleton 2, Savovic). Turnovers: 11 (Singleton 3, Redd 2, Johnson, Brown, Penn, Savovic, Reese, Coleman). Steals: 5 (Redd 2, Penn 2, Brown).

Connecticut	min	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp
Freeman	29	2-4	1-1	2-7	0	3	5
Hamilton	33	10-17	3-5	2-3	1	3	24
Voskuhl	19	1-2	0-0	2-5	1	5	2
El-Amin	34	8-15	2-2	0-1	6	1	18
Moore	37	1-7	4-4	1-6	1	2	6
Wane	8	0-2	0-0	0-4	0	2	0
Harrison	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Jones	8	3-3	0-0	0-0	0	1	4
Saunders	23	2-3	1-3	1-6	3	3	5
Mouring	5	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>26-55</b>	<b>11-15</b>	<b>11-39</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>64</b>

Percentages: FG: .473, FT: .733, 3-point goals: 1-6, .167 (Hamilton 1-3, El-Amin 0-1, Moore 0-2). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 3 (Hamilton, Voskuhl, Saunders). Turnovers: 14 (Freeman 3, Hamilton 3, El-Amin 3, Voskuhl, Moore, Wane, Jones, Saunders). Steals: 6 (El-Amin 3, Voskuhl, Moore, Jones).

Halftime: Connecticut 36, Ohio State 35. Technical Fouls: None. Officials: Burr, Rose, Whiteshead. A: 41,340.

In his four tournament appearances, Sanderson averaged about seven minutes, took just 10 shots and put up 3.0 points and 2.0 rebounds per game. For the season, Sanderson averaged 5.4 points and 3.4 rebounds.

• This game was OSU's 36th, setting a school record for games in a single season.

That breaks the mark of 34 set in 1988-89, when the Buckeyes (19-15) reached the third round in the NIT.

• OSU's 4-1 showing in this year's NCAA Tournament lifted the school's all-time tournament mark to 35-18 (.660) in 19 appearances.

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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL PROFILES

# Penn, Redd Work Together

## Putting Team First Helped OSU Reach Improbable Final Four

By STEVE HELWAGEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

At every stop along the NCAA Tournament trail, media members probed and poked at the relationship between Ohio State guards Scoonie Penn and Michael Redd.

By the tone and wording of the questions, you would have thought OSU coach Jim O'Brien had brokered some sort of Middle East peace accord.

Phrases like "get along" and "coexist peacefully" were used to describe the relationship between OSU's two high-scoring guards.

At each press conference, O'Brien would calmly explain how the two stars have taken to each other.

"I thought their relationship was good a year ago," O'Brien said. "There were good signs they had become good friends. I thought that was important."

"Mike was our go-to guy a year ago. I knew Scoonie was going to put himself in position to share that. I think the fact they became good friends and Michael was a willing learner as a young player are the reasons things have worked out the way they have."

"Michael has shown tremendous maturity. Michael is still our go-to guy. Scoonie still recognizes that. Each guy could be the go-to guy and when we go to the other and they accept it, it makes it nice as a coach."

The 6-6 Redd averaged a Big Ten-high 21.9 points a game a year ago as a freshman, while Penn sat out his transfer year. It became apparent early this season, though, that Redd would not match that average.

He ended up scoring 19.5 points per game, while the 5-10 Penn ended up scoring 16.9 points per contest. O'Brien was asked whether Redd had to suppress his ego this year and give way to Penn.

"Absolutely, and that's what he's done," O'Brien said. "Here's Michael scoring all the points last year. He leads the conference in scoring. He clearly was the man and our go-to guy."

"Now, all of a sudden, you have somebody else show up. Michael knew we knew Scoonie was very good and now Scoonie starts to get some notoriety."

"Michael has to share some of it with another guy. With a different personality, there could have been some problems. But Michael opened his arms to Scoonie, and he was very intelligent to do that. They've played very well together."

Perhaps Ohio State's change in fortunes helped Redd cope. The team was a dismal 8-22 last year. This season, the Buckeyes went 27-9 and advanced all the way to the NCAA Final Four — the school's first appearance there in 31 years.

"That's all that matters," Redd said. "Scoonie has done a great job of helping me, being able to penetrate and kick it to one another. He frees me up a little. Teams concentrate on him a little bit and not as much on me."

"He brings another scoring punch to the team that we needed. He brings another dimension to the team. The biggest thing of all is leadership."

The old axiom that guard play makes college basketball teams go has never been more apparent than with this year's edition of the Buckeyes. OSU enjoyed one of its biggest seasons ever with Penn playing the point and Redd working at shooting guard.

"In general, all the good teams have good guards," O'Brien said. "I think that's been the case with us. When you have good guards and the ball is in their hands — especially in close games — you give yourself a good chance to win."

"We're very fortunate to have both Scoonie and Michael. They are both capable of winning games for you at the end."

O'Brien also noted how this dynamic duo set the tone for the rest of the team.

"It helps coaching when your best player — or in this case, with Scoonie and Michael, your best players — are your hardest workers," he said. "It makes everybody else work that hard."

### Penn Amazes With His Play

Although his magic wore off for the national semifinal game, where the Buckeyes fell to Connecticut 64-58, Penn literally willed the Buckeyes into the Final Four.

His play in the South Regional semifinals and finals was among his best all year. He tallied 26 points, hitting 4 of 7 three-pointers, and dished out four assists in OSU's upset of top-seeded Auburn.

Then, two days later, he nearly pulled off the school's first triple-double, scoring 22 points, grabbing eight rebounds and doling out eight assists in the win over St. John's.

These games came after his rough showings in the Big Ten tournament and the first two rounds of the NCAA, where Penn was hobbled by lingering effects from a nasty spill in the team's regular season finale at Penn State.

"Not too much changed," Penn said. "I just got my confidence going. My teammates told me to just keep shooting the ball and they are going to fall."

"Being a leader, I can't get down because then everybody else will see that."



STEVE HELWAGEN

**FACING THE MUSIC** — OSU guards Scoonie Penn (left) and Michael Redd face media questioning minutes after the team's season-ending loss to Connecticut in the national semifinals.

I have to stay positive and, if things aren't going my way or my shots aren't falling, I have to help out and find other ways to help us win."

Penn's teammates were asked to share their favorite "Scoonie Moment" from the season.

Redd replied, "Nothing he does surprises me."

"There was one play against Iowa. He threw me a spectacular pass for a dunk. He shook the defender out top and threw me a no-look pass."

Center Ken Johnson added, "He totally baffles me."

Penn was asked to share his favorite moment. Would it be one of his patented, 24-foot three-pointers or a nifty move to create a fastbreak layup?

"I really can't pinpoint one play," he said. "It's not all the scoring. The thing I get excited about the most is getting on the floor for a loose ball, getting up and giving

it to somebody else to score."

"The hustle plays stand out more for me than the three-pointers or the crazy layups."

"That response is typical of the team-oriented Penn."

"He's a very competitive kid," O'Brien said. "The thing I've always enjoyed about him is he does not want to lose at anything. Even when we have shooting games, he turns it into a competitive situation. He's a very loyal guy. He's a leader on and off the floor."

"The thing we like about Scoonie in particular is we can sit there and not go crazy because we know the guy with the ball knows what's going on. He understands what has to get done and for the most part he is probably going to make a pretty good decision."

Redd said it was easy to accept Penn as a leader.

"He's shown great leadership throughout the season," he said. "He's gotten on fellas when they've needed it. That's what it takes."

"He believes in his abilities and that he can play with anybody."

Penn's leadership abilities came naturally, he said.

"The guys just took me that way right away," he said. "I didn't come into this program being bossy and being a leader and trying to take over. I was just myself."

"I think the thing this program needed was a leader. Because I had experience, they looked at me as a

### Top Box Score Lines

In a season of impressive showings, here are the top box score lines for Scoonie Penn and Michael Redd from the 1998-99 season.

Scoonie Penn		FG	3-PT	FT	Reb.	PF	Ass.	TO	Bk.	Stl.	Pts.		
Date	Opponent	Score	Min.	M-A	M-A	M-A	O-T						
Jan. 23	Minnesota	W, 89-60	34	9-13	5-9	1-2	0-4	0	4	3	0	2	24
Feb. 13	at Iowa	W, 73-69	36	7-18	6-12	7-8	0-5	2	2	4	0	3	27
Feb. 24	Wisconsin	W, 63-54	35	9-14	6-9	6-6	0-6	1	3	1	0	1	30
Mar. 13	Detroit#	W, 75-44	30	5-15	3-8	2-2	0-12	4	2	1	0	1	15
Mar. 18	Auburn#	W, 72-64	36	9-16	4-7	4-4	0-3	4	4	0	1	3	26
Mar. 20	St. John's#	W, 77-74	38	7-13	3-6	5-6	1-8	2	8	3	0	2	22

  

Michael Redd		FG	3-PT	FT	Reb.	PF	Ass.	TO	Bk.	Stl.	Pts.		
Date	Opponent	Score	Min.	M-A	M-A	M-A	O-T						
Dec. 21	UAB*	W, 71-64	35	10-20	2-5	6-8	5-12	3	0	2	0	3	28
Jan. 2	at Wisconsin	W, 78-74	38	11-20	1-3	7-9	1-4	2	2	5	1	1	30
Jan. 19	Purdue	W, 72-43	33	14-21	1-3	1-2	0-2	0	5	1	0	0	30
Feb. 9	Michigan	W, 74-69	35	9-13	1-3	3-5	2-6	1	3	2	0	1	22
Mar. 6	Illinois@	L, 79-77	36	11-18	2-4	8-11	5-7	3	3	4	0	3	32
Mar. 18	Auburn#	W, 72-54	36	9-19	1-3	2-4	3-10	2	2	2	0	1	22

#Denotes NCAA Tournament; \*denotes Puerto Rico Holiday Classic; @denotes Big Ten tournament.



## OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL PROFILES

leader. I told the guys what could happen if we continued to work hard and worked together. They bought into it, and I'm happy they did."

Penn, who also averaged 4.2 assists and 3.9 rebounds a game this year, shared his favorite player and mentor.

"My favorite player was Kenny Anderson," he said. "But there was a kid from my high school, Kenny Branson, who went to Temple and plays for the Knicks. He was four years ahead of me. He worked with me and helped me with my shot."

"He's been a basketball role model for me."

**Redd Gets Overlooked**

Redd stood by and watched as Penn was selected not only as a third-team All-American but also as the media's pick as the Big Ten player of the year.

Meanwhile, he had to settle for being upgraded from third-team All-Big Ten last year to the second team this year.

"I think I've kind of proven to people I was overlooked," said Redd, who finished as the third-leading scorer (59 points, 19.8 per game) in this year's tournament behind UConn's Richard Hamilton and Duke's Elton Brand. "But my main objective is winning always. Team goals come first. I'm going to try and play as hard as I can for the team."

"I'm sure people are watching and saying, 'How is this kid not elected to any of these teams?' They know. All I can do is play as hard as I can."

O'Brien shared how he feels Redd blossomed as a sophomore.

"Michael Redd is a much better player than he was a year ago," O'Brien said. "Last year, he got away with murder. He took a lot of shots and we allowed him to have the green light. We wanted him to score."

"Now, he is held accountable to how his game is. Last year, we didn't get on him when he didn't play defense. He was playing 39 minutes a game and we played a lot of zone."

"We want him to guard, to rebound and to be a smart, intelligent player. He's made a lot of strides."

Redd confirmed that O'Brien and his staff have pushed him hard to work on his game.

"Coach has been on me all year long," he said. "He just wants to see me improve. I worked hard in the summertime to have an all-around game."

In two seasons, Redd has amassed 1,361 points in 66 games with the Buckeyes — an average of 20.6 per game.

If he continues to score at that clip, he would break OSU's career scoring mark, currently held by Dennis Hopson with 2,096 points from 1984-87, in a potential 36th game next year.

**Decisions, Decisions**

Redd committed to Ohio State during his senior season at Columbus West High School two years ago. That was when Randy Ayers was still the coach and the OSU program was mired in the fourth of what would be five straight losing seasons.

He had other options, but Ohio State just seemed to be the best place for him.

"I had a lot of second-guessing from my friends," he said. "They're like, 'You've got Cincinnati and the rest of the Big Ten recruiting you. Why Ohio State?'"

"But there were a couple of reasons. I wanted to stay close to home and I wanted to see the program do well."

It would only be a few months later that OSU hired O'Brien away from Boston College to replace Ayers. O'Brien was coming off a Big East tournament championship and NCAA appearance with Penn, then a sophomore, leading the way.

Although Penn was a native of nearby Salem, Mass., he was not enamored with the idea of sticking around BC and helping

# Scoonie's Status Still Penn-ding

As Scoonie Penn stepped up to take his bow at OSU's April 1 appreciation ceremony on the Oval, the chant was deafening.

"One more year! One more year!" OSU coach Jim O'Brien, standing just a few feet away, shamelessly smiled to egg on the crowd to try to help convince his junior All-American point guard to come back to the Buckeyes next year.

All Penn could do was smile and tell the crowd, "You're embarrassing me right now."

The 5-10 Penn remains noncommittal on his plans for next season. After leading OSU from the depths of a last-place Big Ten finish a year ago to this season's NCAA Final Four, his star may never again be this bright. He admits the pull of playing in the NBA could be a lot to resist.

"I'm not going to comment on this 'One more year' stuff," Penn playfully told the crowd. "I have to think about it a lot. Right now, I'm leaning more toward staying here at Ohio State."

Teammate Michael Redd, OSU's leading scorer in each of his first two seasons, has already ended the suspense — he says he will definitely be back, and he believes Penn will be too.

"I'm definitely staying," Redd said days before OSU's Final Four appearance. "My mind is set that I will return to Ohio State. I don't think he's planning to leave.

We've already discussed that. He's not leaving. We want to come back and do more things. If he decides to do it, it would be tough, but I don't think he is."

"He wants to win, he'll be a senior next year and we'll have a great chance of winning the national championship next year."

Speaking a day earlier, O'Brien said he had no idea what Penn would do.

"He hasn't indicated to us one way or the other what he wants to do," O'Brien said. "I think what we have to do as a staff is to try to get as much information as we can from the people in the business. We'll try to guide him to what his options are and it will be his choice from there."

The early word from pro scouts has Penn going anywhere from the top 15 to the early second round.

"I'm projected in the second round then there's no question in my mind — I'll definitely come back," Penn said.

Penn faces a similar decision as UConn's Richard Hamilton, one of the key Huskies who derailed OSU in the national semifinals. Hamilton eschewed the draft and came back to earn All-American status and lead the Huskies to their first-ever national title.

"He did make a great decision," Penn pointed out. "He came back and his team (won the championship)."

Penn is expected to take at least a few weeks before making his decision.

"I think whenever you're in a situation like this you have to weigh all your options and look at where you possibly could be drafted," he said. "I'm going to sit down and figure things out."

"I'll rely more on the coaching staff and people who are very, very close to me. It's not going to be anyone that I speak to on occasion. I don't think those people know what's best for me."

He also will discuss the matter with his mother, Allegra.

"She's pretty much leaving it up to me," said Penn, who has three siblings. "She'll be happy with any decision I make as long as it's best for me."

"She's very hardworking and does her best to take care of the family. I really don't feel like I'm in a situation right now where this is a must decision to make to go make money for my family. My mother and grandmother are holding up well enough."

Penn admitted he could graduate during winter quarter next year, which would be his fifth year of college.

And, as far as advice from O'Brien, Penn said he has felt no pressure.

"He doesn't want to hold anybody back from their dreams," Penn said.

— Steve Helwagen and Jeff Rapp

that program rebuild.

"It was a very tough decision," Penn said. "What made it tough was I was leaving my home area. My family was there and all of my friends. It was probably one of the toughest decisions in my life."

"After looking at it and seeing the direction Boston College was going in, I figured it wasn't the direction I wanted to be a part of. On my visit here, the campus, the people and the coaches — I just felt this was the place I wanted to be."

After the Buckeyes had clinched their Final Four berth, the emotion was easy to see between Penn and O'Brien as they shared a hug.

"I have had the fortune of having very good relationships with players throughout the years," O'Brien said. "His is a little bit different because he decided to give up something special to him and come here. I do love this kid."

"He has been a very special player and person for all of our coaches for the last couple of years. We have known him since his sophomore year in high school. There is a pretty good bond between us."

**First Impressions**

It was the summer of 1997 when Penn first ventured to Columbus to participate in open gyms with his new teammates.

The left-handed Redd was an easy guy to spot.

"The first day I came to open gym and I was able to watch the kid play, I knew he was going to be a player," Penn said. "He didn't have any of the hype coming out of Columbus — everybody was talking about (Kansas signee) Kenny Gregory."

"But I knew right away this kid was going to be special."

Likewise, Redd liked what he saw of OSU's new point guard.

"The first time I met him was actually the first time I came in," Redd said. "We clicked. We really didn't know each other — I was a freshman and he was an underclassman."

"I had heard about him a little bit from Boston College."

The rest, as they say, was history.

"Once we had seen each other play, we were really cool because we knew each of

us were pretty good," Redd said, "and that same feeling has really carried over this year."

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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

# Final Four

## *Buckeyes Return To National Prominence In St. Petersburg*



**THE BALL IS TIPPED** — OSU center Ken Johnson and UConn's Jake Voskuhl sky to get the tip in the national semifinal game. This game, played before 41,340 at St. Petersburg's Tropicana Field, marked OSU's return to the Final Four after 31 years.



**THE PRESIDENT SPEAKS** — OSU president William "Brit" Kirwan addresses the crowd during an appreciation rally for the team on the Oval April 1.



**LEAVING REDD-FACED** — At left, OSU sophomore guard Michael Redd is consoled by assistant coach Paul Biancardi after his team's 64-58 loss to Connecticut in the national semifinals. At right, Redd converts a UConn turnover into a fast-break layup as Huskies guard Ricky Moore comes back to defend. Redd led the Buckeyes with 15 points and eight rebounds in the loss.



**Photos By  
Steve Helwagen**



**HANG ON SLOOPY** — OSU fans rejoice as the basketball band plays "Hang On Sloop" during a TV timeout. Ohio State had at least 8,000 fans among the crowd of 41,340 at the national semifinals.

COVER STORY: THE UNFORGETTABLES

# 'Something To Remember For The Future'

Continued From Page 1

program.

"I think we've been able to restore some of the dignity this university deserves and we'll just go from there."

A year ago, Redd was the only remarkable player on an OSU team that finished 8-22. That season brought the curtain down on St. John Arena after 42 seasons.

"We were rock bottom a year ago," Redd noted. "This is one of the biggest turnarounds in the history of college basketball. What a tremendous thing to go from 8-22 to the Final Four in the next year."

Redd is correct in regard to turnarounds. A win over UConn would have guaranteed Ohio State the record for the best turnaround since the NCAA began keeping that statistic in 1974. Instead, the Buckeyes, 27-9 this year, finished fourth on that list with an improvement of 16 games.

The only OSU turnaround that even comes close to this one came in the 1960 national championship year when coach Fred Taylor's Buckeyes improved 11 games from 11-11 in 1958-59 to 25-3.

"I think this team will be remembered for accomplishing something tremendous," said Penn, who followed O'Brien to OSU after playing for him two seasons at Boston College.

"After last year's season the expectations for this year weren't that high for us. We did as well as making the top 10,



STEVE HELMAGEN

**SINGLETON SPEAKS** — OSU captain Jason Singleton addresses the crowd at the April 1 appreciation rally on the Oval. Singleton and fellow captains Neshawn Coleman and Scoonie Penn took turns thanking the crowd.

Arena, where the Buckeyes played before crowds roughly double what they saw the year before in St. John.

"These kids deserve to be recognized in a special way," O'Brien said. "I have been lucky to coach these guys. They are a marvelous group of guys to be associated with."

Ohio State's incredible NCAA run, which included South Regional upsets over top-seeded Auburn and No. 3-seed St. John's, ended with the 64-58 loss to UConn in the Final Four in St. Petersburg, Fla.

O'Brien was not about to sing the blues, though, after becoming just the third coach in OSU history, following Taylor and Harold Olsen, to lead the Buckeyes to an NCAA Final Four.

"Absolutely nothing is going to happen to take away my feeling of accomplishment or just appreciation of what our kids did this year," he said. "This really hurts, but when I think back on how this whole thing has gone it's not going to be that bad."

Even in their ultimate defeat, these Buckeyes refused to go quietly. They ral-

lied twice from nine-point deficits to put a scare in the Huskies.

"This shows we've got heart," Redd said. "We came back and made some defensive stops and cut the lead down to one. We could have packed it in but we didn't."

"We have nothing to be ashamed of. We should hold our heads up. This should inspire us to come back next year and do the same thing."

Singleton appreciated just being a part of a magical season, a year that almost matched the number of wins he and Coleman had enjoyed in their first three years combined (28).

"The Columbus fans are probably the greatest fans in America," he said. "Even when we were losing we were still getting 10,000 a game and they were still behind us."

"I think this team this year will have a special place in the hearts of Ohio State fans. If you look at the history of the program, this is one of the greatest comebacks ever."

"That's due to Coach O'Brien. He deserves to be coach of the year."

O'Brien shrugged when asked to discuss his team's place in history.

"Ohio State has had a rich basketball tradition that has just been put on hold for a couple of years," he said.

But athletic director Andy Geiger, hired nearly five years ago as much to clean up the basketball mess and supervise the building of OSU's new arena as anything else, put it in proper perspective.

"They made the Final Four, and that was utterly unexpected based on where our team has been," he said.

**Going Forward, Looking Back**

O'Brien admitted it will be hard to enjoy this season until he has some time to look back on it. Even then, the specter of trying to duplicate or exceed it next year could be a daunting task.

"This was a nice year, but I know we will have to start all over again next year," O'Brien said. "You're always hoping to be successful, but I am always cautious to discuss where we're going."

"We have to be very thankful for what we accomplished this year."

But no less an authority than the governor of the great state of Ohio, Bob Taft, appearing at a rally for the team on the Oval April 1, summed up this team's place in history.

"Thank you for giving us a season we will never forget and memories we will cherish forever," Taft said.



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THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

# Karen Touched Lives Of People And Papers

This is the 500th issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin. In thinking about how I wanted to mark this milestone issue, I thought that I might like to salute some of the longtime employees who have made this run possible.

After deciding that was the direction I wanted to head with this column, in one of life's cruel little ironies, longtime BSB assistant publisher Karen Wachsman passed away suddenly on March 30.

Karen was a part of all but the first handful of those 500 issues, and I can say with all honesty that if it weren't for Karen, we probably wouldn't have hit numbers 200 or 300, let alone this current mark.

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

circulation department and we continue to take pride in the efficiency and accuracy of that department. She set the precedent for us taking the time to properly edit each of our newspapers. We take pride in the relative scarcity of factual or typographical errors you see in our products.

Karen also greatly enjoyed dealing with the readers of Buckeye Sports Bulletin. She never considered it a burden to talk to them and I know many of you had a chance

Once the Buckeyes got to the Final Four, I finally thought that they were in with some teams that were probably better than they were. After all, the Buckeyes were in there with the top three teams in the country, according to the polls, in Duke, Michigan State and Connecticut. But even though those teams may have been a little bit better, a little bit deeper, it was nice to think that if the Buckeyes played their best game, if the free throws fell just right, if the whistles blew just right, then maybe ...

It was a great season and a fun team to follow, wasn't it? Congratulations, Buckeyes.

### Who Said It Was A Football School?

It was interesting to see spring football take such a back seat to basketball in Columbus. As the Buckeyes made their drive to the Final Four, you would have hardly realized that grid camp was about to open as the sports pages and talk shows were wall-to-wall basketball. You don't see that happen very often, especially when the football team has a quarterback vacancy.

I bet OSU football coach John Cooper was thrilled to have the spotlight taken off of Steve Belliari and Austin Moherman for a few days. In fact, I bet Cooper wasn't that unhappy that stadium renovations have ruled out a spring game. I'm sure the coach would love to work his two pupils with as little media and public distraction as possible.

### Was It A Good Season Or Not?

One player who continues to draw attention is Andy Katzenmoyer. The debate over how well he did or did not play last season will not seem to go away.

The Sporting News recently devoted two pages to the subject in an article titled

"Overwhelming or Overrated?" The article, written by Ron Kroichick of the San Francisco Chronicle, acknowledges that even pro scouts don't know the answer.

"The scouts look one way and see Katzenmoyer at his tantalizing best — big, strong, swift. They look the other way and see him at his vulnerable worst — sprawled on the grass, unable to make the tackle," he writes.

One unnamed AFC scout was particularly brutal in his assessment of Katzenmoyer.

"I think he's the most overrated player in college this year," the scout said. "He's not even the leading tackler on his team. He misses tackles right and left, and he gets out on the ground all the time."

"He's the prototype of a height-weight-speed guy. He's not a (Chris) Spelman-like bulldog. He goes through the motions. I watched him in person, and I had more emotion than he did."

I guess Katzenmoyer won't be going to that scout's team.

Not all pro people are so sour on the Buckeye linebacker, however.

"The kid does have the stuff you can't coach," said Buffalo Bills general manager John Butler. "He can run. And when he hits somebody, he's tagged. When you see Andy put helmet to helmet, he's a load."

At least Butler was willing to be named. The article, which rates Katzenmoyer as the second-best middle linebacker available, following USC's Chris Claiborne, speculates that some team might be unable to resist his combination of size and speed and Katzenmoyer still could go in the top 15.

But according to an unnamed NFC scout, he could still be available late in the first or even in the second round.

"If you get him high, you'll be disappointed," the scout said. "He's one of those run-of-the-mill guys who just got an awful lot of publicity throughout his college career. Then you analyze him, and he's not quite as good as you think."

The only one way for Katzenmoyer to end the debate is to come up big on Sundays. He'll have his chance soon enough. The only question is where and in what round.



FILE PHOTO

**STAFFERS WITH WACHSMAN** — Longtime BSB assistant publisher Karen Wachsman (first row, center) died March 30 in Boulder City, Nev. Here she is pictured with other current and former BSB staffers celebrating her move to Nevada. Also present are (front, l-r) publisher Frank Moskowitz and Mark Podolski; (second row) former editor Mark Rea, Mike Wachsman, Julie Roy, Todd Harrell and John Redd; (back row) Stacey Stathulis, editor Steve Helwagen and Rich Leonardo.

Any of you who have ever been associated with a small business know that things don't always go smoothly and the early years, should you survive them, can be a real struggle. There was some point early on where Karen and I just made the decision that we were going to survive. If we couldn't afford more staff, we'd work all night ourselves if that's what it took to get the paper out on time. And we did. And the paper survived.

Slowly we began to add staff. The paper improved, but by 1987 we went through a period of staff turmoil which again tested the viability of BSB. Again, it was Karen's strength that prevailed, though it was back to the late-night marathons to meet deadline.

Karen and I often called that the "Wendy and Lisa" era at BSB. The only all-night television we could get at the office was a Canadian music video show on a now defunct low-power station that seemed to always be playing a video by Wendy and Lisa, backup singers for the artist formerly known as Prince. It was a pretty good video, as I remember it.

Obviously things have gotten better at the paper through the years and Karen was able to leave her mark in other ways than just sheer endurance.

She oversaw the development of our

to chat with her through the years. It wasn't until Karen decreased her workload in 1996 and the rest of us had to pick up some of the subscriber service that we realized how big a part that was of what Karen did.

But for me, through all those late nights, through all those papers, through all those years, the most important thing was that Karen became one of my true friends. And she was a friend in every sense of the word. If you asked her to keep a secret, she'd keep it. If you needed to borrow a couple of bucks, she'd lend it to you. And if you needed to be put back in your place, she'd put you there.

Not only did I lose a true friend with Karen's passing. So did Buckeye Sports Bulletin and all of its readers.

### The Final Four

I bet you feel the same mixed emotions I do. On the one hand, you're saying what everyone's saying. How can you be unhappy when a team goes from 8-22 to the Final Four? And how can you?

But admit it. Deep down — or even not so deep down — you're a little disappointed that the Buckeyes didn't bring it all home, or at least make it to the championship game. That's OK. You can be happy, but a little sad. Proud, but a little disappointed.

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# Former Coach Tara VanDerveer Still Loves Ohio State

By GARRETT STEPIEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Before she lifted the Stanford women's basketball team to two national championships and 12 Final Fours since 1985, Tara VanDerveer got her start as head coach of a major program at Ohio State.

As the Buckeyes' head coach from 1980-85, VanDerveer took the program to new heights and elevated women's basketball's level of competition in Ohio and beyond.

Hired by assistant athletics director Phyllis Bailey after a two-year stint at Idaho from 1978-80, VanDerveer led OSU to three NCAA tournament appearances – including the 1985 Elite Eight – as a two-time Big Ten Coach of the Year in 1984 and '85.

Outside of a 1995-96 hiatus from college basketball when she led her United States women's national team to Olympic gold at the '96 Olympics in Atlanta, VanDerveer has built the Cardinal into a blue blood, following lessons taught by legends such as Bobby Knight along the way.

VanDerveer recently spoke with Buckeye Sports Bulletin about her career and why she still feels close to Columbus despite spending the past 30-plus years in Palo Alto, Calif.

**Buckeye Sports Bulletin: While growing up in upstate New York, your father told you basketball would never take you anywhere. What do you recall from that?**

VanDerveer: "When I was in the ninth grade, I played basketball and a lot of the boys were on teams. I was playing by myself. I was out there for hours and hours and hours. He just didn't see any future in basketball, so he would call me in and tell me, 'Come in and do your algebra homework. Basketball is never going to take you anywhere.'

"And I was like, 'Uh, algebra's never going to take me anywhere.' I had been all over the world because of basketball, so I sent him postcards, like, 'P.S., I'm in Russia. P.S., I'm in China. P.S., I'm in Australia.'"

**BSB: What drew you to basketball?**

VanDerveer: "Well, there wasn't any type of future I saw. It was just something I just loved. I loved sports. Our whole family's very athletic. I still ski – I went waterskiing today. I sail, I play tennis, I ride bikes. I just love sports. I watch everything.

"Basketball just hooked me. I can't tell you what it was about it. I think so much of it was just so exciting and such a brilliantly designed game."

**BSB: Do you have an earliest memory of picking up a basketball? If so, what was that like?**

VanDerveer: "I just remember playing in gym class. I think I was in the third or fourth grade and we did three-player weave or something like that, and that's what I remember. And I loved it."

**BSB: You started your playing career at Albany in 1971-72 but finished with Indiana from 1972-75. How did those experiences shape your coaching career, and what did you take from each stop?**

VanDerveer: "I was at Indiana for three years, my sophomore, junior and senior years. I had originally gone to the State University of New York at Albany. And I transferred to Indiana because I drove out to the national tournament, which was the AIAW (Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women) national tournament

at the time. It was 1972 in Illinois. So I watched the tournament, I watched Indiana. I said, 'I want to play for that team.' So I transferred to Indiana, I played on the team there. We had a great team. And we actually played Ohio State, and that's where Phyllis Bailey saw me. She saw me playing against Ohio State.

"When I graduated, I wrote to the athletic directors – in the day, they had a women's athletic director and a men's athletic director. So I wrote to the women's athletic directors, all 20 of them, and I heard back from two and one was Ohio State. So that's how I decided to go there. And it was a beautiful letter from Phyllis that was very, very encouraging for me to go to Ohio State. And when I went to Ohio State, the first time, I went as an assistant coach for Debbie Wilson (1972-80) for two years (1976-78) as I got my master's degree.

"I was the No. 1 assistant, but I did not make any money. I worked at the rec facility. I worked in one of those, checking IDs from six in the morning until 12 noon. And then we would practice in the afternoon, and then I had a JV team that I coached. I have two undefeated teams in my career. One is the JV team at Ohio State, one is the Olympic team."

**BSB: How much were you making while checking IDs? I can't imagine it was much.**

VanDerveer: "(Laughs). Yeah, it was not much at all. You know, it might have been enough to cover rent, but I don't even know how, unless I borrowed from my parents. And quite honestly, I was on food stamps. That's why I remember (Columbus pizza shop) Tommy's, that pizza. I remember that was a quick thing. But my second year there, I was given a stipend of \$3,500. And then graduate school was paid for, so that was good because the first year, I was paying for graduate school and rent. It was hard.

"But I wasn't unhappy. I loved it. I loved working with the players on the team. I loved being at Ohio State. And that was a big reason why I came back, after two years at Idaho (1978-80), that I came back to Ohio State. So I spent seven years – they were great years – at Ohio State."

**BSB: So there was never a moment where you said, 'OK, maybe I should consider a different career path?'**

VanDerveer: "Not at all. No, no. I loved it. I was so happy. Every day was really exciting. It was great."

**BSB: While at Indiana, you studied head men's basketball coach Bobby Knight. Why did you watch his practices, and what did you learn from the way he coached?**

VanDerveer: "I watched their practice every day. I went every day. What I learned more than anything is winning coaches have a formula. What you might do is different from what I'm going to do, but you've got to believe in what you do. Coach Knight taught basketball. Basketball was played with a purpose. I took his coaching class.

"Also, Fred Taylor was Bobby Knight's coach, and Fred Taylor was still at Ohio State when I went to Ohio State for graduate school and I took his coaching class. I became very good friends with (Taylor). Every class, I'd stay after. I'm kind of like a basketball sponge, to be honest. I just like being around coaches, talking basketball, watching basketball. At the time, it was really all men.

"So one time, I went to a clinic. I saw

this colored piece of paper in the garbage can and I pulled it out and it was about a clinic, so I went. I was the only woman there. I sat in the very front and it was like the legends of coaching. It was awesome. I learned a lot being at Indiana – playing with a purpose, teaching defense, just how to run a practice, drills, the pace of practice, corrections. (Knight) was a great coach. He is a great coach."

**BSB: How much did you take from Knight and Indiana into your role as a graduate assistant at Ohio State?**

VanDerveer: "A lot of it was doing it with my JV team. I really was given total freedom to coach and I loved it. I also watched all the practices that I could at Ohio State with (head men's basketball coach) Eldon Miller. Any visiting coach that came in, I would go to their practice before games. I watched all the men's games, the women's games. Obviously, I'm at all the women's games.

"It was a different time. Coaches shared a lot of information then. I had notebooks and notebooks of drills and just teaching concepts. I honestly just love being a student of the game, and it's kind of like the more I learn, the more I feel like there is to learn."

**BSB: Your first head-coaching job was at Idaho. What did it mean for you to get your own team at a varsity level? What was that experience like, and how did it propel your career to where you are now?**

VanDerveer: "In those days, that could happen. It might not happen now, going from a Division I team right out of college. I was a head coach at 24 years old. That doesn't happen very often now.

"I loved it. I loved it. I had a great athletic director at Idaho, Kathy Clark was her name, and she was like Phyllis. She was very supportive, a great mentor. It was a great place. In Idaho, you're a first-year coach. You're going to make a lot of mistakes. I did, but I learned from them.

"We worked hard and we had a great recruiting class. I think the year before we got there, they were 2-18. The first year, we were 17-8. That was, 'Wow.' Then the next year, we're in the (AIAW) tournament and we were doing really well. Then the next year, I left to go back to Ohio State."

**BSB: That actually leads into my next question. What led you back to Ohio State? What was the state of the program?**

VanDerveer: "I think, more than anything, the Ohio State program was probably ready for a change. It needed a more-positive culture. I would also say it was a big period of change. When the NCAA was coming in, it was full-time coaches. Debbie Wilson (1972-80) had been a professor and she had worked hard and done a good job, but she wasn't even a full-time coach. I was a full-time coach at Idaho. I taught one basketball coaching class at Ohio State, but basically, I was a coach. And then it was getting full-time assistants and uniforms, and all the things that women didn't have. I had a list of 20 things that, in my mind, I'm like, 'OK.'

"I said, 'They have to pay \$20,000 or I'm not going (from Idaho to Ohio State).' That doesn't sound like much now, but there was no money in women's athletics. There was no support for women's athletics. But I think Ohio State was one of the leaders. A lot of it might have been almost reluctantly in the beginning because women's sports did change things a lot. If you have to divide

up the pie differently, it can ruffle some feathers. It was hard for some other people. But I've always been someone to say, 'Hey, let's have athletic teams for both men and women.'

"So I think Ohio State, it's a gold-mine job. There's great players in this state. There's great high school basketball in the state of Ohio. Sports are so important. I drove all over the state, watching players play. The program, my first year, we might've been .500 (17-15). And then after that, we just took off. And it was awesome."

**BSB: Why were you able to be so successful during your time at Ohio State?**

VanDerveer: "As a coach, we had great players, flat-out great players. We had players who were very talented. I inherited a team that had Amy Tucker. I then recruited Yvette Angel, Carla Chapman, Kristin Watt. That was the first recruiting class. It was Kristin Watt, Yvette Angel, Carla Chapman and Teresa Bush. And they are fantastic.

"You look at the All-Americans – Tracey Hall, Francine Lewis – these are great, great, great players. And honestly, I just didn't have problems. They were mature, they bought into being very unselfish and they were talented. But they were real high-character people. Lisa Cline, I recruited, Nikki Lowry. These are just great, great players, and when you have great players, you look smarter. As a coach, it's a fact."

**BSB: You mentioned Francine Lewis in there. There was a game in high school when Lewis and Georjeann Wells faced off. It really might have put girls basketball on the map in Ohio. What do you remember from that game?**

VanDerveer: "I was at that game. Wells was 6-7 and dunked. She went to West Virginia. She was from a local Columbus school (Northland).

"The game I really remember is Francine's team (Mansfield, Ohio, Malabar) playing Jodi Roth's team (Shelby, Ohio), because they both came to Ohio State. The gym was electric and Francine was a senior, I think Jodi was a junior. It was basketball at the highest level. Francine was a magician. They called her Francine the Machine. She was awesome. Jodi Roth is a cerebral player and just an incredible talent.

"I don't know that I've coached any better players than I've coached at Ohio State. The talent that I had there was second to none. It was just outstanding players and incredible young women."

**BSB: What were some of the highlights of your tenure at Ohio State when you think about it?**

VanDerveer: "I think there are a lot of them. There are a lot of them. But I think it goes back to our first year (in 1980-81). We weren't very good, but we beat South Carolina, which was really ranked No. 1, 2 or 3. So that was a really big win. We went to Iowa and won in front of, like, 22,000 people. We were down 12 at halftime and came back and won that game. Then I think we had Iowa at Ohio State and beat them, in front of 10,000 people. Going to the Elite Eight, beating Penn State and then, unfortunately, Carla Chapman had an ACL (injury) and that's what held us back from going to the Final Four in 1985.

"I think one of the biggest disappoint-

Continued On Page 20

# VanDerveer Reflects On Return To Ohio State

Continued From Page 19

ments at Ohio State must have been, I think, we tied for the Big Ten championship (in 1982-83) with Indiana and it was back in the day when they only had 32 teams go to the NCAA tournament and we didn't go. We had a great team and, honestly, it broke my heart. I went in to Phyllis and said, 'We need to play a better schedule. We need to host a tournament to get some good teams to come in, so we can play against better teams, so they know about our team.' So we started playing Georgia and they had a great team. And we played a really tough preseason schedule. Penn State wasn't in the Big Ten then. Cincinnati had a real good team. We went and played really good competition.

"The thing I loved, coming out for a game, was hearing the band play 'Hang On Sloopy.' I loved that. They still do that. Isn't that crazy? It's still what I love. Amy Bokker, she's a woman who's coming from Stanford to Ohio State as the new women's lacrosse coach. She's awesome. She's fantastic. But I told her, 'You're going to love "Hang On Sloopy." Get the band at one of your lacrosse games.' Ohio State's a very special place. It's a very special place."

**BSB: Why does that song resonate with you so much?**

VanDerveer: "I don't know. You just – that's what you remember. You come out and you smell the popcorn. We played in St. John Arena. I love St. John, loved it. I don't like the fact that they don't have the basketball (games) down there now, but oh, I loved playing there. You come out and the crowd is going wild, the kids are excited. It was awesome."

**BSB: You made your return to St. John Arena in Stanford's season opener against Ohio State for 2017-18. What was that homecoming experience like?**

VanDerveer: "It was pretty emotional, I have to tell you, to play at Ohio State. We didn't have – that particular (Stanford) team – our best team. We were young, but I really had fun. There were about 50 former players that I saw before the game. They all lined up along the baseline and I gave them

all a hug, but it was like, 'I'm crying before the game.' It was really fun to see everybody. I had a great time. And then I went back (to Columbus) for the Final Four, and the Final Four was really fun to see."

**BSB: What did you think of how Columbus hosted the Final Four? Phyllis told me she never even thought there would be a Final Four in college women's basketball, let alone in Ohio State's back yard.**

VanDerveer: "It was fabulous. I loved it. And I saw Phyllis when we were back there. And a lot of players like Barb Smith and Yvette Angel and Tracey Hall. It's just like – it was a little bit weird. You're seeing all these people that I remember as college freshmen and sophomores, and now they're 50 and married with children. And I'm like, 'Wow. How did this happen so fast?'"

**BSB: You mentioned that game at Iowa. People were getting turned away at the doors, there were people sitting up and down the aisles. I asked Phyllis about it, and she said you came back to Ohio after the game and you said you thought you were in a beehive because there was so much black and yellow. That game, how wild was it? Can you take me back to that game? What do you remember from it?**

VanDerveer: "We were going to the game, it was on a Sunday, and we're in a bus or vans, and I turn to one of my assistants and I said, 'What's with the traffic? It's Sunday. Did church just let out?' And my assistant said, 'Tara, these people are going to our game.' I'm like, 'Oh, my God.' But we had actually done, with our sports psychologist back then, some training to get ready for playing in front of a big crowd because we weren't really used to playing in front of a big crowd. And I think that helped us get ready for it, because I told our team, 'It's going to be a big crowd.' We worked and got ready for it. And then afterwards, I remember people coming up to me in the airport. We were leaving to go home and they were like, 'That's the best game I've ever been to.'"

"C. Vivian Stringer was the coach and

she's at Rutgers now, and she had a great (Iowa) team. We stood outside (before the game). I think they were playing the national anthem or something and we're just looking at each other, like, 'Wow. Can you believe this?' It was awesome. And at that Final Four that year, all the coaches were in a luncheon or something, and they said, 'All right, stand up if you had more than 1,000 people at your game,' and then all these people stood up. Then they went all the way up. They said, 'How about 3,000? What about 5,000? Anyone for 10,000?' And then the two of us were just standing and everyone was clapping, so it was just really great and exciting."

**BSB: How much do you think that game against Iowa helped grow women's basketball, especially at the college level?**

VanDerveer: "I think it helped a lot. People just kind of had to get out of the mind-set that this is just friends and family coming. We obviously still have a long way to go, but people like watching women's basketball. Ohio draws well. There's still those kind of games that are happening all around the country that have never had that kind of crowd. It's exciting for people to go and watch and be a part of that."

**BSB: I want to turn the clock back a little bit now to when you left Ohio State for Stanford. How did that opportunity come about and what were your emotions when you told Phyllis of the decision to leave?**

VanDerveer: "In 20/20 hindsight, I had a fabulous job at Ohio State. And quite honestly, Andy Geiger – who recruited me to Stanford – it just started out with losing in the (1985) regional final game to Old Dominion and there had been some opportunities. It was kind of a different situation. When I was first hired at Ohio State, they didn't have a budget for women's basketball. So they said to me, 'Well, let's just see how much it costs.' So it was a different time. When we got a new athletic director four years later, it was like, 'Wow, I'm way over my budget.' Well, nobody really had a budget because, when I was first hired, they said, 'Well, you need to get uniforms. You

need to do recruiting. You need to do things that we've never done before.' So they were in a kind of cutback mode at the time in my last year at Ohio State.

"It was at the time when we went from the big ball – same as men – to the small ball. And then there were just some things, like, 'Hey, wait a minute, this is Ohio State.' And I think some, maybe, lack of communication. But I just decided, 'I'm going to look and see what's out there.' At this point, I had no intention of leaving Ohio State. I loved Ohio State. I loved it. And we had great players. So I just interviewed. I actually interviewed at Arizona, Stanford and Washington. just to see what's out there. And I basically said, 'I'm not going to leave Ohio State for something that's a big state university in another town.'"

"But Stanford was very intriguing. It's a different place, different school and Andy Geiger is extremely persuasive. And quite honestly, he offered me the job and I said, 'No.' And so he said, 'Well, what can change your mind?' And I said, 'Well, I don't know if I can change my mind.' But he said, 'Will you come back?' I said, 'Well, OK. I'll come back.' And I just went back, in my mind, to say, 'I'm not leaving Ohio State.' But I learned a lot about recruiting from Andy Geiger. I really did. He just did not take 'no' for an answer. I just really connected with him and said, 'Look, here's what's really important to me.' And it was a little bit financial, but ... it really just felt, at the time, Stanford women's basketball was really important and that you could really make a difference.

"And I was physically ill making a decision to leave Ohio State. This was in the day before cell phones. I wouldn't even answer my phone. (Geiger) was calling me. Finally, he said, 'I need an answer.' And I was just like, 'Wow.' I broke out in hives. I was so stressed. But I just realized this was a very hard decision. It's worked out pretty well. I loved working at Stanford and I'm a good fit for it. Both my parents were teachers and academics. You recruit from all over the country.

"And actually, my last year at Ohio



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THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: TARA VANDERVEER

State, we recruited a young woman from Michigan and her name was Emily Wagner. And she was interested in Stanford and Ohio State. We played Stanford my last year at Ohio State. We beat them by 30. Easily. And Emily decided to go to Stanford and I thought, 'Oh, my gosh. That's a great decision academically, but you're going to get your basketball brains beat in.' It's just a different experience.

"But (the decision process) was agonizing. And I just loved to go on campus at Ohio State. I love going back. I've been back for football games. I haven't been back for a basketball game, except for ours. But I follow the (athletics). I'm excited for Amy going to Ohio State. I said, 'You will love it. The people are fantastic. There are not any better fans. Buckeyes love sports.'"

**BSB: You mentioned Andy Geiger. He hired you at Stanford (1979-90) in 1985 and then left five years later for Maryland (1990-94) before his tenure as Ohio State athletic director (1994-2005). What was your reaction when Andy left?**

VanDerveer: "He left Stanford and I wish I could tell you I was really mature. I put my head on my desk and cried. He kind of coined a phrase, in some ways, "shelf life." Everyone has some shelf life. As an athletic director, you can go in and make some changes and then go somewhere else and be effective.

"I hated to see him go. I absolutely hated to see him go. So then they hired Ted Leland (1991-2005), Bob Bowlsby (2006-12). So this is my fourth athletic director at Stanford. Bernard Muir is the fourth athletic director (since VanDerveer came to Stanford). I can't even tell you how many presidents. I think I'm on the fourth president."

**BSB: What was it about Andy that you had such a close relationship?**

VanDerveer: "He just really sold me on the fact that women's basketball was important and he was going to support it, and he did. It wasn't just money. I remember my first year. We really had a lot of work to do. We had to recruit hard. We turned it around, but it was really, really challenging to find kids who, academically, fit the athletic program's profile. Thankfully, we recruited Jennifer Azzi with Katy Steding as one of two Olympians in the first class. But I've never coached any better players than I

coached at Ohio State."

**BSB: Why do you say that?**

VanDerveer: "Oh, they were just terrific athletes. Terrific people. And I coached Olympians. Tracey Hall, Francine, Carla Chapman, Yvette Angel, Jodi Roth - they could play with anybody. And in some ways, I think I would be better for them now because I feel like I've learned a lot more. But I loved coaching them. Toni Roesch, Teresa Bush - all of them. Every one of them, the whole team. They were great, great young women."

**BSB: Your highlights at Stanford came with building its program up. You're still there. What went into that process and how fulfilling has the success been over these past few decades?**

VanDerveer: "I don't think there's anything more rewarding than putting a team on the map. Going to the Final Four for the first time (in 1989-90), when we won the first regional championship to go to the Final Four, I could have just rolled over right there. I don't think I could have ever been happier than that. And then we went to the Final Four and I said, 'We're here. We might as well win.' We won it and I went, 'Wow.'"

"But then I realized - we've won again and gone to the Final Four - it's not really about that. It's more about just the love you have for the people you coach. I really enjoy that, just getting to know (the student-athletes)."

"I used to take piano lessons and I thought I could teach myself, and my piano teacher takes me places I could never go by myself. And that's what I want to do as a coach. I want to be a coach that helps a player do something they can't do without you. And it's really rewarding to see the improvement of a team, to see that just camaraderie. To see kids graduating and then calling you, they're getting married and they're having children. And you're part of their life. It's exciting."

**BSB: You've built up Stanford into an elite program. Why do you think it's been so difficult for other programs to break that blue-blood barrier as well in college women's basketball?**

VanDerveer: "That's the way it is in men's sports, too. You've got Ohio State in football. You've got Kentucky, Kansas or North Carolina in men's basketball. You've

got certain teams in soccer and tennis. Stanford is a really, really special place. With this year, we won six national championships. That's incredible.

"But our team, I think we just have a formula. I can go back to Coach Knight. We have a formula. We work really hard to recruit high-character people, and they have to be excellent students, too. And I think, as a coach, more than anything, I remember, as a player, I remember how much I loved to play. I don't ever want to take the joy away. I want people on our team to love to play and to practice, and to be excited with making that pass or setting that screen or getting that rebound and being caught up in the team aspects of basketball."

**BSB: From the time you got to Ohio State to now at Stanford, how much have you seen the game of women's basketball evolve?**

VanDerveer: "Things are so much more sophisticated, in terms of scouting. The use of video. It's just so much more sophisticated, the game itself. When I used to first coach, we didn't have a three-point line. I love the three-point line. We've always had the 30-second (shot) clock, but just little rule changes. I think the three-point line has been the thing that's been most exciting to have."

**BSB: How long have you known Kevin McGuff? As someone who's been in his shoes at Ohio State, what do you think of the job he's done as head coach of the Buckeyes since the 2013-14 season?**

VanDerveer: "This is a real different time now. I knew him when he was at Washington (2011-13) and also, I think, we played against each other when he was at Xavier (2002-11). And if you talk to him, don't bring up that (2010 NCAA tournament Elite Eight) game (when Dee Dee

Jernigan missed two wide-open layups with less than 15 seconds left and the score tied 53-53 before Stanford beat Xavier, 55-53 with a coast-to-coast layup at the buzzer and advanced to the Final Four), because it was a bad, bad finish. We ended up squeaking it out, but it was a miracle.

"I think he loves Ohio. He's from there. His family's from there. I think he works really hard at recruiting. They've had some great players, obviously. It's a different time, but it's hard to win. And the league is different now, too. I was good friends with Jim Foster (OSU coach from 2002-13), Nancy Darsch (1985-98). Nancy Darsch was on my Olympic staff, so she was my head assistant for the Olympics and I really respect the job that she's done. So I think that I probably did it differently. They have more transfers now. You've kind of got to do what you can to work as hard as you can to have the best team possible. Different people do it different ways."

**BSB: You worked for Phyllis, who had an enormous impact on women's athletics. To you, what is her legacy?**

VanDerveer: "She was one of the leaders of women's athletics. She's a great representative of Ohio State. She was a wonderful, wonderful boss. She was wonderful to work for. She's very intelligent, very hardworking. I think she had a difficult time because there was a lot of sexism. There's no other way to put it. She had to deal with a lot of negative attitudes towards women in sports. She had to fight tooth and nail for everything, for every penny to help women to be able to play. We didn't fly all over the place. In fact, we drove more. But she fought for things for women. She's a warrior for women's sports. She's a wonderful, wonderful person, and I'm so glad our lives crossed."



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