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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

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Buckeyes Cover The Board

OSU Class Rated As High As Second By National Experts

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Although his enthusiasm would be stemmed a few days later when it was learned members of the OSU football coaching staff had committed a pair of minor recruiting violations, head coach John Cooper was all smiles on national signing day Feb. 3.

Cooper and his staff secured signed letters of intent from 24 players for their 1999 recruiting class, a collection of players judged as high as second nationally by recruiting experts.

Ohio State's only signing day suspense centered around a pair of players — Georgia wide receiver Reggie Brown and Florida defensive back Roshard Gilyard — neither one of whom signed with the Buckeyes.

Still, OSU's class included 13 SuperPrep All-Americans, including three players — Ohio defensive lineman Tim Anderson, Florida lineman Bryce Bishop and Illinois defensive back Richard McNutt — who were considered All-Americans by every major service.

"Today was an outstanding day for us recruiting-wise," Cooper said. "Bill Conley, as the recruiting coordinator, and the rest of our coaches did an outstanding job recruiting."

"I think it's a good, solid class. Now, is it a top-five class or a top-one class? I can't answer that because I don't know the players Notre Dame signed or Florida State or Florida."

The recruiting violations stemmed from illegal in-home contact by two OSU assistant coaches, Conley and Shawn Simms, on Jan. 31. That day is a "quiet period," meaning coaches may contact recruits only by telephone. The minor violations were not expected to affect the eligibility of the one signee involved, Bishop. (For more on this story, see Ohio State Insider on page 4.)

There were three main themes surrounding OSU's recruiting effort for 1999:

• **Wrap up key players early** — The Buckeyes had as many as seven commitments by May 1 and 13 by the start of football season.

"A lot of them were early commitments," Cooper said. "I think that's one of the best things about this class. Once a kid commits early, you don't hear a lot about them, they're not making trips every weekend and they're not on everybody's recruiting list."

"But nevertheless, we like them a lot and we know a lot about them. We like the kind of people they are and the kind of background they came from."

• **Keep Ohio's best at home** — OSU signed the top seven Ohio players and 15 of the state's top 25, as rated by The Ohio Football Recruiting News.

"For the first time since I've been the head coach, we were able to get every player in this state who we offered a scholarship to who visited our campus," Cooper said. "I don't want to say we got every player in the state, but we got every kid who came down on an official visit."

• **Snag a handful of the nation's best outside Ohio** — Bishop and McNutt are the two most notable signees.

Continued On Page 12

BSB'S 1999 RECRUITING WRAP-UP



Photos by STEVE HELWAGEN

CENTRAL OHIO CONNECTION — OSU signed six players from the Central Ohio area this year, including these four, left to right, Fred Pagac Jr., Curtis Crosby, Nate Stead and Scott McMullen, pictured at WTVN Radio's studios while appearing on "Munch on Sports." OSU also signed local stars Ben Hartsock and Jesse Kline. At right, OSU coach John Cooper holds his signing day press conference.

Inside BSB's Recruiting Wrap-Up edition:

- National recruiting experts give the Buckeyes high marks (Pages 14-15)
- Recruiting coordinator Bill Conley discusses this year's class (Pages 16, 18)
- A look at how the rest of the Big Ten and Notre Dame fared this year in recruiting (Pages 19-21)
- BSB tracks where Ohio's top prospects landed (Pages 22-23)
- Recruiting Outlook: Brown, Gilyard Get Away (Pages 24-25)
- A recap of the BSB Hot 25, where OSU signed nine players (Page 26)
- Complete bios on OSU's 24 signees (Pages 28-29)
- An early look at the top underclassmen in Ohio and nationally (Pages 30-31)
- Chicago-area star McNutt misses senior year, but will be ready this fall (Page 32)



Buckeyes Hone Out-Of-State Approach

Continued From Page 1

But the Buckeyes also got two other highly rated Florida prospects in wide receiver Maurice Harris and defensive lineman Fred Sturup.

Michigan also provided a pair of players in this class in wide receiver Ricky Bryant and quarterback Craig Krenzle.

"Bill was able to go down to Florida and get a couple of outstanding players that all the schools in Florida wanted," Cooper said. "Shawn Simms went down and got a good player out of Jacksonville in Harris."

"Tim Spencer went to Chicago and got a good defensive back with McNutt. Chuck Stobart went up to Michigan and got a couple of good players."

"The only player we were holding out hope that we had a chance to get was Reggie Brown down in Georgia, and he decided to go to Georgia."

Ohio State's recruiting success could be similar to top-five-ranked classes the Buckeyes signed in 1994 and '96. Those players helped fuel OSU's Big Ten championship teams in 1996 and '98.

"Recruiting is the backbone of your program," Cooper affirmed. "You lose good players every year. It's our job as coaches to go out and replace them with good young talent, and we've been able to do that."

Going Camping

In most seasons, OSU's recruiting effort kicks into high gear each June for the annual football camp.

This past year, though, OSU was able to go off its previous assessments of having several of Ohio's best players in its camp and made a number of early scholarship offers.

Those offers netted commitments from key Ohio players such as Lebanon running back Kelton Lindsay, Columbus Eastmoor cornerback Curtis Crosby, Canton McKinley defensive back Mike Doss and Dublin Coffman linebacker Fred Pagac Jr., the son of OSU defensive coordinator Fred Pagac.

Then the Buckeyes settled on Cincinnati Roger Bacon kicker/punter B.J.

OSU Football Signees

Football players who have signed letters of intent to play college football at Ohio State, with rankings as overall prospects from The Ohio Football Recruiting News for the Ohio players and All-American honors listed:

TOFRN Rank	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School	All-American Honors
6	Tim Anderson	DL	6-4	270	Clyde, Ohio	SP, PFR, G&W, TNRA
—	Bryce Bishop	OL	6-5	310	Miami Killian	USA1, SP, PFR, G&W, TNRA
—	Ricky Bryant	WR	6-1	165	Farmington Hills (Mich.) Harrison	
—	Drew Carter	WR	6-4	187	Solon, Ohio	
7	Adrien Clarke	OL	6-5	315	Shaker Heights, Ohio	PFR, SP, TNRA
2	Curtis Crosby	DB	5-11	175	Columbus Eastmoor	PFR, SP, TNRA
5	Mike Doss	DB	6-0	185	Canton (Ohio) McKinley	PFR, SP, TNRA
19	Richard Hall	RB	6-0	205	Cincinnati Wyoming	
—	Maurice Harris	WR	6-2	200	Jacksonville (Fla.) Raines	PFR, SP, TNRA
18	Ben Hartsock	TE	6-4	250	Chillicothe (Ohio) Unioto	
11	Jesse Kline	RB	6-2	210	Upper Arlington, Ohio	SP
—	Craig Krenzle	QB	6-4	215	Utica (Mich.) Ford	SP
9	Maurice Lee	WR	5-10	170	Cleveland South	SP
1	Kelton Lindsay	RB	6-1	195	Lebanon, Ohio	SP, PFR, TNRA
22	Scott McMullen	QB	6-4	195	Granville, Ohio	PFR, TNRA
—	Richard McNutt	DB	6-0	175	Park Forest (Ill.) Rich East	PFR, SP, G&W, TNRA
12	Pat O'Neill	LB	6-4	215	Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit	
3	Fred Pagac Jr.	LB	6-2	230	Dublin (Ohio) Coffman	SP, TNRA
23	B.J. Sander	K/P	6-3	195	Cincinnati Roger Bacon	
—	Nate Stead	FB	6-0	255	Marion (Ohio) Harding	
—	Fred Sturup	DL	6-4	270	Plantation, Fla.	TNRA
—	Ziyier Walker	DB	6-1	195	Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy	
4	Matt Wilhelm	LB	6-5	240	Elyria (Ohio) Catholic	SP
14	Matt Zahn	OL	6-7	360	St. Henry, Ohio	

All-American Honors Key: USA1, USA Today first-team All-USA (top 25 nationally); TNRA, The National Recruiting Advisor (top 250); G&W, G&W Recruiting Service (top 70); PFR, Tom Lemming's Prep Football Report (top 130); SP, SuperPrep (top 265).

Sander after seeing him perform in their camp. Sander could play a valuable role as early as this fall as he figures to replace departed senior Brent Bartholomew as the punter.

"We had that kid in our camp," Cooper said. "We felt like he had the best leg of everybody we had in camp. We offered him a scholarship last summer and he accepted. He's the only kicker we signed."

"He knows he's got to be our punter." Likewise, tight end Ben Hartsock, from small-school Chillicothe (Ohio) Unioto, got serious scholarship consideration after impressing coaches at the camp.

"He came to our camp, we liked him in

camp and we offered him," Cooper said. "He didn't even look at any other school."

A total of 15 of OSU's 24 signees attended OSU's summer camp at some point.

"You don't run nearly as big a risk by having kids in your camp," Cooper said. "If you couldn't bring a kid to camp with the limited number of scholarships we have now, you would really be rolling the dice."

"When you get them into camp, you can weigh them, measure them, time them, you can see how high they vertical jump and you can coach them. It is very important for those young players to go to camp."

Talent assessment is the key, Cooper said.

"The worst situation we can do is bring

a player in here that can't play," he said. "That player is miserable 365 days a year. If you miss on a player, that player can only hurt you one day a year, and that's the day you play him."

Out-Of-State Magic

In recent years, the Buckeyes have been able to go national with their recruiting effort and pick up the likes of David Boston, Michael Wiley, Ryan Pickett, Na'il Diggs, Steve Bellisari, Derek Ross and Jonathan Wells.

"If we can keep the in-state players at home and then go to California and get a Michael Wiley or to Texas and get a David

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COVER STORY: FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Boston or to Arizona and get a Joe Germaine, then we're going to have a good football team," Cooper said.

This year's effort also became national in scope, led by Bishop, who was a USA Today first-team All-USA pick. Bishop, Harris and Sturup were among Florida's top 25 players, according to SuperPrep.

"All of those guys were heavily recruited by the in-state schools," Cooper said. "Some of those players down there are going to visit some of the schools in the South and some they're not going to visit."

"Bishop could have gone anywhere in the country. He was on everybody's recruiting list — Florida State, Florida, Miami. Maurice Harris visited Tennessee, Miami and Purdue. Sturup was between us and Florida State."

Pickett and Bellisari are examples of former Florida prep stars who are on their way to becoming front-line players for the Buckeyes.

"The last four or five years, we've had a lot of success recruiting Florida," Cooper said. "First of all, you've got to build some type of reputation or rapport with the high school coach."

"Then you've got to go down there and see who you realistically have a chance to recruit. It's a big state. Some of those guys are going to leave, some of them are not."

According to Cooper, he and his coaches have battled tooth and nail to secure talent beyond Ohio's borders.

"When you go out of state to look for players, it's competitive," he said. "We have raised the bar. You could go down to Florida and sign 25 players real quick."

"We're not going down there to get the numbers. We're going down there to get the quality football players."

Preparation and luck also play a small part in successful recruiting outside Ohio, the coach said.

"To sell John Brown what John Brown buys, you must see things through John Brown's eyes," Cooper said.

"Some guys want to leave the state. First of all, you try and find out the good players. Usually there is some kind of a connection there. In Bishop's case, his family is from Cleveland and his daddy knows John Hicks."

"We felt like, 'Hey, we've got a chance to get this player.' But you've still got to work hard and do your homework."

"Maurice Harris visits and he sees David's leaving and Dee's leaving. One of

them caught 85 and the other caught 65. They need some receivers and they run a wide-open offense. That appealed to him."

McNutt, who did not even play his senior year due to injury, was listed as the top player in Illinois by SuperPrep. Bryant and Krenzel were among Michigan's top six prospects, according to The Detroit News.

"McNutt was us and UCLA," Cooper said. "Every out-of-state player we got could have gone anywhere."

But the Buckeyes weren't able to land Georgia's Brown, who cited family ties as a reason he stuck with Georgia.

"Some of them you can do a great job recruiting, but the kid may be close to his parents or his coach may have a strong influence on him," Cooper said.

And it's hard to tell where this class would have ended up if a number of other top national prospects like Maryland defensive lineman Darnell Dockett or Michigan linebacker T.J. Duckett had been able to visit over the Jan. 9 weekend. Those players canceled official visits that weekend because of bad weather.

"We got a bad break," Cooper said. "The weekend we brought several of those kids up here was the weekend we had the real bad weather. We had to cancel several out-of-state players we had scheduled that weekend."

"Dockett, for example, was coming down and we didn't get him on campus. T.J. Duckett was going to visit that weekend and we didn't get him on campus."

"Obviously, with a real good player like that, if you don't get him on campus, you aren't going to sign him."

But Cooper said finishing second in the polls two of the last three years and winning major bowls such as the Rose and the Sugar have done nothing but help OSU's cause.

"There is absolutely no question it's easier now than it's been," he said. "The notoriety the program has had the last few years, the success our players have had, the awards they've won, the records they've set, the games we've won and the exposure."

"We're selling. If you come here, the first game against Miami is on national TV. The second game against UCLA is on national TV."

"What better way is there to start your career than that?"

The Coach's Take

Cooper shared his assessment on several

of OSU's signees, including:

• **Quarterbacks Krenzel and Scott McMullen** — Cooper was asked whether either quarterback would figure at that position this season.

"That's a good question and one I can't answer at this time," he said. "We had both of those young quarterbacks in our camp. We like them both."

"The only other quarterback we went after was (Chris) Simms, and all three of them were in our camp. We obviously liked all three of them."

"I know both of them will be here this summer working out. Krenzel will be coming down and McMullen is a local kid anyway. They'll be working out with our players. Are they going to be better than the two quarterbacks we have? I can't answer that question."

• **Lindsay** — "He's a player who committed to us early. He's a guy we had in our camp. He's got great speed. What I like about Kelton Lindsay is he is a very unselfish player. He'll play anywhere we want him to play."

"He'll play running back, he'll play wideout, he'll play defensive back. The guy wants to play. I like his speed, I like his vision. He's an outstanding running back, but he may wind up playing at corner."

• **OSU's haul on the offensive line** — The Buckeyes signed three linemen in Bishop, Adrien Clarke and Matt Zahn and recently enrolled 1998 graduate Ivan Douglas as a freshman.

"We need somebody to step in there at right tackle, and all four of those guys are thinking they're going to be that man," he said. "That's what I like about them. Every one of them thinks they're going to come in

here and play."

• **Bishop** — "Bryce Bishop reminds you a little bit of Corey Stringer. I would say he would compare with the other big linemen we've had here in the past."

"I don't know if anybody compares with Orlando Pace. That guy was in a league by himself."

• **Zahn, listed at 6-7, 360 pounds** — "He comes from an outstanding program at St. Henry. He's huge. In fact, we weighed him when he came in here and he was 369. He's the biggest guy we've ever signed."

"He's down a little bit now, and obviously he was a little bit overweight when he came in here. He's a big kid with a lot of talent and a lot of potential."

• **Wide receiver Drew Carter** — Carter, from Solon, Ohio, was a player few knew about until after his senior year.

"He's an athlete who didn't play until this last year," he said. "We watched the film on him. Obviously, we're taking a little bit of a gamble, but if you're going to miss, you're going to miss on the big side and the speed side."

• **Running back Richard Hall** — Hall, a 7,000-yard career rusher from Cincinnati Wyoming, was one of OSU's last commitments before signing day.

"You like everything about the Hall kid," Cooper said. "He's an athlete. He's a good basketball player. He's played some defensive back in high school."

"I was really impressed with that kid when I made the in-home visit. He comes from a solid family. He's a kid we got on late because of academics. But I think he will make it. I think that kid will be an outstanding football player for us."



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Don't Mess With Texas: Longhorns Finish No. 1

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

It is hard to get football recruiting experts to agree on anything.

Too often, one man's Ricky Williams is another man's Joe Blow.

But it was not difficult to get six of the nation's leading recruiting experts to agree on who bagged the nation's No. 1 recruiting class — Texas.

The Longhorns, led by first-year coach Mack Brown, shot to the top of the charts — edging out Ohio State in the process — by recruiting 13 SuperPrep All-Americans. The UT haul featured six USA Today All-USA players, including offensive player of the year Chris Simms and defensive player of the year Cory Redding.

Like Ohio State, Texas built its class on in-state talent.

"They got 10 of the top 25 players in the state, and nobody has done that since 1978," said Bobby Burton, the nation's top quarterback out of New Jersey and son of former NFL star Phil Simms, was a stroke of

brilliance. Texas lured him away from a commitment to Tennessee in mid-January.

"He handled the Simms situation expertly," Wallace said. "That's probably one of the most overlooked facets when kids commit. Most people think he just got back in on him. He probably never left."

"That situation gets mishandled a lot. Even when they commit, you still have to stay with the player. If the kid gets upset and changes his mind, then you're there to get him."

"Mack Brown has completely jump-started the Longhorns. (Heisman winner) Ricky Williams gave them a shot in the arm, too."

Ohio State came next in BSB's consensus poll, using voting points from the six leading experts — Burton, Wallace, Bill Kurelic of

National Recruiting Experts Rankings

BILL KURELIC The Ohio Football Recruiting News	BOBBY BURTON The National Recruiting Advisor	PHIL GROSZ G&W Recruiting Report
1 Texas	1 Texas	1 Texas
2 Notre Dame	2 OHIO STATE	2 Georgia
3 Georgia	3 Notre Dame	3 Texas A&M
4 OHIO STATE	4 UCLA	4 OHIO STATE
5 Texas A&M	5 Texas A&M	5 Notre Dame
6 Michigan	6 Alabama	6 LSU
7 LSU	7 LSU	7 Alabama
8 UCLA	8 Tennessee	8 Florida
9 Alabama	9 Miami (Fla.)	9 Tennessee
10 Tennessee	10 Michigan	10 Michigan

RICK KIMBLE PrepStar	TOM LEMMING Prep Football Report	ALLEN WALLACE SuperPrep
1 Texas	1 Texas	1 Texas
2 UCLA	2 Georgia	2 OHIO STATE
3 OHIO STATE	3 Notre Dame	3 Michigan
4 Notre Dame	4 OHIO STATE	4 Texas A&M
5 (tie) Georgia	5 Alabama	5 UCLA
5 (tie) Michigan	6 Texas A&M	6 Alabama
7 Alabama	7 UCLA	7 Florida
8 Florida	8 Michigan	8 Notre Dame
9 Texas A&M	9 LSU	9 LSU
10 USC	10 Florida State	10 Georgia

NATIONAL RECRUITING EXPERTS CONSENSUS POLL (Determined by voting points; First-place votes in parentheses)

1 Texas (6)	60	6 UCLA	29	11 Tennessee	6
2 OHIO STATE	47	7 Alabama	26	12 Miami (Fla.)	2
3 Notre Dame	41	8 Michigan	23.5	13 (tie) USC	1
4 Texas A&M	34	9 LSU	17	13 (tie) Florida State	1
5 Georgia	32.5	10 Florida	10		

they have a lot to do with his success."

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The Ohio Football Recruiting News, Phil Grosz of G&W Recruiting Report, Rick Kimble of PrepStar and Tom Lemming of Prep Football Report.

This marked OSU's fourth top-10 class in six years, following a No. 2 finish in 1994, No. 1 in 1996 and No. 10 in 1997. OSU's small 14-man class was ranked 16th a year ago.

Notre Dame (see page 21) was third, followed by Texas A&M and Georgia to round out the top five.

"Between Texas and Texas A&M, they closed their borders off," Kimble said. "Michigan usually goes down there and gets three or four players. This year they only got one."

Lemming actually listed Georgia second on his ballot behind Texas.

"If Georgia had signed (Florida State signee) Nick Maddox, that may have brought them even with Texas," he said. "Athletically, their class may be better than Texas."

"They got three really good wide receivers including Reggie Brown, they got a good running back in Bruce Thornton and Kevin Breedlove on the offensive line. They loaded up on great talent."

UCLA, which practically shared the top spot with Michigan a year ago, again finished strong with the nation's sixth-best class.

"UCLA picked up a couple of great offensive linemen, including Shane Lehmann," Kimble said. "They got our No. 3-rated quarterback in J.P. Losman and a highly rated receiver in Jerry Owens."

The following are comments from each of the experts on OSU's class.

Kurelic

Kurelic, based in Westerville, Ohio, thinks the OSU haul stacks up nicely.

"I think this is a great class," said Kurelic, who rated OSU fourth nationally behind Texas, Notre Dame and Georgia. "I think it's very comparable to any of the best classes John Cooper has brought into Ohio State."

"The class that rates the highest was the Andy Katzenmoyer-David Boston class in 1996. I think that class turned out to be as good as advertised. This class would not rate

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE EXPERTS

quite as high, but only time will tell if it achieves as much success.

"In their areas of need, they got one great player in each area and, in some, they got a couple of great players. They got a couple great defensive backs, a couple great linebackers and one outstanding wide receiver.

"I don't think running back was a big area of need, but they did very well at that position. They got one of the best offensive linemen in the country in Bryce Bishop.

"I think from top to bottom they filled their needs well and they did it with great players."

Kurelic approved of OSU's strong in-state showing, where the Buckeyes landed his top seven prospects and 15 of his top 25.

"I think they knew what they wanted early on and they landed just about everybody they wanted in state," he said. "Every single kid from Ohio who visited Ohio State ended up signing."

"They built a great foundation early with the Ohio kids. Then they concentrated their efforts primarily on great out-of-state players."

Burton

Burton, who picked OSU No. 2 nationally, gave the Buckeyes high marks for executing a yearlong game plan.

"I think the fact they pretty much dominated the state of Ohio was the No. 1 factor," he said. "There may have been one or two players they wanted in the state that they didn't get, but just about everybody they seemed interested in ended up there."

"If you watch how Ohio State works, they seem to follow a recruiting plan every year. They take care of in-state first, then they pick up some guys that had great senior years like they did this year and then they cherry pick outside the state where they

have a good presence. This year, that was Florida, Michigan and Illinois."

Burton's TNRA rates OSU signees such as defensive lineman Tim Anderson, offensive lineman Bryce Bishop and defensive backs Curtis Crosby, Mike Doss and Richard McNutt among the best in the country at their respective positions. But those weren't the only signees he liked.

"The two sleepers I like are Maurice Lee and Scott McMullen," he said. "I was talking about McMullen last summer. He has a lot of ability. I know he comes from a small school and the competition was not that great, but he does what he's supposed to do in that situation. He was a star."

Grosz

Grosz, whose G&W service is based in Pennsylvania, listed OSU's class fourth behind Texas, Georgia and Texas A&M.

"They cleaned up their home state," he said. "Counting (late enrollee from 1998) Ivan Douglas, they got 18 kids from Ohio."

"I like Bryce Bishop from Florida. Not getting Reggie Brown hurt, but getting Maurice Harris helped a bit. He's a quality receiver."

Grosz credited OSU for not putting all of its quarterback eggs in Simms' basket.

"They washed out with the Chris Simms episode early, but they still did well in signing Scott McMullen and Craig Krenzler, who each had pretty good years," he said.

Kimbrel

Kimbrel, whose PrepStar is based in California, placed OSU third nationally behind Texas and UCLA.

"They really got out of the box strong and dominated in state," he said. "They made sure they were able to get the guys they wanted."

"They closed the borders to Ohio, and that was a theme pretty much across the country this year. It was a tremendous job by John Cooper and his staff."

After winning a pair of Big Ten titles and two No. 2 finishes, Kimbrel says the Buckeyes are at the top of their game.

"Ohio State is one of the glamour schools again, up there with Michigan, Notre Dame, Florida and Florida State," he said. "UCLA and Texas also appear to be back."

Kimbrel cited several of his favorite OSU signees.

"I really think Curtis Crosby has an excellent chance to play right away," he said. "Kelton Lindsay may be a bit underrated because his numbers as a senior weren't what he had as a junior."

"Mike Doss is a lethal hitter. We loved the quarterback Scott McMullen. He may have been a sleeper, but he woke up a lot of people. Florida State keeps its recruiting close to the vest, but they came up to Ohio to recruit him."

Lemming

Lemming, whose Prep Football Report is based in Illinois, placed OSU fourth behind Texas, Georgia and Notre Dame.

"This really was a good combination of in-state and out-of-state players, especially when they go to Florida and get Bishop and Fred Sturup," he said.

"Bryce Bishop and Tim Anderson are two of the best in the country. Mike Doss and Curtis Crosby are also pretty good. Richard Hall is probably as good as Kelton Lindsay."

"Richard McNutt could also be an amazing talent."

Wallace

Wallace joined Burton in listing OSU second behind Texas.

"Ohio State totally dominated the state of Ohio, maybe more so than Texas dominated Texas. They had to share some with Texas A&M," he said.

"They only had one youngster named in our top 50 in Kelton Lindsay. But Bryce Bishop was close to making it. We also liked Curtis Crosby and Maurice Harris a lot."

Thirteen of OSU's 23 high school signees were SuperPrep All-Americans.

"You really can't do this class proper justice by looking at player rankings," Wallace noted. "Texas and Notre Dame also had a high number of our All-Americans, but there were no gaps in this class."

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: BILL CONLEY

Conley Shares Thoughts On New Recruiting Class

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Bill Conley has played a great role in wildly successful recruiting efforts at Ohio State. After all, he's been the football recruiting coordinator since 1991.

But Conley has been around long enough to experience some unpleasant turns of events and has watched a few fish wriggle off the hook. That's why, on national signing day Feb. 3, Conley was as delighted as anyone when the faxes started rolling in. The Buckeyes got everyone they expected to get, and most of the ones they wanted to get.

"Everything went very smooth, the smoothest it's ever been," he said with a broad smile later that day.

Because of that, the Buckeyes once again have rounded up one of the nation's best incoming groups, placing among the top five in the eyes of all the big-name analysts.

Several days later, though, Conley would admit that he and fellow OSU assistant Shawn Simms had inadvertently violated NCAA rules by visiting with a pair of recruits on Jan. 31, a mandated "quiet period." The violations, minor in nature, were not expected to affect the eligibility of Florida lineman Bryce Bishop, who signed with OSU. (For more on this story, see Ohio State Insider on page 4.)

It was Conley who orchestrated OSU's top-rated class of 1996 that was headlined by Andy Katzenmoyer and David Boston. With both of those players leaving early for the NFL, the pressure was on to put together another group of standouts. The only good news about their departure — as well as the loss of Rolland Steele, Sean Penny, Jimmy Redmond and others for various reasons — was that OSU's once-small pool of scholarships broadened.

Conley and the rest of the OSU staff took full advantage by working diligently on prospects from all over the country and welcoming nearly the full allowable allotment of players in for official visits.

"You never know how the numbers are

going to end up," Conley said with a chuckle. "That's the first thing everyone asks, and that changes, and it changed throughout the year."

At this time last year, Conley was looking at roughly 18 openings on the 1999 roster. As it turned out, OSU signed 24 players to letters of intent. It also enrolled lineman Ivan Douglas, giving him a scholarship, and also has one scholarship left over.

"It ended up really benefiting us because of the depth in Ohio," said Conley, who doubles as OSU's tight ends coach. "If we would have had only 18 scholarships, that would have forced us to make some hard choices."

Instead, OSU was using late January to rope in-state players such as Cincinnati's Wyoming running back Richard Hall and Granville quarterback Scott McMullen, both among the top skill players in the state.

The Buckeyes also got January commitments from Ohioans Drew Carter, a receiver out of Solon, and Marion Harding fullback Nate Stead. Neither was rated among the state's top 25 players, according to The Ohio Football Recruiting News, but both were late bloomers who had the potential to earn a scholarship with a full two dozen at OSU's disposal.

Big Class, Lots Of Headliners

It's only natural to look up and down the list of signees and try to predict which ones have star potential. While it's nearly impossible to tell with those youngsters walking around their high school halls, the Buckeyes appear to have several candidates.

OSU received commitments from the top seven players in Ohio according to TOFRN, and the out-of-stateers include well-rated players such as Michigan quarterback Craig Krenzel, Illinois defensive back Richard McNutt and Florida linemen Bishop and Fred Sturup.

When asked which players may make an immediate impact, Conley replied, "It's hard to tell because all the skilled

athletes have some speed and quickness. You don't know which one is going to emerge."

"Obviously you can look at a guy like Michael Doss, who had a great, great high school career at Canton McKinley and played a lot of positions. You could see someone like him coming in and helping us out right away. But again, we got a lot of kids who can run."

And blocky, apparently.

The 6-5, 310-pound Bishop is a USA Today All-USA selection and is supposed to be one of the best road graders from the high school ranks in several years.

"He's a very good football player," Conley said, "and the nice thing about him is I got to watch him practice in May in a scrimmage. He's got good feet for a big guy, as do the other offensive linemen we got. And that's no small group."

Douglas, who hails from Cleveland Benedictine, is in the 6-8, 320-pound range. Matt Zahn, who prepped at the same Ohio high school (St. Henry) as Jim Lachey and the Hoving brothers, is listed 6-7, 360.

Shaker Heights, Ohio, star Adrien Clarke also has the look of a college player at 6-5, 315.

"You look at him and he reminds you of Corey Stringer and Orlando Pace, who had tremendous feet," Conley said. "It will be interesting to watch what happens with Matt Zahn, too, especially when he loses some weight. But those are three big bodies."

Bucks Go Right After Needs

The first two players to raise their hand and verbally commit to OSU were Ohioans Kelton Lindsay of Lebanon and Curtis Crosby of Columbus Eastmoor. Both are somewhat undersized but project at running back and cornerback, respectively. Head coach John Cooper said Lindsay could end up at receiver or cornerback when it's all said and done.

But the fact that Lindsay and Crosby, rated Nos. 1 and 2, respectively, among in-state prospects by TOFRN, committed last winter allowed the Buckeyes to begin targeting the team's four most pressing needs — linebacker, receiver, quarterback and defensive back.

OSU didn't land New Jersey product Chris Simms, the son of former NFL star Phil Simms and the top prospect in the nation according to most. But the Buckeyes did close on Krenzel and McMullen, who also shone at the OSU summer camp.

"All three of those kids were in camp and they all three were very, very close in

terms of athletic skills at quarterback," Conley said. "We thought all three of them were definitely Division I quarterbacks who could have played for anybody."

"The two we got fit in so well with the quarterbacks we already have. It's going to be a great, great competition."

While the Buckeyes lost their top two QBs (Joe Germaine and Mark Garcia) to graduation, OSU also is without top receivers Boston and Dee Miller. Redmond was dismissed from the team for off-the-field problems, and Vanness Provitt is still trying to overcome a nasty hip injury.

That put the heat on Conley and company to find several capable young wideouts, and they believe they did by signing Maurice Harris, Maurice Lee, Ricky Bryant and Carter, although top option Reggie Brown of Georgia picked the home-state Bulldogs over OSU.

"We think we've got a real good group of wide receivers," Conley said. "They all can catch the ball and they all have quickness and speed. A lot of those guys have been return guys, and that's what you look for — the whole package."

"We're extremely happy with all those guys."

At linebacker, the Buckeyes will have to get by without Katzenmoyer and captain Jerry Rudzinski, a valuable five-year OLB. The hope is that fellow starter Na'il Diggs can return at an all-star level and that youngsters such as Courtland Bullard, Jason Ott and Joe Cooper can develop in a hurry.

But no matter who emerges, the OSU coaches knew they needed to find some new blood and future stars at LB. OSU didn't have to look far for one of the candidates in Fred Pagac Jr. of Dublin, Ohio. The Buckeyes also signed Elyria, Ohio, product Matt Wilhelm, who is ranked just behind Pagac at fourth in the state according to TOFRN, and Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit's Pat O'Neill, a promising 6-4, 215-pounder.

"That was an area we filled up pretty quick on," Conley said. "It was a great year in Ohio, and we grabbed three of the in-state linebackers we thought were the three best."

"At defensive back, we've got to replace a couple starters there and we got four good ones. At wide receiver we lost two starters and we got four there. Not only did we get good players to eventually fill in for the ones that left, but also we helped ourselves at some backup roles."

Continued On Page 18



Bill Conley



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BILL CONLEY

Signees' Roles Tough To Project

Continued From Page 16

Work Is Never Done

Hall, Harris and Lee are among the players who still have some work to do academically, which means Conley will check up on those players to see if they get their test scores.

He made sure to point out, however, that 13 of the signees have grade-point averages at or above 3.0.

But the bottom line is a lot can happen to youngsters — good and bad — between now and when they enroll, which is why you can't project their roles right now.

For example, Conley is sure he's got a couple of sleepers in the bunch — he just doesn't know who they are.

"I've looked back and realized it's really tough," he said. "You can't pick out one or two guys. As soon as I mention a couple guys, a couple other guys will come to the forefront."

"You look at last year, it looked like Steve Bellisari was going to be a fourth-string quarterback and he became a guy that helped us out tremendously on special teams, played some defensive back and played some quarterback. You never know. Jamar Martin is another guy who came in and played a successful role in the season."

So until OSU's class comes aboard, Conley and the rest of the coaches will stay in touch and hold their breaths in the hopes the recruits stay healthy and focused. A good sign is that a few players have talked about coming in during the summer to work out with the team and strength and conditioning coach Dave Kennedy.

The coaches also will continue to work the phones. Even though signing day has come and gone, Conley has done some of his best work in the days, weeks and months following. Among the late signees to climb on board are Diggs and former All-American "Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson.

With that in mind, and with one grant-in-aid available, Conley will make sure the Buckeyes haven't overlooked somebody. They were hoping that final player would be Jacksonville, Fla., defensive back Roshard Gilyard, but he opted to go to Auburn on signing day instead of waiting to see what Brown decided to do.

"You always have a few on the back burner," Conley said. "The problem you run into is if a kid waits until signing day to make his decision, then that doesn't do you much good because the kids on the back burner have scholarship offers somewhere else and they don't want to wait."

"Unfortunately, because of all the publicity and press, kids really feel pressured to sign on signing day to get all the hype and glory."

With Gilyard out of the picture and linebacker Shawn Price planning to enroll at Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy because of academics, the Buckeyes almost certainly will bank the final scholarship and concentrate on luring walk-ons to the program.

"Once the newspaper comes out with all the signees, we'll go through and the ones we thought might end up being walk-ons that are on there, we'll take them off the board and see what's left," said Conley, adding OSU could have as many as eight or more new walk-ons.

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE BUCKEYE STATE

Cooper, Staff Clean Up On Their Home Turf

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State capitalized on a strong talent base in the Buckeye State in putting together the nation's No. 2-ranked class.

OSU's 24-man recruiting class included 17 Ohio prospects.

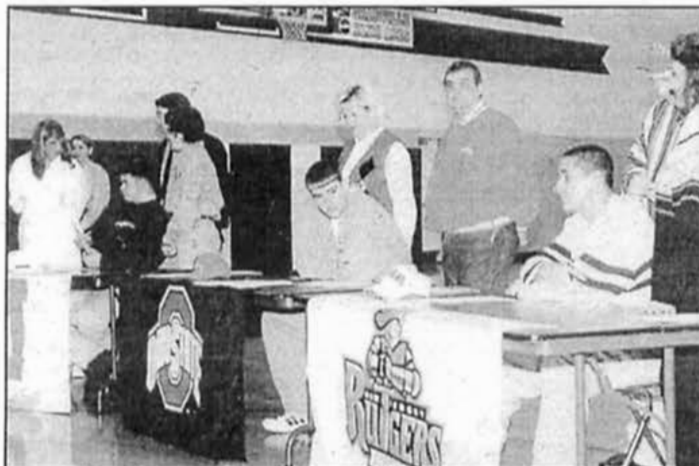
Of that group, 15 were ranked among the top 25 prospects in Ohio, as rated by The Ohio Football Recruiting News.

In fact, OSU offered a scholarship to just one Ohio player who did not end up signing with the Scarlet and Gray. That was Hamilton's Andy Mignery, who felt he had a better opportunity to play quarterback at Michigan than Ohio State.

The Buckeyes ended up signing eight of TOFRN's top 10 Ohio prospects, including the first seven — Lebanon running back Kelton Lindsay, Columbus Eastmoor defensive back Curtis Crosby, Dublin Coffman linebacker Fred Pagac Jr., Elyria Catholic linebacker Matt Wilhelm, Canton McKinley defensive back Mike Doss, Clyde defensive lineman Tim Anderson and Shaker Heights offensive lineman Adrian Clarke.

The 17 Ohio signees is the most OSU coach John Cooper has signed in his 12 Buckeye recruiting classes, eclipsing the total of 15 he signed in his first OSU class in February 1988.

Cooper's No. 1-ranked recruiting class in 1996 included 14 Ohio signees, while another highly ranked class in 1994 featured 12 Ohio players.



GRAND DAY AT GRANVILLE — Quarterback Scott McMullen (seated center) sits among Granville (Ohio) High School teammates while signing with Ohio State. Also signing on Feb. 3 were fullback Cooper Dennison (left), who inked with Miami (Ohio), and running back Nate Colon (right), who is off to Rutgers.

The lowest Ohio output was eight in 1991, arguably the lowest-ranked class in Cooper's tenure at OSU.

This year, though, the Buckeyes cleaned up in their home state.

"It's important for us to dominate in-state recruiting," Cooper said at his signing day press conference.

"When I took this job, I said it was because of the great high school football that is played here in the state. Every year, if we're able to keep the in-state players at home, we're going to have a good recruiting class, and we were able to

do that this year."

Two of the OSU signees from Ohio were not ranked in TOFRN's top 50 in the December 1998 issue.


Solon wide receiver Drew Carter and Marion Harding fullback Nate Stead rose from virtual anonymity to earn OSU scholarship offers in January. Still, each player had other Big Ten and major-conference offers when they committed to OSU.

Headed Elsewhere

Indiana, under coach Cam Cameron, came into Ohio and signed five players — three of them ranked among TOFRN's top 50. That group includes No. 32 Joe Gonzalez, a defensive back from Cleveland St. Ignace; No. 37 Terrance Dawson, a defensive lineman from Warren Harding; and 39th-ranked Kris Dielman, a tight end from Troy.

While OSU went into Michigan to get two of its signees (quarterback Craig Krenzel and wide receiver Ricky Bryant), the Wolverines came to the State Down South and signed four players. Besides the 10th-ranked Mignery, that group includes No. 13 Carl Diggs, a linebacker from Warren Harding; No. 21 B.J. Askew, a running back from Cincinnati Colerain; and unranked Grant Bowman, a defensive lineman from Columbus DeSales.

Michigan State, which upset Ohio State last year behind a collection of Ohio players, continued to emphasize the Buckeye State. MSU landed four Ohio prospects: No. 31 James Smith, a line-



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backer from Hamilton Edgewood; No. 38 Steve Stewart, a lineman from Sandusky; No. 48 Josh Lenaburg, a wide receiver from Medina; and unranked Dan Larlham, a quarterback from Cuyahoga Falls Walsh Jesuit.

Minnesota, led by former Buckeye Glen Mason, ventured into Ohio to sign three Ohio players, none of whom made TOFRN's top 50. The most notable was Akron Garfield defensive back Eli Ward, who comes from the same school that sent Antoine Winfield to OSU.

Illinois got a pair of Ohio linebackers in No. 29 Ty Myers of Springfield North and No. 40 Obadiah Harris of Chillicothe.

Penn State, Purdue and Wisconsin each signed one Ohio player. PSU got the highest-ranked Ohioan to leave the state in eighth-ranked Deryck Toles, a defensive back from Warren Harding.

Wisconsin inked No. 17 Lee Evans, a wide receiver from Bedford. Purdue signed unranked Jason Eisele, an offensive lineman from Avon Lake.

Outside The Big Ten

Ohio once again proved to be fertile ground for a number of other Division I programs.

Pittsburgh, behind former OSU assistant Walt Harris, signed five Ohio players, led by No. 30 Darrell McMurray, a lineman from Akron Buchtel, and No. 49 Matt Mefford, a lineman from Cincinnati Wyoming. Pitt also took Columbus Eastmoor defensive back Corey Humphries.

West Virginia scored with three Ohio players — No. 24 Tim Frost, a defensive lineman from Youngstown Ursuline; No. 33 Shaun Piper, a linebacker from Columbus Hartley; and No. 34 Ben Timmons, a lineman from Chagrin Falls Kenston.

Boston College nabbed a pair of Ohio players in No. 35 Paul Cook, a running back from Berea, and No. 42 Leo Bell, a lineman from Cincinnati Moeller.

Other notables to leave the state include:

- No. 15 Keiwan Ratliff, a wide receiver from Whitehall Yearling headed to Florida;

- No. 16 Brian Camp, a quarterback from Dublin Coffman headed to Georgia Tech;

- No. 20 Brandon Miree, a 2,000-yard rusher from Cincinnati Winton Woods headed to Alabama;

- No. 25 Derrick Tatum, a running back from Shaker Heights who signed with Kentucky; and

- No. 27 Anthony Floyd, a wide receiver from Youngstown Chaney who signed with Louisville.

One Ohio top-30 prospect remained unsigned. Trotwood-Madison tight end Aaron Lumpkin, the brother of OSU tight end John Lumpkin, was still trying to decide between Purdue and Tennessee.

Michigan State had also been recruiting him.

Missing Mr. Football

Cooper finally had a chance to answer critics on why OSU did not vigorously pursue record-setting Troy running back Ryan Brewer, who earned Ohio's Mr. Football honor this past year and ended up signing with South Carolina.

"I'm not sure he was interested in Ohio State," Cooper said. "He was not interested enough to come to our camp. I think he went to Michigan's camp."

"That was a factor. If a kid doesn't come to your camp, you don't know as much about him."

Brewer set Ohio's single-season rushing mark in 10 regular-season games, rushing for 2,864 yards as a senior. He finished his high school career with 7,656 yards and 117 touchdowns.

The 5-11, 200-pound Brewer, who boasts 4.45-second speed, was judged the state's 45th-best prospect by TOFRN.

"We're not necessarily looking for the best high school player," Cooper said. "We're looking for how good that player will be two or three years down the road."

The OSU coach felt vindicated from widespread criticism after no other Big Ten schools appeared to offer Brewer.

"Our coaches saw him play, we evaluated films and we talked to opposing coaches," he said. "We heard talk about Michigan (wanting him)."

"The same thing happened last year. There was a defensive back out of Lima (Joe Sellers). We heard everybody in the world was recruiting him except Ohio State. Where did he end up? OU."

"This year it was the same thing. We heard rumors about who was recruiting (Brewer). But he didn't go to Michigan, did he? He didn't go to Purdue, did he? He didn't go to Michigan State, did he?"

Cooper admitted that recruiting can be a hit-or-miss business.

"I can tell you we don't have all the answers," he said. "We're going to make our share of mistakes. In our opinion, we recruited the best running backs."

"I wish Ryan Brewer all the luck in the world."

Since the inception of the Mr. Football award for the 1987 season, OSU has signed five players who won a combined six Mr. Football awards. That group includes Buster Howe (1987 winner), Robert Smith (1988-89), Bobby Hoying (1990), Andy Katzenmoyer (1995) and Derek Combs (1996).

Other Mr. Football award winners who went elsewhere included Derek Kidwell (1991, Bowling Green), Marc Edwards (1992, Notre Dame), Curtis Enis (1993, Penn State), Charles Woodson (1994, Michigan) and Tony Fisher (1997, Notre Dame).

Ohio Football Signees Elsewhere

The following is a list of Ohio football players who have signed letters of intent to play college football at schools besides Ohio State, with rankings as overall prospects by The Ohio Football Recruiting News:

TOFRN Rank	Player	Pos.	High School	College
8	Deryck Toles	DB	Warren Harding	Penn State
10	Andy Mignery	QB	Hamilton	Michigan
13	Carl Diggs	LB	Warren Harding	Michigan
15	Keiwan Ratliff	WR	Whitehall Yearling	Florida
16	Brian Camp	QB	Dublin Coffman	Georgia Tech
17	Lee Evans	WR	Bedford	Wisconsin
20	Brandon Miree	RB	Cincinnati Winton Woods	Alabama
21	B.J. Askew	RB	Cincinnati Colerain	Michigan
24	Tim Frost	DE	Youngstown Ursuline	West Virginia
25	Derrick Tatum	RB	Shaker Heights	Kentucky
26	Aaron Lumpkin	TE	Trotwood-Madison	Unsigned
27	Anthony Floyd	WR	Youngstown Chaney	Louisville
28	Deon Provitt	WR	Warren Kennedy	Virginia Tech
29	Ty Myers	LB	Springfield North	Illinois
30	Darrell McMurray	OL	Akron Buchtel	Pittsburgh
31	James Smith	LB	Hamilton Edgewood	Michigan State
32	Joe Gonzalez	DB	Cleveland St. Ignatius	Indiana
33	Shaun Piper	LB	Columbus Hartley	West Virginia
34	Ben Timmons	OL	Chagrin Falls Kenston	West Virginia
35	Paul Cook	RB	Berea	Boston College
36	Landon Jones	LB	Marion Harding	Maryland
37	Terrance Dawson	DL	Warren Harding	Indiana
38	Steve Stewart	OL	Sandusky	Michigan State
39	Kris Dielman	TE	Troy	Indiana
40	Obadiah Harris	LB	Chillicothe	Illinois
41	Akia Brown	RB	Portsmouth	Marshall
42	Leo Bell	OL	Cincinnati Moeller	Boston College
43	Obl Chukwumah	DB	Worthington Kilbourne	Wake Forest
44	E.J. Lilly	RB	Alliance	Akron
45	Ryan Brewer	RB	Troy	South Carolina
46	Matt Birdseye	DE	Cincinnati Turpin	Dartmouth
47	Willie Metcalf	TE	Dayton Belmont	Unsigned
48	Josh Lenaburg	WR	Medina	Michigan State
49	Matt Mefford	OL	Cincinnati Wyoming	Pittsburgh
50	Kyle Slager	QB	Upper Arlington	Unsigned
OTHER OHIOANS WITH BIG TEN SCHOOLS				
—	A.C. Carter	RB	Cincinnati Princeton	Indiana
—	Jade Pruitt	RB	Dayton Dunbar	Indiana
—	Grant Bowman	DL	Columbus DeSales	Michigan
—	Dan Larlham	QB	Cuy. Falls Walsh Jesuit	Michigan State
—	Mike Galloway	DB	Columbus Whetstone	Minnesota
—	Paul Nixon	LB	Columbus Mifflin	Minnesota
—	Eli Ward	DB	Akron Garfield	Minnesota
—	Jason Eisele	OL	Avon Lake	Purdue

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE SIGNEES

No. 2 Not So Bad In Recruiting

Behind Ohio Signees, Cooper Nabs One Of His Best Classes

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

So this is what the nation's No. 2-ranked recruiting class is supposed to look like.

Ohio State signed 24 players to letters of intent Feb. 3, attracting talented players at nearly every position on the board.

"On paper, this looks like another good, solid recruiting class," said coach John Cooper after inking his 12th OSU class. "We were able to sign the in-state players that we went after and we were able to secure some out-of-state student-athletes that other major schools were after."

Thirteen of OSU's 23 high school signees — the Buckeyes took defensive back Ziyier Walker from Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy — were named as SuperPrep All-Americans, putting them among the nation's top 265 players.

Focusing even closer — and using rankings provided by G&W Recruiting Report, The National Recruiting Advisor and Prep Football Report — Ohio State signed 10 consensus All-Americans.

Three of those players — defensive lineman Tim Anderson, offensive lineman Bryce Bishop and defensive back Richard McNutt — were unanimous picks by all four services.

But recruiting rankings don't seem to interest Cooper much. Filling his program's position needs is a much higher priority.

"We also filled the needs we had at several positions," he said. "We had a need for two quarterbacks on our board and we signed two quarterbacks."

"Wide receiver, linebacker and defensive back are three areas that jump out at you. Wide receiver was a real key position for us, since we lost Dee Miller, David Boston and Kevin Griffin. So we went out and signed four wide receivers."

"Linebacking again was a critical area because of the loss of Andy Katzenmoyer and Jerry (Rudzinski). We were able to bring in three of them."

"You can never have too many defensive backs. We were able to bring in four, including the player we had in Fork Union Military (Walker) last year."

Besides the signees, OSU also has a commitment from Haddon Heights, N.J., linebacker Shawn Price. Academic deficiencies kept OSU from signing Price, who figures to spend part of next year at Fork Union.

Also, OSU had previously enrolled former Cleveland Benedictine lineman Ivan Douglas, who gained his eligibility while sitting out the fall.

Counting Douglas, OSU has added four 300-pound offensive linemen to the mix.

"We got four big offensive linemen, including Ivan Douglas, and these guys are huge," Cooper said. "They are every bit as big as the heights and weights they're listed at."

The following are thumbnail sketches of OSU's 24 signees. BSB is amending its listed heights and weights for these players to match those listed on the school's signing day press release. The players are listed alphabetically.

• **Tim Anderson, defensive lineman, Clyde, Ohio** — Anderson (6-4, 270, 4.95) projects as an interior defensive lineman for OSU, where he committed after attend-



Tim Anderson

ing the Spring Game April 25. He picked the Buckeyes over Illinois, Michigan State, Purdue and Michigan.

Anderson, pegged as Ohio's sixth-best prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News and the nation's seventh-best DT prospect by TNRA, had 59 tackles and seven sacks as a senior after notching 70 tackles and five sacks as a junior. He also won the Division II state heavyweight wrestling title last spring, going undefeated for the year. He benches 375 pounds, holds a 2.5 GPA and scored an 18 on the ACT.

• **Bryce Bishop, offensive lineman, Miami Killian** — Bishop (6-5, 310, 4.9) is rated the nation's eighth-best offensive lineman and Florida's eighth-best prospect by SuperPrep. He was rated No. 7 among guards by TNRA. He was a USA Today first-team All-USA pick. He chose OSU Feb. 1, picking the Buckeyes over Florida State and Miami (Fla.).

He could play either tackle or guard at the college level. This great run blocker is a three-year starter at tackle. This year he blocked at 88 percent and had 12 pancake blocks. Bishop, who benches 330 pounds, holds a 2.8 GPA and has a reported ACT score of 20.

• **Ricky Bryant, wide receiver, Farmington Hills (Mich.) Harrison** — Bryant (6-1, 165, 4.5) is the younger brother of Michigan receiver Kevin Bryant, although he never really considered UM. He chose OSU in January, picking the Buckeyes over Northwestern, Michigan State and Wisconsin.

Bryant was named Michigan's No. 3 prospect by The Detroit News and No. 4 in the Midwest by The Detroit Free Press. As a senior, Bryant caught 51 passes for 995 yards (19.5 average) and scored 16 touchdowns — including one rushing and two on kick returns — for a 13-0 team that won a state title. He had 34 catches for 705 yards and seven TDs as a junior. He holds a 3.2 GPA and scored a 19 on the ACT.

• **Drew Carter, wide receiver, Solon, Ohio** — Carter (6-4, 187, 4.5) returned to football after a two-year hiatus and earned a scholarship at OSU in the process. He caught 33 passes for 890 yards (27.0 average) and 13 touchdowns for an 8-2 team. Michigan State and Colorado were among major colleges that came into the picture later in the season.

His brother, Grant, will be a sophomore receiver at Minnesota this year. Carter, also a standout basketball player who averaged 19 points a game, holds a 2.4 GPA but scored a 20 on the ACT.

• **Adrien Clarke, offensive lineman, Shaker Heights, Ohio** — Clarke (6-5, 315, 5.1) was rated Ohio's seventh-best prospect by TOFRN and was a consensus prep All-American. TNRA listed him as the nation's eighth-best tackle prospect. This first-team All-Ohio pick helped lead Shaker Heights to a 10-1 mark and a Division I playoff berth.



Ricky Bryant



Drew Carter

He had 35 pancake blocks and 100 finished blocks. He did not allow a sack as a junior, notching 27 pancake blocks.

Clarke, who benches 375 pounds and dead lifts more than 600 pounds, picked OSU over Michigan State, Illinois and Syracuse in December. He scored an 870 on the SAT but needs to raise his 2.1 GPA.

• **Curtis Crosby, defensive back, Columbus Eastmoor** — Crosby (5-11, 175, 4.4) ended the suspense early, committing to OSU over Michigan on Feb. 11, 1998. He was a consensus All-American pick, pegged as one of the nation's top three cornerback prospects by TNRA.

As a senior, he recorded 100 tackles, 12 pass breakups and two interceptions after having seven interceptions and rushing for 1,500 yards as a junior. Crosby, who boasts a reported 40-inch vertical leap, benches 270 pounds. He figures to qualify with a 2.8 GPA but needs to raise his ACT score from a 16.

• **Mike Doss, defensive back, Canton (Ohio) McKinley** — Doss (6-0, 185, 4.55) followed former McKinley teammates Kenny Peterson and Jamar Martin to OSU when he committed to the Buckeyes over Penn State on Feb. 10, 1998.

He was a key member of back-to-back state championship teams at McKinley, where he set the school career record for interceptions with 14. He rushed for 1,454 yards as a senior with 22 touchdowns and had 111 tackles and three interceptions on defense. As a junior, he recorded nine interceptions and 97 tackles. This All-Ohio first-teamer is also a consensus All-American, rated fifth among all strong safeties by TNRA and as Ohio's No. 5 overall prospect by TOFRN. He meets entrance requirements with a 2.5 GPA and a 17 on the ACT.

• **Richard Hall, running back, Cincinnati Wyoming** — Hall (6-0, 205, 4.45) committed to the Buckeyes Jan. 28, picking OSU over Michigan State and Indiana. He finished his prep career with 7,376 yards and a Cincinnati-area-high 121 touchdowns. He earned Division IV state offensive player of the year honors as a senior, going for 2,855 yards (the second-highest single-season total in Ohio history) and scoring 46 touchdowns.

He rushed for 2,251 yards and 35 touchdowns as a junior and 2,098 yards and 36 touchdowns as a sophomore. He would have been rated much higher — TOFRN dropped him from its top five to No. 19 — with a stronger academic picture. His GPA is in the



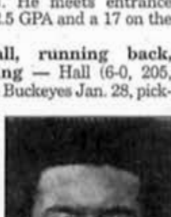
Adrien Clarke



Curtis Crosby



Mike Doss



Richard Hall

2.0 range. He took the SAT most recently on Jan. 23.

• **Maurice Harris, wide receiver, Jacksonville (Fla.) Raines** — Harris (6-2, 200, 4.5) is the most decorated of OSU's four wide receiver signees, earning consensus All-American honors. He is judged as the 13th-best receiver nationally by TNRA and was the 20th-best prospect in Florida, according to SuperPrep. He picked OSU over Miami (Fla.), Tennessee and Purdue in January.

Harris is not a stranger to big games, helping Raines to a 15-0 mark and a state title as a junior and a 12-2 record and state semifinal berth this past year. As a senior, he caught 52 passes for 900 yards (17.3 average) and 14 touchdowns after logging 28 receptions for 882 yards (31.5 average) and 14 touchdowns as a junior. Harris, whose GPA is in the 2.8 range, needs to bump his SAT score up from 800 to at least 820 in order to qualify. He also has a 16 on the ACT.

• **Ben Hartsock, tight end, Chillicothe (Ohio) Unioto** — Hartsock (6-4, 250, 4.8) shone at OSU's summer camp, earning a scholarship offer. He committed to the Buckeyes over Purdue, West Virginia and Indiana. Judged Ohio's 18th-best prospect by TOFRN, he earned first-team Division IV All-Ohio honors as a senior.

In his career he had 86 catches for 1,562 yards. As a senior, he caught 21 passes, rushed for 356 yards and nine touchdowns, and also recorded 61 tackles and 19 sacks at defensive end. Hartsock, who benches 325 pounds, holds a 4.0 GPA and scored a 27 on the ACT.

• **Jesse Kline, running back, Upper Arlington, Ohio** — Kline (6-2, 210, 4.5) committed to OSU in August, picking the Buckeyes over Notre Dame and Michigan.

He rushed for 1,051 yards as a sophomore and bulled his way to 2,315 rushing yards with 33 touchdowns to earn All-Ohio honors as a junior.

Hamstring problems cost him 3-1/2 games of his senior year. He still rushed for 1,100 yards, scored 15 touchdowns and returned in time to lead the Golden Bears to the Division I state semifinals. Kline, a SuperPrep All-American, was listed as Ohio's No. 11 prospect by TOFRN. He benches 425 pounds, holds a 3.75 GPA and scored a 1230 on the SAT.

• **Craig Krenzle, quarterback, Utica (Mich.) Ford** — Krenzle (6-4, 215, 4.85) committed to OSU April 8, picking the Buckeyes over Michigan State, Boston College, Stanford and Duke. He then was impressive at OSU's summer camp. A SuperPrep All-American, he was rated Michigan's sixth-best prospect by The Detroit News.

As a senior, he completed 110 of 200 passes for 1,760 yards and 20 touchdowns — including a state-record seven in one game. He com-



Maurice Harris



Ben Hartsock



Jesse Kline

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE SIGNEES

pleted 114 of 220 passes for 1,350 yards and 10 touchdowns as a junior. His brother, Brian, plays football for Duke. He more than qualified with a 3.7 GPA and a 30 on the ACT.

• **Maurice Lee, wide receiver, Cleveland South** — Lee (5-10, 170, 4.43) committed to OSU at the Spring Game last April, picking the Buckeyes over Indiana and several other Big Ten schools. Rated the ninth-best Ohio prospect by TOFRN, Lee was also a SuperPrep All-American.

He was mainly used as an option quarterback at South, although he showed good skills as a receiver at OSU's camp last year. He had 500 passing yards and 750 rushing yards as a senior, and he also caught 18 passes for an additional 426 yards. He had over 2,200 all-purpose yards as a junior, including 1,030 rushing yards. Lee has some academic work to do: His GPA is in the 2.7 range, but his ACT score is well below the minimum of 17.

• **Kelton Lindsay, running back, Lebanon, Ohio** — Lindsay (6-1, 195, 4.4) was judged by TOFRN as Ohio's top senior prospect. He is a consensus All-American, judged as the nation's seventh-best tailback, although some think he could be a star at defensive back. He became OSU's first commitment for 1999, picking the Buckeyes over Michigan, Michigan State and Notre Dame on Jan. 27, 1998.

As a senior, Lindsay rushed for 1,500 yards and scored 16 touchdowns, including the 41-yard game winner in the final minute of the Division II state title game. He rushed for 2,194 yards and 41 touchdowns as a junior, earning Division II state offensive player of the year honors and leading his team to a 12-1 mark and state semifinal berth. He rushed for 1,462 yards as a sophomore. He holds a 2.5 GPA and scored an 18 on the ACT.

• **Scott McMullen, quarterback, Granville, Ohio** — McMullen (6-4, 195, 4.8) committed to OSU in January, picking the Buckeyes over Michigan State, Pitt, WVU and Florida State. Rated Ohio's 22nd-best prospect by TOFRN, he earned consensus All-American honors.

As a senior, McMullen completed 118 of 191 passes (62 percent) for 2,577 yards with 24 touchdowns and just five interceptions. In three seasons, he threw for 6,100 yards and 58 touchdowns and led his team to a 27-3 mark. He holds a 3.0 GPA and has scores of 20 on the ACT and 950 on the SAT.

• **Richard McNutt, defensive back, Park Forest (Ill.) Rich East** — McNutt (6-0, 175, 4.4) did not play his senior year due to an ankle injury, but he was still a unanimous prep All-American and judged TNRA's top free safety prospect. He figures to play cornerback at OSU, where he committed over UCLA,



Craig Krenzle



Maurice Lee



Kelton Lindsay



Scott McMullen

Northwestern, Michigan State and Florida in December.

This standout cornerback, receiver and kick returner had nine interceptions as a junior to go with the five he notched as a sophomore. He split time between running back and receiver, catching 25 passes and scoring a total of 13 touchdowns his junior year. McNutt benches 250 pounds and has long jumped as far as 23 feet in track. His 47-foot triple jump placed him second at the state meet. He holds a 3.0 GPA and scored a 19 on the ACT. For more on McNutt, see the profile on page 32.

• **Pat O'Neill, linebacker, Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit** — O'Neill (6-4, 215, 4.7) committed to OSU on May 1, picking the Buckeyes over Michigan State, Indiana and Pitt. Tabbed as Ohio's No. 12 prospect by TOFRN, O'Neill earned Division III state defensive player of the year honors as a senior.

He recorded 93 solo tackles, 22 tackles-for-losses and six quarterback sacks as a senior for a 13-1 Walsh Jesuit team that finished as the state runner-up. He had 90 tackles and five sacks as a junior. O'Neill's brothers, Kevin and Joe, both played linebacker at Bowling Green. He holds a 2.3 GPA but should qualify with a 19 on the ACT.

• **Fred Pagac Jr., linebacker, Dublin Coffman** — Pagac (6-2, 230, 4.55) is the son of former Buckeye tight end and current OSU defensive coordinator Fred Pagac. He chose OSU over Florida, Notre Dame, Penn State, Michigan, MSU and Northwestern at last year's spring game. This consensus All-American was named Ohio's third-best prospect by TOFRN and the nation's eighth-best strong-side linebacker by TNRA.

As a senior, he tallied 98 tackles with eight sacks in leading Dublin Coffman to an 8-2 record and the Ohio Capital Conference divisional title. He had 110 tackles, six sacks and two interceptions as a junior. Pagac, who benches 350 pounds, holds a 3.7 GPA and scored a 980 on the



Pat O'Neill



Fred Pagac, Jr.

SAT.

• **B.J. Sander, kicker/punter, Cincinnati Roger Bacon** — Sander (6-3, 195) committed to the Buckeyes last summer, picking OSU over Notre Dame and Michigan. Judged Ohio's 23rd-best prospect by TOFRN, Sander set a state record with his 60-yard field goal in a game against Kettering Alter last fall.

Recruited as a punter — where he figures to start as a freshman — he could have the opportunity to place kick down the road as well. This left-footed kicker averaged 40.0 yards per punt as a senior and averaged 43.5 yards per punt as a junior. He was 9 of 10 on field goal attempts, including field goals of 54, 51, 47, 47 and 43 yards as a junior. He holds a 2.5 GPA and has scores of 22 on the ACT and 1050 on the SAT.

• **Nate Stead, fullback, Marion (Ohio) Harding** — Stead (6-0, 255, 4.8) committed to OSU in January, picking the Buckeyes over Michigan State, Central Florida and Akron. An early-season knee injury had dropped his stock, but he rebounded to rush for 471 yards and nine touchdowns in eight games. He helped Harding (10-2) reach the Division I regional finals.

Stead, who benches 350 pounds, figures to provide depth as a blocking fullback. He holds a 2.1 GPA and scored a 27 on the ACT and an 1180 on the SAT.

• **Fred Sturup, defensive lineman, Plantation, Fla.** — Sturup (6-4, 270, 4.9) committed to OSU in January, picking the Buckeyes over Florida State and Miami (Fla.). He earned SuperPrep All-American honors and was judged as Florida's 26th-best prospect. Sturup has already shed 10 of a planned 20 pounds so he can play the end spot at OSU in the 260-pound range.

As a senior, he recorded 100 tackles, 25 tackles-for-losses and 15 sacks for an 11-1 playoff team. He had 103 tackles and nine sacks as a junior for a 12-1 team that also



B.J. Sander



Nate Stead

advanced to the playoffs. He benches 405 pounds. He has some academic work to complete, sporting a 2.3 GPA and a 16 on the ACT. He was to retake the ACT Feb. 6.

• **Ziyier Walker, defensive back, Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy** — Walker (6-1, 195, 4.5) graduated from Paterson (N.J.) Catholic and originally committed to OSU over Rutgers, Mississippi and Kentucky last spring. But academic deficiencies sent him to Fork Union.

This hard-hitting safety prospect recorded 47 solo tackles and one interception and rushed for 800 yards and one touchdown as a high school senior at Paterson Catholic. He still has to obtain a passing test score in order to qualify.

• **Matt Wilhelm, linebacker, Elyria (Ohio) Catholic** — Wilhelm (6-5, 240, 4.6) committed to OSU at the Spring Game last year, picking the Buckeyes over the likes of Michigan, Purdue, Michigan State, Pitt and Indiana. Wilhelm is Ohio's fourth-best prospect, according to TOFRN, and a SuperPrep All-American. He could play outside linebacker or defensive end at OSU.

Wilhelm earned first-team Division IV All-Ohio honors after recording 100 tackles with 26 tackles-for-losses and 11 sacks as a senior. He rushed for 1,200 yards and scored 20 touchdowns as a junior. He holds a 2.9 GPA and scored a 19 on the ACT.

• **Matt Zahn, offensive lineman, St. Henry, Ohio** — Zahn (6-7, 360, 5.4) committed to Ohio State on May 11, picking the Buckeyes over Notre Dame, Penn State, Michigan and Indiana. He was rated 14th in Ohio by TOFRN. He comes from the same program that produced such Buckeyes as Jim Lachey and Bobby Hoying.

He has good footwork and agility for a man his size and also plays basketball. He benches 350 pounds, holds a 2.5 GPA and scored an 18 on the ACT.



Matt Wilhelm



Matt Zahn

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