

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE EXPERTS

Bowden Gets His Due From Recruiting Experts

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

There is football recruiting and then there is Bobby Bowden football recruiting.

The venerable Florida State coach and his staff again showed why they run the game's preeminent program right now by clearly winning the national recruiting battle for 2001.

FSU received all six first-place votes in BSB's consensus poll of national recruiting experts, taking the title easily over second-place Michigan and third-place LSU. Ohio State ended up in a tie for 14th with USC (see graphic).

"Florida State completely dominated the scene at the end," said Allen Wallace of California-based SuperPrep. "They won in a landslide."

"They signed nine of the top 15 players in Florida. Then they went to California, Georgia, Minnesota — wherever they wanted to go — and got the players they wanted. It was an amazing effort."

When the dust had settled on national signing day Feb. 7, Florida State had signed 10 of Rivals100.com Recruiting's national top 100 players (see graphic, page 11).

Included in that group were signing-day announcements by Florida defensive back Jerome Carter, Florida linebacker Willie Jones and Kentucky running back Eric Shelton.

"They always close strong," said Rick Kimbrel of California-based PrepStar magazine. "It's almost like they sandbag people to make a big splash on signing day. It's almost like they orchestrate it. I wrote on Sunday night before signing day that they were still waiting on six of our Dream Team players (national top 120) to decide and they all came in."

Other notables to pick FSU from the Rivals100 list included California cornerback Dominic Robinson, Florida linemen Chauncey Davis and Ron Lunford, Minnesota quarterback Joe Mauer, Florida receiver Craphonso Thorpe, Florida defensive back Gerard Ross and Georgia lineman Eric Broe.

Mauer, USA Today's national offensive player of the year, was among five FSU signees selected to that newspaper's 48-man All-USA team. The others were Shelton, Thorpe, Carter and Robinson.

"They signed three All-American quarterbacks with Mauer, (Florida's) Adrian McPherson and (Georgia's) Matt

Henshaw," Wallace said. "Joe Mauer may go and play baseball, but he could always come back like Chris Weinke did."

In the days leading up to signing day, it appeared that the race was wide open between several schools. But Tom Lemming of Illinois-based Prep Football Report said he had FSU pegged all along.

"They were unbelievable at the end," he said. "Everyone was saying Oklahoma or LSU was going to be No. 1, but I kept saying, 'Watch out for Florida State.'"

"That run was just amazing," added Rivals100.com's Jeremy Crabtree. "The only guy they lost at the end was (Ohio running back) Maurice Hall, and they weren't expecting him anyway. I think everybody figured he'd end up at Ohio State all along."

FSU became the second unanimous winner in the six years of BSB's consensus poll, joining Texas' class from 1999. The Seminoles spoiled in-state rival Florida's shot at a unanimous title last year, garnering one of the six first-place votes.

Michigan won the tightest consensus poll race 3-2 over UCLA in 1998, while Ohio State (1996) and Florida State (1997) were comfortable winners.

The Wolverines held off LSU for second place this year behind the signing of seven Rivals100.com top 100 players.

"Michigan got players everywhere, including three-USA Today first-team guys in (Michigan DB) Ernest Shazor, (Pennsylvania DB) Marlin Jackson and (Michigan RB) Kelly Baraka," said Phil Grosz of Pennsylvania-based G&W Recruiting Report.

(For more on Michigan's recruiting effort, see the Big Ten roundup on pages 13-15.)

LSU coach Nick Saban attacked his first full recruiting effort with the Tigers head on. He landed six Rivals100.com top 100 players, including in-state stars tight end Marcus Spears, defensive tackle Marquise Hill, wide receiver Michael Clayton and offensive linemen Andrew Whitworth and Rudy Niswanger.

"Nick Saban did an incredible job," Grosz said. "They put a picket fence around Louisiana and got nine of the state's top 10 kids. The important thing is that four of those guys were among the top three at their position in the country."

Wallace added, "What they did was absolutely amazing. He has reignited that whole situation in an incredible fashion. Right now, Nick Saban is one of the top three young coaches in America with Rick Neuheisel and Bob Stoops."

There were some raised eyebrows a year ago when Saban left Michigan State for the lucrative job at LSU — and he didn't take any of his MSU assistants with him. But the move paid off.

National Recruiting Experts Rankings

BILL KURELIC The Ohio Football Recruiting News	JEREMY CRABTREE Rivals100.com Recruiting	RICK KIMBREL PrepStar
1 Florida State	1 Florida State	1 Florida State
2 Michigan	2 Oklahoma	2 Michigan
3 LSU	3 LSU	3 Texas
4 Oklahoma	4 Michigan	4 LSU
5 Texas	5 Texas	5 Miami (Fla.)
6 Miami (Fla.)	6 Washington	6 Tennessee
7 Tennessee	7 Miami (Fla.)	7 Oklahoma
8 Washington	8 Tennessee	8 UCLA
9 Nebraska	9 UCLA	9 Washington
10 UCLA	10 Nebraska	10 (tie) OHIO STATE
		10 (tie) USC

PHIL GROSZ G&W Recruiting Report	TOM LEMMING Prep Football Report	ALLEN WALLACE SuperPrep
1 Florida State	1 Florida State	1 Florida State
2 Texas	2 Michigan	2 LSU
3 LSU	3 LSU	3 Michigan
4 Michigan	4 Texas	4 Texas
5 Oklahoma	5 Tennessee	5 Washington
6 Washington	6 Oklahoma	6 Oklahoma
7 Miami (Fla.)	7 Miami (Fla.)	7 Nebraska
8 Tennessee	8 Washington	8 Virginia Tech
9 UCLA	9 Clemson	9 UCLA
10 Clemson	10 Wisconsin	10 Clemson

NATIONAL RECRUITING EXPERTS CONSENSUS POLL (Determined by voting points; First-place votes in parentheses)							
1 Florida State (6)	60	6	Washington	24	11	Clemson	4
2 Michigan	49	7	Miami (Fla.)	23	12	Virginia Tech	3
3 LSU	48	8	Tennessee	21	13	Wisconsin	1
4 Texas	43	9	UCLA	11	14 (tie)	OHIO STATE	0.5
5 Oklahoma	36	10	Nebraska	7	14 (tie)	USC	0.5



Eric Shelton

"When Saban got there, he brought in a Southern staff," Lemming said. "That was really, really smart. They were able to hold on to everything in their own state."

Texas came next with three Rivals100.com top 100 players, including in-state standouts running back Cedric Benson, lineman Jonathan Scott and linebacker Derrick Johnson.

"They took seven offensive linemen and they all look to be good ones," said Crabtree, whose Rivals100.com service is based in Texas.

Speaking of Texas, that is where Oklahoma

— fresh off a national championship — did some heavy damage.

The Sooners got 14 of their 29 signees from the Lone Star State, including that state's top player in defensive lineman Tommie Harris of Killeen.

Harris was one of five Rivals100 top 100 players to sign with OU, joining fellow Texas stars wide receiver Brandon Jones, defensive end Jonathan Jackson and running back Donta Hickson as well as Louisiana quarterback Brent Rawls.

"They got back into Texas and got some really good kids, including Tommie Harris," Grosz said. "Some say he was the best player in Texas and the best defensive lineman in the country."

Washington, with three Rivals100 top 100 signees, came next at sixth in the consensus poll. The Huskies, with Neuheisel calling the shots, bagged Florida receiver Charles Frederick, Illinois quarterback Casey Paus and in-state receiver Reggie Williams, who spurned Michigan.

One of the nation's biggest success stories was at Miami (Fla.), where the 'Canes still pulled in the nation's seventh-ranked class despite the 11th hour departure of

head coach Butch Davis to the NFL's Cleveland Browns. Assistant Larry Coker, a former Ohio State assistant, was elevated to the top spot, and Miami held on to all of its key prospects.

Miami inked five Rivals100 top 100 players, including New York linebacker Leon Williams, Delaware defensive tackle Orien Harris and Florida defensive back Antrel Rolle.

"They got a great class despite losing Butch Davis," Grosz said. "They got Leon Williams away from Penn State late in the game."

"How they do it just blows my mind. They play in a dump at the Orange Bowl and they don't get anybody to their games. But they do have a big attraction in South Beach."

"They kept the class together with the threat of everything going on in the last few days," Kimbrel said. "They lifted Frank Gore from Ole Miss and reclaimed Kevin Everett from Texas. They got Orien Harris, who was our No. 2 defensive lineman in the country."

"They fought off the disaster of Davis leaving so late. Larry Coker was a good captain of that ship to keep things together."

Tennessee got six Rivals100 players but finished eighth in the consensus poll. The Vols nailed down two of the top four players on that list in California linebacker Kevin Simon (No. 2) and Georgia running back Jabari Davis (No. 4).

UCLA, finishing ninth, signed four Rivals100 players. The key name was California safety Matt Ware.

"They did pretty well, although they lost (in-state USA Today national defensive player of the year) Shaun Cody to USC at the last minute," Grosz said.

Nebraska, never known for having top-ranked recruiting classes, rounded out the consensus poll top 10. True to form, the Huskers did not have a single player on the Rivals100 top 100 list.

The following are comments from each of the six experts used in the consensus poll on Ohio State's recruiting effort.

**46th Annual Touchdown Club of
Columbus All Sports Awards Banquet**
Sat., Feb. 17 — Adam's Mark Hotel
Doors open at 5:30 p.m., Dinner at 6:00 p.m., Awards at 7 p.m.
Honorees include 20 members of the All Century OSU Team.
Lifetime Achievement Award to John Cooper, Introduction of Jim Tressel and Staff, 40th Anniversary of American Football League,
and Introduction of Ohio State's 2001 Signees.
Tickets are \$150.00, call 614-899-2748

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE EXPERTS

Kurelic

Bill Kurelic of Dublin, Ohio-based The Ohio Football Recruiting News ranked OSU's 17-man class third in the Big Ten and 15th nationally.

"The way things finished at the end, that was borderline spectacular," Kurelic said. "They had four guys they were after and got all four."

Kurelic noted the importance of new head coach Jim Tressel retaining recruiting coordinator Bill Conley.

"(Conley) had been working on those players for over a year," Kurelic said. "They started recruiting a lot of them prior to their junior season. They had a lot of continuity with him staying on board. I thought Tim Spencer and Jim Heacock were instrumental as well."

"Mark Dantonio came in and helped out. But it all starts at the top. Jim Tressel was a tireless worker from the moment he got the job and he hasn't stopped working yet. He's already working on juniors for next year."

Kurelic believes OSU solidified its ground game with this attack.

"If you look at Ohio State's needs, there certainly could be an opportunity for a running back from this class to play right away," he said. "Both Lydell Ross and Maurice Hall have a chance to be something special. Maybe they'll be a special tandem because Ohio State is going to play more than one running back."

"Obviously, I like Reggie Arden and Dustin Fox. They are two of my top three players in Ohio. They each have a chance to have great careers at Ohio State."

Crabtree

Crabtree's Rivals100 service uses a rating system to rank each school's efforts. Those rankings are then tweaked, he said, based on each school's needs, speed and balance.

Prior to OSU's big finish, Rivals100 had the Buckeyes 47th nationally. Crabtree said OSU would be 20th in the final rankings, however.

"They rolled at the end," Crabtree said. "That was one of the most impressive recruiting jobs in the nation this year. We were going to list Ohio State as one of our disappointments, but things changed suddenly for them at the end."

"(Angelo) Chattams was the guy who got the ball rolling. When he committed to them, that signaled that it was OK to go back and be a Buckeye."

Arden, Chattams, Hall and defensive end Simon Fraser were all named to the Rivals100 top 100.

"Maurice Hall is special," Crabtree said. "I also like Simon Fraser. He has the frame to bulk up and maybe play defensive tackle. You can't teach a frame like that."

"Fox is a good, heady player. He's probably a strong safety. He's not a real speedster, but he has those intangibles."

"Lydell Ross is a big back, the kind you need to win games in the Big Ten."

Grosz

Grosz picked OSU fifth in the Big Ten behind Michigan, Wisconsin, Penn State and Purdue.

"The best part of Ohio State's class is the three running backs with Maurice Hall, JaJa Riley and Lydell Ross," Grosz said. "How they got Ross to leave Florida I will never know. He took a late visit there and they got him. He must not have been satisfied with Notre Dame or Florida."

"Holding on to (waving verbals) Dustin Fox and Angelo Chattams was also a key."

Grosz believes OSU may already have

a leg up on next year's class.

"The thing Ohio State fans should already be excited about is they've already wrapped up Maurice Claret and Drushaun Humphreys and I think they are the big leader for Justin Zwick," he said. "They all know and like Jim Tressel."

Kimbril

Kimbril's PrepStar magazine gave Ohio State its best marks, tying the Buckeyes with USC for 10th place nationally.

"I think Tressel is going to be really good," he said. "One thing that was key was keeping Bill Conley. It is still a glamorous school that kids far and wide know about. They kept the majority of the good ones in-state, and that is a telling tale if they're going to be successful."

Kimbril gave OSU high marks for snagging California back JaJa Riley.

"JaJa Riley is an outstanding back," he said. "I know that every Pac-10 school wanted him. That was a great get for the Cooper staff and even bigger for Tressel and his guys to hang on to him."

"They also did a great job with Maurice Hall there in their own hometown."

Lemming

Lemming had not finalized his rankings beyond the top 10 but said OSU would likely fall between No. 15 and No. 25.

"They did great for the circumstances," Lemming said. "At one point I didn't think they would be in the top 40."

"They did well at the end to land Hall and Ross and to keep Chattams and Fox. I know Fox nearly went to Penn State."

"If Chris Gamble gets his grades, he could be a good player for them. Chattams could be a great one. I think Adam Olds is pretty steady. He could be a captain there one day."

Lemming liked OSU's haul at running back.

"JaJa is a terrific talent as a running back or a DB," he said. "He also has good hands and could be a receiver."

"There were a lot of good backs in Florida this year, but I thought Lydell Ross was the best. And that's not all because of performance, but also because of size. He's 6-0, 210 pounds and runs a legit 4.5 or 4.45 40. When he squares his shoulders, defenders kind of cringe because he can run them over."

"Simon Fraser looks skinny at 240 pounds. With that frame, he could probably get up to 270 or 280 pounds. Maybe he'll redshirt this year and get up to the 270-pound range."

Lemming assembles the prep All-American team for ESPN. That team will be featured in a special on that network at 1 p.m. Mon., Feb. 19. It will be replayed throughout the rest of the month.

Wallace

Wallace rated OSU 15th in the nation for SuperPrep.

"The coaching switch helped Ohio State," he said. "From a national perspective, people viewed John Cooper as an excellent coach. But inside the state, which is where Ohio State focuses much of its attention, people wanted a change."

"They were sick and tired of losing to Michigan."

OSU ended up signing nine SuperPrep All-Americans.

"We had Simon Fraser and Redgie Arden on our Elite 50 and those two as well as Dustin Fox were on our Super 100," he said. "Plus, we liked Angelo Chattams and Chris Gamble. They were also SuperPrep All-Americans."

The Rivals 100

Here is a look at the final Rivals100.com national top 100 list, ranked from No. 1 down to No. 100. Ohio State received verbal commitments from four of these players and had seven of them make visits (denoted with asterisks).

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown	Signed With
RB	Kevin Jones	6-0	200	4.23	Chester (Pa.) Cardinal O'Hara	Virginia Tech
LB	Kevin Simon	6-0	210	4.5	Concord (Calif.) De La Salle	Tennessee
WR	Roscoe Crosby	6-2	195	4.4	Buffalo (S.C.) Union	Clemson
RB	Jabari Davis	6-0	230	4.5	Stone Mountain (Ga.) Tucker	Tennessee
DT	Tommie Harris	6-3	275	4.8	Killeen (Texas) Ellison	Oklahoma
S	Ernest Shazor	6-4	200	4.5	Detroit Martin Luther King	Michigan
S	Matt Ware	6-3	195	4.49	Los Angeles Loyola	UCLA
CB	Dominic Robinson	6-2	200	4.4	Diamond Bar, Calif.	Florida State
TE	Marcus Spears	6-5	270	4.6	Baton Rouge (La.) Southern Lab	LSU
QB	Brodie Croyle	6-3	186	4.71	Rainbow City, Ala.	Alabama
DE	Shaun Cody	6-5	240	4.7	Hacienda Heights (Calif.) Los Altos	USC
OL	Blake Larsen	6-7	295	5.01	Atlantic, Iowa	Iowa
LB	Leon Williams	6-3	232	4.4	New York Canarsie	Miami (Fla.)
DT	Marquise Hill	6-8	290	4.75	New Orleans De La Salle	LSU
WR	Charles Frederick	5-11	170	4.45	Boca Raton (Fla.) Pope John Paul	Washington
OL	Ben Wilkerson	6-4	265	4.8	Hempfield, Texas	LSU
DE	Chauncey Davis	6-2	230	4.6	Auburndale, Fla.	Florida State
OL	Ron Lunford	6-5	320	5.0	Jacksonville (Fla.) Ed White	Florida State
LB	Michael Craven	6-2	215	4.6	Palm Desert (Calif.) La Quinta	Stanford
OL	Jonathan Scott	6-7	286	5.0	Dallas Carter	Texas
CB	Ahmad Carroll	6-0	190	4.4	Atlanta Douglass	Arkansas
OL	Chris Spencer	6-4	305	5.2	Tadouson (Miss.) Central	Ole Miss
WR	Reggie Williams	6-4	215	4.4	Madison (Wash.) Lakewood Lakes	Washington
RB	Kelly Baraka	6-1	185	4.4	Portage (Mich.) Northern	Michigan
LB	Marvin Simmons	6-1	210	4.5	Long Beach (Calif.) Poly	Unsignd
WR	Michael Clayton	6-2	200	4.4	Baton Rouge (La.) Christian Brothers	LSU
DT	Oriean Harris	6-4	270	4.8	Newark, Del.	Miami (Fla.)
QB	Joe Maurer	6-4	205	4.7	St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin Durham Hall	Florida State
RB	Derrick Tinsley	6-1	180	4.4	Marletta, Ga.	Tennessee
DE	Marquis Elmore	6-4	230	4.65	Folkston (Ga.) Chariton County	Georgia
RB	Carnwell Williams	5-11	192	4.42	Attalla (Ala.) Etowah	Auburn
RB	Cedric Benson	6-0	195	4.5	Midland (Texas) Lee	Texas
QB	D.J. Shockley	6-2	185	4.4	College Park (Ga.) North Clayton	Georgia
S	Jerome Carter	6-1	205	4.5	Lake City (Fla.) Columbia	Florida State
CB	Marlin Jackson	6-1	185	4.5	Sharon, Pa.	Michigan
WR	Tim Massaquoi	6-4	215	4.6	Orefield (Pa.) Parkland	Michigan
OL	Andrew Whitworth	6-7	300	4.9	West Monroe, La.	LSU
RB	Cedrick Houston	6-0	200	4.4	Clarendon, Ark.	Tennessee
DT	Charles Rush	6-3	286	4.9	Erie (Pa.) Cathedral Prep	Penn State
DE	Pierre Woods	6-6	215	4.6	Cleveland Glenview	Michigan
OL	Jami Hightower	6-4	302	5.2	Jacksonville, Texas	Texas A&M
CB	Antrel Rolle	6-0	200	4.4	Homestead (Fla.) South Dade	Miami (Fla.)
LB	Derrick Johnson	6-4	205	4.4	Waco, Texas	Texas
RB	Frank Gore	5-10	190	4.45	Miami Coral Gables	Miami (Fla.)
OL	Mark LeVoir	6-7	305	5.0	Eden Prairie, Minn.	Notre Dame
QB	Kellen Clemens	6-2	190	4.8	Burns, Ore.	Oregon
LB	Lamaricus Rowell	6-3	212	4.67	Opelika, Ala.	Auburn
DE	Jocques Dumas	6-8	240	4.75	Asheboro, N.C.	North Carolina
CB	Lamar Baker	5-11	180	4.5	Avondale (Ariz.) Agua Fria	Arizona State
WR	Aleese Currie	5-11	180	4.4	Columbia (S.C.) Richland Northeast	Clemson
DT	Lorenzo Alexander	6-2	292	5.2	Berkeley (Calif.) St. Mary's	California
DE	Pat Massey	6-8	235	4.7	Cleveland St. Ignatius	Michigan
WR	Craphonso Thorpe	6-2	175	4.4	Tallahassee (Fla.) Lincoln	Florida State
OL	Robert Cleary	6-7	275	5.0	Lake Daisy (Calif.) Mater Dei	Clemson
QB	Matt Leinart	6-5	208	5.0	Santa Ana (Calif.) Temece Del	UCLA
S	Gerard Ross	6-2	190	4.4	Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian	Florida State
RB	J.R. Lemon	6-2	217	4.5	Tyrone (Ga.) Sandy Creek	Stanford
LB	Jeb Hukebea	6-5	201	4.47	Searcy (Ark.) Harding Academy	Arkansas
WR	Jerome Janet	5-11	190	4.5	Tulsa (Okla.) Union	Kansas State
RB	Maurice Hall*	5-10	180	4.3	Columbus Brookhaven	Ohio State
TE	Mark Anderson	6-7	258	4.7	Lewiston, Mont.	Stanford
DT	Artaj Hawthorne	6-5	285	4.9	Hamden, Conn.	Wisconsin
CB	Brett Bell	6-0	180	4.5	Wheaton (Ill.) Warrenville-South	Wisconsin
RB	Eric Shelton*	6-3	235	4.5	Lexington (Ky.) Bryan Station	Florida State
LB	Willie Jones*	6-2	195	4.5	Miami Carol City	Florida State
QB	Casey Paus	6-5	200	4.7	New Lenox (Ill.) Lincoln-Way	Washington
OL	Shawn Andrews	6-4	320	5.1	Camden, Ark.	Arkansas
WR	Brandon Jones	6-1	195	4.54	Texarkana (Texas) Liberty-Elyau	Oklahoma
S	Clarence McDougal	6-1	200	4.52	Clinton, Miss.	Mississippi State
RB	Thez Robinson	5-11	185	4.5	Lyons (Ga.) Toombs County	South Carolina
LB	Redgie Arden Jr.*	6-5	225	4.7	Ironton, Ohio	Ohio State
QB	Brent Rawis	6-5	190	4.65	Shreveport (La.) Evangel Christian	Oklahoma
DE	Jonathan Jackson	6-4	220	4.56	Houston North Shore	Oklahoma
OL	Robert Bergman	6-5	280	5.2	Bakersfield, Calif.	Miami (Fla.)
QB	Kyle Orton	6-4	200	4.8	Runnells (Iowa) Southeast Polk	Purdue
LB	Scott McClintock	6-3	240	4.58	Belle Vernon, Pa.	Michigan
RB	De'Arrius Howard	5-11	220	4.5	West Memphis, Ark.	Arkansas
CB	Robert Boulware	5-11	185	4.35	Charlotte (N.C.) Vance	Tennessee
DT	Ratavious Biddle	6-0	170	4.4	Decatur, Ala.	Mississippi
WR	Thomas Derricks	6-1	287	4.85	Dallas Jesuit Prep	Northwestern
WR	Junior Taylor	6-3	185	4.4	Mesa, Ariz.	UCLA
OL	Eric Broe	6-6	275	5.0	Norcross (Ga.) The Wesleyan School	Florida State
RB	Donta Hickson	5-10	185	4.4	McKinney, Texas	Oklahoma
QB	Derek Anderson	6-6	220	4.8	Scappoose, Ore.	Oregon State
WR	Angelo Chattams*	5-11	185	4.45	Dayton Chaminade-Julienne	Ohio State
S	Jonny Ward	6-1	210	4.48	Miami Northwestern	Unsignd
OL	Zachary Giles	6-4	275	5.0	Marshfield, Mass.	Notre Dame
QB	Nic Costa	5-11	190	4.28	Aloha, Ore.	Arizona
DT	Wayne Dickens	6-2	273	5.0	Lakeland (Fla.) Lake Gibson	Auburn
WR	Kevin Noel*	6-2	180	4.5	Naperville (Ill.) Central	Purdue
CB	C.J. Fayton	6-2	190	4.4	Virginia Beach, Va.	Tennessee
DT	Tyler Reed	6-3	305	5.0	Pittsburgh Thomas Jefferson	Penn State
WR	Earvin Johnson	6-4	200	4.5	South Gate (Calif.) Cathedral	UNLV
QB	Paul Troth	6-4	205	5.1	Charlotte (N.C.) Vance	East Carolina
OL	Rudy Niewanger	6-6	265	5.05	Monroe (La.) Ouchita Christian	LSU
DE	Simon Fraser*	6-5	250	4.7	Upper Arlington, Ohio	Ohio State
LB	Spencer Havner	6-3	215	4.65	Nevada City (Calif.) Nevada Union	UCLA
QB	Billy Hart	6-2	190	4.5	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mission Viejo	USC
TE	Ben Hall	6-5	229	4.59	Duncan, S.C.	Clemson
QB	Ingle Martin	6-4	205	4.6	Nashville (Tenn.) Bell Academy	Florida

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: BILL CONLEY

Recruiting Coordinator Didn't Sweat This One

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Bill Conley has had more nerve-racking days.

Sure, he's been involved with national signing days when as many as 25 letters of intent were pouring out of the fax machine. But he's also had days when some of those faxes didn't come over until nearly 4 p.m. Then there have been the dreaded moments when that one fax never came.

So while virtually every hardcore OSU fan was sweating out local star Maurice Hall's decision on the afternoon of signing day, Feb. 7, Conley, OSU's nationally regarded recruiting coordinator, was as cool as a polar bear. He already had 16 letters from standout players in hand and had every reason to believe Hall would put the cherry on the sundae by sending his fax.

Hall did just that shortly after his press conference at Columbus Brookhaven High School, sending his signature to OSU at about 1:45 p.m. That ended a glorious day that began with Reggie Arden's fax at about 7:15 a.m.

"Obviously, this is why you're in the profession," said Conley, who was courted last month by Tennessee to fill a similar position for the Volunteers. "You're a coach because you like competition, and recruiting is part of that coaching process. That's why we do what we do. That's what makes us go."

"It's a lot of hard work and a lot of effort but it's worth it on a day like today."

Conley, of course, is no stranger to success when it comes to noteworthy recruiting efforts. Approaching his 14th year as an assistant at OSU, where he has been the recruiting coordinator since 1991, Conley has had a hand in several top-five rated classes, including the 1996 class that was deemed the nation's best by most analysts.

Mostly because of the relatively low signing total of 17, most experts have downgraded the Buckeyes' class a bit this year and rate it right around 15th in the nation and second or third in the Big Ten. But considering that John Cooper was fired Jan. 2 and OSU was without a head coach until Jim Tressel was in place Jan. 18, most agree that Ohio State gave a laudable effort.

Quality abounded in the class with

Hall and fellow well-rated tailbacks Lydell Ross and JaJa Riley as headliners along with linebacker Arden, safety Dustin Fox, defensive ends Simon Fraser and Marcus Green, and receivers Chris Gamble and Angelo Chattams.

"Going into the bowl game we were expecting up around 21, 22, possibly 23 good players," Conley admitted. "But we still wanted to be very selective because of our numbers and make sure we didn't take a marginal-type athlete. The way it worked out with the 17 we got, I don't think we could have gotten a finer quality 17. It's got to be one of the top-quality small classes in the country."

There have been signing days in the past when Conley looked like he needed some well deserved R&R. This time, the adrenaline was still flowing.

"We're very excited," Conley said. "This is a great group of young men and as Coach Tressel said, we got not only good football players but good students and great people."

"I think one thing he did when he went into these homes and these schools, he sold the parents on himself as a person, and I think that's why these guys are Buckeyes."

Picking Up The Slack

Tressel, however, can't take all the credit. The new head coach eventually retained running backs coach Tim Spencer, defensive line coach Jim Heacock and Conley, who also oversees the tight ends. That left those three to mind the store during the most crucial period of recruiting, and Conley to somehow keep it all organized.

He had to make a plethora of calls and appearances to recruits while Tressel added to his staff and tried to put out fires. In fact, the OSU coaches spent a majority of their time in January working on players like Chattams and Fox who already had committed to Ohio State.

"I think you can never take anything for granted," Conley said. "Even though a lot of these kids had committed, we went after them and approached it as if they were just new recruits, and I know Coach Tressel did a great job of getting in everybody's home or school and seeing those kids face-to-face."

"We not only continued on from that point but we made sure we kept the home fires burning also. At the end we were just cautiously optimistic because it seemed like the last three or four days things really started to fall into place."

Some national experts doubted OSU could sign a quality class in light of the coaching change. Still other skeptics said OSU would have no closing power with

players because of Tressel, who came to OSU after 15 years at Division I-AA Youngstown State. But it turned out that Conley carried the same charm with recruits and Tressel had more name recognition and recruiting clout than first thought.

"I think everybody in the state of Ohio knew Jim Tressel," Conley said. "You know a coach who's been coach of the year as many times as he has and has won four national championships, even though it's I-AA. It's still four national championships — that's big. Coaches around the country knew Jim Tressel, too."

"One thing that impressed me when we traveled around the country, particularly south Florida, a lot of kids in the homes and schools we went into knew Coach Tressel because other kids from those same programs had come up and played at Youngstown State. He knows areas of the country outside of Ohio, and really they're areas we recruit also. That was a good bridge right there."

Another smooth transition was Tressel's reputation for stressing education combined with a pool of players with lofty GPAs and academic records.

"We always want to recruit the best student-athlete we can — I think you've seen a change in that the last two or three years, and we're continuing that process," said Conley, who claimed there was no edict from on high to raise academic standards this year. "I think also there's been a great improvement by schools around the country and counselors around the country and coaches around the country who are making them more in demand."

OSU did lose out on lineman Alphonso Townsend, who had committed to OSU last year before attending Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy. But when Townsend, who is still trying to gain eligibility for next season, opted on signing day to ink a letter of intent with Michigan State instead of OSU, few fans complained.

Conley also seemed to shrug off the loss of Townsend, saying he thought the prospect's decision was a "toss-up" going into the day.

Plus Conley was absolutely thrilled OSU secured the services of Hall and Ross in the final days.

Hall claimed to have picked OSU over Florida State on signing day, but Conley believed all along that would be the decision.

"His parents (Reuben and Gloria Hall) did a great job of coming over and spending time at the university and spending time with Coach Tressel," he said. "I think that was the key because as they got to know him as a person they realized why go somewhere else when right down the road you had the type of program and the type of head coach that you'd like to play for?"

Considered one of the top running backs in Florida, Ross tabbed OSU over Florida and Notre Dame to the surprise of many.

"He didn't fall in our lap," Conley said. "We just finally got him up here on the visit. He always liked Ohio State and was excited about visiting, but when the change took place he started having some second thoughts. Coach Tressel, Coach Heacock and Coach Spencer did a great job of staying on him hard and going to the school each week and talking to him."

"We felt all along that if Lydell made a

ESPN.com Says Conley's Top 10

OSU's Bill Conley recently was lauded as one of the top 10 recruiting coordinators in all of college football in a Feb. 1 article on ESPN.com.

Recruiting expert Tom Lemming's other nine top recruiters are, in no particular order, Georgia's Rodney Garner; Georgia Tech's Bill O'Brien; South Carolina's Dave Roberts; Arizona's Rob Ianello; Virginia's Al Golden, a former Penn State coach; Florida's Buddy Teevens; Notre Dame's Greg Mattison; Nebraska's Turner Gill and Purdue's Jim Chaney.

Said Lemming of Conley: "The first coach that new coach Jim Tressel kept on the staff. He's known throughout the nation as the best recruiter in Ohio and one of the best in the state of Florida. Extremely thorough locally."

— Darrell Dawson

visit to this campus and got to see all the positives that we would have a legitimate shot at him."

Unending Process

It's difficult, of course, for Conley to feel full satisfaction with his handiwork. For one, recruiting never ends at a major program like Ohio State. For another, few fans really know how much grunt work is involved or all the reasons Johnny Prospect did or didn't choose OSU.

However, the "sport" of recruiting has taken on a whole new perspective recently with seemingly every move being followed via web sites. That, at least, adds a little importance to the process.

"A lot of people today, and in the last two or three years, follow the Internet and follow recruiting more than anything I've ever seen in the past," Conley said. "I mean, it's amazing. It used to be that football was over at the end of the bowl season, but now it's like an extra season itself. And with the mass media it has become something that is followed around the country. So I think a lot of people do recognize what we've done with this class, especially a lot of (other) football programs."

Now the challenge is to make them all take notice again. The Buckeyes will be in the market for several quality offensive linemen, a couple of cornerbacks and a topflight quarterback, among other spots, next season.

Conley has already plotted a course for that effort.

"We were looking at junior tape today as we were waiting on the faxes to come in on these kids," he said. "We've sent out mailings and things like that and kids will be visiting campus within the next few months for unofficial visits so recruiting never, ever stops. It's a continual process."

"We've already talked about our needs for next year, and the fortunate thing is it's going to be a strong year, a very strong year in Ohio. Great recruiting classes have to have a great home base and that's what we have next year in Ohio."



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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE BIG TEN

Michigan Bags Top Class

Quick Start Helps Wolverines Claim 2001 Recruiting Honors

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Michigan may have had to settle for one-third of the Big Ten football championship in 2000, sharing the crown with Northwestern and Purdue.

But there was no question which Big Ten school dominated the 2001 recruiting wars. Michigan finished second nationally behind Florida State in BSB's consensus poll of recruiting experts, while no other Big Ten school cracked the top 10.

"They dominated," said Bill Kurelic, who tracks Big Ten recruiting for The Midwest Football Recruiting News. "They were just so strong in the Big Ten region. They got five of my top 10 players in the Midwest."

Michigan had its entire 22-man class in place by mid-January, snagging as many as 11 SuperPrep All-Americans.

"They were just amazing," said SuperPrep's Allen Wallace. "They are a recruiting juggernaut. They focused on kids extra early this year and that helped."

Beyond Michigan, the rest of the conference enjoyed respectable recruiting efforts.

"It's a very competitive league right now," said Tom Lemming of Illinois-based Prep Football Report. "The top nine schools will probably be in the top 30 or 35 and that usually is not the case."

"Every team in the league, including (last-place) Indiana, can say they got players who they think can help them win football games," added Rick Kimbrel of California-based PrepStar. "The league, in general, recruited very well."

There were several storylines involving Big Ten recruiting this year with most of them revolving around two coaching vacancies — Ohio State and Miami (Fla.).

At Ohio State, 13-year coach John Cooper was fired after his team's Jan. 1 Outback Bowl loss to South Carolina. The school took over two weeks to name Youngstown State's Jim Tressel as his successor. Tressel and his patchwork staff finished OSU's recruiting effort in a strong way, ending up third in Kurelic's rankings of Big Ten classes.

But the big losers in that whole scenario were Minnesota and its coach, OSU alum Glen Mason. The Golden Gophers put their recruiting efforts on hold as Mason chased the OSU job, only to come up empty.

As a result, Minnesota — despite appearing in a second consecutive bowl game — finished a distant 10th in the Big Ten recruiting race.

"If Mason is ever going to fulfill his promise as a college coach, he needs to take his name off the list every time a vacancy comes up," Kimbrel said. "He's a good coach that everybody wants to talk to."

"But every time he starts to listen it hurts the stability of where he's at."

The vacancy at Miami (Fla.) created only a small ripple in Big Ten recruiting.

After Butch Davis fled for the NFL's Cleveland Browns, Wisconsin's Barry Alvarez became the immediate top choice for the job.

One pundit spotted a rival Big Ten recruiting coordinator with a list of UW verbals to call. But before things could get out of hand, Alvarez pulled his name out of the running. His school's recruiting efforts were saved.

"When the rumors came up, a lot of schools called their players to try and change them around," Wallace said. "But what I call the Alvarez Window did not stay open long enough this time around. He pulled his name out and (UW's verbals) stayed put."

Here is a look at the recruiting efforts turned in by the Big Ten's 10 other schools. The schools are rated in order by Kurelic.

Michigan

The Wolverines signed seven Rivals100.com Recruiting national top 100 players, second only to Florida State's haul of 10 top 100 picks.

UM flexed its muscle by signing three top 100 players out of Pennsylvania, where assistant Teryl Austin, a Sharon, Pa., native, has gained a foothold. Those players are defensive back Marlin Jackson, wide receiver Tim Massaquoi and linebacker Scott McClintock.

Michigan went into Ohio and got two more top 100 players in defensive ends Pat Massey and Pierre Woods. The effort was topped off in state as defensive back Ernest Shazor committed early and running back Kelly Baraka picked UM over the likes of Notre Dame and Michigan State.

It was a nice rebound for Michigan, which dipped to fourth in the conference recruiting war last year after losing out on several key players in the final week before signing day.

"They had a great start with seven or eight five-star players, but then they kind of finished slow again," Lemming said. "They recruited their needs well. They did well on defense with Jackson and Shazor and got some pass rushers in Massey and Woods."

"They loaded up on defense," added Rivals100.com's Jeremy Crabtree. "They have their defense set for the future."

Jackson, Shazor and Baraka were all USA Today first-team All-USA picks, while Woods and Massey were second-team picks. The rest of the league combined had three signees from the 48-man All-USA team.

"This class has a lot of depth," Kimbrel said. "There are good players at almost every spot. My sleeper, who I think everybody underrated, was Texas running back David Underwood."

"We had just about everybody in the

class, except for (San Diego State transfer) Spencer Brinton, as an All-American. It's a pretty exciting class.

"They got a lot of good players like Kelly Baraka, Scott McClintock, Tim Massaquoi, Pat Massey and Ernest Shazor."

The Wolverines went into Wisconsin and got two of that state's top line prospects in Adam Stenavich and David Spytke, both SuperPrep All-Americans.

Michigan (22)

Kelly Baraka, 6-0, 180, RB, Portage Northern (Portage); Spencer Brinton, 6-5, 220, QB, Temecula Valley (Hemet, Calif.); Markus Curry, 6-0, 180, DB, Bishop Gallagher (Detroit); Kyle Easley, 6-7, 240, TE, Saint Joseph (Westchester, Ill.); Braylon Edwards, 6-3, 192, WR, Bishop Gallagher (Detroit); Leo Henige, 6-5, 315, OL, Chesaning; Marlin Jackson, 6-1, 180, DB, Sharon (Pa.); Matt Lentz, 6-6, 305, OL, Brandon (Ortonville); Tim Massaquoi, 6-4, 215, WR, Parkland (Breinigsville, Pa.); Patrick Massey, 6-8, 235, OL, Saint Ignatius (Brecksville, Ohio); Scott McClintock, 6-3, 225, LB, Belle Vernon (Pa.); Alex Oflin, 6-4, 230, DL, Ypsilanti; Lawrence Reid, 6-1, 215, LB, Pickerington (Ohio); Sean Sanderson, 6-3, 270, FB, Farragut (Knoxville); Joey Sarantos, 6-3, 215, LB, Portage Northern (Portage, Mich.); Ernest Shazor, 6-4, 210, DB, King (Detroit); Dan Simelis, 6-6, 295, OL, Montour (Coraopolis, Pa.); Dave Spytke, 6-7, 242, DL, Catholic Memorial (Pewaukee, Wis.); Adam Stenavich, 6-5, 260, OL, Marshfield (Wis.); Jacob Stewart, 5-11, 196, DB, Ypsilanti; David Underwood, 6-0, 220, RB, Madisonville (Texas); Pierre Woods, 6-6, 225, DL, Glenville (Cleveland).

Penn State

The Nittany Lions ended up signing four SuperPrep All-Americans, including two members of Rivals100.com's top 100 list.

Those two players were Pennsylvania linemen Tyler Reed and Charles Rush, who each were tempted by Pittsburgh and Michigan. Rush was also a second-team All-USA pick by USA

Today.

"They closed well in the last four days and got in-state linemen Charles Rush and Tyler Reed," Kurelic said.

"They got a great group of offensive linemen," said Phil Groz, who tracks PSU recruiting for Blue-White Illustrated as well as the G&W Recruiting Report. "They also had, perhaps, the best class of tight ends in the country with Andrew Richardson, Isaac Smolko and Scott Paxson."

Maryland defensive end Lavan Chisley and Pennsylvania wide receiver Terrance Phillips were also honored by SuperPrep.

But Penn State lost out on in-state running back Kevin Jones of the Philadelphia area. Jones, ranked No. 1 overall nationally by SuperPrep, picked Virginia Tech over PSU. As mentioned, Michigan took a heavy chunk of the Keystone State's best players as well.

"They went through a rough patch where they lost some important prospects, but they finished very strongly," Wallace said.

Penn State (23)

Lavan Chisley, 6-7, 238, DE, Waldorf (Westlake, Md.); Chris Ganter, 6-2, 190, QB, State College; Dethrell Garcia, 6-3, 235, LB/DE, Bishop McDevitt (Harrisburg); Andrew Guman, 6-3, 206, ATH, Allentown Central Catholic (Allentown); Chris Harrel, 6-2, 200, DB, Euclid (Ohio); Tom McHugh, 6-4, 280, OL, Monsignor Bonner (Drexel Hill, Pa.); Kinta Palmer, 6-4, 180, WR, Berkeley (Moncks Corner, S.C.); Scott Paxson, 6-5, 250, TE/DE, Roman Catholic (Philadelphia); Anwar Phillips, 6-1, 180, DB/WR, Northwest (Germantown, Md.); Terrance Phillips, 6-1, 185, WR, Sharon; Tyler Reed, 6-6, 305, OL, Thomas Jefferson (Pittsburgh); Matthew Rice, 6-5, 245, DE, Eleanor Roosevelt (Greenbelt, Md.); Andrew Richardson, 6-6, 245, TE, North Hills (Pittsburgh);

Continued On Page 14



Tyler Reed



Charles Rush



Kelly Baraka

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE BIG TEN

Hawthorne, Bell Key Signees For Wisconsin

Continued From Page 13

Michael Robinson, 6-3, 210, QB/DB, Varina (Richmond, Va.); Charles Rush, 6-4, 285, DL, Cathedral Prep (Erie); Ivan Schmidt, 6-1, 170, WR, Brandywine (Wilmington, Del.); E.Z. Smith, 6-3, 300, OL, Concord (N.C.); Isaac Smolko, 6-5, 245, TE/DE, Springfield (New Middleton, Ohio); LaMar Stewart, 6-1, 235, RB/LB, Reading; Ernest Terrell, 6-3, 182, WR, Norristown; Giovanni Vendemia, 6-0, 180, DB/WR, Greenville; John Wilson, 6-8, 315, OL, Mainland (Daytona Beach, Fla.); Allen Zernatis, 6-2, 198, CB, Central (Spencerport, N.Y.).

Ohio State

In comparison, Ohio State landed nine SuperPrep All-Americans among its 17 signees. The Buckeyes also got four Rivals100.com top 100 players.

OSU's recruiting efforts are recounted throughout this Recruiting Wrap-Up edition of BSB.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin inked a respectable class with two Rivals100.com top 100 picks and five SuperPrep All-American selections.

The top name is USA Today All-USA first-team defensive lineman Anttaj Hawthorne of Connecticut. He was joined on the Rivals100 list by Illinois defensive back Brett Bell.

"They got a great set of wide receivers, a great set of defensive backs and a really good defensive lineman in Anttaj Hawthorne," Grosz said. "Those

were their main needs and they filled them."

Other names of note include Michigan wide receiver Jonathan Orr and New Jersey quarterback Johnny Sylvain.

"They did a good job of clearing out the state and went down to Illinois to get Brett Bell and Owen Daniels," Lemming said. "I think Jonathan Orr is a nice wide receiver and Darrin Charles, who is 6-6 and has high jumped 7 feet, could also be a potential superstar."

Wisconsin (25)

Isaac Ballou, 6-5, 320, OL, Stanton Prep (Jacksonville, Fla.); Brett Bell, 6-0, 190, DB, Warrenville South (Wheaton, Ill.); Matt Bernstein, 6-2, 250, FB/LB, Edgemont (Scarsdale, N.Y.); Robert Brooks, 5-10, 170, DB, Newman Smith (Carrollton, Texas); Darrin Charles, 6-6, 190, WR, North (Oshkosh); Owen Daniels, 6-3, 215, QB, Central (Naperville, Ill.); Bob Docherty, 6-6, 260, TE, North (Oshkosh); John Gillen, 6-4, 225, LB, Glenbard West (Glen Ellyn, Ill.); Anttaj Hawthorne, 6-3, 310, DL, Hamden (Conn.); Devin Hollins, 6-0, 185, QB/ATH, Crenshaw (Los Angeles); DeAndre Kemp, 5-10, 180, WR, Narbonne (Carson, Calif.); Mike Kieber, 6-2, 280, DL, Catholic Memorial (Muskego); Jeff Lang, 6-6, 255, DL, Wisconsin Lutheran (Greenfield); Matt Lawrence, 6-5, 270, OL, Sussex Central (Millsboro, Del.); Lyle Malava, 6-2, 300, DL, St. Louis (Honolulu); Jonathan Orr, 6-3, 175, WR, Ford (Detroit); Jason Palermo, 6-3,



Brett Bell

265, DL, Edgewood (Madison); Jason Pociask, 6-3, 230, TE, Plainfield (Ind.); Donovan Raiola, 6-3, 290, OL, Kamehameha (Honolulu); Greg Root, 6-2, 240, LB, Highland (Palmdale, Calif.); Dontez Sanders, 6-1, 190, WR, Chanel (Bedford, Ohio); Scott Starks, 5-10, 170, DB, Hazelwood East (St. Louis); Johnny Sylvain, 5-10, 170, DB, Hackensack (N.J.); Nick Toffler, 6-3, 295, OL, Newaygo; Jake Wood, 6-6, 270, OL, Pleasant Valley (Bettendorf, Iowa).

Iowa

Despite a rough first two seasons on the field for coach Kirk Ferentz, the Hawkeyes did a decent job.

Iowa got one USA Today first-team All-USA player and Rivals100 pick in in-state lineman Brett Larsen. He was joined on the SuperPrep team by Florida wide receiver Darius Butler.

"I give credit to them for keeping the two best linemen in the state, Blake Larsen and Ben Cronin, at home," Grosz said.

The Hawkeyes signed six in-state players, including Ferentz's son, offensive lineman Brian Ferentz, and then inked players from nine other states.

"They were a big surprise this year," Kurelic said. "When I looked at it back in December, they were headed for a horrendous recruiting season. But they got most of the kids in Iowa they were after to commit."

Iowa (22)

Antwan Allen, 5-10, 160, DB, Armwood (Tampa); Brad Banks, 6-1, 180, QB, Hinds (Miss.); C.J. Barkema, 6-8, 235, TE, Muscatine; Matt Bohnet, 6-3, 210, QB, Grand Lodge (Mich.); Darius Butler, 6-1, 190, WR, Plantation (Fla.); De'Von Clark, 6-3, 160, WR, Marian Catholic (Chicago Heights, Ill.); Ben Cronin, 6-5, 270, OL, Ames; Fabian Dodd, 6-3, 280, DL, Piper (Lauderhill, Fla.); Brian Ferentz, 6-2, 245, OL, City High (Iowa City); Mike Follett, 6-5, 215, DB, Valley (West Des Moines); Ben Gates, 6-6, 235, TE, South Tama (Toledo); Lee Gray, 6-6, 270, DL, Bishop Dunne (Dallas); Chad Greenway, 6-4, 215, DB, Mt. Vernon (S.D.); Ed Hinkel, 6-1, 170, DB, Cathedral Prep (Erie, Pa.); Abdul Hodge, 6-2, 220, LB, Boyd Anderson (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.); C.J. Jones, 6-0, 185, WR, Garden City (Kan.); Blake Larsen, 6-7, 304, OL, Atlantic; Matt Neubauer, 6-6, 225, OLB, Iowa Falls; Jermire Roberts, 6-2, 210, DB, Trinity Valley (Texas); Matt Roth, 6-4, 245, LB, Willowbrook (Villa Park, Ill.); Adolphus Shelton, 5-10, 165, DB, Carter (Dallas); Kahari Stewart, 6-6, 230, WR, Finney (Detroit).

Purdue

Purdue capitalized on its first Rose Bowl trip since 1966 by signing a class that included two Rivals100.com top 100 picks and four SuperPrep All-Americans.

"The good thing overall is the level of player they are recruiting has risen," Grosz said. "They aren't taking any questionable kids."

The Rivals100 picks were Iowa quarterback Kyle Orton and Illinois receiver Kevin Noel. Those two were joined on the SuperPrep team by Indiana running back Brandon Jones and Kentucky linebacker Brent Grover.

"Purdue got 22 good kids," Grosz said. "The best player they got was the quarterback, Kyle Orton. Brent Grover, the linebacker from Kentucky, is also exceptional. Kevin Noel, the wide receiver from Illinois, is also a quality player."

Wallace added, "Orton could be one of the guys who could be special. Plus, they got some really good players with Grover, Noel, Jones and (Missouri lineman) Antwan Harris.

"This class is very well-suited to help Purdue challenge again for the Big Ten championship."

Kimbrel believes Purdue will be a program to reckon with as long as Joe Tiller's strong offensive system is in place.

"They have definitely become the team that other Big Ten teams have to contend with," Kimbrel said. "They were in on a lot of the best players in the Midwest, especially the skill position players."

"Ohio State did well to get Angelo Chattams back from them. Purdue will have a lot of athletes looking their way because they air it out."

Purdue (22)

Reggie Benton, 6-1, 210, RB, Grand Blanc (Mich.); LaDrelle Bryant, 6-2, 215, LB, Muncie Southside (Muncie, Ind.); Charles Davis, 6-6, 265, TE, St. Mary's (Orchard Lake, Mich.); Ryan Davis, 6-4, 245, DE, Millville (N.J.); Jameson Evans, 6-1, 202, WR, Shaker Heights (Ohio); Brent Grover, 6-4, 230, LB, Jersey (Raytown, Mo.); Brent Hawkins, 6-2, 210, LB, Jersey Community (Jerseyville, Ill.); Brian Hickman, 6-0, 170, CB, Westbury (Houston); Bobby Iwuchukwu, 6-2, 200, LB, James Martin (Arlington, Texas); Brandon Jones, 5-11, 215, RB, Peru (Ind.); Matt Knollman, 6-4, 250, OL, Lakota West (West Chester, Ohio); Jason Lemberger, 6-2, 205, LB, Lakota West (West Chester, Ohio); Kevin Noel, 6-3, 185, WR, Naperville Central (Naperville, Ill.); Kyle Orton, 6-3, 205, QB, Southeast Polk (Russell, Iowa); Mike Rhinehart, 6-5, 235, QB, Homestead (Fort Wayne, Ind.); Josh Tomasek, 6-7, 270, OL, Strongsville (Ohio); Matt Turner, 6-3, 260, OL, Kirtland (Ohio); Brandon Villarreal, 6-2, 260, LB, Allen (Texas); Jerod Void, 6-2, 185, ATH, Surrattsville (Clinton, Md.); Brian Wang, 6-7, 260, TE, Southwest Christian (Fort Worth, Texas); David Williams, 5-10, 185, ATH, Newman Smith (Dallas).

Illinois

The Fighting Illini got four SuperPrep All-Americans: Illinois defensive back Chuck Moore, Illinois defensive end Lionel Williams, Missouri linebackers T.W. Norman and Matt Sinclair.

"They did a much better job recruiting their home state," Grosz said. "They also went out-of-state and got a good linebacker in Matt Sinclair."

"This was another very solid effort," Wallace added. "They started quickly and added Sinclair. They got in-state lineman Lionel Williams, in-state DB Chuck Moore and T.W. Norman."

Illinois (22)

James Cooper, 5-11, 185, DB, Thornton Township (South Holland); Sedrick Davenport, 6-0, 175, DB, Bolingbrook; Matt Diugolecki, 6-5, 220, QB, Santa Margarita (Coto de Caza, Calif.); Cory Flisakowski, 6-2, 215, FB, Stevens Point (Wis.); Jim Goranson, 6-4, 220, LB, Elk Grove; Jamie Hanton, 6-4, 290, DT, Chaffey College (Calif.); JC; Mario Ivy, 6-3, 225, DE, Ellsworth (Iowa); Abe Jones, 5-11, 179, RB, Rolling Meadows; Kendrick Jones, 6-3, 170, WR, East St. Louis; Tamar Jordan, 5-11, 185, DB, Marcos De Niza (Tempe, Ariz.); Kyle Klueckner, 6-0, 185, DB, Downers Grove North (Downers Grove, Ill.); Antonio Mason, 6-0, 240, LB, Pattonville (St. Louis); Ryan Matha, 6-1, 250, DT, Dixon; Chuck Moore, 6-4, 200, DB, Elk Grove; Rob Neesham, 6-6, 305, OL, Rolling Meadows (Arlington Heights); T.W. Norman, 6-3, 240, LB, Stockton (Mo.); Brian Schaeffer, 6-5, 210, LB, Hazelwood East (St. Louis); Kyle Schnettgoecke, 6-4, 252, OL, Chamaine Prep (St. Louis); Matt Sinclair, 6-3, 225, LB, St. Louis University (St. Louis); Morris Virgi, 5-10, 185, RB, Urbana; Steve Weatherford, 6-4, 205, K, Terre Haute North (Terre Haute, Ind.); Lionel Williams, 6-5, 240, DL, Addison Trail.

Michigan State

This was Bobby Williams' first full recruiting effort with the Spartans, and he had MSU in on a number of key prospects including Michigan signee Baraka, Miami (Fla.) signee Leon Williams and Clemson signee Airese Currie.

But MSU could sign only two

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE BIG TEN/NOTRE DAME

SuperPrep All-Americans: In-state wide receiver Robert Strickland and Maryland linebacker Seth Mitchell.

"Michigan State did pretty well and got some athletes, but the question to me is how many will qualify," Grosz said. "They took Brandon McKinney and Alphonso Townsend from Ohio State, but both have academic concerns."

"If all of their players make it academically, which is a big if, this class could turn out to be a lot better on the field down the road than it looks right now," Kurelic said. "But for now, a lot of these guys are question marks."

Michigan State (21)

Aaron Alexander, 6-5, 190, QB, Henrico (Richmond); Matthias Askew, 6-7, 290, DL, Dillard (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.); Michael Bazemore, 6-4, 228, LB, West Catholic (Philadelphia); Van Brown, 6-5, 250, DE, Pasadena (Calif.); CC; Robert Flagg, 6-5, 205, DE, Miami Norland Senior (Miami); Damien Fortson, 6-0, 185, CB, Ravenna (Ohio); Julian Lovett, 6-4, 200, WR, SUNY-Morrisville; Mike McConnell, 6-0, 205, RB, Northeastern Oklahoma A&M JC; Brandon McKinney, 6-3, 310, DT, Chaminade-Julienne (Dayton); Seth Mitchell, 6-3, 230, LB, Gwynn Park (Brandywine, Md.); Christopher Morris, 6-4, 285, OL, Temperance-Bedford (Lambertville); Gordon Niebylski, 6-4, 295, OT, Brother Rice (Bloomfield Hills); Jason Randall, 6-6, 240, TE, Muskegon (Muskegon Heights); Dave Rayner, 6-3, 200, K, Oxford; Eric Smith, 6-1, 195, DB, Groveport-Madison (Groveport, Ohio); Ronald Stanley, 6-2, 210, LB, Saginaw; Ben Stecker, 6-5, 205, WR, Southridge (Huntingburg, Ind.); Robert Strickland, 6-4, 205, WR/LB, Derby (Detroit); Alphonso Townsend, 6-6, 310, OL/DL, Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy; Stefan Wheeler, 6-5, 330, OL, Milford (Conn.) Academy; Ryan Woods, 6-5, 230, TE, Christian Brothers College (Florissant, Mo.).

Northwestern

Northwestern inked just one Rivals100 pick and SuperPrep All-American in highly touted Texas defensive lineman Thomas Derricks.

"They got a real good class, considering the fact their talent pool is a lot smaller," Lemming said. "Of the nation's top 200 players, they can probably only look at about 60 of them."

"They did a nice job to beat Ohio State on (Ohio running back) Jeff Backes and they beat Notre Dame for (Indiana tight end) Trai Essex."

Grosz was impressed with NU's haul. "They got a star-quality guy in Thomas Derricks," he said. "Sundi Griffin is a good running back and Luis Castillo, a defensive tackle from New Jersey, is also a real solid recruit."

"Jeff Backes from Ohio is also not a bad player."

Coming off a Big Ten championship season and playing an engaging spread offense, Northwestern could become a prime destination.

"I think you have to watch out for the Wildcats," Kimbrel said. "They are doing things like Stanford, getting players who are good and smart. I think they cashed in on their success."

"They picked up a transfer from Notre Dame in wide receiver Jovan Witherspoon."

Kicker David Wasielewski of Florida is apparently a throwback to the Lou Groza days as a straight-on kicker.

Northwestern (21)

Ashton Aikens, 6-2, 190, RB, Detroit Country Day (Detroit); Jeff Backes, 5-10, 180, RB, Upper Arlington (Columbus, Ohio); Brett Basanze, 6-2, 175, QB, St. Viator (Arlington Heights, Ill.); Sundi Brewer-Griffin, 6-0, 180, RB, St. Paul Academy (St. Paul, Minn.); Luis Castillo, 6-4, 265, DT, Garfield (N.J.); Vince Clarke, 6-5, 275, OT, Granite Hills (El Cajon, Calif.); Thomas Derricks, 6-1, 295, DT, Jesuit Prep (Garland, Texas);

Irish Trying To Balance Ball, Books

After a dismal 5-7 showing in 1999, Notre Dame returned to the national forefront by qualifying for a Bowl Championship Series bid at the Fiesta Bowl.

The 41-9 loss to Oregon State was certainly forgettable. But ND coach Bob Davie, armed with a contract extension, did not let that stand in the way of signing another respectable class.

"I had them ranked 13th nationally," said Tom Lemming of Illinois-based Prep Football Report. "That isn't a bad spot for them, but it gives Notre Dame fans something to cry about."

Lemming said he saw Notre Dame focus its efforts on better students this time around.

"Notre Dame is at a crossroads," Lemming said. "I know they're trying to become the Stanford of the East. But when you have football players, they usually don't have the 1300 on the SAT. They're going to have to give some guys some breaks."

"This year, they were competing more against Northwestern, Georgia Tech and Stanford than they did against Florida State, Tennessee or Michigan. That right there is the main problem."

Still, the Fighting Irish had 11 SuperPrep All-Americans among their 19 signees.

"Sometimes when you analyze Notre Dame, you have too much information," said SuperPrep's Allen Wallace, who also ranked ND 13th. "The way things look you would say they should be in the top

10. They have 11 of our All-Americans."

"But they didn't finish as strongly as they would have liked. They lost (defensive lineman) Shaun Cody to USC and (running back) Lydell Ross to Ohio State."

"They did end up getting (New Jersey cornerback) Lionel Bolen away from Virginia Tech. (Virginia receiver) Carlos Campbell is also a good athlete and (New Jersey running back) Ryan Grant is one of the elite running backs in the country."

"This class lacks the kind of star power Notre Dame people are demanding now, especially in view of the Oregon State game. There aren't enough difference-makers here."

The Irish did sign two Rivals100.com Recruiting national top 100 players in Minnesota lineman Mark LeVoir and Massachusetts offensive lineman Zachary Giles.

LeVoir was a USA Today All-USA first-team pick, while Giles and Illinois linebacker Corey Mays were second-team picks.

"They needed line help and they got it with Mark LeVoir," said Rivals100's Jeremy Crabtree, who ranked ND 15th. "They would have liked to have closed



Corey Mays

stronger with Cody and Ross. But this is a good class. They needed speed and they got some of that."

"I like their class. They picked up some speed with Carlos Campbell, who was committed to Georgia for a while," added PrepStar's Rick Kimbrel. "This is a solid class that should help them in the future."

Bill Kurelic of The Midwest Football Recruiting News said he would rank ND between 14th and 16th nationally.

"This class is not the typical Notre Dame class with all of the Parade All-Americans, but it is still a very good class," he said. "Mark LeVoir was the top player in Minnesota and one of the best in the Midwest."

— Steve Helwagen

Notre Dame (19)

Brian Beldetsch, 6-4, 265, DL, Marquette (Milwaukee, Wis.); Lionel Bolen, 6-1, 185, CB, Rancocas Valley (Mount Holly, N.J.); Quentin Burrell, 6-1, 185, S, Southwest DeKalb (Decatur, Ga.); Carlos Campbell, 6-1, 190, WR, Hampton (Va.); Dwight Elick, 5-11, 170, CB, Wharton (Tampa); Zachary Giles, 6-4, 285, OL, Marshfield (Mass.); Ryan Grant, 6-1, 198, RB, Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, N.J.); Brandon Hoyte, 6-0, 219, ILB, Sayreville War Memorial (Parlin, N.J.); Cory Jones, 6-2, 215, RB, Kennedy (Seattle); Mark LeVoir, 6-7, 310, TE, Eden Prairie (Minn.); Corey Mays, 6-1, 234, ILB, Morgan Park (Chicago); Darin Mitchell, 6-4, 285, OL, Lovejoy (Ga.); Rashon Powers-Neal, 6-3, 215, OLB, Cretin-Derham (St. Paul, Minn.); Matt Root, 6-6, 225, TE, North Florida Christian (Tallahassee); Matt Shelton, 6-1, 170, WR, Coillerville (Tenn.); Dan Stevenson, 6-5, 300, OL, Barrington (Ill.); Jeff Thompson, 6-5, 265, DL, Penn (Mishawaka, Ind.); Justin Tuck, 6-5, 215, OLB, Central Coosa County (Gadsden, Ala.); Marcus Wilson, 5-11, 180, RB, Poly Prep (Brooklyn, N.Y.)

Trai Essex, 6-4, 240, TE, Paul Harding (Fort Wayne, Ind.); Jonathan Fields, 5-8, 170, CB, Sweeney (Texas); Herschel Henderson, 6-3, 190, S, Clear Lake (Houston); Braden Jones, 6-2, 220, LB, Harrisburg, Ill.; Taylor Jones, 6-3, 230, LB, Winnetonka (Gladstone, Mo.); Greg Lutzen, 6-5, 250, DE, Pewaukee (Wis.); John Pickens, 6-2, 215, LB, Ramapo (Franklin Lakes, N.J.); Zach Strief, 6-7, 305, OT, Milford (Ohio); Frederic Tarver, 6-2, 195, WR, Rivanna County (Palmyra, Va.); David Thompson, 6-3, 245, DE, Rockledge (Fla.); David Wasielewski, 5-10, 220, P/PK, Belen Jesuit (Odessa, Fla.); DeMaris Wilson, 6-4, 245, DE, Sparkman (Harvest, Ala.); Jovan Witherspoon, 6-3, 210, WR, Bishop Luers (Fort Wayne, Ind.); Joe Wohlscheid, 6-7, 245, TE, Grand Ledge (Mich.).

Minnesota

While Mason's status was up in the air, the Gophers stopped hosting potential recruits.

"Minnesota missed three of their weekends in January and it came back to hurt them," Lemming said.

The uncertainty cost the Gophers such homegrown talents as quarterback Joe Mauer (Florida State) and wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald (Pittsburgh).

Minnesota inked just one SuperPrep All-American in Florida defensive lineman Damien Hayes.

"I hate to say this, but I didn't recognize many of their players," Grosz said. "They got a good running back in state in Marion Barber, but overall they have to be upset with what they were able to get."

Minnesota (22)

Marion Barber III, 5-11, 195, RB, Wayzata (Plymouth); Jerry Barnes Jr., 6-6, 230, DL, Kettering (Detroit); Matthew Bass III, 6-0, 170, DB, McArthur (Miramar, Fla.); Terrance Campbell, 6-2, 185, LB, Douglass (Atlanta); Damos Demeritt, 5-11, 197, RB, Miami Norland Senior (Miami); Jared Ellerson, 6-2, 181, WR, Copley (Ohio); Richard Ellman, 6-5, 275, OL, Oconto (Wis.); Brandon Hall, 6-5, 270, OL, (Detroit); Damian Hayes, 6-2, 245, DL, Hialeah-American (Miami); Chariton Keith, 6-5, 220, LB, Buchtel (Akron, Ohio); Rob Kraemer, 6-4, 285, OL, Forest Lake (White Bear Lake); Keith Lipka, 6-4, 265, DL, Oak Creek (Wis.); Mark Losil, 6-7, 240, DL, Spring Lake Park;

Kason Love, 6-2, 260, DL, Chaffey (Calif.); Trevor McCulloch, 6-4, 300, OL, Brainerd; Mike Nicholson, 6-5, 285, OL, River Falls (Wis.); Jarod Posthumus, 6-4, 215, QB, Becker (St. Cloud); Derrick Saunders, 5-10, 170, DB, SUNY College-Morrisville; Danny Upchurch, 5-9, 170, DB, Brookhaven (Columbus, Ohio); Bradley Vance, 6-1, 211, LB, Thornwood (Calumet City, Ill.); Jakari Wallace, 5-8, 170, WR, Boyd Anderson (Lauderdale Lakes, Fla.); Ken Williams, 6-1, 175, DB, Bedford (Oakwood Village, Ohio).

Indiana

The Hoosiers got four JUCO transfers and a prep school signee among their 22 signees. One player, New York running back Jason Sullivan, was named to the SuperPrep All-American team.

"I think the kids they got from the Cincinnati area, (fullback) Kyle Koester and (linebacker) Carlos Tipton, can help them," Lemming said. "I think Ohio State would have looked at Tipton if his academics were a little better."

But of the four Big Ten coaches hired after the 1996 season — Purdue's Tiller, Minnesota's Mason and Illinois' Ron Turner were the others — Indiana's Cam Cameron has had the toughest time getting his program established on and off

the field.

"I'm struggling to find something good to say about (IU's recruiting)," Grosz said. "Their five JUCO transfers head the class. They will have the ability to play next year."

Indiana (22)

Victor Adeyanju, 6-5, 215, DE, Currie (Chicago); Leonard Bryant, 5-10, 180, DB, Immokalee (Fla.); Matt Buchholz, 6-4, 235, TE, San Bernardino Valley (Calif.) College; Courtney Clency, 5-10, 185, RB, Park Tudor (Indianapolis); Brandon Hatcher, 6-2, 275, DT, Cass Tech (Detroit); Damien Jones, 5-10, 185, DB, Sterling (Houston); Kyle Koester, 6-1, 250, FB, Elder (Cincinnati); Martin Lapostolle, 6-2, 240, LB, Cegego du Vieux (Montreal, Quebec); Buster Larkins, 5-11, 180, DB, Cathedral (Indianapolis); Will Lumpkin, 5-11, 192, DB, Trotwood-Madison (Dayton, Ohio); Willie Northern, 6-1, 195, DB, San Francisco (Calif.); CC; Ted Pace, 6-1, 185, LB, W.T. Dwyer (Jupiter, Fla.); Bryan Robertson, 5-9, 180, K, Seymour (Ind.); Dru Robinson, 5-10, 195, RB, San Francisco (Calif.); CC; Michael Robinson, 6-6, 210, WR, Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy; Courtney Roby, 6-1, 180, WR, North Central (Indianapolis); Isaac Sowell, 6-5, 290, OL, Doss (Louisville); Jason Sullivan, 6-1, 235, RB, Monsignor Farrell (Staten Island, N.Y.); Carlos Tipton, 6-3, 200, LB, Winton Woods (Cincinnati); Yamar Washington, 5-10, 200, RB, Klein Forest (Houston); Antonio Young, 6-1, 198, DB, Hinds (Miss.); CC; Courtney Watson, 6-5, 282, DT, San Francisco (Calif.); CC.

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: UNDERCLASSMEN TO WATCH

Ohio's Class Of 2002 Could Be A Special One

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

New OSU head coach Jim Tressel will likely put all 26 years of his experience recruiting football talent in the state of Ohio on the line in the next 12 months.

Tressel and the Buckeyes will be going after what some pundits say is the most talented class in the Buckeye State in recent memory.

"It should be a strong year," noted OSU recruiting coordinator Bill Conley.

When asked whether the Buckeyes will be able to capitalize on such a crop of players in their own back yard, Conley said, "We would hope so. We always want to have a strong base in Ohio. Hopefully, we can keep a large percentage of those kids here at home.

"Anytime you can do that, it definitely helps."

For the fourth consecutive year, Duane Long and Chris Roberts will publish their Ohio's Future Stars newsletter. As always, OFS will focus on the state of Ohio's top seniors-to-be with cursory glances at the top sophomores and freshmen around the state.

In recent years, most Ohio-based talent evaluators have been most impressed by two classes:

- The 1994 class, which produced the likes of Dee Miller, Orlando Pace, Damon Moore, Eric Gohlstin, John Lumpkin and Pepe Pearson for Ohio State and Curtis Enis for Penn State; and

- The 1996 class, which sent the likes of Andy Katzenmoyer, Jefferson Kelley, Nick Goings, Gary Berry and Tyson Walter to OSU.

But Long said the 2002 Ohio crop ranks right up with those two — if it's not better.

"This is the best class in Ohio in at least 10 years, with all due respect to the Pace and Katzenmoyer classes," Long said. "This is one of the most well-rounded classes to come out of this state. There maybe aren't a lot of big-time defensive

backs, but there are still a lot of great athletes who could go on and play those positions at the college level.

"It will be a great year for linebackers and running backs. I would go so far as to say I would be surprised if there aren't five linebackers from the state of Ohio in the consensus top 20 at that position nationally.

"This has the potential to be a monster class."

Ohio State is in a unique position to capitalize on such a banner year in state. With just 17 signees in the class of 2001, the Buckeyes figure to have at least 23 scholarships to give next year. That figure will likely increase as current Buckeyes fall by the wayside due to the normal attrition factors — academics, injuries or transfers.

It certainly will help that Tressel has been recruiting the state of Ohio since he became an assistant at Akron in 1975. Even during his two-year stint at Syracuse (1981-82), Tressel handled recruiting duties in Ohio.

"High school coaches want to feel good that their young person, whom they have nurtured for years, is going to be well cared for," Tressel said. "I think you can help them feel that way if you get to know them a little bit. Creating those relationships in the state is crucial."

"A look at OSU's projected roster for 2001 would show a pressing need for the Buckeyes on the offensive line. OSU will also be looking for one or more quarterbacks in addition to help on the defensive line and in the secondary.

"We're working hard on juniors and we feel we know who the good sophomores are in the state," Tressel said. "The key for us will be to keep the pulse on the great kids and make sure they are constantly being bombarded with the idea they have to do well academically and they have to understand the responsibility they have now because big-time folks like Ohio State are looking at them."

In fact, the Buckeyes may already have a head start on next year's class with ver-

bal commitments in principle from Toledo Rogers running back/linebacker Drushaun Humphreys and Warren Harding running back Maurice Clarett. Humphreys' verbal is contingent on him qualifying academically, while Clarett was reportedly waiting until after signing day to announce his verbal publicly.

OFS will come out with the first of three issues planned for the next 12 months in March. However, the following is a list of players being considered for the publication's early Ohio top 10.

That list is followed by a position-by-position look at prospects in Ohio and around the Midwest as well as top sophomores and freshmen to watch.

Top 10 Contenders

Here are 10 players being considered for a list of the state's top juniors, listed as ranked by OFS (40-yard dash times are included as available).

- **Drushaun Humphreys, running back/linebacker, Toledo Rogers** — Humphreys (6-3, 235, 4.48) gets the nod as OFS' top Ohio junior. He was offered a scholarship by OSU after starring at last summer's camp.

"He's a phenomenal talent," Long said. "At the Ohio State camp, he ran three sub-4.5 40s — and this kid weighs 235 pounds. In seven-on-seven drills, he intercepted six passes."

He also finished the 20-yard shuttle run in 3.91 seconds — a time consistent with the fastest times turned in by OSU players.

After rushing for 500 yards, intercepting six passes and scoring 13 touchdowns in limited action as a sophomore, Humphreys carried for 1,107 yards and scored 19 TDs as a junior.

"He is such an athlete he plays a strong safety in Rogers' scheme," Long said. "He is a big, athletic kid. He's a natural football player who wants to play running back. He probably could play linebacker as easily as he could play running back."

Academics remain the one big hurdle for Humphreys, who is attending night school to shore up some core course deficiencies.

"He is working very hard at it," Long said. "He takes it very seriously. He is a very determined kid."

- **Maurice Clarett, running back, Warren Harding** — Clarett (6-1, 230, 4.5) seemed poised to make his verbal commitment to OSU for 2002 public any day. Clarett had also considered Notre Dame.

"That should be a done deal," Long said. "He got excited and committed and the only reason they backed off of it was because it might affect this recruiting class."

Clarett has had the eyes of college recruiters since his freshman year at Austintown Fitch, when he was already a man among boys.

He transferred to Harding as a sophomore, rushing for 1,058 yards and scoring 18 touchdowns despite missing considerable time due to injury.

This past season, he played in just five-plus games due to injuries, but still accumulated over 1,000 yards. He tried to play in a week two showdown against Cincinnati Moeller but was still injured. He recovered enough to play most of the season's final five games.

"When he has been healthy, he has been the most potent back in the state," Long said. "He is a power back, but he is not just a straight-ahead runner. I would compare him somewhat to Jerome Bettis. He has good change of direction.

"Outside of the injury problems, he has consistently beaten just about everybody he has faced."

He reportedly benches between 350 and 400 pounds and also is a 3.3 GPA student.

- **Bryan Andrews, defensive end/linebacker, Lima Senior** — Andrews (6-6, 215, 4.7) earned first-team All-Ohio honors in Division I at linebacker as a junior. He notched 13 sacks as a sophomore for a Division I playoff team.

"He is an intriguing prospect," Long said. "He could play defensive end or linebacker. As a defensive end, he reminds me a little bit of (Penn State's) Courtney Brown when I saw him as a senior in high school."

He has reportedly already been offered by OSU. New OSU defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio had been recruiting Andrews as well for Michigan State.

- **Mike D'Andrea, linebacker, Avon Lake** — D'Andrea (6-3, 230, 4.55) was a first-team All-Ohio pick and The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer's defensive player of the year as a junior, when he tallied 120 tackles and five sacks. He also caught 20 passes at tight end.

That followed a junior year when he helped lead Avon Lake to an 8-3 mark and a playoff berth with a team-high 97 tackles. He also set a national record for 15- and 16-year-olds in the shot put (62 feet, 9 inches) in the Junior Olympics in Orlando, Fla.

"A lot of people like to compare him to Andy Katzenmoyer," Long said. "Everybody I speak to says he plays sideline to sideline and is an instinctive linebacker out of the Katzenmoyer mold."

"But this kid holds a 3.5 GPA." D'Andrea recently made an unofficial visit to Nebraska and was offered. Oklahoma and OSU also have offered. Michigan and Notre Dame are also in the picture.

- **Quinn Pitcock, tight end/defensive tackle, Piqua** — Pitcock (6-4, 287, 4.9) earned first-team All-Ohio honors in Division II as a junior. That followed a sophomore year when he had 14 sacks, 20 tackles for loss and blocked four punts.

"I saw Piqua play Marysville in the playoffs and Quinn Pitcock is the best defensive lineman I've seen in Ohio since (Chillicothe's) Chuck Jones," Long said. "And that goes back before Big Daddy (Dan) Wilkinson and Trent Zenkewicz."

"Quinn is strong and fast. He's almost 290 pounds and looks like he has a 34-inch waist. He's huge, mobile and just throws kids around. He has excellent speed."

Pitcock, who holds a 3.9 GPA, already squats 550 pounds.

- **Justin Zwick, quarterback, Massillon Washington** — Zwick (6-4,



Drushaun Humphrey



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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: UNDERCLASSMEN TO WATCH

205, 4.67) has already received a lot of acclaim by surpassing the Ohio career passing yardage record in just three seasons.

So it may seem strange that a player at an important position like quarterback is rated as low as No. 6. But that is not a knock on Zwick, Long said.

"Why he's down this far on the list has nothing to do with his talent level," Long said. "But this is just such a monster class."

Zwick has 7,208 yards — and 75 touchdowns — in three seasons, giving him a legitimate shot at becoming one of the few 10,000-yard passers in national prep history.

He threw for 2,460 yards and 24 touchdowns after transferring to Massillon this past year. He was a first-team All-Ohio pick and led the Tigers to the Division I playoffs. He helped Orrville win a Division III state title as a freshman.

"Justin is the most complete quarterback in Ohio since (Cleveland St. Ignatius) Joe Pickens," Long said. "He has excellent size, he's got a strong arm and he moves well. His field vision is outstanding."

"But the game he played against St. Ignatius showed one thing about him nobody knew about — his toughness. He stood in there and delivered pass after pass. He kept getting knocked down and just kept getting up."



Justin Zwick

Zwick has toured several of his favorite schools recently and now lists OSU, Michigan and Pittsburgh as his favorites. His brother, Jared, played for Tressel at Youngstown State as a backup quarterback and receiver from 1996-99. Jared was a member of the Penguins' 1997 Division I-AA national championship team.

• **DeShawn Wynn, running back, Reading** — Wynn (6-1, 210, 4.34) is a prolific running back who moved from Lockland, another Cincinnati suburb, prior to his junior year. Because of the transfer, he was limited to the last five regular-season games. But, including his team's run to the Division V state semifinals, he ended up carrying 229 times for 1,971 yards (8.6 average) and scoring 27 TDs.

Injuries limited him to only 40 carries as a sophomore at Lockland after he broke loose for 1,915 yards and 34 TDs as a freshman.

"DeShawn has the potential to be at the top of this class," Long said. "He is a speed back with good size. There is absolutely no reason why he should always depend on his speed with that size. He also has good hands and could become a wide receiver."

"If his grades are in order, he could shoot up the list."

• **Roy Hall, wide receiver, Lyndhurst Brush** — Hall (6-3, 205, 4.4)



Roy Hall

had 42 catches as a sophomore, but injuries limited him to 21 catches in seven games as a junior.

"He is a phenomenal athlete who has not put up big numbers," Long said. "He's been in a bad situation. He's not in a passing offense. You have to grade high school wide receivers on athletic ability."

"That's true with this kid. Don't look at the catch total. He's got it all."

Hall holds a 3.5 GPA.

• **Bobby Carpenter, running back/linebacker, Lancaster** — Carpenter (6-3, 220, 4.5) is the son of former Miami (Ohio) and New York Giants star Rob Carpenter, also the Lancaster head coach. But he was limited to just four games as a junior due to injuries.

"He is an outstanding linebacker with a great frame," Long said. "He is just about the ideal size. He's very consistent. He's a workaholic. He's fast enough to maybe play strong safety. He loves the game."

Carpenter reportedly favors OSU. But with a 3.8 GPA he will have everybody nationwide jingling his telephone.

• **Mike Kudla, linebacker/defensive end, Medina Highland** — Kudla (6-4, 245, 4.52) tallied 100 tackles as a junior.

"He probably projects as a defensive

end," Long said. "He could easily add 20 to 40 pounds and become a down lineman. They say he already benches 450 pounds."

Kudla attended the OSU and Michigan camps last year and, with a 3.8 GPA, already has interest from Northwestern and Stanford.

Seniors: Position-By-Position

Here is a position-by-position look at the top prospects in Ohio and the region.

Quarterbacks

• **Denayne Davidson-Dixon, East Cleveland Shaw** — Davidson-Dixon (6-3, 205, 4.65) is the state's solid No. 2 QB prospect behind Zwick. As a junior, he threw for 2,000 yards and 16 touchdowns and completed an amazing 70 percent of his passes.

He reportedly likes OSU and also has Wisconsin and Purdue inquiring.

• **Bryan Cupito, Cincinnati McNicholas** — Cupito (6-3, 170, 4.7) has thrown for over 5,000 yards and 45 touchdowns over the last two years. He had 2,000 yards and 21 TDs as a junior.

• **Jimmy Skinner, Chillicothe, Ohio** — Skinner (6-4, 180) threw for 1,400



Denayne Davidson-Dixon



Bobby Carpenter

Continued On Page 26

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: UNDERCLASSMEN TO WATCH

Younger Chattams Gets His Run Through The Mill

Continued From Page 25

yards and 18 TDs as a sophomore for the Cavaliers.

• **Dusty Aldrich, McComb, Ohio** — Aldrich (6-1, 175) completed 175 of 272 passes (64.3 percent) for 3,014 yards. He had a wicked touchdown-to-interception ratio of 44 to 4. He did most of his damage by throwing to his twin brother, Rusty.

• **Mark Borda, Allentown (Pa.)** Bethlehem Catholic — Borda (6-3, 190) is a Student Sports junior All-American.

• **Tyler Palko, Imperial (Pa.)** West Allegheny — Palko (6-2, 205) is also a Student Sports junior All-American. Palko earned first-team all-state honors as a defensive back as a junior.

Running Backs

• **Regis Edgerson, Garfield Heights, Ohio** — Edgerson (6-1 1/2, 220, 4.4) rushed for 1,400 yards as a junior, missing considerable time due to shin splints.

"He looks a bit like Eddie George and, like George, he has good character," Long said.

• **Erick Phillips, Hilliard (Ohio)** Davidson — Phillips (5-10, 205, 4.5) rushed for 1,923 yards and scored 20 touchdowns as a junior, when he earned second-team All-Ohio honors in Division I. That followed up a sophomore campaign when he had 941 yards.

"He is bigger than he looks and he runs

like it," Long said. "He is a high-energy kid and a leader."

• **Sean Miller, Solon, Ohio** — Miller (5-11 1/2, 195, 4.48) served as the backup to Scott Greenberg for the Division I runner-up squad. Still, this son of former Cleveland Browns star Cleo Miller got 1,300 yards and will become the feature back this year.

• **Tyler Everett, Canton (Ohio)** McKinley — Everett (5-11, 190) emerged as a big-time rusher for the Bulldogs as a sophomore, when he had 842 yards. Injuries have limited his progress, however.



Tyler Everett

• **Gerald Riggs Jr., Chattanooga (Tenn.)** Red Bank — Riggs (6-1, 195), the son of former NFL standout Gerald Riggs, is Student Sports' pick as the junior player of the year. He had 2,434 yards, 39 touchdowns and 117 tackles for a 15-0 Class 5A state championship team.

Wide Receivers

• **Andre Chattams, wide receiver,** Dayton Chaminade-Julienne — Chattams (5-11, 185, 4.4) is the younger brother of OSU signee Angelo Chattams.

Andre, who caught 17 passes as a sophomore, had 23 catches for 525 yards (22.8 average) and seven TDs during the regular season as a junior.

"He is an over-the-top guy," Long said. "Angelo is more of an underneath guy, while Andre can stretch the field. It should be interesting to see how he does without Angelo, who had 160 catches the last two years."



Andre Chattams

• **Josh Williams, Cincinnati St. Xavier** — Williams (6-0, 190, 4.45) caught 49 passes for 832 yards and seven TDs as a junior.

"This was just his second year of playing football," Long said.

• **Jimmy Riley, Youngstown (Ohio)** Ursuline — Riley (6-1, 185) helped Ursuline win the Division IV state title. He caught 42 passes for 1,000 yards.

• **Jared Gulling, North Canton (Ohio)** Hoover — Gulling (5-10, 170) caught 51 passes for 595 yards as a junior and had only two drops all season. He was a first-team All-Ohio pick in Division I.

• **Agim Shabaj, Farmington Hills (Mich.)** Harrison — Shabaj (5-10, 180) is a Student Sports junior All-American.

Tight Ends

• **George Cooper Jr., Westerville (Ohio)** North — Cooper (6-5, 255) is the son of former OSU fullback George Cooper. With one year of high school left, the son is already bigger than the dad, who played at 6-2, 245 pounds for the Buckeyes.



George Cooper Jr.

"He looks lean," Long said. "He has athletic ability and runs like a guy who is 50 pounds lighter. He catches like he has mitts on."

"There is a chance he could grow into being an offensive lineman. He has the frame to do it."

• **Anthony Montgomery, Cleveland JFK** — Montgomery (6-6, 240, 4.65) is similar to current OSU tight end Darnell Sanders: He also plays quarterback at the prep level.

He is a standout pitcher and first baseman in baseball. He reportedly already favors Penn State.

Offensive Linemen

• **Doug Datish, Warren (Ohio)** Howland — Datish (6-5, 290) may be the state's top offensive line prospect and

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: UNDERCLASSMEN TO WATCH

there are reports that OSU has either offered or could be close.

"He has athletic ability — he can dunk a basketball — and is nasty," Long said. "He really gets after people."

• **Rob Sims, Macedonia (Ohio) Nordonia** — Sims (6-4, 287, 5.1) has the versatility to play center or tackle.

"He runs great and has great feet," Long said. "His dad was a Cleveland Brown and he's now 6-8, 360. This kid just turned 17. He benches 390 already and is still growing."

"Kent looked at four plays and offered. He plays basketball and had six steals in a game. He can move."

• **Mike Donaldson, Mansfield (Ohio) Senior** — Donaldson (6-6, 310) earned first-team All-Ohio honors in Division I as a junior. He is a prototype tackle prospect.

"He has long arms and works very hard," Long said. "That is the thing that separates the great high school player from the great college player. He takes coaching well."

• **Eric Fritz, Dublin (Ohio) Coffman** — Fritz (6-4, 300) is the son of former Buckeye lineman Ken Fritz. He has experience on both sides of the ball.



Eric Fritz

"He is big and mobile, but he is a raw guy," Long said.

• **Eric Tolbert, Shaker Heights, Ohio** — Tolbert (6-3, 285) also has two-way experience.

"He is an inside guy," Long said. "He could play defensive tackle."

• **Rick McDole, Marysville, Ohio** — McDole (6-6, 315) would be a tackle prospect.

"He held his own against (Piqua's) Pitzcock," Long said.

• **Mark Farris, Pittsburgh North Hills** — Farris (6-6, 270) is a Student Sports junior All-American.

• **Rob Smith, Fort Thomas (Ky.) Highlands** — Smith (6-5, 285) is also on the Student Sports junior list.

Defensive Linemen

• **Larry Tumblyn, Oberlin, Ohio** — Tumblyn (6-4, 235, 4.7) plays middle linebacker but could project as an end. He had 115 tackles as a junior.

• **Barry Cofield, Cleveland Heights, Ohio** — Cofield (6-4, 255, 4.7) plays tight end and fullback on offense and end on defense. He had seven sacks as a junior.

• **Tim Shaefer, Upper Arlington, Ohio** — Shaefer (6-5, 250) played opposite OSU signee Simon Fraser at end for UA.

"He really improved from the beginning of the year to the end," Long said.

• **Al Washington, Columbus Watterson** — Washington (6-0, 260, 4.9) is a standout interior lineman.

"I liken him to Warren Sapp a little bit — he's by you with his first step and you have to find him again," Long said. "He is strong and stays low. He is a very disruptive defensive lineman."

His father is former Buckeye Alvin Washington. The younger Washington was an MVP at the Boston College camp and was invited to attend Florida State's elite big man camp.

• **Joel Penton, Van Wert, Ohio** — Penton (6-5, 232) earned first-team All-Ohio honors in Division III.

• **Brian Mattes, Wyoming (Pa.)**

Valley West — Mattes (6-6, 240) is a Student Sports junior All-American.

• **Anthony Spencer, Fort Wayne (Ind.) Bishop Luers** — Spencer (6-4, 245) is also a Student Sports junior All-American pick.

Linebackers

• **A.J. Hawk, Centerville, Ohio** — Hawk (6-2, 215) has averaged right

around 150 tackles in each of his three seasons on the varsity. He was a second-team All-Ohio pick in Division I as a junior.

"He is a great hole player and a classic middle linebacker," Long said. "Tackle to tackle, he's a demon. He's not going to let anybody get through."

• **Antonio Reynolds, Akron Buchtel** — Reynolds (6-4, 210) helped Buchtel advance in the Division II playoffs.

"He is just an incredible athlete," Long said. "He could grow into a defensive end or could stay at linebacker."

• **Jim Davenport, Lima (Ohio) Senior** — Davenport (6-3, 225) plays alongside Andrews.

• **Stan White Jr., Baltimore Gilman School** — White (6-3, 210, 4.6) is the son of former OSU linebacker Stan White. The elder White lettered in 1969-71, earning All-Big Ten honors before moving on to the NFL's Baltimore Colts. He helps coach his son's team.

OSU and Penn State are reportedly very interested.

Defensive Backs

• **Tremaine Suggs, defensive back, Canton (Ohio) McKinley** — Suggs (6-1, 170) had 49 tackles and three interceptions as a junior.

"He is a corner with safety size," Long said.

• **Troy Smith, quarterback/defensive back, Cleveland Glenville** — Smith (6-2, 180) enjoyed a big year as a pass/run threat and DB for Lakewood St. Edward. But he reportedly transferred to Glenville midway through the school year.

• **Rick Brown, Cincinnati Elder** — Brown (6-2, 215) stars at strong safety for Elder.

"Explosion is the word," Long said. "He comes up and knocks people's heads off."

• **E.J. Underwood, Hamilton, Ohio**

Underwood (5-11 1/2, 175, 4.4) had four interceptions and averaged 14.5 yards on punt returns as a junior.

• **Mike Hinger, Newark (Ohio) Licking Valley** — Hinger (6-2, 170) earned first-team All-

Ohio honors in Division IV after notching 72 tackles and 10 interceptions as a free safety on a team that reached the state semifinals.

Kicker

• **David Abdul, Massillon (Ohio) Washington** — Abdul (5-9, 174) booted

four field goals of 50 or more yards as a junior for the Tigers.

Sophomores To Consider

Here are several sophomores to remember.

• **Dareus Hiley, quarterback, Cleveland Glenville** — Hiley (6-1, 175) has two years of starting experience at quarterback, leading his school to its only two playoff appearances.

"He is probably the best athlete in Ohio overall and our early No. 1 sophomore," Long said.

• **Prescott Burgess, safety, Warren (Ohio) Harding** — Burgess (6-3, 210) is a standout at safety, but he could grow into a linebacker. OSU and Michigan are already well aware of him.

• **Shawn Crable, defensive end/linebacker, Massillon (Ohio) Washington** — Crable is listed at 6-6, 215 pounds.

• **Louis Irizaray, tight end, Youngstown (Ohio) Ursuline** — Irizaray (6-5, 230, 4.7) "could become the best tight end to come out of Ohio if he keeps developing," Long said.

• **Terrence Graves, running back, Youngstown (Ohio) Ursuline** — Graves (6-1, 210) was one of Ursuline's two big rushing stars in its Division IV state championship win. He rushed for 219 yards and two touchdowns in the title game win over Coldwater.

• **Todd Boeckman, quarterback, St. Henry, Ohio** — As a freshman, Boeckman (6-5, 210) threw for 2,520 yards and 23 TDs in leading St. Henry to an 11-3 mark and the Division V state title game. He then completed 88 of 159 passes for 1,341 yards with just four interceptions as a sophomore.

He plays for his father, coach Tim Boeckman, at St. Henry.

• **John Ferguson, quarterback, Reynoldsburg, Ohio** — Ferguson (6-6, 210) started all season as a freshman, completing 88 of 189 passes for 1,345 yards. As a sophomore, he completed 119 of 268 passes for 1,649 yards.

"John has a big arm and his touch is tremendous," Long said. "He just needs to work on his consistency."

• **Ben Mauk, quarterback, Kenton, Ohio** — Mauk (6-1, 180) put up huge numbers playing for his father and coach, Mike Mauk. During the regular season, he completed 254 of 445 passes for a state-high 3,936 yards.

"Ben has the best field vision of any high school quarterback I've seen," Long said. "He can throw the ball and, what impressed me, he was even running a no-huddle offense at times."

• **Mike DeLuca, offensive lineman, Chardon (Ohio) Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin** — DeLuca (6-4, 280) "may be the next great offensive lineman in Ohio," Long said.

• **LeBron James, wide receiver, Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary** — Everybody knows James (6-6, 215) for his exploits in basketball, where one service already has him among the nation's top five players regardless of class.

But football is no lark for James. He caught 42 passes for 752 yards and 11 TDs as a sophomore. He earned first-team All-Ohio honors in Division IV.

• **Chinedum Ndukwe, wide receiver, Dublin (Ohio) Coffman** — Ndukwe (6-2, 190) is the younger brother of lineman Ike Ndukwe, who signed with Northwestern a year ago. As a sophomore, he caught 43 passes for 677 yards (15.7 average).

• **Eric Johnson, Bexley, Ohio** — Johnson (6-3, 260, 4.9) is a two-way lineman for the Lions. He benches 320 pounds and dead lifts 400.

Freshmen To Watch

Here is an early look at three Ohio freshmen to keep an eye on.

• **Jimmy Calhoun, running back, Middletown** — Calhoun is listed at 5-11, 180 pounds.

• **Blake Carter, wide receiver, Cincinnati Moeller** — Carter is listed at 6-2, 175 pounds.

• **Delbert Ferguson, running back, Youngstown Ursuline** — Ferguson (6-2, 200) was the other star of Ursuline's title game win, rushing for 280 yards and scoring five touchdowns in the win over Coldwater.

Long and Roberts are expanding Ohio's Future Stars from one issue to three this year. The three issues will be published in March, late spring and either November or December. The cost is \$15 for all three issues.

Send check or money order to Ohio's Future Stars, P.O. Box 44402, Columbus, Ohio 43204-0402. Or you can e-mail Long at ohiofuturestars@aol.com.



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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: RECRUITING PROFILE

Nugent Lands His Dream Opportunity

By GARY HOUSTEAU
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Centerville, Ohio, must be a safe haven for first-year Buckeye coaches.

Shortly after his hiring in December 1987, John Cooper went to Centerville High School to tab Kirk Herbstreit as the very first prep player to commit to his program. New OSU coach Jim Tressel almost nabbed his very first verbal commitment from there as well.

Although Chris Gamble was actually the first recruit to verbally commit to OSU under the Tressel regime, kicker Mike Nugent of Centerville High School had already made his mind up on Jan. 26, some five days before Gamble went public. Nugent just waited to give the formal announcement during his official visit the weekend of Feb. 2-4.

Nugent, however, could just as easily have been a Pittsburgh Panther by now. He was on his way to visit the school on the last weekend in January when his fortunes changed.

"Mike was en route to visit Pittsburgh, he was in the car with his parents when (OSU recruiting coordinator Bill) Conley called here at the high school and said they were going to offer him," said Centerville coach Ron Ullery. "So we contacted Mike's parents on the road on the cell phone."

Nugent was asleep in the car at the time but when he woke up, his parents had him call Conley right back.

"When I talked to him on the phone, he said they wanted to offer me a scholarship," Nugent said. "He knows that I've wanted to go to Ohio State all of my life, so he said to just come up for a visit that next weekend and meet all of the coaches. And I did that and committed on Saturday afternoon the next weekend."

Despite the dream offer from Conley, Nugent did go through with his visit to Pittsburgh and they eventually offered him as well. The Ohio State offer, however, came just in the nick of time.

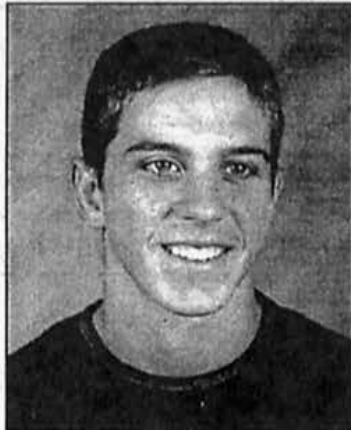
"I never expected them to call me when they did," he said. "But when they did I was really surprised. It was just great."

Because of the coaching change, not a lack of confidence, Nugent thought that the OSU staff had other priorities to deal with right away.

"I wasn't sure that was anything on their minds because they had a lot of guys to take care of," he said. "And I really didn't think they'd give another scholarship to a kicker because they just did last year."

But Conley kept the lines of communication open between Nugent and OSU.

"I had been talking to Coach Conley for a while and he said just stay in touch and don't put Ohio State out of your mind because things could just fall into place," Nugent said. "Everyone told me to be patient, you always get what you deserve, and I finally did."



Mike Nugent

"When Ohio State offered, I dropped everything and decided that I wanted to go to Ohio State."

Luckily for Nugent, Conley was in his corner the entire time. Nugent was a veteran of four OSU summer camps and Conley must have seen something special in him.

"Coach Conley really had a lot of faith in me," Nugent said. "He really tried hard to bring me in. But Coach Cooper I think just wanted (current redshirt freshman kicker) Josh Huston on scholarship."

Along with the new coaching staff came another ally for Nugent.

"Coach (Mark) Dantonio actually recruited me from Michigan State and I got to know him really well," Nugent said. "I was told at a meeting Coach Dantonio actually brought my name up and with Conley's input they decided to give me an offer."

Nugent himself couldn't have drawn up any better scenario than the way things worked out.

"Everything worked out so perfect," he said. "I guess that's just how it is with kicking scholarships. If you're patient, it could happen in the end."

That said, you still have to be good enough to even warrant consideration for one of those hard-to-come-by kicking scholarships, and Nugent kicked for four years at Centerville with a great deal of accuracy. For his career he was 13 of 17 on field goals, including a school-record long of 52 yards.

While leading the team as the full-time quarterback in his senior season, Nugent connected on 5 of his 7 field goal attempts and converted on all 29 of his extra point tries.

"Obviously Mike's got a good strong leg for Ohio State to express the interest in him as a kicker," said Ullery.

"But he played halfback his first two years for us and quarterback this past year and he kicked for us. So he's a football player that kicks, he's not a kicker that plays football. He was our most valuable player on offense because of his quarterbacking this year. He's a great athlete."

In addition to Nugent's physical tal-

The Nugent File

NAME — Mike Nugent
HIGH SCHOOL — Centerville, Ohio
POSITION — Kicker
HEIGHT, WEIGHT — 5-10, 165 pounds
40-YARD DASH TIME — 4.65 seconds
BENCH PRESS — 225 pounds
GRADE-POINT AVERAGE — 3.3

COLLEGE ENTRANCE TESTS — Scored a 20 on the ACT and a 1000 on the SAT.

VITAL STATISTICS — As a senior, Nugent was a first-team Western Ohio League and All-Southwest District selection. He was also a second-team Division I All-Ohio selection. He connected on 5 of 7 field-goal opportunities as a senior, when he also served as Centerville's quarterback. He kicked a school-record 52-yard field goal this past year. He converted 13 of 17 field goals in his career and was a perfect 29 of 29 on PATs in 2000. He totaled 262 points in his four-year career. He comes from the same high school that produced former OSU quarterback and WBNS-AM/ESPN commentator Kirk Herbstreit.

COACH'S COMMENT — "Mike will work year-round on his kicking. He practices nonstop on his own. He's pretty much a self-made kicker. (Former Buckeye) Tim Williams has been a mentor to him all the way through high school.

"He's only going to get better because he's not going to be a position player. In high school, he's running an option football team up and down the field and then we stop and ask him to kick a field goal right in the middle of the drive. Up there, he's only going to be a kicker and he's going to get stronger and as a result, he's only going to get better as a kicker.

"He's got strong character and a real genuine integrity, and he's a great kid from a great family." — Centerville coach Ron Ullery

HOBBIES — Participating in sports and working on school projects.

SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN — Signed with Ohio State over Pittsburgh, Bowling Green and Central Michigan. All offered a scholarship.

ents, Ullery said he really likes his player's mental makeup as well.

"I think really his strongest qualities are his competitiveness and his character," the coach said. "In addition to just being a tremendous kicker, he was a leader for us, he was one of our captains. And he's a great competitor. He doesn't back down from a challenge ever."

Ullery said that Nugent has been preparing himself to be a collegiate kicker for a long time.

"Mike's been around a lot of camps and he's gotten good reviews from a lot of places," he said. "He's got a real quick whip in his leg and gets the ball up off the ground real quick. He's been going to these camps and practicing kicking off the ground, not just off a tee as we do in high school."

Despite having Huston already at

OSU, Ullery thinks Ohio State is a good fit for Nugent.

"Mike's a competitor and he doesn't back away from competition," he said. "He knows there is competition up there and he knows that he's going to have to win the job. And he still didn't hesitate to make the decision to come to Ohio State."

With Dan Stultz no longer around, it appears that Huston and Nugent will go head to head for the kicking job.

"I love to compete and I know that I'm going to have to do that for the next four years, just compete with Josh Huston," Nugent said. "I think that will actually make the team a lot better because the better kicker is going to be on the field."

"I'm really working at it hard already because I know Josh is working hard at it, too."

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