

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 21, No. 15

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

January 19, 2002

## 1 More Year For No. 2

### Doss Deliberates, But Decides To Come Back

By CHRIS NIDA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Early on in Michael Doss' press conference at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center Jan. 9, it appeared as if he would do what almost everyone expected and declare his intention to enter the NFL draft a year early.

"I've been playing football since I was 8 years old," Doss said. "My dream has been to play in the National Football League and now that that opportunity has arrived I had to ask myself, 'Is this the best thing for Michael Doss?'"

But several minutes, a couple of breakdowns and many tears later, he announced his true intention — to return to Ohio State for his senior season.

"My mother told me, living in a two-bedroom apartment with nothing to survive on but her son, she told me to get my education, and I will be returning to Ohio State," Doss said.

Though he was raised by a guardian, Doss' love for his mother was clear, as he could barely get through many of his statements about her. The fact that Jan. 9 was her birthday made the announcement even more special for the safety.

Even with his mother's advice, Doss still agonized over the decision. After speaking to his mother an hour prior to the press conference, he sat with his Bible in his car in the parking lot at the WHAC, watching the satellite trucks pull up and media trickle in. All the while, he was trying to figure out what he was going to say.

But when he approached that lectern at 2 p.m., still



TERRY GILLIAM

**PRESSURE'S OFF** — After agonizing over whether to go pro or stay at OSU, Michael Doss is all smiles having made his decision.

clutching his Bible and his car keys, he wasn't totally sure whether he would be a Buckeye for one more season.

"I am positive I did not know what I was going to

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## Tressel Reflects On First Season With Buckeyes

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The final record may not reflect it, but those directly associated with the Ohio State football program believe it moved forward during a turbulent 2001.

The Buckeyes ended their first season under Jim Tressel at 7-5 after a heart-breaking 31-28 loss to South Carolina in the Outback Bowl. That mark was one game shy of the 8-4 that OSU posted in John Cooper's final year at the helm, which also was punctuated with an Outback loss to the Gamecocks.

"I think we've made progress in every way you could measure it," Tressel said recently. "We are always learning, especially as we put plans into action. We evaluate them and make progress in that way."



Jim Tressel

transgressions and poor showing in the bowl loss.

Tressel was offered and accepted the job on Jan. 17 and was introduced as the

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## D'Andrea Ends Chase, Tabs OSU Over Nebraska

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After weeks of soul-searching, Avon Lake, Ohio, middle linebacker prospect Mike D'Andrea finally ended the suspense Jan. 12 when he committed to Ohio State over Nebraska.

D'Andrea's verbal arguably could be the biggest in the one-year tenure of OSU head coach Jim Tressel.

The 6-3, 238-pound D'Andrea is considered Ohio's No. 1 overall prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News. Rivals100.com Recruiting ranked him the nation's No. 2 middle linebacker prospect and the country's 29th-best player overall.

"It was a pretty hard decision," D'Andrea admitted. "I kept switching back and forth. Ohio State and Nebraska were real close."

D'Andrea admitted it was his dream to play for a national championship team. Nebraska, with three national championships since 1994 and a berth in this year's title game at the Rose Bowl, was a hard program to ignore.

But D'Andrea decided the potential for success at his in-state school, where Tressel has already assembled a well-regarded class for the upcoming Feb. 6 national signing day, was too much to pass up.

"I just took a look at everything, but in the end I thought Ohio State was the best place for me to be," he told BSB. "They have a great recruiting class and the coaches there are great. I can see in a couple of years they are going to be great."

Continued On Page 10



**CROWN JEWEL** — Avon Lake, Ohio, linebacker Mike D'Andrea announced on Jan. 12 that he had chosen to play at Ohio State over Nebraska.



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## OPINION

# So Much For The Front Doss Put Forth

It was an interesting week, to say the least, to follow Ohio State athletics.

The football program scored a major trifecta with the return of All-American safety Mike Doss, the successful enrollment of high school phenom running back Maurice Clarett and the verbal commitment of high school phenom linebacker Mike D'Andrea.

There was the sadness surrounding the death of legendary basketball coach Fred Taylor. Meanwhile, the current OSU men's team pulled out a pair of had-to-have road victories at Massachusetts and Northwestern.

But my main focus this week is going to be Doss.

I have to say that his announcement that he will return to Ohio State for his senior season threw me for a loop. I have to admit I was wrong — make that dead wrong — on this one.

You see, I had Doss pegged for a certain early entry to the 2002 National Football League draft. Instead, I think we have to pencil him in as the first entry for captain for the 2002 Buckeyes.

That decision hit me like a ton of bricks — or a big Doss hit on the gridiron.

It's just that every sign pointed in the direction of Doss going pro. Where do I start?

Well, before the season The Canton (Ohio) Repository, Doss' hometown paper, wrote a mammoth article on Doss, depicting his rough childhood.

Did you know, in fact, that Doss spent his formative years in the Cleveland projects and not in Canton?

According to The Repository, Doss found himself in a tough spot at age 7. His dad headed off to New York City to work as a photographer; his mom had more on her mind than taking care of Mike. He was living with some relatives in Canton. Almost on a whim, he took off and hiked 10 miles to his uncle's house. Mind you, he was 7 years old at the time.

He showed up on the uncle's doorstep and begged him to take him in. The uncle agreed on two conditions — Mike had to obey his rules and his parents had to pay for some of his living expenses.

Mike and the uncle got along famously and Doss went on to superstar status as an athlete at state champion McKinley High. Recruiters came calling and Doss made it clear quickly that OSU was the place for him.

It took the coaches nine games to fit him into the lineup as a freshman, but ever since late in that 1999 season Doss has been making history.

He's not a real big guy, by any means. But he brings the right combination of speed and force to dismantle opposing ball carriers. Just ask Kurt Kittner, for instance.

Big hits can make up for a lot of mistakes and also land you on a lot of highlight reels. Before you knew it, people considered Doss one of the nation's best safeties.

There he goes, intercepting two passes as Ohio State knocks off Michigan in The Big House.

It would have been easy, given his rough life, to follow the money trail right to the NFL. Na'il Diggs is living proof you can go in as a fourth-rounder, play well your first couple of years and be set for life.

And the signals were there all over the place that was precisely what Doss was going to do.

He hung around interview sessions all year but spoke to the media only a handful of times. The rest of the time he clowned around and lampooned players and reporters in a playful way. The lighthearted approach was probably his defense mechanism from having to deal with the inevitable questions.

Before the home finale with Illinois, the handwriting was on the wall. While the team was going through final warmups, Doss was spotted shaking hands with some of his favorite mentors from the program on the sideline. It was like he was saying, "Thanks for the memories."

Then, just before the game, he did not run out of the tunnel. He moved to the south goalposts where the team's 12 seniors were taking their final bow. There, he made sure to hug each senior. It was as if he was waiting for his name to be called as well.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

with

Steve Helwag

I had actually seen something very similar almost 10 years ago. The OSU men's basketball team played and defeated Illinois in its final home game of the 1991-92 season. After OSU's second straight Big Ten title was in hand, the team's five seniors congregated at center court and soaked in one last ovation.

Of course, Jim Jackson was as much responsible for those two titles as those five seniors — and there was Jackson, slowly moving toward the southwest locker room door at St. John Arena as his senior teammates received all of the applause. He looked back once to let it all soak in before taking cover in the locker room. As you'll recall, Jackson turned pro a few weeks later.

Anyway, that was the same impression I had as I saw Doss' actions before the Illinois game.

Then, as the team prepared for its bowl in early December, Doss slipped up and said something to the effect that "I've got one more game here at Ohio State ..." It may have just been a Freudian slip, but where there was smoke there was fire.

He kept saying, in effect, "Yes, a title would be nice, but it's been my dream to play in the NFL."

Then, after the Outback Bowl, he simply said he'd come home to Columbus and sit down with Jim Tressel and make his decision.

But from what Doss said at his press conference, he could not make a decision either way. He said he put it in God's hands and that led him to listen to his mother's advice to stay in school and complete his education.

It was an improbable decision, to say the least. But I applaud Doss for taking the road less traveled.

Derek Ross going pro never surprised me. As we all know, he had already used up about five or six of his nine lives. Plus he (or somebody he knows) tried to sell his Sugar Bowl ring on eBay. The handwriting was clear on that wall: Ross made his point this year — he can play corner-back. Now he'll get paid to do it.

Darnell Sanders' decision was a bit puzzling to me. Yes, he had been here since January 1998. And, yes, he has been largely underutilized the last two years — unless blocking counts. I guess he, too, figured why come back and prove he could do something he has already proved he could do.

By all accounts, Doss figured to be, at best, a second-round pick. Perhaps he can improve his draft status with another year at the college level.

For OSU fans, they get one more season of enjoying the hard-hitting Doss, who can join just a handful of three-time All-Americans at the tradition-rich school.

Plus, he should help solidify a defense that, if it can find one or two serviceable corners and a decent impact linebacker, could be lights out.

But the applause today goes to Doss, who bucked the trend. Given his background, nobody in the world could have blamed him for taking the money and running to the bank.

Instead, the Big Ten should look out.

## Also On My Mind

• We cover recruiting very closely here at BSB, but I still worry sometimes that people get wrapped up almost too much in the football recruiting and not the football.

That's why I think Doss staying for his fourth year is a bigger story than anything involving high school prospects. He is a proven commodity and a difference maker who could be the catalyst for OSU to take that final step back to the Big Ten championship level.

That isn't to say that the recent stories involving Clarett's enrollment and D'Andrea's verbal are not important.

In that vein, let's start with Clarett. He has

been almost single-minded in his pursuit of an OSU scholarship since the day Tressel was hired. And, to his credit, he made it happen by working hard in the classroom.

To graduate early and gain admission at a school as heavy on bureaucracy as The Ohio State University, Clarett swam about seven miles upstream. I credit him for just making it this far.

I know Tressel and running backs coach Tim Spencer can't wait to get him on the practice field this spring and see if he can truly push Lydell Ross and Maurice Hall for playing time in 2002.

• D'Andrea took a lot of flak from recruits for dragging out his decision. First he was to verbal after Christmas then right after New Year's.

But he was working on his own timeline. I applaud him for working that out on his own.

Some have compared him favorably to Andy Katzenmoyer and that seems unfair.

But the truth is he could be like Katzenmoyer in another respect: The OSU coaches may need to clear the decks at middle linebacker to get him into the lineup. As you'll recall in 1996, incumbent middle man Greg Bellisari moved to outside linebacker to make room for Katzenmoyer at MLB.

It's probably premature to say that D'Andrea will be one of OSU's three best LBs this fall. But history could repeat itself if Matt Wilhelm, a former OLB, is willing to move back outside to accommodate D'Andrea.

And it isn't like Wilhelm is a slouch. He's done a fine job in the middle. Maybe D'Andrea plays outside to accommodate him. Hmmm.

This much is true, though: D'Andrea's verbal to OSU over Nebraska is another major coup for Tressel, assistants Mark Snyder and Mel Tucker and the rest of the staff.

Like we said over the summer with Justin Zwick, D'Andrea's verbal could be the thing that spurs OSU to a great recruiting finish. Buster Davis, an acclaimed linebacker from Florida, is on record as saying he'd love to play alongside D'Andrea.

And whether Davis signs with OSU or not, Tressel and Co. have primed themselves to make a nice stretch run leading up to signing day.

• Switching gears, I was saddened to learn of Taylor's death. Obviously, we knew he had been in declining health since he suffered an aneurysm more than five years ago.

When something like that happens, there is always concern that the patient is suffering. There are always concerns, as well, for how the family copes with the hardship of seeing a loved one go through something like that.

I was too young to watch Taylor's teams play and I got to interview him only one time before he took ill. But he seemed like a great and honest man.

And it has been truly touching to see the outpouring of support from his former players, colleagues and OSU fans.

On pages 15-19 of this edition of BSB, we have a mixed bag of stories that we hope adequately chronicle the life and times of Fred Taylor. I commend them to your attention.

• Finally, we will certainly deal with OSU men's basketball in this space more each week leading up to March Madness.

I would not say that the current OSU team will make anybody forget any of Taylor's seven Big Ten championship teams anytime soon. But they are quietly going about their business and getting the job done.

In a year when OSU was picked as low as seventh in some Big Ten projections, the Buckeyes can stamp themselves as contenders for the long haul by holding serve on the upcoming three-game homestand.

The key game in this stretch is a Jan. 19 showdown with Indiana, which rolled at Iowa Jan. 13. That win by the Hoosiers gave each of the supposed Big Ten front-runners — Illinois, Iowa and Michigan State — at least two conference defeats.

As of press time on Jan. 15, OSU and Indiana were the only remaining unbeaten in league play.

It goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway: See you at The Schott.



## COVER STORY: 1 MORE YEAR FOR NO. 2

# Decision Was Made While At The Podium

Continued From Page 1

say (when I got to the lectern)," Doss said. "You could say you watched me decide."

Doss admitted that when talk of him jumping to the NFL intensified after the Michigan game, his first instinct was, "There it is. Go."

He had seen recent OSU players such as Ahmed Plummer, Nate Clements, Na'il Diggs, Ryan Pickett and Joe Montgomery advance to the next level and wanted the opportunity for himself. But after further consideration, his thought process obviously shifted.

"The NFL is going to be there this year and it's going to be there next year," Doss said. "They are going to continue to play if Mike Doss ever makes it there or not."

It helped Doss that an NFL advisory committee told him he was probably, at best, a second-round pick.

"They said possibly as high as the second round," Doss said. "They also said nothing is for sure."

One projection had Doss as the fourth-best safety available. In the last 10 years, just one safety has been selected higher than 23rd overall.

Certainly, Doss was hopeful of hearing the words "surefire first-rounder," which would have been worth much more up-front money. He knows, though, he could possibly reach that status with another solid year of college ball.

His decision to pass on the NFL for now means Doss will not be joining defensive back Derek Ross and tight end Darnell Sanders, also OSU juniors, as early entrants into the draft.

The opportunity to earn a degree won out over the money of the NFL this time around.

"In 20 years when I'm not playing football, I hope I have your job, standing here asking some Ohio State junior what he's going to do," Doss told the assembled media to laughter. "I just decided to go ahead and stick it through."

Doss said he consulted with many different friends and family members, including former Canton (Ohio) McKinley High School and OSU teammates Jamar Martin and Kenny Peterson, and the one confidant he knew would always listen to him, "the lord Jesus Christ."

Among members of the OSU coaching staff, Doss spoke with head coach Jim Tressel the Thursday before his announcement and also talked with defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio. But he conversed most often with his posi-

## Doss Could Join Select Company

With his return for 2002, safety Mike Doss will have a chance to become just the seventh three-time All-American in OSU history. Previous three-time All-Americans at the school include:

Player	Pos.	Years A-A
Chic Harley	RB	1916-17, '19
Wes Fesler	E	1928-30
Lew Hinchman	HB	1930-32
Merle Wendt	E	1934-36
Archie Griffin	TB	1973-75
Tom Skladany	P	1974-76

tion coach, Mel Tucker.

Tressel was at the American Football Coaches Association convention in San Antonio and unable to attend Doss' announcement. Tucker was the only member of the coaching staff present. He said he was proud of the way Doss tackled the tough decision.

"I am impressed," Tucker said. "He went through a process and thought hard about it and that's all you can ask for a guy to think everything through and I think he did that."

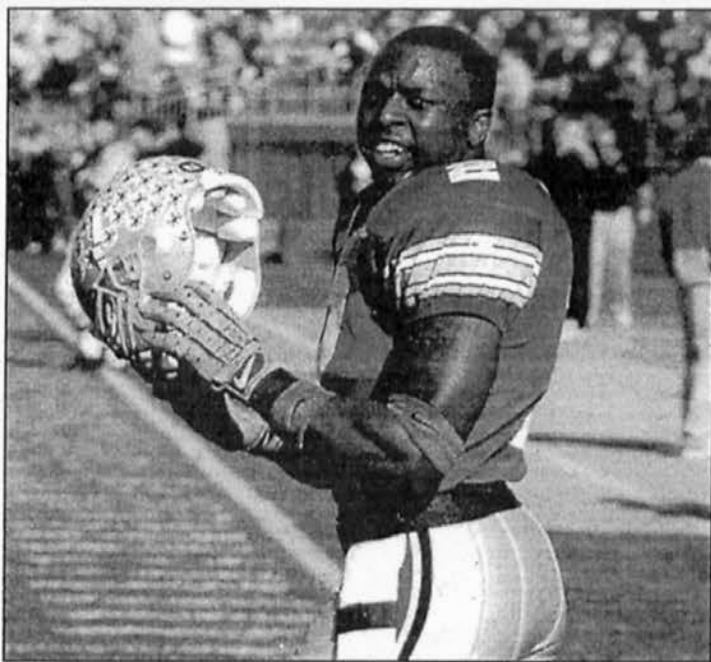
With his return, Doss immediately becomes the leading candidate for a captain position in the 2002 season. In 2001, the 5-11, 203-pound Canton native led the Buckeyes in tackles with 87, including 10 tackles for loss and three sacks. Additionally, he intercepted three passes from his strong safety position and blocked two punts while on special teams.

Following the season, Doss was selected to the All-Big Ten first team and was a Sporting News and Walter Camp All-American. He also was a semifinalist for the Thorpe Award, an honor he figures to contend for again in 2002. Doss has a shot to be just the seventh three-time All-American in OSU history (see sidebar).

But those accolades weren't enough to secure Doss a surefire first-round pick. The NFL composite scouting report he received pegged him as a second-round pick at best, a late third-rounder at worst.

Doss knew he could have moved up at the NFL scouting combine and during individual workouts, but he also realizes there are skills he can improve.

"I'm going to work on better tackling — you can always become a better tackler," Doss said. "Man coverage ... I'm just going to keep working hard. Hopefully you'll see



STEVE HELWAGEN

**THREE-TIMER?** — Now that he's coming back for his senior season at Ohio State, Michael Doss can concentrate on leading his team to a Big Ten title and becoming a three-time All-American.

me out there on special teams and maybe offense."

Above any individual awards, Doss is placing a premium on returning the Buckeyes to Big Ten champion status.

"Go out there and win a Big Ten championship. That's my goal here," Doss said. "All the individual awards, they're OK, but the main goal — the team goal — is trying to get victories and hopefully get a Big Ten ring."

His position coach said that work toward improvement begins right away.

"Obviously we all can get better as players and coaches and that's what you work hard to do every day," Tucker said. "We're going to work toward that, getting better every day and working hard."

Now that the weight of the NFL is off his shoulders, Doss said he knows what he will do.

"Take a deep breath and get back to school and playing football and getting ready for next year," Doss said. "Trying to get some game plans going for (the Sept. 7 opener with) Kent University."

### Happy He's Back

BSB caught up with Tressel upon his return from Texas Jan. 11 and he shared his thoughts on having Doss back.

"It's exciting," Tressel said. "Michael Doss is an impact guy in so many ways. He can be an impact guy in our weight room, on our campus and in this community."

"It can be great for our program. It's hard to put a tangible value on what this means."

Tressel also is hoping Doss can have a major impact on the Buckeyes' fortunes in 2002.

"I like to believe he'll have one of those extraordinary preparation times before his senior year," Tressel said. "If he can do that, I hope at the end of the year we can say he is one of the outstanding players in the country."

Tressel said he tried to counsel Doss as much as he could on the decision.

"I talked to him before I left for Texas," he said. "I met with him and a couple of

his uncles. I know he was talking to them as well as some other people he has great faith in. I talked to him by telephone two or three times from San Antonio."

"I know each time I talked to him, I got more excited about what I was hearing. But I didn't know for sure until after he announced his decision."

"The thing I appreciated most about Mike's decision was the in-depth study he did. Mike is going to be an extraordinary person in society. He has some goals in life. This is another glimpse of what he's all about."

The coach said he expects Doss to continue to be a team leader for the Buckeyes.

"He and I have had a lot of talks over the last couple of weeks," Tressel said. "I asked him to give me a list of his aspirations and what he is going to do to achieve them."

"I told him I would come up with my own list of expectations."

In December, Doss revealed that Tressel had discussed possibly showcasing Doss by using him on special teams and perhaps even on offense. Tressel confirmed as much but said it will be up to Doss to show he should be used in other ways.

"One of the first expectations I have for him is I want him to spend an extraordinary amount of time catching punts and kicks," he said. "Those kids are always out there working out and, if he's serious about doing that, he needs to be out there catching them."

"He also needs to run some routes. He needs to work on his cover game, of course, but he also needs to run some, too, if he's serious about that."

"If he wants to be like an Eddie George, he needs to have that commitment. They say that it didn't matter if they had three lift times and two runs a day, Eddie George was here all the time. That's how you become a special guy — you do a special amount of work."

Steve Helwag and Darrell Dawson contributed to this report.

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## COVER STORY: TRESSEL'S FIRST SEASON

## Winds Of Change Slowly Blowing Through OSU

Continued From Page 1

new coach in Columbus a day later. Since then, he has dealt with:

- The arrests of two of his players, Derek Ross and Steve Bellisari, on traffic-related charges;
- The death of one of OSU's football recruits, Drushaun Humphrey;
- The death of his mother, Eloise Tressel;
- The uncertainty locally and nationally following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11;
- The ongoing controversy surrounding Bellisari's status as the starting quarterback; and
- A handful of painful, close defeats, including single-digit losses to UCLA, Wisconsin, Penn State and South Carolina.

"I don't think about those things," Tressel answered when asked whether he agonized over such losses. "I worry about the things we need to do better. Some things went better than we expected they would and some did not."

"But I'm not going to complain about our situation. We were appreciative and blessed to be able to play in the Outback Bowl this year."

Certainly, though, Tressel had his share of triumphs (see The Jim Tressel Timeline on pages 8-9). The Buckeyes pulled off their first road win in Michigan since 1987, and he and his staff have been burning up the recruiting trail.

By all accounts, they have slowly begun to change the culture of Ohio State football. They have tried to create a family atmosphere for the players. They have made academics and community service two key priorities for anyone who wants to attach his name to the OSU program.

When Ohio State will next win a national — or even Big Ten — championship remains a mystery, but the positive vibes flowing from the Woody Hayes Athletic Center are hard to miss.

"We've had a lot of amazing days this year," Tressel said. "Somebody asked me the other day, 'How many kids do you have?' I said, 'I have 112 at work and four at home.'"

"With the world turning and the reality of that, it's been a very rapid year. It's been a year with a lot of change — personally, family-wise, occupationally."

"There's been a lot of change with the young people we've been working with, a lot of changes in the world. The world changed back in September."

"But it's a wonderful game that we have the good fortune to be a part of. It's a wonderful country we live in, a wonderful university we work at. It's just been tremendous."

## Behind The Scenes

It was last year's Outback Bowl loss — and a month full of controversy preceding it — that led OSU athletic director Andy Geiger to cite a "deteriorating climate" when he fired Cooper.

"John Cooper is a fine man, an honest man, so it was hard to see it heading in the direction it was heading," Geiger said while in Tampa, Fla., prior to this year's Outback Bowl.

"But it got there in a hurry. You get yourself in a trap sometimes when the focus is entirely on winning games, and



**THAT'S A WRAP** — Jim Tressel's first season as Ohio State head football coach officially came to an end with the loss in the Outback Bowl. Here, he's shown congratulating South Carolina coach Lou Holtz (right) on the Gamecocks' victory.

there's less focus on the 'how.' You can never lose sight of how you win games."

Geiger believes Tressel has put the football program back on the right path.

"He's put the 'college' back in college football, as far as Ohio State is concerned," Geiger said. "It's a constant application of the value system he believes in."

The AD noted OSU's improved academic showing and the way Tressel and his staff dealt with the few bumps in the road.

"We just had a much stronger performance in the classroom," he said. "I can tell you the difference. It was a sea change. It was the highest grade-point average we've had in the fall quarter in a long, long time at Ohio State."

"Even when there was an error made, it was handled by the coaches and players in exactly the manner it should have been."

"The outreach that has been provided and the role of our players in the community has just been tremendously upgraded in a special way. I am as proud as I can be of the way our program is evolving."

The latest Outback Bowl loss was still a tough one to take: OSU fell behind South Carolina 28-0, only to make a furious rally and tie the game at 28 before a late interception paved the way for USC's game-winning field goal on the final play.

Still, Geiger, speaking moments after the loss, was satisfied that OSU had made a strong accounting of itself while in Florida.

"I see the way the team managed the week," he said. "I see how they were at public events, how they were in private, how they were around the hotel, how they prepared and how they fought back from a pretty rugged situation."

"We didn't win the bowl game, but we made just a heck of an effort with some handicaps. They had some injuries to deal with, but we rallied."

"They went down throwing bullets. They went down firing. I think I made a comment once after a game that we died

with our guns in our holsters. We didn't do that today. We fired them all and it was terrific."

"How is always important — the how you run your program, how well you do the parts always dictates how the end comes and how you feel afterwards. I'm very disappointed that we lost the game, but the effort was tremendous and a great start for the future."

When news of the Cooper firing broke last January, fans and media clamored for Ohio State to make a high-profile hiring. Oklahoma's Bob Stoops, Stanford's Tyrone Willingham, Oregon's Mike Bellotti and the Oakland Raiders' Jon Gruden all had their names linked to the job at some point.

But Geiger went a different direction in hiring Tressel, who won four Division I-AA national championships in 15 seasons at YSU.

"I'm delighted with my choice," Geiger said. "We visited with Tyrone. We visited with Mike Bellotti, and we visited with some other guys."

"This guy has matched them all. All of the research we did told us he was the right guy for Ohio State."

Geiger went a step further, predicting, "I think this is a good time for Ohio State football, and it's going to be a great time."

## Other Viewpoints

Tressel has raised and clarified expectations from his players, according to assistant coach Tim Spencer, one of three assistants Tressel retained from the Cooper regime.

"It's definitely a different mind-set for the kids," he said. "They're a lot more focused and there is a lot more structure. They know what's expected of them."

The players seem to be accepting the new approach.

"I know Coach Tressel has used the term before, but we're family," said defensive tackle Tim Anderson, who just completed his sophomore season. "We all have our own part to play, each guy on offense and each guy on defense."

"Each guy has to do their individual job. If each guy does that, we're going to be tough to beat."

While Anderson was a Cooper recruit, Tressel at least had a hand in recruiting and signing OSU's 2001 class. One of those players, freshman defensive end Simon Fraser, said he likes what he has seen so far at OSU.

"I'm very pleased with where this program is at and where it's heading," Fraser said. "You could kind of get a sense of that when we were at Michigan."

"People are buying into Coach Tressel's beliefs and what he wants to do with this program. I think within the next couple of years, if people keep believing and working hard, there's going to be some good things coming out of Ohio State."

## Getting It Done

If this year has shown anything, it shows that Tressel can deal with setbacks.

He was dealt two more of those in recent weeks as Ross and fellow junior Darnell Sanders each declared a year early for the NFL draft.

But Tressel takes a realistic view of his position and knows making excuses and worrying about things he can't control are a waste of his time.

"Young people have the same basic needs and desires," he said. "Believe it or not, all of the guys at Youngstown State thought they were going to the NFL. I had parents of backup players come in after the national championship game and ask me what the chances were in the NFL draft for their son ... and they were backups for us."

"We all have similar goals and passions and directions we need to nudge our young people in. Once you're in the stadium and facing the field, it's really irrelevant how many people are behind you. So I haven't found a whole bunch of difference."

The cold hard facts say Ohio State endured more losses over the last three years, when it went a combined 21-15, than it did over the previous six, when the Buckeyes were a stellar 62-12-1 and won three Big Ten championships.

Returning the program to that championship level — while maintaining the academic and community standards set this season — will be Tressel's next challenge.

"We're a long way from where we want to be," he said. "We have a lot more getting to know each other to do, a lot more development in the weight room to do. But I feel good about the effort of our football team, and that's something that doesn't take height, weight or speed."

"The challenges have been great. We know we have lots and lots of work to do. But I feel good about the progress we've made."

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## COVER STORY: TRESSEL'S FIRST SEASON

## Year One: The Jim Tressel Timeline

Here is a look at the past year — the first year — of the Jim Tressel Era at Ohio State.

## JANUARY 2001

- **Jan. 1** — Ohio State drops the Outback Bowl to South Carolina 24-7 to finish a turbulent month and season at 8-4.
- **Jan. 2** — OSU athletic director Andy Geiger confers with OSU President William "Brit" Kirwan and the two agree that firing 13-year head football coach John Cooper is the best course of action. Geiger informs Cooper then meets with the media to say a nationwide search will be conducted.
- **Jan. 5** — Youngstown State grants OSU permission to interview its head coach and athletic director, Jim Tressel, for the job.
- **Jan. 10** — Tressel formally interviews with OSU officials.
- **Jan. 16** — Tressel has a second interview, this time with Kirwan.
- **Jan. 17** — After interviewing Minnesota's Glen Mason a second time, OSU officials settle on Tressel and notify him he is their choice. News of the hiring breaks across Columbus just before the 6 p.m. hour.
- **Jan. 18** — Kirwan and Geiger introduce 48-year-old James Patrick Tressel as OSU's 22nd head football coach at a 3 p.m. news conference held in the recruiting room at Ohio Stadium. "I am really humbled to stand before you today as the head football coach at The Ohio State University," Tressel tells an assembled group of 200 and a statewide television audience. Later that night, he is introduced at halftime of the OSU-Michigan basketball game. "I can assure you, you will be proud of our young people in the classroom, in the community and, most especially, in 310 days in Ann Arbor, Mich., on the football field," Tressel says, drawing a standing ovation from the Value City Arena crowd of 18,653.
- **Jan. 21** — By this point, Tressel has already begun recruiting a number of Ohio's top senior prospects, including those the Buckeyes have commitments from already. But a prized high school junior, Warren Harding tailback Maurice Clarett, who grew up in Youngstown, tells Bill Kurelic of The Ohio Football Recruiting News that he plans to commit to OSU and be a part of the school's class of 2002. "I know a lot about Coach Tressel," Clarett says. "He's all about winning and running a good, disciplined program."
- **Jan. 22** — Tressel begins assembling his assistant coaching staff, luring Jim Bollman from the Chicago Bears as his offensive coordinator and Michigan State assistant Mark Dantonio as his defensive coordinator.

## FEBRUARY 2001

- **Feb. 7** — The rush to national signing day ends as Tressel and his staff sign 17 players to letters of intent. Included in that figure are previous verbalists Angelo Chatters and Dustin Fox, who had wavered after Cooper's firing, and Columbus native Maurice Hall, who announces for OSU over Florida State on signing day. Florida running back Lydell Ross also picks OSU over Florida and Notre Dame on signing day.
- "We are proud to announce an outstanding group of young people who have thoroughly impressed our coaches with their character and desire to be great young people on and off the field," Tressel says.
- The class is ranked 14th in BSB's national experts consensus poll.
- **Feb. 9** — Tressel is the opening speaker at the Ohio High School Football Coaches Association clinic, held at the Easton Hilton in Columbus. In a 45-minute address before a group of nearly 1,000 prep coaches, he outlines his vision for the OSU program. "I can't thank all the people in this room enough," Tressel says.
- He discusses his coaching mission, goals for the OSU program and viewpoint that "leadership is service."
- "Whatever you want, we're here to serve," he tells the coaches.
- Tressel also reveals his plan to restrict access to the workout facilities at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to former players who have graduated or are still working on their degrees.
- **Feb. 19** — Tressel and his staff join the returning players in the first of several weeks' worth of 6 a.m. conditioning workouts at the WHAC as winter quarter winds down. Each assistant mans a station, giving the players a high-intensity, 40-minute workout. "They have a chance to truly begin the day wide awake," Tressel says.

## MARCH 2001

- **March 23** — Tressel faces his first crisis as the OSU coach when junior defensive back Derek Ross is arrested and jailed in nearby Newark, Ohio, on charges of speeding, driving without a license and providing false information.
- Tressel waits several days to meet with Ross then suspends him from the team for spring football.
- "Derek made a poor decision," Tressel says. "He knows that and he is sorry, but there must be consequences."
- **March 31** — The rainy skies above Columbus clear up and Tressel leads his first OSU team onto the practice field for the first of its 15 spring practices.
- "A wise man told me once you can't win the national championship in spring practice, but you can lose it," Tressel says.

## APRIL 2001

- **April 4** — A crowd estimated at 1,300 attends Coach Tressel's Spring Preview, a fund-raiser for the Alzheimer's Association of Central Ohio, at the WHAC.
- **April 25** — Tressel allows the team's 10 seniors to sit down and draft sides for the spring-ending Scarlet and Gray Game.
- "I've always enjoyed sitting back and watching the players draft," Tressel says. "It's interesting to see how the players feel about each other."
- **April 27** — Tressel and his staff host the 70th annual OSU coaches clinic. He invites



KEVIN DYE

**JAN. 18** — After being introduced to the media as the new Ohio State head football coach, Jim Tressel introduced himself to the fans at halftime of the OSU-Michigan men's basketball game at Value City Arena.

- his former boss, Earle Bruce, to be the clinic honoree and keynote speaker.
- **April 28** — The Buckeyes wrap up spring practice with the Scarlet and Gray Game, won by the Scarlet 22-21 behind a late-game rally by third-string quarterback Craig Krenzler. A crowd of 22,892 attends at Columbus Crew Stadium.
- "I think our guys learned a lot of lessons from a general standpoint and also at their position," Tressel says.
- He names Steve Bellisari the No. 1 quarterback, saying, "I would say that after 15 practices, with 29 more to go (in the preseason), the pecking order is the same as it has been."
- **April 30** — Tressel and the OSU football family deal with the death of Toledo high school prospect Drushaun Humphrey, who had committed to the Buckeyes. Humphrey died after collapsing while playing in a pickup basketball game.

## MAY 2001

- **May 12** — Tressel is on the recruiting trail when he learns that Dave Kennedy, OSU's longtime strength and conditioning coach, has decided to resign and walk away from a lucrative long-term contract with the school. Rumors persist there was a rift between Tressel and Kennedy, who had almost free rein under Cooper.
- But Tressel said, "In anything you do, you're disappointed when change occurs. But I see this as a situation where we can make something positive happen."
- **May 21** — Tressel returns to Youngstown State to deliver the school's spring commencement address.
- **May 30** — OSU's recruiting efforts for 2002 hit the fast track as Massillon (Ohio) Washington quarterback Justin Zwick, judged among the nation's top five QBs, picks OSU over Michigan.
- West Virginia tight end R.J. Coleman, also highly regarded, follows suit and verbally commits to OSU.

## JUNE 2001

- **June 7** — Tressel hires well-respected Allan Johnson from West Virginia as OSU's new strength and conditioning coach.
- **June 12-22** — Tressel and his staff welcome over 2,000 football players for their first OSU camp. The staff institutes a new "senior elite camp" to test and teach the region's best seniors.
- The camp format seems to work: OSU's recruiting class balloons from four to 14 after a number of camp attendees — including notables like DB E.J. Underwood, LB A.J. Hawk, DL Jay Richardson, LB Mike Kudia and OLs T.J. Downing, Rob Sims and Nick Mangold — all issue verbals.
- Ohio OL Doug Datish, rated one of the nation's best, also commits.



## COVER STORY: TRESSEL'S FIRST SEASON

## JULY 2001

- **July 15** — Tressel's mother, Eloise, is relocated to Columbus and OSU's Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital after she is diagnosed with pancreatic and liver cancer.
- **July 30** — Tressel hires his brother, Dick, to serve as the newly created associate director of football operations. Dick Tressel was the longtime coach and athletic director at Division III Hamline University in Minnesota.

## AUGUST 2001

- **Aug. 2** — Speaking last at the Big Ten Kickoff Luncheon in Chicago, Tressel wows his conference colleagues and a crowd of 2,000 with a speech themed "It's Not About The Ball." "A month ago, my mom was diagnosed with a tough cancer and she's fighting it," he says. "Being at Ohio State gave me the opportunity to be among the elite institutions in the world. And, as we speak this afternoon, she is able to get treatment that has never been done anywhere in the world." "If I wasn't at Ohio State, that probably wouldn't be happening. So I know it's not about the ball."
- **Aug. 17** — Tressel meets the media at OSU's photo day at Ohio Stadium. "I thought I was busy in 1983, when I walked in here for the first time (as an assistant) and was getting ready for the first game," Tressel says. "I didn't know what busy was back then. Now I know what it is. It's a little different feeling now."
- **Aug. 18** — The Buckeyes open preseason camp. But after the team's first practice, Tressel is informed that his mother has died. He stays with the team for the next two days then misses the team's Aug. 21 workouts to attend the funeral in the family's hometown of Berea, Ohio.
- **Aug. 28** — The Columbus Dispatch reports that Tressel will leave as much as \$100,000 on the table in each of the five years of his current contract so his assistants can receive more compensation.
- **Aug. 30** — Tressel's golden touch in recruiting shows again as Ohio's top receiver, Roy Hall, becomes verbal No. 16. Defensive end Tim Schafer had also joined the OSU class earlier in the month.

## SEPTEMBER 2001

- **Sept. 8** — A new era dawns as Ohio State defeats Akron 28-14 in Tressel's first game as the OSU coach. The game, held in newly renovated Ohio Stadium before a record crowd of 102,602, is punctuated by a pair of new traditions. Prior to the game, the Buckeyes come down a special new tunnel. Then, afterward, they congregate in front of the band in the south end zone as Tressel leads them in a rendition of "Carmen Ohio."
- **Sept. 11** — The world is rocked as terrorists hijack four domestic flights and crash them into the World Trade Center, into the Pentagon and in rural Pennsylvania. The attacks kill over 3,000 people and leave thousands injured. Tressel, keeping his date at his weekly press luncheon, meets with the media just two hours after the attack to discuss the emotional state of his team. He later cancels practice for the day and OSU postpones its Sept. 15 game with San Diego State until Oct. 20.
- **Sept. 15** — Tressel and the football team appear at an afternoon rally. The "Show Your Care" rally and telethon raise nearly \$600,000 for disaster relief connected to the attacks. "There's never been a more glorious day in Ohio Stadium than today," Tressel tells the crowd of 15,000.



DARRELL DAWSON

**SEPT. 15** — Tressel gives a talk during the "Show Your Care" fund-raiser at Ohio Stadium.

- **Sept. 17** — Tressel embarks on his first major fund-raising campaign, the "Wear Your Heart On Your Sleeve" campaign with the Kroger Co. Proceeds are to benefit OSU's new Richard M. Ross Heart Hospital.
- **Sept. 22** — OSU suffers its first loss under Tressel, a 13-6 decision at UCLA. The OSU offense comes under fire after amassing just 166 yards and eight first downs in the loss. Bellisari is 5 of 23 passing for 45 yards with two interceptions. "We're in a growth mode and we will be in a growth mode for some time," Tressel says.
- **Sept. 24** — Tressel touches off a weeklong controversy by intimating that backup Scott McMullen could supplant Bellisari. By Sept. 27, Tressel backtracks and says he figured all along that Bellisari would start the Sept. 29 game at Indiana.
- **Sept. 29** — Tressel admits the question of whether he used the media to get a point across to Bellisari is the toughest he had fielded in his 27 years as a coach.
- **Sept. 29** — Bellisari and backup tailback Lydell Ross come up big as the Buckeyes outlast Indiana 27-14 for Tressel's first Big Ten win. Bellisari completes 15 of 21 passes for 194 yards, while Ross carries 25 times for 124 yards and two touchdowns.

## OCTOBER 2001

- **Oct. 6** — The Buckeyes trounce 14th-ranked Northwestern 38-20 in the first-ever night-time Big Ten game in Ohio Stadium history. Tailback Jonathan Wells leads the way with 179 yards and three TDs on 22 carries.
- **Oct. 13** — OSU grabs a 17-0 lead on visiting Wisconsin but breakdowns in all three facets of the game allow the Badgers to rally for a 20-17 win, dealing Tressel his first home loss and Big Ten defeat as the OSU coach.
- **Oct. 20** — Boos cascade down as OSU trails 2-4 San Diego State 12-6 at halftime. But the Buckeyes rally to win 27-12 with a strong second half. "It's a win," says Tressel, whose team improves to 4-2 overall.
- **Oct. 27** — The Buckeyes find themselves on the wrong side of history as Penn State rallies from a 27-9 third-quarter deficit to stun OSU 29-27 and give 36-year PSU coach Joe Paterno sole possession of the record for Division I-A victories with 324. "I don't know if I'd put a phrase like 'killer instinct' on it, but we have to do things all the



GARY HOUSTEAU

**SEPT. 8** — With the intensity apparent on his face, Tressel prepares to lead the Buckeyes onto the field for the season opener against Akron.

time that you need to do to win," Tressel says.

PSU redshirt freshman QB Zack Mills amasses 418 yards total offense, throwing for two touchdowns and rushing for one to deliver the win.

## NOVEMBER 2001

- **Nov. 3** — OSU averts a potentially embarrassing loss as the Buckeyes hold off Minnesota 31-28, denying Mason a chance to score revenge for the all-too-public snub his alma mater dealt him in January. "You guys have painted a much different picture than there really is," Tressel says, chiding the media for building up a rivalry between the coaches. Bellisari throws for 203 yards and two TDs, and Wells rushes for 152 yards and two scores to key the win.
- **Nov. 10** — OSU puts it all together in a 35-9 romp over visiting Purdue. Bellisari hits for a season-high 263 yards and three TDs. WR Chris Vance makes a pair of one-handed catches, including a TD, in the win. The win lifts OSU to 6-3 overall and 4-2 in Big Ten play. Wins over Illinois and Michigan in the final two weeks would give the Buckeyes at least a piece of the conference title and the league's Bowl Championship Series bid.
- **Nov. 16** — Just 34 hours before the final home game with Illinois, Bellisari, a senior co-captain, is arrested by OSU police and charged with drunken driving. Tressel acts quickly and suspends Bellisari from the team, strips him of his captaincy and bars him from appearing at Ohio Stadium for the Illinois game. "For the past 10 months we've discussed the importance of decision-making in good quarter-back play," Tressel says. "The same is true in life. This can be a good life lesson."
- **Nov. 17** — OSU gamely battles the 12th-ranked Illini, battling back from a 21-10 halftime deficit behind third-string QB Craig Krenzel to take a 22-21 lead. But Illinois drives 80 yards for the go-ahead touchdown then returns a Krenzel interception for a score in a 34-22 win that knocks the Buckeyes out of contention in the Big Ten.
- **Nov. 19** — After meeting with Geiger, his staff, Bellisari and the team's seniors, Tressel announces he has reinstated Bellisari for the Michigan game. But Bellisari is dropped to fourth on the QB depth chart and was not expected to see action at Michigan. "Steve is and will continue to be a member of the OSU football family," Tressel says.
- **Nov. 22** — OSU practices on Thanksgiving morning then, in a break from recent tradition, holds Senior Tackle privately.
- **Nov. 24** — Tressel becomes just the fifth first-year OSU coach in the 98-year OSU-Michigan rivalry to win his first game in the series as the Buckeyes jump on No. 11 Michigan for a 23-0 halftime lead and hold on for a 26-20 win in Ann Arbor. Wells carries for 129 yards and three TDs, while Krenzel is 11 of 18 passing for 118 yards and an interception. "No, we didn't promise any win," Tressel says, referring to his comment on the evening of his hiring. "We promised they would be proud of us; whether we won the game or not. By the way our kids played, you would have been proud of the way they did."
- The win is OSU's first in Michigan Stadium since 1987. OSU ends the regular season 7-4 overall and third in Big Ten play at 5-3.
- **Nov. 26** — OSU's recruiting class increases to 17 verbals as Maryland LB Stan White Jr. picks the Buckeyes over Stanford.

## DECEMBER 2001

- **Dec. 5** — Tressel celebrates his 49th birthday while on a recruiting trip but learns that cornerback Derek Ross plans to jump to the NFL a year early.
- **Dec. 21** — Breaking with recent tradition under Cooper, Tressel sends the team down to Tampa, Fla., to begin Outback Bowl preparations before Christmas. In recent years under Cooper, the team met at the bowl site on Christmas evening.

## JANUARY 2002

- **Jan. 1** — Tressel's 22nd-ranked Buckeyes fall behind 14th-ranked South Carolina 28-0 in the Outback Bowl. But Bellisari, coming off the bench, rallies the team to tie the game at 28. But a late interception paves the way for USC to win the game 31-28 on a 42-yard field goal by Daniel Weaver on the game's final play. OSU finishes 7-5.
- **Jan. 7** — Tight end Darnell Sanders follows Ross' lead and declares for the NFL draft.
- **Jan. 9** — Going against popular belief, safety Mike Doss announces his intention to stay at OSU for his senior year. At the same time, Maurice Clarett, Ohio's reigning Mr. Football award winner, was cleared to enroll early at OSU.
- **Jan. 12** — Linebacker Mike D'Andrea, Ohio's top prospect and one of the nation's top LBs, commits to Tressel and the Buckeyes over Nebraska.

— Compiled by Steve Helwag



## COVER STORY: D'ANDREA ENDS CHASE

## Decision By Top LB Should Boost OSU Class

Continued From Page 1

"I'm real excited about it and looking forward to playing with everyone there."

D'Andrea notified Tressel and Nebraska head coach Frank Solich of his decision in the early evening hours of Jan. 12. Then he dutifully made calls to local and statewide media outlets to inform them of his decision.

"I called Coach Tressel and I talked to all of the assistants as well," D'Andrea said. "They were at the stadium, hosting a bunch of recruits. They were real excited."

"Coach Tressel is just a real good guy. He's real easy to get along with. I like their linebacker coach (Mark Snyder) a lot, too."

D'Andrea becomes the 18th verbal commitment in an OSU class that could number anywhere from 23 to 25 players. His verbal could help OSU, locked in a battle with Texas for the top spot in the current class rankings, wind up with the nation's No. 1 recruiting class.

"I think this was huge," said Bill Kurelic, editor of TOFRN and the BSB Internet site (ohiostate.rivals.com). "He was the best player in the state and a guy everyone wanted to know about. There was just so much speculation about what he was going to do."

"For Ohio State, it is a big boost. They are in the running right now with Texas for the top class and, depending on who else Ohio State is able to land, this could be one of if not the best class the school has ever had."

In addition to his national recruiting rankings, D'Andrea earned first-team All-Ohio honors in Division II and was named to the 25-man USA Today All-USA first team. The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer named him its all-area defensive player of the year.

"He's got it all," Kurelic said. "He's got size, he's a great athlete and he's extremely strong. He runs well and makes plays."

"He is the best linebacker prospect to come out of Ohio since Andy Katzenmoyer (in 1996)."

**Wait Was Long For This Shoreman**

D'Andrea wrapped up his football season in late November then turned his attention to official visits. He ended up stacking his visits to four schools — Michigan, Nebraska, Notre Dame and OSU — over a three-week period.

After returning from his last trip to Nebraska on Dec. 16, D'Andrea told reporters he had removed Michigan and Notre Dame, then in the midst of a coaching change, from consideration. A decision, he said, was expected before Christmas.

But when Christmas — and then New Year's Day — came and went without a decision, D'Andrea found himself in the middle of a media frenzy.

"I never thought it would be like this," D'Andrea said. "I put it off (over the holidays) to get it out of my mind. But I couldn't because no one would ever let it go."

"So I just decided to get it over with."

Kurelic stayed in constant contact with D'Andrea and his family and was able to break the news of the verbal just moments after the player contacted the respective coaches.

"I don't think it was that bad for Mike because he had a lot of people around him supporting him," Kurelic said. "It was probably more agonizing for the fans of both schools and the coaches than anybody else. It had to be tough for those coaches to wait it out."

"For the fans, there was a lot of speculation on the Internet. A lot of people were sitting on the edge of their seats, waiting for him to decide."

D'Andrea's parents, Bob and Sue D'Andrea, helped their son stay grounded during the whole process. They asked him not to participate in the Jan. 5 All-American Bowl in Texas when they thought that trip would distract from his studies.

"It feels real good, but we all feel it was Mike's decision," Bob D'Andrea, an OSU alum, told The Plain Dealer. "We had a lot of people praying about it. He's comfortable with it, and that's good."

"The level of interest people have in that program is unbelievable. It's a good decision for Mike, a good one for the community and a good one for Ohio State."

**Where Will He Play?**

There is already a player at Ohio State manning the middle linebacker spot in returning starter Matt Wilhelm, who will be a senior. Wilhelm, ironically, hails from Elyria, just 10 miles from Avon Lake in Lorain County.

However, there will be two openings at outside linebacker, where Wilhelm began his OSU career. But D'Andrea said the OSU coaches never made him any promises about how they plan to deploy their troops.

"They didn't really say anything about that," D'Andrea said. "I talked to Matt a little bit when I visited down there. He's a nice guy and we got along pretty well."

"They are recruiting me as a middle linebacker. I guess I will just go in there in the fall and try to win the spot."

D'Andrea became a familiar name across the state when he earned All-Ohio honors as a junior. He suffered a strained knee early in his senior year but did not let that hold him back.

He ended the regular season with 112 tackles, nine tackles for loss, three sacks,

three fumble recoveries and two interceptions as Avon Lake went 9-1 and locked down the No. 1 ranking in Division II.

The team then went 2-1 in the playoffs, including a 17-14 regional semifinal win over Defiance in which D'Andrea tallied 15 tackles, five tackles for loss and an interception.

As impressive as his numbers on the field have been, D'Andrea has built a reputation as a tireless worker in the weight room. He boasts 4.4-second speed in the 40 and a 38-inch vertical leap. He also has been a state- and national-caliber champion in the shot put and discus and hopes to compete for the track team at OSU.

Plus he is a solid student with a 3.5 GPA and a 1060 on the SAT.

"I think he has continued the tradition of Avon Lake and taken it up one step," Avon Lake coach David Dlugosz told the Lorain Morning Journal. "He's been not just a good player for us, but a very good role model for the rest of the kids."

**A Clean Sweep?**

D'Andrea's commitment gives Tressel and the Buckeyes verbals from the state's top four prospects. Running back Maurice Clarett, quarterback Justin Zwick and offensive lineman Doug Datish had verbalized previously.

OSU also is recruiting the state's fifth-best prospect in Piqua defensive tackle Quinn Pitcock.

Since 1995, OSU has succeeded in signing the state's top five players just one time, in 1999.

In addition to Pitcock, there are a number of other key prospects at the top of OSU's wish list for the school's last five to seven spots.

They include Ohio linebacker Bobby Carpenter, Ohio tight end George Cooper Jr., North Carolina offensive lineman Derek Morris, Florida offensive lineman Max Jean-Gilles, Florida wide receivers Antonio Holmes and Richard Washington, and Florida linebacker Buster Davis. (For updates on all of these players, see Recruiting Outlook on pages 12-14.)

Davis, in fact, has become a long-distance telephone friend of D'Andrea and was leaning heavily to OSU after learning of his friend's commitment.

"I'd really like to play alongside him," D'Andrea said of Davis, who was also a USA Today All-USA first-team pick. "He's a great player."

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## OHIO STATE RECRUITING PROFILE

## Smith Wants To Play QB, Not An 'Athlete' Role

By GARY HOUSTEAU

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

One thing is certain in the mind of Troy Smith from Cleveland Glenville High School, and that is that he has every intention of playing quarterback at whatever university he eventually chooses to attend next season.

"That's the most important thing to me right now because when I choose a school, that's the position that I'm going to play when I get there," the 6-1, 205-pound Smith said.

With less than a month to go until national signing day, West Virginia is clearly offering Smith an opportunity to be their quarterback of the future, while it looks as if Ohio State is just now beginning to warm to that idea.

"Right now at Ohio State, it's more from a quarterback standpoint than ever," Smith said. "But previously it was all 'athlete' from Ohio State and just as far as me going to school, that's not what I wanted to hear. That wasn't going to fit me as to what I want to do when I go to school. So it was going to be an easy selection."

"But right now as we're winding down toward signing day time, basically, I'm just going to the schools that are primarily talking about quarterback."

With practically everybody expecting Massillon (Ohio) Washington's Justin Zwick to be the Savior at quarterback for the Buckeyes, possibly as early as 2002, Smith can see himself benefiting from that hypothetical scenario if he were to also choose OSU.

"For me it's kind of easy because the world's weight is not on my shoulders," he said. "I don't have to worry about a lot of things. All I have to do is go there and perform."

"But being the franchise player, you've got a lot of stuff on you, and coming in that's a lot of pressure. So going in, not having a lot of pressure on my shoulders will help me a lot so I can perform a little bit better."

Confidence in his ability to play the quarterback position is definitely not something lacking in Smith.

"I've been playing quarterback since I was 7 years old," he said. "That's all I know. All I was ever taught to do was be a leader, lead my team, make good decisions and protect the ball."

Obviously, it would be against his nature to play anything other than quarterback. But if he were to accept a scholarship offer from Ohio State and get beat out for the quarterback position, Smith would then have to face the reality of either having to remain a backup or choosing to use his athletic talent at a different position.

"First of all, hopefully I wouldn't get beat out," Smith said. "But picking a college is something where you have to be happy and content with where you are, no matter where you're going to play on the field, even if your dream is to play quarterback."

"But if you don't, and you get into a situation where you have to play somewhere else, then it comes to where it's a team thing and it becomes bigger than you. And whatever you can do to help your team win, then you do it, whether it's playing quarterback, receiver, safety, wherever."

But Smith has the luxury of knowing he can eliminate all those hypotheticals by choosing a school like West Virginia, which seems to be rolling out the red carpet for him.

"West Virginia has just been on me since the jump," Smith said. "Since day one they wanted me to play quarterback. They say I'm their number one guy."

"And just as far as quarterbacking skills go in their type of offense, it sort of fits me a little bit more because it's more of a free-lance offense, being able to be mobile, moving around, running a lot more different type of plays than your pro-style offense. But then again, pro-style offense isn't that bad either."

Smith first became a hot commodity as a

junior, when he helped lead Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward to a Division I playoff berth. He transferred to Glenville after that football season and helped the Tarblooders also reach the playoffs this year.

According to Ted Ginn, his coach at Glenville, Smith has the kind of talent and athletic ability to excel in either type of offense at the next level.

"Troy is a very intelligent young man and he picks up on the scheme of things real quick," the coach said. "He is very mobile and I know he has one of the strongest arms in the country. I don't think there are too many other kids in the country at his age that have an arm such as his."

"With his intelligence and his mobility, I think he can be a real good quarterback in college."

That's the situation facing Smith as far as picking OSU instead of West Virginia.

"He wants to be a quarterback and they have Zwick," said Ginn. "But he also likes Ohio State. I guess he's weighing all his options to see what place he thinks fits for him."

The good news is that if he were forced to play another position as a Buckeye, Ginn thinks he can be a very effective wide receiver as well.

"Troy has so much athletic ability that as a wideout, there is nobody that can touch him," the coach said. "He's got one of the best pair of hands that I've ever seen or coached. And he just has so much athletic ability that he can lay out for balls, he can go over the top of people for balls. He's just a big-play type guy as a receiver."

If Smith's decision comes down to an issue of trust in the head coach, then Ohio State scores well in that department.

"As far as Coach (Jim) Tressel goes, so far, I love him because of his honesty," Smith said. "The first thing that I have noticed in the recruiting business is that honesty comes first. Honesty has been there since day one, just telling me that, 'We want you in this program and if you can't play quarterback then you can play somewhere else.' That helps me to get to know the program a little bit more."

"If you look at Ohio State they're bringing in a hell of a recruiting class and all they really need is a quarterback, and they're recruiting the two premier quarterbacks in the state."

"If we were to both go there then there is no more '10,000 yards over four seasons (Zwick's career numbers)'. We're starting on a clean slate and the best man wins. So just as far as them coming to me now more from a quarterback standpoint than ever is knowing that the best man may win and the previous records mean nothing when you go to college."

That's precisely what makes the challenge exciting for Smith.

"Every program I've ever been in, there has been speculation of trying to move me to another position because there was another guy there who could throw the ball and I could do other things," Smith said.

Make no mistake about it, Smith knows Zwick: They both attended the Elite 11 quarterback camp in California last summer and Smith has the utmost respect for Zwick as a football player and a leader as well.

"I like his attitude just as far as being a quarterback," Smith said of Zwick. "There has to be a sense of, I wouldn't say cockiness, but you have to believe in yourself. Every quarterback has to have a little bit of an ego, not a big one, just knowing that when you're a quarterback, you are a leader. And he's demonstrated that for the last couple of years. He's a great player. He has a great attitude, a great arm and as far as being a quarterback I respect him."

Smith has worked hard on developing his arm. He wasn't known to have a strong arm when he was at St. Edward's because, according to Smith, whenever he threw the ball hard his receivers would drop it, so he had to

## The Smith File

NAME — Troy Smith

HIGH SCHOOL — Cleveland Glenville

POSITION — Quarterback

HEIGHT, WEIGHT — 6-1, 205 pounds

40-YARD DASH TIME — 4.48 seconds

BENCH PRESS — 245 pounds

GRADE-POINT AVERAGE — 2.8

COLLEGE ENTRANCE TEST — Scored a 14 on his first ACT attempt. He said without the test score he'll likely enroll at Ohio State and pay the cheaper in-state tuition.

VITAL STATISTICS — Smith threw for 1,400 yards and rushed for 500 more as a junior at Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward. He transferred to Glenville after that football season and starred there as a senior. He completed 54 of 128 passes (42 percent) for 969 yards with 12 touchdowns and four interceptions. He also rushed for 329 yards and scored four touchdowns as Glenville ended up 9-2 and qualified for the Division I playoffs. This past summer, Smith attended 10 different camps, including the prestigious Elite 11 quarterback camp in California. He has run an impressive 4.1-second time in the pro shuttle. He was averaging 17 points, nine assists and four rebounds as the school's basketball point guard this winter. He is rated Ohio's 13th-best prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News and the nation's 13th-best "dual threat" quarterback by Rivals100.com Recruiting.

COACH'S COMMENT — "I think it would be a great asset for Ohio State to have the kind of quarterback that (Justin) Zwick is and the type of quarterback that Troy is. To me, Troy would either be the best receiver to make Zwick the best quarterback, or he would push Zwick to be the best quarterback or even beat him out. With him going to Ohio State, that would make Zwick an even better quarterback or he will beat him out."

"Troy has been an excellent leader here, he's been an excellent student here, and he's been an excellent student-athlete here for us." — Glenville head coach Ted Ginn

HOBBIES — Watching movies and DVDs.

SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN — Smith is considering West Virginia, Ohio State, Iowa and Toledo. He visited WVU, Toledo and Michigan State previously and has trips set to Iowa Jan. 18 and Ohio State Jan. 25.

let up on it some so they could catch it easier.

"I work on my arm all year around," he said. "I work on my legs, my arm, my whole body. But my arm has been my secret weapon."

Although Smith is prepared to take his strong arm and athletic ability to a place where he really enjoyed his visit, he said he is still expecting to be overwhelmed on his official visit to Ohio State at the end of January.

"Out of a hundred I'd say West Virginia was about a 99, maybe even a hundred," he said. "I enjoyed my whole time there. They treated me really well and I had a nice time with the coaches and the whole bit. But without a doubt, I'm looking to be knocked off my feet with the visit to OSU because that's what separates West Virginia from the other schools right now."



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## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

## Distinguished Taylor Had A Presence About Him

I can't say that I have much firsthand knowledge of Fred Taylor as a coach. Ohio State was well into the Eldon Miller era when I got my first job covering OSU sports for the old Buckeye Leaves back in 1979.

But I got a chance to work pretty closely with Taylor when I helped with the publicity for the 35th reunion dinner of OSU's 1960 national championship basketball team back in 1995.

The things I'll remember most about Taylor from that experience — aside from the fact that he was really nice to me, a journalist whom he had never met before — was his striking and distinguished presence, his promptness (you weren't going to beat him to any appointment), and how cooperative he was as far as working with any of the media that I hooked him up with.

The thing that most struck me about Taylor, though, was not anything he did during those many months that we worked to make that event into what turned out to be a great success. What most impressed me was the impact that Taylor clearly had on the many former Buckeyes whom I also met while working on the project.

In my more than 20 years in sports journalism, there have been only a few coaches I have come in contact with who had the devoted following among former players that Taylor did. Woody Hayes was certainly one of them.

I think this loyalty among former players is a far greater indicator of a coach's success than wins and losses. But, interestingly, it is my experience that the coaches who command this type of respect are generally successful on the field or court, as well.

Fred Taylor will always be remembered for his record at Ohio State. That record will forever have a place in the record books for all to see. But it is quite apparent that he will have an even greater place in the hearts of those he coached, as is indicated by the many testimonials you have seen in Buckeye Sports Bulletin and elsewhere in the days since the legendary coach's death.

I wanted to thank Lee Caryer, author of "The Golden Age of Ohio State Basketball," for his help in our coverage of the life and times of Taylor in the last two issues and many times in the past. Lee has always been our go-to guy when it comes to Taylor and other historical aspects of Ohio State basketball.

## Doss Surprises Me

I was as surprised as just about everyone when Mike Doss announced that he was returning for his senior year. All indications were that he was going pro, as most of the juniors with pro potential at Ohio State have in recent years.

From a personal standpoint, Doss has a chance to improve his draft status and also get a year closer to his degree. He also has one more shot at playing for a Big Ten championship, something he has stated on several occasions was important to him. I was particularly pleased to see Doss acknowledge that he needs to work on his tackling, something I have harped on in this space many times. The big hit makes the highlight reel; sure tackling wins championships.

From a team standpoint, the Buckeyes retain a bona fide star and proven big-play maker.

I think there is something more impor-

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH  
Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

tant than that, however. Doss' decision gives the team something to build on as it heads into Jim Tressel's second year. And it gives validation to the idea that things are going to be different under Tressel than in the past regime, when players going pro early was the norm and provided a convenient excuse for various failures.

The biggest name that comes to mind among Buckeyes who considered going pro but elected to stay is Joey Galloway, who returned for his senior year in 1994. Many had thought he was leaving when he called a press conference for Jan. 10, 1994, but he claimed he decided about an hour before the gathering with the media that he would not join fellow Buckeye "Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson in heading to the NFL early.

Galloway admitted his cloudy draft status — he was projected as anywhere from a first- to fourth-round pick — played a role in his decision.

Galloway had mixed results in his senior year. He missed a pair of games after it was revealed that while considering leaving early, he had accepted money from a financial planner, money he never returned.

After catching 47 passes for 946 yards and a sparkling 20.1-yard average with 11 touchdowns, he caught 44 passes as a senior for 669 yards and a 15.2-yard average with seven TDs. He also ran the ball 12 times for 52 yards and a score. Galloway was strong on special teams that senior year, returning 16 punts for a 10.6-yard average and 18 kickoffs for a 25.7-yard average, including a 93-yarder for another touchdown. The Buckeyes finished 9-4 that year, with John Cooper's first win over Michigan.

Galloway went on to test strongly at the NFL combine and ended up being picked in the first round of the NFL draft, eighth overall, by Seattle. He also received his degree. Let's hope Doss is picked as high and also receives his sheepskin.

## Landing The Top Recruit

Just as I think it was an important building block for the team and for Tressel that Doss stayed, I think it was important that the coach received a verbal from highly rated prep linebacker Mike D'Andrea.

Longtime readers of this column know that I think recruiting can be extremely overrated. Some blue-chip prospects are all that they are advertised as, others are bombs.

But this early in Tressel's career, I think it is important for him to land players who are perceived as the best in the state or country. It adds credibility to the program and the coach. Many detractors feared Tressel would not be able to recruit on the national powerhouse level. He is putting those fears to rest quickly.

Landing top recruits also creates an environment where other top-notch players want to join something that they see as building. It's a snowball effect.

As for how good D'Andrea is, ask me in a couple of years.

## Stevie One Last Time

One more comment on Steve Bellisari. I was really surprised at how many peo-

ple were unhappy with the "light" punishment Bellisari received for his drinking and driving incident. In fact, there was a large contingent that thought he should have been dropped permanently from the team.

First of all, let's look at the punishment Bellisari received.

He missed the critical Illinois game, which also was senior day, and was stripped of his captaincy. He was allowed back on the team but was dropped to fourth string and had to watch from the sidelines during the Michigan game, the biggest game of his senior year.

I heard many complain that the fact that Bellisari was reinstated after the Illinois game made for what amounted to a two-day suspension. In the world of a football player, those two days are pretty big when you consider that they involved missing an important ball game. We don't know what other, internal penalties Bellisari received, things like running laps until he puked and other such pleasant things.

And all this is in addition to the fact that Bellisari served three days in jail, must spend a weekend in an alcohol rehabilitation program, must pay \$415, had his license suspended and must endure a year of probation.

My question to those of you who think the beleaguered quarterback is getting off easy is that if someone in your workplace is arrested for drunk driving, are they suspended from work?

No, their penalty is determined outside the office place, as it should be. There are probably people you work with who serve their time and you don't even know it.

"But those people aren't the quarterback of the Ohio State football team," some have told me. Does that mean that drunken driving is more or less dangerous

depending on how high-profile you are? Why should Bellisari's penalty be stiffer than the guy or gal sitting next to you?

"He's a role model," you tell me.

My response to that is that Andy Katzenmoyer was a two-time loser on alcohol charges, including once for underage drinking on his recruiting visit. Yet Katzenmoyer never missed a game and I don't remember anyone calling for him to be dropped from the team or outraged that he wasn't because he was a role model.

Similarly, Derek Ross was twice charged with serious driving offenses, though not alcohol related, and Tressel was lauded for the compassionate way he handled Ross' situation during spring ball. Few would have complained if Ross had chosen to postpone surgery and had played in the Outback Bowl.

Few complained about Katzenmoyer or Ross' playing status because they wanted those players, especially Katzenmoyer, on the field. I maintain that people who wanted Bellisari suspended permanently just wanted him out of the lineup because they didn't like his play.

That's well and good, but don't hide behind indignation over his penalties for drinking. Just admit you didn't like him as a player.

I was a little surprised that, in the end, Bellisari opted for a private cell. Initial indications were that he was not going to ask for special treatment while doing his time, for which I lauded him. I can't help but think that if Bellisari had led the Buckeyes to a comeback victory in the Outback Bowl, he would have gone ahead and stayed with the rest of the jail population. With the loss, and the way people in Columbus have treated him, I guess I can see why he had second thoughts.

It's really sad to say, but now that the Bellisari era is over, there can hopefully be a healing process among Buckeye fans. Some of the behavior that the quarterback elicited from Ohio State backers was extremely unfortunate and often downright embarrassing.

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