

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 22, No. 17

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

January 25, 2003

## A Day To Celebrate

### Seniors Enjoy Cheers On Cold Day At Horseshoe

By ERIC LOUGHRY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Following the lead of the drum major who escorted them, the collection of Ohio State senior players arched their backs and high-stepped their way atop the thin vowel in the marching band's fabled Script Ohio formation.

The group dotting took place at the Jan. 18 national championship celebration at Ohio Stadium, a rally that also served as a send-off for the 10 seniors present, a group OSU coach Jim Tressel lauded for its leadership.

"Everything that they asked of their teammates they were willing to do themselves and then some," Tressel said of his senior class. "They led when the going was good. They led when the going was tough."

• **Mayor Michael Coleman renames Lane Avenue as Champions Lane during stadium celebration (Page 15)**

A crowd estimated at 52,000 braved temperatures below 20 degrees and a wind chill near zero to pay homage to the school's newest national championship team.

Seniors Kenny Peterson and Matt Wilhelm missed the event while playing in the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala.

It was senior linebacker Cie Grant who pressured Miami quarterback Ken Dorsey with a blitz on what would be the final play of the Fiesta Bowl — and of the linebacker's collegiate career — to seal the Buckeyes' undefeated national championship season. It was only fit-



SEE CIE SING — Ohio State linebacker Cie Grant (right) perform "Carmen Ohio" as punter Andy Groom spells out an "O."

ting then that Grant helped put the final touches on the celebration.

Standing front and center, Grant softly sang the OSU alma mater, "Carmen Ohio," as a hushed crowd looked on.

Like the OSU team that mirrored Tressel's seemingly unflappable personality and always came through in the clutch during a season chock full of dizzying, frantic finishes, Grant rose to the occasion despite some adverse

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## OSU Seeks Big Finish

### Scott Accepts Shot To Earn Scholarship

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State's recruiting effort for 2003 may be bucking a trend, and that may not necessarily be good news.

As BSB went to press Jan. 21, OSU still had 12 verbal commitments in its class for 2003. OSU figures to sign as many as 17 or 18 players to letters of intent on national signing day Feb. 5.

That current crop of OSU verbals, however, drew a national ranking of only 28th from Rivals100.com's computerized system.

Certainly, OSU's final ranking will be impacted by whom the Buckeyes are able to land in the final two weeks before signing day.

But BSB research showed that over the



Cedric Scott

past 10 years no reigning national championship school has brought in a recruiting class ranked lower than 11th nationally (see table, page 7).

The Buckeyes were still pursuing a number of key prospects, most notably, Kentucky quarterback Michael Bush, New Jersey wide receiver Jesse Holley, Florida tight end James Jean, Ohio defensive lineman Shawn Crable and New Jersey defensive back Ira Guilford. (For updates on these players and others, see Recruiting Outlook on pages 8-10.)

OSU created a bit of good news over the weekend of Jan. 18: Cedric Scott, the younger brother of OSU defensive end Darrien Scott, agreed to enroll next fall as a preferred walk-on with the idea he could

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## Trio Of Juniors Considers Jump, But All Stay Put

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The deadline for underclassmen to declare for the 2003 NFL draft had come and gone and nobody from Ohio State had taken the plunge.

That left the last of three Buckeyes considering such a move to take inventory of the situation.

"It's almost like a package deal," said defensive end Will Smith. "One stayed and everybody stayed. I think that means we should be a good team next year."

Smith met with the media Jan. 17 to discuss his decision of two days prior, when he had followed the lead of teammates Michael Jenkins, a split end, and Darrien Scott, a defensive end, by deciding not to enter the draft a year early.

This marked just the second time since 1992 that the Buckeyes had not lost an underclassman to the NFL. In that span, 17 OSU juniors have made the jump (see graphic, page 18).

Speculation regarding the trio of talented juniors had swirled in the days following OSU's national championship win over Miami (Fla.) at the Fiesta Bowl.

After all, Jenkins was OSU's leading receiver, while Scott and Smith were the team's leaders in quarterback sacks.

But, as BSB reported in the Jan. 18 edition, Scott's father, Darrien Scott Sr., confirmed Jan. 12 that his son would return for his senior year. The 6-3, 271-pound Scott led the Buckeyes with nine sacks this past year.

According to his father, Scott was told he

Continued On Page 18



NFL CAN WAIT — Defensive end Will Smith speaks to the media after announcing he will play his senior season at OSU.



## COVER STORY: FOOTBALL RECRUITING

# Filling Needs Is More Important Than Rank

Continued From Page 1

move into a scholarship spot in January 2004 (see more details below).

In terms of rankings, though, OSU's small class may not get high marks.

But SuperPrep's Allen Wallace, who has covered recruiting for 20 years, said rankings aren't the end-all, be-all when it comes to looking at particular classes.

"Even though they may have a small class, they can still have some great prospects," said Wallace, who is based in Laguna Beach, Calif. "They could still have some truly elite people, like a Maurice Claret, in there who will be difference-maker kind of people."

"Plus, I think you also have to look at how they have addressed their needs at the various positions."

Wallace understands that fans expect immediate results after a national championship season. But he said that impact will be felt more over the next several years.

"The national championship the Buckeyes won will help more in recruiting over the next two or three or four years," Wallace said. "By the time they won that national championship, in large part their

recruiting for this year was set.

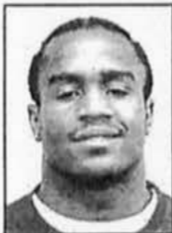
"Ohio State has always been known as an elite program. They have that great heritage. Even in down years, they still have that cachet and that aura about them."

"But the fact that they've now won it all reflects on the coaching that is in place. That should help them especially over the next two to five years."

Wallace notes that he has listed seven of OSU's 12 verbal as SuperPrep All-Americans (top 250 nationally). They are Tony Gonzalez, Darius Hiley, Devin Jordan, Brandon Maupin, Stanley McClover, David Patterson and Donte Whitner.

Patterson and Whitner also are among his national Elite 50. But that designation cuts both ways: Tight end Louis Irizarry, who decommitted from OSU to go with Miami (Fla.) recently, is also an Elite 50 pick.

"The loss of Louis Irizarry hurts,"



Donte Whitner

## National Champions And Recruiting

Here is a look at how recent football national champions have fared with recruiting class rankings immediately after winning their title, as well as how OSU's classes have ranked nationally in recent years.

Season	Champion	Rank	Top Class	OSU's Rank
1993	Florida State	4th	Tennessee	2nd
1994	Nebraska	9th	Notre Dame	25th
1995	Nebraska	6th	Ohio State	1st
1996	Florida	3rd	Florida State	10th
1997	Michigan*	1st	Michigan	16th
	Nebraska*	10th		
1998	Tennessee	11th	Texas	2nd
1999	Florida State	3rd	Florida	7th
2000	Oklahoma	5th	Florida State	14th
2001	Miami (Fla.)	4th	Texas	2nd
2002	Ohio State	—	—	—

\*-Split national champions.

Wallace said. "Good tight ends are not easy to come by. This shows that there are so many other things that kids will look at when they decide."

"Normally, you would think that Ohio State beating Miami would solidify all of their commitments. But it did not in this case because he was able to see the Miami tight end (Kellen Winslow Jr.) catching all of those passes."

Wallace scoffs at the notion that more than two dozen schools will sign a better class of players than Ohio State.

"Whoever ranks them 28th in the country is not paying attention," he said. "They should end up higher than that."

### Another Scott

#### Becomes A Buckeye

Charleston (W.Va.) Capital fullback/linebacker Cedric Scott was among four prospects who made official visits to OSU over the weekend of Jan. 17.

Scott (6-1, 230, 4.6) is the younger brother of OSU defensive end Darrion Scott, who recently decided to return for his senior year. He said he was pleased about the chance to enroll at OSU as a preferred walk-on with the idea he could go on scholarship next January.

"I'm excited," said Scott, who had an offer from in-state West Virginia. "This was

done at their suggestion. I talked to (head coach Jim) Tressel and (linebackers coach Mark) Snyder."

"They said they had already taken their class for this year pretty much, but I could have a scholarship next January after one of the seniors graduates."

Scott started at fullback and linebacker and also played some defensive end at Capital. He had a team-high 80 tackles on a 4-6 squad.

He had been to OSU many times with his family to see his brother play. He also attended OSU's summer camp last year.

He said it would be exciting to be on the same team as his brother, joining the Buckeyes as they prepare to defend their national championship.

"Darrion and I have never been on the same team before," he said. "I think that's going to be great."

Cedric Scott was hosted on his OSU visit by Marcus Green. He joined other recruits in watching the Jan. 18 Ohio Stadium national championship celebration from the warmth of the press box.

"That was really neat," he said. "I enjoyed it. The whole thing was good."

Cedric Scott holds a 2.7 GPA but must raise his ACT score two points from a 15 to a 17 to qualify. He must enroll as a qualifier to receive the scholarship beginning next winter.

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Gameday at Ohio Stadium, by Chance Brockway

Photographers Chance, Sonny and Scott Brockway invite you to an exhibition of their work. They will be on hand to answer questions during the sports card and memorabilia show scheduled for Sat., Jan. 25, at the Buckeye Hall of Fame Cafe. They will be available from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



# A Championship Celebration



**OLD GLORY AND NEW GLORY** — Members of the Ohio State football team (right) look on as the flag is raised during the playing of the Star Spangled Banner.



**STUDENT AND TEACHER** — OSU safety Mike Doss (left) gets ready to give head coach Jim Tressel a warm embrace on a chilly day.



**SCENES FROM A SATURDAY** — Above left, Ohio Gov. Bob Taft holds up a gift for Florida Gov. Jeb Bush; above, the Ohio State marching band makes its entrance into the stadium; left, the tens of thousands in attendance give Cie Grant an "H" during his rendition of "Carmen Ohio."



Photos by  
Jeff Brehm



## COVER STORY: A DAY TO CELEBRATE

# Ceremony Was Just Brrrrfect

Continued From Page 1

conditions.

"I was a little nervous because we were out in the cold for such a long time," Grant said. "Plus I'm just getting over a little illness which had messed with my voice a little bit. But once the emotion started flowing out there, it was sort of easy."

Following Grant's solo, he and the other members of the senior class were accompanied by the marching band and sang the alma mater just as they had after each game the last two seasons, ever since Tressel took over as coach and made each of them learn the lyrics.

They didn't all keep their cool like Grant had. Amidst the joy that swept through the Horseshoe there was a tinge of sadness.

This was goodbye.

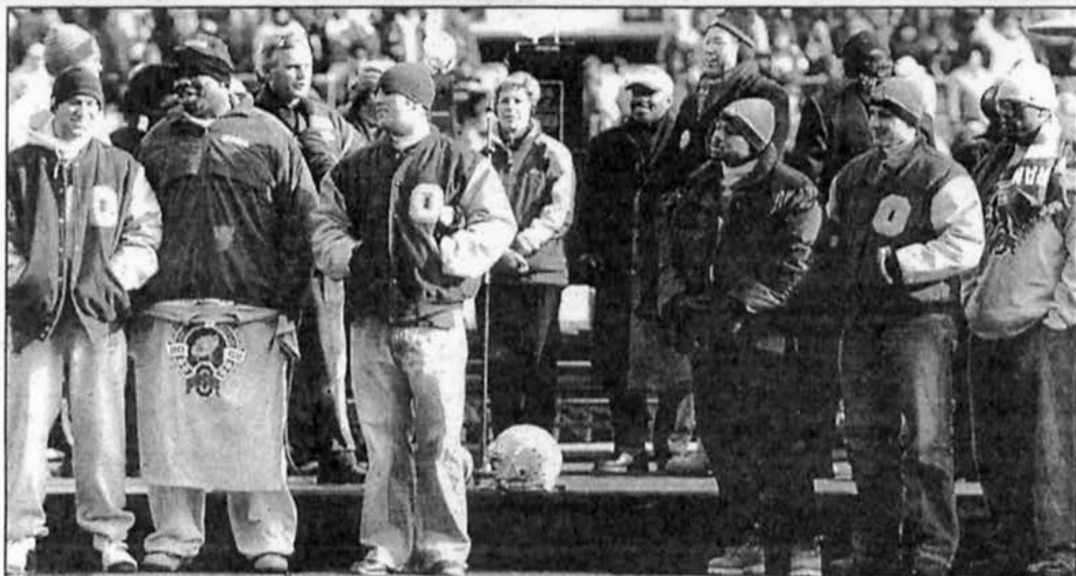
Co-captain Donnie Nickey looked over to see All-America punter Andy Groom trying in vain to hold himself together during their final rendition together. Nickey nearly crumbled himself.

Both came to OSU as anything but blue-chippers. Nickey was originally asked to come as a preferred walk-on and was given a scholarship before signing day in February 1998. Groom came as a preferred walk-on and wasn't given a scholarship until last season. As red-shirt freshmen in 1998, both took their licks running routes as receivers on the scout team offense. They stood together five years later as national champions.

"I think everybody got a little bit of butterflies coming out," said Nickey, a team co-captain. "And then singing the alma mater, that's when it hit. You got to reflect on the whole thing. I looked at Andy (Groom) and I about lost it."

Groom had looked up into the stands for his family as he has done every game as a Buckeye. He realized that he would never do that again. His father was weeping.

"We were singing the alma mater, I looked up to see my parents, like one



**STAND AND BE RECOGNIZED** — A large part of coach Jim Tressel's focus at the OSU football championship celebration Jan. 18 was on the seniors. Here, outgoing players, from left, Andy Groom, David Thompson, Jack Tucker, Chris Conwell, Jeremy Uhlenhake and Cie Grant are honored.

last time to see them in the stands, and my dad is losing it," a red-eyed Groom said, his voice trailing off. "I've never seen my dad cry in my life and I lost it. Everybody was consoling. We were all together and I couldn't take it. This has been the greatest thing of my life and I've loved every minute of it. It's hard to say goodbye."

It's undoubtedly hard for the Buckeye faithful to part with their national champions as well. But, as OSU President Karen Holbrook said, the 2002 team will forever remain intact for fans, petrified in their perfection.

"We recognize that this team will be playing together for years and years to come in the hearts and the minds, and on the VCRs and videos, of all the Buckeye fans everywhere around the world," Holbrook said.

Indeed, the 2002 Buckeyes have preserved their place in OSU lore, which some of them had not completely grasped until the celebration.

As the OSU players waited to be introduced, they congregated at the base of the southeast ramp, watching the end of the Fiesta Bowl replay that was being shown on the big screen atop

the south stands.

Though Grant had seen replays of himself storming off the left end and flinging Dorsey to the ground as the Miami quarterback tossed a desperation pass on the final play of the title game, it was not until he watched the replay at the stadium, with the subsequent roar of the crowd, that he realized the magnitude of the play and what it secured.

"The first few times I watched it, it really didn't hit," he said. "It was just another game, another film, it seemed like. But seeing it today on the jumbo (screen) it really hit that — what can I say — we are the national champions. It really sunk in today."

All-America safety Mike Doss said watching the same play hit home for him as well. He also managed a little barb on his fellow safety and co-captain.

"Standing at the bottom of the tunnel in a little hive, I remember seeing that last play," Doss said. "Cie blitzing in there and forcing a bad throw, Donnie dropping his only chance for an interception of the season, that's when it started really hitting right there."

After enduring three subpar seasons in which the Buckeyes averaged a mere seven wins and were faced with a coaching change, OSU's seniors leave having reached the pinnacle of college football.

"We've gone through a lot," Nickey said. "We've been through bad seasons and to go out as a senior and win all your games, win a national championship, I don't think there's anything more you can ask for."

"I mean there's the loss that we don't get to step out on the field again but, I mean, what we've done, we can take away with us. We'll always remember it."

For all the memories he provided for Buckeye backers as a three-time All-American, one who opted to stay for his senior season instead of entering the NFL draft, Doss will forever be a Buckeye legend. What stands out to him most vividly, however, is not the games he stood out in.

"The things that I will really remember are the things that you guys don't

get to see: in the locker room, the training table, the laughing and the joking and the crying, just the things that make a football team and make a family," he said. "You guys see the finished product and this is what we are: national champs."

Doss and Nickey have already talked about writing a book recalling their title run.

"It's in the works," Doss said of the book. "Donnie's the author, I'm just the consultant."

One of the cornerstones of Tressel's coaching philosophy is his teams will be a "football family." It was evident that his players had bought into that message by the way they rallied around each other and consistently found ways to pull out wins.

The 2002 team will travel to Washington, D.C., sometime in February to visit President Bush at the White House. Certainly, there will be reunions down the line for many years to come.

But it was telling how they clung to each other in their final appearance together at Ohio Stadium.

"I think that the things that we've been through, winning (the Fiesta Bowl), winning all the games, preparing all season, I think we're connected on a family level," Nickey said. "I've had a lot of friends but, when you get to a certain level and you've been through the things that we've gone through, you feel the love. I think we'll always love each other."

Groom had gathered himself when he offered his gratitude to his teammates and coach simply for their friendship.

"All the 12 other seniors, you guys have been my best friends of my life and I'm going to take this forever and I never want to lose touch with anyone and good luck with everything," Groom said. "And thanks to Coach Tressel for giving me a shot and just being a friend to me, too. I've loved everything about this and it's hard to say goodbye, but all good things have to come to an end at some point and we went out in fashion."

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## A CHAMPIONSHIP CELEBRATION

## A Day When Frostbite Never Felt So Good

By ERIC LOUGHRY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Like the 50,000 people who came out to show their appreciation for the national champion Buckeyes Jan. 18 at Ohio Stadium, braving temperatures below 20 degrees and wind chills near zero, Ohio State coach Jim Tressel was cold.

But Tressel did notice the sun was present throughout the celebration on an otherwise overcast day, which was only fitting, he said.

"It was a little bit amazing to me, (that) when the program was going on the sun shone on that bunch," Tressel said. "We had good fortune throughout the year and we had one more moment in the sun, if you will."

"And that was an extraordinary crowd, but what I like about it is (the team) enjoyed every bit of it. They enjoyed the band coming out of the tunnel — you know our guys never get to see that."

The stadium gates opened two hours prior to the event and many were waiting hours earlier, congregating as they did on game days, albeit to a lesser extent. A replay showing the second half and overtime periods of the Fiesta Bowl was shown on the giant video screen atop the south stands.

After the crowd — and players — again watched senior linebacker Cie Grant corral Miami quarterback Ken Dorsey and force a desperation pass that fell incomplete to give OSU its first national title since 1968, the Buckeyes, who were gathered at the base of the southeast ramp they had come down before eight home wins during their undefeated slate, were introduced by OSU athletic director Andy Geiger.

Senior co-captain and three-time All-American Mike Doss charged out, waving his arms to enliven the frigid crowd as he circled the stage that was set up at midfield, facing the west side of the stadium.

Doss and his teammates were seated on the stage along with Tressel, Geiger, OSU president Karen Holbrook, Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman and Gov. Bob Taft.

Shortly after the players were situated, Geiger introduced the OSU marching band. The players, most of whom had never seen the band's ramp entrance, all stood up and clamored to get a view.

Following a performance of the national anthem, Holbrook spoke.

"Many things are impressive about this team," Holbrook said. "They win, of course, but they also know how to win as a team. And they win with character and undying effort. They proved our critics were wrong all year long because they just plain refused to lose."

Holbrook also touched on the recent announcements that juniors Will Smith, Michael Jenkins and Darriin Scott will all return for their senior year at OSU, opting not to enter the NFL draft.

"With a great spirit and sense of team it's no wonder that every single junior will be coming back next year," Holbrook said, eliciting a hearty cheer from the stands. "This is absolutely incredible and it speaks very highly of Coach Tressel and his staff and the values that they share with the team. We think the



**A BETTER ADDRESS** — At the celebration honoring the OSU football team's perfect season, it was announced that Lane Avenue will be ceremoniously renamed Champions Lane. Cheering things on are (background, from left) OSU athletic director Andy Geiger, head coach Jim Tressel and Tressel's wife, Ellen.

seniors probably wish they were coming back, too."

Coleman announced that Lane Avenue at the north end of the OSU campus would be renamed to commemorate the national title.

"You've heard of Lane Avenue, haven't you?" Coleman asked the crowd. "Well, that's the way it used to be. Now it's Champions Lane!"

A scarlet and gray street sign was unveiled to announce the change.

Taft declared the day "Ohio State Champions Day" throughout the state. Taft also let the crowd know he fully intended to make sure Florida Gov. Jeb Bush made good on a bet the two had prior to the Fiesta Bowl. Taft and Bush agreed that the governor with the losing team in his state would have to don the jersey of the winning school at the national governors convention next month. Taft held up an OSU home jersey he had earmarked for Bush.

Two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin, now an associate athletic director at OSU, introduced Tressel. Griffin received a standing ovation from all of the players on the platform.

Tressel thanked the fans for their showing at the Fiesta Bowl and at the celebration. He then introduced the senior class of players and managers, except for middle linebacker Matt Wilhelm and Kenny Peterson, who were at the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala.

Tressel touted his seniors as "the finest leaders in college football."

Doss and co-captain Donnie Nicky both addressed the crowd briefly, thanking OSU fans for the support at the Fiesta Bowl. Doss then addressed Tressel.

"A year ago we sat in a room and we had a mission," Doss said. "Coach, mission accomplished."

Coach and player then shared a hug as the crowd roared its approval.

A highlight montage of the 2002 season was then shown on the video board, with the Michigan game and Fiesta Bowl portion set to Eminem's "Lose Yourself."

The marching band then performed Script Ohio, with the senior players collectively following the drum major to dot the "I." Grant then sang a solo version of the OSU alma mater, "Carmen Ohio." The ceremony closed as the senior class embraced and sang as the band played the alma mater.

"It was cold," Nicky said. "I don't know what the exact temperature is, but it was down there. To see that many people — 50,000 people — it was like the last page of our book."

The event was televised live in Columbus by a pair of local stations as well as statewide on Ohio News Network.

**Well Worth The Frostbite**

If celebrating OSU's first national

championship in 34 years meant sitting in freezing conditions, those present had no problem with that.

"We thought, 'What's a little cold?'" said Albert Gallis of Lancaster, Ohio, who attended the ceremony with wife Angie. Both enjoyed considerably warmer weather in Tempe for the Fiesta Bowl.

Albert Gallis said he had to do a little bit of pleading to Angie, but she soon decided she wanted to go.

"I decided it would be worth it," she said.

Don Carmichael, a 1974 OSU alum from Grafton, Ohio, was joined at the ceremony by his sons, Dan and Don Jr., who attend OSU, and Douglas, who is in high school. Carmichael saw Griffin play while he attended OSU. The chance to celebrate a national title with his sons was special to him.

"It's been 34 years since the last one, so I was really waiting for this one," Carmichael said.

"Just to have the boys a part of it just makes it that much more thrilling."

"The cold wasn't going to hold us back."

Geoff Guider of Cleveland came with his wife and two daughters, including Jessica, 6.

"We just had nothing to do today and said, 'You know what, let's take the family down to the 'Shoe and celebrate,'" Guider said.

His younger daughter didn't have the title just right, but Jessica knew what stood out to her.

"My favorite was doing script and Ohio," she said.

Her father concurred.

"That was my favorite part, too," Guider said. "When they took all the seniors and they dotted the 'I' in Script Ohio, that was really neat."

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

## Buckeyes Made Tight Wins Their Calling Card

By STEVE HELWAGEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Some college football fans are probably still scratching their heads, wondering if Ohio State's 2002 team should be known as national champions or escape artists.

Yes, the Buckeyes completed their mission by winning all 14 games, including a double-overtime thriller in the national championship game at the Fiesta Bowl against Miami (Fla.).

That was a fitting conclusion to the season for the Buckeyes, whose march to a championship was fraught with peril at almost every turn.

Somewhere, both Woody Hayes and Harry Houdini are still smiling.

"We had some narrow escapes along the way," OSU coach Jim Tressel said. "In our conference, it's a battle every weekend. People know one another very well and they know your strengths and weaknesses."

"The emotional highs and lows that go into each weekend make it very, very difficult to remain undefeated."

It would be hard to pinpoint just one game or one play that lifted Ohio State to its national championship. Over the course of the regular season, so many plays put the Buckeyes in position to play for the title.

Then, in the Fiesta Bowl, OSU was twice down to its last play in the first overtime before scoring and sending the game into the second extra period, where the Buckeyes prevailed 31-24.

"I don't know if there's just one play that typified the year," said quarterback Craig Krenzel, who was at the center of many of OSU's heroics. "I know we made a number of big plays. Myself, I was able to step up and make that throw to Michael Jenkins (at Purdue)."

"Maurice Hall, Lydell Ross and Maurice Clarett all made some big runs. When there was an opportunity to make a big play, we felt we did a good job with that."

Whereas previous OSU teams cracked under pressure, this team appeared to thrive on "the moment." Tight end Ben Hartsock said the Buckeyes were actually pretty loose, even in the toughest of jams.

"If you had a camera in the huddle, you wouldn't believe how goofy we are during some of those pressure situations," Hartsock said.

"During the Michigan game, Craig called a play and I heard it wrong. I looked at Ivan Douglas after the play and said, 'You screwed up.' He said, 'No, you did, pal.'"

"So later on, Craig turns to me and says, 'Hartsock, we're running this play,' and everybody was laughing. It's just a very relaxed atmosphere."

But there is only so much suspense a football fan or player can take.

"I'm glad it's over with," flanker/cornerback Chris Gamble said after the Fiesta Bowl win. "I'm tired of overtime games, especially double-overtime games. I just want to rest and get ready for next year."

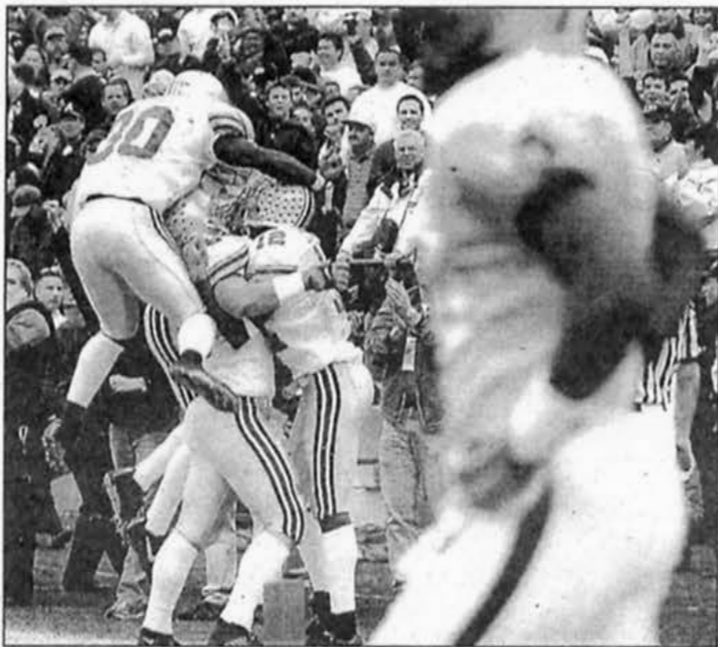
With that sentiment in mind, we will look back at OSU's national-high seven games that were decided by seven points or less.

• **Cincinnati** — Ohio State had not lost to an in-state opponent in 81 years. But there was sixth-ranked OSU staring down the barrel of a 19-17 deficit midway through the fourth quarter Sept. 21 at Cincinnati.

Things changed suddenly, though, as defensive end Darrien Scott hit UC quarterback Gino Guidugli, whose fumble was recovered by OSU's David Thompson with 8:11 left.

Krenzel led OSU on a 47-yard scoring drive, which he capped with a bruising 6-yard touchdown run to put the Buckeyes up 23-19 with 3:44 left.

Guidugli then led UC down to the OSU 15 with 1:01 left. On first down, he threw a high fade to Jon Olinger in the end zone. But OSU freshman corner E.J. Underwood got a hand on the pass to break it up.



**MOB SCENE** — After Michael Jenkins (12) caught the touchdown pass that beat Purdue, he was greeted by Lydell Ross (left) and Ben Hartsock as a dejected Boilermaker looked on.

Guidugli overthrew Olinger on second down with Gamble covering. His third-down pass was a near-perfect fade to George Murray, who could not haul it in after breaking free from OSU's Cie Grant.

Finally, Guidugli locked in on top receiver LaDarius Vann on a fourth-down slant. But OSU had the play defended perfectly: Linebacker Matt Wilhelm tipped the pass up in the air and nickel back Will Allen intercepted it in the end zone to end the threat with 26 seconds left.

"A couple of their guys caught the

ball, but they dropped it," OSU safety Mike Doss recalled. "That was probably the scariest moment. I know I didn't have my best game and a lot of guys didn't have their best game that Saturday."

Jenkins added, "In the Cincinnati game, we had those passes into the end zone. I don't like close calls like that."

• **Wisconsin** — OSU had moved up the charts to No. 4 nationally prior to its Oct. 19 visit to Wisconsin. None of that mattered, of course, as the Badgers led 14-13 to start the fourth quarter.

Facing third-and-6 on his own 16-yard line, Krenzel went for broke and hit Jenkins with a 45-yard heave. The lanky receiver went up and took the ball away from a pair of UW defenders on the play. "We really needed that play," Jenkins said.

Six plays later, Krenzel tossed a 3-yard touchdown pass to Hartsock that staked OSU to a 19-14 lead with 9:59 left.

But the defense still had to stand tall after that with Gamble intercepting a UW pass in the end zone with 7:09 left to quell the Badgers' last and best threat.

• **Penn State** — Gamble again stepped to the forefront as he made his first career start on defense at corner as the Buckeyes hosted the Nittany Lions Oct. 26.

He made the coaches look like certified geniuses when he intercepted a wobbly Zack Mills pass early in the second half and returned it 40 yards for his team's only touchdown in a 13-7 win.

"I just caught the interception and I wanted to score," Gamble said.

• **Purdue** — Defeat once again seemed a definite possibility as the third-ranked Buckeyes trailed host Purdue 6-3 inside two minutes left.

Even worse, the Buckeyes were facing fourth-and-1 at the Purdue 37. But with Purdue expecting a run, OSU exploited single coverage on its receivers. Krenzel



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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

stepped up in the pocket and hurled a 37-yard bomb to Jenkins, who made an almost over-the-shoulder grab at the goal line for the go-ahead touchdown with just 1:36 left.

Had OSU not gotten at least the first down, Purdue could have run the remaining time out — costing not only that game but the Buckeyes' national title hopes.

"I look back at that fourth-and-1 against Purdue and think how not excited I was," Hartsock said. "Now, as I look back I see how big a play it was. If I had thought about that then, I might have tightened up a bit."

Without standout tailback Claret, who was nursing a shoulder injury, Tressel said he felt OSU's best chance to pick up the first down was to throw the ball. Krenzel and Jenkins did the rest.

"At that moment, we were having trouble getting the yards running," Tressel said. "So we thought the next best thing might be to pass the ball. We just called a basic route that wasn't necessarily designed to go for a 37-yard touchdown. The quarterback did a good job going through his reads and threw the ball and made a big play."

Hartsock said the play showed that OSU is not exactly a 3 yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust offense.

"Some people may say we play very conservatively," he said. "But that was a fourth-down call and the biggest play of the game. That was for all the marbles. I thought it was a pretty gutsy call."

"That showed that Coach Tressel will call whatever it takes to get the win. If it takes a big risk like that, he'll do it."

Quarterbacks and receivers coach Joe Daniels said he recognized the potential for the play when he saw Purdue load the box in expectation of a run.

"When we came out and lined up, I saw the coverage and what they were trying to do," Daniels said. "I knew there was no question he was going to go to Michael. I know how well the two of them work together and the instinct they have. I knew where the ball was going even though the other two guys (Gamble and Hartsock) were wide open."

"Craig just knew (the corner) wasn't going to be able to handle Mike. He had a good feel that Mike can beat him."

Jenkins beat Purdue corner Antwaun Rogers at the line and got behind him on the play.

"We didn't have time to think about tensing up during the game," Jenkins said. "It wasn't that tense on the field. We didn't think about it too much. We just made the play."

Gamble added, "When Michael Jenkins caught that pass on fourth-and-1, I was very nervous. I didn't think he was going to catch it, but he came up with the big catch. I was excited."

But the 10-6 win was not secure just yet. Purdue quarterback Kyle Orton tried to go deep, but Gamble raced back on defense and made the game-clinching interception with 45 seconds left.

"They got the ball back and were driving it," Gamble said. "I saw the receiver go deep and I went back there and got the interception."

• **Illinois** — One week later, OSU — now ranked No. 2 — was forced into overtime at Illinois. Kicker John Gockman nailed a 48-yard field goal as time expired to tie the game at 16.

The Buckeyes had the ball first but seemed headed toward a field goal that would have left them vulnerable to defeat if the Illini had answered with a touchdown.

Facing third-and-10 at the Illini 25, Krenzel was flushed from the pocket and took off. He picked up 14 yards and, more importantly, a first down at the Illini 11.

"I just stepped up and after that, I was trying to score," Krenzel said.

Two plays later, Hall did just that with an 8-yard TD run that put the Buckeyes up 23-16.

Then the OSU defense slammed the door shut, stopping the Illini on downs. On the final play, Grant pressured quarterback Jon Beutler, whose pass was batted down by defensive tackle Tim Anderson.

• **Michigan** — Once again, the Buckeyes trailed in the second half as Michigan clung to a 9-7 advantage in the Nov. 23 regular-season finale in Columbus.

But OSU twice deviated from the script as Krenzel threw down the left sideline to Claret for a 26-yard gain. Then Krenzel pitched out to Hall on an option — OSU's first in recent memory — for the 4-yard TD run and a 14-9 lead with 4:55 left.

Michigan threatened twice in the final minutes. But OSU's Scott popped UM quarterback John Navarre to force a fumble, which Will Smith recovered with 2:02 left.

After regaining possession, Michigan drove all the way down to the OSU 24 with nine seconds left. Navarre threw into the end zone incomplete, but one tick was left on the clock.

"That one second was on there and you're just wondering who left that second on there," Hartsock said.

On the final play, though, Navarre again went for the end zone and top receiver Braylon Edwards. But Allen stepped in front of the pass and intercepted it, sending OSU to the Fiesta Bowl and touching off a massive celebration.

"There was a second left on the clock, but they needed to score a touchdown," Smith recalled. "He had a long time to get the ball off, but Will came up with the interception."

For those watching from the sideline, that final Michigan drive — managed perfectly by Navarre until the last play — seemed to take an eternity.

"That was the longest minute of my career, that whole drive," Jenkins said. "Then they had that last play in there, too."

But in the final analysis, it was win No. 13 for Ohio State. Nobody cared about the margin, only about how they would get to Tempe, Ariz., for the Fiesta Bowl.

"We won that game in trademark Ohio State fashion," Hartsock said. "We definitely let it go all the way down to the wire. But I never sensed any despair. I never saw anybody say, 'We're going to blow it.'"

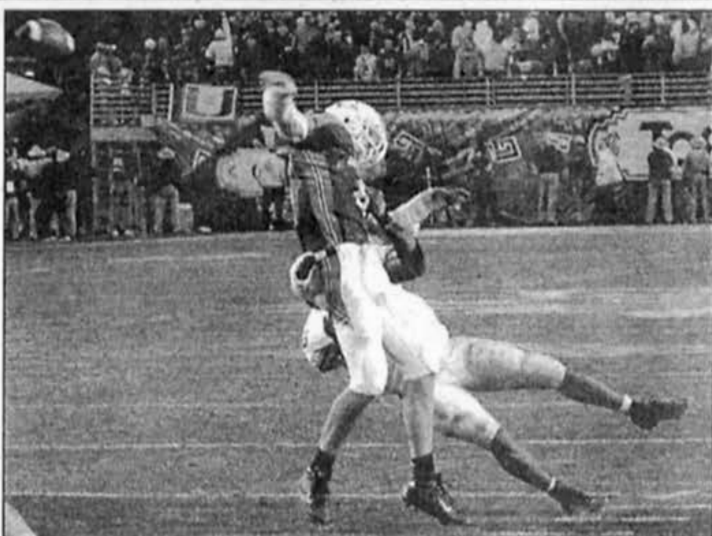
"We got ourselves into those situations and then we'd just say, 'How are we going to get out of it?'"

• **Miami (Fla.)** — Of course, those six nail-biters were only a precursor to the Fiesta Bowl.

OSU grabbed command in the third quarter with a 17-7 lead. But Miami roared back and tied the game at 17 on Todd Sievers' 40-yard field goal on the final play of regulation.

Miami had the ball to open overtime and scored on a pass from Ken Dorsey to Kellen Winslow Jr. to go up 24-17. That meant OSU had to match the 'Canes with a touchdown to force a second overtime.

But Krenzel was sacked, leading to a



**GAME, SET, MATCH AND CHAMPIONSHIP** — Yet another heart-stopper, the Fiesta Bowl, ended in OSU's favor at long last when Cie Grant got to Miami quarterback Ken Dorsey on the final play of the game. Dorsey's desperation pass fell to the ground harmlessly, giving the Buckeyes the national title.

fourth-and-14 predicament from the Miami 29. All seemed lost, but Krenzel calmly threw an out to Jenkins for 17 yards and a first down at the 12.

Moments later, though, OSU had fourth-and-3 at the Miami 5. Krenzel threw to Gamble in the end zone. The pass fell incomplete, but with a pass interference call that will live in infamy — Big 12 field judge Terry Porter tossed a flag against Miami's Glenn Sharpe well after the play was completed — OSU had new life.

Krenzel cashed in three plays later with a 1-yard TD plunge to tie the game.

Claret put the Buckeyes up 31-24 with a 5-yard TD run in the second OT. Miami then drove down to a first down at the OSU 2. But two running plays netted just 1 yard and Dorsey threw wide of tight end Eric Winston incomplete.

That left the 'Canes facing fourth-and-goal from the OSU 1.

"Before that fourth down play, Mike

Doss huddled everybody up and said, 'This could be the last play. Make sure you go your hardest,' Smith said. 'We looked at each other and you could tell in everybody's eyes we wanted to win.'"

OSU's strategy was a winner as well: The Buckeyes brought Grant off the edge on a blitz. He grabbed Dorsey and forced him into a wide incompleteness to end the game and give OSU its long awaited fifth national championship.

"I was tangled up with the tackle and the guard," Smith said. "That let Cie Grant to come free and get pressure on Dorsey. I looked back and saw the ball rolling on the ground and I knew we had won."

"I had a feeling of relief because I was exhausted," he said.

The victory was typical Ohio State.

"We didn't panic," said senior safety Donnie Nicky. "We were like that all season. We never surrendered and we never gave up all season."

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## COVER STORY: JUNIORS STAY PUT

## Jenkins Never Really Thought About Leaving

Continued From Page 1

would project as either a late first-round or early second-round draft choice.

Unconfirmed reports surfaced that Jenkins also would return before he released a statement through OSU on Jan. 15.

"I considered my options," Jenkins said in the release. "I gave a little thought about leaving, but I never seriously considered it."

In fact, Jenkins has been training with the OSU track team this winter and again plans to compete in that sport this spring. The 6-5, 215-pound Jenkins led OSU with 61 catches, including six touchdowns, this past year.

That left Smith to finalize his decision. He reportedly told several friends over the weekend of Jan. 12 that he was not sure which way he would go.

"I did a lot of thinking about it," said Smith, a native of Utica, N.Y. "I thought about my grandmother as well. She always wanted me to finish school. That was a key part in my decision."

"She told me to do what I thought was best for myself and my life. But I knew she wanted me to graduate. I also spoke with Coach (Jim) Tressel and everything was cool."

Smith's decision made it official: OSU would have 18 returning starters from the 14-0 team that won the 2002 national title.

"I just decided I wanted to come back

another year and try and win another national championship," Smith said.

A year ago, safety Mike Doss took the road less traveled by returning to OSU for his senior season.

"I spoke to Mike," Smith said. "He called me. He helped me out. He wanted to make sure I didn't make a bad decision. He was happy I stayed."

"Everybody was happy I stayed," Smith, who had six sacks in an injury-plagued junior year, told reporters research showed he could have been taken in the same position as Scott in the late first round or early second round.

"I got my grade from the NFL's juniors committee the Monday after the Fiesta Bowl," Smith said. "They have like 12 general managers who grade your film. They said I was either a late first-round or early second-round pick. I



Michael Jenkins



Darrion Scott

## They Left Early

Here is a look at the 17 underclassmen who have left OSU early for the NFL draft since 1992.

Player	Pos.	Year	Round Drafted
Alonzo Spellman	DL	1992	1st
Roger Harper	DB	1993	2nd
Robert Smith	RB	1993	1st
Dan Wilkinson*	DL	1994	1st
Korey Stringer	OL	1995	1st
Craig Powell	LB	1995	1st
Lorenzo Styles	LB	1995	3rd
Terry Glenn	FL	1996	1st
Orlando Pace*	OL	1997	1st
Shawn Springs	DB	1997	1st
David Boston	SE	1999	1st
Andy Katzenmoyer	LB	1999	1st
Na'il Diggs	LB	2000	4th
Nate Clements	DB	2001	1st
Ryan Pickett	DL	2001	1st
Derek Ross	DB	2002	3rd
Darnell Sanders	TE	2002	4th

\*First overall selection.

wasn't happy with my grade.

"It would have been tough if they showed I was in the top five, but I don't think I was going to go in the top five this year. You never really know anyway because you have to work out for the scouts and do well there. It's like the lottery, basically."

He went down to the final day, however, before making the decision.

"I woke up in the morning, I got something to eat and I went to class," Smith said. "I called my grandmother and let her know I was probably going to stay in school."

"She said, 'That's good. You have one more year left. You can come back, finish up your school and graduate.'"

Smith, a criminology major, said he was on schedule to graduate next spring. He discussed some of his reasons for returning.

"I know I would miss the atmosphere and going out there in front of 100,000 fans," he said. "I'm confident I can play at (the NFL) level. I have played against a lot of guys in the NFL who are doing well there."

Speaking in the days leading up to the decision, OSU defensive line coach Jim Heacock was hopeful his top two ends would be back in the fold.

"I tried to be honest with them," Heacock said. "In both cases, I believe they can enhance their draft status by staying another year."

"Will really had a rough year. He played hurt all year. Really, only his first game and last game he was totally healthy."

Their return likely leaves junior-to-be Simon Fraser (see story, page 19) as the team's third end again in 2003.



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