

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

\$2.00

PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER
CLASSIFICATION
DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE RUSH!!

Vol. 22, No. 24

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

March 29, 2003

Champs Get Back To Work



BACK FOR MORE — Maurice Clarett (left), who distinguished himself last spring as a freshman early enrollee, OSU strength and conditioning coach Allan Johnson (middle) and running backs coach Tim Spencer begin their defense of the national title when spring practice kicks off April 3.

Tressel Says Buckeyes Can't Get Caught Looking Back At 2002

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

It is only fitting that Ohio State's spring football will begin on April 3, exactly three months to the day after the Buckeyes won the national championship at the Fiesta Bowl.

The date allows OSU and its fans to look back fondly on one of the school's signature moments.

But once those whistles start blowing, head coach Jim Tressel is counting on it being business as usual on the practice fields at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"You're working on what lies ahead," Tressel said. "If you get caught looking back too much at what you've done in the past, somebody is going to pass you by."

The Buckeyes will have 15 spring football practices leading up to the April 26 Scarlet and Gray Game at Ohio Stadium.

With the 2003 season opener with Washington still five months away, the focus will be on fundamentals, not game planning.

"Spring football is a lot different venue," Tressel said. "You are not preparing for another team. You work to get each guy of your own a lot better and they

BSB's SPRING FOOTBALL PREVIEW

are competing against each other.

"I think back in the old days, when it was much longer, I think for players and coaches alike it was a lot more drudgery.

Now, it is so compact with only 15 days, you've really got to focus on what you want to get accomplished."

With 18 returning starters (11 offense, six defense and one kick specialist) from the 2002 championship team, there will not be a lot of position battles this spring.

Nonetheless, coveted spots in the two-deep rotation will be up for grabs. As always, Tressel and his staff figure to conduct a pair of jersey scrimmages as well as a special teams scrimmage to assist them in making these critical personnel decisions.

"A young man has to take advantage of every practice because he only has a very few opportunities to show what he can do," Tressel said.

"They know in general what hard work can do and what it translates to on

Continued On Page 12

Tough Year Ends With Late Rally

OSU Misses On Chance At NCAA

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

While a bevy of injuries put a damper on Ohio State's men's basketball season, it was a remarkable flurry of five games in seven days that ended it.

OSU's frustrating season of what might have been nearly panned out as the Buckeyes won three games in three days — including upsets of regular-season champion Wisconsin and Michigan State — to advance to the Big Ten tournament championship game.

But with a chance to extend the school's string of NCAA Tournament appearances to a record five seasons on the line, OSU knuckled under to Illinois 72-59 in the March 16 title game in Chicago.

The Buckeyes were then relegated to the National Invitation Tournament, where they dropped a 72-58 first-round game at Georgia Tech March 19. The loss ended OSU's season at 17-15 overall.

Continued On Page 16



FINALLY SOME SMILES — OSU head coach Jim O'Brien (right) and senior co-captains Brent Darby (left) and Sean Connolly share a laugh during the postgame press conference following the team's Big Ten tournament win over regular-season champion Wisconsin March 14.

OSU SPRING FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE OFFENSE

With All 11 Back, Offense Looks To Shine

By ERIC LOUGHRY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State offense did just enough during the Buckeyes' 2002 national championship run, consistently coming up with the big play when it was paramount.

OSU was afforded the luxury of often spinning its wheels and still having an opportunity to win games late because of a defense that stifled opposing offenses. Only once in the Buckeyes' final seven games (Minnesota, Nov. 2) did the OSU offense produce more than two touchdowns in regulation, putting the onus on the defense down the stretch.

While the defense will have to replace five departed seniors from the national championship team — including two All-Americans — the OSU offense returns all 11 starters as well as two key reserves on both the offensive line and in the backfield.

Heading into spring practice with a veteran manning each position on his side of the ball, OSU offensive coordinator Jim Bollman wants his unit to pull more weight in the upcoming season.

"We're going to try to put some more points on the board," Bollman said, "try to be able to help the defense, take some pressure off of them."

Bollman certainly has a lot to work with in first-team All-Big Ten selection and conference freshman of the year Maurice Clarett at tailback and second-team all-conference selections Craig Krenzel at quarterback and Mike Jenkins at split end.

"We're fortunate to have some people who are big threats at wideout, some people who are big threats at running back, a quarterback who in the past has proven to be a tough competitor and not made a lot of errors," Bollman said. "And we have to work out all those different phases."

With a veteran lineup returning after winning a championship, Bollman expects he will be able to expand on some

aspects of the offense.

"You would like to think that with all the guys back that they have a little higher motivation, knowing where they were, trying to get back there," Bollman said. "And that they draw on their experience and take another step up mentally on some things. You have to know what to do first."

Even with the abundance of returnees, there will be plenty of competition in the spring.

"It's seldom that you have this many guys coming back who have contributed in the past," Bollman said. "Still, we have some guys who can add to that."

The following is BSB's outlook for the offense heading into the spring.

Quarterback

Many were taken aback by the sheer volume of pass attempts in the 2001 spring game, the first under head coach Jim Tressel and Bollman. Some thought the Buckeyes might become a pass-happy offense under the new coaching staff. They were mistaken, of course, but the passing game will always receive the bulk of attention in the spring.

"We can always improve at the passing game," Bollman said. "We'll always end up working more at the passing game than the running game in the spring — always."

Krenzel established himself as a quarterback who could handle any situation during the Buckeyes' national championship season, picking up the Fiesta Bowl Most Valuable Player award to go along with his all-conference hardware.

His numbers weren't mind-boggling (148 of 249 for 2,110 yards, 12 touchdowns, seven interceptions) but the Sports Illustrated cover boy was always in control, where he will obviously remain heading into his senior season.

"Craig is a guy that we're fortunate that anything mentally we need him to do, he can," Bollman said.

Scott McMullen, who also will be in his senior year, is firmly entrenched as the backup. He was more than competent last season in his reserve role, though he was called on only when games were no longer in question. Still, he completed 25 of 31 passes for two touchdowns and no interceptions.

"A backup quarterback is a guy that you want to be able to come in there and be able to perform right away without taking much of the time or sync of what is going on," Bollman said. "He should be able to make plays and execute the offense. That's one thing we have."

The only real competition at the quarterback position, then, is between red-shirt freshmen Troy Smith and Justin Zwick, with each trying to move past the other in the chain of command. Both will be more active in the offense this spring, Bollman said.

"(We're going) to start to get them more exposed to things and working on our offense more than they have, which will be an interesting thing for us to work out," Bollman said. "We have two older guys who are pretty good guys and we'll have to try to work out reps and everything so that we're efficient in bringing the young guys along, too."

Running Back

With Clarett's emergence last season, there is no question he is first in the peck-



STRONG BACKFIELD — With running back Maurice Clarett (with ball, scoring against Miami in the Fiesta Bowl) and quarterback Craig Krenzel leading the way, the Buckeyes should be strong behind the line.

ing order in the OSU backfield. Last year, he set the OSU single-season record by a freshman with 1,237 yards despite sitting out three games in their entirety and the majority of two others.

Though he has established himself as the No. 1 guy and was off-injured throughout the season, spring will not be a time to rest Clarett and shield him from contact.

"There's some things that he can improve on, too," Bollman said.

Lydell Ross (648 yards) and Maurice Hall (396 yards), who will both be juniors,

each had their moments last season. Ross rushed for a career-high 130 yards against Cincinnati and it was Hall who scored the game-winning touchdowns in overtime against Illinois and in the fourth quarter against Michigan.

"In the backfield, we have some good, experienced guys but certainly can always try to get better and be more consistent with all those guys," Bollman said.

Bollman stressed the backs will all work on improving perceived weaknesses and will continue to hone strong points.

Depth Chart

OSU Offense

Here is a look at the tentative depth chart for the OSU offense heading into spring practice.

| Pos. | No. | Player | Ht. | Wt. | Cl. |
|------|-----|-------------------|------|-----|-----|
| SE | 12 | Michael Jenkins* | 6-5 | 215 | Sr. |
| | 8 | Drew Carter | 6-4 | 200 | Sr. |
| LT | 53 | Ivan Douglas* | 6-8 | 305 | Sr. |
| | 77 | Rob Sims | 6-4 | 305 | So. |
| LG | 63 | Adrien Clarke* | 6-5 | 325 | Sr. |
| | 76 | Alex Stepanovich | 6-4 | 310 | Sr. |
| C | 76 | Alex Stepanovich* | 6-4 | 310 | Sr. |
| | 55 | Nick Mangold | 6-4 | 280 | So. |
| RG | 78 | Bryce Bishop* | 6-3 | 312 | Sr. |
| | 64 | Adam Olds | 6-4 | 290 | So. |
| RT | 71 | Shane Olivea* @ | 6-5 | 310 | Sr. |
| | 52 | Mike Kne | 6-4 | 250 | Sr. |
| TE | 88 | Ben Hartsock* | 6-4 | 264 | Sr. |
| | 80 | Ryan Hamby | 6-5 | 240 | So. |
| QB | 16 | Craig Krenzel* | 6-4 | 225 | Sr. |
| | 15 | Scott McMullen | 6-3 | 215 | Sr. |
| FB | 38 | Brandon Joe* | 6-0 | 245 | Jr. |
| | 43 | Brandon Schnitker | 6-1 | 250 | So. |
| TB | 13 | Maurice Clarett* | 6-0 | 230 | So. |
| | 30 | Lydell Ross | 6-0 | 210 | Jr. |
| OR | 28 | Maurice Hall | 5-10 | 200 | Jr. |
| FL | 7 | Chris Gamble* | 6-2 | 180 | Jr. |
| | 3 | Brandon Childress | 5-10 | 185 | Jr. |
| K | 85 | Mike Nugent* | 5-10 | 170 | Jr. |
| | 23 | Josh Huston | 6-1 | 195 | Jr. |
| KR | 28 | Maurice Hall | 5-10 | 200 | Jr. |

*Returning starter.

@Olivea is injured and will miss spring.

Players On The Spot

• **Drew Carter, wide receiver** — Carter has all the tools needed to be a standout at split end — reliable hands, blazing speed and height (6-4). Injuries and the emergence of Michael Jenkins and Chris Vance and then Chris Gamble have kept Carter in the background. With Vance gone and Gamble perhaps taking on more defensive responsibility, Carter could go out in style as a senior as a vital target for Krenzel.

• **Bryce Bishop and Adrien Clarke, guards** — Clarke's weight was a concern throughout last season. His listed weight on the roster was even updated in the Fiesta Bowl media guide to 355 because the previous listed weight (325) was obviously on the low side. It's no secret that OSU offensive coordinator/offensive line coach Jim Bollman prefers an athletic lineman to one with just girth. Clarke has worked in the off-season to lose weight. How serious he takes his conditioning could be a deciding factor in whether his role is reduced.

Alex Stepanovich moved over from center to replace Bishop at key points last season, with then-freshman Nick Mangold taking over at center. Bollman will play the best five linemen. If he feels Mangold at center and Stepanovich at guard is a more formidable

lineup than one with Bishop in there, Bishop's team-high mark of 26 starts might be in jeopardy.

• **Ivan Douglas, tackle** — After missing the 2001 season with a blood clot in his lung, Douglas rebounded to start all but two games last season. When Shane Olivea was injured, Douglas moved over twice to the right tackle position. Then-freshman Rob Sims was more than adequate in five starts at left tackle, including in the Fiesta Bowl. His emergence might reduce Douglas' playing time.

• **Troy Smith and Justin Zwick, quarterbacks** — Though clearly not in contention for a starting job — or maybe even the backup role — at quarterback, Smith and Zwick will still be under the microscope. These two red-shirts will be jockeying for position to go for the starting job in 2004.

Ivan Douglas

— Eric Loughry

OSU SPRING FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE OFFENSE

Charting The OSU Offense

On The Plus Side

• **The Gang's All Here** — With every starting member of the offense coming back, the Buckeyes should be able to build on the overall success of last season and improve on the unproductive showings. There were times when the Buckeyes spun their wheels when they had the ball, but OSU found a way to get it done when they had to, a trait that breeds confidence.

• **Clutch Connection** — Craig Krenzel to Michael Jenkins is a tandem already set in Buckeye lore. The duo combined for some of the most memorable pitch-and-catches in the history of the program, including the 37-yard touchdown at Purdue and the 17-yard toss on fourth-and-14 in the first overtime of the Fiesta Bowl. With an entire season — a championship one at that — under their belts, Krenzel and Jenkins have another season to cultivate their place in the annals of OSU football.

• **More Reciele** — The OSU offense was clearly not the same without Maurice Clarett in the lineup. The off-season allowed him to recuperate and rehabilitate from a shoulder injury that kept him out for the entirety of three games and the majority of two others late last season. He should be raring to go and to build on his outstanding but oft-interrupted rookie season.

• **Loaded Line** — For the first time since offensive coordinator Jim Bollman took over prior to the 2001 season, the Buckeyes have a stockpile of offensive linemen, helping the Buckeyes in the depth department while also fostering competition for spots in the trenches. With the emergence of freshmen Rob Sims and Nick Mangold late last season, the seniors cannot rest on their laurels.

On The Minus Side

• **More Needed** — A case could be made that if the offense performs similarly to last season and the defense has any kind of drop-off with the loss of five starters, two of whom were All-Americans, the Buckeyes' season could be a far cry from the national championship run.

• **It's A Gamble** — If Chris Gamble continues to play full time on offense and defense, will it reduce his role in the offense, enabling teams to key in on Michael Jenkins in passing situations? The Buckeye have no other proven receivers heading into the spring.

— Eric Loughry

"(We need) to get better at running some particular running plays or get better at a different type of running play, to maybe get better at outside runs," Bollman said. "We run off tackle so much that everyone should be halfway decent at that, but we can still get better at it."

Bollman also will be searching for a mix that best utilizes the different abilities of his backs in various scenarios.

"It's up to us as coaches to take advantage of what guys can do," he said.

At fullback, Bollman will again have Brandon Schnitker and Brandon Joe, who split time last season, at his disposal.

"We're lucky that we have some guys back there — Brandon Joe and Brandon Schnitker — that played a good amount of football," he said. "We're looking for those guys to make some improvements."

Wide Receiver

Bollman tabbed the receiver position as the area where unproven players are most needed to step up.

Jenkins, whom Bollman called a "stalwart guy" at receiver, is about all you could ask for in a first option. The split end led the Buckeyes with 61 receptions for 1,076 yards last season.

Flanker Chris Gamble was second for OSU with 31 receptions. Late in the season, though, he began double duty, taking over at cornerback and playing upwards of 100 plays the final four games of the season.

Gamble is not expected to keep up that pace for an entire season, particularly during the early-season heat. One of Bollman's primary objectives of the spring is developing someone else to bolster the receiving corps.

"With Chris (Gamble) going both ways, we have a situation where we have to be able to play a game without him helping us if that was a situation that arose," Bollman said.

With Chris Vance — the Buckeyes' fourth leading receiver last season — gone, that leaves Drew Carter, Bam Childress, Roy Hall and Antonio Holmes with an opportunity.

Carter, a fifth-year senior next season, is a speedster. He was a standout performer for the OSU track team in the winter and reportedly ran in the 4.3-second range at OSU's NFL timing day March 14. He was contending for a starting position heading into the 2001 season before ankle and knee injuries sidelined him.

Carter had 10 receptions in 10 games last season, averaging 14.7 yards per catch. He showed glimpses of what he could do against San Jose State with a career-high four catches for 76 yards.

Childress is the shortest of the bunch (5-10) but also shifty and elusive. He had four catches last season.

Hall and Holmes were both redshirted last season as freshmen but have impressed the coaching staff.

"Those guys are going to be important guys to get going, get them experience as much as you can in the system during spring practice," Bollman said. "I think that has to transpire that way."

Tight End

Ben Hartsock, the Buckeyes' third leading receiver last season with 17 catches including two touchdowns, returns for his senior season.

Hartsock showed a knack for making the difficult catch early on. Though he caught at least one pass in 10 of OSU's 14 contests last season, his role remained primarily that of a blocker after some highlight-reel grabs in the early going.

It will remain that way, but Bollman said he might look to throw the ball more in Hartsock's direction.

"There's some situations there where we have to make sure we utilize the strengths of our personnel," Bollman said.

In addition to Hartsock, Ryan Hamby, the No. 2 tight end last season, returns, as does Reggie Arden. Both were productive in limited roles last season. Hamby had two receptions, including a touchdown. Arden had four receptions in 10 games.

Bollman has been impressed with the strides Stan White Jr., a converted linebacker who was redshirted last season, made in the off-season.

"We need for Ryan Hamby, Reggie Arden and those guys to continue coming along," Bollman said. "Stan White has had a very good winter. (We need) for those guys to give us a lot of depth and improve."

With a fairly experienced stable of

tight ends coming back, Bollman said he wants to utilize the depth at the position, employing more double tight end sets in certain situations.

"There's some things that we can do formation-wise where we would be better having a fullback in the game, having a second tight end in the game at times," Bollman said. "We have to make sure that we give those guys opportunities to express themselves. We're starting to."

Offensive Line

Entering spring practice the last two years, one of Bollman's primary concerns was a shortage of offensive linemen.

For the first time since he joined Tressel at OSU, Bollman has no such worries this spring.

Bollman, who doubles as the offensive line coach, returns seven linemen who saw extensive action during the Buckeyes' undefeated season.

"We should have this year, numbers-wise, more competition than we've had the first two years that I've been here," Bollman said.

Right tackle Shane Olivea will miss his second consecutive spring as he recovers from a shoulder injury. But Bollman knows what Olivea, a two-year starter, can do.

"That's an area that will give us a chance to look at some of the younger guys, hopefully develop some depth there along the line," Bollman said.

Center/guard Alex Stepanovich returns, as do guards Bryce Bishop and Adrien Clarke. Also back is left tackle Ivan Douglas, as well as center Nick Mangold and tackle Rob Sims, who both worked their way into the rotation last season as true freshmen.

Bishop, Clarke and Douglas, all fifth-year seniors next season, will be pushed to retain their starting positions.

"We've got some young guys who ended up playing a lot last year who are going to provide some good competition and see time regardless of who's done what in the past," Bollman said. "The past is the past."

"Who are going to be the best five? And can we get to the point where we have enough guys play well enough to play more than five guys? Those are things that you would like to see happen as a coach."

Stepanovich played both guard and center last season, shifting to guard when Mangold came in at center, providing Bollman with a few options on the front. Bollman is unsure of where he will have Stepanovich to begin the upcoming season.

"He's our best center and he's probably our best guard, too," Bollman said of Stepanovich. "That will be interesting to see who ends up being the best five guys. There's a couple guys who can play some different spots. It will be interesting to

see who are the best five guys."

"And Alex gives us great flexibility in there. As I've told some of those guys, they're not competing against a guy in front of them. For instance, it's not, 'Is Nick Mangold better than Alex at center? Is Nick Mangold better than someone else might be at guard?' Because Alex can play guard. So what's the best combination?"

"Those are some things that I've got to work out in there. And seeing some of the younger guys, too, are they going to be better off helping us this year at guard or tackle? Who can handle the (responsibility) of playing both? Those are some things that I need to find out."

Sophomore Mike Kne, a former walk-on who saw key (Purdue, Michigan) — albeit limited — action last season as a reserve, could see time at right tackle. Doug Datish, who was redshirted last season, has impressed Bollman.

"Doug Datish is a big, strong guy with excellent movement," Bollman said. "He's learning a lot technique-wise right now. He's in a fight to contribute."

Third-year sophomores Adam Olds, a tackle, and Ryan Cook, a guard, also need to step up, Bollman said.

"Adam Olds and Ryan Cook, guys who have been around here now — those two guys have been around here a couple of years now — they should be fighting for a chance to contribute also."

T.J. Downing, who redshirted last season as a freshman, may miss some of the spring rehabilitating from a knee injury sustained when he fell down some steps in the off-season.

Special Teams

Second-year special teams coach Luke Fickell returns half of what had to be considered one of the strongest kicking tandems in the nation last season. Both placekicker Mike Nugent, who will be a junior, and departed punter Andy Groom were All-America selections last season.

Nugent hit on 25 of 28 field-goal attempts — including his first 23 in a row — as a sophomore.

Even though Groom is gone, the Buckeyes will have an experienced punter in the fold.

B.J. Sander, a left footer who will be a senior next season, averaged 41.9 yards on 37 punts in 2000. He punted just four times in 2001 before Groom emerged as the starter.

Kyle Andrews returns as the long snapper after an almost flawless first year on the job. A walk-on, his only close call came with a low snap in overtime of the Fiesta Bowl. OSU coach Tressel has mentioned awarding Andrews with a scholarship.

The return games are in order with leading punter returner Gamble (8.4 average) and kick returner Maurice Hall (22.8 average) back.

NORTH STAR VISION CENTER

NORTHWEST

1910 Crown Park Court

614-326-1830

NORTHEAST

1680 Schrock Rd.

614-882-2223

SOUTH

Southern Vision Center

105 Great Southern Blvd.

614-491-3435

Comprehensive Eye Exams • Contact Lenses & Fashion Eyewear

Special Attention to Children • Laser Surgery Consultation

Treatment of Eye Diseases • Emergencies Welcome

Personalized Care Is Our Focus

COVER STORY: CHAMPS GET BACK TO WORK

No Time For Fiesta Replay In Tressel Home

Continued From Page 1

the field. You try to tie all of the other things in. You try to paint the picture that good things happen with work."

Focus Back On Football

As the coach of a national championship team, Tressel has spent much of the last three months on the go, both in Ohio and around the country, representing his team and the university.

He is eager to get back to his sanctuary — the practice field.

"You do get pulled in a lot of different directions at a place like Ohio State," Tressel said. "There are times you would rather be working on this or that, but you try like crazy to balance it."

Tressel told reporters in mid-March that he had been so busy he had not had

a chance to sit down and watch a tape of the Fiesta Bowl.

"We usually don't study the last game of the year until March because of recruiting," he said. "Since recruiting has been done, we've been sitting down with our coaches and players one on one. I know our staff has been working a lot on football."

In the weeks leading up to the end of winter quarter, Tressel and his staff put the team through nine intense early-morning workouts. They also sat down with each player to discuss goals for the upcoming season.

"We are finishing up our individual player conferences," he said. "We've been doing more unit stuff with our staff and planning with things we want to experiment with this spring."

"This is a good time. We're getting

OSU Spring Football Data

Here are some notables regarding OSU's spring practice.

• **Practice Dates (all practices scheduled for 3:15 p.m. unless noted)** — April 3, 4, 5 (9 a.m.), 8, 10, 11, 12 (9 a.m.), 15, 17, 18 (kick scrimmage), 21, 22, 23 and 25. Note: The kick scrimmage and two jersey scrimmages (dates TBA) will likely be held at Ohio Stadium. All other practices likely to be held at Woody Hayes Athletic Center. All practice times are subject to change.

• **Scarlet and Gray Game** — The Scarlet and Gray Game will be held Sat., April 26, at 1:30 p.m. at Ohio Stadium. Tickets for the Scarlet and Gray Game are \$5 each and are available online at hangonsloopy.com or in person at the Schottenstein Center ticket office. All tickets are unreserved.

• **Scarlet and Gray Game Broadcast Data** — The game will be televised live in Columbus by WBNS-TV (Ch. 10) and across the state by the Ohio News Network.

• **Injury Update** — Offensive tackle Shane Olivea and defensive linemen Darrien Scott and Simon Fraser are among a group of players who will likely miss spring football due to injuries. Also, defensive end Mike Kudla may be restricted as he continues to recover from an illness.

• **Position Changes** — Thomas Matthews may move from safety to outside linebacker this spring. Also, outside linebacker Robert Reynolds is expected to rep at middle linebacker as well. Scott is being penciled in to move from end to defensive tackle.

• **Important Fall Dates To Remember** — Big Ten Kickoff Luncheon, July 23-24 in Chicago; Freshmen report, Aug. 4 (tentative); Upperclassmen report, Aug. 7 (tentative); Photo day at Ohio Stadium, Aug. 8 (tentative); First full squad practice, Aug. 9 (tentative).

• **2003 Schedule (times TBA)** — Aug. 30, Washington (ABC); Sept. 6, San Diego State; Sept. 13, N.C. State; Sept. 20, Bowling Green; Sept. 27, Northwestern; Oct. 11, at Wisconsin; Oct. 18, Iowa; Oct. 25, at Indiana; Nov. 1, at Penn State; Nov. 8, Michigan State; Nov. 15, Purdue; Nov. 22, at Michigan.



Shane Olivea

buy
one
get
two
FREE
t-shirts*



universitees.com

UniversiTEESSM
T-shirts • Sweatshirts • Hats & More

2 locations to better serve you!

2147 N. High St. • 614.291.3950

Columbus City Center Mall • 614.225.0239

ready to rev it up. This begins your 2003 preparation. This is when you really start working on football."

While it may appear that Tressel and his staff have a pat hand headed into 2003, they know they can't simply rest on their laurels.

"We have been doing a lot of evaluation at what we need to do to get better," he said. "Now we get to start applying those things in April."

"When it's all over, we sit back and say, 'Now, what do we need to do to get ready for August?'"

Seven Pressing Questions

As OSU prepared to begin spring football, these were seven key questions the Buckeyes will try to answer:

• Which of the young quarterbacks is closer to making a move for the top spot? Much has been written and said about Troy Smith and Justin Zwick, but they will be center stage this spring to show what they can do.

Unlike past springs, there should be plenty of offensive line depth to protect the QBs and a plethora of receivers to throw to. There are no excuses. This spring will be a true proving ground for these two as they make their bid to follow in Craig Krenzel's footsteps in 2004.

• Who will emerge behind Michael Jenkins and Chris Gamble at wide receiver? OSU sorely needs another threat, especially if it indeed intends to bolster the passing game in 2003.

Drew Carter supposedly wowed some people with a 4.3-range 40-yard dash on pro timing day recently. They need him or Bam Childress or somebody to translate all of that speed to the football field, beginning this spring. Gamble, especially, will need to take a break every once in a while since it appears he will be an every-down player again at corner.

That means OSU really needs two receivers to step up this spring. Because of that, a lot of eyes will be squarely on redshirt freshmen Roy Hall and Antonio Holmes.

• Is this offensive line for real? When

your last two wins are over Michigan and Miami (Fla.), you have something to hang your hat on, certainly.

But the O-line must continue to progress and build for the future. This spring is critical for some of the young linemen such as Doug Datish and Adam Olds, who have not been able to show what they can do yet.

It will be interesting to see if Rob Sims and/or Nick Mangold can lock down starting jobs this spring and displace one or more of the returning seniors.

• Who will step up on the defensive line? With Darrien Scott and Simon Fraser out with injuries, there will be plenty of reps to go around for some of the team's talented young defensive linemen.

Marcus Green and Quinn Pitcock will get a big look inside. Jay Richardson and Joel Penton could see more reps as well at end.

• How will the linebacker situation play out? Everybody notes that Mike D'Andrea has incredible physical skills and he is working hard to learn the college game.

But the proposed move of Robert Reynolds inside — clearing the way for A.J. Hawk and Bobby Carpenter outside — is a clear wake-up call that D'Andrea must make some solid inroads this spring. Plus, transfer Anthony Schlegel also will be on hand to make his first bid at playing time at MLB for 2004. The time is now for D'Andrea.

• What will they do in the secondary? This hinges on what the staff decides to do with Gamble as well as Dustin Fox, who also could play safety.

Will Allen figures to lock down one of the safety spots. If Tyler Everett or somebody else can nail down the other, Fox likely will stay at corner.

Still, it will be interesting to see how E.J. Underwood, Donte Whitner, Ashton Youboty and others react in their first spring on the firing line.

• Who will take over as the punter? B.J. Sander will probably get the first call to try to replace Andy Groom, but consistency has always been an issue for the fifth-year senior.

OSU SPRING FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE DEFENSE

Departees Force OSU Defense To Fill In Gaps

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

We're not really sure what Ohio State defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio majored in during his college days at South Carolina — we didn't really ask — but he seems to know a lot about physics.

He realizes the Buckeyes, following their stellar showing last season, could succumb to gravity and fall back to earth this year — after all, in theory there's nowhere to go but down — so he is thankful for the arrival of spring practice.

The Buckeyes appear to be stacked offensively with all 11 starters returning from last year. But the defense that often carried the team during its run to the national championship will have to be tinkered with a bit.

Dantonio knows the stakes have risen after OSU "arrived" a year early and that expectations are through the roof for the Buckeyes.

"We have good players coming back, and that should help us keep our goals high," said Dantonio, a finalist for the Frank Broyles Award given to the nation's top assistant a year ago. "The difference between winning and losing is very small, and you need to have the right attitude and right players out there to avoid losing. We learned that last year, but this is a new page."

Dantonio may wish he had some old faces around, though.

Gone are difference-makers Matt Wilhelm, Mike Doss, Donnie Nickey, Cie Grant and Kenny Peterson, as well as super reserve David Thompson.

Finding guys to plug into their spots won't be easy, but Dantonio believes it can be done.

"We always try to improve on what we're doing," Dantonio said. "We had a great season last year, but this isn't last year anymore. We can't rest on that performance. We have some young guys we need to take a look at, so this spring will be very important for us."

"We have a way we want to play, and we have to find out if our players can play that way. We lost some very good players from this defense. Those guys had a lot to do with where we were last season and we have to find guys who can maintain what they did."

Many of the newcomers will be going through their first spring drills and will find out quickly that the coaches mean business.

"We have 19 guys who are first- or second-year players," Dantonio said. "That means there's a lot of proving to be done, and that's why this spring is so big for us."

Line 'Em Up

That huge sigh of relief from the Buckeye Nation came when standout defensive ends Will Smith and Darrion Scott decided to pass up the riches of the NFL and return for their senior seasons.

A year earlier Doss had done the same in a quest to win the national title.

With that already in the bag, Smith — OSU's returning leader in tackles for loss (10.5) — and Scott seemed to have little reason to return. But they did and that should keep the Buckeyes ferocious from the end spots.



BIG HITTER BACK — Cornerback Dustin Fox (rear, making a tackle against Purdue) will be a junior this fall and is the leading returning tackler going into the spring.

"Those two guys — and Michael Jenkins — set a precedent by saying it's OK to come back here and finish your career," Dantonio said. "Michael Doss had done that a year earlier. It's nice when you have guys who are potential NFL draft picks deciding that school isn't such a bad place to be."

Scott and key reserve Simon Fraser won't participate this spring while recovering from shoulder surgeries, so that should mean more reps for redshirt freshmen Jay Richardson, Joel Penton and Tim Schaefer. Sophomore Mike Kudla also may figure in the competition, but he may be limited after a bout with a debilitating infection over the winter.

Tim Anderson returns inside to buoy the tackle position, and the coaches will give long looks to Marcus Green and Quinn Pitcock this spring to potentially play alongside Anderson.

"Tim will form the nucleus inside and he's a steady guy who should help from an experience standpoint," Dantonio said. "We have a lot of folks ready to get some work, so it should be a very interesting and, hopefully, productive spring for the line."

Back(er) To Square One?

With Wilhelm and Grant out of eligibility, it will now be up to junior Robert Reynolds to guide the OSU linebacking ship.

A steady player at the Sam spot, Reynolds had 58 tackles, second among returning players, and may be asked to do a little more this spring than in years past.

"Rob has kind of established himself outside, but you may see him a little bit inside this spring," Dantonio said. "We don't want guys being one-dimensional, so we're going to play them all over the place. We want them to be able to han-

dle all three spots. You'll see Mike D'Andrea and A. J. Hawk and Bobby Carpenter and all those guys moving around."

That touted trio of sophomores all received playing time last year and will be relied upon more heavily this spring and next fall.

The middle will be a battle between Fred Pagac Jr. and possibly D'Andrea and veteran Jason Bond.

"Tackling ability is a top priority," Dantonio said. "We have to find someone to step to the forefront and hold down the Mike position that Matt played so well."

"Freddie has been around and understands our schemes and Jason Bond gives us depth. (Air Force transfer) Anthony Schlegel will be able to practice with us, so we'll get to see what he's about."

Players On The Spot

• **Defensive Secondary** — It certainly helped Ohio State's cause last season to have experience along its back line in Michael Doss and Donnie Nickey, but now there is precious little as those two exhausted their eligibility. That means Dustin Fox, the only true holdover from last year's corps, will have to lead by example and guide a talented but young group through spring drills.

• **Robert Reynolds** — The coaches love his moxie and hustle, but now he'll be in the spotlight as the only veteran among the linebacking corps. He could spend some of the spring inside and, at 240 pounds, would seem to be a natural fit for that spot. He sometimes has issues with his tackling, but he's got a good head for the game and has a non-stop motor.

• **Kenny Peterson's replacement** — The senior shot his way to stardom and

Depth Chart

OSU Defense

Here is a look at the tentative depth chart for the OSU defense heading into spring practice.

| Pos. | No. | Player | Ht. | Wt. | Cl. |
|------|-----|------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| DE | 75 | Simon Fraser* | 6-5 | 250 | Jr. |
| | 57 | Mike Kudla* | 6-3 | 255 | So. |
| DT | 56 | Darrion Scott * | 6-3 | 271 | Sr. |
| | 90 | Quinn Pitcock | 6-4 | 285 | Fr. |
| DT | 54 | Tim Anderson* | 6-4 | 289 | Sr. |
| | 94 | Marcus Green | 6-3 | 300 | So. |
| DE | 93 | Will Smith* | 6-4 | 250 | Sr. |
| | 99 | Jay Richardson | 6-5 | 245 | Fr. |
| BLB | 44 | Robert Reynolds* | 6-3 | 234 | Sr. |
| | 42 | Bobby Carpenter | 6-3 | 240 | So. |
| MLB | 5 | Mike D'Andrea | 6-3 | 240 | So. |
| | 46 | Fred Pagac Jr. | 6-1 | 225 | Sr. |
| WLB | 47 | A.J. Hawk | 6-2 | 230 | So. |
| | 41 | Thomas Matthews | 6-2 | 210 | Jr. |
| CB | 7 | Chris Gamble* | 6-2 | 180 | Jr. |
| | 21 | Nate Salley | 6-3 | 180 | So. |
| FS | 4 | Will Allen | 6-2 | 190 | Sr. |
| | 19 | LeAndre Boone | 6-1 | 215 | So. |
| SS | 33 | Tyler Everett | 6-1 | 185 | So. |
| | 32 | Brandon Mitchell | 6-3 | 190 | Fr. |
| CB | 37 | Dustin Fox* | 6-0 | 190 | Jr. |
| | 49 | E.J. Underwood | 6-1 | 175 | So. |
| P | 21 | B.J. Sander | 6-3 | 212 | Sr. |
| PR | 7 | Chris Gamble | 6-2 | 180 | Jr. |

*Returning starter.

@Fraser and Scott, who started last year at DE, are expected to miss the spring due to injuries. Kudla could be limited as he recovers from illness.

More Than A Secondary Concern

The loss of Doss and Nickey puts much of the spring onus on the secondary.

Veterans Dustin Fox, who had 81 tackles and three interceptions, and Will Allen could form a lethal tandem at safety — if the coaches feel good enough about the corner situation to move Fox back to safety.

"We think Dustin did a great job at corner last year, so is moving him to safety the best thing for the team?" Dantonio said. "You'd be improving one spot, but would you be hurting another? That's what we have to figure out. We want to get the best players on the field."

"If that means Dustin is a corner, fine. If it means he's a safety, fine. He'll probably play a little of both this spring and we'll go from there."

Allen gained a reputation for big hits and for being Johnny-on-the-spot after

probably made himself into a first-round draft pick in the process. That leaves some pretty big shoes to fill inside, but that's exactly what Marcus Green and Quinn Pitcock will attempt to do.

• Donté Whitner and Ashton Youboty

— Both enrolled early for a chance to participate in spring drills, and they'll be thrown into the fire quickly. Both could find their way into the mix at corner with a big spring, but they'll realize quickly just how big the jump is from high school to college. They do at least seem to have the mental makeup to get the job done.

— Mike Wachsman



Quinn Pitcock

OSU SPRING FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE DEFENSE

Charting The OSU Defense

The Plus Side

• **Return Of The Fresh Prince** — Had end Will Smith departed for the NFL, it could have been a blow big enough to floor the OSU D. But his return — along with Darrien Scott's — signals another year of torturing quarterbacks and getting into opposing backfields.

• **Dustin Fox** — His baptism by fire now over, Fox more than held his own at the corner position. After his hiccup against Illinois, where he was picked on mercilessly (though he responded with a big play at the end of the game), Fox rebounded and played an outstanding Fiesta Bowl. He has the capability to play safety or corner, which should help the coaches get the best lineup onto the field.

• **Linebacker Depth** — The experience gained last year by A.J. Hawk, Mike D'Andrea and Bobby Carpenter should prove invaluable as they head into their first spring. They'll be looked upon to fill the void left by the graduation of Matt Wilhelm and Cie Grant, and all can make plays. Fred Pagac Jr. and Jason Bond aren't bad to have in the middle, either.

The Minus Side

• **Youth In Secondary** — Aside from Fox and Chris Gamble, there really isn't anyone back there who has played a lot. Will Allen has been solid in a nickel role, but how will he handle more responsibility? OSU has recruited a ton of defensive backs the last two years, so it is imperative that someone step up this spring.

• **Leadership Void** — Say what you want about Fox, who is a take-charge type, and Tim Anderson, who is more of a quiet type — they haven't proved they are able to match the intensity, fire and desire of guys like Wilhelm, Doss and Nickey. Having those three ensured the Buckeyes were almost always in position and ready to make a play. Someone will need to step up during the spring and give the coaches a reason to trust him.

• **Hole In The Middle?** — Although we said that there is a ton of depth here, there really isn't anyone proven in the middle. Pagac knows the scheme and hustles, but he's often taken out of the equation against physical opponents. This may be where D'Andrea, who has great speed and lateral quickness, has to step up and show the skills that made him a prep All-American. If he can't do it, the Buckeyes may head into the fall with big concerns here.

— Mike Wachsman

game-saving picks against Cincinnati and Michigan, so he seems to have a leg up toward filling one of the safety spots.

A host of players will be champing at the bit to get work at safety, and Dantonio believes all have a shot to play.

"We'll work Nate Salley inside, along with Tyler Everett and Brandon Mitchell," he said. "LeAndre Boone is coming on. We'll have a lot of guys back there, just not a ton of experience."

Fox will have a huge impact on what happens in the secondary, as will two-way star Chris Gamble.

A work in progress as a corner, Gamble showed major improvement by

the end of the season and had started some whispers that his professional future could be on defense.

Dantonio didn't know how much work Gamble would get on defense this spring but said the coaches already know about his ability.

Challenging Fox and Gamble won't be easy, but that's what Bobby Britton, Harlen Jacobs, E.J. Underwood, Mike Roberts, Steven Moore and possibly Richard McNutt (a starter last season who was derailed by an ankle injury) will try to do.

"We have a lot of experience at corner, so we just have to figure out who are the best guys there," Dantonio said.

Muddying the picture are freshmen Donte Whitner and Ashton Youboty, both of whom will be on hand this spring.

They hope to have the impact Maurice Claret had last season after going through spring ball, but there are a lot of unknowns with early enrollees.

"We'll never discourage a kid from

doing it if we think they can handle it," Dantonio said. "Maurice had the ability to handle it. We feel Donte and Ashton have that same ability. Only time will tell, really, but them being out there this spring should be a help."

"It allows you to get acclimated to

your teammates and what the coaching staff wants you to do. A lot of this is chemistry, and you start that in the spring."

Football as science?

Dantonio seems to have a handle on that.

YES!! Even You Can Meet Beautiful Girls!
Guaranteed, Proven Techniques
FREE Report & CD
24hrs. (800) 886-9553



Byers Imports

For over 105 years the Byers family has proven that quality products, personal attention, dependability and regard for detail has given our customers reason to come back to us for their transportation needs, decade after decade. If your not currently one of those friends of ours, why not start now?

OUR COMMUNITY PROFILE!



Byers Imports

401 North Hamilton Road 1-888-774-3768 www.byersimports.com

COVER STORY: END OF A TOUGH SEASON

Year Of Unmet Expectations Comes To A Close

Continued From Page 1

"Even though we were up one at half-time (35-34), I didn't feel good about it," OSU coach Jim O'Brien said after the loss to Georgia Tech. "I just looked at the faces of our kids at halftime. The game was going too fast for us."

"I was just hoping that our guys were going to rally."

That did not happen as Georgia Tech's young, athletic team — which had played just once in the previous 10 days — outscored OSU 38-23 in the second half to finally put the Buckeyes out of their misery.

The defeat capped a year in which five of OSU's top eight players missed a combined 48 games due to injuries. Center Terence Dials missed 26 of the team's 32 games and likely will receive a medical redshirt due to a stress fracture in his back.

Additionally, point guard Brandon Fuss-Cheatham and power forward Shun Jenkins were injured in the team's final exhibition against the Harlem Globetrotters and ended up missing 10 and eight games, respectively.

It was a season of high expectations but precious little yield. Only O'Brien's ill-fated first season at OSU, when the Buckeyes ended the 1997-98 campaign 8-22, was worse.

In no way did this squad match up to O'Brien's last four teams, which each won 20 or more games and made the NCAA Tournament. His 1999 team reached the Final Four, while two of his last three teams claimed Big Ten titles and last year's team rolled through the conference tournament.

But O'Brien praised his team for not giving up when its fortunes seemed bleak.

"There is no question that this past week has taken its toll," O'Brien said after the season-ending loss. "It was a lot of games and a lot of travel. Plus we're in the middle of exams. I give them an awful lot of credit. They hung in there. They gave a great effort."

"We got back late Sunday night from Chicago. Monday morning, just about everybody had a final exam. They had exams yesterday, too. I don't know how they're getting it done. I know if I was a student-athlete, I wouldn't be able to get it done, personally."

For a team that finally showed some signs of life in the last week, the final two losses were hard to take.

"We just went out with a whimper and not a bang," said junior center Velimir Radinovic. "We came out lackadaisical and didn't really compete. Today we just didn't get it done."

Fun Time In Chicago

In four previous Big Ten tournaments in Chicago, OSU had won just one game.

But the Buckeyes, who won last year's conference tournament in Indianapolis, looked at the event as a chance for new life.

They avenged a late-season home loss to Iowa by grinding out a 66-64 opening-round win. That game was decided by a driving layup by senior guard Brent Darby with 1.8 seconds left.

A day later, senior guard Sean Connolly canned five of his seven three-point tries as the Buckeyes knocked off Wisconsin 58-50 in the quarterfinals.

The next day, Darby had 23 points, but seldom-used freshman forward Charles Bass gave OSU its margin of victory by banking in a free throw with 6.1 seconds left. The 55-54 win put the Buckeyes in position to start dreaming, at least, about the Big Dance.

"One thing that I enjoy about these guys is they pay attention and they do respond, so the message was clear (in the second half): We found ourselves in good position and why would we think we can't win this game?" O'Brien said after the win over the NCAA-bound Spartans.

But powerful Illinois stood in OSU's way. Darby netted 27 points, but the Illini's balanced scoring and strong defense proved too much.

"I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge how proud I am of this group," O'Brien said. "These kids really came together here in Chicago. They kept giving, giving, giving. That was evidenced by the last 10 minutes of the game. We were down 20-something points. If ever there was a time for a team to pack it in, it was then, and yet we just kept insisting that they keep going and got it back to 10."

"We went down swinging, and I think that's a good trait for these kids."

The dramatic win over Iowa gave the Buckeyes, who dropped three of their last five regular-season games, confidence to make some things happen in Chicago.

"We never want to come into a game and lose, that's just the bottom line," Fuss-Cheatham said. "But we definitely are proud of these last four days. People never expected us to be here, and I think most importantly our team really came together. It seemed like during the season everybody was splintered and in their own little way. In these last four days we really came together."

"Right now we're proud of our team."

Forward Matt Sylvester added, "This is my first go-round in the Big Ten tournament and I don't think I had one bad experience. I think it was great, even taking a loss. It builds character and gets you ready



STEVE HELWAGEN

THAT'S MY BOY — OSU point guard Brent Darby gives his mother, Zede Warren, a smooch following the Buckeyes' 58-50 win over Wisconsin in the Big Ten tournament quarterfinals.

for next year. We have two seniors, and, of course, we wanted to win it for them, but it was a great experience."

But the feel-good story OSU created with its improbable run in Chicago was lost in the hubbub created by a second-half sideline argument between junior forward and co-captain Zach Williams and O'Brien and his assistants.

Williams, reportedly seething over an assistant's plea for him to rebound, could not be calmed down. He was asked to leave the bench area with much of the second half remaining.

Then, a day later, O'Brien announced that Williams would not play for OSU in the NIT (see Court Report, pages 23-24).

"It's disappointing that that happened but I refuse to allow anything like that to take away from what these other kids did," O'Brien said minutes before boarding the plane for Atlanta on March 18. "You know what it is? It's just too bad that Zach wasn't a part of this, because he should have been, but it was his choice not to be."

Georgia (Tech) On My Mind

Even before going to Chicago, O'Brien told reporters that scheduling conflicts at Value City Arena would preclude the Buckeyes from hosting first- or second-round NIT games.

At the time — before OSU's heart-stopping series of games in Chicago — it didn't seem to be an issue.

"I don't know that (not hosting a first-round game) is that big a deal," O'Brien said. "I want to see if we're capable of winning something on the road. If it's a bad environment, let's use the experience. I really don't have a problem with it."

Darby was more matter-of-fact about being forced to go back on the road.

"We didn't win the Big Ten tournament, so what did we earn?" he said. "We won a few games. We didn't earn anything."

After Georgia Tech's decisive win, though, Darby admitted this last assignment was hard to complete.

"We knew it would be tough after playing four games in four days," he said. "We took one day off then got back in the gym yesterday and practiced."

So Long, Seniors

Following the game, OSU bid farewell to Connolly and Darby.

"This was my last college game," said Connolly, who transferred to OSU four years ago after playing one season at Providence. "It's a tough feeling right now."

Darby ended his career as OSU's 20th-leading scorer of all time with 1,368 points.

"I'm kind of sad right now," Darby said. "Probably later in the week, I'll sit back and think about the success I had here at Ohio State and how much fun I had."

"I enjoyed my stay here at Ohio State. I developed a lot of friendships. I had the opportunity to be coached by one of the best coaches in the nation in Coach O'Brien."

"I just had a great time here. If I had it to do all over again, I would choose Ohio State."

Darby's swan song was further dampened by a battle with cramps. He finished with 12 points, his lowest output in over a month.

"Brent was just spent," O'Brien said. "In his entire four years, I don't remember him asking to come out of a game. But he cramped up. He talked about how it is down here. He just didn't have a whole lot left."

O'Brien noted that Darby had played 158 of the 160 minutes in OSU's four Big Ten tournament games.

"Where he's come from to where he is today is remarkable," the coach said. "I have a lot of respect for everything he's really done. He's played his heart out."

"He's just been a wonderful kid to coach. I really am going to miss him. He has grown in so many ways."

Better Days Ahead?

OSU played the 2002-03 season with just 11 eligible scholarship players as transfers Tony Stockman (Clemson) and J.J. Sullinger (Arkansas) sat out.

But O'Brien should be back at full strength next year. Those two backcourt players fill the spots vacated on the active roster by Connolly and Darby.

Plus, O'Brien will welcome forward Ivan Harris, a national top-10 prep player from Oak Hill (Va.) Academy, and guard Ricardo Billings, a former Michigan prep standout who sat out this past season as a Prop 48.

Three starters return in Radinovic in the middle, Jenkins at power forward and Sylvester at small forward.

A key wild card in this equation is Fuss-Cheatham, who could step in at the point — provided his knee cooperates.

O'Brien must still resolve Williams' status, but, otherwise, it looks good for the Buckeyes to try to battle their way back into the Big Ten's first division next season.

"Watch out for these guys next year," Darby said. "They will bring in J.J. Sullinger and Tony Stockman. Sullinger is an athletic guy on the wing, which is something we lacked this year."

BSB staff member Jeff Rapp and correspondent Ty Huffer contributed to this report.

You Can Count On These Services From
THE QUICKPRINT CENTRE

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ☆ Printing | ☆ Resumes | ☆ Christmas Cards |
| ☆ Typesetting | ☆ NCR Forms | ☆ Rubber Stamps |
| ☆ Art & Paste-up | ☆ Ship UPS & FED EX | ☆ Business Cards |
| ☆ High-Speed Duplicating | ☆ FAX Service | ☆ Wedding Invitations |
| ☆ Photostats | (Sending & Receiving) | ☆ ... and much more |

THE QUICKPRINT CENTRE

1399 GRANDVIEW AVENUE • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43212

614-488-2683 • 614-481-8700 • FAX 614-488-0059

(Three doors north of the Tri-Village Post Office)

OHIO BOYS BASKETBALL ROUNDUP

James Named Mr. Basketball For Third Time

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After a season of controversy and crisscrossing the nation, Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary and star player LeBron James ended up as kings of the state of Ohio.

James, projected as the No. 1 pick in July's NBA draft, ended his high school career in fine fashion. He became the first player in Ohio history to claim The Associated Press' Mr. Basketball award for the third time then led the Irish to the Division II state championship March 21-22 at OSU's Value City Arena.

It was an interesting weekend in Columbus, to say the least. James was suspended by the Ohio High School Athletic Association several weeks ago after receiving two free "throwback" jerseys from a Cleveland clothing store.

James received a court injunction to permit him to finish the season, although the OHSAA may pursue his eligibility in the courts in the weeks ahead.

"I think I'd describe my high school career as a roller coaster," James said moments after SVSM held off Kettering Alter 40-36 in the title game. "There were ups and downs and double-loops, but it's been the best four years of my life, being with my teammates."

"I think I can speak for the rest of my teammates — this is the greatest moment of our life," added James, who had 25 points and 11 rebounds in the championship game.

The SVSM program was a lightning rod for controversy this season as it played games in no fewer than five states. Two of the school's games were televised by ESPN and the home games were made available via pay per view in the Akron area.

In addition to the jerseys, James made headlines when his mother, Gloria, gave him a \$50,000 Hummer for his 18th birthday. OHSAA officials found no wrongdoing in that gift but then suspended James days later after it was revealed he had received the free jerseys.

SVSM forfeited one game it had already won, which turned out to be its only loss in a 25-1 season. The Irish were ranked No. 1 nationally by USA Today prior to the state tournament.

In his four seasons, James' teams posted a combined 101-6 record with three state titles. The forfeit was one of two losses his teams sustained inside the state of Ohio. The only on-court defeat was an upset at the hands of Cincinnati Roger Bacon in last year's Division II state title game.

As a senior, the 6-8 James solidified his resume as arguably Ohio's greatest prep player ever. He averaged 31.6 points, 9.6 rebounds, 4.6 assists and 3.4 steals.

"Everything he does on the court he makes look so easy, but the key is he works so hard," said Irish coach Dru Joyce II.

James was one of only three two-time winners of the Mr. Basketball award, which was instituted for the 1987-88 season. Jim Jackson and Greg Simpson were the others.

"It's a great honor," James said. "I give thanks to my mother, Gloria James. I also want to thank my teammates and coaches who have helped me."

James has made no bones about the fact that he intends to jump to the pros. He is signed up to play in three national all-star games. College-bound players are limited to two such appearances.

Plus, sources told The Columbus Dispatch that a lucrative endorsement deal with Nike had already been negotiated and just needs James' signature. Nike apparently has won the bidding war for James' services over rival adidas, which outfitted the Irish this year. James wore Nike shoes, though, at the state tournament.

The following is a look at the state tournament, followed by a rundown of the state's AP award winners.

Boys State Tournament

• Division I — Ninth-ranked Cincinnati Moeller claimed its second state title by knocking off top-ranked and defending champion Columbus Brookhaven 73-65 before 16,246. Josh Duncan, a 6-7 junior, had 23 points and 12 rebounds. Bubba Walther added 19 points and Andrew Brackman had 18 for Moeller (23-4).

Andrew Lavender had 23 points to lead Brookhaven (25-2), which was attempting to become the first team in 29 years to repeat as the big-school state champions.

Duncan had 27 points and 16 rebounds in his team's 85-74 overtime win over Cleveland Heights in one semifinal. Lavender carded 22 points in Brookhaven's 59-53 semifinal win over Toledo St. John's.

• Division II — A state tournament-record crowd of 18,454 witnessed SVSM's title game win over Kettering Alter. The Irish had routed Alter 73-40 a month earlier in Dayton, but the Knights (18-9) played a deliberate pace this time around and actually led 19-14 at halftime. Doug Penno led Alter with 12 points.

James had 19 points and nine rebounds, while Romeo Travis had 16 points and Dru Joyce III had 15 in SVSM's 71-46 rout of Canton South in one semifinal, which drew a then-record crowd of 18,409. Alter got 24 points from Penno in its 53-45 semifinal win over Columbus Beechcroft.

• Division III — Unranked Cincinnati Reading downed top-ranked Sugar Creek Garaway 50-44 before a crowd of 16,696 to claim the school's first state title. Derek Aden had 17 points to lead Reading (24-3), while Tyler Renner had 20 points for Garaway (26-2).

Eric Clemons had 19 points in Reading's 70-61 semifinal win over Bedford Chancel, while Renner scored 36 points in Garaway's 70-59 semifinal win over Archbold. Renner was 13 of 17 from the floor and 10 of 13 at the foul line.

• Division IV — Second-ranked Maria Stein Marion Local defeated unranked Convoy Crestview 62-46 before



PHOTOS BY STEVE HELWAGEN

SCENES FROM STATES — Above, Josh Duncan of eventual Division I champion Cincinnati Moeller dribbles around a Cleveland Heights player in the semifinals. At right, Mr. Basketball LeBron James shows exactly where he and his St. Vincent-St. Mary teammates finished in Division II.



17,346 to win the school's second state crown. Craig Wolters led Marion Local (24-2) with 19 points, while Kory Lichtensteiger led Crestview (23-4) with 16 points and 13 rebounds.

Marion Local became the third school in state history to win both a boys and girls title in the same season. The others were Upper Scioto Valley (1994) and Delphos St. John's (2002).

Marion Local crushed Elyria Open Door Christian 72-47 behind 15 points from Nick Prenger. Tori Davis led ODC with 28. In the other semifinal, Crestview downed Columbus Wellington 73-40. Scott DeLong's 15-point effort led Crestview.

Boys State AP Awards

• Division I — Brookhaven's 5-7 Lavender, headed to Oklahoma, was named the player of the year after averaging 17.2 points and 9.6 assists. He was joined on the All-Ohio first team by Brookhaven teammate and fellow

Oklahoma signee Brandon Foust (17.5 average) and Moeller's Duncan (16.9 average).

Cleveland Heights' Jim Cappelletti and Thomas Worthington's Bob Miller shared the coaching award.

• Division II — SVSM's James was named the player of the year. Bucyrus' Todd Martin, Steubenville's Mark Masloski, Tri-Valley's Tim Shumaker and Orange's Skip Collins shared the coaching award.

• Division III — Garaway's Renner and Dayton Christian's David Dees shared the player of the year award. Marion River Valley's Mark Bollinger and Clarksville Clinton-Massie's Brian Mudd shared the coaching honor.

• Division IV — Wellington's Marcus McCants and Mansfield St. Peter's Marcus Butler shared the player of the year award. Tiffin Calvert's Tony Mass was the coach of the year.

Mr. Basketball Award Winners

Here is a list of the Ohio Associated Press Mr. Basketball award winners since the award was instituted in 1988.

| OHIO MR. BASKETBALL AWARD WINNERS | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------|------|---------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Year | Player | Pos. | Ht. | Avg. High School | College | |
| 1987-88 | Jim Jackson | G/F | 6-6 | 26.7 Toledo Macomber | Ohio State | |
| 1988-89 | Jim Jackson | G/F | 6-6 | 31.5 Toledo Macomber | Ohio State | |
| 1989-90 | Bob Patton | G | 6-0 | 21.6 Youngstown Liberty | Stanford | |
| 1990-91 | Greg Simpson | G | 6-1 | 32.3 Lima Senior | West Virginia* | |
| 1991-92 | Greg Simpson | G | 6-1 | 35.3 Lima Senior | West Virginia* | |
| 1992-93 | Geno Ford | G | 5-9 | 35.9 Cambridge | Ohio U. | |
| 1993-94 | Aaron Hutchins | G | 5-10 | 25.8 Lima Central Catholic | Marquette | |
| 1994-95 | Damon Stringer | G | 5-11 | 24.5 Cleveland Heights | Cleveland State® | |
| 1995-96 | Jason Collier | C | 7-0 | 24.3 Springfield Cath. Central | Georgia Tech+ | |
| 1996-97 | Kenny Gregory | G/F | 6-4 | 24.2 Columbus Independence | Kansas | |
| 1997-98 | William "Sonny" Johnson | F | 6-5 | 34.0 Garfield Heights | Ohio U. & | |
| 1998-99 | Emmanuel Smith | G | 6-3 | 28.4 Euclid | Akron | |
| 1999-00 | Chet Mason | F | 6-3 | 25.0 Cleveland South | Miami (Ohio) | |
| | Tony Stockman | G | 6-2 | 25.4 Medina | Ohio State% | |
| 2000-01 | LeBron James | G | 6-6 | 25.6 Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary | None\$ | |
| 2001-02 | LeBron James | G | 6-6 | 29.0 Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary | None\$ | |
| 2002-03 | LeBron James | G | 6-6 | 31.6 Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary | None\$ | |

Special Notes: *Greg Simpson attended Ohio State before transferring to WVU; ®Damon Stringer attended Ohio State before transferring to Cleveland State; +Jason Collier attended Indiana before transferring to Georgia Tech; &Sonny Johnson attended Cleveland State before transferring to Ohio University. %Tony Stockman attended Clemson before transferring to Ohio State. \$LeBron James plans to make himself eligible for the 2003 NBA Draft.