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Vol. 30, No. 24

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

August 2011

# Fickell Takes Center Stage

## New Era Begins At Ohio State

 By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In many ways, it seems as if first-year head coach Luke Fickell's rise to the head of the Ohio State football program was preordained.

The Columbus native rewrote the defensive record book at Ohio State, starting 50 straight games from 1993-96 at nose tackle and making 212 tackles. The toughness he boasted became the stuff of legend among his teammates when he played in Ohio State's 1997 Rose Bowl victory with a torn pectoral muscle.

"Luke was just as gritty and played just as hard as anyone on the field," said Stanley Jackson, who was Ohio State's starting quarterback in 1996. "I'm not surprised (he has become the head coach). I think most guys who played nose guard in the trenches that were a little undersized, had a big heart – whatever they set their minds out to do in life after football, they're usually fairly successful."

After a brief NFL career that was cut short by injury, Fickell returned to the program as a graduate assistant in 1999 before taking a job at Akron, where he coached the defensive line for two seasons.

He then returned to Ohio State in 2002 as special teams coach before working his way up the staff ladder – first becoming linebackers coach in 2004 and adding the co-defensive coordinator position to his title in 2005 alongside coordinator Jim Heacock.

"I don't think there's any question I knew he had this in him," said Heacock, who was hired as defensive line coach in 1996, Fickell's final season as an OSU player. "You always knew he was so passionate about coaching and studied the game and did it the right way. I think you always kind of knew that he was going to be out front somewhere and just needed the opportunity."

In recent years, Fickell's stock has continued to rise. He had overtures from Mid-American Conference schools to take over their programs, and a high-profile job as an assistant at Notre



JOSH WINSLOW

**NEW COACH, FAMILIAR FACE** – With the exception of a brief NFL career and a couple of seasons at Akron as an assistant, new Ohio State head football coach Luke Fickell has been around the Buckeyes for much of the last 19 years since joining the team as a defensive lineman in 1992.

Dame was even offered at one point.

Instead, Fickell chose to stay at Ohio State and continue to work on some of the best defenses in the country – all the while impressing those around him.

"We all knew that someday Coach Fick would be the coach at Ohio State," senior Tyler Moeller said. "He's an Ohio State guy and he brings a lot to the table."

The only person who might be surprised to find out that Fickell has become the 23rd head coach at his alma mater is the teen-aged version of the man himself.

"Actually I had no intentions of ever being a coach," Fickell said. "It's funny because obviously we hired (new linebackers coach) Mike Vrabel, and since I met him he'd always told me he was going to be a coach. We were college roommates and I'd say, 'Ah, I'm not going to be a coach.' I was going to be a doctor or optometrist or something."

But a funny thing happened on the way to working in a doctor's office – a trip to one.

Fickell suffered a torn ACL in 1997 while playing with the New Orleans Saints, sidelining him for what turned out to be his only professional season. While he was going through rehab, he was hit by the reality of the situation.

"I remember just laying there in New Orleans and thinking, 'I don't know if this football thing is going to make it,'" he said. "It was kind of taken away before I wanted it to be taken away."

From there, life lessons took over. Fickell immediately thought about his father, Pat, who spent nearly two decades loading cars at Conrail.

"It wasn't a bring-your-son-to-work type of job," Fickell said, looking back on the career that hardened his father. That toughness was passed on to Luke, who won three state championships as a wrestler at Columbus DeSales and is still

thought of as one of the best prep grapplers in the history of the state.

"I just remember back to my dad telling me, 'Whatever you do someday, do what you love to do,'" Fickell said. "I saw him get up to go to work and just be miserable going to the railroad every day when I was a kid, just hating it. But he had to do it because that's what he did for our family."

"Those kinds of things hit me as I lay there hurt thinking I'm not going to play football anymore. I reflected back on who had a lot of impact on my life and I kept thinking about the coaches I had. It kind of just started to hit me (that) the next best

thing to playing is coaching."

The rest, as they say, is history. Looking back, it seems like the easy part for Fickell was getting to where he is now. Now comes the true test – how will he do leading a program in which excellence is the only standard?

### Making It His Own

Of course, there's no manual for Fickell to follow as he prepares to lead Ohio State into the 2011 season, which starts Sept. 3 in Ohio Stadium vs. Akron. He takes over after the Buckeyes' greatest sustained run of success in three decades – and yet inherits a program that needs to be patched back together in many ways.

After 10 excellent seasons that included one national championship and seven Big Ten rings, predecessor Jim Tressel was shown the door May 30 after a scandal that threatened to bring down the program. Tressel did not report possible NCAA violations to his superiors or the NCAA, a breach of his contract and the rulebook of the collegiate sports oversight body.

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Continued On Page 12

# Fickell Hits Ground Running After Tressel's Departure

Continued From Page 1

Soon after Tressel's departure, quarterback Terrelle Pryor – one of the players named in the original scandal that included selling OSU memorabilia and receiving discounted tattoos – left amid further NCAA investigations and a media frenzy that threatened to swallow the entire program.

Once everything subsided, Fickell was left overseeing a program without its beloved head coach and its face-of-the-program quarterback as well as the prospect of beginning the season with three other offensive stars suspended for five games because of the scandal.

On top of it all, the new head coach must deal with the uncertainty that he might not get more than one year at the helm. Though Fickell's interim tag officially has been removed by the university, the school still plans to conduct a full coaching search at the end of the season and there is no guarantee he will receive the job.

The task might have seemed overwhelming at first, but Fickell said that has actually helped him get to work.

"Everything happened pretty fast," he said. "The greatest thing I guess I could say is I had no time to sit and think. I had no time to feel sorry of any sort, to have a whole lot of emotion. The situation arose and obviously I had to stand up.

"I think that's what's been best for me – not to have the ability to sit down and think about the situation that's ahead but hit the ground running, do what I know how to do

best, and that's compete and obviously learn along the way. It has been exciting and challenging, but I think that's what you get into this field for."

Fickell said he has talked to numerous people and coaches for advice since taking over and the overwhelming sentiment has been simple – be yourself.

Through the practices open to media, that's exactly what Fickell has done. A noticeable increase in practice intensity was observed from the opening day of training camp. Team meetings have been made shorter with more teaching done visually and on the field.

The kick scrimmage, which was staged once each spring and fall under Tressel, was reduced in scope while more emphasis was placed on pressure-packed live reps. The traditional scoring system for the jersey scrimmage, the all-important live battle each camp between the offense and defense that determines who gets to wear the coveted scarlet jerseys all season, was done away with for a grading system based on turnovers and toughness.

Fickell has been more open to talking to the media than Tressel, at the same time remaining loath to talk about individual players or any distractions the team might be facing. A new team slogan appearing on shirts and promotional items – "The Men of Action" – comes from an inspirational book Tressel had the team read during the spring at Fickell's urging.

"He's doing a great job," Heacock said. "I know all of the assistants and everybody's



MATTHEW HAGER

**OFF ON RIGHT FOOT** – New Ohio State head football coach Luke Fickell has received good reviews from his players and assistant coaches.

together and the team's together. I think he's done a good job of keeping everything solid and together in there. I think the players really respect him and he's a players' coach."

Junior Storm Klein, who spent the past two seasons under Fickell's tutelage of the linebackers, confirmed that fact.

"He's the right guy for the job, so we're ready to go," Klein said. "He'll do anything to win and he's always calm, cool and collected. He's a great coach and an intense guy. He's a fireball, man, but he's got us going."

Fickell has admitted it hasn't been the easiest transition when it comes to moving

from position coach to head man. Instead of being in charge of putting a small group of players through the paces of a two-hour workout, Fickell has had to come up with an overall organizational plan for the entire 104 players in camp.

According to Mark Dantonio, Ohio State's defensive coordinator from 2001-03 who is now the coach at Michigan State, that's one of the biggest adjustments a coach can make.

"The initial thing I had to learn was that I was no longer a defensive coordinator," Dantonio said. "I have to be responsible for every aspect of the football program from

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## COVER STORY

what kind of socks we're wearing to meeting with the alumni. I always felt like I had a to-do list when I come in and I still do. These are the things I want to get done today.

"The problem is I'm on 15 other peoples' to-do lists, so you get sidetracked. You get pulled out of a defensive meeting and you're asked to make decisions on discipline. The buck stops with you, so you have a much bigger scope of things you have to deal with."

Getting used to those decisions was going to take time, but Fickell was doing his best to stay in the moment. However, there have finally been moments in which he realized the scope of the situation as well. One of those came Aug. 20 when he oversaw the team's jersey scrimmage in Ohio Stadium.

"It's a little bit real now," Fickell said. "I've had a couple of months here to think about it and to see it, but it was a big day for me. I think the first time being in the 'Shoe and actually coaching in a little bit of a different light, that was maybe one of the first real times that I've kind of looked around and it made me realize the situation for a split-second."

### 'A Beautiful Challenge'

Fickell will not be alone as he tries to deliver a successful season in the wake of controversy.

Ohio State boasts a senior class of leaders of varying scope. Some, such as center Michael Brewster, are going into the fourth year of starting. Others, such as quarterback Joe Bauserman, are moving into major roles for the first time. Still others are somewhere in between, but all want to put the football program back in a positive light.

The No. 1 way to do that, they say, is to win.

"It's not all about us," Brewster said. "I think the big thing is we want to help the program move forward and leave it better than we found it. It's going to be a struggle but we feel like a good season can really do that. It's going to be a beautiful challenge."

Brewster's words were emblematic of a determination to overcome the scandal and the media firestorm that seemed to envelop the team early in the summer.

For those seniors who were part of the scandal – running back Dan "Boom" Herron, receiver DeVier Posey, tackle Mike Adams and defensive end Solomon Thomas – they had to listen to claims that their actions helped to bring down a proud regime.

Others who had no role in the situation watched as the program was dragged through the mud nationally, often by accusations that were proved to be baseless. It's fair to say it did not sit well.

"This is a big year for us," Moeller said. "This is going to define us for a couple of years to come. We have a little more fire under ourselves and – I don't want to say pressure – but we're kind of pissed off. We want to make a statement out there this year."

To accomplish that, the team put in some of its hardest work during the offseason. Most admitted the summer months included more work than any they have seen since arriving at Ohio State and the uncertainty around the program served as an inspiration.

"We've really rallied around each other, kind of used it as fuel to the fire," Brewster said. "I feel like people think we feel sorry for ourselves or that we're in confusion or don't know what to do, but if anything we know exactly what to do. We had a great summer."

"If someone trained harder than us this summer I'd like to meet them because I don't think that would be possible."

Fickell likes that his charges are so fired up, but the man of action himself was also sure to point out that talk doesn't always amount to much. This edition of the Ohio State football team will have to prove itself on the field to its coach.

"Come Sept. 3, we want to see what they can really do," Fickell said. "Can you say they're hungry, can you say they're inspired? Yes. But when another adversity hits, that's when you see what your team is really made of. I feel good about where they are. I feel good about where their minds are, where their effort and energy levels are, but we're not crowning anything until we actually see it."

Still, that's not going to stop Brewster from being full of his trademark confidence.

"I feel like we can do something pretty special this year by overcoming what's happened," he said. "It's going to be a really nice opportunity. Maybe this will be a really nice way to send us out."

### Feeling Disrespected

After a run of six straight Big Ten championships – the last of which was vacated by the school – the Buckeyes face the odd situation of entering the season as neither league favorites nor national title contenders.

The Associated Press has the Buckeyes ranked 18th in its preseason poll, the team's lowest opening rank since beginning 2001 at No. 22.

Appropriately, that was the last time OSU went into a campaign with a new face calling the shots on the sideline. But while that team was still pulling itself out of a two-year slide, this one believes its championship pedigree

and talented roster will allow it to contend again.

"As a team, we know how we can play," junior tight end Jake Stoneburner said. "We feel we're going to be one of the best teams. The voters might not agree with that, but I guess we're just going to have to prove them wrong."

"That's kind of our mind-set during camp – 'It's just us.' We're the only people who believe how good we're going to be, so we're just going to have to show people."

Even Fickell, who has done his best to make it clear he and his team should think little of any opinions coming from outside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center and the Hyatt Place hotel the team has stayed in during camp, admitted the lack of national respect can be used to the team's advantage.

"You can ask me a million times – I'd much rather be criticized than be praised," he said. "I don't handle praise very well. I don't like it. I would rather have people saying negative things and doubting you because I think that's a motivation."

But the fact of the matter is Ohio State is Ohio State. Even if the national poll voters aren't expecting as much, the fan base from Ashtabula to Athens and Toledo to Thornville wants big things, first-year coach or not.

Fickell – born and bred in Columbus and a part of the Buckeye program for almost half of his 38 years – has made it clear he expects nothing less.

"I think this team has a chance," he said. "We have a lot of things to prove, though. We'll let our actions speak for us. That doesn't mean we change what our expectations are. Again, we feel like they'll live up to what we expect of them. Now they have to do it."

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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEPTH CHART

# Expectations Still High For Fickell's Buckeyes

By **MATTHEW HAGER**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Gone are head coach Jim Tressel, quarterback Terrelle Pryor and several key contributors from the 2010 Ohio State football team, a squad that had its 12-1 record and sixth consecutive Big Ten championship erased from the record books.

The times, they are a-changing.

One thing hasn't changed, however, and likely never will. The expectations remain just as lofty as ever among OSU players.

"They never change," said junior cornerback Travis Howard. "This is Ohio State.

We're big on tradition and we know what we have to do to continue it. It's the same thing every year. We just have to go out there and put it on the line for each other."

Ohio State enters the 2011 season facing several issues it will have to address.

Key among them, especially in the early portion of the season, is that the Buckeyes will be without three senior offensive starters – right tackle Mike Adams, tailback Dan "Boom" Herron and wide receiver DeVier Posey – as well as backup fifth-year senior defensive end Solomon Thomas for the first five games of the season.

That adds to the task new head coach

Luke Fickell will face in trying to replace all the starters he already lost to graduation following the Sugar Bowl win against Arkansas in early January.

The offense could be run-heavy, especially early in the season. With Pryor's departure, the Buckeyes will have a new starting quarterback, likely either fifth-year senior Joe Bauserman or freshman Braxton Miller. That signal caller will have to contend with a young, Posey-less corps of receivers but will have plenty of talented rushers at his disposal along with a talented offensive line guarding him. Even without Herron, Ohio State should have plenty of capable ball car-

riers in such players as Carlos Hyde, Jaamal Berry, Rod Smith and the versatile Jordan Hall.

Defensively, the Buckeyes might have lost what looks like a large number of starters, but the unit does return eight players who started at least one game last season. Projected new starters such as Howard have been impressive during spring and preseason workouts, and after the secondary was ravaged by injuries last season, it will benefit from such returnees as safety C.J. Barnett and nickel backs Tyler Moeller and Christian Bryant, who missed time last year.

The defensive line starters were set but there was still plenty of competition behind the No. 1 unit. The same could be said for the linebackers, who feature several players jostling for position on the depth chart as BSB went to press.

As the Buckeyes continued preparations for the 2011 season, here is a look at how the team's depth chart should look for the Sept. 3 opener against Akron.

## OFFENSE Quarterback

Former minor league pitcher Joe Bauserman (6-1, 230, 5th Sr.) has served as Pryor's backup for the past two seasons, and with the former five-star prospect's departure for the NFL, Bauserman looks to be the choice to start under center against the Zips. The Virginia native has mainly seen mop-up duty, save for a relief appearance against Illinois when Pryor went down with a minor injury. He threw only two passes against the Illini before Pryor returned, but one was picked off. Despite that appearance, Bauserman was the most consistent quarterback during pre-season camp and looked more confident leading the offense than he had before.

Braxton Miller (6-3, 210, Fr.) is the latest highly touted quarterback to enroll at Ohio State, arriving in Columbus in January. He led Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne to the state Division I title game as a senior and was a Scout.com five-star prospect. He threw for 2,167 yards, rushed for 658 yards and scored 34 touchdowns last year for the Warriors, and Miller continued to show dual-threat QB abilities during spring practice and preseason camp. He was not as consistent as Bauserman, but he did appear to beat out fellow backups Kenny Gupton (6-2, 195, Soph.) and Taylor Graham (6-4, 225, R-Fr.).



Joe Bauserman

## Tailback

Jordan Hall (5-9, 195, Jr.) is listed as a tailback but could just as easily be placed with the wide receivers. The Jeannette, Pa., native was the No. 1 running back during preseason camp but also lined up in the slot on occasion. Ever dangerous with the ball, Hall rushed for 161 yards last season behind starters Dan "Boom" Herron and Brandon Saine and added 83 receiving yards. He also threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to Pryor and returned a kickoff 85 yards for a touchdown against Michigan. Hall should be a major offensive threat for the Buckeyes this fall.

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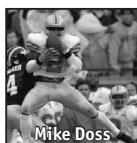
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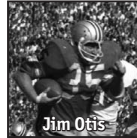
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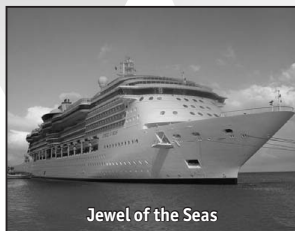
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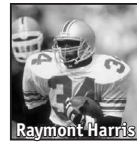
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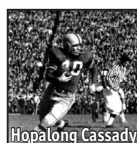
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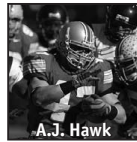
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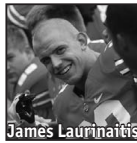
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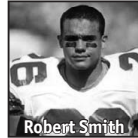
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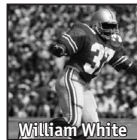
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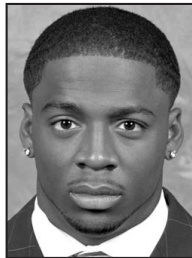
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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEPTH CHART

Several players battled at tailback during preseason camp, but hard-nosed Carlos Hyde (6-0, 238, Soph.) was arguably the most impressive. Hyde may not have a body type that screams speedster, but his 40-yard dash time of 4.42 was the quickest among the tailbacks during summer performance tests. Hyde, who rushed for 115 yards last season, worked his way up the depth chart during August and could see the field early against the Zips.

Herron (5-10, 205, 5th Sr.) is one of the suspended players who will miss the first five games of the season. When he returns against Nebraska, Herron will attempt to build on a junior season in which he rushed for 1,155 yards and scored a touchdown in 12 straight games. He earned first-team All-Big Ten honors and acted as a cheerleader for his fellow tailbacks during the preseason.



Jordan Hall

Chris Fields (6-0, 188, Soph.) showed his athleticism during the Aug. 20 jersey scrimmage. He made a nice adjustment to a deep (albeit underthrown) Miller pass, outmaneuvering a defender and breaking free for a 58-yard touchdown. Fields was solid throughout most of camp and should build on a 2010 season in which he caught three passes for 22 yards.

Posey (6-2, 213, Sr.) will be a big part of Ohio State's offense, but the Cincinnati native will not be able to take the field until Oct. 8 at Nebraska. Posey had started 27 consecutive games, the longest active streak in the Big Ten, and had 1,793 yards and 16 touchdowns through his first three seasons. He was second on the Buckeyes in receiving yards last year with 848 to go with seven touchdowns.



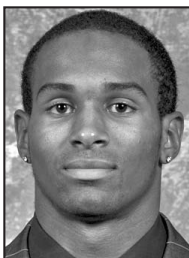
Verlon Reed

## Wide Receiver

A player who saw playing time as a true freshman in 2010, Corey "Philly" Brown (5-11, 182, Soph.) will be a part of Ohio State's starting offense. Brown worked as a wide receiver and a kick and punt returner last fall. He caught eight passes for 105 yards, carried the ball twice for 27 yards and returned four punts for 32 yards. Brown also scored his first collegiate touchdown on a 15-yard reception from Pryor against Purdue.

The tallest member of the wide receiving corps, T.Y. Williams (6-5, 228, R-Fr.) has the look of a dangerous passing target but has struggled catching the ball. When Williams does manage to haul in a pass, good things usually happen like when he nabbed a deep pass in stride for a 68-yard touchdown pass from Graham in the spring game.

If Williams is not the second wide receivers backup, that honor will likely go to a freshman – either Devin Smith (6-3, 190, Fr.) or Evan Spencer (6-1, 190, Fr.). Smith started preseason camp well but appeared to fall out of favor in the latter half of August. Spencer appeared to be improving each day.



Corey "Philly" Brown

He even caught a 25-yard touchdown strike from Miller in the preseason jersey scrimmage.

## Tight End

This position is in good hands with returning starter Jake Stoneburner (6-5, 245, Jr.) back again. The Dublin (Ohio) Coffman product has improved as a blocker and continues to be a talented receiver. He caught 21 passes last season for 222 yards and a pair of touchdowns. Unfortunately, his season could have been even better if not for an ankle injury that kept him out of two games.

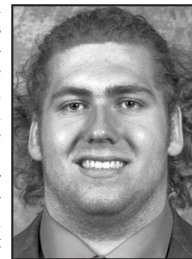
While Stoneburner was out of the lineup, Reid Fragel (6-8, 280, Jr.) played well in his absence. Fragel is a better blocker than Stoneburner, but he also showed an ability to make something happen when the ball is thrown his way.

Fragel caught nine passes for 121 yards and added a 5-yard touchdown at Iowa and a two-point conversion reception at Wisconsin. He was limited during preseason camp, however, after suffering a staph infection in his right shin.

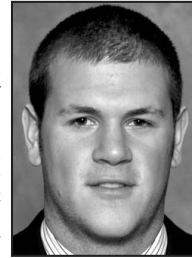
Jeff Heurman (6-5, 240, Fr.) and Nick Vannett (6-6, 235, Fr.) fared well in his absence.

## Left Tackle

With Mike Adams out serving a five-game NCAA suspension, Andrew Norwell (6-5, 308, Soph.) will likely step into a starting role. The Cincinnati Anderson grad was the primary backup at right tackle last season and worked at guard and tackle in the spring. Norwell, a former five-star recruit as rated by Scout.com, earned playing time last fall and has been solid on the first-team line during preseason camp.



Andrew Norwell



Jake Stoneburner

Several players are battling to work their way up the depth chart. One of those players is Chris Carter (6-6, 370, Fr.), who made preseason headlines when Fickell told reporters at the Big Ten Media Days in Chicago that Carter had gained weight since arriving at Ohio State and was up to 390 pounds. Carter said he was down to 375 and wanted to eventually be down to 360.

Adams (6-8, 320, Sr.) will return after his suspension and look to build on a 2010 season that saw him earn first-team All-Big Ten honors. He was the Jim Parker lineman of the week four times and earned his third varsity letter. Adams was healthy for the entire season for the first time since coming to Ohio State. He missed time with a shoulder injury as a freshman and was sidelined for three games in 2009 with a knee injury.

## Left Guard

Jack Mewhort (6-6, 303, Soph.) was the backup to right guard Bryant Browning as a redshirt freshman and has moved into a starting role. The high school All-American from Toledo St. John's features excellent technique for a player of his size. He has also been versatile since coming to Ohio State, working as a center and a guard as a Buckeye. He played center, guard and tackle in high school.



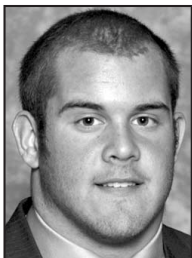
Jack Mewhort

One of several freshman offensive line-men in the two deep, Tommy Brown (6-5, 320, Fr.) comes to Ohio State after an impressive prep career at Akron Firestone. Brown was a first-team All-Ohio, all-city and all-district player. He has worked solely on offense after playing both ways for the Falcons. Like most freshmen, Brown has had some difficult moments during preseason camp but looks to have a bright future.

Continued On Page 16

## Fullback

Zach Boren (6-0, 252, Jr.) will carry his family name solo this season after the graduation of older brother and former Ohio State offensive guard Justin Boren, but the younger Boren will likely bring the same hard-nosed attitude to the field that he and his brother did last season. Boren has been a mainstay in the starting lineup since arriving at Ohio State in 2009, starting five games as a freshman and then every game during his sophomore campaign. He had one carry for 2 yards last season, nabbed 10 receptions for 68 yards and was a capable blocker.



Zach Boren

Adam Homan (6-2, 248, Jr.) returns as Boren's backup. The younger brother of former OSU linebacker Ross Homan played on special teams units as well as at fullback in a reserve capacity. He caught three passes for 18 yards last season and looked solid with the second-team offense during preseason camp.

## Wide Receiver

Verlon Reed (6-0, 195, R-Fr.) has taken a big leap since the end of the 2010 season, one in which he took a redshirt after coming to Ohio State from Columbus Marion-Franklin as a quarterback. Reed played well in the spring, even catching a 17-yard touchdown pass from Guiton in the spring game. He continued his upward trajectory in August, emerging as a likely starter for at least the first five games while DeVier Posey serves his five-game NCAA suspension.

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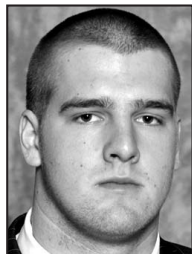


# Senior Center Set To Lead Offensive Line

Continued From Page 15

## Center

The anchor of Ohio State's offensive line, Michael Brewster (6-5, 305, Sr.) returns for his fourth year as the starting center. Brewster was a Football Writers Association of America and Phil Steele first-team All-America selection last season as well as a first-team All-Big Ten pick. The veteran of 36 collegiate starts was a preseason All-American this season and should be a captain.



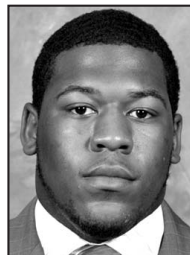
Michael Brewster

Brian Bobek (6-2, 280, Fr.) has served

as Brewster's backup during preseason camp. The Palatine (Ill.) Fremd grad was a U.S. Army All-American Bowl participant last season and was a first-team all-state selection of the Chicago Tribune, The (Champaign) News-Gazette and the Daily Herald of suburban Chicago. He comes from an athletic family. Bobek's father was an offensive lineman at Iowa, and his mother was a women's basketball player for the Hawkeyes. Brother Jeff is a junior walk-on fullback at Michigan State.

## Right Guard

Academic issues caused Marcus Hall (6-5, 321, Soph.) to redshirt last season, but he is back and in the starting offensive line this fall. Hall has a good mix of size and strength, both of which he showed in 2009 as a fresh-



Marcus Hall

man. During that season he played right tackle and saw plenty of action, including a start vs. Iowa.

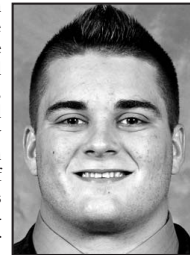
Corey Linsley (6-2, 310, Soph.) moved to guard after spending last season as the primary backup at center. During the spring he worked both at center and guard, and he has spent the majority of his time at right guard during OSU's preseason camp. He should push for playing time this season but will be suspended for the first two games of the season for unspecified reasons according

to sources.

## Right Tackle

J.B. Shugarts (6-7, 300, Sr.) is back for his third season as Ohio State's starting right tackle. He is hoping for better health this

fall after struggling with a nagging right foot injury during the 2010 season. Orthotics he now wears in his right shoe have helped alleviate his ailment, and the Klein, Texas, native appeared completely healthy during preseason practices. If healthy, Shugarts should be a difficult road block for defensive linemen this fall.



J.B. Shugarts

Another freshman who has worked his way into the two deep, Antonio Underwood (6-3, 305, Fr.) has plenty of power and leverage. He was a three-year starter and a two-way player at Shaker Heights, Ohio, and could be thrust into action this season if injuries hit the offensive line.

## DEFENSE Defensive End

John Simon (6-2, 270, Jr.) is one of the most experienced returnees to the Ohio State defense, logging 245 minutes last season, second most on that side of the ball. Mean



John Simon

and aggressive on the field, Simon has been a handful for Ohio State's offensive linemen during preseason camp. He's also been a nightmare for the quarterbacks, bringing a noncontact black jersey-donning Bauserman down for a sack during the Aug. 20 jersey scrimmage. He is a preseason Lott Trophy nominee and was an honorable-mention All-Big Ten pick in 2010.

Adam Bellamy (6-4, 302, Soph.) is back as Simon's backup for the second consecutive season. He made 11 tackles last year, including three stops against Eastern Michigan and four tackles - including a tackle for loss - against Indiana. Bellamy made one of the best defensive plays during the jersey scrimmage, stuffing a rusher in a goal-line situation.

## Nose Guard

Garrett Goebel (6-3, 290, Jr.) will get his chance to make his mark in the starting lineup. The Lombard (Ill.) Montini Catholic



Garrett Goebel

product is a two-time letterman who backed up Cameron Heyward last season. Goebel recorded nine tackles in 2010, including two apiece against Indiana, Purdue and Michigan. He was also an academic All-Big Ten selection last season.

Once known more as a talented singer who annually wowed the crowd at the "Buckeyes Got Talent" event, Evan Blankenship (6-3, 275, 5th Sr.) has played his way into the mix at tackle. Blankenship is a former offensive lineman who moved to the other side of the

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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEPTH CHART

ball in 2010. He had a good preseason camp, showing good technique and earned a spot among the top eight defensive linemen.

**Defensive End**

Johnathan Hankins (6-3, 335, Soph.) should see more of the field this season after emerging as a regular in the defensive line rotation last fall. Hankins backed up Dexter Larimore in 2010, logging 89 minutes. His weight was an issue, forcing him off the field after only a few plays at a time. The Ohio State coaching staff wants to see him stay on the field for longer spells, and when he is on the field he is usually creating havoc for the opposing offense.

An early enrollee, Joel Hale (6-4, 310, Fr.) impressed during spring practice and did not look out of place as he made the adjustment from high school to college football. The defensive line Mr. Football for the state of Indiana boasts good size and strength and could see playing time this fall. He made 40 tackles and forced nine fumbles last season at Greenwood (Ind.) Center Grove.

Also in the mix at this spot is newcomer Michael Bennett (6-3, 280, Fr.), a player who has impressed during preseason camp. Bennett has not only stood out among the freshmen but has even taken some first-team reps in August. He was a U.S. Army All-American Bowl participant last season and has shown the ability to play both inside and outside.

**Defensive End (Leo)**

A shoulder injury kept Nathan Williams (6-3, 260, Sr.) out of several preseason practices, but the Washington Court House (Ohio) Miami Trace product looked no worse for wear when he returned to action Aug. 20 in the jersey scrimmage. Williams' speed and athleticism should continue to give opponents fits this season, a year after he recorded 46 tackles, including 9½ for loss and 4½ sacks, an interception, a forced fumble and two fumble recoveries.

J.T. Moore (6-1, 252, R-Fr.) has worked his way into the two deep after redshirting during the 2010 season. With Williams out with a minor injury during several preseason practices, Moore stepped in on the first team and did not look out of place. He fared well in battles with Adams during several practices. Moore was a standout at Youngstown (Ohio) Boardman, where he recorded 110 tackles, seven sacks and nine TFL as a senior.

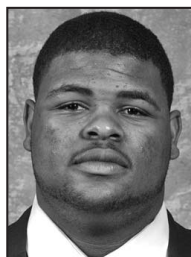
The hero of the Sugar Bowl, Solomon Thomas (6-5, 255, 5th Sr.) will attempt to work his way back into the defensive line rotation when he concludes his five-game NCAA suspension. Tall and agile, Thomas has all the physical tools it takes to make an impact on the field. He will attempt to build on a 2010 season during which he recorded 14 tackles and nabbed a game-saving interception deep in Ohio State territory in the final minute of the Sugar Bowl.

**Strongside (Sam) Linebacker**

Etienne Sabino (6-3, 242, Jr.) took a redshirt last season after losing a battle for the right to start at the Sam spot but is back in the mix this fall. He worked as a backup to

James Laurinaitis in 2008 and Brian Rolle in 2009 at middle linebacker, and he has all the physical tools needed to succeed on the strong side but has admitted to thinking too much and not relying on his instincts in the past. Sabino has worked on the strong side during the preseason and remained on the field, sliding to the middle when the Buckeyes moved to the nickel defense.

Chad Hagan (6-0, 230, R-Fr.) did not play last season after undergoing an undisclosed surgery at the beginning of preseason camp. It was his second



Johnathan Hankins

major health issue since committing to Ohio State as part of its 2010 recruiting class. Hagan was diagnosed with Wolff-Parkinson-White Syndrome while in high school, which results in an elevated heart-beat following physical activity. He underwent several procedures to correct the issue and eventually returned to football. During preseason camp, Hagan worked on the second team several times before an undisclosed injury limited him.

**Middle (Mike) Linebacker**

Storm Klein (6-2, 240, Jr.) has looked quite comfortable in the middle during the preseason after serving as a backup during his first two years at OSU. Klein missed most of the spring with a hamstring injury but has been impressive during preseason camp, often finding himself in the middle of the action. Klein was singled out by defensive coordinator Jim Heacock as a player who has emerged and impressed during camp.

An early enrollee who arrived at Ohio State in January, Ryan Shazier (6-2, 210, Fr.) has had an impressive preseason camp and has worked his way into the two deep behind Klein. Shazier was an all-state linebacker for Plantation, Fla., last season and notched 87 tackles, 19½ sacks, four forced fumbles and four blocked kicks. He has worked on learning all of the linebacker positions and has used his quickness and instincts to climb the depth chart.

Jordan Whiting (6-1, 238, Soph.) has been in the mix at middle linebacker but will miss the first game of the season while serving an NCAA suspension stemming from the tattoo scandal. The Louisville (Ky.) Trinity product saw limited time during the 2010 season, mainly on special teams. He recorded two tackles and earned his first varsity letter.

**Weakside (Will) Linebacker**

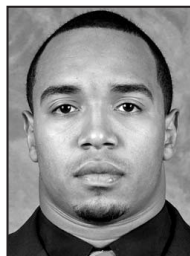
Andrew Sweat (6-2, 238, Sr.) moves to the weakside spot after working as the starting Sam linebacker last season. Sweat said he feels more comfortable at the Will, and the Washington (Pa.) Trinity grad is the most experienced returning linebacker. He recorded 41 tackles, including three for loss, a forced fumble and an interception and started 10 games last season.

A former safety and special teams main-



Andrew Sweat

stay, Nate Oliver (6-0, 215, 5th Sr.) looks to have found a home with the linebackers. New linebackers coach Mike Vrabel said after the jersey scrimmage that he was proud of the progress Oliver had made. Oliver may not break into the starting lineup but should see additional playing time this fall after a season in which he recorded eight tackles.



Etienne Sabino

**Star (Nickel Back)**

Tyler Moeller (6-0, 210, 6th Sr.) returns for one final season at Ohio State after getting a

medical waiver from the NCAA. What was to be his senior season last year ended after he suffered a torn pectoral muscle in the fifth game of the season at Illinois. Moeller remains a player who plays hard and fast every play, and he could be a key to success for the Ohio State defense this fall.

Much like Moeller, Christian Bryant (5-9, 190, Soph.) saw his season end prematurely because of injury. Bryant may not be the largest player in the secondary, but he can level heavy hits and cover lots of ground. His blend of physicality and speed make him a prime candidate to play Ohio State's hybrid linebacker/safety spot.



Tyler Moeller

**Cornerback**

Arguably the most impressive Buckeye during spring practice, Travis Howard (6-1, 190, Jr.) has solidified his place as the No. 1 cornerback. The Miami native emerged as the replacement for Chimdi Chekwa at the left cornerback spot after a sophomore season that saw him record 13 tackles, one tackle for loss, a sack, two interceptions and a fumble recovery. One of his interceptions was returned 30 yards for a touchdown against Penn State.

Highly decorated recruit Doran Grant (5-11, 180, Fr.) has impressed and worked his way up the depth chart in a short time. An athletic player with good instincts, Grant has spent time with the first and second defensive units during preseason camp. He came to Ohio State after an impressive prep career at Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary, where he was a two-time all-state honoree as a wide receiver, cornerback and kick returner. In addition to his football exploits, Grant was also a state champion in the 110-meter outdoor and 60-meter indoor hurdles and a basketball letterman.

**Free Safety**

Orhian Johnson (6-2, 205, Jr.) returns as a starter after taking over a starting spot in the third week of the 2010 season. Johnson struggled at times last year with his tackling and instincts but has looked much more confident during the preseason. The tall and agile native of St. Petersburg, Fla., has been one of the most vocal players on the practice field, helping his teammates get

properly lined up and pointing out things he notices about the offensive formation.

Bryant has worked behind Johnson as has Zach Domicone (6-3, 211, Jr.). Domicone was a special teams mainstay last season as well as a reserve safety. The Beavercreek, Ohio, product recovered a blocked punt for a touchdown at



Orhian Johnson

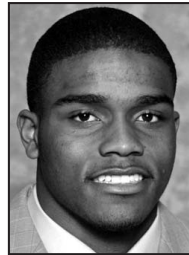
Minnesota and had four tackles during the 2010 season. He had a good preseason camp, several times coming up with hard hits and solid plays in pass coverage.

**Strong Safety**

C.J. Barnett (6-0, 190, Soph.) won a starting job last season and played well during his first two starts before suffering a season-ending right knee injury against Miami (Fla.), one that even held him out of action during the spring. A hard hitter with a nose for the football, Barnett

did not look like he missed a step upon his return during preseason camp.

Another player returning from a 2010 injury, Corey Brown (6-0, 189, Soph.) moved from cornerback to safety last season, and the move has suited him well. His physical style helped him move up the depth chart during the preseason, and Brown showed no hesitation following surgery to repair a knee injury he suffered against Purdue. He made five tackles last season before his injury.



C.J. Barnett

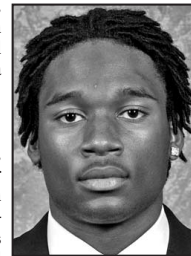
**Cornerback**

Quick and athletic, Bradley Roby (5-11, 185, R-Fr.) appeared to have pulled ahead in the battle for the second cornerback spot as BSB went to press. The former defensive back and wide receiver for Suwanee (Ga.) Peachtree Ridge outlasted several potential candidates and was often cited by teammates as a player to watch. His athleticism and instincts served him well during preseason camp and helped him climb the depth chart.

Dominic Clarke (5-10, 191, Soph.) was a reserve cornerback during the 2010 season who was pushed into action in the Sugar Bowl when Chekwa (wrist) and Howard (cramps) left the game with injuries. Clarke helped the defense hold off an Arkansas rally in a 31-26 OSU victory. He battled Roby in the spring and during preseason camp, often playing with the No. 1 defense before mainly working with the second unit during the jersey scrimmage.

**SPECIALISTS  
Punter**

Ben Buchanan (6-0, 195, Jr.) returns as the Buckeyes' punter after averaging 41.0 yards per punt in 2010. He had five punts of 50 yards or longer and had 15 downed inside the 20-yard



Bradley Roby



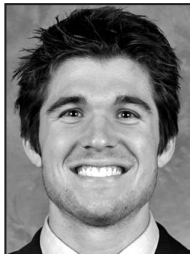
## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEPTH CHART

# Fickell Era Begins; Vrabel, Drayton Join Staff

Continued From Page 17

line. An Academic All-Big Ten selection in 2010, Buchanan had two punts blocked last season, including one in the fourth quarter against Arkansas.

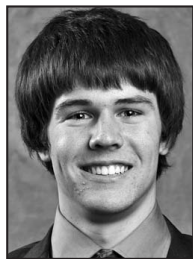
Walk-on Derek Erwin (5-10, 200, Sr.) is back for the second straight season as the primary backup to Buchanan. Erwin joined the team in 2009 and has yet to see game action. While at New Washington (Ohio) Buckeye Central, Erwin was a linebacker, quarterback and punter.



Ben Buchanan

## Kicker

Chillicothe, Ohio, native Drew Basil (6-1, 212, Soph.) will be Ohio State's No. 1 kicker this fall after handling the majority of kickoffs last season. His first collegiate field-goal attempt, a 52-yarder



Drew Basil

against Marshall, was blocked and returned for a touchdown. He also had his second attempt blocked, a 53-yard attempt against Indiana. Basil, who has shown that he can make long-distance field goals in practices and scrimmages, had

only nine of his 87 kicks result in touchdowns. Two of those kickoffs were returned for touchdowns. Buchanan has worked as a placekicker in the past, but the lone other full-time placekicker on the roster is Russell Doup (6-1, 180, R-Fr.). Doup joined the Buckeyes as a walk-on in 2010 and took a redshirt following a prep career at Mount Vernon, Ohio, where he also played basketball and baseball.

## Long Snapper

The younger brother of former OSU long snapper Dimitrios Makridis, George Makridis (5-11, 240, Soph.) was the No. 1

long snapper during preseason practices and the jersey scrimmage. If he does see the field this fall it will be for the first time. He redshirted in 2009 and did not see action behind incumbent long snapper Jake McQuaide last season.

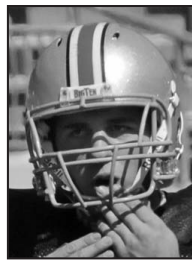
Bryce Haynes (6-4, 185, Fr.) was rated the top long snapping prospect in the nation and was a rare snapper to earn a college scholarship fresh out of high school. However, he was the second long snapper to take the field when the media was able to watch field-goal drills at preseason practices. Haynes comes to Ohio State after wowing scouts at several national camps.

## COACHING STAFF Head Coach

Former Ohio State defensive lineman Luke Fickell is in his 10th season on the coaching staff but his first as head coach. Fickell is the Buckeyes' former linebackers coach, co-defensive coordinator and assistant head coach. He acquired the latter title in March when he was named OSU's replacement for Jim Tressel during what was to be the former head coach's suspension. When Tressel retired May 30, Fickell became the head coach for the entire season.

The Columbus native was a state wrestling champion and football standout at DeSales High School. He was a four-year starter at nose guard for Ohio State from 1992-96, setting a school record for consecutive games played with 50 from 1993-96. Fickell attempted to play professionally, signing with the New Orleans Saints as an undrafted free agent following his collegiate career, but a knee injury ended his career before he played in a game.

Fickell became a graduate assistant at



George Makridis

Ohio State in 1999 following his brief pro career and then spent two seasons from 2000-01 as a defensive line coach at Akron. He returned to OSU in 2002 and has remained in Columbus ever since. The 1997 OSU grad served as the special teams coordinator from 2002-03, became the linebackers coach in 2004 and added the co-defensive coordinator title in 2005.

Fickell is the 23rd coach in the 121-year program history but only the fifth in the last 60 years after Woody Hayes (1951-78), Earle Bruce (1979-87), John Cooper (1988-2000) and Tressel (2001-10).

## Offensive Coaching Staff

Jim Bollman returns for his 11th season as Ohio State's offensive coordinator and line coach. The Ashtabula, Ohio, native has been a coach for 31 years, working as an assistant at Ohio State, Michigan State, Virginia, Youngstown State and North Carolina State. He also spent three seasons as a tight ends coach for the Philadelphia Eagles (1998) and the Chicago Bears (1999-2000). Bollman played college football at Ohio University, earning four letters as an offensive lineman.

The new guy on the offensive side is wide receivers coach Stan Drayton. He came to Ohio State from Florida, where he was the Gators' running backs coach and recruiting coordinator in 2010. He was also UF's running backs coach from 2005-07 and held that title at Tennessee in 2008 and Mississippi State in 2004. In addition to those stops, Drayton was also an assistant coach at Syracuse (2009), Bowling Green (2000), Villanova (1996-2000), Penn (1995), Eastern Michigan (1994) and Allegheny (1993). The Cleveland native also spent 2001-03 as the offensive quality control and assistant special teams coach for the Green Bay Packers. He was a three-time first-team All-American at Allegheny (Pa.) College and is still the program's all-time leading rusher and scorer.

Entering his eighth year as an assistant is tight ends coach John Peterson. The four-year letterman for the Buckeyes from 1987-90 was a guard who returned to OSU in 2004, taking over as tight ends coach and recruiting coordinator.

Quarterbacks coach Nick Siciliano returns for his third season as a full-time assistant. Siciliano is a 12-year college coaching veteran and is entering his seventh season at Ohio State. He took over the quarterback coaching duties from Joe Daniels after serving as the program's offensive quality control assistant. Siciliano also spent time on the coaching staff at North Carolina A&T in 2003 and '04. He graduated from Youngstown State in 1999, and he was a student football coach under Tressel and coached on the Penguins' 1997 Division I-AA national championship team. Siciliano also spent two seasons as Bob Stoops' video coordinator at Oklahoma and had coaching stops at YSU and Urbana before going to North Carolina A&T.

Dick Tressel carries his family name in

the absence of his younger brother Jim. He is back as the running backs coach and is entering his 11th season on the staff. He has spent seven of those seasons as the running backs coach after joining the staff in 2001 as an associate director of football operations. Prior to coming to Ohio State, Tressel was the head football coach at Division III Hamline University in Minnesota for 23 years and the director of athletics for 21 of those years. In leading the Pipers, Tressel posted a 124-102-2 record with Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference titles in 1984 and 1988.

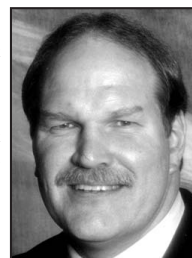
## Defensive Coaching Staff

The elder statesman on the coaching staff, defensive coordinator Jim Heacock is entering his 16th year at Ohio State. He served as the defensive line coach for nine seasons before taking over as defensive coordinator before the 2005 season. Heacock is the 2007 winner of the Frank Broyles Award, given to the nation's most outstanding assistant coach. The graduate of Muskingum University is in his 40th year in coaching, including a stint as the head coach at Illinois State from 1988-95 and as an assistant at Washington, Bowling Green and Muskingum.

Paul Haynes is back for his seventh season at OSU but has a new title. He was named the staff's new co-defensive coordinator in early August, taking the title that Fickell once held. Before starting his coaching career, Haynes was a college football player at Kent State and ended his four-year career in 1991 as the seventh-leading tackler in school history with 440 tackles. After leaving KSU, Haynes coached at Bowling Green, Ferris State, Northern Iowa, Kent State, Louisville, Michigan State and with the Jacksonville Jaguars of the NFL before coming to Ohio State.

Cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson is entering his fourth season at Ohio State. The 14-year coaching veteran has served on coaching staffs at Wittenberg, Millikin, Notre Dame and Miami (Ohio) and was a special teams coach with the Cleveland Browns. The Cincinnati native played three years of football at Wittenberg, where he was a two-time All-American and the North Coast Athletics Conference Defensive Player of the Year in 1992 and '93.

Three-time Super Bowl champion Mike Vrabel is the newest member of the coaching staff. Ohio State's new linebackers coach was a collegiate teammate of Fickell. Vrabel, who earned two Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year awards and back-to-back All-America honors in 1995 and '96, still holds OSU records for career sacks (36), single-season tackles for loss (26 in 1995) and career TFL (66). After leaving Ohio State, Vrabel played for three teams in a 14-year NFL career. He was a part of three championship teams with the New England Patriots and helped lead a young Kansas City Chiefs squad to a division title and playoff berth in his final season in 2010.



Jim Bollman



Luke Fickell



Jim Heacock



# Planks



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# Battle To Replace Pryor Comes Down To Wire

By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Ohio State started fall camp Aug. 8, four quarterbacks were in the running for the one spot under center against Akron in the Sept. 3 opener.

By the time camp reached the pivotal jersey scrimmage 12 days later in Ohio Stadium, it appeared two men had emerged in the battle to replace Terrelle Pryor.

However, efforts by local media to confirm that senior Joe Bauserman and freshman Braxton Miller had pulled ahead of Kenny Guiton and Taylor Graham wouldn't be confirmed by the OSU coaching staff.

"We have not made up our mind yet," first-year head coach Luke Fickell said. "Obviously there is an order and you saw the number of reps guys took, but to me the biggest thing we want to do is challenge them."

Added quarterbacks coach Nick Siciliano, "I don't know. It's changed daily so I wouldn't want to say anybody is a leader right now but those two guys had some more of the reps (at the scrimmage). It doesn't mean it's going to stay that way or it's been that way every day."

What reporters could determine, however, appeared to be a thinning of the herd. The four quarterbacks split reps – each working at times with the No. 1 unit – during the opening week of camp before Bauserman and Miller appeared to pull away in week two.

Those two took the bulk of the reps – including all snaps with the top offense – during Aug. 16 and 18 practices open to the

media as well as the jersey scrimmage while Graham and Guiton were left working with the second and third teams.

As a result, the safe bet seemed to be that Bauserman and Miller were the two likeliest choices to take the first snap from center Michael Brewster when the Zips come to town. How things would be broken up from there, though, remained to be seen.

"I still see it as a competition," Fickell said Aug. 21 as the team staged its annual Photo Day. "I think we're going to have a competition for a very long time. I think everybody did some good things (in the jersey scrimmage), but we have to test them in front of 106,000 fans."

"I don't know that you'll ever truly know until they get on the field to see who really takes over and see what they can really do."

As the days counted down to the opener, there was likely to be even more movement on the quarterback front. A number of offensive coaches admitted it would be prudent to cull the field to two main options – both of whom would need to be ready, offensive coordinator Jim Bollman said.

With game prep looming, there would be the need to install a game plan for those expected to play while one or two quarterbacks would be needed on the scout team. As a result, the team was trying to figure out the best use for each signal caller.

"To me, the biggest thing right now as we move forward I think is really trying to focus in on what we think they do well," Fickell said. "We threw as much at them as we could right now, but I think as we go into two weeks before a game, it's really trying to

figure out what they do well, what gives us the opportunity to be great on the offensive side of the ball."

That meant different things for each player. Bauserman has the most experience of the group, feels he can make the throws and is mobile enough to be moved around the pocket, while Graham has the best pocket presence and arm of the group. Guiton boasts mobility and is second on the team in experience, and Miller can be electrifying but is still getting the playbook down.

"As things are going, what talents do those guys have?" Bollman said. "Are some guys better runners than others? Do you structure a quarterback running game? How good are they at what different types of passes? Maybe they're better at outside or inside throws or swings, etc."

Intangibles would also be important in sorting out the group. Siciliano pointed to toughness as among the key traits his quarterbacks must have while Fickell had a few similar attributes in mind.

"To me, it's confidence and leadership," the OSU head coach said on the opening day of fall camp. "You can lead in different ways. You don't have to be the vocal guy but you've got to have confidence. You've got to exude confidence. Guys have to believe in you, and I think that's the thing we're trying to develop."

One thing does seem for sure. Age likely won't be the determining factor, meaning Miller will get as much chance as anyone else.

"I think we're comfortable with whatever this team needs, whatever this program

needs," Fickell said. "We're going to stick with it. Whether it's a 25- or 26-year-old guy out there or an 18-year-old guy out there, we need to do what's best for the team."

## Senior, Frosh Move Ahead

The most tenured quarterback and the man who has taken the first rep each day with the first team is Bauserman, who entered OSU in 2007 after a professional baseball career before spending four years in the background.

Bauserman's most extensive playing time with the top unit came during an ill-fated cameo at Illinois last year. During that game, which wound up as a 24-13 win for the Buckeyes, he threw an interception in a tight game while subbing for the injured Pryor. Nevertheless, that seems far in the past as Bauserman has turned heads for much of fall camp.

"I think he's done a great job," Fickell said. "His confidence level is up. He has the ability to do a lot of different things, but I think the biggest thing is his confidence. That shows in the huddle as well as just emotionally. He's been pretty solid."

Despite the trouble at Illinois – a game in which he had a quarterback rating of minus-45.8 – Bauserman still had the best season of his career in 2010. He finished the campaign 16 for 22 (72.7 percent) with two touchdown passes, just that one interception and a quarterback rating of 160.1. Pryor completed 65.0 percent of his passes and his QB rating was 157.9.

Bauserman has built on that success and has had a solid fall camp that has impressed his teammates and coaches.



JOSH WINSLOW

**ELDER STATESMAN** – Fifth-year senior Joe Bauserman (middle, with football) was the first quarterback to take reps during preseason practices and scrimmages open to the media in August.

"He has a really good arm, he has a quick release and like anyone else, the more and more work he gets, the better and better he gets," Bollman said. "He's working at it. He's doing well. You can see it on film. You can see it at practice. Guys are getting balls with good accuracy and timing and all of those things we're looking for. He's doing a good job."

Bollman added that the 6-1, 230-pound senior has solid wheels, allowing him to buy time in the pocket when necessary.

For his career, Bauserman is 25 for 47 (53.2 percent) for 320 yards, two touchdowns and one interception. He also has 27 rushing yards on 20 career attempts.

"I feel like I want to be consistent," he said. "I feel like I can make a lot of plays, make all the throws. I hope I can run the offense as well as they want me to."

While Bauserman enters the season as the old hand at 25, Miller is nearly the polar opposite as an 18-year-old true freshman. However, he comes with much more hype after leading Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne to the Ohio Division I title game and earning a five-star rating from Scout.com.

He has impressed on big stages since enrolling early in January. Miller led scoring drives on three of four possessions in the annual spring game, going 7 for 12 with a touchdown, before tossing two scores against no interceptions in the fall jersey scrimmage.

Though Miller boasts a quiet, reserved personality, he seems to be at his best when the lights go on.

"When it's game time with the fans out there, be ready, it's time to go," he said. "There's no holding back. You can't be tight when it's game time. You have to win. No holding back."

There aren't many who will question Miller's credentials coming out of high school. He took over as the Warriors' starter as a freshman, going 31-7 over four seasons and accounting for 34 touchdowns – 17 on the ground, 17 through the air – as a senior while dealing with a leg injury.

The 6-3, 210-pounder boasts an uncanny pocket sense that allows him to evade rushers plus the ability to keep his eyes downfield while scrambling. His biggest issue might be learning the playbook. Miller has admitted he's been overwhelmed at times with the transition and was attempting to learn four passing plays per day in camp.

"We've always talked about walking the line of how much you do," Bollman said. "How much do you throw at guys? How much can they keep learning before they hit the wall and things start sliding off? He's steadily grasping more, improving more. Obviously when you watch him, he's a very good athlete so we'll have to give him some chances to use his athleticism."

Many people expected Miller to contend for the starting role right away, and the quarterback himself was pleased with how far he had progressed heading into the homestretch of camp.

"I feel like I'm on track," he said. "It feels like I'm learning a lot each and every day, and I just go in after practice to see what I did wrong and critique myself with the coaches and the players."

#### A Pair To Spare

While Miller and Bauserman have seen their shares of the reps go up, Guiton and Graham have fallen into the background.

For Guiton, that's a familiar feeling. He earned a starting role in high school only because of injury before becoming a three-year starter for Texas power Houston Eisenhower. Despite solid prep credentials, he was set to go to Prairie View A&M before

## Bauserman Making Most Of Final Shot

For four years, Joe Bauserman was essentially an understudy with little hope of a promotion.

Bauserman, who arrived in Columbus the year the patient Todd Boeckman finally ascended to the starting role, took a redshirt season in 2007 as Boeckman directed Ohio State to the precipice of the national championship.

Then Bauserman watched as Ohio State won the sweepstakes to land the services of five-star wunderkind Terrelle Pryor, who emerged as the starting quarterback by the fourth week of his college career and held the job for three seasons.

In the meantime, Bauserman earned a total of 47 passing attempts in the three campaigns. Though it was never said, there was an understanding that he would see the field only in the case of calamity or in mop-up duty.

As such, one can see why Bauserman came to Ohio State's 2011 camp with a new lease on life.

"It's a different perspective when you come to camp and you know it's an open spot and you have a chance to win it," said Bauserman, who has added a new look this

year as well with a neatly trimmed beard. "You definitely come out here with more of an attitude."

The change has been one for the good. Quarterbacks coach Nick Siciliano said the 25-year-old has had his best camp since arriving at Ohio State and his performance has him squarely in the race to become the starter along with the Buckeyes' newest five-star signal caller, Braxton Miller.

"It's a little different when you have a light at the end of the tunnel for anybody," Siciliano said. "Joe sees that light and he's preparing well. He's been playing well through camp. I think (he's improved in) everything. He's increased his urgency in everything he's done. It's really been a good thing for the team to see Joe practice the way he's been practicing."

Bauserman said the increased reps in practice have helped. He began camp as the first signal caller to get reps in each drill – just as he did during spring practice when Pryor was out with a foot injury – and as a result has seen the most work with the No. 1 unit in his career.

"It's great," he said. "You get the timing of the receivers, you get the feel of the line,

you just kind of know where everybody's going to be and it just works out a lot better."

The No. 1 unit has responded under his command, starting in the summer when senior center Michael Brewster said he first noticed Bauserman stepping up his efforts.

"If anything, I've seen Joe working a lot harder," Brewster said as offseason workouts drew to a close. "I'm sure it was a hard time being behind Terrelle when you're an older guy and you know Terrelle is going to be the starter. Joe's really brought his workouts to a new level."

As a result, Siciliano said he has seen Bauserman emerge as a leader in his final campaign. That's a key factor on a team with three senior offensive starters suspended for the first five games and no one else older than a sophomore in the quarterbacks room.

How the rest of the competition with Miller falls remains to be seen, but Bauserman said he's having fun just being part of it.

"I came into camp and I wanted to do the best I could, put everything out there, and that's all I could do," Bauserman said. "I can't do anything other than that, and whatever happens, happens."

– Jeff Svoboda

a late offer from Ohio State in the class of 2009.

"I do feed off of it," Guiton said of being overlooked. "It motivates me. I know that if people aren't saying your name, it's like motivation because you see that you don't have anything to lose. They're not expecting anything out of you anyway, so I just go out there and play every day."

The 6-2, 195-pounder got off to a solid start in camp and provides another dual-threat option should the Buckeyes need one. One of the most popular players on the team, Guiton also provides leadership in the huddle.

"He's got great leadership, he has great communication, he is very consistent in what we're asking him to do," Siciliano said.



JOSH WINSLOW

**LOOKING AHEAD** – Freshman Braxton Miller (5) worked during preseason camp to try to impress head coach Luke Fickell (background) and win the starting quarterback job.



# Fickell Has Chance To Stake Claim To Coaching Job

The dog days of summer will soon be replaced by the decision days of fall for first-year Ohio State head coach Luke Fickell.

Nearly as much as wins and losses, Fickell's decision-making will go a long way toward shaping the direction of the program and his perception among OSU fans.

Everyone in the Buckeye Nation is an armchair quarterback and knows what's best for the team, so when Fickell ultimately names his starting quarterback – and that shouldn't be too much longer – he'll please one faction while upsetting another.

Since quarterback is the highest-profile position on most teams – and more so this year for the Buckeyes since incumbent Terrelle Pryor is no longer around – the very fate of the program hinges on which young man Fickell chooses to lead the team. Maybe that's overstating it a bit, but not much.

## THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsmen

"The biggest thing I want to do is challenge them," the new head man said after the Aug. 20 jersey scrimmage. "Whether we move them from second to third (unit) or second to first or first to third, I want to see how they handle things and how they react."

The reaction of the quarterbacks will be important, but it will be the reaction of the fans that will be almost as interesting to watch.

The smart money says senior Joe Bauserman will be under center in the opener against Akron, though at some point freshman Braxton Miller will win the job because he's the most talented of the bunch. Miller's head was swimming a bit early in camp, but once he gets the mental part of it down he should be ready to go as he already has the physical tools.

Quarterback isn't the only position that will be intensely watched, though.

The group that quarterback throws to will also be under the microscope, more so since top pass catcher DeVier Posey will be suspended for five games. That means the early going should feature a true collective effort.

Corey "Philly" Brown probably has the most natural ability but hasn't shown consistent hands yet. Verlon Reed has sizzled in camp and has taken to receiver after transitioning from quarterback in high school. Chris Fields has been a big-play guy, and youngsters Devin Smith and Evan Spencer have also shown flashes.

While it would be nice to have a go-to guy from the outset, the Buckeyes might be able to get by with what they have, especially if hard work equals results.

Defensively, I'll be interested to see how the linebacking corps shapes up. Andrew Sweat is a burgeoning star in the mold of Ross Homan, and the unit has more than enough talent to go around.

The D-line is young but talented, and the secondary has a mix of familiar faces and neophytes. It should add up to, at the very least, an exciting campaign and one in which you really may not be able to tell the players without a program. (The older readers will get that reference.)

Ohio State isn't getting much attention nationally, showing up in the lower reaches of the preseason rankings for the first time in ages. That's probably a good thing, though,

as out of sight could mean out of mind and given everything that's happened in Columbus since spring football ended it's all just as well.

If the Buckeyes can focus solely on football and put the recent past in mothballs, there's no telling what this group can accomplish. I'll go on record as saying it's good enough to win double-digit games and contend for a BCS bowl bid. The schedule isn't nearly as difficult as people are making it out to be with Wisconsin and Nebraska looking to be the only real impediments to what would otherwise be a fabulous season.

Whether 10 or 11 wins is enough to keep Fickell as head coach remains to be seen, but that's a decision to be made after the season – and one that Fickell won't be making.

### Scoping The Conference

The laugh content provided by the Big Ten's hurriedly produced divisions continues to be sizable but will likely dissipate once the action on the field begins.

Be forewarned, however. This is the only time all year that the divisions will be referred to by their names in this column as such silliness is not something the Facts Man tolerates. Here is one man's view of how the Big Ten race will shape up in 2011 along with a player to watch from each team.

### Leaders Division

1. Ohio State – Any penalties that might occur won't affect this year's team, which is still the most talented in the league. New faces at quarterback and running back could impact the early-season results, and a young bunch of receivers need to step up. But the defense, led by star-in-the-making John Simon, will keep the Buckeyes in things until their suspended players return. Player to watch: RB Rod Smith.

2. Wisconsin – It would be easy to think the Badgers will take a step back with the loss of some major components. But getting North Carolina State quarterback Russell Wilson makes this a contending team. The defense might be a little soft, but the offense should be able to score with just about anyone. The Big Ten opener at Nebraska could determine the Badgers' fortunes. Player to watch: DE Pat Muldoon.

3. Penn State – Questions abound for JoePa's boys and they're third in this division due more to the lack of strength top to bottom in the division than to anything the Nittany Lions might have. There are no real playmakers on offense, so it will be up to the defense to set the tone. Penn State will know early where it stands when it welcomes Alabama to town in the season's second week. Player to watch: LB Michael Mauti.

4. Illinois – Sometimes you wonder if Ron Zook has some feline in him because he's somehow kept himself alive for six seasons in Champaign despite less than stellar results (28-45). Nate Scheelhaase is a talented yet inconsistent leader at QB, and the offense will need to run through him for the Illini to be competitive. The defense must find a way to make critical stops or else it could be a long season for the Illini. Player to watch: RB Jason Ford.

5. Purdue – Football in the state of Indiana isn't in great condition right now, and the Boilermakers are one example. Yes, injuries derailed a lot of what Purdue hoped to accomplish last year, but a look at the roster doesn't show a ton of talent. QB is in flux, the skill position guys are questionable and the defense lost pass-rushing dynamo

Ryan Kerrigan. Player to watch: DE Gerald Gooden.

6. Indiana – First-year coach Kevin Wilson is doing what he can to change the attitude in Bloomington, but it won't be accomplished overnight. The Hoosiers don't have a ton of talent or much depth, so it will be up to veteran players to show the way. Running back Darius Willis and receiver Demario Belcher are solid offensive pieces, but if the Hoosiers are to contend they must turn around a unit that allowed 34.0 points per game last year. Player to watch: LB Jeff Thomas.

### Legends Division

1. Nebraska – The breath of life the Cornhuskers will give to the stodgy Big Ten will be welcomed as will the fact Nebraska has a team that should be one of the better ones in the country under former OSU player Bo Pelini. There is a ton of history at Nebraska, but the new history begins this year. Nebraska made the Big 12 title game last year and has the horses to do the same in the Big Ten this season. Potential Big Ten defensive player of the year Jared Crick anchors a stout defensive line, and the offense should have just enough passing skill to cause problems for opponents. Player to watch: QB Taylor Martinez.

2. Northwestern – A lot of people think Michigan State will be Nebraska's primary contender for the division crown, but I like the Wildcats for one reason. QB Dan Persa tossed 15 touchdowns and only four interceptions last year (and ran for over 500 yards), and he's surrounded by experienced skill-position players. Pat Fitzgerald was a tough-as-nails linebacker when he played at Northwestern, so he understands what it takes to get things done on that side of the ball. Player to watch: DE Vince Browne.

3. Michigan State – Mark Dantonio has a talented squad at his disposal, but the Spartans have always been a team that buckled under the weight of expectations. We'll see if this year is different. There are pieces in place with quarterback Kirk Cousins and running back Edwin Baker, but five starters have to be replaced on defense, including all-everything linebacker Greg Jones. If MSU can get past tricky early-season road contests with Notre Dame and Ohio State, they could be set up for a nice run and make the Oct. 29 tilt at Nebraska for the division title. Player to watch: LB Steve Gardiner.

4. Michigan – New coach, new attitude, old expectations. With the Rich Rodriguez experiment going down as an abject failure, U-M turned to one of its own to recapture the tradition. Brady Hoke has done and said all the right things, but while talk is one thing, results are another. As long as Denard Robinson is around, the Wolverines can be a handful on offense. It's defense where the team struggled, and that may take a bit of time to turn around. Still, Michigan will be improved from last year – how much remains to be seen. Player to watch: CB Troy Woolfolk.

5. Iowa – This season will test the coaching mettle of Kirk Ferentz, routinely called the best coach in the Big Ten. Quarterback James Vandenberg has shown flashes, and he has solid weapons in RB Marcus Coker and WR Marvin McNutt to work with. But there isn't a lot of depth at the skill positions, so health will be a prime concern. The defense will be a work in progress, though getting LB Tyler Nielsen back after a neck injury is a positive. Iowa doesn't get OSU or Wisconsin this year, so it could be in line

for a bowl trip if Ferentz works some of his magic. Player to watch: DT Mike Daniels.

6. Minnesota – First-year coach Jerry Kill couldn't have known what he was getting himself into, right? Why else would he take a job at one of the Big Ten's worst outposts? There aren't enough Big Ten-caliber players in the program, and the offensive line and defense as a whole are among the worst in the country. Implementing a new offense, one that puts sizable demands on the quarterback, probably won't help things much – at least this year. Player to watch: QB MarQueis Gray.

### A Second Chance ... Sort Of

In stark contrast to his time at Ohio State, decision-making seems to be something Terrelle Pryor is doing well now that he's on the verge of being an NFL player in Oakland.

Since leaving the Buckeyes this summer, Pryor has said and done many of the right things, and at his Aug. 19 workout he mentioned that though he wants to get a shot at quarterback, he would be willing to switch positions if it helped his team win. He also said he wasn't going to appeal the misguided five-game suspension the NFL will dole out upon his signing with a team.

The opinions on Pryor are many, which was to be expected since he is the most polarizing figure to come through Columbus since Maurice Clarett. Some thought Pryor should be made an example of since he put OSU in such a bad light and cost Tressell his job. (It doesn't matter that Tressell is the one who cost himself his job by covering up improprieties. That's not something people want to hear.)

Most Buckeye fans I heard from believe that Pryor should have been denied entry into the NFL's supplemental draft.

I thought the whole thing was laughable. That a kid shouldn't have an opportunity for employment in a professional league because some people deem him to be a "character concern" or because he comes off as selfish and arrogant is preposterous. I don't recall such rogues as Lawrence Phillips or Adam "Pac-Man" Jones being held out of the NFL draft for the same reasons.

In actuality, the NFL dragged its feet on this issue when it could have correctly ruled Pryor eligible for the draft from the outset. He isn't the one who inconvenienced the other eligible players, the league is. And whether you like him or loathe him is irrelevant because Pryor should have the opportunity to show if he can hack it in the NFL.

The suspension is also mind-boggling. You're talking about a guy who hasn't even officially entered the league and already he's subject to the tenets and bylaws of the Player Conduct Policy?

That his suspension is five games takes the cake. Ben Roethlisberger was accused of sexual assault and got four games. Marshawn Lynch missed three games in 2009 for having a concealed firearm. Shawne Merriman was sidelined four games for a steroid violation. And Pryor is getting five games for selling his own memorabilia and profiting a little bit from a system that works its hardest to make sure the workers have nothing? That's his crime?

I generally like NFL commissioner Roger Goodell and believe that he usually has the best interests of his league in mind. But this time, in casting his lot with the NCAA – an organization that is at the highest level of dysfunction – Goodell is not only making a mistake. He's also just plain wrong.

# No Reason Not To Expect Buckeye Success This Season

I may wind up feeling like a complete fool come the end of the season, but I'm really optimistic about the 2011 Ohio State football team.

I'm not suggesting the Buckeyes will win the national championship, but I certainly think they will contend for a spot in the first Big Ten championship game, and after that, who knows?

Why am I so bullish on the Buckeyes?

First of all, I believe all the turmoil surrounding the program has had a greater effect on the fan base than the team itself. Throughout the spring and preseason fall practice sessions, it's been pretty much business as usual – except maybe the Buckeyes have a bit of a chip on their collective shoulder.

"We've really rallied around each other, kind of used it as fuel to the fire," senior center Michael Brewster said of the controversy. "I feel like people think we feel sorry for ourselves or that we're in confusion or don't know what to do, but if anything we know exactly what to do. We had a great summer."

"If someone trained harder than us this summer I'd like to meet them because I don't think that would be possible."

Additionally, no amount of controversy can override the fact that Ohio State's cupboard is hardly bare. The Buckeyes have had consistently strong recruiting classes – among the best in the Big Ten – year after year. Likewise, the players from the other conference programs haven't suddenly gotten better nor have the Buckeyes suddenly gotten worse.

Gone, of course, is quarterback Terrelle Pryor, and that's a huge hole to fill. Don't forget, however, that when Pryor arrived on the Ohio State scene, most of you figured he would be off to the pros after his junior year anyway. In the end, that's what happened – just in a different way than anyone could have predicted.

The bigger question mark surrounds the absence of head coach Jim Tressel. No one knows exactly how Tressel's departure will affect the program. After all, he will undoubtedly (along with Woody Hayes) go down as one of the greatest coaches in school history.

Yet let's not forget that the bulk of the coaching staff returns with the interesting additions of Mike Vrabel and Stan Drayton. Also, all indications are that the procedures and values put into place by Tressel continue under new coach Luke Fickell and the other assistants, many of whom – including Fickell – worked with Tressel for years.

The staff on the defensive side of the ball in particular remains intact with the notable addition of ex-Buckeye and NFL great Vrabel taking over the linebackers from Fickell. The early returns on Vrabel as an assistant have been positive.

The major source of my optimism about the Buckeyes is their continued strength on defense. Not only is the staff pretty much untouched, but there is also – as was almost always the case in the Tressel era – an abundance of talent returning on that side of the ball. The OSU defense is also far less affected by the early-season suspensions.

For all the infatuation among many fans with offense, it is the view from this corner that you still win with defense, something that was proven throughout the Tressel era.

As I have pointed out many times in this space, since Jim Heacock was elevated to defensive coordinator in 2005, the Buckeyes have finished in the top six nationally in scoring defense every year, including 2007 when Ohio State led the country in both scoring

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

and total defense. Last season, the Buckeyes were fifth in scoring defense and fourth in total defense.

Just as I believe that you win with defense, I also believe football remains a game that is won in the trenches, and the Buckeyes once again feature both depth and talent along the defensive line. They may be a little thin at linebacker and are perhaps inexperienced in the secondary, but the 2011 edition should be another in a long line of outstanding Ohio State defenses.

While there are more questions for the team on offense, I am not throwing in the towel on that side of the ball, either. Pryor may be gone but there is a plethora of running backs to help make up the difference regardless of who the starting quarterback winds up being. And though there have been concerns about the wide receiver position, especially in the first five games without DeVier Posey, the young receivers in reserve look good and hopefully will hold their own until Posey's return in game six.

The abundance of talent at tight end, coupled with inexperience at wide receiver, may even lead the Buckeyes to look toward that position as a receiving option more often than they have since the graduation of Ben Hartsock following the 2003 season.

If you are looking for an area of concern, it might be the offensive line where the talent is there but depth is not. If the Buckeyes can avoid injuries up front, especially in the first five games when left tackle Mike Adams is serving his suspension, things should be fine on that side of the trenches as well.

After years of taking heat from critical fans for lack of imagination in play-calling – calls that were usually made by Tressel – it will be interesting to see what the attack looks like with offensive coordinator Jim Bollman actually at the controls.

Still, a good dose of Tresselball might be in store for the team given the strength on defense and the questions on offense. If that is the case, one player who needs to step up is punter Ben Buchanan.

At first glance, Buchanan's 41.0-yard punting average last season as a sophomore seemed respectable. But look closer and his net punting average ranked just 94th in the country. Also, of his 15 punts that landed inside the opponent's 20, only four were inside the 10 and none was inside the 8. More importantly, Buchanan did not bury a kick inside the 10 in any of the final eight games of the season – the time when contenders separate themselves from pretenders.

For Tresselball to be effective, the punt must be a weapon and Buchanan, while competent, was hardly a weapon last season. Keep your eye on production there.

Let me leave you with this thought.

The last time a legendary Ohio State coach went down in flames was in 1978, when Hayes fired his famous punch in the Gator Bowl. Little was expected of the Buckeyes under new coach Earle Bruce the next season, and all Ohio State did in 1979 was go undefeated in the regular season and come within one point of defeating USC in the Rose Bowl for the national championship.

Will history repeat itself in 2011?

### Keep The Ball In His Hands

Back when Pryor was just establishing himself as the starting quarterback at Ohio State, there were those fans who thought that the coaches should move him to wide receiver. I genuinely thought those people were nuts. Why would you want a player of Pryor's ability to touch the ball 10 times a game at most when you can have him handling the ball on every offensive play?

Now, as Pryor moves to the pros, the question again comes up as to whether he can produce more from a position other than quarterback. I still ask the question: Why not have the ball in his hands at all times?

I'm sure NFL scouts know a lot more about this stuff than I do, but I also keep hearing from the nation's Monday morning quarterbacks who insist Pryor will never make it as a signal caller in the pros. Is this all part of the national pastime of Buckeye bashing?

If you want to look at Pryor's skills, remember a two-play sequence at Iowa last season.

Late in the game with the Buckeyes facing a third-and-10 situation, Pryor threw a 50-yard pass to Posey – a beautiful strike as well as Johnny Unitas, Joe Montana or Peyton Manning could have thrown it. Unfortunately, Posey dropped the ball.

Facing fourth down and with his team trailing the Hawkeyes, 17-13, Pryor ran 14 yards for the first down in a way that few other than the former OSU quarterback can do. The Buckeyes went on to win the game, 20-17.

That may be the one thing scouts should not overlook when evaluating Pryor as a quarterback. He's a winner and he wins on the big stage. Think about how he led his Buckeyes to victory at Wisconsin as a freshman. What about the wins in the Rose Bowl over Oregon or against Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl? Some players just have that knack.

With all due respect to Tressel, Bollman and OSU quarterbacks coach Nick Siciliano, Pryor might not have had the best coaching as far as learning his craft while at Ohio State. I'll be eager to see if he improves with more experienced coaching.

At Oakland, he will be playing under offensive coordinator Al Saunders, who as an assistant with the St. Louis Rams helped build "The Greatest Show on Turf" offense that set an NFL record by racking up 442.2 yards of offense a game in 2000. Saunders also served as an assistant in San Diego under Don Coryell, creator of the "Air Coryell" offense, one of the most prolific and exciting passing games in NFL history.

Let's see how Pryor looks after working a while with Saunders.

### I Remain Puzzled

There are all sorts of things that I wonder about. Why didn't Tressel tell someone about the e-mails from Christopher Cicero? What happened in the national championship game against Florida after the 2006 season? Why does ESPN seem to have an agenda concerning Ohio State?

But one of the things that really puzzles me lately is why more of our subscribers don't take advantage of our extra 36 issues of Buckeye Sports Bulletin that are *free* with their paid subscription? Aside from missing

some interesting, timely and entertaining information, I wonder why in these economically challenging times someone would take advantage of less than half of what they pay for.

We had three electronic issues in August that featured a wealth of information about fall camp including analysis of the quarterback battle, which freshmen looked good and all sorts of other things that our staff observed, not to mention the latest in football recruiting. We even reprinted most of the relevant documents from Ohio State's meeting with the NCAA Committee on Infractions on Aug. 12.

Thousands of you took advantage of this free service to BSB print subscribers, but thousands of you didn't. I would think some of you would sign up just to get me to stop writing about this all the time.

In order to start enjoying the extra 36 electronic issues, just send an e-mail to us at [subscriptions@BuckeyeSports.com](mailto:subscriptions@BuckeyeSports.com) with your name, address, phone number and preferred e-mail address and we'll send back simple instructions on how to access this service. Don't forget, our popular Football Friday electronic editions with staff predictions, the latest injury reports, recruiting news and much, much more start Sept. 2.

### Different Feel At Booster Fete

I always look forward to the Buckeye Boosters' annual Kickoff Dinner, held this year on Aug. 23 at the Ohio Union. It's always a great and informative event and gives me a chance to catch up with old friends, some of whom I see only once a year at this banquet.

I was particularly eager to attend this year because I was curious to see how the event would be without Tressel. This was a venue where the former coach was at his best, displaying a sense of humor that he didn't always show in public and always demonstrating an amazing knowledge of and compassion for his players that stretched all the way down to the most little known walk-on. The Boosters' rank and file loved it.

Fickell did just fine in his first appearance as head coach though he was more brief, dry and less interactive with the other coaches and players in attendance than his predecessor.

One of the funniest moments of the event came when Heacock was called on to discuss the OSU defense. Heacock noted the presence on the staff of new linebackers coach Vrabel.

"He's lightened things up in the defensive coaches room a little bit," Heacock said of Vrabel. "We laugh. He's brought a nice change to our room. It's more fun."

"What's that mean, 'more fun'?" Fickell asked when he took the microphone back. "Is that because I'm not in the room anymore?"

Also speaking to the group was Bollman, who held out hope for many fans who have craved change in the OSU offensive strategy for years now.

"It comes down every season to the question about our tight ends being receivers," Bollman said. "Well, this year, they may be receivers."

With Jake Stoneburner and Reid Fragel back at the position, there would seem to be reason to pass to the tight end this year, but Bollman's operative word in that statement could be "may."

For information on how to join Buckeye Boosters or details of their popular road trips, call (614) 326-3300.