

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN


\$2.50

 PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER
CLASSIFICATION
DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE RUSH!!


Vol. 30, No. 19

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

April 2, 2011

The End Of The Road

Special Season For Buckeyes Ends Before Final Destination

 By ADAM JARDY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

One day before a Sweet 16 tip-off against Kentucky, Ohio State's locker room had resembled a grade-school classroom on the last day before summer break. With the top-seeded Buckeyes preparing for a March 25 showdown against the fourth-seeded Wildcats at the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J., the team showed no outward signs of feeling pressure.

At one end of the locker room was a dry-erase board featuring a perspective drawing in red marker. Flanking a street drawn right down the middle were a few buildings along with a tree or two added for good measure by freshman Aaron Craft after Dallas Lauderdale had started the drawing. The burst of creativity came as the Buckeyes were forced to pass about 45

minutes before they could take the court for practice.

About 30 hours later, the jovial atmosphere was gone. In its place was a tomb-like silence as OSU's players realized they had played their final game together. A legitimate shot for a national championship had just been waylaid by the Wildcats, who held on for a 62-60 victory that bounced the Buckeyes from the NCAA Tournament.

There after the game sat all 12 members of this season's team, along with assistant coaches and other team personnel, during a 10-minute cool-down period before reporters were allowed into the inner sanctum. Gazing around the room, head coach Thad Matta searched for the best way to summarize his feelings.

As it turns out, there were no words to be found. Only tears.

Continued On Page 6



SONNY BROCKWAY

NOT QUITE ENOUGH – Senior Jon Diebler (33) made a game-tying three-point-er in the final minute of Ohio State's East Region semifinal against Kentucky, but the Wildcats ended the Buckeyes' season with a basket in the waning seconds for a 62-60 win.

Questions Abound As Spring Football Begins

 By MARCUS HARTMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Ohio State commences spring practice March 31, they will do so without three valuable offensive starters who were seniors during a 2010 campaign that ended with another Big Ten championship and a first-ever postseason victory over an SEC foe in the Sugar Bowl.

That should mean for a second season in a row head coach Jim Tressel, offensive coordinator Jim Bollman and the rest of the offensive brain trust get to spend April playing mad scientists, adding and subtracting new strategies for a veteran group to digest in hopes of becoming a versatile, high-powered unit this fall.

While there may still be some of that, five of the veterans will not be able to show off what they learned until Oct. 8 at Nebraska.

By then, the season will be five games old, so the coaches figure to spend much of this spring figuring out just who will fill in for suspended starters at quarterback (Terrelle Pryor), wide receiver (DeVier Posey), left tackle (Mike Adams) and running back (Dan "Boom" Herron).

That might make this the most interest-

ing spring of Tressel and Bollman's 11 in Columbus.

"It's just like all of our processes from 15 (practices) in the spring to 29 before the season – you've got 44 practices to figure things out," Bollman said of replacing the suspended players. "Naturally that has to be in your mind somewhere, but how fast that will happen, I don't know. We know we have to prepare for that for the beginning of the season. Certainly we have to take steps toward that, but not everything will have to happen a certain way."

"It's a long season and we'll have that in the back of our mind as we're preparing for things."

Four In Line At QB

The most attention figures to be cast toward the quarterback situation.

Four players – a senior, a sophomore, a redshirt freshman and a true freshman – are in the running to keep Pryor's spot warm through September and the first day of October.

The eldest member of the group, Joe Bauserman, figures to begin the spring atop the depth chart. He

joined the team for spring practice in 2007 and served as Pryor's backup the past two seasons. That probably earned the 6-1, 233-pound senior the right to take the first snap with the starters in the spring (when Pryor is not expected to take part as he continues to recover from surgery on his right foot).

Where Bauserman winds up on the depth chart is far from guaranteed, however. He has adequate mobility and a strong arm, but his decision-making and his accuracy tended to be erratic during open practices the past two years as well as during mop-up time last year.

Nipping at Bauserman's heels last spring was Kenny Guiton, a Texas native who will be a sophomore this season.

Guiton came to Columbus as a raw prospect but has impressed the coaches with his enthusiasm to learn the tricks of the college quarterback trade. He showed some wheels on a 15-yard touchdown run against Eastern Michigan last season and appears to throw a catchable ball, but questions remain if he has the talent to be an elite player.

**2011
SPRING
FOOTBALL
PREVIEW**

Continued On Page 20

Collegiate Careers End For Five OSU Players

Continued From Page 1

"He pretty much couldn't say anything," freshman forward Jared Sullinger said, slumped on a trainer's table and surrounded by reporters. "He was in tears. It was touching."

Just like that, it was all over.

There would be no more games for fifth-year senior forward David Lighty, no more three-pointers from senior Jon Diebler, no more blocks by Lauderdale and no more support from Nikola Kecman and walk-on Eddie Days. In their stead would be second-guessing and regret at an opportunity gone by.

"Coach loved these guys," Craft said. "We definitely were a family and that's the toughest part."

When Matta struggled for the right words, Lighty stood up and issued a declaration to those who will be back in uniform next season.

"I was just telling them to cherish these moments," the subdued senior said. "When you get here, you never think about it ending. It's not about the name on the back (of the jersey), it's about what's across your chest. This is what you do this for. The young guys that are coming in, don't let them slack off and push them to the limit every time they take a day off."

The Cleveland native knows a thing or two about winning. Thanks to a broken foot that forced him to take a medical redshirt seven games into his junior season, Lighty ended his career with a program-record 128 victories to his credit, and the 6-5, 220-pounder made his living driving the lane, frustrating bigger opponents with his strength and quickness.

Now it will have to be Lighty's legacy that motivates the Buckeyes instead of the player himself. Freshman forward Deshaun Thomas said he had learned a lot from the oldest player on the team in particular during their lone season together.

"Leadership. Heart. How hard they worked," Thomas said when asked what he will remember best about the seniors. "Dave told us, 'When the freshmen come

in, you've got to keep it rolling and make sure they keep it rolling so you won't be in this situation next year.'"

Those freshmen figure to have help from some of OSU's key players from this season. After the game, Sullinger, junior William Buford and Thomas all indicated their plans to return for another season in Columbus.

Of the three, only Sullinger was viewed as a potential lottery pick in this year's NBA draft.

"The love of this basketball team makes me want to come back," he said. "These guys are my brothers. To see five of them depart is very touching. I'll miss these guys

terribly, and I feel like I let them down today. I want to come back and show them that I had a lapse and I could do better."

(For more on the underclassmen's decisions to return, see Court Report on pages 12-13.)

Lauderdale also tried to address his feelings about his teammates.

"I love this group," he said. "It's a family in here. Every single person in this room, we love them like my brother, like my father. I love them and it always will be a family in here."

The scene in the locker room one day before the game was hardly an isolated incident. Similar interview sessions dur-

ing the postseason saw Ohio State players wrestling with each other, pretending to conduct interviews with one another and playing games of tic-tac-toe.

On March 23, Lauderdale said the team had opened a debate on who was the best player in the NBA with the majority of the team voting for Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant. That was followed by an impromptu concert on the bus headed to dinner, with the players belting out renditions of songs by the likes of Michael Jackson, Usher and Boyz II Men.

But that all changed after the loss to Kentucky. Much as when he left the court, the look on Diebler's face as he answered questions in the Prudential Center locker room could perhaps best be described as one of disbelief.

"It's surreal to realize it's over," he said. "It's something that we just didn't want to end because we've got such a great group of guys. Not being around these guys every day in practice is the thing that's going to hurt the most."

End Of An Era

When Lighty joined the program, the Buckeyes were fresh off their first outright Big Ten title in 16 seasons. A member of the "Thad Five" recruiting class that included Greg Oden, Mike Conley Jr., Daequan Cook and Othello Hunter, Lighty became a key early contributor thanks to his defensive prowess.

By the end of his career, Lighty had accomplished so much that Matta told reporters the university should build a statue of the forward outside the Schottenstein Center. In all, he has so far played with six players who went on to become first-round NBA draft picks – Evan Turner, B.J. Mullens, Kosta Koufos, Oden, Conley and Cook – and would bring home three Big Ten regular-season titles.

But as his final season continued, it appeared that the broken foot that helped doom the 2008-09 Buckeyes to a first-round overtime tournament loss to Siena was proving to be a blessing in disguise. Having reached the national championship game as a freshman, Lighty emerged as the heart and soul of a team that blended veteran experience with talented freshmen.

As the season progressed, he said it was impossible not to feel like things were pointing toward a title.

"I think we had the pieces to compete and win a national championship, but shots weren't falling for us today and Kentucky made plays when they needed," Lighty said.

Those pieces came together in a way Matta said he had not seen before in his 11 seasons as a head coach.

"I've never had a team like this that united and bonded," he said. "When you have a group of guys that take care of their business the way they are supposed to (and) they are not problems off the court, they are a joy to be around in practice."

"It's hard. I mean, I have to be honest with you. As I told them, I don't know what to say after the game."

Last season, the Buckeyes bowed out with a Sweet 16 loss at the hands of Tennessee. OSU was seeded second and the Volunteers sixth, but it was the lower-seeded team that dictated the style of play.

Tennessee outscored OSU by a 50-22 margin in the paint and held a 41-29 advantage on the glass. Although this



SONNY BROCKWAY

GOODBYE – David Lighty (23) was one of four seniors whose careers ended with a March 25 NCAA Tournament loss to Kentucky.

**WHOLE
FOODS[®]**
MARKET

1555 West Lane Avenue
Upper Arlington, OH 43221

Mon-Sun: 8am to 9pm

614.481.3400

or visit us online:

wholefoodsmarket.com/westlane

WE'VE GOT ALL OF YOUR
NATURAL AND ORGANIC
TAILGATING ESSENTIALS FOR THE
BIG GAME... WITHIN WALKING
DISTANCE OF THE STADIUM!

GO TEAM!

COVER STORY

year's season ended at the same point, the Buckeyes pointed to a few reasons this defeat bore few similarities to last year's Sweet 16 loss.

"This is completely different," Lighty said. "I think we did a great job all game long on the defensive end of frustrating (Kentucky) and taking them out of the things that they wanted to do."

This time, the Buckeyes and Wildcats were equal in points in the paint at 24 each and OSU held a 36-32 edge in rebounding.

"We got murdered against Tennessee," Buford said. "They bullied us in that game. This time I think we at least fought more. We just didn't buckle down on our defense when we needed to and our shots weren't falling."

That did not salve all wounds for all players, however.

"It hurts more knowing that this is my last go-around at a national title," Lauderdale said. "It definitely hurts more but I'm encouraged for their future. I'm definitely excited to be watching Ohio State basketball. They're adding new players and I know they'll bring them along right. I just know they'll be exciting to watch."

On-court production aside, this year's team boasted an off-the-court bond that Lauderdale echoed Matta in saying he had never experienced before.

Asked where this group of Buckeyes ranked among those with whom he had played, Lauderdale replied, "The tightest, the closest. No doubt. Without a doubt, this is the closest group I've been with my whole life even knowing all the players in AAU and in high school and

the previous three years. This is definitely the closest.

"That's what hurts the most. I won't be able to spend time with these guys anymore."

That much was evident as soon as Lauderdale finished speaking. After having been seated nearby but out of the conversation, freshman guard Jordan Sibert climbed out of his chair and sat next to the hulking senior.

Rather than try to offer up some platitudes about loss and growth, the freshman simply sat silently and commiserated without speaking a word.

Meanwhile, in a nearby corner of the room, Diebler pointed out that the team had still put together a successful season even if it had fallen short of the ultimate goal.



Dallas Lauderdale

"No one can take away what we did throughout the regular season," he said. "To only lose two games in our conference is impressive. What hurts the most is we've lost two games in 30-some games and then you get in the tournament and you lose one and you're done."

"We only lost three games all year. That's pretty good, (but) it's not how we wanted it to end. We felt confident enough that we could make a deeper run, but that's the game of basketball."

The Next Wave

Assuming Buford, Sullinger and Thomas hold true to their pledges to return next season, the trio should make up a key core for the Buckeyes. Sullinger and Buford were the team's two top scorers this season, and

Thomas has the potential to turn into a go-to player and prolific scorer.

Although he did not see the amount of playing time he would have liked this season, Thomas said he is excited about the chance to take a big step forward as a sophomore.

"It feels great but also I wish I could play with this team one more time," he said. "Now that the table has turned, you've got to move on. I wish this day never happened. I wish there was another half or a third quarter, but next year it's time to get back in the gym and lead this team and get better."

The group will be fleshed out with three other sophomores who saw limited time this season – Sibert, Lenzelle Smith Jr. and J.D. Weatherspoon. In addition, a five-man freshman class rated by Scout.com sixth nationally and tops in the Big Ten means Matta will have a number of young options at his disposal.

Lighty said he has great expectations for next season, particularly with Sullinger's plan to return.

"That's just something that will help them out – having a big guy down low with the guys they have coming in," he said. "It's going to be a great team. The young guys coming in, (if they) don't let them slack off and push them to the limit every day, I have 100 percent confidence that they'll be back in this position next year."

Sullinger said Lighty's advice particularly hit a nerve with him.

"We're looking for another great season next year," the freshman said. "I know I'm going to be in the gym as soon as we get back (home). I'm going to be in an Ohio State jersey next year."

After finishing his prep career as the third all-time leading scorer in Indiana history, Thomas served as the second option

off Matta's bench. Although he occasionally showed flashes of being unhappy with his role, the freshman downplayed thoughts that he ever wished to be anywhere but with the Buckeyes.

"It was great," Thomas said of the season. "God put me in a place for a reason. My role wasn't to play too many minutes, but I probably will next year if I improve my game. I've just got to get back in the gym and my time will come."

"I can be a go-to guy. I think I can. I can hit big shots and play good defense. I think I can play that role of a David Lighty or a Jon Diebler and hit big shots."

Asked what sort of legacy this year's group of seniors had left behind, Diebler paused for a second in another effort to process what had transpired on a chilly evening in Newark.

"I just hope we left that winning mentality and left a stamp on these young guys that you can't take any day for granted," he said. "It goes fast. We've been talking about it all year and we've been telling guys the whole year to enjoy these moments we have with each other because after college you never know where everyone's going to end up."

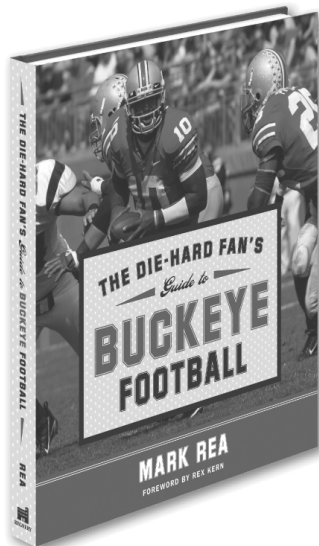
After spending time at the dais to answer questions down the hallway from the locker room, Matta made his way back for the final few moments before the OSU locker room was closed to reporters. Seated on a white folding chair near the entrance, the red-faced coach spoke in hushed tones, his voice raspy from the encounter.

In his mind, the example laid forth by the seniors on this year's team was simple.

"Give everything you've got for something bigger than yourself," Matta said. "That's what those guys did. They gave and it wasn't for them, it was for the program."

CALLING ALL BUCKEYE FANS:

YOUR INDISPENSABLE OSU FOOTBALL GUIDE IS HERE!



Do you bleed scarlet and gray year round?

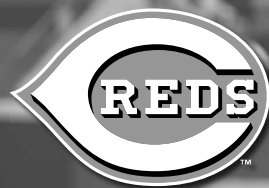
If so, then *The Die-Hard Fan's Guide to Buckeye Football* by Buckeye football expert Mark Rea is for you! This must-have book works its way "Across the Field" through nearly 120 years of Buckeye football, including complete coverage of the national championship seasons and Heisman Trophy winners.

Full of color photos, amusing anecdotes, and little-known facts, *The Die-Hard Fan's Guide to Buckeye Football* is unlike any other book you've read. One minute you're reading about legendary coaches like Paul Brown and Woody Hayes and the next you're visualizing stories of the Horseshoe's greatest games and discovering who Woody Hayes referred to as his "greatest booster."

It is for you, the fans, that this book has been created—the ultimate guide for the most diehard members of the Buckeye Nation! GO BUCKS!

Available in bookstores, online, or call 1-888-219-4747 and reference product code C7411.

Since 1947
REGNERY PUBLISHING, INC.
An Eagle Publishing Company • Washington, DC
www.Regnerycorp.com



Baseball Is BACK!



DON'T MISS OUT ON THE ACTION THIS APRIL!



FRI., APRIL 15
Free Agent Friday presented by Mynt Martini
Kick off your weekends with happy hour drink specials, singles mixers, live music and more.

SAT., APRIL 16
2011 Kroger Team Calendar Giveaway presented by Kroger

SUN., APRIL 17
Team Baseball Card Set Giveaway presented by Thompson Plumbing, Heating and Cooling

FRI., APRIL 29
Gold Glovers Photo Giveaway presented by SmarTravel
Free Agent Friday presented by Mynt Martini

SAT., APRIL 30
Joey Votto MVP Bobblehead Giveaway presented by PNC

SUN., MAY 1
Mascot Wall Stickers Giveaway presented by Tire Discounters

Full promotional schedule available on reds.com.

TICKETS: 381-REDS (7337)

reds.com

meijer

GREYHOUND BUS PARK

OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Knight's Heroics End Ohio State's Title Hopes

By ADAM JARDY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When words and rational thought failed him, Jon Diebler's emotion summed up everything.

The senior guard was the second-to-last Ohio State player to make the long walk back to the locker room inside the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J., following his team's heart-wrenching 62-60 loss to Kentucky in the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament.

Staring straight ahead, Diebler pulled his white jersey over his mouth and screamed, later describing those moments as a blur. Trailing behind him, freshman forward Jared Sullinger's face wore a glum mask.

So ended a season filled with promise. The Buckeyes, who captured an outright Big Ten championship, the conference's postseason tournament title and the No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA Tournament, bowed out with a last-second loss to the fourth-seeded Wildcats that had the team's seniors red-eyed and speaking in hushed tones afterwards.

Throughout the tournament, OSU's locker room resembled more a carnival than a place of business. After bowing out in the Sweet 16 last season with a three-point loss to Tennessee, the Buckeyes somehow overcame the loss of national player of the year Evan Turner and did not miss a beat, fashioning a 34-2 record entering the game.

With the clock just past midnight, however, that locker room resembled a tomb. In one corner sat Diebler, trying to explain the momentum swings of the final seconds. In another was Sullinger, white towel wrapped around his shoulders, telling anyone who would listen that he plans to return for his sophomore season in Columbus.

In a game that featured 19 lead changes and 11 ties, it was the Wildcats who delivered the final blow.

With the score knotted at 60, freshman guard Brandon Knight pushed the ball up the right side of the court and found OSU's pesky Aaron Craft waiting. Faking a drive, Knight created a momentary separation and launched a midrange jumper that swished through the net with 5.4 seconds remaining.

"I thought we had a good chance to send it into overtime but we didn't get the stop we needed," a red-faced Craft said after the game. "I didn't guard (Knight) the way I needed to and he made a good shot. It's devastating the way it ended."

One player's devastation is another's delight. "With the last shot, (head coach John Calipari) put me in a pick-and-roll with a couple of seconds left," Knight said. "I felt (Craft) gave me a lane to go right, so I just went right. He jumped in front of me, so I pulled up and thank God it went in."

The Buckeyes got one final chance at rebuttal.

Quickly pushing the ball up the left side of the court, Craft found junior guard William Buford along the left wing. A 44.4 percent three-point shooter for the season and the team's second-leading scorer at 14.6 points per game, Buford got a decent look from behind the arc.

However, the OSU junior was in the final throes of his worst shooting performance of the season. When he let the ball fly, Buford had missed 13 of his 15 shots from the floor and he had made only 1 of 2 attempts from three-point range. Buford's shot drew the front of the rim and bounced upward but not forward. In a scrum for the rebound near the



SONNY BROCKWAY

DOWN AND OUT – Ohio State freshman Jared Sullinger and the rest of the Buckeyes had a tough time stopping Kentucky big man Josh Harrellson (55), who scored 17 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead the Wildcats.

hoop, the Wildcats (28-8) knocked the ball toward midcourt as time expired.

Just like that, a season that seemed destined for a national championship instead ended in heartbreak for the Buckeyes, who finished the season at 34-3.

"I had a great look," Buford said. "It just didn't fall for me. Shots did not fall for me (tonight). I felt like I had great looks coming off ball screens and coming off curls (but) I just wasn't able to knock shots down."

Knight's jumper answered a clutch three from Diebler that appeared to have the game headed for overtime. After a banked runner from UK junior guard Deandre Liggins gave his team a 60-57 lead with 36.2 seconds left, Ohio State head coach Thad Matta called timeout and spoke directly to Diebler in the huddle.

The senior's first attempt to get off a tying trey from the right wing was denied, but Diebler found an opening from the top of the circle. The Big Ten's all-time leader in three-pointers flicked his wrist and drained what would prove to be the final attempt of his career. With 21.2 seconds left, it tied the score at 60 and ignited the Prudential Center crowd of 18,343.

"I was just happy I made it because it tied the game," Diebler said afterward. "Jared set a great screen and I was able to break free. It's unfortunate that we didn't get a bucket there at the end, but you have

to give Knight a lot of credit. He made a tough shot."

For the game, the Buckeyes shot 32.8 percent (19 of 58), third worst this season. Sullinger led the way with 21 points on 7-of-14 shooting. The OSU freshman especially came on in the second half, hitting 5 of 6 during the second 20 minutes after being held largely in check by Kentucky senior Josh Harrellson, who led his team with 17 points and 10 rebounds. Sullinger finished with a game-high 16 boards.

Diebler finished with 16 points that included a 4-for-7 performance from three-point range, and classmate David Lighty added 12 points. Buford had nine.

"Some of the shots we missed are shots we have been making all year," Diebler said. "You have to give Kentucky credit. I thought they did a good job of challenging shots with their length."

"We were going against length all year and those are shots that we make. Tonight, they just weren't going in."

Harrellson in particular was a thorn in OSU's side. The 6-10, 275-pound senior prevented Sullinger from ever getting comfortable in the paint. Although Sullinger scored 21 points, 11 of them came as a result of offensive rebounds.

A key possession in the waning moments underlined Harrellson's performance.

With the Wildcats clinging to a 58-57 lead and the clock winding under 1:30,

Kentucky 62, Ohio State 60

March 25, 2011 Prudential Center, Newark, N.J.												
Kentucky (28-8)		Total FG FT		Reb.		A		PF		Pts.		
Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	P	F	Ts.					
Jones	25	3-10	0-0	0-8	0	3	8					
Harrellson	34	7-9	3-3	5-5	0	3	17					
Miller	39	2-6	2-2	2-2	4	3	7					
Knight	34	3-10	2-2	0-3	4	2	9					
Lamb	31	2-5	0-0	0-0	0	2	6					
Hood	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Vargas	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Liggins	34	5-8	5-7	0-6	3	3	15					
Totals	200	22-48	12-14	7-25	11	18	62					
Percentages: FG: 45.8%, FT: 85.7%, 3-point goals: 6-17 (Jones 2-3, Miller 1-3, Knight 1-6, Lamb 2-3, Liggins 0-2). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 11 (Harrellson 3, Liggins 3, Jones 2, Miller 2, Lamb). Turnovers: 11 (Knight 6, Miller 2, Jones, Harrellson, Liggins). Steals: 3 (Miller 2, Knight).												
Ohio State (34-3)		Total FG FT		Reb.		A		PF		Pts.		
Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	P	F	Ts.					
Sullinger	39	7-14	7-9	8-8	0	4	21					
Lighty	40	5-12	1-2	0-2	4	1	12					
Lauderdale	5	0-0	0-0	0-2	0	1	0					
Diebler	40	5-10	2-4	0-1	0	2	16					
Buford	37	2-16	4-4	0-2	1	2	9					
Thomas	3	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	2	0					
Craft	36	0-5	2-3	2-4	2	2	2					
Totals	200	19-58	16-22	16-20	7	14	60					
Percentages: FG: 32.8%, FT: 72.7%, 3-point goals: 6-16 (Lighty 1-4, Diebler 4-7, Buford 1-3, Craft 0-2). Team rebounds: 6. Blocked shots: 1 (Sullinger). Turnovers: 7 (Sullinger 4, Buford 2, Craft). Steals: 6 (Craft 4, Sullinger, Lighty). Halftime: Tied 30-30. Technical fouls: Kentucky head coach John Calipari. Officials: Thornley, Ayers, O'Connell. A: 18,343.												

Sullinger got the ball along the right baseline. After the OSU freshman tried to go toward the middle of the court, Harrellson forced Sullinger back to the baseline where he launched a desperation attempt that hit the side of the backboard.

Harrellson grabbed the rebound at the 1:07 mark, and after a Kentucky timeout, Liggins hit his jumper with 36.2 seconds left to push UK's lead to three.

"I think Harrellson is probably the most underrated player in college basketball," Matta said. "He's a tremendous player and knows his role and does it well."

The Buckeyes appeared to have things in hand early on, enjoying a seven-point advantage at 16-9 with 11:53 remaining in the first half. By that time, Knight had already committed three turnovers and Calipari decided to give his freshman guard a breather. Once Knight returned to the lineup at the 11:17 mark, however, Kentucky began a run that saw the Wildcats score on eight straight possessions. The final points during the stretch came on a pair of free throws by Knight with 7:50 remaining that gave his team a 23-20 lead.

Diebler answered 28 seconds later with a three that knotted the score, and from there the game was a back-and-forth battle until the teams headed to their locker rooms deadlocked at 30.

OSU earned nearly half of its first-half points at the charity stripe. Five Wildcats were whistled for two fouls each, and the Buckeyes turned 11 Kentucky fouls into 12 points from the charity stripe on 15 attempts. That helped cover for an 8-for-26 (30.8 percent) shooting performance from the field in the first half.

Neither team managed more than a four-point cushion and the score was tied six times during the tightly contested second half.

Kentucky's two leading scorers entering the game – Knight and forward Terrence Jones – were both held below double-digit scoring for the first time all season. Knight finished with nine points while Jones had eight to go along with eight rebounds – all on the defensive boards. Liggins joined Harrellson in double figures for the Wildcats with 15 points.

Roadrunners, Patriots No Match For Ohio State

By JEFF SVOBODA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State barnstormed into Cleveland to open the NCAA Tournament and had little trouble advancing to the Sweet 16, dominating a pair of contests March 18 and 20 against Texas San Antonio and George Mason.

Greeted by loud sellout crowds of 20,164 each day at Quicken Loans Arena, home of the Cleveland Cavaliers, the top-seeded Buckeyes played excellent basketball while downing the Roadrunners and Patriots by a combined 61 points.

Ohio State shot lights-out during the two games, setting and then resetting the school record for three-pointers in an NCAA Tournament game. In total, the Buckeyes canned 28 of 50 treys for a shooting percentage of 56.0 from beyond the arc. Ohio State also shot 58.6 percent overall from the floor (65 for 111) and assisted on 49 of its buckets.

In addition, Cleveland native David Lighty, Solon native Dallas Lauderdale and walk-on Eddie Days of Richmond Heights each had personal highlights while playing in their home metro area.

"This city's been great to us here this past weekend, and we're very excited to be moving on," head coach Thad Matta said after the wins.

Recaps of the Buckeyes' tournament-opening wins in the East Region follow. Complete recaps of the games can be found in BSB's March 22 electronic edition.

George Mason, March 20

After digging itself an 11-2 hole early, Ohio State went on a 50-15 run to end the first half, building a 26-point lead at intermission and cruising home to a 98-66 triumph against the eighth-seeded Patriots.

Ohio State (34-2) made 16 three-pointers on 26 attempts to set an school NCAA Tournament single-game record of 61.5 percent. The 98 points also matched OSU's NCAA Tournament high, originally set March 11, 1960, against Western Kentucky.

"We're pretty hard to beat if we play like this," William Buford said.

Lighty was virtually unstoppable, canning 7 of 7 three-pointers – a school record for makes without a miss in a game – on the way to game-high honors of 25 points. The senior added three assists and four rebounds while going 9 of 10 from the floor in his last college game in the state of Ohio.

"I was a scorer in high school, so it kind of came up today," said Lighty, who exhorted the crowd while walking off the floor before embracing family members behind the OSU bench. "Coach (Matta) told me earlier this morning to save a couple for the game. I guess I took hold of that and just did it."

Freshman point guard Aaron Craft added a school-record 15 assists – the fourth-highest total in NCAA Tournament history – while freshman Jared Sullinger and Buford had 18 points apiece. Senior Jon Diebler added 13.

"I'm obviously very proud of the way we played," Matta said. "We were moving the ball very well and I thought we had a great pace to what we were trying to do."

The Patriots (27-7) started the game looking like the upstart squad that grabbed the attention of the nation on the way to a Final Four run five years ago and had used some late magic to down Villanova in their tournament opener two days before. They used good interior play on offense and physical play on defense to open a nine-point lead as the Buckeyes got off to a 1-for-4 shooting start with three turnovers.

The entrance of Craft into the game for Lauderdale helped turn things around, and on his opening possession, the point guard fed Lighty for the first of his five threes in the half.

OSU quickly turned up its defense as well, with Buford stealing the ball and going coast to coast to make it 11-7. Lighty next fed Sullinger for a dunk, and then after another George Mason turnover, the senior hit a trey to complete a 10-0 run and give Ohio State its first lead at 12-11 with 14:55 showing on the clock.

Ryan Pearson hit a three to put the Patriots back in front, but Lighty answered with another trey to give the Buckeyes the lead for good at 15-14 with 13:24 left to play.

George Mason stayed close for a few minutes, and a layup by Johnny Williams cut the Buckeyes' lead to 24-20 at the 10:09 mark. But the Patriots missed their next nine shots and committed five turnovers over the next nine-plus minutes as OSU went on a 25-4 run that took away all drama.

"We were kind of expecting we were going to be able to score the ball better than we did, but their defense was very, very good," George Mason head coach Jim Larranaga said. "They put a lot of pressure on us, and we were not able to get the quality shots we're used to getting."

Craft's vision and toughness led to perhaps the most impressive play of OSU's run. He appeared to be trapped along the sideline before whipping a pass some 35 feet to Sullinger underneath the basket for a layup. The big freshman was also fouled, and when he made the free throw, OSU was up 29-22 with 8:34 left and rolling.

Diebler plunged the dagger just before the halftime horn, making an off-balance three with two seconds remaining that left George Mason doubled up at the half, 52-26. Lighty finished the stanza with 17 points while Sullinger had 13 to go with seven rebounds and Craft had seven helpers.

George Mason never got within 20 points in the second half, and Ohio State's lead topped out at 38 when Diebler completed a four-point play with an assist to Craft to make it 87-49 at the 7:39 mark.

Days was inserted for the final three minutes and went to the line with 1:17 left, scoring his first career point on a free throw to bring the fans – who stayed en masse – and the OSU bench to their feet.

Cam Long had a team-high 16 points for the Patriots, who were without starting guard Luke Hancock – who had hit the game-winning three vs. Villanova – because of a stomach virus.

Diebler moved to 1,520 points in his career, allowing him to pass former roommate Evan Turner (1,517, 2008-10) for 15th in the school record book. Lighty moved

Ohio State 98, George Mason 66

March 20, 2011												
Quicken Loans Arena; Cleveland												
George Mason	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Morrison	20	3-6	0-0	1-3	1	3	6					
Pearson	28	4-10	4-4	4-1	4	3	13					
Tate	28	2-7	0-0	2-0	1	1	4					
Long	29	2-7	2-3	1-5	2	2	16					
Cornelius	27	3-7	0-0	0-1	0	1	8					
Bennett	11	0-1	0-0	1-2	0	3	0					
Allen	11	3-7	0-0	0-0	1	1	6					
Arledge	6	2-2	0-0	1-1	0	0	4					
Vaughns	12	0-2	0-0	0-0	2	0	0					
Whack	7	1-2	0-0	2-1	1	1	3					
Williams	21	3-9	0-0	1-1	1	2	6					
Totals	200	26-60	6-7	13-16	13	17	66					

Percentages: FG: 43.3%. FT: 85.7%. **3-point goals:** 8-18 (Pearson 1-1, Tate 0-1, Long 4-6, Cornelius 2-4, Allen 0-2, Vaughns 0-1, Whack 1-2, Williams 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 1. **Blocked shots:** 3 (Morrison 2, Arledge). **Turnovers:** 17 (Long 7, Morrison 2, Whack 2, Williams 2, Pearson, Cornelius, Bennett, Allen). **Steals:** 5 (Pearson 2, Tate, Cornelius, Williams).

Ohio State (34-2)												
Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.						
Sullinger	22	7-10	4-6	4-4	0	2	18					
Lighty	30	9-10	0-2	1-3	3	1	25					
Lauderdale	21	3-4	0-1	0-4	0	1	6					
Diebler	36	4-9	1-1	1-2	2	1	13					
Buford	29	7-14	0-0	1-4	2	1	18					
Thomas	13	3-7	0-0	0-1	0	1	7					
Sibert	8	1-2	1-2	0-0	1	1	3					
Craft	34	2-3	2-2	3-3	15	3	6					
Days	3	0-0	0-2	0-0	0	0	1					
Smith Jr.	4	0-0	1-2	0-0	0	0	1					
Totals	200	36-59	10-18	11-22	23	11	98					

Percentages: FG: 61.0%. FT: 55.6%. **3-point goals:** 16-26 (Lighty 7-7, Diebler 4-8, Buford 4-7, Thomas 1-3, Sibert 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Diebler). **Turnovers:** 9 (Sullinger 3, Buford 2, Craft 2, Lighty, Smith Jr.). **Steals:** 8 (Buford 2, Craft 2, Sullinger, Lauderdale, Diebler, Smith Jr.). **Halftime:** Ohio State 52, George Mason 26. **Officials:** Roberts, Adams, Jordan. **A:** 20,164.

Ohio State 75, UTSA 46

March 18, 2011												
Quicken Loans Arena; Cleveland												
UTSA	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
(20-14)												
Franklin	31	2-7	0-0	1-1	0	2	5					
Wilkins	36	2-7	0-0	4-3	1	2	4					
Hill	30	3-6	0-0	1-1	1	4	6					
Gibson	39	9-18	4-5	0-3	3	1	24					
Johnson III	38	1-9	2-2	2-3	1	2	5					
White	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Bakare	1	0-2	0-0	1-0	0	0	0					
Paye	12	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	1	0					
Whitehead	1	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	2					
Sims	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Wood	8	0-2	0-0	1-1	0	0	0					
Totals	200	18-53	6-7	11-15	6	13	46					

Percentages: FG: 34.0%. FT: 85.7%. **3-point goals:** 4-17 (Franklin 1-2, Hill 0-1, Gibson 2-4, Johnson 1-8, Whitehead 0-1, Wood 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** None. **Turnovers:** 13 (Gibson 6, Franklin 2, Hill 2, Johnson III 2, Wilkins). **Steals:** 7 (Gibson 4, Hill 2, Wilkins).

Ohio State (33-2)												
Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.						
Sullinger	28	5-7	1-2	3-6	0	2	11					
Lighty	30	3-5	0-0	1-0	5	1	8					
Lauderdale	17	2-2	0-0	0-4	1	1	4					
Diebler	35	4-9	2-2	0-4	5	1	14					
Buford	31	7-12	1-2	2-4	5	0	18					
Thomas	20	5-7	1-2	4-4	3	0	13					
Sibert	9	1-4	0-0	0-0	0	1	2					
Craft	24	0-1	0-0	1-1	7	3	0					
Days	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Smith Jr.	5	2-3	0-0	0-0	0	0	5					
Totals	200	29-52	5-8	11-24	26	9	75					

Percentages: FG: 55.8%. FT: 62.5%. **3-point goals:** 12-24 (Lighty 2-3, Diebler 4-8, Buford 3-5, Thomas 2-3, Sibert 0-2, Craft 0-1, Smith Jr. 1-2). **Team rebounds:** 1. **Blocked shots:** 3 (Lauderdale 3, Turnovers: 13 (Diebler 3, Craft 3, Lighty 2, Buford 2, Sullinger, Lauderdale, Thomas). **Steals:** 5 (Sullinger 3, Lighty, Craft). **Halftime:** Ohio State 37, UTSA 21. **Technical fouls:** UTSA TEAM. **Officials:** Natilli, McCarthy, Nestor. **A:** 20,164.

into the top 20 in career points with 1,446, passing Paul Ebert (1,436, 1952-54).

UTSA, March 18

Ohio State got a full team effort as it rolled to a 75-46 victory against No. 16-seed Texas San Antonio.

Buford scored a team-high 18 points while Diebler added 14 and Sullinger had 11 with nine rebounds. Freshman Deshaun Thomas added 13 off the bench while Craft had a team-high seven assists and Lighty added eight points and five assists.

Lauderdale chipped in with the biggest highlight-reel play, slamming home an alley-oop pass from Craft with one hand midway through the second half.

"Probably the biggest thing we did that I liked in the game was we did a great job of sharing the basketball and taking good shots," Matta said. "With this team, that's what we're all about."

Ohio State had a season-high and school postseason-record 26 assists on 29 field goals. Diebler and Buford had five assists apiece.

"I think we just did a good job of moving the ball," Diebler said. "With their zone, they're really extended, and we did a good job of getting the ball to the middle. Dave did a great job of finding guys and so did Will. It was just a great overall game, very unselfish."

The Roadrunners (20-14) – who had won six in a row including the first NCAA Tournament win in school history – tried to slow down the pace on offense and throw Ohio State (33-2) off with a 2-3 zone on defense. With four-time All-Southland Conference point guard Devin Gibson pulling the strings, it worked at the start as UTSA got off to a 9-5 lead by scoring on its first four possessions.

Buford responded by driving the right baseline and dunking emphatically. Sullinger made a layup to tie the score before Buford, wide-open in the left corner

on an inbounds play, drained a three to give Ohio State its first lead at 12-9 with 12:05 to play.

Another three by Buford with 8:26 left gave OSU its first double-digit advantage at 23-13, and then Sullinger made a layup with 4:36 left to put the Buckeyes ahead by double digits for good as part of an 11-0 run that pretty much iced the contest. During the run, UTSA went scoreless for more than five minutes.

The Buckeyes took a 37-21 lead into the half after making 15 of 24 first-half shots (62.5 percent) including 6 of 10 three-pointers. Buford led the way with 15 points.

The Roadrunners cut the deficit to 11 early in the second half, but Ohio State quickly increased its lead to 20 at 46-26 at the 16:01 mark when UTSA coach Brooks Thompson took a technical foul. Diebler made both free-throw shots and Lighty got on the scoreboard for the first time with a trey on the resulting possession.

Lauderdale's big slam drew the crowd to its feet at the 11:04 mark and allowed OSU to increase its lead to 25 at 57-32. The advantage eventually stretched to as much as 38 at 70-32 with 5:26 to play, but the Roadrunners scored the next 12 points to make things a bit more respectable.

"It was real big," Buford said of the win. "We wanted to send a message out today and let people know we're here to take care of business and not to play around."

Gibson led the way for the Roadrunners with 24 points to go with three assists. Melvin Johnson III, who had scored in double digits in 14 straight games and led UTSA with 29 in its opening-round win against Alabama State, finished with only five.

"Wow, they're good," Thompson said. "They're so efficient in everything they do. I'm very proud of the run that my team made. It's been the most phenomenal season in UTSA basketball history, and we're proud of what we've done to this point."



David Lighty

OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Sullinger, Others Waste No Time Announcing Returns

Ohio State fans hope that the pledges made by three Buckeye basketball players in the wake of a Sweet 16 loss March 26 to Kentucky hold true.

Less than 15 minutes after the Buckeyes closed their season with a 62-60 loss to the Wildcats, national freshman of the year Jared Sullinger and junior guard William Buford announced their plans to return for the 2011-12 season. Freshman reserve Deshaun Thomas also said he would be back.

COURT REPORT

Adam Jardy

"I'm coming back next year," Sullinger told reporters. "I'm coming back next year because I have to work on a lot of things and I don't like the taste that I just had. I don't appreciate losing. I never appreciate losing and I'm going to come back to win."

Echoing Sullinger's words, Buford said the manner in which the Buckeyes lost fuels his desire to return next season.

"I'm tired of getting put out (of the tournament) early," he said.

However, the junior did not rule out putting his name in for the NBA draft to test the waters. College underclassmen have until April 24 to decide to put their names into the draft and then until May 8 to withdraw without affecting their collegiate eligibility.

"I don't know," Buford said of that possibility. "I'll talk to my coaches and my family, but as of right now I'll be coming back."

One source close to Buford told BSB during the season that the junior was planning to head to the NBA, but Sullinger has repeatedly said he does not want to leave Ohio State until he brings a national championship to the program.

"(Jared) told me from day one he'd be back for two years," head coach Thad Matta said. "He said, 'Draw me up a contract, whatever you want me to do, I'll sign it.' With him, his freshman year was as good as I've ever seen a freshman have. I think all the things he learned this year, with a great offseason, I have no doubt he'll be the best player in college basketball."

Named the top freshman both in the Big Ten and nationally, Sullinger said he will not even put his name into the draft to test the waters.

"I'll be in an Ohio State jersey next year," he said. "It's my personal choice and I want to come back and serve this basketball team and play for Coach Matta."

The decision came almost immediately after the game ended, but the speed at which Sullinger made his announcement

should not cast doubt on his intentions. His father, Satch, later told The New York Times, "You can etch it in stone. Jared Sullinger will be back at the Ohio State University."

In a mock draft published on NBADraft.net, Sullinger was the No. 5 overall pick, going to the Toronto Raptors, while Buford checks in at No. 19 to Washington. Fifth-year senior forward David Lighty is projected to go 38th overall to Houston in the second round.

Sullinger's decision was no surprise to his teammates.

"Jared loves Ohio State," said freshman guard Aaron Craft, who also played AAU basketball with Sullinger. "He's a competitor as well. He's just as upset about this as all of us are. I'm happy he's decided that he wants to come back, but we've got a lot of ground to make up with the people we lose this year."

In addition to Lighty, OSU loses starters Jon Diebler and Dallas Lauderdale as well as Nikola Kecman and walk-on Eddie Days.

"We know where we're going tomorrow," Sullinger said. "They don't. That's tough on their part, knowing they're not coming back to this basketball team."

Even with the trio pledging their return next season, the Buckeyes will lose 37.5 percent of their scoring from this year. This season, Ohio State had to replace 35.9 percent of its scoring after losing seven players including national player of the year Evan Turner.

Sullinger and Buford finished the season one-two in team scoring with respective averages of 17.2 and 14.4 points per game while Thomas finished fifth at 7.5 despite limited playing time. Sullinger also led the team with 10.2 rebounds per game while Buford and Thomas chipped in 3.9 and 3.5, respectively.

Asked where he wants to improve before next season, Thomas said, "Ball-handling and defense and just being aggressive and hitting shots. Just keep doing what I was doing to get into this position."

Weatherspoon Returns

It was just for one game but freshman J.D. Weatherspoon was back in uniform and on the Ohio State bench after regaining his academic eligibility prior to the Sweet 16.

The product of Columbus Northland saw action in 10 of 13 games before being ruled academically ineligible Dec. 27. He averaged 1.8 points and 0.8 rebounds in limited action during those 10 early-season games.

He was reinstated to the team March 23.

Weatherspoon said he first learned he would not be allowed to play when Matta pulled him aside after a December practice.



SONNY BROCKWAY

HE'LL BE BACK – Freshman Jared Sullinger (0) was one of three Ohio State men's basketball players to voice their intentions to return for the 2011-12 season.

"He was mad about it," the freshman said. "He was like, 'J.D., this has never happened to me at Ohio State.' He was real mad about it but at the same time he had my back. He said, 'J.D., do whatever you've got to do to get back on the court.'"

Asked what two questions he had been asked most by reporters, Weatherspoon said, "How does it feel to be back with the team and what class did I mess up in?" he said. "It feels good to be back on the team, of course. All the missed trips, not taking bus rides and plane rides (hurt). The team has fun."

"The class that I messed up in was a math class. Math is very hard for me. I took a year off because I didn't have a math class my senior year in high school so it was hard. At the same time I just put in a lot more work this quarter and stayed with my tutors. I'm ready to go."

When the reinstatement was announced, Sullinger and Lighty expressed their joy at having Weatherspoon back in the fold.

"He brings excitement to the team with his athleticism and everything that he's been through," said Sullinger, who was Weatherspoon's teammate both in high school and in AAU basketball. "It really shows he worked hard for this situation to come into a situation like this. It's just another guy to have fun with. We always have fun as a team."

While ineligible, Weatherspoon had been allowed to practice with the team but could not travel with them on the road. He was not on the bench as the Buckeyes won their first two games in the NCAA Tournament.

Being a Columbus product made the situation more painful, he said.

"I have so much support here," the 6-7, 210-pound Weatherspoon said. "Little kids want to watch me play. A lot of little kids were asking me a lot of questions about when I was going to be back on the court. That hurt, watching a little kid with tears running down his face."

When OSU played on the road, Weatherspoon kept himself busy.

"Sometimes I'd go to the gym and work out and stay in shape," he said. "I'd make sure I'd get extra jump shots in. I knew I couldn't play with them but I still could help the team out. I'd just go in the gym, lift some weights and shoot around."

Weatherspoon posted career highs of seven points and three rebounds in an 85-60 home win Dec. 12 against Western Carolina. As a senior at Northland, he was rated a three-star prospect and the No. 37 power forward in the nation by Scout.com.

Final Rankings

Although their careers are complete, the accomplishments of Lighty, Diebler and Lauderdale will remain etched in the OSU record books for years to come.

For Lighty, his 1,458 career points put him 19th in OSU history, just behind Jerry Francis (1986-89) with 1,486. Lighty also had 191 career steals, second all-time to Jay Burson (204, 1986-89), and his 141 three-pointers are eighth best.

Lighty also handed out 374 assists, which ties him with Brian Brown (1999-2002) for ninth.

Additionally, the Cleveland native is the

KING
AVENUE 5

SPORTS LOUNGE & RESTAURANT
Join us for Brunch on Saturdays!
945 King Ave. Columbus, OH
www.kingavenuefive.com

OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

2010-11 Ohio State Men's Basketball Statistics

34-3 Overall (16-2 Big Ten)
Final Statistics

Player	G-GS	Min.-Avg.	FG-FGA	Pct.	3P-3PA	Pct.	FT-FTA	Pct.	Rebounds		PF-FO	A	TO	BS	ST	Pts.-Avg.
									Off.	Def.						
Jared Sullinger	37-37	1172-31.7	222-410	.541	3-12	.250	188-267	.704	131-246	377-10.2	90-1	43	59	20	37	635-17.2
William Buford	36-36	1167-32.4	200-433	.462	61-138	.442	59-70	.843	35-106	141-3.9	78-1	106	66	11	29	520-14.4
Jon Diebler	37-37	1320-35.7	145-286	.507	114-227	.502	64-79	.810	14-84	98-2.6	37-0	88	35	5	36	468-12.6
David Lighty	37-37	1186-32.1	153-327	.468	51-119	.429	89-142	.627	49-99	148-4.0	72-1	122	58	17	55	446-12.1
Deshaun Thomas	37-0	518-14.0	105-219	.479	21-64	.328	47-59	.797	62-69	131-3.5	41-0	17	30	6	14	278-7.5
Aaron Craft	37-1	1096-29.6	83-180	.461	26-69	.377	64-88	.727	20-87	107-2.9	101-2	177	79	4	73	256-6.9
Dallas Lauderdale	37-37	595-16.1	74101	.733	0-0	.000	8-26	.308	38-82	120-3.2	66-0	6	24	54	3	156-4.2
Jordan Sibert	25-0	208-8.3	18-62	.290	8-32	.250	8-15	.533	8-17	25-1.0	22	0	14	13	1	10-52.1
J.D. Sullinger	10-0	54-5.4	8-16	.500	0-4	.000	2-9	.222	2-6	8-0.8	2-0	4	2	0	1	18-1.8
Lenzelle Smith Jr.	20-0	91-4.6	9-20	.450	1-8	.125	5-6	.833	8-8	16-0.8	7-0	9	8	0	5	24-1.2
Eddie Days	9-0	17-1.9	0-5	.000	0-1	.000	1-2	.500	0-0	0-0.0	3-0	1	0	0	0	1-0.1
TEAM									52-54	106-2.9				1		
Ohio State	37	7425	1017-2059	.494	285-674	.423	535-763	.701	419-858	1277-34.5	519-5	587	375	118	263	2854-77.1
Opponents	37	7425	838-1976	.424	232-683	.340	300-407	.737	341-755	1096-29.6	697-20	424	552	119	150	2208-59.7

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2011 who have issued verbal commitments to play men's basketball at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Trey McDonald	C	6-9	230	***	Battle Creek (Mich.) Central
LaQuinton Ross	SF	6-8	195	****	Burlington (N.J.) Life Center Acad.
Shannon Scott	PG	6-2	165	****	Alpharetta (Ga.) Milton
Sam Thompson	SF	6-6	190	****	Chicago Whitney Young
Amir Williams	C	6-10	220	****	Beverly Hills (Mich.) Detroit Country Day

third player in team history to record at least 1,000 points, 500 rebounds and 300 assists, joining Turner (2008-10) and Jim Jackson (1990-92).

Finally, his 156 games played are a program record and his 125 career starts leave him one behind Francis and Jamaal Brown (1989-92). Lighty's 128 wins in an Ohio State uniform are a program record.

Diebler's 374 career three-pointers are both OSU and Big Ten records. He finished his career by hitting at least one trey in 53 consecutive games, and his career mark of 41.6 percent (374 for 900) is second best in school history behind the mark of 44.6 percent (107 of 240) set by Doug Etzler from 1992-95.

This season, Diebler went 114 for 227 (50.2 percent) to establish a new single-season mark. Etzler held the previous record after hitting 78 of 178 (43.8 percent) during the 1994-95 season.

In addition to his percentage, Diebler hit a school-record 10 treys in a March 1 road win against Penn State.

With 1,536 career points, Diebler finished 13th on the school's all-time scoring list, 30 points behind Terence Dials (2002, '04-06). In addition, Diebler's 115 career starts are seventh in program history, and he saw action in 144 games, second only to Lighty.

Lauderdale's primary claim to fame comes courtesy of his shot-blocking abilities. In 137 career games – third all-time – the 6-8, 255-pound post player recorded 213 career blocks. That puts him third in the OSU record book behind Ken Johnson (444, 1998-2001) and Herb Williams (328, 1978-81).

Craft said all three seniors will be missed.

"The toughest part is going to be watching all these seniors leave and remembering that's the last game we'll get to play with them," the freshman point guard said. "I think that's the toughest thing to do. It's hard (because of) the leadership and the people that they are on and off the court. They carried themselves better than anyone I've seen."

"They've definitely paved the way for us

freshmen and us young guys to step up and lead the way they did."

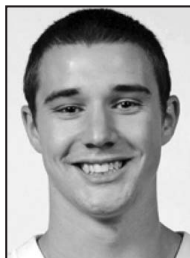
Through three seasons, Buford has scored 1,424 points, which puts him No. 22 on OSU's all-time list. As a junior, his 44.2 percent three-point percentage (61 of 138) is the second-best single-season mark in school history.

After the loss to the Wildcats, both Diebler and Lighty indicated their plans to continue their basketball careers while Lauderdale was less committal.

"Wherever God leads me, that's where I'm going," he said. "I don't know what's in the future. I only know who holds my future and that's God. Whatever He wants me to do, that's what I'll do."

Indiana Nabs Hollowell

While Ohio State is still looking for its first verbal commitment for the class of 2012, Indiana head coach Tom Crean has secured a pledge from a five-star target who had the Buckeyes among his finalists.



Aaron Craft

One day before OSU took the court to face Kentucky, small forward Jeremy Hollowell from Indianapolis Lawrence Central announced his commitment to the Hoosiers during a press conference at his high school.

"With Indiana, I felt something amazing was about to happen," he said. "Playing with the guys they already have committed should be exciting."

The 6-6, 190-pound Hollowell is rated the nation's No. 3 prospect at his position by Scout.

With the commitment, the Hoosiers have landed three five-star prospects from within their state borders for the 2012 class. Hollowell joins Indianapolis Park Tudor point guard Kevin "Yogi" Ferrell and La Porte La Lumiere School power forward Hanner Perea. Rounding out the class are two other prospects – four-star shooting guard Ron Patterson from Indianapolis Broad Ripple and three-star center Peter Jurkin from Charlotte (N.C.) United Faith Christian Academy.

Ferrell and Patterson held offers from the Buckeyes.

pound Harris is rated the nation's No. 2 prospect at his position and holds offers from Ohio State, Illinois, Louisville, Michigan, Michigan State, Vanderbilt and Xavier among a host of others.

Another Hayes To OSU?

Ohio State has the chance to land a second member of the Hayes family. The football team signed Toledo Whitmer defensive lineman Ken Hayes in February, and the men's basketball program is showing interest in Hayes' younger brother, Nigel.

A 6-7, 200-pound power forward for the class of 2013, the younger Hayes is primarily receiving recruiting attention from two schools – OSU and West Virginia.

"Those are the only ones that have called this year," Hayes' AAU coach Quentin Rogers told Scout. "He has a great basketball IQ and a very high motor. I expect a big-time summer out of him and for him to move up the charts nationally as a power forward."

Hayes' older brother is not the only tie he has to OSU. Nigel's best friend is Marc Loving, a four-star small forward who has already verbally committed to the Buckeyes' class of 2013. The 6-7, 185-pound Loving preps at Toledo St. John's.

"I think (Nigel) would have a lot of comfort with Ohio State," Rogers said. "His best friend is going there and his older brother will also be there. That would give him a big comfort zone."

Asked to describe Hayes, who also plays football, Rogers said, "He's an inside-outside type of player. He can step out past the three point line, but also he is skilled around the bucket and has some nice post moves. Beyond that he can handle the ball a little bit for a guy his size."

Reds Fans!

Follow The Reds Year-Round In Reds Report

Reds Report is must reading for every Reds fan. Each information-filled issue includes player features; historical articles; extensive minor league coverage with features on top prospects, complete statistics and farm club updates; box scores and game summaries for every Reds game; complete team memorabilia section and much more.

1 Year (12 issues) – \$36.95

Send to: Reds Report • P.O. Box 12453 • Columbus, Ohio 43212

☐ Please send me a one-year (12 issues) subscription to **Reds Report** for \$36.95.

☐ My check or money order is enclosed. Check # _____

☐ Charge to my: ☐ Discover ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ AMEX

Exp. Date _____

Card No. _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

For Faster Service On Credit Card Orders Call

1-800-760-2862



Defense Has Several Holes To Fill For 2011 Season

Continued From Page 1

Redshirt freshman Taylor Graham has the pedigree – his father, Kent, played at Ohio State from 1990-91 before an 11-year career in the NFL – but lacks experience because of various injuries that limited his practice and playing time during his last two high school seasons and his freshman campaign with the Buckeyes.

The 6-4, 225-pound Graham fits the mold of classic dropback passer, but that might not fit the Ohio State offense as it has evolved during Tressell's time in Columbus. Mobility is a must, and Tressell prefers a player who can make things happen on runs both by design and as a matter of last resort.

The latest member to enter the quarterback race is freshman Braxton Miller, who proved last season at Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne he can work magic with his feet as he carried his team to the Division I state championship game. But he is far from just a runner. Blessed with a powerful arm and a quick release, Miller appears to have the highest upside of the quarterbacks eligible to start the season under center, and enrolling in time for spring practice figures to give him a shot at doing just that.

"Anytime you're here it gives you an advantage," quarterbacks coach Nick Siciliano said. "He will get an extra 15 practices. I think that really is a major step for a quarterback to get extra snaps."

And how many reps can Miller expect this spring?

"I think that's all going to be determined by how fast he adapts to what we do from an offensive standpoint and our playcalling and our formation setups and all those things," Siciliano said. "(Most of that is) somewhat similar to what he's done, but just being able to pick everything up will make that happen."

Both Siciliano and Tressell sounded open-minded to handing the reins to a freshman as they did early in 2008 when Pryor was in his first college season and senior returning starter Todd Boeckman was struggling.

"Coming in early and getting those reps is huge because you get not just scrimmage reps or spring game reps that people will see at the

outset but (you get them) every day in practice and every individual drill and every perimeter drill," Tressell said. "You can't beat experience."

"All these guys are going to get good reps, and the evolution, seeing who steps to the front – there will be days one person steps to the front and days when another doesn't – but I think repetitions are huge and there will be some opportunities. How do I see it coming out? I have no idea."

The competition also will be wide-open at running back.

Although Herron is coming off a first-team All-Big Ten campaign, there figured to be plenty of intrigue at running back this spring anyway. Topping that interest list is a first glimpse of hot-shot recruit Rod Smith in action.

Some speculated Smith, a redshirt freshman, could push Herron for carries even before the suspensions came down in December, so attention on the position figures to be heightened with all the carries up for grabs for the first five games.

In Smith, the coaches have a 6-3, 220-pound back who has drawn comparisons to bruiser Chris "Beanie" Wells, and that could be just what the doctor ordered if the offense takes a conservative turn with a new starter at quarterback for the first month-plus of the season.

Smith has plenty of competition, though, as veterans Jordan Hall, Jaamal Berry and Carlos Hyde all made positive impressions in various degrees of backup work last season.

Running backs coach Dick Tressell will also be looking for a new No. 2 running back after the graduation of Brandon Saine, but he will enjoy the return of juniors Zach Boren and Adam Homan at fullback.

Getting the ground game off and running will be important to the Buckeyes this spring and fall because of an untested quarterback as well as an inexperienced receiving corps. Even before Posey was lost for the first five games, wide receiver figured to be a green group.

The only returning player with anything resembling significant experience is Corey "Philly" Brown, who caught eight passes for 105 yards and a touchdown during his freshman campaign last year.

One other player returns from the depth

chart published for the Sugar Bowl. Chris Fields is a 6-0, 185-pound sophomore who has been getting good reviews from Jim Tressell and former wide receivers coach Darrell Hazell for the past two years. So far, however, Fields has logged only three catches for 22 yards in six games.

Before leaving to take the head coaching position at Kent State in December, Hazell also raved about T.Y. Williams. The 6-5, 218-pounder took a redshirt last season but has drawn comparisons to Randy Moss for his combination of size, speed and long arms.

Classmates James Louis and Verlon Reed, both of whom also redshirted last season, and sophomore James Jackson also will look to earn playing time while getting to know new receivers coach Stan Drayton.

As for tight end – the only offensive position group other than fullback not affected by suspensions or graduation – things figure to get stronger this spring with the return of Jake Stoneburner and Reid Fragel.

The sophomores combined for 31 catches for 343 yards last season as Stoneburner became one of Pryor's favorite targets while Fragel developed into one of the team's best blockers.

Also returning at tight end is senior walk-on Spencer Smith while freshman Jeff Heuerman, an early enrollee from Naples (Fla.) Barron Collier, will look to impress.

Up front, there will be no shortage of open seats in Bollman's offensive line room.

Senior reserves Andrew Miller, Connor Smith and Scott Sika followed starting guards Justin Boren and Bryant Browning out the door after the Sugar Bowl, and redshirt freshman Sam Longo opted to transfer in February.

That leaves only eight scholarship players for Bollman to work with this spring, including just two starters – senior center Mike Brewster and senior right tackle J.B. Shugarts.

Also joining the group will be early enrollee Tommy Brown of Akron Firestone while Marcus Hall is expected to return after redshirting in 2010 for academic reasons. Hall has three years of eligibility remaining.

Adams is available for spring practice, too, but there will be a battle to earn the five starts

he will forfeit at left tackle that should include Hall and sophomore Andrew Norwell. Both got their feet wet to mostly positive reviews as true freshmen with Hall sharing time at tackle in 2009 and Norwell spelling Shugarts at times last season.

Inside, redshirt freshman Corey Linsley looks ticketed to replace Sika as Brewster's backup at center, but two new starting guards must be found.

The No. 1 candidate to move into the starting lineup there is considered to be sophomore Jack Mewhort, who impressed with his strength and tenacity during public practices and blowouts last season. Linsley is in the mix as well while Hall could be a candidate to help inside, too, particularly after Adams returns from his suspension.

A numbers crunch is not out of the ordinary for Bollman, and the veteran coach sounded unconcerned in February.

When asked what he expects this spring, the OSU line coach and offensive coordinator responded, "A lot of reps and a lot of multi-learning because there are seven veterans coming back. We have to be able to get ready to go without counting on any newcomers, so guys are going to need to learn to play multiple positions and then we'll see where the newcomers could possibly add (in the fall)."

Defense In Rebuild Mode

Defensive coordinator Jim Heacock cut straight to the point when asked to identify his goal for the spring.

"Who are the football players?" he replied. "In the spring, you're really trying to find your best 22, the guys we're going to have to go to war with."

That does not necessarily mean the top eight defensive linemen, six linebackers and eight defensive backs. Heacock has made a habit of molding his defenses around the personnel, dating all the way back to his first season in charge of the unit in 2005 when he used linebacker Bobby Carpenter's versatility to make up for a dearth of linemen.

"As a defensive staff we sit down and look at those guys, see how many are linebackers, how many are linemen, how many are secondary, and then we try to figure out what our best personnel grouping is," Heacock explained. "Are you better off in a nickel scheme? You just try to see how they fit into your scheme and then kind of veer toward what they can do best."

"I think spring ball is critical to see who can get a lot of reps and see who can make plays."

With two linemen, two linebackers and three members of the secondary having run out of eligibility, Heacock and his staff figure to have plenty of work to do figuring out which group is the strongest.

He did, however, identify one player who was not available for the second half of last season as a key to the 2011 unit's makeup – Tyler Moeller.

The sixth-year senior from Cincinnati Colerain does not fall into a specific positional category, but he was arguably the most productive defender in the four-plus games before he tore a pectoral muscle last season. He logged 20 tackles, including 4½ for loss and a sack, forced two fumbles, intercepted one pass and knocked down two more.

With Moeller manning the star position, a hybrid linebacker/safety role, Ohio State tended to play more of its 4-2-5 nickel defense than its 4-3-4 base in the first month of the season even in non-passing situations and against power running sets.

"If you've got 11 players who are definitely your best players, those are guys you want on

Offensive Players On The Spot

• **Joe Bauserman, quarterback** – With starter Terrelle Pryor sidelined after offseason foot surgery and phenom Braxton Miller already on campus and anointed as Pryor's heir apparent, this spring should be an interesting one for Bauserman. Normally, any senior who has already served two seasons as the No. 2 quarterback would be penciled in as the starter with Pryor set to serve a five-game suspension when the regular season begins. But with the highly touted Miller looking over his shoulder, not to mention youngsters Kenny Guiton and Taylor Graham eager to make an impact, too, Bauserman probably needs to be fairly close to perfect in everything he does this spring.

• **Rod Smith, tailback** – More than a few observers believe Smith could have made an impact last fall had academic issues not delayed his arrival on campus. Those issues are in the past now, and the 6-3, 220-pound redshirt freshman is ready to explode this spring. It is difficult to gauge how many reps Smith will get since Dan "Boom" Herron will be a full participant in drills while Jordan Hall, Carlos Hyde and Jaamal Berry continue to try to make their own marks. Still, if Smith continues to be compared favorably to former OSU tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells, his reps will likely take care of themselves.

• **Marcus Hall, offensive line** – Lost amid the hand-wringing about how to replace multiyear starting guards Bryant Browning and Justin Boren is the fact Hall returns after

sitting out last season to get his academics back on track. The 6-5, 321-pounder and former five-star prospect has heretofore played the tackle position, but it doesn't seem much of a stretch to believe the Buckeyes will move Hall inside – just as they did two springs ago with Browning – to get their best offensive linemen on the field.



Rod Smith

• **Andrew Norwell, offensive line** – Speaking of getting your most talented players on the field, the 6-5, 308-pound Norwell is the likely replacement for Mike Adams at left tackle when Adams begins to serve his five-game suspension. Norwell played well as a backup last season, and the former five-star prospect is eager to use this spring as a forum to prove he can handle a starting role. There seems to be little debate that he can.

The bigger question may be whether the Buckeyes will want Norwell to relinquish the position when Adams returns.

• **Corey "Philly" Brown, receiver** – With Dane Sanzenbacher gone and DeVier Posey one of those players who will have to sit the first five games of the regular season, someone is going to have to step up this spring at wide receiver. The Buckeyes have some intriguing youngsters at the position, but none more than Brown. He turned in a quietly efficient freshman season in 2010, finishing with eight catches for 105 yards and a touchdown, and he carried the ball twice for 27 yards. Can the 5-11, 170-pounder step up? We'll be watching.

– Mark Rea

COVER STORY

the field all the time," Heacock said. "If you've got 12 players that are all pretty equal, now you can sub or maybe play more nickel. We felt like Tyler proved in camp (last year) he was one of our best 11 players. He's a great blitz, which we felt like we needed, and how can you take a guy like that off the field? That's what it comes down to."

Rather than fret about the youth he figures to see everywhere around him on the practice field this spring, Heacock said he expects an enjoyable round of 15 days of work.

"These are the fun ones because you have no idea who's going to step up," he said. "The competition is going to be unbelievable. Nobody's going to be able to coast through practice."

Heacock, who also coaches the defensive line, is a staunch believer in building a defense from front to back, so it must be considered a good thing that the most known quantities appear to be on the line this spring. Cameron Heyward and Dexter Larimore are gone, but starters John Simon and Nathan Williams are back.

Williams, a 6-3, 260-pound senior, is probably the team's best pass rusher, and he will look to build on a first season as a starter during which he had 46 tackles, including 9½ for loss and 4½ sacks, as the Leo or weakside defensive end.

There figures to be a spirited battle behind him because Heacock is fond of subbing liberally at every line position and there is some uncertainty about who would be the next man up. Senior-to-be Solomon Thomas backed Williams last season, but he is suspended for the first five games of the season for his role in the same incident that has the four offensive starters benched.

"I know I won't be able to play in those games and it will be my senior year," Thomas said after his interception clinched the Buckeyes' 31-27 Sugar Bowl victory over Arkansas. "Seniors usually step up to the plate to help younger guys, and we've got a great Leo under me in J.T. Moore, so I'm going to have to use my suspension to help him."

"In the end, that might help me when I come back from my suspension. That's what we're taught – return to the youth."

The third man on the depth chart last season was walk-on Stewart Smith, who is scheduled to return, but many think highly of Moore, a 6-1, 246-pounder who took a redshirt last season as a freshman. Also in the mix at Leo should be David Durham, another redshirt freshman.

When healthy, Larimore did a good job anchoring the line in the middle at nose guard the past two seasons, but many around the program are excited to see what kind of impact Johnathan Hankins can have in his second year in Columbus.

The 6-3 Hankins, who is perhaps listed generously low at 335 pounds, burst onto the scene as a freshman in 2010 and earned a spot in the rotation to the surprise of Heacock, who thought the youngster would need at least a year to remake his body. Instead, the OSU defensive coordinator called upon Hankins not just for his bulk to stop the run but also his surprising quickness to wreak havoc on opposing offenses.

Hankins might be slowed at the start of spring practice because of an unidentified off-season surgery, but many expect his future to be bright.

Other players who could be able to contribute at nose guard are junior Garrett Goebel and freshman Joel Hale.

Goebel and Hale also figure to be a part of a plethora of players suited to play one of the other two starting positions in which the only real difference is where the player lines up. The end lines up on the outside shoulder of the offensive tackle on the strong side while

the tackle, also known as a "3-technique" player because of the name of the gap he covers, lines up between the guard and tackle on the weak side.

Heyward and Simon each flipped adeptly from one spot to the other in the past, and Simon figures to reprise that role this year as a junior.

First in line to replace Heyward is Adam Bellamy, a 6-4, 295-pound sophomore who impressed in limited action last season, and redshirt freshman Darryl Baldwin. Additionally, fans are eager to see what sophomore Melvin Fellows, a former five-star recruit, can contribute if he can put lingering knee problems behind him. Early reports are that Fellows remains iffy for spring ball.

Meanwhile, spring should be action packed at linebacker as seven scholarship players figure to compete to fill two open spots in the base defense.

The one veteran in the group is Andrew Sweat, a senior-to-be who spent most of the season as the team's strongside (Sam) linebacker but also filled in for Ross Homan on the weak side (Will) when the three-year starter was injured at Wisconsin in game seven and subsequently missed two contests.

Sweat looked more comfortable in Homan's spot, where he was mostly protected by the defensive line and able to read and react to plays. As a result, Sweat is expected to return to the Will position and who steps up at the Sam position remains to be seen.

Junior Jonathan Newsome backed up Sweat there last year but did not make much of an impact despite the nose for the ball he has displayed during open practices, and some insiders believe Storm Klein, another junior, could move to Sam after spending his first two seasons at middle linebacker (Mike).

That move could be made in anticipation of Etienne Sabino taking over in the middle. Sabino was expected to spend 2010 at the Sam spot but lost a preseason position battle to Sweat and redshirted instead. The 6-3, 240-pound junior has good size and speed but has been held back by a tendency to overthink things at Sam, so he might be better suited inside where more simple reactions are usually required.

"Most times if a guy redshirts, it's for his best interest," Heacock said. "It's hard to do when you're going through it, but when you come out on the other side, you're usually better. The important thing is you get better during the redshirt year. If you're just like, 'Well I'm not playing anyway, so to heck with it,' then your

redshirt year is wasted. I think Etienne worked hard during his redshirt year. He was in the weight room trying to get faster and quicker and all that, so hopefully it pays off."

Also in the mix are junior Jordan Whiting, sophomore Dorian Bell, redshirt freshman Scott McVey and true freshman Ryan Shazier. Tony Jackson, a fifth-year senior walk-on, could throw his hat in the ring as well. McVey is eager to show what he can do after being bothered all of last season with a shoulder problem that required surgery.

"At Ohio State with the legacies you have, you really don't have any other choice when it's your time," Heacock said. "You've got to step up. So it will be interesting to see how Etienne does. I think Sweat really proved himself last year when he was put in some tough situations and played well. I think he's going to be a good player for us."

The defensive backfield could have doubled for a ninefield last season when it came to injuries, and the lingering effects figure to muddle the picture in the spring.

Sophomore C.J. Barnett was lost for the season after a knee injury in the second game of the season, and redshirt freshman Corey Brown followed him to the injured list six weeks later with the same.

Brown is not expected to be back until summer, but there is every indication Barnett will be full-go for spring practice since he participated in all 6 a.m. winter conditioning drills. At some point in 2011, both would like to make a run at the starting safety spot vacated by the graduation of Jermale Hines.

The other starter for most of the season, Orhian Johnson, is back for his junior season, although some uneven performances last year might leave him vulnerable to being overtaken by one of a number of hungry candidates. Those looking to make a move on the depth chart this spring include senior Nate Oliver, junior Zach Domicone, sophomore Jamie Wood and early enrollees Jeremy Cash and Ron Tanner.

Perhaps joining that group also will be Christian Bryant, who began his freshman campaign as a cornerback last year but moved to star around the start of the regular season. He became the No. 1 star after Moeller was injured, but that lasted only two weeks because of a foot infection and subsequent surgery that kept him out of the last five games of the regular season.

Whether Bryant will remain a full-time star or add safety and/or cornerback duties is unclear heading into spring ball, but the coaches are sure to want to find a way to get a player

with his nose for the ball and knack for making plays onto the field somewhere.

With or without Bryant, cornerback will be a competitive position this spring as coach Taver Johnson looks to replace Chimdi Chekwa, a three-year starter, and Devon Torrence, a two-year starter.

After fighting shoulder problems for two years, Travis Howard finally found his way onto the field as the No. 3 cornerback last year, so the redshirt sophomore figures to be a front-runner to start this year. Right behind him on the depth chart at the close of last season was Dominic Clarke, now a sophomore, and senior Donnie Evege figures to make a bid for serious playing time after recovering from an elbow injury that cost him the last nine games of last season.

Two players who spent all of last season on the sideline could earn major playing time as well – Dionte Allen and Bradley Roby.

Allen transferred from Florida State and joined the team shortly after the completion of preseason camp. He has only one year of eligibility left, but the talent that made him a four-star recruit coming out of Orchard Lake (Mich.) St. Mary's and the work ethic that led him to be named scout team defensive player the week once and special teamer of the week twice last year make him an attractive option for the staff.

Roby redshirted last year as a freshman but turned some heads during preseason practice for his aggressive nature. He was mentioned again during bowl practice by teammates asked to name impressive youngsters.

Moeller is classified as a defensive back, too, and seems assured of reclaiming his spot at the star. Bryant seems a natural to back him up again, and Oliver has taken repetitions at the position in the past.

Getting Special

No spring practice preview could be complete without a look at the specialists who will be looking to improve and potentially impress.

Junior Ben Buchanan is back for his second year as the team's full-time punter while Drew Basil looks ticketed to take over for Devin Barclay as the new placekicker. Basil handled kickoff duties as a true freshman last season.

The staff will also be in search of a new long snapper after the graduation of dependable Jake McQuaide. A group of walk-ons including his 2010 backup, George Makridis, figures to compete for that job – at least until incoming freshman Bryce Haynes joins the team in the fall.

Defensive Players On The Spot

• **Etienne Sabino, linebacker** – There were a half-dozen five-star prospects in OSU's 2008 recruiting class, and all of them have become solid starters – all of them with the exception of Sabino. Talent has never been a problem for the chiseled 6-3, 240-pounder. His struggles have always been with the mental aspects of the game, often being guilty of overthinking rather than simply allowing his natural ability take over. Sabino redshirted last season in order to have a clear shot at the starting middle linebacker position in 2011. We will begin to see soon if that redshirt year had the desired effect.

• **Garrett Goebel, defensive line** – After having served his apprenticeship behind the likes of Todd Denlinger, Doug Worthington and Dexter Larimore, Goebel figures to have first crack at a starting interior position alongside John Simon. The 6-3, 281-pound junior has a tremendous upside, but with only 11 tackles to show for 23 career games so far, Goebel needs to turn things up a notch this spring to hold off talented sophomore Johnathan Hankins.

• **Tyler Moeller, star** – After missing all of 2009 recovering from a serious head injury, Moeller returned last season and immediately made an impact with 20 tackles in the Buckeyes' first four games. Then came a torn pectoral muscle, subsequent

surgery and another offseason filled with rehab. But the 6-0, 210-pound ball hawk returns this spring undaunted, eager for his sixth year of eligibility and ready to take over as one of the leaders of this year's defense.

• **Dionte Allen, cornerback** – Most fans have forgotten that Allen is a ready-made replacement at one of the starting cornerback spots. Rated by Scout.com as the No. 5 prep cornerback in the nation in 2007, the 5-11, 185-pounder appeared in 14 games over two seasons at Florida State before transferring to OSU last year. Allen battled some injuries during his time with the Seminoles but has been healthy since coming to Columbus. And just in case you think rust is an issue, Allen earned OSU scout team player of the week honors three times last season.

• **Travis Howard/Dominic Clarke, cornerback** – The future is now for these youngsters, both of whom were thrust into action in the Sugar Bowl when Chimdi Chekwa went down. Howard is a 6-0, 190-pounder with excellent cover skills while Clarke seems to excel at propelling his 5-10, 191-pound body toward opposing ball carriers like a torpedo. There will be plenty of interesting position battles this spring, and this could be one of the best.

– Mark Rea



Etienne Sabino

There's More To Success Than NCAA Tournament

If you write a column long enough and you are someone who sticks to their convictions, you are bound to repeat yourself from time to time. So it is with me.

Who knows how many times I have written in this space that one of the things bothering me about college basketball today is the fact that all that seems important anymore is how a team does in the NCAA Tournament. What happens in the regular season is rendered almost meaningless.

I'm not sure I want to get into the debate as to what kind of season top-seeded Ohio State had after the Buckeyes were bounced from the Sweet 16 by four seed Kentucky.

There is no denying the achievement of a 32-2 record heading into the Big Dance, the Big Ten regular-season championship, the conference tournament championship or the oh-so-sweet 93-65 thrashing of Wisconsin to cap the regular season – avenging one of the Buckeyes' only losses – and a tough loss at that.

There is also no denying that if you are rated as the NCAA Tournament's top overall seed and you lose in the Sweet 16, you did not live up to expectations. As previously mentioned, for many, how you do in the tournament is all that matters.

I'm not going to get into that debate about how successful this season was because I'm not sure I care. What I know is that this has been one of the most enjoyable Ohio State basketball seasons I have experienced in many years. To me, this team represents everything that is good – or at least should be good – about athletics.

What I saw over the last few months was a team having fun, a team willing to share the basketball and the spotlight, a team on which the upperclassmen accepted the newcomers and everyone seemed to understand their roles. It was fun to watch each game and see which Buckeye might get hot and carry the load. Sometimes it was several Buckeyes, but it was almost never the same player.

I guess what I saw most from this team – especially during a time when dark clouds hang over Ohio State's flagship sport of football – is a group that represented its university well both on and off the court. They are truly winners in my book.

Those inside the program seem to have the same feelings about this team that I do.

"I've never had a team like this that united and bonded," OSU head coach Thad Matta said. "When you have a group of guys that take care of their business the way they are supposed to. They are not problems off the court (and) they are a joy to be around in practice."

I, too, found the team to be a joy.

As for the game with Kentucky, it was an extremely exciting contest. Once you get past the first round or two of the tournament, just about any game is a 50-50 proposition, so I am not stunned the Buckeyes lost. That's why they call it March Madness.

The game came down to the last two shots. Kentucky made its final attempt, Ohio State did not. The Wildcats lived to see another day, while the Buckeyes and their fans were left to debate the success of Ohio State's season.

I was quite impressed – as I have been for most of the season – with the play of Ohio State freshmen Jared Sullinger and Aaron Craft.

Sullinger, who turned in another double-

double with 21 points and 16 rebounds, is such a horse inside and the game turned into a battle of inside forces as Kentucky's 6-10, 275-pound Josh Harrellson also excelled with 17 points and 10 rebounds.

Craft, on the other hand, barely showed up in the box score, tallying only two points and two assists. His defensive performance, however, was one of the most intense I've seen in a while and his hustle was nonstop. The fact that he pulled down six rebounds in a game dominated by such behemoths as Sullinger and Harrellson is a testament to the way the OSU point guard played.

Craft challenged defensively on Brandon Knight's winning shot, and Knight just got the better of the play. That happens in hard-fought games. Despite his comments to the contrary, Craft has no reason to fault his play on the winning basket.

If Sullinger is indeed coming back next season (and I assume Craft is coming back as well) I look forward to watching the duo again to see how much they grow and improve over the summer. It will also be interesting to watch how well they take over the leadership of a team that has featured such departing veterans as David Lighty, Jon Diebler and Dallas Lauderdale.

I will miss those departing players.

I did want to say something about Diebler. I always thought he was pretty much of a one-trick pony and if that one trick – his three-point shot – wasn't working I wondered how much he was contributing, although just his presence helped free up others such as Sullinger because opposing teams had to account for Diebler whether he was hot or not.

Over the last month or two of the season, though, Diebler really impressed me with his all-around play. He showed moves to the hoop, he played good defense and he rebounded.

And as far as his calling card, that three-point shot, he had one of those streaks of which most shooters can only dream. In the final two regular-season games, wins over Penn State and the Badgers, Diebler hit on an incredible 17 of 20 three-point shots.

While it would have been impossible to continue shooting at that rate, Diebler still shot well the rest of the way and wound up hitting 59.0 percent of his 61 three-point shots during the final eight games of his OSU career while averaging 18.0 points a game for that span. To put that 59.0 shooting percentage into perspective, a player would have to shoot 88.5 percent from inside the arc to equal Diebler's scoring output from downtown.

All this from a guy who was pretty much awful from long range as a freshman, when he averaged only 28.9 percent. He improved to a solid 41.6 as a sophomore and 42.0 as a junior. His hot shooting down the stretch as a senior allowed him to hit over half of his shots from three-point range for the season, finishing with a school-record 50.2 percent.

Diebler also lifted his season scoring average to 12.6, slightly off his career high of 13.0 as a junior but well ahead of the 11.2

points a game on 47.0 three-point shooting he was averaging before his eight-game streak to close out the season.

Buckeye Women Rebound

In evaluating a team's success in the NCAA tournament, a lot of it comes down to expectations.

The Ohio State men's team got a No. 1 seed and then got knocked out of the Sweet 16. Given the high expectations that go along with a No. 1 seed, most seem to consider that a disappointment.

The OSU women, on the other hand, were realistically looking at missing the tournament as late as early February. While they exited their tournament at exactly the same place as the men – the Sweet 16 – their result was probably viewed in a more positive light than that of their male counterparts.

I mentioned previously that a basketball team's play in the regular season is somewhat meaningless in light of today's emphasis on the NCAA tournament. One way a team's pre-tourney play is relevant is with regard to seeding in the tourney. That is where the Buckeyes paid the price for their midseason slump.

There remains a hierarchy in women basketball with the likes of Tennessee, Connecticut and Stanford still a cut above the rest of the pack, much to the consternation of many followers of OSU's women's program who believe it's time for their favorite team to join the elite. Unless you get a No. 1 or 2 seed, you are going to run up against one of those powerhouses sooner rather than later. Thus, after two wins at St. John Arena, the No. 4 Buckeyes found themselves facing the vaunted Lady Vols in the Sweet 16.

Unlike last year, when the higher-seeded Buckeyes crumbled against Mississippi State and lost by 20 points in the second round, Ohio State battled the No. 1-seeded Volunteers tooth and nail before bowing by an 85-75 verdict March 26 in Dayton.

That was not the ending many were looking for when the Buckeyes started the season with such high hopes, but it was a far cry from the way things ended last season and an even farther cry from where the team was during the darkest days of this season.

Junior guard Samantha Prahalis, who had a complete meltdown in the tourney loss to the Lady Bulldogs last season, turned in a fine postseason, averaging 19.0 points for the three games. She also showed her overall game by recording an average of 8.3 assists a game in the NCAA action.

In a way, Prahalis is to the women's basketball team what Terrelle Pryor is to the OSU football team – frequently controversial but always exciting. As with Pryor, fans and observers seem to either love her or hate her. There is very little middle ground.

It was a real reversal of form from last season's tournament when the fiery Prahalis stepped in between an agitated Jantel Lavender and an official during the 67-60 second-round win over Georgia Tech.

Other than her brief eruption, Lavender was her usual consistent self during the tournament, turning in three more double-doubles while averaging 23.3 points and 10.3 rebounds.

One needs to appreciate what Lavender accomplished during her time in Columbus. She gave new meaning to the term "student-athlete" as she was not only Big Ten Player of the Year all four of her record-setting seasons, she also graduated in fewer than four years, an accomplishment for any student let alone an elite athlete.

"The numbers Jantel put up over her career speak for themselves," OSU head coach Jim Foster said. "She was the model of consistency year in and year out. She will continue to have a great career."

It will be a new era in Ohio State women's basketball when the Buckeyes take the court without Lavender. It will be interesting to see if the team can build on the strong stretch run this year or if the team's struggles during the regular season were a harbinger of things to come.

Bruce's Florida Recruits

In the March 5 issue of BSB, I traced the growth of Ohio State football recruiting in Florida under John Cooper and later Jim Tressel. As noted in the column, I used the 30 recruiting classes covered in BSB's publishing history, starting with the 1982 class, because I had thorough and reliable information on those classes. Earle Bruce, however, had three recruiting classes before that time frame.

While any Buckeye fan who has followed football recruiting for any length of time knows Bruce did not dip into Florida much in his later years at Ohio State, longtime BSB friend Hal Leiner reminded me that Bruce initially had some success in the Sunshine State.

Among the plums – or is it oranges in this case? – that Bruce plucked from Florida upon taking over from Woody Hayes in 1979 were William Roberts and Cedric Anderson.

Roberts, who was known as Bill or "Big Bill" when he was at Ohio State, was a captain and three-year starter during his time in Columbus. The Miami native went on to play 13 seasons in the NFL, mostly with the New York Giants, and he played in three Super Bowls, including wins with the Giants in Super Bowls XXI and XXV.

Anderson, from Apopka, Fla., joined Gary Williams and Doug Donley as what I would call the first of the modern era receivers at Ohio State. Anderson was a three-year starter for the Buckeyes and finished his OSU career with 80 receptions, which at the time of his departure following the 1983 season was good enough for fifth place on the school's all-time list.

He averaged a dazzling 21.3 yards on those receptions – still a school record for receivers with at least 50 catches – and scored 12 touchdowns.

Interestingly, Anderson's 80 career receptions would no longer crack Ohio State's top 20. In fact, DeVier Posey and Dane Sanzenbacher each passed Anderson on the all-time list last season and stand tied with 124 career catches.

Other Florida contributors from Bruce's pre-BSB recruiting years included Clark Backus, a linebacker from Maitland, who started all 12 games as a senior in 1983, and Doug Hill, a three-year starter at rover for the Buckeyes from 1981-83 who like Roberts hailed from Miami.