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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

April 16, 2011

Leading The Way

Organizer Of 'Brew Crew' Faces New Challenges

By ADAM JARDY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It almost seems as if Michael Brewster's career has been leading him to this opportunity.

Preparing for his fourth year as a starter for the Ohio State football team, the senior center finds himself in a unique position to lead. With five players and head coach Jim Tressel facing five-game suspensions to start the 2011 season and 12 other players who started the Sugar Bowl no longer on the roster, the Buckeyes are in the midst of a spring practice session unlike any other in memory.

In that case, who better to try to hold the line than the player who helped recruit most of this year's senior class?

"It's weird how it worked out," Brewster said April 9 following a scrimmage at Ohio Stadium. "It is a really good opportunity for me. Let's see how good my leadership skills are. Let's see how I can help these guys.

"If my leadership skills are going to be tested, this is a great time to see what I'm made of."

The Brew Crew

It has been almost exactly four years since the Buckeyes landed a verbal commitment from Brewster, who was rated a five-star recruit and the nation's No. 1 center in the class of 2008 by Scout.com.

Still a junior at Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater, Brewster made the trip to Columbus to take in the 2007 spring game. With more than 70,000 fans packing Ohio Stadium on a picture-perfect day, Brewster and a group of recruits that included Mike Adams, J.B. Shugarts, Josh Jenkins, Andrew Sweat and Brandon Beal found themselves signing autographs for fans and posing for pictures all around campus.

Later that evening, Brewster decided that Ohio State was the place for him. While at dinner with a number of OSU coaches, the Florida native issued his verbal commitment. The end result was a bear hug from Tressel and tears in the eyes of offensive line coach Jim Bollman.

Immediately upon issuing his



FILE PHOTO

VOICING HIS OPINION – Ohio State center Michael Brewster helped bring many members of the 2008 recruiting class to Columbus and now acts as a leader on a team dealing with off-the-field distractions.

commitment, Brewster turned his attention to helping fill out the class.

"I have already been talking to some guys today," he said that night. "We need to land a guy like a Terrelle Pryor or Andrew Sweat. I think that we are going to have a really special class. I think that we may already have six top-100 commitments in the class already.

"We are going to build a dynasty."

Brewster then began the process of recruiting other players to join him in Columbus. The lineman was the fifth verbal commitment in OSU's class, joining Ben Buchanan, DeVier Posey, Jake Stoneburner and Adams.

Of those five, Brewster, Adams and Posey were rated five-star prospects, and the class would eventually add three more five-star recruits – linebacker Etienne Sabino, Pryor and Shugarts. Each of those three became Buckeyes at least in part due to Brewster's efforts.

As the year rolled on, the class earned a nickname – "The Brew Crew" – and it wasn't just the aforementioned players who considered themselves part of that group.

"Yeah, I consider myself a member of the Brew Crew," said Nathan Williams, now a senior defensive lineman who committed to the Buckeyes three days after Brewster issued his commitment. "(Brewster) is my dude. I love him to death. I love his family. He's a real good friend of mine."

Williams said Brewster was the first person he had ever met from Florida, adding that because of him he now wears flip-flops.

When National Signing Day rolled around, Pryor was still

undecided but Brewster and Shugarts were not. The pair had graduated early and enrolled for winter courses at OSU, giving them early starts on their college careers.

Shugarts offered some words of hope for the Buckeyes that had Tressel asking for a little restraint.

"We're already coming together as a family (and) that's what sets us over the top with all these other schools like USC and Florida," Shugarts said on National Signing Day. "I think it's going to be really special and you can get prepared for a lot of national championships."

Pryor completed the class, and by the midpoint of their freshman season Brewster had taken the starting center spot and was snapping the ball to his classmate. As he did so, however, he had junior and former center Jim Cordle lining up at left guard helping him make the line calls.

This fall, Brewster figures to be flanked by two sophomore guards – Corey Linsley and Jack Mewhort, both of whom have taken reps at center. In other words, the apprentice has now become the master.

The situation is not lost on the senior.

"It goes by fast," Brewster said of his time so far at Ohio State. "I can't believe it's going to be my last go-around. I try to put myself in their shoes, the younger guys. I remember it is hard at first. You may not be sure at what you're doing and it slows you down a little bit. Anytime I can help someone and be very clear with them and what they need to do, it's going to help everybody."

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OPINION

Ohio State Has Depth Needed To Succeed

Some days, my job feels like equal parts journalist and psychotherapist because on more than one occasion I have had to talk Ohio State fans in off the ledge. Recently, though, the sheer lunacy of the conspiracy theories regarding Tattogate and the Jim Tressel saga nearly drove me to the psychiatrist's couch.

Countless times since early March when Tressel was hit with a two-game suspension and substantial fine, I have had to assure family, friends and fans that Tressel was not going to resign nor was he going to be fired. I think some even secretly believed the NCAA was plotting to bulldoze Ohio Stadium.

Now, with that firestorm seemingly dying away with each passing day, the Nervous Nellies and Chicken Littles have moved on to their latest doomsday scenario – the 2011 season could produce the worst record since Tressel's first team in 2001 finished 7-5 while the Buckeyes' streak of consecutive Big Ten championships will most assuredly end at six.

My reply: Not so fast.

There is no doubt the Ohio State football team is in a state of flux. When the team kicks off Sept. 3 in the Horseshoe against Akron, it will do so without 16 of the players who started the Sugar Bowl. Four of those – quarterback Terrelle Pryor, tailback Dan "Boom" Herron, wide receiver DeVier Posey and left tackle Mike Adams – are integral parts of an offense that averaged 38.8 points and 448.6 yards last season.

But as good as those numbers look, the cold, hard truth at OSU has always been that while offense stirs the masses, defense wins the championships.

With the exception of Posey, the argument can be made that the Buckeyes have ready-made replacements in place for Pryor, Herron and Adams. The offensive scheme will change, of course, without Pryor at the controls but maybe that's not such a terrible thing. An evolving offensive line always seems to excel more at run blocking, meaning Ohio State can take advantage of its unusual depth at tailback. It might not be the most exciting football to watch, but Woody Hayes managed to win a whole bunch of games with a three-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust approach.

Ball-control offense not only controls the tempo of a game, it helps to keep your own defense fresh, and that will be paramount to the Buckeyes in the early going. While the defensive talent is unquestionable, the lineup is a little light on experience.

That said, I have the utmost confidence in defensive coordinator Jim Heacock, who has had to overhaul his starting lineup several times in the past. You need look back only five years when Heacock was faced with replacing nine defensive starters, including his entire secondary and all three linebackers. That season, the Buckeyes won their first outright Big Ten title in 22 years and went all the way to the BCS National Championship Game.

Yes, that was the 2006 season when Troy Smith won the Heisman Trophy while operating an offense that ranked eighth in the nation in scoring. But that was also the season that produced a defense that finished No. 5 in the country in scoring and No. 12 in total defense just one year after the likes of A.J. Hawk, Bobby Carpenter and Donte Whitner went to the NFL.

Quick Look At First Five

It's not only the confidence I have in the personnel and the Ohio State coaching staff that leads me to believe the Buckeyes could

have a much better record during their first five games than many think. It's also the competition.

OSU kicks off the season against Akron, one of the worst teams in Division I-A last season. The Zips finished 1-11 last season and for good reason – they were 118th of 120 teams in total offense and 109th in scoring defense. The only team Akron defeated last season was Buffalo, a Mid-American Conference rival that finished 2-10.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

It is true that the Zips are the most recent current MAC team to beat the Buckeyes, but since that came in 1894 it really has little bearing on the upcoming season. Mark this one down as an easy victory.

Next up is another MAC opponent, although Toledo figures to give the Buckeyes a much stiffer test than Akron.

The Rockets were a bowl team last season, and head coach Tim Beckman – the former OSU assistant – had them playing their best down the stretch. Toledo won five of its last six regular-season games, and only a last-second loss to Florida International in the Little Caesars Bowl prevented the program's first nine-win campaign since 2005.

Beckman should have a pretty decent offense spearheaded by running back Adonis Thomas, who finished second in the MAC in rushing last season. But the Rockets still need to shore up their defense – nine opponents scored at least 20 points and three of those topped 40 – and that could spell disaster against a team such as Ohio State.

Look for Beckman to give it his best shot, but expect the Buckeyes to prevail.

Week three provides the toughest non-conference test when OSU travels to Miami (Fla.) on Sept. 17. The Hurricanes enjoy a 12-day layoff before hosting the Buckeyes, but their season opener is no picnic – they have to travel to Maryland for a Labor Day evening affair with the Terrapins.

Sun Life Stadium should be rocking, of course, as Miami tries for payback from last year's 36-24 loss to Ohio State and that itch from the 2002 national title game its fans just can't seem to scratch enough.

But the Hurricanes are one huge question mark as they enter the 2011 season. They dropped four of their last six games last year, they turned the ball over at an alarming rate – a nation-high 27 interceptions – and they have a new head coach.

Al Golden comes over from Temple, where he was 17-8 the last two seasons with the Owls. In his previous three seasons, however, he was 10-26. Add to that the impression Golden has given early this spring that he will tinker with his lineup – perhaps even well into the regular season – and you have the makings of a team that could still be searching for its identity in mid-September.

If the Buckeyes stick to their game plan and show the same aggressiveness they did defensively against the Hurricanes a year ago, this game is far from a lost cause for Ohio State. In fact, I see no reason why OSU shouldn't be favored to win.

One week later, the Buckeyes return home to face another program in transition.

Colorado begins its first season of Pac-10 membership with Jon Embree as the program's third head coach in the last 12 months.

Embree has 16 starters returning from last year's 5-7 team, including second-team all-conference tailback Rodney Stewart, who was 12th in the nation with an average of 109.8 yards per game.

But as any college football fan knows, returning starters sometimes have a short shelf life when a new head coach comes to town. The truth of the matter is that Colorado hasn't had a winning season since 2005, and it is doubtful that string ends anytime soon.

That brings us to Oct. 1, the Big Ten opener with Michigan State and a game that will go a long, long way toward determining the success of Ohio State's season. And before you summarily dismiss the Buckeyes' chances against the defending conference co-champions, understand the Spartans are yet another team facing the challenges of an overhauled starting lineup.

By early October, MSU head coach Mark Dantonio will have found replacements for 11 departed starters from last season, including All-American linebacker Greg Jones and All-Big Ten punter Aaron Bates. History is not exactly on Coach Dino's side, however. The last four times the Spartans have won or shared the Big Ten championship, they have failed to win more than six games the following season.

In addition, since it is reasonable to believe Ohio State will be ranked when it plays Michigan State, it is worth mentioning Dantonio's record against ranked teams in his four seasons in East Lansing – it's only 5-10.

At least the head Spartan won't have to worry about going against his old boss. Tressel is not only a perfect 6-0 against Sparty, Dantonio has never beaten JT in four previous tries – 2004 and '06 at Cincinnati and '07 and '08 at MSU. The combined scores of those four games? 136-37.

With the aforementioned information in mind, it is certainly no stretch to believe Ohio State could make it through its first five games without Tressel and the so-called "Tattooed Five" unscathed.

Statement Game

Then, of course, the Buckeyes will finally be at full strength when they make their first-ever visit to Lincoln to take on new Big Ten rival Nebraska. That will definitely be a loss, right?

Maybe. Maybe not. Nebraska head coach Bo Pelini is credited with breathing life back into a program that had fallen on hard times. The Cornhuskers, a pedestrian 27-22 overall during the four-year tenure of Bill Callahan, have rebounded to go 30-12 in three seasons under Pelini.

Last year, Nebraska enjoyed its second straight 10-win season, something that hadn't occurred in Lincoln in a decade. Pelini has accomplished much of his success with defense, and it proved to be that way last season as well when the Huskers were ninth in the country in scoring defense.

But the nasty little secret about Pelini and his team is that they seem to falter on the big stage. For all of his success, Pelini is only 5-7 against ranked opponents including back-to-back defeats in the Big 12 championship game. Then, there was the totally inexplicable 19-7 Holiday Bowl loss to Washington, a team that had to win its final three regular-season games last year just to become bowl-eligible.

There is no doubt Memorial Stadium is a tough place to play, especially for a team that has never been there. At the same time, don't you think there is just the slightest possibility Tressel, Pryor, et al. will want to make a statement on their first game back?



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Charter Member

COVER STORY

Brewster, Seniors To Be Tested During '11 Season

Continued From Page 1

Suspension Byproduct

As Brewster pointed out, this year will test him and his fellow seniors in a number of ways. Suspensions aside, this year's team has to replace an impressive amount of talent from a squad that finished the 2010 season with a 12-1 overall record and captured a share of a conference record-tying sixth consecutive Big Ten title.

That alone would be a daunting task, but the suspensions of offensive starters Pryor, Adams, Posey and tailback Dan "Boom" Herron have provided an unforeseen benefit.

"I'm sure when the time comes it's going to be a little bit weird, but we've been rotating so many guys in spring ball it just seems normal," Brewster said. "I never know who's going to be at quarterback or who's going to be at running back or left tackle.

"We're just trying to get as many guys in as we can, and I think that's really going to pay off for us in the future - getting all those guys experience and not worrying who's out there, just knowing this is what we've got to do when we're out there."

Williams said the most important goal for the defense is to develop chemistry this spring.

"We have more mental issues than anything," he said. "That's something that can be corrected just by paying attention and learning the defense as a whole."

Sweat, now a senior, said it will not just fall on the seniors to set the example for the team.

"I think it's important for everyone to step up and provide leadership no matter if you're a senior or junior," the linebacker said. "Obviously we lose some guys the first couple of games, but it's important that everyone steps up.

"We're just focused on getting better for this upcoming season. We're using this



SIGNING UP - Fans at the 2007 spring game tried to secure autographs from offensive line recruits (from left) Michael Brewster, Josh Jenkins, Mike Adams and J.B. Shugarts.

ADAM JARDY

spring. There are opportunities for people at different positions and I think they're excited about that. We're more focusing in on what we can control for next season and trying to get better."

That involves remaining loyal to the man in charge. Herron said it meant a lot to see Tressel volunteer to increase his suspension to match those his players will face.

"My thing is, everybody is human," the fifth-year senior said. "Everyone makes mistakes. Coach Tressel is still a great coach to me. I still look up to him. He's a great person to us and a great coach for us. I'm behind



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COVER STORY

him all the way and I support him. Nothing has changed the way I think of him."

Brewster said he was never concerned that Tressel would step down despite numerous rumors to the contrary.

"Coach Tress is always a step ahead of everybody," he said. "He's one of the smartest guys I've ever been around. I know he's a few steps ahead of what everyone else is thinking. We trust him. We know he's going to make the right decisions. In the end, he's going to make sure that he's going to put us in a position to be successful. That's why he's such a great coach."

Both Brewster and Herron said that although the coaches do a good job of keeping the team's focus only on what goes on within the locker room and on the field, the situation involving the suspended players and Tressel has proved difficult to ignore outside the friendly confines of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"Sometimes you see it on TV but you've just got to focus on what we're trying to do and that's get better every day," Herron said. "I just really try to stay focused on the team and our job. I think I still can be a role model for the team and a great leader. With us guys missing the first couple of games I know guys will definitely step up and do a great job."

Brewster said the team is sticking to some words of wisdom offered by Tressel when news of his pending punishment first broke.

"He told us, 'We're going to have some adverse times, but I'm going to be here with you guys,'" the senior center said. "We're really just trying to keep things moving and not look back. You can't change the past. We're just trying to get better every day now."

Those efforts will be furthered by Brewster on a number of fronts. In addition to being a senior and a multiyear starter, he finds himself directing the entire offense from his position.

"I feel like I'm in a great position at center," Brewster said. "I'm a senior. These are my leadership skills being put to the test now. I can tell guys who to block. I can really solve out where guys need to go. As they learn more and they understand more where I'm telling them to go, things will move smoother."

"I think I can really help the quarterbacks out, keeping guys off of them and picking up blitzes. Being at center, I'm excited about the role that I can have this year."

Business As Usual

Through the first week of spring practice, it was hard to tell that much was different among the Buckeyes.

When the starting offensive unit took the field for an April 9 scrimmage, Adams, Herron and Posey were all in the lineup while Pryor looked on, still limited following offseason foot surgery. The fifth suspended player - defensive end Solomon Thomas - also got into the action at the Leo position where he spent last season.

While a number of players who will be available all season had their moments, Posey was one of the stars of the day with two touchdown catches.

Brewster said that although he was happy to see the wideout turn in a few impressive plays, there was a momentary flash of recognition that the offense will look a whole lot different when the season starts without Pryor, Posey, Herron and Adams.

"It is what it is, I guess," Brewster said. "At this point, we know it's five games. It's not going to go down and it's not going to go up. Other guys are going to have to make plays, but at Ohio State we count on guys stepping up. We lose big-name players every



MATTHEW HAGER

NO DIFFERENCES - Despite the offseason troubles surrounding the program, action on the field for the Ohio State football team has remained as it usually is this spring. Center Michael Brewster (50) leads a thin offensive line unit that currently boasts only 11 players.

year, but you've got to have someone backing them up."

Herron said his focus has not yet turned ahead to his senior season and pending suspension.

"To be honest, I don't think it's really hit me yet," he said. "I really try not to think about it because that's going to be tough. But at the same time I'll have to go through it. I'm just trying to keep getting better every day. I can't let it bring me down. I just have to stay positive about it."

One day before spring practice kicked off, Tressel told reporters he had been encouraged by the work ethic demonstrated by the suspended players during the offseason.

Brewster said the fights for open spots have brought out the best in a number of players.

"Guys come here to play," he said. "Like Coach says, if you're in the team meeting room before practice, we need you to help this team. You didn't come here to sit on the bench, right? Everyone is here to play. That's why every year we have new guys step up and make plays."

Helping the situation somewhat is the fact that the Buckeyes have been dealing with a variation of the issue since December. As the team prepared for the Sugar Bowl, the initial player suspensions were announced two days before Christmas.

When the team arrived in New Orleans, Tressel opened his introductory press conference by addressing the issue and then declaring it off-limits for further discussion. However, a few days later, the players did address it, telling reporters they felt the situation was bringing them closer together as a team.

In the immediate aftermath of the Sugar Bowl win against Arkansas, the added attention was cited as one reason the program was able to earn its first-ever bowl victory against a team from the Southeastern Conference.

A number of those feelings remain as the Buckeyes go through spring practice.

"As a team, I don't think we're letting this bother us at all," Shugarts said. "I think we're using it as motivation - just some added adversity. More eyes are on us, more people want to see us fail. We're just going to take all that in and we're going to succeed and prove everybody wrong."

During the lone interview session during

the first week of spring practice, the players made available to reporters pointed out there remains unproven talent all across the roster.

Brewster said expectations for the season have not changed within the locker room despite the perception from the outside.

"You can do two things - you can get mad or you can use it to your advantage and use it as fuel to prove people wrong," he said. "That's the attitude we take to it. Let's just

keep working hard. Let's shock the world. Let's show people what we can do by staying together. It's amazing what teams can do when they stay together.

"It's not always the most talented teams that are the best. It's who is doing the right things every play, taking care of the ball and rushing the ball. I'm pumped about this team."

BSB staff writer Jeff Svoboda contributed to this report.

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Healthy Buckeyes Ramp Up Spring Workouts

By **MARCUS HARTMAN**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Since the start of spring football practice March 31, reporters have been allowed to watch part of two practices and all of a third.

That represents a scaling back of the access media was allowed the previous two springs, but the BSB staff swarmed upon the proceedings provided en masse and what we saw during the first two weeks of camp was mostly spirited action and a team in good health.

There was no shortage of work to be done on the offensive line, where 11 players – including only eight on scholarship – were available for coach Jim Bollman to put through the paces while he looked for two new starters and a third player to hold down the left tackle spot while incumbent Mike Adams is suspended the first five games of the season.

That group had to deal with OSU's talent-laden defensive line, perhaps the deepest unit on the team. While senior Nathan Williams is back to man the dropback defensive end position known as the Leo, four players looked fit to fill the other three starting spots and a couple of youngsters were impressive as well.

Linebackers coach Luke Fickell played around with a couple of different combinations, and who starts at safety looks far from being decided. Cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson was his usual enthusiastic self despite having to hobble around in a walking boot that protected an Achilles injury. Johnson had a pair of veterans in junior Travis Howard and senior Dionte Allen competing with youngsters Dominic Clarke and Bradley Roby, a sophomore and a redshirt freshman, respectively.

It's safe to say there was competition everywhere one looked on the practice fields in Columbus this spring, and that didn't even include a position in which fans were probably most interested – quarterback.

We recapped the first day's observations in our April 5 electronic edition, still available to subscribers online with all of our other issues. The following is a look at what we saw during two open days during the second week of practice.

April 5

With access limited, most of the attention went first to the quarterback race, and that held a surprise this particular day when practice was held inside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center because of rain.

Senior Joe Bauserman missed practice because of a class conflict, leaving sophomore Kenny Guiton to take reps with the first team. He showed good mobility and threw the ball well, particularly on a couple of deep in routes to senior DeVier Posey.

Redshirt freshman Taylor Graham followed Guiton and was somewhat erratic. Graham completed a few passes but threw an interception after being flushed from the pocket by tackle Evan Blankenship.

Allen made a good diving catch on the play, but it was a late throw to a receiver who was covered. Graham later airmailed a throw that nearly hit media members on the sideline as they left the practice facility.

True freshman Braxton Miller showed off the arm that made him one of the nation's most sought-after high school quarterbacks, and he left little doubt he can get



out of the pocket and keep plays alive, too. He looked comfortable dumping the ball off to outlet receivers, and he fired a couple of laser beams to various parts of the field.

His most impressive pass was a 10-yard out that he threw on a rope from the left hash to sophomore receiver Chris Fields on the far sideline.

Also observed during the practice session:

- On the offensive line, sophomores Corey Linsley and Jack Mewhort were the starting guards, but there was a lot of mixing and matching on the unit. Both also saw time at center while sophomores Andrew Norwell and Marcus Hall played both tackle and guard.

- Sophomore safety C.J. Barnett (knee) and redshirt freshman linebacker Scott McVey (shoulder) were in blue noncontact jerseys while senior safety Tyler Moeller (pectoral) and senior quarterback Terrelle Pryor (ankle) were both in yellow jerseys that kept them out of nearly all activities. Additionally, senior cornerback Donnie Egeve was spotted on the sideline in street clothes and on crutches. Senior walk-on tight end Spencer Smith and freshman linebacker Ryan Shazier returned to full participation after being out March 31, the previous time reporters were allowed to watch practice.

- Pryor threw passes in a drill pitting wide receivers and defensive backs against each other one on one. The receiver would run a different route every time with the defender having to jam and react, and though he was just lobbing some of the long ones, Pryor dialed up a few tight throws. One in particular he put right by the defender's ear into the hands of his receiver, drawing praise from new receivers coach Stan Drayton.

- There was lots of rotating on the defensive line with Williams and redshirt freshman J.T. Moore seeming to switch every series at Leo with the first team. Moore seemed like the top candidate to back up Williams while senior Solomon Thomas, the No. 2 Leo last season, is suspended for the first five games. Meanwhile,



MATTHEW HAGER PHOTOS

QB BATTLE – Joe Bauserman (14) was the No. 1 quarterback April 9 after missing practice because of a class conflict four days earlier. Kenny Guiton (right) took the first reps April 5, with Braxton Miller (above, standing) following Guiton and Taylor Graham.

juniors Garrett Goebel and John Simon and sophomores Johnathan Hankins and Adam Bellamy each saw time filling out the rest of the top front four.

- Junior Etienne Sabino and senior Andrew Sweat had two linebacker spots locked down on the first team while senior walk-on Tony Jackson spent some time as the Sam (strongside) linebacker in the base defense. However, since the Buckeyes were mostly in nickel during the brief time reporters could watch, Jackson was replaced by the star, Christian Bryant. Dorian Bell and Storm Klein were next at linebacker with Chad Hagan appearing to play both linebacker and star.

- Blankenship, a fifth-year defensive lineman making one last go at playing time after three years on offense, played with the second team and flashed some ability when he was able to get some pressure on a quarterback.

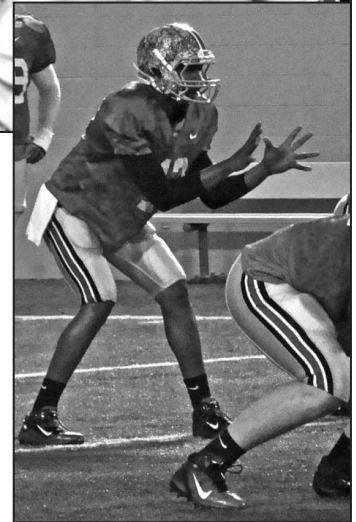
- The first two safeties were Orhian Johnson and Barnett although Barnett was involved only part of the time. Bryant played some safety alongside Johnson but mostly played the star position as Moeller continued to sit out drills with a yellow jersey. Sophomore Jamie Wood and junior Zach Domicone looked like the next pair at safety that day.

April 9

No jerseys were on the line, but there was plenty of intensity as an offense-defense scrimmage dominated the action during a 2½-hour practice at Ohio Stadium.

After scores on its first two possessions, the offense struggled for a long period of time before rallying on its last four.

To start things off, Bauserman connected with Posey on a dig route and let his fellow senior do the rest. Posey outran several



defenders for a 33-yard touchdown, part of a four-catch, 63-yard day for him.

Graham followed by leading the second-team offense 25 yards to set up a 42-yard field goal by sophomore Drew Basil.

However, then came six straight empty possessions, the first ending with a fumble by Guiton after he was sacked by Bellamy. Hankins came up with the loose pigskin for the defense.

After Guiton led a three-play series that ended with an incomplete pass intended for redshirt freshman T.Y. Williams, Miller took his first turn with an offense that included mostly reserves.

That ended as another three-and-out, and the offense would not score again until Basil bounced a 48-yard field goal off the crossbar and through for three points four possessions later.

Using a customized scoring system, the defense led by a 43-28 count when head coach Jim Tressell opted to spread things out to finish the day.

The last four possessions all featured nothing but empty-backfield sets as three of the quarterbacks took turns leading no-huddle attacks and the offense scored on all four.

Graham started the late push with a seven-play, 50-yard drive that ended with a perfectly executed back-shoulder fade to Posey, who beat Clarke in the end zone for an 8-yard touchdown.

Miller continued it with another 50-yard

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drive, this one punctuated with a hair-raising 11-yard touchdown run during which he juiced Moore in the backfield and then sprinted through the middle of the defense before diving across the goal line. Miller also had a 17-yard completion to running back Jordan Hall during the drive.

The freshman QB's score put the offense ahead, 46-45, and Basil followed with a PAT kick and a pair of field goals (on drives led by Guiton and Graham) to set the final margin at 56-45.

In unofficial stats, Graham got the most work and completed 10 of 16 passes for 86 yards and a touchdown while Guiton was 6 for 11 for 51 yards.

Miller was 5 for 7 for 51 yards while Bauserman was 2 for 4 for 50 yards with a touchdown and the game's only interception, a tipped ball that fell into the arms of Bell.

Sophomore Jaamal Berry led a running attack that featured quite a few sizable holes. He carried five times for 28 yards while highly touted redshirt freshman Rod Smith picked up 22 yards on six totes. Jordan Hall picked up 14 yards on four carries and added 24 yards on two receptions while senior All-Big Ten running back Dan "Boom" Herron had 16 yards on four carries.

Aside from Posey, only two receivers caught more than one pass. Fields had two catches for 18 yards while redshirt freshman Verlon Reed grabbed two for 13 yards.

Reserve safety Nate Ebner had a scrimmage-high five tackles while sophomore end Melvin Fellows had a pair of sacks.

The defense pressured the quarterbacks consistently but forced only two turnovers,

crucial sources of points in the scoring system.

Other observations during the scrimmage:

- There were two noticeable injuries on the day. Junior fullback Zach Boren left the scrimmage early with what looked like a right shoulder injury and T.Y. Williams had to exit after taking a big hit from Sabino. Williams got up and tried to walk off the field but had to stop near the hash marks and take a knee before receiving attention from staff members. There was no update on either player afterward.

- The starting offensive line consisted of Adams and Shugarts at tackle with Mewhort and Linsley at guards and Michael Brewster at center. On the second team, Mewhort and Linsley alternated at center while Norwell and walk-on Ivan Blackman played the guard positions and Marcus Hall was the left tackle with true freshman Tommy Brown at right tackle.

- The running backs played in the following order – Herron, Berry, Jordan Hall, Carlos Hyde and Smith. All had their moments, but observers were particularly curious to see what Smith could do. He did not disappoint as he showed he has good shiftiness for a 220-pound back, not to mention impressive acceleration.

- The No. 1 defense had Nathan Williams, Goebel, Hankins and Simon on the line with Moore, true freshman Jake Hale, Fellows and Blankenship backing them up. Bellamy also played on both units, and redshirt freshmen David Durham and Darryl Baldwin saw time with the lower units. Hale had a pair of tackles and has drawn some praise from program insiders for his early impact.

- Jackson (strongside), Sabino (middle) and Sweat (weakside) started at linebacker

with Bell, Klein and Hagan backing them up. At times, the starting linebacker corps was shuffled to include Bell on the weak-side with Sweat in the middle and Sabino on the strong side. Sophomore Jordan Whiting also mixed in and made a couple of impressive hits.

- Bryant and Johnson began at safety with sophomore Jamie Wood and Ebner at backup and Domicone working in as well.

- Howard and Roby began at cornerback, although Roby was soon replaced by Clarke. Allen was the other No. 2 cornerback.


- The scrimmage was preceded by a kick scrimmage that lasted roughly 30 minutes and was dominated by Basil. He made 8 of 10 field goals with a long of 48. One of his misses was blocked. Junior Ben Buchanan excelled punting, including a 73-yarder from the back of the end zone. He also dropped two inside the 5-yard line from near midfield. On the down side, walk-on Derek Erwin had four punts blocked.

- Shazier was back in a yellow jersey, as was Pryor, while walkons Bo DeLande and Chris Roark joined them.

- No tight ends stood out during the scrimmage, but insiders indicated returning juniors Jake Stoneburner and Reid Fragel were impressive through the first week of spring ball. The quarterbacks have emphasized utilizing them and the running backs in the passing game. Any contributions the tight ends and running backs can make as pass catchers could be crucial as the group of wide receivers behind returning starter Posey – who is suspended for the first five games of the season – have not stood out during open portions of practice.

BSB staffers Matthew Hager, Adam Jarley and Jeff Svoboda contributed to this report.

ADAM JARDY
TOUGH BREAK – Cornerback Donnie Evey (30) was seen on crutches April 5 with an undisclosed injury.



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Plenty Of New Faces Appear In OSU's Depth Chart

By ADAM JARDY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State fans struggling to identify players during the annual spring game might be surprised to know they have an unexpected ally.

On the eve of spring practice, head coach Jim Tressel stood at the front of the team meeting room inside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for his annual press conference to preview the upcoming slate of practices. In an opening statement that nearly stretched to 30 minutes, the coach paused for a second and reached for a piece of paper.

It was a personnel list, one Tressel said was necessary as he took a position-by-position look at his 2011 Buckeyes. With 11 players gone from last year's starting lineup – a total that does not even include kicker Devin Barclay and long snapper Jake McQuaide – and five more suspended for the first five games of the season, there will be plenty of new faces thrust into some significant roles this fall.

Read on for some of Tressel's thoughts on each position group as it stood before the start of spring practice. The number of returners is as of the depth chart released by the team prior to the Sugar Bowl.

Defensive Line Two-Deep Returners: 6

Reporters wanting a physical reminder of what the Buckeyes will be replacing up front this fall received one about 10 minutes before Tressel took the microphone. It was then that Cameron Heyward addressed the media after working out for pro scouts at the WHAC and discussed his hopes of becoming a first-round pick in the upcoming NFL draft.

When he lumbered out of the room, Heyward took along with him 163 total tackles, including 37½ tackles for loss and 15½ sacks, while rotating along the defensive line. Linemate Dexter Larimore has graduated as well after racking up 91 tackles, including 16½ for loss and eight sacks from his tackle position.

Raw numbers aside, the two had clearly established themselves as the leaders within the position group's meeting room.

"Up front when you lose guys like Dex and Cameron Heyward, you're losing some production and you're losing extraordinary leadership," Tressel said. "Those guys are tremendous leaders."

Two starters return in senior Nathan Williams and junior John Simon. Together, the pair has combined for 25 starts – 13 for Simon and 12 for Williams, who is the team's leader in career tackles for loss (21½) and sacks (10) as part of 90 tackles over the past three seasons. Simon has 57 tackles, including 12 for loss and 4½ sacks, in his two seasons so far.

"John Simon has emerged as a guy that we believe needs to take the next step from a leadership standpoint," Tressel said.

Simon saw the second-most minutes among defensive linemen last season. Heyward led the way with 251 and Simon came in at 245.

Along with those two players, the coach said leadership needs to come from fifth-year senior Solomon Thomas. In addition to recording the game-saving interception in the Sugar Bowl, Thomas has 23 total tackles to his credit while playing mostly in a reserve role.

Thomas is one of five players suspended for the first five games of the season for selling personal memorabilia and receiving discounted tattoos, but Tressel said that has not had an effect on the lineman's work ethic.

"Solly had his best academic quarter since he's been here," the OSU head coach said. "He was outstanding during this entire wintertime, but those three guys have got to step up and take the leadership role in that defensive front room."

Behind Williams, Simon and Thomas, a number of other players are fighting for playing time. During two half-hour practice periods open to reporters during the first two weeks of spring ball, junior Garrett Goebel and sophomores Adam Bellamy and Johnathan Hankins rotated into the first unit.

Redshirt freshman J.T. Moore appears to be Williams' primary backup at the Leo position with Thomas facing his suspension. After two injury-plagued seasons, former five-star prospect Melvin Fellows saw action on the second unit as well.

Linebacker Two-Deep Returners: 4

Two names that continually popped up during Tressel's speech were Ross Homan and Brian Rolle – and with good reason. Homan finished his career with 287 tackles, good for 16th best in program history, while Rolle recorded 208. Both served as team co-captains last season, as well.

"While Brian Rolle and Ross Homan were outstanding linebackers and we're going to miss hundreds of tackles from them, their leadership was extraordinary," Tressel said.

Leading the charge this season will be senior Andrew Sweat, who started 10 games as a junior. After primarily playing the strong-side position, Sweat moved to a weak-side spot when Homan suffered an injury during the Wisconsin game and held it down until Homan returned three weeks later.

Sweat finished the season with 41 tackles including three for loss, and he grabbed an interception. His 157 minutes of playing time last season leads all returning players at the position.

"Obviously Andrew Sweat is a guy that stepped in when Ross was hurt last year (and) played very, very well," Tressel said. "He's an extraordinary student. He's a student of the game. He does things exactly the way you'd like them done."

While Tressel mentioned Sweat as a player who needs to step into a leadership role this fall, he pointed out two other linebackers he would like to see do the same thing.

"Guys like Etienne Sabino, who redshirted last year so that he could stay another year," Tressel said in reference to players who needed to step up in the leadership department. "Storm Klein now is going into that third season so the leadership and the opportunity to play (are there). Those guys need to step up in that linebacker room."

The opportunity is now for Sabino, a junior eligibility-wise who as Tressel said accepted a redshirt last year after Sweat won the starting job. A former five-star prospect, Sabino has 12 tackles in 26 games while primarily seeing action on special teams.

Klein, also a junior, has recorded 28 tackles on special units but has drawn praise for his hitting ability. In 24 career games, he has 118 minutes of playing time while Sabino has amassed 82 in 26 games.

Sophomore Dorian Bell has seen time with the first-team defense this spring, which



MATTHEW HAGER

MAKING AN IMPACT – Senior-to-be Solomon Thomas (right), seen here speaking to defensive coordinator Jim Heacock, will miss the first five games of the 2011 season but is still someone who could emerge as a leader on Ohio State's defensive line.

has typically also consisted of Sweat and Sabino in the base defense. Also in the mix is fifth-year senior Tony Jackson, a walk-on who has taken first-team reps.

Jonathan Newsome, a junior who earned one start last season in relief of an injured Homan and finished with 15 tackles while primarily seeing action on special teams, is also expected in the linebacker mix. He was not in uniform for the first two days reporters were allowed to watch practice, but returned to the field April 9 for a scrimmage at Ohio Stadium.

Safety/Star Two-Deep Returners: 3

As much as any position on the roster, this group will benefit from a return to health from a number of players.

This fall, sixth-year senior Tyler Moeller and junior C.J. Barnett will be back in action after suffering season-ending pectoral and knee injuries, respectively. Sophomore Christian Bryant, who began the season at cornerback but moved to safety midway through the season, is also back to health after foot surgery.

Moeller figures to hold down the star position, but as he watched early spring practice sessions it was Bryant who filled the spot.

Meanwhile, after starting the final 11 games last season – 10 at strong safety – junior Orhian Johnson figures to be a lock for a starting spot this season. He recorded 50 tackles and his first career interception last season and joins Simon as the other returning defender to see at least 200 minutes of action last season. Johnson had 260.

Tressel likes the experience he has at safety, especially with a critical graduation loss from last year's lineup.

"When you start talking about that safety position, where you lose a Jermale Hines, a guy like Tyler Moeller, who is coming back for a sixth year, is a guy that can step up in

that room," the coach said. "Orhian Johnson has played a lot of football.

"(Then we have) a guy like Nate Ebner, who's a senior, who's a walk-on, who's on special teams. We really believe he's got to step up."

Ebner, a former rugby player, has 19 career tackles and has played nearly all his career on special teams.

Cornerback Two-Deep Returners: 2

Much like linebacker, the Buckeyes find themselves replacing a pair of multiyear starters. Unfortunately, the top candidates to take over for Chimdi Chekwa and Devon Torrence have a combined zero career appearances in the starting lineup – junior Travis Howard and sophomore Dominic Clarke.

After seeing spot duty during his OSU career, Clarke was thrust into action when Chekwa suffered a wrist injury during the Sugar Bowl, and the youngster recorded three tackles during the Buckeyes' victory. Tressel said Clarke's recent maturation reminds him of what former Jim Thorpe winner Malcolm Jenkins went through in Columbus, and he relayed that message to the NFL player as spring practice got under way.

"(Clarke) has always had great ability," Tressel said. "He was young. We've seen a little bit of a transformation from him not unlike (what) we saw from (Jenkins) when (he) was moving along in age. (Malcolm) pledged his fraternity and had a humility moment from that standpoint and all of a sudden his career took off. We've seen a little bit of that from Dominic."

Tressel also pointed out that, like Thomas, Clarke put together the best academic quarter of his career during the winter. While accumulating 86 minutes of action in 13 games last season, Clarke recorded 14 tackles and his first interception.

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

"The beauty of what occurred in the bowl game was that Dominic Clarke had a chance to get in there and see if he could handle the situation and I think he gained some confidence," Tressel said. "His leadership is starting to rise a little bit in the winter workouts, and we're going to need that from Dominic."

Howard has been among the top back-ups since his freshman season, but injuries have conspired to keep him back. In reserve duty last season, however, he nabbed two interceptions, and he has recorded 15 career tackles in 74 minutes of action.

Clarke and Howard will be pushed by Dionte Allen, a senior transfer from Florida State. After spending one year on the scout team to satisfy NCAA transfer rules, the former OSU recruit has been impressive during open practice sessions.

Another player in his final season as a Buckeye was supposed to make an impact this spring, but fifth-year senior Donnie Evege cannot seem to avoid injury. He was seen on crutches April 5, and Tressel said, "He has fought the injury bug forever. You always dream about your seniors having their best career year. If you have one of those teams where your seniors have their best career years, even if they hadn't had a whole bunch of play, if they can raise it up just a little bit, you have a chance for that leadership to emerge."

Evege suffered an elbow injury last season on special teams and wound up seeing action in only three games.

Quarterback Two-Deep Returners: 2

Three-year starter Terrelle Pryor will be sidelined for the first five games of the season. But even if he hadn't been suspended, the battle to be his replacement would have begun this spring anyway since he is out of action following offseason foot surgery.

Four players – one senior, one sophomore, one redshirt freshman and one true freshman – will battle to see which one takes snaps when the Buckeyes kick off their 2011 season Sept. 3 against Akron.

Senior Joe Bauserman, who has attempted a total of 47 passes in his career, would appear to have the inside track since he has served as Pryor's backup the past two seasons. However, he missed one of the first two open practices due to a reported class conflict, and in the other practice where he was present sophomore Kenny Guiton also saw a minute with the first-team offense.

The two figure to battle for the spot well into fall camp and perhaps into the season along with now-healthy redshirt freshman Taylor Graham and early enrollee Braxton Miller.

"I'm going to have as much fun watching as you guys are as to who's going to step up and emerge," Tressel said. "At the quarterback position ... you can only emerge if you demonstrate production. You can only emerge if you demonstrate that commitment. You can only emerge if you take them down the field. It's going to be fun to see that battle."

Offensive Line Two-Deep Returners: 6

The depth at this position is so thin for spring practice that Tressel has indicated a traditional spring game featuring two distinct teams is doubtful. With only 11 linemen in uniform including three walk-ons, a key for all linemen will be remaining as healthy as possible.

Two positions are set with seniors. Michael Brewster returns at center after being named an All-American and bringing home first-team All-Big Ten honors in 2010,

and right tackle J.B. Shugarts will enter his third season as a starter.

Then it gets tricky.

Mike Adams joined Brewster on the all-conference team as a junior, but he will miss the first five games along with Pryor, Thomas, running back Dan "Boom" Herron and wideout DeVier Posey. In addition, the interior line spots both need new starters following the graduations of Bryant Browning and Justin Boren.

Tressel said the line will go as far as its seniors can carry it.

"Those three guys have got to help the rest of that young bunch," the head coach said. "They've got to do a tremendous job making sure that Jack Mewhort and Corey Linsley and Marcus Hall (know what to do). Marcus Hall had the finest academic quarter he's had since he's been here, and he had a chance to redshirt last year. We have a chance there."

Brewster, Adams and Shugarts each saw at least 300 minutes of playing time last season.

Mewhort and Linsley, both sophomores, figure to slide in at left and right guard, respectively. Hall, who was academically ineligible last season, was Adams' primary backup at left tackle during early practices while freshman Andrew Norwell played left guard after helping relieve Shugarts at right tackle last season.

Freshman Tommy Brown started out at right tackle in early sessions, and guards Chris Carter and Antonio Underwood as well as center Brian Bobek will help fill out the ranks this summer. When they do, the onus will be on Brewster, Adams and Shugarts to bring them along.

"We've got three offensive linemen who are seniors who obviously need to have great years playing but also need to lead," Tressel said. "We think Mike Brewster is the best center in the country. He's played a whole bunch of games. He trains like crazy. He will be a leader."

"Then the two tackles, J.B. Shugarts and Mike Adams. Mike Adams had by far his best winter. I'm awfully proud of the way he led."

Also practicing this spring are walk-ons Ivan Blackman, Ben St. John and Eric Kramer.

Wide Receiver Two-Deep Returners: 2

Tressel wasted no time summing up the situation out wide this season.

"Wide receiver, we all know that it's thin," he said.

Gone is Dane Sanzenbacher and sidelined is Posey, meaning the Buckeyes will open the season with (presumably) two wide receivers with one career start to their names. The top two candidates to assume the starting roles are sophomores Corey "Philly" Brown and Chris Fields.

Brown had eight catches in 2010 during his true freshman season while Fields recorded three as a redshirt freshman last fall. Aside from Posey, no other scholarship wideout on the roster has recorded a single reception for the Buckeyes.

Brown started one game and racked up 136 minutes of action while Fields was on the field for 42 minutes.

Posey has looked impressive in camp, and Tressel lauded his efforts within the meeting rooms since his junior season came to a close.

"DeVier Posey has done a tremendous job leading and he'll continue to do that, I promise you," the OSU coach said. "He'll obviously be missing some games. I know he's excited about the fact that he's got to bring that young

bunch along. He is taking that very personal. That's the type of leadership that I know he'll have. That's a thin group. It's a talented group, but those guys need to get some tremendous experience as we go."

Three redshirt freshmen all are in the mix as well – James Louis, Verlon Reed and T.Y. Williams.

Tight End Two-Deep Returners: 2

Unlike out wide, Tressel said he feels confident in what his tight ends bring to the table this season – and with good reason. Juniors Jake Stoneburner and Reid Fragel both put together solid seasons while healthy and combined for 30 receptions during the 2010 campaign.

Stoneburner is more of a pass-catching threat and had 21 receptions for 222 yards and two touchdowns while Fragel excelled in the blocking game as well as in the passing attack. He had nine catches for 121 yards and one TD and proved he could stretch the field with a 42-yard reception against Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl. Fragel stepped into the lineup when Stoneburner suffered a high ankle sprain in the fourth game of last season, and each tight end wound up starting five games. (The Buckeyes started the Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa games in multiple-receiver sets without a tight end.)

Fragel saw more playing time than Stoneburner, 178 minutes to 158.

In addition to the veterans, the position has been boosted by the early arrival of freshman Jeff Heuerman, whom Tressel raved about.

"We think we're going to have as good a tight end corps as you can possibly have," the coach said. "There's no question that Jeff Heuerman coming in early helps. You're going to be impressed when you see Jeff. He's a big, strong guy. Kirk Barton, one of our quality control guys who hangs out in the weight room, gave Heuerman his MVP. For Barton to give you an MVP in the weight room, you've got to do something."

Tressel also pointed out fifth-year senior Spencer Smith as being a potential impact player. Unfortunately, the veteran walk-on was sidelined during early spring practice with an undisclosed injury.

Running Back Two-Deep Returners: 3

Even without Herron for the early part of the season, the Buckeyes are expected to boast a solid stable of backs this fall. The senior has taken most of the first-team reps throughout spring, but junior Jordan Hall, sophomore Jaamal Berry and redshirt freshman Rod Smith are all fighting to pick up the slack when Herron is forced to sit out the first five games.

Tressel said the progression of the youngsters will be directly related to how well they are led by Herron, who topped 1,000 rush-

ing yards last season for the first time in his career.

"In the backfield, Boom Herron had a tremendous winter of leadership," the coach said. "He's got a group of young backs with whom I know he'll work like crazy and he'll show them great leadership."

Also on the depth chart is sophomore Carlos Hyde, who carried the ball 37 times for 161 yards and two scores last season. Hall saw 100 minutes of action, Berry 56 and Hyde 16.

At fullback, juniors Zach Boren and Adam Homan return. Boren has been a starter for two seasons now while Homan has served as the backup.

"Zach Boren and Adam Homan, I think, are two outstanding fullbacks that do things the way you're supposed to do them," Tressel said. "I know that they'll do a great job from that standpoint."

Boren has had the greater impact among the two, catching 14 passes in his career for 91 yards and a touchdown. He also has one career carry to his credit – a rarity for an OSU fullback the past several seasons.

Specialists Two-Deep Returners: 3

Two key specialists exhausted their eligibility after last season, but only one had his picture splashed across the front page of the sports section during his career. Barclay nailed a Big Ten championship-clinching field goal in 2009, but it came on a snap from long snapper Jake McQuaide, who held down the position for three seasons.

"The leadership of that specialist group, when you lose Devin Barclay who kind of was their leader, and you lose Jake McQuaide, who was a tremendous leader in that room, the emergence of the leadership in that area is going to be critical as well," Tressel said.

Sophomore Drew Basil, who handled the kickoff duties and attempted two field goals last season, will take over for Barclay while the spring features open auditions for McQuaide's successor until incoming freshman Bryce Haynes arrives this fall.

Meanwhile, junior Ben Buchanan returns at punter as does his backup, junior walk-on Derek Erwin.

Even so, Tressel may spread his kicking and punting reps around this spring.

"Ben Buchanan returns as the punter," he said, "but Drew Basil is going to get to do some punting this spring. This is the time to do some battling back and forth. Drew Basil, probably if we had a game today, would do the field goals and kick off, but Ben Buchanan is going to have a chance to get his leg back out and see what he can do there."

As a freshman, Basil handled kickoffs and had both of his field-goal attempts from 50-plus yards blocked. Buchanan averaged 41.0 yards per punt as a sophomore.

In high school, Basil and Buchanan each handled punting and kicking duties.

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Offensive Line Must Fill Holes If Buckeyes To Succeed

By JEFF SVOBODA
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

One of the big stories of spring practice is how the Ohio State football team goes about replacing its top quarterback, its top running back and its top receiver from a season ago for the first five games.

But while much of the talk is about the suspensions of Terrelle Pryor, Dan "Boom" Herron and DeVier Posey, center Michael Brewster said the play of Ohio State's offensive line is crucial in helping the team come up with replacements for those three standouts.

"Like (offensive coordinator and line coach Jim Bollman) said, it starts with us," Brewster said after the line helped the offense win an April 9 scrimmage against the defense. "If we're not giving the quarterbacks time to get better, they're not going to get better. If we're not giving the running backs a chance to get through the holes, they're not going to get better. Same thing with the receivers – they're not going to have time to do their routes."

"We're really just trying to give those guys opportunities to make plays."

At the same time, Bollman's charges are going through adversity of their own. Forced to replace two starters in left guard Justin Boren and right guard Bryant Browning – as well as left tackle Mike Adams for the first five games as well – the Buckeyes find themselves short on numbers this spring.

After losing five scholarship linemen from a year ago as well as two others who walked on but were converted to scholarship for their senior seasons, the Buckeyes started spring ball with only 10 linemen on the team. An 11th, walk-on Eric Kramer of Cincinnati St. Xavier, joined the team the week of April 4, but the Buckeyes are still thin when it comes to depth.

That fact prompted head coach Jim Tressel to tell the media the day before practice opened March 31 that the Buckeyes might not be able to stage the usual spring game because of a lack of numbers.



ADAM JARDY

LEADING THE BIG MEN – Ohio State offensive line coach Jim Bollman (center) will have to find new guards following the departures of Justin Boren and Bryant Browning.

That has also meant there has been no true third-team unit, so returning starters Brewster, Adams and right tackle J.B. Shugarts have had to do some extra work in practice.

"A few extra reps can only really help you," Brewster said. "A little extra work isn't going to kill us. We're definitely taking a few extra reps this spring (and) it's going to be hard on us, but it's going to pay off in the future."

With so few players on hand, Bollman has had to get creative to keep practices going. Brewster, Adams and Shugarts have taken their regular reps during practices at which the media has been present, but Jack Mewhort, Corey Linsley, Andrew Norwell and Marcus Hall have each been forced into action at multiple positions.

When it comes to replacing Boren and Browning, Mewhort and Linsley have been given the first chances this spring. Both are sophomores who came in as four-star prospects in the class of 2009 and have then bided their time waiting for this opportunity.

Both have also repped as the No. 2 center behind Brewster, while Hall and Norwell have both played left tackle and left guard, though Hall has spent more time at the tackle spot.

The two have good credentials when it comes to replacing Adams for the opening five games. Hall was a four-star prospect and the No. 5 offensive tackle in the nation when he signed with OSU in 2009, and he earned a start in the de facto Big Ten title game vs. Iowa as a freshman that year when Shugarts was limited by injury.

Though he missed last season with

an academic issue, Hall's talents aren't in doubt.

Norwell, meanwhile, came to OSU as a five-star tackle prospect a season ago and the No. 8 player overall in his class, and he earned valuable playing time during his freshman campaign.

"The left tackle position is really the main one. We have to find someone to fill that spot," Shugarts said. "I think those guys are doing a great job. Moving from side to side and all over the line, that's not easy at all. Being able to do that is going to make them all that much better no matter where they play."

Brewster said he's been pleased by how Mewhort, Linsley, Norwell and Hall have handled everything thrown at them.

"It's not like any spring I've been here for," Brewster said of all the rotating. "To be honest, I've been really impressed by how those guys have responded to all the positions they've been playing. The first few days were a little slow, but ever since then they've been doing a really good job."

While those players are vying for spots, the Buckeyes know what they're getting out of Adams, Brewster and Shugarts. All three started every game in 2010, and the three ballyhooed members of the 2008 recruiting class have combined to start 76 games.

Thirty-six of those starts belong to Brewster, a first-team All-Big Ten pick last year who Tressel said he believes is the best center in the country. Shugarts has started 23 games, while Adams has 17 and came into his own a year ago while earning first-team all-league honors.

Adams has looked particularly good in the spring, and Shugarts said that's part of his response to his five-game suspension.

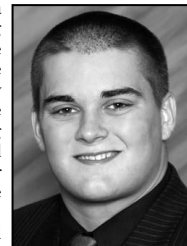
"He's not letting this bother him at all," Shugarts said. "He knows he messed up but he's cool. He's a leader out there helping everybody and he's a great person. He's my best friend."

All three of those players have been helping a group of youngsters that will provide depth. Class of 2011 recruit Tommy Brown arrived for spring as an early enrollee and has been learning the ropes as the No. 2 right tackle, while walk-ons Ben St. John, Ivan Blackman (the No. 2 right guard) and Kramer have been getting key reps.

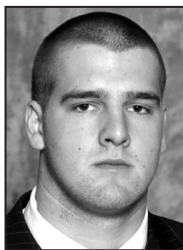
"You have to pass down your wisdom and your knowledge that you've learned," Brewster said. "We're just trying to help out some of the younger guys that aren't really sure what they're doing. Everyone is really just trying to help out. If we can be a coach on the field, that puts us a step ahead."

Ohio State will get more depth when center Brian Bobek and guards Antonio Underwood and Chris Carter arrive in the fall, but in the meantime Shugarts likes what the Buckeyes are doing up front.

"The way that we've been rotating guys in and out all of spring, I feel like we have a solid seven or eight guys that are good enough to play and I don't think we're going to miss a beat," he said.



J.B. Shugarts



Michael Brewster

1189 N. Wilson Road

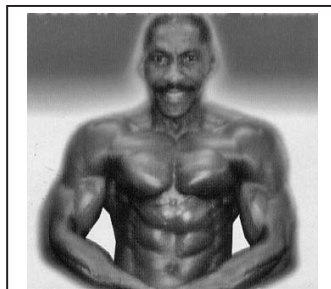
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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Sabino Eager To Make Impact After Redshirt Year

By MATTHEW HAGER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Etienne Sabino came to Ohio State in 2008 as a highly touted prospect from Florida. In fact, the 17-year-old was given a five-star rating by Scout.com and was named the No. 2 middle linebacker prospect in the nation.

Sabino's journey after his arrival in Columbus, however, has been a little bumpy. The product of Dr. Michael M. Krop High School in Miami saw time on special teams as a freshman in '08 and made an impact when he recovered a blocked punt against Purdue and ran it back 20 yards for the game's only touchdown.

As a sophomore, Sabino continued to primarily play as a special teams standout and a reserve linebacker.

Sabino had an opportunity to win the starting strongside (Sam) linebacker position vacated by the graduation of Austin Spitzer going into preseason camp last season, but Sabino lost that battle to Andrew Sweat. Instead of breaking through as a starter for the Buckeyes, Sabino took a redshirt and stood on the sidelines as Ohio State won another Big Ten title and defeated Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl.

"It was extremely difficult," Sabino said April 9 after recording three tackles in an offense vs. defense scrimmage at Ohio Stadium. "I would say it was probably one of the hardest years of my life."

With that difficult stretch over, now appears to be the time for the junior linebacker to take what he learned while redshirting and become a leader on an Ohio State defense that will be looking for several new field generals this fall.

"That's the role everyone wants," Sabino said about emerging as a possible leader. "As far as my role changing, I just feel like I need to step up. I've been here for a while and I haven't done what I wanted to do yet. I want to help this team win. That's where my mind is right now."

Sabino had plenty of time to get his mind-set where he wanted it while sitting out last season. He did not bemoan his fate, however, as the junior focused his energies on learning everything he could about the OSU defense. He spent extra time in the film room, in the weight room and among then-teammates Brian Rolle and Ross Homan.

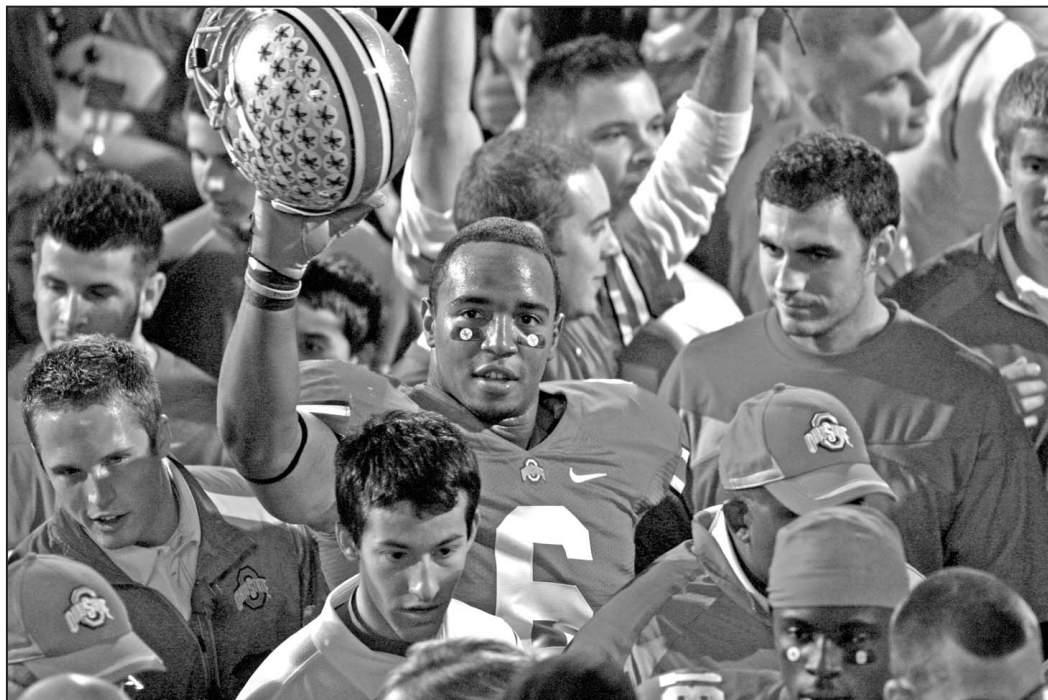
"I think I really got a better grasp on the defense as a whole," Sabino said. "Like what the safeties are doing, what the defensive line is doing in front of you, what the corners have to do."

The added knowledge he gained while sitting out has already begun to paid dividends. Sabino recently uttered the phrase many players say when the proverbial light comes on before a big season: The game has slowed down.

"When you're not out there thinking, you're just reacting," he said. "You know what you have to do. You know what the guys in front you have to do. You can expect to know where the ball is going. It just helps your overall game and your overall football knowledge."

The knock on Sabino has been his tendency to overthink on the field, and he admitted his time away helped him think less and rely more on his instincts.

"A lot of it comes with reps (in practice)," he said. "The more you do it, the more comfortable you feel. And again, it's just knowing the defense. When you know the



FILE PHOTO

DIFFICULT TIME – Ohio State linebacker Etienne Sabino (6) accepted a redshirt and missed the 2010 season after losing a starting position battle last fall to Andrew Sweat.

guy in front of you has (a particular) gap (assignment), you know where you expect the ball to be run."

Sabino is also a physically bigger player. He said April 9 that he is up to 248 pounds, up from his listed weight of 240 last season.

Sabino has no regrets about missing the 2010 season, calling it something that benefitted not only him but the Buckeyes as a team. Not only will he have two years of eligibility remaining when the season begins this fall, he increased his football knowledge and also gained more respect among his teammates for how he handled himself during his redshirt season.

"It's extremely difficult (to sit out)," Sweat said. "I can relate because I tore my ACL during my sophomore year (in 2009) and you just stand there on the sideline watching. It is very hard because it's like you're not really a part of the defense."

"I know how hard it was for Etienne last year but he had a great attitude about it. He got better last year and he's ready to excel this year."

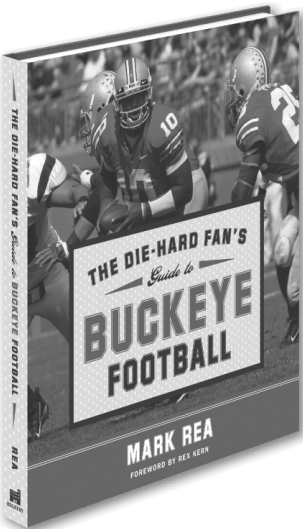
Sabino will go into preseason camp in August as one of Ohio State's starting linebackers. What position he will play, however, has not been determined. He could end up as the middle (Mike) linebacker, a position that he has worked on for several years while serving as a backup for James Laurinaitis and Spitzer.

No matter where he'll line up, though, Sabino is ready for the 2011 season to begin. He is the only one of the six five-star recruits in Ohio State's 2008 recruiting class not to become a solid starter for the Buckeyes, and he intends to change that this fall.

"I just want to make plays and help this team win in any way I can," Sabino said. "It doesn't matter where I am on the field. I just want to be on the field, making plays."

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