

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Flipping Recruits Is Not New In College Football

By ARI WASSERMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

If putting together the best recruiting classes in the nation directly correlates to winning national championships, don't expect Urban Meyer to be bashful about trying to land the top talent in the country.

And Meyer's pursuit of that top talent stops in only two ways – either the recruit indicates to Ohio State's head coach that he's no longer interested in the Buckeyes or the prospect signs a national letter of intent to another program.

Verbal commitments to other programs couldn't be more irrelevant.

"All is fair in love and recruiting," CBS College Sports recruiting analyst Tom Lemming told BSB. "If there is a highly rated kid out there that is committed but has even moderate interest in Ohio State, Meyer is going to find out and see it through."

Though Meyer was hired with scarcely more than two months remaining before the Feb. 1 signing day, he quickly filled out the Buckeyes' class to 25 prospects including eight players once committed to other programs.

Five of those recruits were still committed to other programs when they changed their minds and decided to become members of the Ohio State recruiting class. Offensive tackles Taylor Decker (Notre Dame) and Kyle Dodson (Wisconsin), defensive linemen Se'von Pittman (Michigan State) and Tommy Schutt (Penn State) and linebacker Camren Williams (Penn State) all made the switch.

For most of the 2011 calendar year, the off-the-field issues in which Ohio State was embroiled had a profound impact on the efficacy of the program's recruiting efforts. But the additions of the aforementioned prospects late in the process helped propel the Buckeyes from what had been a mediocre class in terms of national status to the No. 3-ranked group in 2012, according to Scout.com.

All of the decommitments and flipping, however, brought Meyer's recruiting tactics into question, especially from some Big Ten rivals, who suggested that taking previously committed prospects away from other conference teams was a breach of a longstanding "gentleman's agreement" between league coaches.

Wisconsin head coach Bret Bielema, who received a verbal commitment from Dodson last summer, was specifically disappointed in Meyer's approach and publicly said so while introducing his 2012 class to the media.

"I can tell you this: We at the Big Ten don't want to be like the SEC in any way, shape or form," Bielema said, referring to the way Meyer filled out his recruiting class. "There are a few things that happened early on that I made people be aware of, that I didn't want to see in this league, that I had seen take place at other leagues – other recruiting tactics, other recruiting practices that are illegal."

Michigan State head coach Mark Dantonio, who received a commitment from Pittman last June, made similar signing-day comments.

"I would say it is pretty unethical," Dantonio told The Detroit News about enticing prospects to flip on previous commitments. "You ask for people's commitment, you ask for people's trust, ask for people to make a commitment to you, but then you turn around and say it's OK to go back after somebody else's commitment. That's a double standard."

Dantonio later said his comments were not directed at Meyer.



FILE PHOTO

UNHAPPY – Wisconsin head coach Bret Bielema made public comments against Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer and his recruiting techniques after former UW verbal Kyle Dodson signed a national letter of intent with Ohio State.

Meyer likely wasn't expecting those comments, particularly because what he did was no different from the way he approached recruiting during his six years at Florida. According to the parameters of the NCAA rules, Meyer also apparently hadn't done anything illegal.

Perhaps the remarks from Bielema and Dantonio were signs of public frustration or just the results of suffering through something they hadn't previously encountered.

"That's the way of the world down here," Marty Cohen, publisher of Florida's Gator Bait Magazine, told BSB. "I have always been a believer, especially down here in the South, once a guy commits to a school that only intensifies the recruiting. Nobody really lays off down here."

"Urban probably took the Midwest by surprise, but that's the way the game is played down here. He's never going to change the way he approaches things, regardless of what others say to him – publicly or privately."

Meyer's SEC approach – described as "cutthroat" by multiple recruiting experts BSB contacted – could be the new norm in a Big Ten conference that hasn't enjoyed much success as a whole on the national scale in recent years.

The SEC has won each of the last six national championships on the field, and an SEC team has finished first or second nationally in recruiting every year since 2003. This year, nine of the SEC's 14 teams were among Scout's top 25 recruiting classes in the nation while Ohio State and Michigan – ranked No. 3 and No. 4, respectively – were the only teams from the Big Ten to make the list.

Of course, attempting to flip recruits isn't a new thing. It happens every year and in all portions of the country – even the Big Ten. In 2008, then-Purdue head coach Joe Tiller referred to new Michigan head coach Rich Rodriguez as "a guy in a wizard hat selling snake oil" shortly after the Wolverines snatched three-star wide receiver Roy Roundtree of Trotwood (Ohio) Madison away from the Boilermakers on National Signing Day.

Ohio State was even victim to Meyer's recruiting tactics in 2010 when Florida swayed defensive tackle Sharrif Floyd late in the process despite his being a perceived Buckeye lean.

The Buckeyes were also victimized in 2012, albeit before Meyer was hired. Five-star offensive tackle Kyle Kalis of Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward decommitted from Ohio State amid the heat of the NCAA investigation and switched to Michigan, where he eventually signed. Running back Bri'onte Dunn was also recruited heavily by the Wolverines after his pledge to Ohio State although Dunn eventually decided to stay with his commitment and signed with the Buckeyes.

Now under the direction of head coach Will Muschamp, Florida continued to subscribe to Meyer's recruiting philosophy. One of the top prospects in the Gators' class of 2012 was four-star defensive end Dante Fowler Jr., who was committed to Florida State for more than a year before flipping to Florida days before signing his national letter of intent.

"From the perspective of the other coaches, I can see why it is frustrating," Scout recruiting analyst Allen Trieu told BSB. "You recruit a kid all year and feel like you have them, stop recruiting other kids at his position, and then all of a sudden in the last second you lose the kid. I understand that frustration."

"I don't know if it was necessarily an effective way to go about it to publicly say anything about it in a press conference, though. If anything, it just makes it look like sour grapes. At the end of the day, it has to go both ways. The kid has to be interested, too."

Former Illinois head coach Ron Zook, who flipped four-star cornerback Justin Green out of his commitment to Ohio State days before National Signing Day in 2009, said recently that he never gave much regard to the "gentleman's agreement" in the Big Ten.

During an interview on SiriusXM radio, Zook said, "When I first went to the Big Ten, somebody made a comment that it's a 'gentleman's agreement' and I said, 'Gentlemen's agreement, heck.' There were people always trying to recruit our guys."

The former coach added that Bielema and Dantonio were among the offenders.

"I was close to Bret and Mark – probably closer than anybody in the Big Ten, and those guys didn't have any problem recruiting guys of ours that were committed," Zook said. "So there might have been something a little bit more than what's being reported and that might have been what they were upset about."

Much like winning games on the field, recruiting is a battle, and victories in that realm usually have a tangible effect on the future of programs. Because of that, recruiting – much like it is on game day – is about survival of the fittest.

"If you don't sign them, then you never had them," BuckeyeSports.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene said. "I don't remember Ohio State making nasty comments when Kyle Kalis flipped. I don't think Ohio State would feel that (Michigan head coach) Brady Hoke stole Kyle Kalis."

"If you can't keep a kid, then he's not yours. He didn't get kidnapped. Nothing underhanded happened. A verbal commitment is a verbal commitment. They don't sign until February, so everyone is fair game."

'Kind Of A Perfect Storm'

Perhaps the story became a bit magnified because Meyer was able to flip recruits at a rate that was unprecedented in the Big Ten. Circumstances surrounding Ohio State and the programs around it also played a big factor.

Not only was Ohio State in the midst of dealing with an NCAA investigation for most of the recruiting year – which continued after former head coach Jim Tressel was dismissed – the future of interim head coach Luke Fickell was uncertain.

Those factors likely played into such in-state players as Pittman and Dodson – both of whom were thought to be heavy Buckeye leans early in the process – finding comfort in other programs.

But when Meyer got hired, Ohio State became a viable option again – and not just for Ohio-born prospects. The child sexual abuse scandal at Penn State involving former defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky put several programs, including OSU, in position to take away some of the best prospects who had pledged to the Nittany Lions.

"It was kind of the perfect storm for Ohio State this year," Trieu said. "I think if it was one or two kids, it wouldn't have been a huge story. All of the guys Ohio State took from Penn State, for example, if Urban Meyer doesn't come in and recruit them, they probably would have ended up elsewhere anyway."

"I don't see it as stealing a recruit as much as I see it as circumstances changing these kids' courses. Remember, the Ohio State a lot of these kids said no to early in the process wasn't the Ohio State that came back months later before landing them. There was a lot that had changed in those six months."

Meyer has already landed four top prospects in the 2013 recruiting class, which will be the first class over which he has full control at Ohio State, and flipping prospects likely won't be as big a part in his strategy.

"He'll get all the kids he wants this year first instead of trying to flip them late," Greene said. "This year, kids know what Ohio State is from the beginning. There won't be any changes with the NCAA, coaching staff or anything else in the area around them. A lot of them won't consider other schools like they did last year."

As far as Meyer's approach, public comments made won't do anything but drive him harder to continue finding success on the recruiting trail.

"You're (angry) because we went after a committed guy?" Meyer asked rhetorically during a recent Ohio high school coaches' clinic. "Guess what? We've got nine guys (on my coaching staff) who'd better go do it again. Do it a little harder next time."

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

National Recruiting Experts' Rankings

SCOUT.COM	MAX PREPS	ALLEN WALLACE SuperPrep Magazine	PHIL GROSZ G&W Recruiting Report	MAX EMFINGER National Recruiting Analyst	TOM LUGINBILL Stats Inc./ESPN
1. Texas	1. Alabama	1. Alabama	1. Alabama	1. Alabama	1. Alabama
2. Alabama	2. Texas	2. Florida State	2. Texas	2. Texas	2. Florida State
3. Ohio State	3. Ohio State	3. Texas	3. Florida	3. Florida State	3. Texas
4. Michigan	4. Michigan	4. Ohio State	4. Ohio State	4. Florida	4. Florida
5. Florida	5. Florida	5. Florida	5. Florida State	5. Oklahoma	5. Georgia
6. Stanford	6. Florida State	6. Miami (Fla.)	6. Stanford	6. Georgia	6. Ohio State
7. LSU	7. Miami (Fla.)	7. Georgia	7. Miami (Fla.)	7. USC	7. Michigan
8. Miami (Fla.)	8. Oklahoma	8. Michigan	8. Michigan	8. Ohio State	8. Miami (Fla.)
9. Auburn	9. USC	9. Oklahoma	9. USC	9. Michigan	9. Clemson
10. Oklahoma	10. Stanford	10. Stanford	10. Oklahoma	10. Texas A&M	10. Notre Dame
11. Florida State	11. South Carolina	11. UCLA	11. Auburn	11. Miami (Fla.)	11. Oklahoma
12. UCLA	12. Clemson	12. USC	12. Georgia	12. LSU	12. Stanford
13. South Carolina	13. LSU	13. Auburn	13. Clemson	13. Stanford	13. USC
14. Georgia	14. Texas A&M	14. Notre Dame	14. Oregon	14. Clemson	14. LSU
15. Oregon	15. California	15. Oregon	15. Texas A&M	15. Auburn	15. Texas A&M
16. Clemson	16. Virginia Tech	16. Clemson	16. UCLA	16. UCLA	16. South Carolina
17. Mississippi State	17. Notre Dame	17. Texas A&M	17. LSU	17. South Carolina	17. Auburn
18. Notre Dame	18. UCLA	18. South Carolina	18. Tennessee	18. Notre Dame	18. Oregon
19. USC	19. Oregon	19. LSU	19. South Carolina	19. Oregon	19. UCLA
20. Texas A&M	20. Georgia	20. Washington	20. Virginia Tech	20. Arkansas	20. Texas Tech
21. Arkansas	21. Tennessee	21. Mississippi State	21. Notre Dame	21. Tennessee	21. Tennessee
22. Washington	22. Auburn	22. Tennessee	22. California	22. Washington	22. California
23. Oklahoma State	23. Rutgers	23. California	23. Washington	23. Texas Tech	23. Washington
24. Texas Tech	24. Washington	24. Virginia Tech	24. Nebraska	24. Virginia Tech	24. Rutgers
25. Tennessee	25. Virginia	25. Rutgers	25. Rutgers	25. California	25. Virginia Tech

Buckeyes Rule Big Ten Again

By ARI WASSERMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Urban Meyer brought a Southeastern Conference recruiting philosophy to the Big Ten when he took the Ohio State job. Now it is up to the rest of the conference to follow suit if it wants to match what has become yearly dominance by the SEC in national recruiting class rankings.

Though Meyer closed out the Buckeyes' 2012 class with success unmatched by any other school in the country – which helped Ohio State finish in the No. 4 spot in Buckeye Sports Bulletin's annual consensus poll – the SEC had 10 of its 14 teams (counting Missouri and Texas A&M) occupy spots in the top 25.

The Big Ten has a ways to go before being mentioned in the same breath as the SEC on the recruiting trail. Though Ohio State and Michigan each made the top six, no other team from the conference found its way into BSB's top 25.

The Pac-12 was the closest to matching the SEC's dominance, putting six teams in the top 25, while the ACC had four and the Big 12 added three. The only BCS conference to have fewer teams in the poll than the Big Ten was the rapidly dwindling Big East, which had no representative in the rankings. Independent Notre Dame rounded out the list at No. 19.

"If you look at the recruiting rankings every year, it is the same top five or six or seven," Texas-based recruiting analyst Max Emfinger told BSB. "They may be arranged differently, but it is the same teams. If you look at Alabama's group, they don't recruit guys that aren't being recruited by Florida, Florida State, Notre Dame, LSU and all those teams.

"That's the way the SEC does it and that's why they're always at the top of the list. They go for the top players in the country and don't recruit sleepers. Everyone they go after is a highly-recruited player that is recognized as the best in the nation."

Alabama had only three five-star prospects in its 2012 class, according to Scout.com, but the reigning national champions earned five of the six first-place votes in

BSB's consensus poll likely because it added 15 four-star prospects. The Crimson Tide, who have won two of the last three national titles on the field, signed 26 prospects in their 2012 class.

Checking in at the No. 2 spot on the list was Big 12 member Texas, which signed 28 players, 19 of whom were rated four-star prospects or better. The Longhorns got one first-place vote from Scout, particularly because seven of its commits were among the recruiting service's top 100 players in the country.

Rounding out the top three was Florida after it signed 23 prospects who had an average 3.70 star rating.

Following Ohio State was Florida State from the ACC. The Seminoles signed six five-star players according to Scout – the most in the rankings – but found themselves No. 5 on the list because they were probably hindered by signing only 19 players in their class.

"The SEC has been responsible for the last six national titles now, and there are just a lot of talented players in the South," longtime SuperPrep magazine publisher Allen Wallace told BSB. "The SEC also spends a lot more money on assistant coaches and just puts a premium on winning. Getting those kids is expected, and each year they're just getting the best players. There's no question why they're winning on the field."

Ohio State had established itself as the only team from the Big Ten that could compete on the national recruiting trail over the course of the past few seasons, but the Buckeyes' chances at returning to the top five this year looked to be in jeopardy early in the process.

Former head coach Jim Tressel, who had made OSU one of the most successful football programs in the country during the last decade, became involved in an off-the-field scandal that led to his eventual departure.

An ongoing NCAA investigation continued to hinder the program while it turned to Luke Fickell to serve as the interim

head coach. While he was recruiting for the Buckeyes, the uncertainty of Fickell's future was an obvious concern from the top prospects who otherwise would have been interested in the program.

But when Meyer was hired in late November, the Buckeyes experienced a two-month spurt that was perhaps their most successful wave of recruiting in years.



Urban Meyer

Helping Meyer turn what was otherwise considered to be a rather mediocre class into one of the nation's best was the addition of several top defensive line prospects. Ohio State had four five-star prospects in its 2012 class, three of whom are defensive linemen.

Highlighting the class is Harrisburg (Pa.) Bishop McDevitt defensive end Noah Spence, who is rated the No. 2 defensive end in the country.

He's joined by five-star defensive line prospects Adolphus Washington of Cincinnati Taft and Tommy Schutt of Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Glenbard West.

"When you look at what Urban Meyer was able to do to close out Ohio State's 2012 class, you wonder if anyone else in the country would have been able to do that," said Allen Trieu, Midwest recruiting analyst for Scout. "Not only with those defensive line prospects, but he had a wave of really good four-star players at a lot of different positions. All things considered, I don't think Ohio State could have put together a more complete class."

Wolverines On Ascent

A year ago it seemed the Buckeyes were separating themselves in a big way from the rest of the Big Ten, but 12 months later things look incredibly different. Under head coach Brady Hoke, Michigan has seemingly returned to stake its claim as Ohio State's counterpart atop the Big Ten.

Not only did Hoke lead the Wolverines to 23-20 win over Virginia Tech in the Orange Bowl – Michigan's first BCS bowl

BSB Consensus Poll

1. Alabama (5).....	149
2. Texas (1)	143
3. Florida	130
4. Ohio State	128
5. Florida State	127
6. Michigan	116
7. Miami (Fla.).....	109
8. Oklahoma.....	103
9. Stanford	99
10. Georgia	92
11. USC	87
12. Clemson.....	76
13. LSU.....	74
14. Auburn.....	69
15. Texas A&M	65
16. UCLA.....	64
17. South Carolina.....	62
18. Notre Dame.....	58
19. Oregon	56
20. Tennessee	28
21. California.....	23
22. Washington	22
23. Virginia Tech.....	21
24. Mississippi State.....	14
T25. Arkansas.....	11
T25. Texas Tech.....	11

Teams received points based on their placement in each of the six polls above. Points assigned to teams are in inverse proportion to their placement in a poll (25 points for first, 24 points for second, etc.) First-place votes in parentheses.

win since 2000 – the first-year head coach put together a recruiting class unlike anything the program had seen in years.

A year after not being represented in BSB's consensus poll, the Wolverines stormed back with Hoke's help to take the No. 6 spot on this year's list. Michigan signed 25 players, 15 of whom were rated four-star recruits or better.

"I have felt since Brady Hoke got hired that he was the right guy for the Michigan job, and I thought he'd have great success recruiting," BuckeyeSports.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene said. "Off the field, he has such a great reputation in Ohio, which is critical in his success there. When he was at Ball State, he recruited this state really hard, really well and with a lot of class, and the high school coaches really like him.

"Michigan has a great product to sell, and I could see the Big Ten kind of getting

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING



MATTHEW HAGER

DOING WELL – Michigan head coach Brady Hoke is already making waves by getting verbal commits from several top 2013 prospects.

back to the 'Big Two' the way it used to be. Michigan is in great hands with Brady Hoke."

One might expect that the recruiting classes Ohio State and Michigan are putting together could lead to the resurgence of one of the most intense rivalries in college sports.

"Those two teams dominating the Big Ten is definitely going to happen," CBS College Sports recruiting analyst Tom Lemming told BSB. "Those two are headed for big things, mainly because Meyer has brought that SEC recruiting mentality to the Midwest and Michigan has picked up on it quickly and that's why they've done so well."

Though Meyer has earned the reputation as a rock star on the recruiting trail, the class Hoke is already putting together in 2013 is overshadowing the great strides Ohio State has already made.

The Buckeyes have earned verbal commitments from four top prospects in the first class Meyer will mold in its entirety, but Michigan has gotten off to the quickest start of any team in college football in 2013.

Hoke helped put together one of the most successful individual weekends in recent memory when the Wolverines picked up eight commitments during a two-day span in mid-February, including six commitments in one day.

The Wolverines have strung together 13 verbal commitments, and while only six have been rated so far by Scout, each of the five has at least four stars. The class is highlighted by five-star quarterback Shane Morris of Warren (Mich.) De La Salle Collegiate.

"I think Ohio State and Michigan are both going to be top-five or top-10 recruit-

ing classes every year," Greene said. "They're both set up to succeed. They're great schools with great tradition, and they both have guys that really understand the recruiting game running the show."

If not only because of recruiting, the most recent results on the field would indicate the rivalry between the two schools is on its way to being ramped up to previous intensity. Hoke led the Wolverines to their first win over Ohio State in eight seasons when the Buckeyes fell by a 40-34 final in Ann Arbor on Nov. 26.

Meyer and Hoke will continue to butt heads on the recruiting trail, most especially because the victories in landing top talent will certainly go a long way in determining which program will win the annual November game.

"That rivalry makes college football better when it is in full swing," Wallace said. "I think it is incredibly exciting to see it form back up again. You have two new successful coaches recruiting very well and against each other. This is going to be a lot of fun to sit back and watch play out."

"To me, it doesn't seem like there is any question what is in store for both programs and the Big Ten for the years to come."

Catch Up Or Get Left Behind

Experts agree that Ohio State and Michigan could lead to the resurgence of the Big Ten's ability to recruit on the national scale simply because the tactics of Meyer and Hoke will spread quickly.

If not, the rest of the conference could be in danger of quickly falling too far behind to compete.

"In the SEC, Urban learned that recruiting every single day of the year aggressively with personality – and most of all perseverance – is the key," Lemming said.

"His style is somewhat new to the Big Ten, but you watch. Everyone in the Big Ten is going to have to become that aggressive. Either that or step aside and let Ohio State steamroll them."

Though the Big Ten has typically been competitive on the field in recent years, the conference hasn't stacked up well in competing for the best high school talent. If that continues, the overall quality of the teams in the conference could deteriorate.

Michigan State checked in with the third-best class in the Big Ten, but it was ranked only No. 38 in the nation by Scout. The Spartans had 18 commitments, but only four of the players they inked were four-star recruits.

Iowa checked in at No. 45 and Northwestern, Penn State and Nebraska rounded out the final three spots in Scout's top 50. However, Lemming said the Big Ten remains competitive on the field because it has programs with coaching staffs that have the ability to evaluate talent that has otherwise gone overlooked.

"Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan State do a great job evaluating talent that Ohio State and Michigan aren't going for a lot of the time," he said. "They try to evaluate other players who fit in and they do a good job of developing that talent to compete. They don't win many battles against Michigan or Ohio State head to head, but they can beat them on the field at times with that strategy."

Programs such as Penn State, Wisconsin and Nebraska make the Big Ten a perceived power during the regular season, but none of their 2012 classes stacked up well nationally for various reasons.

Penn State was on its way to putting together a very good class before the child sexual abuse scandal involving former defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky was thrust into the public light. The Nittany Lions lost many of their top prospects, many of whom went to other Midwestern programs, including Ohio State.

Wisconsin signed only 12 recruits in its 2012 class – which certainly was the reason the Badgers had only the No. 62 recruiting class according to Scout – and Nebraska has faced identity issues since leaving the Big 12 for the Big Ten.

"It will be Ohio State and Michigan that make the Big Ten relevant again," Lemming said. "It can't be Penn State, which is having its own problems right now, or Nebraska, who has been kind of pushed out of Texas since they left the Big 12. It is up to the rest of the programs to catch up to those two."

Unlike Tressel, Meyer hasn't been very selective about the offers he's thrown out early in the 2013 class, which could be the new trend for the Buckeyes. Though Ohio

State will likely take fewer than 20 recruits in next year's class, Meyer has issued nearly 100 scholarship offers.

Though it remains unclear which offers are committable ones, Greene said that strategy puts Ohio State in the driver's seat long before a lot of the top prospects are willing to give a verbal pledge.

"I think Ohio State was very selective nationally under Tressel," Greene said. "They'd go after a smaller target of kids and try to narrow it down to kids they thought they really could get. With Urban Meyer, he kind of feels he can get anyone and he can go after a ton of kids. You're going to see a lot more national offers."

"If every kid called to commit, he certainly couldn't take them all. It kind of forces kids – if you want to find out if you really have an offer – you almost have to try to commit to him. Maybe that's the strategy on his part – to cut through the extra stuff and find out what kids are really interested."

Penn State's ability to overcome one of the biggest scandals in the recent history of college football could be the difference in the Big Ten's ability to make up ground with the SEC and other BCS conferences.

The Nittany Lions recently hired Bill O'Brien to take over the program, a move Lemming said was smart because there are no links between the new regime and those who had relationships with Sandusky and former head coach Joe Paterno.

Bob Lichtenfels, a national recruiting analyst for Scout based in western Pennsylvania, told BSB that Penn State could again become a factor on the national recruiting scene as soon as this year.

"I think they should recruit nationally," Lichtenfels said. "I think Penn State is one of those schools that is up there with USC, Notre Dame, Michigan and Ohio State. There are schools who can do it and schools that can't, and I think Penn State is one of them. They are a program with name recognition and with a new coach, they're moving forward quickly."

Though it remains unclear how Penn State will rebound from its lowest-rated class in many years, Greene said early returns on interactions with O'Brien have come back positive. The Nittany Lions won't venture out too far to fill their 2013 class, though, as they will focus on closing the Pennsylvania borders while shoring up existing relationships on the Atlantic Coast.

"(O'Brien) has to nail down the top kids in Pennsylvania," Greene said. "He has to get those kids. He has to show right off the bat that he can keep those kids at home and there is a lot of talent in that class. That will be the early indicator with Penn State."



Bill O'Brien

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