

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

May 2015

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PLEASE RUSH!!

KEVIN DYE

**YOUTH GETS ITS DUE** – With veterans such as offensive linemen Taylor Decker (68) and Pat Elflein (65) limited as members of the 2,000 Rep Club, Urban Meyer (right) saw younger Buckeyes get plenty of reps this spring.

## Champs Visit President



The entire 2014 Ohio State football team got together again April 20, and it was for quite the special occasion as the Buckeyes' College Football Playoff-winning squad made the traditional visit to the White House. The Buckeyes met privately with President Barack Obama before a 20-minute public ceremony featuring the president in which he joked with Buckeye players and received a ceremonial jersey and football from team captains. For a full report on the Buckeyes' daylong trip to Washington, D.C., see page 8.

# Individual Improvement

## Some Players Make Most Of Spring

By RYAN GINN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer walked up to the lectern following the April 18 spring game, he didn't wait long to deliver his message.

In a lengthy opening statement, Meyer reviewed the ups and downs of the 15 spring practice sessions the Buckeyes had just completed. But one thing was clear before a single question was asked. Ohio State has work to do in order to fulfill the lengthy expectations placed on its shoulders this season.

"I told our players this: We did not improve as a team. That was not a good team out there, so we did not improve as a team," Meyer said. "As a team that's much worse than what you saw in January, obviously. But we did individually get better."

In many ways, that's all that the Buckeyes could have asked for after the fourth-year head coach spent much of spring practice protecting his most valuable assets. Members of the 2,000 Rep Club – players who have taken part in a couple thousand competitive reps in practice and games during their OSU careers – were withheld for contact portions of practices in order to reduce the wear and tear on their bodies.

That meant players such as left tackle Taylor Decker, right guard Pat Elflein, defensive end Joey Bosa, defensive tackle Adolphus Washington and linebackers Joshua Perry and Darron Lee spent a good bit of the spring watching youngsters occupy their spots on the field.

In addition to players who were withheld as a preventive measure, there were also a number of players who had no choice but to watch from the sidelines. By the time spring practice came to an end, the list of injured Buckeyes included quarterbacks Braxton Miller and J.T. Barrett, center Jacoby Boren, wide receivers Michael Thomas and Dontre Wilson, running back Ezekiel Elliott and defensive linemen Joel Hale and Tyquan Lewis – all of whom will have a chance to start next season.

For those reasons, Meyer didn't even seem upset about the circumstances that prevented his team from making appreciable steps this spring.

"It's not one's fault (the team didn't improve)," Meyer said. "How do you get better as a team when half your team is

not playing? And it's because of injury or because of the 2,000 Club, because the head coach made a decision not to rep out some guys that had 2,000 competitive reps."

Ohio State will have a chance this fall to become the type of legendary team that many think it can. The whole is not yet greater than the sum of its parts, but spring practice was a chance to add more cogs and increase the value of certain parts of what could become a ruthless machine when the calendar turns to September.

### Offense Adds Options, Depth

Ohio State offensive coordinator Ed Warinner has taken over for the departed Tom Herman, now the head coach at Houston, and will have a veritable arsenal at his disposal this season. Although the Buckeyes don't know who will be taking the snaps this fall, whichever quarterback wins the job will be working with an unprecedented amount of talent and depth.

"I'm excited about this fall," Warinner said. "I'm excited about just the entire offensive unit. You can start at any position and be excited about that position."

"You start with the offensive line and see you've got four returning starters and a fifth-year senior coming back, and that excites you. You can go to a backfield with Ezekiel Elliott returning, and that excites you. You can go to a receiver corps with Mike Thomas and all these other pieces that we have out there and Jalin Marshall and so on and so forth and say, 'Boy that's exciting, there's a lot of pieces there.' We have a quality tight end in Nick Vannett. And that's not even talking about the position that you guys all want to talk about, but there's nothing else to talk about there. We just have to keep waiting until that time comes."

"How could you not be excited about that? As we get closer we'll start to narrow down the best players and who's going to play the most, but the beautiful thing about depth is it's a competition then. And the beautiful thing about depth is certain players don't have to play every play and they can be fresher and you can have a little more punch in the fourth quarter if you're rolling some guys through there. I couldn't be more excited about this team, this offensive unit and where we could be in the fall."

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## OPINION

## Spring Answer Man Tackles Big, Lone Question



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Charter Member

During a three-year stretch from 1968-70 when a freckle-faced quarterback named Rex Kern was dashing and darting his way through opposing defenses and the mere thought of Jack Tatum's menacing glare struck fear in the hearts of opponents, Ohio State football fans thought things couldn't get any better.

When Archie Griffin became the first player ever to start in four consecutive Rose Bowls and won back-to-back Heisman Trophies in 1974 and '75, Ohio State football was again at the pinnacle of college football.

After Jim Tressel came to Columbus flashing four Division I-AA national championship rings from Youngstown State and proceeded to lead the Buckeyes to a national title in 2002, fans were convinced (again) that those were the glory days for Ohio State football.

And then came Urban Meyer.

Putting the program back on track to contend for a Big Ten division championship was Meyer's first order of business when he was hired shortly after the disastrous 2011 season that featured the most losses in more than a century. With a program in disarray and a roster filled with disheartened, disgruntled and disinterested players, most observers figured the coach's work was cut out for him.

Maybe Meyer could cobble something together that first season, some kind of foundation on which he could build for a conference championship run in a year or two. After all, the Buckeyes were serving a one-year bowl ban and the 2012 season was supposed to be nothing more than a bridge to the future. Then, if everything went exactly according to plan, Ohio State could begin competing for Big Ten honors again with an eye toward returning to national relevance by the end of the decade.

That was supposed to be the storyline, anyway. It was supposed to be the way things would transpire for the Buckeyes until Meyer shredded every preconceived notion by once again proving he is one of the top two or three coaches in college football.

With a decidedly less than perfect team, Ohio State enjoyed a perfect 12-0 season in 2012 and then advanced to the Big Ten Championship Game a year later. Then this past season, despite losing two Heisman-worthy quarterbacks, the Buckeyes scaled the Mount Everest of the sport by winning the inaugural College Football Playoff national championship, slaying No. 1-ranked Alabama and No. 2 Oregon in the process.

With Meyer at the absolute top of his game, Ohio State has won 38 of 41 games in three seasons and sports a perfect 24-0 record in regular-season conference games. Meyer is now one of only two head coaches in the modern era to win major-college national championships at two different schools, his recruiting has exceeded any and every expectation and his 2015 team is expected to do something unprecedented in 126 years of Ohio State football – win a second consecutive national championship.

Is it any wonder why 99,391 fans spent a warm, sunny Saturday afternoon packed into the Horseshoe to watch the annual spring game despite knowing they would see very little that resembled a real football game? You want to talk about glory days? What's happening right now at Ohio State is the very definition of what fans conjure in their minds when they dream about glory days.

And to think just a year ago at this time, the hand-wringing was prevalent after season-ending losses to Michigan State and Clemson that exposed a worn-out defense. Braxton Miller was rehabbing from his

first surgery on his throwing shoulder and graduation losses included four starting linemen.

The prevailing thought was that no one could possibly assume the role of go-to running back after the departure of Carlos Hyde, the team's leading rusher who was selected by San Francisco in the second round of the 2014 NFL draft. And as if all that weren't enough, the offense would be quarterback-deficient without Miller and backup Kenny Guiton, whose cool head and Midas touch delivered time after time when most needed.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

What a difference a year makes.

Questions remain, of course, regarding the 2015 team's receiving corps, the substantial hole created by the graduation of defensive lineman Michael Bennett and just how the young secondary will solidify following the departure of All-Big Ten cornerback Doran Grant.

But all anyone really wants to know about is the quarterback position, making for a situation so unique, the Spring Answer Man has never faced anything like it during his 20 previous annual visits to the pages of BSB.

This year, it's one question and one question only that commands the spotlight.

### Q. Who will start at quarterback?

A. Meyer has expertly evaded the question for so long that it leads one to believe the head coach doesn't really know the answer. The fact is that no one does because there are so many variables left to be answered.

The Internet nearly had a collective meltdown in mid-February when Miller told a Twitter follower that he had resumed throwing. An underhanded toss of a plush toy football to his 2½-year-old son, Landon, could qualify as throwing, I suppose, but Miller isn't going to embark upon any serious test of his twice surgically repaired shoulder until early summer. Then, and only then, will anyone know if he can resume his career as a quarterback.

Therefore, any talk – including that of a potential transfer anywhere – would be extremely presumptuous.

If Miller's shoulder is sound and he has no limitations in terms of throwing the ball, I would expect the two-time Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year to be under center when the Buckeyes kick off the 2015 season at Virginia Tech on Labor Day. The operative words in the preceding sentence are "no limitations."

In late August, renowned orthopedic surgeon Dr. James Andrews repaired a torn labrum in Miller's right shoulder. The extent of the tear has never been fully disclosed, but there is no doubt Andrews is the best in the field when it comes to saving the careers of athletes.

Still, the success rate for athletes coming back from a torn labrum is not that great. For example, a 2004 story published in *Slate* magazine termed a torn labrum as baseball's most fearsome injury.

"Andrews estimates that 85 percent of pitchers make a full recovery after ... Tommy John surgery," wrote Will Carroll, author of the article as well as several books on baseball injuries. "But if pitchers with torn labrums were horses, they'd be destroyed. Of the 36 major league hurlers diagnosed with labrum

tears in the last five years, only (one) has returned to his previous level."

Carroll wrote a follow-up piece for *Slate* last year, and while the technology is better and more players are making it back, surgery on the labrum remains difficult with varying success rates. New York Yankees righthander Michael Pineda missed all of the 2012 and 2013 seasons after undergoing labrum surgery on his pitching shoulder, but he returned last year to pitch in 13 games for the Yankees and this season was 3-0 with a 3.86 ERA after his first four starts.

Of course, comparing the wear and tear on the shoulders of a major league pitcher and a college quarterback is a classic apples-to-oranges exercise. No one is ever going to require Miller to throw a football at 95 mph or break off a spinning curveball into the dirt, and the good news is that the success rate for comebacks by quarterbacks undergoing labrum surgery is much greater than baseball pitchers.

Andrews repaired the torn labrum of former Purdue quarterback Drew Brees in January 2006 after the then-San Diego Chargers QB suffered the injury at the worst possible time – during the final game of the 2005 season after which he was to become a free agent. Brees, who spent his first five NFL seasons in San Diego, returned for the 2006 season and threw for a league-leading 4,418 yards in his first season in New Orleans. Since then, Brees has missed only one regular-season game for the Saints – and then only because his team had already clinched the No. 1 seed in the playoffs – and thrown for nearly 40,000 yards and 290 touchdowns.

In addition to Brees, current Philadelphia Eagles backup Mark Sanchez seems to have fully recovered from a torn labrum suffered in 2013. In nine games for the Eagles last season, Sanchez enjoyed a career-best 64.1-percent completion rate and threw 14 touchdown passes, his highest total since he started all 16 games for the Jets in 2011.

But just for argument's sake, let's say Miller's shoulder does not fully recover. That means the torch obviously gets passed to either J.T. Barrett or Cardale Jones.

Most fans believe that Jones has the edge in that competition because of his magical run at the end of last season when he threw for 742 yards and five touchdowns and added another 90 yards and a score on the ground during wins against Wisconsin, Alabama and Oregon.

Jones is far from a finished product, however, and anyone believing he can continue to perform at such a high level might be fooling themselves. He didn't seem all that engaged during the spring game, although he could be forgiven for occasionally losing focus during what was only a glorified scrimmage.

Still, there must have been some reason that Jones, who showed so much talent and feel for the game during the title run, couldn't rise above third-team status when Miller and Barrett were healthy.

Miller has the best athleticism of the trio, Jones possesses the strongest arm and Barrett probably offers the best combination of running and passing. Again, I think Miller will be on the field for the opener at Virginia Tech with the condition of his shoulder dictating where on the field he is against the Hokies.

And if Miller has to man another position, it will be interesting to see whether the gutsy Barrett or the gregarious Jones emerges as the starting quarterback for the Buckeyes.

For that question, the Spring Answer Man again finds himself in a unique situation – forced to sit patiently and wait for the answer.



## COVER STORY

# Meyer Not Yet Worrying About QB Battle

Continued From Page 1

Warinner's line about depth turning into competition in the fall rings true, and the Buckeyes will have the most anticipated position battle on their hands in the fall when Barrett and Miller square off against Cardale Jones for the starting spot at quarterback. As an added bonus, the Buckeyes will also have the option of deciding if they want to design packages for incoming freshman quarterback Torrance Gibson, regarded as one of the best athletes – if not the best – in the class of 2015 regardless of position.

There are other battles left to sort out, but Miller vs. Barrett vs. Jones will occupy the staff's attention in a way that few decisions ever have. Meyer, for his part, said that the Ohio State coaches are planning on letting data and performance lead the way over any sort of eye test or gut feeling when it comes to making a decision.

For that reason, Meyer said his summer won't be occupied with fretting over a decision that will have to be made in August.

"I won't spend much time at all about that, other than making sure that Braxton's getting the proper treatments and J.T. Barrett's moving forward, and then how we're going to work this summer as far as those kids throwing together," Meyer said.

"I'll come up with some kind of system throughout training camp that we're going to chart everything that everyone does. And we've kind of done it, but not to the degree that we're going to do it this year. You have to right now. This can't be, 'Well, I'm going with him because it's my gut feeling.' It's got to be statistical analysis and data, backed up on who is going to play quarterback."

Jones entered the spring with the upper hand as the only one of the three who was healthy enough to play, and his practices this spring affirmed that his run over the last three games of the 2014 season wasn't a fluke. That didn't necessarily show in the spring game, when Jones tossed a pair of interceptions in addition to two touch-

downs, but Meyer won't judge the Cleveland Glenville product based on one out of 15 practices.

"That wasn't a Cardale day," Meyer said after the spring game. "He played behind a makeshift offensive line. I can give you a bunch of excuses, but he's got to be much sharper than that. For the spring, I'd give him a very good spring, though. You didn't necessarily see it today."

Jones said the one thing he most improved during the spring was his vocal leadership, and getting the majority of the reps in practice certainly played a part in that. But he still wants to continue to show his offensive counterparts that he's a player who can be trusted, and he'll spend the summer continuing to develop cohesion with his teammates.

"There's stretches everybody goes through, all really things that we have to do on our own," Jones said. "Our coaches really can't be around too much. Carrying this leadership over to the weight room and the summer conditioning, things like that, so the guys I'll be going with can see that they can trust and believe in me and they know I've got their back."

Whichever quarterback wins the job will have an incredible number of targets to choose from. In addition to Thomas, the team's leading receiver last year, Corey Smith emerged this spring as a reliable target and hauled in two touchdown catches in the spring game.

Spring also included the emergence of several youngsters. Sophomore Noah Brown, down nearly 20 pounds from last season, garnered the most praise of any Buckeye this spring. Redshirt freshmen Parris Campbell and Terry McLaurin have also turned some heads, and both showed what they could do in front of big crowds by scoring a touchdown apiece in the spring game.

Even players at other positions developed into assets at wideout. Brown spent last season as an "H" but exited spring with Meyer saying he was in line to start at receiver. In a



KEVIN DYER

**CONTENDER** – Ohio State's Cardale Jones (12) threw two touchdown passes but will still have to battle J.T. Barrett and Braxton Miller for the starting quarterback job this fall.

move to develop versatility and get as many playmakers on the field as possible, sophomore running back Curtis Samuel spent spring practicing with the wide receivers and training at H, and he was the recipient of praise from the coaching staff.

Left guard Billy Price, who had a huge spring himself, said the wide receivers collectively had the best spring. He added that it was made all the more impressive with the absence of several starting linemen, giving receivers less time to get open on each individual rep.

The receivers' superiority was an opinion shared by his boss, as Warinner joined Price in naming the pass catchers the standouts of spring.

"I saw a lot of development in the receiver position with guys like Noah Brown making some development, even Parris Campbell, and Terry McLaurin had a nice catch today for a touchdown," Warinner said after the spring game. "So I thought we made progress there. I saw that position have a lot of numbers that we could get in there."

Perhaps the biggest question mark outside of the quarterback spot also got answered over the course of spring. Meyer proclaimed fifth-year senior Chase Farris as the starting right tackle, filling the only void on one of the best units on the team.

## Defense Answers Questions

While the quarterback battle drew by far the most eyeballs, the defense entered spring with its own questions to answer.

Who would line up opposite the All-American Bosa on the defensive line? Which defensive tackle would fill the void left by Michael Bennett? Could Raekwon McMillan make the leap to starting middle linebacker? Which cornerback would ascend to a starting role?

Consider all of them answered, at least for now.

Lewis used a big spring to become the clear leader for the starting defensive end spot. His play drew praise from Meyer, and he was able to hold off sophomore Jalyn Holmes and redshirt freshman Sam Hubbard

## Spring Scholarship Roster – Offense

QUARTERBACK				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
12	Cardale Jones	6-5	250	Sr./Jr.
16	J.T. Barrett	6-2	225	Jr./So.
5	Braxton Miller	6-2	215	5th/Sr.

**Other scholarship players:** Stephen Collier (R-Fr.)  
**Comments:** Everyone knows the story here at this point, and we organized this spot based on health for the time being. Jones had a good spring and seemed to showcase the leadership abilities the coaching staff had hoped for, but this position won't be fully sorted out until the fall.

RUNNING BACK				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
15	Ezekiel Elliott	6-0	225	Jr./Jr.
4	Curtis Samuel	5-11	200	So./So.

**Other scholarship players:** Bri'onte Dunn (Jr.), Warren Ball (Jr.)  
**Comments:** A year ago, this spot was a real toss-up, but it seems clear-cut now, though there is always the chance Samuel will play some in the "H" spot to get him more touches in dangerous situations. But there's little doubt Elliott enters the fall as the starter, and Dunn's good spring will have him in the mix for touches.

WIDE RECEIVER STARTERS				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
3	Michael Thomas	6-3	210	Sr./Jr.

80	Noah Brown	6-2	222	So./So.
17	Jalin Marshall	5-11	205	Jr./So.

WIDE RECEIVER RESERVES				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
84	Corey Smith	6-1	195	5th/Sr.
21	Parris Campbell	6-1	205	So./Fr.
2	Dontre Wilson	5-10	195	Jr./Jr.

**Other scholarship players:** James Clark (Soph.), Johnnie Dixon (R-Fr.), Terry McLaurin (R-Fr.)  
**Comments:** The position that had the biggest spring was wideout, as Brown, Marshall and Campbell all took big steps forward. Clark and Dixon didn't get to show their skills during spring as they continue to rehab leg injuries, and they should add depth to a spot that now appears to have plenty of it.

TIGHT END				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
81	Nick Vannett	6-6	260	5th/Sr.
85	Marcus Baugh	6-5	255	Jr./So.

**Comments:** The Buckeyes likely can't wait for the fall arrivals of true freshmen A.J. Alexander and Rashod Berry, a pair of three-star signees who will add depth. Vannett is a capable starter going into his senior year who can both block and catch, while Baugh is an intriguing option as a reserve who can stretch the field as a pass catcher.

LEFT TACKLE				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
68	Taylor Decker	6-8	315	Sr./Fr.

74	Jamarco Jones	6-5	310	So./So.
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LEFT GUARD				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
54	Billy Price	6-4	315	Jr./So.
64	Marcelys Jones	6-4	315	So./So.

CENTER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
50	Jacoby Boren	6-2	285	Sr./Sr.
65	Pat Elflein	6-3	300	Sr./Jr.

RIGHT GUARD				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
65	Pat Elflein	6-3	300	Sr./Jr.
75	Evan Lisle	6-7	305	Jr./So.

RIGHT TACKLE				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
57	Chase Farris	6-5	310	5th/Sr.
79	Brady Taylor	6-5	300	So./Fr.

**Other scholarship players:** Demetrius Knox (R-Fr.), Kyle Trout (R-Fr.), Grant Schmidt (Fr.)  
**Comments:** Urban Meyer was displeased by the depth of the offensive line in spring, especially in the interior, where an injury to Knox sapped the team of depth. The Buckeyes left spring feeling good about six guys – the starters and Jamarco Jones at tackle – but the young players must take a step forward in fall.

## COVER STORY

## Spring Scholarship Roster – Defense

DEFENSIVE END STARTERS				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
97	Joey Bosa	6-6	275	Jr./Jr.
59	Tyquan Lewis	6-4	260	Jr./So.

DEFENSIVE END RESERVES				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
49	Sam Hubbard	6-5	265	So./Fr.
10	Jalyn Holmes	6-5	265	So./So.

DEFENSIVE TACKLE STARTERS				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
92	Adolphus Washington	6-4	290	Sr./Sr.
90	Tommy Schutt	6-3	290	Sr./Sr.

DEFENSIVE TACKLE RESERVES				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
51	Joel Hale	6-4	295	5th/Sr.
52	Donovan Munger	6-4	300	Jr./So.

**Other scholarship players:** Michael Hill (Soph.), Tracy Sprinkle (Soph.), Darius Slade (R-Fr.), Dylan Thompson (R-Fr.), Jashon Cornell (Fr.)

**Comments:** The Buckeyes saw enough growth in the spring that it wouldn't be a surprise to see them go eight-deep (or more) in the fall. While the top end might suffer after the loss of Michael Bennett to graduation, there will be more depth and some players hungry to make an impact.

WEAKSIDE LINEBACKER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
37	Joshua Perry	6-4	254	Sr./Sr.
33	Dante Booker	6-3	233	So./So.

MIDDLE LINEBACKER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
5	Raekwon McMillan	6-2	240	So./So.
55	Cam Williams	6-1	225	Sr./Sr.

STRONGSIDE LINEBACKER				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
43	Darron Lee	6-2	235	Jr./So.
35	Chris Worley	6-2	225	Jr./So.

**Other scholarship players:** Kyle Berger (R-Fr.), Nick Conner (Fr.)

**Comments:** A position that was a concern a few years ago suddenly looks pretty strong, and this list doesn't even include walk-ons Joe Burger and Craig Fada, who will be in the mix for roles in the two-deep and the kicking game. Booker had a good spring and might push for playing time somewhere, even though the starters seem solid.

CORNERBACK				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
13	Eli Apple	6-1	200	Jr./So.

19	Gareon Conley	6-0	195	Jr./So.
7	Damon Webb	5-11	193	So./So.
2	Marshon Lattimore	6-0	195	So./Fr.

**Comments:** There likely isn't as much depth here as the Buckeyes would like, though that will be somewhat alleviated in the summer when the recruiting class arrives. Still, at the top, the pairing of Apple and Conley should be solid and Webb can play in a pinch. Lattimore remains an intriguing option who simply needs to get healthy.

SAFETY				
No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl./Elig.
23	Tyvis Powell	6-3	210	Sr./Jr.
11	Vonn Bell	5-11	205	Jr./Jr.
16	Cam Burrows	6-0	208	Jr./Jr.
1	Erick Smith	6-0	202	So./So.

**Other scholarship players:** Malik Hooker (R-Fr.)

**Comments:** This is one of the deepest spots on the team at the moment as any of the four could start and play well, but there would be little argument that their play and leadership abilities place Powell and Bell a cut above Burrows and Smith. Burrows is ready to start anywhere else in the conference, though, and Smith might be hard to keep off the field.

this spring, although both are expected to see significant reps in the rotation.

In the middle of the trenches, Washington will slide into the role vacated by Bennett, and he'll be joined in the middle by senior Tommy Schutt. There's the possibility that Hale pushes for that position going forward, and sophomores Donovan Munger and Michael Hill could also work their way into the rotation. For now, though, Schutt has appeared to distance himself from the pack at one of OSU's most inconsistent and injury-plagued positions.

McMillan's performance this spring was more than enough to convince coaches that he's the player deserving to join Perry and Lee as starters in the middle of the defense. The sophomore out of Georgia has taken on more of a leadership role as the staff attempts to develop him into the star that his potential indicates he should become.

"Last year, coming in I was taking it all in," McMillan said. "This year, I've taken a leadership role. Being the Mike linebacker, going out there as a starter, it's a lot on your plate. Everybody around you is depending on you to make the right call, make the right adjustments. So last year was just a learning process. This year is like a leadership process."

The battle at cornerback might not have been the most important one of this season, but it was arguably one of the most interesting ones. At the end of spring, Meyer declared Gareon Conley the winner over Damon Webb. There will be even more players pushing them in the fall, as redshirt freshman Marshon Lattimore continues to recover from a hamstring injury and four true freshmen arrive in June.

Conley struggled at times last fall, most notably in the Michigan State game when he lasted just two series before being pulled in favor of banged-up Eli Apple. However, starting safeties Tyvis Powell and Vonn Bell noted this spring that Conley was practicing like a starting cornerback, and the coaching staff clearly took notice.

"Last year, I came in at Michigan State and messed up a couple of plays and that just kind of brought me down," Conley said. "I didn't have as much confidence and belief in myself, but just knowing that my teammates know that I'm out there and my coaches put me out there, that just builds my confidence."

"Nobody likes getting beat, so you beat

yourself up. But you have to know that you've got to build upon that. You have to use that as motivation to know that you've got to play the next play."

With those four questions answered, the Silver Bullets can head into fall focused on developing as a unit instead of as individuals. The team's defense believed it rounded into form last year, improving its pass defense throughout the year and coming together during the three-game postseason run to the national title.

Now, in the second year under co-defensive coordinator Chris Ash, the Buckeyes think even more is possible.

"Our goal is to be great," Ash said. "We've got to be more consistent with what we do."

#### Meeting Expectations

With spring out of the way, there will be no more holding back on the Buckeyes' quest to repeat as national champions. The summer will be spent with strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti, who will be tasked with handing Meyer a roster brimming with players at their physical peak.

It will also be a test of how the players grow when the coaching staff isn't there to stare down their every move.

"Coach Mick holds us accountable, definitely," Perry said. "He's basically the guy who's going to be there for us. Outside of that, it's the leaders on the team and the guys within the units."

"We're going to have to be able to police ourselves and hold each other accountable, and that's big. We've been able to do that the past few years that we've been here, so that shouldn't be the toughest task. It's going to be the way in which we do it that's going to be what makes or breaks us."

When August arrives, it will be time for the Buckeyes to grow as a team in the way

that they weren't able to during the spring. They'll have more weapons and more talent at their disposal than ever before, and players seem to understand what's at stake this offseason.

"If we don't get better as a team, then our goal will not happen," Powell said. "Everybody knows we have high expectations. We're trying to meet those expectations. If we don't get better as a team – this is a team sport, it's the ultimate team sport. You have to have depth, you have to figure it out. We have to figure it out real soon or we're in trouble."

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# National Champs Visit President At White House

By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The Ohio State football team introduced itself to the nation when it romped through Wisconsin, Alabama and Oregon to win the inaugural College Football Playoff this past winter.

Apparently, that included President Barack Obama.

The president appeared to have a full and intimate knowledge of the Ohio State team when it took its celebratory visit to the White House on April 20, as Obama referred to Michigan as "a certain team up north," feted the three star quarterbacks on the roster, joked about Ezekiel Elliott's cut-off, crop-top jersey and even exchanged shrugs with Joey Bosa.

Head coach Urban Meyer, who visited George W. Bush in the White House after Florida's title win in 2006 and then Obama after the Gators' 2008 title, said the trip was unlike his previous visits to our nation's capital.

"I'd like to thank President Obama and his staff," Meyer said. "This is our third time that I've been part of it. I can't remember it being as genuine, as open and as relaxed as it was. He came in and spent time with our team, and I think that's the first time that's happened with the president."

"I'm very appreciative. I'm glad he's a sports fan."

So were such players as Elliott, Bosa and Evan Spencer, each of whom received commendation from Obama during a 20-minute public ceremony honoring the title-winning Buckeyes in the East Room.

The room was packed with onlookers, including members of Ohio's congressional delegation, for Obama's remarks and he didn't disappoint, joking with the Buckeyes – even calling quarterback Cardale Jones by his nickname, 12 Gauge – and lauding their selfless play on the way to the championship.

"In critical moments throughout the season we learned about the character of this football team and we've met the characters who have made up the football team along the way, like Joey Bosa," Obama said.

"Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, consensus All-American, led the conference in sacks in 2014 including the one that ended the double-overtime game against Penn State. He followed each with his signature celebration, a shrug."

At that point, the two exchanged the defensive lineman's signature post-sack move, with Bosa giving Obama a thumbs up and a smile afterward.

"Now, Joey's hair may be short now, but he looks good," Obama added. "I actually like it."

"I cut it for you," Bosa replied.

Obama then continued with praise for Spencer and Elliott.

"Wide receiver Evan Spencer was named team MVP in 2014 for his selfless play, great blocking and even a perfectly thrown touchdown pass to Mike Thomas in the Sugar Bowl," the president said.

"And in addition to rushing for over 1,800 yards behind an extraordinary offensive line – as good as we've seen in a very long time – and earning championship game MVP, Ezekiel Elliott made the NCAA fashion police take a close look at their midriff policy. Zeke, thank you for tucking in your shirt today."



JEFF SVOBODA

**BRINGING A GIFT** – U.S. President Barack Obama shows off an Ohio State football jersey given to him by head coach Urban Meyer (center) and team captains, while athletics director Gene Smith (second from left) and university president Michael Drake (right) look on.

For each of those players, it was a memorable day to cap a memorable season.

"It meant the world," Spencer said. "All of us, we worked so hard all season. For him to point me out and show that I did do really well and I did work my butt off, especially with it being from the president of the United States, it felt really good, actually."

"You have to take in everything. This entire experience has been amazing. It's not something everybody gets to do, and it's a present for all of our hard work throughout the season and being able to do things that we did this year."

## Busy Day

Ohio State's trip to the nation's capital started with an early-morning departure from the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. The team's delegation – which included Tom Herman, who is now the head coach at Houston but joined the team for the celebration – was in Washington, D.C., by mid-morning, at which point the team visited the Martin Luther King Memorial.

"Just to see that memorial, it was a great honor," said co-captain Curtis Grant, who grew up in Virginia. "I haven't seen that. I've been up here a million times because I'm two hours down the road, but to see the history of it, it was great."

Ohio State then had a team lunch before arriving at the White House, where the Buckeyes were met by Obama and a number of Ohio congressional leaders including senators Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman as well as Rep. Joyce Beatty, a former senior vice president at OSU.

The team had some time to tour the White House, and a number of players took pictures with the paintings of former presidents hanging throughout the executive residence. Each player also got the chance to shake hands with Obama before the public ceremony.

"They individually got to shake hands with the president, which is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Meyer said. "I hope the pictures are there for them so they can take them with them the rest of their life. Obviously, it's a great reward. They'll tell

No. 1 Alabama and No. 2 Oregon to earn the title.

The president publicly pushed for the playoff and made sure to bring that up – somewhat jokingly – during his remarks.

"This was an historic year in college football," Obama said. "The country finally got to enjoy its first ever College Football Playoff. I will say it – it was about time. I cannot claim full credit, but I will point that I pushed for a playoff system in 2008."

Meyer was sure to point out he was happy for the president's efforts, mentioning them in both his remarks in the East Room while also addressing the subject while meeting with the media afterward.

"He made the point several times, and that's true that he jumped right in the middle of the discussion about the College Football Playoff, and we benefited," Meyer pointed out.

Obama said that Elliott asked him to continue to work his magic and discuss with the NCAA the new directive to eliminate the crop-top jersey that he wore last year, but the president said he could only do so much.

"I already got the playoff, all right? I have other stuff to do now," Obama joked.

## Quarterback Talk

After the ceremony, Meyer was asked if Obama had weighed in on the Ohio State quarterback situation involving Jones, J.T. Barrett and Braxton Miller.

Obama mentioned each quarterback in his address but did not give Meyer his opinion publicly or privately on what the head coach should do in 2015.

"I'm going to meet with him here again and ask him some questions," Meyer joked. "That was my fault. I forgot to ask."

During the ceremony, Obama joked that he could throw a football nearly 75 yards like Jones did during Ohio State's April 18 spring game, then added, "(Jones) didn't believe me, so he clearly is a smart kid."

Meyer added Obama told him he couldn't even hit a golf ball 75 yards, but Spencer said, "Who knows? He might be our fourth-string quarterback next year."

## Been There Before

Obama seemed impressed that he was welcoming Meyer for the head coach's third trip to the White House.

"This is Coach Meyer's third time winning (the championship) with his second team – pretty impressive," Obama said. "I've only done it twice – with the same team both times."

## Obama's Playoff Role

Obama also made sure to point out he was one of the reasons the Buckeyes were able to win the national title. In the first year of a four-team playoff, the Buckeyes entered postseason play as the No. 4 seed but beat



JEFF SVOBODA

**HONORING THE CHAMPS** – President Barack Obama (center) addressed the Ohio State football team April 20 when the Buckeyes took their celebratory visit to the White House.



## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

# Ohio State Legends Discuss Heisman Seasons

By **BLAKE WILLIAMS**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

As three suit-clad men entered through the back door of the Archie M. Griffin Grand Ballroom West, the crowd of about 200 people erupted in applause. Over the cacophonous clapping those in attendance could be heard calling out to the men they came to see.

"Troy!"

"Eddie!"

"Archie!"

All recognizable to Buckeye Nation with just one name, the three men ascended the stairs of the stage, walking with the gravitas expected of two first-round NFL draft picks, five Big Ten titles and four Heisman Trophies.

Ohio State legends Troy Smith, Eddie George and Archie Griffin convened at the Ohio Union on Ohio State's campus April 17 for an hour-long talk about what it is like to play at Ohio State and win a Heisman, offering a unique perspective as they represent three of the four living Buckeyes who have claimed college football's most prestigious award and earned four of the 78 trophies given out.

For \$10 a ticket, fans got the opportunity to hear the three men who played the sport at its highest level talk about their experiences at Ohio State, each recounting the journey that led them to the Heisman Trophy and speaking of the brotherhood they feel with one another.

The Columbus Dispatch's Tim May, a 31-year veteran of the Ohio State football beat who has had a vote for the Heisman Trophy since 1984, moderated the event. May had Griffin, who won the award in 1974 and 1975 and remains the only two-time winner, recount how he learned he won the trophy to highlight the way the fanfare and obsession with the award has grown.

Griffin was notified that he was a finalist for the 1974 award over the phone and made the trip to New York to find out he was the only player to make the trip, eliminating the suspense of who would be crowned the winner. The following year Griffin learned of his invitation on a pay phone. Not to be fooled again, Griffin realized he was the winner but was asked to keep it a secret, a promise he kept outside of telling his mother and girlfriend, he said.

While these days, potential winners are judged in part by how many "Heisman moments" they have throughout the season, Griffin said he felt he was deserving of the award because of his consistency, citing his NCAA-record streak of 31 games with at least 100 yards rushing as the mark he is most proud of.

Things had changed by the time George won his trophy in 1995 as multiple finalists



OSU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

**LIVING LEGENDS** – From left, Ohio State Heisman trophy winners Troy Smith, Archie Griffin and Eddie George entertained the crowd April 17 during a talk about what it is like to play at Ohio State and win a Heisman.

were there for a suspenseful ceremony, and while he wasn't sure he would win, Griffin was.

Griffin said that when he was watching a practice with George's father and saw the younger running back freeze cornerback Shawn Springs completely on his way to the end zone, he knew that he was watching the next Buckeye who would win the Heisman.

"Your son is going to win the Heisman Trophy," Griffin said simply to the elder George.

Griffin was right, of course, as George took home the trophy after amassing a school-record 1,927 rushing yards with 24 touchdowns in just 13 games. George garnered 52.8 percent of the possible voting points to edge Nebraska's Tommie Frazier and Florida's Danny Wuerffel for the Heisman.

"In that moment, my life changed forever," George said of hearing his name called in New York.

George talked about his school-record 314 yards rushing against Illinois that year as the moment he knew he could possibly win the award. He went on to joke about both that record and his season rushing record nearly falling with Ezekiel Elliott's performance in the 2014 national title game.

"Urban, enough is enough, get him out the game," George joked of his plea to head coach Urban Meyer. "I couldn't believe it, I was like, 'Come on, Oregon, one stop!'"

George went on to say that Elliott is fully capable of breaking all of his records, marks that were meant to be broken.

"Except when it's a shovel pass," Smith chimed in.

The former Buckeye quarterback was referring to the Ohio State record he set during his Heisman campaign with 30 touch-

down passes. That record fell last season when J.T. Barrett tossed a shovel pass just feet in front of him that Jalin Marshall caught before racing into the end zone for the quarterback's 31st scoring toss.

Smith, Ohio State's most recent winner who garnered the award by the widest margin of votes in the trophy's history with 91.6 percent of possible points, said his big moment came on a 37-yard touchdown strike to Brian Robiskie on a broken play. That score solidified Smith as a contender for the award in his own eyes and led to a 28-6 win over Penn State during his 2006 Heisman campaign.

Looking back wasn't enough as the topic turned from their own past glories to which current Buckeyes might join the former stars in the Ohio State Heisman brotherhood. Elliott is the favorite to win the award not just among Buckeyes but also in the nation according to oddsmakers. However, Ohio State has a bevy of talent at quarterback that could have something to say about that.

There's just the matter of which signal caller gets the start, and obviously Griffin,

George and Smith couldn't escape without commenting on who should start at quarterback next season.

For Smith, who cited loyalty, Braxton Miller was the answer: "He shouldn't lose his job because he got injured."

Griffin also spoke of loyalty, but of loyalty to recent performance and to Cardale Jones: "You've got a guy that won the three biggest games there are to play. He is the guy doing all the practicing now. Is it fair for a guy to go through the whole spring and win you a championship and not start?"

For George, Jones was also the answer: "The confidence level is going to be at another level. My thing is whoever is going to be my starting quarterback is going to have to take it."

Regardless of who starts at quarterback, the leading contender to join the elite brotherhood of Smith, George and Griffin is Elliott, and all three said they believe he could win the award.

Perhaps years from now fans will be yelling "Zeke!" with the same fervor that greeted Troy, Eddie and Archie as they walked to the stage April 17.

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# BSB Staffers Discuss Spring, Look Ahead To Fall

Since Ohio State hoisted the first-ever College Football Playoff National Championship Trophy Jan. 12, the Buckeyes have had 15 spring practices to assess what the team will look like entering the 2015 season.

The team has come up with some answers – Chase Farris will be the right tackle, Gareon Conley will start at cornerback and Tommy Schutt appears to be in line to start at defensive tackle – but the biggest question remains: Who will start under center for the Buckeyes when the season opens Sept. 7?

With the Buckeyes now off the field until the start of fall camp in August, Buckeye Sports Bulletin editor Jeff Svoboda and staff writers Blake Williams and Ryan Ginn sat down to discuss what was learned from the spring, what questions still remain and what fans should expect out of the Buckeyes in 2015.

**Jeff Svoboda:** I guess the main question is, did we learn much this spring? I am not sure if we did having been able to watch only a handful of practices.

**Blake Williams:** Did we not learn that much because we didn't have a chance to watch much, or was there not that much to learn because the team is so set at so many positions, at least at the starting spots? Depth is the question.

**Ryan Ginn:** I learned that they are going to have a boatload of weapons and they can use them in a lot of different ways. I think you see Curtis Samuel out there with the wide receivers and you're like, "Wow, he can play wide receiver or running back. He can line up out wide." Noah Brown can play the tight-end style "H" or wide receiver. Mike Thomas is the only guy who is really set. He's going to be on the outside. They can use Jalin Marshall and Dontre Wilson in a number of ways. They can pretty much use a mix-and-match lineup that can terrorize defenses. The amount of talent they have right now, it's impossible to think about how recently they called the weapons a clown show.

**BW:** It seemed like early in the Urban Meyer era they were trying guys out at different positions more to just find somebody who can play that position, sometimes forc-

ing square pegs into round holes. Now they are moving guys around because they can. They are playing with the toys they have and trying to find the best way to get their best guys on the field. They didn't move Curtis Samuel to "H" because they desperately needed an "H" – they have Marshall and Wilson – they moved him to "H" because, "Oh, he can also do this and that might make us better." It's not out of necessity.

**JS:** It feels like the coaches haven't really missed on any of the skill recruits they've gotten since they got here. They've had some guys get injured a little bit – James Clark and Johnnie Dixon – but if you think about Ezekiel Elliott, Marshall, Samuel and even the Parris Campbells of the world, they've hit on them. They went from, "Boy, the offense looks good at times but it's pretty much Braxton left, Braxton right," to, "How do you get all these guys on the field and get everybody touches?"

**RG:** You know other teams are in trouble when Ohio State can go into Brooklyn to get Curtis Samuel and New Jersey to get Noah Brown and they are just as devastating as SEC guys. Everyone just assumed that Meyer would pluck guys out of Florida, but he is winning with Northern kids now. It's incredible. The only thing that has stopped anyone so far is injuries.

Terry McLaurin was basically anonymous last year, and he caught a touchdown in the spring game and it was a good catch. He beat Damon Webb. That's what, their eighth-best option right now at receiver? That's not a knock against him, that's just the way it is.

**JS:** And that's a spot where they definitely needed to get better this spring. It's funny – there are real issues on this team and we are kind of discussing (the playmaking depth) like it's an actual problem. It will be really, really interesting to me to see how they use guys next year.

**RG:** If you want to talk about a position that has depth problems, it's the offensive line. It has by far the best starters collectively of a position group, but after that ... Chase Farris is now the starter as opposed to the sixth man, which I think was a much more valuable asset last year when he could play tackle or guard, and Jamarco Jones is a solid

backup at tackle, but after that they've had so many injury problems. Guys like Evan Lisle, Brady Taylor hasn't played, Kyle Trout, Demetrius Knox broke his foot.

**JS:** It looked like they had no interior line depth to speak of watching the student appreciation practice and the spring game.

**RG:** This won't matter at all if they stay healthy.

**JS:** They have stayed healthy under Meyer. The thing is, you don't get a lot of line injuries but when you do they're severe generally because a guy gets rolled up on. You don't get minor things popping up a whole lot to where you have to do a lot of shuffling. But they very well may have true freshmen in the two-deep this year depending on the health and the progress of some of the other guys. If you get multiple injuries you are in trouble. That's probably the thing I left spring least confident about is offensive line depth.

**BW:** The fact that you are putting depth at the end of that sentence makes it a much better situation than last year when it was more than depth, it was starters.

**JS:** If you look at things that went well this spring, they mostly solidified the starting lineup it seems. They filled the right tackle spot, they feel better at wide receiver to replace Evan Spencer and Devin Smith. Gareon Conley looks like he is going to be a starting cornerback, Raekwon McMillian didn't do anything to lose the middle line-backer spot and then Tommy Schutt had a good spring and the other spot is Tyquan Lewis probably. It seems as though their top 22 is going to be pretty solid.

**RG:** I was shocked at how many position battles Meyer came out and said who would be the person to start if the season was today. He went off and named every single spot. I still think the defensive line will be interesting.

**BW:** Yes, but everyone's life gets easier when you have Joey Bosa on the defensive line. Getting to line up opposite him is nice. It seemed like Lewis went and took that spot, but Jalyn Holmes and Sam Hubbard are right there with him. As far as defensive tackle, Meyer said Schutt would have it if the season started today, but he also left the door open for Joel Hale had he not gotten injured to be right there. D-line will be interesting – I guess it's the biggest concern on defense – but I don't think it's a big concern. Or is corner the bigger concern?

**RG:** I'm going to have to see it to believe it with Gareon Conley. I realize that is sort of unfair, but I just can't shake that memory of looking with the binoculars at the Michigan State game and Connor Cook just targeted him right away. You just see cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs walk over to Eli Apple, who was hurt, and say, "Get on the stationary bike." They basically decided a hurt guy was a better option at that point. Now, people make improvements, but that's a believe-it-when-I-see-it situation for me.

**JS:** That's true, but Eli Apple hadn't played a down before last year. The great thing for Ohio State right now is that every position you can question, they are still significantly better off than they were a year ago. I don't think there is any spot where they are going to have to throw someone out there who is completely incapable unless they really lose two guys at certain spots.

This struck me when I did our spring previews and it has kind of stuck with me through the entirety of the spring that there are only 12 scholarship seniors and 12 schol-



KEVIN DYE

**PLAYING TIME COMING? – Ohio State's Jamarco Jones (74) should help provide additional depth for the Buckeye offensive line this fall at tackle.**

arship juniors on the team. At most spots the top backup is a really, really talented true sophomore or something like that. We learned last year that that's not necessarily bad, but there aren't a lot of fourth- or fifth-year guys waiting in the wings.

**RG:** Do we want to talk about expectations for this team?

**JS:** You know what's funny is we got this far without talking about the quarterbacks. It's been ad nauseam everywhere. If you go anywhere you hear, "Oh, you cover the Buckeyes? Who is going to be the quarterback?" But until you know Braxton Miller's health I don't think you can fit the pieces of the puzzle together.

**BW:** I agree completely. That's why although everyone thought it was one of the most interesting things this spring, to me it was one of the least interesting things because we knew that when spring was over we would still have no answer. The right tackle position, the end spot opposite Bosa, the corner opposite Apple – those were all more interesting to me because we knew that there was a good chance by the end of spring that we would have answers to those questions and we do. We knew at the start of spring that we wouldn't have an answer to the quarterback position and we still don't. To me it wasn't as interesting as everyone wanted to make it out to be.

**JS:** It is a completely unique, never-before-seen situation in college football, so I can see why both fans and national writers would want to talk about it, but you're right. We knew Jan. 15 as soon as Cardale Jones decided he was coming back that he was the only healthy quarterback and J.T. Barrett, even though he has exceeded health expectations he wasn't running live reps, so for us you can't really talk about the quarterbacks. Once you know where Braxton is you can maybe start to see the answer, but until you know that you just can't. That's the piece of information that isn't there that is essential to figuring out the puzzle.

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL ANALYSIS

# QB Conundrum Still Looms For Buckeyes

Continued From Page 10

**BW:** The quarterback situation is that one that you have to address but you can't really answer. You have to talk about it, but you can't come to any conclusions so it is frustrating from our side of things. I'm sure it is more frustrating and stressful for Meyer and (quarterbacks coach) Tim Beck than it is for us.

**JS:** That's the weird thing that people haven't really discussed is this is a really weird situation for Tim Beck to get thrown into. If you're Beck, you have three personalities who have all done so much and you have to coach them all and you're going to be partially responsible for who is going to play. Two of the players - Braxton Miller and Cardale Jones - have openly talked about how hard it was for them to develop trust in the previous guy. So it's not an easy situation by any stretch of the imagination.

On paper there are so many different things to like about this team and I have been joking with people that the only thing that could really derail this team is a massive quarterback controversy that tears apart the team, but that's really on the table. It might not be likely, but it is on the table where you have some older guys who played with Braxton and then maybe some younger guys who played with Cardale and even some that had chemistry with J.T. Barrett last year. I've seen teams struggle with Troy Smith vs. Justin Zwick and Terrelle Pryor vs. Todd Boeckman. If it's not handled properly it could all kind of fall apart. I think if you want any coach in the country overseeing it, it's probably Urban Meyer because he has the force of personality to make it work.

**BW:** It definitely could happen, but I think you said it and that's that the trump card in that conversation is Urban Meyer. As a guy making that decision, how much do you factor in how the team might react? That's why he said after the spring game that he was going to develop a specific tracking system for everything so that he can say, "You're the starter, you two aren't and here's why." Not just, "Here is a decision and live with it," but showing what led to that decision and that's a way to avoid that controversy.

**JS:** I do think that transparency will be on their side. Handling it well would include being very clear and specific as to why they are doing what they do. It helps that in this situation everybody has respect for all three of them and what they've done so it's not like it's a bad option.

**RG:** Braxton is a two-time conference MVP, J.T. was fifth in the Heisman voting and lost just one game, Cardale won a national championship. So when the quarterback has a bad game it's not going to be good. Whoever wins will be in the minority because there will be two other guys that the fan base is divided on. It's going to be so hard for someone to have a bad game and be able to tune out what people are saying because they have two other options. Last year J.T. could struggle at times because no one knew Cardale and Braxton wasn't coming back that season. It was his team. They will not be able to not hear about it if they have a bad game.

**JS:** You're right, there would be a lot of questions that next week.

**RG:** Cardale has the highest potential out of all of them, highest ceiling, but turns the ball over the most. J.T. is probably the best decision maker, but he has physical limitations. And Braxton just has the health problems and the fact that he hasn't played in a year, but he is also really good. People underestimate or have forgotten how good Braxton is. There is good and bad with everyone there, and there is reason to doubt and believe in every one of them.

**BW:** I think the key is that those questions that will inevitably arise remain external. As long as the team isn't splintering I think they can wade through it. It might be a tough situation and an annoying situation for the coaching staff and maybe a personally difficult situation for whatever quarterback might have a rough week, but as long as the team isn't splintering it's something they can probably get through. That's the concern is if the team starts to splinter it can all fall apart.

**JS:** Now that we've discussed the one thing that could really go wrong, all things considered I don't see any way they don't win 11 or 12 games in the regular season unless a total disaster happens because they are just so much more talented than all of the teams they are going to play, especially those first 10 weeks. Michigan State and Michigan is an interesting gantlet to end the season, but it is really hard for me to see where they would slip up before then because they have enough talent to overcome it. They are going to have to play a really bad game to lose in the first 10.

Urban would hate to read that, but the reality of the situation is the top 40 guys on their roster are going to be immensely more talented than the top 40 on any of the teams they play in the first 10 games, and not just more talented but more experienced.

**RG:** I think you can pencil them in for 11 or 12 wins. I would never say I think they'll repeat because their last five games of the season will be Michigan State, at Michigan, Big Ten Championship Game, playoff and championship. They would have to do that to win the title and that's five really hard games to win in a row.

**JS:** There's a reason no one has repeated in a while. Everyone takes their best shot against you, you develop new issues. Teams just aren't the same from year to year, so while these guys appear to be very similar personality-wise to where they were on Dec. 31, people change and things develop.

**RG:** I think it's critical that they have guys like Tyvis Powell, Vonn Bell and Cardale who seem to have a very loose effect on this team. You would not know this spring that they are the defending national champions when you saw the way they interact with each other and do media stuff.

**BW:** It is really hard for me to not predict them to start the season 10-0, which is predicting them to be on a 23-game winning streak. That is so hard to do and it seems insane to predict that, but I feel pretty good about it at the same time. And honestly while they could lose to Michigan State or at Michigan, they are more talented than both of those teams, too.

**JS:** Yeah, I have a hard time seeing them losing at home to Michigan State, and I have a hard time seeing them losing to Michigan. They have more talent and more experience. Then it just sets you up and like this last year all you have to do is get into the playoff and go from there.



# Price, Conley Among OSU's Spring Standouts

By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Urban Meyer admitted the football Buckeyes didn't necessarily get better as a team in the spring, but it was always going to be hard for that to be the case.

With as many as seven potential starters sidelined for parts or all of spring with injuries and a number of other veterans limited in order to keep them fresh and help younger players develop, spring was uneven for the Buckeyes. Meyer capped the 15 practice sessions by noting that while some players individually improved, the team as a whole didn't make steps.

There is still plenty of time for the Buckeyes to round into form, with the opener vs. Virginia Tech still four months away. And while the team didn't make the exact steps Meyer might have hoped for, the Buckeyes did see some players make big steps, and we break down some of those gains in this spring superlatives piece.

## Offensive Player Of The Spring: Billy Price

This could have gone to any number of receivers or even running back Bri'onte Dunn, but Meyer seemed positively thrilled with his left guard's development after the spring game April 18.

"Billy Price is playing outstanding football for us right now," Meyer said. "Billy Price is night and day what he was years ago."

Price arrived at Ohio State as a defensive lineman noted for his strength in the class of 2013 and redshirted, moving quickly to the offensive line. He was a bit of an unknown last year at this time but performed well enough that he eventually started every game at guard as a redshirt freshman.

There were some issues in pass protection, especially early in the season, but Price steadily improved and used his tremendous natural strength well, especially in the run game.

"I think it's a matter of confidence, especially when you're playing offensive line," Price said. "When we look from last year to where we finished up those final three games, it's a confidence boost. It really helped me develop my skills."

"I went from a guy with no confidence, zero plays, to a guy who played 1,176 snaps last year. It's like watching a kid grow up, essentially. I didn't play since high school, and to come in and begin to develop myself and become the player I am and the player I'll continue to become, it's pretty cool."

Offensive coordinator and line coach Ed Warinner echoed those comments when asked about Price, noting that the Austintown, Ohio, native is now among the more dependable linemen on the team.

"Confidence is the biggest thing," Warinner said. "A player without confidence doesn't play up to his ability level, so Billy has confidence now and confidence comes from playing well in big games down the stretch. He's so much further along in his development and where he's at right now, he's really good. So that's exciting."

## Defensive Player Of The Spring: Gareon Conley

A co-captain and first-team All-Big Ten pick, Doran Grant left big shoes to fill when he exhausted his eligibility, but Meyer knew whom he has tabbed to start in Grant's stead at cornerback following the spring.

"Gareon Conley is penciled in now,"

## Players On The Spot

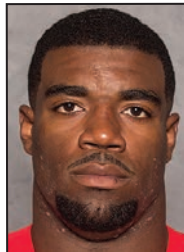
Every year, at the start of spring, BSB lists a number of players who are "on the spot" and need to make strides in order to solidify their roles on the team. Here is how this year's crop performed.

**Corey Smith, Sr. WR** – If Smith's six-catch, two-touchdown performance in the spring game was any indication, he had a good spring. Offensive coordinator Ed Warinner said Smith continued to need to be a consistent performer, but he got better at the end of last year and is showing signs of becoming the explosive target and potential deep threat the coaching staff thought it was getting upon his arrival.

**Noah Brown, Soph. WR** – Brown was one of the top players in spring, earning praise from nearly all sides and maybe even earning a starting role for the Buckeyes out wide. Noticeably slimmed down from a season ago in which he earned spot duty as a blocker, Brown seems to be in line for major playing time in 2015.

**Chase Farris, Sr. OL** – Farris did what he had to do to solidify himself as the team's starter at right tackle in 2015 during spring, fending off a challenge from true sophomore Jamarco Jones. The team's sixth man on the offensive line last year, Farris has bided his time and now appears ready to take over for Darryl Baldwin.

**Tyquan Lewis and Jalyn Holmes, Soph. DEs** – These two each made steps forward, with Lewis likely earning a starting



Chase Farris

role in the spot vacated by Steve Miller and Rashad Frazier and Holmes becoming a viable option as a backup, though he did get banged up during the spring game. Add in Sam Hubbard and the Buckeyes don't appear to be lacking at end.

**Tommy Schutt and Joel Hale, Sr. DTs** – Hale had a calf injury that sapped him of time upon his return to the defensive line, but reports indicated he acquitted himself well, while Schutt seems ready to finally be a starter in his final season. Michael Bennett left huge shoes to fill but Schutt, a one-time five-star prospect, is healthy and dedicated to finishing on a high note.

**Donovan Munger and Michael Hill, Soph. DTs** – The Buckeye staff seemed pleased but not elated with the growth of the depth at this position, and that includes Munger and Hill behind Schutt, Hale and Adolphus Washington. Neither appeared to make a big move toward a starting role, but there was progress from each at a position where depth remains a concern.

**Gareon Conley, Soph. CB** – Conley was proclaimed the starter after spring ball and said his rough cameo a season ago at Michigan State is now long behind him. That tough performance hurt his confidence, Conley admitted, but he looks like a different player and capped his spring with an impressive performance in the spring game.

– Jeff Svoboda

Meyer said after the spring game. "We're going to make the call to the family and say your son earned a right to start at Ohio State."

That was the goal for the third-year sophomore from Massillon (Ohio) Washington, who had a spirited battle with Eli Apple last fall for the starting job opposite Grant only to fall short.

Still, Conley is taking nothing for granted. "It gives me confidence and just knowing that I have to compete for that still, it's not guaranteed," he said. "I always know in the back of my head no spot is always going to be yours. I have to continue to compete for it and keep it. You have to make it yours."

That approach is backed up by the fact Conley knows just how quickly things can go awry. He was still nearly even with Apple after fall camp last year but saw his playing time nearly disappear until he was thrust into a starting role in the huge game at Michigan State when Apple battled a hamstring injury.

But Conley was beat for a deep pass and missed a tackle leading to a touchdown on the first drive. Apple was quickly summoned and Conley's season was essentially over.

"Last year, I came in at Michigan State and messed up a couple of plays, and that just kind of brought me down," he said.

Over the offseason, the 6-0, 195-pound sophomore used that as motivation, as expected by position coach Kerry Coombs.

"When he trots out there Sept. 7, he's got to know they are coming to get you," Coombs said. "What happened when you went out on the field last year? They came right at you. It took one play to find him. He knows that."

"We live in a big-boy world out there in press corners at the corner position. You train and you work. There's a different level of expectation on the part of the player who feels really good that he is going to be the starter."

## Most Improved Player Of The Spring: Noah Brown

Last year, Brown played sparingly as a true freshman. Listed as the No. 123-ranked player in Scout's national rankings coming

out of Sparta (N.J.) Pope John XXIII, the 6-2 wideout was up to 240 pounds and was used mostly as a blocker last year.

This year, the goal was to get him to shed weight and become more of a playmaker, and he did just that as he's now down to 222 pounds. He was the talk of spring, as nearly every interview session brought someone praising the sophomore, including the top dog.

"Noah Brown has had an excellent spring, made some plays," said Meyer, who added he views Brown as a potential starter as a receiver in 2015.

Brown lined up in the slot as the "H" last fall but now projects as an outside receiver thanks to good speed, good hands and excellent size. However, he can still play all the spots and seems ready to become a major part of the attack.

"I think I've had a real good spring," he said. "It all started in the winter, though, when I dedicated myself to get better and tried to change my body and become the player that I know I can be. I think I did a good job of showing that in the spring."

That approach has impressed observers including top returning wideout Michael Thomas.

"He's accountable, consistent, plays big, plays physical and he catches the ball," Thomas said. "He just follows the plan, and that's why he's succeeding."

## Position Battle Of The Summer: Defensive End

The Buckeyes will have to figure out how to balance their bevy of riches at quarterback and wide receiver, but the same might now be true at defensive end.

A year ago, the Buckeyes never really recovered from the loss of potential All-Big Ten end Noah Spence at one spot. Joey Bosa finished just shy of the school record for sacks and Steve Miller and Rashad Frazier were steady on the other side, but the latter two combined for just three sacks and three quarterback hurries.

Bosa returns for what should be a big junior season, but the Buckeyes also seemed happy with the growth across from him.

Sophomore Tyquan Lewis seems to have cemented the role as the starter after spot duty, but he'll be pushed by sophomore Jalyn Holmes and redshirt freshman Sam Hubbard, each of whom can get to the quarterback.

"The other name is Tyquan Lewis," Meyer said when listing players who impressed him this spring. "He's a guy that's penciled in to be in the rotation, along with Sam Hubbard. So I would say on that end ... this is a really valuable next few months."

Lewis had nine tackles, 2½ tackles for loss and a half sack last year, while Holmes had 11 tackles and a sack. Hubbard, meanwhile, has been praised repeatedly throughout his Ohio State career as someone who seems close to breaking out and making an impact.

"We got a lot of reps when we were tired," Hubbard said of the spring. "We have a long way to go, and I'm just glad that I was able to showcase what I could."

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# Late TD Pushes Gray To Spring Game Victory

By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Since becoming Ohio State's football coach, Urban Meyer has never hidden the fact that he finds spring games to be more pomp than circumstance, and with the Buckeyes without many of their starters for this year's contest April 18, that was doubly true.

So when Gray, which boasted the first-team offense and second-team defense, came from behind to beat Scarlet by a 17-14 score thanks to a late hook-up between Cardale Jones and Corey Smith, it wasn't necessarily about the quality of football being displayed.

If it was, it would be fair to say the head man was not pleased.

"That was not a good team out there," Meyer said after Jones led the Gray team to the comeback win in Ohio Stadium.

But when it comes to the pomp, the Buckeyes hit a home run. The day was a celebration of Ohio State football, with a national spring game record of 99,391 fans in attendance. There was a lacrosse game held beforehand that determined the Big Ten champion, what has become the usual pregame circle drill, halftime games of skill and more on a sun-splashed, perfect spring day in central Ohio.

"I'm not surprised but extremely grateful that many fans would come watch a scrimmage, at times not a very pleasant scrimmage," Meyer said. "We grab a hand after each time we come in the stadium, and we're very grateful for the blessings to be able to play this great game."

Linebacker Joshua Perry, who like many veteran starters played sparingly, agreed.

"For someone to come out here in April and want to do that and have a great time watching us run around for a scrimmage where we're not really doing a whole bunch is awesome," he said. "It says a lot about the fans we have."

With many key players including potential first-teamers Braxton Miller, J.T. Barrett, Ezekiel Elliott, Dontre Wilson, Mike

Thomas, Joel Hale and Tyquan Lewis out with injuries and most of the starters playing only the first quarter under what were in many ways touch football rules, the football was disjointed at best.

The Buckeyes were out of sync offensively for much of the day thanks to many of the offensive absences including from an offensive line that is young and banged up. Meyer chose to have the Buckeyes work on the passing game, as well, as there were 75 passes compared to 29 runs.

Jones missed a couple of his trademark deep balls but still finished 19 for 42 passing for 304 yards, two touchdowns and two picks for Gray. Smith caught six of his passes for 174 yards and both scores, including the game winner with 3:43 left in the fourth quarter.

"Today he showed his talent," offensive coordinator Ed Warinner said of Smith, "so his deal to be someone talked about consistently is to be consistent and do that every day. He's trying to figure out what he needs to do to be consistent because when he does show up and have it all locked in he's really good."

The Scarlet team of first-team defenders and second-team offensive players led by redshirt freshman Stephen Collier threw the ball quite a bit as well. Collier finished 15 of 33 for 157 yards, two TDs and three interceptions. Redshirt freshmen Parris Campbell and Terry McLaurin caught touchdown passes, and Campbell and Jeff Greene tied for team-best honors with five catches apiece.

Defensively, Erick Smith led the way with two interceptions for Gray while true freshman Nick Conner had another for Gray and led the game with seven tackles during an impressive performance. Redshirt freshman defensive lineman Sam Hubbard added a pair of sacks and two pass breakups.

Playing for Scarlet, Tyvis Powell picked off roommate Jones early in the game, celebrating by pretending to take a selfie with the QB, and Craig Fada intercepted another pass.

"I had to show him why I'm dad and he's son," the loquacious Powell joked of his interception of Jones. "So I picked him off. That's what happened. That's exactly how it went down."

While Barrett and Miller are still recovering from ankle and shoulder injuries, respectively, and were unable to play in the game, they did get to perform for the record crowd as part of the halftime fun.

Barrett participated alongside Jones and Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith in a halftime quarterback competition. While his injury prevents him from running full speed, Barrett was able to showcase the accuracy that led to him earning the starting job for most of the 2014 season as the sophomore bettered Smith and Jones in that portion of the competition.

Next up was the deep-ball competition in which the three quarterbacks had a chance to showcase their arm strength. Unsurprisingly Jones took home top honors in that category with a 74-yard toss, followed by Smith's second-place try of 68 yards.

"My arm was kind of tired," Jones said. "I probably can throw it a little further."

While Barrett can throw, Miller can only lightly toss as he continues to rehab his surgically repaired right shoulder. That didn't stop him from lacing up the cleats for a 40-yard dash against some of the fastest Ohio State students at halftime.

Miller didn't win as running back Ezekiel

## Spring Game Box Score

### Gray 17, Scarlet 14

April 18, 2015 - Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
GRAY	0	10	0	7	- 17
SCARLET	0	7	7	0	- 14

#### Second Quarter

GRAY - Nuernberger, 29 yard field goal, 6:55; 11 plays, 53 yards, 3:05 TOP.

GRAY - C.Smith, 58 yard pass from C.Jones (Nuernberger kick), 0:59; 5 plays, 73 yards, 1:21 TOP.

SCARLET - McLaurin, 35 yard pass from Collier (Nuernberger kick), 0:00; 7 plays, 66 yards, 0:59 TOP.

#### Third Quarter

SCARLET - Campbell, 3 yard pass from Collier (Nuernberger kick), 0:00; 14 plays, 60 yards, 9:38 TOP.

#### Fourth Quarter

GRAY - C.Smith, 37 yard pass from C.Jones (Nuernberger kick), 3:43; 2 plays, 55 yards, 2:52 TOP.

Att. - 99,391.

Weather - 78 degrees, partly cloudy; wind, NNE 7 mph.

#### Team Statistics

	GRAY	SCARLET
First Downs	14	12
Rushing	3	3
Passing	11	8
Penalty	0	1
Rushes-Yards	11-20	18-44
Passing Yards	304	157
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	19-42-2	15-33-3
Offensive Plays	53	51
Total Net Yards	324	201
Third Down Efficiency	3-11	3-10
Fourth Down Efficiency	3-6	2-5
Punts-Avg.	1-50.0	1-47.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-1
Penalties	4-10	0-0
Time of Possession	19:42	20:18

#### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** - GRAY: C.Jones 8-11; Dunn 3-9. SCARLET: Ball 9-33; Collier 7-9; TEAM 2-2.

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** - GRAY: C.Jones 19-42-2-304-2. SCARLET: Collier 15-33-3-157-2.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** - GRAY: C.Smith 6-174; Brown 4-44; Samuel 3-30; Dunn 3-21; Vannett 1-15; Mitchell 1-11; Marshall 1-9. SCARLET: Greene 5-56; Campbell 5-38; Ramstetter 3-28; McLaurin 1-35; Ball 1-0.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** - GRAY: Johnston 1-50.0-50. SCARLET: Johnston 1-47.0-47.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** - GRAY: Marshall 1-5. SCARLET: None.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** - GRAY: None. SCARLET: None.

**FORCED FUMBLES** - GRAY: Conner. SCARLET: None.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.)** - GRAY: Hubbard 1-0. SCARLET: None.

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)** - GRAY: E.Smith 2-8; Conner 1-5. SCARLET: Powell 1-38; Fada 1-0.

**SACKS (No.-Yds.)** - GRAY: Hubbard 2.0-13. SCARLET: Washington 1.0-6; Munger 1.0-4; Bosa 1.0-4.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)** - GRAY: Hubbard 2.0-13; Conner 1.0-2. SCARLET: Washington 1.0-6; Munger 1.0-4; Bosa 1.0-4.

**TACKLES (Solo-Assst.-Tot.)** - GRAY: Conner 3-4-7; Worley 5-1-6; Webb 3-3-6; Hubbard 2-2-4; E.Smith 1-2-3; Burrows 2-0-2; Munger 1-1-2; Slade 1-1-2; Burger 0-2-2; Kelleher 1-0-1; Hill 1-0-1; C.Jones 1-0-1; Lawless 1-0-1. SCARLET: Fada 2-1-3; Franklin 2-0-2; McLaurin 2-0-2; Munger 2-0-2; Washington 2-0-2; McMillan 2-0-2; Booker 2-0-2; Lee 1-1-2; Williams 1-1-2; Apple 1-1-2; Campbell 1-1-2; Hooker 1-1-2; Cibene 1-0-1; Perry 1-0-1; Bosa 1-0-1; Dunn 1-0-1; Conley 1-0-1; Cornell 1-0-1; Fong 0-1-1; Bell 0-1-1.

Elliott bested him by the slimmest of margins, the back's lone action - other than carrying around a camera attached to a selfie stick - on the day as he continues to rehab from wrist surgery.

#### Back-And-Forth Contest

Gray started with the ball and moved into scoring position. After a fourth-down conversion, Jones found Corey Smith for a 46-yard pass down the left sideline over Eli Apple on third-and-14 to set up first down at the Scarlet 12.

On the next play, Jones hit Jalin Marshall sitting in a zone for a catch-and-run that appeared to be a touchdown. However, offi-

cial decided Marshall was touched down at the 3, and consecutive passes into the end zone including two fade routes to Noah Brown fell incomplete resulting in a turnover on downs.

Scarlet took over, but on the ensuing drive, Collier was flushed from the pocket on third-and-6 and his wobbling pass was tipped and picked off by Conner, an early enrollee from Dublin (Ohio) Scioto.

That touched off a rough stretch for the redshirt freshman QB, who was under constant pressure and had little help from an offensive line of reserves and walk-ons. He threw three first-half interceptions - the next two came when Erick Smith undercut his intended

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

receiver – and also lost a fumble when hit by Conner that was recovered by Hubbard.

Gray really couldn't take advantage, though, as Jones was slightly off on a number of deep balls and was intercepted by Powell over the middle on the team's third drive of the day.

It all added up to a scoreless first quarter, but Gray got on the board very quickly in the second as the rules for the day included 10-minute stanzas. An 11-play, 53-yard drive that started late in the first ended when sophomore Sean Nuernberger made a 29-yard field goal at the 6:55 mark. Key plays included an 18-yard pass to Samuel and a 15-yard throw to Nick Vannett by Jones as well as a 13-yard run by the QB.

Scarlet's best drive of the day to that point then moved the ball 42 yards in nine plays, but it ended when Collier was picked off by Smith for the second time. Gray didn't take long to counter, moving 73 yards in five plays in 1:21 on a drive that was capped when Jones threw a picture-perfect 58-yard TD strike to Smith with 59 seconds left in the half to make it 10-0 Gray.

Collier did have an answer, though, moving Scarlet 66 yards in seven plays to put his team on the board. On the final play of the half, Collier hit redshirt freshman Terry McLaurin in the front corner of the end zone over cornerback Damon Webb for a 35-yard TD that made the score 10-7 at the break.

Collier came out in a groove after half-time, completing six straight passes to start Scarlet's first drive after the break. They came on a methodical 14-play, 60-yard possession that ended as Campbell took in a jet sweep toss from 3 yards out to give Scarlet a 14-10 lead on the final play of the third quarter.

There was a running clock in the fourth quarter, but Gray had enough time to answer.

The team took over the ball at the Scarlet 45 with 4:33 to play, and Jones started with an 18-yard pass to Smith before throwing the winning pass on the next snap. Jones rolled left and spied Smith behind walk-ons Trevon Forte and Michael Cibene, hitting him in stride for a 37-yard score that gave the Gray a 17-14 lead.

Collier tried to rally Scarlet and hit Greene



KEVIN DYE

**PAY DIRT** – Ohio State wide receiver Corey Smith (84) caught a pair of touchdown passes to lead the Gray to a 17-14 victory in the spring game.

for a 35-yard pass to get the ball to the 25, but four straight passes went incomplete and the game was over.

Nuernberger also had field-goal periods interspersed through the game, as he made 3 of 5 with a long of 47.

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## OPINION

# Jones Might Be Front-Runner Heading Into Summer

I was chatting with a buddy the other day, the topic being who should be the starting quarterback for Ohio State when the 2015 season commences. We both admitted that it's a great conundrum Urban Meyer has, to choose from three wildly talented players, all of whom can lead the Buckeyes to the promised land.

## THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

We also admitted that there probably isn't a right or wrong answer, before agreeing that Cardale Jones should be the man. This is actually a shift in thinking for me as I was firmly in the J.T. Barrett camp. I believed that Barrett had shown himself to be more than capable of handling the job with the way he played during the season and that Jones, while acquitting himself nicely during the Buckeyes' postseason run to the national title, hadn't necessarily wrested the job from Barrett on his own merits. It took an injury to Barrett for Jones to get the job, and to that end I felt Barrett should get an opportunity to get his job back.

However, based on the fact that Jones was the only quarterback able to go through spring drills as well as showing little rust from time off, I have come around to being in his camp. I do think the Buckeyes' offense functions more efficiently and is a truer representation of what Meyer wants with Barrett under center. But Jones has a certain buzz surrounding him as the new hot commodity in college football. Fans love the new, and even though he has yet to play a full season, his is still something of a new story to a lot of fans.

The broad smile and quick laugh make some think Jones might not be serious enough about his craft. But teammates gravitate to him and listen in much the same way they did when Barrett took over for Braxton Miller, so he has that as a positive. His cannon arm hasn't lost any of its strength, so defenses will still have to worry about that.

He may not run as much or as well as Barrett or Miller, but he'll run well enough to move the chains. So he is my pick to start.

If Meyer goes another way, that's fine, too. He will see these guys in camp and get a feel for who is best suited to lead, and whomever he selects should run things just fine. There will no doubt be fans who question Meyer's judgment because of having a favorite, but that comes with the territory. The proof will be in the results.

It's a discussion that fans will likely have through the summer and into the beginning of fall camp, which should keep the Buckeyes front and center for quite some time.

### Future Looks Bright

It's funny how these things work – the team wins the national title but has very little buzz heading into the NFL draft.

Remember when the Buckeyes won the crown over Miami early in 2003? That bunch had a ton of talent, but none of it went in the first round. Mike Doss was the first OSU player chosen, going in the second round to Indianapolis.

It wasn't until the following year that the Buckeyes hit it big, with three players going in the first round (Will Smith, Chris Gamble and Michael Jenkins) and a record 14 going overall.

There could be a repeat this year, as no Buckeyes are slated to go in the first round. It doesn't mean it won't happen, but most of the mock drafts have zero Buckeyes selected in the first round, which would make OSU the first team to win a national title and not have a first-round draft pick since the Buckeyes in 2002.

The best possibility is receiver Devin Smith, who had just 33 receptions in 2014 but an amazing 28.2 yards per catch average and 12 touchdowns. Smith is known as a big-play threat, but he has an opportunity to show that he's more than just a one-trick pony. At the combine and Senior Bowl, Smith showed that he can run underneath routes as well as go deep in hopes that teams will see he's a well-rounded receiver and not just someone who can take the top off of the defense.

At points some have touted defensive lineman Michael Bennett as a first-round selection, but no longer. It isn't necessarily that his skills have eroded – he's big yet quick and has an explosive first step that allows him to get past his man – but he seems to be someone who plays specifically in a 4-3 defense as there isn't much versatility to his game. Still, interior defensive linemen who can register seven sacks and 14 tackles for loss don't grow on trees, so don't be surprised if Bennett's name is called sometime in the middle of the second round.

I may be in the minority that believes Doran Grant's future play will exceed the expectations of his draft position. He doesn't quite have the size the NFL covets (just a shade over 5-10), but he can play off coverage or press man, and he isn't afraid to get physical with bigger receivers. He's also a solid tackler, which there is a short supply of. He may not quite be in the league of Bradley Roby (who started most of the year for Denver and was a very solid player) in terms of natural athletic ability, but he has the speed and recovery ability to make up for coverage mistakes. It wouldn't be a shock if he's drafted in the third round.

Tight ends who can run down the seam and exploit mismatches are in huge demand in today's NFL, and Jeff Heuerman could be just what the doctor ordered for some team. Not utilized to his full capabilities at OSU, Heuerman can catch, he can run after the catch and he has some playmaking abilities. He's not a great blocker, but he's serviceable in that area. He battled injuries for much of his senior campaign, but healthy he could be a steal for an NFL team in the fifth round.

While fans lament the lack of Buckeyes in this year's first round, they'll be able to crow loudly about 2016.

Things can (and will) obviously change a great deal between now and the 2016 draft, but one mock has three Buckeyes in the top 10 – including Joey Bosa as the overall top pick. Cardale Jones is slotted at three and Ezekiel Elliott at No. 8. Linebacker Darron Lee is projected at 28, so four Buckeyes in the first round would more than make up for the lack of "star power" from this year's senior class.

### Sit Down, Young Man

Jim Delany wants to float a trial balloon regarding freshman ineligibility, the idea being that they need to be better acclimated to the academic world – but also to prove the point they aren't employees, a response to the decision granted Northwestern players about unionization.

Here's hoping that balloon deflates in a hurry.

There has been a lot of hand-wringing from educators about how college athletics seems to be more about "athletics" than about "college" – yet those multimillion dollar checks schools are cashing would seem to say that things aren't going too badly. Those shiny new facilities you have? Yeah, that's because of athletics. Having your program in the spotlight, even out of season? Thank athletics.

Look, I'm not saying college doesn't serve a purpose. It is a noble endeavor, and it definitely has great outcomes for those who choose to put in the time. But therein lies the rub – athletes don't always want to put in the time because they see themselves as athletes first and students second (mostly,

anyway). Many believe they will be playing professionally and getting a lavish contract, so they don't always concentrate on the finer aspects of college – you know, like schoolwork.

This is more of an issue in basketball than football, simply because of the one-and-done rule that has been collectively bargained by the NBA. Football players have to be three years removed from high school before they can be drafted, so they have to put in some work to stay on the field.

For basketball, a kid who knows he is spending one season on campus can do the work the first semester, then slack off afterward because it won't impact his earning potential. Athletes aren't generally declared ineligible until after the semester (or quarter) is over, and because school is in session for the NCAA Tournament the athlete could play until his team is eliminated.

If there really is a disconnect between the athletics and academic side of college – and I'm not completely sure that there is, given that many studies have shown that athletes often carry a better GPA than the general student body – freshman ineligibility is not the way to improve things.

The baseball model works best – kids can go straight to the pros if they so desire, but if they go to college they have to stay for three years. That would make it easier for coaches, who would be able to recruit without an eye over their shoulder wondering if their touted kid was leaving early, and easier for players, who could get acclimated to the game and get an education at the same time. The mega-stars might choose to go the professional route, but what's the harm in that? Why make them attend college if they really don't want to? Do you think it negatively impacted LeBron James or Kobe Bryant to go straight from high school to the NBA?

There would obviously be kids who had an inflated sense of their game and would declare for the pros. Let's assume they don't get drafted – why not let them come to college to improve? They could opt to go overseas or toil in the NBA D-League and make money that way, but what would be the problem with allowing them to attend college if they wanted to? There probably wouldn't be all that many to go that route, but they should be allowed to. Right now players who declare for the draft cannot return if they don't get drafted – it's sink or swim, and for a system that says it values the players as students and people, that's a pretty callous rule.

However, that's not going to happen if the NBA doesn't allow it to. Commissioner Adam Silver says he would like the age requirement to move from 19 to 20, but that has to be agreed upon by the league.

The other problem with freshman ineligibility is that it would take the shine off football and basketball. There are great freshmen every year, kids who set the world afire with their abilities, who create buzz for their programs. Again, this is more for basketball as a lot of true freshmen simply aren't ready for the rigors of big-time college football. I know I would not have wanted to watch the OSU hoops team this year without D'Angelo Russell as part of the action.

This would seem to be more of a punitive rule than one that remedies any problems. And for someone who is supposed to be an educator and concerned about the welfare of the student-athlete, Delany certainly seems to have missed the boat on this one.



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# Glorified Spring Scrimmage Still Big Fan Favorite

You have probably read this in this space before because I know I have written it before: I tend to forget how boring spring football games can be. And as spring games go, Ohio State's most recent one may have been a bigger yawner than most.

But, as I think about it, who cares if it's boring? It's a rite of spring, and this spring, with a national championship in hand and the hope of more championships in the future, 99,391 Buckeye fans showed up for the glorified scrimmage.

The cynical tend to ridicule those who show up for the spring game, but I think that's a little extreme. First of all, for many, this is their only chance – because of expense or lack of tickets – to see their beloved Buckeyes live in Ohio Stadium. Others see the spring game as a chance to take younger children to see the Buckeyes, not worrying about having to leave early if said children get antsy as the afternoon progresses.

And for the diehard Buckeye fan, one for whom regular-season tickets or young children are not an issue, it's something to break up that eight-month gap when there is none of the thing they love the most – Ohio State football.

Combine all of that with the fact that April 18 was one of the very few nice days of this weather-challenged spring in Ohio and you can see why nearly 100,000 people invaded campus.

I give credit to Urban Meyer and the Ohio State folks for spicing up the proceedings with all sorts of extras. Seeing Cardale Jones throw the ball 74 yards in a halftime competition had to thrill the masses – they would have been disappointed if “12 Gauge” hadn't won the competition – and kudos to 2006 Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith for still being able to heave it 68 yards.

And maybe seeing sore-shouldered QB Braxton Miller give sore-wristed tailback Ezekiel Elliott a run for his money in the 40-yard dash will remind people that, if he can get that shoulder healthy, Miller is a force to be reckoned with.

And any day you can see and hear the Ohio State University marching band is a good day, and I am sure most in attendance would agree.

As for the scrimmage itself, I wish that the Buckeyes had run the ball a little bit more because I was interested in seeing how the somewhat forgotten Br'onte Dunn and Warren Ball – both of whom reportedly took advantage of Elliott's absence because of the injury and Curtis Samuel's move to receiver for the spring – might do.

But the duo combined for just 12 carries and 42 yards despite being the only tailbacks to carry the ball. This day was all about passing.

Many were disappointed – including Meyer, apparently – with Jones' line of just 19 completions on 42 attempts for a solid 304 yards and two scores, but two interceptions.

“He played behind a makeshift offensive line,” Meyer said. “I can give you a bunch of excuses, but he's got to be much sharper than that.”

“I'd give him a very good spring, though. You didn't necessarily see it today.”

Still, Jones gave me one of the few things that I could take from the afternoon, and that was the chemistry he seemed to be developing with receiver Corey Smith. Much of Jones' postseason success in 2014 stemmed from the chemistry he had with another receiver, Devin Smith.

Jones' amazing playoff run surely was fueled by the confidence he gained in the Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin, and that performance was predicated on his connection with Devin Smith. The two hooked up four times for 137 yards and touchdowns of 39, 44 and 42 yards. For the three-game postseason run, the duo connected on a total of seven passes for 269 yards – an incredible 38.4-yard average per

catch – and an additional TD, a 47-yarder, against Alabama.

Devin Smith is gone now, and for Jones to be effective – should he end up the starting quarterback – he needs another receiver with whom he has that special chemistry. That is why I was interested in the day turned in by Corey Smith. The senior-to-be had six catches from Jones for 174 yards and touchdowns of 58 and 37 yards with another grab of 46 yards that appeared to set up a scoring pass to Jalin Marshall which was somehow – in the strange ways of spring games – ruled not a scoring pass.

It all left Smith with a very Devin Smith-like 29.0 yards per catch.

Jones' cannon arm is useless if he has no deep threat. Maybe Corey Smith – who has come a long way since a disastrous performance in the team's lone loss to Virginia Tech last season – will prove to be that threat.

By the way, he was no slouch in the post-season, catching five passes for 111 yards in the three games, including a 47-yarder in the championship game against Oregon.

## Major Award Winner

The other player to post impressive numbers in Ohio State's postseason run was, of course, Elliott, who averaged 232.0 yards in the Buckeyes' three-game run and scored eight touchdowns against some of the best college football had to offer.

The postseason output catapulted Elliott, who had a fine season going regardless, into the national spotlight. It established him as a favorite to win the 2015 Heisman Trophy and helped him recently garner the prestigious Sullivan Award as the country's top amateur athlete.

I have to admit that when I heard Elliott was a finalist for the Sullivan, I didn't think he was going to win it. This had nothing to do with his performance, which was obviously outstanding, but more to do, I guess, with my recollections of the award from my youth.

The Sullivan Award, in my mind, has lost a little bit of its luster through the years. I think this has to do with the changes in the amateur/professional landscape. Now that professional athletes compete in the Olympics and athletes leave college early or don't go at all, the status of amateur athletics is seemingly different. Amateur athletes are not always as iconic as they may have been in the past.

By considering the very first athlete to win the Sullivan, which is older than the Heisman Trophy, you get a sense of the award's significance and also how the sporting world has changed. Bobby Jones, arguably the greatest amateur golfer of all time – and right up there with any golfer in history, amateur or pro – won the first award in 1930.

A lawyer by trade, Jones never turned pro, though he won 13 of what were then considered “majors.” As far as current majors, Jones had yet to help found the Augusta National Golf Club or The Masters – which he ultimately did. A golfer of such ability today not turning pro and claiming his riches is all but unthinkable.

In my formative years of watching sports, some of the biggest names to compete won the Sullivan Award. People such as Rafer Johnson (1960, decathlon), Wilma Rudolph (1961, track), Don Schollander (1964, swimming), Bill Bradley (1965, basketball), Mark Spitz (1971, swimming), Bill Walton (1973, basketball) and Bruce Jenner

(1976, decathlon) – yes, that Bruce Jenner – all at the pinnacle of sports in their time, are whom I associated with the award.

Again, I bring this up not as any criticism of Elliott. On the contrary, I bring it up so that everyone understands what a big deal winning the Sullivan Award – which also factors in leadership, character, sportsmanship and citizenship – is to someone like me. It is hard for me – because of my recollections from my youth – to even fathom Ohio State's star running back in the discussion after just one season as a starter.

To get a sense of how the Sullivan Award has evolved, Elliott is only the eighth football player to be honored. Six of those winners – Charlie Ward (Florida State, 1993), Peyton Manning (Tennessee, 1997), Tim Tebow (Florida, 2007), Andrew Rodriguez (Army, 2011), John Urschel (Penn State, 2013) and Elliott – have been honored since 1993. The other two football players to win the Sullivan – Felix “Doc” Blanchard and Arnold Tucker, both of Army – did so back in the World War II era of 1945 and '46 respectively.

On the flip side, eight decathletes have also won the Sullivan Award, but none since Jenner did so in 1976.

A good sign for Elliott may be that three of the football players to win the Sullivan also won the Heisman Trophy – Blanchard, Ward and Tebow. Will Elliott make it four?

The only other Buckeye to win the Sullivan Award was track star Glenn “Jeep” Davis, who won gold in the 400 hurdles at both the Melbourne Olympics in 1956 and the Rome Olympics in 1960. He was deemed the top amateur in 1958.

There is one other Buckeye-Sullivan Award connection, as Olympic diver Pat McCormick, who won the Sullivan in 1956, was the mother of former Ohio State diver Kelly McCormick, who was also an Olympic medalist in 1984 (Los Angeles, silver) and 1988 (Seoul, bronze).

## Scholar-Athlete Notes

Elliott was also honored as an OSU Scholar-Athlete at the annual banquet held April 13 at the Ohio Union. It was probably just the type of achievement that helped Elliott secure the Sullivan Award.

I also found it interesting that four of the five starting offensive linemen on the national championship football team – Darryl Baldwin, Jacoby Boren, Pat Elflein and Billy Price – were also designated Scholar-Athletes. I noted in this space about a year ago that the four stalwart linemen that these guys replaced – Marcus Hall, Corey Linsley, Jack Mewhort and Andrew Norwell – all graduated.

This would seem to indicate that offensive line coach and now offensive coordinator Ed Warinner is not only a master at molding his linemen on the field but does a pretty good job with his guys in the classroom as well.

How's this for another academic success story?

Both of Ohio State's freshman basketball phenoms, the men's team's D'Angelo Russell and Kelsey Mitchell from the women's team, were Scholar-Athletes.

For the complete list of Ohio State Scholar-Athletes, see the story on pages 22-23 of this issue.

Special thanks to members of the Ohio State diving team and dance team for their graciousness as I sat at their table during the banquet.

## You Would Stay?

Speaking of Russell, there was a letter to the sports editor in the April 26 edition of The Columbus Dispatch criticizing Ohio State basketball coach Thad Matta for encouraging his freshman to leave Columbus after only one year and seek his fortune in the NBA.

I find this type of thinking ridiculous, just as I found it crazy that some were holding out hope because he was slow in announcing his decision that Russell would come back for another year.

You go to college to prepare for your chosen profession. In Russell's case that's basketball. Russell is ready for that profession, just as sure as a law school grad is ready to be a lawyer. Sure, there are other aspects of college life that Russell will miss, but I can give you three million reasons why he should move on – the amount of money he will probably make in his first professional season.

How many of the people who are critical of players leaving early would turn down that type of money? It brings to mind the old quote from former Buckeye football coach John Cooper: “You guys want to gamble, but you want to gamble with my chips!”

Matta would have been a hypocrite to encourage Russell to stay.

Do I like the current “one-and-done” setup in college basketball? No. But for now, it is what we have and I am happy for Russell, who acquitted himself well at Ohio State as evidenced by his Scholar-Athlete designation, and I wish him the best in the future.

## Don't Miss Any Action

This is the last biweekly issue of our winter/spring Buckeye Sports Bulletin print schedule. The next issue of BSB, the June issue, is scheduled to be mailed June 2.

There is no reason to miss any of the Ohio State sports action, however. There will be electronic issues of BSB Quickly posted May 5 and 19. These issues contain all of the features you enjoy in the print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin and are free to all active BSB print subscribers.

One additional feature in BSB Quickly is the reprints from past issues of BSB. We try to choose stories from our archives that are either interesting or topical – or hopefully both. In the April 21 BSB Quickly, for instance, we reprinted stories and pictures from the last time Ohio State went to the White House as national champions on Feb. 24, 2003.

The 2002 Buckeyes were among four national champions honored that day – women's soccer (Portland), men soccer (UCLA) and women's volleyball (USC) champions were also present – so President George W. Bush's remarks were not as Ohio State-specific as the recent comments of President Barack Obama and thus much of the humor and byplay of the 2015 White House trip were not present.

But President Bush was very specific in his charge to the champions present.

“You have a chance to influence people's lives like you never have before,” the president said. “I guarantee you there are a bunch of junior high kids in the state of Ohio wondering what it would be like to be a champion.”

“Hopefully, the champs up here will send the signal that making right choices in life for youngsters is an important part of living a responsible existence.”

For details of the Buckeyes' recent trip to the White House, see page 8 of this issue. The recap of the 2003 trip is archived and available for reading in BSB Quickly.

If you are not already enjoying BSB's electronic offerings, see the simple instructions of page 5.