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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

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The Cutting Edge

Ohio State Looks To Lead In College Athletics

 By BLAKE WILLIAMS
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

The 2014-15 athletic year was a banner year for Ohio State as the program won a school-record five national championships. In some ways, the following year was even better.

No, the Buckeyes didn't win five national titles, but Ohio State did finish the year second in the Learfield Directors' Cup with 1306.0 points, OSU's best total in the 23-year history of the award which honors an athletic department for success across all sports.

The success of the department was reflected in a pair of awards received by Gene Smith. The Ohio State athletic director was honored with the Sports Business Journal Athletic Director of the Year award, and he received the Corbett Award – the highest honor in collegiate athletics – as awarded by the National Association of Collegiate Athletic Directors.

The big year for Ohio State wasn't limited to on-field results as the athletic department moved forward with the Covelli Multi-Sport Arena as a replacement venue for sports currently competing in St. John Arena, announced renovations for Ohio Stadium and expanded beer sales to all of the Horseshoe for the 2016 football season.

Smith met with BSB prior to a late June trip to Indianapolis for NCAA meetings and discussed the success of the athletic department, Ohio State facility changes and more.

BSB: The athletic department has been very successful in each of the last two academic years. This year there weren't as many titles, but it's the best Directors' Cup finish in program history. Which year do you view as more successful, and which are you more proud of?

Smith: "We just had more sports across the board that finished in the top 10 or finished higher in the national rankings.

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FILE PHOTO

BUCKEYE LEADER – Ohio State's Gene Smith was named the Sports Business Journal Athletic Director of the Year and given the Corbett Award for his work with Buckeye athletics.

That's where you get your points in the Directors' Cup. The national championships bring you the 100 points, but we had in the aggregate just more sports perform better across the board – didn't necessarily win the national championship but highly ranked. Our coaches did a great job, and our student-athletes performed well.

"Spring sports performed well. I wish we could have had lacrosse in there a little bit. That might have given us a chance to knock off Stanford, but this is as close as we've come. So I'm proud of our guys.

"The Directors' Cup does not define our year. It's really when you look at the individual sports' performances. Volleyball won an unbelievable national championship. I'm so happy for (coach) Pete Hanson and I look at that sport and I look at Pete's tenure here, that was so cool for that particular sport compared to other national championships that may have happened the year before. I kind of look at them individually. Look at baseball – didn't win the regular season but they won the (Big Ten) tournament. At the end you sort of stop and look at the Directors' Cup, but I look at the sports individually."

BSB: Stanford has now won the Directors' Cup for 22 consecutive years. What will it take to catch them?

Smith: "I think it's an overall performance by as many sports as possible. We were close this year. Literally had we had a few more sports get in and have chances to advance we would have been a lot closer. You need an overall year like they have every year. They have 36 sports and they perform extremely well in the Olympic sports all the way through the spring. We had a great fall and winter. Even though wrestling didn't win the national championship they got third and got a lot of points, then your spring sports usually we get lacrosse in, usually our track finishes higher.

"It's going to take – North Carolina is the only other one that has ever won it, we have to have an overall performance. You're not cognizant throughout the year about chasing the Directors' Cup. You have to focus on the individual sports winning championships, and then at the end we say, 'OK, where are we?'"

**THE
INTERVIEW
ISSUE**

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St. John Arena To Be Around For 'Some Time'

Continued From Page 1

BSB: You were honored with the Sports Business Journal Athletic Director of the Year award and became the first sitting athletic director to win the NACDA's Corbett Award. What do those honors mean to you?

Smith: "It's the entire department. It says a lot about the people that I am fortunate enough to work with every day and how hard they work. I've never been one to strive for individual awards, but they're recognitions for the team. I have great people, they do a lot. (The SBJ honor) meant a lot to me because I've won it before. It's the second one and that validates what we do in the industry. The Corbett Award was more meaningful for me because it was voted by my peers. That one meant the most to me."



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"It's more about the fact that I have a great team."

BSB: You've made some strong hires in your time at Ohio State – Urban Meyer, Tom Ryan, Kevin McGuff. Are you more proud of a hire like Urban Meyer – a no-brainer home run – or a hire like Ryan or McGuff who were a little under the radar?

Smith: "I'm proud of them all, I really am. There's so many of them. It validates our process. I don't make these hires alone. It validates how we evaluate talent and skill and the process that we go through to get inclusive feedback from our team of people. I ultimately have to make the decision, but it just validates our process that our criteria is strong and our ability to assess talent and skill is strong. When you look across the board, this is the best group in my 31 years, best group of coaches that I've been fortunate to work with all the way across the board."

BSB: Where is the department at with the Covelli multisport arena, and how much concern is there over the cost overruns?

Smith: "It was a shock to us, the numbers. We have a team that is doing an assessment of those numbers, exactly where we are going to place the facility – we're re-evaluating that – so hopefully by the end of the year we'll have our assessment done and where we are going to put it."

"We're going to raise the dollars. We fund all our projects, so I'm not concerned about that. We'll have the money in place. For us it's more about, do we have the facility in the right place? Are they properly designed to meet our needs? And when we got the design teams on board some of the things emerged about our original planning. Our original plans were from 2012 and we didn't do as good a job with our programming of the facilities as we should have in 2012. Then obviously the construction costs went off the chain. It caused us to pause and think about our location because Covelli was originally on the corner by Sports Medicine on Ackerman Road. Now we're looking at a different location. We'll break ground in



FILE PHOTO

GOING NOWHERE – Historic St. John Arena is likely to stay standing for the time being after originally being set for demolition.

2017. We're a year behind but that's not a big concern for us."

BSB: What locations are now under consideration for the venue?

Smith: "We're looking at the Buckeye Village area just north of the Woody Hayes, that's the primary one. We're also looking at over by the St. John site but I don't think it's going to be viable. So we are probably going to end up in that area, unless we stay on the corner which is still a viable option. To me it's not the best option at this time."

BSB: What feedback have you gotten in relation to the Covelli construction and moving sports out of St. John?

Smith: "The passion around St. John is huge. Originally, I don't even remember what year it was we started talking about this, there were people concerned about losing St. John, obviously. But once you sit down and talk about the economics of St.

John, they get it. And then St. John is going to be there for some time because we can't move it until we replace it and replace the track facility at the French Field House and the ice rink because all the mechanicals for St. John, the French Field House and the ice rink are connected through St. John. I'll be gone, that's years down the road, but that is where we received the most trepidation."

BSB: Sticking with facilities, attendance at the Schottenstein Center for the basketball team was the lowest since the 1997-98 season. Is that a product of the lack of success on the court, or is there a bigger concern there?

Smith: "I think that's a product of performance. I think in the end we have a lot of things that we can improve on relative to parking and access and the fan experience in the arena. You have to constantly look at how you make it more exciting, and we obvi-

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THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: GENE SMITH

ously continue to do that. We've made some changes. But in the end you've got to win. It comes down to that.

"We still average north of 12,000 fans, and most places with 12,000 fans you are really happy. Our challenge is we've set a standard that is somewhere north of 15,000 when you look at it. We've had some 16,000 years, but realistically it's that 15,000 to 16,000, that's who we are. You're going to periodically sell out to 19,000 when you're doing extremely well and playing a team that is up there, but you're not going to sell that place out every night. I don't have that expectation, never have. But it comes down to we've got to win. We've got to have some type of performance that people can rally around."

BSB: Moving on to Ohio Stadium, you've expanded beer sales to the entire stadium for the upcoming season. What about last season's pilot program made you confident in the extension of the program?

Smith: "The first one was Levy, our concessionaire, they've done a lot of pro facilities, and watching them operate and how they manage things and they kept talking about what they would do throughout the stadium as we went through that process. The conversations with the athletic council, the studies that the Substance Abuse and Alcohol institute did, talking with Texas, Maryland and Minnesota and those schools that are Power 5 schools in particular Texas, we felt comfortable we could handle it with a Levy-type of concessionaire because they are good at it."

"Then we talked about deployment with our ushers and security to make sure we don't have some kind of thing like an NFL team and an unruly environment. I think we can do it. I never thought we'd be here, I really didn't, but it's expanding across the country and it's a good service to our customers. We'll see where it goes."

BSB: Sticking with football, how was the change in ticket policy and ticket selection for football games received?

Smith: "We had some initial people who had concerns, some individual people who were not happy with their seat selection, but largely, over 90-something percent, no issues. We needed to bring back the integrity to the point system that we had in place. It was really more about allowing you based upon your points to select where you want to be in the stadium. It's just like if you go on airlines and pull up the seat selection and boom, you pick your seat. So no longer do we have our ticket people in the back picking seats and people wondering how did I get here, you're doing it yourself. We're empowering you based on your priority to pick your place. There were obviously some people who were upset because they didn't get the seats that they were in before, but that's because someone else had a higher priority and they had an opportunity to pick those seats. It worked, largely successful."

BSB: What prompted the decision to move forward with the upcoming stadium renovations?

Smith: "A couple of things. The most important thing with that deal was the concrete restoration project. We started that a while back, made significant investments, but you have to think about the concrete in that stadium and ensuring that we maintain the integrity of that concrete. Once you have a breach in that concrete and it begins to crack and we get all those little porous holes in there. That was the biggest piece."

"The loge seats were an idea. We've been around the country and seen them

in different places, so we decided that in this area that we had obstructed view seats and it's largely single game ticket holders we decided that was a good spot to try and create a different experience for a different group of people. We're constantly thinking about the demographics of our fans and we think we have a group of people that are interested in not having a suite, they would prefer not to sit totally outside and they would like to have access to the Huntington Club. That's what those seats will provide. It's kind of something that we are frankly a little behind on. A number of schools have it."

"Then we needed to expand the university suite. We needed to find a way to make that more functional for university advancement and all the things they do for raising dollars. That redesign is to make that area much more functional."

BSB: In terms of the team on the field, are you a little surprised with how quickly Meyer got things rolling at Ohio State?

Smith: "I was surprised at the first year when he took over. I'm not surprised after that. We all have to keep in mind he didn't inherit a program that was down. Jim Tressel was one of our best ever, so we were winning and we had great athletes. His plan that he brought in enhanced what we had in place and took it to another level."

"It's kind of what I anticipated - he's a championship coach and we have great athletes. I didn't think we'd win the national championship. If I had that crystal ball we'd be doing something different. But you thought with his talent he'd eventually get one, and we got one probably a year earlier than we thought he would. He's a professional and he's at the top of his game. Great staff, we talk about his staff all the time - what do we need to do to help each one of them get better and be the best they can be. We've got a great group."

BSB: Speaking of the staff, how cognizant do you have to be of assistant salaries and keeping Ohio State's competitive nationally?

Smith: "Urban and I talk about it every year, once a year when we get to raise time. You have to look at not just their base but their aggregate compensation. We don't look at the SEC a whole lot because you can't figure that market out. Here we talk about where we should be in the Big Ten first and then we look at national. Urban makes a recommendation and I may challenge him here and there and we end up with a recommendation to our president. I feel good about where we are. We do have to keep an eye on where things are nationally because we should be in the top of the Big Ten and then nationally we just have to figure that out. It's a little strange nationally. The Pac-12, the Big 12, we kind of align in there. It's the SEC that seems a little helter skelter."

BSB: Some of your comments about holding spring practice outside of Ohio got a lot of attention as a perceived shot at Michigan and resulted in a back-and-forth between the programs. So long as it's good natured, can that type of exchange be good for college athletics?

Smith: "I think it's good for college football. (Jim Harbaugh) is a good coach, he knows what he's doing and he's stretching the envelope as far as it can go with the new rules. They're clean. He's a clean coach and they're a clean program. It's competition at its highest level. You have to look at if you want to do that many satellite camps. I disagree with the philosophy point blank. I want

to change that because we need our coaches at home as opposed to running all around the country to these little one-day deals. I think for the athlete it's better to limit that. I think we ought to limit it."

"It's a competitive field and he's taken advantage of the rules the way they are and driving that ship hard. It's good for college football and it reveals some things that we need to pause and look at."

BSB: Speaking of NCAA changes, and there have been some notable ones recently, are there any rules you would like to see revised?

Smith: "I look more in the football area, like we were talking with satellite camps. I think it's a bigger issue. How do we make July a total dead period so that our coaches stay home and there is no recruiting? How do we create windows of time for our coaches to be here for our athletes? There's a subcommittee looking at that."

"I'm worried about transfers. That's mostly with basketball. I don't really have the answer on that, but there is a group looking at that and I'm looking forward to that study."

"The other thing we're looking at is time management, and we're looking at how much free time athletes have and then defining what is athletic time and what is their time. Those are ones that are probably at the top of the pyramid for me."

"Academically I like where we are and I don't think we have to do anything massive, but just fine-tune that make sure we stay on this trajectory we're on with graduation rates all across the country. I feel pretty good about where we are largely."

BSB: You've always tried to ensure that Ohio State remains on the cutting edge of athletics. With that in mind, what's next?

Smith: "It's so many different things. This digital world, my mind is now on TV and all the viewership and the time slots for games. I'm really into the ratings now. You look at basketball last year overall and the ratings were down and some of that is cord cutting, some of that is just the digital world."

"I want to make sure that in our venues first and foremost we are creating the greatest experience that we can for our fans. That's why we are studying right now - where should we have WiFi in the stadium?

Not necessarily the entire stadium because you don't need it in the entire stadium, but where do you need it?

"The other piece is more about TV time slots. We impacted people when we did more night games, and that was hard for me. There's an older demographic in a two-hour away radius that historically would drive down for our 12 o'clock or even our 3:30 games, but the night games they won't do it. That hurts, that's painful for me. But at the same time that's the prime-time slot we needed to be in so I shifted there. I think we just need to keep looking at that."

"The other thing is, I sent the (basketball) operations team up to the Cavs and to the Final Four, and looking at the technology that they have in those arenas, it's phenomenal. So we're looking at that in the Schott. How do we bring the floor to life with the visuals and your pregame, halftime? We're looking at all those things. Fan experience is critical. The beer is a perfect example. That's something I was resistant to and we needed to jump in. I was wrong. I think we need to constantly do those type of things."

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Cornelius Green(e): 1975 OSU Football MVP

By TIM MOODY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Considering he won a pair of Heisman Trophies, it's fair that Archie Griffin is the first name associated with Ohio State football in the mid-1970s, but Cornelius Greene might have been just as important to some of the best teams in program history.

The Washington, D.C., native, who dropped the final "e" from his last name after his collegiate career, was a three-year starter for the Buckeyes and the school's first African-American starting quarterback. Green started out as a three-sport star at Dunbar High School before passing on a chance to play professional baseball to attend Ohio State under head coach Woody Hayes.

After completing his career in Columbus in 1975, Green had established himself as one of the most prolific Buckeyes ever, and his name is still all over the Ohio State record books. Green posted an overall record of 31-3-1 as the starting quarterback, putting him in second all-time for wins by a quarterback, and he also ranks in the top 10 for total touchdowns in a career with 44. Perhaps even more impressive than the pure numbers is that Green did it while sharing a backfield with Griffin and Pete Johnson, the Buckeyes' all-time leader in rushing touchdowns.

Green capped his Ohio State career in 1975 with a late comeback win to beat Michigan in the final game of the regular season before the Buckeyes fell to UCLA in the Rose Bowl. He led the team to Pasadena, Calif., in each of his three seasons as the starter, including a 42-21 win over USC in 1973.

After his collegiate career, Green was drafted by the Dallas Cowboys and spent some time in the Canadian Football League before he eventually became a multi-sport coach at St. Albans in Washington, D.C.

The Buckeye great took some time to speak with BSB about his time at Ohio State, his thoughts on Urban Meyer's Buckeyes and his expectations for quarterback J.T. Barrett.

CORNELIUS GREEN

BSB: When you first started playing football, what led you to quarterback?

Green: "Well, it goes back to Little League. I always wanted to be a wide receiver but I

knew I could quarterback, and on the first team I tried out for I tried out for wide receiver but the two quarterbacks were overweight, it was a 105 (pound) football team, and they converted me to quarterback."

BSB: Did you stick with quarterback all through high school?

Green: "From there I went in high school, I started three straight years in football and I was All-American my senior year. I was

All-American in three sports – baseball, basketball and football my senior year. I had over 100 football scholarships and probably about 40 or so basketball and I got drafted in pro baseball."

BSB: Did you consider going with basketball or baseball instead of football?

Green: "Baseball was my first love and I really wanted to play baseball, more than any other sport. And what led me to go to Ohio State was Coach Hayes said that I could play baseball and football if I wanted to go there, which it turned out wasn't true."

BSB: What was Woody like in recruiting?

Green: "He didn't actually recruit me personally himself, it was coach Rudy Hubbard, who was the running backs coach and he had the D.C. area. And I didn't meet Coach Hayes until I actually took my visit, and when I finally got to see Coach Hayes he wasn't impressed with me because he thought I was small and he thought my neck was too small. And so he said that coach Rudy Hubbard really thought I was good enough to play. He promised me he wouldn't change my position so that was good. So, honest approach and I think Ohio State was my choice because Coach Hayes spent 90 percent of the time when I was at Ohio State was all academics and not football, vs. all the other schools were probably 90 percent football and 10 percent academics."

BSB: How did you win over Coach Hayes when you got to Ohio State?

Green: "My freshman year I was so far

behind because the offense we ran back in high school, we didn't run I-formations like they were running. I was just so far behind, I didn't know anything about footwork and stuff like that. I almost had to start over as like a little infant in football all over again in terms of quarterback procedures and the right things you're supposed to know from being a quarterback. It was a tough transition. My freshman year I was on the scout squad all season and only got to play three plays the whole season."

BSB: How did you react when you eventually found out you'd have a chance to start at Ohio State?

Green: "I was pretty much shocked. I kind of found out in the paper. Coach Hayes never told me because up until my sophomore year Greg Hare was a senior and it was his third year starting at quarterback. So that was pretty tough. He pulled a hamstring, probably about two weeks before the first game, and he was out a whole week and so I was running the first team that whole week. He's out until that Monday and we're going to be playing Saturday, and that Thursday night I read in the paper I was starting. Can you believe that? It was just nerve-racking."

BSB: What was that first start like?

Green: "The first start, man, was very frightening. We opened up – it's not like they do now, we opened up with a Big Ten game – so this was some serious stuff. All first games are serious, but when we open up with a conference game and back ... it's not like it is now where you've got several teams that go to the bowl. So it's only one

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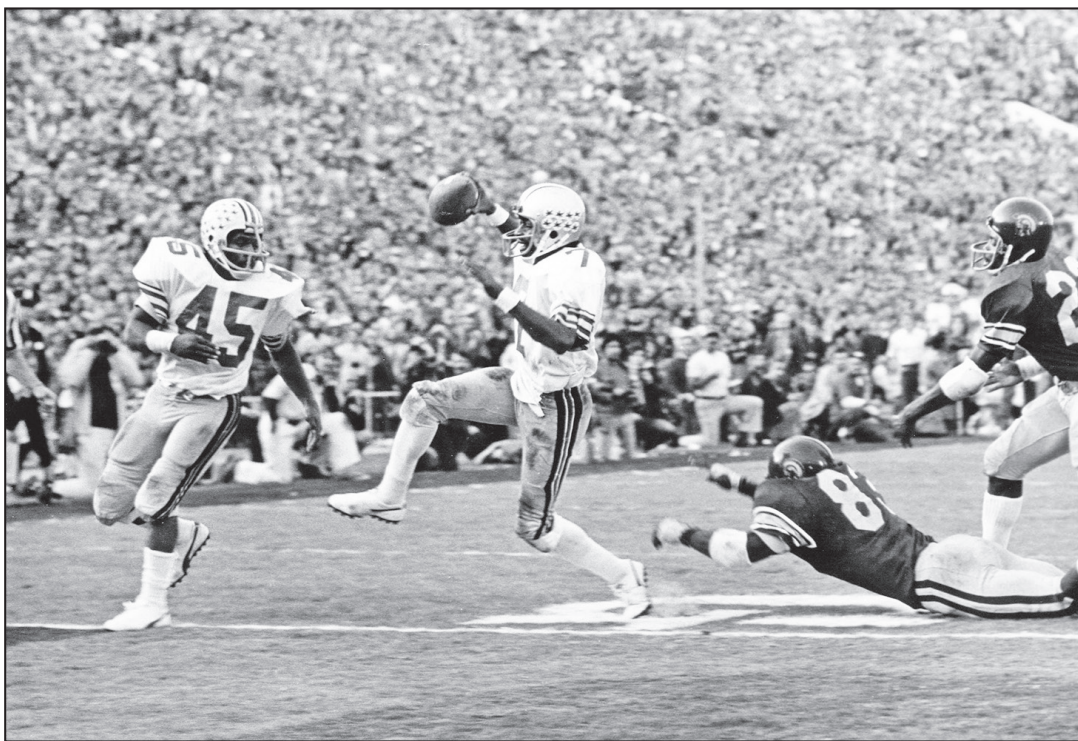
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THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: CORNELIUS GREEN



FILE PHOTO

PASADENA – Former Ohio State quarterback Cornelius Green (7) led Ohio State to three straight Rose Bowl appearances from 1973-75, including a win as a sophomore in 1973.

team back then went to the Rose Bowl. So it was very important and we ended up beating – the first game, we played Minnesota. You know coach Tony Dungy? He was the quarterback on that Minnesota team and we won the first game 56-7.”

BSB: You played with Archie Griffin and Pete Johnson in the backfield most of your career.

Green: “I played with Archie all four years and we were roommates, and Pete played three of those four years with us.”

BSB: Was it in 1975 that Archie won the Heisman but you were the team MVP?

Green: “It really was a stunning thing because Pete led the nation in scoring, Archie won the Heisman, his second Heisman, but I was the most valuable player on the team and I was also the most valuable player in the Big Ten Conference and Archie won the Heisman.”

BSB: Were you surprised to be named team MVP?

Green: “Oh man, I was shocked, are you kidding me? I was shocked. I won by one vote, only won by one vote and Archie voted for me. So if you think about it if he votes for himself, he wins, but he voted for me and I voted for him so I guess his vote cast me to win.”

BSB: Is there any one memory from your Ohio State days that stands out?

Green: “Our last game of the season (in 1975) we played Michigan and we were 10-0 and they were 8-0-2 – winner goes to the Rose Bowl, loser stays home pretty much and we go up, 7-0, in the first quarter. We didn’t get a first down from the mid first quarter (for the rest of the quarter), we didn’t get a first down the whole second quarter, we didn’t get a first down the whole third quarter and then we were down 14-7 with six minutes left and it’s third down and the ball is on the 20-yard line. You can imagine 110,000 people hollering. I got the team together and told everybody to hold hands and I led a prayer in the huddle, and the prayer was not for us to

win the game but for us to be more together and play more as a team.

Right after that prayer Woody called a pass play, and lo and behold I complete the pass for the first first down since the first quarter. And the next play I hit Lenny Willis, and the play after that I hit Lenny Willis again. I completed three straight passes. I ran the ball, Archie ran and then the next thing you know Pete scores the touchdown, now it’s like two minutes left. We kick off and Ray Griffin intercepts the ball and takes it down to the 2 and then we score again and we end up winning 21-14. And I ended up being the MVP of the last game of the season and that was pretty

huge. The power of prayer is something, and it was definitely proven that day.”

BSB: Shifting gears to the recent Buckeye teams, do you think you would have been a fit in Urban Meyer’s offense?

Green: “I think I would have won the Heisman and not Archie, I really do. That offense is just geared for throwing and running and it’s a beautiful offense. I would have loved to have run that offense.”

BSB: Are you a little jealous of the quarterbacks today then?

Green: “Yes I am, very jealous of all the things that they’re able to do in terms of passing and running and everything – sure, very

jealous. But I admire those kids, all the things they’ve got to learn and what they go through.”

BSB: You played alongside a two-time Heisman winner. Do you think J.T. Barrett has what it takes to win a Heisman?

Green: “I think he does. I think he was right in line for the Heisman before he got hurt in that Michigan game. What a season he was having. This season will probably be like my senior season as well, because we lost probably about 11 starters my junior year going to my senior year, just like J.T. is doing, so he’s really going to have to show his leadership this year, which I’m looking forward to. So yeah, I’m looking for him to be very close to a Heisman.”

BSB: What would your advice be for J.T. ahead of this season?

Green: “This year J.T. is going to have to work real hard because he’s going to have some rookie wide receivers, he’s going to have some rookie linemen and he’s going to really have to prove his leadership skills. And the only way to do that is to be in great shape and not miss practice and be the leader that he’s proven that he can be.”

BSB: You played some professional ball in Canada, right?

Green: “Yeah, I was with the Cowboys for a little while then up in Canada with the BC Lions. Totally different experience, football wasn’t fun and exciting like it was in school, mainly because I wasn’t playing quarterback anymore – maybe, that probably was the reason. I was kickoff return, punt return, wide receiver. Learning a new position was really difficult. I could run and catch and all that, but it takes more than that to play wide receiver but I wasn’t enjoying football like I did previously.”

BSB: You said you’re coaching now?

Green: “Yeah, I’m here at St. Albans, and I’m the football, basketball and baseball coach for the lower schools here and I’m also one of the assistant head coaches for varsity basketball as well, so I’m loving it. I wish I would’ve done this earlier, but Coach Hayes said you don’t get into coaching for money and I believe that too, but it doesn’t seem like it as much money as these coaches are making now. I think I could have had a great professional career in coaching, but it’s never too late and I’m really enjoying molding young minds here at St. Albans.”

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Doss Helped Ohio State Return To Glory

By JAMES GREGA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For more than 30 years before the 2002 season, the Ohio State football program had not won a national title and in years leading up to that had struggled to beat Michigan as well. One of the guys who helped end both of those cold streaks was three-time first-team All-America safety Mike Doss.

Doss was recruited by OSU head coach John Cooper out of Canton (Ohio) McKinley and came to the Buckeyes as a freshman in 1999, a season in which Ohio State went 6-6 and missed out on a bowl game. His sophomore and junior seasons, Ohio State ended its seasons with losses against South Carolina in the Outback Bowl.

Sandwiched in between Doss' sophomore and junior seasons, Cooper was fired and Jim Tressel was introduced as Ohio State's next head coach. After the 2001 season, it was thought by many that Doss would turn pro, but his decision to come back sparked a run toward the Fiesta Bowl, where the Buckeyes would win their first consensus title since 1968.

Doss was the defensive MVP of that title win over Miami (Fla.) and went on to be a second-round draft pick of the Indianapolis Colts in 2003. After a couple of seasons as a starter, Doss suffered an injury in 2006 and never fully recovered as the Colts went on to win the Super Bowl that same season. He played his last NFL game in 2008.

Doss currently serves as a regional manager and sales representative for Zimmer Biomet, a company that provides medical supplies and devices to hospitals in multiple states across the country.

He recently spoke to current OSU football players at a job fair held for athletes at Ohio Stadium before catching up with BSB to talk about the 2002 team, the loss of Will Smith and more.

BSB: What went into the decision to come back for your senior season?

Doss: "It was sitting down with Tressel, sitting down with my family, my mother and just trying to think of what would be the best thing for me as an athlete and a student. My mother wanted me to be the first person in our family to get a college degree and I also wanted to leave Ohio State in a better state of mind than when I came in. Looking back, I was getting recruited during the 1996-97 season when they were No. 1 in the country.

I always felt like I was a missing link. Then to see the program go 6-6, 8-4 then John Cooper gets fired. Jim Tressel comes in and we finish 8-5. I just wanted to leave our program in a better state of mind.

"I had always been a winner since I was in Little League football. Every year I was playing for a championship, so I wanted to stay with my senior class, guys that I got recruited with and made the decision to get my degree and try to win a national championship. That was something that I had always been accustomed to throughout my playing career."

BSB: You went on to be on a team that won a Super Bowl despite missing the game due to injury. Braxton Miller and J.T. Barrett had to go through that type of situation in 2014. What does that feel like?

Doss: "There are mixed emotions. Obviously you are elated and happy that your squad has overcome adversity. There is anxiety of wanting to be on the field and contributing. Ultimately, you just feel blessed and happy to be in that environment. You see the game from a different perspective on the sideline. It is only a game and you realize that your health is the most important thing so that kind of helps you focus. You are very excited for your teammates, your coaches and everyone else, as you should be."

BSB: If the 2002 and 2014 title teams play each other, who wins?

Doss: "Without a doubt, no question it would be the 2002 team."

BSB: Why is that the case?

Doss: "You look at the numbers. Our defense had only given up maybe 12.5 points per game. The turnover ratio throughout the season, the leadership and the skill positions of myself, Will Allen, Chris Gamble playing both ways. You had Nick Mangold and Alex Stepanovich, guys who were pillars in the NFL or still are in the NFL (Mangold). I think the 2014 team was a great team, don't get me wrong. They had an excellent squad. They overcame Alabama and Oregon in a play-off-style system to win a national championship. I just feel that our team was a team of destiny and 2014 had a blemish. They had already lost a game, where we went undefeated."

BSB: Sadly, one of the big pieces of that 2002 defense was lost when Will Smith passed away. What were your emotions like when you heard the news of the shooting, and what was your relationship like with him?

Doss: "It was a very tragic situation. He was a friend and a peer. Will is one of the guys



FILE PHOTO

BUCKEYE GREAT – Safety Mike Doss (2) was a three-time All-American at Ohio State and helped the team to a national title as a senior in 2002.

that I love and I treated like a younger brother when he came to Ohio State as a freshman. He lived with me that summer going into his freshman year. He is a guy that I hold dear to my heart. How we lost Will is something that I will not be able to overcome easily. You hear about guys getting sick, or disease or some act of God, but to lose Will the way that we lost him, that is a pill that I can never swallow – just thinking that it could have all been avoided."

BSB: A guy you played for that seems to be a thorn in Ohio State's side recently is Mark Dantonio. What has made him so successful against the Buckeyes in recent years?

Doss: "Mark is old-school. He does things a little bit different. His personality is very much like his team – toughness, heart, desire and a willingness to fight and scrap. Scrap whether it is a high-scoring game, like when they played Baylor two years ago, or low-scoring game, playing against us in Columbus.

"I remember him coaching, and it was always about the little things and doing everything right. If you do the little thing right, that will lead to doing bigger things right. That is something that he has always preached and also senior leadership. A lot of his special seasons have had senior leadership at the skill positions. Mark has always let the team and players discipline themselves. That was something where you govern each other. That is something that I learned and have taken from him."

BSB: You were there for the tail end of Cooper's losses and were part of a team that started the current trend of wins over the Wolverines. What has been the biggest difference in the role reversal of the last 15 years?

Doss: "Those earlier years, we played as if we hoped we would win. We just hoped to stay in the game and get to the fourth quarter and give ourselves a chance to win. My junior and senior year, we played knowing that we were going to win. We knew from the preparation and the mind-set that Tressel embodied as a Buckeye that when you're

playing that team up north, you know it is going to be a war, you know it is going to go four quarters, but you know that you're going to win instead of just having hope.

"You put the work in in the offseason, and you train during two-a-days with the blue and gold periods. When you are able to overcome all of that, the practice and hard work, you get to that game and put together the finished product on the field. In years past, we hoped we would win and never went out with that killer instinct. Now, the Buckeyes go in with killer instinct that, 'Hey, we are going to go out here and beat everybody.'"

BSB: Going off the field, what advice did you give to the OSU football players at the job fair a few weeks back?

Doss: "Football is just a game, but it can propel you into so many different directions in life. Use every tool and every attribute and everything that you learn from the game and use it in everyday life. You learn to get up when you get knocked down, you learn to persevere and compete. All of these skill sets you can use in everyday life and in your career. Also, continue to build relationships. Take business cards, shake hands, because you never know what opportunities will come out of those. Just being a former Buckeye in the world, having the biggest alumni base in the world, there are always opportunities for a Buckeye to reach out and help another Buckeye."

BSB: In closing, what is your relationship like with Coach Tressel?

Doss: "Oh, Jimmy T is the man. That's my guy. When he came to Ohio State, he changed the face of the university, he changed the outlook of the football program. He put us back into national prominence. He is a family friend. I love him, I respect him, I keep in touch with him. I will always be one of his guys knowing that we did something that hadn't been done in over 30 years at Ohio State. He came from a lower division, where some people thought he shouldn't be the man to take that position. We changed the face of Buckeye lore, and Urban Meyer has taken it to the next level from what Tressel started."

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Cook Set For Columbus Return At Senior Open

By TIM MOODY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

At every level of golf there are benchmarks the top players want to hit. Before turning professional, golfers aim for winning titles in college or taking on the top competition at the U.S. Amateur. From there, the ones who can turn pro join the PGA TOUR, and some of the top professionals are able to keep playing at a high level on the PGA TOUR Champions once they turn 50.

John Cook hit the mark at pretty much every level of play.

Born in Toledo but raised in Southern California, Cook played collegiate golf at Ohio State in the late 1970s, helping the Buckeyes to a national title, and picked up numerous amateur championships along the way before turning professional in 1979. From there, Cook went on to win 11 times on the PGA TOUR before continuing his career on the senior tour and adding 10 more wins as of June 2016.

Cook's professional golf career spans 61 appearances in major championships, including a pair of runner up finishes – once in the 1992 Open Championship and again in the PGA Championship that same year.

More recently Cook has scaled back his playing schedule while mixing in work as an analyst with the Golf Channel. Now 58, Cook is still competing with the PGA TOUR Champions, and he ranked 67th on the Charles Schwab Cup Money List as of press time. The former Buckeye is set to make his competitive return to Columbus for the U.S. Senior Open at Scioto Country Club in August. He still has family ties in the area as well – his parents live in Ashville, Ohio, on the property of Cooks Creek Golf Club, which John helped design, while his nephew, Justin, is a walk-on quarterback on the Ohio State football team.

While in Portland with the Golf Channel, Cook took some time to speak with BSB about his successful golf career, the upcoming Open at Scioto and the PGA TOUR today.

BSB: Obviously you have Ohio ties, but was there anything that specifically drew you back to Ohio State?

Cook: "The Ohio ties certainly were strong with my dad (Jim) being born and raised there in Columbus and going to Denison University, being a graduate assistant coach at Ohio State and then an assistant football coach there. We always had the

Scarlet and Gray even in Southern California. It always kind of pulled me back there.

"I think I wanted different experience from the USCs or UCLAs or Arizona States where I didn't play golf 12 months a year at all. I was always playing football or basketball or something. I think it always appealed to me, the program and the coach.

"Jack Nicklaus wrote me a couple of nice letters, and Tom Weiskopf was in touch quite often, once a week or a couple of times a month just to check in and say hello. I think that was what kind of sealed the deal, just that. Coach (Jim) Brown really went all out to get me there and showed the interest. That was back in the day when you could actually have alumni contact recruits. You can't do that anymore, you can hardly look at them."

BSB: So you're not involved with recruiting now?

Cook: "Just a little bit. I think all we can do as alumni basically is if you know a kid or see a kid is call the coach and recommend. There is no active part of recruiting like back in my day when you could actually have alumni contact the recruit. You can't do that anymore. I can barely buy my nephew a dinner. He plays football at Ohio State."

BSB: Do you follow the football team pretty closely then?

Cook: "Oh yeah. Very closely. I have for a long time, not just because of Justin but because of Dad's connection with the

program. Even when we were in school, I think because of my dad's connection with Coach (Woody) Hayes, Coach Hayes would come out and watch our golf tournaments and he didn't play golf. He enjoyed golf so he'd come out. Anytime there was an event at Scarlet, Coach Hayes would put it on his schedule. You'd see Coach Hayes out there just walking around. It was pretty fun."

BSB: You won a national championship and a U.S. Amateur championship at Ohio State.

Cook: "In my three years we won the NCAAAs in '79, I won the U.S. Am in '78 and we won the Big Ten all three years and I think I won twice. We were competitive. We were really good."

BSB: How do your amateur accomplishments stack up with what you have done professionally?

Cook: "I think the thing about my game was I improved at each level. I improved as a junior going up through the 13s and the 15s and the 17s. I kept getting better and winning tournaments and then got into college and won more tournaments. Really my game was starting to progress better and better and I was getting bigger and stronger and I think I learned to win on each level, and I think that helped me when I got into the professional ranks.

"So when I got in my first few situations as a pro, I felt comfortable being on that stage and playing in big tournaments as an

**JOHN
COOK**

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COURTESY OF OSU ATHLETICS

SUCCESS AT EVERY LEVEL – Golfer John Cook was part of a national title team at Ohio State and won 11 times on the PGA TOUR.

amateur, I think that helped. I played in U.S. Opens, and I played Doral and Bay Hill and the Masters and all that. I think once I got on to the professional stage I was comfortable and it helped me win a lot. Not a lot, lot – not Tiger Woods a lot – but, you know, 11 wins isn't too bad. I was comfortable on that stage."

BSB: What was it like to get your first professional win?

Cook: "It was pretty special because it was in California. It was at Pebble Beach in 1981, and it was at the beginning of my second year. It was in a big playoff and in the playoff was Hale Irwin and Ben Crenshaw and I beat these guys in a playoff. Wow! It was at Pebble Beach where I'd played a lot of golf as a kid growing up and going to tournaments up there. So it was a real special place. In the early part of my second year, Jane and I were newly married, we were expecting our first child. We were kids, we were only 23 years old and jumping straight into the deep end, basically."

BSB: Of the four majors was there one that you were extra excited for the first time you got to play in it?

Cook: "You know I qualified for the U.S. Open, so that was a feat. It was nothing given to you, you had to go qualify. The second U.S. Open I got in because I was the U.S. Amateur champion, so that was cool. But I think getting in the Masters, we as amateurs or high school kids or college kids, however old you are, you know during the U.S. Amateur if you make it to whatever round, and at that point it was the semifinalists all get in the Masters. Once you got in the semis you go, 'Wow, I'm in the Masters now.' That's a big deal."

"So going to Augusta and playing practice rounds and just being part of that, that was quite a thrill."

BSB: How is the senior tour different from the PGA TOUR?

Cook: "The interesting thing I found was the level of competition was the same, it was just the guys are a little bit older. They had not lost any skill set, that's for sure. They could really still play golf and loved to compete, and the winning scores were low. Just because guys were in their 50s and 60s didn't mean that they couldn't shoot low scores. That kind of blew me away. The first tournament I played in I shot 7-under par for three rounds and I got beat by 19 shots. The winner shot 25 or 26 under for three rounds and I went, 'Holy smokes, I've got to get a lot better.' Then I ended up playing really well the next week and won the next one."

"The toughest part of the transition was if you're still active on the regular tour and you have Champions Tour age status, it's hard to go back and forth. Not many guys go back and forth and do very well, that's for sure. Just accepting the fact that I'm in a place now where these are my peers, these were my friends growing up through the junior ranks, through the college ranks, through the professional ranks. I'm still competing against these guys. They beat me, I beat them. We're all great friends, our families are great friends, our kids are all great friends. It's relaxed a lot more, but once the competition started it was the same. It felt the same. Winning was the same."

BSB: Will you be playing at Scioto this year in the U.S. Senior Open?

Cook: "I certainly am. I wouldn't miss that. That's a real special one to me. I haven't

been able to compete in Columbus for quite a while. Even in my 50s I did try a couple U.S. Open qualifiers that were there and didn't quite make it. But to play and compete again in Columbus – the last time I played in the Memorial was 2006 – so to compete again in Columbus will be real special to me."

"And Scioto is obviously real special to me and to Ohio State. We had playing privileges there when I was in school, and we would get over there whenever we could, a couple times a month maybe. To compete back in Columbus is going to be quite special, it really is. As I'm winding down my career it's a great place to play, and with my love of the city of Columbus and Ohio State, what a great place to be able to showcase."

BSB: So you're working for the Golf Channel now in addition to your playing career?

Cook: "I've kind of cut down my playing schedule and am doing more and more television as far as some live golf and studio work throughout the Golf Channel. Just looking at life beyond golf. I'm not sure when I'll retire, but it'll be ... I'm almost 60, I'll be 59 this year. I've done this a long time and it's time to move on at some point. I still love to play and compete but certainly not on the big scale."

"I can't be inactive. I love golf so much that I want to talk about it, I want to share my experiences, I want to be a player's voice in the media which they don't have. There's very few that actually have the player's voice. I am still active, I still get this. This is not an easy game. They really don't have a voice like that, and that's really my main reason for doing television is I love the medium."

"I'm not a journalist and I don't pretend to be, but I am an athlete, still current, still active, and what better person to get some analysis from than someone that is doing it and has done it. And if they can get their points across I think it's fascinating. I love listening to Troy Aikman and Phil Simms and guys that have been in the heat of the battle and can relay their experiences. It fascinates me."

BSB: You were still active on the PGA TOUR when Tiger Woods came up. Do you think the way he played changed the public perception of golf?

Cook: "Yes I do. I was lucky enough to befriend Tiger when he first came out. Mark O'Meara and I are close friends and have been since we were kids, and Tiger kind of reached out to Mark to mentor him and help guide him in the right directions as far as golf goes and I was part of that little golf group that he had. So I got to see things happen and greatness firsthand."

"From when he first came out in 1996 in the fall to where it took him to the heights of the game in the mid-2000s, nobody played golf like that. Jack in his heyday was just the

best and had the best record major championship-wise and dominated the game when he played. Tiger took that whole thing and took it to a whole-nother level. Not only how the game was played but how the game was perceived through television, through the media and also through the people, just the fans."

"It brought out a whole different golf fan. People who were not even golfers would come watch (him) play. That never happened in our day. When Tiger got into the middle of his career people went just to watch a sporting event and to watch the best. He took it to a whole different level from fifth-page news to front-page news when he played. That was big for our game and it grew exponentially from there. It was great to be a part of. We would learn from him and he would learn from us, and it probably kept my career going another four, five or six years, just being around and practicing and talking about golf with him. It kept me going, it kept Mark going and it kept us competitive."

BSB: How does the tour now stack up to Tiger's prime?

Cook: "The winning scores aren't better, but there's so many. In my day there was probably 20, 30 guys each week that could win tournaments. Now there's 100. Basically anybody that tees it up on a Thursday has a chance to win."

"I think that has directly contributed to more athletes getting in the game, whether they were playing football, basketball, baseball, hockey, whatever they were, they continued on with golf now instead of going another direction. There's better athletes playing which means there are more of them. The talent pool is very, very deep. I love going out and watching the PGA TOUR golf and where it progressed. I'm trying to learn that part, the power game. There's only a few players when I was playing that had that power like that. Now everybody does."

"It's very interesting for me to watch, the progression. I always try to remind people as great as these players are – the Jason Days, the Dustin Johnsons and Jordan Spieths and the Rory McIlroys – you've got to remember they played with Tiger, but they didn't play with the Tiger Woods from 1999, 2000, 2001. You hear about they're not intimidated by him or they weren't intimidated by him."

"Well they didn't play against that guy, they played against the 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 Tiger Woods, who was still very good and winning tournaments, but they didn't play against that guy that was probably the best golfer of all time. Not the best record, but probably the best player that ever played, there's no doubt. It would have been interesting to see these young kids, as great as they are, how their games would stack up in 2000 when Tiger was winning everything by multiple shots, double-digit wins. That would be interesting."



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1966 Season Still Resonates With Arlin

By RYAN GINN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

It's hard to imagine many having a bigger impact on the Ohio State baseball program than hard-throwing righty Steve Arlin.

He burst onto the scene as a sophomore in 1965 and led the nation with 165 strikeouts while amassing a 13-2 record. His performance in the College World Series that year is still considered one of the greatest ever. Facing Oklahoma State in the semifinals, Arlin twirled a 15-inning shutout that included a CWS-record 20 strikeouts in a 1-0 win over the Cowboys.

He followed that up one season later by leading Ohio State to its first and only national championship in program history. In the College World Series that season, Arlin twice defeated No. 1 USC as the starting pitcher and also pitched in relief for three of the Buckeyes' other four games, earning Most Outstanding Player honors for his efforts. He was drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies and later picked up by San Diego in the 1968 expansion draft.

Pitching for the offense-starved Padres, he amassed a career record of 34-67 despite a 4.33 career ERA. He came the closest of any pitcher in franchise history to a no-hitter, having one broken up with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning against Philadelphia in 1972. He also had a trio of two-hit performances that season, but a lack of run support led to a 10-21 record.

After finishing his career with Cleveland, Arlin retired to practice dentistry, having worked toward that degree during his time in the minor leagues. He was inducted into the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame and College Baseball Hall of Fame and currently resides in San Diego.

BSB: Given that you were born in Seattle, how did you end up at Ohio State?

Arlin: "My dad got a new job at Westinghouse and moved to Ohio, and we lived in Lima for all that time. I was looking around for the right kind of college for me. I considered Harvard and a couple other bigwig schools, but I didn't think that would be a good meld for my athletics. I ended up going to Ohio State on a basketball scholarship, actually. During my sophomore year I figured out I wasn't big enough or fast enough to do that so I dropped off and switched to doing only baseball instead of both."

BSB: What was it like to make that first trip to the College World Series in 1965?

Arlin: "I would think the thing that strikes me the most is that the Big Ten hadn't had any success in the College World Series. Michigan had been there a couple years before but it was our first time, that's for sure. We had a very good team that was built on fundamentals. We didn't have any big home-run hitters or .400 hitters or anything like that, but that first year we were there we had three people on the team who played for Woody Hayes. I think those guys were good people for us to look up to. They knew how to win and be professional about it. They taught us a lot of things along the way."

BSB: What stands out to you about

your 15-inning shutout of Oklahoma State in the semifinals?

Arlin: "The 15-inning game in the semifinals was an interesting game because in the 13th inning their leadoff hitter hit a triple with no outs. We purposely walked the next two guys to load the bases with no outs and I induced the next guy to hit a little tapper back to me. I threw to the catcher who threw to first base for two outs. We struck out the other guy, and that really gave us a boost – especially me. I was thinking, 'There's no way I'm giving this game up.'"

"People consider the best part of me as an athlete is that I had a big heart. That's certainly the time I can remember showing that was the truth, for the most part."

BSB: Prior to the 1966 season, could you sense that it was going to be special?

Arlin: "That happened as the season went on. We actually had a lot of rain-outs and played just six games in the Big Ten schedule, but we were undefeated in those. Every other team had at least one loss, so we got to go to the postseason. We were a very, very good fundamental team. We knew how to play small ball, and every now and then one of our guys would pop a home run."

"When the chips fell and it was time for the College World Series, we got there and were treated like kings. We finished second the year before and here we were there again. We came that close last year. USC was the No. 1 team in the country, and we ended up beating them twice. I'd say we just played very sound baseball, and I had a tremendous World Series pitching-wise. Guys came through with the hits we needed and we ended up winning that doggone thing."

BSB: As a competitor, what did it mean to you to be the starter and get both wins against top-ranked USC?

Arlin: "We all stayed in the same hotel, and that team upset us to no end. We'd end up on the elevator with a couple of them and they'd bad-mouth us and taunt us. We'd never seen anything like that on the ball field. We were like, 'Who are these guys? California jerks.' The first game we beat them 6-2 and the second game we beat them 1-0 and it was rain delayed."

"Rod Dedeaux was their coach, and as far as I was concerned he was just as big a jerk as they were. The shenanigans he pulled on the field to try to win – he delayed the game and delayed it and delayed it. The umpire told me to throw the ball over the plate without the hitter even being in the batter's box. I threw four pitches and it didn't make any difference where they were. He just called them automatic strikes. Dedeaux finally told his guys to get in there, and we finished the game normally. His son was an assistant and came up to me after the game and apologized for the way they'd acted."

BSB: Pitching in five of six games probably wouldn't happen today. What was it like to have such a big impact on the College World Series?

Arlin: "I'd never done anything like that before. Anytime our coach came up and asked how I was doing and if I could go a couple of innings, I was going to give it a try, and that's what I did. I won two games and saved three others."



FILE PHOTO

NATIONAL CHAMP – Righthander Steve Arlin helped Ohio State to a championship at the 1966 College World Series.

BSB: What type of pitcher were you? Did you use more power or precision?

Arlin: "Definitely power. I didn't even have a changeup. I threw a fastball and a curveball and that was it. But both of them were good pitches."

BSB: What did it feel like to be taken in the MLB draft?

Arlin: "The first year I had told everybody I wasn't going to sign professionally. I had another year of school and I was going to finish it out, so don't even bother drafting me because I'm not signing."

BSB: How were you able to balance dental school and the minor leagues?

Arlin: "I guess balance is the word for it. I wasn't really in that good of shape. I tried to work out with the college team after class, but I didn't have the benefit of being able to work out every day at the rate I wanted to and as much as I wanted to. I'd get to whatever summer team I was playing with and they'd throw me into the starting rotation right away and I'd struggle. My control was off, and I've always been a good control pitcher. I struggled with win-loss record and even considered quitting baseball because it was really tough to balance the two of them."

"When I got out of school I had the chance to go to my first spring training. I'd never been to spring training. I'd been sent to the Padres in the winter season and ended up going to spring training with them in Yuma and being a starting pitcher, and it took off from there."

BSB: What was the feeling like when you made your MLB debut?

Arlin: "I remember playing against the Reds at Crosley Field, and that lineup – they averaged .320. Our team was getting beat pretty bad and the manager pinch-hit for the pitcher in the third inning of the game, and I got called into the game and here's the Big Red Machine. I actually did really well. I came in and sat on the bench after getting taken out and here's Crosley Field and look what I just did, put those zeroes up there. I just sort of slumped down and got

all emotional about it. That was at the end of the season, which was still before I went to spring training for the first time. I saw myself do it against the best, so I knew I could do it."

BSB: What was it like to be a major leaguer in the 1970s?

Arlin: "I liked to play baseball because you had superstars all over the place. Every team had superstars. I didn't enjoy so much playing for the Padres. I was the starting pitcher in a rotation that wasn't going to win many games because we weren't going to score many runs and defensively we were suspect. But you got to know people on the other teams, and that was exciting to me. It was a lot of fun, and I think that's one of the real memorable parts of my life."

BSB: What went into your decision to retire?

Arlin: "I had an injury, and that was the first time I'd ever injured my arm at all. It wasn't handled very well. They brought me back a couple times too soon. I should have sat out the rest of the season and allowed the arm to heal. We started that last year and I could tell something was still wrong with it, but I could still throw hard and the curveball was still semi-there. I struggled through part of that and tried to work some things out and ended up getting traded to Cleveland."

"Cleveland was a mess. They had 40 people owning the team and couldn't agree on anything. Frank Robinson was coming in the next year, and I could see the writing on the wall that the whole next year was going to be about Frank, Frank, Frank. I figured if there's any time to do it, let's do it. I hung up my spikes."

BSB: Looking back on the 1966 team 50 years later, what are your thoughts on what the team was able to accomplish that year as the last Big Ten team to win it?

Arlin: "Well I think the record speaks for itself. Fifty years is a long time. You take a look around and you figure we were in the Big Ten and didn't get to play 30 games outside in the spring with 70-degree weather. I think it's pretty remarkable what we did."

Smith Enjoying Role As Assistant Coach

By MARCUS HARTMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Katie Smith is done playing basketball, but basketball is far from done with her.

The Ohio State basketball legend was an All-American for the Buckeyes in 1993 and 1996 and was a seven-time WNBA All-Star and two-time WNBA champion. Smith also won gold medals at the 2000, 2004 and 2008 Olympics, and she was recently named to the WNBA's Top 20 at 20, a list honoring the league's 20 best players over the first 20 years of its existence.

It's still hard to bring up Ohio State women's basketball without mentioning her impact during her career from 1992-96 and the years that followed, so we couldn't think of anyone better to talk about the game this summer for our annual interview issue.

BSB caught up with the Logan, Ohio, native as she continues her third year as an assistant coach for the New York Liberty. We covered the current state of the Buckeyes and college basketball, her coaching career, her favorite places to live and more.

BSB: How is coaching going?

Smith: "It's good. My whole playing career I always thought, 'No, I don't want to coach. I want to do something different. I don't want to be in the gym. I want to have a different life.'"

"But moving on over to the other side has been a lot of fun. It's definitely a lot more work than playing. Just the hours are differ-

ent. The film, the preparation, the mind-set of what are we going to do in practice or how are we going to get this out of the players? So I really enjoy it.

"I like the game planning. It's fun to be in the gym with your players, trying to get the most out of them, figuring out how you can be most successful."

BSB: Did your current boss (New York coach and infamous NBA bad boy Bill Laimbeer) plant the seed of coaching in you when you were playing for him?

Smith: "He didn't really. It's just a little bit of a natural progression. Towards the end of my career, he went to New York and he said, 'Hey, come back for a year and then move on over to the coaching side.' So that was just kind of a smooth transition. Obviously we have a history and a respect on how we think the game and go about business, and that's how I got that opportunity.

"Just the way I kind of look at the game, I guess coaching was kind of in the mix. I like watching film and trying to figure out how to do things and seeing things on the floor."

BSB: Did you get any preparation for the role during your winters as a graduate assistant at Ohio State?

Smith: "Yes, being a grad assistant, it was just nice being around, understanding kind of how they go about business. Understanding all the work that goes in: the film, the meetings, the practice prep, the recruiting, just how much time they spend.

"I think that's the biggest difference, the time spent thinking about things, how to get



FILE PHOTO

OLYMPIAN – Katie Smith was an All-American at Ohio State and a three-time gold medalist at the Olympics.

BSB: Tell us about the promotion you received from the Liberty prior to this season.

Smith: "Mostly just kind of a step up, more of the same of what you do. Bill has always been great because he allows you to be yourself. We all have our own scouts, we dictate a lot of the defense. We can chime in on the offense. He continues to allow you to do more and more, like (video) edits, showing the team something on video, drawing up plays, suggesting things. It's just more of what we did before because we're kind of a jack-of-all-trades. We all do kind of everything, whether it's on the court, film, schemes or hashing out how we're going to approach a game. It's all a matter of continuing to try and learn and get better."

BSB: Did you think about X's and O's a lot as a player or just go with the flow of the game more?

Smith: "I was very much aware of why things happened, mismatches – how to take advantage of the defense, how to score. Understanding just why we're doing certain actions and how people guard you. That was all my career.

"Obviously when I played in Detroit, I played point guard so I had to understand how to call plays, how to get people involved, seeing mismatches. It's just kind of maybe the way I'm built. So it's kind of been natural. Moving over to the other side is more of the same, but you have to continue to learn everything.

"Also I learned there's just so much that goes on that an assistant coach is really huge. All of us have to play a role because there's so much that goes on then someone might make a suggestion you didn't even think about because the head coach is worrying about subs and timeouts. It's just a lot. So just being in the heat of the battle, understanding how many things are happening at once."

BSB: How did it feel to be named to the 20-year team?

Smith: "I was hugely honored. It was just a huge, huge thing, and very humbling, too, because you play the game, it's because you

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THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: KATIE SMITH

love basketball. I started playing basketball because it was fun. I played with my brothers, played with my high school teammates and people from home. Then you're just like, 'Well I can go to college,' and you end up playing in the Olympics, play professionally. It's just like that. My age, we didn't grow up thinking we'd be professional basketball players, so it really has been such a surprise – an unexpected journey. Now to be one of the top 20 for the 20 seasons, it's awesome. It really is like, 'Wow!' It's pretty cool."

BSB: And now the players who are rookies or still in college have grown up in a world where they could always try to picture themselves making a career out of basketball.

Smith: "Now they start playing and can start thinking, 'I want to play professionally. I want to be in the WNBA like such and such.'"

"It's totally twisted around. They can say, 'Hey, I can do this. It's an opportunity I have.' They don't know any different. They don't know it didn't exist. It is pretty exciting to know you've been a part of that and can continue to be a part of it growing and staying here. It's a lot of pride that we've all been the founding members in a sense of a league that's been around for 20 seasons and hopefully we'll be around for many more."

BSB: We know right now you're living in New York, but basketball has taken you all over the country. How do you rate the places you've played?

Smith: "I really enjoyed Seattle. Seattle was a blast. I was there during the summer so that is the best time of the year there. It's a really amazing place – outdoor living, food, the weather, all of it. D.C. has been fun, but I do like New York. Summers in New York are really special, and I've really enjoyed that. I did like Minneapolis, too. I really, really enjoyed Minny during the summer, too. It's kind of similar to Seattle but a little bit of a smaller version. Those are some of my favorites that I have played and stayed at least for a summer."

BSB: How much do you get to be around the Ohio State program now?

Smith: "I do come by a lot. Coach (Kevin) McGuff is great. (Assistant coach) Patrick Klein is a good friend that coaches. I do come by a lot just to watch practice and touch base and see them. Doing commentating (for ESPN and Big Ten Network game broadcasts) in the offseason and then just stopping in to see what these ladies are doing. It's been fun to watch them."

BSB: What is your impression of Kelsey Mitchell, Ohio State's All-American point guard?

Smith: "It's been fun watching her. I think she's a great kid. I think she's an extremely hard worker. I think she's talented. She's just got the whole package. She's a great teammate. I just enjoy watching all of them — Asia Doss, Cait Craft, Shayla Cooper, the whole crew. Ameryst Alston. It's just been fun getting to know them a little bit and being able to be around them and continue our history of women's basketball, for them to get to know me and me to get to know them."

"Just to see them have success, go out and play the top teams and just trying to get to the top and make that run in the NCAA tournament is a lot of fun to watch."

BSB: Have you seen anybody who can make a shot off the dribble like Mitchell?

Smith: "With the speed that she does it and the control of her handle, and the accuracy with which she shoots it – I mean there's not many folks who can change direction, have the chance to make it, shoots it as well as she does. There's not many at all."

"She's a really, really special player with her skill set and unselfish, too, which is also crazy

because she's always got eyes up, looking to find a teammate, ready to drop it off. She puts crazy pressure on the defense. At the speed that she plays and the efficiency she plays with at that speed is nuts. She is a nightmare to try to get ahold of. Everybody has to be locked into her because one person is probably not going to be able to handle her."

BSB: What was it like moving to Columbus from Logan after high school?

Smith: "It wasn't too bad for myself. My dad went to dental school at Ohio State. We came to Columbus a lot, and both my parents are from Cleveland originally and we traveled quite a bit so it wasn't like a shell shock or culture shock coming to a city and having more people, more things. I was exposed to a lot of stuff thanks to my folks. It was a lot of fun being in that environment and finding your niche and meeting people and just experiencing life in the college world."

BSB: Were you rooting for the Cavs in the NBA Finals?

Smith: "Of course! Definitely rooting for the Cavs. With my parents being from

Cleveland, of course I am always wanting them to have some success. There's been a lot of heartbreak. Definitely as an Ohio kid I wanted to see them do well, and also as just an athlete seeing that LeBron came back home, wanted to win a championship and actually got it done. That's hard to do, so that's pretty impressive."

BSB: Were you surprised they pulled it off?

Smith: "After they got the series back to 3-3, Game 7, I was like if they go out and hit shots and keep attacking I definitely thought they could do it. Down (three games to one) I'm probably going to say I didn't think they were going to come back, but when they won a couple, got a little momentum and just kept coming at 'em and at 'em, being physical and just playing their game, it was fun to watch."

BSB: Would you prefer to continue coaching in the pros, or might you end up in college?

Smith: "I'll probably see how it goes. I think maybe ultimately I'll find my way to college. I'm kind of game for whatever the next

opportunity is. I want to continue to improve and keep growing, but I like the pro game. College would be different in the sense of recruiting, but probably right now 50/50, see how it goes. I'd like to stay in the women's game. That's where my heart lies."

"Who knows which way I'll go, but we'll see what the next opportunity is."

BSB: Do you think you'd like recruiting?

Smith: "I think it would be all right. I'm sure like any job some of it's a grind, but it's a lot about building relationships and talking to people, and I do enjoy that. I enjoy getting to know people and if they're a good fit and just building those type of relationships whether it's with the players themselves, the AAU coaches, the coaches in your area or around the country."

"It's a small world in terms of the basketball world, but it's all about building relationships, getting to know people, also doing good work so people will want to come work for you or play for you. I think I'll learn as I go, but I hope that being able to build those relationships is something I can do well."

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