

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

Vol. 37, No. 23

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

July 2018

**\$3.00**PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER  
CLASSIFICATION  
DATED MATERIAL  
PLEASE RUSH!!

## Setting The Standard

### OSU Athletics Continues To Lead On, Off The Field

By TIM MOODY  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The 2017-18 academic year was another resounding success for Ohio State athletics, both on and off the field of play.

The year included a resurgence from the men's basketball team under new head coach Chris Holtmann, another Big Ten title in football and various other successful seasons. It also marked the conclusion of Ohio State careers for some of the school's best athletes – most notably quarterback J.T. Barrett, women's basketball star Kelsey Mitchell and champion wrestler Kyle Snyder.

Off the field, the Buckeyes set new records for academic honors once again, finishing the season with the most Academic All-Big Ten selections in school history. The academic side has always been a focal point for athletic director Gene Smith, who has spearheaded the charge to make Ohio State athletics a success in all facets since he took over the job in 2005.

Smith sat down for his annual Interview Issue session with BSB in June to chronicle the past year at Ohio State and take a look ahead at things to come.

The Interview Issue:  
• Gene Smith – Cover  
• Kerry Coombs – Pg. 10  
• Kelsey Mitchell – Pg. 12  
• Chuck Csuri – Pg. 14  
• Terence Dials – Pg. 18  
• Will Grimmer – Pg. 20  
• Larry Romanoff – Pg. 22



JOSH WINSLOW

**FOCUSED** – Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith has overseen progress on the field, in the classroom and around the Buckeyes' vast athletic complex.

**BSB:** Starting off broad, how would you sum up the 2017-18 academic year for Ohio State athletics?

Smith: "It was a great year. Our coaches continue to do a great job. Our academic support unit continues to do a great job. We ended the year with like 238 graduates of 1,034 students. We ended up with 34 teams with 3.0 or better average GPA out of 36. Our kids are doing a great job in the classroom. We're just proud of them. I think we had eight degree-completion graduates, people who come back and finish their degrees. That culture of academic excellence we've been striving towards, we're there. I think it was 692 Scholar Athletes, I think, is what we had.

"It's the culture we wanted to create so it's been a great year. We have more student-athletes taking summer school courses. We had athletes graduating faster which is cool because you end up with a number of them taking master's courses, graduate school courses. I think we had 16

this past year that are doing that which is a different thing for us that we're getting used to. It's cool, the culture is where we wanted to be. Academically, a great year."

**BSB:** Since you mentioned the degree completion program, what does OSU do to promote that when athletes are first getting here to know that they'll have that option if they do pursue another path?

Smith: "We talk to them as they leave. (Former football captain) Christian Bryant, who just completed, when he left, we kind of – there's a gentleman by the name of John Macko in our student-athlete support operation. That's his responsibility to work with the individual sports to make sure Christian Bryant understands, 'Hey, this is what you need to complete. Go chase the dream.' Which they're doing. Then, we're trying to stay in touch. Some of them can take courses online from where they are but, ultimately, many of them have to come back and sit in a classroom to finish. It's really, we kind of keep track of them at the moment that they get ready to go chase the dream.

"Then, some of them, they get that opportunity to just keep playing for quite some time. Every now and then we'll see them come back to a game or something, and then, we'll whisper in their ear. I don't know if Joey Bosa will ever come back, (laughs) but we'll always whisper in his ear and see how it goes. It's just more when they leave, we tell them, 'You need X number of credit hours. You need to keep that in mind.' Then, we stay in touch with them."

**BSB:** There are a few athletes I wanted to ask you about in particular – a couple of them have their pictures right out here on the wall outside your office. Kyle Snyder, Kelsey Mitchell and J.T. Barrett all wrapped up their careers this year. What was it like to watch them over the past four or five years, especially Kyle and Kelsey competing for Ohio State and internationally as well?

Smith: "It's unbelievable. I tell recruits and their families when you look at Ohio State, you come to Ohio State, you need to really, hopefully, get a chance to see other sports because you're going to probably see the top of the pyramid athletes in a particular sport. A Kyle Snyder, a gold medal winner, comes back to finish his degree. While you're here, you need to go see him. Those athletes, a Kelsey Mitchell, those athletes, they hopefully inspire other athletes towards excellence.

All of our athletes get it, coaches in other sports get it, it's the competitive fire of a J.T. Barrett and how he maximized his talent and skill not only from his athleticism but from his leadership traits and his fortitude. They were special athletes. What's interesting, there are a whole lot more."

**BSB:** Looking at some of the stuff going on with the NCAA, I know last year was the first year of the

Continued On Page 8

**Your Mailing Label Goes Here  
Call (614) 486-2202  
Today To Subscribe**

**THE  
INTERVIEW  
ISSUE**

# Buckeyes Adjusted Well To New Recruiting Timeline

Continued From Page 1

early signing period in football. How do you think that went for Ohio State, and maybe how do you see that going in the future?

Smith: "We adjusted. We were one of the schools that, originally, was against it. We understood some of the benefits, we just had some concerns, but we adjusted to it and we've benefited from it. We've signed a number of athletes, and our coaches' time is different.

"The intent to allow those athletes who definitively knew where they wanted to go, go ahead and get it done, that's been that. That was the impetus from the beginning. I think from that perspective, it's worked. We just have to see I think the impact of it. You have to see over time. We have to go to a few iterations and look back and say, 'Okay, was there anything that changed in the behaviors of recruiting?' That takes a look back so we need some evidence before we can actually say, 'This is a great thing.' I think it is, but we need some time to see that."

**BSB: You have a year on the College Football Playoff selection committee under your belt. How did that go? What were some of the highlights of it for you?**

Smith: "It was a great learning experience. I served on the basketball committee, and one of the things that I was hopeful that I'd benefit from was just the camaraderie. We'll be around other teammates who have the same passion and interest that I do and around our sports programs, in that case football. It was cool. Just sitting around with the (committee) and you're talking football. Ultimately Frank Beamer, you go back to roots a little bit. I was having a lot of fun with that, and the policies and procedures were very similar to what we had on the basketball committee, that was a little bit easier for me to transition into from that perspective.

"Then, just watching games in a different way than I used to watch them and becoming more definitive and focused on the evaluation of the team as opposed to just watching games. It's a great experience and I'm looking forward to it now that I've gotten past my

rookie year and got my sea legs under me a little bit. I'm anxious to try to be a little bit better in serving a membership in that role this coming year. I'm looking forward to it."

**BSB: Ohio State at the end of the year was right there on the fringe. What was that process like for you to have your school right on the edge of the picture?**

Smith: "Well, I was out of the room. They have a policy where anytime your school's talked about, or your school is in a situation where the team that you might play is being talked about, you're out of the room. I don't know what the conversations were in the room. I just accepted the fact that that was the choice of my peers and my colleagues and I respect that. We move on and take advantage of the opportunity we had at the time and go play and be where we got to play. At that point you just shift your thinking because you can't change anything. I accepted the fate and moved on."

**BSB: How do you think this new playoff system has gone through the first few years, and do you see any changes coming down the road?**

Smith: "I think it's going well. I always had the concern of its impact on the other bowls. I think that has played out. We have to be really careful about that. How do we keep the other bowls relevant when everybody is so focused on the final four? It's difficult. I think we have to keep our eye on that ball. I think it's played out extremely well. I don't see any changes in the near future.

"The commissioners, the management committee, everyone seems to be comfortable with the current format. I think we need time. I think we always have to let these types of things play out over time, to see what tweaks need to occur as opposed to just being reactive. Just let it play out over time. I can't see any changes in the near future."

**BSB: Now, looking at the football team in general, Urban Meyer signed a new contract this year. Can you take me a little bit through the process of first the decision to extend him, and why the timing was right to do it now?**

Smith: "We were a little concerned about some of the conversations around recruit-

ing, and there were, for whatever reasons, suggestions that he might not be here long – those type of things – and that was a concern of mine and a concern of his. I forgot when we had the conversation. We ended up having a conversation about doing a contract extension. At the same time, I had a concern about his salary not being No. 1 in the Big Ten. When his performance – not just in the wins and losses, but in culture around our team. Behaviorally, academically, knock on wood, all those things are happening on track.

"I just feel like he's the No. 1 coach in the league and he needed to be compensated consistent with that. We talked to the president, got authorization to move forward and try to put it in place, and then it just came about a time we needed to get it to the trustees and get it approved. It was the right time to send the message that he is going to be here for a long time which was a concern of recruits, concern of those – not a concern but window for our competitors to call to recruits against us. Then also media conversations about that so I wanted to put that to bed."

**BSB: Then obviously the rest of the staff got new contracts as well, Greg Schiano and Ryan Day both hit that million dollar mark for the first time at Ohio State. Are you still comfortable with that decision to give those contracts, and was it really just kind of an inevitable thing where the market is?**

Smith: "It was. You get it. It was inevitable. I knew we'd get there, it was just a matter of what year, what time. In that window of time the year before, actually, the market went berserk. It was unbelievable – salary increases and coordinators. There already were some, but it really went berserk the year before. Urban and I talked about it for a long time, but the ones that we took to that level they deserved to be at that level compared to their peers in their market performance.

"Those guys were the top of the pyramid. For us, one of the things that we have to constantly think about is talent retention. This great city, Columbus is a great place to live. This is a great place to work at Ohio State. At the end of the day, we need to make sure we have fair compensation. Salaries have gone berserk, we're in that game, we've just got to play it. So, that was an easy decision."

**BSB: You mentioned talent retention. When you've got a guy like Ryan Day who's relatively young in his coaching career and he's had a lot of opportunities this year both as a collegiate head coach or maybe going off to the NFL, what does it say about Ohio State that he's not only staying, but he signs a three-year contract to stay at Ohio State?**

Smith: "It's awesome. That's one of our commitments to do what is right from a salary perspective. One, the contract as you said. Two, the security piece. Someone like him with his family and I think he said this as well, finding a place like this to live and then raise your children and then have some stability for some period of time was important. We can't take for granted how great a place this is to live and work. Then you have a chance to – for him, as you said, a young coach to work with somebody like Urban, the experiences that he will gain by working with Urban, competing against the teams we compete with in our league and out of our league.

"Unbelievable experiences for him to

grow. He'll be a head coach someday, hopefully it's not too fast. In order to make sure that we help him reach that dream, we want to make sure that he has family, he's really comfortable with everything around him. That was important for us."

**BSB: What did you think when you were watching the quarterback competition as it unfolded this spring?**

Smith: "It was hard. Because you have – I'm on the periphery on that. You like the coaches but I had enough of a relationship with actually all three of them. Tate Martell, Joey (Burrow) and Dwayne (Haskins). I just love them as people. I had no clue where everyone was going to land, but my role was how do we make sure we do what's best for the student?

"I'm thinking Joey did the right thing for himself. He's got two years of eligibility, and he's a smart, smart young man. He's a perfect example of one that graduated early. Taking advantage of summer school and maximizing his credit hours. I might be the athletic director but I'm also a fan of sports so I was watching it like everybody else to see who was going to emerge. It was, I think, a good decision on Joey's part. When you still have two outstanding returning quarterbacks that have got this experience but our freshman (Matthew Baldwin) came in, it's pretty good. He'll be healthy and ready to roll."

**BSB: Now looking at Haskins, he's going to be the starting quarterback this year. What are your memories from watching that Michigan game after Barrett got hurt and Haskins comes in?**

Smith: "Unbelievable, because I went in the locker room with J.T. for a while with the doctors. Then when I came back out I was on the sideline. Just to watch him, you know what's interesting is I have a different perspective. The throw was phenomenal, but that catch. People forget how hard Austin Mack got hit.

"That grab, man. It's not a lot of receivers that you could throw it on a dime like that that would have held on, but Michael Thomas would have. (Anthony Gonzalez) would have. That was a heck of a catch and retention of the ball when he went to the ground. Those two are pretty special. Then, all the other receivers are going to be just phenomenal to watch. Great throw, great leadership. That speedy run he had, probably broke the speed barrier. It was fun to watch. (laughs) You know that demonstrated unbelievable decision-making. He didn't make a mistake. He made unbelievable decision-making, thrown in the fire in that situation."

**BSB: Going back to Burrow, are you able to keep track of athletes like that? Especially a guy like him who had been here for years and has a degree?**

Smith: "We'll be watching him and see how he does. Anyway, it depends on the athlete and how they leave. Some leave in a disgruntled way. Someone like Joey we'll track and obviously, I'll watch (LSU's) games more than I've ever watched them before and cheer for them and hopefully he does well. As I told Joey after he made his decision and announced it, I called him and said, 'Look, you're still our guy. Don't ever forget. If you need us, we're here. You've got my cell number, you reach back if you need some help.'

"Hopefully, he doesn't. Hopefully, things go excellently for him. He gave us a lot, and if he wants us, we'll be here for him. Even





**NOW OPEN IN DUBLIN**  
7370 Sawmill Rd.

*Best taco Al Pastor in the City!*

**FEATURED ON THE FOOD NETWORK'S**  
**"TOP 5 MEXICAN RESTAURANTS"**

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Columbus 5221 Godown Rd.</b>                   | <b>Gahanna 1376 Cherry Bottom Rd.</b> |
| <b>614-538-0211</b>                               | <b>614-471-4717</b>                   |
| Sun - Thur   11am - 12am • Fri & Sat   11am - 1am | Mon-Sun   11am - 11pm                 |



## THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: GENE SMITH

when he's done there, if he needs help trying to find a job or something like that, we're here for him."

**BSB: Shifting focus to the basketball team, we're here a year later after Thad Matta left and Chris Holtmann was hired. What was this year like for you, and what were your expectations going in compared to what you ended up seeing?**

Smith: "I didn't have expectations that we would excel at the level that we did. I knew we had guys who were hungry. (JaeSean Tate) was hungry, Keita (Bates-Diop) was hungry. Unfortunately, Keita had a career prior to this year where he had so many different small injuries here and there. One major one but others were nagging so he really couldn't get on the floor in a consistent way. We knew once he did, that he would be an impact player. The thing that I was really – Chris did in a phenomenal way was gain their trust fast. I think we made some very good strategic moves to help with that."

"He established trust early, and then it's his coaching. This tactical and strategic coaching with these guys in their individual capabilities. He never asked J.T. to do what he couldn't do. Keita was always in a position where he could take advantage of his talents and skills. Andrew Dakich, holy smoke. (laughs)"

"I mean, we could sit here and go through each guy, right? To me, that was the beauty. One of the beauties of what he did is he put each of them in a position where each of them could benefit the team based upon their individual talents and skills."

**BSB: You said you didn't have those expectations last year, but now seeing this season, what's your expectation going forward?**

Smith: "Now, we've got to do more. (laughs) Just like everything in life. What did you do for me lately? But it is going to be interesting to watch and learn. We've never seen how he and his staff transitions in five new guys. We have four freshmen, a graduate transfer and C.J. Walker can't play yet but he will be practicing. Transitioning those individuals into guys who are returning, how do you re-create the leadership that J.T. and Keita provided? Who emerges? Who's that floor guy that helps them get through the storms?"

**BSB: When I talked to you last summer it was a few days after Holtmann was hired. One of the things you stressed was recruiting, especially recruiting in this region. Obviously, last year he was able to put a roster together and then this year, another good class coming in. It seems that going forward in the future years, recruiting in this state is going well compared to maybe some of the more recent years under Matta.**

Smith: "It's beautiful. It's beautiful. ... Well, Thad did an outstanding job for a long time recruiting in our home base and this happens for all of our sports, in Ohio, student-athletes at the high school level to aspire to be at Ohio State. Chris and his staff have done a great job of connecting with the high school coaches, the club coaches and all those people. Kind of share his style, his philosophy, what he does for students."

**BSB: Talking about Matta, it seems like, No. 1, he's been pretty content over the past year, and I think it sounds like he missed coaching less than he expected to. What is your impression of the year, what it might have been like for Matta and how much of a relationship have you had with him over the past year?**

Smith: "I think this past year has been great for him. He's had a chance to get away from

the game, get away from the stress, reconnect with his family. I was with him Monday in Indianapolis. We had two meetings, we had to come in. Actually, we were sitting together in this meeting all morning long and he is in a good space. I think he'll always peek and see if there's something that fits him."

"I think he's doing well and he's enjoying life reading books and enjoying his family and helping the industry a little bit."

**BSB: Obviously, we talk a lot about basketball and football here at Ohio State, but you still get athletes from some of the smaller sports that are able to compete at a high level. What do you think you can do to keep promoting those sports and get them at a higher and higher level here at Ohio State?**

Gene: "Great question. Dan (Wallenberg) and his staff, communications, continue to do a great job, and then we have a social media team. They're trying to do the best they can around that – in publications like yours and others focusing on recognizing their talents and skills. We had 10 conference championships this year. We had 10 conference championships, nine coaches of the year, one national coach of the year. That's a lot of talent. You go sport by sport by sport, from tennis to the track, and you can pick those individual athletes."

"You just go through every single sport. What we have to do is, in the moment when they're competing, we've got to try to bring them to life. Social media has been our primary avenue to try to do that. Then some things back home in their areas where they came from. Most of us would track that but trying to make sure there's articles in your local paper and those type of things. Tough to do. This is tough to do but we've got a great staff. They do the best job they can. Then the athletes promoting themselves, which they also do the job of, probably do their own little thing."

**BSB: There are a few ongoing construction projects like at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, renovations of the stadium. Can you give me an update on the general athletic projects that are going on?**

Smith: "We've got a lot going on. The Covelli Arena will probably be done in March of 2019. It's going well. The Schumaker facility (housing additional sports adjacent to the WHAC), that will be open in October sometime. Again, I'm budgeting on time. It's going well. Suite project (at Ohio Stadium), suite and loge seats are doing good. They'll be ready for the 2019 season. We'll have less seats in the stadium this year because of it. I think our capacity will be 102,000, and then we'll add those back in '19, but that's gone well."

"Concrete renovation that most people don't pay attention to but I do. We're down to one side of the stadium that we have to finish and then we would have resealed and repainted the entire concrete in the stadium over a four-year period, and that will give us another 10 years before we have to do it again. That's a major project to help sustain the life of that iconic facility. We started the Wi-Fi project."

"We're pretty confident we'll have it done for the 'Shoe by this fall. There could be a couple of dead spaces because antennas didn't get done in time, but we'll have it pretty much done. Again, the 'Shoe will be done, the Schott (renovations) actually should be done by basketball season. We have a lot of projects."

**BSB: Looking around Columbus in general, obviously the Blue Jackets had a big run this year. Then the Crew going through the situation they're going**

**through with a potential move to Austin, Texas. What kind of relationship does Ohio State have with the pro sports teams in Columbus, and what has it been like to watch them over the past couple of years?**

Smith: "It's great. We have a strong relationship with the Blue Jackets, we've had for a long time and the Crew we've had for a long time. Blue Jackets we are from a management point of view, we oversee Nationwide Arena, we manage Nationwide Arena. We have a working relationship with them as our primary tenant at Nationwide, but we also have a collaborative relationship with them. Well, I'm just so happy that they were able to have a run that they had for the year, and hopefully they'll get a deeper run and it's just so much fun to watch and going to the games. This is really cool, they are unbelievable tenants."

"With the Crew, we hired (former Crew star) Brian Maisonneuve (to coach) the soccer program. One of the things we wanted to get stronger at is that relationship with their youthful member club program, the recruiting and things of that nature. We've always had a collaborative relationship, but we haven't been as successful as we wanted to in recruiting out of their system, their clubs, their youth system so I'm looking forward to working with them better and I hope they stay. I really do. I understand the business piece of it. I get it. Well, I hope they stay."

**BSB: Earlier this week I was over at the Buckeye Boosters golf outing at the Scarlet Course. Meyer was there and he talked about you a little bit. He mentioned your experience as a college athlete yourself and how that can impact your outlook on the wellness of the student-athlete here. How do you think**

**your experience from when you played football in college has impacted your job here at Ohio State?**

Smith: "It was one of my greatest blessings, to find a career path where I can take my personal experience and apply it in what I do every single day. If it wasn't for football, let's say high school sport participation with football was in the air, I never would have gone to college. My parents couldn't send me to college. I'm the only person in my family that's got a college degree. My dad worked in the Navy, my mom was a nursing student for a two-year program, but a four-year degree, that didn't exist in my family so I was blessed."

"Then to have the experience that I had playing in college. I wasn't the greatest student, so I did have academic support. I did have tutors to get through college. I remember that and I know that the young people that we have in whatever sport, also, I kind of relate it back to my experience, I never forgot those things. I understand why someone needs a tutor. I understand when I have to tell a coach, 'Look, you got to give that student more time away from practice in order to help them attack their academics.' And coaches get it. I never get any pushback."

"It's valuable. It's helped me and that makes my opportunity not to just be professional but to be personal because that's how I look at it from a student-athlete, is look, this is personal for me. What I've got today, you can do better if you do what you're supposed to do. That's why you'll see more athletes probably talk to me the way I engage with them than most ladies because I can get granular with them around their experience and what they're going through. I'm passionate about what we do for our kids, all of them, every single sport."

## The Homeowner's Premium Choice Interior & Exterior



- ✓ **Master Painters** each with more than 25 years in Residential and Commercial Coatings & Applications
- ✓ **Environmentally-Friendly** coatings from Sherwin Williams and Pittsburgh Paints.
- ✓ **A Professional, Consultative Approach** focused on achieving your desired results, the BEST quality, and long lasting value.

**Ask About Our PRICE MATCH GUARANTEE**



VOC-FREE

**NewLook**  
PAINTERS, LLC



2699 E. Main Street, Ste. 103-A | Columbus, OH 43209

**(614) 470-4130 | NewLookPainters.com**

# Coombs Will Forever Cherish Time At OSU

By RYAN McGLADE  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Kerry Coombs has coached high school and college football for the last 35 seasons and is now roughly two months away from beginning his first at the highest level – the NFL.

After six seasons at Ohio State, Coombs was hired by the Tennessee Titans in January to be their secondary coach. He was the Buckeyes' cornerbacks coach and special teams coordinator for all six years he spent in Columbus and was promoted to assistant coordinator on defense last offseason.

A talented recruiter, Coombs constructed his own pipeline from Ohio State to the NFL. Every OSU cornerback who started for him has reached the NFL. Not only that, three Ohio State corners were taken in the first round of the past two NFL drafts, marking the first time any school has achieved that feat.

Now in charge of the Titans' defensive backs, Coombs is coaching for Tennessee head coach Mike Vrabel, a former Buckeye defensive lineman who was a defensive assistant coach on Ohio State's staff from 2011-13.

Despite 2018 being a busy year for Coombs, he found a few minutes to chat with BSB about his time in Columbus and his move to the NFL.

**BSB: Have you had a chance to get settled in Nashville?**

Coombs: "We have. It was very fast. We bought a house. My wife is there. It went much faster than any transition that I've ever had, but we're in, we're settled in, going to work every day. It's just like Columbus South."

**BSB: What do you think of Nashville so far?**

Coombs: "We love Nashville. We were always country music fans, which makes it a great fit. We like the weather. The people are incredibly nice, friendly, polite and helpful. The town is vibrant. It's growing at a ridiculous pace, which made buying a house hard. But other than that, it's a really neat place."

**BSB: How are things going for you as the secondary coach for the Titans?**

Coombs: "I think it's going great. You'd probably have to ask my players more than

anybody. We just finished our last minicamp. We went pretty much from April 9 until June 14 on a consistent basis with phase 1, phase 2, (organized team activities) and then minicamp, so I've gotten a good chance to coach them. We haven't put pads on yet. But I've had a chance to work with them every day, and that's been really exciting."

**BSB: Rookies and quarterbacks report to training camp July 22, while the rest of the team does so on July 25. As a coach, what are you doing between now and then?**

Coombs: "Actually, we've had some time off, which is really nice and unusual. I've never had that before like this. The fact that there's no recruiting going on makes it different because when you're at Ohio State you're recruiting every day, 365 days a year. There wasn't a holiday or a weekend that you weren't actively recruiting players. So that's a little different."

"I spend my mornings trying to watch and study third-down and two-minute (situations) because I think that's really important in the NFL. I've been communicating with my current players by text, but they are all off site. There's no workouts going on at the facility. They are enjoying their time off and are working out all over the country at their own hometowns or back at their college campuses or any number of places. Our coaches are kind of spread out, so it's a little bit of a different experience."

**BSB: After being the cornerbacks coach at Ohio State for six years, how much different is it coaching the entire secondary for the Titans?**

Coombs: "I (coached corners and safeties) at (the University of) Cincinnati (from 2007-11). It's kind of the nature of how coaching staffs want to divide themselves. I like having all of the guys in the same room all of the time. I'm still able to be as specific with the corners as I ever was because the reality is we just have more time. Nobody has to rush off and go to class. Nobody has any of those kinds of obligations. So I can still be specific with the corners the same way I was at Ohio State, but now I'm able to do that with the safeties as well."

"Right now, our study – primarily – has been twofold. One, it is to learn the playbook because it's a new installation for everybody. Two, it really focuses on individual technique. So we've been able to spend a lot of quality time, I think, on players' technique."

"One of the most valuable things I learned at Ohio State in my process there was you had to coach every player differently. I had to coach Eli Apple differently than Bradley Roby and differently than Marshon Lattimore and so on. Because I learned that, I think that helps me now because these guys are different players that come from different programs that you can't put everybody in the same box. So I try to meet them where they are, enhance their strengths and focus on the things they can get better at."

**BSB: During your time at Ohio State, you were known for the energy and passion with which you coached. There may be some who wonder if that same type of style will successfully translate to the NFL. What is your response to those people?**

Coombs: "I've heard that from a lot of people. It's hard for me to imagine that the day that a Marshon, a Gareon (Conley), Bradley, Denzel (Ward), any one of them, walk into a new facility six months after graduating from

college that they all of a sudden choose to have a different demeanor about how they do their business. What I've learned is that players are players. They love to play football, and these guys (in the NFL) really love it. For me, I learned a long time ago to try to be who I am and not try to be somebody else. So I guess we'll all find out if it works or not. So far, I'm really enjoying coaching these guys, but you'd have to ask them about their reaction."

"I typically like being around people who are having fun at what they do. I know that the head coach of the Tennessee Titans is a very energetic guy, and nobody would say that Mike is anything less than that, and it's worked out pretty well for him."

**BSB: Outside of what you've mentioned already, what are some other differences between coaching in college and coaching in the NFL?**

Coombs: "I think there's two things. One is the playbook is bigger, and that is something that is a function of having to play 16 games against pro athletes who don't do anything or have anything to do but study the game. So you have to have more variety. You have to attack differently because they're really sharp. They know and spend a lot of time learning and studying the tendencies of the opponent."

"The second thing is just the quality of time and amount of time that you get to spend with them without any concerns for anything other than football. These are men who have wives and children and a lot of really neat things going on in their life. I talk to them about different things than I did the guys at Ohio State, but they are all football all day every day. That is the difference."

"I think anybody who makes this transition has to get used to the NFL game vs. the college game. I talked with (Ohio State associate head coach and defensive coordinator) Greg Schiano, who was the head coach at Rutgers (from 2001-11) and then the head coach for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (from 2012-13), and those guys about what the challenges were and what the differences were."

"I think the league is much more competitive. In other words, Mike likes to tell our players all the time that it's an 8-8 league, and we've got to figure out a way to win four more games than they do. But everybody has good players and good coaches, so it's going to come down to every Sunday."

"When you're at Ohio State and you're able to recruit your players and you have great tradition and all of that, it may not necessarily be an 8-8 schedule. I think we had 11 of our 16 regular-season games last year with the Titans decided by one score or less. So the games are going to be close. They're going to be competitive, and you better be able to win in third-down and two-minute (situations)."

**BSB: You've mentioned Mike Vrabel a couple of times. What are your impressions of him in his first year as an NFL head coach?**

Coombs: "Tremendous leader. First of all, he's a man's man and he's a player's coach, but he has very high standards. There's no entitlement. He's very consistent and his players know what to do and play fast and aggressive. It's our job to make sure you know what to do. He wants them to be competitive and disciplined. He wants them to work hard."

"I've been so impressed by the things that Mike has learned and taken from every coach

he either played or coached for. There's a Bill Belichick emphasis. There's a clear Urban Meyer emphasis. I think he took some things from Bill O'Brien as well. His leadership style and his ability to communicate with the players and his passion for everything that he's doing is clear. We haven't played a game yet, but I think he's going to be one of the great coaches in the game. I really do."

**BSB: You mentioned there is a clear Urban Meyer emphasis with Vrabel. In what ways have you seen that?**

Coombs: "No doubt, many of the things that we talked about in staff meetings at Ohio State about the manner in which we would communicate with the players, how we would teach, how we would coach, how to maximize the development of players, all of those things that he learned from Urban, that I learned from Urban, that a lot of good coaches have learned from Urban, they show up – even to the point of the same phraseology."

"That's what makes Urban Meyer great. It's not just that he wins games or develops great players or great people after football, but he also develops coaches. That's one of the things that I really appreciate about Urban. My six years spent with Urban Meyer emphatically made me a better coach. It made me better prepared for this journey. I believe that the two years Mike spent with Urban made him a better coach."

"I think if you talk to (former Ohio State defensive coordinator and linebackers coach and current University of Cincinnati head coach) Luke Fickell or (former Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach and current Rutgers head coach) Chris Ash or (former Ohio State offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach and current Texas head coach) Tom Herman, they would all tell you that because it's true. There's a huge influence of Urban Meyer throughout football in the country today at every level."

**BSB: How much did the two years you spent with Vrabel as assistants on Ohio State's staff play into your decision to join him at Tennessee?**

Coombs: "One hundred percent. I had a great job. I wasn't looking to leave Ohio State, that wasn't something that was on my agenda. I loved what I was doing. But I also love Mike. In the two years that I spent with Mike (at Ohio State), I really developed a great connection with him. We sat on the same side of the table every day for two years for every defensive meeting. We planned, we worked, we fought, we strained."

"When he got the (Tennessee) job and called me – I'm not going to tell you it was an easy decision because it wasn't – but at the same time, it was because of Mike that I made this move. It's another opportunity for me to grow and continue to develop as a coach. It wasn't the NFL attractiveness as much as it was Mike Vrabel."

**BSB: How long did you ponder the decision to leave Ohio State to join Vrabel's staff with the Titans?**

Coombs: "Not long. It's been my experience with these things that they are very time-sensitive and you're never going to have a lot of time to sit around and think about it. It's kind of weird. I've been in this situation four times. Each time I was never looking. These things have just happened. They kind of just show up on your front porch. But somebody needs an answer pretty quick."

"I talked to Coach (Meyer) about it and, obviously, my wife and I talked at length how it would affect our family dynamics. That was the most important consideration. I talked to Urban and Greg and those guys. I was on the

KERRY  
COOMBS

RECHARGE  
YOUR GAME  
HERE

Call  
614-228-3200

BOOK NOW AT  
COURTYARD.COM

COURTYARD®  
Marriott

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT®  
Columbus Downtown

35 West Spring St. Columbus, OH 43215  
614.228.3200 | Marriott.com/CMHCY

We're happy to be your host for a one night retreat or for a larger group gathering. Space for meetings or private dining is available on-site. Reach out to our Sales Team at 614-228-3200 for groups of 10 rooms per night or to book your downtown meeting today!



## THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: KERRY COOMBS



FILE PHOTO

**BUCKEYE FOR LIFE – Kerry Coombs (in white) was Ohio State's cornerbacks coach from 2012-17.**

road recruiting, and I flew back in to talk to my players face to face before I even went down to meet with the guys at Tennessee. I thought that was important. In too many of these cases, I think the kids get left out. I brought every one of those kids on campus, so it wasn't fair for me to walk out of there and not tell them that I was considering it. They were great about it and have been. I think my relationship with them remains intact.

"By the way, that's the best unit room in the country. (The cornerbacks) right now, the depth that they have top to bottom, they are going to have extraordinary success. And you can write that down. I love those kids, and they are going to be really good. I miss them.

"I would tell you the hardest part I miss about all of it – and as much as I love Urban, Greg and all of the guys on staff – I miss those kids. And I'm going to miss the 'Shoe on Saturdays. The things that happen there are unique. It was a phenomenal, phenomenal experience.

"But timeframe-wise, it was quick. I didn't have a lot of time to make a decision. You always hope and pray you do the right thing. So far, I think we're OK."

**BSB: How did Vrabel present this coaching opportunity to you?**

Coombs: "He pretty much called me and said you're coming. Mike did everything right. He called Urban first, which is exactly the right thing to do, and let him know he was going to call me. (Vrabel) is not only a gifted leader, he's an exceptional professional. And he did things the way you're supposed to. None of this was backdoor. None of this was behind anybody's back. It was all right up front. He called Urban first, and then he called me."

**BSB: What were your conversations with Meyer like when you were contemplating the move?**

Coombs: "I'll probably keep most of those between Urban and me. I don't think that's for the general public. I think Urban and I are and will be close for a long, long time.

"I can tell you this, I owe Urban Meyer an awful lot. He has taught me a tremendous amount about coaching, how to develop players, how to run a program, how to manage the time and intensity. One of the great things that I appreciate about Urban is as hard as we worked at Ohio State every day – every day you worked now – you never had to worry that you were working harder than the head coach (because) he was outworking everybody. That was a great model for all of us.

"In addition to all of his skill sets that he has, he just has this extraordinary passion for being the best in the world at what he does. I could not appreciate him more. I look forward to continuing to having a great, deep relationship with him. I just saw him (on June 16), and it was awesome. I miss him. I miss learning from him, his leadership. I'm going to try to pay him back every day with the way I do my

business here so that people will recognize that somehow in the way or manner in which I coach I've learned things from Urban."

**BSB: How often do you keep in touch with the coaches currently at Ohio State?**

Coombs: "Not as often as I would like. It's sporadic. Weekly. Biweekly. (Linebackers coach) Billy Davis and (running backs coach) Tony Alford came down to practice because they were down in Nashville for a one-day camp and had a two-hour window. So they came over and I got to see them. I saw Greg. I saw Urban, (wide receivers coach) Zach (Smith), (offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach) Ryan Day.

"There's good communication. But at the same time, they're busy, they're recruiting, they're on the road, they're grinding. It's mostly text. It's mostly quick. It's mostly, 'Thinking about you,' kind of thing. Those are guys I'm going to be connected to forever."

**BSB: You've brought up recruiting a few times. How do you feel about no longer recruiting?**

Coombs: "I miss it. I miss going into high schools. I miss talking to high school coaches. I love that part of it. I miss the communication with the players. I miss the competitive nature of recruiting. I loved the winning. I loved getting a kid and convincing him what I knew to be true, which is Ohio State was the absolute best place for him to go to school and play football.

"Recruiting takes so much of your time. My wife and I will go out to dinner or wherever we are, and I've got my phone right out there on

the table and it's not going off anymore. She'll say, 'You can put it away.' It is different because it becomes so much a part of who you are that when you go cold turkey it's kind of hard to not be doing it all the time."

**BSB: What do you know about Taver Johnson, the man who replaced you as Ohio State's cornerbacks coach and special teams coordinator (and also the man you replaced when you arrived in 2012)?**

Coombs: "I've known Taver because he went to (the now-defunct Cincinnati Academy of Physical Education), so he's a Cincinnati guy. I know he went to Wittenberg with one of the guys who coached for me at (Cincinnati) Colerain (High School), Tommy Bolden. Our paths have crossed periodically professionally. When he was coaching college ball he recruited my high school. I know Taver well. I'd say we're friendly. I don't know that we would say we're friends.

"I think Taver is going to do a great job. He's a high-energy guy who's had a great level of experience and has coached corners at Ohio State before (from 2007-11). I think he's in a great spot because I think that room is good, and I think he'll do a great job with them."

**BSB: You've coached at the high school and college ranks, and now you're in the NFL. What else would you like to accomplish?**

Coombs: "I've got a whole lot more to do. We're looking forward to every challenge. We're going to compete as hard as we can every single Sunday in Nashville, Tenn. We're going to try to win every day. We're not going to just try to win on Sundays. We're going to try to get out of bed and win tomorrow. To me, there's a whole lot more to be accomplished.

"I'm looking forward to coaching guys that make the Pro Bowl. Hopefully we have an opportunity to be in the playoffs and compete for a Super Bowl and all of those things. That's the reason you take this next step. I'm intrigued by it, I'm excited by it, and I think that is what it is really all about. It's the next challenge. It's the next thing on the horizon. I think when you stop growing you start dying, and I'm not ready to do that. We're excited about the future."

**BSB: Do you eventually see yourself becoming an NFL head coach?**

Coombs: "Everybody would want to do that. There's only 32 of those in the world, so who wouldn't? What I would say to you is the same thing I've told people all along. I just try

to do the job I have as hard as I can and see what happens. I didn't apply for a job with the Tennessee Titans. I didn't apply for one at Ohio State. I didn't apply for one at the University of Cincinnati. It just happens.

"I'm looking forward to coaching the Titans. Whatever God has got in store for us after that is going to be what it is. But we'll be prepared. That's what it's all about. I think guys that spend time looking too far into the future or over the horizon are the guys that go off the road. I'm just going to try to stay between the lines and do my work and let everybody else decide that stuff."

**BSB: Would you ever consider returning to college if the timing and situation were right?**

Coombs: "Absolutely. I would consider everything. People that close doors are probably just as bad as the folks that are looking too far off into the horizon. It's not for me to say what might happen and what's in the best interest of our family and what's going to be in the best interest of whatever. For now, I just took a new job. I'm not spending a whole lot of time thinking about the next one. I loved every bit of what I did at Ohio State."

**BSB: When you think about your time at Ohio State, what are some of your most prominent memories?**

Coombs: "That's a great question. I think the first word that comes to my mind is 'confetti' because Urban used to always talk about the feeling of the confetti coming down after you have won that game. We would talk about that with the players. The last couple of times that I've been on the field when that confetti is coming down, I've had grandchildren and children and other people to share that experience with me. Singing 'Carmen Ohio' in the end zone with a grandchild or two were great days and great experiences.

"For me, there was nothing like the daily walking into the locker room, going in front of the special teams' meeting, loving those kids and feeling like they loved you back every day. That is what I will remember about Ohio State. I love those kids. I think they appreciate me. I haven't gone to work in a long, long time, and I didn't work a single day at Ohio State. I was playing a game and having fun with a bunch of boys who were really, really neat people. For me, the day in, day out, high five, slap on the backside, whatever, was something that I will treasure."

Let our friendly staff take care of you before, during & after the game.

Enjoy your favorite team on our many HD flat-screen TVs

**Shade RESTAURANTS**

NFL Ticket

Friends, Fun & Great Food!

NFL Ticket

**Shade on the Canal**  
19 S. High St.  
Canal Winchester  
614-837-9873

**Shade on 30th St.**  
850 S. 30th St.  
Heath  
740-788-9287

**Shade on State St.**  
994 E State St.  
Athens  
740-566-1009



# Mitchell Leaves Behind Record-Breaking Legacy

By GARRETT STEPIEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Kelsey Mitchell cemented her place among the greatest players in Ohio State women's basketball program history at the end of the 2017-18 season when she capped her four-year career with a laundry list of NCAA (4), Big Ten (8) and OSU (17) records.

As a senior, the 5-8 guard started all 35 games and led the nation in total scoring as she tallied 849 points. During her tenure with the Buckeyes, Mitchell compiled 3,402 points to finish second on the NCAA's all-time career scoring list behind 3,527 by Washington's Kelsey Plum (2013-17).

Now in the WNBA after the Indiana Fever selected her with the second overall pick in the 2018 draft, Mitchell was two months into her rookie season when BSB went to press. From being recruited out of Princeton High School in Cincinnati by OSU head coach Kevin McGuff to her distinguished career in Columbus and catapulting into the professional ranks, Mitchell spoke with BSB about the past, present and future as she continues to push forward.

**BSB: When you remember your recruitment in high school at Cincinnati Princeton, how did your process unfold? What led you to Ohio State?**

Mitchell: "My recruiting process was real short and sweet. I didn't do much. I took one official visit, which was to Ohio State. I had taken an unofficial visit to UK, Louisville and one more, but I had just attended a game or whatever the case may be. But I took one official out of my five. After that, I kind of went through my AAU season, and then I committed after AAU was over. It was just that simple. I wasn't really into teams when it came to coaches on the phone, but I was grateful that it was colleges that I never thought would be interested in me, talking to me. So it was very humbling, but I didn't overthink it too much."

**BSB: How much of your Ohio State decision came down to staying home?**

Mitchell: "That was a factor, but it was more about where I was comfortable. And believe it or not, Coach McGuff, based on his conversation and the way he treated his players and introduced me to his program, that all made me comfortable. But my family being close to home was the icing on the cake, so it was a bit that way."

**BSB: When you entered through the 2014 recruiting class before the 2014-15 season, did you feel any pressure to potentially reshape the program under McGuff over the next four years?**

Mitchell: "Not at all. When we first started, it was a lot of us learning. So we just kind of like learned throughout the process. Unfortunately, we had people go down in

regard to injuries. One way or another, he just kind of threw us in there, threw us in the fire and we adjusted from game to game. In certain practices, we also learned. But we adjusted, game to game, knowing how young we were."

**BSB: How much did McGuff help you develop on both sides of the ball?**

Mitchell: "He helped me a lot in regards to how he did it. He's not really a screaming type of coach. But when he broke it down in film and video, it took a while because I wasn't adjusting right quick from when he showed me. But he helped me from a standpoint of knowing not just for college, but for knowing now, here in the WNBA, where I need to be better or how effective I could be if I had gotten smaller things defensively right. So just over time, he taught me over time through a lot of film, and then I think the film, seeing yourself was better than just recalling information. I think once you see yourself on video and how you're supposed to be, he was really good at showing us film after games and how we could be better at it – and for myself, specifically. So that helped."

**BSB: How did you feel like you fit his offense?**

Mitchell: "Coach McGuff, his scheme was one that wasn't necessarily hard for me to adjust to based on the pace. It was hard for me to adjust based on what we were looking for. Where I came from, we just got it up and down the court, played off one another. It wasn't a lot of action into it – not entirely like playground ball, but in a way, it was. I'm just going to be honest – it was. So this game kind of implemented my game and helped me. My playground play, that people called it, kind of helped. But in the same breath, it kind of changed and made me screen things and my teammates in a way that made us successful. It was an open-space kind of offense. With that being said, it kind of let players know to be yourself, know who you are and kind of make reads in the process."

**BSB: With your father, Mark, on**

**McGuff's staff for the last four years before he resigned and returned to coaching boys' varsity basketball at Western Hills High School in Cincinnati, what was that experience like for you?**

Mitchell: "The experience was nothing short of great, sweet. He knew he wanted to be a coach, I knew I wanted to be a player.

He didn't want to put on the dad role – I didn't want to put on the daughter role. It wasn't like stuff that we were trying to do – it was just natural. At first, it would kind of be like, 'Oh, he's saying this to me and being hard on me because he's my dad,' but the more mature I became and the older I got, the more I understood. He's just been in this profession and he's been in his career. We kind of understood one another in so many ways. It wasn't bad at all."

**BSB: What would you say to people who were critical of having him on the staff?**

Mitchell: "I don't have any problem with defending him or letting anybody know about my dad's credibility – Coach Mitch's worth is what I call it. He's a true basketball mind with the way he studies the game on a day-to-day basis. You'd be surprised with how much film he watches and how much he breaks down the game. You'd be surprised. When you see it first off, he was at Ohio State. But he definitely helped us in so many ways. He's behind the scenes, but he was one of the integral parts to us winning the Big Ten tournament and the conference last year."

**BSB: Now that he's back in Cincinnati, which is only about an hour away from where you play your WNBA home games in Indianapolis, how much do you enjoy having him and the rest of your family in attendance to watch you play during your new chapter?**

Mitchell: "I enjoy seeing him and my whole family. I always enjoy seeing them still, and I enjoy it because I can just tell being by myself, and I see it's a great thing. So whenever they come and I hear his voice in the stands, it never fails."

**BSB: Have you been able to reflect on the successful career you had on the court at Ohio State?**

Mitchell: "Not really, to be honest with you. I haven't. It's been a quick turnaround. I actually haven't had time off. The wheels are still turning. I think once I actually take some time and kind of like be with family and have some fun – not that basketball isn't fun, but it's just about picking a time to take off and then I think I'll be able to reflect a lot more. I've definitely been grateful of Ohio State, though. I made so many memories, good and bad."

"I just kind of like stay stuck into what I'm focused on and let that be it. I try not to think too far ahead."

**BSB: Two months into your rookie WNBA season, which started almost immediately after your senior NCAA season, how did you adapt to that quick turnaround?**

Mitchell: "The adjustment has just been about picking my dos and don'ts. I'm learning, the more and more I play, about stuff that I can and can't do. I think the most important thing I've learned is knowing personnel. I know, in terms of personnel what a (Los Angeles Sparks guard) Chelsea Gray does or a (Phoenix Mercury guard) Diana Taurasi does, how they come off of ball screens. Defensively



Kelsey Mitchell

**KELSEY MITCHELL**

**Cucos Taqueria**

*The Great Taste of Mexico* patio opening soon!

*only at Cucos Taqueria*

**HAPPY HOUR**  
- MONDAY - FRIDAY 4-7PM -

2162 W. HENDERSON RD. COLUMBUS, OH 43220  
(614) 538-8701 | CUCOSTAQUERIA.COM

## Attention Reds Fans

Here's a chance for Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers who are also Cincinnati Reds fans to enjoy a year of Reds Report, BSB's sister publication covering the Reds, for just \$9.95, a \$33 savings over the regular \$42.95 rate. Take advantage of this special offer for BSB readers and we will also send you a voucher good for two free tickets to your choice of select Reds games this season.

This will be another interesting year for Reds Report readers as our extensive Reds minor league system coverage becomes more critical with the team in the midst of its rebuilding project. You will also enjoy stories, columns, statistics and box scores for the major league club.

Just send your \$9.95 to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212 or call (614) 486-2202 for credit card orders. You must mention the Reds BSB Special.



## KELSEY MITCHELL

and offensively, it's just been about knowing personnel at the next level. It has changed for me because it's just important, it's just important. You're going to get exposed if you don't know the personnel."

**BSB: Did you have a favorite WNBA player you looked up to while growing up that you're now playing against?**

Mitchell: "Not necessarily. But the older I've gotten, the more I kind of want to focus on basketball. All throughout high school, I would say (guard) Cappie Pondexter, for sure."

*(Editor's note: Pondexter was waived by Los Angeles before signing with Indiana on July 1.)*

**BSB: Do you anticipate that you might play overseas once your WNBA season ends?**

Mitchell: "Right now, I'm not sure. But if I'm given the opportunity, I'm definitely going to go. I haven't really focused on it too much, to be honest."

**BSB: Physically, how have you been able to keep active, playing basketball almost nonstop since last fall?**

Mitchell: "Honestly, it's just been for the whole love-of-the-game attitude. I'm trying not to think too much about all of the tiredness, the tired days and just keep focusing on how much you enjoy it and how much it makes you happy."

**BSB: What did you gain from your latest experience with Team USA?**

Mitchell: "It was definitely a learning experience in a positive way. I got a chance to meet and talk to people like (Minnesota Lynx guard) Seimone Augustus and (Minnesota Lynx center) Sylvia Fowles and Diana Taurasi on a personal level. I just got to interact with them, get to know one another. On the court, it's the same way. I got to witness some of that greatness."

**BSB: After the early exit from the NCAA tournament, how difficult was it to watch the Final Four take place in Columbus without Ohio State in it?**

Mitchell: "It was definitely a heartbreaking moment, only because you work so hard trying to get there. For four years, you try to repeatedly make it. All you want is to be one of those teams. You want to bust the bracket, but then you just don't meet that requirement. Knowing it was my senior year, it could have been one of the best memories ever had we made it to the Final Four. But we didn't, so you just chalk it up for what it is and learn from it."

**BSB: Reuniting with former Ohio State forward Stephanie Mavunga, whom the Indiana Fever selected with the 14th overall pick in the second round of the 2018 WNBA draft, what has that been like?**

Mitchell: "Me and Steph, man, we are total opposites. But we balance each other out because we are opposites. And with that being said, we kind of balance each other out from an on-and-off-the-court perspective. She helps me. I help her. If she misses something, she lets me know. If I miss something, I let her know. I think it's made us closer, and I'm happy, definitely, to be on this journey with her."

**BSB: Among the accomplishments you have had on and off the court, what does graduating from Ohio State mean to you?**

Mitchell: "I can put that into so many words. All I can say is at this point, I'm grateful. Before four years, I could've easily just said, 'I'll come back and get my degree, I'll come back and do this,' but I chalked it up for what it was and I was definitely happy that I could attend graduation and have my family come and support me. I was able to have people such as my parents and my grandparents, the ones who made all of these sacrifices, come and see me walk across the college stage. So it was definitely a grateful moment. It was just enjoyable, to be honest."

Join us in  
imagining a world  
with zero hunger  
and zero waste.



It's our vision.  
And we have a plan.

Follow our journey at [TheKrogerCo.com](https://www.TheKrogerCo.com)  
and [#ZeroHungerZeroWaste](https://twitter.com/ZeroHungerZeroWaste).

**ZERO  
HUNGER  
ZERO  
WASTE**

©2018 The Kroger Co.

# OSU Sprung Csuri To Success Beyond Football

By GARRETT STEPIEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Charles “Chuck” Csuri initially became known at Ohio State for his years on the gridiron, but the career paths he pursued after football brought him groundbreaking success.

As a child of the Great Depression, Csuri weathered an upbringing of poverty and served for the United States in World War II before his breakthrough began on campus in Columbus. With an aggressive motor to offset his undersized stature, Csuri developed into a multiyear starting offensive tackle for the Buckeyes. He was voted MVP by his teammates, team captain and an All-American in 1942 when OSU won the program’s first national championship, going 9-1 overall and 5-1 in the Big Ten.

While he has since been recognized for that season and the accolades it brought on the field, Csuri became best known for pioneering in the field of computer graphics, computer animation and digital fine art. Considered by Smithsonian Magazine to be the “father of digital art and computer animation,” Csuri graduated from Ohio State in 1947 with his bachelor’s degree in education, followed in 1948 with his master’s degree in fine art.

Csuri is a professor emeritus of art education and computer and information science at Ohio State, where he established the Advanced Computing Center for Arts and Design (ACCD) as one of the world’s first computer art, animation teaching and research programs. With an intellectual curiosity for computers and technology coupled with his art background, Csuri intertwined his work with art and computer science in the 1960s, beginning his creation of computer graphics and computer-animated films in 1965. Between 1971-87, Csuri also founded the Computer Graphics Research Group and the Ohio Super Computers Graphics Project. He co-founded Cranston/Csuri Productions (CCP), which was one of the world’s first computer animation production companies.

Born in West Virginia and raised in Cleveland before he came to Ohio State, Csuri still resides in Columbus today. He recently

discussed his trailblazing journey from football to war and arts and computers in a conversation with BSB.

**BSB: Your successful careers across multiple fields started at Ohio State, where you also happened to play football. Ultimately, what led you to the university?**

Csuri: “I went out for football my sophomore year (of high school at Cleveland West Tech) because my older brother played football – so that’s what younger brothers do. And then I got cut from the squad because I was too small. Then the next year, over the next year, I gained about 30 pounds. So my junior year I played football and did reasonably well. In my senior year, I started putting things together. My high school coach was the brother of the assistant football coach at Ohio State, and I had never even considered going to college. I didn’t even think it was possible. He saw me play in high school. Although I didn’t get any awards as a player – I didn’t make all-city or anything like that – he said, ‘You know, I think you could make it at Ohio State,’ I said, ‘Really? OK.’

So he set it up that I could get to Ohio State and that’s how I got to Ohio State – because of coincidence, just sort of being at the right place at the right time with the right person. Then when I got to Ohio State, I was very apprehensive about what was going to happen to me because here I was, born in West Virginia. I lived there until I was 10 years of age. It was coal-mining country. My father was a coal miner and there was a lot of poverty. I really was a child of the depression, as were many of my teammates, and so I didn’t know what to expect. It was a bit overwhelming for me. The high school I went to wasn’t particularly a good high school, where the kids were primarily there for vocational education and the idea of college wasn’t something very remote. Only the wealthy kids got to go.

“But I’ll never forget the first day I had the scrimmage. Within five minutes, I knew I

could make the (Ohio State) team because of the way contact was made and I knew that I could handle whatever I was faced with, so it gave me a lot of confidence. As time went on, especially in academia, my first two years were a bit difficult. I had to play catch-up because I didn’t really have a good educational background. By my junior year, I was up to full

speed and did really well. I made A’s my junior, senior year and from that point on I was OK. But it was, academically, a battle the first two years. But it was a time when you had no help like the kids get today, have tutors and everything like that. You were on your own. But anyway, that’s sort of where it started.”

**BSB: You played for the legendary Paul Brown, who was the head football coach at Ohio State from 1941-43. What do you remember from your experience under him? What was he like on a daily basis?**

Csuri: “Paul Brown was one of these people that when he walked into the room, he had this presence – he had an aura about him. You had the feeling he was important, even before he opened his mouth. So there were very few people like that, but he was one of them. He was very organized, very innovative, very imaginative and a great psychologist in a way that related to players. He knew how to push the button to get me to work, so I was very impressed by him as a person. I immediately had respect for what he had to say and his so-called authority. It was a great experience.

“I remember we were going to go to Los Angeles. In those days, you went to Los Angeles by train. You didn’t fly. We took the train called the Super Chief from Chicago all the way across the country. It was one of the greatest trips of my life because I’d never been out of Ohio and here we were on all of these cars going all the way across the country. We had private dining cars, sleeping cars and it was an ideal way to travel. We didn’t stop anywhere any more than we had to, so we weren’t picking up passengers or anything like that and the team went all the way to Los Angeles. It was a fantastic trip. I loved it. It was a way to see the country.

“But the week before we went, Paul started talking to me about this tackle I was going to play opposite of. I was very light as a tackle. I only weighed about 210. I was the lightest tackle in the Big Ten. The only reason I played tackle was because they needed somebody that was aggressive.

“Even though I was brought in as an end, I was apparently able to show signs of aggression that they liked in somebody that could play tackle. So at tackle – I really wasn’t big enough to play tackle, but I learned how to play it – (Brown) told me I was going to go up against a guy who weighed 250. In those days, that was big. I was really scared that I was going to get killed by this guy. I worked my butt off all week going into the game. When I got into the game, I really clobbered the guy. I just let loose and I let him have it. I hit him so hard I knocked him out of the game. That’s one of the nicest things that’s happened to me playing football. It was against the University of Southern California in 1941 (a 33-0 win by Ohio State on Oct. 4 at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum).

“It’s a joke that I went up against him. I was a peewee. There was a ceremony here in Columbus honoring the 100 best players from Ohio State somewhere in downtown, 2007 or 2005. We had to go up on stage by position and

when they called for tackles, I walked up on the stage and all of the guys standing and waiting said, ‘Are you sure you’re in the right place?’ I was with these guys who were 300 and sometimes 400 pounds because they gained weight. They looked at me, this peewee, like, ‘What are you doing here? You’re in the wrong place.’ The game, it is such a different deal. We played both ways, we didn’t have a face mask and blocking was different. The way people block today would be considered illegal when I played.”

**BSB: You played for Brown, but Woody Hayes was a legend in his own right when he was the head football coach at Ohio State from 1951-78. Did you ever compare the two? What did you think about Hayes?**

Csuri: “Well, he was a complicated person for me because the feelings I had about him were that he had a temperament that I could not relate to. I didn’t particularly like him. On the other hand, I met many of his former players over the years. They were very high on him and they thought a great deal of him. So I had very mixed feelings, more based upon impressions of former players and my own personal impression, because I just didn’t like that kind of personality. He had a kind of bravado, very emotional and I thought it was kind of silly. But anyway, that was my impression. I’m not saying I had the accurate impression. That’s just the way I felt about it.”

**BSB: So Brown wasn’t really like Hayes? How was he different?**

Csuri: “He was the calm person. He didn’t get outrageous. He didn’t jump up and down and curse and yell. I mean, he would just give you a dirty look or give you a gesture. It was a totally different style of coaching. Way different.”

**BSB: After you were on Ohio State’s first national championship team in 1942, you and your teammates had successful careers beyond football. How much did Brown factor into the development of his players on and off the field?**

Csuri: “I think there were circumstances that it was more like the following – most of the guys on my team, mostly all of them graduated from college except one on the entire squad. Most of us were children of the Great Depression. This was the depression where there was about 25 percent unemployment. We were poor, so the opportunity to go to college was just fantastic – at least for me, but I think it was the same with these other players. Our primary focus I think really was one of college education and career, and we didn’t think in terms of football. Nobody thought about going and playing professional football. It was just something that happened after World War II and especially when television became the medium of the society. It’s the same as everything. The idea of professional football, it was something that was remotely in people’s backgrounds. But I don’t think anybody even thought about it after World War II. A few of them on my team did play professional football.”

**BSB: As the first Ohio State player in program history to win the Heisman Trophy in 1944, Les Horvath was one notable member of the team. What was it like playing with him?**

Csuri: “I know that, but on the other hand, he was a second-stringer on our squad because there were other players that were better than him. He went to dental school, so he was able to play football. He didn’t go into the war. On our squad, he was a second-string player. There was a guy named Paul Sarringhaus who was a better halfback than Les Horvath, but he never made Heisman. (Horvath) just

CHUCK  
CSURI



**Get your SEWN Personalized Commemorative Alumni Flag at the**

**THE ★ FLAG ★ LADY'S ★ FLAG ★ STORE!**



**3x5 Hand-sewn Nylon Flag**  
**\$89**

**Sally Davis '80**



**8' x 12' Hand-sewn Nylon Flag**  
**\$199**

**80' zivsd ylls2**

**To Order: [www.flagladyusa.com/buckeye](http://www.flagladyusa.com/buckeye)**  
**Or call us at (614) 263-1776!**

**Made by Buckeyes for Buckeyes!**



## THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: CHUCK CSURI



COURTESY OF OSU ATHLETICS

**HISTORIC SUCCESS – Charles “Chuck” Csuri was team captain and MVP when Ohio State won its first national title in 1942.**

happened to decide to go to dental school and that’s just the way that it worked out for him. Same thing with Don Steinberg, who was on our team – he went to medical school.

“Regarding Les, I could tell you a story. This is one of my treasured stories. Les Horvath’s father and Gene Fekete’s father and my father were all Hungarians. They came from Hungary and all spoke Hungarian. My brother arranged for my father to attend an Ohio State-Pittsburgh football game in 1942. They seated our fathers on the sidelines.

“At one point in the game, we were close to them – somewhere on the 20-, 25-yard line – and (former fullback/linebacker) Gene Fekete in Hungarian yells to his father, ‘Hey, pop. Watch this play.’ Here are these Hungarians – my father had never seen a football game in his entire life. He had no idea what the hell was going on. He was sitting there smoking cigars – all three of them were smoking the cigars – and Fekete yells and says to watch him. Dammit, he runs for one of the longest plays from the line of scrimmage for a touchdown (89 yards, the longest OSU play from scrimmage until Kenny Guiton connected with Devin Smith for a 90-yard touchdown in 2013). You couldn’t have written a better script. It was just fantastic. I just treasure that story, that experience.”

**BSB: Are there any other stories that come to mind when you remember playing at Ohio State?**

Csuri: “One story was one of those crazy things when you block a kick. I’d never blocked a kick in my entire life except for the Michigan game (a 21-7 win over the then-No. 3 Wolverines on Nov. 21, 1942). I blocked one kick in my entire career, (blocking it at the UM 35 and setting up the Buckeyes’ first scoring drive of the game) and it made me famous. Six inches, one way or another, and I wouldn’t have been famous (laughs). That was another high point.”

**BSB: Was the rivalry between Ohio State and Michigan as big then as it is now?**

Csuri: “It was intense. Oh, yeah. It’s probably gotten more intense because of the media hype, but it was pretty intense. We didn’t need any special motivation. We just knew it was an important game, and we just were up to it. That’s all.”

**BSB: Looking around at your team, did you think those guys would become so successful after football? A lot of you did.**

Csuri: “No, not really, not really. I don’t

think I even thought in those terms. I didn’t have that type of vision, not at that age. There were people I liked very much. There was a camaraderie that was fantastic and that was great, and that went on for a very long time. But as to whether they would be successful – a lawyer or doctor – I never thought about those terms. I wasn’t that forward thinking when I was that young. I really wasn’t.”

**BSB: Don Steinberg, who was a teammate of yours as you mentioned, wrote “Expanding Your Horizons: College Football’s Greatest Team,” featuring you and your teammates’ lives on and off the field. Five pages were exclusively on you. Did you know that former Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel (2001-10) used to make his teams read that book?**

Csuri: “I know Jim very well. I know the book very well, yes. I guess Tressel did, I understand he did and I know a lot of people still read it. I keep getting people coming and calling for me to sign the book. I don’t know where they’re getting copies of it, but somebody does and it seems to have a life of its own.”

**BSB: When you still have people calling and asking you to sign that book, what does that mean to you?**

Csuri: “It’s nice, it’s very flattering and you like it. Once in a while, it gets to be a nuisance. But that’s mainly because of depending on what I’m doing and the time I have. Sometimes people hit me at the wrong time and it’s a little awkward, but most of the time it works out well.”

**BSB: On the 1942 national championship team, the ethnic diversity was so much different than it is today. Back then, it was such a predominantly white game. From your perspective, what was it like?**

Csuri: “(Offensive tackle) Bill Willis was the only black player. He was fantastic, he was a great guy and he was a great personality. I related very well to him. I think mostly everybody did. But in hindsight, as I think about it, he had an enormous amount of pressure because he was the only black player on the team. He had to be Mr. Nice Guy. In other words, he couldn’t swear, he couldn’t act like the rest of us because he was black. I mean, he had a rule that was different. When we went on a road trip, he couldn’t go to the hotel with us. They had to find special housing for him. In hindsight, I don’t know how the hell he did that. And what the coaches had to deal with, with the kind of prejudice that was prevalent at

the time. But Bill was a person that was super. That guy, I really liked him.”

**BSB: Was he someone you and your team collectively embraced?**

Csuri: “Oh, yes. I think, across the board, everybody liked Bill. Bill had such a fantastic, natural athletic ability. In fact, he was so quick and strong – that was one of his problems. He would overcharge. He had to be taught to restrain himself to play the game more efficiently. It was kind of weird, but he was super strong.”

**BSB: Willis went on and played professionally with the Cleveland Browns. How influential was Brown, who coached there from 1946-62, in presenting that opportunity?**

Csuri: “I really don’t know the particulars of that situation at all. I know Brown asked me if I would play pro football for him and I told him I wasn’t interested in playing. I wanted to go to graduate school. I was affected by the war. After World War II, World War II dissipated whatever macho I had before World War II. After going into combat and seeing the consequences of war, I just did not have the same mind-set. I played my senior year because of social pressure, but I really did not want to play football. I was finished. It was enough.”

**BSB: World War II is a tough time to draw from your memories, but what do you remember? How difficult was the transition from war to football when you went back to Ohio State?**

Csuri: “I think it’s the regimentation, the discipline of war and military life that is so different from anything you’ve ever experienced. So that’s a real adjustment, trying to get used to that. But in my case, I was luckier than some people. I went to basic training in Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and even to this day, I remember my army serial number. Which is bizarre, but I do and that’s the way it goes – 15307118 is my army serial number.

“But then they decided we needed some more engineers, so I went to engineering school. Here I had the art background, but the military decided I’d be a good engineer. So I was sent to the Newark College of Engineering (one of the oldest and largest professional engineering schools in the country, now named the New Jersey Institute of Technology) and I was there for a little over a year while I was in the military service, taking calculus, analytical geometry, physics and stuff like that.

“In hindsight, I was very lucky because it turned out to be a great education for me (while training to become an officer). It helped me in terms of career choices and things I wanted to do. After, then they decided, ‘No, time’s up, we need more people in Europe,’ so they suspended the program and they shipped me off to Europe into combat. So my career to be an officer was circumvented by the war and that’s what happened to me.”

**BSB: After World War II, you go from veteran to football player and then artist. Did you ever anticipate doing what you did as a career?**

Csuri: “No, not really. I didn’t really think it

through. When I think about what could have happened to me, what could have happened to me is I could have graduated with an art degree and then discovered that I couldn’t make a living and then I would have ended up selling cars. I probably would have been a car salesman. But it turned out for me – luckily, for me – that I had the ability to communicate to people about art so the faculty decided to add me as a teacher. So I was given the opportunity to teach at Ohio State. Fortunately, I was able to take advantage of that and my career turned out very well.

But had it not been for that, I don’t know what would have happened to me. My life would have been totally different. It would have been a different story – and not a very pretty story, I don’t think, because I don’t think I could have made it as an artist, not in Columbus, Ohio. If I had been more knowledgeable, I might have moved to New York but not Columbus. Especially in the ‘40s and ‘50s, it simply was not the place to be.”

**BSB: What made you want to pursue art? After that, what compelled you to get involved in computers?**

Csuri: “The art thing came very naturally. I found out that I had an itch for art when I was extremely young, when I was 10 years of age. I had a brother that was 11 years older than me. He saw that I had a great interest in art, so he arranged for me to go to Cleveland Art School Saturday morning classes when I was 10 years of age. So for two, three years, I went to Saturday morning classes and I used to wander around the art museum. So my interest in art came very early and when I came to Ohio State, I had to decide on a major and I knew that’s just what I liked so that’s how I happened to end up in it.

“The computer is a different story. When I was on faculty at Ohio State – you have to remember, back in the ‘50s, Ohio State was more like 20,000 students. There were 25 (thousand) at the most. It was smaller, a different kind of environment. It was easier to connect with people, other faculty members. Among the people I connected with was Jack Mitten, who was a professor in industrial engineering. He and his family and my family became very close.

“I’ll never forget, it was sometime in the ‘50s, Jack, we were visiting him and he came home and he said, ‘Damn, the computer went down.’ I said, ‘The computer? What fell down? What’s a computer? It does what?’ I thought it was some kind of creature that I had never heard of. Then I said, ‘Well, what does it do? How does it do that?’ One question after another. Those questions weren’t answered in a day.

“But over 30 years, I would have this dialogue about a computer and what it does. In the early years, computers did not do graphics. There was no graphics output. People hadn’t even thought of it. But over a period of years, because of my dialogue and exchanges with Jack Mitten, I got a conceptual background and framework for how the computer works and what it could do. We thought about the computer as being an intelligent machine, a philosopher but not as an artist.

Continued On Page 16

**www.theredbricktapandgrill.com**

**292 E. Gates St.**  
**Columbus**  
**(614) 444-2742**

**HAPPY HOUR 3-8pm Mon-Fri**  
Half off all 30 drafts • Half off select appetizers  
Craft bottle specials all day

**100 Craft Beers!**

**New Food & Cocktail Menu**

**Newly Renovated Patio with Fire Pit**

**Handmade Pizzas & In-House Smoked Meats**

**THE RED BRICK**  
TAP & GRILL

# Csuri Pioneered Computer Graphics After Football

Continued From Page 15

"Then one day I was looking at The Lantern, the student newspaper. There on the front page was a picture of a computer, processed by a computer through some engineering student who had taken a special typewriter that had nine grade-level keys and they figured out a way to make it type keys representing points on a surface that looked like a face.

"When I saw that, it just blew my mind. I saw the implications immediately because I had this background. The combination I had – some background in mathematics, nothing serious but enough – and my dialogue and background and discussions with Jack made me realize that this had great potential. So I went to the electrical engineering department and met with the students, they walked me through the process of what they did and I learned a great deal.

"I came home after this and I said to my wife, 'I'm going to study computer programming.' My wife, who's an artist, said, 'What? You're out of your mind. OK, go ahead.' So I signed up for computer programming and there was one computer on the entire campus, one mainframe, and that was how I began."

**BSB: It was such an unknown. What was it like, the thrill of not knowing what you were getting into?**

Csuri: "It was pretty bizarre. It was crazy because at the time, I made that decision. I was a full-time professor, I had tenure and I was the only faculty member that hadn't chosen New York City. I had a gallery deal at the time. So in a way, I had some leverage. I was very isolated. There was nobody I could talk to about it. I could not get into a dialogue with anybody. I had to make up fantasy questions and ask myself, 'Why are you doing this?' So I had to play games with my own mind on why I was

doing something because there was nobody to talk to and I did this for a long time.

"With some help, some computer programmers at the computer center, I made some pictures. Then, quite by accident, I discovered a magazine article about somebody in Germany who made a picture with a computer. I went, 'Oh, my God. Somebody else is really the greatest in the world.' I then submitted a picture to a publication and they reproduced it. Then things just sort of snowballed after that.

"But I couldn't tell you what it was like. It was just something that I can't communicate, what it was like to be in that place in time when you come up with an idea that nobody understands but you believe it has good potential and people think you're crazy to do it. But to do it in spite of that, you believe it, and that's what I did because I was convinced this way the way it was going to go."

**BSB: Let's go back to 1942 right now.**

**Could you even conceive the idea of a computer?**

Csuri: "There was no way. I wouldn't say anybody could. Things were ongoing in the underground, so to speak, with the military and with people trying to figure out how to interrupt the German communication system. So there were computer ideas beginning to take place during World War II, but it didn't in academia until after World War II. I don't know exactly what year, but it had to be in the '50s."

**BSB: When you look at the way computers and technology have advanced since then, how crazy has that been for you to see?**

Csuri: "It's fantastic. I mean, there are things I thought that would happen and were going to happen. There were other things that I didn't anticipate ever in this world. It never occurred to me that there would be an Internet or there would be cellphones. That was something that was just beyond my thinking.

"But I knew that computer graphics would have an implication on society, especially in animation. That I was convinced of, and in that case, I think I was right on the money on that one. But I also knew that it would be a very powerful communication tool and that people would start using graphical communication more and more to communicate. It's continued to be. Now, what we're going to see is the role that artificial intelligence is going to play with everything.

"Right now, we're working on a project involving eye tracking where the computer tracks your eyes and what you're looking at. Have you ever heard of the IBM watch and intelligence system? It's an artificial intelligence system that IBM has developed. They're putting it into the public domain and people could have access to it. So we're trying to figure out how to use voice commands and artificial intelligence to make pictures and graphics and animation. I'm presently working on a project with a former student of mine – it's not a big project, it's pretty minor because we don't have any real funding and he's living in San Francisco and I'm in Columbus so we have to communicate by email and telephone.

"That's what I'm saying. I'm still doing basic research in that area. Nothing serious, nothing that I consider very important, but I still have enough intellectual curiosity that I like to see how it works and by doing something."

**BSB: How are you doing in your health? You turn 96 on July 4.**

Csuri: "I'm still walking, but I have had serious problems. I had two total hip replacements. I go into the gym now with a walker and everyone looks at me strange as hell. Here's a guy coming in with a walker and trying to do weight lifts (laughs). I go to a gym in Powell, Ohio, the YMCA has a nice facility and I just try to work with what I can work out and get in my car and come home."

**BSB: How much of Ohio State do you still watch during football season in the fall? What do you think about the team going into 2018?**

Csuri: "I watch the games. Yeah, I watch Ohio State games. But I really don't think about it too deep in those terms anymore. It's just simply Ohio State football. I watch it and that's it. I'm told by the paper they're supposed to have a good team, but I don't know what that means. I don't go through the trouble to analyze players and the best player. Occasionally, I will think about and wonder about quarterback controversy and something like that. Like the thing with (Joe) Burrow and the kid (Dwayne Haskins) they finally made the quarterback. I wondered who was the better one, and I had no opinion about it."



**Dine-In • Carry-Out • Pizza • Subs • Salads • Spaghetti**

**We've been delivering  
the same great pizza and  
service since 1972.**

**Stop in – one visit and  
you're family.**

**[www.pizza-cottage.com](http://www.pizza-cottage.com)**

## BUCKEYE LAKE

740-928-1144  
4592 Walnut Rd. (Rt. 79)

## CIRCLEVILLE

740-474-3620  
23401 US-23

## LANCASTER

740-654-2400  
2223 W. Fair Ave.

## NEWARK

740-366-5747  
969 Mt. Vernon Rd. (Rt. 13)

## PICKERINGTON

614-856-3333  
1000 Old Diley Rd.

## ZANESVILLE

740-455-6000  
3938 Pond View Dr.



# Time At Ohio State Still Vivid In Dials' Memory

By RYAN McGLADE  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Terence Dials witnessed and accomplished a lot during his five years as a member of the Ohio State men's basketball team.

A product of Boardman High School in Youngstown, Ohio, Dials was on the OSU squads that won Big Ten regular-season titles in 2002 and 2006 and the league tournament crown in 2002. As for individual achievements, he was named the 2006 Big Ten Player of the Year after averaging 15.3 points and 8.0 rebounds per game while starting all 32 contests in his final season as a Buckeye. For his collegiate career, he appeared in 132 games (97 starts) and averaged 11.9 points and 6.6 boards per outing. In the midst of all of that was a coaching change, in which he had a significant role. After Ohio State, Dials played professional basketball overseas for nine seasons.

Now three years removed from his career as a basketball player, Dials took some time with BSB to discuss his playing days at the collegiate and professional levels and life beyond the hardwood.

**BSB: What do you remember about your recruitment?**

Dials: "Obviously, the AAU circuit is where you get seen and the recruitment really happens. They don't really come to your high school to recruit. They catch you on the circuit. I played with some very good basketball players. Jawad Williams, who went to North Carolina, a lot of coaches would come to see him. I happened to be his teammate, so my recruitment started like that.

"I wasn't a big name initially. I joined his team and, because he was so recognized and such a great player, coaches started to notice me as well. I had narrowed it down by the time my senior year came around. I had every school in the Big Ten offer me a scholarship besides Indiana. I probably didn't fit the Bob Knight

mold – whatever that is. I also had offers from Southern California, Pittsburgh and a lot of the MAC schools.

"I committed to Ohio State the summer going into my senior year, July of 2000. It was one of those things where Ohio State had three scholarships available at the time. I think Brandon Fuss-Cheatham committed first, then Matt Sylvester committed like a day after Brandon committed, and they had one scholarship left. It was one of those things where I think they offered it to a couple people at the time, but Coach (Jim) O'Brien had told me they were waiting on me to make a decision but they couldn't wait long because recruiting is kind of crazy.

"I remember actually being in Detroit when I committed to Coach O'Brien over the phone. I was at my sister's house. My dad, my sisters and that whole side of the family lives in Detroit, Mich., still, so I visit every summer and a lot of the holidays. I always remember being at her house committing to Coach O'Brien."

**BSB: Why did you choose Ohio State over the other schools that had offered you?**

Dials: "I kind of did it geographically. It was basketball-wise too, but I figured my family in Detroit and my family in Youngstown – it's about 2½ hours from Youngstown and 3½ from Detroit. So it was kind of right in the middle where both sides of my family could see me play without having to catch a flight or anything like that. At the time, Ken Johnson was leaving. He had just graduated, and I felt like I had an opportunity to play right away as a freshman. My best friend from my childhood, who's two years older than me, he was already down at Ohio State, so it just worked out perfectly for me."

**BSB: Though you didn't play much your second year at OSU (2002-03) because of a back injury, probably the most memorable game that season was the famous 'Charles Bass Off The Glass' against Michigan State in the semifinals**

**of the Big Ten tournament where Charles Bass banked a foul shot off the backboard in the final seconds to give Ohio State a 55-54 win. What do you remember about that game?**

Dials: "I remember it very well. I didn't travel with the team. I was home watching the game. He was like the worst free-throw shooter we had on the team at the time. Him going to the line, we just kind of knew it was over. Then he surprised us with the off-the-glass shot, which is probably the second-biggest shot I've been a part of while on the team behind Matt Sylvester's big shot against Illinois (see below)."

**BSB: After your third year at OSU (2003-04), Jim O'Brien was fired for NCAA violations. How difficult was that for the players on the team?**

Dials: "It was a very difficult year. Coach O'Brien had offseason throat surgery entering that year, and his first time being with us was on the flight to go to San Francisco (for the season opener). He missed all of the first month of basketball. We recorded practice and he would watch the videos.

"We also had two new players – Tony Stockman and J.J. Sullinger, who were very, very good at their previous schools (Clemson and Arkansas, respectively) but struggled their very first year playing at Ohio State. We had high expectations for the team just because of those two coming in, me returning from injury, Matt Sylvester returning from injury, so there was a lot of excitement around the program.

"But Coach couldn't really yell at us and couldn't really speak because of his throat. It was a very difficult time and we struggled big time initially. You could kind of see the writing on the wall – from J.J. and Tony struggling, to the whole team struggling, with Coach O'Brien struggling speaking. We finished 15-17, and that was the year he got let go.

"We all met at Randy ShROUT's house. He was the director of basketball operations at the time. We met at his house, and Coach O'Brien came out and told us, 'I'm going to get fired today. I just wanted to let you know it's been a pleasure coaching you. I hope you guys do big

things going forward.' It was tough because that's the guy who recruited me, that's who I came to Ohio State to play for. But they couldn't have made a better hire with Thad (Matta). He came in with a lot of energy and changed the program around big time."

**BSB: Did you ever consider transferring once O'Brien was fired?**

Dials: "No. It wasn't on my mind at all. I never thought for one second to transfer. Quite honestly, I didn't know where to transfer to even if that thought came in my mind. Normally, you want to see who the coach is first before you think about transferring. At the time, I really didn't know Thad. He came out of nowhere from Butler, two years at Xavier, then Ohio State. I didn't even get a chance to learn about him throughout college basketball and watch him. I

was just like, 'You know what, it's a chance for us to start fresh, start new. He doesn't know me, I don't know him, let's go for it.' Staying was the best decision I could've made."

**BSB: How did you first meet Matta?**

Dials: "I was fortunate enough to be on the hiring committee. They let me sit in on all of the interviews with the coaches and sit in on all of the meetings because I was the captain at the time, and it was an experience. I got to kind of see from step one all the way to the end how you finish the hiring process. I got to see the behind-the-scenes part of it."

**BSB: Was there anything from Matta's interview that you still remember?**

Dials: "It's kind of a blur, the interview process. I do remember his excitement. He actually revealed what type of coach he would kind of be if he got the job. He was my choice. He was young and youthful at the time and was very energetic. He came to the interview with a laid-out plan. I just remember him saying he's going to own Ohio as far as recruiting. That was big for all of the other people on the hiring committee. You always want to own your state, and that was (Matta's) biggest thing. I think he said he wanted to do what (then-Ohio State football head coach Jim) Tressel was doing, in terms of getting all of the top recruits in the state of Ohio first."

**BSB: Obviously, Matta's first year at Ohio State included Matt Sylvester's three-pointer to beat No. 1 Illinois, 65-64. How exciting was it to play in that game and hand the Illini their first loss of the season?**

Dials: "It was super exciting. To this day, I never saw more media in the building. It looked like an NBA Finals game almost where the baseline had cameras. Every media outlet you could think of was there. It's hard not to get excited for those types of games when you see everybody on the sidelines and baselines with their cameras and news reporters.

"I just remember us being down early and kind of just fighting back and then having that opportunity at the end where Matt can take us home with that big shot. I just remember the crowd rushing the floor. Obviously, that's the biggest game I've probably played in and the most exhilarating game."

**BSB: What was the huddle like in the timeout before Sylvester's game-winning shot?**

Dials: "We were down two going into the timeout. We were walking to the huddle and Coach Matta was like, 'We're going for the win!' The whole bench and the players in the game, we got so pumped up that it was hard for us to pay attention to the play he was drawing up



Terence Dials

TERENCE  
DIALS

## The ULTIMATE Ohio State

Football Trivia Q+A

Makes a great gift for your Buckeye!

"Holy Smokes! It is so comprehensive—what an amazing job you've done."

— GENE SMITH, OHIO STATE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

"Great work!"

— JIM TRESSSEL, PRESIDENT, YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

\$30 each, includes shipping and handling

To purchase, contact Mike McGuire  
at 602.793.2383

McGuire  
Publications

## THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: TERENCE DIALS

because we were just so hyped. He drew up an excellent play.

"But what I remember most is – my point guard at the time was Brandon Fuss-Cheatham. We're walking out on the floor after Coach Matta just drew up this great play. We get on the floor and Brandon, who was just in the huddle with me, was like, 'What am I supposed to do?' I'm like, 'What? Dude, we just went over the play. Just stand right there.' I remember watching everybody's spots (while Matta drew up the play) because that's the type of player I was. I just wanted to know where everybody was.

"I remember watching where (Fuss-Cheatham) was, so I was able to tell him where he was supposed to be. I was like, 'It shouldn't be like this. You're the point guard. You should know where everybody is.' It was vice versa. He was so nervous he couldn't even think straight."

**BSB: What are your thoughts about how things ended between Ohio State and Matta last year?**

Dials: "At first, I was a little bit bitter. I'm not going to lie. I love Thad. That's my guy. He didn't recruit me, but we ended up having a great relationship. We still text from time to time now, we're still in communication. His family was great. I knew his wife and daughters. It was like a family, so, of course, I'm going to be upset.

"It was just a weird timing. At one moment, they say he's going to coach one more year, he's going to be extended or whatever. Then the very next day or two hours later it was like Thad is fired or resigned or something like that. I'm like, 'What? I literally just got a message saying he's going to coach this year. Now they're saying he's not?' I didn't like how it went.

"If you're going to fire someone or force him to resign, do it in a timely manner. That was in June, and they were like, 'OK, now we can fire

him.' Most coaches you probably wanted to go after are gone at that time. It was peculiar timing. I still don't know behind the scenes what was going on and why they decided to do it at that time instead of maybe in March right after the season was over with."

**BSB: You and many other former OSU players gathered at Matta's house last summer after he was let go and threw a surprise party for him. How did that idea come about?**

Dials: "We all put it together. After he got fired, we were like, 'Let us have one more get-together as a group, as guys, as boys. That's our guy.' He didn't know anything about it. His wife worked hard with us to get it going. We tried to make sure every player he coached was in town at the time. That's the toughest thing, trying to get all of the players who played for him in one place at one time. You've got guys overseas, you've got guys in the NBA doing different things and everybody has family. So that was the most difficult thing, getting everybody together. After that, it was awesome.

"We were going to take a picture, and he told us to hold on. He goes in the house for like five minutes and comes out with all of these rings and said, 'Now we can take the picture.' He looked like (11-time NBA champion) Bill Russell with all the rings. It was a cool moment."

**BSB: Do you think Matta will get back into coaching?**

Dials: "Personally, no. That's my personal opinion. I have not spoken with him about that, so I don't know. I just think coaching took a toll on him physically and mentally. Thirteen years at one place. He's got more than enough money to where he can just chill and watch his daughters run track and cross country. One daughter is already in college at Butler.

"I know it's under his contract he has to actively seek a position for him to get paid. I

think that's part of the clause. So when you see his name float around, I honestly don't think it's all that serious. I just think he has to do that for his buyout or whatever the case was."

**BSB: Moving to Matta's successor, what are your thoughts of Chris Holtmann after one year?**

Dials: "I love the guy. I love his demeanor, his attitude, his personality. He has a quiet confidence about himself. He's not very loud. But he's a very confident guy and very mellow when he needs to be.

"He did a fantastic job with the group that we had coming back this past year. I think he exceeded everyone's expectations in Columbus and outside of Columbus. I don't think anyone would have thought that team would have done what it did.

"I'm very hopeful for the future. I'm looking forward to it, especially once he starts to get his guys in there, the guys that he recruited, the guys that he sees a vision for. I think it will be very good for the program."

**BSB: After your Ohio State career, you played professional basketball overseas for nine years in Europe and China. What was that like?**

Dials: "Two different games. The Chinese game is more about entertainment and fits more of the NBA mold. European is just basketball at your purist sense. It's all about ball movement, getting stops. It's not really a show-boat type of league.

"The Chinese league, they love dunks, they love crazy three-pointers, crazy passes. They give you bonuses in your contracts for dunks and stuff like that, that's how important it is to them and the fans. Very much different, even the living.

"In Europe, you get a house or an apartment, you get a car and you're on your own. China, you live in a very nice hotel, you have a driver

and you have a translator with you because not one person speaks English over there. It's just a little bit different."

**BSB: What have you been doing since you retired from basketball?**

Dials: "I'm in sales for a compounding pharmacy called Shields. I call doctors and speak to doctors about using our services as a compounding pharmacy. I like the gig because I'm on the road, I make my own hours, I'm not stuck in a chair all day and I've got some flexibility. I coach my daughter's basketball team as well. So if I were to have a 9-5 job, that would be difficult."

**BSB: Obviously, you have a family. Do you still live in the Columbus area?**

Dials: "We're in Gahanna. My daughter is going into her freshman year of high school. I have another daughter going into her sixth-grade year of middle school. It's a very big year because they're both starting new schools. It's like a transition year for us."

**BSB: Looking back, how beneficial was it for you to go to Ohio State?**

Dials: "I couldn't have picked a better school. The fan support that you have here at Ohio State is just top-notch. Then the support afterwards. I still get recognized in public here in Columbus, and it's kind of weird to me that they still remember me because I haven't played in so long.

"Sometimes I'll hear whispers, I think that's Terence Dials. They're supposed to be whispering but I can hear them. It's like, 'How do you even know it's me? I haven't played on TV in so long.' Those are the true Buckeyes, those are the ones who really follow the program and followed everything that the basketball team did. I appreciate those types of fans. The love that we receive from them, it was great. Getting an education at Ohio State, you can't get a better one. It was a win-win situation."

## Get in the Driver's Seat with Competitive Auto Loan Rates from AAA

We offer great rates, no application fees and a fast closing!

Apply today for a new or used auto loan:

**(800) 243-4227**

**AAA.com/AutoLoans**



\* All loans offered through AAA Ohio Auto Club for AAA members living within its designated club territory. Persons living outside AAA Ohio Auto Club territory should contact the AAA club serving their area to inquire about auto loans.



# Romanoff's OSU Career Spanned 6 Decades

By CRAIG MERZ  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Larry Romanoff era at Ohio State, which spans six decades, thousands of events and immeasurably more student-athletes, will end Aug. 31 upon his retirement.

As the ultimate behind-the-scenes-guy, Romanoff's involvement at the university began in the late 1960s when one of his duties as student-manager was having replacement eyeglasses at the ready for Woody Hayes when the fiery coach smashed his own in a moment of rage.

Romanoff began a 44-year full-time career at OSU in 1975 in the ticket office before joining the academic counseling division. He was an assistant athletic director in that department and eventually the assistant AD for academics.

Those are just fragments of the work he has done over the years in a variety of areas with the goal of making life better for those he came in contact with, whether it was the athletes he helped or fans attending games on campus.

Among other titles were director of development and director of external Relations for football. He currently is the assistant director for event management.

As he settled into another day of work recently, Romanoff talked to BSB about his many years at Ohio State and what is ahead for the Toledo native.

**BSB: How did you get started as a football student manager in 1969?**

Romanoff: "When I was in high school I played football as a freshman and I was the smallest guy on the team. They didn't even have a uniform small enough hardly to fit me; 5-foot-1, a hundred and some (pounds). I went out for the team anyways.

"After that my parents said, 'Look, you're too small. You can play baseball and be a manager for the football team.' So I became a manager and when I was a senior in high school I wrote a letter to (coach) Bump Elliott at Michigan. I wrote a letter to Woody Hayes at Ohio State asking if I could be a manager. I never heard from Bump Elliott and he ended up getting fired (to be replaced by Bo Schembechler).

"Woody and his assistant coach, Dave McClain, both wrote me very nice letters saying that they would love to have me come as a manager. My father, who went to Michigan, said, 'Looks like we're rooting for Ohio State from now on.'

"It wasn't a hard choice even though I grew up rooting for That Team Up North."

**BSB: What was it like being around the team in 1969 coming off the national championship the previous season when the Buckeyes were led by the "Super Sophomores"?**

Romanoff: "What I was amazed by was that there were so many nice guys – Ron Maciejowski, Rex Kern, all them were amazingly nice guys. I could go on and on, John Brockington was very nice. Jack (Tatum) never talked. He just kind of grunted."

**BSB: At that point in your life could you ever foresee spending so much time working at Ohio State?**

Romanoff: "Not a chance. When I came to school I really wanted to be a child psychologist and talking to people they said you have to do this and go somewhere else to get a master's, then you've got to go somewhere else to get a PhD or you're nothing without it.

"I said I'd go to law school instead so I became a history major with a poli sci and geography minor and started working toward that. I had no idea I'd get into athletics until I my first senior year, I had two senior years, and I heard about Ohio University's sports administration program.

"It was extremely selective. I went out and got 12 letters of recommendation. I was supposed to get three, I sent in 12. I had letters from (sportswriters) Paul Hornung and Kaye Kessler and Woody Hayes, people like that that I'd been around and liked me.

"I got in. That turned me toward athletics. I had always loved athletics. I was a baseball stats junkie and other stuff. I really liked the college scene although my original goal was to get into professional baseball.

"I went down to spring training with the Detroit Tigers in Lakeland, Fla., for a few weeks to train in the ticket office. I said 'Wow, this is so impersonal I'm not doing this.' I wanted to go the college route so I sent out letters and came back and talked to (former athletic administrators and directors) Jim Jones and Hugh Hindman at Ohio State and they both said they wanted me up here.

"That's how I got started. I went into the ticket office in June of '75 and started running study tables for Jeff Kaplan, who was the academic coordinator. I ran study tables at night for him and worked during the day in the ticket office."

**BSB: You've been in different departments and jobs at the university. How has that helped you be a better professional?**

Romanoff: "I appreciate and understand all these areas and how hard they're working. A lot of people have no idea what the people in the ticket office do or what the people in academics do or the people in compliance and development and all these other areas do.

"People come to games and they have no idea all the planning that goes into it beforehand and the timing sheets and organization that went on way before the (football) game.

"We're there six hours before the game; on a night game we're there sometimes 12 hours before the game starts. We're there an hour and a half to two hours after the game's over."

**BSB: Through all the years I'm sure you've seen many changes in athletics, but first, what's the same? What's been the same thread throughout?**

Romanoff: "The student-athletes. We wouldn't have a job if it wasn't for the student-athletes, none of us would. That's the most important resource, the most important asset we have."

**BSB: Now, what's changed?**

"Social media is one. That's huge. When I came things weren't reported or nobody knew about them. You didn't know who the people were.

"Also, our department was small. We had three assistant ADs and an AD, a ticket director, a business manager. We didn't have marketing. We didn't have development. You didn't have events management help run the games. Our department is 10 times as big as it used to be."

**BSB: With more and more technology involved in your work, what's the importance of keeping that personal touch?**

Romanoff: "That's what I'm about, totally. I

go to things. I go to practices and events just so I know who the people are and what they're doing and they know me. That's important to me."

**BSB: You're mainly associated with football and obviously baseball is a passion, but what other sports do you really enjoy getting out of the office to see at Ohio State?**

Romanoff: "Quite a few, actually. As I told you, I'm a sports junkie. I've helped with soccer over the years, and I've really enjoyed seeing the young ladies come in as freshmen and grow and grow as people and get better and better and then seeing them go on and do great things.

"Then, there's the men's volleyball program. The coaches are as good as you'll find anywhere in the country. They're awesome people. They've obviously been very successful (NCAA titles in 2011, '16 and '17) and I've had a close view of that because I've been running their events for a number of years.

"I can go back to the golf team when I got to know Joey Sindelar and John Cook. I've not had as much to do with pistol and rifle, although as good as pistol is, I should have more to do. Our fencing team, I've had several fencers I've gotten close to but not as many as I'd liked.

"Baseball, I know all the players as they've come through, all the football players as they've come through, all the basketball players as they've come through until the last 10 years. I don't know them as well now because I don't deal with them as often.

"Going back to the '91 basketball team and some of the guys on that team, I had a direct effect on the fact that some of them were playing because of the work I did with them (as an academic adviser)."

**BSB: How rewarding is that for you?**

Romanoff: "You see student-athletes that come in that are poorly trained and have no confidence in themselves when they come in, and you put them in a class with kids that went to outstanding high schools and very good ACT and SAT scores. They're sitting next to a student who understands the teacher and you don't know what's going on.

"You sit with them and say, 'Look, you don't have the same training but you can do this. You play in front of 100,000 people and make split-second decisions when a linebacker is coming at you. You can do that. You memorized an entire playbook. They can't do that or haven't done that.'

"I would sit down every night with people and say, 'You can do this. I know you can do this. Work with me.'

"With certain kids I actually had to go to class with them and teach them how to take notes because they've never done that before in their life. I taught them how to take notes out of their books while they were waiting, how to prepare for an essay test, how to prepare for a multiple-choice test.

"Then, to see them have success was the reward. Seeing them finish and graduate. It's amazing now that some of the ones I was a – I'll use my own word – jerk to because I was on their case every single day and yelling at them are the ones that come back and see me.

"They're the ones that come back and say they wouldn't have made it without me and they have their sons or daughters there and say, 'Look, he's the reason I got through school. He's the reason I got this job. He helped me with my résumé.'

"I haven't done academics since 1994 but I still help kids write résumés and cover letters and help them prepare and go out and get a job."

**BSB: What are your plans after retiring?**

Romanoff: "That's the big question. I can't go from 60, 70, 80 hours a week to nothing. What am I going to do? I can't sell used cars or be a starter at a golf course.

"My daughter, Jennifer, has taken care of that. She's got us involved in a franchise which will be coming to Columbus sometime next year called Chicken Salad Chick. We will be owners of these franchises if everything goes right.

"If it does, I'll be back to working 70 hours a week. My daughter is the brain power here, and I said I would assist her. That will keep me very busy."

**BSB: Will you still get a chance to attend sporting events, football games?**

Romanoff: "She is fully aware that every Saturday I'm not working at Chicken Salad Chick if there's a home game. That's her own words. She knows how important it is to me.

"I told some of the girls on the soccer team this year I'll still come to their games, don't worry. I told the baseball guys I'll still come to their games because I've built up some pretty good relationships with a lot of the kids over the years and that's important to me.

"Even the visiting teams, the umpires and the red coats that I had at all these events. My baseball red coats and my soccer red coats and my volleyball red coats, I built relationships with them.

"The visiting teams coming into football games are constantly writing letters back saying you treat us better than any school in the country here and that's because I treat them like I want to be treated at their place.

"The umpires call us the gold standard for the way we treat them at baseball. That's important to me and that's the way Mike Penner (senior associate athletic director, internal operations) and Ericka Hoon (assistant athletic director, event management) want it to be. When visiting teams come in you treat them well and give them everything they need."

**BSB: How would you describe your time at Ohio State?**

Romanoff: "It's been a great run here. You look at the people with Woody and Earle and Coop and Tress and Urban and Randy Ayers. I mean I go back to Fred Taylor. I dealt with Fred and Eldon (Miller) and Gary Williams. That's an amazing thing, just the people I've dealt with.

"Jim Jones who helped me get started and Jeff Kaplan who hired me way back in '75 to be his assistant, and all those people I owe so much to and are still friends with like the Archie Griffins of the world. Can you find a better person than Archie Griffin? I started his senior year doing academics and I'm still close to Archie.

"I was lucky. I learned so much from Woody Hayes even though I got fired once a month. Part of the reason I'm so close to kids is because Woody made you do it every day. Your job was to make sure you were close enough to the kids every day and helping them every day, 6 a.m. to 10 o'clock at night. You learn that.

"Then you meet a guy like Jim Tressel, who's a phenomenal person, I'm not just talking about coaching. That's been the great thing here."

**BSB: After hearing all this, you've got to write a book, right?**

Romanoff: "Several people have mentioned it to me. I'm certainly not a writer so I would have to have someone assist me.

"I don't know that I'm ready to move out of town if I tell all the stories (laughs)."

LARRY ROMANOFF



Larry Romanoff