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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

September 29, 2001

Ohio State Touched By National Tragedy

Geiger Quick To Postpone Game

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

In a time of deep national tragedy, the world of athletics logically went on hiatus.

That was the reaction at Ohio State and across the country in the wake of the series of terrorist attacks Sept. 11 that left over 6,000 people missing or dead in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.

Terrorists hijacked four separate cross-country flights that morning and succeeded in flying two of those planes into the World Trade Center towers in New York City and another into the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C. The fourth plane crashed in rural Pennsylvania, killing everyone aboard.

In the hours and days following the tragedy, professional and college athletic teams and their leagues postponed and canceled games for the remainder of the week.

In fact, Ohio State was one of the

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DARRELL DAWSON

STAND AT ATTENTION — A uniformed officer passes by Ohio State football players Maurice Hall (left) and Simon Fraser during the "Show You Care" rally held at Ohio Stadium Sept. 15.

Defense Capable, Offense Culpable In Loss At UCLA

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

If the case ever goes to trial, Ohio State's 13-6 loss at UCLA Sept. 22 would be considered Exhibit A.

The lawsuit in this analogy would be the OSU defense suing the OSU offense for nonsupport. The defense would have an open-and-shut case, based on what happened on a brilliantly sunny day at the Rose Bowl.

But all parties involved say there are no plans to file charges — yet.

"We're in a growth mode and we will be in a growth mode for some time," said OSU head coach Jim Tressel after suffering his first defeat with the Buckeyes. "We knew there would be a point in time where this new family was going to have some tough times. We just have to deal with it."

The OSU defense played well enough to win on just about any other given Saturday. The Buckeyes bottled up explosive UCLA tailback DeShaun Foster, limiting him to just 66 yards on 29 carries. The defense also helped force five UCLA turnovers.

But the OSU offense could not capitalize on any of them, managing just 166 total yards and eight first downs. The Buckeyes got their only touchdown off a Mike Doss blocked punt that was recovered in the end zone by Ricky Bryant.

It should be noted — before the case goes to the jury — that Ohio State was at a small disadvantage. The

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Sept. 22 Issue Postponed

Because Ohio State's Sept. 15 game with San Diego State was postponed due to the national tragedy, BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz decided to postpone the issue dated Sept. 22. Instead, BSB subscribers will now receive an extra issue in October, dated Oct. 20, when the Buckeyes are now scheduled to host San Diego State.

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A.J. Hawk



SONNY BROCKWAY

BAD DAY AT THE OFFICE — Ohio State quarterback Steve Bellisari (8), trying to avoid UCLA's Marques Anderson, had a rough day in the loss at UCLA. He completed only 5 of 23 passes for 45 yards and two interceptions as OSU fell 13-6.

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OPINION

The Images That Will Never Fade

My 2-year-old son, Carter, likes airplanes. We live in Pataskala, just east of Columbus and apparently on the flight path to Port Columbus.

Every three to five minutes, a plane flies over our house and, if Carter sees it, he says, "Plane!"

Fast-forward to the morning of Sept. 11: Carter, his twin sister, Dolen, and I are watching a "Thomas and Friends" video. The video runs out and the TV comes up with pictures of one of the World Trade Center towers on fire.

Moments later, an airplane flies into the screen and crashes into the other tower of the Trade Center.

Carter yells, "Plane!" Then, as they replayed the incident several times, my son became upset.

"Where did the plane go, Daddy?" "It went inside the building, Carter," I replied.

A father should never have to explain to his 2-year-old son that the plane went inside the building, but that's what I was left to do on what began as an otherwise mundane Tuesday morning in our living room.

To say that day changed our lives and our way of living is a mild understatement. I am convinced that my generation has never fully understood the sacrifices our fathers, uncles and grandfathers — and their wives — made to keep this country free.

Rather, we seem to take that freedom for granted, as if it were something out of a spigot — you knew it would always be there. That is no longer the case, though. The world has changed, and definitely not for the better.

The senseless acts of terrorism that resulted in the deaths of thousands of American citizens have shaken this country's sensibilities.

Worse than Pearl Harbor? Incredible, in the year 2001, to say something like that, isn't it?

Fast-forward several hours later: It was almost a surreal feeling as I drove into work, listening to this day of horror unfold on the radio.

Another plane hits the Pentagon, another plane goes down in rural Pennsylvania, and, finally, the WTC towers melt at their core and collapse, killing thousands more in a single instant.

A police car speeds by on I-70 with sirens blaring. My thoughts drift to whether something has happened to our downtown.

I get to the office and dutifully go about my business, wondering — believe it or not — how this whole thing was going to affect me. You see, I had made plans for Ohio State's off week Oct. 20 and didn't want to see those plans screwed up by having the San Diego State game moved to that date.

I made a business call and the man on the other end of the phone was practically in tears.

"This isn't the day to talk about that," he said.

Minutes later, as a shaken Jim Tressel addressed the media at his weekly luncheon — where football was the last thing on anyone's mind — I realized how out of whack my priorities were. The coach discussed how the mother of one of his players worked at the WTC and she was unaccounted for.

Hours later, we discovered she had been found safe and sound, but this tragedy truly was hitting close to home.

Fast-forward to the next day: I'm sitting at home when an older acquaintance telephoned with her concern.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK with Steve Helwagen

And, no, it wasn't about the national tragedy. It was about Ohio State football and the news that the SDSU game was, in fact, moved to Oct. 20.

"You know, Steve, I don't like it that they're not playing that game this weekend," she said. "I think that will hurt them for the UCLA game."

I was so upset I wanted to say, "Given what's happened, I could care less if they ever play again," and slam down the phone.

I mean it was just a moment earlier I was thinking about how many hundreds of children were orphaned when their single parent perished in one of the planes, inside either WTC tower or at the Pentagon.

But I didn't want to hurt her feelings, so I stammered and hemmed and hawed about, "Yeah, this isn't going to help the team, is it?"

Fast-forward two days: High schools around the nation and in Ohio take the field for their usual Friday night football games.

Everybody agrees the major colleges and pros needed to take the weekend off. But for the preps and the small colleges, these games are more about community and participation than entertainment.

At the nearby high school field, the opposing teams stand side by side and everybody stops for a full minute of silence. I'm glad they played these games because it gave people a chance to see their neighbors and talk about the tragedy.

Fast-forward one more day: It is a resplendent Saturday afternoon and the scene is Ohio Stadium. Thousands have flocked to the Horseshoe, but there won't be one football in sight.

Rather, there are American flags in every direction. Thousands of Ohioans are on hand to show their support for the disaster relief effort. Their donations reach more than half a million dollars. The OSU band plays an incredible rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever." A single bagpiper slowly makes his way out of the stadium's north entrance.

Slowly, we are starting to come out of mourning and beginning to feel good about who we are and what this nation stands for once again.

Fast-forward a couple more days: The OSU football team has returned to the practice field to begin preparing for its impending cross-country excursion to UCLA.

That road trip would have been a tall order even if the Buckeyes had trounced

San Diego State. Without that game's worth of experience, it seemed like UCLA would be a lost cause.

But the Buckeyes seem steeped in their resolve. They, too, feel a responsibility to themselves, their fans and the country — which will be watching on national TV — to do the best they can.

"If we can provide an escape for people from this tragedy for a few hours, I consider that an honor," said OSU tailback Jonathan Wells.

Fast-forward a few more days: This OSU-UCLA game first appeared on the schedule seven years ago. At the time, I can remember thinking, "Wow, that will be great to get to go out to California for the weekend."

But now it's time for the intrepid reporter to board the plane to go to Los Angeles for the game, and he does not want to go.

But your job is still your job, national tragedy or no national tragedy. The scribe kisses his wife and kids goodbye and hopes above hope he will see them — as well as their unborn brother or sister — again.

At the airport, he stands in extra long lines and is subjected to everything just shy of a full body cavity search before being permitted to board the plane.

The increased security measures reassure him only slightly, but the flight goes off without a hitch. The California midday sun, as they advertise it, is absolutely blinding.

Fast-forward one more day: The Rose Bowl is the ultimate stage in college football and, on this day, it is an amazing scene.

The most telling moment came during the moment of silence. After about 15 seconds, a distant voice in the south end zone blurted out, "God bless America!"

That pierced the silence — and some of the uneasiness — and the game went off without a hitch.

Yes, the Bruins prevailed over the Buckeyes on the scoreboard, and we'll have weeks and months to dissect the X's and O's and what went wrong, as if any of that really matters.

But the real triumph at the Rose Bowl, from this vantage point, was the human spirit and the American way of life.

Along with 73,722 of my closest friends, I shared an experience none of us will soon forget that afternoon at the Rose Bowl.

Yes, I know athletics and specifically big-time college football are largely viewed as entertainment and, no, none of these grand festivities brought back any of the nearly 7,000 victims from this senseless tragedy.

But I think this one exhilarating day in the hot California sun helped at least a few of this nation's survivors move forward.

Now if somebody could just help me with how I'm going to explain all of this to my little boy. Who do I see about that?

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COVER STORY: DEFENSE CAPABLE, OFFENSE CULPABLE

Offense Struggled To Find Any Sort Of Consistency

Continued From Page 1

Buckeyes had played just one game, while UCLA had road wins over Alabama and Kansas to its credit. OSU was counting on building some momentum for this game by hosting San Diego State Sept. 15. But that game was postponed after the terrorist attacks that gripped the nation earlier that week.

When asked how missing that game affected his team, Tressel replied, "No differently than it did any other team. We worked hard to get better at some things. I think in two-thirds of the game we did take some steps forward with our special teams and our defense.

"As everybody who was there knows, we struggled to gain any kind of rhythm or consistency offensively.

"It would have been good to have another game. I think we learned a whole bunch of things in the Akron game and it would have been neat to see if we learned them or not, but everyone is going through that."

Instead, the Buckeyes were on the firing line on a red-hot day in Pasadena, Calif. Unfortunately, the OSU offense wilted like, well, three-week-old roses.

"It was a tough situation to be in," said OSU center LeCharles Bentley. "We don't like it, and we have to bounce back from it."

Tressel praised the defense for its stellar play.

"I'm proud that the guys kept fighting," he said. "Despite the fact we didn't move the football, they kept coming up with ways to keep us in the game — the special teams and the defense.

"Of course, I'm disappointed with what we did and didn't do on offense. That's just something we need to bang away at. We said going into the game that if we played superior special teams and relentless defense and didn't make mistakes on defense, we would win. But we didn't get there."

A Case For The Defense(s)

This game seemed to have the makings of an offensive shootout. But each side took turns stymying the other.

"I really couldn't ask the defense to play better football than they did today," said OSU tailback Jonathan Wells. "The job they did was outstanding. We didn't put any points on the board for them. That has to fall on our shoulders.

"But we're going to stick together and we're going to get better."

Freshman receiver Angelo Chattams, who notched his first career reception, seemed to sum it all up.

"Personally, I feel we let the defense down," he said.

OSU defensive end Tim Cheatwood emerged as one of the leaders with the



STEVE HELWAGEN

ANY SUGGESTIONS? — OSU head coach Jim Tressel and offensive coordinator Jim Bollman had a tough time coming up with much offense against UCLA. The Buckeyes were held to 166 total yards and just 45 through the air, the least since 1989.

way he helped hound Foster.

"We pretty much did the job we wanted to do, but I guess it wasn't good enough because we didn't win," he said. "If we don't have a 'W' in our column, we didn't play good enough."

But Cheatwood and his defensive mates said they will not abandon the OSU offense.

"It's a little frustrating, but we're all a team here," he said. "We're not going to look down on our offense for not getting the job done today. There will probably be times during the season that we don't get the job done and they'll pick us up."

Added OSU linebacker Matt Wilhelm, "We're not down on them. They're probably down on themselves and disappointed. Some guys are even saying they're sorry. But, hey, we lost the game so we're all down right now."

No 'O' In This Team?

Much of the debate following the loss at UCLA centered on the status of quarterback Steve Bellisari. Playing on a tender ankle — which he appeared to reinjure — the senior co-captain was an abysmal 5 of 23 passing for 45 yards with two interceptions.

Bellisari was not available to reporters following the game.

But Tressel was grilled about whether he considered pulling Bellisari in favor of backup Scott McMullen.

"I didn't think it was the right thing for the group," Tressel said. "I wasn't trying to protect Scott. I just didn't think it was the right time for it. That was strictly subjective."

Reporters then went a step further, asking Bellisari's teammates to assess his performance.

"I can't really evaluate him," Bentley said. "I think he always goes out and plays hard. That's all you can ask of a quarterback each week, to go out and play hard."

Wells added his two cents to the

now three-year-old debate.

"That's not my call," he said. "I'm just trying to make plays in the backfield. That's a coaches' decision."

The questions kept coming such as, "What is wrong with this offense?"

"I don't know either," Bentley said. "We have to watch the film and the coaches have to make those decisions. We have great coaches and it will be up to them."

Getting Back To Action

When factored against the trying times the U.S. has faced since the terrorist attacks, OSU's defeat takes on much less significance.

In fact, OSU and UCLA were featured in a national telecast by ABC from the Rose Bowl, perhaps the nation's most revered football theater.

"We were all proud to be part of this game," Tressel said. "It was a game that was coast to coast on national television. We talked about the fact that we wanted to represent, with the way we played the game, just how proud we are of where we live and the people who have done great things."

UCLA coach Bob Toledo said it was a relief to finally play.

"I told the team in my pregame talk, 'You don't know what tomorrow is going to bring. Live each day to the fullest, go out and give it your very best,' and they did," he said. "To get out there and see a great crowd and have a great college football game in that setting was really a great experience."

For the Buckeyes, the real relief will probably come Sept. 29, when they visit Indiana to begin Big Ten play.

"To travel this distance and play in the Rose Bowl, this is something we can build off of," Doss said. "We came out here and traveled long hours. We were just trying to get this victory, but we came up a little short."

With nine games left — including all eight Big Ten games — Tressel has already begun circling the wagons.

"We challenged our older guys to be there for our younger kids," the coach said.

It sounded like the message had gotten through.

"As a captain of this team," said fullback Jamar Martin, "I feel like it's my responsibility to say something to each player, and after the game I just told everybody, 'This is not the end of the season. We've got a long way to go and we've got a lot more opportunities to take advantage of. There's a lot of big things that we still need to do.'"

"So we need to move on, learn from this game and put it behind us. We can't dwell on it for too long. We need to really focus on ourselves and make ourselves better."



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COVER STORY: OSU TOUCHED BY TRAGEDY

Geiger: Playing Would Be Wrong Thing To Do

Continued From Page 1

first college teams to announce a postponement. Speaking less than 12 hours after the hijackings, OSU athletic director Andy Geiger announced the school's Sept. 15 home game with San Diego State had been postponed until Oct. 20, an open date for both schools.

"I think we felt strongly that we should not play on Saturday," Geiger said. "It was very clear that trying to play this game would be the wrong thing to do."

"I cannot imagine, feeling the way I feel right now and seeing the pictures on television that we've all seen all day long, bringing 100,000 people to Ohio Stadium in four days."

Adding to the uncertainty was the fact that San Diego State would have needed to make a cross-country flight. The Federal Aviation Administration closed all airports nationally for two days after the tragedy.

Initially, a number of Division I-A schools announced plans to go ahead and play their weekend football games. However, by Sept. 13, all Division I-A games had been canceled. Major League Baseball also canceled all games through Sept. 16, while the National Football League wiped out its slate of games set for Sept. 16-17.

According to Geiger, his quick decision was based on discussions with football coach Jim Tressel, university administrators and San Diego State athletic director Rick Bay.

"Getting Jim's feelings on the mood of the team, we didn't feel that we needed to go any further," Geiger said. "I talked with (OSU President) Dr. (Brit) Kirwan and I met this afternoon with the university vice presidents and the president's cabinet."

"I also chatted with Rick Bay several times today and found him very much concurring with the decision."

Bay, a former OSU AD, said the postponement was an easy call.

"This is the right thing to do," Bay told the San Diego Union-Tribune. "Some would argue that the U.S. is weakened by any interference to its normal activities, but in this case I feel the proper thing to do is reflect on what happened and make the game up (Oct. 20)."

In addition to the football game, Ohio State also canceled all other intercollegiate games and competitions through Sept. 16.

However, the newly renovated Ohio Stadium served as the site for a hastily planned rally and telethon Sept. 15. Over 15,000 attended the event, includ-

ing members of the school's athletic squads and marching band, and over \$585,000 was raised for the American Red Cross disaster relief fund (see story, page 19).

Initial Reaction

Reporters met briefly with Tressel just two hours after news had broken on the hijackings. The coach, fresh off a 28-14 win over Akron in his first game as the OSU coach, appeared at his weekly press luncheon.

But football was the last thing on anyone's mind.

"We've said and known all along there are a lot more important things than football," Tressel said. "This is another tremendous example of that."

Tressel said he contacted his daughter, Carlee, who was planning to go to the University of Chicago in the days following the tragedy.

"You would think that Chicago would also be a primary target," he said. "You really don't know what to think."

Reporters tried to get Tressel's sense on whether the games should go on.

"There are a lot of emotions," the coach admitted. "You are mad at the people who are doing it. You don't want them to ruin this country. But then you also have to be compassionate and think of the families and the people."

"We can't even visualize what's taken place, the disaster. As we sit here, that puts a lot less importance on Saturday."

Tressel said Geiger told him of the initial attack during a morning meeting of all OSU athletic coaches at the Faculty Club.

"Andy whispered in my ear that there appears to be a terrorist attack," Tressel said. "I thought he was kidding at first."

Dealing With Tragedy

With San Diego State off the docket — at least for the time being — the OSU football team focused on its impending Sept. 22 trip to UCLA.

But even Tressel was having a problem putting the week's events in perspective.

"I'm not an expert on dealing with tragedies like this," he said. "I know first and foremost that we have to have respect for the victims and just let those people who have been directly affected know that they're in our thoughts and prayers."

"I think this is a time of true reflection for all of us. I'm not telling anyone what to reflect about, it's just a time to be there for each other. That's what's



DARRELL DAWSON

SIGNS SAY IT ALL — A pair of attendees at the Sept. 15 rally held at Ohio Stadium display the thoughts that were on the minds of many.

wonderful about being part of a group in a difficult time."

The coach and his players hoped the remainder of their games this season would help the healing process.

"I think we understand that we are somewhat entertainment to people," Tressel said. "Obviously, it's an opportunity to teach the kids what we're involved with and for our fans it's definitely something for them to emot about."

"Maybe they can get their minds off those other things for three hours as we play."

Linebacker Joe Cooper voiced concerns over the safety of players and fans alike in the days following the terrorist activity.

"It makes you think," he said. "On Saturday, especially at a school like Ohio State, there's going to be a lot of people (there). I'm no genius. I don't know anything, but to me it seems like they'd try to attack where there's a lot of people and there's over 100,000 people in the Horseshoe on Saturday, so it's in the back of your mind."

"You take it for granted sometimes and say, 'Well, it would never happen here,' but you can't think like that."

Linebacker Matt Wilhelm was asked if winning games each week means as much in the wake of this tragedy.

"Winning still means the same," he said. "It definitely is the same. I know for me personally it's important. You want to win for yourself, but you feel like you've got to take on another opponent, even though they're from the United States of America, and get out some aggression, because you do have pent-up aggression in a situation like this."

"You don't know whom to blame. There are guys who get paid a lot of money who are trying to figure that out. But you've just got some aggression inside you that just has to come out, whether it be on the practice field or in the game."

"We're lucky as football players that

once a week or so we get to let it loose. If you talk to pro athletes, college athletes or even some guys in high school, they will tell you they feel free on a football field, and in that moment everything outside of football kind of fades away."

Wilhelm was glad OSU wasted no time in making the proper call.

"I was proud of that," he said. "It's a great representation of the university that we were the example for the rest of the country, and I think it speaks highly for the type of people we have leading this university in President Kirwan, Andy Geiger and Coach Tressel."

Tailback Jonathan Wells admitted it was hard to face a beautiful fall Saturday without football, but he said his school made the right choice.

"I knew it would happen yet I was still a little disappointed," he said. "But there's a much bigger issue going on. I couldn't agree with the decision more. A lot of innocent people lost their lives. It's bigger than Ohio State football, way bigger."

For OSU, the only point of reference was the situation in November 1963, when OSU and Michigan postponed their season-ending game one week after the assassination of President Kennedy (see story, page 20).

Never before in its 112 years of football had Ohio State postponed or canceled a game due to war or civil unrest.

The SDSU game was to serve as the induction weekend for the 2001 class for the OSU Athletics Hall of Fame. Those ceremonies will now take place over the weekend of Oct. 19.

The SDSU game was also to be broadcast by ESPN with a 12:10 p.m. start time. No starting time or television assignment had been announced for the new date on Oct. 20, although 12:10 p.m. still seemed like a safe bet.

BSB staff members Jeff Rapp and Mike Wachsmann contributed to this story.



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RALLY AT OHIO STADIUM

Thousands Show Their Spirit At Stadium Rally

By DARRELL DAWSON
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

At times, it sounded as if there was a game going on in Ohio Stadium. Other times, you couldn't even hear its ghosts.

Such is life in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist tragedies. But for a couple of hours, fans and dignitaries from across Ohio remembered those lost and celebrated the nation we live in.

There were a variety of speakers at the Horseshoe Sept. 15 for the "Show You Care" rally and telethon. But all it took was a single bagpiper to upstage some of the state's most beloved statesmen and public figures.

A crowd in excess of 15,000 attended the rally and, by the time the three-hour broadcast on WBNS-TV and Ohio News Network had gone off the air at 3 p.m., more than \$170,000 had been raised for the American Red Cross disaster relief fund.

Including donations made by telephone, the sale of American flags at the stadium and drive-up donations made outside the Horseshoe, WBNS-TV reported a total of over \$585,000 in donations had been made by the time its 11 p.m. newscast hit the air.

Near the end of the two-hour-long program, the City of Columbus Bagpipers played a traditional Scottish version of "Amazing Grace." During the closing strains, one of the players got up from his perch with the others in the north end zone and walked up the north ramp and out of view.

You could hear a pin drop. On the turf.

Each of the event's speakers was at the top of his or her game.

"They were just like us," said OSU President Brit Kirwan of those who died in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. "Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters — all gone. Here today at Ohio Stadium we mourn their losses."

Ohio Gov. Bob Taft spoke of the many Ohioans who are on the scene at the disaster sites and those who are helping closer to home through donations of blood, money and food.

"It is time to demonstrate that the American spirit is alive and thriving here in this stadium, here in Columbus, here in Ohio and throughout this great nation of ours," he told the flag-waving crowd to loud cheers.

"Let's move toward a new peace on Earth. A peace that was meant to be."

Following a speech by Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman, OSU athletic director Andy Geiger took the microphone.

"This is a place of celebration, of human achievement, whether academic when commencement is held here, or athletic," Geiger said. "We would rather be watching football, for that would mean that last Tuesday never happened."

Throughout the process of refurbishing Ohio Stadium over the past couple of years, Geiger talked about the three prongs the project represented: preservation, renovation and expansion.

During his speech, he widened his thoughts on those three sentiments.

- "Preservation — We must believe even more deeply in our freedoms and our democratic ways of life.

- "Renovation — We must learn of our new sense of vulnerability ... We must also work on sensitivities toward

our fellow human beings.

- "The third part is expansion. The tragic loss of life is all-inclusive. ... Our love for one another should also be all-inclusive."

Soon after Geiger left the podium, it was OSU head football coach Jim Tressel's turn. Though Buckeye fans only recently reacquainted themselves with Tressel, many look to the coach for words of wisdom at times like these, regardless of whether the coach ever asks to be put in that position.

By all accounts, Tressel came through. He gave what may have been the most uplifting thought of the day.

"A week ago today, we came out in front of 100,000 fans and I wasn't sure there would ever be a more glorious day in Ohio Stadium," he said.

"But once again, central Ohio proved us wrong. There's never been a more glorious day in Ohio Stadium than today."

Mitch Brown, safety director for the city of Columbus, also spoke. WBNS-TV anchorwoman Angela Pace was the emcee.

The OSU marching band provided a number of patriotic tunes, including a stirring rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever." The Otterbein College concert choir also provided music.



DARRELL DAWSON

WORDS OF COMFORT — Old Glory flies above Ohio State head football coach Jim Tressel as he talks to the gathering at the "Show You Care" rally at Ohio Stadium Sept. 15.

Athletes from many of OSU's athletic teams, including the football squad, filled a section of seating in the lower level of the stadium.

Those from the general public nearly filled all of the sections in the north end zone of the stadium.

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1963 OHIO STATE FOOTBALL TEAM

Last OSU Postponement Came After Death Of JFK

By MARK REA

Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Ohio State has not been faced with the postponement of a regular-season football game in 38 years and that was under similar circumstances.

While the nation attempted to recover from the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the mood was comparable to November 1963 in the wake of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The Buckeyes' traditional season finale with Michigan was scheduled to be played in Ann Arbor the day after Kennedy was shot.

While many schools quickly made the decision to cancel and postpone games scheduled for the next day, Michigan officials opted to go ahead with the game.

"It was a decision left up to the individual schools," remembered former OSU sports information director Marv Homan. "Many schools in the South decided immediately within just an hour or two after the news spread. Later that afternoon, teams in the West began to announce postponements."

"But if you were to call the University of Michigan that day, the answer was that the game was on as scheduled."

Unlike most years, the Big Ten champi-

onship did not ride on the game. Ohio State had a 3-1-1 conference mark while the Wolverines had limped to a sub-par 2-2-2 record.

Michigan State and Illinois were set to decide the title, but officials in East Lansing had quickly postponed that game and rescheduled it for the following Thursday.

But Michigan officials remained silent. So, the Ohio State football team stuck to its normal schedule and prepared to play the game.

"We were already in Michigan when the terrible news about President Kennedy came in," Homan said. "Our normal travel plans called for us to fly to Michigan at noon, which we did."

"Then we would always stay at a hotel in Ypsilanti and that is where we heard the news. We continued to be told that the game was on."

Even as late as Saturday morning of the game, the official word was that the game would be played. The Ohio State marching band left Columbus early that morning to attend the game while fans from all over the Midwest began to make their way toward Ann Arbor.

"We were sitting around the lobby waiting to get on the team buses when a call came to the hotel from Ann Arbor," Homan said. "Michigan had finally decided to postpone the game. It was absolutely an 11th-



FILE PHOTO

THE VACANT HOUSE — There weren't many people in Michigan Stadium for the 1963 OSU-Michigan game. The contest, scheduled to take place the day after President Kennedy was assassinated, was rescheduled for the following Saturday. Those who were there saw Wolverine Robert Timberlake (28) attempt a field goal on this play, as OSU's Dwight Kelley (53) went for the block.

hour decision and, I might add, one that was poorly handled.

"We simply got on the bus and went back to the airport. While we never made it to Ann Arbor that day, I'm sure thousands did. Why in the world they waited so long to make the decision, I don't know."

The game was played the following Saturday and, in front of only 36,424 fans inside cavernous Michigan Stadium, the Buckeyes overcame a 10-0 deficit to score a 14-10 victory. It was the smallest home crowd for Michigan since World War II and still ranks as the smallest attendance figure ever for an OSU-UM game in Michigan Stadium history.

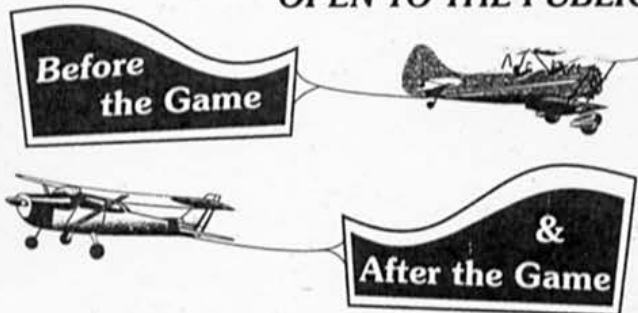
"We wound up winning," Homan said,

"but no one really gave a darn about the football game. In my opinion, the small crowd was Michigan's fault. By dillydallying around, it just totally turned people off. So the following week, they simply didn't show up."

Lost in the malaise that hung over the game, the win allowed head coach Woody Hayes to achieve a feat that only Francis Schmidt had accomplished in the long rivalry with Michigan: four straight victories over the Wolverines.

Two days before, Illinois had upset Michigan State 13-0 in front of a Thanksgiving Day crowd of 74,342 in East Lansing. The Illini went on to beat Washington in the 1964 Rose Bowl.

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OPINION

It's Funny How Sports Can Become A Nonfactor

Putting pen to paper — or in this case fingers to keyboard — has not been easy this week. I've wondered many times just how important anything I have to say might be.

When your life changes, it's hard to put it into words. Being too young to truly remember Vietnam, my first real trauma came when Elvis Presley died in 1977. I was 11 years old and loved the man's music and I was borderline distraught. Sounds silly, I know, but I was a kid.

My reverence changed a little in the next few years as I learned about his drug habits and womanizing. I still like his music but don't have nearly the respect or idolatry that I did before.

Life has changed again — for everyone — and this time it's not over something silly. This is real, and it doesn't feel good.

The first time I saw the video of the second plane hitting the World Trade Center, I was speechless. Ask anyone in this office how hard that is for me.

It all seemed so surreal, but it was definitely happening. Never had there been such a hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach. This was my Vietnam. To those who lived through that tumult, I can hardly imagine what the emotions are right now.

It could have been harder for me, though. I have an aunt who lives about a mile from the Trade Center who came through unscathed ... at least physically. I have two cousins who work literally across the street from the Trade Center. One was in Wisconsin visiting a friend and the other didn't show up to work that fateful Tuesday. I don't know why, but frankly I don't care. I just know nothing happened to them.

America lost some of its innocence when it lost John Kennedy and when it plunged itself into a morally wrong war it couldn't win in Vietnam. As I said previously, I wasn't around for those cataclysmic events, so I had no frame of reference for comparison.

I've had a cynical view of the world in the past, rallying against the selfishness and self-absorption that too many are guilty of. But to see so many give of their time and manpower has, to a great extent, restored my faith in this society.

As far as sports is concerned, that was a non-thought. I'm generally in the sports mode 24/7, but that immediately took a backseat to the carnage and catastrophe that happened in our country.

There were some who seemed a little upset by the cancellation of nearly the entire sports world, but I wasn't among them. I thought maybe for an instant about the NFL and what

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsmann

sort of conundrum it was in as far as the decision to play or not play, but that was about it.

Sports lends itself to bombast and hyperbole, but I'm hoping that no one uses the word "heroic" to describe a game-winning ninth-inning homer or the word "war" when talking about the Ohio State-Michigan game.

Players are not heroic unless they are helping in the relief effort, and football is hardly a war or even a battle.

Now more than ever we have to realize that sports is an ancillary part of life. The investment many have in it is ridiculous, and to feel upset by an Ohio State loss a week later says that priorities are out of whack. There's no way the result of a game — and that's what it is, folks — should keep someone unsettled for an entire week.

Here's something to chew on: Next time an OSU loss gets you down and you feel like you won't get over it, look at your family and realize how much of a gift you have.

We've seen firsthand just how quickly it can all be taken away, so cherish what you've got.

The hope from this corner is that things can return to normal sooner rather than later. But normal or not, one thing is certain: We're all different. The world, its people and the way we think.

Remember that the next time you're grousing about some inconsequential football or basketball game. Stay well.

It Keeps Getting Funnier

The antiquated "Save The Bowls" stance taken by the major conferences has been laughable for quite some time, but now it's downright hilarious.

Never mind that these money-grubbers are missing the forest for the trees by not embracing an eight-team playoff at the end of the season. Think they'd make some serious coin off that? You bet. But they're having none of it.

The college commissioners are instead moving toward letting 6-6 teams into bowl games in years when there's a 12-game regular season. Makes sense, right?

OSU athletic director Andy Geiger is a member of the NCAA Management Council, and he seems to be behind the idea.

"There are differences between one 6-6 team and another," he said recently. "If a team runs off four in a row at the end of the season, I don't think it ought to be shut out."

Oh, really? Shouldn't be shut out? After starting the year at 2-67 The only "reward" a 6-6 team should get is an early start on recruiting. There should be no reward for mediocrity, but that's what these folks want to do.

The commissioners are behind this because of money. Based on the 2000 season, there were 52 teams that finished 6-6 or better. That means more bowl-eligibles and more money for the leagues.

It also means that any credibility these leaders had about being trendsetters is out the window. The conferences are not leaders, they're followers — of the green stuff.

Things will get worse before they get better, and this is another step in the wrong direction.

Dark Side Of Hollywood

In the aftermath of OSU's loss to UCLA, one thing came to mind — we've seen all of this before.

Big-game setting, good effort from one side

of the ball and pathetic play at quarterback. It sounds so much like a John Cooper script that it gave me the creeps.

Jim Tressel is going to be faced with some difficult decisions in the next few days and weeks, and one might involve senior captain and resident marksman Steve Bellisari.

While some of Bellisari's atrocious play can be traced to the fact that OSU's offensive line hasn't improved a whit in pass blocking, most of the onus is on him. He's become an indecisive runner, a scattershot passer at best and is still a poor decision-maker.

It may be difficult to bench a captain, and with soft touch Indiana up next on the schedule, Bellisari may have actually bought himself time. He can play horribly against the Hoosiers and OSU should still win.

However, teams have learned one crucial thing: If you make Bellisari beat you, your chances are good. Think OSU won't be seeing eight- and nine-man fronts for the rest of the season?

The decisions Tressel makes in the next few weeks will go a long way toward shaping how this season goes and toward the tenor of his run as Ohio State's head coach.

It should be interesting to watch.

From The Pages Of BSB

TWENTY YEARS AGO — 1981

The Ohio State football team ran up a 17-0 halftime lead on its way to a 27-13 victory over Michigan State in East Lansing.

The game was closer than the score indicated as sloppy second-half play allowed the Spartans to narrow the gap to 20-13 with 8:22 left in the game.

But backup quarterback Bob Atha, taking over for an injured Art Schlichter, directed the Buckeyes on a late drive and scored on a 27-yard run with just 1:00 remaining to clinch the victory.

MSU kicker Morten Andersen booted two field goals including a 63-yarder, still the longest in Big Ten history.

Two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin led a group of 11 named to the university's Athletics Hall of Fame.

Joining Griffin were such former Buckeye greats as fellow football All-Americans Jack Tatum, Merle Wendt, Sid Gillman and Warren Amling and basketball All-American and three-star star Dick Schnitker.

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO — 1986

Rookie kicker Pat O'Morrow booted a 19-yard field goal with just 25 seconds left to propel Ohio State to a 13-10 victory over Colorado. The win was the first of the year for the Buckeyes after season-opening losses to Alabama and Washington but did little to quell criticism of head coach Earle Bruce.

BSB published six letters in the Sept. 27, 1986, issue and all six criticized Bruce. "Since Earle Bruce has taken over the reins at Ohio State, we have gone from the football capital of the world to obscurity," wrote Gary Gerken of Davenport, Iowa.

The ranks of the Ohio State men's basketball team increased by one when 6-11, 250-pound center Herb Bartholomew enrolled after failing to make entrance requirements at Pitt. The Parma, Ohio, native would not be eligible for the 1987-88 season because of failure to make Proposition 48 requirements.

TEN YEARS AGO — 1991

Ohio State was its own worst enemy against Louisville, committing 15 penalties during a 23-15 victory in Ohio Stadium. That set a school record for infractions and was only two short of the Big Ten mark of 17 penalties, held by Michigan State since 1957.

On the men's basketball recruiting front, point guard Jason Kidd of Alameda (Calif.) St. Joseph Notre Dame canceled a scheduled visit to Ohio State and eliminated the Buckeyes from consideration.

The Buckeyes already had one verbal commitment — from Greg Simpson of Lima (Ohio)

Senior — and continued to pursue Rodrick Rhodes of Jersey City (N.J.) St. Anthony's, Donta Bright of Baltimore Dunbar, Gerald Eaker of Westchester (Ill.) St. Joseph, Quinton Brooks of Akron Firestone and Nate Wilbourne of nearby Upper Arlington.

The OSU wrestling team received some good news before its season began. Former Ohio high school champion Rex Holman announced he would transfer from Arizona State to Ohio State.

FIVE YEARS AGO — 1996

One week before traveling to Notre Dame, the Buckeyes left the Pitt Panthers as so much roadkill in a 72-0 whipping.

The win came on the heels of OSU's 70-7 shellacking of Rice in the season opener. After two games, quarterbacks Joe Germaine and Stan Jackson had combined to complete 26 of 36 passes for eight TDs and together had an unheard-of efficiency rating of 273.42.

The Buckeyes received verbal commitments from a pair of California prep QBs: David Priestley of Cypress Brethren Christian and Austin Moherman of Mission Viejo Capistrano Valley.

OSU men's basketball recruiting was not as fortunate. JUCO transfer Ed Jenkins was deemed ineligible until at least the beginning of the Big Ten schedule since he fell just short of the minimum eligibility set forth by conference guidelines.

Meanwhile, head coach Randy Ayers was set to make in-home visits with a trio of well-rated Columbus high school stars: Aaron Turner of Mifflin, Kenny Gregory of Independence and Michael Redd of West.

OSU women's basketball coach Nancy Dargsh welcomed 6-4 Kylee Bogott of Sterling, Ill., as the fourth player to her recruiting class and said goodbye to assistant coach Nikita Lowry, who was hired as head coach at Detroit Mercy.

ONE YEAR AGO — 2000

Paying a late-night visit to the desert, Ohio State snoozed its way through the first half before cruising to a 27-17 win over Arizona.

The Buckeye defense sacked Arizona QB Ortege Jenkins eight times while the Wildcats offense was held to just 194 total yards.

Indiana University president Myles Brand fired legendary basketball coach Bob Knight in the wake of an incident in which the coach was alleged to have grabbed an IU student by the arm at Assembly Hall and given him a profanity-laced lecture on manners and respect.

Knight, a member of Ohio State's 1960 NCAA championship team, had 763 career victories, leaving him 166 shy of Dean Smith's all-time NCAA record.

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