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BULLETIN

July 1989

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Assistant Elevated To Head Coach**Ohio State Goes With Ayers***By Mark Rea*

"I've been a Buckeye all my life. For me, this represents the ultimate in coaching."

With those words, Randy Ayers became the 11th man to hold the title of head men's basketball coach at Ohio State.

He succeeds Gary Williams, who resigned June 13 to take the head coaching job at his alma mater, the University of Maryland.

Ayers becomes the first black head basketball coach in the school's history and, at 33 years of age, is one of the youngest head coaches in college basketball today.

Ayers was offered a five-year contract with a base salary reported to be \$75,000 for the first year.

He has no head coaching experience on any level, yet has 11 years of experience in college coaching. Coupled with the fact that Ayers was the principal recruiter of three players — Jim Jackson, Mark Baker and Alex Davis — who will help lead OSU basketball into the 1990s, the Buckeyes offered the job to Ayers.

Ayers believes that Williams left the Ohio State program on solid ground. Still, he was mindful of the task set before him.

"Our program and the young people in it have great potential," he said, "and my commitment is to do the best job I possibly can and to maintain always the Buckeye tradition of honesty and integrity."

"I've always felt that I was a very capable individual. I felt I had paid my dues. I have been in the profession now 11 years. That's not a guarantee, but I just feel I'm ready to assume this responsibility."

Ayers said he attached no special significance to the fact that he was the first black head basketball coach at OSU and only the fourth in Big Ten history.

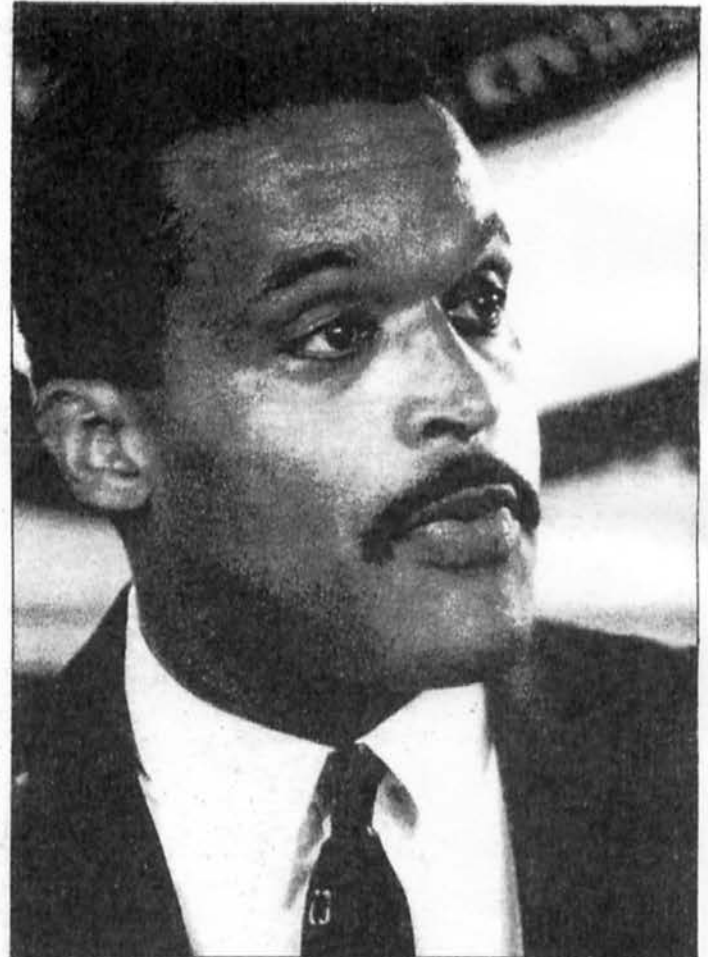
"I just see myself as a capable professional who happens to be black," he said. "Other people may give special significance to that, but I don't. The important thing right now is to put together a winning program."

Ayers emerged as the Buckeyes' head coach from a list of candidates filled with successful head coaches from other Division I schools.

However, the school's search committee must have liked what it saw in Ayers. He was formally interviewed June 29 and told the job was his less than three days later.

"We believe we conducted a thorough national search," said OSU athletic director Jim Jones. "We talked to a number of persons for information or recommendations, as well as several potential candidates."

"I must tell you that personally, and



Randy Ayers was named the 11th head men's basketball coach at Ohio State on July 3. Ayers was elevated from assistant coach for the Buckeyes after former head coach Gary Williams resigned June 13 to return to his alma mater, Maryland. Ayers is the first black head basketball coach in OSU history and, at age 33, the youngest head coach in the Big Ten.

I believe that the department appreciates very much, the excitement and direction of our basketball program under Gary Williams.

"In that idea, it is our desire to continue the tradition, in fact, the winning tradition that we have grown accustomed to at Ohio State. To do that, we came up with Randy Ayers, a person in whom we have a great deal of confidence."

Jones added that although lack of prior head coaching experience weighed in the search committee's decision, Ayers had too many other things going

for him to be overlooked.

"Obviously, when you go out to search, you have a number of factors you want to consider," Jones said. "One of those is head coaching experience."

"As far as I know, there is no one perfect coach in America. I believe Randy fulfills the ideals we were going out after. So we were willing to overlook the fact that he had not been a head coach."

"His hard work, integrity, true con-

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OSU's Choice
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Ohio's Top
Prep Gridders
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Top Athletes
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BSB Quotebook: "The Hiring Of Randy Ayers"

Randy Ayers, new head men's basketball coach at Ohio State: "I knew I was a long shot, but I won't say I'm surprised. I feel I've paid some dues with 11 years in the profession and I have confidence in my ability. If I was afraid, I wouldn't even have asked to be considered."

Jim Jones, Ohio State athletic director, when asked about an ESPN report which stated no one seemed to want to be basketball coach at OSU: "It would probably surprise you, but our program is not built on Chris Berman and ESPN. Our program is, I think, built on sound values and we're going to continue to build on those values."

Fred Taylor, former Ohio State head coach: "I'm surprised that so many coaches turned it down. It would seem to me there couldn't be 10 better jobs in the country than Ohio State. There has got to be something wrong some place."

Billy Hahn, former Ohio University head coach who was elevated from assistant coach status and then fired after going 42-45 in three seasons: "Going from an assistant coach to a head coach, it's like being dropped into a stand of woods without a compass. Then you're told, 'All right, lead us out of here.'"

Darrell Hedric, former Miami head coach who guided Ayers when he was with the Redskins: "It's just fantastic. It's great that Ohio State would promote within a kid who's paid his dues. I couldn't be more happier. It couldn't happen to a nicer young man. It's like a son getting an advancement."



Randy Ayers



Fred Taylor

Carol Ayers, wife of Ohio State's new basketball coach: "Maybe I'm naive, but I'm an Ohioan. I've always thought if you worked hard for something you were rewarded. That's the way it's always worked for me. I always, always felt that Randy had a very good chance."

Don Henderson, who coached Ayers at Springfield North High School: "I don't think the fact he hasn't been a head coach is going to have anything to do with it. The way he can handle situations and handle people, coaching is coaching. It all gets down to how you handle people and Randy does that well."

Nolan Richardson, head coach at Arkansas, thought to be the front-runner for the OSU job: "Ohio State probably didn't know if I was really interested in the job. I was asked several times if I wanted the job. I told them I didn't know. I would have needed more time to think about it."

Jones on how the Ohio State selection committee came to offer the job to Ayers: "I could tell you a great deal about the selection process, but I don't think I will. Let me repeat for the record that no one was ever offered the position of head basketball coach at The Ohio State University other than Randy Ayers."

Don DeVoe, former Tennessee coach, OSU grad and unsuccessful candidate for the job that went to Ayers: "There have been three different athletic directors each time I applied and sometimes circumstances don't allow you to be the chosen one. I seriously don't think I'll ever be a candidate for the Ohio State job."

BSB Graphic

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Brazeau Decides To Remain With Bucks

By Mark Rea

The Ohio State men's basketball coaching staff, once thought to be on the verge of a complete overhaul, will return 50 percent intact next season.

Randy Ayers was the new Buckeyes head coach less than 48 hours before naming Paul Brazeau as one of his two full-time assistants.

The 30-year-old Brazeau had been a part-time assistant coach for the Buckeyes the past two seasons.

His hiring keeps half of Ohio State's coaching staff intact for next season. Head coach Gary Williams resigned to become head coach at Maryland, while assistant Fran Fraschilla left to become an assistant at Providence.

Williams had offered both Ayers and Brazeau assistant positions at Maryland. Brazeau had accepted the offer in late June, but said Williams understood his desire to remain at OSU as part of Ayers' staff.

"Gary was totally supportive of my decision to stay," Brazeau said. "He knows what a help it would be to Randy because of my familiarity with our program, the university and the Big Ten and he knows how well this community treats an assistant coach."

Brazeau admitted he originally accepted the Maryland job with some trepidation.

"It was a tough decision to make," he said. "After two years in this community, we had made a lot of friends."

"But as a career decision, I just couldn't turn down a full-time position with Maryland especially when I wasn't even sure I'd get an offer to remain a part-time assistant here."



Paul Brazeau

A part-time coach is limited to a salary worth half the value of a scholarship, but is allowed to supplement his income with jobs outside the athletic department. As a result, Brazeau had worked in group sales for a Columbus hotel.

Brazeau joined the Buckeyes prior to the 1987-88 season after spending five years as an assistant coach at Boston College. Four of those years were spent serving under Williams.

A native of North Adams, Mass., Brazeau is a 1981 graduate of Boston College with a degree in economics. He also received a master's degree in business administration from BC.

Others Probably Would Have Moved On**Ayers Was Always Right Man For Job**

What's wrong with this job anyway? The simple answer is that there is nothing wrong with being the head men's basketball coach at Ohio State. It's just that the powers that be at the venerable old school had the guts to stick to principles this time, refusing to

allow public opinion to sway their convictions.

The Ohio State athletic department has been taken to task during the past two years — and rightfully so — for some of its decisions.

Whether you liked him or not, Earle Bruce was unceremoniously dumped after nine years as head football coach. And it wasn't bad enough that Bruce was fired, but the timing and handling of the ordeal was less than professional.

In the last calendar year alone, the Buckeyes have fired head men's gymnastics coach Mike Willson and assistant baseball coach Joe Carbone and were taken to court by both men.

Then there was foot-dragging in decisions to promote Steve Snapp to sports information director, to change from artificial to natural turf in Ohio Stadium and to give former basketball coach Gary Williams a three-year contract extension that he reportedly wanted as early as last year.

But about the circumstances surrounding the hiring of Randy Ayers as head basketball coach, I cannot find fault with the OSU athletic department at all.

It was certainly right for the Buckeyes to conduct a nationwide search. And while some diehard fans wondered why no big-name coaches were interested, it is because they were never contacted.

Ohio State, or any other school for that matter, has no chance to lure Dean Smith from North Carolina, John Thompson from Georgetown, Denny Crum from Louisville or Digger Phelps from Notre Dame. If you know you can't buy, why go into the store?

The Buckeyes did very well compiling a list of candidates who were mostly all up-and-comers. But the trouble with the Nolan Richardsons, the Jim Crewses, the Pete Gillens and the Lon Krugers is a microcosm of what's wrong with college basketball today.

Apparently, none of them were willing to sign a five-year contract and agree to fulfill all five years of that pact. None were willing to agree to stay at Ohio State and waive their chance to go elsewhere for head coaching jobs in the midst of their contracts.

Now, that may seem archaic on Ohio State's part to expect a coach to honor the entire length of the contract he signs. But it is also refreshing in this age of coaches jumping from one ship to another mid-contract.

A case can be made for the fact that schools fire coaches almost as quickly as they collect tuition. But, most of the time, the universities honor their end of the bargain by compensating the coach monetarily.

Ohio State many times has been charged with living in the dark ages on matters like these. Maybe the old ways are the best ways after all.

SOME HAVE criticized the Buckeyes for giving the job to an untested head coach.

He may be untested as far as a head coach is concerned. But he has so many other things going for him that OSU simply could not overlook them.

He brings the kind of continuity to the OSU basketball program that it so desperately needs. Despite the excellent talent of its team members, the last thing the Buckeyes could have afforded was to lose the entire coaching staff. The program would have been dealt a crushing blow as far as recruiting is concerned, a blow from which it may

Editor's Notebook
with Mark Rea

have taken three or four years to recover.

With the hiring of Ayers, and the fact that assistant Paul Brazeau has agreed to stay instead of following Williams to Maryland, much of OSU's recruiting braintrust remains intact.

The fact that Ayers is only 33 years old has to be considered a plus. He is not so far removed from his playing days, so he can still relate to the players on their level.

Five-Year Deal Was Too Much For Coach

Why did Ohio State give Randy Ayers a five-year contract?

Ayers might be a nice guy. He might be a super recruiter. He apparently is very loyal to Ohio State. But do we know how well he'll do as a head coach?

Ayers is unproven. That's not to say he didn't deserve the opportunity to become the next Ohio State basketball coach, it's just that we don't know.

Five-year contracts should be used to attract proven, prime time-type coaches — people like Seton Hall's P.J. Carlesimo, who took the little school in the Big East to the NCAA championship game.

Five-year contracts are not used to promote an assistant to the head coaching position.

Let's face it. Do you really think if Ohio State athletic director Jim Jones told Ayers, "We want you. Here's a two-year contract," Ayers would have said, "Thanks, but no thanks. I want five years guaranteed?"
No way.

He is a native Ohioan, born and raised in Springfield. He knows his way around the state and counts many of the high school basketball coaches in Ohio as personal friends. Nothing is more important come recruiting time.

Last, but certainly not least, Ayers has the respect and admiration of his players. He was involved in the recruiting of nearly all of them, personally having a hand in the luring of Jim Jackson and Mark Baker to Ohio State.

To that last man, the Ohio State players went to athletic director Jim Jones and said they wanted him to hire Ayers.

That was something Richardson, Crews, Gillen or Kruger never had.

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Inside Look
with Rich Exner

If Ayers had done that, he'd still be an assistant dreaming about the chance to be the head coach of a big-time college program.

You might say it is only fair to give Ayers a five-year contract, since that's what Gary Williams had.

Well, everything isn't fair and, besides, Williams paid his dues proving himself as a head coach.

I'd be willing to bet Williams didn't get a five-year contract at American University, and he probably never got a five-year contract until he got to Ohio State (although Williams proved not

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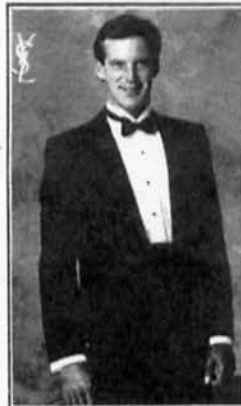
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Many Coaches Mentioned During Search**OSU Was Never At Loss For Big Names***By Mark Rea*

When it comes time to look for a new head coach at Ohio State, nothing works better or more quickly than the rumor mill.

When Gary Williams resigned June 13 as head basketball coach to accept a similar position at Maryland, the mill worked overtime churning out names of possible successors.

At first came Terry Holland of Virginia, Billy Tubbs of Oklahoma, Bob Huggins of Cincinnati, Bob Knight of Indiana, Bobby Cremins of Georgia Tech, Joey Meyer of DePaul and Gene Keady of Purdue.

When the dust finally settled, the Buckeyes were actually working from a list that included the following:

- Nolan Richardson of Arkansas,
- Pete Gillen of Xavier,
- Lon Kruger of Kansas State,
- Roy Williams of Kansas,
- Jim Crews of Evansville,
- Cy Alexander of South Carolina State,
- Mike Newell of Arkansas-Little Rock,
- Mike Deane of Siena,
- Don DeVoe, former head coach at Tennessee and
- Randy Ayers, assistant under Williams at Ohio State.

The Buckeyes ended a three-week search July 3 by naming Ayers, making him the 11th head basketball coach in

school history and, at age 33, the youngest head coach in the Big Ten.

Before Ohio State scheduled interviews, Williams and Deane dropped from the race. Both men stated a desire to remain at their respective schools.

Richardson, 47, was thought to be the Buckeyes' top choice for the position. He got support from several school officials and head football coach John Cooper, who coached at the University of Tulsa when Richardson was basketball coach there.

He has been successful everywhere he has been — Bowie High School in El Paso, Texas (190-80 in 10 seasons), Western Texas Junior College (101-13 in three seasons), Tulsa (119-37 in five seasons) and Arkansas (77-46 in four years). In fact, his success with the Razorbacks led him to eventually withdraw from consideration.

Richardson has recruited a young team that posted a 25-7 record last season and will be a strong national contender in 1989-90.

Also receiving a lot of support for the job were Gillen and Crews.

Gillen, 42, is head coach at Xavier (Ohio). He has compiled a 91-34 record in four years with the Musketeers and has guided them to an NCAA Tournament berth each of those four seasons.

A former assistant at Notre Dame under Digger Phelps, Gillen is thought to be interested in returning to the

Ohio State Cage Coaches

Coach	Years	W	L	Pct.
D.C. Huddleson	1903-04	15	6	.714
Thomas Kibler	1909-10	22	2	.917
Lynn St. John	1912-19	79	69	.534
George Trautman	1920-22	29	33	.468
Harold G. Olsen	1923-46	255	192	.570
William Dye	1947-50	53	34	.609
Floyd S. Stahl	1951-58	84	92	.477
Fred Taylor	1959-76	297	158	.653
Eldon Miller	1977-86	176	118	.599
Gary Williams	1987-89	59	41	.590
Randy Ayers	1989-	0	0	.000

Fighting Irish when Phelps retires.

Crews, 35, has a four-year record of 70-45 with Evansville including a 25-6 record last year.

He is an Indiana alumnus who played for the Hoosiers from 1973-76, teams which compiled a four-year record of 108-12. Crews later spent eight seasons as an assistant to Knight at Indiana and is thought to have his eye on that position whenever Knight is through with it.

Kruger has spent three years at Kansas State, piloting the Wildcats into the NCAA Tournament all three seasons. Two days before OSU named Ayers, Kruger told reporters that he "was never a candidate" for the Buckeyes' job.

Alexander, who coached South Carolina State to a 25-8 record last season, interviewed for the position, but said he didn't think he was a serious candidate.

Newell, who is also the athletic director at Arkansas-Little Rock, told reporters he has a policy of not commenting on job situations.

Meanwhile, the 47-year-old DeVoe says that it's obvious to him that OSU doesn't want him after trying for the job for the third time.

"My feeling is obviously they don't want Don DeVoe as their basketball coach," he told the *Wilmington (Ohio) News-Journal*.

"I felt this time the timing was right for me at Ohio State and (instead) I was turned down for someone who's never coached a college basketball game."

DeVoe was a candidate for the OSU job in 1976, but Eldon Miller was chosen instead. DeVoe again applied in 1986 following Miller's firing, but withdrew his name because of the lengthy selection process. Williams was given the job that year.

A 1964 graduate of Ohio State, DeVoe had the backing of former OSU head coach Fred Taylor and ex-Buckeye teammate Knight.

DeVoe said as late as two days before Ayers was named that he was under the impression that Richardson was the front-runner for the position and DeVoe was a close second.

Although he was fired as head coach at Tennessee after last season, DeVoe is not done as a basketball coach.

He will guide the South team in the U.S. Olympic Festival later this summer.

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Players Elated With Picking Of Ayers

By Mike Wachsman

While reviews have been mixed from Ohio State fans on the selection of Randy Ayers as head basketball coach, such is not the case with the members of the Buckeyes team.

To a man, the reaction has been favorable. Most of the team members stated that continuity and not having to learn a new system were definite pluses and the main reasons the players wanted Ayers from the beginning.

"I really wanted Coach Ayers from day one," recruit Jim Jackson said. "I'm glad he got the job because I think he knows the system and can get the job done at Ohio State."

"I think he's a class act. He related to me well and to the players well. He'd talk to me and tell me what was really going on and not beat around the bush. He was straight with me on what he wanted me to do and where he wanted the program to go."

The early line had Arkansas head coach Nolan Richardson as the prohibitive favorite, and had he been chosen, the players would have had to learn an entirely different system than the one they learned under Gary Williams.

"It will definitely make my transition into Ohio State a lot smoother," Jackson said. "He's been under Coach Williams for three years and he knows the fundamentals and what needs to be done for Ohio State to be successful. That's what I want — to be successful."

Jackson, who is keeping in basketball condition by playing in a summer league in Worthington, Ohio, talked about the need for him and Ohio State to get a coach that can get through to the team.

"I think that it is good that Ohio State picked someone in the program, especially since it was Coach Ayers," Jackson stated. "I think that being around Coach Williams helped Coach Ayers to know more about basketball. I understand that the style of play will be the same. We're still going to push the ball up the floor. I like it that way."

"Coach Ayers is definitely a players' coach. Some coaches can't relate to the guys on a team. Coach Ayers is the type of guy you can open up to and tell your problems to at any time."

And had Ayers not gotten the job, would the Buckeyes be in danger of losing Jackson?

"I don't know about that because it really depended on the coach who came in," he said. "The coaching staff matters, too. If Coach Ayers was to leave, that might have gotten to me and maybe I might have changed my mind. But maybe not. You'll never know because it didn't happen. I mainly came here to the Ohio State University for the academic part."

"I did choose to play basketball here partly because of Coach Williams, but in the back of my mind I really wanted to play under Coach Ayers."

Prop 48 casualty Mark Baker, who will be eligible to play this season, was relieved that the coaching choice was someone with whom he was familiar.

"I didn't get to play under Coach Williams last year and that made me upset," Baker said. "Then when he left, that made me upset, too, because I felt like I didn't have a coach. Now I have a coach and I'm glad it's Coach Ayers. I feel comfortable with him and I'm looking forward to playing for him this season."

Baker used philosophy to analyze a situation that many have said may not



Jim Jackson

be good. After all, Ayers has never coached a major college game.

"This will definitely show what we're made of," Baker explained. "Are we going to take the challenge for Coach Ayers or are we going to back up? Personally, I like challenges. I know Coach Ayers and I feel like he shouldn't have any problem getting us to play well for him. I think the fans will start to like him once they see what he can do."

Cincinnati Forest Park recruit Alex Davis, who will be one of many at the crowded guard position, was taken aback by the Williams decision, but is now looking forward to playing for the new coach.

"Basically, I picked a school and not a coach," said Davis. "Coach Williams is a nice coach and everything, but he has to do what he has to do and I have to do what I have to do."

Most of the younger players chose OSU with the intention of playing for Williams. Now, the recruits that he so hotly pursued won't know what it's like to play for Williams.

"I feel that's the toughest part of leaving the Ohio State situation," Williams said. "The young players, like Jim Jackson, picked Ohio State for several reasons. Maybe I was a part of it but, at the same time, there's a lot of things that go into a young man's decision."

"I think Ohio State can give Jim Jackson and the other players what they need to be successful in their careers, both academically and in basketball."

The feelings for Ayers are not limited to only the recruits. The players on the team, the ones who played for Williams, will also have some adjusting to do, but feel that with the selection of Ayers, it will be an easier transition to make.

"You really feel bad," said junior-to-be James Bradley, "because for three years he worked hard to get the program where it is and now he has all his players here."

"It's just shocking that he would leave now."

Two weeks before leaving, Williams told players during a team meeting that it was "60-40 in favor of staying" at Ohio State, Bradley reported.

"That's what he told us in the locker room," Bradley said.

Sophomore-to-be Bill Robinson felt equally comfortable with both coaches and feels that the switch should have no effect on his play this year.

"We as a team worked really well with Randy last year," Robinson said.



Mark Baker

"Personally, I'm very happy with him. We relate to him really well and he's been a really good friend of myself. I really have a lot of confidence in him as a coach."

"We were kind of worried about who might come in. Being around Coach Williams, maybe Coach Ayers might use the same philosophy, maybe he won't. But it always helps to know the coach right away and not have to get used to his philosophy and personality. We're definitely farther ahead than if they brought in someone from outside."

Perry Carter, the starter at center last year and one of the top returnees in the Big Ten, feels his progress won't be hindered by the coaching switch.

"I loved it," Carter said. "It's pretty good because he knows all the players since he recruited them. He knows our strong points and our weaknesses. He should be able to take that and make us into a winning hallclub."

"If it wouldn't have been Coach Ayers, we would have had to learn a whole new system and that might have set us back since we're comfortable with



Perry Carter

the system we're in."

Even former Buckeyes are pleased with the choice. New Jersey Nets guard Dennis Hopson, who played under Williams for one season, always liked Ayers and thinks the Buckeyes will prosper under their new mentor.

"Randy is the best choice they could have made," Hopson said. "He's never been a head coach, but he has all the qualities he needs to do a great job. He's got the players he needs to do a great job. They're going to play hard for him."

Hopson, who was an All-American his senior season, said that Ayers showed plenty of ability to coach the team when Hopson was a Buckeye.

"He worked real well with me," Hopson said. "Even though he was an assistant coach, he would get in my ear and let me know when I was doing something wrong. I'm very confident that he will do a fine job in bringing Ohio State back to the top of the Big Ten."

Ohio State fans may be feeling the same way if Ayers can deliver on the promise Williams began.

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- (F) Champion Practice. Net cut-off, white or red. 100% polyester. Med-XL. \$15.50. XXL. \$18.50
- (G) Hat by "The Game". "Coach Cooper Style" White polycotton, embroidered logo. \$10.25.
- (H) Red sun visor with embroidered block "O" with green buckeye leaf. \$7.50

Ayers Becomes Youngest Coach In Loop

Continued From Page 1

cern for our players, commitment to the university and the community, interest in our academic pursuits, ability to teach, enthusiasm and will to win were all important factors for me," Jones added.

Ayers said that while making the adjustment from assistant coach to head coach would be difficult, it was a challenge he was ready to accept.

"It doesn't concern me, to be honest with you," he said. "I feel I've paid my dues. I've coached under some great coaches who I think are excellent teachers. Hopefully, I've learned something from them."

"I've been in the Big Ten Conference now for six years. I've done my homework and I'm prepared to take on this responsibility."

With that responsibility comes the challenge to continue to build upon the excitement generated for the past three seasons by Williams' teams. Ayers said OSU fans need not worry about any drastic changes from that game plan.

"We will play up tempo basketball," he promised. "We'll use all 94 feet of the court. We'll be aggressive defensively, I guarantee you that. We hope to create some offense with our defense. We'll get after it. I like to push the ball up the court."

"With the players we have right now in the program, we do have a lack of size, but I think we have good quickness and I'm going to try to utilize that quickness by pushing the ball up the floor."

"I'm also a firm believer in getting the ball inside," Ayers continued. "It

helps when you have size down on the block to get it done. But I'm very confident in the young people we have coming back."

Ayers readily admits there are adjustments associated with becoming a head coach. Some of those include decision-making on different levels.

"Probably the hardest thing will be decision-making during the games," he said. "But I think that will just come with time. I was fortunate because both Gary and (former OSU head coach) Eldon (Miller) let us get involved during the game as far as talking over different situations."

He added that he will be dealing with the players on a different level, too, making the ultimate decision about who plays and who sits on the bench.

"I think that will be a tough part, too," he admitted, "but I think they already respect Randy Ayers as a coach and as a person."

"I believe in putting a lot of responsibility on the players and we will do that. It will be tough, but they will know what I expect from them. You know, the players really make the decision whether you play them or not — how hard they work through the summer and then how hard they work from Oct. 15 to our first game. So they do a lot of the decision-making themselves."

Ayers was Ohio's Class AAA player of the year at Springfield (Ohio) North and went on to be a four-year starter under Darrell Hedric at Miami University.

He helped the Redskins to two Mid-American Conference championships and later spent two years on Hedric's staff as a graduate assistant. He spent

Army Aide, Grad Assistant Expected To Fill Out Staff

By Mark Rea

Army assistant basketball coach Les Fertig was to join the Ohio State basketball staff on July 18, according to a report published in The Columbus Dispatch.

Fertig, who was unavailable for comment before Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press, would become the second full-time assistant hired by new OSU head coach Randy Ayers. Former part-time assistant Paul Brazeau was elevated to full-time status on July 5.

Fertig is a 14-year coaching veteran in Division I, serving as an assistant at Oklahoma under then head coach Dave Bliss from 1975 to 1979 and at Army since the 1980-81 season.

Fertig was hired at Army by head coach Pete Gaudet and served two years under him. The past seven seasons have been spent in service of current Army head coach Les Wothke.

Ayers worked as an assistant with Fertig for two seasons at Army from 1981 to 1983.

Fertig played on two state championship basketball teams in Norman, Okla., but did not play in college.

Meanwhile, a familiar face may round out the OSU coaching lineup.

Tom Souder, who worked as the Buckeyes' graduate assistant last year, is expected to apply for the part-time position, vacated when Brazeau was promoted.

two seasons as an assistant at Army and then joined Miller's staff at OSU in 1983.

When Williams came on board in 1987, he persuaded Ayers to stay and made him a full-time assistant.

When asked if Ayers' on-court demeanor would mirror Miller's low-key approach or Williams' more vociferous behavior, Ayers just smiled and replied, "I'd better say I fall in between the two."

"I think I know when to push and when to pull and when to sit down on that bench and let my players play. I just think you have to coach to your personality. I'll pick and choose my spots."

Ayers said other facets of his coaching philosophy were gleaned from other college coaches who he admires and respects.

"I have a lot of respect for Coach (Bob) Knight at Indiana," he said. "I've been very fortunate. I grew up in Springfield, Ohio, during the Fred Taylor days here at Ohio State, the Ray Mears days at Wittenberg and the Eldon Miller days at Wittenberg. I've been exposed to some good coaches."

"I think a lot of Coach K (Mike Krzyzewski) down at Duke. I think he's done a great job of blending the old with the new. And I think Coach (John) Thompson at Georgetown stresses defense and he's concerned about his players academically."

"I want to follow along those same lines. We're going to try to take a little bit from everybody to form my philosophy. But, again, it's Randy Ayers' philosophy. I'm just going to take little bits and pieces from other people who I respect."

Ayers admits he is excited about the future of Ohio State basketball. Still, mindful of the task ahead of him, he says he has to temper some of that exuberance.

"I'll tell you, after Jim told me I got the job, I was the most excited person in Columbus. Then I looked at our schedule," Ayers said.

"We're a very young team and we have to go to DePaul. We play in the Diet Pepsi tournament down in Charlotte, N.C., opening up with North Carolina State. We've got a challenge."

"There are going to be some tough times because of our youth. When we go into a DePaul or a North Carolina State, to an Indiana or a Purdue, because of our lack of experience, we're going to have some tough going. But, again, if we're totally prepared and the people sitting on the bench with me make good suggestions, we're going to make the necessary adjustments to win a ball game."

"It's going to be a challenge and I think these young people are here to accept that challenge. We'll be ready and I'm excited about it."

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Ayers Pact Should Have Been Two Years

Continued From Page 3

very loyal to Ohio State).

Your other argument might be that in recruiting, a coach needs a five-year contract so he can tell recruits he'll be there for them.

That argument is ridiculous for two reasons.

Is that supposed to mean that every year you extend the coach's contract for

the next five years? And, what if a coach decides to leave, like Williams did? Promises made to recruits all of a sudden don't really mean that much.

Every player being recruited knows there's a chance of a coaching change at almost any school he chooses.

My suggestion to Jones would have been to offer Ayers a two-year contract. Even I will admit one-year deals are out of date.

If Ayers proved during the 1989-90 season that he can be a big-time college coach, three more years could have been

added. If Ayers' hiring proved to be an error, he could have been easily released after two seasons.

For Ohio State's sake, let's hope Ayers was the right choice and leads the Buckeyes to a truly national powerhouse level.

As for the decision to hire Ayers, I have no quarrel.

The names that were mentioned weren't all that impressive.

It would have been stupid to hire Don DeVoe. You don't hire people at Ohio State's level who resigned under pressure or were fired, depending on

who you want to believe.

And I don't think Bob Huggins, if he was really interested, was ready for the move to Ohio State. He was an assistant at Ohio State and did a fine job as head coach at Akron, but I question whether he's any more proven than Ayers.

Some other coaches said they withdrew from consideration. The truth in some of those cases might be that Ohio State took them out of consideration.

So there's no problem with the choice of Ayers, just with the contract he received.

Notebook

Continued From Page 3

going for them. Perhaps it was something they would never have had going for them, making the hiring of Ayers even more important.

One more advantage Ayers had over Richardson, Crews, Gillen or Kruger.

Randy Ayers is a Buckeye.

WE ARE left to guess what kind of a program Gary Williams could have built at Ohio State.

We are also left to guess whether or not Williams really wanted to stay in Columbus. Personally, I've made up my mind that he was looking for any viable escape route.

Was it his reportedly strained relationship with Jim Jones? Was he tired of basketball being treated with less respect than football?

We'll probably never know the reason.

The fact is that Ohio State did everything Williams wanted it to do. And, after getting that satisfaction, he double-crossed them by going to Maryland anyway.

It was a matter of principle. He was always going back to Maryland. He seemingly just wanted to put the squeeze on the Buckeyes one last time.

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The View From 15th and High

By Frank L. Moskowitz, Publisher

OSU's Choice Of Ayers Brings On Mixed Feelings

I have feelings of both happiness and concern with regards to the naming of Randy Ayers as the new Ohio State basketball coach.

I am happy because Randy Ayers is one of the finest, highest quality people in the Ohio State athletic department. I have yet to meet someone who didn't have only good things to say about the Springfield, Ohio, native.

On the other hand, I would have liked to have seen Ohio State select a coach with substantial head coaching experience at the major college level. That desire is not in any way meant to be a knock at Ayers.

Rather, I think that, whether Jim Jones wants to admit it or not, the OSU basketball program is reeling a bit after the loss of Gary Williams. Buckeye backers, all of whom seem ready to support Ayers, might have been more comfortable with a more seasoned coach. There will be a tremendous amount of

pressure on Ayers to produce and produce quickly.

I felt from the beginning that the only way Ayers would get the job would be if Ohio State had trouble finding other takers. That appears to have been the case, with the longtime Buckeye assistant getting the job after Nolan Richardson, among others, apparently withdrew from consideration.

Both Ayers and Jones seem to be sitting together on a limb. Will Ayers be the weight that brings that limb down or the one who leads the two, and the OSU basketball program, off of it?

My point is that we just don't know. Ayers may be the next John Wooden or he may be a bust. Short of waiting for a couple of years, how do you tell?

However, he brings a lot of good things to the job. He is well-known and popular across the state, which surely will help in recruiting. He offers continuity to a program that could use

plenty of it. He is liked by the players. He is energetic, hard-working and apparently has a good basketball mind.

And best of all, it's doubtful he will leave Ohio State to take the job at his alma mater, Miami.

ONE OF the more disappointing aspects of Gary Williams' departure is the fact that we will never get a chance to see how good a coach Williams really is — at least not at Ohio State.

There was a tendency among Ohio State basketball fans to give Williams a tremendous amount of credit for his coaching ability, but I wanted to wait a year or two longer to make my judgment. No one disputes that he was a good coach. I wanted to know *how* good.

In his three years at Ohio State, Williams was 59-41 for a .590 winning percentage. In Eldon Miller's final three years at OSU, his teams compiled a 54-38 mark, for a comparable .587. Williams' teams were 24-30 (.444) in the Big Ten, finishing sixth, sixth and eighth in the conference. Miller's final three squads were actually stronger in conference, going 27-27 and finishing fifth, third and seventh.

In these comparable periods, both coaches had two NIT appearances and one NCAA bid. Both teams were 1-1 in the NCAA tourney and Miller brought home an NIT championship his final year, while Williams' 1987-88 unit was the NIT runner-up.

Thus, there was nothing especially spectacular about Williams' years at OSU. I think he simply proved that if Buckeye fans were going to have to watch mediocre teams, they would rather see an exciting brand of basketball as opposed to Miller's brand, which, though equally successful to that of Williams, seemed to match Miller's ho-hum personality.

Williams could have established himself as one of the OSU all-time coaching greats this past season if he had been able to rally his troops after the loss of Jay Burson. Instead, the Buckeyes lost seven straight. So there was nothing spectacular there either.

I think Williams was building what could have been an outstanding program. But like I say, we'll never know. His apologists said that his problem was he didn't have his own players to work with. With the graduation of Jay Burson, Tony White, Joe Dumas and Jerry Francis, the last vestiges of the

Eldon Miller era are gone. But so is Gary Williams.

Before he left, Williams recruited some of the finest athletes the OSU basketball program has seen in years. Too bad we won't know how well he would have done with them.

IT IS INTERESTING that the OSU athletic department appears to have leaked the story about Gary Williams running up huge personal phone bills at the expense of the university. After Jim Jones and Gary Williams spent so much time denying reports that they didn't get along, one wonders what the purpose of leaking the story was.

THE ASTUTE observation of the year award goes to Don DeVoe, who says that it now appears he is not going to ever get the Ohio State basketball coaching position. Most *BSB* readers spoke to seemed adamant in their desire to have someone other than DeVoe in the top basketball spot, though there were some who seemed to think it was time to put a Buckeye in the top cage job and DeVoe was their leading choice.

Interestingly, the last time we got as violently negative of a reaction concerning a potential OSU head coach was when Don Nehlen was mentioned as a possibility for the Ohio State football job eventually landed by John Cooper. *BSB* readers gave Nehlen an absolute thumbs down and, ironically, he ended up leading his West Virginia squad to within a couple of touchdowns of the national championship last season.

THIS IS the time of year when we like to give some of our letter writers who have been taking it easy over the summer a little push.

For our August issue, we would like to hear from you regarding the Ohio State basketball situation. What did you think about Gary Williams and his departure from Ohio State? What did you think about the process to choose a new coach? And what do you think about the selection of Randy Ayers?

Then, for our football preview issue, we want to hear what you think about the 1989 edition of the Ohio State football team. How will it do? What are its strengths and weaknesses? We look forward to hearing from you.

By the way, some of you have been trying to sneak letters by us either unsigned, or with pseudonyms. We feel if you believe in your opinion about something, you should certainly be willing to back it up with your name.

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