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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

February 12, 2000

OSU Class In Top 10 Again

Buckeyes Concentrate On Athletes, Load Up On Defensive Help

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

There was a little bit of good news, some bad news and a whole lot of athleticism for Ohio State on national signing day this year.

The good news was that Michigan linebacker Marco Cooper had indeed spurned late overtures from Tennessee and signed with Ohio State. Plus, the Buckeyes had won a last-minute recruiting battle with LSU for Georgia defensive back Harlen Jacobs.

The bad news was that South Carolina running back Greg Jones had signed with defending national champion Florida State over OSU.

As for the athleticism, OSU head coach John Cooper preferred to say it was everywhere he looked in the Buckeyes' 25-man recruiting class.

"The word I think would be overall athletic ability," Cooper said when asked to sum up his 13th OSU recruiting class. "You look at these linebackers and defensive backs that we've signed, all these kids can run.

"If you can't run, you can't play. That's the best thing I like about this football team is the overall team speed of this incoming freshman class."

Speaking at his Feb. 2 signing day press conference, Cooper seemed pleased as Ohio State had signed one more top-10 caliber recruiting class. In fact, BSB's consensus poll of six recruiting experts gave Ohio State's class a national ranking of seventh.

"You are looking at one happy head football coach," Cooper told the assembled media at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. "Bill Conley, our recruiting coordinator, did an outstanding job again this year. I think we have an excellent class coming in here.

"Not only were we able to get most of the football players inside the state we were interested in, but we were able to go outside the state and secure some very good prospects."

Coming off a 6-6 season when the Buckeyes missed bowl competition for the first time in 11 years, Cooper and his coaching staff were able to turn a negative into a positive by landing a class that, by and large, filled their needs.

"I don't think that had a difference in it," Cooper said of the team's record. "There are certain players who want to see your depth chart and want to play right away. Some of them want to play for the national championship next year. I don't know if our record had a bearing on whether we got somebody or not."

In particular, OSU signed six linebackers — including junior college transfer Jack Tucker, who is already enrolled — and five defensive backs.

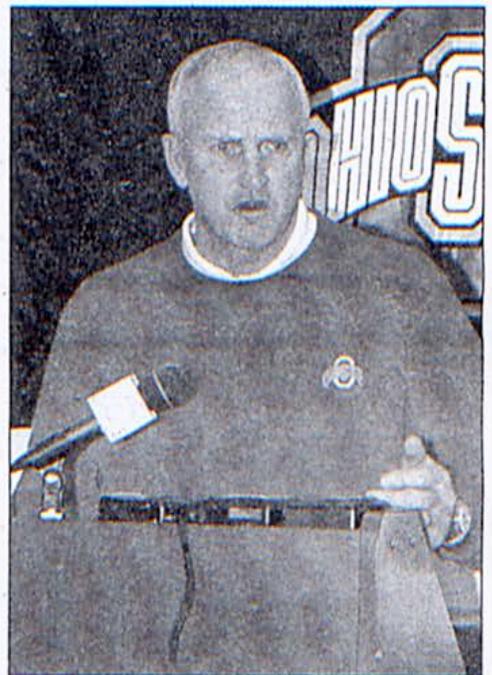
"We pretty much got the numbers we need at the different positions," he said. "We felt like we needed some linebackers. Anytime you have a good defensive football team, you have guys who can run.

"We got speed and athleticism. These are good tacklers. The trend in college football is everybody is playing

BSB'S 2000 RECRUITING WRAP-UP

Inside BSB's Recruiting Wrap-Up edition:

- National recruiting experts give the Buckeyes high marks; Florida reels in nation's No. 1 class (Pages 10-11)
- Recruiting coordinator Bill Conley discusses this year's recruiting effort (Page 12)
- BSB discusses recruiting with OSU assistant coach Jim Heacock (Page 13)
- A look at how the rest of the Big Ten and Notre Dame fared this year in recruiting (Pages 14-16)
- BSB tracks where Ohio's top prospects landed (Pages 18-19)
- Profile on Florida's versatile Michael Jenkins, an OSU signee with experience at as many as six positions (Page 20)
- Recruiting Outlook: Jones gets away, but OSU signs Jacobs at last minute (Pages 22-23)
- A recap of the BSB Hot 25, where OSU signed nine players (Page 24)
- An early look at the top underclassmen in Ohio and nationally (Pages 25-27)
- Complete bios on OSU's 25 signees (Pages 28-29)



STEVE HELWAGEN

ONE HAPPY COACH — OSU head coach John Cooper meets with the media to discuss the school's 2000 football recruiting class. The class was judged seventh nationally.

the pressure package, including the Buckeyes, so we're looking for guys who can run."

Besides Tucker, the key names at linebacker were Marco Cooper, a USA Today All-USA first team pick, and Kentucky's Robert Reynolds.

"Those (linebacker) positions are pretty much interchangeable," Cooper said. "We play a 4-3 style of defense, so we're looking for three linebackers. Some of those guys can move up, like we did with Na'il Diggs, and use them as rush ends off the corner. All of these guys have good size and good range."

In the secondary, OSU brought in two safeties, two corners and one player in Jacobs who could probably handle either position.

"We needed some cover guys in the secondary," Cooper said. "We lost Ahmed Plummer this year and the past couple of years we lost some other talented guys back there. You're always looking for good athletes."

Despite missing on Jones — he actually committed to OSU Jan. 30 only to recant a day later — the Buckeyes

In This Issue Of BSB

• Patriots Making A Big Play For Kennedy

The NFL's New England Patriots have offered their vacant conditioning coach position to OSU's Dave Kennedy. Kennedy flew to Boston Feb. 4 to discuss the opening with the Pats. For more on the story, see Ohio State Insider on page 4.



Dave Kennedy

Continued On Page 8

COVER STORY: FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Out-Of-State Success Required Every Resource

Continued From Page 1

finished strong. Besides Marco Cooper, they also wrapped up Reynolds, Jacobs and highly touted defensive end Will Smith of New York in the final weeks before signing day.

"The kind of year you have will depend on what you do in the last week of recruiting," Cooper said. "We were able to finish strong, get Marco and get Robert Reynolds."

"Plus, we held on to the other players we had committed to us and we slipped in there late and got Jacobs, the defensive back out of Atlanta."

Going Out Of State

Ohio State was rebuked on a handful of the top players in Ohio as four of the state's top five players went elsewhere.

That group included linemen Antonio Hall and Mike Munoz, who went to Kentucky and Tennessee, respectively, and tight end Sean McHugh and defensive end Sam Ruhe, who both signed with Penn State.

But the Buckeyes picked up the pieces and ended up signing players from nine different states.

"We missed a couple in-state this year, but we were able to go out-of-state and get a couple," Cooper said. "We have gone national the last few years. Now don't get me wrong, we're going to concentrate in Ohio every year as we did this year. We're going to start in Columbus and go as far as we need to go."

OSU Football Signees

Football players who have signed letters of intent to play college football at Ohio State, with rankings as overall prospects from The Ohio Football Recruiting News for the Ohio players and All-American honors listed.

TOFRN Rank	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School	All-American Honors
31	Willie Allen	DB	6-2	175	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne	
16	B.J. Barre	DB	6-1	185	Toledo Whitmer	
—	Bobby Britton	DB	5-11	175	Jacksonville (Fla.) Raines	SP
26	Jason Caldwell	TE	6-5	265	Mentor, Ohio	
19	Brandon Childress	DB	5-10	175	Bedford (Ohio) Chanel	
—	Marco Cooper	LB	6-2	235	Detroit Cass Tech	USA1, RR100, G&W, SP, PFR, PS
18	John Hollins	WR	6-2	185	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne	
NR	Josh Huston	K	6-2	190	Findlay, Ohio	
—	Harlen Jacobs	DB	6-2	175	Atlanta Douglass	
—	Michael Jenkins	WR	6-5	200	Tampa (Fla.) Leto	
10	Branden Joe	RB	6-2	230	Westerville (Ohio) South	SP
9	Larry Kinnard	OL	6-7	295	Alliance, Ohio	SP
15	Andrew Lee	WR	6-2	195	Columbus Brookhaven	
—	Sam Maldonado	RB	6-2	215	Harrison, N.Y.	USA2, RR100, G&W, SP, PS
—	Thomas Matthews	LB	6-1	205	Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) Dillard	
21	Rick McFadden	QB	6-7	205	Struthers, Ohio	
—	Jamal Muhammad	LB	6-1	230	Stone Mountain, Ga.	
—	Shane Olivea	OL	6-5	315	Cedarhurst (N.Y.) Lawrence	SP, PS
7	Terry Pogue	RB	6-2	220	Dayton Colonel White	SP
—	Robert Reynolds	LB	6-4	223	Bowling Green, Ky.	SP, PS
—	Darrion Scott	LB	6-3	244	Charleston (W.Va.) Capital	SP, PS
—	Will Smith	DE	6-3	230	Utica (N.Y.) Proctor	RR100, SP
3	Alex Stepanovich	OL	6-5	270	Berea, Ohio	SP
6	Alphonso Townsend	DL	6-6	280	Lima (Ohio) Senior	RR100, SP, PS
—	Jack Tucker*	LB	6-1	235	Cerritos (Calif.) C.C.	SP (No. 6 JUCO player)

*-Already enrolled at Ohio State.

All-American Honors Key: USA1, USA Today first-team All-USA (top 25 nationally); USA2, USA Today second-team All-USA (second 25 nationally); RR100, Rivals100.com Recruiting (top 100 nationally); G&W, G&W Recruiting Report (top 100); PFR, Tom Lemming's Prep Football Report (top 100); SP, SuperPrep (top 308).



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COVER STORY: FOOTBALL RECRUITING

"We got 13 of these players in state. We were disappointed. We didn't get a couple of guys that you all know about in the state who, for whatever reason, didn't come to Ohio State. I think they made a mistake.

"If you don't get them in state, you've got to go out of state. I think our coaches did a nice job in Florida and New York, New Jersey and areas like that."

In Florida, OSU inked two of the state's top 35 players in defensive back Bobby Britton and wide receiver Michael Jenkins.

The Buckeyes got the top three players in New York in running back Sam Maldonado, Smith and offensive lineman Shane Olivea.

Reynolds was Kentucky's top player, while linebacker Darrien Scott was among the top three in West Virginia. Marco Cooper was among Michigan's top five prospects this year.

Coach Cooper said recruiting effectively outside Ohio requires maximum effort from the staff.

"You've got to go find the players and then you have to find the out-of-state players you have a realistic chance to recruit," he said.

"For whatever reason, Sam Maldonado liked us. His dad came on the visit. (Assistant) Tim Salem and Tim Spencer did a good job of following up on him. He went to the Heisman banquet and Archie Griffin spoke at the banquet and Eddie George was there.

"The six Heisman Trophy winners we have are running backs, and that may have had an impact in him coming here."

Individually Speaking

Cooper then got into specifics on some of OSU's signees:

• **Brandon "Bam" Childress, defensive back** — "Bam Childress was the player of the year here in Ohio. He could play either wide receiver or defensive back. He is a very confident football player that you'll love when he gets down here."

• **Harlen Jacobs, defensive back** — "Harlen Jacobs is a guy we got a commitment from late last night (Feb. 1). He was also being recruited by one of the SEC schools. He runs track, he has good speed and could be a good cover back."

• **Michael Jenkins, wide receiver** — "We like Michael Jenkins from Florida. He is a 6-5, 200-pound guy. Some schools liked him as a free safety. We were recruiting him as a wide receiver."

• **Branden Joe, running back** —

"We offered him a scholarship way back his sophomore year. He was a great player his freshman year. He came out of a great program over there. (Westerville South coach) Rocky (Pentello) does a great job with those players. He wants to be a Buckeye and that's the kind of guy you like in your program."

• **Andrew Lee, wide receiver** — "He's got a 40-inch vertical jump. Some people say he is the same kind of football player coming out of high school as Terry Glenn, so we're very excited about him."

• **Sam Maldonado, running back** — "You will absolutely love Sammy. His dad came down on the visit, fell in love with this place. Tim Spencer did a good job recruiting him, along with Tim Salem, and George Belu got involved there in the end.

"We got three good players out of New York. We talked about Will Smith and Shane Olivea and Sammy comes from New York, also. You'll love the kid on the field and you'll love him off the field. He comes from a good family and he had 7,000 yards rushing up there in high school. I hope he's as good as advertised."

• **Rick McFadden, quarterback** — "Rick McFadden at quarterback is 6-7, 205 pounds. He's a big, tall quarterback with good vision. We liked everything about him. He has good ability. We had him in camp. He's got great vision. He's got a good release. He is a very intelligent football player. There is a lot of upside to him."

• **Jamal Muhammad, linebacker** — "Jamal Muhammad from Stone Mountain, Ga., was a guy who committed early. Then a lot of the SEC schools tried to get in on him late. He is a fine young man we think is going to have a very bright future. He had 150 tackles this year."

• **Shane Olivea, offensive lineman** — "Let me tell you what happened, it's an interesting story. Shane Olivea was in our camp, we offer him a scholarship, he likes our program and his mother and dad really like Ohio State. He has a brother that lives down close to the Cincinnati area. That made it real convenient for the kid to come to Ohio State."

"He went home, visited Georgia Tech and he absolutely loved Georgia Tech's offensive line coach. I make an in-home visit and I tell him, look, if you like their school better than our school, maybe you ought to consider going there. If you like their head coach better than me, then maybe you ought to consider going there. But do not go to a school because you like an assistant

football coach. Assistant football coaches come and go. Who knows, if he's a real good coach he may be in the NFL.

"So Shane made a verbal commitment to go to Georgia Tech. The next week, that offensive line coach left Georgia Tech and went to Georgia, so exactly what I was talking about came true. Shane called us and said, 'Coach Cooper, you're right. I'm reconsidering.'"

"Then our offensive line coach, George Belu, goes up, makes an in-home visit, he likes George Belu, and boom, he's going to Ohio State. Shane's a big lineman who thinks he's going to come in here and play next year."

• **Robert Reynolds, linebacker** — "Robert Reynolds was a highly recruited football player that almost everybody in the country tried to recruit. He is also a deep snapper. Losing Kevin Houser, we're looking for somebody to come in and do that."

• **Alex Stepanovich, offensive lineman** — "You talk about Alex, Alex is a young man that committed to us last year. We think he is one of the best linemen in the country, either offense or defense. He'll come in here as an offensive lineman. He's probably good enough to play on the defensive side of the ball. His brother is a wrestler at Ohio State now. A year ago everyone in the world was recruiting him. We really like him."

• **Alphonso Townsend, defensive lineman** — "Townsend was in our camp. We like his size, athletic ability and quickness. Last year, everybody in the world was recruiting him, including Florida State. He's a big kid and he's got a lot of growth potential."

Playing Early

Cooper and his staff are hopeful members of this class will push for immediate playing time.

"There are players we recruited this year that have the talent to come in here and play," he said. "Now whether they will work hard this summer, come in in great condition and pick the system up as quickly as we hope they will remains to be seen."

"You think they're all good prospects or you wouldn't sign them. More and more of the players we sign want to come in here and play early."

"If they're going to play early, they need to come in here and condition with our players. If they don't, they have very little chance of playing."

When pressed for who he believes could come in and play, he replied:

"Probably some of those linebackers and defensive backs, probably because of the need factor. We're thin in the defensive backfield. Losing Plum (Ahmed Plummer) and Gary Berry in the secondary and not having a lot of quality backups there a year ago, that might open the door for some of those guys to come in here."

"We were looking for linebackers, wide receivers and running backs. We lost Michael Wiley, but we picked up Sam Maldonado and Terry Pogue, a couple of guys we think can come in here and play quickly."

"We have a history of having some big running backs like Eddie (George), Raymond (Harris) and Robert (Smith). Those are big backs that are playing in the NFL."

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE EXPERTS

Ohio State's Class Seventh-Best, Say Experts

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Florida has not been a major player in the national championship picture since the Gators claimed the crown in 1996.

So Steve Spurrier and his staff went into recruiting season this year on a mission.

And, if we believe the opinions of BSB's collection of six national recruiting experts, it was a mission accomplished for the Gators.

Florida claimed five of the six first-place votes to take the top spot in BSB's consensus poll. Tennessee, as high as second on five ballots, finished second. Florida State, which had the other first-place vote, was third. Last year's winner, Texas, was fourth, while Alabama rounded out the top five.

Three Big Ten teams came next with Penn State sixth, Ohio State seventh and Michigan State eighth.

PropStar's Rick Kimbrel cast the lone dissenting vote for Florida State,

although he admitted the competition was very tight.

"You could almost make an argument for every team in the top 10," Kimbrel said. "On our rating system, only decimal points separated several of these teams. This is the closest I've ever seen it."

"Adding to the confusion, there are several guys like Teyo Johnson, D.J. Williams and Amon Gordon who have not decided yet."

Florida bagged six Rivals100.com Recruiting top 100 players, including late commitments from linebacker Darrell Lee, defensive tackle Bennie Mills and safety Tre Orr. Wide receiver Carlos Perez, just outside the top 100, also picked UF over Ohio State in the final weekend before signing day.

"They got two great wide receivers in Carlos Perez and Reggie Vickers," said SuperPrep's Allen Wallace. "Plus, they got the No. 2 linebacker in the country in Darrell Lee."

Florida set itself up for the future by signing USA Today offensive player of the year Brock Berlin, a quarterback from

National Recruiting Experts Rankings

BILL KURELIC The Ohio Football Recruiting News	BOBBY BURTON Rivals100.com Recruiting	PHIL GROSZ G&W Recruiting Report
1 Florida	1 Florida	1 Florida
2 Tennessee	2 Tennessee	2 Tennessee
3 Penn State	3 Penn State	3 Alabama
4 Florida State	4 OHIO STATE	4 Florida State
5 OHIO STATE	5 Texas	5 Penn State
6 Texas	6 Alabama	6 Texas
7 Alabama	7 Florida State	7 OHIO STATE
8 Miami (Fla.)	8 Michigan State	8 Nebraska
9 Michigan State	9 Nebraska	9 Michigan State
10 Notre Dame	10 Arizona State	10 (tie) Miami (Fla.)
		10 (tie) USC

RICK KIMBREL PrepStar	TOM LEMMING Prep Football Report	ALLEN WALLACE SuperPrep
1 Florida State	1 Florida	1 Florida
2 (tie) Texas	2 Tennessee	2 Texas
2 (tie) Tennessee	3 Alabama	3 Florida State
2 (tie) Alabama	4 Florida State	4 Penn State
2 (tie) Florida	5 Texas	5 Tennessee
6 Miami (Fla.)	6 OHIO STATE	6 Alabama
7 Penn State	7 Notre Dame	7 OHIO STATE
8 OHIO STATE	8 Penn State	8 USC
9 USC	9 Michigan State	9 Miami (Fla.)
10 Michigan State	10 USC	10 Michigan State

NATIONAL RECRUITING EXPERTS CONSENSUS POLL

(Determined by voting points; First-place votes in parentheses)

1 Florida (5)	57.5	6 Penn State	36	11 (tie) Notre Dame	5
2 Tennessee	49.5	7 OHIO STATE	29	11 (tie) Nebraska	5
3 Florida State (1)	43	8 Michigan State	11	13 Arizona State	1
4 Texas	38.5	9 Miami (Fla.)	10.5		
5 Alabama	37.5	10 USC	6.5		

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Louisiana.

"Florida's wide receiver class was tremendous," said Rivals100.com's Bobby Burton. "Plus, they got the No. 1 quarterback in the country in Brock Berlin. They also signed the best offensive line unit in the country."

"Florida really cleaned up everywhere," added Prep Football Report's Tom Lemming. "I had them with 18 All-Americans."

Meanwhile, Tennessee signed seven Rivals100.com top 100 players, getting late commitments from running back Shyrone Carey, safety O.J. Owens and offensive lineman Sean Young. Other notables in the class were quarterback Casey Clausen of California and offensive lineman Mike Munoz of Ohio.

"If they get Jason Respert in, it could be the best offensive line class we've seen in a while with him, Mike Munoz and Sean Young," Kimbrel said.

"Their wide receiver class again was very strong with Rashad Baker and Tony Brown," added Burton. "Plus, they signed three of our top eight linemen in the country."

Florida State inked the most Rivals100.com top 100 players, signing eight. Of that group, five decided in the days leading up to signing day, including lineman Alex Barron, linebacker Michael Boulware, defensive end Travis Johnson, cornerback Bryant McFadden and linebacker Eric Moore.

"They are a big deal now," Burton joked of the defending national champions. "They are definitely closers, getting Jones, McFadden and Moore very late."

"They got the No. 1 defensive lineman in Travis Johnson, the No. 1 corner in Bryant McFadden and the No. 2 linebacker in Eric Moore," Kimbrel added.

Texas was also strong with seven Rivals100.com players, keeping tight end Brock Edwards at home in the final days.

"They signed the best back-to-back recruiting classes any team in this state

has had in a long time," Burton said of the Longhorns.

Alabama netted six Rivals100.com players, snagging defensive linemen Anthony Bryant and Nautyn McKay-Loescher just before signing day.

Penn State, rated sixth, had five top 100 players, followed by Ohio State and Michigan State with four each. Miami (Fla.), ranked ninth, finished with five top 100 signees.

For more on how the experts saw the Big Ten recruiting race as well as Notre Dame, see pages 14-16. The following are comments from each of the experts on OSU's class.

Kurelic

Bill Kurelic tracks OSU recruiting for The Ohio Football Recruiting News. He tabbed OSU fifth nationally.

"I think they did very well," Kurelic said. "I think they filled their needs well with some very good talent. The only places they could have used more help were at tight end and on the offensive line."

Kurelic liked the depth OSU added on defense, where it signed six linebackers and five defensive backs.

"They've added depth at both positions," Kurelic said. "In the defensive backfield, there's no one there who is going to be on any national list of, say, the top five DBs in the country."

"But they're solid prospects and prospects who could turn out to be very good. I consider Bam Childress — it's hard to compare him at this point — but a little bit like Antoine Winfield. He's about the same size and wasn't that highly known coming out of high school but is a very talented player who has a bit of potential."

Kurelic also liked OSU's signing of quarterback Rick McFadden.

"In my opinion, he is the best quarterback in the state of Ohio this year," Kurelic said. "He's a good player, with

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE EXPERTS

good size at 6-7. But he's not just a big kid, he's a good athlete.

"In fact, he was recruited by some schools to play basketball. He's a talented all-around athlete. He's a left-hander, which fits in nicely because Steve Bellisari is left-handed. I think he's going to redshirt. I don't think he's ready to play Big Ten ball right now, but I think he has the potential to be a very good quarterback. You just don't know how he's going to develop."

While in Hawaii recently for the Hula Bowl with Rivals100.com, Kurelic had a chance to spend time with OSU signee Sam Maldonado, a highly touted running back from New York.

"I've watched tapes on him," Kurelic said. "He really is an excellent prospect. He's about 6-1, goes 215 pounds. That's a good size for a running back. He's also fast and elusive. He can either run you over or run by you."

"I don't know if he'll play right away this year. That remains to be seen — they have Jonathan Wells, who will certainly be the first man in line — but Sammy's got it in his mind that he's going to come in and play next season for Ohio State."

From Ohio, Kurelic was impressed by Dayton running back Terry Pogue.

"He is a tremendous talent," Kurelic said. "The only question mark has been whether he will

qualify academically. He definitely can do that. He just has to get it done."

"He's 6-2, nearly 220 pounds and runs a 10.8-second 100 meters. You don't find that combination very often."

Kurelic noted how the Buckeyes struck out on several highly ranked tight ends they were recruiting.

"That's the one area that Ohio State would have liked to have done a little better," he said. "They wanted to land two tight ends if they could and they had a shot at some good ones — Willie Roberts from Florida at one point committed to Ohio State and Darius Williams from Georgia had it down to Ohio State and Georgia Tech. There were a few others they had a shot at but just didn't land."

Burton

Burton gave OSU's class the highest marks, rating the Buckeyes fourth nationally.

"The players we liked, obviously, were Marco Cooper and Sam Maldonado," Burton said. "We had Maldonado as our No. 1 running back in the nation."

"Some people did not have Cooper rated that highly, but he made our All-American team. They beat Tennessee for Cooper, so that's a major accomplishment."

"We also had two more of their signees, Alphonso Townsend and Will Smith, on our top 100 list. They should help them on the defensive line. They stuck with Smith, got him to visit and commit late when it looked like he was headed somewhere else. That was a good pickup," he said.

Grosz

Phil Grosz of G&W Recruiting Report listed Ohio State seventh, two spots behind Penn State, nationally. He addressed OSU's failure to sign Ohio's top stars like Munoz, lineman Antonio

Hall (who defected to Kentucky) and Penn State-bound tight end Sean McHugh and defensive end Sam Ruhe.

"I thought Ohio State took a lot of unnecessary criticism after supposedly losing four of the top five players in Ohio," he said.

"They might be light a couple of offensive linemen, but I don't think it's as bad as some people think."

Grosz had several of OSU's signees ranked highly.

"I liked the linebackers, Robert Reynolds and Marco Cooper, they signed," he said. "I think Shane Olivea is an outstanding offensive lineman. I was one of the first guys to rank him that high."

"With him, Will Smith and Sam Maldonado, they probably got the three top guys in New York."

Kimbrel

Kimbrel also marveled over the hubbub surrounding the loss of Munoz and Hall — and how the Buckeyes overcame it.

"I thought they did a fantastic job," said Kimbrel, who gave OSU its lowest ranking at eighth nationally. "The strange thing is they lose the top two players in state and still end up better than Michigan and Michigan State by a long shot."

"What they lost in state they picked up in New York with the top three players there. Olivea is a nice offensive lineman. He's tall and works hard. They got a great pass rushing outside linebacker or defensive end in Smith. Maldonado may be the big back they've been looking for since Eddie George."

"This is a very athletic class with a lot of speed."

Lemming

Lemming had OSU ranked sixth nationally. He was the only expert to rank the Buckeyes ahead of Penn State.

"I thought Ohio State did a great job," he said. "They lost Munoz and Hall, but they got just about everybody else they wanted. What made it special was they went out of state and got Cooper, Reynolds and Maldonado. That really added some oomph to their class."

Lemming said he sensed early on that OSU had no chance on Munoz.

"When I talked to Anthony Munoz, he told me he would like to see Mike and Michelle go to the same school," he said. "She decided first for Tennessee, and that kind of cinched it for him."

Wallace

Wallace ranked OSU seventh nationally after the Buckeyes bagged three of his magazine's top 50 prospects overall.

"They got great linebackers in this class with Cooper and Reynolds," he said. "We had those two and Maldonado in our national top 50. They also got our top three players in New York with Maldonado, Smith and Olivea."

Wallace also gave All-American kudos (top 308 players nationally) to all three of OSU's offensive line signees — Olivea, Alex Stepanovich and Larry Kinnard.

"Every one of those offensive linemen they signed were All-American caliber," he said. "How many are you expected to sign?"

"I have always believed that it doesn't matter where you get your kids, as long as they can play. Sure, Munoz will probably go to Tennessee and be a great lineman."

"But it looks like Ohio State got some people who can help them, too."

The Rivals 100

Here is a look at the final Rivals 100 list. Ohio State signed four of these players and had 10 of them make visits (denoted with asterisks). Players are listed with their schools of choice or commitment (in bold).

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown	Schools
CB	Corey Bailey	5-10	165	4.65	Hialeah (Fla.) American	Florida
WR	Rashad Baker	6-0	185	4.41	Camden (N.J.) Wilson	Tennessee
OL	Alex Barron	6-8	298	4.9	Orangeburg (S.C.) Wilkinson	Florida State
RB	Tatum Bell	6-0	180	4.34	DeSoto, Texas	Oklahoma State
QB	Brock Berlin	6-2	202	4.7	Shreveport (La.) Evangli Christian	Florida
CB	Adam Black	6-0	175	4.4	Houston (Texas) Cy Falls	Texas A&M
RB	Ronnie Brown	6-1	207	4.5	Cartersville, Ga.	Auburn
LB	Michael Boulware	6-2	200	4.5	Columbia (S.C.) Spring Valley	Florida State
S	Yohance Buchanan	6-2	205	4.4	Atlanta (Ga.) Douglass	Florida State
DT	Anthony Bryant	6-4	312	4.93	Sunshine, Ala.	Alabama
QB	Jason Campbell	6-5	185	4.8	Taylorsville, Miss.	Auburn
RB	Shyrene Carey	5-9	170	4.4	Marrero (La.) Shaw	Tennessee
QB	Casey Clausen	6-4	205	4.8	Mission Hills (Calif.) Alemany	Tennessee
LB	Marco Cooper*	6-2	230	4.5	Detroit (Mich.) Cass Tech	Ohio State
LB	Brooks Daniels	6-4	195	4.4	Madison (Fla.) Hamilton County	Alabama
WR	Willie Dixon	5-11	173	4.31	Stockton (Calif.) Brookside Christian	Alabama
DE	Adam Dolron	6-4	260	4.78	Duncan, Okla.	Texas
RB	Tyrell Dortch	5-11	195	4.4	Hoboken, N.J.	Michigan State
RB	Vontez Duff	6-0	180	4.4	Copperas Cove, Texas	Notre Dame
TE	Brock Edwards	6-4	250	4.64	Fort Worth (Texas) Christian	Texas
S	Ben Emanuel II	6-3	185	4.57	Friendswood (Texas) Clear Brook	UCLA
RB	Diamond Ferri	5-10	198	4.45	Everett (Mass.)	Syracuse
DE	Amon Gordon	6-3	271	5.0	San Diego (Calif.) Mira Mesa	USC, Ariz., Stanford, FSU, Miami (Fla.), TXAM
S	Matt Grootegoed	6-0	200	4.5	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Del	USC
OL	Antonio Hall*	6-7	300	5.1	Canton (Ohio) McKinley	Kentucky
OL	Kwama Harris	6-7	325	5.1	Newark, Del.	Stanford
DT	Justin Hinds	6-5	265	5.1	Piscataway, N.J.	BC, PSU, Mich., Miami (Fla.), FSU
LB	Hobie Holiday	6-3	227	4.67	Warner Robbins (Ga.) Houston Cty.	Georgia Tech
RB	Albert Hollis II	6-0	185	4.4	Sacramento (Calif.) Christian Bros.	Georgia
TE	Alex Holmes	6-3	285	4.9	N. Hollywood (Calif.) Harvard/Wlake	USC
RB	Marcus Houston	6-2	200	4.39	Denver (Colo.) Thomas Jefferson	Colorado
S	Harold James Jr.	6-0	220	4.5	Osceola, Ark.	Alabama
WR	B.J. Johnson	6-0	180	4.5	South Grand Prairie, Texas	Texas
CB	Richard Johnson	6-0	170	4.38	Randallstown (Md.) Millford Mill	Virginia Tech
TE	Tevo Johnson	6-6	242	4.84	San Diego (Calif.) Mira Mesa	Stanford, San Diego St., FSU, Houston, UCLA, USC, Miami (Fla.)
LB	Tim Johnson	6-3	245	4.7	Delbarton, N.J.	Penn State
RB	Tony Johnson	5-11	186	4.57	State College, Pa.	Penn State
DE	Travis Johnson	6-5	240	4.6	Sherman Oaks, Calif.	Florida State
LB	Darius Jones	6-4	245	4.75	Beloit, Wis.	Wisconsin
OL	Greg Jones*	6-1	235	4.5	Beaufort (S.C.) Battery Creek	Florida State
OL	Carlos Joseph	6-5	315	5.1	Miami (Fla.) Edison	Miami (Fla.)
RB	Keith Kelly	6-0	215	4.45	Walterboro (S.C.)	Clemson
LB	Darrell Lee	6-5	230	4.5	St. Louis (Mo.) Kirkwood	Florida
DT	Stevie Lee	6-5	310	5.0	Shreveport (La.) Evangli Christian	Texas
RB	Jermelle Lewis	6-0	215	4.4	Bloomfield, Conn.	Iowa
RB	Sam Maldonado*	6-2	215	4.4	Harrison, N.Y.	Ohio State
LB	Raymond Mann	6-2	228	4.5	Hampton, Va.	Virginia
LB	Chad Mascoe	6-2	215	4.5	Kissimmee (Fla.) Osceola	Florida State
S	Adrian Mayes	6-2	200	4.4	Houston (Texas) Forest Brook	Nebraska
RB	Ronald McClendon	5-8	180	4.4	Ponchatoula, La.	Tulane
CB	Bryant McFadden	5-11	170	4.6	Hollywood (Fla.) McArthur	Florida State
OL	Willie McGahee*	6-1	217	4.47	Miami (Fla.) Central	Miami (Fla.)
OL	Joe McGuire	6-6	290	5.3	Anaheim (Calif.) Servite	USC
DE	Nauyn McKay-Loescher*	6-3	245	4.55	Toronto (Ont.) Central Tech	Alabama
OL	Chris McKelvy	6-4	295	4.15	Lansdale (Pa.) N. Penn	Penn State
DT	Albert Means	6-3	280	4.9	Memphis (Tenn.) Trezevant	Alabama
DT	Bennie Mills	6-3	280	5.0	Metairie (La.) Rummel	Florida
OL	Maurice Mitchell	6-8	285	5.1	Albany (Ga.) Dougherty	UGA, G-Tech, Auburn
QB	Paul Mochler	6-6	298	5.53	Bellevue (Calif.) St. John Bosco	UCLA
QB	Chance Mock	6-2	190	4.53	The Woodlands, Texas	Texas
CB	Bo Mosley	5-10	150	4.5	Osceola, Ark.	Arkansas
LB	Eric Moore	6-5	225	4.7	Pahokee, Fla.	Florida State
WR	Johnnie Morant*	6-4	220	4.5	Parsippany (N.J.) Hills	Syracuse
OL	Michael Munoz	6-7	285	5.2	Cincinnati (Ohio) Moeller	Tennessee
LB	Karlton Neal	6-5	235	4.67	Chicago (Ill.) Mogan Park	Tennessee
DT	Erik Neill	6-5	295	4.84	Gaithersburg (Md.) Watkins Mill	Penn State
QB	Craig Ochs	6-2	208	4.55	Boulder (Colo.) Fairview	Colorado
DE	Artwan Odum	6-6	257	4.7	Bayou La Bate (La.) Alma Bryant	Alabama
S	Tre Orr	6-2	195	4.4	Lake City (Fla.) Columbia	Florida
S	O.J. Owens	6-0	190	4.4	New London (N.C.) New Starkey	Tennessee
DT	Greg Pauly	6-6	270	4.8	Waukesha (Wis.) South	Notre Dame
RB	Derron Parquet	6-0	205	4.4	Metairie (La.) Rummel	LSU
RB	Chris Perry*	6-1	215	4.5	Fork Union (Va.) Military	Michigan
WR	Tab Perry	6-3	205	4.4	Milpitas, Calif.	UCLA
DE	Jason Peters	6-5	270	4.6	Queen City, Texas	Arkansas
OL	Sean Poole	6-7	295	5.15	Flint (Mich.) Central	Michigan State
OL	Jason Respert	6-3	290	5.2	Warner Robbins (Ga.) Northside	Tenn., UGA, Florida, FSU, Mich.
CB	Lawrence Richardson	5-11	170	4.3	Galveston (Texas) Ball	Arkansas
LB	Jason Richenberger	6-2	200	4.53	Liberty (Mo.)	Nebraska
WR	Charles Rogers	6-4	189	4.5	Saginaw (Mich.)	Michigan State
DE	Sam Ruhe	6-5	240	4.6	Stow (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit	Penn State
TE	Chris Septak	6-5	235	4.6	Omaha (Neb.) Millard West	Nebraska
OL	Wes Sims	6-5	300	5.03	Weatherford (Okla.)	Oklahoma
DE	Will Smith*	6-4	230	4.55	Utica (N.Y.) Proctor	Ohio State
QB	Jeff Smoker	6-4	190	4.62	Manheim (Pa.) Central	Michigan State
OL	Shannon Snell	6-6	305	5.2	Tampa (Fla.) Hillsborough	Florida
S	Larry Stevens	6-4	228	4.6	Tacoma (Wash.) Wilson	Michigan
TE	Terrell Suggs	6-4	235	4.5	Chandler (Ariz.) Hamilton	Alabama State
WR	Sioan Thomas	6-3	189	4.4	Klein, Texas	Texas
RB	Tyson Thompson	6-2	190	4.5	Irving, Texas	TCU
DE	Alphonso Townsend*	6-6	270	4.75	Dina (Ohio) Senior	Ohio State
DT	Mac Tyler	6-6	305	4.9	Bessemer (Ala.) Jess Lanier	Alabama
S	Carl Walker	6-3	185	4.5	Jacksonville (Fla.) Jackson	Miami (Fla.)
QB	Andrew Walter	6-5	190	4.7	Grand Junction (Colo.)	Arizona State
DT	Vince Wilfork	6-1	314	5.25	Lantana (Fla.) Santaluces	Miami (Fla.)
LB	D.J. Williams	6-2	220	4.49	Concord (Calif.) De La Salle	Miami (Fla.), Texas, Mich., FSU, Cal
RB	Michael Williams	6-1	195	4.5	Lakewood (Calif.) Mayfair	Arizona State
WR	Roy Williams	6-2	195	4.5	Odesa (Texas) Permian	Texas
DT	Steve Williams	6-4	250	4.80	Bolingbrook (Ill.)	Indiana
OL	Sean Young	6-8	295	5.1	Dalton (Ga.) N.W. Whitefield	Tennessee



Terry Pogue

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: BILL CONLEY

Ohio State's Recruiting Maven Shares His Thoughts

EDITOR'S NOTE: As it does annually when football recruiting wraps up, BSB made sure to sit down with recruiting coordinator Bill Conley on signing day to garner his thoughts on the class and the current state of college recruiting.

Considered one of the best in the business (see accompanying graphic), Conley considered a head coaching position at Eastern Michigan but remained with the Buckeyes and helped them bring home, according to the experts, a top-10 class. Conley asked not to talk specifically about players' abilities but tackled various subjects about the recruiting effort in the following interview with BSB staffer Jeff Rapp.

BSB: Is there any way to differentiate or have a feel one way or another, at this point, about a class? Or is the feeling more just relief that it's over, you've done all you could and now it's time to cross your fingers?

CONLEY: "I think the feeling that you have after you sign a class is kind of like the old story about football games: It's not how you start but how you finish. And the one thing that I liked about our recruiting this year is we finished strong. We had some key kids at the end, and we ended up getting several of those kids. And when you beat major schools around the country like the Florida schools, LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, Syracuse, people like that, that makes you really feel good."

"I think that was a real positive for us. You're never going to get 100 percent of what you want. But when you get the majority, and in this situation the vast majority, we were extremely pleased with that. Some of the kids we got out of state, we got the very best player in that state. That's a big plus."

BSB: Do you want to talk more specifically about those players?

CONLEY: "I can't really get into that but we got probably the two best players out of New York/New Jersey, the best player in the state of Kentucky, the best player



Bill Conley

in the state of West Virginia, maybe the best player in Michigan, and three of the best players in Florida. That's pretty strong."

BSB: Then, of course, there's the other way of looking at it, where fans are reminding you that you didn't get this guy in Ohio and that guy. Are you as disappointed as they are?

CONLEY: "No, not really. When you're around it and know some reasons why they didn't come here, you know there's nothing that you could have done. There's really no second-guessing with it."

"There were a couple situations there where it didn't matter what Ohio State did. Those guys weren't going to come to Ohio State. They were some we did everything humanly possible, short of cheating — which we're not going to do — to get a kid. It's different if you're in a fight to the end on an in-state kid and you lose him, but that was not the situation. We were dealing with things, family situations and so forth, that

we had no control over."

BSB: Did your focus change at all, though, when it looked like it just wasn't going to happen for you with those key guys in Ohio? Did it change a game plan, so to speak?

CONLEY: "I don't think it changed the overall game plan but it did change the concentration level. I think all of a sudden we kicked into a heavier gear on some out-of-state kids because we had more time to spend on them. I guess it might have been a blessing in disguise."

BSB: Is there any relief when you do quote-unquote miss on a kid when he doesn't choose a Big Ten rival? I mean, at least Joe Blow didn't go to Michigan.

CONLEY: "Sometimes you have mixed feelings because you'd like them to go somewhere you can beat them. But you're right. If a guy is going to go outside of your conference, there's probably not much you could have done about it anyway."

BSB: With Mike Jacobs no longer on staff, I'm sure you're going to want to get a new presence up in the talent-rich Cleveland area. Have you already addressed that with the new coaches?

CONLEY: "We've had several coaches up in Cleveland finishing up with recruiting, now what we'll do at the end of next week is sit down with the new guys on staff and with the guys currently on staff and come up with the new areas."

BSB: Does that pretty much fall on you?

CONLEY: "Coach (John) Cooper and myself figure it out, with input from the whole staff."

BSB: Have you gotten a handle yet on the strong areas for the new coaches?

CONLEY: "Yeah. The one thing about both George (Belu) and Brian (Williams) is they've both been a lot of different places, so they're guys, in areas that we're going to recruit, who already have connections."

BSB: Can you talk about you being unable to go out on the road in January (because of a school- and NCAA-imposed sanction)? Was that weird for you? Did it help you become more organized or was it pretty frustrating?

CONLEY: "Both. The way the calendar worked out, fortunately, I was only off the road the last two weeks. The thing I'm very proud of is the way our coaches picked up the slack. We had people that were no longer on staff and people who were brand-new to the program. Our guys really pulled together and worked as a unit to make up for that. We actually got about four recruits with different coaches having to step in."

BSB: Were there any other unusual things about the recruiting effort this year?

CONLEY: "Well, you just can't leave any stone unturned and therefore, something different happens every year. I guess the biggest thing this season was the way the weather changed the last couple weeks. We had to get guys from Atlanta to New York, we had guys trying to get from New York to Richmond, from the East Coast to the West Coast, from Florida to Chicago. There were schools closed and a foot of snow in certain places and we still had guys make the rounds. I guess we're like the Pony Express (laughs)."

BSB: Are there any particular coaches you want to single out?

CONLEY: "I don't want to do that because we had so many guys helping in so many areas. You take a guy, for example, like Will Smith. There were two or three coaches who recruited Will Smith. That

Sporting News
Lauds Conley

OSU's Bill Conley recently was lauded as one of the top recruiting coordinators in all of college football in an article in the Jan. 24 edition of *The Sporting News*.

Writer Michael Bradley featured Alabama's Ronnie Cottrell in the article then mentioned five other star recruiters — Conley, Georgia's Rodney Garner, Arizona's Rob Ianello, USC's Hue Jackson and Oklahoma's Brent Venables, who came into prominence after pulling major talent into Kansas State.

Of Conley, TSN wrote, "Has helped the Buckeyes lock down Ohio and beyond."

— Jeff Rapp

was great teamwork."

BSB: What, then, constitutes a strong finish like you alluded to earlier? Is it just a matter of staying on guys?

CONLEY: "You have to stay solid with the commitments you have, and not going a day without making a contact. That's one key thing. The second is winning some of those battles head to head with other schools. You always like to win some against a school that's geographically a lot closer to the kid than we are. That's a sign of finishing strong."

BSB: It seems that the biggest thing these kids want by far is to play right away, and you guys don't promise that. How is it that you're still getting top-10 classes every year? We hear stories all the time of promised playing time.

CONLEY: "Other schools do do that. We were in on a kid in-state, for example, who went elsewhere because he was promised a starting position, and that's wrong. That's wrong. First of all, when you do that you're telling the kids that are already in your college program, 'You're not good.' That's wrong. The only thing we ever offer is the opportunity. To flat offer a kid a starting job is completely dishonest in my book."

"The key to recruiting is hard work by the coaches and selling a guy on the coaches and players on our team. When you boil it down, the guys who come here are the ones who give us a chance on an official visit and feel good on their visit with the players who are currently on our team. That's what I think our players do as well as any in the country."

BSB: One of the big selling points you also have on those visits is the stadium, but it's a mess over there right now with the renovations. Did that hurt you guys?

CONLEY: "Well, it is a big selling point normally so the selling point this year was what it was going to be like when it was over. You're right. We like to put them on the 50-yard line and tell them about the tradition and we couldn't do that as much this year, although a lot of the kids did come to games. We had to show them pictures and models this year."

BSB: Lastly, landing a Mr. Football (from Ohio) again, does that mean anything to you from a PR standpoint?

CONLEY: "I think that's good, but it's better when Mr. Football is a real good football player, which is the way it was this year."

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE SIGNEES

OSU Covers Map To Cover Needs

New Class Of Bucks Includes Top Talent From A Number Of States

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

With a national consensus poll ranking of seventh, Ohio State obviously did some things right in football recruiting this year.

The Buckeyes signed 24 high school players and added one junior college transfer. Missing from the list of signees on signing day was Stone Mountain, Ga., running back/wide receiver Corey Adams, who still has some academic hurdles to clear before OSU can officially tender a scholarship offer (see Recruiting Outlook, pages 22-23).

Otherwise, though, OSU coach John Cooper was generally pleased with a recruiting haul that saw the Buckeyes sign five of Ohio's top 10 players, the top three players from New York, the top player from Kentucky, one of the top three from West Virginia, one of the top six from Michigan and two of the top 35 from talent-rich Florida.

"On paper, it is a very solid, athletic class," Cooper said. "We feel like its strengths fit our needs. But making the transition from high school football to Big Ten football is a huge adjustment, and it's our job as a coaching staff to now make that transition smoother."

Here are thumbnail sketches of the 25 new Buckeyes, with heights and weights coming from OSU's signing day release and players listed alphabetically.

• **Willie Allen, defensive back, Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne** — Allen (6-2, 175, 4.45) was a Division I first-team All-Ohio pick by The Associated Press. He was rated the No. 4 defensive back prospect and the No. 27 overall prospect in the Midwest by SuperPrep. He was ranked 31st overall in the state by The Ohio Football Recruiting News.

He helped Wayne reach the Division I state title game and finish 13-2. During the regular season, he was second on the team in tackles and had two interceptions and five fumbles caused at free safety. As a junior at Trotwood-Madison, he had 80 tackles, two interceptions and returned two kicks for scores. He is qualified academically with a 3.0 GPA and a 17 on the ACT. He picked OSU over Miami (Ohio).

• **B.J. Barre, defensive back, Toledo Whitmer** — Barre (6-1, 185, 4.5) was ranked as Ohio's 16th-best prospect by TOFRN. He committed to OSU April 24 after receiving an early offer. He was not included on OSU's initial list of signees because his mother, who was out of state on signing day, still needed to sign off on the letter before the school could publicize his name.

He projects as a safety, where he intercepted five passes as a junior. As a senior, he did most of his damage at tailback. He rushed for 1,245 yards as a senior. He is qualified with a 2.8 GPA and a 22 on the ACT.

• **Bobby Britton, defensive back, Jacksonville (Fla.) Raines** — Britton (5-11, 175, 4.4) was rated the No. 14 cornerback prospect in the country by Rivals100.com Recruiting. He was ranked as the No. 6 athlete in the Florida Super 75 by the Jacksonville (Fla.) Times Union.

Britton played primarily at receiver as a senior, catching 47 passes and scoring eight touchdowns. He had three interceptions as a senior for an 8-3 playoff team. He picked off three more and had over 40 tackles as a junior. He committed to OSU in December over Notre Dame and Georgia Tech. He boasts an impressive 3.57 GPA and was awaiting his first ACT score.

• **Jason Caldwell, tight end, Mentor, Ohio** — Caldwell (6-5, 265, 4.75) was impressive at OSU's summer camp, earning a scholarship offer. He committed to OSU over Michigan, Kentucky, South Carolina and several SEC schools at mid-season.

Caldwell played only two years of high school football and earned the starting nod as a senior. He finished his senior year with 20 receptions for 210 yards and five touchdowns. He was rated the No. 26 prospect in the state by TOFRN. He also competes in basketball and track and field. In 1998, he was the state runner-up in the discus (177-7) and placed seventh in the shot put (54-6). He holds a 3.0 GPA and scored a 24 on the ACT.

• **Brandon "Bam" Childress, defensive back, Bedford (Ohio) Chanel** — Childress (5-10, 175, 4.45) earned Ohio's Mr. Football award as voted by The Associated Press. He was also the Division V defensive player of the year and a first-team All-Ohio selection. He was rated Ohio's 19th-best prospect by TOFRN. He committed to OSU Dec. 9 over USC, Purdue and Minnesota.

He was a two-way starter at receiver and cornerback for the top-ranked Firebirds, who went 13-1 and reached the state semifinals. He finished his senior year with 41 catches for 754 yards and 11 touchdowns. He also returned two kickoffs and two punts for touchdowns. He finished his career with 3,553 kickoff return yards, 2,707 punt return yards and 2,776 receiving yards off 151 receptions. He also intercepted 12 passes in his career. He averaged 20 points per game in basketball his junior year for a team that won the Division III state championship. He holds a 2.6 GPA and scored a 17 on the ACT.

• **Marco Cooper, linebacker, Detroit Cass Tech** — Cooper (6-2, 235, 4.48) is likely OSU's most decorated

recruit, earning first-team USA Today All-USA honors as a senior. He was also a member of the Rivals100.com top 100 list and All-American team. He was the No. 4 pick overall in the Detroit Free Press Best of the Midwest survey. He picked OSU over Tennessee, Georgia, Minnesota and Purdue on Jan. 31.

In 11 games as a senior, Cooper had 118 tackles, 22 tackles for loss, four fumble recoveries and three forced fumbles. He had 114 tackles as a junior. He benches 340 pounds. Cooper holds a 2.8 GPA and scored an 18 on the ACT.

• **John Hollins, wide receiver, Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne** — Hollins (6-2, 185, 4.5) was a Division I first team All-Ohio pick. He was rated the state's 18th-best player by TOFRN and the fourth-best receiver in the Midwest by SuperPrep. He committed to OSU during the summer camp.

Hollins finished his senior season with 61 receptions for 1,220 yards and 17 touchdowns for the Division I state runner-up squad. He also started as a defensive back. He holds a 2.8 GPA and scored a 20 on the ACT.

• **Josh Huston, kicker, Findlay, Ohio** — Huston (6-2, 190, 4.6) was a Division I second team All-Ohio selection. He was rated the No. 10 kicking prospect in the nation by Rivals100.com and the No. 3 kicking prospect in the Midwest by SuperPrep. He committed to OSU over Bowling Green, Louisville and Maryland.

He was 57 of 60 on PATs this year and 84 of 88 in his career. He put 67 of his 79 kickoffs into the end zone for touchdowns. He was 9 of 15 on field goals with a season-long kick of 43 yards. All of his misses were 47-yards or longer. Inside 45 yards, he was 17 of 18 over his career. He holds a 3.2 GPA and scored a 21 on the ACT and 1050 on the SAT.

• **Harlen Jacobs, defensive back, Atlanta Douglass** — Jacobs (6-2, 185, 4.45) became the final member of OSU's 2000 recruiting class, committing to the Buckeyes on signing day over LSU, Wake Forest and Louisville. He was rated the No. 36 cornerback prospect in the nation by Rivals100.com.

He totaled 50 tackles, 15 passes broken up and four interceptions for a 10-2 playoff team in his senior year after getting five interceptions in his junior year. Jacobs would be a cover corner. He holds a 2.5 GPA and scored an 850 on the SAT.

• **Michael Jenkins, wide receiver, Tampa (Fla.) Leto** — Jenkins (6-5, 200, 4.45) was rated Florida's No. 22 prospect and the No. 24 best skilled athlete prospect in the nation by SuperPrep. In

the Florida Super 75 list by the Jacksonville (Fla.) Times Union, he was rated as the No. 2 athlete in the state. Jenkins picked OSU in January over Georgia Tech, Notre Dame and Virginia Tech.

He will play receiver, but he rotated between running back, receiver and linebacker in high school. He carried the ball 60 times for 600 yards and also had 16 receptions for 325 yards as a senior. He scored nine TDs. As a junior, he had 26 receptions for 480 yards and 11 touchdowns. He also totaled 88 tackles, four fumble recoveries and four interceptions on defense as a senior. He has a 3.77 GPA with a 17 on the ACT and an 890 on the SAT.

For more on Jenkins, see the profile on page 20.

• **Branden Joe, running back, Westerville (Ohio) South** — Joe (6-2, 230, 4.5) was a Division I first-team All-Ohio pick. He was rated the No. 10 prospect in Ohio by TOFRN and was rated the No. 7 prospect in the Midwest by The Detroit Free Press. He was rated the No. 23 running back in the nation by Rivals100.com. Joe picked OSU over Penn State, Michigan, Purdue, Notre Dame and Georgia Tech.

As a senior, Joe rushed for 1,226 yards and 11 touchdowns. He started at both running back and linebacker. As a junior, he gained 620 yards rushing in six games before breaking his foot. He is also an excellent baseball player. Joe is set academically with a 2.8 GPA and a 20 on the ACT.

• **Larry Kinnard, offensive lineman, Alliance, Ohio** — Kinnard (6-7, 295, 5.1) was the first player to commit for the Class of 2000, picking OSU over Indiana and Michigan on March 8. He was rated Ohio's ninth-best prospect by TOFRN and the No. 3 line prospect in the Midwest by SuperPrep.

Kinnard is the son of former National Football League player Larry Kinnard Sr., who spent time with the Miami Dolphins and the Baltimore Colts. The younger Kinnard has massive size, good balance, quick feet and long arms. He is also the starting center on the basketball team. He holds a 2.5 GPA but must improve on a 16 on the ACT.

• **Andrew Lee, wide receiver, Columbus Brookhaven** — Lee (6-2, 195, 4.45) was rated Ohio's 15th-best player by TOFRN and the No. 5 receiver in the Midwest by SuperPrep. He committed to OSU early in the season after an impressive summer camp, where he logged a 40-inch vertical leap. He also considered Purdue, Pitt and Cincinnati.

He comes from the same high school as OSU great and Biletnikoff winner Terry



Marco Cooper



Bobby Britton



John Hollins



Jason Caldwell



Josh Huston



Michael Jenkins



Branden Joe



Larry Kinnard



Willie Allen



B.J. Barre

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE SIGNEES

Glenn. As a senior, Lee had 30 receptions for 667 yards and seven touchdowns. He also played defensive back. In his junior year at Columbus West, he played quarterback and passed for 886 yards while rushing for 905 yards. He holds a 2.5 GPA and recently upped his ACT score from 15 to 19 to qualify.



Andrew Lee

• **Sam Maldonado, running back, Harrison, N.Y.** — Maldonado (6-2, 215, 4.5) is a unanimous All-American selection, earning second-team All-USA honors from USA Today. He was rated the No. 1 running back prospect in the nation and a first team All-American by Rivals100.com. SuperPrep listed him No. 1 in New York, No. 3 among all running backs and 36th overall nationally. He picked OSU over Syracuse.



Sam Maldonado

Maldonado is one of only 30 players in prep football history to rush for over 7,000 career yards. He finished his career with 7,581 yards rushing and 99 touchdowns. As a senior, his team won the Class B state championship. He rushed for over 3,200 yards and 38 TDs as a senior. He admitted to BSB that his core GPA was a low 1.7. But he boasts a 960 on the SAT, a mark that would allow him to qualify on the sliding scale with just a 2.15 GPA.

• **Thomas Matthews, linebacker, Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) Dillard** — Matthews (6-1, 205, 4.5) was a player who came out of nowhere to merit, first, a visit and, finally, a scholarship offer. His Jan. 14 visit to OSU was his first, although Georgia Tech and Vanderbilt had some interest. He was originally scheduled to see Bethune-Cookman Jan. 21. Vandy, Boston College, Oregon and Iowa were among a group of schools that had offered. He committed to OSU during the visit.

He tallied over 140 tackles with five games with 15 or more as a senior. He could be either a linebacker or safety as a senior. Matthews is qualified with a 3.0 GPA and a 910 on the SAT.

• **Rick McFadden, quarterback, Struthers, Ohio** — McFadden (6-7, 205, 4.85) was a Division IV first-team All-Ohio pick and was rated 21st in the state by TOFRN. He was rated the No. 2 quarterback prospect in the Midwest by SuperPrep. He picked OSU over West Virginia in December.



Rick McFadden

He finished seventh in the state with 2,056 passing yards. He also threw 20 touchdown passes. As a junior, he threw for over 1,700 yards and 16 touchdowns with just three interceptions. This left-handed thrower is also an excellent basketball player. He holds a 3.2 GPA and scored a 21 on the ACT.

• **Jamal Muhammad, linebacker, Stone Mountain, Ga.** — Muhammad (6-1, 230, 4.6) was a Class AAA first-team All-Georgia selection. He played fullback and middle linebacker. He committed to OSU June 14, picking the Buckeyes over Maryland, Michigan State, Florida,

Arkansas and Florida State.

He finished with over 150 tackles with six sacks and one interception as a senior. He rushed for over 400 yards as a blocking fullback. As a junior, he totaled 128 tackles with 10 sacks and one interception. He benches 400 pounds, holds a 2.5 GPA and scored a 1000 on the SAT.



Jamal Muhammad

• **Shane Olivea, offensive lineman, Cedarhurst (N.Y.) Lawrence** — Olivea (6-5, 315, 5.0) is a two-time first team All-New York selection. He was rated the No. 3 player overall in New York and the nation's 19th-best lineman by SuperPrep. He committed to OSU after originally committing to Georgia Tech.



Shane Olivea

This four-year starter on both the offensive and defensive lines combines size, speed, quickness and agility. Olivea, who benches 405 pounds, holds a 2.67 GPA and scored a 19 on the ACT.

• **Terry Pogue, running back, Dayton Colonel White** — Pogue (6-2, 220, 4.5) was the Ohio Division II offensive player of the year by The Associated Press. He was rated Ohio's seventh-best prospect by TOFRN. He committed to OSU last summer during camp, picking the Buckeyes over Michigan, Michigan State, West Virginia and Indiana.

He finished fourth in the state with 182 points off 29 touchdowns and four two-point conversions in his senior year. He also rushed for 1,903 yards and was named the Dayton Public Schools League player of the year. As a junior, he rushed for 1,317 yards. He started at both running back and inside linebacker. Pogue holds a 2.5 GPA but must improve on a 15 on the ACT.

• **Robert Reynolds, linebacker, Bowling Green, Ky.** — Reynolds (6-4, 223, 4.6) was rated the No. 1 prospect from the state of Kentucky and the nation's No. 4 linebacker by SuperPrep. He committed to OSU Jan. 24, picking the Buckeyes over Michigan, Tennessee, Virginia and Miami (Fla.).



Robert Reynolds

Reynolds finished his senior year with 99 tackles, 14 tackles for loss, nine sacks and one interception. He earned all-state honors after his senior and junior seasons. He played much of his senior season with a broken hand. As a junior, he totaled 180 tackles, 21 tackles for loss and 15 sacks. He finished his high school career with 468 tackles, 39 tackles for loss, 29 sacks, 16 fumble recoveries and two interceptions. He has a 2.9 GPA and scored a 19 on the ACT.

• **Darrion Scott, linebacker, Charleston, W.Va.** — Scott (6-3, 244, 4.7) is rated the No. 3 player in West Virginia and the nation's 26th-best linebacker by SuperPrep. He was rated the No. 18 linebacker prospect in the country by Rivals100.com. He was also a two-time

all-state selection. He committed to OSU June 21 after returning from the summer camp, picking the Buckeyes over Georgia, West Virginia, Michigan State, Pitt and Marshall.



Darrion Scott

As a senior, he had 133 tackles, 10 sacks and four interceptions (two returned for scores) for a playoff team. He also rushed for 1,618 yards and scored 15 TDs on offense. As a junior, he finished the season with 133 tackles and nine tackles for loss, and he rushed for 1,291 yards. He was also a second team all-state pick as a basketball player. He holds a 3.1 GPA but needs to improve on a 16 on the ACT.

• **Will Smith, defensive end, Utica (N.Y.) Proctor** — Smith (6-3, 230, 4.5) was rated the No. 2 player in New York and the No. 13 defensive line prospect in the nation by SuperPrep. He was also a Rivals100.com top 100 pick, ranking seventh nationally among all defensive linemen. He picked OSU Jan. 17 over Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Virginia Tech and Boston College.



Will Smith

He finished his senior year with 65 tackles, 20 tackles for loss, 13 sacks and three forced fumbles in just seven games. He also caught 18 passes at tight end. He was second team all-state as a junior when he totaled 111 tackles, 29 tackles for loss, 16 sacks and six blocked kicks. Smith, who benches 330 pounds, should qualify with a 2.8 GPA and an 840 on the SAT.

• **Alex Stepanovich, offensive lineman, Berea, Ohio** — Stepanovich (6-5, 270, 5.0) was rated Ohio's third-best player by TOFRN. He was also tabbed as the nation's 23rd-best offensive lineman by SuperPrep and 17th nationally by Rivals100.com. He ranked as the No. 19 overall prospect in the Midwest by The Detroit Free Press. He com-

mitted to OSU last May, picking the Buckeyes over Michigan.

He was a two-way starter at offensive guard and defensive end. He had 14 sacks and 68 tackles as a junior. His brother Nick is a varsity wrestler at OSU and Alex, himself, is a standout prep heavyweight. He holds a 3.0 GPA and scored a 19 on the ACT.

• **Alphonso Townsend, defensive lineman, Lima (Ohio) Senior** — Townsend (6-6, 280, 4.75) was a Division I first-team All-Ohio selection by The Associated Press. He was rated the sixth-best player in Ohio by TOFRN. He is rated the No. 1 defensive line prospect in the Midwest and No. 26 in the nation by SuperPrep. Townsend is also a Rivals100.com top 100 selection. He committed to OSU on April 21, picking the Buckeyes over Florida State and several other schools.



Alphonso Townsend

He suffered a broken toe in Week 7 of his senior year but has already returned for basketball season. As a junior, he had 80 tackles, 15 tackles for loss and six sacks. Townsend, nicknamed "Biggie," holds a 2.5 GPA but must improve on a 15 on the ACT.

• **Jack Tucker, linebacker, Cerritos (Calif.) Community College** — Tucker (6-1, 235, 4.7) is already enrolled at Ohio State after transferring in at the start of the winter quarter. He was ranked as the nation's sixth-best junior college player overall by SuperPrep. He also earned second team All-America honors by J.C. Grid-Wire.



Jack Tucker

He totaled 120 tackles in helping lead his team to an 8-3 record and a Strawberry Bowl berth. The year before, he earned first team all-conference honors with 114 total tackles. He attended Kennedy High School in Cypress, Calif., where he was a first team All-CIF selection his senior year of high school.

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