

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

Vol. 24, No. 22

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

March 12, 2005

\$2.00

PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER
CLASSIFICATION
DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE RUSH!!

'It's Great To Be Home'

OSU Hires Cleveland Native Gene Smith To Be Its Next AD

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

In a ceremony that was equal parts pep rally, homecoming and introduction party, Eugene Smith was formally introduced March 5 as the eighth director of athletics at Ohio State, succeeding the retiring Andy Geiger.

Smith, 49, who has nearly 20 years of experience piloting athletic departments at Eastern Michigan, Iowa State and Arizona State, appeared with his family at the Longaberger Alumni House in front of a packed audience that included members of the search committee and board of trustees, university coaches such as Jim Tressel and John Markell and the OSU pep band and cheerleaders.

"I'm excited to be here. I'm excited to be a Buckeye. It's great to be home," said Smith, a Cleveland native who donned a scarlet tie and an OSU logo lapel pin for the occasion. "There's so much rich tradition and history at the Ohio State University — academically and athletically. I'm happy to be here, my family is happy to be here and we're ready to rock and roll."

Introduced by university president Karen Holbrook, Smith was the end result of a nationwide search that began shortly after Geiger announced his intention Jan. 5 to step down.

Shortly thereafter, Holbrook formed a 15-member panel to find a new athletic director, a search



HAIL TO THE NEW CHIEF — Escorted by university president Karen Holbrook, Gene Smith was formally introduced March 5 as Ohio State's eighth athletic director.

In This Issue Of BSB

- Complete coverage of new athletic director Gene Smith's press conference along with reaction to Smith's hiring from Jim Tressel, Archie Griffin and others (Pages 6-9)

- A profile of Paul Haynes, Ohio State's new defensive backs coach (Page 10)

- A feature on incoming freshman wide receiver/defensive back Donald Washington (Page 13)

- Part two of our Buckeye Flashback on former OSU kicker Tad Weed (Pages 14-15)

- A feature on Jessica Davenport, who was named Big Ten Player of the Year just one year after winning the league's top freshman honor (Pages 22-23)

- Coverage of the Ohio State women's basketball team as it stubbed its toe in the semi-finals of the Big Ten tournament in Indianapolis (Page 24)

- Plus reports on other Olympic sports as well as all of BSB's regular briefs, columns and features



Jessica Davenport

that appeared to meander for the first several weeks until heating up at the beginning of March.

"Gene was somebody that I had watched for a long time and thought would be phenomenal at Ohio State," Holbrook told BSB after the press conference. "On the other hand, I wasn't on the search committee and had no input into it. But when the committee presented me with the final candidate and it was Gene, I couldn't have been happier."

Holbrook would not comment on reports that Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione had first been offered the job but had turned it down. She did, however, admit that Smith was one of two finalists.

"The search committee presented to me two final candidates this last week," she said. "And as I said, I couldn't have been happier that Gene was presented as a final candidate and accepted the position."

Smith has served the past five years as athletic director at Arizona State after stays at Eastern Michigan from 1986-93 and Iowa State from 1993-2000. Born and raised in the Cleveland area, Smith was a football star at Bedford Chanel, later playing for Ara Parseghian at Notre Dame and returning as an assistant coach on Dan Devine's staff.

Continued On Page 6

• GIANT KILLERS •



SONNY BROCKWAY

Imperfect Storm

Syl's Shot Shocks No. 1 & Unbeaten Illinois, 65-64

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Anyone who thinks it's easy to go undefeated, that Hollywood endings are only for the movies or that college basketball in March isn't one of the most emotional of athletic pursuits didn't bother to watch the Ohio State men try to knock off top-ranked Illinois.

And anyone who didn't bother to flip on the CBS national game March 6, assuming there was no chance of an upset, greatly underestimated the plucky yet sometimes maligned Buckeyes.

Rallying from double-digit deficits and feeding off a suddenly believing sellout crowd of 19,200, OSU made the stars align inside Value City Arena and did the unthinkable, ruining the mighty Illini's perfect season with a stunning 65-64 victory.

Fans, of course, stormed the floor when the Illini's Roger Powell fired up an airball at the buzzer and the Buckeyes, losers of three straight and mired in the middle of the Big Ten standings, became folk heroes in the wink of an eye.

J.J. Sullinger grinned ear to ear aloft the shoulders of a few zealots. OSU football coach Jim Tressel, who was seated at courtside, high-fived some of the rowdies like a frat boy. Other fans danced, roared, cried.

The Buckeyes (19-11, 8-8) aren't going far — their postseason ban will go into effect immediately after the Big Ten tournament in Chicago — but on this day their spirits — and the program — soared.

"It feels like a dream," said forward

Continued On Page 16

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETINVol. 24, No. 22
March 12, 2005

Buckeye Sports Bulletin (USPS 705-690, ISSN 0883-6833) is published 30 times a year (weekly September through November and January through March, biweekly March through May and monthly June through August and December) by:

Columbus Sports Publications
1350 W. Fifth Ave., Suite 30
P.O. Box 12453
Columbus, Ohio 43212
(614) 486-2202

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$59.95 per year.

PUBLISHER
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachman 1944-1999

MANAGING EDITOR
Mark Rea

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER
Becky Roberts

NON-REVENUE SPORTS EDITOR
Mike Wachman

SENIOR WRITER
Jeff Rapp

PHOTOGRAPHY
Jeff Brehm Kevin Dye
Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
David Newman

CONTRIBUTORS
Darrell Dawson Julie Roy
Rich Leonardo Mark Schmetzer
Eric Loughry Steve Siegfried
Chris Nida Stacey Statshulis
Bob Roehm Nicole Wels

DIRECTOR OF GROUP AND CO-OP SALES
Jack Woodworth

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
Ron Friedman Elizabeth Gaeta
Tammy Geiger Nikki Mayabb

2004-05 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 24)

No. 1 Sept. 4	No. 16 Jan. 29
No. 2 Sept. 11	No. 17 Feb. 5
No. 3 Sept. 18	No. 18 Feb. 12
No. 4 Oct. 2	No. 19 Feb. 19
No. 5 Oct. 9	No. 20 Feb. 26
No. 6 Oct. 16	No. 21 March 5
No. 7 Oct. 23	No. 22 March 12
No. 8 Oct. 30	No. 23 March 19
No. 9 Nov. 6	No. 24 April 2
No. 10 Nov. 13	No. 25 April 9
No. 11 Nov. 20	No. 26 April 16
No. 12 Nov. 27	No. 27 May 14
No. 13 December	No. 28 June
No. 14 Jan. 15	No. 29 July
No. 15 Jan. 22	No. 30 August

The next issue (March 19 cover date) will be mailed on March 15.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a privately owned newspaper and is not affiliated directly or indirectly with The Ohio State University.

BSB World Wide Web site address is:
<http://BuckeyeSports.com>
BSB e-mail address is:
bsb@buckeyesports.com

Charter Member



P.O. Box 13513 • Columbus, FL 32904
1-800-762-3216

OPINION

What Will Future Hold For Smith?

It was a slight case of déjà vu for me March 5 although the venue had changed along with nearly all of the major players.

When Ohio State formally announced Gene Smith as the successor to athletic director Andy Geiger, I couldn't help but go back to the day more than 11 years ago when Geiger was introduced as the successor to Jim Jones, who also took an early retirement.

That announcement came in May 1994 in the office of then university president E. Gordon Gee. At that time, Smith was in his second year as athletic director at Iowa State and OSU president Karen Holbrook was in her second year at the University of Florida juggling three jobs — vice president for research, dean of the Graduate School and professor of anatomy, cell biology and medicine.

The Longaberger Alumni House — site of Smith's public introduction to Columbus — was still the figment of some architect's imagination as were several other structures and facilities that now make up the university's skyline.

About the only things that remained the same about the ceremonies 11 years apart were Archie Griffin and a campus cloaked in NCAA investigation clouds.

Last time, Griffin wanted the athletic directorship but lost out to Geiger's experience of more than two decades of leading athletic departments. This time, as a member of the search committee that recommended Smith, the two-time Heisman Trophy winner and Ohio State icon removed himself from the running almost immediately.

"They say timing is everything and the timing wasn't right," Griffin said. "I just started a new job (as head of the OSU Alumni Association) last year and it's a job I really enjoy. I love what I'm doing now."

The fact that Griffin — or any person with an Ohio State background for that matter — didn't get the job didn't sit too well with Buckeye fans when Geiger came from Maryland, and it's not expected to sit too well with Bobby or Betty Buckeye this time either.

In fact, there were plenty of viable candidates with Ohio State ties, from former OSU star athletes Bill Hosket and Rex Kern to ex-OSU athletic department officials Paul Krebs and Jim Smith.

In the end, however, I believe the specter of another NCAA investigation — two independent probes, actually — led the university to do exactly what it did last time and bring in an outsider who could not possibly be tainted by anything that has gone on before at Ohio State.

At first blush, Smith seems to be a great hire. He appears to be personable, is extremely engaging, seems even-tempered and thoughtful and has an unblemished track record of running three different athletic departments at the Division I-A level.

Not that anyone would confuse the size and scope of Eastern Michigan, Iowa State or even Arizona State to Ohio State's gargantuan athletic department. Still, Smith seems like he knows what he's getting into.

But does he really? Do any of us really have any comprehension of what may take place on the Ohio State campus in the next 10 months let alone the next 10 years?

For example, when Geiger was hired, he said, "One of the things I will turn my attention to is a vigorous compliance pro-

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

with
Mark Rea

gram with the athletics department." With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, we now know that compliance was sometimes not as vigorous as Geiger had envisioned.

When he was hired, John Cooper, Randy Ayers and Nancy Darsch held the three most high-profile coaching jobs on campus. Cooper was coming off a 10-1-1 record in 1993 and a tie for the Big Ten championship, his finest season with the Buckeyes up to then. Ayers and Darsch, however, were in danger of losing control of their respective programs. Less than three years later, they were gone — both fired by Geiger on the same day.

They weren't the first head coaches to be replaced on Geiger's watch and they wouldn't be the last — Cooper was gone after the 2000 season — and with the old-time coaches went most of their old-time facilities. Ohio Stadium got a multimillion-dollar face-lift while the basketball, ice hockey, baseball, track, gymnastics and swimming teams all received brand-new venues.

All of that upgrading came at a cost — the university faces a \$200 million deficit in facility expenditures that didn't exist 11 years ago — but there seems to be a plan to retire that debt, and each of the new facilities should serve OSU well past Smith's retirement age.

But what of the coaches on staff now? One Phoenix-area newspaper writer opined that one of Smith's first orders of business would be to dismiss Tressel. Obviously, you'll have to forgive my journalistic brother. He's been in the Arizona sun too long.

But it would be presumptuous on the part of all of us to believe that Tressel, Thad Matta and Jim Foster will all outlast Smith. As successful as those coaches have been in their relatively short tenures in Columbus, no one can foretell what might happen in the future.

In this very space in the BSB dated May 14, 1994, I looked like Nostradamus when I wrote, "Despite the fact that he has no previous Ohio ties, Geiger has already proved himself adept at public

relations, indicating one of his challenges is to beat Michigan and his initial goal over the next six to eight weeks was to focus on being a Buckeye."

"Geiger represents a refreshing breath of fresh air. All Ohio State fans need to do is give this guy half a chance and I think they'll like what they see."

That turned out to be fairly omniscient on my part. But before you call me, asking for my favorite lottery numbers, here is another passage from the same column in the same issue:

"Veteran safety Dennis Maag had an excellent spring and is going to fight Tim Patillo for the starting free safety job in the fall."

Maag did go on to win letters for the Buckeyes in 1994 and '95, but he never seriously challenged Patillo for the starting job.

I also said something in that column about running backs Lou Willard and Andre Hatcher being able to help the Buckeyes in the fall of '94. Remember them? Neither does anyone else.

As I mentioned before, no one can foretell the future.

Could It Be An Omen?

As long as we are on the subject of the paranormal, could Smith's hiring be the portent of good things to come for the Buckeyes?

Only a loss by the women's basketball team in the second round of the Big Ten tournament — and maybe that last-place finish at the conference tourney by the wrestling team — put a damper on an otherwise spectacular first weekend in Columbus for the new AD.

It's hard to believe he's going to witness a game in Value City Arena with any more electricity than OSU's stunning victory over undefeated and top-ranked Illinois. But perhaps that win coupled with the fact that it was Smith's first contest since accepting the job as the new athletic director signifies the beginning of the end of a long, dark period for Ohio State sports.

All I know is that one year ago, the Buckeyes had a chance to beat Illinois and couldn't even get a shot off. This time, Matt Sylvester drains the prettiest three seen in Value City Arena in quite some time.

Coincidence? Maybe, but at least we can think good thoughts for a change.



At Middleton Printing, we offer you quality printing, competitive prices and exceptional service!

With 50 years of printing experience, see what we can do for you! One of our representatives would be glad to help you.

1220 Corrugated Way
Columbus, Ohio 43201

(614) 294-7277

(614) 294-7449 fax
e-mail: mpco1220@aol.com
www.middletonprinting.com

We print a wide variety of projects to fit your needs:

- Brochures
- Annual Reports
- Corporate Identity Packages
- Newsletters
- Flyers
- Posters
- Booklets

COVER STORY: 'IT'S GREAT TO BE HOME'

Smith's Record Shows He Can Erase Debt

Continued From Page 1

"And let me say that in my years of coaching at Notre Dame, I never lost to Michigan," he said to an eruption of laughter and applause.

Smith inherits an athletic department that is on one hand in good stead with many of its sports and on the other hand facing NCAA investigations in football and men's basketball as well as a \$200 million facility debt.

"I certainly understand in this community how the negative has been in the top of the mind and what everyone is interested in," he said. "But that's not why I came here. This institution did not attract me to come in and try to clean up some issues with an investigation or to deal with a small microcosm of individuals who have tried to breach the integrity of an unbelievably historic institution. So I can't get to that level. I'm just a little bit different that way."

As for the debt, Smith admitted he was aware of it and "it scared the lights out of me." But he was quick to point out that the university already has a plan in place to tackle that problem.

"From what I understand — and I have not had a chance to look at the budget spread sheets or the forecasting — there is a long-term financial plan, and the revenues that are needed to cover that debt are in place," Smith said. "I'm anxious to see that. It's a little blind faith, but that's true everywhere. There's no secret about that."

"When I went to Arizona State University, I was unaware of the \$4.3 million deficit that I inherited. ... At least I know we have the debt here and I'm confident, based upon the chat that Andy had with me, that a plan is in place. My plan is to come in and work the plan and make sure it is successful."

For his part, Geiger praised Smith and his selection as athletic director.

"I congratulate Dr. Holbrook and the university for its selection of Gene Smith," he said. "He is a good man with a strong record of leadership in our business. I am grateful for the opportunity I had to lead the Ohio State athletic department and I am comforted to know that its future is in very capable hands."

Now that his successor has been found, Geiger will continue to serve the university in an advisory position until his retirement is effective June 30.

Smith's first day is April 15 and he said that he will seek Geiger's guidance.

"I anticipate that I will come back here at some point in time before my start date and spend some time with him, pick his brain and let him tutor me a little bit," Smith said. "This is a great program, and what has intrigued me most is what Andy Geiger has accomplished here. He is one of many people that I have looked up to."

"Over the years, I have continually watched Andy and watching him grow his program has allowed me to grow as well. I am anxious to step into his shoes."

'Never Aspired To Be Anywhere'

As a native Ohioan who has spent much of his adult life as an athletic director, it seemed natural to many that Smith would aspire to someday sit in the athletic director's chair at Ohio State.

Such was not the case, however.

"I have never aspired to be anywhere," he said. "I've just tried to work hard, and when opportunities presented themselves, I tried to be prepared to respond to them. So I never aspired to be anywhere. When the search firm called me, I was shocked. ... But when I listened to what the Ohio State University was looking for, I realized that maybe I was a good fit. So I didn't really aspire to be here but I feel fortunate that I am here. This is a great institution."

He went on to say that the athletic directorship at Ohio State was the pinnacle of his profession but insisted he wasn't trying to score instant points with Buckeye fans by telling them what they wanted to hear.

"I'm not going to say those things to make friends," Smith said. "I'm here telling you what I'm all about. I'm going to be forthright and tell you what the deal is."

"The challenges that are here are different than what I had (at Arizona State). The challenges that I've had in the past ... were significantly different than the challenges here. I'm anxious to take my talents and skills and direct them toward new challenges, and I feel very confident that my talents and skills fit those challenges and dealing with



TERRY GILLIAM

ALL SMILES — Flanked by daughter Lindsey (left) and wife Sheila (right), new Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith is all smiles as he answers questions from the media.

those challenges."

One challenge will most definitely be repairing the national perception of the damaged reputation of Ohio State athletics, although Smith said that was a flawed perception.

"Let's keep in mind something: The Ohio State University outside Columbus is still thought of in a great way," he said. "I know there have been challenges here. I understand the pressures that exist. I understand the immediate challenges with dealing with some of the issues that we've had in our great program."

"But nationally, the Ohio State University has a great reputation, so our role is to come in and see if I can enhance that reputation."

Smith added that he was not completely familiar with the NCAA investigations into the football and men's basketball programs but said he did not believe either probe should diminish what else is happening at Ohio State.

"Regardless of the outcomes (of the investigations), the bottom line is that there is a great deal of integrity here," Smith said. "When you go through the list of coaches, when you look at the tradition, when you spend time with President Holbrook — these issues are single issues in a small situation."

"They are not something that will damage the integrity and the long-term health of the institution or the athletic program. So I didn't gauge that. I've had experience on the NCAA Infractions Committee and I've seen cases worse."

Pioneer? Smith Says No

Smith becomes the first African-American to hold the position of athletic director at Ohio State. Though that is significant in that the position has been in existence since 1912, Smith doesn't see himself as a trailblazer.

"Years ago, I felt like I was a pioneer when I was at Eastern Michigan University," he said. "I was 29 years old and there were only three or four black athletic directors, and probably for about 10 years that number hovered around about three or four."

"Now you look at it today, I think there are 11 in Division I-A. I just want to do my job. As an African-American, it's an honor to be the first particularly at the Ohio State University. No question, it's an honor."

"At Eastern Michigan when I was 29 years old, I felt that it was a very big step for me and maybe a lot of other people. Today, I feel this is a big step for different reasons. I feel like taking on the responsibility of an athletic department the size and scope of this university is extremely challenging, and I've always loved a challenge."

OSU Alumni Association president and CEO Archie Griffin, who served on the search committee, said that it was significant that Smith was the first African-American to become athletic director at Ohio State.

"But it's even more significant that we've found a man with the kind of resume and character that Gene has," Griffin told BSB. "Our paths have crossed many times in the past, and I think we're extremely fortunate to have him on our campus. He is truly considered to be

one of the top four or five athletic directors in the country."

Once the search centered on Smith, the university seemingly conducted a whirlwind courtship of him. He reportedly met for the first time with members of the search committee in Dallas on March 3 then flew to Columbus for a formal interview with the entire panel. Later that evening, he was offered the job and immediately accepted.

His contract calls for a seven-year agreement with an option for a three-year extension at the university's discretion after 24 months in the position. The full compensation package includes:

- An initial annual base salary of \$450,000, subject to university-wide salary percentage increases in each subsequent year of employment;
- Annual incentives of up to \$75,000 for achieving athletic performance goals and up to \$50,000 for achieving academic performance goals;
- An additional total sum of \$350,000 will be contributed by Ohio State to a deferred compensation plan that will vest, along with any accrued earnings, seven years after the initial date of employment if Smith remains continuously employed as athletic director through that date;
- Full standard benefits on the same terms as provided by the university to all senior administrative and professional employees;
- A sum of \$4,000 per month beginning April 15 — his official hire date — and continuing until two months following the sale of Smith's home in Arizona, with the total payment not to exceed \$24,000;
- Reimbursement for household moving expenses to be provided by a national moving company; and
- Full family membership at a mutually agreed-upon local country club, a social family membership at a mutually agreed-upon country club and full membership at the OSU Faculty Club.

In addition to that contract package, Ohio State also included airfare for Smith and his wife to make two trips between Columbus and Arizona over the next six months, travel cost reimbursement for his wife's attendance at several out-of-town athletic events and the use of two premium automobiles provided by the university.

The contract also provides Smith with a \$100,000 buyout clause.

Smith, 49, was accompanied to the announcement ceremony by his wife, Sheila, and their four children — son Matt and daughters Nicole, Lindsey and Summer. Sheila Smith was a member of the 1976 Canadian Olympic women's basketball team and holds a doctorate in higher education administration.

No Staff Changes Seen

Smith said after the news conference that he did not envision bringing any staff members from Arizona State with him to Columbus.

"I'm just not that way," he said. "I did have a great staff there and the hardest part for me was getting on the phone last night, calling them and telling them I was leaving."

"I'm a Max DePree type of person," Smith added, referring to the author of such books as "Leadership is an Art." "I believe that people are the heart and soul of all that matters. When you set up structures, have people in little boxes, dotted lines and all that stuff, that doesn't mean anything. Those things don't mean anything to me."

"It's relationships that matter. It's understanding what people's personal and professional goals are. What I want to do is come here and spend the appropriate amount of time — and that could be six months or 12 months — assessing the environment and assessing the people, making sure that people are in the right position that they're in relative to their talents and skills."

"There are a lot of people in this world who just work in their jobs and their talents or skills might be somewhere else. It's just that no one has taken the time to assess that. I'm that guy."

That said, he also admitted he had a cadre of possible candidates he would like to have join him at Ohio State if the situation was right.

"Do I have people across the country that I would bring in if jobs opened up?" Smith said. "No question."

OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

New AD Impresses Those He Will Lead

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

There was a universal show of solidarity at Ohio State on March 5 when Gene Smith was introduced as the new athletic director.

Everyone seemed to agree that Smith was the perfect man for the job.

"Sitting here today and listening to what he had to say, I was certainly impressed," head football coach Jim Tressel told BSB. "The more I heard, the more I liked."

University president Karen Holbrook said no one should be sur-

Tom Osborne and Bob Devaney."

As Smith finished his football career, got into coaching and eventually moved up to head the athletic departments of three different universities, Myles kept track of his old recruit.

"I have followed his career quite a bit, and I used to meet him at conventions and we would talk," Myles said. "I think he's very good at what he does and I think the people here at Ohio State and the people throughout Ohio are going to be very happy with him."

OSU Alumni Association president and CEO Archie Griffin, who served on the search committee, told BSB he had no doubt the university had selected the

relationship in that we'd played against his teams. Our athletic director my first six or seven years at Youngstown State (Joe Malmisur), who is now retired, used to always talk about Gene and how impressed he was with him, and I can't wait to call him and tell him that Gene is with us."

Later, the two crossed paths again while Smith was at Arizona State and served on the Fiesta Bowl committee.

"Although you meet a zillion people at those things, I do recollect meeting him at one of the functions," Tressel remembered. "Spending as much time as we did with the Fiesta Bowl committees two years in a row, his name was brought up often as being a guy who was making an impact there."

"I think being in the Pac-10 is somewhat similar to being in the Big Ten. They have very excellent academic institutions, and of course, athletics is very important in both of those conferences. There are a lot of challenges, so I think he brings with him a lot of thought."

While Smith appeared to make a favorable initial impression on Tressel, football player Brandon Mitchell said that Smith reminded him of his head coach.

"I think he's a lot like Coach Tressel," said Mitchell, one of two OSU student-athletes to serve on the search committee. "When Coach Tressel was recruiting me, when I sat down and had an individual meeting with him, I was thinking in my head that this was a guy that I could really sit down and talk to. For lack of better words, he seemed like a father figure to me."

"When I sat down with Mr. Smith, I felt the exact same way. When he shared some of his life experiences with me, I was just like, 'Wow, this guy is wise beyond his years.' Even though he is only 49, he is so wise and has so many life lessons that he can teach all the other student-athletes."

Mitchell admitted to some mixed feelings while attending the press conference because of his close relationship with Geiger.

"It's bittersweet in a way because me and Andy had a great relationship," he said. "I was able to talk to Andy about pretty much anything I needed to. He was like a mentor to me as far as academics and athletics, and it's kind of a sad feeling to know that he's leaving."

"But I'm sure I'll keep in contact with him, and Gene Smith is a great guy. I can't think of a better person to take Andy's place."

As the news conference ended and Smith was besieged by members of the media, his wife, Sheila, found a quiet corner to talk with members of the search committee and board of trustees.

Occasionally looking out over the sea of television cameras, microphones and tape recorders, she tried to make eye contact with her husband but failed.

As for her first brush with the frenzy that surrounds Ohio State athletics, she smiled and said, "Someone asked if this was overwhelming. I don't think I'd say it was overwhelming. I think it's really more energizing and exciting."

Mrs. Smith is a former Olympic basketball player for Canada in 1976 and senior vice president of the ASU Foundation. She said that her husband was extremely excited about his new job.

"He was delighted for a whole host of reasons," she said. "Obviously, first and foremost, it was the quality of the institution and the quality of the athletic program. Also, he is coming home. He was born and raised in Cleveland and his parents are just 2 1/2 hours up the road, and we're delighted about that."

And it puts the family just a few hours away from youngest daughter Summer, who recently graduated from Arizona State and is currently job-hunting in Michigan.

"I'm ecstatic," Summer said. "We just found out a few days ago that he was a candidate and this was a possibility, so we're very excited."

When asked to describe her father, Summer replied, "He's a great people person. He's very ambitious and loves challenges. He likes to tackle those challenges. He'll get bored if he doesn't have a challenge to tackle."

And did Summer or her two sisters ever give him a different kind of challenge growing up?

"Oh, yeah," she said with a laugh. "Where do you think he got that gray hair?"

Arizona State president Michael Crow said that his university would take immediate steps to find Smith's successor.

"Gene has been an extremely successful athletic director and university leader," Crow said. "He and his wife, Sheila, are beloved by the university family. We are sorry to see Gene leave but well understand that this is a wonderful opportunity for him."

"We will take steps immediately to find a successor who can build upon the base Gene has created here."



TERRY GILLIAM

INTERESTED SPECTATOR — Among those at a packed Longaberger Alumni House to hear Gene Smith's opening statement after being hired as athletic director was head football coach Jim Tressel.

prised that Smith wound up atop the list of possible candidates to replace Andy Geiger.

"We started out with the search committee and set up what we wanted in a new athletic director," Holbrook told BSB. "We wanted somebody with integrity and values and someone who cared about the students as students and as athletes. That certainly seems to describe Gene very well."

Smith met with members of the media less than 24 hours after accepting a seven-year contract to become the eighth athletic director at Ohio State. A native of Cleveland who was a high school football star in northeastern Ohio, Smith said he was recruited to play for the Buckeyes by assistant coach Bill Myles, now an associate athletic director at OSU.

"It took you a while to get me here, huh, Coach?" Smith said.

Myles appreciated the recognition even if it was a bit inaccurate.

"He got a little mixed up," Myles said. "I was at Nebraska at the time and I was trying to get him to come there. It doesn't matter, though. You can see that he was a good football player because Woody was after him, Michigan was after him, Ara Parseghian was after him, and I was after him along with

best candidate for the job.

"I've known Gene for a number of years and he has always impressed me and everyone in the profession of college athletics," he said. "Someone asked me when he rose to the top of our list, and I said that he would have always been on top of that list whether or not he had been interested in the job."

"He is considered to be one of the top directors of athletics and someone that I believe Ohio State is extremely fortunate to have hired."

While some fans had speculated that Griffin or perhaps some other person with an Ohio State background would have been more appropriate, Tressel said, "I'm sure there were several worthy candidates with backgrounds from our university. But when you look at the qualifications and look at Gene's resume, then listen to what he has to say about college athletics in general and Ohio State in particular, I'm confident that the search committee has done an excellent job."

Tressel said that while he was at Youngstown State he crossed paths with Smith, then the athletic director at Eastern Michigan.

"I knew him a little bit from afar," the OSU coach said. "When he was at Eastern Michigan, we had a competitive

Join The Buckeye Boosters

Membership Opportunities:

- ★ Celebrity Golf Outing at the OSU Scarlet Course
- ★ Tour of Ohio Stadium
- ★ Kick-Off Dinner honoring Senior Players
- ★ Travel to every football away game and bowl game
- ★ And much, much more!!

Membership is only \$40 per year! For information, check us out at www.buckeyeboosters.com or call 614-326-3300. **JOIN TODAY!**



Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 Mail Check to: Buckeye Boosters, 921 Chatham Lane, Ste. 105
 Columbus, Ohio 43221

OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

Smith Not Worried By Athletic Dept. Woes

The following is a transcript of the March 5 press conference held by Ohio State president Karen Holbrook to introduce incoming athletic director Gene Smith.

Karen Holbrook: "I want to thank everyone for coming out on this wonderful, wonderful, terribly exciting day for every single one of us. What a great day in Buckeyeland. We are here to announce the appointment of Gene Smith as Ohio State's next athletics director."

"I want to congratulate Joe Alutto and the search committee for an outstanding search process and also to acknowledge Tami Longaberger, the chairman of our board of trustees, for staying with the process all the way through and for leading it also in a marvelous way."

"I am certain that the people of Ohio will agree that we have found the best possible person to be our next athletics director at the Ohio State University."

"On a personal note, Gene, I had the pleasure of meeting (you) three years ago and have watched (your) success at Arizona State over the years. I was absolutely delighted when the search committee recognized him as our top candidate."

"Let me also say that after spending time with Gene and Sheila, his wife, and his family, I think I can state unequivocally that they are going to be a terrific asset not just to the Ohio State University but to the entire community of Ohio."

"Gene was tailor-made for this job. First, he's a Buckeye, born and raised in Cleveland. He's a graduate of the Notre Dame University (sic) when in 1973 he played defensive (end) on their national championship team. Gene has served with distinction as athletics director at Eastern Michigan University and Iowa State before directing the athletics program at another great public university: Arizona State University. Gene, we are really thrilled that you chose to return to your roots in Ohio."

"Ohio State's athletics department with its 36 sports and nearly 1,000 student-athletes is part of this great university's identity and spirit. Gene is going to very quickly discover the degree of loyalty and enthusiasm that the Buckeyes feel for all of their sports teams."

"Gene comes to Ohio State with a deep commitment and understanding of college athletics and a true commitment to student-athletes to be successful in their sport and also to meet their academic challenges and to graduate with the lifetime benefits of an Ohio State degree."

"And now let me issue a very hearty Buckeye welcome to Gene and Sheila Smith and turn the podium over to Gene for a few remarks."

Gene Smith: "Thank you so much. ... Hello everyone. How are you doing? Let me welcome everyone and thank everyone for coming today. I certainly appreciate the media coming here, obviously, and appreciate the staff who are here and people from the community. I also see a few trustees in the room and others. Thank you for being here."

"Let me take this opportunity to introduce the most important people in my life. First of all, my wife, Sheila Smith; secondly, my son, Matt Young; my middle daughter, Lindsey Smith; the oldest, Nicole Smith; and the baby, Summer Smith. Thank you guys for coming."

"I'm excited to be here. I'm excited to be a Buckeye. It's great to be home. There's so



TERRY GILLIAM

PEOPLE PERSON — Surrounded by members of the media, Gene Smith fielded a variety of questions at the news conference to announce his hiring as Ohio State athletic director. Smith tackled such issues as NCAA investigations, facility debt and his leadership philosophy.

much rich tradition and history at the Ohio State University — academically and athletically. There is so much that can be accomplished in the narrow world of athletics to help student-athletes be successful. This was said earlier — there are over 1,000 student-athletes here. My whole mission — our goal — is to create an environment for those student-athletes to be successful academically, athletically and socially."

"The No. 1 goal is to get an education and get a degree. Secondly, God gave them a gift. They developed that gift in the K-12 system, club program or whatever. The football field, the pool, the court, wherever is that platform where we provide them an opportunity to express that gift and hopefully maximize the potential they have within themselves."

"Lastly, we want our young women to grow up to be women and understand what it is to be a woman in this complex society. We want our young men to grow up to understand what it means to be a man in this world and alternately take on the challenges they will have to take on as they move on to maturity."

"This is a great program, a place where across this nation we can have a significant impact on the direction of intercollegiate athletics. The things that intrigued me most about the Ohio State University were what Andy Geiger had accomplished. I have the utmost respect, loyalty and admiration for Andy Geiger."

"I was fortunate enough to be blessed to be an athletic director at the age of 29, and there were many people that I looked up to and aspired to emulate and to be. And over the years, I continually watched Andy operate an institution that he was fortunate enough to be a part of. With his talents and skills, and watching him develop those programs, I grew as an athletic director. So I'm privileged to have a chance to follow a great footprint that he has put

forward. I'm anxious to step into his shoes and try to be a part of what he's built."

"Lastly let me say that in my years of coaching at Notre Dame, I never lost to Michigan. (Laughter and applause.) I look at a lot of tradition and history, and there are some former football players in the back of the room. Coach Bill Myles recruited me actually out of the city of Cleveland. It took a long time to get me here, huh, Coach? (Laughter) I also see Archie (Griffin) and big John Hicks back there. John, I appreciate you showing up."

"In the city of Cleveland when I was growing up, there were a lot of student-athletes who all aspired to be like you. John was the biggest person I ever saw in my life, and I didn't think I could ever be as big as him. To see him today and see him here moves me, and so I appreciate you showing up, John. It's unbelievable to me."

"To have a chance to be on the same campus, to be in the same environment as Archie Griffin — I don't know if I can explain it. I wouldn't even begin to share the emotions I have relative to that opportunity to be in an environment to work with him. He is one of the greatest of all time, and not just in athletics but as you all know in his values and integrity and what he's all about."

"So we're happy to be here. My family's excited. Our official start date is April 15 according to my contract, and we're anxious to be here. We're ready to rock and roll. Thank you so much for being here and we'll take questions at this time."

Q. The reputation of Ohio State's athletics program has been subjected to a significant amount of negative publicity and distractions recently due to the NCAA investigations into the football and men's basketball programs. What is your plan to uphold and restore the image and also create an environment where players won't accept illegal benefits or get into other

kind of trouble?

Smith: "I think that challenge is not a challenge that a single individual can have an impact on. One of the things that I'm excited about is coming to an environment where there are outstanding coaches and outstanding staff, and within the university community, there are significant resources relative to intellect and knowledge. I intend to take advantage of that — bring the coaches together who are the leaders of our department. I want to take advantage of the skills on campus in communications and public relations and other areas. I want to talk about a strategy to deal with the aftermath of some of the challenges we've had in the past."

"Let's keep in mind something: The Ohio State University, outside Columbus, is still thought of in a great way. I know there have been challenges here. I understand the pressures that exist. I understand the immediate challenges with dealing with some of the issues that we've had in our great program. But nationally, the Ohio State University has a great reputation, so our role is to come in and see if I can enhance that reputation. We'll do everything that we can to avoid those types of issues by utilizing the expertise around us."

Q. Have you talked with the NCAA about the investigations and what the possible penalties might be?

Smith: "No, I have not."

Q. How extensively have you been briefed on where the investigations stand?

Smith: "Very little. One, I've been a member of the NCAA Infractions Committee. I'd hate to tell you how many cases I had come before me, and so I understand those things exist and I think it's important that we keep them in perspective. Regardless of the outcomes, the bottom line is that there is a great deal of integrity here. When you go through the list of coaches, when you look at the tradition, when you spend time with President Holbrook — these issues are single issues in a small situation. They are not something that will damage the integrity and the long-term health of the institution or the athletic program. So I didn't gauge that. I have experience on the NCAA Infractions Committee and I've seen cases worse."

Q. You don't think that investigations in both major programs are damaging to the integrity of the athletic program overall?

Smith: "No, I don't. I don't think it will. I think when you look at the people — I look at Jim Tressel, I look at Thad Matta, I look at Karen Holbrook — I'm not an individual that focuses on single incidents relative to 300 people (in the department) or 1,000 student-athletes. We have 1,000 student-athletes and many of them have great integrity. This president has great integrity. Jim Tressel has great integrity. This community and these trustees have great integrity. It is all about the people. It is not about a single incident."

"So, yes, when you look at an individual incident and the individuals that are in that incident, there might be some integrity issues. But relative to the entire institution, relative to our College of Business, relative to our College of Education, relative to our College of Law, there is great integrity in those institutions. I just have a little bit different perspective than the way it's being presented."

Q. On Thursday, Ohio State issued a statement that the athletic director position had not been offered, yet here you sit less than 48 hours later.

OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

Smith: "Are you surprised?"

Q. No, not really. (Laughter) How did all of this come together so quickly?

Smith: "I was contacted about 10 days ago ... by the search firm and I did interview in Dallas with a small part of the search committee. I came to town Friday (March 4) morning and interviewed with the entire committee. (That) night was when I was officially offered the job and I accepted. That's how it came about."

Q. Woody Hayes used to say that the louder someone proclaimed their integrity, the faster he counted his keys. (Smith laughs.) Is it possible that Ohio State is perhaps guilty of proclaiming its integrity almost to a fault?

Smith: "You know, we can get into philosophy all you want. I'm just a simple person. I'm pretty simple. I'm a blue-collar guy. I understand your question and I understand what you're saying. I understand why everyone is so focused on that. I'm probably more focused on the positive than the negative. I certainly understand in this community how the negative has been in the top of the mind and what everyone is interested in."

"But that's not why I came here. This institution did not attract me to come in and try to clean up some issues with an investigation or to deal with a small microcosm of individuals who have tried to breach the integrity of an unbelievably historic institution. So I can't get to that level. I'm just a little bit different that way. So I apologize if it appears as though I'm not paying the depth of attention that others would pay to that because I just look at it a little bit differently."

Q. Were you quoted accurately in a statement released earlier in the week by Arizona State that said you were not interested in this job and had not been contacted?

Smith: "That was not my statement. Look at the quote. It was not my statement. I never made that statement. It was a statement issued by ... and actually I have never seen it. Someone mentioned it to me this morning. So it didn't come from me. I was on the golf course actually ... and I won the tournament."

Q. You mentioned Bill Myles earlier. Why did you not come to Ohio State back then?

Smith: "I think it was Bill and Dick Walker who recruited me for Ohio State. I don't know. I was very fortunate that Woody sat in my living room, and I had that opportunity to hear Bill talk about the Ohio State University. I had a friend in Warren, Ohio, by the name of Ross Browner, and recruiting at that time was pretty intense and I don't know if we had a formula or what. We just kind of went gut-check and went with Ara Parseghian and Notre Dame. I don't think it was anything against you, Bill, or Dick. It was just Ross and I sitting around trying to make a decision."

Q. Being from Ohio, when you first became an athletic director, was this where you always wanted to be? Is this the job you aspire to if you're an athletic director?

Smith: "I look at it as the pinnacle. It is, by far, the best athletic program in the country. I have never aspired to be anywhere. I've just tried to work hard and when opportunities presented themselves, I tried to be prepared to respond to them. So I never aspired to be anywhere. When the search firm called me, I was shocked. ... But when I listened to what the Ohio State University was looking for, I realized that maybe I was a good fit. So I didn't really aspire to be here, but I feel fortunate that I am here. This is a great institution."

Q. During Andy Geiger's tenure, the university pretty much took care of building new and upgrading existing facilities. What do you see as the greatest challenge facing you as you begin this position?

Smith: "I think immediately we need to do everything we can to help promote the positives that exist here. It was evident in the questions that I was hit with first (today) that I need to help talk about what's good here. I may be missing something and I apologize because I've only been here two days. But the reality is that there are some great things here, and we need to talk about those things. We need to develop our pride points. We need to share what has been accomplished here."

"There have been some great accomplishments with these student-athletes, academically and athletically, and we need to be more positive with those things. There is no question that those negative things are always going to be there, but they are not issues that should overshadow the great things that are done here. I need to come up with a strategy to deal with that."

"Secondly, the Ohio State University, in my view, has an opportunity to shape intercollegiate athletics across this country. There are a number of task forces being developed at the NCAA level with different presidents chairing those task forces. Decisions will be made relative

"I never said to myself five, six, seven years ago that this is where I want to be. But when I received the call, I knew this was where I needed to end up."

• Gene Smith

to student-athlete well-being, subject to fiscal integrity, things of that nature. The Ohio State University has a chance to be a model and be a source-maker in that decision-making process, so I see that we need to find a way to help our program assert itself into a national discussion about where intercollegiate athletics will be."

"Otherwise, I need to do everything I can to support our coaches. We have some great coaches and I need to see that they have the resources necessary to help our student-athletes experience the successful experiences they would like to experience."

Q. Can you talk about the differences you think you'll face here as opposed to Arizona State? I think you had 22 sports and a much smaller budget. Is that a daunting thing for you? How do you view that?

Smith: "It's a daunting thing relative to my schedule because I love to go to every single sport. My wife and I love competition, and I'm kind of anxious to see how that's going to work for me relative to trying to hit every single event. We'll work it out some way. But otherwise, I'm not really worried about not being able to handle that part of it."

"Andy has put in place an excellent staff that is very competent, people I had an opportunity to meet 30 minutes ago. They're very accountable for what they're responsible for, so I'm one of those individuals that believes in setting goals and objectives, setting parameters for where people work and how they work, then getting out of the way and letting them do their jobs. Hopefully, I can tweak and enhance and continue to allow the staff to be successful and be able to run the operation as well as it has been run."

Q. The NCAA just released its new guidelines for academic performance by student-athletes, and Ohio State didn't rank very highly. Do you have some ideas on how to improve the academic performance of the student-athletes at Ohio State?

Smith: "I'm not really sure yet. I need to have the time to come in and assess, understand the culture and see what we have in place. I know there are some great things in place. I need to understand our recruiting and what we look for. There are a number of things I need to assess before I say these are the things we need to implement to improve our academic performance. We do have great academic performance in a number of areas, and we want to look at areas where we have challenges and improve those particular areas. But a number of our sports perform extremely well, so we need to look at some of those things."

Q. How will you work with Andy Geiger during the transition period?

Smith: "I talked to Andy this morning and we had a nice conversation. I anticipate hopefully meeting with him sometime next weekend as we travel. Otherwise, there will be a lot of phone calls. I anticipate that I will come back here at some point in time before my start date and spend some time with him, pick his brain and let him tutor me a little bit. I'll keep in contact with him."

Q. You inherit some \$200 million in facility debt here. Was that brought up to you during the interview process?

Smith: "Yes, and it scared the lights out of me."

Q. How do you tackle that and is that just the way things are in today's college athletics?

Smith: "From what I understand — and I have not had a chance to look at the budget spread sheets or the forecasting — there is a long-term financial plan and the revenues that are needed to cover that debt are in place. So I'm anxious to see that. It's a little blind faith, but that's true everywhere. There's no secret about that."

"When I went to Arizona State University, I was unaware of the \$4.3 million deficit that I inherited. We just developed a strategic plan to take care of it. At least I know we have the debt here and I'm confident, based upon the chat that Andy had with me, that a plan is in place. My plan is to come in and work the plan and make sure it is successful."

Q. What did you do to erase that \$4.3 million debt at Arizona State?

Smith: "It was a combination of reducing expenditures and increasing revenues — the old business formula. The main thing was really looking at creative ways we could increase revenue. We were probably not your typical athletic department that was bent on increasing prices and

ticket sales as opposed to looking at all the ancillary revenues that had the potential to grow in a significant way."

"People thought I was crazy when I lowered (football) ticket prices, and the objective in lowering ticket prices was to increase volume and ultimately increase sales in all of the other ancillary areas and then hopefully exceed what you had lost in the reduction."

And it worked."

"The idea of providing free tickets to those season ticket holders that had been loyal to us was an effort to bring in people who we knew would ultimately be back if they had a great experience and we provided them customer service, and we did that. So you implement creative strategies and control your expenditures. It took a while and a few gray hairs, but it worked."

Q. Do you feel the need to have to be as creative here?

Smith: "I don't know if I need to be. I don't think I need to take my creativity to the issue of finances. I probably need to take my creativity to other areas. The gentlemen back there asked about academics and I probably need to focus my creativity on that. Financially, from what I understand, that's not going to be our issue. There are a lot of loyal Buckeyes in this state from what I understand, so that's not going to be my major issue."

Q. As you were coming up in the ranks as an athletic director, how much attention did you pay to what was going on at Ohio State?

Smith: "Over my entire career? I would say probably more when I was at Eastern Michigan University. I was just 15 minutes down the street from that 'other school' and you're in the shadow of the Big Ten, so I probably paid more attention at that time. Now when Andy came here, I watched Andy. I don't know if I necessarily watched what was happening at the institution as much as I watched Andy, so I can't really say I had a major focus."

Q. So this was not really your dream job?

Smith: "No, it was not my dream job. I never said to myself five, six, seven years ago that this is where I want to be. But when I received the call, I knew this was where I needed to end up. I plan to hopefully retire here unless my boss to my right (Holbrook) tells me I need to leave early. I just never aspired to be anywhere except where I was. My dad was an electrical contractor and my mom was a registered nurse. My dad dragged me around since I was 5 years old and I was sweeping up behind him. I just was interested in working hard and keeping the job I had."

"When I had the opportunity to go to Iowa State University, I looked at it and it was awesome. When I had the opportunity to go to Arizona State University, I looked at it and it was awesome. But here is beyond awesome. This is the pinnacle. My emotions were totally different. So, no, it wasn't a dream, but as far as being here, I can't describe it. This opportunity I would never dream to have because I was just trying to keep what I had. I'm just a little different that way."

Q. What makes this the pinnacle for you? Is it because you don't have to compete with professional teams like the Diamondbacks and Suns like you did at Arizona State? Or is it something else? Is it to make the people feel good and win friends?

Smith: "Let's make sure we're up front with one another. I'm not going to say those things to make friends. I'm here telling you what I'm all about. I'm going to be forthright and tell you what the deal is. The challenges that are here are different than what I had (at Arizona State). The challenges that I've had in the past — at Eastern Michigan University, Iowa State University and Arizona State University — were significantly different than the challenges here. I'm anxious to take my talents and skills and direct them toward new challenges, and I feel very confident that my talents and skills fit those challenges and dealing with those challenges. I can't say that this is a job that I dreamed of as a child, but I can say that the challenges that are here intrigue me."

Q. So when you say pinnacle, you mean as a personal challenge?

Smith: "It's a professional and personal challenge. God gave me the ability to play football. Through athletics, I have the opportunity to be where I am today. We have 1,000 athletes and I want them to have the opportunity to take what they gain athletically and academically and have a chance to be what they want to be in life."

"Through hard work and athletic competition, I want them to be able to have a chance to land in that spot. I landed in that spot and I'm excited about this challenge. I want our student-athletes to have that opportunity whenever it presents itself to them. That's what it's all about here. We should not lose focus on that."

COVER STORY: GIANT KILLERS

Buckeyes Produce One Shocking Moment

Continued From Page 1

Matt Sylvester moments after canning the winning shot. "I feel like I'm going to wake up all of a sudden and it's all going to be over."

Conference champion Illinois (29-1, 15-1) was left wishing for the same. The Illini were bidding to become the first team to start the season 30-0 since the 1991 UNLV team and were hoping to be the first squad to claim the NCAA title unscathed since another league team, Indiana, turned the trick in 1976 at 32-0.

Instead, they had to be consoled in the visiting locker room by head coach Bruce Weber.

"(I told them) just to celebrate what they've done," Weber said. "That wasn't one of our goals to be undefeated. It just kind of snuck in there. We didn't get it done. Now we learn from it and move on."

"It was a tough atmosphere, they didn't quit and they were playing loosey-goosey. I thought a couple of times maybe we could break them, and we just could never do it. They hung in there and made the big shot at the end."

That shot, a deep three by the 6-7 Sylvester in front of a jubilant OSU bench, might live on in Buckeye lore for decades. He drilled it with 5.1 seconds left and out of a finely executed play called on the sideline by head coach Thad Matta.

OSU was down 64-62 when Tony Stockman rebounded a missed three by Luther Head and OSU called timeout with 12.1 seconds to play.

"We met real quick and each coach kind of gave me a little bit of their thoughts. I listened a split-second and I said, 'Blank that. We're going for the win,'" Matta said.

"I went into the huddle and I told the players, 'Gentlemen, we're going for the win,' and they were as excited as I've ever seen them. They executed the play as well as we could have."

Sylvester, who finished with a career-high 25 points, was the primary option, to the apparent surprise of Illinois and defender Deron Williams.

"It's a play that we run a lot and we had Tony as a decoy because that's a great decoy, Tony's a great shooter," Sylvester said. "They were looking at him like they had no doubt he was getting the ball. Terence (Dials) set a great screen and pinched in my man. Before they realized that it wasn't going to Tony, I had already let the ball go and I made it."

"I told Coach if I got it, I was going to make it."

Illinois had played just four games that ended in a single-digit margin. That included a 73-68 overtime win over Iowa Jan. 20. The Buckeyes, on the other hand, had played in five games this season that went down to the final possession of regulation — and lost them all.

"When you're in that situation and you're playing the best team in college basketball, you want a shot to win the game at the end, and we got it," Matta said. "Fortunately, finally for us we had a positive ending because we've been so close so many times and we've never been able to get over that."

"I think saying that this would be a big win would probably be the under-



SONNY BROCKWAY

COLUMBUS GOES CRAZY — Fans stream onto the court at Value City Arena after Ohio State upset No. 1-ranked Illinois 65-64 on March 6. It was the Buckeyes' fifth win in six tries over No. 1 teams dating back to 1978, but the first ever at VCA.

statement of the world today. I could not be happier for the players and everything that they've been through, this team's been through, the commitment that they've made to this program. You always want justice and they gave, as I told them they had to before this game, every ounce of everything that we had."

Added Dials, who was rock-solid inside with 21 points and eight rebounds, "I'm speechless right now. It's been an unbelievable run for this team with all the adversity we had to go through. To beat Illinois being No. 1 on Senior Day on our home court, there's just no better feeling right now."

Whether OSU can find a new motivation in the Big Ten tournament in Chicago remains to be seen, but it will get its chance to keep things rolling. The sixth-seeded Buckeyes have to play an opening-round game with 11th-seeded Penn State (7-22, 1-15) March 10 at approximately 5:05 p.m. Eastern on ESPN2. A win would move them into a quarterfinal matchup with three seed Wisconsin (20-7, 11-5) on March 11 at approximately 9:10 p.m. Eastern.

Anatomy Of An Upset

Moving up a seed in the league tournament, though, was only a sliver of the mountain of emotion behind OSU's shocker. Seeing if they could actually complete the task against an undefeated team was the real carrot for the Buckeyes.

In doing so, they stuck to a plan to cut off UI's deadly transition game and force the talented Illinois guards to dish the ball on defense, while centering the offense around Dials in the paint and Sylvester on the wing.

It was check marks all around as Sylvester and Dials were a combined 16 of 30 for 46 points while Williams, Head and Dee Brown were a combined 7 for 27 for 27 points.

"Our guards, they've carried us all year and they just didn't get offensively a whole bunch done," Weber said.

Still, Brown had 11 first-half points as Illinois enjoyed a 38-27 lead at the break, and Head appeared to be getting

warmed up just in time to put OSU away early in the second half.

His three on UI's first possession of the second half provided a 41-29 lead, and another trey from the top of the key put Illinois up 44-32 with 17:05 to play. Head also upfaked Sylvester into a foul outside the arc with 12:03 to go and swished all three free throws to move the lead to 50-39.

After Je'Kel Foster rimmed out a three, Brown, who scored a team-high 13 points, stormed ahead and drew a foul. He made 1 of 2 free throws to up the lead to 51-39. However, the OSU guards shut down Illinois' push thereafter and also took care of the ball well enough to allow the Buckeyes to chip back at the lead.

"Illinois obviously is a great team and they thrive on getting out in transition off people's turnovers," Dials said. "The coaches told us to take care of the ball, take your time and be strong with the ball. I think our guards did a great job after they told them that."

The Buckeyes, in fact, registered no turnovers in the entire second half after committing eight in the first 20 minutes.

"That was the No. 1 thing I wrote on the board at halftime," Matta said, "because Illinois is so good, and when you mishandle or turn the ball over it is two or three points at the other end."

The Buckeyes started the uphill climb with a three-point play by Sylvester in the post over Brown to cut the score to 51-42. After a basket by UI reserve Nick Smith, Dials logged a three-point play of his own.

Smith scored again off a wraparound feed from Head, but OSU scored six straight to make it 55-51 with free throws by Sylvester, a Brandon Fusch-Cheatham lay-in off a Dials pass and a Dials tally off an assist from Foster.

Illinois still led 62-56 when James Augustine scored on his third consecutive attempt inside at 4:09, but that's when the hometown heroics began.

Sylvester missed a long three, but Foster saved the day by diving on the floor for a steal and drawing a foul by Brown. He hit both ends of the one-and-

one out of a television timeout with 3:37 to play. Augustine dunked off a perfectly executed pick-and-roll from Williams to make it 64-58, but Illinois was done scoring for the day with 3:21 to play.

After misses on each end, Dials made a hanger in the lane with 2:08 showing and, with the help of a doubling Sylvester, forced Augustine into a travel on the ensuing possession. Sylvester made the turnover hurt by storming down the lane and flipping in a left-handed bank over Augustine with 1:40 on the clock.

Despite his 1-for-7 shooting day, Williams threatened to put the game away when he shook Stockman and flipped a pass to a cutting Powell. However, Dials read the play and blocked Powell's attempt with 1:08 to go.

Sylvester missed a potential game-tying fadeaway, but Head fell down on his three-point attempt with 17 seconds to play. That set up Sylvester's bomb, which provided the only OSU lead of the day yet left the Illini wondering what happened.

"For the first time maybe all year, really, down the stretch we were tentative," Illinois forward Jack Ingram said. "We weren't aggressive, and they were the more aggressive team and they made the plays on offense and defense, and they won."

"Give the credit to them. They played really hard and made the plays, and we couldn't respond."

"I didn't think anyone tightened up," Weber snapped. "I just think we didn't execute."

"It's something to learn from. I said at the first press conference, 'We're going to lose sooner or later,' and I guess I was right."

Ohio State 65, Illinois 64

March 6, 2005 Value City Arena; Columbus, Ohio												
	min	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp		min	fg	ft	rb
Illinois	21	4-11	1-3	3-8	0	3	9	Augustine	34	4-10	4-5	6-11
Powell	38	3-9	3-3	0-7	6	1	12	Head	33	1-7	0-0	1-6
Williams	38	3-11	5-8	0-0	4	4	13	McBride	6	0-0	0-0	1-1
Carter	8	2-2	0-0	1-1	0	0	4	Smith	6	2-2	0-0	0-0
Ingram	16	4-8	0-0	0-1	0	1	8					
TOTALS	200	23-60	13-19	13-37	14	17	64					
Percentages: FG: .383, FT: .684. 3-point goals: 5-19, .263 (Head 3-6, Brown 2-6, Ingram 0-1, Powell 0-2, Williams 0-4). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 1 (Williams). Turnovers: 9 (Head 3, Augustine 2, Powell 2, Ingram, Team). Steals: 5 (Ingram 3, Head, Williams).												
	min	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp		min	fg	ft	rb
Ohio State	21	1-3	0-0	0-5	1	3	2	Sullinger	5	0-0	0-0	0-0
Harris	39	8-13	5-7	5-8	3	1	21	Dials	17	0-2	0-0	0-2
Butler	33	3-8	2-3	0-2	2	1	10	Foster	23	2-4	1-2	0-2
Fuss-Cheatham	26	1-6	0-0	1-4	3	1	2	Stockman	34	8-17	7-9	0-5
Sylvester	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	Marinchick	2	0-0	0-0	0-0
TOTALS	200	23-53	15-21	7-31	14	14	65					
Percentages: FG: .434, FT: .714. 3-point goals: 4-16, .250 (Foster 2-5, Sylvester 2-5, Fuss-Cheatham 0-1, Butler 0-1, Stockman 0-4). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 3 (Dials, Foster, Sylvester). Turnovers: 8 (Butler 2, Sylvester 2, Sullinger, Dials, Foster, Stockman). Steals: 3 (Sullinger, Dials, Foster). Halftime: Illinois 38, Ohio State 27. Officials: Hightower, Hillary, Hartzell. A: 19,200.												

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

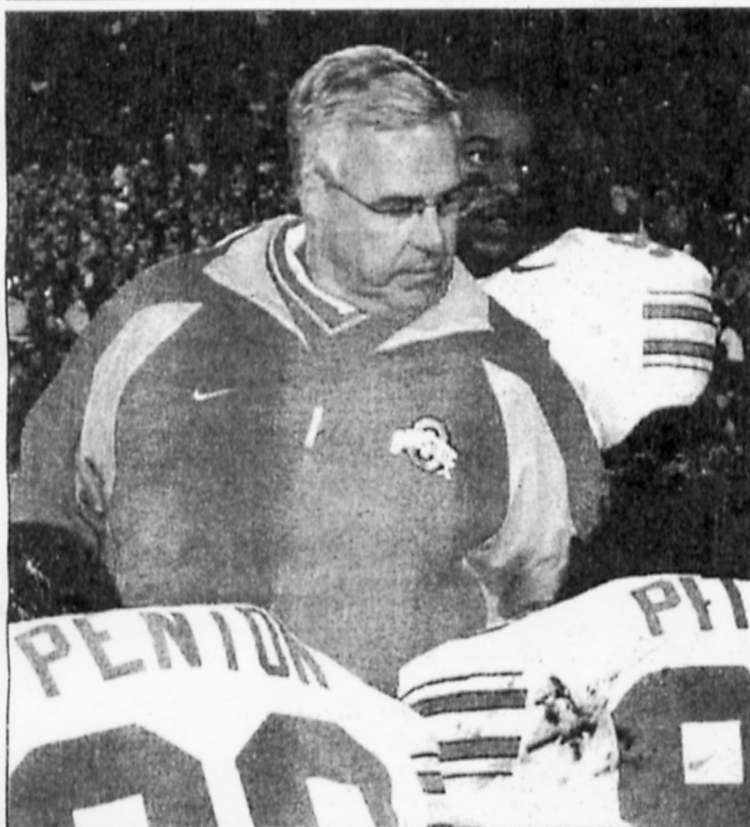
\$2.00

PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER
CLASSIFICATION
DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE RUSH!!

Vol. 24, No. 26

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

April 30, 2005



SUSAN ZEIER

HEACOCK FOR THE DEFENSE — Longtime Ohio State assistant coach Jim Heacock was promoted to defensive coordinator April 14, replacing Mark Snyder, who left the Buckeyes to become head coach at Marshall University.

OSU Defense: To Be Continued

*Game Plan Stays
Intact As Heacock
Takes Over For
Departed Snyder*

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

As transitions go, it was about as quick and painless as possible.

Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel wasted no time April 14 in naming assistant head coach Jim Heacock as the team's new defensive coordinator.

Heacock replaced Mark Snyder, who earlier that same day was introduced in Huntington, W.Va., as the new head coach at Marshall. Along with Heacock, linebackers coach Luke Fickell also received a promotion to co-defensive coordinator.

"We want continuity, we want a great coach to follow our great defensive tradition and we felt that we had all of those things in Jim," Tressel said. "We're sorry to lose Mark, but we think Jim taking over (the defense) is the next best thing."

Heacock had somewhat of a

shocked look on his face and swore that he was surprised about the promotion even though Snyder had interviewed with Marshall several weeks before and had appeared to be the front-runner for the job for at least a couple of days before the official announcement.

"I never thought about it, to tell you the truth," Heacock said of assuming entire control of the OSU defense. "It never really entered my mind. Then, when Tressel came to me and asked me about it, I just had one question for him: Did he think it would be in the best interest of this football team? He said that he thought it would, so I accepted."

A native of Alliance, Ohio, and a graduate of Muskingum College, the 56-year-old Heacock began his coaching career in 1972 as a graduate assistant at Bowling Green. He has also had stints at Washington and Illinois State, where he was head coach of the Redbirds from 1988-95.

Former Ohio State head coach John Cooper first brought Heacock to Columbus in 1996 to coach the Buckeyes' defensive tackles, and he took over the entire defensive line in 2000. He was one of only three assistants retained by Tressel when he

Continued On Page 8

Settling In Will Take A While, Says Smith

By CHRIS NIDA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On his first day in charge of a department that oversees around 300 employees and more than 900 student-athletes, Gene Smith spent as much time as he could learning.

He said that there wasn't anything daunting about the prospect of being the eighth athletic director in the history of the Ohio State University, but before he could lay out any definitive course of action for the school, he first had to be sure he was sufficiently familiar with the scenario into which he was stepping.

"It's going to take some time and assessment for me to determine what I need to do here that fits the Ohio State University and its culture before I can sit here and say, 'We are going to do this,'" Smith told a gathering of reporters on April 15, his first day on the job.

"There's a lot to learn here. It's a very complex organization. I need time to learn the culture. There's some

Continued On Page 18



READY TO GO — New athletic director Gene Smith exits his St. John Arena office on April 15, his first official day at work at Ohio State.

COVER STORY: DEFENSE TO BE CONTINUED

Players On Heacock: 'He Knows His Stuff'

Continued From Page 1

replaced Cooper in 2001, and Heacock remains the only one of those three still on staff. The others were running backs coach Tim Spencer and recruiting coordinator Bill Conley, each of whom left the program last year.

"I love working at Ohio State and I love working for Coach Tressel," said Heacock, whose younger brother, Jon, has a four-year record of 24-21 as Tressel's successor as head coach at Youngstown State. "We have a talented group of young guys and a good group of coaches, and I enjoy coming to work. I hope we can just keep the great tradition going that was started by Snyder and Coach Dino (former defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio) before him."

Tressel admitted that he had talked with former co-defensive coordinator Mel Tucker about the possibility of returning to the Buckeyes to take over the defense. Tucker left in late February to become secondary coach for the Cleveland Browns.

But while Tucker was reportedly flattered at the overture, he told Tressel that he was committed to his first NFL position and the Browns coaching staff, led by first-year head coach Romeo Crennel.

"The timing just wasn't right," Tressel said. But when asked if Tucker was his first choice and Heacock simply a fall-back candidate, the head coach shook his head and said, "I don't think I'd phrase it that way."

Regardless of whether Tucker returned or Heacock took over, Tressel obviously was looking for continuity because Snyder's departure occurred with barely a week remaining in spring practice. Coupled with the fact that the Buckeyes return nine starters on the defensive side of the ball, wholesale changes were never in the plans.

But when it was suggested that Heacock had inherited what amounted to a pat hand, he quickly disagreed.

"Nine starters or 10, I don't care," he said. "I know we have to get better. I know we've got the talent to get better, but I want to see more of it more often. To be real honest with you, I think we've got a long way to go."

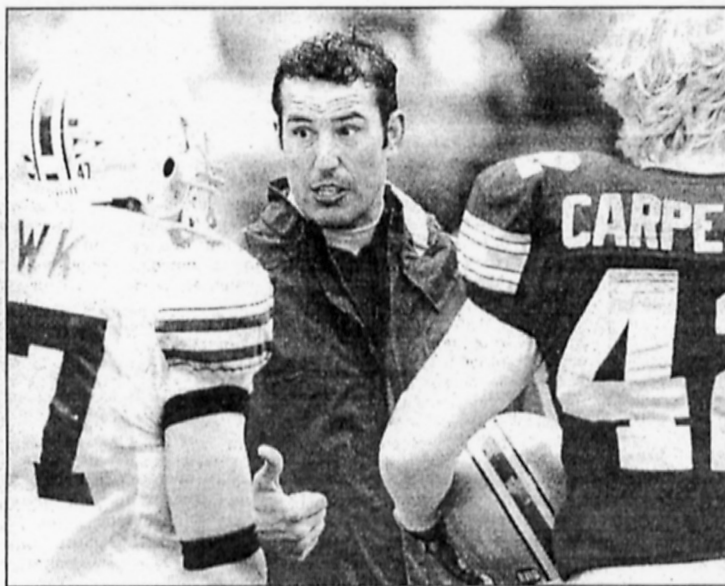
Springtime Questions

Even had Snyder stayed with the Buckeyes, there were always going to be question marks surrounding the unit heading into the fall.

Much of those question marks had to do with personnel since three standouts — defensive end Mike Kudla and linebackers Anthony Schlegel and Mike D'Andrea — were barred from contact this spring, and several other starters including defensive tackle Quinn Pitcock and safety Tyler Everett battled minor injuries.

Still, the loss of Dantonio last year and now Tucker and Snyder within the space of six weeks could be considered the most difficult hurdle to get over.

"We're trying to take it in stride," said senior linebacker Bobby Carpenter. "We're not going to let this hold us back from having a great year. Coach Heacock is a great coach. He



STILL THE BOSS — Ohio State assistant coach Luke Fickell, who was recently promoted to co-defensive coordinator, retained his duties as linebackers coach and is seen here conferring with A.J. Hawk and Bobby Carpenter before the annual spring game.

wants us to be aggressive. He wants us to get out there and pressure the quarterback. He thinks we can be a lot better than we are now, so that's our goal — continue to improve."

Defensive end Jay Richardson said that it might even prove beneficial to have his position coach in charge of the entire defense.

"He knows his stuff," Richardson said of Heacock. "His personality is a little different from Coach Snyder or Coach Dantonio, but that's OK. We know he wants us to be aggressive all the time, and I think anybody who plays on defense wants to put as much pressure as possible on the other team. I think we'll be just fine."

In addition to losing Snyder and Tucker on the field, the Buckeyes also lose their services in the area of recruiting.

One of Snyder's key areas was south Florida — which also took a hit when Conley resigned in 2004 — while Tucker was responsible for the fertile Cleveland area. In just the past few years, those two regions alone have produced such players as Chris Gamble, Antonio Holmes, Albert Dukes, Nate Salley, Troy Smith, Donte Whitner and Ted Ginn Jr.

Regarded as one of the program's best recruiters, Heacock has been a presence in central Florida as well as the Dayton, Cincinnati and northern Kentucky areas. But as happened with Snyder this past recruiting season, coordinators have had reduced roles in recruiting under Tressel, and the head coach admitted that he may have to rethink that strategy.

"I think whenever we have somebody move into a coordinator's position, we arrange his recruiting situation because of some additional duties," Tressel said. "The first thing we have to do is rearrange our current staff from a recruiting standpoint. Then, I think you talk about what

position you're going to bring in and what areas they have experience in recruiting."

Tressel also refused to speculate on who might fill the vacancy on his staff. Former OSU All-American linebacker Steve Tovar, who just finished his first season on Bobby Dodd's staff at Army, was among those mentioned as a possibility. That would allow Fickell to take over the defensive line — where he started for the Buckeyes from 1993-96 — with Tovar assuming responsibility for the linebackers, the position he played for OSU from 1989-92.

"That would be a good name to think about, but there are others to think about, too," Tressel said. "We will do what we always do, and that will be sit down with our assistants, talk about some of our needs, then have one or two guys come in and make our decision based on all of that."

For Heacock's part, he said he would like to continue to oversee a position despite his added duties.

"I like to coach a position," he said. "That's what I've always liked to do, and I hope I can continue that."

Snyder's departure means that only offensive coordinator Jim Bollman, passing game coordinator Joe Daniels and Heacock remain from Tressel's first OSU staff. According to the head coach, that's the way it should be.

"We feel like our young coaches are learning what they need to learn to move on and become head coaches in their own right," Tressel said. "That's what our game is all about. Just like our young players grow up, mature and move on, it's the same with our young coaches."

"It's hard to say goodbye sometimes because you build up relationships and friendships. Just like when (Dantonio) left, we went way back. We kind of started in this (profession) together. When Mel left, it was like he graduat-

ed and went on to grad school with the NFL. Now, Mark is doing this and he should have his chance. One of his goals has always been to return to his alma mater as head coach. It just tells me that we have been blessed with some great guys."

Moving Up Coaching Ladder

While Heacock will enter his 10th season in Columbus in the fall and 33rd overall as a full-time coach, Fickell won't even celebrate his 32nd birthday until mid-August.

Nevertheless, he has been on a fast track since he joined the Buckeyes' staff in 2002. He spent two seasons as special teams coordinator then was elevated to linebackers coach last year when Dantonio left for the head coaching job at Cincinnati and Snyder was promoted to defensive coordinator.

Now entering his fourth season on Tressel's staff, he adds even more responsibilities. But he looks at it as a challenge.

"When I got into coaching, all I ever wanted to do was coach at Ohio State," Fickell said. "This is exactly where I want to be, and whatever they want me to do, that's I'm going to do."

He has been a coach on the collegiate level since 1999 when he was hired as a graduate assistant at OSU by Cooper. Fickell left for his first full-time assignment at Akron and spent two years with the Zips before returning to Columbus in 2002.

As far as earning such a lofty promotion so early in his coaching career, Fickell replied, "I think it shows that Coach Tressel has a lot of faith in us. And that means a lot to us, I know, as a defense and as a coach."

"It's a good break for Coach Heacock and me, and we're just ready to work together. The good thing about us — we're both pretty similar. We're competitive people and we're going to work at it. It's not about credit or anything. We just all want to win."

Fickell added that he doubted there would be much noticeable difference from a Snyder-led defense to one that was piloted by Heacock.

"We're still trying to feel each other out and feel out by what we're going to do because it's going to be a lot of what Coach Heacock wants to do and he'll dictate," he said. "We'll figure out what that is ... and then going into the pre-season, obviously, we'll find out what he's most comfortable with and go with it."

"We've got a lot of good kids, a lot of good seniors, and you don't want to do a change to them right now."

Fickell has some experience with switching coordinators in midcareer. His defensive boss for the first three years at Ohio State was Bill Young, who left after the 1995 season to join the staff at Oklahoma. Elevated from linebackers coach to defensive coordinator for Fickell's senior year was longtime OSU assistant Fred Pagac.

The Buckeyes went on to post an 11-1 record in '96, marred only by a 13-9 loss to Michigan in the regular-season finale. But it also included a win over Arizona State in the Rose Bowl, a No. 2 finish in the national polls and an Ohio State defense that surrendered the fewest number of points in

COVER STORY: DEFENSE TO BE CONTINUED



TERRY GILLIAM

HEAD OF THE HERD — Mark Snyder became the former defensive coordinator at Ohio State on April 14 when he was formally introduced as head coach at Marshall, his alma mater. Snyder spent four years with the Buckeyes, including his first three as linebackers coach.

Snyder Returns To Herd As Head Coach

By CHRIS NIDA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Having lost longtime friend and defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio following the 2003 season and another trusted defensive assistant in Mel Tucker early in 2005, Jim Tressel couldn't have been thrilled with the prospect of losing defensive coordinator Mark Snyder.

But during the decade in which Snyder served on Tressel's coaching staffs, the head coach came to know well his assistant's goals, and he knew that one of Snyder's greatest professional desires was to someday return to Marshall University, his alma mater, as head coach.

And so, when the top job at Marshall opened in March with the abrupt retirement of Bob Pruett, Tressel openly campaigned for Snyder's hiring by the Thundering Herd. Perhaps the lobbying paid off as Snyder was introduced as the new head coach at Marshall on April 14.

Certainly, Snyder's Marshall connections and his 17 years in the coaching profession made him more than qualified to take over for Pruett at his alma mater. But on the day of his announcement as head coach at MU, Snyder still found time to gush about his former boss at Ohio State.

"When I talk about him, I get choked up," Snyder told reporters. "The greatest man I've ever been around, Jim Tressel. He helped me grow as a man, a family man and a football coach, as a community leader."

Snyder is a native of Ironton, Ohio, just across the Ohio River from the Marshall campus in Huntington, W.Va. He was an All-American defensive back on the 1987 Thundering Herd squad that played for the Division I-AA national championship and began his coaching career there as a student assistant.

After a stint at Central Florida, Snyder joined Tressel's staff at Youngstown State in 1991, working his way up to defensive coordinator and secondary coach for the '96 campaign. Following that season, Snyder joined Glen Mason's coaching staff at Minnesota, where he stayed through the 2000 season.

Snyder rejoined Tressel upon the latter's hiring at Ohio State in early 2001 and served as linebackers coach his first three years on staff before taking the defensive reins from Dantonio last season.

Popular among the Ohio State players, Snyder had turned down inquiries from other universities in recent years, including earlier this year when LSU explored the possibility of him taking over as defensive coordinator under new head coach Les Miles. But Snyder turned down all opportunities and found himself in the right place at the right time when Pruett opted to retire.

"It had to be this opportunity or I would have stayed at

the Ohio State University," Snyder said. "That's why (Coach Tressel) was so poignant in his dealings with the folks here in Huntington — because he knew how special it was to me."

After his announcement as head coach, Snyder remained in Huntington for just about 48 hours, running a practice and observing the Herd's April 16 spring game. But he was back in Columbus after that, taking in the Buckeyes' April 17 jersey scrimmage with his successor, former colleague Jim Heacock.

"I was just kind of a consultant," Snyder said. "I just kind of went in the (press) box with Heacock and just kind of observed. They didn't need much of my input today."

Following the scrimmage, Snyder watched film with his Buckeye charges one last time before heading back down U.S. Route 23 to take over his Marshall gig full time.

He had the chance to address the Buckeyes before leaving for the Herd and directed his comments most particularly at the current senior class, the first class at Ohio State that Tressel and staff were fully responsible for and one with many contributors to the 2002 national championship team.

"Especially to the seniors, those guys came in and gave me everything they had, and we won a lot of games and made some great relationships," Snyder said. "I told them that I love them and if they ever need anything from me, I'll always be there for them."

The members of that class returned their affection to their departing coach.

"He's a great guy," A.J. Hawk said. "I came in with him — he was my linebackers coach for two years. Everyone here has always been really close to him and we're excited for him to have a head job. I know he's excited and it's a good opportunity for him."

After Pruett's retirement, offensive coordinator Larry Kueck was named interim head coach at Marshall, and several former players now in the NFL gave him public votes of confidence. Determining Kueck's place on his staff — if indeed there is one — could be one of Snyder's first duties in his new position. But it will be just one of many.

The timing of Snyder's hiring was awkward as many coaches around the country are in the midst of spring practice and not in a position to explore taking other jobs, so it may take awhile for the new coach to round out his staff. That could put him and his assistants in a position of playing catch-up on the recruiting trail next month.

Many of Snyder's coaching acquaintances likely will be watching to see how things pan out for him.

"I've talked to a lot of my buddies that are head coaches, and it's hard for any of them to give me any advice because I'm kind of a test case," Snyder said. "Most of those guys (were hired) in January and here I come in April. It'll be interesting."

the last quarter-century.

"I told some of the guys today that this happened to me my senior year," Fickell said. "We had a change in defensive coordinators and they kept somebody that was on the staff. And it obviously worked out great."

"It obviously didn't end great that last game of the season (against Michigan), but it was a great thing. We had a great group of seniors and I think that's what makes the change that much easier."

"Coach Pagac took over as the defensive coordinator and nobody missed a beat. I know we as players thought it was a great thing, and change isn't always bad. So I think the makings are in place and we've just got to do a good job with it."

Like Heacock, Fickell threw out a suggestion about which position he'd like to coach on the revamped defensive staff.

"I'm a D-lineman by heart," he said. "I'm not saying that's what I want to do. The only thing I told Coach Tressel when I peeked in there was just if you want any name, I'll give you a name or so. But the only thing I said to him was, 'Coach, I'll do whatever.'"

"Someone asked me, 'Did you have this plan at this age?' or whatnot. My goal when I got into coaching was I wanted to be at Ohio State and that's still my goal. And this is where I want to be. I don't care if you ask me to coach the D-line or you ask me to coach the punters."

"I have no agenda. Personally I don't have any

desire to be in the NFL. This is where I've always wanted to be. This is what I wanted to do as a coach — to get here. It's the best thing for me and my family."

Best Offense, Good Defense

With the springtime buzz seemingly surrounding Ohio State's offense, which features spread formations and speed all over the field, talk about the defensive unit has been largely relegated to staff defections.

But both Heacock and Fickell have insisted that the offense's new emphasis on speed has been extremely beneficial for the defense.

"This has been a great spring for us because the offense has done a lot of things to make us have to really, really work," Fickell said. "They've made us work at our base stuff and work at playing a lot of the things that we're going to see in the fall."

"It's always a huge thing because the No. 1 thing about football is competition. When the scoreboard's on and the competition's up, you get to really see who can play and who can make plays. And that's the only way you can evaluate people."

"The hard thing about football is there's so much indecision as to who's the better player, who's the better man at this position. I'm used to it being from a wrestling background and it's simple — you put two guys out on the mat and they wrestle and whoever wins is the better guy. You can't do that day in and day out in practice, but when the scoreboard's on,

that's about the only time you can really, really, truly measure the competition."

The offensive unit did its best to exploit whatever weaknesses it could find in the Ohio State defense all spring long, some of which was evidenced in a 95-39 blowout of the defense in the semiannual jersey scrimmage.

Despite the 56-point loss, however, Fickell believed the scrimmage made its point.

"They're making us adjust, making us do things that a lot of teams out there are doing and things that we'll see," he said. "It's good for us. We're used to being a little bit more comfortable in the spring and playing just some of our package stuff and not having to do a lot more adjusting and worrying about Teddy Ginn or something. It's going to be evident during the year."

And will all of the chasing of Ginn and the other OSU speed-burners pay off in the fall?

"It had better be the payoff in that everybody knows they've got to be running to the ball because ultimately a good defense is only a team that can tackle and run to the ball," Fickell said. "We'll still have the payoff because we're seeing it each and every day, and that's what you're teaching off of."

"There's no substitute for speed, and the hard thing about once you get into the season is if you're going against scout teams, it's hard to really evaluate yourself when you're not seeing the true speed. We're getting the best dose we can right now."

COVER STORY: SMITH ARRIVES ON CAMPUS

Acclimation Period In Full Swing For New AD

Continued From Page 1

things, like the budget, that are quantifiable, but there are other things that are not. So I'm going to take my time and do my due diligence."

For the first day on the job, that meant a number of meetings. After beginning his day with a workout and a stop at Caribou Coffee for some tea, Smith began his time at Ohio State by beginning to familiarize himself with his co-workers.

Following a meeting with his assistant, the new AD spent much of his day participating in a senior staff meeting, one-on-one meetings with various members of the department and a budget meeting.

One of the first orders of business was to make sure

scenes, he was respected by reporters for his availability and his willingness to return almost every phone call, a trait not as common as many may believe.

That's not to say that Smith won't act similarly from time to time. But from the sound of things on his first day in office, Geiger's successor appears likely to do more delegating of responsibilities when it comes to meeting with the media.

"I will be here like I am today — talking to the media based upon the situation, and there will be others who will speak for the department and the institution based on the situation," he said.

"The situation may dictate that the person with the most information and the expertise in that particular area is the one that's up front and talking about it. The other piece is ... for the associate athletic director, who

without the hassle that accompanied a trip from Arizona.

"I love this part of the country," he said. "The trees are starting to blossom, the grass is green, and I can take my little wedge out and chip. I couldn't do that in the desert. I'm kind of anxious to get out there on the grass."

Varied Topics, Opinions

Here are more highlights from Smith's meeting with the media on his first day at Ohio State.

- Just days before Smith began at Ohio State, the NCAA moved closer to placing a 12th game permanently on the football schedule beginning in 2006. OSU's new athletic director is a staunch supporter of the move.

"I am a strong believer that we need, first, more revenue opportunities for a lot of our programs across this country," Smith said. "Obviously an additional football game provides that."

"Secondly ... players love to play, and when you look at the football season, practice toward the end of the season dwindles down. It's not as heavy as it is the beginning of the year. It dwindles down. Football misses the least number of classes of most sports because they play on Saturdays — they travel on Friday afternoon, they're back on Sunday at the latest. I've been a big believer of providing another platform for them to play but the driving force has been the money, and that's the reality of it."

Some see the NCAA's decision to add this extra game as hypocritical in that one of the reasons some cite for not instituting a football playoff is that it would occupy too much of the players' time.

But Smith has always been a supporter of sticking with the bowls.

"In this changing world, every year we can't close our eyes or ears to something different down the road," he said. "If something that makes sense comes open, we have to listen, we have to look. But I'm one of those old-school guys who likes the bowl system."

- In response to a question regarding the NCAA's investigation into the men's basketball program, Smith said that his impact would be minimal.

A former member of the NCAA infractions committee, Smith is familiar with the NCAA's processes and said that at this point much of the investigation has already been completed.

"A lot of that's pretty well down the track," he said.

- When Smith was introduced as Ohio State's next athletic director March 5, he won instant support by announcing to the assembled crowd that while he was an assistant coach at Notre Dame, he never lost to Michigan.

The problem was, that wasn't true. During his four years with the Irish, Smith's teams actually went 2-2 against the Wolverines.

"I made a big mistake," he said. "We lost to them obviously. All I could remember was the wins."

Smith also noted April 15 that at the time of his introduction, he made a reference to being recruited to Ohio State by former assistant Bill Myles. But when Myles recruited Smith, Myles was an assistant coach at Nebraska.

"Things happen to you when you get older," Smith said with a smile.

- Queried as to whether he would like to work a game with Arizona State onto the schedule, Smith responded by noting the fervent OSU alumni base in both Arizona and Florida, perhaps a sign he could be looking to schedule games in those states somewhere down the line.

- As previously noted, Smith opened his first day on the job in Columbus with a trip to Caribou Coffee, a coffee shop also favored by his predecessor. With his photo played across the front of the Columbus Dispatch that day, it didn't take other customers long to recognize the new man in town.

But Smith said he wasn't shocked by the recognition. He's become familiar with being a public figure during stints as athletic director at ASU, Iowa State and Eastern Michigan.

"I certainly recognize I'm in a fish bowl and understand that," he said. "I was in a fish bowl in Ames, Iowa. So magnify that 10 times, frankly."



TERRY GILLIAM

CLEAN SLATE — With a clean desk and empty bookshelves behind him, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said he would take his time to familiarize himself with his co-workers and get acclimated to his new surroundings.

that all of the employees he now oversees are comfortable with the change in leadership.

"I am a big believer in collaboration and communication," Smith said. "I think the most successful organizations do not operate in silos. Everyone's totally integrated, so I want to talk about my philosophy there, make sure that we have strategies to help people be included in our process."

One thing that should be reassuring to the employees of the athletic department and the athletes of some of the lesser-publicized sports at Ohio State is that after looking at the budget — and Smith was sure to note that he spent just 45 minutes going over a \$97 million budget — he did not see a reason to cut any sports from the program.

"I am a person that believes that what has been built here is just unbelievable," he said. "(This is) a program that's a broad-based program that affects the lives of over 900 student-athletes — a department that provides a quality of living for about 300 employees I'm doing everything I can to protect. And as I look at the budget, I see no need to make any changes in that regard."

One of the major changes to come with the transition from Andy Geiger to Smith could be the visibility of OSU's athletic director. During Geiger's tenure, he was often the face of the university, speaking out publicly in the wake of nearly every controversy and often shielding his coaches from more intense scrutiny. Behind the

for some weird reason aspires to be an athletic director, to have the opportunity to sit down and talk to the media about a particular issue I think is good professional development."

Smith is used to seeing the athletes in his programs on a fairly regular basis. He said one of his biggest adjustments at Ohio State will be that in his last two stops as an athletic director — at Arizona State and Iowa State — the athletic offices were more centralized and athletes were often in and out of the administration area.

At OSU, the athletic department's various facets are spread out around the campus, meaning that Smith will have to venture out of his St. John Arena office to visit with the basketball and football teams, for example. To that end, after wrapping up his session with the media on his first day on the job, Smith headed over to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to watch the end of the football team's practice and speak briefly to the players.

"He just told us to work hard in practice," sophomore linebacker Marcus Freeman said. "He had a nice little poem he told us — I can't remember every word he said. But mostly he said games are made on practice. You have to work hard on the field and just keep pushing hard in practice so you'll always be winners."

A native of the Cleveland area, Smith admitted that he is "jacked up" to be back in Ohio and have the ability to visit his parents — who still live in Cleveland —