

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

Vol. 24, No. 22

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

March 12, 2005

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PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER  
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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.

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• 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)

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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 Changel, later playing for Ara Parseghian at Notre Dame and returning as an assistant coach on Dan Devine's staff.

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#### • GIANT KILLERS •



SONNY BROWN

## 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

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**OPINION**

## What Will Future Hold For Smith?

It was a slight case of *deja 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 normal 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.



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## 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



**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

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## 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 Buckeye land. 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, Nicola 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

kinds 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-



**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 Fuss-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-

two 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

	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp	
Illinois	21	4-11	1-3	3-8	0	3	9
Augustine	34	4-10	4-5	6-11	1	2	12
Head	38	3-9	3-3	0-7	6	1	12
Williams	33	1-7	0-0	1-6	3	3	2
Brown	38	3-11	5-8	0-0	4	4	13
McBride	6	0-0	0-0	1-1	0	2	0
Carter	8	2-2	0-0	1-0	0	0	4
Smith	6	2-2	0-0	0-0	0	1	4
Ingram	16	4-8	0-0	0-1	0	1	8
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>23-60</b>	<b>13-49</b>	<b>13-37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>64</b>

Percentages: FG: .383, FT: .684, 3-point goals:

5-19, .263 (Head 3-8, 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).

	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp	
Ohio State	21	1-3	0-0	0-1	1	3	2
Sullinger	5	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Harris	39	8-13	5-7	5-8	3	1	21
Dials	17	0-2	0-0	0-2	0	1	0
Butler	33	3-8	2-3	0-2	2	1	10
Fuss-Cheatham	23	2-4	1-2	0-2	2	2	5
Stockman	26	1-6	0-0	1-4	3	1	2
Sylvester	34	8-17	7-9	0-5	3	4	25
Marinchick	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>23-63</b>	<b>15-21</b>	<b>7-31</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>65</b>

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 (Butler 2, Sylvester,

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.

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

## Not Being Tied To OSU Could Serve AD Well

Almost exactly two months to the day after Andy Geiger announced he would be resigning as Ohio State athletic director, OSU introduced his successor. Only time and change will tell, but Gene Smith appears to be a capable replacement for Geiger, who reigned over 11 years of growth, success and turmoil during his stay in Columbus.

There is always a part of me that hopes for someone with Ohio State ties to take over the job as Buckeye AD. This marks the third time in the last four that Ohio State has gone outside the family to fill its highest athletic position.

Rick Bay (1984-87) was a Michigan grad who came to OSU from the AD position at Oregon. Geiger (1994-2005) was a Syracuse grad who was hired away from Maryland. Smith, a former Notre Dame football player who was AD at Arizona State for the past five years, is at least an Ohio native. Jim Jones (1987-94), the only in-house hire, was a Kent State grad who spent more than 20 years working his way up the OSU athletic department ladder before taking over as AD upon Bay's resignation.

Though Buckeye fans tend to focus on the need for coaches and administrators to understand Ohio State athletics — "John Cooper just doesn't get it," they used to frequently lament — maybe this is a good time to turn to someone with a fresh perspective. Sometimes Buckeye fans don't realize the reputation — fueled in part by ESPN and cover boy Maurice Clarett — that Ohio State has outside its state borders.

It's not a good one and I believe cleaning up that image to be the most important short-term issue for the new AD, though Smith claimed in his welcome remarks that Ohio State's national reputation is still strong. Having someone who is more detached from the problem to try to solve it might be a plus.

In addition to dealing with the image problem, Smith must also make sure that proper controls are in place to assure there are no more of these repeated embarrassing occurrences. It is often easier for someone from outside an organization to see what may be right or wrong and come up with possible ways to fix things.

I like the way that Smith has worked his way up through the athletic administration ranks. He started out at Eastern Michigan, moved up to Iowa State and then took what would have to be considered another step up by moving to Arizona State. His rise

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH  
Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

would not only indicate that he has done a good job wherever he has gone, but also that he has been exposed to a variety of athletic department issues and presumably dealt with them in a successful manner.

Now he finds himself at one of the top jobs in college sports. It caught my attention that while at ASU he oversaw 22 sports. Ohio State fields 36 varsity teams. That's quite a jump for Smith. I hope he has the same commitment to such a large program as Geiger did. In these times of financial challenges for all athletic departments, cutting sports is frequently an easy and quick fix.

Geiger seemed obsessed with having not just a vast program offering abundant scholarship opportunities for a variety of athletes, but a program of such quality that it could compete for the prestigious Directors' Cup, symbolic of the best all-around program in the country. In fact, OSU has been ranked in the top 15 nationally the past six years and the top four the past two seasons, a tribute to Geiger's efforts. Will Smith have the same vision to keep the Buckeyes ranked among the nation's broad-based elite?

The selection committee was no doubt impressed with its new hire's academic record at Arizona State. The Sun Devil program was recently ranked seventh nationally and No. 1 in the Pac-10 in number of Academic All-Americans since 2000, which is when Smith started in Tempe. During the 2003-04 sports year, 61 percent of ASU's student-athletes attained a 3.00 GPA or better in one of the semesters, and the school's graduation rate among athletes reached record levels.

Ohio State has also made strides in the area of academics, despite any negative publicity to the contrary, and it's good to know that there is someone leading the department who seems to have a commitment to continuing this trend.

It's also probably a good thing that Smith is a graduate of a school like Notre Dame and played and coached football there, no less.

Let's be realistic. Football drives everything athletic at Ohio State. If there is no football, there is no 36-team program competing for the Directors' Cup. It is encouraging to have an AD from a background where football is of utmost importance to alumni and fans.

I'm fairly confident that Jim Tressel will have the backing he needs to keep Ohio State a national contender on the gridiron.

It's also intriguing that Smith is an African-American. His presence in the top spot sends a positive message and presents a strong role model for both prospective black athletes as well as those black athletes already in the program.

One also has to wonder if the tenor of the ill-fated meeting between Geiger, Clarett and former NFL great and current activist Jim Brown might have been different if Smith had been dealing with the Clarett camp and not Geiger. We'll never know.

It's a pretty big chair that Smith is going to be sitting in. I'm as interested as the next person to see how he does in Columbus, and I wish him the best of luck.

## A Victory For The Long Run

For a team that is facing a self-imposed ban from postseason play, there is no question that its game with top-ranked and undefeated Illinois was the equivalent of the Big Dance for the Buckeye men's basketball team.

As exciting as it was for Ohio State and its fans — the first opportunity to storm the court in who knows how long — I couldn't help but think about longer-term ramifications of the victory.

First-year coach Thad Matta has done a pretty good job leading — with all due respect — a fairly mediocre bunch of Buckeyes to what would have been considered a respectable season even without the stunning upset of the Illini. If you consider what he has done in Columbus, as well as his outstanding work at Butler and Xavier, you are left wondering what he will be able to do in Columbus if he can raise the level of talent.

And the best way to raise the level of talent is to convince prep stars that Ohio State is a program on the rise and that there is something exciting brewing in Columbus. Knocking off a top-ranked team on the brink of becoming the first undefeated conference team since 1976 on national television before a frenzied crowd is sure to catch the attention of prep players across what appears to be a loaded Buckeye State

as well as star players from outside Ohio's borders.

This season — and the win over Illinois in particular — could be the start of a new era in Ohio State basketball.

I especially enjoyed the fact that Matt Sylvester swished the game-winning shot, capping off a career-high 25-point afternoon and leaving no doubt that — after a rocky couple of seasons — the 6-7 Cincinnati native is a Big Ten caliber player. There were plenty who wondered why Sylvester was considered such a big deal coming out of Moeller High School.

Sylvester is one of my favorites because he seems like just an average Joe. While I don't condone his behavior with fans after the recent game at Michigan State, I can certainly identify with his irritation. But what I really got a kick out of was his admission that his spat — if you will pardon the expression — with the fan was his "annual mistake."

As someone who has made his share of mistakes and, I hope, learned from them, I've been entertained by Sylvester's journey through college and look for big things from him as a senior next season.

## Davenport A Keeper

Before Ohio State named a new athletic director and the men's basketball team knocked off the Illini, forcing a revamping of this issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, women's basketball force Jessica Davenport was scheduled to be featured on the cover. Her move inside the paper does not diminish her accomplishments this season.

She was in the top three among conference players in scoring, rebounding, blocks and field-goal percentage this year, leading the Buckeyes to a share of the Big Ten title for the first time since 1993.

The thing to remember about Davenport is that the Big Ten Player of the Year is only a sophomore. And if you read our story on her in this issue, you realize that she is not only coachable but willing to acknowledge her weaknesses and work on them. The sky is really the limit for her in the next two seasons. And unlike with the men, Davenport is not going to jump to the NBA after a big season like the one she just had.

Great basketball teams usually have great centers, and barring an injury to Davenport, the Buckeyes seem set in that department through 2007.

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