

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

The Guy Behind The Guys

Football Isn't All That Matters To Ted Ginn Sr.



FILE PHOTO

By ERIC LOUGHRY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The instructions didn't make much sense to Troy Smith at first, but he got the message soon enough. Following Ohio State's loss to Penn State last season, the OSU quarterback received some advice from Ted Ginn Sr., his coach at Cleveland Glenville High School.

Ginn suggested Smith go straight into the office of OSU head coach Jim Tressel and ask to transfer.

Unsure what to make of the advice, Smith asked why. Ginn then proceeded to unload on the quarterback, telling Smith it was clear he was not studying film. If the quarterback was just going to tuck the ball and run nearly every down, then he needed to find another school where that suited the offense.

Ginn suggested Nebraska. Never mind that second-year coach Bill Callahan had scrapped the Cornhuskers' archaic wishbone offense and implemented a pass-oriented attack. Smith got the point — he might end up a decent college quarterback the way he was going, but never a great one, and certainly not an NFL prospect.

"I ate him up," Ginn said, "because he wasn't studying film. He was going and getting him some sunglasses and looking for an automobile and a gold chain because he was reading his articles."

As it turned out, Tressel was in on the charade. Ginn made sure to tell the OSU coach of the harsh advice he was going to dispense.

"Troy is rough, but he's not rough for me because I know what he's thinking every minute of the day," Ginn said. "I can look at the game and tell you what's next. I'm serious. I coach Troy every week, and then I call Tress. I call him and say, 'Tress, this is what we've got to look out for.'"

The Buckeyes didn't lose another game after Penn State, running off seven straight wins as Smith evolved from a running quarterback to a quarterback who could run.

In those final seven games, he accounted for 19 touchdowns — 13 pass-

ing and six rushing — and ramped up his game considerably in a come-from-behind win at Michigan and then a thorough handling of Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl. In those two games put together, Smith completed better than 70 percent of his passes (46 of 65) for a hefty 642 yards — 300 against Michigan, 342 against the Fighting Irish — and four touchdowns against no interceptions. He also added a rushing TD against the Wolverines, his team-high 11th of the season.

Smith led the Big Ten in completion percentage (62.9) and became the first OSU quarterback to pass for more than 2,000 yards and rush for more than 500 yards in the same season. He finished the year with 16 touchdown passes, just four interceptions, and as a 2006 Heisman Trophy candidate.

That heady status is all the more remarkable considering Smith's standing after his senior season at Glenville. With offers from only Toledo and West Virginia on the table as signing day approached, Ohio State — at Ginn's urging — extended Smith an offer two days before players were to sign their letters of intent.

"Didn't but two people recruit Troy," Ginn said. "I made Ohio State recruit him."

West Virginia seemed ready to hand Smith the reins at quarterback, but with highly touted quarterback Justin Zwick headed to Columbus in that recruiting class, Smith was projected as an "athlete" and not necessarily a quarterback for the Buckeyes. Tressel was up front with Smith, telling him that Zwick would get more reps early on at quarterback while Smith would play more of a utility role.

Undaunted, Smith decided on OSU, forging a partnership of sorts between Ginn and Tressel.

There has been a Tarblooder in each Buckeyes' recruiting class since Smith signed on in 2002. Donte Whitner and Darius Hiley followed in '03, while Ginn's son, Ted Jr. — a Heisman candidate in his own right as a receiver and return man — and linebacker Curtis Terry each signed a year later. They were

followed by Jamario O'Neal and Freddie Lenix in 2005, and three players — defensive end Robert Rose, receiver Ray Small and offensive lineman Bryant Browning — this past February.

The so-called "Glenville Pipeline" might never have started pumping if Ohio State hadn't offered Smith. Tressel was announced as the successor to John Cooper in late January 2001, just a few weeks before signing day, leaving the new coach little time to right what Ginn perceived as a previous slight. He was frustrated that OSU hadn't come through with an offer for linebacker Pierre Woods, who wound up at Michigan.

"In the beginning, they wouldn't recruit Pierre because they didn't want to recruit a kid from the inner city," Ginn said. "So, I went to everybody's camp but Ohio State. I'm down at Georgia Tech, I'm at LSU with Nick Saban. I'm everywhere. I put 5,000-6,000 miles on the van promoting."

When Tressel got to Columbus, he inquired about Woods, but the linebacker had already committed to the Wolverines.

Taking Smith smoothed over any additional hard feelings, but the quarterback would have some rough times ahead at Ohio State. He certainly had some growing pains along the way.

Becoming A Better Man

Smith and receiver Santonio Holmes were among seven people arrested for disorderly conduct after a late-night incident outside a campus dorm hours after the Buckeyes' overtime win over Purdue in 2003, starting off the week of the 100th Ohio State-Michigan game in a way that didn't endear them to the coaching staff.

Holmes, who would catch two touchdowns in the loss, was held out only the first offensive series. Used primarily as a kick returner that season, Smith didn't play on special teams until the fourth quarter.

Just a little more than a year later, after he had turned in an epic performance against the Wolverines with 386 total yards — 145 of them on the ground

— throwing for two touchdowns and running for another in a 37-21 win, it came to light that Smith had accepted some \$500 from a booster prior to the 2004 season. He was suspended for the Alamo Bowl and then the 2005 season opener against Miami (Ohio).

Ginn and Tressel each remained in Smith's corner during his off-the-field transgressions.

"When dealing with Coach Ginn and Coach Tress, it's more about the betterment of you as a man than just an athlete on the field," Smith said. "And the comparison between those guys, it's pretty equal because they both represent the same thing — making better men."

On more than one occasion, Ginn drove down Interstate 71 from Cleveland to Columbus not to see his son, but to try to talk some sense into Smith.

"He had to straighten me out," the QB said. "I think everybody needs to be straightened out sometimes."

Ginn might be more brash and confrontational than Tressel, but the Glenville coach said their bottom line is the same.

"I think we have the same core values and we run our programs clean," Ginn said. "It's about the kids, and anytime it's about the kids, you can't go wrong. He cares about the guys. He's a father figure to them."

Most of Ginn's players look at him in the same way. When Ginn experienced health problems late last summer, Smith appeared as shaken up as Ginn Jr. The quarterback wouldn't even talk about Ginn's illness, which turned out not to be colon cancer as was considered the worst-case diagnosis.

Ginn had a growth removed from his colon, but recovered in time to watch Glenville's first game from the press box before returning to practice the following week.

"He's like a daddy," Rose said. "He gets (on) our butts just like a father. He makes sure we stay out of trouble. He tells us what the world is, and how it is."

Ginn talks of his players as if they are his kids, and Ted Jr. and his older sister, Tiffany, had plenty of company in the Ginn household throughout high school. Ginn and his wife, Jeanette, took in Woods, Smith, Whitner, Terry, Small, Hiley and O'Neal at one point or another.

"If they didn't live with me at a certain point in time, they wouldn't have made it," Ginn said. "You wouldn't even know who they were."

Ginn knows his players inside and out. He's seen what they've seen — the good and the bad.

A moment of silence was observed in Glenville's gymnasium on signing day for Anthony Gordon, a junior running back for the Tarblooders who died from multiple gun shot wounds a few days earlier. A concert at a nightclub in the Flats was overrun by a series of fights that spilled into the streets of downtown Cleveland.

Police found Gordon lying at an intersection.

"I know their stories," he said. "I know their lives. I know what they're about. And there's tons of them, tons of them, so I've got to deal with something to accommodate all of them."

"Now, does that mean they're bad kids? No. Every kid is that way. If he's 16, they're at risk in some kind of way."

Also the coach of Glenville's dominant

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School Ginn's Latest Way To Help Students

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track and field team, Ginn figured out a way to sell kids on the possibilities athletic prowess could bring them if they went about taking care of other business.

"Every kid here will turn you off if you don't know how to deal with them," he said. "You'd better be able to affect the person today to deal with a 13-year-old because what happens is somebody put their opinion in that kid for 13 years and then you're trying to put one in late.

"So you've got to sit down and scheme it up just like everything else — just like football."

From Humble Beginnings

Ginn went to work as a machinist in Cleveland after graduating from Glenville in 1974, but his coach, James Hubbard, kept him involved at the school.

"He started me out cleaning the bathrooms, getting the equipment and doing this and doing that because he was giving me a job," Ginn said. "He wanted me to stick around."

He returned to the school full-time in 1976 as a security guard and also helped out as an assistant coach. He took over as head coach two decades later, in 1997, and saw an opportunity to create opportunity. He found his calling.

"I never was happy about what I did as a man," Ginn said. "You know, I was working in industry and different things like that and just so much went down — I wouldn't say things went wrong in my life, but I experienced so much as a young kid that I know the way.

"When I look at the kids here and just across the country — it doesn't have to be Glenville, it's anywhere — they have the opportunity to be a whole lot better than I was, a whole lot better than people even really know."

That first year, the Tarblooders lost their first five games under Ginn, the last of those a 70-0 loss to Canton McKinley, the eventual Division I state champion and mythical USA Today national champs. Glenville went on to win its last five games that season to win a weak North Senate League, but Ginn was struck by how overmatched his team was against McKinley, which featured such future Ohio State standouts as Kenny Peterson, Mike Doss and Jamar Martin.

He instituted 6 a.m. weight training sessions after that season. There were 18 or so kids who made it to nearly every workout, and they were the backbone of a team that went 9-1 the next season, losing only its first game.

"You saw a whole change in a year, a compete turnaround just in grades, speed and strength," Ginn said. "Now, I know I've got to get out and promote. And still, in '98, I was angry. I thought I had some good guys. A couple of guys went to Akron, places like that, but I thought they were Ohio State-type guys and Big Ten-type guys."

He was frustrated, but not surprised, by the lack of interest in his program.

"I wanted to know why people didn't look at kids at Glenville High School or the kids in the city of Cleveland," Ginn said. "Everybody said, 'Oh, you don't go in the city. There's no players. They don't do their work,' or whatever. I had to change that."



TWO-SPORT COACH — Ginn, who is also the track coach at Cleveland Glenville, received the big-school championship trophy when the Tarblooders won the title last year.

"I told the kids you've got to be the best. They've got to be afraid *not* to come."

When college coaches wouldn't come to Glenville, Ginn took Glenville to them. Bringing along his top prospects, he became a regular at summer football camps. His contingent continues to grow, taking in not only Glenville players, but players from throughout northeastern Ohio. Last summer, 37 players were on board chartered buses as Ginn chaperoned them to 11 different camps.

"We started in a van and cars," he said. "Now, we're on buses."

In June, four motor coaches are expected to be at the coach's disposal as he takes even more players on a 12-day trip throughout the Midwest. The trip, dubbed the "Ginn Road to Opportunity Division I Combine Tour," will be financed by a marketing and entertainment firm and will cover five states and 11 colleges.

Open To Everyone

With open enrollment in the Cleveland Public School System, students don't have to live in the Glenville district to attend the school — only inside the city limits. Therefore, Ginn has openly recruited throughout the city and beyond, and there has been some backlash even as traditional area parochial powers like Cleveland St. Ignatius, Lakewood St. Edward and Cleveland Benedictine have operated without the parameters of a school district for years.

For example, Smith came to Glenville

after his sophomore year. He had been expelled from St. Edward after elbowing an opponent during warmups before a basketball game as a sophomore. Small had originally wanted to go to Glenville, but his father insisted he attend St. Ed's. He was a freshman on that school's junior varsity basketball team when Ginn approached him at halftime of a game.

Terry went from the east side of Cleveland to Texas and back before finding his way to Glenville. With his mother incarcerated, Terry took a bus to Houston to live with his father in 2001, but Collinwood High School would not release his transcripts on the grounds they had to be obtained by a legal guardian.

Terry saw a return to Cleveland and Collinwood as his only way back to school. With the time he missed, however, he failed to meet the requirements to graduate by the end of what would have been his senior year. On Terry's behalf, Collinwood athletics director Sid Anderson went to the Ohio High School Athletic Association, and Terry was granted one additional semester of athletic eligibility as a fifth-year senior.

He then promptly went to Glenville. However, none of those transfers were met with the skepticism that came when Ginn obtained legal guardianship of O'Neal, who left Mansfield Senior High School to live with the Ginns in late August 2003.

O'Neal was already the Buckeyes' first verbal commitment for 2005 when he left Mansfield before his junior year. The cir-

cumstances surrounding his transfer led officials at Mansfield Senior, then coached by current OSU associate director of football operations Stan Jefferson, to file a complaint.

O'Neal had recently been charged with aiding and abetting theft and criminal damaging after admitting he was present when two of his friends broke into a car and stole a stereo. He was sentenced to 60 days in the Richland County Juvenile Attention Center (all but five of the days were suspended) and community service.

"It throws up a red flag whenever a coach ends up to be the legal guardian of a player," then OHSAA commissioner Clair Muscaro told BSB at the time.

The Ginns had met O'Neal at an indoor track meet five years earlier, and Muscaro eventually determined that because there had been a previous relationship and the move was not for explicit athletic reasons, there was no violation. He signed off on the transfer.

While waiting for a ruling, however, O'Neal missed much of the season at Glenville because if it was ruled there had been a violation, the Tarblooders would have had to forfeit any games he had played in.

Ginn felt the whole ordeal portrayed him and his program in the wrong light and takes exception to the notion he is trying to build an athletic superpower.

"Sports — that's the carrot that I use," he said. "That's the vehicle, but that's not the deal. The deal is giving them direction. Giving them a chance and putting

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them in position — that's so huge. I mean, that's what education is about. That's what we work every day for. Everything that you do in education is what I'm talking about. It's just now there are more things needed than before.

"You've got both parents working and all that. They've got to try to keep the lights on in the house. They've got to try to keep food on the table. That means we've got to step it up as coaches.

"Coaching is everything. Tell me what it's not. It's teaching. It's parenting. It's whatever you want. It's everything. I don't know what else to do. This is what I do. It's the best job in the land for me because you get a great feeling when you do well, when you help somebody. And then I'll search for help. I search to encourage kids to do the right thing."

'Don't Judge From The Scoreboard'

The same day that Smith had his coming-out party in the 2004 win over Michigan, a game that Ginn Jr. broke open with an 82-yard punt return for a touchdown, Glenville became the first Cleveland public school to advance to the state semifinals, defeating St. Ignatius in the Division I quarterfinals.

Ginn Jr. and Terry were on hand for Glenville's win, having hurried to the game following the win over the Wolverines.

"I've been a Tarblooder for life," Ginn Jr. said in the Michigan postgame interview session, explaining why he was headed to Cleveland rather than celebrating the Michigan victory. "Just to have a great game here and see how important it is to the kids back home, to

see us walk in the stadium — they know that we've got their back just like they watched us on TV and they know that all the eyes are on us, so I just try to give back as much as possible.

"And I know me going back and watching the football game will probably give them another step, that extra effort."

Trailing 14-6 early in the fourth quarter, Glenville scored two late touchdowns to grab a 22-14 win over the Wildcats. The following week, with Smith and Ginn Jr. watching from the sideline, the Tarblooders were edged by Canton McKinley, but a state title was never the ultimate goal for Ginn Sr.

When Ginn Jr. and Terry signed with Ohio State in 2004, they were joined by nine other teammates who signed NCAA letters. Just two years later, the number of Glenville signees nearly doubled as 21 players donned the hats of the college they would attend and play football. Ginn Sr. addressed the players, as well as their friends and families gathered in the Glenville gymnasium.

"This is the championship right here," the coach said. "I never want anybody to judge Glenville from the scoreboard. I'd like them to judge us from what's going on today. This is what it's all about."

In addition to the three OSU commitments, Glenville had five other players sign to play for Big Ten schools this year — Arvell Nelson and Derrick Smith (Iowa), Daven Jones (Wisconsin), Royce Adams (Purdue) and Ray Fisher (Indiana). Three others — Bryant Milligan (Marshall), Kelvin Primm (Ball State) and Bruce Frieson (Toledo) — are headed to Mid-American Conference schools.

"It just proves how a great coach like Ted Ginn can come in and change a whole community," Browning said. "Just with him working hard and speaking the truth, he tries to help kids become great young men with their lives."

The week after signing day, Ginn went before the Cleveland school board to pitch the Ginn Academy, a publicly funded charter school. He was confident going in that he would get approval.

"I believe I can tell the story, but my story is real, though," he said. "It's not a fairy tale. I will show you what I do with nothing."

The board granted tentative approval for the program Feb. 11, and a little more than a month later, full approval was given. The charter school — one of two sponsored by the Cleveland school district — will open next fall at a former plant in the Collinwood section of Cleveland that neighbors Glenville.

Ginn hopes to have roughly 150 freshman and sophomore boys who come from troubled backgrounds in the school. He plans to have 15 teachers, a principal and two assistant principals, and would eventually like to expand the school to grades eight through 12.

The Ginn Academy will not be exclusive to athletes, and won't even field any sports teams for the first few years, if ever. Students at the academy could, however, play sports for other Cleveland high schools, including Glenville.

"I want all kids (at the new school) because in order to change the world now you've got to do it through education," Ginn said. "Look, I know. I deal with them every day. They don't have a clue. They're teaching proficiency here (at

Glenville). That's all they teach across the country — 'Oh, what's the number?'"

"Some of our kids can't even walk across the street. They don't even know what jaywalking is. I want to do some things differently. I want a different school. I want them to come and have pride. We've got pride in Glenville football and track, and we're proud to know that we've got opportunity, that people can come.

"But if you don't, you'll miss something. I've got to keep that going and that gives them an opportunity in life to become a better man. You have to be educated, or what is it that you're going to do?"

Ginn, who will sit on the board of the new school but draw no salary, envisions students boarding on school grounds with the thinking that just as he could keep closer tabs on the kids he brought into his own house, he could give more assistance if he had more time with the students.

"That's what I'm trying to do," he said. "I'm trying to be in their life. There's no question. I'm getting them out. We do the X's and O's thing. We do the classroom thing. But it's in the way of these things — life skills and different things that they need fed. It takes up a full day.

"That's the reason I'm trying to do a different thing as far as my own school. I need to have them back there every day and dealing with them in class. That's what I did for my own kid. That's what I did for the kids prior to the kids that I've got now, and it's still something that you have to do across the country."

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OHIO STATE RECRUITING PROFILE

Smith Wants To Play QB, Not An 'Athlete' Role

By GARY HOUSTEAU
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

One thing is certain in the mind of Troy Smith from Cleveland Glenville High School, and that is that he has every intention of playing quarterback at whatever university he eventually chooses to attend next season.

"That's the most important thing to me right now because when I choose a school, that's the position that I'm going to play when I get there," the 6-1, 205-pound Smith said.

With less than a month to go until national signing day, West Virginia is clearly offering Smith an opportunity to be their quarterback of the future, while it looks as if Ohio State is just now beginning to warm to that idea.

"Right now at Ohio State, it's more from a quarterback standpoint than ever," Smith said. "But previously it was all 'athlete' from Ohio State and just as far as me going to school, that's not what I wanted to hear. That wasn't going to fit me as to what I want to do when I go to school. So it was going to be an easy selection.

"But right now as we're winding down toward signing day time, basically, I'm just going to the schools that are primarily talking about quarterback."

With practically everybody expecting Massillon (Ohio) Washington's Justin Zwick to be the Savior at quarterback for the Buckeyes, possibly as early as 2002, Smith can see himself benefiting from that hypothetical scenario if he were to also choose OSU.

"For me it's kind of easy because the world's weight is not on my shoulders," he said. "I don't have to worry about a lot of things. All I have to do is go there and perform.

"But being the franchise player, you've got a lot of stuff on you, and coming in that's a lot of pressure. So going in, not having a lot of pressure on my shoulders will help me a lot so I can perform a little bit better."

Confidence in his ability to play the quarterback position is definitely not something lacking in Smith.

"I've been playing quarterback since I was 7 years old," he said. "That's all I know. All I was ever taught to do was be a leader, lead my team, make good decisions and protect the ball."

Obviously, it would be against his nature to play anything other than quarterback. But if he were to accept a scholarship offer from Ohio State and get beat out for the quarterback position, Smith would then have to face the reality of either having to remain a backup or choosing to use his athletic talent at a different position.

"First of all, hopefully I wouldn't get beat out," Smith said. "But picking a college is something where you have to be happy and content with where you are, no matter where you're going to play on the field, even if your dream is to play quarterback."

"But if you don't, and you get into a situation where you have to play somewhere else, then it comes to where it's a team thing and it becomes bigger than you. And whatever you can do to help your team win, then you do it, whether it's playing quarterback, receiver, safety, wherever."

But Smith has the luxury of knowing he can eliminate all those hypotheticals by choosing a school like West Virginia, which seems to be rolling out the red carpet for him.

"West Virginia has just been on me since the jump," Smith said. "Since day one they wanted me to play quarterback. They say I'm their number one guy."

"And just as far as quarterbacking skills go in their type of offense, it sort of fits me a little bit more because it's more of a free-lance offense, being able to be mobile, moving around, running a lot more different type of plays than your pro-style offense. But then again, pro-style offense isn't that bad either."

Smith first became a hot commodity as a

junior, when he helped lead Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward to a Division I playoff berth. He transferred to Glenville after that football season and helped the Tarblooders also reach the playoffs this year.

According to Ted Ginn, his coach at Glenville, Smith has the kind of talent and athletic ability to excel in either type of offense at the next level.

"Troy is a very intelligent young man and he picks up on the scheme of things real quick," the coach said. "He is very mobile and I know he has one of the strongest arms in the country. I don't think there are too many other kids in the country at his age that have an arm such as his."

"With his intelligence and his mobility, I think he can be a real good quarterback in college."

That's the situation facing Smith as far as picking OSU instead of West Virginia.

"He wants to be a quarterback and they have Zwick," said Ginn. "But he also likes Ohio State. I guess he's weighing all his options to see what place he thinks fits for him."

The good news is that if he were forced to play another position as a Buckeye, Ginn thinks he can be a very effective wide receiver as well.

"Troy has so much athletic ability that as a wideout, there is nobody that can touch him," the coach said. "He's got one of the best pair of hands that I've ever seen or coached. And he just has so much athletic ability that he can lay out for balls, he can go over the top of people for balls. He's just a big-play type guy as a receiver."

If Smith's decision comes down to an issue of trust in the head coach, then Ohio State scores well in that department.

"As far as Coach (Jim) Tressel goes, so far, I love him because of his honesty," Smith said. "The first thing that I have noticed in the recruiting business is that honesty comes first. Honesty has been there since day one, just telling me that, 'We want you in this program and if you can't play quarterback then you can play somewhere else.' That helps me to get to know the program a little bit more."

"If you look at Ohio State they're bringing in a hell of a recruiting class and all they really need is a quarterback, and they're recruiting the two premier quarterbacks in the state."

"If we were to both go there then there is no more '10,000 yards over four seasons (Zwick's career numbers).' We're starting on a clean slate and the best man wins. So just as far as them coming to me now more from a quarterback standpoint than ever is knowing that the best man may win and the previous records mean nothing when you go to college."

That's precisely what makes the challenge exciting for Smith.

"Every program I've ever been in, there has been speculation of trying to move me to another position because there was another guy there who could throw the ball and I could do other things," Smith said.

Make no mistake about it, Smith knows Zwick: They both attended the Elite 11 quarterback camp in California last summer and Smith has the utmost respect for Zwick as a football player and a leader as well.

"I like his attitude just as far as being a quarterback," Smith said of Zwick. "There has to be a sense of, I wouldn't say cockiness, but you have to sure believe in yourself. Every quarterback has to have a little bit of an ego, not a big one, just knowing that when you're a quarterback, you are a leader. And he's demonstrated that for the last couple of years. He's a great player. He has a great attitude, a great arm and as far as being a quarterback I respect him."

Smith has worked hard on developing his arm. He wasn't known to have a strong arm when he was at St. Edward's because, according to Smith, whenever he threw the ball hard his receivers would drop it, so he had to

The Smith File

NAME — Troy Smith
HIGH SCHOOL — Cleveland Glenville
POSITION — Quarterback
HEIGHT, WEIGHT — 6-1, 205 pounds
40-YARD DASH TIME — 4.48 seconds
BENCH PRESS — 245 pounds
GRADE-POINT AVERAGE — 2.8

COLLEGE ENTRANCE TEST — Scored a 14 on his first ACT attempt. He said without the test score he'll likely enroll at Ohio State and pay the cheaper in-state tuition.

VITAL STATISTICS — Smith threw for 1,400 yards and rushed for 500 more as a junior at Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward. He transferred to Glenville after that football season and starred there as a senior. He completed 54 of 128 passes (42 percent) for 969 yards with 12 touchdowns and four interceptions. He also rushed for 329 yards and scored four touchdowns as Glenville ended up 9-2 and qualified for the Division I playoffs. This past summer, Smith attended 10 different camps, including the prestigious Elite 11 quarterback camp in California. He has run an impressive 4.1-second time in the pro shuttle. He was averaging 17 points, nine assists and four rebounds as the school's basketball point guard this winter. He is rated Ohio's 13th-best prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News and the nation's 13th-best "dual threat" quarterback by Rivals100.com Recruiting.

COACH'S COMMENT — "I think it would be a great asset for Ohio State to have the kind of quarterback that (Justin) Zwick is and the type of quarterback that Troy is. To me, Troy would either be the best receiver to make Zwick the best quarterback, or he would push Zwick to be the best quarterback or even beat him out. With him going to Ohio State, that would make Zwick an even better quarterback or he will beat him out."

"Troy has been an excellent leader here, he's been an excellent student here, and he's been an excellent student-athlete here for us." — Glenville head coach Ted Ginn

HOBBIES — Watching movies and DVDs.

SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN — Smith is considering West Virginia, Ohio State, Iowa and Toledo. He visited WVU, Toledo and Michigan State previously and has trips set to Iowa Jan. 18 and Ohio State Jan. 25.

let up on it some so they could catch it easier.

"I work on my arm all year around," he said. "I work on my legs, my arm, my whole body. But my arm has been my secret weapon."

Although Smith is prepared to take his strong arm and athletic ability to a place where he really enjoyed his visit, he said he is still expecting to be overwhelmed on his official visit to Ohio State at the end of January.

"Out of a hundred I'd say West Virginia was about a 99, maybe even a hundred," he said. "I enjoyed my whole time there. They treated me really well and I had a nice time with the coaches and the whole bit. But without a doubt, I'm looking to be knocked off my feet with the visit (to OSU) because that's what separates West Virginia from the other schools right now."



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OHIO STATE RECRUITING PROFILE

Whitner Provides Versatility In Secondary

By GARY HOUSTEAU

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Although he's played mostly at safety up to this point in his young football career, Donte Whitner of Cleveland Glenville High School is being recruited as one of the top defensive backs in the country to play mainly at the cornerback position at the next level.

"I can hit, I can get to the ball and I can cover guys well," Whitner said. "I play safety now, but I have played corner in some games and in my high school career I have never been beaten deep. I play safety because my team needs me there. For my team I sacrifice playing corner to go to safety, but I think I'm better at corner."

According to his coach, Ted Ginn, Whitner is versatile enough to play either safety or corner equally well at the high school level.

"In our scheme of things we play him at the safety position because he's like an extra linebacker for us," the coach said. "But on the college level he's going to be a corner."

At 5-11, 178 pounds, the speedy Whitner is probably better suited to man the cornerback position. He's previously been clocked at 4.22 seconds in the 40-yard dash at the University of Pittsburgh and he also has run a 4.3-second time at a national All-American combine in Texas.

With that kind of blazing speed, it would seem logical that Whitner might be able to help his team a great deal at running back as well.

"I have a couple of offers that want me to play tailback, but my heart is not really at playing tailback," he said. "My heart is really on the defensive side of the ball. It's just something that I've always played, and when I grew up I loved Deion Sanders and Charles Woodson and guys like that."

"I feel that I can really help my team and get my team's spirits up on the defensive side of the ball both as a leader and a player."

Ginn said that Whitner excels both mentally and physically on the gridiron.



Donte Whitner

"He's very intelligent, first of all," the coach said. "He understands the game well. He hits well and that's the big thing — his hitting and covering. But it's his speed and quickness that really stand out. He's just a legitimate 4.3 guy and everybody is looking for corners that can cover and hit. He has great jumping ability and he's pretty strong. He loves to hit."

Blessed with all that talent, Whitner said he was "recruited" out of the Cleveland muni-league to play quarterback at Benedictine High School, but after just one year there he transferred to Glenville.

"I came here my sophomore year without lifting a weight and I was 135 pounds and they needed a safety," Whitner said. "So I stepped in and played safety and started the second half of the season in my sophomore year. I went from 135 pounds before my sophomore year, bench pressing 140 pounds, to 178 pounds now maxing about 275 or 280."

His speed, however, is really a mystery to him, especially after a bit of an injury-plagued childhood.

"I wasn't supposed to ever play sports,"

The Whitner File

NAME — Donte Whitner

HIGH SCHOOL — Cleveland Glenville

POSITION — Defensive back

HEIGHT, WEIGHT — 5-11, 178 pounds

40-YARD DASH TIME — Consistently timed at 4.3 seconds but went as low as 4.22 seconds at the Pittsburgh camp.

BENCH PRESS — 280 pounds

GRADE-POINT AVERAGE — 2.8 core, 3.4 overall

COLLEGE ENTRANCE TEST — Awaiting results on his first test attempt.

VITAL STATISTICS — Whitner is considered Ohio's No. 2 overall junior prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News and No. 4 by Ohio's Future Stars. As a junior, Whitner earned honorable mention All-Northeast Lakes District honors in Division I. He helped Glenville qualify for the Division I playoffs and post a 9-2 record. He had 54 tackles, three interceptions with one going back for a touchdown, and five pass breakups. He also had 37 carries for 546 yards, a 14.8 average, and scored nine rushing TDs. He had one reception of 34 yards for another TD and one kickoff return of 82 yards for a touchdown. In basketball, he averaged 12 points per game as his school's starting shooting guard last year. In track, he has been clocked at 10.6 seconds in the 100 meters, 21.4 seconds in the 200 and with a 48.5-second split in 4x400 relay.

COACH'S COMMENT — "Donte is a very serious kid. He has to win at everything whether it be in the classroom or on the field or in everyday life. He's serious about, and he knows about, where he's trying to go and what he's trying to do. Talent-wise, he's one of the best defensive backs in the state of Ohio. Some have compared him to (Antoine) Winfield from Ohio State. I think he's the next Winfield. He's got the numbers, he's got the size, the ability and the mindset to do whatever needs to be done at that position. He's so versatile, he can play any skill position that you need, but (safety is) where we choose to play him. And he used to be a quarterback, so he can play running back, quarterback, receiver, corner and safety, and he even loves to play on special teams." — Glenville coach Ted Ginn

HOBBIES — Sports and extracurricular activities.

SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN — Ohio State, USC, Michigan, Michigan State, Tennessee, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Louisville and Kentucky.

Whitner said. "When I was young I was running after a football in the street, not looking both ways when I was about 4 or 5, I was hit by a car and I broke, I think, 17 bones in my legs.

"I wasn't supposed to walk or I wasn't supposed to play. After that accident nobody ever thought I would be playing football."

Shortly after it was determined that he, indeed, would be able to play football, he broke his ankle during a muni-league game in the eighth grade, but mysteriously came back from that injury better than ever.

"When I took my ankle cast off, I was able to dunk a basketball and I had great speed, and I didn't do any rehab," Whitner said. "As soon as I took my ankle cast off I went straight into basketball, like the next day, and that's when I saw it. I went from not ever being able to touch the net before I broke it to dunking the ball, and to being able to run faster than a lot of my peers. I really don't know what happened."

It may be a bit of an understatement to say that it's been a rather arduous journey for Whitner up to this point, yet he's poised to make the most out of his football career now, at least in the short term.

"I'm very appreciative of everything and I give thanks to my family and my head coach," Whitner said. "Without my head coach, I would not be in the position that I am right now. It feels great to be recruited this way. It gets a little hard sometimes, a little hectic sometimes, but that's what you have to go through to be the best player that you want to be."

Guys such as Pierre Woods and Troy Smith, former teammates who were Big Ten recruits, are inspirations to Whitner.

"I know all the trouble Pierre went through — about living in the projects and having to live with eight or 10 people in his house and having a baby and having to go to work — so my life is not harder than Pierre's, so why can't I work harder than the next man? So, yes, Pierre has really been an inspiration to me," Whitner said. "And Troy has been an inspiration to me, too. Troy knows that if he wasn't at

Glenville, he'd probably be in an awkward position, too."

Whitner and teammate Dareus Hiley should make it four Tarblooders in three years now who very realistically will find their way into the Big Ten. The college recruiters are making Glenville a regular stop now.

"They feel that I can go and play and perform on the next level at an early stage," Whitner said. "They feel that I have time to develop because a lot of people don't even know that I'm only 16 years old. In addition to that I work hard and I have the grades so that's a couple of reasons why they like me."

Ohio State is just one of the many schools that have shown an interest in obtaining the services of Whitner.

"I love the Buckeyes," he said. "I love (defensive backs coach) Mel Tucker, I love Jim Tressel. I love them. What really sticks out to me is that Jim Tressel is a great guy and anybody that you ask will tell you, no matter if it's recruiters from other schools or coaches from other schools, they'll tell you that Jim Tressel is a great guy. And my cousin that played for Jim Tressel at Youngstown State also tells me that Jim Tressel is a great guy."

It's still very early in the process and Whitner and Hiley continue to get new offers from different schools on a regular basis.

"I haven't really narrowed it down but I think I'll have it narrowed down probably about mid-football season or the end of football season," Whitner said. "I don't even have a top five right now. It's like being a kid in a candy store."

In the end, Whitner said it's likely he'll have to decide between a strong pull from Woods and the coaching staff at Michigan, and the lure of playing in his home state with Smith for Tressel. He even said a package deal with Hiley is not out of the realm of possibility.

"I'm just going to go where my heart tells me to go," Whitner said. "There's a good chance of me coming to Ohio State. I really like the Buckeyes but I really don't have any favorites right now so we'll just wait and see what happens."

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OHIO STATE RECRUITING PROFILE

Speedy Ginn Among Nation's Best Prep Stars

By CHRIS HOPPES

Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

There's good news and more good news concerning Ted Ginn Jr.

He will sign a national letter of intent Feb. 4 to play football for Ohio State this fall, which is great news for the Buckeyes and their legions of fans.

There is, however, some unfinished business for the speedy senior from Cleveland Glenville.

He has awaiting him his senior season on the Glenville track team. And then, hopefully beyond that and prior to heading to Ohio State, Ginn wants to head to Europe and run track. Not just any track, mind you, but the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece.

Ginn has the right stuff and will put his talents to the test at the U.S. Olympic Team Trials July 9-18 in Sacramento, Calif. Should he qualify from there, it's on to Greece for the Summer Games, which begin Aug. 13.

Ginn sounds low-key and relaxed about the prospect of representing his country in the Olympics and pursuing a football career for the Scarlet and Gray.

"The Olympics is kind of a dream for me," he said. "It's been in the back of my mind for quite a while, and I want to take a shot at it. I probably won't get another one."

"As far as football is concerned, Ohio State was the best fit for me. It's close to home and my mom (Jeanette) wanted me to stay close to home."

Ginn excels in both sports and chooses not to pick a favorite.

"They both go hand in hand," he said. "I don't really have a favorite right now."

Midway through the conversation, Ginn's cell phone signal goes dead. Moments later, he calls back to finish the interview.

A lot of young people might say, "Well, I gave that reporter five minutes. That's enough." But Ginn is not a typical young person.

"Ted is a special kid," said Ginn's father, Ted Sr., who also is head football and track coach at Glenville High School. "He's real humble. He never looks for you to give him anything. He always wants to give you something. He looks out for everybody and he's always willing to share things with people."

"He just enjoys playing football and being a student."

The younger Ginn is rated the No. 1 cornerback and No. 2 overall college football prospect in America by Rivals.com and was named the USA Today national defensive player of the year.

While most believed he would eventually wind up at Ohio State, Ginn admitted he looked long and hard at the possibilities of going with co-national champion Southern Cal and Big Ten champion Michigan.

"I wouldn't have gone wrong if I'd selected either of those schools," he said. "They both have a lot to offer in a lot of areas. But Ohio State did, too, and like I said before, it was close to home. It seemed like the perfect fit for me."

If he does not qualify for the Olympics, Ginn is expected to step in and contend for playing time at the cornerback spot vacated when Chris Gamble declared early for the NFL draft.

"They're (also) talking about putting him at receiver and probably some punt

and kickoff returns," Ginn Sr. said.

"He did some things I really didn't expect. He did things that a lot of people dream of doing. He had an excellent season at quarterback. He passed for about 900 yards and rushed for about that many from the quarterback spot."

"He also had 35 to 40 tackles and eight interceptions, five he returned for touchdowns."

The highlights for Ginn Jr. this past season were two of those interception returns — one of 96 yards and another he brought out of the end zone for a 102-yard return.

Obviously, Ginn did a lot of everything for Glenville's football team. He ran kickoffs and punts back for touchdowns and kicked extra points as well for the Tarblooders.

Glenville went 9-2 last year, falling 24-21 in the first round of the Division I playoffs to Cleveland St. Ignatius.

But while his goal of a state championship in football fell just short, Ginn still eyes state titles during the upcoming track season.

The high school track season begins in late March and ends in Columbus June 4 and 5 at Ohio State's Jesse Owens Memorial Stadium with the state championships.

Ginn's talents helped lead Glenville to the 2003 Division I state track championship. Along the way, he won the individual 110- and 300-meter hurdles titles and was a member of the state championship 400-meter relay team. He added a second-place finish in the 200-meter dash and scored 30.5 of his team's 56 total points.

"Ted's an excellent track athlete," Ginn Sr. said. "He's the No. 1 (high school) hurdler in the country and probably one of the top 200-meter and 400-meter guys in the country."

Ginn Jr., who blazes in the 110-meter hurdles, has a personal best time of 13.62 seconds. The Ohio prep record is 13.30 set by Chris Nelloms in 1990.

Ginn has clocked a best time of 20.6 in the 200-meters and a 45.5 split time in the 400-meter relay.

As preparation for his Olympics try, he will switch events this year for the first time.

"This year, I'm taking him out of the 300 hurdles and putting him in the open 400," Ginn Sr. said.

Going to one of the top college football schools in America and trying out for the Olympics might make a person's head swim. But Ginn seems to take it all in stride.

"I'm going to try to make the (U.S. Olympic) team right out of high school," he said. "It shouldn't be that hard."

"But even if it is, I just want to see



FILE PHOTO

HE'S GOT QUICKS — Ted Ginn Jr., scheduled to sign to play with OSU as a defensive back on Feb. 4, is also an elite hurdler.

what (the experience) is like. No matter what happens, I think it'll be a good experience."

The Ginn File

NAME — Theodore Ginn Jr.

HIGH SCHOOL — Cleveland Glenville

POSITIONS — Cornerback, wide receiver, kick returner

HEIGHT, WEIGHT — 6-1, 170

40-YARD DASH TIME — 4.4 seconds

BENCH PRESS — 240 pounds

SQUAT MAX — 300 pounds

VERTICAL LEAP — 30 inches

GRADE-POINT AVERAGE — 3.50

COLLEGE ENTRANCE TEST — Scored a 19 on the ACT.

VITAL STATISTICS — Ginn is rated the No. 1 player in Ohio by Rivals.com and The Ohio Football Recruiting News and also was rated the No. 1 cornerback in the nation and No. 2 prospect overall by Rivals.com. He earned national defensive player of the year honors from USA Today. Ginn was named Ohio's co-offensive player of the year in Division I as well as first-team All-Ohio by The Associated Press. As a senior he passed and ran for nearly 2,000 yards as a quarterback and registered 40 tackles and eight interceptions as a cornerback. Five of those INTs were returned for touchdowns. Ginn also returned kicks for Glenville and kicked extra points. A three-time state track champion, he wants to try for the 2004 U.S. Olympic team in hurdles this summer.

COACH'S COMMENTS — "Offensively, he is so explosive. He scares me. He can do things on the football field I have never seen done. He is still just little Ted to me, of course, but he is just an outstanding talent. In one game, he scored five touchdowns in all different phases of the game — passing, running, punt return, kickoff return and on defense. He has been blessed with a tremendous amount of gifts, not the least of which is his personality. As a father and his coach, I couldn't be more proud." — Cleveland Glenville head coach Ted Ginn Sr.

HOBBIES — Relaxing, watching TV, spending time with his girlfriend, playing Sony PlayStation.

SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN — Committed to Ohio State during the U.S. Army All-American Game Jan. 3. He chose OSU over Southern Cal and Michigan, although virtually every major program in the country offered him a scholarship.

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