

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

**\$2.50**

 PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER  
 CLASSIFICATION  
 DATED MATERIAL  
 PLEASE RUSH!!


Vol. 33, No. 23

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

July 2014

# Smith Recaps Year

## Success, Change Big Part Of 2013-14 At Ohio State

 By JEFF SVOBODA  
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

In many ways, 2013-14 was business as usual for the Ohio State athletics department.

The football team won all 12 games on the regular-season schedule for the second consecutive year, while the men's basketball program continued its streak of NCAA Tournament appearances. Some of Ohio State's other 34 varsity sports put together impressive accomplishments, and the Buckeyes again had a strong year in the classroom.

But it was also a year of change for Ohio State, and not just in sports such as women's basketball and men's hockey where first-year head coaches Kevin McGuff and Steve Rohlik got their feet wet and skipped impressive postseason performances.

Ohio State hired a new president – UC Irvine chancellor Michael Drake, who took over July 1 – and athletics director Gene Smith signed a contract extension that will keep him at the school through 2020. In addition, continued attacks on the college athletics system kept Smith and his fellow administrators across the country busy.

Smith was willing to discuss these topics and more when he sat down at the Fawcett Center with BSB in late June to discuss the state of his department and other issues.

Recapping the athletics year, Ohio State received plenty of standout performances, including a school-record 24-game win streak by the football program. The rowing team repeated as NCAA champions, while the pistol program won its second national title and the men's tennis team won the ITA national indoor championship.

Women's golf returned to the top 10 in the nation, where it was joined by football, men's tennis, fencing, men's gymnastics, wrestling and synchronized swimming. In addition, the women's lacrosse team made its first NCAA tournament appearance in 11 years.

However, it wasn't enough for the school to have a good year in the standings of the Directors' Cup, the yearly trophy that tabulates the on-field success of a school across all of its sports. The Buckeyes dropped from last year's finish of 16th all the way to 25th this season, its worst standing since the inception of the trophy in 1993-94.

### THE INTERVIEW ISSUE

With all that in mind, Smith had a lot to talk about when he met with BSB. What follows is a partial transcript of our in-depth question-and-answer session with the director of athletics.

**Buckeye Sports Bulletin: From your perspective, as you look back on this year, how do you feel about how it went?**

Gene Smith: "It went great. We had a great year. We graduated 195 athletes over the year and then we had 329 Academic All-Big Ten honorees, and that's the second highest in our history, so it was a great year. Competitively, we had a lot of people that did well, a lot of teams did well.

"Having our rowing team win back-to-back national championships was phenomenal. The football team had a great

year even though we didn't finish as strong as we all had hoped. Men's basketball, I think Thad (Matta) did one of his best coaching jobs ever in a tough situation. I think he managed that extremely well. Recruiting has been phenomenal. I think Kevin McGuff, our women's coach, transitioned in well with the smaller numbers and injuries and so on, and I think he got a lot of great experience for those young ladies and set a great foundation for the future.

"You look at it, I think we had six coaches that received national coach of the year recognition. Women's golf, it's unbelievable the job Therese Hession does. Women's tennis got better, moved up the rankings, so it was a good year when you think about it overall."

**BSB: In the Directors' Cup, you finished 25th. You want to be top five, top two, even top one.**

Smith: "We have to win that bad boy from Stanford."

**BSB: Does finishing 25th worry you?**

Smith: "It doesn't worry me. We should strive to be in the top five. We certainly shouldn't be in the 20s. That's now who we are. You have to take into consideration where every individual program is. Certain sports didn't go deep enough in the postseason so those points we usually rack up, we just weren't able to achieve. Every coach knows that, but it's not like the end all, be all. It's just one of those indicators we have to constantly look at because we should be up there. There's five schools in the Big Ten ahead of us, and that shouldn't happen."

**BSB: You mentioned it was one of Thad's best coaching jobs. Seeing it from your perspective, what was so impressive about what he did this year?**

Smith: "We had a mix of such great kids, but it was challenging at some positions. We've been blessed over the years, we always have had that offensive go-to guy. We had Deshaun (Thomas), who was our most recent guy that had just unreal offensive talent in a lot of situations. We had Jared Sullinger before that, we had Mike Conley and Greg Oden, we had Evan Turner.

"We always had that one go-to, clutch guy, and we just didn't really have that (this year). Being on the basketball committee, loving this sport and having watched it over the years, to be where we need to be, you have to have one of those guys that offensively is the ball hog – 'Give it to me, I'm going to score one way or the other.'

"I thought what Thad did understanding that we did not necessarily have that, trying to put our young men in a position where they could be as strong as they could be, he did a great job. It's hard to get guys to be all in defensively like they were. Who wanted to play us? Defensively we were pests. I thought he did a marvelous job of holding them together and not letting them fall apart. We went probably as far as we could, so I was proud of them."

**BSB: Obviously you lost to an in-state team, Dayton, who then goes to the Elite Eight. They had the headline in the Dayton paper mocking Ohio State. There was a lot of discussion before the game if Ohio State should play more Ohio teams ...**

Smith: "There's your answer. It was like they won the national championship. You know, for us, if we lose, it's like it ended up. If we win, we're expected to win. There's



MATTHEW HAGER

'GREAT YEAR' – Ohio State athletics director Gene Smith was pleased with the 2013-14 athletics year, which included national championships claimed by several Buckeye squads.

Continued On Page 6

# 'Tough Losses' Hurt At End Of Football Season

Continued From Page 1

a dichotomy with that one. But no, it didn't bother me. I expected it when I saw it. You have to respect the fact that they have done a marvelous job with basketball over the years and they have a guy at the helm like they have in Archie Miller. He's talented, and he coached here. He's on that (Matta) coaching tree, so he's doing a marvelous job and will continue to do so. But you're right, those are the realities of, to some degree, one of the many reasons why we won't play."

**BSB: Football-wise, head coach Urban Meyer recently said you are the best AD in the country. Do you feel the same way about him with what he's done with this program?**

Smith: "We have a great relationship, no doubt. We spend a lot of time on different issues, and there's no one that could be better for our job considering the situation we were in and the opportunities that we have ahead of us. You know the pedigree – national champion, from Ohio, wife is from Ohio, kind of a Camelot type of deal, but at the end of the day, he gets what we needed to do to go to another level with our performance.

"More importantly, he understood the culture, and he's talking about that a lot right now – that we needed to establish a particular culture. That's relative to wins and losses, but for me – as he well knows, and he agrees – it's about everything else, too. It's about how you carry yourself. It's behaving the right way, that understanding of being respectful, understanding that it's not just about you. It's about your teammates, it's about your families, it's about the institution, it's about getting ready for life – the Real Life Wednesdays, all those things.

"I think he's packaged it really nicely and he's doing it extremely well to help the progress. He's done a good job with that piece. He's a CEO-type coach. We're in a good spot, we really are."

**BSB: The 12-0 start to the season was great, so there was no complaining there. Then obviously the 0-2 end was frustrating for the program and the fan base as well.**

Smith: "Tough losses – particularly the Michigan State one. That one hurt. Clemson hurt, but not as bad as the Big Ten Championship Game, to be quite frank. The Michigan State one hurt because we should have got that."

**BSB: There are two new coaches on the defensive side of the ball. How involved are you when it comes to making those decisions?**

Smith: "What's so funny is that our conversations are so fluid, and we talk about personnel all the time. We talked prior to the bowl game about personnel – who might be interviewing somewhere, who is ready to be a head coach, what jobs are opening – so it starts from there and then we evolve into conversations.

"We knew Everett (Withers) had his opportunity, so when that was coming down the pipe we began to talk and (Meyer) had some ideas of people. And then I might have a name to throw at him, but we have those conversations fluidly and naturally. We don't like schedule a meeting, you know what I mean? And then when he gets down to his final few, he asks, 'Gene, talk to these guys,' so he'll set it up and he'll make his recommendation and go.

"Larry (Johnson) was a no-brainer – 'What time can we get him here?' All those years of

experience, his pedigree. When (Meyer) called me and said Larry might have an interest, I said, 'Wow, let's figure that out and push that interest over the edge.' Mike (Vrabel leaving) was a surprise to us, and he was quality, but when you can get a Larry Johnson, that's another level, man. We were excited about that.

"I knew Chris Ash so that made it easier with him. I didn't have to meet him or talk to him. He was at Iowa State with me, so I didn't have a need to figure him out. So that's how that happens – it just kind of flows. Same thing with a lot of different situations like recruits or the leadership program. We just kind of talk naturally."

**BSB: The stadium expansion is getting close to being done. At Michigan, there was a story that blew up in the media as far as their trouble with selling student tickets. Especially since the expansion, have you had anything similar happen here at Ohio State?**

Smith: "We're fortunate. Obviously we've been watching it because it was happening at Michigan and it actually has happened over the years across the country. What was cool was those 2,600 seats we put in there for the student section will take the South Stands to 19,600 seats as opposed to 17,000, and we blew way past our ticket allotment. I think we went 1,600 tickets over our allotment for students. (Ticketing director) Brett (Scarborough) left the student ticket ordering open so more students could order.

"We're fortunate. Our public and donor sell was at about 98-point-something percent renewal. We're in good shape. However, you have to constantly continue to develop the fan experience. We had a call last Friday where I chaired a subcommittee on in-game fan experience from the Big Ten. We lifted the video replay policy last year and now we're talking about basketball and hockey and should we lift it for those two sports?"

"We also talked about technology in the stadium. We're going to have full WiFi in our stadium in 2015. We have the digital antenna system which helps with texting and phone calls, but the full WiFi we don't have. We'll have that in the fall of 2015, and more of our schools are moving toward that.

"We're going to try some new things on the video board that only the people in the stadium will get a chance to see. You won't be seeing it at home on your couch, it'll be for the people in the stadium. When you think about the new tunnel for the team under the seats, we're going to do some things around it with the team coming out that will be different. It will be really exciting for night games.

"We're constantly thinking about how we can continue to make the game fun and exciting beyond the game itself. We're doing everything we can to hold our ticket prices for a while. We're looking at a variable ticket model for the future. We're starting that study this fall with our Athletic Council. We've stayed pretty true to our model with the exception of premium prices. Now we need to look at the variable ticket model and how that will work, particularly since our scheduling really changes after 2016. We have to get ready for that and make sure we have the right pricing structure for the fan in place at that particular time."

**BSB: Can you give us any sneak peeks as far as enhancing the atmosphere?**

Smith: "No, they have to be a surprise (laughs). We have creative people, and it's

just that they are little things that people will say, 'Wow, that's cool.' It's like fireworks last year. I can't tell you how many people commented on the fact that we did that. We've been resisting doing that for years, but it was cool. I didn't have the vision. I had a hard time seeing it. These guys draw that stuff up, and I'm like, 'How is that going to work?' but then when you see it, it's like, 'OK, that's better than what I thought.'

"I say, 'Look, here's eight ideas. Let's try all eight. If three of them are good, great. The rest we'll never do again.' You have to try some things. You have to be sensitive to your traditions, protect those, but at the same time we have to understand our demographic is changing. You look at what's happening up north, you look at what's happening out west, you look at those attendance numbers and what's happening is we haven't been responsive to the changing demographics.

"People who come to our games are going to be different, so how do you make sure we protect our history and our traditions but also add that new component that recognizes their interests? Like our band – holy smokes. I asked (director) Jon (Waters), how are you going to do better than last year? That was phenomenal, right? The pressure is on, but they'll figure it out. That type of stuff is representative. Levy Restaurants, our concessionaire, I was shocked when they first came on board last year. You just walk the concourse and the colors and the splash, the aesthetics are different in the stadium. Those are the things that make you better."

**BSB: You're going to have a new boss in Drake. Have you had much chance to pick his brain on athletics? He's coming from a much smaller school.**

Smith: "A little bit. I had a formal meeting with him for about 90 minutes or so. It was a great conversation. He gets athletics and its value in higher education and in society. I think he's not going to have any challenge with the transition here. I think the magnitude of what we do is different, but he's an experienced professional at 63 years old so that adjustment won't be that hard. He gets it. That's really good. I'm anxious to get him here, get him started, learn from him. He has a lot of other issues on campus to focus on besides us, so he'll be pretty busy. I'll just be lucky to catch him when I can."

**BSB: We have to ask about the O'Bannon trial that is going on right now. Do you get updates on that every day? How closely to do you pay attention?**

Smith: "Yeah, I get updates every day. I'm watching it. It's going to still be a long time to go through this, then it will go to the appellate court and all that, so you're talking two years or whatever. The reality is some of the things I hope that happen in the new governance structure will deal with some of those concerns. I do think that ultimately if you have to pay for student-athletes' likenesses, then you have to figure out a financial model that works. It's not like it's a new discussion. Do you set up a trust fund, and as that person grows, X amount of dollars go into that trust fund? Because you know, when you come here, you have no persona..."

**BSB: Well, Braxton Miller does, but a lot of guys don't.**

Smith: "A little bit, but we didn't contribute. So that's exactly right. So you come here but we didn't contribute to that, so if he wants to collect, he can collect from high school. Then you have that transition and

then you have to have some way to evaluate how you monetize that. People say it's just jersey sales, but I think it's more than that."

**BSB: That's an easy metric, but it's only one.**

Smith: "That's only one of X. So I think that's the big issue, that you have to sit down and figure out that formula. Where is the trust fund? Is it at the institution or is it in the conference office? If you say the conference office peels off X amount of money from the television revenue and retains it in the conference office and then you have a formula and at the end of the year you submit a report and it's filed, do you retain that in a trust fund until they graduate or do they get a check annually? So there's a lot of stuff around that. The courts aren't going to come up with the formula. They'll just say they should be paid for their likenesses and it's going to come back to us to figure that out."

**BSB: So it's fair to say you have thought about potential outcomes and what might happen?**

Smith: "Oh yeah. I don't know what is going to happen, but I know if the O'Bannon plaintiffs win, then the reality is we have to come up with a model and it's going to significantly change who we are and how colleges are run. It's going to go back to the old-school days. The reality is if I'm in the L.A. market, I can increase the value of a persona a whole lot faster than if you're in Ames, Iowa. It's all market driven. I can do the same thing here.

"The reason the rules are the way they were is because we were trying to change the old-school model, but now we're going to open it back up because I'm going to look at Braxton and I'm going to look at, how do we help monetize this persona? However you set up the structure – if he's paid yearly, monthly or when he graduates – that money has to grow, right? Because what it does is helps recruiting. That's where we're going, so that means we probably can't have as many sports, which means we significantly reduce our department. The game changes. We spend a significant amount of funds on marketing other sports (right now). I mean, it just changes."

**BSB: It has to be worrying as somebody who has been in athletics as long as you have that you're going to lose something if it goes to its logical conclusion or past it.**

Smith: "I was talking to a class about a month ago and that's what I was trying to explain to them, the changes to how that individual will operate, how they think. And any entity that is financially benefiting from those likenesses, they're open. They're fair game. It's interesting, isn't it?"

**BSB: You don't realize how many ripples there are.**

Smith: "Dan Guerrero, the AD at UCLA, and I were sitting around talking about that. We were like, people don't get it. They don't get the devastation. They just think, 'Just pay them,' but if that passes, it goes deep."

**BSB: When a lot of this stuff started being discussed, Jim Delany said something along the lines of not being sure if his institutions would want to be part of a pay-for-play model. Do you think it could get to that point?**

Smith: "We talked about that. Is there a different structure that we would go to? Ohio State is probably one that would not walk away from our environment, the Horseshoe, the great tradition and history. We'd probably walk away from our broad-based phi-

THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: GENE SMITH

losophy that we've enjoyed with 36 sports and 1,000 athletes.

"I could see a new piece of legislation going to the NCAA saying that - right now, 16 sports are required along with men's and women's basketball to be Division I. I could see that going down to another number, whatever that is. I can see conferences like the Big Ten saying, 'OK, here are the only ones we're going to compete in at a championship level.' If you have anything else, it's club or whatever.

"So you truly are moving into that professional model is what you're doing. I don't know how the federal government views this legally. You can say it's just for football and basketball. It would be hard, so I'd have to pick the sports where the athletes can monetize their likeness in this environment. So now you start going down that mental track. As soon as you print that, everybody is going to be on their napkin to figure out, 'These are the sports,' because that's what will happen.

"To your earlier question, we will lose something. We will lose a lot. That's why 70 percent of the public doesn't want us to pay our athletes. However, we have to come up with a way to solve some of the financial challenges that some of the kids are having. You know my message on that. I've been driving that for years, and I think that we will get there because that's the root of this in a lot of regards. If a full-ride student-athlete has to go out and get a loan, we're not doing something right. We have to figure that out."

**BSB: As far as NCAA progress, you're getting toward August when you might get a chance to enact some of these changes. People are studying it - is that where things are right now?**

Smith: "I think Aug. 7 is the board of directors meeting, and every indication is they are going to vote on the new model and the top five (conferences) will have autonomy. I think what will happen once they vote it in, I think we'll be able to get that cost-of-attendance piece of legislation in the system fast and hopefully get it voted on for an effective date of 2015. That would be a great opportunity because we've talked about that enough. People are studying it, so we should be able to create a piece of legislation that everybody can see, modify it by the January convention and get it voted in and go.

"Other issues I think will take a little bit longer because we haven't vetted them as much. Health care, those types of things, time demands for student-athletes - I think those are going to take a little bit more time and we need to engage more coaches in the discussion. One of the big things in the new structure that I think we'll be able to do better is identifying the best people to help solve a problem.

"I think the cost of attendance will get out of the chute pretty fast. The others might take a little while longer, but that's the game changer, getting us to that new governance structure because we'll be able to do what we can afford to do."

**BSB: As far as other issues, you spoke on concussions at the NACDA (athletics directors) convention. I know the Big Ten is doing a study with the Ivy League schools on the subject. What were you able to discuss while you were there?**

Smith: "My whole part of the panel discussion was not as much on the medical side, which was very interesting. It was more focused on a couple of things like having the right protocols in place, and that's based upon the environment and what you have. We're blessed to have a medical center so we have some unbelievable talent and skill here, but it starts from the fact that the medical

people make the call on the student-athlete, not the coaches. They make the call on coming out and when they return to play and have an environment where the team physician has total authority and that authority is respected.

"My coaches understand that they do not venture into that world. If the team physician says he's not ready, he's not ready - just move on to the next guy. It's that simple. A lot of places aren't set up that way. In fact, there's some places where the team doctor reports to the coach. That makes no sense. That's a conflict inherent in the structure.

"What I brought to the table was that drive. The other piece that I tried to bring home and why they asked me to be on that panel was people always just think about the impact the concussion has on the student-athlete on the field or the court or whatever, but they forget about the piece in the classroom. So if I'm concussed on Saturday and I have to go to class on Monday, how does that affect me? So what are your mechanisms with academic advisors to communicate with the faculty, what are your mechanisms to help that student-athlete deal with that class on Monday and trying to recover because brain trauma is brain trauma. That's why they asked me to be on the panel, to share my thoughts and feelings on those issues.

"The joy of listening to the medical experts like Brian Hainline from the NCAA, listening to them about all the different studies nationally, what is occurring, and the hope that exists out there to see real numbers of a true decline. The numbers aren't well-tracked right now, but there's a sense that there's a decline in the number of concussions. We've gone back to teaching how to tackle. Nobody ever really talks about gymnastics and lacrosse and all those other contact sports, but there's a lot of conversations in those sports and their cultures are starting to shift a little bit."

**BSB: Another thing that came up this year was the controversy surrounding your bonuses when teams or athletes**

**won championships this year. Is that something you'd like to take out of your contract?**

Smith: "That's an old model. That's not new. (Oklahoma AD) Joe Castiglione and I were talking about it - and his is the same way - and we were saying, 'You know, we need to change that.' This model has been in place for years. This year after President Drake gets settled and I've had some conversations with the general counsel on campus, we'll discuss how we change our incentive model because we're in a performance-based environment. So how do you shift that to the business side of the house? I've had some preliminary conversation with our general counsel on campus, and we'll eventually probably change that."

**BSB: Do you understand why that became an issue?**

Smith: "It's been so old, I wasn't as sensitized. I had it at Iowa State, which was, I don't know, how many years ago? I had it at Arizona State. If you made a public records request for some of the top ADs across the country, you would probably find the same thing. It needs to be changed and so we'll end up changing that. The optics don't look right, so we'll change it."

**BSB: Maryland and Rutgers are joining the Big Ten on July 1 ...**

Smith: "I'm excited about them coming in. I know it's not a popular decision, but from a business point of view it worked and it will work. We needed a presence on the East Coast. We needed to give Penn State partners to protect them. It worked, but yeah, I'm excited."

**BSB: There was an article in Sports Illustrated recently with a little bit of sentiment that fans see the Big Ten losing a little bit of what made us. Do you hesitate to make decisions like that when that might be the outcome?**

Smith: "That goes back to what we deal with locally, so being careful, holding on to our traditions and history but understanding our world is changing. People need to under-

stand that realignment was going to happen. If we took a vote back in 1996 about realignment, everybody would say, 'Don't realign because you're changing who we are.'

"Well, you know what? There's a lot of companies that fail because they stayed the way they were. There's probably only a few like Southwest that say, 'We're not doing anything differently. It's gang seating, and that isn't changing.' There's only a few that survive that way. Our world was changing and we were blessed that we put the Big Ten Network together, so the reality of trying to expand to that market made sense to us. Even the Sports Illustrated article missed the Penn State issue and the potential for the ACC to go into the Big Ten and go to Penn State and say, 'Hey, join us.' So it's interesting.

"My hope is that being part of the Big Ten, that (the programs at Maryland and Rutgers) will elevate. Maryland has a rich tradition in basketball and was dominant for a very long time, so hopefully that will increase. Rutgers had a good run in football. It wasn't consistent but they had a good run, so we can help them elevate. Anyway, it wasn't a popular decision, but I know for where we need to be down the road, it was the right decision. We couldn't go west very easily. So I feel good about where we are."

**BSB: Do you foresee anything else happening with expansion?**

Smith: "Not in the near future, no. Do I think it's going to happen down the road? Yes. I'll be retired, sitting in the stands, screaming, talking to the officials. But I think down the road it will probably happen again. It's just going to happen. There's television, the ability to keep the fan base growing in certain markets. Not all markets, but certain markets will say, 'We need to do something different.' The Big 12 to me, they are very solid where they are with 10 schools, but will that continue to work over time? You never know. So the reality is I think down the road we'll see expansion, but it's not anywhere in the near future."


## OHIO STATE VS. NAVY

**BALTIMORE, MARYLAND  
AUGUST 29TH-31ST, 2014**

Join Travel Partners Specialty Tours on the road with the Buckeyes to Baltimore, Maryland to watch them take on the Navy Midshipmen, August 30th! We are staying right in the heart of Baltimore's Inner Harbor!

**Package Includes:**

- Round trip airfare from Columbus, OH to Baltimore, MD
- Two nights deluxe hotel accommodations at the Embassy Suites
- Hotel taxes and fees
- Complimentary Breakfast and Cocktail hour
- Group hotel check-in
- Luggage tag and souvenir gift
- Escorted Tour of U.S. Naval Academy/Annapolis OSU vs. NAVY game ticket
- Round trip airport transfers on deluxe motorcoach
- Fully escorted by Travel Partners Specialty Tours Staff




**Pricing Information:**

Deluxe Tour: \$899 per person  
Land Only Tour: \$699 per person  
Based on Double Occupancy. Single, Triple, & Quad Rates available upon request. All Packages are Non-Refundable.

## Weekend in Washington D.C!

**OSU VS. MARYLAND  
WASHINGTON D.C.  
OCTOBER 3RD - 5TH, 2014**



Join Travel Partners Specialty Tours on the road with the Buckeyes to historic Washington D.C. to watch them take on the Maryland Terrapins, October 4th! We are staying right in the center of Washington D.C. Visit many of the National Monuments and landmarks in our Nation's Capital!

**Package Includes:**

- Round trip airfare from Columbus, OH to Washington, D.C.
- Two nights deluxe hotel accommodations at the Embassy Suites
- Hotel taxes and fees
- Complimentary Breakfast and Cocktail hour
- Group hotel check-in
- Luggage tag and souvenir gift
- OSU vs. MARYLAND game ticket
- Round trip airport and game transfers on deluxe motorcoach
- Fully escorted by Travel Partners Specialty Tours Staff

**Pricing Information:**

Deluxe Tour: \$899 per person  
Land Only Tour: \$649 per person  
Based on Double Occupancy. Single, Triple, & Quad Rates available upon request. All Packages are Non-Refundable.

## REMATCH!



**EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN  
NOVEMBER 8TH, 2014**

Join Travel Partners Specialty Tours on the road with the Buckeyes to East Lansing, M\*ch\*gan to watch them take on Sparty in a rematch of the Big Ten Championship game, November 8th!

**Package includes:**

- Round trip deluxe motorcoach transfer
- Honeybaked Ham Box lunch/Pizza during return trip
- OSU vs. MSU game ticket
- Luggage tag & commemorative gift
- Fully escorted by Travel Partners Specialty Tours Staff

**\$299 per person**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK A RESERVATION FOR ANY OF THESE TRIPS, PLEASE CALL, TRAVEL PARTNERS SPECIALTY TOURS 614-792-6204 OR VISIT BUCKEYECRUISE.COM!**



# Broadcasting Career Keeps Fox In Game

By BEN AXELROD  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Despite its lack of success, you'd be hard pressed to find a sports city with more to talk about than Cleveland, Ohio.

Speaking to BSB as he pulled into the parking lot of 92.3 The Fan's studios in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Dustin Fox was preparing for the final radio show in a week in which he had already discussed a Cleveland Indians walkoff grand slam, the NBA draft, the NBA finals, LeBron James' impending free agency and a Cleveland Cavaliers coaching search. And oh yeah, some quarterback named Johnny Manziel.

Born into a football family in Canton, Ohio, being at the center of the action is nothing new for Fox, who started as a sophomore cornerback on Ohio State's 2002 national championship team. The GlenOak High School product was a three-year starter for the Buckeyes, helping usher in the Jim Tressell era and serving as a captain in 2004.

Following Fox's impressive college career, the Minnesota Vikings used a third-round pick on him in the 2005 NFL draft. Injuries, however, plagued the 5-11, 200-pounder's lone season with the Vikings, who released Fox prior to the start of the 2006 campaign.

The Hall of Fame City native was immediately scooped up by the Philadelphia Eagles, with whom he made his NFL debut in 2006. Fox would go on to play two additional seasons with the Buffalo Bills, playing in a total of 11 games.

After his time in the NFL, Fox got into medical device sales with Biomet and also made his broadcasting debut in 2010. Cutting his teeth as an Ohio State analyst for WEWS-TV Channel 5 and WKRN-AM in Cleveland, Fox caught his big break in 2011 when he was named a drive-time co-host for CBS Cleveland's new sports talk station, 92.3 The Fan.

For the past three years, Fox has been heard from 2-7 p.m. each day discussing the latest happenings in Cleveland sports alongside Adam "The Bull" Gerstenhaber.

Last year, he added to his broadcasting résumé when he began calling Mid-American Conference football games for ESPN, and for the past three years he's been the radio color analyst for the Cleveland Gladiators of the Arena Football League.

Also the co-host for the postgame show on the Cleveland Browns radio network, Fox has become one of the most prominent voices in one of America's most talked about sports cities. What's that like and where does Fox plan on going from here? BSB chatted with him to discuss just that.

**Buckeye Sports Bulletin: How did you make the transition from being an NFL defensive back to a big-time sports broadcaster?**

Fox: "It's pretty simple. Once I got done playing, I knew that I wanted to get into broadcasting, but I didn't have a very big avenue for it because I didn't really know anybody or know how to get into it, so I just got into sales. I was selling orthopedics with my brother for the first year when I got done playing, and then I just called up a friend of mine, (former WKRN host) Kenny Roda - actually I contacted him on Twitter, and (WSYX-TV sportscaster) Clay Hall down in Columbus was the one who connected me with (WEWS sports director) Andy Baskin in Cleveland.

"Both of those guys - Kenny and Andy Baskin - helped me out giving me some stuff. Kenny was at WKRN at the time and I was doing Buckeye stuff over there, and then I was doing Buckeye stuff for Channel 5 with Andy Baskin. That was pretty cool."

**BSB: Cleveland is such a fascinating sports city. You've probably already covered close to 10 coaching searches in your three years. What's it been like talking about a town with so much happening on a daily basis?**

Fox: "It's fun, man. It's awesome. There's always something to talk about. We don't win but outside of that, it's interesting. There's always something interesting to talk about. It would be bet-



FILE PHOTO

**SPORTS STILL IN BLOOD - Ohio State 2002 national champion Dustin Fox (37) remains connected to sports as a radio host on 92.3 The Fan in Cleveland.**

ter if we won, obviously, but things are turning around. The Indians were fun last year when they made the playoffs. That run that they had was probably the most exciting thing that we've had since we've been on the air.

"But there's also been good moments with all the teams. There's been exciting moments. They haven't always been on the field, but sometimes it's getting the No. 1 overall pick in the (NBA draft) lottery or drafting Manziel. There's been lots of exciting stuff."

**BSB: What's a typical day like for you?**

Fox: "For me, it depends because a lot of people don't know that I still sell orthopedics. My brother owns the company. He's a Biomet distributor. Two or three days a week, I'm doing that in the mornings. I'll get up at like 5:30 and go cover surgery. I'll be in surgery by 7 or 7:30. And once the surgery's over I'll drive downtown and get downtown around 11:30 or noon and start prepping for the show and do the show and drive home."

**BSB: What's your favorite topic to talk about? Is it still Ohio State, or are you really into the pro teams up there?**

Fox: "We don't talk Ohio State up here (laughs). We don't. I mean, during football season, we'll talk it maybe a couple of segments a week, if that. It sucks because I would like to talk about it."

"It's about what our listeners want. They want to hear about their teams. I get it. There is a huge amount of Ohio State fans up here, but not everybody went to Ohio State. Not everybody's an Ohio State fan. In Cleveland, everyone's a Browns fan or everyone's an Indians fan or Cavs fan. It's a little bit delicate, but we try to make time for it. If I had my pick of it, I'd love to talk Ohio State football. But we just can't."

**BSB: Speaking of the Browns,**

**what are your thoughts on the Johnny Football situation up there?**

Fox: "It's exciting. I think he's a great player. I hope it works out. I think he's acting like a fool right now, but I think he's going to calm down. Hopefully - well, not hopefully - I know he's going to calm down once the season begins. He needs to. He needs to take it seriously because he's got a great opportunity here."

"The town is depending on him to be the savior. I don't know that he realizes how big that is, but it's huge. If he doesn't pan out, he's going to be letting a lot of people down."

**BSB: What about another potential savior in Cleveland - is there any chance noted Ohio State fan LeBron James returns to the Cavs, or is that just a pipe dream at this point?**

Fox: "It's not a pipe dream for me. I think it's definitely a realistic possibility. You look at what Miami has and the fact that they have to retool that whole thing down there, and you could make the argument that for the next five to 10 years, he could have a better roster in Cleveland."

"Now the question is, does he want to leave Pat Riley? And if you saw Riley's press conference, you could see that he's a salesman. I think it would be tough to leave Miami, but I think it's either Cleveland or Miami. I don't know if it's 50-50 or if there's a percentage that you could put on it, but when you hear LeRon talk about how important his family is and his kids are getting older and all that stuff, I think that's a big factor and I think his kids are enrolled in school up here already for the fall. I think if you put two and two together, it's definitely a realistic possibility."

**BSB: It's clear on air that you definitely have a big personality. Have you always been like this or is it something that's evolved as you've gotten older in life?**

Fox: "I don't know, man. I thought



PIZZA

COTTAGE

Same Great Taste Since 1972

www.pizza-cottage.com

Lunch Special

\$6.49

<p><b>Buckeye Lake</b> 4592 Walnut Rd. ( Rt. 79 ) 740-928-1144</p> <p><b>Circleville</b> 23401 U.S. 23 740-474-3620</p> <p><b>Lancaster</b> 2223 W. Fair Ave. 740-654-2400</p> <p><b>Newark</b> 969 Mt. Vernon Rd. 740-366-5747</p> <p><b>Pickerington</b> 1000 Old Dillee Rd. 614-856-3333</p> <p><b>Zanesville</b> 3938 Pond View Dr. 740-455-6000</p>	<p><b>OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK AT 11AM</b></p>
--	--

**THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: DUSTIN FOX**

when I was in school I was always pretty decent with the media in terms of opening up. It has evolved, there's no question about that. I've adapted to the area here in Cleveland and what people are interested in. I feel like I fit in with a lot of our demographic and who our listeners are. I think that makes me likable on the air.

"I just try to be myself, you know, and have fun and not take things too seriously."

**BSB:** That's where my next question was headed. Your show is relatively new and you've stood toe-to-toe with an established station up there. Why do you think your show has been so successful so quickly?

Fox: "I think we work really hard at making it a good show. We work for more than five hours and that's more than any show in Cleveland. It's tough, so you've got to put time and effort into it.

"I'm really lucky to have a veteran radio host with me, a guy who's worked in the biggest market in the world and knows what it takes to be on the radio and does a very good job. He's taught me a lot since I've been here, and I think he's allowed me to grow. We butt heads on a lot of things, but I think that over time our chemistry has gotten a lot better since we started and I think that I've evolved as a broadcaster in terms of when I started to where I am now.

"I challenge him now. When we started, it was like I was more of a sidekick. Now, I think it's definitely 50-50."

**BSB:** I know you wish you could talk about the Buckeyes more, so I'll give you a chance to do it here. What are your thoughts on Ohio State heading into year three of the Urban Meyer era?

Fox: "They've got to win, man. They've got to win. This is the year, I think, when you look at the fact that Braxton (Miller) is coming back for his senior year. My goodness, isn't this supposed to be the year when all of the Urban Meyer recruits really pan out and start to make an impact on the team? I think we'll really know how good the recruiting classes have been and how good of a recruiter he is. We all think

he's great and you never know how the classes are going to be on paper, but when you look at some of the guys he's got, this is the time for them to really step up.

"I think it will be an exciting year. I think it'll be fun with the Big Ten expanding with Rutgers and Maryland and all that. And then you have the playoff - it should be a really exciting year in college football."

**BSB:** Professionally, what are your aspirations? Could a national move be on the horizon?

Fox: "My dreams are to be calling games - college games, pro games, whatever they may be - on a national level. That's why I've really tried to work

my way into getting the reps when I can. I call the Gladiators games up here, and last year my manager got me a connection with ESPN and I did some ESPN3 games, some Mid-American Conference games.

"I've got some good experience so I'm just trying to work my way into there and see how it goes. It's tough to get into that business. It's a tough job too. You learn so much through repetition and all that and preparation and things like that.

"I don't have any desire to leave Cleveland. I love it here. Guys all the time call games on the weekend and go back to their radio show throughout the week. I'm with a great company in CBS, and there could be an opportunity there or there could be an opportunity with ESPN.

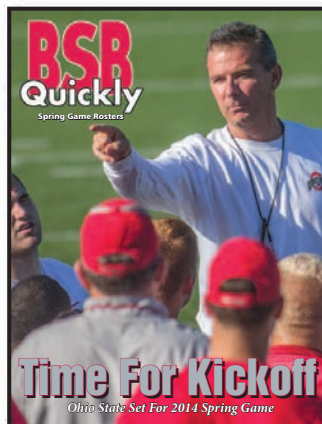
"I try to take it one day at a time. I've got goals, obviously, but I'm not going to say that if I'm not doing something by a certain age that I'm going to be disappointed. I think that the last couple of years have been really good for me.

"I've been lucky, I've been blessed. Think about this - when I got into the business, this station just randomly started out of the blue. To basically be a rookie broadcaster shoved into drive time radio in a top-10 market, I think that's pretty huge. That's where we're at now. The show's gotten buzz nationally, and we've had lots of moments on the show that have been picked up by national people, we get great guests. I'm happy, man. It's all good."



Dustin Fox

**SEE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING  
BSB'S ELECTRONIC ISSUES  
Free To Print Subscribers**



**Buckeye Sports Bulletin has expanded its publishing schedule to include 60 annual issues, including 36 electronic issues available only online to print subscribers.**

**Here's what you've missed if you're not taking advantage of reading BSB online:**

**2013-14 BSB Quickly Schedule**

Aug. 30	Jan. 21
Sept. 6	Jan. 24
Sept. 13	Jan. 31
Sept. 20	Feb. 4
Sept. 27	Feb. 7
Oct. 4	Feb. 18
Oct. 18	Feb. 25
Oct. 25	March 11
Nov. 1	March 25
Nov. 15	April 8
Nov. 22	April 22
Nov. 29	May 6
Dec. 6	May 20
Dec. 10	June 17
Jan. 2	July 15
Jan. 6	July 31
Jan. 10	Aug. 5
Jan. 17	Aug. 12

**To sign up for this free service send an email to [subscriptions@buckeyesports.com](mailto:subscriptions@buckeyesports.com) and we will send you easy-to-follow instructions on how to enjoy reading your Buckeye Sports Bulletin online**

**New patio now open!**  
HAPPY HOUR  
4-7 weekdays

**Quail Crossing Cellars Winery**  
*Where friends meet!*

2899 N. High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43202  
614-848-8458  
[quailcrossingcellars.com](http://quailcrossingcellars.com)

Over 25 different wines to taste in our urban cool tasting room in Clintonville at High & Kelso. We make all of our wine onsite including our wines especially for OSU fans: **Buckeye Tailgate Red and Scarlet.**

Tuesday-Thursday  
4 pm - 9 pm  
Weekends  
4 pm - 10 pm

THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: BOB HOYING

# Hoying Using OSU Lessons In Real Estate Career

By RYAN GINN  
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State football teams of the early 1990s helped vault the program back to national prominence, and quarterback Bob Hoying played a valuable role in that success as a starter from 1993-95.

A native of St. Henry, Ohio, a town less than 10 miles from Indiana with a population hovering around 2,000, Hoying chose to play for head coach John Cooper and the Buckeyes over Illinois, Louisville and UCLA.

When he got to Columbus, he ultimately teamed with such Buckeye legends as 1995 Heisman Trophy-winning running back Eddie George, wide receiver Terry Glenn and defensive lineman Mike Vrabel. He is also the brother-in-law of Ohio State defensive coordinator Luke Fickell, his college teammate who married the sister of his wife, Jill.

He is one of the most successful quarterbacks in Ohio State history, directing the Buckeyes to a co-Big Ten championship in 1993, a win against Michigan in 1994 and an 10-0 start in 1995. Hoying still holds Ohio State's career records for touchdown passes (57, tied with Terrelle Pryor) and completions (498), while the 7,232 yards he threw for in his career and the 3,269 yards he accumulated in 1995 are each second in OSU annals, behind Art Schlichter's 7,547 and Joe Germaine's 3,330 in 1998, respectively.

After playing for the Philadelphia Eagles from 1996-98 and the Oakland Raiders the following three years, Hoying embarked on a career in real estate. Now a principal at Crawford Hoying along with Brent Crawford, Hoying works for one of the top firms in the central Ohio area. Crawford Hoying builds and operates apartment communities, works in real estate development and rents residential and commercial properties as well.

The company has also been in the news in Columbus of late for its plans to develop the \$300 million project known as Bridge Park in Dublin. The project would turn 25 acres of property across the Scioto River from downtown Dublin into a mixed-use area that would include apartments, condominiums, commercial space and a hotel.



RYAN GINN

**SUCCESS OFF THE FIELD** – Former Ohio State quarterback Bob Hoying is a principal at Crawford Hoying, which builds and operates apartment communities, works in real estate development and rents residential and commercial properties.

Hoying sat down one-on-one with BSB to discuss both his playing days and his successful transition to a prominent post-football career.

**Buckeye Sports Bulletin: Did you grow up an Ohio State fan?**

Hoying: "Growing up in St. Henry, I had a chance to watch (future Ohio State and NFL offensive lineman) Jim Lachey in my

hometown and at Ohio State. He was about 10 years older than me, so in my formative years of practicing and training I had a chance to watch Jim play at Ohio State and then go on to the NFL. I know for me and some of my other classmates, he was a big role model for us and kind of a big reason why I ended up at Ohio State."

**BSB: Coming from a small town, what was the transition like when you arrived**

**in Columbus at a big school in a big city?**

Hoying: "It was hard, but I got redshirted so I had a chance to sit back. Kirk Herbstreit was great to me and kind of took me under his wing. I worked really hard the next two years and was able to start my sophomore year. I think it would have been different if I would have come in right away and played my true freshman year like a lot of guys do these days, but it wasn't like that for me.

"I had a chance to play with really fast guys. Our scout team my freshman year was Terry Glenn, Eddie George, Buster Tillman and a bunch of other guys who all ended up being stars two or three years later. Terry was a walk-on at the time. You have a chance to play with that kind of talent in practice and you get used to it."

**BSB: What are some memories that stand out to you from your time at Ohio State?**

Hoying: "Obviously the Notre Dame and Penn State games and the Michigan game my junior year (a 22-6 win for the Buckeyes) are some of the bigger moments for me. The things you miss after you're done playing – and I played for six years in the NFL – are the players and the friendships that you had. That's the stuff you miss, just cutting up with players after practice. I met my wife, and Coach Fickell and I are brothers-in-law now because we married sisters. I was able to play football with my brother (Tom) at Ohio State, so I have a lot of great memories."

**BSB: You broke some school records in 1995. Could you sense a breakthrough performance coming together before the season?**

Hoying: "I probably didn't until Walt Harris came in as quarterbacks coach my senior year

## Hole-In-One Commemorative Ring®



Celebrate that perfect shot

The ultimate reward for the ultimate achievement in golf.

Custom made in Gold or Silver  
Includes your name and the date of the big event.

Call or stop by today

**American Awards, Inc.**  
 2380 Harrisburg Pike  
 614-875-1850  
 www.awardsohio.com

Continued On Page 12

# Hoying Proud Of Ohio State Accomplishments

Continued From Page 10

and told me something. He had been with the New York Jets (as the quarterbacks coach from 1992-94) and told me after spring ball, 'You've got Eddie George, Rickey Dudley, Terry Glenn – all guys that are as good or better than we had at the Jets last year.' I kind of laughed about it because I didn't believe him at the time, but it was true. Those guys were so talented. It was in spring ball that year when we got the sense that we had a good nucleus of guys heading into that year."

**BSB: After the Citrus Bowl loss to Tennessee that closed the 1995 season, you told BSB that you'd probably have more appreciation for your career after more time passed. Is that the case?**

Hoying: "You definitely get better with age. When people look back and talk about the great games with you, they don't necessarily bring up the losses. I'm proud of what we did. I feel we could have won a couple of more games my last three years where we could have played for national titles, especially my sophomore and senior years. I think it would have changed the dynamics of Coach Cooper's tenure at Ohio State."

"I do feel pretty proud that we kind of changed how Ohio State was viewed nationally. Up until that point, we'd kind of lost our luster a bit. Looking back, I think we're pretty proud that we played on some pretty good teams."

**BSB: The 1990s didn't produce the fondest memories when it came to The Game, so how much did it mean to get that one win over Michigan in 1994?**

Hoying: "It meant a lot. That's why you go to Ohio State. I was as frustrated as everyone else, and I think we all were, that we couldn't win it. To this day, probably the most frustrating game is my senior year against Michigan (a 31-23 loss for the previously undefeated Buckeyes). It just played (on TV) yesterday, as I was reminded by a handful of people, and I didn't watch it. My son's 11, and he's not seen that game. I don't know that I've watched it any more than one time. That's the game that probably would have had us playing in the title game, and we came up short up there."

**BSB: What was it like playing for John Cooper?**

Hoying: "It was great. He was a very positive coach and kind of let the coaches do the coaching on the offensive side but was still there. He had a lot of belief in me. There was a time my true freshman year when I was looked at as an athlete and asked if I wanted to play special teams or maybe move to defense to get on the field faster. I told him no and that I thought I could play quarterback and he agreed. He didn't press me to change a position or anything. He was very supportive of my career, and we stay in touch from time to time to this day."

**BSB: Did you always play quarterback growing up, and what attracted you to that position?**

Hoying: "My dad never played football. My hometown didn't have football until the mid-'70s or early-'70s. I grew up playing it and throwing the ball a ton with my brother and my dad. Once you become the quarterback, there's only one guy who can play it. I loved it because you're in control of virtually every play of the game, and it's just something that came naturally to me."

**BSB: You got to play with quite a few talented teammates over the course of your career at Ohio State ...**

Hoying: "I tell people all the time that it's not just the '95 team. Really, in my five years of playing football, all the guys I played with were great. Robert Smith was a guy I never started with, but he played ahead of me and I got to watch him play. There were a lot of guys that as I was getting in were getting out, and in those overlapping years there were a ton of guys who went on to play in the NFL. It was a special time. There were NFL coaching days in the spring where they come to test everyone, and you couldn't get into the Woody Hayes (Athletic Center) because there were so many people watching them. It was fun to play with all those teammates."

**BSB: What was your experience like in the NFL?**

Hoying: "It was great. I had a chance to play for Jon Gruden virtually my entire time. The three years in Philadelphia, Jon was my offensive coordinator and then got the head coaching job out in Oakland. I learned a ton of football from him. Just an unbelievable coach and offensive mind. He was a very demanding

guy. I think a lot of what carries me through my professional career today is how hard I had to work with him. I consider myself a pretty bright guy, but I had to study the playbook for an hour or more each night just so we could run what he wanted us to run."

**BSB: At what point did you start planning for life after football?**

Hoying: "I had an opportunity to have great parents, so I was always thinking ahead, and education was very important to me in college. My second year in the NFL, I came back and met Brent Crawford on the golf course. He had just sold some units at Ohio State's campus, and about a year later we bought our first apartment complex, which we actually just sold last year. It sounded pretty interesting to me, so I got my real estate license that year and ended up playing another four years in the NFL."

"Every time I came home in the offseason, I got a little more involved in the management side of things, and it's grown to what we're doing now."

**BSB: How did you bounce back from the damage to real estate done by the economic downturn?**

Hoying: "It was about as bad as you could ever imagine for the real estate world, for the most part. Virtually overnight, you lost all of your value or saw it reduced by 30 or 40 percent. When I say overnight, it was over the course of months in late 2008. You couldn't get new financing because nobody was financing anything, and you had loans that were maturing on some of our projects."

"You basically had to put blinders on and just attack them one by one, and that's what we did. We had a lot of patient partners and patient banks that are financing our deals now. Looking back, there's so many things you learned and can never forget. There wasn't federal bailout money for medium-to-small companies like ours. It makes you stronger. We talk about it all the time here, to never forget what happened in those years from 2008-12. I think everybody thought it would only be a year or two."

"I think it reflects on all the disappointing times I had in college or in the pros. A lot of times I look back and realize I learned from those things in college and it made me stronger. It's no different in professional life."

**BSB: The \$300 million mixed-use project in Dublin is obviously a big undertaking for Crawford Hoying. How was that project conceived?**

Hoying: "We weren't ever setting out to do a massive project like that. We tried to work on a redevelopment in Dublin at a different site, and Dublin liked it. It was taking a fairly vacant office building and repurposing it with mixed uses. They kind of pointed us in the direction of old Dublin, and so we started looking at property 2½ years ago in historic Dublin along the river."

"There was a failed retail center that really needs to be redeveloped at some point, and we were able to purchase that along with an old driving range on the east side of the Scioto River. There's a smaller piece in old historic Dublin that's linked together by the pedestrian bridge. We're working on a series of mixed-use restaurants, offices and residential buildings and a mix of restaurant and residential on the east side of the river."

"We've been working on this project going on two years now, and we're getting close. It's something we're all pretty proud of, and it builds off a couple of projects we've just recently finished or are in development. The interest has been great. A lot of restaurants would like to come into Dublin and just don't have the right location. Dublin has been key in all of this. They're spending quite a bit of money – about \$41 million – on the new pedestrian bridge, a world-class park, a relocated Riverside Drive and a roundabout. We're proud of it and excited to be working on it."

**BSB: How has the company changed over the years?**

Hoying: "It's probably shrunk a little bit because after the downturn, a lot of companies got lean and mean. We tried to trim where we could trim, and it's forced companies like ours and everybody else to get way more efficient. We've been at 200 employees for a while now, and you don't want to grow just to grow. We're trying to pick our spots. But again, you win with people, and we feel like we've got some really good people on our team."

**BSB: What tasks are you involved with on a day-to-day basis?**

Hoying: "I'm pretty much focused on the real estate development side of things. We're in meetings with the city, their planners, our consultants and architects going through the various stages of projects we're developing. It's fun for me because you get to do a little bit of everything. It's exciting that you don't have to come in and do the same thing over and over again."

**BSB: Trent Dilfer spoke at the Elite 11 camp in Columbus about the success of quarterbacks in life after their playing careers are done. What do you attribute that to?**

Hoying: "I think for a lot of quarterbacks, it's not being afraid to fail. The ball is in your hands and you have 3½ seconds to make a decision. You have to do it in a split-second, and you have to live with the consequences. In a professional career, we can have people double-check or triple-check our work and then turn it in. Football forces you to prepare and then live with your decisions. Not everybody can do that, and not everybody wants to take that role on."


"The other thing is communication. You have to get in the huddle and look at 10 other guys and lead them, tell them what to do. I think once you start that from a young age, you do it your entire life. It's very natural as you're going into some other profession to carry that with you."

**HAWTHORN**  
SUITES BY WYNDHAM  
**OSU**  
Go Buckeyes Suites  
**\$69.00**

based upon availability and excludes holidays  
**Just minutes from OSU**

- Complimentary hot breakfast buffet
- One and two bedroom suites available
- Outdoor Pool and Sport Court
- Full kitchens in all the suites
- Free High Speed Internet

**CALL 614-431-1819**  
for RESERVATIONS  
[www.Hawthorn.com/4822](http://www.Hawthorn.com/4822)



**TIM SWANSON**  
Certified Personal Trainer

**Flat Stomach • Weight Loss • Strength Training**  
• Cardio Kick-Boxing •  
Boot Camp

**614-886-9331**  
[foreverfitswan@yahoo.com](mailto:foreverfitswan@yahoo.com)

**FISHERMAN'S WHARF**

Family Owned and Operated  
FRESH SEAFOOD, STEAKS & MARTINI BAR



OPEN FOR LUNCH & DINNER  
BRUNCH MENU ON SUNDAYS  
HAPPY HOUR EVERYDAY

1611 POLARIS PKWY  
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43240  
[WWW.FISHERMANSWHARFCOLUMBUS.COM](http://WWW.FISHERMANSWHARFCOLUMBUS.COM)

**\$10 OFF**  
PURCHASE OF \$50

NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER OFFER, DISCOUNT OR SPECIAL EVENTS. DOES NOT INCLUDE ALCOHOL OR GRATUITY.  
GO BUCKS!

# Fan Favorite Stays Busy After Playing Career

By BEN AXELROD  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Born James Donnell Penn, the man known more affectionately as "Scoonie" has been a mainstay on the Columbus basketball scene for the past 16 years. Whether Penn was leading Ohio State to a Final Four in 1999 or spending his professional offseasons working out with the Buckeyes, it hasn't been hard to find his infectious smile around the halls of the Schottenstein Center for almost two decades.

Calling Columbus home, however, wasn't always the plan for the 5-11, 180-pounder, who was born in Yonkers, N.Y., but made a name for himself on the Massachusetts prep scene at Salem High School. The Big East Rookie of the Year in 1996, Penn starred at Boston College for the first two seasons of his college career while playing for head coach Jim O'Brien.

But when O'Brien took the head coach opening at Ohio State and came to Columbus in 1997, Penn opted to follow suit. Leaving the comfortable Northeast for the unfamiliar Midwest, Penn quickly became a fan favorite for the Buckeyes after sitting out the 1997-98 season because of NCAA transfer rules.

Upon becoming eligible for OSU, Penn instantly made his mark in Columbus, averaging 16.9 points and 4.3 assists per game en route to being named a third-team All-American as well as the Big Ten Co-Player of the Year alongside Michigan State's Mateen Cleaves. More memorably, the Bay State native helped lead the fifth-seeded Buckeyes to the 1999 Final Four in Tampa Bay, Fla., as he was named the South Region's Most Outstanding Player.

Penn capped his college career a year later as a consensus second-team All-American after averaging 15.6 points per game for a Buckeye team that was bounced by Miami (Fla.) in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Despite playing just two years at Ohio State, Penn left the university as its all-time leader in three-point makes with 153. Although the Buckeyes' 1999 Final Four was ultimately erased from the record books because of NCAA violations committed by O'Brien, Penn's legacy remains that of a fan favorite in Columbus to this very day.

After being chosen by the Atlanta Hawks in the second round (57th overall) of the 2000 NBA draft, Penn headed overseas, where he'd play 11 seasons of professional basketball. Over the course of his career, the Buckeye great spent time playing in Italy, Serbia, Croatia, Greece, Turkey and Ukraine.

Upon the completion of his professional career in 2011, Penn returned not to Massachusetts but his adopted home of Columbus. There, Penn founded and became the CEO of POWR Management Group, which helps service the needs of former top-tier collegiate and professional athletes.

Inducted into the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame in 2013, Penn can regularly be seen and heard as a basketball analyst on WBNS 10-TV's "Wall to Wall Sports" and the Big Ten Network. The two-time All-American recently took the time to speak with BSB about a number of topics including his legacy and the current state of the Buckeye basketball program.

**Buckeye Sports Bulletin: As somebody who spent his entire life in the**



FILE PHOTO

**FOREVER A BUCKEYE – Former Ohio State men's basketball standout Scoonie Penn was a member of Ohio State's Athletic Hall of Fame class in 2013. He helped the Buckeyes make the 1999 Final Four.**

**Northeast until 1997, how did you wind up coming to Columbus?**

Penn: "It was tough being where I'm from and being a hometown kid and going to Boston College at first when Coach O'Brien left. That kind of left me in a position where I wasn't sure what I was going to do – whether I was going to stay at BC or enter the draft or look at other schools. When O'Brien came to Ohio State I decided to visit. I came here for my visit, on the flight home I felt comfortable and when I landed in Boston I was like, 'I know where I'm going and that's Ohio State.'"

**BSB: At the time, could you have ever imagined Columbus becoming your permanent home?**

Penn: "Never. I never could have imagined it, even when I came on my visit. My friends were like, 'Why are you going to the country? Columbus is the country.' I didn't ever have that in mind to come to the Midwest at all. I was a Northeast kid, and I liked the East Coast. But at the end of the day, I'm glad I did."

**BSB: You look back at your time at Ohio State, what stands out to you the most?**

Penn: "Just the friends I made and the great times we had. The basketball, that was great. But the guys that I met along the way, the people I played with, those are the people that I'm still close to to this day. The university's great. I met so many great people through the university, and it opened so many doors that I'm grateful for."

**BSB: Thad Matta's had the Ohio State program running strong for the past 10 years, but is it fair to say that your era**

**showed that this basketball program can sustain success?**

Penn: "I think our era changed this program's culture of basketball. It jumped to where it's at now. I'm happy we were able to be pioneers. When the Schott opened up, it was the best facility in college sports. For us to have that and play well and be a success, it obviously worked out great."

**BSB: Everybody still has the memories, but you look up in the rafters and there's no 1999 Final Four banner. Does that ever hurt you personally?**

Penn: "It does. It upsets me sometimes when I go to look up there and it's not there. I really feel it should be, but that's out of my hands. But they can't take that away. We won. We know where we played and that we did everything correctly. But it does hurt that we're not recognized for going to the Final Four and that that banner isn't there. And when you look at Ohio State history, because of the way it was written, they're not able to mention that team was a Final Four team."

**BSB: How do you think that you're remembered individually by Ohio State fans?**

Penn: "I hope in a good way. I think in a very good light because I gave it my all. Not just as an individual, but as a team guy. I played hard. I did what I did for myself, the team and the university, and I did it the right way. I think I'm looked at and held to a high standard at Ohio State and with Ohio State basketball and its culture. I think that going into the Hall of Fame after just playing two years says a lot. In a lot of ways, I wish I

did play four years at Ohio State. If I started here, believe me, I'd have a lot of those records if I did. That's not the case, but I'm happy to be a Buckeye and it's something that I'll always cherish."

**BSB: You were drafted by Atlanta and then left to play 11 years professionally overseas. What was that like?**

Penn: "It was a great experience getting to play in different places in Europe and getting to see the world. I really enjoyed it. I was just happy that I got to play 11 years after school and continuing to do what I loved to do. My kids got a chance to see Europe, and those are memories that and things that you can never take away. Playing professionally is a dream for all kids who play basketball, and I was lucky that I had the chance to do so."

**BSB: You played for new Cleveland Cavaliers coach David Blatt. What was he like?**

Penn: "A fiery individual. I enjoyed playing for David Blatt. He was fiery, real emotional. He was on us, but he has just a competitive drive and I loved that about him. He and I, we meshed well together because that's the kind of person I am. I enjoyed playing for him. I think he's going to do pretty well in Cleveland."

**BSB: I know you're still close to the Ohio State program. What's your view of its current state?**

Penn: "Thad Matta has done an excellent job. It's a healthy program. It's one of the best programs in the country. I think we've had some good teams that just haven't been able to get over the hump a couple of times. But Thad Matta's definitely put a lot of heart and soul into the program, and those guys do a great job of recruiting and dealing with the young men who come through here."

**BSB: Who wins a game of one-on-one, you or Aaron Craft?**

Penn: "I do. Easily."

**BSB: Easily?**

Penn: "Yeah, I do."

**BSB: What about you and Mike Conley Jr.?**

Penn: "Oh, Mike's a little tougher. But if you put us in our college days, I think me because I was strong. I played D and I could score much better. I had much more of a well-rounded game. Mike wasn't much of a scorer in college. Mike was a lot thinner. I think I'd be able to kind of use my strength against a guy like Conley when he was in college."

"I played against both of these guys when they were in school, so I had a little bit of an advantage. I think they're both exceptional players. Mike's doing very well in the NBA. My style was just a little different. If I came out in this era or Mike's era, it would be different. Everybody wanted a pass-first point guard, so it made it a little bit more difficult for me."

"I love Aaron's game, I love Mike's game and I hope Aaron gets his shot in the NBA."

**BSB: What's Scoonie Penn up to these days?**

Penn: "I have a management company called POWR Management. I'm working with my business and growing that. On the side, especially during basketball season, I'm doing work with the Big Ten Network, work with CBS doing Division II games. I got a chance to call some high school games – I called the state championship game this year and also I do radio. I stay busy throughout the year and am always trying to keep something on my plate."

# Former OSU Wrestler Has Done It All

By **MARCUS HARTMAN**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

From small-town sports star to collegiate national champion to Olympics participant to mixed-martial arts pioneer, Mark Coleman has remained true to his roots and his beliefs.

A native of Fremont, Ohio, Coleman started his wrestling career at Miami (Ohio) but transferred to Ohio State as a senior, where he won the national championship at 190 pounds in 1988. From there, Coleman went on to compete in the 1992 Summer Olympics for Team USA in Barcelona, Spain.

His combat sports journey was just beginning, however. Coleman just so happened to finish his wrestling career when mixed martial arts was in its infancy, and he joined the fray in time to win the sport's first heavyweight title at UFC 12.

Coleman quickly became one of the most popular fighters in the promotion, earning the nickname "The Godfather of Ground and Pound" in reference to his fighting style of getting his opponent on the ground using his wrestling skills and then striking him into submission.

His career included plenty of adversity – he lost his UFC belt in 1997 to Maurice Smith at UFC 14 and then blew out his knee shortly thereafter – but also a number of major wins, including a victory at Pride Fighting Championships' Grand Prix in 2000. His last major win came at the landmark UFC 100 promotion in 2009, and Coleman has officially retired from the sport.

Still, his name is synonymous in some ways with the sport, as he was one of the coaches on the recently completed "The Ultimate Fighter" reality show that awards contracts to up-and-coming MMA fighters.

Coleman now lives in Columbus, and the UFC Hall of Famer made time one recent afternoon to speak with BSB about his experiences.

**Buckeye Sports Bulletin: Let's keep it simple to start: Why did you start wrestling in the first place?**

Coleman: "As a kid, sports were just in my genes, and that's all I really cared about as far back as I can remember. I wanted to be the first three-sport star, ever. I wanted to play in the NFL, play in the major leagues. I played baseball and football, was all-state in both sports, and wrestling was a perfect fit. My father wrestled, and I loved it because in the other two sports you pretty much have to count on your teammates, and I loved the fact wrestling was me vs. one other guy and you don't have to count on anybody. If you win, it's because you won. If you lose, it's because you lost. I loved it. It was part of me from age 5.

"I was a pretty feisty little kid and I real-

ized at a young age 'bigger, stronger and faster' will take care of a lot of your problems. I've probably said that a million times in my life. I was a very shy kid and I didn't like a guy four grades above picking on me. I didn't get bullied that bad, I don't want to make it out that way, but I didn't like it at all. My answer to a lot of my problems was get bigger, get stronger, get faster."

**BSB: How long did it take you to develop your skills as a wrestler?**

Coleman: "I was athletic, but I was not big and strong. I was a little skinny kid. Each year I gained 15 or 20 pounds in high school, and it just always helped to be stronger than the other guy. I took my lumps in fifth, sixth and seventh grade, and even my first year in high school I was still taking my lumps, but whenever I got beat I just would look at my dad and say, 'Give me one year, and I'm going to beat that guy.' Whenever I lost, I was not happy, and I really felt ruined. I've said, 'I'm ruined,' probably a million times in my life. But I would look at my dad and say I was going to beat that guy. I just knew what it was about – work hard, set your goals high and stay away from the distractions."

**BSB: And that was at Fremont, Ohio, correct?**

Coleman: "Yes! I'm from Fremont, Ohio, and proud of it. My mom and dad still live there, and when I first came on the scene of the UFC they announced my hometown as Columbus, Ohio, and a lot of people from Fremont were disappointed and acting like I wasn't proud of coming from Fremont, and I had to clear matters up. I am from Fremont, Ohio, born and raised there. My favorite days of the year are Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and what have you when I have a chance to go visit Fremont and see my family, so I want to set the record straight – I live in Columbus, Ohio, but I am from Fremont, Ohio."

**BSB: After finishing fourth in the nation as a junior at Miami, you transferred to Ohio State and won the national championship. What was it like to accomplish that goal in your final season?**

Coleman: "That's kind of the first goal you set for yourself. You've always got to reset your goals, but growing up you want to be a state champ, and after that you want to be a national champ. I planned on having two or three national championships because most wrestlers are pretty confident, and then I was a fifth-year senior at Ohio State and I didn't have any national titles, so the pressure was on when I transferred to Ohio State. I knew I had it in me, and winning the national title at that time was pretty much the most amazing feeling I could have."

**BSB: And the next logical step, particularly in 1988, was to try to be an Olympian. Did Ohio State play a role in your being able to achieve that goal?**



FILE PHOTO

**TRAILBLAZER – After the conclusion of his collegiate wrestling career, former OSU standout Mark Coleman (left) – seen here with fellow Ohio State product and mixed martial artist Kevin Randleman (right) – competed in the Olympics and later became the first UFC heavyweight champion.**

Coleman: "After you win the national title, of course the Olympics were always in my mind. That created some belief I could do it, and Ohio State hired me on as an assistant coach and I got the heavyweights ready to wrestle and I had the freedom to prepare myself to try to make the Olympic team in 1992.

"Nobody's perfect, but I didn't miss too many workouts. That ended up working out pretty good as well, although of course I was expecting to get the gold. I did take second in the world in 1991, and I was planning to beat the guy who beat me in the finals in '91 but sometimes things don't go your way.

"At the Olympics, I lost to two guys who I had beaten earlier and finished seventh, which at the time was just a horrible feeling. I didn't appreciate it. I wanted everything. I wanted the gold. I didn't get it. You really learn to appreciate it about 20 years later. As we're talking now, what a complainer I was! I am so grateful and so thankful to the Lord and everybody who helped me that I just made that team, because just making that team was pretty amazing."

**BSB: So what did you do next? How did you bounce back from the disappointment?**

Coleman: "I saw UFC 1 on pay per view in 1993 and watched it, and I just really hoped that it was real because what I saw, I couldn't believe my eyes. I said, 'Oh my God, if this is real, this is my future.' I wanted in, and it turned out the UFC was real. They had a lot of problems in the beginning because it was so violent and there were no rules, but that's what I liked. I did my best when there were no rules.

"The headbutt was my favorite weapon, and people don't realize the headbutt takes technique. You headbutt wrong, you hurt yourself, but it was something that motivated me because I had lost my motivation big-time after the Olympics. I started watching this stuff on TV and it inspired me. I thought immediately this was mine, I could beat these guys."

**BSB: So you didn't make the 1996 Olympic team, but you didn't have to wait long to get started on the next phase of your career in the UFC.**

Coleman: "Once I was out of the running for the Olympics in '96, a man came

and approached me and two other wrestlers about joining the UFC. I knew the other two guys and I told the guy, 'I will win UFC 10. These other two guys you're recruiting from here, I've got respect for them, but I'll beat everybody in UFC 10.' Basically that was it. About 30 days after the Olympic trials, I was walking into the Octagon.

"Wrestlers are very confident people. We always felt we don't get enough respect because wrestling is kind of low on the totem pole, but we always felt like we were the toughest guys in the world. I stuck with that, but once I got into UFC 10, I went back and watched some cage fights against people I might be fighting, and I'm not going to deny, once I was in all of a sudden they looked a lot tougher! The question of doubt starts creeping into your mind, but I was almost more confident than I was with a lot of my wrestling matches. I really felt like I was going to win this thing.

"It didn't hit me too hard until I'm walking in and they're playing the song and I realized I'm fighting a karate world champion. Then I started wondering if he was going to do a 'Karate Kid' flying spinning kick and knock me out in 10 seconds and I'm going to be humiliated because I ran my mouth too long about how I was the toughest guy in the world. Fortunately, wrestling prevailed. I owe so much to wrestling – basically his kick missed by a long shot and I took him down on the ground and I began the era of 'ground and pound.'"

**BSB: And the rest is history, right? (laughs) What I want to know is how did ground and pound come about? Did you plan on taking that approach all along, or is it just what came to you in the cage?**

Coleman: "My game plan from the first show was to blast them with a double-leg (takedown), get him down and then ground and pound them until they quit or the ref pulls me off. When I finally got in, the game plan didn't change at all. They call me the Godfather of Ground and Pound because I coined the phrase. Fortunately for me, the sport was just beginning and everybody went out there and pretty much represented their own sport and their own style and wrestling did prevail and I was able to beat those guys down with a variety of punches and head-butts and elbows.

**Conrads**  
COLLEGE GIFTS

**A New Era Begins Poster:**  
Panorama of Ohio Stadium during 1st Urban Meyer game. 14" by 36". Ships from manufacturer 1 to 2 weeks. Pick your type.



Shop Online!  
www.conrads.com  
316 W. Lane Ave.  
Columbus, OH 43201  
1-888-443-8678

**E8-98: Unframed (left) \$37.95**  
**E8-99: Framed (right) \$125.95**  
\*shipping included

## THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: MARK COLEMAN

"Everything changed in one night when I won UFC 10. It kind of went as planned except for one thing – really, honestly, not trying to be cocky, I thought it was going to be a lot easier. I didn't understand how much pride and heart people have. The final was a one-sided war with Don Frye. He and I are good buddies now, but it got to the point at the seven- or eight-minute mark I had been hitting him so much you couldn't really see his eyes, and the ref kept asking him, 'You OK, Don? You OK?' and Don looked at him and said, 'I'm fine,' in his deep voice. I'm like, 'Oh my God, this guy's fine? He's almost dead!'"

**BSB: Eventually the fight was stopped after about 12 minutes. What did it feel like to be declared the winner?**

"It's hard to separate the feeling of being a national champion, making the Olympic team and then when I won UFC 10 what I saw when I looked over it was such a relief because I had never been in that situation where I was pounding on a guy for 12 minutes and I just wanted it over and wanted my belt and wanted to get out of there."

**BSB: I would guess that night changed everything for you. You came back and won UFC 11, and that set you up to fight for the first UFC heavyweight title. How did that go down?**

Coleman: "When I won UFC 10 it was all about promoting this new sport, and they weren't sure I could fulfill the role of a champion. I was very shy, and you've got to be able to talk on camera and I didn't like that part of it, but you have to, especially nowadays."

"I didn't know any better, but my style of fighting was, I'm going to ambush this guy and maul him until he quits. But the fans loved it of course and fortunately it worked out for me because I was blessed and I felt like I was the better athlete in the ring at the time so that was my style and it became an official style of fighting."

"I was offered to fight Dan 'The Beast' Severn at UFC 12 for the first-ever UFC heavyweight title fight. And, well, wow. You create your own luck, but sometimes it's about being in the right place at the right time. I'd rather be 20 today than 20 years ago because right now these guys are making the big bucks, but I was in the right place at the right time because I got an opportunity to be the first heavyweight champion, and you can't take that away. I ended up choking out Dan Severn and that was truly amazing. As a wrestler, it was kind of getting overwhelming because of so much attention, so you've got to be able to keep it together to remain the champion."

"It's easier to become a champion than stay a champion, and I'm definitely living proof because after I beat Dan Severn maybe I started reading too much about myself and slacked off. The one thing that helped me win the state titles, the national titles and make the Olympics was I outworked people. After you let things go to your head and let people tell you how good you are, well, I'm not going to make excuses but my first title defense was against Maurice Smith. There's no such thing as an easy fight, but if I would have prepared for him at all, I would have been able to ground and pound him like nothing, but I kind of overlooked him and took him lightly and for the first five minutes it looked like that, but as soon as my body started seizing up, Maurice Smith put the most humbling whipping on me I've ever had in my life. What a horrible day, but at the same time, wow, I needed that because I didn't think I could get beat, but he taught me a lesson."

**BSB: But you couldn't capitalize on that lesson right away. After some time off to heal up from that fight, you were**

**set for revenge until you blew out your knee during training.**

Coleman: "That was kind of my first major injury. Things were so high for a while, and then I lost to Maurice Smith and tore my ACL – well, how quickly you fall. As quickly as I rose, I fell because they just move on to the next person. I tried to come back in about five months, which was way too soon back then, and I ended up getting punted in the nose by Pete Williams."

"Maurice Smith was the upset of the UFC, and then Pete Williams punting me in the face was the No. 1 highlight reel knockout for about 10 years until finally some other kicks took over. I was tired of watching them promote the UFC and I was the guy getting punted in the face! I was 32 when this happened and I didn't know what to think. I went outside and looked up in the sky and thought, 'This is over.'"

**BSB: That's a natural reaction to such a bad streak of events, but it turned out there was more to your struggles than just coming out on the short end of fights. You had a thyroid problem that had to be dealt with. What was the result of that?**

Coleman: "I felt 32 again and I realized 32 doesn't mean you're done."

**BSB: I guess that means that losing the next fight in a decision to Pedro Rizzo was even more disappointing then?**

Coleman: "I wasn't the same guy who came out there and just destroyed people, but confidence is major, and I felt like I did plenty to win this fight, but the judges awarded him the win. That was three straight losses for me, and basically the UFC cut me. So I went from people saying this guy will never get beat to basically a year later the UFC told me to beat it. Wow. I knew I wasn't done, though, because that's when bigger, stronger, faster came back into my head. I knew people were counting me out for dead, but I said I knew I was going to find a way back into that UFC cage."

**BSB: And the best place to do that turned out to be overseas in the Pride Fighting Championships in Japan.**

Coleman: "For a small period of time Pride was actually bigger than the UFC, and they invited me to come over there and put me in the Pride Grand Prix (in 2000), which to this day is probably still one of the most prestigious tournaments ever held."

"They told me they had no intention of me winning this thing, but they put me in it because I had three UFC belts. Well, I just decided to go back to my roots when I was 10 years old. I had two kids at the time, daughters 1 and 2 years old, and it was different because I had never really had much coaching. I taught myself because the sport was so new. But how can you teach yourself something you really don't know? So I went with my own game plan and my own style and found a way to make it work. I knew they put me in the Grand Prix just as a big name but didn't want me to be the champion."

"I made plans on ruining Pride's plans, and I went back to my roots and put together a seven-month serious training camp to get into the best shape ever. If I didn't get tired, I didn't see anybody beating me. It was like wrestling, you work to peak at the national championship after seven months, and that's what I tried to do. So many people had counted me out for the dead, but that motivated me so much and thankfully my old saying worked. Work harder, get bigger, get stronger, get faster."

"I went to the Grand Prix and ruined Japan's plans, and the feeling was hard to describe. It was so big because everybody

was so sure Mark Coleman was washed up at 32 years old.

"I went from the top to about as far down as you can go, then after winning the Grand Prix I re-established myself as the No. 1 heavyweight in the world, so that was pretty cool."

"They were kind of distraught that I won this thing."

**BSB: You spent the next few years with Pride, but that organization's days were numbered. After they were eventually bought by the UFC, it looked like you finally had achieved the goal of getting back with that promotion, but it wasn't that simple. What happened to set up your last run back home?**

Coleman: "There was the downfall of Pride, and the UFC bought Pride, which meant they bought the contract I had just signed with Pride, but the UFC did nothing with it so I sat idle for two years."

"Finally my buddy started a rumor on the Internet that they were thinking about putting me in the UFC Hall of Fame, and that got a lot of people buzzing even though it was false. Then (UFC president) Dana White and (UFC matchmaker) Joe Silva I found out called each other and said they had read all these stories on the Internet and said, 'We had so much going on, did we plan this?' Neither one of them knew if they were or not, then all of a sudden they were coming to Columbus for the first time so it just worked out. I owe my buddy Wes Sims a big favor for starting the rumor, and the UFC decided this might not be a bad idea. 'We'll induct him into the Hall of Fame in Columbus, Ohio, and then we'll go from there.'"

"Then UFC 100 came, which was a big show for the UFC, and they put me up against Stephan Bonnar, who was one of Dana White's favorites because he was on the first Ultimate Fighter show and he went out there and banged, so they think they can give him a damaged Mark Coleman and give the guy a win."

**BSB: How did you prepare for that fight?**

Coleman: "I said to my kids, 'Look, I'm tired of fighting without any help. I need to get some help. I'm tired of trying to teach myself something I don't know. Am I pushing myself hard enough or not?' So I knew it was my last straw and I would be cut so I went out for a 70-day training camp for peace of mind and training."

**BSB: And you out-pointed Bonnar for a victory in July 2009.**

Coleman: "They're all big, but that was one of my proudest nights for sure. That was one of the first times I was losing after the first round. I went to the corner and told myself I had to figure out a way to win, and I went and won the second and third rounds and it was like, 'I did it.' I do thank the Lord because I've been blessed to be able to do so many things. I felt like I was 21 years old again and thought I was going to fight another 10 years, but it was never meant to be."

"I thought I was healthy other than some nagging hip and knee pains, but then I fought (fellow UFC Hall of Famer) Randy Couture (in February 2010) and that turned out to be the worst fight of my whole career. No excuses, he just handed me an ass-whopping. After that I said I was going to take a few months off to heal, but the hip didn't heal up. That was the first time something didn't heal up. It just got worse and finally I got an MRI and they told me I was done. 'You don't have a hip, Coleman.'"

**BSB: That led to hip replacement surgery the doctor said would end your career, but that didn't mean the end of your association with the UFC. Earlier**

**this year you were part of the UFC's reality show, "The Ultimate Fighter." What was that like?**

Coleman: "That was one of the coolest experiences I've ever had. I put everything into it, and I didn't even think about my hip. Although I was training on one hip a little bit, I was able to get out there and, as my doctor would say, 'break protocol.' I wasn't supposed to be wrestling with an artificial hip but I couldn't resist. I rolled with those guys and a couple of them gave me the ultimate compliment, called me the glue of the team, and that meant the world to me because I loved them all."

"I did come back thinking maybe I will train and try to fight – not in the UFC, but I get offers from all over the world so why not? Well, unfortunately the surgeon was correct. Don't break protocol because I wrestled for six weeks on the TUF show without any kind of incident but then I got back to Columbus and basically I bent down to pick up some trash on the ground and next thing I know I had no clue where I was and my hip popped out of place and the surgeon was right. I don't really like pain at all, but this kind of pain was not tolerable. It ended up popping out three times in a two week span, and as we sit and talk today, I'm realizing that I've got to follow protocol from here on out because I don't ever want to have that pain again."

"But there are no complaints from me because you've got to pay to play, and I played. I made it until I was 45 years, and oh my goodness, there's too many great nights that, no, I would never change a thing. I've been very fortunate and very lucky, and oh well. I'm not the only guy with a hip replacement. I just have to learn sometimes you've got to follow protocol."

**BSB: So what is next for you? You live in Columbus, and you're staying involved with MMA via CF Wrestling and Cage Fighter Apparel, which is owned by another former OSU wrestler, Mike DiSabato.**

Coleman: "They are coming out with some Cage Fighter shoes and basically I'm going to have my own signature wrestling shoe. I've got some Topps cards from wrestling, some fighter dolls from a couple of different companies and that's all really cool, but this wrestling shoe is pretty neat. I sure hope it's a very nice shoe and I wouldn't mind if it sold a couple million. It's still in the works right now, but they are also in the process of working on shoes for (current MMA fighters) Daniel Cormier and Ben Askren. It's just a process. They hope to have it all finished before this year's wrestling season starts, and we'll go from there and see what happens."

**BSB: Is there anything you'd like to say to the fans you've made over the years?**

Coleman: "Fans, I can't thank them enough. Anytime I meet somebody – I'm the same as anybody else out there. If somebody wants to meet and shake my hand, I'm pretty grateful, and I'm going to be glad to meet them."

"I really don't want people just liking me because I kicked some ass in fighting. I prefer people like me because I treated them well. Basically my saying is, if you like me, I like you. If you don't like me, it doesn't necessarily mean I don't like you, that's just your choice."

"I haven't always been a super nice guy my whole life – you've got to be a little feisty to get by in this business – but I'm still humbled and surprised when people come up and shake hands."

"If you see me walking around tell them to say hi, I would gladly meet you and I appreciate all the support over the years. Without them it's nothing."