

OHIO STATE RECRUITING PROFILE

In The End, Mangold Agrees With Dad's Preference

By GARY HOUSTEAU
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It was a dilemma, but it wasn't really a dilemma.

Ohio State or Notre Dame? Those were the two options that offensive lineman Nick Mangold of Kettering (Ohio) Alter mulled over for just a brief period this past summer. He went to a camp at OSU and came away with a scholarship offer from Jim Tressel. The following weekend he went to a camp at Notre Dame and was offered a scholarship by Bob Davie.

"The family was a little bit torn," said Alter coach Ed Domsitz. "His dad always wanted Ohio State but his mom's side of the family sort of always liked Notre Dame, too, so there was a little bit of a tug-of-war there for a while."

In the end, Mangold's love for the Buckeyes prevailed.

"I think it was an issue of I've always liked Ohio State as a little kid growing up with the Buckeyes," Mangold said. "It was an overall better fit for me because I've had that love for the team and the school for as long as I can remember. I never really had any connection with Notre Dame or even Clemson, so going to Ohio State just seemed like the more natural thing to do."

Clemson was the first major college to offer him a scholarship, but prior to attending camps with Ohio State and Notre Dame, there wasn't any real guarantee of an offer from either of those two schools.

"The (OSU) camp was definitely the decid-



Nick Mangold

ing factor for the coaches about me," said Mangold. "I was told back in the spring that if I went to the camp there would probably be a scholarship waiting for me. So I went into the camp knowing that and putting out my best to get the scholarship."

"But it also gave me a chance to look at all the coaches too and their coaching techniques, and how they work with the players, which I really liked."

Mangold said he thought that there was an intense feeling in the air from the very outset when he attended OSU's elite camp.

The Mangold File

NAME — Nick Mangold
HIGH SCHOOL — Kettering (Ohio) Alter
POSITION — Offensive lineman
HEIGHT, WEIGHT — 6-4, 270 pounds
40-YARD DASH TIME — 4.9 seconds (best at Clemson camp among linemen)
BENCH PRESS — 360 pounds
GRADE-POINT AVERAGE — 3.18
COLLEGE ENTRANCE TEST — Scored an 1150 on the SAT.
VITAL STATISTICS — Mangold is a three-year starter at center for Alter. He could play that position or guard at the college level. He also is a regular at defensive tackle. Prior to the season, he was ranked Ohio's 19th-best prospect overall and the No. 4 offensive line prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News. He was offered a scholarship by Ohio State after performing well at the senior elite camp in June.
COACH'S COMMENT — "I think in a good program like Ohio State's, it's awful tough for a freshman to jump in on the offensive line. You see the skill kids do it, the great athletes at receiver or running back or DB maybe, but it's awful tough when you're looking at one of those line positions. So I would be surprised if Nick steps right in, but he'll perform. He will do fine, he'll compete for those spots because he is a competitor. So I think he'll do real well."
 "He's an intelligent kid. I haven't had any kids who have been recruited who were taking Latin III. He's an excellent student and comes from a great family. Nick has always loved Ohio State and his dream is to go up there and play football for the Buckeyes and he's going to get to fulfill that dream." — Alter coach Ed Domsitz
HOBBIES — Likes to build model cars and model planes.
SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN — Committed to Ohio State June 30, picking the Buckeyes over Notre Dame and Clemson.

"The pressure was there and you could feel it, especially that first day of camp when everyone was showing up to sign in," he said. "You just sensed a lot of people checking you out and looking you over."

And those were the other players he was referring to, not the coaches.

"I thought it was more from the players," Mangold said. "The coaches were great with how they treated everybody and there wasn't really a showing of preference. But I think it

came more from the players who were there just trying to see where they fit in.

"I know, myself, I was checking out the other linemen and how they were and what they were doing."

With everything on the line, Mangold knew he had to perform well at the camp, regardless of who else was there, to secure his opportunity to play for the Buckeyes.

"As I looked at it, that was my chance to show Ohio State what I can do and get what

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I had always dreamed of — a scholarship to Ohio State," he said.

Obviously, Mangold was able to give the Buckeye coaching staff everything they were looking for at the camp. Before the camp ended, Tressel invited Mangold, Rob Sims, and T.J. Downing, all offensive linemen, into his office.

"That was amazing," Mangold said. "They brought us all in the room and offered us the scholarship all together. They said it was to promote the unity to build that great wall, as Coach Tressel said, for the years to come.

"That was a state of euphoria pretty much, sitting in Coach Tressel's office and getting that scholarship that I've dreamed about for 14 years of my life. It was amazing. I know I had a grin on my face for probably about the next four weeks."

But Mangold didn't say yes to Tressel on the spot.

"I followed my commitment to go to Notre Dame's camp," he said. "I wanted to do that before I said anything. So I went through Notre Dame's camp and got the scholarship offer from Notre Dame, and then I took about the next four weeks to see how my decision was going to turn out.

"It just came down to I love Ohio State and that was where I wanted to be. But I really felt blessed to have those two opportunities look me in the face."

The coaches at both Ohio State and Notre Dame obviously were impressed with the way Mangold performed during their respective camps to confirm what they had already seen of him on film on the gridiron. Although he had previously run a 4.9-second 40-yard dash time at Clemson's camp, he turned in a 5.0-second 40 at OSU and recorded a 27-inch vertical jump.

"I think I move quick, I've got great feet and I get the job done," said Mangold as he attempted to evaluate his play on the football field. "Just staying calm and being smart about things, being able to look at a defense and be able to make the calls up and down the line in the right amount of time. And I'll finish everything that needs to be done blocking-wise."

Domsitz thinks Mangold is clearly living up to all the hype and attention he's getting from being an Ohio State recruit.

"I think he's having an exceptional senior season, he's doing a great job on the offensive line, he grades out every week in the high 80s and low 90s, which is almost unheard of for an offensive lineman," the coach said. "At the same time, he's playing some great defensive tackle for us. We try to spell him on defense. We don't want to take our center out unless we have to.

"But he can dominate on both sides. He's in good shape, he plays exceptionally hard and without question, he's the best that I've had in my 26 years as a head coach."

Mangold, being recruited to Ohio State as an offensive lineman, has played center since the seventh grade and is a three-year starter at that position for the Knights. But he feels he has the ability to also play the guard position as well if needed.

"At Alter we've been pulling the center and having center traps," Mangold said. "So I don't think playing guard would be too much different than what I'm doing now except I wouldn't have to snap the ball. I don't think it would be any problem."

According to Domsitz, Mangold possesses two very important characteristics needed for any offensive lineman to excel.

"His aggressiveness and his quickness, I think those are two things that stand out right away," he said. "You'll find kids who are bigger, but he's a big boy, he's a strong kid, he's quick and he's an aggressive football player."

Getting bigger and stronger is something

Mangold thinks he really needs to work on before he becomes a Buckeye. Additionally, being in a predominantly run-oriented triple-option offense, he doesn't get to work on his pass protection a great deal of the time during the course of a ball game.

Mangold feels confident that he'll be able to adapt to whatever situation he finds himself in, in regard to what position or amount of playing time, once he gets to Ohio State.

"Really, to me, just the fact that I'll get to go up there and be a part of the team is enough for me," he said. "Wherever they need somebody, whether it be guard or center, I'll play there.

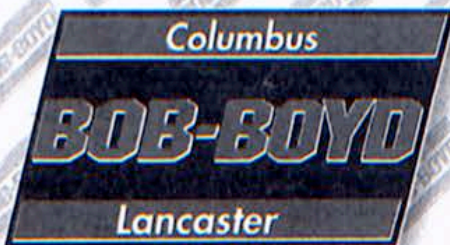
"And as far as playing time, whatever works out, works out. Sure I'd love to play every down, but that's just not really normal for a freshman. I understand that."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PROFILE

Mangold Proved Himself To Be A Fast Learner

By ERIC LOUGHRY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Like many incoming freshmen, Nick Mangold had in his mind a loose timetable of how his role and playing time would progress through his career. And as is often the case with newcomers, Mangold's initial projection wasn't even close to reality.

Only, in his case, his miscalculation was a positive.

Even though the Centerville, Ohio, native was regarded as one of the top three centers in the nation when he concluded his career at Kettering Alter High School, Mangold did not expect to contribute at OSU in his first season.

He was way off.

"My mom and I were talking recently and I remember saying I thought I would come in and redshirt for sure," Mangold said. "Then I got to play in seven out of the 13 (regular-season) games and I got to play in the Michigan game."

"I really wasn't one of the touted recruits. I just went in there with my head down and just kept going at it. It's worked out real nice. It's been everything I thought it would be. It's been a dream come true."

When Mangold first took to the practice field at OSU, it seemed to him that his projections for playing time were on par. He soon found out he had a lot to learn.

"I think my whole style of blocking got changed in the first three days (at OSU)," Mangold said. "I was blocking the way it works in high school. I came to find out in

college it's real different.

"There's a ton of technique involved. (Offensive line coach Jim Bollman) is very

specific about our footwork and exactly how many steps we're supposed to take. It was a big mental thing. It was completely different than everything I'd been taught."

Helping Mangold make the transition to the college ranks was his superior at center, Alex Stepanovich.

"The first two weeks, I had the hardest time figuring out what I was doing," Mangold said. "Alex Stepanovich has been a great mentor in helping me figure out what to do."

Mangold also credited departed seniors Mike Stafford and Scott Kuhnlein in helping him and Rob Sims, another freshman offensive lineman who played a vital role in the Buckeyes' national title season.

"They were very accepting of me and Rob," Mangold said. "I thought there would be a caste structure, but the older guys have helped us along."

Stepanovich's grasp of the offense proved invaluable for Mangold. His extensive understanding of the responsibilities of each lineman also gave the freshman a goal to shoot for.

"We go over the blocking schemes," Mangold said. "I think that's what helped

me the most because he knows what everybody is supposed to be doing on every play. I'm trying to get to that level."

Though both Stepanovich and Mangold are 6-4, Stepanovich weighed in at 310 last season, 30 pounds heavier than Mangold.

Stepanovich said that Mangold's quick grasp of the offense helped the freshman compensate for any bulk that he had yet to put on his frame.

"Everybody looks at linemen and says, 'If you're not so tall and so big, you can't get the job done,'" Stepanovich said. "But at a position like center, if you have decent enough strength and know what you're doing, it really helps."

"That's really been to his advantage. He pays attention during games and asks questions."

Mangold was able to seek out Stepanovich even while in the huddle and literally during the games. When Mangold would replace Stepanovich at center, Stepanovich would slide over to one of the guard spots, allowing for immediate counsel for Mangold.

In the Pressure Cooker

Mangold's first collegiate action came in OSU's 51-17 rout of Kent State in the second game of the season.

It was not until his play in a 34-3 win over Minnesota in the 10th game of the season, the Buckeyes' last relatively easy win of their undefeated season, that he felt comfortable.

He settled in at just the right time. Soon after, he would find himself in the trenches at key points of arguably the most important, exciting, anxiety-filled four-game stretch in the annals of OSU football.

"It kind of sunk in probably after the Minnesota game," he said. "My confidence went up a little more. Definitely, after the Illinois game, Coach Bollman put me in and left me there."

After a 10-6 win over Purdue won on the now famous Craig Krenzler-to-Mike Jenkins 37-yard touchdown pass on fourth-and-1 in the final minutes, OSU escaped Illinois with a 23-16 win in overtime, the first game in OSU history to be decided after regulation.

Only on the way back to Columbus did Mangold realize the significance of what he had just been a part of.

"It was great being out there," Mangold said. "I never thought about it while the game was going on. It wasn't until the flight back that I started thinking about how important that game was with everything on the line."

Even after playing during pivotal times of OSU's close calls with Purdue and Illinois, Mangold still had to gather him-

self when Bollman called on him to go against Michigan.

"That was amazing," Mangold said. "I remember a year ago, sitting in my house watching the game. It never really dawned on me that there was a slight chance I could play in it. Then Coach Bollman said, 'You're going in.'"

"It all kind of hit me. Everything locks up. My mind froze. I had to rethink everything and get back into it."

With the 14-9 win over Michigan, of course, came the Fiesta Bowl, where the high-wire antics continued. Again, Mangold was called on at a crucial juncture. He played in several key short-yardage situations as part of the Jumbo package, where OSU inserts a sixth offensive lineman.

In the first overtime of the double-overtime contest, Krenzler plunged in for a 1-yard quarterback keeper behind Mangold and right guard Bryce Bishop.

Who's At Center?

That Mangold was able to come in in the most crucial of situations, moving Stepanovich over to guard, leaves Bollman a nice option heading into the 2003 campaign.

He has two centers who are more than capable.

Stepanovich has no qualms about playing guard full time if the coaches think that's the best lineup.

"I love playing center," Stepanovich said. "But I want to win more importantly. If I have to move wherever, that's what I'm going to do. That doesn't bother me one bit."

Based on the way Mangold came on last season when he was needed most, Stepanovich said the best situation could be him at guard and Mangold manning the middle of the line.

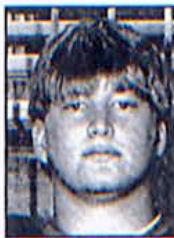
"He's just worked real hard, he and Robbie Sims both," Stepanovich said. "They came in and realized that we've needed some guys to play for us. We needed some depth. We had some injuries on the line where they've been able to step in and perform well."

"Sometimes the best combination has been for Nick to come in and me to bump over."

Of course, Stepanovich will be on the field one way or the other. If Mangold isn't at center, his playing time could be limited. But he said he is comfortable with either situation.

"I want to do what's best for the team," Mangold said. "I really don't care what happens. That's for the coaches to decide. I'll go out and do what I have to do and let them sort it all out."

"If it's me playing a lot, that's good. If it's me playing a little, that's fine, too. Whatever needs to be done is fine for me."



Nick Mangold

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PROFILE

Mangold Has Become A Center Of Attention

By ERIC LOUGHRY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The way Nick Mangold had it figured, he would just be coming in line this season for the starting job at center.

His projection sounded reasonable enough as he prepared for his first season at OSU in 2002. He expected to red-shirt that year, meaning he would be a third-year sophomore in 2004, ready to replace Alex Stepanovich, who would exhaust his eligibility at the end of the 2003 campaign.

Suffice it to say, Mangold is slightly ahead of schedule.

He is indeed the starting center for the Buckeyes. His name is not only penciled in atop OSU's depth chart, but on the watch list for the Rimington Award, given annually to the best center in college football.

Along with left tackle Rob Sims, also a junior, Mangold is a veteran on a line that replaced three starters from last season.

"I can't believe that I've already got two years under my belt," Mangold said. "It flies by so quickly. I'm not really prepared to see how quick it will go for this

year. It keeps getting faster and faster. I'd like to slow it down a little bit, keep enjoying it."

Instead of redshirting in 2002, Mangold played in eight games with Stepanovich moving to guard as Mangold took over at center. His first taste of action came in a 51-17 rout of Kent State in the second game of 2002, but by late in the season, Mangold was included at key points in OSU's string of close calls. He was called on in an overtime win at Illinois, a 14-9 win over Michigan in the regular-season finale and the double-overtime win in the Fiesta Bowl to win the national title.

Not bad for a guy who wasn't expecting to even touch the field that year.

Last season, Mangold took over the starting center spot midway through the second game when Stepanovich suffered an ankle injury just before halftime. He remained at center for the rest of the season with Stepanovich moving to right guard when he returned after missing three games.

Now as one of the most veteran linemen, he is called upon to help bring some of the younger players along. But when asked if any of OSU's four freshman offensive linemen might have a



TERRY GILLIAM

GOOD AS (MAN)GOLD — Ohio State center Nick Mangold has just begun his second year as a starter, and he'll be looked to for leadership as the Buckeyes retool an offensive line that lost three starters to the NFL.

shot to contribute in the same fashion he did, Mangold was at a loss.

"I don't really know," he said. "I know when I first showed up, I wasn't expected to do anything (and) just kind of fell into it."

Of course, there was more to his development than that.

Two primary factors enabled Mangold to contribute much sooner than he thought he would. For one, the OSU offensive line didn't have much depth. Coupled with his ability to understand and process what he was taught, he got an expedited route to playing time.

"I think it takes a big mental effort to get into it," Mangold said. "That's what helped Rob and me because as we were going through things, we were able to

learn things a lot quicker than some of the other guys, which really pushed us along."

OSU offensive line coach Jim Bollman certainly was impressed by the concentration Mangold displayed as a rookie.

"He's a very knowledgeable, aware guy," said the OSU assistant. "The secret to playing early (at any position) is how fast you can absorb it, learn it, know it — especially at center. And he was able to move in with the crew that was here and learn things more than adequately, and was able to hold his own that way mentally."

"When you can handle that part, then your physical abilities take over. Once you know it, then it's how good are you, and obviously at that early age, he was physically able to duke it out — (but) not as well as he can now."

Even though he was able to hold his own in the trenches as a freshman, Mangold said he has never been the strongest or fastest of guys up front.

Coming out of Centerville (Ohio) High School, he weighed in at 280. He has since added 10 pounds to his 6-4 frame while at Ohio State.

"I've always got to work on (my) strength and speed," Mangold said. "I've never really been the strongest of the guys, so I've got to keep working on that, and then the different little techniques."

Though it's not as if he's ever been overmatched physically at center, it's his craftiness that sets him apart. Mangold credited technique and his ability to pick up on defensive tendencies for allowing him to succeed.

"I've got the playbook pretty well down now, making those kinds of (adjustments), seeing little things like safeties moving around," he said. "(I'm) trying to get that to be second nature and doing the different techniques, hand placement and stuff. I'm really focusing, trying to make it that much easier to make a block."

Bollman noticed extra attention to detail from both Mangold and Sims this preseason.

"They're trying to be more and more studious and finite about their exact techniques, trying to be particular about the way they're doing things," the coach said.

Sims is the more vocal of the two returning starters, but Mangold has made a point of taking on an increased leadership role in the huddle.

"The way he's making calls, the way he's running the show in there, (he's) just trying to take the next step to be better," Bollman said.

Though he admitted feeling that more is expected of him now that he and Sims are the veterans, Mangold expected his linemates to come along quickly and do their parts.

"A little bit," he said of feeling more pressure, "but we have such a great supporting class that we're all able to kind of disperse things around, and I think a lot of the guys, as soon as they get in there, they'll seem like old veterans. So we'll be all right."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: NICK MANGOLD



TERRY GILLIAM

GOOD AS MAN-GOLD — Center Nick Mangold (55) got valuable playing time for Ohio State during its run to the national championship in 2002, and now he's one of the mainstays along the offensive front.

Increased Endurance, Strength Help Center

By RICH LEONARDO
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On a team overflowing with game-breakers and star power, it could be easy for the casual fan to overlook the reality of how every potential big play gets started.

When the Buckeyes open the season on Sept. 3 against Miami (Ohio), and before Justin Zwick is able to toss his

first pass to Ted Ginn Jr., Ohio State center Nick Mangold will have already called the blocking scheme for the linemen, snapped the ball on the proper count and executed his block.

Though Mangold may not be the center of attention on the team, he is one of the top centers in all of college football.

"Nick is without question one of the better centers in the country," OSU offensive coordinator Jim Bollman said.

"He not only does a great job at the point of attack, but he also makes all of our blocking calls at the line of scrimmage, which is a huge responsibility."

"A wrong read and call by Nick and the play usually fails, so he's extremely key to all of our offensive successes."

For Mangold, a 6-4, 290-pound senior, success on the collegiate gridiron came early and often. Over his first three years as a Buckeye, he saw action in 33 games including 21 starts. For last season's efforts, Mangold was recognized as a second-team All-Big Ten selection while also being named a Rimington Award candidate.

"Heading into this season, I wanted Nick to simply get stronger," said Bollman, who also doubles as the Buckeyes' offensive line coach. "He's already a very, very good player, and the only way he could continue to improve was to increase his strength and endurance."

"Now that he's done that, he should be able to really wear down his opponents by the time the fourth quarter rolls around."

"There's really no limit to what Nick can achieve this year."

When the first watch lists for college football's major awards came out in July, Mangold's name could be prominently seen on both the Rimington and Outland trophy ledgers, as well as being listed as a leading All-America candidate.

"Heading into this season, there seems to be a strong air of excitement surrounding us," Mangold said. "I believe that air is due in part to the incredible young talent we have on the team, along with the 2002 national championship experience still with some of us veterans."

One can only wonder whether the excitement Mangold spoke of will manifest itself in the form of a wide-open, explosive offense or if the punt-deep-and-play-strong-defense technique will make another appearance.

"We're Ohio State and that means we will always line up and run the ball, but now we have the talent to burn defenders with lightning-quick strikes as well," Mangold said. "Regardless of what style of offense we're running, my assignment at center doesn't change a whole lot."

"It is very exciting, though, to see all of our talented playmakers now having the opportunity to really showcase their skills."

If OSU's playmakers do in fact get the opportunity to shine, it will be in no small part aided by Mangold's work in the trenches.

"When it comes to toughness and leadership, you won't find many better than Nick," Bollman said. "He has continually displayed both attributes over his career, and I expect him to finish

things off here with a bang."

Mangold's collegiate career certainly started off with a bang, as the Buckeyes won the national title in his freshman year. Since that championship season, the Buckeyes have played well, but not well enough to return to the top of the mountain in college football.

"The road we've traveled over the past three years has been somewhat bumpy because we started out with the incredible high of winning the national championship, and then followed that up with a bit of a dropoff," Mangold said. "Then last year we dropped even further because we didn't perform anywhere near our capabilities."

"But what's past is past. Now, it's our time to climb back up to the top."

Mangold arrived at Ohio State following a stellar prep career at Kettering (Ohio) Alter High School. A three-year starter on both offense and defense, he was named a first-team All-Ohio selection while being widely considered one of the elite center prospects in the country.

"Nick has played a ton of very good football for us over the past few years, and I know he's ready to have an outstanding final season," Bollman said. "He's a great young man and a great leader as well as one of the best centers in college football, so I'm expecting him to successfully accomplish everything he's set out to do this year."

For the Buckeye center's goals to be realized this season, the team will have to perform admirably on both sides of the ball, and according to Mangold, that shouldn't be a problem.

"Our defense overall is really starting to pick up the pace," he said. "The defensive line is getting stronger — Quinn Pitcock is just an amazing player and I think Marcus Green is really going to break out during his senior season."

"Our linebackers are the best in college football and our secondary is full of smart, quick ball-hawks, so it's going to be an exciting year on both sides of the ball."

Mangold's hopes for the coming season, teamed with the great experiences he's had in the past, would seem to put all the pieces together for the Buckeyes to have another legitimate shot at national honors in 2005.

"I've been fortunate to enjoy many highlights over my time as a Buckeye," Mangold said. "From the national championship to having the opportunity to start as a sophomore and then continuing to start after Alex (Stepanovich) came back from his injury. And, of course, the victories over Michigan always stay with you."

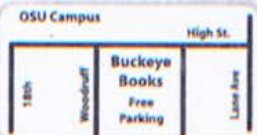
"The past three years have gone by so quickly, but I've had a great time and now I'm looking forward to ending it all back on top where we belong."



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A.J. Hawk
First Round
(Fifth overall)
Green Bay



Donte Whitner
First Round
(Eighth overall)
Buffalo



Bobby Carpenter
First Round
(18th overall)
Dallas



Santonio Holmes
First Round
(25th overall)
Pittsburgh



Nick Mangold
First Round
(29th overall)
New York Jets

Led By Hawk, OSU's A First-Round Knockout

By MARK REA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

To say that NFL coaches like the product Ohio State puts on the field might be something of an understatement.

Two years ago, the Buckeyes set the modern-day NFL Draft record for most players selected at 14, then established a new school mark of their own April 29 when five standouts were among the 32 first-round draftees.

OSU head coach Jim Tressel was understandably proud of the achievement, but was quick to point out it was just as much a tribute to the hard work individual players put in as it was to the program itself.

"That's what you hope for," Tressel said of being selected in the first round. "You hope for the best. Guys come in, set goals, and they want to be the best at what they do."

"If you get picked in the first round, that's a pretty good indication that you're pretty good at what you do."

Lombardi Award winner A.J. Hawk was the first Buckeye taken, going with the fifth overall pick to the Green Bay Packers. Three selections later, the Buffalo Bills announced they were taking safety Donte Whitner.

The first-rounders continued with linebacker Bobby Carpenter going to the Dallas Cowboys with the No. 18 pick, receiver Santonio Holmes becoming a Pittsburgh Steeler at No. 25 overall and center Nick Mangold hearing his name

called by the New York Jets, who had the No. 29 selection.

The five first-round picks broke a longstanding school record set in 1971 when four Ohio State players were taken in the opening round. Cornerback Tim Anderson (San Francisco), running back John Brockington (Green Bay), running back Leo Hayden (Minnesota) and defensive back Jack Tatum (Oakland) were first-round selections that year.

And the hits kept coming. Cornerback Ashton Youboty and linebacker Anthony Schlegel were taken in the third round while safety Nate Salley and offensive lineman Rob Sims went in the fourth round.

Youboty, who like Whitner and Holmes skipped his final year of college eligibility to enter the draft, slipped to the 70th overall selection by Buffalo. Meanwhile, Schlegel was taken six spots later — a little higher than projected — by the Jets.

Salley went to Carolina with the No. 121 overall pick and Sims was taken by Seattle at No. 128.

It was no surprise that Hawk topped the list of Buckeyes taken. Several draft analysts had the star linebacker going as high as No. 2 overall, but most had him pegged going to Tittletown.

"To play in Lambeau Field will be great," Hawk told BSB. "Green Bay is a traditional town, it's an old-style place, and that's the kind of player I think I am. It's great to be going there."

The Packers wasted little time promoting their new defensive star. Along

with his fiancée Laura Quinn, Hawk was jetted to Green Bay to meet team officials and media members, then got his first look at Lambeau Field.

He posed for photographers while holding his new jersey No. 50, and those photos quickly made it to the team website where some jerseys were priced at \$179.95 and already on back-order.

"I think the fans here are going to love him," Packers general manager Ted Thompson said. "I think he is a small-town guy and this is the perfect place for him. He understands what it means to be a Green Bay Packer. He knows what he is getting into."

Another example of Hawk's small-town personality was his decision to skip the trip to New York for the draft, opting to watch the proceedings at home with family and a few close friends.

"I didn't want to sit in the green room with a bunch of cameras in my face, to tell you the truth," he said. "The offensive guys can have all the glory. I don't want any part of that."

Hawk was the first Big Ten player selected in this year's draft and the first OSU linebacker taken in the first round since Tom Cousineau went No. 1 overall to Buffalo in 1980.

Next in Line

Whitner certainly helped himself with his predraft workouts. The Bills had him with a blazing time of 4.38 seconds in the 40-yard dash and a 40-inch vertical leap, which would help to more than make up for any concerns about his 5-11, 205-pound frame.

At least as important as Whitner's measurables, though, was his on-the-field production, which included four sacks and two interceptions as a junior at Ohio State. Whitner's well-known devotion to the film room also worked in his favor.

"We like the way he plays football," Bills general manager Marv Levy said. "He's smart, he's into it, (and) he's a film rat. He's dedicated. He has coverage ability, so if you put some slot receiver out there or a tight end he can cover him. He has a fast motor and exhibits a great dedication to the game."

Whitner came highly recommended to the Bills. Linebacker London

Fletcher, a Cleveland native, works out with Whitner and vouched for his work ethic. Meanwhile, Bills defensive coordinator Perry Fewell coached Buckeye safeties coach Paul Haynes at Kent State and later worked with him with the Jacksonville Jaguars, and Haynes gave Whitner a glowing recommendation as well.

But Whitner also made sure to give credit to one of his former coaches: Mel Tucker, who went from Ohio State to the staff of the NFL's Cleveland Browns.

"I give all thanks to Mel Tucker," Whitner said. "He was my defensive backs coach for two years and showed me how to watch film and what tendencies to look for. During the game week, I'd try to put at least seven, eight or nine hours of film time in on the team we were playing. And I would take what I saw on film to the football field."

In Buffalo, Whitner will be joining a host of former Buckeyes. Nate Clements is already entrenched in one of the Bills' cornerback spots, Tim Anderson is working along the defensive line, and two rounds after Buffalo chose Whitner, they took his once-and-future teammate Youboty.

Whitner will likely slide into the Buffalo secondary at the strong safety spot, replacing veteran Lawyer Milloy.

"I think he's outstanding," Bills head coach Dick Jauron said. "He'll hit you with everything he has. Perhaps his best quality is his temperament and how he plays the game. He plays it hard and he plays that way every snap. He really helps us up the middle of our defense."

While Whitner soared up the draft board, so did Carpenter, who was projected as a late first- or early second-round selection. But when he was available at No. 18, Dallas head coach Bill Parcells pounced.

Ironically, it came two decades after the NFL retirement of Carpenter's father, Rob, who played several years under Parcells with the New York Giants.

"It's almost surreal, actually, that your son ends up playing for a guy that you played for, and he goes at such a high level and (after) such a long time," Rob Carpenter told BSB.

The elder Carpenter — now head

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coach at Lancaster (Ohio) High School — didn't like to talk much about his playing career with any of his four sons, but he would occasionally mention Parcels.

"The one thing he'd always stress was that (Parcells) was brutally honest and that he was going to get the most out of you as a player, whether you wanted him to or not," Bobby Carpenter said.

"That's something that excites me. I've always kind of dreamed of playing for him. Growing up, I was always a fan of the team he coached for. Now, to have a chance to play for him is almost like a dream come true."

Carpenter is expected to team with DeMarcus Ware, the Cowboys' first-round draft pick last season, as the outside linebackers in the Cowboys' 3-4 alignment. Though Carpenter was used extensively as a rush end in passing situations last season for Ohio State, Ware will likely remain Dallas' rusher off the edge while Carpenter will drop into pass coverage.

Carpenter said he expects immediate success next season, given the Cowboys went 9-7 and narrowly missed the playoffs in 2005, and have since picked up high-profile, if troubled, receiver Terrell Owens in free agency as well as offensive lineman Jason Fabini.

"I think he's thinking Super Bowl his rookie season," Rob Carpenter said.

Fitting In Perfectly

While Carpenter dreams of making the Super Bowl as a rookie, Holmes has as good a chance as anyone of getting to Super Bowl XLI at Dolphins Stadium.

That's because the talented receiver joined the roster of the defending Super Bowl champs in Pittsburgh. And, as a bonus, his favorite team just happens to be the black and gold.

"It isn't often that a player gets to play for what has been his favorite team for the past 10 or 11 years," Holmes said. "The Steelers are my favorites because of the way they played leading up to the Super Bowl in 1995. I was watching them because one of my uncles was a Steelers fan, and I decided to switch out on the Cowboys and go for the Steelers in the Super Bowl."

"I thought they had a better team at the time, and I have been watching all the guys who play for the Steelers."

Holmes will join a talented group of receivers in Pittsburgh that includes Hines Ward and Cedrick Wilson, and will get to work with one of the top young quarterbacks in the game in Ben Roethlisberger.

Even so, the possibility for a lot of rookie playing time is available since the Steelers lost slot receiver Antwaan Randle El to free agency.

Also looking for early playing time will be Mangold, who was tabbed by the Jets to help reinforce what has been a shaky offensive line. He will compete with free agent acquisition Trey Teague to replace Jets center Kevin Mawae, a 12-year veteran who was allowed to walk away as a free agent following the 2005 season.

Mangold said he was ready for the challenge.

"I was taught real early in college that I had to learn everything there is to know in football, and I tried to do that," he said. "I look forward to getting up to the Jets, learning their system and getting the most out of their system mentally."

He added that trying to replace

Mawae, or going against eight-year veteran Teague, will not faze him.

"Going into Ohio State, I had to fill the shoes of some great centers (such as NFL starters Alex Stepanovich and LeCharles Bentley)," Mangold said. "So, I'm looking forward to the opportunity."

"I don't know where the coaching staff wants me or how they'll use me, but wherever they want to put me, I'd love to be there. Just as long as I get to contribute — no matter how that is — I want to be there."

Eric Mangini, who was named Jets head coach in January, indicated that

Mangold could contribute at guard as well as center.

"What I've told Nick is the same thing I've told all the current players on the roster," Mangini said. "Your job is to come here, work hard, play where you're told to play, compete where you're told to, and at the end of the day, we're going to sort out who the best players are."

"He's going to give us great competition at a couple of spots — both center and guard."

Moving Up, Moving Down

Schlegel will have the opportunity to

join Mangold — as well as former OSU kicker Mike Nugent — in green and white after the Jets took him in the third round, a bit of a surprise since some analysts had the middle linebacker as a lower-round projection.

Nevertheless, New York team officials said they saw a lot of intangibles in the rugged linebacker that they liked.

"When we were watching A.J. Hawk, Schlegel just kept showing up and showing up," Mangini said. "It's something


Continued On Page 18

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After Draft, Five More Sign As Free Agents

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when you go to watch one player and the other guy keeps making tackles."

With Jonathan Vilma entrenched as the starting middle linebacker and outside man Mark Brown listed as the backup, Schlegel would seem to be facing long odds in terms of contributing in 2006. But he said he'll find a way to get on the field.

"I'm going to do it," Schlegel said. "Special teams, linebacker — whatever they want me to do, I'll do it."

While Schlegel was improving his draft status, Youboty dropped from what many believed was possible first-round territory.

But he landed on his feet in Buffalo, a team known for its affection for Ohio State defensive backs.

"We had some first-round grades on him from us and our projections," Bills scout Marc Roos said after the draft. "We knew that a lot of teams liked him. I thought that he would have definitely gone no later than the mid-second round."

Nevertheless, with Youboty still on the board in the third round, Buffalo jumped at the chance to team him with Whitner and Clements in their secondary.

"I think it will help to make the transition a lot easier," Youboty said of joining a team with a number of ex-Buckeyes. "I'll look to the older (guys) so I know what I need to do, but I'm looking forward to meeting the rest of my teammates, too."

Rounding out the draft choices for Ohio State were two more seniors, each of whom had to wait until day two to



Ashton Youboty
Third Round
(70th overall)
Buffalo



Anthony Schlegel
Third Round
(76th overall)
New York Jets



Nate Salley
Fourth Round
(121st overall)
Carolina



Rob Sims
Fourth Round
(128th overall)
Seattle

hear their names called.

Salley admitted that he spent a restless night after the first day of the draft, but that any worries quickly vanished when he got the call from Carolina.

"It was nervous and frustrating, but

everything happens for a reason," Salley told BSB. "I believe the reason was that I think Carolina is really a perfect situation if you sit down and think about it."

On the field, Salley is helped by the presence of Chris Gamble as one of the Panthers' starting cornerbacks. The duo were teammates at Ohio State in 2002 and '03, and competed against each other in high school. Salley spoke with Gamble not long after he was chosen.

"It makes it that much easier, having him there," Salley said. "He's been through it all and he can help you if you have any questions because he already knows the defense. He can help with questions about the defense — at least some of it since corners don't really know that much."

With that, Salley broke out in laughter, perhaps indicating how comfortable he is in his situation. In addition to the presence of his former teammate, he is also closer to his Florida home, and has relatives in the Raleigh, N.C., area and in South Carolina and Atlanta.

Sims was also disappointed about not being able to hear his name called on the first day of the draft.

"It was real difficult," he told BSB. "I was already having trouble sleeping that week, and that didn't make it any easier."

Sims hadn't planned on watching the draft, but said he ended up spending his Saturday watching for his name to be called. When he was finally selected by defending NFC champion Seattle on the second day, he and his family were in church.

The now-former Buckeye was scheduled to fly to Seattle — a city he had never set foot in — May 4, and he couldn't be more relieved.

"It feels a little different," Sims said. "It's just a little bit of a relief. All along I thought I would have a chance at least to play somewhere, but now knowing where I'm going hasn't really hit me."

Five Others Headed Out

Several other Ohio State players were projected as draft picks but failed to hear their names called during the two-day selection process, held at Radio City Music Hall.

Less than 48 hours later, however, each had agreed to free-agent deals including defensive lineman Mike Kudla (Pittsburgh), safety Tyler Everett (Denver), defensive lineman Marcus Green (New York Giants), kicker Josh Huston (Chicago) and tight end Ryan Hamby (Cincinnati).

Kudla going undrafted was perhaps the biggest surprise. After a senior season in which he won first-team All-Big

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Ten honors, tying Hawk for the team lead in sacks with 9 1/2, he was projected as high as the second or third round by some draftniks.

But after fielding several free-agent offers, Kudla opted to join the Steelers, who intend to move him to the linebacker position.

Meanwhile, Everett said he held no illusions he was going to be drafted as high as the other three starters from the OSU secondary, but he did expect to be drafted. In fact, Chicago and Dallas each worked him out twice at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

But when it came time to sign a free-agent contract, Everett opted for Denver.

"It's all about getting to the league," he told BSB. "That's all I wanted was a chance. And I've got the opportunity right now, and now it's in my hands and it's all about what I do when I'm there and how I finish and how long I'm in there."

Green said he, too, heard overtures from several teams that expressed interest in drafting him.

"It's hard, man," he said. "You kind of gear yourself up for something, you're excited about it and then it doesn't happen. I got some vibes from a few teams that I might be a sixth- or seventh-round choice, so when it didn't happen I was down about it."

"But in some ways, this way might be better for me. You want to hear your name called and all during the draft, but when you're picked, you have to hope you fit into that team's scheme. I was able to look around a little bit, see who needed what, and the Giants seemed like a good fit."

Huston, considered by many to be the top available kicker in the draft, signed with the Bears and will battle incumbent Robbie Gould for Chicago's starting job.

And Hamby turned down several other offers to try and make the roster of his hometown Bengals. He will join a crowded field that includes former Buckeye Darnell Sanders for the right to back up Cincinnati starter Reggie Kelly.

Big Ten Wrapup

Ohio State set the tone for what would be an overall strong draft performance for the Big Ten.

With 41 overall draftees, the Big Ten was one of just two conferences with more than 40 selections. In somewhat of a surprise, the typically basketball-heavy ACC led the way with 51 draft choices.

OSU accounted for the Big Ten's first two selections of the draft and five of the conference's eight first-rounders. After Hawk at No. 5 and Whitner at No. 8, Big Ten players were selected with four of five selections between the 17th and 21st picks. Iowa linebacker Chad Greenway went at No. 17 to Minnesota, followed by Carpenter. Penn State defensive lineman Tamba Hali (Kansas City) and Minnesota running back Laurence Maroney (New England) went back-to-back at Nos. 20 and 21.

Maroney's selection by the Patriots drew praise from around the league.

"I loved him," Denver head coach Mike Shanahan said of Maroney. "I think the Patriots got a steal. An absolute steal. I think he's going to be the best back in the league."

Holmes and Mangold rounded out the Big Ten's first-rounders.

Purdue safety Bernard Pollard was the conference's lone second-round pick, going to the Chiefs, while the third-round selections included Wisconsin teammates Brian Calhoun (Detroit) and Brandon Williams (San Francisco), Greenway's linebacker teammate, Abdul Hodge (Green Bay), and Michigan State safety Eric Smith (New York Jets), a native of the Columbus area.

After OSU's nine draft picks, Penn State was next with six, including quarterback Michael Robinson, who was drafted by San Francisco as a wide receiver in the fourth round. Wisconsin had five players chosen, and Minnesota and Purdue each had four, though Boilermakers quarterback Brandon Kirsch — who left school early to enter the draft — was not selected. He later accepted an invitation to attend rookie minicamp with Washington.

Only three Michigan players were drafted, none in the first three rounds. Defensive tackle Gabe Watson was the first Wolverine chosen, going in round four with the 107th overall pick to Arizona.

(BSB staffers Adam Jardy, Eric Loughry, Chris Nida and Mike Wachsmann contributed to this report.)

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05 Dodge STRATUS SXT \$10,995	06 Ford TAURUS \$11,995	05 Chrysler PT CRUISER TOURING \$12,995	05 Dodge GRAND CARAVAN SE \$13,995	05 Chrysler SEBRING CONVERTIBLE \$14,995	05 Dodge RAM 2500 QUAD CAB 4X4 \$26,995

'5,000 & UNDER

95 Plymouth Voyager	\$1,195
97 Dodge Caravan	\$1,995
98 Ford Taurus	\$1,995
95 Ford Windstar	\$1,995
99 Chevrolet Malibu	\$1,995
06 Chevrolet Celebrity 67k mi	\$2,295
98 Plymouth Voyager	\$2,995
99 Hyundai Tiburon	\$3,495
95 Honda Del Sol	\$3,995
98 Chrysler Concord	\$3,995
01 Buick Century	\$3,995
97 Chevrolet G10 Conv. Van	\$4,995
98 Ford F150	\$4,995
00 Plymouth Voyager	\$4,995
02 Dodge Intrepid	\$4,995
98 Cadillac Deville	\$4,995

'10,000 & UNDER

00 Ford Explorer	\$5,995
03 Dodge Neon	\$6,995
02 Dodge Caravan	\$6,995
00 Jeep Cherokee	\$6,995
00 Dodge Intrepid	\$7,995
01 Dodge Ram 1500 Quad Cab	\$7,995
99 Jeep Grand Cherokee	\$8,995
00 Nissan Quest	\$8,995
01 Chrysler Sebring Convertible	\$8,995
01 VW GTI	\$8,995
99 Nissan Pathfinder	\$8,995
00 Cadillac Escalade	\$9,995
01 Honda Civic EX	\$9,995
00 Dodge Durango	\$9,995
02 Isuzu Rodeo	\$9,995

MANAGER'S SPECIALS

06 Ford Taurus	\$11,995
05 Dodge Grand Caravan 5 In Stock	\$13,980
05 Chrysler Sebring Convertible	\$14,995
05 Jeep Liberty 4x4	\$14,995
02 Ford Truck Sport Trac Lthr. Roof	\$14,995
05 Dodge Grand Caravan SXT Slow-N-Go	\$16,980
04 Dodge Dakota SLT Quad Cab 4x4	\$17,995
02 Ford Expedition Eddie Bauer 4x4	\$17,995
05 Chry. Town & Country Vao Slow-N-Go	\$17,995
05 Pacifica AWD Leather	\$18,995
06 Dodge Charger	\$18,995
05 Dodge Durango SLT 4x4 17k mi	\$19,995
05 Jeep Grand Cherokee V8, 4x4	\$19,995
06 Chrysler 300 LTD	\$22,995
04 Dodge Ram P/U 2500 Diesel 4x4	\$25,995
06 Dodge Charger RT Hemi Blk	\$26,995
06 Dodge Durango LTD 4x4 Hemi, Roof, DVD, Nav	\$26,995

BYERS DUBLIN DODGE
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