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Vol. 30, No. 23

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

July 2011



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HICKORY CRAWDADS

USED TO PRESSURE – Ohio State senior quarterback Joe Bauserman (32), one of four candidates for the starting job in 2011, was once a minor league pitcher in the Pittsburgh Pirates organization.

Prepared For Center Stage?

Former Minor League Pitcher Could Be Next Starting QB

By ADAM JARDY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Joe Bauserman had been on Ohio State's campus for a matter of days, but his reputation had clearly preceded him.

A former two-star quarterback prospect in the class of 2004, Bauserman committed to the Buckeyes but decided to play professional baseball instead of college football. After three seasons in the lower reaches of the Pittsburgh Pirates farm system, Bauserman opted to give football another shot and joined the OSU program during the summer of 2007.

Shortly after reporting, the players found themselves at a team function at which each player had to introduce a teammate to the assembled group. Owing to the lack of time spent getting to know one another to that point, the player tasked with introducing Bauserman fumbled his lines.

"He was so new that they didn't know what his last name was," said wide receiver

Dane Sanzenbacher, who was also entering his freshman season. "This player stood up and said, 'It's Joe Baseball,' and he's been that ever since."

Now, four years removed from that experience, Bauserman is one of four candidates who will battle to be the team's starting quarterback this fall after three-year starter Terrelle Pryor left the program in early June. The former pitcher is hoping his experience will help lead his teammates to victory this fall.

As the Buckeyes have gone through summer 7-on-7 workouts, Bauserman said he has set a few goals while leading drills.

"We just try to be as efficient as possible and try to get through things in 7-on-7s," he said June 28. "We try to get more work done and get as much as we can done in the little time that we have. I hope my actions lead to guys knowing that I want them to be more efficient, more focused and get more things done."

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Pryor Opts To Leave Ohio State

By ADAM JARDY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Terrelle Pryor's abrupt departure from the Ohio State program caused shock waves across the nation, but inside the team's locker room the impact felt more like a mild tremor.

On June 7, the three-year starter at quarterback for the Buckeyes announced that he would not be returning for his senior season and would pursue the NFL's supplemental draft. The decision came as Pryor's name was linked to a number of investigations into the program and the quarterback was already facing a five-game suspension to open the season.

Pryor leaves as one of the post prolific players in program history. He is OSU's career leading rusher as a quarterback with 2,164 yards, sits fifth in passing yards with 6,177, threw for 57 touchdown passes – tied with Bobby Hoying (1992-95) for the most in school history – and was named the most valuable player in two BCS bowl games.

But speaking for the first time since Pryor's withdrawal and the May 30 resignation of head coach Jim Tressel, a handful of current Buckeyes

said it was essentially business as usual within the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"We lose many great players every year," senior center Michael Brewster said. "It's just another thing. We lost him a little earlier than we thought we were going to, but now it's someone else's turn to step up. At Ohio State, you've always got somebody ready to step up."

Speaking at his introductory press conference June 13, head coach Luke Fickell said he had not spoken with the quarterback since the day after Tressel's resignation.

"Everything happened kind of fast," the coach said. "He tried to contact me and the situation didn't work out. When I do talk to him, I will encourage him, I will wish him well in his endeavors and continue to encourage him to finish his degree."

Speaking on national radio as a guest on "The Dan Patrick Show" on June 28, Fickell said Pryor had called him while he was attending a Taylor Swift concert in Columbus along with his family on

June 7 and he was unable to answer. The two have still not spoken.

The same goes for fifth-year senior quarterback Joe Bauserman, who has sat in the same meeting room as



Terrelle Pryor

Pryor for the past three seasons.

"I haven't heard from him," Bauserman said. "He hasn't contacted me and I haven't had a chance to contact him. When you guys (in the media) heard about it is when I heard about it. He never gave any ideas that it was going to happen."

With negative publicity swirling around the program, much of it has centered on Pryor, the former No. 1 recruit in the country. The Columbus Dispatch reported that the quarterback had been seen driving a number of different cars during his time in Columbus, while a report on ESPN's "Outside the Lines" alleged Pryor had brought in as much as \$40,000 from a Columbus businessman for autographing memorabilia during his collegiate career. Pryor denied the allegations through his lawyer at the time.

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PUBLISHER
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachsmen 1944-1999

MANAGING EDITOR
Mark Rea

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER
Becky Roberts

PHOTOGRAPHY
Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
Kevin Dye Josh Winslow

CONTRIBUTORS
Bill Armstrong Craig Merz
David Breithaupt Bob Roehm
Rich Exner Julie Roy
Matthew Hager Mark Schmetzer
Marcus Hartman Steve Siegfried
Adam Jardy Stacey Stathulis
Rich Leonardo Jeff Svoboda
Eric Loughry Mike Wachsmen

DIRECTOR OF GROUP AND CO-OP SALES
Jack Woodworth

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
Ron Friedman Jan Jager

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BSB e-mail address is: bsb@buckeyesports.com



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OPINION

Still Wondering If Tressel Resignation Was Necessary

More than a month later, it remains borderline unbelievable that Jim Tressel is no longer the head football coach at Ohio State.

When Tressel tendered his Memorial Day resignation, it was naturally assumed the steady stream of allegations against the coach and his program would evolve into a crystal clear picture of wrongdoing so dastardly that the university had no choice but to rid itself of a chronic cheating liar.

What the likes of Sports Illustrated, ESPN and even the hometown Columbus Dispatch trumpeted as dynamite, however, turned out instead to be nothing more than a wet firecracker.

From video of the "brand new" sports car former quarterback Terrelle Pryor drove to a team meeting – a used car that turned out to belong to his mother – to the sheer lunacy surrounding breathless reporting that Pryor and other Buckeyes had been witnessed in 2009 playing at a Columbus-area private golf course, the story quickly lost traction when even anonymous sources dried up for the aforementioned media outlets.

After acid rain seemingly fell on the OSU campus every day for a month, triggering a panic among university officials that precipitated Tressel's resignation, we were left with a gaggle of half-baked innuendo, some of which seemed plausible but most of which did not pass the smell test. Now that the media circus has packed away its carnival tents and Ohio State is left to clean up the sawdust and elephant dung, I continue to wonder if Tressel's departure was absolutely necessary.

If your entire point of reference is the national media with its bloodthirsty obsession to take Tressel down, the answer is clear. From most of the blather that emanated from those who should know better, one might have believed many pundits wanted the former coach shackled and hauled away to federal prison.

ESPN college football writer Pat Forde summed it up nicely for the sanctimonious crowd when he wrote, "In the realm where Ohio State likes to say it resides, the school had to rid itself of a coach who cheated and lied his way into making a bad situation far worse. Staying in the fox hole with Tressel eventually became too costly to the school's reputation."

Forde and many others also mentioned that if Ohio State had elected to stand by Tressel, it would have sent an awful message – a message that winning is all that matters. Zip up your coat, Pat, and throw another log on the fire because here comes the cold, hard truth: Winning is all that matters in big-time college athletics.

The formula seems simple enough. The more you win, the higher profile your program enjoys and the more money you make. When is the last time you saw the ESPN "College GameDay" crew at Indiana or Mississippi State? Both schools are members of BCS conferences, but since neither is a consistent winner, neither football program has a high profile and that means the Hoosiers and Bulldogs have to fight for the scraps along with about 100 other Division I-A schools.

If winning weren't important – all that matters, if you will – why did Mack Brown of Texas make more than \$5 million last season while Big 12 counterpart Art Briles drew a relatively paltry \$878,000 salary from Baylor?

University presidents and athletic directors can make all the pronouncements they

want about the sanctity of amateurism and the purity of the student-athlete. It's likely they are making such pronouncements at cocktail party fund-raisers or annual retreats paid for at least in part by bloated television contracts.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

If winning was not the bottom line, why did Kentucky on June 27 give men's basketball coach John Calipari a contract extension, making his total compensation package worth \$36.5 million, just weeks after it had erased 42 wins from his career record because of NCAA violations committed at schools where Calipari had previously coached?

What sets apart the University of Kentucky from The Ohio State University? Why does Calipari merit a raise while Tressel gets cut loose?

You could argue that all the offenses Calipari has committed over the years don't measure up to the allegation that Tressel violated NCAA bylaw 10.1, which bans so-called unethical conduct. I suppose that would depend upon your definition of "unethical conduct" so any NCAA transgression – major or minor – could be considered unethical. That is an argument for another day, however.

Today's debate – one that will continue to rage on in my mind – is what might have happened had Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith called a Memorial Day news conference to defend Tressel, to say that no matter what the NCAA had in store for the university's football program, the coach was staying.

Naturally, that would have touched off another round of withering criticism from the media accusing Smith of harboring a rogue coach running a dirty program. My question: Why would the athletic director – or anyone else at Ohio State for that matter – care what the national media think?

Coaching Candidates

With Tressel gone, the early speculation regarding his successor has centered on two names – current OSU head coach Luke Fickell and former Florida head coach Urban Meyer.

Both men have their champions and detractors. Some look at Fickell and see a dynamic, young coach in the mold of Northwestern's Pat Fitzgerald. Others look at Fickell and see another Randy Ayers.

Meanwhile, Meyer's proponents tout his .819 career winning percentage and two national titles at Florida. Then, of course, there were the off-the-field problems at Florida, health concerns that have sidelined the coach – at least temporarily – and last season's 8-5 record with a team that had a lot more talent than its record would indicate.

Fickell and Meyer have something else in common. Each boasts the obligatory Ohio ties the next Ohio State head coach will need to have. After John Cooper, it is doubtful the university will ever again hire someone without some prior connection to the Buckeyes or the Buckeye State.

If Ohio ties are a prerequisite, however, there are many more candidates than only Fickell and Meyer.

No fewer than seven current Division I-A

head coaches were born in Ohio including Bob Stoops of Oklahoma, Mike Stoops of Arizona and Bo Pelini of Nebraska, all of whom were born and raised in Youngstown and attended Cardinal Mooney High School. Also in the Ohio born-and-bred group are Gary Pinkel of Missouri (Akron), Les Miles of LSU (Elyria) and Ron Zook of Illinois (Loudonville).

If you are looking for guys who have been on Ohio State staffs in the past, that list includes Fickell, Meyer and Zook, of course, as well as Alabama head coach Nick Saban, Green Bay Packers defensive coordinator Dom Capers and former Minnesota head coach Glen Mason. As you probably know, Mason also played for Ohio State as did another current NFL assistant, Minnesota Vikings offensive line coach Jeff Davidson.

And then there is James Patton, a native of Lafayette, Ohio, who currently coaches the offensive line at Oklahoma. Patton played his college football at Miami (Ohio), the proving ground of so many coaching legends including Ara Parseghian, Bo Schembechler and Woody Hayes.

In fact, Patton might have more in common with Hayes than anyone knows. During the 2008 Big 12 Championship Game, a contest played on a frosty December night with a wind chill in the low 20s, Patton was readily visible on the Sooners' sidelines. He was the one channeling Hayes by wearing no jacket, only shirt sleeves.

Stupid Is As Stupid Does

Piling on will get you a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty in football but it was evidently fair game when it came to commenting on Ohio State's troubles with the NCAA. To wit:

• Former Miami (Fla.) and current Baltimore Ravens running back Willis McGahee when asked by a CBSSports.com blogger if the Hurricanes should be declared 2002 national champions if it is determined that Ohio State won with ineligible players: "I feel we were cheated anyway. We beat them. The pass interference with the eligible, ineligible players. It wouldn't have made any difference. I can't get my money back that I missed out on a second ring. If they did (cheat) I'd like to have my ring."

• Former Michigan star and Heisman Trophy winner and current ESPN commentator Desmond Howard to the Omaha (Neb.) World-Herald: "If Woody Hayes was around now, I'm thinking he would grab Jim Tressel by the collar and punch him in the throat."

McGahee can be somewhat excused for his comments since he remains one of a Miami multitude who have never gotten over how the Hurricanes wilted in the Arizona desert that January night almost 10 years ago.

Howard? He gets no such dispensation because he should know better.

Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the shoe was on the other foot and Ohio State couldn't beat Michigan, Howard was one of those all-for-me guys who could have stayed in his home state to play college ball and helped turn the tide. Not only didn't he, but when he got the chance, he rubbed Ohio State's nose in it with what is probably the most classless thing I have ever seen on a football field (that pose that we have seen ad nauseam the last 20 years).

Now, Howard has the temerity to opine on what Woody might do? That might elicit a chuckle if it weren't so utterly offensive.

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Negative News Trend Lost Some Steam In June

By JEFF SVOBODA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Whereas it seemed like a new story was published every day about scandal within the Ohio State football program during the month of May and the early throes of June, the spigot appeared to be turning off as the sixth month of 2011 came to a close.

In fact, Ohio State started to score a few victories in the arena of public opinion, most especially June 21 when the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles released a report that indicated it found little to no impropriety in the sales of cars to football players and their family members by a pair of Columbus dealerships.

All along, Ohio State officials maintained they had no reason to believe wrongdoing had occurred, and the report was met with smiles among key decision-makers at Ohio State, including athletic compliance director Doug Archie.

"Today's report from the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles supports the sworn statements two Columbus auto dealers provided us that the manner in which they conducted sales with Ohio State student-athletes and their families adhered to university and NCAA rules," Archie said in a statement.

At the same time, Ohio State announced that a previously scheduled university examination of those purchases would be canceled.

"In light of the report from the BMV and an examination done by the Ohio Independent Automobile Dealers Association, we have seen no evidence that would lead us to believe that Ohio State student-athletes violated any policies when purchasing used cars," university spokesman Jim Lynch said. "Therefore, we will not be conducting an independent examination outside of what has already been done by these parties."

The BMV investigation began May 6 after The Columbus Dispatch reported that its review of car purchases by OSU athletes had raised questions about whether the athletes had received special discounts.

The Dispatch reported that Aaron Kniffin, who worked for both Jack Maxton Chevrolet and Auto Direct, had been the salesman on most of the purchases. Kniffin later swore in affidavits that the purchases were above board, and the findings of the BMV seemed to support his claims.

The BMV looked into 25 purchases, concluding that both dealerships maintained necessary records and that 24 of the sales made money for the respective dealerships. The only sale that didn't was on a vehicle that had been in inventory for more than 150 days, at which point it is standard practice for a dealership to try to sell the vehicle even if it incurs a loss.

The report also found that no memorabilia or tickets were traded in lieu of cash during the purchases.

Not included in the report was perhaps the most famous vehicle to come out of the scandal, a Nissan 350Z sports car driven by former quarterback Terrelle Pryor to a team meeting May 30, the day head coach Jim Tressel resigned.

The car sported temporary tags, and a subsequent media report alleged Pryor had driven as many as eight cars during

his three years at Ohio State. However, this one proved to be no issue when his mother, Thomasina, produced a bill of sale that showed she was making monthly payments and that Pryor had procured the car from Auto Direct after trading in his previous ride.

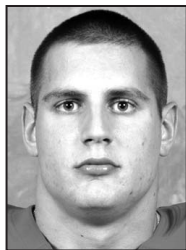
That was among the pieces of good news to hit the public domain as Ohio State prepares for its Aug. 12 hearing in front of the NCAA Committee on Infractions. At that time, OSU will answer allegations – already confirmed by the school – that six players sold memorabilia and received discounted services on tattoos and that Tressel knew of some of the violations but did not report them.

The possibility still exists that the university could face further allegations – and, perhaps, a delayed hearing – should the NCAA corroborate other reports of wrongdoing, but many of the most troubling claims appeared to be without legs as press time neared.

Chief among those was a cover story in the June 6 edition of Sports Illustrated that alleged nine current players had also traded signatures and memorabilia for cash and tattoos. Those named were defensive back Zach Domicone, defensive back C.J. Barnett, linebacker Dorian Bell, running back Jaamal Berry, running back Bo DeLande, linebacker Storm Klein, linebacker Etienne Sabino and defensive linemen John Simon and Nathan Williams.

Sources indicated to BSB that at least eight of the nine had been cleared after meeting with NCAA investigators, including Simon, who spoke to reporters June 28.

"I would just say it was a rough time, especially for my family and things like that, how they had to answer questions," he said. "It was a misunderstanding. There's nothing we can do about it and we just have to move forward."



John Simon

Simon's father, John, and Klein's father, Jason, had previously declared their sons' innocence to BuckeyeSports.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene. They were joined in speaking publicly June 19 by Domicone's father, Fred, who talked to the Dayton Daily News.

"It is not true," Domicone said. "You can't say it any simpler than that."

In addition, Clayton (Ohio) Northmont assistant football coach Collin Abels, who worked with Barnett in high school, spoke up in defense of his former pupil.

"He felt like he had done everything right since he had been there, so he was hurt by the accusations," Abels told the paper. "He said, 'I've saved the receipts from my tattoos. I've never failed a drug test. This is the farthest thing from the truth.'"

Williams' mother, Trina White, told The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer that she and her son were in possession of all of his memorabilia.

While the news appeared to be good regarding most of the nine current players named, it was too early to tell how the NCAA would feel about other parts of the SI story, including Robert Rose's admission that he had swapped memorabilia for tattoos. The magazine alleged that at least 28 players – including the original six suspended and the nine current players – had done so stretching back to 2002.

The SI story also reported that former

running back Jermil Martin, who left the program after the 2009 season, had traded memorabilia and tickets for a vehicle, but the Dispatch reported Ohio State did warn Ashland University about possible problems with his NCAA eligibility upon his transfer to the school.

Among other parts of the SI piece, former Youngstown State quarterback Ray Isaac disputed claims in the story that he had broken rules by receiving money from a booster under Tressel's watch and accused story writer George Dohrmann of distorting his quotes.

Switching gears to Pryor, the three-year starter found himself embroiled in a pair of controversies as he left town, the more serious of which included allegations by ESPN's "Outside the Lines" that he had received up to \$40,000 from local businessman and photographer Dennis Talbott in exchange for autographing Ohio State memorabilia. The tip was provided by an anonymous source purporting to be a former friend of Pryor's who saw him receive checks from Talbott.

Both the quarterback and Talbott denied the claims, though there has been one report the NCAA is in possession of the checks exchanged between Talbott and Pryor. If that turns out to be true, Pryor would be guilty of receiving impermissible benefits and the school could get additional sanctions.

Pryor was also mentioned in a report that indicated he and a few other players received free golf at the Scioto Reserve Country Club from Talbott. The club general manager told ESPN that he called Tressel and that Pryor and the other players stopped showing up around that time.

Pryor's lawyer, Larry James, has said the quarterback will no longer be speaking to the NCAA upon leaving town, making any claims that much harder to corroborate for the body.

The NCAA is gone, as well, and the following weeks will show how many of the media reports that surfaced around Tressel's departure have merit or not. The final weeks of June, however, had to be a welcome respite for Buckeye fans across the country.

Ohio State Fans!

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Prep Coaches React To OSU's Coaching Change

By MARCUS HARTMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Talk to high school football coaches around Ohio and you will come away feeling as if they lost a friend as much as a colleague when Jim Tressel resigned from his position as Ohio State head coach. All of those Buckeye Sports Bulletin and our partners spoke to sounded confident the football program will march on, however.

In his 10 years and roughly four months on the job, Tressel not only won 106 games, seven Big Ten championships and one national title, he fortified a fence around Ohio's borders that had let a few coveted prospects escape the state during predecessor John Cooper's 13-year reign.

Tressel's first full recruiting class left little doubt where he would place his emphasis. Eighteen of the 25 players he signed in 2002 came from within the Buckeye State's borders, and there was no sacrificing quality that season, either. Scout.com rated the effort by far the best in the Big Ten and No. 3 nationally behind Texas and Oklahoma.

Tressel widened his scope as time went on, but the Berea native never forgot the importance of his home state to his team. In all, 60 percent of his recruits came from Ohio. Every corner of the state contributed to the total of 132 signees who came from more than 50 different cities and towns in the state.

To aid his efforts, he maintained an open-door policy that extended to coaches from schools of all sizes.

"I think the biggest thing he did was really carve a relationship with all the high school coaches in the state far more than Coach Cooper had done," said Clayton Northmont coach Lance Schneider, who sent future All-America safety Kurt Coleman and current Buckeye defensive back C.J. Barnett to Columbus from his program. "He helped us feel comfortable there. We were always welcome to come into the offices and talk football. I think that's the biggest thing from a coaching standpoint."

But not everything was about the sport they shared in common, Steve Specht said.

The coach of two Division I state champions at Cincinnati St. Xavier as well as former Ohio State quarterback Rob Schoenhoff, Specht said his professional relationship with Tressel seemed much more like a personal one.

"I don't know that I ever had a conversation with Jim Tressel about my players," Specht told BSB. "The conversations were more on the kids as people, not as players. They were about what I was doing in my profession. It was just informal dialogue. It wasn't, 'Hey I want to talk about your player and what he can do on the field.' He just wanted to get to know who you were, who the kids were."

"That's kind of a lost art form I think anymore, especially head coaches of that caliber or that high of a profile. They just don't have the time, but he always took the time. A guy that didn't have the time took the time to really sit down and have a quality conversation with you."

Tressel's abrupt departure left many around Ohio shaken, including perhaps the best-known coach in the state in recent years, Ted Ginn Sr. of Cleveland Glenville.

"I think we all lost a great man for the state of Ohio, and it's hard for me to speak on the subject, to be honest," Ginn told BuckeyeSports.com recruiting analyst Bill

Greene. "He did so much in the community, and directly for the players themselves, that he will be missed."

In the immediate future, the Buckeye program's fortunes are under the control of Luke Fickell, a Columbus native who lettered for the Scarlet and Gray from 1993-96 and spent the past nine years on Tressel's staff.

He is a known and popular figure around his home state, too, but he faces a challenge in trying to keep the recruiting effort going without any guarantee he or any members of the remaining staff will be coaching in Columbus next season.

"I think that Luke Fickell is a well-respected competitor," Steubenville head

coach Reno Saccoccia told BSB shortly after one of his players, Najee Murray, verbally committed on June 12 to be part of Ohio State's class of 2012. "Of all the coaches there, he was pegged to take Coach Tressel's place even before he resigned. Luke Fickell is a solid person and I think if anybody can get Ohio State through these tough times, it would be a tough-minded person like Coach Fickell."

"I'm sick over the position that Coach Tressel is in right now because I have the utmost respect for him. I think that if Ohio State is to go on that Luke is by far the best person who can get them through these tough times."

Fickell can use not only his name recognition and personal relationships to sell Ohio State but also the reputation of the football team and the school itself.

"No matter who is there a year from now, it's still going to be Ohio State," said Centerville head coach Ron Ullery, who has coached multiple future Buckeyes and saw his son, Brent, earn a varsity letter as an OSU walk-on in 2007. "It's still going to be Ohio State fan base, and the university is still Ohio State University."

As proof, Ullery pointed to the case of the most recent player to sign with Ohio State from his program.

Michael Bennett picked Ohio State last year over Northwestern, an unlikely second choice for a four-star defensive line prospect such as Bennett, who also counted Alabama, Michigan, Florida, Nebraska, Notre Dame and Stanford among his myriad suitors.

"He didn't pick Ohio State because of the football program only," Ullery said. "(OSU and Northwestern) both are tremendous academic institutions because he wants to go on to the medical field and be a doctor, which I'm sure he will someday."

"I think what tipped it in Ohio State's favor was the level of football that they play. Northwestern's got great people in their football program, too, outstanding people and coaches, but the level of football that he would be with day in and day out, the type of player he would be around, probably tipped it in Ohio State's favor in Michael's mind."

Bennett made his decision in May 2010, months before six players were suspended in December for trading memorabilia and school equipment for tattoos and cash. He signed his letter of intent in February,

a month prior to Tressel's admission he had committed an NCAA violation by withholding information about some of those players' conduct and nearly four months before the coach resigned.

Though Bennett could have asked for his release, he did not.

Prospects in this recruiting season are looking at a different playing field, one where many enticing college options are in front of them and Ohio State is still months from knowing the results of an NCAA investigation that could alter their careers.

"It's probably going to be tough at least this year because they don't really know what they're facing sanctions-wise," Schneider said. "But it's always been a great program and there is the following that the whole school has throughout the country with the alumni and how it can benefit a guy to go there for what it can do for him for the rest of his life. There are alumni all over the world from Ohio State that will hire people because of that."

He said many coaches around the state know Fickell and like him.

"He's a real personable guy who likes to just come in and doesn't necessarily need to just talk football with you," Schneider

said. "He's a real passionate guy, loves Ohio State and I think he's the perfect guy for the job. I hope they do really well this year so he ends up getting it because I think he would end up carrying on the legacy of what the program has been in the past."

Ullery said he was acquainted with Fickell but not to the level he knew Tressel.

Like Schneider, he expressed hope the current OSU head man would enjoy enough success this year to hang onto the job long term.

"I've talked to Luke a few times – quality guy," Ullery said. "I look for him to really do an outstanding job there, hopefully a good enough job to get more than just a trial run because you know as well as I do if they don't keep him there then most of the assistants are probably gone as well. There are just so many great assistant coaches there that I hate to see them all leave."

"Ohio State's program is obviously bigger than any one individual or number of individuals. It always has been. Plus they have so many quality people there still. Coach Tressel was an absolute quality person when he was there, and he did nothing but surround himself with great people on that staff."

"I think they'll weather the storm, and no matter what happens this summer they're going to be back on their feet pretty soon. I think they'll attract the same type of people they've always attracted."

BSB staff writer Adam Jardy contributed to this report.



Jim Tressel



Luke Fickell

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Buckeyes Not Shaken Up About Departure

Continued From Page 1

Junior defensive lineman John Simon said he feels Pryor made the decision to leave because he felt it was in the best interest of his teammates.

"It showed what kind of character he had when he's doing what's best for the team," he said. "That shows a lot. I just think he thought he was bringing distractions to the team, some negativity."

Simon, like Bauserman, said he did not see the decision coming. Asked if he personally felt Pryor had become a distraction, Simon said, "No, I don't think so at all. I had a great relationship with Terrelle and I wish him the best."

Despite the impressive on-field résumé Pryor posted, former OSU quarterback Craig Krenzel said he understands mixed feelings about his departure.

"There's more, I think, to being remembered fondly as a Buckeye than what you do on the field," Krenzel told BSB. "It's an outward expression of your love and your passion for the university and the program and your respect and honor for the guys that have come before you."

Away from the gridiron, the selling of gold pants symbolizing victories over Michigan by Pryor and others has particularly rankled former players, some of whom never earned a pair during their playing days.

A two-sport athlete who won state titles in both football and basketball, Pryor famously delayed his college decision on National Signing Day in 2008 before completing the recruiting class by selecting Ohio State in mid-March. It also was the date of the first misstep in the eyes of OSU fans, Krenzel said.

In announcing his decision, Pryor said he would be playing football for "the University of Ohio State."

"That's going to tick a lot of people off from day one," Krenzel said. "You don't know that it's not the University of Ohio State? (It was) just the little things."

In interviews, Pryor often spoke of his admiration for the team and Tressel in particular. Prior to the 2009 season, Pryor displayed a new sleeve tattoo dotted with buckeye leaves, buckeyes and a Block "O."

However, Pryor was known to show his displeasure at a dropped pass or mistake committed by his teammates. Television cameras caught him yelling at his position coach during one game, leading Tressel to defend his competitive nature.

Although he was quick to point out the numerous game-changing plays made by Pryor, Krenzel said they never quite overshadowed everything else.

"He never really to me showed that true leadership character on the field," Krenzel said. "Guys drop balls and he's taking his helmet off and walking off the field and you can just see the disgust. Just the whole demeanor I don't think ever really won people over."

"A lot of people got excited and continually looked the other way for a dazzling run that he might have had, but I think deep down a lot of people really wanted something more – not necessarily as a player on the field but just in general. For as much as people tried to rag on Tim Tebow for him being corny, let's face it. Buckeye fans would love a Tim Tebow or any guy that just genuinely loves the game and is passionate about winning, is passionate about his team and is passionate about his program."

As Pryor's quarterbacks coach during his prep career, Roy Hall has maintained a close

relationship with his former player. Although he expressed sadness with how Pryor's career came to an end, Hall told BSB that bigger and better things are on the horizon.

"I just can't wait until the day comes – and it will come – that Terrelle rises again and all the critics that blasted him, they eat their words," Hall said.

Asked what he felt people should know about Pryor, Hall said, "People need to know about Terrelle that he's a young man and he really made a mistake. I don't know if he even knew what was going on."

"God forbid if he had been caught with a DUI or assaulted somebody or sold drugs or got caught taking drugs. They made it like he was a felon. People are dying every day but this is the biggest story going on. It's unbelievable."

Pryor Speaks Out

One week after announcing that he was leaving the program, Pryor spoke for less than 100 seconds at press availability in Miami scheduled by his newly signed agent, Drew Rosenhaus.

In an address peppered with apologies, Pryor attempted to put the cap on a tumultuous six months for both him and the OSU program.

"In terms of Ohio State, I'd like to say sorry to the coaching staff, say sorry to my teammates, say sorry to all of Buckeye Nation and all Buckeye fans across the country," he said. "I never meant to hurt anybody directly or indirectly with my conduct off the field and I am truly sorry."

Pryor also made special mention of Tressel.

"I'm sorry for what all went down and I apologize with all my heart," he said. "I love you just like a father. You taught me a lot. I apologize for putting you in a situation and taking you out of a job and a place that you loved to be. I regret the fact that you're not there anymore, and I regret the fact that I'm not there anymore."

Rosenhaus, who pronounced his client's first name incorrectly throughout the press conference and spoke for about seven minutes, said he would not have taken on Pryor as a client were it not for Tressel's testimonials and promised that the two would work together closely.

With a national television audience looking on, Rosenhaus did not let Pryor take questions from reporters. The agent – no stranger to hyperbole – said his expectations are sky-high for the former Buckeye.

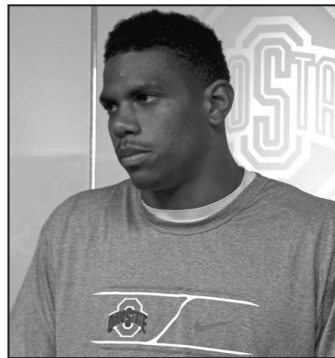
"I'm very confident that this drive, this character, this makeup, along with his incredible physical ability, (Pryor) is one of the most gifted quarterbacks that the NFL has seen," he said. "For anyone who questions where he's going to be drafted, I expect him to be a first-round pick in the supplemental draft."

"This league needs quarterbacks. Are you kidding me? Middle round for this guy?"

During the morning of his press conference, Pryor worked out with NFL wide receivers Chad Ochocinco, Donte Stallworth and Antonio Brown and posed for photos that were posted on Ochocinco's personal Twitter page.

In addition, Ochocinco discussed Pryor in three separate tweets. Addressing media members who doubt whether Pryor is NFL material, the wideout said Pryor possesses great timing and arm strength, concluding that "with the right coaching after what I saw today with my own eyes he can be a great QB."

Numerous reports have had Pryor working with different quarterback gurus in an attempt



MATTHEW HAGER

SAYING SORRY – Former Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor apologized to Jim Tressel, his OSU teammates and Buckeye fans in a press conference June 14 with his new agent, Drew Rosenhaus.

to get ready for the NFL. The (Canton, Ohio) Repository reported June 27 that Pryor was set to work with former Massillon (Ohio) Washington quarterback George Whitfield Jr., who also spent one season under Tressel at Youngstown State before moving to Tiffin University. Whitfield has worked with 2010 Heisman Trophy winner Cam Newton and Pittsburgh Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger as well.

However, reports surfaced June 29 that Pryor would instead be working with former Cincinnati Bengals signal caller Ken Anderson,

who has been a quarterbacks coach in the NFL for the Bengals, Steelers and Jacksonville Jaguars before retiring in 2010.

Regardless of whom he would be working with, Pryor was a figure of interest among writers and NFL front offices. On SI.com, Andrew Perloff listed five reasons that Pryor's decision to enter the draft make sense. Among them was the fact that the quarterback will not need to go through the interview process that players are subjected to when they go through the NFL combine.

"He's coming off a scandal and doesn't seem comfortable talking in tough situations," he wrote. "Ohio State shielded him from the media, and even at his introductory press conference with agent Drew Rosenhaus, the quarterback didn't take questions. What kind of NFL quarterback doesn't take questions?"

However, Rosenhaus said Pryor will still face NFL teams and answer their questions leading up to the draft.

"Every day I'm going to put him in a position where he's going to meet with teams," he said. "He's not going to make any excuses. He's going to tell the teams he made some mistakes out of (lack of) maturity but he has a good heart."

"I've represented a lot of players in the NFL. This young man has got character and he is going to be a winner in the National Football League. He's going to look the teams right in the eyes and he's going to say that he's sorry for the decisions that he's made but he won't make those same mistakes and that he loves the game of football and that he is going to learn from his mistakes and be a better person for it."

COVER STORY

Bauserman Was Hard-Throwing Pitching Prospect

Continued From Page 1

Can Joe Baseball become Joe Starter when the Buckeyes open the 2011 season Sept. 3 against Akron? Earning that honor would mark the culmination of a journey that has taken him from one side of the country to the other and back again.

Powerful Pitcher

A fourth-round selection by the Pirates in the 2004 draft, Bauserman reported to rookie ball with the organization's team in the Gulf Coast League that summer. There, under manager Woody Huyke, Bauserman went 2-2 with a 2.79 ERA in nine appearances.

"He was a guy that had a very good arm," Huyke said. "He could've pitched in the big leagues with the stuff that he had. We all thought he was a prospect at the time."

Although his velocity was down a bit from his high school days, when he was clocked as fast as 96 miles per hour, Bauserman still reached the 90s and struck out 35 batters in 38½ innings.

Huyke said the chief goal for pitchers at that stage is to improve their fundamentals from holding runners on base to learning to field their position.

"When you're young, your secondary pitch is not a good pitch because you're young," he said. "Guys develop curveballs and changeups and so forth, but his fastball was in the middle 90s so he was very good. Joe was not a problem. He worked pretty hard."

With the year of experience under his belt, Bauserman climbed to short-season Single-A Williamsport of the New York-Penn League for the 2005 season. There, he became teammates with Todd Redmond, a right-handed pitcher who now suits up for the Gwinnett Braves, Atlanta's Triple-A affiliate.

The two would be teammates for the duration of Bauserman's career.

"He was a power pitcher," Redmond said. "He threw his fastball. From what I remember he had a good fastball and a good breaking ball. He was definitely more of a strikeout guy and definitely a good player."

That season, Bauserman's numbers were solid. He went 6-2 with a 2.84 ERA in 14 starts,

striking out 45 batters and walking 26 in 69½ innings.

Although Bauserman and Redmond advanced to Single-A Hickory of the South Atlantic League for the 2006 campaign, it would be Bauserman's last complete season on the diamond. In August, Bauserman developed shoulder tendinitis and had to be shut down for the rest of the season.

"It sucks," he said. "You just sit around and you don't really do much. You can't do much of anything, just sitting around while the team plays."

Admitting that the grind of a full season wears on everyone, teammate Michael Crotta said he could tell that Bauserman was missing the sport of football as well as the college experience he had skipped out on to play baseball.

"He was sitting there talking about how he wasn't always getting the fair shake and he was talking about, 'I want to go back,' and, 'I miss playing football,'" said Crotta, who started 2011

in the Pirates' bullpen before being injured and sent to Triple-A Indianapolis.

That season, Bauserman also was known to be a fan of the local concession stands. After being caught sneaking out for food a few times, he was no longer allowed to chart games from the bullpen.

"Oh yeah, he definitely liked to eat some nachos and cheese," Redmond said with a laugh.

Bauserman finished the season 6-8 with a 4.01 ERA in 21 starts.

"At the end of it he was battling with arm soreness and that kind of stuff," Redmond said. "He couldn't get over it. I think he was just over baseball."

I don't know if he was over baseball the whole time, but I think he definitely always thought about football. You could always tell. He always talked about it."

The desire to come back to football grew with each season, Bauserman said, and reached a breaking point during the winter of 2007.



Joe Bauserman

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COVER STORY

Bauserman placed a call to head coach Jim Tressel, took an unofficial visit to campus and then made a return trip to Columbus for the OSU spring game in April.

"You come to a spring game and there's 75,000 people," Bauserman said that fall. "I always enjoyed coming to the games up here. I really enjoy all atmospheres like that, and you really didn't get that playing in front of 1,000 people in Single-A ball in the middle of North Carolina."

Plus, the sport was ceasing to be fun, he said.

"I love the game of baseball," Bauserman said upon his arrival in Columbus. "It's like, when you're little you play the field and you did everything, and now it's a job and you're out there once every five days. It just doesn't feel fun, I guess."

Huyke said he had no idea that Bauserman had thrown for more than 5,000 yards during his final two seasons as a prep quarterback.

"I was surprised when he left (the game)," Huyke said. "He quit out of the blue sky. A couple of years and that was it."

Prolific Passer

Despite Bauserman's talents on the diamond, it appears football was never far from his heart. According to Crotta, Bauserman would grab something out of his locker to help pass the time with his teammates.

It was a football.

"Everybody's got something stupid in the minor leagues to pass the time because you're at the field for so long," Crotta said. "He'd bring a football out and the strength guys never liked it because they're afraid of people getting hurt, but he'd be out there throwing passes to people and doing stuff like that."

That should not be surprising given the success Bauserman enjoyed in both sports in high school. After spending his first two prep seasons playing for Strasburg, Va., Bauserman transferred to Tallahassee (Fla.) Lincoln and quickly earned the starting position under head coach David Wilson.

Bauserman became the replacement for Gavin Dickey, a five-star prospect who signed with Florida but wound up stuck behind Chris Leak on the depth chart.

"We were an option offense before with Gavin, and we just went purely almost shotgun and four wides every down and no huddle and hand signals (with Bauserman)," Wilson said. "He came in and just ran our offense to perfection. We basically molded our offense around his talents."

While throwing to the likes of Antonio Cromartie (now with the New York Jets), Todd Brigran (signed with Louisville) and Ryan Gilliam (signed with Oregon), Bauserman gained around 3,000 yards through the air as a junior. Buoyed by the potent air attack, the Trojans advanced to the fourth round of the state playoffs.

Bauserman's tenure at Lincoln got off to an inauspicious start, however.

"I think his first pass he ever threw at Lincoln was an interception," Wilson said. "Then he came back and threw for about 300 yards in the ballgame. He was sort of unflappable from that standpoint. He didn't let the last play bother him."

Bauserman missed spring football before his senior year as he helped lead the baseball team to the state title game. Wilson said the school encouraged him to continue to compete in both sports.

"We weren't worried about missing spring practices because, gracious, the guy threw for 3,000 yards his junior year," the coach said. "What does he need to prove? He led our football team to two district championships, our baseball team to a couple of district championships. He was very successful here."

He was recruited by OSU and schools such as Tennessee, Georgia and Auburn, and Scout rated him the No. 55 quarterback prospect in the nation. He committed to the Buckeyes before his senior season got under way in order to be able to focus fully on his senior season in both sports.

It was shortly after the draft that Bauserman made the decision to give baseball a try. Looking back, he cited two reasons for his decision.

"Probably I was 18 and the amount of money (offered)," he said.

Said Wilson, "I think anytime you've got a 95-mph fastball, you're wise to look at the baseball route."

Bauserman never signed a letter of intent with Ohio State. After National Signing Day, his father told Scout that the plan was for Bauserman to grayshirt.

When he chose baseball, Bauserman penned a letter to OSU fans explaining his decision. It concluded with, "Coach Tressel has left open the door for me to eventually become a Buckeye. Today, I am a Pittsburgh Pirate. However, tomorrow I might be a Buckeye. We will see. No one knows what the future holds."

Looking back on the letter, Bauserman said he wrote it because "it's just courtesy. They recruited me and the fans were part of the whole experience."

Bauserman began his OSU career in 2007 as a walk-on with the Pirates obliged to pick up the tab as part of his contract. He reported for fall camp after not being allowed to take part in summer workouts and was eventually converted to scholarship.

On check-in day, Tressel said he was impressed with Bauserman's conditioning.

"He made every run," the coach said. "He said that he could have gone more. He really did a good job working to come in in good condition. I'm anxious to watch him as well."

As Tressel then pointed out, Bauserman did not even know the team's cadence for calling plays at that point.

"I haven't seen him throw the ball since youth camp of 1984 - I don't know when it was," Tressel joked. "I'm anxious to see. We were talking about that in our offensive meeting today. Someone says, 'Has anyone seen Bauserman throw?' I said, 'Well, I remember youth camp, and he had a smooth motion then.' (Quarterbacks coach) Joe Daniels said, 'Yeah, smooth enough for us to offer him a scholarship.'"

When he arrived at OSU, Bauserman talked about wanting to give the sport a chance after the three-year layoff. After the 2011 spring game, he indicated that simply being on the roster was no longer good enough.

"You come here not to be the backup," he said. "You come here to play and eventually move on to the next level. If it's one game, two games, five games, I'll take what I can get."

While Bauserman was taking a redshirt, junior quarterback Todd Boeckman led the Buckeyes to the national championship game. The following winter, OSU landed Pryor and he knocked Boeckman out of the starting role by the fourth game of the season.

Once Pryor became the starter, Bauserman's chances of seeing significant playing time were dim at best. In 24 appearances as a backup,

Bauserman has completed 25 of 47 passes for 320 yards, two touchdowns and one interception.

Although Bauserman has been around the program, Sanzenbacher said that experience won't necessarily earn him the starting job now that Pryor is gone.

"He's going to have to prove himself," the wideout said. "Even if you have been around, and Joe has been around and he's been working just like everybody else, when you step in the huddle you're still going to have to prove it on the field. That's going to be the first step."

Sanzenbacher added that Bauserman brings calmness to his teammates when he steps on the field.

"He's never been that amped-up, crazy guy," he said. "He's always been very even-keel. What he lacks in his physical attributes, I think he's got that quarterback moxie to him that he's probably had since he was in high school. He definitely brings that to the table."

Redmond, who said he has visited with Bauserman while Gwynett played in Columbus, said it does not surprise him that his former teammate is in the mix to be the starter.

"He always was real hyped on watching games and waiting for football season to start," he said. "He'd say, 'Man, I can't wait to go back up there and watch football games,' and all that stuff. You could tell that he always had it on his mind. He always threw a football. From what I saw when he did throw a football, he threw it very well. He could definitely throw."

And although Bauserman said he could not recall the last time he has thrown a baseball, Sanzenbacher said the ability is still there.

Asked if he could tell early on that Bauserman was a former pitcher, the wideout said, "Besides when he throws slants to you way too hard and you've got to tell him to ease up? You can see it there."

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With Pryor Gone, Young QBs Could Get Chance

By MARCUS HARTMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In an offseason of seemingly unprecedented change, there is at least one constant for Ohio State football fans: They want to know what is going on with the quarterback position.

Spring football came and went without a feeling any of the four candidates, then looking to earn a five-game cameo but now staring at a potentially permanent job after Terrelle Pryor's early June exit from the program, had grabbed hold of the starting role.

During a brief June 28 meeting with reporters at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, head coach Luke Fickell confirmed that was still the case when he declared the quarterback race "completely wide open."

Repetitions were not quite laid out by seniority during spring practice, a move that might bode poorly for the older pair in the derby.

In fact, senior Joe Bauserman threw the fewest passes (18) in unofficial stats combined from two organized scrimmages open to the media and the spring game. Next was true freshman Braxton Miller (23), then sophomore Kenny Guiton (30) and redshirt freshman Taylor Graham (34).

Pure passing numbers skew the action a bit as Bauserman, Miller and Guiton were all more likely than the statue-like Graham to pull the ball down and run if the opportunity presented itself, but they might tell a tale nonetheless.

Were the coaches so accommodating to the youngsters because they were comfortable with what the veterans can do, or was it a matter of really needing to find out if Miller or Graham is the best option in order to go with one of the youngsters this fall?

Coaches often say they are considering all possibilities in a position battle even when that is pretty clearly not the case. Often veterans are not publicly guaranteed spots simply to try to assure everyone involved keeps working hard, even if most people in and around the situation understand the early leaders will come out on top as long as they do what they are asked.

In this case, however, claims that anyone could earn the right to start the Akron game under center on Sept. 3 seem quite accurate.

If that is so, Bauserman and Guiton did not do much to use their chances to set the bar very high in the spring, though they took more reps with the first and second teams when the squads weren't scrambled.

The mental edge could be their biggest advantage, but time could erode that between now and the start of the season as the younger duo gets more acclimated.

If it comes down to the younger pair, who might have the edge?

Graham and Miller both have stronger arms than the older QBs with the edge in velocity probably going to Miller. Both have some inconsistencies in their delivery, something that would seem to be a bigger negative for Graham than Miller because Graham doesn't bring much scrambling ability to the table.

The 6-4, 230-pound Graham was sacked five times in the spring game and is the one of the four who can't keep plays alive with his feet.

That could hurt him when Fickell, offensive coordinator Jim Bollman and the rest of the staff decide who will start. Bauserman and Guiton are able to avoid rushers and

will pick up the occasional first down on a scramble while the 6-3, 205-pound Miller can do those things but also shares some of Pryor's ability to break off a long play at any time.

The offensive brain trust that until May 30 also included Jim Tressel seemed to view that attribute with increasing importance as the years advanced, but the most important thing Tressel looked for in choosing a quarterback was a knowledge of how to protect the ball.

Neither Bauserman nor Guiton stood out in ball security this spring or in previous seasons, and that is probably a good explanation for why the door seems so wide open for Graham and Miller.

So can either Miller or Graham jump ahead of the older Bauserman or Guiton?

If it does, indeed, come down to the younger pair, that will likely depend on how quickly Miller can reach a baseline of knowledge of the offense. Teammates say Graham has a lot of football smarts, despite lacking Miller's athleticism. Miller appeared to make positive strides in the knowledge department in April, but only time will tell if that will be enough.

In any case, those who knew one or the other in high school believe they could be up to the task of leading a college team as soon as this fall.

"Talent-wise, I can't imagine (Miller) can't step in right now and play at that level right now," said Ron Ullery, who saw him up close for four years as head coach at Centerville (Ohio) High School while Miller starred at conference rival Huber Heights Wayne.

"Now, the question is if you can pick up everything you've got to be able to pick up and be able to make decisions as fast as you have to at that level really early, really quick. I would be one of the last people who would be surprised if he was the guy from (the start of the season), just based on what I've seen from day one."

Ullery, who has tutored such former Buckeyes as Kirk Herbstreit (as an assistant coach) and A.J. Hawk (as head coach) during more than three decades on the Elks' sideline, called Miller the best high school player he has ever seen and praised the youngster's mentality as well.

"I've never seen anyone so calm and cool even when he was a freshman (in high school)," Ullery said. "He's just so even-keeled with an immense amount of talent. There's nothing the guy doesn't do outstanding physically. There's nothing. He's unbelievable."

Another former rival coach, Clayton Northmont's Lance Schneider, agreed Miller could step in and run an offense similar to the one Ohio State ran with Pryor the past three seasons. That included a healthy dose of shotgun formations and some designed quarterback runs.

Schneider, who coached former Ohio State All-America safety Kurt Coleman and current Buckeye safety C.J. Barnett at Northmont, said he saw Miller adjust positively to a new shotgun passing offense last year at Wayne.

"What they did with him last year really helped him," Schneider told BSB. "He threw a lot more shorter balls and he got pretty good at that, which was kind of a weakness of his going into last year, I think."

In poker terms, Miller has the most "outs" on any given play. He is most capable of getting the ball to more places on the field, whether that's with the velocity to nail a throw from one hashmark to the opposite



JOSH WINSLOW

MILLER TIME? – Freshman Braxton Miller (5) will battle senior Joe Bauserman, sophomore Kenny Guiton and redshirt freshman Taylor Graham for the starting quarterback position this fall.

sideline or the fleetness of foot to leave a linebacker grasping for air when he has him dead to rights.

If the decision comes down to the two younger quarterbacks, could that be the ultimate difference?

"I could see him making a run for the job in the fall," Schneider said. "With a freshman, it just comes down to how much mental preparation he's going to make and how much film he's going to watch and things like that. He's probably the most talented they've got at the position now. It just comes down to catching up with the guys they had on campus beforehand to get himself even with them mentally and physically."

Miller's status as a five-star recruit and his familiarity as an Ohio native has him at the forefront of fans' minds, but Graham, a three-star recruit from Illinois one year earlier, will not fade easily into the background.

Joe Wardynski, who coached Graham at Wheaton North, told BSB he felt Pryor's exit might help Graham's chances because it gives the staff a chance to tailor an offense around him for a full year as opposed to using one that fits Graham's talents for five games then having to go back to a more Pryor-friendly attack when the senior's suspension came to an end.

"They told me when they recruited him they were going to put the best kid on the field and they would put a system in place to fit the best kid," Wardynski said.

"Knowing Taylor, he was going to prepare the same way whether he was the starter or the fourth-string guy. That's just the way he does things. He's a very hardworking kid and a very bright kid."

Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff writer Adam Jardy contributed to this report.

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Meet The New Boss

Fickell Sets 2011 Goals In First Press Conference

By ADAM JARDY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Luke Fickell gained his first sense of appreciation for what it means to play for Ohio State when he was 10 years old. As a native of central Ohio, Fickell had one of the program's all-time greats give him an up-close view of the greatest rivalry in college sports.

"I had a little league football coach, John Hicks, who was a former Outland Trophy winner here at Ohio State," he said June 13 during his first press conference after being named OSU's coach for the 2011 season. "He took me to my first-ever Ohio State-Michigan game, and then eight years later (I was) afforded the opportunity by (then OSU head coach) John Cooper to actually wear the scarlet and gray. It's been these experiences at OSU that have been entrenched in the very fabric of who I am today."

As the sixth former OSU assistant to go on to lead the program, Fickell has been promised nothing beyond this year after being appointed in the wake of former coach Jim Tressel's resignation. He inherits a program facing a ruling from the NCAA Committee on Infractions and will head a team trying to replace four players as they serve five-game suspensions to open the season as well as a three-year starting quarterback who left the program shortly after Fickell took over.

Through all of this, Fickell will be fighting for the right to be named the permanent

head man at his alma mater. However, the former nose guard said his focus has been on what can be controlled within the confines of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center and little else.

"Let me be clear to you guys. The 2011 Buckeyes will not be about comparing and contrasting what we've done before but what we believe we will need to do to move forward," he said. "It will be about respect, toughness and being men of action. Those will be our focuses."

Standing at the lectern in a crisply pressed white dress shirt and scarlet tie under a black suit, Fickell presented a different figure from the coach he is replacing. Although Tressel typically also wore a suit to his weekly in-season press conferences, he would typically open things up with a statement that could last as long as 15 minutes.

Fickell's opening remarks lasted roughly three minutes and included an introduction of his wife, Amy, who was seated in the front row.

Once the coach opened the conference to questions, he was immediately asked what he knew about any details about the NCAA violations facing the program and when he might have known it. Professing to be ignorant of any past or present violations, he said he learned of problems as they happened.

"I wasn't going to say that I had blinders on, but (I was) very focused on the task at hand," Fickell said. "I was not informed of any information until it became public knowledge."

Fickell, who previously was slated to be in charge for the five games Tressel was suspended for, was promoted for the whole of the season once Tressel tendered his resignation May 30. The first 48 hours were a blur, he said.

"That's unique because we didn't have any idea until that morning," Fickell said. "I wasn't afforded the opportunity to sit and think. It happened fast. (Athletic director Gene) Smith asked me to step in. We didn't have a whole lot of time to step back and think about the situation. We knew we had to hit the ground running."

That started with a pair of team workouts on the final two evenings of the month.

"All we wanted to do was make sure that we could stand up tall, show some support, show some leadership and most importantly focus on our kids because we knew how they would feel and make sure that they were OK," Fickell said.

It took two weeks to speak publicly, he said, because the program was concerned with preparing players for finals week, which took place during the first full week of June.

Smith was present and delivered a two-minute opening statement but did not take questions. A number of Fickell's assistant coaches were on hand, including defensive



MATTHEW HAGER

TAKING QUESTIONS – New Ohio State football head coach Luke Fickell held his first press conference June 13.

coordinator Jim Heacock, who said Fickell has the right tenacity for the position.

"It's going to take mental toughness and physical toughness," Heacock said. "When you hire a nose guard, I think the thing he brings to the table is teamwork. He was down in the trenches and taking on double teams. (Linebackers) Ryan Miller and (Greg) Bellisari and all those guys were making plays while he was beating up centers and guards."

Fickell said he has spoken with a few former coaches for advice since taking the position, including Tressel, Cooper and current OSU men's basketball coach Thad Matta.

Fickell said he spoke with Tressel the day the coach resigned.

"Really, the only thing he can give me right now is support," the coach said. "He said he really gave us the support for me, for the whole entire coaching staff, for our players. The biggest thing he had given me as well as all the other coaches I've had an opportunity to sit down and talk to is be yourself. I think he respected the situation enough to say that he has the support for all of us as well as to be yourself."

He will try to follow that philosophy as he attempts to earn the position on a permanent basis. However, Fickell said his focus is not on convincing his bosses of his merits.

"Ohio State's expectations will not change," he said, "whether there's a tag on the name or there's not a tag on the name or there's a long-term contract. It doesn't

matter. We will embrace the expectations of being a Buckeye, and we know what that brings with it.

"Ohio State is so much bigger than any one team, one player, one coach or one situation. We all understand that change is inevitable. It is growth that is optional. We believe this is a time for growth for all of us."

A four-year letter winner, Fickell started a school-record 50 consecutive games from 1993-96 after taking a redshirt season and finished with 212 career tackles.

Just 37 years old, Fickell is in his 10th season on staff at OSU and has passed up other high-profile positions to remain in Columbus for an opportunity like the one now at hand. Along the way, he has served as a special teams coordinator as well as the team's linebackers coach and co-defensive coordinator.

"I truly believe it's been a natural progression," he said. "Where some might believe it's an accelerated progression, this is what I've prepared for for almost 15 years now, to have this goal in mind. I've had a lot of different responsibilities from special teams to defense."

"I didn't want to take some of the travels of picking up my entire family and (coaching elsewhere)."

A few of his former teammates were on hand including Mike Vrabel and Matt Finkes. After watching the press conference from the back of the room, Vrabel was asked



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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

if his friend and former teammate betrayed any signs of nervousness.

"I don't know how you couldn't be a little bit nervous, but I just know we're proud of Luke," he said. "I think, speaking from anybody who's ever played with him, played for him or is a friend of his, guys are proud (and) happy for Ohio State and happy for those players in the locker room."

At least one part of Fickell's press conference sounded like business as usual in Columbus. Asked about the team's annual rivalry showdown with Michigan, Fickell stared the reporter right in the eyes and answered, "Our guys will know about Nov. 26, I promise you that."

After taking questions for about half an hour, Fickell closed things up with a final message.

"I just want to leave you with one thing," he said. "We will have a goal this year to lead the nation in three categories – effort, turnovers and toughness. We believe this will be the formula to success and moving forward and planning for the future here at Ohio State."

Recruiting Focus

Fickell is assured of only one season as head coach at Ohio State, but the impact he will make on the program during the coming months could last for years.

Ohio State has said a permanent coaching decision will take place after the season, but in the meantime, one of Fickell's most important assignments must be hitting the recruiting trail and helping the Buckeyes land a solid recruiting class.

To do so, Fickell said he will stress the history and tradition that come with the program.

"We want them to understand that we've got a plan for the future," he said. "That's what we've tried to express to them, to know that it's about something so much greater than just one situation, one player or one coach. We have recruited like that for the last 10 years. We truly believe that Ohio State will continue to attract the best student-athletes around the country."

The Buckeyes have been the toast of the Big Ten recruiting world since Tressel arrived in 2001. Starting with the class of 2002, the first year in the Scout.com rankings, OSU's average national class ranking was 10.3 during 10 seasons. Michigan was not far behind at 10.9 and Penn State was a distant third at 22.7.

The disparity has been even more slanted toward the Buckeyes in recent years. OSU boasted the top-rated class in the conference in three of the last four seasons, capturing the top class in the nation in 2009.

Now, suddenly, that run of success is under attack. New Michigan head coach Brady Hoke has made recruiting Ohio a priority, and that has paid off to the tune of seven verbal commitments from the Buckeye State already for the class of 2012. Just one was known to hold an offer from the

Buckeyes, however, in Tom Strobel, a four-star defensive end from Mentor.

Fickell admitted that recruiting might be more difficult than past years because the deck is stacked against the program from a national perspective. In addition to Fickell's own uncertainty regarding his future, the program could be facing NCAA sanctions.

"That doesn't make it any different from any other year with people saying different things," he said. "We're going to be aggressive at what we do."

Throughout the past several years, the OSU coaching staff has preached the importance of getting recruits to visit the campus. Once the recruits are in Columbus, the thought goes, the overall experience and atmosphere will help convince them to become Buckeyes.

Fickell said that approach will remain the same under his watch.

"We've always sold Ohio State, and that's what we're trying to tell these kids day in and day out," he said. "It's about something so much bigger than what they read or what they see. We just need to get them here to make sure that they understand that. We still have all the faith and confidence in our coaching staff and the players that are here."

"Yes, there are speculations and what I keep reminding them is they need to get here so that they can meet us and understand and have faith and believe in who we are, what we're about and where we're headed. That's the most important thing for us."

The problem might be getting them to Columbus.

The Buckeyes currently boast nine verbal commitments, all of whom hail from within state lines. No longer included on that list is five-star offensive tackle Kyle Kalis of Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward, who withdrew his commitment two weeks after Fickell took the job after initially repudiating his support in the wake of Tressel's resignation.

Prior to four-star prospect De'van Bogard's commitment June 25, OSU's previous five verbal commitments were all three-star prospects as ranked by Scout, and none of them is known to have held an offer from the Wolverines.

In addition, five-star running back Bri'onte Dunn is committed to the Buckeyes but has listened to overtures from the Wolverines and could switch his commitment should OSU be hit with major sanctions.

The big battles will be fought in the coming months. Four of the top 10 prospects from Ohio hold offers from both OSU and U-M and remain uncommitted. Fickell's hope is that the same pattern will hold true for the Buckeyes as in previous seasons.

"What we've stressed to those kids is we're looking for a few good men, the ones who can stand up and understand what Ohio State is all about," he said. "That's what we stressed to them. It's about something bigger than the situation or it's bigger than the coach. That's what we're going to hammer home with them continually."

BSB staff writer Marcus Hartman contributed to this report.

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Buckeyes Moving On With Life After Tressel, Pryor

By JEFF SVOBODA
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Even if the public perception is that there has been a black cloud hanging over the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, all Ohio State center Michael Brewster can see is a silver lining.

Speaking June 28 as one of four Ohio State football players who met with the media for the first time since the departures of both head coach Jim Tressel and quarterback Terrelle Pryor, Brewster said the team psyche hadn't been brought down by a tumultuous month.

"The vibe is great. It couldn't be better, actually," the senior said. "If anything, we've just gotten tighter, we've gotten more pissed off and we're ready to go. Add that to a group of guys and we can do some damage. This is a great group of guys. We're not going to back down just because stuff happened in the past. If anything, we're working harder than ever.

"It's easy to get content when you win six Big Ten championships, so if anything it's coming at a good time for us to really buckle down and get ready."

Brewster's view seemed to fit in with that of the other players made available, including defensive back Nate Oliver, who turned aside a suggestion that the football facility could have doubled as a mortuary in the previous four weeks.

"It's not a funeral home," Oliver said. "Whenever we step through those doors, we know we have to go to work. That's what it is. We're Ohio State. We're playing for our



JOSH WINSLOW

FEELING GOOD – Senior center Michael Brewster (50) said the mood in the Ohio State football locker room is good despite the departures of head coach Jim Tressel and quarterback Terrelle Pryor (2).

tradition. It's bigger than us. It's bigger than one person and it's bigger than this team."

Quotes such as those gave the appearance that with the program under siege, Ohio State's players have subscribed to the philosophy that the best revenge is living well. Defensive lineman John Simon said not much has changed around the facility, with the players expending all of their energies on coming together and getting better.

"Just continuing this team unity," Simon

said when asked what the team wants to accomplish right now. "It's awesome right now. Everyone loves coming in every day, and we have to keep that going and keep working hard."

In fact, a slogan has already emerged among the players as they move forward – "Next guy up." That is a particularly adept adage considering Ohio State must replace seven starters on defense as well as Pryor, two graduated offensive linemen and three other offensive starters who will miss the first five games because of suspension.

Oliver said the slogan was inspired by television analyst Jon Gruden, who met with the team during the spring.

"He was talking about the Green Bay Packers and everything that happened to them in the Super Bowl – how guys got injured and they had to have guys step up,"

Oliver said. "He basically said, 'Next guy up needs to go.'"

While the OSU coaches are unable to conduct on-field workouts – or even watch them, for that matter – during the summer, the strength and conditioning coaches are allowed to conduct voluntary workouts for up to eight hours each week. The players are also conducting their own 7-on-7 drills to work on skills and foster team unity until camp begins in early August.

"I don't think it was tough to get our act together," Brewster said. "There was no point in time where we felt sorry for ourselves. There was no point in time where we were down or like, 'Man, I don't know what's going to happen.' There were tough times emotionally for a day or two after some stuff happened, but other than that, nothing ever stopped.

"Workouts never stopped. Everything just kept going, and it's got to. We don't have much time. A month and a half, then camp's here, then the season. It's like 60-some days until the first game. We're just trying to get ready for that."

Once the season does arrive Sept. 3 with a game against in-state foe Akron, the normalcy of fall camp should have returned to the program. Brewster expects things to be the same on the ledger, too, where Ohio State has posted six straight conference championships and 10-win seasons.

"I know this team is going to be good," Brewster said. "I'm not really worried about that. I have 100 percent confidence in this team and what we're going to do this year. Every year, people doubt us, and this year they're going to doubt us even more, but I'm excited about this group, I really am.

"I think this might be the most fun I ever have here. The challenge is beautiful – that's what I like to say. We're just looking forward to it."

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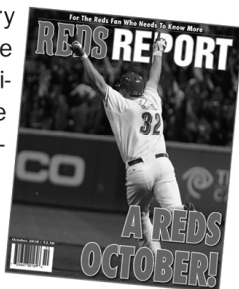
Considering new head coach Luke Fickell's relative youth and intensity – and

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

his presence on the team for the past nine years as an assistant on Tressel's staff – it should come as no surprise that many of the players were pleased to see the former nose guard appointed Tressel's replacement for the 2011 season.

"He's a leader," Oliver said. "He's very enthusiastic. He's very passionate about what he does, and you can tell whenever he speaks, guys listen and guys get into him. Anything Coach Fickell wants us to do, tells us to do, guys do it. We're going to work hard for him and do what we need to do."

The 37-year-old coach also has instant credibility in the locker room because of his background, specifically the fact that he donned the scarlet and gray. Playing the demanding nose guard position that required him to battle offensive linemen on every play, Fickell still managed to start a school-record 50 straight games from 1993-96.

"He's part of the sacred brotherhood," Brewster said. "He's been here. He's played. He's started 50-some games in a row. You can really relate to him. He knows exactly what we're going through at every second. I think that's pretty cool."

Unfortunately for Fickell, he hasn't had the most chances to put his stamp on the program up to this point – and won't until fall camp. Tressel coached spring practice and resigned on Memorial Day, so the new head coach hasn't had a chance to run any drills on the football field.

Off the field, Fickell has tried to preach his message but has run into issues such as finals week and summer break before the team reconvened in mid-June.

"That's the hard part right now is us as coaches haven't been around as much," Fickell said at a short, impromptu news conference after his players spoke June 28. "This happened Memorial Day, and we had maybe a week with them. Getting the pulse of the team, you think you know, but the curious thing is we're not around them that much because we're not allowed to be around them."

"You have to kind of get that from the players and the guys in the little interactions you have with them now, which is why you're around. You can't watch them work out to see what the pulse is, but you get some good feedback from the kids."

Still, Fickell's reputation – including his honor as the 2010 American Football

Coaches Association Assistant Coach of the Year – has earned him plaudits even though he hasn't been able to spend as much time around his players as he'd assuredly like.

"He's a great guy," Brewster said. "He's a Buckeye through and through. He's been here. He's played here. He's been in the trenches. He's a great leader. I have a lot of confidence in him and I'm very excited about him being the coach."

The players also expect Fickell to bring a more outwardly intense approach than Tressel, one befitting both a defensive coach – Fickell spent the past seven seasons as the team's linebackers coach – and former champion prep wrestler.

"I would say he brings a little bit of fire to work and I think that'll help us out," Simon said. "I think he's really going to instill that in the team, and that'll be good for us this coming year."

"He's a very emotional guy. He'll get you very passionate. It's been rubbing off already. You can tell in the locker room. It's going to be a fun year for us."

The appeal also carries over to the offensive side of the ball.

"I love Coach Fickell," senior quarterback Joe Bauserman said. "I think he'll be good. I think he'll be good for the program. With his type of attitude and toughness he's going to bring to the table, he gives us another advantage."

Playing For Tressel

While the OSU players stepped forward to throw their support behind Fickell, they also made sure to mention their love for Tressel, the coach who recruited them all to Columbus.

"I'm definitely playing for Coach Fick, but I'm almost going to have Coach Tressel in the back of my mind – just remembering everything he did for me," Brewster said.

As such, Brewster said it was "gut-wrenching" to hear May 30 that the 10-year head coach – who won 106 games, seven Big Ten titles and a national championship – had resigned.

"I wouldn't say I was disappointed (in his actions) or anything like that," the Florida native said. "I was just more hurt about the way he had to go out because he was such a great guy, a great coach. He did so many great things for this university and the people at this university and the state of

Ohio. It was unreal. It really did hurt. It just hurts you in your heart."

Oliver agreed.

"Obviously, whenever you have someone who you care about, someone you love, someone you'd go to bat for any day, resign or have to leave or anything like that, it hurts," the senior said. "It hurt for a while and it still does hurt, but you always remember it and you always work hard and you always keep them in your memory. It gives you an extra burst and makes you want to work harder for that person."

Tressel was first suspended and then resigned for not forwarding along informa-

tion about violations that later led to the suspensions of six players, including Pryor, who eventually decided to leave the school in pursuit of the NFL.

Add it all up and many programs would be knocked back a peg, but that is not the case at Ohio State, the players all said.

"As we say, everyone has a plan until you're hit," Oliver said. "We've been hit pretty hard this offseason with everything going on, but we came closer together and we're going to move on from here and continue to work."

BSB staff writers Matthew Hager and Adam Jardy contributed to this report.



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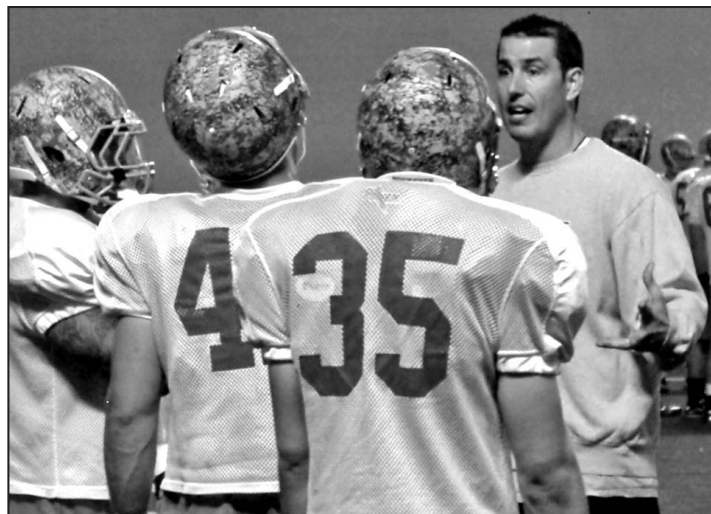
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MATTHEW HAGER

READY TO ROLL – New football head coach Luke Fickell (right) will have the support of his players when the Buckeyes kick off the 2011 season Sept. 3 vs. Akron.



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Tressel's Image Not Tarnished In OSU Fans' Eyes

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

I had the opportunity to address several alumni groups around the state during the past month, and I wanted to report to Buckeye fans, especially those out of state who may feel isolated from other Ohio State football fans, that most of the people I spoke to at these events remain very loyal to departed coach Jim Tressel.

Nearly all of them remain very proud of what the program has accomplished during the past 10 years. What's interesting, when you talk to these Buckeyes, is that it is not just the team's all-but-unprecedented success on the field over the past decade that these fans revel in. It is also a tremendous pride that they have in the values they believe Tressel brought to the program and what they seem to believe is a return to Buckeye traditions.

I find this interesting in light of the fact that Ohio State under Tressel is now being portrayed nationally as a rogue program and Tressel portrayed as a hypocrite for preaching one thing and practicing another in a relentless pursuit of winning, regardless of – literally and figuratively – cost.

The majority of the people I spoke to don't believe their beloved coach acted that way. That's what makes this whole sordid mess so confusing and painful for them.

Granted, the fact that the people I spoke to are not only members of a local alumni club but also Buckeyes who take the time to attend club meetings would indicate that they are the most loyal of Ohio State grads and the most likely to embrace their school and their team – right or wrong. But the fact that they are that committed as alumni would also indicate that they would be the most sensitive to someone besmirching the good name of their university. And still, they remain committed to Tressel.

Are these fans blind to what may have really been going on at Ohio State? Was Tressel blind to what was going on? Only time will tell.

Or maybe we'll never know.

Special thanks to the alumni clubs of Belmont, Van Wert/Paulding and Butler counties for having me out to speak and for, in each case, showing me such gracious hospitality.

A Different Controversy

When you find yourself in the midst of all the chaos that has been around Ohio State football during the last several months and perhaps many more months to come, you find yourself longing for calmer and more upbeat days. It's easy to forget that there has been plenty of controversy surrounding Ohio State football through the years.

While doing some research on something else, I came across an incident from 1992 that I had forgotten about (this whole forgetting thing is something that happens to me more and more these days) and that I found interesting in light of Ohio State's situation today.

The Buckeyes, in the fifth year of the John Cooper era – already 0-4 against Michigan and 0-3 in bowl games including an especially ugly loss to Air Force in the 1990 Liberty Bowl during that span – had just suffered a disappointing (and fifth consecutive) loss to Illinois in Ohio Stadium, dropping Ohio State to 2-3 on the season and 0-2 in the Big Ten. Longtime and influential Columbus sportscaster Jimmy Crum called for Cooper's ouster after the defeat.

"Earlier this year, John Cooper said time and time again, 'We have to improve so we can get to the next level,'" Crum said on

Columbus' WCMH-TV the Monday following the game. "What he should have been saying was, 'We have to improve so we can get Ohio State football back to the level it was before I became head coach.'"

"The winning tradition, scarlet and gray, Buckeye Battle Cry, the Victory Bell in the Stadium tower – they're all gone."

Crum was guilty of a bit of hyperbole in his description of the erosion of Ohio State traditions, but in hindsight, he paints an interesting portrait of then and now.

Cooper would eventually go on to have quite a bit of success in Columbus, though he never could master the Wolverines or – despite a big Rose Bowl victory over Arizona State following the 1996 season – get completely over the bowl-game hump. But something that dogged Cooper throughout his career almost as much as his 2-10-1 record against Michigan and struggles in bowl games was the notion among many Buckeye fans that when it came to Ohio State football, Cooper "just didn't get it." In fact, the travails against OSU's archrival were, in the minds of many, a symptom of that lack of understanding of all things Buckeye.

Following the 2000 season, Cooper was out and along came Tressel, who immediately established himself as the guardian of those very traditions. One of Tressel's first acts as head coach was to make his famous "310 Days" speech, and his first Buckeye team followed that speech up by going to Ann Arbor and defeating the Wolverines for the first time since 1987, Earle Bruce's emotional last game, a game that is also now part of Buckeye lore.

One has to wonder how Ohio State football history and opinions of Tressel might have changed if he hadn't backed up that speech with that first victory over the Buckeyes' biggest rival. But Tressel's team *did* win in Ann Arbor and followed that victory up with a national championship the next season, and by 2011 Tressel was so established as the keeper of the traditions that even a major scandal cannot, as mentioned previously, alter that opinion for many.

The Crum saga gets more interesting, however.

Keep in mind that I have complained for years about how Tressel limited media access to his players and had those few who were allowed to regularly meet the press well-schooled in "Tressel speak." What happened next back in 1992 would give you an idea as to why a coach such as Tressel might want to put a muzzle on his players.

Star running back Robert Smith – who was the Terrelle Pryor of his day, both in his ability on the field and ability to generate controversy off it – attempted to come to the defense of his coach in the wake of Crum's comments. Smith, who would go on to a successful NFL career, took exception to the fact that many Buckeye fans continually compared Cooper to the legendary Woody Hayes.

"People say Woody Hayes did this, Woody Hayes did that," Smith said in a published interview. "I am not one for the tradition thing, and personally, I don't give a (bleep) about what Woody Hayes did."

"Yeah, he won some big games and he

won this and he won that. But it's all about the players that you have and what the players do once you get on the field."

The comments infuriated Buckeye fans and of course reflected badly on Cooper because, to his detractors, they were just another indication that his program had lost touch with the school's traditions, of which Hayes was the biggest symbol.

I suspect that even if Tressel had let his players speak freely, they probably never would have gotten into the mess that Smith did because they were well-schooled in such things as the significance of Hayes.

Interestingly, Smith did not play in the Buckeyes' next game following the loss to Illinois and Crum's and his comments. Cooper denied that there was any connection, blaming Smith's absence from the 31-7 win over Northwestern on a gimpy ankle.

"Robert didn't play because we want to give him a few extra days to heal up because we're going to need him down the stretch," Cooper responded when asked if Smith's absence had anything to do with his comments about Hayes. "I didn't read the paper you're talking about so I can't comment on that."

A couple of days later, Smith attempted to clarify his comments.

"I don't think it's fair to compare coaches of different eras," he said. "There is no way you can take away what Woody Hayes did and was a part of. It was a great era in Ohio State football. But Ohio State had great football before that."

Smith then turned to some words from fiery Buckeye assistant coach Fred Pagac, who played for Hayes, to try to explain his remarks.

"He told us we can't live in the past, we can't try and win games on what's happened before. That was the point I was trying to make. It was not a personal attack on Woody Hayes."

Smith brought up a point that I think is relevant today as we move from Tressel to Luke Fickell or whoever else may eventually end up as Ohio State's football coach. Tressel will be a difficult measuring stick to evaluate any coach against, but Tressel is no longer the coach and at some point you have to move on.

I made a similar point in this space after the Crum incident.

"At some point, people, Crum included, need to stop comparing every OSU football coach to Woody Hayes," I wrote in the Oct. 24, 1992, issue of BSB. "There will never be another Hayes. It's an unfair standard to measure coaches against, particularly when the passing of the years sometimes causes us to remember the successes of past coaches and maybe block out some of the lost games and less successful seasons."

Something I said later in that column may also ultimately hold true for Tressel as history looks back on him and his time as OSU's coach.

"I don't think you evaluate Woody Hayes solely on wins and losses. I think you also have to evaluate him on the many lives he touched."

There is one other interesting and ironic

thing as I look back on that Jimmy Crum incident.

Smith was not the only Buckeye to comment after the late sportscaster called for Cooper's dismissal, which was not the first time Crum had taken Cooper to task.

"It was pretty predictable," then Buckeye quarterback Kirk Herbstreit told BSB at the time of Crum's comments. "Crum is pretty consistent on when he comes out with things like that. It doesn't really affect us one way or the other. It's just another media person making his viewpoint."

"But it's tough. I'm going to be honest with you. It's a lot tougher than dealing with everybody thinking you're the best in the world. You really just try not to pay attention to it, but every time you turn on the TV or read the paper, there's stuff there. You just try to block it out as best you can. I've been here five years, so I'm pretty used to it. But for the young guys, I'm sure it's tough."

My, how the tables have turned. Nearly two decades later, it's Herbstreit, the noted college football analyst, who is frequently accused by Ohio State fans of being hypercritical of the Buckeyes, his Buckeyes.

As an aside, I have been on the Buckeye speaking circuit for nearly 30 years now. For most of those years, the question I was most frequently asked by those in attendance was whether longtime and controversial Buckeye Sports Bulletin letter writer Gary Gerken really existed or was a fabrication of the BSB staff. Yes, he really does exist.

Now that Gerken has gone into hiding, perhaps because the success under Tressel has left him speechless, the question I am most frequently asked is what I think of Herbstreit. Herbstreit, a combination of Buckeye success story and at the same time wayward Buckeye, is clearly on the minds of many Ohio State fans.

I am going to make sure that we reprint the stories about Crum and Smith in our July 19 electronic issue of BSB. Other electronic issues are scheduled for Aug. 2, Aug. 9 and Aug. 16 with our next print issue, the big football preview issue, scheduled to be mailed the week of Aug. 22.

Electronic issues of BSB are free to all BSB print subscribers. If you have not already signed up to enjoy this added bonus, e-mail your name, address, phone number and preferred e-mail address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com and we will forward you simple instructions on how to access this special feature.

Family Matters

I wanted to send special congratulations to my nephews Henry Moskowitz and Jonathan Korn.

Henry recently graduated from Carlton College in Northfield, Minn., and Jonathan graduated from Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C., and will soon head off to Wheaton College in Norton, Mass.

I also wanted to note the passing of my uncle, Hy Stollman. He was a gentle and generous man who taught me the importance of being an uncle, something that those who know me realize is a responsibility that I take very seriously.

So much so that I made it a point to attend Henry's graduation in Minnesota on Saturday, June 11, and Jonathan's ceremony in my native D.C. the next day. I'm sure some people may have thought I was nuts to log so much travel just to be with my nephews on their special days.

My Uncle Hy would have understood.