

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

Vol. 26, No. 27

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

May 12, 2007

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PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER  
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## Still Looking For A Leader



Todd Boeckman



Robby Schoenhof



Antonio Henton

Photos by Jeff Brehm

### Quarterback Competition Highlights Issues For Buckeyes After Spring

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel has a message for those fans hoping he would have named a starting quarterback by the end of spring practice.

Stay tuned.

Todd Boeckman, Robby Schoenhof and Antonio Henton entered the spring locked in a three-way battle for the right to succeed Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith at the

controls of the OSU offense, and although none of the three distinguished himself, no one dropped away behind either.

"I'd say if we had a game tomorrow (Boeckman followed by Schoenhof and Henton) would probably be the order we put them in," Tressel said after spring ball wrapped April 21 with the annual Scarlet and Gray Game. "I don't know that anyone lost any ground, that anyone took any steps backward. I think guys progressed.

"If we had a game tomorrow, I would

start Todd. But I know that I'd probably have some guys get some other opportunities, just like we probably will in the first week and the second week (of the season). We'll see. We've got to have a guy emerge. I know how we'd like to christen someone, but we have to have a guy emerge."

That emergence simply did not occur.

During a pair of jersey scrimmages and the spring game, the trio of quarterbacks combined to throw 10 interceptions while Smith threw only six in 13 games last season. And in the two live scrimmages open to the media – the April 14 jersey scrimmage and the spring game a week later – the trio combined to complete only 37 of 90 attempts (41.1 percent) for 422 yards, one touchdown and six interceptions.

Nevertheless, Tressel was quick to point out that each of the three quarterbacks made some strides and each knows what he has to work on this summer to improve.

"I think when Todd has a real feel and a confidence for the field and really has a sense of where everyone is, he's very effective," the OSU head coach said. "Unfortunately, it isn't always that way and you have to sort that out. But he'll get better at that.

"I think Robby has a little something about him, a little leadership thing about him that he loves to compete and he wants to be good. He's got a lot of ability to throw the football. He's just got to gain a greater knowledge of what the guys in the other shirts are doing.

"As for Antonio, I think when he looks good he looks good, and when he errs, it hurts him. The thing about him is he'll learn from that. I think he has a great grasp of what we're trying to do. I think he just needs to relax and do it."

OSU quarterbacks coach Joe Daniels

acknowledged his inexperienced players had their ups and downs during the spring, but he also pointed out that making mistakes and then correcting them is exactly what spring ball is all about.

"This is just the first step along a pretty long road," Daniels said. "Sure, they've made mistakes but you expect that. They're relatively young players, and they're playing the most demanding position on the field, so it's not like we expect them to be perfect right from the get-go."

Still, the OSU assistant continues to preach his three main fundamentals of playing quarterback – make good decisions, avoid turnovers and create big plays.

"I think the main thing we're looking for is consistency," Daniels said. "I think whoever turns out to be the starter – whether it's Todd or whoever – that guy has got to be consistent in what he does. His knowledge of our offense has got to be really advanced to where it just becomes a feel for things."

And which of the three quarterbacks was most consistent during the spring?

"I'm very happy with what all of them have done, and I think all of them have improved dramatically," Daniels said. "As to which one has improved the most, I'm not ready to talk about that yet. We came into spring with Todd No. 1, Robby No. 2 and Antonio No. 3, and in a true pecking order coming out of spring, that's going to be about the same."

Some of the mistakes made by the quarterbacks during spring practice could be traced to problems the Buckeyes experienced with their offensive line. At times, it seemed there were more linemen on the sidelines than on the field, making for some interesting

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## OPINION

# Spring Answer Man Has Returned

Spring seemed to come a little later than usual this year, with snow actually falling on some of Ohio State's spring practice drills. Nevertheless, warmer weather finally is upon us and it marks the 13th annual visit from the Spring Answer Man, who provides information to all the questions you want answered about what the Buckeyes accomplished during spring ball.

Once again, TSAM didn't get to watch as much of the drills as he would have liked since 12 of the 15 practice sessions were held mostly away from prying eyes. But that didn't stop him from uncovering some nuggets and reading between the lines of what was said. Such as:

**Q. Do Robby Schoenhof and Antonio Henton have a legitimate chance to beat out Todd Boeckman as the starting quarterback?**

A. Schoenhof and Henton each had their moments during spring ball, but nothing they did prevented hearing "If there was a game tomorrow, Todd would start" several times over the spring. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but Boeckman has had better springs over the years. Combining the April 14 jersey scrimmage and the spring game a week later, he was only 12 for 31 (38.7 percent) for 152 yards, no touchdowns and one interception.

Of course, stats are not always the determining factor for making out a depth chart, but OSU head coach Jim Tressel is a real stickler for his quarterback avoiding mistakes at all costs, and Boeckman made a couple of doozies.

With his team trailing in the April 14 scrimmage, he was flushed from the pocket and run down from behind on the game's final play. Then in the spring game, with his team trailing again but in field-goal range of a potential winning kick, Boeckman's fumble was scooped up and taken the other way 80 yards for a touchdown.

The argument can be made that neither play was Boeckman's fault. Then again, another thing Tressel demands is that his QB makes plays. So as to the original question, Schoenhof and Henton have a shot, but the odds are not in their favor.

**Q. Will Ohio State continue to feature a spread offense this fall or will Tressel and Jim Bollman go back into their conservative shells?**

A. Probably somewhere in the middle. With a first-year starter at quarterback – no matter who that is – most teams rely on a more basic style of offense, and the Buckeyes should be no different in 2007. Last year, the team featured what was considered to be a wide-open attack and still ran the ball roughly 59 percent of the time. During the national championship run in 2002, that number was just above 69 percent. Don't be surprised if this coming season approaches the '02 figure.

**Q. How did Maurice Wells look? Is he still looking to transfer, and if not, can he become a viable alternative to Beanie Wells?**

A. There is no question that increased reps helped Mo Wells from a confidence standpoint. As for a possible transfer, he insists he was never really serious about leaving, and that is especially so now that Antonio Pittman has left the program. As for whether he can hold off incoming freshman Brandon Saine for the No. 2 spot, he will undoubtedly have to improve upon performances in the final two team scrimmages of the spring where he averaged only 2.8 yards on a total of 35 carries. The feeling here is that Mo Wells would be better suited to playing some sort of hybrid of the old wingback position.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK with Mark Rea

**Q. Speaking of Beanie, it looked as if he could have played in the spring game. How serious is his ankle problem?**

A. He reportedly lobbied the coaching staff to get some token playing time in the spring game but was denied. The sprained ankle was not thought to be serious until Tressel mentioned in his post-spring game news conference that Wells would have some rehabilitation time ahead of him. That led some conspiracy theorists to speculate the ankle injury was more severe than first believed. However, the eyes do not lie and Wells did not appear to be favoring the leg as he stood on the sidelines for the spring game – wearing game-day gloves, by the way, on a sunny, 70-degree day. That alone seemed to indicate he was ready to go.

**Q. Doug Datish and T.J. Downing are gone. Kirk Barton missed the spring game with a knee injury, and Kyle Mitchum and Jon Skinner were sidelined for significant portions of spring practice with injuries of their own. Put all that together with a poor performance in the BCS title game against Florida, and should we be worried about the offensive line?**

A. First of all, Barton's injury is not believed to be serious. And while the spring game featured patchwork lines, the expected starting five of Alex Boone, Steve Rehling, Jimmy Cordle, Ben Person and Barton got in a lot of valuable reps together. It is true that Mitchum and Skinner needed to stand out this spring to solidify their spots on the depth chart, but their absences simply created opportunities for youngsters such as Connor Smith and Bryant Browning, who were coming into their own anyway. The OL has the potential to be a very good one – and for the team to have success in the fall, they will have to be very good.

**Q. We know that OSU has good, young receivers. But they are inexperienced for the most part. How will the team possibly make up for the losses of Ted Ginn Jr. and Anthony Gonzalez?**

A. Don't discount the obvious talents of Brian Robiskie, Brian Hartline and Ray Small. They may not have the flash of Ginn or Gonzalez, but each has the ability to get the job done. Robiskie and Hartline have sneaky speed while Small has plenty of explosiveness. And remember that Ted Ginn Sr. said Small was the best receiver he had ever coached. Knowing that Senior coached his son, that statement pretty much speaks for itself.

**Q. While we're on the subject of Ginn, how can the Buckeyes replace him on special teams?**

A. The short answer is that they can't. After all, Junior not only broke virtually every return record on the OSU books, he shattered them, so it's doubtful that someone can come along to even approach what he did over the past three years. That said, Small can be very dangerous in the open field, especially on kickoffs. He averaged 25.3 yards on three returns in the spring game, and with the NCAA moving kickoffs back to the 30-yard line next season, there should be ample opportunity for him to break one or two.

**Q. We have heard speculation that the defensive line could be even better this year. How can that be possible with the loss of**

three starters, including NFL draft choices Quinn Pitcock and Jay Richardson?

A. As productive as Pitcock, Richardson, David Patterson and Joel Penton were, they simply were not as athletic as Vernon Gholston, Doug Worthington, Robert Rose, Dexter Larimore and Lawrence Wilson. Gholston has a chance to contend for Big Ten defensive player of the year honors this season as the leader of a deep and talented line that will come at opponents from a variety of angles. Best of all, the Buckeyes can go at least two deep at all four line spots and experience very little – if any – drop-off.

**Q. Who will be the starting outside linebackers who bracket James Laurinaitis?**

A. Like the defensive line, the linebacking corps is a deep one. By virtue of their solid springtime performances, Marcus Freeman and Larry Grant likely sewed up the starting positions outside. But because Jim Heacock will likely employ four-linebacker sets on occasion, there will undoubtedly be plenty of playing time for the likes of Curtis Terry, Ross Homan, Thaddeus Gibson and Mark Johnson.

**Q. Malcolm Jenkins is a given at one of the starting cornerback spots. Who makes up the rest of the starting secondary?**

A. Donald Washington is the likely starter at the other corner. He is coming off a 2006 season in which he started nine times as the Buckeyes' fifth DB in their nickel package and quietly finished seventh on the team in tackles. The safety positions are a little more up for grabs, but the best guesses center on a healthy Anderson Russell returning at free safety and Kurt Coleman possibly edging out incumbent Jamario O'Neal at strong safety. Whichever of those two loses out on the starting nod will likely become the nickel back, and as Washington proved last year, there will still be plenty of opportunity to contribute.

**Q. Who is going to be the long snapper this season?**

A. Good question. Heading into fall camp, the Buckeyes will have no fewer than five walk-ons from which to choose for that unsung but extremely vital position. Tressel couldn't have been pleased during the spring with more than a handful of field-goal and PAT attempts blocked. The favorite would likely be Dimitrios Makridis, but he will have to prove he is fully recovered from a back problem that plagued him all spring.

**Q. If you have to pick just one player who had a standout spring, who would it be and why?**

A. It's always difficult to pick just one. Perhaps the most pleasing thing about spring ball is seeing veterans such as Devon Lyons or Shaun Lane shedding some rust and getting a chance to prove why they merited scholarships in the first place. It was fun to watch a guy like Jake Ballard knock a defensive lineman on his butt and then snag a pass out in the flat.

Also enjoyable is seeing walk-ons such as J.D. Larson, Marcus Williams, Joe Gantz, Jon Thoma, K.C. Christian, Andrew Moses and Dan Potokar get a chance to showcase their skills. They all strive to earn a scholarship someday as Aaron Pettrey, Tyler Whaley, Ryan Pretorius and Trever Robinson did.

But if we have to pick just one breakout player for the spring, we would go with Coleman. Other candidates would include defensive back Chimdi Chekwa, Person at right guard, linebacker-turned-safety Tyler Moeller, Ballard and Small, but Coleman improved so much over the winter that he has now evoked comparisons to three-time All-American Mike Doss – and some experts whisper that Coleman could be even better.

## OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

# Questions Abound For Offensive Unit

By ADAM JARDY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

One season ago, Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel faced a welcome challenge concerning his offense.

With a team returning eight starters from an offense that put up gaudy numbers in the latter parts of the 2005 season, it was clear that the Buckeyes would have a plethora of weapons at their disposal. Though it was speculated that the offense would be powerful, it was hard to imagine just how powerful it would become.

When the 2006 season closed, OSU kickers had tied school records for most point-after attempts (60) and extra points converted (57) as beneficiaries of an offense with weapons at nearly every position.

The list of talent on the offense was almost a veritable who's who of last season's college football awards circuit. Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith quarterbacked the team to a 12-1 record, and his two primary passing targets – Ted Ginn Jr. and Anthony Gonzalez – each were selected in the first round of the NFL draft. Tailback Antonio Pittman posted his second consecutive 1,000-plus yard season – the first OSU rusher to do so since Eddie George in the mid-'90s – and an offensive line with two first-team All-Big Ten players in Doug Datish and T.J. Downing helped plow the way for it all to work.

It must be at least slightly disconcerting to Tressel, then, that none of the aforementioned players will be suiting up in scarlet and gray this fall.

There's the challenge. How does one replace one of the most prolific and productive OSU offenses in recent memory?

"There's very little in offensive football that we didn't have in the package (last season)," Tressel said. "Will we be able to do all of that? I doubt it early on. I don't want to err and have these guys do every little thing that maybe we asked Troy to do because there's a building process. On the other hand, I don't want to be limited, and I want our defense to face lots of things in spring and preseason.

"How will we evolve? I don't know for sure. I'm not sure we knew how we were going to evolve in 2005."

Much as last year's team entered the season seeking to create a specific identity for itself – namely, how prolific it could become – one of the key challenges for the offense this spring was to begin that process of building an identity anew, less prolific though it may be.

"All I know is that we're going to have a handful of receivers that can make plays, we're going to have solid running backs that can get the yards, and I think when it comes down to it we're going to score touchdowns when they need to be scored and we're going to get out of every game with a win," wide receiver Brian Hartline said. "I don't know if it's going to be struggle, struggle, struggle, bomb and we score or if it's going to be a steady drive down the field, 10-play drives over and over again. We'll see."

## Quarterback

While he was as quick to credit his teammates as he was to pick apart the Michigan defense for the third year in a row, Smith was the unquestioned heart and soul of the 2006 Buckeyes. A team leader both on and off the field, his abilities were the core of the



**GETTING MO REPS** — Because of an ankle injury to projected starter Chris "Beanie" Wells, Maurice Wells (34) got plenty of reps this spring and was the leading rusher in the spring game. He ran 14 times for 48 yards for the Gray and also had three receptions out of the backfield. (Photo by Jeff Brehm)

OSU offense.

As Smith chased the Heisman, there were few opportunities for other quarterbacks to see the field. What limited chances that existed were further limited by Smith's classmate Justin Zwick, leaving what playing time was left to be split between Todd Boeckman and Robby Schoenhoft.

After a spring that saw Boeckman enter as the likely starter with Schoenhoft and redshirt freshman Antonio Henton behind him in that order, the 15 days of practice apparently left the pecking order the same.

That does not mean the players have not made progress, however.

"I don't know that anyone took any steps backward," Tressel said. "I think guys progressed."

All three quarterbacks split time with the starting unit, with the number of reps being nearly even between them.

It likely will be Boeckman under center, however, when the Buckeyes open up against Youngstown State Sept. 1. The most experienced member of the quarterback group, he is the most likely to be able to meet Tressel's needs from a quarterback – don't turn the ball over, make smart decisions and make big plays when necessary.

If Boeckman does not become the starter, he will not view the offseason as a disappointment, however.

"No, I don't think so," he said. "The coaches are going to make a decision. I think their decision is going to be the best decision for this team. If that's having two quarterbacks going out there and playing, so be it. We've just got to go out there and stay focused and stay concentrated on our job."

Each of the three signal callers displayed different abilities throughout the course of

the spring. Boeckman at times showed poise and control in the pocket, and Schoenhoft displayed an ability to lead his team down the field.

It was Henton who made the biggest overall splash, however, both in a positive and a negative sense.

In the team's second jersey scrimmage, Henton was the lone quarterback not to throw an interception and finished with more passing yards (108) than Boeckman (49) and Schoenhoft (34) combined. But one week later, it was Henton tossing three interceptions in front of 75,301 fans during the spring game.

"I just know I've got to be more comfortable in the pocket," he said. "Like Coach Tress says, 'Turnovers are bad.' We try to stay away from making so many turnovers, so we've got to be more comfortable with the ball."

Schoenhoft's performances in the second jersey scrimmage and spring game also were near polar opposites. After tossing three interceptions in the jersey scrimmage, he threw the lone touchdown pass in the spring game when he connected with tight end Brandon Smith in the back of the end zone with 5:24 remaining in the game to put the Gray team ahead, 10-9. The throw capped an eight-play, 50-yard drive – the longest drive of the game.

He also impressed his teammates with his leadership.

"Robby's a good leader," junior tailback Maurice Wells said. "He stayed calm, made good throws, good decisions. He didn't have any turnovers or anything like that. He led us down the field like a quarterback should."

For the day, Schoenhoft finished 7 of

15 for 83 yards. Henton was 8 of 16 for 45 yards, while Boeckman was 6 of 14 for 103 yards.

Boeckman's spring was noteworthy for the fact that it was largely unimpressive. The junior signal caller threw just one interception in the two scrimmages open to the media but did not have a touchdown pass. His longest completion of the spring came in the spring game, when he connected with wide receiver Brian Robiskie for a 40-yard gain.

"Todd has a real feel and a confidence for the field," Tressel said. "He really has a sense of where everyone is. I think he's very effective."

He is also apparently the quickest of the three quarterbacks.

"He's deceptively fast," Wells said. "You look at him and think, 'Aw, man, this guy's not going to run anywhere,' but when he starts running and taking off, he's got that long stride. He can really get up on you. Kind of like Teddy (Ginn)."

It all adds up to Boeckman entering fall camp where he entered spring camp – penciled in as the team's starter.

## Running Back

The last time OSU fans saw Chris "Beanie" Wells carry the ball, the Buckeyes were trailing the Florida Gators, 24-14, in the waning minutes of the first half of the BCS National Championship Game.

That held true for the duration of spring practice. Before the team's first jersey scrimmage April 6, Wells suffered an ankle injury that would eventually force him to miss the rest of the spring. As a result, the Buckeyes were left with just one scholarship tailback on the roster, the other Wells, who made the most of his opportunity.

"I think (offensive coordinator Jim Bollman) didn't hold back on utilizing him," Tressel said after the second jersey scrimmage. "I think Mo Wells is a good back. I think he demonstrated that again today. We're going to have good running backs."

While official statistics were not kept, BSB had Wells down for 51 yards and two touchdowns on 21 carries during the second jersey scrimmage.

At the same time, he showed some of the same liabilities demonstrated last season as he saw his playing time diminish behind Pittman and Beanie Wells – namely, the lack of ability to make defenders miss. In the second jersey scrimmage, the offense had the ball inside the 5-yard line and it took Wells three tries to punch the ball into the end zone.

More of a speed back than a power back, though, Wells finished the spring game with a game-high 48 yards on 14 carries.

After an offseason in which it was debated whether he would remain a Buckeye, Wells expressed nothing but a desire to remain in Columbus.

"Right now, 100 percent I'll be here," he said. "I haven't looked at any other schools, (and) I haven't thought about transferring."

With an offense more likely to run the ball than throw it as three new quarterbacks battled for playing time, there were more than enough carries to go around during the spring. As a result, Buckeye fans were introduced to the likes of K.C. Christian, Marcus Williams and Joe Gantz.

All three walk-ons received significant carries during the spring in the absence of Beanie Wells.

"Just because they're not on scholarship,

## OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

guys don't know too much about them," Maurice Wells said. "They're great players. They come in and practice and work hard just like the rest of us."

Although the three tailbacks showed some potential – Christian in particular caught the eyes of reporters during the second jersey scrimmage – it is unlikely that any of them will see any sort of significant action during the fall.

When the Buckeyes report for fall camp, they will boast two more tailbacks in Warren (Ohio) Harding's Daniel Herron and Ohio's reigning Mr. Football, Piqua's Brandon Saine. Many already have Saine pegged as the eventual No. 2 back this fall.

Running backs coach Dick Tressel said he expects Saine to push Maurice Wells to be his best.

"Not very often do the older guys not contribute," he said. "That's been my experience. (Competition) spurs them, and as long as the maturity level is there and the team foundation, so to speak, it will. It will spur them, and they will take their opportunities and make the best they can with them."

Although the Buckeyes figure to be more of a ground-based offense this fall, the running backs coach quickly dismissed the hopes of former walk-on center-turned-fullback Tyler Whaley, who expressed his dream of carrying the ball one time for the Buckeyes.

"Good luck," he said with a laugh. "He'll be the first fullback in a while to do that."

With the loss of fullback/H-back Stan White Jr. to graduation, the Buckeyes now look to two seniors to lead the position. Dionte Johnson, the No. 2 fullback last season, now tops the depth chart. He is followed by former walk-on Trevor Robinson, who was converted to a scholarship player prior to the 2006 season.

The Buckeyes also have redshirt freshman Aram Olson and Whaley – who goes by the nickname "Tank" – to fill out the position.

The fullbacks have taken on a nickname based around Whaley's moniker of "tank": TNT, with the T's standing for each player's first name. After adding Johnson, the fullbacks' nickname is "TNT and Té."

"It's something Tank and Trev had going on," Johnson said, "but then they added me in because we're all fullbacks this year. It's explosive. It's a new form of dynamite."

### Receivers

One year ago, the Buckeyes were charged with having to replace first-round NFL draft pick Antonio Holmes in their wide receiver corps. This year, their task is doubly hard – replacing two first-round NFL draft picks in Ginn and Gonzalez.

Together, the two wide receivers combined for 1,515 yards and 17 touchdowns on 110 catches, giving the Buckeyes a formidable one-two punch at wide receiver.

While the heir apparent to Ginn as a deep threat is sophomore Ray Small, the likely No. 1 wide receiver this season will be last year's No. 3 wideout – junior Brian Robiskie. Although he is not as fast as Ginn, Robiskie is the most established returning wideout for the Buckeyes.

"I think that last year I was in that role (as No. 3), and being in that position I learned a lot," said Robiskie, who finished as the team's third-leading receiver with 29 catches for 383 yards and five touchdowns. "At the same time, I did watch Ted, watch Gonzo, watch what they would do to be successful. I just feel like coming out this year I'm going to have the opportunity to make plays, and I feel like I've learned enough to

where I should be able to do some things on the field as well."

Wide receivers coach Darrell Hazell said he has two guys on the team who have the mentality of a No. 1 receiver, but he declined to name who they were. The next logical choice behind Robiskie is Hartline, a sophomore who was the team's fourth-leading receiver last season as a redshirt freshman.

The coach did list what he looks for in a No. 1 wideout.

"Get open," he said. "Obviously he's got to be able to do all the things that we need him to do. Be able to block, be able to make the tough catches in traffic, be able to be a great leader for us and then be a guy who wants the ball in crunch situations."

If the season began right after spring practices commenced, Hazell said Small would play Ginn's role, while Robiskie would be the go-to receiver and Hartline would fill Gonzo's role by lining up in the slot.

"If you really compare guy to guy, obviously Robo is better than Robo was last year," Hazell said. "Right now Ray's in Teddy's spot, so he's got a ways to go but he's got that same type of explosiveness. You've got Hartline in the slot, who to me is a very exciting player coming out of the slot because he's a little bit bigger than Gonzo. Gonzo was obviously a surgeon in there, and I think Hartline will be there as well. It'll be pretty interesting to watch them."

Hartline helped to make a name for himself last season while playing with reckless abandon on special teams, throwing his 6-3, 180-pound frame around and making nine tackles. This year the coaching staff has instructed Hartline to find ways to maintain his aggressiveness without unnecessarily putting himself in harm's way.

It has been a struggle for Hartline, who also nursed a leg injury and missed part of spring practice.

"I was in a situation where Coach was telling me, 'We need to keep you off the ground, that beats you up, the ground will beat you up,'" Hartline said. "He said,

'That's your goal for the spring, to stay off the ground. If there's a ball you've got to lay out for, let it go if you have to. Don't kill yourself.'"

With three positions pretty much settled, Hazell will be looking to a group of older players who have seen little to no playing time thus far to round out the rotation. That group includes juniors Albert Dukes and Devon Lyons, who have combined for a total of six catches in their OSU careers.

While Lyons has endured being switched from wide receiver to defensive back and back again and has battled injuries, Dukes has had to deal with the expectations that come from hailing from the same high school as Holmes.

"I don't think he'll ever say that, but I think it had a little effect on him," Hazell said.

Both Lyons and Dukes figure to battle for playing time in the fall. Lyons had the more impressive spring, finishing the spring game with three catches for a game-high 72 yards while demonstrating an ability to make things happen with the ball in his hands.

Also looking to get involved offensively will be the team's tight ends, all of whom could see more playing time as the team shifts to a slightly more power-focused offense.

"Tight end could be a lot bigger factor for us this year," Bollman said. "There are some numbers there of guys that have been in the program for a little bit now and have a lot of experience and some new guys with a lot of talent. That mix of those guys should help us."

That could mean more work for junior Rory Nicol, last season's starter. He will lead a corps that also includes sophomore Jake Ballard, Smith and redshirt freshman Andy Miller.

Filling out the depth chart are walk-ons J.D. Larson and Will Crall.

### Offensive Line

Getting a true gauge of what the 2007 OSU offensive line could look like proved impossible during spring practices, and all

thanks for that can go to the injury bug that particularly bit the linemen.

Throughout the spring, the Buckeyes saw Kirk Barton, Steve Rehiring, Jon Skinner and Kyle Mitchum sidelined with various injuries – some serious, some not. Rehiring recovered enough to play in the spring game, while Barton said he was kept out simply as a precaution and if the spring game were a real game he would have played.

As a result, anything resembling an offensive line consisted of some players playing out of position alongside others who will not see much playing time in the fall.

Not only were the Buckeyes seeking to fill the voids left by the aforementioned four skill players this spring, but they were looking to replace Datish, Downing and Tim Schafer, who started three games last season.

In their places, players such as Ben Person and Jim Cordle are projected as the starters at right guard and center, respectively. When all were healthy, they joined Barton, Rehiring and left tackle Alex Boone to constitute the team's first-string offensive line.

But a true gauge of how the line will perform will not be evident until the fall, when all five can practice and play together.

"I think this fall will definitely be much better, just because we'll have more bodies back and guys will be healthier," Barton said.

Behind the starters are players such as redshirt freshman Connor Smith and Bryant Browning, both of whom have drawn praise from the coaching staff for their play this spring. In addition, former walk-on Josh Kerr could also see playing time in the fall.

The biggest concern for Bollman, who doubles as the offensive line coach, is shoring up the center spot with the absence of Datish. Smith, Skinner and sophomore Andrew Moses all spent time as the team's center behind Cordle.

"I think we'll have a lot of guys ready to go," Bollman said. "We'll make sure that we have enough guys that can snap the football."

## Offensive Players On The Spot

**Todd Boeckman, quarterback** – Going into spring ball at the top of the depth chart, the 6-5, 235-pounder didn't do anything to hurt that status. Trouble was, he really didn't take a stranglehold of the position either. Going a rather pedestrian 6 for 14 for 103 yards in the spring game certainly didn't give him the kind of stats from which legends are made, but Boeckman still appears to be the most comfortable pocket quarterback in the three-way race. Efficiency is what Jim Tressel wants from his starting QB, and Boeckman appears to be the leader in that category.

**Maurice Wells, tailback** – The 5-10, 190-pounder took the bulk of the reps this spring because of an injury to Chris Wells, and from most reports, he responded well. He has added some weight (now reportedly up to about 200 pounds) to aid his blocking skills and help with durability. Unfortunately, the extra weight may have robbed him of a little quickness. Wells seemed to break into the open a couple of times in the spring game but averaged only 3.4 yards on a game-high 14 carries.

**Alex Boone, left tackle** – Although he is a returning starter, this was a big spring for Boone as the blindside protection for a new starting quarterback. By all accounts, he rose to the task, earning praise from offensive coordinator and line coach Jim Bollman. Boone came to the Buckeyes three years ago as the second coming of Orlando Pace, and although that kind of tag may have been a bit presumptuous, it appears the 6-8, 325-pounder has every intention of making 2007 his best season yet.



Todd Boeckman

**Jim Cordle, center** – He dabbled at other positions and Bollman experimented with other players at center, but Cordle had an excellent spring and appears to have nailed down the starting assignment in the fall. The OSU coaching staff likes the way he has grasped the nuances of the center position – such as making the line calls – and has made for a smooth transition from last year's starter, Doug Datish. It will also be nice for the Buckeyes to plug Cordle into the center of their line and leave him for the next three years.

**Ben Person, Kyle Mitchum, Jon Skinner, offensive linemen** – Person made the most of his opportunities this spring and seemed to solidify himself as the starting right guard. Things did not go nearly as well for the other two. Mitchum and Skinner each missed significant portions of spring practice with injuries, pushing their development back while newcomers Bryant Browning and Connor Smith might have moved past them in the pecking order. It may be a make-or-break fall camp for Mitchum and Skinner – provided they're ready to go.

**Albert Dukes and Devon Lyons, wide receivers** – Each made some noise this spring and did what he needed to do – catch the eye of the coaching staff. Lyons capped his spring with three catches for a game-high 72 yards in the Scarlet and Gray Game, while Dukes had three receptions in the contest for 20 yards. Were those performances enough to take receptions away from Brian Robiskie, Brian Hartline and Ray Small in the fall? Stay tuned.

– Mark Rea

## OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

## Ohio State's Defense Shone During Spring

## Talented Unit May Be Key To Success For 2007 Buckeyes

By MARCUS HARTMAN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The media were allowed to watch the makings of what will be the next Ohio State defense twice during the spring, and the members of the fourth estate who took in both the Scarlet and Gray Game and the second jersey scrimmage were witness to a total of nine turnovers, 10 sacks and countless quarterback hurries.

While those numbers might hint at why head coach Jim Tressel is so fond of conducting practices behind closed doors, it became pretty clear that defensive coordinator Jim Heacock and linebackers coach and co-coordinator Luke Fickell have nothing to hide.

During the spring game at Ohio Stadium, the two Ohio State defenses combined to force five turnovers and score two touchdowns. The units also came up with nine tackles for loss – including six sacks – and stuffed both offenses consistently on third down (6 for 24) and in the red zone (2 for 6).

Lest anyone think the spring game was a fluke, the defense also had its way with an admittedly banged-up offense one week earlier in a jersey scrimmage that pitted the offense against the defense. That day at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center the defense picked off four passes and had four sacks.

As Tressel pointed out, a successful spring day for the defense also means the offense had some foibles, but there was plenty of reason to think the Silver Bullets could return to being the backbone of Tressel's team this fall.

## Line Looks Deep

Although no final depth chart was released at the conclusion of spring, the same four who entered spring as the No. 1 unit figure to begin there when the Buckeyes reconvene for fall camp.

Junior Vernon Gholston returns at end with classmate Lawrence Wilson manning the other side while sophomores Todd Denlinger and Doug Worthington should get the first cracks at plugging the middle of the Buckeye defense.

In the middle, the backups appear to be redshirt freshman Dexter Larimore and junior Nader Abdallah.

A native of Metairie, La., Abdallah was reported to weigh anywhere from 290 to 310 during the spring and was praised for show-



**IN HOT PURSUIT** — Gray defensive linemen Lawrence Wilson (87) and Dexter Larimore (72) pursue Scarlet quarterback Todd Boeckman (17) during the April 21 spring game. Wilson and Larimore are just two of many young players Ohio State will be counting on in 2007 to fortify its defense. (Photo by Jeff Brehm)

ing up in the best shape of his college career. Although he was applauded in some circles for his springtime performance – he had three tackles, all assists, in the spring game – he may have been overshadowed by the 275-pound Larimore, who proved he could be a presence at tackle by worming his way through the line to block a field goal in the spring game and getting into the offensive backfield on numerous occasions during the

jersey scrimmage.

As for the projected starters at tackle, Worthington had five tackles for the Scarlet in the spring game and Denlinger added half a sack. Denlinger also had a solo sack and forced a fumble in the second jersey scrimmage.

On the outside, the backups coming out of camp looked to be junior Alex Barrow and sophomores Robert Rose and Ryan Williams.

Barrow's athletic interception in the spring game could mean he is coming on, while Williams, a little-used player last year, shook off the effects of a back injury to get in on a pair of tackles that day for the Gray. Rose had three tackles and continued to show he will force his way onto the field often this year.

"A lot of those young guys, they went through a year of getting acclimated, and now you can see them taking hold and really actually competing instead of just learning and kind of following along," Heacock said.

## Lots Of Linebackers

Sophomores James Laurinaitis and

Marcus Freeman combined for 30 tackles the last time fans saw them – in the BCS National Championship Game – and appeared to pick up where they left off during the spring when they each were credited with six stops.

While they were the most consistent contributors on a young squad last year, it appears they will have much more help this season.

Fickell wants to see that happen to the extreme. He floated the idea of using as many as eight linebackers on a regular basis this fall.

The play of youngsters such as Austin Spitzer, a sophomore listed as Laurinaitis' backup in the middle, and senior outside players Larry Grant and Curtis Terry should mean Fickell get what he desires.

In the spring game, Spitzer matched the tackle total of both Freeman and Laurinaitis while suiting up for the Scarlet (with Freeman) at middle linebacker, and he came up with an interception in the jersey scrimmage.

Laurinaitis said his understudy's strong public showings were just an extension of

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## OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

what he had been doing all spring.

"As far as personally, I look at practice and there have been times where there will be the same exact play and Austin will shut it up 10 times better than I do," Laurinaitis said.

Meanwhile, Grant and Terry figure to wage a battle this fall for playing time on the strong side. While Terry battled a foot injury that limited what he could do during the spring, Grant made it his time to shine.

Also in the mix all spring and possible to remain in it this fall were redshirt freshman Thaddeus Gibson (listed No. 3 on the strong side), sophomore Ross Homan (back-up to Freeman on the weak side) and Mark Johnson, a redshirt freshman not listed on the spring depth chart but another player praised all spring by the coaching staff.

"I know that it doesn't matter who's in there," Laurinaitis said. "We're going to be fine. We've got six guys who can play linebacker, so I don't think of it as just me coming back. It's the whole unit. I still look at the way Marcus plays, and the way Larry plays, and Curtis and 'Ross Hoss', and I find parts of their game that are better than mine.

"As a competitor, that makes you want to get better yourself."

### Competition In Secondary

Because so many linebackers could see the field this fall, the majority of position-battle drama on the defensive side of the ball came from the back end all spring.

With the departure of two fifth-year senior starters (safety Brandon Mitchell and cornerback Antonio Smith) and the absence of another man assumed to be a No. 1 in injured safety Anderson Russell, there was competition galore in the defensive secondary.

The move of Tyler Moeller and Kurt Coleman to safety only added to the intrigue, especially when Coleman snagged two interceptions in the first jersey scrimmage, which was not open to the media.

It is assumed Russell will get his starting strong safety spot back this fall, which may mean Coleman slides over to free safety in place of Mitchell.

That would leave one-time super recruit Jamario O'Neal, a junior who started the

last eight games of last season in place of Russell, displaced.

With an interception in both the second jersey scrimmage and the spring game, redshirt freshman Grant Schwartz also pushed his way into the discussion for playing time at safety along with classmate Moeller, a former linebacker.

The two Ohio State defenders most entrenched at their positions might be cornerbacks Malcolm Jenkins and Donald Washington. While Jenkins, a veteran of 19 starts, spent the spring working on perfecting his fundamentals, Washington grabbed hold of the open corner spot.

Behind him, sophomore Andre Amos was making a push to be the No. 3 corner before suffering what is apparently a serious knee injury. That put his 2007 season in doubt, though Tressel said after the spring game he was hopeful Amos could contribute in the second half of the upcoming campaign.

Into the void likely stepped redshirt freshman Chimdi Chekwa, but he might be pushed by one of the two early enrolling true freshmen to take part in spring drills, Donnie Evege or James Scott.

Jenkins said the pair got about as much as is fair to expect from spring practice.

"They're doing real good just trying to grasp the simple things of the coverages and techniques," Jenkins said. "I think they have a long way to go, but there's some bright lights in there.

"For incoming freshmen going from high school where you may have four coverages, we put in five coverages in one day. It can get kind of hectic for them, but I think they're doing a good job of grasping what we're trying to get done."

This fall another hat in the ring for playing time at corner could be Eugene Clifford, a Cincinnati native who is the top-rated recruit in Ohio State's class of 2007. Clifford's availability is clouded by a citation for possession of marijuana in his hometown in March, but because he has not enrolled in school yet, he is not subject to discipline from Ohio State and should be in the clear if he stays out of trouble between now and the fall.

Shaun Lane, a junior and the son of for-

mer Buckeye defensive back Garcia Lane, also may be a dark-horse candidate for playing time this fall after he posted a game-high eight tackles (one for loss) in the spring game. The same may be true for junior Brandon Underwood, a once highly touted recruit working his way back up the depth chart after working through some academic troubles last year. Underwood had one tackle and broke up a pass during the spring game.

### Help From All Over

All spring, good work came from faces both old and new.

Freeman brought the spring game's first possession to an end with a 49-yard interception he returned for a touchdown for the Scarlet. On that same squad, Gholston – the lone returning starter on the defensive line – forced a fumble and had a sack.

For the victorious Gray, Laurinaitis was the leading tackler with six, including one for loss, but his help came from some less familiar sources. Wilson, a part-timer at defensive end last season, had a sack and deflected a pass, while another bit player from 2006, Barrow, tipped an interception to himself.

The big star, however, was Grant. The senior-to-be had two sacks among his three tackles for loss. He also forced two fumbles, one of which he returned 80 yards for a momentum-changing touchdown in the fourth quarter.

Grant may have been a name known among recruiting circles, but he was not a big part of the OSU defense last year.

Over on the Scarlet squad, Gibson – a relative unknown – had a sack and Schwartz intercepted a pass.

In the jersey scrimmage, Washington had a pair of interceptions, as did Schwartz and Spittler.

Gibson's sack in the spring game illustrated statements from both Heacock and Fickell that the Euclid, Ohio, native has flashed some ability to get to the passer.

"It's something that's very natural to him, but then again running and hitting come natural to him and that's what you like," Fickell said. "He's learning. There's a spot for him

and hopefully a spot for him this year. We've just got to find a way to use him that best suits his ability."

Young defensive backs Chekwa and Moeller were praised all spring for their abilities to make plays, and the two showed that the coaches might know what they were talking about by combining to break up a couple of passes in the end zone in the second half of the spring game. Moeller also proved to be a pest in the second jersey scrimmage, particularly as a pass rusher.

Chekwa had a big hit in punt coverage in the first quarter of the spring game, although he was beaten for a long gain in the first half by Brian Robiskie.

### Will It Carry Over?

Of course, OSU fans have seen this kind of ball hawking before.

A defense full of youngsters got off to a great start last season, pilfering 21 passes and adding six fumble recoveries through the first 11 games. But to say the finale was a fizzle would be an understatement.

Against Michigan and Florida, Ohio State forced no turnovers and allowed 80 total points.

Jenkins suggested the change in production at the end of the year might have been a result of letting the immensity of the games get to them.

"I think you have to be enthusiastic about what you're going to do, because I think getting caught up in hype and stuff like that, we didn't have as much fun," he said. "We weren't as enthusiastic as we usually were."

"When it came down to the game itself, it was kind of going through the motions. We play our best – especially on defense – when we're having fun."

Thus, added themes this spring – along with the old reliable "make plays" mantra – were keep things simple, play with enthusiasm and complete what you start.

"We're just going to make it as simple as possible," Washington said after the jersey scrimmage. "We're going to be aggressive, and as long as guys give great effort, then I think we'll be in good shape."

"We've focused this offseason on just finishing everything we do," Jenkins said. "Whether it's a play, a season or a game, we have to finish. That's what it came down to last year. We had some games we didn't finish when we needed to."

## Defensive Players On The Spot

### Marcus Freeman, weakside linebacker

– It appears that Freeman is ready to have the kind of season projected for him when he arrived in Columbus three years ago. He solidified a starting job in a crowded linebacker group with a solid spring game performance that included six tackles for the Scarlet and a 49-yard interception return for a touchdown. OSU coaches would still like to see the 6-2, 242-pounder take a little better pursuit angle on run support, but look for Freeman to be one of the defensive stars in the fall.

### Larry Grant, strongside linebacker

Offseason film study coupled with an increased workload in the weight room paid off handsomely for Grant, who arguably had the finest spring of anyone on the defensive side of the ball. The former national JUCO player of the year punctuated that with an outstanding effort in the spring game that included two sacks, two forced fumbles, two fumble recoveries and a game-clinching 80-yard touchdown rumble with one of those recoveries.

**James Laurinaitis, middle linebacker** – All that the coaching staff was looking for out of Laurinaitis this spring was a willingness to take on more of a leadership role. Mission accomplished. Refusing to rest on a superlative sophomore season, the 6-3, 244-pounder did everything that was asked of him and continues to anchor the middle of the Ohio State defense. Best of all, he came through spring ball healthy.

**Todd Denlinger, Doug Worthington, Dexter Larimore**



James Laurinaitis

### and Nader Abdallah, defensive tackles

– Faced with replacing the productive veteran trio of Quinn Pitcock, David Patterson and Joel Penton, this bunch reportedly came to play this spring. Denlinger and Worthington appeared to nail down the starting positions, combining for eight tackles in the spring game. Larimore doesn't seem to be that far behind, and it was a good spring for Abdallah as well, as he shed some weight and rededicated himself to getting on the field come September.

**Donald Washington, cornerback** – If grabbing several interceptions during scrimmages and earning endless praise from your position coach means you had a good spring, Washington indeed had a good spring. Penciled in as the starter opposite Malcolm Jenkins, the 6-1, 195-pounder didn't have a standout spring game but simply needs to continue doing what he has been doing to stay atop the depth chart.

**Jamario O'Neal, strong safety** – The springtime buzz surrounding O'Neal was whether he could hold off one of several youngsters bent on taking his starting spot. Unfortunately, he suffered an ankle injury midway through camp and spent the rest of the spring on the sidelines while guys such as Kurt Coleman and Tyler Moeller impressed the coaching staff. That means the 29 practice sessions in the fall may be as important to O'Neal in terms of keeping his job as anyone else in the starting lineup.

– Mark Rea



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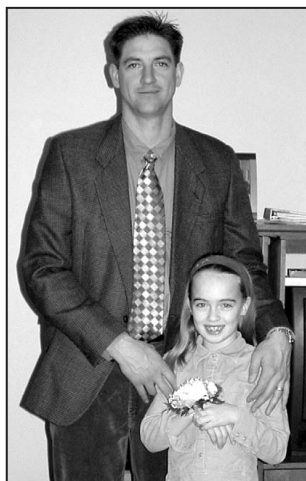
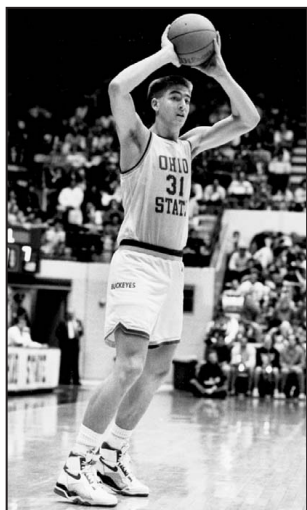
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Brandewie, a native of Fort Loramie, Ohio, was a four-year letterman for the Buckeyes from 1990-93. He played on two Big Ten championship teams and his teams made it to the NCAA Tournament three times, narrowly missing the Final Four in 1992. He was elected team captain in 1993 and played in Ireland for a year after graduation.

Brandewie and his wife, Kelly — a 1996 OSU grad — live in Columbus with their four children: Jared (11), Madeline (9), Luke (4) and Eloise (2). Brandewie continues to be involved with his sport by coaching youth basketball.

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## COVER STORY: STILL LOOKING FOR A LEADER

# Buckeyes Have Several Holes To Fill

Continued From Page 1

ing lineups, especially in the spring game. For example, the starting lines for both teams in that game featured two projected starters, two walk-ons and one redshirt freshman.

Nevertheless, the depth chart that was posted at the beginning of spring ball — Alex Boone and Kirk Barton at tackles, Steve Rehiring and Ben Person at guard and Jimmy Cordle at center — is expected to remain the same come September when the team takes on Youngstown State in the season opener.

"The nice thing about the guys who are working on the offensive line is they have been around here for a while," OSU offensive coordinator and line coach Jim Bollman said. "As a matter of fact, Jimmy and Alex are the youngest ones and this will be their third season. That makes that transition a lot smoother with everybody around them."

Unfortunately, depth was a concern almost from the beginning as Kyle Mitchum and Jon Skinner — both fourth-year players expected to make big contributions this spring — were felled with injuries that sidelined them for the bulk of the practice sessions.

"That was disappointing," Tressel said. "It was disappointing to have Jon and Kyle out because those were two guys going into their redshirt junior years. This would have been a great time for them to get reps and really step up there."

But that cloud seemed to have a silver lining as redshirt freshmen Connor Smith and Bryant Browning stepped into the void. Each earned a spring game starting assignment, and each earned praise from both Tressel and Bollman.

Another player who seemed to step out of the shadows was sophomore walk-on Andrew Moses, a 6-3, 267-pound home-grown product out of Columbus Bishop Watterson. Moses not only drew the nod as the starting center for the Scarlet team in the spring game, he proved his acumen at a variety of offensive line positions and was praised by the coaching staff for his good work.

"The guy I keep hearing Jim Bollman talk about is Andrew Moses," Tressel said. "He really thinks Andrew has really stepped up and gotten stronger, is a competitive kid and a really smart kid."

### Other Holes To Fill

While quarterback is the marquee position on any football team, the Buckeyes understand they have a lot of other holes to fill on offense. Not only is Smith gone, but Ohio State suffered a trio of early NFL defections when tailback Antonio Pittman and receivers Ted Ginn Jr. and Anthony Gonzalez elected to skip their senior seasons.

In the case of Ginn and Gonzalez, OSU has a ready mix of young players and veterans itching to prove they can fill the void. At tailback, however, the springtime roster was extremely thin with only two scholarship players at the position. And when projected starter Chris "Beanie" Wells went down the first week with an ankle injury, the position went from extremely thin to dangerously thin.

Wells was supposed to improve upon a solid rookie season by getting the lion's share of the repetitions this spring. Running the ball has never been a problem for the 6-

1, 230-pound sophomore who was the No. 1 running back prospect in the country when he was recruited out of Akron Garfield two years ago. However, work on fundamentals such as pass blocking and protecting the football is always a goal of spring ball, and Wells missed out on valuable learning time.

Not that the 15 days of practice was a total waste for him. In fact, just the opposite is true, according to OSU running backs coach Dick Tressel.

"I think Beanie is going to benefit from watching the guys one more time now that he understands what we're trying to do," Tressel said. "Last fall, to watch Antonio Pittman do it was OK. But it's not like watching it now when he's been through it once and really understands what the line is trying to do and how the running backs should fit in with all the things going on."

"He's able, in a mental sense, to gain more knowledge than he had previously. And he recognizes that and I think he likes it. He can watch something on tape and learn something from it, whereas last year he could have watched that tape and not had the foundation to learn from it."

Not that missing almost all of spring practice was completely beneficial for Wells.

"He had last spring, so it's not like he's never had a spring practice," Tressel said. "But yes, I think when the guy in front of you leaves and you have your opportunity to step up and you get hurt and you don't get to take that step forward that you hoped, that's got to be a problem."

"But my sense is that Beanie is mature enough to realize, 'OK, that doesn't mean I can't take that step up. That just means I've got to prepare even harder.'"

While Wells was on the sidelines, his counterpart Maurice Wells tried to take advantage of an increased workload. The junior, listed at 5-10 and 190-pounds, fell to No. 3 on the depth chart last fall and managed only 171 yards on 46 carries — none coming in the season's final two games against Michigan and Florida.

Despite those diminishing returns, and the fact that incoming freshman Brandon Saine and Daniel Herron are expected to contend for playing time this year, Wells redoubled his efforts this spring, including a mini-makeover courtesy of time spent in the weight room.

"I was about 187 when I got here and I'm about 200 pounds now," he said. "I put on a good 15 pounds maybe. Bulking up was one of the key things I wanted to focus on when I got here and I feel like I've accomplished that."

In the spring game, Wells was the featured back for the victorious Gray team but managed only 48 yards on 14 carries. He also caught three passes, including a short flare that he turned into an 11-yard gain, and felt he did enough during the spring to keep his No. 2 status into the 2007 season.

"My goals this year are just play to the best of my ability and take advantage of the opportunities when I have them," he said. "I just want to play hard every play and give it my all when I'm on the field. Those are my goals. As far as accolades and rushing yards and stats, I think that will all come with working hard."

With an inexperienced quarterback and a lack of depth of tailback, Ohio State tinkered

## COVER STORY: STILL LOOKING FOR A LEADER

with a variety of backfield looks in the spring, including its tried-and-true I formation as well as a full-house set. If the Buckeyes are to utilize those looks in the fall, it will mean they plan to give the fullback a more important role to play than in recent years.

As a result, there was a flurry of activity at that position including seniors Dionte Johnson and Trever Robinson, converted center Tyler "Tank" Whaley and redshirt freshman Aram Olsen. Unfortunately, most of the activity was on the blocking end – none of them accounted for a single carry in the spring game.

That doesn't seem to bother them, however.

"I'd be lying if I said I didn't want the ball," Johnson said. "But that's not our focus. Our focus is explosion – plain and simple. We've been trying to get after it that way. We've been trying to finish this year – finishing with a pop."

"There's more design for us one-on-one taking out linebackers and taking a bigger responsibility as far as just finishing. We've got a lot on our shoulders. As a team, we're going to be running the ball a lot this year, and I think the running backs are prepared. We're definitely excited and ready for the challenge."

While the Buckeyes may return to a more grind-it-out style of offense this fall, they will continue to try to move the ball through the air. And that's where the successors to Ginn and Gonzalez come in. That duo combined for 110 receptions, 1,515 yards and 17 TDs last year, but that still leaves about 45 percent of the production left over in the likes of Brian Robiskie, Brian Hartline and Ray Small, all of whom had productive springs.

The 6-3, 195-pound Robiskie seems poised for a breakout season after catching 29 passes last season for 383 yards and five touchdowns. This spring, he had several lengthy receptions, including a 40-yarder in the Scarlet and Gray Game, and impressed the coaching staff with his ability and leadership skills.

"I am very pleased with where he is right now," OSU receivers coach Darrell Hazell said. "Brian has been tremendous as a leader, and he's really starting to look like a big-time guy in my opinion. He played fast all the time, run and pass, and made plays all over the field. He's looked good and I think he should have a great year."

For his part, Robiskie does not plan to take anything for granted.

"I'm not going to say I feel more comfortable this year, but I know what's in front of me," he said. "There are a lot of things I need to get better at, and I'm just trying to work hard every day to be the type of player that I want to be. We've got great DBs that I'm working against every day and they make me better. I'm just trying to take it one day at a time and just try and get better."

"Last year I played a role and did a lot of learning. Being in there and getting a chance to play was big because I think the only way you are going to learn something is to be in the game. With the group of guys I had around me last year, it really helped. The seniors and the receivers that were older than me did a real good job of pushing me and bringing me along."

Hartline and Small will likely switch starting assignments back and forth at the flanker position, but there is no doubt the two will be on the field a lot together when the Buckeyes feature three-receiver sets. Each is short on experience and each suffered spring-time injuries – Hartline tweaked a hamstring and Small suffered an undisclosed arm or shoulder injury during the spring game. But each also features tremendous upside on a team looking for game-breakers to replace

PROJECTED '07  
DEPTH CHART

|  |  |   |  |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| <b>15 A.J. TRAPASSO, 6-1, 220, SO.</b><br>48 John Thoma, 6-1, 190, R-Fr.   |  | <b>56 DIMITRIOS MAKRIDIS, 6-1, 225, SR.</b>   |  | <b>20 AARON PETTREY, 6-1, 195, SO.</b><br>85 Ryan Pretorius, 5-9, 180, Jr.                                   |  |
| <b>P</b>   |  | <b>LS</b>   |  | <b>PK</b>  |  |
| <b>33 JAMES LAURINAITIS, 6-3, 244, JR.</b><br>38 Austin Spittler, 6-3, 242, So.  |  | <b>3 JAMARIO O'NEAL, 6-1, 200, JR.</b><br>OR  |  | <b>4 KURT COLEMAN, 5-11, 185, SO.</b><br>26 Tyler Moeller, 6-1, 205, R-Fr.                                   |  |
| <b>21 ANDERSON RUSSELL, 6-0, 190, SO.</b><br>23 Nick Patterson, 6-2, 210, Jr.<br>8 Aaron Gant, 6-0, 205, So.<br>24 Grant Schwartz, 6-0, 200, R-Fr. |  | <b>6 LARRY GRANT, 6-3, 225, SR.</b><br>55 Curtis Terry, 6-2, 234, Sr.<br>37 Thaddeus Gibson, 6-2, 230, R-Fr.      |  | <b>1 MARCUS FREEMAN, 6-1, 242, JR.</b><br>51 Ross Homan, 6-1, 237, So.<br>44 Mark Johnson, 6-4, 230, R-Fr.   |  |
| <b>FS</b>  |  | <b>MLB</b>  |  | <b>SS</b>  |  |
| <b>20 DONALD WASHINGTON, 6-1, 195, SO.</b><br>19 Brandon Underwood, 6-2, 180, Jr.<br>17 Zach Willis, 5-10, 160, Jr.                                |  | <b>92 TODD DENLINGER, 6-3, 280, SO.</b><br>93 Nader Abdallah, 6-5, 310, Jr.                                       |  | <b>50 VERNON GHOLSTON, 6-4, 260, JR.</b><br>78 Alex Barrow, 6-5, 275, Jr.<br>91 Ryan Williams, 6-6, 245, So. |  |
| <b>SLB</b>   |  | <b>WLB</b>  |  | <b>DE</b>  |  |
| <b>87 LAWRENCE WILSON, 6-6, 270, JR.</b><br>9 Robert Rose, 6-5, 260, So.   |  | <b>84 DOUG WORTHINGTON, 6-7, 275, SO.</b><br>72 Dexter Larimore, 6-3, 275, R-Fr.                                  |  | <b>2 MALCOLM JENKINS, 6-1, 202, JR.</b><br>5 Chimdi Chekwah, 6-1, 180, R-Fr.                                 |  |
| <b>RFB</b>   |  | <b>DT</b>   |  | <b>DT</b>  |  |
| <b>TE</b>  |  | <b>DE</b>   |  | <b>LCB</b>   |  |
| <b>88 RORY NICOL, 6-5, 250, JR.</b><br>86 Jake Ballard, 6-7, 255, So.  |  | <b>71 STEVE REHRING, 6-8, 329, JR.</b><br>67 Kyle Mitchum, 6-5, 295, Jr.  |  | <b>63 BEN PERSON, 6-4, 315, JR.</b><br>70 Bryant Browning, 6-4, 328, R-Fr.                                   |  |
| <b>LT</b>  |  | <b>LG</b>   |  | <b>RG</b>  |  |
| <b>75 ALEX BOONE, 6-8, 325, JR.</b><br>73 Josh Kerr, 6-5, 283, R-Fr.   |  | <b>64 JIM CORDLE, 6-4, 285, SO.</b><br>77 Connor Smith, 6-5, 295, R-Fr.   |  | <b>74 KIRK BARTON, 6-6, 310, SR.</b><br>79 Jon Skinner, 6-5, 300, Jr.  |  |
| <b>FL</b>  |  | <b>C</b>  |  | <b>RT</b>  |  |
| <b>4 RAY SMALL, 6-0, 175, SO.</b><br>5 Albert Dukes, 6-1, 190, Jr.   |  | <b>QB</b>   |  | <b>SE</b>  |  |
| <b>9 BRIAN HARTLINE, 6-3, 180, SO.</b><br>5 Albert Dukes, 6-1, 190, Jr.  |  | <b>17 TODD BOECKMAN, 6-5, 235, JR.</b><br>11 Robby Schoenhoff, 6-6, 240, So.<br>7 Antonio Henton, 6-2, 210, R-Fr. |  | <b>80 BRIAN ROBISKIE, 6-3, 195, JR.</b><br>18 Devon Lyons, 6-4, 214, Jr.                                     |  |
| <b>WB</b>  |  | <b>FB</b>   |  | <b>TB</b>  |  |
| <b>49 DIONTE JOHNSON, 6-0, 234, SR.</b><br>54 Tyler Whaley, 6-1, 270, Jr.  |  | <b>28 CHRIS WELLS, 6-1, 230, SO.</b><br>34 Maurice Wells, 5-10, 190, Jr.  |  |  |  |

Graphic By Matthew Hager/BSB

Ginn and Gonzalez.

"There is something to be said for experience," Hazell said. "If you ever put something together at home and you do it the first time, you see how much easier it is to do it a second time and all the shortcuts you can take. It's just like being on the football field. A lot of tremendous things can be said about experience."

"Having said that, these guys are very talented and they can make a lot of plays. People are going to be excited when they get the ball in their hands. We've just got to keep bringing them along and get them entrenched in the system."

Elbowing their way into the receiving mix was a pair of almost forgotten veterans who are intent on finding their way to the field in 2007. Devon Lyons and Albert Dukes led their respective teams in receiving during the spring game, combining for six catches for 92 yards, and Hazell believes the junior duo's push will be beneficial to the team.

"They're really starting to find their niche around here," the OSU assistant said. "Both Devon and Albert are really pushing along and trying to earn a spot out there. And if those guys keep coming on, we are going to feel good about our depth at the position."

The feeling is mutual in the locker room. "I feel very confident in our guys," Robiskie said. "Brian was out a little bit with a hamstring, but guys are stepping up. Albert Dukes has been here for a while. Ray Small obviously has been coming on. Devon Lyons is playing well. We have a receiving corps that is pretty strong, and I think we have a chance to be pretty good."

The Buckeyes also expect to make more use of the tight end in the passing game this season, giving their new quarterback an additional safety valve. Junior Rory Nicol is the returning starter, and he has plenty of support behind him in sophomore Jake Ballard, junior Brandon Smith and redshirt freshman Andy Miller.

Nicol failed to catch a pass in the spring

game, but Scarlet and Gray quarterbacks found tight ends for five of their 21 completions, including a 28-yarder from Schoenhoff to walk-on J.D. Larson on a deceptive fourth-and-1 play.

## Defense In Good Stead

While the Ohio State offense experienced some growing pains this spring, the defense decided it was going to make a statement. After being torched for 80 points and 767 total yards in its final two games of last season, the unit took out a lot of its frustration on teammates on the other side of the ball.

That was especially true along the defensive line even though the Buckeyes seek to replace several veterans, including starters Quinn Pitcock, David Patterson and Jay Richardson. According to some offensive players, the line should not suffer and may even be better in 2007.

"Going against them every day gives you an appreciation for how hard they work and how good they are," Barton said. "Honestly, Vernon Gholston is probably going to be the best end in the country just from a physical standpoint. He benches over 500 pounds and he runs in the 4.5s. His hands are so strong and makes for a really difficult matchup. A lot of guys don't notice that until they actually go against him. He really can whip guys around. Vernon is tough."

"Doug Worthington has definitely shown something this spring, and another guy who has really stepped up is Dexter Larimore. He's shown us a lot. He's a great leverage guy, very strong, very low to the ground when he comes off the ball. He's given us some problems. He's going to be a good player here. I guess I could go on and on."

Gholston is the lone returning starter and heads into his junior season after having led the team in tackles for loss and sacks last season. Expected to join him on the starting defensive line this season are junior Lawrence Wilson on the other end and sophomores Todd Denlinger and Worthington at the tackles. That quartet combined for 14

tackles and 2½ sacks in the spring game.

But with hungry youngsters such as sophomore Robert Rose and Larimore pushing them alongside veterans such as Alex Barrow, Ryan Williams and Nader Abdallah, there is no way the starting four can afford to rest on what they accomplished during the spring.

"There is a lot of good competition at all the positions, which is something we really like," OSU defensive coordinator Jim Heacock said. "You have to name starters, and we'll do that of course. But what really matters is overall production from your entire unit, and our philosophy is the better your depth, the better your overall production. We like our depth right now."

Rose, Larimore and Barrow each had their moments in the spotlight during the spring game. Rose had three solo tackles for the Scarlet team, Larimore blocked an extra-point kick and Barrow got to experience every defensive lineman's dream – he batted a pass up in the air at the line of scrimmage and came down with the interception himself.

"There's no question that we wanted to get after it this spring," Wilson said. "We wanted to get after it and get better and better every day. As younger guys who are coming on and taking on bigger roles, we feel like we have something to prove."

Another defensive player who entered spring ball with the feeling he had something to prove was senior strongside linebacker Larry Grant. The 6-3, 225-pounder came to Ohio State last season as the reigning national JUCO player of the year and promptly intercepted a pass in his first game as a Buckeye, returning the pick 49 yards in the season opener against Northern Illinois.

But it was pretty much downhill from there. He was relegated to playing mostly on special teams and finished the season with just 18 tackles in 12 games. Used to playing

Continued On Page 12

## COVER STORY: STILL LOOKING FOR A LEADER

# Defense Should Be Solid At Linebacker

Continued From Page 11

and being one of his team's main contributors, Grant admittedly struggled to adjust before putting things into perspective.

"Last year motivates me a lot," he said. "I look back on last year and I probably didn't work as hard as I needed to work to play as much as I wanted to play. This year, I'm just taking last year as a learning curve. I just need to keep working hard on the field and off the field and just hope that all the hard work and the sacrifices that I'm making will pay off with success."

Grant experienced plenty of success this spring, getting singled out for his play in the April 14 jersey scrimmage and then exploding in the spring game with a performance that included four tackles, including three for loss, two sacks, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries. The second of those recoveries Grant returned 80 yards to clinch the Gray's 17-9 victory.

According to Jim Tressel, it was the cap on a spring where Grant jumped into the spotlight at the Sam position.

"Larry Grant has been very consistent this whole spring," the OSU head coach said. "He's probably been as consistent as anyone I've seen this spring. I see some good things out of him and he's really matured and grown. Hopefully he's going to have an unbelievable year."

As one of only six scholarship seniors on the roster, Grant will also be asked to assume a leadership role for the Buckeyes. It is a responsibility he relishes.

"I feel like part of my role is to help out the younger guys," he said. "I want to take what I've learned and try and give something back to them. I'm trying to be a leader on and off the field and help them out with classroom stuff, transportation, bringing them in to watch film and just trying to be the best player they can be. I'm just trying to put it all together so we can go as far as we can."

While Grant apparently nailed down the strongside position, returning starters Marcus Freeman and James Laurinatis firmed up their spots with solid plays.

Freeman finished strong with six tackles in the spring game as well as a 49-yard interception return for a touchdown. Meanwhile, Laurinatis continued his yeoman's work after leading the Buckeyes in tackles and interceptions last season. And despite earning several postseason awards, including the Bronko Nagurski Award as college football's defensive player of the year, he did not coast this spring.

"You know what? He's a competitor and I don't think you'd ever see him going anything except full speed," OSU linebackers coach Luke Fickell said. "When the ball is out there and the game is on the line, you can count on him. He's going to compete, compete, compete, and that's what has made him such a great player. Not only his smarts and his ability, but to be a great one, you have to compete and that's what he does."

As with the front wall, the linebacking corps also features a deep talent pool with senior Curtis Terry joined by such budding

stars as sophomores Ross Homan and Austin Spitler and redshirt freshmen Thaddeus Gibson and Mark Johnson.

Terry started twice last season and finished with 17 tackles, including 3½ for loss, while Homan played in all 13 games as a true freshman, winding up 10th on the team with 28 tackles despite playing most of the year with a bad hamstring.

Spitler, Gibson and Johnson each made statements in the spring game for their own playing time next fall. Playing in the middle for the Scarlet team, Spitler registered six tackles, including five solos, Gibson had an important sack for the Scarlet and Johnson tied for second on the Gray squad with four tackles in the contest.

"We feel pretty good about these guys," Fickell said. "We feel like all of them are getting a feel for where they need to be, and if we can keep everybody competing for playing time, it keeps everyone fresh and keeps everyone's head in the game. That's what we've done in the past to be successful, and it's what we need to continue to do."

In the secondary, the coaching staff enjoyed watching the emergence of a couple of new players in safeties Kurt Coleman and Tyler Moeller.

The 5-11, 185-pound Coleman began turning heads almost from the first snap of spring ball, building upon a modest rookie season in 2006 that included nine tackles in 12 games. He had five stops in the spring game for the Scarlet and will seemingly head into fall camp neck-and-neck with Jamario O'Neal for a starting job.

Moeller, the 6-1, 205-pound redshirt freshman, moved from linebacker and made an immediate impact in the secondary. He had a couple of tackles for the Gray in the spring game and also broke up two passes – both against Robiskie. Throughout the spring, he earned glowing praise from the coaching staff as a young player to watch.

"When you have a team meeting, Tyler Moeller is the first one in there," Tressel said. "It's like he woke up and came straight to the team meeting room. He loves it, loves every part of it."

Fickell said he was sorry to lose Moeller from the linebacker corps but believes his move to safety will greatly benefit the team.

"We hope to compare Tyler to someone like Anderson Russell," Fickell said. "He's around the ball, he runs fast, he's quick. Right now, he's just trying to figure out where he needs to be. Once that happens, he'll be fine."

Russell, who is penciled in as the starting free safety in the fall, was held out of all contact drills during spring practice as he continues rehabbing his surgically repaired knee. But all indications are that the 6-0, 190-pound sophomore will be full-go by fall camp.

While Coleman and Moeller were emerging, a couple of more established players turned in steady performances throughout the spring. Malcolm Jenkins (6-1, 202) and Donald Washington (6-1, 195), expected to start at cornerback for the Buckeyes in '07, were reportedly rock-solid.

"I'll tell you what – Malcolm Jenkins has made my transition a lot easier," first-year cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson said. "He's played a lot of football for us and he knows the system very well. He's a very coachable young man as well. He has a chance – if we can get him to do all those little things – he has a chance to be very, very special because he has the talent."

"I really like Donald as well. I think both Malcolm and Donald are interchangeable. And

the good thing about that is they are both tall guys and they are both physical guys. You don't see that very much from the corner spot. They will come up and will hit you. They can tackle. They can do everything. When you are tall at the corner spot, you can make up a lot of ground. You can contest a lot of thrown balls, a lot of deep balls and things like that. It helps and we've got some good ones."

Several other defensive backs also caught the attention of the coaching staff during the spring, including junior corner Shaun Lane, who went from being left off the depth chart at the beginning of drills to registering a game-high eight tackles in the Scarlet and Gray Game.

Also earning praise throughout the spring were junior Brandon Underwood, sophomore Aaron Gant and redshirt freshmen Chimdi Chekwa and Grant Schwartz. Chekwa and Schwartz especially elevated their stock – Chekwa was consistently mentioned by coaches for his good work while Schwartz had an interception in the April 14 jersey scrimmage and followed that with another pick in the spring game.

One defensive back who will likely not be available in the fall is sophomore corner Andre Amos, who was expected to be the main backup at Coleman's spot. Amos suffered a torn ACL during spring drills, a knee injury that will require surgery and sideline him up to eight months.

## Steady Special Teams

If spring practice was any indication, Ohio State can expect its veteran kickers to continue to improve this season while opposing teams could be in for a couple of new wrinkles in the punting game.

Both Aaron Pettrey and backup Ryan Pretorius were solid over the 15-day spring practice schedule, getting plenty of work in the team's April 19 kick scrimmage and again two days later in the spring game. Each has worked on improving leg strength, especially with the new rule that moves kickoffs back to the 30-yard line.

Meanwhile, junior punter A.J. Trapasso worked on his consistency and also a few trick plays. Trapasso took off on a fake punt during the kick scrimmage and also in the spring game, a play that ended when he steamrolled walk-on defensive back Zach Willis for what was perhaps the biggest hit of the afternoon.

Both fakes resulted in long gains for Trapasso, who totaled more than 3,750 yards and 50 touchdowns as a high school running back, and a smile crossed his face when asked if he thought the fake would be trotted out again in the fall.

"Hopefully," he said. "It's there if we need it."

The only real question marks coming out of spring ball centered around the long-snapping duties and who would return kickoffs and punts.

Senior walk-on Dimitrios Makridis was scheduled to take over as long snapper, but a back problem limited his playing time during the spring. That allowed fellow walk-ons Jake McQuaide, Patrick Howe and Don Curtis to contend for the duties with transfer Jackson Haas, a battle that will likely wage on in fall camp.

In the return game, the Buckeyes tried a variety of combinations including using Robiskie and Jenkins on punts and Dukes, Small and walk-on receiver Dan Potokar on kickoffs. That facet of the game will also likely be fine-tuned when fall camp begins in August.

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

## Shugarts, Williams Latest To Give Verbals

When BSB last went to press, it was reported that the Buckeyes had landed a verbal commitment from Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater offensive lineman Michael Brewster and were expecting another from Klein, Texas, offensive lineman J.B. Shugarts.

As it turns out, that was only part of the story.

In the first 48 hours after our last issue, the Buckeyes landed verbal commitments Nos. 7 and 8. One was expected, while the other came as somewhat of a surprise. While the latest news was posted as it happened on our website, [www.BuckeyeSports.com](http://www.BuckeyeSports.com), here is a look at the two newest verbals to join Ohio State's class of 2008.

#### Texas Lineman Shugarts Joins Ohio State Fold

Reports swirling in the immediate aftermath of Shugarts' unofficial visit to Columbus for the Buckeyes' spring game April 21 turned out to be both premature and late.

Shugarts announced his intention to attend OSU one day after BSB went to press, but it turns out he had known for some time that he would eventually become a Buckeye.

"Me and my dad have been discussing

it for like two weeks, just comparing and contrasting schools," he told BSB. "And then I had my mind made up for a little over a week. For almost two weeks I knew I was going to go there. I just hadn't really told anybody. Then when I went up there, that was like the icing on the cake and I was for sure then. I was 110 percent."

His final decision came down to the fact that when he came to OSU, "it just felt right," he said. In addition, head coach Jim Tressel was a key factor.

"I felt at home,"

he said. "The coaching staff was a big role in it. They have really good facilities too, and I really like Coach Tressel a lot."

While Shugarts had a one-on-one meeting with the OSU head coach during his weekend in town and spent time with the coaching staff, Tressel did not find out Shugarts was going to commit until after his April 24 press conference when the 6-7, 285-pound athlete called him.

"He was really excited," Shugarts said of Tressel's reaction. "He was fired up."

That does not mean that nobody knew beforehand, however. Some of Shugarts' friends – Brewster and Dublin (Ohio) Coffman teammates Mike Adams and Jake Stoneburner – all knew on April 23.

All four are verbal members of OSU's class of 2008 and plan on graduating early

#### OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Football players in the class of 2008 who have issued verbal commitments to play college football at Ohio State.

| Player           | Pos.  | Ht. | Wt. | High School                               |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----|---|
| Mike Adams       | OT    | 6-7 | 305 | Dublin (Ohio) Coffman                     |
| Michael Brewster | OL    | 6-6 | 300 | Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater                  |
| Ben Buchanan     | K/P   | 6-0 | 185 | Westerville (Ohio) Central                |
| DeVier Posey     | WR    | 6-3 | 190 | Cincinnati LaSalle                        |
| J.B. Shugarts    | OL    | 6-7 | 285 | Klein, Texas                              |
| Jake Stoneburner | TE/WR | 6-5 | 220 | Dublin (Ohio) Coffman                     |
| Devove Torrence  | RB/LB | 6-2 | 215 | Massillon (Ohio) Washington               |
| Nathan Williams  | LB/DE | 6-4 | 245 | Washington Court House (Ohio) Miami Trace |

from high school and enrolling for spring classes at OSU. It could also be the beginning of a class many are pegging as having the potential to be something special – a fact that is not lost on Shugarts.

"Our goal right now is all we're thinking is national championships, so that's the plan," he said. "Not just like one or maybe two. We're thinking dynasty. We want at least three."

The foursome also appears to have the ear of the coaching staff, having helped recruit other prospects to come to Columbus.

"They really do (listen to us)," he said. "We met (West Virginia offensive line recruit) Josh Jenkins at the U.S. Army All-American Combine, and he kind of found us because he knew who we were from the Internet. We didn't really know much about him, but when we went and played with him, he was nasty. He's the type of player that you want on your team, and he's really hardworking and very good. Brewster told (offensive line coach Jim) Bollman and (recruiting coordinator John) Peterson and Coach Tressel about him, and a couple of weeks later I think they ended up offering him and now Ohio State's one of his top schools."

That influence could continue should the Buckeyes wind up offering another Texas product in Sam McGuffie, a tailback from Cypress Cy-Fair. A friend of Shugarts', the duo had discussed going to the same college and many felt the two were a package deal.

Should the Buckeyes offer McGuffie, Shugarts said he expects big things out of him.

"When you've got this offensive line that we're putting together and to get a running back as good as him, you're almost stupid if you don't go to a school like (OSU) because he's got a shot to win the Heisman," Shugarts said.

Repeated attempts by BSB to contact McGuffie were unsuccessful.

A four-star prospect ranked the No. 29 prospect overall by Scout.com, Shugarts wound up choosing the Buckeyes over Notre Dame, LSU, Florida, Texas A&M and Oklahoma, among others.

He said he does not plan to listen to any further attempts to recruit him, saying his commitment was "110 percent" firm to OSU.

"Most of the schools were really nice about it," he said. "They congratulated me and told me it was great getting to meet me and it was nice getting to know me and all that, with me and my dad and my mom and everything. In the end, they say if anything changes to give them a call. I told everybody, 'I'm committed. I'm not

going to look around anywhere else. I'm done.'"

#### Ohio Defensive End Keeps Recruiting Streak Rolling

With Shugarts and Brewster joining the fold, it seemed reasonable to expect the Buckeyes not to land any further commitments in the near future. But just a few hours after Shugarts made his announcement public, the Buckeyes received a verbal commitment from a prospect who had just been extended a scholarship offer.

Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Heacock made a trip on April 24 to watch Washington Court House (Ohio) Miami Trace defensive end Nathan Williams' track meet. Speaking with him afterward, he told Williams to expect a text message from Tressel later that evening.

It came through, and almost immediately Williams became the eighth player to verbally commit to OSU's class of 2008.

"I'm psyched," he said two days after his commitment. "I was just eating dinner and I had to go outside for a second (to savor it). I haven't gotten 10 minutes just to sit down and relax since I committed. It's just a thrill. I've been waiting so long and for it finally to be here is unbelievable."

The eventual offer from the Buckeyes was something Williams said he had been hoping for every time he made the roughly 50-mile trip north to Columbus. A self-described Buckeye fan for life, his most recent visit prior to his commitment was for OSU's spring game April 21.

"Seems like every time I went up to Ohio State I was just so anxious to see what would happen," he said, referring to the possibility of getting an offer. "I've never questioned my ability, and I had performed in front of them, so they knew what type of player I am. I just tried to make as many trips to OSU as I could so they could see me and see what I can do."

After verbally committing, the 6-4, 245-pound Williams said he received a text message the following morning from Stoneburner, congratulating him.

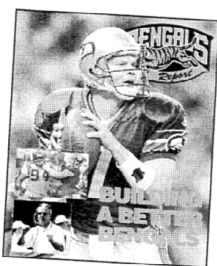
Having first camped at OSU prior to his sophomore season – the same year he moved to Ohio from California – he first caught the attention of the coaching staff by turning in a time of 4.6 seconds in the 40-yard dash.

"I think that caught their eye, the fact that he ran so well at his size," Miami Trace head coach Jeff Conroy said. "That kind of put him on their radar a little bit. We sent them tape after his sophomore year, and I think when they saw him on the football field that kind of piqued their interest."

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

According to Conroy, the Buckeyes were convinced of Williams' talent but wanted to make sure he fit the mold the OSU coaching staff was looking for. In addition to Heacock and Tressel, OSU linebackers coach Luke Fickell had visited him as well.

"When they had all those (character) questions answered they felt comfortable giving that offer," Conroy said. "They saw a combination of good qualities in this young man plus they saw a good athlete."

As a junior, Williams recorded 149 tackles – 24 for loss – and six sacks.

Although Williams has made his name as an inside linebacker in the Panthers' 4-4 defense, Conroy said he has developed into a good contributor as a tailback and fullback in what is primarily a one-back spread offense as well. Williams said he also plays tight end and defensive end.

Heacock told Williams the OSU coaches envision him as a player in the Bobby Carpenter mold, able to rush the passer and drop into pass coverage either from the line of scrimmage or back at linebacker.

His commitment to the Buckeyes caused a stir in his hometown.

"The whole city was there to congratulate me pretty much," he said. "My family's been an active part of the community since I've been here, and with it being a small town, most of the town knows my family. They were all crying and calling to congratulate me. They're psyched for me to be a Buckeye."

Williams chose the Buckeyes over West Virginia, Oklahoma, Michigan State, Georgia and California, all of whom had offered.

### Not The Spring Seasons They Might Have Liked

The final spring of high school before enrolling at OSU in the summer has been a difficult one for two of the most high-profile members of the Buckeyes' class of 2007.

Piqua, Ohio, tailback Brandon Saine, two-time state track champion in the 100- and 400-meter dashes, has elected to give up track for the rest of his senior season. The reigning state Mr. Football has battled

injuries throughout his senior season, and the Dayton Daily News reported his decision to leave the team May 2.

"He just wasn't having much fun anymore," Piqua head coach Ron Pearson told the newspaper. "I could tell that."

Saine took some time off following his football season and did not take part in his school's indoor track season but came out for outdoor track beginning March 5. He was forced to the sidelines for a week just two days into practice when he suffered a minor injury to his right Achilles tendon. He returned for one meet, where he was timed at 11.33 seconds in the 100 and finished second.

After the race, Saine complained of discomfort in his left upper groin and was again sidelined for a week. He would run in one more race, finishing third in the 400 with a time of 49.5 seconds – nearly three seconds slower than his state-championship time of 46.88 one season ago.

None of Saine's injuries is believed to be serious, and he plans on reporting to Columbus suffering no ill effects from

them.

Farther south down I-75, Cincinnati Colerain defensive end Eugene Clifford was making headlines for a more dubious distinction. The 6-2, 190-pound Clifford was cited for possession of marijuana at 3:30 a.m. March 25 at a house near his own.

Court records show that Clifford paid a \$105 fine that was classified as a minor misdemeanor citation. Because he has not officially enrolled at OSU, it is unlikely that he will face further punishment from the school.

Clifford's father, Eugene Clifford Jr., told the Cincinnati Enquirer his son was not one of the kids who were using the drug.

"It was somebody else's, and he had nothing to do with it," he said. "He was just in the area where they gave all the boys a ticket. He just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Continued On Page 20

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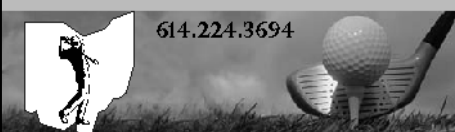
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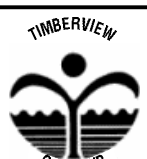
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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

# Scott Continues WR Tradition At Glenville

Continued From Page 19

## Virginia Wideout Still Interested In Buckeyes

Ohio State already has landed one verbal commitment from a wide receiver for its class of 2008 in Cincinnati LaSalle's DeVier Posey, but the Buckeyes could be looking at a handful of other wideouts.

One senior-to-be wide receiver hoping to be one of those players is Richmond (Va.) Huguenot's Rotell Jenkins, who lists the Buckeyes among his top five schools.

"(It's) Ohio State, Florida, Tennessee, UNC and Penn State in no particular order," he said.

As a junior, Jenkins caught 36 passes for 648 yards and eight touchdowns in an offense that primarily looks to run the ball. He also sees playing time as a kick returner and a strong safety.

"Most teams are looking at him at wide receiver, but he's a heck of a strong safety for us too," said Huguenot head coach Richard McFee, who handles most of the recruiting process for Jenkins. "I don't like to play kids both ways, but he's one of those kids where you've got to keep him on the field."

The Gators had a representative visit Jenkins at his high school, and the 6-3, 185-pounder will be at a Nike combine during the May 11-13 weekend at Penn State. He was scheduled to visit Florida during the month of April but was unable to take the trip. Other schools that have been around to check on him include Georgia, Rutgers, Tennessee and Richmond.

Bollman has also visited Jenkins' school. The wideout has never set foot on campus in Columbus and does not have any visits finalized yet, but that has not prevented him from seeing many things he likes about the Buckeyes.

A cable TV channel at his house has enabled him to see parts of some OSU practices as well as some of the team's nationally televised games.

"(I like) the way that I see the players on TV, how they carry themselves, and the way the coaches coach," he said. "I've seen on OnDemand, it shows some of their practices.

## A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

### 20 Years Ago - 1987

Tight end Jay Koch told BSB he planned to contribute at Ohio State after leading Cincinnati Purcell Marian to state championships in football and basketball.

"I take things one day at a time, but I expect myself to play," the 6-3, 202-pound signee said. "I don't want people to say, 'He went to a big school but didn't play.'"

OSU outside linebacker coach Fred Pagac told BSB that recent signee Tom Lease of Kenton, Ohio, reminded him of senior Buckeye linebacker Eric Kumerow.

### 10 Years Ago - 1997

Prospects in town for the spring game attended the ceremony in which Orlando Pace's tree was planted in the Buckeye Grove outside Ohio Stadium. Among those in attendance were several players from Ohio including Cincinnati Winton Woods running back Wiz White, Batavia lineman Ike Clepper, Columbus Briggs defensive back Charles Boyd and Cleveland St. Ignatius lineman LeCharles Bentley.

A trio of Ohioans from Canton McKinley also traveled south for the game - fullback/

linebacker Jamar Martin, running back/defensive back DeMarlo Rozier and defensive end Kenny Peterson, who already was a verbal commitment.

### Five Years Ago - 2002

More than 40 prospects visited Ohio State for the spring game, including Ohio juniors Massillon Washington linebacker Shawn Crable, Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary defensive end Sian Cotton, Lyndhurst Brush tight end Marcel Frost and Columbus Eastmoor running back Justin Valentine. Visitors from out of state included Baltimore Gilman School teammates Victor Abiamiri, a defensive end, and Ambrose Wooden, a defensive back; Hoboken, N.J., free safety Ira Guilford; Lapeer (Mich.) East offensive lineman Jake Long; and Beaver Falls, Pa., defensive back/running back Rodney Slappy.

Class of 2002 signee Derek Morris, a tackle from Huntersville, N.C., told reporters at the game he was optimistic he would qualify academically and be eligible to play for the Buckeyes in the fall. Reports surfaced that the Morris family had purchased a home in the Columbus area from which to

track his progress while at OSU.

Another of his classmates, quarterback/wide receiver Troy Smith of Cleveland Glenville, also continued to work toward qualifying academically.

### One Year Ago - 2006

Telling BSB he was getting sick of all the attention he was getting as he went through the recruiting process, tailback Brandon Saine of Piqua, Ohio, offered his verbal commitment to the Buckeyes. Other early contenders for Ohio high school's fastest man included Notre Dame, Pittsburgh, Northwestern and Boston College. He had won both the 100- and 400-meter track titles at the state track meet the previous spring as a sophomore and three days after committing blazed to a 10.38 in the 100, setting the all-time state record.

A potential contender with Saine for the title of Ohio's top 2007 recruit, defensive end Ben Martin of Cincinnati LaSalle, picked up a scholarship offer from Tennessee to go with previous offers from (among others) Notre Dame, Michigan, West Virginia, Illinois, Cincinnati and Ohio State.

It shows some of their training camps and stuff like that, and the way their coaches sit there and take time to teach the players how to work. I like that."

Contact from the Buckeyes has been limited, however. Jenkins said it had been about two months since they text messaged him but said he feels they are still players for his services. He said he was not sure if the Buckeyes had submitted an official offer, but they have verbally offered him.

For now, Jenkins said he plans to narrow his list further during the summer after taking unofficial visits to as many of his top schools as possible. He will then make a final decision sometime during his senior season.

## Glenville Wideout Could Keep Pipeline Flowing

It is no secret that many of the state's top high school football players wind up suiting up for Cleveland Glenville head coach Ted

Ginn Sr. Each season, it seems, a handful of Tarblooders are signing Division I letters of intent on National Signing Day, and one or two of them are typically headed south to Columbus to play for the Buckeyes.

This year, the most highly sought after prospect from Glenville is wide receiver Cordale Scott, a 6-3, 200-pound athlete who has already been offered by the likes of OSU, Iowa and Wisconsin. While he admits to having strong feelings for the Buckeyes, Scott said he considers himself wide open right now.

"I know everybody says I'm a lock for Ohio State," Scott told Scout. "It's not true. I love Ohio State but it's not automatic that I'll choose them. I want to look around and be sure of my choice."

A four-star prospect as ranked by Scout, Scott is in the midst of track season but is also taking part in various football camps across the region. He was named the over-

all MVP of an elite skills camp held in Cleveland in early May.

As a junior, he had 27 catches for 280 yards and four touchdowns on offense while recording five interceptions as a defensive back. This season, he could suit up as a quarterback for the Tarblooders.

Although he said he has no preference as to which position he will play, Scott does have a preference as to which other schools he would still like to offer him.

"I'm still hoping to get offers from some other schools like Michigan, Florida and USC," he said. "I really don't have a leader at this point. I'm interested in every school that's offered me."

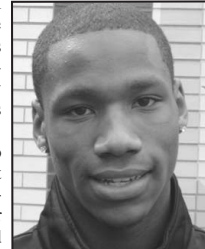
Scott plans to narrow his list sometime during his senior season, and he said he will likely announce his final decision at the U.S. Army All-American Game in San Antonio if he is selected to attend.

Whether he will become a Buckeye, however, will likely remain in doubt until then.

"I'm definitely a big Buckeye fan and love the staff there," Scott said. "Ohio State is a great atmosphere to play college football in. They have the best fans in the country. Ohio State has everything I want in so far as choosing a college to play for. I feel very comfortable there and they're going to be hard to beat, but I'm still keeping an open mind about the whole process. I'm going to choose the place that's right for me."

"A part of me wants to go to Ohio State to be with my big brothers and continue the Glenville tradition there. But another part of me is saying that maybe I should be the one to go my own way and start my own tradition in a different place. I don't know what I'm going to do."

BSB staff writer Marcus Hartman contributed to this report.



**Cordale Scott**

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

# LB Sweat Has Made Mark From Beginning

By ADAM JARDY

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ed Dalton remembered the play almost immediately.

It was the first scrimmage of the season, and the head coach for Washington (Pa.) Trinity lined up freshman Andrew Sweat for his first play at strong safety. The ball was snapped, and within a few seconds Sweat had already made an impact.

"The first guy he hit, he knocked the kid out," Dalton said. "He knocked the ball loose, the kid looked like he was out for the eight count."

It was a sign of things to come for Sweat, who now stands 6-3, 230 pounds and plays linebacker for Trinity. At the time, though, it was just a hit made by a kid trying to get the coaching staff to notice him.

"In ninth grade I was trying to make the varsity team and I was kind of overwhelmed by everything," Sweat said. "I was trying to do something to impress them, and I guess I made a pretty good hit."

The impact of that hit is still being felt nearly three years after the fact. Soon to be a senior, Sweat is still delivering what Dalton calls bone-crunching hits for the Hillers; it is just the position from which he delivers them that has changed.

Sweat moved to linebacker during his sophomore season and split time between that spot and safety out of need. As a junior, he focused exclusively on linebacker while playing defense.

The end result was a season that saw Sweat rack up 165 tackles – 13 for loss – along with four sacks and two interceptions for the Hillers, earning all-state honors in the process.

Sweat's talents have his coach thinking of a certain current OSU linebacker.

"Not to burden him with a role, but I was at Ohio State's practice and the kid he reminds me of the most is the best kid, (James) Laurinaitis," he said. "He's as close to him as he is to any of those other kids."

"He's a closer. He can just get to the ball and get off blocks. He has unbelievable natural instincts for his physical size. He also has great foot speed."

It is that talent that has enabled Sweat to become a leader for his team. While Dalton said he has seen his linebacker grow into the role of team leader, in the end it is his ability to produce on the field that goes the furthest.

"I think leadership also is demonstrated, not announced," the coach said. "Just be first in line, be doing what you're supposed to be doing, be doing it right. That's as much leadership as telling a sophomore to get behind you and follow you in line. I think most people are non-leaders and they will follow the person that knows what they're doing. Just like confidence comes from skills, I think leadership is demonstrated not announced and he's done a really good job with that."

Trinity utilizes a 4-4 defense, so although Sweat is classified as a middle (or Mike) linebacker, he is actually the weakside, or Will, linebacker positioned on the same side of the field as the opposing team's tight end.

"Coming to linebacker, I guess things happen a little faster," said Sweat, who

played linebacker in pee-wee football as a child. "I guess you read your keys and get to the ball and it's kind of the same deal. I guess things just happen a bit faster and you have to work with blockers and stuff and trying to shed them, rather than at safety you just run fast and fill the alleys."

Linebacker is likely the position he will play in college, and it is the position for which Ohio State is recruiting him. Some schools are visualizing him as a safety at the next level, but the majority of schools have the same line of thinking as the Buckeyes.

For his part, Sweat said he simply enjoys playing defense. Dalton also has utilized him as an H-back and a tight end, and this year he will be lining up at fullback as well.

"I can tell you that if he played safety he'd probably be one of the top safeties," Dalton said. "He's just one of those guys. The other thing about recruiting him is if he's not your Mike linebacker, he can be your Will 'backer. If he's not your Will 'backer, he can be your strong safety. If he's not your strong, he can probably be a free. If he's not your free, he can be your H-back."

"There's like seven different ways you can go with him. It's not like recruiting a fat tackle and then all of a sudden he can't play fat tackle – guess what, he can't do anything for you."

Sweat, a four-star prospect and the No. 52 prospect overall as ranked by Scout.com, is no stranger to the OSU campus. After taking in the Buckeyes' spring game April 21, the linebacker has taken in the Buckeyes a full half-dozen times. He plans to eventually head to law school after he finishes his undergraduate coursework.

He listed academics as the top factor he is looking for in a school followed by football – "the prestige of the program, when I can play, my comfort level with the college and the football program and the location of the university itself," he said.

More than 40 schools have offered Sweat, and he was planning to make a final decision sometime during the month of May.

While in attendance at OSU's spring game, Sweat was seen hanging out with the likes of Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater offensive

## The Sweat File

NAME – Andrew Sweat

HIGH SCHOOL – Washington (Pa.) Trinity

POSITION – Linebacker

HEIGHT, WEIGHT – 6-3, 230 pounds

40-YARD DASH – 4.55 seconds

**VITAL STATISTICS** – As a junior, Sweat was named first-team Class AAA all-state by The Associated Press and first-team all-conference by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. He recorded 165 tackles – 13 for loss – and four sacks and two interceptions.

**COACH'S COMMENTS** – "He makes a lot of plays in practice. You have to quick-whistle him because you're afraid when you're going live he's going to hurt one of your ones on the other side." – Trinity head coach Ed Dalton

**HOBBIES** – Sweat enjoys reading books by Harlan Coben, a fiction writer, and lists "Tell No One" and "Deal Breaker" among his favorite books.

**SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN** – Although he boasts around 40 offers, Sweat has OSU, Penn State and Notre Dame at the top of his list.



Andrew Sweat

lineman Michael Brewster, Klein, Texas, offensive lineman J.B. Shugarts and Dublin (Ohio) Coffman offensive lineman Mike Adams and tight end Jake Stoneburner.

In the immediate aftermath of the game, Brewster and Shugarts joined Adams and Stoneburner as verbal members of the OSU class of 2008, and both Brewster and Adams have expressed a desire to help recruit Sweat to come to Columbus.

When he makes his final decision, how-

ever, it will be based solely on which school is the best one for himself, regardless of who else has committed there.

"We'll see where I end up, and if we end up at the same place that would be awesome," he said. "You'd like to play with them. We're all good friends outside of football. We all know each other and we joke around and we had a good time."

"But ultimately I have to do what I think is best for me."

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## NFL DRAFT

# Gonzalez, Ginn Go First

*Pair Of Buckeyes Go In First Round Of NFL Draft, Break All-Time Record*



**FROM ONE HORSESHOE TO ANOTHER** — Flanked by general manager Bill Polian (left) and head coach Tony Dungy (right), former Ohio State receiver Anthony Gonzalez displays his new jersey after being selected in the first round of the NFL draft by Super Bowl champion Indianapolis. (Photo courtesy of the Indianapolis Colts)

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

Two Ohio State players were taken in the first round of what ultimately became a wildly unpredictable NFL draft, and that made the school the all-time leader in opening-round selections.

Wide receiver/kick returner Ted Ginn Jr. was a surprise pick at No. 9 overall by the Miami Dolphins while fellow receiver Anthony Gonzalez was selected at No. 32 with the final selection of the first round by the Super Bowl champion Indianapolis Colts.

Those two picks allowed the Buckeyes to move past Southern California for the most first-rounders in NFL draft history. OSU now counts 66 first-rounders to 65 for the Trojans. Notre Dame and Miami (Fla.) are tied for third with 61, and Michigan and Florida are deadlocked for a distant fifth with 42 first-round selections each.

Shortly after the draft, Gonzalez revealed that Ohio State receivers coach Darrell Hazell had once told him that his goal was to have coached three straight first-round selections — Santonio Holmes in 2006, Ginn in 2007 and Gonzalez in 2008. However, when Gonzalez decided to forgo his senior year of eligibility, Hazell said he would “settle” for three first-rounders in just two years.

“I just talked to Coach Hazell, and he is really excited for us,” Gonzalez said. “The fact that Ted and I could do this together, it’s really nice to be part of that NFL-Ohio State tradition.”

A total of 23 different schools had at least one player chosen in the first round of this year’s draft, held April 28 and 29 at New York City’s Radio City Music Hall.

LSU led the way with four first-rounders, including quarterback JaMarcus Russell, who was the No. 1 overall pick by the Oakland Raiders. Other former Tigers going in the first round were safety LaRon Landry to Washington at No. 6, receiver Dwayne Bowe to Kansas City at No. 23 and receiver Craig Davis to San Diego at No. 30.

Despite a subpar season that wound up costing head coach Larry Coker his job, Miami (Fla.) had three players selected in the first round albeit none until the latter stages. Safety Brandon Meriweather was taken at No. 24 by New England, linebacker Jon Beason went one pick later to Carolina, and tight end Greg Olsen found himself chosen by Chicago with the 31st overall selection.

Ohio State was one of four schools with two first-round selections. The others were Tennessee, Texas and Florida.

In addition to the Buckeyes, four other Big Ten schools saw players taken in the first round. They were Wisconsin offensive tackle Joe Thomas at No. 3 to Cleveland, Penn State offensive tackle Levi Brown at No. 5 to Arizona, Michigan cornerback Leon Hall at No. 18 to Cincinnati, and Purdue defensive end Anthony Spencer at No. 26 to Dallas.

Ginn and Gonzalez were two of eight Buckeyes chosen in the overall draft. They were joined by defensive tackle Quinn Pitcock, who went to Indianapolis in the third round; running back Antonio

Pittman, picked by New Orleans in the fourth round; a trio of fifth-round selections — defensive end Jay Richardson to Oakland, receiver Roy Hall to Indianapolis and quarterback Troy Smith to Baltimore; and center Doug Datish, who was a sixth-round pick by Atlanta.

Ohio State finished second only to Florida in terms of total players drafted. The Gators had nine to the Buckeyes’ eight while Texas, Notre Dame and Michigan each had seven players taken.

The draft began almost according to script as Russell was taken by the Raiders in the No. 1 spot and Detroit scooped up Georgia Tech receiver Calvin Johnson at No. 2. The Browns then selected Thomas with the third pick, telling Notre Dame quarterback Brady Quinn the night before the selection process they would not be selecting him — yet.

Likewise, picks four through eight — Clemson defensive end Gaines Adams to Tampa Bay, Brown to Arizona, Landry to Washington, running back Adrian Peterson to Minnesota and Arkansas defensive end Jamaal Anderson to Atlanta — generated very little buzz.

However, when the Dolphins made their selection at No. 9, most experts believed the quarterback-starved team with offensive-minded new head coach Cam Cameron would jump at Quinn. Instead, Miami went for Ginn, who was projected to go at least a half-dozen picks later.

Ginn suffered what has been a lingering injury to his left foot early in the BCS National Championship Game, and fans jeered Cameron at the Dolphins’ draft party for bypassing Quinn.

Nevertheless, Miami player personnel remained undaunted.

“We feel good about Ted’s foot,” Miami general manager Randy Mueller told reporters. “We think he’s a month or so out. We’re obviously going to treat him with kid gloves a little bit to get him right, but we don’t think there’s any long-term effects, and we think he’ll be fine.”

Ginn, who hosted a draft party at Cleveland Glenville that was attended by family, friends and many of his former Tarblooder teammates including Smith and current NFL defensive back Donte Whitner, said he was about 85 percent healthy and would be able to play in a game now if necessary.

“I have the ability to go out there and work through any pain,” he said. “I have done workouts on (the injured foot). I have practiced on it for weeks.”

Ginn said he had an inkling that the Dolphins were interested after Cameron and Mueller took him to dinner the night before a recent workout in Columbus.

“I met with them and we had a very good conversation,” Ginn said. “I laid it all down and they knew all about me. I got to the point then that I thought I could be their (first-round) pick.”

The Dolphins’ medical staff was expected to require Ginn to wear a protective boot on his injured foot for up to a month, meaning he would miss the initial summer mini-camps. But the team’s long-range goal for the speedster was to have him in uniform — on special teams at the very least — by the time Miami kicks off its 2007 season Sept. 9 at Washington.

While Ginn had to wait through only

## NFL DRAFT

a handful of selections before hearing his name called, Gonzalez had to sweat it out for nearly the entire first round. But when the Colts nabbed him with the final pick of that first round, the former Ohio State receiver found himself in a most enviable position – going to the defending Super Bowl champions to work with Peyton Manning, who many believe is the top quarterback in the NFL today.

"If this was recruiting and I had my choice, this is what I would have picked," Gonzalez said. "It doesn't get any better for me and my family from a professional standpoint, from a proximity standpoint, from the players and coaches they have. I'm really very blessed.

"I always said for the last eight years or so, I'm the luckiest guy in the world. I swear I am, and this is no exception. I already played with a Heisman Trophy winner and now I'll play with a guy who is probably the best quarterback in the entire NFL."

Indianapolis general manager Bill Polian said that everyone in the organization agreed that Gonzalez was a perfect fit for the Colts, adding that "he has the (team) horseshoe (logo) stamped all over him."

Gonzalez should fit right in with Indianapolis, which needs a replacement for third receiver Brandon Stokley, who left the team via free agency. But he admitted that when the Colts' selection came around, he had already resigned himself to being a second-round choice.

Gonzalez said his unofficial barometer became highly regarded Tennessee wide receiver Robert Meacham, who wasn't taken until No. 27 by New Orleans.

"I said, 'I need that guy to go if I'm going to go in the first round,'" Gonzalez

said. "Meacham finally went to New Orleans, and then we started to get excited again. When San Diego was on the clock (at No. 30), I thought, 'Maybe there.' But they picked (LSU receiver) Craig Davis. That hurt a little. I would have thought I had gone ahead of him.

"Indy hadn't really occurred to me because I thought, 'Well, they have the two receivers.' I knew Stokley had left, but I wasn't sure and I hadn't had a lot of contact with the Colts. I kind of resigned myself to, 'Well, the second round's not bad.'

"Then, the phone rang."

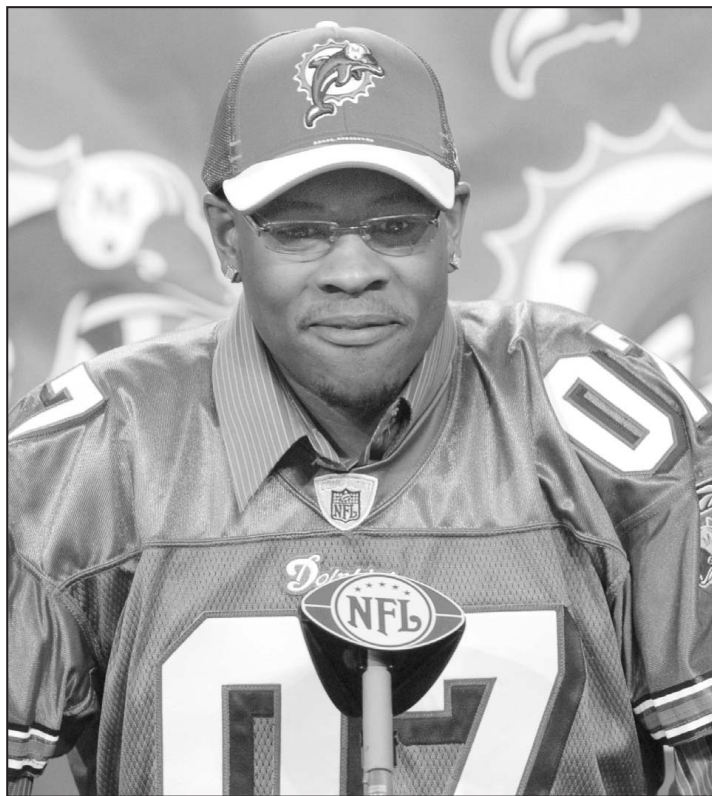
The telephone remained quiet for the remaining draft-eligible Buckeyes before the Colts selected Pitcock with the next-to-last pick of the first day. Indianapolis picked up the 6-2½, 299-pounder with the 35th selection of the third round, No. 98 overall.

"(Our defensive line coach) John Teerlinck described him as a 'big-old-ax-handle guy,'" Polian said. "He's a terrific run player. He's a high-motor, go-go-go, chase-all-over-the-field guy. He's not a great pass rusher, but a very big presence inside against the run and a guy who will stand in and slug it out with you while still having some athletic skills."

Colts head coach Tony Dungy seemed to agree.

"Pitcock is a real high-energy, high-motor guy off a great football team," the coach said. "He was one of their better players, one of their leaders and a guy who just plays hard every down. He's a 300-pound body, and we don't have many of those. He is going to fit right into how we

Continued On Page 24



**MIAMI NICE** — Former Ohio State receiver/kick returner Ted Ginn Jr. meets the Miami media after being chosen No. 9 overall in the NFL draft by the Dolphins. Ginn has been slowed by a foot injury suffered in the BCS National Championship Game, but he insisted he will be ready for the team's season opener in September. (Photo courtesy of the Miami Dolphins)

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## NFL DRAFT

# Pittman, Smith Among Those Who Slipped

Continued From Page 23

play and the type of people we want."

Prior to the draft, at least one observer nailed Pitcock's status. NFL draft analyst Jerry Jones said the former Buckeye would go late in the third round and have a lengthy career.

"He's essentially a run-stuffer, but he proved he had some pass-rushing abilities," Jones said. "He's a good, instinctive kid — the lunch-pail, blue-collar-type guy who plays in the league a long time."

## Slipping Down The Board

While Ginn, Gonzalez and Pitcock enjoyed being first-day draft selections, a couple of former teammates slipped into the later rounds.

Pittman, who hosted a party at an Akron-area restaurant on the first day of the draft, had to wait until the eighth pick of the fourth round (No. 107 overall) to hear his name called. Even then, it was a bit of a head-scratcher since the Saints already possess a potent one-two running attack with Deuce McAllister and Reggie Bush.

Nevertheless, New Orleans head coach Sean Payton said his team had its eyes on Pittman, even trading up 17 spots and surrendering a fifth-round pick to Houston to get him.

"With Antonio Pittman, we were looking at the board trying to look at our best graded players," Payton said. "I think that's something you always try to do, especially as you go into the second day. He's someone that has been a consistent performer who has been durable. He was a guy that stood out a little bit. We moved up a little to get him."

And about Pittman entering an already crowded backfield with McAllister and Bush? Payton sees no problem.

"You can't have enough of these runners," the Saints coach said. "We'll figure out his role down the road. More importantly, we just felt that he was a back that you looked at from a value standpoint. Right now, obviously, we have a great deal of confidence in Deuce and in what he brings to the table and the same thing with Reggie. Pittman is a young back that appealed to us and nothing more than that."

"We're trying to find guys that we feel have a chance to make the team. In his



**NEW TEAMMATES** — Ted Ginn Jr. (right) shakes hands with former BYU quarterback John Beck as the two celebrate being the first two players taken in the NFL draft by the Miami Dolphins. Ginn was the ninth selection in the first round, and Beck was taken with the eighth pick of the second round. (Photo courtesy of the Miami Dolphins)

case, that was the reason for the selection. We're excited to have him."

For his part, Pittman said he sees himself fitting in just fine in New Orleans.

"Those are two great backs," he said. "I can learn a lot from those guys. Who better to teach you than Deuce and Reggie?"

Joining Ginn and Gonzalez in skipping his senior year of college eligibility, Pittman's fall to the fourth round meant that he joined a group of which he likely would rather not have been a part. He became only the fourth of 26 Buckeyes to declare early for the NFL not to be selected in at least the first three rounds.

The others were all fourth-rounders — linebacker Na'il Diggs (98th overall, Green Bay, 2000), Pittman (107th,

New Orleans), tight end Darnell Sanders (122nd, Cleveland, 2002) and fullback Nicky Sualua (129th, Dallas, 1997).

Later, Pittman said he would simply use his fourth-round selection as motivation.

"You know, my whole career at Ohio State, I was always doubted," he said. "But to have that opportunity to play in the NFL, now's the time to put more work to it and come out rolling."

Also taking a free fall in the draft was Smith, the Heisman Trophy winner who led the Buckeyes to back-to-back Big Ten championships and became the first OSU signal caller in 70 years to beat Michigan three times.

A poor performance in the BCS title game against Florida compounded by less-than-stellar workouts at the NFL Combine in February had many draft experts downgrading Smith to the middle or latter stages of the fourth round. Yet, no one seemed prepared for him to tumble all the way to the last pick of round No. 5, going to the Ravens with the 174th overall selection of the draft.

In the end, things may have worked out for the best. Smith will get to learn under the tutelage of veteran quarterback Steve McNair, who is reaching the twilight of his career, and he joins a team that finished 11th in passing offense in the NFL last season.

And if being pushed to the bottom of the fifth round and watching while eight other quarterbacks were chosen ahead of him stung Smith in any way, he refused to show it.

"The wait wasn't a concern for me," he said. "The organization that I was going to get a chance to be a part of is an ideal fit. Playing for a winning team and a winning

organization, and getting a chance to learn from guys like Steve McNair, Ray Lewis, Ed Reed, coach (Brian) Billick, (general manager) Ozzie Newsome — the list goes on and on of good guys in this organization."

Smith further insisted that being criticized for everything from his lack of height to a perceived lackadaisical attitude toward working out for pro scouts did not bother him.

"Critics are going to be there for the rest of my life — there's nothing I can do about that," he said. "In a lot of ways, it makes people stronger when they (get criticized). My whole life, I've been fighting that battle and it's turned out positive right now, and I'm going to continue to stay the course."

Smith's stock might have dropped even lower had it not been for an unsolicited phone call Newsome received during the week leading up to the draft.

"I got a phone call from Jim Tressel on Tuesday," Newsome said. "I've known Coach Tressel (for a long time). His father was the coach where we practiced in Berea. He had had a long conversation with Brian earlier in the year, just to give his endorsement of Troy Smith, (and they talked about) the type of person that he was, the type of competitor that he was."

"He told me, 'I feel like (Baltimore) would be a very good place for him.' I took the information down and it just so happened to fall that way."

Some observers opined that the Ravens may try to take advantage of Smith's athletic abilities and switch him to another position. But Billick was quick to shoot down that theory.

"He's a quarterback and that's impor-

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## NFL DRAFT

tant to him," the Ravens head coach said. "Anytime you have someone with that level of athletic ability, there's always a conjecture you might do some other things. But if he's going to progress and be that starter in the National Football League, that's where his focus has to be and where it will be for us."

Peter King, longtime football writer for Sports Illustrated, wrote April 30 on SI.com that Baltimore may have gotten the steal of the draft.

"I'd like to hear the defensive comments four years from now from scouts when they are asked to justify how Troy Smith went with the last pick of the fifth round," King wrote. "This isn't Charlie Ward, people. This is a guy who played at a high level until the last game of his college football career. And he goes 174th? I almost would call that irresponsible."

## Other Freshly Minted Pros

Richardson and Hall joined Smith as fifth-round selections from the Buckeyes.

Richardson was a bit of a surprise, going to the Raiders with the first pick of the fifth round and the 138th selection overall. In fact, he was changing clothes in his apartment after going to church when the phone rang.

"I was pretty confident I'd go (somewhere in the draft), but I didn't know when," Richardson said. "It was mostly a sense of relief."

Thirty-one picks later, another mini-surprise occurred when the Colts decided upon another Ohio State player, this time taking Hall with the 169th overall selection. He was shooting basketball behind his parents' house when the call came.

"Tony Dungy came on the line and said, 'We watched a lot of film on you. You're a great athlete, and we want to make you a Colt,'" Hall said. "'We're turning in the card, so go watch TV.' And there it was."

The 6-3, 238-pound receiver had excellent workouts for pro scouts, running the 40-yard dash in 4.46 at the combine and then turning in a 4.38 a few weeks later at Ohio State's annual Pro Day. That was enough to raise his draft status, and going to Indianapolis to join former teammates Gonzalez and Pitcock was just icing on the cake.

"That's going to make the transition a little bit easier – to be around people you're comfortable with and people you've been around for four or five years," Hall said. "You don't have to be a stranger."

As far as how Hall will fit into the Colts' plans, "I don't know," he said, "but they drafted me for a reason. They didn't bring me in to fail. They're bringing me in for a reason. I'm big and fast and they'll figure out how to use me on the field. I just have to show I can make plays."

Polian characterized Hall as "a player we think has a lot – a lot – of upside."

Ohio State's 2007 draft ended when the Falcons took Datish with the 24th selection of the sixth round, the 198th pick overall. According to new Atlanta head coach Bobby Petrino, the former Buckeye center will provide depth along the team's offensive line – chiefly at center and guard – and may help as the long snapper.

Once the draft had ended, the annual flurry of college free-agent signings occurred and seven former Buckeyes landed at least mini-camp looks from NFL teams – cornerback Antonio Smith and quarterback Justin Zwick (Indianapolis), safety Brandon Mitchell (Houston), offensive lineman T.J. Downing (Arizona), defensive lineman David Patterson (Atlanta),

fullback Stan White Jr. (Cincinnati) and long snapper Drew Norman (Cleveland).

Smith, Mitchell, Downing, Patterson and White all signed free-agent contracts with their respective teams while Zwick and Norman were invited to rookie mini-camps strictly on a tryout basis. Zwick said he hoped the chance would help him earn a free-agent deal.

"We had some discussions with some teams during the draft, and I'm not really sure what happened," he said. "But going to the Colts' camp is a good opportunity. It would be ideal to catch on with them and learn from Peyton Manning. It would be great to stick around and learn."

## Draft Notes

• Smith is the 12th Buckeye quarterback to be drafted since the first NFL-AFL combined draft in 1967, and despite going

at the bottom of the fifth round, only four of those other 11 were selected ahead of him – Art Schlichter (No. 4 overall, 1982, Baltimore Colts), Bobby Hoying (85th, 1996, Philadelphia), Joe Germaine (101st, 1999, St. Louis) and Craig Krenzel (148th, 2004, Chicago). Smith went higher than Greg Hare (203rd, 1974, Buffalo), Kent Graham (211th, New York Giants, 1992), Rex Kern (260th, 1971, Baltimore Colts), Cornelius Green (318th, 1974, Dallas), Jim Karsatos (322nd, 1987, Miami) and Ron Maciejowski (376th, 1971, Chicago).

• This year marked the sixth time a school had at least one wide receiver picked in the first round of consecutive NFL drafts. Ohio State has now accomplished the feat on two separate occasions – Joey Galloway and Terry Glenn were picked in the first round in 1995 and '96, while the selections this year of Ginn and

Gonzalez followed that of Holmes last season.

• Richardson joined former high school teammates Quinn and safety Nedu Ndukwe to give Dublin (Ohio) Coffman three former players drafted. That tied the suburban Columbus high school with Shreveport (La.) Evangel Academy and Miami Norland for most players taken in this year's draft.

• By virtue of being the final pick in this year's draft, Alabama cornerback Ramzee Robinson, who went with the 255th overall selection to Detroit, earns the distinction of being "Mr. Irrelevant 2007." Ohio State hasn't had a Mr. Irrelevant since receiver Everett Ross was taken by Minnesota with the final pick of the 1989 draft.

BSB staffers Marcus Hartman and Adam Jardy contributed to this report.

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## OPINION

# There May Be Reasons Behind Troy's Tumble

It was with a wide range of emotions that I monitored the NFL draft and, specifically, the status of the former Mr. Everything, Troy Smith.

Here he was, the nation's reigning top collegiate football player, languishing until midway through the second day of the draft. The list of players drafted ahead of him was incredible. Allen Barbre, for example, was an offensive tackle for Missouri Southern State, a Division II school. He was taken more than a full round ahead of Smith.

Rather than being selected high in the draft and earning the millions of dollars that should come along with being the nation's top college football player, Smith will now likely have to battle former UCLA quarterback Drew Olson for a spot on the roster as the Baltimore Ravens' third-string quarterback.

All this for Ohio State's seventh Heisman Trophy winner. He was even taken five spots behind former teammate Roy Hall – the same Roy Hall who nabbed a total of 13 catches during the same season that Smith was en route to the Heisman. Smith was the seventh Buckeye taken.

Apparently, when he spent the entire season praising his teammates for all of his individual success, he might have been doing more than simply blowing smoke at everyone.

Even with that in mind, I pondered how the mighty Troy had fallen so far so quickly. In doing so, I thought back to the beginning of the season and the 2006 Big Ten Football Media Day luncheon held in Chicago – the unofficial kickoff to the Troy Smith for Heisman campaign.

It was there that Smith was seated at a large round table surrounded by dozens of writers from every major sports publication in the country. At times comfortable, at other times very much ill at ease with the barrage

of questions he faced, Smith was asked frequently about his past transgressions as well as his future aspirations.

When asked about being suspended for taking \$500 from a booster, Smith said there were more details to the story that had not been made public. When asked to qualify what that statement could mean, he declined.

With about five minutes left in the interview session – which lasted two hours – Smith decided that he'd had enough and had OSU spokesman Steve Snapp step in to end the interview prematurely.

For me, it was the first glimpse into what kind of person Smith might actually be. Off the field, away from the glare of the cameras, he still kept his past mistakes very close to himself; it was obvious that, while he had put his mistakes behind him, he had not completely moved on.

It seemed like reporters were speaking to a person who was claiming and demonstrating two different things. Clearly, Smith had not put the incident behind him or he would not give reporters a cryptic statement about how they did not know the full truth, then decline to embellish with what the true story was. It was also obvious that he was merely putting on a face for the press that did not reflect his true feelings.

The NFL has especially begun clamping down on off-the-field issues recently with commissioner Roger Goodell suspending Tennessee cornerback Adam "Pac-Man" Jones for a full season after several off-the-field incidents. The decision came after Goodell stated that he would begin cracking down on players with frequent run-ins with the law.

## UP AND ADAM

Adam Jardy

This takes us back to Smith, who had to endure an increased demand for his time from the media throughout his senior season. As the Buckeyes prepared for

a chance to go wire-to-wire as the top-ranked team in the country, OSU athletics communications set up a weekly conference call with the team's two Heisman candidates – Smith and Ted Ginn Jr.

A great idea in practice, it became obvious that it was becoming more and more of a burden for both players as the season went on, but especially for Smith. As the season progressed and it became evident that he, and not Ginn, was the front-runner for the Heisman, it became more difficult with each passing week to get Smith on the teleconference.

Some weeks, he would seem very much at ease. One week a reporter asked Smith if he was growing tired of his media responsibilities, and he responded by saying that he enjoyed chatting with "all you fine gentlemen."

Other weeks, not as much. During the week leading up to the Iowa game, Smith was asked how he had progressed in his ability to stay in the pocket and find open receivers rather than simply tuck and run – a fact backed up by his greatly diminished rushing statistics compared to his first two years as a starter.

Smith took offense to that and told reporters later during the call that he was starting to put names together with faces and that he remembered who had asked him that question, a question he apparently perceived as a grave insult.

Not long thereafter, Smith started simply

not showing up for the conference call. Or, if he did show up, he would answer two or three questions, tell reporters to "hang on a second" and then leave the call.

That made covering Smith and his Heisman campaign difficult for local reporters and impossible for out-of-town writers.

It seemed as if the more success he enjoyed, the less he felt he needed to give of himself to anyone else.

That fact became painfully obvious while at the NFL Combine, his first interaction with the press since the team's painful destruction at the hands of the Florida Gators. With many questioning the body of work Smith and the Buckeyes had put forth against what was now appearing to be a less-than-stellar group of opponents, it was his first opportunity to put on a good face and show that he was the fiery, personable leader who got the Buckeyes to the national championship game.

Instead, he effectively fell flat on his face. Showing up overweight, Smith appeared to have a chip on his shoulder when facing 15 minutes of questions from reporters – many of whom had never dealt with him before.

It was there that I made a rookie mistake. While Smith stood at a podium, I planned to ask him why it cost so much to get his autograph and if he knew store owners were apologizing to fans for the high prices being charged by those who represented Smith. Rather than ask it in front of a large crowd of media members, I figured I would get a better answer in a one-on-one setting.

After biding my time while Smith talked to the NFL Network after his press conference, I caught up with him in a hallway where a local television reporter was also waiting. Smith stopped and obliged for a quick interview – although he looked none too happy about it. When the newscaster finished his questions, I started to ask mine.

Smith refused to even look up and quickly walked away from me. I tried to follow, but a security guard assigned to Smith forcibly prevented me from doing so. There I stood, watching Smith walk down a hallway as he completely ignored dozens of fans crying out for an acknowledgement from the former team captain.

Instead, he walked down the hallway and gave them the same reaction he gave me – that is to say, no reaction whatsoever.

One criticism I have heard of Smith is that NFL execs are unsure as to how he will handle the trappings of fame and success at the next level, should he attain them. Based on his history and personality, teams apparently were not sure they could trust the future of their franchise to a player with as many question marks as Smith.

As it stands, I can't say that I blame them.



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## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

# Baltimore May Be Best Place For Troy

I can't help but think that the Baltimore Ravens got a bargain when they picked up Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith with the last selection of the fifth round in the recent NFL draft. I know he's perceived to be too short for the NFL and he has been surly over the past few months, but the guy's a winner. That's not something you can gauge or quantify at a combine or campus pro day.

I think back to Smith's sophomore year when he was still battling Justin Zwick for the starting quarterback job. The thing that struck me most early on in Smith's quest for playing time was how even as a sophomore he had complete command of the huddle. You could see it almost immediately. Again, it's a quality that can't be quantified or taught.

Hopefully, the NFL snub will motivate Smith, just as he was motivated to excel as a Buckeye after being recruited in the shadow of Zwick. I think it's important that he fall under the positive influence of someone in the Ravens organization, whether it's quarterback Steve McNair, head coach Brian Billick or even former Cleveland Browns great and current Baltimore general manager Ozzie Newsome.

I believe one of the greatest accomplishments of OSU head coach Jim Tressel during his time in Columbus is the way he nurtured Smith and helped him become one of the greatest Buckeye quarterbacks of all time – despite some rocky moments along the way. We'll see if Smith is the surprise of the Ravens just as he came from almost nowhere to become one of the all-time Buckeye greats.

By the way, I question the wisdom of NFL scouts if they downgraded Smith because of his performance in the national championship game against Florida. I don't know that even Joe Montana – another quarterback whose knack for winning may have exceeded his physical attributes – could have done much better than Smith, given the porous play of the Buckeye offensive line and the game plan the quarterback was given.

Besides, Notre Dame quarterback and local product Brady Quinn struggled in several big games and still was drafted in the first round.

I ended up feeling really bad for Quinn on draft day. Once he was passed over with the first couple of picks, the ESPN analysts spent the rest of the afternoon making him the big story. It's bad enough to be picked lower than expected – ask OSU running back Antonio Pittman, who told a reporter at the Buckeye spring game that he was hearing he would go in the first round, but went in the fourth – but it's even worse when that slight is constantly dwelled on in front of the entire nation.

Kudos to Quinn for handling the situation with dignity.

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## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

### Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

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**Wells No Samson**

I noted in the last issue that I was concerned with the play of the Ohio State quarterbacks in the spring game. It seems only logical that the Buckeyes will turn to more of a run-oriented attack come the fall given the questions at quarterback and with the presence of Chris Wells, the highly touted running back out of Akron who is getting ready to enter his sophomore year.

Wells missed much of the spring with an ankle injury, and it would have been an excellent time for Maurice Wells, also highly regarded out of high school but pretty much a disappointment so far, to assert himself before incoming freshman running backs such as Brandon Saine arrive in the fall.

Wells got plenty of work in the spring game, leading all ball carriers with 14 carries, but gained only 48 yards for a disappointing 3.4-yard average. The Florida native always seems to be just a split-second away from breaking one.

I have a suggestion for him.

Do you know how swimmers shave their body hair to reduce resistance and reduce their times? Some swimmers even admit the shaving is more mental than actually aerodynamic.

Maybe Wells should lose some of his long hair that flows from beneath his helmet. At a position where a only a fraction of a second of speed separates a player at Ohio State from a player at Muskingum College – I'm not picking on Muskingum; I recently met someone who played football there, so it comes to mind – maybe less hair would give Wells that little bit extra, be it mentally or physically, to start turning those short gains into long ones.

Hey, it's worth a shot (or a cut, as the case may be).

Besides, I've seen enough players get brought down by their jerseys or have their face masks grabbed, whether intentionally

or unintentionally, to know it's only a matter of time before Wells gets taken down, intentionally or unintentionally, by the hair. How would you like to have a strong guy like Vernon Gholston bring you down by the locks? That's got to hurt.

By the way, perhaps one of you football officials out there knows whether that would be a penalty.

**The Clipper Connection**

About a half-dozen BSB staffers recently celebrated their birthdays within a short period of time, including two of our forever young females who are each now a year older than Jack Benny (you younger readers can Google that one). In honor of all the birthdays, we met at popular Buckeye and Buckeye Sports Bulletin hangout Plank's Café to celebrate.

Proprietor John Plank introduced us to new Columbus Clippers manager and former major leaguer John Stearns, who was there with coaches Boots Day and Steve McCatty.

In talking with Stearns, it turns out he has an Ohio State football connection of sorts.

As a member of the University of Colorado football team, he played against the Buckeyes in Ohio Stadium in 1971, a 20-14 Buffalo victory that snapped a 19-game OSU home winning streak. Stearns, in fact, was quite active in the game, making 12 tackles from his safety spot, breaking up a pass and also punting four times for 159 yards and a 39.7-yard average.

But what Stearns remembered most about the game was the Buckeyes stubbornly sticking to their base offense. Former OSU assistant coach Bill Conley, who was a member of that 1971 Buckeye team and – as a current Buckeye Sports Bulletin contributor – was also at the birthday celebration, described that offense as a "Robust T."

Followers of Ohio State football, familiar with the ways of legendary coach Woody Hayes, would not be surprised by the coach's stubbornness. But Stearns seemed to have a point as the Buckeyes, a ground-oriented team, gained just 84 yards rushing in the first half while the Buffs jumped out to a 13-0 lead. Two times during the game, the Buckeyes had the ball inside the Colorado 2-yard line and were turned back by a virtual 11-man line as Woody called for fullback plunges by John Bledsoe.

"Many fans were critical of Hayes' conservative offense and debated the play calling long into the evening, thinking a short pass or option around end would have been much better calls," wrote OSU football his-

torian Jack Park of the game in "The Official Ohio State Football Encyclopedia."

Still, the sixth-ranked Buckeyes battled back in the second half against the 10th-ranked Buffaloes. The score remained 13-0 into the fourth quarter when the teams combined for three touchdowns in the final five minutes.

While Stearns remembered the conservative play of the Buckeyes, the thing Conley remembered most was an onside kick that appeared to be recovered by Ohio State but was ruled to not have traveled the necessary 10 yards. The kick came after the Buckeyes had closed to 20-14 when quarterback Don Lamka, who would pass for 255 yards as Hayes finally took off the wraps, marched the Buckeyes 77 yards for the score, capping the drive with a 14-yard scoring strike to Rick Middleton with 2:11 to play.

Conley recalled that the game was officiated by a split crew of Big Ten and Big Eight officials, and a Big Eight official overruled a Big Ten official on the following kick.

Colorado ran three plays, burning more than a minute off the clock before Stearns buried the Buckeyes with a punt that was downed at the OSU 5. Lamka got the Buckeyes as far as his own 43 before time ran out.

"If I had known what I know now, I would have gone to the passing game a lot sooner," Hayes said after the game. "We just didn't play well enough to win. When you stop Ohio State twice on the 2-yard line, I guess you deserve to win."

Colorado head coach Eddie Crowder saw no controversy in the win.

"I was quite aware the ball didn't go 10 yards," he said of the controversial onside kick. "It's easy in the congestion to get confused, but the ball was spotted short of the 50-yard line and you have to have less than average vision and intelligence not to see that."

"The officials are maligned, but they booted some, we booted some and Ohio State booted some."

Now that Stearns is in Columbus managing the Triple-A affiliate of the Washington Nationals, we'll count him on our side and look forward to seeing him again soon at Plank's.

**BSB Goes Monthly**

This is the final Buckeye Sports Bulletin of the spring publishing schedule, and we now switch to a monthly publishing schedule until September. The next BSB will be mailed June 5.

If you haven't already signed up for our premium Internet service, BuckeyeSports.com, now would be a great time to check it out. Ohio State sports news, especially recruiting news, breaks all the time and BuckeyeSports.com is there seven days a week regardless of BSB's print schedule.



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