

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 14, No. 13

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

December 1994

Coach Looks At LSU Before Returning To Ohio State

Cooper Receives Five-Year Extension

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Though he did not gloat — as he had every right to — John Cooper made a clear point during Ohio State's Dec. 2 announcement that he had agreed to a new five-year contract with the school.

"I think stability is very, very important in any program and certainly it's important in the decision here now," said the often embattled Cooper. "The message is loud and clear. Those schools that have been using this against us the last two or three years ... it's over. I'm going to be here. And that's one of the exciting things about it for me and our coaching staff, the fact that we do have stability in this program and, hey, let's get on with it."

The seventh-year OSU head coach, now preparing for a Jan. 2 Citrus Bowl date with Alabama, has churned out highly rated recruiting classes in the last few years despite heavy speculation that his current contract would not be renewed. That conjecture finally ended two weeks after Ohio State's first win over Michigan in the Cooper era with a renewal that has secured the coach through the end of the 1999 season.

Cooper owns a 54-25-4 record at OSU since he was hired in 1988, including a 35-17-4 mark in the Big Ten. His career record of 136-65-6 spans 18 straight seasons. Since his original contract with the school was extended at the end of the 1991 season, Cooper has led OSU to an overall league showing of 17-5-2, easily the best in the Big Ten in the past three seasons. His teams have finished second, first and second in the conference in that time, including last year's co-championship and 10-1-1 campaign.

After painful league losses to Illinois and Penn State, this year's squad now sits at 9-3 and would likely enter the top 10 of the national polls with an upset of the Crimson Tide.

Apparently the OSU administration, led by athletic director Andy Geiger, recognized the need for stabilizing the program. Settlement discussions between Cooper and Geiger, admittedly tough at times, ended the night before the first day the program began ushering in recruits for official visits to the school. Geiger said, however, that there was no target date for the agreement.

Cooper said he is just glad to have the matter resolved and he's happy to be staying put, even though it appeared Louisiana State was prepared to make a handsome financial offer for him and his name was beginning to surface in connection with other schools' searches for new head coaches.

"I want to thank Andy, I want to thank (university president) Dr. (Gordon) Gee, I want to thank the board, I want to thank anybody that had anything to do with keeping John Cooper at Ohio State," he said while at the podium. "Obviously, this is a very, very happy day for me. Any of those of you that know John Cooper know how I feel about living in Columbus, Ohio. My wife, Helen, my daughter, Cindy, and John, my son, have been extremely happy since we've been here and I'm just very, very excited about continuing as the head football coach at Ohio State."

"I'm excited for a number of reasons. Not only do we love living here, but it's a great university. We're excited about the recruiting that's coming up. I'm excited about the football team that we have, the players we have, not only for the bowl game, but the players coming



LET'S SHAKE ON IT — OSU athletic director Andy Geiger (left) and head football coach John Cooper shake hands during the press conference at which Cooper's five-year contract extension was announced. The official announcement was made on Dec. 2.

back."

Though he professed an affection for his job and place of residence, Cooper's expressions were ones of relief instead of glee.

"Anytime you make a major decision or career decision about where you're going to be living and working, obviously it's been a long week," he admitted.

The day before the announcement, Cooper left town to go hunting and said he felt comfortable that he would return to Ohio State, even though terms were not met until later that evening. The handshake came the next morning, following the announcement.

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Buckeyes Ready For Citrus Bowl Challenge Against Crimson Tide

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State's season-ending win over Michigan served several purposes, not the least of which was securing a berth in sunny Florida at the CompUSA Florida Citrus Bowl.

Of course, that 22-6 triumph over the Wolverines gave the Buckeyes their first win over Michigan in seven years and their first win at home in that series since 1984.

Also important was how it helped solidify the position of OSU coach John Cooper. Athletic director Andy Geiger,

citing a need for stability in the program, awarded Cooper with a five-year contract extension on Dec. 2.

Ohio State's second-place finish helped propel the Buckeyes (9-3) to a Jan. 2 bowl. Michigan, meanwhile, was exiled to a Dec. 30 date with Colorado State at the Holiday Bowl in San Diego.

And, if all of this is not enough, the 13th-ranked Buckeyes will take on a tradition-rich program in sixth-rated Alabama (11-1), which dropped the SEC championship game to Florida 24-23 on Dec. 3.

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Helwagen Named BSB Editor

Steve Helwagen has been named as the new editor of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin*, publisher Frank Moskowitz announced recently.

Helwagen replaces Mark Rea, who is leaving after more than six years as *BSB's* editor. He begins his work as editor with this issue, the only issue scheduled for December. *BSB* will resume its weekly publication schedule with the Jan. 14 issue.

Helwagen, 26, is a 1990 Ohio State University journalism graduate. He has served as the managing editor at the *Urbana (Ohio) Daily Citizen* newspaper since April 1993. Prior to that, he worked for three years as the sports editor at the *Circleville (Ohio) Herald*.

He has been covering Ohio State athletics continuously since beginning his work on the staff of *The Lantern*, OSU's student newspaper, in 1988.

Helwagen has also served as a correspondent for *BSB*, focusing on men's basketball and recruiting features since 1989.

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Editor Enjoys Time Covering OSU

This is my last column for *Buckeye Sports Bulletin*. It has been both a pleasure and an honor to share with you some of my thoughts about Ohio State sports and the college athletic scene for the past 6½ years.

There has been a lot that has gone on during that time. Coaches, administrators and players have come and gone by the dozens. I have attended games in every Big Ten town and I have traveled to places I had never traveled to before such as the Coliseum in Los Angeles, Graceland in Memphis, Puget Sound, San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico.

Likewise, I have been able to return to old, familiar sites such as Tampa and Orlando, as well as Ohio Stadium, one of the grand old ladies in the game of football today.

I have seen a lot, heard a lot and, hopefully, learned a lot.

When I took this job in August of 1988, the winds of change were blowing across the Ohio State campus. The Buckeyes were still trying to clean up the mess they had made nine months earlier when Earle Bruce had been fired.

John Cooper was the new head coach, a guy I didn't know from Adam, but he seemed like a nice enough guy. Then came the Big Bear commercials, the losing season and, well, you know the rest.

Things became a little contentious around the campus for a while. Things became a little contentious at home for me, too. You see, while I was working at *BSB*, my marriage broke up after almost 10 years. It was an extremely difficult time for me, but amid the personal turmoil that I was feeling, life went on at work and at Ohio State.

It was a painful time in my life, but one that I am happy to look back upon now with the knowledge that I made it and became a better person because of it. But I truly believe that the Buckeyes had something to do with my personal healing process.

In fact, I think that is the best thing that the Buckeyes can provide for us all. Ohio State athletics are a constant.

Countless wars have been fought and millions of young people have died in those wars and still the Buckeyes have played on. The Berlin Wall has been erected and razed and the Buckeyes have played on. Millions of babies have been born and the Buckeyes have played on. Through marriage and divorce, happiness and despair, celebration and grief, life and death, the Buckeyes have played on in football, basketball and a host of other sporting events.

When I began this job, I could never quite figure out those people who dressed in scarlet and gray, painted their faces and screamed "Go Bucks!" at the top of their lungs. Equally as dismaying were the ones who cursed the head coach and players when things went wrong, then jumped back on the bandwagon during victories or championship seasons.

But I believe I know now where these people are coming from. We need Ohio State. We need the Buckeyes to fill in the gaps of our own personal lives. On any given Saturday, we can second-guess Cooper or cheer Eddie George on a long run or jump to our feet when the band enters the stadium or shed a tear when "Carmen, Ohio" fills the air.

I don't mind saying that I went outside the press box during the Michigan

Editor's Notebook with Mark Rea

game, my last one, to watch the band enter the stadium and perform "Script Ohio." Perhaps it was fitting that the senior tuba player who dotted the "i" was a journalism major.

I hope, wherever that tuba player winds up, he takes a common-sense approach to sports journalism. That is what I have always tried to do.

Unfortunately, there are those in my profession who take an attitude that covering Ohio State sports is something akin to coverage of Desert Storm or the Middle East peace accords. In other words, it's the most important thing in the world. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth.

It's a game, pure and simple, and we all ought to enjoy it. Sure, we can cheer and curse and somehow live vicariously through the Buckeyes. But there are much more important things going on in the world around us. Sportswriters don't report on cancer or AIDS research, politics or world affairs. We are in the entertainment business.

Some people have told me that I have the greatest job in the world. "You get to go to all the games," they tell me, "and sit in the press box and eat free hot dogs."

Well, that's true to a point, but there is much more to it than that. I'm proud to say that we work extremely hard to put each and every issue of *BSB* together.

As editor, I have had a hand in publishing nearly 200 issues of the newspaper, working more 18-hour days than I care to remember, talking with coaches, players, prospective recruits, administrators, dealing with the public, writing stories and headlines, deciding what goes into the paper and what doesn't, deciding whose letter to the editor elicits a response and whose doesn't.

By the way, reading and editing those letters has always been one of my most enjoyable tasks here. Sometimes, the readers are right on with an observation and, other times, I can't figure out where they're going with their particular tangents.

I remember one day about two years ago when I received two letters written personally to me. I opened the first to find it was from a respected journalism professor from Ohio State, praising me for a column I had written. Before I could even feel good about the praise, I had opened the second letter to the salutation: "You are so dumb, you couldn't find your ass with both hands."

This job was nothing if it wasn't humbling.

But I valued the second letter almost as much as the first. My first job in this profession was as sports editor of a small newspaper with two high schools to cover. I learned quickly back then that if you made someone from one of those high schools happy, someone from the other was going to be unhappy.

But I appreciate the fact that our readers take the time to sit down and write us a letter. How else are we going

to know how we're doing and what you're feeling? Whether you agree or disagree is immaterial. The fact is that you are reading what we write, and that's the important thing.

It has always been a challenge for *BSB* to bring you the news of Ohio State sports. Lately, we have moved up among the elite in that field and I take great pride in the fact that we produce a tremendous amount of information with a relatively small staff.

I have been proud of my staff countless times over the years, but never more so than a few weeks ago when we broke the story that basketball player Damon Stringer had committed to Ohio State. Our paper was already on the street and in the mail with that information while other Columbus media outlets were reporting Stringer still hadn't made up his mind and would deliberate at least another day or two.

Those are the little things that have made *BSB* one of the oldest and largest publications of its kind in the country and also one of the best publications of any kind in the country.

I am extremely proud of the work we have produced during my 6½ years here. But as with many things in life, it is time for me to move on.

By the time you read this, I will already have started a new job in an entirely new field for me in a place some 1,500 miles away. It was a move I did not take lightly, especially in light of the fact that I was born and raised just 40 miles from Columbus and most of my family still resides in the area.

But this is a new challenge for me, much like the one I was seeking in 1988 when I moved from Naples, Fla., back to Ohio to become editor of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin*.

My hope is that the people I serve in my new profession will be as kind and generous as the ones with whom I have come in contact while at *BSB*.

Thank you for allowing me into your homes for these past 6½ years. It has been a pleasure for me and, hopefully, for you as well.

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Buck Beat

National Awards

Ohio State junior offensive tackle Korey Stringer was named to the Associated Press All-American first team, while OSU sophomore defensive end Matt Finkes was picked on the AP All-American third team.

Stringer, a 6-5, 315-pound native of Warren, Ohio, was also a finalist for the Outland Trophy, given to the nation's top lineman. While Stringer was a first-team choice on some All-American teams last year, he was a second-team AP pick a year ago. He becomes the 32nd player in OSU history to make the AP All-American first team since 1929.

Perhaps Stringer's biggest moment of the season was when he was selected as ESPN's player of the game in OSU's 32-17 win at Indiana. Where the player of the game's pertinent stats usually appear, the ESPN crew simply put, "Opened a lot of big holes."

Finkes, a 6-2, 258-pound native of Piqua, Ohio, was third on the OSU team in tackles with 66. He registered 17 tackles for loss, including an OSU single-season record 11 quarterback sacks.

Big Ten Honors

A number of Ohio State players were recognized on the All-Big Ten football team announced on Nov. 29. The Buckeyes placed four players on the All-Big Ten first team.

Stringer was the lone OSU player on the first-team offense, while defensive linemen Finkes and Mike Vrabel and linebacker Lorenzo Styles received first-team honors on defense.

Freshman offensive guard Orlando Pace was recognized as the Big Ten freshman of the year. Pace's selection for that honor raised some eyebrows because he was left off the All-Big Ten

first and second teams as well as the conference's honorable mention list.

Buckeyes who were named to the second team included wide receiver Joey Galloway, cornerback Marlon Kerner and punter Scott Terna.

Ohio State had five players named as honorable mention. They were linebacker Greg Bellisari, quarterback Bob Hoving, tailback Eddie George, center Juan Porter and cornerback Shawn Springs.

Academic Honors

OSU's Bob Hoving and Greg Bellisari were selected to the District IV all-academic football team, chosen by the College Sports Information Directors of America.

Bellisari has a 3.75 grade-point average, while Hoving holds a 3.21 GPA.

Starters Injured

A pair of OSU football starters — junior linebacker Lorenzo Styles and sophomore guard LeShun Daniels — missed the team's first bowl practice on Dec. 9 while nursing nagging injuries.

Styles, the team's leading tackler this season, was on crutches after suffering a severe bruise in the lower leg during the Michigan game.

Daniels was also using a crutch to get around while recovering from a muscle strain.

Both players are expected to practice for and play in the Citrus Bowl.

Tom Hoving Cited

Redshirt freshman quarterback Tom Hoving, brother of starting quarterback Bob Hoving, was arrested for underage drinking at a campus bar at the end of final exams week on Dec. 8.

"It was breaking the law, and it was wrong, but I would think you'd have more important things to lead the news with," OSU coach John Cooper said, in



STEVE HELWAGEN

OPENING THE HOLE — OSU junior offensive tackle Korey Stringer (78) is pictured opening a gaping hole for tailback Eddie George during the Michigan game this season. Stringer was named as a first-team All-American by The Associated Press.

response to several local electronic media outlets that made the incident a lead story.

Cooper indicated that Hoving would be disciplined internally, but he would make the trip with the Buckeyes to Florida for the Citrus Bowl.

Hoving was reportedly one of 13 people arrested during a Columbus police sweep of campus bars that night.

Zban Leaving

Fourth-string quarterback Mark Zban told Cooper he would be leaving the program after this season.

Owens Leaves OSU To Take Job At Akron

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Buckeyes will be minus one assistant coach when spring football rolls around as tackles and tight ends coach Lee Owens was appointed to steer the beleaguered Akron football program in the right direction.

Owens, 38, had been with Ohio State for three years and was responsible for molding Korey Stringer and Orlando Pace into standout tackles. He beat out North Carolina assistant Gerald Carr, Akron assistant Bob Junko and Florida assistant Ron Zook, a former secondary coach at Ohio State.

Among OSU's best recruiters, Owens will stay with the Buckeyes through the Jan. 2 Citrus Bowl. He will be taking Buckeye graduate assistant John Peterson with him to Akron.

Many felt it was just a matter of time before someone tabbed the knowledgeable Owens for a head coaching position, and Akron did not wait long to fill the position left vacant when Gerry Faust, who led the Zips to a woeful 1-10 season, was reassigned.

"Lee Owens is ideally suited to lead the University of Akron's football program to success in the Mid-American Conference," Akron athletic director Michael Bobinski said. "He has been a winner throughout his career and brings a solid football background, outstanding organizational ability and a



Lee Owens

great concern for the development of student-athletes."

Owens had been a head coach at the high school level for Lancaster, Galion, Ashland Crestview and prestigious Massillon Washington before joining the Buckeye staff.

That he gets to return to the Akron area for his first college head coaching job is a huge dividend.

"Football is very important in northeast Ohio and the quality of football there is second to none," Owens said. "There are champions at every level, from the high school programs right

through to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, so the University of Akron's commitment and location were critical to my decision."

Owens relishes the opportunity to bring the moribund Zips grid program back to life.

"There is no question about it, all through my career I have tried to prepare for an opportunity such as this," he said. "The University of Akron is the perfect place with my background and experience to meet the challenges of being a head coach at the Division I level."

OSU coach John Cooper was pleased to see one of his hires moving forward.

"Obviously, I'm happy for Lee," he said. "He did a nice job for us and he'll do a good job up there."

Owens is the only OSU assistant leaving, but three others were in the running for coaching positions in recent weeks.

Owens was also one of four finalists for the Ohio University job, left vacant by the firing of former Buckeye assistant Tom Lichtenberg. That job went to longtime Air Force assistant Jim Grobe. Buckeye defensive line coach Bill Conley was also among the candidates for that job but did not make the list of finalists.

Offensive coordinator Joe Hollis was one of four finalists for the head coaching job at Mississippi before that school opted to go with Texas A&M defensive

coordinator Tom Tuberville Dec. 2.

Defensive coordinator Bill Young's name was linked to the vacant coaching job at his alma mater, Oklahoma State. Young interviewed for two days with Oklahoma State officials but did not get the job. The Cowboys tabbed Colorado assistant Bob Simmons to replace Pat Jones, who resigned at the end of the season.

At the news conference to announce Cooper's contract extension, the coach stressed how important it is to have a stable coaching staff.

"Those people who know me know I'd love to see my staff advance in the coaching profession," Cooper said. "Anything I can do to help any of my assistants become head football coaches, I'm 100 percent behind them. I don't want to lose coaches to lateral moves, but if I can help Bill Young, Joe Hollis or Lee Owens or any of the other coaches that are involved in the head coaching process, I'm happy to do so."

"It's a problem, but one thing about Ohio State is if you lose a good coach, you are going to be able to replace him with a good coach," he said.

ONE FORMER OSU assistant, Jim Colletto, received a two-year extension to remain as head coach at Purdue on Nov. 23.

Colletto guided the Boilermakers to a 4-5-2 record this past season, an improvement from last year's 1-10 mark.

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Zban, a redshirt freshman from Huntington, W.Va., did not see any game action this year. He was sidelined at times by a knee injury.

The logjam at quarterback with starter Bob Hoyer returning for his senior year next season, as well as backups Stanley Jackson and Tom Hoyer, also sophomores next year, probably played a role in Zban's decision. He is expected to transfer to a Division I-AA school (perhaps Marshall in his hometown) so he would be eligible to play next year.

Simpson Headed To WVU

Former OSU basketball player Greg Simpson announced his intention to enroll and play basketball at West Virginia University on Dec. 12.

Simpson, a former two-time Mr. Basketball in Ohio at Lima Senior High School, played two seasons with the Buckeyes before he was removed from the team this past fall after a series of brushes with the law.

Simpson took the opportunity to toss a few darts OSU's way.

"I think they're the ones feeling bad right now," Simpson told *The Columbus Dispatch*. "They had one of the better guards in the nation and decided not to stick with me. I just feel Ohio State let me down after I gave my loyalty and commitment to them."

OSU coach Randy Ayers took the high road after hearing those comments.

"I don't want to get into a public debate with Greg or his family," Ayers told *The Dispatch*. "Whatever he says is fine. That's on him. From now on, he can answer to (WVU coach) Gale Catlett."

A misdemeanor assault charge against Simpson was dismissed on Dec. 8 after the alleged victim in the assault said she did not want to testify at a second trial.

Andrea Pitts, 20, said she did not wish to pursue the matter any further. She is reportedly Simpson's ex-girlfriend and mother of three of his children.

Simpson was arrested by OSU police on Sept. 23 after allegedly striking Pitts during an argument outside the Ohio Union on campus. The following day,

OSU athletic director Andy Geiger cited Simpson's history of scrapes with the law and kicked him off the OSU team.

Simpson's first trial on the assault charge ended in a hung jury on Nov. 8.

Jackson Paces Mavs

Through games of Dec. 12, Dallas Mavericks guard and former OSU All-American Jim Jackson was listed as the second leading scorer in the NBA.

Jackson, scoring 28.7 points per game, is benefiting from the play of Dallas' top draft pick, point guard Jason Kidd.

Jackson and former Kentucky star Jamal Mashburn, himself ranking in the top 10 in scoring at 26.6 points per game, have led the Mavericks to a 9-7 start. That is pretty good, considering the team was 13-69 last year.

Perhaps Jackson's best effort as a pro was his 50-point effort in a win over Denver on Nov. 26. Jackson hit two free throws with one second left in that game to give the Mavs a 124-123 overtime victory.

Ayers, Jackson's former coach, said it is no surprise he is off to a fast start.

"He worked hard," Ayers said. "Every day this summer he was in the gym. I think Dave Langworthy, our strength and conditioning coach, has done a great job getting Jimmy in shape. I went down in the fall to watch him practice and it was obvious he was the best conditioned player on the court, and I think that's helped him."

"Jimmy has great strength and he can go and get a shot anywhere on the floor. Plus, he has confidence. Now he gets paid to play and he enjoys it and that's what you like to see as his college coach."

Jent Released

The Houston Rockets released former Ohio State forward Chris Jent on Dec. 1, once again leaving his professional future in doubt. Jent spent an entire month on the injured list with an ailing back and never suited up for the world champions this season, although he was on hand for the ring ceremony at the team's Nov. 4 opener in the Houston Summit.

Jent was a star swingman for the Columbus Horizon of the CBA before he was signed to two separate 10-day con-

tracts late last season. He also latched onto the Rockets' playoff roster and played in each playoff series, including the NBA finals against New York.

A spokesperson for the Rockets said Jent gave no one in the franchise an indication as to what his plans now entail.

Perry Recognized

Former Ohio State golfer Chris Perry recently won the Mexican Open. Perry also received the player of the year honor this year on the Nike Tour.

Skyboxes At New Arena?

Ohio State is considering including luxury skyboxes in plans for its brand-new arena.

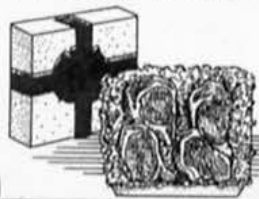
The addition of skyboxes at OSU's arena may create a problem for the city of Columbus, which is trying to market an arena plan of its own. Reportedly, the university had an agreement with the city to not pursue skyboxes at its arena.

"They're missing a fantastic op-

portunity," state Rep. Patrick Sweeney told *The Other Paper* about the possibility of OSU's arena not including the skyboxes. Sweeney is a member of the state Controlling Board which recently released \$5 million of the \$15 million the state has pledged to help build the OSU arena.

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Helwagen Named BSB Editor

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"I am confident that Steve's experience overseeing the day-to-day operations of a daily newspaper coupled with his strong knowledge of Ohio State sports will allow him to maintain the high standards set by Mark Rea," Moskowitz said.

During Helwagen's tenure at the two daily newspapers, he earned several awards presented by the Ohio Associa-

ted Press, Brown Publishing Co. and Ohio Prep Sports Writers Association.

"I'm really looking forward to the challenge of covering Ohio State athletics day in and day out," Helwagen said. "I know I have big shoes to fill with Mark's departure, but I know this is a great opportunity for me as an Ohio State grad."

Helwagen and his wife, Amy, will be relocating to the central Ohio area. He begins his full-time work as editor with this edition.

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Cooper: Geiger Is A 'Tough Negotiator'

Continued From Page 1

lowed by a noon press conference.

Cooper's base salary was raised from \$123,000 to \$130,000 in 1995, although his total income from endorsements and advertisements is expected to remain in the \$500,000 to \$600,000 range. He also will be able to make undisclosed amounts and possibly expand the length of the contract for meeting various performance and incentive clauses, which include such terms as winning at least nine games, leading OSU to the Rose Bowl and beating Michigan.

After five losses and a tie, Cooper finally delivered on the latter with a 22-6 defeat of the archrival Wolverines Nov. 19. When neither Geiger nor Gee gave public support of Cooper in the wake of the long-awaited victory, rumors swirled. Most of them involved either Cooper leaving for another school or Ohio State buying out the final year on his contract.

Gee left town for several days for his honeymoon and stated the decision was in the hands of Geiger, who took over his post in May. Geiger said he entered discussions with Cooper with every intention of extending the coach's contract, but he defended his action of waiting a week before beginning the renewal process.

"I think it's wrong to have this important a discussion in either the gloom of defeat or the euphoria of victory, so I

deliberately separated it from that particular experience," Geiger said. "I wanted to be able to have the perspective of the whole season."

When those discussions commenced, a roller-coaster ride ensued. Geiger allowed Cooper to make a midweek trip to Atlanta to meet with LSU athletic director Joe Dean. A source close to the Louisiana State program said Cooper told Dean during the meeting that he felt underappreciated in Columbus and that original offers were for less than five years, generally a standard length for such contracts. Sources, in fact, indicated that Ohio State's initial offer was for two years.

Geiger would not admit if the length of the offer became a sticking point, saying, "I saw his eyes light up a little bit when he didn't agree with me and I liked that. That was important. He saw my eyes light up a little bit a couple times and that's important for him to see. We're both pretty strong people. I thought the give and take was healthy. We never had angry words, but we disagreed, so I think this has been a good process and a good opportunity for the athletic director and head football coach to get to know each other better."

Cooper said some of Geiger's stances were as sturdy as those of a UM lineman.

"He's a good athletic director," Cooper said. "He's a tough negotiator, I can guarantee you that. That's why he's

one of the best in his business."

Last year, Cooper joined John Wilce (1922-27) as the only OSU coach to survive a six-year winless drought against Michigan. Ironically, Wilce's Buckeyes finally beat the Maize and Blue in 1928, his last season as head coach. But Cooper's victory against OSU's chief rival may have been a job-saver, which he himself does not deny.

The win over Michigan capped a three-week healing process after OSU's embarrassing 63-14 defeat at Penn State. The Buckeyes were knocked out of Rose Bowl consideration at the time and appeared to be in danger of being unable to salvage any kind of respectable season.

But Geiger said the resounding wins that followed over Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan "passed my improvement test." The AD especially lauded the team's play in a dominating 24-3 stopping of Wisconsin one week after the Penn State loss, the program's worst defeat in 48 years.

Geiger added that he wants to see improvement and for the team to eliminate "wide swings in terms of emotional preparation."

Of the new incentive clauses, Geiger said, "They are important because I think goals are important, and expressing them in the employment arrangement is important. It's a combination of objective goals and subjective goals. We

are in full understanding where we both think the program can be."

When that understanding could not be met immediately in terms of figures, Cooper avoided phone contact with all recruits for a full week and allowed himself to be courted.

"I'm a college football coach and certainly I thought I owed it to myself, to my family and my coaching staff to look into that situation," he said of discussions with LSU officials. "But I never felt like I wouldn't be at Ohio State."

Geiger said Cooper made it apparent that he was hoping to stay put.

"I don't think anybody who is a fan of Ohio State football should resent the idea that John Cooper is desirable someplace else," Geiger said. "There shouldn't be any question about his loyalty or anything like that. He never wanted to be anywhere else but here. But when the negotiation was at times difficult, I recognized the fact that he ought to have an opportunity to protect himself and stick his toe in the water."

Now that his foot has been wiped dry by the warmth of a five-year deal, the 57-year-old Cooper aims to end his career wearing scarlet and gray.

"This five-year contract will take me, hopefully, through my retirement," he said. "I've been a head football coach for 18 years and it's been a good ride for me. Hopefully, this is the last time I'll have to negotiate a contract."

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Citrus Bowl Trip Nice Reward For Buckeyes

Continued From Page 1

The Citrus Bowl is a nice reward for an OSU team picked fourth or fifth in the Big Ten in many preseason publications.

"I think my first reaction to Ohio State and Alabama is this is two great football programs playing each other," Cooper said. "In my opinion, they've had a fantastic season."

"Alabama will be ready to play. They've got great kids in that program. They're winners. They were national champions two years ago, and this year they're one point away from being undefeated," he said.

Although Alabama trailed poll leaders Nebraska and Penn State all season, the Crimson Tide had serious aspirations of picking up at least a piece of the national championship pie until its deflating loss to Florida.

Still, oddsmakers have rated Alabama as a favorite in this Citrus Bowl match-up. At least early on, Alabama is favored by 4½ points over OSU.

The Citrus Bowl, like most of the other major bowls, is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 2, this year in deference to the National Football League's playoff games on Sunday, Jan. 1.

It will mark Ohio State's third appearance in Orlando and second trip under the Citrus Bowl's agreement to take the Big Ten runner-up. In 1985, Ohio State stopped Brigham Young 10-7 at the Citrus Bowl. OSU's return trip there on Jan. 1, 1993, was not as pleasant as the Buckeyes fell to SEC runner-up Georgia (and its star back Garrison Hearst) 21-14.

Citrus Bowl Notes

The Buckeyes are taking a slightly different approach to this year's bowl preparations than in past years.

The players wrapped up autumn quarter exams on Dec. 8 and re-congregated for their first practice since the Michigan game at Woody Hayes

Athletic Center on Dec. 9. The team practiced in Columbus for five days before the players return home to be with their families.

The team is scheduled to then travel together to Melbourne, Fla., on Dec. 18 to begin a "mini camp" of two-a-day practices before heading over to Orlando to participate in pregame Citrus Bowl festivities on Dec. 23.

"We're going south early for two or three good reasons," Cooper said. "Number one, we're going down to get acclimated to that weather and the 80-degree temperatures. That climate is tough to adjust to."

"Secondly, we're doing it as a change of pace, and so we don't have to stay in one place too long. We're going to break it up by going to Melbourne and try to get a lot done, and then on the 23rd move over to Orlando," he said.

"We're going down there to work hard, but there will be time for the players to have a good time. We tell our players this is a time to improve themselves as football players, help the football team win the bowl game and at the same time go down and have a good time."

Cooper said Ohio State will take 88 players on the bowl trip. He spoke to Alabama coach Gene Stallings on Dec. 8 at a Citrus Bowl press conference. Stallings indicated that Alabama would bring close to 125 players when they arrive in Orlando on Dec. 26.

OHIO STATE is 12-14 in postseason appearances, ending a four-game bowl losing streak with its 28-21 win over Brigham Young at the Holiday Bowl last year.

Alabama is 26-17-3 in bowl games. The Crimson Tide won the national championship two years ago with a 34-13 upset over Miami (Fla.) in the Sugar Bowl. Last year, Alabama defeated North Carolina 24-10 in the Gator Bowl.

COOPER WILL make his ninth postseason appearance as a head coach. He is 3-5 in previous bowl games,

leading Arizona State to wins over Michigan in the 1987 Rose Bowl and Air Force in the 1987 Freedom Bowl and taking OSU to its win over BYU last year.

THE BUCKEYES have been playing major college football since 1890, but the program has only limited experience against Southeastern Conference opponents.

Ohio State has a 7-5-2 mark against current members of the SEC, but its last two games against those teams (the 1993 Citrus Bowl against Georgia and the 1990 Hall of Fame Bowl against Auburn) have been losses. OSU's last win against an SEC opponent came in Coach Cooper's first season, 1988, in a 36-33 thriller over Louisiana State at Ohio Stadium.

Besides its 0-2 mark against Alabama, Ohio State is 0-1 against Georgia, 3-0 against Kentucky, 3-1 against Vanderbilt, 1-0-1 against LSU and 0-1-1 against Auburn.

The Buckeyes have never teed it up against these SEC programs: Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, Mississippi State, South Carolina or Tennessee.

THIS IS the third meeting between Big Ten and SEC schools under the current format. Georgia defeated OSU in 1993, but Penn State evened the score for the Big Ten last year by defeating Tennessee 31-13.

On Oct. 14, the Citrus Bowl, the Big Ten, the SEC and ABC Sports agreed to extend the current contract for the next six years.

AS OF Dec. 12, Ohio State had sold its entire complement of about 13,000 Citrus Bowl tickets. Tickets for the bowl game are priced at \$40 each.

By all accounts, the game is expected to be a sellout at the 70,000-seat Citrus Bowl. The largest crowd for a game in Orlando was 72,868 for the Notre Dame-Florida State game on Nov. 12.





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Michigan State Hires Browns Coach Saban

Michigan State looked back to move ahead, hiring former Spartans assistant and current Cleveland Browns assistant Nick Saban as its next head football coach.

Saban, secondary coach and defensive coordinator at MSU from 1983-87, takes over the reigns from George Perles, let go at the end of the season.

Saban, who recruited former MSU standouts Percy Snow, Travis Davis and Tony Mandarich, believes Michigan State can emerge from the long shadow of in-state rival Michigan and compete for Big Ten championships.

"I'm committed to staying at Michigan State for as long as it takes to be a championship team," he said. "If I wanted to be an NFL coach, I could just as well stay where I am. But I wanted to come back."

"I think this is one of the top 20-25 programs in the country."

Over Perles' objections, Saban left East Lansing in 1988 to become secondary coach for the Houston Oilers, where he remained until 1990, when he was tabbed as head coach at Toledo. There, he led the Rockets to a 9-2 record and the Mid-American Conference crown.

Saban, also a former Ohio State assistant, will stay with the Browns until their potential run in the playoffs is over before heading to East Lansing.

Penn State

One of the luxuries Joe Paterno will have when his team hits the Rose Bowl field is knowing the result of the Orange Bowl, a national championship implication showdown between Nebraska and Miami.

Should the Huskers lose, all the Nitany Lions need to do is beat Oregon, which on paper seems like an easy task.

If Nebraska wins, though, and Penn State does likewise, then there's a quandary.

Do you vote PSU number one for their tougher schedule or Nebraska because it beat a better team in the bowl on its home field?

Big Ten Notes

with Mike Wachsman

Joe knows.

"I am going to give this team the Italian National Championship of the World," he said. "As I said, I am not going to worry about that. You guys (the media) are getting yourselves all uptight about it. I am excited about the Rose Bowl and the team is excited about the Rose Bowl."

"I want to go out and have a little fun. Maybe I won't be talking the same way the night of the 2nd, but who knows? Right now, that is the way I feel."

With a big bull's-eye on its back, Penn State might be a bit of a tight target.

But Paterno doesn't think so.

"We have nothing to lose in this game," he said. "We're the Big Ten champions, they're the Pac-10 champions, and we're playing in the best bowl game in the country. We're playing in it for the first time and they haven't been there for 35 years. I think both teams ought to go out there and just play their heads off."

Bowl Me Over

Big Ten fans wishing for a great deal of postseason success might be asking for a bit much.

Of the five league teams being fitted for bowling shirts, four of them have losing records in postseason play over the years. Only Penn State, with one game under its Big Ten belt, is on the up side of .500.

Michigan is 12-13, Ohio State 12-14, Illinois 4-7 and Wisconsin 2-5.

Bowl Lineup

DATE	BOWL	OPPONENTS	TIME	TV
Dec. 15	Las Vegas	C. Michigan (9-2) vs. UNLV (6-5)	9 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 25	Aloha	Kansas St. (9-2) vs. Boston College (6-4-1)	3:30 p.m.	ABC
Dec. 27	Freedom	Arizona (8-3) vs. Utah (9-2)	9 p.m.	Raycom
Dec. 28	Independence	Texas Christian (7-4) vs. Virginia (8-3)	8 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 29	Copper	Oklahoma (6-5) vs. BYU (9-3)	8 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 30	Heritage	S. Carolina St. (9-2) vs. Grambling (9-2)	1 p.m.	ESPN
	Gator	Tennessee (7-4) vs. Virginia Tech. (8-3)	7:30 p.m.	TBS
	Holiday	Colorado State (10-1) vs. Michigan (7-4)	9 p.m.	ESPN
	Sun	Texas (7-4) vs. N. Carolina (8-3)	2:30 p.m.	CBS
Dec. 31	Alamo	Baylor (7-4) vs. Wash. St. (7-4)	8 p.m.	ESPN
	Liberty	Illinois (6-5) vs. E. Carolina (7-4)	1 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 1	Peach	N. Carolina St. (8-3) vs. Miss. St. (8-3)	8 p.m.	ESPN
	Orange	Nebraska (12-0) vs. Miami (10-1)	8 p.m.	NBC
Jan. 2	Hall of Fame	Wisconsin (6-4-1) vs. Duke (8-3)	11 a.m.	ESPN
	Citrus	Ohio State (9-3) vs. Alabama (11-1)	1 p.m.	ABC
	Fiesta	Colorado (10-1) vs. Notre Dame (6-4-1)	4:30 p.m.	NBC
	Carquest	South Carolina (6-5) vs. West Virginia (7-5)	1:30 p.m.	CBS
	Cotton	Texas Tech (6-5) vs. Southern Calif. (7-3-1)	1 p.m.	NBC
	Rose	Penn State (11-0) vs. Oregon (9-3)	4:50 p.m.	ABC
	Sugar	Florida (10-1-1) vs. Florida St. (9-1-1)	8:30 p.m.	ABC

B&B Graphic

Iowa

Even though he won league rookie of the year honors in basketball, there are still many people who don't consider the Hawkeyes' Jess Settles a household name.

The 6-8 sophomore, adept at many positions, was one of the more pleasant surprises in the Big Ten, and he carved his niche by good, old-fashioned, hard-nosed play.

Settles was leading the Hawkeyes in scoring at over 23 per game and should be a major catalyst in propelling Iowa to

the upper reaches of the conference.

As for those who overlook Settles as a top player because he isn't flashy, coach Tom Davis believes that might be a mistake.

"Jess Settles is getting the majority of points on his own," Davis said. "We aren't creating anything special for him, although we obviously have some plays designed to get him the ball in certain situations. Jess is one of the finest competitors you will ever see. He has a special attitude. He competes for the moment. The most important game to him is the one immediately ahead."

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*All-American Handles Herself Well Both On, Off Court***Smith Handles Burdens That Go With Fame**

By MIKE WACHSMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Imagine how difficult it would be to finish up your holiday shopping if you were constantly mobbed by the paparazzi and frenzied fans just itching to take a smidgen of your time.

That's what Katie Smith has to go through.

She'll be minding her own business, searching for some bric-a-brac to get mom and dad when, from out of nowhere, an autograph hound taps her on the shoulder and thrusts pen and paper — or maybe hat or shirt — in her direction.

Wouldn't you be angry?

Not Katie.

"It is kind of neat when you think about all the people you meet and people who notice you," the unassuming Logan, Ohio, native said. "Coming from a big school like this and being with some great athletes, you're definitely pleased if people notice you."

"It's fun to know that I'm seen like that, but it's also good for the whole school. It gets our name out there more and that helps the university and everyone in it."

It's not unfair to say that Smith is the most recognized athlete on the sprawling Ohio State campus. That may sound a touch peculiar, especially at a school known from time immemorial as a bastion of football, but it seems to be the truth.

"That's probably a fair statement," OSU coach Nancy Darsch said. "She does attract attention, but that's a natural thing. She doesn't do anything to attract attention, she's just Katie Smith. That means a lot around here."

She's recognized at various OSU sporting events, seen supporting her fellow Buckeyes, and often can't get out without signing her name to some precious item.

"A lot of people will ask if I play basketball and things like that," she said. "It's neat. This is four years of my life that's going to be over soon. Those kids that you meet, they're the important ones. You make an impact in their life the way you react to them. It's something I take pride in. I like to be friendly with everyone."

Everyone except Ohio State opponents, that is.

When Leslie Johnson or Tia Jackson or Barb Franke come to town, they look for ways to stop Smith. Thus far, they and everyone else have been largely ineffective.

Smith set the Big Ten on fire as a freshman, winning the league's top rookie honors and averaging 18.4 points per game. More importantly, she was a vital addition to an already talented but inconsistent team, and her arrival helped the Lady Buckeyes reach the NCAA championship game.

Her numbers went up last year, to 22.0 points per outing, but the team's results did otherwise, tumbling to seventh place in the league and breaking even at 14-14 overall.

Her goal this season is to bring Ohio State's results closer to those of her freshman season than the disappointing results of last season.

With Ohio State at 4-2 entering its

own Buckeye Classic, her persistence may pay off. She's averaging over 20 points per contest and, more importantly, is playing nagging defense.

"We'll continue to work on our defense," Smith promised. "That's really what wins games in crunch time. We want to keep running the ball and score some points, too. We can't be happy with what we've done. We have to keep working hard to get better."

One of the problems last season was the lack of a burden-lifter for Smith. Sure, there were some solid games from other players, but no one who, night in and night out, could take the pressure off the Buckeyes' number one target.

That's all changed now, though, with the welcome addition of power forward Peggy Evans, who sat out last season after transferring from Tennessee.

Evans' abilities down low, coupled with her desire to win, will make teams channel their energies inside. That will likely free up Smith to do what she does best: work to the basket off the dribble.

"The focus will be on both of us now," Smith said of her teaming with Evans. "It's a different type of role. You have inside and outside, which is something we didn't always have last year. It's come on strong this year."

Darsch believes Smith's play can only get better with the addition of Evans in the paint.

"Teams won't be able to key on Katie as much as they did last year," she said. "They pretty much knew if they could force her into a bad game, they could beat us. They have much more to worry about this year with Peggy in the lineup. We expect to see Katie freed up a lot more."

Expectations can often make the hardest of souls succumb, but Smith is an exception.

After leaving Logan High School as the nation's top prepster, she was saddled with the burden of returning OSU to the Big Ten's upper echelon.

She turned a deaf ear to those who said she was the second coming of Larry Bird, able to do a myriad of things and do them well.

That, more than anything, kept her at an even keel.

"You don't listen to a lot of stuff that's said or written about you," said Smith, who aspires to hit 90 percent or better from the foul line this year. "I'm not really big into reading stuff. It's not very hard. You just go out and play your game and work hard. Whether people like it or not or what they think is kind of up to them."

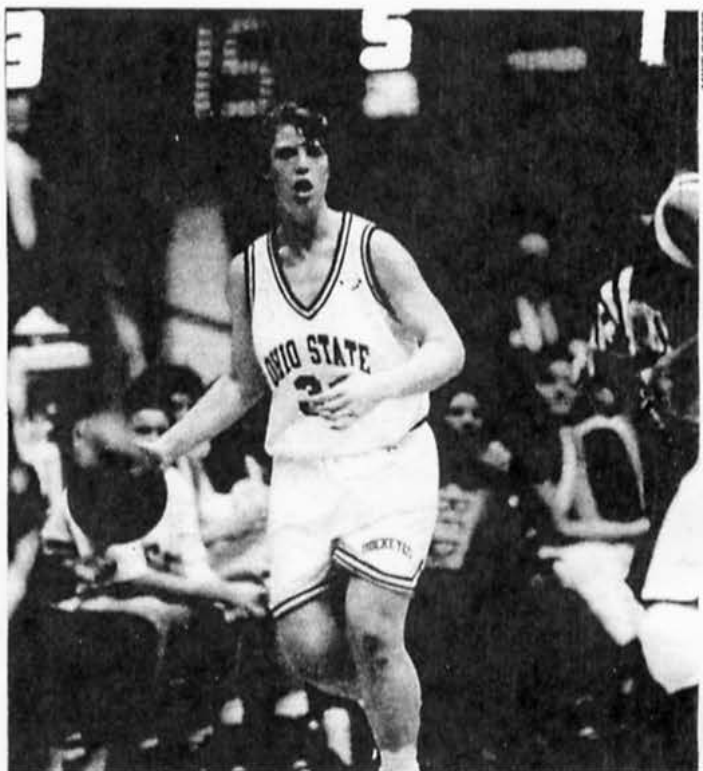
One of the perks in being among the nation's best hoopsters is a chance for extensive travel.

She's no doubt qualified for a free trip somewhere after piling up the frequent flier miles on sojourns to Europe, Florida, Russia and, most recently, the Hawaiian Islands.

The trip to the islands, where OSU participated in the Kona Classic, was tough. But someone had to do it.

"We were all excited about going," Smith said. "Everyone around town said, 'You're going to Hawaii?' and I said, 'Yeah. Life's rough.' It was fun, we had a good time and played some good basketball."

Smith realizes travel, among other



THE ALL-AMERICAN — Ohio State junior Katie Smith is a stabilizing force for the OSU women's basketball team. Smith, averaging 26.8 points per game through the season's first six games, is one reason why the Buckeyes have opened the year 4-2.

things, is one of the prizes for being a high-profile college athlete.

"One of the opportunities you have as a college athlete is getting to see places you wouldn't normally see," Smith said.

"It's fun flying to places and seeing what they're like. A lot of people only know about what their home is like, but we get a chance to see other people and places. That's fun."

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The View From 15th and High

By Frank L. Moskowitz, Publisher

Even After Regular Season, There Is Drama With OSU Football

Say what you want about Ohio State football, but you've got to admit it's never short of drama. Take this season, for instance.

First you have the Buckeyes and their coach on the ropes after the potentially devastating loss to Penn State. Written off by many, the team rallies for impressive victories over Wisconsin and Indiana.

Those wins are just a warm-up for an action-packed Michigan week, which included a surly John Cooper, a loud-mouthed Wolverine and a fiery bunch of ex-Buckeyes rallying to support this year's beleaguered team.

Then there is the game itself, an impressive triumph on a beautiful afternoon in front of an animated crowd in the often subdued Ohio Stadium. It was a conquest complete with blackboard bashing, ill-fated shoulder rides and even pepper gas-spraying police.

Then comes the almost deafening silence as coaches, players and fans alike wait for word of a contract extension for Cooper. That makes it all the more dramatic when contract news finally comes out and it proves to be news from LSU. The plot thickens as many insiders indicate that the coach's departure to Louisiana is a done deal.

But any good drama has plot twists, and suddenly OSU athletic director Andy Geiger comes up with a package to Cooper's liking and the seventh-year coach is retained for five more years.

A happy ending? That's the beauty of this drama: It's not over. The scenario features an upcoming schedule that offers as many potential plot twists as an Agatha Christie novel.

With a bowl game against powerful Alabama, followed quickly by games at home against Washington and Notre

Dame and on the road against Penn State and Wisconsin within the first five outings next season, there are some intriguing possibilities.

With the Michigan win under his belt, what appears to be another solid recruiting class in the fold and so many big contests coming up so quickly, Cooper could establish himself as one of the best coaches in Ohio State history with some big wins in those games. On the other hand, he might be heading into a mine field with a potential disaster looming every step of the way.

Oh, the drama of it all, and we've barely reached intermission.

I'VE GOT to take a poke or two at both Cooper backers and bashers. First, the bashers.

I hear a lot of you trying to say that it wasn't a very good Michigan team that the Buckeyes beat. First of all, any win over Michigan is a great win and that was a solid ballclub the Wolverines fielded, just as they field a solid team every year.

And like him or not, you've got to give Cooper credit for rallying the troops after the Penn State game. The team could have gone down the tubes so easily.

When people look back at the Earle Bruce years, they always talk about the way he was able to get the team to bounce back after losing three straight games in Ohio Stadium in 1982. If you're going to praise Earle for that season, you've got to give the same credit to Cooper.

Now for you backers. You should be in the PR business with the way you present the facts. The big line now is that Cooper has the best record in the Big Ten over the last three years. As best I can figure it, that's if you conveniently (though accurately) say that Penn State has only been in the Big Ten for two years.

For three years, Penn State is 28-7 and the Buckeyes are 27-7-2, giving a slight edge to the Lions, by my calculations. For the two years that Joe Paterno's men have been in the conference, the Lions have a more substantial 21-2 to 19-4-1 edge.

My other favorite is pointing with pride to the fact that the Bucks have finished second, first and second in the Big Ten the last three years. Fans and players should be proud. But keep in mind that what that translates to is that Michigan, Wisconsin and Penn State have gone to the Rose Bowl in those three years.

When you go to a wedding, you admire the bride, not the bridesmaid.

AS NOTED elsewhere in this edition, longtime BSB editor Mark Rea has left to pursue interests outside of the newspaper business. I know that many of you keep your back issues of *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* and you need only compare issues from when Mark arrived back in 1988 to issues today to see the impact he had on the paper.

We are particularly proud of the way Mark upgraded our coverage of football recruiting. Covering recruiting is probably the most tedious task we have here, though perhaps the most appreciated by the readers. I know many figure that the OSU coaches just call us up with

the information. Unfortunately, that's not the way it works. Covering recruiting involves countless hours on the phone calling prep coaches and players, and Mark was one of the best at it.

If you spend enough 16- and 18-hour days with someone, you get to know them pretty well and it will be hard for us not to miss Mark. I look back with fondness on the now-infamous trip to Memphis for the Liberty Bowl, the nights at Plank's after putting the paper to bed and, of course, the baseball trivia.

If you're reading this, Mark, who are the five Cleveland Indians to lead the AL in RBIs since 1950?

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YOU TELL me if this is praise or a slam at Cooper.

Each week, *The Sporting News* runs a column called "High Fives & Low Lights." High Fives go to sports figures who make some contribution to a worthy cause or do some other good deed. Low Lights highlight various acts of unsportsmanlike conduct.

In the Dec. 12 issue, Cooper gets a High Five with the note that "he has beaten Michigan once in seven years yet gets job feelers from Oklahoma and LSU. Isn't this a great country?"

Sarcasm or praise? SPEAKING OF TSN, the sports weekly had unquestioned praise for former Buckeye receiver Cris Carter, who is turning in a record-setting year for the Minnesota Vikings.

In a note chronicling his stellar play this season, Carter is called one of the best in the league at making circus catches.

"If Cris can get a hand or a finger on it, he'll catch it," said former Vikings coach Bud Grant. "He's beyond worrying about catching it. He's concentrating on what to do before and after."

Carter lists one of the reasons for his big season as the arrival of veteran quarterback Warren Moon.

"Warren has meant a great deal to me," Carter said. "He's so very professional and such an accurate passer. The trade we made to get him makes it a lot easier to do my job."

By the way, Carter is racking up his impressive numbers this season while playing with a fractured bone in his right wrist.

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