

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

March 7, 1998

## Taylor Gives OSU Another Great Moment

*Legendary Coach, Former Buckeyes Enjoy Spotlight For St. John's Final Game*

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It was nearly the ultimate send-off.

But the majority of cheers and tears on display at the farewell to St. John Arena were out of unconditional love for a classic home court and proud program that has meant so much to Ohio State fans.

On a night when the old shack packed 'em in and rocked one last time, on an evening when fans and former players wiped moist eyes at the sight of former coach Fred Taylor, in a season finale in which the Buckeyes actually could have closed on a winning streak, the whole shooting match went overtime.

Did the ghost of Lynn Wilbur St. John orchestrate this?

The magic, it seemed, just wouldn't end, even if Jim Jackson had already left the arena to make it to Cleveland at a reasonable hour.

Now all the lovable but bumbling Buckeyes of present had to do was go ahead and win the five-minute overtime, putting an end to Penn State and 42 seasons of history. It didn't happen. Grand old St. John went out, regrettably, with a loss.

But while the final outcome dampened the mood of the 13,276 or so in the building, it in no way overshadowed the celebration that unfolded on Feb. 28, 1998.

St. John Arena, they say, will never host a Buckeye basketball game again. After this year, it may never host a boys high school state championship again either, not with the palatial Schottenstein Center going through its final stages of construction down the street.

That alone was reason for the return of a horde of former players large enough to line the edges of the playing floor.

"I came back out of respect for the guys I played with and the guys that came before me and after me," former point guard Curtis Wilson said. "I wanted to be able to say I was there when they closed it down. It's good to get back and see the guys. It's a special night for all of us."

Wilson and contemporaries such as Granville Waiters, Joe Concheck, Ronnie Stokes, Troy Taylor and Tony White convened at a pregame reception for former players at French Field House. More recent Buckeyes like Doug Etzler and Rick Yudd also were on hand. Players from an earlier era like Allan Hornyak, Dick Purry, Larry Siegfried and Jim Clemons meshed in, too. So did the less recognizable but perhaps most appreciative players from the late 1950s and early '60s who witnessed firsthand the public's growing love affair with Buckeye basketball and St. John.

"I wouldn't miss this for the world," said former captain Jim Laughlin, a member of the 1956-57 team that opened the arena.

"It's great to come back and see a lot of the guys I haven't seen in a long time," said Clemons, who moments later shared a hug with Jackson, his former player when he coached the NBA's Dallas Mavericks.

Jackson has since been traded to New Jersey, Philadelphia and Golden State, his current team. As fate would have it, his Warriors were scheduled to play the Cavaliers March 1 and were blessed with a rare Saturday



STEVE HELWAGEN

**WELCOME BACK, COACH** — Above, OSU coach Jim O'Brien (right) greets former coach Fred Taylor and his wife, Eileen, after the final men's basketball game ever at St. John Arena Feb. 28. At right, former Buckeyes Bill Hosket (left) and Denny Meadors assist Taylor to center court for a halftime tribute.

off.

"It was just fortunate that I was playing in Cleveland and had a day off," said Jackson, arguably the last great Buckeye player. "When I was in Boston, I coordinated it with the coaches that I could come to Columbus and just drive up to Cleveland tonight."

"I had state tournaments here and Big Ten championships and those are memories that can never be erased. They may not play in the building anymore, but the memories are still there."

As players exchanged stories and fables, associate athletic director Paul Krebs announced plans for a special seating section for former players at the Schottenstein Center as well as a Fred Taylor Lounge.

"It's a pleasure to come in and see guys like Ron Stokes and Granville Waiters and a lot of the former players," said Troy Taylor, Stokes' old running mate. "We've talked about doing this type of thing more often instead of just waiting for special occasions."

"It might be good at the new arena, where they're talking about having a social hour before games."

### Coach Taylor Is The Glue

The idea of sending off St. John, which will house only Olympic sports such as gymnastics, wrestling and volleyball beginning this fall, drew interest from many of the players and managers.

But what brought people from the nether reaches was the appearance of Fred Taylor, wheelchair-bound from a near-fatal brain aneurysm he suffered in April 1996, but still lucid enough to chitchat with players who helped build his basketball dynasty.

"It's sad, but it's not like they're throwing basketball out," Taylor whispered when asked about the end of St. John Arena.

Taylor roamed the sidelines there from 1958-59 to



KEVIN DYE

1975-76, amassing 297 wins, seven Big Ten titles, four Final Four appearances and the program's only national championship in 1960.

When asked if it would be an emotional moment to take the St. John floor one last time, Taylor showed he still had his sense of humor by saying, "As long as they don't ask me to shoot."

Several former players were obviously touched by his presence.

"He taught me everything," said Hornyak, who lives in the same Ohio town, Bellaire, that Taylor recruited him out of in the late 1960s. "Every accomplishment and honor

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## OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

# Penn State Spoils Final Game At SJA, Claims 89-85 Overtime Win

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On a night when several former players were honored and the program's greatest coach was showered with appreciation, Ohio State also saw the return of two unwelcomed nemeses — free-throw shooting and three-point bombs.

Both helped visiting Penn State overcome an emotional night that saw the closing down of storied St. John Arena Feb. 28 in front of a sellout crowd of 13,276. In hitting the big shots, the Nittany Lions (15-11, 8-8) defeated the Buckeyes 89-85 in overtime.

OSU finished the regular season at 8-21 and just 1-15 in the Big Ten, the win coming earlier in the week at Wisconsin. The loss left OSU in last place in the Big Ten standings for the first time since 1976-77.

OSU hoped to enter its March 5 Big Ten tournament game on a high note, but Joe Crispin and Pete Lissicky each scored six points in the overtime to put PSU over the top.

"This is very disappointing," said Michael Redd, whose career-high 32 points wasn't enough. "I know everyone wanted us to get this victory. We had a chance to win. We just didn't make plays at the end and Penn State did."

OSU coach Jim O'Brien participated in postgame festivities by greeting an ailing

Fred Taylor, the winningest coach in the program's history, and watching Gene Millard's ceremonial final basket.

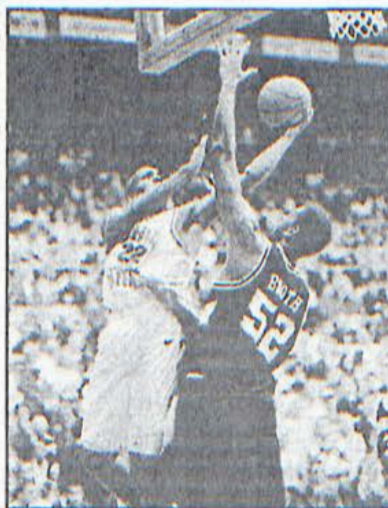
Those positive experiences carried into his postgame press conference despite OSU's hard-to-swallow defeat.

"You take away the final score and the outcome and I don't think we could have asked for a better night, a better setting, and a more competitive game," he said. "I think both teams are to be congratulated for that. This is as good a way to finish off a legacy of a building."

But it didn't take long for O'Brien's mood to turn as he dissected the stat sheet. As he pointed out, OSU managed 13 more shots and hit 50 percent from the field, outrebounded PSU 33-29 and committed just 10 turnovers.

"All the things that have plagued us all year long we did a very good job at," he said. "But the one thing that is glaring is our inability to make free throws, and that really bit us tonight. We talked all year long how in one of these games that was going to jump up and get us, and tonight that was a big difference in the game."

Especially considering while OSU was struggling to hit 17 of 32 (53.1 percent) of its free throws that Penn State canned 28 of 36 (77.8), an effort led by Lissicky's perfect 10-for-10 showing at the



KEVIN DYE

**COMING AT YOU — OSU guard Michael Redd takes this play right at Penn State's supreme shot blocker Calvin Booth. Redd scored a career-high 32 points in the 89-85 loss.**

stripe.

And as has been the case in seemingly every league home game this season, the

## Penn State 89, Ohio State 85

Feb. 28, 1998 St. John Arena; Columbus, Ohio												
Penn State	min	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp					
Jackson	6	0-0	2-4	1-2	0	1	2					
Ivory	19	2-6	3-4	1-3	1	4	9					
Booth	37	5-10	2-4	0-6	1	4	12					
Crispin	29	4-9	0-0	1-3	2	0	12					
Lissicky	37	5-10	10-10	0-1	2	2	24					
Grays	28	2-3	0-0	0-0	7	2	5					
Stephens	38	5-6	7-8	1-7	2	4	17					
Crenshaw	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0					
Cline-Heard	7	1-1	2-3	2-4	3	2	4					
Stevenson	20	1-4	2-3	2-4	3	2	4					
Witkowski	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>25-49</b>	<b>28-36</b>	<b>7-29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>89</b>					

Percentages: FG: .510, FT: .778, 3-point goals: 11-25, .440 (Ivory 2-6, Crispin 4-8, Lissicky 4-8, Grays 1-2, Stevenson 0-1). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 5 (Booth 5). Turnovers: 8 (Booth 2, Stevenson 2, Ivory, Lissicky, Stephens). Steals: 2 (Ivory, Grays).

Ohio State	min	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp					
Sanderson	43	4-8	3-6	4-10	0	3	12					
Redd	45	11-23	8-16	4-6	7	4	32					
Hanna	17	3-7	3-4	1-1	0	4	9					
Davis	43	6-9	1-1	1-7	1	2	14					
Coteman	35	3-7	0-0	1-2	5	3	8					
Johnson	16	2-2	1-3	1-3	0	4	5					
Singleton	13	1-4	1-2	2-2	3	3	3					
Herron	7	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	2					
Lumpkin	5	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Steele	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0					
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>31-62</b>	<b>17-32</b>	<b>15-33</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>85</b>					

Percentages: FG: .500, FT: .531, 3-point goals: 0-14, .000 (Sanderson 1-1, Redd 2-5, Davis 1-2, Coteman 2-6). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 10 (Davis 4, Sanderson 2, Redd 2, Johnson 2). Steals: 5 (Redd 2, Davis 2, Sanderson).

Halftime: Ohio State 39, Penn State 30. Regulation: 76-76. Technical Fouls: none. Officials: Bova, Drury, Grissom. At: 13,276.

visitors looked comfortable at the three-point arc. Crispin and Lissicky both hit 4 of 8 from there as the Lions shot 44 percent from deep.

## Big Shots At Bad Times

OSU took a brief 78-77 lead in overtime,

Continued On Page 23

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## ST. JOHN ARENA FINAL GAME

## Fond Farewell For St. John

Continued From Page 1

I had was because of that man right there. I haven't seen him since '93. It was nice seeing him again."

"It's great to see him out of the rehab facility," added Furry, captain of the famed '60 team. "He's excited about being here tonight and getting to come back and see everybody. He remembered just about everybody's name and if he didn't, he picked it out right away."

"This is something that had to happen as far as I'm concerned. In many ways, Fred Taylor started the situation that was St. John Arena."

Added Siegfried, pointing to Taylor, "This is why we're here. He was responsible as the coach for starting that legacy and tradition. He's why we're here tonight. Without him here, I don't see the point of being here. I'm tickled to death to see him here."

"That's what we all want to see with Ohio State basketball. Some of these things have drifted away the last few years. Hopefully Coach (Jim) O'Brien can pick it all up and put it all together."

**A Night To Remember**

Once inside the arena, seniors Carlos Davis and Eric Hanna, as well as senior managers and cheerleaders, were honored. Then came an even bigger treat.

While fans were still giddy about a Michael Redd jumper to end the first half with OSU leading 39-36, the former players were introduced to the sellout crowd — Jackson, Jay Burson, Bill Hosket and Clemons receiving the warmest ovations. The cheers built to a crescendo for the introduction of Taylor as Hosket and Denny Meadows escorted him to midcourt.

The coach was crying head down, and so were many in the stands.

"That was a very emotional moment for all of us," former player Rich Hoyt said. "When you think about what all he accomplished in his years here and seeing everybody come back tonight, it was quite a scene."

"He came into that reception before the game and he seemed to know just about everybody who came up to him. It was just a real treat."

The fans got a heart-stopper of another kind a minute into the second half when Penn State's Joe Crispin chased a loose ball to the northwest corner of the court where Taylor was seated and ended up standing on the press table above the coach.

Moments later, longtime Big Ten official Phil Bova acknowledged Taylor with a friendly nod before signaling for play to resume. This was St. John's kingdom, but Fred R. Taylor had the throne.

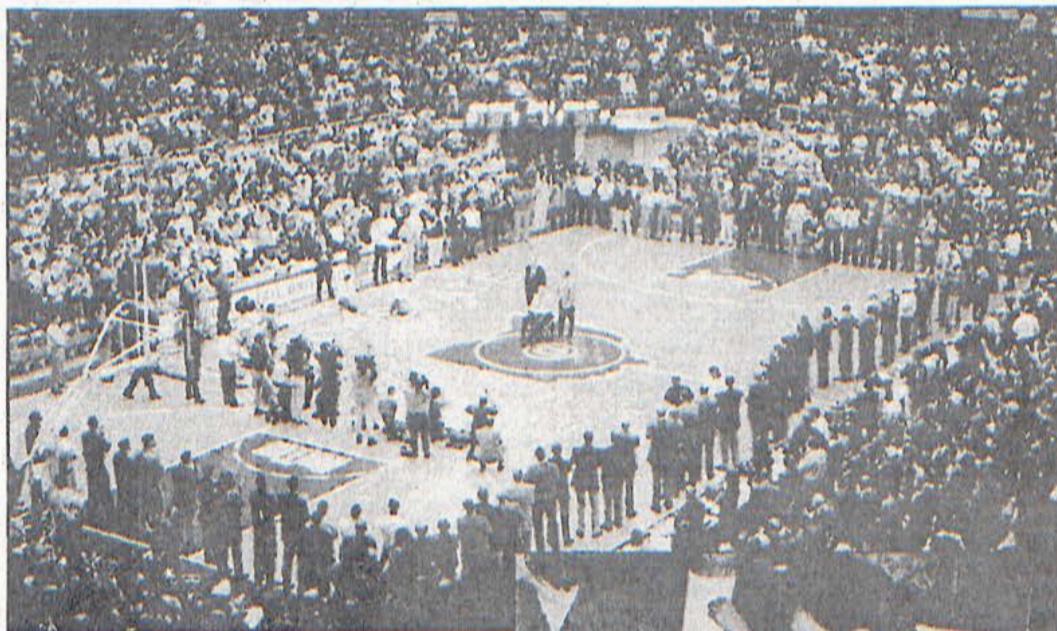
Erasing the bitter expression left from an 89-85 overtime defeat, O'Brien made sure to walk across court to Taylor.

"I hope we gave you enough entertainment tonight," he said with a smile and gentle shake of the hand. "I am so happy you came over for this."

O'Brien later recounted the moment to reporters.

"I just told him I hope he's doing well," he said. "I was really happy he was able to get here. When you talk about Ohio State basketball, you have to talk about one name and that's Fred Taylor. He has meant more to this program than any other single person."

Another longtime coach grabbed the spotlight briefly when Gene Millard, credited with scoring the first basket in the



STEVE HELWAGEN

**HONORING THE COACH** — A group of 127 former OSU players and managers surround the St. John Arena court as former coach Fred Taylor takes center stage.

arena in a 1956 win over Butler, took a ceremonial last shot. Millard lettered for Floyd Stahl at Ohio State from 1955-57 and went on to a highly successful coaching stint at local Bexley High School.

He didn't disappoint those who stayed on hand by dribbling in for a right-handed layup, then surprising all by tossing up — and nailing — a 19-footer from the top of the key. Millard's foot was across the three-point line, but hey, they didn't have such things when he played in the arena.

After the OSU pep band played a stirring rendition of "Carmen Ohio," it was time to say goodbye and reflect on yet another thriller of a game.

"The tradition and the atmosphere has not gone lost on me," said O'Brien, OSU's first-year coach. "It is very obvious to see why people have such a high regard. But the thing I think is important is you could play in any building that you want. The thing that makes this special right now is not the building, but the people that come into the building. And I think all the people here ... they have stood up like you cannot believe and made this a memorable season for us even under the conditions that we were faced with with not being very successful."

"It excites me to think that when we get good — and we are going to get good — our program could be something that's very special."

That was evident when reporters left O'Brien's press conference to find hundreds of fans still soaking in the arena with the clock ticking past 11 p.m.

No doubt those diehards were still trying to figure out why all good things must come to an end.

BSB editor Steve Helwagen contributed to this story.



STEVE HELWAGEN

**GREAT TO SEE YOU** — Former OSU All-American Allan Hornyak greets his coach, Fred Taylor, at a pregame reception at French Field House.



STEVE HELWAGEN

**TWO OF THE BEST** — Former Buckeye stars Jim Clemons (left) and Jim Jackson share a word. The two worked together last year while Clemons coached Jackson for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks.



ST. JOHN ARENA FINAL GAME



KEVIN DYE

**GAME OF HIS LIFE** — OSU senior Eric Hanna had hardly played all season, scoring just five points coming into the home finale. But against Penn State, Hanna notched nine points, including this nifty reverse as PSU's Calvin Booth looks on.



STEVE HELWAGEN

**ON THE RADIO** — Jim Cleamons (left) spends some time reminiscing about his St. John Arena memories with WBNS Radio's Terry Smith and former Buckeye star Jay Burson (right).



KEVIN DYE

**HI, COACH** — Former Buckeye star Larry Siegfried greets his former coach Fred Taylor upon Taylor's arrival at the French Field House reunion.



STEVE HELWAGEN

**BIG MAN REUNION** — This group of OSU forwards and centers from the 1970s and '80s posed for a photo at the pregame reunion. Pictured are, left to right, Rick Smith, Granville Waiters, Tony White, Joe Concheck and Jim Honigford.



KEVIN DYE

**LAST SHOT** — Former Buckeye Gene Millard (left) jokes with OSU coach Jim O'Brien before making the "final shot" at St. John Arena. Millard, who made the first shot in a game at the arena in 1956, also sank a three-pointer for good measure.



## OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

(prospect) for sure. But he likes to play on the perimeter and I don't know how he'll do in the Big Ten.

"But he'll do a good job for Ohio State. They need bodies and he's better than some of the guys they've got."

Wacaser has seen Reese play four times this season and he and Ball again will be watching during the NJCAA tournament.

"He's very physical and he can shoot very well," Wacaser added. "He has a nice inside-outside game. He gets points in bunches and he's a very confident player. But he doesn't rip down as many big rebounds as I would like."

Reese has grown a couple of inches since high school and has intrigued several programs. But while schools like UCLA and Illinois showed only moderate interest, the OSU staff, especially assistant Dave Spiller, treated Reese like a priority recruit.

"Ohio State has been involved for a long time, and just, to be honest with you, outworked everyone else," Imhoff said.

"I'm happy for George and I don't think as a coach you should ever deny a young man a chance to come home."

Reese could sign as early as April 8 but could wait until all his academic affairs are in order. He's on course to graduate from Logan May 7 and will turn 21 the following day.

That may be an ideal day to sign his letter of intent considering all he's been through and the maturation that has come with it.

"That's what Coach O'Brien said he likes most about me — that I've been through a maturing process," Reese said. "Now hopefully I can help bring their program along. I think by my senior year we can be real, real legit."

"I've won at every level and I don't want to come to some program that's going to go like 5-20 two years in a row. I don't see anything but good things ahead with Coach O'Brien. I just believe in him. And his resume speaks for itself."

Reese said he hasn't talked to the OSU coaches about enrolling in the summer but he plans to be around. Last year he helped Andrew's Insurance win the Worthington Summer League title. This year he could join up with old friend and former Buckeye Lawrence Funderburke.

"We talked the other day and he said, 'I'm going to get you ready.' That's got me excited," Reese said. "I just can't wait to get in there and get my feet wet."

#### Harrington Has Big Decision Ahead

As BSB has reported, some in the recruiting biz believe New Jersey product Al Harrington is considering the NBA and also is looking to stay close to home, meaning St. John's, Villanova and Seton Hall could be in the best position.

That leaves Ohio State in the "sleep-er" category, but certainly the Buckeyes shouldn't be counted out, especially since Harrington visited OSU and came home intrigued.

And the other undeniable player in the Harrington sweepstakes is Georgia Tech. Yellow Jackets coach Bobby Cremins is a notorious recruiter and is benefiting from the play of freshman sensation Dion Glover. The future also looks bright with the transfer of Jason Collier and encouraging play from freshman guard Travis Spivey.

Harrington also visited Georgia Tech and is comfortable with Cremins and staff. He also no doubt is following the season of senior forward Matt Harrpring. Knowing you are very talented and you would be asked to take over for a player

who is among the top scorers and rebounders in the ACC, if nothing else, is an interesting proposition.

"It allows Cremins another recruiting pitch in his winterlong battle for one of the nation's top five prep prospects," an *Eastern Basketball* article said recently of Harrpring's big year. "Harrington is a budding superstar who is nearly unstoppable at the high school level when he gains position on the blocks. His post moves, turnaround jumper and affinity for finishing plays after drawing a foul make him a 25-point-a-game-plus scorer."

Harrington, who stars for nationally ranked Elizabeth St. Patrick, is being listed at 6-9 (up from 6-8) by most publications, maybe because he's becoming more and more dominant inside. He already projects as a dream power forward at the college level, but he wants to be able to play out on the wing as a collegian with the NBA beckoning.

What he doesn't want to do is end up playing solely in the middle out of need.

"With Collier in the fold, that is no longer a problem at Tech," *Eastern Basketball* said. "Consider that an advantage."

While announcing a Georgia Tech-Clemson game on ABC March 1, analyst Dick Vitale said Harrington was down to three schools — Georgia Tech, St. John's and Seton Hall. Harrington and his coach, Kevin Boyle, could not be reached for comment. The Buckeyes haven't been considered a viable option by many for months now even though Harrington insists they are.

Harrington previously told BSB his visit to Columbus sold him to the point where "Ohio State should be in it right to the end." He has scheduled no other official visits as yet.

Considered the top unsigned player in the country, Harrington's signature would greatly elevate the class rank of any school, especially Ohio State or Georgia Tech.

Harrington recently was named a McDonald's All-American to no one's surprise. He's already a member of the USA junior national team and is a top candidate for USA Today prep-player-of-the-year honors.

#### OSU Hanging Onto Ball-Of Late

With a regular-season closing crusher to Penn State that dipped their record to 8-21 and 1-15 in the Big Ten, the Buckeyes are not exactly brimming with confidence. But O'Brien and gang do believe they can pull off an upset at the Big Ten tournament in Chicago. One reason: better ball handling.

OSU actually had committed fewer turnovers than their opponents in six straight games until the tussle with Penn State. But even in that game, which went into overtime, the Buckeyes totaled just 10 turnovers.

That gave them an average of 11.7 in their last seven, well below the mark of 17.1 in the first 22.

"When we played Iowa in Iowa City we only had 12 or 13 turnovers (actually 14) against a team that pressed us, so we were very good against their pressure. But all the teams that we have played lately — Michigan is a half-court defensive team; we've played Penn State, they don't pressure; we've played Wisconsin, they don't press — we haven't turned the ball over too much, but it's more because of their style," O'Brien said.

Still, the trend is encouraging. OSU has now forced more turnovers (478) than it has committed (460) with the tournament pending.

## OHIO STATE VS. PENN STATE

## PSU Wins SJA Finale

Continued From Page 19

but Crispin gave his team the edge for good by canning a trey from in front of his bench and over OSU's Carlos Davis.

"I didn't think he would take that shot," Davis said. "I was trying to see what was going on behind me and when I turned back around he just shot it."

OSU got within 82-80 moments later, but Redd failed to complete a three-point play, missing his eighth free throw of the night, and Ken Johnson missed the front end of a one-and-one seconds later.

That's when Crispin, a 6-1 freshman, struck again, this time draining a long three with Neshawn Coleman right in his mug and with just 34 seconds on the game clock.

"I had a hand in his face and everything," Coleman said. "It was a big shot. He hit it, whether it was luck or a good shot or whatever. You have to give him credit."

The game began with a trio of threes — one by PSU's Titus Ivory and answers from Jon Sanderson and Coleman. But in this shootout, it was a matter of who struck last.

Lisicky made sure it wasn't Ohio State by hitting all six free-throw attempts in overtime.

He closed the curtain on the regular season, St. John and seniors Davis and Eric Hanna by catching an inbounds pass with six seconds left, drawing the foul and swishing a pair at the line.

"That's really frustrating because we had planned to face guard him and somehow he got free," Redd said.

#### Buckeyes Left Seeling Redd

Redd also lamented his lost chances in regulation. With OSU clinging to a 75-74 lead, he drew a foul but hit only one of two free throws. Moments later he was blocked by Ivory. Calvin Booth tied the game at 76-76 with a hook shot, but the Buckeyes still had time to give their super frosh one more chance in the final seconds, just as they had time in the previous home game with Indiana.

This time Redd wheeled into the lane, but he stumbled and came up short on a pull-up jumper.

"We got what we wanted to do (at the end) against Indiana, which was get the ball in his hands, and he got in the lane," O'Brien said. "I think he just ran out of legs."

"I was fatigued," Redd admitted. "They did a good job of bodying me up all night and being physical with me. That kind of wore me down."

An Ivory airball before the regulation buzzer seemed to signal overtime, but O'Brien was told in the huddle that a shot clock violation would give OSU the ball back with 1.6 seconds left. He called for a John Lumpkin heave, which sailed off the fingertips of Sanderson and set up the nerve-racking OT.

Penn State may have been warmed to the task by having to play at Wisconsin Jan. 14 in a game that christened the new Kohl Center. The Nits fell 76-57 in that test but entered play with wins in four of their last six to set up a shot at a .500 conference mark.

"I thought this was louder longer, no question about it," PSU coach Jerry Dunn said of St. John Arena. "This is a tough place to play. I think it's one of the toughest in the Big Ten."

It was downright uproarious when Redd hit from the top of the key at the end of the half to give OSU a 39-36 advantage that segued right into the memorable half-time salute to Taylor and former players and managers.

The good feelings continued into the second half when Hanna, a lanky and seldom-used walk-on, continued to work on a career night in his only start.

He banked home a high turnaround over Booth and tallied on a nifty reverse in consecutive possessions to give OSU a 52-39 lead and frenzy the crowd.

Hanna had scored five points all season coming in but tallied nine in 17 minutes of action. Davis also played well in his swan song with 14 points and seven rebounds.

Sanderson had a double-double with 12 points and 10 rebounds and Redd added six caroms and seven assists to his 32 points.

Lisicky led PSU with 24 points and Jarrett Stephens logged 17 points and seven rebounds off the bench.



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THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

# St. John Arena Finale Was Memorable Night

I wasn't nearly as emotional as I thought I might be as they brought the curtain down on Ohio State basketball at St. John Arena on Feb. 28.

Before I try to explain this, let me say that the Ohio State athletic department did an outstanding job of making the evening a tasteful and special event. From the free souvenir programs, to the more than 100 returning players being efficiently presented at halftime, to Fred Taylor's appearance, to Gene Millard's final bucket — and his three-pointer for good measure — to the singing of "Carmen Ohio," it was all first-class and extremely well executed.

Well executed with the possible exception of the fact that the current Buckeyes blew a big lead and couldn't bring the curtain down on a winning note, an ending that would have been so fitting. Just the fact that the game went into overtime seemed appropriate, as we were allowed to savor basketball in St. John Arena for just a little longer.

Sure I was a little misty when Fred Taylor was brought out to midcourt. And I can be moved by the singing of "Carmen Ohio" even on an uneventful day, it being such a beautiful and appropriate alma mater. So I was certainly touched as the pep band and cheerleaders closed out the evening and an era with the song.

Yet at no point during the evening was I overwhelmed by the fact I was viewing

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

my final basketball game in the building in which I have viewed the bulk of the basketball games I've seen in my lifetime.

As the crowd thinned out and I viewed the near-empty arena, I started to understand why I was not more moved. I looked at the well-lit court, the big scoreboard that is only a few years old, the well-maintained wooden seats that I have always loved — just the overall good condition of the building and I realized that I can't really picture myself not attending games there. I certainly can't picture myself in the Schottenstein Center, standing with but half a roof, only a few hundred yards away.

The only sports facility closing I've ever really been associated with is the old Municipal Stadium on the lake in Cleveland. I loved that stadium and was perfectly willing to have the Indians stay there. But let's face it. It was a bit of a dump. It was time to either radically overhaul it or move.

St. John Arena, on the other hand, looks as if it could house basketball for many, many years to come, just as it will play host to OSU's Olympic sports, I'm sure into the distant future.

Progress is inevitable, however. And just as I immediately fell in love with Jacobs Field, I am sure that I will love the Schottenstein Center. There will be all that exploring of the facility once it opens, just as I wandered around Jacobs Field, taking in each nook and cranny, on my first several visits there.

But until I am in my seat in the Schottenstein Center — in the balcony, I'm sure — I guess I will still feel like St. John Arena is the basketball Buckeyes' home.

### The Salute To Fred Taylor

Hopefully, the closing ceremonies at St. John Arena and Taylor's presence there will help heal some of the obvious wounds felt by many of his players.

You don't have to speak to a lot of "Fred's Formers" to realize that many of them are quite bitter about the way they feel he was treated at the end of his tenure at OSU. It is also clear that many former players — and fans — believe that the new building should have been named after him or that there should at least be a significant monument to Ohio State's greatest cage coach.

The realities of athletic financing these days probably eliminated the possibility of the building being named after Taylor. Sure, it would have been nice if some business put up the millions of dollars in naming rights and then named it after Taylor. But few businesses have the type of money to be that benevolent.

If the ground rules were that money was going to buy the naming rights of virtually every corner of the building, maybe the former players who felt so strongly about a fitting tribute to Taylor should have put together the fund-raising effort to establish such recognition.

Certainly the athletic department, which would ultimately name the road adjacent to the building after Taylor, should have been on top of the situation more quickly and established a fitting memorial to Taylor from the outset.

What's past is past, however, from Taylor's dismissal to the perceived slight at the new building.

By attending the final game at St. John Arena — a building he seemed to consciously avoid after his dismissal — despite being confined to a wheelchair, Taylor seemed to be indicating that it was time to move forward, that Ohio State basketball was bigger than Fred Taylor or St. John Arena or the Schottenstein Center. The buildings, the players, the coaches, the fans are all just pieces that make the program so great.

But there is no question that Fred Taylor is one of the biggest pieces. And perhaps the beauty of the final game in St. John Arena is that through all the media coverage, the anecdotes from the various players and coaches, the general reminiscing, maybe Fred Taylor is finally getting his due.

### Taylor Memories

Local writer, historian and all-around good guy Bob Thomas has offered to send copies of two pieces on Taylor from Thomas' second volume of "Columbus Unforgettables" to anyone who sends a

self-addressed stamped envelope. The first is a question-and-answer with the coach on the 1960 championship team. The second is an article centering on a roast of Taylor back in 1985.

Send your SASE to Bob Thomas, C/O Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212.

### St. John Fun Fact

I got my first Ohio State basketball media guide in 1980-81, when I was writing for the old *Buckeye Leaves*. I still have it, with Herb Williams pulling down a rebound on the cover. I must have had more time back then because I used to just pore over guides like that. One of the things that always stuck with me from the media guide was in the description of St. John Arena.

They touted the fact that with 16 stairways from the main concourse to the balcony and 15 exits, the building "can be emptied in seven minutes." At some point in the last 17 years they stopped including that assertion in the St. John sketch. I wonder if the building can still be emptied that fast. For that matter, how did they come up with that time in the first place?

### Practice Those Free Throws

The men's basketball team lived and died by the free throw in its final week of Big Ten action. The Buckeyes, who have had problems from the stripe all year, hit their free throws down the stretch to keep Wisconsin at bay in their only conference win of the season.

They came back a couple of days later and hit just 17 of 32 from the line for 53.1 percent, including 41.7 percent in the second half in losing to Penn State. An even average showing at the line and the Buckeyes could have ended the regular season and the St. John era with a victory.

I don't care what kind of talent the Buckeyes bring in next season. If they don't start hitting from the line, they're still going to have problems. Talent is generally God-given. But free-throw ability usually comes with practice. Work on them, guys!

### Bringing Back The Cup

When *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* originated the Ohio Cup back in 1983, we certainly thought it would reside in Columbus a fair amount of the time.

The hockey Buckeyes won the inaugural Cup in what was probably the Golden Age of Ohio State hockey. Led by the Pooley brothers, Andy Browne, Dave Kobryn and a host of other fine players, the Buckeyes posted a 26-9-1 record that season and were 30-10-1 the following year, finishing second in the CCHA both seasons and advancing to Joe Louis Arena both times.

But the Buckeyes posted only one winning season after that until this year and, after that 1983 season, the Ohio Cup stayed in either Bowling Green or Oxford. That is until Feb. 26, when the Bucks clinched the Cup on their home ice with a thrilling 3-1 win over Miami.

We started the Cup to enhance and support collegiate hockey at all three of the Ohio hockey schools. But I must admit that all of us here were thrilled when the Buckeyes skated around their rink in their final home game there with the Cup held high.

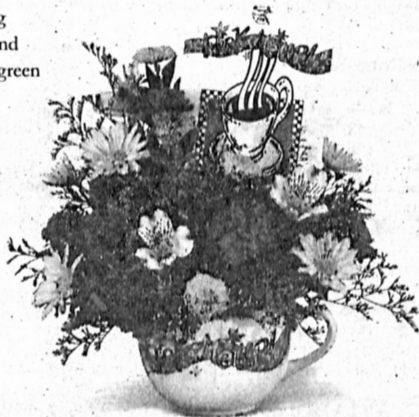
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