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PUBLISHER  
 Frank Moskowicz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS  
 Karen Wachsman 1944-1999

MANAGING EDITOR  
 Mark Rea

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER  
 Becky Roberts

DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING  
 Bill Armstrong

PHOTOGRAPHY  
 Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam  
 Kevin Dye Josh Winslow

CONTRIBUTORS  
 David Breithaupt Craig Merz  
 Rich Exner Bob Roehm  
 Matthew Hager Julie Roy  
 Marcus Hartman Mark Schmetzer  
 Adam Jardy Steve Siegfried  
 Rich Leonardo Stacey Stathulis  
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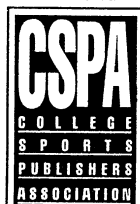
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BSB e-mail address is: bsb@buckeyesports.com

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## OPINION

# BCS Title Or Bust For 2008 Buckeyes

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK with Mark Rea

Mark this down: Ohio State will go to the BCS National Championship Game next January and this time the Buckeyes will be victorious.

Sure, that's a bold prediction five months before the season begins and one you might expect from a guy who writes for a publication that has the word "buckeye" in its name.

All homerism aside, though, if the Buckeyes don't win the title, something somewhere is terribly wrong. Yes, I know how difficult it is to win a national championship. And yes, I know OSU has featured many athletically gifted teams in the past. But the seasons have been rare when the team virtually bulges at the seams with talent as it will in 2008. When Jim Tressel and his coaching staff open spring practice March 27, they should probably be embarrassed at the level and depth of offensive and defensive explosiveness at their disposal.

Everywhere you look, there is a player with the potential to be named the best at his position in college football. Malcolm Jenkins will undoubtedly top the list of Thorpe Award candidates. James Laurinaitis already won the Nagurski Trophy in 2006 and the Butkus Award last year and should be a front-runner for those honors again as well as the Lott Trophy and Lombardi Award.

Then, of course, you switch your dazzled eyes to offense and find candidates such as Alex Boone for the Outland Trophy, Brian Robiskie for the Biletnikoff, Todd Boeckman for the Unitas and O'Brien awards, and Chris "Beanie" Wells for the Doak Walker, Walter Camp and Maxwell awards, not to mention the Heisman Trophy.

I contend that no other team in the nation – not Southern Cal, not Oklahoma, not even Georgia, Florida or any of our other pals from the big, bad SEC – can measure up to the kind of high-wattage star power the Buckeyes are going to put on the field next fall.

I know what you're thinking. You've been tricked into thinking all of this before. You invested a lot of emotion into the last two seasons only to get hit by the respective brick walls of Florida and LSU, who smashed your national title dreams into smithereens.

That was then. This is now. This team has a whole different mind-set than the two which preceded it. How do I know? Because the bulk of the starting lineup that returns for 2008 had every chance to make an early leap to the NFL and didn't do it. Do you realize how rare that is nowadays? Do you understand how much the desire to win a national championship burns in guys like Laurinaitis, Jenkins, Boone and Robiskie, guys who essentially turned down the chance to become instant millionaires?

Most experts say that Ohio State will field almost the same team this fall that it did last year when it won 11 games and made the BCS National Championship Game. I contend Ohio State will field a better team in 2008.

There are notable losses, of course, such as Kirk Barton on offense and Vernon Gholston on defense. But when you consider the Buckeyes have a host of young, eager offensive linemen ready to take over for Barton and budding superstar Lawrence Wilson itching to get back into the mix at defensive end, those losses suddenly don't seem so critical.

Additionally, the starting lineup is just the tip of the iceberg. OSU has a backup roster teeming with players who would likely start for nearly every other team in the Big Ten. Guys such as Brandon Saine, Eugene Clifford, Aaron Gant, Thaddeus Gibson, Chimdi Chekwa, Tyler Moeller and so many others have barely begun to show what they are capable of doing.

And there is Terrelle Pryor, a quarterback so talented the Buckeyes may alter their entire offensive scheme in the fall to maximize his

potential.

Then there is the schedule. With the exception of an early trip to the West Coast, the 2008 schedule sets up perfectly for OSU. Four of the first five games are at home against Youngstown State, Ohio University, Troy and Minnesota. The Buckeyes also host Penn State and Michigan in the Horseshoe this fall while facing Wisconsin, Michigan State, Northwestern and Illinois on the road.

You may look at those road games as possible problems, but I look at them as opportunities. Wisconsin will be breaking in a new starting quarterback, MSU head coach Mark Dantonio hasn't come close to beating Tressel in three previous tries (albeit two of them were with Cincinnati), and since Northwestern upset OSU in 2004, the Wildcats have been outscored 160-24 in their subsequent three games against the Buckeyes.

Even the game against Illinois should be only a speed bump on the expressway to the national title game. By the time the Buckeyes arrive at Memorial Stadium in mid-November, how many times to do you think the defense will have watched film of last season's 28-21 loss? How much emphasis do you think they will put on keeping track of Juice Williams? That game would appear to be drenched with heavy coatings of scarlet and gray redemption.

Then there is the traditional season finale against Michigan and its new head coach, Rich Rodriguez. I know there are those of you out there who believe that if Rodriguez could be successful at West Virginia, he ought to be even more so in Ann Arbor. I don't happen to share your view. Rodriguez runs a tricked-up offense that relies almost solely on the heady play of a veteran quarterback. Last time I looked at the U-M roster, I didn't see a veteran quarterback anywhere on it.

Also, Rodriguez has been known to concentrate more on offense than defense. That has always been a recipe for disaster in the Big Ten.

That leaves the Sept. 13 game at Southern California as the only real hurdle I see on the entire 2008 schedule. The Trojans will be home-standing in their cavernous Los Angeles Coliseum, and that venue has not been kind to the Buckeyes over the years. Ohio State is only 2-4-1 in seven games there, including its most recent visit, a 42-3 stomping absorbed in 1989. Fact is, OSU hasn't won in the Coliseum since a 21-0 win in 1946.

But that's ancient history. The game is already being touted as college football's top nonconference contest of 2008, and the winner should have the inside track on the No. 1 ranking and a berth in the national championship game. However, even the loser of the game will remain in line for a trip to Miami next January. The contest comes so early in the season that a rematch is entirely possible when the BCS National Championship Game kicks off Jan. 8, 2009, in Dolphin Stadium.

I expect Ohio State to be there, hoisting the crystal football trophy this time. Mark it down.

### Pryor Equals Who?

Because I've been covering Ohio State football since my hair was a much darker shade than it is now, I have been asked repeatedly to

make comparisons between Pryor and Buckeye quarterbacks of the past.

It is extremely difficult to do that because my knowledge of Pryor is only what I have seen on some grainy game film, and all of that was against high school competition. I don't care how good he is, the speed of the game between high school and college is a quantum leap for any player.

Also, I don't know if the Buckeyes have ever fielded a 6-6 quarterback with a rifle arm and 4.4 speed. Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith had speed and a powerful delivery but he was barely over 6-feet tall. Art Schlichter was about 6-3 and could make all the throws, but while he was extremely deceptive in the backfield, he never had anything resembling 4.4 speed. Joe Germaine has probably had the most accurate arm of any OSU quarterback in the last 20 years, but Super Joe was another player who had to stretch to get past 6 feet.

The tallest quarterbacks in recent OSU history are Kent Graham, Bret Powers and Boeckman, each of whom are 6-5. However, I think it's safe to say none of them would stand much of a chance against Pryor in a footrace.

The only quarterback with whom Pryor's potential comes even remotely close is Cornelius Greene.

Pryor is much bigger than the 6-0, 185-pound Greene and is a much more polished quarterback than Greene was when he got to Columbus. Likewise, he won't have to deal with the kind of racial slurs Greene had to endure when he became the first African-American starting quarterback at Ohio State. But Greene is a pretty good measuring stick for any aspiring quarterback, especially one like Pryor.

There was almost no opposing pass rusher that Greene couldn't elude, and he approached the game with such flair that teammates began to call him "Flam" as in flamboyant. He was much more than flash, however. Greene was a bona fide winner. He was a three-year starter with a 31-3-1 record, led the Buckeyes to a trio of conference championships and three consecutive Rose Bowl appearances, and earned Big Ten most valuable player honors in 1975. That was a pretty mean trick since teammate Archie Griffin won his second Heisman Trophy in a landslide that year.

### Some Final Thoughts

• What does it say about this year's NCAA Tournament that I actually watched almost as much wrestling during the first weekend of the tourney as basketball? Well, when you lose one of the Final Four teams from your bracket in the first round, you kind of lose interest. (Thanks a lot, Clemson.) But I've always been intrigued by amateur wrestling, a sport I believe is one of the toughest for any individual to master. It is all about technique and power, and it's just you out there on the mat against your opponent. Congratulations to second-year head coach Tom Ryan and his Ohio State wrestlers for finishing second at the nationals, the best finish in school history.

• OK, I will admit to watching some March Madness. But I will also admit that my interest in the tournament is waning a bit, and that has nothing to do with OSU missing the field. Quite frankly, I am bored with poor officiating, way too many timeouts and frightful shooting. Terrible free-throw shooting is one thing, but how can scholarship players for major college programs miss layups and even dunks? What exactly are some of these multimillion-dollar coaches coaching?

• Some of my glass-half-empty friends were talking about Pryor the other day, wondering aloud if the quarterback phenom could possibly be as good as he is hyped to be. My thought: What if he's better?

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

# Pryor Finally Makes It Official – He’s A Buckeye

The puzzle is finally complete. Six weeks to the day after Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel introduced the first 19 members of his class of 2008 to the media on National Signing Day, the final member put his name on the dotted line and opted to become a Buckeye.

Terrelle Pryor, the nation’s top overall prospect and the subject of intense media scrutiny for more than a year, became the final member in an OSU recruiting class that now ranks among the most elite in the country.

At a press conference held March 19 in the auditorium of his high school in Jeannette, Pa., Pryor sat flanked by family members and coaches at a long table. Wearing a black fleece jacket from the U.S. Army All-American Bowl – a contest from which he brought home MVP honors – Pryor sat at the center of the table.

After a brief announcement by a Jeannette school official, Pryor leaned to his left and procured a black Block “O” hat that had been concealed within his father’s black windbreaker.

Donning it to applause, Pryor spoke of his intentions to become a Buckeye

“The University of Ohio State,” he said with a grin when asked to announce his college choice.

With those words, he finally put to end a recruiting process that stretched on for an extra six weeks after signing day until the top prospect in the country could finish out his

basketball season with a state championship. However, the stated goals as of signing day – namely, to take more official visits – were not met during the six weeks.

Instead, Pryor simply went with where he felt more comfortable – and he did not make his final decision until the morning of his announcement, signing his national letter of intent shortly after noon.

“I just broke it down and got involved with a lot of the kids there,” he said. “I felt comfortable with Coach Tressel. It was my choice.”

The Buckeyes were viewed as the leader for his services for most of the recruiting process. Pryor was apparently set to select OSU on signing day, but a disagreement with his father, Craig, convinced him to put off his decision until he could at least take an official visit to Penn State. To that point, he had been citing a final list of four schools that consisted of OSU, Michigan, PSU and Oregon.

With the immediate pressure to make a final decision gone, a trip to Oregon was planned as well. Pryor had been considering the Ducks but dropped them from consideration citing his busy schedule and subsequent inability to take an official visit there. After capturing a state championship in football, Pryor and his teammates were forced to play a hectic schedule to make up for basketball games that had been rescheduled because of the team’s football playoff run.

Having officially visited OSU during the



ADAM JARDY

**ENDING THE SUSPENSE – Among family and friends, Terrelle Pryor (middle) announces March 19 that he will play his college football at Ohio State. Pryor had postponed his decision for six weeks after National Signing Day and chose the Buckeyes over Michigan, Penn State and Oregon.**

weekend of Nov. 3 when the Buckeyes hosted Wisconsin on the gridiron, Pryor – accompanied by adviser Charlie Batch – took an official trip to Michigan during the weekend of Jan. 18.

But while the Buckeyes and the Wolverines appeared to be his leaders heading into signing day, Pryor maintained an even playing field for all four schools for the ensuing weeks as he focused exclusively on his team’s basketball season.

That focus ultimately culminated in a Class AA state championship for the Jayhawks with a 76-72 victory against Philadelphia Strawberry Mansion on March 15 in a game played on campus at Penn State.

With the reason for not taking official visits – namely, his basketball schedule – out of the way, it appeared Pryor was set to take at least two trips. Instead, he mentioned after his final basketball game that he hoped to quickly wrap up the recruiting process, and word broke during the afternoon of March 18 that Pryor would be making a noon announcement the following day.

His final decision came down to OSU and rival Michigan. On the date of his announcement, Pryor said he was so upset about having to tell U-M head coach Rich Rodriguez that he did not want to go there that he felt sick to his stomach.

“I shouldn’t even feel bad right now, but I feel bad because I said no to Michigan,” Pryor said. “I had so much of a bond with Coach Rodriguez. They had their hopes on me and I let them down.”

“I told my mom last night ‘maybe Ohio State’ and I was pretty sure, and then I started thinking about Michigan. They’ve got a great offense and it’s a great start to go in there and be the starter and possibly get some Heismans coming up. I talked to Coach Rich. I know he was pulling for me there. This offense could make me No. 1 in the country and he started it. That’s why he was pulling for me to go there.”

It did not help OSU’s chances that several people in Pryor’s inner circle were pulling for the Wolverines as well. At the press conference, Pryor said both Batch and his head coach, Ray Reitz, felt that he would be best suited in Ann Arbor.

So, too, did a handful of NFL scouts and coaches with whom Pryor said he consulted on the eve of signing day.

“I’m an 18-year-old kid and I feel like a man,” he said. “I’ve got to make choices myself. (People) prayed for me and said to ask God and He’ll give you an answer. You can’t always take what everyone else wants.

You have to do what you want. That’s what I did.”

All are firmly on his side now that he has selected the Buckeyes, however. Both of his parents wore Ohio State shirts, while Reitz was attired in a scarlet turtleneck. Batch was in Hawaii during the time of the announcement, but Pryor said the two were text messaging each other back and forth during the event.

After the press conference, Reitz said he felt Pryor would be able to more quickly adapt to Michigan’s offense because it was the same one he utilizes at Jeannette.

“Coach Tressel has his philosophy with the I-formation, and he’s been very successful with it,” Reitz said. “I’m just saying I thought because he had experience with us on offense that it would’ve been a little bit easier transition. But they’ll get him in the summer and I’m sure they will work him hard and we wish him the best.”

Reitz admitted that he had not discussed X’s and O’s with the OSU coaching staff because it was not his place to do so, he said.

Oregon was deemed too far away for Pryor to choose, while he admitted to simply not liking PSU’s location.

“I don’t like the area,” he said. “It’s a country type of thing and I just don’t like that place.”

Pryor appeared much more relaxed than he did on signing day. Seated onstage in his school’s auditorium, he answered questions from reporters for nearly half an hour. At times tossing off jokes and teasing those in the crowd and at other times guarded – such as when asked about his postgame scuffles en route to the basketball state championship – he said he would have preferred to give his decision out of the way much sooner to avoid the stress he has endured in the past few months.

In recent weeks, at least two more schools entered the picture and began pitching their services on the hardwood. Both USC and Memphis attempted to recruit Pryor as a small forward with the likely chance of playing football. But he remained resolute in his desire to be a quarterback and develop into an NFL-caliber talent.

“I think it’s my ticket,” he said. “My goal always in my life was to go in the NFL or the NBA. That’s every kid’s goal. Just getting realistic, look at the number of NBA basketball players and NFL players. That just speaks for it right there.”

Pryor cited Tressel as one of the key reasons for his decision.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK with Adam Jardy

OSU on signing day, but a disagreement with his father, Craig, convinced him to put off his decision until he could at least take an official visit to Penn State. To that point, he had been citing a final list of four schools that consisted of OSU, Michigan, PSU and Oregon.

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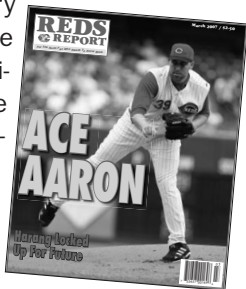
Having officially visited OSU during the

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**OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING**

**OSU Football Verbal Commitments**

Football players in the class of 2009 who have issued verbal commitments to play college football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School
C.J. Barnett	CB	6-1	180	Clayton (Ohio) Northmont
Chris Fields	WR	6-0	180	Painesville (Ohio) Harvey
Adam Homan	LB/FB	6-2	232	Coldwater, Ohio
Storm Klein	RB/LB	6-3	220	Newark (Ohio) Licking Valley
Jack Mewhort	OL/DL	6-6	285	Toledo (Ohio) St. John's
Johnny Simon	DT	6-3	250	Youngstown (Ohio) Cardinal Mooney
Jamie Wood	DB/WR	6-2	190	Pickerington (Ohio) Central
Jordan Whiting	LB	6-0	220	Louisville (Ky.) Trinity

"Coach Tress, you've got to love him," he said. "He's just a classy guy. I talk to him about every day. He's probably the main focus of me committing there, along with the other coaches."

Although he was on vacation that day, Tressel held a teleconference to discuss Pryor's signing with reporters.

"It is an exciting day for the Buckeyes," he said. "We're so proud of Terrelle Pryor choosing this football family, and it's been wonderful working with his coaching staff and his family. He's had quite an ambitious time here with 16 football games and a state championship and a bunch of basketball games and a state championship and trying to make a decision for his future, so we're so proud of him. We think he's handled it tremendously well."

"His mom and dad are excited, and we couldn't be happier."

In addition to Tressel, Pryor cited his relationships with a handful of members of the team's recruiting class as being instrumental in bringing him to Columbus. On signing day, offensive linemen Michael Brewster and J.B. Shugarts both spoke about how they

wanted Pryor to close out the class of 2008 for them.

Now they have gotten their wish.

"It had a part to play in it," Pryor said. "They just made me feel at home because I know the kids a little bit. It's all part of recruiting and I understand that."

The choice proved to be what his family wanted, as well. At his press conference on signing day, Pryor mentioned that the Nittany Lions staff had been spending the most time recruiting his family and specifically his father.

For that day, Joe Paterno and staff appeared to have grabbed an upper hand in the situation or at least stayed OSU's hand.

Fast-forward six weeks later and Pryor's father inadvertently gave the first indication that his son would be a Buckeye. By undoing the zipper on his jacket just a bit too much as he sat on the stage of the auditorium immediately to his son's left, he revealed enough of a white t-shirt that the words "Ohio State" could clearly be seen peeking out.

After the press conference, Craig Pryor said he fully supported his son's decision despite the fact that his desired official visit

to Happy Valley never materialized.

"He didn't take an official visit to Penn State, but he did what he wanted to," his father said. "Whatever was comfortable for him, I was comfortable with that. I just had to back him wherever he decided."

The younger Pryor said he needed the support of his family as he attempted to make a decision. Once they saw where he wanted to go, they were fully supportive of his decision.

"I wouldn't prefer for him to go anywhere," Craig Pryor said. "He had to just take his time, and wherever he felt that God wanted him to go, that was the place for him."

The fact that that final decision did not come until the morning of his announcement had little bearing on the final verdict. Between signing day and his decision date, Pryor moved in with his mother, Thomasina, who moved back to Jeannette.

That experience helped ease the pressure in the final weeks leading up to his decision.

"I've always been able to call and talk to Terrelle, but it was nice especially through this recruiting season because he could go back in his room and lie down and relax, and if I wanted to go back there and bother him or if he wanted to talk I was there," his mother said. "Me being there around him has definitely helped and made him more relaxed."

Though it appeared the Nittany Lions had put the most time and effort into recruiting Pryor's family and as if OSU's efforts wrongly had been focused elsewhere, it is a situation that occurs from time to time, according to OSU quarterbacks coach Joe Daniels.

A 38-year member of the coaching profession, Daniels said identifying which people surround a recruit can be one of the most

challenging aspects of the recruiting process. In the case of Pryor, who had been residing with his godfather while his mother lives out of town and his father confined to a wheelchair and unable to care for him, this seemed to be the case.

"In any recruiting, you've got to find out who has an influence on him, who he counts on," Daniels said on signing day. "If you could ever find out the one person that is going to be as involved as anybody in the decision-making process, then of course you would zero in on him. But there's a lot of cases where it's several people. You just try to figure that out and piece it together."

Rumored to be a lifelong PSU fan, Pryor's father told reporters he is actually a fan of Pitt, the school Pryor initially committed to as a basketball prospect in January of 2006. The Nittany Lions had a built-in advantage in that they have been recruiting Pryor since he was a freshman in high school, the elder Pryor said.

"I've always been a Pitt fan. Penn State kind of came on to me, (but) I like both schools and I like where both of them are headed," he said of the two Pennsylvania schools.

With Pryor's commitment in the bag, the question now becomes how OSU will utilize the quarterback. At his press conference, Pryor said the OSU coaching staff is planning to find ways to get him in the game as a change-of-pace quarterback similar to how the Florida Gators deployed Tim Tebow as a freshman in 2006.

Tressel pointed out that he has varied his offense over the years based on the players he had available.

Continued On Page 16

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

## Ohio State, Michigan Battle For DB Turner

Continued From Page 15

"We try to be an offense that has just about every single thing in their playbook that they could possibly have and then utilizes the people that are ready to do each one of them," he said. "He has the passion to be a great drop-back passer and a great play-action passer. He's a guy that obviously can make plays with his feet and all the rest, but we just think that his upside and his future are tremendous and we won't have to add a whole bunch because I don't know what we don't do."

That plan sounds fine to Pryor, who said he is looking forward to learning from both Todd Boeckman and Antonio Henton – although he was unsure of Henton's name.

"I couldn't have gone wrong either way," he said. "I could've gone to Michigan and possibly could've started the whole time. I could've gone to Penn State and fought for a starting job or gone to Oregon and fought for a starting job. But Ohio State ... it's a long season and there is a senior there I can learn from."

Tressel apparently has drawn the parallel to Pryor between him and Troy Smith, OSU's Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback from 2006.

"I watched a lot of cuts on him and how they used him and how they'll use me," he said. "They still have the cuts and they were showing me my playbook and I'll start working on it."

Now that Ohio State's class is complete, Pryor gives the Buckeyes six five-star players from Scout.com's class of 2008, the most in the country. The class of 20 commitments averages 3.95 stars per player, putting OSU just behind Notre Dame (3.96) for tops in the nation.

On signing day, one of those five-star recruits made a pitch for Pryor to select the Buckeyes. Brewster, who has become friends with Pryor throughout the recruiting process, did the honors.

"Because we have one of the best coaches in the country," Brewster said. "We've got the offense that will mold him into a Heisman (winner), a line that will protect him, and this offense will not only mold him for a Heisman

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

## 15 Years Ago – 1993

Recent OSU signee Shawn Springs told BSB his father, Ron, had tried not to pressure him into going to school in Columbus, where the elder Springs had been a standout running back 15 years earlier.

"My dad's going to Ohio State made a little bit of a difference because I had been going to Columbus off and on since I was a little kid," he said. "But he tried hard not to influence me. Even so, my dad's really happy with my decision. He tried not to show it, but he always wanted me to go to Ohio State."

Springs' coach at Silver Spring (Md.) Springbrook was not so unbiased, however. John Haberman wanted Springs to go to Penn State, his alma mater.

"I felt terrible about it," Haberman said. "I wanted him to go to Penn State and I'll readily admit that. With Penn State coming into the Big Ten, I wanted him to play for them."

## 10 Years Ago – 1998

Several potential Buckeyes continued

but will also make him ready for the NFL. The spread offense at Michigan and what they run, that will get you hurt as you can see in all those programs – Oregon, Florida, West Virginia. Also, nobody runs that in the NFL. I just want my good friend to be playing quarterback so I can protect him.

"I just tell him to stay strong and he'll be fine. He'll figure it out."

And so he did, from OSU's point of view at least. For the Wolverines, Ducks and Nittany Lions, it's now officially time for Plan B.

For Pryor, it is time to get to work. Although the coaching staff encouraged the Jayhawks to take a few weeks off before getting back into the weight room, quarterbacks coach Roy Hall told BSB that Pryor did not take the advice.

"He was in there Monday morning working out on his own," Hall said. "That's the kind of kid he is."

On signing day, Shugarts told reporters that the class of 2008 was looking forward to bringing home a few national championships for the Buckeye Nation. Asked what he could promise OSU fans, Pryor spoke in more

measured tones.

"I can guarantee them that I'll work hard," he said. "I'm going to try to get a job there. I'm going to try to win games for them whenever my name and number are called, and I'll try to contribute as much as I can."

"We just want to work hard and do whatever we can to help Coach Tress get over that little hump he's got, that little championship losing two years in a row. We're going to do whatever we can. I'm part of the class and hopefully we can do that."

Ben Person of Xenia, Ohio, became the second member of the class of 2004 by issuing a verbal commitment on March 16.

## Five Years Ago – 2003

Ben Person of Xenia, Ohio, became the second member of the class of 2004 by issuing a verbal commitment on March 16.

measured tones.

"I can guarantee them that I'll work hard," he said. "I'm going to try to get a job there. I'm going to try to win games for them whenever my name and number are called, and I'll try to contribute as much as I can."

"We just want to work hard and do whatever we can to help Coach Tress get over that little hump he's got, that little championship losing two years in a row. We're going to do whatever we can. I'm part of the class and hopefully we can do that."

## Possible Big Ten Race For Massillon Defensive Back

It seems that both the Buckeyes and Wolverines have taken turns as leaders for the services of Massillon (Ohio) Washington defensive back J.T. Turner. Rated a four-star prospect by Scout, Turner was listing U-M as his leader for some time before interest from the Buckeyes turned him to their side.

Now, after a trip to Ann Arbor to take in a junior day March 13, it appears the Wolverines might have pushed themselves back to the forefront.

"It was fun meeting the new coaches,"

Turner told Scout. "Coach Rodriguez is a cool dude. I was getting to know my DB coach, Coach (Tony) Gibson, I saw the new stadium (upgrades) they're about to get, and I saw the locker room. It was nice."

Michigan was the first team to offer Turner, a fact not lost on the 6-2, 185-pound prospect.

"It registers a lot," Turner said. "I've always liked Michigan and they just came along and gave me my first offer. It was just crazy. It came out of nowhere. I hadn't heard anything from the coaches. I wasn't talking to them or anything. Then I just looked around one day and there was a Michigan offer."

"Michigan is still at the top. I still like them a lot. Ohio State is up there, and Illinois is sticking out right now too."

Also working in Michigan's favor is the fact that Turner has a longstanding relationship with Shawn Crable, a former Wolverine linebacker.

"(We) have been friends since I was in the sixth grade," Turner said. "We used to go to the Boys & Girls Club and play basketball there when he was in high school. Then he went to Michigan and I've always looked up to him. He said just take my time (with recruiting) and make the right decision. He said to make the one that is best for me and my family."

Although he did not switch to the secondary until his junior season, Turner is ranked the No. 12 cornerback prospect in the country. He recorded 40 tackles and three interceptions in 2007 and also rushed for four scores in limited time in the offensive backfield, his initial position.

Turner now is planning to take in a few more spring practices across the country in the coming weeks with the goal of making a decision sooner rather than later.

"I'm not really trying to go to a place where I'll get redshirted," he said. "I'm trying to play right away. I'm going to try to make practices at Michigan, Ohio State, Illinois, and I'm going to try West Virginia. I'm going to try to make my decision before the season starts."

For the latest on Turner and all the other Ohio State recruiting news, be sure to go to [www.BuckeyeSports.com](http://www.BuckeyeSports.com).

Eastern Ohio Lineman Plays The Waiting Game

Ryan Spiker knows that nearly every kid who plays prep football within the Buckeye State wants to suit up for OSU in college. And like most of those kids, Spiker also knows his chances of getting that opportunity – and they are far from guaranteed.

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**OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING**

An offensive lineman from Dresden (Ohio) Tri-Valley, the 6-4, 295-pound offensive guard was in Columbus March 1 for an OSU junior day and came away both impressed with the program and unsure when – or if – the Buckeyes will offer him.

While on campus, he met with Tressel and two other offensive linemen. Tressel then laid out the facts as to where the Buckeyes sit with their class of 2009.

“There are five other guys and only three scholarships,” Spiker told the Zanesville Times-Recorder. “A lot will depend on what happens at their summer camp.”

OSU has one verbal commitment for the offensive line already in Jack Mewhort of Toledo St. John’s. It is known that the Buckeyes have offered Cleveland Glenville tackle Marcus Hall, Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Glenbard West guard Chris Watt and Boardman, Ohio, guard Corey Linsley.

Spiker is not completely lacking in offers, however. Both Indiana and West Virginia have offered him, while Notre Dame and South Carolina also have shown interest.

Head coach Justin Buttermore said he believes there will be more where those came from.

“He’s 295 pounds and he’s got great hands and great feet,” Buttermore said. “He’s just a tremendous athlete for a kid his size. Guys like him only come around about once every 20 or 30 years. They’re just big athletic kids.”

**Nation’s No. 2 DE Focused On Spring**

He might not be lacking for attention, but that does not mean Craig Drummond is paying attention.

The 6-5½, 260-pound prospect from

Chicago Morgan Park earned both all-city and all-state honors following a junior season in which he recorded 18 sacks. Not surprisingly, offers have been flowing in from some of the top programs in the country.

But for now, Drummond’s focus is simply on his spring track season and on his desire to improve in the classroom.

“I haven’t been able to go to any junior days or anything,” Drummond told Scout. “I’m focusing on my SATs and track right now.”

“I haven’t really got into my recruiting much yet. I don’t know where I’m going to visit this summer for camps.”

As a member of his school’s track team, Drummond is part of three relay teams. He takes part in the 4x100-, 4x200- and 4x400-meter relays and also runs the high hurdles.

In addition to his 18 sacks, Drummond posted 84 tackles and forced two fumbles and two fumble recoveries. He also scooped up a blocked punt and rumbled for a touchdown.

Drummond said the U.S. Army All-American Bowl has been in touch with him about playing in the annual prep showcase, but no final decisions have been made yet.

Schools such as Illinois, Penn State, Oregon, USC and OSU, among others, have extended Drummond scholarship offers.

“I’ll be looking at the coaching staff of the teams, but I haven’t really thought about playing close to home or not yet,” he said.

**More Offers For Arizona Defensive Tackle Prospect**

The total offer count now stands at 14

for Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro defensive tackle Corey Adams after both Utah and Oklahoma offered him during the week of March 17.

A 6-3, 275-pound prospect, Adams is ranked a four-star prospect and the No. 7 defensive tackle in the country by Scout. He recorded 11 sacks and helped his team to a state title as a sophomore then followed that up by recording 117 tackles and 24 sacks as a junior.

Now he has schools from across the country pursuing him.

“Being in this position is what I worked to get at,” he told Scout. “There is a little bit of fear to live up to the hype but I am very excited. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. This is what I dreamed about as a kid, and a lot of guys would like to be in this position.”

Ohio State is one of 14 schools that have offered him, joining the likes of Florida, California, Michigan, Oregon and USC. He recently took in a junior day at Arizona but admitted to taking a hands-off approach to recruiting for a two-week period in mid-March while he battled an illness.

“It was a really cool atmosphere,” he said of Arizona. “It has a big college atmosphere. The whole town is involved with the school. I also learned about the coaches and the education and they talked about the time commitment of a college athlete and that helped put things in perspective.”

Adams has not yet finalized any further plans to visit junior days or take unofficial

visits during the coming weeks.

**Former OSU Recruit Charged With Rape; Future Uncertain**

A once-promising future is clouded as Devoe Torrence awaits his fate.

The former five-star tailback prospect who was a verbal commitment to OSU’s class of 2008 and prepped during his senior season at Massillon Washington was one of four people charged in a rape case March 20 in Stark County.

Torrence, whose scholarship offer to OSU was pulled because of unspecified off-the-field issues, faces one count of juvenile rape. The 17-year-old could receive probation or be held for one year in the state youth prison system before his 21st birthday if found guilty.

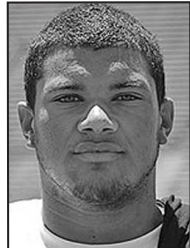
The arrests are part of a police sting operation that uncovered an underage sex ring involving 12-year-old girls from Stark County. All of the alleged sexual encounters were consensual and all were furthered by contact on MySpace.com.

According to the police report, Torrence engaged in sexual conduct with a 12-year-old girl in the early hours of Sept. 23. On Sept. 22, Torrence was in Columbus to see the Buckeyes host Northwestern at Ohio Stadium.

Under Ohio law, any sexual contact with a person under the age of 13 is considered rape.

If found guilty, Torrence would have to register as a sex offender but later would be able to ask for that to be modified, the Canton Repository reported.

*BSB staffer Jeff Svoboda contributed to this report.*



Corey Adams

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## OPINION

# Pryor's Shadow Looms Over Spring Practice

Most in the Buckeye Nation are anxious to see how much of a lingering hangover Ohio State has as it enters spring football practice.

For the second straight spring, the Buckeyes will attempt to wash the sting of a national championship game defeat away, and it will be interesting to see whether they talk about the loss to LSU as fuel for this spring or if they choose to use other motivations to get them through.

Many eyes will be on the veterans who passed up a chance at NFL riches – Malcolm Jenkins, Alex Boone and James Laurinaitis – and quite a few will also be on the early enrollees, including stud linemen Mike Adams and J.B. Shugarts. Jim Tressel and company brought in a huge recruiting haul, and nowhere will there be more interest than on the big guys in the trenches.

There will, however, be nearly as much talk about someone who won't be in camp this spring as there will be about the players on hand. That someone, of course, is Terrelle Pryor, and his recent signing with Ohio State ended a recruiting odyssey as strange and interesting as any I can recall.

For everyone who has been living under a rock, Pryor was a consensus can't-miss recruit, a Vince Young type (only a better passer) who has the leadership skills to elevate his teammates and the physical skills to beat opponents in a variety of ways. He was coveted by many of the top programs in the country, including a final four of OSU, Michigan, Penn State and Oregon.

When Rich Rodriguez was hired to lead the Wolverines, many thought that might tip the scales in their favor for Pryor because of the offense U-M would run and the glaring lack of experience at the quarterback spot. Oregon had thrust Dennis Dixon into the spotlight and seemed to have an offense tailor-made for Pryor's skills, so there were people who insisted he could end up there. PSU was closest to home, and family is important to him. Ohio State was not going to offer him the chance to start immediately because it returned starter Todd Boeckman, and there are few who believe Tressel will switch the offense entirely to cater to Pryor's game.

When Pryor announced to the nation that he was signing with Ohio State – a decision those who follow OSU had known for months already – eyebrows were raised. National writers, seemingly oblivious to the assembly line of talent the Buckeyes put into the NFL via the draft every year, felt that Ohio State must have been doing something untoward to get Pryor because there's

no way a high-profile QB would come to Columbus when he could have gone somewhere with more talent.

Once the ink had dried on Pryor's signature, the cry was almost immediate that the other schools "really didn't want him" and that he didn't "fit what we want to do effectively." In other words, they were trying to spin their own failure to land the kid.

Maybe he'll be great and maybe he won't, but for schools to say that they didn't truly want him just because he went to OSU insults everyone's intelligence. Rodriguez was hoping to the end that Pryor could be wooed to Ann Arbor, and even Penn State claimed that Pryor could be the man in State College even though the Nittany Lions haven't developed a quarterback since the days of Todd Blackledge.

There have been statements that Pryor will be a major headache for Tressel and could be Maurice Clarett-like off the field given the drama that his recruitment produced. Detractors point to a couple of incidents that occurred during basketball season, one between Pryor and the opposing crowd and another that involved the opposing team. What people don't say is that both incidents were instigated by the opposition, including fans in the first one allegedly hurling racial taunts at Pryor. Should he have ignored it and walked away? Sure. But think back to when you were 17 and how easy it was to set you off about something.

Then add in the prying eyes of the national media and overenthusiastic fan bases of four big-time schools, and you see just how difficult it might have been for Pryor to keep any sense of levelheadedness.

Pryor's signing definitely gives Ohio State even more of a national buzz, but it may also unintentionally have given OSU fans license to dissect Boeckman's every throw. When Boeckman misfires this fall, there will be some who cry for Pryor. You know the old adage – the backup quarterback is always the favorite. The hope from this corner is that OSU fans can enjoy the spring and the players who are here and allow Pryor to slowly grow into the position that should become his in 2009.

## Once Again Maddening

I've always maintained that even though

## THE FACTS MAN

Mike Wachsman

football is the greatest single sport ever invented, the NCAA Tournament is the greatest event in all of college athletics. Three taut weeks packed with passion, heart and upsets, and it's all there on display for everyone to see.

I'm not one of those people who has less enjoyment when Ohio State is out of the mix, though it is nice to see the Buckeyes get on a run such as the one that happened last year. But we see how difficult that is, and the difficulties this year's team experienced make last year's trip to the title game even more special.

That the Buckeyes didn't make the Big Dance wasn't all that surprising to me – nor was it upsetting. At last check, they had beaten exactly two good teams (Purdue and Michigan State), and they waited until the final week of the regular season to do that. Yes, they were competitive against Tennessee, Wisconsin and Indiana but in the end couldn't break through against any of them.

It was nice to see the Buckeyes head to the NIT, which may not have the relevance it used to but is nonetheless an opportunity for the team to play more basketball. Instead of sulking about not being included in the NCAA, they went out and took apart a UNC-Asheville team that, frankly, I expected to be more competitive than it was. For one thing, it had 7-7 man-child Kenny George in the middle, and that in itself is a huge challenge. The Buckeyes did not fare well this season against teams with a strong post presence, so a tight game was expected by more than a few observers.

But OSU played with intensity, took good shots and looked, for one of the few times this year, like it was having fun. Too many times this season, the Buckeyes would be playing well only to see the other team go on a run and forge ahead. Heads immediately went down and games were lost at that point.

Almost everyone got into the act against UNC-Asheville, and if that game is any indicator the Buckeyes could be looking at a trip to Madison Square Garden for the NIT Final Four.

It may not have the same ring as last year's trip to the Final Four, but it's a chance to compete for a title just the same.

For what it's worth, a lot of people I know went into this year's NCAA Tournament with a certain amount of skepticism. I had a longtime friend call me on the tournament's first day and proclaim, "You know, this thing is a fraud. Without any upsets, it's just not interesting. I don't see much interest in all the No. 1 seeds making the finals."

After last year's event held form almost all the way across the board, pundits everywhere were proclaiming that the days of rampant upsets were over. Through the first day of this year's tourney they had some ammunition, but the second day proved why the event is such a staple of sports viewing.

No fewer than five double-digit seeds won their games, including a couple in dramatic fashion. It was also nice to see most of the Big Ten exceed expectations and win first-round games. Michigan State, Purdue and Wisconsin were all impressive, and the Badgers are playing well enough to be real threats for a trip to the regional finals.

With a normal BSB publishing year, I

would have had an opportunity to diagnose the tournament and give my picks. By the time you read this, the tourney will be down to the Sweet 16, but I'm undaunted.

In the East, I had North Carolina knocking off Butler (which I have knocking off Tennessee) to make it to San Antonio; in the Midwest, I saw Kansas knocking off USC (which promptly laid an egg in its opener against Kansas State). In that region, I also had Davidson beating Gonzaga and Georgetown to make the Sweet 16. On the other side, it was Texas beating Pittsburgh (which I had knocking off Memphis) in the South while UCLA topples Xavier in the West.

When it's all said and done, I have UCLA beating Texas and North Carolina edging Kansas, with the Bruins cutting down the nets April 7. UCLA has great depth, the most stifling defense in the nation and enough scorers to get the job done.

## Making A Statement

You have to hand it to Tom Ryan and the Ohio State wrestling team. They definitely took a step forward and showed that they could be a force in the sport for years to come. Having four All-Americans had been done on a few occasions before by the Buckeyes, but never had the team finished as high as second nationally, and only one other time had they managed more than one national champion in the same season.

When sophomore 184-pounder Mike Pucillo won his title showdown over Iowa State's Jake Varner, the runner-up spot was clinched for OSU. And though the Buckeyes were closer to the lower half of the top 10 than to national champion Iowa, they definitely received praise from the ESPN announcing crew that was on hand in St. Louis. It would have made the night extra special had senior heavyweight J.D. Bergman managed to win his match, but a runner-up finish and three career All-American honors is something of which to be very proud.

The real story of the night was the victory by junior J Jagers at 141 pounds, however. Hampered by injury for much of his OSU career, the four-time state high school champion from the Cleveland area was touted for huge accomplishments shortly after signing with the Buckeyes. He was an All-American as a sophomore but didn't take the wrestling world by storm as many had predicted.

Finally at 100 percent this year, Jagers rolled into nationals on fire, and though opponent Chad Mendes of Cal Poly came in unbeaten and top-seeded, Jagers was not intimidated. It looked for a moment like the injury bug would once again be unkind, halting the match just 16 seconds from its conclusion when Jagers screamed in pain about an ankle injury. Initially fearing it was broken, Jagers gutted it out and held on through the end of the match.

"I knew the ankle was hurt, but it would get better. Losing this match would never heal," Jagers said to ESPN as he walked off the mat as a champion, the first lower weight (under 157) national champ ever for the Buckeyes.

With Bergman and 174-pounder Alex Picazo the only appreciable losses to next year's team, the Buckeyes could be around for the national wrestling scene for quite some time. And it wouldn't be the least bit surprising if OSU is soon making a real run at the Hawkeyes for the top prize.

For now, however, being the best team in school history will do very nicely.

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## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

# Pryor Hoopla Ends With OSU Commitment

The Terrelle Pryor sweepstakes is finally over and fortunately Ohio State wound up the winner.

I say "fortunately" not just because the OSU football team picked up the top-rated prep player in the nation, but because some Buckeye fans would have had a more difficult time dealing with the loss of Pryor than they did dealing with the Buckeyes' losses to Florida or LSU in the past two national championship games. That's how much energy and passion some fans have already invested in the quarterback from Jeannette, Pa.

The fact that Pryor went long past National Signing Day before making his decision to come to Columbus only made things more intense for those who have staked the future of the program on the 6-6 prep phenom. I find this "Pryor as savior" scenario interesting when you consider the Buckeyes are three-time defending Big Ten champions. I guess some fans figure one player – especially if he is a quarterback – can put Ohio State over the top and all but guarantee a national championship.

True, it's a big deal anytime a school lands the top high school player in the nation, but landing a quarterback of Pryor's reputation is even more significant when you consider Ohio State does not have a tradition of recruiting the best quarterbacks in the country. Running backs, linebackers, defensive backs, yes, but not quarterbacks.

Still, I think some of the expectations being put on Pryor are a little excessive. Upon his decision for Ohio State, The Columbus Dispatch ran the very large headline asking, "When can he start?"

While that's a headline writer's image, not the gist of the story underneath the banner, it gives you an idea of the hoopla surrounding Pryor.

First of all, I think these types of expectations are unfair to incumbent senior quarterback Todd Boeckman. All he did last season in his first year as a starter was lead the Buckeyes to a Big Ten championship and a berth in the national championship game while earning all-conference honors. It's true that Boeckman tailed off a bit as the season wore on, but to assume that Pryor, fresh off the high school field, can do better is a huge assumption.

I actually believe that Ohio State presents a perfect situation for Pryor.

With Boeckman a senior and a proven quarterback, Pryor can come in and learn without the type of pressure that he would have faced had he gone to Michigan. There, he would have been all but forced to start, and the hopes and dreams of a somewhat wounded Wolverine Nation would have immediately become a huge weight on his shoulders.

If all goes well, Boeckman can lead the Buckeyes to another conference championship and berth in the national title game this season while Pryor learns the ropes in preparation for his shot at the team reins in 2009.

I know some of you longtime readers of this column are waiting for me to bring up such quarterbacks as Joe Pickens and Justin Zwick, two quarterback recruits who have had their names banded about more in the past few months than anytime since they were being recruited out of high school. All of you know the plight of those two quarterbacks.

Instead, I'm going to bring up the name of perhaps the most ballyhooed OSU quarterback recruit of all time. Art Schlichter,

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

unlike Pickens and Zwick, would go on to rewrite the Ohio State passing record book and nearly lead the Buckeyes to a national championship in 1979.

Schlichter, out of Fayette County, Ohio, was every bit the Terrelle Pryor of his day. And with the whispers getting louder that Woody Hayes and his "three yards and a cloud of dust" offense were both becoming obsolete, the desire for the Buckeyes to land Schlichter was great among the Buckeye faithful. After all, he had passed for 4,397 yards and 46 touchdowns while rushing for another 1,660 yards and 29 scores while never losing a game he started at Miami Trace High School.

It was a huge feather in the cap of the old coach when he lured the prep sensation to Columbus for the 1978 season.

As is the case today, the Buckeyes already had an established player at quarterback. Rod Gerald was set to start his senior year after leading the Buckeyes to a 9-3 mark in 1977 and earning Orange Bowl offensive player of the game honors for the victorious Buckeyes the year before when OSU was 9-2-1.

The Dallas, Texas, native passed for 1,016 yards as a junior – it's hard to believe now but that was the fifth-highest total in school history at the time – and rushed for another 446 yards and seven TDs to lead the team with 1,462 yards of total offense, a much more significant statistic than it is today.

Just as Ohio State has a huge nonconference game with USC scheduled for early this season, the Buckeyes faced a blockbuster nonleague game in 1978 as they were slated to host Penn State – then an independent power – to open the campaign. The Nittany Lions, with Joe Paterno in his 13th year as head coach at PSU, were coming off of an 11-1 season and were annual national championship contenders.

When the OSU offense took the field in Ohio Stadium against the Lions, Hayes had Schlichter, not Gerald, under center. The freshman would go on to toss a school-record five interceptions, a record that still stands, and the Buckeyes also lost three fumbles for a total of eight turnovers in a 19-0 Penn State victory. Ohio State, with Schlichter at the helm, would finish the regular season with a 7-3-1 record, sending them to the Gator Bowl to face Clemson where the rest, as they say, is history.

Would the Buckeyes have done better in 1978 if they had gone with Gerald at quarterback? We'll never know.

Would Schlichter have led Ohio State to an 11-0 regular season and berth against USC in the Rose Bowl in 1979 if he hadn't learned under fire as a freshman? We'll never know that either.

Current Ohio State coach Jim Tressell is known for his loyalty to upperclassmen. Don't look for Pryor to trot out on the field when the Buckeyes go on offense Aug. 30 against Youngstown State the way Schlichter did against PSU 30 years ago.

But with today's rules that allow a college player to go pro after three seasons, don't look for Tressell to redshirt Pryor either. You have to use today's star players while you have them, and Pryor will

be given every opportunity to compete for playing time.

While you should look for Boeckman to earn the starting nod (and don't forget Antonio Henton, who made strides last season despite missing time due to off-the-field problems), if the Buckeyes struggle during their game Sept. 13 against USC ... well, you never know.

### March Less Maddening

I would disappoint many if I didn't mention what a drain I find March Madness is on our nation's productivity. Brackets are at the forefront of many people's minds as the annual NCAA Tournament tips off.

I have to give credit to our current staff. They are much more capable of balancing the tournament with their job at hand than some previous longtime employees. This year marked the end of an era for our own Mike Wachsmann, traditionally one of the worst March Madness offenders. For longer than anyone can remember, Mike has taken the first tournament Thursday off, staked out a spot at Damon's on Olentangy River Road and enjoyed his favorite day of the year from opening tip to final horn.

He is legendary for being able to follow action on all four screens with running commentary loud enough for the benefit – or annoyance? – of the entire restaurant. Mike had other obligations this year and passed on Damon's. I know some of you readers who also attend annually noticed his absence. Interestingly, none of the other BSB staffers who used to go over to Damon's for an extended lunch went this year, leading me to believe that they went to be entertained by Mike as much as to see the games.

Ohio State, of course, did not make this year's tournament. The Buckeyes have only themselves to blame for their failure to make the field. A win in any of those games during the conference schedule where they were in the hunt until the end but couldn't seal the deal would have no doubt punched their Big Dance ticket.

Are the Buckeyes among the 65 best teams in the country? I have no doubt of that. But the NCAA Tournament is not about the best teams. It's about conference tournaments and automatic bids and then about the best teams.

BSB columnist Rich Exner recently advocated opening the tournament to every school just as is done on the high school level here in Ohio. That would eliminate any complaining from teams who ended up on the wrong end of the bubble as the Buckeyes did. I don't find the all-inclusive idea that far-fetched. Or simply try to select the 64 best teams without guarantees for each of the conferences.

At the least, I would like to see conferences forced to send their best representative regardless of their tournament winner.

I know that Cinderella teams help make March Madness what it is, but this year's Coppin State and its 20 losses is no George Mason and had no business being in the bracket.

While I believe some tinkering may be in order, it's hard to argue with the success of the NCAA basketball tournament. They don't call it March Madness for nothing.

### Good Grad List

Speaking of Boeckman, he was one of several football players on the winter quarter graduation list. Among the other graders picking up their degrees were Marcus Green, Dimitrios Makridis, Steve Rehring and Tyler Whaley.

Special recognition should also be given to former Buckeye running back Michael Wiley, who earned his diploma after last playing for the Buckeyes in 1999. Similarly, former Buckeye baseball player Mike Lockwood, who lettered for OSU from 1997-99, earned his degree after attempting a career in the major leagues.

A complete list of OSU's graduating athletes for the winter quarter can be found on page 34 of this issue. Congratulations to all Ohio State athletes who earned their degrees.

### Of Women And Wrestlers

The growth of the NCAA basketball tournaments, both for the men and the women, has made the basketball regular season less significant than something that stretches several months and about 30 games should be. But that's reality and the Ohio State women's team's four straight Big Ten regular-season championships have been lessened by the team's continued struggles in the postseason tournament.

For the second year in a row, the Buckeyes were bounced from the tournament by a lesser seed in the first round.

While Florida State, from the highly competitive ACC, would have to be considered a tougher team than Marist, which eliminated the Buckeyes in their opener last year, the loss to the Seminoles would still have to be considered a disappointment. Jim Foster's teams are now just 5-6 in NCAA action with just one Sweet 16 appearance despite all their success in the regular season.

Is it coincidence, bad luck, or is something else amiss?

During Foster's previous coaching stop at Vanderbilt, where his team played in the SEC shadows of perennial women's power Tennessee during the regular season, he seemed to fare better in the postseason. His team reached the Final Four once (1993, the same year as Ohio State), the Elite Eight four times and the Sweet 16 another three times in 11 seasons. His Commodores had a 21-10 NCAA mark.

Is the Big Ten not preparing the Buckeyes for the rigors of the postseason?

College wrestling, on the other hand, is a sport where virtually everyone agrees that the regular season and dual records have little meaning. It's all about preparing for the conference and national championships. Wrestling is also a sport where competing in the Big Ten absolutely prepares you for the postseason as many of the nation's top teams, year after year, reside in the conference.

Ohio State converted the rigors of its dual season and conference tournament into an impressive second-place finish nationally at the NCAA championships, held in St. Louis, after finishing just fifth at the Big Ten meet. Two Buckeyes were crowned national champions and two more earned All-America status in coach Tom Ryan's second season at Ohio State.

With the wealth of prep talent in Ohio, this could be the start of a long run for the wrestling team at Ohio State.

Congratulations to the wrestling Buckeyes.