

OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

Buckeyes Take To The Air

Quarterbacks The Stars In Spring Game

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

On the eve of his first spring game at Ohio State, head coach Jim Tressel admitted he planned to put the ball in the air quite a bit.

After all, he had a quarterback derby to preside over and new wide receivers and defensive backs to be tested.

The Scarlet and Gray teams combined to throw 57 passes out of a total 89 plays in the spring-ending scrimmage, in which the Scarlet rallied late to win 22-21 before a sell-out crowd of 22,892 on a brilliantly sunny April 28 at Columbus Crew Stadium.

"I think it was a great thing to have a competitive game," Tressel said. "Outside of a couple special teams miscues, I don't think it was that sloppy. I thought these kids competed hard."

Earlier in the week, Tressel had the team's 11 seniors divide up into two teams and conduct a draft for this game (see story, page 16). Tressel also put restraints on the

defense, limiting them to one blitz per series and banning stunts and twists on the defensive line.

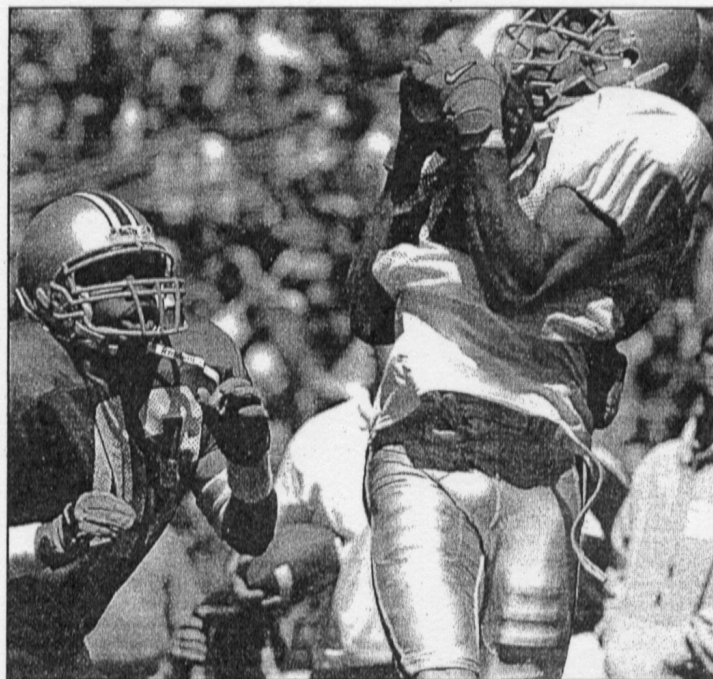
"We handcuffed the defense a little bit, only letting them do certain things," Tressel said. "We were so young on the offensive line, we didn't want to overload our young linemen."

The Gray actually led 21-7 after three quarters, but the Scarlet rallied for 15 fourth-quarter points to get the win. The Scarlet's comeback bid was assisted by a trio of special teams blunders by the Gray. Punt returners Bam Childress and Maurice Lee each muffed a punt, allowing Scarlet drives to continue toward touchdowns. And punter B.J. Sander dropped a snap in the end zone before taking a safety.

"For a long time, when it was 21-7, the Scarlet team could have thought the game was out of hand," said Scarlet linebacker Matt Wilhelm. "But with some hard work and some breaks on the special teams, (quarterback) Craig Krenzle led a great drive and we won the ball game."

In fact, each of OSU's four scholarship quarterbacks shone in the game.

Krenzle shrugged off a first-half interception to lead the Scarlet on its two touchdown drives in the fourth quarter, throwing 21 yards to Chris Vance for one score and carrying 4 yards on a quarterback draw for the game winner with 1:05 left. He ended up 3 of 10 passing for 70 yards and also rushed 11 times for 42 yards.



JEFF BREHM

CLOSE TO THE VEST — Wide receiver Drew Carter (right) stretches for a catch as Christopher Conwell provides defense during the Scarlet and Gray Game. Carter was one of the game's stars, nabbing a pair of touchdown receptions.

"I'm sure that makes Craig feel good about himself and makes his teammates feel good about him," Tressel said. "I mentioned before the game that I thought Craig had his best practice of the year (April 24). He stepped up on the goal line and scored a big touchdown there and today he did it again."

Scott McMullen also shone for the Scarlet, completing 6 of 14 passes for 42 yards and a score. John Hollins was the top receiver for the Scarlet with six catches for 84 yards.

"I think we're going to spread it out more," Hollins said. "We wanted to get the receivers and quarterbacks some more practice. I know we'll be mixing it up more in the fall."

For the Gray, Steve Bellisari was 11 of 17 passing for 122 yards and two touchdowns. Four of his incompletions came on his team's final drive when he was attempting a last-ditch comeback.

His Gray teammate, Rick McFadden, was 9 of 13 for 90 yards and a score. Eight different players — including Bellisari, who took a turn at tailback — caught passes for the Gray, led by tight end Ben Hartssock's three catches for 51 yards.

Of the running backs, Gray fullback Jamar Martin had the most carries with four totes for 19 yards. Tailback combatants Sam Maldonado and Jonathan Wells, on the Gray and Scarlet, respectively, each had just one carry.

"We knew ahead of time they were going to put the ball up 75 percent of the time," said Scarlet safety Mike Doss. "We just wanted to go out there and make a good showing for the fans. I think we did that."

As It Happened

Bellisari had the first crack with the Gray offense. But a sack by Kenny Peterson

and David Thompson curtailed the drive and, after a bad punt snap, the Scarlet got the ball at the Gray 29.

This was the exact gift McMullen and the Scarlet had to be hoping for. It took six plays to find the end zone. McMullen converted one first down with a 9-yard pickup on a quarterback draw. Three plays later, he pump faked and threw a lob to the end zone, where Ricky Bryant made a diving grab around the Gray's Maurice Lee for the 12-yard touchdown and a 7-0 lead with 5:23 left in the first quarter.

"We ran it in practice and had worked on that quite a bit," McMullen said. "It was great to come out and get that first score. That alleviated some of the pressure and nerves."

"The receiver made a great adjustment on the ball."

Bellisari and the Gray answered with a seven-play, 63-yard scoring march in the second quarter. The key play was his 34-yard pass down the middle to Hartssock. He then found Maldonado for a 12-yard gain and Childress for 14 more on a slant.

Finally, he found Drew Carter in a soft spot in the zone for the 7-yard TD and a 7-7 tie with 11:52 left in the first half. Cornerback Harlen Jacobs failed to get a good jam off the line on Carter, then Doss was slow to react to the receiver in the end zone.

"I ran a corner route," Carter said. "Harlen sat on the outside receiver. I got in behind him and Steve just looked it in. Mike tried to come from the side, but Steve got it in there quick."

McFadden relieved Bellisari on the Gray side and completed 5 of 6 passes for 61 yards on his first possession. An apparent 44-yard touchdown bomb to Carter was nullified when the receiver stepped out of bounds.

Scarlet 22, Gray 21

Scarlet And Gray Game April 28, 2001 — Columbus Crew Stadium; Columbus, Ohio						
Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4		F
SCARLET	7	0	0	15	—	22
GRAY	0	14	7	0	—	21

First Quarter
Scarlet — Bryant, 12 pass from McMullen (Uhlenhake kick), 5:23

Second Quarter
Gray — Carter, 7 pass from Bellisari (Huston kick), 11:52
Gray — Childress, 6 pass from McFadden (Huston kick), 1:50

Third Quarter
Gray — Carter, 1 pass from Bellisari (Huston kick), 1:24

Fourth Quarter
Scarlet — Vance, 21 pass from Krenzle (Uhlenhake kick), 5:35
Scarlet — Safety, Sander ran out of end zone, 3:41
Scarlet — Krenzle, 4 run (pass failed), 1:05

Att. — 22,892

Weather — Sunny, 72 degrees

Team Statistics

	Scarlet	Gray
First Downs	8	13
Rushes-Yards	17-61	15-35
Passing Yards	133	211
Passes (Att.-Comp.-Int.)	26-10-1	31-21-0
Offensive Plays	43	46
Total Net Yards	194	233
Punts	3-34	0-0

Individual Offensive Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — Scarlet: Krenzle 11-42; McMullen 3-21; Parker 1-5; Wells 1-(-1); Team 3-(-6). Gray: Martin 4-19; Maldonado 1-10; Bellisari 5-10; Allen 1-7; McFadden 3-(-2); Sander 2-(-34).

PASSING (Att.-Comp.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — Scarlet: McMullen 6-14-0-42-1; Krenzle 3-10-1-70-1; Team 0-1-0-0. Gray: Bellisari 11-17-0-122-2; McFadden 9-13-0-90-1; Otis 1-1-0-(-1).

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — Scarlet: Hollins 6-84; Vance 1-21; Luke 1-16; Bryant 1-12. Gray: Hartssock 3-51; Jenkins 3-34; Maldonado 3-31; Childress 3-25; Carter 3-16; Andrews 2-35; Martin 2-6; Bellisari 1-(-1).

MISSED FIELD GOALS — Scarlet: Uhlenhake, 21. Gray: Huston, 35.

Individual Defensive Statistics

TACKLES (Solo-Assst.-Tot.) — Scarlet: J.Cooper 3-2-5; Bullard 4-0-4; Wilhelm 4-0-4; Peterson 2-2-4; Doss 3-0-3; Adams 2-1-3; Thompson 1-2-3; McNutt 2-0-2; Scott 1-1-2; Britton 1-1-2; Sturup 1-0-1; Schabo 1-0-1; Cornwell 1-0-1; Jacobs 1-0-1; Nickey 1-0-1; Culver 1-0-1; Luke 1-0-1. Gray: Grant 3-1-4; M.Cooper 3-0-3; Cheatwood 2-1-3; Pagac 2-1-3; Reynolds 2-0-2; Childress 2-0-2; Tyler 2-0-2; Smith 1-1-2; Matthews 1-0-1; Lee 1-0-1; Moore 1-0-1; Muhammad 1-0-1; Kortovich 0-1-1; Anderson 0-1-1.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) — Scarlet: Peterson 2-7; Thompson 2-4; Bullard 1-1. Gray: Matthews 1-3; Cheatwood 1-2; Anderson 1-2.

PASSES BROKEN UP — Gray: Lee 2; Grant; Crosby; Collins.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) — Gray: Matthews 1-0.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) — Scarlet: Peterson 2-7; Thompson 2-4. Gray: Cheatwood 1-2; Anderson 1-2.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.) — Scarlet: Schabo 3-34.

OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

Seven plays later, the drive stalled at the Scarlet 18, and the Gray came up empty as Josh Huston's 35-yard field goal was wide left.

Krenzel then got his first taste of action, but his first pass went off Vance's hands and to Gray safety Thomas Matthews for an interception at the Scarlet 45.

It took eight plays to convert the turnover into points. McFadden completed 4 of 6 passes for 29 yards on this drive, including the 6-yard TD to Childress. On the play, McFadden completed a perfect timing pass as Childress got away from Jacobs in the end zone. The Gray pulled ahead 14-7 with 1:50 left in the first half.

"He ran a corner route," McFadden said. "I just tried to float that in over the corner's head. It was a good route by him to stay inbounds."

"I thought I had one earlier to Drew Carter, but it got called back when he stepped out of bounds. It was good to finally get one on the board."

Krenzel then led the Scarlet down to the Gray 4, hitting Hollins for a pair of big plays to convert third downs. The duo hooked up on a 32-yard pass down the left sideline then set up a first-and-goal at the 6-yard line on a 19-yard pass completion down the middle.

But with eight seconds left, Jeremy Uhlenhake came on to attempt a 21-yard field goal. The kick was wide right, keeping the Gray's halftime lead at 14-7.

The Gray pushed the lead to 21-7 on its first possession of the third quarter, moving eight plays in 50 yards. Bellisari found Maldonado for 11 yards and tight end David Andrews for 16 more. Finally, on third-and-goal at the 1, Bellisari hit Carter at the goal line for the 1-yard touchdown with 1:24 left in the third quarter.

"That was a hitch route," Carter said. "Steve looked me off then came back to me."

The Gray seemed to have the game on ice. But Childress' muffed punt gave the Scarlet new life at the Gray 32 with 7:26 left in the game. Five plays later, Krenzel found a wide-open Vance in the left corner of the end zone for the 21-yard TD to cut the lead to 21-14 with 5:35 left.

"The receivers crossed, then Chris Vance faked like he was coming back inside," Krenzel said. "He broke back out to the corner. The secondary got a little confused, the line did a great job of pass protection and I just stepped up and threw it. That's easy when you've got a guy wide open and you've got all the time in the world to throw it. You have to make those plays."

Vance added, "I ran a corner route. The corner disappeared. I went to the back of the end zone and when I saw the ball, I knew I had to catch it. I put my hand up and he let the ball go."

Then Sander's safety trimmed the gap to 21-16 with 3:41 left. His ensuing kickoff held up in the wind and Vance fair caught it near midfield.

The Scarlet appeared dead after Krenzel was sacked and fumbled for a 20-yard loss. But Lee muffed the ensuing punt and Bobby Britton recovered it at the Gray 22 with 2:38 left.

Krenzel then kept the ball on the next four plays, getting pickups of 11, 6, 1 and 4 yards to find the end zone. The touchdown came on a draw out of the shotgun formation.

"That was a draw the whole way," Krenzel said. "You take a little drop and try and find a hole. You just try and get upfield and do whatever you can to get the ball in the end zone."

Krenzel's two-point conversion pass for Bryant fell incomplete. Still, the Scarlet led 22-21 with 1:05 left.

"I think (that comeback) says a lot about our offensive unit," Krenzel said. "We didn't give up and we didn't get our heads down. I think it says even more for the defense and the special teams. They kept getting us the ball. They came through big for us."

Bellisari returned to direct the two-minute offense for the Gray. His first pass to Carter was complete for 17 yards. But his next four passes fell incomplete to effectively end the game with 32 seconds left.

Scarlet And Gray Game Notes

• Defensively, Joe Cooper led the Scarlet with five tackles, while Thompson and Peterson each had two sacks.

For the Gray, Cie Grant had a team-high four tackles, while Cheatwood and Anderson each had a sack.

• Tressel used special timing rules for this game. The first quarter was played with a 15-minute continuous clock. The second quarter was played with a 12-minute regular game clock. The last two periods were shortened to 10 minutes each. The third was played with a running clock, while the fourth was played with a regular clock.

That format allowed the sides to use their two-minute offenses at the end of each half.

• Bellisari said the decision for him to go to tailback midway through the third quarter was made "right before

I went in."

He played the first two plays of the drive at tailback, catching a swing pass out of the backfield from walk-on quarterback Jim Otis Jr. for a loss of 1 yard.

Tressel said he had no part in the decision, which appeared to be just a lark by the Gray.

"I didn't see that catch," Tressel said. "I was headed up to the press box to (join the TV broadcast). They said he caught the ball on the sideline. I don't know how he ended up at (tailback), but Steve can catch. Steve is versatile."

• Carter hopes his two touchdown grabs for the Gray helped his cause in nailing down the starting split end job.

"It felt good," Carter said. "It was a monkey off my back. I had a couple of drops (during the spring). I was just glad to be able to come out here and do this."

• Bellisari went to Childress for two straight slants after getting a first down at the Scarlet 20 late in the first half.

The speedy Childress, one of the highlights of spring

practice after his switch from cornerback to wide receiver, dropped what looked like a sure touchdown on the first one.

But on the very next play he pulled the pass in and went for 14 yards to help set up Carter's first TD grab two plays later.

"Steve knew I wasn't going to drop two passes in a row," Childress said.

• Close observers of the Scarlet and Gray Game noted that the Scarlet had the benefit of a five-down series in the second quarter.

On first down at the Scarlet 39, McMullen threw the ball away high and wide left under pressure from the Gray's Anderson. Big Ten referee Dave Witvoet, last seen working XFL games, penalized the Scarlet for intentional grounding.

The Scarlet lost 10 yards on the penalty, but nobody changed the down marker. It did not matter, though, because the extended series ended a few plays later after a third-down incompleteness and a fourth-down punt.



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OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

Offense Shows Ability To Put It Up, If Need Be

Jim Bollman is not the most tightly wound guy you'll ever meet but there is a rigidity to Ohio State's new offensive coordinator, a sense of purpose in his daily demeanor.

It's no wonder first-year head coach Jim Tressel professes so much faith in the man. After all, Bollman's mantra is "We will get this done," which falls right in line with the thinking of the well-directed Tressel.

However, Bollman appeared unusually relaxed and confident moments after the Scarlet and Gray Game at Columbus Crew Stadium April 28, maybe even a bit relieved. He was soaking in the achievement of a month's worth of hard work by his players and had seen marked improvement in many key areas during the team's 15 practice sessions.

But was he satisfied? Come on, we're talking about a football coach.

"We're nowhere near where we want to be, nowhere near," he insisted. "We're not as advanced as we want to be, there's no question about that."

"I think we'll be able to run the ball in fair situations, but we have to be able to get in those situations and have the threat of throwing the ball. We're certainly headed in the right direction. Are we where we want to be? No, not even close."

"But I think we found some things out that we needed to find out — who should have the ball in their hands, who has what

INSIDE THE OFFENSE with Jeff Rapp

capabilities. So certainly it's a basis for the fall."

The spring produced different points of emphasis for the offense. Bollman whipped his offensive line into shape right from the get-go, proving he was willing to implement new principles and try linemen at new positions to improve the group's toughness and capability. Soon after, the running backs began to emerge behind what appeared to be improved blocking.

In the latter days of spring and in the scrimmages, including the Scarlet and Gray Game, the passing game took center stage as the quarterbacks and receivers began to pick up the new language and philosophy of the offense. In fact, OSU's four QBs combined to complete 29 of 54 passes for 324 yards in the spring game as wide receivers hauled in all five of their touchdown passes. (For more on the quarterback derby, see story on pages 1, 15.)

Of course, no one expects the Buckeyes to pass almost twice as much as they run in 2001 — Bollman chuckled at the thought — but the finale did hint at the offense's ability



JEFF BREHM

AMBIDEXTROUS — OSU running back Sammy Maldonado (No. 5) totes the ball with his right hand while trying to shoo away Joe Cooper with his left.

ty to throw the ball — repeatedly.

"I think we're going to mix it up," said an excited Steve Bellisari, who is eyeing his third season as the starting quarterback. "Between the three guys we have — Coach Tressel, Coach Bollman and (quarterbacks/receivers coach Joe) Daniels, I think we're going to have a great offense."

That offense included a more sophisticated look in the passing game, including the use of shotgun and four-wide receiver sets.

"Of course I like it," Bellisari said. "I think if we run the four wides correctly we can also run the ball. I think that will be the biggest aspect of it — can we mix in the run with that kind of offense? — and I think we can."

But there's no question the multiple receiver sets served as a showcase for OSU's renewed depth at wideout. As you might imagine, John Hollins, one of those talented receivers who is fighting for playing time, is excited, too. He took advantage of the pass-happy mode of the spring game by leading everyone with six catches for 84 yards.

"I think we're going to spread it out more this year," said the redshirt freshman. "We wanted to get the receivers and quarterbacks some more practice. I know we'll be mixing it up more in the fall."

Even senior tailback Jonathan Wells, who took just one handoff in the spring game (for minus-1 yard) with the passing game on full display, wrapped up camp upbeat about the offense.

"I think it's been a real positive experience," he said. "The first two weeks we came in the spring, the guys were kind of sitting back and trying to learn but the last two weeks the guys were really physical, especially the offensive line and the backs."

"We haven't even really put in a lot of stuff yet. I think once we get all the other

stuff put in we'll be fine and we'll be an explosive offense. We have the weapons, now we've got to go out and do it."

Running Back Left Unanswered

The biggest question mark at the conclusion of spring may have been at running back even with an obvious lack of depth at tailback. Wells certainly didn't do anything to hurt his standing as option No. 1 in the backfield (see story, page 22).

But sophomore runner Sam Maldonado, who doubled as a fullback in two-back sets, appeared to close some of the gap.

However, he, too, was shackled in the spring game with just one carry for 10 yards.

"I wasn't disappointed at all," said Maldonado, who grumbled about his diminishing role last season but seems to have a better outlook these days. "That's the way I'm going to get better with my pass blocking and my passing routes and stuff like that. We just went out there and had fun and played well."

Maldonado caught three passes for 31 yards in the spring game. Fullback Jamar Martin, a viable receiving option in many drills, also grabbed a couple of swing passes in the final scrimmage.

Bollman said he'd like the backs to be more than safety valves in the upgraded passing attack.

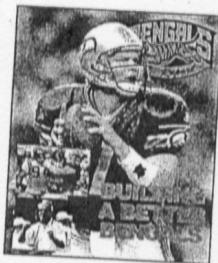
"In the passing game you're always trying to spread the ball around and see what match-ups are out there," he said. "In fact, that's something that we would really like to do, get the ball to the backs."

A healthy Jesse Kline figures to add more versatility to the backfield. But he could be in a numbers crunch at tailback with Wells and Maldonado clearly in the lead and freshmen Maurice Hall, JaJa Riley

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OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

and Lydell Ross coming in the fall.

There's already a logjam at fullback behind Martin and Maldonado in the form of Brandon Joe, Nate Stead and a pair of converted defenders — Jamal Muhammad and Jack Tucker.

Wideouts Provide Weaponry

The spring seemed to be a boon to all of the wide receivers. Subpar seasons at wideout from seniors Ken-Yon Rambo and Reggie Germany, coupled with the lack of help from the youngsters, may have been the biggest disappointment of last season.

But Hollins, Ricky Bryant, Chris Vance, Drew Carter, Michael Jenkins and Bam Childress all had shining moments over the course of the spring and in the Scarlet and Gray Game.

"There were some guys that made some plays, no question, just like last Saturday (April 21) in our other big scrimmage," Bollman said. "It just helps so much to get these guys throws and I think we've made some good progress there."

Despite his big day, Hollins, who was singled out by Tressel after the game, was one of two wideouts to not catch a touchdown in the spring game. The other was Jenkins, who still managed to grab three balls for 34 yards.

Bryant's lone reception was a TD from Scott McMullen, a nifty, over-the-shoulder grab of a fade pass from 12 yards out. Carter got open repeatedly and hauled in two scores. Childress' day included three grabs for 25 yards, including a 6-yard TD from Rick McFadden that required him to sky for the ball in the back of the end zone.

Vance had an up-and-down afternoon in the spring game but eventually came through with a 21-yard touchdown from Craig Krenzel that ignited the Scarlet's comeback.

"I expected there to be a little bit more running (in the game)," said the JUCO transfer, "but I guess Coach Tressel likes to put the ball in the air and that's best for the receivers. They're trying to make the quarterbacks and receivers get better. I have no problem with that at all."

Vance dropped a couple of throws but never hung his head.

"I don't fault anybody for dropping a pass," said Vance, one of the early sensations of the spring camp. "It just wasn't enough concentration on my behalf. I was trying to stay focused and keep the crowd out of it, but this was the biggest crowd I've played in front of and it was my first time on TV. I was just trying to get used to it."

Vance, Carter and Jenkins all are listed as split ends and Bryant, Hollins and Childress are listed as flankers, but that's just apples and apples to the OSU staff.

"We've been working at different positions," Hollins said. "We want to be interchangeable so we're not predictable."

Line, Tight End Spots Take Shape

There was less dramatic posturing for first-team status up front throughout the spring, mostly because of a lack of depth. However, the projected starters did not ease up in drills.

Senior tackle Tyson Walter, for example, pushed through all of the drills to the surprise of everyone. He was hoping to lay some claim to a role after missing all of last year with a hip infection. Instead, he held up to the physical nature of camp, proved he belonged in the first five, and eventually was shifted from right tackle to his more comfortable left tackle spot.

Adrien Clarke didn't have Ivan Douglas (who was sidelined with a blood clot in his lung) pushing him, but he put in yeoman's work at tackle as well. Alex Stepanovich was impressive at left guard

Charting The OSU Offense

In the spring preview issue of BSB (March 31), we labeled several members of the offense as being "On The Spot." The following is a look at how those players fared in the 15-practice spring season.

• **All Ohio State quarterbacks, most notably Steve Bellisari** — Considering this group had to learn with a new coaching staff and a new offensive system with new terminology, all four of them receive rather high marks. Bellisari was the steadiest signal caller throughout the spring and that was borne out in the Scarlet and Gray Game (11 of 17 passing for 122 yards and two touchdowns).

However, redshirt freshman Rick McFadden, who had an up-and-down camp, also excelled in the spring game (9 of 13, 90 yards, one TD). Craig Krenzel played hero in the game with a TD pass and the game-winning run. Fellow sophomore Scott McMullen may have made the most progress in April and could be the closest to unseating Bellisari, a senior.

There's still a lot to settle here but at least the spring proved there are a lot of viable options, too.

• **Any and all receivers** — Many of this year's batch of receivers have yet to play significant minutes in a fall game but they appear to be ready to make an impact.

JUCO split end Chris Vance made an early splash with several acrobatic catches in drills, and sophomore Drew Carter and redshirt frosh John Hollins showed consistent ability to beat defenders downfield and make the big catch.

True sophomore Michael Jenkins also appears to be an asset and has shown improvement in his intermediate routes.

Also a sophomore, Ricky Bryant may be the team's most polished route runner after Vance. The coaches even found lightning in a bottle in Bam Childress, who switched from corner in the middle of the spring. A 5-8 red-shirt freshman, Childress skied to catch a TD in the back of the end zone in the spring game.

As at quarterback, this group is still untested but is deep with talent.

• **The young offensive linemen** — This specifically referred to Alex Stepanovich, Shane Olivea and Bryce Bishop. As Meatloaf once said, two out of three ain't bad.

Stepanovich nailed down a starting spot with a very solid spring, the only question is where. He can play either guard position and took reps at center after LeCharles Bentley suffered a knee injury. Olivea was dinged up the first week or so of drills but also came on strong at guard thereafter.

Bishop remains a mystery. A highly touted prospect from Florida, he simply hasn't elevated himself the last couple of years. His scrawny lower body still needs some work in the weight room.

• **Darnell Sanders' backups** — Sanders has dibs on the starting tight end spot but position coach Bill Conley was challenged to find him some help. At least one capable backup emerged in the form of sophomore Ben Hartsock, who showed marked improvement in all phases.

Redshirt freshman Jason Caldwell is a competent pass catcher but needs more work as a blocker. The coaches, in fact, repped him at offensive tackle late in the spring to aid his development there.

— Jeff Rapp

Depth Chart

Here is a look at the projected depth chart for the OSU offense at the completion of spring practice.

Pos.	No.	Player	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
SE	82	Drew Carter	6-4	200	So.
	12	Michael Jenkins	6-4	200	So.
or	84	John Hollins	6-2	180	Fr.
LT	77	Tyson Walter*	6-5	300	Sr.
	62	John McLaughlin	6-6	290	Fr.
LG	76	Alex Stepanovich	6-4	285	So.
	69	Jim Massey	6-5	290	Sr.
C	68	LeCharles Bentley*	6-2	300	Sr.
	66	Mike Jacobs	5-10	300	Sr.
RG	71	Shane Olivea	6-4	320	So.
	78	Bryce Bishop	6-3	300	So.
RT	63	Adrien Clarke*	6-4	325	So.
	87	Jason Caldwell	6-5	265	Fr.
TE	89	Darnell Sanders*	6-6	265	Jr.
	88	Ben Hartsock	6-4	260	So.
QB	8	Steve Bellisari*	6-3	220	Sr.
	15	Scott McMullen	6-3	215	So.
	16	Craig Krenzel	6-4	215	So.
FB	39	Jamar Martin*	6-0	245	Fr.
	5	Sam Maldonado	6-1	215	So.
	34	Jamal Muhammad	5-11	235	Fr.
TB	28	Jonathan Wells	6-1	230	Sr.
or	5	Sam Maldonado	6-1	215	So.
	29	Jesse Kline	6-1	227	So.
FL	9	Ricky Bryant	6-0	175	So.
	3	Bam Childress	5-8	180	Jr.
or	4	Chris Vance	6-2	180	Jr.
K	23	Josh Huston	6-1	195	Fr.
	20	Jeremy Uhlenhake			

*-Returning starter.

@-Walter was a starter at left tackle from 1997-99.

and filled in admirably at center after LeCharles Bentley suffered a knee injury in camp. Shane Olivea shook off a couple of nagging injuries and looked solid at right guard.

Spring games usually are a house of horrors for the offensive line, which has to be split somewhat evenly between the two squads. But this time the aforementioned group — and the backups — held up well.

"I was pleased that the offensive line, for the most part, did a solid job of protecting," Tressel said. "There are some young guys there who haven't had a lot of experience playing in front of people."

Maldonado went one better.

"I think the offensive line did a great job," he said.

Looking Ahead

As Bollman so clearly stated, the OSU offense is by no means a finished product. A lot more will be put in this fall, the coaches have a ton more evaluating to do and the players need to continue to improve and brush up on the terminology.

But Bellisari, who is playing for his third offensive coordinator in three years, has been around long enough to know

good offense still comes down to execution, and there's no way to predict yet how the Buckeyes will fare in that department.

"Football is football," Bellisari said. "People call things different things, and that's the hardest part. But it's still football. You line up and you play."

When the OSU offense does that in the fall, it hopes to draw on what can only be termed an encouraging April.

"We had an up-tempo spring," Wells said. "We got out of there without that many injuries. Now we've got to get better every day this summer. We can't waste any time."

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OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

Players Meet Dantonio's Spring Expectations

The feeling-out process is now over, which means the feeling good process can begin for the Ohio State football squad.

Now that the first Camp Tressel is in the history books, the Buckeyes can turn their attention to rebuilding themselves into a legitimate Big Ten contender for 2001. True, OSU was in the running for the league title heading into last year's Michigan game, but few thought it was really a championship-caliber unit.

The Buckeyes were far too often victims of their own gun, shooting themselves in the foot with silly personal foul penalties and untimely lapses on defense — most notably against Michigan's David Terrell, Purdue's Seth Morales and Minnesota's Ron Johnson — that spelled defeat.

With a new dictionary of terms to learn and a rededication to the little things, the OSU defense is hoping to showcase itself as one of the best in the Big Ten in the upcoming season and beyond.

If the spring is any indication, it could be well on the way.

"The expectations were to play with great effort and great toughness and learn the terminology," first-year coordinator Mark Dantonio said. "We were installing something new just about every day. We were very happy with the effort this spring."

The Buckeyes will have to hang their hats on that effort and determination

INSIDE THE DEFENSE with Mike Wachsman

because there are a host of novices contending for playing time.

One of the mainstays of the defense doesn't seem too concerned, though.

"We didn't take every step we needed to take, but we're very close," said junior linebacker Matt Wilhelm, who started all 12 games last season. "We're close to being a good team. Like Coach Dantonio said, we have the toughness and the effort. Now it's just learning the terminology and applying it and being right 100 percent of the time."

Walk That Line

There are some big shoes to fill up front as senior Mike Collins is the only holdover from a unit that helped compile a school-record 47 sacks last season.

Collins is a what-you-see-is-what-you-get performer, content to collapse the middle and let teammates grab the glory. But he's also a very important part of OSU's defensive equation.

"Mike Collins will go a long way in determining how this defense does," Dantonio said. "He's a veteran and he understands what it means to make plays."



JEFF BREHM

WE'RE COMING TO GET YOU — Nose guard Mike Collins (left) and defensive end Will Smith (right) put the pressure on quarterback Scott McMullen during the April 28 Scarlet and Gray Game.

Collins is surrounded, however, by inexperience. Someone is going to have to make waves if the Buckeyes are to be back among the elite in the conference.

Dantonio likes the energy and potential of ends Will Smith, Darrien Scott and Kenny Peterson, noting that all three have the speed to get to the quarterback.

Smith and Scott got their feet wet last year as freshmen while Peterson, a junior, may be ready to break out. Tim Cheatwood, moved over from tight end, has also shown he can be a top-notch situational pass rusher.

Collins has been instrumental in helping his mates at defensive tackle, Tim Anderson and David Thompson, showing them the ropes and what to expect when the season begins. The departure of Ryan Pickett a year early means one of those two will be under the gun to produce at the other inside spot.

"We've got some experience on the defensive line and we've had some guys who have stepped up and played well," Dantonio said. "Mike Collins has been solid. Tim Anderson has had a good spring, as well as Darrien Scott, Will

Smith, certainly, and Kenny Peterson. So we have really five guys who can play.

"Cheatwood came on late and did some nice things. David Thompson has been a player, too."

Peterson and Thompson each had a pair of sacks in Ohio State's spring game, while Cheatwood and Anderson had one apiece.

Backing Up To No One

The backbone of the Ohio State defense should be the linebacking corps.

All three starters return, led by senior All-Big Ten outside man Joe Cooper, who topped all OSU linebackers in tackles with 80 in 2000.

Wilhelm eased the qualms the coaching staff might have had about him being a first-year starter, making 66 stops in the middle and becoming a solid replacement for Jason Ott, who had to give up the game due to a chronic shoulder problem.

Senior Courtland Bullard is the team's fastest defensive player but some-

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OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

Reynolds, Grant Provide Depth At Linebacker

Continued From Page 24

times gets lost when forced to play assignment football. He made 46 stops last year but had problems too many times. He did, however, receive praise from linebackers coach Mark Snyder, who liked the way Bullard "hustled to the football and sold out on every play." Whether or not that translates into a banner season remains to be seen.

"There's a lot on us," Wilhelm said. "A lot of people have said the linebackers are the backbone of this team — at least the defense. We've got everyone coming back, so we can't say we don't have experience. We can't say we haven't produced because we were a good defense last year. You've got to take it in stride, knowing there's inexperience behind you

and in front of you. You have to take it, react and make a play."

Dantonio knows there's an abundance of riches in the linebacking corps. It's just a matter of getting them all to play up to their potential.

"As far as the linebackers, we've got some depth there," Dantonio said. "There are guys who we've seen make plays. They have to continue that."

Two other players who made a big push during the spring were outside men Robert Reynolds and Cie Grant.



Cie Grant

Reynolds got his feet wet, primarily on special teams, last year as a freshman and came back with some added weight and a better understanding of his role.

Grant was all over the field most of the spring, showing a nose for the ball and the same kind of blue-collar work ethic that has helped Cooper become a big-time player.

Should Wilhelm falter, Fred Pagac Jr. seems ready to pick up the pieces. Fully recovered from a broken leg, Pagac has a solid understanding of the position, which makes up for his lack of prototype size (6-1).

Highly-touted Marco Cooper was still running with the third team as spring closed, but he seemed to be picking up schemes as camp progressed.

Dantonio's philosophy isn't much different from that of his predecessor,

departed assistant coach Jon Tenuta. Dantonio would like to see the Buckeyes shut down the run first and foremost, and if that happens then the linebackers are playing well.

Wilhelm said that Dantonio has paid attention to detail but hasn't burdened the squad with too much.

"He's kept everything basic," Wilhelm said. "It's been easy to pick up this spring, and that should make it better in the fall. He's helped me work on things I can do to get better. He's given me the opportunity to play in the nickel defense, which is very big for me. If I'm going to be a leader on this defense I don't want to be running on and off the field."

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OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

turn to their safeties to lead the secondary.

Strong safety Mike Doss led the team in tackles with 94 and picked off three passes last season. Though he still needs improvement in coverage, Doss is one of the most fundamentally sound tacklers around. This year he wants to add "leader" to his resume, which already includes All-Big Ten honors.

"It's really a team effort out there, and I can't wait until (fall) camp starts," Doss said. "It's time to step up and show what we can do. I'm a veteran now and there's no more learning the ropes."

Alongside Doss will be Donnie Nickey, who received constant praise from Dantonio for his ability to tackle. Nickey, in on 64 takedowns a year ago, is looking forward to being unleashed this fall, much the way Rob Kelly was in 1996.

"I think the defense is going to take a lead role," Nickey said. "We want to try to pick up the offense, and when we need it I'm sure they'll pick us up. If I'm blitzing or helping out on the run, it doesn't

matter. I'll do whatever it takes to help us win."

Surprising walk-on Rob Stover ended the spring as Nickey's backup, mainly because he showed a nose for the ball and the ability to understand the defense. He'll have to fight off the charge of incoming freshman Dustin Fox, but at least the coaches know Stover can play if needed.

Thomas Matthews, who moved from linebacker, came on late and had the only interception of the spring game and seemed to be getting the finer points of the position down.

The questions for the secondary are at cornerback (see story, page 23).

All-Big Ten selection Nate Clements left a year early and David Mitchell graduated, so two spots were open heading into the spring.

That's still the case as a plethora of candidates vie for jobs.

Front and center — for now anyway — are Bobby Britton and Maurice Lee, who converted from receiver. Both have

the requisite speed to cover, but neither one has proved he can do it on a consistent basis at the collegiate level.

The Buckeyes should get a boost if Derek Ross returns for fall camp. The senior missed spring drills while tending to academics after some off-the-field problems, and his experience would ease

the transition for many of the younger players.

"We have a couple of players with experience in the secondary, but we need to find some more guys who can play

Continued On Page 28

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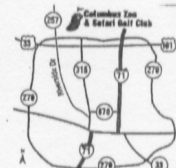
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OHIO STATE SPRING FOOTBALL

Coordinator Has About 85 Percent Of Plan Ready

Continued From Page 27

back there," Dantonio said. "We don't have a shortage of bodies. We just need someone to step up."

Battling with Britton and Lee are Harlen Jacobs, who flashed brightly at certain moments, and Curtis Crosby, who took two steps forward and three back much of the spring.

While Dantonio has expressed a few doubts, Nickey doesn't seem too worried about the situation.

"There's not a big concern," Nickey said. "Whoever the corners are going to be will be ready. It's not going to be a weak spot. We have enough talent at the corners where someone can step right in and play."

Looking Ahead

Most of the changes Ohio State undergoes this fall will be cosmetic.

The discipline will be better and the tackling will be better — if Dantonio has his way.

But the aggressive, attacking style of previous Ohio State teams will be one thing that stays the same.

"We're going to be very aggressive," Doss said. "It was kind of hard to show (in the spring game) what we'll be like

because we were going against our own guys and we were limited. But once the season starts, you'll see what the Buckeye defense is made of."

Dantonio, who said roughly 85 percent of the defensive package is in place, believes Ohio State took enough positive steps this spring to warrant optimism.

"We wanted to stop the run this spring and I think we were able to do that," he said. "We have some inexperience in the secondary and we'll definitely have to work that out, get that taken care of."

As the Buckeyes were falling apart last season — on and off the field — Wilhelm was out front in his beliefs that the team wasn't together, that certain players had certain agendas that loomed larger than victory.

That's why he as much as anyone is thrilled with the direction Ohio State is heading as the pivotal 2001 campaign draws near.

"We're going to be a team — that's A-number one," Wilhelm said. "We're going to play together. Wins and losses will come, but if there's one thing you're going to talk about with Ohio State football, it's that we're going to live the tradition and live Coach (Jim) Tressel's way — and that's as a team."

Charting The OSU Defense

Prior to the beginning of Ohio State spring football practice, Buckeye Sports Bulletin identified a handful of players it felt to be under the microscope. Here is how the five notables performed during the spring.

• **Courtland Bullard, OLB** — The senior finally seems to be getting the hang of this thing called football as he's been doing more than just showcasing his speed. He was around the ball much more frequently and was actually decent when dropping into coverage, a big liability last season. If he uses his performance as a springboard, OSU should have very little worry at linebacker.

• **Marco Cooper, OLB** — With a year under his belt, Cooper flashed some of his potential this spring. He has good lateral movement and can hit like a truck, but he doesn't always play sound, assignment football. That's not going to get him very far in coordinator Mark Dantonio's scheme and could be a big reason he was listed third-team at one outside spot.

• **Donnie Nickey, FS** — One of the questions with Nickey has been his ability to tackle. Sometimes it was there, sometimes it wasn't. Tackling is another Dantonio must, and Nickey seemed to buckle down in that area. Dantonio liked the way Nickey led the secondary and believes he can be a playmaker when the season opens.

• **Derek Ross, CB** — Ross' absence allowed the Buckeyes one luxury — to test out just what kind of players they had at cornerback. The veteran was suspended for the spring after a brush with the law, and some of OSU's youngsters took advantage. Ross is a definite big-time when it comes to smashing receivers, but he's definitely behind heading into the fall. He will have to work to wrest what was his starting spot away from Maurice Lee.

• **Darrion Scott, DE** — The second-year player looks ready to blossom, and Dantonio couldn't sing his praises enough. Scott

showed great speed rushing off the edge and kept up the intensity throughout the spring. He's vying with Kenny Peterson for a starting spot, but no matter who opens the game, both will play quite a bit. Scott showed this spring that he can be a difference-maker.

— Mike Wachsman

Depth Chart

Here is a look at the projected depth chart for the OSU defense at the completion of spring practice.

Pos.	No.	Player	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
LE	97	Kenny Peterson	6-4	265	Jr.
or	56	Darrion Scott	6-3	265	So.
DT	98	Mike Collins*	6-3	290	Sr.
	51	Fred Sturrup	6-3	270	So.
DT	54	Tim Anderson	6-3	289	So.
	95	David Thompson	6-5	280	Jr.
RE	93	Will Smith	6-4	250	So.
	49	Tim Cheatwood	6-4	250	Sr.
BLB	58	Courtland Bullard*	6-3	227	Sr.
	44	Robert Reynolds	6-3	220	So.
	36	Pat O'Neill	6-3	230	So.
MLB	35	Matt Wilhelm*	6-4	245	Jr.
	46	Fred Pagac Jr.	6-1	225	So.
	91	Jason Bond	6-3	242	So.
WLB	10	Joe Cooper*	6-0	225	Sr.
	6	Cie Grant	6-1	220	Jr.
or	32	Marco Cooper	6-1	230	So.
CB	19	Maurice Lee	5-9	170	So.
	24	Curtis Crosby	5-11	180	Jr.
FS	25	Donnie Nickey*	6-3	203	Jr.
	42	Rob Stover	6-0	185	Fr.
SS	2	Mike Doss*	5-11	197	Jr.
	41	Thomas Matthews	6-0	200	Fr.
CB	1	Bobby Britton	5-10	175	Fr.
	13	Harlen Jacobs	6-1	190	Fr.
P	21	B.J. Sander*	6-3	212	So.
	18	Andy Groom	6-1	190	Jr.

*Returning starter.



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