

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 20, No. 16

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

January 27, 2001

It's ... Tressel!

Youngstown State Coach Selected After Two-Week Search

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After an exhaustive two-week search, Ohio State's new football coach was only 2-1/2 hours away the whole time.

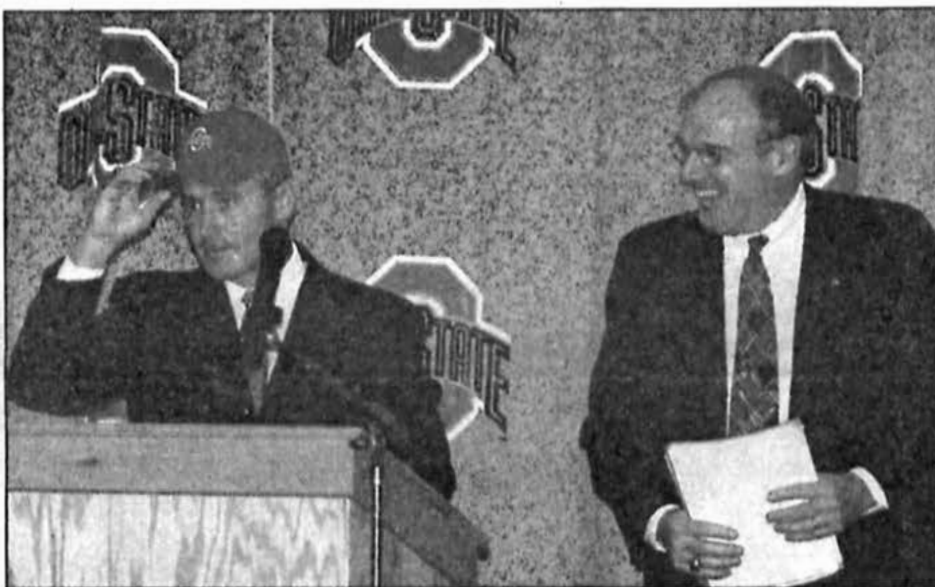
OSU athletic director Andy Geiger introduced Youngstown State head coach Jim Tressel as Ohio State's 22nd head football coach during a Jan. 18 press conference. The media event, staged in the new recruiting lounge at Ohio Stadium, was attended by more than 200 media members and was beamed live statewide.

"I'm really humbled to stand before you today," Tressel said. "I just spent the last 40 minutes standing before the Ohio State Buckeyes in their team meeting room and I mentioned the same thing to them."

Tressel's hiring ended a 15-day search to find the successor to John Cooper, who was fired Jan. 2 after a 13-year reign with the Buckeyes.

Word had actually leaked to the media a day earlier that Tressel had outlasted Minnesota's Glen Mason in the final interview phase. Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti, who toured the campus and interviewed Jan. 15, had already taken his name out of the running.

"While we strongly desire success on the field, such success must not come at the expense of the academic preparation and character development of our student-



NEW COACH GETS NEW CAP — Jim Tressel (left) tries on an Ohio State cap after athletic director Andy Geiger introduced him as OSU's new head football coach Jan. 18.

athletes," said OSU President William "Brit" Kirwan, who joined Tressel and Geiger for the announcement. "With these criteria clearly in mind, we believe we have

selected just the right person for the job."

Tressel, a former OSU assistant who won four Division I-AA national championships in his 15-year stint at YSU, agreed to a five-year contract. The deal calls for Tressel to receive \$700,000 in his first year, plus a \$100,000 signing bonus. That salary will escalate \$100,000 per year until it reaches \$1.1 million in 2005.

Geiger, Kirwan and an advisory committee interviewed the final three candidates. Tressel's defining interview came on Jan. 16. He was offered the job after Mason, a former OSU player and assistant coach, interviewed and left town a day later.

"I would say that Tuesday (Jan. 16) was an extraordinary day on this campus," Geiger said of the final interview with Tressel. "I think we had very high regard for him. I have to tell you the research we had done in the area of the game — his ability to adapt — I had absolutely no doubts about the football part."

"And the rest of it was so outstanding it put him over the top."

At his introductory press conference, the 48-year-old Tressel spoke for nearly 50 minutes. He wowed the media and viewing public with an unscripted acceptance speech then deftly fielded questions on all aspects of his background, experience and plans for the program.

"When you're at a place like Ohio State that is so visible as an outstanding institution, so visible as an outstanding football program, it gives us even more responsibility because it's not just to this state or this region, it's to this country and it's to this world," Tressel said.

Tressel Takes The Reins

Related stories on the hiring of head football coach Jim Tressel:

- New coach receives warm welcome at Value City Arena (Page 5)
- OSU's verbal commitments react to the hiring of Tressel (Page 7)
- Media, recruiting experts debate Tressel's potential as a Division I-A recruiter (Page 8)
- Warren (Ohio) Harding junior standout Maurice Claret favors the Buckeyes after Tressel hiring (Recruiting Outlook, Pages 9-11)
- Staff comes together with appointment of Michigan State's Mark Dantonio as defensive coordinator (Page 12)
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- BSB staffer acquainted with new coach's work (Page 24)
- A cursory look at Tressel's upcoming first year at OSU (Pages 26-27)



Mark Dantonio

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Tressel: No Trepidation About Graveyard Of Coaches

During his introductory press conference Jan. 18, new OSU head football coach Jim Tressel was asked whether he was concerned that the three coaches who preceded him — Woody Hayes, Earle Bruce and John Cooper — were all fired at the end of their tenure.

"Well, I didn't really look at it that way," said Tressel, who agreed to a five-year contract. "I looked at it more like Woody and Earle and John won a lot of championships and had a lot of All-Americans and made a lot of positive impact on the kids they worked with."

"They had a great love affair with their community and had a wonderful experience that anyone in my business would love to have."

"I didn't really look at the other side, but I'm glad you brought it up."

Tressel said it is a thrill for him to hold the same job as coaching legends like Hayes and Paul Brown.

"Having been born in the state of Ohio and idolizing the likes of Paul Brown and having had a chance, I recall, as a little one to meet him — the Grozas used to take us out to Hiram (where the Browns trained) — this is something," he said.

"Then, idolizing Woody Hayes and everything he did and believing everything that he said, then having the joy to work for Earle Bruce was great. Had it not been for my experience with Earle Bruce, there's no way I would have been prepared to become the new coach at Youngstown State (in 1986)."

Father's Influence Big For OSU's New Coach

Tressel learned a lot from watching his father, Lee, serve as the head coach at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio.

Lee Tressel coached 23 seasons, amassing a 155-52-6 record and winning the 1978 Division III national championship. He died in 1981 but was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1996.

"Usually, you get in the hall of fame because you win a lot of games," Jim Tressel said. "But he was one of the greatest college coaches because he cared about every player. He knew the most important thing that the player was concerned with was, 'Do you really care about me?'"

"He used to always tell us the players don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. The thing he taught me most was that he cared about every person. He cared about the recruits. In fact, Mom used to

cook spaghetti when the recruits would come in — we didn't have these recruiting budgets and all that stuff — and the rule around the house was this: When the recruits were done eating, if there was any spaghetti left, you guys got to eat."

"So when the linemen came through the door I said, 'Oh, man, we're not eating tonight.'"

"But the guys knew from the minute my dad recruited them that he cared, that his family cared and that getting that diploma was crucial and meeting their dreams in football was crucial."

Lee Tressel was a standout high school running back at Ada, Ohio. He dreamed of playing at OSU for Brown.

"It was the fall of 1942, long before most of us were born, that my dad happened to be the player of the year in the state of Ohio as a running back at Ada High School — the booming metropolis of Ada," Jim Tressel said. "There was only one place he was interested in going and that was Ohio State, with Paul Brown and the rest of the Buckeyes."

"So he graduated early and enrolled in the spring of '43 and at that time they were allowing the freshmen to play a little bit in spring practice because some of the men had gone off to World War II. Well, he had a great spring game and we'll have to have (sports information director) Steve Snapp get the microfilm out and find out if he had as great a game as he always told us he did. But as the story goes, he scored two or three times in that spring game."

"But he felt compelled then at the end of that spring term to enlist, to serve. He was unselfish. He wanted to go and serve his country like all the great men did at that time, so he didn't get to live his dream to be here."

"And I guess it works in funny ways because maybe I get to (be at OSU)."

Tressel Surrounded By Family, Friends As He Takes OSU Job

Tressel was joined at his introductory press conference by his wife, Ellen, his mother, Eloise Tressel, and three of his four children, Carlee (18), Eric (16) and Whitney (15).

"My mom reminded me that she has taken courses here, but then the war was on and she was riveting bolts for the men who were overseas so they could fly and win," Jim Tressel said. "But she didn't back down, she got her degree — it wasn't until 1972, so she wouldn't have helped our graduation rate — but she got her degree and she certainly loves the great state of Ohio and has spent many a year cheering the Buckeyes from wherever she's been."

Tressel also introduced his wife to the media.

"My wife, Ellen, is here with us and she is so excited to get to know those players and get to know those coaches and the coaches' families and the community," he said. "I'm just so excited and proud for her and can't wait to see and find out that the best part of the deal you got was Ellen."

Tressel's oldest son, Zak (21), did not attend the press conference due to a class conflict.

"We had our first discussion about the importance of class with our team this afternoon," Tressel said. "Zak had physics from 3:30-4:30 p.m. and I explained to the team something our

Comedian's new life Novelist Richard Lewis writes of his book with anecdotes and humor to life around Park, D1	Pumped up Changes at Parker Hannifin, B6	Cops, dogs sweep jail Law enforcement officers and drug-sniffing dogs search for drugs in Lawrence County jail, Local, B1
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The Vindicator

Thursday, January 18, 2001

The Vindicator's Price

CITY EDITION • 35 cents

Jim Tressel | From YSU to OSU

Biography
 Jim Tressel, 40, was born in Ada, Ohio, and grew up in Ada. He attended Ada High School and graduated in 1965. He then attended Ohio State University, where he played football for Paul Brown. He graduated in 1969 with a degree in physical education. He then worked for the Ohio State Athletic Department for several years before becoming the head coach at Youngstown State in 1986. He coached at YSU for 15 years, winning the Division III national championship in 1996. He was named the Division III Coach of the Year in 1996 and 1997. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 1998. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 1999. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 2000. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 2001.

Coaching career
 1986-1996: Youngstown State (15 years)
 1997-2000: Ohio State (4 years)
 2001-present: Ohio State (0 years)

Coaching honors
 1996: Division III Coach of the Year
 1997: Division III Coach of the Year
 1998: Ohio State Coach of the Year
 1999: Ohio State Coach of the Year
 2000: Ohio State Coach of the Year
 2001: Ohio State Coach of the Year

For Jim Tressel, another title

Ohio State University puts ball in YSU coach's hands

YOUNGSTOWN — The Ohio State University has been searching for a head football coach since Jan. 3, when John Cooper was fired after the Buckeyes' poor performance in the 2000 season. The search has been a long and arduous one, with several names being mentioned. But now, the search is over. Jim Tressel, the head coach at Youngstown State, has been named the head coach of the Ohio State University. Tressel, 40, was born in Ada, Ohio, and grew up in Ada. He attended Ada High School and graduated in 1965. He then attended Ohio State University, where he played football for Paul Brown. He graduated in 1969 with a degree in physical education. He then worked for the Ohio State Athletic Department for several years before becoming the head coach at Youngstown State in 1986. He coached at YSU for 15 years, winning the Division III national championship in 1996. He was named the Division III Coach of the Year in 1996 and 1997. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 1998. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 1999. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 2000. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 2001.

SCARLET-AND-GRAY-LETTER DAY — Here is what two papers that cover Youngstown State football on a daily basis had to say the day Penguins coach Jim Tressel left to become the head coach at Ohio State. The (Youngstown) Vindicator is above, while the (Warren) Tribune Chronicle is pictured below.

GOODBYE

George W. Bush says he will not run for re-election in 2004. He will serve one term as president.

CLIMATE CHANCE OF SNOW

Experts say there is a 50 percent chance of snow in the next 24 hours. The snow could be heavy and could cause travel problems.

Tribune Chronicle

Tressel rushes to OSU

YSU's coach to return to the Buckeyes

Jim Tressel, the head coach at Youngstown State, has been named the head coach of the Ohio State University. Tressel, 40, was born in Ada, Ohio, and grew up in Ada. He attended Ada High School and graduated in 1965. He then attended Ohio State University, where he played football for Paul Brown. He graduated in 1969 with a degree in physical education. He then worked for the Ohio State Athletic Department for several years before becoming the head coach at Youngstown State in 1986. He coached at YSU for 15 years, winning the Division III national championship in 1996. He was named the Division III Coach of the Year in 1996 and 1997. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 1998. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 1999. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 2000. He was named the Ohio State Coach of the Year in 2001.

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came to our house. One of my greatest joys of my whole life is that we got to go and hold the ball for Lou 'The Toe' as he practiced to get ready for his season. And we got to go chase it, too. But he always hit it straight.

"I'm so excited that Jackie's here today. Her son, Jeff, and I were classmates at Berea. Jill was in school a couple of years behind and John and then Judd you all know came to Ohio State and graduated and is doing great things with his Ohio State diploma.

"The other young lady is Sandy Madze. Tom Madze was my high school coach. Billy Graham says that a high school coach or a college coach can have more impact in one year than a preacher can have in a lifetime and I know that's true in this case.

"Tom Madze had so much impact on me, it's amazing. And I'm so happy that these people can be here to share this with us."

On-Field Victories Fleeting; Off-Field Victories Forever

Tressel's message of building a family and achieving in the classroom was illustrated through a vivid incident that occurred after Youngstown State won its first national championship in 1991.

"We'd just won our first national championship and we were coming off the field and CBS said we have three minutes for the trophy presentation, we have to hurry up," Tressel said. "So we were scurrying down to the end of the field and a person ran over with the microphone and put it in front of me and said, 'Coach, do you think you can repeat?' I said, 'Man, we don't have the first trophy yet, but that's reality."

"And those victories, they are, as Phil Jackson would say, ephemeral — they disappear. But the other things stay there for life and I think that's what I learned most from my father."

To that end, Tressel said he is dedicated to seeing his players succeed in the classroom and graduate.

"We don't want to shortchange any thoughts our guys have in what they accomplish on the field, but we want to make sure they understand and thoroughly believe that the things we can accomplish off the field, in the classroom, in the community within our personal families, just in our relationships with each other will be so much more exciting to us," he said.

Tressel Says He Plans To Consult With Cooper

Tressel said that his predecessor, Cooper, was always supportive of him and the YSU program.

"My relationship with Coach Cooper has been tremendous," he said. "It's amazing. Anytime I've had the opportunity to see Coach Cooper he always mentions that he's very proud of the Penguins from northeast Ohio and how we've brought great national exposure to the great state of Ohio."

"He's nothing but complimentary about what the Penguins have meant to his state."

Tressel said he plans to call Cooper to seek advice on things the OSU head coach should know about.

"I do want to give John a call," he said. "I'm going to ask him if there's anything he thinks he can share with me that will help our young people because I know he wants to help our young people."

"That's the neat thing. You have to know coaches. Coaches love to be asked how they can help. They do. Whether it's, 'How can we run off-tackle better?' How can we run our study tables better? How can we run our strength program better? Coaches love to talk about that. I know John will welcome the opportunity to talk about that."

Media Crush Not Threat For New OSU Mentor

A media throng in excess of 200 attended Tressel's introductory press conference inside the new recruiting lounge at Ohio Stadium.

Tressel spent close to two hours speaking at the podium, doing live shots with various television stations and answering radio and print reporters' questions.

He was asked if he had seen anything like this when he was hired at YSU in 1986.

"It was a pretty good size," he said. "It was a third of this maybe. It wasn't casually attended. The neat thing about Youngstown is that we have three national TV affiliates and Fox, too."

"We have two big newspapers along with the suburban newspapers, The (Akron) Beacon Journal has been good with us, The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer has always been good to us, so have The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. We've had the good fortune of getting a lot of coverage. We've had a lot of chances to interact with the media."

Tressel also had a request of the news media.

"One thing I'm going to ask of all of you is that we do a lot of interacting with you folks directly," he said. "I think they need that experience. They need to know how to communicate. This is good practice for them."

"I always tell my TV guys, 'Hey, even if you're not going to use this on the air, I want you to talk to these four guys today because it's good experience for them.' They'll probably turn your station on tonight so you'll get a couple more people watching. I like the experiences our young people can have interacting with the media."

Tressel Asked About How He Will Deal With Lawsuit

One of the touchy issues dropped into Tressel's lap as the new OSU coach is the ongoing lawsuit between players Tyson Walter and LeCharles Bentley.

Walter filed suit Dec. 28 in Franklin County Common Pleas Court asking for \$50,000 in damages for injuries he suffered in connection with an alleged assault by Bentley. The alleged attack took place during a team conditioning session last February.

To complicate matters, Walter has appealed to the NCAA to receive a sixth year of eligibility. If approved, he and Bentley could be on the same offensive line in 2001.

"The only thing I know of that, of course, is what I've read and I haven't read much to be honest with you," Tressel said. "My feeling about working with a young person is what's the situation when I begin my relationship with him and where do I go from here?"

"I don't know what led up to whatever problems there were. I know this: When you have a lot of people in a group, problems happen. Part of leader-

OSU-Michigan Game Crowd Gives Tressel A Big Hello

A crowd of 18,653 at Value City Arena greeted new Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel in a big way at halftime of the OSU-Michigan men's basketball game Jan. 18.

Tressel, appearing just three hours after his introductory press conference at Ohio Stadium, received a nice ovation when he and OSU athletic director Andy Geiger appeared in the corner of the arena just before halftime. Tressel spent part of the first half at the broadcast location, talking to ESPN's Mike Gleason and Bill Raftery.

Then a buzz went through the crowd as they moved toward center court during the intermission.

Geiger, to a mixed reaction of cheers and boos, took the house microphone: "The search is over! We have a brand-new head football coach at Ohio State."

"How about a great big Buckeye welcome for Jim Tressel!"

The OSU basketball band then played a rousing chorus of "Fight The Team" as Tressel waved to all sides. The standing ovation lasted for exactly one minute.

"I'm so proud, so excited and so humble to be your football coach at Ohio State," Tressel told the adoring crowd. "I can assure you, you will be proud of our young people in the classroom, in the community and, most especially, in 310 days in Ann Arbor, Mich., on the football field."

"Thank you very much."

The crowd roared its approval and Tressel's first public appearance before the fans was a big success.

As he stepped away from the floor, reporters heard Tressel say, "Unbelievable."



WELCOME — Jim Tressel makes his first public appearance as the OSU football coach during the OSU-Michigan men's basketball game Jan. 18 at Value City Arena.

That's what Ohio State is all about — the electricity running through your body when you get a reception like that."

— Steve Helwag

ship and management is problem solving.

"How will I deal with it? I'll first deal with it from relationship development with both of them and go from there."

Press Conference Produces Several Quips, Opinions

Here is a sampling of some of the interesting quotes and opinions to come out of the Tressel press conference.

• **Athletic director Andy Geiger, who said he did not check his e-mail during the search** — "I turned my computer on one day and there were 395 e-mails, and they are still out there somewhere."

• **Geiger on whether Cooper would have been fired if he had posted a 10-2-1 record against Michigan instead of 2-10-1** — "How can I answer that question? I don't know."

"I think you don't look at one thing with a decision that was as important as that. We felt we had a deteriorating climate in our football program. We're sort of selfish. We think it's OK to have a very good football team that graduates its players and represents the institution in an exemplary way on and off the field."

"That's what we're looking for and that's the reason we made the change."

• **Tressel, whose annual income vaults from \$85,000 a year at YSU to \$700,000 a year at OSU, was asked if he felt like he hit the lottery** — "You know, I don't think I've ever played a lottery ticket. You have to be a coach one time and see how much you make per hour. And that dollar —

I've never put a dollar down for lottery."

"This is better than winning the Ohio Lottery because if you win the Ohio Lottery all you get is money. I get a whole new family. I get a whole new challenge. I get a whole new opportunity to impact positively, if I do it right, a whole new population. That's much better."

• **Geiger, on whether Tressel's experience as YSU's coach and athletic director factored in the decision** — "I thought that was a positive, but not a difference-maker because any coach who coaches at a high level has organizational skills."

"Now I have somebody I can ask advice. If the budget isn't high enough, I can go to him and say, 'What did you say to your coaches when the budget wasn't enough?'"

"His overall management skills, his skills with people, his concepts of organization, his fundamental values, his core values, they are all really strong."

Ohio Columnists Discuss OSU's Hiring Of Tressel

Here is a sampling of some of the opinion columns from around the state relating to the hiring of Tressel.

• **Tim Sullivan, The Cincinnati Enquirer** — "Jim Tressel must feel like a provisional prom date. He's the guy who gets the girl if the girl can't find anybody better. He's a fallback position, an insurance policy, a stooge."

"Andy Geiger's search for John Cooper's successor thus far has suc-

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ceeded mainly in embarrassing the Buckeye nation. For two weeks, the position once considered among the most desirable in the country has been dissed almost daily by coaches with smaller salaries and more slender resources.

"Shouldn't coaches be salivating for this job instead of fleeing from it as if it were a chemical spill? Shouldn't Ohio State's search committee, scouring the country for the ideal candidate, be able to attract someone with a higher profile than Division I-AA Youngstown State?"

• **Bill Livingston, The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer** — "Tressel is the anti-John Cooper. He's an Ohio guy, born and bred. Cooper, for his entire 13 years here, always stuck out like a mismatched piece of luggage."

"Tressel is polished. The amiable

Cooper came off as homespun.

"It's fashionable to 'dis' all things Cooper at Ohio State now, but Tressel said he has no plans to distance himself from his predecessor."

"The way Tressel sees it, Cooper is family at Ohio State. There aren't many dearer concepts to him. When asked after less than an hour on the job, 'What have you done to beat Michigan today?' Tressel replied that he had met the media, the players and the administration officials 'in my new family.'"

"The media part of the family? That's heresy here. But Tressel will actually encourage his players to talk to the media. It's such a radical change in procedure that a listener blurted out: 'Are you sure you're the coach at Ohio State?'"

• **Terry Pluto, The Akron Beacon Journal** — "Buckeye fans should applaud. Not just for Tressel, but also for the man (Geiger) who brought him to Columbus. ... Tressel has a chance to be a great hire, to be the next Frank Beamer."

Pluto discussed the Tressel hiring with Walsh University coach Jim Dennison, who hired Tressel as a graduate assistant at Akron in 1975.

"Jim is like me," Dennison said. "We believe that where you are at the moment is the big time. When it comes to treating people, I don't do anything differently at Walsh than I did at



John Cooper

The BSB Internet Poll, Post Of The Week

If the Buckeye nation is to be believed, Ohio State could have a little bit of trouble retaining its recruits.

BSB's most recent Internet poll question, written before Jacob Stewart recanted and chose Michigan and Brandon McKinney was eliminated for grades, asked, "OSU has 14 verbal. How many will change their minds due to the coaching snafu?"

The top answer was, in a bit of a surprise, five or more, with 25.4 percent. Next was two (21.0 percent), followed by three (16.1), zero (14.5), four (12.6) and one (10.4).

The latest question is this — How long will it take Jim Tressel to win his first national championship at Ohio State? Log on to BuckeyeSports.com and let your voice be heard.

Post Of The Week

The hiring of Tressel was, for the most part, lauded by followers of the Buckeye football program.

There were a few naysayers, but by and large the ex-Youngstown State mentor made an impression, especially on one person who came to BuckeyeSports.com the day of the hiring.

"Chris Spielman said yesterday that it is Ohio's obligation to embrace and support Coach Tressel. He had nothing but praise for Coach Tressel. After his (press conference), I hope all true Buckeyes take notice. Tressel is a winner and we are extremely lucky to have him."

"Let the bandwagon fans and fans of other schools think what they want to about our coach being a 'nobody.' Let them keep talking because that will motivate our team and Coach Tressel. And they will soon find out why they learn to keep their mouths shut. A change will sweep across all of Ohio. Ohio State football is back!"

"Winners exude a quiet confidence when backed against the wall — talking doesn't get anywhere! Keep your heads high, Buckeye fans. Let them talk trash. We will have the last say."

— bucks1, 1/18

Akron, and Jim will treat people at Ohio State like he did at Youngstown."

Pluto also discussed the hiring with Akron Ellet High School coach Joe Yost, who served alongside Tressel at Akron.

"He's very disciplined, he's serious-minded and I believe that he's exactly the guy who will eventually win national titles at Ohio State," Yost said. "Not just one title, more than one."

"Jim Tressel was born to have the Ohio State job. That's the best compliment I can give him, and it will pay off. Just watch."

• **John Harris, The (Toledo) Blade** — "Upon interviewing Jim Tressel for the first time, OSU athletic director Andy Geiger essentially told his football coach, 'Don't call us; we'll call you.'"

"Geiger put Tressel on layaway. 'If Geiger couldn't hire one of the biggest names in the country for his top-10 program, he still had an ace up his sleeve. Even if Tressel's name didn't stir households."

"From Columbus to Toledo, Ohio State alumni, fans and friends of the program are relieved the Buckeyes finally put the John Cooper era behind them. But forgive them if they don't know whether to laugh or cry over the hiring of Tressel, who is OSU's fourth football coach over the last half-century."

Defending Champs Hard For OSU To Handle On Hardwood

With its 71-56 loss at Michigan State Jan. 21, the Ohio State men's basket-

ball team lost a chance to earn a rare win over a defending national champion.

It's not like the Buckeyes haven't had their chances, however. In fact, since the NCAA adopted its own post-season tournament in 1939 — OSU was the runner-up to Oregon in the first NCAA title game — the Buckeyes have gone on to face the previous year's champion 27 times, winning only five. That included the loss in East Lansing to the Spartans, who claimed last year's national title in Indianapolis. The rematch is set for Jan. 27, when OSU hosts its neighbor from the north.

OSU also faced the defending champs on Dec. 28, 1996, in a match with Kentucky at the Rock-n-Roll Shootout in Cleveland. OSU fought gamely that night, but former Buckeye Derek Anderson and the No. 3-ranked Wildcats were too much, UK winning 81-65.

On Dec. 18, 1993, less than one year after Dean Smith led North Carolina to the NCAA title, the Buckeyes had to trek to the Dean Dome for a return game and suffered an 81-68 setback at the hands of the No. 2-ranked Tar Heels.

The last time OSU downed a reigning champion was its 64-61 upset of No. 5 Michigan in St. John Arena in 1990. OSU also won home games with Magic Johnson-less Michigan State in 1980 and Indiana in 1982.

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IT'S TRESSSEL: THE RECRUITS

Tressel Hits Highways Hard Upon His Hiring

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

If his first few days as the OSU head coach are any indication, Jim Tressel will be following in John Cooper's footsteps as a tireless recruiter.

Tressel's first four days on the job were marked by recruiting duties as the Buckeyes tried to make up for time lost as the program drifted without a head coach from Jan. 2-17.

"I can't worry about the valuable time lost," Tressel said upon officially taking the job Jan. 18. "All I can look at is the valuable time remaining. This week, we have no contacts left. All we can do is get on the phone."

"A new week starts on Sunday. That's when I will get out there and utilize our contacts."

True to his word, Tressel hopped on the phone on the evening of Jan. 18 while attending the OSU-Michigan men's basketball game.

Then, on Jan. 19, he began his day with a staff meeting where recruiting had to be a major topic. A visit by Columbus Brookhaven running back Maurice Hall came next before Dublin (Ohio) Coffman's Adam Olds showed up to begin an official visit.

Tressel also had the welcome mat out Jan. 20 as nearby Upper Arlington's

Simon Fraser and Jeff Backes, among others, stopped at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

But nothing topped Tressel's Jan. 21, when he visited with Canton (Ohio) GlenOak's Dustin Fox in the morning, stopped by the Upper Arlington football banquet to speak in the afternoon and saw Dayton Chaminade-Julienne's Angelo Chattams and Andree Tyree of London, Ohio, in the evening.

OSU has room to take as many as 25 players this year. But it seems likely that the Buckeyes, with 12 commitments already, will take only 15-20 players and save the remaining spots for next year, when Ohio is loaded.

"We possibly could give 25 scholarships this year, but then we could only give 13 next year, barring some attrition," said OSU athletic director Andy Geiger. "We might put some (spots) in the bank."

"We have a very good football team coming back. I love the team and feel we have some talent."

Geiger said he was not influenced by trying to rush to get a coach in place for recruiting season.

"To be stamped by that arbitrary (signing day) deadline is not the way to run the search," Geiger said. "Doing it quickly for a short-term goal could be disastrous. Doing it thoroughly and carefully for long-term impact is the right way to do it."

"I can promise you that based on this press conference today, our recruiting is turning around."

A Coach's Viewpoint

Warren (Ohio) Harding football coach Thom McDaniels sent, among others, Jamar Martin and Kenny Peterson to Ohio State during his tenure as the head coach at Canton (Ohio) McKinley.

It also seems likely that Harding junior running back Maurice Claret will one day become a Buckeye (see Recruiting Outlook, pages 9-11).

McDaniels also has sent a number of players to Tressel during the latter's time at Youngstown State. He approves of the hiring.

"I'm thrilled," McDaniels said. "I am elated that Coach Tressel got the Ohio State job. The great thing about Jim Tressel is if Thom McDaniels calls him and Jim Tressel isn't available, he calls Thom McDaniels back. He has a great relationship with the high school coaches in Ohio."

"For a lot of coaches, ego seems to be a big part of their persona. Jimmy doesn't possess an ego that's out of control. The high school coaches in this state are comfortable in Jimmy's presence."

Plus McDaniels said prep coaches are confident that Tressel will watch over and guide their athletes.

"He teaches them all of the right things on and off the field," he said. "If you ask him about what he likes most about coaching, I'd bet he'd say being with the kids."

"There are a lot of demands that come with being the coach at Ohio State, but he will never let that job distance him from the kids."

"He is a hands-on guy who oversees every significant facet of the program."

Going Outside Ohio

A quick glance at Youngstown State's 2000 football roster will show that Tressel has some experience in luring players from outside the Buckeye State.

Of 89 players on that roster, 49 are from Ohio. Nine are from the all-important state of Florida, while six hail from California.

But attracting players with few or no Division I-A offers to YSU is a far cry from recruiting blue-chip players who could be considering the likes of Florida, Florida State or Miami (Fla.).

"The days of Ohio State going to Florida and cashing in on the name are over," said reporter Bruce Hooley of The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer on WTVN-AM in Columbus. "They got in the door on name alone. But guys come to play at every college for the people who recruit them. It's, 'Do I feel comfortable with these coaches?'"

"Players pick schools wrongly, in my view, because they don't look at the academics and all that, but largely because of the coaches."

Prep Football Report's Tom Lemming, also speaking on WTVN-AM, acknowledged that Tressel will face some tough



STEVE HELWAGEN

CAN TRESS DO IT? — OSU coach Jim Tressel may have had a strong track record of recruiting Ohioans while at Youngstown State, but some question whether he'll be able to snag top out-of-state recruits. Lexington (Ky.) Bryan Station running back Eric Shelton, pictured above at the Nike Camp held last April at OSU, is one non-Ohioan who recently struck OSU from his short list.

battles as he establishes himself and his program.

"It's the same kind of recruiting from I-AA to I-A," Lemming said. "Obviously, you are not going after the great ballplayers. The major difference is the amount of pressure the coaches have on them when they are going up against a Florida State, a Penn State, a Notre Dame or a Tennessee."

"You don't really see that at the lower divisions. It really is a pressure cooker. Some of these coaches who do well at the lower level kind of crumble when they go up against the big boys because of the pressure, the back-stabbing and the bad-mouthing. It's a lot different at the Big Ten level."

Lemming noted that most key Ohio prospects are inclined, if offered, to attend Ohio State. That is not the case beyond Ohio's borders, though.

"For the local players, if they offer them they would usually go to Ohio State no matter who the head coach is," Lemming said. "But you have to give John Cooper credit. He was a tremendous recruiter during his years at Ohio State and did a good job out of state, along with Bill Conley."

"That may suffer a bit until Tressel develops his reputation at Ohio State. Ohio State is one of the super big names. The name will draw kids in, but to close on them you usually have to have a head coach with some personality, prestige and a name."

"For a kid coming in from Miami or Atlanta, just the name Ohio State isn't going to do it. You need persistent coaches with great personalities."

Hooley also debunked the myth that OSU has its pick of the litter.

"People here want to think that Ohio State has its pick of players," he said. "But Ohio State does not select. It goes out and fights tooth and nail for people with Michigan, Penn State, Florida State and Florida. A lot of that is closing the deal."

"You walk into a kid's living room and you're Lloyd Carr or Jim Tressel, you tell me, who have those kids heard of?"

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IT'S TRESSEL: THE NEW STAFF

Tressel Plucks Bears, MSU, YSU For Assistants

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Although he pledged in his introductory address to go slow in naming his first Ohio State coaching staff, Jim Tressel already had as many as seven new staff members in place by Jan. 22.

Tressel announced that day that he had hired:

- Chicago Bears assistant Jim Bollman, 46, to serve as OSU's new offensive coordinator and line coach;

- Michigan State assistant Mark Dantonio, 44, to serve as the defensive coordinator and secondary coach;

- His longtime Youngstown State assistant, Ken Conatser, 60, as the new special teams coach; and

- Recent YSU assistant and former OSU assistant Bob Tucker, 57, to serve as the director of football operations.

Although it was not formally announced, sources told BSB that Tressel was expected to keep at least three members of John Cooper's 2000 staff — tight ends coach/recruiting coordinator Bill Conley, defensive line coach Jim Heacock and running backs coach Tim Spencer. Roles for those coaches on the new staff were not immediately known.

"I am really excited to make this announcement," Tressel said. "These guys are terrific football minds. But more importantly, they are four of the finest men you will ever meet."

"They are the kind of people I would want my son to play for. They have a genuine care and concern for their players."

It was unclear when Tressel would name the final three positions on his first staff. Those spots would appear to be the quarterbacks job (although Tressel, himself, performed those duties at YSU), the wide receivers position and the linebackers position.

After taking the OSU job Jan. 18, Tressel met with the eight remaining assistants from Cooper's staff in a 7:30 a.m. meeting Jan. 19.

At that time, he left the future of those coaches' jobs up in the air. Those previous OSU assistants who are not retained will be on salary through March 1.

The New Guys

Bollman, Dantonio and Conatser were all members of Tressel's first staff at YSU in 1986. In fact, Bollman and Dantonio were Tressel's first two coordinators as a head coach.

Bollman, a native of Ashtabula, Ohio, has spent the past two years as the tight ends coach for the Chicago Bears. Prior to joining the Bears' staff, he spent a year with the Philadelphia Eagles in the same capacity.

A 1977 graduate of Ohio U., Bollman spent 21 years in the collegiate ranks after graduation, with stops at Miami (Ohio) (1977-82), N.C. State (1983-85), Youngstown State (1986-91), Virginia (1992-94) and Michigan State (1995-97). At Youngstown, under Tressel, he served at separate times as both offensive and defensive coordinator. He was the offensive line coach at Michigan State.

"I grew up in Ohio and heard about Ohio State all my life," Bollman said. "I am thrilled to be part of this staff and to be reunited with Coach Tressel. Jim Tressel is the reason I am here."

"This was not a tough decision for me — because of Jim."

Dantonio was born in El Paso, Texas, but grew up in Zanesville, Ohio. He played

The OSU Coaching Carousel

Welcome Aboard



Jim Bollman
New Offensive
Coordinator



Ken Conatser
New Special
Teams Coach



Mark Dantonio
New Defensive
Coordinator



Bob Tucker
New Director Of
Football Operations

Sticking Around



Bill Conley
Tight Ends
Under Cooper



Jim Heacock
Defensive Line
Under Cooper



Tim Spencer
Running Backs
Under Cooper



Jon Tenuta
Def. Coordinator
North Carolina

In Limbo



George Belu
Offensive Line
Under Cooper



Fred Pagac
Asst. Head Coach
Under Cooper



Tim Salem
Wide Receivers
Under Cooper



Chuck Stobart
Off. Coordinator
Under Cooper



Brian Williams
Linebackers
Under Cooper

his college football at South Carolina, earning three letters as a defensive back before receiving his degree in 1979.

Dantonio, who has spent the past six seasons at Michigan State, began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at Ohio U. in 1980. He later coached at Purdue (1981), Butler (Kan.) Junior College (1982), Ohio State (1983-84), Akron (1985), Youngstown State (1986-90) and Kansas (1991-94). His first season at Michigan State was the 1995 campaign.

He coached the Spartans secondary for five seasons and was elevated to assistant head coach prior to the 2000 season.

"I am excited to be back at Ohio State," Dantonio said. "It is a great honor to be here and I look forward to again working with Coach Tressel."

Conatser has been the assistant head coach at Youngstown State the past nine years and has been a member of Tressel's staff since 1986.

"As a high school coach, I used to sit in the end zone of Ohio Stadium with my teams and watch the Buckeyes play," he

recalled. "This is a special day in my life. It is hard to put my feelings into words."

Conatser, born in Cincinnati, graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 1962. He coached high school ball for two years after graduation then spent two seasons (1964-65) as a graduate assistant at his alma mater.

In 1966, he became the head coach at Harrison High School in Cincinnati, a position he held until taking over at Western Hills High School in 1970. Conatser jumped to the collegiate ranks in 1971 as offensive line coach at Massachusetts but returned to the Cincinnati area in 1972 as head coach at Milford High School, a position he held until 1977.

After a four-year hiatus from coaching, Conatser became offensive line coach at Syracuse in 1981. He then spent two seasons at San Diego State (1984-85) before joining the Youngstown State staff in 1986.

For Tucker, who has been a member of the Youngstown State staff since 1997, Ohio State is familiar turf. He served as a member of Earle Bruce's coaching staff

from 1979-84, spending the first four years as the linebackers coach and the last two as defensive coordinator.

A native of Sandusky, Ohio, Tucker graduated from the College of Wooster in 1965. After one season as a graduate assistant at Penn State (1966) and two more as an assistant coach at Massillon (Ohio) High School under Bruce (1967-68), he joined the staff at Wichita State in 1969. In 1973, he joined the Iowa State staff and remained there until 1979, when he accompanied Bruce to Ohio State.

He left Ohio State after the 1984 season to become head coach at Wooster, remaining there for 11 seasons (1985-95). Tucker spent the 1996 season at Wooster High School before joining forces with Tressel at Youngstown State in 1997 as defensive coordinator.

"I am happy to be back at Ohio State," Tucker said. "I have a lot of fond memories from my first stay here and I look forward

Continued On Page 39

IT'S TRESSEL: THE SEARCH

Geiger: Search Was Without Dissension

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After 15 days and hours and hours of talk radio and Internet speculation, OSU athletic director Andy Geiger finally had his man.

Geiger and OSU President William "Brit" Kirwan proudly introduced Youngstown State head coach Jim Tressel as Ohio State's 22nd head football coach Jan. 18, ending a hotly debated search for the successor to John Cooper (see timeline, page 15).

"We just selected the man we feel is the right man, period," said Geiger, who interviewed at least five different candidates for the job. "I will always be at peace because the decision was made for the right reasons."

The decision ultimately came down to Tressel and Minnesota coach Glen Mason, who were each invited back for second interviews before Kirwan and an advisory committee. Oregon's Mike Bellotti also was a serious candidate, meriting his own visit to Columbus before taking his name out of the running.

OSU assistant head coach Fred Pagac and former Buckeye star Chris Spielman also were interviewed during the preliminary stage.

Geiger and associate athletic director Archie Griffin led the search. Getting the best man for the job was his main focus, Geiger said.

"I don't care about myself," he said. "I think it is very important that when I introduce Coach Tressel to the football team I tell them that the search was done for them. Before it was done for anybody else, it was done for them."

"This is their teacher. This is their coach."

Those outside the loop — and that included just about everybody except for Geiger, Griffin and Kirwan — believed the search wore on through two vital recruit-

ing weekends as the OSU hierarchy tried to convince "big-name" coaches like Oklahoma's Bob Stoops, Pittsburgh's Walt Harris, Stanford's Tyrone Willingham or the Oakland Raiders' Jon Gruden to at least consider the job.

But in the end, Geiger told reporters the job was offered just one time — to Tressel. All along, Geiger maintained that the new coach would have to meet with Kirwan, something none of the so-called big names seemed inclined to do.

"While the search seemed to take a long time according to some observers, I must say that the importance of the decision, which has a long-term impact, warranted careful and thorough exploration of the resumes and backgrounds of the candidates," Geiger said.

Geiger dispelled the widely held rumor that he and Griffin, who presumably backed former OSU player and assistant coach Mason, were ever at odds over the choice.

"There was never any disagreement among the advisory committee or Archie or Dr. Kirwan or myself," he said. "In fact, in those kinds of terms, it was as easy a search as I have ever participated in. We just didn't get it finished until we got it finished."

"We didn't choose until yesterday because we didn't finish our process until yesterday."

Mason was believed to be the front-runner among those who interviewed for the job. But Geiger found Tressel's total package of academic and athletic performance too much to pass up.

The decision shows, he said, that you have to look beyond the simple facts.

"If you're going to be any good at what I do or at similar things, you have to be prepared to think outside the box," he said. "You have to think a little bit counterintuitively and ask some questions and hear some answers a little differently."

"You have to listen to the feedback and listen to what they're telling you. We spent



PSST, THIS GUY AIN'T BAD — Ohio State athletic director Andy Geiger (right) has a word with OSU President William "Brit" Kirwan during Jim Tressel's Jan. 18 press conference, his first as Ohio State head football coach.

a lot of time reflecting on what we heard."

Kirwan defended the length of the search.

"It was very exhaustive," he said. "The thing about Ohio State is that we can talk to anybody about our football coaching position. I'm not saying that just anybody will come here, but we can get in anybody's door."

"There were many different people to consider, but as we narrowed down and looked at what made the most sense for us, the choice became clearer and clearer to me."

Tressel's Jan. 16 interview clinched it, Kirwan said.

"I have to say the interview I had with him at the house was one of the most impressive that I've ever had in 15 years as a university president," Kirwan said.

Tressel, YSU's athletic director since 1994, was impressed with the depth and breadth of OSU's search.

"It was very apparent to me that they were trying to find out things about everyone," he said. "When we recruit, we should try to find out everything about that young person. Find out from the cafeteria worker to the janitor to the English teacher to the guy down at the barber shop. I think they did that in terms of this coaching search."

A Tough Decision

Saying no to a guy like Mason, who has spent much of his adult life working toward one day being the OSU coach, was not an easy task.

"He was very disappointed," Geiger said of his conversation with Mason.

"Each and every one of (the candidates) represents courage, ability and dedication to the game of college

football. They are exceptional people and I wish to extend to them our best wishes for continued success."

"Mike Bellotti is an extraordinary man. He was very impressive. Some people I talked with earlier last week were also very impressive. Jim and Glen were also very impressive. It was just a matter of choosing."

While discussions to entice Stoops, Harris and Willingham apparently never got beyond the exploratory phase, Kirwan admitted there was some truth to rumors that Gruden, a Sandusky, Ohio, native, had his representatives inquire about the job.

"There was a conversation that took place between Coach Gruden and people around him and the university," Kirwan said. "There was never any face-to-face meeting or any detailed discussion."

"He said an interesting thing in the paper, and it sort of reflected the point I made a moment ago — the one college job he would think about is the Ohio State job. There were feelers, there was a question of interest in having a conversation on both sides but it never went beyond that."

"I was also very impressed with my interview with Coach Mason," Kirwan added. "He is a fine human being. He cares deeply about this place. He also has a strong record and I know he would have made an outstanding coach at Ohio State, as he has at Minnesota and other places."

"But we just felt when we looked at the total scope of things we were trying to achieve, Jim Tressel was our man."

The Advisory Committee

Geiger and Griffin co-chaired the advisory committee that also included OSU players Steve Bellisari and Joe Cooper, Board of Trustees chairman George Skestos, Varsity "O" Alumni Association president Jeff Logan and faculty members David Frantz, Susan Hartmann and Jack Rall.

That group met on Jan. 4 to carve out the kind of profile OSU should look for in its new coach.

"At the first meeting, we talked about what we were looking for in a coach in the abstract," Geiger said. "We talked about the ideas and things we wanted in a coach."

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IT'S TRESSEL: THE SEARCH

"Then we identified candidates we wanted to bring to the campus. The committee met those men. They didn't vote on each one they wanted, but they gave us feedback on those people."

Perhaps sensing that the final pool of Bellotti, Mason and Tressel was not dynamic enough, Geiger and Griffin asked the group for direction and/or approval.

"At one point, we asked if we had a pool of people that will move our program forward and we got a resounding yes," Geiger said. "We asked that of the advisory committee. We asked it of each other."

The group ended up sitting in for final interviews of those three candidates.

"It was easy to come out with what we thought that coach should be," said Logan, a former OSU captain and broadcaster. "It was very difficult in the end for the guys who had to make the decision, and that's Andy Geiger and Brit Kirwan."

"Our search committee actually was an advisory group and our advice was we could support either of these two men. So our job was easy."

Shutting Out The World

The search was met with intense media scrutiny, both in Ohio and nationally. That is why Geiger and Griffin did their best to keep a lid on any and all news surrounding the hunt.

"Everyone runs searches differently," Geiger said. "We ran this search, because of the public nature of the job and the process, in a way that was about trying our very best to have integrity in the search, to protect the candidates as well as we possibly could — all of whom had other jobs at other universities — and their families and friends that were concerned about what was happening in this process."

Geiger said he felt no external pressure to name any of the popular candidates — Mason, Pagac or Spielman.

"Part of the reason I don't answer a lot of questions and phone calls, the process is one of choosing among people," he said. "People ought to be chosen based on their merit."

"I'll do the reference check and the background check. Having it become a political process or a public process with me out there commenting on each candidate seconds after I talk to them is a terrible mistake. You would lose whatever semblance of control there is."

Geiger and Griffin attended the American Football Coaches Association convention in Atlanta Jan. 7-10 then returned to Columbus and waited for Bellotti to arrive Jan. 14 to begin the final series of interviews.

Meanwhile, the rumor mill had Geiger flying around the country, trying to stir up interest in the job. He also dispelled those notions.

"I was working the phones," he said. "I was at home. You could have gone to the Upper Arlington swimming pool Saturday morning (Jan. 13) and found me cheering for my son at a swim meet."

"I had my cell phone with me and my notes with me, calling people around town. I was right here."

"There wasn't any way I could bring people to town over that weekend because those people were recruiting at their other jobs. I had to play a bit of a waiting game, so I used that time to background check and to check on other candidates."

"I had (Bellotti) scheduled to come in Sunday and to interview Monday (Jan. 15), (Tressel) to come in and interview Tuesday and (Mason) set to come in Wednesday. We were satisfied that we liked our pool and that we liked one person well enough to make a decision."

With Tressel's hiring publicly

The OSU Coaching Search: Day By Day

The following is a day-by-day look at the events surrounding the coaching search at Ohio State.

• **Jan. 1** — The Buckeyes lose to South Carolina 24-7. OSU athletic director Andy Geiger, typically alongside coach John Cooper's side at postgame press conferences, leaves Raymond James Stadium to take a walk. His absence from Cooper's tense postgame press conference immediately breeds speculation that something is amiss.

Later that night, Geiger tells OSU President William "Brit" Kirwan that he is inclined to fire Cooper. The two agree to sleep on the decision.

• **Jan. 2** — Geiger and Kirwan agree that firing Cooper is the best plan of action, and Geiger informs Cooper just after 9 a.m. that his contract will be bought out for \$1.8 million. Geiger also meets with OSU's assistant coaches and then holds a press conference for the media at 4 p.m. He cites a "deteriorating climate" in the program as a prevailing reason to fire Cooper.

Speculation immediately turns to Minnesota's Glen Mason and Pittsburgh's Walt Harris as leading candidates.

In Miami, meanwhile, speculation swirls that OSU is after Oklahoma's Bob Stoops, a Youngstown, Ohio, native. However, he denies interest in the job at a press conference a day before his team plays Florida State for the national title in the Orange Bowl.

• **Jan. 3** — Geiger meets with the returning team members. Those players lobby hard for assistant head coach Fred Pagac to get the job. Co-captains Steve Bellisari and Joe Cooper are named to an eight-person committee to assist in the search.

That night, Oklahoma downs FSU 13-2 to win the national title. Afterward, OU athletic director Joe Castiglione fumes over the timing of the Stoops-to-OSU rumors.

"I'm not being courteous at all," Castiglione says when asked about whether he would allow OSU permission to talk with Stoops. "I don't need to make it easier for someone else."

• **Jan. 4** — The committee, which includes the two players, Archie Griffin, Board of Trustees chairman George Skistos, Geiger and three faculty members, meets for two hours at the Schottenstein Center. No details of the meeting are reported.

• **Jan. 5** — Reports say that OSU officials contacted officials at three schools seeking permission to discuss the job opening. Minnesota granted OSU permission to speak with Mason, while Youngstown State did the same for its coach, Jim Tressel.

But Pittsburgh athletic director Steve Pederson denied OSU permission to speak with Harris.

• **Jan. 6** — Pagac officially is contacted to set

up an interview.

• **Jan. 7** — Rumors continue to percolate that Harris is still on OSU's radar, as is OU's Stoops. Stoops' brother, OU defensive coordinator Mike Stoops, is also banded about for the job.

Pagac appears on WBNS-TV's "Wall to Wall Sports" to make his case for the job.

Meanwhile, Mason and other coaching candidates travel to Atlanta, site of the American Football Coaches Association convention.

• **Jan. 8** — Pagac is believed to be the first candidate interviewed for the job. He travels to a suburban Atlanta home, where he meets with Geiger and Griffin for two hours.

"I feel like it went real well," Pagac said.

Rumors surface that a possible face-to-face meeting between Geiger and Harris is halted after Harris' name pops up as a potential candidate for the Buffalo Bills head coaching job.

Tressel remains in Youngstown, attending to matters as YSU's AD.

• **Jan. 9** — Mason becomes known interviewee No. 2 in Atlanta. According to sources he believes he did a "heck of a job" interviewing.

Geiger and Griffin also reportedly spend part of their day discussing the job with Stanford coach Tyrone Willingham, whose agent portrays the talks as an "informal discussion but not a formal interview."

Other reports say Harris is still interested in a potential OSU offer.

• **Jan. 10** — Back in Columbus, Geiger and Griffin conduct a pair of interviews. They speak with former OSU linebacker Chris Spielman and YSU's Tressel.

Geiger refuses to say whether the interview phase is over or whether he is close to a decision.

• **Jan. 11** — Reports began to swirl that Oregon coach Mike Bellotti could be a leading candidate for the job. Rumors also abound that Geiger has left Columbus for destination unknown to meet with a coaching candidate.

• **Jan. 12** — Pitt's Harris issues one more statement to say he is taking his name out of the running for good.

"I want to make my intentions clear regarding my future at the University of Pittsburgh," Harris said. "I have no interest in the Ohio State job or any other job. I have a long-term commitment at Pitt."

With no coach in place, OSU cancels all official visits by recruits scheduled for this weekend.

• **Jan. 13** — Baltimore Ravens defensive coordinator Marvin Lewis and Oakland Raiders head coach Jon Gruden have their names tossed into the rumor mill for the OSU job.

Geiger remains mum on the search, although reports surface that he contacted Tressel by telephone for a "follow-up question."

• **Jan. 14** — Oregon's Bellotti and his family arrive in Columbus to take a whirlwind tour of the city and the campus.

Meanwhile, Gruden finds himself with more time on his hands after his Raiders suffer a 16-3 loss to Baltimore in the AFC championship game.

• **Jan. 15** — Geiger reportedly takes Bellotti on an 8 a.m. tour of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. Upon returning to Eugene, Bellotti tells reporters he was not offered the job and he goes on a recruiting junket for Oregon.

A published report links Gruden to OSU with the lure being a reported 10-year, \$25 million contract.

• **Jan. 16** — Reports surface that YSU's Tressel ventured down to Columbus, presumably to also meet with Kirwan.

At the same time, things heat up on the Gruden front with reports that he will come to Columbus to tour the school and meet with OSU officials.

To top things off, Bellotti issues a statement from Oregon saying he is taking his name out of consideration for the job.

• **Jan. 17** — In fact, Gruden never leaves Oakland and issues statements that he is not interested in the job.

Mason ventures down from Minnesota for his second interview on campus.

After Mason's departure, Geiger and Kirwan concur that Tressel is their man. They notify him by telephone with a job offer then wait as he informs his wife and calls them back at about 4:30 p.m. to accept.

News of the hiring breaks first on Columbus' WTVN at approximately 5:10 p.m.

• **Jan. 18** — Tressel comes to Columbus and meets with his new team at 3 p.m. at the WHAC. Kirwan and Geiger then introduce him to a media throng in excess of 200 as OSU's 22nd head football coach in the recruiting lounge at Ohio Stadium.

"I am really humbled to stand before you today as the head football coach at The Ohio State University," Tressel says.

Tressel fields questions for over two hours before appearing later that evening at halftime of the OSU-Michigan men's basketball game at Value City Arena. The crowd of 18,653 gives him a standing ovation.

— Compiled by Steve Helwagen



Mike Bellotti

announced, Geiger did his best to mend fences. He spoke with the media at length after the press conference.

"I have a lot of friends in the media and I have a reputation as someone who returns phone calls," he said. "I acted absolutely contrary to that during this process and there will have to be some recovery time now. But I did it to protect the search."

Getting Their Guy

It was Tressel's fine academic record as the YSU coach — not to mention his four Division I-AA national championships — that helped him win this job.

"I went on the Web and found out what their graduation rates were," Kirwan said. "Then I asked them specifics, like how does it work and what are the mechanisms you employ to have the success you're having? What are the incentives you employ to make sure students do the right thing in the classroom? What kind of resources do you have?"

"He (Tressel) had a whole book of procedures that he follows. The thing that came through so clearly with him is the contact he makes with individuals. He gets to know these young people. I know he

develops a relationship with them where they know of his concern and care and vice versa. We read that a lot from the Youngstown players in the paper."

But even after they had offered Tressel the job and believed the search was finally over, Kirwan and Geiger were forced to play one last waiting game.

"We called Jim early in the afternoon (Jan. 17)," Kirwan said. "I got on the phone and made the offer."

"He said, 'This is a dream job. This is what I want, but I have to talk to my wife.

I cannot say yes until I have told my wife and she has concurred."

"So we sat there by the phone for 20 minutes on pins and needles and hoped he would call back and say yes, and he did."

Kirwan said he used some of that time to alert OSU's Board of Trustees to the decision.

"After Andy and I made the decision, I had a communication with each of our trustees to let them know what we intended to do," he said. "They were in total endorsement of that."

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IT'S TRESSEL: REACTION IN COLUMBUS

Lehner Gets Credit For Breaking The Story

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ask WTVN-AM sports director George Lehner and he'll tell you he was simply doing his job.

But when Lehner took to the Columbus airwaves with the word that Jim Tressel had been hired as Ohio State's new football coach Jan. 17, he put an end to the media race to break the story and touched off a firestorm of reaction throughout the community.

Upon receiving word of the hiring, Lehner calmly grabbed a cartridge with a bulletin alert and ad-libbed the story just after 5:10 p.m., breaking into "The John Corby Show." Suddenly, Ohio State's exhaustive 17-day search for John Cooper's replacement had come to an abrupt end.

"I'll never forget the look on Corby's face, who was on the air at the time," Lehner told BSB. "We interrupted whatever he was doing and he just looked at me like, 'Oh, my God, I can't believe it.' And I think we all felt that way. I was surprised it happened that quickly."

But Lehner was ready just the same. Ohio State officials had met with another prime candidate, Minnesota head coach Glen Mason, earlier that day, and by all accounts OSU was nearing a decision — barring the inclusion of some mystery candidate.

"We were watching the situation with Mason very carefully just as we did when everyone else was here," Lehner said. "We were told Mason left at 2:15 (p.m.). We were also told that there would be a series of phone calls made, kind of a conference call situation, with members of the (OSU) Board of Trustees and people responsible in the decision-making process."

"It made perfect sense that after this thing went down with Mason that the decision would be imminent. It made total sense to me that this decision would be made by the time you had the basketball game on national television (the next day) to parade around the new coach."

Knowing that, Lehner expected that the coach of choice — and the runner-up — would be notified that afternoon.

"I had been working with a list all along, just people that you stay in contact with, and just happened to have been at the right place at the right time and had just been informed by somebody who knew who the new coach was going to be," he said.

Lehner and the station received congratulations from people ranging from listeners to employees from competing news agencies.

"That was really nice, especially to hear that from your colleagues," he said.

However, a local television station claimed to have broken the story and others questioned the validity of WTVN's source. That made Lehner laugh.

"That always breaks me up when people say, 'Well, was that a good source?' Well of course it was or we wouldn't have gone on the air with it," Lehner said.

"I had a very reliable list of sources and any one of them could have told me a name and I would have gone on the air with it immediately. That's the level of credibility I have with these people. And if you have enough people like that, somebody is going to come through with it."



TIME FOR CHITCHAT — Frank Beckmann (left) of Detroit's WJR-AM chats with Ohio State head football coach Jim Tressel during halftime of the OSU-Michigan men's basketball game Jan. 18. The stint on Michigan radio was one of the many duties Tressel tended to on his first day on the job.

"It was a good day for WTVN."

Lehner, who also broke news of Cooper's hiring in 1987, said this particular move by OSU was the most secretive and highly anticipated yet.

"(OSU athletic director Andy) Geiger made it clear to that advisory committee that if anything leaks guys were to be cut off at the knees," he said. "That scared some of the people I'd been talking to, and they made that very clear to me. So I wasn't as positive about it as I'd been for other stories that we were able to break."

But WTVN's bombshell didn't prevent other news sources from providing immediate extensive coverage of the move. TV and radio stations began to dig up information on Tressel for that evening's broadcasts. Web sites and newspapers followed suit.

The following is some of the public reaction to the Tressel hiring from members of the media, former players and OSU dignitaries as compiled by BSB.

• **Dan Beatty, former OSU player (1987, 1989-90)** — "It's a great day for Buckeyes everywhere. I think Jim Tressel is a great coach, and the more you hear about him and the more you learn about him, the better you like him."

"It's a really bad way for Mason to find out. He bleeds scarlet and gray, there's no doubt about it, and you hate to do that to one of your own. He's the man who recruited me to Ohio State, and I still have fond memories of that."

• **Mark "Munch" Bishop, on WTVN-AM in Columbus** — "Jim Tressel is a good man, first and foremost, and a great football coach."

"However, the problem I have is not so much with Jim Tressel. The problem I have is I feel Glen Mason was wronged horribly by the university."

"Glen Mason was more than qualified for that job. He played and coached under Woody Hayes and he coached for Earle Bruce. He has spent 15 years as a head coach at Kent, Kansas and Minnesota. Like Coach Bruce said, if that didn't earn him his spurs, I don't know what will."

"Jim Tressel is a wonderful guy. He is our coach and he has my full support. The problem I have is Archie Griffin and his camp wanted Glen Mason. Andy Geiger wanted Jim Tressel. I think Andy Geiger was worried about someone overshadowing him."

"But you should hire the best person, not the person you feel you can control."

• **Tom Cousineau, former OSU player (1975-78)** — "I'm here (at the Jan. 18 press conference) because I love Ohio State, and I was extremely interested in this decision. I'm thrilled about it, and I think this is a wonderful opportunity to take a step forward for our program. Jim Tressel is well-spoken, well-considered, thoughtful. He's the perfect choice for what Ohio State needs right now and I'm so looking forward to what he can accomplish here with our kids."

Cousineau feels that Tressel can bring back the family atmosphere to Ohio State football.

"That's what it's about, and that's where Coach Hayes came from. I like John Cooper a lot. He's a good man and he values his family. But that part has been missing here. That just wasn't part of what John stressed. I don't want to bash John Cooper, because I like John and he was a very successful coach. He just left us a little short here; he left the kids short."

"These kids, as Jim was talking about, they crave that. We went through it with Coach Hayes. I mean, he would stand up

and say things that went right over our head or that we would laugh about, but he would say it every single day and at the end of the campaign, you understood. Then he won you over."

"That's what leadership is all about and that's what Jim Tressel will provide here. You're not going to see his teams come out flat."

• **Greg Frey, former OSU player (1987-90) and current analyst for WTVN-AM** — "It's great news. I think Jim Tressel has proven himself at Youngstown State at the Division I-AA level, and I think everybody in Columbus is very excited."

Frey, however, said Tressel's victory was Mason's loss.

"I feel very badly for Glen Mason. I think they really strung him out for a long time."

• **Bruce Hooley, beat writer for The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer on WTVN-AM** — "Around the nation today — believe me, I've talked to a lot of guys who work at big papers and national online services — when the news went out yesterday, I got a lot of instant messages and the message was one word: Tressel?"

"He's accomplished a lot at Youngstown State with four national championships. But his record over the last six years is 57-24. You know what John Cooper's record over the last six years is? 57-17."

"All you people who think Cooper did a lousy job at Ohio State, let's remember that when Earle was fired here they wanted a guy who could win big. They got a guy who won less than Earle. There is a distinct possibility this guy will win less than Cooper."

Hooley pointed out that Geiger has made this type of move before — and failed.

"What a risk Ohio State is running. Andy Geiger hired Mark Duffner at Maryland in 1989 because he went 65-1 at Holy Cross in Division I-AA. Who was one of the other guys Andy Geiger interviewed? Jim Tressel."

"So Mark Duffner goes 20-35 and plunges Maryland into huge debt. So now Andy Geiger revisits this again and says, 'You know, I'm going to prove that a Division I-AA guy can make it at Division I-A.'"

• **Paul Keels, play-by-play voice for The Ohio State Football Radio Network** — "He seems to be very polished. He is well-spoken and well-versed. He also exhibits a lot of passion for what he does. You can just sense that enthusiasm he has."

"Like a lot of people, I watched the championship games they played in at Youngstown State. I was always impressed with what I saw on TV."

"When I worked in Cincinnati, I know his name came up for the UC job when it came open."

"I've heard he is very media friendly. If his press conference today is any indication, that seems to be the case. We will find out how true that is, I guess, after losses, but he seems to be very media savvy."

But will that keep reporters at bay when trouble strikes the program?

"The key point will be the first time he has to put his foot down. We'll see how solid and how consistent he is. He seems

IT'S TRESSEL: REACTION IN COLUMBUS

to be very consistent in the things he says and does."

• **Jim Lachey, former OSU player (1981-84) and color analyst for The Ohio State Football Radio Network** — "I thought both the guys it came down to, Jim Tressel and Glen Mason, would come in here and do a pretty good job."

"Of course, Glen Mason was my position coach, so I probably know him a little bit better. Jim Tressel was our quarterbacks and wide receivers coach. Certainly, I thought he did a good job with those groups."

"I think the bottom line is when he got in front of the selection committee he probably did a better job of selling himself and selling some of the beliefs he had."

"He is a proven winner. At Youngstown State, he has won four national championships and 70 percent of his games. He's a guy that has won."

"Plus, he has the academic part of it. There is a reason they call him Professor Tressel. He's the type of guy who is a good leader and he can get that across to his players."

"If he can come here and lay some of that discipline down with our players and put his system in place, I think there is a great chance he is going to be successful."

• **Jeff Logan, former OSU player (1974-77) and member of OSU's advisory committee** — "I'm glad it's over for a couple reasons — so Ohio State can get on with its life, Jim Tressel can get started and the other coaches can go on and have it be fair to them. But I think the future is very bright for Ohio State, and I think this is the guy who can kind of heal

the wounds from the academic side and also from the athletic side. We've got to do something about that rivalry with Michigan and get it in the right direction."

"He was not only an Andy guy but an Ohio State guy. I felt that he fit real well with what we were looking for as a search committee and he certainly got the attention of Brit Kirwan and Andy Geiger."

• **Jim O'Brien, OSU men's basketball coach** — "From what I've been reading, it all seems good. From everything I've read and heard and seen, it seems like a terrific hire. He looks like a perfect fit."

"I know Andy is very excited about having him. Andy knows what he's doing. It's a very important hire and a very important decision. I think anybody who was aching for him to rush the decision is missing the big picture."

• **Chris Spielman, former OSU player (1984-87), an analyst for WBNS-AM radio in Columbus and also a candidate for the job** — "I think they have a great choice in Jim Tressel, and I think it's every Buckeye's duty to support him and back him 100 percent. I know he'll come in and he'll work hard and he'll do what's best for the university."

Spielman does not see Tressel's jump from Division I-AA as being an issue.

"You win four national championships, I don't care what level that was at. It doesn't bother me at all. The candidates were all great coaching candidates."

"He's going to look to build character in young men, not just put football players on the field. He'll try to create productive citizens that not only the univer-

sity can be proud of but the whole state can be proud of."

• **Dimitrios Stanley, former OSU player (1993-96) and son of former OSU assistant Wayne Stanley** — "My dad was happy. We know Jim personally, and when he was talking up there he hit on the ingredient that we were missing, why we didn't win the national championship. We had four years, and in three of them we were undefeated until the last game."

"We should have at least one national championship, and he was talking about the ingredient we were missing most, which is family, that relationship of feeling emotional about our coach and the coach feeling the same about you and going out there and fighting harder for him. That was what we were missing."

"If he can do that — you know he knows how to win championships — with the talent we have there's no way we wouldn't go out of here without a national championship."

If Stanley had it his way, he'd be the first one on the field in spring ball.

"I wish I was starting my college career over, period. I would love to play

for someone like him. He'll let you be the person you are and then he's going to develop around you. That's what you have to do to be a great coach and not try to make people fit your system. Find what they do best and then build around them."

• **Jim Stillwagon, former OSU player (1968-70)** — "I supported him and Glen Mason. If the prerequisite were to have a Buckeye I think Glen Mason would have been an excellent choice, but in lieu of that I thought Jim was a great selection because of all the things he's accomplished and the kind of person he is."

Stillwagon felt no regret over the fact that OSU did not bring in a so-called big-name coach.

"Sometimes the biggest names and marquee guys are duds. This guy talks the talk and I think he's going to walk it, and I'm excited."

"He has great values, he stresses team, he cares about the players and he wants to see people move on. I think he has the ability to take an average athlete, like Woody Hayes, and make him good and make a good one great."

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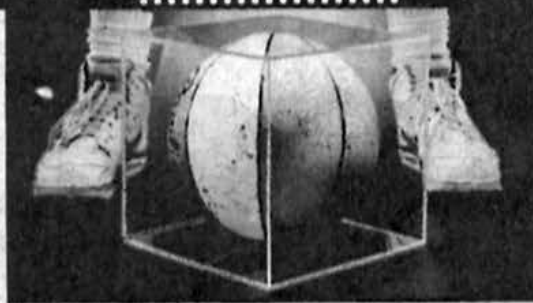
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IT'S TRESSEL: REACTION IN YOUNGSTOWN

Tressel Left Behind Sad Loyalists

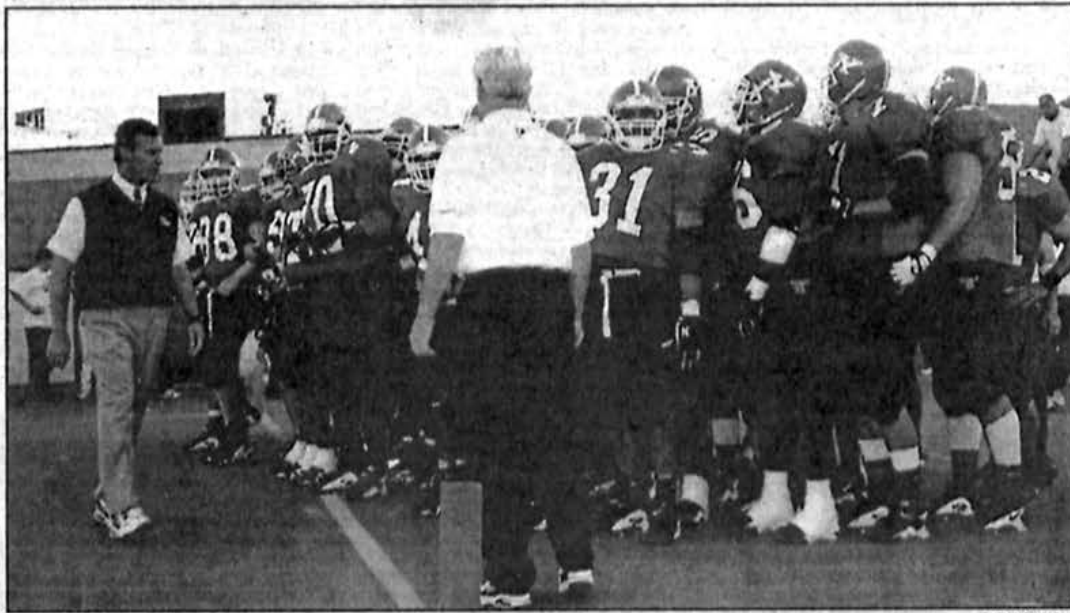
By GARY HOUSTEAU
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Though Jim Tressel may be a native of Berea, Ohio, after a 15-year relationship in his adopted home of Youngstown, the people of the Mahoning Valley are collectively feeling as proud and sentimental as if they're sending their own son off to further his football career at The Ohio State University.

"He's a once-in-a-lifetime coach," said Bob Hannon, the voice of the Youngstown State Penguins since 1989, who has called all four of Tressel's Division I-AA national title wins on the radio waves.

"He brought class to YSU, he does it the right way, he wins the right way. Not only is he a coach, but he's a community leader and he's a great speaker. He's a lot more than a football coach."

Some of Tressel's most recent community work included his efforts in the economically-challenged Mahoning Valley. He was a visible leader in the campaign to keep GM Lordstown in the valley. Additionally, he led the way for a campaign for the financially troubled



GARY HOUSTEAU

HERE WE GO, GUYS — Youngstown State head coach Jim Tressel (left) prepares to lead his Penguins out onto the field for the 1997 season opener. His efforts to help the city of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley region are big reasons he'll be missed by many in that area.

Youngstown public school system. He also helped support Tod's Children's Hospital.

In his own methodical way, Tressel wove a tireless web to make the bond between his football family and the university, and the community that they

were a part of, strong enough to sustain one another and prosper.

That's just one of the extra benefits that come as a part of the total Tressel package.

Ohio State may never have another

coach as loved and revered by Buckeye fans and former players as Woody Hayes was, but Tressel has the requisite charisma and leadership ability to eventually evoke those comparisons. And Youngstown State will most certainly

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IT'S TRESSEL: REACTION IN YOUNGSTOWN

never have another national treasure at their helm the likes of Jim Tressel himself.

Although heartfelt good wishes are being expressed for the newest Buckeye coach from everywhere in northeast Ohio in general and Youngstown specifically, Tressel will be just as deeply missed by those same people.

One person in particular will miss Tressel's immediate tutelage on the gridiron as much as anyone. That person is three-year starting quarterback Jeff Ryan.

"It's great for Coach Tressel," said Ryan, who honed his skills at the position under Tressel. "He deserves it. He's a great coach and person. Best wishes to him and Ohio State."

Ryan, like the rest of his teammates, was alerted by Tressel to the pending situation Jan. 17 during the team's regularly scheduled meeting at Stambaugh Stadium. But by the time the unofficial word leaked out, the coach had already left the premises.

"It's sad here today," Ryan said, "but there is nothing we can do. It's great for him as a friend and now ex-coach, so I just wish him the best."

"He's a great guy and he has taught us a lot. Every person here in the organization and program thinks highly of Coach Tressel. He's a class act."

Ryan has nothing but the same high expectations for his former coach at OSU as Tressel has always had for his former players at YSU.

"I wouldn't doubt if he has a national championship there pretty soon," Ryan said. "But he'll need the cooperation of the players and the administrators to hear what he has to say and listen to him."

"He's the type of coach you get along with, and it's a great opportunity to be a quarterback underneath him and have him be your position coach."

Even people in the program who haven't been around Tressel for very long understand what Ohio State saw in him. YSU sports information director Trevor Parks just joined the program from Nebraska in late August, shortly before the season began.

"I'm sad to see him go, but I'm really excited for him," Parks said. "It's the best

opportunity that's out there for him right now and he has wanted it for a long time from what people tell me."

"I know he'll do well down there. I come from a big school in Nebraska so I know how things are run at a big program. I told a lot of people that he reminds me of (Nebraska coach) Frank Solich (another Cleveland-area product)."

"They have the same stature to the way they handle the media, to the way they work with people, to the way they handle their football team and staff. There's a lot of similarities there and I'm not surprised. I think they've got a blue-chipper."

The people who work closest with Tressel know Ohio State got a keeper. Carmine Cassese has been the equipment manager the entire time during the Tressel years at YSU.

"I knew that once Coach Tressel got ahead of those people down there and they gave him an opportunity, that he would get the job," said Cassese, an Ohio State graduate. "My friends and I, especially the people that work close with Coach Tressel, knew what a special person he is. To us, it's no surprise. We're sad, we're happy, we're scared. It's been a great run and I've loved every minute of it."

"Columbus is very lucky. They don't know it. Like he proved them wrong already by getting that job, he'll prove what a great man he is and the things that he'll do will be incredible. Columbus finally has somebody they can embrace."

Joe Cassese, Carmine's son and a YSU student, had been charged with holding Tressel's headset cord for most of the championship seasons.

"There's a feeling of complete excitement here," the younger Cassese said. "Ohio State is so fortunate to have a man of his character. They have no idea just how fortunate they are to have Jim Tressel as the head coach. It's going to be unbelievable and I wish him the best of luck. He knows that the Valley supports him and we love him."

Even faculty members of YSU love and support Tressel.

Thomas Shipka, who chairs the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at YSU, is a big Tressel fan.

"I got to know Jim Tressel a year or two

after he came here," Shipka said. "I was so impressed at the type of program that he ran that I got involved in the Penguin Club. And since then we've gotten to be good friends."

"Jim Tressel is one of the finest human beings that I've ever gotten to know. He's a decent man of high moral standards and he runs a program that probably doesn't have a match in the country. Winning, however, is not his first priority. Developing young kids into responsible young men is his first priority."

"Youngstown is losing one of the greatest figures in its history, but Ohio State is gaining one of the greatest figures that they'll ever have."

Former YSU football players, even ones who never played for Tressel like Paul McFadden, are strong supporters of the former Penguin coach.

McFadden, a barefoot kicker who kicked during the 1980s in the NFL with the Philadelphia Eagles, New York Giants and Atlanta Falcons, now holds an administrative position at YSU.

"We're heartbroken losing Coach," McFadden said. "But at the same time this is a tremendous acknowledgment of his abilities and it also is a great reflection of our university because Coach came here and did great things and now he's going to carry that down to Columbus."

"He has raised our program on every level. He has totally transformed our academic program. Our graduation rate, something that when Coach arrived we didn't talk about, we brag about it now."

"Jim Tressel means so much more than football for our community. He's a Valley leader, he's a big part of our identity and we hate to see him go."

Jared Zwick, a four-year quarterback under Tressel at YSU and the brother of standout Massillon (Ohio) Washington quarterback Justin Zwick, couldn't be happier for his former coach.

"Coach Tressel is going to bring a bunch of class to this program," said Zwick, who is now in his first year of dental school at Ohio State. "That's what he

preaches first is class, as far as being a class person on and off the field, and it shows through your play."

"He's going to bring a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of discipline, both in the academic realm and on the field. And I think that's going to be the main things that are going to help him be successful here in Columbus as the new coach of Ohio State."

"I've been telling everybody down here that they're going to fall in love with this guy as a person. He's a humble person, he puts family first and he's going to recruit the kind of kids that he thinks can be successful on and off the football field and in the classroom."

"I think if you give him two or three years here, people are going to be so excited with what he's done with the football program and the direction that it's going to be going in."

Rick Shepas, the second-leading career receiver in YSU history in both catches and yards and the younger Zwick's head coach at Massillon, played for Tressel in his senior year in 1986.

"I think it's a great opportunity for him," Shepas said. "It's a job that he's always wanted and I think the 15 years have definitely prepared him for Ohio State."

Shepas sat in the very first meeting as a senior when Tressel took over the Youngstown State program.

"When he took the Youngstown job he gave that job his total commitment, his total focus, his total dedication, his total loyalty, and he's going to do the same thing down there."

"When you think about what he's been able to do at Youngstown, you always have to think about the fact that he accomplished all those goals while using only 63 scholarships. Now he's upgraded to 85 and obviously Ohio State is really the only premier football program in the state."

"So if he was able to recruit great players of great character and ability at Youngstown, just think what he's going to be able to do using a resource of Ohio State and 85 scholarships."

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IT'S TRESSEL: PLAYER REACTION

Players Impressed With Tressel's Introduction

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It was a key moment in a momentous day for Jim Tressel, probably the most important part of the day, he said.

The new Ohio State football coach had a whirlwind agenda Jan. 18 that included his public introduction to the media, an appearance at the OSU-Michigan men's basketball game and more gigs on local radio and television stations. But before any of it started he had set a 3 p.m. meeting with the returning members of the team.

Also on hand for that important first step to Tressel's family-building process was athletic director Andy Geiger, the man who fired John Cooper and pinpointed the well-respected, lesser-known coach from Youngstown State.

"It was very quiet in there," Geiger said of the afternoon meeting, which took place at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. "They paid very careful attention, they were excited, they were impressed. I think some of them were stunned."

"Jim is a very confident person, he's a very gifted speaker. If I were a member of the football team I'd be very excited about the opportunities that I had, but I'd also feel challenged."

That, in fact, summed up what members of the team were telling BSB afterward.

"He seems like a great guy and I really felt his speech," tailback Sam Maldonado said moments afterward. "At the same time, he's a hard-nosed guy. He kind of reminds me of my coach I had in high school."

"I think he has his totally own style," quarterback Steve Bellisari said. "He's going to introduce some things here which will be good."

"He spoke from his heart, which was the most important thing. He wasn't lying to us. He wasn't trying to make anything sugar-coated. He was very up-front with us and very honest."

"For the most part, I think people are



GARY HOUSTEAU

FROM THE HEART — After new Ohio State head football coach Jim Tressel met with his team for the first time Jan. 18, many of the Buckeye players surveyed pointed out how strong a public speaking ability Tressel displayed.

happy. I think we're ready to start worrying about football again and not the head coach."

Added defensive end Darrion Scott, "The meeting went pretty good. This guy seemed like he means business. He's a very religious guy. He talked about how he believes in God

first. He wants to get to know us and he wants us all to write down what we believe in and what we expect and how we plan to help people outside the community. He wants us to come together as one and become a team."

"It seemed like a good starting point. He got everybody's attention. Everybody understood what he wanted. I'm pretty sure we're all going to be on one page soon."

That, of course, is Tressel's goal and why he put so much effort into the meeting, which was more like a 40-minute oration.

"What did they say to me?" Tressel said, repeating a question at his press conference. "Well, you know what, I've got to be honest. As you can tell, I like to talk and I did all the talking. The only thing they said on the way out was their name. A lot of them came by and said hello and where they were from. This wasn't one of those two-way conversations. We really didn't have time for that. We just had a short time to visit in this direction."

"I'm sure the players are wondering if they're going to get four credits for the new lecture series they just began here this afternoon."

Hoping For Better Things

It's been a tumultuous month to be a Buckeye to be sure. Ever since their embarrassing loss to South Carolina in the Outback Bowl on New Year's Day, and Cooper's firing upon return to Columbus, the sentiment has been the following: Who can come in and change the attitude of the Buckeyes? Some players even admitted that they lacked discipline, an obvious Tressel, strong point.

"For the last couple years we sort of lost that, so we need to bring it back by any means necessary and get it done," tailback Jonathan Wells said.

Linebacker Jason Ott also intimated that the team was in need of new leadership.

"It was almost like Coach Cooper didn't have his heart in it the past couple years," Ott was quoted as saying in the Jan. 18 edition of The Cincinnati Enquirer. "The assistants did all the coaching, and I wasn't surprised when he was let go."

Members of the team admitted having an emotional meeting with Geiger upon finding out that Cooper was fired. Many of them made it clear they wanted assistant head coach Fred Pagac to move into the job or, at least, were in favor of a majority of assistants being retained.

Geiger, of course, made no promises but appeased the group to a point by adding Bellisari and senior linebacker Joe Cooper to an advisory committee that played a role in the search.

Both seemed to take the role to heart, attending final interviews for Tressel, Mike Bellotti and Glen Mason.

"I was in on all three interviews and all three men were impressive," Joe Cooper said. "It comes down, in the end, to what you want to do with your program to take the next step forward."

"I'm very proud of the decision that was made to bring Coach Tressel in. It's the right choice and a great choice."

"I talked to some of the players after the meeting and they all seemed very excited with the decision that was made."

Added Bellisari, "It was nerve-racking. At first, it was kind of exciting. I didn't know what to think, whether I should leave or not. Before it was said and done, I was downright nervous."

"It was a very uncomfortable situation, but now it's over and I think it all worked out."

Wells was late arriving to the WHAC Jan. 18 due to a class and did not attend the initial meeting with Tressel, but he was interested nonetheless.

"I kind of stayed out of the whole mix," he said. "I've got a lot of questions but I didn't do any research on it. I'm sure Mr. Geiger and Mr. (Archie) Griffin did a great job and made a good decision for the university."

"He seems to be a straightforward guy, a fair guy, a disciplinarian. That's what we need on this team to get some wins going."

Even outgoing senior Jerry Westbrook came by the WHAC to get a feel for the Buckeyes' reaction to Tressel.

"I thought Pagac was going to get the job but from what I hear (Tressel) is a great coach," he said. "As far as D-I-double-A goes, he's the best."

New Era Begins

At his press conference, Tressel offered details of his first meeting with his new players.

"Unselfishness is the key to anything," he said. "Team is the key to anything. And we talked at good length this afternoon about the fact that I want to get to know them and I want to develop a relationship with them and know everything about who they are and what they want to be in all phases of their life and that we can achieve in every phase of life."

"And that the two most exciting days they have at Ohio State University will be the day that they walk across and that diploma is placed in their hand and the second will be when they are allowed to slip that ring on their finger that has a '1'."

"And if we reach our potential, if we're unselfish, if we care about one another, if we can build relationships at the great Ohio State, there is nothing we can't do."

By all accounts, the message was received.

"He talked about religion, family and everything like that," Maldonado said. "He's a real down-to-earth guy and I'm really happy they chose him. I can't wait to sit down with him one on one."

"I think things have calmed down and now guys can't wait to get started. I think he can lead this team to where we want to go."

That, of course, is a national championship, and Tressel was not afraid to utter that phrase to the players.

"He's won at a different level and he's confident," said Cooper, who said he's still not sure if he'll seek another year of eligibility. "He has four national titles, and in my opinion — I don't care what level you're on — if you do that you're a winning coach."

"There are some coaches at our level who haven't won. He gets the job done. I'm happy for this team right now."

Cooper and several players also termed Tressel "a player's coach" because of his immediate interest in them off the field. Tressel vowed to get to know his players as individuals, and so far they believe him.

"It's hard for a coach to have a one-on-one relationship and he's not going to have a great relationship with everyone, but I'm sure he's going to try," Bellisari said.

Added Scott, "I'm relieved and excited. We've been waiting for a while to get a coach, and I'm happy we've got one. He seems to be a good guy."

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IT'S TRESSEL: THE 1984 OSU STAFF

1984 Staff Was Full Of Now-Familiar Names

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

While the soap opera that was the Ohio State football coaching search played out, one of the storylines that held the interest of fans was the jockeying between Jim Tressel and Minnesota coach Glen Mason for the position.

Both had been assistants at Ohio State and both understood what it might mean if they won the coveted spot. Some may have had the impression that there was some Erica Kane-style backstabbing going on between the two, but nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, the two respect and like each other, and Tressel likely would have sent kudos Mason's way had the Gophers coach landed the job.

"He has always had the highest regard for Glen and if Glen had gotten the job instead of him, I think he would have been fine with that," said Tressel's wife, Ellen. "He's always talked about the fact that Glen is an outstanding coach."

Tressel was in charge of Ohio State's quarterbacks, receivers and running backs during his time as an assistant — 1983 to 1985 — overseeing the development of future NFL players Mike Tomczak, Keith Byars and Kris Carter.

Mason, too, was part of that staff, serving as the offensive coordinator under Earle Bruce.

Other up-and-comers on that staff included Fred Pagac, OSU's assistant head coach under John Cooper and also a candidate for the job; Randy Hart, now at the University of Washington; and then first-year assistants Gary Blackney and Bill Conley. Current director of football operations Bill Myles was also part of that staff, and he could see that there was a host of talent among the coaches.

"They were all aggressive guys, and it took guys like Woody (Hayes) and Earle to hold them down," Myles said. "There were strong leaders and sometimes it got pretty heated. Sometimes it even got physical."

The Buckeyes, as they did nearly every year under Bruce, went 9-3 in 1984, getting steady play from Byars, Tomczak, Carter and Mike Lanese, who was one of the heroes in the Buckeyes' 21-6 victory over Michigan.

The offense was a machine, churning out points in bunches, including a thrilling 45-38 come-from-behind win over Illinois behind Byars' 274 rushing yards. The 1984 Buckeyes scored 391 points, thanks in large part to Tressel and Mason.

Bruce felt he had some potential stars working for him, and it came as no surprise that the Buckeyes won the Big Ten title in 1984.

"I thought that was one of our better staffs," Bruce said. "We had a lot of young guys on that staff, guys who you had a feeling were going to do some things. Glen and Jim and Gary Blackney and Randy Hart, all those guys had great minds and were talented coaches."

Groomed For Stardom

Tressel had the look of a savvy coach even as an assistant. Prior to his first stint at OSU, he was an assistant at Miami (Ohio) and Syracuse, working with the quarterbacks on both occasions, and put in time at Akron as well.

Bruce said he saw qualities in Tressel even then that signalled he had a promising future in football.

"Jim was a bright guy even then," Bruce said. "He had played quarterback for his dad (at Baldwin-Wallace) and he understood the position. He worked a lot with Tomczak and helped Karsatos make the transition to starter in 1985."

"We had a young man named Kris Carter come to our program in 1984, and Jim was in charge of most of the skill position guys. Kris had great talent, but Jim helped him through some of the growing pains freshmen have and really helped get him going."

Karsatos, who amassed 2,311 yards and tossed 19 touchdowns to just eight interceptions as a starter for Tressel in 1985, said it was more the preparation aspect rather than anything physical that he credits Tressel with.

"He really helped me get ready mentally more than anything else," he said. "I was behind Tomczak and knew I had to be prepared to play if anything happened to him. When you're used to being a starter it's hard to go in as a backup, but Jim taught me a lot of things about the position, some subtle nuances that kept me from maybe getting down about not playing."

Former OSU All-American lineman Jim Lachey was coached by Mason, but he saw firsthand the work that Tressel did getting his players ready.

Lachey knew Tressel was a stickler for getting guys to reach their potential, and that's one of the reasons he's excited about Tressel's hiring as head coach.

"I think the mark of a good coach is putting athletes in a position where they can excel, and certainly you don't ask a guy to do something he can't do," Lachey said. "I think that's part of the evaluation process and that's what he'll do."

Myles was one of the veterans on the staff, and he kept a close watch on Tressel and how he worked his charges.

"He was young and ambitious, he wanted to learn about football," Myles said. "He liked to talk football. He was a neat dresser. And he was a very regimented person. His life was very regimented where he did certain things at certain times."

A Common Thread

Now that Tressel is beginning the arduous settling in process, there's time to ruminate about the merits of the selection.

It seems ironic that all of the formal candidates for the job — Tressel, Mason, Pagac and ex-OSU linebacker Chris Spielman — were connected in some way to that 1984 team, but that may be mere coincidence.

Spielman, for instance, had openly pursued the job to fulfill a lifelong dream of being the OSU coach.

"My thoughts were that I was glad it was done, I guess, because it's been a little difficult the past few weeks because you'd hear different things every day," said Spielman, who interviewed for the job. "Things like you're in it, you're out of it, you're in it, you're out of it. It's a constant roller coaster ride."

"But I think they made a great choice, and I don't think they could have gone wrong when you're talking about Glen Mason and Jim Tressel. Those guys are two Buckeyes and they understand the tradition."

Spielman sought the position despite having no formal coaching experience.

"I thought I addressed that in a sufficient manner (by telling them about) the people I was intending on hiring," Spielman said. "Unfortunately, though, I think that was an issue and one they felt was a risk,



STEVE HELWAGEN

STACKED STAFF — Before this past season's Ohio State-Minnesota football game at Ohio Stadium, Golden Gophers coach Glen Mason took time out to chat with Ken Fritz, one of his former players while he was an assistant at OSU. In 1984, Mason and a host of other notables — including Jim Tressel — assisted OSU head coach Earle Bruce.

and I certainly empathize with their position.

"I thought that I could present a case to them that this is what I can bring to the table and there are other strengths that I think will overcome the experience issue if I'm selected as head coach. The experience really would have been there through the assistants I would have hired."

There were rumors, in fact, that Tressel would enlist recently retired Virginia head coach George Welsh to be an overseer.

Spielman said there were personal reasons he didn't take an assistant coaching job when offered by Cooper a year ago. He said he might be open to such an offer from Tressel.

"That's something I would have to think about," he said. "If I ever want the opportunity to coach as the head coach at Ohio State, apparently what I can offer now is not enough and the experience is a factor. However, I do not want to be a hindrance to him or put him in a bad situation. That's something that I wouldn't want to be a part of."

Mason got to the final interview stage for the OSU job, only to see it go to Tressel later the same day.

"This guy is done looking for jobs," the 50-year-old Mason told reporters in Minneapolis.

The OSU alum will at least have a strong consolation prize: He will continue to make \$1 million a year as the Minnesota coach.

"Was I disappointed? Yes, who wouldn't be? Who likes to be rejected?" Mason said. "But when that alarm went off this morning, I was fired-up again. Why? Because I was driving to a job I love."

'His Time And Place'

Myles seems to be behind the choice, noting that a changing of the guard is often tough but sometimes necessary.

"It's a good decision," he said. "They all brought different things to the table, but this is the man. It's his time and place."

Bruce was quoted as being behind Mason immediately after the decision was made, but he stated that was less a swipe at Tressel than it was an outpouring of emotion for Mason.

In fact, Bruce went out of his way to praise Tressel for the time he spent on the OSU staff in the early 1980s.

"Oh, there's a lot to like about him," the ex-coach said. "He's honest — very honest. He's caring, he makes players feel like they're a part of his life. There aren't a lot of coaches who truly, truly care about their players, but I know this — few people will put more of themselves into a program than Jim Tressel will. He loves football, he loves coaching and he loves helping young men become great people."

An impressive speaker and motivator, Tressel now has the unenviable task of bringing Ohio State football back to its lofty perch atop the Big Ten.

Karsatos believes that the detail-oriented Tressel will make sure things don't spiral out of control the way they did in the final two seasons of the John Cooper era.

"He really related well to all of us," Karsatos said. "Whether or not that style will work now will be interesting to watch. But he really understood what it took to get the best out of you. He could take two totally different guys and get both of them to reach their potential because he understood people so well. I think it's a great choice personally, and I think people will see how much attention Jim pays to the little things."

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IT'S TRESSEL: CAREER IN REVIEW

Tressel Has Coaching In His Ohio Bloodlines

By **DARRELL DAWSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The third week of December 1985 was a good one for Jim Paul Tressel, a 33-year-old Ohio State assistant coach.

As OSU prepared to play Brigham Young in the Citrus Bowl, the Buckeye quarterbacks/receivers coach got the news that Mike Lanese, one of his wideouts, had been named a Rhodes Scholar. At the time, Lanese was just the fourth OSU student to receive the honor and certainly the first football player.

Tressel was proud.

"He's an achiever," Tressel said after the news reached him. "Some people said he didn't have the speed or size to be a flanker, but he got the job done."

Less than a week later, on Dec. 21, Tressel was named the head coach at Youngstown State, where he would go on to find enormous success in his own right.

"It was hard (to leave) because it was tremendous being there," Tressel told The Columbus Citizen-Journal the day he was hired at YSU. "I enjoyed every minute of it. For a young man who grew up in Ohio, to get the opportunity to coach at Ohio State is the epitome."

"No other place in the country could be better."

And just as the Citizen-Journal proclaimed on its final front page at the end of that month, Tressel said, "Goodbye, Columbus."

But unlike the popular morning newspaper, Tressel would be back — this time as Ohio State's head football coach.

Cutting His Teeth

Was there any question Tressel was going to be a football coach when he grew up? Living under the same roof as the legendary Lee Tressel, his father, he seemed predisposed to that.

A lifelong Ohioan, Tressel grew up in Berea, played quarterback at Berea High School and graduated in 1971.

Logically, perhaps, Tressel then stayed in Berea and played for his father at Baldwin-Wallace College. Earning all-conference honors his senior year, Tressel was at least a small part of his father's success: Lee Tressel racked up a 154-53-6 record in 23 years with the Yellow Jackets.

"I've been blessed with a great background," Jim Tressel said. "I got to watch a coach every day. Back in the old days (at) the small colleges, your house was on campus and our house happened to be next to the stadium. I got to watch my dad's trade every day."

After college, it didn't take long for Tressel to land on his feet as a coach. He joined Jim Dennison's staff at Akron in 1975, mentoring the running backs and, later, the special teams.

Always one to continue his education, Tressel earned his master's degree at Akron while he was coaching there.

Tressel's time with the Zips was followed by two years as the quarterbacks/receivers coach at Miami (Ohio) (1979-80) and two more as the quarterbacks coach at Syracuse (1981-82).

"I was with Coach (Dick) MacPherson for two years and he built that Syracuse program from scratch," Tressel said. "His work ethic was tremendous and I learned a lot from his ability to work with the kids."

Current Pittsburgh coach Walt Harris' time as the Ohio State quarterbacks coach in the mid-'90s may be more well thought of in casual OSU circles, but Tressel's first ground in Columbus was just as successful.

Hired to handle coach Earle Bruce's QBs and wide receivers on Jan. 7, 1983 (and taking over the backfield in '84), the three teams Tressel was a part of went to the Fiesta, Rose and Citrus bowls.

He also sent a number of his players to the NFL, including quarterbacks Jim Karsatos, Mike Tbmczak and Tom Tupa, wide receiver Cris Carter and running back Keith Byars.

After the press conference that introduced him as OSU's head coach Jan. 18, Tressel expressed fond memories of Bruce and his first stint with the Buckeyes.

"They had had a lot of exciting things happening (when he was hired at OSU) and they expected those things to continue," Tressel said. "I learned a lot. I learned about what Coach Bruce expected of us in recruiting and in creating relationships with our players off the field."

"The number one thing I would say about Earle Bruce is his honesty. There is not one dishonest bone in Earle Bruce's body."

Four National Titles

Before Tressel turned some Buckeye skeptics into believers with his fiery introductory press conference, some of those same fans would have liked to have seen a bigger name like Mike Bellotti or Jon Gruden walk the OSU sidelines in 2001.

You already know that OSU men's basketball coach Jim O'Brien wasn't the first choice to take over for Randy Ayers. But how about this: On Dec. 7, 1985, a couple of weeks before Tressel was hired at YSU, a big, albeit tainted, name was considering the post.

That coach, Gerry Faust, late of Notre Dame, took the job at Akron Dec. 18, clearing the way for Tressel's hiring. One of the reasons Faust went to Akron (still Division I-AA at the time) over Youngstown State was that the Rubber Bowl held 35,000 people, while YSU's Stambaugh Stadium seated 16,500.

Faust went on to do a nice job with the Zips, but it pales in comparison to what Tressel did with the Penguins.

Taking over for Bill Narduzzi, whose contract wasn't renewed, Tressel led YSU to a 2-9 record in 1986. The next season, though, the Penguins went 8-4 and made the first of their 10 trips to the I-AA playoffs under Tressel.

Two more postseason appearances followed (including an 11-1 mark in '90) before the Penguins finally broke through and won the national championship in 1991.

The ability to win close games was another concern put forth by Buckeye fans.

Well, in the run to that first title, the Penguins beat Villanova by one point, top-ranked Nevada by two, Terry Bowden's Samford squad in a 10-0 shutout and finally Marshall in the championship game in a relative blowout, 25-17.

But the Penguins' fortune was still tested in that game, as they scored 19 points in the fourth quarter to overcome a 17-6 deficit.

The win made the Tressels the only father-son duo to win national titles: Lee's B-W squad won the 1978 Division III trophy.

"I'm awfully proud, but I have a long way to go to be as good as my dad," said Tressel following that game. "It's special, but it's secondary to how proud I am of our players, who fought through tough times all season. We just believed in each other."

Other national titles followed:

- In '93, the Penguins beat Marshall 17-5 to win the title again;

- In '94, YSU had people talking dynasty after a 28-14 win over Boise State capped a 14-0-1 campaign;



GARY HOUSTAU

THREE OF FOUR — After Youngstown State won the third of its four Division I-AA national championships under Jim Tressel (back), the coach and three of his players posed and showed off their hardware. Title No. 4 would come in 1997.

- And, finally, McNeese State tasted the Penguins' wrath in 1997, when they made Tressel the only coach to earn four Division I-AA rings, after a narrow 10-9 win.

How about some of the Buckeye fans' concerns about what the offense is going to be like under Tressel? You've heard him talk already about how he used four different quarterbacks to get the four championships. His ability to adapt to different players' strengths is unquestioned.

But Tressel also has a bag of tricks. It's nice to know he'll dig his hand into it in a pinch, such as late in that game against McNeese State.

Down 9-3 on field goals and facing a third-and-goal situation from the 9, here's how Tressel solved the puzzle in front of him: Receiver Renauld Ray was lined up on one side, while fellow receiver Mark Cox went in motion toward Ray's side.

When Cox got right behind Ray, quarterback Demond Tidwell took the snap. At that point the McNeese safety and cornerback assigned to that side were both perplexed

and froze for a second, then went to cover Cox.

Ray was wide open, caught the touchdown pass and, though there was still eight minutes to play, the game was basically over.

"The ball seemed like it was in the air forever," Ray said. "All I had to do was catch it."

Sure, there have been low spots for Tressel. But for every 2-9 or 3-8 season (as in '86 and '95, respectively) there are the two American Football Coaches Association coach of the year awards ('91, '94) that Tressel can look at when he's sad.

And for every field goal as time expires by a backup kicker that deprives Tressel of a title (which is how Marshall knocked off the Penguins to claim the 1992 title), there are the sweeter championship memories he can tell his grandkids about.

But mostly there are the moments frozen in time, like the one Ray recalled after beating McNeese State.

Buckeye fans are hoping for more of those out of Tressel, this time a little south and west of Youngstown.

The Career Of Jim Tressel

Here is a look at the 15-year career of new Ohio State head football coach Jim Tressel. Included for each year are overall and conference records, and playoff results.

Year	School	Overall	Conference	Division I-AA Playoffs
1986	Youngstown State	2-9-0	2-5 (Ohio Valley)	Did Not Qualify
1987	Youngstown State	8-4-0	5-1 (OVC)	Playoff Qualifier
1988	Youngstown State	4-7-0	Independent	Did Not Qualify
1989	Youngstown State	9-4-0	Independent	Playoff Qualifier
1990	Youngstown State	11-1-0	Independent	Playoff Qualifier
1991	Youngstown State	12-3-0	Independent	National Champions
1992	Youngstown State	11-3-1	Independent	National Runners-up
1993	Youngstown State	13-2-0	Independent	National Champions
1994	Youngstown State	14-0-1	Independent	National Champions
1995	Youngstown State	3-8-0	Independent	Did Not Qualify
1996	Youngstown State	8-3-0	Independent	Did Not Qualify
1997	Youngstown State	13-2-0	4-2 (Gateway)	National Champions
1998	Youngstown State	6-5-0	3-3 (Gateway)	Did Not Qualify
1999	Youngstown State	12-3-0	5-1 (Gateway)	National Runners-up
2000	Youngstown State	9-3-0	4-2 (Gateway)	Playoff Qualifier

Tressel Overall Record (15 years): 135-57-2 (.701)

Tressel Conference Record: 23-14 (.622)

Tressel Playoff Record: 23-6 (.793)

Note: Tressel also made four stops as an assistant coach — Akron (1975-78, Running Backs/Special Teams); Miami of Ohio (1979-80, Quarterbacks/Wide Receivers); Syracuse (1981-82, Quarterbacks); and Ohio State (1983-85, Wide Receivers/Quarterbacks/Running Backs).

COVER STORY: IT'S TRESSSEL

'Exemplary' Process Ended With Tressel On Top

Continued From Page 1

"The most exciting thing to me is that we can have that impact of excellence done the right way, that will resound around the world and hopefully young people all over this state, certainly, and all over this country and this world will look at the way our young people do it and the way our coaches do it and the way our faculty do it and they'll want to do it just that way."

"That's what leadership is all about. Leadership is service. Leadership is making sure that excellence in everything we do on and off the field, in the classroom, in the community, in our homes, excellence is what's expected."

Geiger said he, Kirwan and the committee were taken by the similar way Tressel presented himself and his vision.

"I think he articulated his case well today," Geiger said after the press conference. "We heard the same things plus more in the two interview sessions we had with him."

In addition to Bellotti, Mason and Tressel, OSU assistant head coach Fred Pagac and former OSU standout Chris Spielman also received interviews during the early portion of the search process.

But around Columbus, Geiger and OSU took criticism for the length of the search. After high-profile candidates like Oklahoma's Bob Stoops, Stanford's Tyrone Willingham, Pittsburgh's Walt Harris and even Oakland Raiders coach Jon Gruden had their names bandied about, some believed the final pool lacked pizzazz.

"From my standpoint, I believe the process has been exemplary," Kirwan said. "It has been thorough, timely and diligent. We left no stone unturned in finding the right coach to meet our high expectations and we have done so within two weeks."

Program Goals

Cooper was fired after an embarrassing 24-7 loss to South Carolina in the Outback Bowl Jan. 1. That defeat capped an 8-4 season as well as a month rife with turmoil within the program.

OSU's academic shortcomings were outlined, including new graduation rate figures that listed the program at 28 percent for the entry years of 1989-93. That figure ranked OSU dead last in the Big Ten, some 13 percent behind the next school.

In the final analysis, academic achievement of his players may be what set Tressel apart from Mason.

In data published by the NCAA for the entry years of 1989-92, Tressel's YSU program had a listed graduation rate of 57 percent — some 25 percent ahead of the rate of all YSU students who entered those same years. Meanwhile, Mason, then at Kansas, graduated only 36 percent of his players (compared to 55 percent of all KU students) during the same time frame. (OSU's graduation rate for the football program at that time was 35 percent.)

Tressel's YSU program also had an amazing 67 players earn a 3.0 grade-point average or higher over the past two years.

Building a family — especially a family that goes to class and achieves outside the lines — was one of Geiger's goals with this hiring.

"If we can build a program that puts



KEVIN DYE

WELCOME ABOARD — Ohio State President William "Brit" Kirwan (right) offers his opening remarks during the Jan. 18 press conference that introduced Jim Tressel (left) as the 22nd head football coach in Ohio State history.

team ahead of self, then achieving goals that we have not been achieving will be easier," Geiger said. "I'm not saying that the Michigan game will ever be easy."

"But it's about service and giving to each other and some really fundamental values that are important."

Geiger dismissed the notion that "great athletes" will not want to play for such a demanding coach.

"I think that will be part of the core of who we are and what we'll stand for," he said. "If you want to be a part of this, this is how we'll play."

Making The Jump

Mason's supporters pointed to his 15 years as a Division I-A head coach between stints at Kent, Kansas and Minnesota.

Tressel, who played quarterback for his father, Lee, at tiny Baldwin Wallace in his hometown of Berea, Ohio, has Division I-A experience as an assistant at Akron, Miami (Ohio), Syracuse and three seasons as the backfield coach at OSU (1983-85).

Geiger bristled at the notion that Tressel won't be able to handle a major college program.

"In I-AA, we noticed in watching tapes that the field is 100 yards plus two 10-yard end zones and the same width," Geiger said. "The ball has points on each end. Eleven guys play on both sides of the line of scrimmage. The X's and O's are very sophisticated, as they are at this level. Some of the guys may be a little bit bigger and a little bit faster at this level, but Coach Tressel has coached at The Ohio State University and Syracuse University."

"He has been in this big stadium and other big stadia around the country. He has competed in the highest level within his division and we think, much as Coach (Woody) Hayes played at Denison and coached at Miami and came here, that Coach Tressel can make the same sort of transition, really, without missing much of a step."

Geiger admitted that he was looking

for an "effective program manager," much as he did nearly four years ago when he hired Jim O'Brien as the men's basketball coach, instead of a renowned football guru.

"You measure the man, not the level necessarily," Geiger said. "I don't think the game is that much different in concept. His total program at Youngstown State is very impressive and exactly the kind of thing we want applied here."

It isn't as if Tressel's resume is not impressive. His Penguins teams won Division I-AA playoff championships in 1991, '93, '94 and '97 and reached the title game two other times. His teams have made 10 postseason appearances and posted a 15-year mark of 135-57-2 (.701).

"I don't have any questions about whether he can coach the game or not," Geiger said. "He won four national championships with four different quarterbacks."

"When he had an option-type quarterback, they ran the option. When he had a dropback quarterback, they dropped back. When they had quick receivers, they spread the field."

Tressel borrowed from Hayes' favorite motto, "You win with people," to answer that same question.

"I happen to think that any group activity is about people," he said. "Our people at Youngstown State reached their potential quite often because of their ability to develop those relationships. They believed in what had to be done to reach excellence."

"I haven't found the people at the Division I level any different. When I was at Syracuse and Ohio State, there were guys who learned more quickly than others, just like we have at I-AA. So I really think it's all about people. It's all about developing a team."

"I have every confidence that if we're able to create the unselfishness and the team concept at Ohio State, that simply the talent that this university attracts — not us wonderful recruiters — but this institution attracts such talent, if we're able to build a team then the transition

will be one we can make."

Tressel, whose YSU team finished 9-3 after a first-round playoff loss this past season, knows his championship success also was a big feather in his cap.

"I do know this — had we not won those championships I wouldn't be here," he said. "That's reality. How we won them, I think, is somewhat of a subject. The fact we were successful and that our young people have grown was a big reason."

Geiger, certainly looking at YSU's 23-6 playoff record under Tressel, was probably intent on finding a coach who could lead OSU to late-season success. Cooper was a combined 5-18-1 against Michigan and in bowl games, including 2-10-1 against UM.

"The program will have steady improvement," Geiger said. "His points about getting better each week and building each week are important to me."

Aware Of Where He Is

Tressel becomes just OSU's fourth head coach since 1951, following Hayes, Tressel's former boss Earle Bruce and Cooper.

"As I sit here and think about the fact that I will be following men like that, it's really humbling, but it's so exciting," he said.

Although Tressel never played for the Buckeyes, both growing up in Ohio and his three-year stint working for Bruce gave him a primer of what OSU football is all about.

"I grew up in Berea, Ohio," he said. "When I was small, all I cared about was what was Rex Kern doing. Rex Kern was on the cover of The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer. He was holding his MVP ball and his Bible."

"I said, 'Maybe I better start reading the Bible because if Rex Kern reads the Bible, then I should, too.' That's the way I felt about Ohio State and Woody Hayes and Rex Kern."

"Why Ohio State? Because if you're from Berea, Ohio, that's the ultimate."

A lot has changed, he noted, from his stint at OSU. For instance, the Buckeyes now practice in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, which was completed shortly after Tressel left for YSU.

"I was here 15 years ago and the difference between the facilities today and 15 years ago was extraordinary," he said. "But everywhere you went you saw three words. You saw those words of tradition. You saw those words of people. You saw those words of excellence."

"And as I stand before you today, I understand the responsibility I have to contribute to upholding the great tradition and building new traditions at Ohio State. I understand the responsibility and accountability that I have for the people that I have a chance to be with, whether it be the folks of the media, or the folks of the city of Columbus, or our student-athletes, or students on campus, or faculty or staff or managers or trainers or secretaries or assistant coaches. My responsibility is to those people. And certainly to the people of the great state of Ohio."

Tressel was asked how he intended to put his stamp on OSU football. He said that was not really his mission.

"Ohio State football is bigger than any one of us," he said. "Ohio State football isn't just Woody. It isn't just Paul Brown or Archie (Griffin)."

"We're all part of it. I'm just excited to be part of Ohio State football."

IT'S TRESSSEL: THE SEASON AHEAD

Process Of Constructing 2001 Team Begins

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Speaking just minutes after Ohio State was flattened by South Carolina 24-7 in the Outback Bowl, OSU running back Jonathan Wells was, well, flabbergasted when asked where the program would go from that point.

"A new season," Wells said as he headed for the bus and the off-season. "That's about it. That's all we can look forward to. We can't get anything out of this game, just a new season."

A day later, the Buckeyes lost their coach, John Cooper, who was fired after 13 years on the sideline. An exhaustive two-week search ended Jan. 17 as word was leaked that OSU had found its new coach in Youngstown State's Jim Tressel.

On paper, the Buckeyes figure to have 10 starters back from their 8-4 team in 2000. That figure does not include punter B.J. Sander, who also returns, or linebacker Joe Cooper, who awaits word on whether an appeal for an extra year of eligibility will be approved.

In addressing the media for the first time as the OSU coach, Tressel said he will try to build a family atmosphere within the program. Behind the scenes, though, the new coach admitted that he will be scrambling to learn as much as he can about his new team.

"It will be a threefold process," Tressel said. "One will be the time we can find to watch film. Two will be the time we can carve out to watch them in the conditioning program. And three will be the time we have to learn more about who they are, what they're interested in and what they're willing to sacrifice, and do they understand what it takes to meet some of those aspirations."

Tressel said it is premature to discuss what type of offense or defense — he favored the 5-2 in recent years at YSU, while OSU has worked from a 4-3 base — the Buckeyes will utilize, especially since he still needs to complete his staff.

"You know this about the Big Ten and you know this about Ohio State: It's going to be physical football," he said. "I think if you've watched champions very close in the NFL or college football or the great high school teams, you'll see the teams who play great defense — like the two we're going to see in the Super Bowl — and teams that have a tremendous belief in special teams."

"Teams that also know how to utilize the talents of their offensive players are the teams that win. That is so important."

Tressel said he has employed differ-

2001 OSU Football

Schedule		2000 Record
Date	Opponent	
Sept. 8	AKRON	6-5
Sept. 15	SAN DIEGO STATE	3-8
Sept. 22	at UCLA*	6-6
Sept. 29	at Indiana	3-8
Oct. 6	NORTHWESTERN*	8-4
Oct. 13	WISCONSIN*	9-4
Oct. 27	at Penn State	5-7
Nov. 3	at Minnesota*	6-6
Nov. 10	PURDUE*	8-4
Nov. 17	ILLINOIS	5-6
Nov. 24	at Michigan*	9-3

*Bowl team

Returning Starters

- **Offense (5):** QB Steve Bellisari, FB Jamar Martin, LT Adrien Clarke, C LeCharles Bentley, TE Darrell Sanders.
- **Defense (5):** DT Mike Collins, WLB Courtland Bullard, MLB Matt Wilhelm, SS Mike Doss, FS Donnie Nickey.
- **Kickers (1):** P B.J. Sander.

ent offensive attacks with success during his tenure at YSU, where he won four Division I-AA national titles in 15 years.

"We had the good fortune to take five quarterbacks to the national championship game and they were all different," he said. "And we ran some basic things — if you can't run off-tackle you can't play this game. But we ran lots of different things based on what those five quarterbacks could do."

"We won't ask a young man to come into Ohio State and fit into our system. We will select the best kids to come to Ohio State who have everything in place, on and off the field, and then we'll build our system around them on offense."

Tressel will have two-plus months to assemble a staff and prepare for spring practice during the month of April.

"Spring practice will be huge," Tressel said. "What we need to do before spring practice is really get to know these players and we've got to do a great job of studying the video that is available of our opponents and ourselves."

"We need to share ideas and have that staff put together based on what they see, from a talent standpoint, the things we need to be doing."

"Then in the spring, we only have 15 days to implement it and find out if some of the things we saw are accurate. Maybe we'll say, 'This guy would be really good at this or that,' and then see if that comes true."

"Spring practice will be more important for a program like ours than it



SCOTT BROCKWAY

2001: A FOOTBALL ODYSSEY — New Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel will face a tough schedule in his first year leading the Buckeyes, but first he will have to evaluate the talent John Cooper left behind, including tailback Jonathan Wells.

would be for a program that is going to continue to run the same system."

Quarterback Steve Bellisari senses a positive feeling for the Buckeyes headed toward 2001.

"I'm very excited about this year," he said. "I think we've got a great nucleus of players coming back that are ready for the cause, just like (Coach Tressel) was talking about."

"We have a lot of guys who are going to sell out."

Bellisari, a co-captain and second-year starter this past season, is interested in knowing which youngsters — OSU will have 33 true and redshirt freshmen in camp this spring — are ready to step up.

"There are some areas of concern, but I really won't know about that until we get into the spring and see how some of the young guys react from being the guy or being the man at their spot," he said.

"Some will step up to the plate and be fine and some won't. We won't know anything until we start spring ball."

What About Quarterback?

There has been speculation that

Bellisari will give up the quarterback spot and move, perhaps, to his former home in the defensive secondary for his senior year.

However, it seems likely he will try to impress Tressel and the new staff by staying at quarterback this spring. He is coming off a junior year where he increased his completion percentage from 45.1 percent to 52.6 and he threw for 2,319 yards. But his interceptions (13) equaled his touchdown tosses.

"I think I got into a mode where I tried to do everything they said instead of just playing football," Bellisari said. "That's where I got into trouble. They would say, 'You have to do this, this and this.'"

"But sometimes you can't do everything they want. You have to make plays happen. That was my biggest mistake all year long."

Reporters quizzed Tressel for his knowledge of the quarterback situation at OSU, where sophomores-to-be Craig Krenzel and Scott McMullen and redshirt freshman Rick McFadden are waiting in the wings.

"The quarterback position is so crucial," Tressel said. "When you say you

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IT'S TRESSEL: THE SEASON AHEAD

build your offense around what your talents are, really you're saying you build your offense around the talents of your quarterback.

"What's the quarterback situation here? I don't know, I had the great fortune of meeting Steve Bellisari during the interview search process and he seems like a young man who wants to excel."

Tressel said he had not seen any game film of Ohio State, but he is confident in his ability to develop quarterbacks.

"I feel strongly about my competence in that area," said Tressel, who served as OSU's quarterbacks and receivers coach from 1983-85. "I had the great fortune of working with Mike Tomczak here and Jim Karsatos and Tom Tupa. I think we've had extraordinary success with our quarterbacks at Youngstown State."

"I just want to observe every one of our personnel no matter what role they happen to play and observe every one of our players then make decisions. To make decisions prior to that would be unfair."

The Rest Of The Offense

Bellisari would be one of five returning starters on the offense. Also due back are left tackle Adrien Clarke, center LeCharles Bentley, tight end Darnell Sanders and fullback Jamar Martin.

All four of those players have the potential to be among the best in the Big Ten at their respective positions, especially the rangy Sanders, who had five touchdown grabs among his 23 catches.

Wells (6-1, 230), who had 598 yards and a team-high six touchdowns as a junior, and sophomore-to-be Sam Maldonado (6-0, 230) will be the only scholarship tailbacks in camp this spring.

"Jon and I are excited that we're going to be here next season and we want to do the right thing and make it happen," said Maldonado, who was limited to just 22 carries and 50 yards in his first season. "I can't wait until spring."

"This year was tough. When I came in I really didn't do that much because my knee was bothering me. But I worked hard, I tried to do what I had to do, I got into a couple games. I didn't know much about the offense, but I was getting used to it more at the end of the year. It was just an experience year, basically."

Likewise, OSU will be starting from scratch at wide receiver after the departure of starters Ken-Yon Rambo and Reggie Germany. The key names here appear to be sophomores-to-be Ricky Bryant, Drew Carter and Michael Jenkins, redshirt freshman John Hollins and junior college transfer Chris Vance.

"I think Ricky Bryant and Drew Carter will be two of my main targets next year, and I think they'll be ready," Bellisari said. "I have total confidence in them and they are both good football players."

But the offense will go nowhere unless a few good men can be found up front. Leading candidates there will be sophomores-to-be Bryce Bishop and Alex Stepanovich at guard and sophomore-to-be Shane Olivea at tackle.

Tyson Walter, a former three-year starter at tackle, also is bidding to return after missing last season due to a mysterious infection in his hip.

Defense, Special Teams

Senior-to-be Mike Collins, at tackle, will be the only returning starter on the defensive line after his interior line partner, Ryan Pickett, left a year early for the NFL and end starters Rodney Bailey and Brent Johnson exhausted their eligibility.

Senior-to-be Heath Queen and sophomore-to-be Tim Anderson are the only experienced players in line to replace Pickett. Junior-to-be Kenny Peterson and sophomores-to-be Darrion Scott and Will Smith figure to get the first call at the end spots.

If Joe Cooper can win his appeal bid, he would bring experience — not to mention heart — to the linebacking corps. He was second on the team in tackles (80) from one outside spot.

Junior-to-be Matt Wilhelm (66 tackles, 15 for losses) enjoyed a big first year as a starter at middle linebacker after incumbent starter Jason Ott went down with a pre-season injury. Senior-to-be Courtland Bullard also had his moments when used as a rush linebacker outside.

In the secondary, juniors-to-be Mike Doss (team-high 94 tackles) and Donnie Nickey return at the safety spots. But the cornerback positions are wide open after David Mitchell exhausted his eligibility and Nate Clements left for the NFL a year early.

Luckily, OSU is well-stocked in the secondary. Some of the key CB candidates who will be on the spot this spring

include juniors-to-be Derek Ross and Curtis Crosby, sophomores-to-be Bobby Britton and Richard McNutt and redshirt freshman Brandon "Bam" Childress.

Kicker Dan Stultz wrapped up his OSU career as the school's career field goals leader. He will be replaced by either Sander or redshirt freshman Josh Huston. Sander, who averaged 41.9 yards per punt in splitting that role with Stultz, has an Ohio-record 60-yard field goal to his credit from his high school days.

The Schedule

Reporters joked with Tressel that he must not have seen OSU's 2001 schedule before he agreed to take the job.

The Buckeyes will open with Akron and San Diego State at home before venturing to UCLA Sept. 22. Then, in Big Ten play, lowlights Michigan State and Iowa rotate off the schedule and Indiana and Big Ten co-champion

Northwestern cycle on.

None of OSU's four Big Ten home games — Northwestern, Wisconsin, Purdue and Illinois — figures to be a sure win.

Plus, in addition to Indiana, the Buckeyes will make Big Ten visits to Penn State, always a tough environment; Minnesota, where spurned Glen Mason and his Golden Gophers will await; and Michigan, where, it almost goes without saying, OSU was 0-6 under Cooper.

Tressel said he never gave the tough slate consideration as he jumped at the OSU job offer.

"That wasn't going to be an issue about the schedule," Tressel said. "This job is about the challenge and the potential. You can't come to Ohio State and not expect to be challenged tremendously."

"But now that you mention it, it does look like a tough one."



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OHIO STATE INSIDER



Continued From Page 6

OSU's first win over a defending champion was a 64-36 rout of Utah in Columbus on Dec. 18, 1944. Prior to that, OSU was swept by Indiana in 1941 and Wisconsin in 1942. The Buckeyes also were swept by the Hoosiers in 1954, '77 and '88, one year after IU claimed a national title.

OSU has had three encounters with mighty UCLA teams the year after the Bruins were crowned and lost all three — at UCLA in December of 1965 and '71 and at home on Dec. 6, 1968, when Lew Alcindor led the top-ranked Bruins to an 84-73 win over OSU in St. John Arena.

It could be argued that OSU's most glorious win and most crushing defeat came in such games. The Buckeyes claimed their only national title by downing the defending champion Cal Bears in San Francisco's Cow Palace on March 19, 1960. Two years later, Jerry Lucas, John Havlicek and company ended their magnificent run with a second straight loss to rival Cincinnati in the title game. OSU's 71-59 loss to the Bearcats came on March 24, 1962, in Louisville, Ky.

Miscellaneous Notes

• OSU linebacker Joe Cooper, who was part of the advisory committee that interviewed the coaching candidates, shared a word for his former coach, John Cooper, after Tressel's introductory press conference.

"I wish him nothing but the best," Joe Cooper said. "I hope he is happy at whatever he does."

"I have talked to him. He is in good heart right now. He sounds very well. I'll miss the guy."

• OSU wide receiver Reggie Germany never caught nine passes in a game for the Buckeyes. But the departing senior did just that in earning team MVP honors at the Hula Bowl Jan. 20.

Germany caught nine passes for 108 yards to help lead the North to a come-from-behind 31-23 win over the South in Wailuku, Hawaii.

OSU kicker Dan Stultz also appeared in the game for the North.

• OSU linebacker Jason Ott's career is apparently over due to injury.

Ott, a native of Cincinnati, told The Cincinnati Enquirer a neck injury will preclude him from rejoining the team.

"I talked to Dr. (Timothy) Kremchek," said Ott, who was examined by the noted Cincinnati-based

sports medicine physician Jan. 17. "He told me I could suffer permanent injury if I played again. I'll graduate in June, and I plan to work for my dad (in construction)."

It was unclear when Ott, who would have been a fifth-year senior in 2001, suffered the injury. He emerged as a starter at middle linebacker in 1999 but was lost for all but one minute of one game this season after suffering a preseason shoulder injury.

• Former OSU defensive back Antoine Winfield is suing another former OSU athlete, ex-wrestler Danyasha Yetts, to recoup \$1.35 million the NFL player asked Yetts to invest on his behalf.

According to the lawsuit filed Jan. 10 in Franklin County Common Pleas Court, Winfield is suing Yetts, a local sports agent, and his World Wide Financial Group Inc. to recover at least that amount plus interest from Yetts. Winfield, now with the Buffalo Bills, is also asking for a full accounting of his investments and legal fees.

After the Bills made Winfield a first-round draft pick, he signed a five-year, \$7-million contract, including a \$3.5 million signing bonus.

According to the suit, Winfield gave Yetts installments of \$700,000 and \$650,000 in 1999 to invest on his behalf. But Winfield asked for the money to be returned in December after he suffered a season-ending shoulder injury with the Bills.

Attorney Kevin Nose, who filed the suit on Winfield's behalf, filed a similar suit in 1998 on behalf of former Buckeye Nicky Sualua. That suit was settled last year.

• Former OSU quarterback Art Schlichter pleaded guilty Jan. 16 in federal court in Indianapolis to 10 charges relating to credit card fraud, money laundering and interstate transportation of forged securities.

Schlichter entered a plea agreement with federal prosecutors. U.S. District Judge Sarah Evans Barker will now decide whether to accept the plea agreement. A sentencing hearing is expected within the next three months.

Schlichter, who faces other charges in courts in Indiana and Ohio, could face an additional five years in prison for these charges.

• The OSU marching band participated in the Inaugural Parade for President George W. Bush Jan. 20 in Washington, D.C.

The band played "Beautiful Ohio" as it passed the reviewing stand. The band also played "Fight the Team," "I Wanna Go Back To Ohio State" and "Buckeye Battle Cry."

The 225-member band worked hard on fund-raising projects to raise the \$55,000 it needed to make the trip.

• Dom Capers, who served as an OSU assistant coach from 1982-83, has accepted a five-year, \$9 million deal to become the first head coach of the NFL's expansion Houston Texans.



Jason Ott

IT'S TRESSSEL: THE NEW STAFF

Some Of Cooper's Staff Looking For New Jobs

Continued From Page 12

to again being part of the excitement that is Ohio State football."

BSB will have separate articles on each of the new coaches in upcoming editions.

The Cooper Staff

It appears that longtime OSU assistant Fred Pagac, the assistant head coach under Cooper this past year, will not be back.

According to reports, Pagac, a former Buckeye player and graduate assistant for Woody Hayes and a full-time assistant for 19 seasons for Bruce and Cooper, may have turned down a chance to be the linebackers coach on the new staff. He was one of five interviewees for the OSU head coaching job.

He reportedly also had an offer to become the linebackers coach for the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

"It's hard to see a coach that has been here 20-some-odd years go," said OSU senior linebacker Joe Cooper. "I would hope that he would stay around. Hopefully he'll stay around, but if not I wish the best to him and his family."

Others in limbo appear to be George Belu, the offensive line coach this past season; Tim Salem, who served stints as the quarterbacks and receivers coach under Cooper; Chuck Stobart, the offensive coordinator this past year; and Brian Williams, the linebackers coach this past season.

The ninth member of Cooper's last staff, defensive coordinator Jon Tenuta, was hired Jan. 15 as the coordinator at North Carolina.

With Bollman's hiring, it seemed unlikely that Belu would be retained.

"He has people who have been with him a long time," Belu said previously. "We all care and love Ohio State."

"Jim, just listening to him, it goes back. I knew and coached against his dad. He has a son in school here. There's a lot of love with Jim for Ohio State."

Stobart also seems to be done at OSU after spending the last six years on staff under Cooper.

He said he might be open to serving as the receivers coach, a position he held with OSU from 1995-99. But he also said, "I think probably my best deal is to maybe retire."

Stobart said he plans to stay around Columbus, though.

"I'll be here. I've got two kids going to school here," he said.

Conley, Heacock and Spencer have been among OSU's best recruiters in recent years.

Conley, in fact, as the recruiting coordinator helped OSU land top-10 ranked classes in five of the last seven years. Conley was unavailable for comment, although it was widely known that the former OSU player wanted to stay with the Buckeyes.

The same was true for Spencer, a former OSU standout running back.

"There was no doubt that I wanted to stay here," he said. "I wanted to stay and grow within this system."

"It was hard waiting to hear. I knew if I wasn't going to be here I needed to get on to something else. It was really taxing. I've had a headache for the last three weeks."

Heacock's brother, Jon, served two stints as the defensive coordinator at YSU under Tressel.

"My brother and a lot of the people who have worked for him can't say enough good

things about him," Jim Heacock said.

"Jim Tressel is going to oversee the whole thing. My brother, having been there quite awhile, had enough of his confidence to let him do pretty much what he wanted. But I'm sure Jim was very involved and at least knew what was going on defensively and approved of it."

"I am certain, though, that he has spent most of his time with the offense."

Heacock, speaking before any official notice of his status was made, said he was hopeful of staying on at OSU.

"I'm appreciative of John Cooper for bringing me in here," he said. "We had five great years and won some big games. I appreciate what John did for me. I'm also interested in continuing here."

"I'm from Ohio and it's a great university. Playing in the Horseshoe, it doesn't get any better than that. If I fit Jim's needs, I'd love to stay here."

"But I know he's going to pick nine guys he thinks can get the job done, and we just have to wait and see if we fit into that picture."

Bill Myles, who had served the last three seasons as the director of football operations, the position now held by Tucker, will return to a job as an associate athletic director within the department, according to an OSU spokesman.

Strength and conditioning coach Dave Kennedy just completed the first year on a 10-year deal. Athletic director Andy Geiger put that contract in place last summer after the NFL's New England Patriots tried to lure Kennedy.

Kennedy has already begun OSU's winter conditioning program and appeared to be entrenched in the job for the time being.

"We are in the middle of a crucial phase in what we're doing with conditioning," Tressel said. "I'm anxious to find out about his magic. It says a lot that the NFL guys want to come back here and work out with him."

Who's Next?

As of press time, Tressel was still trying to hammer out the last three spots on his new staff.

It seemed possible that he could hire Jon Heacock if Heacock is not named his successor at YSU. Besides Conatser, Heacock and Tucker, Tressel had five other assistants at YSU.

"If I had asked, 'How many of you guys want to go with me?' I would have had a van-load," Tressel said. "I did talk with them and told them that there are things that go into building a staff. It won't happen overnight, and they understand that."

"I'm really rooting for one of our coaches to become head coach at Youngstown State. I have a lot of care and concern for those kids back there, and I know those guys will take care of them. I guess my hope is to make sure all of my guys are taken care of."

Another name that popped up was Michigan State wide receivers coach Don Treadwell, who played for Tressel at Miami (Ohio) and spent six seasons on his staff at YSU — including the national championship season of 1991 as offensive coordinator.

"We've got a lot of guys who have passed through Youngstown State and are now in the Big 12, the Big Ten, Conference USA, the ACC and other places," Tressel said. "There are a lot of people to look at."

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

By Definition, Hiring Of Tressel Was A Bold One

When Andy Geiger and Archie Griffin set out to find a new Ohio State football coach, I was looking for a bold move for Ohio State's future. I was hoping for something dynamic like somehow prying Bob Stoops away from national champion Oklahoma, something that would not only energize the Buckeyes and their fans but thrust Ohio State back into the national spotlight in an exciting and positive way.

If you go by Webster's definition, which reads "daring, fearless," the choice of Jim Tressel as the 22nd coach in Ohio State football history was probably far more "bold" than the choice of a big-name coach would have been — because the hiring of a coach without Division I-A coaching experience and who is not that widely known outside of Ohio is a bit of a gamble.

Of course, the hiring of any new coach is a gamble, regardless of previous record and reputation. If athletic directors could predict the future, they would all hire only coaches that came with guaranteed national championships. Life — and athletics — should be so simple!

After hearing Tressel speak upon his introduction on Jan. 18, I feel a lot more comfortable with the hiring. His enthusiasm is unmistakable and contagious. If I had any eligibility left (and 4.4 speed and a 400-pound bench press) I would have suited up right then and there. He hit all the key subjects — team, family, academics, discipline, beating Michigan — and you could see how he must have vowed Geiger, Griffin, OSU President Brit Kirwan and anyone else who might have had two cents' worth in the selection process.

But I must also admit that upon hearing the news of Tressel, I was a little disappointed. I guess, after more than two weeks of cloak and dagger-like secrecy, I thought we would be presented with a bigger surprise than one of the two most obvious candidates from the very first day of the search.

From the beginning, I've said that Geiger and Co. should take their time and make the right choice. However, if it was going to be Tressel — or the other logical candidate, Glen Mason — why take so long in the search and give up two critical weekends of recruiting? Geiger said they wanted to make a thorough search. I wonder if Tressel, in the end, wasn't the best candidate from among only a handful that were interested.

I've heard many, in the last few days, say that maybe the Ohio State job isn't as special as we who follow the program think it is and there weren't the type of applicants that many expected. And I think that is one of John Cooper's legacies. The Ohio State job perhaps isn't what it used to be. It is up to Tressel to build it back up to its past glory.

Yet there are those, out of state, who say that the choice of a virtual unknown on the national scene reflects even more poorly on OSU and will hurt on the out-of-state recruiting scene.

Tressel seems well respected within the state, however, and maybe Ohio State needs to regain its respect here at home first and then worry about what others, nationally, may think. Start to beat Michigan and win some Big Ten championships and Tressel and his team will earn respect from even the most casual follower of college football.

I still worry about the jump from Division I-AA. I thought Geiger (and

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH
Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

apparently Tressel in the interview process) was a little simplistic when he said that the field was still 100 yards long and they played with 11 players, etc., at that level. I don't care what anyone says. It's a step up.

Sure the fundamentals are the same in any level of football. And the X's and O's are probably similar. But now you're drawing them up to try to beat the best athletes in the nation, who are having their X's and O's drawn up by the nation's best and brightest coaches. And while it is clear that Tressel is a great motivator, is it the same to motivate a pampered superstar who is thinking about his future in the NFL as it is a player who knows that his greatest success and glory will, most likely, be achieved at Youngstown State?

Most importantly, I'm fairly confident that Tressel has never walked into a blue-chip recruit's living room to close the deal only hours after a Lloyd Carr, Joe Paterno, Bobby Bowden or Steve Spurrier has made his case. Now that's a step up!

On the other hand, there are many close observers of the Ohio State program who say that many of the problems of late have been caused by the fact that the Buckeyes have gone after many out-of-state athletes who were more concerned about moving on to the NFL than such things as beating Michigan or getting an education.

Maybe Tressel will go back to the good, solid player who is concerned about the team and winning, first. And if those players create a winning environment, others from both in and out of state will want to come and be a part of that winning atmosphere.

The nice thing about hiring a guy like Tressel is that if he does have some success, he'll probably stay in Columbus. A guy like Oakland's Jon Gruden (assuming he was ever interested in the OSU job) would probably ultimately end up back in the NFL. Tressel can, hopefully, add some continuity if he is successful, rather than being one of the many carpetbagger coaches that seem to abound in sports, jumping from job to job.

Whether you liked the choice of Tressel or were disappointed, he is the head coach at Ohio State now. Let's give him a chance. Now that I'm over my initial disappointment, I am both excited and optimistic.

I know this much. If enthusiasm wins football games, we have ourselves a winner!

Other Thoughts On The Search

Am I the only one who thinks that if Glen Mason and his Minnesota Golden Gophers had won a couple of more football games down the stretch, he would be working out of an office at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center right now? After Mason and the Gophers' absolute trouncing of the Buckeyes back on Oct. 14, there were few who didn't feel they were looking at Ohio State's next coach and that was before John Cooper had even been fired.

Following the win in Columbus, the Gophers lost three straight before beating lowly Iowa by a field goal in the season

finale. Then, in the MironPC.com Bowl, Minnesota blew a 24-point lead, losing to N.C. State and falling to 6-6. Suddenly, Mason didn't look so good.

Though Mason remained the choice of many, including a faction of former players, Pitt's Walt Harris, who had so much success while working as an offensive assistant for the Buckeyes, was the first choice of many others. The buzz on the street was that while Harris was interested in the job, he didn't want to go through a lengthy interview process. Rather, he wanted to be offered the job.

After seeing the hit that Mason and his reputation took in the process, you can see why Harris, if the stories were true, wanted to stay above the fray.

You have to feel a little sorry for Mason and the way he was left dangling for two weeks. But you're talking about a guy who still has a high-paying job at a Big Ten school. And he has shown that he can motivate his team for a big game (just ask Cooper), so Tressel had better look out.

Mason will probably never get the Ohio State job, the job he always wanted, but he still has a chance to strengthen his standing among college's leading coaches and leave a lasting legacy at Minnesota. Time will tell.

As the search progressed, I was surprised at the obsession many seemed to have with getting a coach with Ohio — preferably Ohio State — ties. There were some who would have given thumbs down to the next Vince Lombardi if he hadn't lived at least a couple of days in Ohio.

Just because Cooper supposedly "didn't get it" when it came to Ohio State football doesn't mean that every coach from out of state would be clueless to, say, the importance of beating Michigan. If they didn't understand the importance of beat-

ing Michigan previously, they certainly would figure it out after seeing the way Cooper was vilified for his 2-10-1 record against the Buckeyes' archrival.

I said go for the best guy and if he had Ohio State ties, so much the better. Let's hope the best choice was Tressel.

Patience With The Video

If you are scheduled to receive your free Archie Griffin video, we ask that you be patient. Demand for this special offer was so great that we have been forced to dub more videos. We think you'll find the video worth the wait.

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The Editorial And Good Words

Many of you sent along self-addressed stamped envelopes to receive a copy of the "View From 15th & High" I wrote following the 63-14 loss to Penn State back in 1994. Thanks for the notes that several of you sent with your requests. I enjoyed hearing from each of you.

Reader Michael Andello from Girard, Ohio, near Youngstown, had this to say: "Frank, you can relax. Tressel is a motivator. More than often YSU would be more fired up in the third and fourth quarters than they were in the first half. You will see a new attitude/discipline in the Bucks you never saw before."

After seeing, all too often, Cooper-coached teams get outplayed in the second half, these are encouraging words.

If you would like a copy of that 1994 "View From 15th & High," a column that in some ways defined the relationship between Cooper and Buckeye Sports Bulletin, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the previously mentioned post office box and I will be glad to send it to you.

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