

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

\$2.50
PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER
CLASSIFICATION
DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE RUSH!!



Vol. 31, No. 22

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

June 2012



...But Not Forgotten

One Year After His Departure, Tressel's Legacy Still Debated

By **MARCUS HARTMAN**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On the next-to-last day of May 2011, Ohio State and Jim Tressel parted ways under a cloud of NCAA problems that seemed to be expanding continually.

Beforehand, every day felt longer than the last, and that was not merely a matter of the natural rhythm of the seasons in Columbus. Coach and school constantly were under siege as winter turned to spring with new accusations flying on a regular basis.

Finally, before summer arrived, Tressel's tenure in his dream job officially had come to an end.

Without a final press conference but merely a couple of quoted sentences in his resignation letter released by the university, Tressel was gone. He and the team he grew up adoring went their separate ways, futures uncertain for both.

Yet one year later, nearly all is well with the Buckeye football program. A new coach with national championship credentials and Ohio roots has taken over, and optimism runs high across the state and beyond.

Tressel, too, has resurfaced with a job in higher education. He is the vice president of strategic engagement at the University of Akron, where he was introduced in February.

With the two entities moving forward, their relationship is only a thing of the past.

How that history will be written remains to be seen, although the process is already well under way.

One year later, BSB set out to determine the state of Tressel's reputation and legacy, where they stand now and how that might change going forward.

Stunning Decision

Although all of college football was aware of the serious nature of Tressel's troubles, his actual firing came as a shock to many within the Ohio State fan base.

The situation seemed quite dire when news first broke in March that Tressel had

admitted to breaking NCAA rules by withholding information about potential violations committed by quarterback Terrelle Pryor and wide receiver DeVier Posey, but those around Tressel stood firm.

University president Dr. E. Gordon Gee and director of athletics Gene Smith stated their unwavering support for Tressel to remain head coach of the Buckeyes. They censured, fined and suspended him while preparing to face the NCAA's Committee on Infractions at the end of the summer but insisted his job was safe.

That's why Adam Neft was preparing to spend his Memorial Day on the golf course. The host of "Neft at Night" weekday evenings on 97.1 WBNS Radio did not even take his cell phone with him to play 18 holes with his father the morning of May 30, but word reached him anyway before he could hit his first ball of the day.

Before long, he found himself in the studio in the midst of a maelstrom of reaction from across Columbus.

"We finally decided to wrap it up around 8 o'clock as the calls kept getting worse and worse, as you can imagine," he told BSB. "It was Memorial Day so people were drinking and eating and getting more ticked off. Eventually we decided it was enough with the conspiracy theories and whatnot. It was crazy. It was one of the crazier days I've had, that's for sure."

Neft's callers had plenty of vitriol for all involved, be it Tressel, Smith, Gee or the media.

They wondered what happened to change the school's stance on its beloved coach, but answers were not easy to come by.

"It took a lot of rational people and made their feelings irrational," Neft said. "They were just so fed up with everything. This thing had been building. It was a tidal wave for months and months and months dating back to the Sugar Bowl and Christmas week. It had been going on so long with more problems and more speculation, and that frustration all sort of came out in one day."

Continued On Page 12



FILE PHOTO
HAPPIER TIMES – Former Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel (left), seen here with wife Ellen, led the Buckeyes to the 2002 national championship.

OPINION

Tressel's Troubles Still Pale Compared To Others

One year after Jim Tressel's forced retirement because of NCAA violations committed on his watch, battle lines have been drawn between Buckeye Nation factions that want to debate Tressel's legacy as head football coach at Ohio State.

On one side are those who appreciate the coach's accomplishments in returning the Buckeyes to their rightful place among college football's elite programs. On the other, those who tired of a sometimes-archaic approach to 21st century offense along with the sanctimonious lot who believe Tressel brought undue embarrassment to their favorite team and got exactly what he deserved.

I understand why Tressel was forced out, but I continue to maintain that reason was a flimsy one. The coach "lied" to the NCAA by virtue of signing a compliance document signifying he knew of no violations having been committed by his program. As we all became painfully aware, Tressel was aware of violations and did not disclose them.

Whether you wish to believe the coach was trying to shield his players from a pending FBI drug investigation or think he was selfishly covering his own posterior really doesn't matter. The crux of the crime committed by Tressel was that compliance document he signed – the same document signed by nearly every other coach at nearly every other school where NCAA infractions are committed every other day.

Tressel certainly thought he could weather the impending storm. After accepting a five-game suspension and \$250,000 fine, the coach was ready to do battle with the NCAA. He hired an attorney who was a former chair of the NCAA Committee on Infractions and appeared to have the backing of university president Dr. E. Gordon Gee and director of athletics Gene Smith.

Remember that fateful March 8 news conference during which Smith told reporters, "I want to make sure you understand that wherever we end up, at the end of the day Jim Tressel is our football coach. ... We support him 100 percent. He's our coach and we trust him implicitly."

Eighty-two days later, Tressel was summoned back from a Florida vacation to face forced retirement. What transpired between March 8 and May 30 remains up for conjecture, although a case of cold feet on the part of Gee and Smith – as well as a spineless board of trustees – would be a pretty good guess.

The stream of bad publicity the university hoped would end with Tressel's departure continued well into last summer although it was a continual mishmash of innuendo and untruths mostly from the mouths of disgruntled ex-players and those with axes to grind.

Sure, there was the matter later discovered of players who took small sums of money from a misguided Cleveland-area booster. But when the final chapter was finally written on the so-called renegade program run by the supposedly blackhearted Tressel, there was much more sizzle than steak – just a handful of players who traded memorabilia or autographs for tattoos and/or cash. They simply compounded their problem by happenstance – trading their swag to a guy who was the target of an FBI drug trafficking investigation.

And for that, the NCAA unloaded with both barrels. Many national pundits – as well as some who cover the team on a more local basis – continue to argue that the Buckeyes got off easy. Really? NCAA sanctions didn't cost only scholarships and a postseason ban in 2012. They completely sabotaged the 2011 season from the beginning, stripping the team of its head coach and three-year starting

quarterback not to mention a handful of other veteran starters for half of the year or more.

The penalties were not only punitive; they were downright draconian when compared to other programs around the nation who have been found to be playing outside the boundaries of NCAA bylaws.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK
Mark Rea

Perhaps the most high-profile case broke last August when former Miami (Fla.) booster Nevin Shapiro revealed that he had given more than 70 Hurricane football players and recruits money, cars, yacht rides, nightclub and strip-club access and even prostitutes between 2002 and 2010.

The Hurricanes were hit with several preliminary penalties, including a handful of player suspensions last season, and the school self-imposed its own postseason ban – slightly disingenuous since the team was 6-5 and barely bowl-eligible at the time.

Miami continues to await its day in NCAA court, but the prevailing opinion is that the school has done enough to mitigate the allegations made by Shapiro, who is currently serving a 20-year prison term for running a Ponzi scheme.

Then there was South Carolina, a program the NCAA slapped with a failure to monitor charge after finding Steve Spurrier's program was responsible for improper recruiting practices as well as providing extra benefits to its current and prospective players.

The Gamecocks received minimal scholarship reductions spaced out over a two-year period, three years of probation, reduced recruiting visits ... and that's it. Despite being found guilty of failing to properly monitor rules within its football program – including turning a blind eye to nearly \$50,000 given to athletes so they could live in a local hotel rather than on campus – South Carolina received no bowl ban.

Auburn skated away with no penalties whatsoever in 2011 despite a 13-month NCAA investigation into the recruitment of the quarterback Cam Newton. Despite acknowledgment that Newton's father shopped his son to Mississippi State for nearly \$200,000, the NCAA said it could find no proof that the school paid for the quarterback's services. Newton went on to win the Heisman Trophy and the Tigers were crowned national champions.

In each of those cases, no coach lost his job nor were any suspensions or fines even discussed.

But if you had not before been convinced of the utter hypocrisy that is the National Collegiate Athletic Association, I give you the ugly mess still percolating at Penn State involving former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky.

NCAA president Mark Emmert informed reporters earlier this year that Penn State officials had been "very, very forthcoming" as the NCAA looked into the child sexual abuse scandal that has rocked the school since November.

Still, Emmert continues to hedge where Nittany Lion football is concerned, saying the NCAA still hasn't decided whether the allegations leveled at Sandusky – as well as the subsequent cover-up that allegedly included former university president Graham Spanier, former athletic director Tim Curley and then

head coach Joe Paterno – fall under the umbrella governing NCAA bylaws on ethical conduct or institutional control.

And you want to tell me that Jim Tressel is a bad guy who deserved what amounts to the NCAA death sentence for coaches with a five-year show-cause penalty?

Love-Hate Relationship

You can find fault with Tressel if you want to dig hard enough. For every critic of his offensive philosophy, you could point to the 2006 season when the Buckeyes finished eighth in the nation in scoring and Troy Smith won the Heisman Trophy.

For everyone who said the coach failed on the biggest stage against the toughest opponents, I present as rebuttal the 2003 Fiesta Bowl, the 2010 Rose Bowl and a 5-3 record in career Bowl Championship Series games.

Then there are the critics who said Tressel displayed too much cronyism when it came to employing assistant coaches. Of course, one person's cronyism is another person's loyalty. Urban Meyer has stocked his first Ohio State staff with a bunch of guys with whom he has had prior relationships, but I'm not hearing many of the same complaints that were leveled at Tressel.

Tressel's chief indiscretion – the thing that probably wound up costing him his job – was the fact that he had taken micromanagement to the nth degree. He was becoming synonymous with Ohio State football and believed he had earned enough conference championship rings and victories over Michigan to do things his own way.

There were countless acts of kindness and generosity that emanated from Tressel, but he could also present a pricklier side, and he probably presented that side of his personality a little too often in the presence of university power-brokers. That could explain last summer's quick erosion of support from Gee and Smith.

Of course, Ohio State fans have always had a love-hate relationship with their head coaches. After winning the national championship in only his second season with the Buckeyes, Tressel could have been elected governor of Ohio in a landslide.

But for whatever reason, Tressel lost a great deal of his support following the 2006 title game loss to Meyer-coached Florida. My sense always was that Ohio State fans who had invested a tremendous amount of emotional capital in that game – not to mention real capital – began to take Tressel's coaching for granted and that 41-14 beatdown was a cold dose of reality. Support for the coach slowly began to ebb after that night in Arizona, and it didn't help the following year when the Buckeyes lost again in the national championship game.

Despite Tressel piling up Big Ten championship after Big Ten championship, not to mention a historic success rate against Michigan, fans who hadn't celebrated a national title in 34 years were already restless for another one. And when it appeared Tressel couldn't deliver, there were many more than eager to see him go.

In his place is Meyer, the über-successful coach who has two national championship rings. Make no mistake, though. If he doesn't add to that total – and rather quickly – Ohio State fans will tire of him as well.

Meyer would be well-advised to understand that short of winning every game in convincing fashion, his honeymoon will soon be over. Paul Brown was the last Ohio State head coach of note to leave Columbus without either being fired or forced out – and that was in 1943.

Vol. 31, No. 22
June 2012

www.BuckeyeSports.com

Buckeye Sports Bulletin (USPS 705-690, ISSN 0883-6833.) is published 24 times a year (weekly September through November, biweekly mid-March through May and January through early March and monthly June through August and December) by:

Columbus Sports Publications
1350 W. Fifth Ave., Suite 30
P.O. Box 12453
Columbus, Ohio 43212
(614) 486-2202

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$74.95/year.

PUBLISHER
Frank MoskowitzASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachsman 1944-1999MANAGING EDITOR
Mark ReaASSISTANT PUBLISHER
Becky Roberts

PHOTOGRAPHY

Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
Kevin Dye Josh Winslow

CONTRIBUTORS

Bill Armstrong Bob Roehm
David Breithaupt Julie Roy
Rich Exner Mark Schmetzer
Matthew Hager Steve Siegfried
Marcus Hartman Stacey Stathulis
Rich Leonardo Jeff Svoboda
Craig Merz Mike Wachsman
Eric Loughry Ari Wasserman

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES

Toni Daniels Jan Jager
Ron Friedman Jack Woodworth

2011-12 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 31)

| | | | |
|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| No. 1 | Sept. 10 | No. 13 | December |
| No. 2 | Sept. 17 | No. 14 | Jan. 14 |
| No. 3 | Sept. 24 | No. 15 | Jan. 28 |
| No. 4 | Oct. 1 | No. 16 | Feb. 11 |
| No. 5 | Oct. 8 | No. 17 | March 3 |
| No. 6 | Oct. 15 | No. 18 | March 17 |
| No. 7 | Oct. 29 | No. 19 | March 31 |
| No. 8 | Nov. 5 | No. 20 | April 14 |
| No. 9 | Nov. 12 | No. 21 | May |
| No. 10 | Nov. 19 | No. 22 | June |
| No. 11 | Nov. 26 | No. 23 | July |
| No. 12 | Nov. 30 | No. 24 | August |

The next issue (July cover date) will be mailed on July 3.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a privately owned newspaper and is not affiliated directly or indirectly with The Ohio State University.

BSB email address is: bsb@buckeyesports.com



Charter Member

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Quarterback Ready To Make Own Name At OSU

By ARI WASSERMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

J.T. Barrett's game isn't all that comparable to that of Robert Griffin III, the Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback from Baylor who was just selected second overall in April's NFL draft.

That's not enough for Barrett to escape the inevitable comparisons to perhaps the most exciting player in college football a year ago, however, specifically because Barrett's high school – Wichita Falls (Texas) Rider – is only four hours north of Baylor's campus.

"It'd be like comparing Vince Young to Colt McCoy," Rider head coach Jim Garfield told BSB. "I don't think it'd be a fair deal. What I do see, comparison-wise, is that they're both great leaders."

Being mentioned in the same sentence as Griffin – affectionately referred to as RG3 – makes for quite the compliment to Barrett. Remember, the Washington Redskins thought highly enough of Griffin to trade up in the draft to select him, sending an unprecedented three first-round picks and a second-round selection to the St. Louis Rams in order to do so.

But sometimes comparisons are more convenient than accurate.

Barrett, of course, is immensely athletic, which is why he was successful enough as a dual-threat quarterback to be offered a scholarship to play at Ohio State. However, Barrett hasn't made a conscious effort to emulate the way Griffin plays the game.

"A lot of people talked about me being the next RG3, but I don't really want to follow in somebody's footsteps," Barrett told BSB. "I just want to create my own path."

Had Barrett wanted to be the next Griffin, he had the opportunity. Coming off an impressive 103 season capped by an Alamo Bowl win over Washington, Baylor offered Barrett a scholarship hoping he'd be the next to lead the program in its efforts to continue trending upward.

The Bears weren't alone in offering Barrett a scholarship. Rated by Scout.com as the No. 8 quarterback in the 2013 class, Barrett pulled down a multitude of offers, including ones from Arizona, LSU, Nebraska, Texas Tech and others before ultimately selecting the Buckeyes.

Barrett points to the family atmosphere at Ohio State as the main reason he quickly chose to become a Buckeye. Forging his own path will just be an added benefit to attending college across the country.

"It wasn't that hard being compared to RG3," Barrett said. "I felt like wherever I went – Ohio State, Arizona, Connecticut – I wanted to just go to the best place for me and where I'd fit best not just for football but academically. I want to be successful in every phase of life."

Don't take Barrett's decision to attend Ohio State as a deliberate attempt to escape comparisons, especially because he'll immediately be associated with another dual-threat quarterback the second he steps foot on campus in Columbus.

That's because Ohio State's coaching staff likely views the 6-2, 205-pound prep star as the replacement for current starter Braxton Miller. Miller, now only a sophomore, still is in the early portions of his career at Ohio State and looks to be in position to hold his spot as the team's starting signal caller for at least the next two years.

"He's always been able to separate himself from comparisons," Garfield said of Barrett. "We've always discussed the comparisons to other quarterbacks or if Ohio State signs

another quarterback how he was going to handle something like that. The young man is a competitor. He's focused on what he has to accomplish."

Perhaps Barrett has removed himself from indulging in those comparisons because he hopes to play like someone else – Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning. Known for his innate ability to read defenses, Manning is a Super Bowl-winning quarterback regarded by most as one of the best signal callers in the NFL.

Manning, however, has never been a running threat, instead using his precision passing to dissect opposing defenses. Barrett hopes to model his game after Manning, not Michael Vick, the NFL's ultimate dual-threat quarterback.

"That's the quarterback's job – to pass the ball and get it downfield," Barrett said. "I want to get the ball to the receivers and let them make plays. That's what playing quarterback is all about."

Though it is possible that Ohio State's staff could decide to redshirt Barrett in his first season with the Buckeyes – thus creating three years of separation between him and Miller – head coach Urban Meyer has expressed his disdain for keeping players on the bench who could contribute.

Finding a way onto the field at quarterback, however, could be tricky, especially given the fact Miller is one of the brightest young stars in college football. Barrett doesn't think in those terms. To him, he'll be competing to start right away.

"He will use it as a mentoring process," Garfield said. "He will look at it from a teaching standpoint as him being a pupil and learning the ins and outs of Ohio State football. But he isn't going up there thinking he's going to be a backup. He's going to compete. That's the way he approaches things."

Barrett's athleticism is evident in his numbers. In his junior season a year ago, Barrett threw for 1,605 yards and 14 touchdowns and ran for 1,510 yards while leading the Raiders to the Texas 4A regional final.

Those who have watched Barrett perform have noticed his outward leadership. His ability to take charge in all situations is a tangible quality.

"You know that 'it' factor that people talk about? When people say a person has 'it,' J.T. does," Garfield said. "It's hard to explain because it's not just his presence in the offensive huddle, it's his presence on the whole team. You'll have kids that will try to say something positive or try to be a leader but not all ears will listen. With J.T. it's been totally different. When he speaks, everyone listens."

With that in mind, Barrett could be better prepared than the average recruit for the pressures associated with performing for a big-time collegiate program out of state.

Under the new coaching staff – particularly with the aid of offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Tom Herman – the Buckeyes are trying to re-establish themselves as contenders for the top talent in the state of Texas.

Given the vast infrastructure of high school football in the state, players are often exposed to the rigors of college football long before those opportunities present themselves. Because of that, Garfield feels as if Barrett will be more prepared to step in early at Ohio State and contribute.

"The things that we do here to develop our athletes for the next level are unbelievable," Garfield said. "The weight rooms, the camps they attend, all the combines that are provided

Get To Know: J.T. Barrett

High School – Wichita Falls (Texas) Rider

Position – Quarterback

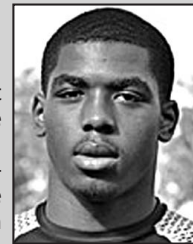
Height, Weight – 6-2, 205 pounds

Rankings – Barrett is a four-star prospect ranked the No. 8 quarterback prospect in the 2013 class, according to Scout.com.

Player Evaluation – "He is rated as a top-10 QB nationally, so the belief is there that he should definitely be able to compete and win at the highest level in college." – Scout.com national recruiting analyst Greg Powers

Strengths – "He is smart with the football in his hands. No matter the situation he stays calm, cool and makes quick and sound decisions. He commands presence in the pocket and moves the football down the field. He also has the ability to dial up the deep ball, which helps keep defenses honest. He is a dangerous weapon because he can work the entire field horizontally and vertically." – Powers

Weaknesses – "Barrett does not have a cannon for an arm. He plays in what is often a more windy area and he is able to deliver an accurate and catchable ball, but he does not have the big powerful throw that many associate with an NFL projection." – Powers



J.T. Barrett

for these young men – it's crazy. It's guys like Tom Herman, who is recruiting J.T., that bring in an idea of a game plan.

"Coach Herman talks about plays and (we're) on the cutting edge all the time at the high school level because of all the college guys that come in. Not just in game planning, but in strength and conditioning as well as

academic success, social success and things of that nature."

Barrett is accepting of whatever awaits when he does make the trek to Columbus.

"If I do have to sit a couple years behind (Miller), I'll work to get better and then be a starter eventually," Barrett said. "But I am just focused on getting better and competing."



FOR THE OHIO STATE FOOTBALL FAN



Reynolds Travel presents
2012 Ohio State away football trips:

Michigan State Trip: Sept. 28-30 — Two-night motorcoach trip with two nights in Mt. Pleasant, Mich., at the Soaring Eagle Hotel and Casino, \$20 daily meal credit and \$30 daily slot play credit, game tickets and game transportation - **\$467** per person, double occupancy

Indiana Trip: Oct. 12-14 — Two-night Motorcoach trip with two nights at the Belterra Hotel and Casino near Vevay, Ind., and buffet dinner, game ticket and game transportation - **\$496** per person, double occupancy

Penn State Trip: Oct. 26-28 — Two-night Motorcoach trip with two nights at the Ramada Inn in Altoona, Pa., and buffet dinner on Friday night and two buffet breakfasts and game ticket and game transportation - **\$467** per person, double occupancy

Wisconsin Trip: Nov. 16-18 — Two-night Motorcoach trip with two nights at the Ho-Chunk Hotel and Casino in Baraboo, Wisc., and buffet dinner on Friday night and two buffet breakfasts and game ticket and game transportation - **\$489** per person, double occupancy.

Reds Trip: Saturday, July 14 — Same-day Reds trip to Cincinnati to see the Reds vs. Cardinals (7:10 p.m. game) by motorcoach with buffet dinner and Club Level seats - **\$149** per person.

Don't wait too long to book!

Trips fully escorted by Reynolds Travel, offering Ohio State trips since 1978.

**Call today or check the website at
www.reynoldstravel.net**



**8934 Commerce Loop Dr.
Columbus, OH 43240
Phone: 614-847-8008
Toll Free: 866-880-0577**

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Several Fresh Faces Line Meyer's First Depth Chart

By **MARCUS HARTMAN**
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

True to his winter word, new head coach Urban Meyer set his first Ohio State football depth chart in May following a spirited 15 spring practices.

The result was a vastly remade offensive lineup in contrast to the defense, where the majority of the names were familiar from last season.

"We made a big emphasis with our players about spring practice not being about just fundamental development and skill development but also earning a spot on the team because our focus in August is not developing a depth chart, it's trying to go win a game," Meyer said May 16.

"I think the urgency was there this spring, especially after the players were really made well aware of their playing time will be determined in spring practice, not so much in fall."

Nine players are either new to the lineup or find themselves somewhere other than where they spent most of last season, with one spot still apparently up for grabs.

The most movement is on the offensive line where Jack Mewhort moved from right guard to left tackle while Corey Linsley (center), Marcus Hall (right guard) and Reid Fragel (right tackle) moved into the starting lineup with Andrew Norwell returning at left guard, where he started the last eight games of 2011.

Meyer came away from spring feeling much better about the entire starting offensive line than he did entering spring practice. That was thanks in large part to the development of Linsley, a part-time player at guard last year, and Taylor Decker, a freshman tackle who enrolled in March after graduating early from Vandalia (Ohio) Butler. The youngster emerged from spring ball with a shot to overtake Fragel when the team reconvenes in the fall.

"Without question the addition of Taylor Decker makes your offensive line functional," Meyer said. "I would put them at non-functional in January and very functional after spring practice. I thought Coach (Ed) Warinner did a very good job with them in what some would say a complicated, a very different offense, and they came in and I've got to give those guys a lot of credit."

The first-year head coach also called Linsley one of his surprises of spring, pointing to a newfound commitment out of the Youngstown (Ohio) Boardman product as the reason for his development. Linsley didn't disagree.

"It's always nice to hear the stuff in the media, but what he tells me behind closed doors gives me motivation," Linsley said. "He's just telling me every day I have to get better. The thing that matters to me the most is I've gotten back to the values (Boardman coach D.J.) Ogilvie instilled in me – working hard and being tough."

On the other side of the ball, Meyer listed defensive lineman Michael Bennett as his surprise player, but that didn't get the sophomore into the starting lineup. Bennett is listed as a backup to tackle Johnathan Hankins despite splitting time in the top unit this spring with end Adam Bellamy, but Meyer said that the Centerville, Ohio, native will see extensive playing time.

"I see we have him listed as a backup here, but that's not necessarily going to be the case in the fall," the coach said. "Our four best players will be on the field at the same time, and it's hard for me to say he's not one of our four best. We'll move him around."

Bennett said he was amenable to any role he fills going forward this fall.

"Whatever the coaches want," Bennett said. "I want to be a big contributor to the team, and I want to be able to make sure I make plays and do everything I can."

As with the offensive line, the skill positions had a much different look on the depth chart released in mid-May from the one for the Buckeyes' last game, a 24-17 loss to Florida in the Gator Bowl on Jan. 2.

Senior Jordan Hall emerged from a crowded backfield as the No. 1 running back while sophomores Evan Spencer and Devin Smith ascended to the starting lineup at wide receiver. Corey "Philly" Brown is listed as the slot receiver after starting on the outside a year ago as a sophomore, but Meyer said the receivers still have a way to go.

"(The wide receivers are) probably the most unprepared group I've ever dealt with when it comes to practice," Meyer said.



Urban Meyer

"That's not saying that I wasn't pleased with the progress, but from their performance last year statistically and on the field understand where we were starting from. The good thing is I think we have enough talent in there to make some improvement and be very functional by the fall."

The Buckeyes also boast returning starters at quarterback (Braxton Miller), fullback (Zach Boren) and tight end

(Jake Stoneburner). The use of the latter two players will be interesting to watch as the Buckeyes move to more three-receiver sets in Meyer's spread offense. Stoneburner could be split out wide more often while Boren takes on an H-back role that includes more possession of the ball.

On defense, middle linebacker Curtis Grant is the only player new to the lineup from the end of last season. He replaces the graduated Andrew Sweat and slides in between Ryan Shazier (weak side) and Etienne Sabino (strong side).

That development was pleasing to the five-star prospect, who admitted he struggled mentally a season ago as a true freshman while making only two tackles in 10 games in a special teams role.

"It started off hard because expectations were so high, but I just probably needed a year to catch up to the college speed, study the game and get to know things better to get a good confidence level," Grant said. "I think my confidence level has gone up a lot. I've just been studying a lot and working with the different players and coaches. It's been helping me a lot."

The secondary also contained a bit of a surprise with sophomore Doran Grant listed as a co-starter along with senior Travis Howard at cornerback. Howard started last season opposite Bradley Roby, who is back for his sophomore season.

The defensive line also featured a few notes worth watching. Senior Nathan Williams was listed as a co-starter with Bellamy at defensive end after missing all of 2011 and the spring with a knee injury. Converted offensive lineman Chris Carter,

Ohio State Post-Spring Depth Chart

| OFFENSE | | DEFENSE | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Left Tackle | | Defensive End | |
| 74 JACK MEWHORT, 6-6, 310, JR. | | 93 ADAM BELLAMY, 6-4, 292, JR. | |
| 76 Darryl Baldwin, 6-6, 292, So. | | 43 NATHAN WILLIAMS, 6-3, 249, 5TH SR. | |
| Left Guard | | 57 Chase Farris, 6-4, 286, R-Fr. | |
| 78 ANDREW NORWELL, 6-6, 304, JR. | | Nose Tackle | |
| 55 Tommy Brown, 6-4, 310, R-Fr. | | 53 GARRETT GOEBEL, 6-4, 285, 5TH SR. | |
| Center | | 51 Joel Hale, 6-4, 295, So. | |
| 71 COREY LINSLEY, 6-3, 292, JR. | | 72 Chris Carter, 6-4, 358, R-Fr. | |
| 50 Jacoby Boren, 6-2, 283, Fr. | | Defensive Tackle | |
| Right Guard | | 52 JOHNATHAN HANKINS, 6-4, 317, JR. | |
| 79 MARCUS HALL, 6-6, 317, JR. | | 63 Michael Bennett, 6-3, 277, So. | |
| 73 Antonio Underwood, 6-2, 301, So. | | Leo End | |
| Right Tackle | | 54 JOHN SIMON, 6-2, 260, SR. | |
| 77 REID FRAGEL, 6-8, 298, SR. | | 88 Steve Miller, 6-3, 255, So. | |
| 68 Taylor Decker, 6-7, 310, Fr. | | 50 J.T. Moore, 6-3, 250, So. | |
| X Receiver | | Outside Linebacker | |
| 15 DEVIN SMITH, 6-1, 196, SO. | | 10 RYAN SHAZIER, 6-2, 226, SO. | |
| 83 Michael Thomas, 6-2, 193, Fr. | | 42 Luke Roberts, 6-1, 226, Fr. | |
| Z Receiver | | 36 Conner Crowell, 6-1, 233, R-Fr. | |
| 16 EVAN SPENCER, 6-2, 205, SO. | | Middle Linebacker | |
| 9 Verlon Reed, 6-1, 200, So. | | 14 CURTIS GRANT, 6-3, 235, SO. | |
| H Receiver | | 32 Storm Klein, 6-3, 242, Sr. | |
| 10 PHILLY BROWN, 6-0, 186, JR. | | Outside Linebacker | |
| 80 Chris Fields, 6-0, 197, Jr. | | 6 ETIENNE SABINO, 6-3, 237, 5TH SR. | |
| Tight End | | 59 Stewart Smith, 6-3, 230, Sr. | |
| 11 JAKE STONEBURNER, 6-5, 245, 5TH SR. | | 15 Joshua Perry, 6-4, 231, Fr. | |
| 86 Jeff Heuerman, 6-6, 247, So. | | Cornerback | |
| 81 Nick Vannett, 6-6, 248, R-Fr. | | 25 BRADLEY ROBY, 5-11, 190, SO. | |
| Quarterback | | 9 Adam Griffin, 5-8, 180, So. | |
| 5 BRAXTON MILLER, 6-2, 210, SO. | | Cornerback | |
| 13 Kenny Guiton, 6-3, 206, Jr. | | 7 TRAVIS HOWARD, 6-1, 196, 5TH SR. | |
| Fullback | | 12 DORAN GRANT, 5-11, 188, SO. | |
| 44 ZACH BOREN, 6-1, 246, SR. | | Safety | |
| 49 Adam Homan, 6-3, 245, Sr. | | 2 CHRISTIAN BRYANT, 5-10, 190, JR. | |
| Running Back | | 3 Corey Brown, 6-1, 197, Jr. | |
| 7 JORDAN HALL, 5-9, 198, SR. | | Safety | |
| 34 Carlos Hyde, 6-0, 235, Jr. | | 4 C.J. BARNETT, 6-1, 202, JR. | |
| Punter | | 19 Orhian Johnson, 6-3, 210, 5th Sr. | |
| 17 BEN BUCHANAN, 5-11, 190, 5TH SR. | | SPECIALISTS | |
| 24 Drew Basil, 6-2, 210, Jr. | | Long Snapper | |
| Kicker | | 56 GEORGE MAKRIDIS, 6-2, 225, JR. | |
| 24 DREW BASIL, 6-1, 210, JR. | | 41 Bryce Haynes, 6-4, 209, R-Fr. | |
| 39 Kyle Clinton, 6-1, 212, So. | | Holder | |
| | | 17 BEN BUCHANAN, 5-11, 190, 5TH SR. | |
| | | 13 Kenny Guiton, 6-3, 206, Jr. | |

a redshirt freshman, is also listed as a backup.

Meyer said he was not ready to set his return men's names in stone but identified Jordan Hall and Devin Smith as top candidates.

The head coach made setting a depth chart a priority in spring practice but confirmed there is some room for movement in the fall as the team prepares to open the season against Miami (Ohio) on Sept. 1.

"In the competitive nature of what we do, if you recruit well and you develop well, you've got to hang on for dear life to your position," he said. "If we do that then we've

obviously got a bunch of good players on this team."

Meyer said several incoming freshmen who will join the program in June could fight their way into the mix. That includes defensive linemen Noah Spence, Adolphus Washington and Tommy Schutt as well as linebackers David Perkins and Jamal Marcus.

"I anticipate Noah Spence would be in an immediate competition for playing time just from what I know as a player and what we need as a pass rusher," Meyer said.

BSB staff writer Jeff Svoboda contributed to this report.



MIDDLETON
PRINTING, CO.

1220 Corrugated Way • Columbus, OH 43201
(614) 294-7277
 (614) 294-7449 fax
 middleton@miltonprinting.net

At Middleton Printing, we offer you quality printing, competitive prices and *exceptional service!*

With over 55 years of printing experience, see what we can do for you!

Score big on your next printing project with the quality and service you'll receive when you have your printing done at Middleton Printing Co.

10% OFF

Any Printing Order of \$250 or more



MIDDLETON
PRINTING, CO.

(614) 294-7277

One-Color, Two-Color, Four-Color...
 Brochures, Flyers, Newsletters...
 Whatever your printing needs...
Contact one of our sales representatives today!

Time Likely To Heal Wounds Left By Scandal

Continued From Page 1

"People didn't really know where to direct their anger, and if you were even the least bit culpable you were going to get some of that anger whether it was me or (ESPN's) 'Outside the Lines' or Sports Illustrated or Gene Smith or Coach Tressel or the NCAA – it didn't matter. All they knew was a coach they loved was gone and somebody was going to get yelled at."

The timing may have been more of a shock than the actual action.

No one was quite sure Tressel would survive the ordeal despite the school's stated intentions to keep him. He coached the Buckeyes through spring practice and spoke after the spring game in April as if his pending five-game suspension would be just another bump in the road that would be overcome, but all the while stories had continued to break, some above the surface with others a bit deeper.

The one that seemed to have fans most spooked involved a rumored piece in the works at Sports Illustrated. The magazine was known to have sent one of its writers, George Dohrmann, to Columbus to work on a story that was being described as a potential program killer on local talk radio and Internet message boards.

Dohrmann himself fed the hype, using his Twitter page to tell readers they would understand why Tressel's career was over after they read his story. When it was published on the magazine's website the evening of the coach's firing, though, it proved to have little new information.

That served to inflame Ohio State fans even more.

"You read this SI article and whether you believed everything in it or you believed nothing in it, you didn't really get the sense this article would have made the situation so much worse," Neft said.

The NCAA's final report found one player on the team at that point who had been newly accused of wrongdoing in the story – linebacker Dorian Bell – to have violated NCAA rules while eight other players were exonerated.

Regardless, though, Tressel's time was done.

His forced resignation served as fodder for sportswriters across the country, many of whom were quick to point out the irony of his fall from the author of books about doing things the right way to exile over ethical violations.

A year later, those scribes have moved on to other stories as the news cycle churns on. With a plethora of scandals breaking out across the country – in places such as Arkansas, Auburn, Miami (Fla.), North Carolina, Oregon and Penn State – there has been no shortage of stories to write.

In Ohio, newspapers, websites, TV programs and radio shows have filled their content needs with details of new head coach Urban Meyer's early recruiting exploits, a new winter conditioning program and the installation of his spread offense.

Meanwhile, Tressel's reputation has begun to bounce back.

The More Things Change?

Like just about everyone BSB interviewed for this story, Andy Staples had to stop a second to ponder the fact 12 months already have passed since Tressel's forced resignation.

A national college football writer for Sports Illustrated based in Florida, Staples said he thinks non-Buckeye fans likely think first of how Tressel's tenure ended but ultimately more about how his teams dominated the Big Ten and made regular BCS bowl appearances.

"It ended badly for Woody Hayes, too, and he's deified not just at Ohio State but throughout college football," Staples said in reference to the Buckeyes' College Football Hall of Fame coach, who patrolled the Columbus sidelines from 1951-78. "(Tressel) is kind of a Mount Rushmore-type coach. I don't think people are going to dwell on the bad as you get further and further away from the investigation."

The view is similar closer to home, where Bill Livingston and John Porentas both see an Ohio State fan base mostly in the mood to forgive.

"I think fans will tend to remember the good stuff," said Livingston, who has been a columnist for The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer since 1984. "I look back on college and there were certainly some gray Mondays when I had math class where I was just lucky to scrape through. I don't remember those – I remember the fun times and the good professors and the games that were exciting."

"I think that's the natural inclination, especially with the record Tressel set up. I think it will be unbalanced toward the sunshine with the fans."

That figures to be especially true in the Cleveland area, where Tressel was born and raised. He grew up in the suburb of Berea, where the NFL's Browns have their practice facility, and played quarterback for his father, Lee, at Baldwin-Wallace College in the town.

"He was Cleveland's guy, and if you're from Cleveland you have to do a lot for people to turn on you," Livingston said. "There's a lot of insularity and a lot of loyalty."

Of course, folks in Columbus are quite fond of Tressel as well. Porentas, the publisher of The-Ozone.net, sees that daily as he does business in the state's capital city.

"I think they like the fact he brought some things back to the program that they felt were missing in terms of public perception," Porentas said. "They felt that he 're-Ohio-ized' the program in terms of recruiting, relationships with Ohio high school coaches, in terms of Ohio-style traditions down to the way he signed autographs, which was the same way Woody used to."

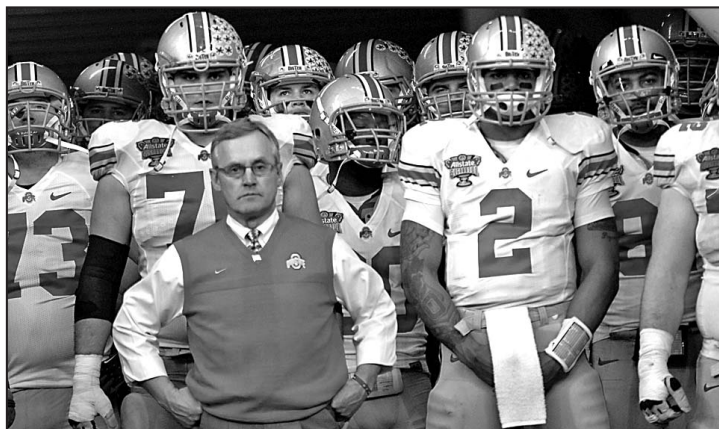
While that would seem to be the viewpoint of the majority, it is not the only one.

"I think there are those who think he really let them down, that he is very close to scumbag level, whatever that means," Porentas said. "I do think some people are very disappointed by what they think are the facts."

"I think there is a larger group who still hold Tressel in reverence. They feel like he made a mistake, but the overall body of work supersedes all that. I think that's the larger group, but I don't think there's much in between. I don't think there are people who are kind of waffling on the thing."

Indeed, there was little confusion on which side each person fell who weighed in on a recent thread on the "Ask the Insiders" message board at BuckeyeSports.com, BSB's home on the Scout.com network.

A discussion titled "I still miss Tressel" lasted for eight days in the middle of May. It drew 133 total responses from a variety of board users. Most agreed with the initial



FILE PHOTO

FAN FAVORITE – Former Ohio State coach Jim Tressel (left, foreground) remains a popular figure among many Buckeye football fans.

thought, but some said they were ready to move on.

Fans we spoke to seemed to indicate the same types of feelings.

Robert Mosack, 43, is among the dissenters.

Describing himself as "an OSU fan, not a coach worshipper," he told BSB he was initially thrilled with Tressel's hiring and, quite naturally, the results but grew tired of the style of offense the famously conservative coach remained wed to.

"The man sold out 100 players and millions of fans to protect a few guys that stupidly and selfishly broke rules," said Mosack, who lives in San Diego. "What part of lying or dishonesty don't people understand? He lied, period. As time has passed, I've become convinced that he probably would not have covered up what he did if star players like Pryor, Posey and Herron weren't on the list."

"He did some great things for OSU football, but in the end, those are balanced by some pretty bad things. I'm glad he was hired and glad we had him – also glad he's gone."

More fans seem to come down on the side of people such as Grant Kunkle and Alan Plunkett, however.

"He was more a 'fall from grace' story than how bad his violations were," said Kunkle, a Fairborn, Ohio, resident. "He was seen as such a moral person. He wrote books and sold his image as one of faith and honor. I sure wished he could have finished his tenure under good terms. Sad (Tressel) and Woody, the two greatest coaches ever at (Ohio State), left in disgrace."

Plunkett, a Columbus resident who said he developed a personal relationship with Tressel early in the coach's tenure at Ohio State via business contacts, agreed the good he did far outweighs the bad.

"Obviously it was very difficult to witness a media onslaught directed down upon someone you care for and know to be a true man of integrity," Plunkett said.

He described the mood around the Woody Hayes Athletic Center in the days leading up to May 30, 2011, as "as dark as you can imagine."

"As a good friend of mine in the program said, 'How can something like this happen to such a truly good man?'" Plunkett said. "Fortunately, none of what transpired changed the way any of us feel about Jim Tressel."

"Absolutely nothing has changed in

terms of my respect for Coach Tressel. The way he has handled the situation is exactly what I would have expected – pure class and dignity. My favorite quote from him is, 'Ten percent of life is about what happens to you and 90 percent is how you respond to it.' I think he is responding very well."

The Meyer Wild Card

The end of the Tressel era at Ohio State certainly did not occur in a vacuum. All of those BSB spoke to agreed the hiring of Meyer to replace him after longtime assistant Luke Fickell guided the team on an interim basis for a season figures to color the way Tressel's exit is viewed in the years to come.

While Tressel compiled a record of 106-22 in his 10 years on the job, Meyer was putting together a similarly impressive resume and building a reputation as one of the best coaches in college football from 2001-10, the same year's as Tressel's OSU tenure.

In three different stops as a head coach, Meyer went 104-23. He won five conference championships (two in the Mountain West Conference at Utah and three in the Southeastern Conference at Florida) and a pair of national titles.

Meyer, 47, is also a northeast Ohio native, having been born and raised in Ashtabula, and his hiring was met with near-universal euphoria across the Ohio State fan base in November.

He immediately re-energized a recruiting effort that had languished during the summer months and the regular season after Tressel's exit, and his promise to bring a new offensive approach to Columbus caused a buzz felt throughout the winter and into the spring.

Ohio State historian Jack Park felt that as he traveled throughout the country speaking to alumni groups.

"As far as what Urban Meyer brings to the table, I think there's a very strong possibility that some of Ohio State's best seasons ever are coming here with him," Park said. "He brings new energy to this. He's a little bit different type of a personality, maybe a little bit more competitive during practices and things like this."

Meyer's first team is hamstrung by a postseason ban that is part of the punishment from the NCAA violations committed by Tressel, a handful of his players and a longtime booster, but optimism is high as the Buckeyes return 16 starters from the

COVER STORY

end of last season. The team will still be relatively young, perhaps boding well for a 2013 run after a year of experience in Meyer's offense.

"I think Ohio State will hit a high note pretty quickly," Park said. "I think this will be a super season coming in. I think that will probably help Jim Tressel's legacy a little bit because it will take some of the attention off of that and be something positive. We had a losing season last year for the first time since 1988 and if we were to have more than that would hurt it, I think. I think some people would start to blame him for that whether it's right or wrong - 'Look what Tressel did for our program. Guys got suspended and then he left and now we're losing games.'"

Livingston expressed a bit of concern about the longevity of Meyer's time in Columbus - he took the reins of the Ohio State program less than a year after quitting as head coach at Florida in part because of health issues causing him to burn out - but shared the viewpoint that he could make the final face on the Tressel legacy a bit happier.

"I don't know how long Urban is going to last, but he has two national championships and he is such a forceful, commanding type," Livingston said. "He's from northern Ohio, too, and he fits the whole thing too. He just has that kind of 'it' factor."

Parentas suggested winning is not the only thing Meyer can do to make Tressel look better.

"Ironically I think it does kind of salve the wound, and what will salve it even more is the first three-and-out or the first loss because they'll think Tressel would never do that," Parentas said. "Or they'll lose a shootout and people will think of Tresselball and how he won close games."

"I think the hiring of Meyer right now has helped Tressel's image with the public, and I think the first inkling of any kind of failure will also help Tressel. People will yearn for the days of, 'Oh, Tress never lost those games.'"

Many expect Meyer to match or even exceed Tressel's rate of success in Columbus, but that could figure to be easier said than done.

Tressel dominated the Big Ten in a way not seen since the days of Hayes in the 1970s.

"This is what I don't think people understand," Staples said. "They're assuming Meyer is going to come in and do what Tressel did and kick everybody's butt in the Big Ten. It's going to be really hard to do that because there is so much going on throughout the league."

Tressel's last team shared a Big Ten title with Wisconsin and Michigan State, two programs that have risen in recent years under head coaches Bret Bielema and Mark Dantonio (a former Tressel assistant). The Badgers and Spartans were generally considered the class of the league last season when they staged a pair of classic games decided by late scores. That included a Big Ten championship victory that propelled Wisconsin to its second consecutive Rose Bowl.

Meanwhile, Michigan stunned many in the Big Ten and college football at large by winning 11 games in 2011, the Wolverines' first season under head coach Brady Hoke. They snapped a seven-game losing streak to the Buckeyes, and Hoke is in the midst of putting together highly regarded recruiting classes in back-to-back years.

Dantonio also put an end to a long dry spell against Ohio State last year as the Spartans beat the Buckeyes for the first time since 1999.

The addition of traditional power Nebraska and institution of a Big Ten championship game also change the equation when it comes to winning conference titles and qualifying for BCS games.

"It's kind of a different league now," Staples said. "The one thing you've got to look back on with Tressel is just how dominant they were. I really don't think while it was going on that people appreciated that. They liked beating Michigan every year, but to dominate a league like the Big Ten the way they did, I don't know that it's ever going to happen again."

"I don't think he can put up a streak against Michigan like that, but that might be more Hoke's doing than Meyer's doing. It's pretty amazing the run they had going under Tressel."

Like the others, he is bullish on the chance Meyer can play a positive role in the way Tressel is remembered even if the numbers do not add up the same way.

"If this caused a noticeable and prolonged dip in the success of the program, they will blame it on Tressel. It will reflect badly on the Tressel administration," Staples said. "But if things pick up and Urban is winning, I don't think that will happen. Any sort of lingering nasty feeling about the way it ended will go away and people will just remember that he was a really good coach."

He added that it is his belief the way the Tressel regime came to an end might not have changed the viewpoint of many around college football.

Although Ohio State fans preferred to hold him up as an example of how to run a program without cheating, Tressel had long been the subject of rumors that not everything was aboveboard.

He also had to answer for the fact three of his best players - Ohio State tailback Maurice Clarett and quarterback Troy Smith along with Ray Isaac, a star quarterback when Tressel was head coach at Youngstown State - had been found guilty of accepting illegal benefits before Pryor ever showed up on campus.

"Anybody who really followed the stuff didn't buy into the whole squeaky clean senator thing anyway," Staples said. "I mean, think about it: His three best players got in trouble with the NCAA. If any other coach had that happen to him, he would have been labeled the dirtiest coach in America."

On the day of Tressel's ouster, Staples led his column with that point of view. However, he still felt the national reputation of Tressel was generally positive even if it wasn't perfect. That could be because many who follow closely do so with the understanding a certain amount of breaking of the rules goes on everywhere.

"If you follow it, you're like, he's really not that different from all these other guys," Staples said. "He's going right up to the line just like they are, as evidenced by these guys who got in trouble with the NCAA, but for the most part when people wrote about him or they talked about him on ESPN, that stuff didn't get brought up."

"Michigan and Penn State fans, I'm sure they really disliked him and said all kinds of awful things, but I think in SEC country, Big 12 country and Pac-12 country, I don't think they felt that way. I think they saw him as The Senator."

In choosing how to write about Tressel during his tenure - and particularly at the end - Livingston also admitted to feeling some inner conflict.

Tressel's success on the field and his good deeds could not be denied, but neither could his admitting he was guilty of violating NCAA regulations on ethical behavior.

"I know that he had done a number of things that he wanted no publicity for," Livingston said. "He turned around a lot of the academics to a large extent. He was a man of faith and good works to his players and cared about them and all of those things, but there always was that side of him that he was willing not to be on top of stuff he didn't need to be on top of."

"I think a lot of people saw that, and that was why the columns were so hard to write for me because I did see both sides of him and I wanted to try to bring out what I felt, that he wasn't a demon at all but that he wasn't an angel. Few of us are."

Hayes Comparison Apt

While the future under Meyer figures to play a role in how Tressel's career ultimately is viewed, another strong hint can likely be found in the past.

Long before his career came to its own surprising end, Tressel garnered many comparisons to Hayes for his affection for Ohio State football, his conservative views and strategies, his track record on the field and his extensive work off it.

Both tried to keep their charitable contributions out of the public eye but touched countless lives.

"I think it's probably pretty similar," Park said. "I don't think anybody would ever exceed what Woody Hayes did for other people. There are so many stories out there of people who were down on their luck or hospitalized, former players who had run into some tough times. He made a point of not letting those things get out."

Tressel's sudden and sad end gave him a couple of more things in common with Hayes as well. Both were found guilty of NCAA violations, and both saw their time as Ohio State head coach come to an end prematurely.

In the case of Hayes, he admitted to using money from his own pocket to help players in financial need from 1951-55. An investigation also revealed some players had received pay for jobs they did not perform, and the football team was banned from postseason play for one season.

That proved to be just a bump in the road, however, a misdeed all but forgotten now.

Hayes' firing had nothing to do with NCAA violations. He was let go after punching Clemson linebacker Charlie Bauman in the closing moments of a 17-15 loss in the Gator Bowl on Dec. 29, 1978.

"I think Tressel's is a little more serious, though," Park said. "What Woody did was completely wrong and embarrassing. It was embarrassing to him later on - a 65-year-old man did this on national television - but he was losing it. There were a lot of telltale signs the last year or two."

"He had a huge temper and things just got the best of him. I think maybe Hayes' dismissal, the way that was done might be a little easier for fans to forget and maybe forgive because Tressel's affected so many other people. Hayes' was really one incident where his temper got the best of him. We've all had situations where we did something or said something we'd like to take back, and I think that's basically what happened there, although he had been warned about his temper."

As referenced by Park and Staples, Hayes remains highly regarded in Ohio and beyond. The rehabilitation of his image did not take place overnight, but he eventually came to be fully embraced.

Hayes is one of only a handful of non-band members to dot the 'i' in the Ohio State University marching band's famous "Script Ohio" performance on a football game day, and he was asked to give the university

commencement address in March 1986. He wept openly on the latter day, one he called the greatest of his life.

"I appreciate it so much to be able to come here and talk to a graduating class at the Ohio State University, the great, great university that you and I both love," he told those assembled at St. John Arena.

Of course, Hayes is not the only Ohio State head coach to be fired.

The same happened to the two men who followed him in the post, Earle Bruce and John Cooper. Both are now popular members of the local community in Columbus.

"If you look back at ex-coaches in general, they all in the end are rehabilitated," Parentas said. "Earle is beloved, Cooper is accepted and liked, and at the time of their firings nobody liked them. I think with time people will look back at Tressel's record and the things he brought to the program and really like him."

"I think they'll forgive that year of angst and pain and see him as a guy who brought some great years to Ohio State football."

The football facility built in 1987 is named after Hayes, and a sign on the facade of the stadium that commemorates his accomplishments was unveiled during the 2005 season.

In that vein, Ohio State officials did not even wait a year to begin to recognize Tressel's contributions to the program. Before last season began, a wall inside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center had already been remade with a picture of the former coach and a list of his various successes on the field and in the classroom.

Many fans have already gone on record to declare they want to see him dot the 'i,' and a commencement speech would not seem to be farfetched someday, either.

Only time will tell if any or all of those things happen, but Tressel does not have to worry about being forgotten.

Neft said the former coach is not a daily topic of conversation between him and his listeners, but there are reminders of his presence from time to time.

"It happens pretty regularly," Neft said. "After the spring game I was at a bar that Saturday night and some people who had driven into town from Youngstown or from Akron came up to me and said, 'We really appreciate what you say about Tressel.' I stick by what I really believe and that is Tressel by and large is a good person. I don't think he did anything maliciously. He screwed up, there's no doubt, but I'm not going to kill the guy the rest of his career. I don't think he intentionally harmed people."

The most recent example came in mid-May when Neft wondered on the air if Tressel would make the College Football Hall of Fame someday. With a winning percentage over 60 percent and more than 10 years as a college head coach (including 15 at Youngstown State), he meets the minimum criteria, and an official from the foundation that maintains the hall of fame told BSB there is no disqualification as a result of being found guilty of NCAA violations.

If Neft's listenership were allowed to vote it would likely result in Tressel's induction.

"A lot of people called in, and not surprisingly it was pretty overwhelmingly positive that yes he should get in," Neft said of the on-air conversation that day. "If you did it nationally I don't know that it would be like that, but in Columbus it's still a hot topic. People really liked this guy and still want to hear stories about him."

"The longer he's gone, it's just like Woody, I imagine. The longer he's removed from the program the greater the legend grows, the more people will become endeared and want to know and want to talk about it."

Above All Else, Tressel Brought Pride To OSU

It has now been a year since Jim Tressel was ousted as Ohio State football coach after 10 highly successful seasons. In this issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, we attempt to look at Tressel's legacy at OSU. Many followers of the Buckeye football program check in with their opinions on the matter elsewhere in the paper.

Time and change will show how Tressel and his accomplishments are ultimately viewed by Buckeye fans and followers of college football. But I, for one, think that what Tressel meant to Ohio State is being forgotten in the aftermath of his grievous NCAA violations and the euphoria among Buckeye fans over the hiring of Urban Meyer, a coach who has yet to win a ballgame in the scarlet and gray.

When I think of the Tressel era and what he brought to the Ohio State program, it is about more than just wins and losses. It's also about pride – pride that he brought back to the team and pride that he brought back to Buckeye fans.

You have to think back to the scenario during the waning days of the 2000 football season, John Cooper's final year at Ohio State.

The Buckeyes were guilty of three interceptions as they fell to Michigan to finish the regular season at 8-3, relegating Ohio State – 6-6 the previous season – to the Outback Bowl to face South Carolina. In the days leading up to the bowl game, it was reported that as many as 23 players – including senior receiver Reggie Germany, who failed all of his fall quarter classes – would not have been eligible to play if the Buckeyes had qualified for the national championship game that was scheduled for Jan. 3, the first day of winter quarter.

It was revealed that the team's graduation rate was last in the Big Ten by a wide margin and was roughly half of the national average. Word also came out that senior lineman Tyson Walter was suing teammate LeCharles Bentley over damages in connection with an alleged assault during conditioning drills earlier in the year.

There were several other incidents that reflected poorly on the program in the days leading up to the game, and the turmoil was capped off when Ryan Brewer, a former Ohio Mr. Football out of Troy who was spurned by the Buckeyes, ran roughshod over Ohio State in a stunning 24-7 loss to the unranked Gamecocks. A day later, Cooper was gone.

"I would say that (the loss to South Carolina) was the capstone of what we've seen of a deteriorating climate within the football program," then-athletic director Andy Geiger said in announcing Cooper's firing. "There were concerns about discipline, competitiveness and academics – a whole series of things. I thought yesterday's performance (in the loss) was proportionally an exhibit of all those things."

Enter Tressel, much to the disappointment of many Buckeye fans at the time, who had hoped for a bigger name than the highly successful head of the Youngstown State program. Tressel took that combination of "discipline, competitiveness and academics" that Geiger talked about, sprinkled in a few wrinkles of his own like family, tradition and respect of seniors and the importance of one's senior year and turned it into a recipe for almost immediate success.

In his first season of 2001, the Buckeyes beat Michigan in Ann Arbor for the first time since 1987, and in his second year, Ohio State survived a grueling 14-game schedule to finish the season undefeated and win the school's first national championship in 34 years.

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

In Tressel's 10 seasons in Columbus, his teams won at least a share of seven Big Ten championships and beat Michigan an astounding nine of 10 times (sorry, although the 2010 season was "vacated," you and I saw the games so I still recognize them as being played). Counting the 2010 season, he posted a 106-22 record for an .828 winning percentage, second in school history only to the .889 mark (16-2) posted by Carroll Widdoes from 1944-45.

Up until the scandal that led to his ouster, this was all done in what appeared to be a squeaky clean way and in a fashion that seemed to evoke the previously mentioned pride throughout the program and Buckeye Nation.

But his continued success seemed to spoil some Buckeye fans, who were unhappy that he didn't take Ohio State to another national crown. Those fans pointed to the two losses in the national championship games following the 2006 and 2007 seasons to SEC teams Florida and LSU as proof that Tressel was just a big fish in a small Big Ten pond and couldn't compete on the big stage.

Never mind that the Buckeyes hadn't really played for the national title since 1979, Earle Bruce's first year as head coach, and Tressel had put his team in that position three times in six years, beating traditional power and heavy favorite Miami (Fla.) for the 2002 crown.

Many of those same fans also seemed bored with all the wins over Michigan.

Never mind that one of the major reasons Cooper's tenure in Columbus failed was his inability to beat the archrival Wolverines. Those fans credited Tressel's success against the rival to a downturn in the Michigan program.

Perhaps, but many a weaker Buckeye or Wolverine squad had scored the upset through the years, yet Tressel was able to reel off seven straight wins over Michigan, including beating the No. 2-ranked team in the country in 2006 to earn a trip to the BCS National Championship Game.

In my mind, it's a pretty impressive record and I think most Buckeye fans, as they look back, will agree once the shock of the final scandal begins to fade away. Ohio State fans forgive and continue to revere Woody Hayes despite his demise in the 1978 Gator Bowl.

Interestingly, I think Meyer will have a lot to do with how Tressel is perceived in the future. If Meyer is ultra-successful, Tressel may end up being caught in the shuffle. It potentially reminds me of the case of Buckeye running back Tim Spencer. I maintain that Spencer was one of the greatest running backs in school history, yet he doesn't seem to get the due he deserves.

I believe that is because he came so quickly after Archie Griffin and was followed immediately by Keith Byars. He was lost in the shuffle, the same shuffle in which Meyer might catch Tressel.

Meyer seems to recognize Tressel's legacy.

The new coach went out of his way to include the deposed coach in his first Coach Meyer's Spring Kickoff to benefit the Earle and Jean Bruce Alzheimer's Research Fund (though Tressel was not present) and assured the large crowd at the event that Tressel had

left the program in good shape. And Meyer made a pretty bold statement about Tressel's legacy when he continued the former coach's tradition of the team singing Carmen Ohio following the recent spring game.

If Tressel is good enough for Meyer, he will probably end up being good enough for the vast majority of Ohio State football fans. Despite the unfortunate ending, the Tressel Era was a pretty good 10 years for Buckeye football.

Seau's Performance Recalled

The recent death of NFL great Junior Seau by an apparent suicide was a true tragedy. In the wake of his death, many recalled his stellar professional career that included 10 All-Pro seasons and 12 trips to the Pro Bowl.

Many Buckeye fans, however, will best remember Seau for one of the most dominant defensive performances ever turned in by an Ohio State opponent in a 42-3 drubbing of the Buckeyes by USC on Sept. 23, 1989. It was the Buckeyes' worst loss in 43 years and the largest losing margin on the road since a 40-0 loss to Michigan in 1905.

Ohio State junior quarterback Greg Frey had entered the game as the nation's leader in passing efficiency, but he was harassed by Seau and his mates into a 13-for-28 passing day for 135 yards with no touchdowns, an interception and three sacks. Kirk Herbstreit ultimately came on in relief and missed both his passes and also was sacked in just two series.

"Frey was continually harassed by USC junior linebacker Junior Seau, who finished the game with three solo tackles, two sacks and three batted down passes," BSB managing editor Mark Rea reported in our Sept. 30, 1989, issue. "Seau also pressured Frey into hurrying his passes on at least a half-dozen occasions."

The editing of Buckeye Sports Bulletin back then was not what it is now, and elsewhere in the paper Seau was credited with three sacks, something I'd like to think we would catch and clarify these days. Regardless, it was an impressive performance.

The game led to something that is now a part of Ohio State football lore. After the Trojan linebacker's relentless performance, Cooper and his staff allegedly told one of the offending OSU offensive linemen to go over and shake Seau's hand because "it will be the first time you touched him all day."

Cooper certainly was not ready to blame Frey for his poor showing.

"It's easy to sit back and point a finger at Greg Frey," the then-second-year coach said, "but I never saw a quarterback in my life that could throw the ball when he didn't have time."

After years of dull and predictable quotes from Tressel, it's fun to recall the more colorful Cooper.

Of his offensive line's performance that day, Cooper said, "We can't trade them. We just better get back to the drawing board. Southern Cal has an excellent defensive football team. It was either a good pass rush by them or poor pass protection on our part. Depends on which way you want to look at it."

In light of all the talk these days about concussions in football, one has to wonder

if blows to the head in a lengthy 20-year pro career on top of his high school and college ball played a part in Seau's unfortunate death.

While Seau had no reported history of concussions, his ex-wife indicated that he had suffered several of them.

"He always bounced back and kept on playing," Gina Seau said. "He's a warrior. That didn't stop him."

An attorney for former Ohio State quarterback Art Schlichter recently suggested that concussions suffered during his career might be a cause of Schlichter's gambling addiction. My first reaction upon hearing that was to roll my eyes in disbelief.

But what if?

Hopefully, the newfound concern with football concussions will lead to the equipment changes and education necessary to make sure that players don't suffer down the line.

As I look at the life of Seau, however, I also hope that colleges and pro teams do a better job of preparing players for life after football. After having their lives completely dominated by football for such a large part of their existence, so many athletes seem ill-equipped for life after the cheering stops.

A Dolphin First

One of the reasons the Ohio State offensive line might have struggled in that game against USC back in 1989 is that the Buckeyes were playing without graduated All-America center Jeff Uhlenhake. In that same issue of BSB, it was noted that Uhlenhake had become the first rookie to start at center for the Miami Dolphins in the team's 24-year history, with the exception of the strike year of 1987.

Uhlenhake started against the New England Patriots on Sept. 17, 1989, and helped the Dolphins to a 24-10 victory. He played so well that he was awarded one of the game balls by the Miami coaching staff.

First-year player Greg Ours started at center for the Dolphins during a replacement game in '87.

Conrads Founder Passes

Few of you may have ever met Jack Cohen, the founder of Conrads College Gifts on Lane Avenue who passed away May 27 at the age of 88, but chances are many of you had seen him. Jack was never one to hang out in the back of the iconic Buckeye merchandise store and could usually be found on the sales floor, where many of you, no doubt, encountered him on game day or throughout the rest of the year.

With Ohio State gear and gifts readily available these days virtually anywhere in central Ohio or online from any number of places, it's easy to forget that this was not always the case. In many ways, Cohen, a jeweler from Zanesville, Ohio, by trade, was the godfather of Ohio State fan stores, with Conrads dating back to the 1970s.

Cohen was an enthusiastic supporter of Buckeye Sports Bulletin (Conrads has advertised in every issue of BSB ever published, print or electronic) and over the years I got to be friends with Jack, his wife, Violet, and his children – Bennett, Rob, Suzie and Judy – who have taken over running the store.

I probably first met Jack when I was still working for the old Buckeye Leaves in the late '70s. It's funny, but more than 30 years later, I can still remember the first thing he said to me when I introduced myself.

"So, what part of Brooklyn are you from?" Cohen asked.

I had never heard the question asked that way and I am from Washington, D.C., but those of you who get it, get it.