

# **BSB Reprints: Northwestern Has Hosted Buckeyes Off Campus Before**



# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

Vol. 11, No. 7

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

## \$2<sup>00</sup>

2ND CLASS NEWSPAPER  
CLASSIFICATION  
DATED MATERIAL  
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Oct. 26, 1991

12802

## Buckeyes Throttle Northwestern In Northern Ohio

# OSU Makes Itself At Home In Cleveland

By Mark Rea

Playing Northwestern in Cleveland Stadium might not have qualified as a home game on Ohio State's 1991 football schedule, but for several members of the Buckeyes it was more of a home game than playing in Ohio Stadium.

Nine members of the OSU team who made the 150-mile trip up Interstate 71 to help the Buckeyes defeat Northwestern 34-3 Oct. 19 were going home, natives of the Greater Cleveland area.

Starting the game for the Buckeyes were native sons Rich Primel of North Olmsted, Andy Gurd of Chagrin Falls, Judah Herman of Bainbridge, Paul Long of Highland Heights, Rod Smith of Cleveland and Steve Tovar of Elyria.

Also seeing action in the game were nose guard Pete Beckman of Chesterland, Raymont Harris of Lorain and Joe Pickens of Brooklyn.

And while Ohio State head coach John Cooper grew up in Powell, Tenn., several hundred miles away from Cleveland, he, too, talked about playing a game in a stadium of which he has fond childhood memories.

"As a kid, I used to listen (on radio) to the Cleveland Indians," Cooper said. "I grew up listening to such players as Bob Feller, Early Wynn, Mike Garcia, Jim Hegan, Larry Doby, Luke Easter, Lou Boudreau, and all the great Cleveland baseball teams."

"And it was the same way with Cleveland Browns football — Jimmy Brown, John Wooten is a good friend of mine, and Otto Graham. There is a lot of tradition up here, and I really felt good about getting the opportunity to come up here and see our football team play in Cleveland."

"I think we need to pay special thanks to the Cleveland Browns and (owner) Art Modell for helping make it possible for us to come up here. Personally speaking, it was a great thrill for me to come in here and play."

Cooper, who has coached in literally hundreds of stadiums throughout the country, was making his first trip to Cleveland Stadium.

Meanwhile, some of his players have made so many trips to the stadium that they have lost count.

"It felt great to play in this stadium," said Pickens, who played nearly all of the fourth quarter for the Buckeyes. "It was a great thrill. I've never played here. I've been to a lot of games here, but I've never played here before. It was quite a feeling."

"We've had season tickets for a long time and I've been to several games. I've been a Browns fan for a long time."

Pickens said it was a weird feeling entering the stadium through the

players' entrance and taking his place behind the center just like his idol, Browns quarterback Bernie Kosar.

"It was almost unbelievable," he said. "I thought of all the times I've been to this stadium and, of course, you dream about being out there on the field, but you never know if that dream will come true. Today, at least for a little while, it came true."

Smith, who started the season saddled by problems with weight and classwork, celebrated his return to the starting lineup by playing in front of his hometown fans.

"It was really nice to get to start in front of my friends and my family," said the St. Joseph High School product. "It felt real good. I never really thought I would ever play in this stadium, unless I made it to the pros. Now, even if I don't play in the pros, at least I can say I made it. I played in the stadium."

Like Pickens, Smith admitted to a few goose bumps when he made his way through the tunnel from the dressing room to the playing field.

"I felt chills (the day before the game) when we first came in the place," he said. "But when we walked out on the field, it felt good. It felt good to be home."

"As soon as we got off the highway and I saw we were in downtown Cleveland, it felt pretty good. I saw a few of my friends on the street as we were driving along, and it felt good to be home again."

"There are a lot of people who haven't seen me play since I was in high school because they haven't had a chance to come down to Columbus. This time, I came to them."

Harris admitted that he was never much of a Browns fan but quickly added that he was very happy to play in Cleveland Stadium.

"I never really paid much attention to the National Football League," he said, "but this meant a lot because I know what this stadium means as far as the tradition of professional football is concerned, and I always wanted to play here. I always wanted to play here as a professional, but until that happens, this will do."

"It meant a lot to me to come back to northeastern Ohio. It was just a short little ride for my sister to come and see me, so that was real important for me."

Harris' sister was just one member of the friendly crowd of 73,830, most of them OSU fans, who braved the blustery weather to cheer the Bucks to victory. Even non-Cleveland natives were appreciative of the crowd.

"I thought this crowd was a little louder than some we have at home in



Ohio State junior inside linebacker Steve Tovar (58) acknowledges the partisan Buckeye crowd in Cleveland Stadium after tackling a Northwestern runner. Tovar was one of several OSU players from the Cleveland area to play in the game.

the Horseshoe," said tight end Cedric Saunders. "They were behind us right from the beginning, and we could feel they were right with us."

"It's always a big advantage to have the crowd behind you, and although this was technically not a home game for us, it sure felt that way."

Cooper agreed. "It was a friendly crowd, especially down there in the 'Dawg Pound,'" he said, referring to the bleacher area where Browns fans have been known to dress up like dogs and throw dog biscuits at opposing players.

"Those are my kind of people,"

Cooper added. "If I came up here to a game, I'd probably sit in the 'Dawg Pound,' cheer and have a good time."

In addition to the victory, which came on the heels of a heartbreaking loss to Illinois and put the Buckeyes back on track in the Big Ten race, perhaps the best thing of all was the chance to play a game in an area that annually produces some of the best high school prospects in the state.

Cooper and his staff spent most of the night before the game scouting high

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Northwestern will be hosting the Ohio State football team at historic Wrigley Field, home of Major League Baseball's Chicago Cubs, on Nov. 16. This is not the first time the Wildcats have hosted the Buckeyes in a stadium off campus. In fact the Wildcats hosted Ohio State in Cleveland Stadium, home of the Browns and Indians, on Oct. 19, 1991. The "visiting" Buckeyes came away with a 34-3 victory. In this edition of Reprint Thursday, we look back at that game.

"I found the game in Cleveland a unique and exciting change of pace as compared to the usually predictable OSU-Northwestern fare," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz wrote at the time. "It had the strange feel of a home game that wasn't a home game, which is what it was, if that makes any sense. I know this much. I didn't see many people dressed in purple and white."

The Buckeyes were led by fullback Scottie Graham, who racked up 109 yards on just 13 carries and scored three touchdowns as the Buckeyes totaled 289 yards on the ground.

"It feels good, but there are a lot of mistakes I have to make up for," Graham said of his play. "I'm definitely not satisfied. No way. I still have a lot of improving to do."

The following stories are reprinted from the Oct. 26, 1991, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.