

OHIO STATE FLASHBACK

Rose Bowl Victory Capped Championship Season

Editor's Note: Buckeye Sports Bulletin is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 1957 national championship team with special features throughout the 2007 football season.

By **MARK REA**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

Woody Hayes was never bashful when it came to heaping praise on his championship teams. That was never more true than after the 1957 Michigan game when Ohio State finished off an unbeaten Big Ten season with a 31-14 win over the Wolverines.

"Team-wise, you're the greatest I've ever coached," Hayes told his players in the locker room. "I think you should be the national champions. Every one of you played your best game today and I'm proud of you."

With the victory over their archrivals, the Buckeyes had finished an improbable run to the top of the national polls. Picked to finish somewhere in the middle of the Big Ten standings, OSU proceeded to make the critics look prescient by losing its first game of the 1957 campaign to Texas Christian, the program's first loss in a season opener in seven years.

But then the team righted itself with a 35-7 victory at Washington the following week and never looked back. Ohio State reeled off eight consecutive wins to finish the season, win the outright Big Ten championship and earn a trip to the Rose Bowl.

The caper on the magical season was a 10-7 win over Oregon in the "Granddaddy of 'Em All," the program's third consecutive Rose Bowl victory and second in four years.

Before heading to Pasadena, though, there was some unfinished business for the Buckeyes. Unlike today, writers voting in The Associated Press poll and coaches who made up the rankings for United Press (the predecessor of United Press International) awarded their respective national championships prior to the bowl season.

Hayes let his feelings be known as soon



THE ROSE BOWL

OSU halfback Don Clark (18) runs against Oregon in the 1958 Rose Bowl with quarterback Frank Kremblas (22) providing the interference.

as his team had vanquished the Wolverines.

"It would be a shame if these kids aren't named the national champions," the OSU head coach told reporters. "They deserve it. As a team, they're the best I've ever coached. We've had more individual stars (in the past), but team-wise they're tremendous.

"As far as working their way out of trouble, as far as training and conditioning and the way they buckle down and do a job — well, they're just the greatest."

At least half of the country was listening. UP crowned the Buckeyes its national champions, voting Ohio State just ahead of Auburn and Michigan State. The Tigers had completed a perfect 10-0 season and won their first Southeastern Conference championship in 25 years while the Spartans were 8-1 and finished a half-game behind the Buckeyes in the Big Ten standings. Ohio State and Michigan State did not face one another in 1957.

Meanwhile, the AP gave its national championship to Auburn, placing OSU second and Michigan State third.

Other major polls of the day were also split. The International News Service named Ohio State its national champion while the Helms Athletic Foundation named Auburn. (The 1957 season was the final one in which the INS named a national champion in college football. Helms continued to crown its champion until 1982.)

Hayes wasn't completely satisfied with the verdict, especially since the AP poll was the more recognized as the "true" national championship. But he was pragmatic about the decision.

"The fact that the coaches voted us as their national champions is a great honor," he said. "Who knows more about college football than the men who coach it? I think it is a tribute to our kids who never quit on themselves or their teams. They fought through a lot of adversity this year and I am extremely proud of them.

"Now they have one more task ahead of them and I'm confident they will be up to it."

That task was taking on Oregon in the Rose Bowl on New Year's Day 1958. The Ducks were coached by Len Casanova, who was in the seventh year of what would become a 16-season tenure in Eugene. Casanova had been a successful coach at Santa Clara in the late 1940s, leading the Broncos to one of their most historic wins with a 21-13 upset of Bear Bryant-coached Kentucky in the 1950 Orange Bowl.

When he arrived at Oregon to begin the 1951 season, Casanova inherited a program that was coming off a 1-9 season and had posted a 52-67-4 record over the previous 13 seasons. In 1957, however, the Ducks finished with a 7-3 overall record and the three defeats were by a combined 13 points — 6-3 to Pittsburgh, 13-6 to Washington and a disappointing 10-7 loss in the regular-season finale to in-state rival Oregon State.

Nevertheless, Oregon tied for the Pacific Coast Conference championship, its first league title in nine years and only its second in nearly a quarter-century.

Casanova's team was a defensive-minded unit that allowed an average of only 9.0 points per game during the regular season. They were led by senior defensive guard Harry Mondale, who was named to the All-Pacific Coast Conference first team; tackle Jerry Kershner, who was selected in the 1958 NFL draft by Green Bay; and senior defensive backs Jack Morris and Chuck Osborne, each of whom had a pair of interceptions in 1957.

Senior running back Jim Shanley was the team's leading rusher with 664 yards and five touchdowns and completed his career as Oregon's all-time leading ground gainer. The 5-9, 174-pounder led the Ducks in scoring in '57 with nine total touchdowns, earned first-team All-PCC honors and was voted his

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OHIO STATE FLASHBACK



team's most valuable player.

Shanley, who was named Oregon's first-ever representative to the Senior Bowl, played in the NFL with Green Bay for one season, returning 14 punts for a 7.5-yard average for the Packers in 1958. He was inducted into the Oregon Athletic Hall of Fame in 1994.

Senior Jack Crabtree was the starting quarterback in 1957, completing 55 of 99 attempts (55.6 percent) for 624 yards and four TDs. Crabtree's favorite receiver was junior Ron Stover, who led the Ducks that year with 24 receptions for 247 yards and two scores.

The Ducks were three-touchdown underdogs to the more powerful Buckeyes, but Casanova didn't seem to care.

"I don't think you need to know much to realize that Ohio State has quite a team," he told reporters. "Of course, someone has to be the favorite and someone has to be the little guy. I think our players understand what they have to do."

When reminded by reporters that the oddsmakers had made his team an underdog, the Oregon coach simply smiled.

"We'll see," Casanova said with a grin. "We'll see."

Gaining The Early Edge

New Year's Day in Southern California is typically bathed in bright sunshine with warm temperatures providing a glow to the holiday. It was no different in 1958 as 98,202 fans soaked up the sun and temperatures that rose into the middle 70s.

The Buckeyes took early advantage of the Chamber of Commerce setting and marched 79 yards for a touchdown on the game's opening possession.

Oregon got a healthy dose of sophomore fullback Bob White to get things started. White ran the ball each of the first three plays, gaining a total of 10 yards and getting OSU's initial first down of the contest.

Despite the fact the Ducks were inching up closer to the line of scrimmage with every play, Hayes stayed with his running attack as White alternated carries with halfbacks Don Clark and Dick LeBeau to push the ball out to the Oregon 43. Then Clark took a pitchout around right end, cut back toward the middle of the field and picked up 27 yards before being pulled down from behind.

But the drive suddenly went into reverse when senior halfback Joe Cannavino was thrown for a 7-yard loss and White was stuffed for a loss of another yard. Facing third-and-18, Hayes decided to gamble a little. He called for quarterback Frank Kremblas to try a swing pass in the flat to one of his speedy halfbacks. But when Kremblas rolled out, he caught a glimpse of

tight end Jim Houston breaking free down the field.

Kremblas launched the pass to Houston, who gathered it in around the 18-yard line and then rumbled all the way inside the 2 before being tackled. Two plays later, the OSU quarterback sneaked into the end zone for the touchdown. The play finished off the seven-minute drive, and once Kremblas added the PAT himself, the Buckeyes enjoyed a 7-0 lead.

But anyone who believed the early touchdown was a sign of a rout in the making was mistaken. The Ducks took their first possession and methodically moved past the midfield stripe, utilizing a mix of running and passing. Crabtree completed an 11-yard pass to Stover on Oregon's third play from scrimmage, and the QB later had a third-down scramble that resulted in a first down to keep the drive alive.

But just as the Ducks appeared to be moving into scoring position, Crabtree was intercepted by Cannavino at the OSU 29.

The Buckeyes had a chance to increase their lead later in the first quarter. On a second-and-8 at the Oregon 46, Kremblas found Houston again wide open over the middle. The sophomore tight end gathered in the pass, but as he turned to race for the end zone, he lost his footing and fell to the ground. The play was worth 22 yards and a first down, but when Kremblas was sacked two plays later for a 10-yard loss and his third-down pass attempt was batted away, Ohio State was forced to punt.

As the second quarter began, the Ducks put together another sustained drive that began at their own 20. Shanley got things started with a 22-yard run off an option pitch, while Crabtree and Morris broke off runs of 11 and 13 yards, respectively, to push Oregon into OSU territory.

Later in the possession, Crabtree completed an 11-yard pass to Charlie Tourville that gave the Ducks a first down just outside the Ohio State 10-yard line. Crabtree followed with a 5-yard run just inside right end, and then Shanley finished things off. The Oregon halfback took a pitchout around right end, and picking up a block from Tourville who pushed Kremblas out of the way, Shanley slanted into the end zone.

Morris kicked the PAT and the score was tied at 7 with 12:25 remaining in the first half.

Each team had one more scoring opportunity before halftime. On its next possession, Ohio State drove inside the Oregon red zone and had a first down at the 17-yard line. Clark ran for 2 yards followed by a Kremblas scramble for 3 before Oregon sophomore defender Alden Kimbrough batted down a third-down pass.

Hayes decided against trying for a field goal, but Kremblas' fourth-down pass attempt to senior end Leo Brown near the goal line was broken up by Ducks DB Sandy Fraser and the Buckeyes surrendered the ball on downs.

Oregon went to work from its own 12 and moved the ball in chunks against the OSU defense. The Ducks converted a couple of key third-down plays, including an 8-yard reception by sophomore Tom Keele on a pass that was deflected near the line of scrimmage by Houston.

Casanova also used a little trickery by moving Crabtree out of the quarterback spot and allowing sophomore Willie West to take over. The move worked immediately as West connected with Stover for a 17-yard gain and then ran for 14 more yards to the Ohio State 31.

But when Crabtree returned to the quarterback position, disaster struck. On second

down, Crabtree was hit hard by OSU defensive tackle Birtho Arnold and the football squirted loose. A mad dash for the ball resulted in a recovery by Ohio State junior lineman Dan Fronk, ending the Oregon threat.

Winning Ugly

Neither team mounted a serious threat in the early stages of the third quarter. Cannavino's second interception of the game ended Oregon's first second-half possession, and the Buckeyes turned it over on downs the first time they had the ball when White was stuffed for no gain on a fourth-and-1.

The Ducks took over after stopping White and quickly moved out from their own 38-yard line. Crabtree connected with Tourville for 16 yards and then threw to Stover, who made an acrobatic catch for a 12-yard gain. On the play after that, Morris took a pitch wide around left end and picked up another 16 yards, giving Oregon a first down at the OSU 20.

But after Crabtree pushed the ball to the 18 on a short dive, the Ducks QB threw incompletions on second and third down. With the teams jockeying for field position, Casanova reasoned that any points might be the game winners. He instructed Morris to try a 34-yard field goal, and although the snap and hold were good, the Oregon kicker pushed the attempt just outside the left upright.

The Buckeyes took over at their own 20 with 5:14 remaining in the third quarter and proceeded to slug their way back down the field. Hayes took no chances, calling for his team to keep the ball exclusively on the ground. As a result, White carried the ball on six of the drive's first seven plays, chewing up gains of 2, 4, 7, 4, 8 and 11 yards.

After a two-play respite during which Clark and Kremblas carried, White went back to work and smashed through the center of the line for 9 more yards and a first down to the Oregon 24. Clark swept around right end for 2 as the third quarter ended, and then White slanted over left tackle for 3 on the first play of the final period.

On third-and-5, the call was to White once again, but when the OSU fullback tried to cut at the line of scrimmage, his feet went out from under him at the 17.

Along the Ohio State sideline, Hayes briefly thought about going for the first down. But sophomore kicker Don Sutherin told his head coach he could make the 34-yard field goal. Finally, Hayes simply nodded and the 5-11, 194-pounder went onto the field. From almost the same exact spot where Morris had missed his field goal a few minutes earlier, Sutherin calmly booted the ball through the uprights, giving the Buckeyes a 10-7 lead with 14:02 left in the game.

Oregon tried to answer by moving back into Ohio State territory on its next possession. The Ducks appeared to get within striking distance after Crabtree completed a pass to Stover at the OSU 24. But on the play, Brown arrived just after the ball and delivered a hard tackle that caused Stover to lose control of the football. Cannavino was in the right place at the right time again, recovering the fumble and accounting for his third takeaway of the game.

There were still nearly 11 minutes left to play but the game was essentially over. The Ducks never got any closer than the Ohio State 47-yard line in the waning moments before the Buckeyes were finally able to celebrate their 10-7 victory.

Oregon enjoyed an advantage in the statistical breakdowns, including 351 total yards and 21 first downs. OSU had 304 yards of offense and 19 first downs. Turnovers played

a huge role in the game – the Ducks had four and the Buckeyes had none.

White led all rushers in the game for Ohio State with 93 yards on 15 carries while Clark chipped with 14 carries for 82 yards. Kremblas added 43 yards on the ground and also completed 2 of 6 passes for 59 yards.

For the Ducks, Crabtree and West combined to complete 13 of 20 pass attempts for 197 yards. Stover was on the receiving end of 10 of those throws, good for 114 yards. Meanwhile, Shanley had 59 yards rushing while Morris had 57, each on 11 carries.

Despite the loss, Oregon's players hoisted Casanova on their shoulders after the final gun and gave him a ride to the locker room in tribute to a moral victory. A few minutes later, the Ducks head coach gave sportswriters a piece of his mind.

"I may get hell for saying this," Casanova said, "but you Los Angeles sportswriters had a lot to do with how my boys played. When you humiliate a bunch of young fellows by the kind of wild predictions that were carried in the papers – well, they just couldn't take it and you saw the kind of game they played."

"I've said all season long that this is the most amazing bunch of boys I've ever coached. Now I think they're the greatest bunch of kids in the country."

Across the way in the home locker room, Hayes wore a huge smile as flashbulbs popped away, but the grin quickly faded when some media members suggested Oregon was simply the victim of some bad breaks.

"What the heck," the OSU head coach said. "They lost the ball twice on fumbles and twice on interceptions. How about those for bad breaks?"

"They had their chance for a field goal just like we did. They didn't make theirs and Don made ours. Of course, their kid had been in the game all the time and was tired. Our boy was fresh."

Later, after taking time to reflect on the victory, Hayes had mellowed somewhat.

"I don't think this was one of our better games, but that's always relative," he told reporters. "That other team was doggone good. Neither team could get much of an edge, and that's why I'm so darned tickled about that field goal."

"I'm tickled to death to win, we had a nice time out here and I haven't made too many enemies while we've been out here. All in all, a pretty successful trip."



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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Trio Of Ohio Juniors Give OSU Verbals

It might have come a few days late by this year's calendar, but Christmas came about a full year early for the Ohio State coaching staff.

After heading into the holiday with two verbal commitments for their class of 2009, the Buckeyes picked up three more from Dec. 26-29. All three came from top in-state prospects who had been on OSU's radar for some time.

First came Youngstown Cardinal Mooney defensive end Johnny Simon, who verbalized to the Buckeyes the day after Christmas. Two days later it was offensive lineman Jack Mewhort from Toledo St. John's. Finally, Coldwater middle linebacker Adam Homan – the brother of current OSU linebacker Ross – joined the party one day later, giving the Buckeyes five members for their class of 2009.

In contrast, OSU did not get a verbal commitment for its class of 2008 until nearly a full month after National Signing Day in 2007. This year, the five have come a full month and a half before signing day.

At the same time, though, the Buckeyes were shut out at the U.S. Army All-American Bowl for the second consecutive year as a handful of top prospects considering OSU publicly declared their intentions to go

elsewhere.

If you haven't been keeping up with all the news as it happens on our website, www.BuckeyeSports.com, here's a recap since BSB last went to press.

Early Effort Pays Off As Simon Commits

As the OSU coaching staff was getting its efforts under way for the class of 2008, the staff members put a big target on

Youngstown Cardinal Mooney. Three players – safety Dan McCarthy and linebacker/running backs Mike Zordich and Brandon Beachum – all earned offers from the Buckeyes and were aggressively

pursued by them.

It all appeared to be a wasted effort, however, when one by one those players all opted to head elsewhere. But as a byproduct, the coaching staff became familiar with Simon, regarded as one of the top players in the state for his class.

Those efforts then paid off when Simon issued his verbal commitment to the Buckeyes.

"I think I got to build better relationships with the coaches," he told BSB. "They're a great coaching staff. They are coming in and I got a real heads-up and

RECRUITING OUTLOOK with Adam Jardy



Johnny Simon

easy to talk to. It's perfect for me. Coaches were coming in and I got a real heads-up and

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Football players in the class of 2008 who have issued verbal commitments to play college football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Mike Adams	OL	6-7	305	Dublin (Ohio) Coffman
Michael Brewster	OL	6-6	300	Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater
Ben Buchanan	K/P	6-0	185	Westerville (Ohio) Central
Nic DiLillo	TE	6-5	245	Madison, Ohio
Garrett Goebel	DT	6-4	270	Lombard (Ill.) Montini Catholic
Travis Howard	WR/CB	6-1	170	Miami (Fla.) Dr. Michael M. Krop
Willie Mobley	DE	6-2	263	Eden Prairie (Minn.)
DeVier Posey	WR	6-3	190	Cincinnati La Salle
Etienne Sabino	LB	6-3	230	Miami (Fla.) Dr. Michael M. Krop
J.B. Shugarts	OL	6-7	285	Klein, Texas
Jake Stoneburner	TE/WR	6-5	220	Dublin (Ohio) Coffman
Andrew Sweat	MLB	6-2	233	Washington (Pa.) Trinity
Lamaar Thomas	RB/WR	5-10	178	Fort Washington (Md.) Friendly
Devoe Torrence	RB/LB	6-2	215	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Nathan Williams	DE/LB	6-4	245	Washington Court House (Ohio) Miami Trace

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Adam Homan	LB/RB	6-2	232	Coldwater, Ohio
Storm Klein	RB/LB	6-3	220	Newark (Ohio) Licking Valley
Jack Mewhort	OL/DL	6-6	285	Toledo (Ohio) St. John's
Johnny Simon	DT	6-3	250	Youngstown (Ohio) Cardinal Mooney
Jordan Whiting	LB	6-0	220	Louisville (Ky.) Trinity

a chance to talk to some of the coaches. I think that helped me a lot."

Listed as a five-star defensive tackle prospect, Simon stands 6-3, 265. He is aiming to put on another 25 pounds before he gets to Columbus, he said.

The Buckeyes first began to show interest in him following his sophomore season when they were recruiting his teammates. Watching them go through the recruiting process helped him when his turn came around, he said.

"They were real thorough about it," Simon said about his teammates. "They wanted what was best for them, and that's what I wanted to do. I didn't just want to go to a place because other people were going there or because it was the hometown place. I wanted to go wherever was most comfortable for me, and that place was Ohio State."

The Buckeyes were far from the only team showing interest in Simon. He holds offers from Notre Dame, Illinois, Nebraska, Boston College and Iowa, among others.

Simon said that as he was growing up, the Buckeyes were not necessarily his favorite team.

"I always rooted for Ohio State, but I never had a favorite team," he said. "I always rooted for a couple of teams, but Ohio State was definitely one I rooted for. I rooted for Notre Dame and I was also a Florida Gator fan, actually."

In last year's title game, though, he said he was rooting for the Buckeyes because they already were starting to recruit him.

Despite the interest in him shown by other programs, Simon said there is no chance he will waver on his commitment to OSU.

"I'm 100 percent Buckeye," he said. "No exceptions. It's a great feeling that you can trust the coaches over there and trust the program. I'm very thrilled about that."

The OSU coaches are targeting him to play on the defensive line, and he could be either a tackle or an end in college.

Keeping It All In The (Homan) Family

OSU fans are well familiar with the name Ross Homan, a sophomore linebacker for the Buckeyes who made a splash as a true freshman before taking a medical redshirt this season.

When the 2009 season rolls around, they will find another Homan on the roster. Adam Homan, a 6-2, 230-pound linebacker/fullback, issued his verbal commitment to his brother's school, fulfilling a lifelong dream.

"One thing is it's close to home," he said. "I've been an Ohio State fan since I was a little kid. There's a great support system in my community and I wanted to stay close to that. Ever since I was little, Ohio State's been the place I've wanted to go. It makes a lot of sense for me to go there."

As a junior, Homan helped lead Coldwater, Ohio, to a state championship. As a sophomore, he recorded 137 tackles.

Although he is listed as a linebacker, Homan said the OSU coaches are targeting him as a fullback at the next level.

"Talking with (running backs) coach Doc Tressel and coach Jim Tressel, they both think that fullback would be the best position for me to play right now," he said. "I'm not saying things couldn't change, but I have no problem with that. Wherever they think that I can play, the position that fits me best is where I'd like to go."

Given the choice however, Homan said he would prefer playing on defense.

Growing up with Ross in the same household helped Adam become a better player. When the two played pickup football games, the older brother would have the advantage. Now, that might be up for debate.

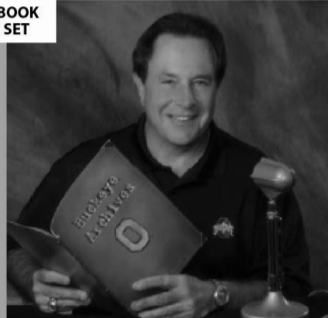
"Back then he would whup on me pretty good, but I think it would be a little bit more even now," he said.

When it came to the recruiting process,

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Ross' advice to his brother was pretty simple: Take your time and make sure you are picking the right school for you.

Despite the early timing of his verbal commitment, Homan said he followed his brother's instructions.

"People might think I did this all too quick, but I really did think about it a lot every day," he said. "I just sat down and thought about what I wanted to do. I just paid attention, learned from him and took it all in stride. I was going to make the right decision when the best time came."

Adam also said it helped his chances with OSU that his brother currently plays there.

"I think it helped out," he said. "I went to a few of his practices and just seeing him practice and watching all that, getting introduced to the coaches, I think that helped me out a lot, that he's at Ohio State and he's already gone through all this stuff."

Buckeyes Win Border Battle For Toledo-Area Lineman

Northwest Ohio has long been viewed as a battleground between Ohio and Michigan, with many natives from the area holding mixed loyalties between the Buckeyes and the Wolverines. The region has not proved

to be a major hotbed of talent recently for the Buckeyes, who have just one scholarship player on the roster – wide receiver Dane Sanzenbacher from Toledo Central Catholic – from the Glass City.

But in 2009, Mewhort will double the number of players from the region on the roster as the 6-6, 285-pound senior-to-be verbally committed to the Buckeyes in late December.

For Mewhort, the recruiting process began when both Jim and Doc Tressel visited him at school following his sophomore season. The Buckeyes did not offer right away, but the seeds had been planted.

"When the recruiting process first started, me and my dad always said that if I get a big offer – we never thought it would be Ohio State – but if we got a big offer, we'd have to seriously think about committing because he wanted me to get it out of the way," he said. "He thought the process would be a distraction."

Both the University of Toledo and Bowling Green also had offered and Michigan State and Northwestern had been showing interest, but an offer from OSU forced Mewhort to

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- '04 OLDSMOBILE ALERO, 60k\$6,980
- '98 CHRYSLER TOWN & COUNTRY LXI\$5,980
- '98 ACURA INTEGRA, 5-spd., clean\$5,980
- '03 TOYOTA COROLLA S\$8,980
- '05 NISSAN 350Z, 6-spd.\$19,980
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- '05 HONDA CIVIC VP\$12,980
- '03 INFINITI G35, Coupe\$18,980



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QB Pryor Shows Off Skills In San Antonio

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start considering making a quick decision. Finally, his comfort level with the coaching staff helped lead him south to Columbus.

"Coach (Jim) Tressel, whenever I saw him on TV he always looked like just a real classy guy," he said. "He was like a guy I'd want to play for, and then when I met (offensive line coach Jim) Bollman, that's another thing that drew me to the program because he's such an offensive line guru and I'm sure I could learn a lot from him."

Perhaps reflecting the divided allegiances of his hometown, Mewhort said he did not grow up with a vested interest in either OSU or Michigan.

It was not until he reached middle school that Mewhort said he started to really like the Buckeyes. Of course, it was around that time that OSU was in the early stages of experiencing previously unheard of levels of success against the Maize and Blue.

"I had a lot of friends who were Michigan fans, but I had a lot of friends that were Ohio State fans," he said. "Growing up, I didn't really know what to think. My family really wasn't into the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry that much, but when I started watching college football and actually getting into the sport around middle school, that's when I started realizing Ohio State was the program to follow and that's where I want to play."

Even his friends who support the Wolverines were happy for him, he said.

"Everybody was happy for me just because it's a big program," he said. "Everyone knows

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

20 Years Ago - 1988

New OSU football coach John Cooper's first OSU recruit joined the fold hours after his introductory press conference. It came in the form of Kirk Herbstreit, one of the top-rated quarterbacks in the nation as a senior at Centerville, Ohio, and the son of a former Buckeye captain.

"There has never been a doubt that I was going to Ohio State," Herbstreit said. "It's always been my dream."

15 Years Ago - 1993

Ohio State hosted 15 recruits on the second weekend in January but came away with no new commitments.

In fact, the Buckeyes lost one of the visitors as Columbus Brookhaven running back Charles Henley opted to go to Kansas.

The same day they lost offensive lineman Ryan Daniels of Toledo St. John's, who committed to Northwestern while on an official visit there.

Other in-state visitors along with Henley were running backs Marc Edwards of Norwood and Kim Herring of Solon, linebacker Steve Terry of Steubenville and defensive lineman Henry Slay of Elyria West.

Ten players visited from outside the state - fullback Clarence Williams of Crescent City, Fla.; linebacker/tight end Roland Williams of Rochester (N.Y.) East; linebacker Greg Bellisari of Boca Raton, Fla.; defensive backs Shawn Springs of Silver Spring (Md.) Springbrook, Donovan Greer of Alief (Texas) Elsik, Zack McCall of Fitchburg, Mass., and

Donovin Darius of Camden (N.J.) Woodrow Wilson; offensive lineman Chris Lee of Anniston, Ala., and Charles Beatie of Newark (Del.) Glasgow; and defensive lineman Brad Jones of Beaver Falls (Pa.) Blackhawk.

10 Years Ago - 1998

The Buckeyes were preparing for 11 visitors on the second weekend of January, including Ohioans Jamar Martin (a verbal commitment), a fullback from Canton McKinley, offensive lineman LeCharles Bentley of Cleveland St. Ignatius, tailback Tony Fisher of Euclid and tight end Greg Grothous of Delphos St. John's.

Bentley's visit represented Ohio State's late try to get in on him after schools such as Michigan State and Indiana offered him first.

"They saw my junior tape but felt I was too small," Bentley said after bulking up from 240 to 270 pounds. His added weight and a stellar performance against OSU commitment Kenny Peterson of Canton McKinley combined to draw the offer.

"He got beat pretty bad by me ... They said they wanted me to play with him rather than against him."

Rumors abounded that River Ridge (La.) Curtis running back Jonathan Wells had issued a commitment to Ohio State while the Buckeyes worked out in his home state for the Sugar Bowl, but as of press time Wells had yet to go public with his decision.

Five Years Ago - 2003

In the month leading up to Ohio State's

appearance in the Fiesta Bowl to play for the national title, five players committed to be Buckeyes.

From Ohio there was East Cleveland Shaw linebacker Reggie Smith, West Chester Lakota West defensive lineman Brandon Maupin and Cleveland Glenville defensive backs Darius "Superman" Hiley and Donte Whitner.

The fifth new member of the class of 2003 was Ashton Youboty, a defensive back from Houston Klein.

Acting as somewhat of a counter to all that good news was word that Ohio's top prospect, Warren Harding defensive back Prescott Burgess, had opted to go to Michigan rather than Ohio State.

One Year Ago - 2007

At the U.S. Army All-American game Jan. 6 four elite recruits chose to matriculate somewhere other than Ohio State, including Ohio's No. 2 prospect, defensive end Ben Martin of Cincinnati La Salle, who opted for Tennessee in somewhat of a surprise move. Ohio State and Notre Dame had been the perceived leaders for Martin previously.

Defensive tackle Joseph Barksdale of Detroit Cass Tech picked LSU over Ohio State, offensive lineman Anthony Davis of Piscataway, N.J., stunned many by picking in-state Rutgers over heavyweights Ohio State and USC, and running back John Clay of Racine (Wis.) Park opted for Wisconsin over Iowa, Ohio State and Nebraska.

it's a good program. There's not anybody really telling me things like, 'Michigan's better.' Everybody's just happy for me."

Mewhort's Titans matched up with

Sanzenbacher's Fighting Irish during the regular season one year ago, and it was St. John's that emerged with a victory that snapped Central Catholic's 22-game winning streak.

As Mewhort recalled, his team was aided a bit by Mother Nature.

"We beat them, 13-7," he said. "It was a lot of fun. It was raining, so I don't think their passing threat was what it usually was. I think that was a reason why we beat them because they couldn't really throw the ball and that took Dane out of the game a little bit."

Mewhort is the first offensive lineman to verbally commit to OSU's class of 2009, but the Buckeyes have three commitments for their class of 2008 and are hoping to land a fourth in Parkersburg, W.Va., guard Josh Jenkins. The Toledo product said he is aware of the glut of talent that will be ahead of him when he arrives in Columbus but also that he is looking forward to competing for a spot.

"I know I'm not going to play tackle in college and most of these guys that they are bringing in are tackles," he said. "It's going to be fun to get there and just compete. Hopefully I'll earn a spot in a few years."

With his commitment out of the way, Mewhort is free to put all his energies into his senior season. During each of his three prep seasons, the Titans have been defeated in the first round of the playoffs.

The plan next season is to change that.

"It feels real good because now I can just get with my team and start getting in the weight room and just play football for St. John's and do what we have to do," he said. "I'm going to play my senior season and hopefully we can come together as a team and play well and finish strong. I'm hoping this is the year we can make it pretty far, pretty deep in the playoffs and do some damage."

Pryor, Others Shine In Annual Army Game

Although the Buckeyes saw the 2008 U.S. Army All-American Bowl come and go without picking up any new verbal commitments, the Ohio State program was easily one of the most talked-about during the event.

A smattering of OSU verbal commitments took part in the game, but the name on everyone's lips was a player who has not yet issued his commitment. Jeannette, Pa., quarterback Terrelle Pryor, the nation's top prospect at his position, stole the show from the minute he arrived in San Antonio.



Terrelle Pryor

First, the 6-6, 215-pound Pryor shocked the recruiting world by arriving on site sporting a Michigan sweatshirt. The Wolverines are one of the schools in play for his services since they landed former West Virginia head coach Rich Rodriguez, but the decision to wear the sweatshirt came more out of a desire to get a reaction out of the many OSU verbal commitments who were playing alongside him in the game.

"I'm considering Michigan now, and I wanted to mess with all my Ohio State kids coming in," he told BuckeyeSports.com and the Scout Network. "I like Coach Rodriguez. He left West Virginia, so I just followed him."

Pryor is now planning on taking an official visit to Michigan sometime in early February. In addition, he said he plans to visit Duke, Florida and possibly Penn State and Oregon. He said his top five schools are OSU, Florida, Michigan, Oregon and Penn State.

Then, when the game started, Pryor's wardrobe again caused a stir. At the behest of offensive lineman Michael Brewster, a verbal member of OSU's class of 2008, all the OSU commitments wore a Buckeye award sticker decal on the back of their helmets.

Although he is not committed, Pryor

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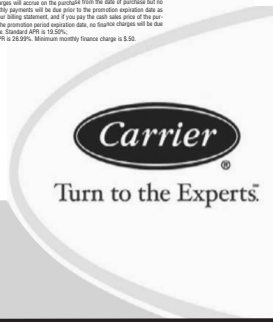
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donned one as well.

Until he makes a final decision, the speculation as to where Pryor will end up will continue to swell – and he is fine with that.

“It doesn’t bother me,” he said. “People will speak when they are just guessing. ‘Oh, he’s going to go there.’ But they don’t know. They have no clue. People are going to have opinions whether I say it or not.”

Expect a final decision from Pryor on signing day.

As for the game itself, Pryor took home the Pete Dawkins Most Valuable Player Award for his part in the East team’s 33-23 victory against the West. Pryor began the game by picking up 22 yards on a quarterback keeper.

For the day, he completed 4 of 6 passes for 76 yards and a touchdown and also rushed for 79 more yards and a touchdown on 10 carries.

“It felt good,” Pryor said of his performance. “It was not about proving my doubters wrong. I just came out here to have fun.”

In all, eight future Buckeyes were on hand for the game – Brewster, Mike Adams, Ben Buchanan, DeVier Posey, Etienne Sabino, J.B. Shugarts, Jake Stoneburner and Lamaar Thomas.

Jenkins Decommits From West Virginia

It’s been a difficult couple of weeks for Jenkins (6-3½, 303), the top-rated prospect in West Virginia. After verbally committing to the Mountaineers long ago and then opting to look at other schools following some staff changes in Morgantown after last season, Jenkins took the final step when Rodriguez went to Michigan.



Josh Jenkins

Jenkins rescinded his verbal commitment to the Mountaineers, but the appointment of Bill Stewart as the new coach could lead him to reconsider yet again.

“I think it is a great hire and all the kids like him,” Jenkins told Scout. “I could see myself playing for (Bill) Stewart. I wouldn’t be saying that if they hired Butch Jones. Coach Stewart takes pride in the program and he is a great recruiter. He is a great person. He is very down-to-earth and we like each other a lot.”

With that, the Mountaineers now could be back on Jenkins’ list provided Stewart gets in contact with him. Failing that, his top three schools are OSU, Florida State and Pittsburgh. He has already officially visited the Buckeyes, and he is planning to take official visits to Florida State on Jan. 11 and Pitt one week later. Should Stewart call him, Jenkins will also trip to WVU.

The decision to decommit from WVU was not an easy one.

“People in West Virginia, if you decommit from West Virginia you’ve made a big mistake,” he said. “Before that, I was God in West Virginia. Now people hate me.”

The Buckeyes have been viewed as the

team to beat should Jenkins decommit in large part based on how well he gets along with the other offensive linemen who have already verbally committed to OSU. As it turns out, though, the three linemen in the fold might hurt the Buckeyes’ chances of landing Jenkins.

“Ohio State has pretty good offensive linemen,” he said. “They already committed, and the chance of going there and playing over their top three guys is slim. I just have to pick a place that’s comfortable.”

Jenkins played in the Army game, lining up alongside the likes of Adams.

“Mike Adams is a stud,” Jenkins said. “He’s the real deal. He’s a beast.”

Jenkins said he will make a decision on signing day or slightly before.

No New Members On Board Following Army Game

The annual Army All-American Bowl broadcast showcased many prep players donning the hats of their final selections between actual game action, but yet again the Buckeyes did not bring home any new players.

The biggest name OSU missed out on was Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway defensive end/middle linebacker Shayne Hale, who chose to stay in state and head to Pitt rather than commit to the Buckeyes.

“Everything just felt right at Pitt,” he said. “I felt that it was the best choice for me.”

With his decision, Hale will join close friend Cameron Saddler at the next level. However, Hale said Saddler’s verbal commitment to Pitt did not influence his own.

“I made this choice for me,” he said. “I had to pick where I wanted to be regardless of what anyone else thought about it. I chose Pitt because I feel that is where I belong.”

Hale had been a big target for the Buckeyes for much of the last year, but interest between the parties appeared to cool as his senior season went on. Communication between the two parties resumed in recent weeks, but that downtime ultimately crippled OSU’s chances.

“I honestly was all ready to go there, but then they kind of stopped talking to me for a while,” he said. “Pitt never backed off me. (OSU quarterbacks coach) Joe Daniels did a good job of recruiting me, but in the end it just didn’t feel right to me.”

As a senior, the 6-3½, 245-pound Hale recorded 114 tackles, nine sacks and three forced fumbles.

OSU In The Mix For Texas Blue-Chip Tailback

No matter the number of commitments and the amount of time left to fill the remaining spots, it seems that each year sees a handful of new names pop up on the OSU radar.

This year, four-star senior tailback Aundre Dean from Katy, Texas, fits that description.

Following a junior season that saw him rush for 2,111 yards and 27 touchdowns and earn first-team all-district, first-team all-Greater Houston and honorable-mention all-state honors, the 6-1, 201-pound back issued a verbal commitment to Texas A&M during the winter.

However, an early April trip to California saw him switch that verbal to UCLA in mid-month. From there, Dean appeared to be solid to the Bruins until his senior season dragged on.

As the coaching situation at UCLA appeared more and more uncertain, Dean began exploring other options. In early December, he officially decommitted from the Bruins and announced that he would be taking official visits to both Louisville and Arizona State.

Now those plans have grown even more, and after leading his team to a state championship Dean has scheduled five official visits between now and National Signing Day. He will start the whirlwind tour by visiting Louisville Jan. 11 then travel to Alabama two days later, Arizona State Jan. 18, Ohio State Jan. 20 and LSU Jan. 26.

“I have all five visits set in January,” he said. “All of those schools are really showing the same amount of interest.”

However, if he is on a visit and decides he really likes the school, Dean said he could commit on the spot. He is certain he will take three visits before making a decision, though.

The month of December was a relatively quiet one for Dean aside from his exploits on the gridiron. No head coaches visited him, but he was visited by three assistant coaches – ASU offensive coordinator Rich Olson, LSU running backs coach Larry Porter and Louisville running backs coach Tony Alford.

OSU is a recent addition to his list, and it appears the Buckeyes have Shugarts – a verbal member of OSU’s class of 2008 from Klein, Texas – to thank.

“At Ohio State I talk to J.B. Shugarts,” Dean said. “He is a good guy. He tells me a lot of good stuff about Ohio State and that I would like it up there.”

“They have a winning program. Coach

Tressell is a great coach. I like the fact they have a good running team. They are known for their tradition of running backs, and they could help me get to the next level.”

When asked what factors he will weigh the most to pick a final school, Dean said he plans to be picky.

“I am going to be looking at the dorms,” he said. “I can’t be in a tight place. I want to get a good feel for the coaching staff. I want to see if my family likes them. I want to go to a school with good facilities and academics. I want to spend time with the players and see if I could grow with them. I want to see what they like to do and what they don’t like to do.”

Nation’s No. 5 CB Prospect Kept Eyes On Title Game

Brandon Harris found himself in an interesting position for the BCS National Championship Game. A four-star defensive back from Miami Booker T. Washington, he plans on making his final decision on signing day.

Of his final five schools, two of them are LSU and OSU.

“I won’t be rooting for either team,” he said before the contest. “I just want to see a good game. I hope it’s not a blowout. I think both teams are going to be well-prepared. Ohio State plays tough every week and they never quit. They really play together as a team, and I like how focused they are.”

In addition to the Buckeyes and the Tigers, Harris, rated the fifth-best cornerback in the nation, said he is considering Florida, Miami (Fla.) and Central Florida, all of whom have offered. He has taken two official visits thus far, one to Florida on Sept. 15 and the other to LSU on Oct. 6.

Next up is a trip to OSU on Jan. 11, followed by one to Miami on Jan. 25.

As a junior, Harris recorded 42 tackles, four sacks and six interceptions – two of which he returned for touchdowns. In addition, he returned three kickoffs for touchdowns.

For all the latest recruiting news for Ohio State and across the nation, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com.



Aundre Dean

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