

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 15, No. 14

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

January 13, 1996

Buckeyes Close In On Top-Flight Recruiting Class

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

It is strange to say it, but with almost a month remaining until the Feb. 7 national signing day, Ohio State's 1996 football recruiting push could be nearly complete.

The Buckeyes have commitments from 23 players already (see table), and could up that total after welcoming five players in for official visits over the weekend of Jan. 5.

It was widely reported that one of those players, running back Michael Wiley of Spring Valley (Calif.) Monte Vista, had issued a verbal commitment to Ohio State. Just before press time, BSB reached Wiley's mother, Felicia, at their home in the San Diego suburb.

"He told me he loves the school," she said. "He told me he had committed to Ohio State, and I said, 'Thank God it's over.'"

Due to a winter storm in Columbus, Wiley's flight home was delayed and, as soon as he landed, he rushed off to play in a high school basketball game. He was unavailable for comment.

The other players who visited OSU over the weekend of Jan. 5 included Garland, Texas, tight end Mike Gandy; Orange Park, Fla., strong safety Robert Pollard; Humble, Texas, wide receiver David Boston; and Miami Senior running back Sedrick Irvin.

Details from their visits and more insight on Wiley are featured in "Recruiting Outlook" on pages 20-22. As of press time, no players were scheduled to make official visits over the weekend of Jan. 12 and, with scholarship spots tight, OSU may welcome only a handful of players the rest of the way.

OSU Football Commitments

Football players who have issued commitments to play at Ohio State:

Player	Pos	Hgt	Wgt	High School
Joe Brown	OL	6-7	250	Tucson (Ariz.) Catalina Foothills
Mike Burden	SS	6-2	210	Palatine, Ill.
Mark Garcia	QB	6-4	210	Modesto (Cal.) Junior College
Benji Gilbert	OL	6-5	290	Lancaster, Ohio
Mike Orr	TE	6-7	250	Hemilton, Ohio
Kevin Houser	TE/DE	6-4	240	Westlake, Ohio
Brent Johnson	DE	6-4	250	Kingston (Ont.) Holy Cross
Kevin Johnson	DE	6-7	245	Washington (D.C.) Dunbar
Andy Katzenmoyer	LB	6-4	240	Westerville (Ohio) South
Jefferson Kelley	OL	6-6	305	Cincinnati Colerain
Paris Long	OL/DE	6-5	305	Columbus Beechcroft
Kurt Murphy	C	6-4	275	Columbus DeSales
Marcus Perez	DE	6-4	250	Medina, Ohio
Vanness Provin	WR	6-3	180	Fork Union (Va.) Military Acad.
Garrett Shea	WR/OT	5-11	175	San Jose (Calif.) Bellarmine Prep
Eric Smith	OT	6-6	310	Columbus Walnut Ridge
Rolland Steele	DB	5-11	160	Dublin (Ohio) Scioto
Dee Stultz	K	6-1	185	Orvillie, Ohio
Tyson Walter	OL	6-5	290	Chagrin Falls (Ohio) Kenarion
Derik Warske	WR	6-1	190	Cuy. Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit
Clianton Wayne	DE/LB	6-4	240	Brampton (Ont.) Conestoga
Jerry Westbrooks	RB/OLB	6-3	210	Bea Raton (Fla.) P.J. Paul II
Michael Wiley	RB	6-0	180	Spring Valley (Cal.) Monte Vista

Since the December issue of BSB was published, Ohio State received five other verbal commitments. Those players included Palatine, Ill., safety Mike Burden; Modesto (Calif.) JUCO quarterback Mark Garcia; Kingston (Ontario) Holy Cross defensive end Brent Johnson; Washington (D.C.) Dunbar defensive end Kevin Johnson and Columbus Walnut Ridge offensive lineman Eric Smith. For more on these commitments, see pages 18-19.

Burden joins Westerville (Ohio) South linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer as USA Today first-team All-USA selections in this OSU recruiting class. Katzenmoyer, in fact, was named as USA Today's national defensive player of the year.

Garcia gives Ohio State another option in replacing outgoing starting quarterback Bobby Hoying. Garcia, who threw for over 3,000 yards for Modesto this past season, has already enrolled at OSU and will compete for the starting job alongside juniors-to-be Stanley Jackson and Tom Hoying and sophomore-to-be Joe Germaine.

Young Heads To Oklahoma

Cooper Has Key Post To Fill

By JEFF RAPP
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Life goes on and the wheel of coaches just keeps on turning.

The Ohio State football team, which boasted one of its most accomplished staffs in school history this past season, now needs a new defensive coordinator.

Bill Young, who held that position since coming over from Arizona State with John Cooper in 1988, confirmed he is leaving to take the same job at Oklahoma.

Young will work under newly hired John Blake, the youngest Division I-A head coach at 34 and one of just six African-Americans at the helm of a major program. He'll also work with some old friends including newly hired assistant Joe Dickinson, who in turn recommended Young to Blake.

Young recently ventured to Norman, Okla., to meet with Blake, who left the Dallas Cowboys staff to fill the void left by the resignation of Howard Schnellenberger, and agonized over the decision for a week.

"It wasn't an interview as much as it was a chance to come look around and see if everything was a good fit," Young told BSB. "It was, even though Oklahoma has had some tough times lately, and now hopefully we'll build it back up."

Cooper and athletic director Andy Geiger have made strides to increase the salaries of OSU assistants and have said they hope to never lose a coach to a lateral move. But Young and his wife, Lawana, are natives of the area and felt the opportunity was special.

Continued On Page 42

Fumbles, Miscues Keep Buckeyes From Citrus Win, Top-Five Finish

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Another bowl trip to Florida. Another deflating defeat.

As is becoming almost the annual modus operandi for Ohio State, the Buckeyes fell just short in the CompUSA Florida Citrus Bowl, losing to Tennessee 20-14 on Jan. 1 in Orlando.

The loss ended OSU's season at 11-2 and dropped the Buckeyes, among the front-runners in the polls all season after winning their first 11 games, to sixth in the final Associated Press rankings.

"I told my players that even though we didn't win today, I'm still proud of them," said OSU coach John Cooper. "I thought we had a good year. We finished up 11-2. We got beat by a good football team, and



first half, Ohio State failed to punch the ball into the end zone or even get a first down on fourth-and-inches at the Vols' 2. OSU sent Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George into the middle of the line on an isolation play, but a surge of Tennessee defenders shoved him back for a 2-yard loss.

• Then, OSU failed to run out the closing minute of the first half and punted to Tennessee with 41 seconds left. Two plays later, Vols tailback Jay Graham ripped off a 69-yard touchdown run to tie the game at 7-7 at halftime.

• OSU held Tennessee on its first possession of the second half, but then roughed the punter. That gave the Vols new life, and quarterback

Continued On Page 6



DUDLEY SCORES — OSU tight end Rickey Dudley scores on a 32-yard pass play, but Tennessee won the CompUSA Florida Citrus Bowl 20-14.

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No. 2	Sept. 23	No. 17	Feb. 3
No. 3	Sept. 30	No. 18	Feb. 10
No. 4	Oct. 7	No. 19	Feb. 17
No. 5	Oct. 14	No. 20	Feb. 24
No. 6	Oct. 21	No. 21	March 2
No. 7	Oct. 28	No. 22	March 9
No. 8	Nov. 4	No. 23	March 16
No. 9	Nov. 11	No. 24	March 30
No. 10	Nov. 18	No. 25	April 13
No. 11	Nov. 25	No. 26	April 27
No. 12	Nov. 30	No. 27	May 11
No. 13	December	No. 28	June
No. 14	Jan. 13	No. 29	July
No. 15	Jan. 20	No. 30	August

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Bowls Beginning To All Look Alike

Editor's Notebook

with
Steve Helwagen

It is almost like the Ohio State football program is stuck in the movie "Groundhog Day": Every Jan. 1 the Buckeyes wake up in Orlando and by the end of the day they've suffered another stunning bowl defeat.

In "Groundhog Day," Bill Murray's signature line was "I'm having the weirdest day."

OSU coach John Cooper opened his postgame press conference — after the Buckeyes fell to Tennessee 20-14 — in a similar exasperating fashion: "It seems like I've done this before, guys, too many times."

(As an aside, one of my friends — a big Buckeye fan — said you don't even have to watch OSU's bowl games anymore. Just pop a tape in from any of the last five or six bowl trips, and you'll get the picture.)

Cooper will take the brunt of the blame for the team's latest collapse. Some of the criticisms will be warranted, although I will say that Cooper, going for it liberally on fourth down throughout the game, showed he was clearly behind his troops and playing for the win.

In the final analysis, Ohio State had three opportunities in the closing minutes to drive down and win the game and the players on the field, including Heisman Trophy-winning tailback Eddie George and sure-handed quarterback Bobby Hoying, fumbled the ball away each time. Cooper did not do this, although some will question the logic in approving the call for the ill-fated Hoying option pitch.

Even though everything important — the Big Ten title and the Rose Bowl — was gone after the Michigan loss, these Buckeyes, to a man, said they had cleared that from their memory and they were ready to focus on Tennessee.

But it apparently wasn't that easy. Just because somebody tells you this game means something, you have to believe it yourself. The warning signals should have gone up early in bowl week when George told reporters he was having problems firing people up in practice.

The players have to want it. In preparation and on game day, they have to make it their highest priority. If they don't, that's when you see gaffes like ill-timed personal foul penalties, blown coverages and fumbles.

Delving deeper, the OSU offensive line played with little fire — or effectiveness — in either the Michigan game or the Citrus Bowl. They showed little emotion at either game, rarely ran or off the field at the Citrus Bowl and simply got handled in both games. In my mind, this is where both games were lost.

Let me get this straight: You have three first-team Associated Press All-Americans on offense, and you score a paltry 14 points against Tennessee?

From a big picture standpoint, the average OSU fan must be wondering when and if the Buckeyes will consistently beat Michigan, go to the Rose Bowl and, lacking that, simply win another bowl game.

I mean, if you can't win a simple Big Ten title or Citrus Bowl with the Heisman Trophy, Lombardi Award and Biletnikoff Award winners, just exactly who do you win those things with?

The Ohio State program is at a position now where it is consistently in the Big Ten title picture. OSU has 30 wins

over the last three years, but just a shared Big Ten title in 1993 to show for it.

Clearly, the question remains: When — if ever under Cooper — will Ohio State take that next step?

His contract says he will be here five more years. Yes, he got another year added on for finishing in the top 10. People who are far too caught up in wins and losses will say it's time to make a change and get a new leader to put the program over the top.

I, however, disagree. After the sting from this defeat subsides, people will realize exactly where this program is at — a pretty high level. This isn't something you dismantle with herky-jerky changes. After all, do you want to end up like an Oklahoma or Georgia, where you're constantly changing coaches for the sake of change and constantly rebuilding?

And, no, I'm not advocating that these perpetual flirtations with greatness are acceptable, either. That is, after all, how Cooper's predecessor, Earle Bruce, ended up out of work.

We started the season with a golf analogy. Let's end it with another one: The current state of the Ohio State program is kind of like a golfer who goes out and pars all 18 holes. He had a good round, but he didn't get under par.

I would boldface this next statement if our style would allow it, but I can't so I'll simply italicize it: *Ohio State fans are ready for some birdies.*

HAVING SAID all of that, I am not entirely sold on OSU's chances next year.

It will be almost like the way Penn State came down from the mountain this year. Without George, Hoying, Rickey Dudley and possibly flanker Terry Glenn, the OSU offense will certainly suffer.

With some support, Pepe Pearson will step into George's shoes and probably enjoy a fine year. No one is going to

confuse him with Johnny Heisman or Doak Walker, but he should serve as a dependable weapon.

There will also be plenty of receivers and tight ends to partially fill the voids left by Glenn (again, maybe) or Dudley.

Quarterback, though, is the real question mark. Is JUCO transfer Mark Garcia for real? Are Stanley Jackson or Tom Hoying ready to really make their mark by leading this team? Or is there a high school star somewhere waiting to sign on the dotted line and throw his helmet into the ring?

I have to believe the OSU staff will anoint either Garcia, Jackson or Tom Hoying as the starter late in spring practice and stick with it. Whoever that person is, he needs a multitude of practice reps ASAP. The 1996 schedule, with opening home games with Rice and Pitt, allows OSU the chance to season its new starting quarterback before he finds himself in with the varsity (and we do mean varsity) on Sept. 28 at Notre Dame.

Defensively, OSU loses only Matt Bonhaus at tackle. He should be replaced without incident. The linebacking corps needs a solid spring of testing and fine tuning, while the secondary will still be among the Big Ten's best.

Under what looks like similar circumstances, Penn State went 9-3 and won its bowl game this year. And, like the '95 Nittany Lions, OSU has its toughest Big Ten games — Penn State and Michigan — at home in '96.

JUDGING BY the bowl season, Penn State and Iowa will come back next year ready to contend. Northwestern, I believe, will have a solid year, kind of like Wisconsin did after its token Rose Bowl appearance. Michigan is still missing something (i.e. a pro style passing game to complement Tim Biakabutuka), while Michigan State is still a year away. Nick Saban is quietly becoming a force to reckon with in East Lansing. He will be my pick for coach of the year — in 1997.

Illinois and Wisconsin were disappointments this past year and they need a lot of "under-the-hood" work.

I think Ohio State fits favorably into this Big Ten picture, although the key offensive puzzle pieces must be assembled quickly.

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OSU Unable To Convert Chances At Citrus

Continued From Page 1

Peyton Manning went for the jugular, passing 47 yards to Joey Kent for the go-ahead score.

• The Buckeyes failed miserably on their final four possessions of the game. OSU fumbled three times in the fourth quarter — including one each by George and steady quarterback Bobby Hoying, on a botched option play — all thwarting serious scoring opportunities that could have turned the tide of the game. Hoying also threw a desperation fourth-down pass to right guard LeShun Daniels, creating a penalty that turned the ball over to the Vols on downs.

All of the mental and physical miscues added up to another tough defeat for the Buckeyes, who at one point this year were considered as national title contenders.

Instead, the game becomes the latest footnote to Ohio State's bowl woes: The team is now 1-6 in bowl games under Cooper. OSU has also lost five straight bowl games to SEC teams, including three of the last four Citrus Bowls.

And it is Tennessee (11-1) that moved up a spot from fourth to third in the final AP poll.

"Everyone in the Big Ten's ultimate goal is to get to the Rose Bowl," Hoying said afterward. "We didn't do that. We ended up down here. We didn't beat Tennessee, so you can realize how disappointed we are right now."

The game was played in a steady downpour after rainstorms pelted Orlando overnight. The playing field, while slick, was in fine condition, however.

Still, what was billed as a high-scoring shootout between two of the nation's most potent offenses turned into a strong-willed battle of field position, punts and turnovers.

Ohio State got on the scoreboard first, in fact, as a direct result of a blocked punt by Central McClellion late in the first quarter. McClellion burst through from the left side and blocked Larry Binion's punt. The ball rolled dead at the Vols' 23-yard line with 3:00



BLOCKED — OSU special teams star Central McClellion (20) blocks this first-quarter punt by Tennessee's Larry Binion as teammates Antoine Winfield (11) and Steve Baird (9) look on. The play helped set up OSU's first touchdown, a 2-yard run by Eddie George, in the Citrus Bowl.

left in the first quarter.

After the block, OSU put the ball safely in George's hands. He took a handoff right on first down, carrying for 17 yards to the 6. A face mask penalty gave OSU a first-and-goal at the 3. After gaining 1 yard on first down, George followed fullback Nicky Sualua's block and dove past a trio of Tennessee tacklers into the end zone for the 2-yard TD and a 7-0 OSU lead with 2:07 left in the first quarter.

The Ohio State defense was seeming-

ly getting the job done, making Tennessee punt on its first four possessions and causing a fumble on the fifth as cornerback Ty Howard put his helmet on the ball after running back Eric Lane caught a screen pass. Howard lost his helmet but pounced on the ball at the Vols' 24 with 6:21 left in the first half.

Ohio State was poised to add to its lead, giving to George on six consecutive plays. But the Heisman winner was stuffed for the previously mentioned 2-yard loss on fourth-and-6 inches at the Tennessee 2 with 3:26 left. It was the turning point for what would end up as a disappointing day for George, who finished with 101 yards on 25 carries and was clearly upstaged by Graham.

"I knew that everything I would get, I would have to work for," George said. "It was that type of game. Things didn't pan out like I thought they would. We were behind and we weren't able to pound them like we wanted to."

OSU forced a Tennessee punt and got the ball back at the Vols' 37 with 1:42 left. Again, it looked like the Buckeyes would pad their lead, but Tennes-

see's Shane Burton had other ideas. He sacked Hoying for a 6-yard loss, knocking OSU out of scoring position. Punter Brent Bartholomew's punt rolled into the end zone for a touchback with 41 seconds left, and it seemed OSU's 7-0 lead would be safe at intermission.

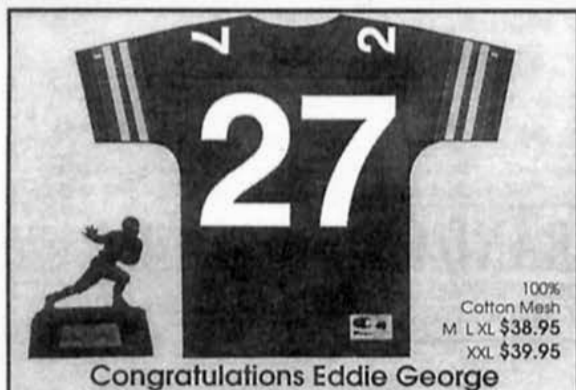
But Graham carried for 11 yards on a first-down draw play. Tennessee called a timeout with 34 seconds left to take a chance at the end zone. Again, the Vols called Graham's number on a draw play. The line opened a gaping hole and Graham was off to the races virtually untouched on a 69-yard touchdown run — the second longest in Citrus Bowl history — to knot the game at 7-7 with 23 seconds left in the half.

"If we were trying to run the time out, we would have taken a knee," said Vols coach Phillip Fulmer on his team's strategy. "We were trying to move the ball out to where we could make some kind of decision on what to do one way or another. He just made a great play."

"I was just trying to run down the middle of the field and it just so happened that one of their guys tried to cut my legs," said Graham, who was voted

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Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Page 7

the game's MVP after rushing for 154 yards on 26 carries. "I just jumped over him. One guy hit me and slipped off, and I just ran to the other side and was off."

A critical OSU error early in the second half paved the way for Tennessee to take the lead. The OSU defense had held for a three-and-out on the Vols' first possession, but a trio of punt-block happy Buckeyes including Alonzo Shavers plowed into Binion and were flagged for roughing the punter. The penalty gave Tennessee a first down at the OSU 47.

Manning, content to dink the Buckeyes to that point, wasted no time in throwing the deep ball. He lofted one down the left sideline for his main receiver Joey Kent, who adjusted on the ball around OSU's Antoine Winfield — covering Kent in place of the injured Shawn Springs. Kent made the catch at the 5 and slipped into the end zone for the touchdown and a 14-7 lead with 13:22 left in the third quarter.

"That was a designed play," Kent said. "After the penalty, we took advantage of the opportunity."

"I don't think the DB had an idea where the ball was, and that made it easier for me to make the adjustment and catch the ball. I only had one man to beat," he said.

Ohio State finally got untracked and tied the game at 14-14 after embarking on a 10-play, 66-yard scoring drive that carried over into the fourth quarter. Cooper rolled the dice early in the drive, allowing Hoying to run a quarterback keeper on fourth-and-2 inches at the OSU 41. Hoying then dialed up Glenn for an 18-yard gain and hit Buster Tillman for 7 more.

A reverse to Glenn lost 4 yards and ended the third quarter. After an incomplete pass, Hoying's third-down pass went down the middle to tight end Rickey Dudley. He got behind Vols linebacker Scott Galyon, caught the ball at the 20 and rolled easily into the end zone for the 32-yard touchdown that, after Josh Jackson's PAT kick, tied the game at 14-14 with 14:48 left.

"Bob saw me on a couple of occasions, he hit me and I was able to make some plays," said Dudley, who enjoyed his biggest day of the season with five catches for 106 yards.

Undaunted, Tennessee went back to work and moved 63 yards to the OSU 8. A false start penalty and a pair of Manning incompletions forced the Vols to settle for Jeff Hall's 29-yard field goal and a 17-14 lead with 9:24 left in the game.

On OSU's next possession, George was hit by Vols linebacker Tyrone Hines and fumbled. Galyon pounced on it at the OSU 39 and, with just 7:35 left, it appeared the Vols would wrap it up.

"He knocked it out of my hands," George said. "I took a handoff and it wasn't completely secure and it just popped out."

Bowl Results

Date	Bowl	Teams, Records and Results
Dec. 14	Las Vegas	Toledo (11-0-1) 40, Nevada (9-3) 37, OT
Dec. 25	Aloha	Kansas (10-2) 51, UCLA (7-5) 30
Dec. 27	Copper	Texas Tech (9-3) 55, Air Force (8-5) 41
Dec. 28	Alamo	Texas A&M (9-3) 22, Michigan (9-4) 20
Dec. 29	Sun	Iowa (8-4) 38, Washington (7-4-1) 18
Dec. 29	Independence	LSU (7-4-1) 45, Michigan State (6-5-1) 26
Dec. 29	Holiday	Kansas State (10-2) 54, Colorado State (8-4) 21
Dec. 30	Liberty	East Carolina (9-3) 19, Stanford (7-4-1) 13
Dec. 30	Carquest	North Carolina (7-5) 20, Arkansas (8-5) 10
Dec. 30	Peach	Virginia (9-4) 34, Georgia (6-6) 27
Dec. 31	Sugar	Virginia Tech (10-2) 28, Texas (10-2-1) 10
Jan. 1	Outback	Penn State (9-3) 43, Auburn (8-4) 14
Jan. 1	Citrus	Tennessee (11-1) 20, Ohio State (11-2) 14
Jan. 1	Gator	Syracuse (9-3) 41, Clemson (8-4) 0
Jan. 1	Cotton	Colorado (10-2) 38, Oregon (9-3) 6
Jan. 1	Rose	USC (9-2-1) 41, Northwestern (10-2) 32
Jan. 1	Orange	Florida State (10-2) 31, Notre Dame (9-3) 26
Jan. 2	Fiesta	Nebraska (12-0) 62, Florida (12-1) 24

But the Vols failed to move the ball and OSU got the ball back after a punt at its own 20 with 6:29 left. The chance ended, though, on fourth-and-1 at the 50 when Hoying's mistimed option pitch to George hit backup fullback Matt Calhoun in the helmet and Tennessee's Tori Noel recovered at the OSU 47.

The OSU defense stiffened with Finkes knocking Graham for a 2-yard loss that helped force another Vols punt with 3:27 left.

Ohio State began this possession at its own 17. Hoying hit George for an 8-yard gain on first down, but then threw a pair of incompletions. On fourth-and-2, Hoying found himself under immediate pressure and desperately tried to throw the ball upfield. Daniels, an ineligible receiver, caught it and advanced it before the play was whistled dead. OSU was penalized 10 yards and loss-of-down for illegal touching, giving the Vols the ball at the OSU 15 with 2:33 left.

But even this was not enough to kill Ohio State's chances completely. Once again, the defense kept the Vols out of the end zone. Vrabel knocked Graham for a 4-yard loss this time, and the Vols settled for Hall's 25-yard field goal and a 20-14 lead with 2:06 left.

OSU, now without any timeouts, took over after the ensuing kickoff at its own 31-yard line. After a pair of incompletions, Hoying hit Glenn for a 12-yard gain and George for 5 more. Now facing second-and-5 at the OSU 48, he dropped back and hit Dimitrios Stanley for a 14-yard gain to the Vols' 38. But the backup split end was popped by DeRon Jenkins and fumbled. The loose ball was recovered by Craig King with 57 seconds left.

OSU's comeback hopes were finally crushed.

fourth quarter when a long Manning pass down the left sideline soared out of bounds. Brutus caught the errant pass but was immediately plowed to the ground by Tennessee receiver Kevin Nash. Still, he held on.

The play made the postgame highlight reel and was also selected as CNN's "Play of the Day."

* Attendance for the Citrus Bowl was generously announced at 70,797. That was, apparently, the paid total. Due to the heavy rain, there was an abundance of empty seats throughout the 72,000-seat stadium. The crowd was also mainly pro-Vols, primarily because Tennessee sold 18,000 seats to OSU's 12,000.

The game, matching two teams tied for the No. 4 ranking coming in, was also widely viewed on ABC's national telecast. The game drew an 11.1 rating, a new record shading the 11.0 mark for the '95 game between OSU and Alabama.

The Citrus has risen to the No. 5 spot in terms of payout (\$3 million per team) and is poised to make a jump to the bowl alliance at some point, although its deal with the Big Ten and SEC runs through the 2000 season.

"I have to like the future of this bowl," said Florida Citrus Sports executive director Chuck Rohe. "No. 1, we have a contract for 6 years, and if the alliance sticks together, we will continue to get teams like this."

According to Rohe, the Citrus could be in line for a spot in an enlarged bowl alliance as early as 1998 if current contracts are renegotiated and especially if Walt Disney World gets involved.

The Citrus Bowl celebrated its 50th anniversary with this game, although it was known as the Tangerine Bowl through the 1982 season.

Citrus Bowl Notes

Ohio State's record in bowl competition dipped to 12-16 with the loss. The Buckeyes are now 1-3 in the Citrus Bowl. OSU defeated Brigham Young 10-7 in 1985, but fell to Georgia 21-14 in 1993 and to Alabama 24-17 last year.

The loss also dropped Cooper's OSU combined record in Michigan games and bowl games to 2-12-1 (.167). His overall record at OSU after eight seasons stands at 65-28-4 (.691).

The Big Ten-SEC rivalry in the Citrus moved to 3-1 in favor of the SEC with OSU absorbing all three of the losses since the deal was set up in 1992. Penn State beat Tennessee for the only Big Ten win after the '93 season.

* While players from both teams had trouble holding onto the ball, Brutus Buckeye certainly did not.

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Option Call Openly Debated After Citrus Loss

The CompUSA Florida Citrus Bowl will live in infamy as the second place a John Cooper-coached Ohio State team went awry with an ill-fated, ill-executed option play.

The first, of course, was the 1990 Michigan game when then-quarterback Greg Frey was tackled on fourth-and-18 inches deep in OSU territory with just 1:38 left, leading to a 16-13 Michigan win.

Just over five years later at the Citrus Bowl, the Buckeyes picked another critical fourth-down play to unveil the option. This time, the results were nearly as disastrous.

Facing fourth-and-1 at the 50-yard line, OSU quarterback Bobby Hoying moved to his right and pitched the ball toward Heisman Trophy-winning tailback Eddie George. But the pitch struck fullback Matt Calhoun on the helmet and careened to the ground where Tennessee's Tori Noel recovered.

Unlike the time constraints of the Michigan game, there were still over five minutes left in this contest. The play, though, will go down as one of the more curious moments of OSU's 20-14 loss to the Vols — and for that matter the entire 1995 season.

After all, Ohio State — a power running team with George maneuvering primarily behind All-American tackle Orlando Pace — had run the option only sparingly with the first-team unit all year.

Still, OSU offensive coordinator Joe Hollis defended the decision.

"I'm the one that made it. It was a bad call because it didn't work," Hollis said.

"There was sound reasoning to the call. They had been overshifted to the unbalanced side, but double blitzed on that play. It was Coach Cooper's decision (to go for it), but it was my call. The option was a play that had worked before. It didn't today," he said.

Cooper also defended the option call, saying a previous fourth-down power running play near the goal line had been quashed by the Vols.

"I think it's pretty obvious you guys

Inside The Offense with Steve Helwagen

want to make a big deal about the option call," Cooper told reporters afterward. "We just ran the ball on fourth down and 6 inches to go off tackle and got stopped. We ran the isolation play where the fullback is going to block the linebacker.

"(Fullback) Nicky Sualua was out of the game. He was hurt. We knew they were going to bunch it up inside and we've got fourth down and maybe a yard, yard-and-a-half to go, and we're thinking if you're going to run the ball, get the ball outside on the toss sweep. We thought it would be better for Bobby to come down the line and pitch the ball to the tailback," he said.

Hoying admitted he should have audibled out of the option once he sensed the blitz was coming.

"I probably should have checked to the frontside sweep," he said. "They kind of disguised their blitz a little bit. They brought two guys on the outside and they just trumped our move. We just didn't react in time. They did a nice job of disguising that.

"We had numerous opportunities to come back even after that. At crunch time, we just didn't get it done," he said.

Even the soft-spoken Pace, who missed practice time the week prior to the game with a minor shoulder injury, was surprised by the option call. The play went away from Pace's left side to the right (short) side of the field.

"I was definitely surprised with that call," he said. "I thought we would run something that was more our bread and butter. I thought we would use something that got us here. I was definitely surprised because I can't recall us running that any more than 10 times."

Hoying said it would be easy to chalk the play up as another botched call, similar to the '90 Michigan game. But, he added, he also saw the play work for a 76-yard touchdown by George last



GEORGE PLOWS FORWARD — OSU senior tailback Eddie George confronts Tennessee linebacker Jesse Sanders head-on during the Citrus Bowl. George, the 1995 Heisman Trophy winner, was limited to 101 yards rushing and one TD by the Vols.

year at Michigan State.

"It goes back to when I'm a senior in high school and Greg Frey doesn't pitch it," Hoying said. "People are going to make comparisons to that. They had the perfect blitz to stop that play.

"Nobody is going to bring up when we check to it at Michigan State last year and Eddie George goes for a long touchdown. If they don't blitz like that and we do get it, then everybody says you're a genius."

THE OHIO State offense never seemed to get on track in the rainy conditions at the Citrus Bowl.

George barely eclipsed the 100-yard mark with 101 yards on 26 carries, while Hoying hit on 19 of 38 passes for 246 yards. Those are respectable numbers, that is, until the team's four turnovers and woeful 4-of-15 mark on third downs are figured in.

"I think the situation was we were struggling and we weren't in sync," said tight end Rickey Dudley, one of the few bright spots with five catches for 106 yards including a 32-yard score.

"Everybody on this team went out and played hard; things just didn't go our way," he said.

OSU's inability to establish the run created second-and-long and third-and-long situations throughout the game. The Buckeyes were forced to pass, creating easier defensive situations for the Vols, Hoying said.

"I don't know how many times we threw the football, what, 38 times? That's not Ohio State football. We want to throw the ball 25, maybe 30 times, mix it up with the run. Obviously, we weren't in sync. There were spurts

there where we looked good throwing the ball, but that's not our game. Our game is mixing it up," he said.

"They did a nice job of bending and not breaking. They did a good job of not letting us get the big play."

The rain played havoc with the passing game for both teams. The footballs became waterlogged early on, making accuracy tough for the passers.

"The ball was just floating out there," Hoying said. "We had problems getting it out there."

THE BUCKEYES fell behind 17-14 with 9:24 left in the game after Vols kicker Jeff Hall connected on a 29-yard field goal.

Ohio State had four possessions after that point, but could not mount a serious scoring threat.

The possessions ended in succession with George fumbling at the OSU 43 with 7:35 left, Hoying's mistimed option pitch at midfield with 5:07 left, Hoying's fourth-down desperation pass to lineman LeShun Daniels (a penalty gave Tennessee the ball at the OSU 15) with 2:33 left, and Dimitrious Stanley's fumble after catching a pass at the Vols 38-yard line with 57 seconds left.

Hoying said the Buckeyes believed they could pull another miracle finish out of their hat like they had done earlier this year at Penn State.

"I mean, we did it at Penn State and it really was the same feeling," Hoying said. "We got a second chance out there. Everybody takes the blame on offense. I think our defense played outstanding. Except for two plays, they played well enough for us to win. I think the brunt of this loss goes on the offense's shoulders," he said.

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Two Long Touchdowns Cloud Effort By Defense

If you had told OSU defensive coordinator Bill Young before the Citrus Bowl that his troops would hold Tennessee to two touchdowns, he probably would have been ecstatic.

After all, his defense has been backed by one of the nation's most potent offenses this season.

But after Tennessee made a pair of long touchdown plays and a pair of short field goals stand up for a 20-14 win over the Buckeyes, Young was pleased with the effort, but certainly not with the result.

"We gave them two home runs and let them drive the ball on us when we shouldn't have," Young said. "But I think they played hard. Take away those two plays and we played a hell of a game."

Tennessee's two home runs — a 69-yard touchdown run by Jay Graham and Peyton Manning's 47-yard TD pass to Joey Kent — obscured the fact that the OSU defense repeatedly kept the Vols out of the end zone in the fourth quarter. Down the stretch, Tennessee began three possessions in OSU territory after quick-change turnovers, and the OSU defense allowed the Vols just two field goals, keeping OSU's comeback hopes alive.

"There's a ton of positives from this game," Young said.

But Graham's long touchdown run caught the OSU defense off guard, for sure.

On first down at the Tennessee 31 with just 34 seconds left in the half, Graham took a handoff on a draw play. He cut back into a hole at left tackle, picked up a block from his tight end on OSU linebacker Jerry Rudzinski, avoided a trio of diving Buckeyes and outraced OSU cornerback Ty Howard down the left side to the end zone.

It was reminiscent of the feeble tackling efforts the OSU defense had made against Michigan's Tim Biakabutuka when he ripped them for 313 yards in the regular-season finale.

"We were shocked, really shocked," said Howard, whose team went into halftime tied at 7-7 rather than leading 7-0. "He was pretty fast and I just couldn't run the guy down. I couldn't catch him."

Manning's bomb to Kent also caught the Buckeyes off guard, at least personally.

Ohio State had planned to use a lot of nickel coverage against Manning, who set a Tennessee single-season passing record this year. But those plans were foiled when a pair of backup safeties, Che Bryant and Damon Moore,

Inside The Defense with Steve Helwagen

never made it to the game due to disciplinary reasons — Bryant was academically ineligible, while Moore was sent home from Florida for a team rules violation.

"We'd already lost our second-team nickel back (Damon Moore)," Young said. "We had to send him home. We ended up playing the Buck linebacker, and we hadn't planned on doing that."

Then, star cornerback Shawn Springs left the game midway through the first quarter due to a fractured left shoulder blade.

"We lost our best defensive back on the first series of the game, and it almost took us completely out of our defensive game plan," Young said. "We wanted to get a lot of pressure and go with man coverage. We planned on putting Shawn Springs man-to-man on Kent, and all of a sudden he's not in the game."

Without Springs, freshman Antoine Winfield ably stepped into the void. But when Manning looked deep down the left sideline for Kent early in the second half, the All-SEC receiver had beaten the rookie, curling around him to make a nifty catch and dance into the end zone with the go-ahead touchdown.

"Springs was on me every play before he got injured," Kent said. "When he left the game, that kind of opened the door of opportunity for me."

"I think they stayed with their game plan after Springs went out. They had a tremendous athlete back there in Winfield, but we were able to take advantage of him at a bad point for him," he said.

Manning agreed that Springs' injury was a key turning point in the game. With Springs out, Manning concentrated on Kent and hit him with seven passes for 109 yards.

"Springs was going to wherever Kent was," Manning said. "Normally, he's the field corner, but he went wherever Kent was. It meant a lot (when he left)."

With a steady rainstorm cascading the field throughout the game, Manning was content to dink the Buckeyes with high-percentage, short passes. He completed 20 of 35 passes, but for only 182 yards.

"We concentrated a lot on disguising our coverages, getting pressure on him and not letting him have a lot of time to find his receivers," said OSU defensive



BIG HIT BY HOWARD — OSU cornerback Ty Howard (2) lost his helmet but recovered the football after delivering a crushing hit on Tennessee running back Eric Lane. Buckeyes Rob Kelly (34) and Luke Fickell (99) converge on the play as well.

end Matt Finkes, who was named his team's defensive player of the game after logging a team-high nine tackles including four tackles-for-loss and a sack.

Young had drilled his team throughout the bowl practice on trying to contain Manning, Kent and Graham, who was named the game's MVP after a 154-yard rushing performance.

"We knew Manning was a great player, and they really didn't do anything too much differently than we thought they would," Young said. "The tailback, Graham, we knew was a great player, and the receiver, Kent, we knew was a phenomenal player, and they didn't disappoint us."

Disappointing, however, were the two long touchdowns, Finkes said.

"We played pretty sound on defense, but then again, we came in thinking we had to stop the big play on defense and they hit two of them on us. You're not able to win like that," he said.

MIKE VRABEL, OSU's stellar

defensive end, broke his own single-season record for sacks with one in the Citrus Bowl. That upped his total to 13 for the year, eclipsing his mark of 12 from last year. He also set a new single-season mark for tackles-for-loss with 26.

Vrabel, a third-team AP All-American this year, is now in second place on both the school's all-time sacks list with 27 and the tackles-for-loss chart with 48. He needs one sack and nine tackles-for-loss in 1996 to take over the career lead in both departments. Jason Simmons, who played from 1990 to '93, currently owns both records with 27½ sacks and 56½ tackles-for-loss.

Finkes finished the year with five sacks and 19 tackles-for-loss, upping his career marks to 19 sacks and 43 tackles-for-loss.

Middle linebacker Greg Bellisari held on for the team lead in tackles with 98, with outside linebacker Ryan Miller second with 93. Springs led the club in interceptions with five.

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Cooper Discusses Where Citrus Bowl Got Away From Buckeyes

EDITOR'S NOTE — Throughout the football season, *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* has published excerpts from Ohio State head coach John Cooper's postgame press conference. For the Citrus Bowl, Bobby Hoying and Eddie George also were involved in the press conference. Here is what they had to say following OSU's 20-14 loss to Tennessee in the Citrus Bowl:

COOPER: "It seems like I've done this before, guys, too many times."

"I told my players that even though we didn't win today, I'm still proud of them. I thought we had a good year. We finished up 11-2. We got beat by a good football team, and give Tennessee credit. Jay Graham made a great play before halftime on the run and the long pass right after we roughed the kicker was another key play in the ball game."

"We got a big play off the kicking game. We blocked one punt that gave us a touchdown, then we roughed the kicker and that gave them the opportunity to score on the next play after that. I'm proud of the way we played defensively. I thought we played hard."

"Shawn Springs went down early in the game, our best corner, and that didn't help us, but that's no excuse. We planned on using a little more nickel defense and blitzing a few more times than we did. But I can't fault our defense. I thought we played really well on defense."

"Looking back, we had a couple of situations where you could sit back and second-guess all day long. Maybe we should have kicked a field goal when we had it fourth-and-short, but my thinking is we've got a big, strong offensive line, we've got the Heisman Trophy winner at running back, and if we're not going to make 6 inches in that situation, then we're probably not going to win the game anyway."

"I felt like we needed to score touchdowns to beat this fine Tennessee football team. They're a fine offensive foot-

ball team, and as it turned out, we didn't get the job done."

"Turnovers were a big factor for both football teams. We turned the ball over and that's not like us to have as many turnovers as we had today and I'm sure Phil Fulmer feels the same way about his football team. We had a couple of penalties, the unnecessary roughness penalty that hurt us a little bit. I don't understand that. But that's football."

Q. What was the thinking on the fourth-down option at midfield, especially since you hadn't run that all day?

COOPER: "It's short yardage. Looking back, we probably should have called a timeout. They gambled a little bit, came with a blitz, and we didn't execute it very well. Again, it's a good call if you execute it or if they've got two people coming outside, you can't pitch the ball. But that's one of those situations where you guys can second-guess all you want to."

Q. How big a factor was the rain?

COOPER: "I think the rain was a factor for both football teams. I think you would have seen a lot more offense from both teams if conditions had been a little bit better than they were. But both teams played on the same field. Their offense is similar to ours. Our offense is maybe a little similar to what they do, although we use the tight end a little bit more."

"I'm really proud of Rickey Dudley. He was picked as (OSU's) offensive player of the game. And I'm certainly proud of Eddie George for all he's done for our football team throughout his career, not only today but throughout his career. I can say the same thing for Bobby Hoying. He's done a great job for us."

Q. What happened on Graham's long touchdown run just before halftime?

COOPER: "Well, they ran a draw play. That's the play you're going to do. In all honesty, they're probably trying to run the time out. They're backed up and they're probably just trying to get out of there with being down 7-0. They

ran a draw play. We didn't tackle, and he's a good football player."

Q. Bobby, can you comment on the footing and just how tough it was?

HOYING: "I had a really tough time throwing the ball in the first half, and I think Peyton (Manning) did too. It just wouldn't come out right. After the first two drives, all of the balls were saturated. I felt a lot more comfortable throwing the ball after the rain stopped in the second half. But it was like that for both teams. In all honesty, I felt a sloppy field would help our team out a little more."

Q. Bobby, how disappointing is it to end the season this way, losing to Tennessee here while Northwestern plays USC in the Rose Bowl?

HOYING: "I think that's an obvious question to ask. Everyone in the Big Ten's ultimate goal is to get to the Rose Bowl. We didn't do that. We ended up down here. We didn't beat Tennessee, so you can realize how disappointed we are right now."

COOPER: "Probably the stat that jumps out at me right now was we were 4 out of 15 on third-down conversions. I think if you look at us for the year, you'll see we did a much better job than that on third-down conversions. That's one area. Tennessee wasn't much better. They were 5 of 17, but I think on a better field you're probably going to see both teams execute their third-down plays a little bit better."

"I can't say enough about our kicking game. Brent (Bartholomew) did a nice job of punting the football, averaging 48 yards a kick. One time we should have downed the ball on the 3-yard line and we knocked it into the end zone."

Q. Eddie, it looked like you were having some problems catching the ball. Was that because of the wet ball?

GEORGE: "Yes, it was. My gloves kept getting wet and I kept trying to dry them off and the ball was just slipping through my hands. I think I should have made the catches."

Q. Bobby, the pitch hit Matt Calhoun. Did you think that was Eddie coming up?

HOYING: "The fullback usually gets out of the way. I should still wait and let him clear and get a good pitch out there. But, again, they had a blitz on to stop that play, and I really don't know how good a play it would have been even if Eddie got the pitch."

Q. Eddie, how disappointing is it to finish up this way?

GEORGE: "I'll let you answer that."

Q. Coach, do you feel Tennessee came in trying to stop the run and make you pass?

COOPER: "I don't think necessarily."



SCOTT ROCKWAY

LOOK OF CONCERN — OSU coach John Cooper motions to an assistant during a tense moment at the Citrus Bowl.

I think they came in here and mixed it up like any well-coached team will do. I think at times they gambled, brought some people and tried to play some man coverage. If anything, it looked to me like their safeties played about as deep as any safeties we've faced all year long. They had the two safeties playing 15 yards deep in two-deep coverage. That's why Dudley caught as many passes as he did down the middle."

"They did a nice job of taking the big play away from us. They took the big play away from Terry Glenn. Terry, game after game after game this year, has been able to catch the ball in front of the defensive backs and make big plays. They weren't going to let us just control the tempo. Our style of football is more lining up, bloody your nose and be a little more physical than we were today. But again, give Tennessee's defense credit. They did a nice job."

Q. Eddie, coming in you felt Tennessee would be one of the best teams you'd face all year. How do you feel about them now?

GEORGE: "No doubt. I mean they had a great day on defense and they executed pretty well on offense. We came back to tie the game and it could have gone either way. We still could have won it in the waning seconds, but unfortunately we fumbled."



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The Numbers Game

Tennessee 20, Ohio State 14

Jan. 1, 1996 — Florida Citrus Bowl Stadium; Orlando, Fla.

OHIO STATE	7	0	0	7	—	14
TENNESSEE	0	7	7	6	—	20

First Quarter

OSU — George, 2 run (Jo. Jackson kick) 2:07 (3 plays, 23 yards)

Second Quarter

UT — Graham, 69 run (Hall kick) 0:23 (2 plays, 80 yards)

Third Quarter

UT — Kent, 47 pass from Manning (Hall kick) 13:22 (4 plays, 69 yards)

Fourth Quarter

OSU — Dudley, 32 pass from B. Hoying (Jo. Jackson kick) 14:40 (10 plays, 68 yards)

UT — Hall, 29 field goal 9:24 (13 plays, 59 yards)

UT — Hall, 25 field goal 2:06 (4 plays, 7 yards)

Att. — 70,797

Weather — 70 degrees; Wind, 10-15 mph from the sw; Cloudy with periods of heavy rain.

Team Statistics	OSU	UT
First Downs	17	15
Rushing	6	8
Passing	11	6
Penalty	0	1
Rushes-Yards	36-89	32-145
Passing Yards	246	182
Passes	38-19-1	35-20-0
Offensive Plays	74	67
Total Net Yards	335	327
Third Down Efficiency	4-15	5-17
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-3	0-0
Punts	7-48.1	9-34.2
Fumbles-Lost	5-3	1-1
Penalties	6-57	8-43
Time Of Possession	29:21	30:39

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) — OSU: George 25-101; Sualua 2-3; Pearson 1-1; Glenn 1-4; B. Hoying 7-(-12). UT: Graham 26-154; Ford 1-4; Manning 5-(-13).

PASSING (Att.-Comp.-Int.-Yds.-TD) — OSU: B. Hoying 38-19-1-246-1. UT: Manning 35-20-0-182-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) — OSU: Glenn 7-95; Dudley 5-106; George 3-18; Stanley 1-14; Tillman 1-7; Houser 1-5; Sualua 1-1. UT: Kent 7-109; Kyle 4-16; Nash 3-44; Price 2-4; Graham 2-0; Pfeiffer 1-7; Lane 1-2.

PUNTING (No-Avg-Long) — OSU: Bartholomew 7-48.1-65. UT: Binion 8-39.2-54.

PUNT RETURNS (No-Avg-Long) — OSU: Stanley 6-5.0-11. UT: Fair 3-7.3-10.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No-Avg-Long) — OSU: Pearson 2-13.0-15; Springs 1-13. UT: Fair 2-28.5-29.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES — OSU: Howard, Winfield. UT: Noel, King, Galyon.

INTERCEPTIONS — OSU: None. UT: Austin.

SACKS — OSU: Vrabel, Finkes, UT: Little, Duff, Burton.

TACKLES FOR LOSS — OSU: Finkes (4), Vrabel (3), R. Miller, Gwinn, Howard. UT: Burton (2), Hampton (2), Little, Sanders, Duff.

TACKLES — OSU: Finkes 7-2-9; Winfield 7-0-7; Gwinn 3-3-6; R. Miller 5-0-5; Bellisari 2-3-5; Howard 4-0-4; Kelly 4-0-4; Vrabel 2-2-4; Johnson 2-1-3; Fickell 2-1-3; Springs 2-0-2; Bonhaus 1-1-2; Kreuzer 1-1-2; Willis 1-0-1; McClellion 1-0-1. UT: Austin 5-2-7; Sanders 4-2-6; Burton 4-2-6; Galyon 3-3-6; Little 4-1-5; Jenkins 4-1-5; Noel 4-0-4; Hines 3-0-3; Fair 3-0-3; King 2-0-2; Duff 2-0-2; Hampton 1-1-2; Wilson 1-0-1; Kidd 1-0-1; Green 1-0-1; White 1-0-1; Brown 1-0-1; Lane 0-1-1.

Note: Players in the Game not provided in official box score.

OSU Season Statistics

RUSHING	ATT	GAIN	LOST	NET	AVG	TD	LG	TEAM STATISTICS	OPP	OSU
Eddie George	328	1984	57	1927	5.9	24	87	FIRST DOWNS	217	303
Pepe Pearson	83	405	20	385	4.6	3	24	Rushing	95	152
Jermon Jackson	38	171	2	169	4.4	0	26	Passing	110	143
Nicky Sualua	20	112	3	109	5.5	0	22	Penalty	12	6
Stanley Jackson	23	98	57	41	1.8	0	16	AVG PER GAME/RUSH	145.5	210.2
Terry Glenn	4	37	4	33	8.3	0	27	AVG PER GAME/PASS	183.5	268.5
Greg Bellisari	1	27	0	27	27.0	0	27	AVG PER PLAY/PASS	6.6	9.4
Matt Calhoun	3	32	5	27	9.0	0	27	TOTAL OFFENSE	4276	6222
Bobby Hoying	59	199	178	21	0.4	2	25	Total Plays	856	939
Dimirious Stanley	2	7	0	7	3.5	0	6	Average Per Game	328.9	478.6
Josh Jenkins	2	2	0	2	1.0	0	2	Average Per Play	5.0	6.6
Eric Gohlsin	1	0	7	-7	-	0	0	PENALTIES-YARDS	71-579	74-619
Tom Hoying	2	7	16	-9	-	0	7	Offense	47-400	35-307
OSU Totals	566	3081	349	2732	4.8	29	87	Defense	19-138	26-215
OPP Totals	494	2305	414	1891	3.8	17	69	Special Teams	5-41	13-97

SCORE BY QUARTERS	1	2	3	4	TOTAL	AVG
Ohio State	110	148	127	90	475	36.5
Opponent	51	50	45	74	220	16.9

PASSING	ATT	COMP	INT	YDS	PCT	TD	LG	RTNG	SACKS-YDS
Bobby Hoying	341	211	12	3269	.619	29	82	163.4	23-159
Stanley Jackson	*25	16	1	202	.640	2	31	150.3	7-45
Tom Hoying	7	2	0	19	.286	2	12	145.7	1-16
OSU Totals	373	229	13	3490	.614	33	82	162.2	31-220
OPP Totals	362	189	24	2385	.522	10	55	103.4	27-183

RECEIVING	NO	YARDS	AVG	TD	LG	SCORING	TD	EPK	EPP	EPR	FG	PTS
Terry Glenn	64	1411	22.0	17	82	Eddie George	25	-	1-0	0-1	-	152
Eddie George	47	417	8.9	1	30	Terry Glenn	17	-	1-0	-	-	104
Rickey Dudley	37	375	10.1	7	41	Josh Jackson	7	57-60	-	-	-	10-15
Buster Tillman	30	538	17.9	1	58	Rickey Dudley	7	-	-	-	-	42
Nicky Sualua	17	129	7.6	2	22	Dimirious Stanley	4	-	-	-	-	24
Dimirious Stanley	13	177	13.6	4	25	Pepe Pearson	3	-	-	-	-	18
Pepe Pearson	5	95	19.0	0	44	Nicky Sualua	2	-	-	-	-	12
Dee Miller	5	47	9.4	0	13	Shawn Springs	2	-	-	-	-	12
Bob Houser	5	43	8.6	0	16	Bobby Hoying	2	-	0-3	-	-	12
Jermon Jackson	3	27	9.0	0	15	Alonzo Shavers	1	-	-	-	-	6
DeWayne Carter	2	24	12.0	0	15	Buster Tillman	1	-	-	-	-	6
Alonzo Shavers	1	7	7.0	1	7	OSU Totals	64	57-60	2-3	0-1	10-15	475
OSU Totals	229	3490	15.2	33	82	OPP Totals	27	23-24	1-1	0-2	11-14	220
OPP Totals	189	2385	12.6	10	55							

FG DISTANCE	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	TOT
Josh Jackson	0-6	4-9	0-0	0-0	10-15
OSU Totals	6-6	4-9	0-0	0-0	10-15
OPP Totals	6-6	1-1	3-6	1-1	11-14

PUNTING	NO	YDS	AVG	TB	120	BK	LG
Bartholomew	49	1885	38.5	6	14	0	65
OSU Totals	49	1885	38.5	6	14	0	65
OPP Totals	79	2956	37.4	3	21	4	71

KICKOFF RETURNS	NO	YARDS	AVG	TD	LG	PUNT RETURNS	NO	YARDS	AVG	TD	LG
Shawn Springs	11	295	26.8	1	97	Dimirious Stanley	33	204	6.0	0	24
Dimirious Stanley	9	162	18.0	0	29	Terry Glenn	5	28	5.6	0	16
Terry Glenn	8	158	19.8	0	29	Shawn Springs	2	11	5.5	0	7
Pepe Pearson	4	59	14.8	0	18	Mike Vrabel	1	18	18.0	0	18
Nicky Sualua	2	26	13.0	0	14	Central McClellion	1	6	6.0	0	6
John Lumpkin	1	4	4.0	0	4	OSU Totals	42	327	7.8	0	24
OSU Totals	35	704	20.1	1	97	OPP Totals	15	64	4.3	0	18
OPP Totals	75	1210	16.1	0	35						

Defensive Statistics

DEFENSE	SOLO	AST	TOT	TACKLE	LOSSES	QB	SACK	'PBU	FC	FR	TDS	BK
Greg Bellisari	54	44	98	5-21	1-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ryan Miller	48	44	93	4-18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rob Kelly	38	30	68	-	-	3	1	1	2	-	-	-
Kevin Johnson	34	31	65	5-14	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Mike Vrabel	44	19	63	26-133	13-101	1	4	-	-	-	-	1/PT
Luke Fickell	36	25	61	9-30	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-
Matt Finkes	36	24	60	19-67	5-31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Antonie Winfield	45	11	56	5-19	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Shawn Springs	40	12	52	2-2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ty Howard	31	20	51	2-3	-	2	4	1	-	-	-	-
Anthony Gwinn	26	21	47	1-1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Damon Moore	16	14	30	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Matt Bonhaus	16	14	30	3-5	1-1	1	-	2	-	-	-	-
Alonzo Shavers	17	7	24	1-3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2/PT
Che Bryant	10	6	16	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Central McClellion	9	6	15	1-15	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1/PT
Marc Willis	9	6	15	1-7	-	1-7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jeff Wilson	7	6	13	4-20	-	4-20	1	1	-	-	-	-
Roedell Dupree	8	3	11	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Jerry Rudzinski	9	0	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Winfield Gamett	4	3	7	3-7	1-3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shane Clark	4	3	7	1-2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Kevin Griffin	6	0	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
John Day	3	3	6	2-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dave Becker	4	1	5	1-1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Obie Stillwell	3	2	5	1-1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Dan Colson	2	3	5	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Dean Kreuzer	3	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Brian Stoughon	3	0	3	1-2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buster Tillman	3	0	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Will Conroy	1	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brian Heinen	2	0	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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BSB Quotebook: Tennessee 20, Ohio State 14

Ohio State coach John Cooper on the fourth-down option call that went awry: "It's short yardage. Looking back, we probably should have called a timeout. They gambled a little bit, came with a blitz, and we didn't execute it very well. Again, it's a good call if you execute it or if they've got two people coming outside, you can't pitch the ball. But that's one of those situations where you guys can second-guess all you want to."

OSU quarterback Bobby Hoying on the difficulty he and Vols passer Peyton Manning had in the rainy conditions: "I had a really tough time throwing the ball in the first half, and I think Peyton did, too. It just wouldn't come out right. After the first two drives, all of the balls were saturated. I felt a lot more comfortable throwing the ball after the rain stopped in the second half. But it was like that for both teams. In all honesty, I felt a sloppy field would help our team out a little more."

Manning shared his thoughts on how treacherous the conditions were for the offenses: "Some of the timing passes were hard to execute. Mainly, we wanted to concentrate on the safe passes and take care of the ball."

Tennessee tailback Jay Graham, selected as the game MVP after rushing for 154 yards and a touchdown, on his "duel" with OSU Heisman winner Eddie George: "I've heard that question about 800 times this week, but the most important thing for me is to win. I don't care. He has nothing to do with me. He's not at linebacker, but he is a great tailback. He just had a tough game."

OSU offensive tackle Orlando Pace tried to pinpoint his team's lack of success in the Citrus Bowl: "I think every-



Ty Howard



Orlando Pace

body came out and played hard. Maybe with the time off we had, we just came out flat and weren't in sync."

Hoying on how the Buckeyes knew ahead of time that Tennessee would provide a great challenge: "We came down here and everybody said, 'There's going to be a letdown.' But as soon as we saw them on film, we knew we would have our hands full. Tennessee has got a great offense and a quick defense. It was different than Michigan, because it's my last game and I'm never going to play for Ohio State again and that hurts pretty bad."

OSU cornerback Ty Howard on what cost his team the Citrus Bowl: "They made two big plays. If you take two plays out of this game, it's a completely different game. It just hurts to send our seniors out this way. I couldn't imagine going out a senior and losing my last game. I feel really bad about that."

Vols coach Phillip Fulmer talked about receiving a postgame telephone call from Vice President Al Gore: "That was great. I appreciated that very much. He just congratulated us very much and basically said we had made the state of Tennessee very proud. He, of course, is a Tennessean."

Tennessee defensive end Leonard Little on his team's motivation against OSU: "We just wanted to come out and show people we could play with the best in the nation. They're one of the best offensive teams in the nation."

Fulmer, whose team finished up 11-1 and third in the final Associated Press poll, talked about some unfinished business for his team: "It's a great win, but my dream is to win it all. We're not there yet."



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Buckeye Briefs

New Recruits

Several Ohio State teams inked top-notch prospects in the recent signing period.

Both tennis teams signed premier performers, the men getting Bjorn Munroe from Freeport, Grand Bahamas, and the women inking prospects from Missouri and California.

Munroe is the Bahamian 18-and-under national champ in singles and one half of the championship doubles team. A member of the Bahamian National team, Munroe will represent his country in the Sunshine Cup World Junior Team Championships, to be played in Florida later in December. Munroe hails from the same hometown as former OSU star Roger Smith, a Big Ten titlist in 1985.

The women brought in two well-regarded netters, including Jefferson City, Mo., native Kristen Jordan, ranked 45th in the nation by the USTA. She is the highest nationally ranked player to sign with OSU in recent memory and is a three-time Missouri singles champion.

Joining Jordan is Megan Wachtler out of Newport Beach, Calif., the 10th-ranked player in the Southern California regional rankings and a state dou-

bles champ.

Women's gymnastics added two athletes, Catherine McGhee from Jonesboro, Ga., and Jill McMillon of Tipp City, Ohio.

McGhee is an AAU National Championship qualifier, finishing first in floor exercise and beam and third in the all-around. She was Georgia state champion in the Junior Olympic level from 1989-91 and was a USA Classics qualifier in 1993.

McMillon finished third in the vault and floor exercise at the Ohio state championships in 1995, and at regionals placed 15th in the all-around. That was good enough to qualify for the national competition.

Baseball

Though football just wrapped up and it's now the heart of hoop season, another Buckeye season is just around the corner — baseball.

OSU's diamond squad will be shooting for its sixth consecutive league championship, and if preseason pundits are to be believed, the Bucks should have little trouble repeating.

Collegiate Baseball recently released its preseason top 40 and Ohio State nestled in comfortably in the 20th position. The Buckeyes and Notre Dame

(24th) are the only Northern schools in the West Coast-dominated rankings.

Defending national champion Cal State-Fullerton is at the top, followed by Stanford, Louisiana State, Tennessee and California. Buckeye opponent Long Beach State is ranked 19th, the only OSU foe in the preseason listings.

The Buckeyes should be up to the challenge of reclaiming their title, mainly because most of the infield returns. Mike Estep at third, Mark Carek at shortstop and Alex Eckelman

at second are steady, and if Mark Chonko hits well, he'll be the guy at first.

Big Ten freshman of the year Dan Seimetz is back for his sophomore campaign, and pitchers Mike Biehle and Bob Spears should anchor a better-than-believed rotation.

Estep and Spears, both seniors, have been elected as co-captains for the '96 season, which begins with a road trip to Lake Charles, La., for the McNeese State Tournament Feb. 23-25.

Young Headed To Oklahoma

Continued From Page 1

"The overriding factor in the decision was home," Young said. "She has family close to there and we wanted to get close to them."

Young said his wife, who is a special education teacher, has an invalid brother and other siblings in the Oklahoma City area.

"Coach Cooper has been as good as he possibly can be," Young added. "Both he and Helen (Cooper's wife) have been really understanding and supportive. This is a tough move for us because it's hard to leave here. I don't know if you could ever find a place better than Ohio State."

The 48-year-old Young grew up in Oklahoma City and actually was a Coke vendor at OU football games while in junior high school. He went on to play for rival Oklahoma State as a three-year letter winner and graduated in 1967.

He began his coaching career at the high school level, then returned to his alma mater to coach the defensive line. He then spent two years as an assistant at Iowa State before beginning his 16-year association with Cooper at Tulsa, ASU and Ohio State.

"It's tough to leave a guy like that and a place like this. Columbus has been a great community to live in and the people have been great. I'm going to miss the kids, the coaches, the maintenance man, the trainers — everyone."

Under Young, several top-flight athletes found OSU stardom, a list including Roger Harper, Alonzo Spellman, Dan Wilkinson, Steve Tovar, Chico Nelson, Lorenzo Styles, and current Buckeyes Mike Vrabel and Shawn Springs. Also, and maybe more impressive, once lesser-known recruits such as Jason Simmons, Greg Smith, Matt Finkes and Ryan Miller were able to flourish.

As Cooper once said, the cupboard was bare when Young took over the defense. But after allowing a school-worst 297 points in 1989, the defense perennially rated with the league's best under Young. In 1994, OSU ranked 10th nationally in scoring defense (15.6 points) and 16th in total defense (300.3).

This past year, the defense was looked at as a liability of sorts as the offense was breaking school records left and right. Truth be told, the unit improved steadily — a Young staple — and finished second only to Northwestern in scoring defense (16.9) in the conference. It also ranked third in pass defense despite opponents' throw-from-behind mentality all season.

"I'm very proud of what we were able to accomplish. We had some disappointment at the end of the year, but you've



Bill Young

got to look at the positives and we've had a lot of them," said Young, who has been burdened by early departures to the NFL from Harper, Spellman, Wilkinson, Styles and Craig Powell. The last three would have been seniors this past season.

In the Citrus Bowl, Ohio State held high-powered Tennessee to just two touchdowns and All-American quarterback Peyton Manning to 182 yards passing. However, rushing defense was a concern as OSU ranked in the middle of the Big Ten pack, thanks mostly to a record-setting, 313-yard performance by Michigan's Tim Biakabutuka.

Still, Young is leaving an OSU defense that should be among the best in the nation with the return of the entire 1995 two-deep, departing defensive lineman Matt Bonhaus being the lone exception.

Cooper was in New Orleans for the AFCA convention and was unavailable for comment. However, he recently was quoted by *The Columbus Dispatch* just prior to the decision, saying, "Sometimes you've got to do what's best for your family. I know this — they don't come any finer than Bill Young."

A source near the program said Cooper will take a strong look from within to find Young's successor. That could make linebackers coach Fred Pagac the leading candidate. Pagac, who accompanied Cooper to New Orleans, is a former Buckeye tight end and has the most seniority of any assistant coach. He joined the OSU staff in 1978.

Defensive backs coach Lovie Smith may also be considered, but he just finished his first year at OSU. Defensive ends coach Bill Conley also is well-regarded, but he has spent most of his energy as OSU's unofficial recruiting coordinator.

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Coaches, Players Share Blame For Citrus

Here we are again, wondering what could have been for the Buckeyes instead of celebrating a win in a meaningful bowl game.

The cards were all on the table, ready to be played. A possible No. 2 ranking, a 12-win season, some regained respect, all of it. But the Buckeyes, at least offensively, didn't show up.

I had three friends call me after the game placing the blame, as usual, on John Cooper. I disagreed. They asked me who should take the heat. I said everyone. You win as a team, you lose as a team.

It's interesting that when the Buckeyes lose, people automatically pinpoint Cooper as the reason. But when they win, how often is he praised? Seldom. It's always "What a great win by the players." You can't have it both ways, people. If you bash him when the Bucks lose, you have to give him credit when they win.

OSU certainly had opportunities to win, but four turnovers and lackluster offense is not going to get the job done. By the way, Coop wasn't responsible for the four turnovers, nor the personal foul penalty by Mike Vrabel or the misplay on punt coverage by Matt Finkes.

The only things I can get on the coaching staff for were not sending the house when Tennessee punted out of its own end zone and the botched option play late in the game.

Regarding the punt, if you block one early, then keep sending the troops. Remember the Purdue game? Rob Deignan had no idea how to get the ball off, and OSU won pretty handily. Here you have a guy at the back of his end zone, maybe a little skittish because you've already pounced on one, and you let him kick away. If you rough the kicker, so what? Tennessee has the ball at the 18 instead of the 3.

The other gripe has to be the option play. Joe Hollis says it was his call, to put the heat on him. That won't be tough to do. When you've run the option only a handful of times, with just a

Mike Wachsman The Facts Man

modicum of success, you know that's not the time to dig it out of mothballs. It certainly is not Ohio State's bread and butter play.

Not only was it a poor call, but one of the worst-executed option plays I've ever seen. It's a good thing Matt Calhoun wasn't looking for the ball or it would have hit him right between the eyes. Ouch.

So we're at yet another unfulfilling climax to a season that should have gone down as one of the greatest in Ohio State history. Why is that?

It's tough to put a finger on one single reason, but there's no escaping the fact the Buckeyes just don't play well the final two games of the year. Look it up. Whether it's the routine, the demeanor of the coaches, the players "not wanting to be there," whatever, something just isn't clicking. An answer needs to be found.

I don't know where that answer lies. Greater men than I have been baffled by less complex questions.

Maybe things need to be done differently as far as Michigan and the bowl game are concerned. Tennessee didn't head to Orlando until just after Christmas, while the Buckeyes left on the 18th. That seems a long time to practice before a game. Maybe the approach needs to be altered.

What doesn't need to be made, however, is a radical change. Ohio State is now back among the elite programs in the nation, and if you don't believe me, just look at all the kids clamoring to come here. Recruits are smart. They don't want to go to a school they perceive as weak. Just a little tinkering here and there might do the trick. You don't need to rebuild the engine. Just tighten up a few things.

It was just another case of the little things, namely turnovers, doing the Buckeyes in.

That's an all too familiar refrain around here, isn't it?

THE BUCKEYES weren't the only Big Ten team not to come through at bowl time.

If not for Penn State and Iowa, the league would have been a total joke around the nation. Here you have arguably the most physical conference in the nation getting pushed around by finesse teams like LSU and USC. Go figure.

Was the Big Ten overrated? It sure looks that way.

Oh, and when you cry about not getting any respect, remember this: Respect isn't something you get, it's something you earn.

THIS DEAL the university signed with Nike has me ambivalent.

On one hand, I hate corporate sponsorships — the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, the Kelly Tire Blue-Gray Game, maybe Value City Arena, too — and any thought that a college team will have anything to do with that is sickening.

However, because this cushy contract states that money will go to all 34 sports at OSU, it looks to be a good one. Nike will outfit each and every Buckeye contingent.

It will also step up the ad campaign for OSU merchandise, perfect timing for a school just out of the 18th century as far as marketing goes.

If this deal gives a kick in the pants to the Ohio State marketing department, which by the way dropped the ball on the USA national team women's game (c'mon, folks, only 8,600 at a game that should have been a sellout?) with almost no publicity, so much the better.

OSU is the largest school in the country, with the largest intercollegiate sports program in the free world. It should be impossible not to notice Ohio State. We'll see how this one shakes out.

IT'S INTERESTING to note that

Ohio State's "toughest schedule in the nation" turned out to be not so difficult after all.

Sure, sure, there's a faction that says the important thing is when you play 'em. Bull. Rate the schedule at the beginning of the year, based on how you think opponents might do, then amend it as teams win or lose. Iowa went to a bowl game and won. So what? They still aren't that good. Neither is Michigan and the Buckeyes lost that one.

For the record, the Buckeyes' schedule was 39th toughest in the country (according to the NCAA) and just fourth in the Big Ten. The toughest slate belonged to Notre Dame, which went 9-3, losing to Florida State, Northwestern and the Buckeyes, all final top 10 teams.

The Irish defeated Texas (10 wins), Washington (seven) and USC (nine). The only losing teams ND played were Purdue, Vanderbilt, Boston College and Navy. And the Bucks played two of them. So the folks who ragged on the Irish should pipe down.

By the way, OSU's worst opponents, Pittsburgh and Indiana, finished the year well behind Vandy's Commodores (er, Commodores) in the final computer rankings.

WITH EVERYTHING finally settled on the field, we can give one last look at the good old top 10, brought to you with no help whatsoever from Tostitos. I'm a Fritos guy.

1. Nebraska (12-0)
2. Florida (12-1)
3. Tennessee (11-1)
4. Colorado (10-2)
5. Florida State (10-2)
6. Kansas State (10-2)
7. Northwestern (10-2)
8. Ohio State (11-2)
9. Virginia Tech (10-2)
10. Notre Dame (9-3)

Some early favorites for next year's preseason kudos include Notre Dame, Tennessee, Florida State, Florida, Miami, Colorado, Syracuse, Penn State, Nebraska and Arizona State.

Bring on the hoops!

From The Pages Of BSB

TEN YEARS AGO — 1986

Senior middle guard/linebacker Larry Kolic capped his OSU football career by winning the most valuable player trophy in the Florida Citrus Bowl for his two pass interceptions, one of which he returned 14 yards for Ohio State's only TD in a 10-7 win over BYU.

The Buckeyes held the No. 1 offensive team in the nation to 348 yards, more than 150 yards below its 500.2-yard average. They picked off four Robbie Bosco passes and broke up 10 others, holding the Cougars, the top passing team in the country, to 261 yards through the air.

FIVE YEARS AGO — 1991

Unranked Air Force shocked Ohio State with a 23-11 victory in the Liberty Bowl, played in Memphis, Tenn.

It was the crowning blow to a month of problems for OSU. An aborted fourth-down option play against Michigan possibly cost the Buckeyes a shot at the Big Ten title and a berth in the Rose Bowl.

Then the coaching staff was rocked when three members — Jim Colletto, Bobby "Turrier" and Gary "Blackney" —

resigned to take positions elsewhere.

All those problems were exacerbated by the Buckeyes themselves, as they continually told reporters they believed they should have been going to a more prestigious bowl than the Liberty.

ONE YEAR AGO — 1995

Despite losing to Alabama 24-17 in the CompUSA Florida Citrus Bowl on Jan. 2, Ohio State dropped just one place — to 14th — in the final Associated Press top 25 poll and actually moved up two spots — to ninth — in the final USA Today/CNN top 25.

Passing game coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ron Hudson was let go by head coach John Cooper Jan. 8, the second change to the offensive staff in a month. Tackles and tight ends coach Lee Owens also left to take the head coaching job at Akron.

On Jan. 5, All-American offensive tackle Corey Stringer — a sure-fire first-rounder — announced his intention to forgo his senior year of eligibility at OSU to enter the NFL draft.



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The View From 15th and High

By Frank L. Moskowitz, Publisher

Lowering Expectations Not Acceptable For OSU

I wish I could feel as upbeat as so many of you seem to feel following Ohio State's losses to Michigan and Tennessee in the Citrus Bowl. You're the same people who hate all the negative letters to the editor in *BSB*, so I'm going to give you a chance to fill the letters page with notes criticizing me.

Actually, I'm probably more annoyed with some of the things I hear from the fans than I am with the football team. Of course this was a great season and certainly one of the most exciting in years. In order to understand why some are frustrated, though, you can't look at this season by itself. You have to look at it in the context of the last eight seasons.

If Ohio State, which looked like a national contender after it crushed Penn State in 1993, had gone to the Rose Bowl that year, would people be as upset at not going to the Rose Bowl this year? I think not. If those 1993 Rose Bowl hopes hadn't been crushed by a lesser Michigan team, would it have been easier to accept OSU's Rose Bowl hopes being crushed by a lesser Michigan team this year? Perhaps.

If the Buckeyes had a few impressive bowl wins under their belts, don't you think fans would be more willing to ac-

cept a defeat against a national power like Tennessee? Probably.

Heck. Let's look at the last two games in the context of this season alone.

We all saw how good this Buckeye team was. Just a few weeks ago, many of you were arguing that the Buckeyes should be ranked No. 1 in the country, ahead of Nebraska. Don't you think that it's a reasonable desire for a team that is better than the mighty Huskers to beat a Michigan team that ended up with four losses or a Tennessee team that was good, but in my book not as good as Ohio State?

Some of the things I hear as people try and justify OSU's performance just amaze me.

• "Bo Schembechler had a poor record in bowl games. I suppose you think he was a bad coach?"

Since when did we use the most hated rival coach in Ohio State football history as a yardstick for Buckeye coaches? And while it's true Schembechler lost his first seven bowl games, five of them were in the Rose Bowl. At least he was at the dance. And don't forget his record was 11-9-1 against rival OSU.

The good news is Bo's eighth bowl

appearance was also at the Rose Bowl and the Wolverines won that one following the 1980 season. Perhaps that's a good sign for the Buckeyes.

• "It's not the coach's job to motivate the team."

Then whose job is it? Of course the players, particularly the seniors and captains, should provide some of the motivation, but ultimately the buck stops with the head coach for all aspects of the program, including motivation.

• "Ohio State had the Heisman Trophy winner, the Lombardi winner and the Biletnikoff winner. How can you say it wasn't a successful season?"

I thought team success was more important than individual honors. Besides, with all that talent, shouldn't the Buckeyes have defeated a Michigan or Tennessee team that didn't have all those award winners?

• "The coach is doing a good job because recruiting has improved. Look at all the players Ohio State is sending to the NFL."

Again, if the Buckeyes have all this talent, let's see them win some championships.

• "Get over it, Woody Hayes is dead." I don't think Woody Hayes is the issue, though I think most of the values Hayes stood for are still valid in 1996. Most people understand that the days of the Big Two, Little Eight are over. But once every 11 years, they'd like to see the Buckeyes go to the Rose Bowl. People aren't necessarily asking for the Buckeyes to play to the level of Hayeed teams. How about to the level of Gary Barnett's teams?

• "A coach's main job isn't to win championships. It's to run a clean program and graduate its players."

Those goals should be at the top of any coach's list. But you can do that and win championships. Bill Mallory, as far as I know, runs a clean program at Indiana. If the Buckeyes go 2-9 like the Hoosiers did in 1995, would that be OK because the program is clean?

I can't speak for all Buckeye fans, but I want John Cooper to get over that last hump. I think most people do. People want the Buckeyes to do well. That's what was so frustrating about this season. This was the year to quiet all the naysayers. The 1993 season was another opportunity.

By the way, if you think that the Buckeyes don't have a prayer of winning the Big Ten championship in 1996, keep in mind that no one expected the Buckeyes to be as strong as they were in 1995.

The goodwill the Buckeyes would generate with a win over Michigan and a trip to the Rose Bowl would carry over for several seasons. But when you start to compile frustrating seasons like 1993 and 1995, it's no wonder that so many people are restless.

I refuse to believe that Cooper is satisfied with the way those seasons played out. And I refuse to believe that the players are satisfied. Expectations are higher at Ohio State, and that's what makes this football program great.

As I said in the last issue, if some of you fans continue to lower those expectations, eventually they will indeed become lower and the extra edge needed to put the Buckeyes over the top will be eliminated.

I FOUND the final football polls interesting. Ohio State has traditionally been ranked higher in the coaches poll than the media poll. I always figured that the media voters had a bias against Ohio State and the coaches had a better sense of where the Buckeyes really stood.

However, in the final polls the media had the Buckeyes ranked sixth and the coaches eighth. I think the media, like some of the fans, simply looked at the 11-2 season and ranked the Bucks accordingly. The coaches know that you've got to beat your archrival and win your bowl game, especially when you have the superior team.

IT'S NOT too early for you Buckeye fans in northwest Ohio to start thinking about the very popular Toledo-area "Meet the Buckeyes Night."

The event, held every two years, is slated for the Masonic Great Hall on May 3. This year's honoree will be three-time Buckeye All-American Tom Skladany, sure to be an entertaining featured speaker. Also scheduled to attend are John Cooper, Randy Ayers, Nancy Darsch, Archie Griffin, Andy Geiger and other members of the OSU athletic department staff. Members of the band and cheerleading squad will also be present.

I have had the privilege of attending each of the previous four "Meet the Buckeyes Nights" where Archie Griffin, Clark Kellogg, Jim Lachey and Mike Tomczak have been honored. This is an event that no Buckeye fan should miss, even if you don't live in the area.

Tickets are available for \$25, which includes dinner, at the Buckeye-Wolverine Shop, Dan Rodgers Sporting Goods and at the Stranahan Theatre box office. For more information call (419) 841-8215.

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