

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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## OSU AD Gene Smith Leads Way In Unstable Time For College Sports

By **BRADEN MOLES**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith has served in his role since 2005, with over 18 years on the job at this point, but the last handful of athletic seasons may have provided the most challenge thus far in his tenure.

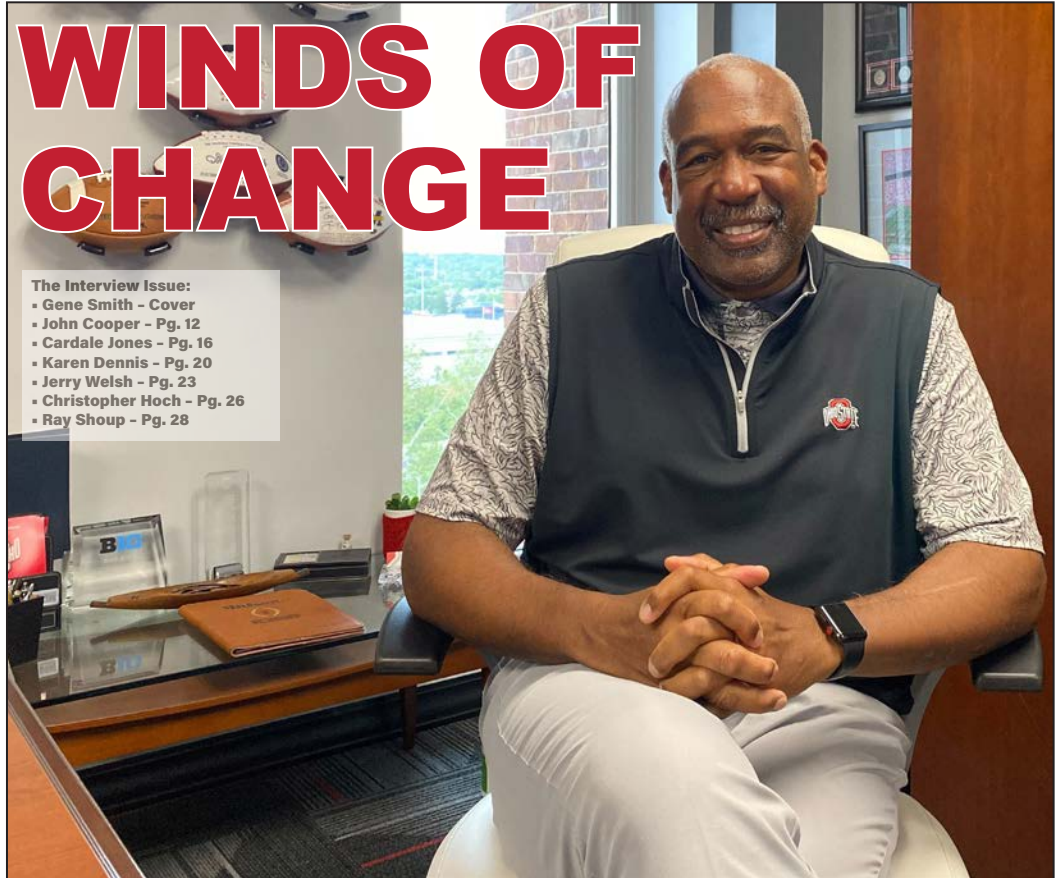
Beyond the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, college athletics has continued to change with the introduction of the transfer portal in 2018 and the addition of the one-time transfer rule and adoption of name, image and likeness, both in 2021. All of these developments have made for a complicated landscape, one that Smith and the rest of Ohio State's athletic department have been tasked with working through despite being in unfamiliar territory.

On the field, Ohio State football and head coach Ryan Day have seen the tides of the rivalry shift with consecutive losses to Michigan. The basketball programs have moved in opposite directions, with the men's team under coach Chris Holtmann suffering the squad's first losing season since 2003-04 and the women, led by coach Kevin McGuff, making the Elite Eight for the first time since 1993. The school's Olympic sports also saw plenty of success, with national runners-up and individual national champions throughout college sports.

Smith spoke with Buckeye Sports Bulletin on June 13 in his office at the Fawcett Center to kick off the annual Interview Issue, touching on a variety of topics and reflecting on the year that was for Ohio State athletics.

# WINDS OF CHANGE

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BRADEN MOLES

**LEADING THE CHARGE** — Despite all of the changes to college athletics in recent years, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith has kept the Buckeyes on top, posting record revenue for the athletic department last year.

**BSB: How do you feel about the health of the athletic department, and how do you assess the 2022-23 athletic season for Ohio State?**

Smith: "We are really proud of our student-athletes and our coaches and support staff. It's really been a good year, competitively. We're top five again (in the Directors' Cup), and then academically, student-athletes did a great job. Our academic perfor-

mance rate is the highest it's ever been in our history. We're really proud of that being at 993. We did exceptionally well – you have to compliment our (Eugene D. Smith) Leadership Institute staff and our coaches.

"Ninety-five percent of our graduates were placed, so they either have jobs or are going pro or are going to grad school, with a large number going to graduate school. That's becoming the new trend now, is getting that secondary degree. So overall, a really good year, so I'm really excited about what our programs accomplished."

**BSB: The athletic director's contributions are important to the program**

**in terms of the Directors' Cup standing, and you would probably agree that the university's president is just as important to establishing that. Kristina M. Johnson resigned and recently completed her last day. What was your working relationship like with her, and where is Ohio State in the process of hiring a new president?**

Smith: "My working relationship with Kristina was outstanding. We know she had an affinity for athletics as a former athlete herself and Veronica, her spouse, being a former



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# Smith Upholding “High Standard” At OSU

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athlete. They were heavily involved in what we do from a recruiting point of view, from a going-to-contests point of view. My working relationship with her was outstanding.

“But the search, I’m not really sure where we are right now. I know the (job) profile went through the process of getting feedback from all the different stakeholders and had a number of focus groups meeting. The advertisement is out and the search firm is searching and working with our board to try and find somebody.”

**BSB: It’s been a couple of years since we last spoke to you. In that time, the football program has had two losses to Michigan and no Big Ten titles. What have your conversations been like with Coach Day around getting Ohio State back to where it needs to be in the rivalry and the conference race?**

Smith: “Nothing’s changed relative to our goals. We all obviously want to win all of our games and beat The Team Up North and win the conference championship and then win a national championship. That’s never changed. That’s our goal. It’s a high standard, it’s a high bar, but that’s who we are and that’s what we chase.

“It’s funny, we don’t really talk about the goals because the goals are there. They don’t change. So we get more granular. What type of things do we need to do to position ourselves and make sure we have an opportunity to meet those goals? That gets down to recruiting, that gets down to roster management, that gets down to your support staff and your coaches and everything around personnel management, your operations. It gets down to his role. As we all know, he’s trying to move himself more to a CEO-type role and delegate some of the duties that he’s historically had, like possibly some level of play calling. Those are the things that we’ve talked about, is what we need to do to position ourselves.

“I tell people all the time, if we don’t beat Indiana, that Team Up North game won’t mean a whole lot to us, so we’ve got to focus on the things that we need to focus on this time of year. We’ve got camps going on, so we’ve got to make sure that Mickey (Marotti) has, for example, everything he needs in place from a strength and conditioning point of view, because he had some personnel losses. Some people moved on, so we need to replace them with the right people so that when this time of year hits, he has his team ready and they can go and work on strength and conditioning, so when we hit August, we’re ready to roll.

“The conversation – I know that the public probably wants me to talk about the Michigan game, but you’ve got a lot of games before you get to that. That game is important. There’s no question, we’ve got to win it. We’ve got to win the Big Ten championship. But we’ve got to beat everybody else.”

**BSB: I was going to ask you about Day wanting to be more of a CEO for the program. How have you seen that manifest since the season ended, and do you feel it’s a challenge for him to give up some of that responsibility?**

Smith: “We talked about that when he



FILE PHOTO

**NEW ARRIVALS — Over the past year, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith and former university president Kristina M. Johnson helped guide the Buckeyes through the addition of USC and UCLA to the Big Ten.**

was first hired. That’s his wheelhouse. We all have a comfort level where we’re pretty good, and we’re self-aware that we’re good at this and we don’t want to leave it. We knew it would be an evolution and we talked about that at the beginning and said that there’ll be a time. After the Georgia game, he began to self-reflect, look back at the season, and that’s when we started the conversation about, ‘OK, maybe it’s time to delegate some of those offensive duties.’ Ultimately, he won’t get out of it, let’s be clear, but he may not have to do as much during the week in offensive prep that he would normally do, so he can maybe do some other things.

“He is an unbelievable leader relative to dealing with the individual student-athletes, so now he may have more time to provide them those one-on-ones that they desire, or their parents or whatever it might be. We started this conversation when he first got hired. This year, we started the conversation right after the Peach Bowl after he did some self-reflection.”

**BSB: In your role as athletic director of a major college program, do you find it difficult to delegate some of your responsibilities?**

Smith: “Not anymore. This is my 19th year here and my 39th year as an athletic director. I’m 68, (and I started at) 29 as an athletic director, so over time you develop your leadership skills. Early on at Eastern Michigan for the eight years I was AD there, I realized that delegation was very important for me to be able to free up time for me to have an opportunity to focus on my ultimate talents and skills. When you get to a point in leadership where you have confidence in your teammates around you, then it’s easier for you to delegate.

“I’m blessed. I have some very good

people that I am fortunate to work with every single day, and so I need to delegate to them, which also helps them grow, because they may aspire to be athletic directors or they just may aspire to be the best that they can be where they are. If I don’t give them things, they’ll never grow, and so it’s big for me to delegate and see that growth and then ultimately take advantage of the talents and skills that they all bring to the table. It’s not difficult for me anymore. It used to be at the beginning because I was kind of a micro-manager, and years ago I grew away from that and recognized that I needed to delegate.”

**BSB: You mentioned the Peach Bowl earlier. Ohio State comes up just a field goal short of going to the national championship game. Overall, how do you assess the season for the football team?**

Smith: “It was a great season. You look back to a lot of different games – you know, we had eight home games. I look at it from a wins and losses point of view like everybody else, but I have to keep in mind everything else when we hosted eight home games, five in a row. I think about my ushers and my ticket operation and my event management people, my facility people, my marketing people, all those types of people for five weeks in a row, which actually started out with Notre Dame. When you think about that workload, it’s pretty significant, five weekends in a row to host 100,000 people and work very diligently to ensure that they’re kept safe. I look at how well we did with program sales, concessions, keeping people safe, limited number of ejections. It was a good year from that perspective.

“Now with the team, relative to wins and losses, I was proud of how they came out of the chute and beat Notre Dame. That was a

big win for us. And then it also developed to a point where we had young men – you just think about the individual players who ultimately emerged and became outstanding in their position. I mean, who would have projected at the beginning of the year that C.J. (Stroud) would be second and Paris Johnson (Jr.) would be sixth in the (NFL) draft? So I look at that development. But our goal is to beat The Team Up North and win the conference championship and win the national championship.

“We were, to your point earlier, two points away, basically, from winning that national championship. I believe that had we gotten to the finals, we would have beat TCU, and so it was close. Disappointing from that point of view. But overall, when you look at it, we were in the (College Football Playoff). You always want to be in the hunt, and so we were in the hunt but didn’t get it done. That’s a disappointment. Defensively, we’ve got to get better in certain situations, and our offense was prolific, but at the end of the day, it’s a total team effort, special teams, all that stuff. It was a great season overall, but we fell short relative to those particular goals.”

**BSB: This next football season will be the last without USC and UCLA in the Big Ten. Where is the league in the process of integrating those teams, and how excited are you to add USC and UCLA to the schedule starting in 2024 and 2025?**

Smith: “I’m excited. Trev Alberts, the AD at Nebraska, one of my good friends, shared publicly how tough the schedule is going to be now, but I’m excited about it. It adds something new to our conference. The business part of it, everybody knows, but I think that there’s something new that will be good for us. We’ve been to USC before and played there before, but going to USC as a conference member is a little different, and same with UCLA. I’m looking forward to that from that novelty point of view. That will be pretty cool.

“We’ll probably change our nonconference schedule philosophy a little bit as it was done with Washington and that move. We’ll see what the future holds with the new CFP model and how that actually works. Strength of schedule may matter in a different way, so we’ve got to watch that, but I’m excited about it.”

**BSB: Speaking of that new CFP model, you had said originally that you were against hosting playoff games at Ohio Stadium in December, and you’ve since come out and said that you would be fine with that. What led to your change of mind there?**

Smith: “Looking at the landscape and understanding, operationally, how difficult it would be to get an indoor facility with all the uncertainties as you lead up to that, then doing some historical view of our weather patterns over the last 10 years (changed my mind). We did have two years that were pretty tough, but at the end of the day, we can handle (the weather).

“We’re still a speed team, so the idea that it won’t impact us is really not true. We’ve got to make sure that the field, whatever the condition, is in the best shape it can be for us.”

**BSB: You mentioned the playing sur-**



THE INTERVIEW ISSUE: GENE SMITH



FILE PHOTO

**VOTE OF CONFIDENCE** — Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said that men's basketball head coach Chris Holtmann (pictured) is the "coach of the future" for the program.

face. There's been a lot of debate lately about turf vs. grass — would you give any consideration, with some of the injury concerns raised about playing on turf, to potentially changing Ohio Stadium's playing surface to grass at some point in the future?

Smith: "You always keep that as a possibility. At this point in time, we haven't thought about it a whole lot, but you always keep that as a possibility. We would have to sacrifice a number of different things. There's no way I would have approved five concerts in the stadium this year. We just had (Buckeye Country Superfest) and we've got four more in August, and particularly back-to-back, I would've never done that with (grass).

"That's the management issue, is when you have a multi-million dollar facility that is so iconic in Ohio, you want to make sure you maximize its use beyond football. We'll always keep our eye to that. We have one of the best turf management programs in the country here in Ohio State, so those experts are there. As these studies continue to emerge, you know, we'll keep track of them. You could never say no, but there's always that possibility."

**BSB: Moving on to men's basketball, the team finished the regular season with a 13-18 record and had a run in the Big Ten tournament. How do you assess the season?**

Smith: "Obviously, we wanted to win more games, and I was really disappointed (with) some of the games that we lost that were so close like North Carolina. There

were a number of games that we had a lead — Purdue — and we didn't finish it off, but that gave me a perspective of where we are. Those end-of-the-game situations, you need a level of maturity and, for lack of better definition, alpha dogs that get you to where you need to go.

"I knew going into the year it would be challenging but really emphasized more and more with Chris about playing those young puppies and getting them a chance to get minutes on the floor and get them experience. They're so talented. It was a top-five class. The shift to make sure we got them playing time was critical. We saw that at the end of the schedule. Once they played more they came together, and so I feel good about the results of the efforts.

"I felt great about Chris' on-floor coaching. He's a very good teacher. But we needed to get to a point where our roster was being managed appropriately, and I feel that happened, so I'm really excited about the future, too."

**BSB: In the midst of a significant losing streak, you said that Holtmann is the "coach of the future" for the program. Why do you believe that's the case?**

Smith: "He's a good teacher. At the end of the day, when you look at all of our coaches, first and foremost, they're teachers. And that's what a lot of people miss is the facilities are their classroom. That's where they teach. That's where he worked with Bruce Thornton on being a better point guard and being a leader of the team, and teaching them leadership skills. You know, working with Felix (Okpara) — people haven't seen it

yet, but he's already a totally different player. Having that one-on-one conversation (of) this is how you improve, these are the things you need to work on, these are the things you need to do — having that conversation, that's teaching.

"Then it shifts to in-game, putting the players in position to win, whatever you're running offensively, whatever you're running defensively. I've watched him over the years here, even during this tough season, the positions that our players were in. Had they been more experienced, it would have positioned them better. I think he's a good teacher.

"People aren't giving him the respect he deserves. From a recruiting point of view, we've had two top-five classes back-to-back and two one-and-dones. We've got to get to a point where those one-and-dones are two-and-dones (laughs). We would have had a different team if Malaki (Branham) came back, or next year we'd have a different team if Brice (Sensabaugh) came back. We've got to get to that point, and I think we're there. We have a group of young men that really bought in and they'll be our leadership for the future, and then (focus on) these freshmen coming in and molding them the right way."

**BSB: Ohio State took down the scoreboard at St. John Arena recently. What plans, if any, are there for the venue at this time?**

Smith: "Really no plans beyond making it the best workout facility that we could possibly have. Many of our Olympic sports, our men's and women's track team, women's

ice hockey team, our swimming programs are the ones who use it the most. Making that a really good weight room like it has been the last couple years.

"We just needed to take that scoreboard down instead of chasing parts and asking my teammates to try and find parts to make the thing work. It made no sense anymore when the company has gone away, so we took it down. But there's no definitive plans. We'll still hold Skull Session in there. Taking St. John down is a long way away."

**BSB: Sticking with basketball, it was the first run for the women to the Elite Eight since 1993. What have you made of the job that Coach McGuff has done there?**

Smith: "He has done a great job. You look back over his tenure, he has done a great job in personnel management, his assistant staff. It's the best it's ever been. His support staff is outstanding. So when you look at that personnel management, from that perspective, he's evolved, and they're really good. Then the talent is exceptional. We've had outstanding recruiting classes over the last few years, and he's managed the portal well. Taylor (Mikesell), perfect example, Celeste (Taylor) from Duke. There's some young people there that are really talented.

"I liked the fact that he committed to a style of play that players like to play. A lot of players don't want to press the whole game. I like what he did, and they have a chance to be exceptionally good next year, so I'm

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# Smith Excited About Growth In Women's Sports

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proud of the culture he's created. Our culture wasn't where it should have been in the early years, but now it's a really outstanding culture."

**BSB: The athletic department reported an 82 percent increase in attendance for the women's team, which is among the biggest in the country. How have you seen women's basketball and women's sports as a whole grow in your time at Ohio State?**

Smith: "It's really nice. We just celebrated Title IX last year, and that brought a lot more attention and awareness to women's sports, that national promotion around celebrating Title IX. And then, ultimately, we had unbelievable performances by a lot of student-athletes. People began to pay more attention to it, and it pulled people in. We did the attention and awareness marketing campaign through Title IX celebration, which wasn't the intent – it was to celebrate Title IX – but then people started paying attention and then you had good teams.

"Our women's volleyball team came out of the chute and they were good again and people started to pay more attention. It's great to see across the country. I haven't heard yet what the viewership was for the Oklahoma softball team that won (53 consecutive) games. I mean, it's crazy. Women's softball is a cool sport to watch, so fast. When people start to watch women's sports and see the high quality of play and the strong fundamentals that exist, you get more people that stay with it.

"I'm excited about it. Now, can we continue it? Yes, I think we can. But it's effort. We've got to do a good job coming out of the chute, whatever our schedule is for women's basketball, for example. We've got to push that hard and encourage people to put it on their calendar and put it on their schedule just like they do for football or men's basketball. We'll get it going."

**BSB: Moving into the Olympic sports, Ohio State had runner-up finishes in men's tennis and women's ice hockey, with several individual national championships. How important to Ohio State's bottom line is the success of Olympic sports?**

Smith: "It's huge. Only football and men's basketball are profitable, but every other sport generates revenue, two different ways. You mentioned women's basketball had an 82 percent increase (in attendance). Their revenue increased – not profitable – but their revenue increased. We haven't been charging for softball, but we will. They had a good season, not a great season, but a decent season, and so it's always good to the bottom line, financially, when those sports do exceptionally well.

"It gives us some metrics from a donor point of view that people are passionate about a certain sport. Women's tennis, men's tennis, when they do exceptionally well, those donors who are interested in that individual program give more to give them an opportunity to get over the hump. It's really targeted and focused from that perspective. Every coach has what we call a discretionary account, so they raise a lot of money in it. Camps become more exciting



FILE PHOTO

**ADAPTING ON THE FLY — Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith (right) said the Buckeyes are in a "great spot" when it comes to name, image and likeness after a "clunky" start following NIL's adoption in 2021.**

and interesting, so all those things spin off."

**BSB: You've had a few different leadership changes in some of the Olympic sports with baseball, women's golf and women's lacrosse in the last couple of years. When you are hiring for one of those positions, how, if at all, is that process handled differently from hiring for something like football or basketball?**

Smith: "It's interesting. That's a great question. It's handled differently because in football or basketball, it's usually just me. I might have one or two people that are confidants that might help me, but the reality is the other sports are more broad. Women's lacrosse, for example, we have a committee. We have two student-athletes on that committee. The candidates will come in and they'll meet with some of our head coaches, be with the committee, tour, those types of things. Football, basketball, I usually just go get them.

"It's different from the process point of view, but the attributes are the same. We're looking for high-value people. We want people with integrity and people who understand the value of respect, and so we're looking for values and great character, and then we're looking at their technical talents and skills, so that's a lot of work. The Olympic sports are actually more challenging, depending on the sport, because it's a different culture around it."

**BSB: Speaking of lacrosse, the men's and women's teams recently completed**

**their first season in the new Ohio State lacrosse stadium. How important is it for a program and their success to have a place to call their own?**

Smith: "It's huge. You look at lacrosse, and it's one of the fastest growing sports in this country. In Ohio, over the last 10 years, it has really grown unbelievably. Having a facility that's their own, that's uniquely designed for them, is huge, for the players we have and then for recruiting. It also takes pressure off the Woody (Hayes Athletic Center). We were playing women's contests in the Woody, so it takes that pressure off that turf, and it actually opens it up for the scheduling of the other sports to be more spread out as opposed to back-to-back-to-back all the way up to midnight.

"(June 16-18), we'll host four contests, I believe, that are four pro teams (from the Premier Lacrosse League) playing in that facility. It's great exposure for our university, our community, and the economic impact in our community."

**BSB: Plans have recently been approved for the new men's and women's hockey facility, with construction starting next year with an estimated opening date in 2026. Where is progress on that, and are there any other facility announcements or upgrades in the works right now?**

Smith: "We probably won't start construction next year. The way it works for us

is we fundraise for our facilities, and then we create, along with the Institution. We're not 100 percent sure until the architects and construction manager actually gives us, probably in October, what it will look like and that we'll know exactly what our number is. So while we're fundraising towards that right now, we don't know exactly what it will be. Then it's going to take us a while to fundraise for whatever that number is. I don't anticipate us having a shovel on the ground next year – 2025, maybe. But I'm excited about it.

"Probably the only other one that we're studying right now that we don't have everything for is the Woody Hayes. We like to tell people when I started here, we didn't have a creative department, we didn't have a recruiting department, we didn't have the number of people in video services. The personnel has grown over the years, so we've always tried to work everything in that square footage, that footprint. We've exploded outside of that right now.

"The Woody Hayes facility is old. If you go in right now, you look at it, it's beautiful because we've got LED lights, we painted the walls, all that type of stuff. We put good lipstick on it. But the mechanicals, the electrical, all those are challenges and we pray that it doesn't rain. Those things are our challenges for that facility, so at some point, we're going to have to add on to that facility, build a new facility attached to it, and so we're looking at it right now."

**BSB: Moving into the college landscape as a whole, Tony Petitti was recently hired by the Big Ten as commissioner. What has your first impression been of him since he's been on the job?**

Smith: "I knew Tony (before he was hired). I didn't know him in this type of role, but I knew Tony from my days at Iowa State and him being with CBS when I was on the (NCAA Division I Men's Basketball) committee. He's just a good human being. Great values and easy to trust. He's doing a great job transitioning in. I like how he's restructuring his organization.

"I like the fact that first and foremost, he focused on his people, which is the heart and soul of everything we do. He didn't come in and focus on all this other stuff. He focused on his teammates and made sure that he had them structured. Getting back to your earlier question, he had the trust in them, structured the way he wanted to so he could delegate and then go work on our TV contracts or go work with the CFP or establish relationships with the right people. I like the way he's transitioning in. I have a lot of confidence that he will do a great job."

**BSB: Maybe the biggest change over the last couple of years in athletics has been name, image and likeness. What are some of the biggest changes you've seen in NIL since it was introduced, and how do you feel Ohio State has responded to continue to capitalize?**

Smith: "It was clunky at the beginning. It was new. It wasn't the perfect situation. But I think over time as we learned more about how it should be structured, the collectives emerged, they learned more, (and) I think we're in a great spot right now. I really

do. But changes will continue to emerge. It's a matter of how we shift with whatever those changes are. The IRS just came out with their statement about (501(c)(3) NIL collectives) not being tax deductible, so you shift. You have to deal with that. There will be something else. I have no clue what it will be.

"We all focus on football and basketball and all that, but if you look at our Olympic sport athletes, they're killing it. Many of our Olympic sport athletes are on partial scholarships, so they leave with debt. Now they have an opportunity to mitigate that debt. Rightfully so, we've got to focus on football and basketball, but what people don't pay attention to or see is what our student-athletes are doing in different sports, and they're killing it. It's fun to watch."

**BSB: You recently backed a bipartisan bill, the Student Athlete Level Playing Field Act, introduced in Congress that aims to create a federal standard for NIL in college sports. What are you looking for in terms of regulation around NIL?**

Smith: "We need a way to preempt all of the state laws that have emerged. I lost track of how many – Texas, I think, was the last one (to introduce new laws). Everyone's creating laws that make it an uneven playing field around NIL. We need federal legislation to bring some consistency to it. I like the fact that Charlie Baker, our NCAA president, is searching for a way to create transparency, or a national registry, a contract and a standard so some of these young people aren't taken advantage of, and that's happening. Some stories have emerged, but there's more out there that's going to

emerge.

"I like the fact that he's doing that, but I'm looking for enforcement capacity. What does that look like? Who are the investigators? And actually making sure that we minimize how these young people are taken advantage of. The national registry for agents, making sure that they're certified, and they're actually good at what they do so they're not just taking advantage of these kids. That's what I'm looking for. Capitol Hill is not my world. I don't know what they can get done, but I'm hopeful they can get something done."

**BSB: You've talked over the last year or so about the entire model of college football changing, and some in the sport – including Alabama head coach Nick Saban – have discussed the possibility of players being employed and paid directly by schools. Where do you stand on that issue if it does come up in the next couple of years?**

Smith: "I'm not a supporter of our student-athletes being employees. I think that there's unintended consequences. Sounds good, but there's a list of things that they would have to adhere to that right now they have the freedom from. Being taxed – they get room, board, books, tuition and cost of attendance. At the end of the day, their tax status changes. They're at-will employees at that point in time. That's not what this is all about.

"Could the model change where the compensation model, the scholarship changes? Sure. But at the end of the day, that would impact our Olympic sports. People never pay attention to it, (but) the Olympic Games

in Paris next year, north of 80 percent of those young people that will compete come from the college platform. When we get excited about a basketball player being drafted or a football player being drafted, I also get excited about our student-athletes in the Olympics. When we had the Olympics in Tokyo (in 2021), I was tracking all of our kids. Our fencers, Emma (Maltais) in ice hockey. It was just the coolest thing.

"I think whatever model emerges, if it requires some type of more institutional compensation in some form or fashion, we need to understand, just like the conversation we had earlier, the impact that it has on Olympic sports, and the impact on the football and basketball players. What does that mean to them from a tax point of view and from their circle of care? Right now, all the things that we provide them, I'm not so sure as employees that they will have the ability to have access to it. I don't think that's the model. Should it be different? Probably. But I'm concerned about financially what it will do to the department and what it does to all of our Olympic sports."

**BSB: As for your career, you're contracted through 2026. You've said in the past that you take things on a year-by-year basis, so how do you feel heading into this next athletic season?**

Smith: "That's a good question for my wife (laughs). But I feel good. I feel good about where we are. My health is good. Obviously, I wish we had a president that I would have these conversations with. I serve at the pleasure of the president, and so that is meaningful to me who that person is, and so I'll wait and see, but I feel good. I love

our coaches. I love our student-athletes, our support staff. We've got great people. But I have some goals I want to accomplish. So yeah, I feel good."

**BSB: When you're posting on social media, it's usually about Ohio State or spending time with your family and your grandkids. In a role as time-consuming as athletic director, how do you find time for those little things in life?**

Smith: "It's hard. It's trying to reach some harmony, balance around my life. This is a good time of year for me because things are slowing down. But during the year, it's really hard because I try to go to as many events as I can. I stay in touch with my grandkids, stay in touch with my children. That's where those posts come from. That's important for my personal harmony. My wife and I and our family have a shared (website) where photos go up. (We've got) three of our grandkids in Vancouver, Canada, right now, so at the end of the day, I get a chance to see them going through that experience. That fulfills me that they're able to do that. Then I might grab (a photo) and tweet it out.

"All of us need to find harmony in what we do in our lives and invest in ourselves. You can't be the best you can be if you don't come to work every single day energized and excited about the day. But it's not just about the work that gets you there. It's about everything else around you. For me, if I don't work out five days a week, I'm not the best person to be around. There's a lot in there, but it's intentional. It's very intentional for me to find time for myself to invest in myself."

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