

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

June 2004

Geiger Looks Back On Decade At OSU

65-Year-Old AD Preparing His Exit Strategy

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

Andy Geiger recently celebrated a decade as director of athletics at Ohio State and said he thinks 10 years is just about long enough.

"I'm going to step down soon," he told BSB during an exclusive interview in his St. John Arena office. "I don't know when. A year maybe, two at the outside. I really enjoy what I'm doing, but this job is pretty relentless. And it's probably time. I want to be able to enjoy my family."

In May 1994, Geiger was named just the seventh Ohio State director of athletics in history, succeeding Jim Jones, who retired. Geiger has been an athletic director since 1971, when he took over the athletic department at Brown University at the age of 32.

Now at age 65, with his two sons ready to graduate from high school, Geiger is looking forward to something

other than the daily grind of overseeing 35 intercollegiate sports with an annual budget of \$85 million.

"There are a lot of things I want to do, most of them having to do with family," he said with a smile. "But I have other interests and I'm eager to pursue those."

Geiger is a well-known jazz aficionado and also enjoys such outdoor endeavors as golf and fly-fishing. But before he can think about those hobbies, there is still plenty on his plate at OSU.

For example, when longtime associate athletic director Archie Griffin left the department at the end of 2003 to head up the university's alumni association, it fell to Geiger to complete contracts for upcoming football games.

"That's mostly me now," he said. "And I'm happy to report that we're done for most of the next decade. That includes the open date that appears on our 2006 schedule, but we now have that sold. We just haven't announced the opponent as yet. That will be coming soon."

The football Buckeyes will be playing an impressive array of talent from around the country over the next few years including home-and-home series with Texas (which begins in '05) and Miami (Fla.) as well as Pac-10 foes Southern Cal, California and Washington.

"And as long as they remain popular,



FILE PHOTO

BUCKEYES' NO. 1 BACKER — In addition to heading up the athletic department at Ohio State, Andy Geiger enjoys taking in various contests in person. Here, he was photographed during a recent Buckeye baseball game.

In This Issue Of BSB

• Since we last published, the Ohio State football team picked up its fourth and fifth commitments — a pair of defensive linemen — for its 2005 recruiting class.

In the latest installment of Recruiting Outlook (Pages 13-15) you can read all about those two verbals, Todd Denlinger of Troy, Ohio, and Ryan Williams of California.

• We also have a wealth of information about the OSU men's basketball program. On Pages 16-17, BSB senior writer Jeff Rapp details the events that led to guard Nick Dials leaving the program.

You can get up to speed on the conclusion of the Malik Hairston saga on Pages 18-19, while on Pages 22-23 you'll find our annual "Hot 15" men's basketball recruits whom the Buckeyes should have their eyes on.

• Throughout this edition we also hope you'll take the time to read about how the Buckeyes' Big Ten foes fared in their spring games; former assistant football coach Mark Dantonio's homecoming to Zanesville, Ohio; the men's golf team's fantastic run through the Big Ten tournament; the conclusion of the OSU baseball season and much, much more.

we're going to continue with the MAC series," Geiger said, referring to the series with Ohio-based Mid-American Conference teams that began in 1997. "I think those games are win-win situations. They certainly are winning situations for us, and I believe they are for the MAC schools that have come in here to play us. For the most part, they have been competitive games, exciting games and games against teams I think a lot of our fans like to see."

Although the Buckeyes' nonconference schedule is set for the foreseeable future, Geiger would like to begin work as soon as possible negotiating additional contracts for a 12th regular-season game each year.

"I know our conference is working hard trying to get 12 as a national standard," he said. "For the financial health of college football, there needs to be a 12th game. And I'm not just talking about the financial health of college football at Ohio State. I think that's the feeling everywhere, at least among athletic directors. The presidents aren't on board just yet, but I think they'll get there."

Geiger said he is much more in favor of an extra regular-season game than he

is an extra postseason affair to determine an undisputed national champion.

"I think there's no question that there will be five BCS bowls in the new contract, but I don't believe there will be a championship game after those bowls," he said. "I don't believe there is anyone much in favor of that other than television."

ABC, which holds the broadcasting rights to the Bowl Championship Series, has proposed several scenarios which would produce a national Division I-A champion on the field. The network has proposed a championship game to be played at rotating BCS sites one week after the BCS bowls. In addition to a tremendous amount of fan interest, ABC believes its proposal would generate huge profits for itself and college football.

But Geiger doesn't believe the financial windfall justifies prolonging the postseason.

"No, it does not," he said. "How many ways would we be dividing that so-called windfall? We believe that extra game — the 12th regular-season game — is

Continued On Page 6

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No. 3	Sept. 20	No. 18	Feb. 7
No. 4	Sept. 27	No. 19	Feb. 14
No. 5	Oct. 11	No. 20	Feb. 21
No. 6	Oct. 18	No. 21	Feb. 28
No. 7	Oct. 25	No. 22	March 6
No. 8	Nov. 1	No. 23	March 13
No. 9	Nov. 8	No. 24	March 20
No. 10	Nov. 15	No. 25	April 10
No. 11	Nov. 22	No. 26	April 24
No. 12	Nov. 29	No. 27	May 8
No. 13	December	No. 28	June
No. 14	Jan. 10	No. 29	July
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OPINION

Quarterback Situation Mirrors '02

There is a poster on our BuckeyeSports.com message board who never fails to come to the defense of Justin Zwick should he ever be criticized or maligned in any way.

I have gone on record — both on our website and in this very space — that Zwick has never shown me anything super-dazzling. Not that he has done anything super-horrible. It's just that I thought — and maybe "hoped" is a more accurate word — that a guy with as much hype and as many high school yardage records as he brought with him to Ohio State would have been dazzling by now.

The truth of the matter is that Zwick hasn't been given much of a chance until now to prove what he could do. And now he's seemingly locked in a battle for the starting quarterback spot with Troy Smith, a battle that Zwick is leading but clearly hasn't won just yet.

Since the dazzle factor hasn't been there yet, I got to wondering about two years ago and the last time that the Buckeyes had what appeared to be a quarterback derby heading into the season.

You remember the 6-3 spring game of 2002, don't you? BSB described it at the time as a "snoozefest," and that was probably being generous.

Craig Krenzel and Scott McMullen entered that spring with very little playing time under their respective belts, albeit more than Zwick and Smith combined.

Krenzel had started the 2001 Michigan game — a game OSU won 26-20 at Ann Arbor — as well as the Outback Bowl, although he was relieved in that one by former starter Steve Bellisari as the Buckeyes fell behind 28-0.

McMullen had been pressed into starting duty in the next-to-last game of the regular season against Illinois when Bellisari was suspended for a DUI incident. But McMullen was relieved in that eventual 34-22 loss by Krenzel.

By the time the spring game in 2002 rolled around, Bellisari was gone and Krenzel and McMullen were juniors and left to do battle for the starting position. In that game, it was difficult to declare a winner. Krenzel had slightly better stats, completing 14 of 26 passes for 155 yards and an interception, but McMullen's team won the game. He completed 10 of 23 attempts for 113 yards.

Actually, it was Scottie Mac who appeared to have the better spring. In three scrimmages that included the spring game, he completed 44 of 74 passes (59.2 percent) for 522 yards and five TDs. Krenzel connected on 46 of 89 attempts (51.7 percent) for 505 yards and three scores.

Still, Krenzel ended the spring the way he started — penciled in as the No. 1 quarterback.

Even so, head coach Jim Tressel continued to state the starting position wasn't yet decided.

"Things are always up in the air at the quarterback position," the coach said at the time. "Maybe if you're returning a two-year starter, it's not. But you love competition at the other positions, and you have to love it there, too. At this point, though, it would be hard to name a starter."

And here's another interesting note about that 2002 spring game. The quarterbacks wore black jerseys to avoid contact and neither one liked the decision.

Does any of this sound familiar?

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

with
Mark Rea

I'm not ready to climb out on a limb and predict another national championship for Ohio State in 2004, but the similarities between this coming season and the one just two years ago are becoming striking.

Just one of those similarities concerns the quarterback position. If history repeats itself, Zwick will be the starter and handle the bulk of the snaps.

And while he might not be dazzling on the stats page, national championships are not won on the stats page. But don't take my word for it. Check the national quarterback stats for 2002 and see where Krenzel ranked. Then check for all the names that won national championships.

How It Ought To Be Done

For the first time in about a decade, I had a chance to cover the Memorial Tournament this year, the Jack Nicklaus-hosted PGA tournament at Muirfield Village in the Columbus suburb of Dublin.

In addition to having four days of sunny weather — a complete departure from traditional soggy Memorials — the tournament couldn't have asked for a better leaderboard with Ernie Els, Fred Couples and Tiger Woods slugging it out on the final day until Els finally took a two-shot victory.

Everything about the Memorial is first-class from the way it treats its players and fans to the relative ease with which one can get to and from the venue despite the fact it's actually in a small, suburban community.

But the thing that struck me the most was the way the PGA Tour players interact with fans. After their rounds, each player walks up a slight hill to the scoring shack where they check their scorecards. Right outside that shack is a fence behind which stand hundreds of fans with hundreds of items to be autographed.

Sure, some players sign longer than others. But I saw precious few players brushing off the autograph seekers and many of them sign for 20 minutes or more. Nicklaus signed longest, making the short walk to the practice tee on Friday and signing for about 40 minutes along the way.

The other unique thing about these autograph sessions? The players don't seem to mind them at all. In fact, before heading over to the fence, most dig in

their golf bags for their own Sharpie pens, the preferred signing tool of most autograph hounds.

30 More Years For JT?

Perhaps you read recently that Penn State head coach Joe Paterno had signed a new contract extension that would take him past his 80th birthday.

My initial reaction was wonderment over what teen-ager would want to play for someone old enough to be their great-grandfather? But it also got me wondering what Ohio State would do if Jim Tressel puts together the same kind of career that JoePa has put together in Happy Valley.

Would Tressel still be negotiating contracts into his 80s?

He's only 51 and won't celebrate another birthday until December, which means he would have to coach at OSU through the 2033 season.

Just in case you wondered, two of the last three Ohio State coaches have been in Columbus into their 60s. Woody Hayes, the oldest head football coach in university history, was 65 during his final season in 1978, while John Cooper was 63 during the 2000 season.

By the way, Earle Bruce — who just finished his first season as head coach of the Arena Football League's Columbus Destroyers at the age of 73 — was only 56 during his final season with the Buckeyes in 1987.

Fair Is Fair, Isn't It?

Southern Cal wide receiver Mike Williams has petitioned to get back into school and have his football eligibility reinstated after trying to ride Maurice Clarett's coattails into the NFL.

Of course, you know by now that Clarett's case to join the NFL less than three years removed from high school was overturned on appeal and both he and Williams were knocked out of the NFL draft in late April.

Clarett continues to appeal the ruling, but Williams has had enough and wants to go back to the Trojans. But should he be allowed to do so while Clarett cannot? Both received exceedingly bad advice from handlers who had dollar signs in their eyes, and now both are paying the consequences.

I know what the main argument is: Clarett was a pain in the butt, and from all indications Williams was a model citizen while at Southern Cal. So what? Williams rolled the dice just like Clarett and those dice came up boxcars. The rules are the rules. Williams left school, hired an agent, took money and started to live the high life. The NCAA should not make an exception just for him.

And if it does, it ought to make the same exception for Clarett.



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COVER STORY: GEIGER LOOKS BACK ON DECADE AT OSU



GOOD WITH THE BAD — In addition to presiding over 35 intercollegiate sports, Andy Geiger sometimes has to deal with problems in the department like last fall when he announced the suspension of running back Maurice Clarett.

Tournament Ideas Do Not Bowl Him Over

Continued From Page 1

much more financially rewarding than a Super Bowl-type thing or whatever that championship game would be.

"Also, I'm not sure the hype and hoopla of a Super Bowl atmosphere is what we're looking for. I am very protective of the bowls and the atmosphere and excitement they have meant to college football over the years. I don't think that's something we're very eager to diminish in any way."

On other football-related topics, Geiger said that OSU fans can continue to expect their favorite team to play night games, but only on occasion.

"I think night games are fine as long as they are limited to special, once-in-a-while occurrences," he said. "One thing I can tell you: Ohio State will never play on any day other than Saturday as long as I have anything to say about it. We will not play on Tuesday or Thursday or any other day of the week except Saturday."

On the possibility of installing field turf in Ohio Stadium, Geiger said he is content to stick with the natural grass surface currently in place.

"Switching to field turf in our stadium has not been presented to me as a wish," he said. "We have two grass fields and one turf field (at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center), and the field turf is the same as they have at Michigan and Wisconsin, and Illinois also has it, I believe. We have that in place because we play on it throughout the Big Ten schedule."

"But as far as I know, there is no desire to go to a field turf surface in our stadium. I believe our grass held up very well this past year. We're very happy with the surface we have in there at the present time."

Problems in Paradise

At this time last year, Ohio State was basking in the glow of its first national championship in 34 years.

But that glow soon became a white-hot spotlight of scrutiny beginning with a New York Times article that accused the uni-

versity of preferential treatment toward athletes.

The NCAA cleared OSU of any wrongdoing, and an in-house investigation found no improprieties. Still, the damage was done to the athletic department's reputation, and it took another hit when star tailback Maurice Clarett was suspended for the 2003 season for various NCAA violations.

Clarett, who brought litigation against the university before withdrawing the suit, unsuccessfully sued the NFL to enter the 2004 player draft. As Clarett's attorneys continue to appeal the case, there are some who wonder if the tailback could not somehow seek to rejoin the Buckeyes as receiver Mike Williams is doing at USC.

Geiger, however, believes Clarett is through in scarlet and gray.

"I don't see any possibility that he could come back," the AD said. "To play football here, you first have to be a student of the university, and he has not been a student here for quite some time. Therefore, I see no possibility that he could play football for us."

Clarett's off-the-field problems grabbed national headlines but were by no means the only trouble suffered by Jim Tressel's program. In his three-plus years in Columbus, more than a dozen of his players have run afoul of the law in differing ways.

Most of those players have been dealt suspensions of varying lengths. But when sophomores Ira Guilford and Louis Irizarry were charged with beating and robbing a fellow OSU student May 1, Geiger's tolerance seemed to reach its breaking point.

"They're gone," he said. "That is behavior we simply will not condone and they are gone."

Geiger said he hoped that his message on the subject would be a clear, concise one.

"The message is that we will not tolerate this type of behavior," he said. "It is the hope that this will serve as a reminder to people who may find themselves in similar situations in the future to think twice

about their actions. And if they don't, they'll be gone, too. I don't know how to be any more firm than that. I don't know how to be any more plain than that."

Asked if that was his decision alone without input from Tressel, Geiger replied, "Of course we consulted on that. But I was pretty adamant in the way I expressed my feelings on the subject."

Although the list of off-the-field transgressions by Ohio State football players seems to be growing, Geiger hasn't lost any faith in his football coach or his program.

"None whatsoever," he said. "Coach Tressel is a wonderful person, and I am confident what has happened and what has been reported are isolated incidents."

"We are living in a culture that sometimes runs counter to what we believe or how we were raised. For that reason, I tend to hold the student more accountable than I do the teacher."

"As far as my feelings toward Coach Tressel, all I can say is that I would have absolutely no qualms whatsoever having my child play football in his program. I don't know any higher praise I could give."

Geiger said he remains confident that Tressel is addressing the off-the-field incidents in the proper way.

"Coaching is a lot about parenting, and correcting mistakes is part of parenting," the AD said. "Do you have children of this age? I do. Are you frightened when they leave the house? I am. I'm frightened a lot. But you have to trust them and trust that what you have taught them and tried to get them to learn has been enough that when they are faced with a difficult situation, they are armed with enough knowledge that they can make a wise decision."

"Ultimately that decision is up to them, but you hope that you have taught them well enough to make that decision wisely."

"But I do know that we aren't going to have 58 assistant coaches standing on every campus street corner all night every night. These are young men who want to be treated as such, and we will do that as long as they act accordingly. I don't think that's too much to ask."

Another, more peripheral incident was last year's crackdown on excessive game-day tailgating in and around Ohio Stadium.

"There was no quote-unquote crackdown on tailgating," Geiger said. "There was an enforcement of laws already in place. To the point where we're trying to manage 105,000 people in a relatively small space, I thought it went very well."

"And it will continue. Again, we're not interested in making things difficult on our fans or diminishing the amount of enjoyment that goes into the atmosphere of our football games. But after what we experienced following the Michigan game in 2002, when our university made the national news and national headlines for all the wrong reasons, we felt clearly that the situation had to be addressed. That was very important to us."

Basketball Comeback?

Several times during and after the 2003-04 stumbles by the men's basketball team, there was speculation that head coach Jim O'Brien would either step down or take over another college program elsewhere.

Geiger said that neither is going to happen and that he remains solidly in O'Brien's corner.

"If my memory serves me correctly, Coach O'Brien's team won the Big Ten tournament two years ago," he said. "That last two years — especially last year — were not up to standard. But I don't think

I'm any more satisfied with the program than he is, and he's not very satisfied."

The 2003-04 season started with O'Brien fighting complications after neck surgery. One of his vocal cords was paralyzed, making it extremely difficult to communicate with his team, and at one point, he reportedly considered stepping down.

"We talked about it a little bit," Geiger admitted. "He was depressed (about his health problems) early on, but that feeling quickly subsided. He's a fighter. He is clearly disappointed at the way the season went and I think he's very eager to come back and have the kind of season he believes this team can have."

"He knows the team underachieved last season and he holds himself accountable. He wants nothing more than to put that behind him and the team and move forward. I have no doubt that he will."

"It was a very difficult season. We thought we were a very different team than we turned out to be. Everybody involved was disappointed. But I'm convinced that help is on the way and we're already on the road to making things better. Also, Coach O'Brien is a tremendous coach. I have no doubt in that at all. So we're not really that far away from where we want to be."

Complicating matters during a sub-standard season was a sort of malaise that set in at Value City Arena. Crowds were seldom boisterous while some openly vented their wrath at the team and O'Brien.

In fact, during one home game, a fan displayed a sign implying that O'Brien should be fired.

Near the end of the season, speculation ran rampant that O'Brien was fed up and making himself available as a candidate for the vacant head coaching job at St. John's.

Geiger said that things weren't quite what they seemed during those times.

"There was the incident involving one fan with one sign at one game that got a tremendous amount of attention," he said. "Then the media came in with the story about the St. John's job, and that was just comical. It was ridiculous because there was never any contact there at all."

As to the crowd atmosphere at Value City Arena, many have suggested that beefing up the preconference schedule with more Ohio teams would help generate more buzz. But while he likes to schedule at least one Ohio team each year in football, Geiger is not enamored with the same idea in basketball.

"First of all, there are so many (Ohio schools that play basketball) that it's an entirely different situation," he explained. "Plus I think there is a different approach to basketball scheduling than football."

"What Coach O'Brien is trying to do — is to prepare for the conference schedule. That is always the goal. I believe what he is looking for in the preseason is teams with diversity. Different teams are scheduled because of their styles of play, how they play offense or defense, how they react to different game situations, etc."

A common complaint heard about Value City Arena is the lack of students in proximity to the floor. And while Geiger points out that several thousand student tickets are available in the lower bowl of the arena, he does not envision scenarios such as the Cameron Crazies at Duke ever occurring at Ohio State.

"What has happened in college basketball is a little bit frightening, to be honest," Geiger said. "In some places, the students are right on the floor and while that might look desirable on television, looks can be deceiving."

COVER STORY: GEIGER LOOKS BACK ON DECADE AT OSU

"There have been a lot of problems at different places — Cameron Indoor Stadium at Duke, for example — and I think those universities are not entirely comfortable with their situations. But what can you do? I would never want to get into a situation where anyone — whether that be a player, coach, official or anyone else at one of our games — felt unsafe.

"As for the notion that we don't allow the students close proximity to the floor, we have a certain amount of student tickets that go on sale and many of those tickets went unsold this past season."

Others have criticized the venue, saying the Schottenstein Center is less fan-friendly than venerable St. John Arena. Geiger disagrees.

"I don't think it's the venue at all," he said. "It can be as raucous as any other place I've seen. When Texas Tech was here last year, you couldn't hear yourself think in there."

Geiger believes he knows the answer to why the basketball team doesn't generate any more interest for home games.

"I would like to see us get off television," he said, referring to the fact that all of the Buckeyes' home games are televised in the Columbus area. "We need to create a more unique atmosphere. We need to create a more exclusive atmosphere, and having every game televised in the surrounding area hardly makes for an exclusive atmosphere."

At least one game next season will have a different flavor as the Buckeyes return to St. John Arena for a nonconference contest.

The game, against an undisclosed opponent, will take place during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend when the Schottenstein Center is occupied by another event.

And how will the athletic department deal with those season ticket holders who have suites and PSLs?

"That will be the ticket office's problem to figure out the logistics," Geiger said with a grin. "My problem will be to deal with the complaints."

Other Tidbits

In addition to football and men's basketball, there were plenty of other things on the OSU athletic director's mind during his interview with BSB:

• Geiger said the university has already applied to host the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament again.

"We have applied for either 2008 or 2009, and from the comments we received about last year's tournament, we're fairly confident," he said.

The games will again be held at Nationwide Arena in downtown Columbus rather than the Schottenstein Center.

"We don't have a choice," Geiger explained. "Our state high school tournaments are held each year on our campus and I think bringing all those families here for the high school tournaments is a wonderful thing. I would not be in favor of moving those games even every once in a while for the NCAA Tournament."

"It was a great thing for the city of Columbus, and after all, we're a neighborhood of the city. We believe getting the games again would be beneficial to everyone concerned."

• Chic Harley will have his jersey number retired this coming season, an honor that Geiger believes is probably long overdue.

"I don't know anyone who has ever seen him play, but I'm told he was very special,"

he said of Ohio State's first three-time All-American. "Our stadium was nicknamed 'The House That Harley Built,' and I understand that he would have been the Heisman Trophy winner had there been a Heisman Trophy at the time that he played."

Harley will be the first football player so honored who did not win the Heisman. Since Geiger had previously indicated the stadium's "Ring of Honor" would be reserved for Heisman winners, it begs the question of when other former Buckeye luminaries, such as Woody Hayes, will be honored.

"We haven't gotten that far yet," Geiger said. "As far as someone like Coach Hayes is concerned, that's a bridge we haven't come to yet. We are right now in the process of honoring players."

• There were published reports following the wrestling team's disappointing eighth-place finish at the Big Ten championships that Geiger was critical of Russ Hellickson and his program and that he would begin to personally oversee the program.

"That is not one of the programs that I oversee," he said. "But let's face it — eighth place was disappointing when we were hosting the meet. That's not where anyone of us thought we would be. Then the team rebounded at the national tournament and made all of us proud."

As far as his criticism of Hellickson, Geiger simply replied, "I've been told by the wrestling community that there is probably not a better state for the sport at the high school level than Ohio. It's not as much about what I expect as what the coaches and the athletes expect. I think you want to come to Ohio State to excel. Once you get here, I believe you not only

want to excel, you want to exceed your expectations. That is what all of us want — students, faculty and administrators."

• Geiger said he takes a lot of pride in the Ohio State women's basketball program, which has been revitalized under the guidance of head coach Jim Foster.

But when Foster was hired, Geiger took some initial heat for not sticking with tradition and naming a woman head coach.

"I remember when Coach Foster was interviewed by the search committee," Geiger said. "It was certainly not meant to be as a criticism of his gender, but that it was clear that he was so good and the right fit for our program that several members of the committee said they wished he was a woman. He was so good in the interview process that he made the decision easy for everyone."

• Fund-raising is still under way for renovation and upgrades to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, including the weight room. Those upgrades will not begin until the funds have been raised; therefore, there is no target date for completion.

"We are about halfway toward raising the funds we need," Geiger said. "But I cannot in clear conscience start something when we don't have the necessary funds to pay for it. I'm confident we will get those funds. We're just not there yet."

• As for the best part of his job, Geiger said he enjoys the relationships he has with Ohio State athletes and coaches.

"I really enjoy positive interaction with coaches and athletes," he said. "I really like the sporting community. I have always enjoyed the opportunity to participate in that environment and continue to enjoy that. I always have and I'm sure that I always will."



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CSPA

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Pair Of Defensive Linemen Verbal To OSU

Though it remained early in the recruiting process for the class of 2005, as the month of May approached its denouement, Ohio State's upcoming class was already strong along the offensive line.

Of the Buckeyes' first three verbal commitments, two — Lakewood St. Edward's Alex Boone and Lancaster's Jim Cordle — were the consensus top two offensive linemen in Ohio, with Boone ranked No. 12 in Rivals.com's initial listing of the nation's top 100 players.

In the span of five days between the end of May and beginning of June, OSU began shoring up the other side of the line. Nearly doubling the Buckeyes' class size were a pair of verbal commitments from Ryan Williams and Todd Denlinger, both of whom project as defensive linemen at the college level.

Here is a brief glimpse at each of them:

Ryan Williams — A 6-5, 240-pounder, Williams preps at Mission Viejo (Calif.) High School, but his roots lie in the Buckeye State.

Williams was born about an hour southwest of Columbus in Washington Court House, but he moved to California at a very young age. He still has relatives in Court House whom he visits regularly and he was raised an OSU fan by his Buckeye-loving father.

"I've always followed Ohio State football," Williams said.

It's no surprise then that when OSU linebackers coach Luke Fickell traveled to California and offered Williams a scholarship May 27 to play football at Ohio State, the defensive standout accepted on the spot.

"It really meant a lot," Williams said. "It was really exciting. I've always wanted to be a Buckeye. Ever since I was born, it was the team I wanted to play for."

Williams had offers from some of the West's top schools, including Oregon and Washington, not to mention such schools as Colorado and Oklahoma. For geographical reasons, he figured a western school would be his eventual destination.

"I never really thought it was a possibility that I would get recruited by (Ohio State) because I've never known any California linemen who went to Ohio State," he said. "So I didn't really think it was going to happen. I thought I was probably going to end up somewhere in the Pac-10 or Oklahoma or somewhere like that, but once Ohio State started becoming interested I was, too."

For that, it sounds as if he can thank his high school coach, Bob Johnson, who dropped off game film to the coaching staff while in Columbus for the Nike Camp earlier this spring. Once the OSU coaches saw Williams' highlight reel, they were enamored with his speed off the edge, and things progressed quickly from there.

Williams runs a 4.73-second 40-yard

RECRUITING OUTLOOK with Chris Nida

dash at 6-5, 240, and the coaches have told him they think he could eventually fill the pass-rushing role so ably manned by Will Smith for the past two years.

With a 3.20 grade-point average and an SAT score of 1120 in the books, the coaches think Williams can make them happy for years to come. As it is now, they've already pleased an entire family of Buckeye nuts.

"Everybody's going crazy about it," Williams said.

Todd Denlinger — Denlinger, a Troy, Ohio, product, has been on Ohio State's radar for some time, having been spotted on the sidelines of OSU games as early as last season.

While he didn't accept his scholarship offer on the spot as Williams did, it didn't take him long to let the OSU coaches know he would be a Buckeye, deliberating less than a month after receiving his Ohio State offer May 14. He committed in person to a group of coaches that included head coach Jim Tressel, defensive coordinator Mark Snyder, Fickell and recruiting coordinator John Peterson at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center June 2.

"It's always been in the back of my head that that's where I want to go," Denlinger said. "It's always been my dream."

Offers were pouring in this spring from around the country. Schools from coast to coast — including such universities as Boston College, Maryland, Michigan State, North Carolina and Wisconsin — were letting Denlinger know that he would be a welcome addition to any of their programs.

In the end, the home-state school won out.

"I had so many varieties of colleges," Denlinger said. "I had Stanford and Duke, which are great academic schools, and then schools like Tennessee and Oklahoma, which are great football schools. There was always a second thought in my head like, 'Is this the right choice?' but when it came down to it I think I made the right choice."

Denlinger currently stands at right about 6-3 and 280, but out of necessity he played middle linebacker for Troy as a junior, racking up 125 tackles and six sacks in the process. He will return to the defensive tackle position he played as a freshman and sophomore this coming year.

The OSU coaches seem to think he could play anywhere along the defensive line as a Buckeye, but he thinks his body will eventually be best-suited for the familiar tackle position.

"I talked to them about it a little bit



Todd Denlinger



Ryan Williams

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Football players in the class of 2005 who have issued verbal commitments to play college football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Alex Boone	OL	6-8	296	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward
Jim Cordle	OL	6-5	285	Lancaster, Ohio
Todd Denlinger	DL	6-3	280	Troy, Ohio
Jamarlo O'Neal	DB	6-1	190	Cleveland Glensville
Ryan Williams	DL	6-5	240	Mission Viejo, Calif.

(when I committed)," Denlinger said. "They said (I could play) a little bit of both. They want to see how I mature as my body gets older. Right now I think they're looking for me at end, but I'm putting on a little bit of weight right now so I'm thinking I'm going to end up at tackle."

Now that he has earned and accepted the offer for which he had hoped for most of his life, Denlinger's next task is to make sure he's surrounded by as many fellow great players as possible.

"I'm going to the (Ohio State) one-day camp on the 27th (of June)," he said. "The coaches said that's when most of their big-time recruits will be there. Now that I'm committed, I just want to help them with the recruiting in any way I can, help persuade some of the other guys."

Peterson Preparing For First Stint At Helm Of OSU Camp

Speaking of the OSU football camp, this will be the first time in over a decade that it will not be overseen in some fashion by Bill Conley.

Conley, who resigned April 1 after serving as OSU's recruiting coordinator since 1991, was instrumental in building the Ohio State football camp from a sparsely attended affair into an annual event that now attracts thousands of prep football players nationwide.

In fact, last year's camp attracted a

Continued On Page 14

7 New Bucks To Suit Up For Classic

Seven future Buckeyes are scheduled to participate in the 59th annual Ohio North/South All-Star Classic, set for June 19 at Columbus Crew Stadium.

Brandon Smith of Euclid and Shaun Lane of Hubbard are the only two OSU signees scheduled to play for the North squad.

Slated to be suiting up for the South are Alex Barrow of Dublin Coffman, Erik Haw of Columbus Independence, Chad Hoobler of Carrollton, Ben Person of Xenia and Sirjo Welch of Columbus Beechcroft.

The North holds the all-time series lead at 32-23-3, although the South has been victorious in two of the last three meetings, including a 24-17 win last year.

The game, sponsored by Grange Insurance, will be televised statewide by Ohio News Network. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m. Tickets are available through the Crew box office.

Many of the same OSU signees will also participate in the Big 33 Football Classic, set for July 24 in Hershey, Pa.

— Mark Rea

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Bauserman Drafted In Fourth Round By Bucs

Continued From Page 13

record number of campers — 3,800 — a number that new Ohio State recruiting coordinator John Peterson expects to approach again this year.

"We're looking at about the same numbers as we had last year," Peterson told BSB. "It will be in the thousands, pushing 4,000. We'll be right on that target."

Peterson has quite an act to follow, stepping into the shoes of the man who made the summer camp what it is today, but it's not as if he's a greenhorn when it comes to this event.

"I've been involved in the camp as a camper since I was in the eighth grade and came to camp when Coach Tressel was one of the organizers," Peterson said. "That was back when (former head coach Earle) Bruce and (former assistant coach Bill) Myles were coaching, so I have a lot of experience from the camper side."

"When I got into playing here and into coaching I worked the camp as a guest coach, and that was for

probably 12 years. I've kind of been on one side of the camp in one way or another since 1983."

The camp is obviously a much larger endeavor than it was when Peterson began his camp experience, but under Tressel every attempt is made to keep some aspects of the camp the same.

"I've seen it grow tremendously," Peterson said. "The one thing I know Coach Tressel really emphasized was keeping the ratio of coach to player to a 10-to-1 ratio. Even when the numbers are high, his goal is that every camper gets coached in all facets of football."

This year's format will be much the same as it has been in past years under Tressel.

On June 16 and 17, OSU will host a kicking camp. Following that, there will be two sessions of an all-position camp — June 18-21 and 22-25. Those sessions will be followed by the senior one-day camps, set for June 26-27, which traditionally feature the top prospects in the state and many others from around the country.

Peterson is not without help in coordinating such a major event. He cited Fickell and director of foot-

ball operations Bob Tucker, among others, as those who have helped him organize the summer camp while he is still transitioning into his post at Ohio State.

But this will be one of Peterson's first major duties as OSU recruiting coordinator, and it will provide him with a tremendous opportunity to get his name and face out there to Ohio's best players and coaches.

"That's been a constant thing since the day I got here," he said of his building relationships with the Ohio high school coaches. "One thing you understand being from Ohio is how important Ohio high school coaches are and what a great job they do in teaching football. Our camp — like a lot of camps — is an extension of what they teach on a day-to-day basis to their kids."

No Decision Yet In Sight For Bauserman After Draft

Tallahassee (Fla.) Lincoln quarterback Joe Bauserman committed to the Ohio State football team last summer, but he did not sign a letter of intent to officially join the 2004 recruiting class in February.

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Lincoln, Bauserman is one of the more highly regarded high school pitchers in the nation. In fact, on June 7 he was drafted in the fourth round (112th overall) of the Major League Baseball first-year player draft by the Pittsburgh Pirates.



Joe Bauserman

Listed at 6-2 and 220 pounds on Lincoln's baseball roster, Bauserman helped his team become District 4A champions this year. The Trojans finished the season 16-10, with Bauserman compiling a record of 5-3. In the team's final game of the season — a 2-0 loss to Ocala Forest — Bauserman started and pitched six innings, allowing just two hits and striking out eight.

His draft selection ensures he will be well-compensated if he opts to pursue baseball immediately, but he's still not

sure if he will do that or enroll at OSU in January and be a grayshirt quarterback.

"At this point, I have no clue," Bauserman told BSB.

He remains very interested in the Ohio State option, and the Buckeyes continue to keep tabs on him. Members of the coaching staff — including Tressel — have been in Tallahassee to visit with Bauserman in the past several weeks.

It is an efficient use of time for the coaches, seeing as how they are also tracking another Lincoln standout: wide receiver Fred Rouse, who recently checked in at No. 4 overall on Rivals.com's initial listing of the nation's top prospects.

"They just wish me luck in whatever I do," Bauserman said. "That's all they really say."

If Bauserman does decide to pursue baseball right now, he would maintain his college eligibility and conceivably could return to Ohio State at some point in the future to try his hand at

football, a la former Florida State QB Chris Weinke, who wound up with a Heisman Trophy. That, however, is a long way down the road at this point.

Ginn Wins Three Events, Leads Glenville To State Track Title

Before Ted Ginn Jr. dons a scarlet and gray uniform this fall, he continues to excel in the red and black of Cleveland Glenville.

Winning two individual events and anchoring a victorious relay team, Ginn helped lead the Tarblooders to a Division I state track championship at Ohio State's Jesse Owens Memorial Stadium.

Ginn won the 110-meter high hurdles in 13.40 seconds and the 200-meter dash in 21.51 while anchoring the winning 1,600-meter relay team, which blazed the track in 3:15.04.

He also logged a second-place finish in the meet, finishing at 46.88 in the individual 400, just behind Zach Logan of Trotwood Madison, who was clocked in 46.64. Logan is a Purdue football signee.

Ginn wasn't the only future Ohio State football player in attendance at the state track meet.

Teammate Jamario O'Neal, a verbal commitment for 2005, took fifth in the 100-meter final but fell victim to a hamstring injury that kept him out of the rest of the finals.

Erik Haw helped Columbus Independence to a third-place finish in the 400-meter relay, and Brandon Smith of Euclid finished seventh in the shot put with a throw of 54-10.

Shaun Lane of Hubbard and Brandon Underwood of Hamilton also qualified for the state track tournament.

Mark Rea also contributed to this report.



Ted Ginn Jr.

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MEET THE BUCKEYES NIGHT



BUCKEYES COME TO TOLEDO — Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel (top) addresses nearly 1,000 Buckeye fans at the ninth "Meet the Buckeyes Night" held in Toledo on May 14 as master of ceremonies Clark Kellogg looks on. At right, OSU assistant athletic director Denny Hoobler (left) accepts a check for the \$40,000 raised during the evening from event chairman Phil Harrison.



Hicks, Cousineau Enliven Toledo Function

Toledo area Buckeye fans once again had a chance to show their colors as they gathered for the ninth "Meet the Buckeyes Night," held May 14 at the Stranahan Theatre.

The event honored former Buckeye football greats John Hicks and Tom Cousineau. Hicks was a late substitute for former Buckeye quarterback Rex Kern, who was unable to attend due to recurring back problems.

Also on the program were master of ceremonies Clark Kellogg, a former Buckeye basketball star, OSU football coach Jim Tressel, women's basketball coach Jim Foster, men's associate head basketball coach Rick Boyages and OSU football historian Jack Park.

Kellogg himself was a "Meet the Buckeyes Night" honoree in 1992.

"I recall that there was some zealous, sincere, enthusiastic support for

the athletic department at the Ohio State University," Kellogg said of his appearance 12 years earlier. "It's nice to see that has not changed."

Boyages appeared in place of his boss, Jim O'Brien, who had a conflicting engagement. The assistant noted how the Buckeyes' recent season had gotten off to a rocky start as O'Brien had problems with his voice following neck surgery, forcing Boyages to do a lot of communicating for the head man.

"He was the ventriloquist and I was the dummy," Boyages said.

The assistant coach, who returned to Ohio State after a brief stint as head coach at William & Mary, admitted that the 2003-04 campaign had been a disappointing one.

"We're anxious to bounce back. I've been with Jim for 10 years and this was by far our toughest season. But a turnaround can happen quickly in basketball," Boyages said, reminding the crowd that the Buckeyes had gone from eight wins to 27 wins and a Final Four appearance in O'Brien's first two years in Columbus.

"This is the same Jim O'Brien as then," Boyages said. "It's the same philosophy. I wouldn't have left William & Mary for anyone else."

"He's a class guy. He has no ego. What you see is what you get with him."

Foster was next up on the program. He gave thanks to Tressel for help in recruiting center Jessica Davenport.

"She was in for the Penn State (football) weekend and Coach Tressel had breakfast with us," Foster explained. "I'm not sure that got Jess, but I know it got her father."

Davenport, a Columbus Independence product, not only came to Ohio State but went on to win conference freshman of the year honors last season.

Foster called the season, in which his Buckeyes went 21-10 and finished third in the Big Ten, a "transitional year" for him and his program.

"We're trying to take the next step," he said. "It will be our third year in the

Big Ten. We want to move to the next level."

Tressel talked more about what it meant to be a Buckeye than about specifics of his current football team.

He told of how the legendary Buckeye coach Woody Hayes had come to visit Tressel's ill father, Lee, himself a noted football coach.

"Woody Hayes drove two hours to a hospital in Cleveland to see my dad," Tressel recalled. "Woody talked. Dad couldn't really speak. He talked about football. He talked about military matters, something they were both interested in."

"When I went to visit, Dad said, 'Coach Hayes was here!' He hadn't talked in a while. 'Woody Hayes was here!'"

"That's what being a Buckeye is all about," Tressel said. "That's what John Hicks learned. That's what Tom Cousineau learned."

Hicks picked up on that theme, recalling how many in the Buckeye community had come to the aid of OSU grid great Jack Tatum, who has suffered serious health problems, losing a leg in the process.

"When we went and got him, he weighed 130 pounds," Hicks recalled. "What really got me was the support of the community and our former teammates."

"Some Michigan guys were telling me, 'You guys have got things really together.' We didn't have it together. We're Buckeyes."

"We were able to help save Jack's other leg and stabilize his condition. Coach Hayes would have been proud."

Cousineau said that while he hadn't played with Hicks at Ohio State, he played with plenty of Buckeyes like him.

In fact, when the linebacker first arrived at Ohio State and realized all of the talent that was there, he was a bit intimidated.

"I cracked my helmet one of the first days of practice," Cousineau said. "I was lining up against guys like Chris Ward and Pete Johnson with Archie

Griffin behind them, and I was getting knocked around."

"I called my dad and said that I might be in the wrong place, but he told me to be patient and it would all click."

Cousineau remembers when it clicked.

"One thing about Pete Johnson is that he was a great telegrapher of plays," he said. "He didn't care if you knew what was coming."

"He would put all his weight on his hand and put that big booty up in the air and you knew it was an isolation play, an attitude play that they ran and still do."

"A blitz wasn't called, but I saw Pete do that and I went right after him and knocked him over. Well, I don't know that anyone had ever knocked Pete over, but I knocked him back and Archie fell over him. Woody went nuts. He was screaming and yelling."

"Our defensive coach, George Hill, told me, 'Good job,' but he warned me: 'You know what play they are going to run next.'"

"And sure enough, they ran it again and I came after Pete again and stopped the play. Only this time, I got thrown off the field."

"But I never played on the scout team again," Cousineau said.

Hicks and Cousineau joined Kellogg, Griffin, Mike Tomczak, Tom Skladany, Keith Byars, Chris Spielman, Jim Karsatos and Howard "Hopalong" Cassady as "Meet the Buckeyes Night" honorees.

Nearly 1,000 Buckeye fans attended this year's event, and chairman Phil Harrison was able to present the OSU athletic department with a check for \$40,000. Accepting the check on behalf of Ohio State was Denny Hoobler, assistant athletics director for development. "Meet the Buckeyes Nights" have now raised nearly \$300,000 for Ohio State.

Harrison recently announced that the next Toledo area "Meet the Buckeyes Night," which is held every other year, is scheduled for May 19, 2006.

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