

Brains, Ability Help White Into Lineup

By Dave Kelch

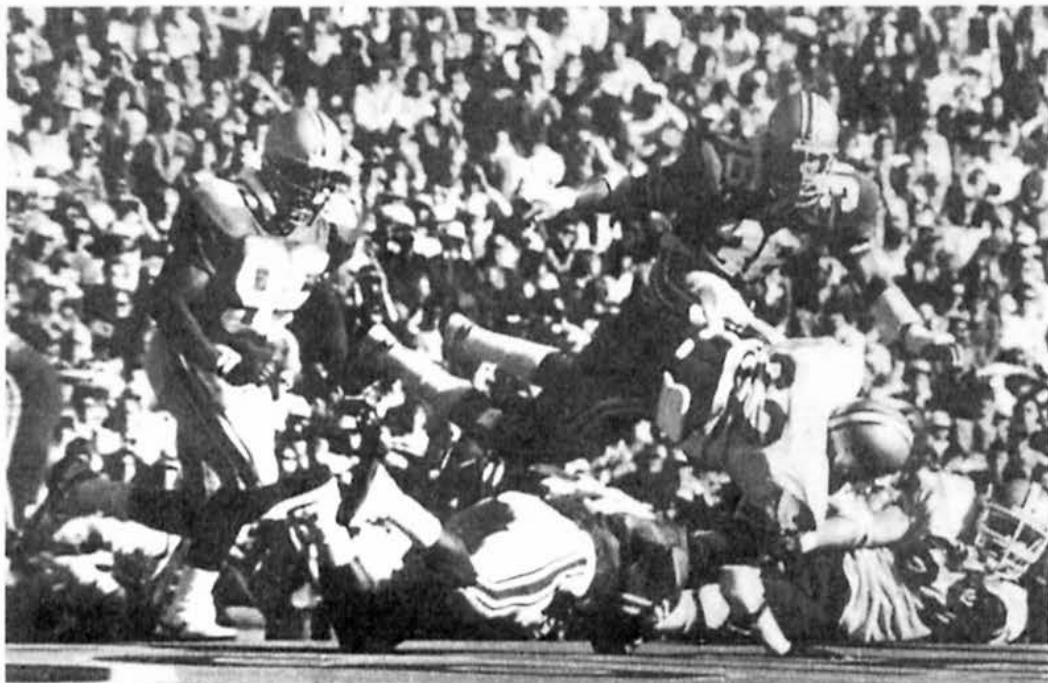
Back in the early spring, before William White had been handed his high school diploma as an honor student at Lima (Ohio) Senior High School, a statement was made by an Ohio State assistant football coach. At the time, it was speculation; it could not have been closer to the truth.

"I think he (White) could possibly help us early because he'll learn the system quickly," said Jim Tressel, the Buckeye offensive backfield coach who recruited the 5-10, 180-pound defensive back. "Freshmen sometimes have trouble learning it, but he won't. It's very unusual. His maturity level is so much greater than others."

That is what was said about the inner makings of White. Now for what was said about his physical attributes:

"As we watched film (of White's prep exploits for the Spartans), we felt he was an outstanding athlete," said Tressel. "I watched seven or eight of his game films and in the Cincinnati Moeller passing (scrimmage) film I saw some great things. What really assured me was watching him play basketball (a point guard). He has outstanding quickness."

So, when White came to freshman camp this summer, there



Freshman William White (Bottom) Trips Up Cougar Richard Calvin.

was little doubt in the coaching staff's mind that White was a very capable individual, capable of handling the emotional and

physical demands of college football.

And that brings us to the present, two games into the 1984 season. White impressed enough heads during preseason camp that in the opener against Oregon State he was the only first-year freshman at the 22 offensive and defensive positions to start. He opened at wide-side cornerback and had a very fine game, tying for third on the defense in tackles with nine (six solo, three assists) and breaking up two passes, which tied him for first.

"I thought it (the opener) went pretty well," said White, who will be a mechanical engineering major once school starts. "It was a nice game to have to improve upon. I have one (prior to Washington State) under my belt.

"I was really nervous before we came out for the pre-game," he added. "My stomach had knots in it and I could barely bend over, but my teammates (on defense) and the upper classmen helped me out."

White was elevated to first-team status a little more than a week before the opener. It did not shock him and he kept things in proper perspective.

"I had been on the first team for a week or so and I was just trying to stay there," he said. "I knew all along they needed some new defensive backs this year and I was blessed with the misfortune of others (several returning defensive backs had spent the summer in school to avoid becoming ineligible and were not allowed to practice until their grades were cleared). I didn't hope for it to be that way."

As a high school senior, White was an all-district and third team all-state running back for the Class

AAA Spartans of the tough Greater Miami Conference (includes defending state champion Cincinnati Princeton, Middletown and Hamilton). White rushed for 1,444 yards and scored 12 touchdowns, then was the point guard for coach Ron Niekamp's regional finalists in basketball.

Although a freshman, White has been particularly miffed by all the preseason talk saying the OSU secondary would be the early sore spot of the team. Three of four starters from 1983 were gone.

"That rumor about the defensive secondary being the weakest part of the team inspired us," said White. "The whole defense really got involved in it and stuck behind us."

As long as White and his secondary buddies stick behind the linemen and linebackers, they will have confidence in the secondary and return the favor.



William White

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White Says 'Smurf' Backfield Will Bring Back Glory Years

By Dave Kelch

Don't argue with William White when he says the 1985 Ohio State defense will remind you of the glory defenses of the late '60s and early to mid-'70s.

White, a 5-10½ — and he wants to stress that half-inch — 186-pound sophomore starting cornerback, is a scholar-athlete majoring in engineering.

There is a tendency to begrudge football players credit for their level of intelligence and White is a prime example of a hard-hitting member of OSU's "Smurf" defensive backfield to whom you'd be best off listening.

"We are very confident. We feel our defense is going to help the team. If our offense doesn't score 30 or 40 points a game . . . they won't need to. We have two of the best inside linebackers in the game — if you ask me."

Of course White was referring to senior Thomas "Pepper" Johnson and sophomore Chris Spielman, the Wheaties' cover boy. But there is much more to this Buckeye defense than just the linebackers, or so says White.

"Defense is only a third of the team," he acknowledged. "Last year the offense was the strong point. We want to get back to the old defense of the '60s and '70s. We want to intimidate people. We feel this is the year for the defense."

Pretty strong words coming from a sophomore when you have players the caliber of Keith Byars, John Wooldridge, Cris Carter, Mike Lanese and Jim Karsatos on offense.

White has no problem supporting himself, though.

As one of two first-year freshman starters in the secondary last year, White led the defense in total minutes (333.5), consistently graded high with the coaches, had three interceptions — one for a touchdown against Indiana — and led the defense in passes broken up with seven. Add to that 48 tackles and two fumble recoveries and White had an impressive freshman season.

With the experience at linebacker and in the secondary, White sees the possibility of more man-to-man coverage this year. The coaches protected their young secondary (three freshmen and a sophomore) to a degree last year by playing mostly zone pass coverage.

White spent the summer working out in Columbus and improving his man-to-man coverage.

"Hopefully, I improved that a lot," he said. "I felt I needed a little more confidence in covering man-to-man. Last year as a freshman I liked the zone because I had someone behind me, but this year I want to be ready for whatever they (opposition) throw at me."

Other than the new 2-5 alignment (two down linemen and five linebackers), White doesn't see

much change in the Buckeye defense.

"Really nothing, but with all the talent and experience we should be able to do a lot of things," he said.

He did stress the resurgence of the defense as a key to OSU football fortunes, though.

"We want to get back to that. We want to erase all that was said about the weak secondary in the past. We want to be one of the toughest defensive teams OSU has ever had. We may be small (in the secondary) but we can hit. If someone catches a ball in front of us, they're going to get hit and remember it."

White is carrying this upgraded level of confidence beyond the team to include himself.

"This year I can help the team out more. Last year I just knew the basics. I feel I can help in more ways this year."

White's goals and those of the defense are shared by the team.

"One of the biggest is to repeat as Big Ten champs," he said. "A lot of people say it can't be done any more, that it's like winning two straight Super Bowls or World Series. I don't see it that way."

The new 2-5 defensive alignment is a delight for the secondary, says White.

"The DBs love it," he said. "That means a better pass rush which will make it easier for us and the other linebackers. We lost three starters in the line and they were good players, but with the experienced people we have back, and with Larry Kolic in the middle we feel we'll be better."

The Rose Bowl loss at Pasadena has its sour taste for all returning Buckeyes, including White.

"It was a hard loss for me personally and the team," he said. "I would love to get back there."

There are things we didn't get done."

Academia is not lost on the playing field with White.

"I would like to be an academic all-Big Ten," said White. "Not just as a football player, but as a student-athlete."

Using that wisdom, he sees the Big Ten race as most Buckeyes do — wide open.

"I think Illinois and Iowa are definitely strong and we have to play at Michigan," he said.

"Really, the Big Ten isn't the Big Two anymore. You have to be careful no matter who you play and where you play."



William White

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White Gets Chance To Gain Redemption

By Craig James

William White, one of Ohio State's two starting defensive cornerbacks, was feeling sorry for himself.

The Pitt player he had been defending, flanker Chuck Scales, had just outrun him into the end zone in time to take delivery of a 14-yard touchdown pass from quarterback John Congemi. The score gave the Panthers their first and only lead at 7-3.

"I kind of felt bad about the touchdown they had," said White, "because that was on me. But a lot of players came over and told me to keep my head up and not to worry about it. They told me, 'You'll get another chance.'"

He did.

It happened during Pitt's possession immediately following OSU's scoring drive to retake the lead, 10-7, in the fourth quarter. The Panthers were steadily crossing the field as they had been doing all evening. Then, with Pitt on the Buckeye 47, Congemi faded and passed to Scales, who was waiting on the left sideline. Suddenly, White stepped in front of Scales and picked off the aerial.

Another Panther drive was stopped, as others had been, by a key Ohio State defensive performance.

"William White made the one big play that really made it possible to win that game when he intercepted the ball," remarked Buckeye boss Earle Bruce.

"It was the last minute-and-a-half of the game and we were in a prevent zone," White recalled. "I was in a deep coverage. I just saw the quarterback's shoulders and his whole motion and I just had a good break on the ball.

"I had to redeem myself. I wanted a big play to happen, because the (Pitt) touchdown was on me."

White had been in on another big play earlier in the game. During the Panthers' first possession of the night, after Pitt had moved down to the OSU 23, Buckeye safety Terry White forced Panther tailback Charles Gladman to fumble the ball. It was recovered a second later by William White at the OSU nine.

"Basically, I was just running to the ball, in good pursuit," said White. "Terry had a good hit on the guy and the ball bounced out. I saw

the ball rolling and I ran to it. When I saw the ball, there wasn't anything getting in my way to stop me."

But the biggest moment of the night for him was the interception.

"There was a lot of excitement," he smiled. "(Linebacker) Pepper (Johnson) came over and started hugging me and telling me he loved me. That made me feel good to know that."

For the sophomore, the first game of the season was a lot different from his first college game a year before.

"Last year, I was very nervous," he said. "That was my first time running out in the Horseshoe. My legs were shaking and everything. This year, I was more relaxed and more confident in myself. I felt I played a pretty good game."

The other members of the Ohio State defense played well, also.

"We have more experience on defense, so the defense is going to carry us until the offensive line comes through," said White. "Hopefully, the offense will improve as well as the defense and come together as a team."

The win, achieved without the services of tailback Keith Byars, was a great confidence-booster for the entire squad, according to White.

"That helps out tremendously," he said, "because with Keith, more points would definitely be on the scoreboard. Pitt's a great football team, and if we can beat Pitt, when Keith comes back, that's going to help our team just that much more."

"We can't do anything but improve. We opened up (facing) a great quarterback and a nice offensive team and we stopped them and held them to only seven points. If we keep practicing hard, we will improve and be better and we will build on that victory."



William White After Fourth-Quarter Theft

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White Has Come Far Since First Summer

By Steve Burkley

When William White entered the Ohio State football scene four summers ago as a freshman out of Lima, Ohio, he brought along with him some modest expectations.

"Four years ago at this time I was in awe of everything here," said White, who starred for the football and basketball teams at Lima Senior High. "All I wanted to do was make the traveling squad that first year."

"I think I've been fortunate."

White, 21, did more than make the Buckeyes' traveling squad that first season. He did much more.

"I got to start the first game," he pointed out.

Since then White has played in 35 games during his three years at Ohio State, all as a starter, though he missed two games last year because of an ankle injury.

"Most guys are done with their careers after that many games," defensive backfield coach Chuck Heater said of White. "He should be a dominant force out there for us. By repetition alone, he should be an improved player."

White has come a long way since his first start, a 22-14 win over Oregon State.

"I was very nervous before that game," he said. "But after that first hit everything was fine. That first hit settled me down. I made 10 tackles which is the most I've ever had in a game. I was a freshman and the new boy out there, so they really ran it at me and tested me."

"I guess I was at the right place at the right time," said White, recalling the opportunity to immediately jump into a starting position. "And I guess the coaches liked what they saw of me."

The coaching staff has continued to appreciate what White has meant to a defense that led the Big Ten in the fewest points allowed last season.

"He's a smart player. He studies films and he prepares himself for each opponent," Heater said.

The coaches have demonstrated their confidence in White by playing him at the open side cornerback position. The players showed their faith by voting White one of the Buckeyes' four captains this year.

"We have William playing the open end of the field which means he has no help back there," Heater said. "You play your best player back there. William has been back there all three years."

White responded by making 38 tackles last year and 137 over the past three seasons. He has also played the pass well, intercepting 11 of them during his career, including a personal high six as a sophomore.

His career stats also include one touchdown (as a freshman), 14 pass deflections and six fumble recoveries.

White is taking the honor of being captain along with Chris Spielman, Eric Kumerow and Tom Tupa, in stride, saying he's not the rah-rah type that captains are often perceived as being.

"I'm not going around boasting about it," he pointed out. "The way I feel about it, if someone needs advice, then he'll come to me. I think the players feel I lead by example. I'm not one to hoot and holler. I'm going to lead as I know how. I get excited but I like to have fun. So when I do holler, I also like to laugh a little."

That doesn't mean White won't jump on a teammate if he feels it's necessary.

"I'll kick somebody in the rear if needed," he added. "It's an honor being voted captain of the Ohio State football team. It feels a little bit better that the players on the team picked me rather than the coaches. It always means more when your peers have that kind of faith in you."

White has improved his game to where he no longer just knows his role in the Buckeyes' defensive schemes, but also where his teammates belong.

"My freshman year, I knew what I was supposed to do at the corner. Then as I got more experience, I knew the whole defensive backfield and what each player was supposed to do each play. Then last year, I knew the concept of the whole defense," White explained.

"I'll never know everything. That's why coaches are always out there, so you can still keep learning. I'm always working on the little things. I can still get better at some of the little things, things that the people in the stands don't always see."

White is joined in the backfield by fellow fourth-year starting cornerback Greg Rogan. Sophomore David Brown is back to start his second year at safety with senior Ray Jackson, a backup last fall, slated to start at rover.

White, 5-10 and 192 pounds, is a big part of the Buckeyes' highly-regarded defense, though he may not participate in as many plays as linebackers Spielman or Kumerow.

"His position, by nature, is one where he's not involved in that many plays," explained Heater. "There might be 80 plays in a normal college football game and he might be asked to make five plays. So for William, he's in a position where he has to make those four or five plays each game. We've come to expect a lot from him."

Part of White's responsibility as captain is to make sure the Buckeyes' high preseason rankings don't go to the players' heads.

"The way I feel, preseason rankings mean nothing," he said. "We have the talent, but we haven't won a game yet. It's where we are at the end of the season that counts. That's what matters to me."

"If we take it one game at a time and



This Is William White's Fourth Year As Starter

let the chips fall where they may, we'll be all right. There are a lot of things we don't have any control over. What we do have destiny over is winning the Big Ten and then winning the Rose Bowl. I feel if we're 12-0 then we should be the national champs."

White, who also excels in the

classroom as an honor student in mechanical engineering, says it's time to forget the preseason hype and prepare for the Sept. 12 season opener against West Virginia.

"Now is the time to stop all the talking," he said, "and make that (talk) become a reality."

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MICHIGAN MEMORIES — WILLIAM WHITE

White Recalls Intensity Of Michigan Games

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Many Buckeyes can capsule their college football careers with one quick barometer: Michigan.

In the case of William White, standout defensive back from 1984-87, triumphant battles with the Maize and Blue at the beginning and end of his tenure represent the highest highs.

The lows, and everything else, sit in between.

"In '84, I was part of a great freshman class and that was just an enjoyable year," recalled White, now a safety for the Kansas City Chiefs. "I got to play all season and when we (the defense) were off the field, watching (Jim) Lachey and the boys block for Keith (Byars) was a thrill.

"My last year was kind of sentimental for me and Chris (Spielman) and (Tom) Tupa. That Michigan game was special, too."

White, an all-league performer as a senior, and fellow captains Spielman and Eric Kumerow led the '87 defense, which had become a maligned unit by the Michigan game. Breakdowns against Indiana and Wisconsin and a last-play touchdown the week before against Iowa had caused the ouster of head coach Earle Bruce.

Compound that with bitter losses to the Wolves the previous two years and it's easy to see why the Buckeyes were seething as they took the field at Michigan Stadium.

White Vs. Michigan

Won 2, Lost 2

- 1984 — Ohio State 21, Michigan 6
- 1985 — Michigan 27, Ohio State 17
- 1986 — Michigan 26, Ohio State 24
- 1987 — Ohio State 23, Michigan 20

"What's great about that game in '87 was they were supposed to kill us, just like we were supposed to win in '86," White said. "But in this rivalry it doesn't matter what the records are.

"I remember we were down at halftime and Jamie Morris already had like 110 yards (rushing). Spielman was throwing chairs around."

At game's end Morris had 130 yards and the Buckeyes, donning Earle headbands, rallied for a memorable 23-20 win.

Even with no rewarding bowl trip and an abrupt end to his college career, White walked off the UM field with a sense of satisfaction. In his last visit ('85) OSU had worked back into the game in the fourth quarter and then White was burned by young wideout John Kolesar and quarterback Jim Harbaugh for a 77-yard game-clinching TD in a 27-17 UM victory.

"He was supposed to run a curl route and didn't," White said like it happened hours ago. "I was supposed to sit down and time my release, but he went 15 yards and kept going. Sonny (Gordon) blitzed on that play and if Harbaugh had held that ball another tenth of a second it would have been a sack.

"Believe me, I'm reminded of that play



STEVE HELMAGEN

WHITE KNOWS MICHIGAN — Former OSU defensive back William White (left), pictured with Archie Griffin at an OSU game last season, started for the Buckeyes for four years from 1984 to '87. In that stretch, OSU was 2-2 in games against Michigan.

all the time."

The following year, OSU hosted the Wolves with a chance to advance to the Rose Bowl, but again it wasn't meant to be as Harbaugh, Morris and company eked out a 26-24 upset.

"I remember certain things about that game," White said. "Cris (Carter) made an unbelievable catch in the end zone and when our defense came out Harbaugh acted like he couldn't hear — we even had a penalty called on us. I guess they were surprised our fans actually made noise as compared to that dead, stale Michigan Stadium."

When OSU kicker Matt Frantz narrowly missed a game-winning field goal, White was in disbelief. It wasn't supposed to happen this way. In his rookie year of 1984 he had recovered an onside kickoff in a rous 21-6 win over Michigan.

"The thing I remember about '84," White said, "was that year we did all the things you come to OSU to do: We beat Michigan, we were Big Ten champs and we played in the Rose Bowl. After that, you thought it was going to be easy, but we never did all that again."

Still, White looks back with great fondness and little regret. He was a standout two-way player at Lima (Ohio) Senior High School who had pared his list of schools to Ohio State and Michigan. A fateful phone call from a former coach ensued.

"My dad talked to Woody (Hayes) and he pretty much made up my mind for me. That was it," White said. "But I probably knew all along I was going to go there anyway."

Looking back now, it's a little bit funny White even considered UM. Few players have bought into the honor and tradition of being a Buckeye more than White, who has run several summer camps at the school with Carter, his business partner and close friend.

"It's not really a hate when you play Michigan. It's an intense rivalry, a respect," he said. "You don't really root for them to do well, but you want that game to mean something — and it always did."

"It's just smash mouth, snot-running-out-your-nose football — the way it's supposed to be."

Even with the battles in his past, White still points to the Big Ten finale every year: Last season, OSU not only lost an unbeaten season by falling to the Wolverines, White lost a humiliating bet. Chiefs teammates Trezelle Jenkins and Derrick Walker, a pair of UM grads, were to wear OSU sweatshirts for a full week had the Buckeyes won. Because they didn't.

"I had to wear (Michigan) shirts, caps, all kinds of stuff. You can imagine my embarrassment," said the ninth-year pro.

But this year White plans to return the favor: "Once you're a Buckeye it's ingrained in your blood."

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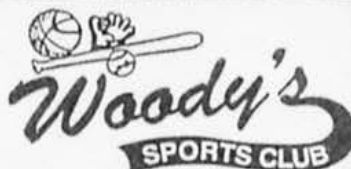
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