Springing Into Action
Ohio State Begins Spring Practice
Turner Becomes First Buckeye To Win Naismith

Evan Turner was unable to guide the Ohio State men’s basketball team to Indianapolis for the Final Four, but the junior standout did manage to make history in the Circle City.

Turner was in Indiana’s capital April 3 and added another accolade to his long list of 2009-10 season honors when he won the 2010 Naismith Trophy awarded by the Atlanta Tipoff Club. Turner accepted the trophy at the NABC Guardians of the Game awards program at the Murat Theatre.

The Chicago native is the fourth Big Ten player to win the Naismith Trophy and the first from Ohio State. He joins Glen Robinson of Purdue (1994), Calbert Cheaney of Indiana (1993) and Scott May of Indiana (1976) as Big Ten Naismith winners.

The other finalists for the 2010 Naismith were Kansas point guard Sherron Collins, Syracuse forward Wes Johnson, and Duke guard Jon Scheyer.

“As the first Buckeye to win the award, I’m thrilled to represent Ohio State University. I hope this is just the beginning of great things to come for our program. I want to thank head coach Thad Matta and our coaching staff. His work ethic and character, which is extraordinary, but more so because of what he meant to his teammates and our coaching staff. His work ethic and example he set for his teammates and future Buckeyes are unmatched.”

“I congratulate Evan for winning the Naismith National Player of the Year honor for 2010. He and his family deserve this recognition for all the efforts spent toward earning this individual accomplishment.”

This season Turner led the Buckeyes to a 29-8 record, a share of the Big Ten regular-season championship and the title in the conference tournament.

The 6-7 junior led the conference in scoring (20.4) and rebounding (9.2) and also averaged 2.0 steals and 5.9 assists per game. He concluded his third year in scarlet and gray 15th on the school’s career scoring list, 13th in career rebounds, seventh in assists and third in steals.

“I’m honored to be recognized for this award,” Turner said. “Though this is an individual honor, I’m thrilled to represent my family, my teammates, coaches and the Ohio State University.

“As the first Buckeye to win the award, to have my name listed with some of the greats of the game like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (Lew Alcindor), Bill Walton, Larry Bird and Michael Jordan is incredible. I appreciate those who voted for me and am just really excited to be associated with this award.”

Turner also picked up the National Association of Basketball Coaches Division I Player of the Year honor at the Guards of the Game program.

Previously this year, Turner was named Big Ten Player of the Year and earned national player of the year recognition from The Sporting News, The Associated Press and the United States Basketball Writers Association.

Lavender, Prahalis Earn National Recognition

Turner was not the only Ohio State basketball star to earn postseason honors. Women’s basketball junior center Jantel Lavender and sophomore guard Samantha Prahalis were honored April 3 by the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) when the NCAA Division I Coaches’ All-America team was unveiled.

Lavender was named a first-team All-American, and Prahalis earned an honorable mention. The duo earned the same honors from the Associated Press on March 30.

Lavender, a junior from Cleveland who was also an All-American last season, joined Tracey Hall (1987, ’88), Katie Smith (1993, ’96) and Jessica Davenport (2005, ’06, ’07) as Buckeyes to earn the honor multiple times.

Lavender, the reigning and three-time Big Ten Player of the Year, averaged 21.4 points and 10.3 rebounds per game and shot 51.4 percent from the field during the 2009-10 season. She led the Buckeyes to a program-record 31 victories and was the Big Ten tournament most outstanding player after setting a tourney title-game record with 35 points in a 66-64 win against Iowa. Lavender reached the 2,000-point mark this season and is one of 12 finalists for the Wade Trophy, given to the nation’s best women’s college basketball player.

Prahalis was an unanimous first-team All-Big Ten selection this season after averaging 16.3 points and 8.0 assists per game, the latter mark ranking second in the country. She set a conference record with 289 assists and is one of eight finalists for the Nancy Lieberman Award, given to the nation’s best point guard. Prahalis also set a school record with 48 straight made free throws and recorded nine double-doubles.

Sullinger Overcomes Illness, Wins All-American Game MVP

An upset stomach was not going to stop future Ohio State men’s basketball player Jared Sullinger from playing in the McDonald’s All-American Game — in his hometown no less.

The Ohio State signee came down with stomach sickness on the eve of the game that cast his status in doubt, but after shaking off the quasiness, Sullinger started for the East squad in Value City Arena and captured the team’s most valuable player honor in a 107-104 loss.

“I don’t know what got into me,” he said after the game. “I just got so excited.”

Sullinger finished with a game-high 22 points on 7-for-11 shooting and added seven rebounds in a game-high 24 minutes of action.

He was joined as a starter on the East squad by future Buckeye teammate DeShaun Thomas. Thomas, a Fort Wayne (Ind.) Bishop Luers athlete, struggled to find his shot from behind the arc, missing all five of his attempts, but finished with 11 points, seven boards and three assists in 22 minutes.

“There was a little bit of pressure,” Thomas said. “The jumper wasn’t falling, but I stayed with it and showed off a little bit at the end. I think I played hard and showed them who I was.”

The event resembled a party for Sullinger at times. He was playing on his future college court, and plenty of locals came out to get a glimpse of the future Buckeye. His introduction before the game generated the loudest response, and he was a runaway choice for his team’s most valuable player award in the fan voting posted on the scoreboard.

“Jared’s a phenomenal player, and for this to be at his school I can’t imagine what kind of joy it was for him to play in front of the city of Columbus,” said West forward Harrison Barnes, who captured his team’s most valuable player award after putting up 18 points.

Sullinger and Thomas might have work to do before they become Buckeyes, however. Asked if he is academically qualified to do before they become Buckeyes, however. Asked if he is academically qualified to do, Thomas said, “I don’t know yet. I’ll have to get back to you on that.”

Sullinger said he needs to improve his ACT score but added he does not have a set goal.

As for Thomas, he said he will retake the ACT with the goal of improving his score one point to a 17.
Buckeyes Lead Academic All-Big Ten Selections

The Ohio State men’s swimming and diving team won the Big Ten championship meet in February, and its efforts in the classroom helped OSU garner the most winter Academic All-Big Ten selections as well, with 27 members of the squad among Ohio State’s 65 honorees.

Sixteen members of the women’s swimming and diving team made up the second-largest contingent from Ohio State. Student athletes from the wrestling (seven), men’s gymnastics (five), women’s basketball (four), men’s basketball (three) and women’s gymnastics (three) teams also were honored.

In all, 539 student-athletes from seven conference sports made the team. To make the squad, student-athletes must be letter winners who are in at least their second academic year at their institution and carry a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.

One Buckeye posted a perfect 4.0 grade point average - men’s basketball player Kyle Madsen.

The Ohio State members of the 2010 winter Academic All-Big Ten team are as follows:

- **Men’s basketball:** Kyle Madsen, Grad., sports management; Danny Peters, Sr., special education; Zisis Sarikopoulos, Jr., family resource management.
- **Women’s basketball:** Brittany Johnson, Jr., sport and leisure studies; Maria Moeller, Sr., consumer and family financial services; Sarah Schulze, Jr., comparative studies; Amber Stokes, Soph., criminology.
- **Men’s gymnastics:** Michael Bell, Sr., civil engineering; Justin Myers, Sr., psychology; Matt Rayl, Soph., business; Shachar Tal, Sr., business; Brandon Wynn, Jr., family resource management.
- **Women’s gymnastics:** Rebecca Best, Jr., textiles and clothing; Hillary Dow, Sr., exercise science; Nicole Krauter, Soph., exploration.
- **Men’s swimming and diving:** Andrew Bretscher, Sr., parks and recreation and tourism administration; Itai Chammah, Jr., marketing; Alex Chen, Sr., aeronautical and astronautical engineering; Duncan De Wet, Sr., finance; Joel Elber, Sr., exercise science; Andrew Elliott, Soph., finance; Lincoln Fahrbach, Soph., exploring; Justin Farra, Jr., political science; Brent Hitchcock, Soph., molecular genetics; Michael Hulme, Jr., international studies; Ryan Jefferson, Sr., exercise science; Elliott Keefer, Jr., history; Daniel Malnik, Sr., finance; George Markovic, Sr., finance; Austin Mudd, Soph., molecular genetics; Mark Neiman, Sr., operations management; Mark Nicholson, So., pre-industrial design; Tom O’Neill, Jr., finance; Sam Pelkey, Sr., biology; Niksa Roki, Sr., biology; Stephen Sakaris, Soph., psychology; Ben Savonen, Jr., mechanical engineering; Markus Sievers, Soph., electrical engineering; Stefan Sigrist, Sr., political science; Alex Smit, Soph., finance; Steven Springer, Soph., pre-business; Weston Wieser, Sr., computer science and engineering.
- **Women’s swimming and diving:** Megan Alexander, Sr., human development and family studies; Bianca Alvarez, Jr., molecular genetics; Kristen Asman, Jr., exercise science; Farriss Blaskovits, Sr., biology; Samantha Cheverton, Jr., psychology; Chelsea Davis, Sr., health and wellness; Catherine Eitel, Soph., biology; Erin Fawley, Soph., human nutrition; Shelby Gordon, Jr., business marketing; Jill Lockhart, Sr., communication; Morgan Menzie, Jr., animal science; Haley Mitchell, Sr., business marketing; Lisa Narum, Soph., fashion and retail studies; Sarah Ratica, Sr., health science; Colleen Schweitzer, Sr., health science; MaryAnn Wiser, Sr., speech and hearing science.
- **Wrestling:** Pat Harrington, Jr., economics; Brian Kelly, Soph., undeclared; Jared Kusar, Soph., molecular genetics; C.J. Magrum, Soph., undeclared; Corey Morrison, Grad., teaching and learning; Steve Ruthen, Soph., undeclared; Colt Sponseller, Jr., business marketing.

“I’m fully academically qualified,” he said. “I’m going to take the ACT. I only need one more point. I just made the honor roll.”

Sullinger and Thomas took the court with a number of members of the OSU squad in attendance. Turner, William Buford, David Lighty and P.J. Hill were all on hand for the game seated throughout Value City Arena.

The West took home the victory when Brandon Knight - an undecided guard from Coral Springs (Fla.) Pine Crest - drilled a three-pointer from the right wing in the closing seconds. Sullinger had one final look at the basket, but his heave from beyond half court was off target.

Despite the loss, the evening remained a dream come true for Sullinger. “I still think I’m in a dream,” he said. “I have to pinch myself to see if I’m up. To get my MVP in Columbus is just amazing.”

“I need one more point. I just made the honor roll,” he added. “I’m fully academically qualified,” he said. “I’m going to take the ACT. I only need one more point. I just made the honor roll.”

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Contenders Line Up For Left Tackle Battle

By Marcus Hartman

With experienced players returning at quarterback, running back, wide receiver and the interior of the line, the offensive positions under the most scrutiny during Ohio State’s 15 spring football practices are not hard to discern.

Fans are curious to see who will win the vacant left tackle spot, and they would not mind finding out if this is the year the tight end becomes a consistent pass-catching threat in the Ohio State offense for the first time since 2003.

As far as the former situation, offensive coordinator and line coach Jim Bollman made clear there should be no shortage of competition this April.

Senior Andrew Miller, juniors Mike Adams and J.B. Shugarts and sophomore Marcus Hall all figure to get long looks at the two offensive tackle spots.

“We’ll just keep rolling those guys through out there until we feel like we’re settled, but it’s nice that we have four guys that have some experience,” Bollman said. “We’ll see how things evolve. There are four guys that will play at left tackle before the spring is over.”

Adams got the initial crack at reps with the first team when spring practice began April 1 while Miller took over the next day.

Shugarts played right tackle with the first team both days, while Hall was a member of the second team both days. The youngest member of the battle spent most of his time at right tackle on day one before shifting to the left side on day two while Adams held down the right side.

By the looks of things, all have the size, strength and quickness to fill the roles, and none is exactly a newbie, something Bollman appreciates.

“It’s evident that there are seven guys who have experience,” he said, referring also to the starting inside trio of center Michael Brewster and guards Justin Boren and Bryant Browning. “And then you have a couple of guys that we redshirted that have some potential, so we could have a chance barring injury to have a little bit of depth.”

Miller is taking part in his fourth spring practice while Adams and Shugarts are in their third. Hall first hit campus last summer, but he benefitted from a few brief appearances with the starters in games during his true freshman season.

Shugarts started 10 games at right tackle last season and is viewed by many as a lock to remain there unless he turns out to be the best option at left tackle. Hall got his feet wet in the second half of the season, including a start during which he played two series against Iowa, while playing mostly at right tackle.

Although both Shugarts and Hall saw most of their experience on the right side last year, Bollman confirmed they are in the left tackle derby this year.

“If they fall on their face, we’ll put them back at right, but if they hang in there and do a good job, you never know,” Bollman said. “You never know who’s going to be the best guy until you try him.”

Miller started the 2009 season as the left tackle but was supplanted by Adams in week four before bad luck on the health side of things soon knocked both out.

Miller fell ill and missed three games while Adams suffered a knee injury and did not play in the last six games of the season.

In the meantime, now-graduated senior Jim Cordle took hold of the left tackle spot for the last six games of the 2009 season. Once he did so, he played well enough to earn a share of the team’s offensive lineman of the year award.

Shugarts and Adams were both five-star recruits in the class of 2008, and with Shugarts viewed as the incumbent at right tackle unless he opens eyes on the left side, the majority of attention from fans and media has focused on Adams, a 6-8, 300-pounder from Dublin, Ohio, whom Bollman gave early high marks.

“He’s doing well,” the coach said. “He’s had a good winter. He’s really worked at getting strong, which will have a direct correlation to how much he improves.”

Adams’ offseason work also caught the eye of Browning, a fifth-year senior who figures to become a three-year starter this fall.

“Mike started the offseason working hard in the weight room and in the film room,” Browning said. “Now I feel this is his time to show what he can do. He’s doing a great job.”

The starting right guard added that who ends up playing to his right did not concern him greatly.

“I think with us having so many guys playing last year, when another guy comes in we can basically stay on the same page,” Browning said. “We can stay with the same calls and see the same things and stuff like that, so I feel we stay smooth no matter who is in there.”

Bollman said all four of the candidates for starting tackle spots can benefit from learning some of the same things.

“Body control – when you don’t have good body control you’re getting pulled all over the place,” the coach said. “Your center of gravity is too high, so you’ve got to have great strength and play lower. That’s not just (Adams), that’s the same with all those taller guys. J.B., Marcus, Andrew Miller – all those guys have got to do a better job of playing lower, getting their tails down there and playing powerfully and more consistently.”

No matter who wins the tackle spots, the interior of the line looks solid with seniors Boren and Browning along with Brewster, a junior who first entered the starting lineup early in his freshman season.

Having played a full season together, that group gives Bollman something on which to hang his hat.

“When you have those three guys with that kind of experience, that’s always a plus – no question,” said Bollman, who was sure to stress that he did not expect to come to
April 6, 2010

Football: Off. Line

any kind of final decision before the end of spring.

“I hope you guys know that we’re not afraid to play who we think is the best guy,” he said. “We’ve had walk-ons on the field. It doesn’t matter, so whoever shows. And it’s not just these 15 practices. We’ve got 29 more before we take the field (for a game), so hopefully by then we’ll know.

“What would be the really nice thing is if we can play eight or nine guys. That would really be nice, so we’ll see how close we can get to that.”

Tight Ends Earn Early Praise

A season ago, tight ends Jake Ballard and Jake Stoneburner combined to catch 16 passes for 180 yards, marking yet another season in which their position was a virtual afterthought in the Ohio State passing game.

Ballard is gone, but fans are hopeful Stoneburner and the other tight ends remaining on the roster will be utilized more as weapons.

Of course, before that can happen, sophomores Stoneburner, Reid Fragel and Nic DiLillo must prove they are capable of competently re-creating the blocking performances Ballard turned in down the stretch last season on his way to being named co-winner of Ohio State’s offensive lineman of the year award.

“Last year was simply about getting more familiar with what he was doing,” Bollman said of Stoneburner, a 6-5, 245-pound former wide receiver. “He has the physical ability to be a big contributor. That’s not hard for anybody to see, so keep learning it, keep doing what you need to do, and the better we will be.”

Some have pegged the 6-8, 260-pound Fragel as a candidate to move to the offensive line in the future, but he showed considerable quickness and smoothness of movement while running pass patterns during seven-on-seven drills and scrimmage time at the start of spring ball.

“He’s had a great offseason, but I’d like to think he will express himself more when we put pads on because he’s a big, physical guy who really has a chance to be a factor as a blocker there,” Bollman said.

In 2003, Ben Hartsock and Ryan Hamby combined to catch 51 passes for 480 yards, but only once in the past six years have Ohio State tight ends broken the 30-mark in receptions.

Another Competition

Cordle’s loss is being felt in two areas this spring.

As much as fans and media want to know who will play left tackle, Bollman seems just as concerned about who will back up Brewster.

The early candidates are redshirt freshmen Jack Mewhort and Corey Linsley.

Mewhort handled snapping for the second unit on day one before giving way to Linsley a day later.

“Those guys are going to be continually rolling again until we decide,” Bollman said. “I told them both no matter who is No. 2 and who is No. 3, they’ve both got to come out of here being able to operate the show.”

Additionally, veteran walk-on Scott Sika has helped the two learn the ropes.

“We’re very lucky that Scott Sika really is great knowledge-wise and can get in there and help the other guys,” Bollman said.

From the early looks of things, both Mewhort and Linsley have a good chance to put their names in the two-deep this fall no matter who wins the backup center battle.

When one played center, the other played right guard on the No. 2 unit at the start of spring ball as senior Connor Smith played left guard.

WHO’S NO. 2? - Redshirt freshmen Jack Mewhort (74) and Corey Linsley (71) have both handled snapping duties with the second-string offensive line during the first two days of spring practice.
Defensive Line Changes Have Not Changed Goals

Some of the names have changed, but the plan remains the same for Ohio State's defensive line.

As the Buckeyes go through spring workouts, the front four that controlled the line of scrimmage and set the tone for last year's stout defensive unit will attempt to reload with a few familiar faces. Gone are four seniors and one junior, a group that included at least two starters in every game last season.

The cupboard is far from bare in Columbus, but defensive coordinator and line coach Jim Heacock could tell that things felt differently than they did a year ago.

“We've got some experience, but the depth is going to be critical,” he said. “The young guys are going to have to really come on fast. They've got to learn a lot, they've got to learn the defense. We were fortunate last year that we had a lot of older guys in the two-deep and they could just run out there and run the defense.

“Today was a little bit more work for me trying to get them lined up.”

The Elder Statesmen

Three seniors will help to anchor this year's defensive line, but the leader among them figures to be one who by most accounts does not have to be on the roster.

That would be Cameron Heyward, a lineman who had the option of leaving after his junior season to head for the NFL but instead opted to return. Listed at 6-5, 288 pounds, Heyward will continue to line up at both end and tackle.

“I'm definitely happy with how I've done so far, but I'm not satisfied,” he said. “I still want a national championship. I think everybody on this team does. We've been there two times before, but there's still a lot to accomplish for this team.”

Heyward started all but one game for the Buckeyes last season and was the team's most prolific lineman with 46 tackles including 10 for loss and 6.5 sacks. He earned second-team all-Big Ten honors for his efforts.

“Cam's done a good job of playing hard and doing all those things,” Heacock said. “He realizes with all the seniors gone, now it's his turn. He's got to step up and do the things that Coach Tressel expects him to do. He's done a good job.”

As he continued his line of thought, Heacock went on to talk about another senior in Dexter Larimore. The 6-2, 310-pound tackle was limited to 10 games last season due to injury but came up with 20 tackles.

“I think Dex is ready,” Heacock said. “Dex has had a couple of tough years physically and had some injuries and surgeries. I think he's looking forward to being healthy and getting out there to play.”

Larimore's presence helped allow the Buckeyes to use what amounts to a 3-4 defense with him at the nose guard, two linemen at the ends and a fourth typically standing with his hand off the ground.

The latter role primarily belonged to Thaddeus Gibson last season, as the junior racked up 45 tackles including a team-high 13 for loss and four sacks.

“I don't know that you can replace a guy like Thaddeus,” head coach Jim Tressel said. “You can put a guy at that spot, but it remains to be seen if we'll have the production there.”

To replace Gibson, Heacock said he views the position right now as being split between juniors Nathan Williams and Solomon Thomas. Thomas had six tackles in limited action last season, while Williams played in all 13 games including one start and had 26 tackles including eight for loss and 3.5 sacks.

“Both of them had really good off-seasons,” Heacock said of Thomas and Williams. “Thaddeus is gone, so they see an opportunity and they're giving good effort and there's good competition there. If one lets down, we can always put the other one at the other end spot.”

Along with Gibson, the Buckeyes will have to replace four seniors who were in the two-deep last season in Doug Worthington, Todd Denlinger, Rob Rose and Lawrence Wilson.

Together, those five linemen com-
bined for 136 tackles, 28 tackles for loss and 12 sacks.

“You look at Thaddeus and Lawrence and all those seniors and take their reps out and take their sacks out and their tackles for loss out, we’ve taken a lot of production out of that defensive line,” Heacock said. “Now who’s going to step up? Somebody’s got to take their places as far as the production.”

In the early going of spring, Heacock said he was looking at a starting four that included Heyward, Larimore, Williams and sophmore John Simon. As a true freshman, Simon worked his way into the two-deep and finished with 16 tackles – 3.5 for loss – and 1.5 sacks.

A natural tackle at 6-2, 270 pounds, Simon was listed by Heacock as an end and ready to step up. Sophomore John Simon with Simon.

“He’s a young guy who has learned a lot,” Browning said. “He’s really quick and really strong. He’s just hungry, always trying to get to the ball. He’s got a motor that goes 100 percent all the time. He’s real active.”

Asked if he likes a starting four that includes Heyward, Larimore, Simon and Williams, Heacock said, “I think there’s some potential. Those guys all had reps last year with Cameron. Nate’s been playing for two years even though he’s backed up Thad. He’s played a ton these last two years and Simon played a lot last year and really came on. He’s had an unbelievably good offseason.”

The New Faces
Finding four starters is just half of Heacock’s goal, however. Last year’s unit was among the nation’s best because the Buckeyes were able to liberally rotate at least four more players in throughout the game to keep fresh legs on the field.

The results speak for themselves. Ohio State finished fifth in the nation in total defense (262.31 yards per game) and pass efficiency defense (95.52) and seventh in rushing defense (90.77 yards per game).

It was a unit that Heacock said was different than the others he has captained during his tenure at OSU.

“Last year was the first time I said we had so much depth,” he said. “Last year we had three senior backups. Previous to that, it’s always been more like it is now where you have four starters who have some pretty good reps and then one or two backups who have gotten some reps and then some young guys who have to step up.

“You want to keep that going. Last year was unique in that we had so many with Lawrence being back and Rob Rose and Todd Denlinger.”

Their loss means a few new faces could creep into the picture.

“We’ve got some good young guys,” Heacock said. “Melvin Fellows is another guy that came in highly touted and hasn’t had a chance to do much but now he’s doing pretty well. I thought he looked pretty good out there today for a young guy.”

Fellows was a five-star prospect who took a redshirt last season after undergoing surgery before his freshman season. He finished his prep career at Garfield Heights, Ohio, with a school-record 51 tackles for loss and 24 sacks.

Although he will be a junior this season, Thomas falls into this category as well. The former four-star prospect has seen action in 12 games, recording nine tackles while seeing duty on special teams.

Inside, sophomore Garrett Goebel saw action in 10 games as a redshirt freshman and recorded his first tackle for loss. The Buckeyes are also hoping redshirt freshman Adam Bellamy can make an impact this season. Bellamy spent the season learning the position after playing on both sides of the ball during his prep career.

“As far as the backups, Garrett Goebel has to step up for us,” Heacock said. “He’s got to fit into one of those spots. I think Adam Bellamy is a young guy at 295 pounds that ran really well in the offseason. We’re counting on him.”

This summer, the Buckeyes will also welcome in three freshmen in Johnathan Hankins (tackle), Darryl Baldwin (end) and J.T. Moore (end).

From what he has seen so far, Heacock likes the potential of the players on the roster.

“We’ve got a great young group with a great attitude,” he said. “They’ve had it all offseason. We’ve just got to find who our top eight people are because we’re obviously going to roll guys through and get eight guys playing. We have to find out who they are.”

**Spring Football Depth Chart: Defensive Line**
*(Based on the April 1 & 2 open practices)*

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<th>DE/Leo</th>
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<td>John Simon</td>
<td>Dexter Larimore</td>
<td>Cameron Heyward</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. 2s</td>
<td>Solomon Thomas *</td>
<td>Garrett Goebel</td>
<td>Adam Bellamy</td>
<td>Keith Wells</td>
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* – Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Heacock said Williams and Thomas will battle for the No. 1 Leo spot.

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This summer, the Buckeyes will also welcome in three freshmen in Johnathan Hankins (tackle), Darryl Baldwin (end) and J.T. Moore (end).

From what he has seen so far, Heacock likes the potential of the players on the roster.

“We’ve got a great young group with a great attitude,” he said. “They’ve had it all offseason. We’ve just got to find who our top eight people are because we’re obviously going to roll guys through and get eight guys playing. We have to find out who they are.”

**Adam Bellamy**

**Ready to Step Up - Sophomore John Simon (54) made an impact during his freshman year and will likely be a starter on the defensive line in 2010.**
Another Ohio Offensive Lineman Gives OSU Verbal

By Adam Jardy

Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel accepted his sixth verbal commitment in less than three weeks when Akron Firestone two-way lineman Tommy Brown joined the class of 2011.

Entering the weekend, Brown held scholarship offers from the likes of Michigan State, West Virginia, Ohio and Toledo but he did not have one from the Buckeyes. After taking in a spring practice April 3, the 6-5, 300-pound Brown was summoned to Tressel’s office.

“He took over from there and told me I was offered,” Brown told Scout.com Midwest regional manager Allen Trieu. “Then I told them basically I’m coming and be prepared.”

Brown was accompanied on the trip by his parents, who were moved by his decision.

“It feels good to be committed,” he said. “It’s been a long road, but I made it. My mom and my dad … weren’t surprised at all. I’ve been talking about committing for forever. My mom was teary-eyed.”

Although he lines up at both offensive and defensive tackle for the Falcons, Brown said the Buckeyes see him as an offensive player at Ohio State.

“They said I have great athleticism, but anyone can have athleticism,” he said. “They said I have great work ethic too, a great personality and I’m an all-around great person.”

The OSU offer came in spite of the fact that Brown missed the final five games of his junior season after suffering a strained knee. Prior to his commitment, Brown had taken in a junior day with the Buckeyes and said that he spoke with OSU offensive line coach Jim Bollman on a weekly basis.

Brown, like the five previous verbal commitments for the class, is an unranked prospect according to Scout.com.

After sitting at two verbal commitments for 4½ months, the Buckeyes snagged five in 48 hours starting March 15 with Cleveland John F. Kennedy offensive lineman Antonio Underwood. He was joined that day by Shaker Heights, Ohio, offensive lineman Chris Carter. He was joined that day by his parents, who were moved by his decision.

“My mom and my dad … weren’t surprised at all. I’ve been talking about committing for forever. My mom was teary-eyed.”

The following day, three more recruits offered their verbal commitments: Toledo Rogers cornerback DerJuan Gambrell, Palatine (Ill.) Fremd center Brian Bobek and Elyria, Ohio, defensive tackle Chase Farris.

As a result, the Buckeyes sit with eight verbal commitments in a class that figures to max out around 20.

Former OSU Recruit Dies

Former Ohio State recruit and 2010 Notre Dame signee Matt James fell off a fifth-floor hotel balcony April 2 in Panama City Beach, Fla., while on spring break and died. He was 17.

The 6-6, 291-pound offensive tackle was vacationing with about 40 fellow students from Cincinnati St. Xavier.

Alcohol was a factor, according to local police.

“It appears to be a tragic accident,” Panama City Beach police Maj. David Humphreys said. “Witneses and friends indicate he had become drunk and belligerent. He had leaned over the balcony rail, was shaking his finger at the people in the next room over. He fell over.”

In addition to the other students, James was accompanied by six adults on the trip. Humphreys said police are trying to ascertain where James and his friends acquired the alcohol.

The railing met regulation height standards, according to Humphreys.

“Matt was an outstanding young man with a wonderful family,” OSU coach Jim Tressel said. “The Buckeye family will be praying fervently for the Jameses and the entire St. X community.”

According to the medical examiner’s office in Panama City, James’ blood-alcohol level will not be known for about three months.

Once the news became public in Cincinnati, a few hundred students took part in an impromptu vigil outside the school.

James’ parents released a statement thanking those who had supported their son and expressed their condolences to the family.

“We would like to thank everyone for their prayers and support during this tragic time, particularly the family at St. X,” Jerry and Peggy James said. “Matt was a very special young man, and it is gratifying to us that you all could see that as well. We are touched by this outpouring of love.”

Tanner Visits Buckeyes

Ohio’s No. 9 overall prospect made an April 2 visit to watch the Buckeyes go through their second spring practice. While there, Ron Tanner spent time with Bobek and four-star cornerback prospect Doran Grant from Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary.

“It was great talking to the Ohio State coaches, too,” Tanner told BuckeyeSports.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene. “They’re a program I’m very high on, and it helps that they’re just minutes from my home.”

The 6-1, 190-pound athlete from Columbus Eastmoor has a return trip planned for April 6. He has recently visited Michigan State and is also aiming to check out Pittsburgh, Northwestern and possibly Michigan in the coming weeks.

In addition, Tanner has landed recent offers from Stanford and Arizona.

“I can’t decide on when I might get this done,” he said. “Sometimes I think it could be soon and other times I want to wait a little while longer, so I can’t really say. I really haven’t narrowed my list down yet, and I really don’t want to put out a favorite list right now. I want to be 100 percent sure before I make a commitment.”
Baseball Captures Home Opener, Big Ten Series

The Ohio State baseball team began the northern portion of the 2010 slate with a win in the home opener March 31 before beginning Big Ten play by taking two of three contests at Northwestern April 2-4.

Clear skies and 70-degree weather greeted Ohio State and 1,167 vocal fans in the lid lifter at Bill Davis Stadium, where the Buckeyes used a late rally to defeat Toledo by a 4-3 score. Michael Stephens doubled in Dan Burkhart in the eighth inning to tie the score at 3 before scoring the winning run on Ryan Dew’s RBI single.

“All I got on it was our defense was special,” head coach Bob Todd said. “I’m sure the players were looking forward to that.”

Cory Kovanda flew out to start the eighth, but Burkhart followed with a walk off Toledo ace reliever Matt Suschak.

Stephens came up next and drove a pitch off the center-field wall. Center fielder Chris Dudics tracked down the ball in time to have a play on Burkhart with a sacrifice fly. Rucinski started and gave up four runs – three earned – in 5 1/3 innings to fall to 3-1.

Ohio State (16-8, 2-1) made amends on getaway day with an 11-6 win over the Wildcats (7-20, 1-2). Every starter had a hit, with Hurley driving in four runs and Burkart three. Wolosiansky improved to 2-3 by giving up four runs - three earned - in five innings.

Blasi Gets Miami Extension To Rule Out OSU Move

One of the most intriguing names in the search for a new men’s hockey coach at Ohio State was that of Miami (Ohio) boss Enrico Blasi, but that option moved off the table on April 2 when Blasi signed a contract extension that will keep him in Oxford through the 2016-17 season.

Blasi’s extension also included increased financial compensation, though exact figures were not released by the school.

“Coach Blasi’s new contract exists because of the substantial financial contributions of a handful of alums,” athletic director Brad Bates said. “Their commitment to Miami, athletics and our hockey program ensures that the best college hockey coach in the country will continue to lead our program for many years to come.”

Blasi has spent 11 years at his alma mater, leading Miami to a 239-158-40 record, two Central Collegiate Hockey Association regular-season titles and five straight NCAA appearances. The RedHawks have qualified for the Frozen Four, set for April 8-10, this season for the second straight year.

There had been persistent rumors that mutual interest existed between Blasi, a four-time CCHA Coach of the Year, and Ohio State.

The OSU job posting to replace John Markell will remain open through April 11.

Wynn Leads Charge As OSU Hosts Gymnastics Meet

Ohio State gymnast Brandon Wynn left no doubt he’s the best performer on rings in the Big Ten.

The junior blew away the field as the Buckeyes hosted the Big Ten men’s gymnastics championships April 2-3, scoring 15.850 on the apparatus to win the individual conference title by more than half a point. Michigan’s Chris Cameron was next at 15.200. Wynn hasn’t been defeated all season in the event.

Wynn also took third in vault with a score of 16.000, earning his second career medal in that event. Those performances - as well as his third-place finish in the all-around event with a score of 87.700 - allowed him to be one of eight gymnasts named first-team All-Big Ten.

Pommel horse expert Ty Echard of Ohio State continued to show his postseason prowess. A year after taking third at the NCAA championships, the sophomore placed second in the Big Ten this time around with a score of 15.325. Illinois’ Dan Ribeiro won with a 15.625.

Echard earned second-team All-Big Ten, as did sophomore Philip Onorato by virtue of a second-place finish on vault. His score of 16.300 was a career high but not enough to top the 16.350 earned by Paul Ruggeri of Illinois. It was the second straight year Onorato was runner-up in the event at Big Tens.

Fifth-ranked Ohio State was fourth of six teams in the team standings with a score of 346.950. Third-ranked Illinois won with 359.700 points.
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