

*July 27, 2009*



An interview with:

## **OHIO STATE HEAD COACH JIM TRESSEL**

**JIM TRESSEL:** It's good to be back with all of you, and this always is kind of our time that we know it's time to go to work. Our coaches just came back from vacation, and hopefully they enjoyed some well-deserved time. I know our young people just finished a summer term and have a little bit of time off, and then they come back at it here in a week. We're ready to head into preseason.

It's an exciting time for us because it's probably the youngest group that I can remember that we've had. Twenty-eight seniors graduated and three juniors graduated. So spring practice was a lot of fun. It was one of those types of springs that you could really notice improvement because of how young we were and guys getting opportunities. So it's really an exciting time for us.

I'm sure our guys have worked hard this summer. I know they worked extremely hard in the spring, and I know they're anxious to get back at it on the 9th of August as we report.

We most certainly have to mature quickly because our September is an extraordinary one. We're going to have to be ready on September 5th to face Navy coming in. It's an exciting thing for us because we haven't had an academy in Ohio Stadium since about 1930. And it's really going to have some extra excitement and energy as the Naval Academy comes in with their unique style of play where they've led the nation in rushing the past four years, and they give you some problems that you probably haven't rehearsed against for many, many years.

And then Southern Cal comes in, and enough said there. A great football team.

Then we go up to Cleveland Stadium to play in the Browns' stadium, which will be exciting for our young people, to play in an NFL

stadium and play against the University of Toledo there.

And then we open the Big Ten with the University of Illinois. In my opinion, they may have as much or more talent than anyone in this league. I know they're going to be a very veteran team, very mature team. So that's going to be quite a September for us.

So we're going to need to have a heck of a preseason. We're going to need to grow very, very quickly. Unfortunately sometimes the only time you grow is through real experiences, so we're going to have to train and get ready for those real experiences, and then handle those bumps and ups and downs and so forth and see if we can become a good football team.

I think we have excellent leadership. We have 19 seniors that I think about 10 or 11 of them are fifth-year guys and may be taking on both some playing and leadership responsibilities that they haven't had, and they're excited to do that. We're looking forward to see where they can take us.

**Q. Terrelle Pryor was the first quarterback to start as a true freshman in over 30 years. How is he handling, I guess, the leadership role for playing nine games last year and then coming into this year?**

**JIM TRESSEL:** Yeah, I think the experiences Terrelle got this past fall were very, very valuable. I think they were tough. When you step in and you take over for a guy like Todd Boeckman who was our captain and who had done a lot of good things. I think that's a difficult assignment, and I thought he handled them well.

He has a real passion to do well. He wants to make sure he can do all that the team needs, and I thought for a freshman he was pretty careful with the football and grew to learn from every experience he had. There were some tough experiences along the way.

I thought his bowl preparation was very, very good, and then of course we're playing against a very good team in Texas. That was

another lesson that he had a chance to be a part of, and then I thought his preparation this spring was excellent. He's a guy that's passionate about being good. He's very serious about the game, studies the game extremely hard, loves to study film, loves to just be on his own with his DVDs and grow as a quarterback.

But not unlike our team, the maturity in September is going to be a great challenge. I think that will be a real plus for him to face the challenges that we have. But we feel real good about him.

**Q. Coach Zook and Illinois are going to play a schedule that are almost nontraditional by Big Ten standards because it goes later into the fall. Would you like to see more coaches in the league have the moxy to go out and play the Texas and USCs and during nonconference which could help down the road?**

JIM TRESSEL: I think any time you challenge yourself -- I'll answer the second one first. I think any time you challenge yourself it's a positive thing. But as I look at our conference's schedules, there are a heck of a lot of challenges on those schedules we all take very seriously representing one another and representing the conference.

But there's no doubt about it, when you're taken to your limit and then some, it can make you better.

As far as playing later and those kinds of things, you know, part of me is an old traditionalist that I always enjoyed Thanksgiving weekend because my dad was a football coach, and typically his season had just ended. We got to see him for the first time since the massive Ohio Conference media day that he would head out to, so that was a special time.

I also have an affinity for the fact that our players who really train all year-round in our conference setup, they have a chance to be home for an extended Thanksgiving weekend, which really there's nothing more important in any of our lives than our family and having the chance to be with them.

On the other side of things, certainly the arguments about the exposure later in the year with the Conference Championship games and all those kinds of things, I'm sure there's validity from that standpoint. As far as how many days you have in between games, you know,

the difference between 46 and 38 or something like that, I'm not sure it's that significant.

We've not felt in any of our Bowl situations that because we happen to have a lot of days in between -- I think when we played Miami back in '02 we might have had 43 days in between the end of the season and the championship game, and it worked out. Other times we've had 46 or 45 and maybe it didn't work out as well.

The whole picture is bigger than just football, whether it's the discussion of a 12th team or a Conference Championship or the calendars and all that. You know, we're on board with whatever is best for the conference, whatever is best for the institution, all the while keeping in mind what's best for the student-athlete and trying to make it as great an experience for everyone as we can.

Like any complicated matter it will continue to be discussed, and we'll come up with good solutions.

**Q. Could you talk about the state of the running back position and replacing Beanie Wells, what needs to happen there, and the role of Dan Herron and how he's developed?**

JIM TRESSEL: Well, it's difficult to replace a Beanie Wells. Beanie was an outstanding player, and he was the kind of guy that as the season went on or as the game went on, he got stronger and stronger. We used to talk about there was a cumulative effect when he carried the ball through the course of a game or through a season. So you can't replace exactly what he does or what he did.

We feel real good about Boom Herron. Danny Herron is a tough kid, a good ball carrier, excellent pass protector, is solid in the passing game. We'd like to think that Brandon Saine, another young man that had a real solid freshman year and then had some injuries this past year that kept him from being in the plan as much as we had anticipated, Brandon had a very good spring, as well, as did Danny.

He's the kind of guy that not only is he an excellent running back, but he's a real fine receiver and has tremendous speed. He owns the state 100-yard dash -- or I guess it's not 100 yards, it's 100 meters there in the state of Ohio at 220 pounds. Brandon, we would like to believe, will be a heck of a runner there.

We've got some other guys that

can maybe run the ball in different type scenarios than a traditional running back with some of our wide guys and our quarterback and those types of things.

But Danny Herron and Brandon Saine, it's their time to step up.

**Q. Often successful teams are copied, or you start seeing some of the schemes that maybe your team is using on other teams. In the case of Ohio State, have you seen that? Have you seen maybe some of your scheme or maybe a formation or some of the things that you guys have done successfully starting to pop up on other teams around the league?**

JIM TRESSEL: You know, I think one thing about us coaches is we all copy off each other. There's no doubt about it, that as we study all that film and we watch what someone does, you say, boy, that's a heck of an idea. And then you have to sort out is it a good idea because they happen to have the people that have those skills, or is it a good idea because it can cross over to some of the talents that our guys have.

You know, there are only so many ways you can line up 11 guys, and defenses around the country, I think, are doing them all, just about anything that you can possibly do. Offensively you have to have five of them. They're at No. 50 through 79. So there's only so many ways you can line up the other six.

I think we all do a good bit of all of them, and I think the secret to all the good teams is that they find out the things that their guys can do the best. Sometimes it's simply by their design and their experimenting and so forth, and sometimes it's by, ooh, look what this group is doing. I can see Terrelle Pryor doing that or I can see Boom Herron doing that or whomever. There's a little bit of it all.

The one thing that college football is great about is in the off-season you see teams getting together all the time and sharing ideas and sharing thoughts, and it's a little bit unusual that that's the way it is with all the sharing of information. But that's how we all get better.

**Q. A couple of the coaches basically indicated that you guys have actually talked about a little bit of the perception situation out there about the Big Ten right now from maybe a little bit of an inferior complex situation or something like that. What is your feeling about that, and do you feel the worm is turning?**

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JIM TRESSEL: Well, we spend time in meetings, whether it was our meeting at the national coaches' convention that we met as a conference or the meetings in May, and we always talk about how we can get better. I mean, that's -- even after the years where we might be 5 and 2 in bowls, you're sitting there talking about, How can we get better? This year we were 1 and 6, and maybe that discussion gets even more impactful or whatever.

But that's an ongoing thing that we talk about. I don't know that anyone in this conference has an inferiority complex. If you watch ball games, our guys will play toe to toe with anyone. If you watch the NFL draft, they'll get selected at the regularity of almost every conference.

But it is something that, as I mentioned earlier, we take very, very serious, that every time we line up outside our conference, obviously we're representing ourselves and our institution, but we're representing this league. That's important to us.

When those bowl games are going on, we're rooting like crazy. That's something that's very, very important.

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J. Tressel - 07.27.09

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