

February 1, 2012



An interview with:

**COACH URBAN MEYER
COACH LUKE FICKELL
COACH TIM HINTON**

COACH MEYER: Hi guys, thanks for coming. Obviously a great day for Ohio State, great day for our coaching staff and I appreciate you guys being here with us to enjoy this. Before we get going just like to thank our coaching staff this is a, I keep hearing Top 5, Top 3, Top 2 that doesn't mean a whole lot to me personally or really at the end of the day it's what happens two to three years from now. However, I'm very pleased with the work ethic our guys showed, very impressive to pull that class together. Luke Fickell, Mike Vrable and Stan Drayton did a great job assisting us in the transition, no agenda, very selfless approach to being able to close this kind of recruiting class with such short notice. The guys that came in, the rest of our staff came in and did an excellent job. Mark Pantoni, my right hand guy as far as helping me in the recruiting process, as well as Greg Gillum who was on the previous staff and his relationships especially in the state of Ohio were very helpful.

We signed 16 guys from the state of Ohio, 25 overall. Areas of need that really, I am still not aware of because I haven't coached this team yet but according to the previous coaches or excuse me, the coaches who were on the previous staff, the defensive line was very, was critical this year in particular the defensive end and to think we signed three kids that are in the top 100 and three guys that we identified as guys that we had to have. One committed the week before I was hired and then the last two Se'Von Pittman and Noah Spence are just the, I call them the prize of the recruiting class. They are the guys that you can take anywhere in the country at any time. High

character guys that play really hard, they are different body types. How can you have three defensive ends that would really stick it out, that was hard because a lot of the rival schools and a lot of schools went after them saying how can you go to the place that has the number one defensive end, the number two defensive end, the number three defensive end in a lot of these rankings, they are different body types. Noah Spence is a fast ball pass rusher, an open end, I like to call them an open end in our defense, we call them the Leo, but he is a guy that lines out and acceleration up the field is what you are looking for and he has that. Where you Aldolphus and Se'Von Pittman are more of the wider body guys that are going to be more power rushers. I think that was the prize of the recruiting class.

The area that was probably in the most need was our linebacker position. Because of attrition, because of injury, sheer numbers we were way down and very excited. The guys that when you flip him on tape and not know anything else, without reading ranking or without listening to everybody's opinion, the guy that is really impressive to me is Jamal Marcus. I invite you at some point, it's easy to do on YouTube, watch that highlight video it borders on ridiculous as far as his ability level. Of all the great backers that we signed including David Perkins which I think he's tremendous. You're going to enjoy that highlight video as well. Luke Roberts, Camren Williams and the young guys that's on campus right now, Joshua Perry, so we're excited to sign five linebackers and that was obviously an area of need.

Next area of need was offensive tackle, offensive line in general but offensive tackle and we signed five offensive linemen but the two guys, the day I was hired, we came back here, got to work, said, Let's pick out the top offensive tackles in America, because that's where we're at as far as our shortage. That night we were on the phone. If you would have told me we got the top two guys, that would have been a good day for us. We got



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the top two guys. That was Taylor Decker and Kyle Dodson, who we recently received his paperwork.

A lot of positives. I'm not going to go through every guy.

Let me say this about recruiting for Ohio State. Recruiting is work ethic, it's uncovering who the champions are for each young man that you're recruiting, but most of all it's a belief in the place you're at and knowledge of the place you're at. To be able to do that in such a quick time period, a lot of credit goes to our coaching staff.

Our coaching staff, if you take a good close look at them, either they're from Ohio, they have strong ties in the state. Tim Hinton, a member of our staff, very successful high school coach, very important member of the high school association in the state. This staff was put together with a purpose. Recruiting without question was a number one importance of putting together a staff.

With that said, I'll answer any questions.

Q. What was it like for you getting in here a little bit late and then to be able to hit what looks to be a home run? Talk about the whole process and then how good it feels now to be done with it.

COACH MEYER: I don't want to give the opinion that it is not a home run. We'll evaluate that. We signed a Class I team, I heard a reporter say it's the greatest class in the history of football. Half of them aren't there any more. You just don't know.

What was it like? It was a sprint. Basically recruiting, we are now knee deep into the 13 kids. Already had a junior day. Already been all day on the phone with a lot of guys. The recruiting process is so far ahead.

We picked up and spoke to Noah Spence the night I was hired and within two weeks he is over buying Ohio State gear over at the bookstore, which cool to be a part of that. It's endless phone calls, then obviously a lot of time on their visits.

Q. So much of recruiting is relationships. How did you warp speed it and was it your reputation, the school's reputation? What opened those doors immediately for you?

COACH MEYER: I think our coaching staff's reputation. You look around at who we've hired, it's pretty solid stuff. I think Luke, Mike Vrabel, Stan Drayton, Se'Von Pittman had a relationship with Luke Fickell. I think we helped it

when I made that phone call. He recruited us after a little bit. The phone call went something like this. Are you interested?

Yes.

Come on down for a visit.

I get a phone call the next few days, Come on up, we got good news for you.

Can't say I had a lot to do with that other than, Hey, let's go. He always wanted to be an Ohio State Buckeye.

Q. I think eight guys flipped their choice. As competitive as you are, how personally satisfying was it that you could get guys to come here from other places? How much does that rev you up?

COACH MEYER: I think what revs me up if there's an offensive tackle and fits into our system, high-character guys. Sometimes they say, How can you go recruit a young guy committed to other school? You ask a question, Are you interested? If they say, No, you move on. If they say, Yes, very interested, then you throw that hook out there. If they're interested, absolutely, especially from your home state.

Is it gratifying to take a guy from another school? Not at all. Is it gratifying to know we got the two offensive tackles that we went out in November or December, when we first got here, that night on the videotape, we want those two, get them on the phone, bang, now they're part of our class. I mean, that amazed me. I didn't think that could happen.

Q. Along the same lines, we hear the term 'flip' a lot. That seems to be the buzz word. What did you have to say to the kids that were thinking of Michigan State, Penn State, Wisconsin, to convince them that things were okay here and flip?

COACH MEYER: The bowl ban was a shot. I don't know the exact date and timing. I should be better versed in that. We're hired, we go out, recruit as hard as we can. I mean, as hard as we can. I had a belief we would not get a bowl ban. When that hits, it was damage control for two, three weeks.

The way we did it, the way we instructed our staff, hit that as hard as you possibly can on the front end. Don't wait for them to attack you with it. Your competitors are all over that.

We went and were extremely preactive as

far as the bowl ban. That was a little bit of a sucker punch for a little bit. Obviously, the month of January, I haven't heard about it even in the last two weeks.

Q. Given the reason you took off a year, how did you like going back on the road? What was that like for you physically and mentally? Does a person like you have to like recruiting? Does a coach have to like it?

COACH MEYER: You have no chance if you don't. There's no gurus. Our job description is very clear for our coaching staff. Number one is bring in quality student-athletes. Really you can stop after that. Then it's power unit. Not interested in that genius that knows how to run that defense or offense. There's plenty of examples of schools, we've had examples, that an offense doesn't look quite as good without those players in there. It's all about that. If there's a misunderstanding about that...

I love it. To say I enjoy getting on a plane and flying the redeyes and all this, I probably would be lying to you. Enjoying that I know I have 6'6", 6'8" offensive tackles where we need them is every bit worth it. Love that part of it.

Q. Ohio State fans who watched the last two Ohio State national championship games understanding the importance of the defensive line, what your team did, what LSU's team did. How important is it to have dominant defensive linemen? How good is this group you just brought in?

COACH MEYER: You talk about Florida. There's defensive linemen all over the place. We have a few here. Defensive line is our strength. Ohio State's tradition is a big part of why those kids came, too. To be a part of what's been done here for the last 10 years. I looked at it one time. The last 10 years, we are in the top 10 in defense almost every year. We coached against Ohio State. It's traditionally a strong defensive line unit.

The area we didn't have it, I think that's why these kids wanted to come, we're down in sacks. You don't want to have to blitz every time you want pressure. Coach Fickell and I talked. To get pressure, you don't want to have to bring five every time. You want to recruit guys that put their tails up in the air and go.

Simon and Nate Williams are going to be gone. They're seniors. We have them one more year. It's a perfect time to come in for a defensive end.

Nate Williams, he's doing good. Doing good in school. Lifting and training. He's just not running. It's all positive, though.

Q. With the guys who have been publicly announced as departing the current roster, when you add in the 25 guys from this class, it seems like you're maybe at 84 or so right now. How will the numbers work themselves out to get you to 82 by the time you need to be 82?

COACH MEYER: I think we're at 81 right now. I think we have room for one more.

Q. Are there some guys you know, other guys that have decided to leave the program that haven't been out there yet?

COACH MEYER: At some point in the near future I'll give you that. I don't have that in front of me.

Q. That number balance, was that a concern for you during this process? How did you balance that as a new coach coming in here?

COACH MEYER: Well, we had a couple issues. We had to make some roster changes on some disciplinary issues. We had a young person decide to leave on his own. That's three off the top of my head that I think of. Then simply the war room is right in there. You go in there, you work the board as far as where we're at. You have the three slots we're not allowed to fill. Our magic number is 82. I want to say right now we're at 81.

Q. Is this class still open? Y'all are still after a couple more guys perhaps. How is recruiting never ending? How do you like that and deal with that?

COACH MEYER: I love that. I think it's every day. It goes back to your coaching staff. The assistant coaches, I get to stand up in front of here, everybody has pictures, asks me questions. The assistant coaches set the table.

Like in anything, you have some that are absolutely the best at what they do. We happen to have a couple of those guys that are really good. I've already talked to the best juniors in their area. So recruiting is a process. It's a long process. You don't go on one date and you're done. It's a long process. It's a long date.

I guess my point is, it's every day. You

take a day off, your opponent is maybe making that phone call instead of you. That's what drives me. I know I drive our staff real hard about that.

Q. Is there a need in this class that y'all didn't hit yet that you still would like to get?

COACH MEYER: Yeah. Speed at the skill. I would say some of the things we like to do offensively, you're going to hear us talk -- we want the defense to defend the width and length of the field. There's only one way to defend the width, that's flat speed. We've tried it. There's no other way that you can make a defense defend the entire width of the field.

The way to make them defend is vertical. I ideally like speed there, too. In our offense, we're still lacking that game-changer that you can hand the ball to speed-wise. I think we got some bigger guys, but we're still looking for a difference maker in one of those 10.4 100 meter guys that can change the game.

Q. Did you encounter very much negative recruiting with all that's happened around here the last year?

COACH MEYER: We had people tell the truth. We're not going to a bowl game. I had to address that. I'm not sure what negative recruiting is. Factual recruiting. I saw some guys make up something, they'll get asked a bizarre question, I'll fix that right away.

When someone states a fact that there's an issue in your program, you have to get it fixed, we hit it right down the middle, right when we walk in the door. So we get that finished.

Q. Coach Paterno supposedly was extremely effective recruiting the mothers. Coach Tressel got some guys that way, too. Is there a family member you center on? Would you not divulge that?

COACH MEYER: Moms are big. Moms are huge. That's the first place you hit. You find out who else is very much involved. We had a couple brothers involved that helped us. Kyle Dodson's brother was very involved. I didn't realize it till the 11th hour. He was very instrumental.

I'd say this class more than any class I've dealt with in the last decade, the high school coach was paramount in the decision-making process. I'm going back to Dodson, Taylor Decker. The kids especially in this state, the high school coach is strong in the state of Ohio, I mean strong. To

know they're involved, they have a great love for this university, that was powerful.

Q. Ohio State has now landed back-to-back very good classes. You're inheriting a bunch of other guys. How important is it to put back-to-back classes together?

COACH MEYER: Someone asked me about the correlation. It's kind of a silly question. It's a perfect one. The correlation between what you sign, not necessarily the ranking, but the quality of person in that class. One great evaluator is on draft day three or four years from now, how did your class do. At a place like Ohio State, every player should get drafted. I understand that doesn't happen. We were fortunate. I think one class we had four first-rounders come midyear when you're at Florida. Think about that. Out of the six or eight that came in, four were first-rounders. I don't care where they ranked, but that class should have been ranked pretty high.

This class right here, we try to evaluate that group of defensive ends, are those guys going to make a living play pro football. If they are, that's a pretty good indication that they're going to play very well here.

Q. You talked a few times about competitiveness, looking for competitiveness in kids. Talk about that a little bit with this class, what you saw. How do you identify that?

COACH MEYER: I'm glad you brought that up. I have a note here to bring that up. I've grown as a coach. You grow, change, always adapting, thinking how to get better. That year off helped me to kick back, relax - well, not relax - kickback and evaluate what programs are doing a really good job. The one common denominator wasn't black, white, yellow, jump, I formation, West Coast, pro style, spread; it was the competitive nature of the program, the competitive nature of the athletes on the team.

The great ones that I see going on to the National Football League, doing the same thing they did in college, it's amazing, they did the same thing in high school. They're competitors.

There's a couple ways we evaluate it. How do they compete in a big game. Bri'onte Dunn had 300-yard back-to-back games. That's real. What sold me on him, other than the fact he comes from a great family, great-looking guy, he

didn't tap out in the big games. How do they perform in a rivalry or state championship, state playoff game. That's usually an indicator of a high-end competitor.

Basketball is a great evaluator. Adolphus Washington, had a chance to watch him play basketball. Very impressive. I don't know how he shoots, I don't really care. I just watched the way he plays, bangs, moves guys around. I like to see a guy's face. He's very upset when it doesn't go his way.

Without question that's the number one thing we look for, that I look for. If he's a track guy, is he a guy that's always competing, if he runs a 10.5, try to run a 10.4.

The best evaluation is cornering that coach. You get about six inches from that coach's face and say, Tell me about this guy. There's no other nonsense in the room.

I notice a lot of pro scouts, pro head coaches, pro assistant coaches, the really good ones, that's all they want to know. At the end of the day, will that kid compete at the highest level, do what it takes to win a game.

Q. I was curious about what you said about getting up front with the bowl ban and all that. Did you get a sense people were taken aback, the reaction you got?

COACH MEYER: Everyone. Taken aback. Everyone was taken aback. I would say that was probably a two-week assault that we had. Instead of waiting for it to come, we went after that proactive, extremely transparent, here is exactly what that means. Rumors, blogs, everything. You're not going to go to a bowl game for three years. No, no, no, here is what is going on. We attacked it, didn't wait for the question, just went after it.

Q. About roster management, did you have to attack that any differently with the Big Ten's policy versus the SEC's?

COACH MEYER: I'm not sure of the difference.

Q. The Big Ten's rules against oversigning.

COACH MEYER: I've never oversigned. At Florida we never oversigned. Obviously we didn't do that here.

Q. Were there any noticeable differences in the way you were able to recruit here as to how you recruited at Florida?

COACH MEYER: No, very similar. You're talking about high-end recruited guys. Very similar.

Q. It was mentioned before about a couple guys still going after the 2012 class. Is there any difference recruiting them when they go past signing day? Not that there's any immediacy, but there's not that signing day crunch.

COACH MEYER: I don't think I've ever done it. We still may. So I don't know that. That's something we're still actively recruiting because we have one spot available. Is there any difference? I don't think so. I know you can't visit them. It's quieter. Well, I think it is dead. It's unlimited calls for 48 hours after. I have to make sure I know those rules because I've never done that.

Q. You talked about the competitive nature you look for in the player. The character issues with what's happened recently here, how much of a factor was that in the way you recruited this year at Ohio State and was it any different from what you've done in the past?

COACH MEYER: I think everybody, because of the nature of Twitter and social media, all this stuff, you were so careful. I heard this horrible story about a guy that did something stupid, now he lost all his scholarships. It's awful.

Kids are kids. You represent a powerful university. So if you walk in that room, there's a list. Always I have character one through five. The only person that really knows is that recruiting coach, if he does a good job of getting under everything, asking the secretaries, the coaches, assistant coaches, teachers in the school. There's a couple red flags that show up, how do they treat females, any type of addiction issues. You try to ask those hard questions. Sometimes you don't know.

Is there a premium placed on character? Probably like never before. I've noticed that in the last dozen years of recruiting, just because of all the negativity that can bring on a program.

Q. Ohio State and several other Big Ten schools are offering four-year scholarships. Why are you doing that and is it

just a matter of semantics? What's the benefit or drawback to that?

COACH MEYER: I think it's all the same. We've offered a four-year scholarship. You're going to graduate. We have that obligation. So you have a four-year scholarship. A four-year scholarship, you have to do the right thing. If you flunk out of school, have disciplinary issues, you lose your right to be on scholarship.

But that was the same before. You can't just take a scholarship from a guy.

Q. Some of the high school coaches that I've talked to in the past said that Taver Johnson was very effective in recruiting in the state of Ohio. Not having Taver in the fold the last couple weeks, did that make it any harder to close this class for you?

COACH MEYER: Sure. I think anytime you have a quality guy that has great relationships, he did very good in Cleveland, Taver is a very good recruiter. Held onto him and closed one, without him, with Kyle. He set the table very good for Kyle. Quality recruiter, loved Ohio State. It worked.

Q. Getting back to the strengths, staff you assembled right now, for a transition like that to take place at such a crucial moment in the recruiting process, what does that stay about the staff?

COACH MEYER: I tell recruits this as well, we are probably the most evaluation friendly business that exists. I can't think of another business where it's either this or this. Pretty good coaches don't survive, not in this kind of competitive environment. You're either this recruiter or this. You can't be an average recruiter and survive in the Ohio States of the world.

The testimony is we're pleased where we're at. Now we're at the next phase. How do we develop them? Weight program. I'd grade them very favorable after what we got done. Now the next phase, because it's not done. When I say evaluation friendly, we'll all be evaluated every day. I grade our guys a pass. We did a good job to close this class the way we did.

Q. Did Roger Lewis take himself out of the running even prior to yesterday's development? My understanding is you were not going to sign him.

COACH MEYER: I don't know if I'm allowed to talk about that. Am I? I heard

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something awful that happened. Before that, he was not going to be part of the recruiting class.

Q. You inherited some recruits from a previous coaching staff. Are you pleased to see how well they fit your system, how well they seem to gel with what you plan to do?

COACH MEYER: I think so. I don't know them so well. Bri'onte Dunn, I love. Joshua Perry is doing outstanding. Already gained a bunch of weight. Great-looking kid. Nice family. Very pleased with what we got.

Q. Your thoughts on the prospect of an early signing period. Basketball has one. People think it needs one. Normally would you be in favor of an early signing period?

COACH MEYER: I was on a committee a couple years ago. The best one I heard is when a kid says, I'm not going to visit anywhere, then he can sign early. I don't know. I don't know. Thank God we didn't have one this year because we'd be a bunch of sullen faces in here right now, a bunch of angry coaches.

Q. You mentioned you had to recruit really good players at positions of need, but at the same time you mentioned you want to recruit high-character kids. Was it difficult with the accelerated time span you had?

COACH MEYER: Yeah, that's the million dollar question that you have to ask yourself. I know Noah Spence for two weeks. Bang, he shakes our hands and tells us he's a Buckeye. The next four weeks we spent recruiting him afterwards, magical. What a great family.

This class, the more you found out about them, the better you felt as far as their character.

Early on, you're offering scholarships to who knows because we had no idea. That was a good six-week period where we got to know most of these guys.

Q. When the word finalyl came from Kyle Dodson, was that a cherry on top? How would you describe the emotions? He was committed to Wisconsin. What did it mean to get that guy?

COACH MEYER: I think we had to have him. I don't think, I know we did. Where we're at right now at offensive tackle, depth at line, our sheer numbers, that was a must have. I would

almost trade him for any other player that we signed. We had to have him. You get the two offensive tackles that three weeks ago it didn't look like we were even in the running. And the body types are exact. God created two offensive tackles for us.

That's exactly what we go look for. Big, athletic guys that can block second-level defenders. Both those guys are A1 A guys. Perfect for a fit.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MEYER: We have Cardale Jones. Obviously with Braxton Miller, it's harder. We had the issue with Tim Tebow and Smith. It's harder that way.

Q. Cardale, did you have a chance to evaluate him? To get some separation between he and Braxton as a redshirt in the possible cards for him?

COACH MEYER: I haven't got that far. We're just trying to get Kyle Dodson's facts. Appreciate you thinking ahead (smiling).

Q. In today's climate with recruiting, is it practical or realistic to think you can't go after guys that committed? There was a coach from Michigan State that said there was a gentlemen's agreement. Is that realistic to advance on that?

COACH MEYER: Realistic to?

Q. Not go after guys already committed. Do you have to in today's climate?

COACH MEYER: That's up to each individual school. We went after a young guy in Cleveland, Ohio. I asked him if he was interested in Ohio State. He said no. I wished him the best of luck, do well in school, move on. Especially from your home state, you ask a man, Are you interested in Ohio State? Yes, coach, I've always wanted to be a Buckeye. That's really the only way we've recruited.

Like I said, Taylor Decker recruited us. He called me and said, I want to be a Buckeye. Whoa, what are you talking about? Some guys, What do you think about this? Then his high school coach called us said, He wants to come to Ohio State. If the kid is not interested, we're done, we move on.

Q. When you took over, some of these guys, did you know their names? Were some

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of these guys in this class when you sat down after being hired, this was the first time you ever heard of them?

COACH MEYER: Noah Spence, he was a national guy. A couple guys I did not. The guy at linebacker, Jamal Marcus, I just heard about him two weeks ago. We put on the film. He just blew us away on the videotape. I never heard of him. A couple of you heard of the prime time names.

Q. Noah, how did he relate to the defensive ends you had at Florida?

COACH MEYER: He's different than Harvey. Probably more like Moss. A slender, high-cut athlete. Harvey was more of an Adolphus Washington type. Strong, bull-rusher type player.

Thank you for coming.

THE MODERATOR: We'll bring Coach Luke Fickell down now. Questions.

Q. Coach Meyer talked about the excitement of the defensive players. Where is your excitement?

COACH FICKELL: Well, I think it's always going to start up front. You look at it and say, If you're going to start a class, you want to start up front, whether it's on the offensive or defensive line. The excitement starts there and then moves, obviously, its way back for me.

Q. Luke, you went through this last year, the turmoil. How much did you know that Ohio State was going to be able to sustain itself to land this type of class and move on?

COACH FICKELL: Well, I think the entire year our focus was on making sure that we did the best job in state, in our 250-mile radius. Ohio State is so much bigger than any situation. We knew those were the guys we had to focus on, those were the guys that knew what that place is about, not just the things that happened in the last six months. That was always our focus.

The big thing was, the staff and everybody did a great job of saying, Hey, keep us in the ballgame, a lot of those guys, even outside the game, or those guys inside the state, we couldn't solidify before the end of the season.

Got to give them a lot of credit, keeping our foot in that door. I kept saying all year, When there's clarity with what's going on in the program, we'll be in fine shape. We all bought in. That's kind of the way we went about the entire recruiting

throughout the season.

Q. Coach Meyer twice singled out Jamal Marcus as a player he was excited about. What were your feelings on what you saw of him? How does he fit a scheme?

COACH FICKELL: Well, it definitely starts with some need. I think that was one of the focuses with having a lot of guys we lost in the last maybe six months, being very thin at linebacker. He's obviously something that when you pop on the film, it jumps off the screen at you very quick. It's also somebody that is a position of need.

Have the ability to put him in a position where you need somebody to step up in that role. Obviously he has the great abilities. There's a lot of guys with great abilities. Maybe some are going to come in here in a position that you couldn't think you're an immediate need, whereas Jamal might be in a position where this is a spot of immediate need.

Q. Coach Meyer said when the bowl ban came down, he told you to stay out front, bring it up right away. The reaction from the athletes and parents, were they somewhat taken aback that you were talking about it right up front?

COACH FICKELL: Honesty is always going to win out in the long run. It's something that was a shock a little bit to all of us. To be honest, to be out front, to try and get ahold of them as soon as possible. You already built that relationship. I think they had enough confidence in you that they knew who you were. They were really interested in seeing how honest you were, you didn't try to sugarcoat it or beat around the bush.

For those young guys, down the road, it's a one-year thing, we got a lot of things to come. As long as you stay strong and stand up, that one year is not what is going to make you here at Ohio State in this program.

Q. Luke, could you break down the four defensive linemen, what you like about each of those guys.

COACH FICKELL: Again, they might come up -- three of the guys come up as defensive ends. But they're all different in their own right. Noah Spence is probably little bit more of a linebacker size, 230, 240 pounds, probably a guy that is a true speed guy.

Then you go from there, Adolphus Washington, he's a guy that plays basketball

probably nine months out of the year and only football for a few months. So what his potential is when he hits the weight room, gets down to one sport, he's a 250-pound guy right now. Who knows what he'll look like in a year or two. I think he could be a guy that could play either side as an end.

Then Se'Von Pittman is a guy who is a 225-pound guy, a junior in high school that looked like an outside backer type of guy, now is 265-pound guy that is continuing to grow. Where his growth potential is I have no idea.

The thing you see with Se'Von and Adolphus is the versatility. Everybody wants to be an end, wants to be a rush guy. I think that's one of the things we had to focus on, is finding guys with speed. They do have that. Who knows in a year or two exactly what they'll do.

Tommy is the one true guy you can say is going to be an inside guy. He enjoys that. He doesn't want to hear about the edge. He could be a nose or a 3-3 technique. We don't define that. So for us it gives us a lot of balance. I think Tommy, knowing he's a true inside guy, Noah being a true outside guy, then Adolphus and Se'Von being guys with great versatility that can be able to play the field or boundary side end, I think the versatility is the thing you like best.

Q. Speaking to a couple high school coaches today of guys you signed, guys who committed to Ohio State before Coach Tressel left, they said you bridged the gap through communication. How did you go about doing that?

COACH FICKELL: This program and the foundation is set. It sold itself. Over the last 10 years you have to give a lot of credit -- the high school coaches have treated this program and us unbelievable. In the last 10 years it's even been better, and that's because of the relationship, not with just Coach Tressel, but all the coaches that have been here. The true belief is Ohio State being the flagship school for this state. For us to truly be able to share in every aspect we can with those guys.

The relationship has been so good, so the transition for them to see that the foundation wasn't going to change, that we know that's our lifeline, we want to help promote football in the state no matter what, I think that right off the bat was the good thing. But it started with the relationship that

was been built over 20, 30 years of the high school coaches, and nothing has changed.

Q. Luke, do you expect the defense you want to play now will be pretty much similar to the style of defense that Ohio State has played in recent years or are there some things where you might be doing things a little bit differently? As part of that, the skill set of guys you're recruiting in this class...

COACH FICKELL: You're trying to get two questions in one.

Q. Were you looking for the same type of skill sets at the position?

COACH FICKELL: Did you want to talk about how we're going to play defense or did you want to get back to recruiting?

Q. Both.

COACH FICKELL: Our philosophies haven't changed. Again, we kind of evaluated it as coaches came in, what our skill sets were, what we needed to focus on. Obviously you're always trying to recruit speed, good people, the right character guys. I think that's probably the most exciting thing. We all stand up here and praise the class. In two years we'll find out what it's really about.

The biggest thing is we truly addressed the things we need, that is speed and the linebackers for depth and speed as well. Our philosophies haven't changed and I don't think they'll changed a whole lot.

Q. Having recruited under Coach Tressel for so long, now switching, have you noticed any major differences in recruiting philosophies? More gung-ho going forward?

COACH FICKELL: I mean, the timing is completely different. I haven't been in the situation where the timing is different. The philosophies are not much different. It's still about people. It's still about building relationships. How you go about those things sometimes is different. When you're put down into a two-month period, you have more work to do at patching up those things, building those relationships to get them to know you.

There was a lot on coach's plate. He has to come in here. Not only do you have 12 commitments, he did a great job of trying to build relationships with those guys so they were comfortable where they were, then trying to jump in and build a relationship in two months on

something that could have been done for the last year and a half.

Was it a little bit more aggressive? It had to be accelerated because of the situation. To say it was much different, I don't know because recruiting doesn't change. It's still with relationships. It's still about the right kind of people. There's plenty of guys out there that can fit all kinds of programs at athletes, but you want the guys that fit your programs as a person, what your morals are, what you're trying to do.

To build those relationships in a two-month period, coach did a great job at being aggressive, spending every day, night, morning, trying to get to know every one of those guys as much as possible.

Q. How much did coach come to you and ask you about the needs of the team, the kids that you were already recruiting, where we should go? How much information did you relate to him and give to him as to which direction we should go?

COACH FICKELL: Well, obviously he is very thorough. He had done his evaluations before he ever got here at what he had seen, what he thought we needed.

But the ability to sit down and pick somebody's brain, have an idea of not only what you have already recruited, what you thought about some of the young guys. I think that's one of the things, whether it was a new guy coming in, sometimes you got to do a better job in truly evaluating some of those guys that might have been freshmen or redshirt freshmen in your program to see how they developed. It's hard to completely judge a guy on his redshirt year or even his redshirt freshman year if you see the potential continuing to grow.

It's not just because he wasn't there and he didn't know some of those guys. It was also us as a staff, some that have been here in the past, to sit down and put our heads together, What do we think about that guy that redshirted? Do we see the same thing when we saw him as a senior in high school, where will he be in two or three years. He had a lot of work to do, did a lot on his own, then he got with us, not just myself, whether it be Coach Gilham (phonetic), any of those guys, he wanted an opinion from as many different sources as he could, then he wanted to go back, watch film, make his own opinions as well. It's a relationship in both

ways.

THE MODERATOR: We have Coach Hinton.

Q. How much did it help to have the three hold-over coaches and in what way did they help in the recruiting efforts?

COACH HINTON: I came in on January 2nd. Things were very much in place at that time. It was really phenomenal. You look at the recruiting board, the things that were being done at that time. Things were well in place. It was a well-oiled machine.

We were trying to identify some people we needed to retarget, continue to recruit. Coach mentioned some of those. But you could see a lot of things were in place.

It's a phenomenal turnaround when you talk about recruiting schedule, phone calls, emails, Facebook, all the things you're allowed to do, getting coaches out. Then you have the dead period when you have the national convention, the holidays. It's really unbelievable how much work is being done behind the scenes in order to create the kind of success we had today.

Q. Coach Meyer mentioned Taylor Decker, how he called Ohio State. Can you talk about your relationship with Taylor, how important it was to get a kid like that in this class.

COACH HINTON: Interesting process. I recruited Taylor at the University of Notre Dame. I didn't recruit Taylor Decker until he stepped on campus. Taylor knew his recruiting coach had left Notre Dame and came to Ohio State. It was a relationship issue. We keep saying relationship, but those relationships were built, all of a sudden he didn't have relationships with people that were there. Obviously at that point he decided to call Coach Meyer and say, I'm very interested. It was a good thing. His mom and dad were great people. Obviously through that recruiting process, got to know them very, very well.

When he came on campus for his official visit, he felt tremendously comfortable. He felt academically comfortable. Socially with our players he felt comfortable. He had a great relationship built with Coach Meyer between the multiple phone calls.

When he had a chance to sit down in a room with Coach Warinner, have conversations with him, recruiting meals when I could sit down, my wife and I could go sit there with his mom,

assure her that all things are intact for her son to be successful socially, academically, on the football field, I think it was an easy turn from there.

Q. Was there ever a moment in this recruiting season when you talked about Notre Dame instead of Ohio State? Did you have a Freudian?

COACH HINTON: I tried not to. You get on the phone, introduce yourself. I'm tremendously pleased, said it many times already, this is a phenomenal place. Coach Meyer is a tremendous recruiter. The success of this class is very evident to his ability to identify people, target relationships, find the identifiers, the champions, the people that are going to help this young man make a great decision.

So far I've been very impressed. I've only been here since January 2nd. It's been a whirlwind for the last month, but a tremendous experience.

Q. How do you go from selling Notre Dame, to Taylor Decker, to telling him Ohio State is really your place?

COACH HINTON: That is an interesting question. You continue to talk about relationships, people, academic fits. You look at the young man, say, What do you want academically? Does Ohio State have the ability to reach that potential for you? All those things were in place. Like Coach Meyer said, if they weren't in place, we would have walked away from the situation. The young man would have said that he had an alternative choice.

All the pieces were in place here also for him. He's a hometown guy. In his bedroom had Ohio State in it all through his childhood like millions of kids in the state of Ohio. He had an ability to get a great match academically. We walked down into his major and Adam Homan is there on a Saturday morning actually practicing the things he wants to do for his academic major. It wasn't set up. It was by accident. One of those great moments in recruiting. So it worked out really well.

Q. I passed you in the hallway at around 3:30. It looked like you were on the phone with a recruit walking from one war room to another. For people that have never been on your side of it, how wild are these days? How satisfied are you with the end

product?

COACH HINTON: I always tell people, no offense, I don't want to isolate any group, offend everyone here. You know how you can tell that wrestlers have those ears that are a little bit funny. Football coaches are the same way from cell phones. Is there something wrong with cell phone and brain power? It's going to happen to all of us because you live on a phone and technology is our friend at times. You can never leave it. It's always going to be with you.

When that recruit calls, you better take that call and continue to sell Ohio State. Because Coach Meyer is right, somebody else will, somebody else is. It's something that we want to get the best in the country, the next class, next two classes. Trying like crazy, want them to get them to call us, get them to speak, develop those relationships. You caught me on one of those, I guess.

Q. Like you said, Coach Meyer is a phenomenal recruiter. Is there a part of you that is somewhat surprised that he's only been on the job for two months, some of you for a month, and you land this good of a class?

COACH HINTON: I've been fortunate. I've known Coach Meyer for a long, long time. The one thing that has really been evident throughout his career, having an opportunity to be around him, he has a tremendous work ethic and a purpose about what he's going to do. He has a plan on how to get there. When you put those three things together, I think it's a tremendous way to accomplish great things. All those things are really intact.

He's a tireless worker, he has a great plan. He really is very, very personable with parents, with players. He has a knack to have a thousand different conversations with a thousand different kids a day. Each of them are special to that person.

When you can have the ability to do that, it's not generally, Hello, I'm Coach Meyer, Ohio State University, it sounds like you're trying to do the business approach, thanks for calling, glad to talk to you, it's not like that. He's really going to ask you about mom, about dad, about the girlfriend, how you doing in science class, I heard you were having trouble in science class. Those things are key to a young man feeling, This guy knows me, knows who I am.

He will challenge a young guy to see whether or not he's ready to perform his best when

he gets there. Kids like to be challenged. They want to have that purpose and they know they want to be successful.

It's been addressed here many times. Not one time from January 2nd until today when I was on the recruiting trail was I ever asked about any of the NCAA stuff. Not one time. All the houses, as a new guy coming in, you talk about a tremendous job by the people who did damage control when the bowl sanction and all those things came out, it was phenomenal. I never was asked that question by a high school coach or recruit at any time.

Q. I was going to ask if that was a hurdle you had to get over. Obviously not. What was the one thing that you sold the most about Ohio State? What do you think was the one selling point that would lock a kid up?

COACH HINTON: The one selling point is the things that Ohio State could have to offer. One, tremendous academic opportunities for you. When you say that, it's something that's very true. When you sit in that house, there's mom on that couch, at that kitchen table, dad, looking at you, getting ready to give you their son for the next four or five years, you're telling them what this place is going to do academically for their son, the son has to meet the challenges, but it's important.

The university itself is such a tremendous academic institution. You can talk about all the things you want to say. When you talk to mom and dads, they want to know how academically this institution is going to perform for their son.

Secondly, We can develop you as a player, as a person, then have the ability to maybe even prepare you for another level. When you're doing those things, you're really, truly selling those, you have a chance to be successful every time you go out and recruit. Ohio State can back all of it up. That's the thing that's beautiful about it. You have the ability to back up academics, social development, development as a player, development to get to the next level, the development of being successful.

When I first come on campus, been on campus two nights, you run into a guy at the Blackwell Hotel, I was a graduate assistant in the '80, Dan Beatty. How you doing? Haven't seen you in 25 years. To see how successful he is running a business out in the state of California, meeting somebody here for business reasons, what a phenomenal story. Went right then and told

a certain recruit right there, Look, here is an offensive lineman who had success, here is what he's doing after graduation. All those things really made a difference.

Q. With the push to get guys to commit early, when you try to flip a guy, how do you go about approaching him without aggravating the family or the high school coaches?

COACH HINTON: I think Coach Meyer explained that really well. We really don't go into those to try to flip somebody. In reality, I know when Coach Meyer came through this year, I know he wanted to find out, Are you interested in Ohio State? Other than that, if there's no interest in Ohio State, there was no flipping.

The young men, whatever you want to call it, that worked off of, had interest in Ohio State, they really wanted to be successful here.

Who knows why, how, might not have been as strong earlier, greater later, I don't know all those things, wouldn't be able to explain it to you. But at that time in their life, where they were in recruiting, for the reasons they were being recruited, had an interest. From there, that begins.

Q. I think there's a feeling this 2013 class in Ohio is going to be particularly strong. Would that affect how you might attack the year overall?

COACH HINTON: Well, we hope every year in the state of Ohio is strong. We have great football in the state of Ohio, great football coaches. They're going to do a phenomenal job. We obviously want to put that lock around Ohio, make sure it goes where we want it. There's 16 players from the state of Ohio in this class. We want to get the players we want out of the state of Ohio.

The problem is, the state of Ohio is going to create 130 BCS players if the state is consistent. They're not all going to be guys that Ohio State will want on needs, positions, all those things. There's always going to be some reasons some guys leave. But if we're putting a lock around Ohio for the players we want, the players that fit the position needs we need, we'll be successful here.

That's important to Coach Meyer, and philosophically we're going to work very hard to make sure the great players stay in the state of Ohio.

Q. A couple weeks ago you characterized yourself as an old high school coach. Does that give you a different type of

perspective having been on all sides of this during the recruiting process?

COACH HINTON: I certainly hope so. I think having been on both sides of it, one thing it's really prompted me to do in recruiting is be flat honest about everything that goes on. There's no perfect world. There's no perfect place. There's no perfect person. There are certain things that are going to be better.

You can look at 20 houses, you're wishing you could combine 20 houses to get the one you want. Same way with cars.

The bottom line for me in recruiting is, even if it's something I think is not Ohio State's strength, we got to say, This is where we are with it. We're trying to improve it, like every person should, we're trying to make it better.

If you're honest in the recruiting process, At this time we're not ready to offer you, but we're going to reevaluate things, then eventually you offer, they appreciate you didn't shun them and tell them they're not good enough. There's going to be 200 young men or a thousand yuck men in the state of Ohio that want a scholarship that we couldn't offer for whatever reason. All of those are in high school somewhere. If you don't do a great job of being honest with that high school coach, you'll offend high school coaches along the way. Then all of a sudden they have the one you want, right? Now what do you do?

Develop that relationship, treat people with respect. I learned that being on both sides of the table because I've seen it work both ways. So be honest, I think that's the one thing that me personally, and I know this staff does tremendously, they're honest with the young men in the recruiting process.

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