



The Next Big Thing. (When you capitalize it, it's an even bigger thing.) Two years ago, it was Terrelle Pryor, the top high school quarterback in the country. He had his pick of the nation's college football programs before deciding to be a Buckeye. Now Pryor's continuing development as a quarterback under Jim Tressel could be a big key to landing his logical successor...the *New Next Big Thing*.

(If this all seems just a bit premature to you...join the club. Didn't the last Next Big Thing just finish his sophomore year?)

When Pryor came along in 2008, the hype seemed unprecedented. The recruiting frenzy was ridiculous, especially toward the end, when both the new coach at Michigan and the Oregon Ducks made a late run at Pryor and the media became enthralled with the idea of him running the Rodriguez or the Belotti offense.

What the national media missed in their stereotyping of dual-threat quarterbacks and their hunger for some last-minute recruiting drama was that Pryor wasn't the least bit interested in becoming Pat White in an Ugly Hat, or the next Dennis Dixon in fluorescent yellow. He wanted an NFL future at quarterback as a pro-style passer, and he trusted Jim Tressel and OSU to help him get there.

The jury is still out on that case of course, but you can be sure that none of the developments at the quarterback position at OSU over the last two years have escaped the attention of one [Bra](#)

[xton Miller](#)

of Wayne High School in Huber Hts., OH, near Dayton, the aforementioned NNBT.

Miller Time

No kid deserves the pressure that comes with a label like Next Big Thing, and I use it only in jest because the memory of the Pryor recruitment craziness is still fresh in mind. But still...what else do you call a guy at a glamour position who has the Who's Who of college football banging down his door?

Braxton Miller is the hot property at QB in the Class of 2011. Scout.com ranks him as [their No. 1 quarterback](#), and the only 5-star player in the country at the position. The 6' 3", 200 lb. Miller already holds offers from USC, Alabama, Florida, LSU, Miami, Notre Dame, and Michigan in addition to the home state Buckeyes and a host of others. Clearly, like Pryor, he can play college football anywhere his heart desires. So for the recruiters, it's game on.

As you might imagine, Miller has long-established ties to the Ohio State program, having been on the Buckeye radar since junior high. From a timing standpoint, it couldn't work out much better for him to succeed Pryor in Columbus. Miller would be a freshman a year from this fall, when Pryor will be starting his senior year at Ohio State. If you read the reports from the programs competing with OSU for Miller, the feeling is that it's going to be tough to get him away from Ohio State, although Miller hasn't gone much beyond confirming that the Buckeyes are one of his favorites.

Proximity to his home just 80 miles southwest of Columbus should be a factor in OSU's favor, but competing with Urban Meyer and Lane Kiffin won't be easy, what with the lure of warm weather and other amenities to go along with the winning traditions at USC and Florida. You can already hear Tressel's competition questioning the conservative scheme run at OSU, and trying to convince him his long term interests are better served elsewhere. I guess that's when Tressel drags out the Rose Bowl film.

Close the Sale on the Field

In addition to making Miller feel comfortable at Ohio State, a project already well underway, Tressel also has to make the offensive product on the field attractive enough to the top quarterback prospect in the land that he'll feel good about putting on the OSU colors. So I'll speculate that Pryor's effectiveness running that offense in 2010 could have a significant effect on the decision Miller will be making by February of next year. (For the record, I have zero insight into what's going on in Braxton Miller's head, or what his leanings are in the selection of a college destination.)

While Miller may be keeping an eye on the Terrelle Pryor development project in Columbus this fall, most scouts who have seen Miller play regularly agree that he is much farther along as a passer than Pryor was as a high school player. He combines the speed and athleticism (but not

the size) of Pryor with a strong and accurate throwing arm. At 4.47 in the 40, he's a slasher in the open field, and his coaches call his number on lots of runs from the shotgun. But it looks like it's his ability to find space with his quickness...and then throw darts...on target...all over the field, that has the coaches of every top program panting over him.

On the next level, and at his size, Braxton Miller will probably not be a pure running quarterback...(unless he goes north...nah...that couldn't happen.) The good news is that his talent and potential as a passer are already blooming with his senior season still in front of him. It's Miller's quickness and elusiveness that jumps off [the video](#) to me, in addition to the zip and accuracy on his throws (*I know, they're highlight films.*)

The ideal scenario of course, is to get an early commitment from Miller, so he can help recruit for a 2011 OSU class that has potential to a good one with or without him, but which would pick up major momentum if he jumps on board. And if his recruitment extends well into football season, the Buckeyes chances could be helped significantly if Terrelle Pryor looks good running Jim Tressel's offensive show.

[ScoutingOhio.com - Braxton Miller Profile Page](#)

Spring Has Sprung

They say there are two seasons in Columbus (and Austin...and Tuscaloosa)... football...and spring football. Thursday the Buckeyes got spring ball started with an open practice session...in shorts...on a beautiful April Fools Day in Columbus.

I won't see the team in person till the 4/17 Jersey Scrimmage and the Spring Game on the 24th, but after picking up tidbits from a variety of sources, it's safe, I think, to assert a consensus of opinion among beat writers and program insiders about a few things personnel-wise going into 2010:

- Pryor is healthy...no ill effects from the surgery, but he'll have a limited contact spring...a routine precaution these days regardless of who the QB is.
- Starting offensive tackles J.B. Shugarts and Mike Adams are both transformed physically and looking great. Adams has trimmed his weight to a cut 305, while Shugarts has gotten bigger...with muscle. Adams appears to be ahead in the bid for the LT spot.
- Etienne Sabino will probably start at the Sam linebacker spot alongside returners Brian Rolle and Ross Homan. Storm Klein will push Rolle for the starting MLB job.
- Replacing both safeties is the biggest question mark on the defense, and three names are

mentioned most prominently there...Jermale Hines, Orhian Johnson and Tyler Moeller, with a couple of other guys like CJ Barnett and Jamie Wood pushing for time. Moeller is not participating in full contact this spring, but has been active in drills as he attempts to come back after missing all last year.

- WR Duron Carter isn't around this spring, and Tressel has indicated that it's an academic issue similar to the problems that kept him out of the Rose Bowl. Not to worry at the receiver spots however, with Posey and Sanzenbacher entrenched, Taurian Washington at #3 for now, and youngsters like Chris Fields and James Johnson coming on to join Grant Schwartz as backups. And that's before we get into three incoming freshmen.

- Jake Stoneburner replaces Jake Ballard at tight end, with Reid Fragel pushing him. Look for more balls thrown to the tight ends and running backs, including fullback Adam Homan (*no, really this time*)

- Nathan Williams will compete with Solomon Thomas to replace Thad Gibson at the Leo, and Johnny Simon will take over as a full-time starter at tackle, with returners Cam Heyward and Dexter Larimore rounding out the starting DL.

- The kicking jobs and the kick returner jobs are probably the most wide open of any on this team. Keep your fingers crossed.

Brandon Castel of The O-Zone has two really good reports from the first day of spring ball, [here](#)
[e](#)
and
[here](#)

....early two-deeps, comers, quotes from JT and Heacock...go do it...really. I'll wait here.

Doug Lesmerises covers OSU sports better than anyone at the PD I can remember since I started paying attention....around 1964. (Of course Ed Chay didn't have a blog, but...). Here's [h](#)
[is take](#)

on some of the position battles going on as the 2010 team takes shape. More practice notes from Doug

[here](#)

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A couple of reflections on the basketball team:

First, congratulations to Thad Matta and his team, for bringing a truckload of hardware back to campus this season...a Big Ten title, a Big Ten Tournament championship, the Player of the Year....and finally, a Sweet Sixteen appearance and a 29-8 final record. Evan Turner and the Buckeyes exceeded all expectations...something that's easy to forget in the disappointment of

losing that last game.

After a relatively favorable path to the Sweet Sixteen, the Buckeyes flaws were finally exposed against Tennessee. The lack of size in the front court...the uneven ball-handling...the weak rebounding....the inconsistency of Evan Turner's supporting cast...all reared their heads against the Volunteers, and OSU exited the tournament about where they realistically should have.

As it turned out, the Buckeyes played three of the eventual Final Four teams over the course of the season, losing to both Butler and West Virginia, while beating Michigan State in East Lansing. Not sure what that says exactly, other than maybe that West Virginia and Butler got where OSU didn't because they're better teams. And maybe also that Tom Izzo always seems to have his team playing its best basketball in late March.

As everyone knows by now, help is on the way to OSU next season to address the size issues (Jared Sullinger and DeShaun Thomas) and the ball-handling problems (young point guards Aaron Craft and Lenzelle Smith). The group of six freshmen added to the core of veterans Lighty, Buford, Diebler and Lauderdale should make for another fun tournament run a year from now.

I'm not even seriously entertaining the talk that Evan Turner might pass up the near certainty of a \$25 million NBA contract to play another year at Ohio State. (Quick sanity test...Would you?) Whatever that decision is, Turner plans on making it soon, perhaps as soon as this weekend.

Speaking of Jared Sullinger, the OSU recruit was hospitalized for dehydration the day of the McDonalds High School All-American game, (he was "excited") but came out and [put up a game-high 22 points and added 7 boards](#)

...and was

[named co-MVP](#)

of the game. DeShaun Thomas added 11 points for the future Buckeyes contingent. Eleven Warriors is

[on it](#)

too.

Right before upload time comes word that Evan Turner has been [named AP Player of the Year](#). Lots more hardware to come for Evan, I'm sure. Congratulations!
