

## Reloaded?

Written by {ga=furls}

Tuesday, August 29 2006 7:00 PM -

---

Tick, tock, tick, tock. Just three more days until the start of Buckeye season. In his latest, Furls takes an intimate look at the heavily scrutinized Buckeye defense, which is replacing nine starters this season. His argument? Expect some growing pains, but do not expect this group to be a liability. Check back in tomorrow for Furls preview of our Saturday opponent, Northern Illinois.



There has been a lot of hype surrounding the Buckeyes this year. Most of this hype is wrapped up in the slew of returning starters on offense, and each time the Buckeyes are mentioned in the media the question is the same:

Can they recover from the loss of nine defensive starters to keep the offense in the game?

This is certainly a fair question. And if you were to pose it to five different people you would get five different answers, each reflecting the relative optimism or team allegiance of the person involved.

I'm not sure that anyone can give a real answer to the questions on defense. And I don't think anyone will know for sure how this unit will gel until late September, with hopes that we still have national championship aspirations by then.

So what **do** we know about the Bucks defense coming into this year?

We know that they should be very good upfront. The Buckeyes return two very good defensive tackles to anchor their 4-3 defense, Quinn Pitcock and David Patterson. Both of these players have extensive game time experience and their mere presence on the line will make the new linebackers better. The two defensive ends are a bit of an unknown commodity. Fifth-year senior Jay Richardson has never really met the expectations that many writers set for

## Reloaded?

Written by {ga=furl}

Tuesday, August 29 2006 7:00 PM -

---

him. On the other side, Lawrence Wilson has the raw talent to be exceptional. Expect Vern Gholston or Robert Rose get some serious play time should Richardson falter. Robert Rose has been the talk of camp among many and I am anxious to see if he lives up to the potential.

At linebacker, initial reports had John Kerr in the middle and James Laurinaitis and Marcus Freeman on the outside. Late rumors out of camp have Kerr and Freeman on the outside with Laurinaitis on the inside. While Kerr has shown excellent field awareness and anticipation, particularly as a freshman while playing for Indiana, I am not sure if he will have the speed to play outside. Mike D'Andrea continues to battle injuries and it's uncertain exactly how much playing time he will see. Marcus Freeman has seen the field quite a bit in the past and has shown that he has what it takes to be solid on the outside. All in all, if last years linebackers were a ten on a scale from one to ten, this year's would be a 6 or 7. There is definitely going to be a noticeable difference in the quality of play, but I do not think that this linebacking corps will be a liability.

Let's keep our perspective here, this is Ohio State football. When was the last time the linebackers were a liability?

Frankly, I think the strongest aspect of the linebacking corps last year was that they were often able to make the secondary appear a little better than they were. This year's secondary is much faster than last year's, and that says a lot. And in my view, in Malcolm Jenkins, Ohio State has a legitimate lock down corner. He is the type of guy that people are going to deliberately throw away from for the first time since Chris Gamble.

At safety, I think we will miss Donte Whitner. Everyone misses top ten safeties with exceptional run stopping ability, but Nick Patterson has the potential to step up and get it done. Playing behind Patterson, Jamario O'Neal will provide real depth to the position and could be a starter just about anywhere else in the country.

This will be a very exciting year on the defensive side of the ball. We will get a chance to see the defense that will lead this team forward in 2007, after the offense goes through its "Sunday Morning Migration" (like the defense from last year). I expect to see that the future of Ohio State football will look good. The battle for starting positions was wide open on the defensive side of the ball, and by most accounts, the competition has forced some men to shine and

## Reloaded?

Written by {ga=furls}

Tuesday, August 29 2006 7:00 PM -

---

others to falter, but all in all it has driven the players to higher level.

Will there be mistakes? Absolutely.

Luckily the offense should be enough to cover for them and I don't expect this defense to be an "Achilles Heel," like some Ann Arbor optimists.