



The exodus from Columbus of OSU coaches, quarterbacks, and committed football recruits over the last several weeks is causing me to contemplate the name of this column in a whole new way. It's not a news headline, people...although lately it could be.

The [defection](#) last week of linebacker Ejuan Price from the 2011 class of recruits doesn't hurt the program nearly as much as the news a few days later that 2012 five-star offensive tackle [Kyle Kalis](#) from St. Ed's is

[decommitting from Ohio State](#)

, and will now visit Michigan. There is no position on the Buckeye roster thinner at the moment than offensive tackle, and Kalis was the kind of recruit that can anchor a class. There's no getting around the fact that his decision is a major kick in the teeth for the Ohio State program. Kalis says he hasn't eliminated OSU from consideration, but there are more doubters than believers right now.

The OSU staff has naturally tried to [put the best possible face](#) on the situation. This staff has always encouraged recruits to look around to be sure about their college destination, and they always say they only want players who truly want to be Buckeyes. But with Kalis presumably in the fold, and their eyes on some out-of-state OT prospects, the coaches have allowed a couple of very solid 2012 Ohio tackles to get away already.

The good news is that the Class of 2012 in Ohio is very strong, and with eight commits already, the Buckeyes will still be able to sign 20 excellent football players before it's all said and done. Some of the blue-chippers were going to get away under the very best of circumstances, especially with a newly-aggressive Michigan program working Ohio hard, and Brian Kelly's Notre Dame staff getting their Ohio bearings after a year on the job in South Bend.

There were too many excellent prospects in the state, and too few available scholarships at OSU for the Buckeyes to dominate the state like they have in the recent past. But when Wisconsin comes in and grabs one of the best offensive tackles in the state in Cleveland Heights' [Kyle Dodson](#) ...and then Michigan State lands a [Se'Von Pittman](#) out from under your nose at Canton McKinley...and Nebraska signs DE [Greg McMullen](#) from Akron Hoban....and all that after Michigan got a verbal from Mentor's [Tom Strobel](#)well...it's meaningful.

No matter how many good players are left in the state, OSU is not used to seeing four (five if Kalis bolts to AA) of the top 10-15 players in the state leaving Ohio for its Big Ten rivals...so far. If any development more abruptly signals the end of the Tressel Era, this is it. The fence he built around Ohio has been flattened, and for the moment at least, the looters are making off with the spoils. From this point, the goal has to be to find some leaders among the already [committed 2012 recruits](#), first to stop the 2012 bleeding at Kalis, and then to rally quality new recruits to the Buckeye cause. It's easier said than done, and right now momentum is the enemy.

A little context amid the mini-panic of the present moment: With the possible exception of the offensive line situation, about which there are very real concerns for the years beyond 2011, this Buckeye roster is loaded with quality young talent. The inevitable bump in the recruiting road with the 2012 class will not permanently damage the pipeline of Ohio talent flowing into Columbus. This blip will be noticeable in a couple of years, but it won't be debilitating.

The 2013 class in-state is also very strong from what I'm hearing, and the whole Tressel imbroglio will probably not have a powerful effect on players just now finishing their sophomore years in high school. Unfortunately, that will not make the 2012 recruiting season, which will surely contain some additional disappointments, any easier to take.

Back in January, I put together a fairly detailed look at the position-by-position breakdown for the 2011 season, with some speculation about how the incoming recruits might fit into the program. It was published before the 2011 class was complete, but it holds up pretty well today, with the exceptions of Price being gone and Verlon Reed now being a wide receiver....plus a few other minor springtime developments unforeseen in January....like the coach and the quarterback being dispatched: [Recruiting and the 2011 Buckeyes](#)



Steele This Book **

[Phil Steele's](#) annual college football bible has been out on the newsstands for a couple of weeks now, and it's the best nine bucks any fan of the game can spend. Of its 328 pages, only about 100 are devoted to reminding you how accurate Steele's predictions have been in the past decade. But if you had a track record like his you'd toot your horn too.

Steele ranks, rates and predicts just about everything you can imagine, and while I haven't had a chance to do the volume justice in the few days I've had it, I can summarize for you how he sees the 2011 Buckeyes, individually and as a team...plus a few other tidbits. (** - those too

young to get my Abbie Hoffman reference above, see [here](#))

First, the preseason team rankings for Steele, and then also for Lindy's and The Sporting News, (hereafter TSN)

Phil Steele's Top 10 - 1.Alabama 2.Oklahoma 3.Boise St. 4.Oregon 5.Virginia Tech 6.Notre Dame 7.LSU 8.Texas A&M 9.Georgia 10.Florida St. (Ohio State #15)

Lindy's Top 10 - 1.Oklahoma 2.Alabama 3.Oregon 4.LSU 5.Florida St. 6.Boise St. 7.Oklahoma St. 8.Stanford 9.Nebraska 10.Arkansas (Ohio State #14)

TSN Top 10 - 1.LSU 2.Oklahoma 3.Alabama 4.Stanford 5.Oregon 6.Boise St. 7.Florida St. 8.Ohio State 9.Texas A&M 10.Nebraska. (Take the #8 ranking with a grain of salt...they also have Pryor on their regional cover)

Of the Buckeyes at #15, Steele says "Give me Ohio State's talent for a full season, and I would probably project them into the National Title game. Unfortunately...." (you know the rest)

Of the three publications, only Steele lists Virginia Tech, Notre Dame or Georgia in the top ten. This is explained in part by his "Most Improved" rankings (Georgia #2) and his "Surprise Teams of 2011" ranking (Va. Tech #1, Notre Dame #2, Georgia #3).

Of interest to Big Ten fans, he lists Nebraska #6 and Wisconsin #10 among the "surprise" teams (though I suspect neither of those two teams will be sneaking up on anyone this year). And he ranks Purdue at #9 among the Most Improved.

In the position group ratings, Ohio State is ranked nationally as follows by Steele: QB - #17, RB - #15, WR - #34, OL - #8, DL - #12, LB - #19, DB - #18, Special teams - unranked.

Despite the players' suspension issue, (he went to press before the JT and TP exits) Steele thinks Ohio State is "clearly the best team in the Big Ten". Here's his preseason [All-Big Ten Team](#), which includes Buckeyes Mike Brewster (*pictured at top*), Andrew Sweat and Nathan Williams on the first team. Brewster is one of Steele's first team All-American selections as well.

DeVier Posey and Etienne Sabino are second team picks, while John Simon (*pictured*), Orhian Johnson, J.B. Shugarts, Jake Stoneburner make third team, along with Jaamal Berry and Jordan Hall as special teamers. (My only gripe with Steele there is his ability to somehow come up with eight defensive linemen in the conference that he thinks are better than Simon.)

Steele sizes up the Big Ten this way:

Leaders Division: 1.OSU (3-way tie) 1. Wisconsin, 1.Penn State, 4.Illinois, 5.Purdue, 6. Indiana.

Legends Division: 1.Nebraska (tie) 1. Michigan State, 3. Iowa, 4.Northwestern, 5.Michigan, 6. Minnesota. (Steele: "...this is not your father's Michigan")

TSN also ranks Ohio State as the best team in the Big Ten, and Lindy's has the Cornhuskers ahead of OSU by a nose....though as I said, there has been quite a bit of water under the bridge since they went to press. I'll be previewing the Big Ten in much greater depth over the next few weeks, and also getting into the Buckeyes personnel situation as it shapes up for 2011.

Loose Leaves



[https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/3111111/ohio-state-basketball-de-leon-rector-looks-to-lead-buckeyes-into-2017-season](#)