COLLEGE FOOTBALL



BOB SMIZIK

Pitt's Harris puts heat on QB Lytle

att Lytle is a three-year letterman who has completed 147 passes for ____1,646 yards and 10 touchdowns in his Pitt career. Matt O'Connor and John Turman are junior-college transfers who have never played a game for Pitt. O'Connor has one spring practice with the Panthers; Turman not even that.

It would not take a clairvoyant to determine which of the three opened preseason camp yesterday as the team's No. 1 quarterback. Of course, it would be Lytle, who has started 11 games in his career, including nine during the 1996 season.

Of course, it would not. Saying he got the idea from Sports Information Director E. J. Borghetti, Coach Walt Harris announced, "All of our quarterbacks are No. 3. They're working to be No. 2 and then No. 1." It was not exactly the kind of en-

dorsement Lytle, who will be 23 next month, was looking for. "It bothers me a little bit," he

said, before abruptly changing the subject.

Lytle knows not to mess with Harris' pronouncements. Harris is the quarterback miracle man, and no one is more aware of that than Lytle. He saw first hand what Harris could do last season and he wants his own dose of the magic treatment this year.

"He's a great coach," Lytle said. "I want to do what he tells me."

Lytle had to be a bit astonished watching the Panthers from the sidelines last year as Pete Gonzalez, snatched by Harris from the used-quarterback pile, performed with a style and skill no one believed he possessed.

Lytle had every reason to think he was better than Gonzalez when Harris became coach after the 1996 season. He had a stronger arm, better size and more experience. It's not known how many games it took him to lose that notion, but certainly by the season's end — when Gonzalez had thrown for 2,675 yards and 30 touchdowns — Lytle knew he was a distant and deserved

It's not easy for a player to spend almost all of his fourth season on the bench. But as Lytle watched what Harris did for Gonzalez, he was smart enough to realize maybe the same thing could happen to

"I learned from Pete that it takes hard work," Lytle said. "He proved it. He worked real hard and he did a great job. I've been watching film as much as possible, just about every day. He did the same last

"Hopefully, it will pay off for me." The change in Lytle has not gone unnoticed by Harris. "I think Matt has grown up tre-

mendously," he said. "Why? He sat on the sidelines.

It's amazing what the sidelines can do for you. But I also know he learned from Pete. He learned hard work does pay off.

"He's got the work ethic. He's into showing me instead of telling me. He wants to please. He wants to learn more. He has taken a very positive attitude toward coaching. He has worked very, very hard."

So why hasn't he been declared the starter? It goes back to Harris' philoso-

phy. He acknowledged yesterday that he knew coming out of spring practice in 1997 that Gonzalez was going to be his starter. But he never publicly acknowledged as much. "Quite honestly, it was obvious

to me that Pete was the best of the two in spring practice," Harris said. "I wanted to make sure Pete brought that attitude back to camp,

which he did." But Harris waited until after camp, when the Panthers were back practicing at Pitt Stadium, be-

fore he made the announcement. "I like competition," Harris said yesterday, meaning he wants Lytle to be pushed hard by the JC

transfers. There's no criticizing such a strategy. Harris is a man who

knows quarterbacks. He has taken too many off the same heap he found Gonzalez and turned them into standouts. Bobby Hoying, who started for the Philadelphia Eagles against the Steelers Friday, received the Harris treatment at Ohio State, going from a guy who handed off the ball to an offensive force. And Hoying is only one of many Harris has improved

enormously. Will Lytle give Pitt the same performance Gonzalez did? That's asking too much. But will he be as

good as he can be? With Harris pulling the strings, that's a given.

PSU emphasizes agent-education program

By Lori Shontz Post-Gazette Sports Writer

Penn State's football team began its preseason camp this week with, as usual, a long list of things to accomplish in a short period of time.

Finding a starting quarterback. Determining if its best game-breaking running back is healthy enough to play. Revamping a defense that surrendered practically unprecedented amounts of rushing yardage in the final two games of last

No matter what needs to be done. however, the routine never varies. Coach Joe Paterno meets the players, says hello. Then, before they even step onto the practice field, the Nittany Lions are introduced to a man named John Bove, who has quite a lot to say.

"Their first meeting," he said, "is with me."

That's because Bove is Penn State's NCAA compliance director, and he makes sure that before anyone plays a down for the Nittany Lions, he is familiar with NCAA rules and Penn State policies. During preseason camp, the Nittany Lions will spend between seven and eight hours in meetings that have nothing to do, specifically, with football.

A recovering alcoholic discusses drug and alcohol abuse. A counselor explains date rape. An FBI agent details the dangers of gambling. And Bove, with help from a starstudded cast including former Penn State players, an NFL general manager and representatives of the NFL Players Association, explains the rules and regulations regarding

It's not as if the Nittany Lions get only a crash course in such issues. Several times throughout the season, a speaker talks for an hour or

Seminars are offered for the players' parents, too, five times a year. Over the summer, Penn State's coaches attended a program with such speakers as Michael Franzese, a former made member of the Columbo crime family who was involved with agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom.

"They have one of the best programs in the country," said Bill Saum, the NCAA's representative for agents and gambling.

Paterno has made time for such programs since the beginning of his head-coaching career.

"As soon as we became aware that something may be a problem,



Bub Donaldson/Post-Gazette

Former Penn State runnning back Curtis Enis, who was suspended for the Citrus Bowl after his dealings with an agent became public, is being used as an example to current Nittany Lions' of how not to act.

we have someone come in," Paterno said. "I don't want any coaches in there, in case anyone has any questions they want to ask."

There is no way, the players say, someone can come through Penn State's system without a working knowledge of NCAA rules. That's why many of the players don't believe former All-American tailback Curtis Enis made an innocent mistake last season when he accepted gifts from an agent and was declared ineligible for the Citrus Bowl.

"At Penn State, we know what to do," former quarterback Mike McQueary said. "They tell us what to do. I don't care what anyone says, Curtis Enis knew what to do. He knew what he was doing was

Saum agreed. He said Bove's personal interest in educating the players, along with finding a wide variety of speakers, has, for the most part, paid off.

"I know the Enis thing really bothered Penn State because they work so hard at it," he said. "The

way I choose to look at it is, obviously, Curtis made a horrible decision. But a lot of other elite athletes went through there, and they haven't had the same problems. That's a reflection of their educational program.'

The Nittany Lions are exposed to agents long before they go through Penn State's educational process. Many players, after signing their letter of intent to attend Penn State. receive letters from agents congratulating them on their choice of college. Bove has a whole file of such letters.

"If you're a great athlete and you can't tell your buddies you're being hassled by agents, it's like you can't walk and chew gum," Bove said.

It's not illegal for a college player to talk with an agent, only to sign an agreement or accept money or gifts. So agents try every possible way to get in contact with the players. McQueary found that out last season after his first game as a starter. A reserve for four years, McQueary finally got his chance to

start against Pitt, and he responded

with a Penn State record 366 yards passing.

After the game, he celebrated with this parents, then returned to his room and found an answering machine full of messages — from agents. He was stunned.

"For a while, I didn't take it seriously," McQueary said. "I'd erase the messages. Then, they figured out if they called at 11 or 12 at night, I wouldn't be at practice. It was very similar to recruiting."

McQueary was prepared to handle it. He had listened to four years of lectures and, before his senior season, he — like all other Penn State seniors with professional potential — had received a copy of "An Athlete's Guide to Agents," that Bove considers the best resource available. Bove hopes athletes read it before preseason camp so they will be prepared not only to weed out the agents, but to select a good one when the time comes.

Since 1983, the NCAA has allowed schools to have a professional sports counseling panel to help the

athletes in their search for an agent. Since day one, Penn State's panel has consisted of the same three people — a business professor, a tax and real estate professor and an attorney who specializes in contracts and sports law.

"They're all experienced," Bove said. "They know all the horror stories.'

Penn State makes sure its athletes know about all of the potential pitfalls. They are given an 800 number to call if they need to talk about drugs or alcohol and a warning that a 21st birthday party, taken too far, could cause serious harm or death.

"You don't have to be an alcoholic to make a mistake with alcohol," Bove said.

They are told that something as simple has putting \$5 in the dorm pool for the NCAA basketball tournament is an NCAA violation, that placing a few bets with the student bookie who sits behind you in math class can backfire if you wind up in debt. And it is made clear that they should not doubt that the bookie and whoever is backing him - know you're an athlete with the potential to affect games.

They are told that not just agents, but runners — college students who work for agents — will try anything to get close to them. Obviously, the athletes have to be careful, but so do their girlfriends, parents, friends, and roommates.

"Whoever they deem to be influential in a kid's decision, they go over him," Bove said. "His girlfriend, mom, dad, his favorite uncle. It can be that thorough."

And they are reminded, repeatedly, about the rules and regulations.

"This may sound like a silly analogy, but think about when you're driving down the highway," Saum said. "They don't just post the speed limit one time, they post it continually, to remind us."

In the wake of what happened with Enis, Bove has re-evaluated Penn State's program, looking for ways to improve it. Although the Enis incident will be discussed with this season's players, Bove doesn't plan any major changes.

"You can't legislate integrity," he said. "A program is only as good as the people involved with it. If the coaches don't support you, it's not going to work. Now that they support it enthusiastically, you have to count on the people you're feeding the information to. What if they fall prey to temptations? We have firsthand experience. It's hard to be sure of the character of an individual."

Six-pack of tailbacks vying to start for Pitt

By Shelly Anderson Post-Gazette Sports Writer

JOHNSTOWN — Finally, Pitt has a full stable of tailbacks. Six of them, strong and fast. Yesterday, they sprinted through a spirited first set of three-a-day practices.

Coach Walt Harris, though, stepped lightly in talking about the "I purposely have downplayed

those guys," he said. "They're young and inexperienced and I don't really want them to hear good things said about them until they prove themselves."

Not that the coach had anything bad to say about them.

"I see the effort," he said. Kevan Barlow is the biggest at 6 feet 1, 225 pounds. The sophomore who is lighter, stronger and faster than a year ago — also is the only one who has played a down for the Panthers, rushing for 108 yards and two touchdowns on 27 carries and catching six passes for 140 yards and a touchdown as the thirdstringer last year behind Dwayne Schulters and Billy West, who are both gone.

Two others have college experience. Ike Williams is a 6-0, 205 transfer from Pasadena (Calif.) City College, where he rushed for 811 yards and 16 TDs last year. Nick Goings is a 6-0, 205 transfer from Ohio State, but he is not game eligible until 1999.

Aamir Dew (6-0, 205) is a redshirt freshman and Creg Bethea (5-10, 205) a redshirt sophomore who have not played but were able to learn Harris' West Coast offense last

Brandon Williams (6-0, 205) was Pitt's most noted 1998 recruit. Although the Valley High School graduate is the least experienced, he already has a pretty good handle on the six-pack.

"Kevan and Creg, they're two of the biggest, so they're harder to bring down and they can take a shot," Brandon said. "Ike and Aamir Dew, they're more shifty with a lot of cutting. And Nick Goings and me, we're like a combination of those two things."

Dew, however, sprained his right knee during the second practice yesterday. He missed most of spring drills after injuring the same knee and having surgery. It's not yet known how severe the new injury is or how long he will be out.

"That's unfortunate, because that's one of the guys we thought has a chance athletically," Harris

For most of this decade, losing a contender at running back on the first day of training camp would have been devastating and might have meant moving someone from another position. For once, the Panthers have enough tailbacks to fill in — so many that they're all itching to show what they've got as they split practice time six ways.

"There's a lot of competition," Barlow said. "When we get into games, whether its the first-team or second-team or third-team running back, they're going to be good."

The line between first and third strings might stay blurred for a

Harris expects it to take longer than the preseason for a solid No. to emerge.

"Because we don't have an established guy like we had a year ago, honestly we're probably leaning toward playing two or three guys until we find one guy who can carry the load," Harris said.

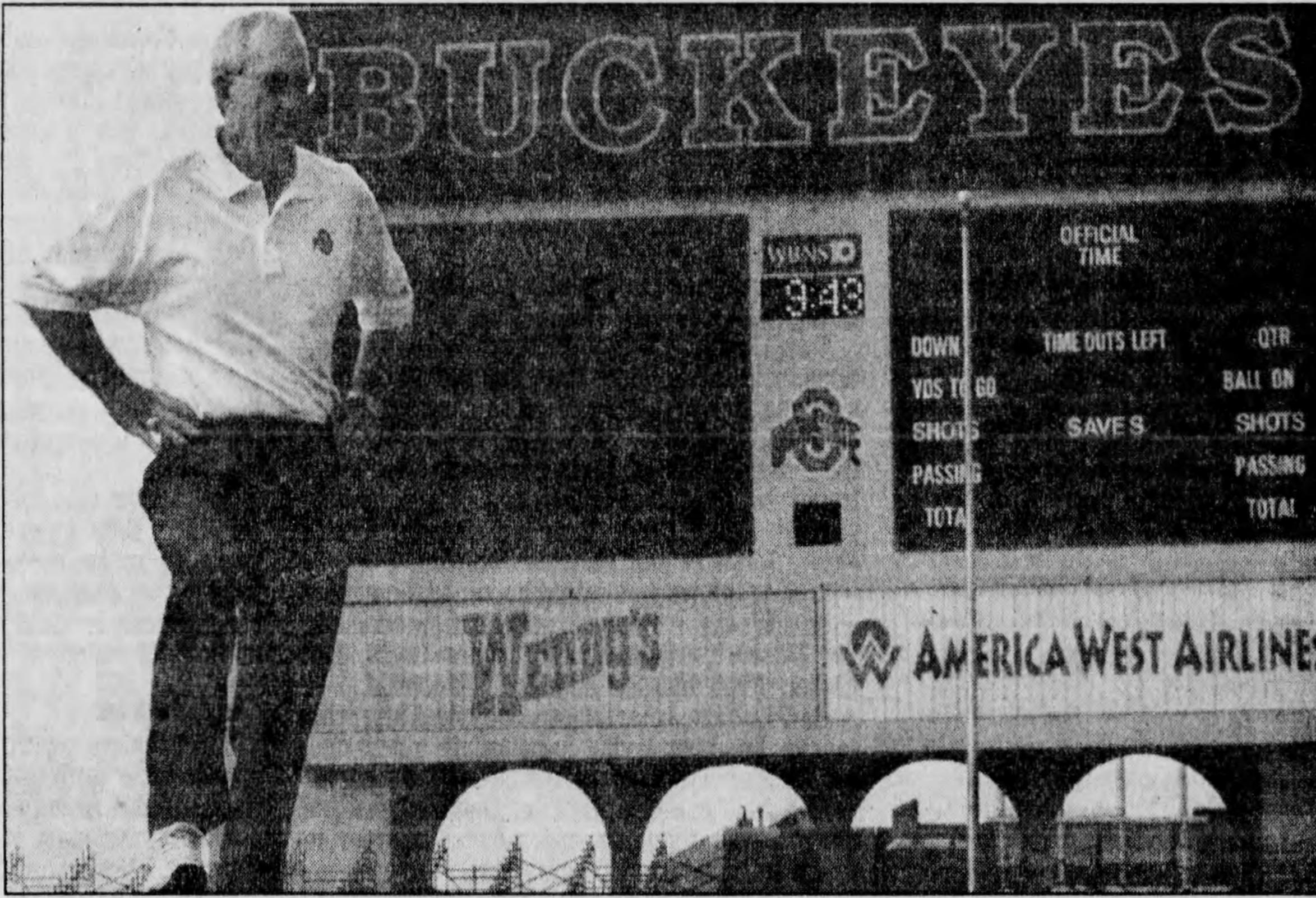
Most of the six tailbacks share a body type — tall and muscular but quick. It's not the image of the man they'll replace, Schulters, who at 5-7, 180 ran under everyone.

Harris said accumulating tailbacks of similar build was not by design. Besides, Ike Williams said, "We may look alike, but we have our own styles."

Besides Dew's injury, the only hitch yesterday was a series of dropped passes by the running backs, but Harris blamed the new mix of personnel.

"The quarterbacks have to throw to them better," he said. "They've got to realize who's got good hands, better-than-average hands, belowaverage hands and throw accordingly."

NOTES — Redshirt sophomore fullback Tony Thompson, who started eight games last year, had arthroscopic knee surgery in June and is doing conditioning work. The Panthers are hoping he can practice before camp breaks. . . . Freshman offensive lineman Chad Reed, of Latrobe High School, injured his right shoulder in the day's third practice. It took medical personnel several minutes and a lot of muscle to get the joint back into alignment. Harris called Reed "one of the bestlooking freshmen we've got," and is concerned he might have to be redshirted. . . . Pitt made arrangements for a group of players who are on all the special teams and don't get much of a break during practice to get rides around the hilly Pitt-Johnstown campus.



Terry Gilliam/Associated Press

Ohio State Coach John Cooper finds his Buckeyes ranked No. 1.

Buckeyes edge FSU for No. 1

West Virginia 11th and Penn State 13th in AP preseason poll

> By Richard Rosenblatt The Associated Press

Ohio State starts the season where it hopes to end up for the first time in 30 years — ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press college football poll. The Buckeyes won their third

national championship in 1968 under Coach Woody Hayes. And now, a year after watching rival Michigan win its first title in 50 years, the Buckeyes are primed for another championship run under Coach John Cooper.

"Being No. 1 is something you shoot for, so we're certainly not going to apologize for being picked as the best team to start the season," Cooper said.

Ohio State, 10-3 and No. 12 in last season's final AP poll, returns a number of starters but All-American linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer, defensive back Damon Moore and guard Rob Murphy could be academically ineligible.

Ohio State received 30 first-place votes and 1,668 points from the 70 sports writers and broadcasters on the AP panel, edging No. 2 Florida State by five points. The voting was the second closest in the 48-year history of the AP preseason poll in 1994, Florida beat out Notre Dame by two points.

AP PRESEASON TOP 25 (First-place votes in parentheses)

1. Ohio St. (30)

	2. Florida St. (22)	11-1	1,663	3
	3. Florida (5)	10-2	1,547	3 4 2
,	4. Nebraska (4)	13-0	1,534	2
	5. Michigan (4)		1,475	1
	6. Kansas St. (2)		1,335	8
	7. UCLA (1)		1.331	8 5
	8. Arizona St. (2)	9-3	1,256	14
	9. LSU	9-3	1,237	13
	10. Tennessee		1,094	7
	11. West Virginia		985	-
	12. North Carolina		864	6
	13. Penn State		804	16
	14. Texas A&M		760	20
	15. Colorado St		631	17
	16. Virginia		620	-
	17. Syracuse		608	21
	18. Washington		494	18
	19. Georgia		480	10
	20. Wisconsin		444	-
	21. Southern Miss		341	19
	22. Notre Dame		291	-
	23. Michigan St		211	-
	24. Arizona	The second secon	208	-
	25. Auburn		201	11
		w. +		

Others receiving votes: Texas 145, Southern Cal 121, Georgia Tech 86, Missouri 72 Colorado 60, Oklahoma St. 31, Purdue 30, Mississippi 24, Mississippi St. 21, Utah 17 Brigham Young 10, Miami 10, Wake Forest 9 Oregon 8, Arkansas 7, Kentucky 4, Washington St. 4, Tulane 3, Marshall 2, South Carolina 2, Louisiana Tech 1, Toledo 1.

SMIZIK'S TOP 25

Post Gazette columnist Bob Smizik chooses his top 25 college football teams in the wake of the Associated Press' picks:

Nebraska; 2. Ohio State; 3. Florida; 4 Arizona State; 5. Florida State; 6. Kansas State; 7. LSU; 8. Michigan; 9. UCLA; 10. West Virginia; 11 Tennessee: 12. North Carolina: 13. Penn State: 14. Virginia; 15. Texas A&M; 16. Georgia; 17. Southern Mississippi; 18. Washington; 19 Notre Dame; 20. Wisconsin; 21. Syracuse; 22. Colorado State; 23. Colorado; 24. Texas; 25 Michigan State.

The Seminoles received 22 firstplace votes and 1,663 points in gaining their 11th straight Top 5 preseason ranking. Florida State ended last season with a 31-14 win over Ohio State in the Sugar Bowl.

Florida, with five first-place votes and 1,547 points, is third, followed by No. 4 Nebraska (four first-place votes, 1,534 points) and No. 5 Michigan (four first-place votes, 1,475 points). Michigan and Nebraska split the 1997 national title, the Wolverines finishing No. 1 in the AP poll, the Cornhuskers No. 1 in the coaches' poll. Kansas State, with two first-place

followed by No. 7 UCLA (one firstplace vote, 1,331 points), No. 8 Arizona State (two first-place votes, 1,256 points), No. 9 LSU and No. 10 Tennessee. West Virginia, which plays host to the Buckeyes in the season opener

votes and 1,335 points, is No. 6,

Sept. 5, is No. 11, followed by No. 12 North Carolina, No. 13 Penn State, No. 14 Texas A&M and No. 15 Colorado State. Virginia is No. 16, followed by No. 17 Syracuse, No. 18 Washington, No. 19 Georgia, No. 20 Wisconsin, No. 21

Southern Mississippi, No. 22 Notre

Dame, No. 23 Michigan State, No. 24

Arizona and No. 25 Auburn. The Big Ten and SEC led all conferences with five teams apiece In the USA Today/ESPN coaches' preseason poll, the top 10 are Ohio State, Florida State, Nebraska,

Florida, Michigan, Kansas State, UCLA, LSU, Arizona State and Tennessee.