Ask and you shall receive. After being deluged with emails asking for Furls' take on the Buckeyes 2007 recruiting class, we finally deliver. As mentioned yesterday, he was in the middle of a move to the heart of SEC country, if you can believe that one. In his latest, Furls takes a look at the incoming freshman class of Buckeye football players, highlighted by RB Brandon Saine and S Eugene Clifford (pictured), both of whom have superstar potential. But what does Furls think of the rest of the class?

In case you missed it, I am not a big fan of ranking recruiting classes . That said, I have no problem grading one. This year was labeled as a bad year across the Midwest among those that follow high school players. It wasn't so much that there aren't good players; this year just seems to be missing the "high end talent." As a result, Ohio State only signed fifteen players this year. I wouldn't be too concerned; Jim Tressel's staff has shown an uncanny and consistent ability to develop underrated recruits.

Personally, I grade a class based on what it does to fill existing and future holes on the team. For instance, it was not an absolute imperative that the Buckeyes sign wide receivers, quarterbacks, linebackers, or defensive ends this year. They are set with at least adequate talent at those positions for a minimum of two years, but they definitely need some immediate help in the secondary, defensive tackle, and running back. All in all the Buckeyes did a very good job of addressing all of their needs, except at defensive tackle.

I guess that is as good a place as any to start. With the departure of Quinn Pitcock and David Patterson to Sunday football, Ohio State has obvious needs in the interior defensive line. The Buckeyes are not completely devoid of talent there, but losing three seniors will create an immediate need. The Buckeyes addressed the problem by landing Craig "Ironhead" Heyward's son, plucking him from the heart of SEC country. Ohio State was not the only major player competing for Heyward's services; he was visited right before signing day by Urban Meyer and was also recruited by LSU and Georgia.

Heyward has the potential to be a solid tackle, but as of right now he is a bit of a project. He will need to seriously improve his strength and technique in order to be effective on the inside. Heyward has the athleticism to get it done, but at 6'7" his pad level and leverage are always

going to be a concern. I like what Heyward brings, but I really would have liked to see the Buckeyes sign a second tackle.

There has been a lot of rumors about Robert Rose moving to defensive tackle and that is a real possibility. He has added considerable size and strength since coming to campus and could actually make the move to a “three technique” tackle. I am not saying that he will, but if the Buckeyes need to move an end in to play tackle, he would make the most sense.

The Buckeyes recruited an entire fleet of running backs to shore up the recent hole made at that position by the departure of Antonio Pittman and the continuous rumors regarding the departure of Maurice Wells. Current speculation is that Wells will transfer to an ACC or SEC school and sit out next year.

If Wells does transfer I would expect the 2006 Ohio Mr. Football, Brandon Saine, to be catapulted into the two deep roster and see immediate play time. I am sure that this will become to cliché to type in a month or two, but Saine’s speed is “insaine.” Saine won the Ohio State Championship in the 100 meters as a SOPHOMORE. He returned as a junior to repeat, not only in the 100 with a state record (and nationally competitive) time of 10.34, but also won the 400. According to his track numbers, once Saine steps onto the field he will be the fastest player EVER to suit up in Scarlet and Grey. Track speed is different than football speed, but I am not sure that we will really be able to tell the difference. If you are expecting another Ginn-style burner you will be surprised because will Saine may have Ginn-like speed he does not share Ginn’s aversion to contact. Saine is not the type of back to bust out a bunch of moves and cuts; he will hit the hole hard and fast and if he gets to the second level full speed look out, NO ONE WILL CATCH HIM.

Lost in the speed of Saine and the power of Beanie Wells are Devon Torrence and Boom Herron. Both are very capable backs and Devon Torrence has a bit more versatility than Saine, but once coaches see a back with Saine’s size (6’1” 205lbs) and speed, they will have a hard time getting him off the field. Boom Herron is a bit undersized and I am unsure where he will end up on this team.

The Ohio State secondary was exposed against both Michigan and Florida particularly at the safety position. Help is on the way in the form of a rehabilitated Anderson Russell and freshman Eugene Clifford. If starter, and perpetual underachiever, Jemario O’Neal does not show significant improvement, I would expect to see Clifford take his job. At a minimum, I would expect to see Clifford play some nickel, replacing recently graduated Antonio Smith. Clifford is a big physical presence in the middle and has the skills and athleticism to actually move to corner if needed, but with Donald Washington, Andre Amos, and Malcolm Jenkins that will probably not be necessary.

All in all this is a bit of a down year for incoming Buckeye freshman. That is not to say that there are not good players in the class of 2007, just that I really do not expect to see many of them on the field this year. Ultimately, I think Saine will prove too fast to keep off the field and Clifford will prove to be too good to leave off the two deep roster next year. As for the rest of the class? Only time will tell.