Antonio Pittman surprised some Buckeye fans when he declared for the NFL Draft this past spring, but the team is hardly left in shambles at the running back position. Chris Wells is back, and is a sleeper Heisman candidate. Maurice Wells also returns ... and remember this name Buckeye Nation: Brandon Saine. Furls previews the Buckeye runners for us.

Gone:

Antonio Pittman

The Replacements:

Chris Wells
Maurice Wells
Brandon Saine

Often underappreciated and generally undervalued, Antonio Pittman now finds himself staring up another unlikely depth chart between him and play time. I think the only person more surprised than I was when the Saints drafted Pittman had to be Pittman himself. It is already a full and crowded backfield, and I am still a bit shocked that they drafted him. I guess Pitt has them right where he wants them now, for he is no stranger to beating odds and scrapping his way into some play time.

I will not say that replacing Pittman with Wells is an upgrade for the team. It is pretty obvious that Wells has better physical tools than Pittman, but what has yet to be seen is whether Chris Wells will prove as durable and reliable as Pittman.

Wells is a bruiser with burst and timing. The more I watch him, the more he reminds me of Eddie George (fumbles and all). I don't think anyone would be upset by the comparison, including Wells himself. While I think (and it isn't much of a stretch) that Wells is going to be extremely impressive, don't fool yourself into thinking that there are not going to be painful growing pains in the form of fumbles and nearly as bad, missed pickups on the blitz. These are the little things that we all took for granted from Pittman.

Chris Wells spent a large part of spring ball on standing on the sidelines hampered with an ankle injury. Nothing severe, but it was still enough to keep him out of much needed reps, and Maurice Wells was there to capitalize on the opportunity.

Let's not forget that Maurice Wells was a former Mr. Football for the state of Florida (I hear they play decent HS football down there) and he had one of hell of a camp. Wells' first two years in Columbus have been a complete disappointment for him and the Buckeyes, so much so that Wells' contemplated transferring out of Ohio State and sitting next season. I think Pittman's decision to go to the NFL finally gave the Wells the daylight he

needed to move up the depth chart to a point where he will get at least some carries.

In his first two seasons, Wells has only carried the ball 107 times for 370 yards. That is really not enough for anyone to draw conclusions about his ability to play in the Big Ten and it looks like he will now finally get his chance. With his speed and elusiveness, I expect to see the Buckeyes incorporate Wells into the passing game getting him screens and dump passes into the flats.

Last but not least... there is Brandon Saine, the 2007 Ohio Mr. Football. He single handedly led Piqua to a Division II State Championship rushing for 226 yards and three touchdowns in the championship game. When Saine suits up for the Scarlet and Grey, he will be the fastest player EVER to don that uniform (yes, that includes Tedd Ginn). Saine is a two time state champion in the 100m and currently hold the state record in the event with an astonishing 10.31 second time. Saine would have probably won the event for a third straight year, but decided not to compete in track this year. Saine also competed nationally in the 60 yard dash and faired very well. More surprising is that Saine does all this at 6'1" 218lbs.

While the names and physical attributes change one thing remains constant, it is still going to be a crowded backfield in Columbus.

Star: Beanie Wells

Emerging Star: Maurice Wells

Future Star: Brandon Saine