In 2007, Robiskie and Hartline, "the Brians" as they have come to be called, quietly equaled the 2006 production of Ted Ginn Jr. and Tony Gonzalez, the two NFL draftees that some doubted they could adequately replace. This year the Bucks have a little more firepower behind Robo and Hartline, with Ray Small and Dane Sanzenbacher returning, and Taurian Washington and DeVier Posey ready to make in impact as well. Dan takes a look at the Buckeye recievers.

The 2008 Buckeyes have enough good young talent at the wide receiver position that they could fill in nicely for last year's starters, and still have some good depth at the position. They won't be asked to do that though, because last year's starters are back and ready to go, with a full year of experience working with QB Todd Boeckman, receivers coach Darrell Hazell, and the OSU offensive system.

In 2007, Robiskie and Hartline, "the Brians" as they have come to be called, quietly equaled the 2006 production of Ted Ginn Jr. and Tony Gonzalez, the two NFL draftees that some doubted they could adequately replace. Robiskie and Hartline combined for 107 receptions, 1629 yds. and 17 TD's last year (compared to 110, 1515, and 17 for G&G in 2006.) Those numbers are all the more impressive when you consider that they were both first-year starters, working with a first-year starting QB.

The Buckeyes will be looking to get more production from the 3 and 4 spots in the receiver corps than they had in 2007. And there are at least seven candidates to fill those roles for OSU in '08. Ray Small (20 rec, 267 yds, 2 TD) and Dane

Sanzenbacher (12 rec, 89 yds, 1 TD) were third and fourth in receptions by wide receivers a year ago, and both return looking to add to those numbers. Small was noticeably more confident and intense in the last few games of '07 and in spring ball this year, and it looks like he could break out as a major contributor this season. The sophomore Sanzenbacher appears to have Gonzalez-like skills, and the fact that he played at the No. 3 receiver as a true freshman for much of last season shows the confidence the coaches have in him.

Waiting in the wings, and sure to get some playing time in 2008, are sophomore Taurian Washington and true freshman DeVier Posey. Washington flashed his skills in the opener last year with a TD on his first-ever catch as a Buckeye, and then showed it was no fluke when he had an outstanding Spring Game, serving notice that he deserves to be on the field. Posey made first-team Parade All-American last year as a senior at Cincinnati LaSalle, and his combination of talent, size and speed makes him a candidate for playing time right away.

Two more sophomores, Devon Torrence and Grant Schwartz, saw the field a little bit in 2007, and both are great athletes trying to play their way into the rotation. And true freshman Jake Stoneburner (6'5", 230) is a big target with good speed and terrific hands. He enrolled early and showed that he could be utilized by the coaches in a variety of ways to create matchup problems for opposing defenses.

Projected Starters:

Brian Robiskie - #80 - Senior; 6' 3" 200 lbs. (Chagrin Falls, OH) Kenston H.S.

As a junior in 2007, Robiskie led the Buckeyes in receptions (55), receiving yards (935), yards per catch (17.0) and touchdowns (11). He established himself early as Todd Boeckman's favorite target, and as a threat to go deep at any time. He got off to a fast start with 9 receptions for 153 yds. in the opener against YSU, and then over the next four games he had six touchdown catches, including three on just three receptions against Northwestern. He demonstrated the ability to go up and get the ball in traffic down the field, and Boeckman took advantage,

connecting with Robiskie for five completions of more than 40 yards in the first eight games. (Robiskie 2007 stats)

Robiskie was a late addition to the 2005 recruiting class, and while his football bloodlines were authentic (father Terry was an NFL player and head coach) he was not rated among the nation's top receivers coming out of a small school in Chagrin Falls. Since that time however, he has justified the coaches decision to offer him a scholarship in every aspect of his Ohio State career. Robiskie is a leader on and off the field, an intelligent and well-spoken young man, and a class example of a college student-athlete. On the field, he is a precise route-runner, with extremely good hands and a gliding running style that tends to mask his 4.5 speed. He missed spring ball after arthroscopic knee surgery, but hopes to be 100% coming into summer camp.

Brian has reportedly been hard on himself over his failure to hold on to a TD pass in the third quarter of the title game against LSU that would have given OSU a lead (it was stripped by the DB, not dropped.) But he had his share of highlights in 2007. He ran away from the Washington DB's on a 68-yard TD catch on the first play of the second half to erase a 7-3 Huskie lead in the third game, and made a spectacular, one-handed grab for a 52-yard TD against Minnesota. Brian has made some preseason All-American teams, and will doubtless be playing on Sundays next year. But for now there is unfinished business in Columbus, and Brian Robiskie will be one of the Buckeyes senior leaders in 2008.

Brian Hartline - #9 - RS Junior; 6' 2" 186 lbs. (Canton, OH) GlenOak H.S.

After getting his feet wet in 2006 with 17 catches and 2 TD's as a redshirt freshman backup, Hartline stepped in as a starter in 2007, and responded with 52 receptions for 694 yds, and a 13.3 yd. average, with

6 touchdowns. He worked out of the slot position for the most part, and became a reliable target in short yardage and 3rd down situations for Boeckman. But Hartline also showed the speed to get downfield and make the big play, with six receptions of 25 yards or more, with a long of 65 yards. He also set an Ohio State record with a 90-yard punt return for a touchdown against Kent State. (Hartline 2007 stats)

Hartline missed his entire senior season at GlenOak with a broken leg, but showed his work ethic and determination by coming back in the spring to win Ohio state championships in both the 100M hurdles and the 300M hurdles in 2005. He committed to Ohio State, and after redshirting his first year, he made an immediate contribution in 2006, catching a 32-yard pass from Troy Smith on the first play of the opening game against Northern Illinois. This past spring, with Robiskie sitting out, Hartline refined his chemistry with Todd Boeckman, and the result was a six catch performance for 89 yards in the Spring Game. His outstanding hands and his demonstrated capacity for making the tough catches in traffic will assure him a continued role as a valued target for Boeckman in the Fall.

Ray Small - #82 - Junior; 5' 11" 180 lbs. (Cleveland, OH) Glenville H.S.

After being dubbed "the next Ted Ginn Jr." coming out of Glenville, Ray Small has had to deal with the expectations of fans and teammates, on top of a host of other issues that so far have kept him from meeting those expectations. Small had 20 receptions for 267 yds, and two touchdowns in 2007, but his Buckeye career has been largely spent shuttling between the training room and Jim Tressel's doghouse, with some all too brief stops on the field in between.

Small's speed and receiving ability have never been in question. He has the elusiveness and open field speed to turn a short completion into a touchdown. As fast and athletic as the Brians are, Small brings the pure speed element that can stretch a defense in a way that they don't. The injuries have been perhaps more of a problem for Small than the off field issues have. In 2006, he was racked by a brutal hit in the Minnesota game, and took some time to recover physically, and seemingly even longer to lose some of the understandable tentativeness in his play after the injury. He led the team in punt return and kickoff return opportunities in 2007, but didn't produce many of the big plays that had been expected of him.

Toward the end of last season and in the Spring Game this year, Small seemed to have his health and his aggressiveness back, and with any luck he'll also stay in the coaches' good graces, and show the world what he can do in '08.

Reserves:

Dane Sanzenbacher - #12 - Sophomore; 5' 11" 175 lbs. (Toledo, OH) Central Catholic H.S.

As a true freshman in his first game ever at Ohio State, Sanzenbacher scored the first points of the 2007 season when he caught a short slant pass on a third and goal against YSU. The catching part seems to come naturally for this gifted athlete from Toledo, but he had to know it wouldn't always come this easily. With Small sitting out the early part of the season a year ago, Sanzenbacher impressed the coaches by learning the offense early, and then by catching everything thrown his way. Over the course of the season, he worked mostly as the backup slot receiver to Hartline, but took snaps at the wide spots as well, and in the four-receiver sets.

Sanzenbacher finished his freshman season with 12 receptions for 89 yards, and that one early score. He has very good speed, having placed in the state track meet as a 400-meter runner. But it's the ability to find space and make tough catches in the short game that has reminded some fans of Tony Gonzalez, and will make him effective as a slot man in Tressel's system. It is to Dane's credit that he rose above the competition and played important minutes as a true freshman. He figures to be one of the first receivers off the bench for receivers coach Darrell Hazell this fall.

Taurian Washington - #5 - Sophomore; 6' 2" 179 lbs. (Orchard Lake, MI) St. Mary Prep

Washington caught everyone's eye in his Buckeye debut as a freshman last year. In the opener against YSU, he caught a short crossing route from Antonio Henton, and sprinted in untouched for a 37-yard TD. Once the Big Ten schedule came around, he had fewer opportunities to play, and he finished the season with just three catches for 46 yards, but spent a year of eligibility.

His next chance to shine was this year's Spring Game, and on that day, Washington looked like he's ready to become a star for the Bucks. He hauled in a 50-yard strike from Joe Bauserman for a score, and looked good after the catch on some other receptions, showing why every top Big Ten program offered him a scholarship. Washington had always been Buckeye fan even though he hailed from Michigan, so the decision came easily when OSU offered. Taurian Washington has given every indication that 2008 could be a breakout year for this special athlete from that state up north.

DeVier Posey - #85 - Freshman; 6' 3" 190 lbs. (Cincinnati, OH) LaSalle H.S.

Posey was a dominant high school player for LaSalle, and was one of Coach Tressel's early commitments and most prized recruits in the 2008 class. He made first team Parade All-American as a senior and was ranked as the nation's #4 wide receiver by Scout. Posey also played in the Army All-American Game along with several of his future-Buckeye teammates, but didn't have much of a chance to show his stuff. He is another of the young OSU receivers who runs extremely well (10.7 100M) and also possesses the size and overall athleticism that coaches love in a wide receiver. He's the kind of talent that will be moving up the depth chart as he begins to feel more comfortable with the offensive system, and may be able to contribute even sooner if he can make a good showing with the kickoff return unit.

Devon Torrence - #10 - Sophomore; 6' 1" 193 lbs. (Canton, OH) South H.S.

Coming out of high school, Devon Torrence was torn between a professional baseball career and signing to play football for Ohio State. When he was drafted by the Houston Astros in the 16th round of the June draft just after committing to the Buckeyes, he worked out a plan with the OSU coaches to have the best of both worlds - at least for now. Before reporting to Ohio State last fall, Torrence reported to the Astros rookie league team in Greenville, and played in 30 games as an outfielder.

Then in fall camp, a decision was made to switch his position from cornerback to wide receiver. He saw very limited playing time as a true freshman receiver last year, but had four catches for 31 yards. He is back playing baseball this summer and plans to continue the dual career as long as possible. Like a few of the other players in this talented receiver depth chart, Torrence challenges the OSU coaches to somehow get his athletic ability onto the field in the best situation possible to help the Buckeyes win.

Grant Schwartz - #6 - RS Sophomore; 6' 0" 194 lbs. (Dana Point, CA) Dana Hills H.S.

Schwartz is another gifted all-around athlete who was originally recruited by Ohio State as a safety, but was moved to wide receiver after his redshirt freshman season. He played quarterback as a high school senior, passing for 1000 yards and rushing for 600 more. Schwartz has extremely good quickness and elusiveness, to go with speed in the 4.3 to 4.4 range. His father Brian played for the Buckeyes, so there was a strong Buckeye connection with him, even though he grew up in California. In his third year, Grant is looking for chances to contribute to the team, and that could happen in 2008 on special teams as well as in the offensive sets.

Jacob Stoneburner - #11 - Freshman; 6' 5" 230 lbs. (Dublin, OH) Coffman H.S.

Stoneburner played on the same Coffman team as incoming Buckeye tackle Mike Adams and he made several of the same scouting service lists as one of the top 100 players in the country. At 6'5", 230, Stoneburner will be the biggest OSU wide receiver in memory. On national signing day, receivers coach Darrell Hazell put to rest the speculation that Stoneburner was possibly ticketed for the tight end position, given his size. Hazell is looking forward to some of the mismatches he can create with a player Jake's size, who can also run a 4.6 40 and possesses a great set of hands. Stoneburner might see more playing time early if he were getting reps at tight end, given the Buckeyes relative lack of depth at the position. Don't be surprised to see him on the field either in the slot, or in tight in multiple receiver sets or two-tight end sets. There's a chance OSU opponents could mistake

him for a tackle.

One of the silliest critiques of the OSU wide receivers that you hear in preseason is that they aren't fast enough. Granted, in the LSU game in January, it was apparent that Robiskie and Hartline were not getting real separation from the Tigers' cornerbacks on the deep patterns, and LSU managed to shut down that part of the OSU passing game pretty effectively. Going up against the fastest players on the best team in the fastest conference in the country, no receivers anywhere are going to run right past LSU's corners. And while neither Robiskie or Hartline have "Ted Ginn speed", they can both turn it on, and there is plenty more of the commodity in this receiver group.

With Small and Washington and Posey getting significant playing time, there will be no shortage of burners. And though the Buckeye offense doesn't throw the ball to Chris Wells very often (5 catches for 21 yards in '07), they do plan to use Brandon Saine and possibly also freshman Lamaar Thomas out of the backfield in the passing attack. Both of those guys have run 10.3 in the 100-meters, and can leave even the fastest DB's in their dust, let alone the linebackers that will often be trying to cover them.

The future is bright at this position for OSU, who will lose only Robiskie

from this group going into 2009. The challenge for Coach Hazell in 2008 will be to get the most out of the deepest OSU receiving corps in recent memory, and to get some of the most talented athletes on the team onto the field in any way possible.

This is one in a series on the 2008 Buckeyes position groups. The other installments are linked below:

Meet the 2008 Buckeyes: Offensive Line

Meet the 2008 Buckeyes: Quarterbacks

Meet the 2008 Buckeyes: Running Backs