The Beanies and Animals have moved on from Columbus, and the 2009 OSU roster doesn't have a lot of household names other than that of their celebrated quarterback. And people know about Thad Gibson and Kurt Coleman on defense, but a big chunk of this year's Buckeye team is made up of a core of lesser-known young talents, just waiting to show their stuff on the football field. I'm previewing ten of the guys I think are likely to have breakout seasons for the Buckeyes in '09...with certain qualifiers...

No seniors are on my breakout list. Yes there are several senior starters on this team from whom a breakout year would be welcome....possibly even "huge", as contributions to a successful OSU season. WR Ray Small, DT Todd Denlinger, CB Andre Amos and TE Jake Ballard come to mind. Did I mention Ray Small? But "breakout" implies future success as well, and my ten have at least two years each of eligibility remaining.

No true freshmen on my list either. Almost any member of the touted 2009 class could "break out", and several undoubtedly will. Running backs Jordan Hall and Jamaal Berry will both play. Receiver Duron Carter and linebacker Dorian Bell will play. OL's Jack Mewhort and Corey Linsley are already pushing into the two-deep. Glenville's Jonathan Newsome is turning heads at outside linebacker. Storm Klein, John Simon, Corey Brown...studs. You get the idea. This class is loaded....but for our purposes today, it doesn't count.

My list contains all players with at least one year in the program at OSU, and all are either first-time starters for the Buckeyes, or are playing regularly in the rotation. One of those first-time starters in 2009 was supposed to be Tyler Moeller, the junior linebacker from Cincinnati, who was seriously injured in an unprovoked assault this month, and will miss the 2009 season. Tyler Moeller certainly would have been on this list. So we'll call him #11, and list the other ten in his honor...and send our heartfelt best wishes to Tyler for a complete recovery.

My Breakout Ten, in no particular order...

Devon Torrence - #10 - cornerback - The 6' 1", 193 lb. junior from Canton South is still battling with Andre Amos to be the starting cornerback replacing Malcolm Jenkins, but now that he has put his professional baseball career on hold, Devon's obvious athletic talent and his two years experience in the OSU program should propel him to a lot of playing time regardless of who starts. Playing opposite the established Chimdi Chekwa, Torrence will be tested early and often by opposing quarterbacks, and no doubt take some lumps, but he has no less natural ability than some of the great corners in OSU history, and he'll have ample opportunity to show it off. Like the man says, you still have to do it in front of 105,000 people....but Torrence looks like he's up to it.

J.B. Shugarts - #76 - offensive tackle - Shugarts was somewhat under the radar this spring as he rehabbed from an off-season shoulder surgery, but he has closed fast in fall practices and has now moved past fellow sophomore Mike Adams in the competition at the all-important left tackle position. Part of the 2008 "Brew Crew" recruiting class, the 6' 8", 300 lb. all-state lineman from Klein, Texas came to OSU amid high expectations, and got enough playing time in 2008 to earn a letter, competing almost exclusively at right tackle. His off-season development in the weight room and the year of competitive experience should come together with this young man's fierce competitiveness and physical style of play to make this the year J.B. Shugarts makes his mark as a Buckeye.

Etienne Sabino - #6 - linebacker - Moeller's misfortune may result in more playing time for Etienne Sabino, the highly-recruited sophomore from Miami who made an impression on special teams as a true freshman in 2008, and is working as the first backup at two of the three linebacker spots at the moment. For the 6' 3", 232 lb. Sabino, that will mean his first significant action from scrimmage as a Buckeye, and his great speed and sideline-to-sideline range make him versatile enough to contribute at any of the three linebacker positions in the OSU defense. He demonstrated his knack for being around the ball with a TD off a blocked punt last year at Purdue, and he was was on the field with the first unit for much of the jersey scrimmage this Saturday. He'll be a fixture in the deep OSU linebacker rotation in 2009, and he has the look of a star in the making.

Justin Boren - #65 - offensive guard - Boren qualifies as a potential breakout player for OSU mostly because he has yet to play in a game in Scarlet and Gray. The 6' 3", 315 lb. junior guard from Pickerington is an established performer in Big Ten play however, having started for a full season at Michigan in 2007, earning honorable mention all-conference honors before transferring to OSU and sitting out 2008. You rarely hear Boren's name mentioned without the

word "nasty" coming up somewhere in the conversation. His aggressive style and a play-through-the-whistle attitude should bring an element to the Buckeyes' O-line that many observers feel has been lacking recently. By consensus the best OSU offensive lineman in spring and fall practices, Boren has been prominently mentioned among the all-conference projections for 2009. He's a bear. Watch #65.

Nathan Williams - #43 - defensive end - Williams played his way into the rotation as a true freshman at one of the deepest positions on the OSU roster in 2008, which alone says a lot about his ability and his work effort. And the fact that the 6' 4", 245 lb. defensive end played on offense as a running back in his prep career at Washington C.H. (OH) Miami Trace tells you a lot about his overall athleticism. As a pass rusher, Williams has shown that he can run either around, or over opposing offensive linemen, and in defensing the run, his powerful upper body makes it tough to break his tackle once he makes the hit. He is listed as the Buckeyes' third defensive end, behind Gibson and Cam Heyward, but he'll be at end on most obvious passing downs, as Heyward moves inside to tackle, and paired with Gibson, Nathan Williams should make a habit of disrupting offensives in 2009.

Taurian Washington - #5 - wide receiver - Washington has paid his dues for two years at OSU, playing behind NFL-bound receivers in Columbus, but the 6' 2", 180 lb. speedster from Michigan is ready to step into the limelight as one of Terrelle Pryor's prime targets in 2009. "T-Wash", (as his quarterback refers to him) will probably be on the field with the first unit when the Buckeyes are in their 3-wide set, a formation that they could use as much as 50% of the time. He'll split out wide opposite DeVier Posey, as Dane Sanzenbacher moves into the slot. Washington has great speed, and should be one of Pryor's primary deep threats this season. Washington led all receivers with six catches in Saturday's jersey scrimmage, and though he has yet to make his first official pass reception as a Buckeye, they should come early and often in the new season.

Brian Rolle - #36 - linebacker - Rolle is another young OSU linebacker who is ready to make his name a household word in Buckeye Nation. For two years now Rolle has been making crunching hits on kick coverage teams and showing the promise of the future in his limited opportunities to play from scrimmage. The 5' 11", 221 lb. linebacker from Immokalee, FL makes up for whatever he may lack in ideal linebacker size with tremendous speed and an instinct for penetration into the offensive backfield. A fearless tackler with a non-stop motor, Rolle has worked his way into a starting linebacker spot in the base, 3-linebacker defensive set. Rolle has a cousin (Antrel) playing in the NFL, and he has shown flashes of that kind of ability in his first two seasons at OSU. Now he'll have his own chance to perform on the big stage.

Brandon Saine - #3 - running back - Saine is probably the most familiar name on this list, having been named "Mr. Football" for the state of Ohio in his senior year at Piqua, but after his first two years at OSU, that breakout season hasn't happened yet. Injuries were a part of the problem, as he struggled with a hamstring problem all last year, but even when healthy, the 6' 1", 217 lb. Saine hadn't shown the stuff of which big-time running backs are made. He comes into 2009 as the #2 back behind starter Boom Herron, and his performance in the offseason and in spring ball has given observers every reason to believe that 2009 could be different. Saine has been running with more confidence and authority this year, and his speed (state record-holder in the 100M) has never been in doubt. Neither Saine nor Herron are established every-down backs in the Big Ten, so the ideal situation would be for them to split up the 25 carries per game and limit the team's reliance on true freshman backs. If he stays healthy Brandon Saine could become a very important Buckeye in 2009.

Jermale Hines - #7 - safety/linebacker - Hines was a borderline breakout player for this list, because he played enough, and impressively enough, last season for the Buckeyes to be considered already "broken out" in some people's minds, (not unlike DeVier Posey on the other side of the ball). One reason he makes this list anyway is that the ceiling for this 6' 2", 210 lb. junior from Glenville is so high that he still has plenty of potential to grow as a player, and we may have only seen him scratch the surface of his ability. Hines is the starter at the Star position for the defense, a hybrid role that makes him the fifth DB when they go to the nickel package. He combines the speed of a safety with the size and physical presence of a linebacker. A big hitter and a tremendous all-around athlete, Hines is a talent offensive coaches will have to account for on every play. A big junior year could get the NFL scouts paying attention to #7.

Jake Stoneburner - #11 - tight end - Forget the burning metaphysical question...if it's even possible for a young tight end to have a breakout season at Ohio State...and consider instead redshirt freshman Jake Stoneburner's remarkable skill set. A 6' 5", 245 lb. converted wide receiver who can catch, and get yards after the catch, with speed that's still in the 4.6 range. The blocking part is coming, and Stoneburner could be a handful downfield for linebackers and for defensive coordinators...but only if the coaches call his number. I think they will. Stoneburner will team up with senior starter Jake Ballard in 2009, and only his bad luck with injuries, which cost him the 2008 season and has limited him again this fall, will stop this talented big man from becoming a potent offensive force for OSU.

There are still an awful lot of question marks for the 2009 Buckeyes, many of them revolving around how quickly the young offense can come together and be productive. And no prediction like the above can ever expect to be 100% on the money. But if these ten guys play up to their collective ability and potential, there's no doubt in my mind that the 2009 Bucks will be Big Ten

champs once again, and come December, will be sitting at 10 or more wins waiting for the BCS to come calling.