The Buckeyes scrimmaged at the Horseshoe Saturday, and about 35 media people were in attendance to watch, along with a few dozen other family and guests. We were joined by 105,000 empty seats.

After warm-ups they spent the first half hour or so with all the offensive and defensive linemen going through drills down at one end of the field while the offensive skill position guys and the linebackers and defensive backs went through some 7-on-7 stuff at the other end.

A brief kick scrimmage followed, with Ben Buchanan handling most of the punting and Drew Basil doing the place-kicking. OSU will sink or swim with those two as the kicking specialists, as they aren't likely to be challenged for the starting roles this year.

Both guys looked pretty good, by the way. Basil was hitting with consistency from 40+ yards out, including one 50-yarder, though he had a couple of kicks blocked, and Buchanan boomed one punt over 70-yards out of his own end zone. Figuring punting yardage averages, including net punting yardage, is such an overrated stat these days with so much pooch-punting in the game plan. Buchanan proved pretty successful at pinning the opposition inside their own 20 last season, and that looks to continue.

All of the Tat5 are practicing with the team except for Pryor, with Adams and Posey looking especially good. Pryor was in shoulder pads and sweats, and spent much of the morning in Braxton Miller's ear, helping him understand the play calls coming in from the sideline when the freshman took his turns behind center.

Offense:

Joe Bauserman started at QB, but over the course of the 90-play scrimmage, played fewer series than any of the other three quarterbacks. He hit Posey for a 33-yard TD on the first series. It was a basic dig route coming right to left, and Posey just outran several defenders after the catch for the last 20 yards into the end zone. Posey had four catches on the day, and looked like a man among boys compared to the rest of the OSU receivers. He'll be missed in September as much as any of the other suspended players.

Bauserman threw the only interception of the day, when he threw up a wounded duck after getting hit by Johnny Simon, and it was picked off and returned about 20 yards by Dorian Bell.

Kenny Guiton didn't do much to distinguish himself on this day, unofficially 7 of 13 for about 50 yards. He doesn't have the arm strength of Miller or Taylor Graham, and he's quick, but not as quick as Miller.

Graham had the best numbers overall...11 of 20 for 86 yards, including a nice throw for an 8-yard TD to Posey near the end of the day. He looks comfortable in the pocket, and unlike his dad, he's not a total statue in the backfield. He scrambled around end for one first down, and looked mobile enough to evade pass rushers in a pinch. Several of his incompletions were wildly overthrown, although he appeared to be making mostly good decisions in a very conservative game plan...checking down to short throws to backs and tight ends much of the time.

Braxton Miller *(pictured above)* looked as good as any of the quarterbacks, going 4 of 7

passing, mostly on short stuff, but he had one 17-yard completion over the middle to Jordan Hall that showed off his arm strength and accuracy, as he threaded the ball between defenders. Miller also had the highlight reel play of the day when he took a shotgun snap from the 11-yard line, evaded a rushing J.T. Moore, spun away from another tackler at the line of scrimmage and juked his way up the middle into the end zone, diving the last three yards for the last score of the day.

Miller is lightning quick on rollouts, and he showed he's capable of seeing the field and throwing on the run. Depending on how quickly he can pick things up in the mental phase of the game (they won't allow Pryor to be in the huddle telling him what to do vs. Akron on 9/3) Miller could be the guy that gives the Buckeyes the best mix of running and passing skills at the position. Right now he seems like a long shot to start the season at QB, but a lot can happen between now and Labor Day.

At running back, the Buckeyes are just loaded. Boom Herron played, and you know what you've got in Herron from Game 6 on....a solid, tough back who can catch the ball and won't fumble it. But Jaamal Berry and Rod Smith were the most impressive backs on the field Saturday, and along with Jordan Hall and Carlos Hyde, OSU is deeper at running back than at any time in my memory...(and that's a long time).

Smith *(pictured)* had six carries for 34 yards, including a 13-yard gain, but it wasn't so much the yardage gained...because it's always going to hard to run against the OSU defense...but the way he runs that is impressive. Speed and power at 6'3, 225, with some open field moves too. He breaks tackles and fights for extra yards. Smith (who's wearing #24) has already built a reputation for 100% effort, hustle and hard work on the field and in the weight room. He did drop a couple of short passes that hit him in the hands, so it seems there are better backs to throw to (Hall, Herron, Hyde) on this team. But Rod Smith is special.

Hall, Herron and Berry had four carries each, but it was Berry (4 carries, 22 yds.) who flashed the quickness and vision that set him apart. Hall had two catches on top of his 15 yards rushing, and spent a lot of time in the slot as a receiver.

We expected the passing game to feature lots of short, safe throws to backs and tight ends this year with the inexperience at QB and wide receivers, and this scrimmage bore that out. Jake Stoneburner and Reid Fragel along with early arriving freshman Jeff Heuerman give this team tons of talent and depth at tight end. Fragel is huge at 6' 8", and 275 lbs, and is already the best blocker this team has had at tight end in a while. His good hands are a bonus. Stoneburner looks healthy and trim, and he could have a huge season catching the ball.

At wide receiver, the starters are likely to be Chris Fields (2 catches) and Corey "Philly" Brown until Posey gets back. T.Y. Williams had a couple balls thrown his way Saturday, but they were too tall even for the 6'5" redshirt freshman. Verlon Reed, another redshirt freshman, is probably next on the depth chart, and I very much liked what little I saw of him...excellent hands and a fluid gait...could be a pleasant surprise.

Toward the end of the scrimmage they ran a no huddle look for three series with Graham, Guiton and Miller getting one series each at QB. It was all empty backfield shotgun, with two WR's and two backs in a 4-WR look (Fields and Hyde in the slots, and Brown and Berry split wide, as one example). That way they can break the huddle with two RB's in the game, and then come up to the line with 4 WR's, keeping the defense guessing. I suspect Hall and Berry could be especially lethal in this kind of set.

The starting offensive line was (L-R) Mike Adams, Jack Mewhort, Mike Brewster, Corey Linsley and J.B. Shugarts. Sophomore Andrew Norwell is the best bet to take over through Adams' suspension at LT, but we were seeing him get a lot of work at left guard in this scrimmage, and he could supplant one of Mewhort or Linsley at guard if the coaches feel he's one of the best five linemen they've got. Mewhort is among the most versatile of the linemen, seeing time at both guard spots and at left tackle. He can play center in a pinch too, although Linsley is Brewster's first backup there.

Marcus Hall, who worked at both guard spots and at right tackle on Saturday, is another guy who could break into the starting lineup at a guard before it's all said and done. Until the freshmen arrive in August (a center and two guards) the Buckeyes are operating with just 10 scholarship offensive linemen...one reason I suspect they have yet to confirm that there will

even be a spring game on the 23rd. At best I think they'll have to alter the usual format, or have several of the O-linemen switching off jersey colors during the game to keep every guy from playing every snap of his team's offensive series. There are a couple of walk-ons who could help out, but only a couple. Any major injury, especially to one of their OT's, would be a disaster.

Early enrolling freshman Tommy Brown played exclusively at RT, and showed some pretty good feet, although he had his hands full at times (literally) with Melvin Fellows and some of the other pass rushers on the defense.

Defense:

Despite losing Heyward and Larimore, it looks like the defensive line will be the strength of the team again. Loaded is the word. And that's before four more stud freshmen report in August.

So many of the guys are versatile enough to play inside or outside, including Johnny Simon, who could play the strong side defensive end, Heyward's old spot, but who will be hell on wheels inside playing the 3-technique DT paired with Jonathan Hankins on the nose. Hankins *(pictured)*
looks like he has reworked his 330 pounds into a (relatively) more trim package, and he's a natural nose. Nathan Williams will of course start at the Leo end, backed up by redshirt freshman J.T. Moore at least until Tat5 suspendee Solomon Thomas gets back.

Adam Bellamy could end up the starter at the SSDE if Simon isn't there, or at the 3-technique tackle if Simon goes outside. Moore and Bellamy both had strong scrimmages Saturday. Bellamy caused a fumble and Moore penetrated into the backfield several times to disrupt plays

Melvin Fellows looked huge and fast in this scrimmage, penetrating and outside speed rushing the QB's all day. He appears lean and quick at 6'5", 280, and may be about to leave his first two injury-plagued seasons behind and break out at SSDE. Fellows had two sacks and a few more pressures Saturday.

Solon's Darryl Baldwin (#90) redshirted last year, but passed the eye-test Saturday, playing both at strongside end and defensive tackle. Baldwin looks even bigger than his 6'5, 290, and he will help off the bench. Garrett Goebel is another player at DT, and early freshman Joel Hale (#51) has impressed everybody all spring as another possible DT contributor.

At linebacker, Andrew Sweat seems to have found his natural position at Will linebacker where he can run and pursue. Etienne Sabino played mostly in the middle and was a force on Saturday, making his redshirt year in 2010 look like a smart move. He'll have two years to roam the middle and make plays. Storm Klein played Sam and Mike linebacker spots and made a few tackles. When the Buckeyes are in their 4-2-5 nickel package, Sweat and Sabino will be the linebackers, at least if the season started tomorrow. Dorian Bell had a gift-wrapped interception, and looked active most of the day. Jordan Whiting played well too, and Jonathan Newsome is in the mix as a backup.

Travis Howard and Dominic Clarke would be the starting cornerbacks if they had a game this week. Howard (#7) and Clarke (#5) have both switched numbers for this fall, and after filling in admirably against Ryan Mallett's Sugar Bowl onslaught, they both have some confidence going into 2011. Florida State transfer Dionte Allen had a couple of pass breakups Saturday. He's not the prototype sized OSU corner at 5' 10", 185, but he could possibly surpass Clarke as a starter

by September. Bradley Roby is the other guy to watch in the cornerback rotation. The redshirt freshman will help this team in 2011. (Once Akron SVSM's Doran Grant gets here in August, he could break into that two-deep as well.)

Tyler Moeller is still rehabbing from his pectoral muscle surgery and didn't play Saturday. He's the projected starter at the hybrid Star position as he goes into his sixth season in Columbus. Till then, Christian Bryant is the Star, and C.J. Barnett and Orhian Johnson would be the starting safeties. (Though they played mostly 4-3-4 Saturday) Bryant is too good not to play somewhere, and although Johnson looked aggressive and strong Saturday, he could be the odd man out once Moeller is back. Bryant and Barnett are likely to be your safeties when the curtain comes up. Jamie Wood is a great looking backup at safety. He had a couple of "who was that?" hits on Saturday.

We may be allowed to see another similar scrimmage this Saturday, and if so, I'll make the trip again. Till then.....

(all photos courtesy of Jim Davidson - The-Ozone.net)