There were some major developments for OSU football at the end of the week, and for a change, it was generally good news for Ohio State followers. The NCAA released their report (pdf) on the OSU case, and the news that there had been no finding of either a “failure to monitor” or a “lack of institutional control” came as a surprise to many observers around the country.

I trust it didn’t come as a surprise to readers of this column, however, because for weeks in this space they have been reading that those two serious institutional violations had not even been alleged against Ohio State. Yes, the NCAA could still add on to the self-imposed penalties already assumed by OSU, with a potential post-season ban (one year, tops), or some scholarship losses, which I assume would be minimal. But for now at least, it looks like the dreaded Hammer will not be of the sledge variety.

In addition, the university released the full transcript (139-page .pdf) of the five-hour interview Jim Tressel conducted with NCAA officials on Feb 8 of this year, soon after the school discovered and self-reported that Tressel had been alerted by email to possible violations by some of his players. We’ll get into much more on that after I get a chance to digest it all, but I didn’t wait around till Friday to decide on a topic for this week’s Leaves, so there’s something else in store for you.

An interview with Bill Greene:

Bill Greene is from the Canton area, and has been following and analyzing Ohio State's recruiting for a long time, and writing about it as an "insider" on the Scout.com site for Ohio State sports for the last several years. He has now taken on more responsibilities for Scout, covering all of the top players in the state of Ohio as part of their national team of recruiting analysts.

I've spoken to Bill for this column several times over the years, and I don't think there is anyone who is more tuned in to the OSU recruiting situation than he is. I have come to respect the way he goes about his job, because he talks to the kids themselves and their families, and he respects their decision process and their privacy. He shoots straight, and puts a lot of himself into his work. It's obvious that he loves his job.

I caught up with Bill by phone this week, and have transcribed below nearly all of our 30-minute conversation. I've added some links to the names of some of the kids we talked about, so you can learn more about them if you care to. I don't think it needs any more set-up than that...and it's long already, but I think it'll be a quick and informative read...at least for OSU fans who concern themselves with the decisions of 17 and 18-year old high school football players, like some of us do.....

DW: Bill, thanks for taking some time with us. First off, tell us a little bit about what your job description is with Scout.

BG: My title is Ohio Recruiting Analyst....which would be covering the state of Ohio...not specifically Ohio State. My job is to cover the top 100-120 top players in Ohio...every year. That's my main job description. And then also, when Ohio State is recruiting a kid from Florida, I go ahead and track him down, because the bulk of our subscribers are not really signed up to hear about the No. 120-rated kid. They want the Ohio State kids, so I do provide that also...but that's not really in my job description. Technically I have to write 70 articles a month on the top 120 players in Ohio....I've got so many message board posts I've got to make on about ten different message boards....so that's my main job description....but the Ohio State stuff...they love me doing it....and I love doing it. I love covering Ohio State recruiting.

DW: Well, that's kind of how it started out, right?. I mean, more than some of the other recruiting analysts, at first you were really just getting to know the kids....you talk to the kids and their families and you were doing that when it was a hobby and then it sort of transitioned into the current job, right?

BG: Exactly.....I did this....probably 10-11 years ago....I was doing it just for fun....I mean, I go to games every week anyway....I'm always going to games...so I know all the coaches, and got to know all the players...so then I kinda got hooked up with Duane Long. He was publishing a magazine called Ohio Future Stars, and he heard my name, so he would call me to ask me about a kid from Canton McKinley...or a kid from Glenville that I had seen...I just started helping him with that magazine...just as a hobby...something to do...and he would list me in the magazine as a contributor...and it was cool.

Then he got bought out by Bucknuts when they went to a full website...they bought him out and renamed the magazine Ohio High Magazine...and he kind of encouraged me to stay with Bucknuts, and write articles for them and post on the Internet...and it was great...and I did that for about 3 ½ years...never made a nickel. And then they started paying me....on a per article basis. About that time Scout kind of took notice of me, and when Bucknuts split away from Scout to go into business, and Scout took over the Ohio State site as their own, they asked me and Kyle Lamb and Nevadabuck to stay on with them, which we did.

DW: So now you're kind of in competition with Duane Long...to some degree, right?

BG: Yeah, right...absolutely. We're basically competitors now. You know, I'm still friends with

him, and really don't look at it that way at all. I've got a job to do...and that's the way it is. I've got a great relationship with all the Rivals guys...and the Bucknuts guys and everyone. I'm not so much in competition with those guys as I'm in competition with myself...to do what Scout wants me to do.

DW: Getting down to talking about the Buckeyes' 2012 recruiting a little bit. First of all what's the number of scholarships you see for next year? I've heard 20 thrown around a little bit. They've got 11 commits now. Is 20 the likely target?

BG: They probably could stretch it...you know, James Jackson left the program...and there might be some other defections. They might stretch it to 21 or 22 if they wanted to, but 20-21 is what we're working off...and I think that's safe...without going overboard. I think that's where they'll end up being.

DW: Bill, seems like right now, the big void is the lack of defensive line commits...which is kind of ironic... it's a great year for defensive linemen in Ohio...and still none of them are Buckeyes. I said in a column when Tom Strobel committed to Michigan...hey, not to worry...if McMullen and Wormley

and
Pittman
and
Lewis
and
Adolphus Washington
all go elsewhere, you can join me out on the ledge. Now, a few weeks later, with three more of those kids [Pittman, McMullen, Lewis] already committed elsewhere...well, I'm not out on the ledge...but I'm opening the window. What's your take on the whole defensive line situation?

BG: Well, my comment on that has been that if you get one of them...that would be good...that would be real good...and if you get two of them, you can break out the champagne. And I still feel like that. Six or seven months ago, I would have told you that they were going to get them all....and they were going to get them all. They would have got every single one of those kids. They might have actually had to turn someone away, which they probably would have hated to do, but maybe not...maybe they would have taken them all. They would have gotten Lewis, McMullen, Pittman, Strobel, Washington...maybe not Wormley...I don't think they were ever going to get Wormley, but they would have gotten the rest of those kids.

DW: And they would have been bringing in those 5 or 6 kids to join what was already one of the strongest position groups on the team....

BG: Right...I mean if you're going to take a hit somewhere, the defensive end position is probably a place where you can afford to take one. I mean you hate to see a five star kid get away...you never have enough talent....but they can take a hit there and survive it.

DW: Bill, it seems to me that right now, the biggest enemy is not so much direct fallout from Tressel...but it's uncertainty...the same kind of uncertainty that has hurt Penn State for several years now...because who knows who's going to be there three years from now. Is that a fair take on the situation....that uncertainty is the biggest enemy of Ohio State recruiting right now?

BG: Yes, I think it is. I've felt that way all along. I go back now 11 or 12 years...and I think the most important factors in recruiting are comfortability and relationships...and these kids are just so leery of developing relationships right now with Coach Fickell...or Coach Bollman...they just don't know if they're going to be there. They go through all this....a lot of kids had great relationships with Tressel....and he's gone...and then you get a great relationship with

Fickell...and he gets fired in December...and you gotta meet a new guy...and a lot of kids just don't want to deal with that.

Now some don't care...like Devan Bogard ....does not matter to him. Devan Bogard just wants to run out of the tunnel wearing scarlet and gray....and he'd be happy if they made you the coach tomorrow. It wouldn't matter. Everybody's comfortability factor is different. Some of these kids....like Tyvis Powell....Powell was glad to get an Ohio State offer...it didn't matter who was coaching. But some of the bigger time kids...they really want to know...who is that position coach who is going to get me to the NFL? And Ohio State can't answer that question right now...and that's hurting them.

DW: And that's not going to change until maybe December, right?

BG: That would be the earliest it could happen...I think the Michigan game isn't until after Thanksgiving this year, so you're into December before you can even start the interview process with the selection committee and all that, so realistically, you're probably looking after the bowl game....

DW: But that still leaves you a month before signing day, so there's a possibility of salvaging some recruits late in the process...

BG: Well what hurts you is.....everybody thinks that all the committed kids could come back. The problem is that all the time between now and December, those kids are cementing their relationships with their Michigan State coaches, and their Michigan coaches, and their Notre Dame coaches, and their Wisconsin coaches...they're cementing those relationships, and they have no contact at all with Ohio State...either the current coaches or the new staff coming in. It's so hard to overcome all that.

DW: Well, you've been doing a good job of dampening that unwarranted optimism on the website...by saying, hey man, these kids aren't coming back...don't get your hopes up.

BG: I don't see how. It could happen. Sometimes you get a guy....like Ryan Shazier last year.

He left late in the game, and went looking for a school, so it can happen.

DW: There's been some hope for (Kyle) Dodson floating around out there. What do you make of that?

BG: I don't know...I think they're all Internet rumors. There was some hope for McMullen too, and he pretty much dashed those hopes with his statement the other day...that kinda crushed that. I talked to Kyle Dodson , and he gave me nothing, on the record or off the record, to make me think he's thinking of switching. So I don't see it. I just don't see it. I think if Pittman were to de-commit from Michigan State, I think he'd go to Michigan. So I just don't see that right now.

We'll see what happens. Lots of Internet discussion going on about how Fickell and Mike Vrabel would be calling these kids, and they'll get them back.....but they can't call them right now. You're not allowed to call these kids until September 1. Then you get about one call a week for about two months. The rules are just....it's hard. It's hard to actually recruit kids.

The kid can call you whenever he wants. Well, Kyle Dodson is probably not going to be calling Jim Bollman much, and I bet he's calling that Wisconsin coach a lot. It's just so hard. There's just such an advantage to the committed school, over another school trying to get a de-commit. It's hard to get that. If he's not calling you, and he's not picking up the phone when you call him, you've got a problem.

DW: Let's talk about offensive tackles a little bit. Everybody's really concerned about it...the depth there...not even so much for this year, but for 2012 and beyond, after Adams and Shugarts are gone. They need tackles in this class and there aren't any yet. There are still some big names out there nationally, like Jordan Diamond, and Jonah Pirsig, Evan Goodman...Nick Davidson. Is there hope to land one or more of these kids? How do you see this shaking out?

BG: Well I agree...they need tackles. I don't see one...right now. Pirsig has already eliminated Ohio State. He told them that...so he's out. You know, you actually subtracted one...with (Kyle) Kalis . It's not like you're just having trouble attracting one...you can't even keep the one you have...so that hurts.

(Evan) Goodman , everyone keeps saying he's going to visit, but I'll believe it the day he shows up in Columbus. I think he's remote. I mean, I'd keep recruiting him if I'm Ohio State. As long as he's keeping the recruiting lines open....but I think he's a serious longshot.

Jordan Diamond , I think, is going to go to Michigan. I think if he doesn't go to Michigan, I think Wisconsin is sitting pretty. He's still talking to Ohio State though, so you keep recruiting him. He's a Chicago kid whose good friend is a year older and at Michigan now. I think he's going to Michigan...and Pirsig's out...and Goodman is a serious longshot...

...and then I don't see anyone in Ohio left....that they can get...after you eliminate Kalis, Dodson and Taylor Decker .

So unless there's an out of state kid...now the Davidson kid is very interesting. He's interesting because he doesn't do any interviews.

DW: And he's a legacy guy too. (son of former Buckeye and current Minnesota Vikings offensive line coach, Jeff) In your opinion, is he OSU caliber?

BG: Yeah. I think he is. Just going off of film...I haven't seen him in person. I think he is. And I

have no clue how he views this Ohio State situation...he has never answered a text or call from me. And he really hasn't talked to many recruiting reporters, so it's hard to get a feeling on him, as to what he's thinking.

Until we hear from him, I think it's a guess. I think the talent is really good. You know he'll be well-schooled....by his father...So I think he's a sure thing at the next level...but I have no clue what his thoughts are. He didn't camp at Ohio State...which I took as a telltale sign. I would have thought if he was interested in Ohio State and they were interested in him, that he would have come to their camp...and he didn't.

DW: With maybe 9 or 10 spots left in the class, where do you think they'll go in terms of position groups. I think we can figure on at least two DL and 2 more OL, but outside of that, how do you see the 2012 class filling out?

BG: That's a really good question. I don't think they're real happy with the receivers...the young ones they have on board right now...and I think they would take maybe three receivers in this class...

DW: One on board already...you like (Frank) Epitropoulos , do you not?

BG: I did not. I was not real high on him...just looking at his film. The film just showed a guy...you know, but then when I saw him at the Ohio State camp...the kid was pretty special. He was real special. It was like...wow. The height (6' 3") is legit...real quick feet coming off the line. He knows how to get open...catches everything...he was pretty impressive.

DW: Can he be the future punter for them in Columbus?

BG: He's pretty darn good. Yeah, I think he could be the punter down there. His high school average numbers were mid-40's...he's pretty impressive. I don't claim to be a punting guru, but his numbers were pretty impressive. I think he could be a heck of a safety...I don't think that's where they intend to play him, but I think he could play safety for them, and do well.

Dwayne Stanford then would be the odd ball out there. There's so much difference of opinion out there about whether he has an offer or not. He thinks he has an offer...I know that. He tells me he has an offer. There are some rumblings that he doesn't. I think he's OK...he's pretty good.

DW: Those package deals never seem to come together do they? (referring to Stanford and Ohio's top-ranked overall player, DE Adolphus Washington of Cinn. Taft). Do you see the Stanford -Washington thing happening, or going the way these things usually go?

BG: No...those rarely occur. And from Stanford I keep getting vibes that maybe he wants to get this thing done soon...where from Adolphus Washington, I don't get any vibe that he even gives a crap about recruiting. I think he's going to take his official visits in the fall...take his time, and he may make a really late decision...where Stanford I could see going pretty soon.

We'll see. They could end up at the same school, but I don't see them committing together...or deciding together. I don't think that will happen.

DW: Bill, you have written that you see the recruiting impact of the Tressel scandals as hopefully being a one-off...a one year one-off, because the 2013 kids don't seem to be affected by it as much as this 2012 group. Expand on that for us a little bit...

BG: Yeah...you know I really can't explain why. Just in talking to 2012 kids...even way before they started committing...I knew...OSU...you're in trouble. With Strobel, Lewis, McMullen.... Kids will tell me things on the record for an article, but then they'll say something like..." hey, don't write this, but this is what's really going on"...and it's like....oh jeez...

So I knew it was bad...from a combination of on the record and off the record conversations, talking to coaches, talking to parents...same thing.

With the 2013 kids...they're all back to where it's always been for Ohio State. Cameron

Burrows , Jalin Marshall , Billy Price . I mean all the top guys. They're all Ohio State. I think Cameron Burrows will commit to Ohio State. I think it's coming. I don't know when, He could drag it out, but I think he's all Ohio State. I think Jalin is all Ohio State. Ohio State is in great shape with all these kids.

There's so many good offensive tackles in the next group...and they're in great shape with all of them. Steve Mathie , Evan Lisle, Kyle Meadows , Alex Gall . Next year's really a great year for offensive tackles in Ohio, and they're going to have their pick of them...and they're going to do well with them.

DW: Just in the nick of time, right?

BG: They need 'em. Beyond the nick of time, I think. But that's the way they look at things.

If Chris Carter or Tommy Brown can play tackle...or if you can shift (Jack) Mewhort out there to play at tackle...I think they can bridge the gap...along with (Andrew) Norwell . Bollman's idea since day one is to put the five best football players out there on the football field, and if that means he puts five guards out there...he doesn't care.

DW: Is Marcus Hall one of the best five football players he's got?

BG: I think he's in the mix definitely. But I want to see him come back...you got nothing out of him last year, so he's a guy I hope to see more of this fall. They need him to come through, and he's a heck of a player, and a guy I think they'll be able to count on. and feel good about it. Now...Tommy Brown...Carter...Underwood....we'll see.

And only if someone is injured will any of these guys have to play. I hope they can all take a redshirt...take their time...reshape their bodies, learn the system .

DW: I wasn't as down on Tommy Brown out at right tackle in the spring as some were. I thought he struggled against some pretty damn good defensive linemen like Adam Bellamy, Melvin Fellows and Nathan Williams, but you've got to remember this kid's classmates were all still going to prom.

BG: I wasn't even all that concerned with Tommy Brown in the spring. His job is to struggle. He's supposed to struggle. I would have been more worried if he had played *less*. You can't even evaluate Tommy Brown off of the spring...and I'm not someone who's been high on him at all...but you've got to be fair to the kid.

DW: Was it your sense that last year....in the 2011 class....that the staff kind of panicked, maybe going for numbers...with Chris Carter , Tommy Brown and Tony Underwood ...sort of early...to make sure they weren't going to get burned late like they did the year before...coming in second for some national recruits like Henderson and Matt James, and ending up with Norwell being the only OL recruit?

BG: I don't know...I kind of saw it that way. I know people can get really ticked off if you say Ohio State "panicked". They don't want to hear that. And I don't know if I would use that word either. They were just...maybe prudent?

I would have brought them all into camp. Last year there were some linemen that were really good...like Donavon Clarke and Chase Hounshell, Chris Carter, Tommy Brown. I would have brought them all in to camp, and had them compete for offers. But maybe they were worried that it might be a situation like this year...when you saw guys like Zach Higgins and Benny McGowan making their commitments...and if these guys start committing....and then you don't get any? They were in a tough spot.

I mean Jim Bollman is an easy guy to whip...on the Internet...but you've got to be fair about this. So maybe they did go a little early, but they did get four.

DW: Right...they got the players that they said they wanted...and we'll see. We haven't seen these guys play yet.

BG: At first I was a little critical...first of all I love (Brian) Bobek . Bobek to me is a sure thing...sure fire....but the other three?. I never, ever, ever wrote that they were not OSU caliber players...because I don't think that they are clearly not. I don't know yet. I just thought, let's bring them to camp instead of just offering them off junior film. They got the numbers they needed. They could not have had a one or two offensive linemen class last year. They needed numbers.

What you *cannot* say is that Carter, Brown and Underwood are not OSU caliber. That is just not true. That would be incorrect to say that. Those were kids that definitely belonged in the mix.

DW: Talking about 2012...as a one-year blip on the recruiting scene....and I think it's a little unfair as some are doing, to sort of write off this class. I mean they are going to sign 20-21 kids...and they're going to all be very good football players. And this team is so stacked with talent right now...in my opinion, that they can survive a one-year blip...even if they don't get three or four five-star recruits.

BG: Absolutely. That's not even up for debate either. You can do it yourself. Do a scan of that 85-man roster right now...and look at the kids who have 3, 4 or 5 years of eligibility left, and you'll be shocked at the talent that is there. People, I don't think, are grasping how young this roster is. And it's not like this class (2012) is a washout at all.

Even Najee Murray . I would never criticize Najee Murray's offer...where I might criticize Brown or Carter, because they offered them off junior film. Najee Murray came to Ohio State camp, and *lit it up*. He might have gotten an offer even if they had everyone committed that they wanted...because I mean he lit it up.

DW: Tyvis Powell too...was he a camp offer?

BG: No. Powell was not. I thought they should have waited. They offered about two weeks

before camp...and I thought, couldn't you have just waited two weeks to see him? And yet they were sold on him.

But Luke Roberts they saw in camp. And Fickell and Vrabel were there...and those guys...if there's any position they know, it's linebackers. And if you want to start criticizing three-stars...well, that's when you start getting into..."why are you offering this Brian Hartline kid. He'll never play here, with all these great receivers we've got.". Another three-star, Dane Sanzenbacher. "He'll never play here with all these other receivers." Well...yes he will.

You know..."how's Dane Sanzenbacher going to beat out Ray Small?" Well...watch him.

DW: And that's what you've got to be thinking when you look at a guy like Frank Epitropoulos. The hope is he can be as good as a Sanzenbacher.

BG: So that's why you've got to temper some of the criticism., and some of the being down...If they see these guys in camp...that means a lot to me. Because these guys are so good at talent evaluation. They've proven to be good.They're not perfect, by any means...but my god...their record is pretty darn good.

[illegible] @dwismar [illegible]