Urban Meyer's first Ohio State fall camp is approaching the halfway point, and with a little help from ESPN, OSU fans are getting an intimate inside look at everything from the practice routines to the locker rooms. The depth chart is changing as some of the incoming freshmen show their stuff early, and Meyer has been busy implementing some of his own new touches to the time-honored traditions of Ohio State football.

Kissing and Making Up

Just slightly over a year ago, ESPN was suing Ohio State for the release of internal emails related to the myriad scandals that rocked the program in 2011. Fans of the OSU football program were furious at what they considered nothing short of a vendetta of some sort by the sports network against *(take your pick)* Ohio State, the Big Ten, or their nascent competitor, the Big Ten Network.

The perception was, and in many quarters still is, that ESPN had treated the Ohio State case with far more negative scrutiny and coverage than they had been able to summon for what many considered far more serious scandals elsewhere. In the course of their lawsuit against the university, ESPN had claimed OSU was "aggressive and misguided" as well as "equal parts cynical and hypocritical" in their withholding of the requested emails.

But all that stuff is so 2011.

On August 2, the university announced that ESPN would be granted unprecedented access to Ohio State training and practice facilities, players and coaching staff, and would produce "four, 30-minute specials on ESPNU (August 14-17), a five-part series across College Football Live (August 19-23) and a one-hour special on ESPN (August 22)."

The regular OSU beat media took a back seat to the ESPN cameras and crews for the first two

weeks of fall camp, getting somewhat less than normal face time with Buckeye players and coaches, but things should return to normal now that the shows are in the can. If the first episode in the series is any indication, the show should be a huge hit with followers of the Buckeyes and a masterstroke of welcome PR for Meyer and his program. Ramzy from 11W called the overwhelmingly positive first
"All Access"
show on Tuesday "the weirdest make-up sex in the history of make-up sex." Apparently, all is forgiven. Was it good for you too?

One additional positive result of this newly-flowering romance was an outstanding profile of Urban Meyer
by Wright Thompson of
ESPN the Magazine,
a piece of writing well worth your time if you're a fan of OSU or college football in general.

Playing Angry

One of Meyer's repeated themes of this camp has been that he wants "a hungry team... a team that can't wait to get out there." He goes a step further, saying that he leads an "angry staff", and he wants "an angry team...I want a pissed off football team". This is something he is seen saying on ESPN video , and it is detailed in a piece by Scout's Jeff Svoboda . Meyer cites his 2006 Florida Gators as a team motivated by a certain chip on its shoulder, and he hopes his 2012 Buckeyes will play "pissed off" as a group.

If all this sounds vaguely familiar, it should. Last summer, several OSU players spoke of how being "pissed off"
about what they had been through was going to be motivating them on the field. If that anger was a factor in how the team performed last season, it was not discernible from where I was sitting. I can't say I ever saw any evidence that this approach was embraced or encouraged by Luke Fickell though. In hindsight, maybe he should have tried, and for all we know, maybe he did try, out of view of the public.

I'm sure Urban Meyer will do all he can to harness and then channel the pent-up emotion, frustration and anger still felt by some of his Buckeye players in a positive direction. While the "us-against-the-world" thing isn't exactly a novel motivational ploy, I wish him all the best in that project, if he feels it can help the team maintain an edge. It's worth noting too, that Meyer can be seen in the ESPN show exhorting his players to "calm down" and to "have fun out there", so it's clearly not "all angry all the time".

The Black Stripes

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