

COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S 2010 NATIONAL SIGNING DAY

AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

JOE PATERNO MAY BE 83 YEARS OLD, BUT COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S ALL-TIME WINS LEADER SHOWED HE CAN STILL REEL IN A TOP CLASS. PATERNO AND HIS ASSISTANTS WELCOMED 20 PLAYERS TO PENN STATE IN THE BIG TEN'S NO. 1 RECRUITING CLASS OF 2010.

BY WAYNE STAATS COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The famous saying goes: "Actions speak louder than words." For Joe Paterno, perhaps age would be the better comparison to such actions. The 83-year-old coach just went through another National Signing Day on Wednesday, compiling a recruiting class that ranks at the top of the Big Ten and around the top 10 nationally.

Conventional wisdom says a man can't still be coaching at this level or put together recruiting a class like this one, which numbers 20 prospects. But it turns out age is just a number and is not a hindrance other factors may be.

"Joe has shown, despite his age, that he can relate to the players," Scout.com's Cory James said. "It's tough for other programs to sell [his age as a problem] with coaches leaving left and right at big programs."

Such instances have been all over the news this college football offseason. In 2007, Kansas was 12-1 and Orange Bowl champions under Mark Mangino. Now, the Jayhawks are coming off a season that saw them lose their last seven games after a 5-0 start. They now have a new coach after Mangino was investigated regarding inappropriate player conduct. A settlement was agreed upon, and Mangino resigned.

Also, Lane Kiffin got his first college head coaching job at Tennessee and led the Volunteers to a 7-6 record before leaving for USC, which saw long-time coach Pete Carroll finally make the move back to the NFL with the Seattle Seahawks. And Mike Leach saw a quick end to his successful tenure at Texas Tech after alleged mistreatment of a player, while Florida's Urban Meyer resigned last December before changing his mind and instead taking a leave of absence.

All this happened in one offseason as Paterno

Penn State's recruiting class rank the last five years		
Rivals: 12	2010	Scout: 9
Rivals: 20	2009	Scout: 11
Rivals: 43	2008	Scout: 41
Rivals: 24	2007	Scout: 19
Rivals: 6	2006	Scout: 6

gets ready to embark on his 45th season as the Nittany Lion head coach. It wouldn't be a stretch to say Paterno and Penn State go hand-in-hand, as Rivals.com's Mike Farrell suggests. But the recruiting expert also made it clear that there was more to Penn State's recruiting ability than just the veteran coach. In fact, with the facilities — which he regards as in top five nationally — the money and the fanbase, Farrell called the program one of the pinnacles of college football.

Scout.com's Bob Lichtenfels compared the Lions' program to that of USC, as he argues both are programs that can recruit simply by name. Of course, it doesn't hurt that Penn State has its own brand name.

"Joe Paterno, he could be Punxsutawney Phil," Lichtenfels said. "He can show his face just once every year; it doesn't matter."

Of course, there will have to be an end some day, even for someone like Paterno. But even when that day comes, the recruiting experts acknowledge the foundation the coach has built.

Lichtenfels said receivers' coach Mike McQueary, defensive line coach Larry Johnson and linebackers coach Ron Vanderlinden are some of the top recruiters in the nation. As James

believes, it was Paterno's ability to teach his staff that makes Penn State so successful annually. He points to the fact that the Lions had their class basically wrapped up early as a sign of effectiveness.

As long as Paterno's coaching, don't expect things to change much, especially with the recruiting prowess. But even when the inevitable does happen and the rolled-up khakis and white socks stop roaming the sidelines, there shouldn't be too much of a drop-off.

"People have been using his age against them for years now," Farrell said. "It's tough to follow a legend, but as least follow one who's built a football empire."

Blue chip QBs could battle for time

The regular season is still months away, but the biggest question mark on the team is probably who takes over for Daryll Clark under center.

Kevin Newsome does have a little experience, as he's seen game action. This past season, Newsome threw for 66 yards and also ran for 95 yards and two touchdowns. However, highly touted recruits Paul Jones and Robert Bolden figure to be in the mix.

Farrell said Bolden has the farthest to go out of the three but added that "he's a freak" and that during Elite 11, a quarterback camp that was held in Soka University in California last year, Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Carson Palmer was impressed with Bolden's arm.

Like Newsome last year, Jones enrolled early, so it looks like the decision between the three could go down to the wire.

"They have a lot of depth," Lichtenfels said. "They'll both push Newsome, and I like Jones a little better than Newsome."

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THE RECRUITS

TWENTY PLAYERS JOINED PENN STATE'S CLASS OF 2010, WITH NINE PLAYERS COMING FROM PENNSYLVANIA AND TWO QUARTERBACKS JOINING THE FRAY.

robert bolden

Orchard Lake, Mich. Quarterback Scout Rank: No. 8 QB

"I LOVE THE WAY HE LOOKS," FARRELL SAID. "I WAS THE ONLY ONE FROM RIVALS TO SEE HIM AT THE ELITE 11. I SAW SOME SERIOUS POTENTIAL FOR HIM BECOMING A SUPERSTAR. BUT HE HAS TO WORK ON TOUCH PASSING AND BE MORE AGGRESSIVE RUNNING."

mike hull

Canonsburg, Pa. Middle Linebacker Scout Rank: No. 1 MLB

"HE WAS HIGHLY RATED, BUT HE IS THE NEXT BIG LINEBACKER OUT OF PENN STATE," JAMES SAID. "I LOOK FOR HIM TO REALLY MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE DEPTH CHART. HE'LL PROBABLY START BY THE START OF SOPHOMORE YEAR."

silas redd

Stamford, Conn. Runningback Scout Rank: #No. 7 RB

"HE'S A CAN'T MISS, HE'LL BE A SUPERSTAR," FARRELL SAID. "HE COULD BE A STAR RUNNING BACK. HE IS A PHENOMENAL, PHENOMENAL, PHENOMENAL EFFORT PLAYER — LOVE HIM. HE'S ONE OF MY FAVORITE PLAYERS. HE'S A JOY TO BE AROUND."

tom ricketts

Wexford, Pa. Offensive Tackle Scout Rank: No. 28 OT

"THE OFFENSIVE LINE WAS AN EMPHASIS," LICHTENFELS SAID. "AND THERE WERE SEVERAL GOOD OFFENSIVE LINEMEN AVAILABLE. RICKETTS IS A HIGH-END TYPE KID."

zach zwinak

Frederick, Md. Fullback Scout Rank: No. 1 FB

"HE WAS A RUNNING BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL BUT HE'LL PROBABLY BE A FULLBACK AT PENN STATE," JAMES SAID. "HE'S A REALLY TOUGH RUNNER AND CAN BLOCK REALLY WELL. HE COULD MAKE AN IMPACT EARLY. [JOE] SUHEY IS NOT THE BLOCKER ZWINAK CAN BE. HE'S LIKE MIKE ALSTOTT — A BIG, TOUGH RUNNER."

THE PLAYERS

WHO'S WHO

Name	Hometown	Scout.com Rating
Robert Bolden	Orchard Lake, Mich.	****
Paul Jones	McKees Rocks, Pa.	****
Brad Bars	Nashville, Tenn.	***
Kyle Baublitz	York, Pa.	****
C.J. Olaniyan	Warren, Mich.	****
Khamrone Kolb	Burke, Va.	**
Tom Ricketts	Wexford, Pa.	****
Dakota Royer	Manheim, Pa.	****
Khairi Fortt	Stamford, Conn.	****
Alex Kenney	State College, Pa.	****
Levi Norwood	Waco, Texas	****
DaQuan Jones	Johnson City, N.Y.	****
Evan Hailes	Chesapeake, Va.	****
Miles Dieffenbach	Pittsburgh, Pa.	****
Luke Graham	Harrison City, Pa.	***
Kevin Haplea	Annandale, N.J.	****
Mike Hull	Canonsburg, Pa.	****
Shyquawn Pullium	Erie, Pa.	***
Silas Redd	Stamford, Conn.	****
Zach Zwinak	Frederick, Md.	****

QB DE OT OLB WR DT C OG TE CB MLB FB