Buckeye Fever: Virtue or curse?

by Marty Rozenman

Buckeye Fever: The state of being an OSU fan characterized by paying close attention to the success of that university's sports teams and often wearing scarlet and gray clothing on game days.

At its most extreme, those with the fever will name their first child Brutesc Buckeye, and if it’s a girl, Favorite record-The OSU Marching Band’s latest release. Frequently heard quote-“Go, Buckeyes!”

NOT THE FEVER?

OK, Buckeye fans, it’s time for a quick check of your sports consumer level—aka, fan factor, as it were.

Let’s jump ahead in time to a Saturday afternoon and see if you have Buckeye Fever.

You: A) listened to the OSU-Michigan game on the radio; B) watched it on television, providing it was on television; C) watched the game in Ohio Stadium; D) were both A and B; E) didn’t care.

If you answered E, you needn’t bother continuing with this article. You don’t have Buckeye Fever. You’re probably not a sports fan. You may not have a use.

If you answered D, it’s up to you whether or not you want to continue. Oddsmakers say you’ll skimp on the article and ask friends how it came out.

If you answered A, B, or C, you may have Buckeye Fever. If you attend the game, there’s a good chance you’ve got it. Either that or you’re getting a free ticket and see the opportunity as more interesting than an afternoon of, say, Krogering. Odds are you won’t be much fun to sit beside.

THE DOCTOR SPEAKS

Dr. Andrew Schwabel is a professor of psychology at Ohio State. The Long Island product grew up following the Brooklyn Dodgers, New York Mets and football Giants.

Today, Schwabel is a normal, healthy Ohio State fan. He said his transition “just happened” naturally over a period of time and was not inspired by a particular Archie Griffin run or a rare Buckeye pass.

“I think being an Ohio State fans serves a variety of functions,” the psychologist rationalized. “It’s something for people to look forward to during the week, something they can be relaxed about and something that involves social contact. There are 90,000 people at the stadium and they share the same experience. They instantly have something to talk about.”

Schwabel said being a fan, and the Michigan game in particular, gives a person the opportunity to “let the child out.” Being a fan involves little responsibility, and the opportunity to let “pure joy and emotion rule.”

He added the Ohio State experience contributes to community feeling.

“You feel like you’re part of Columbus,” he said. “You can drive down High Street and see the signs or go into Kroger or Tarp’s where everybody is wearing scarlet and gray.”

RIDING THE WAVE

The well-adjusted Buckeye fan is like a good surfer; He or she can enjoy the thrill of the experience and avoid being wiped out.

Schwabel cautioned that being a fan, as in almost all pursuits, requires perspective—moderation as it’s been said. He said it is not a good idea to take your fandom to extremes.

“It is good to identify with the team and hope it wins,” he said. “That’s OK. But to take it so personally that it can ruin your day is not good. You have to come to terms with the fact the outcome is out of your control. You can’t step out of the fan mode and understand your emotions.”

Schwabel believes a lot of Buckeye boosters were inadvertently blue after the three straight losses early in the year.

“Some men, who are so oriented to their career or business, forget how to have fun,” Schwabel said. “This becomes a function of Football Saturday. It takes the decisions away. It’s a built in break.”

He added the atmosphere also allows men to get together in a way they’re not usually able to in the business world and “let their hair down.”

Schwabel said it can also serve as a ready made day together for couples.

Drinking associated with tailgate parties or watching the game “depends on the individuals and the individuals they associate with,” Schwabel said.

Again, moderation is the best game plan.

EVERYBODY LOVES A WINNER

“There’s been some interesting research done,” Schwabel said. “After a victory many people will wear the team colors on Monday and say, ‘We won.’ After a loss, people tend not to wear the team colors, say, ‘They lost.’”

THE THRILL VS. THE AGONY

High Street has been the scene of wild celebrations and unruly demonstrations after victories and defeats, respectively.

“The celebrating is something to look forward to,” Schwabel said. “People want to have a good time and that’s terrific.”

“The other part is you can lose your sense of personal responsibility and get carried away into a mob psychology,” he added. “That is tied to the drinking. You become lost in the crowd, irresponsible and leaderless.”

Schwabel suggested a way to counteract this possibility: is to have scheduled activities planned for after the game.

NO ROSES THIS YEAR

Michigan has already won the Big Ten title and the trip to the Rose Bowl, so this Saturday’s game appears to have lost a bit of its luster. Or has it?

“I don’t think that makes much difference,” Schwabel said. “Sure, it would have been more exciting if Illinoi had scored (and beaten USC Wolverines Nov. 6), but it still is The Game of the Year if OSU wins, it can go to bowl.”

THE VERDICT

The final answer to the question — Buckeye Fever virtue or curse? — is left to the good doctor.

“It’s a good community pastime,” Schwabel said. “You just have to find out how it fits into your life style.”
If you answered A, B or C, you may have Buckeye Fever. If you attend the game, there’s a good chance you’ve got it. Either that or you’re getting a free ticket and see the opportunity as more interesting than an afternoon of, say, Krogering. Odds are you won’t be much fun to sit beside.

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Buckeye Fever heats up

Program brings grants-in-aid to OSU athletes

By RANDY JACOBS
Lantern staff writer

Ohio State students can donate money to the school's athletic program just by purchasing a box of Tide or a six pack of Pepsi.

These donations are made possible through a program called Buckeye Fever. This program by Central Ohio food stores and distributors, provides financial aid for OSU athletes.

"The money raised goes right into the athletic grant-in-aid fund. It is not allocated to any particular sport," said Denny Hoobler, director of marketing and promotions for the Department of Athletics.

Area food stores designate about 100 items as Buckeye Fever products. Each manufacturer or food supplier then donates a portion of the sales of these products to the Buckeye Fever Fund.

Hoobler said the original idea for the program came from OSU Athletic Director Richard M. Bay.

"Rick had a similar program when he was at the University of Oregon, prior to coming to Ohio State," Hoobler said. "The program worked well there, so he decided to put one together here."

Since it began two years ago, the Buckeye Fever program has grown each year. Last year it raised $132,000 for the athletic program.

"I would estimate that the money raised last year provided around 22 scholarships," Hoobler said.

Anne Chasser, director of Ohio State's licensing program, said area stores have been cooperative in helping with the program.

"Retailers see that this is good for their business, and the food vendors who supply the products, see this as a good promotion for them," Chasser said.

"The retailers also like it because it is a way of affiliating with Ohio State during the football season, when the school is in the news a lot," he said.

John Hill, who represents Big Bear stores on the Buckeye Fever board of directors, said Big Bear became involved because they felt it was a good fund-raising idea.

"This program has been good for Ohio State and the stores that participate," Hill said.

Buckeye Fever is currently running from Sept. 14 through Oct. 17. Hoobler said the program was run the entire month of September the first year, but was moved back at the beginning of last year.

"We felt we might have lost a little the first year due to the holidays and back to school sales," Hoobler said. "By moving it back a couple of weeks we felt we were into a heavier buying time for grocery items."

Since the Buckeye Fever program has grown in its first two years, the outlook is good for this year, Chasser said.

"We expect the program to keep growing and do even better this year," she said.
Fund-Raising Effort reaches "Fever" Pitch

A fever is spreading throughout Columbus, and the business community is helping it grow—all in the name of Ohio State athletics.

Buckeye Fever, a promotional campaign which ran from Sept. 13 to Oct. 17 of this year, is expected to generate approximately $150,000 for the athletic department’s grant-in-aid program.

In a joint effort, local grocery stores and their suppliers and manufacturers have teamed up to create a virtually new form of revenue that will benefit all 31 Buckeye sports programs.

During the campaign period, particular products are targeted for use in the program, and are sold at reduced prices. A specified amount is then contributed to OSU based on the manufacturers’ and suppliers’ sales volume to local stores. The stores’ role involves designing displays that identify the products for the consumer.

For example, the Keebler Company sold 6,863 cases of its Townhouse Crackers to Columbus grocery stores during the designated five weeks. With a pledge of fifteen cents per case, Keebler raised about $1,000 on that product alone.

Since its inception in 1985, Buckeye Fever has continued to grow. This year’s effort included approximately 100 different items, involving 31 companies. Now on the campaign trail was Procter & Gamble which offered products such as Tide and Cascade to the cause.

Companies participating in the project include Kroger, Big Bear, Harts, Super Duper, Meijer, IGA, Cardinal Supermarkets and Cub Foods.

"The philosophy of the program is a winning situation for everyone," said Denny Hoobler, director of marketing for Ohio State. "For the companies who have products in the program, we can hopefully increase their sales through advertising. For the stores themselves, it’s maybe getting additional traffic. And from the consumers’ part, they’re getting a good product at a cheaper price during that time."

Buckeye Fever was actually suggested by OSU Athletic Director Rick Bay, who worked with the idea during his three-year stint as athletic director for the University of Oregon. Although not a common fund-raising practice in the collegiate setting, Bay was able to make the project a statewide program, in conjunction with Oregon State University. With the success of Buckeye Fever, Hoobler said other schools such as Tennessee, Vanderbilt, Iowa and Illinois have shown an interest in starting their own campaigns.

But increased revenue is not the only driving force.

"Buckeye Fever has helped us to strengthen ties with the business community, creating a communication link on a more personal basis," Hoobler said.

In addition, with various members of the food industry serving on the board of directors to oversee activities, competition is set aside for the good of the cause. And local businessmen find that all the more worthwhile.

"It provides an opportunity for businesses to get together to do something for the community," said John Hill, frozen food merchandizer for Big Bear. "We’re pleased as punch to be involved. Big Bear got out of it exactly what we wanted to—involve in the community."

For Kroger, the project serves a dual purpose.

"Buckeye Fever is an outstanding campaign that involves a lot of food industry people working together for a common goal—OSU athletics," said advertising manager Dave Tebay. "For Kroger, it shows we are indeed good corporate patrons."

Roy Berman, account manager for CMI Brokerage, saw things from the athletes’ perspective.

"It costs anywhere from $8-10,000 to put a kid through school," Berman said. "With the $210,000 that Buckeye Fever has generated in its first two years, we’ve allowed for 21-23 scholarships."

"It’s an opportunity for kids who couldn’t afford to go to school to get a scholarship and an education while providing support to other non-revenue sports."

The Keebler Company, in much the same manner, saw this as an opportunity to address a personal concern.

"We hope it will encourage more sports and more activity," said regional sales manager Ray Mangini. "We were concerned with students not getting the full tilt of sports. But if we’ve scratched the surface, then we’ve accomplished our goal."

And all agree that the best is yet to come.

"We’ve been with it since the beginning, and we are going to stay with it as long as it’s out there," said Larry Doyle, regional sales manager for the Coca-Cola Bottling Company. "I can only see it growing as more people become aware of it."

Members of the 1986 Buckeye Fever Board of Directors join Athletic Director Rick Bay in accepting a $132,000 check for the department’s grant-in-aid program.

November 14, 1987
COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Central Ohio grocers and distributors are putting aside the competitive food wars to raise money for Ohio State University.

The five-week project, which began Monday (8/22), is the annual Buckeye Fever promotion which provides financial aid for Ohio State student athletes.

The program is about three weeks earlier than last year's "to take advantage of the football fever that's sweeping through Central Ohio this fall," said James L. Jones, director of athletics.

Some 90 to 100 products are designated as Buckeye Fever items. Each manufacturer or food supplier designates a portion of the sale of these products to the Buckeye Fever Fund, which provides athletic grants to varsity athletes at Ohio State.

Big Bear and Hart's, Cardinal Foods, Cub Foods, IGA, Kroger, Meijer, and Super Duper are participating with a variety of grocery, dairy, frozen food, beverage and non-food items.

Some manufacturers are even contributing specially packaged Buckeye Fever products such as buns, ice cream and canned soda.

"Buckeye Fever works because everyone involved benefits," said Denny Hoobler, marketing director for Ohio State's athletic department. "Consumers take advantage of lower product prices,
and food wholesalers and retail grocers profit from the increased volume."

Begun in 1985 by Ohio State and food industry representatives, the Buckeye Fever campaign has raised $360,000 for the Grant-in-Aid Scholarship Fund.

"The driving force behind the promotion is a committee of professionals from all levels of the food industry," said Anne Chasser, director of Ohio State's licensing program.

The promotional campaign includes newspaper, billboard, flier and in-store promotions and radio and television commercials.

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Contact: Denny Hoobler, director of marketing and promotions, Department of Athletics, (614) 292-4679; or Anne Chasser, director of Ohio State's licensing program, (614) 292-1562.

(T/140)
AUGUST 22-SEPTEMBER

CATCH IT!
Many "Columbus Area" food suppliers and grocery stores have combined their efforts to help raise money for The Ohio State University Athletic Department's Grant-In-Aid Program. Your help is needed to keep one of the largest collegiate athletic programs in the country successful...current and future O.S.U. athletes are counting on us.

BUCKEYE FEVER...
When shopping at your local grocery store, look for "Buckeye Fever" items throughout the store. Since food suppliers have agreed to donate monies for any "Buckeye Fever" items purchased during August and September, your individual purchases will ultimately help us raise money for the Athletic Department's Grant-In-Aid Program.
Dear Alumni and Friends of Ohio State:

On behalf of the Ohio State University Department of Athletics, I would like to thank you for making Ohio State Buckeyes Fever a great success in 1987. Through your purchase of Buckeyes Fever products, over $150,000 has been contributed to the department's grant-in-aid program.

Since our athletic department is financially self-sufficient, we are counting on fund-raising projects such as Buckeyes Fever to assist in financing our athletic program. We are pleased to report that through the first three years of Buckeyes Fever, approximately $361,000 has been raised for our grant-in-aid program.

At this time, I would like to ask you for your support of Buckeyes Fever '88 which begins today and runs through September 24, 1988. Over 30 products, all listed in this flyer, have been designated as Buckeyes Fever items and are available at the majority of grocery stores throughout central Ohio. The manufacturer of these products will again donate a set amount of money to the athletic department based on the sale of these items throughout the Buckeyes Fever promotion.

All items will be clearly identified in the grocery stores and through advertisements during the promotion. We ask that you purchase these items because not only will you be getting a quality product at a great price, you will also be helping support our athletic department.

Again, we need your support to make Ohio State Buckeyes Fever a success. Only through your assistance can the Ohio State University Athletic Department continue to offer our many student-athletes a quality educational experience and to our alumni and friends an athletic program that is second to none.

Thank you for your support of Ohio State Buckeyes Fever.

Sincerely,

Jim Jones
Director of Athletics
BUCKEYE FEVER SPREADING TO MORE PRODUCTS, MORE CITIES

COLUMBUS -- Perhaps it was only natural that health products would become a part of Buckeye Fever.

The annual Buckeye Fever campaign has been expanded this year to include more than 100 items, including health and beauty products along with the groceries.

The fifth Buckeye Fever promotion began Sunday (8/20) and will run through Sept. 23 at Big Bear, Cardinal Foods, Cub Foods, Harts, IGA, Kroger, Meijer, and Super Duper along with a number of independent grocers.

The campaign, involving central Ohio grocers and food suppliers, raises athletic scholarship money for The Ohio State University. The cooperative project provides lower prices for consumers and profit from increased volume to wholesalers and retailers. Suppliers pay Ohio State a specified amount per case of food or product sold.

"Each year the community support grows," says Denny Hoobler, director of marketing in the Department of Athletics. He noted that last year's program generated about $150,000. Every dime goes to athletic scholarships for the 30 men's and women's varsity sports teams.

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Grocers like the program because they can tie sales to Ohio State football, which has a large following, he says.

"Most grocers like it because the tie with an important community event brings people to the store," he adds. "Companies are seeing a unique advantage to specialized programs in geographic areas. In central Ohio, we're reaching millions with this message."

The message, or fever, is even spreading beyond central Ohio.

"I really think the program is on the leading edge on what's happening nationwide," says Anne Chasser, director of Ohio State's licensing program.

She notes that Buckeye Fever has been a model for fund-raising campaigns at a number of other universities which have have tried similar programs.

Contact: Anne Chasser, (614) 292-1562, or Denny Hoobler, (614) 292-4679.
BUCKEYE FEVER CAMPAIGN UNIQUE TO COLLEGE ATHLETICS

COLUMBUS -- Many have tried, but few have succeeded when it comes to getting principals in the fiercely competitive grocery business to drop their armor and join forces for the good of the home team. But that's exactly what happens each autumn in Columbus, as local grocers and suppliers band together in a cooperative effort to raise scholarship money for athletic scholarships at The Ohio State University through the "Buckeye Fever" promotion.

Buckeye Fever will kick off its sixth campaign Aug. 20, and when the register tapes are tallied at the end of the promotion on Sept. 22, organizers expect they will have raised close to $200,000 for the athletic grant-in-aid program.

Suppliers target products for the campaign, then donate a predetermined amount of money to Ohio State for each case of goods sold to the retail grocers. The grocers use in-store promotions and special pricing to designate Buckeye Fever items, and consumers respond with increased purchases.

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More than 120 products and 150 stores (representing 98 percent of the Columbus grocery market) are in the Buckeye Fever lineup.

"Each year we get a better response from the suppliers, retailers and consumers, and this could very well be our best year yet," says Denny Hoobler, director of marketing for the Department of Athletics. "The interest just continues to grow here, while other schools have tried to copy our formula and can't seem to sustain the momentum from year to year. We are unique in that respect."

To date, Buckeye Fever has raised nearly $700,000, including a record sum of $177,000 last season. With an average athletic scholarship running $7,500, more than 90 athletes have benefited from the campaign. Last year alone, 24 scholarships were provided through Buckeye Fever -- that's equivalent to the entire 22 starters on the football team, plus the punter and placekicker!

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Contact: Denny Hoobler 614-292-4679
Buckeye Fever nets $200,000 in grants

By Stephanie Bryant
Lantern staff writer

"...it generates extra selling volume and it's a great way to get your name around."

Buckeye Fever, Ohio State's promotion program among Columbus' grocers and their suppliers, ended Saturday with organizers in the athletic department estimating that they will have raised $200,000 this year for the student athletic scholarship fund.

"We are totally self-supported, and since our budget is $24 million, we have come to rely on the money that Buckeye Fever brings in, just as we rely on ticket sales," said Denny Hoehler, director of marketing for OSU's Athletic Department.

"Most of the money comes from our Buckeye Club members which the Buckeye Fever campaign is part of," said Doug Clay, business director for athletics. The student athletic "grant-in-aid" (athletic scholarships) budget is $26 million for 1990-91.

The Buckeye Club consists of gifts of $2,000 or more from private citizens, alumni or businesses. For their donations, members are given the opportunity to purchase preferred-seating football tickets, and are invited to a reception before a game.

Currently, an in-state athletic scholarship costs $7,500; a non-resident student athlete costs the athletic department over $23,000. There were 307 full scholarships allotted for Ohio State's 16 men's and 13 women's sports this year.

"It's up to NCAA rules and the athletic director to decide the maximum number of scholarships each sport is allowed to offer," Clay said. "The coaches and the athletic director then meet to discuss their needs and availability of scholarships."

"Scholarships can be full or partial," Clay said. "The football team and men's and women's basketball mostly offer full scholarships, while swimming and golf might split their scholarships so they could get two athletes on partial grants."

The Buckeye Fever campaign has raised $700,000 since it began six years ago. Ninety student athletic scholarships have been paid for by the promotion.

Participating in fundraising programs like Buckeye Fever has been beneficial to both Ohio State and the companies who have donated the money. Niles Fiala, an Oscar Mayer representative and a board member for the campaign, said, "The association with OSU is the reason we participate; it generates extra selling volume and it's a great way to get your name around."