A STITCH IN TIME
THE EVOLUTION OF THE OHIO STATE UNIFORM

In 1878, a committee of Ohio State students, charged with selecting school colors, chose orange and black. When they later discovered that those were the colors of football powerhouse Princeton, they opted for scarlet and gray. Today, for any colors other than scarlet and gray to represent Ohio State is virtually unthinkable. Michigan's winged helmets, the interlocking ND in South Bend and the garnet and gold of Florida State all inspire pride and loyalty in their fans. When Ohio State announced some minor changes in the fabric and sleeve stripes of its football uniforms, there was outrage in some corners of Buckeye Nation. Some wondered how Ohio State could alter the timeless look of the Buckeyes. But how timeless was it? This timeline doesn't represent every version, but it does provide a glance at some eras in the appearance of the Buckeyes.
1934
Dick Heakin, Halfback

Ohio State's uniforms in the mid- to late 1930s varied wildly as coach Francis Schmidt's offensive schemes, with different colored pants, jerseys both with and without front numerals and even a "winged" helmet. Helmets became mandatory in 1939.

1943
Bill Willis, Tackle

Most teams didn't distinguish between home and away uniforms; the NCAA didn't require that road teams wear white until 1963. Jersey numbers became mandatory in 1939. These uniforms reflected the "tracks" style of coach Paul Brown.

1954
Jim Parker, Defensive Tackle | Guard

Here's the uniform the 1964 national champions wore while winning the 1965 Rose Bowl. The white helmets were made of hard plastic. College football historians aren't sure when facemasks became standard equipment.

1964
Ted Andrick, Guard

The Buckeyes sported the same jerseys and pants from 1957 through 1967, but changed their helmets four times in that period, including a scarlet helmet in 1966-67. The red stripe on the pictured helmet was an externally attached rubber pad, outlawed when it proved unsafe.

1968
Jack Tatum, Defensive Back

The team adopted a silver helmet for the '68 season. Black numbers appeared on the jersey sleeves. For the first time, players were awarded buckeye leaf decals for outstanding plays. And players' names appeared on the back of the jersey for the first time.

1977
Tom Cousineau, Linebacker

In 1970, the numbers moved from the sleeve to the top of the shoulders. Over the years, as buckeye leaf decals have been awarded for more feats on the field, they've become much smaller. Besides some changes to the sleeve stripes in the 1980s, this uniform design remained through 2005.
FROM OHIO STATE TO ROBERTSDALE

A Buckeye gift to a Baldwin school

Resourceful

Robertsdale High principal acquired Ohio State uniforms for 1936 football team

By ROBERT LADNER

Sports Reporter

ROBERTSDALE — Among several framed photographs hanging on the wall of Steven Grant’s office is an old black-and-white shot of a football team. Nineteen boys are standing in front of a set of double doors, holding leather helmets and dressed in gridiron uniforms.

Grant, an assistant principal at Robertsdale High School, is quite proud of the story that goes behind that photo.

“The picture initially came through the committee members doing the Robertsdale High Athletic Hall of Fame with some interest in the history of our school,” Grant said. “In the course of being involved with the Athletic Hall of Fame, a gentleman, Jimmy Gilbert, discussed the Foley-Robertsdale game from 1936.”

Grant, a history buff himself, was intrigued with the story that Gilbert related about the Robertsdale uniforms from that season.

“After talking about the picture he started expanding on the idea of where the jerseys came from and how Professor (Charles Fletcher) Taylor was involved and how he was able to get some jerseys from Ohio State,” Grant said. “A couple of people (in the photo) were identified by Mr. Gilbert.

“One day I sat down with him and got the names. Mr. Gilbert was very helpful because he knew a lot of the people. He is actually one of the people in the photo, so he remembered a lot of the names. I’m not sure if he provided the picture or not, but he did help provide that information. Also, the Galway family had a lot to do with it, too.”

The man

Taylor served as the first principal at Robertsdale High from 1930-1933, and was affectionately called “The Professor” by people in the community.

Bertha Flinth, the Manuscript Assistant for the Ohio State University Archives, confirmed last week that Taylor was a graduate of the Buckeye institution.

“From a registrar card of listed graduates, he got a BA in 1916 and an MA in 1911 from the College of Arts, Philosophy and Science,” Flinth said in a phone conversation with the Baldwin Register on Tuesday. “His major was in English and his minor was in Latin. His master’s thesis was ‘The Development of the Social Short Story in America.’”

The well-rounded Taylor was also a veteran of World War I, Flinth said. “He was a sergeant with the 101st, Sanitary Train, 4th Division.”

The dilemma

Robertsdale High apparently began playing football as a school in 1926. Eleven years later, with the United States still in the Great Depression, Taylor was searching for a way to get new uniforms for his players on the 1936 team.

Jimmy Gilbert, who still resides in the area, was a member of that Golden Bears’ football squad.

“I was a quarterback,” Gilbert said. “That particular year, I was a sophomore substitute, but played for two more years.”

The solution

Without an adequate source of funds, Taylor found a way around the problem.

“C.P. Taylor, a graduate of Ohio State, had a brother who was an athletic director at Ohio State,” Gilbert said. “In the fall, Mr. Taylor realized there was credit available for uniforms. He had used all of the credit and hadn’t been able to say it off. He talked to his brother at Ohio State, and he arranged to have a supply of complete uniforms—pants and jerseys—and sent them to Robertsdale through the Railway Express Agency. ‘I helped load those boxes onto a truck and took them out to the school’”

The connection

That also revealed from an obituary that a Henry D. Taylor, the apparent brother of C.P. Taylor, served as director of ticket sales at Ohio State from 1922 until his retirement in 1947.

He died at 67 years of age on May 4, 1953, about the same time that C.P. Taylor was retiring from Robertsdale High.

“Henry DeHass Taylor was born in Noble County, Ohio,” Flinth said. “The interesting things I found out was he was survived by two brothers and three sisters, plus a wife, daughter and grandchildren, but it doesn’t state their names. It also reads, ‘Other things besides ticket sales during the season from December to May he acts as assistant director of athletics, taking care of the purchase of new athletic equipment, the road travel schedules and routes followed for out-of-town games, hotel accommodations and other details. He also buys all equipment for basketball season and the stadium. He was also a baseball fan.’”

She added, “It’s the purchased new athletic equipment, it sort of fits that is how those uniforms got down there.”

The modifications

By the description, the uniforms were quite colorful, but there weren’t enough of each to supply the entire Robertsdale team.

“The jerseys were red, and most had white stripes on the front in a different material sewed to the shirts and the numbers on the back,” Gilbert said. “Others were just plain red. The first team wore the ones

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with stripes and the subs wore the solid red jerseys. There was one modification that needed to be taken care of by the high school.

“The trousers were gray and the home economics department dyed all those pants the same color red as the jerseys so you had a completed uniform with white stripes, the front and white numbers on back,” Gilbert said. “It was a special delight for the players.”

There was another problem that even the home economics department couldn’t resolve.

“Both the pants and jerseys were on sale,” Gilbert said. “You can imagine playing football in Baldwin County in an all-sold uniform. In addition to that, the jerseys had a flap that pulled up to keep the jersey inside the pants, and that added more heat.

“We used this uniform for one year, then we were able to get some different uniforms.”

There was also another major inconvenience: stitting.

“Both the pants and jerseys were from Ohio State, and al were pretty big for us,” Gilbert said. “Some of us were still growing, so it was rather interesting.

“We did very well that year. It was an interesting time.”

Back to the Future

Poor football was just beginning to gain a foothold in the Deep South when a major university from the North helped out a little rural high school in south Alabama with a gift of uniforms.

“I think it’s really important for the school to get that recognition, let alone any other history of the school,” Grant said. “It was kind of neat, too, with the Ohio State tie.”

At the time of their generosity, the Buckeyes were coming off back-to-back 7-1 seasons under coach Francis Schmitt, but the school had played in only one bowl game, suffering a 25-0 loss to California in the 1921 Rose Bowl.

Now 70 years later, and with 37 bowl games beneath its belt, Ohio State finds itself ranked No. 1 in the nation and poised to play in the Bowl Championship Series title game against a yet-to-be-determined opponent.

“Even though Columbus, Ohio — home of Ohio State University — is well north of the Macon-Ellson line, Robertsdale is a member of the Big 10 Conference, there may just be some fans in the Hub City of Baldwin County who find themselves with a little extra pocket money for the Buckeyes when they play in Glendale, Ariz., on Jan. 8.”

The 1936 Robertsdale High football team was uniformed with Ohio State accouterments required from Ohio State University. Front row, from left, are Francis Nelson, Rudolph Loden, Charles Monroe, Barrett Sellers, George Taylor in supplier Hammond; middle, Melvin Gaultrey, (first name unavailable) Patton, Carbine Campbell, William Rhodes, Jim Dubose and Jimmy Gilbert; back, name unavailable, Archie Degriff, Fuzz Mussey, A.C. Childress and Michael Baldwin.

Praise see A Buckeye Page 23
Days since Michigan's last win over OSU in football:

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Ohio State football uniforms | Changing looks a new tradition

In 2009, in Ann Arbor, Mich., Ohio State took the field with a new look, including white helmets.

By Rob Oller
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Ohio State debuted white helmets at Michigan in 2009, sparking a mix of excitement and controversy among a fan base brought up on scarlet and gray.

On Saturday, the Buckeyes are going with a black uniform against Penn State, further igniting a progressive vs. traditionalist argument that applauds the efforts to market to millennials, especially college football recruits, even as critics accuse the participants of careless thought and corporate greed.

In reality, the uniform issue is not nearly as black and white as the helmets that bookend the debate. It plays out, appropriately enough, mostly in gray areas, with one important exception. It is clear as the ring of the Victory Bell that Ohio State welcomes the uniform changes.

No one, including equipment supplier Nike, is forcing the OSU athletic department to break from tradition by wearing black. It will be the sixth design change since 2009, and the most drastic, because black is not one of the team's traditional colors.

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"Recruits are impressionable today and have a great deal of materialistic interest. So, reality is, we're going to respond to that," Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said. "Our job, our core mission, is our student-athletes that we serve, first and foremost. And that includes the recruits we're trying to attract."

That is not just public-relations spin. Current Ohio State players agree that recruits want to be wooed by fashion.

"When you're a recruit, all you're thinking about is looking good on the field, and what you're going to wear and how you're going to look on TV," linebacker Raekwon McMillan said. "Once you're an actual player at the school, it really doesn't matter..."
McMillan likes the black uniforms, in part because his Georgia high-school uniform had a similar look.

"Coach (Urban) Meyer mentioned the (Ohio State) black uniforms when he recruited me, that it was something they were thinking about but had not yet decided," McMillan said. "It's a college trend that's going on, and I think it's pretty good."

Recruiting isn't the only reason, however, that Ohio State is trotting out a new uniform design every season.

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"We're going to pick one game every year where we try to do this," Smith said, adding that next year's design already is being discussed (although he would not discuss it yet).

The athletic department contracts with Nike, which enjoys having its brand showcased on TV. Ohio State is not contractually obligated to wear new designs, but maintaining a strong business relationship with the equipment giant does matter.

It is not clear exactly how much of a role Nike plays in deciding what Ohio State will wear, but for certain the company does not wield as much influence as it did in 2012 during the "Pro Combat" phase of its sales push, when it was intent on marketing a particular line.

Nike used to pay for everything — helmets, jerseys, pants, shoes. But for the past several design changes, including the black variation, the company paid only for jerseys and pants, which is why the black helmets are really silver under the surface — Ohio State repainted existing helmets at a cost of about $60 apiece rather than buy new ones for approximately $300 each.

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Otherwise, the system works like this: Nike approaches Ohio State with different uniform concepts, and the athletic department decides what looks good and what doesn't.

"They'll bring a design to us. We'll look at the design, kick it around, get some input and make some modifications based upon what we think or feel should be added," Smith said, adding that OSU did not approve every detail of the original black-uniform design. "We added some of the elements you'll see this weekend. And that's happened every single year we've done that."

The original design for Saturday's uniform included numbers that Ohio State deemed too dark. So more scarlet was added, Smith said, adding that he forms a committee of current and former players, including Archie Griffin, to help decide if the uniform design is appropriate.

"So Nike came to us and said, 'What do you think of this?' And my first reaction was 'No way, no chance.' And I looked and said, 'Whoa,' and it looked pretty sharp," Meyer said.

"We're blessed here, our institution has such great tradition and history. You have to make sure you respect that," Smith said. "And there are certain things that become untouchable in that regard."

Helmet color apparently is not untouchable.

"I can't remember the helmet part. I wasn't part of that piece," Smith said.

Some think the black jerseys and pants might bemoan palatable to traditionalists had the helmet color remained silver. Ohio State had the option to keep them silver but chose to go with the matte black.

"Some people thought our first one was drastic. It just matters where you sit," Smith said, referencing the white helmet look in 2009. "There is that balance of respect, our history and tradition, but also moving ourselves further into the 21st century, which kind of the landscape defines that for you, and the uniforms are part of that."

Then there is the money factor. Some critics of Saturday's uniform say that black is the new green — a way to profit from new products.

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Smith could not say how much the athletic department expects to make from the sale of the black apparel, but he assured it is not a significant amount.

"I look at (financial) spikes like the bowl game," he said. "The spike (in clothing sales) won't be huge."

A Nike spokesman in New York said the company does not divvise sales information for individual schools. But there is no question that Nike benefits from brand placement, which is a big deal in the competitive world of sports equipment sales, where adidas and Under Armour challenge for a share of the college football clothing market.

No matter Nike's involvement or Ohio State's contention that it must keep up with the times, the frustration in Buckeye Nation is real. Expressed mostly by older fans, the complaint is that Ohio State is supplanting its traditional garb for
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http://buckeyextra.dispatch.com/content/stories/2015/10/16/changing-...

heretical garbage

Those wearing the uniforms don't see it that way.

"People have been asking for these all-black uniforms since I have been here," junior safety Tyvis Powell said. "It's great to finally get that request answered."

Personally, Powell said, he is "indifferent" about wearing all black.

"I appreciate the (Ohio State) jersey, period," he said. "Just being able to put the Ohio State jersey over me is good enough."

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