

## RECRUITING CYCLE

The SEC wants to reform recruiting rules. Coaches from the country's most competitive — and cutthroat — league are asking the NCAA to, among other things, remove a ban on text messages between prospects and coaches.

Northwestern's Pat Fitzgerald doesn't like it.

"We had text messaging. It ruined the quality of life of prospects. It ruined the quality of life of our assistant coaches."

"(If) we go back to text messaging, we're going to go back to the crap that we had when a lot of schools bought a bunch of phones and they had all their non-full-time coaches text messaging these kids all the time. 'I'm gonna outwork you. I'm gonna outwork you.' Well, that's a bunch of baloney. OK?"

"All it did was ruin the quality of life of these kids."

Recruiting is "a hundred-fold more competitive" than it was 25 years ago, Purdue coach Danny Hope said.

"In the old days, you'd go out in the spring and it was like window shopping. You came back with a list of stuff you wish you had."

But you didn't even think about prospects until October or November. Now the bulk of recruiting is finished six months before signing day. The intensity required far exceeds the old days. That's why Hope sees so many assistant coaches in their 20s and 30s.

"Recruiting in a lot of ways is a young man's game."

In most cases, Bo Pelini doesn't advise a recruit to complete high school early and enroll at Nebraska in time for spring ball.

"There are going to be some bumps in the road. It's not going to go real smoothly, especially if you're a lineman. You're getting hit in the mouth every day in practice. Real quickly a guy could start questioning whether he really belongs."

Pelini delivers the message before a recruit decides to arrive early.

"I try to tell them beforehand, 'Don't have illusions that you're going to go out there and be a Hall-of-Famer day one.'"

Nebraska had three early enrollees in January: receiver Jamal Turner, defensive tackle Kevin Williams and offensive lineman Tyler Moore.

Wisconsin made an unusual recruiting visit in pursuit of transfer quarterback Russell Wilson. Bret Bielema sent his offensive coordinator to Wilson's high school.

Why unusual? Because Wilson hadn't attended there in four years.

Wilson, twice an All-ACC quarterback at North Carolina State, was looking for a place to complete his football eligibility. But NCAA rules limited his contact with Wisconsin. Which is why Bielema sent his assistant to a Richmond, Va., prep school.

"Every person (the offensive coordinator) talked to, from the head custodian to the teachers to the administrators, they just spoke volumes about what kind of person (Wilson) was," Bielema said.

That visit helped sell Wisconsin on its likely 2011 starter.



BARRETT STINSON  
THE WORLD-HERALD NEWS  
SERVICE

## BIG RED TRANSPLANT

Husker senior defensive tackle Jared Crick wants to clear something up: He's not really from Nebraska.

Yes, he did play at Cozad High School, but his family moved to the state when he was 12. He was actually born in Albuquerque, N.M. He lived in Denver at one point, too.

"It's not a bad thing to say I was born in Cozad because it's a great place, but it's just untrue when I hear it," said Crick, whose parents are from Nebraska. "I always have to correct people."

## WISKY WANTED ANOTHER ROUND

The game that sparked Wisconsin's Rose Bowl run in 2010 was a 31-18 upset of No. 1 Ohio State at Camp Randall. The Badgers remember what happened afterward, too.

Terrelle Pryor, who was dismissed from Ohio State this summer after allegations of improper benefits, said the Buckeyes would've beaten Wisconsin nine of 10 times.

"There wasn't any question about who won that football game," Wisconsin coach Bret Bielema said. "The only bad part about Terrelle leaving is he kind of claimed the week after that it was a fluke ... We really wanted to play that game against him."



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Terrelle Pryor claimed Wisconsin's win over Ohio State last year was an upset. But the Badgers outyarded the Buckeyes and rolled to a 21-0 lead behind two touchdowns by John Clay (above).

## A CUP OF JOE

The future.

Joe Paterno, 84 years young, is always fielding questions about his future. And he usually answers with a story from the past. When a reporter mentioned that 2011 was the last year of Paterno's contract, he remembered a story from 1966.

"Is this the last year of my contract? I don't even know I got a contract. I don't pay attention to that."

"You know when I got the job, I was 16 years assistant coach at Penn State. Rip Engle came in and said to me, 'I think

I'm going to retire and I think you have a good shot.'

"Rip had been my college coach when I played at Brown University. The athletic director was Ernie McCoy. ... He called me in the office and he said, Rip is retiring.

"I said, 'Yeah, he told me.'

"He said, 'Do you want this job?'"

"I said, 'Yeah.'

"He said, 'OK, it's yours.'

"I said, 'That's great.'

"He said, '10 thousand bucks a year.' He

said, 'I'm teasing, 20 thousand you're getting.' Never signed a contract.

"Four, five years later when the Patriots were fooling around with me, they called me in and said, 'We better sign a contract.'

"So a guy by the name of Patterson was vice president in charge of business. He said, 'We're going to go out to Pittsburgh, get a contract.'

"I said, 'Why do I have to go? You guys write up the contract, bring it back, I'll sign it.'"



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Don't count Joe Paterno among those who think young people behave worse than previous generations. "They ought to go back and read Socrates," he said. "Socrates, 400 years BC, said, 'The kids today are terrible, tyrants. They don't pay attention.'"

Paterno hears the stories about scandals in college football. He prefers not to comment. Instead, he tells a story about his early days as Penn State head coach.

"I used to get a telephone call from one of the campus cops. He would say, 'Hey, Coach, you better come up here and get ahold of Mike. Too much to drink, making a lot of noise.'

"I'd go up at 2 in the morning, grab Mike, put him in bed, get him up at 5 in the morning, run his rear end off for a week. You guys never heard about it."

Every once in awhile, Paterno sees an old-timer shake his head at "kids today."

"They ought to go back and read Socrates. Socrates, 400 years BC, said,

'The kids today are terrible, tyrants. They don't pay attention.'

"That's 2,500 years ago, OK?"

It's been a rough few years for JoePa's health.

First, in a 2006 game, a Penn State player crashed into the sideline, breaking Paterno's left leg.

Then, well, we'll let Joe tell it.

"Then I threw my hip out showing off, trying to show the kids how to kick a football. I couldn't kick when I was healthy. I sure as hell couldn't kick with a broken knee."

Now Paterno is feeling healthy again.

He wakes up early and walks five or six miles a day. In spring practice, he said he moved with more agility. He demonstrated technique.

When pressed on his coaching future, Paterno said he'd like to coach four or five more years.

"That may be optimistic, I don't know."

Technology? Paterno pleads ignorance there. He doesn't have a computer. He doesn't have a cellphone.

"People tell me about Twitter. I don't know what the hell Twitter is. When I was a kid, a twitter was when a good-lookin' girl walked by with a short skirt. Everybody twittered."

## TRIPLE THREAT

Northwestern coach Pat Fitzgerald is worried about playing Army. Yes, Army. Why? Because of the triple-option attack Northwestern must defend.

"We will not be as prepared as we need to be. I mean, we've researched it. We've practiced it in spring. You cannot simulate it. It's just impossible to do. When you play those kinds of teams that are a

little bit different, the first quarter is critically important."

Kind of makes you wonder if Nebraska should've stuck with its old offense.

## QUARTERBACK QUANDARIES

With Terrelle Pryor's departure at Ohio State, new coach Luke Fickell is looking for a starter. He said he has four "very capable guys." They range from a 25-year-old senior to a ballyhooed 18-year-old true freshman named Braxton Miller, who participated in spring practices.

Pryor played as a true freshman. Is Miller good enough to do the same?

"I hope so," Fickell said.

At Purdue, coach Danny Hope said he'll likely use a two-quarterback system, using Robert Marve and Rob Henry (and perhaps even Caleb TerBush). Hope had similar plans last year, but each quarterback got hurt.

The two-quarterback system "won't

be the bread and butter of our offense, but something that has potential and a style of offense that we have the personnel to execute."

Most valuable player in the Big Ten? It's Northwestern quarterback **Dan Persa** (right), who missed the last three games of 2010 after rupturing his Achilles tendon.

With Persa, the Wildcats are a potential eight- or nine-win team. Without him, they'll be lucky to win six. Northwestern lost its final three games last year after Persa's injury.

Can Persa return to full speed?

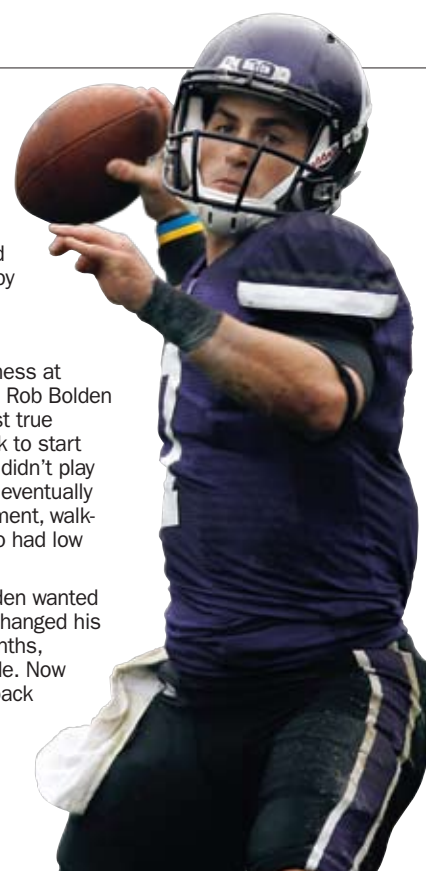
He fielded more questions about his health than any other player at Big Ten media days. After a

long and painful rehabilitation, he said he'll be full strength by the season opener.

Penn State faced a mess at quarterback in 2010. Rob Bolden became Paterno's first true freshman quarterback to start a season opener. He didn't play well consistently and eventually got hurt. His replacement, walk-on Matt McGloin, also had low moments.

At season's end, Bolden wanted to transfer. Then he changed his mind. For several months, Bolden couldn't decide. Now he and McGloin are back in competition for the starting job again.

"I think the



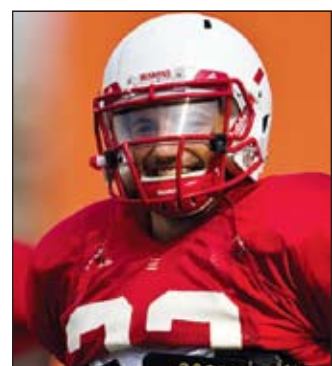
## BO LOOKING FOR SMALL CHANGE

Nebraska won't be operating out of the dime and nickel formations this season as much as it has in the past.

But Bo Pelini knows where to turn if offenses flood the field with receivers.

The names Pelini mentioned: sophomore Ciente Evans, junior Justin Blatchford, senior Lance Thorell, redshirt freshman Josh Mitchell, junior P.J. Smith and senior Austin Cassidy.

"Some guys thrive in there and some guys are better off on the edge," Pelini said. "Everybody's a little bit different."



ALYSSA SCHUKAR  
THE WORLD-HERALD

Rex Burkhead likes what he's seen in freshman backs **Brayton Heard, Ameer Abdullah and Aaron Green**. "They're very talented, very disciplined."

## BLOCKING BACKS

The toughest mental adjustment for a freshman running back is learning the complexities of pass protection, according to Rex Burkhead.

"In high school you have like one protection, and that's protect the edge," Burkhead said. "Now you've got to look to so many different things."

That's just part of the challenge for Nebraska's three freshman backs: Brayton Heard, Ameer Abdullah and Aaron Green. Burkhead thinks the group can make a quick transition to the next level.

"They're very talented, very disciplined," Burkhead said.

## FINALLY, A SOFTBALL

Reporters closed in on Luke Fickell to get his thoughts on Jim Tressel, potential NCAA sanctions and Michigan. Then, after 10 minutes, someone in the mob asked about dinner plans during fall camp.

It was Ohio State safety Orhian Johnson, impersonating a reporter. Fickell played along with the joke.

"It depends on how you perform as to how you will eat," he said. "There's hot dog and there's steaks."

How do we get those steaks, Johnson asked.

"That's to be determined," Fickell said.

## AFTER YOU, ALEX

Purdue kicker Carson Wiggs should have a good shot at being the Big Ten's best kicker this season. He's hit the four longest field goals in Boilermaker history (59, 55, 53 and 52), nailed a 67-yarder in the spring game and watches video of the most accurate kicker in NCAA history for tips. That would be Nebraska's Alex Henery.

"He's probably the top specialist I've ever seen," Wiggs said.

The longest Wiggs has ever made in practice is 72 yards.

"But that was with a strong wind."

quarterback situation will be better," Joe Paterno said. "How good? We'll find out."

Is Minnesota's MarQueis Gray a quarterback or a wide receiver? Not your typical position dilemma.

One of the top playmakers in Big Ten country coming out of high school, Gray dabbled at both positions as a freshman in 2009. Last year, he stuck to receiver, catching 42 passes.

But Minnesota lost starting quarterback Adam Weber. So Gray will take the snaps in 2011. Coach Jerry Kill called him "without a doubt the most gifted athlete on our squad."

"If MarQueis would have had a lot of quarterback reps (the last two seasons), I think it would be scary where he's at right now."