

Tressel returns to YSU



.Photo courtesy of the Department of Marketing and Communications

AUTOGRAPH: Ohio State Buckeyes head football coach Jim Tressel takes time out to sign autographs during his visit to campus last Friday.

BY DAVE DEVEREUX
The Jambar

Jim Tressel, Ohio State University football coach, returned to YSU campus last Friday to give \$125,000 to the campaign to build a new \$12 million student recreation center at YSU.

When he stepped to the podium in Kilcawley Center, surrounded by old colleagues and friends, Tressel said it felt like he never left.

"It really is a thrill to come back," said Tressel, former YSU football coach and athletic director.

"We've been kind of gone for two years now, but I will never really be gone from here."

Tressel, who guided Ohio State to the national championship this year, was joined by his wife, Ellen, a graduate of YSU, and Ellen's parents, Frank and Norma Watson.

Both the Tressels and Watsons donated \$125,000 to the recreation center, which is expected to open in fall 2005.

YSU honored the families by naming a room in Kilcawley Center the Watson-Tressel Reading Lounge.

"This really is a team effort," University President David Sweet said. "We've got a lot of teams that are moving this university forward."

With the recent contributions, the campaign to raise funds for the new recreation center has now surpassed the \$9 million mark. The new 65,000-square-foot facility will include a fitness center,

climbing wall, weight room, jogging track, racquetball courts and a spiritual meditation room.

Along with the Tressel and Watson donations, others have made large contributions



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Ohio State University football

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to the campaign.

The John S. and Doris M. Andrews Trust, named after the late financier and his wife, pledged \$2 million to the project. Other major contributions include \$1.5 million from John and Denise York, \$1 million from the Ward and Florence Simon Beecher Foundation, \$750,000 from Anthony and Mary Lariccia and \$500,000 from D.D. and Velma Davis.

Frank Watson, who graduated from Youngstown College with an engineering degree in 1949, led the campaign to raise \$16 million to build Stambaugh Stadium in the 1970s. Mrs. Watson has served as a member of numerous organizations including Federated Women's Clubs, chair of Mahoning County Residential Financier Cancer Campaign and president of Canfield Methodist Women.

Frank Watson said he believes the recreation center is another sign of growth for YSU.

"Youngstown State University has been a part of our lives for over 50 years," Watson said. "We have seen many changes from a college to a university to a state university. And

good universities just don't happen. Universities that function the way they are supposed to are due to the efforts of everyone in the community."

Jim Tressel served as head football coach at YSU from 1985 to 2001, leading the Penguins to national championships in 1991, 1993, 1994 and 1997 — a dynasty that placed the Penguins program at an elite level in college football.

Tressel left YSU to become head coach at Ohio State University in January 2001. And although his storied reign on the gridiron came to an end, Tressel said there is still a goal at YSU that he has not forgotten about.

"I can remember back in the late 80s and when you talked to some of our young people, our passion and our goal was that perhaps in the year 2025 when the name Youngstown, Ohio was talked about, that people would say 'oh that's where Youngstown State is', 'that's a place that has an extraordinary university'."

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