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open. He posed for photos with the coaches and even had one taken for the school newspaper.

"During one conversation, I learned that Paterno, a Brooklyn native, played freshman basketball at Brown University for Webb Ewbank, who coached the Baltimore Colts to an NFL championship and later the New York Jets to a 1958 Super Bowl win. Paterno once had to check the great Bob Cousy from Holy Cross.

"He had eight points in the first five minutes, and we were down 50-17 at halftime," Paterno laughed.

"Many of my questions during a one-on-one, 15-minute interview were strictly off the cuff. The interview went smoothly as the Clarenceville basketball team went through practice drills.

"Here is a snippet of what we talked about:

How did you get connected with Ron Vanderlinden?

"We played against him when he was at Northwestern and I was impressed with what he did with their defense. At Maryland he was this close (holding two fingers less than a inch apart). He was right there, lost a couple of close games and then he was let go. We lost our linebacker coach to Baltimore and we knew Ron had done a heck of a job. He's a heck of a coach and a person. He's made a lot of contributions at a lot of places."

Do you ever get tired of recruiting?

"I don't get tired of recruiting. The rules have changed. We're only allowed one visit to the school and one visit to the home,

and sometimes it's hard to get to know a kid well enough. But I enjoy meeting the kids. One coach, who will remain nameless, got out of it because he said he got tired of competing with the television set being on when he visited a home."

What kind of things do you do when a player makes an official campus visit?

"We don't put them up in a hotel like some other schools. We put them up in a dorm with one of our players. We want them to get a feel of what it's like living on campus. We have them talk with the strength coach, an academic guy and meet with a department person. If they're going into business, for instance, we have them meet with a person in that area. We don't do any different than most places. We try to be thorough and honest. The hardest thing about recruiting is trying to get a match. Do we have something different and provide a better opportunity in making them feel more comfortable? You can't be a used car salesman because you're dealing with people's lives."

How do you travel when you're recruiting?

"We go in a King Air, it's not a jet, it's a prop. I have to be in Ohio tomorrow, New Jersey the next day and then over to Virginia. I couldn't do without it."

If you could change anything about college football, what would it be?

"I said this many times and I've been critical of the NCAA. Make freshman ineligible to play, limit it to 75 scholarships

and do away with two-platoon football. That would give more kids a chance to play."

What about next season, what areas do you need to improve upon? (Penn State finished 5-6 last year)

"We have to get better defensively, especially in the linebacker area. We have to have a stronger offensive line and we have to find some depth at running back. The Big Ten is going to be better next year. There are some good quarterbacks coming back. A guy right out of our state, Jeff Smoker (Michigan State), is really a good quarterback."

Who do you open with next season?

"We open with Central Florida and then host Nebraska. Then there's the Big Ten. We're at Michigan, at Wisconsin and at Ohio State. It's going to be a challenge."

The one question I wished I would have asked.

"Matt Millen, any advice?"

Maybe the next time I see Joe, I'll ask.

I'm sure, just like Carr and the other coaches, he'll be approachable and willing to answer.

(Emons is the Livonia-Westland sports editor for the Observer and can be reached at (734) 953-2123 or by e-mail at bemons@oe.hometown.com.)

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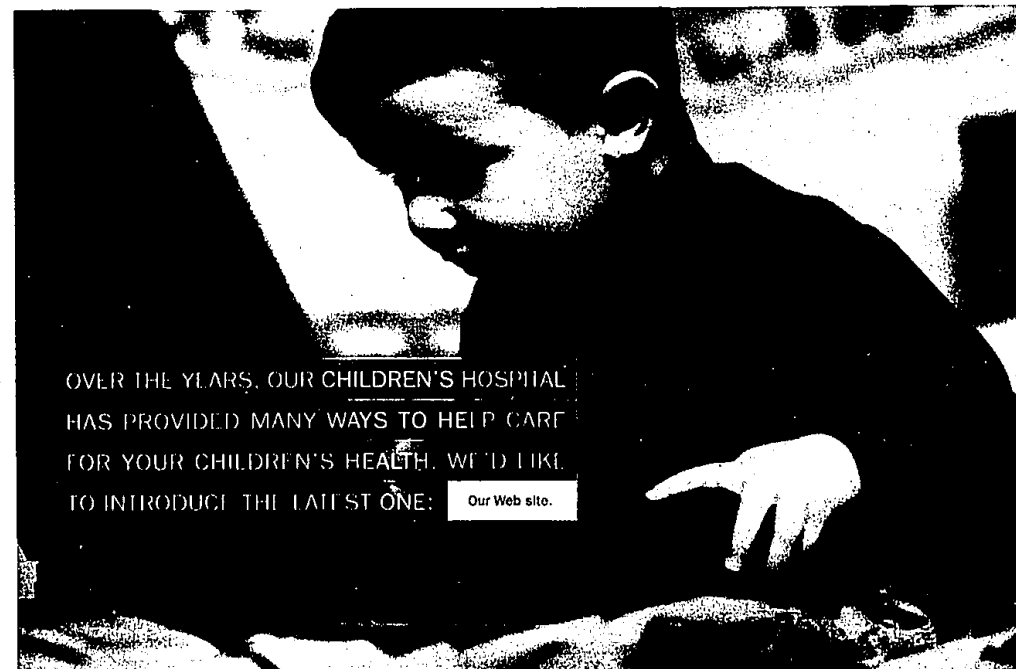


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