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For this Ohio U fan, it's not easy being green in northwest Ohio

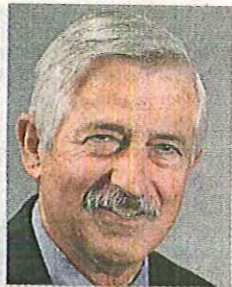
JEFF Condon may or may not be an environmentalist. I don't know. But I'll say this for him: He went green a long time ago.

Green and white, actually. Mr. Condon, who lives in Perrysburg with his wife and 11-year-old son, is a proud 1985 graduate of Ohio University. And when I say proud, I mean proud as in a bit over the top.

When his beloved Bobcats launched their 2015 football season against the Idaho Vandals in Moscow, Idaho, his Ohio U flag was flying in front of his house.

When he's not at his job in the vascular care business, and thus not bound by the dress code of the workplace, he's wearing Ohio U green. He visits his *alma mater* as often as he can and loves the campus in Athens for its hills and old-school charm.

Of course, a lot of people feel the same way about where they went to college. Maybe you bleed blue and gold and your University of Toledo Rockets can do no wrong. Perhaps you're into orange and brown and live and die with your Bowling Green State University Falcons.



THOMAS WALTON

Mr. Condon wants you to know if that's what floats your boat, he's fine with it. But he can't stand it when students and alumni are so casual about their allegiances that they dare to wear the colors and logos of another school.

"I always wonder why so many people wear the merchandise of schools they did not attend," he said. In other words, he asks incredulously, why would a UT student wear a "Go Bucks" T-shirt to class? Why would a BGSU alum wear a Michigan Wolverines sweat shirt to a BG football

game?

He's also put off by Ohio State's somewhat dismissive attitude toward Ohio University. "You don't hear Oklahoma State University claiming to be the University of Oklahoma," he points out, adding that Ohio U was established in 1804, one year after Ohio statehood and decades before Ohio State set up shop.

"Don't get me wrong," Mr. Condon said. "I do root for Ohio State. But if they play Ohio University, my allegiance is forever with the green and white."

If you've spent a large chunk of your money — or your parents' money — to attend a school, he figures, why would you shift your allegiance to another institution? Dance with the one that brung ya, as the old saying goes.

A few months ago, Mr. Condon made several phone calls to the OU football staff strongly recommending a potential recruit from northwest Ohio. He was not happy with the lack of response.

So decked out in his greenery, he jumped in his car, drove to Athens,

strolled into the football offices as if he owned the joint, and made his pitch in person. Finally the coaches agreed to take a hard look at the kid.

One of five boys, Mr. Condon is surrounded by relatives who did not go to Ohio University. His wife, his father-in-law, two brothers-in-law, and two sisters-in-law are all BGSU alumni. He's a splash of green in a sea of orange and brown.

The best test of a fan's loyalty is endurance through bad times. By that standard, his credentials cannot be questioned. Although OU has had some success in basketball, it has not won a Mid-American Conference football championship since 1968. Lyndon Johnson was in the White House and a gallon of gas cost 34 cents.

While Mr. Condon finds that discouraging, he is undeterred. There is always hope that this is going to be



Condon

the Bobcats' year. Maybe. Or maybe not. "My brother says I live a life of quiet desperation," he confesses.

His desperation will be anything but quiet on Nov. 4, when the squad he reveres journeys north to play the BGSU Falcons in Bowling Green. The game will be on a Wednesday night — because ESPN said so. Mr. Condon will be the Bobcats' cheerleader in chief. He will be vocal and greener than Kermit the Frog.

If his team's season does not end well, Mr. Condon will simply wait for the next one. It's what he does. Sometimes it's not easy being green, but he is loyalty defined. You have to admire that.

It would be a shame if his resolve eventually evaporates and his tombstone were someday to read: "Severe frustration did him in, while waiting for his 'Cats to win."

Thomas Walton is the retired editor and vice president of The Blade. His column appears every other Monday. His commentary, "Life As We Know It," can be heard each Monday at 5:44 p.m. on WGTE-FM 91.

Contact him at: twalton@theblade.com