

RedHawks trade high-fives, hugs

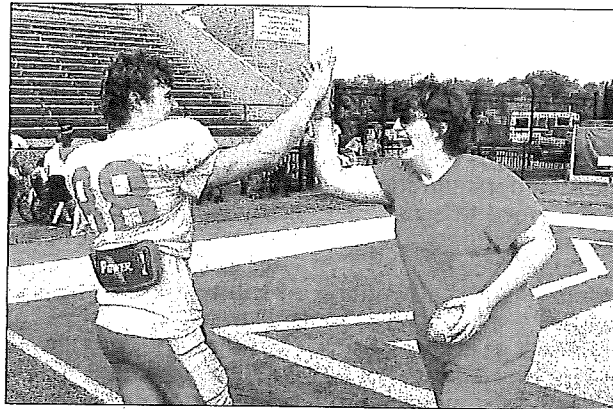
Butler County DD adults make annual visit to stadium.

By Eric Robinette
Staff Writer

OXFORD – The Miami RedHawks haven't played a single game yet, but they were already winners in the eyes of about 40 people from Butler County Developmental Disabilities who came to watch the team practice Tuesday.

The visit to Yager Stadium is an annual tradition, which has been ongoing for more than 15 years, said Connie Mehlman, a spokeswoman for Butler County DD. The adults from Liberty Center exchanged high-fives and hugs with the players, and some brought footballs to toss with the players.

"We have a lot of sports fans who attend our rehabilitation program at Lib-



Ashley Paris high-fives receiver Jared Murphy during a meet-and-greet Tuesday at Miami University's Yager Stadium in Oxford. NICK DAGGY / STAFF

erty Center. They love to come out and meet the players, get a little one-on-one time with them. We have a lot of folks who watch or listen on radio, and they just really enjoy the activity. I think it's also very good for the players to get introduced to people of all abilities," Mehlman said.

Tyler Tucker, a line-

backer from East Lansing, Mich., said, "It's awesome to be there for our community and get everyone together because they're huge fans of ours.."

Associate athletic director Steve Brockelbank said, "I think it's important for our kids to interact with these people to understand how fortu-

nate they are to have been given the gifts they've been given, both physically and mentally. Every time we have an opportunity to give back to people and brighten their day and make their week a little better, I think we've got to take every opportunity we have to do that."

Linebackers coach Joe Palcic said the meet-and-greet is "important for both groups. I think it's important for our football players because it allows them to realize how fortunate they are to be a college football player and be out here and run around and do the things they love. And I think it's important for the (DD) group that's here to get out and socialize with our players and realize they're important too."

Contact this reporter at 513-705-3826 or email Eric.Robinette@coxinc.com.