

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

May 2018

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Always A Buckeye

Ohio State Coaching Great Earle Bruce Remembered For Passion On The Field And Off

By MARK REA
BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Earle Bruce often introduced himself as a football coach, and his Hall of Fame résumé suggests he was one of the best. But while the persona on display for much of his nine-year tenure as Ohio State head coach was mostly that of a one-dimensional Woody Hayes imitator, Bruce had many more layers and textures to a life that touched so many people in so many ways over the years.

Bruce, who died April 20 at his suburban Columbus home due to complications of Alzheimer's disease, was honored with a public memorial April 25 at St. John Arena and a private funeral service the following day. During each event, the impact the 87-year-old coach had on his family, friends and former assistant coaches and players was on full display.

Current Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer, who was a graduate assistant at OSU under Bruce in 1986 and '87 and then a full-time assistant for three seasons during the 1990s on Bruce's staff at Colorado State, has often said his father and Bruce were the two most influential men in his life.

But Meyer has also recounted stories that underscore the kind of tough-love approach he received from Bruce, including the late September afternoon in 1990 when Meyer walked onto the practice field at Colorado State after the birth of his first child, Nicole.

"I remember it like it was yesterday," said Meyer, who was the Rams' wide receivers coach at the time. "We were working on a screen pass when one of the receivers blows a blocking assignment and Earle blows a gasket. I mean, he just undressed me."

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**Earle Bruce
1931-2018**

JOSH WINSLOW

IN GREAT COMPANY – Former Ohio State head coach Earle Bruce was one of the few non-band members to dot the "i" during "Script Ohio" at Ohio Stadium.

Continued On Page 8

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN.COM

Early on the morning of April 20, Buckeye Nation lost a true legend when Coach Earle Bruce died after a battle with Alzheimer's. After the news of Bruce's passing, Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers and staff members took to the Forum on BuckeyeSports.com to share their thoughts and condolences for the Bruce family and their memories of the Hall of Fame coach.

A few years back, when I was still a student reporter at The Lantern, I was the last person working in the lobby of the Woody after a press conference, and for whatever reason Earle Bruce was there as well. He had been speaking with some older reporters that he clearly knew well, but once it was just me remaining, he immediately struck up a conversation.

That always stuck with me as a young reporter. Not many coaches – current or former – would've done that.

– **Tim Moody, BSB Editor**

Prayers to his family! Sad to say I wasn't alive when he was coach but I really enjoyed and felt like I saw him coach when I read Mark Rea's series on Coach in the paper.

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

Sad news to see this morning. One of the Buckeye greats.

– **AcrossTheField**

Will remember him for much more than his coaching abilities.

– **eharvey**

Earle was a true Buckeye. One of the few people who became bigger after his time as coach than during his career. He was a GREAT storyteller and always very kind to me and to Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

I think the thing he was most proud of was his winning record against Michigan and Bo Schembechler. No small feat.

Ohio State football lost a giant today.

– **Frank Moskowitz, BSB Publisher**

I will always remember hearing Earle Bruce on 610 WTVN radio before the Ohio State football games all fired up and so passionate talking about the Buckeyes.

Then I had the privilege to sit one row in front of Earle in the press box for Ohio State football home games and hear him mutter under his breath whenever the Buckeyes did something he did not like. Everyone knows there's no cheering in the press box, but with Earle, he was more than OK to do so in my opinion. He had every right to.

– **Ryan McGlade, BSB Staff Writer**

My favorite memory of Earle, or at least the Buckeyes under Earle, was the 1979 season. What an incredible way to rebound from one of the lowest points in Ohio State football history, when Woody was fired for hitting the Clemson player. Great season and the Rose Bowl is always a pinnacle. If only the Buckeyes had beat USC that year Earle's narrative might be completely different.

– **Poster That Harley Built**

From all I have seen and read: good coach, impossible scenario to come into. A lot of disciples that he trained. Great ambassador for OSU. Phenomenal person.

– **Blufftonbuck**

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1983

Though the Ohio State football team had just wrapped up spring practice, members on the squad were already looking forward to a matchup at Oklahoma in the second week of the 1983 season.

Senior-to-be linebacker Rowland Tatum was one of those players eyeing the Sooners.

"I look forward to it because I know guys on the Oklahoma team, and I'm going into the season next year not wanting to lose a game," he said. "That's the kind of attitude I'm going to have, and I'm sure everyone else on the team is going to have that attitude."

30 Years Ago – 1988

Ohio State entered spring practice unsure of who its starting quarterback was going to be for the upcoming season but came out on the other side with a resolution. The Buckeyes named Greg Frey their starter when spring ball concluded, leaving Chris Stablein and John Wagoner as the backups.

"Greg is just keener mentally than the other guys," said quarterbacks coach Bill Dudley. "That has a lot to do with maturity and experience. Nothing seems to faze him."

25 Years Ago – 1993

Through his attorney, former Ohio State basketball star Jim Jackson entered a not guilty plea to charges that he waved a gun at four teenagers in December. Jackson had been charged with four counts of disorderly conduct, aggravated menacing and carrying a concealed weapon in a motor vehicle.

Four Columbus-area teenagers claimed Jackson drove up alongside them at a suburban intersection, threatened them verbally and then brandished a gun.

Because of the plea, the case was set to be continued at a later date. If convicted, Jackson could have been fined as much as \$1,000 and faced six months in jail on the menacing charge. The other counts each carried fines up to \$250 and jail sentences up to 30 days.

20 Years Ago – 1998

In the midst of Ohio State's annual spring game on April 25 was a kick-for-cash event sponsored by Huntington Banks and WBNS radio.

Canal Winchester, Ohio, resident Samuel Smith, a 24-year-old at the time who used to sell pop and give the media hot dogs at OSU games, was chosen from more than 2,000 entries for an opportunity to win \$25,000 for a 35-yard kick, \$50,000 for a 40-yard kick, or \$100,000 for a 45-yard kick.

Smith elected the 40-yard distance and sailed the kick through the uprights, causing the crowd to explode into a celebration.

"All I did was look at the ball," Smith said. "I didn't see the crowd or anything. I just nailed it."

15 Years Ago – 2003

A Franklin County Common Pleas Court jury returned a verdict in favor of former Ohio State offensive lineman Tyson Walter in his civil lawsuit against former teammate LeCharles Bentley, who punched him after a verbal altercation during a Feb. 17, 2000, conditioning session.

But Walter, who was seeking up to \$2 million for pain, suffering, medical expenses and lost wages, received just \$6,000 to cover his medical expenses. That total was \$4,000 less than Bentley had earlier offered Walter in exchange for dropping the suit.

According to Bentley, Walter verbally abused him because Bentley had just been named OSU's offensive lineman of the year in 1999.

"He made two comments that really pushed it," Bentley said. "He said, 'Which coach did you have to suck off to win that award?' and, 'You couldn't afford that award if you had to buy it from a coach because you're too poor and from the ghetto.' That was it."

10 Years Ago – 2008

The last chapter of the Ohio State vs. Jim O'Brien saga

seemed to have been written after the university reportedly cut a \$2.74 million check to its former men's basketball coach as a result of a wrongful termination suit O'Brien had won against his former employer.

O'Brien was fired in 2004 after it was disclosed he had paid a former recruit \$6,000. A Columbus court ruled that he had violated his contract but not to the degree that the university could fire him. An appeal was later upheld and the Ohio Supreme Court refused to hear a subsequent appeal in February.

Five Years Ago – 2013

Former Ohio State running back Maurice Clarett forged The Comeback Project charity basketball game at Struthers Fieldhouse just outside of Youngstown, Ohio.

Proceeds from the game, staged April 27, went to The Riot, a Christian youth center. The event brought together a number of current and former NFL players from the area, as well as former Ohio State football head coach Jim Tressel, who coached Clarett.

"I'll tell you what: I haven't played basketball in a long time, but it was fun getting out there," Tressel said. "I'm glad I left without any injuries."

One Year Ago – 2017

Former Ohio State football player, Tattoo-Gate tipster and lawyer Chris Cicero was being accused of practicing law without a license, according to The Columbus Dispatch.

Cicero was the man who told Tressel that a select group of players were selling their Ohio State memorabilia for tattoos in 2010-11, a revelation that ultimately led to Tressel's resignation.

According to the Dispatch, Cicero's latest offense was his fourth professional misconduct case. For his involvement in the Tattoo-Gate scandal, his license was suspended for one year in 2012 after the court ruled he "violated the confidences of a would-be client."

Bruce Was Honest, Intense, Classy At Once

on the field. Never one to suffer fools, the coach was no glad-hander or butt-kisser, and to his ultimate detriment he never understood how important those roles were to play in Columbus.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Still, how wounded Bruce must have been to have given his heart and soul to his alma mater only to see that university vindictively spit on him. I can only imagine the hurt he must have felt – not only at being dismissed from his dream job, but to have it come at the beginning of the most important week of the season.

It's difficult to put myself in that position, but it's not difficult to imagine I would not have handled the situation with such class.

Bruce somehow kept his emotions in check that week, showing them briefly only twice – when members of the Ohio State marching band showed up on the lawn at his house to play "Across the Field" and "Carmen Ohio," and when he triumphantly pumped his fist into the air while being carried off the field atop the shoulders of his players following the 23-20 victory against Michigan in his final game.

"I was kind of in awe that week as I watched how a man gets back up after he's been knocked down," said current Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer, then a 23-year-old graduate assistant on Bruce's staff. "We were all kind of shell-shocked, but not Earle. He wouldn't let us get distracted. We had a job to do, and he was going to make sure we did it. That week, we all saw how a man – and I mean a *real* man – reacts when adversity knocks him to the ground."

In a kind of ironic way, the botched manner in which Bruce was fired by then-OSU president Dr. Edward Jennings helped turn public opinion in the coach's favor. Bruce suddenly became a martyr of sorts to many fans who had previously been apathetic toward him, and when the coach returned to Columbus several years later to become an OSU football analyst for WTVN Radio, the transformation became complete.

With his passion for anything and everything scarlet and gray firmly on display, Bruce became a beloved figure to an entirely new generation of Buckeye fans. He was approachable, seemingly indefatigable and eminently eager to discuss football in general and Ohio State football in particular for as long as anyone cared to listen.

My personal relationship with Bruce came full circle after Jim Tressel was hired in 2001 and welcomed Bruce and fellow former head coach John Cooper back to the program as honorary assistants.

Bruce became a regular at Tressel's weekly press luncheons, and it was always a privilege and honor to sit beside Bruce as he would regale media members with a litany of stories – some salty, some hilarious and every one of them more entertaining than the last.

One of the most enjoyable games I ever covered was the 2004 Fiesta Bowl. Ohio State survived a furious comeback from Kansas State to secure a 35-28 victory, but exceedingly more entertaining than the game itself was getting a chance to sit beside Bruce in the auxiliary press box on the roof at Sun Devil Stadium. I didn't need to watch that game. I

got a blow-by-blow description from the coach complete with priceless (and sometimes profanity-laced) analysis.

At the end of the game, I stood up, shook his hand and said, "Coach, that was the most enjoyable game I think I've ever had the pleasure to watch." A kind of mystified look came across his face as he replied with a somewhat bewildered, "OK."

Last year, as I interviewed him for what would be the last time, he seemed a little slower than usual. But I hadn't seen him for a while and I chalked it up to the fact that he was 86 years old. It wasn't until a few months later that it was revealed that he was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease.

Anyone who has been touched by that disease knows how insidious it can be, but Bruce took the same approach to that fight as he did any other – with as much hard-nosed determination as he could muster. The fact that he attended an Ohio State spring practice session on his 87th birthday, just six weeks before his passing, probably tells you all you need to know about the man's grit.

Potent Quotables

I realize the foolhardiness of attempting in just a few words to convey the importance of a life such as the one fully lived by Earle Bruce, so I thought I would enlist the coach's help. Here are some of my favorite quotes from the series I wrote last year for BSB on his life and legacy.

- When asked about his no-nonsense personality: "I've never been one to blow smoke. I've never done that, and I don't think I could ever do that. But it's never been a problem. Not with me anyway."

- About working on Sundays as an OSU assistant: "It wasn't that Woody wasn't religious. It's just that Woody wanted everyone to work religiously. He was of the mind that there was simply too much to be done to take a day off – ever. Honestly, we never knew from year to year if we were going to get Christmas Day off."

- On dealing with adversity: "Every now and then, the lessons you learn on the football field come back. And when you get knocked down and hit real hard – if you stay down, that's sad. You can't always be taken aback by the fact you got hit. You can get hit, but you've got to do something about it. You can't fold up. When you try to teach that to your kids, how can you not do that when it happens to you?"

- On his radio career: "I may not breathe into the microphone the right way and I may not talk just right. I may not be the most professional broadcaster you've ever heard. But I give it to you straight from the heart. I'm no phony. I'll tell you the way it is because that's the way I've always been."

- On following in the footsteps of a legend: "I never at all regretted being the guy who succeeded Coach Hayes. At the time, I felt I was the guy who could follow Coach Hayes and be successful, and if I hadn't felt that way, I wouldn't have done it. I was never going to be the guy who said, 'I want to be the guy who follows the guy who follows Woody.' A person with that attitude is a loser."

Earle Bruce was many things to many people – coach, friend, mentor, father, grandfather, storyteller – but one thing he was not was a loser. Earle Bruce was every bit a winner, and he was a winner by any definition of that word.

Aside from my father, Earle Bruce just might have been the most honorable man I've ever known.

As with his immediate family as well as all of Buckeye Nation, I'm going to miss him.

I first met Earle Bruce almost 40 years ago. I was a scruffy, cocksure, 20-year-old sports-writer, and he was a 47-year-old grown-ass man who had been a football coach since before I was in diapers.

To say that our first encounter didn't go well for me would be akin to saying the Battle of the Little Bighorn didn't go well for Custer and the 7th Cavalry.

In those days, media members covering Ohio State football had almost unlimited access to players and coaches following games. As sports editor of a small newspaper in OSU quarterback Art Schlichter's hometown, I was used to having nearly unlimited *carte blanche* in terms of asking questions and receiving answers.

An emotionally-spent Bruce had just won his first game as successor to the legendary Woody Hayes, watching the Buckeyes systematically dismantle a pretty good Syracuse team by a 31-8 final score in the 1979 season opener. OSU enjoyed a lopsided 383-81 edge in rushing yardage – obviously something Woody would have liked – but Bruce had spent a large chunk of the summer claiming that he would bring a more updated and sophisticated offensive approach to Columbus.

So, naturally I asked why running the ball 69 times while throwing it on only 16 occasions could be interpreted as anything akin to a modern offensive attack.

That's when I got the look for the first time. Bruce had a way of simultaneously pursing his lips while raising his eyebrows to the point where you didn't know if he was angered by the question or simply pitying you for being so dumb.

Finally, after a few seconds that seemed like minutes, Bruce answered, "Well, I don't know. We threw the ball on the first play of the game. I think we threw it three or four times during that first series. Exactly how many times do you think we should have thrown it?"

Was there ever a time in your life when you wished you could have become invisible? That was one of those times for me. But it also taught me a valuable lesson that I have carried for the remainder of my journalistic career. If you're going to ask a question, make sure it's based upon facts and not opinion.

Bruce was the teacher, I was the pupil, and I never played a down for the man.

To be honest, I didn't think much of Bruce when he was head coach at Ohio State. I never thought he took as much advantage as he should have with such strong-armed quarterbacks as Schlichter, Mike Tomczak and Jim Karsatos at his disposal, preferring instead to rely upon traditional, ground-and-pound Big Ten football.

It was far from glamorous (much like the coach himself), yet it was a winning formula. When Bruce was fired, he enjoyed a .770 winning percentage against Big Ten competition that at the time ranked fifth all-time among conference coaches with at least five seasons in the league.

Class Personified

In the aftermath of the outpouring of love and admiration for Bruce following his April 20 death, it seems almost unbelievable that the Buckeye Nation that remembered the coach with such affection was the same one that was ready to pay for his one-way bus ticket out of Columbus after a string of 9-3 finishes during the 1980s.

Only through the prism of time do we begin to fully understand that Bruce's ouster the week of the Michigan game in 1987 came not wholly as a result of the product he put



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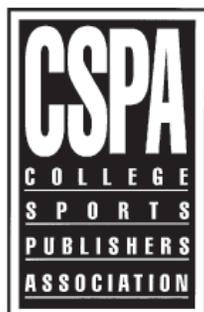
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The next issue (June cover date) will be mailed June 5.

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Charter Member



Buckeyes Mum On QB Competition

In at least one regard, Ohio State closed spring practice the same way it opened it – unsure of who will be the starting quarterback for the 2018 season. After the spring game on April 14, Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer said he would meet with his assistants in the week that followed to discuss the quarterback situation.

In the scrimmage, fourth-year junior Joe Burrow completed 15 of 22 passes for 238 yards and two touchdowns, including strikes of 42 and 50 yards to sophomore H-back Demario McCall in the second half, the latter coming on the final play of the game. Third-year sophomore Dwayne Haskins was 9 of 19 for 120 yards and two more scores, including a 25-yard dart to sophomore wide receiver Jaylen Harris for the contest's first passing touchdown.

Williams Looking To Make Most Of Scholarship Offer

Alex Williams of Pickerington (Ohio) North is just one of the latest examples of Ohio State football head coach Urban Meyer waiting until late in the recruiting process to offer an in-state prospect.

Williams, rated a three-star athlete in the 247Sports composite, committed to West Virginia last May and was planning to ink his national letter of intent with the Mountaineers on the first day of the early signing period, Dec. 20. A couple of weeks before the early window opened, however, he garnered that coveted scholarship offer from the Buckeyes and wound up signing with them five days before Christmas.

Williams, who played in the 73rd annual North-South All-Star Classic at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium in Massillon, Ohio, on April 28, told BSB he couldn't pass up the opportunity to don the scarlet and gray.

"Coach Urban and the rest of the staff fortunately blessed me with the chance to play for them and gave me a full scholarship," he said after the game. "They decided to do it during my recruiting with West Virginia – my final steps. To say no to the school that you grew up loving, it would have been very hard to do. Just like any Ohio kid, you grow up playing football and you want to play for the Buckeyes."

Williams played on the South squad in the All-Star game, which the North won, 20-18. The contest featured a few skirmishes, as tempers of players on both teams flared at times. Williams appeared to be in the middle of a few of those scuffles. After a play in the third quarter, Williams glared at the North sideline for a moment before demonstrating the "O-H" with his arms.

"I have a history of maybe not being as sportsmanlike as I should be," Williams admitted, "but this North-South game was a little different. There was some chippiness that necessarily shouldn't have been here. Everybody feels to challenge my choice to go to Ohio State and the sideline decided to chant some things. So I just wanted to reciprocate that 'O-H' and that we're all from Ohio."

Now that he has played his final high school football game, Williams can look forward to reporting to Ohio State this summer. The Buckeyes officially list Williams as an athlete, but the 6-7, 250-pounder said he'll enter the program as a defensive end. He added that he hopes he stays at that position throughout his OSU career so he can be guided by defensive line coach Larry Johnson.

"You meet great men in your life such as your father, mentors, celebrities that you look up to, and I've had coaches I love and adore, but I can already feel a connection with Coach Johnson that's like no other," Williams said. "He truly understands the game, and there is not a better defensive line coach, I think, in the history of football than Coach Larry Johnson. I made the right choice being under him."

While Williams noted that he hopes to gather some hardware while at Ohio State, he pointed out there is another motivation driving him as well.

"Everybody wants to win a national title and everybody wants to win a Big Ten title," Williams said. "But I honestly want to prove to people that I'm valued here. I want to let Coach Johnson and Coach Urban know that them giving me this scholarship was the best thing they could do."

– Ryan McGlade

Redshirt freshman Tate Martell struggled as a passer, completing just 5 of 16 throws for 28 yards and throwing the game's only interception. When using his feet, though, Martell ran for 69 yards and a touchdown on 11 carries.

Ohio State offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day and offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson, as well as other assistants, spoke to the media on April 18. The two, however, failed to provide any clarity on which signal caller will lead the squad this fall, largely

because the coaches had not finished discussing the matter internally.

"We're right in the middle of meetings right now," Day said. "We're still evaluating film and everything from the spring right now. So in the middle of meetings, in the middle of eval-

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Last BSB Print Until June 5

This is the final print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin until the June issue, scheduled to be mailed on June 5. However, BSB's new full-service website, BuckeyeSports.com, is in full swing so you will be able to keep up with all the breaking Ohio State Sports news. BuckeyeSports.com is free to all BSB print subscribers. Be sure to check in on the site daily for any news, especially on the recruiting front, as well as features, video, commentary and more.

The BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum is also the place to be. Frequently, recruiting news breaks there first, and the Forum also offers you a chance to interact with the BSB staff and other Buckeye fans. Remember, every BSB reader is now a BSB correspondent. If you see or hear something interesting, be sure to share it with other Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers on the Forum.

Among the features coming up on BuckeyeSports.com will be reprints of Mark Rea's entire series on the life and legacy of Earle Bruce, to honor the late coach after his recent passing.

BuckeyeSports.com replaces the electronic BSB Quickly, the last edition of which was posted on April 24. All editions of BSB Quickly are archived on the new site, however, as are print issues of Buckeye Sports Bulletin which remain available on Mondays during football season and Tuesdays of print weeks the rest of the year.

Current subscribers who are not already enjoying the new BuckeyeSports.com must email their name, address, phone number and preferred email address to subscriptions@BuckeyeSports.com. We will send back simple instructions on how to access the site, as well as the electronic version of the print BSB.

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While being equally vague, Wilson did say the coaches must eventually decide who the starter will be to help provide the team its identity.

"At the end of the day, what you need is a direction sometimes," Wilson said. "There's a point in time where as we've now practiced and had a great winter, all three of those guys have been awesome, and I know Ryan and Coach (Meyer) will get together and make some decisions and continue to move forward. Maybe we're at that point and maybe we're not. I think that's where Coach and Ryan and ourselves are totally trying to figure out."

With Burrow set to graduate this spring, he could leave Ohio State as a graduate transfer and be able to play elsewhere immediately with two years of eligibility remaining, should he not get the job.

When asked about potential changes to the roster forthcoming, Day said the team as a whole should take precedence if and when quarterbacks make decisions about their future.

"As the quarterback, you trust the fact that guys chose Ohio State for a reason," Day said. "The brotherhood, being nine strong and being there for your teammate is a part of it. That's one of the things we talk about all the time is, 'How strong is your unit? How strong is the offense?' The brotherhood of trust is important to us, and that's why we preach it all the time. In the end, it's not about yourself. It's more about the team."

Pair Of Buckeyes Announce Transfers

Within nine days following Ohio State's spring game, two players on the team announced they would be transferring from the school at the end of the semester. Offensive lineman Matthew Burrell did so via Instagram on April 18, and running back Antonio Williams took to Twitter on April 23 to announce he will be transferring to North Carolina.

Burrell, who will be a fourth-year junior in the fall, was a member of Ohio State's 2015 recruiting class out of Woodbridge (Va.) Hylton. After redshirting his first year on campus, Burrell played in all 13 games for the Buckeyes as a reserve in 2016, seeing extensive action in blowout wins vs. Bowling Green, Rutgers, Nebraska and Maryland.

In 2017, Burrell was a candidate to start at right guard but lost the competition to Branden Bowen. When Bowen broke his leg on Oct. 7 against Maryland, Burrell replaced him for the rest of the game. The next week at Nebraska, however, after battling for the spot, Demetrius Knox started at right guard instead of Burrell and did not surrender the position for the remainder of the year.

Burrell was vying for the center spot this spring but quickly fell behind Brady Taylor and Josh Myers. After the spring game,

Meyer said Taylor heads into the summer as the team's starting center. The head coach also pointed out the progress Myers made in the spring but did not mention Burrell.

Burrell, who had not announced a new destination by the time BSB went to press, is the third offensive lineman this offseason to announce his transfer from Ohio State. Jack Wohlabaugh announced he would transfer to Duke, and Kevin Feder is leaving to pursue a graduate transfer option.

"Being a Buckeye is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity on the field and off," a portion of the note Burrell posted to his Instagram account read. "That being said, and after prayer and thought, I will be transferring from OSU. I am not certain where I will end up but I am looking forward to whatever God has planned for me."

Williams, a native of New London, N.C., will have a homecoming of sorts when he arrives at North Carolina, which officially announced his transfer on April 24.

The 5-11, 210-pound Williams joined OSU as a four-star recruit in the 2016 class. Rated by the 247Sports composite as the No. 169 overall player and No. 7 running back, Williams pledged to the Buckeyes in 2015 after originally committing to the Tar Heels in 2013 and Wisconsin in 2014.

He played in two games for Ohio State as a freshman in 2016, tallying six carries for 28 yards. As a sophomore last fall, he managed 57 totes for 290 yards and three touchdowns in 12 games while playing behind J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber, both of whom are back for Ohio State in 2018.

"As individuals we set goals for ourselves," an excerpt of Williams' note on Twitter read. "Some things are obtainable from the paths

that we choose, and some things aren't. Though being at Ohio State provided me with the right path to reach those goals, the timing for me to be at OSU wasn't the most ideal. With that being said, following the end of this semester, I will be transferring to the University of North Carolina."

News of Burrell's and Williams' transfers was originally published on BuckeyeSports.com, which provides instant Ohio State updates for BSB subscribers. For signup information regarding BSB's new full-service website, free to all print subscribers, see note on this page.

Saunders Reportedly Given A Scholarship

Meyer has been known to reward walk-ons who work hard with a scholarship before their senior year. Recent examples include Joe Burger, Craig Fada, Elijaah Goins and Zach Turnure.

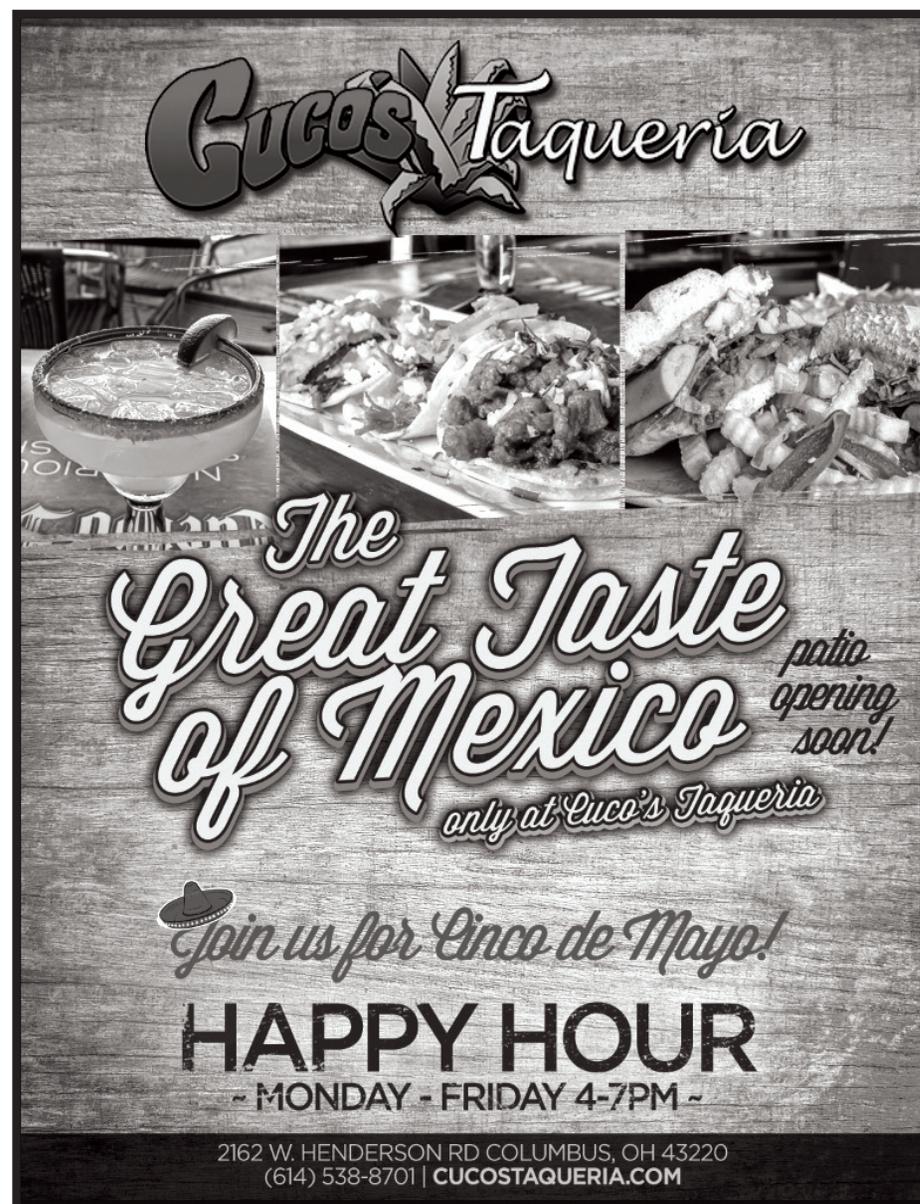
It appears Meyer has done this again.

According to the Dublin (Ohio) Coffman High School football program's Twitter account, alumnus and current Buckeye receiver C.J. Saunders was recently given a scholarship for his fourth season, although he has two years of eligibility remaining.

"Congrats to former Rock, CJ Saunders – just got put on scholarship for the Buckeyes!" read the social-media post, which was retweeted by Ohio State wide receivers coach Zach Smith. "Just goes to show it's how you finish and not how you start. Good luck young man. Well deserved, you earned it!"

Saunders originally walked on at Ohio State in the fall of 2015. After recording no catches in his first two seasons as a Buckeye and playing in just one game, Saunders broke out when

Continued On Page 6



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Continued From Page 5

he collected six receptions for 102 yards and one touchdown in Ohio State's 54-21 home win over UNLV last season.

While playing largely in a reserve role, Saunders saw action in 12 of the Buckeyes' 14 games in 2017. He registered 17 catches for 221 yards and had the score against the Rebels.

Ohio State had not confirmed the report that the team has put Saunders on scholarship by the time BSB went to press.

Assuming that Dublin Coffman's tweet is true, Ohio State is at 87 scholarship players for 2018, two over the NCAA limit of 85. The Buckeyes must be down to 85 scholarship players by the start of 2018 fall camp.

Players On The Spot

Quarterbacks Joe Burrow (Jr.), Dwayne Haskins (So.) and Tate Martell (R-Fr.) – Spring couldn't have gone much better for any of the three quarterbacks, really, save one of them being named a starter. Burrow and Haskins were both outstanding throughout the spring, and each shone in the spring game, with Burrow perhaps having the better day in Ohio Stadium. Martell was always a long shot to win the job, and he won't be the starter barring some major changes or injuries, but he did enough this spring to make the coaches think long and hard about what kind of impact he could have in 2018. Regardless of how the battle shakes out, all three players have bright futures in college football – even if one of them is likely to end up playing at another school.

Sophomore H-back Demario McCall – With K.J. Hill out for spring practice, McCall had a chance to showcase his talents at his new position, and that's exactly what he did. Even with Hill and incumbent starter Parris Campbell back, McCall showed why he has to be on the field in some capacity in 2018 after he made 11 receptions for 165 yards and two scores in the spring game. McCall is a star in the making, and he'll bring a dynamic presence to Ohio State's offense and return game.

Fifth-year senior center Brady Taylor – This spring was probably Taylor's last chance to prove himself at Ohio State, and it seems he did exactly that. After the spring game, head coach Urban Meyer named Taylor the starting center – for now – heading into summer workouts. He'll have to continue to hold off redshirt freshman Josh Myers in fall camp, but there's nothing to suggest that Taylor won't be the starter on Sept. 1 when the Buckeyes open against Oregon State.

Junior cornerback Damon Arnette – Arnette was a starter last season, and he cemented his spot in a three-man rotation once again

this spring. Expect to see him back in his normal No. 3 in the fall, and expect him to be much improved from last season. Experience will lead to more consistency for Arnette, and the coaches continued to rave about his competitiveness this spring. If he tightens up from a mental standpoint, he could make a big step forward in 2018.

Junior tight end Rashod Berry – Projected by many – including BSB – as the starting tight end heading into spring practice, Berry is in real danger of opening the season third on the Buckeyes' depth chart. He suffered a stinger toward the end of spring camp that held him out of a few practices and the spring game, but Berry had already been passed on the two-deep by sophomore Luke Farrell, whom Meyer named the starting tight end heading into the summer. Now Berry not only has to fight to pass Farrell, but he has to continue holding off sophomore Jake Hausmann – plus blue-chip recruit Jeremy Ruckert, who will enroll this summer and immediately push for a spot on the depth chart.

Linebackers Malik Harrison (Jr.), Tuf Borland (So.), Baron Browning (So.), Dante Booker (5th-Sr.) and Keandre Jones (Jr.) – The results of spring camp for this group of linebackers was a mixed bag, with the negatives being out of the players' control. Borland suffered an Achilles injury early in camp which will keep him out until September while Booker had two offseason shoulder surgeries and didn't practice at all. Before his injury, Borland was locked in as a starter, but now he'll have to work his way back into the lineup in the fall after Browning and junior Justin Hilliard each had standout springs. Harrison and Jones both did well this spring as well, and each looks likely to either start or be in the immediate rotation in the fall. Sophomore Pete Werner and freshman Dallas Gant are others who impressed the coaches this spring and could be factors in 2018.

– Tim Moody

Buckeyes Lose Recruiting Staffer To Purdue

In addition to Burrell and Williams leaving, Ohio State lost assistant director of player personnel Eron Hodges to Purdue. He announced through Twitter on April 22 that he was tak-

ing the director of player personnel job on Boilermaker head coach Jeff Brohm's staff.

Hodges, a native of Chicago, had been working under Ohio State director of player personnel Mark Pantoni since 2015, his second stint with the Buckeyes. Hodges was a strength and conditioning intern from December 2012 to June 2013 before leaving to become a graduate assistant at Kent State coaching linebackers. He returned to Columbus in 2015 as a recruiting analyst and was given the title of assistant director of player personnel in 2016.

Hodges handled the walk-on program for Ohio State, convincing a number of recruits with Division I offers to pay their way at OSU. One of the preferred walk-ons he helped land for Ohio State's 2018 class is a wide receiver who ranks higher in the 247Sports composite than two 2018 Michigan signees. Cincinnati Summit Country Day School three-star Xavier Johnson ranked No. 1,142 nationally and No.

171 positionally. Meanwhile, Kansas City (Mo.) Park Hill three-star wide receiver Ronnie Bell and DeSoto, Texas, three-star safety German Green, who both signed letters of intent with the Wolverines, were ranked No. 1,478 and No. 1,230, respectively.

This story was originally published in the April 24 edition of the electronic BSB Quickly on BuckeyeSports.com. A discussion regarding Hodges and his impact on Ohio State recruiting, especially the walk-on program, can also be found on the BuckeyeSports.com forum, a key new feature on BSB's new full-service website.

Buck-I-Guy Criticized For Behavior At Bruce Memorial

Buck-I-Guy, an Ohio State fan who has long been known to wear an all-white outfit and a white cowboy hat to OSU football games, may have taken it one step too far.

The passionate fan attended the memorial service at St. John Arena on April 25 honoring former Ohio State football head coach Earle Bruce, who died at the age of 87 on April 20 after a long fight with Alzheimer's.

Dressed in his typical garb worn on Ohio State football game days, Buck-I-Guy, whose real name is John Chubb, was criticized on social media for his behavior at the ceremony, particularly for clapping and cheering at what many considered to be inappropriate times.

Later that same day, friends of the Bruce family were welcomed to pay their respects at the Schoedinger Worthington Chapel in Columbus. There, a photo of Bruce was present. Despite there being a sign indicating that the photo was meant to be signed exclusively by former players and coaches, Chubb penned his moniker on the picture of the late coach.

Chubb's signature drew negative reactions from numerous former Ohio State players who expressed their dissent via social media. At some point that day, an unknown player or coach used a pen to black out Chubb's signature, turning it into a small drawing of a Buckeye nut instead.

These actions prompted a petition to be started asking Ohio State president Michael Drake to ban Chubb from all university functions as his alter ego. As of press time, the petition had more than 5,000 signatures.



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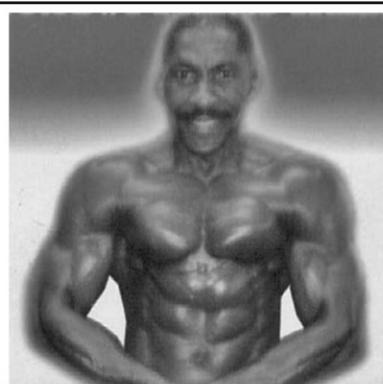
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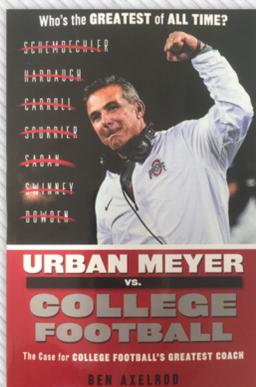
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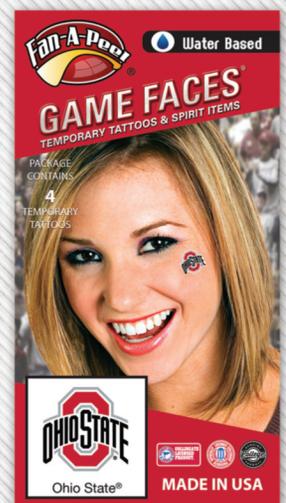
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Bruce Served As A Mentor To Many At OSU

Continued From Page 1

"All these years later, I can remember the night of the play we were working on and the defensive scheme we were working against. What was the lesson? No matter what else is going on, focus on the task at hand. Focus on what you're doing."

William White, who played four years at OSU for Bruce before embarking upon an 11-year NFL career that included an appearance in Super Bowl XXXIII as a starting strong safety for the Atlanta Falcons, had a similar brush with Bruce's wrath.

As a freshman out of Lima (Ohio) Senior, White earned a starting job at cornerback in 1984 and chalked up his first career tackles during a 22-14 victory against Oregon State in the season opener. Three weeks later, during his first road game in scarlet and gray, White snared the first of his 16 career interceptions at OSU, a second-quarter pick that set up a touchdown during an eventual 35-22 victory at Minnesota.

As the freshman danced his way toward the sideline, he was expecting a high-five or at least a congratulatory pat on the butt. What he got instead was rather unexpected.

"I'm a freshman, I'm all happy (and) Earle comes up and grabs me by the helmet and is yanking me and yelling at me," White told The Lima News. "I just got an interception, and he's talking about a tackle I missed two plays ago. I was like, 'Really?' But when you look back at it, it was to make you better. That was the passion he had. It was always that way."

"My first two years, I thought he hated

me, as much as he yelled. I'm starting as a freshman, and I'm thinking, 'You ought to be embracing me and trying to help me out.' But every time he talked to me, he was yelling about something. But it was to make me better and get better. When I was able to settle in and become a decent player, we actually became friends."

Not every recollection about Bruce contains tough love. Former quarterback Greg Frey remembered how the coach managed to sweet-talk Frey's mother – a devout Catholic who wanted her son to play football at Boston College – into allowing him to attend Ohio State.

"In January 1986, Ohio State was very late in the game to recruit me," Frey said. "(Quarterbacks coach Jim) Tressel had left the Ohio State staff in November or December to become head coach at Youngstown State, and the trail to recruit me went quiet."

"I remember telling my dad that I would at least like to know if they had an interest in me before it was too late. So, we reached out to a few alumni in Cincinnati and found out Ohio State was indeed still interested in me."

Bruce re-established contact with the quarterback prospect and his family and quickly scheduled an in-home visit.

"Coach quickly realized it was not me or my dad that he had to win over – it was my mom," Frey said. "And he knew he had his hands full."

"Growing up Catholic, I went to St. James Elementary School and St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati, and my mom wanted to keep that theme going for my future college education. Boston College was at the top of the list and

they wanted me. This was right after Doug Flutie won the Heisman, BC was a hot program, and Mary Ann Frey had her mind made up that BC was where I needed to be."

Taking a page from the legendary Hayes, who always placed as much or more emphasis on recruiting a player's parents than the player himself, Bruce placed a call to the Frey household, hoping Greg's mother would answer the phone.

"He always said he knew he would never totally win her over," Frey said, "but he at least wanted to connect with her, give her some peace of mind that I would be more than OK at Ohio State and that he really wanted to coach me."

After a 30-minute conversation, Bruce said he knew he was going to get his quarterback.

"Earle must have told me that story a dozen times over the years, and his face always lit up with a beaming grin of pride," Frey said. "He would say, 'Oh, boy, I got her to talk to me for 30 minutes! I got her! Do you hear me? I got her!'"

"A few weeks later, I signed with Ohio State, and although my mom didn't speak to me for three days, things worked out just fine and she came to love Earle and Jean Bruce and her new Buckeye family."

Passion From An Early Age

Ask anyone who spent any amount of time around Bruce to describe the coach and most likely the word "passion" would be uttered in the first few words of the reply.

"Earle was real," White said. "He was a guy who always spoke the truth, and he had a deep passion for players, the organization, the team."

Apparently, the deep seeds of that kind of passion were planted at an early age

Bruce was born March 8, 1931, the first of four sons to Earle D. Bruce Sr. and his wife, Mildred. Bruce's father was a no-nonsense man of strong will and an even stronger constitution having toiled in the steel mills along the tristate area where the borders of Pennsylvania, Maryland and West Virginia converge.

Young Earle inherited his father's grit and determination as well as a passion for sports. As one of the only left-handed players on his baseball team, Bruce quickly picked up the nickname "Lefty" as an homage to Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Lefty Grove, who was a native of Lonaconing, Md., just 15 miles west of Bruce's blue-collar hometown of Cumberland.

Despite being only 5-9 and 155 pounds, Bruce was a high school star in track as well as football. He set the city scoring record in 1948 as a junior with 23 touchdowns and 138 points in 10 games, leading his team to a 9-0-1 season and earning all-state honors at fullback.

Several major programs were interested, but Bruce chose to attend Ohio State, beginning a self-professed love affair that lasted nearly seven decades.

"I was a Buckeye from day one," the coach told BSB last year. "When I got there, and I saw that band come out of the field for the first time, I jumped up and shouted, 'I'm a Buckeye! I'm a Buckeye!' It was just something I'd never seen before, and I still remember I got chills when that band came out on the field."

Bruce never played a single varsity down for the Buckeyes, suffering a career-ending knee injury about a month before the 1951 season opener against SMU. But Hayes offered him a chance to remain with the team – as well as keep his scholarship – as a student assistant on the Ohio State coaching staff. It was the

beginning of a career that lasted more than 40 years and went from the high school ranks to the professional level with the Arena Football League.

Bruce's first full-time coaching job came at Mansfield (Ohio) High School in 1953. He spent three seasons there, the first two under Bill Peterson, who went on to become head coach at Florida State for 11 seasons before spending a season and a half at the helm of the NFL's Houston Oilers. His third season came on the staff of Bob McNea, who would later become an assistant for Ara Parseghian at Northwestern. Years later, Bruce hired McNea as his recruiting coordinator at Ohio State where his duties included helping design the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"I don't think Mansfield ever enjoyed a more successful three-year period than the Peterson-McNea era," Bruce said. "It was a privilege to be an assistant coach for those guys."

In addition to cutting his coaching teeth there, Mansfield was also where Bruce met a striking young lady named Jean French.

"She was a senior when I was a first-year teacher and I remember she used to bring me the attendance sheets," he said. "When she graduated, we began to date, and we were married the next August."

Earle and Jean Bruce were married for 56 years until Jean's death in 2011. The marriage produced four daughters – Lynn, Michele, Aimee and Noel.

Bruce got his first head coaching job in 1956 at Salem, Ohio, beginning a four-year stint that turned a previously moribund program into a winner. The Quakers posted a 24-4 record during the coach's final three seasons, earning him an undying love and respect from the small town of about 12,000 that, according to Tressel, continues to this day.

"Coach Bruce is still a legend in Salem," said Tressel, now the president of Youngstown State University, located about 25 miles northeast of Salem. "He hasn't coached there for more than 50 years, and people talk about him like he was coaching there yesterday."

Bruce's coaching career continued upward when he left Salem for Sandusky in 1960 and was promptly named Ohio High School Coach of the Year after nearly leading the Blue Streaks to a state championship. From there, he took over the legendary program at Massillon High School, where he posted back-to-back undefeated seasons as well as state titles in 1964 and '65.

With his second straight 10-0 record, Bruce joined Paul Brown and Chuck Mather as the only coaches in Massillon's long and storied history with back-to-back undefeated seasons. Brown did it in 1935 and '36 and had three in a row between 1938-40, and Mather posted back-to-back undefeated campaigns in 1952 and '53.

Following the 1965 season, Bruce and his 82-12-3 record in 10 seasons at the high school level began to attract college coaching offers. Miami (Ohio) head coach Bo Schembechler made an offer that might have been acceptable had the post not come with an \$11,000 annual salary, some \$2,000 less than Bruce was making at Massillon.

About the same time, Hayes was looking for a replacement for defensive backfield coach Max Ulrick, who had left the OSU staff after four seasons.

"Woody told me he couldn't afford me," Bruce said with a chuckle. "My negotiating didn't go well from that point on. He offered me the same \$11,000 that Bo had offered me. But

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"I took a pay cut to leave high school and come coach college ball. And you know what? I'd do it again."

To OSU And Back Again

Bruce spent six seasons as an assistant coach on Hayes' staff, a stretch during which the Buckeyes won an undisputed national championship in 1968 and the National Football Foundation's version of the national title in 1970.

After the 1971 season, Bruce secured his first head coaching position at the college level, beginning with a 10-2 campaign at the University of Tampa. That led to a six-year stint at Iowa State, a job that served as a springboard for returning to Ohio State to succeed Hayes.

On the evening before Bruce was formally introduced as Hayes' successor, the new coach was treated to dinner at the residence of then-university president Harold Enarson. During the evening, OSU athletic director Hugh Hindman interrupted the proceedings to say that Bruce had a phone call.

"It was Woody," Bruce said. "I was struck by how upbeat he sounded. He said he was happy that I'd been chosen and he would be there for me whenever I needed support. To this day, I have no idea who called Woody to tell him I was at the president's house. I just know it was a gracious gesture and gave me a great feeling about coming to Ohio State."

Bruce made an immediate mark on the Ohio State program, leading the Buckeyes to the 1979 Big Ten championship and a berth in the 1980 Rose Bowl, earning national coach of the year honors from the American Football Coaches Association. He spent nine seasons as head coach of the Buckeyes, leading the team to an 81-26-1 record and four Big Ten titles before being fired the week before the Michigan game in 1987.

Stints at Northern Iowa and Colorado State followed before Bruce finished his college coaching career with a 154-90-2 record. He later spent five seasons in the Arena Football League with several different teams before finally giving up coaching for good in 2004.

The list of those who played and/or coached for Bruce during his illustrious career reads like a who's who of football. Mike Tomczak, Cris Carter, Keith Byars, Chris Spielman and Jim Lachey are considered some of the finest players in Ohio State history at their respective positions, while Bruce's coaching tree includes Meyer, Tressel, Alabama head coach Nick Saban and Michigan State head coach Mark Dantonio as well as Seattle Seahawks head coach Pete Carroll. In fact, 11 of the last 16 college football national championships have been won by teams with a former Bruce assistant at the helm.

In addition to his coaching career, Bruce spent more than 20 years as an Ohio State football analyst for WTVN Radio in Columbus, something that introduced the coach's passion and affection for his alma mater to a whole new generation of fans.

In 2000, Bruce was inducted into the Iowa State Athletics Hall of Fame and followed that honor in 2003 with induction into the College Football Hall of Fame. A year later, he was inducted into the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame.

His final public appearance at Ohio Stadium came Oct. 1, 2016, when he was honored by the Ohio State marching band as one of only a handful of non-band members to dot the "i" in Script Ohio. During halftime of an eventual 58-0 win against Rutgers, the coach again donned a dark-colored suit, walked out on the Ohio Stadium turf one

more time, and doffed his trademark fedora to a crowd that responded with a thunderous standing ovation.

The coach received a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease last August but still made an appearance at his annual Beat Michigan Tailgate Party in November, looking determined to meet his newest adversary with every bit of the grit and determination he leveled against any opponent.

He celebrated his 87th birthday March 8 with a visit to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to watch a spring practice session then returned to his home in Dublin, Ohio, where he passed away early in the morning of April 20.

Current OSU running backs coach Tony Alford, who played for Bruce at Colorado State, echoed many others when he said, with the exception of his father, no other person had more influence on his life than Bruce.

"He changed the culture of Colorado State football in just two years," Alford said. "He took a bunch of underachievers and forced us to believe in ourselves and each other. He had this way about him that you not only heard

what he said, but you also listened to what he said. I think that's important."

Alford crossed paths with Bruce several times after both left Colorado State, including in 2015 when the Akron native had been contacted by Meyer and offered the running backs position at Ohio State. After six years at Notre Dame, Alford didn't know if he wanted to make a change – that is, until his phone rang on a Friday afternoon.

"It was Coach Bruce," Alford said with a smile. "He asked if I had been offered the job, and when I said that I had, he asked, 'Well?' I told him I hadn't made a decision, and that's when he said, 'Stop thinking, son. You know what to do. It's time to come home. I'll see you on Monday.' And then he hung up.

"I looked at my wife and said, 'Call the realtor.' That's how big an influence Coach Bruce was in my life."

Longtime Ohio State football historian Jack Park said the coach's passing marks the end of an era that many consider the program's golden age.

"In a lot of ways, Coach Bruce represented one of the last links to Woody Hayes," Park

told BSB. "Down through the years, there have been many players and coaches who have been important to the Ohio State football program, but in my opinion, Coach Hayes is one of, if not the most important.

"But when Coach Hayes was fired after the 1978 season, Ohio State football was at a crossroads. Replacing an icon the likes of Woody Hayes, who had been the head coach for 28 years, was going to be difficult enough. But when you add the circumstances under which Coach Hayes was to be replaced ... well, I think the university needed a unique man to fill that void, and in my opinion, Coach Bruce was the perfect choice."

Perhaps former OSU All-America lineman Jim Lachey, who played for Bruce and later coached with him in the arena league, put it best when he said, "No matter what happened along the way, Coach Bruce always represented Ohio State with so much humility and so much dignity. He was just a class act.

"If Coach Bruce has a legacy, that's it. He was a class act all the way."



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Bruce's Passion Carried Over To All Aspects Of Life

By RYAN McGLADE
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Cloud cover above the Ohio State campus on April 25 cast a gloomy backdrop as people gathered at St. John Arena that morning to celebrate the life of former OSU football head coach Earle Bruce, who died April 20 after an extended battle with Alzheimer's.

Upon entering the venerable hall, however, videos of Bruce being played on the scoreboard depicting his unyielding passion for Ohio State football offered a moment of joy for those in attendance.

Longtime Columbus WBNS 10-TV sports director Dom Tiberi emceed the ceremony, which lasted about an hour. Former Ohio State cornerback William White, who was a 1987 team captain and All-Big Ten Conference selection for Bruce, delivered the invocation.

From there, former Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel, current Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford, sports director of Columbus radio stations 610 WTVN and 105.7 The Zone Matt McCoy, current OSU wide receivers coach Zach Smith, who is Bruce's grandson, and current Buckeye head coach Urban Meyer each took a few minutes to share their memories of Bruce.

Tressel opened his speech by pointing out that Bruce had love affairs throughout his life, starting with OSU when he was a player and student assistant for Woody Hayes in the early 1950s, to his wife, Jean, and his family, to his career as a high school football head coach, to his time as a college football head coach at Tampa, Iowa State, Ohio State, Northern Iowa and Colorado State, circling back to his affinity for the Buckeyes once he retired from coaching.

"With Coach Bruce, love affairs never end, that's just the way it is," Tressel said.

Tressel was the head coach at Ohio State from 2001-10. He was an assistant on Bruce's staff at OSU from 1983-85. But in Tressel's mind, he said he was always an assistant for Bruce, who had a resounding presence around the Ohio State campus once he retired from coaching in 1995.



TIM MOODY

REMEMBERING A MENTOR – Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer, who coached under Earle Bruce at Ohio State and Colorado State, was the final speaker at a memorial held for Bruce at St. John Arena on April 25.

"Somebody asked me earlier in the week, 'How many years did you coach for Coach Bruce?' " Tressel said. "I said, 'Thirteen.' They said, 'You were an assistant coach for 13 years for Coach Bruce?' I said, 'No, I was an assistant coach for three years, but I was the head coach here for 10 years. But he was in the building, so really, I was an assistant

coach for Earle for 10 more years.' That's just the reality of the situation."

Alford, who was a running back at Colorado State from 1987-90, played for Bruce as a junior and senior in college. It just so happened that Meyer was an assistant on Bruce's staff at Colorado State in 1990, Alford's senior year.

Roughly 25 years later, Meyer interviewed Alford and eventually offered him the running backs coach position at Ohio State prior to the 2015 season. Alford said Bruce called him and told him to take the offer.

After Alford accepted the job, he said Bruce took him out to dinner to celebrate.

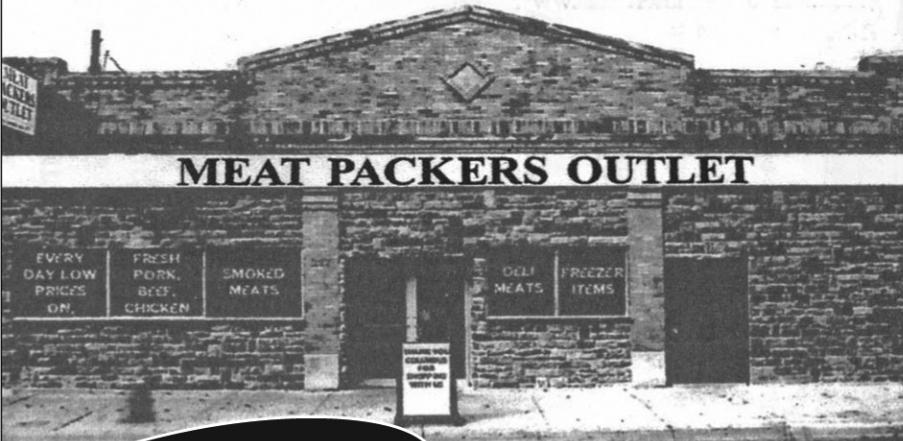


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When they arrived at the restaurant, Alford said everyone inside stopped what they were doing to meet Bruce and take pictures with the former Buckeye coach, gestures that struck a chord with Alford.

"I'm 46 years old and I had never looked (Bruce) in his eyes and told him how much he meant to me," Alford said. "So, I promptly told him how much I admired him, how much I trusted him, how much faith I had in him, and I thanked him for being the influence that he was on my life. I looked him in the eye and I told him I loved him.

"What I would ask all of you to do – I took too long – if there is anybody in your lives who has influenced you, has helped you, has guided you, let them know. Thank them, thank them as often as you can."

McCoy then took the stage and shed light on Bruce's time in the media. McCoy worked 23 years alongside Bruce at 610 WTVN doing pre- and postgame shows for Ohio State football, as well as other responsibilities.

McCoy recalled one particular instance when he and Bruce were in the studio together watching Ohio State play Notre Dame in the 2016 Fiesta Bowl. The Buckeyes received the kickoff to begin the second half leading 28-14, largely due to Ezekiel Elliott, who finished the game with 149 yards rushing and four touchdowns, three of which came in the first half.

Ohio State's drive at the start of the second half featured nine plays – five rushes and four passes. Despite the play-calling slightly favoring the ground game, McCoy said Bruce was not pleased.

"Whenever (Ohio State) would throw, even completed passes, Earle would say,

'Run the ball. They can't tackle Zeke,' " McCoy said. "As fate would have it, this particular drive ended with an interception, and Earle lost it. He stood up, shouted at the TV, 'What are you doing?!"

"Before I knew it, Earle had his phone out and was scrolling down his contact list. He looked at me and said, 'I'm calling Urban.' I told him, 'Coach, two things: One, I'm pretty sure he doesn't have his phone with him right now and two, even if he does, he's a little busy and I'm pretty sure he's not going to answer.' Earle looked at me and said, 'He'll answer if it's from me.' "

McCoy's speech dovetailed into Smith's. The oldest of Bruce's 12 grandchildren, Smith said Bruce grandfathered like he coached.

"He loved his players, he loved his coaches who coached for him just like he loved his daughters (Lynn, Michele, Aimee and Noel) and loved his grandchildren," Smith said. "It was the same to him, believe me, I can tell you. Being a teenage grandson of his and not renewing your license plates, he reacted about how I would imagine he reacted when, Tony, you fumbled (at Colorado State). It was the same man – passionate with energy."

After Smith shared a few memories about his grandfather, the memorial then shifted to what was termed, "The Fourth Quarter," signaling the last portion of the proceedings. To open the final act, the marching band played "Hang on Sloopy," the song that is played at the beginning of fourth quarters of Ohio State football games.

After "Hang On Sloopy," Meyer opened his speech by saying, "Heaven just got a little more intense."

Meyer was a graduate assistant for Bruce

at Ohio State in 1987, Bruce's last season as the Buckeyes' head coach. As previously alluded to, Meyer also was the wide receivers coach at Colorado State while Bruce was there.

Meyer eventually became a head coach, and his last stop before Ohio State was at Florida. He led the Gators to a match-up against Arkansas in the 2006 SEC Championship Game, what Meyer called the first big game of his career as a college football head coach.

Reflecting on that contest against the Razorbacks, Meyer remembered sending his players to their hotel rooms after they finished their pregame meal to get ready to go to the stadium. What Meyer didn't know was that Bruce was in the room where the team ate.

"As the players leave, I sit down, I feel a nudge, I look over and say, 'Oh, hey, Coach,' " Meyer said, referring to Bruce. "He said, 'How are you doing?' I said, 'I'm not doing very good, not very good at all.' "

"By then, the servers are picking up the dishes, probably 25 around us picking up the dishes. And here's this older coach basically verbally assaulting and attacking a coach. He stands up and starts pounding me with the famous finger. He pounds me in my chest and starts screaming at me in front of these young ladies to the point where they went and got security. They didn't know who this guy was.

"He says, 'You've gotten your team to this point because you've let them play and you let the MF'er go.' Now he's at the top of his lungs. He starts pounding on my chest, 'Let the MF'er go.' He just kept screaming at me. So like any coach who worked for Earle Bruce, I grabbed my

pen, I write on my game-plan sheet right at the bottom, 'Let the MF'er go,' in big, bold letters."

Meyer then transitioned the anecdote to the game. Florida took a 17-7 lead into half-time. While in the locker room, Meyer said the team found out that USC had just lost to UCLA. That result meant the Gators would be in the national championship game if they beat Arkansas.

"The team feels it, and I did not do a great job of calming the team down," Meyer said. "Sure enough, we went out and we played like we were playing for the national championship. Turnover, touchdown Arkansas. Turnover, touchdown Arkansas. Next thing you know it's 21-17 and we're losing."

Following Arkansas' go-ahead score, Florida managed to return the ensuing kickoff only to its own 8-yard line. The Gators were unable to move the ball on three plays and faced a fourth-and-10.

"What do I do?" Meyer said. "Like any coach, I grab my folder, I stare at the game plan, and what do I see? 'Let the MF'er go.' So I called a fake punt on fourth-and-10 from my own 8-yard line. Obviously, I'm telling you this story because I'm not sure I would have survived down in Florida if that would have not happened. We got a first down and the game changed. I can speak on many here today that Coach Bruce has influenced many former players and coaches with decisions such as that."

Florida went on to beat Arkansas, 38-28, and shellac Tressel's Buckeyes in the national title game, 41-14.

The service observing Bruce's life concluded in fitting fashion, with the playing of Ohio State's alma mater, "Carmen Ohio."

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Remembering Earle Bruce

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer: "Buckeye Nation lost one of its own. Thoughts and prayers to the Bruce family. My mentor and friend, thank you for all you did for the Ohio State University, and all those players and coaches whose lives you made a difference in."

Former Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel (2001-10): "He was just so loyal to his family and coaches, his players, Ohio State, the game of football and his colleagues in the media when he became a part of that family. You just knew he was there for you. You would get a phone call from him when you needed it. He just had a sense of when someone that he loved needed a shout-out. There are memories for all of us. We all have different memories, different times, different impacts, but you always knew he was there for you."

Ohio State wide receivers coach Zach Smith, Bruce's grandson: "RIP to one of the finest men I've ever met. The impact he had on those he loved, cared about, coached and mentored has left a legacy that will pay forward for generations. No greater example than the impact he's had on me. He will be missed, but his presence here lives on."

Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford, former Colorado State running back (1987-90) under Bruce: "He was much more than a coach. He was a father figure, mentor and, most importantly, a leader of young men. He will be missed."

Michigan State head coach Mark

Dantonio, former Ohio State graduate assistant under Bruce (1983-84) and defensive coordinator under Tressel (2001-03): "RIP to one of college football's finest coaches and mentors. Will never forget his wisdom, humor and grit."

Texas head coach Tom Herman, former Ohio State offensive coordinator (2012-14): "My heart goes out to the Bruce family. It was a joy and a privilege to be around Coach Bruce and his wisdom for three years. He will be missed."

Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh, who played quarterback for the Wolverines while Bruce was coaching Ohio State: "The U of M football program and Harbaugh family send our prayers and condolences to the Earle Bruce family on the passing of a football icon. Simply said, Coach Bruce was a respected husband, father, friend and football coach."

Former Ohio State assistant Glen Mason (1978-85): "Earle was very demanding. You better pack your lunch when you go to work every day. It was always a constant push to get better. But you knew his heart was always in the right place. You knew it was about having the well-beings of the players and coaches, first and foremost, in mind. The way he went about it with his work ethic, his integrity and his passion for the game of football and his love for Ohio State was second to none."

Former Ohio State defensive lineman Matt Finkes (1991-94): "One of the best to ever

roam the sidelines. Great coach and better man. Will miss you and your stories, Coach."

Former Ohio State fullback Vaughn Broadnax (1980-83): "My freshman year was real tough for me. Both my parents were hospitalized throughout the season and that year, and then my father passed away that Thursday before my spring game. I kept a lot of it in throughout the year. It affected my grades, it affected my practice but I actually played in the spring game. It was that following Monday that we had my father's funeral, and Earle Bruce showed up with the captains – Doug Donley, Art Schlichter and those guys. That meant the world to me. Some of the things he did trying to be that surrogate father will always, always stand out in my mind."

Former Ohio State quarterback Mike Tomczak (1981-84): "Sad to share the passing of Earle Bruce. One of my favorites! I'll miss our talks, Earle."

Former Ohio State wide receiver Dee Miller (1995-98): "Rest in heaven, Coach Bruce, it was an absolute honor to work with you for two years at 610 (WTVN). Those times were some of my most memorable Buckeye memories. Don't think you knew how much that meant to a young kid from the south side of Springfield, Ohio."

Former Ohio State linebacker Joshua Perry (2012-15): "Rest in heaven, Coach Earle Bruce!"

Northern Iowa head coach Mark Farley: "Our thoughts and prayers for the family of Earle Bruce. Once a Panther always a Panther."



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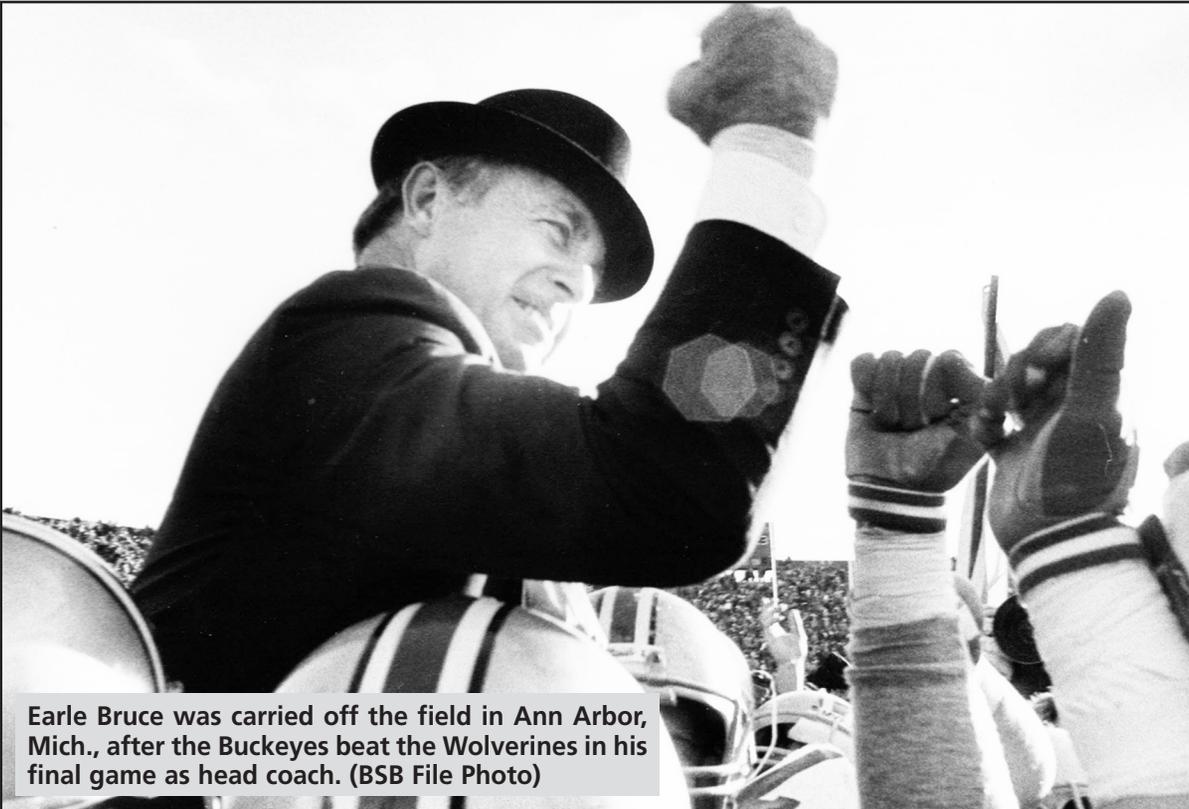
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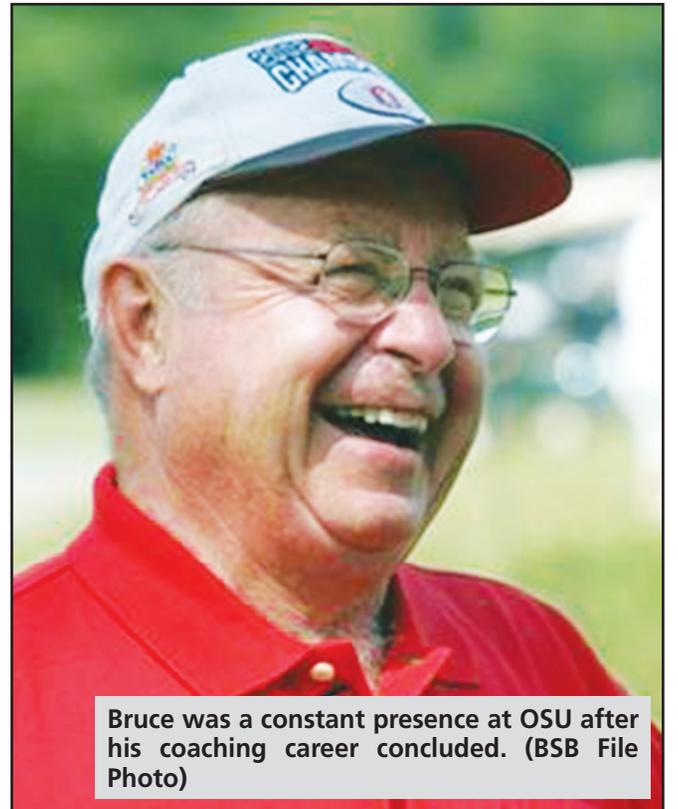


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In Memory Of Earle Bruce



Earle Bruce was carried off the field in Ann Arbor, Mich., after the Buckeyes beat the Wolverines in his final game as head coach. (BSB File Photo)



Bruce was a constant presence at OSU after his coaching career concluded. (BSB File Photo)



Bruce coached the Buckeyes to 81 victories during his Hall of Fame career in Columbus. (BSB File Photo)



Bruce's grandson, Zach Smith (right), followed in Bruce's footsteps and became the wide receivers coach at Ohio State, a position he still holds. (BSB File Photo)



Bruce concluded his Ohio State career with a 5-4 record in The Game. (BSB File Photo)

Spring Practice Sheds Light On OSU's Lineup

By **TIM MOODY**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Entering spring practice, Ohio State had 11 starters back from its 2017 squad, with the same number of spots left to fill. Injuries played a role in a few position battles staying open this spring, while there were some that neared an end as well. Overall, the Buckeyes got a good look at where the roster stands heading into summer workouts.

With spring camp over, the coaches won't see the players in pads until the fall, but they'll be going in with an idea of how things should shake out. What follows is a position-by-position breakdown of where things stand for the Buckeyes after spring practice, starting with the offense.

Offensive Line

As is the case with any football team, offensive line will be key for the Buckeyes in 2018. Along with finding a quarterback, replacing Billy Price at center might have been at the top of head coach Urban Meyer's to-do list.

To that point, mission accomplished – sort of.

After the spring game, Meyer named Brady Taylor, a fifth-year senior, the starting center heading into the summer. A couple of days later, position coach Greg Studrawa stressed that there will still be plenty of competition in the fall.

"That battle is continuous," Studrawa said. "Both those guys are playing well."

The other man in the competition is redshirt freshman Josh Myers, who came on strong toward the end of camp to make sure he will still have a shot in the fall. For the time being, though, it's Taylor's position to lose.

In addition to losing Price, the Buckeyes also have to replace left tackle Jamarco Jones, who was a two-year starter. Ohio State knows its two starting tackles – senior Isaiah Prince and sophomore Thayer Munford – but which side of the line they end up on is still in the air, although Munford is more likely to play on the left with Prince retaining his spot on the right.

At guard, junior Michael Jordan will slot back into the left side of the line once he returns from an offseason shoulder injury, while fifth-year senior Demetrius Knox and junior Branden Bowen, who each started for parts of 2017 (Bowen broke his leg against Maryland), will fight to be the right guard. Junior tackle Joshua Alabi, fifth-year senior guard Malcolm Pridgeon and freshman tackle Max Wray could all factor into the two-deep as well.

Quarterback

The quarterback battle has been written about ad nauseam this spring, and quite simply nothing has changed since BSB last went to press, meaning this update will be brief.

If nothing else, the spring game showed that Ohio State is down to two real options to replace J.T. Barrett – it will either be junior Joe Burrow or sophomore Dwayne Haskins, with special packages built into the offense for redshirt freshman Tate Martell.

That said, there's still a good chance a resolution will come sooner than later – after the coaches break down and analyze all the available data – allowing the loser of the battle to consider his options going forward.

"We said we weren't going to focus on



JOSH WINSLOW

INTO THE LINEUP – Fifth-year senior center Brady Taylor was named the starter for Ohio State after spring practice, but he'll have to hold off redshirt freshman Josh Myers in the fall.

anything other than getting better," said offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day. "At the end, we were going to take all the film, all the grades, pile it on and go from there."

Running Back

Perhaps more so than any other position on the team, Ohio State is set at running back. The two-headed monster of sophomore J.K. Dobbins and junior Mike Weber hardly played in the spring game, but they hardly needed to. Both are already 1,000-yard rushers, and both will be expected to carry heavy loads in 2018.

Instead, the focus this spring was on staying healthy and developing depth, and both goals were accomplished – although the depth took a hit when junior Antonio Williams announced his plans to transfer to North Carolina.

At the end of spring, the Buckeyes had freshman Master Teague third on the depth chart after he ran for 73 yards and a touchdown on 14 carries in the spring game, and

the depth will only be boosted this summer with the addition of another four-star prospect in Brian Snead.

Tight End

Ohio State entered the spring with a big question mark at tight end, and the Buckeyes were able to erase that – to some extent – with the emergence of sophomore Luke Farrell, who made an early cameo in the spring game with one catch for 15 yards. After the game, Meyer named Farrell the starter but, like Taylor at center, he'll have to continue competing going forward.

Behind Farrell is junior Rashod Berry, who was limited at the end of camp and missed the spring game by way of injury. Farrell had already passed Berry, though, and the junior will have to hold off sophomore Jake Hausmann and freshman Jeremy Ruckert in the summer and fall as well.

"Luke has separated himself as our best performer," said offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson. "Rashod

had a minor injury that's not going to hold him back, but it limited him the last week of practice. He's a little bit more athletic. Jake Hausmann came along, and then with Ruckert, I think we're going to need all four."

Wide Receiver

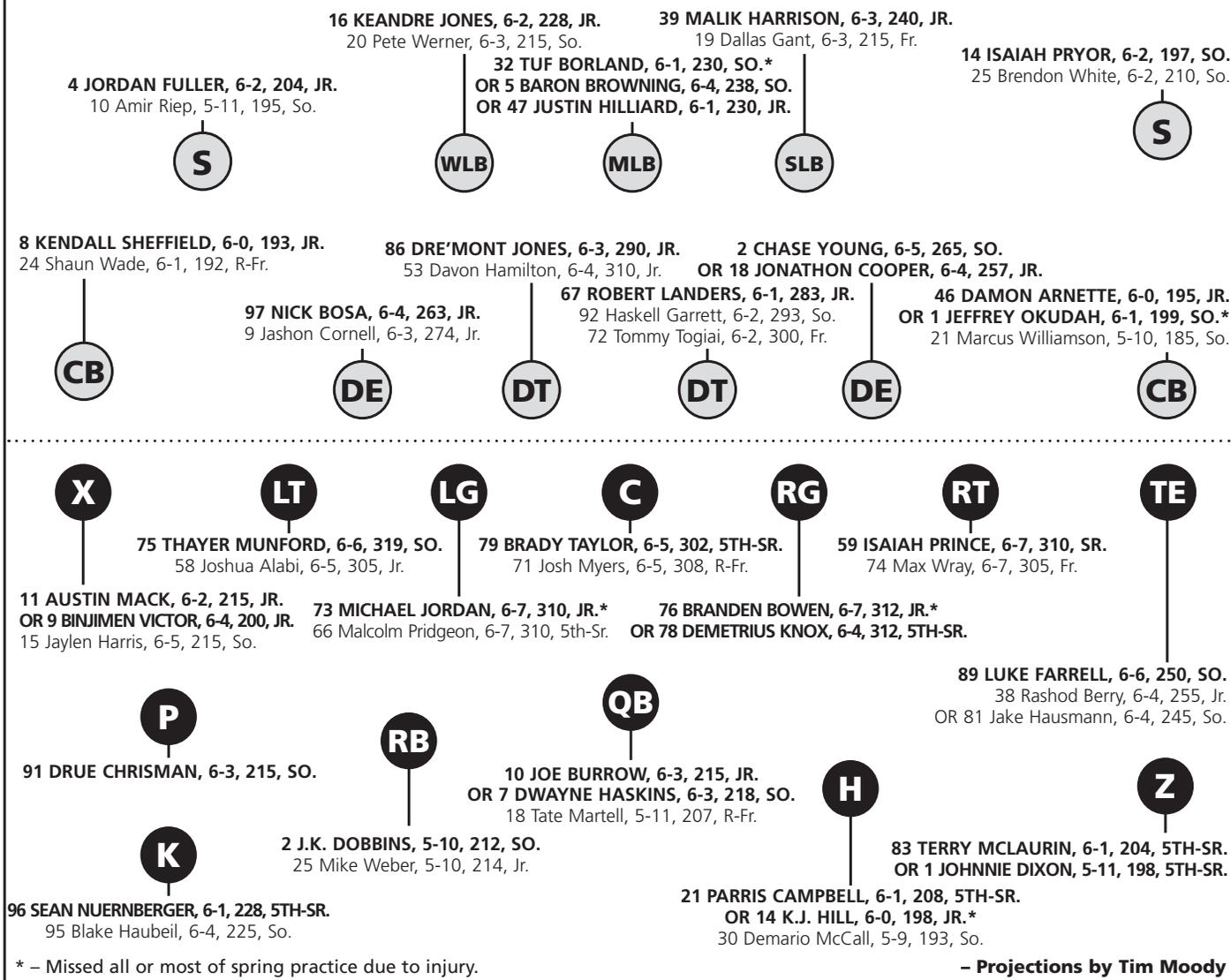
Similar to running back, the Buckeyes lost very little at wide receiver and have a ton of experience coming back. Ohio State employed a six-man rotation last year, and all six players will be back in 2018.

On the outside, fifth-year seniors Terry McLaurin and Johnnie Dixon and juniors Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor are known commodities while H-backs Parris Campbell and K.J. Hill were the team's top two receivers last year.

If anything, the main changes at wide receiver will come by way of additions to the rotation rather than subtractions. On the outside, sophomore Jaylen Harris acquitted himself well, showcasing his talents in the spring game with three catches for 39 yards and a score. Sophomore H-back Demario



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Those two, along with Borland, are all likely to find their way onto the field in some capacity next year. Borland's health could also impact Browning's position, as he could slide into a starting role on the outside once Borland is healthy.

In those outside spots this spring were mainly junior Keandre Jones and sophomore Pete Werner at Will with junior Malik Harrison and freshman Dallas Gant working at Sam. All four took a step forward in spring practice, and Gant was one of the surprises of the spring, culminating with a spring game performance that included five tackles and a forced fumble.

Along with Borland being out for most of spring camp, fifth-year senior Dante Booker missed the entire practice slate after undergoing two offseason shoulder surgeries. His health will be a big question mark going forward, but Booker has starting experience and would provide valuable depth once he's back on the field.

Going into the summer, the fights for all three spots are fairly open, with Jones, Browning and Harrison having a slight edge.

Safety

Ohio State knows one thing for sure - junior Jordan Fuller will be the starting boundary safety. The field safety spot, though, is still a concern, with sophomores Amir Riep, Isaiah Pryor, Brendon White and Jahsen Wint all in the mix.

"There are guys putting in the work," co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach Alex Grinch said. "There are good days and there are some bad days and there are great reps and reps as a coach you wish you had back. I think as much as anything, you just leave spring football without circling one single name. So we'll go into fall camp as a great competition."

With the battle seemingly wide open, Pryor and Wint stood out in the spring game with four and 11 tackles, respectively leading the Scarlet and Gray squads. Riep had five stops and a pass breakup while White assisted on one tackle for the Scarlet squad.

Early in practice, it seemed that Pryor had the edge to start, and he would be the betting favorite going into fall camp, but all four will have a chance to prove themselves before the season begins on Sept. 1.

Special Teams

Special teams shouldn't be too much of a headache for Meyer in 2018. Sophomore Drue Chrisman is back at punter after a stellar debut season while fifth-year senior Sean Nuernberger is one of the most experienced kickers in the nation. Long snapper Liam McCullough, a junior, has seemingly never put a foot wrong as a Buckeye, and sophomore Blake Haubeil is expected to handle kickoffs once again.

In the return game, the Buckeyes have struggled in recent seasons, but McCall is set to take over on both punts and kickoffs, providing a dynamic threat that has been lacking in the past.

McCall was the star that day with 11 receptions for 165 yards and two touchdowns.

Harris and McCall should both be factors, in addition to the other six, in an improved passing attack for the Buckeyes in 2018.

Cornerback

Ohio State has employed a three-man cornerback rotation in recent seasons, leading to astounding success overall. That's the plan again in 2018 with two of the three - juniors Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield - back and a new cornerbacks coach, Taver Johnson, in the fold.

"Those guys have done a very good job with that first group," Johnson said after spring camp in regard to Arnette and Sheffield, who also ran track for the Buckeyes this spring. "We talked about it earlier with their game experience and things like that in the spring that both of those guys have had, they have done a tremendous job and they have gotten better in the 15 practices that we have had."

After the spring game, Meyer noted that sophomore Jeffrey Okudah, who missed all of spring camp after undergoing offseason shoulder surgery, will be the third man in the rotation.

After the top trio, young players such as sophomore Marcus Williamson, redshirt freshman Shaun Wade and early enrollees Sevyn Banks and Tyreke Johnson give Ohio State an astounding amount of depth and talent at cornerback.

In the spring game, Williamson was all over the field, finishing with a tackle and a pass breakup, while Banks made two stops of his own. Johnson had two tackles, one for a loss, and Wade had the game's

only interception with an impressive diving effort.

"Competition within the room is always good, and that is what we have," Taver Johnson said.

Defensive Line

Ohio State had an unusual situation at defensive line this spring.

The Buckeyes lost starters in Tyquan Lewis, Sam Hubbard, Jalyn Holmes and Tracy Sprinkle, but it seems like they have as much depth as ever regardless of those departures. At defensive end, Nick Bosa - the 2017 Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year - is back, and he'll be joined in the rotation by sophomore Chase Young and junior Jonathon Cooper, both of whom are expected to have breakout seasons in 2018. Junior Jashon Cornell also made the switch from defensive tackle to provide Ohio State with another talented edge rusher.

On the inside, starter Dre'Mont Jones opted to return, and he'll be playing with a talented and deep group that includes players such as juniors Robert Landers and Davon Hamilton, sophomores Haskell Garrett and Antwan Jackson and early enrollee Tommy Togiai, who was the only one of Ohio State's freshmen to lose his black helmet stripe this spring.

Top to bottom, the depth is there and the talent is there. The only thing lacking might be experience. But with Bosa and Jones leading the way, defensive line coach Larry Johnson will expect big things from his group once again.

The line was hit with some injury concerns this spring, though, as Garrett suffered a concussion and sophomore Malik Barrow is still recovering from a torn ACL from last season.

Linebacker

In 2017, linebacker was a weak point for Ohio State, and with two starters off to the NFL, it was a concern heading into spring practice. Fifteen practices later, though, and Meyer was raving about the linebackers, with a handful of young players stepping up to develop depth.

Early in the spring, the position group took a hit when starting middle linebacker Tuf Borland suffered an Achilles injury that is expected to keep him out until September. With Borland out, junior Justin Hilliard and sophomore Baron Browning stepped up, with Browning turning heads in the spring game with four tackles.



Nick Bosa

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OSU's Summer Arrivals Could Make Early Impact

By **TIM MOODY**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

On the first Wednesday in February, Ohio State received national letters of intent from the last few prospects in a 26-man 2018 recruiting class. By that time, nine of the signees were already on campus as early enrollees – see page 18 for an update on them – with another 17 blue-chip prospects set to arrive in Columbus in June.

As is the case every season, there will be some prospects who don't see the field while taking a redshirt year. Others will find their way into the lineup in late-game blowouts with nothing on the line, and others will carve out an important role on special teams or in situational packages on offense or defense.

Then there are those who will truly have a shot to make a big impact – maybe even start – as first-year players for head coach Urban Meyer. With spring practice in the books, BSB takes a look ahead at three summer arrivals who could be impact players right away in positions of need for the Buckeyes.

Teradja Mitchell

Position: Linebacker

Height, Weight: 6-2, 232

High School: Virginia Beach (Va.) Bishop Sullivan Catholic

On paper, it might not seem like Mitchell has much of a shot at early playing time. He'll be a middle linebacker for Ohio State, and that position is already occupied by such players as sophomores Tuf Borland and Baron Browning, as well as junior Justin Hilliard.

Here's the thing – Borland is out until at least September with an Achilles injury while Browning could easily slide back to an outside spot if another player emerges in the middle. Hilliard is fully healthy

and is ready to contribute, but Ohio State has shown a willingness to rotate at middle linebacker in the past – think 2014 when freshman Raekwon McMillan rotated throughout the year with senior captain Curtis Grant. The Buckeyes won the national title that season.

So, not only is there a potential need for another body at middle linebacker, but Mitchell is simply that good as a player.

Throughout the spring, Ohio State linebackers coach Billy Davis has touted Mitchell – along with fellow June arrival K'Vaughan Pope and early enrollee Dallas Gant – as highly-talented prospects. Mitchell, though, stands out above the rest and has the best chance to play as a middle linebacker – the Buckeyes have even more depth and talent at the outside spots.

"They (Mitchell and Pope) were up here for the spring game, and I had a great time with them," Davis said after spring practice wrapped up. "They're so excited and they're

working hard to be ready. What happens when you have Dallas Gant who's their same age already here, they're champing at the bit at their high school and saying I've got to keep up with Dallas and everything he's getting done. I'm really excited about these young guys that are coming in. I hope and expect them to contribute."

Because prospects such as Mitchell have signed, the rules regarding contact change as well. Instead of being a recruiter, Davis is now a coach, even if Mitchell hasn't arrived in the Buckeye State just yet.

In order for them to keep up with early enrollees like Gant, the coaches give prospects like Mitchell an offseason plan with goals to hit so that when they do arrive, they're ready to dive in.

"We always have a plan on their weights

and their conditioning and what their bodies are shaping into," Davis said. "We talk to them about the scheme and where we see them. They're in contact with our players who are currently here, so some of them are helping them. It's a good mix. We have a great plan here. We always have a real solid plan in place so kids are ready to go and not behind in any way."

Josh Proctor

Position: Safety

Height, Weight: 6-2, 190

High School: Owasso, Okla.

For much of his recruitment, Proctor expected to arrive in Columbus with Greg Schiano as his position coach. Now Schiano is simply the defensive coordinator, giving him more flexibility to move around and work with the entire lineup, rather than focusing on safeties.

Replacing Schiano as safeties coach is co-defensive coordinator Alex Grinch, who is in his first year with the Buckeyes after leaving Washington State. Grinch will be Proctor's position coach when he arrives, along with fellow safety signee Marcus Hooker, this summer.

While nothing is set in stone just yet as far as a role goes for Proctor – or Hooker, for that matter – Grinch is hoping for big things.

"You never know until you get them here," Grinch said. "We saw them perform at a high level as high school players, but high school's high school and the Big Ten's the Big Ten. So you don't know.

"But from all the years of doing it, you're hopeful that the things you saw that initially attracted you to offer them a scholarship, you feel when you're around those two guys, you think there's a possibility."

Perhaps more than any other reason, Proctor has a chance to make an immediate impact because there's an immediate need at his position. Jordan Fuller is the Buckeyes' starting boundary safety, but the field safety spot is still wide open after the staff failed to pinpoint a starter this spring.

That means when Proctor arrives in June, he'll have a chance to immediately impress with his work ethic in summer workouts. After that, he'll have fall training camp to prove himself on the field, and the coaches will give him a legitimate chance to win the starting job.

Jeremy Ruckert

Position: Tight End

Height, Weight: 6-5, 238

High School: Lindenhurst, N.Y.

After the spring game, Meyer announced that sophomore Luke Farrell had won the starting tight end spot in camp – but he simultaneously noted that nothing is set in

stone going forward.

Part of the reason the coaching staff doesn't want to firmly give Farrell that starting spot for the season is because competition often brings out the best, but another reason is that Ruckert hasn't landed in Columbus just yet.

He's the top tight end recruit Meyer has signed at Ohio State, and he's arguably the best pass-catcher the Buckeyes have signed in that time period overall. When he arrives in offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson's position room, Ruckert will immediately challenge for a role – maybe even a starting role – by showcasing his ability as a receiver.

The thing is, Ruckert's skill as a receiver is far ahead of his ability as a blocker, and a tight end in Ohio State's offense has to be a complete player. His ability to pick up that aspect of the game will determine his role for 2018.

"It will be interesting because he's very talented, but very much so in a skill setting as a big receiver and great in the passing game," Wilson said of Ruckert.

Wilson also noted that he's being careful with Ruckert, though, to make sure he doesn't overdo it trying to get his body ready for the rigors of a Big Ten slate.

"He has a body that I don't want him to try to work so hard on getting strong because he's kind of a long guy, that I don't want to have a high school young kid with a bad back," Wilson said. "So I want him to get stronger, but I want him to be smart.

"It's a developmental position, so for him to really play significantly, how strong is he in the blocking game? And how does he hold up, because he's going to have to block defensive ends. We'll get phenomenal opportunity in practice with who he matches up against to see where he stands."

Regardless of where he ends up as a blocker as a freshman, Ruckert's skill will get him on the field. Even if he doesn't start, it wouldn't be out of the question to see Ruckert with the best receiving numbers out of the tight ends as a freshman this fall.



Teradja Mitchell



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Early Enrollees Make Strides In Spring Practice

By RYAN McGLADE
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Keeping in line with essentially every recruiting class Urban Meyer has constructed since becoming Ohio State's head coach after the 2011 season, the Buckeyes signed one of the best hauls yet again in 2018.

The Scarlet and Gray landed the No. 2 class in the nation, behind only Georgia, according to the 247Sports composite rankings. Of the 21 recruits Ohio State signed, nine of them arrived on campus in time to participate in spring practice, getting a head start on their development.

With eight of those nine players being able to begin their college careers a semester sooner – defensive tackle Antwan Jackson is a JUCO transfer – Meyer said he saw this group make the most of that privilege.

"I see guys that are all going to be swinging for an opportunity, and they're talented enough to play," Meyer said of the early enrollees March 26.

Now that the early enrollees have a full slate of 15 spring practices under their belts, BSB decided to take a look back at how the nine early enrollees have fared. What follows is a player-by-player breakdown of the 2018 recruits already on campus, listed in alphabetical order.

Matthew Baldwin, QB

Baldwin, a four-star quarterback from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis and Ohio State's lone signal caller in the 2018 class, never got a chance to show off his skills in spring practice. That is because he had surgery to repair a torn ACL he suffered as a high school senior in the state playoffs last fall.

"He's not going to play (this spring)," Meyer said of Baldwin after Ohio State's first spring practice on March 6. "He has an ACL, had surgery. He's doing a good job, gained a bunch of weight back. He's here. He was out there today. But they're very, very cautious with him."

Although no injury is ideal, the timing of Baldwin's isn't too detrimental. With Joe Burrow, Dwayne Haskins and Tate Martell currently ahead of him on the depth chart, Baldwin likely would have been a candidate to redshirt his first year on campus regardless.



SONNY BROCKWAY

Sevyn Banks, CB

As is the case for many early enrollees in

HORSESHOE DEBUT – Freshman running back Master Teague (33) carried the ball 14 times for 73 yards and a touchdown in the spring game.



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their first spring on a college campus, Banks had some ups and downs, said first-year cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson.

"Very talented young man," Johnson said of Banks. "It's just learning every single day how to go and when to go and things like that. He's willing, without a doubt, and he's excited to be here. Now it's just a matter of maturing. This is a tough place. It's a tough position. You have to be mature, and that's a daily process."

Banks saw a decent amount of playing time in the spring game. Despite having some tough moments, he was the victim of very good throws when passes were completed against him. The Florida native had four total tackles.

Ohio State signed six defensive backs to its 2017 class and already has a three-man rotation in place at corner for the 2018 season in Damon Arnette, Jeffrey Okudah and Kendall Sheffield. With that in mind, it may be difficult for Banks to crack the two-deep as a freshman this year.

Ohio State's 2018 Early Enrollees

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Previous School
12	Matthew Baldwin	QB	6-3	200	Austin (Texas) Lake Travis
12	Sevyn Banks	CB	6-1	190	Orlando (Fla.) Jones
13	Tyreke Johnson	CB	6-1	190	Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian
19	Dallas Gant	LB	6-3	215	Toledo St. John's Jesuit
33	Master Teague	RB	5-11	215	Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Blackman
51	Antwuan Jackson*	DT	6-2	310	Brenham (Texas) Blinn College
54	Matthew Jones	OL	6-4	305	Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall
72	Tommy Togiai	DT	6-2	300	Pocatello (Idaho) Highland
74	Max Wray	OL	6-7	305	Franklin, Tenn.

* - Jackson is a JUCO transfer who is a sophomore in terms of eligibility.

Dallas Gant, LB

While Banks must continue to work on his maturity, OSU linebackers coach Bill Davis said Gant has mastered that aspect of his game.

"I think Dallas is such a mature young man," Davis said. "He really is mature. He's very businesslike and he did everything. He went about it right. Now, he made the freshman mistakes that you're going to make. Technically he should still be in high school. But he's such a mature young man and it means so much to him. He had a lot of growth, and he'll benefit from that down the road. We'll benefit from that down the road."

A product of Toledo St. John's Jesuit, Gant finished the spring game second on the Gray squad with five tackles and also forced a fumble. He is a member of a crowded linebackers room that features Dante Booker, who missed the spring with shoulder injuries, Baron Browning, Tuf Borland, who is out until sometime in September with an Achilles injury, Malik Harrison, Justin Hilliard, Keandre Jones and others.

Though the amount of playing time Gant will see at linebacker this fall is uncertain, Meyer said Gant will earn reps on special teams.

"He's probably going to play (this season)," Meyer said. "He's shown enough. I'm going to go to him ready to compete on special teams because he's one of those very mature players to come right in. He's not where he needs to be, but he doesn't have to be. He just needs to give us everything he's got, and he's been doing that. He's a very smart player too."

Antwuan Jackson, DT

Jackson arrived at Ohio State with a leg up on his fellow early enrollees. Jackson initially went to Auburn as a member of the 2016 recruiting class before transferring to Blinn College in Brenham, Texas, and eventually landing at Ohio State.

Foot surgery limited Jackson in spring practice as well as in the spring game, though. He played about 23 snaps in the scrimmage, defensive line coach Larry Johnson said.

"We tried to push him a little bit and get him going, knowing that he is not quite ready," Johnson said. "By the time we get into fall, he will be ready to roll."

Given that he has already been in the college ranks for two years, Jackson should be able to provide some support to the interior of Ohio State's defensive line once healthy.

Tyreke Johnson, CB

Johnson, a five-star recruit, was highly coveted coming out of Trinity Christian Academy in Jacksonville, Fla. As a prospect, he was known for his hands and coverage ability.

Being a cornerback in Ohio State's defense is a completely different animal, though. Taver Johnson said Tyreke Johnson, as well as Banks, struggled at times this spring with playing the aggressive man coverage OSU primarily employs.

"I thought they did a good job," Taver Johnson said of the two corners' progress this spring. "They were sponges. They just tried to take it all in. They went into survival mode a few times, just because it is so hard with what we do, but they are really, really eager to be really, really great. They understand those expectations and everything that we have to get done in our room. To have them here early was a big, big plus."

Considering the aforementioned depth at corner, it may be difficult for Johnson to earn playing time at that position in 2018. Similar to Gant, though, he could be a candidate to play on special teams in his first year as a Buckeye.

Matthew Jones, OL

Jones' spring was about as quiet as his recruitment. A product of Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall, which also produced former Ohio State H-back Curtis Samuel and current OSU safety Jahsen Wint, Jones gathered offers from such powerhouses as Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, Michigan, Ohio State and Penn State. The Buckeyes were always the top pick, though. After all, he first visited Columbus all the way back in eighth grade.

A center in high school, Jones appeared to be buried on the depth chart at that position for Ohio State at the outset of spring camp. He entered a competition that already featured Brady Taylor, who was named the starter heading into summer, Matt Burrell and Josh Myers. Burrell, however, announced April 18 that he was transferring out of Ohio State. Prior to Burrell announcing his departure, Haskins said everyone playing center made gains in the spring, including Jones.

"Brady Taylor was my center last year with the twos, and he's done a great job with everyone else behind him - Josh Myers and Matt (Burrell) and Matt Jones," Haskins said March 22. "They're all doing a great job. It's hard playing center because you're like the quarterback of the offensive line. You have to be able to call IDs and you have to be able to change protections and it's hard for them as well, but they've been great."

Master Teague, RB

Although Teague wasn't a highly-rated player early in his recruitment, he showed during spring ball why he ended up being slotted as the No. 228 overall prospect and the No. 11 running back in the 247Sports composite's final rankings for the 2018 cycle.

At 5-11 and 215 pounds, Teague already appears to have the physical traits to be a successful tailback at the collegiate level. As the only running back on the Scarlet roster for the spring game, Teague rushed 14 times for 73 yards and a touchdown.

With J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber at the top of OSU's running backs depth chart and Antonio Williams announcing his transfer to North Carolina on April 23, Teague will be battling for the No. 3 spot with fellow 2018 running back signee Brian Snead, who will join the team in June.

Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford, however, said there are still many things Teague can improve.

"He did some good things," Alford said of Teague. "He's just got to learn how to finish plays and the terminology we use - 4 to 6, A to B - and strain to finish every single snap. I know he's been here a semester, but in all reality, he's played football for two weeks - 15 days with actual bullets flying. He's going to be OK. He's going to be fine. He had a good spring. I'm happy with where he is at. We've got to still keep going."

Tommy Togiai, DT

Togiai committed to Ohio State shortly before the early signing period of Dec. 20-22, causing Meyer and Larry Johnson to dance around hysterically in a video that went viral on social media.

Togiai's performance in the spring can serve as the explanation of why Meyer and Johnson celebrated so fervently. The defensive tackle from Idaho was the first member of Ohio State's 2018 recruiting class to have his black helmet stripe removed, indicating he is a full-fledged member of the team.

Togiai wrapped up perhaps the most

impressive spring of any early enrollee by recording two tackles in the spring game.

Despite knowing what kind of talent Togiai is, Larry Johnson said he was still impressed to see what the young defensive lineman showed in the spring.

"I saw his videotape and saw him practice and saw what he could do, and then he walked in here and he was everything you hoped to get out of the Cracker Jack box," Johnson said. "That prize you want to get? You have to make sure it's really cool, and it was really cool to see what he is all about. You saw emotion, you saw excitement, and I am tickled to death with where he is at."

Max Wray, OT

Not much was said about Wray during spring practice, but the offensive tackle acquitted himself well. Wray earned time as the backup right tackle with the second-team offense in the spring game.

The competition could get fiercer this summer, though, when Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star signee Nicholas Petit-Frere enrolls and looks to make his presence felt.

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Ohio State Sees 7 Stars Selected In NFL Draft

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Three days, seven rounds and numerous transactions later, the 2018 NFL draft April 26-28 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, finished with destinations set for a double-digit number of former Ohio State players.

Headlined by two first-round selections in cornerback Denzel Ward (No. 4 overall, Cleveland Browns) and center Billy Price (No. 21 overall, Cincinnati Bengals) on the opening night, the Buckeyes saw seven players selected in the draft.

That number topped the 33 picks totaled by the Big Ten, while also tying LSU and N.C. State for second-most picks from any of the overall schools after 11 from Alabama were selected. Since head coach Urban Meyer came to Columbus in 2012, 40 players have been drafted from the program. It was the fifth consecutive year in the Meyer era with at least five Buckeyes taken in the draft.

Defensive end Tyquan Lewis (2nd round, No. 64 overall, Indianapolis Colts), linebacker Jerome Baker (3rd round, No. 73 overall, Miami Dolphins) and Sam Hubbard (3rd round, No. 77, Cincinnati) went on day two. Defensive end Jalyn Holmes (4th round, No. 102 overall, Minnesota Vikings) and offensive tackle Jamarco Jones (5th round, No. 168 overall, Seattle Seahawks) rounded out OSU's picks on day three.

Ohio State's storyline started with three players – Ward, Price and Hubbard – staying home with the in-state NFL teams. Ward, who grew up 30 minutes outside of Cleveland in Macedonia and went to Nardon High School, was taken by the Browns three slots after Oklahoma quarterback Baker Mayfield went to Cleveland with the No. 1 overall pick.

When the selection sank in for Ward, who was introduced April 27 by the Browns alongside Mayfield, the first cornerback selected in the draft credited Meyer and the Buckeyes for assisting him along the way.

“At Ohio State and with Coach Meyer, it's really all about the development of players – and that's on and off the field,” Ward said. “Going there to Ohio State, they definitely did that with all those coaches there.”

Upon arrival with the Browns, Ward will be expected to come in and compete immediately for the franchise after its overhaul of the defense. In the secondary, Cleveland made a series of offseason moves to adjust the back end at safety. The Browns got Damarious Randall from the Green Bay Packers and dealt Jason McCourty to the New England Patriots. They followed with a flurry of free-agent transactions when they signed cornerbacks T.J. Carrie (16 starts in 2017 with the Oakland Raiders), E.J. Gaines (36 career starts, most recently with Buffalo) and Terrance Mitchell (four interceptions in 2017 with the Kansas City Chiefs).

With Ward's natural competitiveness and Cleveland's need for athletes in its retooled defensive backfield, general manager John Dorsey went with him at fourth overall for a reason.

“What do I like about him? I like the ability of him being able to play in this defense when we need shutdown corners,” Dorsey said of Ward. “He's got the speed, he's got the athleticism, he's got the quickness and he's got the ball skills.”

Beyond the draft in Arlington and his introductory press conference in Cleveland, Ward's whirlwind weekend involved throw-



SONNY BROCKWAY

BUCKEYE STATE – The Cleveland Browns made cornerback Denzel Ward the fourth overall pick in the 2018 NFL draft, keeping the former Ohio State star in his home state.

ing out the first pitch with Mayfield before the Cleveland Indians game April 27. To top it all off, he celebrated his 21st birthday April 28.

“I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio,” Ward said. “Growing up, I was a Buckeye fan. So getting recruiting by them was like a childhood dream ... to be able to go there and play at the level I played at and put myself in a position I'm in today, it's amazing.”

Price, an Austintown native who went to Fitch High School, shared similar sentiments when he stayed in state and went to the Bengals.

“You're playing in your back yard, you're playing at home,” Price said. “It's an amazing

opportunity. Playing for the Bengals, it's a dream come true.”

Between Price and Frank Ragnow of Arkansas, considered the top two centers in the draft, Cincinnati had a clear-cut choice when the Detroit Lions picked Ragnow with the 20th overall pick. Without hesitation, the Bengals bagged Price at 21st overall.

Ahead of schedule on a torn left pectoral he suffered at the NFL scouting combine, Price is expected to take over the starting role for Cincinnati after former four-year starting center Russell Bodine (64 starts) declined a long-term deal and departed for the Buffalo Bills in the offseason.

“He's athletic, he's fluid,” Bengals offen-

sive line coach Frank Pollack said of Price. “He pulls well. He can run and adjust in space. He's advanced to the technical football standpoint on the field and in the classroom. He's great for an O-line. It's what you want.”

Lewis was next in the second round, where he went to the Colts. After Indianapolis selected Notre Dame offensive guard Quenton Nelson with the sixth overall pick in the first round, the Colts appeared to have filled their pass-rusher need when they selected Rutgers defensive end Kemoko Turay at No. 52 overall in the second round. Indianapolis, however, remained active and traded up for another second-round selec-



JOSH WINSLOW

GETTING HIS SHOT – Former Ohio State quarterback J.T. Barrett accepted an invitation to try out for the New Orleans Saints after going undrafted.

tion, sending its 67th overall (third round) and 178th overall (fourth round) selections to Cleveland for the Browns' 64th overall pick to take Lewis.

As the Colts switch to a 4-3 base defense, Lewis brings a versatile piece with his ability to play the edge and rush from the interior. In the offseason, Indianapolis signed Denico Autry from the Raiders and released defensive tackle Johnathan Hankins. While one former Ohio State player in Hankins exits, Lewis joins forces with a few former Buckeyes on the defensive side of the ball – linebackers Joshua Perry and John Simon and safety Malik Hooker. Between the incoming duo of Turay and Lewis, Turay is more of a project player while Lewis could impact the Colts immediately on their reload-front.

“You win up front,” said general manager Chris Ballard. “You win when you rush, you win with speed and that’s how we’re going to play. The defensive line’s always going to get the priority with us.”

In the third round, the Dolphins scooped up Baker. In Miami, Baker, a one-time Florida commit, reunites with former Ohio State battery-mate Raekwon McMillan after the Dolphins selected the Buckeye linebacker in the second round of the 2017 NFL draft. McMillan had won a starting spot in Miami before a torn ACL placed him on injured reserve and caused him to miss all of last season.

While Baker has more of an uphill battle with the Dolphins returning incumbent starters Kiko Alonso and Lawrence Timmons, general manager Chris Grier underlined the need for Baker’s speed. Depending on the direction the coaches take it, Baker could become a rotating outside linebacker and provide a boost of athleticism and energy when called upon in pass-coverage situations.

“He’s just very athletic, first of all,” Grier said of Baker. “He adds speed. It was a big priority on defense to get faster.”

Four picks after Baker, Hubbard’s wait finally ended when the Bengals took him late in the third round. Hubbard, a Cincinnati native who went to Moeller High School, slid later in the draft than expected but was rewarded with an ideal situation in his homecoming to the Bengals.

Ohio, I got a national championship,” Hubbard said. “The last thing I need is a Super Bowl, and I’m committed to doing everything I can to make sure that happens here in Cincinnati.”

The Bengals return veteran starters Carlos Dunlap and Michael Johnson on each side of the defensive line. Beyond them, Jordan Willis was the backup while Chris Smith departed when he signed with the Browns. Hubbard could crack the rotation on the two-deep at defensive end but is also an option at outside linebacker down the road as a talented edge rusher.

Holmes made it three Ohio State defensive linemen off the board, picked by the Vikings with the second selection of the fourth round. Jones rounded out the Buckeyes in the draft when the Seahawks scooped him up late in the fifth round.

When the sixth and seventh rounds came and went, though, multiple OSU products went undrafted. The notable names included safety Damon Webb, linebacker Chris Worley, defensive tackle Tracy Sprinkle, tight end Marcus Baugh and quarterback J.T. Barrett.

Among the undrafted free-agent signings, Webb and Elijaah Goins went to the Tennessee Titans. Webb reunites with former Ohio State assistant Kerry Coombs, who coached Webb as a cornerback prior to his position switch to safety. Coombs left the

Buckeyes in February to become secondary coach of the Titans under former OSU player and coach Mike Vrabel. Goins, on the other hand, was a walk-on wide receiver with OSU from 2015-17. He will work at defensive back for the Titans, with his best shot at making the roster coming as a gunner on special teams.

Baugh signed with the Raiders, while Worley joined the Bengals and Sprinkle picked the Panthers.

Barrett, meanwhile, went undrafted after 13 quarterbacks were picked. He initially chose the Colts on their invite to rookie minicamp, reportedly over an identical offer from the Philadelphia Eagles, but changed his plans and took up the New Orleans Saints on their invite to rookie minicamp. New Orleans currently lists Drew Brees, Tom Savage and Taysom Hill as its quarterbacks on the roster. If the Saints elect to carry three quarterbacks, Barrett has a shot to make the team.

Other former Ohio State players going for tryouts at rookie minicamps include defensive tackle Michael Hill (Detroit) and Nick Seme (Cleveland). NFL rookie minicamps are held May 4-7 or 11-14 at the discretion of each team.

Seme spent the 2017 as a walk-on transfer after coming from Division-II Ashland to the Buckeyes last spring. He plans to work out at long snapper for the Browns.

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5 More Prospects Join Ohio State's 2019 Class

What's the old adage? April showers bring May flowers?

Well, it was raining recruits in the month of April for Ohio State, as the Buckeyes have a 2019 class that is blossoming into one of the best in the country.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Ryan McGlade

Since BSB last went to press, Ohio State has landed six more recruits, five coming from the 2019 cycle. Marietta, Ga., offensive tackle Jake Wray became the first member of the Buckeyes' 2020 haul when he issued his verbal on April 23. (More on Wray's story later.)

As for the five recruits from the 2019 class who pledged to the Buckeyes, Mentor, Ohio, four-star defensive end Noah Potter ignited the surge on April 16. Roswell, Ga., four-star athlete Steele Chambers committed two days later. Ohio State then managed to flip Potomac (Md.) Bullis three-star safety Bryson Shaw from Wisconsin on April 28.

The next day, however, is when OSU made its biggest splash on the 2019 recruiting calendar to date. Lexington, Ohio, four-star outside linebacker Cade Stover declared to Ohio State on the afternoon of April 29. But no pledge was bigger than the one the Scarlet and Gray secured that night from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis five-star wide receiver Garrett Wilson.

What follows is a player-by-player breakdown of the five latest additions to Ohio State's 2019 batch of prospects, listed in alphabetical order.

Steele Chambers

Other than Ohio State, Chambers (6-2, 215) was being courted by Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Georgia, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Penn State and others, an offer list that suggests he'll shoot up the overall rankings later in the process. The Buckeyes extended an offer to Chambers, the No. 323 overall prospect and No. 29 athlete in the 247Sports composite rankings, on Oct. 12. The No. 34 player in the state of Georgia has visited OSU multiple times, with the latest trip coming on March 30.

He plays both running back and line-



JOSH WINSLOW

COMMITTED – Lexington, Ohio, four-star outside linebacker Cade Stover (left), long considered a likely Ohio State commit, gave a verbal pledge to the Buckeyes on April 29.

backer for his high school team. As a tailback, he has rushed for nearly 3,000 career yards.

Noah Potter

Potter (6-5, 250) committed to Ohio State three days after Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic four-star athlete Ronnie Hickman did and two days after being at OSU on an

unofficial visit for the program's annual spring game.

Potter chose the Buckeyes over scholarship offers from such schools as Alabama, Florida, Notre Dame, Penn State and Wisconsin.

His brother, Micah, completed his sophomore season with the Ohio State basketball team this past winter. What's more, Noah's high school teammate, four-star offensive tackle Ryan Jacoby, committed to Ohio State on March 1. More information on the two Mentor natives can be found on page 26.

The 247Sports composite rates Potter, who attained an Ohio State offer on Oct. 28 while on an unofficial, as the No. 271 overall prospect, No. 20 strongside defensive end and No. 7 player in the Buckeye State.

Bryson Shaw

Shaw (6-2, 175) ended a three-month commitment to Wisconsin to become the seventh member of Ohio State's 2019 class. He announced his decision via Twitter by attaching a note to a tweet.

"After many talks with my family, it is with a heavy heart that I have decided to

switch my commitment from Wisconsin to The Ohio State," the note read. "Personal family matters have called for me to be closer to home. I love and thank the Wisconsin community for (accepting) me. However, I need to be closer to my family. I am excited and blessed to be committing to the Ohio State University!! Go Buckeyes!"

The tweet to which the note was attached stated, "Please respect my decision. My recruitment is now closed."

OSU heated up its recruitment of Shaw on Feb. 4 when it offered the three-star safety from the same high school that produced Ohio State sophomore quarterback Dwayne Haskins.

Shaw originally pledged to the Badgers on Jan. 27, but Ohio State entered the fray eight days later with the aforementioned offer and kept in close contact with him. Co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach Alex Grinch was at the school April 24 to inquire about Shaw, according to a tweet from Bullis head coach Pat Cilento.

A dual-sport athlete, Shaw also plays lacrosse and at one time was planning to go to Maryland to play that sport.

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2019 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings reflect 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Steele Chambers	ATH	6-2	215	★★★★	Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic
Ronnie Hickman	ATH	6-1	200	★★★★	Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic
Ryan Jacoby	OT	6-5	270	★★★★	Mentor, Ohio
Sampson James	RB	6-1	211	★★★★	Avon, Ind.
Doug Nester	OT	6-5½	295	★★★★	Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley
Noah Potter	DE	6-5	250	★★★★	Mentor, Ohio
Bryson Shaw	S	6-2	175	★★★	Potomac (Md.) Bullis School
Cade Stover	OLB	6-4	225	★★★★	Lexington, Ohio
Garrett Wilson	WR	6-0	185	★★★★★	Austin (Texas) Lake Travis

Player in the class of 2020 who has issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings reflect 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jake Wray	OT	6-5	290	★★★★	Marietta, Ga.

ASK AN ANALYST

With CBS Sports Network's Tom Lemming

Among the loaded list of April 14 visitors for the Ohio State spring game, Cincinnati St. Xavier five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson made his second trip to Columbus in as many weeks. Having evaluated and met Johnson, who recently cracked the updated 247Sports composite rankings for the 2020 class as the No. 7 overall player and No. 1 offensive tackle, what stands out about him?

"I go see everybody in person, so I don't get confused with who's better or this or that. But because of his length, his athletic ability and already his production at St. X, he would be a premier ballplayer in his 6-7, 275-pound frame.

"I don't do rankings. At this stage, the fans want to see rankings, but a lot of the rankings get ridiculous. That's why they get changed so often. They'll get changed before the players even play their next game. They get changed by how many offers the kids get – that's what a lot of the people do, that I see, and it's not right because that's why J.J. Watt only got one star because he didn't have any offers.

"You've got to go by the talent, and I think Paris – when you look at a left tackle, they look like Paris Johnson who's only 15 years old or so. You look at the length, the long arms and then you watch him on film, the athletic ability. He can bend, move his knees, has tremendous athletic ability. So you know he's going to be a premier player and a five-star prospect."

Ohio State already has two in-state commitments in the Mentor, Ohio, four-star duo of offensive tackle Ryan Jacoby (March 1) and defensive end Noah Potter (April 16). With the abundance of talent spread out across Ohio in the class of 2019, how

do you see head coach Urban Meyer and his staff approaching local and national recruiting?

"That's when you take a chance. If you've got 'tweeners' who get offers down the line, a lot of times, they'll wind up at Michigan or Michigan State because those schools have been at them all year. But I understand Ohio State's philosophy. They want to win national titles. They don't want to just appease the high school coaches. They want to win national titles, and (recruiting selectively around the country) is the best way to go at it.

"(Former Southern California head coach) Pete Carroll told me that in Los Angeles, they only went after the great players and they were only looking for potential No. 1 draft choices around the country. They weren't there to make the high school coaches happy. They were there to win ballgames or they'd get fired. That's not just Urban's approach, but that's (Alabama head coach) Nick Saban's, (former Texas head coach) Mack Brown told me that, (former head coach and current athletic director) Phil Fulmer at Tennessee.

"The great ones always had that philosophy. You project them as potential first- or second-round draft picks. Now, Pete Carroll only projected them as first-rounders at USC. He didn't even care about second-rounders. He was getting great players. Pete Carroll was the Nick Saban of the last decade, where they dominated the recruiting scene out of USC."

As quarterbacks continue to fly off the board in the 2019 class, where Ohio State will go remains to be seen. Meyer said in the spring he doesn't believe the depth is there nationally in this cycle. What do you make of those comments?

"Yeah, I don't think it's great. I just saw a 2020 kid named Jay Butterfield, a quarterback up here at Brentwood (Calif.) Liberty – he's a real good one. His dad was in my Prep Football Magazine 20-something years ago – Mark Butterfield – went to Stanford and played in the NFL. This kid (6-6, 180) is already 15 and going to keep growing, so I was really impressed with him.

"But for the 2019 class, that's why everybody's fighting over the same guys. This kid Cade McNamara, (a four-star quarterback from Reno [Nev.] Damonte Ranch) who was committed to Notre Dame and flipped to Michigan, is one example of it. Everybody's realizing there aren't a whole lot of them. There's a kid now in Iowa, (Council Bluffs Lewis Central four-star quarterback) Max Duggan, who's really shot up the ranks (and now committed to TCU). I saw him a year ago and he was having trouble getting offers beyond Iowa and Iowa State. Now, they're all zooming in on him.

"A lot of these guys at the next level are running the spread, the veer and you don't see a whole lot of power arms coming out like you used to. California used to be loaded. I'm up against it now trying to find them for 2019. Every year, there was a ton of California quarterbacks everybody went after. This year, you're lucky to find two or three. It's the same thing in Texas. There was always a ton of them and they don't have them either.

"So it's a weak year for quarterbacks. I don't know if it's a one-year thing or it's perpetual because the way everybody copies the colleges now where, in high school, they're all running the spread now. There are more athletic quarterbacks in high school – you can be 5-6, but if you can play, they'll play you. That's not ideal for college because now they're having trouble finding arms."

As a grinder, the 247Sports composite rates Shaw the No. 660 overall recruit, No. 53 safety and No. 13 player in Maryland.

Cade Stover

Stover (6-4, 225) was one of the first Ohio prospects from the 2019 cycle to attain a scholarship offer from the Buckeyes, garnering one on March 28, 2017, the same day he unofficially visited the Buckeyes. He visited OSU at least six times before taking an official the weekend of April 21, one week after seeing Oklahoma's campus in an official capacity.

The No. 130 prospect in America and eighth-best outside linebacker picked Ohio State over a long list of scholarship offers that also included Kentucky, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Penn State, Pittsburgh and Wisconsin.

Like Shaw, Stover plays multiple sports at his high school. In addition to football, Stover starred on the hardwood for Lexington. He led the Lexington basketball team to the state final four this past season,

Continued On Page 24

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Wilson Is OSU's 1st 5-Star Commit For 2019

Continued From Page 23

averaging 19 points and 13 rebounds per game in 2017-18.

Garrett Wilson

Considered the No. 29 overall prospect, No. 5 wideout and fourth-best player in the state of Texas, Wilson is the crown jewel of Ohio State's 2019 class thus far.

The 6-0, 185-pound wide receiver selected Ohio State out of a final eight that also included Arkansas, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, TCU and Texas, although his recruitment really came down to the Buckeyes and Longhorns. He received an offer from Ohio State in December and took an official visit to Columbus the weekend of April 14 for the Buckeyes' spring game.

Wilson, who also unofficially visited Ohio State the weekend of March 23, was high school teammates with Buckeye freshman quarterback Matthew Baldwin as the duo led Lake Travis to the state championship game last season. Wilson has long been familiar with Ohio State, though, because he was born in nearby Dublin and lived in the area until sixth grade.

He follows in the footsteps of J.T. Barrett, Dontre Wilson and, most recently, star running back J.K. Dobbins, cornerback Jeffrey Okudah and linebacker Baron Browning, among others, as prospects from the Lone Star State to commit to Ohio State since Meyer took over as head coach after the 2011 season.

Wilson is Ohio State's highest-rated wide receiver commit in the 247Sports era (since 2010). His pledge helped bump the Buckeyes up to eighth nationally in the composite team rankings.

Wray Becomes OSU's 1st Pledge For 2020

Wray committed to Ohio State before the end of his sophomore year of high school. He chose the Scarlet and Gray over scholarship offers from Alabama,

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

25 Years Ago – 1993

Andy Dawson was heading into his senior year of high school as one of the top-rated offensive linemen in Ohio and had college recruiters' attention.

Just when everything was looking great, the 6-4, 275-pound tackle out of Shelby broke a bone in his leg in his team's final preseason scrimmage and missed his entire senior season.

Determined to fulfill his dream of playing at Ohio State, Dawson said he was prepared to walk on at OSU before he was offered a scholarship by the Buckeyes.

"Ohio State is close to home. It has a great agriculture campus and a great football tradition," said Dawson, who grew up on a family farm. "I feel I fit right in with the team. They're a great bunch of guys and a lot of great athletes."

20 Years Ago – 1998

Michigan had long been known for poaching players from the state of Ohio, but Ohio State reversed the roles when the Buckeyes nabbed Utica Ford junior quarterback Craig Krenzler from the state up north.

Krenzler (6-4½, 205) made his decision less than a week after visiting OSU, picking the Scarlet and Gray over the likes of Boston College, Duke, Michigan State and Stanford.

"I had been thinking about it for a month now," Krenzler said. "I had been real interested. I wanted to wait until I was 100 percent in my mind that's where I wanted to be. I was weighing out the pros and the cons, and there weren't any cons."

Florida, Florida State, Georgia, Michigan, Michigan State and Notre Dame, among others.

His college decision brings him one step closer to reuniting with his older brother, Max, who is a freshman offensive tackle for Ohio State, on the college gridiron.

Max Wray, an early enrollee, said on Feb. 7, National Signing Day for the 2018 cycle, that he hoped his brother would follow his path.

"He's going to have every opportunity to

"That's when I knew you can't go wrong with a place like that."

15 Years Ago – 2003

Austintown (Ohio) Fitch wide receiver Miles Williams became OSU's fourth commitment for 2004 when he pledged to the Buckeyes on April 10. Williams (6-3, 205) was looking at most of the Big Ten schools as well as Boston College, Pittsburgh and West Virginia.

"I talked to (OSU assistant coach) Tim Spencer, and he said he was going to FedEx (a scholarship offer) to my house," Williams said. "He told me to call him when I got the letter saying that it was official."

"When I called him, I told him that I committed."

10 Years Ago – 2008

Ohio State had landed three commitments in a span of three days after its 2007 spring game. With a large contingent of recruits on hand for the 2008 scrimmage, the Buckeyes managed to net three more verbals for their 2009 haul.

Indian Head (Md.) Lackey cornerback Darrell Givens; Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway linebacker Dorian Bell; and Jeanette, Pa., running back Jordan Hall all issued pledges within two days of OSU's spring game.

Givens (6-1, 178) chose the Buckeyes while holding more than 40 scholarship offers. With Bell (6-1, 220) in the fold, OSU had three of the top linebackers in the country. Hall (5-9, 185) was former high school teammates with quarterback Terrelle Pryor, who had signed with Ohio State's 2008 class.

go wherever he wants to go, but at the end I think he knows how Ohio State is going to treat me and how they're going to treat him and our family," Max said of Jake, who is not yet ranked in the 247Sports composite. "Hopefully he makes the right decision, but I'm not going to force him. I would love to have him here. If it happens, I'd love it. But if it doesn't happen and it's the best opportunity for him, I'm happy for him."

Though he knew Max treasured the thought of being teammates again in college, Jake (6-5, 290) told 247Sports he never felt any pressure from his brother to commit to Ohio State.

Five Years Ago – 2013

Ohio State was one of more than 30 programs to offer Norcross, Ga., running back Myles Autry, who was considered to be one of the top playmakers in the 2014 class. Some of the other schools who were interested in Autry (5-11, 170) included Auburn, Clemson, Florida, Florida State, Georgia and Georgia Tech.

Fortunately for the Buckeyes, who had gone 12-0 in 2012, Autry said they had earned a good portion of his attention.

"Ohio State is the only team in the country last year to go undefeated," he said. "That's a good thing. That's my dream school, and I am going to go visit this summer. Ohio State has a big impact on my top (teams)."

One Year Ago – 2017

In February 2016, five-star defensive end Micah Parsons (6-3, 236) of Harrisburg, Pa., committed to Penn State. On April 23, 2017, Parsons officially announced that his recruitment was back open, just a day after being on Penn State's campus for the Nittany Lions' spring game.

Parsons hadn't exactly shut down his recruitment while being committed to PSU, though. He had visited Ohio State on numerous occasions, including the Buckeyes' spring game on April 15. He also was considering such schools as Alabama, Clemson and Georgia.

"Ohio State, they're a favorite of mine," he said. "Alabama, they're coming in late, but they're trying to push on me."

"Of course he wants to play in college with me, but it's not like he was trying to recruit me or anything," Jake said. "He loves it there. He loves the accountability that they put in place. It makes you a tougher player, a better player, a stronger player and a better person."

Jake received an offer from Ohio State in March 2017. He has been on OSU's campus at least three times since then – an unofficial visit last April, Friday Night Lights in July and another unofficial trip the weekend of Oct. 28 for the Ohio State-Penn State game.

"When I went to Ohio State last year,

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Join The Conversation

As Ohio State's 2019 recruiting class continues to grow and continues to move up the top 10 in the 247Sports composite team rankings, Buckeye Sports Bulletin has kept readers up-to-date with each new commit on BuckeyeSports.com. The new full-service website features commitment stories, commit lists and, most importantly, a Forum with up-to-the-minute information regarding Ohio State recruiting.

After each new commit, and when any other recruiting news breaks, BSB subscribers can head to the Forum to catch up on the news and join in on the conversation with other subscribers and BSB staff members, who are constantly checking the Forum and are well-equipped to answer any recruiting-related questions.

For signup information regarding BSB's new full-service website, which is free to print subscribers, see page 5.



JOSH WINSLOW

INTO THE FUTURE – Four-star tackle Jake Wray became Ohio State's first 2020 commit when he pledged to the Buckeyes on April 23.

I got this feeling that I haven't felt at any other place," Jake said. "I haven't had any ups and downs with that feeling. It's always been up. Me and my family feel like it's the best place to succeed and play at the next level."

The earliest Jake can sign with Ohio State will likely be December 2019 during the early signing period, assuming the NCAA recruiting schedule remains unchanged. Fortunately for the Buckeyes, it sounds like their first commitment in the 2020 class is a solid one.

"I'm not taking any other visits," Jake said. "I'm 100 percent committed to Ohio State."

The entire version of this story was published in the April 24 edition of the electronic BSB Quickly, which can be found on BuckeyeSports.com. For signup information regarding BSB's new full-service website, free to all print subscribers, see page 5.

Ohio State Targets Commit Elsewhere

While Ohio State obtained pledges from six recruits during the final two weeks of April, a number of prospects from the 2019

cycle whom the Buckeyes were interested in chose other college destinations.

On April 17, Baltimore St. Frances four-star linebacker Shane Lee committed to Alabama. The No. 76 prospect in the nation and fourth-best inside linebacker, Lee (6-0, 253) received an offer from Ohio State on Feb. 10. He has been to Ohio State multiple times and was contemplating attending the Buckeyes' spring game this year but didn't make the trip.

Four days after Lee revealed his decision, Belleview, Fla., four-star offensive tackle Michael Tarquin issued a verbal to Miami (Fla.). The 6-5, 290-pounder landed an OSU offer last May and took at least four unofficial visits to Columbus in 2017. He is the country's No. 273 overall prospect, the No. 27 offensive tackle and the No. 43 athlete in Florida.

Ohio State missed out on another offensive tackle on April 23, when Gibsonia (Pa.) Pine-Richland three-star product Andrew Kristofic unveiled on Twitter his pledge to Notre Dame. The Buckeyes extended an offer to Kristofic (6-6, 265) in November. He has visited Ohio State a couple of times, most recently on April 11. He is the No. 476 overall prospect, the No. 45 offensive tackle and the No. 8 player in Pennsylvania.

Malvern (Pa.) Malvern Prep three-star linebacker Keith Maguire was the next one to turn down Ohio State. He landed a scholarship offer from the Buckeyes in the first week of February. He then made his first visit to Columbus in March.

On April 14, Maguire (6-1½, 210) took to Twitter to say he had narrowed his list of scholarship offers down to five schools – Alabama, Clemson, North Carolina, Notre Dame and Ohio State. Less than two weeks later, on April 27, he announced he had committed to Clemson.

Maguire is the No. 524 prospect in America, the No. 34 outside linebacker and 10th-best player in Pennsylvania.

Williams Calls OSU 2021 Target A 'Natural-Born Killer'

Pickerington (Ohio) North tight end/defensive end Jack Sawyer is wrapping up his freshman year of high school but already holds offers from Cincinnati, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State, Penn State and Pittsburgh. The Buckeyes offered him on April 6, the same day they hosted him on an unofficial visit.

His former high school teammate, Alex Williams, signed with OSU's 2018 recruiting class. After participating in the 73rd annual North-South All-Star Classic at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium in Massillon, Ohio, on April 28, Williams told BSB that Sawyer already has a tight bond with the Scarlet and Gray.

"His relationship with Ohio State is very strong," Williams said of Sawyer. "He is an Ohio-based kid. If I have anything to do with his recruiting, he will be going to Ohio State – there's no doubt about it."

Who Is The Greatest Quarterback In Ohio State History?

The Options:

J.T. Barrett _____
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 Joe Germaine _____
 Cornelius Greene _____
 Kirk Herbstreit _____
 Bobby Hoying _____
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 Cardale Jones _____
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 Mike Tomczak _____
 Don Unverferth _____
 Other _____

Instructions:

Number your picks 1-10 (feel free to write in any players we left off the list) and mail this ballot to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212. Lists can also be emailed to bsb@buckeyesports.com or subscribers can vote on the forum at BuckeyeSports.com. Please provide your name, age and any additional comments regarding your ballot. Copies of the ballot are accepted and voters are welcome to attach additional paper if more space for comments is needed.

Comments:

Williams noted Sawyer's athleticism, saying that the rising prepster could excel in baseball or basketball, if he were not to play football. Should Sawyer continue the football route, become a Buckeye and be mentored by OSU defensive line coach Larry Johnson, who has coached every Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year dating back to 2014, Williams said the sky is the limit for Sawyer (6-5, 200).

"If Coach LJ gets his hands on an athlete like that, that's a future first-round draft pick," Williams said of Sawyer. "Not only is he a football player, if he gets to 6-8, we may not see him on the football field because he is that athletic on the basketball court. When it comes down to it, he was born to play sports. He works hard in his academics and is overall a great kid."

Asked to describe Sawyer's style of play on the football field, Williams simply said, "Natural-born killer. His instincts, he plays with a chip on his shoulder that he's necessarily never needed because he's always been an alpha on the field. He plays with a

chip on his shoulder, and it was something that was very admirable throughout the season. He went hard every chance he got. Summer ball we were playing, I would test him. I would test him, test him, chip away and see his toughness. I knew he was really made for this sport. He's a great kid."

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In-State High School Sending 2 To Ohio State

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In his past 21 years as the head coach at Mentor, Ohio, Steve Trivisonno has come to understand the significance of what it means for Ohio State to come calling.

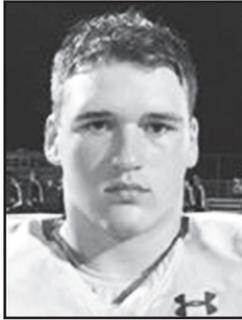
Considering the fact that the Cardinals last had a player become a Buckeye in the class of 2000, when Mentor tight end Jason Caldwell signed with OSU, Trivisonno knows the rarity of a scholarship offer to stay in state at one of college football's premier programs.

With the class of 2019, though, the stars aligned for Mentor. Four-star offensive tackle Ryan Jacoby jumped on his chance to stay in Ohio with the Scarlet and Gray when he committed March 1, and four-star defensive end Noah Potter followed in his teammate's footsteps when he pledged April 16.

"It's neat – that doesn't happen," Trivisonno told BSB. "We hadn't sent someone there since (Caldwell in the class of 2000). So it's cool. It's neat to see. It's been fun to be a part of, watch and see how they handle it. It's been cool."

In the four-star duo of Jacoby and Potter, OSU secured two priority targets early in its growing class of 2019, which could eventually feature a double-digit number of in-state prospects. Jacoby (No. 8) and Potter (No. 7) were

among the top players in Ohio, according to the 247Sports composite, with offers to stay home. Cincinnati Anderson four-star offensive guard Zeke Correll (6-4, 270), Lexington four-star outside linebacker Cade Stover (6-4, 225), Cincinnati Walnut Hills four-star defensive tackle Jowon Briggs (6-2, 275) and Lewis Center Olentangy Orange five-star defensive end Zach Harrison (6-6, 240) could join them, with others getting attention from the Buckeyes as well.



Ryan Jacoby

Potter, who took an unofficial visit with his family for the spring game April 14, actually committed to head coach Urban Meyer and defensive line coach Larry Johnson hours after the annual intrasquad scrimmage was over. Knowing his future at the next level would be under the direction of Johnson, Potter made up

his mind after meeting with Meyer and went public with the announcement on Twitter two days later.

"I think that was going to be the clincher, no matter what, was because of Coach Johnson," Trivisonno said. "Anytime you get a chance to play for him, on top of playing for Urban, is pretty special. So that's a great position coach that could take him to where he needs to go and what he needs to do. So that's the huge part of it. The sky's the limit for him."

Potter's older brother, Micah, is a rising junior center on the men's basketball team. Beyond the family ties, though, Potter knew the Buckeyes presented him with the best

chance to elevate his game to the next level.

"That's the goal," Trivisonno said. "There are so many things that have to go right, in terms of honing his physicality with his overall skills. Obviously, the health is one of those factors. But he's got the intangibles, so now it's just a matter of getting everything to work the right way."

"I think he's got the check marks to make it, but you've got to do what you've got to do to finish it. That's a long way down the road. Like I try to tell them all the time, you better worry about today and not tomorrow. Do what you can do every day and prepare yourself. If you're lucky enough, it happens, it will."

Potter's intrigue starts with his 6-5, 250-pound stature. The 247Sports composite considers him the No. 271 overall player and No. 20 strongside defensive end, but that barely scratches the surface of what he could become.

"The sky's the limit," Trivisonno said of Potter's potential. "When you look at him, he's still young looking. I don't know that he's going to get any taller, but he's certainly going to fill out (with additional muscle). So he's got a lot of room to grow and become the great player that he can be."

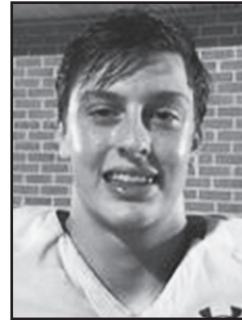
"He's talented, he's got the size and he's got the athletic ability. He plays the game the right way. It's fun to watch. He's only played since he was in the eighth grade, so he hasn't played very long."

The 6-5, 270-pound Jacoby is in the same

boat. Ranked the No. 282 overall prospect and No. 30 offensive tackle in the 247Sports composite, he has a long way to go, having started playing football in seventh grade, according to his coach.

For both Jacoby and Potter, though, their development prior to OSU will continue over the course of 2018 at Mentor. Matched up every time Trivisonno conducts one-on-one drills in practice, they bring out the best in each other.

"Even when they're in shorts (for offseason workouts), it's kind of scary," Trivisonno said. "These are two big boys. It's fun to watch. That prepares each of them, too. They're seeing this is as good of guys as they're going to see any week during the year, so it's good preparation for them and keeps them sharp and keeps them playing hard and practicing hard. So it's fun to watch – you just have to better get out of the way when they go at it."



Noah Potter

Jacoby and Potter are academically on the path to graduate from Mentor early and enroll at Ohio State next spring.

"You've got to get all of the academic parts of it done – that's the only thing that's the hard part, but they're both set on it," Trivisonno said. "They've still got to do some things, class-wise, but they're on course to do that and hopefully it will all work out well for them. For them, they can get where they're going and get to Ohio State and start their careers."

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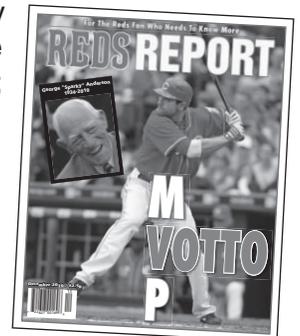
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Wake Forest Grad Transfer Commits To OSU

Since the end of the 2017-18 season, Ohio State men's basketball head coach Chris Holtmann has said on numerous occasions that the team must add one or two graduate transfers this offseason to help soften the blow of losing valuable members from last year's squad.

COURT REPORT Ryan McGlade

Keita Bates-Diop announced in late March that he would forgo his fifth year of eligibility by declaring for the 2018 NBA draft after averaging 19.8 points and 8.7 rebounds per game last season and being named the 2018 Big Ten Player of the Year. Andrew Dakich, a former walk-on who came to Ohio State last summer as a graduate transfer from Michigan, dished out 72 assists and turned out to be a significant cog in Ohio State's run to the 2018 NCAA Tournament. Jae'Sean Tate, who was the heart and soul of the team during his four seasons as a Buckeye, averaged 12.3 points, 6.2 rebounds and 2.9 assists while starting all 34 games in 2017-18. Kam Williams, a three-point threat for OSU, contributed 9.0 points per contest as a fifth-year senior but upped that average to 20.5 points in OSU's two NCAA Tournament games against South Dakota State and Gonzaga.

"We're losing 60 percent of our scoring, almost 60 percent of our assists, 60 percent of our rebounding and 90 to 100 percent of our leadership," Holtmann said after the season.

The Buckeyes can now hope that some of those aforementioned deficits can be restored in the form of Keyshawn Woods, who announced via Twitter on April 24 that he had committed to Ohio State as a graduate transfer. Woods (6-3, 205) spent the last three years at Wake Forest, where he averaged 12.2 points in 61 career games while shooting 46.9 percent (269 of 574) from the field, 40.8 percent (86 of 211) from the three-point line and 79.7 percent (122 of 153) from the free-throw line. Woods was not averse to finding his teammates either, as he averaged 2.8 assists per game during his time as a Demon Deacon.

A native of Gastonia, N.C., Woods spent his freshman season of 2014-15 at Charlotte, where he produced 8.4 points per outing and led Conference USA in three-point field-goal percentage at 46.6 percent. He then transferred to Wake Forest and had to sit out the 2015-16 campaign due to NCAA transfer rules.

Woods will provide some much-needed depth to Ohio State's backcourt in 2018-19. As the roster is currently constructed, senior-to-be C.J. Jackson is the only returning guard who consistently played significant minutes last season. Musa Jallow started 10 times in 2017-18 but played 14.0 minutes per game to Jackson's 30.5 and endured the ups and downs freshmen typically experience.

In addition to Jackson, Jallow and Woods, Ohio State has two guards in the incoming freshman class whom Holtmann said will help shoulder the load – Luther Muhammad from Jersey City (N.J.) Hudson Catholic; and Duane Washington out of Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon.

"Duane and Luther both have the ability to be (ball-handlers)," Holtmann said.



KEVIN DYE

ROSTER MANAGEMENT – Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann has showcased the ability to build his roster through high school recruiting and collegiate transfers.

"Musa will also handle the ball more and be more of a playmaker, but it's probably going to be more from the wing-guard spot. That's also an option we're looking at right now at bringing in and addressing that need.

"I think there will certainly be a lot of times this year where we play a three-guard lineup. I don't think there's any question about that. We'll definitely play a three-guard lineup probably in some ways more than we did this (past) year."

Speaking to reporters on April 10, Holtmann said he was planning to keep Jackson – who averaged 12.6 points, 3.9 assists and 2.1 turnovers last year – at point

Continued On Page 28

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Ohio State Transfer Target Opts For Louisville

Continued From Page 27

guard next season. The head coach added that he would be open to moving Jackson to the off-guard position, as long as the team found a grad transfer who could lend some relief. Woods could very well be that candidate.

"C.J., I think, grew into the (point guard) position and did a really good job with it," Holtmann said. "I don't know that I'm ready to pull him back from that because I think he does some good things there. I do think if we could find another point guard that could come in and do some things, it would help to be able to slide (Jackson) some and play him off the ball, like we did with Andrew some this (past) year where we played those two guys together. I think we could (slide Jackson over to the two). It just depends who we add as a fifth-year."

Former Samford PG Commits To Louisville After OV To OSU

After landing Woods on April 24, the Buckeyes welcomed former Samford point guard Christen Cunningham to campus the following day for an official visit that lasted through April 27. Prior to making the trip to Columbus, Cunningham visited Oregon State from April 22-24.

On the last day of April, though, he told 247Sports he had committed to Louisville.

"It was tough," Cunningham said. "I feel like I had three really good options. But after thinking about it, I've decided I'm going to Louisville."

Cunningham started all 110 games he played at Samford, averaging 11.7 points, 4.7 assists, 2.7 rebounds and 1.0 steals per game while shooting 43.6 percent (437 of 1,002) from the floor, 29.0 percent (56 of 193) from three-point range and 81.3 per-

OSU Basketball Verbal Commitments

Player in the class of 2019 who has issued a verbal commitment to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings reflect 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Alonzo Gaffney	PF	6-9	190	★★★★★	Cleveland Garfield Heights

cent (353 of 434) from the charity stripe. The 6-2, 190-pound Georgetown, Ky., native played only nine games last year due to illness but received a medical hardship waiver and will have one more season of eligibility remaining.

He is Samford's all-time leader in assists with 514 over four seasons, including 225 helpers (6.3 per game) during the 2016-17 season that ranked fifth in the country.

Clearly busy in the grad-transfer market, Holtmann discussed on April 10 how

recruiting such players has become a phenomenon.

"It's a more extreme version of recruiting with a smaller timeline," he said. "The quicker a guy becomes available, you're flying out to see him the next day once your compliance gets the release. You are at 10 right away on a scale of 1 to 10. You are in hot pursuit, and it is very competitive."

"I don't know that every year we will recruit a fifth-year, but it seems like pretty much everybody in the country is this time of the year. It's really competitive."

Walker Officially Added To 2018-19 Roster

On April 8, former Florida State point guard C.J. Walker declared on Twitter that he would be transferring to Ohio State. On April 23, OSU announced he had been added to the team's roster.

Walker, a sophomore last year at Florida State, must sit out the 2018-19 season to satisfy NCAA transfer rules and will have two additional years of eligibility beginning with the 2019-20 campaign.

A four-star product of Indianapolis Arsenal Tech, Walker was the No. 113 overall prospect in the 2016 recruiting class, according to the 247Sports composite. He was a target of Holtmann and his staff while they were at Butler but ended up committing to Purdue before decommitting and signing with Florida State.

He spent two years with the Seminoles, becoming the starting point guard this past season when he averaged 8.0 points and 2.4 assists. FSU made it to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament before losing to Michigan.

Walker (6-1, 195) shot 35.5 percent (39 of 110) from beyond the arc, 41.2 percent (94 of 228) from the floor and 73.2 percent (52 of 71) from the foul line in 2017-18. He started 34 of 35 games, but his playing time diminished down the stretch due to the emergence of fellow sophomore guard Trent Forrest.

After averaging 25.4 minutes and 9.0 points through the first 28 games this past season, Walker averaged just 14.6 minutes and 3.7 points in his final seven contests. He announced three days after the loss to Michigan that he would be leaving Florida State.

"We are excited about the addition of C.J. Walker to our program," Holtmann said. "C.J. is a strong, competitive, experienced guard who has competed at a high level in high school and college. As we continue to build our roster, C.J. adds the ability and experience at the guard position we were looking for. We really look forward to working with him in his redshirt year in preparation for the 2019-20 season of play."

OSU Handed NCAA Sanctions For Minor Recruiting Violations

Three basketball recruits who were on official visits at Ohio State the weekend of Sept. 9 visited the set of ESPN's "College GameDay," which was on campus to preview the football game between Ohio State and Oklahoma.

The trio of prospects – Muhammad, Jaedon LeDee and Elijah Weaver – went onto



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MEN'S HOOPS

the stage of GameDay and met with former Ohio State quarterback and ESPN analyst Kirk Herbstreit, former Ohio State running back and celebrity guest picker Eddie George and two other ESPN personalities. Recruits are allowed to meet former players on their visit to campus. They aren't, however, allowed to meet with the media, and since ESPN's GameDay staff is considered to be media, Ohio State committed a recruiting violation.

On April 19, Ohio State's student newspaper, The Lantern, reported that the OSU men's basketball program had been given minor punishments from the NCAA after the university self-reported violations stemming from what took place that weekend in September.

LeDee committed to Ohio State on Sept. 19 while Muhammad did the same three days later. Weaver later committed and signed with USC. LeDee and Muhammad, along with Justin Ahrens and Washington, signed letters of intent with OSU on Nov. 8. Ohio State did not report the violation until Nov. 16, according to the report.

For self-imposed punishments, Ohio State forbade the men's basketball program from returning to the set of any future "College GameDay" broadcasts over the remainder of the 2017-18 school year, and the university issued educational materials regarding the violation to the basketball program and GameDay staff, according to the report.

The NCAA, however, did not agree with Ohio State's action and hit the program with three harsher penalties. The NCAA declared the three prospects ineligible, requiring Ohio State to apply for reinstatement for the players, which the university did. The NCAA also issued a reduction of two recruiting-person days. The NCAA defines a recruiting-person day as one coach engaged in an off-campus recruiting activity of a prospective student-athlete, including one who has signed a letter of intent, on one day. The NCAA's third punishment was forcing director of player development Scoonie Penn, who allowed the prospects to walk onto the GameDay set, to sit out one game.

This story was originally published in the April 24 edition of the electronic BSB Quickly, which can be found on BuckeyeSports.com. For signup information regarding BSB's new full-service website, free to all print subscribers, see page 5.

B1G Announces Conference Breakdown For 2018-19 Season

The Big Ten announced on April 19 the conference opponent breakdown for the 2018-19 men's college basketball season, which will feature a 20-game league slate.

Ohio State will have home-and-home series with Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan State, Northwestern, Purdue and Rutgers. The Buckeyes will play Indiana, Michigan and Nebraska once on the road, and Minnesota, Penn State and Wisconsin once at home in Columbus.

The Big Ten had a 12-game league schedule from 1920-50 before bumping it up to 14 games from 1951-74 and then to 18 games from 1975-97. The conference dropped to a 16-game schedule from 1998-2007 before returning to an 18-game slate from 2008 through last season (2018).

OSU Trims New Floor Design Options To Four

Ohio State announced on April 17 that there will be a new basketball court design for the 2018-19 season. Originally starting with 10 potential floor layouts, the university revealed its final four options on April 23.

Fans can view the final four options by going to www.ohiostatebuckeyes.com/sports/m-baskbl/spec-rel/041718aaa.html.



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Ohio State Rounding Out Roster For 2018-19

When the Ohio State women's basketball team comes together and takes the court for the first time to open its 2018-19 season, the new-look Buckeyes will be hard to recognize.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Garrett Stepien

With the departures of five seniors, OSU head coach Kevin McGuff is working on reloading the roster. Ohio State is challenged with replacing 410 starts combined from the Scarlet and Gray careers of guards Asia Doss, Kelsey Mitchell and Linnae Harper and forwards Stephanie Mavunga and Alexa Hart.

The daunting task begins with Mitchell, the No. 2 all-time scorer in NCAA history with 3,402 points, who shattered 17 program records and eight Big Ten marks among the long list of accolades in her four years with the Buckeyes.

"We're going to miss her, and we had some other really great seniors – we really did," McGuff said. "So it will be a hard transition."

As the lone returning starter in the lineup, plenty of the offensive output is expected to come from fifth-year senior guard Sierra Calhoun.

After she averaged 11.6 points and shot 37.1 percent from the floor (35.8 percent on three-pointers) while averaging 29.4 minutes in 35 contests, Calhoun is challenged with elevating all aspects of her game. She and fellow fifth-year senior Makayla Waterman, a forward, will need to assist McGuff and the staff in leading the influx of incoming freshmen.

"We have some really great pieces coming back and some good kids coming in that I really like," McGuff said. "We're going to be much younger. We're going to need a lot of leadership out of people like Makayla Waterman that have been around here for a while and all that type of stuff."



SONNY BROCKWAY

ROSTER MAKEOVER – Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff has to replace a combined 410 starts from the 2017-18 roster.

While the graduate-transfer additions of 5-10 guards Carly Santoro (Bowling Green) and Najah Queenland (Pacific) should bring OSU immediate-impact players, seeing how quickly the three incoming freshmen can develop remains to be seen. Ohio State signed Lombard (Ill.) Montini

Catholic three-star post Aaliyah Patty, Barrington (R.I.) St. Andrew's four-star guard Janai Crooms and four-star forward Dorka Juhász, a native of Hungary.

"It will be hard," McGuff said, "but it will also be fun because you get a new group and try to see what we can do with them."

McGuff placed the walk-on duo of sophomore forward Savitha Jayaraman and junior guard Karlie Cronin on scholarship midway through 2017-18, while guard Chelsea Mitchell has one year of eligibility left but is unsure of a return to the team after she mutually left in the midst of academic conflicts last season.

OSU is open to possibly adding multiple others in the offseason for the class of 2018 if the fit is right, McGuff said, but the class of 2019 is shaping up to be where he and his staff are starting to channel their recruiting efforts.

This upcoming cycle is especially loaded on the local level with Ohio boasting three of the top 10 prospects – all of whom were uncommitted when BSB went to press – in Canton McKinley five-star guard Kierstan Bell, Columbus Africentric five-star guard Jordan Horston and Toledo Rogers five-star point guard Zia Cooke.

Bell is No. 5, Horston is No. 8 and Cooke is No. 10 in the 2019 HoopGurlz Recruiting Rankings by Collegiate Girls Basketball Report's Dan Olson on ESPN.com.

"Like I said, it's tough to lose people like Kelsey and some of the other people that we're losing, but I'm excited about the kids we have coming in," McGuff said. "We're also trying to add a few more here late. So it should be exciting."

Mitchell Makes National Team Debut

In the USA Women's Basketball National Team's first game back on the hardwood since it won gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics, Kelsey Mitchell made her debut with the squad in its brief return to action.

When Team USA cruised to an 83-46 rout over China in an exhibition game April 26 at KeyArena in Seattle, Mitchell pitched in five points with two assists and one rebound in 10:29 of action. She knocked down a bucket and a triple, shooting 2 for 5 from the floor and going 1 for 3 from deep.

"It feels good," Mitchell said of practicing with Team USA days before the game when she reported to Seattle for a three-day minicamp. "I'm kind of new to this whole national team thing. So for me, it's just learning the ropes, knowing when to play fast and when to play slow. So for me, it's just kind of taking everything in at one time. I'm enjoying it."

Under the tutelage of Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame member and South Carolina head coach Dawn Staley, in addition to guidance from WNBA veterans such as Diana Taurasi (Phoenix Mercury) and Sue Bird (Seattle Storm), Mitchell made the most of her time around the sport's top ambassadors.

"I think me getting this experience early will prepare me for what's coming in the next couple of weeks (with the WNBA)," Mitchell said. "I think everything I've learned today is one of those things where it's going to be some bumps and bruises, and bad times. There's going to be a lot of bad plays, but at the end of the day, I'm learning."

One month removed from her last game at Ohio State, where she averaged 24.3 points per game on her way to becoming Big Ten Player of the Year a third time, Mitchell wasted no time working on her craft at the next level.

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OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

2 overall pick April 12 in the first round of the WNBA Draft, Mitchell begins her professional career in May with the Fever. Indiana opens its preseason slate May 7, followed by the start of its regular-season schedule May 19.

Following her rookie campaign with the Fever, Mitchell is likely to rejoin Team USA for the 2018 FIBA World Cup in Spain from Sept. 22-30. Team USA looks to defend the gold it won at the 2014 FIBA World Cup starting when it competes in the preliminary round of Group D against Senegal (Sept. 22), China (Sept. 23) and Latvia (Sept. 25).

Mavunga Working Out With Indiana Fever

While Mitchell got most of the attention when Indiana drafted her, the Fever's second-round selection of Mavunga at No. 14 overall made waves.

Being selected by Indiana meant more to Mavunga for a multitude of reasons. She reunited with her former Ohio State teammate in Mitchell, teamed up with sister-in-law Jeanette Pohlen-Mavunga and made a homecoming of sorts to Indianapolis as a native of nearby Brownsburg.

"I can't even put it into words," Mavunga said of hearing her name called by the Fever at the draft. "I mean, I just heard a lot of yelling in my house. My parents were excited for the opportunity to just come home. To just be around these facilities, I've watched so many Fever games and been to so many games – especially last summer, coming to watch my sister-in-law.

"So it was just a lot of emotions really flowing through my head. I actually have a Fever shirt, so of course I went to put that on. I'm just really excited, really blessed and excited to get training camp started and be around the facilities. Like I said, I'm just blessed beyond measure."

When she reported to Indiana for pre-season workouts April 23, Mitchell was with Team USA, but Pohlen-Mavunga was in attendance.

"So exciting," Pohlen-Mavunga said of

being teammates with Mavunga. "I mean, for me, it's – how many people can say they play with their sister-in-law? It just kind of worked out perfectly. She's a great player, hard worker and really high energy – and I think she's a great fit here.

"(My advice for her) was kind of just do what she does best. I mean, the coaches have watched her play in college, they know what she can do and just kind of bring that – bring the intensity, be vocal, kind of everything that I think we all look for as far as teammates and players. But she's an amazing rebounder. Obviously, that's always needed. She's very physical and aggressive."

Mavunga comes to the next level ready to compete after she averaged a career-best 16.6 points and 11.0 rebounds per game for the Buckeyes last season.

"It was fantastic," Mavunga said of her first WNBA workout. "It was definitely nice

to come in with the coaches and really get a feel for it. I got a feel for the facilities, taken on a tour. So I'm just really excited and blessed for the opportunity."

Mavunga, who transferred in 2015 to OSU from North Carolina, was especially grateful for her experience in Columbus when she reflected on her journey to the professional ranks.

"Shout-out to Buckeye Nation," Mavunga said. "They gave back to me. They really took me in, took me under their wings. Coming as a transfer student-athlete, it was really just great.

"Shout-out to the whole 317 (area code). It's just nice to be back in Indiana, back in my city, a place where I grew up. It had so much support as I was going through middle school and high school. They even supported me in college. So hopefully, they can come and support me this summer, and for years to come.

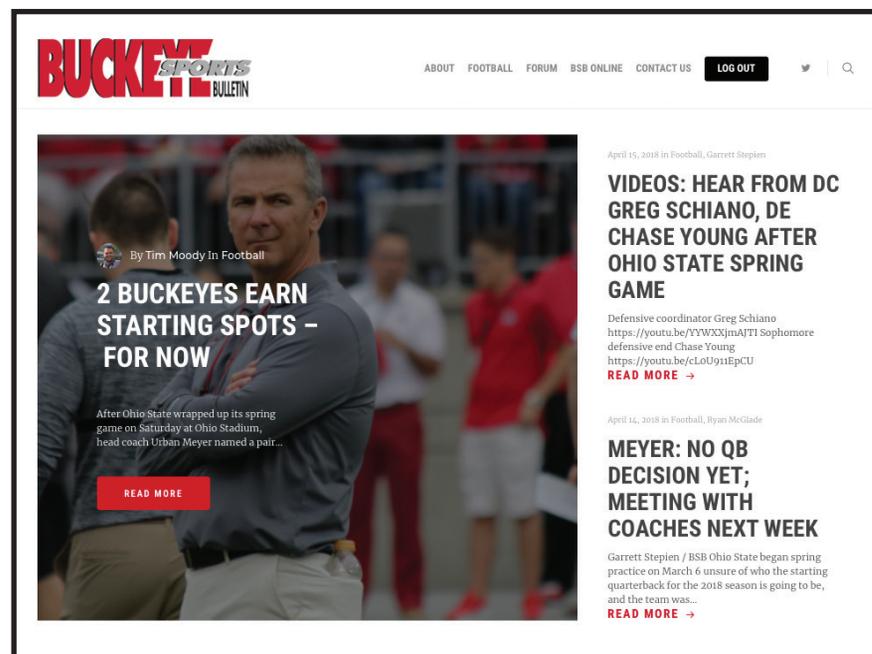
"Shout-out to Zimbabwe, where I'm originally from. I've just gotten so much love from them, being the first draft pick from my country. So I'm just so excited and so blessed. So shout-out to everyone who believes in me and supports me, and shout-out to God for all of the blessings that he's continued to give me."



Stephanie Mavunga

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Purdue Extends Brohm Through 2024 Season

Purdue vice president and athletic director Mike Bobinski announced April 26 an agreement on a contract extension with head football coach Jeff Brohm.

BIG TEN NOTES Garrett Stepien

Approved by the Board of Trustees, Brohm is now under contract with the Boilermakers through the 2024 season and will make \$3.8 million in 2018.

"This extension is a reflection of how pleased we are with Jeff's leadership of our football program," Bobinski said. "He has brought renewed energy to our campus, revived our fan base and alumni, and made Purdue relevant once again in the college football landscape. With the success of last season as a foundation, we have tremendous optimism about the future of Purdue football."

After a 3-9 season the previous year under former head coach Darrell Hazell (2013-16), Brohm brought a spark to the Boilermakers in 2017 and guided them to a solid turnaround at 7-6. Purdue went 4-5 in the Big Ten and tied for third place in the West Division, capping the campaign with a 38-35 win over Arizona in the Foster Farms Bowl.

Fans took notice as attendance at Ross-Ade Stadium increased by an average of 13,433 and the Boilermakers played in front of their first sellout crowd since 2008.

"From my first conversation with (president) Mitch Daniels, (board of trustees member) Mike Berghoff and Mike Bobinski, it was apparent that there was a commitment to rebuilding this football program," Brohm said. "We all have the resources necessary for success, and I promise that my staff and I will continue to work tirelessly to build a championship-caliber program. My family and I love West Lafayette, and we look forward to being a part of the Purdue family and this community for years to come."

NCAA Grants U-M QB Immediate Eligibility

Ole Miss transfer quarterback Shea Patterson is eligible to play for Michigan in 2018.

The NCAA decided April 27 to waive its regular rule requiring undergraduate transfers to sit out a year before playing, paving the way for Patterson to be immediately eligible as a junior in the fall for the Wolverines.

U-M and Ole Miss announced April 27 in a statement that the athletic departments worked together in the week leading up to the NCAA's decision, creating a waiver request the two schools agreed was accurate.

"Both schools are ready to move forward and appreciate the assistance of the NCAA staff in bringing this matter to a resolution," the two athletic departments said in a joint statement. "While the process has been complex at times, the solution was simple – two flagship universities and the NCAA working together with a focus on student-athlete well-being."

Their collaboration took advantage of a recent amendment to NCAA transfer waiver guidelines, made effective April 18, for transferring student-athletes such as Patterson to attain immediate eligibility in 2018-19. Those new guidelines state that a student-athlete's academic standing can be taken into consideration.

The agreement put an end to previous objections the Rebels made against Patterson's reasons for transferring. After he transferred in December to Michigan, following the NCAA's decision to ban Ole Miss from bowl games in 2018, Patterson applied for immediate eligibility late in February. As he waited to hear back on a decision, Patterson practiced with Michigan for spring camp in March and April.

In early April, the Ole Miss athletic department told the NCAA it did not support Patterson's original request because officials claimed the basis of his reasoning – former head coach Hugh Freeze persuading him and others to stay in 2017 by lying about the potential punishment of the NCAA's investigation into the football program – was false. Although those claims were not included in the new waiver request, Ole Miss agreed to submit with Michigan a new waiver request based on the amendment that took Patterson's academic standing into account.

"There are a lot of people who worked really hard to help make this transfer process a success," Patterson said in a statement. "I want to thank Coach (Jim) Harbaugh, the University of Michigan and the NCAA for allowing me to continue my education and football career at one of the best universities in the country."

"A special thanks to Michigan's compliance staff and to (Patterson's attorney) Tom Mars for his personal guidance for me and my family during this time. With this decision behind us, my family and I are fully focused on the upcoming season. My teammates and I are always committed to competing at the highest level and winning championships. Go Blue!"

Patterson was with Michigan on a team-sponsored trip to Paris when the news was announced. He is expected to compete with third-year sophomore quarterback Brandon Peters and others for the starting job in the fall.

As the starter for Ole Miss in its first seven games of 2017 before a season-ending leg injury in October, Patterson completed 166 of his 260 passes (63.8 percent) for 2,259 yards and 17 touchdowns to nine interceptions.

MSU Tied To Coach Accused Of Sexual Assault

Following sexual assault scandals at Michigan State involving disgraced former team doctor Larry Nassar and accused former dean William Strampel, the university is now under fire for its relationship with prominent volleyball coach Rick Butler, who was publicly accused in 1995 of sexually abusing and raping six underage girls he trained in the 1980s.

The Associated Press obtained letters from advocates for the accusers, revealing how MSU has been under pressure for the past year to terminate ties to Butler, who runs training facilities in the Chicago suburb of Aurora, Ill. Top volleyball prospects in his program provided a pipeline to collegiate teams such as Michigan State. According to online records, MSU hosted exhibition matches at his facilities through at least 2014.

Accusers said Butler countered their refusals of his advances by threatening to use his national influence against and negatively impact their recruitments at prospective programs.

Questions about Butler's relationship

with Michigan State became magnified after Nassar was charged in 2016 for sexually abusing athletes over 20 years when he had an on-campus office. In the wake of Nassar's sentencing to a maximum of 125 years, Strampel's case of abusing female students surfaced and he was charged with multiple counts of sex crimes after failing to protect patients from Nassar and sexually harassing female students himself.

Butler's past being brought to the surface is the latest link MSU has to someone accused of sexual abuse. However, unlike Nassar and Strampel, Butler has never been criminally charged and has denied any wrongdoing. The actions in question allegedly occurred 30-plus years ago and were beyond the statute of limitations for prosecution when the accusers broke their silence in 1995.

Recently, three others came forward. One of them was Sarah Powers-Barnhard, who claims Butler molested her hundreds of times over two years – starting when she was 16 and he was 30. Powers-Barnhard said he raped her at his home, in cars and also in a train-car bathroom while her teammates were sitting nearby. She called on Michigan State to sever its ties to Butler, adding how she believed the university "turned a blind eye" to his history.

"If we don't stop supporting the top abuser in volleyball, how can we ever claim zero tolerance for sexual abuse?" Powers-Barnhard said.

Michigan State recently responded to questions from the AP, releasing a statement April 23 saying Butler is currently "not affiliated with MSU in any way" and adding that the women's volleyball program "is not actively recruiting players from his program at this time."

However, Michigan State's eight-sentence statement never answered any of the AP's questions, which ranged from asking how long the university knew of the allegations to why the institution formed ties with him in the first place.

Since she became the head women's volleyball coach at MSU in 2005, most of the teams under Cathy George have featured one or more players from Butler's program. George knew Powers-Barnhard from when they played against each other. In 1995, when George was the head coach at Western Michigan, Powers-Barnhard said George called her to express sympathy after hearing of the allegations against Butler, but that she could not cut ties with him.

"(George) said, I'm sorry all this happened, but I will still have to recruit from him," Powers-Barnhard said.

In a 1995 report from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, no evidence was found to support Butler's belief that the three athletes were lying about his sexual abuse. Butler did, however, acknowledge in a 1995 hearing with USA Volleyball that he had sex with the three. Claiming the interactions were consensual and after they turned 18, Butler called their accusations a "smear campaign."

U-M Wing Transfers To Dayton

After two seasons with the Michigan men's basketball team, Ibi Watson is coming back home to Ohio. The Pickerington native announced a homecoming of sorts April 25 when he revealed his decision to transfer from Michigan to Dayton for the next three years. Watson will sit out the 2018-19 season due to NCAA rules but maintains two years of eligibility afterward.

"I'm extremely blessed to announce that I am going to continue my academic and athletic career at the University of Dayton," Watson said in a tweet. "Go Flyers!"

Rated by the 247Sports composite as a three-star recruit from Pickerington Central in the class of 2016, Watson was recruited by Dayton but chose Michigan over offers from Indiana and others. As an AAU teammate on All-Ohio Red with Nick Ward (Michigan State) and Kaleb Wesson (Ohio State), Watson was slightly overshadowed before his recruitment rose to the national level with interest from Florida, Missouri and Virginia Commonwealth.

However, when Watson joined the Wolverines, he never found consistent minutes on the floor. During consecutive Big Ten tournament titles and NCAA Tournament runs, highlighted by U-M's appearance in the 2018 national championship game, Watson watched from the bench. After he averaged 1.3 points and 4.4 minutes in 19 games as a freshman in 2016-17, Watson followed up in 2017-18 with 2.3 points and 5.6 minutes in 24 contests as a sophomore.

B1G Boasts 4 Picks In 1st Round

When the first round of the NFL draft came to a close April 26, the Big Ten saw four players from the conference make their dreams come true.

At second overall, the New York Giants selected Penn State running back Saquon Barkley (6-0, 233).

Two picks later, Ohio State's Denzel Ward (5-11, 183) was the first cornerback off the board when the Cleveland Browns took him fourth overall. Fellow Buckeye Billy Price (6-4, 305) heard his name called by the Cincinnati Bengals at 21st overall. (For more on Ward, Price and others from OSU in the draft, find BSB's full recap on page 20).

Maryland wide receiver D.J. Moore (6-0, 210) went to the Carolina Panthers at 26th overall to round out the Big Ten products.

With 10 picks, the SEC led all conferences. The ACC followed in second with six, while the Pac-12 tied the Big Ten with four.

In total, 33 former Big Ten players from 12 schools were selected in the seven-round draft, which concluded April 28.

Nike Signs Multiple Big Ten Products

Before the NFL draft began April 26, ESPN reported earlier in the day that Nike had signed 18 prospects to endorsement deals.

Six former players from the Big Ten were on the list. Penn State boasted three products in tight end Mike Gesicki, wide receiver DaeSean Hamilton and Barkley, who had previously signed his deal in February with the company. Ward, Moore and Iowa cornerback Josh Jackson rounded out the prospects from the conference.

The other players on the list were Oklahoma quarterback Baker Mayfield, Wyoming quarterback Josh Allen, Alabama wide receiver Calvin Ridley, Louisiana State running back Derrius Guice, Georgia linebacker Roquan Smith, Virginia Tech linebacker Tremaine Edwards, Southern California running back Ronald Jones II, Clemson wide receiver Deon Cain, Notre Dame running back Josh Adams, Alabama cornerback Anthony Averett and Washington wide receiver Dante Pettis.

Laczynski Planning To Return For Buckeyes

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Tanner Laczynski has unfinished business for the Ohio State men's hockey team.

The standout sophomore forward, named a 2018 second-team All-American, confirmed to BSB that he will return to school for a third season and not sign with the Philadelphia Flyers, who drafted him in the sixth-round of the 2016 NHL draft.

One of the contributing factors is a chance to play for an NCAA title, something that eluded OSU (26-10-5) this season when the Buckeyes suffered a 2-1 loss to eventual champion Minnesota Duluth in the Frozen Four semifinal.

"Us losing to UMD made a big impact on that decision," he said. "Getting to the final four and not coming out on top was a big reason.

"Obviously the guys around me, the close group we have, was another factor I had to weigh in. When I look at all that for me coming back, it's exciting going forward and trying to win a national championship next year."

The Buckeyes should be loaded with talent and one of the favorites to return to the Frozen Four.

Forwards Mason Jobst and Dakota Joshua have also apparently decided they will not turn pro and will return for their senior seasons. Jobst, a second team All-American in 2017, is undrafted. Joshua is a 2014 draft pick of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

"From all indications they'll be back," OSU coach Steve Rohlik said to BSB. "They've both said it in all our meetings with them. Those guys understand first and foremost they can come back here and get their degrees, which obviously with both those guys being seniors, they'll have their degrees done.

"Secondly, they can become better players and put themselves in better spots to be closer to the NHL the following year. And they understand it gives Ohio State another chance to be very competitive."

Laczynski led the Buckeyes with 47 points on 17 goals and 30 points this past season. Jobst was next with 43 points (21-22) and Joshua fourth with 26 points (15-11).

Despite his production, Laczynski realizes there is plenty of room for improvement before making the jump to professional hockey.

"I'm in no rush," he said. "Whenever it's my time, it's my time. I feel like I'm a good enough player to know when I'm ready. I could have gone (pro) this year, but at the same time I'm still young. I still have time to grow more as a player staying in college and playing more, playing a bigger role and developing more than if I left for the pros."

He consulted with the Flyers, his family and the OSU coaching staff before reaching his decision, one that Rohlik said will benefit Laczynski in the long run.

"You've got the best of everything off-ice from the nutritionists to the weight room to the conditioning, you name it," the coach said. "For me, the most important thing is he's going to get one year closer to his degree.

"He's a smart enough kid to understand he's got the best of both worlds and that's what Ohio State brings to the table."

Philadelphia general manager Ron Hextall told the media April 26 that he was fine with whatever decision Laczynski made.



KEVIN DYE

ONE MORE YEAR – Ohio State forward Tanner Laczynski, a Philadelphia Flyers draftee, is set to return to the Buckeyes for another season.

It's no secret that the Flyers want him to work on his skating before he departs OSU.

Laczynski rattled off a few more areas: "Clean up the defensive side of things, I can always improve on that. Guys in the NHL are still working on that. That's a big part of the game now, a 200-foot game.

"Also, working on trying to be more versatile and work on things like trying to be quicker, acceleration and a quicker first step, and as far as my shot, just be smarter where I'm shooting it. Doing all that will go a long way for me."

Rohlik has no doubt Laczynski (6-1, 191) will continue to develop, saying, "The great thing about Tanner is he is driven. When you have a work ethic like that you understand what it takes every day, not just game days."

A favorite phrase of Rohlik's is the importance of "Monday through Thursday." In

college hockey, games are usually played on Fridays and Saturdays, so the preparation must be done in the days leading to the series.

"He's the epitome of Monday through Thursday," Rohlik said. "He works at his craft. He wants to get better. He understands he wants to get quicker. He wants to work on the little things, handle the puck more. He knows he can be more of a complete 200-foot player. In the NHL there's only so many 50-goal scorers, 40-goal scorers, and now it's about what are the rest of the guys doing?"

"At that level you can't just be a top-six guy or just a penalty-kill guy. You've got to come in and be a 200-foot guy who can come in and be on any line. That's where Tanner can get. That's where he can push his game to the next level with another year of experience at our level."

Rohlik said the Shorewood, Ill., native will also become more of a leader entering his third year in the program.

"First of all, he's got to keep doing what he's doing," Rohlik said. "Everybody sees what he's doing on the ice. There's no question everybody in our locker room understands what he's doing out there. He's not a rah-rah guy, but now he's in a position where Tanner says something, the locker room is going to turn and listen.

"Good leaders go out there and do the right thing. They're there first, they stay last, and they work hard. That's expected. That's a good leader. A great leader is someone who can grab one, two, three other guys and have them doing the same things you're doing. That's what I'll expect from a guy like Tanner."

With the return of the "Big Three" as Rohlik calls Jobst, Joshua and Laczynski, the Buckeyes will enter the 2018-19 season with high expectations considering they finished third in the USCHO and USA Today/USA Hockey Magazine polls.

"That's what you want out of a program," Rohlik said. "Our guys deserve that recognition because they worked hard to get there.

"We've got enough older guys and leadership and guys that have been there the past few years to understand that and lean on that a little bit. Us as coaches have got to make sure we've got a thumb on it and make sure we're pushing these guys to the highest level."

Laczynski is ready for the challenge for what likely will be his final season at Ohio State before signing with the Flyers.

In a phone interview with BSB three weeks after the defeat to Minnesota Duluth, the goal to make the NCAA tournament for a third straight season was already embedded.

"We didn't like that feeling of losing," he said. "With all the veterans we have coming back there's going to be extra motivation in the locker room. The rookies are going to come in and realize this is a team that wants to win and go back to where we were at and win it all.

"Even though we were there two years in a row, it doesn't really matter and it doesn't mean anything unless you're winning the whole thing."

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Ohio State Holds Zach Farmer Memorial Game

The Ohio State baseball team held its Zach Farmer Memorial Game on April 27 against Minnesota at Bill Davis Stadium. Luke Benner, a nine-year old who recently finished his cancer treatment, threw out the honorary first pitch during pregame. It was a perfect strike right down the middle in the back of the glove of senior righthander Seth Kinker for what was a special moment for a season-high 1,610 crowd to witness.

FROM THE STRETCH

Joe Dempsey

"I was an incoming freshman when (Farmer) got diagnosed," Kinker said. "I was a freshman when he was going through chemo and everything. The impact he made on his class – it spreads, not only with that class but for those that come in after it's happened. It's an impact on our lives. It's something that we literally wear on our hats. We got new hats so we don't have it on there anymore, but he's a part of us."

"And that memorial – seeing his dad out there, seeing the little kid throw out the first pitch, I got to catch it. Those are touching moments and they never go away. And the situation with Zach and his family, you love them, you comfort them when they need it. And it's one of those things where as a team we embrace what happened and we celebrate his life, because he made such an impact on this university, on this program."

In the summer of 2015, the Buckeyes lost their teammate and friend Farmer after his battle with leukemia. During his fight, Farmer helped raise awareness for the bone marrow registry through Be The Match, starting a campus drive with help from his Buckeye teammates. The organization provides bone marrow transplants in the United States from volunteer, unrelated donors to leukemia patients.

"The Farmer game means a lot to our program, and the guys that are seniors now knew Zach," head coach Greg Beals said. "And in the years to come, it may mean a little less to the players in the locker room because they wouldn't have known Zach, but we're going to carry it on. And it means the world to me because that's what Zach wanted. The fight that he put up, I lived through that with him. And the registry was something that was important to him. He got extended hope through the registry, so we're going to have that Be The Match game for as long as I'm here."

In 2016, Minnesota pitching coach Todd Oakes passed away after a battle with acute myeloid leukemia. Oakes spent 18 years with the Maroon and Gold. On Friday, the two teams honored both Farmer and Oakes before the first pitch. Both teams wore orange wristbands that had the letters "ZF" and "TO" labeled on each side. Fans could also purchase the wristband for five dollars with all donations going to the Be The Match Foundation.

"And that memorial day, you go out there – we didn't have a good game (an 11-1 loss),

but it also impacted Minnesota – they lost a coach to the same exact thing," Kinker said. "And you're playing not only for yourself but you're playing for those around you. You're playing for both teams and Coach Todd Oakes and then Zach of course. And it's touching. And it's never going to leave this program. It's a part of Beals' heart. And he embraces it, we embrace it, and we're always going to play for Zach no matter what."

From Catcher To Center Fielder

Freshman Dillon Dingler came to Ohio State as a catcher. However, with Jacob Barnwell returning as the team's starting catcher, there was not much opportunity for Dingler to crack the lineup. Beals liked what he saw from Dingler and said he needed to find a way to get the freshman's bat in the lineup.

Perhaps one might think a catcher could transition to first base or maybe third, but Beals chose a less conventional path for Dingler. With the primary goal of keeping the Buckeyes' best bats in the lineup, Beals moved Dingler to center field.

"He brings (athleticism). He brings (competitiveness). He brings championship pedigree. He's been there, done that at every level he's played at," Beals said. "As we look and evaluate like we always do, you have a kid like that in your program, we've got to find spots for him. And we think the center field spot has been a spot where we've been searching, so we're going to give him a shot there."

The Massillon (Ohio) Jackson product led the Polar Bears to victory in the 2017 Division I state championship. Dingler admitted he lacks experience in the outfield, however, playing only one or two games in that position in high school.

"The outfield is kind of new to me, but it's an adjustment and I kind of like it out there," Dingler said. "(Tyler) Cowles, Dominic (Canzone) and Ridge (Winland) and all those guys are helping me out throughout the way."

The 6-3, 220-pound freshman also earned all-state honors playing football in high school and earned four letters in three different sports: football, basketball and baseball. Dingler has used his versatility and work ethic to adjust on the fly.

"I'm pretty comfortable, but obviously conditions, wind-wise and stuff like that ... I'm getting the hang of it," Dingler said. "I feel like I make pretty good reads. I can always improve though."

Defensive Difficulties

Ohio State has enjoyed much more success in 2018 than last year, but the team's success has not come without blemishes. The ballclub has hit the ball very well this spring, ranking second in the Big Ten in hitting (.290) and runs scored (280). The Scarlet and Gray pitching staff has also enjoyed success, ranking fourth in the Big Ten in ERA (3.70) and second in strikeouts (339). However, the team has struggled immensely in the field. With several players, such as Dingler, a few players out of position, they have experienced growing pains around the diamond.

"We've been doing pretty good," Beals said. "We're a real solid baseball team. That's our blemish. And we've got to find a way to cover it up, make up for it. We've all got blemishes."

The Buckeyes have committed the most errors in the conference by far. The 68 errors

committed by Ohio State is 12 more than the team with the next highest total – Penn State (56). Illinois has committed the fewest errors with 28 and Minnesota has committed 39, showing Ohio State's defense has been significantly worse than its conference foes.

Prior to the season, Beals decided to move Brady Cherry from third base to second and Conner Pohl from second to third. The two infielders struggled in their transitions around the diamond. Cherry has 11 errors on the season with a .916 fielding percentage. Pohl has 16 errors and an .896 fielding percentage and has since been moved from third base to first. Noah McGowan started the season at first base but has since switched with Pohl and currently starts at the hot corner. McGowan has struggled at times defensively as well, committing 11 errors himself.

The defensive miscues have cost the Buckeyes on many occasions. The pitching staff has allowed 206 runs on the season, but only 152 of them have been earned. The Buckeyes rank eighth in the Big Ten in runs allowed, but fifth in earned runs allowed. Ohio State's 54 unearned runs allowed are the most in the conference.

Despite the defensive issues, Kinker said he has trust in the guys behind him.

"It doesn't really faze me as much as it might a younger person because I've been here for four years," Kinker said. "We've never really been a sound fielding team in my four years, but we make the plays when they need to happen – it's weird."

"But you assume the best out of who's behind you. You trust who's behind you. You have confidence in who's back there because I'm a ground-ball pitcher. I'm going to continuously get them ground balls, so I have confidence in them to make the play."

McGowan's Breakout Year

The Ohio State baseball team has rebounded from a forgettable 22-34 season a year ago with a 28-13 start to 2018. Now 9-6 in the Big Ten, the Buckeyes already have more conference wins than they did when they went 8-16 in 2017.

A big reason for Ohio State's success is the breakout performance of the vastly improved McGowan. After hitting .214 with a modest five home runs and only 19 RBI in 39 games last season, the Houston native looks like a different player in 2018.

McGowan is hitting .385 with eight home runs and is tied with Illinois' Bren Spillane for the most doubles and RBI in the Big Ten with 17 and 48 through April 29, respectively.

McGowan was quite blunt when describing how he felt about the 2017 season, his first in Columbus after transferring from McLennan Community College.

"I just played terrible last year," McGowan said. "That was pretty much it."

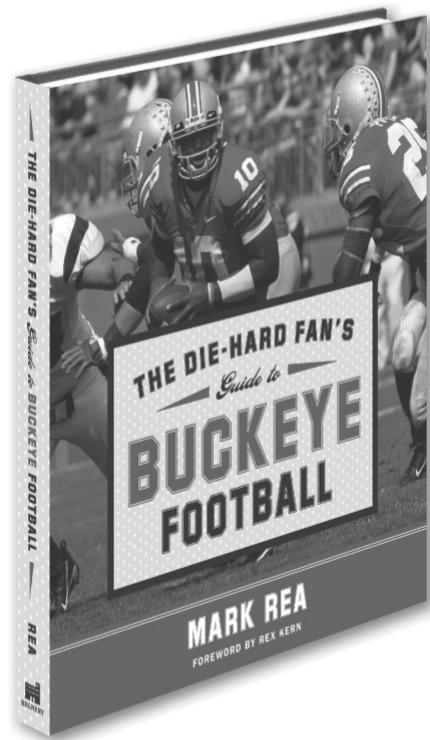
Now 41 games into the 2018 campaign, McGowan is tearing through opposing pitchers and consistently filling up the box score. What has led to this offensive surge?

"This year I just really want to come in and play well and not really try to do too much," McGowan said. "And just have fun playing baseball and enjoying playing baseball in my last year. And I think that is part of the reason I've been successful."

The next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be mailed on June 5. Recaps of OSU baseball games played between now and then will be posted on our BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all BSB print subscribers.

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OSU Takes Finale Of B1G Series With Minnesota

By JOE DEMPSEY
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The Ohio State baseball team hosted Minnesota for a three-game Big Ten series April 27-29, falling in the first two matchups before taking a win in the finale.

The Buckeyes moved to 28-13 overall and 9-6 in the Big Ten after the series. The Golden Gophers (28-12, 11-3 Big Ten) took the opener, 11-1, at Bill Davis Stadium in Columbus before winning 2-1 on April 28. On the third day of the series, the Buckeyes bounced back with a 6-5 victory thanks to a ninth-inning comeback.

Minnesota 11, OSU 1

The Ohio State baseball team fell to No. 21 Minnesota, 11-1, after a shaky start and quiet night at the plate.

The Golden Gophers got on the board in the first on a sacrifice fly by Terrin Vavra before Ohio State answered in the bottom half with an RBI groundout by Conner Pohl, scoring Kobie Foppe and tying the game at 1. The home team appeared to be poised to take the lead when Dillon Dingler drilled a single to left field, but Noah McGowan was out at the plate attempting to score from second.

Pohl dropped a pop-up in foul territory to start the second, and Cole McDevitt capitalized by hitting a solo home run over the fence in left center. Minnesota's Luke Petterson hit a sacrifice fly, scoring Micah Coffey and extending the lead to 3-1.

Vavra led off the third with another Golden Gopher solo shot. Jordan Kozicky hit a bases-loaded single up the middle, driving in two more runs. After a sacrifice bunt, Minnesota had runners on second and third with one out. Alex Boxwell hit a single to center, scoring McDevitt to make it 7-1.

The Golden Gophers did more damage in the sixth, starting with an RBI single by Vavra. McDevitt added an RBI single and Toby Hanson scored on a wild pitch. Kozicky added another RBI, tying him with Vavra for a game-high three RBI and pushing the visitors' lead to 11-1.

Minnesota starter Reggie Meyer shut down the Buckeyes after the first, striking out three and allowing one run on seven hits in eight innings of work. Jake Stevenson finished the game with a scoreless ninth.

Ohio State starter Connor Curlis had a rough start, going three innings and allowing seven runs (five earned) on eight hits with one walk and one hit batter. Austin Woodby was solid in relief, allowing just one hit while striking out three in two innings. Jake Vance finished out the game, allowing four runs on five hits in four innings.

Minnesota 2, OSU 1

Two costly defensive miscues led to Ohio State's second straight loss against the Golden Gophers, 2-1.

"I think it's fair to say we found a way to lose tonight," said Ohio State head coach Greg Beals. "This team has had a knack of finding ways to win. And today we didn't. We found a way to lose, and we lose 2-1 on two unearned runs and two relatively fluke-type error plays."

Dominic Canzone led off the bottom of the first with a single for the Buckeyes. Foppe moved him to second with a sacrifice bunt, and Canzone stole third on the next pitch. With a runner on third and one out,



COURTESY OF OSU ATHLETICS

TIME TO CELEBRATE – The Ohio State baseball team came back to beat Minnesota in walk-off fashion on April 29 after losing the first two games of the series.

McGowan smacked a line drive to right field. McGowan drove it deep enough to allow Canzone to tag up from third and make it 1-0.

With a runner on second and two outs in the fourth, Boxwell hit a hard ground ball to Pohl at first base. A fielding error by Pohl allowed McDevitt to score from second and tie the game at 1-1.

"Our pitcher wins the battle and gets an easy chopper and we don't handle that," Beals said. "And they score from second base on a ball that got hit about 80 feet."

Ohio State starter Ryan Feltner was excellent, striking out nine batters and allowing just one unearned run on eight hits and two walks in seven innings.

The Golden Gophers threatened Feltner in the seventh when Petterson laced a one-out double to left field. Petterson advanced to third on a bunt single and Vavra struck out looking. Feltner walked Eli Wilson on four pitches, and with two outs and the bases loaded, the Hudson, Ohio, native got Hanson to pop up to Foppe to escape the inning.

"I'm comfortable with guys on base, and I know I can get out of any jam," Feltner said. "So a lot of it is just having confidence in my stuff and going out and throwing strikes."

Kyle Michalik relieved Feltner to open the eighth and retired two Golden Gophers with one walk and one strikeout. Griffan Smith came in and put down the final batter in the inning.

Smith came back out for the ninth and allowed a leadoff single to Petterson. After a sacrifice bunt moved Petterson to second, Smith intentionally walked Vavra. Seth Kinker came in to relieve Smith and the Golden Gophers pulled off a double steal. Barnwell's throw to second was mishandled, and Petterson scored the tie-breaking run on the throwing error.

"They scored on a double steal and the ball hits the runner going in, and if our glove gets out in front, it may be an out," Beals

said. "But our glove didn't get out in front and it got to the runner first and the ball squirts out into left field. That's the deciding run."

Minnesota starter Ryan Fredrickson recovered after allowing the first-inning run to strike out seven and allow the one run on eight hits. Max Meyer relieved the freshman in the ninth and got the save despite allowing a walk.

OSU 6, Minnesota 5

The Buckeyes bounced back for a game-three win with a thrilling walk-off infield hit by Dingler.

"That's a really good baseball team, Minnesota is a really good baseball team and they beat us for 26½ innings this week-end and we scratched and clawed and found a way in that ninth inning to win a ballgame," Beals said of the 6-5 victory. "I'm very proud of the toughness that our guys are willing to compete with."

The Buckeyes got on the board first in the bottom of the second. Pohl drew a leadoff walk and Dingler popped out to the pitcher on a failed sacrifice bunt attempt. Cowles drew a walk to move Pohl to second, and Fishel plated Pohl by slicing an RBI single to center.

The Golden Gophers answered in the top of the third with three singles, including a one-out RBI single by Ben Mezzenga. With one down and runners on the corners McGowan made a heads-up play on a ground ball to third by throwing the lead runner out at home. The converted first baseman made another impressive play on a soft grounder for the third out to keep the score at 1-1.

Minnesota opened the fifth inning with three straight hits, a double by Kozicky, a single by Boxwell and a two-run triple by Petterson to take a 3-1 lead. Vavra hit a sacrifice fly, scoring Petterson and pushing the lead to 4-1.

Smith relieved Ohio State starter Adam

Niemeyer to open the sixth inning. Niemeyer finished with six strikeouts and allowed four runs on seven hits in five innings. Smith gave up an RBI double to Hanson to extend the Golden Gophers' lead to 5-1.

The Buckeyes responded in the bottom half with an RBI groundout by Barnwell to plate Cowles. Noah West then came through with a two-out RBI single, scoring Fishel and cutting the deficit to 5-3.

Barnwell led off the bottom of the ninth with a single through the right side on an 0-2 count. Nate Romans pinch hit for West and struck out before Canzone hit a single through the left side. Foppe reached on a fielder's choice that retired Canzone at second. Representing the winning run, McGowan was walked on four pitches to load the bases with two outs. Pohl came up with an RBI single through the left side, scoring Barnwell and cutting the lead to 5-4.

Dingler stepped in and hit an 0-2 pitch directly into the ground, which was fielded by the pitcher. Racing down the first base line Dingler beat the throw to first, and his 6-3, 220-pound frame collided with the first baseman, causing the ball to pop out of his glove. By the time Minnesota picked up the ball McGowan was barreling around third and beat the throw to the plate for the game-winning run.

"Well obviously when I hit it and I saw that it was going fair I was busting down the line and just trying to get there and beat it out," Dingler said. "But I wasn't intentionally doing that of course. It was just the throw kind of brought him over and I was reaching for the bag at the same time, and it just so happened we collided and he dropped it."

The Ohio State baseball team's action for the week April 16 was recapped in the April 24 issue of the electronic BSB Quickly, which is archived on our BuckeyeSports.com website.

BUCKEYE BRIEFS

Men's Tennis Takes Big Ten Title

For the third straight season and 13th time in program history, the Ohio State men's tennis team took the Big Ten tournament title. The top-seeded Buckeyes blew through the field of 11 teams from April 27-29 at the Hawkeye Recreation and Tennis Complex in Iowa City, Iowa, outscoring their competition by a combined score of 12-1 over three matches.

With the tournament championship, OSU (29-2) earns the unanimous Big Ten crown after it won the regular-season title on an 11-0 mark in conference play.

After a first-round bye April 26, Ohio State opened its run April 27 in the quarterfinals against host team and No. 8 seed Iowa. The Buckeyes bounced the Hawkeyes (16-15) in a 4-0 sweep, making quick work with two doubles wins and three singles victories. OSU claimed the doubles point when the duo of senior Mikael Torpegaard and freshman John McNally dropped Will Davies and Piotr Smietana for a 6-3 win, following the 6-2 victory by junior Martin Joyce and sophomore JJ Wolf over Kareem Allaf and Jonas Larsen. Ohio State cruised in singles with wins from Wolf (6-0, 6-0 over Smietana), McNally (6-4, 6-1 against Joe Tyler) and Joyce (6-3, 6-4 vs. Davies).

When the Buckeyes returned to the courts April 28, they carried their momentum into the semifinals for a 4-1 defeat of No. 4 seed Minnesota. OSU barreled past the Golden Gophers (15-8) after it grabbed the doubles point on a 6-2 victory from Joyce and Wolf over Josip Krstanovic and Felix Corwin, followed by a 6-0 win from Torpegaard and McNally against

Justyn Levin and Matic Spec. Singles proved to be a battle when Torpegaard's 6-3, 6-4 loss to Corwin started the string of matches. Ohio State bounced back on Wolf's 7-6 (7-5), 7-5 edge of Spec and junior Hunter Tubert's 6-3, 6-4 triumph over Marino Alpeza. Third-year sophomore Kyle Seelig sealed the deal with his 6-4, 2-6, 6-3 sequence for the victory over Krstanovic.

In the final April 29 against No. 2 seed Illinois, the Buckeyes kept rolling with a 4-0 sweep for an exclamation point of an ending. After the Fighting Illini (21-7) opened the doubles session with Aleks Vukic and Vuk Budic recording a 6-4 edge of Tubert and fifth-year senior Matt Mendez, OSU rallied with wins in the subsequent matches to steal back the momentum. Torpegaard and McNally answered with a 6-3 win over Aleks Kovacevic and Zeke Clark, followed by a 6-4 victory from Joyce and Wolf against Alex Brown and Caleb Chakravarthi to clinch the doubles point. From there, Ohio State cruised in singles. Torpegaard defeated Vukic (6-3, 6-1), Wolf dropped Aron Hiltzik (6-2, 6-3) and McNally downed Brown (6-2, 6-3) to crown the Buckeyes as undisputed conference champions.

OSU now prepares for the NCAA championships, finding out its opponent and destination for the opening round when the selection process for the 64-team field begins May 1 at 6 p.m. Ohio State looks to go the distance in the tournament after it fell 4-2 to Virginia in the semifinals last year.

Women's Tennis Falls Short In Semis

After the Ohio State women's tennis team

took a 4-1 victory in the quarterfinals April 27 against No. 5 seed Purdue, the tables turned for the fourth-seeded Buckeyes in the semifinals and they dropped a 4-1 defeat April 28 to No. 1 seed Northwestern in the Big Ten tournament.

The loss to the Wildcats (21-4), who lost in the final to No. 2 Michigan, leaves OSU (14-8) hoping for an at-large bid to the NCAA championships. Selections for the 64-team bracket are to be announced May 1 at 5 p.m. on NCAA.com.

For the conference tournament, which spanned April 26-29 at Minnesota's Baseline Tennis Center in Minneapolis, Ohio State started strong April 27 with its win over the Boilermakers (14-10). The duo of sophomore Danielle Wolf and freshman Emma DeCoste notched a 6-2 victory against Seira Shimizu and Alex Sabe, and senior Olivia Sneed and freshman Mary Beth Hurley recorded a 6-3 win over Ena Babic and Zala Dvornik for the doubles point. Purdue tied the score at 1-1 to start singles when DeCoste fell 6-1, 6-0 to Shimizu. But the Buckeyes answered with three straight victories from Sneed (6-0, 6-4 over Sabe), red-shirt freshman Shiori Fukuda (6-1, 6-3 against Babic) and senior Anna Sanford (6-3, 2-6, 6-3 vs. Silvia Ambrosio) to take the match.

When OSU returned to the courts the next day, it was unable to knock off Northwestern. In doubles, Ohio State got off on the wrong foot when Wolf and DeCoste dropped a 6-0 match to Julie Byrne and Rheeja Doshi. Sanford and Fukuda fell in a 6-3 defeat to Erin Larner and Maddie Lipp, and the Wildcats clinched the point. Singles started with two losses for the

Buckeyes in the form of defeats from DeCoste (6-1, 6-0 to Byrne) and Hurley (6-1, 6-4 to Doshi). OSU fought back for a brief moment when Sneed put the Buckeyes on the board with a 3-6, 6-2, 6-1 win over Lee Or before the Wildcats pulled away on Alex Chatt's 6-4, 6-4 result against Wolf.

Men's Volleyball Advances In NCAA Tournament

Fresh off the Midwestern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association tournament title, the Ohio State men's volleyball team continued its postseason tear April 26 when the Buckeyes started the NCAA tournament by sweeping King University, 3-0, at St. John Arena in match one of the opening rounds.

The Buckeyes (24-5) defeated the Tornado (23-6), which entered the seven-team field after it won the automatic berth from the Conference Carolinas, in straight sets (25-13, 25-23, 25-18).

OSU advances to match two of the opening rounds May 1 at 8 p.m. against UC Irvine (21-9) at Pauley Pavilion in Los Angeles. The winner of match two advances to the semifinals against No. 1 Long Beach (26-1).

Ohio State's trio of senior outside hitter Nicolas Szerszen (14), redshirt freshman opposite Jake Hanes (12) and junior middle blocker Blake Leeson (11) set the tone with 37 combined kills. Senior outside hitter Maxime Hervoir added five kills, while junior setter Sanil Thomas served up 39 assists to pace the offense.

The Buckeyes dominated with a .528 attacking rate, led by Leeson's clip of .846. In the first set, OSU jumped out to an 8-0 lead before King could get on the board. After Ohio State took the opening set by a 25-13 margin, the Buckeyes came back from a 23-21 deficit and scored the final four points for a 25-23 edge to take the second stanza. OSU polished off the match victory in the third period, breaking an 11-11 tie and going a 14-7 run for a 25-18 result to break out the brooms.

Men's Lacrosse Pulls Off Another Upset

Continuing to click late in the campaign, the Ohio State men's lacrosse team won its third consecutive contest against a ranked opponent April 28 with its 10-7 edge of No. 9 Rutgers.

The Buckeyes beat then-No. 20 Michigan (8-5, April 13), then-No. 1 Maryland (12-10, April 22) and now Rutgers to finish the regular season at 8-6 overall and 3-2 in the Big Ten.

No. 19 OSU's victory over the Scarlet Knights (9-5, 2-3) allowed it to slide into the four-team conference tournament May 3 and 5 in Ann Arbor, Mich., at Michigan's U-M Lacrosse Stadium. No. 3 seed Ohio State, which likely needs to win the Big Ten's automatic berth in order to continue its season in the 17-team NCAA tournament, starts its attempt at a postseason run May 3 at 7:30

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p.m. against No. 2 Johns Hopkins (9-4, 3-2) on Big Ten Network. If the Buckeyes beat the Blue Jays, they would face the winner of No. 1 seed Maryland (11-2, 4-1) vs. No. 4 seed Rutgers in the final May 5 at 7 p.m. on Big Ten Network.

"I'm thankful to be able to have the chance to spend more time together with this team," said head coach Nick Myers. "To have the opportunity to head into the postseason playing some of our best lacrosse is really special. It's exciting and I think it energizes all of us."

To reach the Big Ten tournament, OSU needed to bring its best against Rutgers before 1,845 in attendance on Senior Day at Ohio Stadium in Columbus.

Freshman midfielder Jackson Reid paced the offense with three goals, followed by senior attackman Colin Chell's two scores and five others with a goal each to round out the charge. On defense, sophomore goalie Josh Kirson made nine saves and improved to 3-2 since he became the starter late in the season. The Scarlet and Gray owned double-digit advantages in shots (35-21), ground balls (26-16) and faceoffs (18-3).

Ohio State opened with two goals, from senior defenseman Erik Evans (12:16) and Chell (10:58), for a 2-0 edge in the first five minutes. The Buckeyes traded goals with the Knights throughout the rest of the half for a 4-3 lead at the break.

When action resumed in the third quarter, OSU pulled away with four straight goals and took an 8-4 advantage into the final 10 minutes. In the fourth quarter, Reid and Chell chipped in goals and Ohio State held off Rutgers for the 10-7 final.

"We've been close as a class since we got here," said Evans, who made his 55th consecutive start in the home finale. "It's a special group of guys and something to take advantage of when you have it. We're trying to make the most of every moment."

Men's Golf Finishes 2nd At B1G Championships

At the Big Ten championships on April

27-29, the Ohio State men's golf team recorded a score of 851 at 11-over par for second place out of 14 teams. It was the Buckeyes' best finish at the conference tournament in 15 years, but they were unable to knock off first-place Illinois at 836 and 4-under par at Baltimore Country Club in Baltimore.

Junior Will Grimmer paced OSU with a total of 211 (70, 69, 72) for fourth place – his second straight top-five finish after his runner-up performance in 2017. Sophomore Jed Coughlin finished tied for 10th with a score of 214 (67, 70, 77) and junior Daniel Wetterich compiled a result of 215 (73, 68, 74) in a tie for 15th.

In the battle between Ohio State and the Fighting Illini, the Buckeyes took a 279-281 edge after round one. Illinois answered in round two with a 268-271 edge to leave it one shot ahead of OSU, netting a 287-301 advantage in round three to secure the title.

After it lost out on the Big Ten's automatic bid, Ohio State hopes an at-large berth comes its way May 2 at 6 p.m. on the NCAA Men's Golf Selection Show on the Golf Channel.

Softball Secures Sweep On Senior Day

The Ohio State softball team swept Maryland in three games April 27-29 at Buckeye Field in Columbus, extending its winning streak to six.

In the April 29 finale, the Buckeyes (32-11, 13-6 Big Ten) honored seven seniors after their 5-2 win over the Terrapins (18-33, 7-13). OSU recognized catcher Becca Gavin, first baseman Ashley Goodwin, infielder Maddie Marotti, pitcher Shelby McCombs, left fielder Bailee Sturgeon, first baseman Alex Vargas and center fielder Taylor White.

After three scoreless innings, Ohio State took a 2-0 lead on Gavin's two-run double to center field in the bottom of the fourth. Maryland evened the score in the top of the fifth on a two-run double of its own, but the Buckeyes answered with three runs on three hits in the bottom frame for the difference. McCombs, who improved to 15-4 on the sea-

son with four hits and two runs in 5½ innings pitched, helped her own cause at the plate with a two-run double to left center that made it 4-2. Junior second baseman Emily Clark's double to left center drove in Amy Balich, who pinch ran for McCombs, for a 5-2 lead before junior Morgan Ray relieved her in the circle with a perfect 1½ innings pitched to seal the victory. OSU was limited to six hits but made them count late.

The first two games of the series provided much more of a punch at the plate for Ohio State, which opened with a 13-5 victory in six innings April 27 and followed with a 9-5 triumph April 28. In the opener, the Buckeyes had 14 hits and tied a single-game program record with five home runs. Freshman third baseman Niki Carver, junior shortstop Lilli Piper, Clark and McCombs each belted two-run blasts while Goodwin added a solo shot. Ray improved to 16-6 in the circle with five runs (two earned) on five hits and six strikeouts to four walks in five innings pitched. McCombs closed out with a perfect sixth inning for her second save of the season.

The middle contest was more of the same. McCombs was in the circle and went the distance, yielding five runs (four earned) and scattering seven hits with two strikeouts to two walks for the win. OSU tallied eight hits at the plate, led by Clark's two-run home run – her second in as many days – in the bottom of the first for a 2-0 edge. Ohio State added a two-run burst in the third and a five-run frenzy in the fourth, paving the way for the 9-5 final.

Track & Field Completes Regular Season

At the Drake Relays in Des Moines, Iowa, the Ohio State track and field team completed its final meet of the regular season with strong finishes on both sides of the April 27-28 action. The women finished with 27 points for second out of 23 teams, while the men tallied 18 points and tied Illinois for third among 21 teams. Purdue (31 points) won the women's competition and Iowa (32 points) paced the men's field. Both squads for the Buckeyes begin the

postseason at the Big Ten championships from May 11-13.

Ohio State started the action April 26 when senior Courtney Clody secured second place in the unseeded women's 800-meter run, clocking a time of 2:08.70.

The Buckeyes began April 27 with sophomore Taylor DeLoach's first-place finish in the women's long jump, leaping 6.14 meters. Junior DaJuan Seward earned second in the men's triple jump at 15.35 meters. On both sides of the 200-meter dash, OSU was among the top times. Freshman Eric Harrison Jr. won the men's event with a personal-best time of 20.59 seconds, while senior Maggie Barrie was second on the women's side with a readout of 23.20 seconds. In the distance events, junior Julia Rizk (4:25.22) raced to first place in the women's 1,500-meter run and senior Kevin Plank (3:47.30) placed second in the men's 1,500-meter run. The women's 4x800 relay team of freshman Aziza Ayoub, senior Olivia Smith, Clody and sophomore Annie Ubbing placed second on a time of 8:41.48 to round out the action.

On the last day, senior Zack Bazile began the events with his distance of 7.70 meters to take first place in the long jump. In the 100-meter dash, freshman Anavia Battle (11.60 seconds) won the women's competition and Harrison Jr. (10.74) placed second on the men's side. In hurdles, senior Chantel Ray raced to second place with a time of 13.41 in the women's 100-meter hurdles, and Seward finished in third place after a personal-best readout of 13.94 seconds in the men's 110-meter hurdles. Sophomore Annie Ubbing added a title after a time of 2:07.92 in the women's 800-meter run, while sophomore Alex Lomong logged a readout of 1:49.88 for second in the men's 800-meter run.

To close out the competition, the women's 4x100-meter squad of junior Bliss Soleyn, Battle, Ray and Barrie placed second with a time of 45.02 seconds. On the men's side, the 4x100-meter group of freshman Tavonte Motte, Harrison Jr., senior Duan Asemota and Bazile won with a readout of 39.69 seconds.

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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL

Sept. 1 OREGON STATE, TBA; **8** RUTGERS, TBA; **15** vs. TCU at Arlington, Texas, TBA; **22** TULANE, TBA; **29** at Penn State, TBA.

Oct. 6 INDIANA, TBA; **13** MINNESOTA, TBA; **20** at Purdue, TBA.

Nov. 3 NEBRASKA, TBA; **10** at Michigan State, TBA; **17** at Maryland, TBA; **24** MICHIGAN, TBA.

BASEBALL

(28-13, 9-6 BIG TEN)

Feb. 16 Snowbird Classic at Port Charlotte, Fla., vs. UW-Milwaukee, W 11-7; vs. Canisius, W 6-4; **17** Snowbird classic at Port Charlotte, Fla., vs. Canisius, L 5-4; **18** Snowbird Classic at Port Charlotte, Fla., vs. UW-Milwaukee, W 13-3; **22** Big Ten/Pac-12 Challenge at Surprise, Ariz., vs. Utah, W 7-2; **23** Big Ten/Pac-12 Challenge at Surprise, Ariz., vs. (2) Oregon State, L 10-8; **24** Big Ten/Pac-12 Challenge at Surprise, Ariz., vs. Utah, W 20-13; **25** Big Ten/Pac-12 Challenge at Surprise, Ariz., vs. (2) Oregon State, L 6-1.

March 2 Cox Diamond Invitational at Pensacola, Fla., vs. Nicholls State, W 6-3; **3** Cox Diamond Invitational at Pensacola, Fla., vs. (16) Southern Miss, W 9-6; **4** Cox Diamond Invitational at Pensacola, Fla., vs. Eastern Michigan, L 6-1; **9** Environmental Staffing Chanticleer Classic at Conway, S.C., vs. High Point, W 8-6; **10** Environmental Staffing Chanticleer Classic at Conway, S.C., vs. High Point, L 8-4; at (21) Coastal Carolina, L 10-8; **11** Environmental Staffing Chanticleer Classic at Conway, S.C., at (21) Coastal Carolina, W 7-5; **13-14** at UNC-Wilmington, W 8-3; W 8-1; **16** CSUN, W 2-1.; **18** CSUN W 11-6; W 7-3; **21** EASTERN MICHIGAN, Canceled; **23-25** GEORGETOWN, W 13-5; L 5-1; W 5-4 (10 innings); **28** TOLEDO, W 19-4; **30-April 1** NEBRASKA, L 7-3; W 7-4; W 15-14.

April 4 KENT STATE, Canceled; **7** at Iowa, W 2-1; L 9-5; **8** at Iowa, L 2-1; **10** OHIO, W 4-0; **13** at Penn State, W 1-0; **14** at Penn State W 5-1; W 19-8; **17** MIAMI (OHIO), Canceled; **18** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 12-3; **20-22** (8) INDIANA, L 4-0; W 5-4; W 6-5 (12 innings); **27-29** (21) MINNESOTA, L 11-1; L 2-1; W 6-5.

May 2 at Ball State, 3 p.m.; **4-6** at Illinois, 7 p.m.; 4 p.m.; 2 p.m.; **8-9** CAMPBELL, 6:35 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; **11-13** PURDUE, 6:35 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.; **15** at Cincinnati, 11 a.m.; **17-19** at Michigan State, 4:05 p.m.; 4:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.; **23-27** Big Ten Tournament at Omaha, Neb.

MEN'S GOLF

Feb. 9-10 Big Ten Match Play Championship at Palm Coast, Fla., W 5-1/W 4-3; L 6-0/W 6-0; **18-20** Puerto Rico Classic at Rio Grande, Puerto Rico, 10th/15 (882).

March 18-20 Linger Longer Invitational at Greensboro, Ga., 4th/16 (861).

April 14-15 Boilermaker Invitational at West Lafayette, Ind., T-14th/17 (598) – Final round cancelled; **21-22** ROBERT KEPLER INTERCOLLEGIATE, 4th/16 (869); **27-29** Big Ten Championships at Baltimore, 2nd/14 (851).

May 14-16 NCAA REGIONAL; **25-30** NCAA Championships at Stillwater, Okla.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Feb. 11-13 Northrop Grumman Regional Challenge at Palos Verdes, Calif., 17th/18 (922); **25-26** Westbrook Spring Invitational at Peoria, Ariz., 2nd/15 (840).

March 16-18 Clover Cup at Mesa, Ariz., 4th/16 (882); **23-25** Clemson Invitational at Sunset, S.C., 5th/15 (864).

April 14-15 LADY BUCKEYE SPRING INVITATIONAL, 7th/14 (598) – Final round cancelled; **20-22** Big Ten Championships at Cincinnati, T-4th/14 (865).

May 7-9 NCAA Regional; **18-23** NCAA Championships at Stillwater, Okla.

MEN'S LACROSSE

(8-6, 3-2 BIG TEN)

Feb. 3 at Cleveland State, W 13-6; **10** (20) BOSTON UNIVERSITY, W 15-9; **17** HOFSTRA, W 9-7; **25** at Jacksonville, W 12-11 (OT).

March 2 Midwest Lacrosse Classic at Detroit vs. (18) Marquette, L 8-7 (OT); **4** Midwest Lacrosse Classic at Detroit vs. Detroit Mercy, W 8-7; **10** TOWSON, L 7-6 (OT); **17** at (6) Denver, L 12-7; **25** (4) NOTRE DAME, L 9-8; **31** PENN STATE, L 12-4.

April 7 at (6) Johns Hopkins, L 13-10; **13** (20) MICHIGAN, W 8-5; **22** at (1) Maryland, W 12-10; **28** RUTGERS, W 10-7.

May 3 Big Ten Tournament Semifinals at Ann Arbor, Mich., TBA; **5** Big Ten Tournament Finals at Ann Arbor, Mich., TBA.

SOFTBALL

(32-11, 13-6 BIG TEN)

Feb. 9 FAU "First Pitch" Classic at Boca Raton, Fla., vs. NIU, W 9-1 (6 innings); vs. Duke, W 5-2; **10** FAU "First Pitch" Classic at Boca Raton, Fla., at Florida Atlantic, W 10-1; vs. NIU, W 10-2; **11** FAU "First Pitch" Classic at Boca Raton, Fla., vs. Boston University, W 3-2 (8 innings). **16** Big Ten/ACC Challenge at Raleigh, N.C., at N.C. State, L 5-4 (8 innings); **17** Big Ten/ACC Challenge at Raleigh, N.C., vs. Louisville, W 6-5 (9 innings); at N.C. State, W 5-4 (8 innings); **18** Big Ten/ACC Challenge at Raleigh, N.C., vs. Louisville, W 4-0; **23** Texas Invitational at Austin, Texas, vs. Virginia Tech, canceled (rain); vs. Wichita State, W 4-3; **24** Texas Invitational at Austin, Texas, at Texas, W 8-5; vs. Wichita State, W 9-0 (5 innings).

March 9 Louisville Slugger

Invitational at Fullerton, Calif., vs. San Diego State, W 7-0; **10** Louisville Slugger Invitational at Fullerton, Calif., vs. San Jose State, W 6-3 (8 innings); **11** Louisville Slugger Invitational at Fullerton, Calif., vs. UCLA, L 11-0 (5 innings); at Cal State Fullerton, W 3-1; **13** at Loyola Marymount, W 2-1 (8 innings); W 7-0; **14** at CSUN, W 5-1; **16** Easton Invitational at Fullerton, Calif., vs. Grand Canyon, L 7-6; at Cal State Fullerton, W 6-2; **17** Easton Invitational at Fullerton, Calif., vs. CSUN, W 4-2; **18** Easton Invitational at Fullerton, Calif., vs. (5) Oklahoma, L 5-0; **23** at Indiana, L 6-0; L 9-3; **25** at Indiana, L 4-1; **28** KENTUCKY, Postponed; **30-April 1** WISCONSIN, W 9-7; L 3-1; W 7-0.

April 6-8 at Rutgers, W 12-3 (6 innings); W 6-2; W 10-3; **11** PENN STATE, W 9-1 (6 innings); W 7-4; **13** at Northwestern, L 10-2 (6 innings); **15** at Northwestern, L 14-6 (6 innings; game three cancelled); **18** OHIO, L 7-0; **20-22** MICHIGAN STATE, W 10-2 (5 innings); W 6-2; W 6-5; **27-29** MARYLAND, W 13-5 (6 innings); W 9-5; W 5-2.

May 2 PITTSBURGH, 6 p.m.; **4-6** at Michigan, 6 p.m.; 1 p.m.; 6 p.m.; **10-12** Big Ten Tournament at Madison, Wis.; **18-20** NCAA Regionals; **24-27** NCAA Super Regionals; **31-June 6** College World Series at Oklahoma City, Okla.

MEN'S TENNIS

(29-2, 11-0 BIG TEN)

Jan. 20 XAVIER, W 7-0; CLEVELAND STATE, W 4-0; **27** ITA KICKOFF WEEKEND vs. YALE, W 4-0; **28** ITA KICKOFF WEEKEND vs. NORTH FLORIDA, W 4-0; TOLEDO, W 5-0.

Feb. 3 (13) TEXAS, W 4-0; **9** (6) TEXAS A&M, W 4-3; **11** (11) FLORIDA, W 5-2; **16** ITA National Team Indoor Championship at Seattle vs. (20) Duke, W 4-0; **17** ITA National Team Indoor Championship at Seattle vs. (7) UCLA, L 4-1; **18** ITA National Team Indoor Championship at Seattle vs. (3) North Carolina, W 4-3; **25** at (17) Notre Dame, W 5-2; **28** PENN STATE, W 7-0.

March 7 at (21) Georgia, L 4-0; **13** at (11) USC, W 4-3; **14** vs. Arizona State at Los Angeles, W 4-2; **23** at Michigan State, W 7-0; **25** (8) MICHIGAN, W 6-1; **30** at Minnesota, W 5-2.

April 1 at Wisconsin, W 6-1; **4** at (22) Kentucky, W 4-2; **6** IOWA, W 4-0; **8** NEBRASKA, W 7-0; TOLEDO, W 4-0; **14** (6) ILLINOIS, W 4-0; **15** NORTHWESTERN, W 7-0; **20** at Indiana, W 5-2; **22** at Purdue, W 4-0; **27** Big Ten Tournament at Iowa City, Iowa, vs. Iowa, W 4-0; **28** Big Ten Tournament at Iowa City, Iowa, vs. Minnesota, W 4-1; **29** Big Ten Tournament at Iowa City, Iowa, vs. (8) Illinois, W 4-0.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

(14-8, 7-4 BIG TEN)

Jan. 19-21 Miami Spring Invite with Vanderbilt, Kentucky, Miami (Fla.), NTS; **26** ITA KICKOFF WEEKEND vs. KANSAS,

W 4-1; **27** ITA KICKOFF WEEKEND CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH vs. WAKE FOREST, L 4-2

Feb. 1 KENTUCKY, W 4-1; **4** NOTRE DAME, W 6-1; **22** at Penn State, W 7-0; **25** (22) ARIZONA STATE, W 4-3.

March 2 at Baylor, L 4-1; **4** at (18) Texas, L 4-0; **7** NEBRASKA, L 4-3; **13** DAYTON, W 6-1; BOWLING GREEN, W 7-0; **25** at Iowa, W 6-1; **30** MICHIGAN, L 4-3.

April 1 MICHIGAN STATE, W 5-2; **6** at Minnesota, L 4-3; **8** at Wisconsin, W 5-2; **13** at Indiana, W 6-1; **15** at Purdue, W 5-2; **20** (15) ILLINOIS, W 4-3; **22** (12) NORTHWESTERN, L 4-2; **27** Big Ten Tournament at Minneapolis vs. Purdue, W 4-1; **28** Big Ten Tournament at Minneapolis vs. (12) Northwestern, L 4-1.

OUTDOOR TRACK & FIELD

March 16-17 UCF Invite at Orlando, Fla., NTS; **23-24** Power 5 Trailblazer Challenge at Los Angeles, Men: 1st/5 (152); Women: 3rd/5 (103); **30** Raleigh Relays at Raleigh, N.C., NTS.

April 5-7 Jim Click Invite at Tucson, Ariz., Men: 3rd/6 (113); Women: 6th/6 (83); **12-14** Tennessee Invite at Knoxville, Tenn., NTS; **20-21** JESSE OWENS CLASSIC, NTS; **27-28** Drake Relays at Des Moines, Iowa, Men: T-3rd/21; Women: 2nd/23.

May 11-13 Big Ten Championships at Bloomington, Ind.; **24-26** NCAA East Preliminaries at Tampa, Fla.

June 6/8 NCAA Championships at Eugene, Ore.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

(24-5, 11-3 MIVA)

Jan. 6 NORTH GREENVILLE, W 3-0; **12** STANFORD, W 3-1; **13** (6) BYU, L 3-2; **18** Big Ten/Pac-12 Challenge vs. (13) USC at Los Angeles, W 3-1; **20** Big Ten/Pac-12 Challenge vs. (2) UCLA at Los Angeles, L 3-2; **25** SAINT FRANCIS (Pa.), W 3-0; **28** PENN STATE, W 3-0.

Feb. 2 at Charleston (W.Va.), W 3-0; **3** at George Mason, W 3-0; **8** BALL STATE, W 3-2; **10** FORT WAYNE, W 3-0; **15** LINDENWOOD, W 3-0; **18** QUINCY, W 3-0; **22** at (9) Lewis, L 3-0; **24** at (8) Loyola, L 3-2.

March 2-3 at McKendree, W 3-1; W 3-0; **16** at Penn State, W 3-2; **17** at Saint Francis (Pa.), W 3-0; **23** at Quincy, W 3-0; **25** at Lindenwood, W 3-2; **29** (6) LOYOLA, W 3-1; **31** (10) LEWIS, W 3-0.

April 6 at Fort Wayne, W 3-0; **7** at Ball State, L 3-2; **14** MIVA QUARTERFINALS vs. QUINCY, W 3-0; **18** MIVA SEMIFINALS vs. LEWIS, W 3-2; **21** MIVA FINALS vs. LOYOLA-CHICAGO, W 3-0; **26** NCAA TOURNAMENT OPENING ROUND MATCH 1 vs. KING, W 3-0.

May 1 NCAA Tournament Opening Round Match 2 at Los Angeles vs. UC Irvine, 8 p.m.; **3** NCAA Tournament Semifinals at Los Angeles, 8 p.m.; **5** NCAA Tournament Finals at Los Angeles, 7 p.m.



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Passion, Toughness Defined Bruce On And Off The Field

This August would have been 50 years of my association with Coach Earle Bruce. I knew Earle first as a player, then as an assistant coach, and even later as a fellow football analyst for 610 WTVN.

COACH'S CORNER With Bill Conley

When asked to describe Earle as a position coach, words like passionate, tough and intense come to mind. As a matter of fact, the same words can also describe him as a head coach and as a football analyst behind the microphone. As most coaches, he demanded perfection on every technique and every play. Most of all, he expected his players to play physical, win the battle in the trenches, and never let up. He expected his coaches to be good teachers and good recruiters, and to be responsible for their players' actions on and off the field. That's a sure formula for success and for winning championships; Earle Bruce was a winner and a champion.

Earle Bruce truly loved Ohio State. Coach Wes Fesler recruited him as a scholarship running back. He played his freshman year but got hurt in August practice prior to his first season of varsity competition. Earle Bruce could never play the sport he loved after that injury.

Ohio State's new head coach, Woody Hayes, demanded he get an education and kept him on scholarship. Woody even had Earle serve as a student coach to keep him involved in the game and work toward his degree. Ironically, it would be Earle Bruce, nearly thirty years later, who would take over for his mentor as head coach of the Ohio State Buckeyes.

Earle loved being the head coach of his alma mater and everything that came with it. He always reminded everyone of the many traditions associated with the program such as senior tackle, the "Horseshoe," the gold pants, the marching band and, most importantly, the great rivalry against the "team up north." The team which he held a winning record over, and a team he would coach his last game at Ohio State against.

Just like in his coaching, Earle Bruce handled his unjustified firing like a champion. He fought through all the emotions of this untimely action by staying focused on the task at hand – beating Michigan. He wouldn't let us coaches and players get sidetracked. It was

business as usual. Earle coached hard that game but the players played even harder that November day in Ann Arbor, Mich. They were not going to let the man they respected so much go out losing to the greatest rival of them all. The "Earle" headbands were the symbol that the Buckeyes used to show support for their coach, but the way they played is now legendary. They took on the character of the man himself as they played with toughness, determination and Buckeye pride.

Earle Bruce had every justification to turn his back on the university that mistreated him, but he had too much class for that. He not only would return to Columbus when his final coaching days were over but embraced Ohio State University once more. He became a great ambassador for the school, a mentor for future head coaches and a great friend to all of us. He had come up through the ranks as a former Ohio high school coach, and those coaches knew they always had an ally in Earle Bruce. Under that hard shell that Earle displayed was a man of compassion for others.

A great family man who truly adored his wife, Jean, and his wonderful daughters. He never showed arrogance or selfishness and was as honest as the day is long. He wasn't always the most diplomatic of individuals, but you always knew where he stood. Earle Bruce stood for all the right things in coaching and in life itself.

Need For Speed

Perhaps the biggest news coming out of the spring scrimmage this year is the fact the Buckeye squad that takes the field this fall may be actually the fastest and most explosive team ever at Ohio State, at least on the offensive side of the football. The running back and wide receiver units are made up of athletes who can burst through the line of scrimmage or catch a short pass then turn it into a big play. It is true the defense was limited on what they were allowed to do during the scrimmage, but they also were given the benefit of the doubt with the tag for a tackle rule and don't touch the black shirts at quarterback. No matter the rules, speed is speed and the offense displayed plenty of that all day long. Although starting running back Mike Weber had only one carry, he went 63 yards and took it down inside the 5-yard line. The trio of Weber, J.K. Dobbins and freshman Master Teague give the Buckeyes depth to go along with the speed factor.

Especially impressive was the maturity and emergence of several newer faces to the

receiver corps. Parris Campbell is already known for his athleticism and acceleration, so he was used sparingly in the scrimmage, but he still hauled in four passes for 40 yards. Binjimen Victor is quickly becoming a go-to guy. His 91 yards are just a taste of things to come. The real star of the scrimmage as a receiver was Demario McCall. He showed his versatility by playing multiple positions, and his big-time potential was displayed when two of his 11 receptions went for 50- and 42-yard touchdowns. Add in Austin Mack and Jaylen Harris to the mix and, just as at running back, you've got speed and numbers.

Quarterback Dilemma

Most of the talk the entire spring boiled down to who will be the starting quarterback. Tate Martell is an athletic zone-read quarterback who is quick and a definite run threat especially in the red zone. He is limited, however, in his ability as far as the passing game is concerned. Due to his height, he is limited to quick passes, crossing patterns between the hashes or the sprint-out passing game that ties in with his running ability. The trouble with sprint-out passes is you have a restricted area to throw and the passes have to leave the quarterback's hands in a timely manner. As talented as Tate Martell is, I do not believe he's really in the mix to be a starter. He can, however, be given a special package of plays to be used in given situations and in specific areas of the field.

Dwayne Haskins has the strongest arm of all. He displays the ability to put the football in tight places and to throw it downfield. He is not as good a runner as his competition for the position, but he has proved the ability to pull the ball down when necessary in the heat of battle. Perhaps his biggest advantage is the fact he has the most game experience and has proved worthy when called upon. The players have seemed to respond to his presence on the field.

Joe Burrow is the most versatile of the three quarterbacks. He has a good arm, makes good decisions the majority of the time, and can make yards with his feet when stepping up or bouncing out of the pocket. He is steadily improving in terms of accuracy and timing, and like Haskins, his teammates seem to have confidence in his leadership. The dilemma for Burrow is how long will he wait to find out if he is the starter. He has the ability to go to another big-time program and play right away, thus enhancing his chances of playing at the next level.

The final choice for the coaching staff will probably center around the intangibles each man possesses – elements we have mentioned such as leadership, making the right decisions, handling pressure, and the confidence the players and staff have in them. Urban Meyer would love to go into the season with all three quarterbacks, but part of the decision is not

his to make. If Haskins or Burrow doesn't get the nod soon, it may lead to a major distraction going into August camp, and no head coach wants that situation.

Offensive Line

The offensive line is a work in progress and always will be, and it has little to do with talent. What I mean by that is that defensive linemen are generally quicker and more athletic, and they are constantly moving. Just check out the times of the various NFL combine events – defensive linemen score better than offensive linemen time wise on the sprints and shuttle drills. Defenses incorporate a scheme of various line stunts, twists, slants and angles in order to make it tough on offensive linemen who have to win their battles physically as well as mentally.

The key to the offensive line puzzle is to make the pieces fit – getting the players in the right position. Two solid centers in Brady Taylor and Josh Myers are fighting to replace Billy Price at that spot. It's also imperative that the Buckeyes determine who starts at left tackle, the guy who protects the quarterback's back side. Isaiah Prince and Thayer Munford appear to be the starting tackles, but who will hold down that coveted left tackle position has yet to be determined.

Defensive Expectations

Probably the biggest area of recruiting significance since Urban Meyer came to the helm at Ohio State is the emphasis on the quality number of talented defensive linemen. The ability to rotate fresh and quick defensive linemen into the game is devastating to opposing offensive lines. Despite losing players such as Sam Hubbard, Jalyn Holmes, and Tyquan Lewis, there are more than adequate replacements. If the spring scrimmage was any indication, Chase Young can be a special player. Buckeye quarterbacks are lucky they were off limits to getting hit during the spring game or Young would have had a field day. Young, Dre'Mont Jones, Nick Bosa and Robert Landers are four guys who have the talent to be dominant up front in 2018 – a common theme the past few seasons.

The secondary and linebacking corps look to be on solid footing with good quickness and athleticism, but it will be tough to replace Damon Webb as a leader and as a playmaker. Jordan Fuller and Isaiah Pryor appear to be ready to answer the call at safety. Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield were impressive in man-to-man coverage at corner in the scrimmage, and with Jeffrey Okudah coming back from shoulder surgery, the secondary should be solid. Like the case with Okudah, Tuf Borland missed spring practice with an injury, so the reps went to guys like Baron Browning and Pete Werner who combined for 10 touch tackles in the scrimmage. All in all a more than respectable afternoon for a defense that was handcuffed most of the afternoon.

Bruce's Legend Has Little To Do With Coaching Record

Earle Bruce is a Buckeye legend. No. His record doesn't say it. Bruce was a good coach, not a great one, at Ohio State.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

He was 81-26-1 in nine seasons, averaging just under three losses a year. His best team was his first, taking an 11-0 record to the Rose Bowl before losing to USC and finishing fourth nationally.

Never again did a Bruce team finish in the top five nationally. He never won a Rose Bowl. He won two Big Ten titles outright, and his teams were co-champions two other times. Importantly, he had a winning record (5-4) against Michigan.

By today's standards, standards raised considerably by the work of Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer, Bruce's record wasn't great at Ohio State. It was good.

But Bruce is a legend because of the complete package – most notably when it came to Ohio State, but also when it came to anything that had to do with football.

After Ohio State fired Bruce near the end of the 1987 season, he didn't quit. He coached at lesser programs – Northern Iowa and Colorado State – for five more years.

The last time I talked to Bruce, he was coaching the Cleveland Thunderbolts in the Arena Football League back in 1994. You would have thought he was getting ready for an Ohio State-Michigan game based on the passion in his voice.

Earle Bruce loved football – football at any level.

Bruce called it quits in 1996 at the age of 65 after two more seasons in the Arena Football League with the St. Louis Stampede.

That's when Buckeye Nation really got to know Bruce, lover of the Buckeyes and the game of football. He gave impassioned speeches to the players before Michigan games. He poured out his heart with evaluations of games on the radio. He wasn't afraid to say when he thought

the Buckeyes needed to play harder and smarter.

As a coach decades earlier – while some might have questioned his success – there was no questioning his commitment to his players, the game of football or Ohio State University.

He was in his third season as coach when Buckeye Sports Bulletin began publishing in 1981. He was the first coach above the high school level I ever covered.

I probably didn't realize it in 1981, or over the next few years. But looking back, he really was a model example for a college coach, carrying himself with integrity and doing what he thought was right for his players, assistant coaches, school and fans (even if he did fire a young assistant named Nick Saban after that 1981 season).

The example for his commitment to his team that I remember most was from 1983. The Buckeyes blew a late lead and lost on the road to Illinois, 17-13 – OSU's first loss to Illinois since 1967.

Many of the old Big Ten stadiums, at least then, had very limited space for locker rooms and media areas.

So while Bruce was giving a postgame talk at a heartbreaking time to his team in one corner of the locker room, the small group of traveling media from Ohio was in another corner. Bruce noticed the eavesdropping. Considering his talk a private matter with his team, Bruce angrily ordered the media away.

A little while later, Bruce calmly answered the typical postgame media questions until Tim May of the Dispatch noted that we really couldn't hear clearly what he was telling his team. May asked Bruce to summarize the talk. Bruce exploded. That was the end of the postgame Q&A.

Bruce wasn't picking a fight, or really even being rude. He was showing the sensitivity he had for his private relationship with his players.

It's no wonder that when Bruce was fired before the 1987 Michigan game, band members went to his front yard to perform and players donned "Earle" headbands for the Michigan game in support of their coach and in defiance of the school's sloppy work in firing Bruce.

Thirty-one years later, Buckeye Nation lost a legend when Earle Bruce died at the age of 87.

The All-Bruce Team

My favorite players from the Earle Bruce era are Art Schlichter, Keith Byars, Chris Spielman and John Frank. But there are many others worth noting, some who starred on the field and some who didn't.

Below are the 51 players from Bruce's OSU teams who went on to be drafted into the NFL:

- 1980 – Jim Laughlin, Mike Guess and Ken Fritz.
- 1981 – Doug Donley, Al Washington, Todd Bell, Calvin Murray, Keith Ferguson, Vince Skillings, Robert Murphy and Ray Ellis.
- 1982 – Art Schlichter, Anthony Griggs and Bob Atha.
- 1983 – Jerome Foster, Gary Williams, Joe Lukens and Tim Spencer.
- 1984 – William Roberts, John Frank, Rowland Tatum, Shaun Gayle and Thad Jemison.
- 1985 – Jim Lachey, Kirk Lowdermilk and Mark Krerowicz.
- 1986 – Keith Byars, Pepper Johnson, Byron Lee and Larry Kolic.
- 1987 – Sonny Gordon, Jamie Holland, Scott Leach, Jim Karsatos and Cris Carter.
- 1988 – Eric Kumerow, Chris Spielman, Alex Higdon, Tom Tupa, William White, George Cooper, Ray Jackson and Henry Brown.
- 1989 – Jeff Uhlenhake, Vince Workman,

Derek MacCready and Everett Ross (juniors on Bruce's last team in 1987).

- 1990 – Jeff Davidson, Joe Staysniak and Tim Moxley (sophomores on Bruce's last team in 1987).
- 1991 – Vinnie Clark (a freshman on Bruce's last team in 1987).

Logo In Campaign Literature

Almost anyone who follows Ohio State knows how aggressively the school protects the use of its logo. But OSU apparently took a pass recently when questioned about photos former Buckeye Anthony Gonzalez used in his campaign literature as a Republican candidate for a northeast Ohio congressional seat.

A Gonzalez campaign mailing showed him in an Ohio State uniform with Ohio State and Nike logos, and the recognizable Buckeye leaves on his helmet. University officials contacted by Andrew Tobias of cleveland.com declined to say whether Gonzalez sought permission to use such photos or whether they have declined similar requests in the past, Tobias reported.

The story also noted that records show OSU Athletic Director Gene Smith gave Gonzalez a \$2,500 campaign donation in August.

The University of Michigan's policy, Tobias reported, states that "as a general principle, candidates for office and political organizations" may not use its trademarks," citing the school's tax-exempt, nonprofit status, and may not use terms such as "Go Blue" or "Hail to Michigan" in campaign signs or posters.

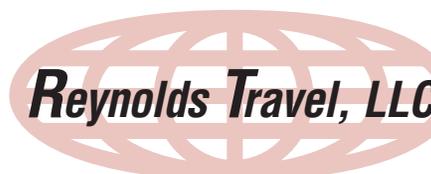


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- Ohio State vs. Penn State: Sept. 28-30** – 2-night motorcoach trip to State College/Bedford Springs area with 2 nights hotel at the Omni Bedford Springs Resort in Bedford County, Pa., with breakfast daily and game tickets. See website.
- Ohio State vs. Purdue: Oct. 19-21** – 2-night motorcoach trip to Indianapolis/West Lafayette, Ind., with hotel accommodations at the new Drury Inn located in Carmel, Ind., with breakfast daily and Drury Inn's famous "kick-back party" on Friday night with game tickets. Pricing on website
- Ohio State vs. Michigan State: Nov. 9-11** – 2-night motorcoach trip to Mt. Pleasant/East Lansing

- Mich., with accommodation at the Soaring Eagle Casino Resort and Hotel in Mt. Pleasant with daily meal allowance and casino credit and game tickets. See website for pricing.
- Ohio State vs. Maryland: Nov. 15-18** – 3-night motorcoach trip (or land only) to Washington, DC/College Park, Md., with accommodations at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Georgetown with breakfast daily and full day of DC touring on Friday and game tickets. Pricing and inclusions on website.
- Macy's Day Parade Package for TBDBITL First Ever Parade Performance: Nov. 21-23** – 2-night air package from Columbus (land only available) leaving on Wednesday with Friday return and accommodations at the Sheraton Times Square with breakfast daily, airport transportation and private outdoor parade viewing on parade route with private brunch included. Full program on our website.
- Indians vs Yankees: Sun., July 15** – Same-day motorcoach trip to Cleveland to see the Indians vs. the Yankees for 1:05 pm game with club-level seating and all-you-can-eat from 1 hour before game until end of 7th. All info on our website.

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Transfers Prove Depth Of Talent At Ohio State

Since the end of the 2017 season, three offensive linemen and a running back have opted to transfer out of Ohio State. More than anything else, that exhibits the ridiculous depth of talent the Buckeyes have in Columbus.

Let me explain.

MOODY MUSINGS Tim Moody, Editor

The three linemen – Matthew Burrell, Jack Wohlabaugh and Kevin Feder – all signed with Ohio State for a reason. They were coveted recruits – although their rankings varied – who all had options to go to numerous schools throughout the nation.

Burrell was the highest-rated of the three. He was a four-star prospect who picked the Buckeyes over offers from powerhouse programs such as Florida State, LSU, Penn State, Alabama and Clemson, among many others. The Woodbridge, Va., native chose to become a Buckeye, hoping to earn early playing time.

Instead, Burrell – despite his prodigious talent – redshirted as a freshman then didn't play a meaningful snap the following year in 2016. In 2017, he replaced Branden Bowen at right guard against Maryland after Bowen broke his leg, but Burrell promptly lost that spot in practice the following week and played only in mop-up duty after that. This spring, he switched to center to try to win the job but almost immediately fell behind Brady Taylor and Josh Myers, prompting him to transfer to an as yet unknown school.

Part of the issue for Burrell at Ohio State is that he probably didn't develop the way the coaches expected. He had some attitude issues early in his career, but by all accounts he had matured over his three seasons in Columbus. At Ohio State, he had no chance to play a real role in 2018 – if ever – but he'll likely be a day-one starter wherever he transfers.

To have a player who can start at another Division I program be unable to even sniff

the lineup at your school is a good thing. It shows that the top-end talent in Columbus is on another level than other schools around the nation.

Similar things can be said about Feder and Wohlabaugh, although those two were developmental prospects rather than expected day-one impact players.

Feder, a 6-9, 305-pound product of Don Bosco Prep in Ramsey, N.J., had offers from schools such as Miami (Fla.), Tennessee and Michigan State, among others, before choosing the Buckeyes. He spent three injury-riddled years in Columbus and never played a meaningful snap but, again, he'll likely be able to move to another program and be an impact player.

The same can be said for Wohlabaugh, a Stow, Ohio, native who had offers from other programs like Boston College and Michigan.

Not only did Wohlabaugh never played a meaningful snap at Ohio State, he never played at all. Now he's headed to Duke – another Power 5 program – where he'll be in the mix right away.

The Buckeyes have Division I starters all over the depth chart, and even more of that caliber who can't even crack the two-deep.

Perhaps the best example of this depth of talent is Williams, who is heading back home to North Carolina to play for the Tar Heels.

At different points in his recruitment, Williams was committed to both North Carolina and Wisconsin before ultimately earning an offer from the Buckeyes and landing in Columbus.

The New London (N.C.) North Stanly product played sparingly as a freshman in 2016, but he flashed in 2017 in a limited role, carrying the ball 57 times for 290 yards and three touchdowns, including two in the opener against Indiana, amounting to a yards-per-carry average of 5.1. Despite the limited action, those are stellar numbers, and the running back showed a willingness to pound the ball and run through defenders when necessary – abilities that are coveted and often earn you a starting job, or at least a key role in any offense.

Williams' development continued this spring as he turned into a leader in the running

backs room, culminating with an impressive spring game performance of five carries for 47 yards (9.4-yard average) and a touchdown.

In spot action last year and in practice this spring, Williams had the look of a future star. A future NFL player, in fact. At Ohio State, though, that future NFL player was the third-string running back at best and was in danger of falling ever further down the depth chart with the emergence of early enrollee Master Teague, who carried the ball 14 times for 73 yards (5.2-yard average) and a touchdown in the spring game, showcasing that same willingness to run through defenders when necessary.

So not only was Williams behind 1,000-yard rushers J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber in Columbus, but he might have ended up behind Teague – and maybe summer arrival Brian Sneed, another four-star prospect, as well.

Now he's off to North Carolina where, after he sits out a year per NCAA transfer rules, he'll likely go directly into the lineup. When the 2019 season rolls around, I fully expect to see Williams put up big numbers – he'll be a 1,000-yard rusher for the Tar Heels – and he might even be ready to move on to the NFL after a season as the starter.

A guy who could be playing in the NFL a couple of years from now was going to be third-string at Ohio State – at best.

The Buckeyes are in good hands with Urban Meyer in charge.

On Buck-I-Guy

Buck-I-Guy, whose real name is John Chubb, is among a group of Ohio State super-fans who are instantly recognizable and often broadcast as secondary mascots to Brutus, especially during game telecasts.

In the end, though, Chubb isn't an official representative of the university, and he has certainly rubbed many Ohio State fans and players the wrong way over the years. In general, though, super-fans like Buck-I-Guy are harmless at worst and fun figureheads at best.

At St. John Arena during a celebration of life for late coach Earle Bruce, Chubb did take it a step too far, and he received a remarkable amount of backlash on social media – especially from former players as well as fans.

I was at the memorial, which overall was very well done, but it struck me when I noticed Buck-I-Guy walk into the arena and around the entire portion of seats open to the public – well after everyone else was seated – in his full costume consisting of a white outfit, a white cape and a white cowboy hat. He situated himself in a front-row seat and, at times when everyone else silently listened to the speaker, opted to clap, drawing attention to himself.

Worse things have certainly happened, and he didn't really detract from the service, but he probably shouldn't have shown up in costume, and he certainly shouldn't have done anything to draw attention to himself. But, in the end, no real harm was done.

After the memorial, though, it came out on social media that he had signed a picture of Bruce meant only for former players and coaches. That was a step too far, and he ended up issuing a halfhearted apology via Facebook after a lot of backlash.

That signature shouldn't have happened, but I'm also not sure that a petition to ban Chubb from Ohio State events – which already had thousands of signatures when BSB went to press – makes much sense either. He's not an employee of the school, he buys his tickets, and many fans enjoy his presence at games. If anything, it would be nice to see him get a little less attention during broadcasts of games when, in my opinion, more focus should be put on the universities' students.

That said, I have a feeling Buck-I-Guy learned a bit of a lesson this month, and I'd expect him to be a bit more respectful in similar situations going forward with not too much harm done.

On The Draft

I don't have a ton to say about the 2018 NFL draft, but I will comment on the Cleveland Browns' first-round selections.

Despite growing up in Honolulu, I'm a life-long Browns fan due to family ties – my father is from Columbus and a lifelong Browns fan himself – so I was keeping a close eye on what they did in the first round. And, once again, I was disappointed with the first pick – quarterback Baker Mayfield. But, let's face it, I've had a lifetime of disappointment in regard to the Browns. I'm too young to remember the Art Modell days, and I didn't start following the team until they returned from the grave after the move to Baltimore. Here's to hoping I'm wrong about Mayfield and I'll finally have a functioning NFL franchise to cheer for.

That said, I was thrilled when the Browns picked Ohio State product Denzel Ward fourth overall. He's going to be an instant starter – size concerns be damned. I was shocked to see so many Browns fans – who have been begging the team to draft Ohio State products for years – disappointed with the pick. Soon enough, they'll be proven wrong.

I'll leave it there in regard to this year's draft, but make sure to check BuckeyeSports.com, our new full-service website, during the first week of May for a look ahead at Ohio State's top draft prospects for 2019. I'll be writing a breakdown of the Buckeyes' top draft-eligible players and what I expect from them next season, in addition to where I think they'll go in next year's draft.

Without giving too much away in this space, I will say that Nick Bosa is the clear No. 1 prospect coming out of Columbus next season – and yes, he will be leaving after his junior year.

For signup information regarding BSB's full-service website, free to all print subscribers, see page 5.

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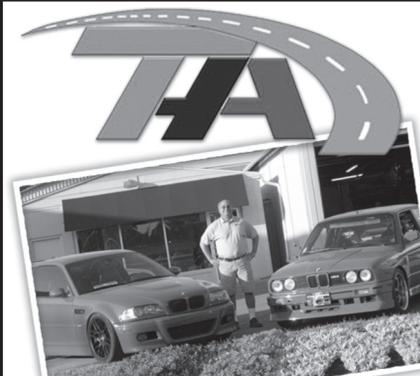


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Bruce's Legend Only Grew After OSU Departure

It's funny. Earle Bruce's path to being a Buckeye legend started when he was fired as coach at Ohio State.

Termination – unless you are a coach with the type of built-up cachet as a Woody Hayes, who won three national championships and was part of the legendary “10-Year War” with Michigan – usually starts you on the path to oblivion among a school's fan base. But Bruce, who passed away on April 20, seemed to start on his path to Buckeye lore when he lost the Ohio State job the week of the 1987 Michigan game.

His time as Ohio State head coach started positively enough in 1979. He led Buckeye football out of the depths reached with Hayes' firing following the punching of a Clemson player in the previous season's Gator Bowl by leading OSU to an undefeated regular season and its first trip to the Rose Bowl since 1975.

But the first chink in the Bruce coaching armor also occurred that season, when the Buckeyes lost to USC in Pasadena, denying the program its first national championship since 1968 – a Buckeye a team that had Bruce as an assistant on its legendary coaching staff. A win at the Rose Bowl might have changed the trajectory of his tenure. Instead he quickly fell into the rut that earned him the moniker “Ol' 93 Earle.” With each passing season, his status within Buckeye Nation deteriorated.

By the time the '87 season rolled around, many of the team's fans were ready to see him go, and the situation only got worse as that fateful season unfolded.

First there was a humiliating 31-10 loss to Indiana in a game Bruce himself famously called “the darkest day in Ohio State football.” The Buckeyes had been 30-0-1 against the Hoosiers, a team that Hayes had famously vowed would never beat Ohio State again, in the previous 36 years against OSU.

A couple of weeks later, the optics were bad again, when Ohio State lost to Michigan State. The Buckeyes, with Bruce serving as his own offensive coordinator, scored on the game's first play from scrimmage with a surprise 79-yard bomb from Tom Tupa to Everett Ross. A great start! But the Buckeyes gained only 68 yards the rest of the way in a 13-7 loss to the visiting Spartans, including just 2 rushing yards.

During Bruce's postgame interview, an irate Buckeye fan could be heard yelling outside the interview room: “You stink, Bruce! Do something. Why don't you quit?!” I am sure he spoke for many from the crowd of 89,915 in the Horseshoe that day.

But things would get worse.

The next week, the Buckeyes were guilty of six turnovers in the second half, giving up a 24-13 halftime lead and falling to Wisconsin – a team that entered the game at 2-6, 0-5 in the Big Ten – 26-24.

The straw that broke the camel's back came the following week, when Iowa visited Columbus. The Hawkeyes were down to their last out, trailing 27-22, facing a fourth-and-23 at the Buckeye 28 with just six seconds remaining in the game. A field goal was of no use. One stop by the Buckeye defense and the game was over.

Instead, somehow, Chuck Hartlieb completed a pass to Marv Cook – the 13th completion to a tight end – at the 8 and he barreled into the end zone with Buckeyes Mark “Bo” Pelini and David Brown in tow.

I think everyone knew that Bruce's days were numbered after those three straight losses.

To understand what happened next, you have to understand what the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry was back then. Oh sure it's big now, but back then it was sacred. This is

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

before John Cooper's 2-10-1 mark against the Wolverines and the run of Ohio State success against its rivals that started under Jim Tressel and continues today under Urban Meyer. This was the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry of Woody Hayes and Bo Schembechler – and of Earle Bruce. You could fire Bruce after the season. There would have been little uproar. But you didn't fire an Ohio State coach the week of The Game. President Ed Jennings and the OSU board of trustees *did*.

Bruce said it best himself, the afternoon he was fired.

“I think they have a right to fire a person,” he said, “but I think it's very poor timing – right before the Michigan game. I don't think that's quite fair. They can do it anytime, but not before the Michigan game.”

Buckeye fans apparently agreed.

Fans and members of the OSU marching band came to Bruce's home that evening to show their support. A telephone poll by Columbus' WCMH TV, in which 12,000 people responded, showed 90 percent opposing the firing. Fans rallied at a Buckeye practice that Bruce opened to the public – unheard of in an OSU-Michigan week (unheard of, period, today). A plane flew overhead pulling a banner that read “Keep Earle, fire Jennings.” This after planes had flown over Ohio Stadium during the Iowa game with the such messages as “Noose Bruce” and “Earle Call Eldon,” a reference to Buckeye basketball coach Eldon Miller, who had been terminated the year before.

All this outpouring of support came from a group that would have happily bid Bruce farewell at the end of the season.

Yet this is a story that still could have gone in an entirely different direction. That week's saga wasn't over.

Bruce's last team, the team that had all but collapsed down the stretch that season, went up to Ann Arbor and, wearing “Earle” headbands, defeated its archrivals in a hard-fought game, 23-20, battling back from a 13-0 deficit. The players carried Bruce, pumping his fist in his trademark suit and fedora, off on their shoulders into what could have been his Buckeye sunset.

“There's no sweeter victory in the world than one over Michigan in your last game at Ohio State,” Bruce said after the game. “But the real thrill of that football game was for our football team, down 13-0, to come back and win after the week they've had. They showed me a lot by sticking together and playing as a team. You talk about coming back from adversity, coming back from almost disaster. Most certainly, they're made of the right stuff.”

According to BSB's own Bill Conley, who was on the Ohio State coaching staff for that game, Bruce had the right stuff, as well.

“Just like in his coaching, Earle Bruce handled his unjustified firing like a champion,” Conley writes on page 40 of this issue. “He fought through all the emotions of this untimely action by staying focused on the task at hand – beating Michigan. He wouldn't let us coaches and players get sidetracked. It was business as usual.

“Earle coached hard that game, but the players played even harder that November day in Ann Arbor, Mich. They were not going to let the man they respected so much go out losing to the greatest rival of them all. The ‘Earle’

headbands were the symbol that the Buckeyes used to show support for their coach, but the way they played is now legendary. They took on the character of the man himself as they played with toughness, determination and Buckeye pride.”

That week, that game, were the turning points in Earle's relationship with Buckeye Nation. After the win he uttered words that he would prove true every day for the rest of his life.

“I will always be a Buckeye,” he declared. “This win is one for the Buckeyes. God bless them. I love them.”

Oh sure, Bruce kicked around coaching for several years after that. But it was in his position as an analyst for WTVN radio in Columbus that he gained fame and adoration disproportionate to his success – albeit part of a Hall of Fame career – as Buckeye coach. Fans loved his obvious passion for the Buckeyes, his love of hard-hitting, rock'em, sock'em football, his willingness to criticize the team he loved if he thought they needed criticizing.

Fans realized that when he had said things like calling that 1987 loss to Indiana “the darkest day in Ohio State football,” he meant it. That's how passionate he was about the Buckeyes and their traditions.

Along with Archie Griffin, but in a completely different way, Bruce became the leading ambassador for Ohio State football.

The fact that such successful coaches as Tressel and Meyer, both of whom served under him, touted Bruce's virtues on a regular basis only helped his standing.

On a personal note, back when we first started Buckeye Sports Bulletin, Bruce took the time to do a personal interview with me, a young journalist with photographer Jim Kirkpatrick in tow, just a few weeks into our existence. Today, some 37 years later, I don't know that I could get a private audience with Meyer.

We reprinted the story I generated from the early interview in the April 24 issue of the electronic BSB Quickly.

Bruce provided many great victories in his time at the Buckeye helm, including the '83 win over Oklahoma, the amazing comeback win over Illinois in 1984, the 1985 victory over top-ranked Iowa and his five wins over Michigan and the immortal Schembechler.

After his coaching career, I got to know him as a tremendous – and animated – storyteller. I will never forget the day he regaled me and big Buckeye fans Bruce Peterson and Wally O'Dell with tales of the Massillon-Canton McKinley rivalry after a Buckeye Boosters dinner. He had us in stitches. I know that Bruce and Wally remember that night as well as I do because it was vintage Earle.

Each year over the last decade or so, I got to spend an evening with Earle at the annual gathering of the Atlanta OSU alumni in Columbus, organized by another great Buckeye fan, Bill Gue. He was always animated and entertaining at these events, and I am appreciative of the kind words he would say about Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

In fact, the last time I saw Earle was at the Atlanta dinner this past November. His health was already in decline and he didn't say much. He certainly didn't get up and speak, as was his custom.

But you could tell by his smile he was happy to be among Buckeye fans – among his people.

No Get Well Wishes

Just a few days ago I thought I would be sending get well wishes to my mother, the noted writer and educator Faye Moskowitz, in this space. I don't find that necessary now, as she has battled back from a very serious eye infection and eye surgery with a vengeance. She may look a little like she went 15 rounds with Muhammad Ali, but I can assure you that in that mythical fight with the champ, Faye was never knocked off her feet. She went from major surgery on Saturday, April 21, to teaching her final class of the semester at George Washington University on April 26. Her positive outlook throughout her fight to retain sight in her eye (sadly unsuccessful) and through her surgery and recovery has been an inspiration to me and my entire family. I know there will be some tough moments ahead for Faye, but with her positive outlook and her huge support system, I am sure she will work through them.

By the way, if you are part of that large support system or her loyal legion of fans, no need to send food or flowers. There is enough food in the refrigerator and now creeping into the freezer to feed Faye and my father, Jack, for a month, and there are enough flowers in the house to open up a flower shop. No fooling.

I love you, Faye!

Extra, Read All About It!

This is the last BSB print issue until June 5. But there is no need to miss out on any of the Buckeye sports action. Buckeye Sports Bulletin's revamped website, BuckeyeSports.com, is up and running with all the breaking news, as well as features and commentary, recruiting news, videos and much, much more, 24/7/365.

BuckeyeSports.com is free to all BSB print subscribers and *only* available to BSB print subscribers. This helps keep our new Forum free of some of the clutter and rancor that pops up on other sites open to the public.

Be sure to check in on the site daily to keep up on any breaking news, especially on the recruiting front, and monitor the Forum as well as this is where a lot of the breaking news can be found – again, especially on the recruiting front. The Forum also offers you a chance to interact with the BSB staff and other Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers. Our readers have a variety of opinions, which they are more than willing to share, and with subscribers in all 50 states, we in effect have correspondents all across the nation, posting relevant tidbits that they see or hear. Remember, if you see something, say something on the Forum.

In just the short time the Forum has been on line, there have been threads about Earle Bruce, self-proclaimed super-fan Buckeye-I-Guy, Buckeyes in the NFL draft, OSU basketball sanctions, the design of the floor at the Schott, wrestler Kyle Snyder winning the Sullivan Award and our quest to determine the greatest quarterback on OSU history.

Jump in. Your two cents' worth has the same value as anyone else's.

If you previously signed up to access the electronic BSB Quickly, you are already signed up for BuckeyeSports.com. Sign in with the same user name and password as before. If you have not already signed up for this exciting new service, simply send your name and preferred email address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com and we will send back simple instructions.

The final BSB Quickly was posted on April 24, but all previous editions of BSB Quickly are archived on the new site, as are all print editions dating back several years.

FOR ATHLETES

HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

You may have a concussion if you have any of these symptoms after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body:

- Get a headache
- Feel dizzy, sluggish or foggy
- Be bothered by light or noise
- Vomit or feel sick to your stomach
- Have trouble focusing or problems remembering
- Feel more emotional or problems remembering
- Feel more emotional or "down"
- Feel confused
- Have problems with sleep

HOW CAN I HELP MY TEAM?

PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

Avoid hits to the head and follow the rules for safe and fair play to lower your chances of getting a concussion. Ask your coaches for more tips.

BE A TEAM PLAYER

You play an important role as part of a team. Encourage your teammates to report their symptoms and help them feel comfortable taking the time they need to get better.

Concussion symptoms usually show up right away, but you might not notice that something "isn't right" for hours or days. A concussion feels different to each person, so it is important to tell your parents and doctor how you are feeling.

The information provided in this document or through linkages to other sites is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for concussion should be directed to a physician or other health care provider.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

www.healthy.ohio.gov/concussion



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