

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 37, No. 24

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

August 2018

# Back In A Bit

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## *Meyer Retained By Ohio State, But Suspended 3 Games*

By **TIM MOODY**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

When Ohio State opens the season against Oregon State on Sept. 1, Urban Meyer won't be on the Ohio Stadium sidelines. He won't be there a week later when the Buckeyes take on Rutgers in the Big Ten opener, either. And a week after that, Meyer won't be making the trip to Arlington, Texas, with his team for a prime-time showdown with TCU.

Three games – that's the main point of the punishment Meyer received from the university for mishandling the employment of former wide receivers coach Zach Smith, who was fired July 23.

Though Meyer is held from his position as head coach for the first three games, he'll otherwise be able to return to his regular coaching duties starting Sept. 2 – the day after the Buckeyes kick off their 2018 slate against the Beavers.

Meyer will also forgo six weeks of pay in addition to his suspension, while athletic director Gene Smith will be suspended without pay from Aug. 31 through Sept. 16 – dates that include each of those first three games.

The two most prominent figures in the Ohio State athletic department – and two of the most prominent figures in the sport overall – were found to be at fault for mishandling a string of incidents involving Zach Smith, most notably their handling of a 2015 allegation of domestic abuse leveled against the former assistant coach by his ex-wife, Courtney Smith.

The punishment was handed down after a 14-day investigation that was sparked over questions about Meyer's knowledge of the 2015 allegations – notably because he denied knowledge of those events while speaking at Big Ten Media Days in Chicago on July 24, the day after he fired Zach Smith. As the result of a media report suggesting that Meyer had, in fact, known about the allegations, he was placed on paid administrative leave by the university on Aug. 1 through the resolution of the investigation, which is when his suspension began.



TIM MOODY

**SIDELINED** – Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer was suspended by the university Aug. 22 through Sept. 2 in addition to gameday suspensions for Sept. 8 and Sept. 15.

That move sparked a media frenzy that lasted up to, and through, Ohio State's final decision Aug. 22 – a span of three weeks and a day that encompassed Ohio State's entire fall camp and the beginning of the fall semester at the university.

After an exhaustive meeting between university president Michael Drake, the board of trustees, the independent working group that oversaw the investigation and the investigators themselves – a meeting that stretched past the 10-hour mark while a throng of media members and fans waited inside and outside the Longaberger Alumni House – the school finally came to its decision, and Drake, Meyer, Gene Smith and Mary Jo White, the chair of the investigative team, all had their say in a press conference.

"We wanted to be fair. We wanted to be equitable," Drake said in regard to the length, depth and scope of the Aug. 22 meeting. "We wanted to be just. We wanted to be appropriate. We worked to refine our decisions and our actions to be able to do the best that we could to achieve those goals.

"This is a very difficult and complicated situation. Many things to consider over a long period of time, and the reason

it took 10 hours of this is to try to make sure that we were being thoughtful and considerate in every case.

"We know this is one of those circumstances where there is no right answer. It's very difficult to not – not possible to do something that makes everyone happy. And so in that circumstance, we are trying not to seek the sole perfect answer for everyone but to be fair, to be just, to be equitable and to be appropriate and to do what we can to help us make our program stronger."

Drake, Gene Smith and Meyer each read prepared statements, with the latter two expressing their apologies for the role they played in mishandling the allegations against Zach Smith, and opting to keep him on staff up until July 23. They also addressed questions from media members during the press conference.

"I know the impact that the events (of the) last three weeks have had on this institution, an institution that I love, and how challenging this has been for our community, our president, a man who I have great respect for, and for that

Continued On Page 10

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**BSB'S 2018  
FOOTBALL  
PREVIEW**

# BUCKEYE SPORTS .COM

**After a weeks-long process that included a 14-day independent investigation, Ohio State announced Aug. 22 that head football coach Urban Meyer would be suspended for three games while athletic director Gene Smith would be suspended from Aug. 31 through Sept. 16. After the punishment was announced, we took to the BuckeyeSports.com Forum to see how BSB subscribers reacted to the news and the investigative report. To add your opinion on future topics, go to the Forum at BuckeyeSports.com.**

It's disappointing that it had to come to this, but after reading that report, I don't see how Urban could have avoided punishment. He might even be lucky that he wasn't fired. This seems like a good resolution at the end of the day.

– **AcrossTheField**

I didn't read the report until I got home and my mind is blown. A suspension is sounding good right now after reading that.

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

Who is running things over there? They look like they don't know what they are doing. I would have said the same thing if Urban was given no suspension. It's embarrassing that an institution that large can't get it right.

It's not like they have a history of looking great in the PR department – from how they handled Tatgate, the band fiasco, the wrestling physician, and now this.

Please, somebody hire somebody that can make us look like we know what we're doing.

– **117680**

I'm not happy about the suspension. But at the end of the very long day, I'm at least happy he is still our coach. Hopefully we can all move on soon.

– **GNilly97**

After the Trustees (especially Michael Drake) left Urban Meyer "twisting

slowly, slowly in the wind" for the better part of 10 agonizing hours it's no wonder he was, as the ESPN attack dogs noted, a bit "unfocused" at the press conference. At least Gene Smith had his back, as Urban had the AD's. On the other hand, Pres. Drake's prepared statement was mostly devoid of any support for our AD and head coach – and in fact was far more derogatory toward them and the Athletic Department than was Mary Jo White, who headed the investigating team. As Coach Greg Schiano told the team: "It's now Ohio State against the world." It would more properly be said that, "We have met the enemy and it is us."

Once again, that's nothing new for my alma mater. Meyer and Gene Smith may not have been thrown under the bus but they surely were tossed off it. If only Michael Drake had half the character, guts and devotion to Ohio State as does Urban Meyer. Oh well.

Go Bucks!

– **Thomas Brownfield**

I think the suspension is about right in terms of severity, maybe trending a little toward the harsh side. We need to remember that not every allegation/accusation is true. No assault has been proven in court, at least in the last six years. This was not about DV and not even about allegations of DV, but about the reporting (or failure to report) of allegations or suspicion or rumors of DV/assault.

– **Terrier Buck**

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 35 Years Ago – 1983

The Ohio State football team had ended the 1982 season with seven straight wins, and head coach Earle Bruce was hoping that momentum would carry over into the 1983 campaign.

"I surely am looking forward to this year," Bruce said. "I guess the biggest thing is at the end of last year, we had seven consecutive victories and a very strong, physical-type football team. And that should be great going into the 1983 season because it has left us with a great attitude, a great impetus going into the 1983 season."

### 30 Years Ago – 1988

The John Cooper era at Ohio State was set to begin on Sept. 10 when the Buckeyes would host Syracuse. Cooper replaced Bruce, who was fired before the Michigan game of a 1987 season in which OSU went 6-4-1.

Cooper acknowledged that the first Big Ten championship of his regime might be down the road a bit. The task of returning the Scarlet and Gray to college football prominence, however, was one that he was anticipating with great expectations.

"I hope we can be pleasantly surprised at the end of the season," Cooper said. "And don't get me wrong. Even though we're not picked to win the Big Ten championship, I think we'll have a say in who does."

### 25 Years Ago – 1993

For the second straight year, Ohio State had a tight end go down early in preseason camp.

In 1992, senior Joe Metzger broke a bone in a leg during a practice session Aug. 16. Nearly a year later to the day, sophomore D.J. Jones snapped a bone in his right ankle, forcing him to be sidelined for six to eight weeks.

"I had the same horrible gut feeling when Joe made the cut out there last year about the same time," said OSU tight ends coach Lee Owens. "It seems like every camp I've ever been a

part of, there's always at least one of that type of injury that occurs."

### 20 Years Ago – 1998

The Buckeyes, whose national championship drought was reaching 30 years back to the 1968 season, were nearly a consensus preseason pick as the nation's No. 1 team.

Ohio State senior linebacker Jerry Rudzinski said fans who had been clamoring for OSU to receive more national recognition couldn't simultaneously be paranoid about the Buckeyes earning such lofty praise heading into the season.

"For a long time, people have complained around here that Ohio State doesn't get the national attention it deserves," he said. "We get to be No. 1 and now people are complaining that it will make us overconfident. You think everybody would be silenced. But now they don't like the No. 1 ranking. So we've got to play with the cards we're dealt and have fun with it."

### 15 Years Ago – 2003

Usually a quiet time for college football teams, the summer was anything but mellow for the 2003 Ohio State squad.

On July 13, the New York Times published a story alleging academic impropriety within the OSU football program. The Buckeyes' summer was filled with questions about the integrity of the football program, most of which swirled around sophomore running back Maurice Clarett.

Those questions led to the NCAA beginning an investigation into Clarett and Ohio State, which subsequently prompted OSU to hold Clarett out of its fall practice drills until inquiries about his eligibility had been sufficiently answered.

As BSB went to press Aug. 21, they had not been, and Clarett's status remained up in the air.

### 10 Years Ago – 2008

Nathan Williams, a member of Ohio State's 2008 recruiting class, was among those practicing with the defensive linemen

during the team's public practice Aug. 18, a fact he could attribute to his successful navigation of summer school.

The Washington Court House (Ohio) Miami Trace product's former coach, Jeff Conroy, told The Columbus Dispatch that Williams retook a high school English class and was able to raise his grade from a D to a B. He achieved freshman eligibility in the process.

Conroy told the paper that the NCAA found Williams' ACT score suspicious in the spring, and a subsequent retaking of the test yielded a score and grade-point average combination that was not high enough.

### Five Years Ago – 2013

Ohio State running back Carlos Hyde was suspended for the first three games of the 2013 season for being a person of interest in an alleged assault that occurred in the early-morning hours of July 20 at a bar near campus.

Columbus police spokesperson Sgt. Rich Weiner confirmed to BSB on July 30 that police would no longer investigate Hyde.

"The case is closed," Weiner said. "Investigators met with the victim on (July 27), and during that interview she informed the investigators she didn't want to pursue charges. There is no victim at this point in the game."

### One Year Ago – 2017

Former Buckeye linebacker Chris Spielman filed a class action lawsuit against Ohio State to "block the usage of player images for promotional purposes."

At the center of Spielman's lawsuit are the banners that were hung in and around Ohio Stadium that bear his likeness along with company logos such as Honda and the IMG Sports Radio Network.

"Ohio State is always more than welcome to use my name and image in any way they want," Spielman said on 610 WTVN, a Columbus radio station. "The problem comes when they slap a corporate sponsor on my name and image without my permission or without giving me or any of our ex-players the ability to negotiate."

# We Never Should Have Gotten To This Point



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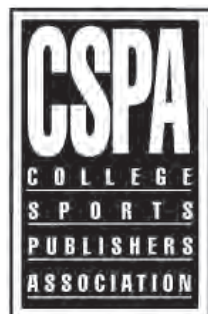
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**2017-18 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 37)**

|        |          |        |          |
|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| No. 1  | Sept. 9  | No. 13 | Dec. 16  |
| No. 2  | Sept. 16 | No. 14 | Jan. 20  |
| No. 3  | Sept. 23 | No. 15 | Feb. 3   |
| No. 4  | Sept. 30 | No. 16 | Feb. 17  |
| No. 5  | Oct. 7   | No. 17 | March 10 |
| No. 6  | Oct. 14  | No. 18 | March 24 |
| No. 7  | Oct. 28  | No. 19 | April 7  |
| No. 8  | Nov. 4   | No. 20 | April 21 |
| No. 9  | Nov. 11  | No. 21 | May      |
| No. 10 | Nov. 18  | No. 22 | June     |
| No. 11 | Nov. 25  | No. 23 | July     |
| No. 12 | Dec. 2   | No. 24 | August   |

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Charter Member

It should never have been this way. We should never have been privy to the salacious details of a marriage that had long since disintegrated. We should never have had been put in the position of siding against the victim of alleged domestic abuse.

It should have never come down to contract clauses, Title IX liabilities, unexplained OVI charges, extramarital affairs being carried on inside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, lewd pictures taken in White House restrooms and an investigation that might ultimately wind up costing taxpayers somewhere in the neighborhood of a half-million dollars.

Yet, here we are, all because Urban Meyer risked his reputation and career to hire and retain insanely immature wide receivers coach Zach Smith despite a litany of incidents that should have reduced Smith to the dustpan of history long ago.

Following a marathon session Aug. 22 of the university's board of trustees, Meyer was slapped with a three-game suspension stemming from the way he handled allegations of domestic abuse and myriad other boorish behavior levied against Smith during his six-plus years on Meyer's staff at Ohio State.

That came after more than three weeks of paid administrative leave for Meyer as the university wrapped up an investigation into why the ultrasuccessful head coach suddenly took leave of his senses in late July at Big Ten Media Days in Chicago. That was when he denied being aware of domestic violence allegations made against Smith in 2015.

Why Meyer issued a denial so easily disproved was subject enough for conjecture. The coach blamed his quote-unquote "misstatement" at least in part on how the media reported the allegations against Smith – an increasingly-convenient excuse these days when public officials are caught doing something they shouldn't.

Additionally, the investigative committee stated that it "learned during the investigation that Coach Meyer has sometimes had significant memory issues in other situations where he has prior extensive knowledge of events" and that he has also "periodically taken medicine that can negatively impair his memory, concentration and focus."

Impaired memory, concentration and focus? That's the defense for someone who has won 94 percent of his conference games in six seasons at Ohio State? Really?

Even if you concede the explanations why the coach was not forthcoming in Chicago, the bigger question for me remains why Meyer hired Smith at Ohio State in the first place and then kept him on staff through a litany of incidents that included more allegations of spousal abuse, an extramarital affair, an expensive trip to a Florida strip club, the purchase of sex toys that were sent to Smith at his office at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center and a number of lewd photographs, including one Smith allegedly took of his own genitalia while inside a White House restroom as the Buckeyes were being honored for their 2014 national championship.

It is painfully apparent – both by his words and actions – that Meyer did not totally believe Courtney Smith when she repeatedly accused her now ex-husband of abusive behavior. Even so, Meyer apparently followed proper protocols and informed his superiors in a timely manner when he learned of allegations against Smith. If he hadn't, he would likely have been fired with cause rather than face a three-game suspension – not wholly insignificant in that it represents one-quarter of the 2018 regular season.

I just can't seem to get my head around

the reason why Meyer ever risked his career on a dime-a-dozen assistant coach whose role could have been filled – and probably filled much better – by any number of other young men eager to work at Ohio State.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

The argument that Meyer isn't paid to babysit his assistant coaches is a hollow one. Likewise with the one that the head coach simply didn't know what Smith was doing after hours at the team's practice facility or on the road during recruiting trips. I would contend that if Meyer is paid to know what each and every one of his student-athletes is doing at all times, the same applies to his assistant coaches, especially one Meyer knew had problems dating back nearly a decade.

For any coach to enjoy the success that Meyer has enjoyed throughout his career, he must be hands-on. Yes, I remember this is supposed to be a warmer, fuzzier Meyer than the one with the jangled mess of nerves who had a physical meltdown during his final years at Florida. Yet it remains difficult to believe Meyer was completely oblivious to many of Smith's issues.

Perhaps, as some have conjectured and the coach has admitted himself, Meyer kept Smith around as some sort of homage to the late Earle Bruce, the former Ohio State head coach who was Smith's grandfather. It was Meyer, who has often described Bruce as one of the most influential figures in his life, who welcomed Smith as a walk-on player at Bowling Green. It was also Meyer who gave Smith his first coaching job as a graduate assistant at Florida.

But if Meyer hired Smith at Ohio State as a favor to Bruce, and then kept him on his staff despite a grand scale of less-than-appropriate behavior, then Meyer is guilty of a misplaced allegiance – not only to what was best for himself and his livelihood but for the Ohio State football program as well.

Maybe loyalty to a former mentor had nothing to do with Meyer's motivation for keeping Smith around. Maybe he thought Smith had learned from his earlier transgressions. Maybe Meyer didn't want to embarrass one of his assistant coaches. Maybe he didn't want to embarrass his program. And maybe he thought he could compartmentalize the situation much the way Jim Tressel thought he could eight years ago when he discovered some of his players were exchanging memorabilia for free tattoos.

Whatever the reason, there must be a better explanation than blaming the media or some mind-altering medication. Unfortunately, I doubt we'll ever get one. The investigative committee has offered its findings, Meyer has accepted his suspension (albeit somewhat begrudgingly) and that will be the end of it. Oregon State is still going to bring its football team to Columbus on Sept. 1, and the 2018 football season will proceed on schedule.

But for most of the month of August, instead of charting the progress of new starting quarterback Dwayne Haskins, debating the best replacement for Damon Webb at field safety and wondering who will start at middle linebacker, we have been subjected to another self-inflicted, largely-manufactured scandal and the accompanying sanctimony

from outside sources who believe the investigation was a sham and Meyer's suspension akin to a slap on the wrist.

The worst thing? It all seemed so avoidable.

### Truth Will Set You Free

There are those who will contend that Meyer did nothing wrong, that he was the victim of some ill-advised investigation – a "witch hunt," if you will – that was fueled by a vindictive media that felt it had been wronged when the coach denied knowing about the 2015 allegations against Smith.

I would argue just the opposite.

Meyer earns an annual salary of \$7.6 million, and there is much more to his job than simply winning football games. In addition to being charged with the coaching, mentoring and protection of more than 100 young men in his program, he is paid to keep track of his assistant coaches and staff members and ensure they are honorable people worthy of wearing scarlet and gray.

Additionally, Meyer is paid to interact with the media. I'm sure it is one of his least favorite things to do, and that often shows. But the media covering the Ohio State football team – most of it anyway – is anything but contentious toward Meyer and his Buckeyes.

Meyer didn't have to say what he said in Chicago, and I'll continue to scratch my head about that until I've scratched myself into baldness. But the cold, hard truth is that he did say what he said, triggering an investigation that focused the white-hot national spotlight on his program for all the wrong reasons.

Universities do not typically spend \$500,000 on so-called "witch hunts," so it remains immaterial whether or not you or I believe the investigation was warranted. Ohio State president Michael Drake and the university's board of trustees felt it was warranted, and perhaps something good will come of it.

Maybe Meyer will become a little more media-friendly, although that seems doubtful in the wake of the fall camp lockdown that accompanied his stint on paid administrative leave. The media's interactions with OSU players and coaches are so tightly controlled nowadays anyway that one wonders why a lockdown was necessary, especially with so much interest in how the 2018 team will look with a new quarterback under center.

I can understand a coach's distaste for the media. There are too many times when I have sat in a press conference and groaned at one of the dull-headed questions asked by one of my colleagues. And, yes, we can be a prickly bunch sometimes, especially when we use our forums to second-guess such decisions as giving Ezekiel Elliott only two second-half carries in the 2015 Michigan State game or wondering what went so spectacularly wrong in the 2016 Fiesta Bowl.

But the media covering Ohio State football are not in the business of second-guessing Meyer or disparaging his program. That "fake news" and "enemy of the people" stuff might be useful taglines in the political arena, but it has no basis in fact with regard to Ohio State football and the media that cover it.

I discovered at an early age the consequences of playing fast and loose with the truth. Despite that, I persisted until my father persuaded me with a different kind of enlightenment – that is to say he lit up my backside and I saw that enlightenment in a whole new way.

Maybe this whole affair will have the same effect on all parties concerned.

Then again ...



**OSU In Top 5 For AP, Coaches Polls**

Despite there being uncertainty as to who would coach the Ohio State football team this season when The Associated Press and the Amway Coaches Poll announced their preseason top 25, the Buckeyes found themselves in the top five of both.

The coaches poll was released Aug. 2, one day after OSU announced head coach Urban Meyer had been placed on paid administrative leave during a university investigation into how he handled domestic abuse allegations against former wide receivers coach and recruiting coordinator Zach Smith. The Buckeyes, who were led by acting head coach Ryan Day during fall camp, checked in at No. 3 in the coaches poll behind Alabama (No. 1) and Clemson (No. 2). Alabama, the defending national champion, garnered 61

**Ohio State 3rd In BSB Consensus Poll**

It's impossible to know exactly what will happen throughout the 2018 college football season, but the preseason expectations – at least at the top of the game – generally match up.

One general expectation is that Alabama, the defending national champion, will be the top team in the nation once again – but Clemson and Ohio State are highly rated as well. The Crimson Tide, coming off an overtime victory against Georgia in the College Football Playoff National Championship, received 15 first-place votes out of the 19 rankings used in BSB's annual consensus poll. Clemson picked up three top votes, and Ohio State received top billing in one of the polls used.

With those first-place votes in hand, Clemson ranked second in the final standings behind Alabama, while the Buckeyes were third. After that, last year's runner-up Georgia was fourth, followed by Washington rounding out the top five.

Wisconsin checks in at sixth, marking the second Big Ten team in the rankings, followed by Oklahoma, Auburn and Miami (Fla.) before Penn State – at 10 – sparks a run of three Big Ten teams, followed

by Michigan at 11 and Michigan State at No. 12.

That makes for five Big Ten teams in the BSB consensus poll after four made the preseason rankings last year (Michigan State was outside the top 25 in the 2017 BSB consensus poll). Northwestern and Iowa each received votes as well, but neither came close to cracking the top 25.

Out of the Big Ten teams in the rankings, Ohio State is scheduled to take on three of them – Penn State, Michigan and Michigan State from the Big Ten East – in addition to a week-three matchup against No. 18 TCU in Arlington, Texas.

Rankings used in the BSB consensus poll include the AP Top 25 and the Amway coaches' poll in addition to standings published by Athlon, the Austin-American Statesman, CBSSports.com, CompugterRatings.com, the Detroit Free Press, DRatings.com, ESPN.com, ESPN's Football Power Index, Lindy's, Mike DiSimone, Phil Steele, SBNation's S&P+ ratings, SportsFormulator.com, Sports Illustrated, Sporting News, Vegas Insider and Bleacher Report.

A first-place vote earned 25 points, while second was awarded 24, and so on. First-place votes are in parentheses.

| Rk.       | Team                  | Pts.       |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1.        | Alabama (15)          | 471        |
| 2.        | Clemson (3)           | 452        |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Ohio State (1)</b> | <b>424</b> |
| 4.        | Georgia               | 419        |
| 5.        | Washington            | 381        |
| 6.        | Wisconsin             | 373        |
| 7.        | Oklahoma              | 360        |
| 8.        | Auburn                | 317        |
| 9.        | Miami (Fla.)          | 309        |
| 10.       | Penn State            | 307        |
| 11.       | Michigan              | 272        |
| 12.       | Michigan State        | 263        |
| 13.       | Notre Dame            | 256        |
| 14.       | Stanford              | 233        |
| 15.       | USC                   | 174        |
| 16.       | Mississippi State     | 168        |
| 17.       | Florida State         | 148        |
| 18.       | TCU                   | 135        |
| 19.       | WVU                   | 106        |
| 20.       | Virginia Tech         | 106        |
| 21.       | Texas                 | 106        |
| 22.       | UCF                   | 73         |
| 23.       | Boise State           | 70         |
| 24.       | LSU                   | 55         |
| 25.       | Florida State         | 43         |

– Compiled by Tim Moody

first-place votes while Clemson had three and Ohio State had one.

Out of the Big Ten, Wisconsin was seventh and Penn State was ninth, giving the

conference three of the nation's top 10 teams. Michigan State (12th) and Michigan (14th) were the only other teams in the league to crack the top 25. Northwestern (67) and Iowa (eight) both received votes as well.

As for the rest of the top 10 in the coaches poll, Georgia was fourth, Oklahoma was fifth, Washington was sixth, Miami (Fla.) was eighth and Auburn was 10th.

TCU, Ohio State's week-three opponent, was No. 16 in the coaches poll.

In the AP poll, Ohio State slotted in at No. 5. Once again, Alabama was No. 1 with 42 first-place votes, followed by Clemson at No. 2 with 18, Georgia third and Wisconsin fourth with one.

One other Big Ten team, Penn State (10th), joined Ohio State and Wisconsin in the top 10. Michigan State just missed out,

coming in at No. 11 in the poll that was released Aug. 20. Michigan (14th) rounded out the conference's representation in the top 25. Like the coaches poll, Northwestern (13) and Iowa (two) received votes in the AP balloting.

TCU also was 16th in the AP poll, but Ohio State's other nonconference opponents didn't receive any votes.

**9 More Freshmen Lose Black Stripes**

The first member of Ohio State's 2018 recruiting class to lose his black helmet stripe was defensive tackle Tommy Togia back in April. It took four months for another true freshman to join him in that accomplishment, but now he has plenty of company.

Nine players from the 2018 haul have

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## Friday Newsletter Moves To New Site

The elements of Buckeye Sports Bulletin's popular electronic Friday Newsletter will be moving to our new 24/7 full-service website, BuckeyeSports.com. The BSB staff will once again be making their pregame predictions on the Friday before each game this fall. The Key Matchup feature for each game will also appear on Fridays.

However, there is no longer a need to wait until Friday each week for the latest news of the OSU football team and all the other great sports. This news will be posted as it happens throughout the week, including any recruiting updates.

Don't forget to take part in the BuckeyeSports.com Forum. That's where members of the BSB staff and BSB readers exchange their thoughts on all the Ohio State sports news. The action on the Forum was lively in the weeks leading up to the ultimate Urban Meyer decision. If you have an opinion or a Buckeye news item, jump in! Remember, everyone's opinion is equal on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum.

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Remember, complete copies of the print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin are posted on BuckeyeSports.com on Mondays during football season and Tuesdays the rest of the year. Your copy of the paper will still arrive in your mailbox at the usual time.

If you have any questions about BuckeyeSports.com, feel free to call us at (614) 486-2202.

## 2018 Ohio State Football Schedule

| Date     | Opponent              | Time           | TV  | 2017-18 Record    |
|----------|-----------------------|----------------|-----|-------------------|
| Sept. 1  | OREGON STATE          | Noon           | ABC | 1-11 (0-9 Pac-12) |
| Sept. 8  | RUTGERS               | 3:30 p.m.      | BTN | 4-8 (3-6 B1G)     |
| Sept. 15 | vs. TCU#*             | 8 p.m.         | ABC | 11-3 (7-2 Big 12) |
| Sept. 22 | TULANE                | TBA            | TBA | 5-7 (3-5 AAC)     |
| Sept. 29 | at Penn State*        | TBA            | TBA | 11-2 (7-2 B1G)    |
| Oct. 6   | INDIANA               | 3:30 OR 4 p.m. | TBA | 5-7 (2-7 B1G)     |
| Oct. 13  | MINNESOTA             | TBA            | TBA | 5-7 (2-7 B1G)     |
| Oct. 20  | at Purdue*            | TBA            | TBA | 7-6 (4-5 B1G)     |
| Nov. 3   | NEBRASKA              | TBA            | TBA | 4-8 (3-6 B1G)     |
| Nov. 10  | at Michigan State*    | TBA            | TBA | 10-3 (7-2 B1G)    |
| Nov. 17  | at Maryland           | TBA            | TBA | 4-8 (2-7 B1G)     |
| Nov. 24  | MICHIGAN*             | Noon           | FOX | 8-5 (5-4 B1G)     |
| Dec. 1   | Big Ten Championship@ | 8 p.m.         | FOX |                   |

\* - 2017-18 bowl team  
# - at Arlington, Texas  
@ - at Indianapolis

newspaper based in Morgantown, W.Va. According to the report, Chugunov is expected to be on scholarship, but the timing of his enrollment was not yet clear when BSB went to press.

Chugunov (6-1, 203) joined the Mountaineers as a three-star prospect out of Skillman (N.J.) Montgomery in the class of 2015. He redshirted as a freshman in 2015 before playing in three games (2 of 5 for 15 yards) in 2016.

Last year Chugunov played in five games, including a pair of late-season starts, completing 43 of 90 passes for 536 yards with three touchdowns and two interceptions.

Chugunov announced his plans to transfer in March, at which point he was on track to graduate in May. With his degree in hand, Chugunov would be eligible to play immediately with two years remaining.

When BSB went to press, though, Ohio State was not expecting any additions to the roster, and the Buckeyes already had 85 scholarship players on the roster this fall.

BSB reached out on Aug. 15 to Chugunov's high school head coach, Zoran Milich, who said Chugunov was waiting on a few things to clear up before the transfer is 100-percent official.

## Freshman Safety Suspended 1 Game For DUI, Other Charges

Meyer announced at Big Ten Media Days in Chicago on July 24 that freshman safety Marcus Hooker would be suspended for the first game of the 2018 season for his run-in with the law this summer. Hooker, 18, was charged with driving under the influence, disregarding traffic lanes, careless driving, no rear lights and the purchase of an alcoholic beverage by a minor in his hometown of Newcastle, Pa., on June 16.

Hooker, the younger brother of former Ohio State and current Indianapolis Colts safety Malik Hooker, arrived at Ohio State in June for summer enrollment. He hauled in an OSU offer July 26, 2017, and committed to the program the next day. He then inked his National Letter of Intent during the early signing period on Dec. 20.

The 247Sports composite rated Hooker a three-star recruit out of New Castle High School, and he was ranked nationally as the No. 642 player and the No. 20 prospect in Pennsylvania.

Hooker was seen wearing a cast and sling

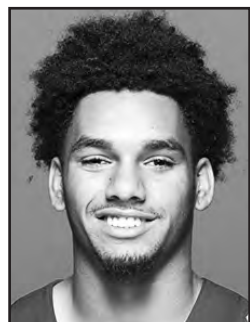
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shed their black stripes since fall camp started Aug. 3. The first to do so was linebacker Dallas Gant (6-3, 225) on Aug. 8. The Toledo St. John's Jesuit four-star product enrolled early and caught Meyer's attention in March.

"He's probably going to play," Meyer said of Gant, who is a candidate for time on special teams and defense. "He's shown enough."

The next freshman to lose his stripe was fellow linebacker Teradja Mitchell (6-2, 236). The four-star from Virginia Beach (Va.) Bishop Sullivan enrolled in June, thus becoming the first summer enrollee to earn the honor.

Gant and Mitchell were joined as official Buckeyes on Aug. 11 by running back Brian Snead (5-11, 211) and defensive tackle Taron Vincent (6-2, 288). Snead, a four-star out of Seffner (Fla.) Armwood, and Vincent, a five-star from Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy, enrolled in the summer.



Chris Olave

San Marcos (Calif.) Mission Hills three-star wide receiver Chris Olave (6-1, 175), another summer enrollee, lost his stripe Aug. 13.

Three more freshmen had theirs removed on Aug. 18, the final day of fall camp.

They were tight end Jeremy Ruckert (6-5, 240), defensive end Tyreke Smith (6-4, 255) and running back Master Teague (5-11, 215). Ruckert, a four-star product of Lindenhurst, N.Y., and Smith, a four-star from Cleveland Heights, were summer arrivals while Teague, a four-star out of Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Blackman, was one of the nine early enrollees.

Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy five-star product Tyreke Johnson had his stripe removed Aug. 20. The 6-1, 193-pound early enrollee was listed as a safety by recruiting services when he was in high school but is a cornerback for Ohio State.

A number of players who are not freshmen lost their stripes in August as well.

On Aug. 9, senior walk-on tight end Tate Duarte achieved the accomplishment. Originally from Poland (Ohio) Seminary, Duarte (6-5, 248) walked on this spring. He started out at the FCS level with St. Francis in Loretto, Pa., for the 2015 season. He then

transferred to the Division-II ranks with Ohio Dominican in Columbus for the 2016 and 2017 campaigns.

Sophomore quarterback Kory Curtis (6-3, 228), who is from Cape Coral, Fla., and walked on at Ohio State in the summer of 2017, shed his stripe Aug. 11.

Five days later, junior walk-on running back Amari McMahon lost his stripe. The 6-0, 205-pounder who prepped at Dublin (Ohio) Scioto joined Ohio State in the fall of 2017.

## QB Reportedly Transferring To Ohio State

Former West Virginia quarterback Chris Chugunov may be transferring to Ohio State, according to a report issued on Aug. 14 by Allan Taylor of The Dominion Post, a daily

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|---|---|



Continued From Page 5

on his right arm during Ohio State's 14th practice of fall camp on Aug. 18.

### Bosa Named 1st-Team AP Preseason All-American

On Aug. 21, Ohio State junior defensive end Nick Bosa was named to the AP preseason All-America team. A native of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Bosa also is a member of the Maxwell, Bednarik and Bronko Nagurski awards watch lists.

In 2017, Bosa led the Buckeyes in tackles for loss (16) and sacks (8½). The 6-4, 263-pounder was named the 2017 Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the year as well, becoming the fourth straight Buckeye to win the award.

### 2 Buckeyes Make SI All-America Teams

In addition to being on the AP preseason All-America team, Bosa was a unanimous first-team All-America selection for Sports Illustrated, which announced its preseason All-America squads on Aug. 15.

Sports Illustrated also recognized Ohio State fourth-year junior cornerback Damon Arnette, who was named a preseason second-team All-American.

Arnette (6-0, 195) has played in 27 games and has logged 65 tackles to this point in his Ohio State career. Last year, the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native started 12 games,

## Snyder Headlines OSU's Summer Grads

Three-time national champion and Olympic gold medalist wrestler Kyle Snyder highlighted the list of 29 current and former Ohio State student-athletes who graduated Aug. 5 at the university's summer commencement in the Schottenstein Center.

Snyder won gold in the 97kg competition at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, becoming the youngest Olympic and world champion in U.S. history. He was the Big Ten's Male Athlete of the Year in 2017 and 2018, helping the Buckeyes to three conference championships in his OSU career. He was also on the 2015 national championship team, adding to his three individual titles.

The list of graduates also included seven current and former football players, including defensive end Jashon Cornell and kicker Sean Nuernberger. Cornell is entering his fourth full year in Columbus as a fourth-year junior while Nuernberger will be a fifth-year senior in 2018.

The complete list of graduates, including their degrees, can be found below.

**BASEBALL** – Bo Coolen, sport industry.

**MEN'S BASKETBALL** – Matthew Lehmann, sport industry.

**WOMEN'S BASKETBALL** – Stephanie Mavunga, kinesiology (master's).

**FENCING** – Max Chastenot, marketing; Morgan Mzhen, criminology; Stanislav Sudilovsky, earth science; Lewis Weiss, international studies.

**FOOTBALL** – Kyle Berger, exercise science; Christopher Carter, communication; Jashon Cornell, family resource management; Jordan Leasure, sport industry; Sean Nuernberger, computer and information science; Robert Rose, African-American and African studies; Curtis Terry, African-American and African studies.

**WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS** – Taylor Harrison, communication; Alexis Mattern, sport industry.

**MEN'S ICE HOCKEY** – Luke Stork, sport industry.

**MEN'S LACROSSE** – Henry Bethke, economics.

**PISTOL** – Kara Moody, speech and hearing science; Michael Soklaski, molecular genetics.

**ROWING** – Cassandra Johnson, communication.

**MEN'S SOCCER** – Marcus McCrary, history.

**WOMEN'S SOCCER** – Bryce Watts, child and youth studies.

**WOMEN'S SWIMMING** – Kathleen Cook, animal sciences.

**SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING** – Monica Velazquez-Stiak, sport industry.

**MEN'S TENNIS** – Chase Buchanan, communication.

**MEN'S VOLLEYBALL** – Maxime Hervoir, communication.

**WRESTLING** – Cody Allen Burcher, sport industry; Kyle Snyder, sport industry.

– Tim Moody

intercepted two passes, made 44 tackles and registered eight pass breakups.

### Dept. Of Education Opens Probe On Former OSU Team Doctor

An investigation of allegations made against former Ohio State team physician Dr. Richard Strauss was opened by The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights on Aug. 16.

According to a statement released by the university, the OCR – which oversees the enforcement of Title IX – is investigating whether Ohio State is responding promptly to reports made by former students, including sexual misconduct allegations made against Strauss and allegations that the university allowed the abuse to continue.

The OCR Cleveland office will handle the investigation.

"We welcome the involvement and careful oversight of OCR and look forward to providing any information we can," said

Gates Garrity-Rokous, vice president and chief compliance officer for Ohio State.

Three class-action lawsuits have been filed against Ohio State citing the university knew about the alleged sexual misconduct by Strauss, who committed suicide in 2005, and ignored the complaints made.

Ohio State began its own independent investigation in April run by Perkins Coie LLP. Additional updates are expected to be announced at the board of trustees meeting in late-August.

The university statement also noted that Ohio State will continue to provide updates on its independent investigation and will report the outcome when it is completed.

"We responded promptly and appropriately to the allegations received in April about Dr. Strauss," Garrity-Rokous said. "We are confident in the independence and thoroughness of the investigation we launched then as well as our ongoing commitment to transparency."

### OSU Transfer Granted Immediate Eligibility

Former Ohio State offensive lineman Jack Wohlabough, who announced in January that he was transferring to Duke, was granted immediate eligibility by the NCAA on July 11 after the organization approved a waiver request from Duke.

Wohlabough was a three-star prospect out of Walsh Jesuit High School in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. He redshirted his first year at Ohio State in 2016 and did not see any playing time last season.

Wohlabough, who has three years of eligibility remaining, is the second OSU offensive lineman to transfer to the Blue Devils in the last two years. Evan Lisle announced ahead of the 2016 season that he would transfer to Duke for his final year of eligibility.

### Pair Of Former Buckeyes Retire From NFL

Two former Ohio State football players announced at the end of July and beginning of August that they were retiring from the NFL. Former Buckeye linebacker Joshua Perry did so on July 30, while former OSU offensive lineman Jack Mewhort followed suit on Aug. 2.

Perry, 24, said in a statement he wrote and posted to his Twitter account that being

diagnosed with his sixth concussion led to his decision.

"Football has been one of the biggest blessings in my life, but recent concerns about concussions and the health of my brain have led me to step away from the game," a portion of Perry's statement read. "I've recently sustained my sixth documented concussion. It wasn't from a high velocity, big contact play. It was a very pedestrian thing, and that was a huge concern to me. The last thing I want to do is put the health of my brain and my future well-being in jeopardy over a game and over a paycheck."

Once a four-star prospect out of Olentangy High School in Lewis Center, Ohio, Perry played at Ohio State from 2012-15 before being selected in the fourth round of the 2016 NFL draft by the San Diego Chargers, who have since moved to Los Angeles.

He appeared in 15 games for the Chargers as a rookie, started once, and collected 22 tackles. The Chargers placed Perry on injured reserve in 2017 because of a head injury and later released him. The Indianapolis Colts then signed him to the practice squad in 2017, eventually promoting him to the active roster. He appeared in two games last fall. The Seattle Seahawks signed him in June.

In his four years at Ohio State, Perry played in 38 games and recorded 296 tackles and 7½ sacks. He was a member of the Buckeyes' 2014 national championship squad.

Perry said in his statement that he plans to pursue his real estate license. He added that, while staying in the Columbus area, he hopes to remain close to sports through writing, TV and radio.

As for Mewhort, the 26-year-old unveiled his decision through a statement released by the Indianapolis Colts, who picked him in the second round of the 2014 NFL draft.

"I would like to thank the Irsay family (which has owned the franchise since 1972) and the entire Colts organization for giving me the opportunity to live a childhood dream," Mewhort's statement read. "The fans and the city of Indianapolis have treated me like one of their own, and I am forever grateful. Wearing the Horseshoe was one of the biggest honors I have ever known, and I will always bleed blue. Go Colts!"

In an interview with Colts.com on Aug. 7,



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Mewhort explained further why he retired. "My No. 1 thing has always been that I want to do my part for the team," Mewhort said. "I've always loved the guys I've played with – loved the offensive line and going out there and looking to my left and my right and caring about those guys. I got to a point where I wasn't going to be able to uphold my end of the bargain for those guys next to me, and I didn't want to go out there and not be able to do that – not help the team."

Mewhort, from Toledo, started all 45 games he played during his four seasons in the NFL. Injuries, however, plagued him the past two years. He played a total of only 15 games in 2016 and 2017 combined because of knee injuries that sent him to the season-ending injured reserve list.

Mewhort spent five years at Ohio State. He redshirted his first year on campus (2009) before playing in 10 games as a backup during his redshirt freshman season of 2010. He then became a starter in 2011, beginning the year at left guard before moving to the right side after five games. Following a brief suspension at the beginning of the 2012 campaign, the offensive lineman was in the trenches for the rest of Ohio State's 12-0 season. Mewhort was named a captain before his senior year of 2013.

**2 Former Buckeyes Signed By NFL Teams**

While Mewhort and Perry have concluded their NFL careers, two other former Ohio State football players are getting a shot to prolong theirs.

Former OSU wide receiver Corey "Philly" Brown was signed by the Denver Broncos on July 27, one day before the team opened training camp. Former OSU kicker Mike Nugent, meanwhile, was signed by the Oakland Raiders on Aug. 4.

Brown, who played at Ohio State from 2010-13, was not selected in the 2014 NFL draft and later signed an undrafted free agent contract with the Carolina Panthers. In three seasons with Carolina, Brown caught 143 passes for 1,019 yards and seven touchdowns and also returned a punt for a score. He played in Super Bowl 50 against the Broncos, registering four receptions for 80 yards in a losing effort.

Brown was not retained by the Panthers following the 2016 season. He signed a one-

year contract with the Buffalo Bills in March 2017 before he was cut, re-signed and then released days later.

During his time as a Buckeye, Brown played in 52 games, snagged 145 passes for 1,750 yards and 15 touchdowns and returned two punts for scores.

With Nugent, should he make Oakland's 53-man roster, it will be the eighth team he has played for as he enters the 14th season of his NFL career.

Nugent, who played for Ohio State from 2001-04 and was a member of the 2002 national championship team, was selected in the second round of the 2005 NFL draft by the New York Jets. In four years with the Jets, the Centerville, Ohio, native converted 81.5 percent (75 of 92) of his field goals. He split the 2009 season between the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Arizona Cardinals before signing with the Cincinnati Bengals for the 2010 campaign. He spent seven years in Cincinnati, producing an 81.8 field-goal percentage (157 of 192). Nugent, who was cut by the Bengals in December 2016, split last season between the Dallas Cowboys and Chicago Bears.

In four years with the Scarlet and Gray, Nugent made 72 of 88 field-goal attempts (81.8 percent). He was a consensus All-American in 2002 and 2004, the same year he won the Lou Groza Award. By the time he left Ohio State, he had broken or tied 22 school records, including most points in a career by any player at OSU (356).

**Member Of '02 National Championship Team Dies**

Highland (Ohio) Local Schools announced on July 16 that former Ohio State defensive end Mike Kudla had passed away unexpectedly the previous day. He was 34.

Kudla, once an All-Ohio Defensive Player of the Year for Highland High School in Medina, was a freshman at Ohio State in 2002 when the Buckeyes beat Miami (Fla.), 31-24, in double overtime to win the national title. Upon returning from the game, Kudla was diagnosed with Johnson-Stevens syndrome, an immune-system condition in which the body attacks its own mucous membranes.

He eventually recovered from the ailment, but a neck injury and a torn labrum

hampered him through much of 2004, his junior season. As a senior, he was named first-team All-Big Ten when he recorded 41 tackles and tied A.J. Hawk for the team lead with 9½ sacks. Kudla played in 49 games at OSU, including 19 starts, collecting 91 tackles and 14½ sacks.

After failed attempts at making the Pittsburgh Steelers, Green Bay Packers and Miami Dolphins rosters, Kudla set his sights on the Arena Football League. The AFL went bankrupt in December 2008, however, and Kudla dropped football altogether.

He became an agent for State Farm Insurance in 2009. Three years later, he was named the managing director of development for the Fisher College of Business at Ohio State. Most recently, he was the owner of Core Plex, where he developed and built medical facilities across America. He also worked with the NFL on proper protocol for Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), a degenerative brain disease found in people who have a history of repetitive head trauma.

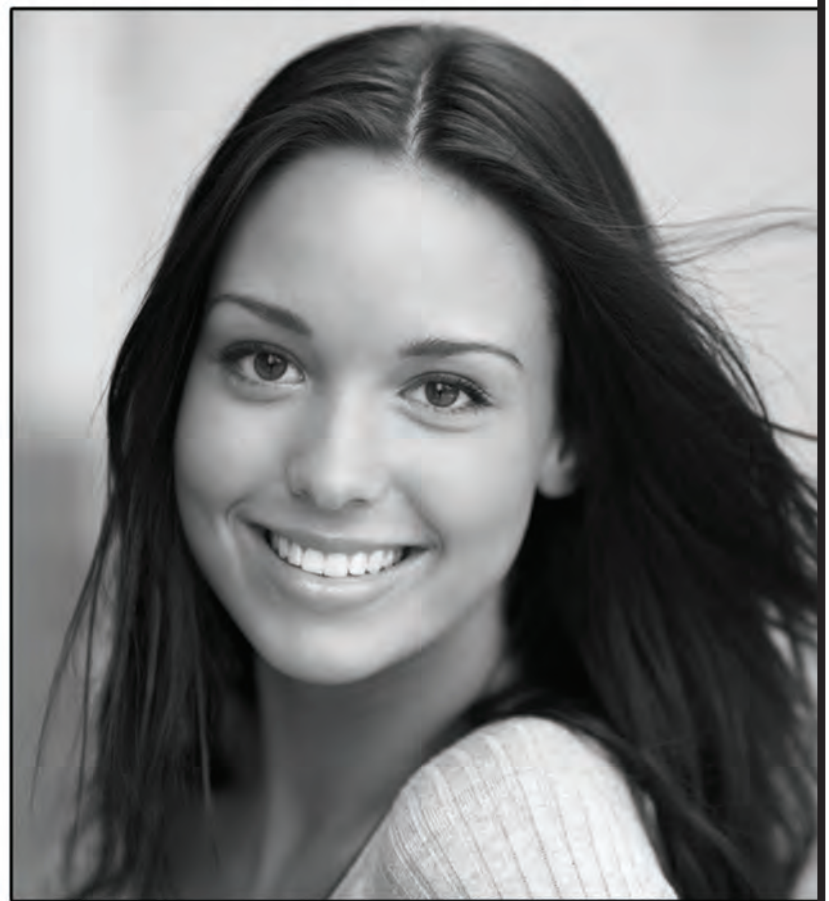
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"Despite his success on and off the football field, Mike remained humble and was extremely generous with his time and resources," a portion of Highland Local Schools' statement read. "He was always willing to share his experience and mentor youth. He was loved and respected by many and will be missed terribly."

### CFP Sticking With Cotton, Fiesta, Peach Bowls

The College Football Playoff will continue to rotate through the Cotton Bowl, Fiesta Bowl and Peach Bowl through at least 2026. Executive director Bill Hancock announced July 13 that a new deal had been struck with the three bowl games, adding onto the current contract that runs to 2021.

"These bowl games have provided a quality experience for the student-athletes and fans for many years, including the first four seasons of the CFP, and we know that will continue," Hancock said in a statement. "The communities of greater Dallas, Phoenix and Atlanta have fully embraced the opportunity to be a part of this very popular event and to showcase the unique opportunities they offer to visitors."

In addition to the Cotton, Fiesta and Peach bowls, the CFP will continue to rotate the Rose, Orange and Sugar bowls through 2025-26 as well.

For the upcoming season, the Cotton and Orange bowls will host the CFP semifinal games. Next year, it will be the Fiesta and Peach bowls. In 2020-21, it will be the Rose and Sugar bowls. The semifinals return to the Cotton and Orange bowls in 2021-22, followed by the Fiesta and Peach bowls a year later. The Rose and Sugar bowls will host the semis in 2023-24, the Cotton and Orange bowls in 2024-25 and the Fiesta and Peach bowls in 2025-26.

Sites for the championship game have been determined through the 2023-24 season. They include Santa Clara, Calif.; New Orleans; Miami; Indianapolis; Englewood, Calif.; and Houston in that order.

The CFP debuted in 2014-15 when Ohio State topped Alabama in the Sugar Bowl before beating Oregon in the national title game at AT&T Stadium, the site of the Cotton Bowl. The Buckeyes lost to Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl in 2016 in the CFP semifinals a year after beating Notre Dame at the same bowl game in a non-playoff contest. In 2017, the Buckeyes missed out on the playoff and appeared in the Cotton Bowl, beating USC last December.

### OSU Men's Hoops 2018-19 B1G Schedule Announced

The Big Ten announced the men's basketball conference schedule for the 2018-19 season on Aug. 21, and Ohio State opens league play by hosting Minnesota on Dec. 2.

The Buckeyes, led by second-year head coach Chris Holtmann, then have a neutral-site game vs. Illinois at the United Center in Chicago on Dec. 5.

OSU spends the rest of December finishing up nonconference action before resuming the Big Ten season on Jan. 5 at home against Michigan State, last year's regular-season conference champion.

Holtmann's club then goes on the road for games at Rutgers (Jan. 9) and at Iowa (Jan. 12) prior to returning to Columbus to face Maryland (Jan. 18) and Purdue (Jan. 23).

Ohio State closes out the month of January at Nebraska on Jan. 26 and at Michigan three days later.

The Buckeyes are then at home for three of the next four games – Rutgers (Feb. 2), Penn State (Feb. 7) and Illinois (Feb. 14). They play at Indiana on Feb. 10.

Following that four-game stretch, Ohio State heads up to East Lansing to play Michigan State on Feb. 17. A game in Columbus vs. Northwestern three days later precedes a contest at Maryland on Feb. 23.

OSU's final game in February is at the friendly confines of Value City Arena against Iowa on Feb. 26.

Ohio State concludes the regular season at Purdue (March 2), at Northwestern (March 6) and at home against Wisconsin (March 10).

The 2018-19 campaign marks the first time in which the regular-season league

title will be determined following a 20-game schedule.

The Buckeyes finished second last year in the Big Ten with a 15-3 conference record (25-9 overall). Purdue had an identical league mark, but OSU had the head-to-head tiebreaker advantage.

### Tate Signs Contract To Play Overseas

Former Ohio State men's basketball forward Jae'Sean Tate signed a contract with Telenet Giants Antwerp of Belgium, the team announced Aug. 20 on its Twitter page.

Tate, who played his last game as a Buckeye in March, pursued an NBA career this summer prior to taking the overseas route. The Pickerington, Ohio, native was signed to the Milwaukee Bucks' Summer League roster after not being selected in the 2018 NBA draft in late June. But he broke his finger in practice on July 4, two days before the Bucks opened competition in the Summer League.

While in Columbus to watch the first round of The Basketball Tournament at Capital University, Tate told a small group of reporters on July 21 that he was still waiting to hear back from Milwaukee about his future with the squad. He also said that he had interest from a few NBA teams regarding potential training camp invitations, noting that the Chicago Bulls, Orlando Magic and Utah Jazz wanted him to play for their Summer League clubs.

Tate was a four-year starter for Ohio State from 2014-18. He finished his collegiate career with 1,512 points, good for 19th on OSU's all-time scoring list, and 771 rebounds, good for eighth all-time.

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- SEPT 8 - RUTGERS STATE
- SEPT 15 - AT TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY (TCU)
- SEPT 22 - TULANE
- SEPT 29 - AT PENN STATE
- OCT 6 - INDIANA
- OCT 13 - MINNESOTA
- OCT 20 - AT PURDUE
- OCT 27 - BYE WEEK
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# Meyer Admits Loyalty To Bruce Impacted Judgment

Continued From Page 1

I am deeply sorry," Meyer said in his statement. "I am fully aware that I'm ultimately responsible for the situation that has harmed the university as a whole and our department of athletics and our football program."

Meyer admitted that he followed his heart, rather than his head, when it came to the plethora of questionable actions by Zach Smith – actions that ranged from alleged abuse and visits to strip clubs during recruiting trips to delinquency in regard to coaching duties.

Zach Smith is the grandson of the late Earle Bruce, the former Ohio State head

coach who in 1986 gave Meyer his first collegiate coaching job as a graduate assistant with the Buckeyes. Meyer went on to coach under Bruce at Colorado State as well, and the two had a close relationship – bordering on a father-son relationship – until Bruce's death earlier this year.

Meyer noted that he did not know many of the details about Zach Smith that emerged during the investigation (a full breakdown of the findings can be found on page 12 of this issue), but he expressed more than once that he should have known more. Meyer also made it clear that, if he had known more, he would have removed Zach Smith from the staff much sooner.

"The biggest regret, I wish I would have known more and if I had known more, I would have taken action much quicker," Meyer said.

"There were red flags and I wish I had known and I wish I did a better job of finding things out," he added later in the press conference. "I wish I was told more things. Ultimately, that is part of the job – you're ultimately responsible to represent this incredible university, and I wish I had done more. I wish I had known more."


Meyer noted that in the week before Big Ten Media Days, it was brought to his attention that Zach Smith had a criminal trespassing charge leveled against him earlier in the year. Meyer, until then, had been unaware of the charge, and he expressed frustration that he hadn't been notified sooner. After that, a protective order was requested by Courtney Smith, which Meyer viewed as the first real

proof of domestic abuse, according to the findings of the investigation. That's when Meyer made the decision to fire Zach Smith.

Gene Smith, for his part, admitted that, as athletic director, he had obligations that weren't met. The investigation found that, when notified of the 2015 allegations against Zach Smith, Meyer and Gene Smith both opted to allow the legal proceedings to play out. The investigators found that Zach Smith was told by Meyer that, if Zach Smith was in fact guilty of domestic abuse, he would be fired. Gene Smith told the then-assistant that he would be let go if charges were ever filed.

Charges weren't filed, though, and Meyer – according to the investigation – was never given proof of abuse beyond a he-said-she-said situation between Zach Smith and Courtney Smith.

Meyer and Gene Smith, though, both had an obligation to report the allegations to



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Ohio State's compliance office, which they didn't do. The investigators found that their decision not to report was an oversight related to a misunderstanding of their reporting obligations, though.

"I have ultimate authority and responsibility and oversight and accountability for our athletic department and particularly the football program," Gene Smith said. "And I understand that I could have done a better job in this particular instance."

Early on in the investigation, there was speculation that Meyer had violated the Title IX clause in his contract by failing to report the allegations. The investigation learned, however, that Michelle Willis – Ohio State's designated Title IX coordinator for athletics – was the first individual at the university to learn of the 2015 allegations. She was notified of the investigation by law enforcement and in turn notified Gene Smith, who passed the information to Meyer.

The reporting issues, therefore, had nothing to do with Title IX obligations, but a separate obligation to report to the compliance office.

"Coach Meyer and AD Gene Smith, although acting in good faith, did not report the investigation of Zach Smith for domestic violence in 2015 to compliance as we believe they should have," White said in her prepared statement. "Although law enforcement had not brought charges at the time that Coach Meyer and AD Smith became aware of the investigation, the compliance function could have been in the best position to assess whether to conduct an internal investigation into the allegations had they known about them.

"In the domestic violence context especially, there are many cases in which abuse takes place but there is no arrest or criminal prosecution. And so simply relying on law enforcement to take action in the face of such allegations is not, in our view, an adequate response."

Beyond the mishandling of the 2015 allegations, and failure to follow adequate reporting protocols, the investigation found that there were numerous instances involving Zach Smith that could have or should have led to termination before July 23.

"The investigation identified multiple other examples of inappropriate conduct by Zach Smith while employed as an assistant football coach, some known by Coach

Meyer and/or Gene Smith and others on the football staff," read a summary of the findings handed out before the press conference. "Coach Meyer and athletic director Smith's efforts to help Zach Smith overcome his personal issues went too far in allowing him to remain as an employee in the face of repeated misconduct."

During the press conference, questions were raised as to whether Zach Smith should ever have been hired by the university. He had previously been arrested, but not charged, after an allegation of domestic violence in 2009 while he was on Meyer's staff at Florida. Meyer was aware of the incident at the time, although he did not tell Ohio State about it when he opted to hire Zach Smith in 2011 to join his staff in Columbus.

The investigation found that, while Meyer should have disclosed the 2009 incident to Ohio State, he was not obligated to by any law, rule or regulation. The regular background check that all prospective employees are subjected to did not turn up any indication of the 2009 arrest, either.

Gene Smith, when asked about the deci-

sion to hire Zach Smith in the first place, admitted that the process should likely take more into account going forward.

"I had a conversation with our new vice president for human resources today around our hiring practices and how we might be able to expand on our effort relative to our background checks," Gene Smith said. "Obviously, all of our employees go through a standard background check. But the reality is we can probably go deeper with some positions, and that is one that we can go deeper on."

At the end of the day, though, while policies will likely be changed going forward, they weren't in place back in 2011 when Zach Smith was hired. He was kept on staff up until July 23 this year which, the investigation proved, was a mistake by Meyer and Gene Smith. For that, they will serve their respective suspensions, but questions will continue – especially after nobody in the press conference chose to directly address Courtney Smith, the alleged victim of Zach Smith's abuse.

One question that has a firm answer, though, after weeks of speculation, is in

regard to who will coach the Buckeyes on Sept. 1. That will be acting head coach Ryan Day, who has served in place of Meyer since he was placed on leave. Day, Ohio State's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, will lead the team through the remainder of preseason practices, then he will be the man in charge for the first three games.

After that, Meyer will return to the sidelines – barring further developments – giving him nearly a month to reflect on the investigation, his role in the mistakes that were made and his punishment for those mistakes.

Then it will be back to football for Meyer as the Buckeyes pursue another Big Ten title and a return to the College Football Playoff.

"The suspensions are tough but I fully accept them," Meyer said. "I wished I could go back and make different decisions but I can't. These difficult lessons are a constant reminder of the duties and obligations that I have as a member of this universities and this community.

"I take full responsibility – I take this responsibility very seriously, and I will do better."



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# 23-Page Report Details Meyer Investigation

By **TIM MOODY**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State announced suspensions for head football coach Urban Meyer and athletic director Gene Smith on Aug. 22, capping a weeks-long process that included a 14-day independent investigation into the athletic department's handling of former assistant coach Zach Smith's employment, which lasted from late 2011 until he was fired July 23.

Meyer will serve an unpaid suspension through Sept. 2, the day after the Buckeyes open their season against Oregon State at Ohio Stadium. He will also be suspended on Sept. 8 for the home game against Rutgers and on Sept. 15 for a matchup with TCU in Arlington, Texas. Gene Smith will serve his unpaid suspension from Aug. 31 to Sept. 16 – spanning the first three football games as well.

The punishments were handed down by university president Michael Drake after a board of trustees executive session to discuss the matter, a meeting which lasted past the 10-hour mark at the Longaberger Alumni House. After the suspensions were announced, and after a press conference concluded, the university released the full summary of the findings from the investigation. A breakdown of those findings can be found below.

## The Questions

The investigation focused on three main questions:

1. Did Meyer violate any university policies or rules, Title IX, NCAA rules, Big Ten rules, Ohio State ethics laws, federal or state laws or any part of his contractual obligations with the university related to his handling of domestic violence allegations made against Zach Smith by his ex-wife, Courtney Smith?

2. While speaking at Big Ten Media Days in Chicago on July 24, did Meyer “misrepresent his knowledge of a law enforcement investigation” regarding 2015 domestic violence allegations against Zach Smith. If he did, was it on purpose?

3. What role did Gene Smith play in the events related to Zach Smith's employment, and did he violate any of the rules or laws stated above?

## The Working Group

On Aug. 2, Ohio State formed an independent board working group to “oversee the independence and work” of the investigation in addition to being available for consultation and advice to the investigators. The group also received the final report from the investigative team and assisted with communication to the board of trustees.

The working group was chaired by former Ohio House speaker Jo Ann Davidson and also included Ohio State trustees Alex Fischer, Janet Porter and Alex Shumate. Non-trustees in the group were former acting U.S. deputy attorney general Craig Morford and former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Ohio Carter Stewart.

The independent investigators engaged by the working group were led by Mary Jo

White, who is the senior chair of New York law firm Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, and partner David Sarratt.

## The Evidence & Witnesses

Over the course of the investigation, which met its original 14-day timeline when it concluded Aug. 19, Meyer, Gene Smith, Zach Smith and Courtney Smith were the key witnesses, while a total of more than 40 witnesses were interviewed, “many more than once.”

The scope of the investigation included “more than 60,000 electronic documents and 10,000 pages of Coach Meyer's text messages from the past year,” the final report stated. Investigators also looked at media reports, police reports, court filings, contracts and various other documents relevant to the investigation, as well as text messages and photos from Courtney Smith. The group “attempted to, but were unable to retrieve” text messages from Gene Smith, Zach Smith and chief of football operations Brian Voltolini.

## The Findings

The final report released by Ohio State spanned 23 pages, with the sectioned titled “Key Factual Findings” beginning on page 3. What follows is a summary of the main points of the findings, while the full report can be accessed at <https://news.osu.edu/public-records-related-to-the-investigation-in-to-allegations-involving-urban-meyer/>.

**2009 Incident** – The factual findings in the final report began with the events regarding a 2009 allegation of domestic abuse by Courtney Smith against Zach Smith. Meyer, who was the head coach at Florida at the time and had Zach Smith on his staff there, acknowledged in July that he was aware of the 2009 incident, which took place after a party at Meyer's house, the report said.

Meyer, his wife, Shelley, and special assistant to the coach Hiram deFries were all aware of the incident, for which Zach Smith was arrested but never charged.

During the investigation, Meyer claimed that he met with both Zach and Courtney Smith after the incident, but both claimed that only Zach Smith met with Urban Meyer, while Courtney Smith met only with Shelley Meyer at the time. The investigation concluded that it was more likely that Urban Meyer never met with Courtney Smith after the incident, and she decided not to pursue charges after speaking with members of Zach Smith's family, including former Ohio State head coach Earle Bruce.

In December 2011 when Meyer decided to hire Zach Smith in Columbus, he did not inform Ohio State of the 2009 incident, and the arrest did not appear on the background check performed by the university. Gene Smith did not find out about the incident until July 2018 when it first appeared in media reports, the investigation found.

**No DV Arrests/Charges From 2010-2018** – From there, the investigative report turned to incidents that occurred between 2010 and July 22, 2018 – the day before Zach Smith was fired by Meyer. In that time period, there was no evidence of any arrests or charges against Zach Smith for domestic violence, but a domestic violence civil protection order was issued against him – pending a formal hearing – on July 20 this year. Zach Smith is contesting that order.

While there was a lack of arrests or charges related to domestic abuse in that time frame, the investigation found “exten-

sive evidence during this period of misconduct and other problematic, or at least questionable, behavior by Zach Smith while he was employed at OSU.” The report noted that Meyer and Gene Smith were aware of some but not all of the issues.

**2013 Arrest** – In 2013, Zach Smith was arrested for operating a vehicle while impaired, but there is no evidence that Meyer or Gene Smith was aware of the incident.

**2014 Strip Club Visit** – Zach Smith “ran up a significant bill” at a strip club in Florida in May of 2014 while he was on a recruiting trip. The report stated that one other Ohio State coach and at least one high school football coach were also present.

The report stated that Zach Smith spent around \$600 of his own money at the strip club in Miami. Voltolini knew about the visit.

Meyer said he was made aware of the incident – but not the amount spent – and warned Zach Smith that he would be fired if it happened again. He also “revised the 2014 Coaches' Manual to include a ‘morality clause’ instructing staff to ‘[a]void strip clubs or venues that would embarrass The Ohio State University.’” The revision also prohibited porn on any school-issued electronics.

The investigators didn't find any evidence that Gene Smith was aware of the strip club visit, and Meyer did not report it to the athletic compliance office.

**2015-16 Police Investigation** – Mieshelle Willis, who in October 2015 was the deputy Title IX coordinator for athletics at Ohio State, was the first employee at the university to be notified by the Powell police of a domestic violence investigation into Zach Smith regarding the allegations made by Courtney Smith. Willis passed the information along to Gene Smith, who notified Meyer during practice that Zach Smith was “under investigation for domestic violence and could be arrested at any time.”

According to the report, Gene Smith remembers Meyer having a “strong negative reaction to the news.”

Zach Smith was ordered to return from a recruiting trip, and he denied any wrongdoing. Meyer told him, if “you hit her, you are fired,” according to the report, while Gene Smith said termination would occur if charges were filed. Meyer and Gene Smith monitored the investigation but did not notify OSU compliance.

In late fall 2015, Courtney Smith shared her allegations of abuse with Shelley Meyer, including photographs. Both Urban and Shelley Meyer maintain that her text conversations with Courtney Smith were never shared with her husband, but the investigators found it likely that some conversation likely occurred between the Meyers in regard to the allegations.

According to the report, both Urban and Shelley Meyer had doubts about Courtney Smith's allegations in both 2009 and 2015.

**The Divorce** – Courtney Smith filed for divorce on Nov. 12, 2015, after she had been separated from Zach Smith since June of that year. The divorce was finalized Sept. 2, 2016.

The investigators found that Zach Smith's “job performance suffered” during the divorce proceedings, including multiple instances of him being late to practice or workouts as well as skipping recruiting visits and reporting back to Meyer that he had been present as scheduled. At the time, Meyer warned him that if the issues continued, he would be fired, according to Zach Smith. Gene Smith suggested that Meyer make a change, but the coach chose not to.

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TIM MOODY

**LEARNING HIS FATE – Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith received a suspension Aug. 22 that will last from Aug. 31 through Sept. 16.**

**Zach Smith’s Affair** – During the same time period as the divorce and domestic violence investigation, Zach Smith had an ongoing sexual relationship with a secretary on the football staff who was not his subordinate, the investigators confirmed. He also “took sexually explicit photographs of himself in the OSU football facilities and at other locations,” including the White House when Ohio State visited after winning the national title in 2014. Zach Smith also had sex toys delivered to the athletics offices at Ohio State.

According to the findings of the investigators, some members of the football staff were aware of the issues, but Urban Meyer and Gene Smith were not.

**Drug Treatment** – Meyer directed Zach Smith to enter a drug treatment facility for an addiction to a prescription medication used to treat ADHD in June 2016. Gene Smith did not know about the rehab stint.

**Big Ten Media Days** – Zach Smith was fired July 23 after Meyer consulted with Gene Smith. Meyer told investigators that the firing was due to Zach Smith’s failure to notify him of the protection order against him, in addition to his failure to disclose a criminal trespassing charge from earlier in the year. According to the report, Meyer believed the protection order was the first evidence that Zach Smith had, in fact, committed domestic violence.

After making the decision to fire the assistant, Meyer notified other staff members that the move was due to “core value violation and cumulative issues.” The same day, Shelley Meyer texted Urban Meyer to say she was “worried about Zach’s response. He drinks a lot and I am just not sure how stable he will be afraid he will do something dangerous. It’s obvious he has anger/rage issues already.” Meyer did not respond to the text.

That evening, Meyer also saw a media report stating that Zach Smith had a felony arrest related to the 2015 incident, which was false. He instructed members of his staff to find out more information, and they informed him that no such arrest occurred.

While preparing for his press conference in Chicago, Meyer had a group text chat that

included Gene Smith and football SID Jerry Emig. Gene Smith said, “I would be careful. Do not get too detailed.” He suggested that Meyer acknowledge Zach Smith’s firing in his opening statement and refrain from taking any more questions on the matter in addition to acknowledging that he was aware of the 2009 and the 2015 allegations. Emig agreed with that idea and also suggested that Meyer say “there were no charges in 2015 and I really don’t even recall any details,” but Meyer did not respond to that text.

In a text conversation with his agent on July 24, Meyer referred to Zach Smith’s dismissal as the “right thing to do.” He also said it was for “cumulative stuff” and noted that he would “not tell media.”

Despite the recommendations from others, Meyer, in his comments in Chicago, denied knowledge of the 2015 incident. According to the report, Gene Smith and Voltolini were both surprised by Meyer’s statements and informed him afterward that he was aware of the investigation. Meyer told the investigative group that he had not recalled the 2015 investigation until being reminded about it. Other witnesses told investigators that they believed Meyer’s remarks in Chicago were focused on the false report of a felony arrest.

**Possible Deleted Texts** – On Aug. 1, a new report surfaced suggesting that both Urban and Shelley Meyer had been aware of the 2015 allegations – which was true. When that report emerged, Voltolini – during practice – informed Urban Meyer and called it “a bad article.”

According to the investigative findings, Meyer and Voltolini talked about whether the media could access Meyer’s phone, and “specifically discussed how to adjust the settings on Meyer’s phone so that text messages older than one year would be deleted.”

Investigators received Meyer’s phone Aug. 2, and it had no text messages older than a year. There was no evidence as to whether or not the settings were changed as a response to the media report or at another earlier time.

“It is nonetheless concerning that his first reaction to a negative media piece exposing his knowledge of the 2015-2016 law enforce-

ment investigation was to worry about the media getting access to information and discussing how to delete messages older than a year,” the report read.

The Ohio State student paper, The Lantern, had filed a July 25 public records request for emails and text messages between Meyer and Zach Smith and between Meyer and Gene Smith for various dates in 2015 and 2018, but the request did not receive a prompt response and was never brought to Meyer.

“Had Coach Meyer’s phone been examined and processed promptly at that time, we would know definitively that the August 1 article’s revelations had no impact on the evidence we received from July 23rd and dates in 2015,” the report read. “While the absence of prompt and effective follow-up is problematic and frustrating, we want to be clear that we have found no evidence that Coach Meyer was aware of the records request before we brought it to his attention during the Independent Investigation.”

**Paid Administrative Leave** – Meyer was placed on paid administrative leave by the university Aug. 1, the day the beginning of the investigation was announced.

Two days later, Meyer made a statement via Twitter admitting that he had been aware of the 2015 investigation and apologizing for misleading statements in Chicago. He also said he had followed the proper protocol in 2015.

**Possible Violations**

**Failure To Report 2009 Incident** – Meyer did not report his knowledge of the 2009 allegations when Zach Smith was hired at Ohio State, but he was not obligated to by any law or contract. The report stated, though, that it “would have been better” for Meyer to disclose that knowledge at the time.

**2015 Obligations** – The investigators found that both Meyer and Gene Smith had an obligation to report the 2015 investigation regarding Zach Smith to university compliance. Neither individual believed they were in violation of any obligation, though, because they believed Zach Smith’s denials and because no charges or arrests occurred. Meyer was also under the impression that he had no further obligation for reporting because it was his superior who first notified him of the allegations.

While Meyer and Gene Smith should have reported to the compliance office, there was no Title IX violation discovered.

“We have found no other facts giving rise to violations of policy, rules, law, or contractual obligations by Coach Meyer or AD Smith in connection with alleged domestic violence by Zach Smith,” the investigative report read.

**Obligations Regarding Honesty** – According to Meyer’s contract, he is required to “represent Ohio State positively in public and private forums.” With that in mind, the investigators found that Meyer spoke untruthfully in Chicago but also accepted that Meyer was “deeply absorbed in football season and wanted to focus on football” at the time.

The investigation also discovered that Meyer has, at times, suffered from “significant memory issues in other situations where he had prior extensive knowledge of events.” Investigators also found that he has at times taken medicine that can “negatively impair his memory, concentration, and focus.”

In regard to his comments at Big Ten Media Days, the investigators concluded that Meyer was determined to disclose as little personal information regarding Zach

Smith as possible, and that he was focused on the false reports of a felony arrest, but he still made statements that were not true.

**Conclusions Regarding Meyer**

**Meyer Would Have Fired Zach Smith** – The investigators concluded that they believed “that if (Meyer) ever came to learn or believe that Zach Smith had physically abused his wife, Coach Meyer would have fired Zach Smith or any other coach on the spot.”

**Respect For Women** – One of the core values of Ohio State’s football program is a respect for women, and investigators found that Meyer had a “sincere commitment” to that value. Gene Smith does as well, but Zach Smith “did not live up to” that core value in addition to other core values.

**Reliance On Law**

The investigators found that Meyer, Gene Smith and other athletic personnel seemed to emphasize the importance of an arrest or filed charges when determining whether or not a violation that could go against the law or university sexual misconduct policy had occurred, which would necessitate a report to the compliance office. The report stated that, especially in instances of domestic violence and sexual abuse, victims often choose not to come forward and allegations often do not lead to charges. They suggested that “a stronger program to combat sexual abuse and domestic violence” might be warranted.

**In Conclusion**

To cap the 23-page report, the investigators included the following conclusion:

“We have worked hard in a short period of time to investigate this matter and have arrived at our findings independently. While we know that not everyone will agree with our conclusions, we hope that our work will shed some light and be of some benefit to those who are charged with the weighty responsibility of making the important decisions that will follow this report. We especially want to thank the special, independent Board working group for its invaluable guidance and expertise, as well as the entire OSU community for its cooperation in the Independent Investigation and for its commitment to the integrity and independence of this process.”

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# Local, National Columnists Chime In On Meyer

By GARRETT STEPIEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Despite the drag of a nearly 12-hour deliberation, capped by an 8:50 p.m. press conference Aug. 22 at Longaberger Alumni House, it didn't take long for local and national columnists to fire off their takes on Ohio State's decision regarding Urban Meyer.

Meyer, who received a three-game suspension without pay, wasn't the only one taking the heat. Athletic director Gene Smith, who was also suspended without pay from Aug. 31 to Sept. 16, faced additional criticism. University president Michael Drake caught criticism, too, along with general remarks questioning the decision-making of the board of trustees.

Below is a collection of opinions from columnists, in Ohio and beyond, on how everything went down in Columbus.

• **Bill Bender, Sporting News:** "Pay attention instead to a series of missed opportunities, where the university's most powerful voices could have shifted the attention back to the seriousness of the domestic violence allegations at the center of the investigation."

"When asked about what message he has for Courtney Smith – one of the key figures in this scandal – Meyer declined to speak out on that issue. He didn't even mention her by name. Neither did Drake or Gene Smith."

**David Briggs, The (Toledo) Blade:** "If the national narrative will cast Ohio State as the win-at-all-cost bad guys – a cheerleader,

not a leader – know this: no school in America would have fired a three-time national champion coach under these circumstances.

"Hell, some schools would have bowed to fan pressure, reinstated Meyer immediately, and had the band perform Script Urban before the opener. Judging by Meyer's spaced-out gaze in the press conference, he strongly resisted any punishment."

"In that context, credit Ohio State."

• **Paul Daugherty, The Cincinnati Enquirer:** "Indignancy doesn't wear well when it's used too often. It should be pulled out only for the really special occasions, lest it lose its power to convince. I was indignant over Jerry Sandusky and Larry Nassar. I was mildly indignant over Rick Pitino."

"That's a lot of indignance, dispensed over a short period of time, on a group of people belonging to a fraternity known for conniving and charming in equal measure, whose egos, God complexes and fat senses of self worth have existed for a century or two."

"Urban Meyer is a good football coach who did a bad thing, then tried to cover it up. He has faced consequences. That's not enough to get me outraged these days. The suit's back in the closet."

• **Heather Dinich, ESPN.com:** "Ohio State coach Urban Meyer is now 0-2 in news conferences, and that might be the only record that counts."

"The first time, at Big Ten media days, he lied."

"The second time?"

"Meyer stood in front of a room full of reporters and television cameras Wednesday

night, taking center stage in what was the biggest story in sports, and apologized more to 'Buckeye Nation' than he did to Courtney Smith."

• **Dennis Dodd, CBSSports.com:** "In its worst times, Ohio State has constantly proven that its football is bigger than any coach."

"I wish I had done more,' the current coach said."

"Meyer – and the university that employs him – should have."

• **Pat Forde, Yahoo Sports:** "Compare the power that comes with a .901 winning percentage and a recent national championship ring with that of a less successful coach at the same institution. Say, the college basketball coach, who had a .733 winning percentage and no national championship rings. That coach was abruptly pushed out 14 months ago. He had some health issues, but no known scandal befouling his program."

"The largely successful basketball coach had to go. The wildly successful football coach had to stay."

"That's the reality at Ohio State, which retained Urban Meyer but relinquished its reputation in the process. Moving on from this entire tawdry spectacle won't be easy."

• **Teddy Greenstein, Chicago Tribune:** "I actually believe the university chose the right punishment – a suspension of three games and six weeks without pay. Hopefully that money goes to causes that help the victims of domestic violence."

"Meyer is sidelined through Sept. 2, including the season-opener against Oregon State. He cannot coach the team for its Week 2 (Rutgers) or Week 3 (TCU) games but will be permitted to lead practice."

"I do not believe that Meyer's negligence and lies amounted to a fireable offense."

"I do believe that a coach savvy enough to win three national titles and go 47-3 in Big Ten games still somehow doesn't understand the breadth of his screw-ups."

"And that makes what transpired Wednesday night feel empty."

• **Matt Hayes, Bleacher Report:** "Look, if you're paying a coach \$8 million a year to

run a business – because that's what Ohio State football is – you expect him to know every last thing about that business, and everything that could potentially harm that business."

"You don't allow him the excuse of 'I followed proper reporting protocols and procedures.' You don't allow him to lie, intentionally or not, to nine different questions at Big Ten media days about his knowledge of something that could stain the university for years, and later admit that 'I was not adequately prepared' to speak to the media."

"Hey, Urb: Your job is to be adequately prepared for anything."

• **Doug Lesmerises, Cleveland.com:** "Drake addressed the obvious, that no solution would please everyone, and that the two-week investigation and 10-hour consideration by Drake and the OSU board of trustees on Wednesday dealt with some complicated issues."

"The end result, in my opinion, was reasonable. It could have been more severe."

"Smith's failures as an AD in not more systematically dealing with the allegations in 2015 are a problem. Meyer's continued employment of an unqualified relative of a friend put personal relationships ahead of the football program, and he ignored several chances to cut ties with Zach Smith, outside of the fact that Smith was never charged with a domestic-violence crime."

• **Dan Wolken, USA TODAY:** "This whole incident, going back three weeks, is going to leave a mark on Urban Meyer's legacy. And the truth is, for somebody like Urban Meyer who's built so much of his brand on being about more than football, I don't see how anybody can take that seriously anymore. This is a football-driven decision. Understand that Urban Meyer can no longer occupy that moral high ground that he likes to claim so religiously. This was all about winning."

"I think, frankly, America would have respected what Ohio State did today more if they had just come out and said this was about wins and losses. Instead, they're trying to sort of satisfy all parties. And that doesn't really work very well."

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# Buckeyes Sorting Through Various Position Battles

By RYAN GINN  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

At Ohio State, it appears there's no substitute for the benefits of competition.

Despite losing quite a bit of talent to the NFL, the Buckeyes return a total of 19 players who made multiple starts in 2017. Some of those starts came because of injuries, but the rotation that began with cornerbacks has expanded to the wide receivers and defensive line. Furthermore, an influx of young, versatile talent has made it possible for the Buckeyes to mix and match players as they see fit to get the best possible combinations on the field.

On the offensive line, returning starters at guard have switched to center in each of the last two seasons, and that's now a possibility yet again. Though the quarterback battle is effectively over, there's still the question of what role Tate Martell might have if he is indeed the backup. At a number of defensive positions, the depth has reached a level where players can rotate and it may not even matter which one starts.

What follows is a look at each of the position battles, including what's at stake and which players factor into the fight for playing time.

## Quarterback

Though Dwayne Haskins is the presumed starter, no official announcement has been made other than when head coach Urban Meyer proclaimed him the leader entering camp. Ohio State has certainly been operating in a way that would get both players ready, especially since Tate Martell will likely still be used even if he doesn't start.

"Dwayne Haskins and Tate Martell have been putting in the work on and off the field to get themselves prepared for an excellent season," Ryan Day said in a camp update on Aug. 17. "They both have been taking the majority of the reps in practice as freshman Matthew Baldwin is recovering from ACL surgery and won't be 100 percent for another couple of weeks. We can see the improvement by each of the QBs on a daily basis."

What would Martell's role be if Haskins takes the starter role? If he's good enough to

contribute, he's going to find his way onto the field outside of garbage time. Meyer said he even considered him for punt returns before ruling it out because of the risks involved. He didn't provide details about how the Buckeyes might utilize him but did say that there will be a role for him if he performs.

"If Tate doesn't play well, then no, we don't (use him as much)," Meyer said at Big Ten Media Days. "But if he's one of our best players, you have to find a way to get him in the game and we have all kinds of ideas. A guy like that's easy to get into a game."

## Running Back

With Mike Weber limited by an injury for much of 2017, freshman J.K. Dobbins stepped up and gave the Buckeyes an indispensable weapon at running back. With both fully healthy heading into the season, it's still unclear how Ohio State will split up the carries between the two.

Day kept his cards close to the vest in his camp update, saying only that both were doing an impressive job.

"Led by Tony Alford, we have two returning 1,000-yard rushers in J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber," he said. "Both are veterans and are having a productive camp. They are very deliberate with everything they do on the field, and they haven't rested on their success at all. They are going hard every day, fighting to earn their reps. And they love their teammates. They've been great in helping the younger guys acclimate to our culture."

Dobbins figures to get the first carries and the higher amount than Weber, but Weber had moments of brilliance at the back end of the 2017 regular season when he showed off an explosiveness that had previously been lacking from his arsenal. If Ohio State does indeed run the quarterback fewer times than it did with the departed J.T. Barrett, it could render the running back debate moot by freeing up enough carries for both to have a big piece of the offensive pie.

## Wide Receiver

Ohio State returns all but one of its wide receivers from 2017, and the only departure was true freshman Trevon Grimes. With that level of

continuity, it would seem like a pretty straightforward answer as to which players might see the most playing time this season.

However, the wide receivers have lately been a group that mixes and matches in terms of starters and overall playing time, especially among the top six guys.

"This group continues to be full of leaders and is a very strong unit of quality young men," Day said. "The upperclassmen – Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon, Terry McLaurin and K.J. Hill – have set the standard for work ethic on offense, and we are expecting big things from them this season. Austin Mack, Binjimen Victor and C.J. Saunders have also been practicing at a high level, making this unit very deep. The depth continues to grow with the emergence of the true freshmen and younger players, including Chris Olave and Jaalen Gill."

While the aforementioned fourth- and fifth-year guys such as Campbell, Dixon, McLaurin and Hill will certainly have big roles, Mack has a chance to shake things up with a big leap forward this year. There have been glowing reports about him from spring practice and fall camp, and his best friend on the team is Haskins. He certainly looks like he's in line for a bigger role this season that might see him spending more time on the field instead of rotating equally.

## Tight End

Rashod Berry seized the backup role behind Marcus Baugh in 2017, but an impressive spring from Luke Farrell put Farrell in the driver's seat for this year. Meyer said at the end of spring practice that Farrell would enter fall as the No. 1 tight end, and nothing during the two practices media members were allowed to see strayed from that narrative.

Even if Farrell holds on to that starting spot, the jostling for backup reps or snaps in two-tight end sets will be intriguing to watch. Berry and Jake Hausmann not only need to worry about chasing Farrell but also about holding off true freshman Jeremy Ruckert, who Meyer said might be the best tight end he's ever recruited and teammates have similarly praised him.

"Obviously he has to do more than that in

our offense as a tight end, but he's definitely one of those elite types of tight ends," Campbell said of Ruckert at Big Ten Media Days.

## Offensive Line

Normally the offensive line spots would be featured independently, but what happens at some positions affects who might line up elsewhere on the line, so it's best to just weave them all together.

The two tackle spots appear to be the least complex of the bunch. In a somewhat surprising move, it was announced this spring by offensive line coach Greg Studrawa that Isaiah Prince would likely be staying at right tackle with sophomore Thayer Munford taking over for Jamarco Jones at left tackle. Nothing there has changed, as nobody else has been able to supplant Munford in that role.

Although that in itself was unexpected back in spring, the biggest development to emerge

came this fall, when left guard Michael Jordan began practicing at center. The center battle was previously being waged between fifth-year senior Brady Taylor and redshirt freshman Josh Myers. It would mark the third straight year that a starter moved from guard to center if Jordan wins the job, and it would also open a spot at left guard that wouldn't be available to Taylor or Myers.

If Taylor or Myers wins the job, Jordan will obviously stay at guard. But if Jordan ends up snapping, look for either Malcolm Pridgeon or Branden Bowen to end up starting at left guard. Bowen started at right guard in 2017 before breaking his leg, but Pridgeon has come on strong and received praise for his play in fall camp. As for right guard, that spot belongs to Demetrius Knox, who has been a different player since Bowen went down.

"The improvement in Demetrius Knox is something tremendous," defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones said at media days. "He's gotten so much better. If he's not playing in the fall, I'd probably be disappointed in him if he's not playing because he's super talented, he's a good kid, he knows what he's doing."



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## Defensive End

Junior defensive end Nick Bosa enters what will likely be his final season in Columbus given that he's projected as a top-five pick in next year's NFL draft. Who will line up opposite him at the other defensive end spot? It will be either junior Jonathon Cooper or sophomore Chase Young, though the distinction may not matter.

Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson has become comfortable rotating his linemen, and he believes in the benefits of players taking slightly fewer snaps than a traditional starter might. Furthermore, Bosa is a cut above but all three aforementioned linemen have the potential to be elite. What will be interesting to see is whether someone like junior Jashon Cornell or freshman Tyreke Smith can find his way into the rotation on a consistent basis.

## Defensive Tackle

Ohio State has such wealth at this position that it's hard to envision an outcome in which there's not a heavy rotation. Obviously Jones will get his share of snaps given his experience and talent, but there are plenty of guys next to him and behind him who could also factor into the mix.

Junior Robert Landers is the safest bet to be the player who starts next to Jones, and he's



## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEPTH CHART BATTLES

earned it by improving each season he's been in Columbus. But Davon Hamilton could also push for time there, and he's come on strong later in his career after needing some time to develop.

Ohio State players will surely come to love the two players likely to end up behind Jones at the other defensive tackle spot. Tommy Togiai has done everything right since arriving on campus in January, becoming just the second early enrollee ever to have his black stripe removed during spring practice. He's continued that strong play into fall camp. The other name to watch is another true freshman, five-star signee Taron Vincent, who also quickly had his stripe removed after arriving in summer.

### Middle Linebacker

This is Tuf Borland's spot if he's healthy, and all indications are that his recovery from an Achilles injury in March is moving more quickly than originally anticipated. He earned the position with stellar play last season, and while not at full speed yet, he's still been practicing and impressing teammates and coaches.

"His name is pretty indicative of what kind of kid he is, but I anticipate he'll be ready early in the season," Meyer said. "I don't want to put too much pressure on him. I just know him, he's like J.T. (Barrett). He's just one of those guys that he heals fast and he's a tough guy."

However, if he's not ready to go when the Buckeyes face Oregon State in the opener, look for Baron Browning to man the middle for the Silver Bullets.

### Outside Linebacker

At the two outside spots, there is a pair of players battling for each starting role. Dante Booker and Pete Werner are competing for the strongside spot, and Malik Harrison and Keandre Jones are fighting for the weakside role.

"At the Sam, Dante Booker and Pete Werner are all over the field making plays on a daily basis, and Malik Harrison and Keandre Jones have both stepped up in their new roles," Day said. "We're anxious to see how these final scrimmages and practices go before game week."

Based on what was seen in practice, it seems as though Werner has made a big push and could beat out Booker for that spot. On the opposite side, Harrison is expected to beat out Jones.

### Cornerback

Much like defensive end, cornerback is a case of three outstanding players fighting for two starting spots. And, once again, it might simply be rendered moot thanks to rotation, which new cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson said he'll keep as warranted.

Kendall Sheffield and Damon Arnette figure to be the starters in name, but Jeffrey Okudah impressed as a true freshman and could carve out a big role for himself this fall. He earned rave reviews from teammates during bowl practice, and he said something clicked for him late in the regular season.

"Taver Johnson is really enjoying being a Buckeye coach again," Day said. "His position group has focused on being consistent with their technique and their understanding of how everything fits together with this defense. Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield are poised

to continue the tradition of great Buckeye cornerback play. Jeffrey Okudah is coming along well and, after missing the spring due to injury, has come back strong and is using each snap to improve. Shaun Wade is really progressing as well. We are excited about this position group, and all of the guys are working to be consistent in everything they do."

### Safety

Jordan Fuller is back as one of the two starting safeties for Ohio State, but the second spot has been hotly contested dating back to spring practice. Isaiah Pryor has thus far been unable to outright earn the role, and Jahsen Wint has emerged as a challenger.

"First-year Ohio State coach Alex Grinch feels it has been a very positive camp for his position group," Day said. "Jordan Fuller, in particular, has established himself as a leader and as a playmaker on our defense. There has been excellent competition to determine who will be the starter opposite Fuller, between Isaiah Pryor and Jahsen Wint. Brendon White and Amir Riep are fueling the competition by showing up on film and making plays."



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# Day, Wilson Lead Talented Offense Into '18

By JAMES GREGA  
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

At the end of the 2016 season, it was clear Ohio State needed a major offensive overhaul.

Urban Meyer brought in Ryan Day and Kevin Wilson to replace Tim Beck and Ed Warinner to revamp a Buckeye offense that had struggled to move the ball down the stretch in 2016, and for the most part, Ohio State had success.

In 2017, the Buckeyes finished seventh in the nation in total offense, averaging 506.0 yards per game and 41.1 points per contest. Ohio State finished the year with a 24-7 win over USC in the Cotton Bowl, with high expectations for the 2018 season offensively, despite losing the most prolific quarterback in school history, J.T. Barrett.

Prior to Ohio State's investigation into Meyer and now-former wide receivers coach Zach Smith, Day was promoted to offensive coordinator after being offered a head coaching job in the SEC, according to Meyer.

A quarterbacks coach by trade, and with NFL coaching experience, Day's influence could see Ohio State's offense feature a more downfield passing game, something that should also fit the skill set of its new starting quarterback.

Though the Buckeyes haven't officially named a starter yet, Dwayne Haskins is expected to have the job, and given that his skill set resembles more Cardale Jones than Barrett, Ohio State's offense could very well take advantage of Haskins' big arm in 2018.

Redshirt freshman Tate Martell showed flashes of talent in the 2018 spring game and has long been thought to be a contributor in a wildcat-like package this season. After completing just 5 of 16 passes in the exhibition, however, questions surrounding his passing talents remain unanswered.

If the season had started in July, Haskins would have been the starter, according to Meyer. However, Martell has had the chance to impress in fall camp, but it was always a long shot that he could catch Haskins. Instead, he likely had the opportunity to earn a spot in certain packages.



**SHOT CALLERS** – Offensive coordinators Kevin Wilson (left) and Ryan Day (right), who is also acting head coach, will call plays for Ohio State.

TIM MOODY

"This guy is very skilled," Meyer said of Haskins at Big Ten Media Days. "The guy behind him is very skilled. If we took the snap today, I made it clear that Dwayne would be the quarterback, but 30 days from now, a lot happens in 30 days."

Boy, can it.

With Meyer on paid leave, Day served as acting head coach in his absence throughout

fall camp. Additionally, after Smith was fired July 23, Brian Hartline came into the fold as the interim wide receivers coach. The good news for Ohio State's offense, in particular the receiver unit, is that the Buckeyes bring back a number of veterans who should help stabilize the offense.

Whether they can give Ohio State the production the unit has been lacking at times the past few seasons remains to be seen.

### Two-QB System?

Meyer has had success with the rotating quarterbacks in the past, just not at Ohio State.

With Florida in 2006, Meyer utilized both

Chris Leak and Tim Tebow on his way to a national title. However a similar experiment with Cardale Jones and J.T. Barrett did not result in the same success nine years later in Columbus.

Despite finishing the regular season 11-1 in 2015, Ohio State's offense sputtered more than it soared. With speculation surrounding another two-QB system in 2018, Meyer said at Big Ten Media Days that calling plays that fit the skill sets of each quarterback in practice is a challenge that the Buckeyes continue to face throughout spring and into fall camp.

"It's hard, but it is also hard for the defense to prepare for. And it is hard if they are not veteran players," Meyer said. "We are very experienced with both styles of quarterbacks. We did that with Cardale to jump right into that 2014 run when he took over for J.T. Our staff did a hell of a job with that."

With Haskins starting, Martell will have to become one of the best 20 players on offense to see the field, at least according to Meyer's usual philosophy.

"If he is one of our best players, then we have to find a way to get him in the game," Meyer said of Martell at media days. "We have all kinds of ideas. A guy like that is easy to get into a game."

The challenge then becomes mixing in some of Ohio State's other backfield talent, which also features a pair of players who deserve to both see the field.

### Fighting For Carries

J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber are both 1,000-yard backs and both have shown that they belong in a starting lineup. The question now becomes will there be enough carries to go around?

Since Barrett is gone and Haskins isn't the kind of quarterback who will carry the ball 10-15 times a game, the easy answer is yes. The next question then becomes will both backs be comfortable sharing the load?

Speaking in the spring, Weber, the veteran of the group, said he wants to be able to put the team on his back when Ohio State's offense needs a boost. He has set lofty goals for himself in 2018, despite being 1B to Dobbins' 1A on the depth chart.

"Really, I want at least 1,300 or higher rushing yards and at least 15 touchdowns," Weber said during spring camp. "That is the goal for me. I just have to make the best of my opportunities. Hopefully, I get a lot of them."

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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: OFFENSIVE OVERVIEW

Last season, Weber missed two games due to a lingering hamstring injury that bothered him for much of the season. Yet he still managed to rush for 626 yards on 101 carries and 10 scores in 12 games while splitting time with Dobbins, who started every game for Ohio State.

With two prolific runners, a formation where both Dobbins and Weber are on the field at the same time could be used more this season, especially with a more traditional passer. The two were on the field at the same time last season just once, against USC, and the play call went to H-back Parris Campbell.

The two-running back set was worked on throughout the spring and into fall camp, and Weber hopes the Buckeyes use it more in 2018.

"We worked on it a lot, especially early in the spring," Weber said. "We added a lot of different plays to it. It looked really good for us, and hopefully we get back to it."

### New Coach, Same Group of WRs

Smith is out, and former Ohio State wide receiver Hartline is in and is tasked with turning around a wide receiver group that is experienced and talented but has yet to live up to expectations in recent years.

Meyer originally said that Day would help out with the receivers in 2018, but that likely became less of a possibility once Day was named acting head coach. That puts even more responsibility on Hartline's plate, with just one full season of coaching experience under his belt, and none as a primary position coach.

The good news for him is that he has a veteran group of wide receivers to work

with, and development isn't as much of an issue as refining those skills and pulling more out of the unit.

Terry McLaurin, Johnnie Dixon, Parris Campbell, K.J. Hill, Binjimen Victor and Austin Mack are all upperclassmen now, and all figure to rotate throughout the season, much like last season.

Hartline has the confidence of Meyer, who said at media days that the former OSU receiver has all the makings of a talented young coach.

"He's got potential to be an excellent coach," Meyer said. "Brian Hartline is a wonderful guy and works his tail off. Brian Hartline is a very important part of our staff."

Hartline also has the faith of his players, especially Campbell, who said at media days in Chicago that the seven-year NFL veteran has grown alongside the players since returning to campus in 2016.

"He's been with us for two years now, and he's developed a relationship with all the guys in the room," Campbell said. "Guys in the room, we love him. He's someone who's already familiar with the way we go about things. With our men, with our culture, he's been great. He's adapted to us. He's been there for two years. And we've grown a relationship, everyone has with him."

"He's played at the next level, dominated at the next level," Campbell said of Hartline, who played for the Miami Dolphins and Cleveland Browns in the NFL. "He just brings a different mind-set. He shares the things that he did in the NFL and shares what the best of the best do in the league. And obviously getting that knowledge at the collegiate level is definitely going to benefit you."

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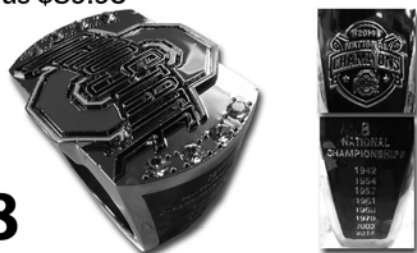
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# Haskins, Martell Top New-Look Quarterback Room

By **TIM MOODY**  
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

One player had the title of starting quarterback at Ohio State for the majority of the past four seasons.

That player's jersey number was 16, and the Buckeyes still have a No. 16 on the roster – but that's junior linebacker Keandre Jones, not J.T. Barrett, who holds every major passing record in program history. While the Buckeyes competed at fall camp from Aug. 3-18, Barrett was busy trying to prove his worth as an undrafted free agent with the New Orleans Saints in the NFL.

With the 2018 season approaching, the Barrett era is over in Columbus – a blessing according to a portion of the fan base and a question mark according to others.

Now it's Dwayne Haskins' turn to be the starter as the third-year sophomore from Potomac (Md.) Bullis School leads the Buckeyes into a new era.

"This is a young group of talented quarterbacks," offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day wrote in an Aug. 17 update. "We have very big shoes to fill in replacing one of the most productive players in the history of college football. In our entire room, we have zero collegiate starts."

"That being said, Dwayne Haskins and Tate Martell have been putting in the work on and off the field to get themselves ready for an excellent season."

## The Starter

While Haskins hasn't officially been named the starter for the season opener against Oregon State on Sept. 1, it's widely accepted that he won the spot during spring camp, and head coach Urban Meyer has consistently said that Haskins is the No. 1 option for the time being. That language was used ahead of fall camp, before Meyer was placed on paid administrative leave,

leaving Day in charge of the team in the interim.

During camp, though, it was obvious that the job belonged to Haskins, who earned eternal fame among the Buckeyes faithful when he replaced an injured Barrett in the second half at Michigan last year, spearheading a 31-20 comeback victory by completing 6 of 7 passes for 94 yards and rushing for another 24 yards on a pair of carries.

In total, Haskins (6-3, 220) completed 40 of 57 passes (70.2 percent) for 565 yards and four touchdowns with one interception in eight games as a redshirt freshman last year.



Dwayne Haskins

He then entered spring practice in a fierce competition with rising junior Joe Burrow, who earned his degree at the end of the spring semester and opted to transfer to LSU. Haskins held off redshirt freshman Martell as well, entering summer workouts and fall camp with the keys to the offense.

After serving as the deputy last season, Haskins had the offseason to prepare for his new role, and his attention shifted.

"In the weight room, on the field, he's just a different dude," fifth-year senior receiver Parris Campbell said of Haskins at Big Ten Media Days in July. "You can see it in his work. He was kind of a guy – joked around a little bit, had funny times in the locker room – you don't see that as often anymore."

"And like I said, when we're in the weight room you can really tell that he's working hard, giving it all. He's coming out of his shell, trying to be that leader that we need him to be."

## The Wild Card

Martell (5-11, 210) committed to Ohio State out of Las Vegas Bishop Gorman as a member of the class of 2017 amid much fanfare, and he showed flashes of his ability in spring practice after redshirting last season. Martell was a clear third option

in the quarterback battle, but he showed the coaching staff enough to earn a spot in the offense beyond the duties of a typical backup.

At Big Ten Media Days, Meyer noted that the top players – regardless of position – will see the field. If Martell makes that list – which is likely – then he'll have a role in the offense.

"We always – and I do it multiple times in the year – I list the top 20 players on offense in order and then I hold it over the coaches' heads to make sure those guys are playing," Meyer said. "If Tate doesn't play well, then no, we don't (use him as much). But if he's one of our best players, you have to find a way to get him in the game, and we have all kinds of ideas. A guy like that's easy to get into a game."

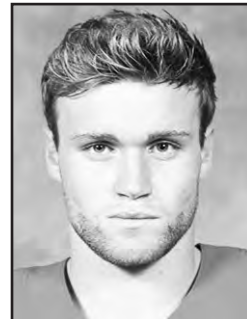
Martell, while adept as a passer, is known most of all for his play-making ability with the ball in his hands. He can extend plays, get out of the pocket and either get rid of the ball on the run or pick up huge chunks of yardage himself. Meyer has even floated the idea of using him in a package with Haskins also on the field or getting him into the rotation as a punt returner.

Those options are less likely, though, since Martell is also the top backup option for Ohio State, meaning the Buckeyes will do what they can to keep him healthy in case he's needed.

Meyer acknowledged that, with Burrow out of the program, playing it safe with Martell will be necessary to some extent.

"You jeopardize your whole program when you do that, so that exact conversation's been had 50, 60 times," Meyer said. "How much can you really use him if he's the No. 2 and the three's the freshman coming off the knee injury?"

Regardless of his role, though, Martell is likely to see playing time early in the season if Ohio State picks up a big lead, and cameo roles in the offense should be expected as well.



Tate Martell

## Projected Starter

**Quarterback**  
**7 • Dwayne Haskins**

6-3 • 218 • So.

Potomac (Md.) Bullis School

Led OSU to a comeback win over Michigan in 2017 after J.T. Barrett's injury.

## The Freshman

The freshman referenced by Meyer above is Matthew Baldwin (6-3, 205), a four-star product of Austin (Texas) Lake Travis.

Baldwin exploded onto Ohio State's recruiting radar late in the process before suffering an ACL injury during the Texas state playoffs. He enrolled early at Ohio State but missed spring practice while recovering from his surgery. Baldwin was involved in fall camp but wasn't 100 percent, meaning he's unlikely to see game action early in the season, if at all, and a redshirt season is almost guaranteed.

When Baldwin is healthy, though, he's expected to make an impact, and he's already received high praise from his teammates, including Campbell.

"First of all, he can absolutely sling it," Campbell said in July. "I don't know if a lot of people know that or not. But I actually – last week I was actually just throwing routes with him and he's going to be elite."

Since Baldwin, a former Colorado State commit, was a late bloomer in recruiting, many looked at him as a second option for the Buckeyes, who saw longtime commit Emory Jones flip to Florida in December. According to Campbell, though, that's not the case.

"Nah, nah, nah. He's not a plan B at all, I can tell you that for sure," Campbell said. "He's just a guy – he doesn't talk a lot, but you can see just in the way he carries himself, you can tell he looks like a natural leader, he looks like a natural winner, and then obviously he has the talent. ... The way he throws the ball is incredible."

## The Other Guys

While Haskins is set to lead the offense and Martell will figure in as a spot player and backup, it's unclear when Baldwin will be fully healthy. With the Texan sidelined, walk-on sophomore signal caller Kory Curtis served as the third-string quarterback during live portions of fall camp.

Curtis (6-3, 228), a Cape Coral (Fla.) Island Coast product, joined the team in the summer of 2017.

Along with Curtis, Cincinnati Christian Academy product Daniel Vanatsky (6-2, 195), a freshman, provides depth as a walk-on for the Buckeyes.

In addition to Curtis and Vanatsky, the Buckeyes were reportedly in position to add another quarterback to the roster. During fall camp, a report surfaced that former West Virginia quarterback Chris Chugunov was set to join the Ohio State program, although the timing of his enrollment was unclear.

Allan Taylor of The (Morgantown, W.Va.) Dominion Post was the first to report the news, stating that Chugunov was expected to be on scholarship. Ohio State is at the full allotment of 85 scholarships this fall, though, and the team wasn't publicly expecting any additions to the fall roster when BSB went to press.

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# Already A Legend, Haskins Is Now A Leader

By **TIM MOODY**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

On Nov. 25, 2017, a legend was born in Ann Arbor, Mich. On Sept. 1, that legend will most likely make his first career start as a member of the Ohio State football team.

In the time in between, quarterback Dwayne Haskins turned from a redshirt freshman inserted into one of the biggest matchups in the sport into perhaps the most important player on one of the nation's best teams – despite not taking an in-game snap in the months gone by.

For Haskins, a third-year sophomore who seemingly won the title of Ohio State starting quarterback during spring camp, his story in Columbus will always start with that game at Michigan.

Haskins, a Potomac, Md., native, had spent the first 11 games of the 2017 season as fifth-year senior J.T. Barrett's backup. He had impressed in garbage time action for the most part – excluding a brutal pick-six against UNLV – but had yet to take a meaningful snap.

That all changed in the third quarter against the Wolverines when Barrett aggravated a knee injury with Michigan ahead, 20-14.

Suddenly, Haskins was not only rushed into the lineup, but he was getting his first meaningful action in what is annually Ohio State's most heated matchup. And things didn't start well for the newcomer.

Facing third-and-3 at the Michigan 43-yard line, the Buckeyes committed back-to-back false starts, turning a simple conversion into a long shot. On the next snap, Haskins' legend truly came to life, though.

The quarterback dropped back on third-and-13 from his own 47 and launched a strike to Austin Mack – his roommate – for 27 yards, threading the pass between two Wolverine defenders in the process. Two plays later, Haskins rushed for 22 yards to the Michigan 1-yard line, and then running back J.K. Dobbins punched it in to put Ohio State ahead for good.

Haskins finished the game 6 of 7 passing for 94 yards while carrying the ball three times for another 24 yards. It was a clutch performance that nobody could have reasonably expected from the former four-star prospect, but it immediately built a mountain of expectations for Haskins heading into 2018.



JOSH WINSLOW

**COMEBACK KID** – Dwayne Haskins led Ohio State to a comeback win over Michigan in his first significant action last season.

Fast-forward to August, and Haskins, still in the shadow of that mountain, was Ohio State's starting quarterback – even if that hadn't been officially announced. With Barrett off to the NFL, Haskins has the keys to the offense, and he'll be tasked with leading the Buckeyes as they pursue another Big Ten title and, ultimately, a spot in the College Football Playoff.

Once Haskins had won the job in the spring, contributing to his main competition Joe Burrow transferring to LSU, he was able to head into summer workouts as a starter and leader for the Buckeyes, and he began to grow on and off the field.

"I think the biggest thing that I've seen in Dwayne is just him getting out of his shell," fifth-year senior wide receiver Parris Campbell said at Big Ten Media Days in July. "You know for those two years that he was backing up J.T., he kind of was a keep-to-himself type of guy, and now you can really see him embracing the role that he's

about to step foot in. He's getting out of his shell and actually trying to be that leader and trying to develop those qualities."

After the spring game, which was the last time Haskins addressed the media, he said he had already become more comfortable in his leadership role.

"I feel like I'm doing a great job of being a leader, having a great demeanor," Haskins said April 14. "I'm a laid-back type of guy but with (head coach Urban) Meyer, the biggest thing is competitiveness and I feel like I've done a great job showing that this spring."

Even while Haskins has embraced his new role, he has to understand whom he's replacing.

Barrett holds every major passing record in program history, and he did that while consistently battling through adversity and injuries along the way. Meyer often referred to Barrett as "one tough cat," a high compliment coming from a coach who values toughness, competitiveness and a winning

spirit above almost anything else, especially from his quarterbacks.

Luckily for Haskins, he's already shown what kind of competitive spirit he brings to the table, despite never making a start.

"Dwayne is – it showed in front of millions of people in our rivalry (game), mainly," Meyer said of Haskins' competitiveness. "He has a little different way of doing it, but he's earning the respect of our players and our staff."

Just like most fans and members of the media, Meyer was quick to refer back to the Michigan game which, at the end of the day, was a small sample size. That said, Haskins' performance on that November day in Ann Arbor is still an indicator of what he brings to the table.

When asked at Big Ten Media Days if people make too much of Haskins' performance in The Game, Campbell was able to put things in perspective.

"I don't think people are making too much of it because honestly, that stage, to perform as he did on that stage against our rivals, I mean, that's huge," Campbell said. "Especially for our coaches and our teammates, that's what matters. But for me, to see him perform like that, it was huge, to see him come out on that stage."

Now with the season just around the corner, people will be expecting more of the same from Haskins. He's proved that he can win in adverse situations, and he's proved that he can make spectacular plays look routine.

But he's still replacing one of the most decorated athletes in school history. Right now, Barrett's legacy is unmatched, while Haskins' legacy spans less than half of one game.

"I think the biggest difference is, you know, catching a pass from Dwayne today is 'I'm just catching a pass from Dwayne,'" Campbell said. "Catching a pass from J.T. today is 'I'm catching a pass from J.T. Barrett, the most winningest quarterback at Ohio State, most touchdowns in Ohio State history.'"

"Dwayne hasn't – don't want to say he hasn't done anything yet, but he hasn't established his legacy yet. But there's no doubt about it that he will."

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# Buckeyes Boast 2-Pronged Backfield Attack

By CRAIG MERZ  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It was three years ago that Ohio State entered its fall camp wondering how in the world three quality quarterbacks could coexist. Would there be enough reps for all of them, or – heading into the 2015 campaign as the defending national champions – was it important to name a starter early and stick with him?

The questions were many. The decision was going to be hard for head coach Urban Meyer and his staff.

His choices included Braxton Miller, one of the most dynamic QBs in OSU history who was coming off shoulder surgery that cost him the entire 2014 season. He was replaced by the less heralded J.T. Barrett, who had guided the Buckeyes to an 11-1 regular season before fracturing his ankle in the Michigan game.

Of course, Cardale Jones replaced Barrett and led the Buckeyes to the inaugural College Football Playoff title.

The lesson learned is that a team should never worry about having too much talent at one position. There are bigger issues to fret over.

As Ohio State enters this season with two proven running backs in junior Mike Weber and sophomore J.K. Dobbins, the task of making the two-headed monster work is daunting. And once again, questions have been raised, as they were in 2015 with the QBs, as to how this is going to work.

Yet circumstances often make the point moot.

No one is wishing ill will to either running back, but look at 2015 when Miller, still recovering from shoulder surgery, moved to wide receiver to leave the quarterback battle to Barrett and Jones.

Who's to say that the story by the end of the 2018 isn't the emergence of a true freshman running back, either Brian Snead or Master Teague? Unlikely, yes, but possible.

Under any scenario, it seems the Buckeyes will be OK with their ground game.

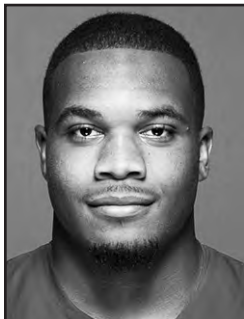
Both Weber and Dobbins rushed for more than 1,000 yards in separate freshman years, and in the three combined seasons of statistics they have 3,125 career rushing yards with 26 touchdowns plus 320 receiving yards and another TD.

Running backs coach Tony Alford said in the spring that having Dobbins and Weber battling for carries can only help themselves and the team.

"Without question it makes you better," he said. "It's competition. The more competition you have, the more successful you'll be because you're going to push yourself to

higher limits that you can't do by yourself compared to when there's someone standing next to you or behind you.

"It makes everyone better. It makes everyone in the room better. It makes our team better. It makes you more accountable in everything you do as far as in the meeting room and on and off the field because you have other guys who are pushing you. It's a close group, though, and they enjoy pushing one another. That's what we're looking for."



J.K. Dobbins

If the competition remains civil, and by all indications it has been, the Buckeyes can expect quality results no matter who is toting the ball.

"We push each other, of course," Dobbins said. "We're almost like best friends. We push each other well."

That's because the program never settles for recruiting one four- or five-star recruit if it can corral two or three recruits. It's the ultimate in next man up.

"From tying our shoes to sprinting, everything is competition around here," Weber said. "That's how it is at Ohio State, period. It's not just me and J.K. It's every position."

If there is one back who's under more scrutiny, it would be Weber.

He came to Ohio State out of Detroit Cass Tech after a hotly contested recruiting battle with Michigan. The day after Weber (5-10, 214) committed to Ohio State on National Signing Day in 2015, running backs coach Stan Drayton took a job with the Chicago Bears, causing some initial bitterness in the Weber camp.

Matters were smoothed with the aid of Meyer and the newly-hired Alford over the ensuing months, and Weber hoped to be the backup to Ezekiel Elliott. However, a torn meniscus in Weber's knee prior to the start of the 2015 season kept him out for an extended period, and he ultimately redshirted.

Healthy the following season in 2016, he was named to two freshman All-America teams (ESPN and Football Writers Association of America) and was the Big Ten Freshman of the Year after rushing for 1,096 yards on 182 carries with nine TDs in addition to 23 catches for 91 yards.

Weber was the third Buckeye freshman to rush for more than 1,000 yards, joining Robert Smith (1,126 in 1990) and Maurice Claret (1,237 in 2002).

Despite those lofty stats, he rushed for just 50 yards combined in the final two games against Michigan (26 yards on 11 rushes) and Clemson (24, 5).

His determination to rebound from those two performances was put on hold when he injured his hamstring in July 2017, paving the way for Dobbins to become the next Buckeye sensation.

Weber rushed for 626 yards on 101 carries

for a 6.2 average with 10 touchdowns last season. His yardage ranked 14th in the conference despite not starting a game. Still, Weber had another personally disappointing end to the season.

He had 6 yards on four carries in the Big Ten championship game vs. Wisconsin and five runs for just 18 yards against USC in the Cotton Bowl.

The postseason presented two choices for Weber: Enter the NFL draft with a large degree of uncertainty where he might be picked or return and challenge Dobbins for playing time.

He decided to stay with the hope of getting more touches through a possible two-back system as well as a bigger emphasis on the running game after the graduation of Barrett (more on that later).

Once Weber got healthy last season he exhibited the type of breakaway speed that Meyer had been looking for since his rookie year. He had an 82-yard score against Michigan State as part of a career-high 162 yards.

Normally, those numbers would be enough to crack the starting lineup unless they came in scrub time vs. a weaker opponent. That was not the case as the Spartans were the No. 3 ranked defense nationally.

It's just that Dobbins, out of La Grange, Texas, was playing as well or better for most of the season beginning in the first game at Indiana when Weber was injured.

He became only the sixth true freshman to start a season opener for Ohio State. The others were left guard Michael Jordan (2016), Claret (2002), linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer (1996), left tackle Orlando Pace (1994) and quarterback Art Schlichter (1978).

Dobbins was not awed by the setting and rushed for 181 rushing yards vs. the Hoosiers, a mark he would not reach the rest of the season.

But don't be fooled by that. He had five other 100-plus yard games and reached the 90s in two others en route to the school freshman record of 1,403 yards while scoring seven times on the ground. Also, his 7.2 yards per carry is second all-time at OSU.

He was named to ESPN's Freshman All-America team and was second-team All-Big Ten.

Dobbins (5-10, 214) saved some of his best games for the toughest opponents. He had 124 yards against Michigan State's vaunted defense, 174 yards vs. Wisconsin's top-ranked D and 101 on Michigan when the Wolverines' defense was third in the nation at the time.

Heading into this season Dobbins has been named to the Doak Walker Award watch list, given annually to college football's best running back, and the Maxwell Award list (best player).

## Projected Starter

**Running Back**  
**2 • J.K. Dobbins**

5-10 • 212 • So.

La Grange, Texas

Set the program record for freshmen with 1,403 rushing yards last year.

said at Big Ten Media Days in July. "We already have an established run game with J.K. and Mike. I think it's going to be hard for defenses to contain us once we get clicking on all phases."

Barrett had five games last season in which he had 15 to 20 carries, including the final three games. Without him, Dobbins and Weber will have a bigger workload with the possibility that each could regularly reach those parameters.

"If we run the ball more than 30 times, which we have been, with the quarterback and me and him combined, I feel like since the quarterback is gone it could be more carries for us," Weber said. "I feel like we can get 15-18 carries a game, unless we're blowing someone out and we get pulled or something like that."

It's more likely than ever that Weber and Dobbins could get breathers if the Buckeyes are rolling up the score.

With new NCAA rules that allow freshmen to play up to four games without losing a season of eligibility, it could mean playing and needed experience for Snead and Teague.

Snead (5-11, 211) was a four-star recruit in the 247Sports composite rankings and the No. 17 player in Florida. Unlike Teague, he was not an early enrollee in January, although he did have his black helmet stripe removed quickly in fall camp.

As a senior last year at Seffner (Fla.) Armwood, Snead rushed for 1,378 yards and 16 touchdowns. He ran for 3,506 yards and 48 touchdowns his final three seasons and added 49 catches for five touchdowns.

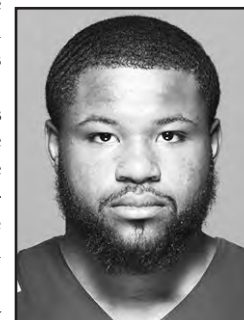
"He's going to come in here and do all he can and be very intentional about learning our offense and buying into our culture of just play as hard as you can every single snap, take it all in and just be the best version of him that he can be," Alford said before the fall camp. "That's my expectation."

Teague (5-11, 215) came out of the spring game, where he had 73 yards and a score on 14 carries, as No. 3 on the depth chart in Snead's absence. The Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Blackman product was also a four-star prospect.

He ran for 2,031 yards and 25 touchdowns as a junior. During his senior year he had 709 yards on the ground and 10 TDs in the first six games before sustaining an ankle injury.

There are two other running backs on the roster as of mid-August, not including redshirt sophomore Demario McCall, the former running back who is expected to compete for an H-back spot.

Amari McMahan was a receiver at Dublin Coffman in suburban Columbus. The 6-0, 205-pound junior is in his second season with the Buckeyes after he walked on in the fall of 2017. The biology major earned OSU Scholar-Athlete status last year. Sophomore Mitch Rossi is also a second-year walk-on and was an OSU Scholar-Athlete majoring in sports industry. Rossi, out of Franklin, Tenn., is 6-1, 235.



Mike Weber

## More Carries To Go Around

With sophomore QB Dwayne Haskins getting the call for now over redshirt freshman Tate Martell, there will be more opportunities to tote the ball for the backs than when Barrett was in charge.

Barrett last season was the Buckeyes' second-leading rusher with 798 yards and 12 TDs on 165 rushes. Haskins is not going to run nearly as much. He has a stronger arm than his predecessor and needs to use it to connect downfield to keep defenses from stacking the box.

"We're going to add to our game vertically," fifth-year senior wide receiver Parris Campbell

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# OSU Wideouts Have Depth, Talent, Experience

By GARRETT STEPIEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

How deep is Ohio State's receivers unit heading into the 2018 season? The Buckeyes bring back so much talent across the board, there actually might not be enough playing time to go around the room.

Compared to the uncertainty around the position group prior to the 2017 campaign, OSU ultimately has a good problem on its hands this fall.

Although there are obvious changes at the top as interim wide receivers coach Brian Hartline takes over for Zach Smith, who was fired July 23 after allegations of past domestic violence by the former wide receivers coach and recruiting coordinator, Ohio State returns more than enough experience and leadership to offset any concerns about distractions over the last-second change.

Among the three Buckeyes at Big Ten Media Days in Chicago, fifth-year senior Parris Campbell was open when he looked ahead to OSU's task to stay focused for fall camp.

"We've got a lot of mature guys," the 6-1, 208-pound Campbell said July 24. "We're not naive to the situation. We understand what's going on, and we understand the critical time that it is right now."

Like fellow fifth-year seniors Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin, as well as fourth-year junior K.J. Hill, Campbell passed up an early exit from Columbus for the NFL. Campbell may have been typical of the veterans in why he chose to come back.

## Projected Starters

| <i>Wide Receiver</i><br><b>83 • Terry McLaurin</b>                                | <i>Wide Receiver</i><br><b>11 • Austin Mack</b>                                    | <i>H-Back</i><br><b>21 • Parris Campbell</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>6-1 • 204 • 5th-Sr.</b><br><b>Indianapolis Cathedral</b>                       | <b>6-2 • 215 • Jr.</b><br><b>Fort Wayne (Ind.) Bishop Luers</b>                    | <b>6-1 • 208 • 5th-Sr.</b><br><b>Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary</b>                         |
| Finished third on the team in receiving yards (436) and touchdowns (6) last year. | Tallied 24 receptions for 343 yards and two scores in his first year as a starter. | Led the Buckeyes with 584 yards on 40 receptions despite missing a game with an injury. |

"If I would have left last year, I would have cheated myself on a lot of things," Campbell said. "No. 1, I felt like I want to leave a legacy at Ohio State. If I would have left last year, then I would have cheated myself."

### Return Of The Deep Ball?

Campbell and company constitute only the tip of the iceberg for Ohio State's receivers group, which features versatile skill sets across its multitude of returnees and newcomers. But to entirely understand the unit's potential for 2018, the key factor comes elsewhere.

As the offense builds upon the blended schemes between downfield passes and designed runs from the second-year offensive coordinator duo of acting head coach/quarterbacks coach Ryan Day and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson, stirred together in head coach Urban Meyer's power-spread scheme, the Buckeyes bring a different element to the field with sophomore quarterback Dwayne Haskins (6-3, 220) expected to take over.

Any questions about the inexperience of

Haskins, whose rise from 2017 backup to 2018 starter began Nov. 25 at Michigan in The Game, are, to a degree, valid.

At the same time, though, his raw arm strength and abundant targets give OSU options its offense simply did not have with multiyear starter J.T. Barrett in the saddle.

Meyer provided such an assessment when he compared the aerial attack's potential to the 2014 season's late run under quarterback Cardale Jones, who opened up Ohio State's offense with wide receiver Devin Smith as the Buckeyes captured the inaugural College Football Playoff National Championship. But now, Meyer believes OSU has more than one downfield threat among its crop of H-backs and wideouts.

"There's a reason why we took so many shots when Devin Smith and Cardale Jones were there – they were very good at it," Meyer said. "At times we didn't – and I don't want to put it all on J.T. – but there's times when he wasn't as accurate. There's other times we didn't have the guy separating and going to make that play."

### Don't Forget About ...

Dixon (5-11, 198), Hill (6-0, 198) and McLaurin (6-1, 205) join Campbell to headline Ohio State's options in the short and intermediate passing game. Beyond them, though, is where the abilities could create matchup nightmares for opposing defenses.

In addition to those four, the Buckeyes bring a pair of potential rising stars in juniors Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor.

Mack, a returning starter, is another all-around threat for Haskins, who famously hit the 6-2, 215-pounder for a crucial third-down conversion in the second half of OSU's 31-20 triumph over the Wolverines. In 14 games, Mack caught 24 passes for 343 yards and two touchdowns.

Victor (6-4, 200), meanwhile, showed spurts of breakout potential as a red-zone target with strong hands. In fact, in 14 games, he hauled in seven scores on only 349 yards and 23 receptions.

Sophomore Jaylen Harris joins Victor as another physical specimen with prototypical attributes. Harris (6-5, 215), who is up 10



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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: WIDE RECEIVERS



JOSH WINSLOW

**PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE – Terry McLaurin is one of three fifth-year senior wide receivers on Ohio State's 2018 roster.**

pounds from his freshman season, appeared in three games last year. He continued the momentum April 14 in Ohio State's spring game with three catches for 39 yards and one touchdown – on a 25-yard strike from Haskins.

"I can see him as a major red-zone threat," Cleveland Heights head coach Mac Stephens, who mentored Harris in high school, recently told BSB. "A big cornerback could stand at 6-0, 6-1, 6-2 – and even at that size, they're outmatched against a guy like Jaylen."

"The one thing that I remember about Jaylen in high school is that he can catch a football at basically 11 feet in the air if you put it in the right spot. So that's a tough, tough thing to guard on top of his leaping ability as well as his size."

"So I'm looking for big things. I think when he gets an opportunity, Jaylen's going to have a breakout year this year."

### The Comeback Kid

After a hernia injury sidelined Demario McCall from action throughout majority of a sophomore season in which he had hoped to make an impact, his 2018 campaign comes with a clean slate.

McCall (5-9, 193) started to make his move from running back toward the end of the 2017 season, completing the position transition in the spring. Now at H-back with a redshirt in hand to maintain sophomore eligibility after he played in four games, McCall's climb up the depth chart comes as a challenge with incumbents Campbell and Hill ahead of him.

"It caught me off guard," McCall said of the position switch Dec. 29 after the 24-7 Cotton Bowl win over Southern California. "I actually didn't know. One thing I took from it is if that's what I've got to do, then that's something I have to get better at. After that, I just started working on my craft, and I just became a better receiver."

If his career numbers from limited action in 2016 and 2017 are any indication – six total touchdowns and 516 yards from scrimmage on 69 touches in only 10 games – McCall could become a key cog on offense. It remains to be seen whether he ultimately cracks the H-back rotation, but McCall will at least have a shot to show his dangerous speed as the likely No. 1 return man for the Buckeyes on punts and kickoffs.

### The Young Bucks

Ohio State originally added four wide receivers and an H-back when the Buckeyes signed their 2018 recruiting class, but only three of the freshmen enter the fall involved with the position group.

For different reasons, St. Louis Christian Brothers College's four-star duo of Kamryn Babb and Cameron Brown will not be with the wide receivers when OSU opens the season. Babb (6-0, 200) suffered a torn ACL while Brown (6-0, 185) moved to cornerback. In an update Aug. 17, Day said Babb was "on pace for a full recovery" through daily work with Ohio State's sports medicine staff.

That leaves Westerville (Ohio) South four-star Jaelen Gill, Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star L'Christian "Blue" Smith and San Marcos (Calif.) Mission Hills three-star Chris Olave.

Gill (6-0, 185) appeared to impress throughout fall camp, according to highlight videos released by Ohio State's team Twitter account, earning time with units consisting of ones and twos. Olave (6-1, 175), meanwhile, became the first of the three freshmen at the position to shed his black stripe Aug. 13 and officially join the Buckeyes.

Gill could be a candidate for time as a returner, a spot where he appeared to be the backup on punts throughout training camp. Olave and Smith (6-4, 207), although their futures are bright, could be in line for limited roles or redshirt seasons.

### The Other Guys

Despite the crowded competition at the top of the depth chart, could C.J. Saunders see more time after he flashed his ability in 2017? As he enters his fourth year at Ohio State, Saunders goes from walk-on to scholarship after the Buckeyes awarded him one April 27. The 5-10, 185-pounder appeared in 11 games and recorded 17 receptions for 221 yards with one touchdown, highlighted by a breakout performance Sept. 23 in OSU's 54-21 rout of UNLV when he snagged six catches for 102 yards, including a 28-yard strike from Haskins.

The scholarship contingent is rounded out by redshirt freshman Elijah Gardiner (6-3, 196), who was limited during fall camp.

The walk-on contingent includes sophomore De'Shawn White (5-9, 172), freshman Sam Wiglusz (6-0, 175) and sophomore Garyn Prater (6-4, 208).

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# Campbell Returned With OSU Legacy In Mind

By **TIM MOODY**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Parris Campbell was a running back at Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary in 2013 being recruited as a four-star wide receiver. The following year, he was redshirting at Ohio State while learning his new position as his team went on to win the national championship.

In 2015, Campbell finally saw the field and promptly dropped the first pass thrown to him – which would have been a sure touchdown in the season opener at Virginia Tech. Instead, Campbell didn't record a single reception that season, and he was involved mainly as a kick returner in 2016 as well.

Fast-forward to the present day, and Campbell is heading into his second year as a team captain for the Buckeyes, and he's the team's leading receiver in terms of yardage (584) and yards per game (44.9) from last season.

As one of the team's primary leaders, Campbell (6-1, 208) was selected to represent the Buckeyes at Big Ten Media Days in Chicago in late July, along with senior right tackle Isaiah Prince and junior defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones. Campbell, who had 40 total receptions with three receiving touchdowns last year, admitted at the time that he had come farther than he ever expected.

"I couldn't imagine myself sitting in the room right here talking to you guys

because you know it was something that I've always wanted for myself, it was something that I thought about when I was working," Campbell said. "If you're at Ohio State, you want to be known as one of the best, you want to be known as one of the guys. So it was something I always thought about, getting the awards, getting the accolades, getting the attention."

As a second-year team captain, plenty of attention is certainly focused on Campbell these days. That was amplified on July 23 when head coach Urban Meyer announced that wide receivers coach Zach Smith had been fired.

That decision came down less than 24 hours before Campbell met with a throng of media members in the Windy City. During that interview session, Campbell was the most senior member of the room – among coaches or players – since an interim position coach had yet to be named.

To become arguably the most important member of a position room as a fifth-year senior isn't necessarily uncommon in football, but for a player who worked through early struggles on the field and plenty of scrutiny from the fans, it was a long journey. And Campbell has embraced his role every step of the way.

With Smith out of the picture, Meyer eventually named former Buckeye wide receiver Brian Hartline as the interim wide

receivers coach, but Campbell was already comfortable shouldering the leadership responsibility in a tumultuous situation.

"Honestly I feel 100 percent responsible, just because I am I guess considered one of the leaders of the room, so I feel like they just need to hear a voice right now and what better way to hear that than from a fifth-year, experienced guy?" Campbell said. "A guy who's looked up to."

That leadership role is something Campbell has embraced, and excelled in, for a year now. But his off-field impact is only part of the equation.

Heading into last season, Campbell was touted as the next great Ohio State H-back, and for the most part he performed well. He was among the top receivers in pretty much every category, and he added

10 carries for 132 yards and another touchdown on the ground, but that wasn't without moments of frustration.

Campbell dropped another sure touchdown on a deep ball in the season opener at Indiana and had a few other drops throughout the season, earning more disdain from a select portion of the fan base in the process. As a kick returner, he was stellar once again – earning a few Big Ten accolades for his work – but Campbell stepped out of those duties late in the year after suffering a head injury against Penn State and missing the loss at Iowa.

Campbell returned to the lineup against Michigan State and caught three passes against the Spartans and three more the following week against Illinois, but he totaled just five receptions in the final three games, including just one catch for a loss of 3 yards in the Cotton Bowl against USC.

Heading into 2018, Campbell knows his spot as a leader, but he has his sights set on improved performance on the field – especially after he spurned a chance to leave early for the NFL in hopes of improving his draft stock this year.

Now that he's back in Columbus for one last go, Campbell has high aspirations. He wants to leave his mark as a Buckeye – something he feels hasn't achieved yet – and he wants to become a more refined receiver, which could be helped along by the addition of Hartline to the coaching staff. The chance to achieve all that made it worth it for Campbell to return, and his presence gives the Buckeyes a dynamic weapon with plenty of experience to utilize in 2018.

"I had some personal goals that I didn't obtain, and then I ultimately felt like if I would have left last year I would have cheated myself out of a lot of things just because, No. 1, I felt like I want to leave a legacy at Ohio State and if I had left last year then I would've cheated myself on that," he said. "And then second, I feel like I have so much more things to polish up on and to show these NFL scouts that I'm a polished receiver."



Parris Campbell

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# Tight Ends Are Improved Despite Losing Starter

By JOE DEMPSEY  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Not generally known for featuring tight ends in the passing game, Ohio State's style changed when the program brought in Kevin Wilson as the new offensive coordinator, who is also the tight ends coach.

Former Buckeye tight end Marcus Baugh particularly enjoyed an increased role last season, catching 28 passes for 304 yards and five touchdowns. Baugh is now a member of the Oakland Raiders, and the Buckeyes must replace his production at the position.

"I think we're finally going to get that group to have value, instead of just one guy," Wilson said near the end of spring ball. "When I got here we had one guy and a bunch of young guys. I think our group can have value, and I think we're going to need our group."

After the spring game, head coach Urban Meyer said sophomore Luke Farrell (6-6, 250) was Ohio State's starting tight end as of the finish of spring practice. Meyer said the Perry, Ohio, native had a very good spring and earned that right, but he added the competition would continue in the fall.

Farrell caught just two passes for 19 yards last season but will have an opportunity for more snaps and targets with Baugh in the NFL.

Another tight end in the mix is junior Rashod Berry (6-4, 259). The Lorain, Ohio, native tripled the snap count of any tight end not named Baugh a season ago while hauling in six receptions for 100 yards and two touchdowns. Berry showed flashes of big-time playmaking ability, including a 38-yard touchdown reception against UNLV where he broke multiple tackles on his way to his first collegiate score.

Wilson is "very" aware of Berry's ability and the importance of helping him realize his potential.

"Rashod is very, very, very talented," Wilson said. "We've got to keep him coming along."

Another Buckeye with boundless potential is freshman Jeremy Ruckert. The Lindenhurst, N.Y., native was the No. 2 tight end in the 2018 class, according to both Rivals and 247Sports. At Big Ten Media Days in July, fifth-year senior receiver Parris Campbell told a story about Ruckert displaying his catching prowess.

"He's definitely one of those elite types of tight ends," Campbell said. "The kid has massive hands, he has great hands. One day he was actually just out there catching one-hand passes like it was nothing. He was having people stand behind him, putting his hand in front of their face, and just catching one-handed, so it was crazy. He's a guy I think can contribute for sure."

The 6-5, 240-pound freshman hauled in 222 receptions for 3,133 yards and 37 touchdowns in his high school career and led Lindenhurst to the school's first-ever Long Island Class I title as a senior. There is little doubt that Ruckert can run routes and make plays down the field, but in order to play tight end at Ohio State, Wilson will need to see more from New York's Gatorade Player of the Year.

"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," Wilson said. "We'll get phenomenal opportunity in practice with who he



JOSH WINSLOW

**INCREASED ACTION** – Sophomore Luke Farrell is expected to have an expanded role in 2018 as Ohio State's starting tight end.

## Projected Starter

**Tight End**  
**89 • Luke Farrell**

6-6 • 250 • So.

Perry, Ohio

Reeled in two passes for 19 yards while playing in eight games as a redshirt freshman.

matches up against to see where he stands. I think he'll be in the mix to play early as a receiver. And to be a complete player, is he strong enough and mature enough to block?"

Meyer provided a brief update during Big Ten Media Days.

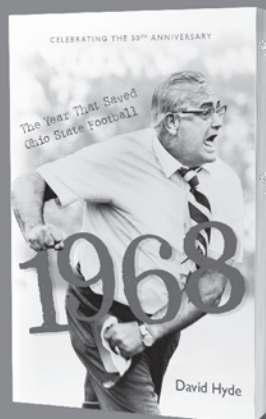
"Tight ends have had a very good summer," Meyer said. "Luke Farrell will be running with the first team immediately, and then Rashod Berry's had a great summer and so has Jake Hausmann, and then unless something happens Jeremy will play."

Offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day served as acting head coach throughout fall camp. He shared some updates on his Twitter account on Aug. 17.

"The tight ends have had a very competitive preseason camp so far and, even though we lost a quality player last year to the NFL (Baugh), this year's group will be deeper and has a chance to be stronger than last year," Day wrote. "Kevin Wilson has done a remarkable job developing Luke Farrell, Rashod Berry and Jake Hausmann over the past year, and Jeremy Ruckert is a very talented freshman."

Day added that Hausmann (6-4, 245) missed a few practices due to a hamstring injury but is back now and practicing well. The sophomore from Cincinnati was ranked one of the top five tight ends in the 2016 class by Rivals, 247Sports, ESPN and Scout. The Cincinnati Moeller product has yet to record a collegiate catch but provides depth to an improved unit.

Seniors Derrick Malone (6-5, 245) and Tate Duarte (6-5, 248) add to the depth at tight end, along with junior Brock Davin (6-3, 235).



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# Position Changes, New Starters Come To OSU OL

By RYAN McGLADE  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

As the 2018 season approaches, Ohio State is tasked with replacing two full-time starters along the offensive line, in addition to determining who will slot into the three interior spots.

Two-year starting left tackle Jamarco Jones and four-year starter Billy Price are both in the infancy of their NFL rookie seasons after anchoring the Ohio State line in recent seasons.

For a third straight year, OSU will have a new starting center. Pat Elflein anchored the offensive front as a senior in 2016 while Price did the same in 2017. Both spent their freshman, sophomore and junior campaigns at guard.

Three names have surfaced in regard to who will become Ohio State's next starting center. Fifth-year senior Brady Taylor (6-5, 295) was named the spring starter by head coach Urban Meyer after the spring game on April 14. Meyer also said after the scrimmage that redshirt freshman Josh Myers (6-5, 308) would have his shot in fall camp. Things have changed since then, though.

At Big Ten Media Days in late July, Meyer noted that junior Michael Jordan (6-7, 312), who has started 27 consecutive games at left guard, is a potential option at center.

"Brady Taylor had a great spring, but you need to have more than one (center) and who are they?" Meyer said. "You have Josh Myers, you have, potentially, Michael Jordan, and we're just trying to constantly see who can step in and snap."

Since fall camp began Aug. 3, Jordan has routinely been spotted taking snaps at center with the first-team unit.

In a position-by-position breakdown of the team's progress released on Aug. 17, acting head coach Ryan Day said Taylor, Jordan and Myers had all been taking snaps at center. Whoever gets the nod has big shoes to fill, as both Elflein and Price, who set the school record with 55 consecutive starts, won the Rimington Trophy,

## Projected Starters

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Left Tackle</b><br><b>75 • Thayer Munford</b><br>6-6 • 319 • So.<br>Massillon (Ohio) Washington<br>Delivered a key block on Dwayne Haskins' 22-yard run against Michigan. | <b>Center</b><br><b>73 • Michael Jordan</b><br>6-7 • 310 • Jr.<br>Canton (Mich.) Plymouth<br>Started every game at left guard the past two seasons before moving to center.                       | <b>Right Tackle</b><br><b>59 • Isaiah Prince</b><br>6-7 • 310 • Sr.<br>Greenbelt (Md.) Eleanor Roosevelt<br>Entering his third season as a starting offensive tackle for Ohio State. |
| <b>Left Guard</b><br><b>66 • Malcolm Pridgeon</b><br>6-7 • 310 • 5th-Sr.<br>Garden City (N.Y.) Nassau C.C.<br>Played in all 14 games last season after redshirting in 2016.  | <b>Right Guard</b><br><b>78 • Demetrius Knox</b><br>6-4 • 312 • 5th-Sr.<br>Fort Worth (Texas) All Saints Episcopal<br>Started the final eight games of 2017 in place of an injured Branden Bowen. |  |



JOSH WINSLOW

**BLIND SIDE** – Sophomore Thayer Munford is expected to take over for Jamarco Jones as Ohio State's starting left tackle.

an award given to the nation's top center each year.

At left tackle, sophomore Thayer Munford has looked like the likely successor to Jones. Day said in his update that Munford and junior Joshua Alabi (6-5, 305)

have been competing for the starting left tackle spot, but Munford has usually been with the first team in camp. Alabi was with the ones during the segment of practice that was open to the media on Aug. 18 while Munford was off to the side riding

a stationary bike and doing individual exercises.

Despite playing a position that rarely receives any glory, Munford was one of the top freshmen on the squad in 2017. The 6-6, 319-pounder played in 12 of the 14 games, logging 202 snaps.

The man slated to play opposite Munford at right tackle is senior Isaiah Prince, the team's starting right tackle the last two years. Prince came under fire in 2016 when he had poor performances against Penn State, Wisconsin and Michigan. The Greenbelt, Md., native bounced back nicely in 2017, however, becoming a reliable pillar on the right end of the line.

Given Prince's frame (6-7, 310), Meyer said it simply took the offensive lineman longer to mature physically.

"It was just strength and development," the head coach said. "Long-bodied players take a long time to develop. The short-bodied guys are much easier to develop. You're talking about a 6-7, very long guy who was weak and, fundamentally, a little bit of a Bambi when we got him."

Lining up to Prince's left at right guard in 2018 will likely be fifth-year senior Demetrius Knox, whom Day named as one of the three leaders of the offensive line – the other two being Jordan and Prince. Knox (6-4, 312) has regularly been seen handling first-string reps at right guard in preseason camp.

If right guard is in fact shouldered by Knox, 2018 will be the first season he begins as a starter. He was a backup for the initial six games last year before becoming the starting right guard for the final eight games after Branden Bowen broke his leg against Maryland on Oct. 7. Knox, however, did not fill in for Bowen for the rest of the contest against the Terrapins. Matthew Burrell did instead. Knox then assumed the open spot in the starting lineup for the remainder of the season, and Burrell transferred out of Ohio State after spring camp.

When it comes to left guard, assuming Jordan has center locked up, fifth-year senior Malcolm Pridgeon is expected to man that post for the offense's first play of the season on Sept. 1 against Oregon State. If Taylor is named the starting center, then Jordan will likely stay at left guard.

A native of Central Islip, N.Y., Pridgeon (6-7, 310) began his collegiate career at Nassau Community College. He transferred to Ohio State for the 2016 season and was viewed by many as someone who could play immediately upon his arrival in Columbus. He struggled learning the playbook, though, and has yet to make an impact for the Buckeyes. A knee injury

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suffered in fall camp of 2016 slowed his progress as well, and it ultimately led to him redshirting the 2016 campaign.

It appears Pridgeon will get his chance in his final year donning the scarlet and gray. The one-time junior college prospect has frequently been taking first-team reps at left guard in preseason camp.

Day even specifically commended Pridgeon in the previously mentioned player update, saying, "A bright spot has been the development of Malcolm Pridgeon at guard."

Beyond Pridgeon, Day has been pleased with the offensive front as a whole.

"The offensive line has been working every day to solidify the foundation of our offense," Day said. "The competition within this unit has raised the level of play across the board as guys are battling for starting positions."

**No Shortage Of Depth**

While the coaching staff may still have to figure out the starting five for the offensive line, the competition represents the depth Ohio State has at that position group – even with three players transferring earlier this offseason.

Jack Wohlabaugh, from Walsh Jesuit High School in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, announced in January his intentions to transfer to Duke after redshirting his first year at Ohio State in 2016 and not see any playing time last season.

Burrell, out of Woodbridge (Va.) Hylton, revealed in early May that he was transferring to Sam Houston State, an FCS school. After playing all 13 games as a reserve for the Buckeyes in 2016, Burrell was a candidate to start at right guard a season ago but lost the battle to Bowen. Burrell was then vying for the center spot this past spring but quickly fell behind Taylor and Myers.

Kevin Feder unveiled in late May that he would continue his academic and football career at Kansas. A product of Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep, Feder spent much of his first two seasons in Columbus (2015 and 2016) dealing with a foot injury. His lone appearance in 2017 came during a 52-14 win over Illinois on Nov. 18 at Ohio Stadium.

But as previously noted, OSU has an abundance of choices to fill out its offensive line two-deep.

At tackle, the Buckeyes have Alabi and freshmen Nicholas Petit-Frere (6-6, 272) and Max Wray (6-7, 305). Alabi, whom Meyer praised at Big Ten Media Days, is entering his second full season as an offensive lineman. The Detroit native redshirted in 2015 as a true freshman and played in five games in 2016 along the defensive line. He then switched to offensive line prior to the 2017 campaign and logged double-digit snaps on offense in six games, including career bests of 44 plays vs. UNLV and 41 vs. Illinois.

Petit-Frere, already an athletic specimen a few months into his collegiate career, was a five-star recruit out of Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep. He was rated the No. 7 overall prospect and No. 1 offensive tackle in the 247Sports composite for the 2018 recruiting class. Wray was a four-star prospect out of Franklin, Tenn., who enrolled in January and spent the spring practicing with his new team.

At guard, in addition to Knox and

Pridgeon, Ohio State has Bowen (6-7, 312) and redshirt freshman Wyatt Davis among the top options. Like Petit-Frere, Davis (6-4, 313) was a five-star prospect and the top-rated player at his position coming out of St. John Bosco High School in Bellflower, Calif. Meyer said Davis had an excellent summer.

And as noted above, Myers and Taylor are two of the options the Buckeyes have at backup center should Jordan be named the starter. Myers was a four-star recruit out of Miamisburg, Ohio, while Taylor has been

the second option at center the past two years behind Elflein and then Price.

Meyer, who's entering his seventh season as Ohio State's head coach, had a glowing remark for the 2018 offensive front.

"It's the most quality depth we've had," he said.

Ohio State's contingent of scholarship offensive linemen is rounded out by sophomore guard Gavin Cupp (6-4, 308) and freshman center Matthew Jones (6-4, 299). Cupp is in his third year with the program after joining the Buckeyes as a three-

star prospect out of Leipsic, Ohio. Jones enrolled in January as a four-star out of Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall.

The roster also features five walk-on linemen in junior Nathan Brock (6-4, 288) out of Powell (Ohio) Olentangy Liberty; senior Blake Pfenning (6-5, 292), a product of Wapakoneta, Ohio; senior Brandon Pahl (6-2, 299) of Cutler (Ohio) Warren; senior Kevin Woidke (6-6, 300), out of Cleveland St. Ignatius; and freshman Jack Jamieson (6-1, 285), a product of Cleveland St. Ignatius.

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# Long Road Led Prince To Big Role For Senior Year

By GARRETT STEPIEN  
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Strolling through the hallway on the fifth floor of Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile, there was something different about Isaiah Prince.

As he arrived just in time for his individual session at Big Ten Media Days, it marked the latest interview for Prince after radio shows and television hits.

Suited up in a gray blazer, white shirt and lavender tie, the senior offensive tackle was the center of attention among three Ohio State players representing the Buckeyes on July 24 in the Windy City. Open and honest, Prince took on questions left and right – the same way he embraces his battles in the trenches with the conference’s best defensive ends every Saturday in the fall.

Flashing a smile, Prince spoke on his past struggles on the field after those previous issues catapulted him into this position – primed for success as a senior starter.

“That’s just the type of person I am,” Prince said. “I’m not just going to give up. I’m just going to continue to work hard.”

Where exactly OSU plans to play Prince for the 2018 season remains to be set in stone, but he appears to be pegged in his incumbent spot at right tackle after ending spring camp there while sophomore offensive tackle Thayer Munford is likely to play on the left.

“It’s completely different,” Prince said of the two spots. “It’s like writing with your right hand the whole time and then switching and writing with your left. Your muscle memory’s different. Everything’s backwards. You look up – the defense looks different on a whole different side of the field. It’s completely different.”

Prince brings veteran experience to the trenches with 37 game appearances and 27 straight starts, but perhaps his value goes beyond the numbers. Heading into year three as a starter after he was an All-Big Ten third-team selection by coaches and media in 2017, Prince is using the adversity he has faced while pushing forward into 2018,



JOSH WINSLOW

**VETERAN PRESENCE – Senior right tackle Isaiah Prince has developed into one of Ohio State’s most important leaders heading into the season.**

with the help of past-and-present mentors from former Ohio State offensive linemen Jamarco Jones and Billy Price to third-year position coach Greg Studrawa.

“Jamarco Jones, Billy Price – they all found a way to hold the guys in the room and lean on them, especially Coach Stud,” Prince said. “Talking to Coach Stud every Sunday after the games just definitely kept my spirits up.”

As a four-star recruit and U.S. Army All-American from Greenbelt (Md.) Eleanor Roosevelt – ranked the No. 101 overall prospect, No. 5 offensive tackle and No. 1 player in Maryland for the 247Sports composite’s 2015 class – Prince knew all about high expectations.

Eleven days after his original commitment to Alabama, Prince flipped Feb. 4, 2015, to the Buckeyes over the Crimson Tide and Maryland. CBS Sports Network’s Tom

Lemming, who has covered recruiting for 40 years, was among the national analysts to point out the always-evident potential for Prince at the next level.

“He could read quickly – quick enough to slide outside, cut outside on pressure, did a good job of sticking blocks,” Lemming told BSB. “He played left tackle in high school but definitely had the versatility to wind up playing either side of the position in college.”

Long before Eleanor Roosevelt head coach Thomas Green sent Prince off to Columbus for college, he and his staff knew where the OSU coaches could take those physical attributes and natural talents. Prince (6-7, 310) has packed on 38 pounds since he left his high school for Ohio State, which won half the battle.

“Our expectations from him going there ... we watched him grow as a freshman here – kind of a goofy 6-4, 220-pound fresh-

man tackle – to 6-6, 280,” Green told BSB. “He has attributes that first-round draft picks have. We knew the mental part was going to be tough at some point, but Isaiah does stuff that kids at 6-7 have a hard time bending and doing certain things. He’s very athletic, can bend and move, and he’s a tough kid.

“When he left here – I’m going to be honest – expectations were he would grow into, barring injury, a first-round draft pick type of kid. That was our expectation.”

Prince appeared on the fast track to those goals when he played as a freshman in 2015, but adversity hit as a sophomore in 2016.

When he stepped up to start at right tackle that year, Prince’s struggles plagued the Buckeyes in their 24-21 loss Oct. 22 at Penn State, where the Nittany Lions pounced for six sacks. The difficulties resurfaced weeks later on Nov. 26 when OSU outlasted Michigan at home for its 30-27 double-overtime triumph, despite eight sacks for the Wolverines.

Almost two years later, Prince still points to those two performances – but only as sources of motivation.

“That was a really low point for me – all of the criticism, everyone was just talking bad about me,” Prince said. “To me, I didn’t know how to handle it because it was like I was being criticized for my job. It’s not something I’m doing for a living. It was hard for me, but I had the support of my brothers around me, my coaches, my family, and I think that ultimately helped bring me out of my slump.”

In dire times, Prince relied heavily on Green, who provided an inside glimpse at what 2016 was like for his former player as the then-sophomore right tackle battled through the mounting criticism.

“Now we talk from time to time, but his sophomore year – we were talking almost every week at one point because I really wanted to make sure he wasn’t getting too down on himself,” Green said. “In high school, Isaiah, he would dwell on mistakes and I always used to tell him, ‘Let it go. You can’t do anything about the last play. Just worry about the next play.’

“After his good games, we would talk. And after the bad games, we would talk. I just always talked to him about what he did really well. I just said, ‘Hey, look, obviously your coaches see something in you. You’re still in there. So even though the commentators – (ESPN analyst) Kirk Herbstreit and those guys – are on your butt, you’re obviously the best right tackle they have because at Ohio State they would have somebody else in there if they thought that somebody could do a better job.’”

Prince put his sophomore season to bed in 2017, rebounding with a strong junior campaign and springing into his senior finale as a veteran leader with the battle scars to prove it.

Urban Meyer’s decision to bring Prince to Big Ten Media Days with fifth-year senior H-back Parris Campbell and junior defensive tackle Dre’Mont Jones spoke loudly for the offensive tackle’s growth. The head coach’s reflection on Prince confirmed the transformation he has steadily seen the throughout the past year.

“You talk about a 6-7, very long guy that was weak,” Meyer said of Prince. “Fundamentally, he was a little bit of a Bambi when he got in. So it’s just a confidence and development as a physical tool, skill-set development.”



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# Jones Excited About Rushmen Opportunity

By RYAN McGLADE  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

If there is any truth to the proverb, "Good things come to those who wait," then Dre'Mont Jones' patience will finally pay off this fall.

The fourth-year junior defensive tackle was pulled out of games in 2017 when opposing teams were in obvious passing situations so Ohio State could deploy a defensive front exclusively featuring defensive ends in hopes of getting to the quarterback.

With three defensive ends from last season's team now in the NFL and Jones gaining another year of experience, though, he will be a fixture in the 2018 version of OSU's distinguished Rushmen package.

"He would come out last year on third downs," Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer said at Big Ten Media Days in Chicago on July 24. "I can guarantee he's not coming out now."

When opponents were facing the likes of

third-and-long last year, the Buckeyes would typically put Nick Bosa, Jalyn Holmes, Sam Hubbard and Tyquan Lewis – all defensive ends – on the field. The strategy behind this was that having four talented pass rushers across the defensive line would maximize the team's chances of disrupting the quarterback.

The tactic proved effective, as Bosa (8½), Hubbard (seven), Lewis (seven) and Holmes (two) combined for 24½ of the team's 45 sacks last season. They also were responsible for 17 of the squad's 29 quarterback hurries, with Bosa having nine, Hubbard and Lewis each having three and Holmes having two.

Now that Bosa, the reigning Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year, is the only member of that foursome returning in 2018, Rushmen opportunities await for players such as Jones.

"I'm very excited," Jones said. "Who doesn't want to be on the field? That's my hunger, that's my drive. This is what I want to do."

"I'm playing football. That's all I want to

do. If I hear more snaps, I'm not going to say no. I would never want to do that."

As an interior defensive lineman, Jones is primarily responsible for clogging up the middle and attracting multiple blockers to give defensive ends and linebackers more space with which to work. Jones recorded 20 tackles, five tackles for loss and one sack during a 2017 campaign in which he missed two games after scraping his leg in the locker room.

Though the Cleveland native will be on the field for more third-down snaps this fall, he said that won't affect his function on the team.

"That doesn't really change my role," Jones said. "That's just something I can be more a part of because I need that. I need to be in on third down. I love seeing my brothers go out there and pass rush, but I need a piece of that because it's hard being on the sideline watching."

Despite not rushing the quarterback often in evident passing scenarios last season, Jones doesn't lack confidence in his abilities to do so for the upcoming campaign.

"I can pass rush, for sure," he said. "I'm not worried about it. I'm not stressed out or anything about a third-down package. I'm ready to be in it."

Jones joining the Rushmen comes on the heels of a spring-camp performance that Meyer said was among the best of anyone on the club.

"Dre'Mont made a decision to come back, and I am so impressed," Meyer said in Chicago about Jones passing up a shot at the NFL. "A lot of times guys come back

and maybe they see buyer's remorse. There never was (with Jones). He's hit it full stride, and you see him walking around there, it's as good as he's ever looked. He's a grown man and I can't wait. He's one of our best players. What I saw in spring practice, it's hard to say he wasn't one of the top one or two players on our team."

Jones, who has played in 25 games and has started 23 times thus far in his Ohio State career, said the key to spring ball was his mental approach.

"I feel like a lot of players come back and they feel like they have a certain agenda or they think, 'I could have left for the NFL so you have to play me,'" he said. "That wasn't my mind-set. I had to come in and work like I didn't have a starting job."

Jones said he decided to return for multiple reasons. First and foremost, he said he wants to graduate and receive a degree in sociology. Secondly, he said he wants to continue working on his craft before making the jump to the next level. Specifically, the 6-3, 290-pounder said he wants to be stouter against the run and add more weight.

And while he has put an emphasis on stopping ball carriers, Jones said he wants to prove to everyone that he also can be a force in the pass game.

"Why would I not want to display myself?" he said. "I feel like I could have done it last year, but they were doing something with four D-ends, which I was very fine with because I love seeing my brothers go to work. But I feel like I need to be out there more. So it's time for me to get more exposure for my talent."



JOSH WINSLOW

**RUSHMAN** – Junior defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones (86) is set to have more pass-rushing opportunities in 2018.

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# Defensive Coaches Keep OSU Units On Track

By GARRETT STEPIEN  
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Many of Ohio State's defensive starters from the 2017 season are set to spend the 2018 campaign on NFL rosters, leaving big shoes to fill for the Buckeyes in each unit from the trenches to the secondary.

There are valid questions about OSU's defense, but talent isn't one of them. Over the past three recruiting cycles, Ohio State has been hitting the trail with great success under head coach Urban Meyer. Just look to the recent numbers in the 247Sports composite team rankings from 2016-18, which features top-three finishes and back-to-back No. 2 results.

On both sides of the ball, with the next-level athletes the program breeds, the annual expectations in Columbus are for new names to step in as the next man up every fall. The difference for Ohio State in 2018, however, comes in the form of replacing veteran Buckeyes from the field to the sidelines.

In addition to five of their seven draftees coming on the defensive side of the ball – Cleveland Browns cornerback Denzel Ward, Indianapolis Colts defensive end Tyquan Lewis, Miami Dolphins linebacker Jerome Baker, Cincinnati Bengals defensive end Sam Hubbard and Minnesota Vikings defensive lineman Jalyn Holmes were selected from rounds 1-5 – cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs surprised many in January when he jumped to the NFL after six years in Columbus.

Coombs joined former OSU defensive lineman (1993-96) and assistant (2011-13) Mike Vrabel, who enters his first season as a head coach with the Tennessee Titans, as the team's secondary coach. Coombs was among the original assistants from Meyer's first season in 2012, and his departure created a big void on the Ohio State defensive coaching staff.

At the same time, the Buckeyes benefited from a new NCAA rule that bumped up the number of full-time assistant coaches now allowed on college staffs to 10. OSU acted

swiftly on the change in January when it added co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach Alex Grinch, who spent 2015-17 as the defensive coordinator at Washington State. Ohio State then replaced Coombs in February with cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson, who most recently was the defensive coordinator at Temple.

"They're both excellent coaches," said third-year defensive coordinator Greg Schiano, who was also the safeties coach from 2016-17. "We're blessed to have (Grinch and Johnson) both here. They've both coordinated defenses. They both understand the big picture. They both understand their positions. They're specialists at their position. We're really fortunate. You look at our staff, and it is all defensive coordinators that sit in a room together."

A proven commodity in the industry, Johnson previously did a stint as Ohio State's defensive backs coach from 2007-11 with former head coach Jim Tressel and then-interim head coach Luke Fickell (2011). Now under Meyer, Johnson brings the knowledge he gained from his past six years at Arkansas (2012-13), Purdue (2014-16) and Temple (2017) into round two with the Buckeyes.

"I told the guys – and I already know – I have some big shoes to fill (in replacing Coombs)," Johnson said. "I've accepted that challenge, and I'm excited about it. That's the one thing about Ohio State and Coach Meyer, for sure. It's not just talent-based people that come to the program. It's really, really great people. He attracts those types of people from a staff and as well as player standpoint, so I'm just thankful to be here to do that."

With a pair of proven staffers in Johnson and Grinch manning their respective parts of the secondary, Schiano has gradually been spreading out his focus among the position groups of the defense.

"With the addition of our 10th coach, it allows me to (have more oversight of the defense)," Schiano said. "I can kind of fill in where they need a little help. So if you take it that one of the linebackers does a different job than the other two, I can help there. I can help whatever position is needed."



JOSH WINSLOW

**MORE FREEDOM** – Defensive coordinator Greg Schiano (center) is no longer the team's safeties coach, so he has more time to work with other positions.

"So I'm kind of the roamer, but it allows me to have a better understanding of where our guys are at a comfort level with things, different techniques and I think, hopefully, it should have an effect on how you call it because if you know how guys aren't comfortable with technique, you wait until they get comfortable. Not that you couldn't do that before, but when you see it with your own eyes, sometimes it helps."

While fifth-year defensive line coach Larry Johnson and second-year linebackers coach Billy Davis return to their respective posts, the two new additions of Grinch and Taver Johnson have given the Buckeyes added experience on their staff, offsetting the unexpected departure of Coombs and improving the overall staff.

"I think (the experience is) priceless, I really do," said Davis, a seven-year defensive coordinator and 24-year assistant coach in the NFL prior to OSU. "Having sat in the coordinator spot like a lot of guys in our room have, you understand that all of us are here to make sure that Coach Schiano's vision gets met, and we add and subtract. We'll put our two cents in."

"But having sat in that chair, we all understand that you want all the ideas you can get but at the end of the day, you're the final decision maker. Everybody else falls in and does everything they can to make that vision happen. I think it's a selfless group that is truly wanting the Ohio State defense to be the best ever."

Larry Johnson, who joined Meyer's staff

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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEFENSIVE OVERVIEW

in 2014 and was previously with Penn State from 1996-2013, echoed those sentiments.

"You have four great coaches who all have different styles they are bringing in," Johnson said. "You have coaches that have no egos, and that makes it easier to share ideas. When you can share ideas and use those ideas, those are what make us great. I think that is what makes us different as a defensive staff.

"We aren't fighting over plays. Everybody is so important, and I think Greg does a great job of being a leader through that. He wants your input, he wants your opinion, and I think that is a great way to run it."

Grinch brings an aggressive approach to OSU. Grinch's Cougar defense was ranked ninth nationally in passing yards allowed (170.9 yards per game) for 2017.

Grinch's addition, along with Taver Johnson – whose Temple defense allowed 206.8 passing yards per game to tie for 40th nationally – bolsters the Buckeyes, along with Schiano, in place of Coombs. As mentors of the defensive backfield, the trio together aims to boost Ohio State's secondary further after the Buckeyes finished 30th with 195.9 passing yards allowed per game in 2017.

Several categories reflected Grinch's aggressive style in 2017, notably leading WSU's tie for ninth in the country with 28 turnovers – 15 interceptions and 13 fumbles – gained. In comparison, OSU finished 29th nationally with 13 interceptions and 11 fumbles for 24 turnovers.

Grinch appreciates the task ahead of him as he embraces the talent in the back end of Ohio State's defense.

"I certainly understand the responsibility of coaching at a place like Ohio State,"

Grinch said April 18 at the end of spring camp. "There's just a constant light shining on you, and you know the standard of what this place is. Going back from a depth standpoint, when you're evaluating guys, was it a good day? Yes, but was it good enough?"

"If the bar is set low enough, we would walk off the practice field every day and think we're great. But when the bar is set as high as it is at Ohio State, you walk off the field most days feeling like you have meat left on the bone."

While Grinch and Johnson remain relatively new to their respective units heading into their first seasons on the defensive staff, the returning Buckeyes boast a group of starting juniors and rising sophomores.

The junior cornerback duo of Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield is back for Johnson, while sophomore Jeffrey Okudah rounds out the likely three-man rotation as he pushes for time. As junior Jordan Fuller brings elite potential in the eyes of Grinch, several sophomores continue the competition for the other starting spot. Isaiah Pryor, Jahsen Wint, Brendon White and Amir Riep were all battling as the search to replace Damon Webb, who signed as an undrafted free agent with the Tennessee Titans and reunited with Coombs, dragged deep into the preseason.

Grinch believes that the system in place at Ohio State will help make his unit strong this fall.

"In almost all cases, the guys who have the most successful falls – typically, you can circle back and say the leap they made from spring football to fall camp oftentimes is a phenomenal predictor for the success of the football team and them as individuals," Grinch said. "If the same guy in practice 15 is

the same guy practice one of fall camp, then you have issues," Grinch said. "Our player development program is too good here, and we spend too much time over the summer to suggest that's going to happen."

### Strong Front Seven

As the defensive line and linebackers reload, the expected rotation of players among Ohio State's front seven remains strong under the direction of Davis and Larry Johnson.

The linebackers lost multiyear starters in Baker and Chris Worley, who signed with the Cincinnati Bengals as an undrafted free agent, but a pair of rising Silver Bullets projects to offset the key departures.

On the same note, while the trenches practically saw a four-man front leave – Lewis, Hubbard, Holmes and Tracy Sprinkle, who signed with the Carolina Panthers as an undrafted free agent – last year's part-time starters and talented backups are rising through the ranks.

Davis enters his second season with the Buckeyes after he joined Meyer's staff of full-time assistants in 2017, becoming linebackers coach after serving as an analyst the year before. With the competition created at the position since the spring, multiple linebackers were involved as OSU went through fall camp without sophomore Tuf Borland, who suffered an Achilles injury in March. Davis discussed the state of the rotations at the end of the spring.

"I love the competition," Davis said. "All the positions (Mike, Will and Sam) are in such a strong battle, it's so healthy. They're all driven, they're all helping each other. It's a different animal you fight when you have solid starters and the backups think they're

backups. I don't have backups that think they're backups, and that's a great thing. They're swinging hard to improve every day to get to where they want to be."

Borland continued to work back throughout August, while sophomore Baron Browning and junior Justin Hilliard battled for the time being in the middle. Juniors Malik Harrison and Keandre Jones competed on the weak side, while fifth-year senior Dante Booker and sophomore Pete Werner were involved with the strong side. Whatever the rotations come out to, Davis clarified how the defensive staff arrives at those decisions.

"It's collective," Davis said. "We all have so much experience. We talk deeply about everybody's strengths and weaknesses and how they fit in making us the best defense we can be on that particular week. At the end of the day, I don't think you can take one person to make the final decision. As a group, we all believe in the decision we make."

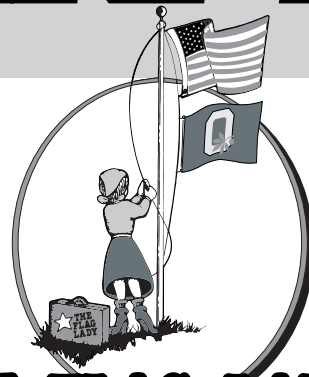
Larry Johnson's "Rushmen" return with loaded skill sets. Junior defensive end Nick Bosa and junior defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones, among others, lead the way. Others come in different shapes and sizes. Take, for example, sophomore defensive end Chase Young (6-5, 265) and junior defensive tackle Robert Landers (6-1, 283).

"You have a guy like Nick who has some elite skill sets, but at the same time, there is so much room for improvement," said Johnson, whose unit helped the defense yield just 105.1 rushing yards per game, sixth in the nation. "Those improvements are just that small. Your job as a coach is to find the moments where you can improve that much. Every day is like that, and Nick has taken that to heart."

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# Bosa, Jones Lead Talented OSU Defensive Front

By CRAIG MERZ  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

With great talent come great expectations, and the 2018 edition of the Ohio State defensive line certainly has both, beginning with junior first-team All-American end Nick Bosa.

But he's not alone. Defensive tackles Dre'mont Jones and Robert Landers, and defensive ends Jonathan Cooper and Chase Young are among the returnees. Plus, there's a strong incoming crop that includes Taron Vincent, the top defensive tackle nationally in the 2018 recruiting class.

The Buckeyes are loaded up front even though stalwart defensive ends Sam Hubbard, Jalyn Holmes and Tyquan Lewis and nose tackles Michael Hill and Tracy Sprinkle all left to pursue pro careers.

Hubbard (Cincinnati; third round, No. 77), Holmes (Minnesota; fourth round, No. 102) and Lewis (Indianapolis; second round, No. 64) were chosen in the 2018 NFL draft. Sprinkle (Carolina) and Hill (Detroit) signed as undrafted free agents.

Those are some huge holes to fill not only in terms of performances but leadership.

"We had some really experienced guys, and there's never a substitute for experience," said OSU defensive coordinator Greg Schiano. "We still have some experienced guys, but not quite as much."

"We have some talented guys, some young guys that I think as they continue to grow in our program will really become great players. So when you lose experience like that, you'd like to think you can make up for it, but there's going to be a little bit of a drop."

## Defensive Ends

Fortunately for the Buckeyes, that doesn't pertain to Bosa, the 6-4, 263-pounder from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., whose stock continues to rise as he enters what will likely be the last of his three seasons in the program.

Bosa last season became the fourth consecutive Buckeye to win the Big Ten's Smith-Brown defensive lineman of the year award

following his brother, Joey, in 2014 and '15 and Lewis in 2016. Prior to this season Bosa was named to watch lists for the Bednarik (best defensive player) and Maxwell (best player) awards.

Last season in 14 games he led Ohio State in tackles for loss with 16 and TFL yardage (74) as well as quarterback sacks with 8½. He also had 34 tackles (19 solo).

The scary part?

Longtime assistant head coach/defensive line coach Larry Johnson said Bosa is bound to make even greater strides this season compared to what he accomplished going from a freshman to a sophomore.

"(Year) two-to-three is really the biggest jump," Johnson said. "First year, you are trying to learn the system and learn how we do it. Second, you go and play with those techniques, and third year, you are trying to improve that much each time he walks on the field."

"You have a guy like Nick who has some elite skill sets, but at the same time, there is so much room for improvement. Those improvements are just that small. Your job as a coach is to find the moments where you can improve that much. Every day is like that, and Nick has taken that to heart. I think there is still growth."

Bosa may end up matching or bettering Joey's No. 3 pick by the San Diego (now Los Angeles) Chargers in 2016, but he's got help on the D-line. Cooper and Young, which sounds like a law firm, are potential high draft picks as well whenever they leave school.

Young (6-5, 265) played in 10 games last season as a true freshman in helping the Buckeyes to a Big Ten title. The five-star recruit from Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic had 19 tackles, including six TFL and 3½ sacks.

Johnson said as Young continues to grow physically he must make adjustments.

"With young players, you want to make sure they are not growing too fast," the coach said. "When you grow too fast, you miss the technique part of it. My job with Chase is make sure as you move (forward) we can't use athleticism to win every play. That was the biggest focus going into spring

## Projected Starters

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>End</b><br><b>97 • Nick Bosa</b>                                       | <b>End</b><br><b>2 • Chase Young</b>   |
| 6-4 • 263 • Jr.   | 6-5 • 265 • So.  |
| Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas                                  | Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic   |
| Named the Big Ten's Defensive Lineman of the Year in 2017.                | Racked up 19 tackles, six tackles for loss and 3½ sacks as a freshman last season. |
| <b>Nose Guard</b><br><b>67 • Robert Landers</b>                           | <b>Tackle</b><br><b>86 • Dre'Mont Jones</b>  |
| 6-1 • 283 • Jr.   | 6-3 • 290 • Jr.  |
| Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne  | Cleveland St. Ignatius   |
| Tallied 10 tackles, included five for loss, as a rotation player in 2017. | Opted to return to Ohio State despite being a projected NFL draft pick.            |



JOSH WINSLOW

**AT THE TOP – Nick Bosa, a junior defensive end, enters 2018 as the reigning Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year.**

ball is to make sure he has enough tools in his tool belt to use when he faces a great offensive tackle. That is the biggest challenge for him.

"Chase is learning as he goes, trying to figure out, 'What is my go-to move?' To be able to do that on the spot, that is the progress. Joey (Bosa), he got it and the next year, it was done."

Cooper, who hails from Gahanna Lincoln High School outside Columbus, has played 20 games the past two seasons while waiting his turn.

"It's definitely his year," Bosa said. "He's a great player and people tend to overlook him a little bit, but he's going to be a super big part of our D-line this year."

Johnson agrees: "He's got a chance to make an impact at the defensive end position. ... This is his moment right now, it really is. He's doing everything he can to make sure he grabs it."

Cooper (6-4, 257), a junior, had 15 tackles and three TFL for 19 yards last season. He played in six games as a freshman in 2016.

"Coop, he's on me and Nick's level," Young said. "He's a good guy. Coop goes hard on every play. His motor speaks for itself. Coop is good."

There is plenty of depth among the defensive ends including fourth-year junior Jashon Cornell (6-3, 273), a junior from St. Paul

(Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall who graduated Aug. 5 with a degree in family resource management.

He has played in 18 games with 18 tackles, four TFLs and two sacks. Cornell made the move back to end from defensive tackle to provide help on the edge rush.

Freshmen ends Tyler Friday, Javonte Jean-Baptiste, Tyreke Smith and Alex Williams may have opportunities to contribute, especially with the NCAA's new rule that they can play four games without burning a year of eligibility.

Friday (6-3, 255) was a 247Sports composite four-star prospect from Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep who collected 25 TFL and four sacks as a senior.

Another New Jersey guy, Jean-Baptiste was a four-star prospect at Oradell Bergen Catholic. At 6-5, 235, he is still considered a raw talent after not drawing a lot of attention until his senior year when he had 88 tackles.

Smith (6-4, 255) is a Cleveland Heights graduate who earned a four-star ranking and was rated the third-best recruit in Ohio for the 2018 class. He's another late bloomer as he did not participate in football full time until his junior year and then played only five games before injuring his leg. He had 70 tackles last season with 23 for losses.

Johnson likens Smith to his predecessor Lewis at the position.

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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEFENSIVE LINE

"I think he is a clone, (that's) what we looked for," the coach said. "Good basketball player, good feet, good movement skills, really smart. I think his ceiling is very high."

Williams (6-6, 260), out of Pickerington North in suburban Columbus, is another raw prospect with a chance to make an impact with his athleticism on the field.

### Defensive Tackles

Jones (6-3, 286), a fourth-year junior, could have turned pro after last season. He redshirted his true freshman year at defensive end because of a torn anterior cruciate ligament then switched to defensive tackle and has produced two excellent seasons that have caught the attention of NFL scouts.

"I've gone through so much as a player that it's hard not to grow," he said. "And then I've had help from Coach Johnson to really mold me into a great person and a great player."

Head coach Urban Meyer said once Jones committed to return to the program he was fully vested.

"For a guy to come back, when a lot of people thought he should leave, a lot of times we have to deal with, whether it be effort issues or 'Why am I doing this?' issues. Zero (with Jones)," Meyer said. "That's a credit to his family and Larry Johnson."

Jones, from Cleveland St. Ignatius, has started 23 of the 25 games he's played in and had 72 career tackles with nine of them being behind the line of scrimmage for a total loss of 26 yards. He was third-team All-Big Ten last season when he had 20 tackles despite missing two games with an injury.

He wants to prove that returning for another season wasn't a mistake.

"I feel like a lot of players come back and they feel like they have a certain agenda," he said. "That wasn't my mind-set. I watched film. I improved my routine before practice. Stretching. I'm eating healthier. That's what really helped me."

He will be joined on the inside line by Landers (6-1, 283), a junior nose tackle from Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne and a former West Virginia commit.

"His leadership skills are going off the roof," Johnson said. "I think that is the biggest (thing). I want him to grow as a leader. He has done that. He is leading by example, too, which is really cool for the young players, to watch a guy with a challenging skill set go as hard as he can."

Landers has 12½ tackles for loss among his 26 career tackles in 26 games. He had 10 tackles and five TFL last season in limited playing time due to the talent ahead of him.

"Going hard every rep that I possibly get on the field in practice," is how Landers described his path to improvement. "The biggest thing is my conditioning. When the ball is thrown, I'm probably not going to catch (receiver) Parris Campbell 10 yards down the field, but I'm at least going to make the extra effort to get myself in shape to take a larger volume of reps this coming season."

There are several other returnees who will seek playing time.

Fourth-year junior Davon Hamilton (6-4, 308) played his prep ball at Pickerington Central and stayed close to home by choosing Ohio State. He has 22 career tackles in 26 career games. Redshirt freshman Jerron Cage (6-2, 290) from Cincinnati Winton Woods was a two-time Associated Press Division II first-team all-state selection and a four-star recruit.

Injuries could impact what happens to second-year sophomore Malik Barrow (6-2, 280) and sophomore Haskell Garrett (6-2, 293).

Barrow, out of the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla., played two of the first three games last season before sustaining a season-ending knee injury and is working his way back.

Garrett had to deal with concussion issues during spring ball but was a full participant in fall camp. He played in eight games last season and had three tackles. He went to Las Vegas Bishop Gorman and was a teammate of OSU redshirt freshman quarterback Tate Martell.

There are three newcomers who come with impressive credentials, including Antwan Jackson, a junior college transfer from Blinn College in Brenham, Texas. He was rated the No. 2 JUCO defensive tackle among the 2018 class after recording 70 tackles, nine sacks and three forced fumbles last season.

Jackson (6-2, 300), from Ellenwood, Ga.,

was a redshirt freshman at Auburn in 2016 before going to Blinn.

"He can play nose and he can play the 3-technique," Johnson said. "He has got good pass-rush skills for a big guy, and that is what we kind of want."

He and Pocatello (Idaho) Highland product Tommy Togiak (6-2, 300), a freshman, enrolled in January and were able to get in the extra practices and conditioning. Togiak was the No. 3 defensive tackle and 55th player overall in the 247Sports composite for the 2018 class after getting 93 tackles, including 11 sacks, as a senior to lead his team to the state 5A championship. He is the first player from Idaho to sign with the Buckeyes.

Johnson was pleasantly surprised by his skills.

"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

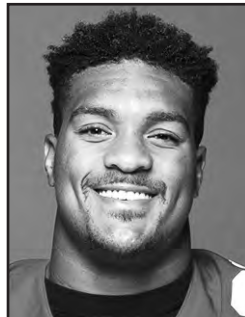
hoped to get out of the Cracker Jack box," the coach said.

Freshman Vincent (6-2, 288) has the family pedigree. His father, Troy, was a five-time Pro Bowl selection for the Philadelphia Eagles as a defensive back. The younger Vincent, from IMG Academy, was a five-star recruit and the top-rated defensive tackle in the country.

He had 60 tackles, 10 TFL and three sacks as a senior and 172 tackles in two years at IMG.

"He has got a really good skill set - very physical player, very athletic," Johnson said. "He has a really high IQ for football, so he understands the game really well. He will come in here and compete. I see him playing."

There are three defensive linemen walk-ons on the roster as well: sophomore Aaron Cox (6-3, 255) from Mantua (Ohio) Crestwood; junior Noah Donald (6-1, 263), a Uniontown (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit graduate, and Zaid Hamdan (5-11, 265), who graduated from Mason (Ohio) High School in December and walked on in January.



Dre'Mont Jones

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# LBs In 'Fierce Competition' For Starting Spots

By JOE DEMPSEY  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Despite losing a pair of talented multiyear starters to the NFL in Jerome Baker and Chris Worley, the Ohio State linebacker room still features some of the most talented athletes in the program.

"I really am excited about the linebacker position," defensive coordinator Greg Schiano said near the end of spring ball. "I think we have several guys that can play. It's a young position, so we're just going to have to compete. There's no rule that says only three can play either. We've done that at other positions. If we have more that we think can play, well, we're going to play more."

Following last season, sophomore linebacker Tuf Borland (6-1, 230) appeared to be the man to hold down the middle of the defense moving forward. The Bolingbrook, Ill., native totaled 58 tackles (35 solo) with 3½ tackles for loss and one sack after seeing increased playing time due to Worley's foot injury.

Borland stood out at the Mike linebacker spot with 12 tackles and one TFL in his first full game against Army and stayed in the rotation after Worley returned. However, an Achilles injury sidelined Borland for most of the offseason, and his return isn't expected to come until after the Buckeyes begin the 2018 slate.

## Projected Starters

| <i>Weakside</i>   | <i>Middle</i>   | <i>Strongside</i>  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>39 • Malik Harrison</b>  | <b>5 • Baron Browning</b>   | <b>20 • Pete Werner</b>  |
| <b>6-3 • 240 • Jr.</b>  | <b>6-4 • 238 • So.</b>  | <b>6-3 • 235 • So.</b>   |
| <b>Columbus Walnut Ridge</b>  | <b>Kennedale, Texas</b>   | <b>Indianapolis Cathedral</b>  |
| Tallied 36 tackles, three tackles for loss and two sacks while playing in all 14 games. | Registered 14 tackles while playing in 12 games as a true freshman. | Played in 11 games in 2017, mainly on special teams, and finished with nine tackles. |

Head coach Urban Meyer addressed Borland's status when asked at Big Ten Media Days on July 24 if he would be ready to start camp.

"Not the opening of camp, no," Meyer said. "I mean, if I needed him to be, he probably would be. That's how – his name is pretty indicative of what kind of kid he is, but I anticipate he'll be ready early in the season."

In addition to Borland, fifth-year senior Dante Booker (6-3, 235) represents another Buckeye linebacker returning with substantial experience. The Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary product has played in 36 games, recording 62 tackles (39 solo), six TFL, two sacks and one interception. A pair of shoulder surgeries held Booker out of spring ball, but Ohio State will have the 2013 Ohio Mr. Football back at full strength on the outside when it opens the season against Oregon State.

"Ready to roll," Meyer responded when

asked of Booker's status. "We're going to be smart. He's had an incredible summer, and he looks as good as I've ever seen. I'm counting on him to be in that linebacker mix."

Offensive coordinator Ryan Day served as acting head coach during fall camp, and he gave an Aug. 17 update on the linebackers.

"(Linebackers coach) Billy Davis feels as if things are starting to fall into place with this inexperienced but talented linebacker corps," Day wrote. "There are fierce competitions at all three positions."

Booker is competing with sophomore linebacker Pete Werner (6-3, 235) for time at the Sam linebacker spot, which is the strongside outside linebacker.

"At the Sam, Dante Booker and Pete Werner are all over the field making plays on a daily basis," Day wrote.

The Will and Sam spots are largely interchangeable in Ohio State's defense, so any of the outside linebackers can play either side, allowing for more opportunity to see the field.

At the Will linebacker spot, junior linebacker Malik Harrison (6-3, 240) returns with game experience. The Columbus native recorded 36 tackles (22 solo), three tackles for loss and two sacks as a sophomore while primarily playing the Will, which is the outside linebacker on the weak side. The Walnut Ridge product brings extreme athleticism to the group, playing quarterback and safety in high school while also standing out as an All-Ohio basketball player.

Junior Keandre Jones (6-2, 228) played in 11 games as a sophomore, totaling 15 tackles (11 solo) with one pass breakup while primar-

ily filling in as Baker's backup. The Olney (Md.) Good Counsel product offers speed and athleticism and has also earned praise for his leadership, while competing with Harrison.

"Malik Harrison and Keandre Jones have both stepped up in their new roles," Day wrote.

Linebackers often take on leadership roles to keep the defense in sync and set standards for physicality and discipline. At Big Ten Media Days in July, junior defensive lineman Dre'Mont Jones mentioned both Booker and Jones among the leaders of the defense, along with junior safety Jordan Fuller.

Junior linebacker Justin Hilliard (6-1, 230) played in all 14 games as a sophomore, contributing 14 tackles (10 solo) after missing almost all of the previous two seasons with different biceps injuries. The Cincinnati St. Xavier product has yet to live up to his No. 1 outside linebacker ranking by ESPN and No. 1 inside linebacker rating by Rivals, but he will have an opportunity if he can stay healthy.

Sophomore linebacker Baron Browning is another name in the mix. The 6-4, 238-pound underclassman played in 12 games as a freshman, recording 14 tackles (seven solo) and 1½ TFL. The Fort Worth, Texas, native was considered a top-10 player in the 2017 class by Rivals (No. 9 overall) and the No. 1 outside linebacker by Rivals, 247Sports and Scout.

"Baron Browning and Justin Hilliard are battling at Mike while Tuf Borland is recovering from his Achilles injury," Day wrote.

Both Browning and Hilliard have demonstrated the versatility and athleticism required to play the outside spots once Borland returns from injury, and that flexibility gives the Silver Bullets more options.

Early enrollee Dallas Gant (6-3, 225) and fellow freshmen Teradja Mitchell (6-2, 236) and K'Vaughan Pope (6-1, 226) come to Columbus with impressive résumés and will have the opportunity to compete for playing time as first-year linebackers.

Gant, a Toledo St. John's Jesuit product, has been with the team since January, and 247Sports' No. 10 outside linebacker will contend for playing time at the Will and Sam spots. Mitchell was the No. 1 inside linebacker and a top-20 prospect, according to Rivals. Pope was the No. 9 inside linebacker, according to 247Sports and Rivals.

Walk-on linebackers Trayvon Wilburn (6-0, 212, freshman), Hayden Jester (6-1, 230, junior) and Cade Kacherski (6-3, 190, freshman) will provide practice depth for the Buckeyes.

Davis said the linebacker group talks about how leadership is more about actions than words and it is exciting to see the linebackers grow into those roles.

"Keandre's got a very strong personality in the room," Davis said. "Malik is a playmaker that's got a lot of people looking at him. Baron's a young man and Justin Hilliard are both Mike backers that are in charge and in front of people a lot."



Malik Harrison



Pete Werner



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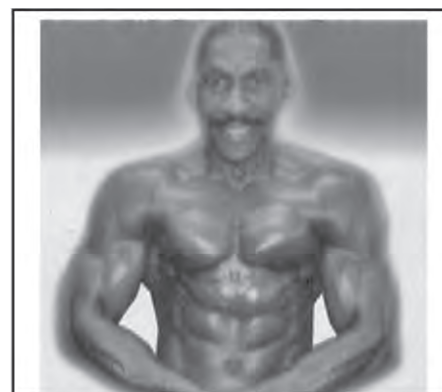
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# New-Look DB Unit Has High Expectations

By JAMES GREGA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's defensive back room has arguably been the most consistent unit for Urban Meyer since he arrived in 2012. However, much like the uncertainty surrounding Meyer throughout August, there is some uncertainty surrounding the defensive backs room at Ohio State.

After a dreadful 2013 season, the Buckeyes turned around their secondary play for four seasons under cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs and defensive coordinators Chris Ash and Greg Schiano. Ohio State sent five first-round picks into the NFL draft from 2015-18 (Eli Apple, Malik Hooker, Marshon Lattimore, Gareon Conley and Denzel Ward). Now however, Ohio State has to replace a pair of players currently on NFL rosters (Ward, Damon Webb), and the candidates to do so have big shoes to fill.

In addition to trying to live up to the expectation set by the defensive backs room at Ohio State, the Buckeyes are adjusting to two new position coaches.

Outside of wide receivers coach Zach Smith, who was fired July 23, Coombs was the longest tenured coach on Meyer's staff from his original 2012 crew. After his departure to the NFL to join with former Buckeye Mike Vrabel in Tennessee, Ohio State turned to Taver Johnson, a former Jim Tressel assistant who knows plenty about Ohio State and Columbus.

"Taver Johnson is really enjoying being a Buckeye coach again," acting head coach Ryan Day said in a statement Aug. 17. "His position group has focused on being consistent with their technique and their understanding of how everything fits together with this defense."

The Buckeyes also added Alex Grinch to their staff as a 10th assistant thanks to a new rule from the NCAA. Grinch, who served as the defensive coordinator at Washington State prior to his move to Columbus, will coach the Ohio State safeties,



JOSH WINSLOW

**ROUND TWO** – Junior cornerback Kendall Sheffield is entering his second season at Ohio State after being a key contributor on defense in 2017.

leaving Schiano more time to serve in an overseer role with the defense.

## Replacing A 1st-Rounder

It has become commonplace for Ohio State to pump out first-round cornerbacks, and for the third straight season, the Buckeyes will have to try to replace that production.

Gone is Denzel Ward to the Cleveland Browns, and Kendall Sheffield is the popular pick to take over a leadership role in the cornerback room. Sheffield is also, at this

point, Ohio State's best chance at keeping the first-round pick trend going, listed as one of the fastest players in college football by multiple outlets.

Sheffield (6-0, 193) transferred to Ohio State from Brenham (Texas) Blinn College in 2017 after leaving Alabama following the 2015 campaign. In his first season as a Buckeye, he was eighth on the team in tackles with 40, including two tackles for loss. He broke up nine passes while playing in all 14 games for the Buckeye defense but failed to collect an interception.

The former JUCO corner will likely be joined by veteran Damon Arnette (6-0, 195) when the Buckeyes take the field against Oregon State, as Arnette has more experience than anyone else in the secondary when it comes to playing at Ohio State.

A redshirt junior, Arnette enters his third season as a major contributor in Ohio State's secondary. As a redshirt freshman in 2016, he earned playing time primarily as the nickelback in the Buckeye defense and recorded 21 tackles and an interception.

Last season, Arnette was one of three

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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEFENSIVE BACKS

### Projected Starters

|  |
|--|
| <b>Cornerback</b><br><b>46 • Damon Arnette</b><br>6-0 • 195 • Jr.<br>Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas<br>Registered 44 tackles and two interceptions in his first season as a starter. |
| <b>Safety</b><br><b>4 • Jordan Fuller</b><br>6-2 • 204 • Jr.<br>Old Tappan, N.J.<br>Finished second on the team with 70 total tackles while adding two interceptions.                          |

|   |
|---|
| <b>Cornerback</b><br><b>8 • Kendall Sheffield</b><br>6-0 • 193 • Jr.<br>Brenham (Texas) Blinn College<br>Had 40 tackles, including two for loss, in his first season at Ohio State. |
| <b>Safety</b><br><b>14 • Isaiah Pryor</b><br>6-2 • 197 • So.<br>Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy<br>Played in all 14 games as a true freshman, totaling 13 tackles and a sack.          |

10 tackles in the Cotton Bowl win over USC and enters 2018 as Ohio State's unquestioned leader in the secondary. Who ends up joining him at the back end of the Buckeye defense, though, remains one of the biggest personnel questions in Columbus.

Sophomore Isaiah Pryor (6-2, 197), a four-star prospect out of IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla., was considered the early favorite to replace Webb. However after failing to secure the spot in spring practice, the door appears open for a number of other players to grab the position.

Pryor's main competition appears to be sophomore Jahsen Wint and true freshman Josh Proctor (6-2, 198).

Wint, a 5-11, 196-pounder out of Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall, attended the same high school as former Buckeye standout Curtis Samuel, and despite being just a three-star prospect out of high school, he has worked his way into contention for the position.

Proctor, a four-star safety out of Owasso, Okla., appears to be the most athletic player vying for the spot. Proctor provides length to a position that requires a player to cover plenty of ground.

Other candidates to replace Webb include sophomores Brendon White (6-2, 210) and converted cornerback Amir Riep (5-11, 195), both Ohio products.

White, the son of former Buckeye William White, played quarterback, cornerback and receiver at Olenangy Liberty High School before working with both linebackers and receivers as a freshman and then finally landing at safety.

Riep, much like White, played primarily special teams in 2017 as a freshman. A Cincinnati native, Riep spent his rookie season in Coombs' unit before transitioning to safety in the spring. Riep tallied 10 tackles in mop-up duty and special teams last season, while White collected just one stop in five games played.

"First-year at Ohio State coach Alex Grinch feels it has been a very positive camp for his position group," Day said in his state-

ment. "Jordan Fuller, in particular, has established himself as a leader and as a playmaker on our defense. There has been excellent competition to determine who will be the starter opposite Fuller, between Isaiah Pryor and Jahsen Wint. Brendon White and Amir Riep are fueling the competition by showing up on film and making plays. The play of a couple of true freshmen – Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker – has been encouraging."

Marcus Hooker (5-11, 192), the younger brother of Malik, is suspended for Ohio State's season opener against Oregon State following a DUI arrest over the summer.

### Potential Sleepers

As they continue to do most seasons, Ohio State welcomed a fresh crop of high-profile recruits in the 2018 class who should contend for playing time, either with the defense or special teams, as first-year players.

Outside of Proctor and Hooker, the Buckeyes also signed Tyreke Johnson and Sevyn Banks to the 2018 recruiting class, two players who figure to contribute on special teams. Johnson, a 6-1, 193-pound product out of Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian, gives Ohio State a long, athletic corner with the ability to continue their press-man excellence at corner while Banks, at 6-0, 195 pounds, provides similar athleticism.

Four-star wide receiver Cameron Brown (6-1, 185), a St. Louis Christian Brothers College product, switched to the defensive side at cornerback after arriving in Columbus.

Also in the mix at corner is Westerville (Ohio) South product Marcus Williamson (5-10, 186), who enters his second season with the Buckeyes, having appeared in 10 games last season. He tallied six tackles in limited time as a freshman.

Rounding out Ohio State's secondary is a healthy amount of walk-ons, a group that includes junior corner Alex Badine (5-11, 186), freshman corner Lloyd McFarquhar (5-9, 165), sophomore safety Kevin Dever (6-0, 192) and freshman safety Ryan Batsch (6-3, 205).

Ohio State cornerbacks who rotated consistently, joining Ward and Sheffield, and he finished sixth on the team in tackles with 44 and corralled interceptions against UNLV and Michigan State.

Day said in his statement released Aug. 17 that he expects both veteran defensive backs to continue Ohio State's success in the secondary.

"Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield are poised to continue the tradition of great Buckeye CB play," he said.

A player who is expected to push both Arnette and Sheffield for playing time is Jeffrey Okudah (6-1, 199). Okudah played significant time as a true freshman last season, collecting 17 tackles while playing in all 14 games.

He saw extended playing time in games against Nebraska and USC in 2017 due to a targeting suspension for Arnette against the Cornhuskers and Ward sitting out the bowl game against the Trojans. Despite missing spring practice due to shoulder surgery, Okudah has been back for fall camp and is working his way back into the rotation in the secondary.

"Jeffrey Okudah is coming along well

and, after missing the spring due to injury, has come back strong and is using each snap to improve," Day said of the Texas native.

Redshirt freshman Shaun Wade (6-1, 195), who missed all of last season due to abdomen surgery, is also expected to contend for playing time. A former five-star prospect out of Trinity Christian High School in Florida, Wade earned a shout-out from Day as well in his statement to Ohio State fans updating them on the progress of the team.

"Shaun Wade is really progressing as well," Day said. "We are excited about this position group, and all of the guys are working to be consistent in everything they do."

### Biggest Hole On Defense

Last season, Ohio State had to replace Malik Hooker in the back end of its defense and did so with flying colors.

Initially, the Buckeyes rotated both Jordan Fuller and Erick Smith at Hooker's safety spot, but eventually Fuller took the role and ran with it. The now-junior safety finished the 2017 season second on the team in tackles with 70 and nabbed a pair of interceptions.

Fuller (6-2, 204) tied a career high with



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# Familiar Faces To Lead Ohio State's Specialists

By RYAN McGLADE  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Other than a couple of personnel changes, the special teams for Ohio State in 2018 will look very similar to the 2017 unit.

The Buckeyes return their punter, placekicker, long snapper and kickoff specialist but have modified who will receive kickoffs and punts.

Sophomore Drue Chrisman (6-3, 215) is back at punter after a stellar debut season. As a redshirt freshman last fall, the Cincinnati LaSalle product averaged 44.2 yards per punt (51 attempts totaling 2,256 yards) to rank 14th nationally.



Sean Nuernberger

A 2017 Ray Guy Award semifinalist, Chrisman had 25 punts downed inside the 20-yard line and booted 15 more than 50 yards.

Chrisman also is expected to be the team's holder for field goals and extra points again.

Chrisman's battery mate on field goals and extra points, Sean Nuernberger (6-1, 228), is one of the most experienced kickers in the country. The fifth-year senior is entering his second straight season as the squad's full-time kicker. He made all 71 of his extra-point attempts in 2017 to extend his career streak of successful PAT tries to 177,

tying Rich Spangler for the school record. Nuernberger went 17 of 21 on field goals as a junior, missing from 47 and 29 yards and twice from 43.

Nuernberger began his Ohio State career in 2014 when he helped the Buckeyes win the national championship. He then lost the kicking battle at the start of the 2015 season to transfer Jack Willoughby. Nuernberger regained the job for the final four games of the 2015 campaign, but a groin injury at the start of the preseason camp in August 2016 ultimately led to him taking a redshirt that fall.

Back as OSU's No. 1 long snapper for a third consecutive year is junior Liam McCullough (6-2, 228). From Worthington Kilbourne in suburban Columbus, he is only the second Buckeye long snapper, along with Bryce Haynes, to receive a scholarship.

Sophomore Blake Haubeil, who was the primary kickoff specialist a season

ago, is expected to handle kickoffs once again. The 6-4, 225-pounder kicked in 13 of Ohio State's 14 games last fall and was responsible for 88 of the team's 104 total kickoffs. One of the chief reasons he wasn't on the field for all kickoffs was that the coaches gave Nuernberger (15 kickoffs) and even walk-on Bryan Kristan (one) a shot at properly executing the kickoff strategy.

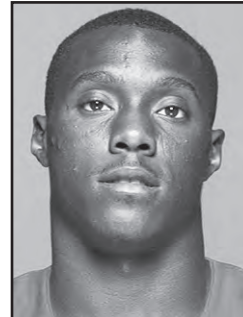
Since Urban Meyer became OSU's head coach in 2012, the Buckeyes have tried to kick the ball short of the end zone but as close to the goal line and sideline as possible, with the intent of pinning opponents inside their own 25 on the return. This tactic backfired last year, as Ohio State was tied for first in the country with seven kickoffs going out of bounds – five by Haubeil and one each by Nuernberger and Kristan.

Meyer, special teams coordinator Taver Johnson and the rest of the staff may have to re-evaluate how they approach kickoffs and kickoff returns moving forward, though. In April, the NCAA passed a new rule that allows teams to call for a fair catch on any kickoff inside the 25-yard line, resulting in a touchback if they do.

"We've probably had about a dozen conversations," Meyer said at Big Ten Media Days in Chicago on July 24. "I always start the meeting. If we have an advantage, we're going to do it. If we feel like we can return a kick against someone, we'll do it. If not, we'll do this (gestures the fair catch signal).

"Kickoff coverage, same thing. If we can find a way to have an advantage, then we'll do it. I'm anxious to see what teams will do against us. That's what (associate head coach and defensive coordinator Greg) Schiano and I have been talking about. Do they condense us? Or do they keep us spread out? If it's a kick that's not on target, then return it. If it is on target, then fair-catch it."

Sophomore H-back Demario McCall (5-9, 193) will head both the kickoff and punt return groups after a committee handled the former and K.J. Hill was responsible for the latter last year.



Demario McCall

Parris Campbell (nine), Mike Weber (nine) and Hill (six) combined for 24 kickoff returns in 2017, while McCall tallied two for 29 yards (14.5 average). Ohio State was 17th nationally in kickoff return average (24.2 yards on 28 attempts). Campbell averaged 36.6 yards per return.

The punt return unit last fall underachieved mightily for a second straight season. After ranking 105th out of 128 FBS schools in punt return average (5.2 yards on 27 attempts) in 2016, the Buckeyes finished 98th in the country in 2017 (5.5 yards on 30 attempts). Hill returned 26 punts for 144 yards (5.5 average), and McCall returned two for 6 yards. The longest takeback was 22 yards by Hill.

The Buckeyes have not registered a special teams touchdown since Jalin Marshall had a 54-yard punt return to pay dirt vs. Indiana in 2014.

Hill and freshman H-back Jaelen Gill both worked as returners in fall camp as well.



Liam McCullough

OSU allowed an average of 17.4 yards on kickoffs last year to place 10th nationally and gave up a 100-yard touchdown to Maryland's Ty Johnson and a 97-yard score to Penn State's Saquon Barkley.

The Buckeyes' punt coverage ranked 73rd in America by allowing 7.7 yards a return. Chrisman's net average of 41.1, however, helped the Buckeyes check in

at ninth. Ohio State's special teams lineup is rounded out with a pair of walk-ons. Toledo Central Catholic product Zack Hoover (6-2, 185) is a sophomore kicker while Troy (Mich.) Athens product Bradley Robinson (6-1, 220), a junior, will provide depth behind McCullough at long snapper.

## Projected Starters

| Kicker  | Punter   | Long Snapper   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>96 • Sean Nuernberger</b>                                      | <b>91 • Drue Chrisman</b>                                    | <b>49 • Liam McCullough</b>                                      |
| 6-1 • 228 • 5th-Sr.<br>Buckner (Ky.) Oldham Co.                   | 6-3 • 215 • So.<br>Cincinnati LaSalle                        | 6-2 • 228 • Jr.<br>Worthington (Ohio) Kilbourne                  |
| Converted 17 of 21 field goals and 71 of 71 extra points in 2017. | Had 25 of 51 punts downed inside the 20-yard line last year. | Entering his third season as Ohio State's starting long snapper. |

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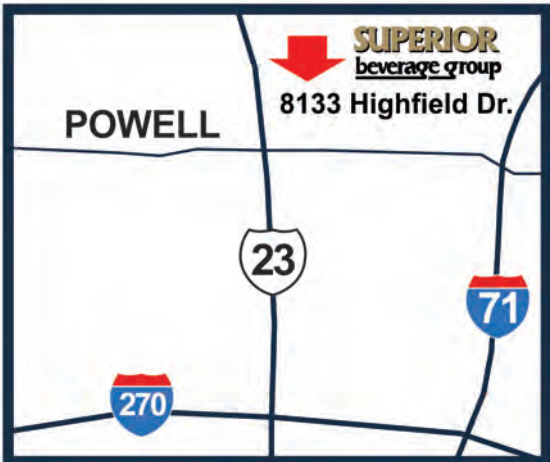


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# Ohio State Football Roster By Position And Eligibility

| POSITION                | SENIORS   | JUNIORS  | SOPHOMORES   | REDSHIRT FRESHMEN  | FRESHMEN  |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|--------------------|---|
| <b>QUARTERBACK</b>      |   |  | 7 Dwayne Haskins<br>16 Kory Curtis*  | 18 Tate Martell    | 10 Daniel Vanatsky*<br>12 Matthew Baldwin   |
| <b>RUNNING BACK</b>     |   | 25 Mike Weber<br>44 Amari McMahon*   | <b>2 J.K. Dobbins</b><br>34 Mitch Rossi*   |                    | 6 Brian Snead<br>33 Master Teague   |
| <b>H-BACK</b>           |   |  | 30 Demario McCall  |                    | 26 Jaelen Gill  |
| <b>WIDE RECEIVER</b>    | 1 Johnnie Dixon#<br><b>21 Parris Campbell#</b><br><b>83 Terry McLaurin#</b> | 9 Binjimen Victor<br><b>11 Austin Mack</b><br>14 K.J. Hill<br>80 C.J. Saunders   | 5 Jaylen Harris<br>23 De'Shawn White*<br>82 Garyn Prater*                                | 87 Elijah Gardiner | 17 Kamryn Babb<br>85 L'Christian Smith<br>86 Chris Olave                            |
| <b>TIGHT END</b>        | 37 Derrick Malone*<br>48 Tate Duarte*                                       | 38 Rashod Berry<br>84 Brock Davin*   | 81 Jake Hausmann<br>89 Luke Farrell  |                    | 88 Jeremy Ruckert   |
| <b>OFFENSIVE TACKLE</b> | <b>59 Isaiah Prince</b><br>60 Blake Pfenning*<br>63 Kevin Woidke*           | 58 Joshua Alabi  |  | 75 Thayer Munford  | 74 Max Wray<br>77 Nicholas Petit-Frere  |
| <b>OFFENSIVE GUARD</b>  | 62 Brandon Pahl*<br>66 Malcolm Pridgeon#<br><b>78 Demetrius Knox#</b>       | 50 Nathan Brock*<br><b>73 Michael Jordan</b><br><b>76 Branden Bowen</b>          | 61 Gavin Cupp  | 52 Wyatt Davis     | 64 Jack Jamieson*   |
| <b>CENTER</b>           | 79 Brady Taylor#  |  |  | 71 Josh Myers      | 54 Matthew Jones  |
| <b>LONG SNAPPER</b>     |   | 42 Bradley Robinson*<br><b>49 Liam McCullough</b>                                |  |                    |   |
| <b>KICKER</b>           | <b>96 Sean Nuernberger#</b>   |  | 29 Zach Hoover*<br><b>95 Blake Haubeil</b>   |                    |   |
| <b>PUNTER</b>           |   |  | <b>91 Drue Chrisman</b>  |                    |   |
| <b>DEFENSIVE TACKLE</b> |   | 53 Davon Hamilton<br>67 Robert Landers<br><b>86 Dre'Mont Jones</b>               | 55 Malik Barrow<br>90 Antwuan Jackson<br>92 Haskell Garrett                              | 98 Jerron Cage     | 6 Taron Vincent<br>68 Zaid Hamdan*<br>72 Tommy Togia                                |
| <b>DEFENSIVE END</b>    |   | 9 Jashon Cornell<br>18 Jonathon Cooper<br>70 Noah Donald*<br><b>97 Nick Bosa</b> | 2 Chase Young<br>56 Aaron Cox*   |                    | 11 Tyreke Smith<br>17 Alex Williams<br>38 Javontae Jean-Baptiste<br>54 Tyler Friday |
| <b>LINEBACKER</b>       | 52 Dante Booker#  | 16 Keandre Jones<br>39 Malik Harrison<br>41 Hayden Jester*<br>47 Justin Hilliard | 5 Baron Browning<br>20 Pete Werner<br>32 Tuf Borland                                     |                    | 7 Teradja Mitchell<br>19 Dallas Gant<br>36 K'Vaughan Pope<br>46 Cade Kacherski*     |
| <b>CORNERBACK</b>       |   | 8 Kendall Sheffield<br>28 Alex Badine*<br><b>46 Damon Arnette</b>                | 1 Jeffrey Okudah<br>21 Marcus Williamson   | 24 Shaun Wade      | 12 Sevyn Banks<br>13 Tyreke Johnson<br>26 Cameron Brown<br>42 Lloyd McFarquhar*     |
| <b>SAFETY</b>           |   | <b>4 Jordan Fuller</b>   | 10 Amir Riep<br>14 Isaiah Pryor<br>23 Jahsen Wint<br>25 Brendon White<br>30 Kevin Dever* |                    | 15 Josh Proctor<br>29 Marcus Hooker<br>43 Ryan Batsch*                              |

# – 5th-Year Senior • \* – Walk-on • Returning Starters In **BOLD**

## Ohio State Future Schedules

| Date     | 2019 Opponent                 | Date     | 2020 Opponent                 | Date     | 2021 Opponent                 | Other Games Scheduled (2022-27)  |
|----------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|--|
| Aug. 31  | FLORIDA ATLANTIC              | Sept. 5  | BOWLING GREEN                 | Sept. 4  | at Minnesota                  | <b>2022</b> – Sept. 3 vs. NOTRE DAME;<br>Sept. 17 vs. TOLEDO.<br><b>2023</b> – Sept. 23 at Notre Dame.<br><b>2024</b> – Sept. 7 at Washington.<br><b>2025</b> – Aug. 30 at Texas; Sept. 13 vs. WASHINGTON.<br><b>2026</b> – Sept. 5 vs. TEXAS; Sept. 19 vs. BOSTON COLLEGE.<br><b>2027</b> – Sept. 18 at Boston College. |
| Sept. 7  | CINCINNATI                    | Sept. 12 | at Oregon                     | Sept. 11 | OREGON                        |  |
| Sept. 14 | at Indiana                    | Sept. 19 | BUFFALO                       | Sept. 18 | TULSA                         |  |
| Sept. 21 | MIAMI (OHIO)                  | Sept. 26 | RUTGERS                       | Sept. 25 | AKRON                         |  |
| Sept. 28 | at Nebraska                   | Oct. 10  | IOWA                          | Oct. 2   | at Nebraska                   |  |
| Oct. 5   | MICHIGAN STATE                | Oct. 17  | at Michigan State             | Oct. 9   | PURDUE                        |  |
| Oct. 19  | at Northwestern               | Oct. 24  | at Penn State                 | Oct. 23  | at Rutgers                    |  |
| Oct. 26  | WISCONSIN                     | Oct. 31  | NEBRASKA                      | Oct. 30  | MICHIGAN STATE                |  |
| Nov. 9   | MARYLAND                      | Nov. 7   | INDIANA                       | Nov. 6   | at Indiana                    |  |
| Nov. 16  | at Rutgers                    | Nov. 14  | at Maryland                   | Nov. 13  | MARYLAND                      |  |
| Nov. 23  | PENN STATE                    | Nov. 21  | at Illinois                   | Nov. 20  | PENN STATE                    |  |
| Nov. 30  | at Michigan                   | Nov. 28  | MICHIGAN                      | Nov. 27  | at Michigan                   |  |
| Dec. 7   | B1G Title Game (Indianapolis) | Dec. 5   | B1G Title Game (Indianapolis) | Dec. 4   | B1G Title Game (Indianapolis) |  |

# Buckeyes Face Tough But Manageable Slate

By RYAN GINN  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

If Ohio State makes the College Football Playoff in 2018, nobody will be able to say the Buckeyes didn't earn it.

Big Ten runner-up Wisconsin was (fairly) plagued by schedule criticisms throughout last season, to the point that some analysts wondered (unfairly) if they'd be kept out of the playoff even if they won the conference. If the Buckeyes run the regular-season table, they won't hear any such qualms.

Playing in what appears to be the toughest division in college football, Ohio State will be tested against Michigan, Michigan State and Penn State, with the latter two coming on the road. And while the Buckeyes avoid Wisconsin in the West, the cross-division opponents include two games against teams with rising stars as head coach (Minnesota and Purdue) and another against a dormant power that just hired a coach with a star that is already very much risen (Nebraska). To top it off, the Buckeyes head to Arlington, Texas, for a neutral-site game against a TCU team coming off an 11-win season.

That's a tough group of opponents, but it's not unmanageable. Unless they underwhelm early or an opponent noticeably outperforms expectations, the Buckeyes will likely be favored against every regular-season foe. Additionally, the schedule doesn't have any quirks that could punish them.

The 2016 campaign famously forced the Buckeyes to face two tremendously talented

teams – Wisconsin and Penn State – in road night games in back-to-back weeks after each opponent was coming off a bye. Ohio State's trip to Happy Valley is sandwiched between games against Tulane and Indiana. The neutral-site meeting with the Horned Frogs follows a home game against Rutgers, and the regular-season finale against Michigan comes one week after Ohio State visits Maryland.

What follows are thumbnail previews of Ohio State's 12 regular-season opponents. Additionally, a full preview of Oregon State can be found on page 46.

**Oregon State, Sept. 1** – The Buckeyes couldn't open up with an easier Power 5 opponent outside of Kansas, and even that might be up for debate. The Beavers are coming off a 1-11 season that featured zero wins against FBS opponents and a three-point victory against FCS opponent Portland State.

Things went from bad to worse when Gary Andersen walked away from \$12 million left on his contract and bailed on the rebuild six games into his third season. Oregon State was humiliated in its season finale, losing 69-10 to rival Oregon. New coach Jonathan Smith faces a tall task, but he knows what it takes for the Beavers to be great. During his four-year stint as a starting quarterback, he led Oregon State to its best-ever season in 2000 that featured an 11-1 record and a No. 4 ranking after beating Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl.

The Beavers do return some key pieces from injury, including likely starting quarterback Jake Luton, but they've also lost

a number of contributors. Three of the four running backs have departed, leaving Artavis Pierce (323 yards, one touchdown) as the leading returning rusher.

**Rutgers, Sept. 8** – While Chris Ash does appear to be making strides in Piscataway, it's hard to imagine a much cushier opening tandem of Power 5 opponents than Oregon State and Rutgers. Ash still hasn't scored on Ohio State's defense, losing 58-0 in 2016 and 56-0 in 2017.

The Scarlet Knights will have to find a way to improve their offense, which ranked 128th in total offense and 120th in scoring offense in 2017. That fix could come in the form of true freshman quarterback Artur Sitkowski, a four-star who flipped from Miami (Fla.) to Rutgers. With senior Gio Rescigno offering nothing of note the last two seasons, Sitkowski could very well win the job. The freshman was impressive in spring, throwing for 280 yards and three touchdowns in Rutgers' spring game.

If Rutgers does make a bowl game, it will probably come thanks to the defense. The linebackers are strong, and cornerbacks Blessuan Austin and Isaiah Wharton should be able to cause some problems for the Ohio State receivers.

**TCU, Sept. 15** – Calling this a neutral-site game is somehow doubly misleading. The game takes place at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, just a few miles from TCU's Fort Worth campus – hardly a neutral site in terms of location. However, the fact that the game will be played in an 80,000-capacity stadium benefits the Buckeyes. TCU is a small, private school that rarely eclipses 45,000 fans at home games despite the stature of the program. It's entirely possible Ohio State will have more fans in the building.

Offensively, the Horned Frogs will turn to dual-threat Shawn Robinson at quarterback. He's a new starter but could be a boon for the program as TCU's first ever four-star quarterback signee. Additionally, he'll have a talented group of skill position players to work with, though an offensive line that lost three starters could present some problems.

The Horned Frogs defense suffered a big loss in August when defensive tackle Ross Blacklock, the 2017 Big 12 co-defensive freshman of the year, sustained a season-ending injury. His loss removes a big obstacle for what will be a reworked Ohio State interior offensive line. On the edges, the Ohio State offensive line will still have to watch out for first-team All-Big 12 defensive end Ben Banogu, who had 8½ sacks in 2017.

**Tulane, Sept. 22** – The first meeting between these two programs will also double as the only non-Power 5 matchup for Ohio State in the regular season. Tulane has slowly climbed out of the depths after hiring Willie Fritz and finished just shy of a bowl bid in 2017 after coming up a yard short of the game-winning score against SMU in the 2017 season finale. Tulane's been to just one bowl game since 2013 and two since 2002, but that should change this year if no big injuries occur.

The most important piece of the puzzle is quarterback Jonathan Banks, and the priority of keeping him healthy increased even more dramatically after two backups transferred. Banks is a dual threat who led the team in both passing and rushing in 2017. He'll have some help with eight starters returning on offense for the Green Wave.

No matter how much Tulane improves, though, there's no question Ohio State is vastly superior. As long as the Buckeyes

take care of business in the first half, this could be the best chance yet for fans to see the backups and young players in a more expanded role.

**Penn State, Sept. 29** – In what is becoming a routine occurrence, it will be whiteout conditions in Happy Valley when the Buckeyes take on the Nittany Lions. It may feel a little different, though. The last time the Buckeyes traveled to State College in September, it was Woody Hayes leading them on the field in 1976.

Penn State has plenty of talent, but it will also have some questions to answer. How much of the offensive success was departed coordinator Joe Moorhead responsible for? Did James Franklin find an adequate replacement for Moorhead? How will Saquon Barkley's absence impact the offense? Can the Nittany Lions find a receiver as dependable as career receptions leader DaeSean Hamilton?

Those uncertainties will have to be addressed, but the good news for Penn State is that it still returns plenty of impact players. With quarterback Trace McSorley, the Nittany Lions have a dependable playmaker at the most important position, and the benefits of that can't be overstated. Running back Miles Sanders should be improved in a bigger role, and the Nits can also test out five-star running back Ricky Slade.

Speaking of impact freshmen, it will be interesting to see how Penn State utilizes super recruit Micah Parsons, who has been practicing at linebacker after playing defensive end in high school. If he reaches his potential early, he could be a big weapon.

**Indiana, Oct. 6** – Indiana hasn't beaten Ohio State since 1988, and that streak seems like a safe bet to make it past the 30-year mark. Although the Hoosiers have occasionally given Ohio State fits at Memorial Stadium in recent years, it's been smooth sailing when the Buckeyes host them at Ohio Stadium.

The Hoosiers have carried an intriguing quarterback battle well into fall camp, and there may not be a resolution until the season opener. Peyton Ramsey was splitting time as the starter in 2017 before a season-ending knee injury, and he entered 2018 as the favorite to win the job. However, Indiana landed Arizona graduate transfer Brandon Dawkins in April. In 22 games for Arizona, Dawkins threw for 2,418 yards with 15 touchdowns and 12 interceptions. He also proved to be an adept runner, notching 1,582 rushing yards and 20 touchdowns.

The Hoosiers return just eight starters, including just three on defense. That's never a good sign, but Indiana could steal some games if the quarterback plays well enough to raise the offense's ceiling. Additionally, the Hoosiers could have a star in the making with dynamic running back Morgan Ellison, a Pickerington, Ohio, native who fell into their lap because of an injury-plagued prep career. Ellison averaged almost 5.0 yards per carry as a true freshman and hit the 100-yard mark in two games.

**Minnesota, Oct. 13** – The first year of the P.J. Fleck era at Minnesota included some highs (beating Nebraska 54-21, for example) but was mostly a disappointment. The wins weren't against great opponents, and the Gophers failed to score against Northwestern and Wisconsin in the final two games of the season.

The Gophers have hung around with Ohio State in the last two meetings, losing 31-24 in the snow in 2014 and 28-14 in Columbus in 2015. If host Ohio State can

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## FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE OPPONENTS

put up points, though, this Minnesota team won't be able to stay close. True freshman quarterback Zack Annexstad edged out red-shirt freshman Tanner Morgan for the starting job, meaning the top two signal callers have never taken a college snap.

Minnesota's defense is intriguing, though, and features a couple of Ohio State connections. Defensive end Carter Coughlin, who was heavily recruited by the Buckeyes before choosing his home-state team, led the team with 6½ sacks in 2017. Additionally, safety Antoine Winfield Jr., the son of Buckeyes legend Antoine Winfield, gives Minnesota a playmaking safety after missing most of 2017 because of a hamstring injury.

**Purdue, Oct. 20** – Jeff Brohm's Boilermakers surprised in his first season, going 7-6 and winning the Foster Farms Bowl after a rough run under former Ohio State assistant Darrell Hazell. Purdue claimed wins at Missouri and Iowa (easier said than done, apparently) and narrowly lost to Wisconsin (17-9) on the road and Louisville (35-28) in Indianapolis.

While Brohm is an offensive innovator, Purdue's success primarily came because of a stout defense that ranked 24th nationally in scoring defense. Replicating that will be a challenge, with just two starters back from the front seven. The good news is that one of those two is Hilliard (Ohio) Davidson product Markus Bailey, who will be sliding back into his natural role at middle linebacker after leading the team in tackles and sacks while playing outside linebacker in 2017.

Purdue will need to find a way to improve on offense, and injuries have made that a difficult task. The two top quarterbacks both had awful luck in 2017. David Blough dislocated his ankle in November, and Elijah Sindelar played the last three games of the season with a torn ACL. With Purdue returning four starters on the offensive line, keeping the quarterback upright will be paramount.

**Nebraska, Nov. 3** – Mike Riley's two-game run against Ohio State was a fireable offense all by itself, with the Cornhuskers getting outscored by a combined 118-17 in 2016 and 2017. Enter native son Scott Frost, fresh off resurrecting Central Florida from 0-12 to 13-0 in a two-season span. Whether he can do the same type of rebuild at Nebraska remains to be seen, but the visiting Huskers have plenty of room for growth.

Due in part to the disastrous work of defensive coordinator Bob Diaco, the Huskers finished 115th in total scoring defense in 2017. New defensive coordinator Erik Chinader is keeping the 3-4 scheme Diaco favored, but it will still be the third coordinator in five years for the Blackshirts. The Huskers don't have a ton of talent on that side of the ball right now, but Chinader's aggressive style should be a contrast to Diaco's conservative approach.

Much like Minnesota, Nebraska's top two options at quarterback have never played a snap. Redshirt freshman Tristan Gebbia is the better passer (and the favorite to win the job), but true freshman Adrian Martinez is the better runner and could also find a role even if he doesn't start. Senior receiver Stanley Morgan, who caught a program-record 68 passes last year, gives a reliable target for whichever signal caller Frost chooses.

**Michigan State, Nov. 10** – What to make of Michigan State, a program that plummeted to a 3-9 record in 2016 a year after a College Football Playoff appearance but rebounded with a 10-3 season last fall? With nearly the entire slate of starters returning on both sides of the ball, don't expect a similar dip. While the Spartans still

have to navigate the rugged Big Ten East, they'll likely be double-digit favorites against each of their other nine foes.

The biggest reason for Michigan State's return to winning? That would be the defense, which was truly superb last season and should be just as good this year. Walk-on defensive end Kenny Willekes is coming off a monster season of 14½ tackles for loss and seven sacks. Middle linebacker Joe Bachie is a menace against the run, and the secondary is showing signs of returning to the No Fly Zone days.

On the other side of the ball, the Spartans found a quarterback and he's back in 2018. Brian Lewerke threw 20 touchdowns against just seven interceptions last year, racking up 2,793 yards. With L.J. Scott a proven commodity at running back, getting a quarterback who can move the chains through the air made the Spartans a more complete threat.

**Maryland, Nov. 17** – Will DJ Durkin even be coaching Maryland when the Terrapins host the Buckeyes? Whether he is or isn't is probably immaterial to the outcome of the game, as Ohio State has treated

Maryland like a punching bag since the Terps showed up to the Big Ten.

Maryland is seemingly always down to its fourth-string quarterback by the end of the season, and that will have to change at some point for the Terps to ever get into the mix for even a mid-division finish. The Terrapins do return four starters on the offensive line, so maybe this is the year the starting quarterback actually completes the season.

What's most interesting about Durkin's uncertain status is that the acting head coach title went to first-year Maryland assistant Matt Canada. He's never been a head coach, and this is his third stop in three seasons after his stint at LSU blew up in a fit of disagreements with Ed Orgeron. But Canada is regarded highly as an offensive schemer, so it's worth watching how he manages the head coaching role if Durkin doesn't come back.

**Michigan, Nov. 24** – There will be no shortage of storylines when these two teams meet in the final regular-season game of 2018. The quality of both rosters should ensure that at least one of the participants – if not both – will have a division title on

the line, and the strong opinions that follow Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh will have a chance to be validated by either side. He'll either beat Ohio State for the first time or fall to 0-4 vs. the Buckeyes, and the reaction probably won't be muted for either one.

If he does finally crack The Game, it will probably be because of new starting quarterback Shea Patterson, who transferred from Ole Miss after the NCAA saddled the Rebels with some sanctions. The receivers are young, so the Wolverines will need Patterson to be good from the outset and throughout. The same goes for the offensive line, which will have to improve in order to keep him upright.

The defense, however, should once again be great. That starts up front with ends Rashan Gary and Chase Winovich, who combined for 14 sacks last season. Gary is projected as a top-five NFL prospect and moves like a skill-position player at times despite a frame that looks like he could be playing defensive tackle. Defensive coordinator Don Brown has always put a good product on the field, and his 2018 edition should be a good test for Dwayne Haskins and the Buckeyes.

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# Smith, Beavers Have Long Road To Improvement

By RYAN GINN  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Taking over a team that went 1-11 in 2017 in the midst of four straight losing seasons, first-year Oregon State coach Jonathan Smith already had a difficult enough task trying to rebuild a broken program.

The climb surely felt even steeper when he first saw that the Beavers open with an Ohio State team that hasn't lost more than two games in a season since 2011 and is coming off a convincing Cotton Bowl win over Pac-12 champion USC. When a reporter at Pac-12 media days broached the subject with Smith, he took it in stride, but his answer about valuing the process over results perfectly illustrated just how much work the Beavers have to do before they concern themselves with wins and losses.

"Yeah, that's one way to start, for sure," Smith said. "It's a great opportunity. I've never been in that stadium. I bet none of these kids have been in the state, let alone the stadium. So it's one way to start."

"We're going to go in there swinging. We're going to go in there with an opportunity – we only get 12 Saturdays guaranteed – and see where we are at. I think it's great to be on a national stage, at a national power, to experience that. But we'll really be focused on improvement from that game to the next to the next and the process of it."

It will surely be a long road back for the Beavers to the glory days of Smith's time as Oregon State's quarterback. Smith was a four-year starter from 1998 to 2001 and led the Beavers to their most successful season in program history in 2000, when they went 11-1, beat Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl and finished No. 4 in the country. Given the current state of the program, that season probably feels like a lifetime ago in Corvallis.

After a great stretch of nine-win seasons and bowl victories from 2006-08, the Mike Riley era at Oregon State ultimately ended with the Beavers plummeting from nine wins to seven to five from 2012-14. It

only got worse when Gary Andersen left Wisconsin for Oregon State. A promising partnership never materialized, and the Beavers went 2-10 in 2015, 4-8 in 2016 and 1-11 last fall. Halfway through the regular season, Andersen quit and voluntarily left \$12 million on the table by allowing the university to void his contract.

"After many discussions with (athletic director Scott Barnes), waiving my contract is the correct decision and enables the young men and the program to move forward and concentrate on the rest of this season," Andersen said. "Coaching is not about the mighty dollar. It is about teaching and putting young men in a position to succeed on and off the field. Success comes when all parties involved are moving in the same direction."



Jonathan Smith

The Beavers closed out the season with 10 straight defeats – the final six under interim head coach Cory Hall – and their lone win came against FCS program Portland State. One of those 11 losses came at the hands of Smith, a Chris Petersen protégé who spent the past four seasons as Washington's offensive coordinator. The Huskies handed Oregon State a 42-7 loss

that wasn't that close, with Smith helping Washington rack up 509 yards of offense and 32 first downs.

Things didn't get any better after Andersen abruptly quit six games into the campaign. Beset by injuries on a roster that was already thin on talent, Oregon State was humiliated by rival Oregon in its season finale, losing 69-10. Smith has offered a message of hope to his players, though. When he took over as starting quarterback in 1998, Oregon State hadn't won five games in a season since 1971 but contended for a national championship two years after a coaching change.

"I want to come in with a message of I've experienced it here," Smith said. "I've sat in those seats. I've gone through a coaching change when I was a player. It's been done before. We can do it again. So I'm trying to be authentic that I've lived it, and I want to help them do the same."

Success is still a long way off for a team that ranked near the bottom of the NCAA

## Get To Know ... Oregon State

### About Oregon State

- **2017 record:** 1-11 (0-9 Pac-12).
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Multiple; Defensive Formation – 3-4; Starters Returning – Offense 7, Defense 7, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Jonathan Smith, first year.
- **Series History:** Third meeting; Ohio State leads, 2-0.
- **School Facts:** Location – Corvallis, Ore.; Enrollment – 31,303; Nickname – Beavers; Colors – Orange & Black; Conference – Pac-12 Conference (North Division); Stadium – Reser Stadium (Surface, FieldTurf; Capacity, 43,154).

### Top Offensive Returners

| Rushing         | Att. | Net | Avg. | TD | Long |
|-----------------|------|-----|------|----|------|
| Artavis Pierce  | 68   | 323 | 4.8  | 1  | 29   |
| Trevon Bradford | 1    | 36  | 36.0 | 0  | 36   |
| Jake Luton      | 17   | 27  | 1.6  | 0  | 18   |

| Passing    | Comp.-Att. | Pct. | Yds. | TD-INT |
|------------|------------|------|------|--------|
| Jake Luton | 83-135     | 61.5 | 853  | 4-4    |

| Receiving       | Rec. | Net | Avg. | TD | Long |
|-----------------|------|-----|------|----|------|
| Noah Togiai     | 34   | 461 | 13.6 | 2  | 48   |
| Isaiah Hodgins  | 31   | 275 | 8.9  | 2  | 21   |
| Timmy Hernandez | 30   | 357 | 11.9 | 3  | 43   |

### Team Offensive Stats

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| Points Per Game – 20.7              |
| Rushing Yards Per Game – 137.5      |
| Passing Yards Per Game – 196.2      |
| Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 333.8 |

### 2018 Schedule

| Date           | Opponent             | Time (ET)   |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Sept. 1</b> | <b>at Ohio State</b> | <b>Noon</b> |
| Sept. 8        | SOUTHERN UTAH        | 8 p.m.      |
| Sept. 15       | at Nevada            | 7 p.m.      |
| Sept. 22       | ARIZONA              | TBA         |
| Sept. 29       | at Arizona State     | TBA         |
| Oct. 6         | WASHINGTON STATE     | TBA         |
| Oct. 20        | CALIFORNIA           | TBA         |
| Oct. 27        | at Colorado          | TBA         |
| Nov. 3         | USC                  | TBA         |
| Nov. 10        | at Stanford          | TBA         |
| Nov. 17        | at Washington        | TBA         |
| Nov. 23        | OREGON               | 4 p.m.      |

### Top Defensive Returners

| Def. Leaders    | Solo | Ast. | Tot. | TFL-Yds. | Sacks  |
|-----------------|------|------|------|----------|--------|
| David Morris    | 48   | 27   | 75   | 4.0-16   | –      |
| Jalen Moore     | 50   | 25   | 75   | 2.0-4    | –      |
| Jonathan Willis | 36   | 32   | 68   | 6.0-46   | 3.0-38 |
| Omar Hicks-Onu  | 27   | 11   | 38   | 2.5-3    | –      |
| Shawn Wilson    | 23   | 11   | 34   | 2.0-3    | –      |
| Isaiah Dunn     | 21   | 7    | 28   | –        | –      |

| Interceptions  | No. | Yds | Avg  | TD | Long |
|----------------|-----|-----|------|----|------|
| David Morris   | 1   | 6   | 6.0  | 0  | 6    |
| Omar Hicks-Onu | 1   | 0   | 0.0  | 0  | 0    |
| Shawn Wilson   | 1   | -2  | -2.0 | 0  | 0    |

### Team Defensive Stats

|   |
|---|
| Points Per Game Allowed – 43.0              |
| Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 235.8      |
| Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 237.3      |
| Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 473.1 |

in almost every defensive metric and wasn't much better offensively. A quarterback battle could run all the way up to the Ohio State game. Jake Luton, a 6-7 junior, entered 2017 as the starter but sustained a season-ending injury four games into a season in which he was completing 61.5 percent of his passes. He's the most likely starter, but he was pushed by sophomore Conor Blount in spring practice and that battle has extended into the waning days of fall camp.

There's some good news and bad news for the Beavers in terms of attrition. The offensive line lost just one starter – right tackle Fred Lauina – and no backups, so Oregon State could be solid up front. However, there's not much talent to put behind them. The running backs were mediocre in 2017, and three of the four leading rushers are gone. The lone returner, Artavis Pierce, finished with 323 rushing yards and one touchdown in 2017 but should get a bigger workload this season.

What remains to be seen is how much influence Smith will have on the offensive direction now that he's giving up the play-calling duties he had as Washington's offensive coordinator. He said he wants the offense to be flexible enough to alter schemes on a weekly basis but acknowledged they don't currently have the personnel to implement everything they'd like.

"We're definitely going to work with what we have," he said. "We've got some talent. I'm excited about it. Those guys, we don't have quite the number of tight ends just in the room like we did at U-Dub. We've got some playmakers on the outside. So we might be lighter than we were in regards to the personnel we put out there, but it still comes down to running the football and our quarterback making great decisions with it."

An Oregon State defense that allowed 43.0 points per game in 2017 (good for No. 127 in FBS) gets to open against Ohio State's offense that finished seventh in total offense and sixth in scoring offense in 2017. Although the Beavers will likely at least marginally improve from 2017's injury-plagued numbers, they were dealt a blow when two-year starting cornerback Xavier Crawford transferred to Central Michigan in June.

The Beavers' anemic pass rush won't help matters, and in fact it could provide a huge opportunity for Ohio State's transitioning offensive linemen to get comfortable. Oregon State managed only 14 sacks in 12 games last season, and the defensive ends are primarily freshmen or redshirt freshmen with no college experience to date.

All of those problems are a recipe for a brutal day against Ohio State's well-oiled machine, and Smith has made his goals more about improvement than wins and losses as he looks to resurrect the program.

"I want to see them competing for 60 minutes, and I want to see them improving and working to improve from Game 1 to Game 12," he said. "Those two things I want to see."

Odds are, there will be plenty to improve on after a trip to Ohio Stadium.

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# Ohio State vs. Oregon State

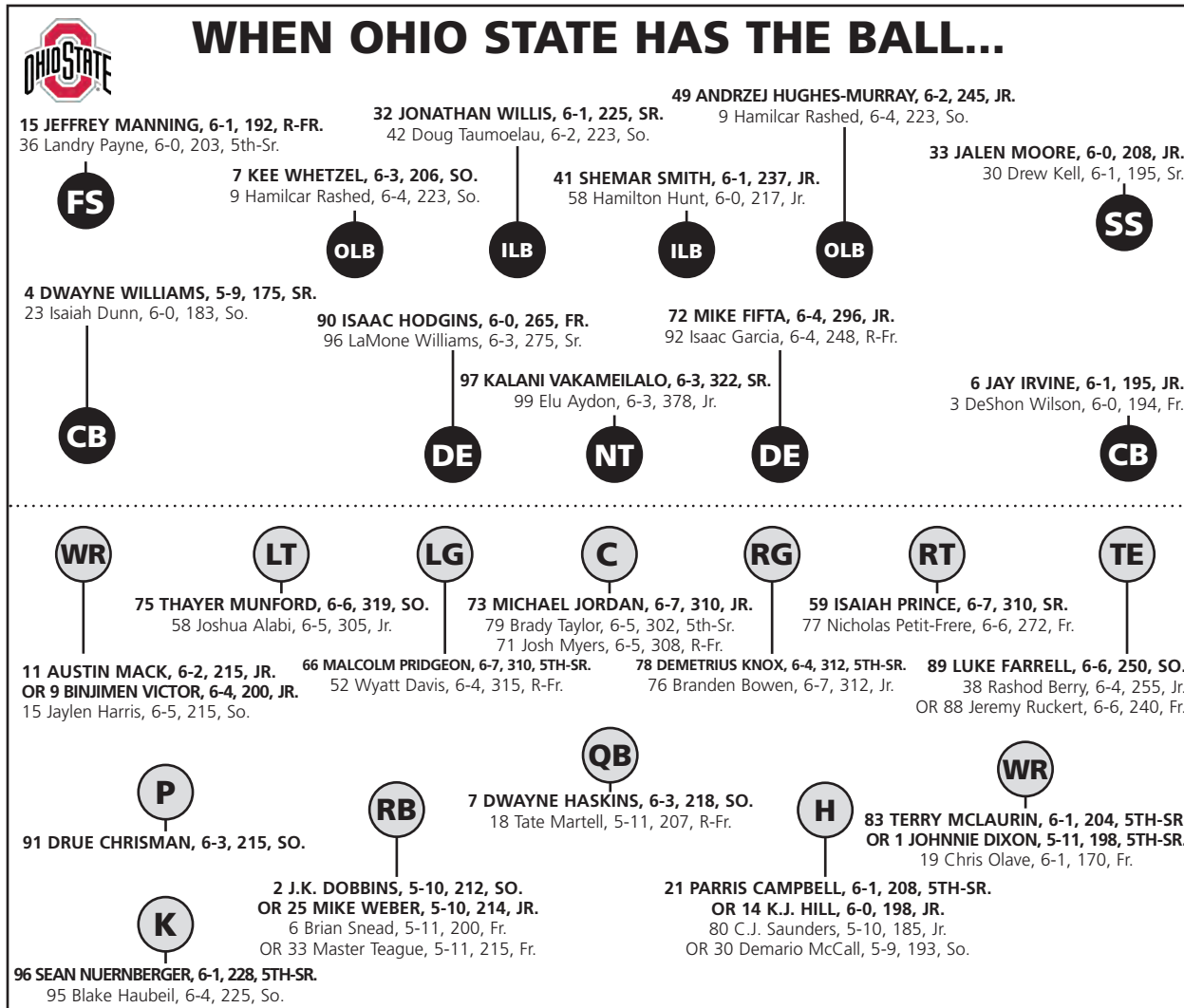
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## Projected Depth Charts

## How We See It

### WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



### OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. OREGON STATE RUSH DEFENSE

What's a prognosticator to do? We have Ohio State, commonly referred in these parts as OSU, facing one of the other OSUs in Oregon State. How can As We See It deal with this? Not use the acronym at all? TOSU for The Ohio State University? Maybe the best way is to have the Good OSU and the Bad OSU. The OSU vs. OSU dilemma is like the running back "problem" for the Buckeyes (the Good OSU). Who carries the ball more – incumbent starter sophomore J.K. Dobbins or fourth-year junior Mike Weber? Fortunately for Ohio State, there is no wrong answer. Each has a 1,000-yard season to his credit and will likely have opportunities to reach that mark again, especially now that J.T. Barrett and his 11.8 carries per game last season are gone. Redshirt sophomore Dwayne Haskins is apt to run fewer times. Oregon State, for its part, has a young defensive line, which doesn't bode well for a team that was 1-11 last season. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### OREGON STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Beavers' offensive line returns four starters. The bad news is Oregon State was 97th of 129 in rushing last season with 137.5 yards per game on 4.0 yards per carry. Redshirt freshman B.J. Baylor should get a strong look after a solid spring game. The leading returning rusher is junior Art Pierce, who gained 323 yards while averaging 4.8 yards per rush. Ohio State should throttle the run. Its front with the likes of the freakish Nick Bosa, Dre'Mont Jones, Robert Landers, Chase Young and Jonathon Cooper is impressive and nasty. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. OREGON STATE PASS DEFENSE

Haskins will make his first college start but has already had a legendary performance when he replaced the injured Barrett vs. Michigan and went 6 for 7 for 94 yards. For the season he was 40 for 57 (70.2 percent) with four touchdowns and one interception. He's got a veteran line, although replacing center Billy Price won't be easy, and the receiving corps is really good and really deep. Fifth-year seniors Parris Campbell and Terry McLaurin are leaders of the group on and off the field, and Johnnie Dixon is back for what seems like his eighth year (it will be his fifth). For Oregon State, safety David Morris (the leading returning tackler after notching 75 last season, second most on the team) is the best of the seven returning defensive backs. Even though they are all sophomore or juniors, they still have as much experience as Haskins, or more, and could present a challenge. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### OREGON STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

New head coach Jonathan Smith must choose among three quarterbacks to replace Darell Garretson, who passed for 1,465 yards with six TDs and eight interceptions. Jake Luton (83 of 135, 61.5 percent, 853 yards, four each of TDs and interceptions) started the first four games last season before sustaining a back injury. Connor Blount and JUCO transfer Jack Colletto are in the mix, and the uncertainty gives the Buckeye secondary, anchored by juniors Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield, something to think about. Of course, they may not get much work if the QBs are under constant pressure. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### SPECIAL TEAMS

Throw out any numbers on kickoff coverage. Under a new rule, a fair catch on kickoffs inside the 25-yard line will be a touchback and the ball placed on the 25. Ohio State's strategy is to try to pin the returner to one corner of the field near the goal line. How that will change is unclear. Oregon State's Jordan Choukair made 12 of 19 field goals (63.2 percent) and all 30 extra points. Punter Nick Porebski averaged 38.5 yards. The Buckeyes' fifth-year senior Sean Nuernberger was 17 of 21 (81.0 percent) with a long field goal of 44 yards and made all 71 PATs. Redshirt sophomore punter Drue Chrisman averaged 44.2. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

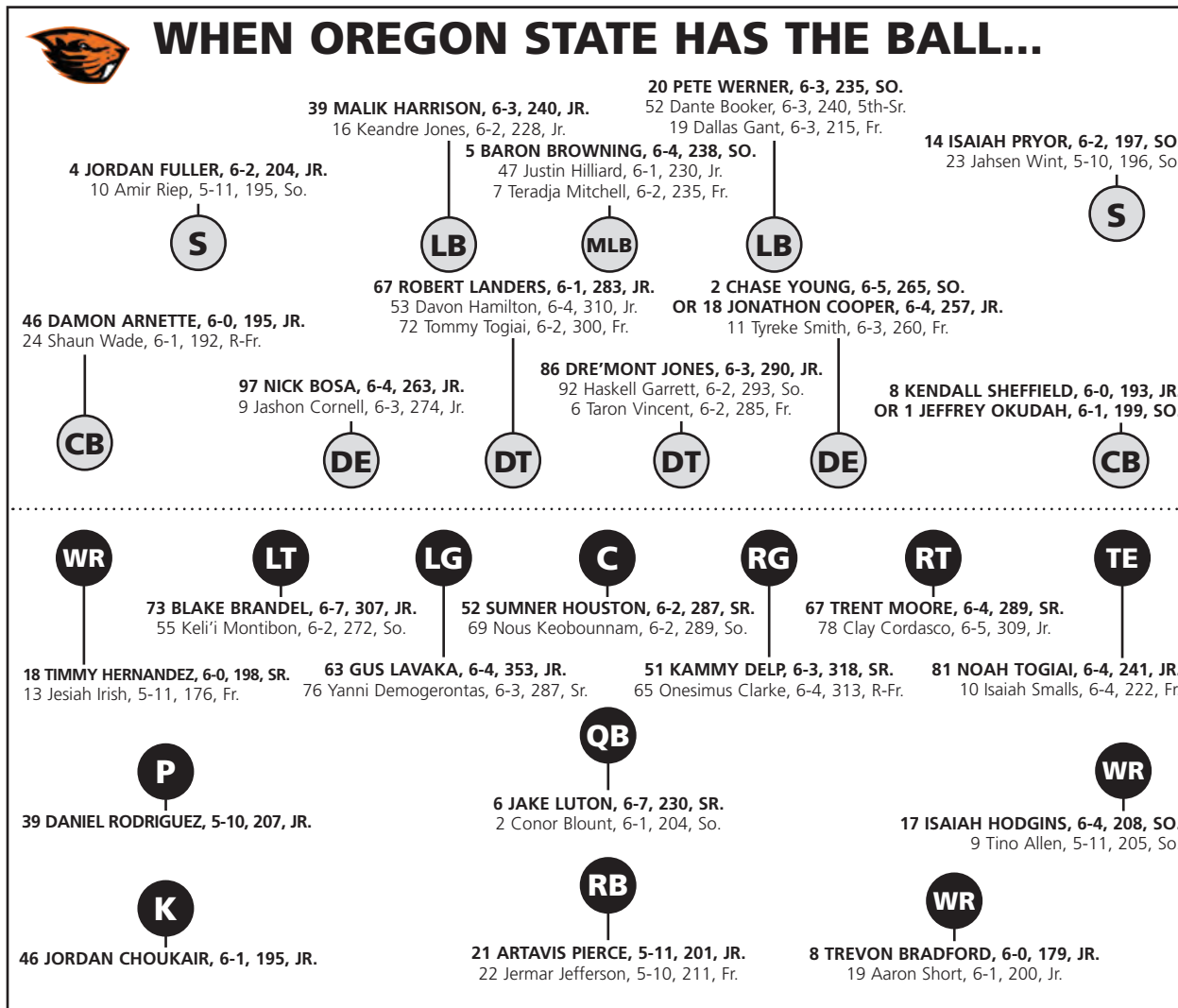
### INTANGIBLES

The uncertainty surrounding the head coaching situation for the Buckeyes during the start of fall camp didn't seem to be a distraction; at least that's what the media was led to believe. The Buckeyes will try to use the situation as a motivating factor, but sometimes the eagerness leads to mistakes. Throw in a new quarterback and things could be rocky. But if the opponent is Oregon State, then there are no worries. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### PREDICTION

The Beavers have not won since Sept. 2, 2017, against FCS opponent Portland State and are carrying a 19-game road losing streak back to Oct. 4, 2014. Oregon State was outscored 516-248 last season, including a 69-10 thrashing by Oregon in the finale. It can be said here that OSU will win the game. If you're unclear which one, you haven't been reading. **OHIO STATE 52, OREGON STATE 13**

### WHEN OREGON STATE HAS THE BALL...



# BSB Forecasters Expect Another Big Ten Title

A year ago, the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff was a little too optimistic when it came to projections for Ohio State's season.

Of the four predictors, three of them – staff writers James Grega and Ryan McGlade and editor Tim Moody – forecast undefeated regular seasons and a trip to the College Football Playoff. Contributing editor Jeff Svoboda expected the Buckeyes to go 11-1 and make the playoff.

In the end, the Buckeyes of course ended up losing twice – early in the season to Oklahoma and later in the year at Iowa – and missing out on a return to the playoffs. Ohio State did win the Big Ten title, as each staff predictor expected, but it came at the expense of a spot in the playoff for the conference.

While the projections regarding Ohio State were off the mark, the BSB staff was spot on when it came to the Big Ten West. Each of the four staffers picked Wisconsin to win its division, and three of them – Grega, McGlade and Svoboda – correctly predicted an undefeated 12-0 regular season for the Badgers. (Moody was off the mark with a 10-2 prediction for Paul Chryst's team.)

Perhaps the biggest miss for the staff, though, was Purdue's success under first-year head coach Jeff Brohm. The Boilermakers finished the year 7-6 overall after being projected as the conference bottom-dwellers by the BSB staff. Grega and McGlade each predicted 1-11 seasons for Purdue, while Moody had the team from West Lafayette, Ind., at 2-10 and Svoboda expected a 3-9 run.

All of this shows that predictions can be a fickle game, even when experts are the ones making the picks.

That said, we're ready to take another stab at the task. This year, Grega, McGlade and Moody are joined by staff writer Garrett Stepien in predicting the upcoming slate for the Buckeyes and the rest of the Big Ten.

## Grega: Early Loss Before CFP Run?

I know what you might be thinking. This guy again? Buckeye Sports Bulletin is like the Hotel California. You can check out anytime, but you can never leave.

So here I am, back for another football season and to give you what are sure to be some mediocre takes and predictions for the 2018 football season.

Last season, I picked Ohio State to finish a perfect 12-0 in the regular season, make the CFP and even reach the national title game. Shockingly enough, I was wrong.

The Buckeyes did, however, win the Big Ten while Penn State went to the Fiesta Bowl and Wisconsin to the Orange. So I didn't completely strike out.

This season, I don't expect Ohio State to go undefeated, but I do expect the Buckeyes to get back to the College Football Playoff, even with Urban Meyer's three-game suspension in mind.

September sees Ohio State travel to Arlington, Texas, to take on TCU before a snoozer against Tulane serves as a prequel to a rematch in Happy Valley against Penn State.

I have a hard time believing Ohio State makes it out of September unscathed. TCU, while relatively young and inexperienced on offense, always has a tenacious defense, and I believe Gary Patterson will have something up his sleeve for a young Dwayne Haskins, making his first ever "road" start.

If it's not that game, I think Ohio State could very well drop its Sept. 29 contest to Penn State on the road, a place where the Buckeyes have struggled in their last two trips. The good news for OSU is that even if it does fall in the first month of the season, there is a good chance the Buckeyes can still win out and get to a Big Ten title game. Win that, and you're back in the playoff for the third time in five seasons. Not too shabby.

Elsewhere in the conference, I think Michigan and Penn State are both going to compile 10-win seasons. I have the Wolverines bookending their season with losses to Notre Dame and Ohio State, respectively, but winning everything in between. The Nittany Lions have to travel to Ann Arbor and take on a veteran Wolverine defense without superstar Saquon Barkley, and with an inexperienced secondary. Not a good formula to win on the road.

Michigan State has the potential to be a 10-win team, but I have questions concern-

ing the consistency of quarterback Brian Lewerke and running back LJ Scott. Both are supremely talented but have yet to put together a full season that is All-Big Ten worthy.

Meanwhile, I think Chris Ash finally has enough talent to reach a bowl game with Rutgers. This, along with my pick for Purdue to win eight games, is my risky pick for this season, but I feel good enough about them to put them in print.

Wisconsin has the talent to get to the College Football Playoff, but I will just never be sold on quarterback Alex Hornibrook. He is a solid game manager but doesn't have the arm strength to push the ball downfield and extend defenses. When you are a power-run football team like Wisconsin, you need a big-armed quarterback to make big plays in the passing game, and the Badgers don't have that right now. That said, the Badgers have more than enough talent to breeze through the Big Ten West and back to Indianapolis.

As I mentioned, I think Purdue is poised to improve on its 7-6 finish from a season ago, and I think the Boilermakers will finish the regular season at 8-4. I am a believer in what Jeff Brohm is building in West Lafayette, and I think the players bought in from day one. Keep an eye out for the Spoilermakers this year – perhaps even when the Buckeyes visit town on Oct. 20.

As for the rest of the country, my CFP picks are the Buckeyes, Alabama, Clemson and Georgia. Washington is a team to watch out for as well in the Pac-12, but I think the SEC will once again get two teams into the playoff with a possible chance for a conference rematch in the title game.

## McGlade: B1G Champs Again

So what's the true purpose of predictions? To entertain readers and give them food for thought? Or to make the author of the predictions look like a downright fool?

Based on what I wrote in this space last year, I'm going with the latter.

For starters, I predicted that Ohio State would beat Oklahoma, thinking that then-quarterback Baker Mayfield and first-year head coach Lincoln Riley would have a tough time in the Horseshoe without weapons like Nick Basquine, Joe Mixon and Dede Westbrook. Little did I know Riley would have an effective game plan and Mayfield would use the Buckeyes as a steppingstone on his path to the Heisman Trophy.

Then, while noting that Kinnick Stadium is a tough place to play, I went on to write that Ohio State would get past Iowa. We all know how that turned out. Of course, I don't think anyone saw the Carnage in the Cornfield, aptly dubbed by BSB staffer Craig Merz, coming.

I also said the Big Ten East would be a three-team race among Ohio State, Michigan and Penn State, while Michigan State and

Indiana jockeyed for fourth and fifth, and Rutgers and Maryland battled to avoid last place. It was a three-team race, but among Ohio State, Michigan State and Penn State, with Michigan finishing fourth and Rutgers fifth. So there's that.

As for the West, I did accurately predict that Wisconsin would win the division, but anyone who follows college football probably could've done that. I did, however, say the Badgers could very well finish the regular season 12-0, which they did. My excitement for correctly forecasting Wisconsin's season was quickly tempered when I looked back and saw that I said Purdue would bring up the rear in the division. The Boilermakers finished third.

So now that I have shredded any ounce of credibility I once had, allow me to enlighten you on how the 2018 season will go for Ohio State and the Big Ten as a whole.

The biggest games on the Buckeyes' 2018 slate are TCU, Penn State, Michigan State and Michigan. If you're looking for a possible sleeper game where Ohio State may have to grind it out to win, I'd put money on the Oct. 20 contest at Purdue.

Ohio State will breeze through its first two games on the season – Oregon State on Sept. 1 and Rutgers on Sept. 8 – both of which are at Ohio Stadium. The Scarlet and Gray's first test this fall will come in the third week of the season when the team travels to Arlington, Texas, to take on TCU in what is technically a neutral-site game (TCU's campus in Fort Worth, Texas, is less than 20 miles from AT&T Stadium).

In four of the last five seasons, TCU has won at least 10 games. The Horned Frogs lost quarterback Kenny Hill, but playmaker KaVontae Turpin is back and will be a huge part of the offense. The team is also led by an experienced head coach in Gary Patterson.

And while this game will be played in TCU's back yard, Ohio State fans always travel well and will be in full force. I think first-year starting quarterback Dwayne Haskins will get his feet wet just enough in the first two games of the season to adequately lead the Ohio State offense against TCU. Game-breakers such as J.K. Dobbins, Parris Campbell, Mike Weber and others will help shoulder the load, while the defense does its part to get the Buckeyes to 3-0.

OSU then returns home for a tuneup against Tulane on Sept. 22, one week before Urban Meyer leads his squad to State College, Pa., to face Penn State. This is probably the game I feel the least confident about. I know Haskins was thrown into an incredibly difficult situation last year at Michigan, and I know that Saquon Barkley no longer plays for Penn State, but there's just something about a whiteout for a night game in Happy Valley. (The start time for the Penn State game hasn't been announced yet, but we all

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## How We See The 2018 Big Ten Race

Here is a look at how members of the BSB staff predict the Big Ten football season:

| James Grega<br>East                              |            |            |  | Ryan McGlade<br>East                                    |            |              |  | Tim Moody<br>East                              |            |            |  | Garrett Stepien<br>East                          |            |              |  |
|--|------------|------------|--|---|------------|--------------|--|--|------------|------------|--|--|------------|--------------|--|
| Record   | Conf.      | Bowl       |  | Record  | Conf.      | Bowl         |  | Record   | Conf.      | Bowl       |  | Record   | Conf.      | Bowl         |  |
| <b>Ohio State</b> 11-1                           | <b>9-0</b> | <b>CFP</b> |  | <b>Ohio State</b> 11-1                                  | <b>8-1</b> | <b>CFP</b>   |  | <b>Ohio State</b> 11-1                         | <b>8-1</b> | <b>CFP</b> |  | <b>Ohio State</b> 11-1                           | <b>8-1</b> | <b>CFP</b>   |  |
| Michigan 10-2                                    | 8-1        | Rose       |  | Penn State 10-2   | 7-2        | Rose         |  | Penn State 11-1                                | 8-1        | Fiesta     |  | Michigan State 10-2                              | 7-2        | Fiesta       |  |
| Penn State 10-2                                  | 7-2        | Peach      |  | Michigan State 10-2                                     | 7-2        | Outback      |  | Michigan 9-3                                   | 6-3        | Gator      |  | Michigan 9-3                                     | 7-2        | Gator        |  |
| Michigan State 8-4                               | 5-4        | Gator      |  | Michigan 8-4  | 6-3        | Citrus       |  | Michigan State 9-3                             | 6-3        | Outback    |  | Penn State 9-3                                   | 6-3        | Holiday      |  |
| Rutgers 6-6                                      | 3-6        | Quick Lane |  | Indiana 4-8   | 2-7        |              |  | Rutgers 5-7                                    | 2-7        |            |  | Rutgers 6-6                                      | 3-6        | Gasparilla   |  |
| Indiana 4-8                                      | 1-8        |            |  | Maryland 3-9  | 2-7        |              |  | Maryland 4-8                                   | 2-7        |            |  | Indiana 3-9                                      | 1-8        |              |  |
| Maryland 3-9                                     | 1-8        |            |  | Rutgers 3-9   | 1-8        |              |  | Indiana 4-8                                    | 1-8        |            |  | Maryland 3-9                                     | 1-8        |              |  |
| <b>West</b>                                      |            |            |  | <b>West</b>   |            |              |  | <b>West</b>                                    |            |            |  | <b>West</b>                                      |            |              |  |
| Wisconsin 10-2                                   | 7-2        | Citrus     |  | Wisconsin 11-1  | 8-1        | Fiesta       |  | Wisconsin 11-1                                 | 8-1        | Rose       |  | Wisconsin 11-1                                   | 8-1        | Rose         |  |
| Purdue 8-4                                       | 5-4        | Outback    |  | Northwestern 8-4  | 6-3        | Pinstripe    |  | Purdue 8-4                                     | 5-4        | Holiday    |  | Iowa 10-2  | 7-2        | Outback      |  |
| Northwestern 7-5                                 | 5-4        | Holiday    |  | Iowa 8-4  | 5-4        | Gator        |  | Northwestern 7-5                               | 5-4        | Pinstripe  |  | Northwestern 8-4                                 | 6-3        | Foster Farms |  |
| Iowa 7-5   | 4-5        | Music City |  | Purdue 7-5  | 4-5        | Holiday      |  | Iowa 7-5                                       | 5-4        | Music City |  | Nebraska 6-6                                     | 3-6        | Pinstripe    |  |
| Nebraska 7-5                                     | 4-5        | Pinstripe  |  | Nebraska 6-6  | 3-6        | Foster Farms |  | Nebraska 6-6                                   | 3-6        | Quick Lane |  | Minnesota 6-6                                    | 3-6        | Quick Lane   |  |
| Minnesota 5-7                                    | 2-7        |            |  | Minnesota 5-7   | 3-6        |              |  | Minnesota 5-7                                  | 2-7        |            |  | Purdue 4-8                                       | 3-6        |              |  |
| Illinois 4-8                                     | 2-7        |            |  | Illinois 1-11   | 0-9        |              |  | Illinois 3-9                                   | 1-8        |            |  | Purdue 4-8                                       | 3-6        |              |  |
|  |            |            |  |   |            |              |  |  |            |            |  | Illinois 2-10                                    | 0-9        |              |  |
| <b>Big Ten Title Game Winner: Ohio State</b>     |            |            |  | <b>Big Ten Title Game Winner: Ohio State</b>            |            |              |  | <b>Big Ten Title Game Winner: Ohio State</b>   |            |            |  | <b>Big Ten Title Game Winner: Ohio State</b>     |            |              |  |
| <b>AWARD WINNERS</b>                             |            |            |  | <b>AWARD WINNERS</b>                                    |            |              |  | <b>AWARD WINNERS</b>                           |            |            |  | <b>AWARD WINNERS</b>                             |            |              |  |
| <b>Offensive POY:</b> Jonathan Taylor, Wisconsin |            |            |  | <b>Offensive POY:</b> Trace McSorley, Penn State        |            |              |  | <b>Offensive POY:</b> Shea Patterson, Michigan |            |            |  | <b>Offensive POY:</b> Jonathan Taylor, Wisconsin |            |              |  |
| <b>Defensive POY:</b> Nick Bosa, Ohio State      |            |            |  | <b>Defensive POY:</b> Nick Bosa, Ohio State             |            |              |  | <b>Defensive POY:</b> Nick Bosa, Ohio State    |            |            |  | <b>Defensive POY:</b> Nick Bosa, Ohio State      |            |              |  |
| <b>Coach of the Year:</b> Jim Harbaugh, Michigan |            |            |  | <b>Coach of the Year:</b> Mark Dantonio, Michigan State |            |              |  | <b>Coach of the Year:</b> Jeff Brohm, Purdue   |            |            |  | <b>Coach of the Year:</b> Kirk Ferentz, Iowa     |            |              |  |
| <b>Fresh. POY:</b> Tarik Black, Michigan         |            |            |  | <b>Fresh. POY:</b> Micah Parsons, Penn State            |            |              |  | <b>Fresh. POY:</b> Zack Annexstad, Minnesota   |            |            |  | <b>Fresh. POY:</b> Justin Shorter, Penn State    |            |              |  |

know that's going to be a prime-time kick.) I am of the opinion that Ohio State will lose one game during the regular season, and this one against the Nittany Lions might be it.

The Buckeyes are then home the following two weeks for what I think should be dominating wins against Indiana and Minnesota. Next is the sleeper game.

Purdue surprised me last season under first-year head coach Jeff Brohm. The Boilermakers won four of their last five games in 2017 to finish with a 7-6 record, their first winning season since 2011.

Historically, Ohio State has had some difficulties in West Lafayette, Ind. Since the turn of the century, OSU is 3-4 at Ross-Ade Stadium. I don't see this game being like the 2002 affair when Craig Krenzel and Michael Jenkins had to pull off some heroics in the final minutes to secure an Ohio State victory, but I would not be surprised if it is close for a half or three quarters until the Buckeyes pull away.

After an off week, Ohio State hosts Nebraska on Nov. 3. So long as OSU does not overlook the Cornhuskers – who are entering their first season with alumnus Scott Frost as head coach – because of a showdown with Michigan State the following week, I think the Buckeyes will win.

That brings us to Sparty. Michigan State has given Ohio State fits during the Meyer era. Since 2012, Meyer's first year in Columbus, three of the six games in this series have been decided by three points or fewer. The Spartans have ruined undefeated seasons for OSU twice in the last six seasons as well, beating the Buckeyes in the 2013 Big Ten Championship Game and late in the 2015 regular season.

With the next meeting in this rivalry being the 10th game of the season for Ohio State, I imagine Haskins will be sufficiently prepared and the defense will make some impact plays for the Buckeyes to come out victorious in a low-scoring – to quote longtime WWE announcer Jim Ross – slobberknocker.

OSU then heads to Maryland a week later to face the Terrapins, who I think will be in total disarray after the death of 19-year-old offensive lineman Jordan McNair this summer and head coach DJ Durkin being under fire for running a toxic program.

That means Ohio State will be 10-1 heading into its annual regular-season finale against archrival Michigan. I could argue that Michigan State has given Ohio State more headaches than Michigan since Meyer has been at the helm. But this could be the Wolverines' best year under Jim Harbaugh, who's entering his fourth season as the head

coach at his alma mater, if things go right. Nevertheless, Ohio State has not lost to Michigan under Meyer, so I'm picking the Buckeyes.

At 11-1, Ohio State returns to the Big Ten Championship Game and wins it for a second straight year to qualify for the College Football Playoff. Haskins will eventually hit his stride running an offense that has so many playmakers at its disposal, and the defense has one of the best defensive lines in the country – if not the best.

**Lopsided Big Ten** – As it has been for the last couple of years, I expect the Big Ten East to be markedly more competitive than the West. Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State and Penn State will be battling for first place for much of the season. Since I have Ohio State winning the division, I'll say Penn State finishes second, with Trace McSorley, a Big Ten Player of the Year candidate, at quarterback. I have Michigan State finishing third and Michigan fourth. I think Ole Miss transfer quarterback Shea Patterson will have a strong season for the Wolverines, but they play at Michigan State and at Ohio State and host Wisconsin and Penn State. I see three losses there.

After that, Indiana slots in at fifth. Is it just me, or is Indiana in a handful of close games every year and always seems to come out on the losing end? I guess that's why they're Indiana. Maryland finishes sixth while Rutgers is in the cellar.

As for the West, Wisconsin is still a class above everyone else. The Badgers bring back junior Alex Hornibrook at quarterback and sophomore running back Jonathan Taylor, who was named the 2017 Big Ten Freshman of the Year, after running for nearly 2,000 yards. It should be noted that Wisconsin does play at Iowa, at Michigan and at Penn State, so I'd be shocked if it goes undefeated in the regular season for a second consecutive year. But I still think the West is the Badgers' division to lose.

I see Northwestern being Wisconsin's best challenger and finishing second in the division. Iowa, Nebraska and Purdue will duke it out for third, fourth and fifth, while Minnesota rows the boat to a sixth-place finish and Illinois rounds things out yet again.

### Moody: No Problems On The Field

Let's get this out of the way right off the bat – Ohio State will be just fine for the first three games of the season without head coach Urban Meyer.

He'll be serving a suspension, meaning acting head coach Ryan Day will be the guy calling the shots on game day for the first three

weeks of the 2018 slate. Regardless of the head coach, all three of those games should be wins for the Buckeyes.

In week one, Ohio State gets to face one of the worst Power 5 teams around in Oregon State. That should be an easy win – don't be surprised to see the Buckeyes put 60 or more points on the board while allowing 10 or fewer. Then it'll be a home game against Rutgers, a team that has yet to score against Ohio State since head coach Chris Ash left Columbus to join the Scarlet Knights for the 2016 season. A continuation of that streak is certainly in play this year.

Then comes the real test, and the biggest part of Meyer's punishment this year: the trip to Texas.

Ohio State faces TCU in Arlington, Texas, on Sept. 15 at the site of its most recent national title. The Horned Frogs have a very good team, but like Ohio State they have a first-year starter at quarterback, and Shawn Robinson hasn't proved as much as Dwayne Haskins so far. That will be a big game – and it could feature some tough moments – but Ohio State has the far more talented team, and even without Meyer the Buckeyes will be ready to play. Many will likely predict a loss for Ohio State that week, but I expect a resounding win.

After that, it's a return to Columbus and a cakewalk against Tulane before the Buckeyes have arguably their hardest test of the season – a road game at Penn State.

The Nittany Lions are the strongest opponent on Ohio State's schedule, and State College, Pa., is always a difficult place to play. Last time the Buckeyes traveled there, they came away with a heartbreaking loss under the Beaver Stadium lights back in 2016, and a similar result this year wouldn't be shocking.

The Penn State game will be the first true test after Meyer's return, and he'll have his team champing at the bit to prove themselves for their head coach. I think Ohio State has the edge in both talent and coaching, which should negate the home-field advantage for the Nittany Lions.

From there, Ohio State will have only two more tests in 2018, one at Michigan State and one at home against Michigan. Starting with the latter, I expect Meyer's undefeated run against the Wolverines to continue. It's a home game, and the Buckeyes will be riding high after a likely blowout of Maryland in week 11.

That said, the Buckeyes had better hope they beat Michigan, because a loss will keep them out of the Big Ten title game and the College Football Playoff. I expect Ohio State to enter the final week of the regular season with a loss on their schedule – a loss that will have come two weeks earlier in East Lansing, Mich.

I don't necessarily think Michigan State is better than Ohio State – in fact, I have the Spartans going 9-3 – but that's regularly the toughest matchup for Meyer-coached teams. Michigan State is well-coached, and the Spartans have a talented roster. And at the end of the day, it's always difficult to go undefeated. The Buckeyes will have a slip-up, and playing in cold weather north of the Ohio-Michigan boarder, Haskins could well struggle in one of the toughest environments of his young career.

That's no problem, though, because the Buckeyes will still beat Michigan, go on to win the Big Ten and earn their spot back in the College Football Playoff.

### Stepien: Unfinished Business

Out of everything that transpired throughout Ohio State's 2017 season, the one game that came back to haunt the Buckeyes was a performance I'm not sure anyone will truly ever understand – I sure still don't.

Despite the talent and leadership spread out across OSU's squad of players and coaches last year, nothing mattered Nov. 4 when Iowa delivered its 55-24 pasting and ultimately kept the Scarlet and Gray away – by just one spot – from cracking the College Football Playoff.

Capped by the 24-7 victory over Southern California on Dec. 29 in the Cotton Bowl, Ohio State rides a five-game winning streak into its 2018 campaign. But with arguably more playmakers and athletes spread out across both sides of the ball, none of what transpired last season matters now.

In fact, the stakes just got higher. Welcome to Columbus, where that's always been the case for the Buckeyes.

For those of you who might not remember, last fall marked my first on the beat. Thrown into the fire on Aug. 31 at Indiana, I had no idea what to expect as I learned on the fly. But the one thing I did come away with was how downplayed a 12-2 overall record and Big Ten title could be for a fan base that expects the best of the best from its OSU teams on an annual basis. Having covered Rutgers between the downward spiral of the Scarlet Knights' 2015 and 2016 seasons, let's just say the Ohio State experience was a bit of a culture shock.

So, as I enter year two, I take into account some of the turnover since December but realize this – the team is actually built even better for a CFP run. And, to be honest, it's just hard to bet against the Buckeyes.

As much as the saga around head coach Urban Meyer dragged throughout the past month, the staff he has built up over his first six years has kept OSU in good hands.

Continued On Page 50

# TCU Trip Will Be Big Early-Season Test For Bucks

Continued From Page 49

With that being said, although we haven't had much of a chance to truly see it for ourselves with the way Ohio State blocked media access for the entirety of camp outside of two short observation periods for the fourth and 14th practices, the sense has been that the Buckeyes are in a right state of mind before their season opener kicks off Sept. 1 at noon against Oregon State.

Speaking of the Beavers, they present Ohio State with the first of a favorable nonconference slate. Oregon State was an atrocity last year under former head coach Gary Andersen

(2015-17), sputtering to 1-11 overall before hiring former Washington offensive coordinator Jonathan Smith (2014-17) to right the ship. Considering the fact that the Beavers formed arguably the worst Power 5 program in the country last year with plenty of problems still to clean up since Andersen left in the middle of the season, the Buckeyes get the benefit here of an inferior opponent to kick things off.

Week two presents more of the same Sept. 8 with Rutgers, which showed improvement in its second year under head coach Chris Ash. The former Ohio State co-defensive coordinator has the Scarlet Knights headed in the right direction, but the Buckeyes have dominated for

the past two seasons with OSU's back-to-back shutouts for an incredible 114-0 margin. Rutgers might scratch a touchdown and field goal if it's lucky, but it's simply common sense to expect more of the same with how far apart both programs are in terms of talent and athletes.

The real challenge, at least on the nonconference slate, comes Sept. 15 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, against TCU. In a glorified home game for the Horned Frogs, Ohio State gets its first true test against a Big 12 team that finished second in the conference standings – only to eventual CFP qualifier Oklahoma – with an 11-3 mark. But with sophomore Shawn Robinson stepping up at quarterback

for Kenny Hill, questions ultimately remain for TCU as the Horned Frogs reload and the Buckeyes should still emerge from Jerry World on top.

When Ohio State returns Sept. 23 to Columbus, the Buckeyes size up as another large favorite over Tulane.

**BIG Stakes** – Things truly get interesting when Ohio State enters Big Ten play for good Sept. 29 at Penn State, where the Nittany Lions already have the date circled on their calendar. How the Buckeyes emerge from the OSU-PSU rematch will be telling of how they pan out for the rest of the year, although an early loss wouldn't entirely eliminate either squad from CFP contention.

From there, Ohio State hosts Indiana on Oct. 6 and Minnesota on Oct. 13 before the Buckeyes hit the road for contests Oct. 20 at Purdue and Nov. 3 at Nebraska with an off week sandwiched in between Oct. 27. Not to say that the Buckeyes should necessarily cruise through this stretch, but I'd expect Ohio State to handle business, barring an immediate rise by the Cornhuskers in head coach Scott Frost's first year. Even then, though, the Buckeyes have outscored Nebraska by a 118-17 margin in 2016 and 2017. I don't care who the coach is – that still counts for something.

Down the homestretch, Ohio State goes north Nov. 10 to Michigan State, which should be a tough road test despite the Buckeyes' unexpected 48-3 pounding of the Spartans last year. Another road contest comes Nov. 17 at Maryland, which could certainly be without head coach DJ Durkin by then after allegations of a toxic culture came to light in August. Even then, though, the Buckeyes have handled the Terrapins throughout the past four years.

Much might end up coming down to Nov. 24 when Michigan comes to Columbus for The Game. Plenty remains to be seen about how far the Wolverines will go this year as a large number of their starters return, including a stellar defense. But seeing how Ole Miss transfer quarterback Shea Patterson performs could be telling of how far U-M gets – and in turn how much of a threat Ohio State's rival ultimately poses in the regular-season finale.

No, I don't think the Wolverines stop Ohio State's undefeated run since 2012. And frankly, taking the past year into consideration with how much head coach Jim Harbaugh under-achieved once again, I don't expect U-M to be in much of a position to have a lot riding on The Game. I'll believe it when I see it.

On the other side of the conference, Wisconsin remains the team to beat until another program in the West Division decides to step up and challenge the Badgers. Wisconsin returns junior quarterback Alex Hornibrook, sophomore running back Jonathan Taylor and a prototypical offensive line to run behind – the Badgers' blueprint for success. Unless others such as Iowa or Northwestern elevate things this year, Wisconsin could cruise once again to Indianapolis.

If the Badgers do, they set up a likely rematch with the Buckeyes in the Big Ten Championship Game. And as in the matchup last year when Ohio State claimed the title in a 27-21 win, I believe the Buckeyes bring an edge with more speed and athletes to repeat as long as they get through the East Division's gantlet and reach Lucas Oil Stadium.

In the case where all goes according to plan, Ohio State would avoid any of the anxieties that came with the uncertainty of waiting for the CFP selection show. It's unrealistic to expect perfection, but as I've learned, that's not necessarily the case here in Columbus, where the Buckeyes could absolutely run the table.

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# No Shortage Of OSU TV, Radio Coverage In '18

By RYAN McGLADE  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State football fans will have ample options when it comes to finding TV and radio coverage regarding their team for the 2018 season.

The Big Ten Conference and Fox Sports are entering the second year of the six-year deal to which they agreed last summer, meaning some Ohio State games will be broadcast on that network like they were last fall.

For the 12th straight season, every Ohio State football contest will be part of a national television broadcast. Four of those broadcasts were already known when BSB went to press.

The Buckeyes begin the 2018 season by hosting Oregon State on Sept. 1, which is scheduled for a noon kickoff on ABC. Ohio State then welcomes divisional foe Rutgers to town for a 3:30 p.m. start on Big Ten Network on Sept. 8 before traveling to Arlington, Texas, for a neutral-site showdown in AT&T Stadium against TCU at 8 p.m. on ABC a week later. The regular-season finale against Michigan in Columbus on Nov. 24 will have the traditional start time of noon and will be on FOX for the second straight year.

Many ESPN broadcasts can be found online for network subscribers at WatchESPN.com, while Fox's version is online at FoxSportsGo.com.

Television outlets and start times for the rest of the games will be announced as the season progresses and printed in BSB in addition to being published on BuckeyeSports.com.

Fans in Ohio will also be able to get their fill of the Buckeyes each week with Urban Meyer's weekly hour-long coach's show. "Game Time With Urban Meyer" will air at 9 a.m. each Saturday on Fox Sports Ohio as well as on WBNS 10-TV in Columbus, which produces the show. The head coach will make an appearance each week to discuss the team while exclusive interviews will take viewers inside the world of Ohio State football. The show also features news and analysis from former players and coaches to get ready for each game.

## Keels, Lachey Back In Saddle

All Ohio State football games, as well as pregame and postgame coverage, will be broadcast live on The Ohio State-IMG Sports Network, which will have 80 affiliates – including flagship station 97.1 The Fan in Columbus – for the 2018 season.

The statewide Buckeye pregame show begins 90 minutes prior to kickoff. Paul Keels, entering his 21st year as the voice of the Buckeyes, discusses the upcoming game with Jim Lachey, who is now in his 22nd year as the analyst, while comments from players, coaches and opposing team radio broadcasters help set the stage.

Keels, Lachey and Matt Andrews will call the live game action with help from longtime producer/host Skip Mosaic.

For those out of state, all regular-season games can be heard on OhioStateBuckeyes.com and on the Ohio State TuneIn app.

The network is responsible for mid-week programming delivered throughout the state too. On Monday nights, fans can tune in for the "Buckeye Roundtable" show. It is hosted by Mosaic and features Lachey and Keels as well as former Ohio

State head coach John Cooper. Other former Buckeye players will rotate in each week. The show airs from 6-8 p.m.

The popular "Coach Meyer's Weekly Radio Show" is live from noon-1 p.m. each Thursday. With Meyer being suspended until Sept. 2 and for the first three games of the season, assistant coaches will be guests on the show for the first three weeks. Meyer will return in the fourth week of the season. Network affiliates have the option of taking the show live or replaying the show later that same day.

Finally, Mosaic hosts the award-winning "Ohio College Football Today" show that airs Saturday mornings on a number of stations across the network including the flagship.

## Radio Coverage

WBNS will also offer plenty of Buckeye football coverage to those in the Columbus area with various programs on 97.1 FM.

On all game days, the station coverage will include a pair of two-hour shows leading up to the network broadcast. WBNS personality Tim Hall and former Ohio State linebacker Jerry Rudzinski host "The Fan Pregame Show," which is followed by "The Fan Tailgate Show" with Anthony Rothman, former Buckeye linebacker Joshua Perry and former OSU tailback Chris "Beanie" Wells. It will broadcast live outside Ohio Stadium at home games.

Following the network's coverage after each contest, WBNS will air "The Fan Postgame Show," which lasts two hours – except for night games – and will be hosted by station personality Jonathan "T-Bone" Smith and former Ohio State linebacker Anthony Schlegel.

Coverage carries over into Mondays as well, beginning when WBNS airs the weekly press conference at 11:45 a.m. live.

On weekdays, Buckeye football talk is featured throughout the day on "Bishop and Laurinaitis," starring Beau Bishop and former Ohio State linebacker James Laurinaitis each day from 10 a.m.-noon; "Carpenter and Rothman," with former Buckeye linebacker Bobby Carpenter as a co-host, from noon-3 p.m.; and "Common Man and T-Bone," hosted by Mike Ricordati and Smith from 3-6 p.m. Hall and Brandon Beam will host "The Buckeye Show" every Tuesday through Friday from 6-8 p.m. Former Buckeyes such as Jake Ballard, A.J. Hawk, Perry and Wells may be a part of the station's programming on Fridays to preview the upcoming game as well.

Coverage can be heard online at 971the-fan.com.

Another big player in Columbus radio when it comes to Ohio State football is 105.7 The Zone, the sister station on the FM dial to 610 WTVN, a news station that has long been known for having "The Best Buckeye Coverage."

All of the gameday programming this fall will strictly be on The Zone. "The Best Buckeye Coverage Early Show" gets things started followed by "The Best Buckeye Coverage Pregame Show."

Immediately following each game, The Zone will air a postgame show that features the postgame press conference, comments from the team, analysis and listeners' phone calls and tweets.

Sports director Matt McCoy leads the gameday coverage. Former Ohio State assistant Bill Conley, Bruce Hooley, who is the host of The Zone's weekday morn-

## 2018 Ohio State Football Radio Affiliates

WBNS Radio in Columbus serves as the flagship station for the Ohio State Radio Network. Here is a look at the 80-station network.

| City              | Station                                   | City           | Station                      |
|-------------------|---|----------------|------------------------------|
| Akron             | WAKR-AM (1590)                            | Logan          | WLOH-FM (99.3)               |
| Archbold          | WMFR-FM (96.1)                            | Mansfield      | WMAN-AM (1400)               |
| Ashtabula         | WFUN-AM (970)                             | Marietta       | WMOA-AM/WMOA-FM (1490/101.3) |
| Athens            | WATH-AM/WATH-FM (970/97.1)                | Marion         | WMRN-AM (1490)               |
| Bellefontaine     | WPKO-FM (98.3)                            | Marysville     | WQTT-AM/WQTT-FM (1270/96.7)  |
| Bucyrus           | WBEO-AM/WQEL-FM (1540/92.7)               | McConnelsville | WJAW-FM (100.9)              |
| Cambridge         | WILE-FM (97.7)                            | Millersburg    | WKLM-FM (95.3)               |
| Canton            | WHBC-AM (1480)                            | Mt. Vernon     | WMVO-AM/WMVO-FM (1300/100.9) |
| Celina            | WCSM-AM/WCSM-FM (1350/96.7)               | Napoleon       | WNDH-FM (103.1)              |
| Chillicothe       | WBEX-AM/WBEX-FM (1490/92.7)               | Newark         | WCLT-AM/WCLT-FM (1430/98.7)  |
| Cincinnati        | WDJO-AM/WDJQ-FM/WDJQ-FM (1480/99.5/107.9) | Norwalk        | WLKR-FM (95.3)               |
| Cleveland         | WKNR-AM (850)                             | Painesville    | WABQ-AM (1460)               |
| Columbus          | WBNS-AM/WBNS-FM (1460/97.1)               | Paulding       | WKSD-FM (99.7)               |
| Coshocton         | WTNS-FM (99.3)                            | Piqua          | WPTW-AM/WPTW-FM (1570/98.1)  |
| Dayton            | WING-AM/ WGTZ-FM (1410/92.9)              | Portsmouth     | WNXT-AM/WZZZ-FM (1260/107.5) |
| Dover             | WJER-AM/WJER-FM (1450/100.9)              | Ravenswood     | WMOV-AM/WMOV-FM (1360/106.7) |
| Elyria            | WEOL-AM (930)                             | Sandusky       | WLEC-AM (1450)               |
| Findlay           | WFIN-AM/WFIN-FM (1330/99.5)               | Sidney         | WMVR-FM (105.5)              |
| Fredericktown     | WMAN-FM (98.3)                            | Steubenville   | WCDK-FM (106.3)              |
| Fremont           | WOHF-FM (92.1)                            | Toledo         | WTOD-FM (106.5)              |
| Fostoria          | WFOB-AM (1430)                            | Uhrichsville   | WBTC-AM/WBTC-FM (1540/101.9) |
| Georgetown        | WRAC-FM (103.1)                           | Upper Sandusky | WYNT-FM (95.9)               |
| Hillsboro         | WSRW-AM/WSRM-FM (1590/101.5)              | Van Wert       | WERT-AM/WERT-FM (1220/104.3) |
| Ironton           | WIRO-AM (1230)                            | Wash. C.H.     | WCHO-FM (105.5)              |
| Jackson           | WYRO-FM (98.7)                            | Waverly        | WXIZ-FM (100.9)              |
| Kenova/Huntington | WTCR-AM (1420)                            | Wheeling       | WVLY-AM (1370)               |
| Kenton            | WKTN-FM (95.3)                            | Wooster        | WKVX-AM/WQKT-FM (960/104.5)  |
| Lancaster         | WLOH-AM/WLOH-FM (1320/104.5)              | Youngstown     | WNIO-AM (1390)               |
| Lima              | WIMA-AM (1150)                            | Zanesville     | WHIZ-AM (1240)               |

ing show "Spielman and Hooley," former Ohio State quarterback and current BTN analyst Stanley Jackson, former Buckeye running back Jeff Logan, Dave Maetzold, former Ohio State wide receiver Evan Spencer and former OSU linebacker Chris Spielman are a part of the team as well.

Football chatter on The Zone continues on Sunday from 10 a.m.-noon with the "Sunday Morning Sports Talk" and from 5-7 p.m. with the "Sunday Sports Slam," so long as the latter does not conflict with Cleveland Indians baseball, whose Columbus affiliate is The Zone.

Back for another year is "Buckeye Rewind" on Monday evenings from 6-8 on The Zone. Listeners can also tune in on Thursdays for "Bucksline," a show that has been around for more than 30 years and will simulcast on both WTVN and The Zone this season from 6-8 p.m. The show will be broadcast live at Buffalo Wild Wings on Bethel Road in Columbus.

Fans can tune in to The Zone weekday mornings from 6-9 to hear more Ohio State football talk from Hooley and Spielman and in the afternoons from 3-6 to get the latest from Jackson and McCoy.

For live broadcasts of the aforementioned shows, fans also can visit 1057the-zone.iheart.com.

## Columbus TV Coverage

Fans in the central Ohio area can tune

in to local TV stations for coverage on newscasts and a handful of special programs during the season as well.

For a second straight year, "The Football Fever" will provide pre- and post-game coverage on WSYX (ABC 6), WTTE (Fox 28) or WWHO (CW), depending on which network broadcasts the game and the start times of the games. Fans are encouraged to tune in to ABC 6 during the week to see where they can watch "The Football Fever" for the upcoming matchup.

Sports director Clay Hall and former Buckeyes Obie Stillwell and Ben Buchanan will be live at the stadium, where the show will feature interviews, highlights and more. Buchanan also will be helping BTN for select OSU games this fall. Anchor Rodney Dunigan and former Ohio State defensive linemen Matt Finkes and Jay Richardson will be the studio hosts for "The Football Fever."

WBNS 10-TV will broadcast its popular "Wall to Wall Sports" program every Saturday and Sunday night at 11:35. The Saturday edition will feature station anchors Dom Tiberi, Dave Holmes and former OSU receiver Roy Hall, while the Sunday version will have Tiberi and Columbus Dispatch writer Tim May.

The CBS affiliate will have its "Buckeye Blitz" segments every Thursday and Friday throughout the season during the 5:30 and 11 p.m. newscasts.

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# Smith Takes Top Spot In Both Fan, Media Polls

By **TIM MOODY**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Over the past few months, Buckeye Sports Bulletin has polled subscribers and media members on one big question: Who is the greatest Ohio State quarterback of all time?

With the 2018 season a matter of days away, the results are in, and BSB has a clearer picture of how the Buckeyes' best stack up against each other. Although the vote was close overall, there are plenty of takeaways from the extensive polling process, including big differences between the fan poll and the media poll and clear trends depending on the age of the voter.

Overall, though, players from every era were represented in the voting process, with 29 individuals receiving at least a point in the fan poll and 15 of those quarterbacks receiving votes in the media ballot.

No quarterback – even the top vote-getters – appeared on every ballot, although a few found their names on the vast majority. Many of the top vote-getters appeared in every spot – 1-10 – on at least one ballot, showing a wide array of opinions among the Ohio State fan base and local media.

Now, without further delay, here are the results.

## Best Of The Best

Although the final tally was close toward the top, one thing was clear: The Heisman Trophy plays a big part in the ranking.



FILE PHOTO

**TOP OF THE CROP** – Troy Smith, an Ohio State Hall of Famer, was voted by fans and media as the program's top quarterback of all time.

Ohio State has had six different athletes win a total of seven Heisman Trophies, but only one of those six players was a full-time quarterback. That player – Troy Smith, who won the Heisman in 2006 – was the clear

first-place finisher in both the fan and media polls.

Smith didn't appear on every ballot in the fan voting, but his name was on 98 percent of the rankings – the most of any player, fol-

lowed by J.T. Barrett at 97 percent. He also received 32 percent of the first-place votes, well ahead of second-place finisher Rex Kern (25 percent) and Barrett (13 percent).

In the media ballot, Smith received a staggering 58 percent of first-place votes while Barrett finished with 25 percent and Art Schlichter and Bobby Hoying each received 8 percent of the top votes.

Smith played at Ohio State from 2002-06, starting part time in 2004 before taking the job for good during the 2005 season. As a fifth-year senior in 2006 – his Heisman season – Smith completed 203 of 311 passes (65.3 percent) for 2,542 yards with 30 touchdowns to just six interceptions while leading Ohio State to the national title game, where the Buckeyes fell to Florida.

Statistically, Smith was one of the most efficient passing quarterbacks in program history. That's in stark contrast to the second-place vote getter Kern, who played in a vastly different era of college football.

Kern played under Woody Hayes from 1968-70, and when he left the program he was easily the greatest signal caller in Ohio State history up to that point – but it certainly wasn't for his passing stats. In fact, Kern threw more interceptions (24) than touchdowns (19) in his collegiate career. But he was the catalyst of one of the best teams in program history – the leader of 1968's "Super Sophs" that won the national title. He led the Buckeyes to a version of the national championship in 1970 as well, while coming up short against Michigan in 1969.

While Hayes wasn't known for throwing

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**Final Fan Vote**

- (Points in parentheses)  
 1. Troy Smith (1,804)  
 2. Rex Kern (1,689)  
 3. J.T. Barrett (1,583)  
 4. Art Schlichter (1,366)  
 5. Joe Germaine (1,307)  
 6. Braxton Miller (1,152)  
 7. Craig Krenzel (972)  
 8. Cornelius Greene (790)  
 9. Terrelle Pryor (694)  
 10. Bobby Hoying (613)

Also receiving votes: Mike Tomczak, Cardale Jones, Tom Matte, Kirk Herbstreit, John Borton, Stanley Jackson, Don Unverferth, Jim Karsatos, Greg Frey, Dave Leggett, Les Horvath\*, Tom Tupa, Tippy Dye, Rod Gerald, Ron Maciejowski, Kenny Guiton, Vic Janowicz\*, Don Scott, John Havlicek\*\*.

\* – Heisman trophy winner not widely considered a quarterback.

\*\* – Basketball Hall of Famer and former high school football star who never played football at Ohio State.

**Final Media Vote**

- (Points in parentheses)  
 1. Troy Smith (714)  
 2. Art Schlichter (486)  
 3. J.T. Barrett (480)  
 4. Braxton Miller (384)  
 5. Rex Kern (360)  
 T-6. Joe Germaine (300)  
 T-6. Bobby Hoying (300)  
 T-8. Cornelius Greene (252)  
 T-8. Craig Krenzel (252)  
 10. Terrelle Pryor (216)

Also receiving votes: Mike Tomczak, Greg Frey, Cardale Jones, Jim Karsatos, Stanley Jackson.

perhaps more surprisingly, Braxton Miller – arguably the most dynamic athlete in program history – finished in fourth place, ahead of Kern in fifth.

Overall, though, the same 10 players finished in the top 10 for both the fans and the media. Joe Germaine was in the top five for the fans but finished sixth in the media balloting, while Miller was sixth in the fan vote. Hoying – thanks in part to his first-place votes – was rated more highly by the media, while Cornelius Greene (who now spells his name Green) checked in at eighth in both votes. Terrelle Pryor – whose finish was almost certainly worsened because of the “Tattoo-Gate” scandal – fell one spot to 10th in the media poll.

Interestingly, Mike Tomczak was the first man out in both votes, missing out on 10th on both ballots by a wide margin. Hoying was 10th in the fan vote with 613 points to Tomczak’s 429 points. Pryor finished 10th with 216 points in the media vote while Tomczak had just 90.

**1st-Place Votes**

In total, 16 quarterbacks received at least one first-place vote in the fan ballot, including Barrett, Greg Frey, Germaine, Greene, Kirk Herbstreit, Hoying, Jones, Kern, Craig Krenzel, Miller, Pryor, Schlichter, Smith, Don Unverferth, Dave Leggett and Heisman winner Les Horvath, who is not widely classified as a signal caller.

Only four players received first-place votes in the media polling: Smith, Schlichter, Barrett and Hoying.

**The Age Gap**

Beyond the overall top 10, BSB broke the fan vote down by age, eventually separating the votes of individuals who were 60 or older when they cast their ballot from those who were 59 years old or younger. The voting age ranged from voters in their early 20s to a few individuals in their late 90s – the oldest to participate turned 98 years old in April.

While the fan and media votes produced differing results, Smith was easily the top vote-getter in each ballot. In the age groups, though, that changed.

For voters 60 and older, Kern ended up at No. 1 with 30 percent of the first-place votes. Smith was second with 28 percent of the top votes. In that age group, Barrett, Schlichter, Miller, Germaine, Krenzel, Greene, Pryor and Hoying rounded out the top 10 – in that order.

You’ll notice that that’s still the same 10 players – in a different order – as both the overall fan and media ballots.

Those same 10 made the top 10 for voters aged 59 and under as well. In that ballot, Smith led the way with 40 percent of the

first-place votes while Barrett and Schlichter (who finished second and third) each had 15 percent of the first-place votes.

Kern’s placement was the biggest swing among the younger voters as he received just 5 percent of the top votes, finishing fourth overall in the 59-and-under age group.

Overall, Kern seemed to be the only player to have drastic changes in rankings between the age groups. The other 10 players in the top 10 finished within one or two ranking spots regardless of the age group.

Interestingly, Tomczak was the 11th-place quarterback among the older voters, while Jones edged him out for the spot with the younger contingent.

Looking at the voters aged 60 or older, 14 players received first-place votes, including Kern, Smith, Barrett, Schlichter, Miller, Germaine, Krenzel, Greene, Pryor, Hoying, Herbstreit, Unverferth, Leggett and Horvath.

Ten athletes received top billing from the younger voters, including Smith, Barrett, Schlichter, Kern, Miller, Germaine, Krenzel, Pryor, Jones and Greg Frey.

**Odds And Ends**

While the results of the overall balloting

didn’t necessarily determine the exact order, it seemed to clearly show that Smith is considered the best quarterback in Ohio State history, while the top 10 clearly stood out from the pack.

Beyond that, the depth of talent at quarterback in program history is solid, but the list of true greats isn’t as long.

There were also a few notable votes cast for unusual players. Heisman Trophy winners Horvath and Vic Janowicz both appeared on at least one ballot even though neither is thought of as a quarterback. Ron Maciejowski and Kenny Guiton received votes as well, despite the fact that both were known more as super-subbs rather than starters while in Columbus.

And perhaps the most unusual vote of all was cast for John Havlicek, who didn’t play a down of football for the Buckeyes. He was, of course, a star basketball player at Ohio State who went on to be an eight-time NBA champion with the Boston Celtics and a 13-time NBA All-Star. He played high school football in Bridgeport, Ohio, and was even drafted by the Cleveland Browns in 1962 despite never playing college football.

the ball, Kern was a key offensive playmaker with his legs, rushing for 1,714 yards and 24 touchdowns in 29 career games.

Kern, who finished in second place by a solid margin (1,689 points to Barrett’s 1,583 points) in the fan poll, was less highly regarded by the media, finishing fifth – but there’ll be more on that later.

The other quarterbacks who truly contended for top honors in both polls were Art Schlichter – one of the first true passing quarterbacks in program history – and Barrett, who holds pretty much every major quarterback record at Ohio State.

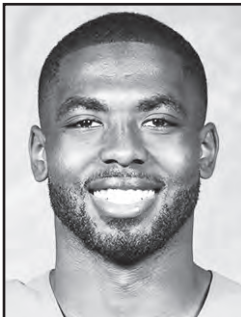
Schlichter, who played first for Hayes Bruce, threw for a then-record 7,547 yards with 50 touchdowns and 46 interceptions in his career, with 21 of those picks coming during his freshman year in 1978. He was a four-year starter for the Buckeyes in an era when Ohio State football was beginning to move away from the “3 yards and a cloud of dust” system.

Barrett, on the other hand, was a true modern quarterback, starting for Urban Meyer for the majority of the 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 seasons. He was adept at passing and rushing, putting up stellar numbers in the majority of his appearances. In total, Barrett finished with 9,434 passing yards with 104 touchdowns – both program records. He added 3,263 rushing yards and 43 more touchdowns on the ground, giving him the Ohio State all-time marks for total offense and total touchdowns.

Schlichter and Barrett, though, never won a Heisman, and neither won a national title as the starter (Barrett was injured when the Buckeyes, led by Cardale Jones, who just missed out on the QB top 10, won the 2014 championship). Smith’s Heisman and dominant play – especially against Michigan – and Kern’s mastery of the offense and success as a two-time national champion put them in their places in the fan poll.

**Fans Vs. Media**

One thing was clear – Troy Smith was the best in the eyes of the fans and media members alike. After that, things ended up being pretty different in each poll. Schlichter, fourth in the fan voting, edged out Barrett for second place in the media ballot. And,



J.T. Barrett

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# Buckeyes Build '19, '20 Classes With 4 Commits

After Ohio State completed camp season in June with hundreds of prospects in attendance for each of its one-day events, culminated by the Buckeyes' annual Friday Night Lights on June 22, the staff rolled with recruiting momentum into July. Since BSB last went to press, OSU secured four total commitments – two for the 2019 class and two for the 2020 cycle – as a direct result of its camp circuit, after all of the eventual additions came to Columbus in June and subsequently arrived at their decisions throughout July.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Ryan McGlade & Garrett Stepien

Despite the dead period from Aug. 1-31, which prevents in-person contact but allows written messages and phone calls, Ohio State sat strong in both of its recruiting classes. In addition to the Buckeyes building their 2019 class up to 15 commitments, they managed to remain ahead of the game for the 2020 cycle with six pledges secured. According to the 247Sports composite team recruiting rankings, OSU was No. 9 for 2019 and No. 3 for 2020 when BSB went to press.

As Ohio State pushes forward when the evaluation period returns Sept. 1 and runs through Nov. 24, below is a chronological look by class at the Buckeyes' successes on the trail for 2019 and 2020 since BSB last went to press. Four of the five July commits are featured, after Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral 2020 four-star quarterback Jack Miller's July 1 commitment was covered in the previous issue.

To stay in the know as the action unfolds for OSU's commitments and targets, visit BSB's 24/7 full-service website, BuckeyeSports.com, which is a free service for Buckeye Sports Bulletin print subscribers. If you are not already signed up,

email your name and address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com to receive simple instructions on further access.

### Kane Patterson

Ohio State picked up where it left off in June when Nashville (Tenn.) Christ Presbyterian Academy four-star linebacker Kane Patterson committed to the Buckeyes on July 9.

The 6-1, 225-pounder chose OSU over a trio of SEC programs – Alabama, Tennessee and Texas A&M – after his string of trips to see the schools throughout June.

After he arrived at his decision July 8, Patterson released a commitment in favor of Ohio State the next day.

"I want to thank God first because without him none of this would have been possible," Patterson said in a tweet. "I also want to thank my family and friends for their support. I also want to thank all my coaches, especially (C.P.A. head coach Ingle) Martin for all they have done for me. Lastly, I want to thank all the other coaches that have recruited and invested time in me. With that being said, I'm blessed to announce that I'm committing to The Ohio State University."

Between multiple trips in SEC country, Patterson came to Columbus on June 14 for an unofficial visit. He started his month of unofficial visits at Alabama on June 2, following with the Buckeyes before hitting up Texas A&M on June 15 and swinging to Tennessee on June 20. Patterson then finished the southern swing back with the Crimson Tide on June 22 for another unofficial visit, but OSU ultimately emerged on top for a big recruiting win. The 247Sports composite rates Patterson the No. 199 overall prospect, No. 9 inside linebacker and No. 7 player in Tennessee. He joins Lexington, Ohio, four-star outside linebacker Cade Stover as Ohio State's second commitment at the position for the 2019 class under head coach Urban Meyer and linebackers coach Billy Davis.

"Coach Davis is my position coach," Patterson told 247Sports. "I got to see him in practice, and I know that was the coach I

## 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                               |
|--------------------|------|------|-----|-------|---|
| Jordan Battle      | S    | 6-1  | 187 | ★★★★  | Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas |
| Steele Chambers    | ATH  | 6-2  | 215 | ★★★★  | Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic    |
| Cormontae Hamilton | TE   | 6-2  | 263 | ★★★   | Memphis (Tenn.) Whitehaven                |
| 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.                                |
| Dwan Mathis        | QB   | 6-4  | 197 | ★★★★  | Oak Park, Mich.                           |
| Harry Miller       | C    | 6-4  | 310 | ★★★★★ | Buford, Ga.                               |
| Doug Nester        | OT   | 6-5½ | 295 | ★★★★  | Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley          |
| Kane Patterson     | ILB  | 6-1  | 225 | ★★★★  | Nashville (Tenn.) CPA                     |
| Noah Potter        | DE   | 6-5  | 250 | ★★★★  | Mentor, Ohio                              |
| Bryson Shaw        | S    | 6-2  | 175 | ★★★   | Potomac (Md.) Bullis School               |
| Cade Stover        | OLB  | 6-5  | 235 | ★★★★  | Lexington, Ohio                           |
| Garrett Wilson     | WR   | 6-0½ | 181 | ★★★★★ | Austin (Texas) Lake Travis                |
| Craig Young        | ATH  | 6-4  | 200 | ★★★   | Fort Wayne (Ind.) Wayne                   |

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

| Player         | Pos. | Ht.  | Wt. | Stars | High School                         |
|----------------|------|------|-----|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Lejond Cavazos | S    | 6-0  | 186 | ★★★★  | Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy        |
| Darvon Hubbard | RB   | 6-0  | 200 | ★★★★  | Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral        |
| Paris Johnson  | OT   | 6-7  | 285 | ★★★★★ | Cincinnati St. Xavier               |
| Jack Miller    | QB   | 6-4  | 210 | ★★★★  | Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral        |
| Jake Wray      | OT   | 6-5  | 290 | ★★★★  | Marietta, Ga.                       |
| Luke Wypler    | OL   | 6-3½ | 285 | ★★★★  | Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional |

wanted to play under. Also seeing him in the film room, when I went in the office to watch film with him, he said, 'I found your 10 worst plays from the season.' He really worked on my technique and strategies. It just showed that he really knew how I played ball.

"Lastly, my relationship with Coach Meyer. I know my commitment wasn't based on a certain timeline and I was just doing it when it felt right. Coach Meyer just stayed on me super hard. He probably texted me like four or five times a week, just telling me what Ohio State can bring to the table and on the other hand what I can bring to the table too."

### Cormontae Hamilton

After twists and turns throughout the search took Ohio State all over the country, the Buckeyes zeroed in on a tight end for the 2019 class when they received a commitment from Memphis

(Tenn.) Whitehaven three-star Cormontae Hamilton on July 27.

The 6-2, 263-pounder camped at OSU on June 22 for Friday Night Lights and came away with an offer. In contact with the staff throughout the next month and five days, Hamilton pulled the trigger to give Ohio State its solution at the position after offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson formulated a list of 10 prospects back in January.

"As the tight ends coach, (Wilson) informed Cormontae," Whitehaven head coach Rodney Saulsberry told BSB. "He was like, 'I've scouted the country for the top tight-end prospects. You're one of the top 10 prospects I've seen. I wanted to come and meet you and see you in person. Just know that we'll be following you.'

"So that happened in January, and he was true to his words. He continued to just follow with him, came back in the springtime evaluations and was honest with him the whole time. He was like, 'Hey, we want to see you in camp. If we see you in camp, you have a great chance of getting an offer from Ohio State.' That's how things played out."

Hamilton blew up throughout camp season as he earned offers from Tennessee, Louisville and Alabama after workouts at each school. The next week, though, he went up to Ohio State and the rest was history.

Hamilton is rated by the 247Sports composite as the No. 632 overall player, No. 28 tight end and No. 23 player in Tennessee. However, Saulsberry believes Hamilton's ability and potential go beyond the rankings, giving the Buckeyes a multifaceted talent at the position.

"He has size – he has some of the best hands in the country," Saulsberry said. "I would attest that he may have the best hands in the country. Obviously, he has very large hands – 11-plus-inch hands – but they are very soft hands where he makes one-hand catches.

"He's strong enough to be an in-line guy, although he doesn't have the prototypical height of what they say, but he has the prototypical strength and positioning to be a very good blocker – dominant blocker. At times, you see him picking guys up and putting them on the ground on film. So just having

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# ASK AN ANALYST

## With CBS Sports Network's Tom Lemming

For most of August while Ohio State conducted fall camp, head coach Urban Meyer was on paid administrative leave. Although the Buckeyes had yet to lose any commitments by the time BSB went to press, what type of recruiting impact – if any – can a situation like this one have on OSU's 2019 and/or 2020 classes?

"All opposing coaches will use negative recruiting because they're all after Ohio State, which is a juggernaut when it comes to recruiting. The Buckeyes and Alabama dominate the scene. I just interviewed 2,000 prospects in 2019 and 1,500 recruits 2020, and it's always the two schools that pop up the most – *the* most – even more than Clemson, USC or Notre Dame. It's always Ohio State and Alabama on most of the lists. So the other schools – the local ones, particularly – when it comes to other players they're recruiting, they're bad-mouthing Ohio State. If they were recruiting Maryland, the Maryland-area schools would be doing it. If they were recruiting Georgia, then the Georgia-area schools would be hitting them.

"But, to be honest with you ... it will be to no avail at all. It will be forgotten 30 minutes after he's OK to stay. That's how fast it will be forgotten. I've watched horrible situations like Penn State when everyone thought the opposite. I always watched how these things developed. I said they'd rebound as soon as the bowl ban was over and as soon as they'd get their scholarships back. They came back stronger than they were before things happened.

"The same thing happened with Miami in Florida when the Nevin Shapiro thing hit. Same thing at Ohio State when the Terrelle Pryor thing hit, North Carolina

when their academic thing hit or USC when the Reggie Bush thing hit. Everyone kept saying, 'This is going to kill recruiting.' It didn't. They all had great recruiting years the next year, just about.

"With the ballplayers, there are three things that they look for: Facilities, the Buckeyes have state-of-the-art. How many guys you put in the NFL, the Buckeyes put in as many as anybody. And how good-looking the girls are on campus. That's all. I mean, all of the other stuff is rhetoric and talk and B.S. I've watched it for all of these years. As long as Urban stays, it will have absolutely no effect on the recruiting. They'll have another great year. That's guaranteed. That's 100 percent."

**How much does it help Ohio State to have had the university's investigation into Meyer happen during the dead period, which runs from Aug. 1-31 and excludes in-person contact but allows written/electronic communication?**

"Oh, it 100 percent helps. If it happened during a recruiting period and there was some thought that perhaps the committee might come back and say he's out, the other schools would put doubt in the kids' minds like crazy. If they happened to try now, it didn't have any effect at all. I mean, even if they lose guys, they can get them back before the early signing period – or for the 2020 class, within the next year, so it doesn't matter. To me, it's a nonissue. ... But at the same time, Ohio State is still Ohio State. You've had schools where, no matter who coaches it, they're all great."

**In a situation such as Ohio State's, where Meyer was restricted from team contact and university**

**properties on top of the obvious recruiting duties, how much does it help to have other veteran coaches on the Buckeyes' staff to keep relationships strong on the trail?**

"They're all big names. They're important. (Offensive coordinator and tight ends coach) Kevin Wilson's always been a great recruiter. So has (defensive coordinator) Greg Schiano. (Defensive line coach) Larry Johnson is one of the greatest recruiters ever at the position. However, they're also pushing Ohio State, so you can have average recruiters in those positions and they have. They have had average recruiters that go on to other schools and they can't recruit.

"It comes down to the fact that you've got a great school to recruit, you've got people growing up in one of the top five states for talent – that have dreamed of playing for Ohio State – so all you've got to do is recruit. I mean, I never really thought (former Ohio State head coach) Earle Bruce was a good recruiter. I knew Earle since he got there. He was a good guy – he worked at it – but just his temperament and the way he was made him not so much of a great recruiter. But he recruited well because he had a great staff. Plus, it was Ohio State. So I think you've really got to be a non-personality or something to not recruit well.

"But there's an extra level where Urban's brought them up to because of his coaching and his ability to get the most out of his players. Urban, like (Alabama head coach) Nick Saban, like (Clemson head coach) Dabo Swinney – they're all at the top of recruiting. That's their habit. That's what you have to do nowadays, and Urban brings that extra edge to Ohio State."

that flexibility is mostly what they want – a hybrid tight end – which is what I think the NFL and everyone is looking for now."

### Luke Wypler

Miller committed to Ohio State on July 1, marking the last addition for the Buckeyes' 2020 class right before BSB last went to press. Only six days later, though, OSU's future signal caller had company July 7 when Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional four-star offensive lineman Luke Wypler pledged as well. In an announcement on Twitter, Wypler wrapped up his recruitment just two days after he included Ohio State and Stanford in a July 5 top two.

The 6-3½, 285-pounder's physical attributes speak loudly about Wypler's early potential on Ohio State's interior offensive line. However, other factors helped put the Buckeyes over the top.

"Ohio State, as a school, has everything that I am looking for, with the Fisher School of Business," Wypler told 247Sports. "And then on the field its coaching staff all have a lot of experience breeding, working with and creating the best football players in the country."

Wypler is OSU's second commitment in the trenches for 2020, joining Cincinnati St. Xavier five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson Jr. as an important pickup so early in the cycle. The 247Sports composite considers Wypler the No. 34 overall prospect, No. 1 center and No. 1 player in New Jersey for the 2020 class.

### Darvon Hubbard

Miller's commitment to start the month soon led to another pledge for Ohio State when Chaparral teammate Darvon Hubbard decided in favor of the Buckeyes on July 25.

The 6-0, 200-pounder became OSU's latest addition to its six-member class of 2020. He earned his offer on June 26 after two

campus in a week at Ohio State during the Buckeyes' one-day position camp on June 16 and Friday Night Lights on June 22, the latter of which Hubbard attended with Miller.

Throughout the spring Hubbard's offer list grew to double digits with Georgia, LSU and Alabama among the latest from May 17-22.

Although the offer took time, Hubbard had been on OSU's radar since middle school. Originally from Akron Buchtel, Hubbard's Ohio State recruitment had heated up ever since running backs coach Tony Alford sparked the communication in 2016.

"He knows how I operate," Hubbard said of Alford. "He knows how to talk to me as a person, so I'm able to understand him more than maybe some of my coaches.

"He's known me since I was in the eighth grade, so we have a really good connection. I know how he talks, so I know how to understand him. We just have a real special connection."

The 247Sports ranks Hubbard the No. 195 overall prospect, No. 18 running back and No. 6 player in Arizona for the 2020 cycle. As a featured member of his high school's offense with Miller, Hubbard brings shifty speed and powerful physicality to the Buckeyes.

"He's been impressive," Chaparral head coach Brent Barnes told BSB. "I've obviously watched the film, but seeing him in person and his size – he's a big back, but he also can really move.

"He's shifty in the open field and space, so that's probably the thing that stood out the most – just how quick he can be, even at his size."

### 2019 Commit Backs OSU Amid Meyer Investigation

In the midst of the Ohio State independent board's two-week investigation into how Meyer handled allegations of former wide

receivers coach and recruiting coordinator Zach Smith's past domestic violence, 2019 Austin (Texas) Lake Travis five-star wideout Garrett Wilson shared his thoughts on the matter and said 2018 will be a rousing success for the Buckeyes.

"Talking to my mom (on Aug. 12, a week prior to the investigation concluding), I'm like, 'I don't know why stuff like this has got to happen,'" Wilson told CBS Austin. "She's like, 'Welcome to life.' So some things go wrong, not everything's going to go right.

"At the end of the day, I feel like those kids are going to come back stronger after this, Coach Meyer's going to come back stronger and they're going to win a (national championship) this year."

Wilson (6-0½, 181) pledged to Ohio State over Texas on April 29. The 247Sports composite ranks him the No. 14 overall prospect and second-best receiver in the 2019 recruiting class. He is Ohio State's highest-rated commit for its upcoming haul.

The last time Garrett was in Columbus, his hometown, was for his official visit the weekend of April 13-15, which coincided with the Buckeyes' spring game on April 14. He and his former high school teammate, OSU freshman quarterback Matthew Baldwin, led Lake Travis to the state championship game last fall, where the Cavaliers fell to Allen, Texas, 35-33.

Wilson is determined to ensure his final season on the high school gridiron ends with his squad hoisting the state title trophy.

"I'm trying to do whatever I've got to do to help my team win a state championship," Wilson said. "If that means catching zero passes or 150, whatever it takes.

"Usually, when you've got to wake up at 5:30 in the morning, you're dreading through. I'll wake up, I'm smiling, ready to play some football."

Lake Travis opens its season Aug. 31 at Arlington Martin.

### Harrison Cancels Announcement Date

Ohio State, along with Michigan and Penn State, will have to wait a little longer to see who lands one of the best prospects in the 2019 cycle.

Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy Orange five-star defensive end Zach Harrison, the No. 4 recruit in the country, was originally planning to announce his college decision

Continued On Page 56

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Loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers frequently ask us what they can do to help keep BSB vibrant in this increasingly electronic age. One of the things readers can do is introduce BSB to new readers who might find our Ohio State sports content interesting. In order to help you do that, we are offering an opportunity to send four free trial issues to potential subscribers. We will then offer your potential subscriber a very special offer to get them to join the fold of loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers.

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# WR Washington Waiting To Make Commitment

Continued From Page 55

Aug. 14, his birthday. The top-rated player in the state of Ohio, however, told Clay Hall of ABC 6 Columbus on July 30 that he would no longer be sticking to that deadline.

Still undecided, Harrison (6-5½, 243) said that he wants to visit Ohio State, Michigan and Penn State – his final three schools – sometime this fall before determining which one he will attend. The No. 3 weakside defensive end officially visited Penn State the weekend of April 20, which included the Nittany Lions' spring game, Michigan June 21 and Ohio State two days later.

Harrison told BSB back in early May at the Nike Opening Regional in Canton, Ohio, that he would not rush his decision if he wasn't ready.

"Hopefully, my birthday – Aug. 14 – but I don't know," Harrison said of a possible announcement date. "That's not set in stone. If I know by then, great – but if not, then I'm not deciding."

Harrison received an offer from Ohio State on Jan. 28, 2017, the same day he attended the Buckeyes' junior day. Playing for a high school just north of Columbus, Harrison has been on OSU's campus countless times throughout his recruitment.

## 2019 WR Target Delays Decision, Reopens Recruitment

Harrison isn't the only 2019 Ohio State target who has recently adjusted his decision date. St. Louis Trinity Catholic four-star wide receiver Marcus Washington announced via Twitter on Aug. 2 that he will delay his decision and reopen his recruitment.

He was originally set to choose between Ohio State and Missouri on Aug. 7.

"Due to everything happening in college football right now, my family and I have decided it's best I delay my commitment date and reopen my recruitment fully," his tweet read.

Washington (6-2, 191) landed an Ohio State offer in April 2017. The No. 157 overall prospect and No. 26 wideout has

## A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

### 25 Years Ago – 1993

According to multiple publications, the top 10 players in Ohio heading into the 1993 season were Cleveland St. Ignatius quarterback Scott Mutryn, Sandusky offensive lineman Orlando Pace, running backs Che Bryant of Canton McKinley and Pepe Pearson of Euclid, wide receiver Dee Miller of Springfield South, linebackers Lamont Smith of West Chester Lakota and Jerry Rudzinski of Kettering Alter, defensive end Mike Buzin of Cleveland St. Ignatius and defensive backs Damon Moore of Fostoria and Tony George of Cincinnati Winton Woods.

Ohio State was in the running for each of those 10 players and among the top choices for a number of them, including Pace (6-8, 300), who listed the Buckeyes, Florida State, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame and Penn State as his favorites.

### 20 Years Ago – 1998

One day before beginning his senior season at Upper Arlington, Ohio, running back Jesse Kline appeared at Ohio State's Aug. 12 freshman practice to commit to the Buckeyes in person.

"My feeling while I watched the freshmen was, 'I'll be out here a year from today,'" said Kline (6-2, 215), who committed to OSU over Michigan and Notre Dame.

"The main thing for Ohio State was the people and the coaching staff. I just felt like these guys would help me to become the person I could be and the best football player I could be. I just had the best feeling at OSU with the coaches and football team."

### 15 Years Ago – 2003

In the weeks leading up to the 2003

season, the Buckeyes picked up four additional commitments for their 2004 recruiting class and one for their 2005 haul.

The four from the 2004 cycle who pledged were Tallahassee (Fla.) Lincoln quarterback Joe Bauserman (6-2, 225), Columbus Independence running back Erik Haw (5-11, 210), Mount Carmel, Pa., offensive lineman Joel Skinner (6-5, 285) and Hamilton, Ohio, defensive back Brandon Underwood.

Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward offensive lineman Alex Boone (6-8, 290) became the second member of Ohio State's 2005 class, joining Mansfield (Ohio) Senior defensive back Jamario O'Neal.

### 10 Years Ago – 2008

In mid-August, Ohio State already had 24 commitments for its 2009 class, putting a serious premium on the few remaining spots.

Cleveland Glenville five-star offensive tackle Marcus Hall was expected by many to be one of those players to fill a final slot. Despite Hall listing Ohio State as one of his top schools, the 6-5, 293-pounder did not stop seriously considering other premier programs across the country.

One of those was LSU.

"I like (head coach Les) Miles at LSU a lot," Hall said. "The offensive line coach is Coach Greg (Studrawa), and he's an Ohio guy (from Fostoria, Ohio)."

### Five Years Ago – 2013

More than five months remained until Ohio State could officially sign members to its 2014 recruiting class, but after picking up three more verbal commitments during the late summer months, head coach Urban

Meyer already had filled out the majority of his 2014 haul.

The trio of pledges were offensive guard Demetrius Knox of Fort Worth (Texas) All Saints' Episcopal School, athlete Malik Hooker of New Castle, Pa., and wide receiver Curtis Samuel of Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall.

Knox (6-4, 305) committed to Ohio State on July 28 after once being verbally committed to Texas. Hooker (6-3, 185) chose the Buckeyes out of a top six that also included Michigan, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Virginia Tech and West Virginia. Samuel (6-0, 185) went with OSU because of Meyer and his spread offense, according to Erasmus Hall head coach Danny Landberg.

### One Year Ago – 2017

Meyer and his staff landed a pair of commitments in July before snagging two more during the first week of August to cap a successful summer.

Lindenhurst, N.Y., product Jeremy Ruckert (6-5½, 238), the nation's top tight end in the 2018 cycle, committed to the Scarlet and Gray in mid-July with a video posted to his Twitter account that featured a go-kart race, with an Ohio State kart winning, edging out a Michigan kart.

Marcus Hooker (6-0, 185), Malik's younger brother, declared to Ohio State on July 27, just a day after receiving an OSU offer. The Buckeyes garnered their third linebacker from the 2018 class when K'Vaughan Pope (6-2, 210) of Dinwiddie, Va., announced his college decision Aug. 4.

The fourth commitment came one day after Pope's from offensive tackle Doug Nester (6-5½, 295) of Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley, marking the Buckeyes' first member of their 2019 haul.

been on OSU's campus at least three times since then, including his official visit the weekend of June 22-24, the same weekend OSU hosted a number of other official visitors for its annual Friday Night Lights camp.

One of the other high school student-athletes who was on his Ohio State official then was St. Louis Cardinal Ritter College Prep four-star Jameson Williams, a fellow wide receiver. Washington and Williams know each other in more ways than just through

the recruiting process, though. Trinity Catholic and Cardinal Ritter are crosstown rivals.

Cardinal Ritter head coach Brandon Gregory is entering his third year at the helm. His club has come up short vs. Trinity Catholic in each of his first two seasons at Cardinal Ritter, and a lot of that has to do with Washington.

"Marcus Washington is a great football player," Gregory told BSB. "I'm a defensive guy, so we have to strategize to take the ball

out of his hands. Marcus is a hell of a football player."

## 2019 DT Lists Buckeyes In Top 4

D'Von Ellies, a three-star defensive tackle out of Owings Mills (Md.) McDonogh, released a list of his top four schools on July 18, and Ohio State made the cut. Joining OSU were Rutgers, Virginia Tech and West Virginia.

Ellies (6-2, 280) camped at Ohio State on June 16 and told BSB then that he came away from Columbus with the Buckeyes "in a very good place" following his initial trip to campus after their May 16 offer.

"The program speaks for itself," Ellies said of OSU. "The development of the players, that just speaks for itself. (Defensive line coach Larry) Johnson is kind of like a legend of the industry. On top of that, I know a couple of people that go there (like Hyattsville [Md.] DeMatha Catholic product and sophomore defensive end Chase Young), and they have nothing but good things to say about it. It's a great program. It's nothing but hard work, honestly. The reward speaks for itself."

Ellies, the No. 423 prospect regardless of position and No. 27 defensive tackle in the 2019 haul, told BSB in mid-July, shortly after unfurling his top four, that he was planning to make a commitment sometime before the start of the season. He has since landed scholarship offers from Florida and Penn State, which have prompted him to postpone his commitment plans.

For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting, be sure to check in daily at [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com), free with your BSB print subscription. For simple sign-up instructions see page 5 of this issue.



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# Former Hoops Player Rising Up Recruiting Boards

By GARRETT STEPIEN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Through his sophomore year of high school, Jared Harrison-Hunte hadn't played a down of football. As a rising-star basketball player, Harrison-Hunte had his sights set on hoop dreams before his switch from the hardwood to the gridiron changed the course of his athletic career.

When Harrison-Hunte joined the football team for his junior year at Middle Village (N.Y.) Christ the King, head coach Jason Brown and the Royals staff ultimately stumbled upon a national talent.

Since the fall came to a close, Harrison-Hunte blew up all offseason from the spring evaluation period to the summer camp circuit. As he enters his senior year, Harrison-Hunte has become one of the top uncommitted prospects left in the country for the 2019 recruiting class.

As was the case with the powerhouse programs now at the top of Harrison-Hunte's offer list, the name didn't ring a bell when CBS Sports Network's Tom Lemming was initially told about the budding defensive tackle from New York City. Lemming, who has covered recruiting for 40 years, then saw Harrison-Hunte in person and was blown away by the Christ the King product.

"He's one of the top two prospects in the state of New York," Lemming told BSB of Harrison-Hunte. "He can play. ... Jared is a big-time guy. I gave him four stars. When I interviewed him last, in May, his top three were Penn State, LSU and Baylor. Georgia had no idea who he was back then - neither did Ohio State."

Ohio State entered the Harrison-Hunte sweepstakes in a tight race with Georgia and Penn State throughout the influx of scholarship offers over past five months. Rated in the 247Sports composite as a three-star recruit, Harrison-Hunte is ranked the No. 527 overall prospect, No. 33 defensive tackle and No. 2 player in New York.

The Buckeyes got involved late in the spring when defensive coordinator and area recruiter Greg Schiano stopped May 8 at

Christ the King during his evaluation swing through New Jersey and New York.

Schiano's report back to the OSU staff resonated with defensive line coach Larry Johnson, who went to take a look for himself May 22 and also came away impressed.

Ohio State returned to the East Coast when the majority of its coaches attended a June 1 camp at Rutgers in Piscataway, N.J., where head coach Urban Meyer and Johnson worked closely with Harrison-Hunte.

The player then trekked out to Columbus for Friday Night Lights and ended June 22 with an offer from the Buckeyes in hand after conversations with Johnson and Meyer in the head coach's office at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"It's a game changer, let's just say that," Harrison-Hunte told reporters after the camp. "Not a 'game over.' Got to give other schools chances, but definitely a game changer - just because it's Larry Johnson, just because he taught me so much in basically two meetings. In two meetings, I've learned so much from him."

The 6-4, 286-pounder emerged June 23 with an offer from Tennessee after he camped with the Volunteers in the afternoon - just 12 hours following his workout with the Buckeyes.

Harrison-Hunte took a similar route July 27 in front of Georgia head coach Kirby Smart, camping for a scholarship from the Bulldogs before flying July 28 up to Penn State where he has held an offer from the Nittany Lions and head coach James Franklin since March 19.

Throughout the summer trips, Christ the King coaches have chaperoned Harrison-Hunte and his teammates. Royals offensive coordinator Bruce Eugene recapped the latter visits to Georgia and PSU, summing up where Harrison-Hunte's recruitment stands after the latest action.

"When you go down there and showcase your talent and get an offer from them, that's huge," Eugene told BSB. "They were shocked about his size and athleticism. As any people would be aware of when they about him, but once you see him move in person, it's something else. They were like, 'Whoa.' So they were really impressed with

## Get To Know: Jared Harrison-Hunte

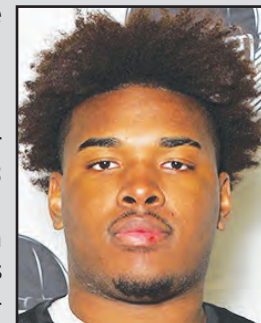
**High School** - Middle Village (N.Y.) Christ The King Regional

**Position** - Defensive Tackle

**Height, Weight** - 6-4, 286 pounds

**Rankings** - Harrison-Hunte is rated as a four-star prospect, the No. 33 defensive tackle and No. 533 overall player in the 247Sports composite.

**Player Evaluation** - "You can't take much from his highlights other than the kid mostly still has no idea what he's doing. He has 'blow up' potential, though. Colleges like him a lot but many have wanted to work him out before offering. He's a lot like (former Cleveland Heights four-star recruit and current Ohio State freshman defensive end) Tyreke Smith when Smith first burst onto the scene a few years back. Definitely one to watch as a three-tech (defensive tackle)."  
- Sean Fitz of 247Sports



that size, athleticism and explosion. The fact that he's raw - they like that they can put their hands on him to shape and mold him.

"Georgia's huge because Georgia's one of those schools that's among the upper echelon of the SEC. So when Georgia comes and offers you, it makes you re-evaluate the whole situation. Like I said, it's a big-time offer. But he still has a great, great relationship with Penn State and Ohio State."

Harrison-Hunte had previously mulled a decision prior to the fall. However, without official visits set by the time BSB went to press, Bruce detailed why those dates

remained open as Harrison-Hunte considers all options with only his second season of football on the horizon.

"He doesn't have any idea of when and where to take official visits yet," Eugene said of Harrison-Hunte. "That's something that's going to be talked about as the summer winds down and into the season. Like I said, he's kind of torn between a few schools, of course, when you're thinking about Penn State, Ohio State and then Georgia."

"You think about Arizona State, LSU, Texas A&M, Tennessee, so he's kind of torn. Then you've got, right in your back yard, Rutgers and UConn. So it's like, 'What do I want?'"



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# Staff Changes Occur Amid UMD Investigation

As the University of Maryland investigates allegations of a toxic culture in its football program after the death of offensive lineman Jordan McNair, athletic director Damon Evans announced several staff changes in the wake of the Terrapins' latest discoveries.

## BIG TEN NOTES Garrett Stepien

Among the moves, UMD placed third-year head coach DJ Durkin on paid administrative leave Aug. 12 and named first-year offensive coordinator Matt Canada – hired in January after he spent 2017 on staff at LSU – as interim head coach.

Maryland also placed two anonymous athletic training staffers – later identified by an ESPN report as athletic trainer Wes Robinson and athletic training director Steve Nordwall – on paid administrative leave Aug. 11 with assistant athletic director of football sports performance Rick Court.

Robinson and Nordwall remained suspended with pay when BSB went to press, but the Terrapins announced in an Aug. 14 press conference with Evans and university president Wallace Loh that they had parted ways with Court. Yahoo reported that Court resigned but received a financial settlement in the form of a \$315,000 lump-sum payment. Court posted a resignation letter on his Twitter profile that day, shortly after the details leaked.

UMD's decision to part ways with Court came on the heels of McNair's death and subsequent reports on the program's culture under Durkin. McNair, 19, died June 13 from heatstroke complications after he collapsed during a May 29 workout led by Court.

Since an initial report Aug. 10 from ESPN, additional information on McNair's death emerged in the two weeks that followed. ESPN revealed that McNair had difficulty standing upright while running 110-yard sprints during the May 29 workout, which started around 4:15 p.m., resulting in a seizure at 5 p.m. and a body temperature of 106 degrees later at a local hospital. He died two weeks later.

Maryland launched an external investigation into what exactly happened to McNair and how staffers on the scene handled the situation. In the press conference, Loh acknowledged the probe's preliminary results, noting that athletic trainers misdiagnosed McNair and indicating how they could have prevented the subsequent complications.

"The university accepts legal and moral responsibility for the mistakes our training staff made on that fateful day of May 29," Loh said.

Evans echoed Loh's sentiments, pointing to

two medical steps the staffers failed to apply in their examinations.

"Our athletic training staff did not take Jordan's temperature and did not apply a cold water immersion treatment," Evans said.

After ESPN's Aug. 10 article on McNair, it cited former and current coaches and players in an Aug. 11 report that alleged a "toxic culture" under Durkin. Court, whom Durkin once called the most important hire he made, was Ohio State's associate director of football strength and conditioning from 2012-13 under OSU assistant athletic director of football sport performance Mickey Marotti (2012-present). Court was a large focus of the allegations made in the second ESPN report.

Citing several sources who were in attendance for the May 29 workout, which Court reportedly led, ESPN reported that McNair showed serious signs of exhaustion and fatigue. Multiple witnesses told ESPN that athletic trainer Robinson then yelled, "Drag his ass across the field!"

McNair's family attorney, Billy Murphy, reiterated the account Aug. 12 in an interview with The Associated Press as he called for Durkin to be fired.

"We have corroborated facts that Wes Robinson made completely callous statements to Jordan McNair as he was suffering from heatstroke, as his temperature was rising to 106 degrees," Murphy said. "He yelled at Jordan McNair, 'Drag (your butt) across the field.' That is absolutely reprehensible and completely reflects the culture that we're saying and has been pervading the University of Maryland."

The parents of McNair, Martin McNair and Tonya Wilson, spoke publicly Aug. 16 for the first time since their son's death. In an interview with "Good Morning America" on ABC, they also called for Durkin's termination.

"He shouldn't be able to work with anybody else's kid," Martin McNair said of Durkin. "You send your kid away to college for them to be developed into young people – and that's physically, emotionally and spiritually. And teach our young kids, our young people that we worked so hard to get there, to, 'Hey, I'm giving my child to you. Keep him safe.' They did anything but that. So of course he should be fired."

Loh said Maryland was taking the ESPN reports seriously into account as the university set up a four-person board to investigate the claims made against the program's culture.

"We will do everything possible that the situation that Jordan McNair found himself in will never happen again," Loh said. "And if we succeed, which I surely hope and expect that we will, we will always keep alive the legacy of Jordan McNair."

### PSU Players Medically Retire

Penn State lost a pair of players Aug. 15 when junior defensive end Ryan Buchholz and freshman cornerback Jordan Miner revealed their medical retirements from football.

"With those two guys, first of all, they've been class acts in every aspect of our program," PSU head coach James Franklin told reporters. "Both had tremendous futures in front of them – they still have tremendous futures in front of them, it's just going to be different now. I think they're going to continue being very involved in the program."

Buchholz shared the news of his retirement first, taking to Twitter and releasing a statement citing chronic back issues over his career with the Nittany Lions. The 6-6, 258-pounder tallied 34 tackles (seven for loss) and collected five sacks in 23 games during the 2016 and 2017 seasons.

"I will be forever grateful for the opportunities, memories, and friends this sport has given me," Buchholz's statement reads. "Stemming from problems developed in high school, I've been through years of dealing with extreme pain. After multiple back surgeries and the inability to perform at 100 percent at this level, it's time for me to retire. You only have one body, and my health and future well-being is most important to me. Unfortunately, some things don't last forever, and I am just very thankful for everyone who has helped and supported me throughout my career."

Hours later, Miner made a similar announcement when he shared his own unfortunate news after a heart issue was detected.

"From the day I committed to Penn State I always imagined making huge plays in Beaver Stadium," Miner's statement reads. "But unfortunately I was diagnosed with a heart problem that will have to put a hold on my football career. Everybody that knows me knows I had to work super hard to get in this position, but God had other plans for me."

Miner committed July 6, 2017, to Penn State as a four-star recruit from Westley Chapel (Fla.) Wiregrass Ranch, where he was the No. 349 overall prospect and No. 31 cornerback in the 247Sports composite's 2018 recruiting class.

The 6-0, 180-pounder is the second incoming freshman to medically retire after offensive lineman Nana Asiedu was forced to do so June 28 – four days after his June 24 arrival to PSU for summer enrollment – also due to a heart condition. Sophomore quarterback Jake Zembiac stepped away as well Aug. 7, citing "an ongoing injury issue."

"It's challenging," Franklin said. "It's challenging for them, it's challenging for their parents, it's challenging for us as a staff, in terms of managing a roster and depth, and those types of things. Most importantly, it's difficult (because) this is their dream. This is their ultimate dream."

The Nittany Lions open their 2018 campaign Sept. 1 against Appalachian State at 3:30 p.m. ET on Big Ten Network, serving as the first of four nonconference games before they host Ohio State in PSU's Big Ten opener Sept. 29.

### Gophers Coach Retires From WNBA

When the University of Minnesota hired Lindsey Whalen as its head women's basketball coach in May, she initially planned to continue her playing career with the WNBA Minnesota Lynx as well. However, it was announced Aug. 13 that she would retire at the end of the 2018 season.

"I would like to announce that after 15 seasons in the WNBA I am going to retire after the 2018 season," Whalen said. "I would like to thank the WNBA, the Connecticut Sun, and the Minnesota Lynx for believing in me all of these years. I look forward to the next chapter in my basketball career and wish my Lynx coaches and teammates all of the best in the future."

Whalen caps her career as a player on the hardwood with four WNBA titles, six All-Star appearances and more wins (322) than any other player in league history. The Hutchinson, Minn., native averaged 11.5 points per game on 46.1 percent shooting in 447 regular-season contests with the Sun (2004-09) and the Lynx (2010-18). Whalen also helped Team USA to Olympic gold medals in 2012 and 2016.

"It has been a privilege and honor to watch Lindsay lead our team to four championships," said Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx owner Glen Taylor. "Throughout her 15-year WNBA career she has represented the state of Minnesota with class and dignity and thrilled fans ever since she stepped onto the floor at the University of Minnesota. Lindsay is Minnesota women's basketball, and we congratulate her on an amazing WNBA career and look forward to following her in her next endeavor."

As she prepares to take over her alma mater for her first season in 2018-19, Whalen inherits a Golden Gophers squad that went 24-9 overall and 11-5 in Big Ten play.

### RU Players Involved In Scam

In the spring, eight Rutgers football players were involved in a credit-card fraud scam. The players – four of whom have since left the program – stole approximately \$11,000, authorities told NJ Advance Media.

The now-former Scarlet Knights planned to turn themselves in to authorities Aug. 22 after they received summonses earlier that week, two persons with knowledge of the situation told NJ Advance Media.

Police named sophomore linebacker Brendan DeVera and junior safety K.J. Gray as the ringleaders of the operation.

Middlesex (N.J.) County prosecutor Andrew Carey said the two were charged with promoting organized street crime, a second-degree crime, and money laundering.

Rutgers dismissed DeVera and Gray from the team July 11. DeVera, who was jailed on the charges, was set to appear Aug. 23 in court.

The prosecutor's office said junior linebacker Malik Dixon, redshirt freshman defensive back Edwin Lopez, senior defensive back Kobe Marfo and redshirt freshman linebacker Syhiem Simmons were all facing charges of money laundering and fraudulent use of credit cards.

Sophomore linebacker C.J. Onyechi and redshirt freshman defensive back Najee Jones were also charged with credit-card fraud. Each player faces a charge of conspiracy to commit theft by deception.

In a statement, Carey said the players were accused of stealing credit card numbers and transferring the funds to various Rutgers University Express Accounts for their own personal use.

Simmons announced his transfer plans Aug. 10, while Lopez left Rutgers and enrolled at Garden City (Kan.) Community College. Dixon, Marfo, Onyechi and Jones were suspended from fall camp at Rutgers but remained enrolled in summer classes when BSB went to press. Simmons, Lopez, Dixon, Marfo, Onyechi and Jones are due Sept. 13 in Middlesex County Superior Court.

All eight players projected for important roles on Rutgers' defense in 2018.

"We are very disappointed and frustrated," Rutgers athletic director Pat Hobbs said in a statement. "We have been working extremely hard to build a culture of excellence across the department and this news detracts from the great strides we have made. We will continue that work."

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# Spain Trip A Success For Ohio State Hoops

The Ohio State men's basketball team took a trip to Spain from Aug. 1-10, and the visit was beneficial on multiple fronts.

OSU added six new players to the roster this offseason, so the 10-day stay in the European country was a crucial time for the team to bond. It also gave the group the opportunity to play three games before the start of preseason camp.

## COURT REPORT Ryan McGlade

The team spent most of Aug. 1 traveling before landing in Madrid early on Aug. 2 and taking a tour of Spain's capital that morning. The tour included a stop at Las Ventas, the second-largest bull-fighting arena in the

world behind the Plaza de Toros México in Mexico City.

On Aug. 3, the Buckeyes visited Toledo, which is about an hour south of Madrid and is pronounced differently than the northern Ohio city of the same name. One of the many tours the team went on while in Toledo was one of a cathedral that took more than 250 years to construct. The players and coaches were free to shop and explore in Madrid the rest of the day.

Aug. 4 marked the first game of the trip. Led by 20 points from sophomore center Kaleb Wesson, OSU beat the Madrid Generals, 93-61, in a gym (Pabellon Felipe Reyes Arena) with no air conditioning and the outside temperature reaching 100 degrees. OSU head coach Chris Holtmann deployed a

veteran-laden starting lineup of seniors C.J. Jackson and Joey Lane, juniors Micah Potter and Andre Wesson and graduate transfer Keyshawn Woods.

Kaleb Wesson said playing with his new teammates for the first time in a game setting was valuable.

"It was very different (playing) in a system," he said. "Open gym is a lot different than playing a real game with the coaching and everything. So playing in a system, it was really good to know what guys like to do and how they like to play."

Ohio State spent the next morning traveling from Madrid to Valencia, a coastal city where the Turia River meets the Mediterranean Sea. In the afternoon, the team was free to explore Valencia and its beaches, many doing so by canoeing or rid-

ing scooters that glide across the surface of the water. The squad did some sightseeing in Valencia the morning of Aug. 6 and had that afternoon to relax.

Ohio State played its second game of the trip on Aug. 7, defeating the Valencia All-Stars, 95-63, at L'Alqueria del Basket. Contrary to the Madrid Generals game, Holtmann went with a young starting lineup against the Valencia All-Stars. The coach gave the nod to freshman guards Luther Muhammad and Duane Washington, sophomore guard Musa Jallow, freshman forward Jaedon LeDee and Kaleb Wesson.

Washington led the club with 19 points, going 7 of 10 from the field and 3 of 3 from international three-point range, which is 22 feet and 1¾ inches from the basket compared to the collegiate distance of 20 feet and 9 inches. Sophomore forward Kyle Young totaled 11 points and a game-high nine rebounds. LeDee had 10 points and equaled Potter with eight boards.

"The game was good," Holtmann said after the contest. "I thought we played a team that played harder than the team we played the other night. They were a little more together than the team we played the other night – maybe not quite as talented. We had a lot of contributions from a lot of guys."

Aug. 8 was spent traveling from Valencia to Barcelona. Halfway through the five-hour trip, the team stopped for some swimming, snorkeling and lunch out on the Mediterranean Sea.

Ohio State played its final game in Spain on Aug. 9 against the Catalan All-Stars, who proved to be the toughest competition. Playing at Pavelló Esportiu Municipal, the Buckeyes fell behind by 14 points early and trailed by seven at halftime before opening the second half on a 14-5 run to take a 45-43 lead, their first of the game. The teams traded the lead down the stretch until Woods' bucket put Ohio State ahead for good at 66-65. Kaleb Wesson and Woods both made 1 of 2 foul shots in the final minute to seal the 68-66 victory for the Scarlet and Gray.

"We needed this adversity here before we got back to the States," said Woods, who transferred from Wake Forest this past spring. "If we can get down (big) in league play and come back and win the game, we did something – we did something bad early on – but we did something great in order to stick with it, in order for us to get the win."

Holtmann said that he was extremely pleased to see his club show resiliency.

"I think it's a good sign," he said. "I think we've got to continue to foster that. We didn't always play as smart as we needed to with some of the stuff we did, but what a great learning experience (because) we could have very easily lost this game. And we know we've got to play better once November rolls around or else it's going to be a very long season for the Buckeyes. So we're going to work really hard. This is great information to go off of."

On Aug. 10, the final day of the Spain trip, the Buckeyes took a walking tour of a Barcelona church commissioned in 1883 and had a farewell dinner on the beach.

## No. 1 Recruit In Iowa Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State bolstered its 2019 recruiting class on July 14 by landing a commitment from one of the best prospects in the country in Bettendorf, Iowa, five-star point guard DJ Carton.



Keyshawn Woods



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**OSU Basketball Verbal Commitments**

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

| Player         | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Stars | High School                       |
|----------------|------|-----|-----|-------|-----------------------------------|
| DJ Carton      | PG   | 6-1 | 189 | ★★★★★ | Bettendorf, Iowa                  |
| Alonzo Gaffney | SF   | 6-9 | 190 | ★★★★  | Wolfeboro (N.H.) Brewster Academy |

Carton, the No. 21 overall recruit and No. 2 floor general in the 247Sports composite, had nearly 20 scholarship offers before trimming his list to six in May and then to three on July 8, including the Buckeyes both times.

His high school head coach, Curtis Clark, told BSB that comfort was the supreme reason that OSU was the last school standing.

"I think he just felt like it was the right place for him and he felt at home," Clark said of Carton, who also mentioned Indiana and Michigan in his final three.

Carton announced his college decision a couple of days after taking an official visit to Ohio State on July 11 and 12. Some of the trip was spent at Zoombezi Bay, a waterpark located just north of Columbus, with players currently on the team.

"He said everything went well," Clark said of Carton's official. "He enjoyed the teammates. I think that was the big one for him. He felt like he connected well with the team."

Jackson, who's entering his third year at OSU after spending his freshman season on the junior college circuit at Eastern Florida State, said it's the players' responsibility to treat a recruit who's on an official visit like he's a teammate.

"We just try to make him feel like he's part of the team for that week," Jackson said July 17, three days after Carton committed. "So when they come in, we just want to make them feel how it would normally be and just put them with us for that short amount of time that they're there."

Carton received an offer from Ohio State on Dec. 19. A little more than two weeks later, Holtmann visited Bettendorf on Jan.

4 to watch a 6 a.m. practice before guiding the Buckeyes to a 92-81 victory over Iowa in Iowa City that night.

Clark noted that one of Holtmann's assistants, Mike Schrage, was the Buckeyes' lead recruiter for Carton. According to Clark, Schrage has visited multiple times to watch open gyms and spent the majority of his time on the recruiting trail talking to Carton.

Clark said OSU's approach to recruiting his star player played a significant role in how things unfolded.

"I think Coach Holtmann and Coach Schrage are as classy as they come," Clark said. "They're just easy to talk to and very down-to-earth, comfortable guys. You could tell they were very genuine in what they said. It wasn't something that they were just saying to try to get a recruit. It was genuine, and it was a good fit for him."

And according to Jae'Sean Tate, who completed his Ohio State basketball career this past March, Carton is an ideal fit for the Buckeyes.

"I remember playing with him on his visit here," said Tate, who was in Columbus on July 21 to watch the first round of The Basketball Tournament at Capital University. "I don't know if it was an official or unofficial, but I knew he was a good player. He fit right in to everything that we stood for. He's a great player. He was balling out on his visit."

Based on how Clark described Carton, it's easy to see why the student-athlete was coveted by so many schools.

"He's really a coach's dream in the sense of he's very unselfish," Clark said. "He's a true competitor, a guy whose only interest is winning. It doesn't have anything to do with

the individual. He's a humble kid, very likeable and, obviously, a phenomenal basketball player on top of that. I think those personal characteristics really separate him and made him as highly recruited as he was and why Ohio State will be very lucky to have him."

Carton, the No. 1 prepster in Iowa, joins four-star small forward Alonzo Gaffney, the top-rated player from the state of Ohio, in OSU's 2019 haul.

**Top Illinois Prospect Includes OSU In Top 5**

The Buckeyes have already secured the No. 1 prospects from Iowa and Ohio for their 2019 cycle and have a chance to do the same with the best that Illinois has to offer.

Belleville West four-star power forward E.J. Liddell released his top five schools via Twitter on Aug. 13, and Ohio State made the cut. Accompanying the Buckeyes on the list were Illinois, Kansas State, Missouri and Wisconsin.

Liddell, the No. 40 overall recruit and eighth best among those who play his position, narrowed his options from an offer list that included his top five and such programs as Connecticut, DePaul, Florida, Georgetown, Iowa, Iowa State, Louisville, Marquette, Purdue, Saint Louis and Texas A&M. Blue bloods Duke and North Carolina made a push for him as well.

The 6-7, 220-pound Liddell obtained an offer from Ohio State on Jan. 10 before Holtmann visited him about a month later on Feb. 13.

Belleville West head coach Joe Muniz told BSB that Holtmann's visit resonated with Liddell.

"Coach Holtmann doesn't get out much during the season – at least that's what he told me – and he flew down after practice one day to watch us play," Muniz said. "That was pretty much the third time he had been out all season, so that made an impression on E.J."

Holtmann made a return trip April 8 and was joined by assistant coach Ryan Pedon.

Liddell then visited Ohio State for the first time from June 8-11. He is expected to take

an official visit to OSU for the first weekend of September, which coincides with the football Buckeyes' season opener against Oregon State on Sept. 1. He is scheduled to take official visits to Missouri the weekend of Sept. 8, Kansas State the weekend of Sept. 29, Wisconsin the weekend of Oct. 6 and Illinois the weekend of Oct. 13.

Liddell is coming off a junior campaign in which he led Belleville West to its first state championship in school history and was named Mr. Basketball in Illinois and the Gatorade Illinois Player of the Year.

"He is extremely special," Muniz said of Liddell, who averaged 20.8 points and 8.2 rebounds per game and blocked 200 shots last season. "To do what he has done thus far in his career, taking our school to the heights he's taken it to in just the three years he's been here is unbelievable. The magnitude of him winning Mr. Basketball from southern Illinois – unfortunately, we don't get the same respect that the other schools up in Chicago do – so for him to do that is really, really impressive."

Liddell played on the Bradley Beal Elite squad this spring that went 11-5 in the Nike Elite Youth Basketball League. In those 16 contests, Liddell averaged 14.0 points, 5.9 rebounds and 1.6 blocks per game. He shot 51.7 percent from the floor (74 of 143) and 67.0 percent from the foul line (69 of 103).

Liddell then put on a strong showing at the National Basketball Players Association Top 100 Camp at the University of Virginia in June. He also competed in the prestigious Nike Skills Academy in Thousand Oaks, Calif., from Aug. 8-12 that featured 30 of the top high school players.

Liddell's timeline for when he'll make his college decision remains unclear, but Muniz did say the Buckeyes are doing their part to land him.

"Ohio State, like others, has done an outstanding job recruiting him," Muniz said. "Pedon keeps me up to date and sends me texts once in a while. But I do know they're in contact with him a lot."

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# OSU Loses Top Returning Scorer To Transfer

With a mass influx of new players on the way in for the 2018-19 season, the Ohio State women's basketball team expected plenty of change as the Buckeyes compensated for the collective loss felt from five graduated seniors.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Garrett Stepien

However, a recent departure served up somewhat of a surprise to OSU. Seven days before the fall semester was scheduled to start Aug. 21 in Columbus, fifth-year senior guard Sierra Calhoun's transfer to Rutgers became official Aug. 14 in an announcement by the Scarlet Knights.

"We are excited to welcome back Sierra back home to play for the Scarlet Knights," Rutgers head coach C. Vivian Stringer said in a statement. "Sierra has made herself known as a tremendous three-point shooter and has the ability to score like (recent graduate) Tyler Scaife. Her ball handling is tight, you can isolate her and she can still post it up. She is a prolific scorer who can do it all. Sierra is an WNBA-caliber player reminiscent of some of our great local talent that we have signed in the past such as Essence Carson, Epiphanny Prince and Kia Vaughn. We are excited that the likes of Sierra and (redshirt sophomore guard) Arella Guirantes from the New York area

have chosen to come back home and play for the Scarlet Knights."

Originally from Brooklyn, N.Y., Calhoun came to Ohio State from Duke after the 2014-15 campaign when she averaged 10.1 points in 13 games. Calhoun sat out the 2015-16 season due to NCAA transfer rules, going on to average 10.5 points while starting all 70 games from 2016-18 with the Buckeyes. With 11.6 points per game in 2017-18, the 6-0 guard was going to be OSU's top returning scorer for 2018-19.

More importantly, perhaps, is Calhoun's perimeter presence after she paced OSU in three-point shooting at 38.6 percent in 2016-17 and followed in 2017-18 with a second-best mark at 35.8 percent. While she makes a homecoming of sorts to the New York metropolitan area – Calhoun starred at Middle Village (N.Y.) Christ the King as a McDonald's, Parade Magazine and WBCA All-American in high school – her move leaves Ohio State without a proven scorer and outside shooter.

However, head coach Kevin McGuff knew Calhoun's move was a possibility. In fact, he added, her options went beyond the eventual switch across the Big Ten.

"At the end of the year, she wanted to look around at other options," McGuff told BSB of Calhoun. "She included potentially transferring to a different school or even going pro, but she decided to go to Rutgers.

"I wish her all the best and I hope it works out for her. I hope she does great except for when they play us, but she's a nice kid and we never had any problems with her.

"I think she could have been good here, but she wanted to try another school. So that's fine. I wish her all the best. I hope it works out for her."

### The Freshman Four

Despite the departure of Calhoun, McGuff remains optimistic about the direction of Ohio State as the Buckeyes inch closer to the 2018-19 season.

When BSB went to press, the roster featured 12 players. Among them were three freshmen, four returnees and five graduate transfers.

The trio of freshmen – 6-3 forward Aaliyah Patty, 5-10 guard Janai Crooms and 6-4 forward Dorka Juhasz – have impressed McGuff and OSU's staff since they arrived in June.

"I really, really like our freshmen," McGuff said. "Janai Crooms is a really versatile guard. She's one of the best passers I've ever seen at that age. She does a great job of making other people better.

"Aaliyah Patty's kind of a versatile post player. She can play a little bit of around the basket, but also away.

"And then I really like Dorka, who comes from Hungary. She's big, she's tall, she's strong – but she's a very, very unique post player in that she can really shoot the ball from the perimeter. There's just not a lot of people her size that can do that, so I'm really excited about her as well."

Ohio State is also expected to add 6-2 freshman forward Aixa Wone, who committed May 23 to the Buckeyes. A team spokesperson told BSB that the Barcelona, Spain, native has been admitted to OSU. However, as of Aug. 15, the team spokesperson said Wone was still in the process of working through the logistics of getting over to the United States for enrollment.

### Graduate Transfers Galore

While the freshmen have their entire careers ahead of them to develop, Ohio State will need immediate production from the bunch. To help ease the transition, though, the Buckeyes brought in a slew of graduate transfers.

From the middle of the 2017-18 season to the later months of the summer, OSU collected five fifth-year guards with immediate eligibility for the 2018-19 campaign. Ball State's Carmen Grande (5-8), Cleveland State's Ashanti Abshaw (5-9), Bowling Green's Carly Santoro (5-10), LaSalle's Adreana Miller (5-11) and Pacific's Najah Queenland (5-10) bring Ohio State options on both ends of the floor with proven experience at their respective stops.

Some were by design for McGuff and his staff, while others he came across at the right time and in the right place as the

Buckeyes navigate the talents spread out across the 2019 cycle.

"It was a little bit of both, but it was kind of by design just with the way the recruiting fell," McGuff said. "This 2019 class is really good, so we wanted to make sure we had enough available scholarships for that. When you take a fifth-year, it obviously doesn't count against what you're trying to do in terms of recruiting because they'll only be there one year and they're not going to take up scholarships for that class. So that was the thing and now we've just got to make sure that we get the right kids in."

### Rounding Out The Roster

Only four players remain from OSU's 2017-18 roster, which featured 11 athletes. After the graduations of Kelsey Mitchell, Stephanie Mavunga, Linnae Harper and Asia Doss, McGuff confirmed to BSB that Mitchell's twin sister, Chelsea, also will not return to the team for 2018-19. Chelsea Mitchell had one year of eligibility remaining, but she left the program midway through last year to focus on academics and will focus on completing her degree.

After the attrition, fifth-year senior forward Makayla Waterman leads Ohio State despite zero starts in the 32 games she played during the past season. As a key cog in the rotation, though, the 6-2 Waterman produced in a versatile role with averages of 3.5 points and 3.8 rebounds off the bench.

McGuff and the Buckeyes now look for her to take another step along with junior guard Jensen Caretti (6-1), who posted 2.4 points per game and shot 42.9 percent (9 for 21) from deep in 8.7 minutes averaged in 29 contests.

The duo of sophomore forward Savitha Jayaraman (6-2) and senior guard Karlie Cronin (5-10), who went from walk-on to scholarship players halfway through the 2017-18 campaign, round out OSU's roster as they each remain on scholarship.

McGuff is aware of the challenges ahead for Ohio State, but he believes the Buckeyes have enough talent and experience scattered throughout their personnel to chase another successful season once the chemistry develops.

"It's different for me because I haven't had that (turnover)," McGuff said. "I think we can have a really good team this year. I think it's just a matter of how quickly we can come together. With a lot of new pieces and a lot of new people, that's the thing – just how quickly can we come together? So I think we'll be good early and win some games, but I think that our best basketball will just logically progress through the year as we get to spend more time together and kind of develop chemistry and so forth."

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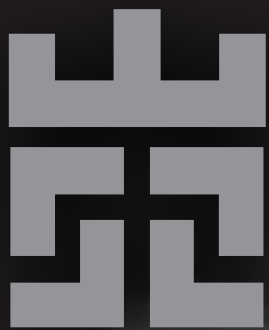
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# BUCKEYE BRIEFS

## Women's Soccer Opens With 2 Losses

After a pair of exhibition games against Indiana and Pittsburgh, the Ohio State women's soccer team kicked off its regular season with losses at Duke and at North Carolina on Aug. 16 and 19, respectively. The Buckeyes fell to both teams by scores of 2-0.

In the season opener at Koskinen Stadium in Durham, N.C., No. 23 Ohio State and third-ranked Duke played a scoreless first half before the Blue Devils tallied twice in the second frame.

Duke (1-0-0) got on the board when Mackenzie Pluck delivered a strike from the top of the penalty area past OSU senior goalkeeper Devon Kerr, who recorded five saves in the loss. Taylor Racioppi sealed it in the 81st minute when she tapped home a deflection.

The Buckeyes (0-1-0) turned up the pressure in the final 10 minutes after Racioppi's score but could not get a ball over the line.

For the game, Duke outshot Ohio State, 16-8, including an 8-2 margin in the first half. The Buckeyes also were on the short end of corner kicks (7-3). Freshman forward Kayla Fischer led OSU with three shots.

"I think we did some really nice things defensively in the first half and clearly frustrated Duke and what they were attempting to do," said Ohio State head coach Lori Walker-Hock. "We were asking players who have not played in specific positions to move and play in some new roles, and I think they stepped up and did a really nice job. We aren't happy with the results, but we'll learn a lot from this. We need to play faster and stay connected. As a team, we'll take this experience and move forward."

Ohio State then made the trip to Chapel Hill, N.C., to face the No. 6 Tar Heels at Finley Soccer Complex three days later.

The Buckeyes came up empty on two quality scoring chances before the Tar Heels notched the first goal of the match. Fischer nearly headed one in on a free kick from senior midfielder Arden Holden in the 17th minute, but UNC keeper Samantha Leshnak was there for the save. Less than 10 minutes later, senior midfielder Sarah Roberts boot-ed one from long range that skipped into Leshnak's arms.

# BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

## FOOTBALL

**Sept. 1** OREGON STATE, Noon; **8** RUTGERS, 3:30 p.m.; **15** vs. TCU at Arlington, Texas, 8 p.m.; **22** TULANE, TBA; **29** at Penn State, TBA.

**Oct. 6** INDIANA (Homecoming), 3:30 OR 4 p.m.; **13** MINNESOTA, TBA; **20** at Purdue, TBA.

**Nov. 3** NEBRASKA, TBA; **10** at Michigan State, TBA; **17** at Maryland, TBA; **24** MICHIGAN, Noon.

**Dec. 1** Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis, 8 p.m.

## CROSS COUNTRY

**Sept. 1** Queen City Invitational at Highland Heights, Ky.; **8** Golden Eagle Invitational at Cookeville, Tenn.; **15** Commodore Classic at Nashville, Tenn.; **29** Loyola Lakefront Invitational at Chicago.

**Oct. 13** Pre-Nationals at Madison, Wis.; **28** Big Ten Championships at Lincoln, Neb.

**Nov. 9** NCAA Regionals at Terre Haute, Ind.; **17** NCAA Championships at Madison, Wis.

## FIELD HOCKEY

**Aug. 17** at Ohio (exhibition); **20** MICHIGAN (exhibition); **24** DELAWARE, 4 p.m.; **26** at Louisville, 1 p.m.

**Sept. 1** vs. Maine at Boston, 6 p.m.; **3** at Boston University, 1 p.m.; **7** BALL STATE, 4 p.m.; **9** LEHIGH, 1 p.m.; **14** PENN STATE, 4 p.m.; **16** MIAMI (OHIO),

1 p.m.; **21** at Maryland, 1 p.m.; **23** at Rutgers, 1 p.m.; **28** INDIANA, 4 p.m.; **30** IOWA, Noon.

**Oct. 5** at Northwestern, 3 p.m.; **7** OHIO, 1 p.m.; **12** JAMES MADISON, 4 p.m.; **14** at Kent State, Noon; **19** MICHIGAN STATE, 3 p.m.; **21** MICHIGAN, Noon.

## MEN'S SOCCER

**Aug. 24** WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. FURMAN, 7 p.m.; **26** WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. HOFSTRA, 2:30 p.m.; **31** Dayton Classic vs. Marshall, 5 p.m.

**Sept. 2** Dayton Classic vs. Milwaukee, Noon; **7** USF, 7:30 p.m.; **11** BOWLING GREEN, 7 p.m.; **16** at Penn State, 1 p.m.; **21** NORTHWESTERN, 7:30 p.m.; **25** at Michigan, 7 p.m.; **30** RUTGERS, Noon.

**Oct. 5** CLEVELAND STATE, 7 p.m.; **8** at Syracuse, 7 p.m.; **12** MICHIGAN STATE, 5 p.m.; **16** KENTUCKY, 7 p.m.; **19** at Maryland, 7 p.m.; **24** INDIANA, 7 p.m.; **28** at Wisconsin, 4 p.m.

## WOMEN'S SOCCER

### (0-2-0)

**Aug. 9** at Indiana (exhibition); **12** PITTSBURGH (exhibition); **16** at (3) Duke, L 2-0; **19** at (6) North Carolina, L 2-0; **24** at Florida, 7 p.m.; **26** DUQUESNE, 7 p.m.; **30** MOREHEAD STATE, 7 p.m.

**Sept. 2** at Notre Dame, 1 p.m.; **7** FLORIDA GULF COAST, 5 p.m.; **14** at Penn State, 6 p.m.; **20** at Illinois, 8

p.m.; **23** at Northwestern, 1 p.m.; **27** IOWA, 7 p.m.; **30** NEBRASKA, 2:30 p.m.

**Oct. 5** at Michigan, 7 p.m.; **7** at Michigan State, 1 p.m.; **12** RUTGERS, 7:30 p.m.; **14** MARYLAND, 2 p.m.; **18** at Purdue, 6 p.m.; **21** WISCONSIN, 2 p.m.

## WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

**Aug. 24** ALBANY, 7 p.m.; **25** OHIO, 12:30 p.m.; TEXAS A&M, 8 p.m.; **31** vs. Southern Miss at Oxford, Miss., 1 p.m.; at Ole Miss, 7:30 p.m.

**Sept. 1** vs. Samford at Oxford, Miss., 12:30 p.m.; **7** vs. Princeton at Towson, Md., 4 p.m.; **8** vs. Missouri at Towson, Md., 11 a.m.; at Towson, 4:30 p.m.; **14** vs. Evansville at Dayton, 3 p.m.; **15** vs. Tennessee at Dayton, 10:30 a.m.; at Dayton, 7 p.m.; **19** at Wisconsin, 7 p.m.; **22** PENN STATE, TBA; **26** INDIANA, 7 p.m.; **29** at Maryland, 7 p.m.

**Oct. 5** at Rutgers, 7 p.m.; **6** at Penn State, 7 p.m.; **12** MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; **14** MICHIGAN STATE, 1 p.m.; **19** at Indiana, 7 p.m.; **20** at Purdue, 7 p.m.; **24** NEBRASKA, 7 p.m.; **28** at Northwestern, 2 p.m.

**Nov. 2** ILLINOIS, 7 p.m.; **4** NORTHWESTERN, 1 p.m.; **7** at Michigan State, 7 p.m.; **10** MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **16** WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; **17** MINNESOTA, 7 p.m.; **23** at Nebraska, 8 p.m.; **24** at Iowa, 8 p.m.

North Carolina took a 1-0 lead in the 37th minute when Brianna Pinto bent a free kick from just outside the penalty area into the upper left corner of the goal. The Tar Heels added a goal in the 58th minute on a header inside the right post by Bridgette

Andrzejewski. UNC (2-0-0) registered 23 shots for the game compared to OSU's four, all of which came in the first half. Kerr had eight saves for the Buckeyes (0-2-0).

"I'm so proud of our squad and the fight that they showed," Walker-Hock said. "One of the challenges of playing against

North Carolina is how deep they can go on their bench, and I think we showed a lot of class, were able to dig down deep and a lot of players played 90 minutes. We'll take a lot from this game, and it'll make us stronger. We'd love to have another crack at North Carolina or Duke again, and hopefully we'll be in contention to see that in November."

Before the beginning of the season, the Buckeyes won their exhibition games against Indiana and Pittsburgh, although no official stats were available.

After the losses to Duke and North Carolina, Ohio State was set to play Florida in Gainesville, Fla., on Aug. 24. The Buckeyes' home opener is scheduled for Aug. 26 against Duquesne at 7 p.m.

## 3 Field Hockey Players Make B1G Honors List

The Big Ten announced its field hockey preseason honors list Aug. 20, and a trio of Buckeyes made the cut. Junior Esther Clotet and seniors Casey Cole and Kelsey Nolan were all recognized by the conference heading into the 2018 season.

Clotet, who garnered preseason honors in 2017, was Ohio State's second leading scorer last season with five goals while also collecting three assists for a total of 13 points. A native of Barcelona, Spain, Clotet started 17 games last season and notched three game-winning goals.

Cole, from Nuangola, Pa., enters her senior season having played in all 55 games of her Ohio State career and starting in



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## BRIEFS

54. She tied for fourth-most points on the team last season, scoring two goals and two assists for six points. Both goals were game winners.

Nolan, a native of Lancaster, Pa., played in all 19 games last season, totaling one goal on 12 shots.

After two preseason scrimmages against Ohio and Michigan, the Buckeyes were set to open their regular season at home against Delaware on Aug. 24 at 4 p.m.

### Dennis To Be Inducted Into Hall of Fame

It was announced on Aug. 7 that Karen Dennis, Ohio State director of track and field and cross country, will be inducted into the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Coaches Hall of Fame.

Dennis and the five other coaches in this year's class will be honored at the 2018 USTFCCCA Coaches Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on Dec. 18 at the group's convention in San Antonio.

Dennis started her Ohio State coaching career by becoming an assistant for the men's and women's track and field programs in 2003. She then took over as head coach of women's track and field in 2006. In 2014, Dennis became the director of track and field and cross country and led the Buckeyes to 37 individual Big Ten titles, 31 first-team All-America honors and an NCAA individual event title.

This past season, Dennis guided the men's track team to an indoor-outdoor conference sweep, becoming the first woman to do so in Big Ten history. Also this past season, she became the first female coach to be named the Men's Big Ten Outdoor Coach of the Year and the Men's Big Ten Indoor Coach of the Year.

Dennis is the second Ohio State coach to be inducted into the USTFCCCA Coaches Hall of Fame, as Larry Snyder was a special inductee in 2009.

The USTFCCCA Coaches Hall of Fame was started in 1995 and recognizes coaches who have brought great distinction to themselves, to their institutions and to cross country and track and field.

### Big Ten TV Schedule Set

On Aug. 1, the Big Ten released its fall TV schedule, and a total of 81 games in four sports are to be televised on the Big Ten Network, Fox Sports 1 or ESPN. The TV schedule includes a total of eight Ohio State games slated to be broadcast on BTN throughout the fall. Those broadcasts include men's and women's soccer, field hockey and women's volleyball.

The first Ohio State game scheduled to be televised this fall is the women's volleyball match at Wisconsin on Sept. 19 at 7 p.m. The women's volleyball team will have a total of three televised games this fall, with the second contest being the home game against Indiana on Sept. 26 at 7 p.m. The Buckeyes also will be on BTN when they host Nebraska on Oct. 24 at 7 p.m.

The Ohio State field hockey team will have two games televised on BTN. The first is a meeting at Rutgers on Sept. 23 at 1 p.m., followed by an Oct. 21 game at Michigan that will start at noon.

The Ohio State men's soccer team will have just one game televised, which will be when it hosts Rutgers on Sept. 30 at noon.

The Ohio State women's soccer team will have a pair of televised games this fall, starting with a game at Purdue on Oct. 18 at 6 p.m. The final Ohio State matchup to be televised this fall is the Buckeyes' home game against Wisconsin on Oct. 21 at 2 p.m.

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# Buckeyes Have Depth Of Talent Needed For A Run

Like at the beginning of any football season, there are questions, concerns and some doubts about the team that will take the field in the season opener. Some positions are up for grabs, and – barring injury – many are already locked down.

## COACH'S CORNER With Bill Conley

Fortunately for the Ohio State Buckeyes, there is plenty of returning and incoming talent to give everyone in the fan base a very optimistic attitude going into the 2018 season. There are high standards and high expectations each and every year for the Ohio State football team, and this upcoming fall is no exception.

The Big Ten East is considered by many football analysts to be the very toughest division in all of college football, even tougher than the SEC West. The Buckeye faithful anticipate Ohio State will win that division, take the Big Ten title and even make a run for the national title.

None of these things are out of the question, but we all know it has to be earned on the field. There is definitely plenty of talent, an outstanding coaching staff and a schedule that gives the men of the Scarlet and Gray a chance to accomplish all of those lofty goals. The mood is very positive, despite the recent Zach Smith controversy and Urban Meyer's forced leave of absence, for this year's squad to excel.

### Offensive Breakdown

The speed and athleticism of Buckeye skilled positions is exceptional. The number of potential big-play running backs and wide receivers has never been greater. The talent and breakaway threat of J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber is a two-headed nightmare for opposing defenses. There should be plenty of carries for both of these running backs in 2018 since J.T. Barrett is gone and the quarterback position will not be expected to keep drives alive with the read option and designed quarterback runs.

Also expect to see the speedy slot backs and receivers get involved with the running attack

by coming around on counters, reverses and jet sweeps to keep the defenses honest in terms of defending the perimeter.

It would not be shocking to see more two-back sets in the Ohio State offensive arsenal this season with Dobbins and Weber on the field at the same time. In that way the offensive coaches can take advantage of their talents as runners and coming-out-of-the-backfield receivers knowing that every time they touch the ball is an opportunity for one of those big plays.

It's hard to imagine any college in the nation having more depth at the wide receiver position than Ohio State. There are possession receivers who have the sure hands to keep the chains moving, thus sustaining drives. There are speed receivers who can run by corners and safeties to make the big play. There are those courageous receivers and slotbacks who are reliable at catching the football over the middle in heavy traffic areas between linebackers and in front of safeties, and those receivers who are very talented at making those ever-important yards after the catch.

Of course there are wideouts who possess more than one of these skills. The Buckeyes have nine or 10 players at the wide receiver position who can contribute to the success of the offense. The coaching staff has to be smart in determining which combination of receivers is best and which ones a first-year starting quarterback has confidence in in terms of route running and timing. Whether it's Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin, K.J. Hill or Johnnie Dixon and company, one thing is for certain: The receiver position is deep and talented. The key is to identify the right formula and rotation to achieve maximum efficiency.

Everyone knows that a major key to offensive success is the offensive line – the horses up front. More than any other position, the offensive line is a work in progress and process. It is rare for a great offensive line to just emerge. It usually takes at least two seasons for an offensive lineman at the collegiate level to gain the expertise to perform at a high level.

Besides the obvious of being physical enough, offensive linemen must understand defenses, recognize blitzes and make decisions quickly. Physical strength and agility are important, but an offensive lineman must play

with absolute confidence as well as having trust in the abilities of his teammates up front. For an offense to run and pass the ball successfully, the offensive line must be highly skilled and efficient.

This year's offensive line has playing time experience in players like Isaiah Prince and Michael Jordan, and the coaches have shown confidence in Branden Bowen and Thayer Munford, but the big hurdle is replacing center Billy Price. Brady Taylor and Josh Myers are competing for the starting position, but don't be surprised if you see Jordan taking a few snaps along the way.

Luke Farrell is expected to be the starting tight end, but freshman Jeremy Ruckert is turning heads in practice. A team can't have too many versatile athletes at tight end. Today's tight ends can be used as fullbacks for lead blocks, edge blockers for perimeter runs and of course as a receiving threat. The question is not so much who the cast of characters will be as much as what role will that position play in a restructured offense that suits the talents of its quarterback and offensive philosophy.

### The Haskins Era Begins

Dwayne Haskins has the spot, and now it's time to perform. Haskins really proved himself as a guy who can come off the sideline and lead his team. He even took his team from a six-point deficit against its archrivals to an 11-point victory in the second half last November.

It's a new role for him this fall. He's the guy that's in command of the offense as the starting quarterback, and that is indeed different. He has shown the possibilities of being an excellent field general.

Haskins has many of the fundamentals quarterback coaches look for at the position like a strong arm and a quick release. Technically he has proved he belongs, but the intangibles are the true measure of a great quarterback.

One of the key qualities, and arguably the most important, of a successful quarterback is decision making. Haskins has passed that test as a backup. Now can he do it on a regular basis when the bullets are flying in the heat of battle? He doesn't have to prove himself a superstar in week one, and the coaching staff's job is to

give him a chance to grow and gain confidence progressively.

There is a great supporting cast of players who can help Haskins and the offense be successful. The lack of depth at the position puts added heat on him to get the job done, but I truly believe the Ohio State coaching staff and even Buckeye fans will have patience with his development. Dwayne Haskins has plenty of pressure on him, but that pressure can help him become an outstanding quarterback in the Big Ten conference.

### Defensive Breakdown

Five starters return for the Buckeyes on the defensive side of the football. That doesn't mean, however, the cupboard is bare. Even though the NFL was again the big winner in drafting and signing a talented group of Ohio State defenders, there are enough big-time players still on the roster along with talented freshmen to step to the forefront. The Buckeye defense that ended up sixth in the nation against the run and ninth in total defense shows no signs of being any less stingy than last season.

It is true that the Ohio State defense can get better against the pass. Last season the Buckeyes gave up just under 200 yards in the air per game for a national ranking of 30th and were only plus-five in the turnover margin.

Despite losing Jalyn Holmes, Tyquan Lewis and Sam Hubbard, the defensive line will once again be the unit that sets the standard for excellence for the entire defense. Anchored by All-World defensive end Nick Bosa, arguably the best pass rusher in all of college football, the defensive front will be big, physical and athletic. Bosa, along with players like Dre'Mont Jones and Chase Young, should allow the unit to be dominant against the run and put fear in the eyes of dropback quarterbacks.

An area of legitimate concern may be the linebacking corps. Run-stopping middle linebacker Tuf Borland is still recovering from an Achilles injury that kept him out of spring practice, but the outside 'backers have some proven talent in juniors Malik Harrison and Keandre Jones. Sophomore Baron Browning, used sparingly last season, proved to be a special player with an extremely bright future at linebacker. Look for some those incoming freshmen to add to depth at that position.

The quickness and athleticism of the linebackers are exceptional, but they must be solid against opposing running attacks and better in 2018 against the pass than last season. Look for improvement in underneath coverage and collisioning of vertical receivers by the linebacking unit this season.

For the first time in several years, the Buckeye secondary will have some experience in terms of playing time. No. 4 NFL pick Denzel Ward is gone, but Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield return at the cornerback position. Also look for Jeffrey Okudah to be in the rotation. Safeties Jordan Fuller and Isaiah Pryor are the likely starters, but some solid backups will be necessary to secure the position and be used on special teams units.

The Ohio State secondary shows all the signs of a sound and steady unit in terms of coverage and open-field tackling. What they need to prove is they can be big-play makers by going up and getting the interception, especially in critical situations.

*Known as one of the top recruiters in college football, Bill Conley is a national championship-winning coach and player at Ohio State who suited up for Woody Hayes and spent 17 years on the staffs of Earle Bruce, John Cooper and Jim Tressel.*

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**"Your Head to Toe Buckeye Source"**

# Troubling Report Showed Wrongdoing By Meyer

Well, that was odd.

One of the strangest days in recent Ohio State football history capped one of the strangest months in Ohio State football history, ending with a three-game suspension for Buckeye coach Urban Meyer.

Depending on whom you talk to, it was either a slap on the wrist or completely undeserved.

## THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

As with most things, the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

By now everyone knows all of the sordid details of this saga, the back-and-forth social media journalism rivalries that uncovered nugget after nugget – most having nothing to do with anything, but lapped up just the same.

The investigative committee charged with sorting out this mess was about as thorough as could be expected, especially given the fact they worked under the confines of a self-imposed 14-day deadline. They talked to numerous people – including Meyer, athletic director Gene Smith, former receivers coach Zach Smith and his ex-wife, Courtney Smith – as well as examined text messages and emails. Their conclusions were that Meyer did not violate any contractual policies but did mismanage his handling of Zach Smith, allowing him to stay on staff despite numerous red flags.

The result determined by Ohio State was a three-game suspension without pay, which means Meyer won't be around the team at all until after Sept. 2, won't coach a game until after TCU and won't receive any money until Sept. 16. He's forgoing six weeks of salary in total, or well over half a million dollars. I don't care how much you make, that's not pocket change.

There were definitely some troubling things uncovered by the committee, including the fact that Meyer's phone appeared to be devoid of text messages older than a year, not coincidentally around the same time a staffer told him that the phone's settings could be adjusted to get rid of messages older than one year. The committee could not prove that Meyer did anything shady in that aspect, but it does seem odd that it was talked about prior and then shown to have retained only messages a year old or newer.

Also troubling was the committee's determination that "We learned that coach Meyer sometimes had significant memory issues in other situations where he had prior extensive knowledge of events." The issues were attributed to medication Meyer takes, which sometimes impairs his memory and focus. Even taking the committee at its word, this one seems a bit hard to swallow.

And then there's Zach Smith.

Where to start? There were spending issues, an OVI (which he never informed Meyer about), an affair with a staffer, sex toys ordered and delivered to the offices at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. In short, a ton of reasons why Smith could have been fired and no one would have batted an eye. There were also the domestic violence claims, though only an incident in 2009 while Smith was an assistant at Florida under Meyer has been confirmed by all parties. Meyer repeatedly talked to Smith about his behavior, warning him that if it happened again he would be fired. But he never did, and that's concerning. Did he

keep him on because he was a top recruiter? Because the receivers seemed to play hard for him? Because he was Earle Bruce's grandson, and Bruce was the man who helped Meyer break into the coaching profession?

Probably all of the above.

Although loyalty is to be commended, at some point you have to take a step back and ask yourself if it's worth it. Is the stain on your reputation and that of your university worth keeping such a troubled guy on staff? Meyer apparently thought so, at least until Smith got slapped with a protection order. At that point he was fired. That was July 23. The same day, a story by Brett McMurphy ran alleging that Smith had been arrested for domestic violence (which was untrue), and Meyer was asked at the Big Ten Media Days, "the 2015 reported incident ... are you saying you don't know anything about that, or do you believe that didn't happen?" Meyer said, "I can't say it didn't happen because I wasn't there. I was never told about anything, never anything came to light, I've never had a conversation about it. So I know nothing about that."

He then doubled down – a crucial mistake – and uttered the infamous "There's nothing. I don't know who creates a story like that."

The committee said it accepted that Meyer was "deeply absorbed" in football season and wanted to focus on football on that day. They kind of gave him a pass, saying he misspoke, but that the reasons were complex and that, in their view, Meyer did not deliberately lie. He definitely came off looking bad and should have said something to the effect of "we have let Zach Smith go due to an accumulation of things." If asked to expand upon that, about the domestic violence incident specifically, he could have said he was aware of it, did what he was obligated to do and didn't want to talk any further about it as it was a personnel matter. But he didn't.

He had a second chance, a chance to make it right, at the end of the Aug. 22 press conference. He was asked what he would say to Courtney Smith. His response was that he was "sorry we are in this situation." It seemed obvious he did not believe her, and maybe he had reason not to. There were never charges, and the committee even hinted that no incident could be confirmed in 2015, referring to it throughout the report as "allegations." The facts at hand can be debated, but his statement cannot be. In a situation like that one, even if you're skeptical, be a bigger man and show some compassion for the victim. Don't come off like a petulant kid, because that's what you looked like.

All of those things can be examined up, down and sideways, and different people will have different feelings.

What cannot be disputed is that Meyer acted properly in reporting his concerns about Zach Smith to his superiors. The committee said as much, though added he should have done more and gone to Compliance. That seems odd, considering Compliance has no jurisdiction over these kinds of matters. Compliance deals with Title IX and NCAA violations, and this was neither.

The committee concluded the following:

*"Although neither Urban Meyer nor Gene Smith condoned or covered up the alleged domestic abuse by Zach Smith, they failed to take sufficient management action relating to Zach Smith's misconduct and retained an Assistant Coach who was not performing as an appropriate role model for OSU student-athletes. Permitting such misconduct to continue is not consistent with the values of the University and reflects poorly on Coach Meyer, Athletic Director Smith, and the University."*

So if Meyer did not violate his contract, he could not be fired – at least not with cause. OSU could have terminated him without cause but would have owed him \$38 million in the process. That's a hefty price to pay someone to go away. The committee did chide him for his handling of Smith, of keeping him on staff despite repeated missteps, which is more than fair. Thus, the suspension.

If naysayers want to cast aspersions on the committee or on Ohio State, that's a "they" problem, not an Urban Meyer problem. People don't get to choose their version of reality, though they often do. Quick rushes to judgment, even if the facts prove otherwise. They will stick to their original ideas and blast the process, or ignore them altogether. If people want to throw shade at Meyer, that's fine – as long as they have something to back their argument.

We've seen this recently – the misguided Tennessee fans who torpedoed Greg Schiano's hire because they believed that he was tied to the Jerry Sandusky pedophile scandal at Penn State, even if no tangible evidence of that exists. They got vocal and UT backed away, ultimately hiring Jeremy Pruitt away from Alabama.

The fact that this whole thing has devolved into a soap opera, a fencing match of dodge-and-parry statements, is sad. Prurient reports about things that have nothing to do with the investigation are released just so a reporter can stay relevant. That's where journalism has gone.

Even though Meyer was retained, there are no winners here, at least not in the short term.

OSU will take a PR hit nationally, though that doesn't bother me too much because local approval matters much more than anything the outsiders say. The only way it becomes an issue is if recruiting suffers, and at the moment that does not appear to be the case.

Journalism hasn't won because it has sunk to the lowest common denominator, with a few exceptions.

Fans haven't won because they've been painted with a broad brush.

The sport hasn't won because too many people have been talking about off-field issues instead of battles for the starting quarterback job.

All of that said, at least the situation is no longer a distraction. The Buckeyes and Meyer know where they stand and can begin planning for the season.

It will be interesting to see not only how the Buckeyes play in week four vs Tulane but how Meyer comports himself going forward. While the press conference was botched – in fact both press conferences – there is a real chance to shape a new legacy, to make people forget about this blip in time.

Meyer has remade himself once before. Can he do it again?

For the sake of his career, he will have to.

### Big Ten Breakdown

Fans of the Big Ten will be as thrilled and as mystified in 2018 as they would be by a great detective novel. There is a ton of intrigue and a mountain of uncertainty before settling for a somewhat expected ending.

- **Ohio State** won't cede its throne easily, though there is a bit of concern about a rebuilt secondary and a new man under center. Dwayne Haskins has the keys to the Buckeyes' ride now, and the coaches are optimistic that he will give the passing game a dynamic addition. But look for OSU to ride its talented 1-2 tailback punch of J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber to success. The defensive line is

one of the best anywhere, and the schedule is mostly manageable.

- **Penn State** coach James Franklin has been a tireless recruiter in his time in State College, and that could finally pay off as he has his most talented team – but a demanding schedule. With Trace McSorley, the league's best quarterback, showing the way, and an aggressive, athletic defense – not to mention getting OSU, Michigan State and Wisconsin at home – Penn State could be an outside threat for the College Football Playoff.

- **Michigan** needs to make hay now, and fortunately for Jim Harbaugh it's his most talented team. There may finally be a quarterback who can put pressure on a defense in Ole Miss transfer Shea Patterson. The defense will once again be lethal, with elite players at each level.

- **Michigan State** needs to become a bit more offensive-minded if it really wants to challenge for East Division supremacy. Quarterback Brian Lewerke is an excellent field general but isn't asked to win games. That may change this year if the defense doesn't live up to expectations.

- It's still **Wisconsin** and all of the others in the West, but the gap is closing thanks to the infusion of new coaching blood at Nebraska (Scott Frost) and second-year bosses at Purdue (Jeff Brohm) and Minnesota (PJ Fleck). The Badgers feature, as usual, a mammoth offensive line and ground game led by Heisman candidate Jonathan Taylor. Wisconsin will grind foes into the ground and may be more deliberate this season as a typically stout defense returns just four starters.

- One of the old guard coaches – Pat Fitzgerald – has **Northwestern** primed as Wisconsin's biggest divisional threat. If quarterback Clayton Thorson is healthy after an ACL injury suffered in last year's bowl game, the Wildcats should be fast out of the gate. They open on the road with Purdue so will need to be focused on the get-go.

- **Iowa** has its typical blue-collar team, though the combo of quarterback Nathan Stanley to tight end Noah Fant will be heard more than a few times this fall. The defense may drop just a notch as only six starters return.

- **Purdue** could be a better team this year, but it might not be reflected in the record as it tackles Ohio State, Michigan State and Wisconsin, as well as a non-league test with Missouri. The offense returns nine, but the defense has only four returnees, though linebacker Markus Bailey is an all-league talent.

- Frost's homecoming to Lincoln could be bumpy, but expect **Nebraska** to win a game it shouldn't – and lose one it shouldn't. A quarterback battle that will extend into fall camp isn't the best thing, but the defense should be good with eight starters back and a new, more aggressive coordinator in Erik Chinander, Frost's DC at UCF.

**Big Ten Championship Game:** Ohio State over Wisconsin.

**Postseason:** Cotton Bowl – Ohio State vs. Alabama (College Football Playoff semifinal); Rose Bowl – Penn State; Citrus Bowl – Wisconsin; Outback Bowl – Michigan; Holiday Bowl – Michigan State; Music City Bowl – Northwestern; Pinstripe Bowl – Iowa; Quick Lane Bowl – Nebraska; First Responder Bowl – Purdue.

**Offensive Player Of The Year:** Trace McSorley, Penn State; **Defensive Player Of The Year:** Nick Bosa, Ohio State; **Coach Of The Year:** Pat Fitzgerald, Northwestern; **Freshman Of The Year:** Micah Parsons, Penn State.

# Ohio State's Football Reputation Still Among The Best

Stepping back for a moment before the 2018 football season begins, it really is amazing to see how Ohio State's football reputation has risen over the last few years under Urban Meyer, or even going back to Jim Tressel's national championship in 2002.

This could not have been imagined in 2001.

## EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Ohio State has a new quarterback. As usual, a number of last year's key players are gone, beginning NFL careers. Yet, as a matter of routine, Ohio State is right in the middle of the conversation for a national championship.

That reminder showed up recently in my email inbox from the online betting service Bovada, which promotes its service to the media with regular emails sharing odds on any number of interesting sports topics.

Ohio State, at least as of Aug. 9 and with Meyer still on paid administrative leave from the team, had the third-lowest odds in the country to win the national championship.

At 8-to-1, the Buckeyes were behind only Alabama at 7-to-4 and Clemson at 11-to-2.

This has become a matter of routine in recent years, and not just because of the expectations of football experts looking at the season ahead. The odds are set to balance the betting money. So what the odds say is that not only do a lot of people think Ohio State is a good bet to contend for the title, the combination of experts and fans are willing to put their money down on the Buckeyes.

That goes back to the reputation factor. Ohio State has not only been very good, but the football program is looked upon that way nationally.

### Odds Changes Since January

In comparison to the odds put out by Bovada back in January, the Buckeyes are a slightly longer bet now, dropping from 15-2 to 8-1. But that change is very small. (Doing the math for you, 8-to-1 equates to 16-2, or offering a slightly larger payout than 15-to-2.)

Betting must be moving Alabama's way, as the Crimson Tide was 11-to-4 in January but 7-to-4 now.

Here's how other Big Ten teams showed up on the odds board:

- Michigan – 9-to-1 in January and 18-to-1 now.
- Wisconsin – 22-to-1 in January and 28-to-1 now.
- Penn State – 11-to-1 in January and 35-to-1 now.
- Michigan State – 25-to-1 in January and 45-to-1 now.
- Nebraska – 150-to-1 in January and 175-to-1 now.
- Iowa – 150-to-1 in January and 450-to-1 now.
- Maryland – 500-to-1 in January and unchanged at 500-to-1 now.
- Purdue – 250-to-1 in January and 500-to-1 now.
- Northwestern – 150-to-1 in January and 700-to-1 now.
- Minnesota – 250-to-1 in January and 900-to-1 now.
- Illinois – 500-to-1 in January and 1,000-to-1 now.

- Indiana – 500-to-1 in January and 1,000-to-1 now.

- Rutgers – 500-to-1 in January and 1,000-to-1 now.

### Way-Too-Early Heisman Odds

Speaking of reputation, this one speaks to Meyer's reputation as an offensive coach more than what little we've seen so far of Dwayne Haskins. Haskins, who has not yet started a single game in college football, is rated fourth in the Heisman race, according to Bovada.

Bets on only three players would pay out less than a winning wager on Haskins.

Stanford running back Bryce Love and Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa are both listed at 7-to-1. (Like Haskins, Tagovailoa looked great in relief as he rallied Alabama to the national title, but he has yet to start a game.)

Wisconsin running back Jonathan Taylor is 8-to-1. And Haskins is 11-to-1.

Back on Jan. 24, there were no odds listed for Haskins.

Taylor and Buckeye running back J.K. Dobbins were the co-favorites in late January, each at 6-to-1. Love and Tagovailoa were both listed at 7-to-1.

Since then, Dobbins' odds have fallen to 18-to-1.

Other Big Ten players on the current Heisman board for Bovada:

- Penn State quarterback Trace McSorley – 20-to-1 in January and 15-to-1 now.
- Michigan quarterback Shea Patterson – off the board in January and 20-to-1 now.
- Ohio State defensive end Nick Bosa – 75-to-1 in January and 100-to-1 now.

### Stats Odds

Dobbins also showed up in Bovada's most recent listing for odds on individual stats. The so-called over-under bets are essentially a prediction. They are designed to get equal money bet above or below the threshold.

Dobbins is listed at 1,375.5 yards on the over-under board for rushing, and 12.5 for rushing touchdowns.

These numbers for regular-season bets are higher expectations for Dobbins. Including postseason games last year, he finished with 1,403 yards rushing and seven rushing touchdowns.

### A Vote For Fewer Yards

I wouldn't mind Dobbins getting fewer rushing yards this season, because Ohio State could be an even more potent offense with both Dobbins and Mike Weber topping the 1,000-yard mark this season.

Weber, you will recall, rushed for 1,096 yards as a redshirt freshman in 2016. Injuries last year opened the door for Dobbins to take the spotlight, finishing with the 1,403 yards in his freshman season in 2017, while Weber had 626.

Two, healthy 1,000-yard backs is a scary proposition for Big Ten opponents.

I could find only two other times when Ohio State had multiple 1,000-yard rushers.

Carlos Hyde (1,521 yards) and Braxton Miller (1,271) did it in 2013. And back in 1975, Heisman winner Archie Griffin (1,450) and touchdown machine Pete Johnson (1,059) did it.

There are good reasons to believe it could happen this year. It's easier to do these days, with the longer seasons vs. the 1990s and earlier. Plus OSU won't be running the quar-

terback as much this season (J.T. Barrett ran for 798 yards last season).

I expect both Weber and Dobbins will top the 1,000-yard mark in rushing in 2018; 1,200 yards each would be nice.

### 2,000 Yards Passing, Too?

I also expect Haskins to top 2,000 yards passing. This is less of a bold prediction.

Just 22 times in OSU's long football history has a quarterback gone over 2,000 yards passing, but it has become routine in recent years. This season should be no different with the talent Haskins already has displayed.

The only time in the Meyer era OSU has failed to have a 2,000-yard passer was in 2015, when the QB duties were shared by Cardale Jones (1,460 yards) and Barrett (992 yards).

Before then, you have to go back to Terrelle Pryor's freshman season in 2008, when he led the team in passing with 1,311 yards after splitting some time with Todd Boeckman (620 yards). They had a combined 1,931 yards passing.

In Barrett's four seasons, he passed for 2,834 yards, 992 yards, 2,555 yards and 3,053 yards.

Based on this, at least 2,500 yards passing would be a fair expectation for Haskins this year.

For a comparison of how the game has changed, consider that Art Schlichter topped 2,000 yards just once from 1978 through 1981, with seasons of 1,250, 1,816, 1,930 and 2,551 yards passing.

### Lots Of Eyeballs

Many, many eyes will be on Haskins, Dobbins, Weber and the other Buckeyes when the season gets under way against Oregon State on Sept. 1.

Here's a reminder of just how unusual the size of the crowds are at Ohio State and some other places in the Big Ten.

Ohio State was involved in three of the 10 most-attended college football games last season – at Michigan ranked second at 112,028, home against Penn State ranked ninth at 109,302 and home against Oklahoma

was 10th at 109,088, according to the NCAA record book.

Six Michigan games in Ann Arbor were the six most-attended games last season, topped by the crowd of 112,432 for Michigan's loss to Michigan State.

Penn State home games ranked seventh and eighth, and then the two OSU games listed above were ninth and 10th.

By school, the Big Ten again dominated the top of the attendance rankings for home games.

Michigan (111,589), Ohio State (107,495) and Penn State (106,707) ranked one, two, three in attendance nationally last year. The only other school to top 100,000 on average was Alabama (101,722).

Other Big Ten schools in the top 25 were No. 10 Nebraska (89,798), No. 15 Wisconsin (78,824), No. 19 Michigan State (72,485) and No. 22 Iowa (66,337).

### Coaching Numbers

Meyer enters the season ranked seventh all-time for winning percentage at any NCAA level, according to the NCAA record book. His 177-31 record works out to a winning percentage of .851.

First is former Mount Union coach Larry Kehres (332-24-3, .929), followed by Knute Rockne at 105-12-5, .881.

For wins, however, more than 50 coaches have 200-plus wins, including Woody Hayes with 238. The record of 489 wins is held by John Gagliardi, primarily over six decades at Saint John's (Minn.).

### Best In The B1G, All-Time

Undisputed, Ohio State has the best record all-time in Big Ten games, I found in tabulating the league standings over the years.

The Buckeyes are 511-174-24 (.738). Michigan is 503-206-18 (.704).

In modern times, the gap is wider. Since Penn State joined the league in 1993, the battle is for second, not first.

Ohio State leads with a 164-38-1 (.810) record.

Next are Michigan (133-69, .658) and Wisconsin (131-68-3, .656).

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# Ohio State Got Punishments For Meyer, Smith Right

First things first – Urban Meyer made glaring mistakes, and he deserved to be handed some sort of punishment by Ohio State. He certainly didn't deserve to lose his job, just as much as he didn't deserve to skate.

## MOODY MUSINGS Tim Moody, Editor

In the end, he got a punishment that fell short of drastic but still surpassed a slap on the wrist (don't tell any national columnists, or really anyone outside Columbus, that I said that, though). That punishment fits the crime.

Three games is a significant portion of the season – a quarter of the regular-season slate, to be exact – and it includes that visit to Texas to take on TCU. Meyer won't miss the biggest games of the year, but he's not missing a meaningless chunk of the season either.

What Meyer did in regard to his handling of Zach Smith was wrong – he never should have hired Smith in 2011 and, even if he did, he should have fired him long before July 23 this year. You can debate me on those points, but I won't back off them no matter what you say.

Meyer didn't respond properly when he found out about the 2015 domestic abuse allegations against Smith. While his

superior was already aware of the incident, Meyer – the investigators made clear – was supposed to report to OSU compliance as well. But his obligation in this case reasonably goes beyond what was written in his contract.

This was a second domestic abuse allegation against the same coach, a coach who had various other known ... well, let's call them "issues." Those issues included things like a strip club visit while on a recruiting trip that could end up as an NCAA violation for Ohio State to documented delinquency of his duties as an Ohio State assistant coach. He had an addiction to prescription drugs, at least for a period of time, and numerous people who spoke to investigators seemed to believe he had a drinking problem.

Looked at individually, I'm not sure any of those issues would be a fireable offense. Looked at as a group, it should have taken only a couple of problems to make a move. In fact, athletic director Gene Smith suggested that Meyer fire Zach Smith when the assistant coach's job performance suffered. Meyer chose not to – at least not until it was too late.

The investigation also uncovered details involving what seemed to be an attempt by Meyer to hide certain, old text messages from discovery. It also noted that Meyer apparently suffers from memory loss from time to time, referencing a medication he sometimes takes that can cause that. On the surface, that all sounds fishy, for lack of a better word. But at the end of the day,

the investigators found no real proof that Meyer deleted anything incriminating, and they stated as fact that those memory issues exist.

When I read through the 23-page summary report, I took everything as fact. Why wouldn't I? The investigation was undertaken by an outside law firm, and the report was presented to the full board of trustees only after it was completed. Everything was by the book, and the report made it clear when a piece of information was factual vs. when it was considered speculation.

I don't know about everyone else, but I'm pretty tired of speculation. You can speculate all you want that Meyer knew more than he's let on, that he lied and lied again (he did lie in Chicago, to be fair, and he admitted as much while using a softer word than that). Many around the nation have speculated about pretty much every detail of this case, and that didn't change after the final punishment was handed down and the report was released to the public. It won't change going forward, either.

So it goes.

Many people will continue to claim that Meyer did nothing wrong, that he should have received no punishment. Some might still be claiming that Zach Smith should have kept his job. They're wrong.

Others will say he should have been fired. That Ohio State is valuing winning on the field over a victim of abuse. They're wrong, too.

But it wasn't Ohio State's job to please everyone. Michael Drake admitted during the Aug. 22 press conference that it would be impossible to do just that. It was the job of Drake and the trustees to determine what happened, why it happened and what the consequences need to be. That's exactly what they did, and apart from a poorly planned press conference, they got it right.

They got it right with Gene Smith, too. He and Meyer are equally responsible for basically the same mistakes, and they received essentially the same punishments for it. Gene Smith will be suspended from Aug. 31 through Sept. 16 – those dates, of course,

include each of the three games that Meyer will be missing.

That's a win for Ohio State because they made the right decision. It's a loss for the school because the entire thing never should have happened, and it likely never would have come to this if Meyer had been honest in Chicago. He wasn't, and here we are.

I will say that Drake should have announced the punishments for Meyer and Gene Smith in a solo press conference Aug. 22 before holding a press conference with the coach and AD the following day. Meyer and Gene Smith were nowhere near ready for a press conference after the day they had just had, and that was reflected in ill-advised answers to a few questions, including Meyer's lack of a direct response when asked what he would say to Courtney Smith, the ex-wife of Zach Smith.

I will say, though, that a press conference being broadcast nationally would not be an appropriate place for Meyer to address Courtney Smith directly. That's a conversation that should happen, but it needs to take place face to face and behind closed doors.

### On Ryan Day

With Meyer suspended for the first three games, Ryan Day will be the Buckeyes' head coach for at least a few big moments. Many were surprised when he was named acting head coach in Meyer's place, but it's a move that makes sense.

Day might very well be the most talented coach on Ohio State's staff, and he's certainly the best offensive mind. I've long thought that he was a likely successor for Meyer at Ohio State, and he's going to get a three-game audition this season.

I fully expect that audition to end with three resounding wins and Day setting himself up for a stellar career in the head coaching ranks, whether that be at Ohio State or elsewhere – maybe as soon as next season.

### Quarterback Ballot

I really enjoyed reading the responses from subscribers to our quarterback ballot over the past few months, and it was fun to tally up the final votes. I'm not at all surprised that Troy Smith came out on top, and Rex Kern seemed like a sure bet to finish second.

I've thought about my personal top 10 for a long time, and it was tough to come to a final conclusion. I won't go into much detail about my rankings, but I wanted to note that I have Braxton Miller very highly rated, and I seriously considered putting him No. 1.

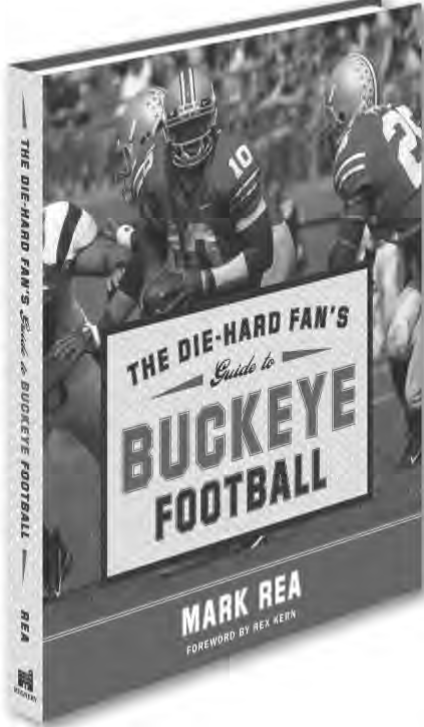
Had Miller not been hurt ahead of his senior season, I believe he would have blown away the OSU record books. But you can't rank someone highly based on what they could have done if an injury had been avoided. I rate Miller near the top of my list because I believe he is the most dynamic athlete to ever play the position at Ohio State, and he would have thrived in any era of the game. Not many players can say that.

Here's my full top 10:

1. Troy Smith
2. Braxton Miller
3. Rex Kern
4. Joe Germaine
5. J.T. Barrett
6. Art Schlichter
7. Cornelius Greene
8. Craig Krenzler
9. Terrelle Pryor
10. Bobby Hoying

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# Meyer Deservedly Still The Buckeyes' Coach

Let me say right off that I am happy Urban Meyer is still at Ohio State.

Obviously, his record as a coach speaks for itself. And maybe I'm naive, but I think the environment that he has created in the program is a good one. Academics seem to be a priority, and it shows in the graduate list and the number of football players honored as scholar-athletes each spring. The players generally seem to be good representatives of the university. And respect for women truly does seem to be a core value of the program.

The situation with Zach Smith was a complicated one. Loyalty to Earle Bruce, Meyer's mentor, clearly played a factor in the coach's – we'll call it patience – with Smith. There's also the question of how much an employer, which Meyer was to Smith, should get involved in the personal lives of his employees.

There seems little question that Smith and wife, Courtney, were involved in a toxic relationship. That they should have separated long ago is probably a given. But in my mind, all of the accusations, the “he said, she said” that have come out in the past few weeks, were just background noise, irrelevant to the question of whether Meyer would stay or go. My belief was that the decision would come down to whether the coach had met his obligations in his contract and under Title IX and whether Smith's actions were even subject to Title IX.

In the end, it seems that Meyer and his boss, AD Gene Smith, didn't violate any rules per se, at least in *their* interpretation of the rules. But they should have informed more people of the Zach Smith situation. The compliance office was not notified, and it should have been. Whether this was a Title IX violation should have been investigated, whether it ended up being one or not, and this was an office more able to determine that than Meyer or Gene Smith. In that regard I agree that some sort of punishment was warranted.

And I strongly believed that if Meyer was punished, then Gene Smith had to pay a price as well. Many felt that Smith should have been held more responsible when Jim Tressel was ousted back in 2011. This time the athletic director was punished along with his coach. In any organization, the head man is ultimately responsible for all actions of his or her group, and Smith did not deny his culpability.

I always felt that even if Meyer were completely cleared of any wrongdoing, he would be hit with some sort of suspension. We sometimes forget that Meyer and Ohio State are hated by much of the world outside of Buckeye Nation. That's the price of success. People want to brand Meyer and the Buckeyes as a program run amok, a program that will win at all costs. Whether violations were found or not, the optics of the whole thing were terrible. So there was going to be some playing to ESPN and the rest of the world in Ohio State's ultimate decision.

I figured two games. But after hearing what the investigating committee had to say about what Meyer did or did not do, three games is not surprising. The significance of that third game – Ohio State's marquee non-league game of the season with TCU – is great. It makes the penalty far stiffer, even though it is just one game more, than if the suspension had been only for the games against hapless Oregon State and Rutgers. The extra game might mitigate some of the national outrage that is sure to come because Meyer was not fired outright.

As for Zach and Courtney Smith, I try to make it a rule to not pass judgment on other people's relationships. Relationships are difficult even in the best of situations.

I was struck, however, by something that

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Courtney said in her widely viewed interview with Stadium.

“When we got (to Columbus for the Ohio State job) everything went completely out of control,” she said. “That is because I believe his life was out of control. He was under a lot of pressure. I don't think he was really ready to take on the job.”

I think she was right. This was a 28-year-old guy with two years of full-time coaching experience at Marshall and Temple, hardly the résumé for a coach at one of the most high-profile football programs in the country. And on top of that he had the added pressure of being the grandson of Bruce, a beloved coach in Columbus who provided a tough legacy to which to live up.

Zach obviously failed. Hopefully time will allow him to rebuild his life and his career, as he comes from a good family and everyone deserves a second chance.

I find it unfortunate that many Buckeye fans have chosen to make Courtney the villain in all of this. The situation is much more complicated than one person, and domestic abuse is not something to take lightly. None of us were in the Smith home, so it is not for us to pass judgment on who is or isn't at fault.

And let me reiterate that in the end, Meyer's penalty has less to do with Zach or Courtney and more to do with how he and Gene Smith handled their situation. If either Meyer or Gene Smith had a chance to do it again, I suspect they would do it differently.

And by the way, while it may be the reason that the whole situation blew up nationally, lying to the press is not against the law. It happens in Washington every day, and coaches do it all the time. You know. “He's out with a sprained ankle,” when really he failed a drug test. A lie is a lie.

When the lie involves domestic violence and involves Ohio State and Urban Meyer, however, that rises to the level of national scandal.

### Looking Ahead

So now that we finally know Meyer's status, where does that leave the 2018 Ohio State football team? In pretty good shape, I believe.

Not only is the team loaded with talent, but more importantly, it has an extremely talented and experienced coaching staff to prepare the team and guide it through the first three games. Two of the coaches – Greg Schiano and Kevin Wilson – have major-college coaching experience, and a guy like Larry Johnson is one of the most tenured and respected coaches in the business. And Ryan Day must be very highly-regarded if he got the nod as interim coach on this veteran staff. There are no inexperienced 28-year-olds among this group.

The eyes of most Buckeye fans will be on the offense. These fans are looking to a new era for Ohio State on that side of the ball after the ascension of Dwayne Haskins to the starting quarterback role. They have been clamoring for a strong-armed quarterback since Cardale Jones took the Buckeye on their magical three-game run to the national championship back in 2014.

I have to caution here that Haskins' strong arm is a given – his game-turning pass to Austin Mack in last year's Michigan game is

now a permanent part of Buckeye lore – but he has yet to prove himself as a full-time starter at the most important position on the field. The coaches will play a large part in whether he succeeds or fails as a starter. If they continue to run J.T. Barrett's offense with Haskins, running the QB often especially in critical situations, Haskins may be doomed to fail – or at least not reach his or the team's potential.

You have two 1,000-yard running backs on the team in J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber. Let them do their thing. That will only open up the passing game – or is it vice versa? In the previously mentioned magical run, Jones had great success downfield, but Ezekiel Elliott was running wild at the same time. Which caused the other? What difference does it make? If you can pass and run, defenses can't cheat either way.

This is an instance when not having Meyer around for camp and the first three games might be helpful, as the more open-minded Day and Wilson might give the passing game a better shot than the suspended – and successful I admit – head coach. If the offense is humming when Meyer gets back, I doubt he will tinker with it.

Haskins, Dobbins and Weber can't excel in a vacuum, however. There are a couple of areas that Buckeye fans need to monitor.

First of all, it is time for the receivers to step up. There are a bunch of good ones there, veterans to boot. But none of the returning receivers have ever been consistently dominant. They are speedy, great athletes – just the type of players Meyer loves to recruit – and they have all had their moments, but none has been an All-American or even All-Big Ten caliber player. Is it because of Barrett's inabilities as a passer or is it on the receivers?

Let me point out that even on Haskins' signature pass to Mack, the Buckeye receiver was extremely well covered. It's time for some or all of these guys to not only make the tough catch like Mack's – something that has been lacking – but also get open consistently – something that has also been lacking.

And either before or after Meyer's return, how about better using one of the coach's signature positions – the H-back? Last year the fleet Parris Campbell carried the ball just 10 times to go along with his 40 receptions from the H, but he averaged 13.2 yards a carry. This is in contrast to the 91 carries for 771 yards Curtis Samuel had the year before, with 74 receptions for 865 yards. Samuel totaled 15 TDs that season, compared to Campbell's four in 2017.

The other thing to watch for on offense is the line.

The Buckeye offensive line has been anchored the last two seasons by the center – Pat Elflein in 2016 and Billy Price last season. Both of them won the Rimington Trophy as the best center in the nation. Hardworking veteran Brady Taylor won the spot coming out of spring ball. But it is clear by the fact that the coaches keep pushing redshirt freshman Josh Myers and now junior Michael Jordan at the position that they are not necessarily comfortable with the senior from Columbus. If the Buckeyes do end up moving Jordan, it leaves a vacancy at his guard position, still leaving the line in flux.

Make no mistake, football is still a game that is won in the trenches, so finding a cohesive starting five up front will be critical to the success of the Buckeyes.

And speaking of winning in the trenches, Ohio State's defensive line is probably the best unit on the team and maybe the best line in the nation. The group, led by Nick Bosa, is talented and, more importantly, deep. Injuries or in-game fatigue are not going to slow this group down.

While a defense is made up of 11 players, all of whom must do their job consistently for the unit to excel, a defensive line that both stops the run and puts intense pressure on an opposing quarterback can make the job of the other two units that much easier.

I have some concerns with the linebackers – probably the defense's weakest link last season – and the secondary as both squads must plug some holes, especially with last year's pleasant surprise, linebacker Tuf Borland, on the mend from an Achilles injury. But the one thing I've learned in six years of following Meyer-coached teams is that the Buckeyes have stockpiled all sorts of athletes, many of whom we have forgotten about since they were recruited. There's always a batch of players waiting to fill in the holes and surprise us with their ability.

Who is this year's Tuf Borland or Malik Hooker from the year before? That's the fun of watching the Ohio State defense each year.

One thing to watch is whether the combination of Taver Johnson and Alex Grinch as coaches in the backfield can make up for the loss of the fiery Kerry Coombs to the NFL and Greg Schiano to more of a coach-at-large on the defensive side of the ball.

The final factor to consider is whether the absence of Meyer and, more significantly, the turmoil surrounding the recently concluded investigation will have an effect on the team. We assume it won't because of the talent present among players and coaches.

But these are a bunch of 18- to 22-year-olds. You never know.

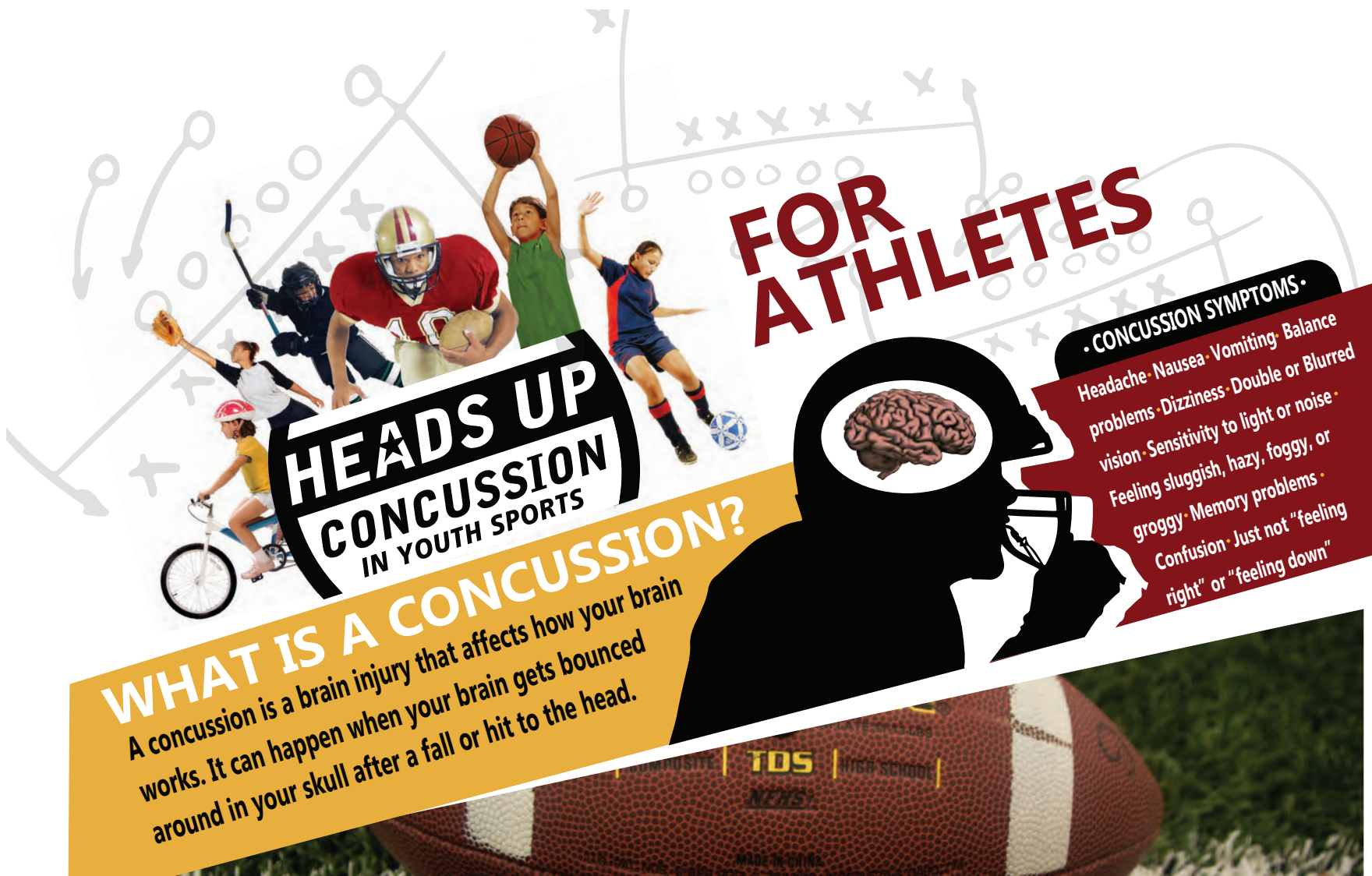
### Some Housekeeping

I had hoped to list my picks for our poll to determine the greatest quarterback in Ohio State history in this issue, but the Meyer situation took up that space. Hopefully I will get to that in the next issue and also share my thoughts on the poll results.

We have declared this the “Year of the Quarterback,” and we will be running features on Ohio State quarterbacks from the past, delving into what the position was like when they played, how it has changed, which quarterbacks they looked up to and more. Watch for the features in coming issues.

We are also encouraging our readers to participate on the Forum at our new 24/7 website, BuckeyeSports.com. As you can imagine, there were plenty of opinions being expressed by readers and staff members as the Meyer investigation unfolded. We thank the many new posters and also remind readers that subscribers frequently post news tidbits that they have found on their own. Remember, if you see something, say something.

And finally, just a reminder to our readers, especially those out of state. You can upgrade your existing subscription to speedy first-class mail in an envelope for football season for just \$28 or \$38 through football recruiting season. Send your check or money order to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212, or call (614) 486-2202. Mention the “Football” or “Recruiting” upgrade.



# FOR ATHLETES

## HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

- CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS:**
- Headache
  - Nausea
  - Vomiting
  - Balance problems
  - Dizziness
  - Double or Blurred vision
  - Sensitivity to light or noise
  - Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
  - Memory problems
  - Confusion
  - Just not "feeling right" or "feeling down"

## WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen when your brain gets bounced around in your skull after a fall or hit to the head.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

**REPORT IT.** Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

**GET CHECKED OUT.** If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a health care provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

**GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL.** A concussion can make everyday activities, such as going to school, harder. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

## WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH & PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.

**GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON**

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