

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 38, No. 20

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

April 20, 2019



SONNY BROCKWAY

TAKING HIS TIME – Ohio State head coach Ryan Day is not ready to make a decision between redshirt freshman quarterback Matthew Baldwin (left) and sophomore transfer Justin Fields.

Quarterback Battle To Continue Into Fall

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Unlike last spring when former head coach Urban Meyer named Dwayne Haskins his starting quarterback shortly after the conclusion of spring practice, the competition between Ohio State sophomore Justin Fields and redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin may continue well into fall camp.

"I don't think, right now, that we're going to make a decision on that," head coach Ryan Day said following the Gray's 35-17 win over the Scarlet in the Buckeyes' annual spring game on April 13. "I think it will continue through the preseason."

Neither quarterback was exceptional in the contest, as Fields completed just 4 of 13 passes for 131 yards and a touchdown for the Gray team – with most of those yards coming on a 98-yard strike to senior wideout Binjimen Victor. Baldwin split his time between the two teams, meanwhile, and finished the day 20 of 36 for 246 yards and two touchdowns. He also threw two interceptions.

"I think that they both did a good job today," Day said. "They both flashed at times. It's still a work in progress. We've still got work to do. But I thought that they gave some of the receivers a chance. Some of it's hard, when you're not in the tackle situation, is it a sack, is it not? Do we break out? And Justin, he can kind of create on the edge a little bit, so we didn't get a chance to see that as much. I thought Matthew made a couple really nice throws down the field, too."

Fields has been the presumed starter following his transfer from Georgia in January, and his ability to make plays with his feet – in addition to with his arm – makes it easy to see why he was a five-star prospect

coming out of high school. He ran the ball eight times for 38 yards and a touchdown, a dynamic that was missing from Ohio State's record-setting offense last season.

When assessing their performances, Day and his staff – which includes offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson and passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mike Yurcich – must keep in mind their young quarterbacks are not grizzled veterans, but rather works in progress.

"These guys, they should have been in high school at this time last year," Day said. "They're still growing, they're still making mistakes. To say we know where they are in terms of finished product, it's hard to tell. They still have a long way to go."

Though Baldwin enrolled in classes in January 2018, he redshirted last season while he recovered from an ACL injury that required surgery. Although he was back to full strength by the end of the year, Baldwin has yet to appear in a game with the Buckeyes.

Fields was also an early enrollee who played in 12 games for the Bulldogs last season as the backup to established starter Jake Fromm. But he's been in Columbus for only a few months, and learning the ins and outs of the playbook on the fly is not an easy task.

"I'm working my hardest to learn it as fast as possible," Fields said. "The stuff we have in right now I feel I have a grasp on."

Baldwin did not speak with the media because sports information director Jerry Emig could not find him in the locker room after the game, but Fields believes he and the rest of his unit are just starting to scratch the surface of their potential.

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From The Message Board

On April 14, Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff writer Andrew Lind started a thread on the BSB Forum asking what stood out during the spring game. Here are some of the responses:

"It's difficult to tell much from any spring game, but I've changed my tune a little bit. Previously, I had said no opponent would put 22 better players on the field. Now I say nobody will have 44 better players. Ridiculous depth at most positions."

– Terrier Buck

"Low attendance for such a nice day. Are fans bored with the spring game? Will this tradition eventually peter out? I was expecting much more considering the new players and new coach."

– PeyoteBuck

"Went every year, until this year. With the advent of 'touch' tackling, it has become kind of boring. Now, if you go, you just go to be in the stadium, not to really see any meaningful type of football."

– mrbigbux

"The left side of the offensive line seemed to open a lot of holes for the running backs. The secondary, particularly Jahsen Wint, stood out. Tyreke Smith looked good, as well as Noah Potter."

– AnthonyBuckeye

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1984

With the USFL in its second year as a professional football league, nine Ohio State products were on team rosters.

Among the Buckeyes were running back Tim Spencer (class of 1982), linebacker Stan White (1971) and wide receiver Lenny Wills (1975) in Arizona. Other former OSU players included safety Doug Plank (1974) in Chicago, running back Calvin Murray (1980) in Denver, linebacker Marcus Marek (1982) in New Orleans, defensive back Garcia Lane (1983) in Philadelphia, offensive guard Joe Lukens (1982) in Pittsburgh and defensive back Mike Guess (1979) in Washington.

30 Years Ago – 1989

With the return of starter Greg Frey, Ohio State's quarterback competition in the spring of 1989 centered on the Buckeyes' backup position. Three redshirt freshmen fought for the open spot – Kirk Herbstreit, Nick Cochran and Jason Frank – as new quarterbacks coach Ron Hudson evaluated the underclassmen. There was an opening for the second-string duties after John Wagoner moved to wide receiver.

"There really isn't one who has stepped out in front," Hudson said. "That's only because we haven't put them under the center in a scrimmage situation. Once we see how they react under pressure, without the coach helping them and giving them clues what to do, then we'll have a clearer picture. It's hard for us to say right now."

25 Years Ago – 1994

In the middle of April, Ohio State remained without a new athletic director, while one top candidate withdrew from consideration. Rex Kern had been viewed as the front-runner to replace Jim Jones, but the former Buckeye quarterback asked that his name be removed.

"I just can't, in good conscience, be a candidate for the job," Kern told BSB. "I am very interested in what happens at my alma mater, and I am very flattered that my name has been mentioned as many times as it has. But I have to think about other things. My family and my health are foremost in my mind, and I really don't want to jeopardize either one."

Kern, who resided in California, had thought about returning to Ohio, despite undergoing five separate back surgeries in addition to a hip replacement procedure the previous summer.

"A different time, perhaps," Kern said. "But we're talking about now. I just feel that I have to withdraw from consideration."

20 Years Ago – 1999

While spring football was in full swing, the Ohio State men's basketball team continued to make headlines after its Final Four run.

Head coach Jim O'Brien was just two years into his original five-year deal with the Buckeyes, but he appeared set in

April to receive an extension. Sources told BSB that athletic director Andy Geiger was considering O'Brien's extension to have a new base salary of \$850,000 annually.

"We'd like to get that thing hammered out," Geiger said. "He has four more years automatically on his contract, and we would like to extend that."

While the direction of OSU's staff was solidified, the roster shook up slightly with the departure of sophomore forward Shamar Herron, who was pursuing a transfer. The 6-9, 255-pound Detroit native had played in 38 games over the previous two seasons – just 10 in the 1998-99 campaign due to a leg injury – with just 1.4 points and 1.5 rebounds per game.

15 Years Ago – 2004

Elevated from linebackers coach to defensive coordinator in the spring of 2004, Mark Snyder knew he had a tough act to follow as the replacement of Mark Dantonio, who left Ohio State and became head coach at Cincinnati.

Snyder was tasked with taking over the Buckeyes' defense after Dantonio led the unit to the nation's No. 2 scoring defense in 2002, among other accolades. The climb was set to be steep after OSU lost key starters in 2003 Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year Will Smith, All-America safety Will Allen and potential NFL first-round pick Chris Gamble.

"We're young, but we're going according to plan," Snyder said after the team's jersey scrimmage at Ohio Stadium. "Our thought process coming into the spring was to play a lot of base defense, get mentally sound and allow a lot of our young kids to get experience. At this point, I think it's gone about the way we expected."

10 Years Ago – 2009

As the conclusion of spring camp neared, Ohio State's veteran defensive line sized up to be its biggest strength on either side of the ball.

Two fifth-year seniors led the way at defensive tackle in Doug Worthington and Todd Denlinger, while seniors Lawrence Wilson and Robert Rose added experience at defensive end.

Junior defensive end Cameron Heyward, junior defensive end Thaddeus Gibson, sophomore defensive end Nathan Williams, junior defensive tackle Dexter Larimore and redshirt freshman defensive tackle Garrett Goebel added to the load of talent in the trenches.

"Your front four, that's where it starts," said defensive coordinator and line coach Jim Heacock. "If you're not tough up front, you're in for a long year. You could have the greatest linebackers and secondary, but if you can't get pressure on the quarterback and disrupt the quarterback a little bit, you're not going to be very good."

Five Years Ago – 2014

At the end of his third spring camp in Columbus, Ohio

State head coach Urban Meyer came away from the April 12 spring game believing the best was yet to come.

"We had a good spring," Meyer said after the Gray team's 17-7 win over the Scarlet at Ohio Stadium. "I think we're better than we were two years ago, and I'm hoping we're a notch better than we were last year."

Meyer's first two seasons at the helm for the Buckeyes resulted in a 24-2 record, but with the two losses coming to end the 2013 campaign, the program pivoted as the head coach overhauled his defensive staff. Among the coaches he hired was defensive coordinator Chris Ash, who installed a new quarters coverage system which led to progress for the cornerbacks through 15 practices.

"I hope the reaction was that they looked quicker, they look faster, they trigger on the ball much better than they have in the past," Meyer said. "If that's your perception, that's mine as well."

While certain starters were set in stone on defense – defensive linemen Noah Spence, Joey Bosa, Michael Bennett and Adolphus Washington; linebacker Joshua Perry; cornerback Doran Grant; and safety Tyvis Powell – several vacancies remained up for grabs. Position battles continued with Curtis Grant and Raekwon McMillan at middle linebacker; Darron Lee and Chris Worley at strongside linebacker; Gareon Conley, Armani Reeves and Eli Apple at cornerback; and Vonn Bell and Cameron Burrows at safety.

One Year Ago – 2018

Meyer had a decision to make as the April 14 spring game ended without a starting quarterback for Ohio State.

"I know I'm going to get a bunch of questions about the quarterback," Meyer said. "I'll go ahead and answer one of them right now, and that is we're going to have to make some decisions. Those decisions have not been made."

The three-way position battle brought some separation, however, as junior Joe Burrow and sophomore Dwayne Haskins drew more reps than redshirt freshman Tate Martell in the annual scrimmage at Ohio Stadium.

"I want to see all of the statistical data – we have everything charted – and go from there," Meyer said.

Burrow was best on paper after going 15 of 22 for 238 yards and two touchdowns, including strikes of 50 and 42 yards to sophomore H-back Demario McCall in the second half. Haskins went 9 of 19 for 120 yards and two more scores, and he made some eye-opening throws, including a 25-yard laser to sophomore Jaylen Harris for the game's first passing touchdown.

Martell completed just 5 of 16 attempts for 28 yards while being picked off by redshirt freshman cornerback Shaun Wade.

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 (614) 486-2202
 bsb@buckeyesports.com

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PUBLISHER
 Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER
 Becky Roberts

EDITOR
 Frank Moskowitz

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS
 Mark Rea

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
 Karen Wachsman 1944-1999

PHOTOGRAPHY
 Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
 Kevin Dye Josh Winslow

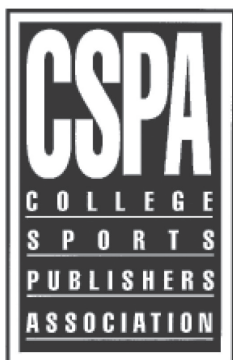
CONTRIBUTORS
 Bill Armstrong Bob Roehm
 David Breithaupt Julie Roy
 Bill Conley Mark Schmetzer
 Joe Dempsey Steve Siegfried
 Rich Exner Garrett Stepien
 Andrew Lind Jeff Svoboda
 Eric Loughry Mike Wachsman
 Craig Merz

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
 Jan Jager Dave Tebay
 Ron Friedman

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Charter Member

New Quarterbacks Signal Return To Old Ways

If there were any takeaways from the Ohio State football team's less-than-glorified scrimmage held April 13, it was that while the Urban Meyer era is over, the recently retired coach's go-to offensive strategy is very much alive and well.

At least, it had better be come fall.

Following a one-year respite (some might say aberration) during which Dwayne Haskins figuratively and literally filled Midwestern skies with pigskins on a regular basis, the Buckeyes appear to be headed back to the kind of offense that helped Meyer win three national championships – some variation of a read-option attack that relies more upon the athleticism than the arm strength of the starting quarterback.

Eager to see if the hype matched the performance of Georgia transfer quarterback Justin Fields, I have to admit to a little disappointment after watching the annual spring game. Some of that can be traced to what we all got used to witnessing last year, but moving forward, making comparisons of any Ohio State quarterback to Haskins is going to be extremely unfair.

That said, I thought or at least hoped Fields would be making a little better showing in the passing department than four completions in 13 attempts for 131 yards and a touchdown. Nearly three quarters of that yardage came on a 98-yard touchdown play to Binjimen Victor late in the second period, and roughly 60 of those yards came after the catch.

Fields did seem to get into a kind of rhythm with some medium-range throws midway through the second period. But for the most part, he didn't seem to be on the same page with his receivers and had no real feel for the deep ball. Even the long touchdown pass to Victor was slightly underthrown and a play made easier when Scarlet cornerback Lloyd McFarquhar fell down in coverage.

Where Fields did seem to excel was running the football. Although all quarterbacks were wearing no-contact black jerseys, and there was no tackling to speak of during the afternoon, Fields still managed to total eight carries for 38 yards and a touchdown.

Although it was worth only five yards, his touchdown run was a thing of beauty and leads me to the premise that Fields will be featured in more of a read-option offense that favored the likes of Braxton Miller and J.T. Barrett rather than any all-out aerial assault utilized when Cardale Jones or Dwayne Haskins was under center. Fields took a second-quarter snap on a designed quarterback sweep, and although Scarlet safety Isaiah Pryor appeared to have an angle, Fields effortlessly got to the edge and motored into the end zone.

Fields was charged with four sacks during the afternoon, but because of the rules of the day, it's difficult to ascertain how many of those pressures the 6-3, 223-pound sophomore could have escaped. He did get loose in the third quarter for a 30-yard scamper – the longest run from scrimmage during the afternoon – that displayed a little bit of power and a whole lot of speed.

Perhaps Fields is a better passer than he showed during his first quote-unquote game inside Ohio Stadium. He did, after all, complete 69.2 percent of his passes last year in limited action at Georgia. And he acknowledged his shortcomings in the OSU spring game, giving himself a C-minus when asked to grade his performance.

I would think C-minus is about right. But that probably won't be good enough when

Florida Atlantic comes to Columbus in late August, and it sure as heck isn't going to cut it when the Buckeyes reach the meat of their 2019 schedule. Simply put, Fields is going to have to play better than he did during the spring game.

Despite what Ryan Day might say, Fields will be the starting quarterback for Ohio State this fall, and it is now up to the new head coach to decide what kind of offense – run-first or otherwise – he wants to build around his starter.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

What About Baldwin?

His self-assessment aside, there is certainly no one who believes Fields is going to remain a C-plus prospect. There is a reason he was rated so highly coming out of high school two years ago.

But let's say, just for the sake of argument, that things don't work out the way everyone believes they will. Can the Buckeyes be successful with Matthew Baldwin at quarterback? Of course they can be successful with Baldwin, although like Fields, he is going to have to show a little more than he did in the spring game.

Baldwin, who redshirted last year behind Haskins and backup Tate Martell, certainly has the pedigree to be a success. He threw for more than 4,000 yards as well as 44 touchdowns during his senior season at Lake Travis High School in Austin, Texas, the same program that has produced several college QBs, including former Oklahoma and current Cleveland Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield.

Unfortunately, Baldwin showed more than a little rust during the spring game. He played for both the Scarlet and Gray squads and wound up totaling 20 completions on 36 attempts for 246 yards and two touchdowns.

But while those numbers were decent enough on the surface, it's worth noting that Baldwin also struggled at times. Like Fields, there were multiple times when he was not in sync with his receivers, and there were times when he seemed to struggle with his footwork.

Baldwin sometimes relies on the strength of his arm and appeared to throw either flat-footed or off his back foot, and that lack of balance led to a couple of poorly thrown balls.

Early in the game, while moving to his left, he drilled a pass into the ground at the feet of his intended target. A short time later, he failed to step into a throw over the middle and was nearly picked off by Scarlet linebacker Malik Harrison.

Baldwin's two interceptions came when Gray safety Amir Riep took advantage of a ball thrown behind Scarlet H-back Jaelen Gill and when the quarterback stared down Scarlet receiver Elijah Gardiner and allowed Gray safety Jahsen Wint to make a relatively easy pick.

But Baldwin had his positive moments, too. It was the 6-3, 215-pound sophomore who threw the ball on which true freshman Garrett Wilson leaped high to make an 18-yard touchdown grab in the second quarter, and Baldwin later exploited soft linebacker coverage on Gray H-Back C.J. Saunders to deliver a strike for an eight-yard touchdown

just before halftime.

Two other quarterbacks also saw action for Ohio State during the spring game.

Chris Chugunov, who played three seasons at West Virginia before joining the Buckeyes last season as a graduate transfer, went 3 of 10 for 81 yards and an interception. Most of his yardage came on a 59-yard completion to Gardiner, who took advantage of a complete bust in the Gray secondary.

And Danny Vanatsky, a sophomore walk-on from Cincinnati, got off five throws, completing two of them for 23 yards.

Chugunov and Vanatsky flashed some talent, but let's be brutally honest. Although the Buckeyes proved in 2014 that you can catch lightning in a bottle with a third-string quarterback, history tells us that any team that must dip that far down on the quarterback depth chart is going to be in trouble.

Some Final Thoughts

- Should Day want to make full use of his passing game, it appears he has an arsenal of weapons at his disposal despite the losses of Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin. In addition to K.J. Hill, Victor and a healthy Austin Mack returning, Gill and Wilson appear to be oozing with talent. Gill grabbed a game-high seven receptions for 95 yards, while Wilson's leaping touchdown snag was apparently a continuation of what the true freshman – another Lake Travis product – had been doing all spring.

- If you're looking for an under-the-radar performance during the spring game, you might focus on Master Teague. The redshirt freshman running back took full advantage of seven carries, turning them into 75 yards and a pair of touchdowns. Not bad, especially considering the defense needed only to put a hand on ball carriers for the play to be whistled dead.

Because of the liberal tackling rules, it was difficult to gauge defensive performances although Riep's interception was an excellent play. He leaped for the ball and then returned it 25 yards to set up the first touchdown of the afternoon.

- The leading tackler in the game was red-shirt freshman defensive end Javontae Jean-Baptiste, who totaled five tackles, including a sack, and a forced fumble for the Gray team. The leading tackler for the Scarlet squad was McFarquhar. (You thought I was making up that name, didn't you?) The redshirt freshman walk-on cornerback, who was credited with four stops, hails from the same Brush High School near Cleveland that produced such former Buckeyes as Jim Laughlin and Roy Hall.

- Things didn't go very well April 13 for Martell at his new school during the first of two open scrimmages. Trying to win a three-man battle at Miami (Fla.) to become the starting quarterback in 2019, the former Buckeye completed only 4 of 11 attempts for 78 yards. That performance included an interception during his first series when Martell threw into heavy traffic.

Even in the second half, when first-year Hurricanes head coach Manny Diaz let Martell run his second-team offense against the third-team defense, the junior struggled to move the ball. On his first drive of the third quarter, Martell began with a throw behind a receiver, tripped while going back for a play-action pass, and then threw a third-down pass about 10 yards short of his target.

According to The Miami Herald, one fan attempted to start a chant of "overrated!" but no one followed.

Martell has one more chance for redemption this spring. The Hurricanes have a final open scrimmage scheduled for April 20.



Young Players Shed Black Stripes

Ohio State offensive tackle Max Wray, wide receiver Garrett Wilson and defensive end Zach Harrison were among the latest batch of Buckeyes to have their black stripes removed before the conclusion of spring camp.

Wray, a native of Franklin, Tenn., battled a knee injury and did not play a single snap during his freshman season in Columbus but has been taking sec-

ond-team snaps at left tackle this spring. His emergence could be critical for an offensive line that has battled injuries, depth issues and the flu this spring.

The 6-0, 188-pound Wilson, who hails from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis, was rated the second-best wide receiver and No. 20 prospect overall in the 2019 recruiting cycle. He is expected to make an immediate impact for Ohio State as the likely backup to Binjimen Victor at the Z (flanker) receiver position.

Harrison, who played his high school ball 15 minutes north of campus at Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy Orange, became the second early enrollee after Wilson to have his stripe removed, which happened on the final day of spring practice. It marked the first time since the tradition was introduced that two true freshmen have done so during the spring. The 6-6, 255-pounder notably recorded three sacks in a full-team scrimmage in front of the media earlier this month.

Wilson and Harrison joined fellow receiver Austin Mack (2016) and defensive tackle Tommy Togiai (2018) as the only early enrollees to shed their stripes during spring practices since former head coach Urban Meyer implemented the tradition in 2012.

A total of 10 Buckeyes have lost their

black stripes this spring, including sophomore transfer quarterback Justin Fields; walk-on wide receiver Austin Kutscher; walk-on linebackers Logan Hittle, Cade Kacherski and Ben Schmiesing; walk-on cornerback Darryl Sinclair; and walk-on safety Ryan Batsch.

Haskins Holds Private Workout With Raiders

As first reported by The MMQB's Albert Breer, the Oakland Raiders held a private workout with former Ohio State quarterback Dwayne Haskins on April 2 in Columbus.

Coached by Sandusky, Ohio, native Jon Gruden, the Raiders hold the fourth overall pick in this month's NFL Draft. And despite having a significant amount of money invested in 28-year-old starter Derek Carr, in the weeks leading up to the draft they have shown interest in selecting a quarterback.

"He had Gruden come in and work with him," Buckeyes head coach Ryan Day said. "That was really cool to see. It was just like the Gruden show on TV. He was barking at him and working him out, so it's been fun to be a part of."

Oakland general manager Mike Mayock and offensive coordinator Greg Olson were among the more than 130

personnel from all 32 NFL teams to attend Ohio State's Pro Day on March 20. Afterward, they met with Haskins and former Buckeyes wide receiver Terry McLaurin, who should be available when the Raiders are on the clock with the No. 24 and No. 27 overall picks, which the team acquired in trades with the Chicago Bears and Dallas Cowboys last season.

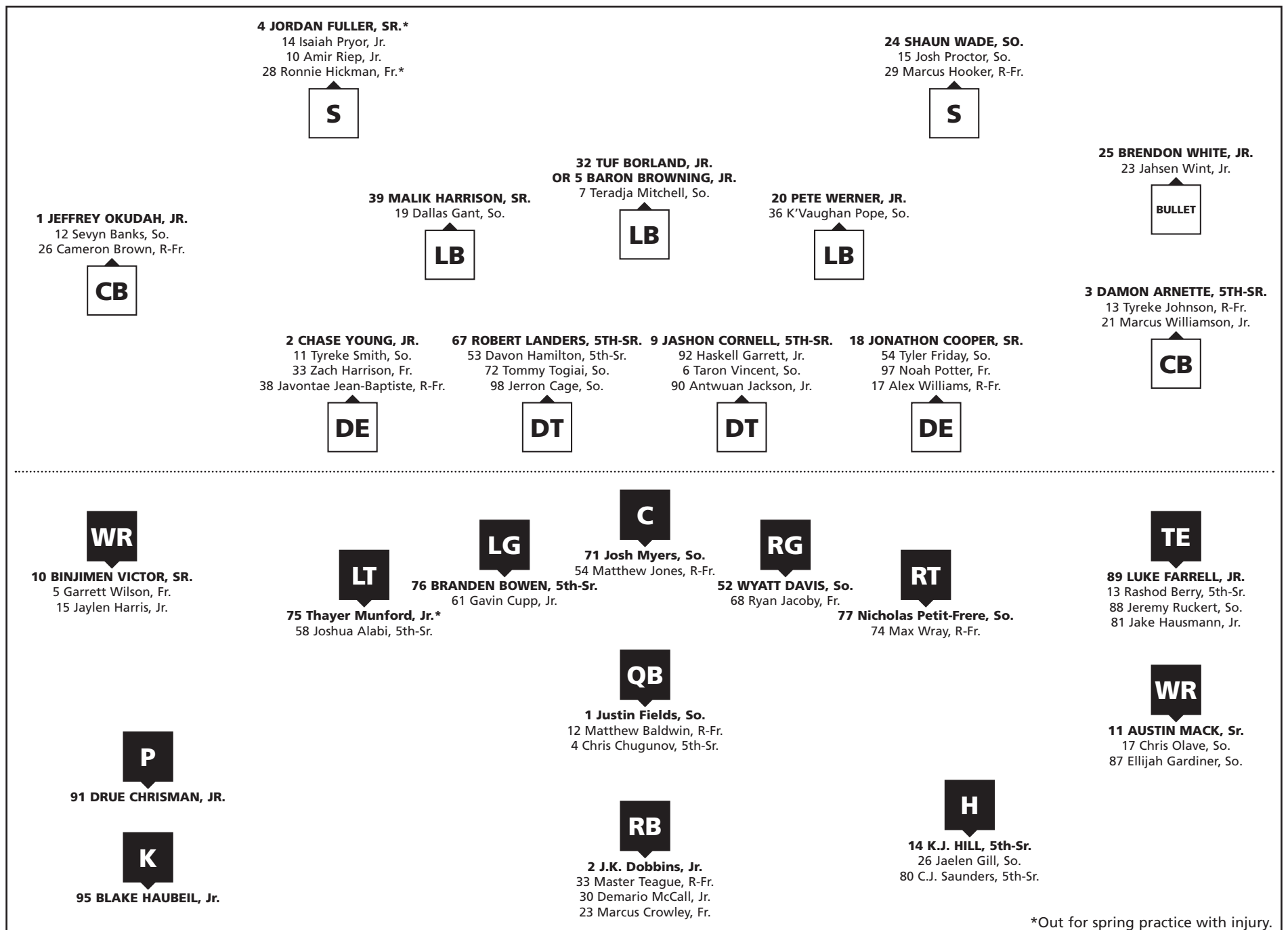
Haskins also recently spent time working out with new Oakland wide receiver Antonio Brown, whom he has known for several years. The two could be reunited if the Raiders ultimately decide to make a change under center.

Haskins Employs Bold Strategy With Broncos

Haskins followed up that Oakland workout with a pre-draft visit with the Denver Broncos, to which he boldly wore a throwback No. 7 John Elway jersey. Elway is not only a Hall of Fame quarterback who played his entire 16-year career in Denver but also currently serves as the Broncos' general manager.

Wearing a jersey to what essentially amounts to a job interview is certainly out of the ordinary, but according to Sports Illustrated's Kalyn Kahler, Elway "saw the humor in it and appreciated the gesture."

PROJECTED 2019 POST-SPRING GAME DEPTH CHART



*Out for spring practice with injury.

Haskins reportedly donned the No. 7 at Ohio State in part because of his admiration for Elway, which began with a trip to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, when he was in seventh grade.

Denver holds the No. 10 overall pick in the upcoming draft and will almost certainly be looking for a franchise quarterback to eventually replace recently acquired veteran Joe Flacco. It remains to be seen if Haskins will fall that far or if the Broncos will be forced to trade up in order to draft him.

Bosa Only Buckeye Set To Attend Draft

The NFL announced the list of prospects who will be attending this year's draft, and defensive end Nick Bosa will be the only former Buckeye in the green room in Nashville later this month.

Though the Arizona Cardinals are widely expected to pick Oklahoma quarterback Kyler Murray with the No. 1 overall, most draft analysts believe Bosa to be the best prospect regardless of position.

If Murray – the reigning Heisman Trophy winner – does in fact come off the board first, most projections have Bosa being selected by the San Francisco 49ers with the No. 2 overall pick.

Haskins decided not to attend the draft, meanwhile, as he'll spend the evening with his family in his home state of Maryland instead. He is also expected to be a first-round pick, but projections have him being selected anywhere from fourth overall by the Raiders to the Washington Redskins at No. 15. Other potential suitors include the New York Giants (No. 6), Broncos (No. 10), Cincinnati Bengals (No. 11) and Miami Dolphins (No. 13).

The first round of the NFL draft will begin at 8 p.m. ET on April 25. It will be televised on ABC, ESPN and NFL Network.

Evan Turner Records Triple-Double Milestones

Former Ohio State shooting guard Evan Turner became the first player in NBA history to come off the bench and shoot perfectly from the floor while notching a triple-double on April 1.

He tallied 13 points (5 of 5 from the field, 1 for 1 from three-point range and 2 of 2 from the free-throw line), 11 rebounds and 10 assists in the Portland Trail Blazers' 132-122 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

"I think that says a lot about our team," Turner said. "I think we all are genuinely happy when each other sees different parts of success."

"Everybody has to step up in different situations, and tonight was my night. Whatever my minutes are, I play defense and am a distributor. That's pretty much it. That's the most minutes I've gotten in a while, probably the most shots I've gotten in a while. Just go with the flow and ride the wave."

Turner then joined Hall-of-Famer Clyde Drexler as the only players in franchise history to record back-to-back triple-doubles in a 116-89 win over the Memphis Grizzlies on April 3. His 13 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists also made him the first player ever to record consecutive triple-doubles as a reserve.

Joey Bosa To Appear On 'Game of Thrones'

As first reported by NFL Network's Ian Rapoport, former Ohio State and current Los Angeles Chargers defensive end

Joey Bosa will make an appearance in the eighth and final season of HBO's popular "Game of Thrones" series.

It's unclear what role he will play in the upcoming season, but it's not difficult to envision the 6-5, 280-pounder as a Lannister soldier in a battle scene.

Bosa recently discussed his love of "Game of Thrones" during an interview with the Los Angeles Daily News.

"I'm definitely obnoxious about it," he said.

Bosa, who was selected by the Chargers with the third overall pick in the 2016 NFL draft and was named the 2016 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year, has recorded 134 tackles, 28½ sacks, five forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries in three seasons. He was limited to just seven games last season by a lingering foot injury but made his playoff debut in a win over the Baltimore Ravens in the wild-card round.

"Game of Thrones," which is based on George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" book series, made its long-anticipated return on April 14.

"Obviously, Cersei (Lannister) is going to betray somebody," Bosa said. "Jon (Snow) or Daenerys (Targaryen), I think, are going to die. I don't think both of them can make it out."

Shazier Continues To Make Progress

Former Ohio State linebacker Ryan Shazier took another impressive step in his recovery from a spinal cord injury on April 7 when he posted a video to his Instagram account doing a box jump at the Pittsburgh Steelers' training facility.

Shazier, who can be seen in the video wearing an Ohio State football T-shirt, has been sidelined since December 2017 after he suffered the injury during a game against the Cincinnati Bengals. Despite being given less than a 20 percent chance to walk again and enduring a grueling rehabilitation process in the 16 months since, he has been steadfast in maintaining that he wants to eventually play football again.

"I've been working my tail off every single day, so I have that in the back of my mind every single time I go to rehab," Shazier said. "I just try to stay positive every day, so I'm just trying to do everything I can to get back."

Shazier, a two-time Pro Bowler, is presumably quite a ways away from playing again. But leaping three feet into the air and landing on a flat surface while maintaining his balance is also no small feat.

"He's grinding every day," Shazier's father, Vernon, said. "He's come a long way but has a long ways to go. We're grateful for the progress he's achieved. He's been dedicated to doing all he can to make as much progress as he can. We don't have a ceiling, just working day to day."

Pittsburgh recently tolled Shazier's contract into the 2019 season, which means he'll be a part of the Steelers' roster, be paid a salary commensurate with his years of service in the NFL, continue to accrue seasons toward his players' pension and receive the same medical insurance coverage as all active players.

Campbell Throws Out First Pitch In Cincy

Former Ohio State H-Back Parris Campbell threw out the ceremonial first

2019 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2018 Record
Aug. 31	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	TBA	TBA	5-7 (3-5 Conference USA)
Sept. 7	CINCINNATI*	TBA	TBA	11-2 (6-2 American Athletic Conference)
Sept. 14	at Indiana	TBA	TBA	5-7 (2-7 Big Ten)
Sept. 21	MIAMI (OHIO)*	TBA	TBA	6-6 (6-2 Mid-American)
Sept. 28	at Nebraska	TBA	TBA	4-8 (3-6 Big Ten)
Oct. 5	MICHIGAN STATE*	TBA	TBA	7-6 (5-4 Big Ten)
Oct. 18	at Northwestern*	TBA	TBA	9-5 (8-1 Big Ten)
Oct. 26	WISCONSIN*	TBA	TBA	8-5 (5-4 Big Ten)
Nov. 9	MARYLAND	TBA	TBA	5-7 (3-6 Big Ten)
Nov. 16	at Rutgers	TBA	TBA	1-11 (0-9 Big Ten)
Nov. 23	PENN STATE*	TBA	TBA	9-4 (6-3 Big Ten)
Nov. 30	at Michigan*	TBA	TBA	10-3 (8-1 Big Ten)
Dec. 7	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	FOX	

* 2018 bowl team

** at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

Next Issue Last BSB Print Until June

The next issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, the May issue scheduled to be mailed on April 30, will be the last BSB print issue for more than a month. The May issue will feature our spring football wrap-up. The June issue of BSB is scheduled to be mailed on June 4.

However, our electronic BuckeyeSports.com is available 24/7/365 with all the breaking news posted, including the latest in recruiting, and then discussed by readers and staff on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum. There is no need for BSB readers to wait five weeks to get their news of the Buckeyes.

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INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

pitch before the Cincinnati Reds' 2-1 win over the Miami Marlins at Great American Ballpark on April 10.

Campbell was a four-star prospect from

Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary who went on to become a two-time team captain for the home-state Buckeyes. He was a first-team all-Big Ten selection as a senior as he hauled in a team-leading 90 receptions for 1,063 yards and 12 touchdowns.

With a 12-yard reception in the first quarter of Ohio State's Rose Bowl win over Washington, Campbell became just the fifth Ohio State receiver to reach the 1,000-yard mark, joining Cris Carter (1986), Terry Glenn (1995), David Boston (1998) and Michael Jenkins (2002). He is widely projected to be a late first- or early second-round selection in the NFL draft, which takes place April 25-27 in Nashville.

Sheffield Impresses During Private Workout

Having suffered a partially torn pectoral muscle while bench pressing at the NFL scouting combine that prevented him from participating in on-field workouts in early March and during Ohio State's pro day a few weeks later, former Buckeye cornerback Kendall Sheffield held a pri-

vate workout for scouts at Ohio State on April 11.

According to Rapoport, the 6-0, 193-pound Sheffield went through various position drills in front of 27 teams. He posted a 39-inch vertical jump; 10-foot, 8-inch broad jump; 4.09-second short shuttle; and 6.97-second three-cone drill, which would have ranked among the best performances for defensive backs at the combine.

Sheffield was widely regarded as a mid-round pick prior to the injury.

SID Emig To Be Honored By His Peers

Ohio State sports information director Jerry Emig will be honored in June by the College Sports Information Directors of America for his 25 years of service in the industry.

"I love this job," Emig said. "I love the relationships, relationships with coaches, relationships with student-athletes, relationships with the media who I work with.

And that just keeps this job so special for me. To reach 25 years as being an SID, I'm extremely proud of that."

Emig is a 1983 graduate of Murray State University who also holds a master's degree in sports administration from Ohio State (1986). He has spent 17 years in Columbus, including the last 11 as the core media relations contact for the Buckeyes' football program.

Agonis Club To Honor Shelley At Golf Outing

Former Columbus Blue Jackets fan favorite Jody Shelley will be honored by the Agonis Club at a golf outing scheduled for June 10 at Foxfire Golf Club. Proceeds from the event will benefit central Ohio high school student-athletes with college scholarship money.

The outing includes golf, prizes, an Italian buffet dinner, a silent auction and a program celebrating Shelley's career. For information and sponsorship opportunities, contact Bob Redfield at (614) 698-2479 or bredfield2000@gmail.com.

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Editor Moody Moves On

Tim Moody has stepped down as editor of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, effective April 5, to study and pursue a career in website design. He will remain affiliated with the newspaper.

"When I arrived at BSB, I was hoping for an opportunity," Moody said. "That certainly came true, but I also ended up with a second home and I'm glad to know I will always be a part of the BSB family. I'm excited for the next steps in my life, but just as excited to watch BSB grow going forward and to contribute when I can."

Moody initially joined parent Columbus Sports Publications as a staff writer and layout designer. His overall work caught the attention of BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz.

"Tim all but forced us to promote him to editor with his leadership skills and overall understanding of the newspaper business," Moskowitz said. "He joined a very select group of people to hold the position. His even hand while steering the ship will be missed, and we are glad he has elected to maintain his association with us."

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"Resolve" Striped Polo***

Black-red.
S, M, L, XL,
2XL, or 3XL.

\$80.95



**B1-16: Ladies Script Ohio
Polyester Tee**

Black.
S, M, L,
XL, or 2XL.

\$34.95



**B1-22: Ladies Athletic O
Victory V Neck Top***

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S, M, L, XL,
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Former Buckeyes Join In Spring Game Festivities

Continued From Page 1

"Overall this spring, there were ups and downs. That just comes with the growing pains, like Coach says. I just have to keep improving, keep working, and I think we'll be good come the (beginning of the) season," said Fields, who wasn't particularly satisfied with his performance in the spring game and gave himself a C-minus grade. "I'm very hard on myself, so I'm kind of a perfectionist. I know I can do better. I've done better in practice. But I definitely see us having a bright future."

He recognizes he has plenty to work on in order to solidify his spot atop the depth chart by the time the season opener against Florida Atlantic rolls around on Aug. 31.

"I think I need to improve in every aspect of my game," he said, "running, passing, just getting better. I feel like there's always a place to improve, no matter how good you get."

Teammates have taken note of the steady progress of the quarterbacks this spring, particular as leaders in the huddle and in offensive meetings.

"They've made a ton of strides," fifth-year senior H-Back C.J. Saunders said of Fields and Baldwin. "They were already good at the beginning of spring, and now, I've just seen both of them step up as leaders so much."

Redshirt senior H-Back K.J. Hill echoed that sentiment and noted how Baldwin and Fields have become more confident and comfortable in the pocket over the course of 15 practices.

"They were kind of shook in there at the beginning, but now they're standing firm and going through their progressions," Hill said.

Sophomore right guard Wyatt Davis also heaped praise upon Fields.

"When Justin first came in, he was still trying to figure everything out," Davis said. "He's really taken that step on being vocal, being confident in his calls and what he wants us to do. His overall swagger – having a quarterback who's confident like that – helps us get going. He's really taken a role in becoming that leader that we need."



SONNY BROCKWAY

FOLLOWING MEYER'S BLUEPRINT – Ryan Day (left) oversees the circle drill ahead of Ohio State's annual spring game.

"You can see the progression that he's had from when he first got here to now. He's definitely taken that lead of controlling the offense, and I feel like as the season goes on and as we get closer to the season, he's going to get better with that."

That said, Fields hasn't won the starting gig just yet. He'll continue to battle Baldwin in the meeting room throughout the summer and on the field in preseason camp. And that competition will ultimately make the Buckeyes better.

"They'll keep pulling for each other, and as long as that room gets strong, that's the key," Day said.

Players Sidelined By Injuries

Ohio State was without several players who factor into the two-deep depth chart for the spring game, including running

back Demario McCall; wide receivers Jaylen Harris and Kamryn Babb; offensive tackle Thayer Munford; defensive tackle Robert Landers; linebackers Tuf Borland and Justin Hilliard; cornerback Marcus Williamson; and safeties Jordan Fuller, Marcus Hooker and Ronnie Hickman will not play to due various injuries.

Babb, who reportedly suffered a torn ACL during spring camp, and Hilliard, who suffered an Achilles injury and subsequently had surgery, are out indefinitely. Everyone else listed above is expected to return to full strength by the start of fall camp in late July or early August.

Former Players Return For Game

Ohio State's annual spring game not only functions as a glorified scrimmage in front of

thousands of fans, but it also serves as one of the biggest recruiting weekends of the entire calendar year. And there's no better recruiting tool than to put on display the sheer amount of talent the Buckeyes have sent to the National Football League over the last three decades.

Meyer always made it a point to invite his former players back to Ohio Stadium in the offseason or during their open weeks during the season, and Day made sure to follow that blueprint on April 13.

Among the current NFL players in attendance were quarterback Cardale Jones (Los Angeles Chargers); running back Ezekiel Elliott (Dallas Cowboys); wide receivers Ted Ginn Jr. (New Orleans Saints), Braxton Miller (Philadelphia Eagles) and Michael Thomas (Saints); offensive tackle Jamarco Jones (Seattle Seahawks); centers Pat Elflein (Minnesota Vikings) and Corey Linsley (Green Bay Packers); defensive ends Sam Hubbard (Cincinnati Bengals), Jalyn Holmes (Vikings) and Tyquan Lewis (Indianapolis Colts); defensive tackle Tracy Sprinkle (free agent); linebacker Darron Lee (New York Jets); cornerbacks Gareon Conley (Oakland Raiders), Marshon Lattimore (Saints) and Denzel Ward (Cleveland Browns); and safety Malik Hooker (Colts). Many of those players were honored during a timeout in the first half, as the upcoming season will mark the five-year anniversary of the 2014 national championship.

During another break in action, several players from last year's team – including Haskins, running back Mike Weber, H-back Parris Campbell, wide receivers Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin, offensive tackle Isaiah Prince, offensive guard Demetrius Knox, defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones, and linebacker Dante Booker – received their Big Ten championship and Rose Bowl rings.

Heisman Trophy-winning running back Eddie George (1992-95) was the game's honorary captain, while former linebackers James Laurinaitis (Big Ten Network color commentator) and Bobby Carpenter (BTN sideline reporter) were also on hand.



SONNY BROCKWAY (LEFT), OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

ROAD GRADERS – On the photo at left, center Josh Myers (left) and Joshua Alabi (right) combine to block defensive tackle Jashon Cornell in the first quarter of Ohio State's spring game. Meanwhile, Ohio State welcomed back 1995 Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George to be the spring game's honorary captain.

TOP SPRING GAME PERFORMERS

Redshirt Freshman Running Back Master Teague

Junior starting running back J.K. Dobbins saw limited action in Ohio State's annual spring game as an established starter, which gave Teague an opportunity to run with the first-team offense.

Teague carried the ball seven times for 75 yards (10.7 average) and two touchdowns, hitting the hole hard on each play and showing an impressive burst of speed when asked to run on the outside.

He also showed decent hands out of the backfield, bringing down one pass for five yards. If it weren't for a "no tackling" rule, the 5-11 and 220-pound Teague would have certainly broken off a few long runs and easily eclipsed the 100-yard mark.

Compare that to early enrollee Marcus Crowley, who rushed for 50 yards and one touchdown on 10 carries against the second- and third-team defenses, and redshirt junior Demario McCall, who has been limited the entire spring with a calf injury and did not participate in the scrimmage, and it's safe to assume Teague has the leg up on the backup running back position heading toward fall camp.

Redshirt Freshman H-Back Jaelen Gill

Gill finds himself in a similar position to Teague, as fifth-year senior K.J. Hill will see a majority of the reps at H-back this fall. But, simply put, he's shown he's too talented to keep off the field.

Playing with the second unit, Gill was targeted 12 times and finished the spring game with a game-high seven catches for 95 yards. He also fielded a few punts and will presumably be in the mix for kick return duties this fall.

With Parris Campbell off to the NFL, Gill's playmaking skill set is unmatched by anyone else on Ohio State's roster.

Gill is arguably better than Campbell was at this stage of his career, too, so it won't be surprising to see him have a significant role on offense and as a special teams weapon this fall.

Freshman Wide Receiver Garrett Wilson

A five-star prospect who grew up in Dublin, Ohio, but played his high school ball at Austin (Texas) Lake Travis, Wilson arrived at Ohio State with almost unrealistic expectations.

His 18-yard touchdown reception, where he elevated over cornerback Sevyn Banks for a spectacular catch in the back corner of the end zone, proved he's more than just hype, however.

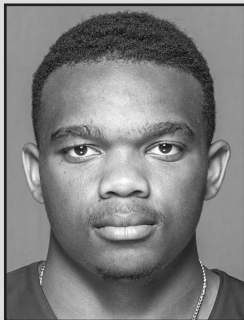
Wilson finished the day with four catches for 44 yards and that touchdown catch, which surely solidifies his

spot behind senior Binjimen Victor at the Z (flanker) receiver position.

The touchdown, which tied the game at 7 early in the second quarter, was certainly an unforgettable moment for Wilson and redshirt freshman quarterback Matthew Baldwin, as the two played their high school ball and scored their first touchdown before a collegiate crowd together.

Redshirt Freshman Defensive End Javontae Jean-Baptiste

Though starters Chase Young and Jonathon Cooper and sophomores Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday sit ahead of him on the depth chart, Jean-Baptiste made a strong case for playing time in the fall.

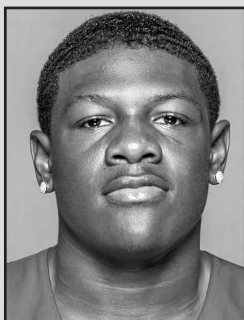


Master Teague

He finished the spring game leading the Gray in tackles with six and also recorded one sack and a forced fumble in the second half. That followed up a two-sack effort in a full-team scrimmage in front of the media one week prior.

Jean-Baptiste's athleticism has never been in question, but he needed to bulk up in order to make an impact along the defensive line. He's added 30 pounds since he arrived on campus, which should help him crack the rotation. But keep in mind, true freshmen Zach Harrison and Noah Potter will be right on his heels as they hope to find their own spots in the rotation.

Junior Safety Jahsen Wint



Jahsen Wint

Much has been said this spring about how junior Brendon White is tailor-made for the newly implemented "Bullet" position, but Wint also showed promise in that role during the spring game.

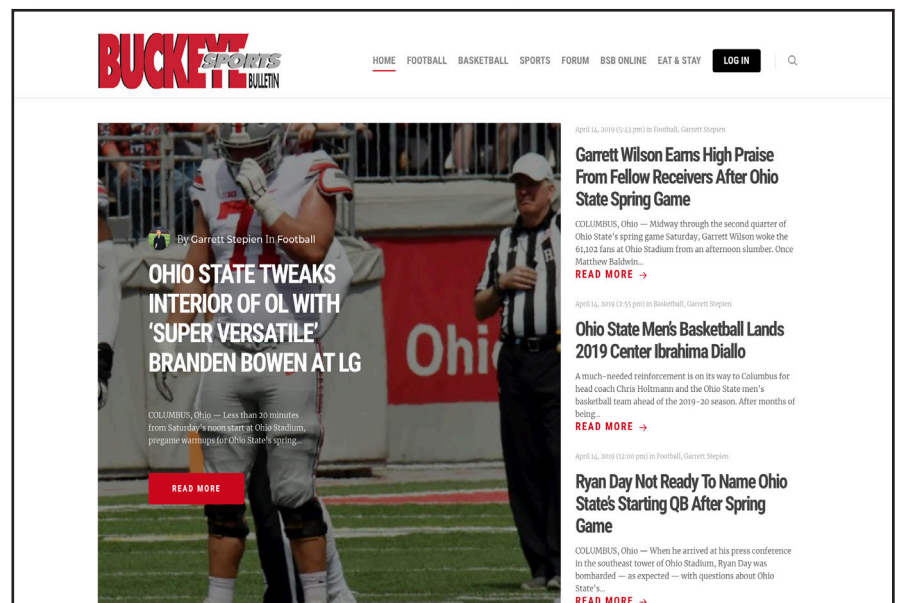
After struggling in the traditional safety spot last fall, the fourth-year junior from Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall seemingly played with a newfound confidence and looked remarkably comfortable as he picked off two passes in the first half while rotating back and forth between strong safety and line-backer.

Wint doesn't have a clear path to playing time this fall, with White penciled in as the do-it-all linebacker/safety hybrid, senior captain Jordan Fuller back at free safety; and junior Isaiah Pryor, sophomores Shaun Wade and Josh Proctor and redshirt freshman Marcus Hooker fighting for playing time.

However, his performance during the spring game – as well as that of junior Amir Riep, who also recorded an interception for the Gray team – gives Ohio State's much-maligned safety unit some much-needed depth moving forward.

– Andrew Lind

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Teague Leads Gray To 35-17 Win Over Scarlet

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ryan Day era began, sort of, under mostly sunny skies at Ohio Stadium on April 13 in Ohio State's annual spring game with the Gray recording a 35-17 win over the Scarlet.

Day, who replaced Urban Meyer as head coach on Jan. 2, was interim coach for the first three games of the 2018 season when Meyer was suspended. But this was the first time on the sideline with "his" program.

The glorified scrimmage drew 61,102 to Ohio Stadium, with a reduced capacity of 76,000 because of stadium renovations and a kickoff temperature of 61 degrees.

There were modified rules, including 10-minute quarters with a running clock in the second half and no live tackling. Instead, the players were mostly grabbed and held. And, of course, no contact with the quarterbacks, who wore black jerseys.

Everyone came to see the expected quarterback duel between Georgia transfer Justin Fields and redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin, who missed last season while recovering from knee surgery.

Fields, playing exclusively for the first-team Gray, was the front-runner coming in to replace Dwayne Haskins and did nothing to discourage that.

Fields was 4 of 13 for 131 yards, including a 98-yard touchdown pass to senior wide receiver Binjimen Victor. He also rushed eight times for 38 yards and a score.

Baldwin, meanwhile, played for both teams. He was 9 of 15 for 119 yards and a touchdown for the Gray squad and 11 of 21 for 127 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions with the Scarlet team.

Redshirt freshman running back Master Teague led all rushers with 75 yards and two touchdowns on seven rushes for the Gray. Early enrollee Marcus Crowley, on the Scarlet, gained 50 yards on 10 totes with a score.

Victor's two grabs went for 107 yards. The Scarlet was led by redshirt freshman H-Back Jaelen Gill (seven catches for 95 yards). Sophomore wide receiver Elijah Gardiner had 72 yards on two catches, and freshman wideout Garrett Wilson added 44 yards with four catches for the Scarlet, including a leap-18-yard touchdown catch.

The following are highlights from the game action.

First Quarter

Fields got the first snaps for the Gray to start the game and went three-and-out. Junior running back J.K. Dobbins rushed for 4 yards, Fields' first pass to Victor was tipped incomplete and Fields was then "sacked" by fifth-year senior defensive tackle Davon Hamilton for a two-yard loss.

Quarterback Chris Chugunov guided the second-team Scarlet on their first possession and on third down had a 19-yard strike to Gill, but the drive ended at the Scarlet 46.

Baldwin's first series for the Gray included a 33-yard toss to senior H-Back K.J. Hill at the 50 that was underthrown, but four more plays netted only five yards.

Baldwin stayed on the field to quarterback the Scarlet in a drive that ended when sophomore running back Xavier Johnson lost a fumble at the Gray 35 after running for no gain. The turnover was caused by redshirt freshman defensive end Javontae Jean-Baptiste and recovered by sophomore cornerback Sevyn Banks.

Second Quarter

On the second play of the period, Baldwin – still in for the Scarlet – was intercepted by junior safety Amir Riep at the Scarlet 45-yard line. He returned it 25 yards.

It took the Gray three plays to go the 20 yards for a 7-0 lead with 8:52 left in the half. Teague rushed for 10, Fields found Victor for nine and then Teague carried it in from the 1-yard line.

Baldwin engineered a six-play, 65-yard drive for the Scarlet in 2:11 to tie the score at 7. The first of two big plays was a 19-yarder to Gill, from nearby Westerville (Ohio) South, to the Gray 18. On the next snap, Wilson made his spectacular leaping grab in the right corner of the end zone over Banks with 6:41 left.

Fields used his arm and feet to take the Gray 65 yards in nine plays, using 2:22 off the clock for a 14-7 lead. He opened the possession with a 16-yard dash around the left end to the Scarlet 49-yard line. After two incompletions, he connected with senior wide receiver Austin Mack for gains of 13 and 11 to the 25-yard line. Teague ran for seven and 13 yards before Fields ran to the right pylon and scored from five yards out at the 4:19 mark.

Baldwin had a poor next drive for the Scarlet. First, he lost 4 yards on a fumble at the Gray 33-yard line. Then, on the ensuing play, he was intercepted at the 2-yard line by junior safety Jahsen Wint.

Fields then took over. On 3rd-and-10 from his own 2-yard line, Fields found Victor down the right sideline at the Gray 43-yard line, and he sped the rest of the way for a 98-yard touchdown and a 21-7 lead with 1:32 left.

The Gray lead was extended to 28-7 with 37 seconds left after the Scarlet turned it over when Wint intercepted Chugunov at the Gray 48-yard line.

Baldwin returned to the Gray side and had a 29-yarder to senior tight end Rashod Berry to the Scarlet 8. After an incomplete pass, Baldwin hit an eight-yard touchdown pass to redshirt senior receiver C.J. Saunders to cap a six-play, 52-yard drive in 54 seconds.

Chugunov made amends when the Scarlet got the ball back when he spotted Gardiner for 59 yards to the Gray 6-yard line. Chugunov missed Gardiner and junior tight end Jake Hausmann on consecutive plays, and junior kicker Blake Haubeil made a 23-yard field goal as time expired to make it 28-10. The drive was 59 yards in five plays in 32 seconds.

Third Quarter

The Scarlet closed within 28-17 at 5:05 of the quarter, with Baldwin taking the group 65 yards in 11 plays in 4:55. Baldwin looked more comfortable and had three passes to Gill for a total of 29 and another of 14 yards to the freshman Wilson, a former teammate at Austin (Texas) Lake Travis. Crowley completed the drive with a two-yard run.

Teague and Fields collaborated to make it 35-17 with 2:24 left. Fields ran for 30 to the Scarlet 35 before Teague rushed for 17. After Fields was sacked for a four-yard loss, Teague ran 22 yards for the Gray score at the end of 65-yard drive that used five plays and 2:41.

Fourth Quarter

There was very little of note in the quarter although fourth-string quarterback Daniel Vanatsky got into game and had a nice 18-yard sideline pass to Gill for the Scarlet. Vanatsky was 2 of 5 for 23 yards.

The game took a tidy 1:54 to play.



SONNY BROCKWAY

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF AN OPPORTUNITY – With junior running back J.K. Dobbins (below) on limited duty as an established starter, redshirt freshman Master Teague (top) took reps with the first-team offense.



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Spring Game Box Score

Gray 37, Scarlet 17

April 13, 2019 – Ohio Stadium; Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4		F
SCARLET	0	10	7	0	–	17
GRAY	0	28	7	0	–	35

Second Quarter

GRAY – Teague, 1-yard run (Haubeil kick); 3 plays, 20 yards, 0:50 TOP.

SCARLET – Wilson, 18-yard pass from Baldwin (Haubeil kick); 6 plays, 65 yards, 2:11 TOP.

GRAY – Fields, 5-yard run (Haubeil kick); 9 plays, 65 yards, 2:22 TOP.

GRAY – Victor, 98-yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick); 3 plays, 98 yards, 0:23 TOP.

GRAY – Saunders, 8-yard pass from Baldwin (Haubeil kick); 6 plays, 52 yards, 0:54 TOP.

SCARLET – Haubeil, 23-yard field goal; 5 plays, 59 yards, 0:32 TOP.

Third Quarter

SCARLET – Crowley, 2-yard run (Haubeil kick); 11 plays, 65 yards, 4:55 TOP.

GRAY – Teague, 22-yard run (Haubeil kick); 5 plays, 65 yards, 2:41 TOP.

Att. – 61,102.

Weather – 61 degrees, partly cloudy; wind SW 7 mph.

Team Statistics

	SCARLET	GRAY
First Downs	19	14
Rushing	5	7
Passing	12	7
Penalty	2	0
Rushes-Yards	25-83	22-155
Passing Yards	231	250
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	16-36-3	13-28-0
Offensive Plays	61	50
Total Net Yards	314	405
Third Down Efficiency	4-11	3-8
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-1	0-3
Punts-Avg.	3-37.3	2-43.5
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	0-0
Penalties	0-0	2-9
Time of Possession	22:55	17:05

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **SCARLET:** Crowley 10-50; Johnson 5-28; McMahon 3-13; Vanatsky 1-2; Baldwin 4-6; Chugunov 2-0. **GRAY:** Teague 7-75; Fields 8-52; Cope 4-33; Dobbins 3-11.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **SCARLET:** Baldwin 11-22-2-127-1; Chugunov 3-10-1-81-0; Vanatsky 2-5-0-23-0. **GRAY:** Baldwin 9-15-0-119-1; Fields 4-13-0-131-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **SCARLET:** Gill 7-95; Wilson 4-44; Gardiner 2-72; Hausmann 1-12; McMahon 1-5; Crowley 1-3. **GRAY:** Saunders 3-35; Victor 2-107; Hill 2-43; Mack 2-24; Berry 1-29; Dobbins 1-7; Teague 1-5; Prater 1-0.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – **SCARLET:** Chrisman 1-44-44. **GRAY:** Chrisman 2-87-44.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **SCARLET:** None. **GRAY:** Gill, 1-0.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **SCARLET:** None. **GRAY:** None.

MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.) – **SCARLET:** None. **GRAY:** None.

FUMBLES – **SCARLET:** Johnson 1; Baldwin 1. **GRAY:** None.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES – **SCARLET:** None. **GRAY:** Jean-Baptiste 1.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – **SCARLET:** None. **GRAY:** Riep 1-25; Wint 2-0.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – **SCARLET:** Smith 1.5-6; Hamdan 1.6-6; Hamilton 1-2. **GRAY:** Jean-Baptiste 1-2; Potter 1-3; Garrett 1-5; Jackson 1-3.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – **SCARLET:** Smith 1.5-6; Browning 1-2; Hamdan 1.5-6; Hamilton 1-2. **GRAY:** Jean-Baptiste 1-2; Potter 1-3; Garrett 1-5; Jackson 1-3.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **SCARLET:** McFarquhar 3-2-4; Smith 3-1-3.5; Donovan 2-1-2.5; Browning 2-1-2.5; Schmiesing 2-1-2.5; Wilburn 2-0-2; Okudah 2-0-2; Cooper 1-1-1.5; Hamdan 1-1-1.5; Hamilton 1-0-1; Wade 1-0-1; Harrison 1-0-1; Brown 1-0-1; Hausmann 1-0-1; White 1-0-1; Dever 1-0-1; Pryor 1-0-1. **GRAY:** Jean-Baptiste 4-2-5; Riep 4-1-4.5; Winte 4-0-4; Gant 2-4-4; Potter 2-2-3; Garrett 2-2-3; Batsche 2-1-2.5; Mitchell 2-1-2.5; Sinclair 2-0-2; Williams 1-1-1.5; Pope 1-0-1; Jackson 1--1; Hamdan 1-0-1; Proctor 1-0-1; Johnson 0-1-0.5; Fankhauser 0-1-0.5.



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Myers Aspires To Uphold New Buckeye Tradition

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State football program is one with an illustrious history and prestigious tradition.

Skull Session, Senior Tackle and gold pants are just a few of the many traditions of the storied program. Additionally, a much more unorthodox tradition has taken shape in recent years for the Scarlet and Gray.

Ohio State has had a converted guard start at center in each of the past three seasons, from Pat Elflein to Billy Price to Michael Jordan. While it is not rare for guards to switch to center, what makes the Buckeyes' situation unique is that each of those three linemen earned All-America honors after making the move.

Jordan decided to forgo his final year of eligibility and enter the 2019 NFL draft, leaving a vacancy at center. Offensive line coach Greg Studrawa turned to another converted guard in Jordan's absence, sophomore Josh Myers.

"That was a huge worry and a concern of all of us when Mike decided to leave," Studrawa said. "And now Josh has stepped in and really taken the bit. And he is just doing excellent, he's making the calls."

"Before we practiced and went to the Rose Bowl, I really felt confident in that kid. Something clicked during bowl practice before we left, and he went out there and his mind-set, everything about him, how he carries himself, everything changed. And so I'm so confident now after watching him, I really think he's going to be exceptional."

Myers (6-5, 310) came to Columbus with high expectations out of Miamisburg, Ohio, rated the No. 1 player in the state and the No. 2 guard in the country by 247Sports Composite. The former four-star recruit experienced some growing pains while adjusting to competing at the highest level in college football.

"Lapses in confidence? I think one of them was a bit of a reality check when I came here my very first spring two springs ago," Myers said. "And just realizing it was like a different world. I couldn't get away with just being strong anymore or being bigger or faster. It was a totally different world and technique was huge."

"And it was something that I struggled with early on, so my confidence probably wasn't very high early on. And the better I got and the more I went on and the more reps I got, the more and more confident I got."

Studrawa acknowledged Myers' initial struggles, particularly in pass protection, which was basically a foreign concept to him in Miamisburg's run-dominated offense.

"I believe he's on the exact right path," Studrawa said of Myers. "And I'll tell you what the big transition for him was. It was learning how to pass protect. You know, that offense in

high school, you just put your hands on the ground and just roar off the ball that way. And he's excellent at that, he's powerful, he's all those things. But now you have to pass block Dre'Mont Jones or you have to pass block Nick Bosa, so you have to develop that ability."

"That's what took him some time. He'd never done it. He'd never been taught it, so it took him some ability and some time to make that transition. Now he's done that. He's really done a good job of developing his foot quickness to allow him to block those quick guys."

Learning how to pass protect while opposing Division I defensive linemen is daunting in itself. Having to do so against the likes of Bosa and Jones gives a new meaning to the expression "growing pains."

Fortunately for Myers, he did not endure the trials and tribulations of being a young offensive lineman at Ohio State alone. Sophomore and former five-star prospect Wyatt Davis faced a similar situation to Myers – talented, yet unproven.

"When we both came in, we were making similar mistakes and stuff like that," Davis said of Myers. "We would have those conversations like, 'Man, this sucks not being able to play,' our freshman year. And we just made an agreement that we're going to stop sitting and we're going to make a contribution to play."

"I saw him, especially this winter, he worked

harder than I've ever seen anyone work before. And you can tell. I feel like that transferred onto the field now. And he's definitely turning himself into a leader and we all follow him, just like it should be with the center role."

Although Myers is excelling at center, according to his coaches and teammates, he admitted to some apprehension when Studrawa approached him about the position switch.

"To be honest with you, when he told me that I was moving to center, I was not upset because I wanted to play, but I didn't know how it was going to go and I was nervous about it," Myers said. "I absolutely love it. I like it more than guard, more than tackle. I absolutely love it. It's my favorite position, for sure."

"I love being vocal. I like getting set first, making the calls, being loud, being confident. I love that about it. It changed my own confidence. I had no choice but to be confident or else the other guys would question my calls."

Davis has had a front-row seat to watch Myers' development as the two have grown together since becoming Buckeyes. The interior-line duo said they motivate each other to continually improve.

"Josh, overall, he's a very smart man," Davis said. "And it was kind of crazy how easy it seemed the transition was, and he was always confident throughout the process. He

never backed away from it, and he would always ask questions and work on trying to get better. And he would always be the guy doing extra work, so I think that was probably why it was so easy for him to transition."

Myers' conversion from guard to center may have appeared seamless to Davis, but he admitted that it was far from easy.

"I struggled at first," Myers said. "I did not love it at the very first, last spring. It's really stressful, honestly. You don't realize how many things are happening and how many calls and how fast it is. And I did not understand when I was a guard how difficult it is at center."

"But once it starts slowing down, I love it. It's mean, it's in your face, it's a 320-pound D-lineman is five inches from you and trying to jump the snap. I don't know, it's just fun. I like it."

Myers is well aware of the trend of converted guards excelling at center at Ohio State, having been teammates with Price and Jordan, but he does not fear the challenge.

"It means everything to me," Myers said of upholding the standard. "I know how much work those guys put in and the sacrifices they made to get to where they are. And I don't want to be the one to not continue that tradition, so I'm going to do everything in my power to keep that going."



SONNY BROCKWAY

MAKING THE SWITCH – Josh Myers, who is flanked by classmate Wyatt Davis to his right, hopes to be the next Ohio State lineman to successfully make the transition from offensive guard to center.



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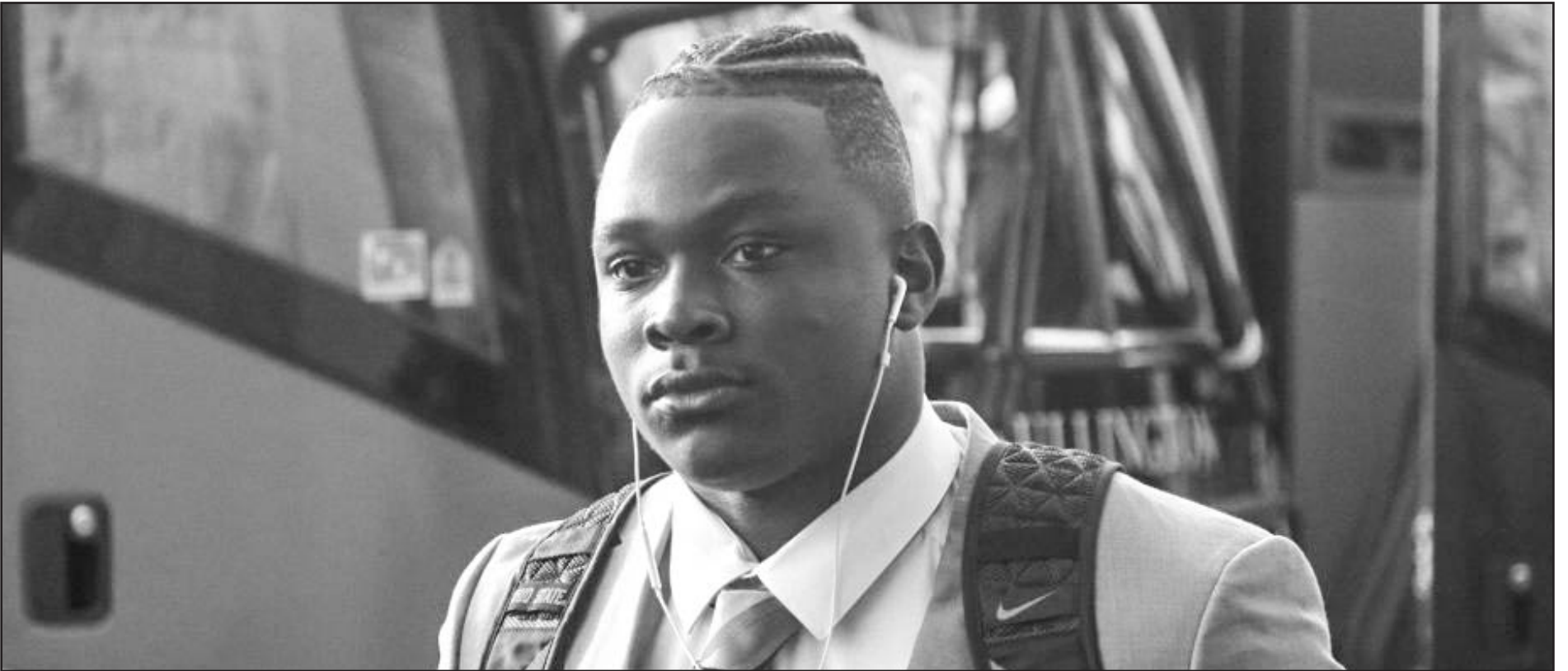
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Mitchell Leads Return To Silver Bullets Culture



TIM MOODY

TIME TO SHINE – With a new coaching staff in place and an open competition at linebacker, Teradja Mitchell hopes to make his presence felt on Ohio State's defense.

By **GARRETT STEPIEN**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When he looks back on his first season as an Ohio State linebacker, Teradja Mitchell can't help but sense that his unit didn't reach its full potential.

"I feel like we didn't play up to par," Mitchell said. "I feel like we didn't play like the Silver Bullets play, but we're working. We're working towards getting back to that culture and that standard. And the guys are very hungry."

While he wasn't necessarily a part of the drop in production, Mitchell hears the outside noise.

As a four-star linebacker recruit and top-50 overall prospect in the Buckeyes' 2018 class, Mitchell came to Columbus from Virginia Beach (Va.) Bishop Sullivan with hopes of playing immediately on defense.

Those plans were delayed while OSU stuck with its starting linebacker trio of Tuf Borland in the middle and Malik Harrison and Pete Werner on the outside, but Mitchell developed into a regular on special teams in 2018, where he contributed 10 games to kickoff coverage and made fans anticipate his sophomore season.

"I try not to put too much into (social media buzz) because this is the reality – what we do right here on the field and what's in the program," Mitchell said March 21. "So

I try not to buy into it. It's nice to know that people are rooting for me, but also, I feel like I have a lot of work to put in."

Twitter has turned Mitchell into one of the top names mentioned as a solution to the 2018 season's problems while the Buckeyes' linebackers hit the reset button on the position with coach Al Washington hired in January from Michigan along with co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison. The new assistants and first-year head coach Ryan Day want the defense to play fast and free.

Those notes are music to the ears of Mitchell, who said he loves how his skill set fits the scheme under Mattison and co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley.

"My style of play, I'm aggressive," Mitchell said. "I like to thump, play inside, play in the gaps. So I feel like (the defense is) the best fit for me."

While juniors Baron Browning and Borland (6-1, 232) have worked middle linebacker with Mitchell, injuries to both upperclassmen opened the door for the sophomore to gain first-team exposure.

Borland (knee) and Browning (hamstring) were limited during Ohio State's fifth practice of spring camp on March 23 when Mitchell manned the inside for the 11-on-11 period and stepped up beside Harrison (6-3, 245) and Werner (6-3, 239) on the outside.

Two weeks later, when Browning returned April 5 for the team's 11th practice

of spring camp and was the Buckeyes' first middle linebacker on the first-team defense while Borland continued to do conditioning and take mental reps along the sideline, Mitchell mixed in.

"Teradja's been there every day," said Day, who added that the middle linebacker battle was expected to continue into fall camp in August. "He's done a good job on special teams."

A big piece of the position's uptick in competition comes from Mitchell and his two classmates, Dallas Gant and K'Vaughan Pope. Along with Gant (6-3, 232) and Pope (6-1, 231), Mitchell pushes for more as a sophomore. Washington has especially taken notice in those efforts.

"Nobody's comfortable, nobody's complacent," Washington said March 21. "Everybody's growth-minded. Everybody's eager. As a coach, I'm not coaching effort. And I'm not saying that at a place like this you never would, but it's human nature. So it's been awesome because everybody's kind of bought into that and actually helping each other. Guys are very supportive of each other, but when they're out there, they want it."

After the Dec. 1 Big Ten Championship Game at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, where OSU overcame Northwestern for its 45-24 victory en route to the conference title and an eventual 13-1 season, Mitchell told BSB he felt his time on the field as a true

freshman gave him great momentum heading into 2019.

But when he reflects on his enrollment in June 2018, Mitchell regrets the physical shape in which he started his career. Although he's added seven pounds of muscle to his frame since fall camp in August, Mitchell (6-2, 242) was overweight upon arrival last summer.

"Coming in, I feel like I struggled," Mitchell said. "Just coming in, I feel like I was overweight, out of shape. Coming in, I just learned how to work hard, got my weight down, got faster, stronger. And now, I feel like I can help produce on this defense. So I feel like I definitely progressed significantly."

As the battle at middle linebacker continues into fall camp with Borland and Browning (6-3, 248) while fifth-year senior Justin Hilliard (6-1, 235) eyes a midseason return from an Achilles injury that required surgery and ended his spring camp in mid-March, Mitchell turns his attention to offseason workouts.

When the competition resumes in August, though, he plans to pick up where he left off.

"That's why we came here," he said. "We came here to compete. We knew everybody was good, so it helps us get better. That's not the thought process we're going through. We're just going out here every day to work and get better, and the best plays."

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Early Enrollees In Line For Immediate Impact

By **GARRETT STEPIEN**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Although the 2019 recruiting class in its 17-member entirety arrives for summer courses the first week of June, six signees from the 247Sports composite's No. 14 group nationally got a head start on their Ohio State careers Jan. 7 when they enrolled early for the spring semester.

In addition to sophomore quarterback Justin Fields, who transferred Jan. 4 from Georgia, the freshmen Buckeyes joined in time for winter workouts Jan. 17 through March 2 and spring camp March 6 through April 13.

From assistant athletic director for football sports performance Mickey Marotti in the weight room to head coach Ryan Day on the field, how have OSU's early enrollees acclimated to their first taste of life at the next level? BSB examines where they are with commentary from Day plus respective position coaches and players.

Running Back Marcus Crowley

One of Ohio State's later additions in the 2019 cycle, Marcus Crowley came to Columbus for spring enrollment just two months after his flip from Miami (Fla.). In the time since he pledged to the Buckeyes during an official visit the weekend of Nov. 3 for the team's 36-31 win over Nebraska at Ohio Stadium, Crowley, a four-star recruit, has shown flashes. Just a month into Crowley's enrollment, Day anticipated an immediate impact, with OSU's depth at the position lacking after Mike Weber declared for the NFL draft and Brian Snead transferred to Iowa Western Community College.

"When you look at what we've done at

running back, I think we've improved there," Day said Feb. 6 on National Signing Day. "We lost Mike. We lost Brian. We get Steele (Chambers), and Marcus is already here doing a good job. Steele is somebody who is very, very talented, comes from a great family. Marcus (was Florida's 2018) Gatorade Player of the Year. We improved our depth there. Those guys will both compete – Marcus in the spring, Steele in the preseason."

Crowley (6-1, 205) hit the ground running in spring camp, seeing an uptick in reps as junior Demario McCall nursed a nagging calf injury. Without junior J.K. Dobbins involved for the team's April 5 scrimmage at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, the 11th practice of spring camp, Crowley ran with the first- and second-team offenses behind redshirt freshman Master Teague.

"He's swimming, he's swimming – as he should be," running backs coach Tony Alford said of the Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy product. "But the good thing that we're doing is we have thrown him into the fire, so to speak, and he's responding. He's going to make mistakes. These are very prideful guys. When they make mistakes, it bothers them – as it should. But that's what he needs, he needs to get thrown in that fire. But he's got some skills. All of a sudden, he'll flash and do something, like, 'OK, here he goes.' But he's a tough kid."

Defensive End Zach Harrison

After a three-horse race between Michigan, Ohio State and Penn State, the Buckeyes added Zach Harrison, a five-star defensive end from Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy Orange, to their 2019 class. The decision lifted the weight of the world off his shoulders.



SONNY BROCKWAY

THE HYPE IS REAL – Known for his highlight-reel catches, Garrett Wilson gave Ohio State fans a glimpse of the future with his touchdown reception.

"Zach Harrison, going through the recruiting process, I know there's a lot on his plate," Day said. "He's come here and blossomed. He's been killing it in the weight room."

Following winter workouts, he turned heads once the helmet and pads went on during spring camp with the Buckeyes. Under the tutelage of both sixth-year defensive line coach Larry Johnson and first-year co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison, the latter of whom recruited him with linebackers coach Al Washington at

Michigan, Harrison has transitioned smoothly since he came to campus.

"One thing that is really good is that we had a great relationship before he got here," Johnson said of Harrison. "That has really carried over. That's what I think has made the difference. So he's taking the coaching really well. He's really bright, always coming into the office, saying, 'Let's watch the videotape. How can I get better?' And that's what you love about him."

Harrison (6-6, 255) has worked his way into

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the rotation at defensive end for 2019 behind veterans such as junior Chase Young (6-5, 265). He also lined up at three-technique defensive tackle with sophomore Tyreke Smith (6-4, 267) on the inside while senior defensive end Jonathon Cooper (6-4, 257) and Young manned the outside during OSU's April 5 scrimmage, a sneak peek at the updated "Rushmen" package during pass-rush situations on third down.

"It's been real good," Young said of mentoring Harrison, who had his black stripe removed on April 12. "Zach, he – like Coach Mick said the other day – is the best high school player who's come in early who pays attention to detail. And when I tell him things, he pays attention, down to the tee. Technique wise, getting off the rock, he tries to use his hands, technique every day. Zach's doing real good."

Safety Ronnie Hickman

An ACL tear midway through the 2018 season cut his senior campaign short at Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic and kept him from full participation during winter workouts and spring camp, but Ronnie Hickman has been turning heads since he arrived in Columbus. The four-star safety appears destined for a redshirt in the fall as he completes his recovery process, but six months into his rehabilitation, he has impressed Ohio State's coaching staff. Unprompted after the Buckeyes' seventh practice of spring camp March 27, special teams coordinator/assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes raved about Hickman's attention to detail.

"One guy that's not even practicing right now that's caught my eye just in the meeting room is Ronnie Hickman," Barnes said. "Just how he goes about his business, for a guy that should still be in high school, you watch him in every meeting. He knows the answer to every

question. He's asking me questions without even me prompting him, things like that. So I've just been really impressed with him."

Considered by multiple scouting services to eventually be a candidate for outside linebacker, Hickman entered OSU at safety. He could, however, grow into a player at the defense's new hybrid linebacker/safety "bullet" position. Junior safety Brendon White (6-2, 215), who entered the program in the summer of 2017 with two-way potential like Hickman (6-1, 200) as a wide receiver and defensive back, draws comparisons.

Offensive Lineman Ryan Jacoby

The first of two early enrollees from Mentor, Ohio, Ryan Jacoby joined Ohio State's offensive line for spring camp with a purpose. While Jacoby was a four-star offensive tackle, fourth-year offensive line coach Greg Studrawa told BSB that he had a unique skill set. His versatility helps the Buckeyes patch up depth concerns at both guard and tackle until reinforcements from Rutgers graduate transfer center/guard Jonah Jackson (6-4, 305) and the three incoming freshmen arrive for summer enrollment in June.

"I'm really proud of how Ryan's doing right now, honestly," said sophomore center Josh Myers (6-5, 310), who enrolled early out of Miamisburg, Ohio, in January 2017. "He's doing a great job. He's doing way better than I did when I came in, honestly. Mentally, honestly, I'm really impressed with how he's doing. He's done some really complicated things that you almost never see young guys do. So I'm really excited to see where he goes in this journey. It's been awesome to watch him so far."

Defensive End Noah Potter

Day had praise for Noah Potter, who com-

mitted after last year's spring game.

"Noah Potter is a guy who has already shown he's going to work really hard, kind of a guy who we expect to challenge in the spring," the coach said.

Through the spring, Johnson saw Potter jump on the chance to make an impact. The 6-6, 252-pounder fills out OSU's depth at defensive end with room to grow in the rotation before fall camp comes in August.

"Young guys are what you'd expect, trying to transition to college football," Johnson said. "It's a faster pace for it and their eyes are big and wide, but I'll tell you what I like about them, they're working at it. And that's all I ask them is just play hard, keep learning and it will come to you. And that's what's happening right now."

With the departure of former All-America defensive end Nick Bosa, Potter received the coveted No. 97. The only OSU players to wear the number since 2012 were Nick (2016-18) and Joey Bosa (2013-15), two all-time greats in program history, which gives Potter two tough acts to follow.

"Sometimes I have flashbacks of watching 97," Johnson said. "Some different guys have been in that jersey number, so we'll see how it goes."

Wide Receiver Garrett Wilson

Garrett Wilson joined rare company April 8 when he shed his black helmet stripe after Ohio State's 12th practice of spring camp, becoming just the third early enrollee to do so since Urban Meyer implemented the tradition in 2012.

The 6-0, 188-pound Wilson came to Columbus from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis as a five-star wide receiver – the highest-rated recruit – with an opportunity for a large role after the position group lost fifth-year seniors Parris

Campbell, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin to graduation following the 2018 season.

From day one, Day acknowledged Wilson's elite potential.

"First off about Garrett is he comes from a great family, is a great person," Day said. "When you get around him, he's magnetic. The second thing is, he's amazing because he's a big-time basketball player. He's never really spent time on just football. His potential, as good as he is, is through the roof. Now he has to go through it."

"This is really the first time he's being challenged in the weight room. Coach Mick and his staff are all over him. He's already gotten better and made strides. He has a long way to go physically. That being said, his skill set is off the charts – his ball skills, adjusting to the balls down the field, route-running ability, length, as good as I've been around."

While seniors Austin Mack (6-2, 215) and Binjimen Victor (6-4, 199) headline the returning experience, Wilson is primed for a role in the rotation. Sophomore Chris Olave (6-1, 185) and Wilson are among the top options on the outside. Brian Hartline, who went from interim wide receivers coach in 2018 to permanent position coach for 2019, detailed Wilson's rise March 27 after the team's eighth practice of spring camp.

"My best compliment to him, I told him, 'You don't act like a freshman,'" Hartline said of Wilson. "When he first got in, he'll tell you, it was kind of a culture change. The kid should still be in high school. He's just doing a phenomenal job, whether I'm throwing him at 'Z,' at 'X,' his mental retention's really good. He really wants to learn from the guys. He's buying into the culture. So everything he's doing right now is on the right track, and I'm excited for him to continue to take small steps."

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Miller Gets FaceTime With Coaching Staff

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State five-star center signee Harry Miller won't join the team until the summer, but he'll be fully prepared to contribute upon his arrival thanks to some creative thinking from offensive line coach Greg Studrawa.

Miller, who hails from Buford, Ga., on the outskirts of Atlanta, is on track to be the valedictorian of his graduating class and chose not to enroll early as a result, which also allowed him to take part in his annual mission trip to Nicaragua this spring. And though he's about a nine-hour drive from Columbus, technology has allowed him to keep in constant contact with his future coaches and attend daily offensive line meetings.

"He watches everything we do," Studrawa said. "Every time we meet, I've got him on FaceTime video. He watches all the practice film. We talk on the phone or talk on FaceTime during meetings. We go over it so he hits the ground running and knows exactly what to do."

The Buckeyes lost four starters along the offensive line in center Michael Jordan, right tackle Isaiah Prince, right guard Demetrius Knox and left guard Malcolm Pridgeon. And while it's rare for a freshman to have an immediate impact – especially along the offensive line – Miller's maturity, intelligence and overall physical stature are all reasons the staff believes he can compete for a starting spot this fall.

"Harry can absolutely come in and compete right away," said head coach Ryan Day. "He's really been working hard in terms of lifting and getting himself physically ready with (assistant athletic director for football sports performance) Mickey Marotti. So we expect him to come in here and play right away. That was part of the conversation in the recruiting process."

Miller recently put up 26 repetitions on the 225-pound bench, an unbelievable feat of strength for someone who just turned 18 on April 1. That would have ranked 16th among offensive linemen at this year's



HARRY MILLER/TWITTER

A STUDENT OF THE GAME – Though he was on a mission trip in Nicaragua, Ohio State five-star center signee Harry Miller (left) stayed in contact with his future coaches in Columbus.

NFL scouting combine.

"I'm watching guys who work out at the combine who don't even get that," Studrawa said.

Miller was actually celebrating his birthday while in Nicaragua, but both coaches anticipated that he would still be in the offensive line meeting that afternoon.

"He's still looking over his stuff, even when he's in another country," Day said.

Redshirt sophomore Josh Myers has been taking first-team reps at the position this spring as Ohio State looks to replace Jordan, an All-American, and Myers plans to take Miller under his wing when he arrives

in Columbus, even if they'll be neck deep in competition for the starting spot this fall.

"I'm going to teach him, I'm going to help him, and I'm going to try to make him the best he can be," Myers said, noting that Miller is quick to ask questions of his future teammates.

The two know each other well, as Myers hosted Miller during his official visit for last year's spring game. They even "sit" right beside one another in team meetings.

"I say 'hi' to him every morning," Myers said with a laugh.

Other high school students are getting ready to go to the prom, but Miller chooses

to be a student of the game he loves instead. And though he currently looks up at Myers and former four-star Matthew Jones on the depth chart, that dedication is among the many reasons he could see the field right away.

"He's mature, he's strong and he's really smart," Studrawa said. "The fact that he's on (the iPad) writing down the plays, studying the film and calling me at night asking, 'Coach, what happened on play 19 on period six?' That tells me he's got a chance."

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Day Showcases New Staff At Coaching Clinic



GARRETT STEPIEN

LEARNING FROM THE BEST – Head coach Ryan Day spoke in front of hundreds of Ohio high school football coaches during Ohio State’s annual coaches clinic.

By **GARRETT STEPIEN**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For the first time in seven years, Urban Meyer was nowhere to be found at Ohio State’s 88th annual football clinic from April 11-13.

Retired from his post as head football coach and now the assistant athletics director of athletics initiatives and relations, Meyer’s move created an opportunity for the Buckeyes to showcase their new regime while they wrapped spring camp.

First-year head coach Ryan Day took the three-day event seriously, looking forward to getting around high school coaches in Ohio and beyond when he previewed the clinic April 10.

“Our clinic that we’re putting on is really important to our staff,” Day said after OSU’s practice at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. “We’ve met on it several times. The thing that we’re doing is we’re really going to do a great job in the clinics of having an open-door policy and trying to be as real as we can, and give the coaches what they need in terms of helping the Ohio coaches and anybody else who’s coming. There’s going to be people outside of Ohio coming to this clinic, and we want to help them.”

Ohio State’s clinic kicked off April 11 with an evening session starting at 6:15 p.m. on the indoor field, where a pair of first-year assistants in co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison and passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mike Yurcich presented.

Mattison delved into defensive practice techniques and philosophy, while Yurcich broke down quarterback footwork and drills in the intermediate passing game. Mattison, whom the Buckeyes hired Jan. 7 from Michigan, preached a fiery nature in OSU’s practices with a points system in drills to dictate winners vs. losers and create competition.

“I’m really proud and honored to be representing Ohio State,” Mattison said. “I’m excited for this upcoming season.”

Through film heavy with practice examples of sophomore quarterback Justin Fields, Yurcich built on the philosophies Day taught before Ohio State elevated the two-year offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach to replace Meyer. Yurcich, whom the Buckeyes hired from Oklahoma State, referenced real-time cases where drills – such as an exercise with a hula hoop on the ground and a quarterback standing in the pocket while keeping his feet moving – translated to on-field highlights. In one instance, Yurcich pulled up 2018 quarterback Dwayne Haskins’ throws Jan. 1 from OSU’s 28-23 Rose Bowl win over Washington.

“I just really want to show all the people, especially the coaches in Ohio, how important this is to us and how we’re going to be a resource for them,” Day said April 10. “I got a lot of feedback on how excited the coaches are about coming to practice, about the way we’re recruiting their kids, with the way our staff is just attacking Ohio and the three- to four-hour radius. This is just another part of that, just to show how important that is.”

Before presentations from first-year co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley and offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson respectively dissected defensive back techniques and balancing an offense, Ohio State honored three of its four Ohio’s Finest award winners, from the high school and collegiate levels. After brief speeches from Cincinnati St. Xavier’s Steve Specht and Cleveland Glenville’s Ted Ginn Sr., the two head coaches honored as longtime scholastic leaders, former Buckeyes wide receiver (2004-06) and veteran NFL playmaker (2007-present) Ted Ginn Jr. spoke.

Heading into his third year with the New Orleans Saints, Ginn Jr. reflected on the road he took to a pro career about to

reach its 13th season.

“This is important for me,” Ginn Jr. said. “Not only because of what it stands for, but what my dad did for me. I’m a product of him and what he stands for and what you guys are trying to do. Continue to be who you are, continue to learn, teach your kids and thank you for this award.”

After chalk talk, which broke out position groups with Ohio State coaches on white boards with quality control staffers, graduate assistants and interns breaking down X’s and O’s to the high school contingent, a social hour of beer and wings capped the first night.

The clinic resumed April 12 after the Buckeyes’ practice, a walkthrough before the April 13 spring game at Ohio Stadium, which started on the outdoor fields despite rainy weather.

Coaches watched the two-hour morning practice before presentations started around 11 a.m. on the indoor field with special teams coordinator/assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes and longtime Wittenberg head coach Joe Fincham.

Coaches watched the two-hour morning practice before presentations started around 11 a.m. on the indoor field with special teams coordinator/assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes and longtime Wittenberg head coach Joe Fincham.

After the sessions, with Barnes breaking down how special teams performances translate to offensive/defensive development and Fincham delving into building offensive line-men from the ground up, athletic director Gene Smith introduced Day, who spoke about how to organize a game plan. Smith called Day a “great father, great husband and damn good football coach” before the head coach detailed offensive philosophies.

Day’s talk was followed by the clinic’s featured guest speaker, Boston College seventh-year head coach Steve Addazio, who spoke on using the bunch package to conflict opposing defenses.

Day worked under Addazio as the offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach at Temple (2012) and offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach with the Eagles (2013-14).

“He brings the juice every day,” Day

said of Addazio. “I learned that from him.”

Addazio’s ties run deep in Columbus. He first crossed paths with Day in 2005 at Florida, where the former was the Gators’ offensive line coach and the latter was a graduate assistant under Meyer (2005-09). Addazio’s son, Louie, spent the past three years (2016-19) as a graduate assistant with Ohio State’s offensive line before becoming Bowling Green’s tight ends coach in December.

“Ohio State’s very fortunate to have Ryan Day,” Addazio said after Day introduced him. “I was watching Ryan up here, and I was so freaking proud of him.”

Presentations by Buckeye assistants picked up afterward with sixth-year defensive line coach Larry Johnson lecturing on enhancing players “the Rushmen way” while fourth-year offensive line coach Greg Studrawa shared insight into offensive line fundamentals, which included videos of workouts with heavy medicine balls translating to movements in the trenches.

During those speeches on the indoor field, Focus 3 founder and OSU leadership consultant Tim Kight held a session in the team room discussing “the edge ... where elite happens.”

The afternoon closed with second-year wide receivers coach Brian Hartline breaking down route running and first-year linebackers coach Al Washington analyzing “the art of confrontation” in defeating blocks for a defense’s front seven.

Once the day – which included an Ohio’s Finest award at the pro level for former Ohio State (1984-87) and NFL (1988-97) linebacker Chris Spielman – ended, the clinic wrapped April 13 before the spring game with a weight room and football movement session from 9-11 a.m.

“It’s just about spending some time and making sure they understand how important they are to us,” Day said of the coaches and the clinic.

Punter Proposes To Girlfriend During Spring Game



OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

POPPED THE QUESTION – Junior punter Drue Chrisman surprised his girlfriend, Avery Eliason, with a well thought-out proposal at halftime of Ohio State's spring game on April 13.

By **ANDREW LIND**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's spring game is little more than a glorified practice, but redshirt junior punter Drue Chrisman was more nervous that afternoon than he's ever been on a football field.

"I didn't have the best day punting, but my heart was beating," said Chrisman, who punted three times for 131 yards (43.7 average).

That's because Chrisman – who may be even better known for flipping water bottles upright on social media than flipping the field with his booming kicks – had another impressive trick up his sleeve.

Chrisman brought his girlfriend, Avery Eliason, onto the field at halftime for what she thought would be a kicking contest against the girlfriend of former Ohio State kicker Sean Nuernberger. But just as she went to kick the ball, Chrisman – who was already on one knee as the holder – stopped her and grabbed a box with an engagement ring inside.

"I knew she was the one, it was just a matter of getting down on my knee and doing it," Chrisman said. "This is the greatest venue I could have done it in, and she didn't find out. Everybody else knew, but she didn't. I am surprised I pulled it off, honestly."

When she saw the ring, Eliason held her hands to her face in disbelief. And when she finally said "yes" and jumped into Chrisman's arms, the entire team mobbed the couple.

"I don't even think I heard her say it," Chrisman said. "I blacked out a little, I'm not going to lie. It was sort of an out-of-body experience. It was incredible."

"She had no idea. She just walked out there thinking she was going to kick a ball, and honestly, I think she was more relieved she didn't have to kick a ball. It worked out perfectly. I couldn't think of a better place to do it than in Ohio Stadium, with the history behind the stadium."

Chrisman and Eliason grew up as neighbors in Cincinnati but didn't start dating until about one year ago.

"He's the love of my life, seriously," said Eliason, who attends Brigham Young University but may soon be transferring to Ohio State. "I've known him since we were little. We grew up together, and we've just been through so much. I'm just so happy. I was not expecting this."

The proposal had been in the works for weeks and included conversations with Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith, head coach Ryan Day and the university's compliance department.

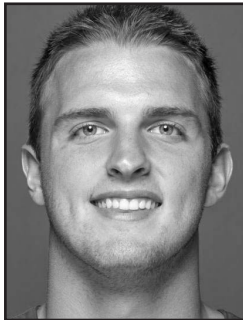
"Let's just say I feel a lot lighter right now," Chrisman said. "It's been building up over the last week. For the coaches and everybody to allow me to do that, it's just a privilege, to be honest."

Day was especially supportive of the proposal, which drew a loud roar from the 61,102 people in attendance.

"He was all on board," Chrisman said of his coach. "It was funny. Right before we did it, he was like, 'Give me the details so I know what I'm doing.' He was awesome."

The couple does not have a wedding date set just yet, but Chrisman anticipates it will happen around this time next year. Maybe it, too, will be in Ohio Stadium.

"Maybe," Chrisman said. "That would be something."



Drue Chrisman

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New Co-DC Greg Mattison Looks Good In Red

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When first-year head coach Ryan Day took over at Ohio State on Jan. 2 and decided to overhaul the entire defensive coaching staff save defensive line coach Larry Johnson, perhaps the most important hire was co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison.

Mattison came to Columbus with 47 years of coaching experience, including spending the past eight years at archrival Michigan. He served as defensive line coach during the past four seasons after four as defensive coordinator (2011-14).

Prior to his stint in Ann Arbor, Mich., Mattison was the defensive coordinator of the Baltimore Ravens for two seasons after coaching linebackers in his first year in the NFL. Before Baltimore, Mattison coached at a litany of FBS programs, including Florida, Notre Dame, Michigan, Texas A&M, Navy, Western Michigan, Northwestern and Cornell.

It was at Florida on Urban Meyer's staff where Mattison met a young Ryan Day, who impressed him from the start.

"When you've coached as long as I have, you get a lot of people that come through the door," Mattison said, "and there are some of them, you look at them, you go, 'Really?' I remember him the first day, I remember him the first time he came in there, and I went, 'Where's this guy from? Where's this kid from?' And somebody said, and I said, 'Man, he's so mature, he's so way ahead of his time.'

"I would run into him over the years after that and see what he's done and where he's gone. 'You're in the NFL now? I believe that. I see that.' Then, when he went here, and I went, 'Yeah, Urban (Meyer) doesn't make many mistakes now. That doesn't surprise me a bit.'

Mattison and Day developed a great amount of respect for one another while coaching together in Gainesville, Fla., and so when Day was constructing his staff, he knew whom he wanted to bring in.

"First off, he's a great man, great husband, great dad, kind of has that mentor feel where you look to him for advice," Day said of Mattison, who turns 70 years old in November. "He's been around a long time, seen a lot of football, a lot of wisdom, and I felt like that was important to have. He's done that. He's somebody that the guys look to with a lot of respect, where he's been, who he's coached, what he's done.

"When he speaks, people listen. And I think that for everybody on defense, the staff and for the players, they look to him as kind of a steadying force there, someone they can grab onto. So when we had an opportunity to get him, that was important for us."

While Mattison is one of the most experienced coaches in the nation, he was not brought in just because he has been around a while. His defenses have been effective, particularly at disrupting offenses' rhythm and pressuring quarterbacks.

"He definitely wanted us to be able to play the kind of defense that he's seen me be associated with," Mattison said of why Day hired him. "It's pretty evident with Larry that it always started up front. You want to be a very physical team against the run and you want to be a pressure team, whether it's a pressure with a four-man rush or it's a pressure with blitzing, or whatever. But you want to not let quarterbacks

sit back there and feel pretty good about themselves."

Mattison coached four consecutive defensive-line units at Michigan that helped the team rank in the top five nationally in total defense and pass defense. When he was the Wolverines' defensive coordinator from 2011-14, his defenses ranked among the top 20 in the country in total defense, pass defense and scoring defense in three of those four years.

Having had success defending the pass in the past, Mattison believes in switching up coverages as opposed to playing strictly man coverage, which Ohio State had done previously.

"I believe in really sound defensive football that you can do, whether you're in the NFL, whether you're wherever coaching," Mattison said. "I think that means you've got to be able to play an eight-man front at times, you've got to be able to play man (coverage) at times, you've got to be able to play zone and you've got to be able to pressure."

While Mattison has enjoyed success at every level, he emphasized the importance of using a strategy that fits the strengths of the players instead of forcing a scheme on the wrong personnel.

"All of those (schemes) depend, really, on the type of players you have," Mattison said. "It's never been schemes that have won. It's what you teach the players to run and then who's running them. And I've been really, really impressed with our players. They are so willing to do whatever you're asking them to do, and they're so into trying to be the best they can be.

"I think there's a set (of) things. If you looked at NFL teams, if you looked anywhere, you'd say, 'Yeah, they do this, they do this, they do this. Good teams do this.' And that's what we're trying to do."

Mattison is thrilled to be a part of the Scarlet and Gray. He said he is very fortunate to be a part of such a great defensive staff, which includes Johnson, co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley, assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes and fellow former Wolverine and linebackers coach Al Washington.

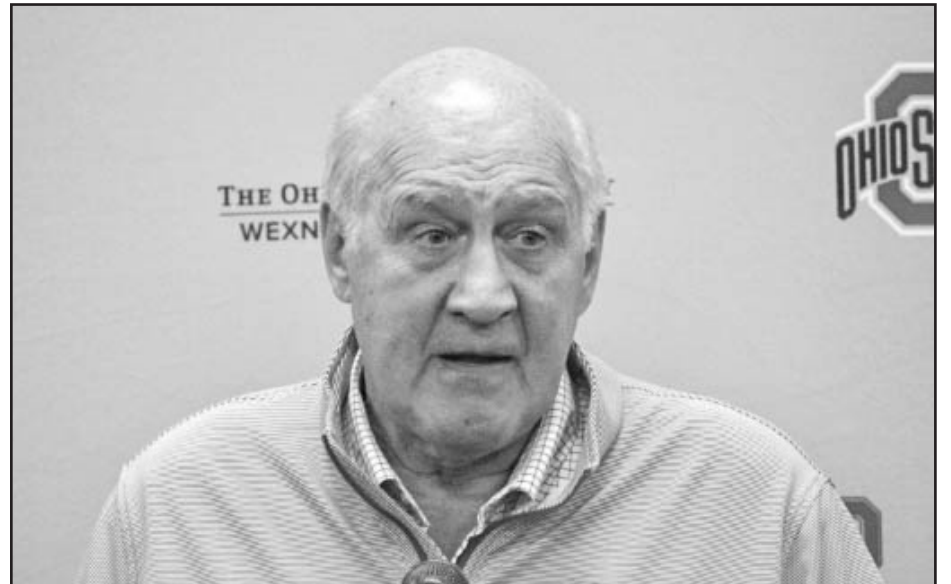
The Ohio State defensive staff is loaded with experienced coaches, coming from various backgrounds. Although Mattison said there are not any egos getting in the way, it can still be a daunting task to guide his staff's ideas toward one common goal.

"That's my job," Mattison said. "I think, when you're a coordinator, that's what the word coordinator means. It means coordinate great peoples' ideas. That's what it is. A coordinator, to me, has never been a guy that comes in and says, 'You're going to do this, this, this, this, this. Listen to me and let's do it.'"

"A coordinator's a guy that coordinates other people's ideas and coordinates other ways of doing things, and being a co-coordinator with Jeff, that's what we do. And that's why we're very happy and lucky or fortunate to have such a good staff, to be able to give you that."

From a coaching perspective, Mattison transitioned well, especially considering he left Michigan for its archrival. Some of his former players razed him, saying they never thought they'd see him in red. The energetic veteran coach responded with a smile.

"Well, that's funny because my wife says she thinks I look really, really good in red," Mattison said.



TIM MOODY

TRADED IN HIS COLORS – After more than a decade at Michigan, Ohio State co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison is happy to be in Columbus.

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Lejond Cavazos Commits To Ohio State, Again



LEJOND CAVAZOS/TWITTER

FULL CIRCLE – Four-star cornerback Lejond Cavazos reopened his recruitment following the retirement of former head coach Urban Meyer but committed to the Buckeyes again on April 12 in part because of his growing relationship with first-year head coach Ryan Day and new co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley.

A little over four months after he reopened his recruitment Dec. 4, Lejond Cavazos found his way home April 12 when he committed to Ohio State. The 6-1, 190-pounder also considered Florida, Georgia, Louisiana State, Miami (Fla.) and Oregon.

The four-star defensive back from Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy re-committed to head coach Ryan Day and the Buckeyes after an offseason of re-evaluation. In the wake of former head coach Urban Meyer's retirement, the Cavazos family stressed its desire to step back and

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Garrett Stepien

see everything through.

As they built their bond with Day, Lejond's mother and father, Melba and C.J., grew more comfortable around the first-year head coach and assistants such as new co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley.

Cavazos first committed to OSU last June after an unofficial visit, deciding on the Buckeyes over Georgia and Oregon, among others. As rumors of Meyer's retirement started to swirl throughout the fall, he took his Nov. 10 trip to Georgia for its 27-10 win over Auburn but followed up two weeks later at Ohio State for its 62-39 rout of Michigan.

In the time since his decommitment, he made several visits. Cavazos stopped by Florida for its junior day Feb. 2 then followed with Miami two weeks later Feb. 16 before competing the next day at The

Opening Regional in Davie, Fla.

He returned with family for the weekend of March 23 and was seen connecting with Day and the Buckeyes' coaching staff while in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for the team's fifth practice of spring camp. Cavazos took to Twitter on March 31 and set his announcement for April 12.

The 247Sports Composite's No. 289 overall prospect, No. 22 safety and No. 42 player in Florida for 2020 rejoins OSU's class and brings its commitment count to eight members for the first time. Cavazos rounds out the group with Cincinnati St. Xavier five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson (6-7½, 295); Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional four-star offensive lineman Luke Wypler (6-3½, 285); Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star wide receiver Gee Scott (6-3, 211); Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral 2020 four-star quarterback Jack Miller (6-4, 210); Rockwall, Texas, four-star wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba (6-1, 188); Cincinnati Elder 2020 three-star offensive tackle commitment Jakob James (6-5, 275); and Norwalk, Ohio, three-star offensive tackle Trey Leroux (6-8, 330).

Spring Game Brings Visitors

There was no shortage of recruits present for the spring game. The following is a list of those in attendance.

Class of 2019 signees: Buford, Ga., five-star center Harry Miller (6-4, 310); St. Louis Cardinal Ritter College Prep four-star wide receiver Jameson Williams (6-2, 170); Lexington, Ohio, four-star outside linebacker Cade Stover (6-4, 225); Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic four-star athlete Steele Chambers (6-2, 215); Fort Wayne (Ind.) Wayne three-star athlete Craig Young (6-4, 200); Dover, Ohio, preferred walk-on kicker Jack Deneher (6-4, 195); and Rutgers graduate transfer cen-

ter/guard Jonah Jackson (6-4, 305).

Class of 2019 prospect: La Verne (Calif.) Bonita 2019 quarterback JP Andrade (6-3, 200).

Class of 2020 commitments: Johnson, Jack Miller, Smith-Njigba, Cavazos, James and Leroux.

Class of 2020 targets: Cincinnati Princeton four-star defensive end Darrion Henry (6-6, 260); Dublin (Ohio) Coffman four-star all-purpose back Michael Drennen (5-11, 195); Mars (Pa.) Area four-star offensive tackle Michael Carmody (6-6, 285); Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star cornerback Luke Hill (5-11, 180); Largo (Fla.) Pinellas Park four-star running back Lawrance Toafili (6-0, 175); Gardena (Calif.) Juniperro Serra four-star wide receiver Lavon Bunkley-Shelton (6-0, 180); and Beach Grove, Ind., three-star center Josh Fryar (6-5, 294).

Class of 2020 prospects: Akron East three-star outside linebacker Bangally Kamara (6-2, 200); Columbus Grandview Heights three-star tight end Luke Lachey (6-6, 215); Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star running back Miyan Williams (5-10, 210); Cincinnati Winton Woods cornerback Miquan Grace (5-11, 190); Gaithersburg (Md.) Avalon three-star defensive tackle Chazz Wallace (6-2, 286); Bollingbrook, Ill., tight end Trevor Borland (6-2, 190); and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas offensive tackle Jahmari Sylvester (6-4, 298).

Class of 2021 commitments: Pickerington (Ohio) North defensive end Jack Sawyer (6-5, 220).

Class of 2021 targets: Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal offensive tackle Donovan Jackson (6-4, 308); Massillon (Ohio) Washington wide receiver Jayden Ballard (6-1½, 164); Solon, Ohio, defensive end Najee Story (6-4, 235); West Lafayette, Ind., outside linebacker Yanni Karlaftis

(6-3, 203); Ironton, Ohio, outside linebacker Reid Carrico (6-3, 218); Philadelphia St. Joseph's wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. (6-3½, 174); Philadelphia St. Joseph's quarterback Kyle McCord (6-3, 195); Roswell (Ga.) Centennial wide receiver Julian Nixon (6-4, 205); and Washington (D.C.) Gonzaga quarterback Caleb Williams (6-1, 190).

Class of 2021 prospects: Cincinnati Roger Bacon running back Corey Kiner (5-10, 205); Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Cardinal Gibbons wide receiver Troy Stellato (6-0, 170); Nashville (Tenn.) Hillwood Camp offensive guard Harisen Miller (6-4, 280); North Little Rock, Ark., quarterback Kareame Cotton (6-1, 185); Akron Hoban wide receiver Brayden Fox (6-3, 175); and Dublin (Ohio) Coffman cornerback Byron Threats (5-10, 190).

Michigan WR Commits to WVU

Bay City (Mich.) Central 2020 three-star wide receiver Devell Washington included Ohio State in his top five April 9, slashing into a list of 11 offers.

Michigan, Michigan State, Purdue and West Virginia joined the Buckeyes on Washington's list. He then committed to the Mountaineers on April 13 while on a visit for the Mountaineers' annual Blue and Gold spring game.

Washington is the 247Sports composite's No. 542 overall prospect, No. 100 wide receiver and No. 19 player in Michigan for 2020. His 6-4, 200-pound frame was on full display March 31 at Massillon (Ohio) Washington for The Opening Regional Canton as a top performer with physicality and ball instincts.

OSU offered Washington last June after he impressed the coaching staff with his performance at Friday Night Lights inside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. Washington subsequently returned July

ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

After more than a year, Ohio State finally offered Cincinnati's Princeton 2020 four-star outside linebacker Jaheim Thomas during a March 30 unofficial visit. Thomas (6-5, 218) took the trip to Columbus with a pair of 2020 Cincinnati recruits in Princeton four-star defensive end target Darrion Henry (6-6, 260) and St. Xavier five-star offensive tackle commitment Paris Johnson (6-7, 295). Might the Thomas offer have a ripple effect for the Buckeyes' as they continue to recruit Henry and Johnson to their 2020 class?

"There's almost guaranteed to be some ripple effect because Henry and, to a lesser degree, Paris Johnson were active in trying to persuade Ohio State to make that offer. They are very close friends. They do want to play together. I'm not going to go so far as to say the push from those two players is what won the day for Jaheim Thomas, but I think there was probably a conversation where they said, 'Hey, are you at least open to this idea of coming to camp in June and working at defensive end and letting us see how you can really fit into the defense?' Because that's been the holdup.

"The fact is that at 6-5, almost 6-6, at 220 pounds as a kid who just turned 16 years old, I don't think there are many people who believe Jaheim Thomas' future is at linebacker, and I think that's been the biggest holdup. He's been extremely reluctant to be open to the idea of playing anywhere else.

"So I would imagine that there's some sort of asterisk to that offer because it's, 'If you're at least willing to try (defensive end) with us.' So the ripple effect is obviously not going to yield any sort of immediate results. I don't

think that Darrion Henry is ready to commit, and I don't think Jaheim Thomas will commit until the summer, probably, at the earliest.

The weird thing is that those kids are going to go down and go to The Opening in Tennessee, so that probably means they'll make another visit to Tennessee. And for Buckeye fans that I think are probably hoping the offer to Jaheim Thomas will bring an end to this worldwide tour, they are probably going to be disappointed. I don't think that's going to happen."

Damascus, Md., 2020 five-star defensive tackle Bryan Bresee (6-5, 290) – the 247Sports composite's No. 1 overall prospect – is set to make his college decision April 23. He's taken three unofficial visits to Clemson since last November, but his last trip to Ohio State came Sept. 22. Has he become an unrealistic option for the Buckeyes?

"The ship hasn't sailed, but I also wouldn't be surprised that if by the time this story is live that he's committed to Clemson. He visited them for their spring game on April 6, and they are the leader for that recruitment. And I just don't think that Ohio State's been in the top three for a year. (Defensive line coach) Larry Johnson is still involved. (Director of player personnel) Mark Pantoni is still involved. (Head coach) Ryan Day is still involved. They're still trying, but there's just sometimes when it just doesn't fit for whatever reason. And I don't think that the fit at Ohio State is right.

"I just think that Bresee is a kid that wants an atmosphere that's a little more laid-back, I guess. The schools that he's looking at like Clemson and Georgia and Penn State are a little less metropolitan. I just think there's – not

that those are small schools, by any stretch – the vibe is totally different. And they have what he's looking for. So I don't think it's over by any stretch of the imagination. Ohio State's still working, still in conversation trying to get his family back on campus, but it just seems every day like that one's sailing further and further away from the port."

How important is the spring game, Day's first as Ohio State's head coach, for recruiting the 2020 class and beyond?

"It's just about relationship building, first and foremost. But especially in Ryan Day's situation, seeing that it's his first spring game as head coach, this is an opportunity for him to show parents and their kids what the program is going to look like on the field, what the product could be, which is obviously huge for him because he's a guy that, if the Buckeyes go out and lose four or five games this year, his entire first handful of seasons at Ohio State could be a totally different result than people are expecting. So it's obviously important from a relationships standpoint with the coaching staff where there's still a lot of guys available that they're recruiting who haven't had a chance to really sit down with the new staff. They've been all over the country.

"This sort of weekend where it's a game atmosphere but not an insane atmosphere where, 'We can't talk to recruits. We're too busy game-planning.' It allows them to get the best of both worlds of not only an offseason visit but a gameday visit at the same time. For the players themselves, it's about meshing with each other and getting to build relationships with each other. So it's huge for the Buckeyes and the future of the program."

27, Sept. 1, Sept. 22 and Nov. 24 for visits.

Ohio State, however, has commitments from a pair of 2020 wide receivers in Smith-Njigba and Scott. The Buckeyes are also prioritizing Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star Julian Fleming (6-3, 210), Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star Marcus Rosemy (6-2, 187) and Washington (D.C.) St. John's College four-star Rakim Jarrett (6-0, 182) among their top targets as they navigate the deep position group nationally.

OSU Closes March With Visitors

Before the calendar flipped from March to April, Ohio State ended its eighth practice of spring camp March 29 at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center with a variety of notable names in attendance.

The recruits included Henry; Cleveland Heights 2020 three-star defensive end prospect Justin Wodtly (6-3, 271); Mentor, Ohio, 2020 long snapper prospect Byron Floyd (6-1, 250); Cleveland St. Ignatius 2020 three-star tight end prospect Sam Daugstrup (6-5, 245); Richfield (Ohio) Revere 2021 offensive tackle target Ben Christman (6-6, 299); Muskegon, Mich., 2020 three-star athlete target Cameron Martinez (5-11, 175); and Scott.

2020 4-Star OLB Gets OSU Offer

Cincinnati's Princeton 2020 four-star outside linebacker Jaheim Thomas picked up an Ohio State offer March 30 while on campus for a visit along with Henry and Johnson.

The 6-5, 218-pounder has made visits to Columbus on multiple occasions over the past year, most notably last June for the Buckeyes' third one-day position camp of the summer, where he believed his performance before the coaching staff had put him close to an offer.

"It was great," Thomas said at the time.

"I liked it a lot, I liked it a lot. We mainly talked about how they're recruiting me hard and how they have high interest in me."

The scholarship finally came nearly 10 months later, following breakthrough bids from Georgia (March 17) and Alabama (March 22) while on unofficial visits to see each school. He has surpassed the 30-offer plateau, with teams at the next level seeing him in a range of defensive positions from outside linebacker to defensive end. Thomas is the 247Sports composite's No. 275 overall prospect, No. 21 outside linebacker and No. 4 player in Ohio for 2020.

Michigan Targets Take In Practice

Ohio State's first practice of April doubled as a key recruiting day with three targets and two offer candidates in Columbus to see the Buckeyes go through drills.

Belleville, Mich., 2021 defensive lineman target Damon Payne headlined the short list. As one of OSU's earlier offers in possession of a scholarship since last April, Payne performed March 31 at Massillon Washington for The Opening Regional Canton and came away as its top junior defensive lineman. After his showing produced a top-five finish among the 2020 and 2021 defensive linemen at the camp, Payne checked in Columbus the next day for his first visit with Ohio State since Nov. 24 for the Michigan game.

"I just take everything as it comes," he said. "See what it's like up there, see what the team's like and the new coaching staff. The Michigan game last season was the last time I was down there, and it was crazy, it was wild."

Payne (6-4, 275) made the trip with two high school teammates on the Buckeyes' radar in the early going for each of the next two cycles – 2021 athlete prospect Jamari Buddin (6-2, 175) and 2022 wide

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2020 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Lejond Cavazos	CB	6-1	190	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Jakob James	OT	6-5	275	★★★	Cincinnati Elder
Paris Johnson	OT	6-7	285	★★★★★	Cincinnati St. Xavier
Trey Leroux	OT	6-8	320	★★★	Norwalk, Ohio
Jack Miller	QB	6-4	210	★★★★	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral
Gee Scott	WR	6-3	211	★★★★	Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	WR	6-1	188	★★★★	Rockwall, Texas
Luke Wypler	C	6-3½	285	★★★★	Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional

Player in the class of 2021 who has issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jack Sawyer	DE	6-5	240	N/A	Pickerington (Ohio) North

receiver prospect Trevor Jones (5-10, 160).

Two other targets from up north watched OSU's ninth practice of spring camp as West Bloomfield, Mich., 2021 running back target Donovan Edwards and Gibraltar (Mich.) Carlson 2020 three-star wide receiver target Ian Stewart visited.

Edwards (5-11, 190), who is being recruited as an athlete, made the visit as planned, sticking around afterward in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center with director of player personnel Mark Pantoni and running backs coach Tony Alford to watch former Ohio State running back Mike Weber (2015-18) go through drills on the indoor field as the Detroit Cass Tech product prepares for the April 25-27 NFL draft. The Buckeyes offered Edwards when he last visited Sept. 22 for the 49-6 win over Tulane, among his first of many scholarships on a list that has amassed 20 bids.

Stewart (6-3, 200) – the No. 541 overall prospect, No. 99 wide receiver and No. 18 player out of Michigan for 2020 – made his latest visit to Columbus after he previously

Continued On Page 22



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Continued From Page 21

checked in March 23 for the team's fifth practice of spring camp, which doubled as student appreciation day. Stewart has held an offer since Sept. 25.

OSU Offers Massive Canadian TE

After he tested among the top athletes in attendance March 31 at The Opening Regional Canton, Windsor (Ontario) Holy Names 2020 four-star tight end Theo Johnson added his 27th offer April 2 when Ohio State extended a scholarship.

The 6-6, 240-pounder registered a 111.00 rating – third among all wide receivers and tight ends at the camp – with a time of 4.67 seconds in the 40-yard dash and a measurement of 35.2 inches in the vertical jump.

Previously in March, Johnson picked up offers from Minnesota, Oregon, Nebraska and Louisville. Before his performance at The Opening, Johnson took visits to Iowa (March 11) and Georgia (March 16), where he has scholarship offers from both programs. Michigan and Penn State are among the other schools heavily involved in his recruitment.

He is the 247Sports composite's No. 240 overall prospect, No. 5 tight end and No. 1 player in Ontario for 2020.

Athletic Hawaiian LB Offered

Ohio State signed Kahuku, Hawaii, four-star offensive guard Enokk Vimahi in the 2019 recruiting cycle. Might the Buckeyes look to Hawaii on the other side of the ball as they get their targets in line for the 2020 class?

OSU offered Honolulu St. Louis 2020 four-star inside linebacker Jordan Botelho on April 2. Committed to the Polynesian Bowl and invited to the All-American Bowl, two of the premier annual all-star games, Botelho has 22 scholarship offers to his name. Before Ohio State, he added offers from Washington State, UCLA, Kansas State, Oklahoma and Tennessee in February.

The 6-3, 200-pounder is the 247Sports composite's No. 106 overall prospect, No. 3 inside linebacker and No. 1 player in Hawaii for 2020.

Recruits Check Out OSU Practice

While the 10th practice of spring camp was closed from media coverage entirely, Ohio State's drills April 3 featured two intriguing recruits in attendance.

Culver (Ind.) Academies 2020 three-star defensive end target Deontae Craig and Carrico were among the notable names on hand.

Craig made his first visit since the Buckeyes offered Feb. 12. Michigan and Notre Dame are also in pursuit of the 6-4, 230-pounder. Craig – the 247Sports composite's No. 551 overall prospect, No. 26 strongside defensive end and No. 4 player in the Hoosier State – ended March with trips to Purdue (March 26) and Notre Dame (March 30, April 2) before Northwestern (April 6).

Carrico checked out OSU as planned. After visits to Michigan State (March 23), Iowa State (March 29) and Nebraska (March 30), Carrico's Midwest swing took him back to his home state where he bonded with Day during the morning on campus. The 6-3, 218-pounder plays running back and outside linebacker for Ironton and has been blowing up with offers – Marshall (March 20), Ohio (March 22), Toledo (March 23), Louisville (March 28), Iowa State (March 29), Wisconsin (April

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

25 Years Ago – 1994

Pittsburgh Central Catholic offensive lineman Chris Kurpeikis decided to transfer from Notre Dame to Michigan, spurning Ohio State for its rival north of the state border.

"I've talked to the coaches at Michigan, and they have told me that I will be able to play there when I get eligible," the 6-7, 295-pound Kurpeikis told BSB. "I think there is a need there for linemen just a little bit more than there is at Ohio State."

The former prep All-American visited the Buckeyes from March 10-11, following with a trip to Michigan the next day. He was slated to sit out the 1994 season due to his transfer and NCAA rules but would be eligible for the 1995 campaign with three years left.

20 Years Ago – 1999

Junior day attracted some of the nation's best prospects in the 2000 recruiting class, bringing a group of 60 high school football players to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on April 17 to see what the program had to offer.

Head coach John Cooper walked the recruits and their parents through tours of the WHAC and campus, as well as a highlight film presentation.

Prospects from 13 different states attended the event, including Mission Hills (Calif.) Alemany quarterback Casey Clausen (6-4, 210), among others.

"This is an awful good group," said recruiting coordinator Bill Conley. "This is as good a group as we have ever had this early in the season. I think it stems from us being No. 1 for most of last season and the success we've had. Plus, our assistant coaches work hard at it. We contact the high school coaches and send out a lot of written invitations."

15 Years Ago – 2004

Nader Abdallah was new to football with only two years of experience, but the defensive tackle signed to Ohio

State's 2004 recruiting class approached his career in Columbus with high expectations.

The 6-3, 295-pounder from Metairie (La.) Archbishop Rummel amassed 43 offers before picking the Buckeyes and inking a letter of intent in February. He made his official visit the second week of January, Abdallah's first trip to campus, which was all it took to be sold on a student-athlete future at OSU.

"Ohio State is a big-time school, in my opinion," said Abdallah, who also considered Florida State and Tennessee. "I think it's the best school in the country, both in terms of football and academics. You can't name one school to me that tops Ohio State. Not one single school."

10 Years Ago – 2009

In the final seven for Tai-ler Jones, the No. 14 wide receiver in the nation for the 2010 recruiting class, Ohio State was hopeful in its pursuit of the Gainesville, Ga., skill player.

"I am going to be committing at my school on (April 16)," he told Scout.com, of which BSB's BuckeyeSports.com was a member.

The 6-0, 175-pounder was set to decide between the Buckeyes and six others: California, Georgia, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Stanford and UCLA.

"How strong their academics are, the experience of their coaching staff, who they brought in with the '09 class and the potential that I see with their team," Jones said of the factors that would go into his decision.

Five Years Ago – 2014

Berea (Ky.) Madison Southern 2015 running back Damien Harris, a one-time Michigan commitment high on OSU, headlined Ohio State recruits at the Buckeyes' April 12 spring game. As the second-ranked running back in his class, he was a four-star prospect with nationwide offers.

The 5-11, 198-pounder came away from the latest trip to Columbus with a positive impression of head coach Urban Meyer and the coaching staff, although Harris wasn't slated for a decision until National Signing Day in February 2015.

Other notable names in attendance at Ohio Stadium for the spring game included Memphis (Tenn.) Whitehaven 2015 outside linebacker Joshua McMillon (6-2, 230), Indianapolis Lawrence Central 2015 four-star middle linebacker Darrin Kirkland Jr. (6-2, 220) and Hallandale, Fla., 2015 four-star outside linebacker Sh'mar Kilby-Lane (6-2, 217), among others.

Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas defensive end Nick Bosa (6-3, 230) and Gahanna (Ohio) Lincoln outside linebacker Jonathon Cooper (6-3, 215) highlighted the 2016 recruits on hand.

One Year Ago – 2018

On the eve of Ohio State's annual spring game at Ohio Stadium, Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic 2019 four-star athlete Ronnie Hickman announced his commitment. In town for an unofficial visit, he pulled the trigger April 13 for OSU.

"Thank you to all of the college coaches who have taken their time and interest to recruit me," Hickman wrote in a Twitter post. "With God's will and blessings, along with hard work and dedication, my dream has come true. I will be continuing my education and football career for the next four years at The Ohio State University."

Hickman (6-1, 200) headlined the 2019 visitors, who included three recruits in town on official visits. Those were Buford, Ga., four-star center target Harry Miller (6-4, 310), Austin (Texas) Lake Travis four-star wide receiver target Garrett Wilson (6-0, 185) and Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley four-star offensive guard commitment Doug Nester (6-5½, 295).

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6), Kentucky (April 8) and Indiana (April 11) and Vanderbilt (April 12) – while his spring surge continues. He was slated to visit the Badgers' spring game April 13, but instead Carrico came back to Columbus for his second trip in 10 days when he watched the Gray's 35-17 win over the Scarlet and came away with an offer.

Commits, Targets See Practice

Ohio State showcased the team's progress through the first month of drills with myriad recruits in attendance for its 11th practice of spring camp April 5.

The notable names included Indianapolis Ben Davis 2019 three-star offensive tackle signee Dawand Jones (6-8, 360); 2020 five-star running back target Kendall Milton (6-2, 220); West Bloomfield, Mich., 2020 four-star safety target Makari Paige (6-3, 182); Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary 2020 offensive tackle prospect Savion Washington (6-8, 340); Cincinnati Elder 2020 three-star tight end prospect Joe Royer (6-5, 210); Cincinnati Elder 2020 offensive guard prospect Luke Kandra (6-4, 290); Louisville (Ky.) Male 2020 three-star wide receiver Izayah Cummings (6-3, 195); Monument (Colo.) Palmer Ridge 2021 wide receiver prospect Kaden Dudley (6-0, 180); and Dayton Centerville 2022 quarterback prospect Chase Harrison (6-2, 185), along with commits Wypler and James.

ATH Makes Long-Awaited Visit

In possession of an offer from Ohio State since last August, 2020 three-star Jeroryan Davis-Hamilton finally made his way to Columbus, spending the weekend of April 6 on campus as the Buckeyes closed spring camp. The 6-1, 185-pounder from Apopka, Fla., had been in touch with Day and Alford throughout the fall and into the spring before the long-awaited trip came to fruition.

As OSU keeps tabs on him, Davis-

Hamilton – a quarterback and running back for his high school team – told Jeremy Birmingham of Lettermen Row that he planned to camp in front of the coaching staff over the summer.

As the Buckeyes sort out their potential position for Davis-Hamilton – the 247Sports composite's No. 812 overall prospect, No. 61 athlete and No. 113 player in the Sunshine State – he holds double-digit offers. He closed March with visits to Auburn and Alabama during a southern swing.

Targets Commit Elsewhere

With the end of the spring comes commitment decisions, including those for Ohio State targets heading elsewhere. Three targets atop the Buckeyes' board for 2020 made pledges the first week of April, but not in OSU's favor.

The first came April 6 when Newport Beach (Calif.) Corona Del Mar 2020 four-star tight end Mark Redman committed to Washington. The 6-6, 250-pounder picked the Huskies over Ohio State and UCLA, among others.

"Washington is truly one of a kind with special people surrounding them," Redman told Greg Biggins of 247Sports. "From the campus to the football program to the coaches and players on the team, everyone and everything stood out for me. I love the school and everything about it, it's a very impressive place, and I love how well I fit in there. They have always been high on my list, and after visiting some other schools, I knew Washington was the right fit for me."

Originally from Ohio with family spread out in the Dayton, Columbus and Cleveland areas, Redman unofficially visited the Buckeyes the weekend of March 5 and came away impressed. Redman said he planned to take his official visit over the summer. The return trip, however, appears unlikely now.

The second and third dominos fell the

same weekend when the 2020 four-star defensive back duo of Southlake (Texas) Carroll safety RJ Mickens and Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy cornerback Fred Davis committed April 7 and 8 to Clemson.

With both recruits in town April 6 for Clemson's spring game, Mickens (6-1, 188) committed on the spot while Davis followed suit April 8. Both were long-time targets for OSU. The coaching staff offered Mickens last April and Davis in September.

Mickens – the 247Sports composite's No. 42 overall prospect, No. 1 safety and No. 5 player in the Lone Star State for 2020 – included Ohio State among his top 11 released March 11. He had last visited Columbus in June for the Buckeyes' Friday Night Lights camp but spent Sept. 15 in Arlington, Texas, at AT&T Stadium as a guest of OSU for the 40-28 win over TCU.

With Davis, Ohio State was hopeful of continuing its trend of turning Conquerors into Buckeyes. The 247Sports composite's No. 33 overall prospect, No. 3 cornerback and No. 3 player in the Sunshine State for 2020 last visited Nov. 24 for OSU's 62-39 rout of Michigan and comes from the same program as several current players in sophomore cornerback Shaun Wade, redshirt freshman cornerback Tyreke Johnson and freshman running back Marcus Crowley.

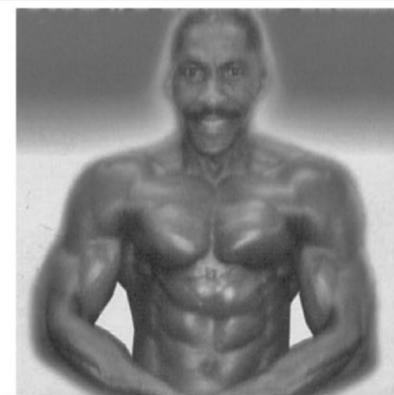
Buckeyes Offer 2020 Florida TE

With Redman off the board, Ohio State acted swiftly in its recruitment of the position April 7 and offered 2020 three-star tight end Jonathan Odom. The Buckeyes' scholarship offer to the 6-6, 240-pounder from Tampa (Fla.) Jesuit marked his 34th.

On March 10, he cut to a top 11 and over the weekend of April 6 officially visited LSU for the Tigers' spring game. Odom's top choices on top of OSU include

Alabama, Florida, Florida State, Iowa, Louisville, Miami, Nebraska, Penn State, Purdue and Vanderbilt as he sorts through his four remaining officials

Among the visits, Odom was slated to see Florida the weekend of April 13 for the Gators' spring game. The 247Sports composite ranks Odom, who is a UF legacy as the son of former Gator (1992-95) and Tampa Bay Buccaneers (1996-99) offensive lineman Jason Odom, is the No. 816 overall prospect, No. 28 tight end and No. 114 player in the Sunshine State for 2020.



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Ohio State 'Feels Like Home' to DeaMonte Trayanum

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Upon arrival March 31 at Massillon (Ohio) Washington's Paul L. David Athletic Training Center for The Opening Regional Canton, DeaMonte Trayanum was impossible to miss.

After he ended his performance with the running backs, Trayanum appeared ready for the ride 20-plus miles north to his home in Akron when Brian Stumpf – president and football events coordinator for Student Sports, an event and grassroots marketing organization dedicated to student-athletes – posed the question.

With the quarterbacks, wide receivers and defensive backs slated to finish the camp, Stumpf suggested that Trayanum stick around for extra work on defense.

"I came in not knowing," Trayanum said. "Brian asked me, 'Running back the only thing you got circled?' I was like, 'Hey, let's get some DB work in.' I've showcased both on my film, (but) I just wanted to come out here and compete with the guys."

Trayanum accepted the challenge and stood out with the defensive backs, putting an exclamation point on the day after he earned running back MVP and punched his ticket to The Opening Finals at The Star in Frisco, Texas, from June 30-July 3.

"I think, honestly, just my size and the abilities I have to do it at my size is just phenomenal and just stands out," Trayanum said. "I think that's what stands me out from all the other players."

Regardless of position, Trayanum already looks like a college athlete.

Up 15 pounds from his junior season at Akron Archbishop Hoban, where he led the Knights to a 15-0 record and Ohio's Division II state championship Nov. 29 in a 42-28 win over Massillon Washington, Trayanum seemingly handled the additional attention with ease.

The 6-0, 220-pounder's versatility ranges from running back to cornerback and strong safety with Ohio State as a front-runner among the 16 offers he has received.

"DB comes natural," said Trayanum, who is listed as a four-star running back and outside linebacker by multiple scouting services. "I play strong safety and corner during the regular season, and I played corner the whole game in the championship game. It's pretty fun out there."

Just last year, Trayanum's first offer came Jan. 29 from the Buckeyes when Ryan Day told Hoban head coach Gregory Harrison of the team's decision to extend



ANDREW LIND

B1G BATTLE – Akron Hoban four-star running back DeaMonte Trayanum's recruitment is shaping up to be a battle between Ohio State, Michigan and Wisconsin.

the scholarship.

Then on the verge of his second year as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, Day has since been promoted to head coach, replacing Urban Meyer after seven years at the helm from 2012-18.

The transition in recruiting has had its ups and downs on the trail, where OSU has gained and lost commitments for the classes of 2019 and 2020 since Meyer's announcement Dec. 4 and Day's elevation Jan. 2, but the move kept Trayanum's process seamless.

"It honestly has (been smooth) because I've known him," Trayanum said of Day. "He's the one that gave Coach G the word that I had the offer. It was a great relationship with him at the start. He was the first real relationship I built with a coach at Ohio State, and next was (running backs coach Tony) Alford."

Trayanum took a return trip down to Columbus for Ohio State's practice on March 19, a "relationship-building" visit in which he touched base with Day and his new coaching staff.

"Honestly, it was just relationship

building," Trayanum said. "Every time I go down there, more and more, it feels like home. I just love the guys down there."

Day's reorganized cabinet of assistants includes linebackers coach Al Washington, who recruited Trayanum last year while at Michigan in the same capacity.

"I just keep close contact with Coach Washington because he's the recruiting coach for the area," Trayanum said of Day's defensive staff, which includes co-coordinators Greg Mattison and Jeff Hafley. "He's a down-to-heart guy. He tells you (how it is), shortcuts nothing. But other than that, he's a great guy and just seeing him at Michigan, the vibes he gave off there and the vibes he gives off at Ohio State is just amazing – never changed."

With the Buckeyes among the suitors, Trayanum sorted through his five available official visits before he settled on short-term plans.

After the OSU visit March 19, Trayanum took in Notre Dame for the first time March 30, followed by Penn

State April 3. He is still trying to nail down dates for Wisconsin and U-M next.

"Awesome visit," Trayanum said of his first trip to South Bend, Ind., where he connected with head coach Brian Kelly and running backs coach Lance Taylor before watching spring camp. "First time ever being there, I really got to truly experience what Notre Dame brings to the table and what type of guys they have – all close-knit, like-minded – while getting the best education."

Fifteen months since Ohio State offered him, Trayanum has the Badgers and Buckeyes atop his current favorites while the Fighting Irish, Nittany Lions and Wolverines battle close behind.

Although he originally wanted to make a decision on a commitment by the end of April or May, Trayanum's process continues with coaches – offensive and defensive – in his ear.

"Honestly, you've got to go there," Trayanum said. "You've got to go there and you've got to fell it out, and you've got to talk to the coaches (in person). At the end of the day, it's just trust in yourself that you're comfortable enough in the environment that you're in."

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OSU Among Donovan Jackson's Early Leaders



DONOVAN JACKSON/TWITTER

HIS SECOND HOME – Thanks to his family's ties to the Buckeye State, Texas four-star offensive tackle Donovan Jackson feels right at home at Ohio State.

By **ANDREW LIND**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Though he's a native Texan, Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal four-star offensive tackle Donovan Jackson grew up rooting for Ohio State. But how exactly does that happen, you ask?

Well, first off, Jackson's parents are originally from Ohio. His maternal grandmother still lives in Cincinnati, and his mother has carried two buckeyes in her purse for as long as he can remember. She regularly makes the peanut butter and chocolate buckeye treats for dessert, too.

So with that, it's easy to see why the 6-4, 308-pound Jackson made it a priority to camp at Ohio State in June 2017 when he was only a rising freshman. And if the Buckeyes continue to make him a priority target, it may ultimately lead to his pledge.

Jackson – who is considered the ninth-best offensive tackle and No. 55 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – holds two dozen offers from some of the top programs in the country, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Stanford, Texas, Texas A&M and TCU. But, as mentioned, an offer from offensive line coach Greg Studrawa and then-defensive coordinator Greg Schiano following his impressive camp performance rocketed the Buckeyes to the top of his list early in his recruitment.

Jackson, the first prospect in his recruiting class to land an offer from Ohio State, finally returned to campus for Buckeyes' spring game on April 13. And, naturally, he was accompanied by his father, mother and grandmother.

"It was a totally different environment (than the one-day camp visit)," Jackson told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "I loved the game overall. It was very exciting to see all that talent on the field go compete."

The spring game is a unique experi-

ence for recruits, as they get a glimpse of game day in Columbus and more one-on-one time with the coaches than they typically would on a Saturday in the fall. They also get to meet with former Buckeyes who have gone on to play in the NFL but return to campus in the offseason.

"Ohio State is unique because not only do you graduate with a great degree, but they provide so much after football," Jackson said, noting how he spent a considerable amount of time on the sidelines prior to the game with former Buckeye offensive linemen Jamarco Jones, Michael Jordan, Demetrius Knox, Malcolm Pridgeon and Isaiah Prince.

He even took a bit of a ribbing from Knox, who attended a rival high school in Fort Worth (Texas) All Saints Episcopal.

Jackson also caught up with Studrawa – with whom he's maintained constant contact since that camp visit – once the spring game ended.

"His main message was player development and how he can improve my game," Jackson said. "He didn't talk about me and what I can do better, but about how he made his current players better."

Jackson's stay in Columbus was brief, and he wasn't able to see much beyond the game itself. He's already familiar with campus and the football program's facilities from his camp visit, but he looks forward to learning more about the academic side of the university during his next visit.

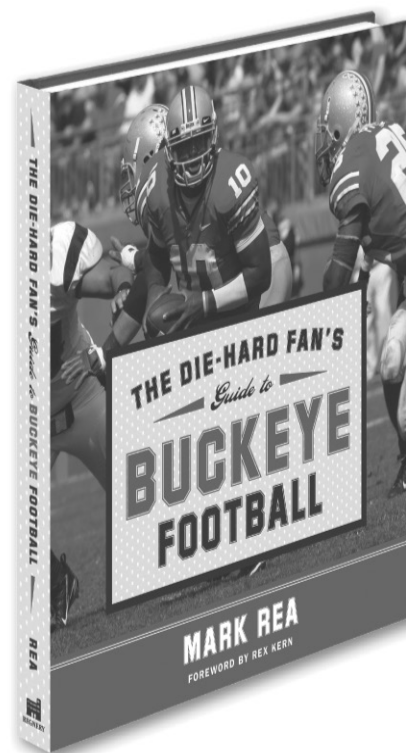
"I'll definitely be back," Jackson said.

With more than two years before he graduates from high school, Jackson is in no hurry to make a decision on his future. But one thing is for certain, and it shouldn't come as a surprise given his family's rooting interest. Ohio State finds itself at the forefront of his recruitment.

"The Buckeyes are on my very short list," Jackson said. "I don't see myself making my decision soon, though. I want to make sure it's the right choice."

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Holtmann Welcomes Next Season's Expectations

Chris Holtmann is amused by the 2019-20 college basketball ranking predictions that seemed to appear within seconds of Virginia capping the 2018-19 season with its first NCAA title on April 8.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

But if Ohio State is going to be among the top teams mentioned by many of the prognosticators, then what the heck, why not embrace it?

"I didn't get into coaching at the highest level of college basketball to be fearful of expectations," the heads men's basketball coach said at his April 10 season wrap-up press conference.

"I also realize, as so many of you guys do, that those way-too-early lists are meaningless. Check the history. I think on one of the lists last year seven of those top 25 teams didn't make the NCAA Tournament. Four of them had losing seasons, didn't play in any postseason.

"So why do they do those? So people will click on them and we know how important that is. That's great, it brings attention to our game. I just don't put credence into any of it."

Maybe not, but you can bet Holtmann and his staff will probably let it slip to recruits that the Buckeyes, coming off a

20-15 season and a second trip to the NCAA Tournament in as many years under his guidance, are getting nationally recognized.

That's why he feels the team is ahead of schedule from what he envisioned when replacing longtime coach Thad Matta on June 9, 2017.

"I wasn't sure this quickly we'd be at the point where we have guys who've had early tournament success, not only getting there but competing," Holtmann said. "I feel the program is very healthy now."

A look at several of those publications would agree.

Sports Illustrated has the Buckeyes ranked ninth to start next season, based on the improvement of sophomore forward Kaleb Wesson (more on him later) and an incoming class that 247Sports at the time had ranked 12th nationally and first in the Big Ten with a trio of four-star recruits: guard D.J. Carton and forwards Alonzo Gaffney and E.J. Liddell.

ESPN sees Ohio State 10th, and USA Today has the Buckeyes 15th, although The Athletic puts them 24th.

Overall, it's a good showing for the Buckeyes. The bad news is they're not close to being the top-rated team in the conference. In fact, all four of the rankings have Michigan State as the No. 1 team in the country, and Michigan ranges from second (The Athletic) to seventh (ESPN). Maryland gets some love in the top 10 as well.

Diallo Commits To Buckeyes

A much-needed reinforcement is on its way to Columbus for head coach Chris Holtmann and the Ohio State men's basketball team ahead of the 2019-20 season.

After months of being in the mix, the Buckeyes landed a coveted commitment on April 14 from 2019 center Ibrahima Diallo.

Evan Daniels of 247Sports first reported the news.

"I picked Ohio State because I have a good connection with Coach Holtmann," Diallo told Daniels. "I have a connection with the coach, and I trust him. He's a good coach. He knows what he's doing and he's got a good program."

The 7-0, 200-pounder picked OSU over Pittsburgh — the only two schools he took his official visits to last month.

He visited Columbus the weekend of March 10 for the team's 73-67 overtime loss to Wisconsin.

Out of the trip, his offer came soon after, with the need for Holtmann to add help in the post.

"I think it's clear that, on the interior, an interior guy's going to be important," Holtmann said April 10 during his season-ending press conference at Value City Arena. "A five man's going to be important."

Diallo's options included Auburn, Central Florida, DePaul, Florida State, Georgia,

LSU, South Florida and the University of California, Irvine.

Originally from Senegal, Diallo plays for Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep. Rankings by 247Sports consider him as the No. 194 overall prospect, No. 41 center and No. 14 player in California for 2019.

Diallo's addition boosts OSU's incoming class to ninth nationally in the 247Sports team rankings.

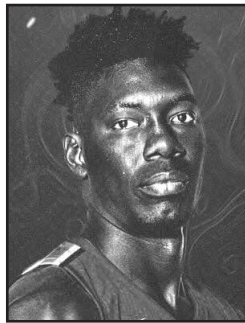
Will He Stay Or Go?

The hype surrounding the Buckeyes is dependent in part on the future of Wesson. The 6-9, 270-pound forward from nearby Westerville (Ohio) South entered his name into the NBA draft on April 10 but will retain his two years of eligibility, Holtmann said.

Wesson is likely to return for his junior season to improve his draft stock, which currently doesn't seem favorable for a first-round selection.

It's become a common practice for players to put out feelers to see if and where they might be drafted. The NCAA made it even more enticing with a new rule last summer that allows a player to hire an agent to go through the process, but if the athlete opts not to enter the draft the relationship with the agent must be terminated in order to remain eligible to play in college.

"I fully support him in going through this process," Holtmann said. "We're going to walk it through with him. I think the feedback's always good. I think Kaleb is bright, and his family, I think, has a good and reasonable understanding of what this

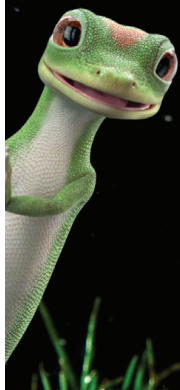


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process is and where he currently is. All that's really helpful.

"I don't know what I would put odds on (returning to OSU), but we're every day kind of getting feedback that gives us and gives him a better idea of where he currently stands."

Wesson was an All-Big Ten honorable mention in 2018-19 after he led the Buckeyes with 14.6 points and 6.9 rebounds per game. He was suspended the final three games of the regular season for unspecified violations of athletic department policy.

Schrage Named Elon Coach

Ohio State assistant basketball coach Mike Schrage has been named the head coach at Elon University, director of athletics Dave Blank announced on April 5.

"We are thrilled to welcome Mike, his wife Amanda, and their children Andrew and Sophia to the Elon family," Blank said in a statement. "Mike has learned under some of the game's best coaches in Bob Knight, Mike Krzyzewski, Johnny Dawkins and Chris Holtmann throughout his career. He has helped lead teams from every program he's worked with to the NCAA Tournament, which includes multiple Sweet 16s and a win in the national championship game. His deep recruiting ties to North Carolina and beyond, his success at academically-rigorous institutions and his commitment to the total student-athlete experience make us excited to have him as the leader of our men's basketball program."

The 43-year-old Schrage spent the last three seasons (two at Ohio State and one at Butler) as an assistant under Holtmann. He helped the Buckeyes to back-to-back appearances in the NCAA Tournament and was instrumental in helping the program achieve the Big Ten's best recruiting class in 2019.

Schrage was officially introduced as Elon head coach on April 8, at which time he thanked Holtmann for taking him under his wing.

"I'm a better coach and a better man so much because of him, and I will forever be thankful," Schrage said. "There's no way I am here in front of you and no way I'd have a head-coaching opportunity if he did not give me that opportunity. I'm going to miss the guys at Ohio State in a big way. Our players, our staff, we were so close."

Schrage is the first assistant to leave Holtmann's staff since his arrival two seasons ago.

"We are so happy for Mike and his family," Holtmann said. "The Elon community will love Mike, Amanda, Andrew and Sophia. Mike has earned this tremendous opportunity, and it's a fantastic hire by Elon. The Ohio State basketball family sends its congrats to Elon University and the Schrage family."

Three Of A Kind

More contributions are expected from

returning freshmen Justin Ahrens (3.2 points per game, 1.8 rebounds per game), Luther Muhammad (7.6 ppg, 2.7 rpg) and Duane Washington Jr. (7.0 ppg, 2.5 rpg).

"Duane, Luther and Justin had moments where they were impactful in us winning games and had really positive stretches of the season," Holtmann said. "And they had other moments as they told me during one-on-one meetings where they saw it was harder than they thought, so it's good."

"They all three had significant moments, and I think that is only going to help them moving forward. They all three need to have tremendous offseasons. The clock moving forward four months doesn't guarantee you're better as a player."

Looking Ahead

As his current freshmen develop and become sophomores, Holtmann is eager to see how his ranked recruits for the class of 2019 will fit into the program.

"Gaffney was the first to commit," Holtmann said. "He's got great potential. He's going to have to find a level of consistency in performance and effort just as we've seen in his high-school career right now. He's got tremendous potential, which is always a fun word but a scary word for coaches."

"D.J. is a competitive, hard-nosed, athletic point guard that is someone we identified really early on as a major, major priority for us."

"E.J.'s a kid who has won two (Illinois) state championships. He values winning," Holtmann said. "All three of them have really natural ability, and at the same time I recognize that all three of them are going to have their share of struggles. There is no question about it. None of them were McDonald's All-Americans, but they certainly would have gotten my vote."

Filling The Roster

With Diallo's commitment there is one available scholarship since freshman Jaedon LeDee entered the transfer portal after the season. It's unclear how Diallo's move affects the status of former Ohio State center Daniel Giddens (6-11, 247), who met with the coaching staff in Columbus in early April.

Holtmann said prior to Diallo's joining the Buckeyes that he was looking for an "interior backup guy" for Wesson. Diallo might fill that role.

"We could also look potentially at another position, another versatile wing/forward," Holtmann said. "That's still fairly fluid right now."

Giddens played the 2015-16 season for Matta before leaving for Alabama. After sitting a transfer season, he played the past two seasons for the Crimson Tide. As a graduate transfer he will have one season of eligibility left.

Adding further credence that Giddens

may no longer be in consideration, Holtmann – again before Diallo's announcement – said his two open spots would not be filled by players who are eligible next season because of limited opportunities to play.

"When you get into the guts of the Big Ten season, you're talking about eight to nine, some cases 10-man rotation, but usually eight to nine in a lot of cases," Holtmann said. "So why would you have 13 guys on your roster that all expect to play and think to play? It's foolish. It creates a team dynamic that's not always healthy."

This past season, he brought in graduate transfer Keyshawn Woods from Wake Forest for one season while C.J. Walker sat after transferring from Florida State. Walker is eligible for the upcoming season.

"He's a bulldog," Holtmann said of Walker. "He's tough, he's competitive. He's got natural intangible leadership ability, and he's also a guy that is certainly a point guard but can play two point

guards together as well. He's going to be a really solid addition."

Another Graduate Transfer Option

According to Rivals national basketball analyst Corey Evans, Ohio State is among the handful of programs interested in UNC Wilmington graduate transfer Jeantal Cylia.

The 6-7, 215-pound Cylia started 32 of 33 games at forward and averaged 13.7 points and 4.6 rebounds for the Seahawks last season. He began his collegiate career at Florida Atlantic but transferred to UNCW following his sophomore season. He was required to sit for one season but was named the Male Iron Athlete of the Year for his work in the weight room during that time.

Cylia – a native of Lake Worth, Florida – also played for the Haitian national team last summer during the FIBA AmeriCup Caribbean 2021 Pre-Qualifier. He averaged more than 15 points per game, which included a 33-point effort in a win over Barbados, as Haiti beat every opponent it faced.



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Ohio State Recognizes 674 Scholar-Athletes

The Ohio State Department of Athletics held its 52nd-annual scholar-athlete dinner April 10 in the Archie M. Griffin Ballroom at the Ohio Union to honor its student-athletes for their academic and athletic accomplishments. A total of 674 Ohio State scholar-athletes were recognized, and a number of senior awards were given out.

The finalists for the Big Ten Medal of Honor – which is awarded to one male and one female student from the graduating class of each member institution who have demonstrated excellence on and off the field throughout their college careers – were revealed at the dinner. The highest honor a student competing in conference athletics can achieve in the Big Ten, the award was established in 1915 and was the first award in intercollegiate athletics to demonstrate support for the educational emphasis placed on athletics.

The Ohio State Big Ten Medal of Honor finalists for 2019 on the women's side are Lauren Boyle (ice hockey), Alyssa Hoying (synchronized swimming), Devon Kerr (soccer), Lilli Piper (softball) and Karrington Winters (track). For the men, the finalists are Marc-Antoine Blais Belanger (fencing), Cole Gorski (track), Mason Jobst (hockey), Martin Joyce (tennis) and Sanil Thomas (volleyball), who is featured on page 34.

Four Buckeye sports programs were recognized for their performances in the classroom.

Women's swimming and diving was recognized for having the highest grade-point average among teams with large rosters, while the women's volleyball team received

the honor among the teams with small rosters. Synchronized swimming was honored for having the most improved team GPA among the teams with large rosters, and the women's basketball team was honored as most improved GPA for the teams with small rosters.

Fencer Gabriella Leccese was the recipient of both the Leann Grimes-Davidge Award and the John Dana Cole Award.

The Grimes-Davidge Award, which is a tribute to Grimes-Davidge's contributions to athletics at Ohio State, is given annually to a female athlete who reflects Grimes-Davidge's outstanding qualities of athletic performance, scholarship, character, campus or community involvement and leadership. A member of the Ohio State women's tennis team, Grimes-Davidge won four state and Big Ten titles. She graduated from Ohio State summa cum laude and received her master's degree from Miami University, where she served as the head women's tennis coach.

The John Dana Cole Award, established in 1966 by a gift through the Development Fund from John D. Cole, provides a one-time stipend for postgraduate studies at Ohio State. The recipient of the scholarship is a student-athlete who shows the promise of success in his/her chosen field and has demonstrated academic achievement (3.00 GPA minimum).

The Corwin A. Fergus Memorial Award was given to Sasha Larocque of the men's hockey team, men's gymnast David Szarvas, wrestler Joey McKenna and synchronized swimmer Alyssa Hoying. Fergus scholars

are male or female student-athletes who have excelled in athletics, achieved academically (3.00 GPA minimum), demonstrated positive qualities of character and citizenship and shown potential for success in a graduate or professional program.

Established in 1967, the award is given in memory of Corwin A. Fergus, a member of the Ohio State football team (1912-14), a graduate of the Ohio State School of Law and later a successful businessman. The award reflects his strong commitment to the pursuit of academic and athletic excellence and his positive contributions to society. The \$5,000 postgraduate scholarships, which each are renewable for up to three years, can be utilized for graduate study or professional programs at Ohio State.

Szarvas also was the recipient of the Pierce Phoenix Award, which is given to a student-athlete who has excelled in academics, athletics and personal growth attained through perseverance and hard work. The award is to be used to attend graduate or professional school at Ohio State, with preference given to someone who intends to enroll in the Fisher College of Business.

In addition, Szarvas joined synchronized swimmer Alyssa Hoying as the Varsity O Scholarship Award winners. The Varsity O award provides each scholar-athlete selected (one male, one female) with a one-time stipend of \$4,000 for postgraduate studies at Ohio State. The ideal candidate maintained a 3.0 GPA or higher during undergraduate studies, earned a varsity letter and performed community service.

Rower Madison Sheahan and Jacyn Reeves of the women's ice hockey team both received the M/I Homes Foundation Award, which has been awarded annually since 1976. The award was one of the first designed specifically to recognize and promote women's achievements in intercollegiate athletics at Ohio State. It provides an outstanding female scholar-athlete \$5,000 for postgraduate studies at Ohio State. The award is based on demonstrated athletic and academic success as well as community contributions through involvement in civic or university organizations.

Five Buckeyes were selected for the Woody and Anne Hayes Award: Bailey Urbach from the rifle team, synchronized swimmer Rachel Warren, Hannah Gantt of the women's lacrosse team and two members of the men's hockey team, Brendon Kearney and John Witala. The award, established in 1979, provides one or more varsity athletes with financial assistance for postgraduate studies. The recipients of this scholarship are student-athletes who have demonstrated academic achievement (3.00 GPA minimum) and leadership qualities.

The following is a list of the scholar-athletes honored.

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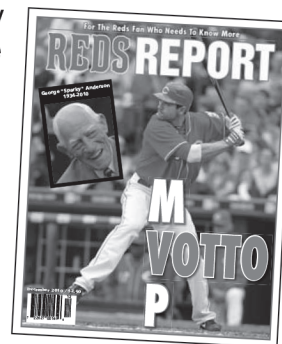


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DANCE – Valerie Celentano, Jr.; Katie Devine, Sr.; Olivia Gutentag, Jr.; Ashley Handley, Jr.; Alyssa Jacobs, Jr.; Kendall Kropp, So.; Kamryn McConnell, Fr.; Lexi Miehl, Jr.; Sierra Nelson, Fr.; Brooke Peterson, Fr.; Adriana Pierleoni, Sr.; Emily Placita, Fr.; Maggie Reinhardt, Sr.; Megan Schmidt, Jr.; Maddie Smith, So.; Gianna Swan, Fr.; Abby Takahashi, Fr.; Hailey Willis Health, Fr.

DIVING – Genevieve Angerame, So.; Alexis Barker, So.; Joseph Canova, So.; Aaron Daniels-Freeman, Sr.; Quinlan DeVal, Jr.; Emma Hellmann, So.; Alexandra House, So.; Jacob Siler, So.; Lara Tarvit, Jr.

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Michigan Hoops Coach Wins Prestigious Award

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

John Beilein might be the most successful men's basketball coach in Michigan history, but his impact does not end on the hardwood.

Beilein was honored with the Coach Wooden "Keys to Life" Award at the Final Four in Minneapolis.

The award is named after John Wooden, the legendary men's basketball coach for UCLA. It is given out annually to a member of the college or professional basketball community who exemplifies Wooden's best qualities: character, integrity and leadership.

The trophy was presented by Athletes in Action, a faith-based organization founded in 1966, during the "Legends of the Hardwood" breakfast.

"John Beilein does it the right way," said Jimmy Dykes of ESPN, who co-hosted the event. "And he's proven you can win doing it the right way."

Beilein recently completed season No. 12 at the helm at Michigan, already as the Wolverines' winningest coach with 278 victories. He has won a total of 829 games as a college head coach.

Michigan finished 30-7 this season and reached the Sweet 16 for the third consecutive year and fifth time in the past seven seasons.

In the age of recruiting violations and scandals in college basketball, Beilein has never been linked to a major NCAA violation and was voted the "cleanest coach" in college basketball by his peers in 2017.

Former Michigan basketball player Austin Hatch told those in attendance of his story and introduced his former coach. Hatch had been severely injured in a plane crash in 2011, not long after accepting a scholarship to play for Beilein at Michigan.

Following the accident, it quickly became clear Hatch would no longer be a competitive athlete. However, he stayed with the basketball program until he graduated in 2018.

"Thanks for following through on your commitment despite the change in circumstances," Hatch said.

Beilein wiped away tears and took the stage, where he spoke about Hatch.

Then Beilein talked about his relationship with Wooden, himself. As a 22-year-old high school teacher and coach, Beilein attended a coaching clinic for the first time, and Wooden spoke.

"I sat there in awe," Beilein recalled, "and wrote down everything he said."

Thirty years later, Beilein took his West Virginia team to play at UCLA. Wooden was in attendance, and after West Virginia won the game, a staffer told Beilein that Wooden wanted to see him.

"He was exactly what we're talking about right here," Beilein said. "He was so humble. He had so many good things to say about my team."

Beilein has enjoyed much success since moving from West Virginia to Michigan,

including two Big Ten tournament titles and two NCAA Final Four appearances.

Beilein credits much of his success at Michigan to the core values he came up with after arriving in Ann Arbor: integrity, unity, passion, diligence and appreciation.

"We started living them, teaching them, and acting them out every single day," Beilein said. "What a difference it made with our team."

Nebraska 'All-In On Basketball'

Nebraska hired Fred Hoiberg to replace Tim Miles as the head men's basketball coach, giving the former Chicago Bulls and Iowa State coach an annual salary of \$3.57 million, which ranks third in the Big Ten.

Beyond Hoiberg's big contract, a \$1 million salary pool for his assistants is up to par with its conference foes.

Ohio State allocated \$1,020,000 to its assistants this season, while Michigan State came in second at \$1,005,000. Wisconsin paid its assistants \$723,600, while Miles' assistants made \$767,467 this season.

"You have to have the best staff," athletic director Bill Moos said. "We've got nice assistant pools in other staffs. By and large, they're your boots on the ground in recruiting. You can have the best X's and O's in the country, and if you don't have arms and legs, it isn't going to matter. You've got to have top assistants."

Overall, Nebraska is paying its four men's basketball coaches \$4.57 million. Moos credited "tremendous revenue streams" from a full share of Big Ten money, along with long-term deals signed and reworked with Adidas and IMG, giving the Huskers the ability to compete with schools with bigger budgets.

"In order to maintain success, we've really got to invest," Moos said, adding that the consistency and stability of coaching staffs are important if the program wants to achieve its goals.

Moos said it was his idea to give Hoiberg a seven-year contract.

"We're all-in on basketball, I can tell you that," Moos said.

Rutgers Reaches Fundraising Goal

Rutgers announced that its R Big Ten Build fundraising campaign surpassed its goal of raising \$100 million for athletics facilities.

While more than 4,000 supporters donated to the initiative, it was head men's basketball coach Steve Pikiell and head football coach Chris Ash who pushed the total past \$100 million with "significant contributions," according to a statement issued by the school's athletics communications department.

"It's only fitting that coaches Ash and Pikiell put us over the top, as it reflects our shared commitment to create an optimal student-athlete experience," athletic director Pat Hobbs said. "We are exceptionally grateful for their support and for the many who invested in our future. We are just beginning to realize our potential. This past month, we crowned two national champions and once again set a record for Big Ten all-academic honorees. Our success will only grow



FRED HOIBERG/TWITTER

CHILDREN OF THE CORN – Junior college guard Jervay Green (left) reaffirmed his commitment to Nebraska shortly after the Cornhuskers hired Fred Hoiberg.

as we continue to cultivate and build resources."

The campaign was launched on Jan. 20, 2016, and kick-started by \$25 million in tax credits under an Economic Redevelopment and Growth Grant co-sponsored by senators Raymond Lesniak and Tom Kean Jr., supported by senator Stephen Sweeney and assemblyman Vincent Prieto, and signed by governor Chris Christie.

"The Rutgers community has been so impactful to me and my family that it only felt right to join the many others who have generously supported this vision for the future," Pikiell said. "This campaign and these facilities will positively impact every student-athlete and will provide the necessary resources allowing them to succeed academically and athletically during their time as Scarlet Knights. I am thankful to be at Rutgers and energized about the future of our program and Rutgers athletics."

The Ash family pledged their gift to acknowledge the generosity of supporters and to directly impact the evolving needs of The Gary and Barbara Rodkin Academic Success Center.

"We are excited to be able to make a contribution to the academic growth of our student-athletes," Ash said. "Their academic success is our top priority, and we are committed to creating the best environment for them to work in as they pursue their degrees."

Edwards Goes Pro

Purdue shooting guard Carsen Edwards announced he will enter the 2019 NBA draft and hire an agent.

"For as long as I can remember, it

has been a dream of mine to play in the NBA. I feel that time is now," Edwards posted on Twitter. "This is the beginning of a new journey, and I am thankful for everyone's support. And I'm ready for the next chapter in my life."

In his three seasons in West Lafayette, Ind., Edwards was a part of two Big Ten regular-season championship teams and became a two-time All-American.

Edwards averaged 24.3 points during his junior season, marking the most by any Big Ten player since Shawn Respert of Michigan State posted a 25.6-point-per-game average in 1994-95. He was even better in the postseason.

Edwards averaged 34.8 points in four games and nearly carried the Boilermakers to the Final Four with his long-range shooting.

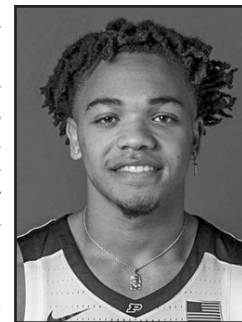
However, Purdue lost to eventual national champion and No. 1 overall seed Virginia in the regional finals.

"Congrats," Purdue head coach Matt Painter wrote on Twitter. "You deserve this. Excited to watch your future in the NBA."

Edwards finished with 1,920 points in his collegiate career, ranking seventh in program history. Forgoing his senior season will cost him a chance to pass Rick Mount (2,323 points) to become the school's career scoring leader.

Having the opportunity to achieve his lifelong dream is worth it to Edwards, however.

"The last three years have been an amazing ride with the best teammates and coaches in the country," Edwards wrote after thanking his parents and reflecting on his religious faith. "I wouldn't trade my time and successes at Purdue for anything."



Carsem Edwards

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MAY 2019



MAY 3-6

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- Fireworks Friday, presented by PNC Bank

SATURDAY — 7:10

- 150th Anniversary Commemorative Mr. Redlegs Bobblehead, presented by Skyline Chili (first 20,000 fans)

SUNDAY — 4:10

- FAMILY SUNDAY, presented by Klosterman Bakery Scooter Gennett Fathead® (Kids 14 & younger)
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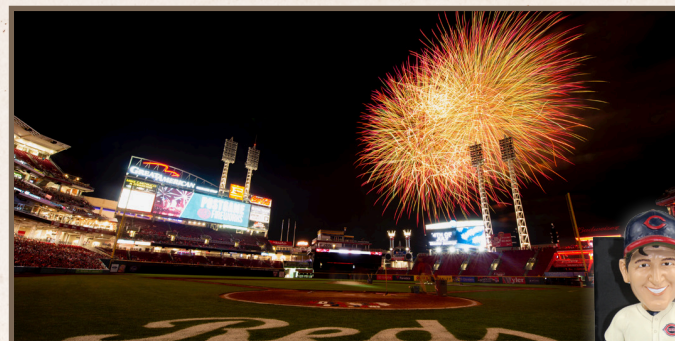
MAY 17-19

presented by Kroger



FRIDAY — 7:10

- Fireworks Friday, presented by Nathan's Famous



SATURDAY — 4:10

- Ernie Lombardi 150 Series Bobblehead, presented by TriHealth (first 20,000 fans)

SUNDAY — 1:10

- FAMILY SUNDAY, presented by Klosterman Bakery
- Family Sunday Ticket Offer* 1 Full-Price Ticket + 3 Half-Price Tickets
- Joey Votto PLAY BALL Arm Sleeve, presented by Tri-State Chevy Dealers (Kids 14 & younger)



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Laczynski Puts NHL On Hold For Final Year At OSU

Tanner Laczynski was polite as always when answering questions and he chuckled when told that after the interview he would not be asked about a certain topic anymore.

The inquiring mind from BSB wanted to know – again – if the Ohio State men's hockey forward would be returning for another season, his fourth for the Buckeyes.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

"I don't mind. No problem at all," he said, before saying that, yes, he would be a Buckeye one more time.

He's used to the question and the answer.

Laczynski, the 169th pick (sixth round) in the 2016 NHL draft was asked if he would be back after posting 32 points (10 goals, 22 assists) in 34 games to rank 11th among NCAA freshmen in 2016-17 with .94 points per game.

He did stay, and he was asked again following his sophomore season when he was a second-team All-American and a first-team All-Big Ten selection as the Buckeyes reached the Frozen Four for the second time, the other being 1998.

There was speculation he would turn pro after his just-completed injury-marred junior season because, even though OSU qualified for the NCAA tournament a third straight season, eight seniors are leaving and the program might be hard-pressed to make it four in a row.

Laczynski went from 47 points (17 goals, 30 assists) in 41 games as a sophomore to 30 points (10 goals, 20 assists) in just 27 games this past season when OSU won its first regular-season title since 1972.

Yet, he's ready for one more season in Columbus.

"It's always going to be hard choosing between going pro and staying here," he told BSB on April 12. "I'm fortunate enough to be in a position to make that decision. I feel confident in my decision."

Head coach Steve Rohlik obviously is pleased to have Laczynski back. With him and Columbus Blue Jackets prospect Carson Meyer, the Buckeyes (20-11-5 last season) have anchors at the forward positions.

"Tanner made the decision to stay for all the right reasons, get that education and continue to develop and be a part of that," Rohlik said April 12. "He knows he's got a lot of room to grow. That's the excitement."

"He and Carson, they want to get better. They know they have all the resources here to improve in all areas, and they know they can get a degree at the same time. It means a lot to our program."

Laczynski has 109 points (37 goals, 72 assists) in 102 career games and became the third Buckeye since 2003 to reach the century mark as a junior. The others were Blue Jackets forward Ryan Dzingel (108; 2011-13) and senior Mason Jobst, who had 128 points through the 2017-18 season.

"A lot of guys say when they leave school early they wished they had finished college," Laczynski said. "You



OHIO STATE HOCKEY/TWITTER

ONE MORE RUN – Though he was drafted by the Philadelphia Flyers in 2016, Ohio State forward Tanner Laczynski will hold off on playing in the NHL for one final shot at a Frozen Four.

never hear a guy say he stayed too late. I want to be able to finish college, get my degree so I don't have to worry about school once I'm done here and move on in my career."

He missed three games early in the season with an injury and sustained a shoulder injury Jan. 19 that caused him to miss the next six games.

"It was kind of an unfortunate series of events this year being injured twice and missing nine or 10 games," Laczynski said. "It was unfortunate for me but for my teammates as well not being able to be out there with those guys."

There are physical injuries and then there are the mental scars of losing 2-0 to Denver in the first round of the NCAA West Regional after the Buckeyes thought they could win the program's first national title.

"Obviously, it hurts as much every single year," Laczynski said. "When you're a freshman it hurts, but you know you've got three more years. Now you've only got one more year. That's motivation in the locker room and will be instilled in the guys coming in next year."

Laczynski sounds like a man on a mission.

"One of the biggest goals of mine is to kind of take over and definitely be one of the top people in the NCAA next year," he said.

Taking Charge

Laczynski, junior forward Ronnie Hein, junior defenseman Gordi Myer and sophomore forward Austin Pooley were selected captains after a team vote. They replace Jobst and senior defenseman Sasha Larocque.

"It's a tremendous honor," Laczynski

said. "There's some big shoes to fill in Mason and Sasha, but we have good core coming back and the leaders we have will do a good job of leading this team next year."

"I try to lead by example on the ice and have fun with the guys in the locker room, but come game day I'm pretty serious."

Pooley's uncle, Paul Pooley, was an OSU captain for the 1982-84

Net Result

Sophomore Tommy Nappier will enter next season as the undisputed No. 1 goalie, a role he is unaccustomed to.

As a freshman, he made six appearances (four starts) and had a 4-0-0 record with a 1.33 goals-against average and .956 save percentage as he played behind Sean Romeo, who was a Mike Richter Award semifinalist for the top goalie in the nation.

This past season Romeo and Nappier evenly split the 34 regular-season games, but Nappier got the nod in the Big Ten semifinal 5-1 loss to Penn State and the game vs. Denver.

Nappier was 12-4-3 with a 1.86 goals-against average, a .934 save percentage and four shutouts to earn first-team All-Big Ten honors and semifinalist selection for the Richter.

Romeo was a senior this past season. Sophomore Evan Moyse, who played one career game, is the other returning goalie. Ryan Snowden from Central Illinois of the United States Hockey League will be a freshman.

Rohlik is not concerned that Nappier won't have Romeo to push him.

"I think Tommy will react like he always does. He'll continue to be Tommy," the coach said. "That's what makes him

special. He just goes about his business the same way.

"We're really excited. He's going into the season like, 'This is my team.' He knows he's got to continue to work hard and mature, but this is his next challenge. He went from five, six games to half the games to who knows what next season."

Buck-Ice

Jobst, a Speedway, Ind., native, was named second-team West All-American for the second time on April 12. He was also honored in 2017 for his sophomore season. He is the second Buckeye to earn All-America honors twice, joining forward Hugo Boisvert, who was a first-team selection in 1998 and a second-team honoree in 1999.

Jobst finished the past season with 36 points (17 goals, 19 assists) in 36 games. For his career he had 164 points (69 goals, 95 assists) in 150 games. On April 2 he signed a two-year, entry-level contract with the New York Islanders.

Meanwhile, Larocque signed with the Colorado Eagles of the American Hockey League, and senior defenseman Tommy Parran joined Adirondack of the ECHL.

Of note, senior forward Brendon Kearney on April 2 was named the winner of the Derek Hines Unsung Hero Award, presented by the Hockey Commissioners Association (HCA).

The award honors the former Army player who was a "consummate team player and team builder." Hines played at Army from 1999-2003 and was a four-year letter winner as well as a co-captain his senior season. He was killed in the line of duty Sept. 1, 2005, in Afghanistan.

Kearney is the first Buckeye to win the award.

Freshman Zach Dezenzo Steps Up At Shortstop

When starting shortstop Noah West went down with a season-ending injury, the Ohio State baseball team lost a key part of its program out on the field.

Although mainly known for his ability as a defensive player, West had hit .284 for

FROM THE STRETCH

Joe Dempsey

the Buckeyes through 19 games prior to his injury.

"It is tough," Ohio State head coach Greg Beals said of the injury. "Noah West is our shortstop and kind of the catalyst of our defense – also, the leadoff guy in our lineup."

In West's absence, freshman third baseman Zach Dezenzo moved over to shortstop.

"Zach Dezenzo has made that shift over to shortstop pretty well," Beals said. "He's a very talented young man, Zach is, so he's kind of relying on that athleticism, relying on the baseball player that's inside him, and just go make plays."

Dezenzo is hitting .264 and slugging .472 in 34 starts through April 15. The Alliance, Ohio, native has hit six home runs and 25 runs batted in, which both rank third on the team behind junior right fielder Dominic Canzone and senior left fielder Brady Cherry.

In addition to his success at the plate, Dezenzo had improved on defense in just a short amount of time. Canzone, a junior captain, likes the versatile infielder's mind-set.

"At first, you saw he was a little bit uncomfortable, but once he saw that he can

really play, the last couple days he's really been fielding his position well," Canzone said of the freshman. "And that's huge, because you've really got to be solid up the middle on defense. So he's been a huge part to our success lately on defense. And for me, the biggest part about his character is that he can have a bad day at the plate, but when he's out on the field, you don't see it translate ever, so that's huge."

Redshirt freshman left-handed starting pitcher Seth Lonsway said it was difficult to lose West, but he also likes what he's seen from Dezenzo.

"A lot of upside," Lonsway said of Dezenzo. "He's got some room to improve, and I think he's got a really good career ahead of him. He's shown some signs of a great player with a lot of tools. I think he's going to be definitely a guy where he's going to be a key role player in the years to come, so I'm definitely excited for him."

Despite losing his junior season to injury, West, a Westerville, Ohio, native, has remained with the team in practices and games, helping the younger infielders adjust to more playing time. Lonsway was quick to mention his off-the-field contributions.

"Westy has been very impactful," Lonsway said, "helping them and giving them some tips and pointers and stuff like that as far as the speed of the game."

Consistent Canzone

While the Buckeyes have dealt with a handful of injuries to starters this season, finding balance and consistency has been difficult as a team.

Canzone, however, has been a model of consistency – really since coming to Columbus. After slashing .343/.390/.458 in 49 games as a freshman, Canzone slashed

.323/.395/.447 in 60 games as a sophomore.

The Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit product had hit a total of only seven home runs in his first 109 games as a Buckeye through two seasons. Canzone (6-1, 190) has found his power as a junior, tallying nine homers through 37 games.

Amid a career year, Canzone is slashing .360/.446/.620, and his 54 hits, nine dingers and 19 walks lead the team. The Sagamore Hills, Ohio, native has also scored a team-high 40 runs, which also leads the Big Ten.

"I just hope Dom keeps doing what he does," Beals said of Canzone. "Dom can hit, he can flat-out hit. He's got a knack for finding the barrel on his bat and squaring balls up. I just need Dom to be Dom, and his leadership comes a lot by example, as well. With adversity, that's where you really define character."

As of April 15, Canzone had reached base in an astounding 33 consecutive games, consistently giving the Scarlet and Gray opportunities to score runs. Beyond the statistics, body language and hustle are of more importance to Canzone.

"I don't really care about the numbers so much as just, honestly, trying to lead this team any way I can. If I'm having a bad hitting day, I can't let that affect me on the field," Canzone said. "Also, just being a good leader, my emotions should never tell you how I'm doing in the game. It should always be kind of levelheaded and just trying to lead the way for the guys in how you should go about your business."

A throwback player by nature, Canzone is businesslike on the diamond. He chases down foul balls, he runs out routine grounders and he's not afraid to get dirty. He is a team captain who takes leading by example to heart.

Canzone does not take a play off and

attributes his success to maintaining consistency in everything he does.

"It's honestly everything," Canzone said of the importance of consistency. "Just going out every single day, getting your work in and being able to be consistent is what makes a great ballplayer and what can make a great team if everybody is consistent. And you can just have quality at bats on a consistent basis, limit the errors, limit the mental mistakes – it's just huge throughout the game if you can be a consistent player."

Military Appreciation Night

The Ohio State baseball program hosted Military Appreciation Night at Bill Davis Stadium when the Buckeyes took on Northwestern on April 5.

Twenty-two central Ohio Marine Corps enlistees were sworn in during an enlistment ceremony, which was administered by Marine Capt. Matthew Wolf.

Additionally, the game featured a ceremonial first pitch, recognizing Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. James Hopper. Gunnery Sgt. Hopper served two tours in Iraq. He was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with a Distinguishing Device for Valor in Combat.

"It means a lot to me," Beals said of the event. "It's something I made sure we continued. I started it over at Ball State. My wife's side of the family is all military. One of her brothers, one of her sisters – both served, and served in wartime. When loved ones are overseas and in harm's way, it's a different meaning."

"So it means a lot to me and it's something that I'll certainly want to keep continuing. It's a small gesture, quite honestly, on our part. It's a small gesture, but it is a gesture and a show of respect."



OHIO STATE BASEBALL/TWITTER

NEXT MAN UP – Freshman shortstop Zach Dezenzo was thrust into duty when starter Noah West went down with a season-ending injury but has hit .264 with six home runs through 34 starts this season.

Perseverance Pays Off For Setter Sanil Thomas

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Sanil Thomas will go down as one of the best setters in the illustrious history of Ohio State men's volleyball. Four years ago that statement would have seemed more like a distant pipe dream than reality.

Thomas was playing for the Ultimate Volleyball Club as a senior in high school with aspirations to play collegiately but had only been looked at by Division II and III schools despite earning All-Illinois accolades twice at Orland Hills (Ill.) Victor J. Andrew.

Those schools did not interest Sanil because he wanted to attend an institution with better academic programs. However, when he would actually receive email responses from coaches, many read, "We're looking in a different way, we're looking at someone taller."

Still uncertain of his future, the 6-0 Thomas applied to Ohio State with knowledge of the Fisher Business School and its national prowess but had not given up on his dream.

"I was like, 'This could be a good shot,'" Thomas recalled. "And then, it had men's volleyball, so I was like, 'Worse comes to worst, I'll just try out on the team.'"

Around the same time, Thomas' club director at the Ultimate Volleyball Club, Keith Kujawa, reached out to Ohio State head coach Pete Hanson.

Kujawa told Hanson about Thomas, who had already been accepted to Ohio State and just wanted someone to give him a chance.

Hanson made the trip to Chicago to see Thomas play in a tournament, which Thomas remembers vividly.

"I'm playing and I see a coach wearing his Ohio State stuff and I was like, 'I don't know if he's watching me or somebody else, but this could be my shot,'" Thomas said. "And then he walks away and I'm like, 'Darn, I missed it.'"

Hanson returned to watch more volleyball, but following the tourney, Thomas did not know what to expect. Then, he had a conversation he will never forget.

"I'm leaving the tournament, I see a voice mail from my club director, and I look at it and it's just like, 'Call me back, right away, right now,'" Thomas recalled. "I'm just like, 'This is something serious, did I forget something? My jersey? My shoes?' So I pick up the phone and call him back and was like, 'Hey what's going on? Is everything OK?'"

"And then he's just like, 'How would you like to be a Buckeye?' In that moment, all my cares, all of the pressure, just kind of just flew away, and I was just so thankful and so grateful. He was like, 'Coach Hanson saw you play, likes what he sees, so there's a spot for you on the team next year.' I was like, 'That's amazing.' I told my dad, he started crying. It was a good time, a little emotional, but a good time."

Since then, Ohio State has won two national championships and Thomas has etched his name in the program record books. Hanson is glad he took a look at the kid from the suburbs of Chicago, who didn't have a major offer to his name.

"He's meant a lot," Hanson said of Thomas. "He didn't have a chance to play a lot his first two years because he was



OHIO STATE VOLLEYBALL/TWITTER

WAITING HIS TURN – After sitting behind an All-American for two seasons, senior setter Sanil Thomas earned first-team All-MIVA honors last season after he led the country with 11.28 assists per set.

behind an All-American, who won a couple of national championships in Christy Blough. But the unique thing about Sanil was that he was our backup setter, but he was willing to play other positions to get on the court to help us win matches, and that was being a serve specialist or a digging specialist in a position that he wasn't familiar with.

"And that's just been Sanil's whole mind-set and his thought process about being at Ohio State: 'Whatever I can do to help the program and help the program be successful, call on me, because I'll do that for you.'"

Thomas said he did not ever expect to play at Ohio State, especially while backing up Blough, but asked what he could do to help.

"They basically said, 'If you can serve the ball well, then you'll be on the court at some point,'" Thomas said. "So I was like, 'All right, I'll serve as best as I can, try to just focus on that.' And digging some balls, I've never been a great digger, but I worked a lot with Coach (Kevin) Burch about a lot of technical stuff. And he helped me a lot with that kind of stuff, so that definitely helped, but I don't know if I was nervous or anything because I was like, 'Hey, if this helps the team, then that's what I'm going to do.'"

Thomas carved out an important role as both a serving and digging specialist, helping the Scarlet and Gray win the back-to-back national titles in his first two seasons. Then Blough graduated and Thomas stepped into the setter role, which Hanson, who is a Hall of Famer, values immensely as a coach.

"It's just like having a solid point guard or a solid quarterback," Hanson said of the setter position. "It's the same kind of

responsibility. It's the same kind of thing, where he has to touch the ball on most every rally, and he has to touch it well for us to be successful. And so there's a lot of pressure on a setter to make good decisions, to make fast decisions, to then execute the play and do a lot of other things, and so it's a very challenging position.

"But those kind of individuals that excel at that stuff have the kind of traits that he has, where it's team-first, does a lot of extra work outside watching film, talking to the coaches, putting together a game plan, getting extra reps. Those types of things are what separates the average players from the really good players. And that's what separated Sanil."

Thomas flourished as the Buckeyes' starting setter, leading the team to the national semifinals and being named an honorable-mention All-American by the American Volleyball Coaches Association and Volleyball Magazine.

"I think Sanil means a lot to this team," fifth-year senior Blake Leeson said. "He's definitely who we rally around, who everybody looks to for guidance and he's the captain of our team. And he runs the show. He's the setter so everything goes through him, and I think that he plays a very important role to the success of our team."

In his year as the starting setter at Ohio State last season, Thomas led the nation in assists per set at 11.28 while guiding the Buckeye offense to a .343 team hitting percentage and 13.44 kills per set, which both ranked within the top three in the country.

Leeson said Thomas' sets make "the world of a difference," while Thomas downplayed his assist numbers, saying, "I think that gets a little blown out of

proportion."

Thomas instead points to all of the talented hitters on his team as the reason for his assists. His humility is just one reason the Tinley Park, Ill., native is so well-liked among his teammates.

"Off the court he's just a real personable, funny guy," Leeson said of Thomas, who is nicknamed Sunny. "He always lightens up situations and is just a positive guy all around. It sounds cliché, but he's just a fun guy to be around. He's just a genuine human being."

When Thomas reflects back on his time in Columbus, he is overwhelmed with gratitude that Hanson was willing to give him an opportunity.

"It's just kind of awesome," Thomas said of his journey. "I'm just really glad I definitely didn't take no for an answer. I just kind of just kept going. I know someone told me when I was in high school, just always focus on what you can control. And when I was getting recruited and stuff like that, people said, 'You're not tall enough.' I was like, 'All right, I can't change that, so there's no point in me getting mad at it. I'm going to try and jump as high as I can, I'm going to try to be as fast I can, be the best setter that I can,' just stuff that I could do and not focus on what I can't control, but focus on what I could control. And that just changed everything."

"Looking back, it's been a crazy ride. I mean, I did not expect this in any way. I didn't expect to be playing, I didn't expect to start, I didn't expect any of that, but it all just kind of came through hard work. And I'm just fortunate that the stars aligned to where I was able to make the most of this opportunity. It's been the greatest four years of my life, and I just owe it all to these guys and my family."

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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

2019 FOOTBALL (All Times TBA)

April 13 SPRING GAME, Gray 35, Scarlet 17.

Aug. 31 FLORIDA ATLANTIC.

Sept. 7 CINCINNATI; **14** at Indiana; **21** MIAMI (OHIO); **28** at Nebraska.

Oct. 5 MICHIGAN STATE; **18** at Northwestern; **26** WISCONSIN.

Nov. 9 MARYLAND; **16** at Rutgers; **23** PENN STATE; **30** at Michigan.

Dec. 7 Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (20-15, 8-12 BIG TEN)

Nov. 1 UNC PEMBROKE (exhibition), W 81-63; **7** at Cincinnati, W 64-56; **11** PFW, W 107-61; **15** at Creighton, W 69-60; **18** SOUTH CAROLINA STATE, W 89-61; **20** SAMFORD, W 68-50; **23** CLEVELAND STATE at St. John Arena, W 89-62; **28** SYRACUSE, L 72-62.

Dec. 2 MINNESOTA, W 79-59; **5** vs. Illinois at Chicago, W 77-67; **15** BUCKNELL, W 73-71; **18** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 75-56; **22** vs. UCLA at Chicago, W 80-66; **29** HIGH POINT, W 82-64.

Jan. 5 (8) MICHIGAN STATE, L 86-77; **9** at Rutgers, L 64-61; **12** at Iowa, L 72-62; **18** (19) MARYLAND, L 75-61; **23** PURDUE, L 79-67; **26** at Nebraska, W 70-60; **29** at (5) Michigan, L 65-49.

Feb. 2 RUTGERS, W 76-62; **7** PENN STATE, W 74-70; **10** at Indiana, W 55-52; **14** ILLINOIS, L 63-56; **17** at (11) Michigan State, L 62-44; **20** NORTHWESTERN, W 63-49; **23** at (24) Maryland, L 72-62; **26** (22) IOWA, W 90-70.

March 2 at (14) Purdue, L 86-51; **6** at Northwestern, L 68-50; **10** (21) WISCONSIN, L 73-67 (OT); **14** Big Ten Tournament Second Round at Chicago vs. 9-seed Indiana, W 79-75; **15** Big Ten Tournament Third Round at Chicago vs. 1-seed Michigan State, L 77-70; **22** NCAA Tournament First Round at Tulsa, Okla., vs. 6-seed Iowa State, W 62-59; **24** NCAA Tournament Second Round at Tulsa, Okla., vs. 3-seed Houston, L 74-59.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (14-15, 10-8 BIG TEN)

Oct. 28 IUP (exhibition), W 72-50.

Nov. 6 (22) USF, L 71-47; **9** DETROIT MERCY, W 55-41; **11** at (2) UConn, L 85-53; **16** at Sacramento State, canceled; **18** at Stanford, canceled; **29** NORTH CAROLINA, W 76-69.

Dec. 2 CINCINNATI, W 69-56; **5** at Washington, L 69-59; **16** FLORIDA at St. John Arena, W 46-41; **20** vs. Butler at West Palm Beach, Fla., L 66-53; **21** vs. Virginia Tech at West Palm Beach, Fla., L 81-73; **28** at Purdue, L 60-42; **31** NEBRASKA, L 78-69.

Jan. 5 at (4) Maryland, L 75-69; **10** (25) INDIANA, W 55-50; **14** (25) MICHIGAN STATE, W 65-55; **17** at Penn State, W 76-71 (OT); **20** at Michigan, L 62-58; **24** (11) MARYLAND, L 70-57; **28** at Minnesota, W 65-55; **31** ILLINOIS, W 78-70.

Feb. 3 at Northwestern, L 76-59; **6** PENN STATE, W 78-73; **10** (16) IOWA, L 78-52; **14** at (23) Rutgers, W 59-39; **17** WISCONSIN, W 70-68; **21** at Michigan State, W 77-70; **28** at Wisconsin, W 61-50.

March 3 RUTGERS, L 66-56; **7** Big Ten Tournament Second Round at Indianapolis vs. 13-seed Wisconsin, L 73-63; **20** WNIT vs. MOREHEAD STATE, L 71-61.

BASEBALL (16-12, 2-1 BIG TEN)

Feb. 15-17 Snowbird Classic at Port Charlotte, Fla., vs. Seton Hall, W 4-3; W 6-0; W 5-3; **18** at FGCU, W 2-0; **22** Kleberg Bank Tournament at Corpus Christi, Texas, vs. BYU, L 5-1; **23** Kleberg Bank Tournament at Corpus Christi, Texas, vs. Texas A&M Corpus Christi, L 8-7; **24** Kleberg Bank Tournament at Corpus Christi, Texas, vs. Oral Roberts, W 8-3; **25** Kleberg Bank Tournament at Corpus Christi, Texas, vs. Texas A&M Corpus Christi, L 3-2.

March 1-4 at Bethune-Cookman, L 4-3; W 6-0; W 16-9; L 8-3; **9** Greenville Drive 1st Pitch Invite at Greenville, S.C., vs. Michigan State, L 7-1; **10** Greenville Drive 1st Pitch Invite at Greenville, S.C., vs. Western Carolina, L 8-5; **11** Greenville Drive 1st Pitch Invite at Greenville, S.C., vs. Furman, L 11-10 (10 innings); **12** at Wofford, L 8-6; **15-17** LIPSCOMB, W 14-3; L 9-3; W 7-6; **19** NORTHERN KENTUCKY, W 10-8; **21-24** HAWAII, W 6-4; W 6-5; W 7-5; L 15-3; **27** TOLEDO, W 9-4; **29-31** at Rutgers, W 5-3 (11 innings); W 2-0; L 3-2 (15 innings).

April 3 CINCINNATI, L 9-5; **5-7** NORTHWESTERN, L 13-5; L 7-2; L 10-4; **9** at Ohio, W 10-8; **10** DAYTON, W 4-2; **12-13** MICHIGAN, W 10-5, W 10-4; L 6-2; **16** XAVIER, 6:35 p.m.; **19-21** at

Maryland, 6:30 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **26-28** IOWA, 6:35 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.

May 1 at Miami (Ohio), 5 p.m.; **3-5** at Minnesota, 9 p.m.; 3 p.m.; 2 p.m.; **8** WRIGHT STATE, 6:30 p.m.; **10-12** PENN STATE, 6:35 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.; **14** at Youngstown State, 6 p.m.; **16-18** at Purdue, 6 p.m.; 6 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **22-26** Big Ten Tournament at Omaha, Neb.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS (6-7, 3-3 BIG TEN)

Jan. 12 Rocky Mountain Open at Colorado Spring, Colo., 4th/6 (398.500); **26** at (1) Oklahoma, L 423.950-395.400.

Feb. 2 at (4) Michigan, L 413.900-402.700; **15/17** Winter Cup at Las Vegas, NTS.

March 2 ARNOLD CHALLENGE vs. (6) PENN STATE, W 413.150-409.000; **8** MINNESOTA/NEBRASKA, 2nd/3 (405.550); **16** at (9) Iowa, L 400.650-396.400; **24** (4) ILLINOIS, W 406.600-404.000.

April 5-6 Big Ten Championships at Iowa City, Iowa, 6th (402.400); **19** NCAA Qualifier at Champaign, Ill.; **20** NCAA Championships at Champaign, Ill.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS (7-10, 3-7 BIG TEN)

Jan. 5 at (7) Georgia, L 196.600-194.900; **12** at (25) N.C. State, W 196.025-194.550; **19** at Penn State, W 196.075-194.850; **27** at Michigan State, W 196.200-195.225.

Feb. 2 IOWA, W 195.000-194.775; **8** at Maryland, L 195.950-194.250; **16** (17) NEBRASKA, L 196.400-195.750; **23** Big Five Meet at Toledo, Ohio, vs. Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois & Rutgers, 5th/5 (194.600).

March 2 (24) WEST VIRGINIA, W 196.850-196.100; TEMPLE, W 196.850-194.000; **9** BOWLING GREEN, W 195.875-194.875; **17** vs. West Virginia, Penn State & N.C. State at Morgantown, W.Va., 4th/4 (194.925); **23** Big Ten Championships at University Park, Pa., 7th/10 (195.775).

April 5 NCAA Regional Second Round, 4th (194.725).

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (20-11-5, 13-7-4 BIG TEN)

Oct. 12-13 at Arizona State, W 3-2; W 3-0; **19-20** MASSACHUSETTS, L 6-3; W 3-1; **26** (15) BOWLING GREEN, L 8-2; **27** at Bowling Green, T 2-2 (OT).

Nov. 2-3 at (5) Notre Dame, W 1-0; L 2-1; **9-10** at Colgate, W 3-0; W 1-0; **16-17** WISCONSIN, W 4-0; W 3-1; **23-24** (6) PENN STATE, L 4-3; W 5-2; **30-Dec. 1** at Minnesota, T 2-2 (OSU 3x3 OT Win); T 2-2 (OSU 3x3 OT Win).

Dec. 28-29 MERCYHURST, W 3-1; W 5-4.

Jan. 4-5 at Michigan State, T 7-7 (OSU 3x3 OT Loss); W 6-0; **11-12** MICHIGAN, L 2-1; W 4-2; **18-19** at (13) Penn State, W 4-1; W 6-4.

Feb. 1-2 (11) NOTRE DAME, W 4-2; W 2-0; **8-9** at Wisconsin, W 2-1 (OT); W 4-1; **15-16** MINNESOTA, L 4-3; L 4-3; **22-23** at Michigan, L 4-2; T3-3 (OT, 3x3 OT W).

March 1-2 MICHIGAN STATE, W 5-1; L 3-2; **17** BIG TEN TOURNAMENT SEMIFINALS vs. 4-SEED PENN STATE, L 5-1; **29-31** NCAA West Regional Semifinal at Fargo, N.D., vs. 2-seed Denver, L 2-0.

MEN'S LACROSSE (7-1, 0-1 BIG TEN)

Feb. 2 CLEVELAND STATE, W 12-9; **9** BOSTON, W 17-10; **16** at UMass, W 11-7; **23** BUCKNELL, W 16-13.

March 2 vs. Marquette at Dallas, W 13-9; **9** at Hofstra, W 14-8; **16** DENVER, Cancelled; **23** at Notre Dame, W 11-10 (OT); **31** RUTGERS, L 14-6.

April 7 at Penn State, L 13-8; **14** at Johns Hopkins, W 14-13; **20** MARYLAND, 1 p.m.; **26** at Michigan, 6 p.m.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE (8-4, 0-2 BIG TEN)

Feb. 8 at Cincinnati, W 16-6; **10** DETROIT MERCY, W 19-5; **18** BROWN, W 15-14 (OT); **22** NOTRE DAME, L 19-10.

March 1 MARQUETTE, W 11-9; **3** NIAGARA, W 16-12; **9** BINGHAMTON, W 13-7; **11** vs. UMass at Deland, Fla., L 15-14; **16** at (2) Maryland, L 16-1; **21** (12) MICHIGAN, L 15-10; **24** SAN DIEGO STATE, W 16-10; **30** US Lacrosse at Sparks, Md., vs. Oregon, W 11-5.

April 4 at Penn State, L 21-5; **9** at Louisville, L 19-7; **13** JOHNS HOPKINS, L 12-7; **20** at Rutgers, Noon; **25** NORTHWESTERN, 4:30 p.m.

May 3/5 Big Ten Tournament at Baltimore.

SOFTBALL (19-10, 4-1 BIG TEN)

Feb. 8 Friends of Jaclyn Tournament at Orlando, Fla., vs. George Mason, W 7-0; vs. Ole Miss, W 4-2; **9** Friends of Jaclyn Tournament at Orlando, Fla., vs. North Florida, W 3-0; vs. UCF, L 3-2; **10** Friends of Jaclyn Tournament at Orlando, Fla., vs. Ole Miss, cancelled; **15** ESPN Elite Invitational at Clearwater, Fla., vs. Florida State, L 3-1; **16** ESPN Elite Invitational at Clearwater, Fla., vs. LSU, L 7-2; vs. Utah, W 10-2 (5 innings); **17** ESPN Elite Invitational at Clearwater, Fla., vs. Notre Dame, L 3-2; **22** Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. Army, W 4-0; **23** Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. Utah, W 2-0; vs. Duke, W 2-0; **24** Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. New Mexico State, W 5-1.

March 8 Husky Classic at Seattle vs. Seattle, W 6-4 (8 innings); vs. (6) Washington, L 3-0; **9** Husky Classic at Seattle vs. Seattle, L 3-0; vs. Idaho State, W 9-3; **10** Husky Classic at Seattle vs. NIU, W 3-2; **12** at Portland State, W 8-4; W 7-0; **15** GCU Invitational at Phoenix vs. Weber State, L 4-0; vs. Lehigh, W 2-0; **16** GCU Invitational at Phoenix vs. Lehigh, W 12-3 (6 innings); vs. Grand Canyon, W 8-7; **17** GCU Invitational at Phoenix vs. Grand Canyon, L 4-3 (8 innings); **22-24** (22) INDIANA, W 7-6; W 5-3; W 2-0; **27** at Kentucky, postponed; **29-31** at Maryland, L 3-2; W 10-1 (5 innings); W 15-3.

April 3 at Pittsburgh, W 5-2 (9 innings); **5-7** RUTGERS, W 2-0; L 8-6 (8 innings); W 8-0 (5 innings); **9** at Penn State, L 6-4; W 12-1 (5 innings); **12-13** MICHIGAN, L 10-3; L 6-2; W 2-1 (8 innings); **16** OHIO, 6 p.m.; **19-21** at Michigan State, 6 p.m.; 11 a.m.; 1 p.m.; **26-28** ILLINOIS, 6 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.

May 3-5 at Iowa, 6:30 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **9-11** Big Ten Tournament at Bloomington, Ind.

SWIMMING & DIVING

Jan. 4-5 at Florida, Men: L 317.50-263.50; Women: L 403-178; vs. Kentucky at Gainesville, Fla., Men: W 336-245; Women: L 375-206; **19** at Michigan, Men: L 202-98; Women: L 196-104; **25-26** Shamrock Invitational at Notre Dame, Ind., Men: 1st/4; Women: 3rd/4.

Feb. 16-17 WINTER INVITATIONAL, NTS; **20-23** Women's Big Ten Championships at Bloomington, Ind., 3rd/12 (1,162.5); **27-March 2** Men's Big Ten Championships at Iowa City, Iowa, 3rd/10 (1,243.5).

March 3 LAST CHANCE MEET (women), NTS; **10** Last Chance Meet (men), NTS; **14-16** CSCAA National Invitational at Cleveland, NTS; NCAA Zone Diving at West Lafayette, Ind., NTS; **20-23** Women's NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas, 25th/44 (43); **27-30** Men's NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas, 9th/44 (124).

MEN'S TENNIS (20-2, 4-0 BIG TEN)

Jan. 7 COLUMBUS CHALLENGER, NTS; **20** CLEVELAND STATE, W 5-0, W 4-0; XAVIER, Cancelled; **26** VCU, W 4-0; **27** ARKANSAS, W 4-1; TOLEDO, W 4-0.

Feb. 2 (9) STANFORD, W 6-1; **8** ARIZONA STATE, W 6-1; **10** (24) GEORGIA, W 4-0; **12** (5) SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, W 5-0; **15** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago vs. (19) Tulane, W 4-0; **16** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago vs. (13) Virginia, W 4-0; **17** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago vs. (6) Texas, W 4-0; **18** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago (Finals) vs. (1) Wake Forest, W 4-2; **20** KENTUCKY, W 4-0; **24** (12) NOTRE DAME, W 6-1.

March 1 at Penn State, W 4-1; **11** at Texas A&M, L 4-3; **14** at (4) Texas, L 4-1; **22** MICHIGAN STATE, W 7-0; **24** at (16) Michigan, W 6-1; **29** WISCONSIN, W 6-1; **31** MINNESOTA, W 7-0.

April 5 at Nebraska, W 6-1; **7** at Iowa, W 4-1; **12** at Northwestern, W 6-1; **14** at Illinois, W 4-2; **19** PURDUE, 6 p.m.; **21** INDIANA, Noon; **26-28** Big Ten Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich.

May 3 NCAA First & Second Round; **10** NCAA Regional; **16** NCAA Championships at Orlando, Fla.

WOMEN'S TENNIS (15-3, 4-1 BIG TEN)

Jan. 19 Michigan Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; **26** ITA Kickoff at Atlanta vs. Geogia Tech, W 4-0; **27** ITA Kickoff at Atlanta vs. Kentucky, W 4-1.

Feb. 1 (6) TEXAS, L 4-3; **3** NOTRE DAME, W 6-1; **8** ITA National Team Indoors at Seattle vs. (4) Duke, L 4-3; **10** ITA National Team Indoors at Seattle vs. (10) Syracuse, W 5-2; **20** CLEVELAND STATE, W 7-0; AKRON, W 7-0; **23** at Arizona State, W 4-3; **24** vs. TCU at Tempe, Ariz., W 7-0; **28** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 6-1; W 7-0.

March 3 BAYLOR, W 5-2; **17** PENN STATE, W 6-1; **22** at Nebraska, W 5-2; **24** IOWA, W 5-2; **29** at

Michigan State, W 4-1; **31** at Michigan, L 4-1.

April 5 WISCONSIN, W 6-1; **7** MINNESOTA, W 5-2; **12** PURDUE, W 4-2; **14** INDIANA, W 6-1; **20** at Northwestern, 11 a.m.; **21** at Illinois, Noon.

OUTDOOR TRACK & FIELD

March 23 Power 5 Trailblazer Challenge at Miami, Fla., NTS; **28-30** Florida Relays at Gainesville, Fla., NTS; **29** Raleigh Relays at Raleigh, N.C., NTS.

April 5-6 All-Ohio Championships, NTS; **6** Battle On The Bayou at Baton Rouge, La., NTS; **12-13** Gamecock Invitational at Columbia, S.C., NTS; **19-20** Virginia Challenge at Charlottesville, Va.; **26-27** JESSE OWENS RELAYS.

May 10-12 Big Ten Championships at Iowa City, Iowa; **23-25** NCAA East Preliminary at Jacksonville, Fla.

June 5/7 NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (8-18, 3-9 MIVA)

Jan. 4 CHARLESTON, W 3-0; **5** PENN STATE, W 3-1; **10** at (5) BYU, L 3-0; **12** at (11) Stanford, L 3-1; **18** GEORGE MASON, L 3-1; **19** ERSKINE, W 3-1; **26** at Ball State, L 3-1.

Feb. 1 SAINT FRANCIS, L 3-2; **2** LINCOLN MEMORIAL, W 3-1; **5** at (15) Purdue Fort Wayne, L 3-0; **8** at (6) U.C. Santa Barbara, L 3-0; **9** at (1) Long Beach State, L 3-0; **15** at Lindenwood, L 3-0; **16** at Quincy, W 3-1; **21** LEWIS, L 3-2; **24** LOYOLA CHICAGO, L 3-0.

March 1/3 MCKENDREE, W 3-1; L 3-2; **8** at (5) UCLA, L 3-0; **9** at (11) USC, L 3-2; **15** LEES-MCRAE, W 3-0; **19** at Penn State, L 3-0; **22** LINDENWOOD, L 3-1; **23** QUINCY, W 3-0; **29** at Loyola Chicago, L 3-0; **30** at Lewis, L 3-0.

April 4 PURDUE FORT WAYNE, W 3-2.; **6** BALL STATE, W 3-2; **13** MIVA Quarterfinals vs. Loyola Chicago, L 3-1; **26** NCAA Play-In Match at campus sites; **30** NCAA Play-In Match at Long Beach, Calif.

May 2 NCAA Semifinals at Long Beach, Calif.; **4** NCAA Finals at Long Beach, Calif.

WRESTLING (12-2, 7-2 BIG TEN)

Nov. 3 vs. Navy at Owings Mills, Md., W 28-9; **11** Ohio Intercollegiate Open at Cleveland, NTS; **16** at California Baptist, W 42-0; **18** at Arizona State, W 22-17; **30-Dec. 1** Cliff Keen Las Vegas Invitational, 1st/43 (148).

Dec. 9 (19) WISCONSIN, W 23-13.

Jan. 6 (4) N.C. STATE, W 26-10; **11** at Indiana, W 43-3; **13** MICHIGAN STATE, W 37-4; **25** (5) MICHIGAN, L 19-17.

Feb. 1 at Illinois, W 23-14; **3** at Northwestern, W 27-15; **8** (1) PENN STATE, L 28-9; **15** at Purdue, W 34-3; **17** (6) NEBRASKA, W 21-12; **22** at (7) Cornell, W 25-9.

March 9-10 Big Ten Championships at Minneapolis, 2nd/14; **21-23** NCAA Championships at Pittsburgh, 2nd/63 (96.5).

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Remembering Ohio State's Phantom Final Four

The 2019 NCAA Tournament has concluded, and once again we were treated to numerous surprises, upsets and memorable moments.

The finale paired two teams, Virginia and Texas Tech, that had never won the men's basketball title. Of course, it went overtime, and the Cavaliers prevailed – one year after being victim to the most stunning defeat in tourney history, losing a 1-16 game.

RAPP AROUND Jeff Rapp

Anyone who has read even a few of my opinion pieces in these very pages probably has figured out I am a huge fan of the college game and the enthralling moments that it provides on an annual basis.

It turns out one of my most enjoyable moments of the entire tournament this year actually had nothing to do with what was occurring on the court at the time.

While covering Round-of-64 and Round-of-32 action in downtown Columbus at Nationwide Arena – several of the games heart-palpitating, by the way – I bumped into former Ohio State assistant coach Rick Boyages.

I've always enjoyed talking with Rick, and I'm happy to report he's doing quite well now. You may recall Coach Boyages arrived with Jim O'Brien from Boston College in 1997 and served as OSU's associate head coach for three seasons. He also returned to campus to rejoin the staff in 2003 after a three-year run as the head coach at William & Mary.

When O'Brien was unceremoniously fired in 2004, Boyages stayed on at OSU as an administrator, serving as a special assistant to the athletic director.

He's moved up the ladder over the years and currently is associate commissioner for men's basketball for the Big Ten Conference with oversight of the league's officials. He serves in a similar role during the NCAA Tournament and happened to be stationed in Columbus with Iowa being one of the eight teams in town.

It's difficult to discuss the NCAA Tournament with anyone who is attached to the O'Brien era without quickly getting to the 1999 postseason magic carpet ride that saw the plucky Buckeyes advance all the way to the Final Four.

"Our goal, honestly, was to see if we could break even and squeeze into the NIT that year," Boyages told me with his trademark East Coast accent. "We knew we had Scoonie (Penn) coming in, but we were so terrible the year before. Then we won a few games, did really well in a holiday tournament (in Puerto Rico), and the excitement kind of built from there. It was our first year in The Schott, and the games were kind of crazy, just really exciting."

In one of the great turnarounds in NCAA history, the Buckeyes went from a dismal 8-22 overall and 1-15 in the Big Ten in O'Brien's first year to 27-9 overall, 12-4 in the league and a March run that still is as enjoyable as any in a lifetime – even though it has been wiped from the books

because of NCAA sanctions.

"We had great players with Scoonie and Mike (Redd), but we also had Jason (Singleton), who could really run the floor and could guard at any position," Boyages recalled. "Kenny (Johnson) started to come on and block shots and guard the basket for us. (George) Reese could come in and score for us. We moved (Brian) Brown into the starting lineup for the tournament, and that really paid off."

"That was such a fun year. The kids would come into the locker and blast music on Scoonie's boom box after games. We'd win a game in the tournament, and they'd all race in there and crank the music. It was awful music, but you had to let them do it."

Memories Galore

The Buckeyes were stunned by Illinois in the Big Ten tournament that season, leading us to run our famous "March Sadness" cover at BSB. But what followed was downright euphoric – dominant wins over Murray State and Detroit in Indianapolis to reach the Sweet 16, the upending of top-seed Auburn in Knoxville, Tenn., and an epic 77-74 survival of St. John's in the Elite Eight, leading to one of the most joyous celebrations and net-cuttings in program history.

Ohio State had earned a No. 4 seed and was placed in the South Regional. The 13th-seed Racers from Murray State made them work but eventually succumbed 72-58. Redd racked up 27 points, but Penn ended up with just seven and was only 1 of 8 from deep.

Concern was growing that the sore back that had plagued him late in the season and in Chicago was going to prevent the Buckeyes from making a run.

However, after Detroit knocked off UCLA in the 5-12 game to set up OSU's next encounter, the Buckeyes quickly killed the will of the Titans, holding them scoreless for more than nine minutes in a 12-0 start. I can still hear the echo of an OSU fan in the nether reaches of the RCA Dome, during the under-eight timeout, chanting, "You've got zer-o."

OSU didn't manage to build on the lead much the remainder of the half and went to intermission up 25-12. But Penn got the engine revved in the second 20 minutes and OSU cruised to a 75-44 win. He and Redd finished with 15 points apiece.

In a class move, several Titans came into the OSU locker room to congratulate the Buckeyes and wish them well, especially Detroit natives Johnson and Shamar Herron. The only Buckeye who didn't bounce around gleefully after the game was guard Neshawn Coleman, who was miserable with the flu.

OSU was on its way to the University of Tennessee to keep the dream alive. In Thompson-Boling Arena, the Buckeyes found themselves facing the SEC kingpin in SEC country. Auburn was the top seed in the region and entered the game a robust 29-3.

Among those in the Tigers rooting section was alum Charles Barkley, who looked stunned from his aisle seat when the upstart Buckeyes rallied from a six-point deficit in the second half.

The Tigers were confident if not cocky and could lean on All-American Chris Porter in times of need. But on this day, in front of a crowd of 23,898, they couldn't

keep up with an inspired gang of Scarlet and Gray down the stretch. The underdogs pulled away in style, winning 72-64.

Just a freshman, Brown produced an indelible moment when he blocked a three-point attempt by Auburn's Bryant Smith with OSU protecting a tenuous 66-61 lead. He not only made a clean rejection but came up with the loose ball and dumped a perfect behind-the-back pass to a streaking Singleton for a game-clinching dunk with 55 seconds to play. If one play summarized how loose, inspired and clutch the Buckeyes were in the 1999 NCAA Tournament, this was it.

"The thing that keeps hitting me right between the eyes is the way these guys have constantly come back to try and accomplish a little bit more," O'Brien said afterward. "They are surprising me a little bit. Just when I ask myself if they are capable of doing more, they surprise me and do more."

Penn dug down and found his shot again, hitting 4 of 7 threes en route to a 26-point outing. Redd produced 22 points and 10 rebounds.

I still remember attending a media dinner the next day and wondering aloud how this ride possible could continue against mighty St. John's, a team that had ruined a Gary Williams-Ohio State reunion by knocking off Maryland in the other Sweet 16 tilt in the building. That thought opened up a discussion that seemed to lead to "good Scoonie, Ohio State has a chance."

The Buckeyes got "good Scoonie." The feisty point guard faced down future pro Erick Barkley and came through with 22 points, eight rebounds, eight assists and two steals. OSU also put on a clinic on winning every four minutes, coming up with a timely positive play seemingly just before every mandatory timeout.

Still, there were a few heart murmurs. Ohio State built a 73-64 lead but almost lost grip in the closing moments. In fact, Barkley was storming up court with SJU trailing by just two points when he lost the ball off his knee. Redd grabbed it, was fouled with 0.7 seconds left and made one of two free throws to finish it off.

The win put OSU in its first Final Four in 31 seasons, dating all the way back to 1968. Fittingly, Bill Hosket, who played on that team, was among those on hand to congratulate O'Brien and the players.

"It's hard to imagine we're going to this thing," O'Brien said. "It's such a nice feeling, but I don't know if it's going to sink in. I'm just emotionally spent right now."

OSU lost to eventual national champion UConn in St. Petersburg, Fla., but joining three No. 1-seeds at the Final Four completed a storybook season.

The Magic Slips Away

With lots of key pieces back for the 1999-2000 campaign, the Buckeyes were very good again. They entered the fray ranked No. 4 in the country, tied eventual national champion Michigan State for the Big Ten regular-season crown and returned to the NCAA tourney as a team to watch – only to lose to a long and athletic Miami (Fla.) squad in the second round.

"We were good that year, but it wasn't the same," Boyages said. "The expectations were really high, and there weren't

any expectations the year before. We had guys who needed to get shots. The roles changed. The personalities were a little different."

Seeing the glint in Boyages' eye while talking about the 1998-99 team confirmed my warm and fuzzy feelings about it, but also saddens me to think it's all vapor now, basically because of two Serbian-born players – Aleksandar Radojevic, who never played at Ohio State, and Boban Savovic, who was a well-down-the-bench freshman that season.

Unfortunately, rules violations regarding that duo took away from all that was accomplished and have even led some of us to forget how compelling the Buckeyes of 1998-99 were.

Penn brought the Boston bravado and was a fearless performer and leader at 5-10. Redd was the smooth lefty local boy who played with a chip on his shoulder, remembering some of the kids in the neighborhood used to refer to Ohio State as the "Suckeyes."

Singleton and Coleman were the team's lone seniors and had seen a gutted program hit the skids, but they stayed around and demonstrated the gumption to help put it back together. Brown was a calm and savvy New Yorker while Johnson was a 7-foot sweetheart and piano-playing savant who still needed an education in rough-and-tumble Big Ten basketball.

"He was the softest kid from Detroit ever," Boyages said with a chuckle. "I remember once we had a hard practice and someone came barreling down the lane and Kenny just stepped out of the way. Obie stopped practice and started screaming at him, 'Why didn't you take that charge?!' Kenny said, 'But, Coach, that would have hurt.' Obie couldn't believe it."

Penn is the program's current director of player development. Redd, who had a laudable NBA career, has a courtside seat just behind the east basket at OSU home games. Singleton worked for several years in the university's compliance office, attaining the title of assistant athletic director for student-athlete development.

Reese has done some work as a local broadcast analyst and has been known to pop into games as well. Brown makes sure to return for the captains' dinner every year.

They all have gone on to success and maintained a connection to the program, many of them even becoming trusted representatives of it. Still, because of the ridiculous ignominy of the NCAA's punishment, there was no 20-year reunion this year; no wave to the crowd and video tribute to a truly feel-good slice of OSU basketball history.

There are 10 recognized Final Fours in program history, not 11. The 1999 appearance has been vacated. It doesn't appear on a banner.

Boyages said Penn is so intent to remind the world of what those Buckeyes of 20 years ago did that he has been stumping ESPN producers to feature that team in a "30 for 30" documentary.

Considering where the program was when they all arrived, the cast of characters, the glorious heights that were achieved and the shame that followed due to NCAA investigation, I'd say Scoonie is onto something here.

Transition From Meyer To Day Appears Seamless

It's funny to hear some of the reactions from fans after spring football is concluded.

They'll make judgments about players, decide that a certain offensive set doesn't work, that some guys are overhyped, that numbers actually mean something.

Spring is about evaluation, about getting guys acclimated and understanding the playbook. It's about getting new coaches on the same page so that the breakdowns that happened the previous season don't show up again. And it's also about – at least this spring, at Ohio State – putting a new stamp on the program.

Ryan Day is in charge now, and he certainly hasn't withered under the early pressure. He says all of the right things, definitely is involved in the offense and will do some coaching and teaching on the sidelines. He is kind of the anti-Urban Meyer, which means no doubled-over, hands on knees, a spring waiting to uncoil after every poor play. Day is calm – at least outwardly – and doesn't give the appearance of someone who will be overwhelmed by the moment.

That said, there's a big difference between coaching 'em up in April against guys they know than against Nebraska on the road in late September.

While it's difficult to make any kind of blanket declarations, a few things appeared evident in OSU's final spring practice: The Buckeyes will play fast and loose on defense.

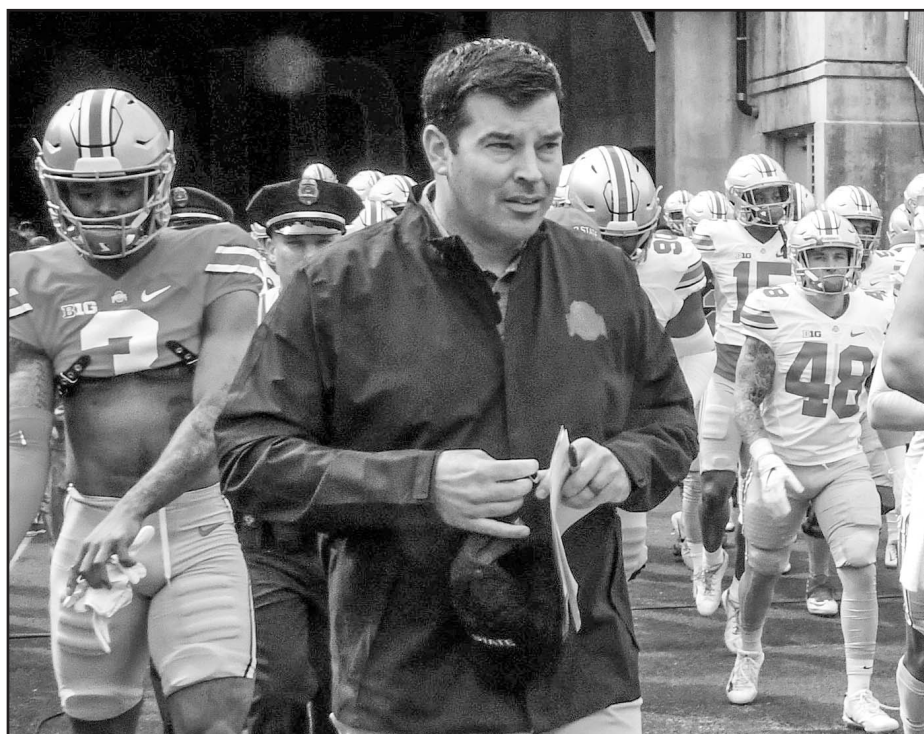
THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

A diverse scheme doesn't help anyone if players can't get lined up properly, and Ohio State had that far too often last year. Greg Schiano's NFL concepts were often hard to grasp and resulted in far too many explosive plays being given up. The talk this spring has been to pare down the playbook to basic concepts and letting the athletes do what they do – fly to the football and make things happen.

That has to be welcome news for a guy like Malik Harrison, who didn't really find his stride until late in the season. A tough, long, fast linebacker, Harrison was misused early in the year when he was asked to check Purdue's Rondale Moore. That's a bad matchup for anyone, and why Schiano and the staff felt it would work is puzzling. We know what happened in that game, as Moore balled out and Purdue effectively killed Ohio State's chances at making the College Football Playoff.

The linebackers will be under the microscope this fall, so having Harrison back is a big plus. Add to that young, burgeoning stars in Teradja Mitchell and Dallas Gant – two guys who, in a perfect world, would be starting – and the group has a real chance to shine.

The secondary also took its share of criticism in 2018, lacking the star power it has shown for most of the century. There were no Marshon Lattimore or Malik Hookers or Denzel Wards back there, and teams took advantage of that. Too many blown coverages, as a result of too many coaches, spelled doom for the Buckeye



HIS TEAM – Ryan Day walks onto the field before his first spring game as Ohio State's head coach.

SONNY BROCKWAY

secondary.

That's why it's nice to see one guy leading the entire unit. Co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley brings NFL credentials to the defensive backs room, and his responsibilities have been streamlined as he is coaching everyone with special teams coordinator/assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes. There is no specific safeties coach or corners coach, which means there will be less chance of getting messages mixed up.

This could be a big season for corner Jeffrey Okudah, who flashed late in the year and at least has the look of a shut-down corner. Add in Jordan Fuller, Shaun Wade and Brendon White, and you have the makings of a suddenly lethal secondary. There is also depth, in the form of Amir Riep, who shone in the spring game, and Jahsen Wint, who looked lost last season but seems to have had the light turn on under Hafley's guidance.

With no live tackling it was hard to truly get a handle on how good the pass rush was, but most people know that Chase Young should be among the most feared quarterback chasers in America. Tyreke Smith showed some outstanding get-off, and Noah Potter flashed quite a bit, too. Zach Harrison oozes athleticism, and once he gets bigger he could be a Bosa-like force.

Some may accuse me of burying the lead because it's only now that the quarterbacks will be brought up. Fans love them some QBs, even more so when replacing someone who was as special as Dwayne Haskins was in 2018.

Justin Fields brought all kinds of hype to Columbus after transferring from Georgia and arrived as the highest-rated QB recruit in the history of the program. He was behind only Clemson's Trevor Lawrence among freshman quarterbacks last year, and all Lawrence did was pilot the Tigers to a national championship. Fields isn't quite the same passer but can be a handful with his legs.

According to Day, Fields is immersing

himself in the playbook and picking it up surprisingly fast. Fields' spring game stats – 4 of 13 – don't catch the eye at all, but actually watching the game showed that there were only two really poor passes. There were a couple of drops, a couple of well-placed balls that were knocked away at the last moment and couple of overthrows. But there was also a pretty touchdown toss to Ben Victor that officially went for 98 yards, but which covered about 45 yards in the air and was placed perfectly over the shoulder. I am not all that worried about Fields.

We know what J.K. Dobbins can do, though his production slipped last year as he added a little weight and saw his role reduced with a healthy Mike Weber sharing the workload. Dobbins seems to have the hunger back, which could be bad news for the rest of the Big Ten. Master Teague and Marcus Crowley each showed a nice power component and could fit into a short-yardage package. Both will play.

The another storyline of the offseason was the loss of receivers Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin and Johnnie Dixon. Many wonder who will pick up the slack as K.J. Hill is the only truly productive returnee from 2018. Just because the receiving corps is short on experience doesn't mean that it will be a liability in the fall. Austin Mack and Ben Victor have been around awhile, and though neither has been consistent, the ability is there. C.J. Saunders has received praise as a leader and should be in the mix at times. If the spring game is any indication, Jaelen Gill should fill Campbell's H-back role quite well. He's shifty in space and explosive in the open field.

And then there's Garrett Wilson.

Folks, as one who is usually in "prove it" mode when it comes to ultra-hyped players, it takes a lot to impress me. So touting Wilson as a star already may seem a bit premature – but the kid has that "it" factor, that something that's hard to quantify. It's just there.

He made a great leaping touchdown

catch in the second quarter, a catch that he has been reportedly making routinely in practice. Wilson has outstanding hands, doesn't let the ball get to his body, and has a frame that will be difficult to bring down on first contact. He doesn't have world-class speed, but he's fast enough to be a playmaker.

While he may not begin the season among the Buckeyes' top three receivers, he will be on the field a lot, especially when they go to "10" personnel (one RB, four WR). I would not be shocked if he led the team in touchdown catches in 2019, nor if he proves himself to be the top freshman receiver in the country.

With attrition and injuries and the game format ruling the day, the offensive line was hard to grade. It will be interesting to follow the progress of guard Wyatt Davis, who seems to be on the fast track to stardom, and the weight and strength gain of Nicholas Petit-Frere, who came into the program last year with all kinds of hype but barely played. Now bigger and stronger, he should be right in the mix for one of the starting tackle spots. The Buckeyes will get a boost from Rutgers graduate transfer Jonah Jackson, an all-league type who will be in for fall camp. He has experience and nastiness, two things that are huge for offensive linemen.

Offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson has talked about how the coaching staff wants to involve the tight ends more and take advantage of the athleticism of Jeremy Ruckert and Luke Farrell. Forgive me if I'm not buying. We've heard this year after year after year, that this will finally be the season when tight end will be incorporated into the offense. Then the leader at the end of the season has 12 catches. The talent is there – let's see if the coaches are true to their word, or if it's merely another season of lip service.

With spring practice in the books, it's now time for the players to decide just how great they want to be. Are they in the weight room when they're supposed to be? Are they gathering together to work on things without the prompting of coaches? Are they getting the intricacies of the playbook? These things will go a long way in determining what kind of season the Buckeyes have.

The talent is there for a return to the CFP, but the offensive turnover and the newness of the coaching staff should bring a little bit of pause. So far Oklahoma's Lincoln Riley is the only guy to take over a blue-blood program and not hit a speed bump. The Sooners are 2 for 2 in CFP appearances under Riley, so the hope is that Day aspires to be that good, because man for man the Buckeyes are better than the Sooners.

Facing Florida Atlantic and Cincinnati in non-conference play, as well as the aforementioned journey to Lincoln, Neb., will force this young Ohio State team to grow up fast. Fans will know pretty quickly whether the transition from Meyer to Day is seamless or whether there are some growing pains.

One thing that is a certainty – those fans will weigh in with their thoughts immediately if something isn't going right.

In that regard, spring practice may be more like the regular season than we realize.

Difficult To Learn Much From Day's 1st Spring Game

I would love to be making astute evaluations of the Ohio State football team in this space, following the annual spring game played April 13, but it is kind of hard for me to do so given the no-tackling format of the scrimmage. I am sure the coaches can break down the tape of the game and evaluate the things they have to evaluate, but for those of us less sophisticated viewers, I must say, the format was kind of disappointing.

The health and improvement of the team is first and foremost for Ryan Day and his staff, as well it should be. But I am sure the 61,102 Buckeye fans in attendance, as well as us media types looking for insight, would have liked to see something more along the lines of game conditions. I keep thinking back to a picture I referenced in this space last issue from reprints we posted on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com as part of Reprint Thursdays. It showed a punishing hit put on quarterback John Wagoner by linebacker John Kacherski during John Cooper's first spring game back in 1988. Coop gave the then-unheard of spring crowd of 54,302 their money's worth that day.

The ideal format in my book to balance the health and well-being of the team with an effort to reward Buckeye fans with a good show would be to make the quarterbacks off-limits and have the rest of the team block and tackle as they would in a regular game. Remember, for many fans the spring game is the only time they can afford to attend a game in Ohio Stadium. It is also a chance for parents to take young fans to enjoy the pageantry of Ohio Stadium football at something way less than \$75 or more a ticket. Give the fans something more than seeing TBDBITL and Drue Chrisman proposing to his intended.

With my rant over, I did not learn as much as I would have liked about quarterbacks Justin Fields, in particular, and Matthew Baldwin. Again, it was hard to tell in that format, especially for Fields who was "sacked" four times but might easily have escaped if the action were live.

I would say both QBs have a long way to go, but I was impressed with Fields' running ability. He showed great quickness as he turned the corner on a five-yard touchdown run in the second quarter and then broke free on what was recorded as a 30-yard run with the patty-cake rules in the third quarter but might have been a 65-yard scoring scamper in live action. His running ability might signal a return to a more traditional Ohio State offense next season, ideally retaining some of Day's passing frills.

Sadly, his passing was just 4 of 13, and even his signature throw of the day, a 98-yard scoring pass to Binjimen Victor, was underthrown, which might have been a problem in a real game against a top-notch secondary.

The big winner on offense may have been Garrett Wilson, who attracted attention during his recruitment because of his high rankings and was getting rave reviews coming out of spring drills. He didn't disappoint with a high-light-reel touchdown catch among his four catches for 44 yards.

While Wilson had the catch of the day, it seemed that Baldwin was frequently targeting Jaelen Gill, which says to me that either the coaches wanted passes going his way or he was getting open more often than other receivers. Gill, a redshirt freshman from nearby Westerville (Ohio) South, led all receivers with seven catches for 95 yards.

Probably the one player on the team with the least to prove this spring was running back J.K. Dobbins, who barely worked up a sweat in the contest played in football-friendly 61-degree

weather. He carried just three times for nine yards and had a catch for another seven.

His comfortable seat on the bench gave two of the primary contenders for backup carries a chance to shine. Master Teague looked especially strong in the third quarter, when he followed Fields' long run with a 17-yard run and a 22-yard scoring jaunt, finishing the afternoon with 75 yards on seven carries. Freshman early enrollee Marcus Crowley added 50 yards on 10 carries. Both backs would have had even stronger stat lines if defenders had been forced to tackle them.

Perhaps my biggest take from the scrimmage was the improved play of the much-maligned defensive secondary and the play of the even more maligned safety Jahsen Wint, who had a pair of interceptions. The Scarlet and Gray squads combined to complete just 29 of 64 passes for a paltry 45.3 passing percentage. The defensive backs seemed to keep the pass plays in front of them, in contrast to plays last season where they were often spotted chasing receivers, frequently with their backs to the ball.

I give high early marks to the new defensive coaching regime.

On a side note, given the nice weather, a new head coach and a new, highly touted quarterback, I thought the attendance for the spring game would be higher, though it was a big jump from the 47,803 that showed up last spring. Ohio State drew 81,112 for Urban Meyer's first spring game and had crowds of 99,391 in 2015, after the national championship, and 100,189 in 2016 before dropping to 80,134 in 2017 with roughly 20,000 seats out of commission. That was still good enough to lead the country in spring attendance.

Tressel's First Spring Game

Jim Tressel's first spring game was played before just 22,892, but that was actually a sell-out as the game was played in soccer's Crew Stadium. Ohio Stadium was in the midst of a major renovation. The game was featured as part of our Reprint Thursdays on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, with stories from the May 12, 2001, issue of BSB.

Tressel had a returning starter at quarterback that first season in senior Steve Bellisari but apparently was not completely sold on the veteran signal-caller, taking a long look at some of his other options that spring. Passing was definitely featured in the spring game. Bellisari, Scott McMullen, Craig Krenzel and Rick McFadden all saw plenty of action.

Bellisari didn't hurt his cause, posting one of the better lines by completing 11 of 17 passes for 122 yards and two touchdowns and no interceptions. McFadden, a redshirt freshman, also opened some eyes while hitting nine of his 13 passes for 90 yards and a score without an interception.

But it was the quarterback with the worst stats who may have stolen the show and given Buckeye fans a glimpse of what was coming in the very near future. Krenzel was just 3 of 10 for 70 yards, a score and an interception, but he engineered a 15-point fourth-quarter comeback to give his Scarlet a 22-21 victory. Krenzel hit Chris Vance from 21 yards out for one score with 5:35 left and then scored on a four-yard run with 1:05 to play to secure the win.

A little over a year later, he would start the Buckeyes on their magical run to the 2002 national championship.

"I'm sure that makes Craig feel good about himself and makes his teammates feel good about him," Tressel said after the late-game heroics that Krenzel would ultimately become known for. "I mentioned before the game that I thought Craig had his best practice of the year (four days before the spring game). He stepped up on the goal line and scored a big touchdown there, and today he did it again."

Bellisari, who had compiled a 13-9 record in two seasons as the starting QB, admitted he heard the noise but said he was going to soldier on.

"The only thing I can control is how I play football," he said. "I hear (criticism) all the time. You can't avoid it. It's everywhere. You can't tell me that any other quarterback in the country, when he has a bad day, he is not going to get ripped on."

As for the renovation project that drove the Buckeyes east to Crew Stadium, it involved the construction of a mammoth new press box, as well as more than two dozen new suites just below the press level.

Stories from the 2001 spring game are archived on BuckeyeSports.com for your information and enjoyment. The next Reprint Thursday will feature stories from BSB covering Meyer's first spring game in 2012. The stories will be posted on April 18.

If you are not already enjoying the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all current BSB subscribers, see the simple instruction on page 5 of this issue or call (614) 486-2202.

Back To The Banquet

After a two-year absence for different reasons, I attended the Ohio State Scholar-Athlete Banquet, an event I have been attending since 1984, held this year at the Ohio Union on April 10. A staggering 674 student-athletes were honored for their work in the classroom.

Looking back at the story I wrote covering the '84 banquet, a modest 160 athletes were recognized. It was a big year for Buckeyes tight end John Frank, who won the Big Ten Medal of Honor, the conference's most prestigious award, as well the John T. Sr. and Hulda E. Edwards Graduate Award, which came with a stipend for graduate school.

This capped quite the year for Frank, who was named Academic All-American for the second straight year, won postgraduate scholarships from both the NCAA and the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame and was named one of the NCAA's top five student-athletes, the governing body's highest honor.

Shortly before the banquet, Frank had been selected by the San Francisco 49ers in the second round of the NFL draft after completing his Ohio State career as the second leading receiver in Buckeye history. Frank would go on to a five-year career with the 49ers, which included a pair of Super Bowl victories, before turning to a career in medicine.

Kelly Robinson of the women's basketball team was the women's Medal of Honor winner.

Through the years, the scholar list continued to grow. As the number of scholar-athletes increased, the banquet started to drag on and on. Originally, each scholar-athlete got to come

up and say a few words. That was reduced to just having each team come to the front of the room and all names called out. But the banquet was still long, despite efforts to keep it moving, a by-product of Ohio State's academic success.

In my two-year absence, the banquet was radically altered to cut it down to a manageable length. This is hard for me to say, but I actually think that now they have made it too short, with each athlete no longer named and bios of major award winners radically reduced. Just one man's opinion.

I want to thank Ohio State assistant rowing coach Anna Goodale and members of her team for their gracious camaraderie, as I was seated at their table. It was a bit of an honor to sit with Goodale because she was a gold medal winner with the U.S. rowing team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, a fact that one of her team members had to point out to me after Goodale seemed too modest to bring it up herself.

That is the second time I was seated with an Olympian at the scholar-athlete banquet. I also dined with former Ohio State runner and coach Robert Gary, who competed in the steeplechase at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece. I admit it. I am a little starstruck by Olympic athletes. That puts them at the pinnacle of their sport.

The banquet gave me a chance to catch up with Ms. Joann Grimes, mother of the late Leann Grimes-Davidge, whose memory is honored with a major award at the banquet. Ms. Grimes is one of Buckeye Sports Bulletin's most loyal readers, and we have become friends through the years by meeting annually at the banquet. The Grimes and Davidge families are tremendous supporters of the banquet, OSU athletics and academics. Bill Davidge, Leann's husband, frequently serves as master of ceremonies. Davidge, who played hockey at Ohio State, was absent from this year's affair while he tended to his day job as an analyst for the Columbus Blue Jackets, who were in Tampa, Fla., taking care of their Stanley Cup business. Paul Keels, the voice of the Buckeyes, ably filled in as emcee.

A 1984 scholar-athlete banquet trivia question: If Frank was the second all-time leading receiver at Ohio State with 121 catches upon his graduation, who was the all-time leader at the time with 154?

Passages

I am saddened to note the sudden passing of Margaret Repko, mother of former BSB editor Jeff Svoboda on April 8, at the age of 63.

"She was my biggest booster and dedicated her life to making sure I could be whatever I wanted to be," Svoboda said in a Facebook post. "I wouldn't be who I am without her."

The thoughts of the entire BSB staff go out to Jeff and his family.

Trivia Answer

Gary Williams was Ohio State's all-time receptions leader with 154 catches from 1979-82. The Wilmington, Ohio, product led the Buckeyes in receiving in 1981 (50) and 1982 (40). His 50 catches were second most in a season to Billy Anders' 55 in 1966. Frank had the next two highest seasons with 45 in 1981 and '83.

Although I initially guessed Williams as the all-time leader in career receptions, I got it in my mind that he played until 1984, so I switched my guess to Doug Donley, who was actually fourth with 106, behind Williams, Frank and Anders (108).

The marks of the above mentioned players were all quickly overshadowed with the arrival of Cris Carter for the 1984 season.



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.

• 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 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

<http://www.healthy.ohio.gov/concussion>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention