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Vol. 39, No. 5

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 5, 2019



ANDREW LIND

ALL-AROUND EFFORT – Ohio State sophomore quarterback Justin Fields accounted for four touchdowns — three through the air and one on the ground — as Ohio State routed Nebraska, 48-7. He has racked up 23 total touchdowns this season, and his only turnover came on a backward pass in the season opener against Florida Atlantic.

Ohio State Passes Road Test At Nebraska With Flying Colors

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

Before the season began, fans and the media alike circled Ohio State's Sept. 28 game against Nebraska as a potential pitfall on the schedule.

After all, the Buckeyes struggled with the sub-500 Cornhuskers at home last fall, and similarities between this year's matchup and losses to Iowa in 2017 and Purdue in 2018 – a night game against a double-digit underdog from the Big Ten's West Division – were more than apparent.

That narrative can now be laid to rest, however, as fifth-ranked Ohio State obliterated Nebraska, 48-7, in front of 89,759 fans, which marked the 371st consecutive sellout at Memorial Stadium.

"I'm proud of the way the guys came out here and played hard," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "We talked all week about what it was

going to take to go win this game on the road. We kind of came in hitting on all cylinders.

"It's something that when we looked at the schedule, we knew this was going to be hard. We kind of assumed it would be something like this environment, even back in February, and so we've been preparing for this game for a while."

The Buckeyes scored on each of their first six possessions before the intermission and jumped out to a 38-0 halftime lead behind quarterback Justin Fields, running back J.K. Dobbins and a dominating defense that turned three interceptions – two by cornerback Jeff Okudah – into 17 first-half points.

"I thought we tackled well on defense, created some turnovers again, created a short field, and we ran the ball well," Day said. "That was great to see. I thought the line did a good job, the backs ran hard and Justin made some really big-time throws. When you combine that together with good special teams, I'm proud of the way the guys played."

Fields completed 15 of 21 passes for 212 yards and three touchdowns. He also had 12 carries for 72 yards and another score in what may have been his best all-around game in five starts with Ohio State.

"It definitely feels easy going out there and playing," Fields said. "We practice hard every day. The harder we practice, the easier the game will be."

Dobbins, meanwhile, racked up 177 yards on 24 carries and became the 11th running back in school history to rush for more than 3,000 yards in his career.

With 654 yards this season, he's also well on his way to becoming just the second Buckeye to have three 1,000-yard seasons, the other being Archie Griffin from 1973-75.

"This team is stacked with talent," Dobbins said. "It could be me, it could be K.J. (Hill), it could be (Binjimen Victor). We just have a lot

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Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State answered any doubts about whether the first four games were a fluke or not with a dominating 48-7 victory against Nebraska at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb.

The Buckeyes outgained the Cornhuskers 580-231 and many players were worthy of praise for their parts in the blowout road win.

The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff and BSB subscribers distributed Buckeye Leaves for players who especially stood out for Ohio State.

Wyatt Crosher, BSB: Once again, there are plenty of players on both sides of the ball that deserve credit for helping dismantle Nebraska, but I will go with Jeff Okudah. Before the game got out of hand, it was the Cornhuskers that got the opening drive to try to get an early jump and make the upset happen.

Instead, Okudah came up with his second interception in as many games to immediately halt the momentum. Then, with the Cornhuskers driving down the field with an unorthodox play style, a ball was batted in the air and fell into the hands of the junior corner for his second pick of the day.

It may have been a pick that happened by being in the right place at the right time, but without Okudah making his second and third career interceptions, who knows if Ohio State is able to immediately put the game away in the same style that it did.

Joe Dempsey, BSB: Josh Alabi earned a Buckeye Leaf for his excellent performance as a fill-in starter at right tackle in place of injured Branden Bowen. It's no small task to step into the starting lineup on the road in the biggest game of the season to date, and the fifth-year senior rose to the occasion.

With the game still in reach for Nebraska and Ohio State regaining possession ahead 7-0 with 9:18 left in the first quarter, Alabi helped lead running back J.K. Dobbins on his first big run of many. The Buckeyes started on their own 40-yard line, and Dobbins followed Alabi along the right side for a 15-yard gain on first down, which helped propel the visitors' momentum on their way to the big victory.

Alabi, a Detroit Cass Tech product, helped pave the way for the Scarlet and Gray rushing offense, which gained 307 yards and three touchdowns on 44 attempts (7.0 average) when he was in the game.

Also blocking well on the edge during pass plays, the 6-5, 305-pound Alabi helped protect Justin Fields, who threw for 212 yards and three scores on 15-of-21 passing.

Andrew Lind, BSB: Though it was just his second career road start, Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields continues to make the game look easy – both throwing and running the football.

In the 48-7 win over Nebraska, Fields completed 15 of 21 passes for 212 yards and three touchdowns. He also rushed 12 times for 72 yards and another score, leading the Buckeyes down the field on drive after drive.

Fields' confidence is apparent, both in the way he motivates his teammates before the game and in how he performs within the flow of the game. He's taken an already exciting offensive attack and not only made it multidimensional, but even more dangerous and difficult for opponents to stop.

Fields should and will get greater consideration for the Heisman Trophy after his output on Sept. 28. He has also put the Big Ten and the rest of the country on notice – the Buckeyes are for real and aren't going to slip up in a game they should handily win this season.

Patrick Mayhorn, BSB: It's hard to put up a quiet 175-yard rushing performance, but J.K. Dobbins did just that against Nebraska, because he gashed the Cornhuskers all night and it still felt like he was never there.

That's become a bit of a trend for Dobbins because of the way that he runs. He isn't super explosive, and while he can make them sometimes, he really doesn't have a knack for big plays. Instead, he just racks up solid gains on basically every carry, and against Nebraska he kept up his workmanlike approach. He averaged 7.4 yards per carry, despite a long of just 26 yards.

He did it without a touchdown, with the touchdown carries going to Justin Fields and Master Teague, but Dobbins was dominant just as he has been in basically every game this season. Plenty of credit could and should go to the offensive line too, but Dobbins deserves props for how hard he ran against Nebraska and how hard he has been running all season long.

BSB Subscribers

Ryan Day and the entire coaching staff for having this team prepared and focused from the opening kickoff to the final kneel down.

– mrbigbux

It has to be Jeff Okudah. His play set the tempo for the game. He almost single-handedly took the spirit away from the Huskers early.

– Mcarr

I'm going to give some love to J.K. Dobbins. I knew he was having a good game, but then you look at the stats and he has 177 yards — a quiet 177 yards, but 177 nonetheless.

– Poster That Harley Built



From The Message Board

Following Ohio State's 48-7 win over Nebraska on Sept. 28, Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked the readers on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as staff members, if they were surprised by the one-sided result given the game had long been considered a potential pitfall on the schedule. Here are some of the responses:

"Before kickoff, I said I couldn't see OSU scoring less than 34 nor Nebraska more than 17, but I was surprised at the almost flawless execution."

– Terrier Buck

"Yes and no. I thought the Buckeyes would win decisively, but not like that. I think I may have bought in on the preseason hype for the Huskers."

– Mcarr

"Not at all. This is the best OSU team I've seen in a few years. The college football world better start recognizing!"

– Tiffin Buckeye

"I am surprised by how sucky Nebraska was. I could have walked through that defense. I was not surprised by how great the Bucks were, however. This is a golden era, fans, treasure every minute. This team is going places."

– PeyoteBuck

"I did expect a dominating victory, but not 38-0 at halftime! This one was beyond my dreams. The team was superbly prepared, the play calling spectacular, both the offensive and defensive lines dominated again in a B1G night game at a storied program. The team (players and coaches) is stacked with future NFL stars."

– AnthonyBuckeye

"OK, so I didn't expect that type of blowout. But now I'm asking, what caused us to fear Nebraska? Was it the 44-8 win over Northern Illinois, the 42-38 win over Illinois or the loss to Colorado? There really wasn't anything on record to date to think that the Huskers were any better than they proved to be. I'll be curious to see what they do the rest of the way."

– Poster That Harley Built

"I was concerned at the start of the season about the Nebraska-Michigan State combo games because of Nebraska's strong finish last year and MSU's always dangerous defense. Either Nebraska has taken several steps back or the Buckeyes have improved. Obviously, it is the latter. Every phase of the game has gotten stronger: passing, running, blocking, tackling, coverage and special teams. Kudos to the coaching. Each week this team looks better. This staff is coaching, preparing, game planning, etc. Brian Hartline has gotten the receivers to block downfield, opening holes for the runners. That is stuff champions do."

– John Lanning

"I really wasn't surprised. I thought the only real chance Nebraska had revolved around Ohio State starting slow again, and as soon as the Buckeyes came out firing and scored two quick touchdowns, it was pretty obvious that they were going to blow the Cornhuskers out. Ohio State was pretty obviously the better team, and it showed it in space, and more importantly in the trenches."

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

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Ohio State's Success Draws Historic Comparisons

Maybe Jordan Fuller is onto something. "I still feel like people think it's not real yet," the senior safety said after his Ohio State team rolled into Lincoln for a prime-time game and stomped its way to a 48-7 annihilation of what had previously been thought of as a pretty good Nebraska team. "Maybe our fans don't feel like that. Maybe (the media doesn't) feel that way, but I know there's people out there that don't really believe the hype yet."

The 2019 season is bearing down on the halfway point, so the "it's too early to tell" argument is growing rather stale. Regardless of what anyone might think about the competition played so far, the Ohio State football team is playing as well as any other team in the nation – and everyone from Clemson and Tuscaloosa to Baton Rouge and Athens, Ga., had better take notice.

It wasn't supposed to be this way, at least according to the preseason pundits who believed Michigan was going to run away with the Big Ten championship before Alabama-Clemson IV would decide the national title. The Buckeyes? No team facing the impossible challenges of replacing a legendary head coach, a record-breaking starting quarterback, a pair of playmaking receivers and a defensive end who just happened to be the No. 2 overall pick in the most recent NFL draft could be considered championship material.

And then they started playing the games – which is how this whole College Football Playoff thing is supposed to be determined – and we found once again that talent has a way of rising to the top.

Is Chase Young better than Joey or Nick Bosa? Maybe. Neither Bosa ever recorded a sack in seven consecutive games. And even when Young doesn't record a sack, he disrupts what the other team is trying to do. It was his pressure on Nebraska quarterback Adrian Martinez that led to the first of three OSU interceptions against the Cornhuskers.

Is J.K. Dobbins better than Ezekiel Elliott? I might want to pump the brakes on that one just a bit because Elliott was one of the best blocking running backs I have ever seen at the college level. Still, if it's rushing yards you want, it's rushing yards you get from Dobbins, who is currently on pace for 1,700 if the Buckeyes get to the Big Ten Championship Game. Tack on two playoff games, and his total would inflate to 1,962 yards – and that would be an Ohio State record.

Is Justin Fields better than Dwayne Haskins? That argument would likely hinge of some sort of false equivalency test since they are completely different quarterbacks. The kind of strong arm and accuracy Haskins displayed last season were generational things. You could make the case, however, that Fields is a more complete package.

In just five games, Fields has thrown for 1,092 yards and 16 touchdowns while adding another 222 yards and seven TDs rushing. His pass efficiency rating is 194.42, and his completion percentage is 69.8. Haskins finished last year's record-breaking season with a pass efficiency of 174.07, a completion percentage of 70.0, and 108 yards and four touchdowns on the ground.

Furthermore, Fields is 116 attempts into his 2019 season and has yet to throw an interception. Among the top 10 quarterbacks in pass efficiency through games of Sept. 28, Fields was one of only three who had yet to throw a pick. Tua Tagovailoa of Alabama and Justin Herbert of Oregon were the others.

The scary thing for Ohio State's future opponents is that Fields has played only five games as a starter. He's going to get better.

His decision-making, the kind that leads to

taking an ill-advised sack or making a misread on a run-pass option – those things are going to go away. What's not going to go away is Fields' talent, the kind that leads to a 41-yard burst down the field in the second quarter or a 6-yard touchdown pass to freshman Garrett Wilson in the third period, the kind of pinpoint throw that would be the envy of every NFL quarterback from Tom Brady and Aaron Rodgers to Patrick Mahomes and Jared Goff.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

And then there is this question: Is Ryan Day better than Urban Meyer?

That's impossible (not to mention unfair) to measure since one guy is in his first year as a head coach on any level of the game and the other wears three national championship rings and is a sure bet for induction into the College Football Hall of Fame.

I have heard the argument that Day is riding Meyer's coattails, winning with the players whom Meyer recruited to play at Ohio State. That is a tired, old tale I have endured ever since I started in this business. Earle Bruce supposedly won the 1979 Big Ten championship with Woody's players. Jim Tressel won the 2002 national championship with players mostly recruited by John Cooper. And Meyer chalked up an undefeated season in 2012 – only the sixth perfect record in Ohio State history – with players who came to Columbus to play for Tressel.

If Day is simply operating the vehicle Meyer built, why has that vehicle somehow found more horsepower, especially on the defensive side of the ball?

Martinez is one of the finest dual-threat quarterbacks in college football, and the Ohio State defense so thoroughly rattled him that he looked like a fourth-stringer playing the game for the first time in his life.

The same guy responsible for 338 total yards, three touchdowns and no turnovers last year as a freshman in Columbus, in a game the Buckeyes were fortunate to win, was this time limited to 128 total yards, no touchdowns and three costly interceptions. If not for a 56-yard run late in the third quarter against OSU's second-team defense, Martinez would have been completely neutralized.

With the risk of overanalyzing the situation, the team of which Day is now in charge bears little resemblance to the one Meyer coached just last year. Gone are the dark clouds that seemed to hang ominously overhead from the mess of the 2018 preseason to the announcement of the coach's retirement due to health reasons.

This year's version of the Buckeyes seems more relaxed, and the proof has been in its performance. No other OSU team in history has scored more points through its first five games, and it's been a good, long time since Ohio State has ranked among the top four nationally in both total defense and scoring defense.

Maybe we're all wrong, and as it has done the past two seasons, this train will inexplicably jump the tracks somewhere down the line. But if the Buckeyes come home and lay the same kind of beatdown administered to Nebraska on Michigan State and its No. 7-ranked defense, those people Fuller mentioned, the ones "that don't really believe the hype yet," had better start believing.

Dobbins Marches On

Dobbins' 177-yard effort against Nebraska marked the 12th time during the junior running back's career that he had rushed for at least 100 yards in a game.

In seven of those 12 games, Dobbins has eclipsed 160 yards, and that puts him in some elite company. Only Archie Griffin (nine) and Elliott (eight) had more games during which they rushed for at least 160 yards, while Dobbins matched Keith Byars, who also had seven such games. Eddie George had six (including five of 200 or more) and Tim Spencer had five.

Meanwhile, the performance against the Cornhuskers allowed Dobbins to crack the top 10 on Ohio State's career rushing list. Now with 3,110 yards, he leapfrogged past Pepe Pearson (3,076, 1994-97), Carlos Snow (2,999, 1987-89, '91), Michael Wiley (2,951, 1996-99) and Antonio Pittman (2,945, 2004-06), and he needs only 91 more yards to jump two more spots in front of Byars (3,200, 1982-85) and Carlos Hyde (3,198, 2010-13).

Dobbins also achieved one other career milestone – albeit a little more obscure. He now has more rushing yards than all of the other players in Ohio State history combined who have worn jersey No. 2.

That list includes Terrelle Pryor, who piled up 2,164 yards on the ground during his three-year tenure at quarterback from 2008-10. (I included Pryor's total from the 2010 season. I know the stats from those games were vacated by the NCAA, but I personally watched each of those games, so it's not like they never happened.)

No. 2 was also worn by Rod Smith from 2011 to 2013, and after that for three years by Dontre Wilson. Smith and Wilson each came out of high school with a lot of hype, but they had the misfortune of playing on the same teams as Hyde and Elliott. Still, they combined for 776 yards on 130 carries, good enough for an average of 6.0 yards per attempt.

Another highly anticipated recruit wore No. 2. That was Erik Haw, who rushed for 61 yards as a true freshman at Ohio State in 2005 before transferring to Jackson State, a Football Championship Subdivision program. Haw led the Tigers in rushing with 630 yards and seven TDs in 2007.

Cris Carter also wore No. 2, and I naturally figured a player with his speed and talent would have gotten a chance to showcase his skills on more than a few end-arounds and reverses.

Apparently, Bruce did not agree because Carter carried the ball just twice during his OSU career and accounted for only seven rushing yards.

Two other players of recent vintage wore No. 2 before switching jersey numbers.

Daniel "Boom" Herron wore No. 2 while serving as a scout-team member during his redshirt year in 2007. He later switched to No. 1 and wound up No. 15 on the program's all-time rushing list with 2,869 yards. (Yes, I counted his stats from the 2010 season, too.)

Finally, quarterback Justin Zwick wore No. 2 during his redshirt freshman season of 2003 when he was a backup to Craig Krenzel and Scott McMullen. Zwick, who had changed from wearing jersey No. 9 during his redshirt year in 2002, got into three games in '03 and carried the ball twice – once for a 2-yard gain and once for a 2-yard loss equaling a net of zero yards.

Zwick switched numbers again in 2004, this time sticking with No. 12 – the same number he wore in high school at Massillon (Ohio) Washington – for the remainder of his college career.



Isaiah Pryor Enters The Transfer Portal

As first reported by ESPN's Tom VanHaaren and later confirmed by the university, Ohio State junior safety Isaiah Pryor officially entered the transfer portal on Sept. 23. The former starter had played in each of Ohio State's first four games of the season, though he recorded just three tackles in that time and played sparingly in all four games. He had been passed up on the depth chart by Brendon White and Shaun Wade and appeared to be falling behind Josh Proctor.

Pryor played in 13 games as a sophomore in 2018, and though he struggled at times and ultimately lost his starting job to White, he put up 31 tackles, five pass breakups and one interception on the year.

A former four-star recruit in the class of 2017 from Lawrenceville, Ga., Pryor is reportedly set to graduate at the end of the year, which would mean that he has two years to play as a graduate transfer at the school of his choice. Because he's ending his Ohio State career now, after four games on the season, he can qualify for a redshirt, making him a redshirt junior next season without having to sit out a full season.

Buckeyes Move One Spot In Both Polls

Following an emphatic prime-time 48-7 victory over Nebraska on Sept. 28, Ohio State was on the move in both the AP and coaches polls.

The Buckeyes jumped over idle LSU to

move to fourth in the AP Poll and now sit behind only Alabama, Clemson and Georgia. The Buckeyes and Tigers are trailed by Oklahoma, Auburn, Wisconsin, Notre Dame and Florida in the top 10. The only change in the back end is at nine and 10, where Notre Dame and Florida switched places from where they were last week.

Ohio State is joined in the AP poll by Wisconsin at No. 8, Penn State at 12, Iowa at 14 and Michigan up one spot to 19. Michigan State, whom the Buckeyes play on Oct. 5, sit just one spot out of the poll, with 147 votes.

The Buckeyes saw a rise in the coaches poll too, up from sixth to fifth, as they jumped over LSU. Just like in the AP Poll, Alabama, Clemson and Georgia fill out the top three, though Oklahoma sits at four ahead of the Buckeyes. The top 10 is filled out by Auburn, Florida, Wisconsin and Notre Dame. None of those four moved from last week's poll.

The coaches poll is slightly more friendly to the Big Ten, with Wisconsin at nine, Penn State at 11, Iowa at 14, Michigan up two spots to 18, and Michigan State up five spots and into the poll at 23, tied with Memphis.

Minnesota received votes in both, with 17 from the AP and 34 from the coaches.

Eichenberg, Andrade Shed Black Stripes

Ohio State has officially introduced two more freshmen to the team, with the removal of the black helmet stripe for linebacker Tommy Eichenberg and walk-on quarterback J.P. Andrade. Both players lost their stripes following the Buckeyes' practice on Sept. 25.

Eichenberg is a former four-star recruit out of St. Ignatius (Ohio) High School and faced a bit of an uphill battle as soon as he arrived on campus, as he was injured for almost all of fall camp. He appears to be fully healthy now and perhaps ready to contribute as depth when Ohio State has games in hand.

Andrade is a preferred walk-on from LaVerne, Calif., who was brought in by Ryan Day as a player who could potentially fill the empty quarterback spot in the 2019 class. While Andrade is a long shot as it currently stands to break through into Ohio State's quarterback rotation, he could serve as depth and is likely the number four quarterback behind Justin Fields, Chris Chugunov and Gunnar Hoak.

Eichenberg was the 327th-best recruit and the 19th-best inside linebacker in the 2019 class,

2019 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2019 Record
Aug. 31	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	W, 45-21	FOX	3-2 (1-0 Conference USA)
Sept. 7	CINCINNATI*	W, 42-0	ABC	3-1 (0-0 American Athletic)
Sept. 14	at Indiana	W, 51-10.	FOX	3-2 (0-2 Big Ten)
Sept. 21	MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 76-5	BTN	2-3 (1-0 Mid-American)
Sept. 28	at Nebraska	W, 48-7	ABC	3-2 (1-1 Big Ten)
Oct. 5	MICHIGAN STATE*	7:30 p.m.	ABC/ESPN	4-1 (2-0 Big Ten)
Oct. 18	at Northwestern*	8:30 p.m.	FS1	1-3 (0-2 Big Ten)
Oct. 26	WISCONSIN*	TBA	TBA	4-0 (2-0 Big Ten)
Nov. 9	MARYLAND	TBA	TBA	2-2 (0-1 Big Ten)
Nov. 16	at Rutgers	TBA	TBA	1-3 (0-2 Big Ten)
Nov. 23	PENN STATE*	TBA	TBA	4-0 (1-0 Big Ten)
Nov. 30	at Michigan*	12 p.m.	FOX	3-1 (1-1 Big Ten)
Dec. 7	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	FOX	

* 2018 bowl team
** at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

BSB Staff Members Saw Big Victory Coming

Members of the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff all predicted a decisive Ohio State victory over Nebraska in the popular Staff Predictions feature, which runs each game day on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com. Staff members Wyatt Crosher, Joe Dempsey, Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn all saw Ohio State's offensive explosion in Lincoln, predicting an average of 50.3 points for the Buckeyes. However, the staff members either overestimated the Husker offense or underestimated the Buckeye defense as they had Nebraska scoring 18.8 points, on average.

Mayhorn (56-10) and Dempsey (52-14) had the Buckeyes winning by the widest margins, while Crosher (45-24) and Lind (48-27) each had Ohio State winning by 21 points.

Access to BuckeyeSports.com is free to all BSB print subscribers and is a good way to keep track of the breaking news between print issues of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Don't miss news from Ryan Day's Tuesday press conferences or practice during the week. Also enjoy Reprint Thursdays, in addition to the Staff Predictions feature.

The BuckeyeSports.com website 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. Subscribers can also read the entire print issue of BSB before it has even hit the post office.

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If you have any questions about BuckeyeSports.com or your mail service, feel free to call us at the above number.

according to the 247Sports composite. Andrade was unranked by most major services but did check in as the No. 1,732 prospect overall in 247Sports' in-house rankings. He was the No. 57 pro-style quarterback.

Day Says Handful Of Freshmen Won't Redshirt

A group of Ohio State freshmen will be playing through the rest of the season rather than redshirting, Day said at his weekly press confer-



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From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1984

If Mike Tomczak's performance against Iowa in a 45-26 victory the week before hadn't set aside all speculation that he hadn't fully recovered from his broken leg, his outing in Ohio State's 35-22 win against Minnesota closed the case.

All Tomczak did against the Gophers was complete 13 of 19 passes for 181 yards and two touchdowns. Six times Tomczak passed on third down, and on all six occasions, he completed passes for first downs. Tomczak's effectiveness was a major reason that punter Tom Tupa wasn't called upon until 1:36 remained in the game.

"I felt real good," Tomczak said. "We knew the curls and the flats would be open. We took advantage of that. They tried stopping the curl, and we went to the square patterns. Things just went well today offensively, especially in the passing game."

30 Years Ago – 1989

He didn't play a single down for Ohio State against Illinois on Oct. 7. He didn't fumble, didn't throw an interception, didn't miss a single tackle. Still, OSU offensive coordinator Jim Colletto shouldered most of the blame for the Buckeyes' 34-14 loss to the Fighting Illini. The way Colletto figured it, his conservatism had cost the Ohio State offense a chance to beat Illinois.

"I didn't do a very good job today," said the man in charge of calling OSU's offensive plays. "You have to let the players do what they're supposed to do and not let the bad results out there affect some of the decisions you make on the sidelines. I was guilty of that today without question."

25 Years Ago – 1994

Northwestern's motto was "Expect Victory." After narrowly escaping with a 17-15 victory over the Wildcats, Ohio State may have needed a motto as well: "You Never Know What to Expect."

For the second time in five games, the Buckeyes showed up for a contest unsure of their purpose. It had occurred in Seattle against Washington and OSU found itself in a 22-0 hole before losing by a more respectable score of 25-16.

It happened again in Evanston, Ill., as the Buckeyes rolled into Dyche Stadium for their Big Ten opener and nearly got rolled back out again by a fired-up Northwestern team.

"This is the second game now where we have come out and failed to execute as an offense," quarterback Bobby Hoying said. "It cost us the first time, and it nearly cost us again today. Twice in five games isn't a very good average."

20 Years Ago – 1999

After hearing since the season began that they could not start games strongly, the Ohio State Buckeyes jumped on Wisconsin 17-0 in their Big Ten opener.

"This was exactly where we wanted them," said OSU offensive tackle Tyson Walter of his team's early lead. "We talked about all week jumping out to a big lead early and showing some maturity by staying in the game for four quarters.

"But we weren't able to do it." That last sentence may go down as the understatement of the year as the 12th-ranked Buckeyes allowed the Badgers to finish the game by scoring 42 unanswered points and rolling to a shocking 42-17 win before 93,524 at Ohio Stadium.

"I am embarrassed by the way we played in the second half," said John Cooper, whose team fell to 3-2 overall. "We didn't do anything right. They carried the fight to us, and we couldn't get them stopped."

15 Years Ago – 2004

Ohio State athletic director Andy Geiger was an interested spectator at Ryan Field for the Buckeyes' 33-27 night game loss at Northwestern.

It marked the fourth consecutive year that OSU had played a Big Ten game under the lights, and Geiger said that fans can continue to expect their favorite team to play night games, but only on occasion.

"I think night games are fine as long as they are limited to special, once-in-a-great-long-while occurrences," Geiger told BSB. "There are some things inherently troublesome about playing at night, but those don't outweigh the benefits.

"Our fans seem to like them so I see no reason why we wouldn't entertain the notion of playing more of them in the future."

10 Years Ago – 2009

Ohio State went on the road in the Big Ten and won decisively, this time taking a 33-14 victory at Indiana in a game that did not feel as close as the final score might have indicated.

The starting defense allowed next to nothing, while the offense moved the ball well enough to put plenty of points on the board.

Oh, and Buckeye fans practically took over an opposing stadium, too.

"Our guys are really focused," Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel said. "They try to block out the distractions (and) they

like challenges. They like going into stadiums where at least only half the people are for us. Our guys are glued into what we need to do to be successful."

Five Years Ago – 2014

The Ohio State football team got five touchdowns from the arms and legs of redshirt freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett and spoiled Maryland's first Big Ten home opener by thumping the Terrapins, 52-24.

The 20th-ranked Buckeyes opened conference play in grand fashion, silencing the Maryland-backing portion of the crowd of 51,802 at Byrd Stadium, and Barrett was a big reason why. The quarterback had a hand in four passing touchdowns and one rushing score. He completed 18 of 23 passes for 267 yards and added 71 yards on the ground, sparking an offense that totaled 533 yards and recorded 26 first downs.

"I'm very pleased with our performance today," OSU head coach Urban Meyer said. "I know it wasn't perfect, and obviously that's not what you strive to be, but we're not. Today, going against a team that was 4-1, a team we have a lot of respect for and very good athletes that showed they can make some plays today ... our coaches did a good job of getting their units ready to go."

One Year Ago – 2018

Back in 2016, Ohio State had the ball in the fourth quarter with a chance to win or tie the game on the road against Penn State. The Buckeyes couldn't get in gear, losing to the Nittany Lions, 24-21.

On Sept. 29, Ohio State had a similar chance. But this time the odds were stacked against the Buckeyes even more – they had 96 yards to go, and a field goal wasn't an option. This time, though, the whiteout crowd at Beaver Stadium didn't have a chance to rush the field, because it was the No. 4 Buckeyes celebrating in delirium after a 27-26 win over ninth-ranked Penn State.

"It's kind of hard to prepare for moments like that," said sophomore quarterback Dwayne Haskins, who made the first road start of his career. "We do a lot with (strength coach Mickey Marotti) in conditioning and lifting and we try to simulate those hard moments, but all we just said was, 'Love each other and whatever happens, happens. Put it all on the line for one another.' And we did that."

ence on Sept. 24. The coach said any freshmen who played all four of Ohio State's first four games will almost certainly not redshirt, while there is a smaller chance for the other players who played three or two games, but that those Buckeyes will likely redshirt.

That four-game group, as Day describes it, includes Marcus Crowley, Zach Harrison, Harry Miller, Jameson Williams, Garrett Wilson and Craig Young.

With this in mind, Ohio State could be redshirting as many as 10 of its 17-man 2019 recruiting class, though those 10 are likely to play four or close to four games on the year as Ohio State looks to take advantage of the four-game redshirt rule that was installed last season.

Fuller Named To William V. Campbell Award Semifinals

Ohio State senior safety Jordan Fuller was included as one of 185 college football players to be named to this year's William V. Campbell Award semifinalist list. Fuller is the lone Buckeye in the group.

The William V. Campbell Award is designed to "recognize an individual as the absolute best football scholar-athlete in the nation for his combined academic success, football performance and exemplary leadership." Fuller, who has a 3.8 GPA and was named to the CoSIDA Academic All-American team last year as well as the Big Ten All-Academic team, fits that billing. He's a second-year captain, and he is tied for the Ohio State lead in tackles through five games with 25.

The National Football Foundation will

announce 12-14 finalists on Oct. 30, and each of them will receive an \$18,000 postgraduate scholarship as a member of the 2019 NFF National Scholar-Athlete Class.

The final winner will be announced in New York City on Dec. 10.

Meyer Not Interested In Michigan Job

Not that it's a massive surprise, but according to an interview that he did with 97.1 The Fan's "Carpenter and Rothman," former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer has no interest in the Michigan coaching position, if that job were to open up at any point.

"No, that's not going to happen," Meyer said. "That's... that's not going to happen."

Meyer went on to elaborate on his thought process, explaining that there's more to his lack of interest than just the rivalry he was a piece of for the last seven years.

"Three months ago, I had a problem," Meyer said. "What if I'm sitting here in October and I can't stand what I'm doing? But I love what I'm doing. My family loves what I'm doing, and those are really the only people who matter to me."

Michael Drake Opposes Endorsements For Athletes

Despite the recent passing of a California bill that would allow college athletes to accept endorsement deals starting in 2023, Ohio State president Michael Drake has not changed his views on the payment of athletes or on endorsement deals for those athletes. He made that

clear on WOSU's "All Sides with Ann Fisher."

"We don't want to have things turn into professional sports," Drake said. "There are professional sports available now. Great. We want to do what we can to maintain collegiate athletics."

Drake, however, does support the NCAA committee co-chaired by Gene Smith that has spent the last year looking into the viability of

Continued On Page 6

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Continued From Page 5

athletes receiving money for the usage of their likenesses. Still, Drake feels that Ohio State is doing enough for its athletes.

"We're also very interested in being appropriate and supporting our students and being fair to our students," Drake said. "And we and all the other schools commit millions, tens of millions of dollars a year in scholarships and other support to our student-athletes."

Malik Hooker Sidelined For At Least A Month

Former Ohio State and current Indianapolis safety Malik Hooker suffered yet another injury setback during Indianapolis' 27-24 victory over the Atlanta Falcons on Sept. 22.

According to ESPN Insider Adam Schefter and a release from the team, Hooker suffered a torn meniscus during the game, and while he actually did return and finish out the game, he's set to miss 4-6 weeks, Schefter indicated. The outlook was slightly more positive from Colts head coach Frank Reich, who said that Hooker would miss "a few weeks."

This comes on the heels of a bit of a resurgence for Hooker. After suffering a torn ACL as a rookie and struggling with nagging leg injuries through much of his first two years in the league, Hooker had started off 2019 as healthy as he was entering the league in 2017. He flashed his talent with an impressive interception against the Los Angeles Chargers in a week-one loss and had eight tackles through the first two games. He had just two against the Falcons.

McLaurin Lighting Up The League

Former Ohio State receiver Terry McLaurin couldn't be off to a much hotter start in the NFL with the Washington Redskins than he has been through the first three weeks of his rookie campaign.

The third-round pick has been a consistent starter for Washington, and his consistency has even allowed him to do something that no rookie receiver has ever done before. McLaurin has been in a league of his own as he compares to fellow rookie receivers, while picking up 257 yards and three scores on 16 receptions.

McLaurin is the first rookie receiver to catch at least five passes and score at least one touchdown in each of his first three games in the league. On top of that, his 16 receptions lead the way for everyone in the rookie class through three weeks, including the 11 receivers drafted ahead of him. He sits at second in yards, behind Baltimore's Marquise Brown, with 282.

Haskins Sees First NFL Playing Time

Former Buckeye quarterback Dwayne Haskins was thrust into his first NFL action on Sept. 29, in Washington's 24-3 loss to the divisional rival New York Giants. Haskins entered the game following a brutal start to the game by starter Case Keenum, but things didn't get much better under the Buckeye signal caller.

With McLaurin out for the game with a hamstring injury, Haskins struggled to find open receivers all day long and tossed three interceptions, including a pick-six to Giants safety Jabrill Peppers. Haskins finished the day with 107 yards on just nine completions, though he did at least complete more than half of his 17 attempts. He also ran for 23 yards on two carries, including a nifty 14-yard keeper that put his offense right on the goal line for the Redskins' lone points of the game.

Head coach Jay Gruden said after the game that he had not yet made a decision on Haskins moving forward.

"You're not handed the keys because of where you're drafted. You have to earn the right."

Vannett Dealt To Steelers

Former Buckeye tight end Nick Vannett is on the move after spending the first three years of his NFL career with Seattle. On Sept. 24, the Seahawks traded Vannett to the Pittsburgh

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Steelers in exchange for a 2020 fifth-round pick.

The move makes sense for both sides, as the Steelers are without tight end Vance McDonald for the foreseeable future, due to a shoulder injury, while the Seahawks have a bit of a luxury at the position. This could be a good move for Vannett as well, because he was expected to start right away in Pittsburgh. In Seattle, he had

played in all three games but started just one and saw only five targets through those three games.

Vannett hasn't had a statistically flashy start to his NFL career, but that doesn't hurt him too much, because his best asset is his ability as a blocker. Through three seasons and three games in season four, Vannett had 48 receptions for 463 yards and four touchdowns.

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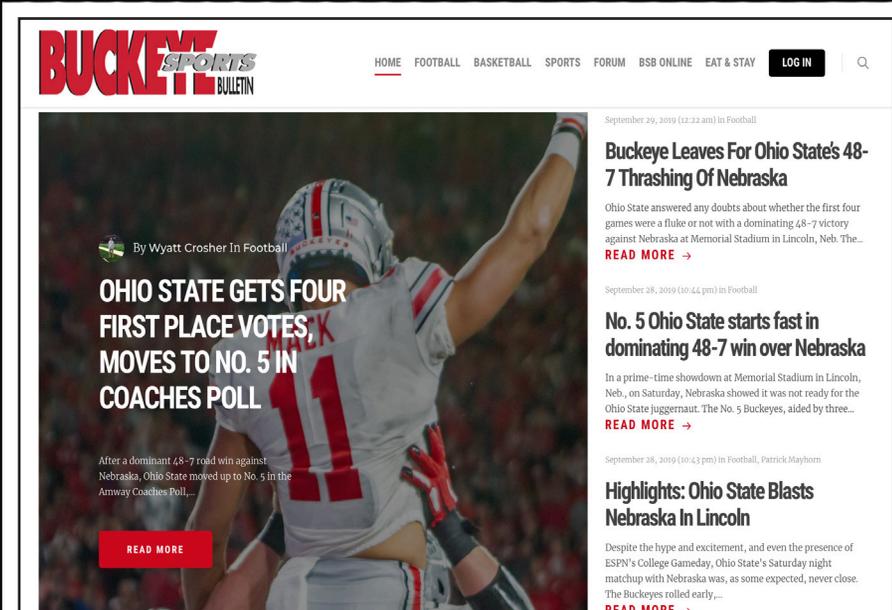
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COVER STORY

Taking It Game By Game

Continued From Page 1

of talent. It shows how talented we are. Hopefully we can prove one day that we're actually good.

"We can play with anybody, I feel like. I'm not going to say anything about a championship. We take it game by game, but I feel like we can play with anybody."

Ohio State outgained Nebraska 580 to 231, marking the fourth straight game in which the Buckeyes have accumulated 500-plus yards of total offense. It's also the fifth game in a row that the defensive has held its opponent to 300 yards or less.

Cornhuskers quarterback Adrian Martinez – a one-time recruiting target of Day's – was expected to give Ohio State's rebuilt defense its first true test of the season.

Instead, he was harassed by defensive end Chase Young from the first snap of the game and completed just 8 of 17 passes for 47 yards and the three interceptions.

Martinez did rush for 81 yards on the night, but 56 of those came on one play in the third quarter with the game well in hand and most of the Buckeyes' defensive starters out of the game.

"I'm disappointed," Nebraska head coach Scott Frost said. "I knew they were a good team. They're really good. I've been on the field with a lot of good football teams. They just put pressure on you

because they're really good on defense, really good on offense, they're good on special teams.

"We didn't protect well enough, we didn't take care of the ball well enough, we didn't tackle well enough, and we didn't block well enough."

The Cornhuskers still have a way to go before they're back among college football's elite. The Buckeyes, on the other hand, showed exactly why some believe they're the best team in the country.

But Day doesn't want his team to look too far ahead. To him, this is just another step in the journey – one that hopefully ends with a third straight Big Ten title and trip back to the College Football Playoff, where Ohio State has not been since the 2016 season.

"This was a major challenge for us, so I'm proud of that, but we still have a long way to go," Day said. "This doesn't mean anything if we don't keep it going."

The Buckeyes now return home for another night game against Michigan State (7:30 p.m. on ABC), followed by a trip to Northwestern on Oct. 18 and then home again against No. 8 Wisconsin on Oct. 26.

It's a daunting slate, but Ohio State should be ready for what's ahead.

"In recent years, as we all know, we've definitely slipped up." Fields said. "We're not doing that this year."



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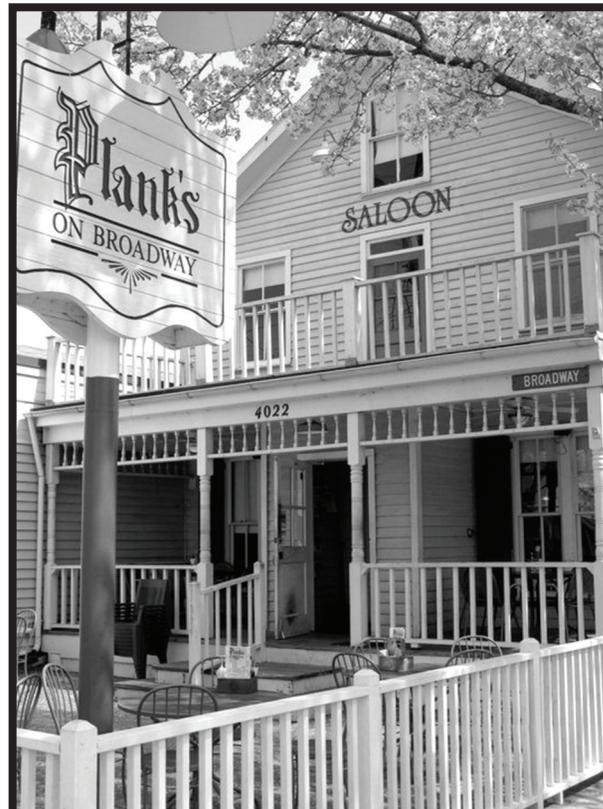
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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 48, Nebraska 7

Ohio State co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison on the Buckeyes' important victory in Lincoln, Neb.: "Our team is totally into everything. I'm really proud of these guys. They came here to send a message that we want to show everybody that we're going to try to get better every game."

Mattison on the key to stopping Nebraska's offense: "We knew we had to shut down the quarterback. We knew we had to shut down the quarterback. We couldn't let the quarterback beat us with his feet, and that was the biggest thing."

Ohio State senior safety Jordan Fuller on the confidence of the defense: "It's come from all our preparation. Seeing the results on the field is the best feeling in the world. Seeing everybody go eat like that on the field, it's fun."

Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley on the challenges presented by the explosive playmakers for Nebraska: "As we got closer to this game, maybe even starting a little bit last week, I started thinking

about this one a lot. They just present a lot of issues. The backs are good, and the receivers are good. All we did was hear about, 'They have really good wideouts.' The quarterback is a very dangerous player and schematically that creates issues, so yeah, I didn't sleep very well this week, watched a lot of tape and this was the one."

Hafley on the Buckeyes' impressive defensive performance: "These guys deserve credit. Are we a finished product? No. Do I think we can get way better? I do. I guarantee you when I turn on the tape on the plane, I'm going to be frustrated on things, but it's nice to do that when you win a game. That's what I'm starting to learn here."

Ohio State junior cornerback Jeff Okudah on the Buckeyes' potential: "The sky's the limit. I'm just really excited. The secondary is finally clicking. The D-line and Chase (Young) are having an amazing year. What's also good is the linebackers are playing like a tight-knit unit, and you saw Pete Werner over there almost decapitate someone. It's just special to see everyone playing in the Bullets at all three levels."

Justin Fields on his 6-yard touchdown pass to freshman wideout Garrett Wilson: "We do so much work in practice, that was just a routine play for us. I liked the mismatch on Garrett, and I thought he was way better than the corner that was on him. I just went up to Garrett, and it just happened like we practiced, for real."

Running back J.K. Dobbins when asked if he thinks about the potential of the Buckeyes: "I personally don't. Because I've been on the other side where you look ahead and you lose to Iowa or Purdue. I'm not going to look ahead."

Nebraska head coach Scott Frost on the crushing loss to the Buckeyes: "We're all disappointed. I thought we had a puncher's chance if we came out and played a really good game, and we didn't, so that's the result. But I told the team we can't doubt for a second where this is going, what we're doing to get it there, the improvements we've made, so I want the guys to go to bed tonight and put this behind them and be looking forward to a week from today (against Northwestern)."

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OHIO STATE VS. NEBRASKA

Defense Holds Strong

Although Ohio State came into Lincoln a favorite, the Buckeyes were nonetheless expecting a battle. That battle did not go according to plan, with Ohio State dominating Nebraska from start to finish in a 48-7 victory.

The lopsided score had a lot to do with the

184 yards and a score, good for 4.7 yards a rush. Prior to this game, the Cornhuskers were averaging a very similar 4.7 yards per carry, tallying 861 yards on the ground on 187 carries.

"The country saw what we were echoing in the locker room before the game," Okudah said. "We are who we think we are, because we put in the work and then we also put it on film, so I know everyone was kind of like doubting the schedule, but I think that we were able to show what we are capable of doing."

GAME NOTEBOOK Wyatt Crosher

Offense Proves Itself Worthy

While the defense managed to stall the high-powered Scott Frost offensive game plan, the Buckeyes were able to find momentum on the offensive side of the ball, especially through the run game.

The combination of junior running back J.K. Dobbins, sophomore quarterback Justin Fields and redshirt freshman running back Master Teague combined for the vast majority of the 53 carries for 368 yards and three touchdowns that helped to put away the Cornhuskers early on.

Of that, Dobbins finished with 24 carries for 177 yards, Teague was 12 for 77, and Fields ended his day with 12 rushes for 72 yards and a score.

The consistent impact on the ground allowed Fields to open up the game through the air and close out the Cornhuskers. Fields completed 15 of his 21 passes for 212 yards and three touchdowns.

"I felt calm and confident coming into this game," Fields said. "I think that goes with the preparation. If you prepare hard, you have nothing to be worried about in the game."

The first of Fields' passing scores came with a 2-yard completion to redshirt senior wide receiver K.J. Hill. Then, in the second quarter, Fields found another senior receiver, Austin Mack, from 18 yards away to make it 38-0 just before the half.

And finally, Fields found true freshman Garrett Wilson in the corner of the end zone from 6 yards out to make the game 48-0 late in the third quarter.

Wilson got both of his feet inbounds and impressed once again with his display of footwork, route running and catch ability, and he showed why he may be a major receiving threat for the Buckeyes moving forward.

Dobbins said that the play on the offensive side came against a good Nebraska team, one that Ohio State did not take lightly and one that they were proud to rack up the points against.

"We respect them," Dobbins said. "They're a good team, so I'm not going to say that they weren't good. I mean we just played well as an offense."

The junior running back also said that after the 41-point beatdown of a top contender in the Big Ten West, Ohio State is ready to prove itself as a major contender for the College Football Playoff moving forward, even if Dobbins isn't ready to fully commit to the claim.

defensive side of the ball, which held Adrian Martinez, Nebraska's sophomore quarterback who was a favorite for the Heisman Trophy early on, to 47 yards and three interceptions on 8-of-17 passing to go along with 15 carries for 81 yards, 56 of which came on one tote in the third quarter when the game was already out of hand.

The dominant defensive showing started off with an interception of a Martinez pass by junior cornerback Jeff Okudah.

"I want to give (co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff) Hafley all the credit for that," Okudah said. "Just being with Coach Hafley, I think that he's someone that's really changed my whole career from the perspective I see the football game. He's made me such a better player, and I can't thank him enough for that."

But the defensive effort did not stop there. Ohio State forced three interceptions and five punts on the first eight drives, including another Okudah pick and a third interception that went into the hands of senior safety Jordan Fuller.

But Okudah said that, even with the impressive showing against Nebraska, the team cannot be satisfied and that the defense has been in this territory before.

"We've been here before, like we're not at any uncharted levels," Okudah said. "We've been 5-0 before, so I think the goal now is to have a complete season, don't have any slip-ups, so if we take it week by week and don't look ahead, don't look past anybody and I think we'll be just fine."

Hafley said the team has plenty of areas where it can improve but that this start to the season deserves recognition.

"Cincinnati's a pretty good football team. Miami (Ohio) won today, is a pretty good football team. Indiana played pretty good today. And this team had 700 yards last week. So these guys do deserve credit," Hafley said.

On the day, the Buckeyes ended the lopsided game holding the Cornhuskers to just 231 yards of total offense, 155 of which came in the second half in a game that was more than over.

The majority of Nebraska's yards came on the ground, with the Cornhuskers' leading rusher, Martinez, averaging 5.4 yards per carry. On the whole, Nebraska rushed 39 times for



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Game Analysis

"As a team, we can play with anybody I feel like," he said. "I mean, I'm not going to say anything about championships or anything, but we take it game by game. But I feel like we can play with anybody right now."

Special Teams Still Solid

Even though it came in a lopsided showing, the Buckeyes continued to bring it in all facets of the game.

This time, even without a blocked punt or field-goal attempt to show for it, Ohio State managed to impress on special teams with two field goals by Blake Haubeil, double the amount of made three-pointers that the team had up to this point in the season.

The first came with 9:32 to go in the second quarter, as Ohio State elected to take a 23-yarder that Haubeil put right through the uprights.

Then, in the third, Haubeil put one right through the middle of the posts from 36 yards away to make it 41-0.

The two field goals were only the second and third made attempts from Haubeil this season after the junior had hit only one of his two attempts coming into this game.

But when it comes to extra points, it is a different story.

Haubeil hit all six of his extra-point attempts, making him 35 for 35 on the season. However, the perfect extra-point total ends there, with backup Dominic DiMaccio missing his single extra-point attempt against Miami (Ohio).

Aside from field goals and extra points, junior punter Drue Chrisman had to punt only one time in the dominant victory against the Cornhuskers. That punt went for 59 yards but found its way into Nebraska's end zone for a touchback and a 39-yard net average for the Ray Guy Award watch list member.

Wilson continued to flash his ability as a potential spark plug in the return game with an impressive punt return, but the play was called back due to a penalty.

Another true freshman wide receiver, Jameson Williams, stood out in the opposite way on special teams, fumbling on a kick return, though Ohio State did recover it.

This was the first game since the opener against Florida Atlantic that the Buckeyes did not make a block of some sort, with two punt blocks and one blocked field goal to their name over the past three weeks.

What Worked Well

Ohio State got it done on both sides of the ball, but where the offense particularly shone was on the ground. The Buckeyes rushed the ball 53 times on the day, finishing with 368 yards and three scores on the ground, which helped to break open the game early. Three Ohio State members broke for more than 70 yards, with junior running back J.K. Dobbins finishing with 24 carries for 177 yards, while redshirt freshman Master Teague ran it 12 times for 77 yards and two scores. Quarterback Justin Fields also scored a touchdown on the ground, running the ball 12 times for 72 yards. All of this helped open up the pass game, where Fields threw for 212 yards and three touchdowns.

What Didn't Work

With the game in hand, Ohio State allowed a five-play, 75-yard drive that was capped off by a 9-yard run by Dedrick Mills that made the game 48-7. But the larger concern came on the following kick return, when true freshman wide receiver Jameson Williams was stripped for a fumble. The ball was recovered by the Buckeyes

and the play was eventually overturned by a flag, but the question of who will be the consistent figure in the return game was made even more shaky with the Williams fumble immediately following the Nebraska score.

Play Of The Game

With the game still undecided in the first quarter, Nebraska quarterback Adrian Martinez was leading an impressive drive down the field that involved a fullback and playing the game under center. All of this led to Ohio State head coach Ryan Day calling a timeout to sort out his defense and figure out how to stop this very classic style of play after the Huskers had driven 49 yards to the OSU 26. On the next play, Martinez threw a pass that was tipped up by his receiver and was captured by cornerback Jeff Okudah, who was lying on his back when the pass came to him. Okudah made the athletic play for his second interception of the game and by doing so stopped the largest amount of momentum that the Cornhuskers had throughout the entire matchup.

– Wyatt Crosher

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Buckeyes Leave Huskers Red-Faced In Rout

By **CRAIG MERZ**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It was supposed to be No. 5 Ohio State's first road test, but instead the Buckeyes made themselves at home to silence the red-clad crowd of 89,759 for the prime-time showdown at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb., on Sept. 28.

The Buckeyes, aided by three first-half interceptions that led to 17 points, rolled to a 38-0 halftime lead and pounded Nebraska 48-7.

Junior cornerback Jeff Okudah had two of the picks, his second and third in the past two games, and the combination of sophomore quarterback Justin Fields and junior running back J.K. Dobbins overwhelmed the Cornhuskers (3-2, 1-1 Big Ten).

Fields was 15 of 21 for 212 yards and three touchdown passes and ran for 72 yards and a TD on 12 rushes for the Buckeyes (5-0, 2-0). Dobbins had 114 of his 177 yards in the first half. Redshirt freshman Master Teague had 12 carries for 77 yards and two touchdowns.

"Our defense did a tremendous job. Our

offense did a tremendous job," Fields said. "The O-line did tremendous and also the coaches with the play calling. We clicked on all cylinders today."

Shucking The Huskers

Ohio State forced a turnover on the first series of the game and went 50 yards in five plays in 2:02 for a 7-0 lead at the 10:35 mark. Okudah, who had his first career interception in the previous game against Miami (Ohio), had a third-down pick of sophomore quarterback Adrian Martinez.

Fields immediately passed 10 yards to Austin Mack. Dobbins had three straight carries for 10 more to the Nebraska 30. On the next down, Cam Taylor-Britt was flagged for pass interference on K.J. Hill deep in the end zone.

Fields scored on the ensuing play from the 15, dropping into the pocket then scrambling up the middle for his seventh rushing touchdown of the season on a 64-degree autumn evening.

The Buckeyes forced a punt when Nebraska got the ball again and marched 60 yards in 10 plays in a span of 4:41 for a 14-0 lead at 4:37

when Fields found Hill on the right side from the 2-yard line.

Dobbins had started the drive with a 15-yard run and later added a 13-yard gallop. Fields had a 6-yard, third-down conversion to sophomore receiver Chris Olave, and later the QB had a 14-yard gain around the right end to the 6 on third-and-10 from the 20. Dobbins gained 4 on the ground before Fields' toss to Hill.

The Cornhuskers responded with a promising drive featuring on old-fashioned, run-oriented offense that reached the OSU 26 before, following an OSU timeout, Okudah came through with a stunning interception at the 4. A pass intended for Wan'Dale Robinson was tipped by the receiver, and Okudah was on his back when the ball fell to him.

Ohio State went on the attack again.

Dobbins got the Buckeyes moving with run of 4 and 17 yards. Mack was open for a 38-yard reception to the Nebraska 37, but it would have been a score if he had been able to keep his feet. Two plays later, Dobbins ran for 6 yards to become the 11th Buckeye to surpass 3,000 career rushing yards.

The Buckeyes ended up getting a 23-yard field goal from junior Blake Haubeil at 9:32 of the second quarter to make it 17-0, but it could have been more points after getting first-and-goal from the 4 following a third-down completion of 20 yards to Hill. Dobbins pushed ahead for 1, and Fields was sacked for an 8-yard loss. On third down, Fields was able to run for 5 yards to the 6, but it wasn't enough, although the 90-yard drive consumed 13 plays and 7:04 off the clock.

Martinez then continued his miserable half when senior safety Jordan Fuller picked off an errant toss at the 50.

Fields kept the ball on the run/pass option and ripped off 41 yards to the 9. Teague spelled Dobbins and had a 1-yard run followed by an 8-yard rushing TD at 8:26 to extend the lead to 24-0. It took just 57 seconds and three plays to score.

The next time Nebraska got the ball, a 4-yard sack by senior linebacker Malik Harrison put the Huskers in a three-and-out situation. After a punt, the Buckeyes started their fifth drive from their 45.

It was the Master Teague show for a 31-0 advantage. He took a pass from Fields and went 28 yards to the Nebraska 27. Teague then ran for 26 and capped the three-play 55-yard, 59-second series with a 1-yard run into the end zone at 5:42 before the break.

The Buckeyes continued their dominance with another gashing drive of seven plays, 72 yards in 2:28 to make it 38-0 with 1:34 left in the second quarter. Dobbins returned and ripped off runs of 5, 13 and 24 yards. Hill had a 5-yard grab, then Fields ran for 7 to the 18 before targeting Hill in the left corner for his first TD catch of the season.

After another Nebraska punt to the OSU 48, the Buckeyes failed to score as the half expired

despite a 16-yard pass to junior tight end Luke Farrell to the Huskers' 36.

Cruise Control

Ohio State had to settle for a 36-yard field goal by Haubeil on the first series of the second half to up the count to 41-0 at 10:35. Beginning at the OSU 24, Olave had catches for 13 and 11 yards, and senior Binjimen Victor was on the end of a 27-yard throw from Fields to the 12. Fields lost 2 on a run, Dobbins got 3 of it back, but Fields was the victim of an 8-yard sack back to the 19. The drive was nine plays, 57 yards in 4:21.

The lead became 48-0 at 3:51 of the third as Fields made a pinpoint 6-yard pass that true freshman Garrett Wilson hauled in just before going out of the back of the end zone. OSU went 67 yards in eight plays and 3:56 used.

Dobbins had opened the series with a 26-yard scamper. He later added 14 more over right tackle to the Husker 20. Fields ran for 7 and Dobbins had two carries for another 7 yards before the TD.

Nebraska finally scored and ended a run of 124 unanswered points by the Buckeyes in the past two games. The big play was a 56-yard run by Martinez to the 12. Dedrick Mills rushed for 3 and 9 yards to make it 48-7 at 2:07 of the third to finish the 75-yard, five-play 1:44 drive.

The Cornhuskers' first-unit offense tried to shove another one across the goal line on OSU's second- and third-teamers, but on fourth down from the 3, Martinez rolled right to pass and, as he backpedaled, fell down at the 15 with junior defensive back Jahsen Wint getting credit for the sack with 6:05 left in the game.

Chris Chugunov took over the QB duties, and the Buckeyes ran out the clock. Teague had four straight runs before true freshman back Marcus Crowley had four more, including a 36-yard jaunt to the Nebraska 23. A victory knee ended the game at the 24.

By the Numbers

Martinez had more completions to OSU (three) than to his teammates in the first half when he was 2 for 8 for 10 yards. Martinez finished 8 of 17 for 47 yards and led the Huskers with 81 net rushing yards.

Mack led the Buckeyes with 66 receiving yards and a score while Hill had a team-high five catches for 39 yards and a TD.

OSU had 580 total yards (212 passing, 368 rushing). It was the fourth consecutive game with more than 500 yards. Nebraska had 231 yards (47, 184). The Buckeyes have allowed less than 300 yards in all five games.

The Buckeyes led in first downs 31-15 and converted 10 of 13 third downs.

Ohio State has outscored its opponents 173-18 in the first half this season.

OSU outgained the Huskers 224 (137 rushing, 87 passing) to 9 (all on eight rushes) in the second quarter.

The Buckeyes had four sacks.

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 48, Nebraska 7

Sept. 28, 2019 – Memorial Stadium; Lincoln, NE.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE (5-0, 2-0)	14	24	10	0	48
NEBRASKA (3-2, 1-1)	0	0	7	0	7

First Quarter

OSU – Fields, 15 yard run (Haubeil kick), 10:35; 5 plays, 50 yards, 2:02 TOP.
OSU – Hill, 2 yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 4:37; 10 plays, 60 yards, 4:41 TOP.

Second Quarter

OSU – Haubeil field goal, 23 yards, 9:32; 13 plays, 90 yards, 7:04 TOP.
OSU – Teague, 8 yard run (Haubeil kick), 8:26; 3 plays, 50 yards, 0:57 TOP.
OSU – Teague, 1 yard run (Haubeil kick), 5:42; 3 plays, 55 yards, 0:59 TOP.
OSU – Mack, 18 yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 1:34; 7 plays, 72 yards, 2:28 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU – Haubeil field goal, 36 yards, 10:35; 9 plays, 57 yards, 4:21 TOP.
OSU – Wilson, 6 yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 3:51; 8 plays, 67 yards, 3:56 TOP.
NEB – Mills, 9 yard run (McCallum kick), 2:07; 5 plays, 75 yards, 1:44 TOP.

Att. – 89,759

Weather – 64 degrees, overcast; wind E 9 mph.

Team Statistics

	Nebraska	OSU
First Downs	15	31
Rushing	12	20
Passing	2	10
Penalty	1	1
Rushes-Yards	39-184	53-368
Passing Yards	47	212
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	8-17-3	15-22-0
Offensive Plays	56	75
Total Net Yards	231	580
Third Down Efficiency	4-12	10-13
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-2	0-0
Punts-Avg.	5-35.2	1-59.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	0-0
Penalties	6-57	2-25
Time of Possession	23:06	36:54

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **NEB:** Martinez 15-81; Mills 11-67; Robinson 9-27; Washington 4-9. **OSU:** Dobbins 24-177; Teague 12-77; Fields 12-72; Crowley 4-45; TEAM 1-(-3).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **NEB:** Martinez 8-17-3-47-0. **OSU:** Fields 15-21-0-212-3.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **NEB:** Washington 2-10; Allen 2-7; Mills 1-10; Robinson 1-8; Spielman 1-7; Noa 1-5. **OSU:** Hill 5-39; Mack 3-66; Olave 3-30; Teague 1-28; Victor 1-27; Farrell 1-16; Wilson 1-6.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – **NEB:** Armstrong 5-35.2-39 **OSU:** Chrisman 1-59.0-59.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **NEB:** None. **OSU:** Wilson 1-2; McCall 1-1.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **NEB:** Robinson 3-51. **OSU:** McCall 2-46.

MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.) – **NEB:** None. **OSU:** None.

FORCED FUMBLES – **NEB:** None. **OSU:** Young

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – **NEB:** None. **OSU:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – **NEB:** None. **OSU:** Okudah 2-0; Fuller 1-0.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – **NEB:** Tannor 1.0-8; Davis 1.0-8; Taylor-Britt 0.5-3; Domann 0.5-2. **OSU:** Wint 1-12; Young 1.0-6; Harrison 1.0-4; Browning 0.5-1; Cornell 0.5-0.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – **NEB:** Davis 2.0-10; Tannor 1.0-8; Taylor-Britt 1.0-3; Domann 1.0-2; Ferguson 1.0-1. **OSU:** Browning 2.0-2; Z. Harrison 2.0-2; Cornell 2.0-0; Wint 1.0-12; Young 1.0-6; M. Harrison 1.0-4; Werner 1.0-1; Landers 1.0-0.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **NEB:** Dismuke 4-4-8; Barry 1-7-8; Taylor-Britt 4-3-7; Miller 3-3-6; Davis 4-1-5; Honas 2-3-5; Jackson 3-1-4; Domann 2-2-4; Davis 2-2-4; Tannor 1-3-4; Reimer 2-1-3; Daniels 2-1-3; Stille 1-2-3; Daniels 1-2-3; Davis 1-1-2; Lee 1-1-2; Nelson 0-2-2; Stalbird 1-0-1; Pola-Gates 1-0-1; Ferguson 1-0-1; Farmer 1-0-1; Thomas 0-1-1; Green 0-1-1; Johnson 0-1-1. **OSU:** Harrison 3-4-7; Browning 1-6-7; Fuller 4-2-6; Young 3-0-3; Werner 3-0-3; Riep 2-1-3; Cornell 1-2-3; Okudah 2-0-2; Harrison 1-1-2; Proctor 1-1-2; Gant 0-2-2; Banks 1-0-1; Wade 1-0-1; White 1-0-1; Hamilton 1-0-1; Arnette 1-0-1; Cooper 1-0-1; Borland 1-0-1; Hooker 1-0-1; Hilliard 0-1-1; Jean-Baptiste 0-1-1; Garrett 0-1-1; Landers 0-1-1; Togiai 0-1-1; Friday 0-1-1; Brown 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – **NEB:** Offense, Spielman, James, Hixson, Jurgens, Wilson, Farniok, Stoll, Noa, Robinson, Martinez, Washington. Defense, Davis, Daniels, Davis, Miller, Barry, Domann, Jackson, Dismuke, Taylor-Britt, Bootle. Reserves, Clark, Williams, Tannor, Pola-Gates, Reimer, Honas, McQuitty, Green, Lee, Anderson, Urbach, Przystup, Neal, Allen, Newsome, Farmer, Stovall, Butler, Mills, Sullivan, Karel, Mazour, Belt, Ferguson, Nelson, McCallum, Stalbird, Johnson, Schommer, Sichterman, Warner, Daniels, Stille, Thomas, Armstrong. **OSU:** Offense, Fields, Dobbins, Mack, Victor, Ruckert, Farrell, Munford, Jackson, Myers, Jackson, Alabi. Defense, Young, Hamilton, Cornell, Cooper, Werner, Borland, Harrison, Arnette, Okudah, Wade, Fuller. Reserves, Berry, Harris, Olave, Crowley, Johnson, Gill, McCall, Teague, McCullough, Chugunov, Browning, Wilson, Williams, Jean-Baptiste, Riep, Banks, Hill, Gant, Williamson, Chambers, Wint, White, Brown, Hooker, Dever, Harrison, Pope, Proctor, Hilliard, Jackson, Friday, Cupp, Woidke, Landers, Togiai, Petit-Frere, Hausmann, Chrisman, Garrett, Haubeil, Cage.

Season Statistics

2019-20 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 31	(5)FLORIDA ATLANTIC	45-21	103,228
Sept. 7	(5) CINCINNATI	42-0	104,089
Sept. 14	(6) at Indiana	51-10	47,945
Sept. 21	(6)MIAMI (OHIO)	76-5	103,190
Sept. 28	(5)at Nebraska	48-7	89,379
Oct. 5	(4) MICHIGAN STATE	7:30 p.m.	
Oct. 18	at Northwestern	8:30 p.m.	
Oct. 26	WISCONSIN (8)	TBA	
Nov. 9	MARYLAND	TBA	
Nov. 16	at Rutgers	TBA	
Nov. 23	PENN STATE (12)	TBA	
Nov. 30	at Michigan (19)	12 p.m.	

OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	146	70
Rushing	77	33
Passing	56	30
Penalty	13	7
Average Per Game/Rush	281.6	85.0
Average Per Game/Pass	254.0	138.8
Total Offense	2678	1119
Total Plays	365	316
Average Per Game	535.6	223.8
Average Per Play	7.3	3.5
Penalties-Yards	22-209	30-274
Fumbles-Lost	8-4	10-3
Third Down Efficiency	30-53	19-77
Percentage	57%	25%
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-3	5-7
Percentage	66%	71%
Sacks-Yards	24-148	10-50
Time Of Possession Avg.	31:02	28:26

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	63	110	59	30	0	262	52.4
Opponents	8	10	10	15	0	43	8.6

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
J.K. Dobbins	92	654	7.1	5	60
Master Teague	52	326	6.3	3	40
Justin Fields	46	222	4.8	7	51
Marcus Crowley	15	102	6.8	0	36
Steele Chambers	10	79	7.9	1	15
Demario McCall	10	37	3.7	0	9
Amari McMahon	1	10	10.0	0	10
TEAM	3	-12	-4.0	0	0
Gunnar Hoak	1	-7	-7.0	0	0
OSU Totals	231	1514	6.1	16	60
OPP Totals	180	425	2.4	2	56

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Justin Fields	81	116	69.8	1092	16-0	194.4
Chris Chugunov	11	14	78.6	104	2-0	188.1
Gunnar Hoak	3	3	100.0	74	1-0	417.2
TEAM	0	1	0	0	0-0	0
OSU Totals	95	134	70.9	1270	19-0	197.3
OPP Totals	75	136	55.1	694	2-7	92.57

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
K.J. Hill	20	218	10.9	4	53
Chris Olave	16	258	16.1	4	39
Binjimen Victor	15	269	17.9	2	33
Austin Mack	10	138	13.8	1	38
Garrett Wilson	8	77	9.6	3	38
Jeremy Ruckert	5	62	12.4	2	25
J.K. Dobbins	5	42	8.4	1	14
Jaelen Gill	4	13	3.3	0	9
Jameson Williams	2	74	37.0	1	61
Master Teague	2	45	22.5	0	28
Demario McCall	2	11	5.5	0	7
Luke Farrell	1	16	16.0	0	16
Rashod Berry	1	16	16.0	0	16
Elijah Gardiner	1	10	10.0	0	10
Jake Hausmann	1	9	9.0	0	9
Marcus Crowley	1	7	7.0	1	7
Jaylen Harris	1	5	5.0	0	5
OSU Totals	95	1270	13.4	19	61
OPP Totals	75	694	9.3	2	49

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Blake Haubeil	-	35-35	-	-	3-4	44
Justin Fields	7	-	-	-	-	42
J.K. Dobbins	6	-	-	-	-	36
Chris Olave	4	-	-	-	-	26
K.J. Hill	4	-	-	-	-	24
Garrett Wilson	3	-	-	-	-	18
Master Teague	3	-	-	-	-	18
Jeremy Ruckert	2	-	-	-	-	12
Binjimen Victor	2	-	-	-	-	12
Damon Arnette	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jameson Williams	1	-	-	-	-	6
Steele Chambers	1	-	-	-	-	6
Marcus Crowley	1	-	-	-	-	6
Austin Mack	1	-	-	-	-	6
D. DiMaccio	0	0-1	-	-	-	0
OSU Totals	36	35-36	-	-	3-4	262
OPP Totals	4	3-3	-	-	1-1	43

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Blake Haubeil	1-1	1-2	1-1	0-0	3-4
OSU Totals	1-1	1-2	1-1	0-0	3-4
OPP Totals	4-4	0-1	0-0	0-0	4-5

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Drue Chrisman	13	602	46.3	0	59
OSU Totals	13	602	46.3	0	59
OPP Totals	40	1616	40.4	2	70

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Jeff Okudah	3	0	0.0	0	0
Damon Arnette	1	96	96.0	1	96
Tuf Borland	1	42	42.0	0	0
Jordan Fuller	1	0	0.0	0	0
Josh Proctor	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	7	138	19.7	1	96
OPP Totals	0	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Demario McCall	6	52	8.7	0	35
K.J. Hill	5	38	7.6	0	16
Garrett Wilson	2	54	27.0	0	52
Chris Olave	1	18	18.0	0	18
Sevyn Banks	1	5	5.0	0	5
OSU Totals	15	167	11.1	0	52
OPP Totals	4	4	1.0	0	5

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Demario McCall	7	155	22.1	0	26
Chris Olave	1	15	15.0	0	15
OSU Totals	8	170	21.2	0	26
OPP Totals	17	266	15.6	0	30

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Malik Harrison	14	11	25	8.0-30	3.5-22
Jordan Fuller	18	7	25	-	-
Baron Browning	10	11	21	4.0-5	1.5-2
Pete Werner	11	7	18	4.0-8	-
Chase Young	12	5	17	8.5-60	8.0-58
Jeff Okudah	13	3	16	1.0-1	-
Jashon Cornell	7	6	13	4.0-18	1.5-8
Damon Arnette	8	3	11	-	-
Brendon White	9	1	10	2.0-3	1.0-1
Tuf Borland	5	5	10	-	-
Dallas Gant	4	6	10	1.	

Olave Emerging As Fields' Go-To Target

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave was the third lowest-rated player in the Buckeyes' 2018 recruiting class according to 247Sports' composite rankings, ahead of only defensive end Alex Williams and safety Marcus Hooker.

Yet he's arguably been the most important piece of that second-ranked haul, which includes such former five-star prospects as offensive tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere, defensive tackle Taron Vincent and cornerback Tyreke Johnson, among many other notable names.

Olave burst onto the scene in Ohio State's 62-39 win over Michigan last fall, as he hauled in two passes for 48 yards and two touchdowns and blocked a punt that was returned by cornerback Sevn Banks for a touchdown – which turned a one-score game into a shocking rout.

It was an unexpected performance from Olave, who entered the game with just five catches for 70 yards and two tackles on special teams, but it was one that changed his perception from afterthought in his own recruiting class to focal point of the Buckeyes' offense.

"I felt like coming into camp (as a freshman), I was hesitant on whether I could play here or not," Olave said this spring. "I just stuck to the plan and played my role throughout the season."

"Then The Team Up North game, I kind of busted out and had a great game. That first touchdown, I was kind of surprised and shocked, but I just went along with it and played like how I do. It all came through."

Olave backed that up with a career performance in the Big Ten championship win over Northwestern one week later – in which he had five catches for 79 yards and one score – and has carried that momentum well into this season.

Through five games, Olave has become a favorite target of first-year starting quarterback Justin Fields. He's caught 16 passes for 258 yards and four touchdowns and even

blocked another punt in the 51-10 win over Indiana.

While the ball rolled out of the end zone for a safety, Olave's special teams theatrics reminded fans of the game-changing play he had made in the win over the Wolverines.

"It's just a lot of technique, fundamentals and a little bit of speed," Olave said after the game on Sept. 14. "Coaches draw it up for us to block it, and we went out there and got it."

Even with the loss of three starters from last year's record-breaking aerial attack in Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin, Ohio State remained loaded at wide receiver this fall with fifth-year senior K.J. Hill and seniors Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor back for their final seasons.

Throw in another fifth-year senior in C.J. Saunders – a team captain who has not played this season as he rehabs an undisclosed leg injury – junior Jaylen Harris and impact freshmen such as Jaelen Gill, Garrett Wilson and Jameson Williams, and there seemingly aren't enough passes to go around.

So Olave, understanding the Buckeyes needed a versatile playmaker to fill the special teams void left by the aforementioned McLaurin, has played each game with a team-first attitude.

"When you look at the history of Ohio State – especially in the last 10 years or so – the best players have played on special teams," head coach Ryan Day said following the win over Indiana. "Some of these guys' impact is different. You think about Terry last year. He was a gunner, and guys have been returners and different things. Chris has been that with punt blocks. He just has a knack for it."

"When you see what he did last year in the rivalry game and what he did there, it changes the whole game. You don't come to Ohio State to play special teams, and that just goes to show you how much he appreciates and loves his brothers and teammates."

Olave has also downed his fair share of punts inside the 5-yard line, something that helped McLaurin go from a fringe draft prospect to a third-round pick of the



JOSH WINSLOW

EARLY CONNECTION – Ohio State sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave is tied with fifth-year senior K.J. Hill for the team lead with four touchdown receptions.

Washington Redskins this spring.

"His production has been off the charts, but that's the way he practices," Day said of Olave. "When you go back through and watch the film over the last few weeks, he's practicing that way. This is a guy who is highly productive for a reason, because that's the way he works. He knows what he's doing when he's out there. He takes the job very seriously. Anytime you practice really, really well, you gain the confidence of the guys around you."

Day has long known what kind of impact Olave could have on the Buckeyes' offense, dating back to his time as the Buckeyes' offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach.

Late in the 2018 recruiting cycle, Ohio State was on the verge of losing a commitment from longtime quarterback pledge Emory Jones. So Day searched the country for another signal-caller, and San Marcos (Calif.) Mission Hills four-star quarterback Jack Tuttle was on the short list of potential

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candidates to fill Jones' shoes.

Ohio State never offered Tuttle – who ended up signing with Utah and then transferred to Indiana this offseason – and instead signed Austin (Texas) Lake Travis four-star quarterback Matthew Baldwin. But Day's trip to Southern California on Oct. 20, 2017, was significant for another reason.

That evening Day watched as a speedy-but-skinny three-star wide receiver named Chris Olave caught everything thrown his way in a 56-20 win over Oceanside El Camino. He made an impact early, too, beating the cornerback off the line of scrimmage on the second play of the game for a 71-yard touchdown.

Day offered Olave a scholarship that evening and invited him to campus for an official visit. Olave committed to Ohio State over finalists UCLA, USC and Utah a few weeks later, and the rest is history.

"(If it weren't for Tuttle.) I probably never would have been there," Day said. "It's funny where recruiting goes and how

things happen."

Olave had quite the rapport with Tuttle in high school, as the two hooked up for a San Diego-section record 1,764 yards and 26 touchdowns while leading Mission Hills to the state championship game during their senior year. He's developed similar chemistry with Fields, too.

"What is there not to like about him?" Fields said following the win over Indiana. "He's fast. He has great ball skills. He runs great routes. He's smart. Not all receivers have that smart decision making, so he finds his zone and he plays with his brain. And he also has great athletic ability. He has all the intangibles."

Whether he's catching touchdowns, blocking punts or chasing a returner, Olave has become a Swiss Army knife of sorts for a lethal Ohio State offense and elite special teams unit. And no matter how he's used, Olave's only goal at the end of the day is to get a win.

"I just do whatever's best for the team," he said.

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CB Okudah Playing For More Than Himself

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In a long season that could stretch to a 15th game vying for the national championship, one play on a Sept. 21 afternoon against an overmatched opponent will be long forgotten when the story of the 2019 Ohio State Buckeyes is written.

But that doesn't diminish the interception during the second quarter of the 76-5 win against Miami (Ohio) within the context of the blowout or the personal significance for junior cornerback Jeff Okudah.

His pick eventually led to a touchdown that extended the Buckeyes' lead to 21-5 after trailing by five against the upstart RedHawks. It was also the overdue first career interception for the former top-rated cornerback prospect in the nation coming out of Grand Prairie (Texas) South Grand Prairie for the class of 2017.

When he went to the sideline, his thoughts were not on the cheers from 103,190 fans in Ohio Stadium or the congratulations from dozens of his teammates. No, his focus was singular.

"When that play was over, I sat back and reflected on it," he said after the game. "I looked up and thanked God, and I said my mom's looking down, really proud of that moment. Just thinking of that play and making something happen for my team was really good."

His mother, Marie Okudah, was diagnosed with lymphoma when he was 2 years old, and she later battled terminal cancer for

several years before passing away shortly after Okudah enrolled early at Ohio State in January 2017.

Prior to her death, he wrote "A Letter to My Mom" for the Jan. 7, 2017, The Players' Tribune in which he went over his recruiting process and how he was going to make her proud not only on the field but in the classroom:

"One day, I want to start a business that will ensure that my family will always be comfortable, whether football works out or not," he wrote.

"I know that college will be tough. At the next level, I'm going to be competing against the very best players in the nation. But I'm ready, because I'm doing this for so much more than just me."

All those emotions came to forefront after the interception.

"When you look at everything that's happened since she passed away, that interception, I'm not saying it's the biggest play in the world obviously," Okudah said. "But just looking at it, I think she would be proud of what I've been able to do, not that I've done anything too major, but it's just what I've been able to do so far."

One of the reasons Okudah (6-1, 200) chose Ohio State over Florida State and Oklahoma was what then-OSU defensive coordinator Greg Schiano said to him, as Okudah explained in his letter, "He told me, 'Jeff, you've had a tough life up to this point. It's time for some good things to happen to you.'"

Ironically, it may have been the departure of Schiano after last season that is helping

Okudah reach his potential. The Buckeyes had a historically bad defense in 2018, and the secondary was targeted by critics for not being able to track passes, which led to an abundance of pass-interference penalties.

As part of a major revamp of the defensive staff, former NFL assistant coach Jeff Hafley was hired as co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach. The changes this season include simpler, more defined roles and a bigger emphasis on attacking the ball carrier.

"When you have confidence in your scheme and know what you're doing, you're able to play so much faster," said Okudah, who added that everyone on the defense now has the same mentality. "Our guys' demeanor is we're willing to tackle so the guys that can do it make our defense better because it's everyone, not just seven or eight guys."

He said criticism from within and outside the program was motivation in the offseason.

"We had a whole winter and a whole spring to deal with letting down the Silver Bullets," Okudah said. "We heard a lot of stuff from former players letting us know they still had faith in us even though we didn't have a good year."

"Just hearing that from former players was kind of embarrassing, so we took it to heart and came out and made a statement that we're not going to be the group that let the Silver Bullets slip away. This is a year of redemption."

The Buckeyes' defense allowed one touchdown – a trick-play double pass by Indiana – over a three-game stretch vs. Cincinnati (42-0), the Hoosiers (51-10) and Miami.

Okudah earned praise and some advice from head coach Ryan Day after the Miami (Ohio) game.

"I think he's done a good job of taking on the technique that (Hafley) is teaching him and embracing that," Day said. "The big thing for Jeff is now where are we going to go as we get into the middle of the season? I think he's flashed – got the interception. He's done some good things, but now that some of this stuff is on film and teams start scheming us up, how are you going to be able to respond to it?"

Okudah believes that adding zone coverage this season has left opponents guessing.

"It allows guys to mix up a lot of looks," he said. "You don't necessarily know what we're doing. It allows guys to play fast."

"Playing zone definitely helps create turnovers. It gives you a lot of chances to make plays on the ball. On top of that, as far as fatigue and playing press man every single play, obviously everyone wants to do it, but it's not the most ideal thing because it's a lot of man-to-man there as far as crossing routes."

Another bonus for the secondary is having an outstanding defensive front, led by junior sack machine Chase Young.

"Sometimes you might get a little salty because a ball might be coming to you but right before it's thrown it's a sack," Okudah said, "But at the end of the day if we're getting sacks and TFLs, we're doing great."

Okudah knows Ohio State has a reputation for getting its defensive backs to the NFL. That was another factor in a kid from Texas choosing to come to Columbus, as he explained last season.

"As far as my position, Gareon (Conley), Marshon (Lattimore), Eli (Apple), (Bradley) Roby," he said. "When you see that, you want to be one of the next guys in line."

Okudah feels Hafley, who spent the previous seven seasons in the NFL with three seasons in San Francisco being his most recent stop, will prepare him for the next level.

"His football acumen is contagious," Okudah said in August. "Guys just aren't in their seats. Things the offense does and things that would pass through last year, guys are stepping up and identifying things like splits or formations."

Okudah said before the start of the season that he was inspired by the path former OSU cornerback Denzel Ward took to the NFL. Ward was the fourth pick in the 2018 draft by the Cleveland Browns and was named to the Pro Bowl as a rookie.

"The other day someone sent me and Denzel's careers up to date," Okudah said. "It's comparable as far as freshman year he did special teams stuff. Sophomore year stats were kind of identical. Now it's taking that last step, and that's being consistent every single time you step on the field and just becoming a lockdown cornerback."

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- Location is a big factor when deciding where to stay, and the **Best Western Hilliard Inn & Suites** is conveniently located just seven miles from the stadium, five miles from the Hollywood Casino and just six miles from downtown Columbus, home of the Greater Columbus Convention Center, Ohio Expo Center, COSI and the Arena District. There are a number of dining and shopping options nearby as well, including Lunada Mexican Grill and Dave & Buster's within walking distance.

Best Western offers newly renovated rooms featuring free Wi-Fi, 43-inch LED televisions, micro-fridge, in-room coffee and sleeper sofas. Start your day off with a free, full hot breakfast. Play or relax after your busy day in the indoor heated pool, or take advantage of the 24-hour business center and exercise facility. Their friendly staff is available 24 hours a day to assist your needs. Call (614) 529-8118 or visit www.bestwestern.com/en_US/book/hotel-rooms.36169.html.

- **The Canopy by Hilton Columbus Short North** is located just steps away from the Columbus Convention Center in the heart of the Columbus Short North district at 77 E. Nationwide Blvd. Take in amazing views of downtown Columbus while chilling out on the outdoor patio with a fireplace, or head to the Rooftop Bar-Goodale Station for cocktails and local signature dishes. The Canopy features a rooftop state-of-the-art fitness center, offering the latest in equipment complemented by wonderful city views.

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- The newly renovated **Embassy Suites Columbus Dublin** is located at 5100 Upper Metro Place, just minutes away from Ohio Stadium, off I-270. Each guest room is a spacious two-room suite with separate living and bedroom areas. Enjoy a complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast, complimentary Wi-Fi and complimentary evening reception. Visit any one of the 150 restaurants within a five-mile area of the hotel and shop at The Mall at Tuttle Crossing. Visit columbusdublin.embassysuites.com or call for reservations at (614) 790-9000 or (800) 220-9219.

- Treat yourself to the ideal blend of excellent service, thoughtful amenities and a convenient location at **Fairfield Inn & Suites Columbus Dublin**. Situated off I-270, the Fairfield Inn provides easy access to top destinations including Ohio Stadium, the Dublin Bridge Park District, shopping and the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium at 7150 Sawmill Rd.

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- **The Fairfield Inn & Suites OSU** is one easy mile from Ohio Stadium and the Schottenstein Center, at 3031 Olentangy River Road. With 165 guest rooms, they have one that is just right for you. The Fairfield Inn & Suites has an indoor swimming pool and a business center for your convenience. Relax

at the Fillmore Lounge Tuesday through Saturday and enjoy the outdoor patio every day. Internet is free. Breakfast is free, and be sure to try one of their Tuxedo Muffins to start your day. Parking is free, and the hotel offers a shuttle that is available Monday through Saturday within a five-mile radius of the hotel. Visit their website at www.marriott.com/CMHSU or call (614) 267-1111. Click or call today to reserve your stay.

- Located in the heart of the Short North Arts District at 750 N. High St., **Graduate Columbus** is just a quick trip to Ohio State and downtown Columbus. Settle into their warm, tailored spaces, where plaids in scarlet and gray mix with gold medal-worthy details. Graduate Columbus is surrounded by dozens of shops, galleries and restaurants.

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- **The Hampton Inn Columbus-Airport**, located at 4280 International Gateway by John Glenn Columbus International Airport, is convenient to just about anywhere in Columbus. It's just minutes from downtown and offers easy access to campus. Every stay includes free Wi-Fi in each room, a free hot breakfast and complimentary access to the gym/fitness center. Unwind after a long day working or sightseeing with a few laps in the outdoor pool. The Hampton Inn is so confident you'll love the facilities and service that if you're not 100 percent satisfied, you'll get your money back. Call (614) 235-0717 or visit www.columbusairport.hamptoninn.com to find out more.

- Meanwhile, the **Hampton Inn & Suites Downtown** is in the heart of Columbus' vibrant core at 501 N. High St. Located in the Arena District and just south of the Ohio State campus, the Hampton Inn & Suites is within walking distance of the Short North, and there is no shortage of activities nearby.

Guests are greeted by a beautiful rotunda, and amenities include in-room coffeemakers, irons and high-speed Internet, as well as 24-hour coffee service and a hot breakfast.

You'll love the convenience of the Hampton's valet parking. And be sure to take advantage of the indoor pool, exercise room, convenience store and business center. To find out more, call (614) 559-2000. Or visit www.columbusdowntownsuites.hamptoninn.com.

- Make the most of your home away from home at the **Hampton Inn & Suites Hilliard**. Located at 3950 Lyman Drive in Hilliard, just off I-270 and just five miles from OSU, the Hampton Inn & Suites offers free parking and features a variety of suites and rooms that include a refrigerator, coffeemaker and free Wi-Fi. Enjoy a complimentary breakfast buffet and you can also visit the indoor pool and fitness center. Grab your clubs and head to the nearby Wilson Road Golf Course, or shop at The Mall at Tuttle Crossing, just seven minutes away. For more information call (614) 334-1800 or visit online at columbushilliardsuites.hamptoninn.com.

- For convenience and comfort, it's hard to beat the **Hampton Inn & Suites University Area**, located at 3160 Olentangy River Road less than a mile from OSU. Unwind in a comfortable guest room or suite equipped with complimentary Wi-Fi, a 40-inch HDTV, a large work space and refrigerator. You can start each day with a free hot breakfast buffet, featuring hearty oatmeal and fresh waffles, or grab a free "Hampton's on the Run Breakfast Bag." Energize yourself in the 24-hour fitness center, or take a dip in the indoor pool.

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The Hilton Garden Inn offers rooms that feature refrigerator, microwave, 32-inch HDTV flat-panel TV, adjustable GSS Sleep System beds, Herman Miller desk chair, free high-speed Internet access (wired and wireless), hair dryer, iron and ironing board. Visit www.columbusdublin.gardeninn.com or call 614-766-9900.

• The **Hilton Garden Inn: Columbus-University Area** at 3232 Olentangy River Road between Ackerman and North Broadway in Columbus wants to be your headquarters for OSU football this season. The Hilton Garden Inn offers 158 guest rooms with a

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The Homewood Suites is convenient to Ohio Stadium and is within walking distance of a variety of restaurants and The Mall at Tuttle Crossing. Book in advance and save money through Hilton's Advance Purchase promotions. Visit www.columbusdublin.homewoodsuites.com for details or call (614) 791-8675.

• The **Marriott and Residence Inn Columbus University Area** offer you the best of both worlds under one roof and are convenient to the events you want to be part of. Located at 3100 Olentangy River Road, the Residence Inn and adjoining Marriott are minutes from the Horseshoe and close to downtown and the Short North. At the Marriott University Area, deluxe guest rooms

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• Experience contemporary suites at the newly renovated **SpringHill Suites Columbus OSU**, perfectly situated between King Avenue and Fifth Avenue at 1421 Olentangy River Road (former spot of the Buckeye Hall of Fame Café). Ohio State University and the OSU Medical Center are just one mile and a few minutes away, and Ohio Stadium is a short walk from the hotel. All the excitement of the Short North and downtown Columbus are minutes away as well.

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Call for reservations at (614) 297-9912 or visit www.SpringHillSuitesOSU.com.

• The **Varsity Inn OSU South** is also one of the closest hotels to the Horseshoe at 1445 Olentangy River Road and is adjacent to a Bob Evans restaurant. Plenty of other dining and shopping is within easy walking distance. Easily accessible from state Route 315, the hotel is just minutes from campus.

The Varsity Inn offers some guest rooms with microwaves and refrigerators. All guests can enjoy the in-room amenities such as high-speed wireless Internet, coffeemaker, ironing board, iron and a work area with a desk and chair. For reservations, call (614) 291-2983 or visit www.varsityinn.com.



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Wilson, Williams Show Future At Wide Receiver

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

"Everything on the field is earned, and as quickly as it's earned, it can be lost," Ohio State wide receivers coach Brian Hartline said in the days following the Buckeyes' 76-5 victory over Miami (Ohio). "We're only as good as our last rep, and we're only as good as our last game."

If Hartline is judging only on what he saw in the game that preceded those comments, he must be immensely excited about a pair of true freshman wide receivers in Garrett Wilson and Jameson Williams.

Against the RedHawks, Wilson led the team with four catches, bringing in the receptions for 54 yards and a touchdown. Williams finished No. 2 on the team with 74 yards, doing so on two catches, one of which was a 61-yard touchdown that had the former track star using his speed to simply beat every Miami defender on the field.

While at St. Louis Cardinal Ritter College Prep, Williams broke the Missouri record in the 300-meter hurdles, a number that was formerly held by current Dallas Cowboys running back and former Buckeye Ezekiel Elliott. Just this spring, Williams also won two state titles in track and field.

That speed displayed in a different sport was something that head coach Ryan Day said has impressed him from the beginning. But Day said he quickly discovered that Williams was much more than his quickness.

"When Jameson got here, we knew his track times were off the charts," Day said. "We knew his length, we knew his speed, but what we didn't know was how tough he was. This is a guy who has practiced really, really hard."

"There's a couple clips of film where he's just throwing his body around. That was really impressive to all of us. His work ethic is really good. I think he's got a really bright future ahead of him. Now again, does he have to learn how to play at this level and all that? Absolutely. Same thing with Garrett. But both of those guys have bright futures."

Hartline said that the track connection

was something that gave him a connection to Williams on the recruiting trail. The wide receivers coach also said that he noticed the comparisons to Ted Ginn Jr., a five-star recruit out of high school who also excelled in track and field.

"The track background, he was a hurdler in high school, we had that relationship in high school," Hartline said. "I was a track guy, he's a track guy, so we got to talk about that a lot. If you're operating in that world with a guy like (Ginn) that I think very highly of, that's a pretty good space to be in. So if that's the case, I think the sky's the limit."

But Williams' flashy reception was far from the sole highlight from a freshman workout on Sept. 21. In the third quarter, Wilson took a punt return 52 yards all the way to Miami's 12-yard line.

The return was enough to capture the attention of Day and for him to say that Wilson's role in the return game should see more action.

"I think it's going to progress, especially when he does things like he did, which was hit a big return," Day said. "We'll kind of see as we go, but the more he can take on, the better for him. He's still a very young player but obviously very talented, and the more he can take on, the more we'll give him."

But Wilson was not done making highlight plays on the day.

Later on, in the same quarter, backup quarterback Chris Chugunov fired a ball into the corner of the end zone, and Wilson, with a defender all over him, got the football after a variety of bobbles and managed to maintain possession enough to score from 38 yards out.

Sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave said after the game that Wilson makes catches like that in practice and that those "50-50 balls" between him and the defender become "80-20 balls" when Wilson is in the equation.

Even though he was on the sidelines for the play, sophomore quarterback Justin Fields said the same thing Olave did when it

came to Wilson's highlight-reel catch.

"Garrett, that was a good catch," Fields said. "But he's definitely had better catches in practice. That wasn't surprising to see."

Fields also said he wasn't surprised by Williams taking his reception the distance down the field.

"Jameson, on that slant, when he kind of stopped and started running, I already knew, like, right away he was going to score," Fields said. "He's definitely one of the fastest guys on the team. His explosiveness – he's going to be a great receiver in the future."

The future may be now as Big Ten play comes to the forefront.

But against Nebraska, Wilson and Williams combined for one reception and six yards. Still, that catch was a Wilson reception in the corner of the end zone for a touchdown, and gives the duo 10 catches for 151 yards and four touchdowns on the season, and shows the pair to be something to build around as a load of talented freshmen come into the fray in 2020.

That 2020 group for the Buckeyes has four wide receivers ranked in the top 100 for the entire class: Julian Fleming at No. 3, Jaxon Smith-Njigba at No. 62, Gee Scott at No. 63 and Mookie Cooper at No. 75. With that comes a serious question of playing time next season for a receiving corps that will be much younger – and potentially more talented – than the one in 2019.

For Hartline, having that "problem" is one he is comfortable with. He said that having too much talent in the room is something that can be incredibly helpful to the receiver room as a whole, as well as for the individual members of the group.

"I don't think it's a negative," Hartline said. "I think it adds a dynamic. I think if we're really focused on the here and now and the immediate satisfaction that this culture is built on, then maybe (it will be a problem), but I think that if we keep in sight the long-term goals, not only for the individual but for the team, then that should be easily handled with grace."

"I want to be surrounded by the best doctors all the time. So, if you're going in for heart surgery do you just want one really good doctor or like five of them? OK, so there's some kind of relatability to the same kind of situation."

Hartline may not be dealing with doctors, but he is going to have to figure out a way to surgically work a lot of up-and-coming talent into the fold with Fields while still having players who have been with the program for multiple seasons and have been waiting for their opportunity.

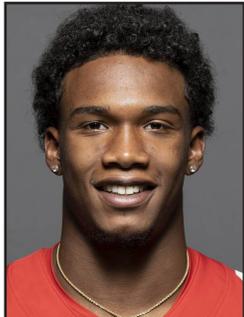
The task may not be easy, but to Hartline, it's also not brain surgery, either.

"I always tell these guys, it's OK to get frustrated, like when guys work their tails off, blood, sweat and tears every day or all season long and they don't kind of get out of it what they want out of it, we have those conversations," he said. "What you can't do is allow it to affect your teammates or your team or your future play. So, get frustrated, it's OK, it's a passionate response. I'm good with that. If you didn't get frustrated, I'd almost look at you sideways."

Those sorts of decisions will continue in the 2019 season as the competition gets tougher, and they will have to be answered once again in 2020. But through just five games, what Wilson and Williams have proved to this Ohio State team is that they were worthy of the immense hype that followed them into the program. Even with potentially limited snaps coming down the stretch, these players have made plays that will go on the highlight reel, not just personally, but for the whole team.

Day said that sort of ability from the two true freshmen has started in practice and can be attributed to a strong leadership corps at its center.

"You can practice well, but it doesn't guarantee you anything," Day said. "But if you don't practice well, you don't have a chance. Both of those guys have practiced harder. I thought their approach to the game has been better and their attitude has been better. And lo and behold, here we go. Now we start to see some things happening."



Garrett Wilson

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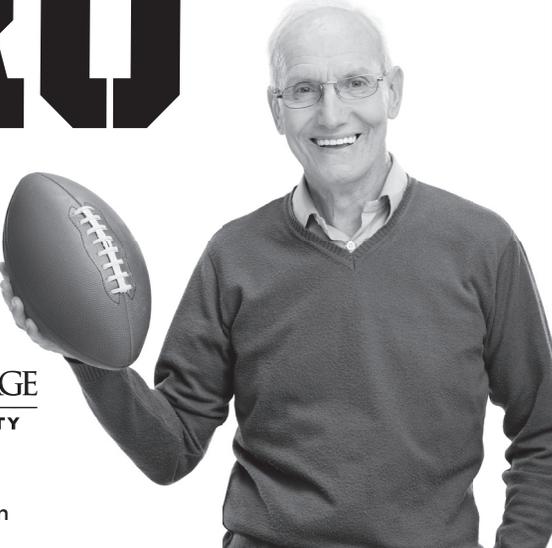


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Michigan State To Test Ohio State's Physicality

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The Big Ten has undergone significant changes since the beginning of the decade in the way that programs, and more specifically offenses, are run. Nearly every program in the conference has undergone at least one coaching change since 2010, and most of those changes have been in an attempt to modernize a conference that had been considered smashmouth for nearly 50 years and slow near the end of the decade of the 2000s.

Some of the criticism was certainly fair.

The SEC won the national championship every year from 2006 to 2012 in large part because of its team speed and athletic ability, and Big Ten teams were embarrassed by new, fast football on the largest stages more than once. The conference responded with innovative hires of coaches who wanted to push the tempo. Ohio State brought in Urban Meyer in 2012, Penn State hired James Franklin two years later, and several of the conference's secondary schools cycled through the next big thing on offense, be it Kevin Wilson at Indiana, P.J. Fleck at Minnesota, Scott Frost at Nebraska or Jeff Brohm at Purdue.

Each team had one goal in mind: look more like the SEC and less like the Big Ten. In select places, that succeeded. Ohio State and Penn State are both national contenders, though that isn't really new to either program. Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska and Purdue have found some success under new, modern coaches, while Illinois, Maryland and Rutgers have stumbled despite hires that looked good on paper. The spread offense revolution in the Big Ten certainly hasn't been a failure, but it also hasn't transformed the Big Ten into a mecca of offensive talent and speed.

While a good portion of the conference underwent large-scale changes, an old guard of sorts has risen, remaining steadfast in its commitment to power football above all else. Iowa, Michigan, Michigan State, Northwestern and Wisconsin have, for the most part, ignored the large-scale shifts in the conference. Michigan is the only one of the bunch to ever really stray, hiring Rich Rodriguez after the 2007 season, but it returned to its roots with the hire of Jim Harbaugh in 2014.

The other four have never looked elsewhere. They are run by the three longest-tenured head coaches in the conference: Kirk Ferentz (21st season at Iowa), Pat Fitzgerald (14th season at Northwestern) and Mark Dantonio (13th season at Michigan State),

along with Paul Chryst at Wisconsin, who serves as an extension of Badgers AD Barry Alvarez, a highly successful Wisconsin coach (1990-2005).

While all four are committed to a grind-it-out, traditional approach to football, reminiscent of Jim Tressel-led Ohio State teams, none has remained more consistent in his style and substance than Dantonio. The Michigan State head man did move up the ranks as a defensive coordinator under Tressel after all, and his dedication to the style Tressel taught is still obvious in 2019. The Spartans play tough, run the football and look to win with defense and special teams.

For much of Dantonio's tenure in East Lansing, that approach has worked as well as anyone there could have hoped. The Spartans were a Big Ten contender basically every year from 2010-2015, and even in the down years since then, Michigan State is at worst a solid, tough Big Ten team. Under Dantonio, Michigan State seems to have two settings: decent or elite.

While the Spartans have played only five games in 2019, it appears that this season's edition is leaning much more heavily to the former than it is to the latter, just as it did in 2018, despite a 4-1 record that might indicate otherwise.

Also like last season, the unit that appears to be holding the Spartans back is the offense. Michigan State is averaging just 31.4 points per game despite playing against a few less-than-stellar defenses such as Tulsa, Western Michigan or Northwestern. The Spartans were able to cobble together only seven points against Arizona State in their lone loss of the season.

Many of the struggles stem from the play of quarterback Brian Lewerke. Lewerke, who was once hyped as one of the best quarterbacks in the Big Ten, has been turned into little more than a game manager in his final two seasons at Michigan State, and his inability to create big plays has seriously damaged the offense's ability to move the football. No matter how well running back Elijah Collins plays or how safe Lewerke is with the ball, Michigan State is playing on a 10-yard field far too often early in the season.

Some of that can certainly be pinned on Lewerke and his physical limitations as a passer, but more of the credit (or blame) should go to the new-look offensive staff. After struggling with the same issues last season, Dantonio chose to address his struggling offense with a staff retooling rather than the introduction of new faces, moving each position coach to a different position, with no new hires. So far, that decision hasn't paid off.

Get To Know ... Michigan State

About Michigan State

- **2019 record:** 4-1 (2-0).
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Multiple; Defensive Formation – 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 9, Defense 7, Specialists 2.
- **Head Coach:** Mark Dantonio, 111-52 in 14 years at Michigan State, 18-17 in three years at Cincinnati
- **Series History:** 48th meeting; Ohio State leads 32-0-15.
- **School Facts:** Location – East Lansing, MI; Enrollment – 50,344; Nickname – Spartans; Color – Green; Conference – Big Ten (East Division); Stadium – Spartan Stadium (Surface, Grass; Capacity – 75,005).

Top Offensive Returners

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Elijah Collins	78	413	5.3	3
Brian Lewerke	37	147	4.0	0
Connor Heyward	24	79	3.3	0

Passing	Comp.-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Brian Lewerke	104-174	59.8	1,325	10-1

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Darrell Stewart	35	556	15.9	3
Cody White	20	257	12.9	2
Matt Seybert	11	133	12.1	3

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game	– 31.4
Rushing Yards Per Game	– 144.6
Passing Yards Per Game	– 269.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game	– 413.6

2019 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 30	TULSA	W, 28-7
Sept. 7	WESTERN MICHIGAN	W, 51-17
Sept. 14	ARIZONA STATE	L, 10-7
Sept. 21	at Northwestern	W, 31-10
Sept. 28	INDIANA	W, 40-31
Oct. 5	at Ohio State	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 12	at Wisconsin	3:30 or 4 p.m.
Oct. 26	PENN STATE	TBA
Nov. 9	ILLINOIS	TBA
Nov. 16	at Michigan	TBA
Nov. 23	at Rutgers	TBA
Nov. 30	MARYLAND	TBA
Dec. 7	Big Ten Championship	8 p.m.

Top Defensive Returners

Def. Leaders	Solo-Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Joe Bachie	23-23	46	4.5-15	1.5-10
Kenny Willekes	14-20	34	6.5-21	4.0-15
Antjuan Simmons	14-19	33	7.5-27	1.5-6

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Joe Bachie	1	19	19.0	0	19
Antjuan Simmons	1	13	13.0	0	13
Drew Beesly	1	2	2.0	0	2

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed	– 15.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed	– 55.8
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed	– 198.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed	– 253.8

It isn't all bad for the Spartans. The defense is still excellent, as usual. Michigan State has one of the best front sevens, if not the best, in the Big Ten, led by senior defensive end Kenny Willekes (34 tackles), nose tackle Raequan Williams (14 tackles) and middle linebacker Joe Bachie (46 tackles). This is a group with very few weaknesses, and for Ohio State to secure a victory, Ryan Day will have to piece together a game plan that can avoid the teeth of the defense.

Players To Watch

Offensively, Collins is almost certainly the best weapon that Michigan State has. He's not an elite running back in the way that Joshua Langford was back in 2014, but with 413 yards and three touchdowns on the season, he's still a very serious threat that Ohio State will have to plan for. His size and ability to break tackles is reminiscent of Cincinnati's Michael Warren, though Michigan State's offensive line is likely better than that of the Bearcats.

Outside of Collins, the talent at skill positions gets a bit shaky. Receivers Darrell Stewart Jr. (35 catches for 556 yards) and Cody White (20 catches for 257 yards) are the only consistent threats outside, and neither is super dangerous past about 20 yards. They will, however, give Ohio State trouble if the Buckeyes aren't ready for a heavy dose of quick underneath routes and play action.

On the line, Michigan State probably should be better than it is. The experience and team chemistry are solid, because seven players in the two-deep (Kevin Jarvis, Tyler Higby, Cole Chewins, Luke Campbell, Jordan Reid, Matt Allen and Blake Bueter) played in at least five games last season. Despite that, the Spartans still struggle with both run and pass blocking, which will spell trouble against such a good Buckeye defensive line.

Unlike the offense, there are playmakers all over Michigan State's defense. Willekes is the best of the bunch and may be one of the three best defensive ends in the conference, alongside Chase Young and Iowa's A.J. Epenesa. He isn't a terrific pass rusher, but he is very good, and he's easily the best run defender of the bunch. Michigan State

will likely look to move him around to find matchups that he can exploit to create tackles in the backfield against Ohio State's solid running game.

He'll be helped up front by Williams. Michigan State's defensive line isn't as deep as Ohio State's, but it will easily be the best that the Buckeyes have played against to this point in the season.

Behind that line, Michigan State has two elite linebackers in Bachie and outside linebacker Antjuan Simmons. Simmons, a former Ohio State commit, has 33 tackles through five games, but his skill set shows up more in the game than it does in the stats. He has terrific speed, and he'll be responsible for screens and horizontal plays against the Buckeyes.

The backfield is the weak part of the defense, but that doesn't mean it is without playmakers. Josiah Scott (22 tackles and one interception) and Josh Butler (17 tackles and four pass break ups) are both solid but not great defensive backs, as is senior safety David Dowell (22 tackles and one pass break up). However, the player in the back whom Ohio State may have to worry about more than anybody else is sophomore Xavier Henderson.

Henderson was an excellent player at Pickerington (Ohio) Central back in the class of 2018 and has found his way onto the field far sooner than expected in East Lansing. More than just making it into the lineup, Henderson is the most electric player in the backfield. He's a ball hawk (one interception this season) and one of the best tacklers on the team with 27 tackles, and Michigan State will move him all over the field to give Justin Fields something to worry about. He could be in for a big day.

While Michigan State's defense can and probably will give Ohio State's offense as much trouble as it has faced this year to this point, it seems that the Buckeyes and Spartans are headed toward a 2018 redux, a 26-6 OSU victory, though perhaps with an even larger win differential for the Buckeyes. Michigan State has the defense to avoid a blowout, but any sort of offensive success would be a pretty big surprise for the Spartans against the feisty Ohio State defense.



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Projected Depth Charts

How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. MICHIGAN STATE RUSH DEFENSE

This game should come down to the battle of the trenches with Ohio State's multifaceted running attack trying to solve the Michigan State rugged forces up front. The numbers tell the story: OSU is seventh nationally with an average of 281.6 yards per game rushing. The Spartans are No. 4 at stopping the run (55.8). The Buckeyes showed in their 48-7 blowout of Nebraska on Sept. 28 that everything clicks when J.K. Dobbins is going hard downfield. He established himself early and that allowed quarterback Justin Fields to not only get his yardage on the ground, but it opened the passing game as well because the Cornhuskers had to respect what Dobbins was doing. Dobbins had 177 yards on 24 attempts (7.4 average), backup Master Teague chipped in with 77 on 12 rushes (6.4) and, oh yes, Fields added 72 on 12 carries (6.0). Although MSU allowed a season-high 356 yards in a 40-31 win against Indiana on Sept. 28, the Hoosiers were held to 70 yards rushing. The Spartans have kept four of their five opponents under 100 yards rushing this season. **EDGE: EVEN**

MICHIGAN STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Michigan State has not found its footing, so to speak. The Spartans are a mere 83rd with 144.6 yards per game on the ground. They would love to be able to chew up some of that Ohio Stadium fake turf with sustained drives to keep the Buckeyes' offense on the sideline. Elijah Collins leads MSU with 413 yards (5.3 per attempt) with three touchdowns and a long of 58. QB Brian Lewerke is second at 147 (4.0). His team-high 78 yards vs. the Hoosiers were the third most in his career. Ohio State is 15th against the run (85.0) as well as No.2 in total defense (223.8) and fourth in scoring defense (8.6). **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. MICHIGAN STATE PASS DEFENSE

Fields' spectacular first season with the Buckeyes continues. He is fifth in the nation with 16 touchdown passes (he also has seven rushing). He has completed 69.8 percent of his 116 passes for 1,092 yards and has yet to throw an interception. Fields has shown he can make all the passes – on the run across his body, over the top, laser strikes down the middle and soft touches when needed. It helps to have ridiculous talent and depth on the receiving end. Nine players have caught TD passes and eight have receptions for at least 25 yards. MSU is 37th in pass defense (198.0). Of concern for OSU is that the Spartans are tied for 18th with 3.20 sacks per game. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

MICHIGAN STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Lewerke was 18 of 36 for 300 yards against Indiana, his seventh career 300-plus game. He's a model of efficiency at 104 of 174 (59.8 percent) for 1,325 yards with 10 TDs against one interception, so the Buckeyes will need to be sharp. Fortunately, they have an array of talent in the secondary and are sixth nationally in pass defense (138.8). Jeff Okudah has three interceptions in the past two games. Chase Young leads the country with eight sacks, and OSU is tied with Pittsburgh and Florida for second at 24, one behind SMU. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

MSU's Jake Hartbarger averaged 54.2 yards per punt on four punts vs. Indiana and placed two inside the 20. He has a Big Ten-best 10 punts of 50-plus yards this season. Matt Coughlin kicked a 21-yard field goal for the Spartans with five seconds left to go up 34-31 in the Indiana game. He is 10 of 15 this season, including 4 of 8 from 40-49 yards. OSU's Drue Chrisman is one of the best punters in the nation again despite his limited opportunities. Freshman Jameson Williams muffed a kick return vs. Nebraska. **EDGE: EVEN**

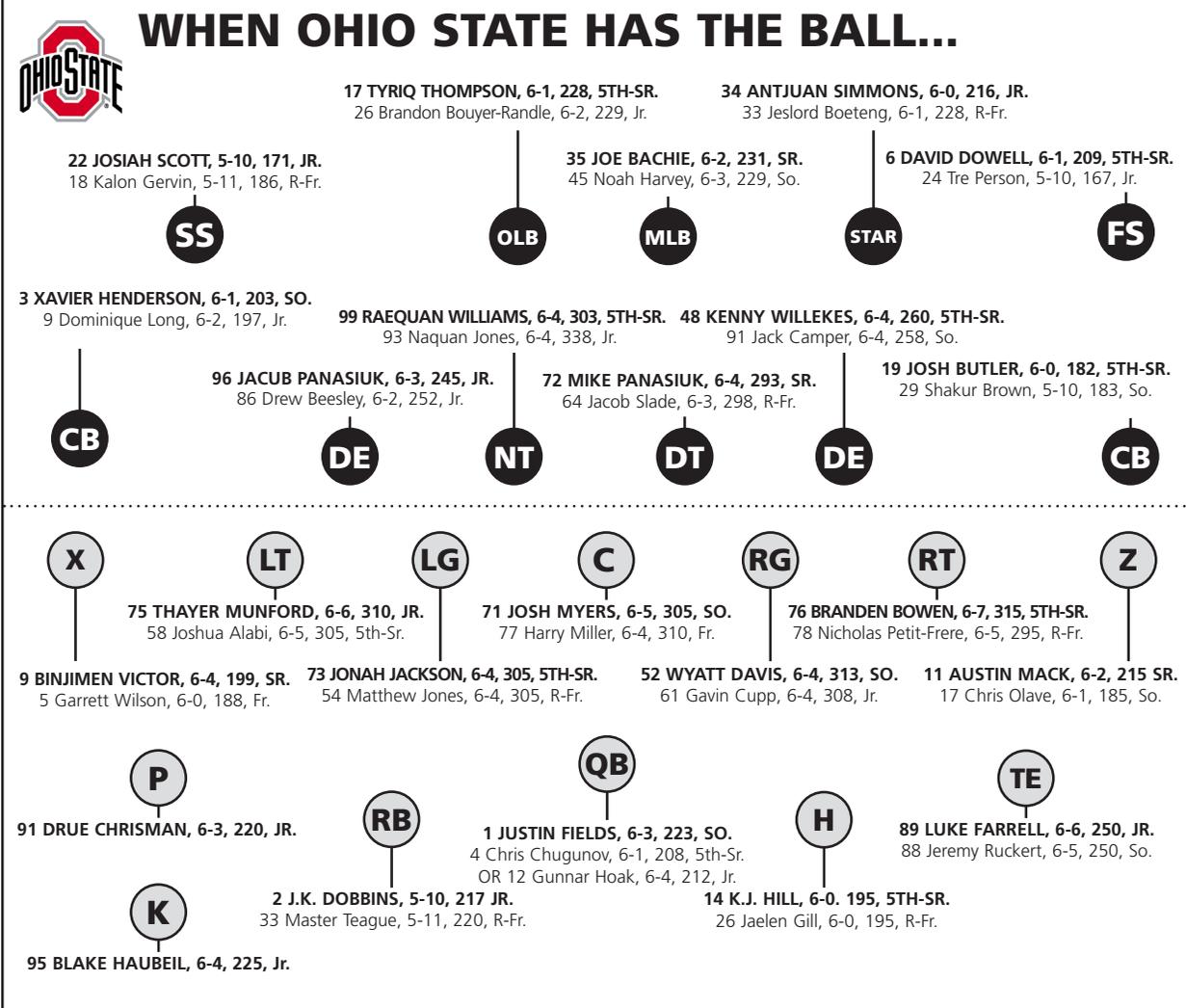
INTANGIBLES

The first home night game of the season is always special. That it's against a Big Ten rival that has caused massive heartache in the past adds to the luster. The Buckeyes passed their first major test with ease at Nebraska but must not get too cocky. That's what the Spartans are counting on. They want to come to Columbus and get into a slugfest and muck up the OSU rhythm. Buckeye coach Ryan Day has done an excellent job so far of keeping his team focused on the task at hand. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

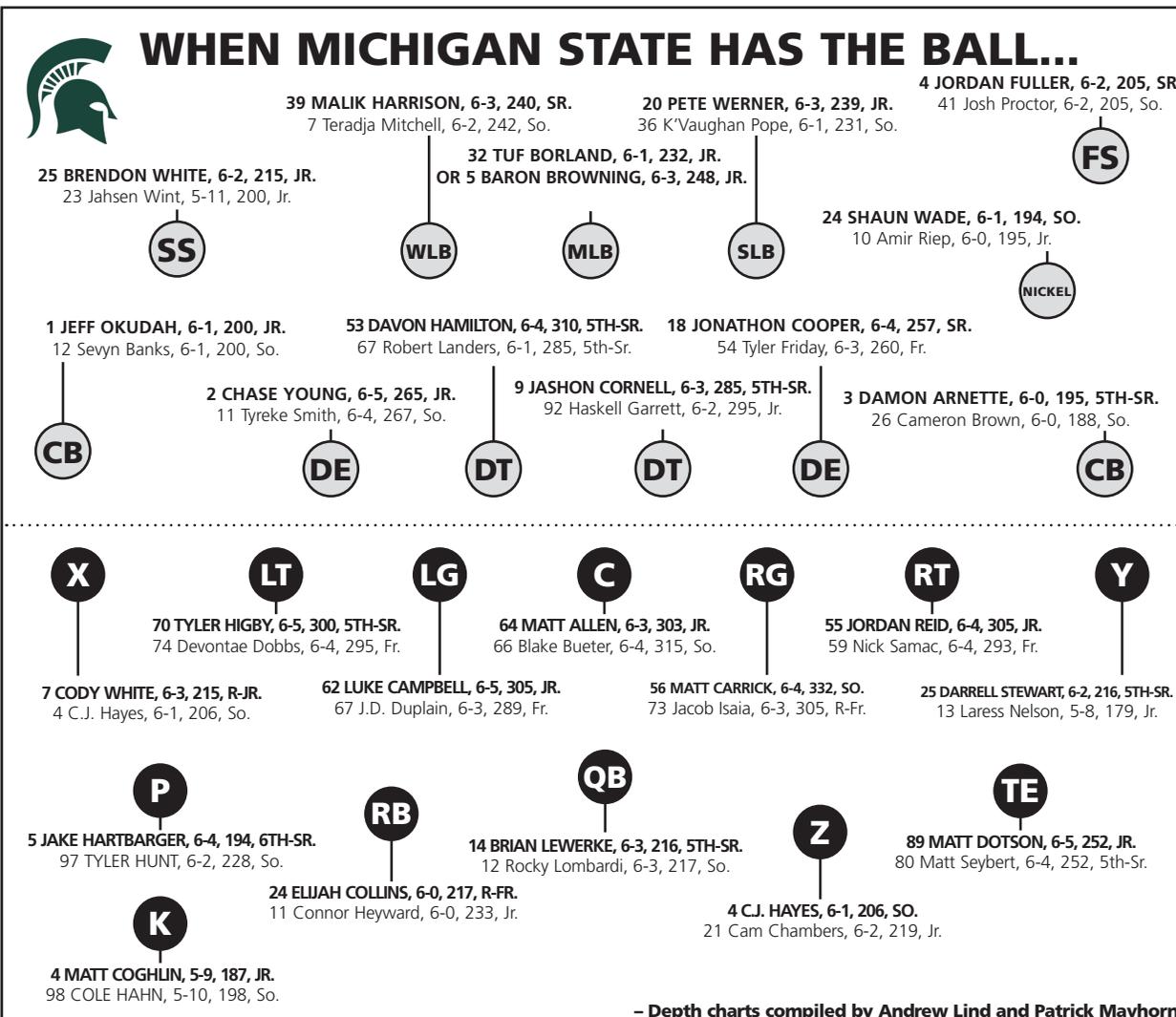
STAFF PREDICTION

The easy route, or rout, is to forecast another Buckeye beatdown. The other thought is that Michigan State will be the most physical and talented team OSU has faced this season and the Buckeyes will be forced to go for a four-quarter game for the first time in 2019. The outcome is somewhere in between. **OHIO STATE, 38-14**

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN MICHIGAN STATE HAS THE BALL...



- Depth charts compiled by Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn

Dantonio Was Meyer's Biggest Nemesis At OSU

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In 2002, Ohio State won the national championship with a down-to-the-wire double-overtime win against Miami (Fla.).

That team, led by head coach Jim Tressel, did not score points at a super-prolific rate, averaging 29.3 points per game, good for No. 41 in the country. Where that team won games was on the defensive side of the ball, smothering opponents with the No. 2 scoring defense in the nation at 13.1 points allowed a game.

That defense was run by defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio, who left the Buckeyes following the 2003 season and became head coach at Cincinnati until 2006 before finally going where he was meant to be: to Michigan State as head coach.

Dantonio would then become the winningest head coach in Spartans history, surpassing Duffy Daugherty, who coached for 19 years, with win No. 110 against Northwestern on Sept. 21 in his 13th season in East Lansing.

Two of those wins have come against his former team, Ohio State, and most of his losses to the Buckeyes were matchups that came down to the wire, with the bulk of these games coming against Urban Meyer.

But how did this heated matchup get under way?

A Little Help From Basketball

When John L. Smith was fired from his head coaching position at Michigan State following a 4-8 record in 2006, his third straight losing season, the Spartans turned to a prominent Michigan State figure at a different sport within the same school: men's basketball head coach Tom Izzo.

"Tom Izzo had more of an impact on this hiring than he did the John L. Smith hiring," Jim Comparoni, publisher of SpartanMag.com, said. "(Smith's) hiring was very quiet, and it was kind of delayed, delayed, delayed, to the point where they petered themselves into a corner and ended up with John L.

Smith out of nowhere, and it didn't work out so well."

Comparoni said Izzo is the "biggest Michigan State football fan there is," but also knows how things work behind the scenes and was a major factor in the 2007 coaching search.

"That hire had to pass the Tom Izzo smell test," Comparoni said.

Izzo knew Dantonio from his first stint at Michigan State, where he was a defensive backs coach from 1995-2000, but the then-Cincinnati head coach had to beat the likes of Todd Grantham, the now-defensive coordinator at Florida, and Brian Kelly, who now is head coach at Notre Dame.

Where Dantonio stood out was his defensive-first mind-set and his ability to play Big Ten football instead of a spread offense that Smith had brought the previous four seasons.

"When a coach gets fired, the program will want to do a 180 from what was not working," Comparoni said. "Mark Dantonio was a 180 from John L. Smith in terms of personality, in terms of organization, being a very diplomatic, presidential kind of guy, with that run game, defensive background."

Dantonio got the job, and Comparoni said the fan reaction was positive but not completely because of his résumé, but mostly because it was a change from Smith.

"When Dantonio was hired, I think in general the fans were like 'OK, well this is worth a shot,'" Comparoni said. "You look at the résumé, and he had been a national championship defensive coordinator at Ohio State. He had been secondary coach for Nick Saban, so he had coached for Saban and Tressel, and at the time, there were no two bigger names in college football coaching than Saban and Tressel."

Izzo's influence could have made an impact on both Michigan State and, potentially, Ohio State back during Smith's hiring in 2003. Among the candidates for that position was a young, upstart coach at Bowling Green by the name of Urban Meyer.

He never even got a phone call.

"Izzo was saying that Urban Meyer said that he would have walked to East Lansing

from Bowling Green back then and didn't get a call," Comparoni said. "It's interesting how a lot of those paths crisscross each other."

Eventually Meyer would get hired at Utah then Florida, and the rest is history.

The Pre-Meyer Era Games

Dantonio had three matchups with his former team before Meyer came to town in 2012. The first two were Ohio State wins, one of which came in a blowout. But for Dantonio's opener against his former boss in Tressel, he immediately looked outmatched.

The Spartans were 5-2 heading into that 2007 game, but the Buckeyes were the No. 1 team in the country, and they looked like it while taking a 24-0 lead. But Dantonio rallied his team to 17 unanswered points, coming just short of a historic comeback against the top team in the nation.

"It was strange that Michigan State had the gumption to stage a comeback in a game like that," Comparoni said. "They hit the gas pedal a little bit and some things were working, and that was, coaches don't use the words 'moral victories,' but I think that was a little bit of a moral victory for the fan base. They'd seen a lot of losses over the years."

Dantonio's first win against Ohio State came in 2011 while the Buckeyes were struggling under interim head coach Luke Fickell.

As the Buckeyes began to falter, Dantonio was turning his program into a powerhouse, leading Michigan State to an 11-3 record in 2011. In a low-scoring slugfest, Michigan State pulled out a 10-7 win that was a shutout until the final seconds of the game.

'Mark The Territory Of The Conference'

Meyer came to Ohio State following a 6-7 OSU record the season prior and immediately turned the Buckeyes back into a powerhouse with a 12-0 season, even without the potential of being bowl-eligible.

The Spartans had a subpar 7-6 record in 2012 but came into the matchup against the No. 14 Buckeyes as the No. 20 team in the country. Even with a down season on the horizon, Ohio State only narrowly

defeated Michigan State 17-16 in a game that Comparoni said showed what the matchups between these two teams would look like while these two head coaches were at the helm.

"Michigan State was kind of a linchpin game early on in the Meyer era, and I think they pinpointed that game, came to Spartan stadium, physical game, some chippiness," he said. "As Dantonio's teams played against Meyer's teams, as they became used to one another, there was a lot more respect at the end than there was at the beginning."

"At the beginning it was like a couple of dogs that didn't know each other that well, and that was a tough, physical, hard-hitting game and one that was, in retrospect, it was a couple of programs trying to set the tone to mark the territory of the conference for the next few years."

Teams Battle Back And Forth

Meyer and Dantonio would go on to split the first four matchups between each other, with each game ending within 12 points.

Following Ohio State's one-point win to open up Meyer's series with the Spartans, Dantonio struck back with a 34-24 win against the Buckeyes in the Big Ten Championship Game in 2013.

That Michigan State team was led by Connor Cook, who threw for 304 yards, three touchdowns and an interception in the victory, while being helped by 149 total yards and a score from running back Jeremy Langford.

Buckeyes quarterback Braxton Miller showed off his dual-threat ability by throwing for 101 yards and a touchdown while also rushing 21 times for 142 yards and another two scores.

This game was decided by momentum, with Michigan State jumping out to a 17-0 lead on touchdown throws of 72 and 33 yards by Cook in the second quarter. But the Buckeyes managed to score 10 unanswered points before halftime to make it a one-score game heading into the third quarter. Ohio State then piled on two Miller touchdown runs in the third to take a 24-17 lead.

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But after a 44-yard Michael Geiger field goal late in the third quarter, the Spartans took over, scoring twice in the final frame to end the game with 17 straight points as well as the 10-point victory.

Trailing 27-24 midway through the fourth quarter, the Buckeyes had a chance to tie or retake the lead, but on a fourth-and-2 from the Spartan 39, Miller ran to the outside and was unable to convert, paving the way for the Spartan victory.

During Ohio State's national title run in 2014, the Buckeyes had to escape Cook, Dantonio and Michigan State once again. The Spartans came in as the No. 7 team in the country, and the offense looked that way throughout the matchup with the Buckeyes, piling up 536 yards of total offense without any turnovers. Cook threw for 358 yards and two scores and Langford rushed for 137 and three touchdowns, but none of it was enough.

The No. 13 Buckeyes, led by J.T. Barrett, who was officially in the groove after some early-season struggles, put up even more impressive offensive numbers in a rare shootout between the two programs.

Barrett threw for 300 and rushed for 86 more, finding the end zone a total of five times while running back Ezekiel Elliott piled up 154 yards on the ground and two scores of his own.

The Buckeyes started the game trailing 14-7, but a 21-point second quarter was enough for Ohio State to gain the lead and never give it back in a 49-37 statement road victory that began the legitimate hope for a push at the College Football Playoff.

In 2015, Ohio State was looking to be the first to win a national title twice in a row under the new playoff. The team returned

the vast majority of its major contributors and on paper looked to be the favorite to win it all once again.

Then came a scrappy Dantonio-led Michigan State team ranked No. 9 in the country that, as always, was ready for an upset.

"Izzo used to talk about when Michigan State, when his program was getting going, when they would play Duke or Kentucky a lot of times they were freaked out by the name on the front of the jersey," Comparoni said. "There was none of that when Michigan State played Ohio State, as good as Ohio State was in all of those matches."

"I suspect that Dantonio's familiarity with them, and his staff members' familiarity with them, it just came down to team A, team B with helmets and shoulder pads playing football. That might have helped take away a little of the Ohio State mystique that they probably hold over every other opponent."

That lack of fear was shown in Columbus on Nov. 21, 2015. In a game filled with rainy weather and a lack of scoring, Ohio State led 14-7 heading into the fourth quarter. But the Spartans held strong and got into the end zone on a 2-yard run by Gerald Holmes to tie the game.

Again, the offenses went away until the final moments. Michigan State had an opportunity to win the game with no time remaining on a 41-yard field goal by Geiger, which he connected on. Geiger then proceeded to run down the field at Ohio Stadium with his arm spinning as if playing an air guitar, shredding the Buckeyes' playoff hopes.

It would be the Spartans who made the playoff instead, where they were immediately crushed by Alabama, 35-0.

In 2016, Ohio State was the significantly stronger team according to record, with

Michigan State coming into the matchup at 3-7 and shifting its focus toward the future.

"The wheels came off the team a little bit," Comparoni said of MSU that year. "By that time Michigan State was getting rid of some of the fat in the program. They had a lot of strife on the team that year, a lot of different factions, leadership problems. They were transitioning to younger players."

The Spartans were a two-point conversion away from being in the driver's seat to pull off a massive upset. Instead the Buckeyes won 17-16, the second time winning by that score against Michigan State in five seasons.

The Spartans went 3-9 that season, which was still not enough to put their most successful coach on the hot seat.

"He'd built up so much good favor and so much equity that when that one went off the rails, I think people could understand it," Comparoni said. "Dantonio had delivered so much that there was never a hint of any of that. He can go 3-9 and everybody's like 'OK, what's next here?'"

'They Knew Ohio State From The Inside'

Meyer won the final three matchups against Dantonio, including a 48-3 beatdown of the Spartans that came after Ohio State's playoff hopes had died in Iowa a week before in 2017. Those wins left Meyer with a 5-2 record against the Michigan State head coach, the only coach in the Big Ten to beat Meyer two times and one of two coaches to do it at all in Meyer's tenure with the Buckeyes, the other being Clemson's Dabo Swinney.

Comparoni believes some of Dantonio's ability to compete so heavily with Meyer regardless of the skill levels of the two teams

was his connections, as well as that of some of his assistants, back to Columbus.

Along with Dantonio's time as Ohio State's defensive coordinator, linebackers coach Mike Tressel is Jim Tressel's nephew, tight ends and special teams coordinator Mark Staten was a graduate assistant, and offensive line coach Jim Bollman was the Ohio State offensive coordinator and offensive line coach from 2001-2011.

The ties to the state don't stop at the coaches, either.

"There is a rivalry, because there are so many Ohio kids on the Michigan State team, those guys naturally want to get up for this team. So, from a competitive standpoint, internally, it's different than Michigan State even playing Iowa or Wisconsin," Comparoni said. "All that familiarity, I'm sure, when it came time to communicate to their own players, they didn't know Ohio State from the outside, they knew Ohio State from the inside, and they felt like they could get in there and get in the ring and take a shot at him. I think that there was not an unknown factor from that regard."

As far as a firm answer to why all that experience is helpful to Dantonio, Michigan State's winningest coach, Meyer's biggest nemesis within the conference while he was coaching the Buckeyes and a constant thorn in Ohio State's quests for national titles, Comparoni doesn't quite have the answer.

"I think that Dantonio's knowledge of Ohio State, some way, somehow, by some dynamic in the universe that we don't understand might have helped," he said. "I think that showed itself in that near upset back in 2016 and over the years when Michigan State has jumped up and ruined national championship runs."

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Walker Brings Experience, Leadership To OSU

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

C.J. Walker spent last season training and practicing with the Ohio State men's basketball team, but due to NCAA transfer rules, he could not take part in games after transferring from Florida State.

"It was very tough," Walker told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "Doing everything that the team does – workouts, practice, conditioning, everything – and not being able to put on that jersey, that was probably the biggest thing. I didn't have a problem with cheering or doing anything like that. Just the fact I'm not contributing when I knew I could contribute in some way to help win games."

Having to sit out is difficult for any competitor, but it presents an even tougher challenge for transfers who are accustomed to playing serious minutes at the highest level of college basketball.

At Florida State, Walker started 34 of 35 games, averaging 8.0 points, 2.5 rebounds and 2.4 assists in 23.2 minutes per game as a sophomore in 2017-18. He went from playing in big games every week in the ACC to being a practice player for the Buckeyes. But Walker stayed committed to improving his own game while helping his teammates.

"Practices were my games," Walker said. "For instance, I was on scout team, and we would go through the team's plays and things like that. I would take that as my game. Or any type of competitive thing, I would take it as serious as possible because if we had a game in two days, I knew I wouldn't play so I might as well

try to exert it while I can in practice."

Treating practices like games showed the Ohio State coaching staff and players what Walker is all about. Head coach Chris Holtmann liked the impact the former Florida State transfer had on the team.

"He was great last year for us," Holtmann said of Walker. "What you're going to see with him is he has some real natural, innate leadership abilities. That's the thing that's always impressed me about him is the fact that he has some real natural leadership ability that's exciting."

Walker earned the respect of his teammates as well. Sophomore guard Duane Washington said he and Walker connected immediately after discovering they share the same birthday.

"Last year, every time I'd watch film, I'd either call him about something or record it and send it to him," Washington said. "We're very critical of each other's games just because we want each other to be great and iron sharpens iron. It's very helpful for him to be on me and for me to be on him."

As a redshirt junior, Walker has two years of eligibility remaining, and his cohesion with his teammates will be essential to his success particularly as a point guard. Becoming close with fellow Buckeyes should not be an issue because of the familial culture Holtmann has emphasized within the program. The familial feel served as a major motivator in Walker's decision to transfer to Ohio State from Florida State, where he felt too distant from his immediate family.

"I just wanted to be closer to home," Walker, an Indianapolis native, said. "Just being away from home, I kind of got homesick, being away

from my family, them not being able to attend games and things like that, since I was so used to that. That's something that fits me and makes me feel a lot more comfortable in my situation and my environment."

The point guard's connection to Holtmann from when he recruited him at Butler helped give the Buckeyes a leg up.

"Coach Holtmann actually offered me when he was at Butler, so I knew him throughout high school and I just knew what type of man he was and how he handles his teams and his coaching staff," Walker said. "Once I knew I was making my decision to leave and once we started having conversations, it was kind of easy."

Holtmann has developed a reputation for being tough on his point guards, particularly, emphasizing the necessity to limit turnovers and defend on the perimeter. He even benched C.J. Jackson for turnover issues early in the 2017-18 season, which Jackson responded to with improved play.

Many young athletes may shy away from such strong criticism, and even if they can handle it, they probably will not seek it out. Walker wanted to be tested.

"His intensity, just the way he goes about the game, how serious he is about the game and how family-oriented he is as well," Walker said of Holtmann. "That means a lot. Just seeing how much he loves basketball and how he pushes his point guards to limits that a lot of coaches don't do, that you don't see a lot, and I feel like I can fit into that position to be able to be pushed and to be able to show my capabilities."

Student-athletes have a litany of responsibilities with classes, workouts, meetings, practices, traveling, games and more, so it's curious that Walker would invite his coach to challenge him. That's all he's ever known, though.

"That's just the way I've been coached," Walker said. "My dad coached me when I was little. He taught me that way, and when I got to high school, Coach (Jason) Delaney, he was one of the coaches that pushed me. Being away from my dad it was kind of different, but I needed it. It helped for the outcome. Now I'm just kind of used to it. I like to be pushed because I feel like that means he cares for me. If he doesn't push me, he doesn't care."

Walker will not have to worry about sensing

apathy from Holtmann, who has been thoroughly impressed with what he's seen from the talented floor general.

"He's about the right stuff, and that's going to be as valuable as anything, along with his experience," Holtmann said of Walker.

Part of the experience Holtmann alluded to was Walker's trip to the Elite Eight as a member of the Seminoles in 2018. He did a little bit of everything in Florida State's Sweet 16 win against Gonzaga, scoring nine points from beyond the three-point arc, grabbing two boards, dishing two assists, swiping two steals and blocking one shot in 15 minutes of action.

Walker said he can build off his Elite Eight experience and relay what it takes to make a deep tourney run to his teammates.

"It's going to be a long season," Walker said. "There's going to be walls. There are going to be ups and downs. You just have to figure out ways to win. You've got to figure out ways to get the team closer. If you're having bad shooting nights, know that you just need to get in the gym and be confident."

"You've got to be family. A family goes through different trials and tribulations. You've just got to understand that. Something that I can bring to the team is some experience. Being there, it was actually so much fun and excitement, so I just want to do it again. I feel like I'm willing to give everything to get back to that."

Holtmann said he would like Walker to improve his assist to turnover ratio, which was less than desirable at Florida State, where he averaged 2.4 assists to 1.7 turnovers per game as a sophomore. Walker shot 35.5 percent from three that season as well, and Holtmann said he would also like to see him continue to improve in that area.

Given the fact that Walker has not yet played a game for the Scarlet and Gray, Holtmann keeps his expectations tempered. The third-year Ohio State coach, however, finds optimism in Walker's competitive nature.

"It helps C.J. having a year in our system and learning that," Holtmann said. "But it's different from practicing every day to now you're actually playing in games. There will be a little bit of a learning curve with him, even though he's an older guy with experience."

"C.J. is tough and tough-minded and has a really good understanding of playing to win and what that looks like. He plays with good pace and has been part of successful teams."

What does Walker believe he will bring to the Buckeyes?

"A lot of intensity, defense, high energy, get the crowd involved, get my teammates involved and just be willing to sacrifice anything to win," Walker said. "I feel like that's something the fans, my teammates and my coaching staff are going to see from me."

Just like his coach, Walker's intensity is contagious. Although he could serve only as a practice player last season, Walker made a name for himself by showing up every day and grinding for his teammates. Don't just take Walker's word for it. His teammates gave rave reviews, including junior forward Kyle Young.

"C.J.'s awesome," Young said. "I'm really excited for him to be able to play. Sitting out a year is always tough for anybody no matter what the circumstances. We're really excited for him to get going."

The Buckeyes are excited to have Walker finally get his chance to play in games, but no one is more excited than the former transfer himself.

"I'm very hungry," Walker said. "I'm jittery right now just even thinking about it. I'm really excited to play in front of the fans and for Coach Holtmann."

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Oct 18 - at Northwestern Wildcats
Oct 26 - Wisconsin Badgers
Nov 2 - Second Bye Week
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DL Jacolbe Cowan Sets Announcement Date

Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day four-star defensive lineman Jacolbe Cowan will announce his college decision on Oct. 4.

The 6-5, 275-pound Cowan – who is considered the 15th-best defensive tackle and No. 163 prospect overall in the 2020 recruiting class – will choose among finalists Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, LSU, North Carolina, North Carolina State, Ohio State, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State, South Carolina and Tennessee, though most believe it to be a three-horse race between the Buckeyes, Tar Heels and Volunteers.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

Cowan has made three separate visits to Columbus in the last year, including an official visit in mid-June. He's been in contact with defensive line coach Larry Johnson and, more recently, head coach Ryan Day as Ohio State looks to add two defensive linemen to its current recruiting haul.

Johnson's other primary defensive line target is Knoxville (Tenn.) Catholic four-star defensive end Tyler Baron, who is slated to begin his official visit with the Buckeyes just hours after Cowan announces his decision. That weekend looms large as a result.

Cowan is considered a defensive tackle by most recruiting services but fits the mold of the big, athletic and versatile lineman Johnson covets and deploys across the

defensive line. He would also prefer to play defensive end at the next level.

It's worth noting Cowan has taken an official visit only to Ohio State despite having four additional visits at his disposal.

Jack Miller Reaffirms Commitment To Ohio State

Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral four-star quarterback Jack Miller has been one of the more vocal members of Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class in an effort to get some of the best prospects in the country to join him in Columbus.

However, Miller recently fielded questions about the strength of his pledge with the Buckeyes actively looking to add another signal caller this recruiting cycle for depth purposes. He took to Twitter on Sept. 27 to shut down any rumors of discontent between the two parties.

"All the speculation, I'm solid," Miller wrote.

Miller's father, Jack Sr., also weighed in on the situation.

"All of the talk about another 2020 (quarterback) was inevitable," the elder Miller wrote. "Jack will compete with all comers, and we have been kept informed of prospects. Doesn't change anything, the trust in the process or his coaches. He is ready to compete."

As it stands now, Ohio State will have three scholarship quarterbacks next fall in Justin Fields, Gunnar Hoak and Miller, who is considered by 247Sports' composite rankings to be the sixth-best pro-style quarterback and No. 185 prospect overall in the class of 2020.

The Buckeyes have been linked to – but have yet to offer – quarterbacks such as Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., four-star

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
Paris Johnson	OT	6-8	295	★★★★★	Cincinnati Princeton
Jack Miller	QB	6-4	210	★★★★	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral
Luke Wypler	OC	6-4	285	★★★★	Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	WR	6-1	188	★★★★	Rockwall, Texas
Gee Scott Jr.	WR	6-3	207	★★★★	Sammamish (Wa.) Eastside Catholic
Jakob James	OG	6-5	275	★★★	Cincinnati Elder
Trey Leroux	OT	6-8	355	★★★	Norwalk, Ohio
Lejond Cavazos	CB	6-1	190	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Julian Fleming	WR	6-2	199	★★★★★	Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia
Jake Seibert	K	6-1	190	★★★	Cincinnati La Salle
Grant Toutant	OT	6-7	320	★★★	Warren (Mich.) De La Salle
Ty Hamilton	DE	6-3	250	★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) Central
Clark Phillips	CB	5-11	178	★★★★	La Habra, Calif.
Cody Simon	OLB	6-1	218	★★★★	Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep
Darrion Henry	DT	6-5	279	★★★★	Cincinnati Princeton
Joe Royer	TE	6-5	225	★★★	Cincinnati Elder
Mitchell Melton	OLB	6-3	235	★★★	Olney (Md.) Good Counsel
Cameron Martinez	ATH	6-0	183	★★★	Muskegon, Mich.
Josh Fryar	OL	6-6	305	★★★	Beech Grove, Ind.
Mookie Cooper	WR	5-9	193	★★★★	St. Louis Trinity Catholic
Lathan Ransom	S	6-1	193	★★★★	Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic
Kourt Williams	ATH	6-1	216	★★★★	Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jack Sawyer	DE	6-6	220	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North
Kyle McCord	QB	6-3	204	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's
Jayden Ballard	WR	6-2	175	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Ben Christman	OT	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield (Ohio) Revere
Reid Carrico	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Irontown (Ohio)

C.J. Stroud; Honolulu St. Louis three-star Jayden de Laura; and Stephenville, Texas, three-star Kade Renfrow, a North Texas commit.

Stroud – the seventh-best pro-style quarterback and No. 192 prospect overall in his class – is expected to take an unofficial visit

to Ohio State for the Michigan State game on Oct. 5. His interest in the Buckeyes is notable given his relationship with several OSU commits, as he was one of the quarterbacks on a seven-on-seven team at The Opening Finals in Dallas this summer that also featured Miller, Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star wide receiver Julian Fleming, Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star wide receiver Gee Scott, and Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star defensive back Lejond Cavazos.

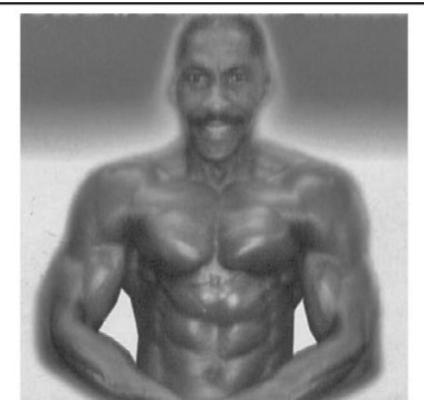
Miller, meanwhile, has been nursing an undisclosed upper-body injury this sea-

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ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

Ohio State hosted Little Elm, Texas, four-star cornerback Ryan Watts, an Oklahoma commit, on an official visit for the 76-5 win over Miami (Ohio) on Sept. 21. Where do you believe the Buckeyes stand in their efforts to flip the 6-3, 187-pounder from his pledge?

"This one kind of depends on who you ask, but anytime a committed player is taking official visits elsewhere, it's worth monitoring.

"Watts is one of a very select group of defensive backs from the 2020 recruiting class still being pursued by Ohio State, so that in itself means something. There is a lot of positive buzz following his trip to Columbus, but he insists that he'll make a visit to Penn State in the near future, as well, so there's nothing that indicates any sort of commitment flip is imminent."

How does the recent offer to Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star running back and Iowa State commit Miyan Williams (5-10, 210) impact Ohio State's pursuit of a running back or two this cycle?

"The more that Master Teague, Marcus Crowley and Steele Chambers show for the Buckeyes, the more it looks like Ohio State is comfortable with the

idea of only signing one running back this cycle.

"Miyan Williams earned his offer, and it now seems likely he'll flip his commitment from Iowa State to the Buckeyes. If that happens in the near future then head coach Ryan Day, director of player personnel Mark Pantoni and running backs coach Tony Alford will have some decisions to make on the numbers, but the sense right now is that they're encouraged by the work being done by their three freshman – one of the redshirt variety – tailbacks."

How has Ohio State's implementation of the Bullet position on defense, as well as the use of only one deep safety on most plays, changed the Buckeyes' recruiting strategy?

"Up to this point in time, it hasn't really changed much, but it does underscore what's become a staple of the Buckeyes' recruiting philosophy for the last few years now: versatility.

"Ohio State is looking for body types and not necessarily searching for positions specifically. Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star athlete Kourt Williams – who committed to the Buckeyes back in July – is a prime example of that because he is, at 6-1 and 216 pounds, the right body type to fit into the mold of the Bullet, which isn't anything

more than a player capable of being impactful against the run and the pass."

Ohio State has been in contact with Honolulu St. Louis three-star quarterback Jayden de Laura as it considers bringing on a second quarterback in the 2020 recruiting cycle to complement Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral four-star Jack Miller. What can you tell us about de Laura, and how does he compare to other quarterbacks Ohio State has been keeping tabs on?

"The Buckeyes have been evaluating a number of quarterbacks as a potential complement to Jack Miller, and de Laura is an interesting prospect.

"Ohio State had never signed a player from Hawaii prior to Kahuku four-star offensive guard Enokk Vimahi in the class of 2019, but if you're recruiting that state, doing so at St. Louis High School is the place to be.

"It's 2019 and every quarterback out there possesses some level of dual-threat ability, and de Laura plays like his hair is on fire. He's a lot of fun to watch but isn't as polished a passer as other quarterback targets like Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., four-star C.J. Stroud or even Stephenville, Texas, three-star Kade Renfro, a North Texas commit."

son and has missed Chaparral's last three games. The Firebirds are 3-2 overall and 2-1 without him.

Buckeyes Make Cut For Maryland Linebacker

Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic four-star linebacker Greg Penn – the sixth-

best inside linebacker and No. 183 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – trimmed his list of more than two dozen scholarship offers to Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, LSU, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio State, Penn State, South Carolina and Texas A&M on Sept. 22.

The 6-1, 225-pound Penn received a

scholarship offer from the aforementioned Johnson — whose primary recruiting responsibility, aside from the defensive line, is the greater Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia area — back in May. He then visited campus for the first and only time in late July, at which time he met with first-year linebackers coach Al Washington.

Ohio State is likely to sign just two linebackers in 2021, and Penn – who hails from the same high school as junior defensive end Chase Young – is at the top of the list to join Ironton, Ohio, four-star Reid Carrico in the Buckeyes' class.

Continued On Page 30



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Staff Hands Out Several New Scholarship Offers

Continued From Page 29

Florida Wide Receiver Sets Unofficial Visit

Ohio State offered a scholarship to Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Cardinal Gibbons three-star wide receiver Troy Stellato in mid-September, and it didn't take long for him to schedule another visit with the Buckeyes as he'll attend the game against Michigan State on Oct. 5.

This marks the third visit for the 6-0, 172-pound Stellato – who is considered the 78th-best wide receiver and No. 463 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – since April. He attended the spring game and then returned to campus for a one-day camp on June 11. He's built a strong bond with Day, wide receivers coach Brian Hartline and quality control coach Keenan Bailey in that time, and the Buckeyes are among the favorites early in his recruitment as a result.

Although his ranking doesn't reflect it, Stellato is quickly becoming one of the most sought-after wideouts in his class. He's picked up offers from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, LSU, Miami (Fla.), Penn State and USC in recent weeks.

Buckeyes To Host Tight End Hudson Wolfe

Ohio State is also set to welcome Savannah (Tenn.) Hardin County four-star tight end Hudson Wolfe to campus for an unofficial visit for the game against Michigan State.

The 6-6, 243-pound Wolfe – the sixth-best tight end and No. 216 prospect overall in the 2021 recruiting class – landed an offer from

Buckeyes' offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson on Sept. 15. He's also been in contact with graduate assistant Trey Holtz in recent weeks.

Wolfe holds early offers from programs such as Alabama, Arkansas, Auburn, Georgia, LSU, Penn State, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas A&M, Virginia and Virginia Tech, among others.

Jakailin Johnson Ready To Return To Campus

Ohio State has recruited St. Louis well in recent years, landing commitments from Christian Brothers College four-star wide receivers Kamryn Babb and Cameron Brown in 2018, though the latter has since switched to defensive back; Cardinal Ritter Prep four-star wide receiver Jameson Williams in 2019; and Pattonville Senior four-star wide receiver Mookie Cooper for 2020.

The Buckeyes feel confident in their chances of continuing that streak in 2021 with DeSmet four-star cornerback Jakailin Johnson, who recently announced on Twitter that he'll be among the long list of prospects in attendance for the prime-time game against Michigan State on Oct. 5.

The 6-0, 168-pound Johnson – who is considered the sixth-best cornerback and No. 69 prospect overall in his class – has been in contact with Hartline, whose recruiting duties include the greater St. Louis area. He landed an offer from the Buckeyes on May 31 and subsequently attended the program's Bash and Barbecue a few weeks later on June 21.

Johnson also holds offers from programs

such as Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Oregon, Texas A&M and Virginia Tech, but the Fighting Irish are considered the early favorites in his recruitment thanks to his friendship with four-star wide receiver commit Jordan Johnson (no relation).

Wide Receiver Lavon Bunkley-Shelton Drops OSU

Though he was scheduled to take an official visit to Ohio State for the Penn State game on Nov. 23, Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra four-star wide receiver Lavon Bunkley-Shelton did not include the Buckeyes among his final six schools on Sept. 26.

The 6-0, 180-pound Bunkley-Shelton – who is considered the No. 34 wide receiver and No. 194 prospect overall in the class of 2020 – instead listed Arizona State, Michigan, Nebraska, Texas, USC and Washington. He also announced he'll make his final decision at the All-American Bowl on Jan. 4.

Bunkley-Shelton attended Ohio State's spring game on April 13 and was excited about a return visit. But the Buckeyes now have four wide receivers in the fold for 2020 in Fleming, Scott, Cooper and Rockwall, Texas, four-star Jaxon Smith-Njigba, and it's unlikely the staff adds a fifth with numbers tight in the class.

Offensive Tackle Riley Mahlman Commits To Wisconsin

One of Ohio State's top offensive line targets is now off the board after Lakeville (Minn.) South four-star offensive tackle Riley

Mahlman committed to Wisconsin just one day after his unofficial visit for the Badgers' 35-14 win over Michigan on Sept. 21.

The 6-7, 270-pound Mahlman, who is considered the No. 27 offensive tackle and No. 211 prospect overall in the class of 2021, was actually expected to visit Columbus for the Michigan State game on Oct. 5. It's probably safe to assume that trip will no longer happen.

Ohio State already holds a commitment from Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star offensive tackle Ben Christman and hopes to add another pair of tackles to complement him in the 2021 cycle. Top targets now include Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star J.C. Latham and Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal four-star Donovan Jackson.

Buckeyes Offer Offensive Tackle Tristan Leigh

On Sept. 23 – just one day after Mahlman committed to Wisconsin – Ohio State offered a scholarship to Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary four-star offensive tackle Tristan Leigh.

The 6-5, 265-pound Leigh is considered the 24th-best offensive tackle and No. 177 prospect overall in the class of 2021, and he holds early offers from programs such as Alabama, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, North Carolina State, Penn State, South Carolina, Virginia, Virginia Tech and West Virginia, among others.

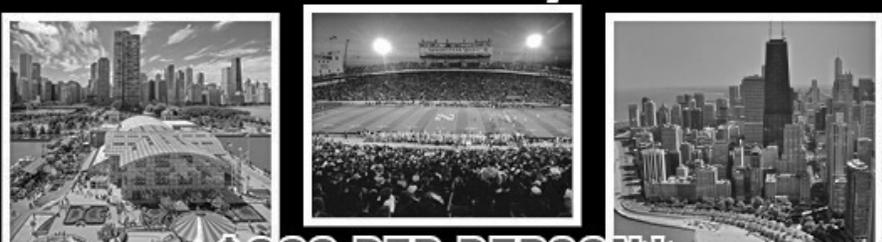
Leigh – who has been in contact with Day and Johnson – will make his first trip to Columbus for the game against Penn State on Nov. 23.

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A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1989

Dayton Meadowdale High School's Rod Boykin was a "can't miss" major-college football player. That was not news to recruiting coordinators across the country, who had started taking notice of the 6-0, 185-pound defensive back more than a year previous.

But his head coach, Pat Masters, said the "can't miss" tag was more appropriate for Boykin than for many more one-dimensional prep gridiron standouts.

"As a defensive back he is really, really talented and can go as far as he wants to," Masters said. "He has great strength and speed and can play corner or safety. But he is one of those kids who is a heck of an athlete and can do a lot of other things. You can recruit him and fit him where he is needed. He is a 'can't-miss prospect' because he could also play quarterback, receiver or tailback if there is a need."

25 Years Ago – 1994

If you wanted to learn a little bit about expectations, you could talk to Willie Spencer. The 6-3, 202-pounder played football in the embodiment of Ohio gridiron action – Massillon. The area that produced Chris Spielman, among others, was certainly one of the most tradition-rich in Ohio if not the entire country. To have to live up to high standards is something that might inspire awe in some kids. But not Spencer.

"I know what I have to do," the Washington High School defensive back/quarterback said. "It's a great feeling going out there on Friday nights and seeing that crowd. You hear them shouting out your name, and you get a rush."

The entire recruiting process rushing at Spencer was just one more thing he dealt with. Not only did he play in Massillon, but he also played in the shadow of his father, Willie Sr., who had graced the field of Paul Brown Tiger Stadium some 20-odd years previous.

20 Years Ago – 1999

Being a longtime OSU fan, it wasn't really that hard a decision for Dayton Colonel White (Ohio) High School running back Terry Pogue to make when he committed to the Buckeyes.

"I really liked Ohio State because I'm from Ohio and everybody

around is an Ohio State fan, and I was too," Pogue said. "It was a lifelong dream to play there, and when I got the opportunity to finally see how the school really was, I took (the offer)."

"He's a north-south runner," said Michael McCray, a former Buckeye captain and Pogue's head coach. "He's an in-between-the-tackles runner. He's a decent runner outside, but in-between the tackles he's a great runner."

15 Years Ago – 2004

Ohio State wanted to see local star Alex Daniels of Brookhaven continue his college career in Columbus, but his mother wanted to see him head out of state for college, meaning Oklahoma could be the destination of choice.

It turned out his situation wasn't just an Ohio phenomenon.

Oakland Park (Fla.) Northeast linebacker Demetri Stewart was very interested in his hometown Hurricanes, but he was also considering Auburn, LSU, Ohio State and the Sooners, where he had recently taken an official visit. If his mother had her way, Stewart would be heading out of Florida to attend school.

"There's pressure (to stay in Miami), but my mom is pushing for me to go out of state," Stewart said. "She wants me to go experience somewhere else, so going out of state is not really something that is going to play a big part in what I do."

10 Years Ago – 2009

When Ohio State landed a fresh commitment, head coach Jim Tressel liked to make sure a commit to the program had made a thoroughly researched decision.

Tressel may have had reason to be concerned about the verbal commitment from four-star wide receiver James Louis of Delray (Fla.) Atlantic.

The 5-11, 180-pound wideout was set to issue a verbal commitment to Florida when Gators head coach Urban Meyer and his coaching staff stopped returning his phone calls. After about two weeks of unsuccessful attempts to reach the Gators, Louis abruptly switched gears and committed to the Buckeyes in late July.

Louis had publicly been mum on his commitment, but SoFLAfootball.com reported that the Gators were back in the hunt

and trying to sway the nation's No. 24 wide receiver prospect back to their program and that they were not alone in their efforts to pry him away from Ohio State's commitment list.

Miami (Fla.), Minnesota, Tennessee and Alabama were all schools Louis told the website he spoke with on a regular basis, in addition to Florida and Ohio State.

Five Years Ago – 2014

Fort Wayne (Ind.) Bishop Luers four-star receiver Austin Mack (6-2, 205) was on hand in Columbus for the second game in a row, taking in OSU's win against Cincinnati after also making the trip to see the Buckeyes dominate Kent State.

"The visit was awesome," Mack said after the UC trip. "It was definitely a different experience from (Kent State) because it was a good game against a rival in the same state. It was a night game, too, and the fans were crazy and a lot of fun."

The trip to Columbus solidified his relationship with some members of the Ohio State coaching staff.

"I spoke with all the coaches pretty much after the game," Mack said. "They just told me to keep doing what I'm doing on the field and to stay in touch. Nothing new, really, because I already talk to them pretty often."

One Year Ago – 2018

The 2019 recruiting class got the jolt it needed when Jameson Williams, a St. Louis Cardinal Ritter College Prep four-star wide receiver, announced his commitment to the Buckeyes on Twitter.

Williams was the 247Sports composite's No. 130 overall prospect, No. 24 wide receiver and No. 2 player in Missouri. His pledge provided Ohio state with its 15th member and second wideout for the current cycle, joining Austin (Texas) Lake Travis five-star Garrett Wilson.

In the receiver's commitment video, a coach of Jameson's described him as "the real deal."

"Explosive kid has deep passion about the game," the coach went on to say. "He does everything you ask him to do, plus more. The kid breathes the game. He eats the game. He's definitely a kid that's to going to be playing on Sundays."

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Rutgers Fires Former Ohio State Coordinator Ash

Former Ohio State assistant coach Chris Ash has been fired as head coach at Rutgers, it was announced on Sept. 29.

"We appreciate Chris's dedicated efforts on behalf of our football program, our department and our university," Rutgers athletic director Pat Hobbs said in a statement. "This change is especially difficult because of the steadfast commitment that Chris and his family have made to our student-athletes."

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

Although the news was not announced until Sept. 29, the decision to move on from Ash came two weeks ago during a Board of Trustees meeting, according to Brett McMurphy of Stadium.

Rutgers still owes Ash approximately \$8.47 million, according to his buyout.

The Scarlet Knights are 1-3 and coming off a 52-0 loss to Michigan on Sept. 28. Ash, who took over Rutgers in 2016, posted an 8-32 record in three-plus seasons at the helm.

Rutgers, which ranks second-to-last in the Big Ten in scoring offense, rushing offense and total offense, also fired offensive coordinator John McNulty. The defense has been just as bad, if not worse, ranking last in the conference in scoring defense, last in rushing defense and second-last in total defense.

Rutgers tight ends coach Nunzio Campanile will become acting head coach for the remainder of the season. Hobbs said he will oversee a search for Ash's replacement. Former Rutgers coach Greg Schiano is expected to be a top candidate, as are former Tennessee coach Butch Jones and

Florida State defensive analyst (and former South Florida coach) Jim Leavitt.

Additionally, Mississippi State coach Joe Moorhead, Buffalo coach Lance Leipold, Pittsburgh coach Pat Narduzzi and Princeton coach Bob Surace represent other candidates for the position, according to NJ Advanced Media.

Schiano, who was the coach of Rutgers from 2001-11, has been reported to be the favorite. Posting winning records in six of his final seven seasons, including an 11-win season in 2006, Schiano took the Scarlet Knights to new heights in the now-defunct Big East. Rutgers ranked as high as No. 7 in the AP top 25 during the Schiano era, which is significantly higher than it has been since he left, with the Scarlet Knights not being in the poll since 2012.

Following his time at Rutgers, Schiano's career path took him to the NFL as well as to the top tier of college football. He was hired to coach the Tampa Bay Buccaneers following the 2011 season but was fired after two seasons. Schiano later teamed up with Urban Meyer in Columbus and spent three years as Ohio State's defensive coordinator from 2016-18. After leaving the Buckeyes to join the New England Patriots' staff, Schiano abruptly resigned before coaching a game.

Rutgers has not notched a winning season since 2014 and has lost 14 of its last 16 games.

Nebraska Plans To Build Nation's Largest Football Facility

The Nebraska football program will receive a brand-new, state-of-the-art athletic facility intended to boost recruiting and help the Cornhuskers regain national prominence, university officials announced Sept. 27.

The largest facility of its kind in the country (350,000-square feet) will begin being built in the summer of 2020, with an expect-

ed completion date of 2022. The \$155 million facility will connect to Memorial Stadium.

"I think this is evidence that the University of Nebraska is committed to making sure we do everything we can to compete at the highest level," Nebraska football coach Scott Frost said at the announcement, one day before Nebraska suffered its 48-7 defeat at the hands of Ohio State.

Nebraska athletic director Bill Moos said the "Go Big" expansion project is part of a broader effort to "create the future" and restore the team's reputation as a national powerhouse in football after several disappointing seasons.

The news comes 13 years after the last major facility construction for the football program was completed, with the opening of the Tom and Nancy Osborne Athletic Complex. University officials said every other Big Ten school has opened new football facilities since then or is at least in the planning stages of constructing one.

Nebraska's mammoth facility will provide the football program with a new locker room, strength and conditioning center, athletic medicine facility, equipment room, meeting rooms, coaches' offices and an additional outdoor practice facility. Also benefiting athletic programs besides football, the facility will include the training table and academic support facilities for all of the university's student-athletes.

Chancellor Ronnie Green said officials expect to raise \$100 million for the project from private donors, while the rest will come from university trust funds and bond financing.

Moos said Husker officials have already raised 35 to 40 percent of what they need from donors.

The facility will occupy the space where the Ed Weir Track and Field Stadium is currently located, just off Memorial Stadium's northeast corner. University offi-

cials plan to construct a new outdoor track stadium north of the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

B1G Soccer Duo Named Senior CLASS Award Candidates

Two Big Ten Conference soccer athletes – Nebraska's Sinclair Miramontez and Penn State's Aaron Molloy – are among the early candidates for the 2019 Senior CLASS Award.

The Senior CLASS Award is presented annually to one male and one female senior soccer student who have made notable achievements in four areas of excellence: community, classroom, character and competition.

Miramontez is an accounting major at Nebraska and a two-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree (2017 and 2018), as well as a 2018 United Soccer Coaches Scholar All-West Region selection.

As a defender for the Cornhuskers, the Lenexa, Kan., native is a two-time first-team All-Big Ten and United Soccer Coaches all-region selection. Miramontez has started all 67 games she has appeared in during her career, collecting five goals and one assist to date, including two goals in 2019.

Miramontez could become the second Big Ten student-athlete to earn the Senior CLASS Award in women's soccer since the award's inception in 2007, following Rutgers' Brianne Reed, who earned the award in 2015.

Molloy transferred to Penn State from Keiser prior to the 2017 season and had an immediate impact, earning second-team All-Big Ten and United Soccer Coaches third-team all-region honors in 2018. He has started 36 of 37 games in his PSU career, registering eight goals and two assists, including a team-high three goals in 2019. A native of Dublin, Ireland, Molloy studies recreation, park and tourism management.

Molloy aims to be the fourth Big Ten student-athlete to earn the men's soccer version of the Senior CLASS Award. Jason Yeisley, another Nittany Lion standout, won the honor in 2009, and more recently, Ohio State's Alex

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Sept. 7 CINCINNATI, W 42-0; **14** at Indiana, W 51-10; **21** MIAMI (OHIO), W 76-5; **28** at Nebraska, W 48-7.
Oct. 5 MICHIGAN STATE, 7:30 p.m.; **18** at Northwestern, 8:30 p.m.; **26** WISCONSIN.
Nov. 9 MARYLAND; **16** at Rutgers; **23** PENN STATE; **30** at Michigan, 12 p.m.
Dec. 7 Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis, 8 p.m.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Oct. 30 CEDARVILLE (exhibition).
Nov. 6 CINCINNATI, 8:30 p.m.; **10** UMASS-LOWELL, 4 p.m.; **13** VILLANOVA, 7 p.m.; **18** STETSON, 8:30 p.m.; **22** PURDUE FORT WAYNE; **25** KENT STATE, 6:30 p.m.; **29** MORGAN STATE, 9 p.m..
Dec. 4 North Carolina; **7** PENN STATE; **15** Minnesota, 6:30 p.m.; **17** SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE, 7 p.m.; **21** Kentucky at Las Vegas, 5:15 p.m.; **29** West Virginia at Cleveland, 12 p.m.
Jan. 3 WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; **7** Maryland, 7 p.m.; **11** Indiana, 12 p.m.; **14** NEBRASKA, 6:30 p.m.; **18** Penn State, 12 p.m.; **23** MINNESOTA, 6:30 p.m.; **26** Northwestern, 6:30 p.m.
Feb. 1 INDIANA, 12 p.m.; **4** Michigan, 7 p.m.; **9** Wisconsin, 1 p.m.; **12** RUTGERS, 7 p.m.; **15** PURDUE 12 p.m.; **20** Iowa, 7 p.m.; **23** MARYLAND, 4 p.m.; **27** NEBRASKA, 9 p.m.
March 1 MICHIGAN, 4 p.m.; **5** ILLINOIS, 7 p.m.; **8** Michigan State, 4:30 p.m. **11-15** Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Nov. 3 Urbana (exhibition); **10** Valparaiso in Springfield, Ohio; **13** Cincinnati; **17** OHIO, 2 p.m.; **21** Kent State; **24** UCONN, 3 p.m.; **29** South Dakota in Las Vegas; **30** Northern Iowa in Las Vegas.
Dec. 5 LOUISVILLE, 8 p.m.; **8** RADFORD, 2 p.m.; **15** Stanford; **17** Sacramento State, 10:05 p.m.; **28** PURDUE; **31** Minnesota.
Jan. 6 Maryland; **9** MICHIGAN, 6 p.m.; **12** PENN STATE, 2 p.m.; **16** Michigan State, 6 p.m.; **19** ILLINOIS, 2 p.m.; **23** Iowa, 8 p.m.; **30** MARYLAND, 6:30 p.m.
Feb. 2 Nebraska; **6** Illinois, 8 p.m.; **9** WISCONSIN, 2 p.m.; **13** MINNESOTA, 7 p.m.; **16** Indiana; **19** NEBRASKA, 7 p.m.; **22** Rutgers; **25** NORTHWESTERN,

6 p.m.; **29** Purdue.

March 4-8 Big Ten Tournament in Indianapolis.

CROSS COUNTRY

Aug. 30 Miami (Ohio) at Oxford, Ohio, Men 2/5; Women 1/5.
Sept. 14 Commodore Classic at Nashville, Tenn., Men 7/15, Women 2/20; **28** Ohio State Invitational at Columbus, Ohio, 4/8.
Oct. 18 Wisconsin Invitational at Madison, Wisc.; **Nov. 3** Big Ten Championships at Columbus, Ohio; **15** NCAA Regional Championships at Madison, Wisc.; **23** NCAA Championships at Terre Haute, Ind.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY

Oct. 6 WESTERN (exhibition); **11** Western Michigan at Toledo, 5 p.m.; **12** Bowling Green or RIT at Toledo; **18-19** OMAHA; **25-26** Mercyhurst, 7 p.m.
Nov. 1 MICHIGAN, 8 p.m.; **2** MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; **8-9** Notre Dame; **22-23** Penn State; **30** MICHIGAN STATE.
Dec. 1 MICHIGAN STATE; **6-7** MINNESOTA; **27-28** COLGATE.
Jan. 3 Cornell at Las Vegas; **4** Army at Las Vegas; **10-11** Wisconsin; **17-18** NOTRE DAME; **24-25** Minnesota; **31** Michigan.
Feb. 1 Michigan; **7-8** PENN STATE; **21-22** Michigan State; **28-29** WISCONSIN.
March 6-8 Big Ten Tournament First Round; **14** Big Ten Tournament Semifinals; **21** Big Ten Tournament Championship.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (2-0)

Sept. 27-28 ST. LAWRENCE, W 4-1; W 3-2.
Oct. 4-5 St. Cloud State; **11-12** WISCONSIN; **18-19** Minnesota State; **25-26** MINNESOTA.
Nov. 1-2 Bemidji State; **15-16** MINNESOTA DULUTH; **22-23** Colgate; **29-30** CORNELL.
Dec. 14-15 Princeton at Las Vegas;
Jan. 10-11 MINNESOTA STATE; **17-18** Minnesota; **24-25** QUINNIPIAC; **31** BEMIDJI STATE.
Feb. 1 BEMIDJI STATE; **7-8** Minnesota Duluth; **15-16** Wisconsin; **21-22** ST. CLOUD STATE; **28-29** WCHA First Round.
March 1 WCHA First Round; **7-8** WCHA Final Faceoff; **14** NCAA Quarterfinal; **20** NCAA Frozen Four; **22** NCAA Championship.
FIELD HOCKEY (5-4, 1-2)
Aug. 17 OHIO (exhibition); **25** at Michigan (exhibition); **30** UMASS, W 7-0.

Sept. 2 BOSTON, W 3-2; **6** at James Madison, W 3-0; **8** at Virginia, L 2-1; **13** CENTRAL MICHIGAN, W 11-0; **15** LOUISVILLE, L 2-1; **20** NORTHWESTERN, L 4-1; **27** at Iowa, L 3-1; **29** at Indiana, W 6-2.

Oct. 6 at Ohio, 2 p.m.; **11** MICHIGAN, 4 p.m.; **13** STANFORD, 3 p.m.; **18** RUTGERS, 3 p.m.; **20** MARYLAND, Noon; **25** at Penn State, 6 p.m.; **27** at Kent State, 1 p.m.

Nov. 2 at Michigan State, 1 p.m.; **7** Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals at Penn State, TBA; **8** Big Ten Tournament Semifinals at Penn State, TBA; **10** Big Ten Tournament Championship at Penn State, TBA.

MEN'S SOCCER (5-3-1, 0-1-1 BIG TEN)

Aug. 17 XAVIER (exhibition), T 1-1; **20** MT. VERNON NAZARENE (exhibition), W 7-1; **24** at Butler (exhibition), L 2-1; **30** WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. CSUN, L 4-3.
Sept. 1 WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. UIC, W 1-0; **6** Dayton Classic vs. Dayton, W 1-0; **8** Dayton Classic vs. EIU, W 3-2; **13** at Bowling Green, W 2-1; **17** at South Florida, W 2-0; **21** PENN STATE, L 2-1; **24** WEST VIRGINIA, L 4-1; **27** at Northwestern, T 0-0.

Oct. 2 MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; **6** at Rutgers, 11 a.m.; **12** CLEVELAND STATE, 7 p.m.; **16** at Kentucky, 7 p.m.; **19** at Michigan State, 7 p.m.; **25** MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **29** at Indiana, 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 WISCONSIN, 3 p.m.; **9** Big Ten Tournament Play in Game, TBA; **10** Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals, TBA; **15** Big Ten Semifinals, TBA; **17** Big Ten Tournament Final, TBA.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (3-6-1, 1-2-1 BIG TEN)

Aug. 22 LOUISVILLE, L 2-1; **25** MISSOURI, L 3-1; **28** at UCF, T 1-1.
Sept. 1 at South Florida, Cancelled; **6** at Texas A&M, L 1-0; **8** at TCU, L 3-2; **13** MIAMI (OH), W 1-0; **15** OHIO, W 3-1; **19** MICHIGAN STATE, W 1-0; **22** MICHIGAN, L 2-1; **27** at Wisconsin, postponed; **29** at Minnesota, L 1-0.

Oct. 3 MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **6** PENN STATE, 2 p.m.; **10** at Purdue, 8 p.m.; **13** at Indiana, Noon; **17** NORTHWESTERN, 7 p.m.; **20** ILLINOIS, 2 p.m.; **27** at Iowa, 2 p.m.

SWIMMING & DIVING

Oct. 18 Texas A&M, 6 p.m.; **19** Louisville at College Station, Texas.
Nov. 1 Virginia Tech at State College, Pa.; **2** Penn State; **8** KENYON & AKRON, 6 p.m.; **15** DENISON, 6

p.m.; **21-23** OHIO STATE INVITATIONAL.

Dec. 4-7 AT&T Winter National Championship at Atlanta.

Jan. 3-4 KENTUCKY; **18** MICHIGAN; **24-25** Shamrock Invitational at South Bend, Ind.; **31** Pittsburgh.

Feb. 14-16 OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; 19-22 Women's Big Ten Championship at Iowa City, Iowa **26-29** Men's Big Ten Championship at Bloomington, Ind.

March 1 LAST CHANCE MEET (women's); **8** LAST CHANCE MEET (men's); **14-16** CSCAA National Invitational at Cleveland & NCAA Zone Diving at West Lafayette, Ind.; **19-21** NCAA Championships (women's); **25-28** NCAA Championships (men's).

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (8-6)

Aug. 30 LEHIGH, W 3-0; TEXAS TECH, L 3-2; **31** VCU, 3-1.

Sept. 6 at Pittsburgh, L 0-3; **7** vs. Duquesne at Pittsburgh, Pa., W 3-0; vs. Green Bay at Pittsburgh, Penn., L 3-1; **13** vs. Tulane at Bowling Green, Kent., L 3-1 2 p.m.; vs. Western Kentucky at Bowling Green, Kent., L 3-0; **14** vs. Bowling Green at Bowling Green, Kent., W 3-1; **19** MIAMI (OH), W 3-0; **20** ILLINOIS STATE, W 3-0; DAYTON, W 3-1; **25** at Maryland, W 3-1; **29** at Michigan, L 3-0.

Oct. 4 MICHIGAN STATE, 7 p.m.; **6** MICHIGAN, 1 p.m.; **11** at Rutgers, 7 p.m.; **12** at Penn State, 7 p.m.; **16** IOWA, 8 p.m.; **19** PURDUE, 7 p.m.; **23** RUTGERS, 6 p.m.; **26** at Illinois, 6 p.m.; **30** at Minnesota, 8 p.m.

Nov. 2 MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **8** WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; **10** MINNESOTA, Noon; **15** at Purdue, 7 p.m.; **16** at Indiana, 7 p.m.; **22** NORTHWESTERN, 7 p.m.; **24** ILLINOIS, 1 p.m.; **29** at Iowa, 8 p.m.; **30** at Nebraska, TBA.

WRESTLING

Nov. 2 Michigan State; **10** STANFORD; **15** Pittsburgh; **17** VIRGINIA TECH.

Dec. 1 CORNELL; **6-7** C.K. Invitational at Las Vegas.

Jan 3-5 ARIZONA STATE; **10** RUTGERS; **17** Wisconsin; **19** ILLINOIS; **24** Iowa; **26** Minnesota; **31** MARYLAND.

Feb. 2 Nebraska; **9** NORTHWESTERN; **15** Penn State.

March 7-8 Big Ten Championship; **19-21** NCAA Championship.

Ivanov (2014) and Zach Mason (2015) garnered the award.

An acronym for Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School, the Senior CLASS Award focuses on the total student-athlete and encourages students to use their platform in athletics to make a positive impact as leaders in their communities.

The group of 30 candidates will be narrowed to 10 finalists midway through the regular season, and those 10 names will be placed on the official ballot. Ballots will be distributed through a nationwide voting system to media, coaches and fans.

The 2019 Senior CLASS Award honoree will be announced during the NCAA College Cup in December.

Top Football Performers Across The Conference

Minnesota quarterback Tanner Morgan stood out in the Big Ten for games of the

Sept. 27 weekend, with a record-setting performance against Purdue.

Not only did Morgan do what he needed to hold off the Boilermakers' comeback efforts in a 38-31 win for the Golden Gophers, but he posted the highest completion percentage by a Big Ten passer ever (minimum 15 attempts). The sophomore signal caller completed 21 of 22 passes (95.5 percent) for 396 yards and four touchdowns against Purdue.

Sophomore wideout Rashod Bateman served as Morgan's favorite target in the historic outing, hauling in six receptions for 177 yards and two scores.

In a 40-31 Michigan State victory at home against Indiana, the quarterbacks on both sides had impressive showings.

Spartan signal caller Brian Lewerke threw for 300 yards and three touchdowns on 18-of-36 passing while adding 78 rushing yards on 12 attempts, including a long

of 30.

In a loss, Hoosier quarterback Michael Penix completed 33 of 42 passes for 286 yards and three scores while adding a rushing touchdown against the vaunted defense of Michigan State.

Another excellent passing performance

in the Big Ten came from Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford in the Nittany Lions' 59-0 domination of Maryland. The Cincinnati native hit his target on 26 of 31 passes (83.9 percent) for 398 yards and three touchdowns. Clifford also added 54 rushing yards and another score on seven attempts.



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Forward Kaleb Wesson's Loss Is Ohio State's Gain

His ears and eyes were just as important to Kaleb Wesson in his weight loss as to what he put in his mouth.

The Ohio State junior center did an extreme makeover from the end of the 2018-19 season when he weighed 289 on his 6-9 frame to the svelte 255 he proudly announced to the media on Sept. 24.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

Wesson had workouts with the Atlanta Hawks and Boston Celtics after the season when he explored the option of entering the NBA draft. He decided to return to the Buckeyes for a third season, but the feedback he heard and read helped shape, or reshape, his future.

"They just told me they want to see me at a lighter weight, but I feel like that's what I've heard my whole career, see how my athleticism and my entire game will change if I lighten up," Wesson said. "They just wanted to see how I can rebound and finish better for the NBA."

He cut down on the carbohydrates, upped the proteins, drank more water and followed an overall better nutritional plan.

"Testing the NBA waters and hearing what they had to say helped him a lot," said his brother, OSU senior forward Andre Wesson. "It opened his eyes even more that he's close. Any feedback that he got, he'll take it to heart."

As anyone who has dieted knows, it takes more than just eating healthy to shed the pounds. Kaleb did a lot of running.

"In between my workouts running, in my workouts running," he said. "In between

drills my trainer would have me do a couple of sprints."

Andre was with him step-by-step.

"All the workouts he did with me. I think that helped me by having somebody help keep me going," Kaleb said. "Every time I was in the gym, he was with me. I feel that helped him and me."

That's what brothers are for.

"Anytime you've got somebody doing it with you, it makes it easier because you're competing against each other," Andre said.

Ohio State coach Chris Holtmann obviously likes the new Kaleb, as well as the mind-set that went into wanting to change.

"He looks great," the coach said. "He's worked really hard at it. I think he's shown tremendous discipline in terms of what he's wanted his body to look like. I think the challenge for him will be to continue to move in that direction as we get throughout the season."

"He did a really good job last year of staying in better shape later in the year. It showed in his play."

Holtmann said Kaleb was doing extra work at the end of last season with strength and conditioning coach Quadrian Banks.

"I'd come in after practice, and he'd be boxing with Coach Q," Holtmann said. "I won't tell you who won that battle, but somebody had a reach advantage there."

"Q puts him through a pretty strenuous post-practice boxing session that's primarily against a pad. Kaleb loved it. I think he enjoyed it, and it helped him stay in better shape as the year went on. He did a great job of it."

Kaleb's teammates were impressed with his new physique.

"We were watching his Big Ten (Network) interview just yesterday on TV," junior guard Musa Jallow said. "When you're around somebody every day, you obviously don't notice the change. We could tell he was getting thinner, but we saw a picture of him from last year, the transformation is amazing, and

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commits

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Eugene Brown	SG	6-6	185	★★★★	Decatur (Ga.) Southwest DeKalb
Zed Key	PF	6-7	215	★★★	Glen Head (N.Y.) Long Island Lutheran

Players in the class of 2021 who have issued verbal commitments to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Kalen Etzler	PF	6-8	195	★★★★	Convoy (Ohio) Crestview
Meechie Johnson	CG	5-11	160	★★★★	Willoughby (Ohio) Andrew Osborne

we can see it in his game. He is so much more mobile. He can play outside more than he did last year. That's dangerous, very dangerous."

Therein lies the key. It's one thing for Kaleb to look and feel better. It's another to use that improved body to help his game.

"As far as athleticism goes, I'm jumping higher, being able to stay in to play longer," he said.

Added Andre, "Just watching him develop since May, since the end of the season, I mean it's crazy to see how much better he's moving, how well he's jumping and stuff now, so it's definitely been a big change for him."

The big question, pun intended, is if Kaleb can still provide enough muscle in the post to compete in the rough-and-tumble Big Ten.

"That's a good playing weight now," he said. "I feel like I'm still strong, I still move bodies like I used to, but I'm lighter. I get to spots faster. I stay in front of guards better."

Junior forward Kyle Young said there are no negatives to Kaleb's weight loss.

"Anytime you shave off some weight, you move better," he said. "I'm excited to see what the season brings for him."

Handling Hoops And Hopes

After two straight NCAA Tournament appearances and the No. 14 freshman class of 2019 according to the 247Sports composite

rankings, the Buckeyes have lofty expectations. Holtmann has a strategy to deal with them.

"I think that's the biggest thing for us is to focus on the day to day and the process of getting better and not put too much thought into what's said good or bad about us, what's written good or bad, what's projected good or bad," he said. "There's a little bit of everything when it comes to that. I think we'll get what we earn, whatever that looks like."

"I really think that mind-set can give you the best chance to be successful. We know on our schedule we feel like we can get beat any night, and we feel strongly that we can win any night. That will come soon enough. Our focus is on the task at hand."

On The Mend

Holtmann said Sept. 24 that three players would not be ready for the start of practice two days later: Jallow, sophomore forward Justin Ahrens and freshman forward E.J. Liddell.

The coach said Jallow was week to week with a leg injury but that Liddell (leg) and Ahrens (back) were close to being ready.

Holtmann mentioned Ahrens' back problems several times over the summer, and Ahrens elaborated on the injury to Buckeye Sports Bulletin on Sept. 24.

"I was out with two herniated discs," he said. "I did it dead lifting. I had a bad rep dead lifting. I didn't think anything of it at first. I heard a pop. I thought it was a strain. The practice the next day I had a tingling down my leg, and that was it."

"I'm full go now except for contact because they don't want me playing and falling on it."

As for Young, thankfully for him and the Buckeyes, he was healthy in the offseason after sustaining a stress fracture in his right leg that caused him to miss several games and impacted him the rest of the season.

"It was tough," Young said. "I never had to play through an injury like that before. I had an injury to my leg in high school but didn't play through it. I wouldn't say it limited me, but I gave everything I had to the point that I couldn't jump as well."

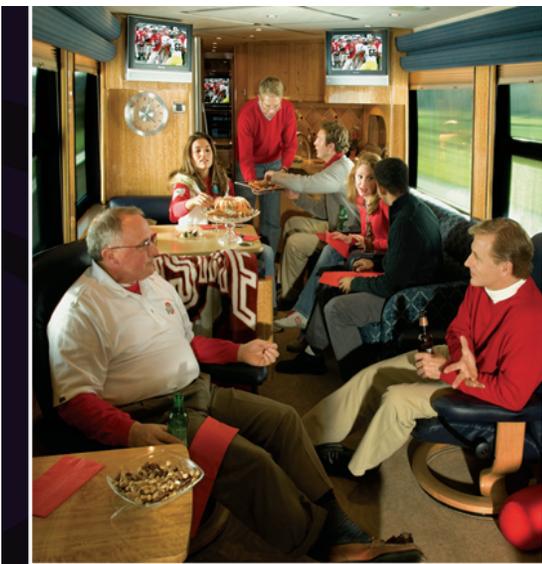
That's in the past.

"I've been feeling great, lifting all summer," he said.

Down The Road

With the recent commitments of Eugene Brown and Zed Key to fill the available scholarships for the class of 2020 and two of the four spots filled for 2021 in Kalen Etzler and Meechie Johnson, Holtmann can afford to look even further ahead.

"Given our roster makeup right now, we'll spend a lot of time on future classes which we feel like we've made some inroads. It's a daily process," he said while adding, "You're always kind of keeping an eye the current class."



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Mikulasikova Brings European Experience To OSU

Rebeka Mikulasikova has been one of the youngest players on her team for the majority of her playing career.

Coming from Nitra, Slovakia, Mikulasikova started playing basketball at 10 years old when her friend told her: "You should try it, you're tall." The now-6-4 forward listened, slowly stopped gymnastics because she was "really, really tall" for it and immediately was playing basketball with teenagers.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

She then was on a European championships team for 16-year-old girls at the age of 14 and moved to the under-18 European championships at 16. Finally, at 17, she went for the Slovakian national team.

"It was a challenge, like a big challenge, but I guess that made me a better player," Mikulasikova told Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

While with her club team Piestanske Cajky, she averaged 8.5 points and 6.5 rebounds per game while shooting close to 50 percent from the floor in her final season, all while being the second-youngest player on the team.

Now, she has found her way to Ohio State with six other players who are coming in just as new as she is to collegiate basketball. But Mikulasikova is not new to the level of talent.

Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said there is a whole lot to appreciate with Mikulasikova's game and that she should fit in perfectly with the Buckeyes.

"She's a really talented young person, she's got a very unique game because she's about 6-4, and she's got strength that she can be successful around the basket, but she also shoots the ball really well from the perimeter," McGuff said. "She's a unique player, and I think she's got a chance to be really special."

But unlike the typical recruit from the United States, McGuff was not able to watch Mikulasikova in person as much as he would have liked.

"It's a little different," he explained. "We've been going to a lot more tournaments in Europe in recent years, really. Sometimes we would start out by going to watch teams from the U.S. Then we would notice these other kids, and so we got on to Rebeka and tried to form a relationship and recruit her."

Because he saw only limited play time by Mikulasikova, McGuff needed to rely on some other resources to make sure that she was the player whom he wanted on the

program.

That led to one of the biggest factors in Mikulasikova's move from Europe to the United States: Ohio State sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz. Juhasz, a Hungarian native, had played against Mikulasikova various times, with the most recent game coming three years ago, according to Juhasz.

"Rebeka and I, we played against each other, we've known each other for so long," Juhasz said. "I kind of knew about what she can do and everything."

This allowed McGuff to use Juhasz for extra info on Mikulasikova during recruiting, including on if she would fit well with the Buckeyes and the level of talent that Juhasz had seen out of her in Europe.

"We were definitely talking to Dorka about her, because you just don't see them, we didn't get a chance to see her as much as kids we would see in the States," McGuff said. "We just kind of wanted to confirm about what we thought, and Dorka said 'Yeah, she's a really good player and would be a great fit here.'"

Mikulasikova will now have to translate her game from what she has been used to in Europe into a different game that is played in the States, something that McGuff said shouldn't be a difficult transition for a player at her skill level.

But the Slovakian forward said the games in Europe and the United States do differ in some areas that will take adjusting, though she admits she's not sure how much they are different without playing a game with Ohio State to this point.

"I think here in the United States, you need to have more ball-handling skills and you need to play one on one from every position," Mikulasikova said. "In Europe it's more about extra passes and I have a feeling it's more ball movement, but we'll see."

Mikulasikova has been dealing with a broken foot injury that has sidelined her for the past month, but she expects to be recovered within the next two weeks as the recovery has gone "faster than our athletic trainer predicted."

When she is ready, the team is getting a versatile forward with size who could significantly help Juhasz in the middle. At this point, Mikulasikova is getting adjusted to her time in the States, and having six others going through a completely new experience is helpful for her.

With three European forwards in Juhasz, Mikulasikova and Aixa Wone Aranaz from Spain, the team has new depth in the middle that Mikulasikova said is expecting to improve from year to year but is also expecting to see some results in year one.

"I think the good things about it are we all start at the same level, and we can move forward, getting better each practice," she said. "I think maybe after this, our second

year, we can be, even now we can be a really good team, because we have a lot of talent, so we just need to work hard, and we'll see how it goes during the season."

Carla Morrow Replaces Klein As Assistant Coach

With the investigation of former associate head coach Patrick Klein still ongoing, Ohio State has announced that Carla Morrow will be brought in to replace Klein as an assistant coach on the women's basketball team.

Morrow comes into the program following three seasons as an assistant coach on the Chicago Sky, a WNBA team that went 20-14 in 2019. Prior to her time at the professional level, Morrow spent 10 seasons at Xavier, the first four of which came as an assistant coach to McGuff.

McGuff said that time at Xavier did help him pull the trigger on Morrow as the proper choice.

"That certainly was helpful, and I really enjoyed working with her and I know how talented she is," McGuff said. "I also like the fact that she's gotten some really high-level basketball experience by being in the WNBA the last three years."

"She's got a really sharp basketball mind, and she'll also be an outstanding mentor to the young women in our program."

Klein resigned on Aug. 2 amid the allegations.

Along with the news of Morrow, two current members of Ohio State's staff and a former player were confirmed into new positions.

Ericka Haney will become the director of player development in her third season with

the team, and Reid Gudzenski will become the assistant to the head coach after serving as an administrative assistant for the previous two seasons.

"Ericka and Reid have been instrumental for our program the last two years, and these new positions more accurately reflect their roles and responsibilities," McGuff said in the press release announcing the hirings.

Makayla Waterman, a five-year player for the program, was also officially announced as a graduate student manager after the news was reported earlier this month by BSB.

In the 2018-19 season, Waterman amassed 7.6 points and 5.3 rebounds per game and was a major leader for a team that had a variety of new faces through graduate transfers and incoming freshmen.

"She's a really great young kid," McGuff said of Waterman. "As a player, she really always had a great understanding of what we were trying to do on the court, and she was a terrific communicator with her teammates about what we were trying to accomplish and also an excellent leader."

McGuff said Waterman's experience from the 2018-19 season, when she was the lone player who had been at Ohio State for five seasons, did help to mold her into the leader she is today.

"She really stepped up and had an outstanding year last year as a leader and as a captain, and that kind of set the stage for what she's going to do this year," he said. "She has a chance to be an outstanding coach and has a very bright future in this profession."

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Ohio State Set Sights On Women's Frozen Four

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The 2018-2019 season may have seemed like a step back for the Ohio State women's hockey program. Under fourth-year head coach Nadine Muzerall, the Buckeyes have already reached heights never before seen in the program, winning at least 20 games in back-to-back seasons for the first time in program history in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

The end to the magical 2017-2018 season was far more heartbreaking than the loss to eventual national champion Wisconsin in the Western Collegiate Hockey Association tournament last year. That was expected. Wisconsin was considered a better team, and Ohio State was already a long shot to win the conference or qualify for the postseason.

A loss to Clarkson in the 2018 Frozen Four semifinals, 1-0, in overtime, was much more difficult to swallow. That it came after the best season in school history, in the school's first ever Frozen Four berth, just added to the difficulty of accepting that the season had ended and that a powerful core of Cassidy Sauve, Julianna Iaffalo and Lauren Spring was set to depart (Sauve unexpectedly, the latter two to graduation).

That pain, as with all sports pain, could be healed by more winning. With Muzerall leading the charge, it seems like only a matter of time before Ohio State finds the wins in both small and big moments that make that loss a distant memory rather than a fresh wound.

Entering the 2019 season, the Buckeyes have what could be their best team yet. With that, however, come expectations that have really never floated around the pro-

gram before. Ohio State was voted ninth in both the USCHO and USA Today preseason rankings. The Buckeyes were selected third in the WCHA conference coaches' poll, behind Wisconsin and Minnesota, two top-five teams nationally. The Buckeyes were new to the party in 2017. Now, it's becoming more expected.

A lot of those expectations are a result of one of the best players in the country. Junior forward Emma Maltais was easily Ohio State's best offensive player last season, racking up 43 points. Now, she's been named to the All-WCHA preseason team and selected as preseason co-player of the year, alongside Wisconsin's Abby Roque.

While Maltais is herself a very talented goal scorer—finishing last season with 15 goals, good enough for second on the team—her true talent is in distribution. That's where two more juniors—forwards Tatum Skaggs and Liz Schepers—come into play. Skaggs was Maltais' partner in crime in 2018 and served as the team's go-to goal scorer, just as she did as a true freshman the year prior. Skaggs put up 17 goals last season, and with Maltais dishing out the puck, as well as very solid contributions from Schepers (seven goals, eight assists last season), the Buckeye attack is one of the nation's best.

While the trio of juniors are probably the team's best scorers, senior forward Olivia Soares should not be forgotten, nor should sophomores Sara Saekkinen (seven points) and Gabby Rosenthal (seven points), who are both expected to take big steps in their development.

Soares is one of two captains on the team, and while she doesn't put up massive stats (four points in 2018), she's a great defender from the front, one of the most physical players on the

team and a crucial leader on the roster.

"One of Liv's best qualities is that she's just easy to work with," said Buckeye defender Jincy Dunne. "I think when she speaks, there's a presence about her. She knows what to say, when to say it and how to say it. She also runs the music, which, I mean, that's a huge deal for our team. But she brings the energy, she's positive, and she helps keep things in perspective."

Joining Soares as a captain, for the third straight year, is Dunne (28 points). While Maltais may be the most talented player on the team, Dunne could be the most important. She's been a staple in the defensive zone for four years running, and she was the lone unanimous selection to the all-WCHA preseason team. She is an anchor for Ohio State in both her play and in her ability to lead, just like Soares.

"I can only create the culture," Muzerall said of her two captains. "They have to implement it and execute it. They have different personalities, but they both balance each other because they cater to everybody in the locker room. They do a great job because they're very mature and accountable and they see the bigger picture, and they can measure what matters. On top of that, they're genuine and loyal and they're great role models because they lead by example of what a true leader is and should be."

Ohio State has the top-level talent, the senior leadership and a team that looks like it has depth. Behind all of that, the Buckeyes have a goalie in sophomore Andrea Braendli who looks like not only a consistent starter but a rising star. After being thrust into a starting role as a true freshman last season, Braendli saved 93.9 percent of the shots she faced and put up a 16-10-2 record between the pipes. She was one of the better goalies in the country

last season, and she'll almost certainly be even better for the Buckeyes in 2019.

With elite play in goal, top-level scorers and a defense led by one of the most consistently excellent defenders in the country, a Frozen Four bid seems a good possibility for the Buckeyes. This could be the most talented team in school history, after all, and Ohio State was able to ride elite goalie play to a berth two years ago. While Braendli isn't quite Sauve yet, she's much closer than many expected when she took over the job last season.

Still, the postseason is not a lock, with the Buckeyes playing in the ultra-talented WCHA. With four top-10 teams in the conference, including No. 1 Wisconsin, No. 2 Minnesota and No. 10 Minnesota-Duluth, winning the conference or finishing among its best is easier said than done.

Because of that, and because of the omnipresent Badgers, who are likely still the best team in hockey, Ohio State may have to take the same approach it did two seasons ago: load up on wins against beatable opponents, split the season series with Wisconsin and Minnesota, and cushion a possible WCHA tournament loss. If the Buckeyes look good enough during the season, they can overcome a loss to Wisconsin or Minnesota in the tournament, especially if those two are as good as expected.

The Buckeyes have a great chance to open their season exactly according to that plan. They opened with two wins over St. Lawrence on Sept. 27 and 28, and they head to St. Cloud State on Oct. 4 and 5. Win those two, and Ohio State enters a two game home series with the Badgers on Oct. 11 and 12 that could go a long way toward defining the season.

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Media Gushes Over Chase Young's Historic Start

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State defensive end Chase Young is receiving loads of praise from a wide variety of football writers and analysts, both locally and nationwide.

After tallying another sack in the win against Nebraska, Young is up to eight sacks on the season, just six away from tying Vernon Gholston's program single-season record. This has been an incredible start for Young, and here is some of the praise he has been given.

"Chase Young has somehow taken his game to another level this season, and he entered the year as a top-three pick."

- Colin Hass-Hill, Eleven Warriors

"We did over/unders before the season. I took under 10 on Chase Young sacks. I am going to be wrong."

- Bill Landis, The Athletic

"Chase Young is living up to his nickname being 'The Predator' ... He's looked like the best defensive player in the country so far this year."

- Jordan Reid, The Draft Network

"2020 draft prospects I don't need to see play another down: Alabama WR Jerry Jeudy, Ohio State DE Chase Young. If you're on the clock and don't need a QB, take one of [them]."

- Mike Renner, Pro Football Focus

"Which lucky team is [going to] get Chase Young after Herbert and Tua get picked over him."

- Connor Rogers, Bleacher Report

"Chase Young is terrifying."

- Austin Ward, Lettermen Row

"Would it be selfish for Chase Young to move to Los Angeles, hire an agent and work out until the NFL Draft? Cause that's definitely an option. Guy is out there making tackles on wide receiver screens."

- Ari Wasserman, The Athletic

"It is scary how good Chase Young is."

- Bill Rabinowitz, Columbus Dispatch



ANDREW LIND

NOT BAD - Ohio State junior defensive end Chase Young has eight sacks in five games, and needs just six more sacks this season to tie the school record.

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Buckeyes Hang Hat On Potent Rushing Attack

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Despite losing four full-time starters on the offensive line and a 1,000-yard back in Mike Weber, Ohio State remained steadfast that it could be a better running team in 2019.

Offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson referred to the demeanor of the new-look Buckeye offensive line and the versatility of a dual-threat quarterback as reasons for an expected improvement in the ground game.

"The way preseason has gone, and the way (head coach Ryan) Day has structured those things, I like a lot of the things I see with the potential to be a really solid running football team," Wilson said on Aug. 21. "And not because the quarterback can run. Just the mind-set. (Former Miami University and Northwestern head coach) Randy Walker said years ago: 'Running football is an attitude.' It's a mind-set. And I think this crowd has a chance to be a much better running football team."

Wilson was not the only one promoting the possibility of the Ohio State rushing attack taking it to the next level, with Day and various players hyping up the concept.

The Buckeyes did not enjoy the success they expected in their season-opening 45-21 win against a weaker Florida Atlantic, rushing 48 times for 237 yards and two scores for a 4.9-yard average per carry.

Correcting some of the mistakes from game one, Ohio State ran for 270 yards and four touchdowns on 46 tries for a 5.9 average against a tougher Cincinnati defense in a 42-0 rout.

Continuing to improve as a rushing offense, the Scarlet and Gray put up 306 yards and

three touchdowns on 42 attempts against Indiana. Ohio State averaged 7.3 yards per tote in the 51-10 shellacking of the Hoosiers.

Starting quarterback Justin Fields, who has 222 yards and seven scores via the ground game through the Nebraska victory, liked what he saw from the team's rushing attack at Indiana.

"It's crazy," Fields said after of the Buckeyes' success on the ground against Indiana on Sept. 14. "The O-line did a great job today, and that's definitely going to make us more dangerous in the future when we play more Big Ten games. Just having the running game there to pick me up and carry the team, that was great to see."

"It makes the offense flow, so if we can keep it going, that would be a great thing. It definitely makes my job easier as a quarterback."

Ohio State likely could have enjoyed more success on the ground against Miami (Ohio), but Fields and Co. could get whatever they wanted against the RedHawk secondary, throwing for a season-high 374 yards and seven touchdowns as a team. Even with the explosive passing outing, the Buckeyes ran for 227 yards and four touchdowns on 42 rushing attempts (5.4 average) in their 76-5 demolition of Miami.

Sophomore center Josh Myers, who came to Ohio State as the No. 2 guard in the nation, takes great pride in being able to run the football. The first-year starter became a highly touted in-state recruit by paving the way for Miamisburg's Wing T offense as a left tackle in high school.

"Our identity is toughness," Myers said. "There are so many factors that go into football games and winning football games. But if we

can always hang our hat on toughness, I think we all believe we'll be all right."

Despite losing those four starters from the offensive line of the most prolific offense in Ohio State history, Wilson and the coaching staff see something in the 2019 Buckeyes that gives them confidence. Wilson made sure to praise offensive line coach Greg Studrawa, as Day often does, for his development of the big men up front.

"We've always had some talented guys," Wilson said. "This group is physical, and the way they're wired, a little harder. There's still some things once in a while that aren't as clean or as perfect as you want, but they play hard. They battle and fight and scratch, and Stud's doing a great job with them. Guys are buying in, backs are running hard, tight ends complement. It's a good-attitude group."

"We've got to keep building on it. Hopefully we're just starting. It doesn't mean you're going to get more yards, but tough yards, hard yards, and keep them healthy and keep them running hard."

Hitting the hole hard and finishing runs strong has been a staple of the Scarlet and Gray ground game, led by junior running back J.K. Dobbins and redshirt freshman tailback Master Teague, who has excelled in Weber's role.

The two-headed monster of Dobbins and Teague proved to be a force to be reckoned with in Ohio State's showdown with Indiana in Bloomington. Dobbins rushed for 193 yards and one touchdown while Teague tallied 106 yards and a score against the Hoosiers, earning rave reviews from their head coach. They were back at it again at Nebraska, with Dobbins gaining 177 and Teague another 77.

"They both ran hard," Day said of Dobbins and Teague after the IU game. "We're going to see some things on film with J.K. that were really good, maybe a stiff-arm and a few things that were really good. We're going to see Master running through again, two weeks in a row, where there's contact made and he's falling forward for four yards, and that makes a huge difference. There were holes there, and contact wasn't being made at the line of scrimmage – it was downfield, so tribute to the O-line on that one."

Also giving kudos to the Ohio State offensive line, Dobbins praised the unit's efforts and shared some insight into the cohesion he has with the guys who help make him look good and keep him healthy.

"I just told them I'll meet them in the end zone, and I think that gets them excited," Dobbins said. "All those guys, I love those guys. I love them like my own brothers. I think that helps us. We have a great bond."

Dobbins had looked like the explosive back he was as a freshman when he rushed for 1,403 yards on a 7.2-yards-per-carry average, earning Freshman All-America honors. Chase Young, a fellow member of Ohio State's 2017 draft class and co-captain, said he was glad to see Dobbins dominate the Hoosiers.

"Me and J.K. are always going back and forth on the type of games we're going to have," Young said of the two hyping each other up. "He balled today, and I'm really proud of him."

Dobbins, a co-captain from La Grange, Texas, posted 175 rushing yards by halftime of the Buckeyes' blowout of the Hoosiers, giving him 316 combined first-half rushing yards

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against Cincinnati and Indiana. Sitting out most of the second half in each of the Buckeyes' first four victories, Dobbins had not been able to display his ability for a full four quarters.

Then, Ohio State traveled to Lincoln, Neb., to take on the Cornhuskers, and Dobbins showed why he thinks he is the best running back in the country, rushing for 177 yards on 24 carries (7.4 average).

The big outing against the Huskers moved Dobbins from No. 14 to No. 10 on Ohio State's all-time leaderboard with 3,110 career rushing yards while donning scarlet and gray.

Even with a lack of playing time because of the run of lopsided victories by the Buckeyes, Dobbins ranks second in the nation and first in the Big Ten with 654 rushing yards. Perhaps more importantly, Dobbins' yards-per-carry average is well above the 4.6 average he posted as a sophomore, sitting at 7.1.

As a team, Ohio State is seventh in the country and first in the Big Ten in rushing yards per game (281.6).

Teague, a Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Blackman product, has done an excellent job complementing Dobbins in the run game. The redshirt freshman, who missed most of fall camp due to

an undisclosed injury, totaled 326 rushing yards through five games, good enough for fourth in the Big Ten.

One might never know Teague is a quiet and calm young man off the field given his ferocious running style, barreling over anyone in sight. Humble in nature, Teague said he had to learn to become a more physical runner.

"I wasn't really like this last year," Teague said. "I still ran hard, but it's different now. Last year, some of the things I went through taught me how to be more violent and just continue that. It's become more of a habit than something I have to work on."

Teague is averaging an excellent 6.3 yards per carry, particularly for a powerful back, and has accumulated 371 yards from scrimmage and three touchdowns. Day has enjoyed the way the tailback duo complements each other.

"Master's fast. He's a big guy, but when he runs and gets behind his pads, he's a load," Day said. "Of course, J.K.'s got great vision, great feet in the hole. They're different but they're both doing really well. Hopefully we'll keep it going."

Running the football has been a staple of the Buckeyes' dynamic dual-threat offense,

which ranks third in the nation in scoring (52.4 points per game) and eighth in total offense (535.6 yards per game).

Dobbins, Teague and Co. will attempt to keep the train rolling against one of the stiffest defenses in the country Oct. 5 in Michigan State. The Spartans allow just 253.8 yards per contest, which ranks seventh nationally, and only a measly 55.8 rushing yards per game, which is the fourth fewest.

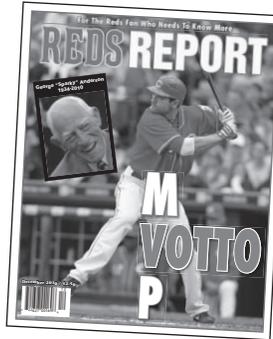
The Buckeyes came away from their thrashing of Nebraska with even more confidence in their improving rushing offense.

"Our O-line is great," Fields said. "Coach Stud does a great job with those guys, so it definitely wasn't surprising to see. I just think the running backs, J.K. and Master and Marcus (Crowley) at the end (four carries, 45 yards), did a great job running the ball down the field and being physical with them."

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Buckeyes Leave Cornhuskers Shell-Shocked

It was 64 degrees at kickoff in Lincoln, and the home crowd was in a frenzy as their beloved Cornhuskers took to the field. Could Scott Frost's warriors in red and white compete against a Buckeye team that had owned all four opponents it had faced so far? A team that had beaten the Cornhuskers six of the seven times they had played, and four out of five times since Nebraska had entered

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

the Big Ten? The encounter in Columbus last season was far from a runaway as J.K. Dobbins scored on a 42-yard breakaway with just under five minutes to play to ice it for the Buckeyes.

But this was 2019 and the Cornhuskers, hot off a victory at Illinois, felt like they had enough offensive skilled weapons in their arsenal to score against an Ohio State defense that really hadn't been tested.

The key for the Buckeyes going into Lincoln was to contain quarterback Adrian Martinez, who had already scored 10 touchdowns for the season, three rushing and seven passing. He was a man who had to be accounted for each and every play as a dual threat. The Nebraska offensive line was solid, but they were going to have to be much more than that against a Buckeye defensive front that was quick, physical, and had plenty of depth. The offensive line of Nebraska had given up 10 sacks already for the season, and they were going up against guys like Chase Young, who had tallied seven sacks by himself in the first four games.

Scott Frost had to come with a game plan that could counter the aggressive play of the Buckeye defensive front while sustaining drives on offense, at the same time defensively trying to slow down an offense that had just scored 76 points the week before in Columbus.

Fields vs. Martinez

The big question for Saturday night would revolve around the two quarterbacks, Martinez and Justin Fields. Both quarterbacks had put up huge numbers for four games, both could hurt you with their feet, both had strong and accurate arms, and both showed great poise and confidence in leading their offensive units. Fields had made fewer mistakes in the early part of the season in not throwing an interception or fumbling the football while Martinez had thrown two interceptions, but Martinez was the more experienced of the two and had brought the Cornhuskers from behind several times in his history as the Cornhuskers' starting quarterback.

Fields and Martinez were going to face adversity Saturday night in Lincoln. Who would respond best in the heat of battle?

The answer to the question came quickly. By the end of the first half Fields was the one who showed a national television audience that he was not a typical first-year quarterback in terms of production and leadership. He along with his teammates made the Boneyard, the Cornhusker cheering section, more of a graveyard by completely silencing the home crowd who was absolutely stunned by the ineptitude of the home team and the complete dominance by Ohio State. Fields again scored the first touchdown of the game with his feet as he executed the offensive game plan to perfection. Fields had 80 yards rushing for the first half alone, along with being responsible for two touchdowns passes.

As for Martinez, the night couldn't have started off worse as each Nebraska drive of the first half ended up in a turnover or a punt due to the inability of the Huskers to convert numerous third-down attempts (1 of 6 in the first half, while Ohio State was 7 of 8). The constant pressure of the Buckeye defensive front that collapsed the pocket, and at times pushed the Nebraska offensive linemen right into his lap, rattled Martinez and his head coach by the time the first half had ended. It wouldn't be until late in the second half that Nebraska fans could release their red balloons for a Cornhusker score.

Offensive Line Domineering

It's not often a line is just as effective in run blocking as they are in pass protection, but that is just the case with the Ohio State offensive front. Even the pro-Nebraska media seemed astonished with the size and athleticism of the Buckeyes up front. Their physicality and sound techniques opened up huge holes for Dobbins, Fields and Master Teague III throughout the evening. At the same time, pass protection was more than solid. Fields had plenty of time to pick out his receivers in order to keep drives alive.

Teams don't put up as many offensive points, like the 124 within just the last two weeks, unless the offensive line is doing its job. The Ohio State offense has scored most of its points in the first half of play in every game of the season and, with the exception of the Miami game, has come out of the locker room full throttle. They have put opposing teams so much in the hole by halftime that digging out of it is nearly impossible.

There have been many great offensive linemen in the history of Ohio State University like Jim Parker, Dave Foley, Rufus Mayes, John Hicks, Jim Lachey, Corey Stringer and Orlando Pace, but this year's offensive front, as a unit, is turning heads as possibly the very best line in the country. Games are won or lost in the trenches, and the trenches have belonged to the Buckeyes.

Secondary

The Buckeye secondary, obviously, is more than just improved from last year, they are downright stingy. Big interceptions, big hits and proper leverage on the football describes this year's "method of operation" for the defensive backfield. Nebraska, as other opponents, was denied big plays and left frustrated with its own lack of offensive production.

Jeff Okudah's two picks early in the game set the tone in Lincoln.

Adrian Martinez, who has suffered from the turnover blues this season,

looked like someone had stolen his last ear of corn when Okudah made his second, and quite acrobatic, interception. Rangy secondary field general Jordan Fuller was outstanding in terms of run support and came up with a pick of his own in the second quarter. By running a mixture of zone and man coverages, the Buckeye defense had Martinez and his teammates uncertain and perplexed the entire game. Keeping the football in front of them due to more zone coverage calls than in 2018 has let the Buckeye secondary play aggressively and with much more confidence.

Michigan State Next

Michigan State will come to Columbus with upset on their minds. The Spartans have improved since the beginning of the season, especially on the offensive side of the football. Mark Dantonio is a defensive-minded coach, and his teams reflect that mind-set.

Justin Fields must prepare for a variety of man and zone blitzes. Buckeye receivers must run sharp patterns, be ready for checks and convert routes in the face of the Spartan defensive attack.

The Buckeye offensive line will get its toughest pass protection challenge of the season in Michigan State.

The Michigan State offense that seemed questionable early is now averaging over 30 points per game and put up 40 against the Indiana Hoosiers on Sept. 28. Spartan quarterback Brian Lewerke is getting better, and the MSU running attack is giving the offense a balanced attack. The Buckeyes will get the Spartans' best shot and can't afford to relax.

Known as one of the top recruiters in college football, Bill Conley was a national championship-winning coach and player at Ohio State who suited up for Woody Hayes and spent 17 years on the staffs of Earle Bruce, John Cooper and Jim Tressel. His column will appear throughout the season in BSB.

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Ready To Proclaim Bucks Championship Caliber

It's difficult to keep a level head about this year's Ohio State football team. The Buckeyes have looked nearly invincible – albeit against competition some would deem worthless, though the strength of schedule metrics would differ. There has been star power on both sides of the ball, the defense looks reborn, the offense looks unstoppable ... then I recall previous seasons that took this same shape, which is why I pause.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

Ohio State has looked like the best team in America on numerous occasions in the last 30 years – a number of times under John Cooper, a handful of times under Jim Tressell and the duration of Urban Meyer's tenure. Yet with few exceptions there was always a head-scratching moment. 1998 Michigan State. 2005 Penn State. 2018 Purdue. All are ingrained into the minds of OSU fans, reminders of what could have been, of falling short of the big prize.

Could that same fate happen to this year's team? If you listen to the players, it isn't likely.

"We're not really in some uncharted levels," cornerback Jeff Okudah said. "We've been 4-0 and 5-0 before so I think the goal now is to have a complete season and don't

make any slip-ups. If we take it week by week and don't look ahead past anybody, I think that we'll be just fine."

And why will it be fine? Because the Buckeyes are playing with a chip on their shoulder.

That's right – a team that has looked like world-beaters still goes into games craving respect. Whether or not they've gotten it, the mind-set remains the same.

"I still feel like people don't think it's real yet," safety Jordan Fuller said. "I mean maybe not. Maybe our fan base doesn't think that, or maybe you guys (the media) don't feel that way, but I know that there are people out there that don't believe the hype yet. I think the hype's real, but we've got a long way to go though. We've had some lopsided wins, but when you look at the film, there's so many places in areas that you can get better, so we're just going to try to lock in on those and just try to shore those up."

The Buckeyes look like the best and most complete team in the country through five weeks of the season, but they don't hand out the national championship after five weeks. Social media is dotted with kudos for the job Ryan Day is doing and for this Buckeye squad. Numerous national media types wax about how impressed they are with the Buckeyes, how they underestimated them heading into the season and how they are a legitimate national title contender.

All of that is true. It's not difficult to say that because it's real.

The Buckeyes look like the most complete, best, most athletic team in college

football.

Numbers back it up. OSU is first in ESPN's overall efficiency metric and the only team in the top three of both offense (tied for second) and defense (second). The Buckeyes have the third-best strength-of-schedule average (Jeff Sagarin and ESPN) of all teams in the top 10 besides Auburn and Notre Dame and top the charts in game control, a metric that shows 60-minute dominance and how often a team has been tested or challenged.

Even with all of this, I am a little hesitant to simply proclaim the Buckeyes as top dogs. There's a lot of football left to be played, including an early-October showdown with still unbeaten Wisconsin, who right now looks like the league's second-best squad. The Badgers have been lights-out on defense, and though the offense is somewhat one-dimensional, it's a great dimension – running back Jonathan Taylor, who can stake a legit claim to being the best in college football at his position.

The prevailing thought from fans on Twitter – most of whom hate the Buckeyes – is that it's been easy for OSU to look good because it has played nothing but tomatoes. It isn't Ohio State's fault that TCU backed out of a game and had to be replaced by Miami of Ohio at the eleventh hour. It isn't Ohio State's fault that the majority of the Big Ten seems to be lacking. It isn't Ohio State's fault about anything that it doesn't control.

And besides, there's something to be said about dominating foes you should dominate.

Defending national champ Clemson was taken to within an inch of its life at North Carolina, foiling a two-point conversion to beat the Tar Heels by a single point. Sure, it was a win. But it was really ugly, reminiscent of the kind of victories Ohio State routinely slogged its way to during the 2002 season. Few thought the Buckeyes were the best team because they hadn't looked the best until very late in the year. And even then, it was more about being unbeaten.

How you play is just as important – maybe more so – than who you play, and right now the Buckeyes are acing the how.

"You know, I knew they were a good team and they're really good now," Nebraska coach Scott Frost said. "I've been on the field with a lot of good football teams. They just put pressure on you because they're really good on defense, really good on offense, they're good on special teams."

OSU players feel that they don't have to take a back seat to anyone.

"I think we're very confident right now," said quarterback Justin Fields, who once again dazzled with a 15 of 21, 212-yard, three-TD night. "We came into Lincoln, the crowd was amazing here, they have amazing fans. We had to play against a big crowd, and they were loud, at the beginning at least. I think we handled it well. We just came out and jumped on them early and didn't let up. So I think we did a good job."

If OSU continues to do a "good job," then maybe it will be time to put away the doubts and make the proclamation.

Oh, who am I kidding?

This team is good, folks.

Like, championship-level good. And barring an injury to Fields, there shouldn't be anything stopping the Buckeyes from putting a stamp on the Big Ten crown and berth in the College Football Playoff.

Sticking Together

It's no secret that last year's Ohio State defense was disjointed and seldom on the

same page. One or two guys were routinely out of position, which led to big plays and occasional bickering.

This season's streamlined defense has put the thinking aside and gone out and just played – and not just for one goal, but for every member of the unit.

"I told the defense to leave all self-doubt in the locker room, just lean on your brother," Okudah said. "When it gets hard, just lean on your brother. We knew they were going to get their plays, so the goal was just don't let that define the defense, like we've got to move past that, and I think that you saw that when (the Cornhuskers) were able to move past and drive down the field and get inside the 25, we stayed resilient. And I think that spoke on how we got off the field with a turnover."

Nebraska made a couple of plays, but little of consequence. The Huskers averaged 4.1 yards per play, which in this day and age of video-game numbers simply won't get it done.

The Buckeyes' D did a lot of the dirty work – forcing three turnovers, keeping the Huskers in check until the backups entered the game. But it was the offense that did the heavy lifting, moving the ball at will and finding the end zone with regularity.

Unfamiliar Surroundings

There was talk in the preseason that this could be a trap game, as Ohio State looked ahead to more traditional rival Michigan State the following week. Road game, first game of the season in a truly hostile environment, prime-time contest. None of that mattered.

Even the atmosphere, which most people who follow college football say is out of this world, wasn't intimidating.

But it was noticed. Fans stayed until the bitter end, and most accounts of their experiences had Buckeyes fans praising their hosts as among the nicest, friendliest and most knowledgeable fan bases around.

The coaching staff was prepared for a grind as it took the team to Lincoln.

"It's something that when we looked at the schedule, we knew this was going to be hard," Day said. "We kind of assumed it would be something like this environment, even back in February, it was going to be hard. Scott (Frost) and those guys do a great job, and so we've been preparing for this game for a while. I don't know, again, in terms of a benchmark, but anytime you go on the road and have to win a night game, we know it's not easy in this conference. It's just another game, we're 1-0 on Saturday nights, and that's the goal. We regroup tomorrow, and we're off to Michigan State."

While most OSU fans felt the game went about as well as it could have, Day wasn't quite ready to shower his troops with unequivocal praise.

"I don't know. We'll watch the film and see," he said. "It's never as good or as bad as you think until you watch it on film. But I'm proud of the way the guys came out here and played hard. They stepped right in, and we talked about it all week, what it was going to take to win this game on the road."

"We kind of came in hitting on all cylinders. I thought we tackled well on defense, created some turnovers again, created a short field and we ran the ball. That was great to see. I thought the line did a good job, the backs ran hard, and Justin (Fields) made some really big-time throws. And when you combine that together with good special teams, I'm proud of the way the guys played."

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Silver Bullets Dominant Against Cornhuskers

It seems that most weeks this football season I have used this space to note how I felt about the Buckeyes' prospects heading into each game.

As Ohio State prepared for Nebraska, I believed this to be a good test for the Buckeyes, though I had been skeptical of the Huskers' positive preseason buzz. While I found Nebraska quarterback Adrian Martinez, who had a strong freshman season, to be overhyped as well, I thought he would present a tougher challenge for the Buckeye defense than the quarterbacks and offenses they had faced previously in 2019.

If the defense was as good as it had played so far – and it was hard for me to completely put last season's defensive debacle in the rearview mirror – then I believed the Buckeyes would win decisively. A blowout on the road? I didn't see that coming.

After 60 minutes of football in Lincoln, I would have to say the defense passed the test with flying colors and looks to be for real. Ohio State held the Huskers, who entered the game averaging 485.3 yards per contest, to just 231 yards, including a stunning 47 through the air after entering posting 270.5 an outing.

You may recall from a column I wrote a few issues back that Buckeye quarterback Justin Fields was one of the preseason favorites to win the Heisman Trophy with 8-1 odds according to Vegas books, the third-best odds out there. Martinez, interestingly, had exactly the same odds.

Martinez ended up having a game he will never forget, but for the wrong reasons. He was just 8 of 17 passing and threw three interceptions, all in the first half. He did have a 56-yard run, but the score was already 48-0 when he turned in his bolt and he had just 25 net yards on his other 14 carries for a 1.8 yard average.

Jeff Okudah set the tone for the defense on Nebraska's drive to open the game, first making a strong open-field tackle to hold a pass to no gain and then intercepting Martinez on the next play, giving Ohio State a short field at the 50. The Buckeyes scored five plays later, and the rout was on.

I must admit that I was stunned when I realized that Okudah's pick the previous week against Miami (Ohio) was the first of the junior's collegiate career, but he seems determined to make up for lost time as he added a second interception against Nebraska, while on his back no less, in the second quarter. Okudah finished the game with two solo stops to go with his pair of picks.

The Buckeye defense allowed the Cornhuskers just 76 yards in the first half, 10 through the air, putting the game virtually out of reach with a 38-0 lead heading into the locker room and Ohio State set to receive the second-half kickoff.

With the Buckeye defense playing at such a high level, obviously more players than just Okudah brought their "A" game.

I knew long before I saw the final stat sheet that Ohio State's dynamic defensive end, Chase Young, would not have a gaudy line. But whether he filled the stat sheet up or not, make no mistake about it. Nebraska felt his impact on virtually every play while he was still in there. I knew he meant business when, early in the game, he chased down from behind a Husker running back who had broken into the open.

Young ended up being credited with three solos, a sack and a forced fumble.

Linebackers Malik Harrison and Baron Browning led the team with seven tackles each with Harrison adding a sack and Browning credited with two tackles for loss and a half sack. Another Buckeye linebacker, Pete Werner, was credited with only three tackles (all solos and a

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

TFL) but may have turned in the hardest hit of the game.

As an aside, you knew it wasn't the Huskers' night when their hardest defensive hit came on a player who wasn't even carrying the ball. Fields executed an excellent fake and was leveled by a hapless Husker as the play was headed in the opposite direction.

Jordan Fuller was also active from his safety spot with six tackles and Ohio State's third interception.

Nebraska had a shot at keeping it a game late in the first quarter.

Trailing just 14-0, the Cornhuskers went old-school, smash-mouth football, running on five straight plays and gaining 37 yards down to the Buckeye 26. Ohio State coach Ryan Day, who seems to have made all the right moves so far this season, acted like a basketball coach and called a timeout to break the Nebraska momentum and give the Buckeye defense, which was temporarily on its heels, a chance to regroup.

The move worked as Okudah grabbed his second interception on the very next play at the Ohio State 4. The Buckeyes then drove 90 yards on 13 plays. The Huskers scored a moral victory by holding Ohio State to a Blake Haubeil 23-yard field goal, but the Buckeyes had eaten up 7:04 of clock and led 17-0, and the wind was pretty much out of Nebraska's sails.

The outstanding play of the defense shouldn't overshadow the productive performance of the Ohio State offense. I just think more attention was paid to the D because Buckeye fans and observers wanted to know for sure if the stop troops were for real. An emphatic yes! I don't think there was ever any doubt about the offense, led by Fields.

The sophomore signal caller clearly had the better game between the preseason Heisman contenders, completing 15 of 21 passes for 212 yards with three scores and, for the fifth straight game, no interceptions. While he didn't have the 56-yard jaunt of his competitor, he was far more consistent on the ground, carrying 12 times for 72 yards. Not to be outdone on the highlight reels, however, Fields had a 41-yard carry of his own and also added a 15-yard touchdown run to open the game's scoring.

I continue to be impressed with Fields' ability – and willingness – to spread the ball around. The man's favorite receiver is the one who's open. This time around, he hit seven different receivers, led by K.J. Hill with five receptions, and threw scoring strikes to three different Buckeyes, with freshman Garrett Wilson turning in another highlight-reel score. Wilson's 6-yard catch to round out Ohio State's scoring may not have been acrobatic but was quite skillful as he navigated the back of the end zone.

The running of J.K. Dobbins and Master Teague against the Cornhuskers speaks for itself, with the two combining for 254 yards and a 7.1 yard average on 36 carries. Teague added a 28-yard reception for good measure. Dobbins was so quietly effective that it was almost surprising to see he had racked up 177 yards by game's end. His long was just 26 yards, but he had only one negative rush.

None of Fields' passing or his running and that of Dobbins and Teague would have been possible without outstanding play from the offensive line. I have sensed that they have been improving since a bit of a rocky start in the opener against Florida Atlantic. My notion was re-enforced by Husker linebacker Mohamed Berry.

"The O-linemen were the best I've played – strong, they fired up, great at single blocks," Berry said after being pounded by the Buckeyes.

"The running backs ran hard, the quarterback is smart and makes good decisions, and we didn't play our best football either," he added for good measure.

Offense, defense, special teams. In the trenches, skill players, coaching. It's all there. Bring on Michigan State.

One Quick Beef

I have continually said to anyone who will listen that, regardless of the sport, if replay officials, with their multiple angles and speeds, can't come up with a decision within 60 seconds, defer to the officials or umpires on the field.

In the Ohio State-Nebraska game, the replay folks delayed the game while they apparently struggled with the placement of the ball after a Martinez completion midway through the third quarter.

They finally gave the Huskers an extra yard or so and a first down. Never mind that Nebraska was at its own 19, even after the review and, more importantly, trailing 48-0. The games are long enough as it is, and this wasn't the national championship game.

Gaming The System

Kudos to the NBA for establishing a system that benefits players considering leaving college early, and kudos to Buckeye Kaleb Wesson for taking advantage of that system. The NBA allows potential early-entry players a chance to work out for teams and attend pre-draft camps and get feedback as to where they might stand with regard to draft position and where they can improve.

Wesson took advantage of that option and, as mentioned in Court Report in this issue, took the advice given and is now down to a "svelte" 255 pounds from his 289-pound playing weight from last season.

None other than Wesson's brother and teammate, Andre, lauded the process.

"Testing the NBA waters and hearing what they had to say helped him a lot," Andre Wesson said. "It opened his eyes even more that he's close. Any feedback that he got he'll take it to heart."

It's not the first time Kaleb has slimmed down, as he shed weight from his high school days.

"They just told me they want to see me at a lighter weight," Kaleb said of the NBA personnel. "But I feel like that's what I've heard my whole career. (They want to) see how my athleticism and my entire game will change if I lighten up. They just wanted to see how I can rebound and finish better for the NBA."

Carrying The Mail

While doing some Heisman Trophy research upon the recent passing of Howard Cassady, I came across an interesting stat.

Did you know that Eddie George carried the ball 403 times for the Tennessee Titans in 2000? That's a lot of totes – 25.2 a game, to be exact. Add to that the fact that George also caught 50 passes for 453 yards, and it looks like the Titans got their money's worth from the former Ohio State Heisman winner.

Before I go any further, some trivia. Do you know who holds the NFL record with 416 carries in a season? Hint, he has an Ohio State

connection.

George gained 1,509 yards rushing on those carries, third in the league, behind Indianapolis' Edgerrin James (1,709) and another Ohio State product, Robert Smith, who gained 1,521 yards on 295 tries (5.2 average) with seven scores.

George's longest run from scrimmage was 35 yards, but he ran for 78 first downs and 14 touchdowns and caught passes for 23 first downs and another two scores as the Titans finished 13-3.

They lost in the first round of the playoffs, however, 24-10 to the Baltimore Ravens. George did his part in the game, though, rushing 27 times for 91 yards and Tennessee's only touchdown and catching eight passes for another 52 yards.

To try to put George's workload into perspective, I checked the record of the NFL's greatest running back of all time, Jim Brown, who was considered a rugged competitor. The most carries he had in a season was 305 in 1961, when he gained 1,408 yards and scored eight touchdowns in a 14-game season. That's only 21.8 carries per game. His highest average of carries came in 1959, when he averaged 24.2 attempts, still less than George's mark in 2000, gaining 1,329 yards and scoring 14 TDs in a 12-game season.

George proved durable throughout his career.

In his 1995 Heisman season at Ohio State, he carried 328 times for 1,927 yards and 24 touchdowns and also caught 47 passes for another 417 yards and one TD. That was an average of 25.2 carries in a 13 game season, and the 328 attempts are second only to the 336 posted in 1984 by Keith Byars (1,764 yards, should have won the Heisman Trophy).

In his eight seasons with the Titans and their predecessor, the Houston Oilers, George averaged 341.6 carries per season and 1,251.1 yards, along with 32.4 receptions per year. He started all 16 games each season he was with the franchise, averaging 21.4 carries per game.

He closed his career with the Dallas Cowboys in 2004, appearing in 13 games (eight starts) and gaining 432 yards on 132 attempts.

All NFL stats are according to Pro-Football-Reference.com.

Bonus trivia: Who started 15 games at quarterback for the Cowboys that year, and who started the other game?

The NFL record for rushing attempts in a season is held by Larry Johnson, son of Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson Sr., who rushed 416 times in 2006 for the Kansas City Chiefs. Johnson gained 1,789 yards rushing that season with 17 scores.

The starting quarterback for Dallas in 2004 was former Browns QB Vinny Testaverde. Also getting a start under center for the Cowboys that year was former Michigan quarterback and Columbus Clippers third baseman Drew Henson.

Speaking Of Carrying The Mail

By now you have had time to see how efficient your Buckeye Sports Bulletin mail service is going to be this football season. If you are having problems getting your BSB before the next game is played, you can upgrade your subscription to speedy first-class mail in an envelope for just \$20 through the Michigan game or \$30 through the traditional Football Recruiting Wrap-Up in February.

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