

BSB Interview Issue: Marching Band Continues Growth Under Christopher Hoch



This is an excerpt of a story from the July print edition of the Interview Issue at Buckeye Sports Bulletin. For four free issues of the print edition, no card required, sign up at the link here: <http://www.buckeyesports.com/subscribe-4issue-trial/>

Ohio State's football program is mostly known, understandably so, for the team's display on the gridiron dating back to 1890. But just as synonymous with that program as the actual football team is the Ohio State marching band - claimed by most as "The Best Damn Band in the Land," which has operated alongside the football team every step of the way.

In fact, the band itself predates the football team's first outing, beginning in 1878 to provide music for the university's ROTC program. And in the 145 years since, the Ohio State marching band has become one of college football's greatest spectacles, entertaining the 100,000-plus fans at Ohio Stadium with memorable traditions such as the ramp entrance, Script Ohio and consequent i-dotting, as well as the band's distinctive halftime performances.

Leading the way for the band is Dr. Christopher Hoch, who was named interim director in 2015 following the firing of then-director Jon Waters. Hoch was later named full-time director in 2016, filling the position ever since for the Ohio State marching band.

Hoch attended Ohio State as a student, participating in band during his time in college, and has since earned five degrees from Ohio State, teaching in the university's School of Music in addition to his band responsibilities.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin spoke with Hoch for the annual Interview Issue and in the two-page interview, Hoch discussed his upbringing in music, he experience at Ohio State and the tradition of the Ohio State Marching Band. Here is a sampling of those questions:

BSB: How did you get involved in music?

Hoch: "I started playing trombone when I was in fourth grade. Dad had played trombone, we had one laying around and band opened up, so I picked it up and started playing – and I hated it. I quit after my first year.

"Three years later – I was going to St. Paul School in Westerville, a Catholic school, but when it came to high school, I decided I wanted to go to the local public high school, Westerville North. Mom and Dad said, 'Well, if you're going to leave all the people you know, you have to be involved in an activity. How about band?' So I picked the trombone back up, and the high school band director there trained me up and taught me, and once I started high school band I absolutely fell in love with it.

"It was my first passion from freshman year forward, and I carried that on to Ohio State, eventually made the marching band at Ohio State and became a music education major, and the rest is history."

BSB: Having been on both sides of those band tryouts, what makes that such an intense process, and how does it result in the best lineup for each band?

Hoch: "We're unique in the way we do our tryouts at the end of the summer. A lot of schools do them before the summer starts so they have their group in place. But we do that because there's an entire summer's worth of training sessions that lead up to that point, and those students – they started every Tues- day and Thursday back the first week of June. It's completely voluntary. Anybody that wants to come or is able to come is always welcome to attend. But it's geared towards preparing people for those tryouts, so by the time they hit tryouts, most of those students are absolutely ready to go and ready to march in the Ohio State marching band. It's a matter at that point of picking the very best of all of those students who are already capable.

"Now, on the downside, obviously, you've got some really good people that don't make the band at the end of the summer, so we make sure there's opportunities for them to keep playing because we want them to do what I did – come back and try out again, eventually make the marching band."

The full interview with Hoch can be seen in the July print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, available to subscribers. Subscribe at [this link](#) to receive immediate online access, or call 614-486-2202 to subscribe and receive online access, and ask about receiving our July interview issue.