



**BSB Reprints: Ohio State Falls To Clemson In 2016 Fiesta Bowl**

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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PERIODICAL NEWSPAPER  
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Vol. 36, No. 14

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Jan. 14, 2017



SONNY BROCKWAY

MISFIRE – Quarterback J.T. Barrett (16) and the Ohio State offense struggled against Clemson on the way to a shutout loss in the Fiesta Bowl on Dec. 31, 2016.

## Offensive Staff Changes Quickly Follow Fiesta Bowl Loss

### Day Replaces Beck As OSU Quarterbacks Coach

By TIM MOODY  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Although the Ohio State offense was statistically prolific for the vast majority of the 2016 season, it had a tendency to stall in the biggest games – especially when it came to the downfield passing attack.

Those concerns were never highlighted more than against Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl, a College Football Playoff semifinal bout that left Ohio State with its first shutout loss since 1993. The offense, led by junior quarterback J.T. Barrett, managed just 215 total yards. On the surface the play-calling seemed to lack diversity – in the first half, Ohio State threw the ball 19 times while attempting just 11 rushes. Of those nine runs, five were by Barrett – totaling minus-6 yards – and just one was by starting running back Mike Weber. Instead of a balanced attack – which was the plan, head coach Urban Meyer said after the game – the Buckeyes leaned on short passes to the flats or screens and struggled to move the ball.



Ryan Day

Not long after the game ended in a 31-0 loss, Meyer said the Buckeyes would be focusing on improving the offense throughout the offseason – suggesting that changes could be coming.

"I'm going to take a hard look at some things when we get back," Meyer said during his post-game press conference. "And obviously there were some great things this year, some great things."

"I go back to Norman, Oklahoma, and some other great things. But anytime you struggle a little bit, you always take a hard look."

The longest and hardest look might come where it concerns the passing game, which Meyer insisted would improve.

"We will become a good passing team, we will," he said. "Next year."

It didn't take long for some of the proposed changes to come to light after the Buckeyes left the Phoenix area to return to Columbus.

Ohio State and Clemson faced off on New Year's Eve, a Saturday. By the following Tuesday morning, Jan. 3, HornsDigest.com, sister site of BuckeyeSports.com, first reported that Ohio State

## Offense Struggles In 31-0 Loss To Clemson

By TIM MOODY  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

First, it was "The Chase." Banners hung in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for two years bearing Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer's motivational motto. That one worked – the Buckeyes were crowned national champions in 2014-15.

After that, Meyer switched to "The Grind." It really ended up being a grind as Ohio State ended up with a 12-1 record in 2015-16, though that included blowing the doors off Michigan and Notre Dame to end the season.

Ever the motivational master, Meyer had a few tactics this season, starting with "The Land of the Wolves." By the time bowl season rolled around and the No. 3 Buckeyes were preparing to face No. 2 Clemson in the College Football Playoff, a couple of new signs hung in the WHAC while some specific words were played on repeat on the video board overlooking the team's indoor practice facility.

It was pretty simple – the signs and video boards referenced a countdown. Not specifically how many days remaining before the Fiesta Bowl against Clemson, but how many days remaining for the Buckeyes to become nine units strong.

Long one of Meyer's main sticking points, being nine units strong means every position group on the team is playing at the highest level.

Finally, the countdown hit zero, and everything fell apart for the Buckeyes – at least when it comes to results on the field. Against the Tigers, Ohio State was demolished 31-0 and knocked out of the playoff. It marked the first shutout loss for the Buckeyes since a 28-0 shellacking at the hands of Michigan in 1993.

"We were not nine units strong," Ohio State quarterback J.T. Barrett said after the loss. "It's real simple."

So, between the time Ohio State started counting down and the time the clock hit zero, what happened? At least offensively, the Buckeyes were systematically outplayed by Clemson. Ohio State managed just 215 total offensive yards – and that number would have been much lower if not for a late 64-yard run by junior H-back Curtis Samuel. The Buckeyes saw Barrett sacked three times in the game and in the first half called just 11 running plays that totaled just 8 net yards. Starting running back Mike Weber – who topped the 1,000-yard mark on the ground this season – received just one of those carries.

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Nearly three years ago, Ohio State faced off against Clemson in the 2016 Fiesta Bowl in the first round of the College Football Playoff.

The Buckeyes were led by Urban Meyer and quarterback J.T. Barrett at the time, while Dabo Swinney and Deshaun Watson guided the Tigers. Clemson dominated the Scarlet and Gray by way of a 31-0 blowout.

With another showdown with Clemson just two days away, we dived into the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives and looked back at that game.

This installment of BSB Reprints includes our coverage of that disappointing loss to the Tigers following the 2016 season.

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