

Managing Expectations

Buckeyes Keeping Postseason Hopes Alive Amid Difficult Big Ten Slate

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Chris Holtmann may have chosen the wrong profession. In baseball and international soccer, for example, the person guiding the team is called a manager.

Holtmann is a coach, more specifically the second-year head coach of the Ohio State's men's basketball team. Yet the title doesn't accurately describe what he does. For much of the 2018-19 season he's been a manager, not necessarily of people – although that is a part of his job – but of expectations.

It's his own fault. His inaugural campaign after replacing Thad Matta was better than anyone could have imagined. He took a program that was 17-15 overall and 11th in the Big Ten with a 7-11 mark in 2016-17 to one under his guidance that qualified for the NCAA Tournament with a 25-9 record, including finishing second in the conference at 15-3.

Holtmann, the 2017-18 Big Ten Coach of the Year, was the magic man with the golden touch.

He tried to warn a reinvigorated fan base before this season that a repeat of that remarkable ride was unlikely for no other reason than that he lost the core of his team, beginning with conference player of the year Keita Bates-Diop.

Also gone were Andrew Dakich, Jae'Sean Tate and Kam Williams. In return, the Buckeyes this season added four freshmen and graduate transfer Keyshawn Woods from Wake Forest.

In an unofficial media preseason poll, the young Buckeyes were picked to finish eighth in the Big Ten. Still, that didn't damp expectations. The previous season OSU was tabbed for 11th, and besides, what does the media know anyway?

For the first two months of this campaign, the Buckeyes lived up to last season's standards despite sophomore center Micah Potter's unexpected deci-



KEVIN DYE

WITHIN REACH – Despite a losing record in Big Ten play, head coach Chris Holtmann has the Ohio State men's basketball team in the hunt for a second straight NCAA Tournament bid.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Helpful Suggestion

If Michigan builds a statue of Tom Brady, here is a suggestion for the nameplate:

"Brady never reached his full potential at Michigan, backing up Brian Griese for two years and sharing time with Drew Henson for two more. He had to hire a sports psychologist to endure the experience. After four years, one of the best quarterbacks in NFL history was only drafted 199th by the NFL. Fortunately he received superior coaching after he left Ann Arbor."

Just trying to help.

Lee Caryer
Columbus

If you would like to express an opinion concerning Ohio State University sports, please send your letter to BSB Letters, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212, or email it to bsb@buckeyesports.com for use in BSB. Letters must be signed and include the writer's hometown and a daytime telephone number for verification. Publication priority will be given to those letters that are brief, and we reserve the right to edit letters for publication.

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN.COM

From The Message Board

With the basketball postseason approaching, BuckeyeSports.com subscriber Terrier Buck began a Forum discussion Feb. 22 regarding the greatest Buckeye ever to hit the hardwood – or really, the second greatest. Here's what Terrier Buck, other subscribers and BSB staffers had to say.

If we grant that Jerry Lucas was probably the greatest player, ever, in the Big Ten Conference, who would be considered the next best, all-around basketball player for OSU?

My nominee: Jim Jackson. Honorable mention: Bill Hosket. Before my time: Robin Roberts.

– **Terrier Buck**

Cannot argue with your list – but John Havlicek would have to be in the discussion somewhere.

– **mrbigbux**

I'd argue that Evan Turner is in the conversation as well. Not No. 1, but in the discussion. Jerry Lucas has to be the answer, though, in my opinion.

– **Tim Moody, BSB**

Jim Jackson.

– **LandeckBuck**

Just a few that came to mind – Guards: John Havlicek, Mike Conley, Michael Redd, Jim Jackson, D'Angelo Russell, Evan Turner, Aaron Craft. Forwards: Jerry Lucas, Clark Kellogg, Greg Oden, Jared Sullinger, Keita Bates-Diop.

– **Joe Dempsey, BSB**

Definitely Lucas or Havlicek.

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

This conversation begins with Jerry and ends with Lucas. Period.

– **Mark Rea, BSB**

As everyone says, the question is who is No. 2? Lucas is No. 1 without any argument. Sometimes I think Havlicek gets too much credit for his pro career when judging the greatest Buckeyes of all time. Of players I actually saw as Buckeyes, Jim Jackson is up there along with Clark Kellogg, Dennis Hopson and Evan Turner. It's hard for me to vote for any one-and-done Buckeye. Gary Bradds was the subject of one of my first significant stories as a sportswriter, so he will always be special to me. Nice guy.

– **Frank Moskowitz, BSB**

Windy City Buck has to go with Windy City's own Evan Turner as No. 2. No question about No. 1, Jerry Lucas. Windy City honorable mention to Brad Sellers, who played for the Chicago Bulls. Not the second-best Buckeye of all time but a great OSU player.

– **Windy City Buck**

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1984

As Ohio State searched for its next athletic director – an ongoing process after Hugh Hindman had been seemingly forced into retirement June 30, 1983 – the university's replacement would have plenty of problems to solve.

According to senior associate director of athletics Jim Jones, the biggest issue in the Buckeyes' athletic department was one plenty of people could relate to: money.

"The money aspect has a lot of implications," Jones said. "It can affect scheduling, it can affect the mode in which you travel, it can affect how many sports you have. If you don't have any money, you have problems.

"Somebody is going to have to be able to maximize revenues. I'm sure television is going to be an issue, still."

Previously, the NCAA had controlled television football packages, but larger schools had been starting to fight against that.

"If it is determined that the NCAA can't have a package, then the athletic director is going to have a major problem, trying to figure out what to do."

30 Years Ago – 1989

Ohio State head football coach John Cooper's staff shuffle continued March 1 with the addition of running backs coach Bobby Turner for 1989.

A native of Alabama raised in East Chicago, Ill., Turner joined OSU after six years at Fresno State. Turner, 38, replaced Ron Hudson, who had been promoted to quarterbacks coach after Cooper fired Bill Dudley in January.

Turner graduated from Indiana State, playing defensive back and tying the program's single-season record for interceptions with nine as a sophomore. After he graduated, his coaching career started with an eight-year stint as the Sycamores' running backs and defensive backs coach.

25 Years Ago – 1994

Two former Ohio State football stars topped the list of candidates involved as the university mulled its options at athletic director after Jones announced his retirement effective June 30, 1994.

Former quarterback Rex Kern and running back Archie Griffin were in the mix among rumored names to succeed Jones.

While the 45-year-old Kern told BSB he was happy with his current job and was "not looking to change" anything, Griffin

was honest about his desire to take over after he had worked the past nine years as the Buckeyes' assistant athletic director in charge of fundraising.

"Becoming athletic director is one of my goals," Griffin, 39, told BSB. "Whether that happens now or sometime in the future remains to be seen. But I wouldn't be working in this department if I didn't believe I could one day run the program."

20 Years Ago – 1999

Ohio State swept the top two Big Ten men's basketball awards, as judged by the conference's media. Junior guard Scoonie Penn was named player of the year and head coach Jim O'Brien was coach of the year.

Penn (5-10), who had to sit out the Buckeyes' 1997-98 campaign after he transferred from Boston College, provided an immediate impact the following season. His per-game averages of 17.2 points and 4.1 assists cemented a spot on both the coaches and media All-Big Ten first team.

"I shudder to think what our season would be like without him," O'Brien said of Penn, who catapulted the Scarlet and Gray (22-7, 12-4) firmly into the NCAA Tournament discussion.

Sophomore guard Michael Redd (6-6) rounded out OSU's all-conference honors, placing on the Big Ten's second team despite leading the team with 19.1 points per game, which was also fourth in the league.

15 Years Ago – 2004

Earle Bruce's first year with the Columbus Destroyers got off to a slow start as the former Ohio State head coach's 2004 season in the Arena Football League began 1-3 after the team's 51-35 loss to the Dallas Desperadoes at Nationwide Arena.

The Destroyers blew a 28-27 halftime lead, scoring just seven points the rest of the way as the Desperadoes scored 24 and left Bruce searching for answers while he tried to get his squad back on track and keep the local fans aboard.

"I think that's terrible," Bruce said of the team's second straight home defeat. "We've had great support. I hope (the fans) stay with us a little longer until we get everything worked out. We're a few inches away, maybe a few players away, and maybe (there are) some adjustments we have to make to get it done."

10 Years Ago – 2009

At the annual NFL scouting combine in late February,

Ohio State products had mixed results at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. Brian Hartline was among the Buckeyes who boosted their stock.

The 6-2, 195-pounder finished atop his position as he competed in multiple drills. Hartline finished first among wide receivers in the 60-yard shuttle (10.92 seconds), third in the three-cone drill (6.65 seconds) and fourth in the 20-yard shuttle (4.12 seconds).

Other notable results by Buckeye players as they prepared for the 2009 NFL draft included the combine-best measurements of cornerback Donald Washington (6-0, 197), who led all athletes in the vertical jump (45 inches) and broad jump (11 feet, 3 inches).

Marcus Freeman (6-1, 239) posted the best 20-yard shuttle time among the linebackers (4.12 seconds) and running back Chris "Beanie" Wells (6-1, 235) was 10th overall with a 4.59-second time in the 40-yard dash.

Five Years Ago – 2014

Over the weekend of Feb. 28 before the Buckeyes began spring football camp, head coach Urban Meyer underwent a small medical procedure to remove a fluid collection related to a congenital arachnoid cyst at OSU's Wexner Medical Center. The cyst was first discovered in 1998 when Meyer was an assistant coach at Notre Dame.

According to Ohio State, Meyer had the procedure to alleviate intermittent headaches he had been experiencing throughout the previous few weeks.

The 49-year-old coach was, however, expected to be with the Buckeyes when they started their slate of spring practices March 4 at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

One Year Ago – 2018

No longer medically qualified to play football, linebacker Nick Conner's career ended as Ohio State started spring camp. On March 5, a team spokesperson confirmed the news to BSB.

A local product of Dublin Scioto, the 2018 season would have been Conner's fourth year with the Buckeyes. However, he had appeared in just one game – the 2016 opener against Bowling Green – during his OSU career.

After he missed most of his senior campaign in high school with a significant knee injury, Conner suffered two more similar injuries at the next level. Conner initially joined the program as a four-star recruit in the 2015 class, the 247Sports composite's No. 223 overall prospect and No. 8 inside linebacker.

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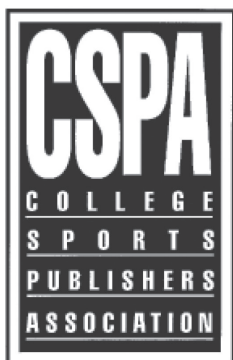
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No. 12	Dec. 1	No. 24	August

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Charter Member

OPINION

Even With Fields, There's No Guarantee At QB

If anyone tells you that Justin Fields is the next Troy Smith, remember they have nothing to go on except five snippets of mop-up duty last year at Georgia, high school highlights and recruiting hype. Fields might live up to his advance billing, and then again, he could be the latest quarterback prospect named Justin (see: Zwick, c. 2002) who was supposed to lead Ohio State to multiple national championships.

Nevertheless, on March 6, when Ryan Day opens his first spring practice as head coach of the Buckeyes, Fields had all but been anointed as the team's starting quarterback for 2019 and beyond.

This time last year when the Buckeyes were set to open their spring camp, there was supposedly a three-way quarterback derby between Dwayne Haskins, Joe Burrow and Tate Martell although Haskins had pretty much cemented his hold on the starting spot after saving his team's bacon against Michigan the previous fall.

As we know now, Haskins went on to rewrite the program's record book for passing, Burrow transferred to LSU and helped lead the Tigers to a 10-win season, and Martell is now on the campus of the University of Miami, hoping to become the next big thing for the Hurricanes.

Haskins' departure for the NFL after only one season as a college starter had some observers wondering if he wouldn't benefit from a little more experience before heading off to the professional ranks.

Truth be told, Haskins likely isn't ready to become a starting quarterback in the NFL. Yes, he has the arm and quick release that pro scouts crave, and to be honest, it's been a long time since I've seen a guy with as little experience at the college level as Haskins show the ability to read defenses like he can. That will be a huge plus for him in the league.

Still, there are things thrown at quarterbacks in the NFL that almost no college quarterback is ready to handle. Guys like Peyton Manning, guys who start from day one of their professional careers, are rare. Tom Brady completed exactly one pass for 6 yards during his rookie year. Joe Montana didn't become a full-time starter until his third season. It took Aaron Rodgers four years to become a starter, and he didn't have a winning record until his fifth season.

My point is that Haskins needs to be drafted by a team that doesn't envision him as their savior in 2019. Most mock drafts I have seen project him to go to the New York Giants with the sixth overall pick, and that might be close to perfect for him. The Giants want veteran QB Eli Manning to come back for at least one more year, and Haskins could absorb plenty of knowledge from a 15-year veteran with two Super Bowl rings.

No player can excel to the best of his ability unless he plays for a team and coach that best fit that player's particular skill set. That's an old cliché, but it also happens to be true – especially for quarterbacks.

The Cleveland Browns, who committed more than their fair share of draft blunders regarding quarterbacks before apparently striking gold last year with Baker Mayfield, made Kentucky QB Tim Couch the No. 1 overall pick in the 1999 draft. Unfortunately for Couch, his supporting cast was abysmal, and his five injury-plagued seasons in Cleveland resulted in him being sacked an incredible 166 times in 62 games.

David Carr was the No. 1 overall selection in the 2002 draft, and the Houston Texans immediately installed him as their starter. But Carr quickly discovered how difficult it can be to throw a football from the seat of one's pants. He was sacked 76 times during his rookie season, and a total of 249 times in 76 games for the

Texans before moving on to career obscurity with three other teams.

Former Ohio State quarterbacks have also found that college excellence doesn't necessarily translate into NFL stardom.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Smith is perhaps the most decorated quarterback ever to play for the Buckeyes, throwing for 2,542 yards and 30 touchdowns on his way to the 2006 Heisman Trophy. But he was only a fifth-round draft choice in 2007 by the Baltimore Ravens.

Smith was never given much of a chance to show what he could do in the league until a going-nowhere San Francisco team gave him six starts at the end of the 2010 season. He threw for 1,176 yards and five touchdowns and posted a 3-3 record in those games, but that was Smith's final season in the NFL.

Joe Germaine established the single-season passing record at Ohio State with 3,330 yards in 1998, a mark that stayed on the books for two decades before Haskins obliterated it last fall with 4,831 yards.

Yet Germaine couldn't find steady employment in the NFL. He was a fourth-round pick by the St. Louis Rams in 1999 and earned a Super Bowl ring with the team that season. But he appeared in only three games, mopping up behind MVP Kurt Warner, and those three games (along with 136 yards and one TD pass) were the sum total of Germaine's NFL career.

The knock against both Smith and Germaine was supposedly their size – or, more accurately, their lack of size. But that was never the problem for Terrelle Pryor, a 6-4, 226-pound athletic specimen who just over a decade ago who was as hotly-anticipated by Buckeye Nation as Fields is today.

Pryor, of course, left Ohio State under the cloud of the so-called "Tattoogate" scandal, leading to his third-round selection in the 2011 supplemental draft by the Raiders. But NFL teams rarely care about the college campus comportment of players if they think they're good enough to excel at the next level.

Pryor, however, was a failed experiment at quarterback. During his first two seasons in Oakland, Pryor rode the bench behind Carson Palmer, and then when he got a chance to start nine games in 2013, he was average at best. He threw for 1,798 yards and seven touchdowns that year, but he also pitched 11 interceptions and the team went 3-6 during his starts.

The Raiders traded Pryor to Seattle before the 2014 season, which began an odyssey of try-outs, signings and trips to the waiver wire that ended only when the Browns persuaded Pryor to switch to a wide receiver position in 2015. He had a breakout year in Cleveland in 2016 with 77 catches for 1,007 yards and seven TDs, a season he parlayed into a one-year, \$6 million contract with the Redskins.

Since then, however, his career has been marred by injury, and Pryor is currently a free agent after Buffalo cut him loose in November.

The biggest NFL disappointment as far as Ohio State quarterbacks are concerned is, of course, Art Schlichter, who broke nearly every program record for passing during his career that lasted from 1978 to 1981. Schlichter was taken by the Baltimore Colts with the fourth overall pick of the 1982 draft, the highest selection for any OSU quarterback.

A gambling addiction that many people

claim began when Schlichter was at Ohio State later engulfed him, and his NFL career was simply part of the collateral damage that includes having now spent nearly half of his life in federal prison. He wound up appearing in only 13 NFL games over three seasons, completing just 45.0 percent of his pass attempts for 1,006 yards and only three touchdowns against 11 interceptions. Additionally, Schlichter's record in six games as a starter for the Colts was 0-6.

Measures Of Success

Two other former Ohio State quarterbacks – including one who led the Buckeyes to a national championship – had brief NFL careers with middling results.

Craig Krenzel was under center when OSU won the 2002 national championship, and just two years later, he found himself starting five games for the Chicago Bears.

Krenzel wasn't expected to see much action after being a fifth-round selection in the 2004 draft, but after starter Rex Grossman was injured and backup Jonathan Quinn was ineffective, the former Ohio State quarterback was suddenly a starting quarterback for Bears head coach Lovie Smith.

Krenzel wound up making five starts during which Chicago won three times and improved to a 4-7 record. Unfortunately, during a 21-7 loss to Dallas on Thanksgiving Day, Krenzel injured an ankle and was sidelined for the remainder of the season. The Bears cut him after the 2004 season, and two years later as a member of the Cincinnati Bengals practice squad, an elbow injury ended his NFL career.

Several years before Krenzel was in the league, there was Bobby Hoying, who led the Buckeyes to 10-win seasons in 1993 and 1995. Hoying finished his OSU career as the program leader in touchdown passes with 57 and went on to become the third-round selection of the Philadelphia Eagles in the 1996 draft.

After appearing in only one game during his rookie season, Hoying made a total of 13 starts for the Eagles over the next two seasons. His best season came in 1997 when he threw for 1,563 yards and 11 TDs against only six interceptions. The following year, he totaled 961 yards over eight games, including seven starts, but pitched nine interceptions with no TD passes.

The Eagles traded him to the Raiders just before the beginning of the 2000 season, and Hoying appeared in only six more games over the next two seasons. He finished his career with 2,544 yards, 11 TDs and 15 interceptions in 22 games.

Coincidentally, Krenzel and Hoying each returned to Columbus and for a time worked alongside one another in the real estate business.

Not every Ohio State quarterback of recent vintage has been an NFL underachiever.

Kent Graham, who played for the Buckeyes in 1990 and '91 after transferring from Notre Dame, parlayed an eighth-round selection in the 1992 draft into a 10-year NFL career. His best season came in 1999 when he made nine starts for the Giants, throwing for 1,697 yards and nine touchdowns.

The best performance in the NFL by a former Ohio State quarterback is unquestionably Mike Tomczak, who – despite going undrafted in 1985 – enjoyed a 15-year career with the Bears, Browns and Steelers. Tomczak appeared in 185 NFL games and threw for 16,079 yards and 88 TDs. His best season came in 1996 with the Steelers, when he went 10-5 as a starter and totaled 2,767 yards and 15 touchdowns.

Tomczak also won a Super Bowl championship ring with the 1985 Bears, and, yes, that's him "playing guitar" midway through "The Super Bowl Shuffle" video.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Spring Camp Opens March 6

Ohio State was slated to hit the practice field under the direction of head coach Ryan Day for the first time on the morning of March 6. Or, well, for the first time since Day took over permanently as head coach, at least.

The Buckeyes' 2019 slate of spring drills were scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. that Wednesday morning, marking the first full practice since Day took over for Urban Meyer on Jan. 2. Day also led the Buckeyes throughout fall camp last year in an interim capacity while Meyer was suspended, in addition to coaching the first three games of the season.

During that time, though, there was little media availability with Day. This spring, things will be business as usual with Day holding a press conference following the first practice.

Ohio State is set to practice again on March 8 before the university's spring break the following week. The Buckeyes will be back on the practice field March 21, March 23, March 27, March 29, April 1, April 3, April 5 and April 10 leading up to the spring game on April 13. Those dates account for practices that will feature media opportunities, but Ohio State has not yet released its full spring schedule.

Ohio State also announced via Twitter on Feb. 28 that the team will hold a student appreciation practice this spring, which was set for March 23, according to a March 4 release.

"The Ohio State students represent the



TIM MOODY

A NEW ERA – Ohio State's first spring camp under the guidance of head coach Ryan Day (center) is set to begin March 6 at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

most passionate and loyal fan bases in all of college football, and the players and the members of this program want to thank them for their support," Day said. "I can't wait to meet

our students on the field afterwards, and I can't wait for our students to meet the players and to greet the new members of our staff."

Doors open at 11 a.m. at the Woody Hayes

Athletic Center for the practice, and food will be provided by Meijer, although not all event details have been finalized.

There was a student appreciation practice during the first six years of Meyer's tenure, but the event wasn't held in 2018 for scheduling reasons.

An Ohio State spokesperson also confirmed that the Buckeyes' Pro Day will be held March 20.

There will be various availabilities with coaches and players throughout the spring, in addition to some open portions of practice. BSB will bring daily updates from spring practice on BuckeyeSports.com and the BuckeyeSports.com Forum.

BuckeyeSports.com, BSB's full-service website, is free to all print subscribers. Sign-up information can be found on page 5.

Grad Transfer OL Picks Buckeyes

Ohio State's offensive line received a much-needed boost Feb. 25 when Rutgers graduate transfer Jonah Jackson announced his commitment to the Buckeyes.

He first confirmed the move to Letterman Row, which reported Jackson's choice in favor of OSU over offers from various Power Five programs.

The short list included Iowa, Maryland, Oklahoma, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Texas and Virginia among others in contention for Jackson's commitment.

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Spring Football Coverage Set

It's hard to believe that spring football is already here. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff will be hard at work bringing you all the position battles and other news as head coach Ryan Day conducts his first Buckeye spring drills.

Upcoming print issues of BSB are scheduled to be mailed on March 16 and April 2. Coverage of the spring game will be in the issue mailed April 16, and the spring wrap-up will be featured in the issue mailed April 30.

However, Buckeye Sports Bulletin's coverage doesn't stop between those issues. The staff will be providing daily updates at our electronic BuckeyeSports.com website, free to BSB subscribers.

Football recruiting is ongoing and well covered at BuckeyeSports.com, and readers will also want to follow both basketball teams, the hockey, wrestling and baseball teams and much, much more. Additionally, subscribers can talk about spring football and other events of the day with members of the BSB staff and other Buckeye fans on BuckeyeSports.com's Forum.

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the Scarlet Knights, where he was one of six team captains as a fourth-year junior in 2018, Jackson emerged as one of college football's best available offensive linemen on the transfer market.

His career at Rutgers started in July 2015 as a 6-4, 285-pound three-star offensive tackle from Media (Pa.) Penncrest.

Jackson redshirted the 2015 season and climbed up the Knights' depth chart in 2016, appearing in all 12 games on the field-goal protection unit before winning the starting center job as a third-year sophomore the next year.

Jackson started five contests at center for Rutgers in 2017 before surgery for an undisclosed injury made for an indefinite absence through November.

He bounced back in 2018, sliding to right guard where the Knights needed him, and Jackson stepped up, starting all 12 games and capping his campaign as an All-Big Ten honorable mention.

The 6-4, 305-pounder packs a punch for Ohio State in the trenches after position coach Greg Studrawa had four starters – left guard Malcolm Pridgeon (6-7, 310), center Michael Jordan (6-7, 312), right guard Demetrius Knox (6-4, 312) and right tackle Isaiah Prince (6-7, 310) – depart after the 2018 season.

Junior left tackle Thayer Munford (6-6, 319) is the only full-year returning starter, while sophomore Wyatt Davis (6-4, 313) started the final two games and fifth-year senior Joshua Alabi (6-5, 305) started in the Rose Bowl.

Jackson, who is open to playing center or

guard, joins OSU for summer enrollment after he completes his spring semester at Rutgers.

Georgia Tech graduate transfer offensive lineman Parker Braun, whom Ohio State had also been recruiting, committed to Texas on March 3.

Buckeyes Near Scholarship Limit

With spring camp approaching, the Buckeyes added a talented athlete at a key position of need when Jackson committed. The move provides a huge boost for Ohio State as he'll be expected to compete for – and likely win – a starting job for the 2019 season. It also added to a bit of a numbers crunch for Day and his staff as the Buckeyes will be at 87 scholarship players when Jackson arrives in the summer as things stand.

The number isn't staggering – Ohio State has to be at 85 scholarship players for the start of fall camp to comply with NCAA rules – but it means there will need to be at least two changes to the roster by that time. That could be in the form of another transfer – Tate Martell (Miami) and Keandre Jones (Maryland) have already left this year – or a potential medical waiver. There's also the possibility that a former walk-on like offensive lineman Kevin Woidke, who was recently placed on scholarship, could return to walk-on status for the fall.

The move to add Jackson was still key for the Buckeyes. Departures during the spring are common and could become even more prevalent going forward with the NCAA's new transfer rules, which are much more player friendly, including the establishment of the

2019 Ohio State Football Schedule

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

* – 2018 bowl team

** – at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

transfer portal. Ohio State has already added two players through the portal – Jackson and quarterback Justin Fields from Georgia – in addition to losing Martell, Jones and walk-on quarterback Kory Curtis (Bryant University).

Adding depth at offensive line was a top priority for Day's staff over the past two months since he took over for Meyer. Before the addition of Jackson, the Buckeyes had just 14 scholarship linemen for this year, including Woidke and not-yet-enrolled freshmen Harry Miller, Enokk Vimahi and Dawand Jones.

The Buckeyes could still be in the market for another quarterback as well with just three scholarship players on the roster right now – Fields, redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin and fifth-year senior Chris Chugunov, a former West Virginia transfer. Adding another signal caller would be important for depth reasons but would lead to the need for a third departure before fall camp.

As always, the numbers crunch will be an

Continued On Page 6

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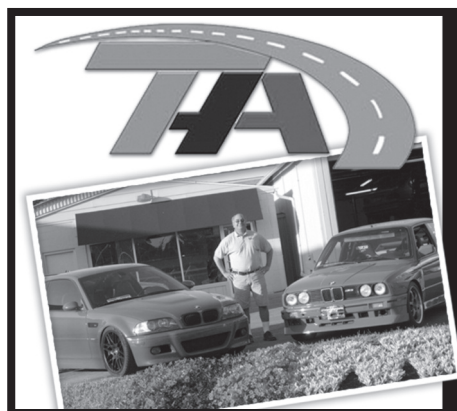
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INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

ongoing storyline until the roster is set for the 2019 Buckeyes. Ohio State's full scholarship chart can be found under the "Football" tab on BuckeyeSports.com.

Hafley Turns Down Bengals

Ohio State co-defensive coordinator/defensive backs coach Jeff Hafley hasn't coached a game with the Buckeyes yet, but he's already had to turn down another job opportunity.

The Cincinnati Bengals reportedly tried to interview Hafley as a defensive coordinator candidate in mid-February, but he opted not to put his name in the pool, according to NFL Network.

Hafley said Feb. 6 that he had chances to coordinate in the NFL but opted to join

the Buckeyes instead. Hafley most recently served as a secondary coach with the San Francisco 49ers. He spent a total of seven seasons in the NFL before coming to Columbus.

"I had opportunities to go be some type of coordinator in the NFL this past year," he said. "I came back here because this is a special place, and I mean that, not just because I'm sitting here. You get a chance to coordinate at a place where you can win a lot of games. That's important."

"But there's more to it than that. You get to coordinate where you can win a lot of games with the right type of people, and that's the culture here. That's where it's different."

Former CB Coach Joins Raiders

When Day took over, he cleaned house on the defensive side of the football with line coach Larry Johnson being the only holdover from Meyer's staff. One of the departees – cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson – has landed in the NFL with the Oakland Raiders, where he'll be an assistant defensive backs coach.

Taver Johnson has been a collegiate coach for the past 13 years, including two stints with the Buckeyes – the other coming under Jim Tressel. He has also made collegiate stops at Wittenberg, Millikin, Notre Dame, Miami (Ohio), Arkansas, Purdue and Temple. He previously spent the 2004 season in the NFL with the Cleveland Browns.

Barnes To Preach Importance Of ST

During Meyer's tenure as head football coach at Ohio State, the Buckeyes often had an assistant coach with a secondary title of special teams coordinator. In reality, Meyer

himself was a key figure in molding the special units.

Among five outside coaching hires made by Day is Matt Barnes, whose primary title is special teams coordinator in a slight shift in philosophy. Barnes will be tasked with continuing to build what has become one of the top units in the nation while also serving as an assistant secondary coach.

Barnes made it clear that he intends to carry on a lot of what Ohio State has done in the past while emphasizing the importance of special teams.

"I'm just trying to continue to develop and continue to cultivate the importance of special teams, which has been phenomenal here," Barnes said. "It's been done at the highest level here. So that's already in place. So just continuing to develop that is a big part of it."

Over the years, special teams has served as a way for young Buckeyes to prove their worth. Players such running back Ezekiel Elliott originally cut their teeth as gunners on kick-coverage units. But the Buckeyes have also consistently played top players on the special units, such as Terry McLaurin, whom Meyer heaped praise on for his ability as a special teamer while he also started at wide receiver.

Barnes said he'll keep up the tradition of playing the best players on special teams while also making sure that younger prospects have the opportunity to develop.

He's also going to focus on the basics while working on the kicking game at Ohio State.

"Keeping in mind we're going to play our best players on special teams, and I think the thing that I hope to maybe shed a little bit more light on or bring to the forefront a little bit more is – it's really not just special teams," Barnes said. "When you're teaching

the kicking game, obviously the things that the punters, the kickers, the holders and the snappers, the specialists do are a little bit different, but beyond that, it's really just general fundamentals of playing the game of football."

Guiton Gets New Coaching Gig

Former Ohio State quarterback and Buckeye fan favorite Kenny Guiton is set to continue his coaching career at Louisiana Tech, where he was named the outside receivers coach Feb. 19. He had previously accepted the same position at Stephen F. Austin, an FCS program, before getting a chance to stay at the FBS level with the Bulldogs.

"I am excited to bring someone in with the energy, enthusiasm and experience of Kenny Guiton," said Skip Holtz, the Louisiana Tech head coach. "He is very knowledgeable of the game having been a quarterback and has now coached receivers for a number of years. He understands the offense, so I am excited to have him join the staff and be a part of our program."

Guiton began coaching at Houston in 2015 as a graduate assistant under Tom Herman, who had coached him at Ohio State. He then moved to Texas with Herman to be a quality control coach in 2017, briefly, before returning to Houston as wide receivers coach from 2017-18.

Guiton, a Houston native, was at Ohio State from 2009-13. He became a folk hero in Columbus in 2012 when he led a late comeback victory against Purdue in place of an injured Braxton Miller. He also spent a stretch as the starter in 2013 when Miller was sidelined.

In total, Guiton completed 89 of 134 passes at Ohio State for 893 yards and 16 touchdowns to just four interceptions.

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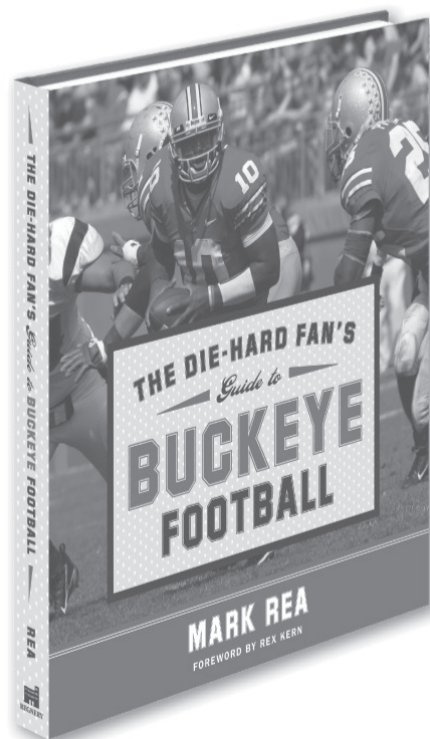


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Ohio State Overachieved To Open 2018-19 Run

Continued From Page 1

sion to leave the program days before the start of the season.

The Buckeyes opened with a 64-56 win at Cincinnati. There was another a convincing road win at Creighton (69-60) and the 80-66 dismantling of UCLA at the United Center in Chicago three days before Christmas.

By the time the calendar flipped to 2019, the Buckeyes had won 12 of 13, were 2-0 in the conference and peaked at No. 14 in the Associated Press top 25 despite their inexperience and short bench.

That was the smooth escalator ride upward.

What has followed since has been a roller coaster of good stretches, bad segments, fouls, turnovers, inspired play and disappointing defeats.

The latest twist was the March 1 indefinite suspension of sophomore leading scorer

Kaleb Wesson for violating athletic department policies.

Playing at No. 14 Purdue the next day without Wesson's team-leading 14.6 points and 6.7 rebounds per game, the Buckeyes lost 86-51 to drop to 18-11 overall and 8-10 in conference play.

"I think I'm more concerned with how our team is going to play and compete regardless of the absence of Kaleb," Holtmann said after the Purdue game. "I'm more concerned about how we're going to play and compete, so we'll see if it has a carryover effect. If we don't compete harder, then it certainly will."

With a March 6 game at Northwestern and the regular-season finale vs. Wisconsin at Value City Arena on March 10, the Buckeyes are tied for seventh with Minnesota – about where they were predicted to be – and in line for a first-round bye in the Big Ten tournament at the United Center in Chicago from March 13-17.

"I don't think anyone took it for granted or thought it would be easy," junior forward Andre Wesson said of the team's success this season. "We knew that we had a young team so there was going to be rough stretches. In any season there's ups and downs."

He spoke those words Jan. 17, the day before a 75-61 home loss to Maryland for a fourth straight defeat. The losing streak would reach five games, the longest in 21 years, before OSU stopped the bleeding with a road defeat of Nebraska then fell at Michigan before reeling off three straight wins.

Even with that short run of success, the honeymoon for Holtmann was over. He was questioned about why fifth-year senior guard C.J. Jackson was playing so much and freshman forward Justin Ahrens so little. How about some zone defense, Coach? Any defense? Why is Kaleb Wesson always in foul trouble? And those darn turnovers.

Holtmann was a victim of his own success, as he told the media in January.

"Fans on the street said, 'Coach, what were you doing, winning so much your first year?' " he said, noting that high expectations for this season were unrealistic.

Yet, the Buckeyes feel like they've left some wins on the table.

In the 86-77 loss to then-No. 8 Michigan State at Value City Arena on Jan. 5 (the first of the five-game slide) the Buckeyes led 72-71 with under five minutes to play.

A 65-49 loss at fifth-ranked Michigan on Jan. 29 had the Buckeyes trailing 32-29 with 17:36 to play before the Wolverines took over.

In a rematch at Michigan State on Feb. 17, the Spartans ended the game on a 20-2 run for a 62-44 victory. That didn't stop MSU coach Tom Izzo from praising the Buckeyes' effort.

"I give Ohio State a lot of credit," he said afterward. "I told my team, 'They're going to come in here desperate.' We beat them the first time, you get to this time of year and people are desperate for a lot of reasons. Some are desperate because they're trying to get into the (NCAA) tournament, and some are desperate because they're trying to win the league."

"If you ask me, the desperate trying to get in – which they deserve to be in – was a lot better than our desperation to try to compete for a championship."

Another tantalizingly close defeat was Feb. 23 at Maryland as OSU erased all but two points of a 16-point deficit with just under 12 minutes left despite playing without the injured Jackson. The Buckeyes couldn't make shots when needed and suffered a 72-62 loss.

Holtmann is aware of the negativity surrounding the program, how some fans are hoping the Buckeyes land in the NIT rather than the NCAA Tournament so they won't embarrass themselves.

"As coaches and probably media members as well, we like to kind of pull out the negative things," Holtmann said. "A guy once told me when I got into coaching, 'They don't write about the planes that land.' I said those are wise words – depressing words, but wise words."

The Buckeyes persevered through adversity when sophomore forward Kyle Young missed four games with a stress fracture in his right leg before returning to play 25 minutes against Penn State on Feb. 7.

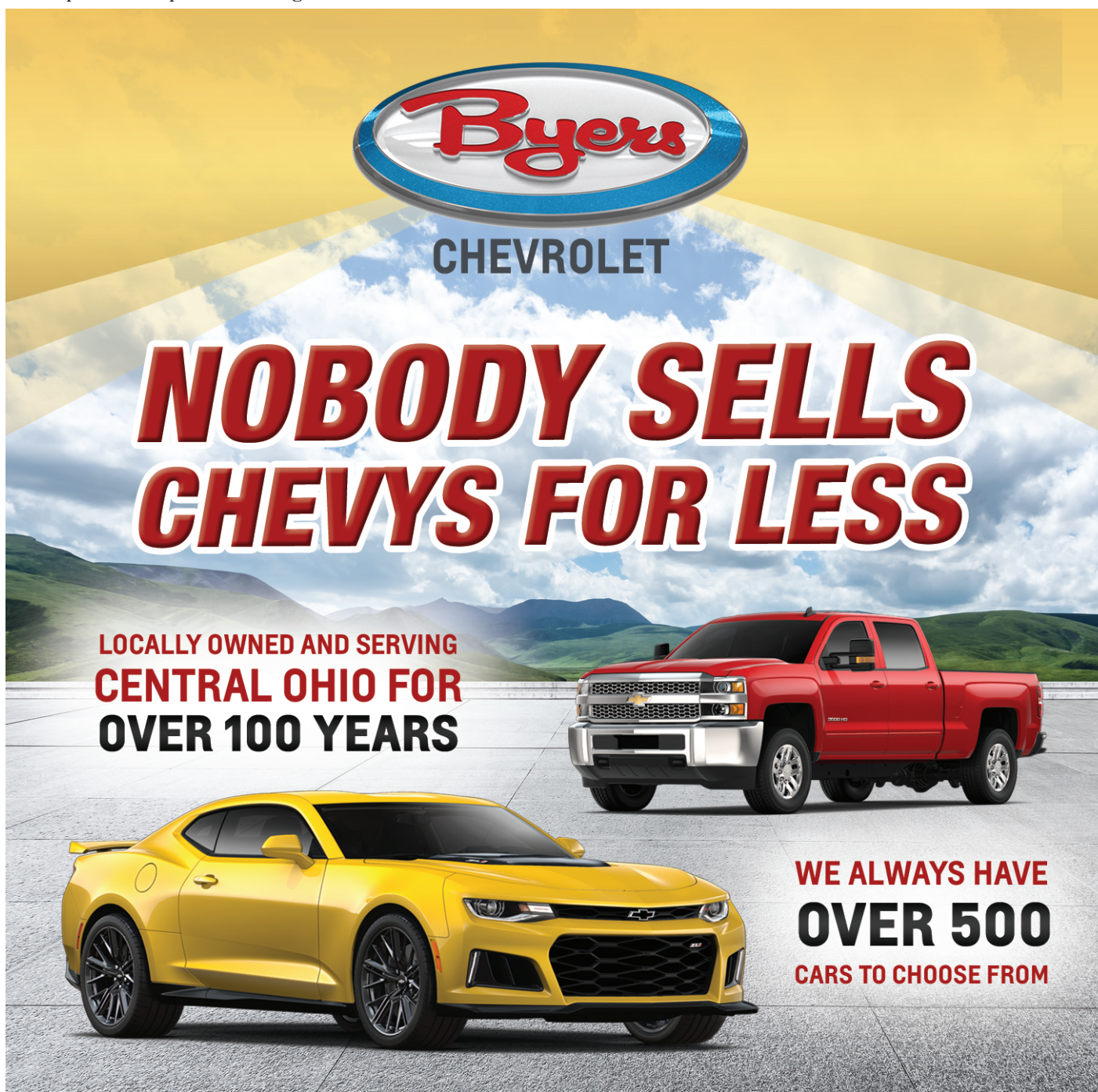
Still limited in how much he can practice and play since coming back, Young proved invaluable in giving Kaleb Wesson the occasional breather, or pairing with him when the Buckeyes went for size in the lineup.

"Kyle makes all the tough plays for us," Kaleb Wesson said. "He's a nitty-gritty guy who's going to get rebounds and score when he gets open. He's a solid player."

It's been an intriguing – some might argue frustrating – season for the Buckeyes, but until the 28th game the Buckeyes were lacking one major component – a signature win.

That changed the night of Feb. 26 in Value City Arena when the Buckeyes upset then-No. 22 Iowa, 90-70, behind the 29-point performance of Ahrens, whose career best had been nine points in the previous game at Maryland.

"You have to give credit to our opponent," Iowa coach Fran McCaffery said. "They shot the ball extremely well, but we didn't rebound tonight. Credit to them for that. We missed 29 shots and only got four back."



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KEVIN DYE

OUT OF NOWHERE – Ohio State got a rare boost against Iowa on Feb. 26 when freshman forward Justin Ahrens erupted for 29 points.

The Iowa game was a rare offensive display for the Buckeyes, who failed to crack 60 points four times in January and February.

“I think certainly it’s been a challenge, but it’s not like we didn’t expect that we were going to have troubles scoring this year,” Holtmann said.

It was OSU’s first win over a ranked opponent this season and put the Buckeyes in position to earn an NCAA bid even with the defeat at Purdue, although the task got tougher according to ESPN’s Joe Lunardi, who in his Bracketology column has the Buckeyes as a No. 9 seed in the West Regional:

“The shorthanded OSU team that played without Kaleb Wesson (who was suspended indefinitely for an unspecified violation) and lost 86-51 at West Lafayette is indeed a candidate to lose two more times,” he said. “In any event, the No. 9 seed Ohio State was car-

rying in mock brackets before the blowout at Mackey Arena is looking a bit lofty.”

The Buckeyes are 43rd in the latest NCAA Evaluation Tool (NET) rankings, which the tournament selection committee uses to evaluate résumés, indicating the Buckeyes still have a legitimate shot to make the 68-team field. The NET this season replaces the RPI ratings which had been used since 1981.

“We’re not finished at all,” Woods said. “We still have more work to do before the regular season ends.”

The route of the 2018-19 Buckeyes has been different, but they might end up at the same destination as last season’s team – the NCAA Tournament.

But Holtmann may get his wish that comparisons to the 2017-18 team stop because expectations for an extended run are not high.

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OSU Loses 2020 Commit As Recruiting Heats Up

As the Ohio State football team returns to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for spring camp the week of March 4, activity on the recruiting trail is heating up as well. With the focus flipped to the 2020 class, the Buckeyes are preparing for visitors in the upcoming cycle while working to capitalize on early momentum in 2021 and beyond.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Garrett Stepien

In the time since BSB last went to press, OSU has made waves with priority prospects for 2020 and 2021 but saw a longtime commitment depart.

The latter result leaves Ohio State's 2020 group with six pledges and the No. 6 spot in the 247Sports composite team rankings, averaging a rating of 94.86 per prospect.

Meanwhile, Ohio State is one of the seven schools with a commitment in 2021, pegging the Buckeyes at third behind Florida and Miami (Fla.), each of which have four pledges.

Hubbard Drops From 2020 Class

Darvon Hubbard committed July 25 to Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class, but

his recruitment changed Feb. 21 when he backed off his pledge.

The 6-0, 200-pounder took to Twitter and announced he would be reopening his recruitment but still considering OSU as a top school going forward.

Hubbard, however, cited former head coach Urban Meyer's recent retirement and subsequent coaching staff changes among the reasons to explore all options once more.

"Thank you to all the fans and support I have received throughout this process from family and friends, coaches and all," a note posted to Hubbard's tweet read. "Much love to the Ohio State staff for believing in my ability to play the game, and being from Ohio it's been a dream of mine to play for Coach Urban Meyer. With the changes to the coaching staff I think it is best if I open my recruitment up. I will be decommitting from The Ohio State University. This is especially hard for me to say but OSU will still be a top school of mine, but right now I feel it's best to explore my options. Please respect my decision, and no media questions please."

Originally from Akron Buchtel and on Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford's radar since middle school, Hubbard spent his freshman season with the Griffins in 2016.

After a cross-country move, Hubbard spent the past two seasons at Scottsdale

(Ariz.) Chaparral, where he teamed up with 2020 four-star quarterback Jack Miller, an Ohio State commit, and the Firebirds.

Since the offseason, Hubbard reportedly transferred to Surprise (Ariz.) Willow Canyon.

Hubbard camped twice with the Buckeyes last June, earning an offer on his second trip back to Columbus when he impressed Meyer and Alford at Friday Night Lights.

"He knows how I operate," Hubbard said of Alford. "He knows how to talk to me as a person, so I'm able to understand him more than maybe some of my coaches."

"He's known me since I was in the eighth grade, so we have a really good connection. I know how he talks, so I know how to understand him. We just have a real special connection."

Before decommitting, Hubbard was reportedly planning to take all five official visits.

Georgia, Louisiana State and Tennessee joined Ohio State as the other schools in the Southeastern Conference-heavy mix for his recruitment, he told Bill Greene of 247Sports.

At the time, Hubbard told Greene that he thought the Buckeyes would be "in good hands" with head coach Ryan Day, who took over for Meyer after two years as offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach.

"I hated seeing Coach Meyer step down,

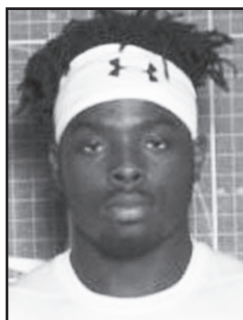
but I knew we would be in good hands with Coach Day," Hubbard said. "I watched the games when Coach Meyer was suspended, and I thought Coach Day really did a great job. I think he's a great coach, and I've talked to him a few times. Ohio State has told me that everything is good for me, and things are cool with them."

"I definitely want to take all five of my visits, and I might take all of them in the spring, but that hasn't been decided. I will take one to Ohio State for sure, and then I have a few other schools in mind. Tennessee has been recruiting me really hard, and I definitely want to take one there. LSU has been recruiting me hard as well, so I want to visit there."

"Georgia also wants me to take an official there, and I think they would be a school I'd want to check out also. Those would be three schools right now I'd want to see, along with Ohio State. I do speak with Coach Alford pretty often, and we are cool. I want to visit Ohio State again pretty soon, when I'm back in Akron seeing family."

Hubbard is the 247Sports composite's No. 285 overall prospect, No. 19 running back and No. 8 player in Arizona. However, OSU has other top targets at the position in 2020.

Among other prospects, Clovis (Calif.) Buchanan five-star Kendall Milton (6-1, 211) and Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star Bijan Robinson (6-0, 200) are atop Ohio State's board. Milton has held an offer since Jan. 26, 2018, while Robinson picked one up Nov. 8.



Darvon Hubbard

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ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

On Feb. 25, Ohio State locked up Rutgers graduate transfer center/guard Jonah Jackson. After two years as the Scarlet Knights' starting center and right guard (2017-18), what does the 6-4, 305-pounder bring to OSU and what is the impact on recruiting offensive linemen going forward?

"It really shores up the depth that they needed heading into the 2019 season, and it provides versatility because he can play either spot. Obviously, Ohio State was going into the 2019 season, I think, banking on (sophomore) Josh Myers as the starter at center, but (Jackson) gives them a little bit of insurance if Myers doesn't pan out or if (fifth-year senior) Branden Bowen is moved now to his more natural position of tackle because he doesn't have to play guard. So it gives them flexibility that they really needed and didn't have, but it also gives them depth for a guy that is going to be a starter at Ohio State.

"It eliminates RJ Proctor from Virginia as an opportunity (via graduate transfer). It does not remove the opportunity for Parker Braun from Georgia Tech – he has two years to play one – so there's an opportunity for Ohio State to maybe bring him in, regardless of their current numbers situation, and redshirt him for a year, let him get stronger, and then have that kind of mean, nasty interior lineman that they like to have who's a specialist in the run game. So they're still looking at Parker Braun, but I think that'll probably be the last addition."

Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star cornerback Lejond Cavazos, a former OSU commit,

remains among the Buckeyes' top targets and returns March 22 for an unofficial visit. How should OSU go about rerecruiting the 6-1, 190-pounder?

"They need four or five defensive backs in this class and really need two cornerbacks, and that's what they see Lejond as. But to rerecruit him – it's an interesting situation because of how close his dad was with Urban Meyer. The thing that they're going to have to go in and prove is that the program is still similar to what they committed to but that Ryan Day has the ability to win on his own. I think that's not something that they're going to be able to learn until the season goes.

"But personality-wise, how he fits, how highly they value Lejond is a big part of this. Jeff Hafley, his first day at Ohio State, Cavazos was his first call. They made it a point to go down and see him. He is a top priority. They want to instill this idea that just because Urban's gone the relationship with Ohio State hasn't really changed, because Urban's still around and they can reach out and talk to him. The guys that are on the fence, it's just about learning that Ryan Day is confident and capable of running his own program."

Among the six commitments in Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class, Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star wide receiver Gee Scott (6-3, 215) is becoming a leader as the Buckeyes pursue top targets in his home state – Seattle Garfield five-star outside linebacker Sav'ell Smalls (6-3, 230) and Ferndale, Wash., four-star offensive guard Geirean

Hatchett (6-5, 275). How important is Scott as OSU tries to pull Smalls, Hatchett and its other priority prospects from the Northwest and Washington?

"He's a kid that people just kind of flock to because he's an extremely hard worker. He's a driven kid. I think people in that area see him as sort of a lightning rod in this class. Just in his high school at Eastside Catholic, they have three of the top five players in the country in Washington in the 2020 class, but they also have the best player in the country in the 2021 class as a defensive tackle there as well (in 6-4½, 277-pound J.T. Tuimolou). So it's huge for Ohio State to open up that Pacific passageway – I guess, whatever you want to call it – and to have some foothold in that area, even though Washington and Washington State continue to be programs on the rise.

"I think that (Scott) is similar, in a way, to (senior wide receiver) Austin Mack. When I interviewed him (as a recruit), Austin was a guy that everyone knew was going to commit to Ohio State. (Scott) committed significantly earlier, but the difference is that Austin was only two hours away from Columbus and could get to campus anytime he wanted. So (Scott) has an opportunity in the western part of the country to connect with kids that other kids might not have had. We haven't seen many (wide receivers) like that. He's not a 'rah rah' guy on Twitter or any of that kind of stuff. But he's having the conversations (with other recruits) that matter, especially with guys in his area."

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.)

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

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jack Sawyer	DE	6-5	219	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North

With Hubbard out of the fold, Ohio State's 2020 class now includes Cincinnati St. Xavier five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson (6-7, 285); Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional four-star center Luke Wypler (6-3½, 285); Miller; Rockwall, Texas, four-star wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba (6-1, 188); and Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star wide receiver Gee Scott (6-3, 211).

Arizona Safety Takes In Columbus

Speaking of Arizona, where Ohio State has Miller committed while Hubbard and Robinson remain among its recruits in 2020, another target has recently gained momentum.

Four-star safety Lathan Ransom, who is a teammate of Robinson's at Salpointe Catholic, spent the weekend of Feb. 22-24 in the Midwest visiting Notre Dame and OSU.

The 6-2, 200-pounder spent Feb. 23 in South Bend, Ind., for an unofficial visit with the Fighting Irish.

"I'm only taking so many unofficial visits because it's not cheap," Ransom told Tom Loy of 247Sports. "The time I had here, Notre Dame is staying high on my list."

He then took his trip the next day to Ohio's capital with the Buckeyes, who had offered him Jan. 24.

"Coach Day showed me he really wants

me to be part of their program," Ransom said. "He was one of the head coaches that came



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and saw me at my school. (Co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff) Hafley, he knew every play of my film. It was my first time to talk to him in person. He hasn't been at Ohio State very long so I can't wait to build a stronger relationship with him. Both Coach Day and Coach Hafley left an immense impression on me. I was super impressed with them."

Ransom has since scheduled an official visit April 13 for Oklahoma's spring game. As he sorts out the other four available officials, Ransom told Bill Kurelic of 247Sports his hope is to have a final five at some point in July.

Among those suitors, OSU established itself as a potential placeholder while Ransom takes unofficial visits with Texas A&M and Texas in the spring. Ransom is

the 247Sports composite's No. 69 overall prospect, No. 4 safety and No. 5 player in Arizona for 2020.

OSU Trending For Top 2020 CB Target

In heavy pursuit of Henry Gray since offering May 15, the Buckeyes have been climbing up the preferred choices list for the four-star cornerback from Miami Central. The 5-11½, 172-pounder confirmed that notion Feb. 16 when he took to Twitter and included OSU in his top eight.

Gray also listed Auburn, Clemson,

Continued On Page 12

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Buckeyes In Running For Nation's Best Wideout

Continued From Page 11

Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Penn State and Tennessee. Miami (Fla.) was one notable omission – he initially committed March 31 to the Hurricanes before his Dec. 13 decommitment.

Not only did Gray peg Ohio State among his top schools, but he took things an extra step with the Buckeyes by announcing Feb. 21 an unofficial visit to Columbus for the spring. Gray is slated to visit OSU the week-end of March 22-26, which will be between the football team's third and fourth weeks of camp.

Beyond Ohio State, Clemson continues to push hard for Gray as well. The Tigers hosted Gray for an unofficial visit the week-end of Jan. 26.

Gray is the 247Sports composite's No. 73 overall prospect, No. 6 cornerback and No. 8 player in Florida for 2020. According to the 247Sports crystal ball, the Buckeyes are currently split with Miami at 40 percent while Clemson possesses a 20-percent chance to land Gray.

Ohio State Makes Top WR's Cut

Another mid-February list cut involved the best wide receiver in the country for 2020. Julian Fleming announced his top six on Twitter Feb. 16. Fleming included OSU with Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, Oregon and Penn State.

"I would like to thank every coaching staff that has given me an opportunity to play at the next level, and also thank them for the tips and guidance they have provided me to this point," a note posted to Fleming's tweet read. "With that being said I have narrowed down my future home to one of six schools and am only focusing on these six schools."

The 6-3, 210-pounder from Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia is the 247Sports composite's No. 5 overall prospect and No. 1 wide receiver in the nation. He is Pennsylvania's only five-star recruit, ranked atop the state for his cycle.

Fleming has been a frequent visitor to

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1989

Why Ohio State? For Forestville (Md.) McNamara defensive lineman Mark Williams (6-3, 212), who had signed Feb. 8 with the Buckeyes' 1989 recruiting class, the chance for championships – particularly the Rose Bowl – stood out above all other factors.

"I think one of the main reasons I selected Ohio State over some of the other schools was the Rose Bowl," Williams told BSB. "I have always liked the Big Ten conference, the way the teams in the conference play football. I like that type of competition. I want that chance, the chance to play in the Rose Bowl."

Although OSU had not been to Pasadena, Calif., for the Rose Bowl since the '84 season, Williams was confident in the program's potential to return on New Year's Day shortly.

"I'm excited to be coming to Ohio State," Williams said. "I think the coaching staff has done an excellent job in recruiting this year, and we all have a chance to go in there and contribute to the program."

25 Years Ago – 1994

East Cleveland (Ohio) Shaw defensive lineman Calvin Brown (6-4, 275) boasted national offers from Colorado, Kansas and Southern California but signed with Ohio State for more than just the opportunity to stay home.

"I felt Ohio State was my best choice because my opportunity to play early is better than at Kansas or some of the other places," Brown told BSB. "They are losing a couple of defensive ends and some other defensive linemen, so it looks like a good situation. Besides, I've always wanted to play for the Buckeyes, and the opportunity was there, so I took it."

With a 360-pound bench press and 4.9-second time in the 40-yard dash, Brown possessed a unique blend of power and speed as he entered his next chapter at OSU.

"The sky's the limit," Shaw head coach Tom Mental told BSB. "If he gets bigger and stronger and picks up his intensity, I could see him in a pro career."

20 Years Ago – 1999

Although Ohio State had lost its top wide receiver in David Boston, who had declared for the 1999 NFL draft a year early after he notched the single-season program record

for receptions (85) in 1998, the Buckeyes had reinforcements on the way.

One of OSU's four recruits at the position in the 1999 class was Farmington Mills (Mich.) Harrison wide receiver Ricky Bryant. The 6-1, 170-pounder signed with the Scarlet and Gray over home-state options Michigan and Michigan State. Part of Bryant's attraction to Ohio State, he said, was his opportunity to make an immediate impact after the Buckeyes' lost Boston, Dee Miller and Kevin Griffin.

"I call it 'Receiver College,'" Bryant said of OSU. "And I really got acquainted with the receivers coach. He's the one who recruited me, Coach (Chuck) Stobart. I really like him, and that really made a big difference."

15 Years Ago – 2004

While Jamario O'Neal was committed to Ohio State for the class of 2005, the Cleveland Glenville defensive back told BuckeyeSports.com of his desire to visit other schools as he entered the spring of 2004. The 6-1, 190-pounder mentioned a return trip to see the Buckeyes but was also planning to check out Florida State, Miami (Fla.), Michigan and Oklahoma.

"I'm still committed to Ohio State," said O'Neal, who had been considered by national scouting services as a potential two-way player with 10.7-second speed in the 100-meter dash. "But everybody's still recruiting me. Nothing has changed. Pretty much all the Big Ten schools have offered me."

10 Years Ago – 2009

As the first commitment in Ohio State's 2010 recruiting class, Youngstown (Ohio) Boardman four-star defensive end/outside linebacker J.T. Moore (6-3, 216) was looking forward to joining the Buckeyes as he completed his junior year of high school.

In constant contact with his future coaches in Columbus, Moore's early decision had set him on the path to become a leader as he aimed to add 40 pounds of muscle and make an immediate impact.

"Ohio State is Ohio State, enough said," Moore told BSB. "It was an honor to be the first commit of the 2010 class, and it was an honor to have been offered a scholarship by Ohio State. There was no reason to wait to hear from any other school. Other schools are still contacting me, but they're wasting

their time. They have no chance because I'm a Buckeye for life."

Five Years Ago – 2014

Ohio State's 2015 recruiting class gained momentum Feb. 11 when Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy three-star safety Ben Edwards (6-0, 195) announced his commitment.

He became the Buckeyes' third pledge for the cycle, joining Cocoa, Fla., three-star cornerback Jamel Dean (6-1, 185) and Canton (Ohio) McKinley four-star running back Eric Glover-Williams (5-10, 165).

Edwards picked OSU over offers from Auburn, Georgia Tech, Kentucky, Louisville, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Stanford and UCLA, among others.

"I have a great relationship with their coaches," Edwards said before mentioning head coach Urban Meyer, area recruiter/tight ends coach Tim Hinton and co-defensive coordinator/safeties coach Chris Ash. "I call Coach Hinton and Coach Ash every week. They've been pushing for this commitment a lot lately. They love my style of play. They want me to come in and play early when I get up there. It's a big-time program, and they always win almost every game and it's where I want to be."

One Year Ago – 2018

Ohio State started to build its 2019 class, picking up a March 1 commitment from four-star offensive tackle Ryan Jacoby. The 6-5, 270-pounder got an offer Jan. 12 from the Buckeyes and wasted no time on a decision.

"I knew for a while now that Ohio State was where I wanted to go," he told BSB. "After that last visit to Ohio State, it was hands down where I wanted to be. That's where I know the best fit is."

Jacoby gave Ohio State the 247Sports composite's No. 363 overall prospect, No. 39 offensive tackle and No. 10 player in Ohio at the time. With his commitment, he joined Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley four-star offensive lineman Doug Nester (6-5 1/2, 295) as the Buckeyes' second pledge for 2019.

"I like Doug a lot," Jacoby said after both prospects unofficially visited OSU the weekend of Feb. 10. "He was just telling me how much he loves it there. I fell in love with it the same way he did."

Ohio State since the Buckeyes offered Feb. 7, 2018. He took his first unofficial visit

June 18 to Columbus and returned to Ohio Stadium for two gameday trips – Nov. 3 for the Buckeyes' 36-31 win over Nebraska and Nov. 24 for OSU's 62-39 rout of Michigan – strengthening bonds with Day and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline along the way.

"Talk to Coach Hartline and Coach Day almost daily. They seem like great guys, and I have a great relationship with them," Fleming told Steve Wiltfong of 247Sports. "They have a strong class already and do a lot with receivers."

While Ohio State has made significant progress over the past year with Fleming as

he continues to build his relationships with Day and Hartline, the Nittany Lions remain the team to beat. Between proximity to home and his girlfriend's enrollment at the university, PSU is Fleming's top destination for visits.

Although the Buckeyes hosted him twice in the 2018 regular season's final month, Fleming stopped by Penn State on Dec. 16, Feb. 2 and Feb. 23 for a string of visits. Those factors have led to the Nittany Lions' holding 75 percent of predictions for Fleming's recruitment among 247Sports crystal ball projections. OSU has 25 percent of the picks.



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"Distance is easy to cover," Fleming said of the Lions. "My girlfriend goes there so it's ... become a weekly routine to go see her, say what's up to the coaches, but I have a good relationship with them all."

Buckeyes Fighting For Former CB Commitment

Back on the market since he announced Dec. 4 his decommitment from Ohio State, Lejond Cavazos remains among the Buckeyes' top targets as they assemble their group for 2020.

He had originally committed to OSU last June 27, and the new regime under Day has been trying to rerecruit Cavazos, who turned heads Feb. 17 at The Opening Regional Miami.

The 6-1, 190-pounder clocked a 4.40-second time in the 40-yard dash at the Miami Dolphins Training Facility in Davie, Fla., where he additionally earned the camp's honor as Combine Champion with his 133.26 rating.

After the performance, Cavazos punched a ticket to The Opening Finals, slated for June 30-July 3 in Frisco, Texas, at The Star – the Dallas Cowboys' indoor facility.

Cavazos unofficially visited Florida (Feb. 2) and Miami (Feb. 16) before he set his March 22 return to see the Buckeyes during spring camp at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

In the time since his decommitment, the Cavazos family has come to know Day better and primarily built up a bond with Hafley, whom OSU hired Jan. 7.

Cavazos first committed to Meyer and an entirely different staff of assistants in

the defensive backfield: Defensive coordinator Greg Schiano (New England Patriots) and cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson (Oakland Raiders) are no longer in Columbus after both went to the NFL. Co-defensive coordinator/safeties coach Alex Grinch left for Oklahoma as well.

Cavazos is the 247Sports composite's No. 281 overall prospect and No. 41 player in Florida for 2020. He is also listed as the No. 22 safety, but his recruitment – especially by Ohio State – has primarily been for cornerback.

Buckeyes Offer Fast-Rising TE

Tight end recruiting for OSU throughout the past two cycles has resulted in out-of-state products such as Lindenhurst, N.Y., 2018 four-star Jeremy Ruckert and Memphis (Tenn.) Whitehaven three-star Cormontae Hamilton becoming Buckeyes.

Might the trend continue in 2021?

While the focus for Ohio State remains on 2020, the Buckeyes got ahead with a fast-rising 2021 recruit at the position Feb. 19 when they extended their offer to Hartwell (Ga.) Hart County's Cane Berrong.

The 6-4½, 220-pounder's recruiting picked up after he ended his sophomore season of high school. Berrong has received offers from Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Louisiana State, Michigan State, North Carolina State, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Penn State, Tennessee, Virginia Tech and Wisconsin since Jan. 12. He took trips to Auburn (March 2) and Clemson (March 4).

Ohio State Offers National 2021 RB

Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough's Evan Pryor picked up his 27th offer Feb. 25 from Ohio State. The 5-11, 170-pounder had picked up an offer most recently Feb. 20 from Auburn.

Among recent activity, Pryor spent Feb. 27 at home-state North Carolina for an unofficial visit. On his lengthy list of offers, Georgia and Penn State headline others pushing hard for him as he navigates the process.

As a sophomore, Pryor played in all 14 games for William Amos Hough (11-3). He led the team with 146 carries for 912 yards (6.2 average) and 10 touchdowns.

Buckeyes Offer 2021 DE

With offers extended to an abundance of recruits for 2020, on Feb. 27 Ohio State's activity in the Southwest trickled into 2021

when the Buckeyes offered Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro defensive end Quintin Somerville.

The 6-3, 210-pounder is a high school teammate of 2020 five-star cornerback Kelee Ringo, who headlines OSU's top targets for the upcoming cycle.

"I hope I can get out there sometime this summer," Somerville told 247Sports. "I am really interested not only in the culture down in Columbus, but also the coaching staff seems incredibly dedicated to bettering their players from what Kelee has told me."

As a sophomore, Somerville played in all 14 games for Saguaro (13-1), recording 44 tackles (16 for loss) and four sacks.

Somerville boasts early offers from Arizona, Arizona State, Memphis and Michigan.

For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB print subscribers, daily. For simple sign-up information, see page 5.

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Multitalented Chambers Ready For Competition

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State signee Steele Chambers, a four-star prospect, decided to join the Buckeyes over national powerhouses Alabama, Clemson and Georgia, which is the most prominent program in his home state.

Chambers led Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic to victory in back-to-back state championships, amassing 2,981 yards and 48 touchdowns on the ground in his final two seasons.

In total, Chambers gained 4,873 yards from scrimmage and scored 75 touchdowns during four seasons. The running back/linebacker also had a quarterback rating of 165.2, completing 6 of 7 passes for 169 yards and five touchdowns.

Blessed Trinity Catholic head coach Tim McFarlin enjoyed having Chambers as an essential part of his program for four years and was straight to the point about what kind of player Ohio State is bringing in.

"They're getting a very durable (player) – they're getting a great football player," McFarlin told BSB. "I'll just sum it up and tell you – he is remarkable, remarkable on both sides of the ball."

In addition to his offensive prowess, Chambers made countless plays for the Titans at linebacker. The two-way standout totaled 262 tackles (155 solo), including 17 tackles for loss and six sacks during his four years. He also forced three fumbles, recovered three fumbles, defended nine passes and intercepted six more.

The Roswell native was certainly sought after by many of the top college football programs in the country, but his decision was based on much more than success on the field.

"It was intense," McFarlin said of Chambers' recruitment. "People came from everywhere, and he had offers from coast to coast. And Steele, I don't know that he exactly knew what he wanted, but he knew what he didn't want."

"And I think there were some places in

the SEC that I thought that that would be it. And he didn't say much about it, but he said, 'Coach, that's not what I'm looking for.'

"But he came back from Ohio State and told me that he had a great visit, and I think that (visit) and some follow-up conversations with Coach (Urban) Meyer sealed the deal."

Although Chambers bought into what former Ohio State head coach Meyer had said, the four-star athlete did not waver when the legendary coach announced his resignation in December. Chambers said he was impressed by Ryan Day's ability to fill in for Meyer and the respect that the players had for him, so he had no reason for indecision.

The Georgia Region 7AAAA Player of the Year was not always dead set on going to Ohio State, however. Chambers said that it was initially just a random offer to him, but his parents knew it was a great institution, so they decided to visit and he came away impressed.

"The community, the way that they push their players," Chambers said of why he chose Ohio State. "A bunch of the coaches – unlike other programs – they were actually telling me what I need to work on and not just telling me everything I was doing great. So it just felt like it was a really close connection."

"They just want me to get better. They want me to be the best player I can be. And it's just really evident that they want that through what they say."

When Chambers made his first trip to Columbus he saw similarities between the foundation of the Ohio State football program and the one he was leaving behind at Blessed Trinity Catholic. The strong sense of community and the firm bond of brotherhood appealed to Chambers, reminding him of his relationships with his Titan teammates.

"It's really everything to me," he said of what that brotherhood means to him. "I just don't see how I'd be able to play

the game if I don't have that kind of relationship with all my teammates. It just really pushes you to the next level, really improves your game."

McFarlin knew he had a talented player who was destined for greatness when Chambers was just a freshman, but could not have foreseen the type of leader his workhorse would become.

"Because he was a great player, we knew he'd have a leadership role on the team," McFarlin said. "But the way Steele treated his teammates and the way he was so unselfish, it bought him so much credibility in that locker room. The kids, they genuinely like him."

"Obviously, everybody looks at the numbers. What's the 40? What's the vertical? What's the measurables? Steele's got the measurables, but he's got an awful lot of the other stuff, too."

Chambers started at running back and linebacker for Blessed Trinity Catholic, and with a talented sophomore tailback serving as his backup, the coaches elected to spell Chambers on offense.

A high school team's star D-I prospect getting his touches reduced could cause conflict within a locker room. Fortunately for McFarlin and the Titans, Chambers put winning first and mentored his backup. Both backs surpassed the 1,000-yard threshold, and the team repeated as champions.

Although Chambers is physically imposing at 6-2 and 215 pounds and showed immense toughness by taking more than 30 carries in four of the Titans' final six games, he does not fit into typical stereotypes.

"He's probably going to be different than you think," McFarlin said. "You think about a kid playing 58 games, offense, defense, being very physical – his personality doesn't match that."

"Steele is quiet, unassuming. He's uncomfortable with attention. He's a deep guy. There's a lot more to Steele than just football. The quality of friendships that he has runs real deep. The teachers love him."



Steele Chambers

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A Pre-Spring Look At Ohio State's Depth Chart

By **TIM MOODY**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State has a new head coach, but Ryan Day isn't new to the Buckeyes. That said, half of Day's first coaching staff in Columbus is made up of outside hires, meaning there will certainly be some changes coming at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center this spring.

That could mean returning starters will have to prove themselves once again. It could provide a chance for younger players to earn their shots, too, which leaves the depth chart in flux as camp gets set to open March 6.

What follows is a breakdown of BSB's projected depth chart for Day's Buckeyes. The projection includes only players who are on campus this spring, meaning most of the 2019 signing class and Rutgers graduate transfer Jonah Jackson are excluded.

BSB will publish updated depth-chart projections throughout the spring as the pictures begins to clear up for the first year of the Day era.

Quarterback

There's never a guarantee when it comes to a quarterback competition, but we can keep this one pretty simple. Justin Fields, a former five-star recruit who is the highest-rated prospect ever on the roster, transferred from Georgia to Ohio State to be the starter.

The 6-3, 225-pound Kennesaw (Ga.) Harrison product has all the tools to thrive as Dwayne Haskins' replacement. At Georgia last season, Fields backed up Jake Fromm and completed 27 of 39 passes for 328 yards and four scores. He added 42 rushes for 266 yards and another four touchdowns, showing off the skill set that makes him a true dual threat, which would bring an element back to the offense that Ohio State missed in 2018.

Fields' only real competition for the starting spot is redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin (6-3, 200), a former four-star out of Austin (Texas) Lake Travis. Baldwin has earned rave reviews, but Fields has a big leg up in terms of development, experience and skill set.

The only other scholarship quarterback on the roster is graduate senior Chris Chugunov (6-1, 203), a former West Virginia transfer who actually started twice for the Mountaineers in 2017. He completed just 43 of 90 passes (47.8 percent) for 536 yards with two touchdowns and two interceptions that season, however.

Running Back

There's no question about who will start at running back in 2019 with junior J.K. Dobbins back for his third season in that role. Dobbins (5-10, 212) will be looking for his third 1,000-yard season in a row while leading a relatively young position room.

The backup role – or possibly a regular spot in the rotation – will be partially decided by whether junior Demario McCall sticks at running back or moves full-time to H-back. The most likely scenario is for McCall (5-9, 193) to be used in a variety of ways, including as a change-of-pace and third-down back in some packages, meaning he'll effectively be Dobbins' primary backup after rushing for 50 yards on eight carries last year with nine catches for 110 yards.

Also fighting for meaningful playing time



JOSH WINSLOW

KEY PLAYER – Senior linebacker Malik Harrison (39) is poised to be one of the top defensive players for Ohio State in 2019.

will be two freshmen – redshirt Master Teague (5-11, 215) and early enrollee Marcus Crowley, a 6-1, 200-pound four-star out of Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy. Teague has an advantage in that battle with a season in the program already under his belt. The Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Blackman product rushed for 106 yards and a score on 17 carries last year.

Wide Receiver

In order to project the depth chart at receiver, you have to break things down to three positions – X, Z and H – and the starters at all three spots are easy to pick.

At the X spot, the Buckeyes have their top two rotational players back in seniors Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor, and those two will certainly be expected to hold their places in the rotation in 2019.

Mack (6-2, 215) missed the final six games with a foot injury last season but still finished fifth on the team with 26 receptions for 331 yards and a score. Victor (6-4, 200), who needs to add more consistency to his game, had 21 receptions for 354 yards and four touchdowns, including a key catch-and-run in the 27-26 win at Penn State.

Junior Jaylen Harris (6-5, 215) and redshirt freshman L'Christian Smith (6-4, 207) could compete for time at X as well, with Harris being a potential breakout candidate this spring.

While the X receiver is typically the possession receiver, the Z spot is filled by the top deep threats. It's safe to expect sophomore Chris Olave to be the starter after he exploded onto the scene with two touchdowns against Michigan in The Game. Olave (6-1, 170) finished his freshman campaign with 12 receptions for 197 yards and three scores, building a ton of late momentum heading into an offseason that should lead to a breakout season.

With Olave penciled in as the starter, one of the biggest questions for wideouts coach

Brian Hartline this spring will be how to fill out the rotation at Z. Early enrollee Garrett Wilson (6-1, 180), a five-star prospect and one of the best wide receiver recruits to ever sign with Ohio State, will be expected to play right away, and spring practice will allow him the chance to prove himself early. Redshirt freshman Kamryn Babb (6-1, 189) should compete at this spot as well after missing 2018 with a torn ACL. He's expected to be healthy for spring camp. Sophomore Elijah Gardiner (6-3, 196) could be a candidate to surprise as well, although Olave, Wilson and Babb are likely to end up ahead in the pecking order.

That leaves H-back, where fifth-year senior K.J. Hill will be the starter, and he'll be expected to be one of the top playmakers on the team after catching 70 passes for 885 yards and six touchdowns last year. There's no question that Hill (6-0, 198) will start, but it will be up to fifth-year senior C.J. Saunders (5-10, 185) and redshirt freshman Jaelen Gill (6-1, 182) to compete for rotation roles.

Tight End

Luke Farrell (6-6, 250) was the starter at tight end as a sophomore, and there's no reason to think that will change early in 2019. Farrell caught 20 passes for 205 yards and a score last year while progressing as a blocker, becoming a dependable part of the offense last season.

Sophomore Jeremy Ruckert was the highest-rated tight end recruit ever signed by Urban Meyer at Ohio State and, if he continues to progress, could bring a completely different element to the offense from a pass-catching standpoint. Ruckert (6-6, 240) had just one reception for 13 yards while playing in 12 games last year.

Ohio State also has fifth-year senior Rashod Berry at tight end, and he progressed last season as well. Berry caught nine passes for 78 yards and two scores but, despite talent and experience, could find

himself at third on the depth chart when the 2019 season begins.

Offensive Line

There's certainly not going to be a final decision on the starting five along the offensive front this spring, but a crop of players has a chance to prove themselves before the battle ramps up in fall camp. Jackson will be expected to compete for a starting spot as well, but he doesn't count for the purposes of this projection.

One thing is certain along the front – junior Thayer Munford (6-6, 319) is going to be the starting left tackle after an outstanding season in 2018. Every other spot is up for grabs, though.

At guard, sophomore Wyatt Davis (6-4, 315), who started the Big Ten title game and the Rose Bowl in place of an injured Demetrius Knox, will have every chance to lock down a spot; in fact, it would be a surprise if he's not starting in 2019. Fifth-year senior Branden Bowen, who started at right guard in 2017 before breaking his leg midway through the season, is fully healthy again and aiming to get back in the lineup. Bowen (6-7, 312) could also compete at tackle, his more natural position, while junior Gavin Cupp (6-4, 308) spent some time on the two-deep at guard last season as well.

At center, the coaching staff has already made it clear that the plan is for sophomore Josh Myers (6-5, 308) to start with redshirt freshman Matthew Jones (6-4, 305) also likely to get reps there in the spring.

Opposite Munford will likely be a battle to start at right tackle between redshirt freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere, a former five-star, and fifth-year senior Joshua Alabi. Petit-Frere (6-6, 272) has a much higher ceiling and the coaching staff would like to see him grab a starting spot, but he has to put on more weight first. Alabi (6-5, 305) played extensively at left tackle against Maryland and started in place of Munford in the Rose Bowl last season, impressing on both occasions. His progress – while somewhat unexpected – has been significant over the past year.

Redshirt freshman Max Wray (6-7, 305) and early enrollee Ryan Jacoby (6-5, 270) are long shots to compete for time at tackle in 2019. Jacoby could also see some time at guard.

Defensive Line

Three starting spots on the defensive front are pretty much set, but various players are likely to rotate in for line coach Larry Johnson in 2019, just as they have the past few seasons.

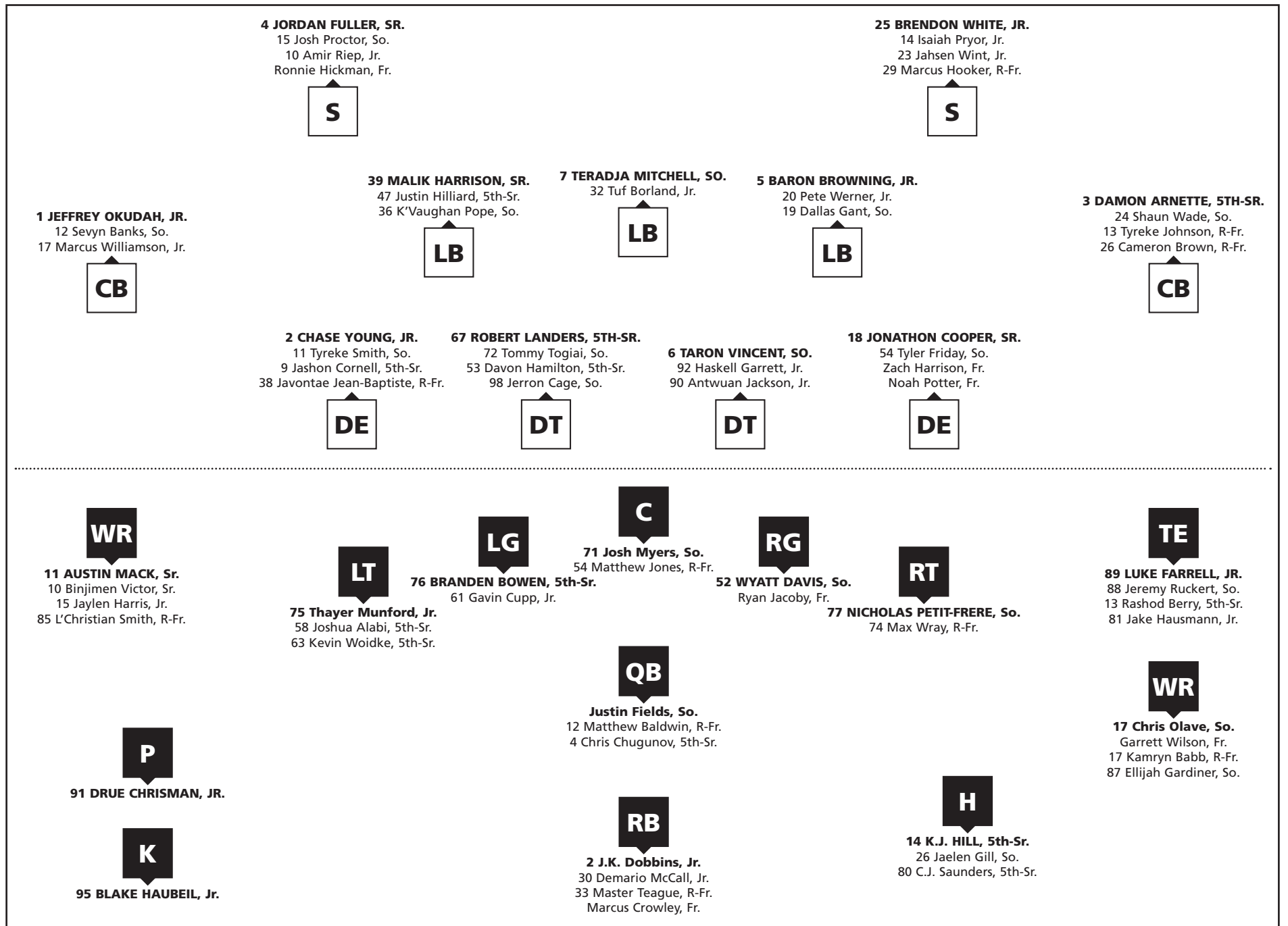
On the ends, sophomore Chase Young (6-5, 265) will be looking to build off his 10½ sacks season in 2018 before a likely early departure for the NFL. Opposite Young will be senior Jonathon Cooper (6-4, 257), who started 13 games last season while tallying 25 total tackles.

On the inside, fifth-year senior Robert Landers (6-1, 283) is likely to start while two sophomores – Tommy Togiai (6-2, 300) and Taron Vincent (6-2, 285) – could find themselves in the lineup as well. The most likely scenario would be Landers and Vincent starting with Togiai, fifth-year senior Davon Hamilton (6-4, 310) and junior Haskell Garrett (6-2, 293) rotating in as well.

The Buckeyes have a lot of depth at tackle with junior Antwan Jackson and sophomore Jerron Cage on the roster also, but neither has made a significant impact so far.

There's no lack of depth behind Young

PROJECTED 2019 SPRING DEPTH CHART



and Cooper, either. The next two in the rotation will likely be sophomores Tyreke Smith (6-3, 260) and Tyler Friday (6-3, 262) after both impressed in 2018. There's also fifth-year senior Jashon Cornell (6-3, 274), who had 15 tackles last year.

You can't forget about five-star Zach Harrison, either. The 6-5, 243-pound Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy Orange product was the gem of the 2019 recruiting class, and he's on campus early, aiming to make an impact as a freshman just like Smith and Friday did last year.

Wild cards at defensive end will be red-shirt freshman Javontae Jean-Baptiste (6-5, 235) and Alex Williams (6-7, 250) and early enrollee Noah Potter (6-5, 250) – three talented prospects who haven't had a chance to prove themselves at this level.

Linebacker

Linebacker might provide the most intriguing camp battle this spring despite the fact that all three starters are back. Senior Malik Harrison (6-3, 240), who tied for the team lead with 81 total tackles last year, took the biggest step forward in 2018 and should be starting again in 2019. The same can't necessarily be said for juniors Tuf Borland (6-1, 230) and Pete Werner (6-3, 236), who started most of last season.

In reality, it will be difficult for Ohio

State to keep sophomore Teradja Mitchell (6-2, 235) and junior Baron Browning (6-4, 238) off the field as they are likely the two linebackers with the highest ceilings on the roster. A starting trio of Harrison, Mitchell and Browning wouldn't be surprising at all – in fact, it might be expected with Borland (more of an inside run stopper) and Werner (a talented coverage 'backer) playing situational roles.

No matter who starts, though, the Buckeyes are not lacking in talent at linebacker. The position group also boasts sophomores Dallas Gant (6-3, 225) and K'Vaughan Pope (6-1, 226) as well as fifth-year senior Justin Hilliard (6-1, 230), who could be a dark horse candidate to finally crack the starting lineup in 2019.

Safety

Safety was a question mark for much of the 2018 season, but the Buckeyes found their ideal combination down the stretch with senior Jordan Fuller (tied for the team-best with 81 tackles with one interception) and junior Brendon White, who had 46 tackles and a pick. With a new defensive brain trust running the defense, though, scheme changes could lead to lineup changes.

Co-defensive coordinators Greg Mattison and Jeff Hafley (also defensive backs coach) could utilize different coverage looks or

some hybrid players, meaning athletes such as White (6-2, 210) could be used in a variety of roles with Fuller (6-2, 204) as the main deep safety.

If White plays closer to the line, that could lead to opportunities for sophomore Josh Proctor (6-2, 190), a popular pick as a potential breakout player in 2019 after he carved out a role on special teams last year.

Ohio State also returns sometimes-starter Isaiah Pryor (6-2, 197), who struggled at times in coverage but also showed flashes of his potential, and junior Jahsen Wint (5-10, 196), who are both candidates to play in a hybrid role as well.

Providing depth at safety are junior Amir Riep (6-0, 195), who could play cornerback as well, redshirt freshman Marcus Hooker (5-11, 192) and early enrollee Ronnie Hickman (6-1, 200), who is working back from an ACL injury this spring.

Cornerback

Ohio State returns two of three key rotation corners from 2018, but there's no guarantee of who will start in 2019. There's also no guarantee that Hafley will still employ a three-man rotation.

Junior Jeffrey Okudah (6-1, 199) was Ohio State's best cornerback at times last season, tallying 34 tackles and eight pass breakups to tie for the team lead. He's likely to start

in 2019 with fifth-year senior Damon Arnette (6-0, 195) and sophomore Shaun Wade (6-1, 192) also vying for spots. Both Arnette and Wade have extended experience at nickel, and either could fill that role this season. With the new staff in place, there could be plenty of opportunities for Okudah, Arnette and Wade to be on the field simultaneously.

Wade could be a candidate to be a breakout player as well. He led the team with three interceptions last season but hasn't been a permanent starter just yet.

There are a few younger players also pushing for time at corner. Sophomore Sevyn Banks (6-0, 195) became a key special teams contributor last year while redshirt freshman Tyreke Johnson (6-1, 193) is a former five-star prospect. Junior Marcus Williamson (5-11, 186) and sophomore Cameron Brown (6-0, 185) are well-regarded by the staff as well, but both struggled with injury issues last year.

Special Teams

In reality, there's no reason to go in depth on the special teams depth chart. The starters will remain the same with junior Drue Chrisman (6-3, 215) handling punting duties, junior Blake Haubeil (6-4, 225) starting at kicker and fifth-year senior Liam McCullough (6-2, 232) serving as long snapper for the fourth season in a row.

Bosa, Campbell Lead Crop Of Buckeyes At Combine

By JOE DEMPSEY & GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writers

The 2019 NFL Scouting Combine took place in Indianapolis from Feb. 26-March 4, and former Ohio State athletes were front and center throughout the workouts.

A total of 10 ex-Buckeyes made their way to Lucas Oil Stadium, the same location where they had helped Ohio State to back-to-back Big Ten titles. What follows is a breakdown of how each of the former Buckeyes fared at the combine.

The NFL draft is set for April 25-27 in Nashville, Tenn.

Nick Bosa

Bosa (6-3¾, 266) excelled in the 40-yard dash, finishing fourth among defensive linemen at 4.79 seconds, and in the 20-yard shuttle, taking second at 4.14 seconds, barely behind Eastern Michigan's Maxx Crosby (4.13). Perhaps most importantly, Bosa's 10-yard split in the 40 was clocked at 1.55 seconds, tying him for the third-fastest split at the position, according to NFL Network's Daniel Jeremiah.

The former Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year displayed his versatility, finishing fourth in the three-cone drill at 7.10 seconds, tied for seventh in the vertical jump at 33½ inches and eighth in the 225-pound bench press with 29 reps, which marked the most by a defensive end. Bosa, who recorded 17½ sacks in 30 career games, posted a broad jump of 9-8.

Bosa fielded an array of questions from the media, including many regarding the core muscle injury that caused him to miss the Buckeyes' final 11 contests.

"It was the year that I had been waiting for my whole career," Bosa said. "I started strong the first three games, and it just got torn away from me. It's something that I'll always think back to.

"Just watching the games, watching the Team Up North game, all that was painful, even though we whupped them. That made it a little better, but it was tough."

Parris Campbell

Campbell entered the combine with hype for the 40-yard dash and delivered. The 5-11½, 205-pounder blazed his way to a time of 4.31 seconds. He tied Andy Isabella of Massachusetts for first among the wide receivers March 2.

Campbell also opened eyes with his athleticism and explosiveness when he leaped an 11-3 broad jump, which followed a 40-inch vertical jump. On display with the best in the draft, the high school running back turned wide receiver belonged as he shot his way near the top of the position group.

"I think my ceiling is high for the position," Campbell said. "I made the transition when I got to college. It was a struggle for me early on but I continued to work, and it got to the place I am now. But definitely I think my ceiling aside, I think I have a lot of potential to still reach for sure."

Johnnie Dixon

While Campbell was a known commodity going in, Dixon flew under the radar until he rocked the combine with his straight-line speed on display in the 40-yard dash.

The 5-10½, 201-pounder finished eighth among the wide receivers with a time of 4.41 seconds. Dixon's official time, after Campbell's attempt, caused Jeremiah to remark, "At Ohio State, they can all fly."

For Dixon, the combine was the latest



TIM MOODY

LONG LAYOFF – Defensive lineman Nick Bosa saw his collegiate career come to an end Sept. 15 in Arlington, Texas. He returned to the field at the NFL Combine as one of the top prospects in attendance.

step on his journey back from chronic knee issues, an ongoing injury he battled for years before a breakout run from 2017-18 capped a five-year career in Columbus.

"When I was about to give up the game, it was just something that I didn't want to deal with injuries and it was tough," Dixon said. "I didn't know if I wanted to continue to play, but sometimes God – he does funny things. He'll try to lead you in a different direction. He gave me a second chance to come out here and do what I can do best and that was just playing football. So it was just a blessing to come back and prove that I can make plays, be a leader that the guys needed."

Dwayne Haskins

Haskins (6-3¾, 231) ran the 40-yard dash in 5.04 seconds, which marked the slowest time among quarterbacks. The former Scarlet and Gray gunslinger was reportedly dealing with leg cramps, and will run again March 20 when Ohio State hosts pro day at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

While fellow top quarterback prospect Kyler Murray of Oklahoma opted out of the on-field drills, Haskins showed no hesitation.

"I've been throwing for 11-plus years," Haskins said. "That's all I do. I was going to throw no matter what."

In addition to excelling in the passing drills, Haskins impressed NFL coaches and executives with his knowledge of the game while breaking down film.

The former Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year said he's not worried about Murray when asked about the Sooners' proclamation that he's the No. 1 signal caller in the draft, ahead of Haskins.

"I feel like I'm the top quarterback," Haskins said. "I just have to do what I do. It will speak for itself. I know what I can do and I'm just going to show that to teams."

Dre'Mont Jones

Jones measured in at 6-2¾, 281, and ran the 40-yard dash in 5.12 seconds. The All-American finished with the No. 12 time among defensive linemen in the 20-yard shuttle at 4.53 seconds, which is excellent for his size.

The Cleveland St. Ignatius product completed the three-cone drill in 7.71 seconds and did not participate in the bench press. Jones, who considers his basketball background an advantage, posted a broad jump of 9-2 and the No. 12 vertical leap at 31½ inches.

Jones enjoyed going through the combine process with Bosa, reflecting on the days when the NFL seemed like a distant dream.

"It's very special, because you know, we started playing together – I was a redshirt freshman, he was a freshman – and just watching both of ourselves develop over the time, it seems crazy," Jones said. "Because I just remember my redshirt freshman year, his freshman year, we were both saying, 'We're terrible, we suck, we need to get better. We're not good enough to play yet.'"

The duo combined for 51 tackles for loss and 27 sacks in their three seasons together, despite Jones missing two games as a sophomore and Bosa missing 11 as a junior. Bosa referred to Jones as the best pass-rusher in the draft, and Jones, who recorded 13 TFL and 8½ sacks as a junior, agreed.

"I definitely feel that way," Jones said. "I'm not surprised he feels that way. I've been proving it in practice from the day one when we first met and we were competing against the offensive line, and I definitely proved myself this year, and in past years, about my pass-rushing ability."

Michael Jordan

Jordan measured 6-5½ and 312 pounds with 10-inch hands and 34¼-inch arms, recording 19 reps on the 225-pound bench press and clocking a time of 5.27 seconds in the 40-yard dash among other workouts.

After the three-year starter at left guard (2016-17) and center (2018) declared Jan. 4 for the NFL draft, Jordan spent his subsequent two months of training at EXOS Sports in Pensacola, Fla., where he worked out twice a week with weights and trained daily for offensive line drills.

"They are two different positions," said Jordan, who later added that his NFL decision was difficult to make. "As a guard, you listen to everybody talk and you just kind of do it. At center, you are actually telling that person what to do. To play both positions, I have respect for both and it was really eye-opening."

"You just do it over and over and over until it is stuck in your head. I feel like teams see me as a guard, but I feel I can play any position."

Terry McLaurin

Campbell and Dixon performed March 2 in the first group, but McLaurin continued the Ohio State track show with the second stint of wide receivers.

Buckeyes At The 2019 NFL Combine

Name	POS	HT	WT	Arm (In.)	Hand (In.)	40-Yd. (Sec.)	Bench (Reps 225)	Vert. (In.)	Broad (Ft.)	3-Cone Drill (Sec.)	20-Yd. Shuttle (Sec.)	60-Yd. Shuttle (Sec.)
Nick Bosa	DL	6-4¾	266	33	10¾	4.79	29	33.5	9-8	7.10	4.14*	—
Parris Campbell	WR	5-11⅞	205	32¼	9½	4.31**	11	40.0	11-3*	—	4.03**	—
Johnnie Dixon	WR	5-10⅞	201	30¼	9⅝	4.41	16	37.5	10-0	—	4.43	—
Dwayne Haskins	QB	6-3⅝	231	33½	9⅝	5.04	—	28.5	—	—	—	—
Dre'Mont Jones	DL	6-2¾	281	33¾	9⅝	5.12	—	31.5	9-2	7.71	4.53	—
Michael Jordan	OL	6-5⅞	312	34¼	10	5.27	19	32.5	9-8*	7.71	4.71	—
Terry McLaurin	WR	6-0⅞	208	31½	9⅞	4.35	18	37.5	10-5	7.01	4.15	—
Isaiah Prince	OL	6-6½	305	35½	10⅞	5.09	23	27.0	9-7	7.90	5.02	—
Kendall Sheffield#	CB	5-11⅞	193	31½	9¼	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mike Weber	RB	5-9⅝	211	29¾	9⅝	4.47*	22	33.5	—	—	—	—

* – Top three in position group. ** – First or tied for first in position group. # – Sheffield suffered a pectoral injury during the bench press.

He picked up where his former teammates left off as McLaurin clocked a time of 4.35 seconds for fifth among wide receivers in the 40.

“The Buckeyes have come in here and are burning it up,” NFL Network’s Rich Eisen said on the broadcast after McLaurin’s runs.

The 6-0½, 208-pounder was also sharp during on-field drills, following in the footsteps of Campbell and Dixon.

McLaurin delivered another strong performance in front of scouts after he impressed with his week spent in Mobile, Ala., leading up to the Jan. 26 Senior Bowl.

“It was an added advantage because I was a familiar face when they came here,” McLaurin said. “It’s like they do more homework on me after they saw my showing at the Senior Bowl, where I felt I had a great week. A lot of scouts remember me from that. This week was kind of like follow-ups and has shortened my process a little bit because some teams I haven’t had to meet with twice.”

Isaiah Prince

Along with Jordan, Prince joined his three-year teammate on the offensive line as the two went through workouts with the position group March 1. Prince (6-6½, 305) ran a time of 5.09 seconds in the 40-yard dash and put 23 reps up on the bench press, with his arms measuring at 35½-inches.

After three years as the starter at right

tackle, Prince paid homage to how he developed throughout his collegiate career before taking the next step at the combine and eventually the draft.

“Every day is serious, every practice is serious,” Prince said. “Especially in practice, you’re competing against the best every day and it’s just an opportunity to grow professionally for the next level every day. You’re playing for something big every year, and it’s very important that you pay attention and learn how to contribute.

“I feel like Ohio State has done the best of preparing me all around – as a professional, as a young man and as a football player. The stuff that they’ve taught us, especially with ‘Real Life Wednesday,’ helping us outside of football – coaches mentoring me, just helping me grow as a young man and as a player.”

Kendall Sheffield

Sheffield (5-11⅞, 193) tore his left pectoral muscle during testing on the bench press at the combine. While trying for his seventh rep, Sheffield grabbed his left pectoral in apparent pain.

What resulted was a torn pec, which NFL Network’s Kimberly Jones reported on a March 4 television broadcast. ESPN’s Josina Anderson added that Sheffield planned to undergo a follow-up MRI in Houston.

Sheffield was “very disappointed” because he had been clocking 40-yard-dash times in the high 4.2-second range throughout the

past two months of training for the combine, according to Anderson.

The former Blinn College transfer did not make his 4:30 p.m. media availability March 3 because he was undergoing tests following the injury. The injury was similar to the torn pectoral suffered by former Ohio State interior offensive lineman Billy Price at the combine in 2018.

Mike Weber

Among the running backs on the field March 1, Weber made some money with “rave reviews” from NFL scouts, as NFL Network’s Jones reported, after he performed physically and technically from his 40-yard dash to on-field drills.

Weber (5-9⅞, 211) tied for third in the position group with a time of 4.47 seconds, showing straight-line speed after he specifically worked on that area of his game over the previous two months of training.

Weber, who declared for the draft Dec. 16, also excelled on the bench press with 22 reps, but the 40 time propelled him up boards for franchises to choose from in April.

“I’ve been getting a little slept on right now,” Weber said. “That’s something I can’t control. All I can control is coming out here and doing my best, showing these teams I should be at the top.”

Bonus: Jamel Dean

Dean transferred from Ohio State back

in 2015 after the Ohio State medical staff would not clear him to play due to a knee injury after he enrolled early. Dean sought a second opinion from sports medicine expert Dr. James Andrews and said he was cleared to play.

Ohio State told Dean that he could stay in school with his scholarship as a medical hardship, which would not count against the NCAA-sanctioned 85-scholarship limit. Dean wanted to play, however, and Auburn gave him that opportunity.

He tallied eight passes defended as a sophomore for the Tigers. Then as a junior, the former Buckeye had nine passes defended and two interceptions. Dean received the opportunity to showcase his abilities at the combine, which he had been looking forward to his whole life.

“I grew up watching the combine because I was always a fast guy,” Dean said, “and I wanted to see what a fast 40 looked like.”

Now, all Dean has to do is watch his combine tape to see what a fast 40 looks like – the speedy corner ran the second-fastest 40-yard dash overall at 4.30 seconds, behind only Mississippi’s Zedrick Woods (4.29).

Dean (6-1, 206) put together an all-around performance, finishing fifth among defensive backs and seventh overall in the vertical jump at 41 inches and tied for eighth among DBs in the broad jump at 10-10.

“It’s a wild experience for me,” Dean said. “This is something I’ve dreamed about since I was a kid. Now I’m actually living it.”

Wesson Suspended With Postseason Approaching

The March 1 press conference a day before Ohio State played at Purdue should have been a time for the players and coach Chris Holtmann to rehash the sizzling performance of freshman forward Justin Ahrens in the previous game, a 90-70 upset of No. 22 Iowa in which he shocked everyone with a career-high 29 points.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

Instead, all attention was focused on the latest kerfuffle for sophomore center Kaleb Wesson.

The university announced via a press release at about 12:30 p.m. – 45 minutes before the media availability – that Wesson was suspended indefinitely “for a violation of Ohio State Athletics Department policy.”

Holtmann addressed the issue as did graduate transfer Keyshawn Woods, but there was no opportunity to meet with Ahrens, who could have discussed how his barrage of three-pointers – he made six to tie the school record by a freshman – set up a rare inside-outside game that allowed Wesson to finish with his first double-double (18 points, 11 rebounds) since the Dec. 22 game against UCLA.

Woods said the loss of Wesson was impactful.

“He’s our leading scorer and our leading rebounder, but you’ve got to continue to keep going, keep this train running without him,” he said.

Wesson (6-9, 270) leads the Buckeyes with 14.6 points per game this season. The Westerville (Ohio) South product is also the team’s top rebounder at 6.7 per game.

“You don’t have to study our team to know how important he’s been for our team and this group and our margin for error not being significant as it is,” Holtmann said. “He’s been a really important part of our success.”

With Wesson out of the lineup, the out-matched Buckeyes were pummeled 86-51 by Purdue. The Boilermakers were 33 of 59 (55.9 percent) from the floor, including 11 of 21 (52.4 percent) on three-pointers.

The day before the game, Holtmann figured Wesson’s absence would be felt more at the defensive end than around the basket, and he was right.

“I think, obviously, Kaleb’s a terrific player and we’ve built a lot of our offense around him,” Holtmann said postgame. “I think the thing that I mentioned yesterday was when we’re playing well, defensively, the gap between his defense and our other guys’ defense at that position is seismic. And I think that’s where I’m concerned.”

There was no indication of exactly when Wesson would be reinstated as BSB went to press, but Holtmann said that he would return this season.

The Buckeyes play at Northwestern on March 6 and host Wisconsin on March 10 in the regular-season finale. The Big Ten tournament runs March 13-17 in Chicago.

Sophomore forward Kyle Young and freshman Jaedon LeDee were being counted on to pick up the slack with Wesson out. Young, though, is still limited in practice and playing time as he recovers from a stress fracture in his right leg in mid-January that caused him to miss four games.



KEVIN DYE

SIDELINED – Ohio State announced March 1 that leading scorer Kaleb Wesson (34) had been suspended indefinitely.

He had seven points and a team-high eight rebounds in 17 minutes vs. Purdue. LeDee tied his career high with 16 points in 22 minutes in his second career start.

Adding to the texture of the situation, Kaleb’s older brother, Andre, is a starter for the Buckeyes.

Woods talked of the family-like closeness on the team and the need to support the younger Wesson in his latest misstep.

Holtmann sat Kaleb Wesson out of his second college game last season for being late to team meetings. Also, Wesson and three teammates were scratched from the starting lineup earlier this season against Samford for being late to the pregame preparation.

“I’m obviously not making excuses but sometimes we want guys to grow both as players and as people, maybe quicker than what is reality,” Holtmann said.

“He’s grown in a lot of areas. We’ve certainly seen some significant development on the floor. He had a terrific academic semester last year, matter of fact his best academic semester he’s had here, in the fall, which was really pleasing to see. When you’re working with young people you understand that this is a process.”

The coach said since it was a violation of university policies, it is up to the athletics department in collaboration with the coaching staff to determine when Wesson will be back.

“Obviously there are some things, some expectations that we have that he needs to meet, and he needs to follow through on, and he will do that,” Holtmann said. “I’m confident he will do that.”

Holtmann last season suspended fifth-year senior Kam Williams for three games before allowing him back for the stretch run.

“To Kam’s credit, when he came back he really finished his game playing as well as anybody on our team,” Holtmann said at the March 1 press conference. “There are some reflections back to that moment.”

Justin Time

Now about that Ahrens kid. The assured first-year player from Versailles, Ohio, knew he was ready to contribute but was given little opportunity until starting the second half against Northwestern on Feb. 20 when he had four points, two rebounds and an assist in seven minutes.

Prior to playing at Maryland three days later, Ahrens displayed the confidence of a pure shooter.

“If you guys don’t know me yet, I’m as confident as ever,” he told the media.

He then had a career-high nine points vs. the Terrapins in his first start, going 3 for 5 on three-pointers. Still, no one was prepared for his bombs-away game vs. the Hawkeyes.

To put it in perspective, his 29 points

BIG Men's Basketball

	Conf.			Overall		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Purdue	15	3	.833	22	7	.759
Michigan	15	4	.789	26	4	.867
Michigan State	14	4	.778	23	6	.793
Wisconsin	12	6	.667	20	9	.690
Maryland	12	7	.632	21	9	.700
Iowa	10	8	.556	21	8	.724
Minnesota	8	10	.444	18	11	.621
Ohio State	8	10	.444	18	11	.621
Rutgers	7	11	.389	14	14	.500
Illinois	7	11	.389	11	18	.379
Indiana	6	12	.333	15	14	.517
Nebraska	5	13	.278	15	14	.517
Penn State	5	13	.278	12	17	.414
Northwestern	3	15	.167	12	17	.414

Feb. 12 Scores

Maryland 70, Purdue 56
Michigan State 67, Wisconsin 59
Penn State 75, Michigan 69

Feb. 13 Scores

Rutgers 59, Northwestern 56
Nebraska 62, Minnesota 61

Feb. 14 Score

Illinois 63, Ohio State 56

Feb. 16 Scores

Michigan 65, Maryland 52
Minnesota 84, Indiana 63
Purdue 76, Penn State 64
Iowa 71, Rutgers 69
Nebraska 59, Northwestern 50

Feb. 17 Score

Michigan State 62, Ohio State 44

Feb. 18 Score

Wisconsin 64, Illinois 58

Feb. 19 Scores

Purdue 48, Indiana 46
Penn State 95, Nebraska 71
Maryland 66, Iowa 65

Feb. 20 Scores

Michigan State 71, Rutgers 60
Ohio State 63, Northwestern 49

Feb. 21 Score

Michigan 69, Minnesota 60

Feb. 22 Score

Iowa 76, Indiana 70 (OT)

Feb. 23 Scores

Penn State 83, Illinois 76
Maryland 72, Ohio State 62

Purdue 75, Nebraska 72

Wisconsin 69, Northwestern 64

Feb. 24 Scores

Michigan State 77, Michigan 70
Rutgers 68, Minnesota 64

Feb. 26 Scores

Ohio State 90, Iowa 70

Indiana 75, Wisconsin 73 (2OT)

Feb. 27 Scores

Penn State 78, Maryland 61

Purdue 73, Illinois 56

Feb. 28 Scores

Michigan 82, Nebraska 53

Minnesota 62, Northwestern 50

March 2 Scores

Indiana 63, Michigan State 62

Wisconsin 61, Penn State 57

Purdue 86, Ohio State 51

Rutgers 86, Iowa 72

March 3 Scores

Michigan 69, Maryland 62

Illinois 81, Northwestern 76

March 5 Games

Nebraska at Michigan State, 7 p.m.

Purdue at Minnesota, 8 p.m.

March 6 Games

Penn State at Rutgers, 7 p.m.

Ohio State at Northwestern, 9 p.m.

March 7 Games

Iowa at Wisconsin, 7 p.m.

Indiana at Illinois, 8 p.m.

March 8 Game

Minnesota at Maryland, 6:30 p.m.

March 9 Games

Purdue at Northwestern, 2:30 p.m.

Michigan at Michigan State, 8 p.m.

March 10 Games

Illinois at Penn State, Noon

Rutgers at Indiana, Noon

Iowa at Nebraska, 2 p.m.

Wisconsin at Ohio State, 4:30 p.m.

2018-19 Ohio State Men's Basketball Statistics

18-11 Overall (8-10 Big Ten)
Statistics through games of March 2

Player	G-GS	Min.-Avg.	FG-FGA	Pct.	3P-3PA	Pct.	FT-FTA	Pct.	Rebounds		PF-FO	A	TO	BS	ST	Pts.-Avg.
									O-D	T-Avg.						
Kaleb Wesson	28-27	719-25.7	137-268	.511	22-62	.355	112-154	.727	67-120	187-6.7	89-4	51	62	18	28	408-14.6
C.J. Jackson	28-26	850-30.4	109-267	.408	50-129	.388	65-82	.793	13-101	114-4.1	55-1	96	69	6	34	333-11.9
Andre Wesson	29-28	846-29.2	89-196	.454	29-88	.330	49-66	.742	38-87	125-4.3	80-2	51	48	14	14	256-8.8
L. Muhammad	28-27	800-28.6	77-201	.383	31-83	.373	51-66	.773	14-64	78-2.8	55-1	53	42	2	29	236-8.4
D. Washington	29-2	512-17.7	79-205	.385	37-115	.322	17-27	.630	8-65	73-2.5	40-0	32	30	0	7	212-7.3
Keyshawn Woods	29-9	758-26.1	74-187	.396	19-68	.279	29-35	.829	10-70	80-2.8	61-0	70	39	4	17	196-6.8
Kyle Young	25-12	516-20.6	69-95	.726	1-5	.200	25-44	.568	40-74	114-4.6	55-1	22	19	12	14	164-6.6
Justin Ahrens	20-3	186-9.3	21-45	.467	15-38	.395	10-11	.909	3-27	30-1.5	18-0	6	12	3	6	67-3.4
Jaedon LeDee	24-2	161-6.7	18-41	.439	0-3	.000	39-53	.736	15-26	41-1.7	26-0	6	11	6	3	75-3.1
Musa Jallow	29-9	393-13.6	25-66	.379	9-30	.300	13-20	.650	24-52	76-2.6	31-1	12	19	8	14	72-2.5
Joey Lane	13-0	35-2.7	4-6	.667	3-4	.750	0-0	.000	0-6	6-0.5	3-0	6	3	0	2	11-0.8
Danny Hummer	9-0	21-2.3	1-3	.333	0-1	.000	0-2	.000	0-1	1-0.1	4-0	1	4	0	2	2-0.2
Harrison Hoofkin	1-0	1-1.0	0-0	.000	0-0	.000	0-0	.000	0-1	1-1.0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0-0.0
TEAM									36-37	73-2.5				9		
Ohio State	29	5,798	703-1,580	.445	216-626	.345	410-560	.732	268-731	999-34.4	517-10	406	367	73	170	2,032-70.1
Opponents	29	5,794	659-1,585	.416	195-596	.327	379-509	.745	263-694	957-33.0	553-15	323	366	84	173	1,892-65.2

OSU Men's Basketball Signees

Players in the class of 2019 who have signed letters of intent to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
DJ Carton	PG	6-1	190	★★★★	Bettendorf, Iowa
Alonzo Gaffney	SF	6-9	190	★★★★	Wolfeboro (N.H.) Brewster Academy
EJ Liddell	PF	6-6	220	★★★★	Belleville (Ill.) West

equaled the number of points he had scored for the season until the Maryland game.

"He was open too much," Iowa coach Fran McCaffery said. "Give him credit, he made six three-pointers. That's impressive."

Ahrens was more concerned with trying to help the Buckeyes get to the NCAA Tournament.

"We don't really talk about it much, but

in the locker room we all know how bad we want to be there," he said. "If you don't make the tournament it's kind of a bummer. It's not what you want to experience in college basketball."

Woods said the team was excited seeing Ahrens firing away.

"Justin always has the energy no matter what time of the day it is," Woods said.

"It could be 8 in the morning, late, it don't matter.

"He brings a lot of spirit to the team because all he wants to do is see his teammates do well. He wants himself to do well and he works really, really hard. So to see Justin have a night like he had against Iowa, we all felt he deserved it."

Ahrens excites the fans as well with fist bumps and high-fives after scoring, something that Holtmann cautiously endorses.

"It's good. With all these things as a coach you're not trying to inhibit a player's personality and what makes a player who he is," the coach said. "I do think there is a level of maturity and understanding that comes with the game moves fast and you have to

be able to move and concentrate quickly to the next play.

"We've talked to him about that. The time for celebrating is usually with your teammates in postgame situations, but his exuberance, his fun, his passion has been tremendous to see."

As is the case with many young players, inconsistency is a problem. Ahrens went from hero to getting zero points at Purdue, attempting one three-pointer in 20 minutes.

Mouthful

McCaffery had more to say after the game vs. the Buckeyes than just commenting on Ahrens' shooting. Unfortunately for him, he said the wrong things to the wrong people, and it cost him a two-game suspension and a \$10,000 fine.

Several media members reported hearing his profanity-laced diatribe at the officials, accusing them of cheating, in the hallway of the Value City Arena visiting locker room area, which is near the media work room.

The Iowa athletics department suspended him for the March 2 game vs. Rutgers and at Wisconsin on March 7. The Big Ten supported the sanction, issued a public reprimand and fined Iowa \$10,000, which the school said McCaffery would pay.

McCaffery and his son Connor, who plays for him, were each assessed a technical a minute apart late in the game. Holtmann was also given a technical during the game.

"My comments directed towards a game official were regretful (sic)," the elder McCaffery said in a statement. "I apologize to Big Ten Conference officials, Iowa Athletics, my players and staff, and the tremendous Hawkeye fans. This behavior is not acceptable, and I take full responsibility for my inappropriate comments."

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Jackson Blossomed As A Leader In Columbus

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

C.J. Jackson transferred to Ohio State from Eastern Florida State, a junior college in Brevard County, Fla., three years ago.

With his final season in Columbus nearing an end, BSB asked Jackson if he could have imagined being a two-year starter and team captain when he made the move from the JUCO-level to the Ohio State men's basketball team.

"Probably not," Jackson said with a smile, "just from all the reputation of the program.

"And when I came here I just wanted to be a part of something special – that was the biggest thing. I wouldn't have expected to be the leader by my senior year or anything like that. But it's definitely an honor to be the leader of the team, the captain of the team at a program like this. And I'm just thankful for every day that I get to be a part of it."

Jackson drastically improved from the time he arrived on campus as a wide-eyed JUCO transfer. The 6-1 point guard averaged a pedestrian 5.6 points, 2.9 assists and 2.5 rebounds per game as a sophomore. Then his production spiked in his second season as a Buckeye, averaging 12.6 points, 3.9 assists and 3.9 boards per game last season.

Through the first 28 games of his senior campaign, Jackson is averaging 11.9 points, 3.4 assists and 4.1 rebounds per outing.

The Charlotte, N.C., native is one of the Buckeyes' most intense players on defense, often hitting the floor for loose balls and diving into the stands to make a play. His statistics support his improvements on the defensive end as well. After averaging 0.8 steals in his first season, Jackson averaged 1.0 steal as a junior and led the team at 1.2 steals per game as of March 2.

The versatile point guard's improved jump shot has made him a legitimate offensive threat. After hitting just 32.1 percent of three-pointers as a sophomore, Jackson showed tremendous improvement by knocking down 37.9 percent last season. The former JUCO transfer took another step forward as a senior, hitting 38.8 percent of his treys as of March 2.

The Buckeye point guard was asked if it has hit him yet that his collegiate career is

nearing its end, but he said he has not put much thought into it.

"All I can control is this year, and I'm pretty sure that's the same mind-set of everybody on the team," Jackson said. "And the coaching staff – they've done a good job just expressing how much in the race that we still are in it, and how much fun the rest of the season can be. We're by no means out of it. And so we're just going to keep focus on what we can control."

So far in his Ohio State career, Jackson has done an excellent job of controlling what he can control. This is shown by his improved defense and shooting, but the soft-spoken guard has also made strides that cannot be tracked on a stat sheet.

"Just being more vocal, that was kind of the biggest difference that I had to transition into from this year and last year," Jackson said. "But the biggest thing is the guys just accepted me in being the leader of the team. And they kind of embraced it and there was no butting heads with anyone."

Jackson added that different guys on the team lead in their own ways, which alleviates some of the weight off his shoulders. Sophomore forward Kyle Young witnessed Jackson grow as a leader firsthand.

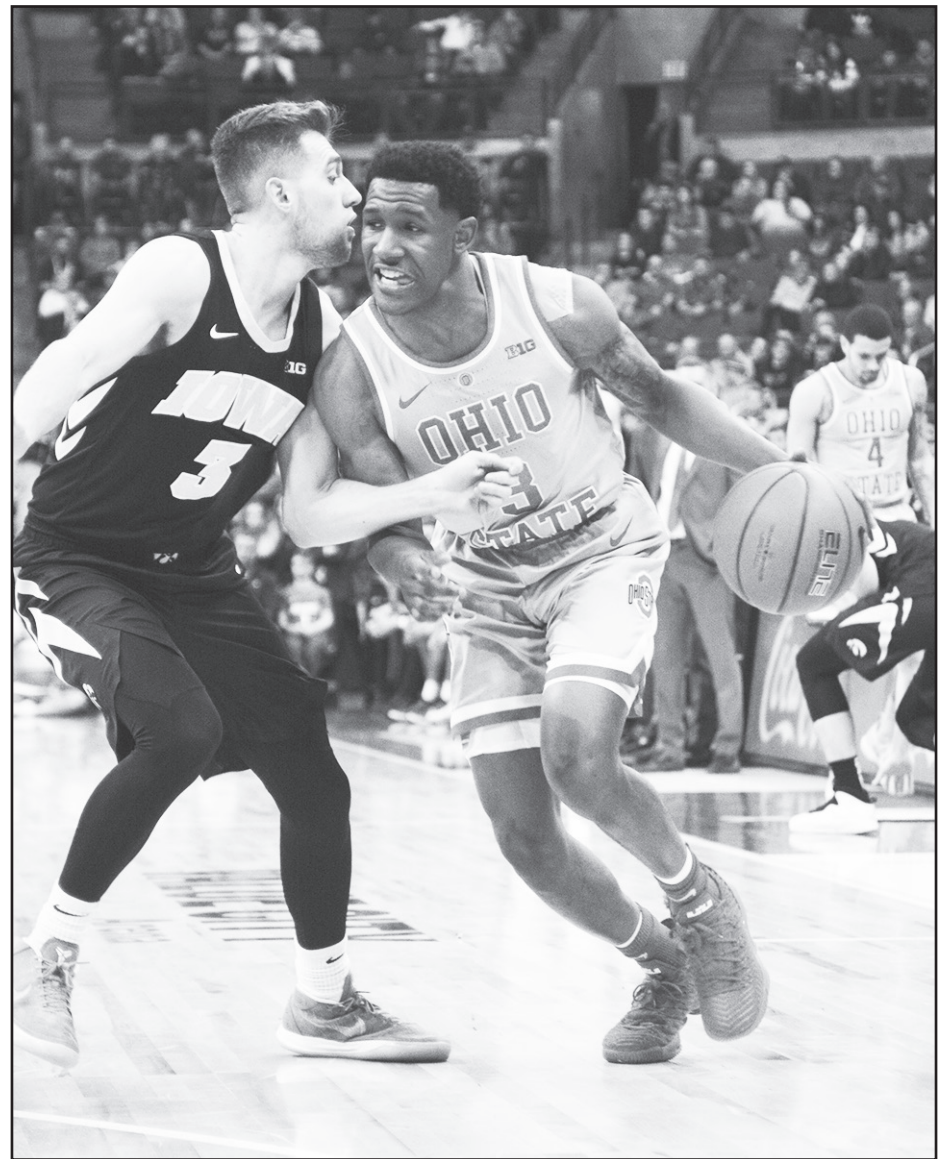
"With him being a leader, you know, a leader is not someone that you just say and you designate like, 'C.J., you're our leader now,' or anything like that," Young said. "It's someone that's going to lead by example, show guys the right things to do with effort on the court, how they are off the court, stuff like that."

Young added that he and Jackson grew much closer throughout the offseason and that the veteran point guard's guidance gave him the confidence to know he can play at a high level.

Young averaged just 1.8 points and 1.6 rebounds in 8.6 minutes per game while shooting 44.2 percent from the field as a freshman. A more confident Young has improved to 6.6 points and 4.6 boards in 20.6 minutes per game, shooting at an astounding 72.6-percent clip as of March 2.

Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann continually pushes his starting point guard to be more vocal but has seen tremendous growth despite Jackson's quiet nature.

"I think C.J.'s done a good job," Holtmann said of Jackson's leadership. "What I love about C.J. is he really cares about the team, and he cares about Ohio State winning. I



KEVIN DYE

LONG JOURNEY – Senior C.J. Jackson (3) has become a key player for the Buckeyes since arriving as a JUCO transfer in 2016.

believe that wholeheartedly. And I think out of that comes a lot of good stuff.

"Do I wish at times he'd be a little more assertive in some areas when it comes to that? And be more demonstrative in his leadership? Sure. But man, I just love the kid and how badly he wants his team to perform well, and sometimes that even hurts him on the floor. But I think he's done a good job."

Jackson has come a long way since first coming to Columbus as a JUCO transfer, growing as a defender, a shooter and, above all, a leader. The ultracompetitive

point guard is soaking it all in as the Scarlet and Gray face an uphill path to the NCAA Tournament.

"It hasn't hit me all the way yet," Jackson said of his final season rapidly concluding. "But I did see the first March Madness commercial like two days ago, so then that just kind of showed, yeah, it is coming to an end. It's really close.

"But I'm just trying to enjoy it as much as I can with my teammates and the coaches. And it's a really fun group of guys, so I really wouldn't want to be with anyone else besides with them."

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Buckeyes Inconsistent As B1G Season Winds Down

By JOE DEMPSEY, JAMES GREGA & CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writers

The Ohio State men's basketball team played six times since BSB last went to press, posting a 2-4 record with a key win over Iowa and an upset loss against Illinois.

After the stretch, the Buckeyes sit at 18-11 overall and 8-10 in Big Ten play. What follows are recaps of Ohio State's past six contests.

Illinois 63, Ohio State 56

The Ohio State men's basketball team's three-game winning streak was snapped at the hands of Illinois, 63-56, at Value City Arena on Feb. 14.

"It's a tough conference," junior forward Andre Wesson said. "Every night you can get beat if you don't show up, and we came out tonight and weren't prepared. And that's on me and us older guys. We need to get the younger guys prepared. And that's what happens, that's how you get beat."

The young trio of sophomore guard Trent Frazier, freshman guard Ayo Dosunmu and freshman forward Giorgi Bezhanishvili led the way for the visitors, providing 15 points on 6-of-11 shooting, 15 points on 4-of-10 shooting and 13 points on 6-of-9 shooting, respectively.

Senior guard C.J. Jackson led the Buckeyes with 17 points, shooting 4 of 9 from the field, 1 of 1 from distance and 8 of 11 at the charity stripe, but committed a game-high seven turnovers.

"He got himself into some difficult decisions with the ball, and seven turnovers is a lot," said Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann. "I don't question how hard he competed. I think he competed, it's just – those turnovers were critical."

The Buckeyes (16-8, 6-7) appeared to be off to an excellent start in front of the crowd of 12,420 when freshman guard Luther Muhammad weaved through the Fighting Illini defense and found Jackson, who used a pump fake in the corner to free himself for a three-pointer, extending Ohio State's lead to 7-3.

The home team cooled off quickly, and Illinois (10-15, 6-8) scored six unanswered points to steal a 9-7 lead. After more than eight minutes of back-and-forth basketball, the visitors went on a 7-0 run and pushed their lead to 27-18 with 4:21 until halftime.

Ohio State responded with a 9-3 run to close the half, trailing 30-27 at intermission after a Kaleb Wesson three-pointer with 36 seconds on the clock.

After Jackson made it 32-31 Illini with a pair of free throws early in the second half, Illinois ignited a quick 8-2 run. Bezhanishvili completed an and-one and hit a jump hook, and Frazier added a three-pointer while Jackson made a Buckeye layup, leaving the Illini ahead, 40-33 at the 15:54 mark.

Thanks to a rebound putback by Andre Wesson, a short jumper from sophomore forward Kyle Young and an old-fashioned three-point play by Jackson, the Buckeyes tied the game at 40 with 13:02 remaining.

After more than two minutes of scoreless hoops, Illinois responded with back-to-back layups by junior guard Andres Feliz.

Then OSU freshman guard Duane Washington stole the show, throwing down a pair of dunks in transition with the second slam resulting in another three-point play. The freshman's five-straight points gave

Ohio State a 45-44 lead, but the visitors regained advantage on a pair of free throws by Dosunmu and a Bezhanishvili jumper.

Dosunmu drilled a three-pointer in between a free throw and a jumper from fifth-year senior Keyshawn Woods. Then Frazier hit a jumper to push the Illini lead to 53-48. Kaleb Wesson knocked down a pair of foul shots before Bezhanishvili finished an easy layup to make it 55-50.

The Buckeyes trailed 57-51 with 1:37 left when Jackson drove to the basket and converted a layup then hit a free throw to bring Ohio State within three.

Feliz came through with a clutch layup for the Illini before Muhammad hit a pair of foul shots to shrink the lead back to three. Needing a stop to stay alive, Ohio State surrendered a backbreaking three-pointer to Dosunmu with 29 seconds to play, ending its chances.

Kaleb Wesson scored 11 points on 3-of-7 shooting, grabbed five rebounds and came away with two steals before fouling out with 2:19 left. Andre Wesson contributed 10 points on 3-of-7 shooting while grabbing five boards.

The Buckeyes struggled mightily to find a rhythm offensively, shooting 17 of 47 from the field (36.2 percent) and 2 of 13 from beyond the arc (15.4 percent), but they made 20 of 25 free throws.

Michigan St. 62, Ohio State 44

A winnable game become a forgettable loss when No. 11 Michigan State hung a 62-44 defeat on Ohio State at the Breslin Center in East Lansing, Mich., on Feb. 17.

The crowd of 14,797 was squirming, but the Spartans (21-5, 12-3) ended the game on a 20-2 run in the final 7:40 after a Jackson three-pointer tied the score at 42 for the Buckeyes, who lost their second straight.

"The 18-point win, that's unfair to Ohio State because they played their tail off and that was a close game the whole way," said Michigan State coach Tom Izzo.

Jackson's field goal would be the final one for the Buckeyes (Kaleb Wesson and Jaedon LeDee would each make a free throw), who

Illinois 63, Ohio State 56

Feb. 14, 2019												
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
		1	2									F
Illinois (10-15, 6-8 B1G)	30	33	-									63
OSU (16-8, 6-7 B1G)	27	29	-									56
Illinois	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF						
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF						Pts.
Bezhanishvili	33	6-9	1-2	3-4	1	1						13
Frazier	34	6-11	0-1	0-3	3	2						15
Dosunmu	32	4-10	5-8	1-3	3	3						15
Williams	17	1-1	0-0	0-2	0	5						2
Jordan	20	1-2	1-2	1-1	1	4						4
Griffin	16	1-7	0-0	1-3	1	2						2
Nichols	15	1-3	1-2	1-1	0	1						3
Jones	2	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0						0
Feliz	22	4-10	1-2	1-5	1	4						9
De La Rosa	7	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1						0
Underwood	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0						0
Totals	200	24-54	9-17	9-24	10	23						63
Percentages: FG: 44.4%. FT: 52.9%. 3-point goals: 6-21 (Frazier 3-5, Dosunmu 2-6, Jordan 1-2, Griffin 0-4, Nichols 0-1, Jones 0-1, Feliz 0-2). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 6 (Bezhanishvili 4, Jordan, Griffin). Turnovers: 13 (Bezhanishvili 5, Frazier 2, Dosunmu 2, Jordan, Nichols, Feliz, De La Rosa). Steals: 7 (Bezhanishvili 2, Griffin 2, Nichols 2, Williams).												
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF						
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF						Pts.
A. Wesson	28	3-7	4-5	2-3	1	2						10
K. Wesson	29	3-7	4-4	2-3	0	5						11
Muhammad	30	0-6	2-2	0-4	1	4						2
Jallow	19	1-2	0-0	0-2	0	0						2
Jackson	32	4-9	8-11	2-3	2	2						17
Washington	22	3-7	1-1	0-3	0	1						7
Young	15	2-3	0-0	2-3	1	5						4
Woods	25	1-6	1-2	0-4	3	3						3
Totals	200	17-47	20-25	9-26	8	22						56
Percentages: FG: 36.2%. FT: 80.0%. 3-point goals: 2-13 (A. Wesson 0-1, K. Wesson 1-4, Muhammad 0-3, Jackson 1-1, Washington 0-3, Woods 0-1). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 1 (Jackson). Turnovers: 18 (Jackson 7, A. Wesson 3, Washington 3, K. Wesson 2, Woods 2, Muhammad). Steals: 8 (K. Wesson 2, Jackson 2, A. Wesson, Muhammad, Washington, Young). Officials: Curry, Epley, Dorsey. A: 12,420.												

Michigan St. 62, Ohio St. 44

Feb. 17, 2019												
Breslin Center • East Lansing, Mich.												
		1	2									F
OSU (16-9, 6-8 B1G)		31	13			-						44
MSU (21-5, 12-3 B1G)		25	37			-						62
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
A. Wesson	29	2-10	0-0	2-6	4	2	4					
K. Wesson	29	5-11	2-5	2-7	0	1	12					
Muhammad	21	1-9	0-0	0-0	1	2	2					
Jallow	20	1-2	0-0	2-5	2	3	3					
Jackson	27	3-9	0-0	0-4	2	0	8					
Washington	24	1-7	1-2	0-2	0	4	4					
Ahrens	4	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	1	0					
Lane	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
LeDee	2	0-0	1-2	0-0	0	1	1					
Young	20	3-4	0-0	1-0	0	1	6					
Woods	23	2-4	0-0	0-2	0	3	4					
Totals	200	18-56	4-9	12-27	9	18	44					
Percentages: FG: 32.1%. FT: 44.4%. 3-point goals: 4-15 (A. Wesson 0-2, K. Wesson 0-1, Muhammad 0-2, Jallow 1-1, Jackson 2-3, Washington 1-5, Woods 0-1). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 2 (K. Wesson, Young). Turnovers: 15 (A. Wesson 3, K. Wesson 3, Jallow 3, Muhammad 2, Woods 2, Jackson, Washington). Steals: 7 (A. Wesson 3, Jackson 2, Jallow, Woods).												
Michigan State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Henry	9	0-1	0-0	1-1	1	1	0					
Goins	33	4-8	0-0	0-10	2	1	10					
Ward	19	3-7	3-4	1-5	0	1	9					
Winston	34	3-15	6-6	0-3	8	3	13					
McQuaid	37	5-12	0-0	2-3	4	0	14					
Ahrens	5	2-6	0-0	0-1	1	1	6					
Loyer	5	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Hoiberg	1	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	3					
Brown	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Kithier	10	1-1	0-0	0-3	0	3	2					
Tillman	17	2-4	1-2	3-3	1	4	5					
Bingham	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
George	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Totals	200	21-55	10-12	7-30	17	15	62					
Percentages: FG: 38.2%. FT: 83.3%. 3-point goals: 10-26 (Goins 2-6, Winston 1-7, McQuaid 4-6, Ahrens 2-5, Goiberg 1-1, Tillman 0-1). Team rebounds: None. Blocked shots: 8 (Goins 3, Winston 2, Ward, Ahrens, Tillman). Turnovers: 10 (Winston 3, Henry 2, Goins 2, Ward 2, Tillman). Steals: 7 (Tillman 2, Goins, Winston, Ahrens, Brown, Kithier). Officials: Simpson, Szlec, Boroski. A: 14,797.												

hit 19.0 percent (4 of 21) from the floor in the second half, when they committed 11 of their 15 turnovers.

For the game, OSU shot 32.1 percent (18 of 56). MSU was at 38.2 percent (21 of 55).

"I think you give Michigan State credit for how they defended, particularly in the second half but really throughout the game," Holtmann said.

OSU led 31-25 at the half but was outscored 37-13 in the final 20 minutes.

Ohio State teetered on letting the first half slip away but responded big time for

the six-point halftime lead by going on a 7-0 run and keeping the Spartans scoreless the final 3:14.

OSU led 18-12 just past the midway point of the first half before Michigan State ran off eight straight points while the Buckeyes missed six consecutive shots for a 20-18 MSU advantage at the 5:38 mark.

Continued On Page 24

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OSU Falls At Maryland Despite Solid Display

Continued From Page 23

The Buckeyes stormed out of a time-out with buckets by Kaleb Wesson, Andre Wesson and Muhammad to assume a 24-20 lead. In a game of momentum, the Spartans went up 25-24 on a pair of free throws by Nick Ward but went cold from there.

Musa Jallow's triple put OSU up 27-25. Jackson made it 29-25 on a layup, and Young scored off a feed by Jallow for the final points of the half with 1:15 left.

After the game was tied for the seventh and final time, Kyle Ahrens, older brother of OSU freshman Justin Ahrens, put the Spartans ahead 45-42 with a three-pointer from the left corner with 7:26 to play in the back-and-forth second half. Kenny Goins followed with a jumper to give the Spartans their largest lead to that point, 47-42, and Matt McQuaid added additional margin with a trey at the 6:01 mark as the Buckeyes fell apart.

The 44 points were the fewest in a game for Ohio State since being held to 43 by Wisconsin on Dec. 31, 2009.

Kaleb Wesson led Ohio State with 12 points, but in the second half he took only two shots and made one, scoring four points in the stanza. Jackson was next with eight points for the game.

"They missed a couple of shots," Izzo said. "Kaleb Wesson missed a couple inside, maybe tired, I don't know. We go through the same thing. I wouldn't question their effort, their cutting ability. I thought they played harder than us, and it bothers me to say that."

Holtmann agreed with Izzo's assessment of Kaleb Wesson.

"He did get fatigued today, more so than I remember him getting fatigued in a game," Holtmann said.

McQuaid led the Spartans with 14 points and Cassius Winston added 13. Goins chipped in 10 points and 10 rebounds. Ward, an MSU standout and Columbus-area product, had nine points in just 19 minutes and played only briefly in the second half because of an injury that was later determined to be a broken left hand.

Ohio State 63, Northwestern 49

Ohio State won a game it badly needed after losing its previous two.

The Buckeyes got 22 points and eight rebounds from Kaleb Wesson for a 63-49 victory over Northwestern at Value City Arena on Feb. 20. He was the lone player in double figures for the Buckeyes.

Most importantly, the big man had just one foul in 33 minutes, dished out four assists and had two blocks.

"I give a lot of credit to Kaleb," Holtmann said. "I thought he had a really good approach in this game. He was really aggressive from the tip. He did a heck of a job with his aggressiveness on both ends."

Vic Law had 10 points for Northwestern (12-14, 3-12), which lost its seventh in a row in front of 12,032 in Columbus.

It was not a good shooting night all around as witnessed by the 24-20 halftime score in favor of OSU.

The Buckeyes, who hadn't made a bucket the final 7:40 against Michigan State in their previous game, didn't fare much better in the opening seven minutes vs. Northwestern, but fortunately for them the Wildcats were just as bad.

The teams combined to make two of their first 19 shots and missed all nine tries from beyond the arc until Washington canned a triple with 12:39 left to give the Buckeyes a 5-3 lead.

Despite the poor shooting, the Buckeyes led 14-8 before Northwestern ran off six straight points for a tie at the 5:31 mark. Kaleb Wesson scored five consecutive points to give Ohio State a 19-14 advantage before A.J. Turner stopped the run with a field goal.

Andre Wesson scored three straight for a 22-16 lead, and Ryan Taylor responded with a bucket. Kaleb Wesson made a pair of foul shots for the Buckeyes' final points as they went the last 2:50 without a field goal. Law's jumper pulled Northwestern to within four with 34 seconds left.

The Buckeyes received a scare when Andre Wesson left the game with 1:23 remaining in the first half. He suffered an elbow contusion but was able to return for

Ohio St. 63, Northwestern 49

Feb. 20, 2019												
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
		1	2									F
NU (12-14, 3-12 B1G)		20	29	-								49
OSU (17-9, 7-8 B1G)		24	39	-								63
Northwestern	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Law	35	3-8	3-6	0-7	2	1	10					
Pardon	31	4-9	0-0	4-5	2	3	8					
Benson	17	0-3	1-2	2-3	2	2	1					
Gaines	25	2-4	2-2	0-2	0	2	7					
Taylor	20	1-6	2-2	0-1	0	2	4					
Greer	4	1-2	0-0	0-1	0	0	3					
Kopp	18	1-7	0-0	1-2	1	2	2					
Turner	27	4-9	0-0	0-1	0	2	9					
Falzon	23	2-9	0-0	1-3	1	1	5					
Totals	200	18-57	8-12	11-25	8	15	49					
Percentages: FG: 31.6%. FT: 66.7%. 3-point goals: 5-29 (Law 1-3, Pardon 0-2, Benson 0-1, Gaines 1-2, Taylor 0-4, Greer 1-1, Kopp 0-4, Turner 1-5, Falzon 1-7). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: None. Turnovers: 8 (Benson 2, Law, Pardon, Kopp, Turner, Falzon, TEAM). Steals: 4 (Gaines 2, Taylor 2).												
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
A. Wesson	31	3-6	1-2	0-5	1	1	7					
K. Wesson	33	8-14	5-5	2-6	4	1	22					
Muhammad	31	0-4	2-2	0-3	3	2	2					
Jallow	5	0-0	0-0	0-2	0	0	0					
Jackson	18	2-8	0-0	0-2	2	4	5					
Washington	28	3-7	0-0	0-5	2	0	8					
Ahrens	7	2-2	0-0	0-2	1	1	4					
Lane	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
LeDee	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Young	14	4-5	0-0	2-2	2	2	8					
Woods	30	3-7	1-1	1-2	3	1	7					
Hummer	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	25-54	9-10	5-30	18	12	63					
Percentages: FG: 46.3%. FT: 90.0%. 3-point goals: 4-20 (A. Wesson 0-2, K. Wesson 1-4, Muhammad 0-2, Jackson 1-5, Washington 2-5, Woods 0-2). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 4 (K. Wesson 2, Jallow, Woods). Turnovers: 8 (Woods 3, A. Wesson 2, K. Wesson 2, Jackson). Steals: 3 (K. Wesson, Muhammad, Washington). Officials: Riley, Oglesby, Sciroto. A: 12,032.												

Maryland 72, Ohio State 62

Feb. 23, 2019									
XFINITY Center • College Park, Md.									
	1	2		F					
OSU (17-10, 7-9 B1G)	28	34	-	62					
UMD (21-7, 12-5 B1G)	33	39	-	72					
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.		
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Ahrens	27	3-5	0-0	0-4	0	3	9		
A. Wesson	37	5-9	0-0	1-1	4	3	13		
K. Wesson	30	3-12	0-2	3-4	1	1	7		
Muhammad	19	1-8	0-0	1-3	2	0	3		
Woods	35	4-11	0-0	0-2	3	1	10		
Jallow	10	1-4	0-0	0-0	0	3	2		
Washington	24	5-12	4-4	3-2	4	4	15		
Young	18	1-2	1-1	1-2	0	3	3		
Totals	200	23-63	5-7	10-18	14	18	62		
Percentages: FG: 36.5%. FT: 71.4%. 3-point goals: 11-33 (Ahrens 3-5, A. Wesson 3-6, K. Wesson 1-5, Muhammad 1-6, Woods 2-3, Jallow 0-2, Washington 1-6). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 3 (Ahrens, K. Wesson, Woods). Turnovers: 7 (Muhammad 3, Ahrens 2, A. Wesson, Washington). Steals: 9 (Woods 4, Ahrens 2, A. Wesson, Muhammad, Jallow).									
Maryland	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.		
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Fernando	35	5-9	4-5	4-6	4	3	14		
Smith	23	2-5	1-2	1-3	0	3	5		
Cowan	37	6-10	4-5	0-4	4	0	19		
Ayala	10	0-1	0-0	0-2	1	0	0		
Morsell	32	2-8	6-6	3-5	2	1	11		
Tomaic	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Wiggins	29	3-4	0-0	0-3	0	1	7		
Smith	19	4-7	5-7	0-1	1	1	14		
Lindo	14	1-3	0-0	1-3	0	2	2		
Totals	200	23-47	20-25	10-30	12	11	72		
Percentages: FG: 48.9%. FT: 80.0%. 3-point goals: 6-17 (Smith 0-2, Cowan 3-4, Ayala 0-1, Morsell 1-4, Wiggins 1-2, Smith 1-3, Lindo 0-1). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 5 (Smith 2, Fernando, Cowan, Morsell). Turnovers: 15 (Smith 4, Cowan 4, Fernando 2, Morsell 2, Wiggins 2, Smith). Steals: 3 (Morsell 2, Fernando).									
Officials: Boroski, Pfifer, Wymer. A: 17,569.									

The Buckeyes played without Jackson because of an injury to his right shoulder. He had started 25 of 26 games and was averaging 12.5 points and 4.2 rebounds.

His absence was felt when the Buckeyes showed their lack of experience and poise.

When Andre Wesson made a reverse dunk with 16:25 to play in the game, the Buckeyes trailed 39-36, but they would go 5:35 without a point, missing nine straight shots.

What had been a close game became a 13-0 run for the Terrapins and a 52-36 advantage with 11:12 left that OSU was unable to overcome.

Ohio State's effort impressed Maryland coach Mark Turgeon.

"I told our guys before the game when C.J. wasn't playing that some of my worst losses in my career was when the other team's point guard hasn't played because everyone relaxes, 'Oh, we're going to beat this team easily,' " he said. "Well, no. They have a lot of top-50 players in their locker room, and another guy (Woods) stepped up today in his absence."

Ohio State trailed 33-28 at the half.

The Terrapins had run off seven straight points, taking a 27-19 advantage with 4:50 left when Anthony Cowan scored off a fast break after a turnover.

Holtmann called a timeout, and his team responded with six straight points, the last two on a layup by Woods with 2:42 left before half. It was Maryland's turn for a timeout, and Serrel Smith came out of the break firing, hitting a three-pointer for a 30-25 lead.

Woods made a trey, but Smith canned 1 of 2 free throws to go up 31-28. Smith added a bucket with 53 seconds to go for the final points of the half.

After Maryland's surge in the second half, the Buckeyes pulled to within five at 57-52 on a three-pointer by Washington, and Ahrens, in his first start, canned another triple to make it 57-55 with 5:27 remaining.

Ahrens then fouled Smith beyond the arc while he was shooting, and Smith

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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

made all three from the charity line with 5:04 to go.

Darryl Morsell then made two more foul shots followed by Wiggins' slam for a 64-55 lead at the 2:48 mark. Ahrens countered with a three to end the dry spell, but a Bruno Fernando bucket extended the lead to 66-58 to hold off the Buckeyes.

Washington led OSU with 15 points. Andre Wesson had 13 points and Woods 10. Leading scorer Kaleb Wesson scored just seven points, making 3 of 12 field goals.

Cowan had 19 points for Maryland while Fernando and Smith each added 14.

OSU shot 36.5 percent (23 of 63) from the floor and 33.3 percent (11 of 33) from beyond the arc for the game.

The Buckeyes committed 18 fouls to 11 for Maryland, which resulted in the Terps making 20 of 25 free throws (80.0 percent), while OSU was 5 for 7 (71.4 percent). The good news for the Buckeyes was they turned the ball over only seven times. Maryland had 15 miscues.

Ohio State 90, Iowa 70

Firmly on the NCAA Tournament bubble, Ohio State needed a quality win.

Behind a career high in points from an unlikely source, the Buckeyes got that Feb. 26 in front of 14,118 at Value City Arena.

Ahrens, making just his second start, poured in a career-high 29 points as Ohio State knocked off No. 22 Iowa, 90-70.

Ahrens, who had scored nine in his first start at Maryland, missed his first four shots from the perimeter before making six straight from long range to close the game. He finished 7 of 11 shooting and a perfect 9 for 9 from the free-throw line.

"I was really hot out there," Ahrens said. "It felt good. When we run that four out, one in look with Kaleb inside, it really opens the floor for open shots."

Slightly overshadowed by Ahrens' breakout performance, Wesson tallied a double-double, pouring in 18 points and collecting 11 boards.

"I would say that Kaleb Wesson's physicality in the second half was as great a reason as any for our win," Holtmann said. "He opened up so many things for so many people. As a coach, I look at his impact as being as significant as any."

Nursing a 40-37 lead early in the second half, Ohio State rattled off an 11-5 run which was capped by three straight jumpers from behind the arc. Ahrens canned the first. That shot was followed by a Jackson three-pointer with the shot clock expiring before Ahrens made his second straight shot, forcing Iowa to call a timeout as Ohio State took a 51-42 lead with 15:27 to play.

Ohio State's lead swelled to 18 with 8:41 to play after Ahrens was fouled shooting a three-pointer. The attempt fell short, but Ahrens made all three free throws to give the Buckeyes a 74-56 advantage. Iowa cut the deficit down to 11 with 4:08 to play before a foul called on Connor McCaffery and a subsequent technical foul led to four straight free throws for the Buckeyes and an 82-67 lead. Less than a minute later, Fran McCaffery, Iowa's head coach and father to Connor, earned a technical of his own as OSU coasted to a 20-point win.

The Hawkeyes had opened the game on a 7-0 run before the Buckeyes answered with a 9-0 spurt of their own. Ohio State

led by as many as six in the opening frame following a Washington fastbreak layup with 9:11 to play before halftime to make it 19-13. Washington finished with 10 points, all in the first half.

Seconds later, Kaleb Wesson picked up his second foul of the first half, causing Holtmann to direct his frustration at multiple referees. During a later timeout, Holtmann was assessed a technical foul, which kicked off a 13-3 Iowa spurt, giving the Hawkeyes a 31-25 lead, capped by a three-pointer from Iowa forward Nicholas Baer.

"I deserved it," Holtmann said of the technical. "I just lost my cool."

The Iowa run forced Holtmann to insert Kaleb Wesson back into the lineup with 3:44 remaining in the half, which led to a pair of free throws from the Buckeye big man with 2:46 in the frame. On the following Hawkeye possession, Ahrens stepped in front of an errant Iowa pass and converted a fastbreak layup, drawing a Flagrant 1 foul in the process. He converted both free throws to knot the game at 31 before a layup from Young and three-pointer from Jackson gave the Buckeyes a 36-33 lead at the break.

Five Buckeyes scored in double figures as Woods scored 13 starting in place of Jackson and Andre Wesson chipped in 11 points. Iowa was led by Joe Wieskamp with 17. Tyler Cook recorded a double-double with 12 points and 10 rebounds.

Ohio State helped its cause with a 22 of 24 night from the charity stripe, good for a sizzling 91.7 percent.

Purdue 86, Ohio State 51

Purdue pounded undermanned Ohio State 86-51 at Mackey Arena in West Lafayette, Ind., on March 2 in front of 14,804 fans.

The Buckeyes played their first game since Kaleb Wesson had been suspended indefinitely the day before for violating athletic department policies. He is the Buckeyes' leading scorer and rebounder.

"We just didn't turn the page very well," Jackson said. "Especially when you play anyone in this league, the way we played today is just not good enough. We'll lose to any team when we play like this."

In Wesson's place, LeDee, a freshman, made his second start. He tied his career high of 16 points to lead the Buckeyes. Washington added nine points.

OSU could not get its shots to fall. The Buckeyes made only 2 of 19 three-pointers (10.5 percent) including 0 for 6 in the second half, a big reason they were 16 of 48 (33.3 percent) from the floor. Purdue was 33 of 59 (55.9 percent), including 11 of 21 (52.4 percent) on treys.

"You've got to really make them work and make them earn it and find a way to just make them really earn what they're getting, and we didn't do that tonight," Holtmann said. "Most

of their threes were wide-open looks, and the ones they missed were really wide-open, for the most part clean looks. They're not going to miss too many open ones."

Ohio State might have been no match for the 14th-ranked Big Ten leaders even with Kaleb Wesson, but the game got out of hand early for the Buckeyes, who trailed 48-20 at the half as the Boilermakers hit 57.6 percent of their shots (19 of 33), including 57.1 percent (8 of 14) on three-pointers.

Ohio State 90, Iowa 70

Feb. 26, 2019										
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio										
		1	2							F
Iowa (21-7, 10-7 B1G)	33	37	-							70
OSU (18-10, 8-9 B1G)	36	54	-							90
Iowa										
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Garza	19	3-6	0-0	0-0	2	2	6			
Cook	32	6-14	0-0	1-9	0	1	12			
Bohannon	32	2-8	4-4	0-2	2	1	8			
Moss	22	0-4	3-3	1-1	1	2	3			
Wieskamp	25	5-6	2-2	0-3	1	3	17			
Baer	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Dailey	15	3-4	2-3	0-0	0	1	8			
Ash	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Kriener	18	4-7	1-2	2-3	0	1	9			
Till	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
McCaffery	18	1-3	0-0	0-1	3	4	2			
Baer	16	2-2	0-0	0-2	1	3	5			
Totals	200	26-55	12-14	4-22	10	18	70			

Percentages: FG: 47.3%. FT: 85.7%. **3-point goals:** 6-19 (Garza 0-1, Cook 0-2, Bohannon 0-5, Moss 0-2, Wieskamp 5-6, Ash 0-1, McCaffery 0-1, Baer 1-1). **Team rebounds:** 1. **Blocked shots:** 1 (McCaffery). **Turnovers:** 10 (Cook 4, Bohannon 2, Wieskamp 2, McCaffery, Baer). **Steals:** 4 (Cook 2, Moss, McCaffery).

Ohio State										
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Ahrens	30	7-11	9-9	0-3	2	2	29			
A. Wesson	40	4-9	1-1	4-1	3	1	11			
K. Wesson	26	6-11	6-7	4-7	4	2	18			
Muhammad	8	0-2	0-0	0-1	0	2	0			
Woods	29	4-8	5-5	0-1	2	1	13			
Jallow	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0			
Jackson	34	2-8	0-0	0-5	6	3	6			
Washington	13	4-8	0-0	0-3	1	0	10			
Lane	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Young	14	1-1	1-2	0-3	0	1	3			
Hummer	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Hoofkin	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0			
Totals	200	28-58	22-24	9-27	19	12	90			

Percentages: FG: 48.3%. FT: 91.7%. **3-point goals:** 12-32 (Ahrens 6-10, A. Wesson 2-6, K. Wesson 0-1, Muhammad 0-2, Woods 0-3, Jackson 2-6, Washington 2-4). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 3 (A. Wesson 2, K. Wesson). **Turnovers:** 11 (K. Wesson 3, Ahrens 2, Muhammad, Woods, Jackson, Washington, Young, TEAM). **Steals:** 7 (K. Wesson 3, Jackson 2, Ahrens, Washington). **Officials:** McDunkins, Dorsey, Szalc. **A:** 14,118.

Purdue 86, Ohio State 51

March 2, 2019										
Mackey Arena • West Lafayette, Ind.										
		1	2							F
OSU (18-11, 8-10 B1G)	20	31	-							51
Purdue (22-7, 15-3 B1G)	48	38	-							86
Ohio State										
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Ahrens	20	0-1	0-0	1-3	0	3	0			
LeDee	22	4-9	8-11	1-2	1	4	16			
A. Wesson	26	2-8	1-2	1-1	3	4	6			
Muhammad	26	0-2	4-4	0-0	1	1	4			
Jackson	29	1-6	0-0	1-0	1	1	2			
Jallow	12	0-2	0-0	0-1	2	0	0			
Washington	20	4-9	1-2	0-3	1	0	9			
Lane	6	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0			
Young	17	2-3	3-6	3-5	0	1	7			
Woods	20	3-8	0-0	0-1	0	3	7			
Hummer	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Totals	200	16-48	17-25	8-19	9	18	51			

Percentages: FG: 33.3%. FT: 68.0%. **3-point goals:** 2-19 (Ahrens 0-1, A. Wesson 1-4, Muhammad 0-2, Jackson 0-4, Jallow 0-2, Washington 0-3, Woods 1-3). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 1 (LeDee). **Turnovers:** 9 (Muhammad 2, Jackson 2, LeDee, A. Wesson, Jallow, Young, Hummer). **Steals:** 5 (Muhammad 2, LeDee, Jackson, Jallow).

Purdue										
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Eifert	22	3-3	0-0	2-3	1	2	8			
Haarms	19	5-7	2-4	3-3	0	0	12			
Edwards	29	9-16	3-3	1-1	2	2	25			
Cline	28	3-9	0-0	0-5	4	1	8			
Eastern	20	3-8	0-0	1-5	3	5	6			
Wheeler	22	4-5	1-3	2-5	0	0	10			
Hunter	20	2-2	1-2	0-1	3	1	5			
Boudreaux	12	2-3	1-2	0-0	1	3	6			
Luce	2	0-0	1-2	0-0	1	0	1			
King	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Williams	9	2-4	0-0	0-2	2	2	5			
Stefanovic	14	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	3	0			
Totals	200	33-59	9-16	10-29	17	19	86			

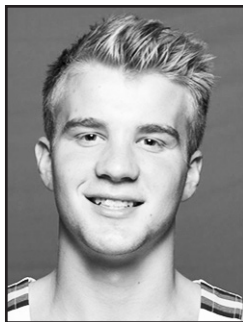
Percentages: FG: 55.9%. FT: 56.3%. **3-point goals:** 11-21 (Eifert 2-2, Edwards 4-8, Cline 2-7, Wheeler 1-2, Boudreaux 1-1, Williams 1-1). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Haarms, Cline). **Turnovers:** 8 (Hunter 2, Eifert, Edwards, Cline, Eastern, Williams, Stefanovic). **Steals:** 6 (Eifert 2, Wheeler, Hunter, Williams, Stefanovic). **Officials:** Pfeifer, Ek, Wymer. **A:** 14,804.

any given night, but you've got to bounce back quick. We have goals that we want to continue postseason play, so we have to turn the page quick."

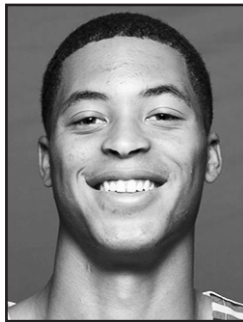
Carson Edwards had 19 of his game-high 25 points in the first half for the Boilermakers (22-7, 15-3) and 7-3 center Matt Haarms had 12 points.

With Kaleb Wesson absent in the middle, Purdue outrebounded OSU, 39-37, and won the scoring battle in the paint, 34-26.

The Boilermakers completed their third unbeaten season at Mackey Arena, going 15-0 overall and 10-0 in conference play. They have a 17-game home winning streak with their last home loss coming at the hands of the Buckeyes last season, 64-63, on Feb. 7, 2018.



Justin Ahrens



Jaedon LeDee

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Buckeyes Enter B1G Tourney With High Hopes

When the Ohio State women's basketball team started its 2018-19 season, there were plenty of questions on head coach Kevin McGuff's mind.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Garrett Stepien

The Buckeyes reloaded their roster after they lost six players from the 2017-18 campaign, which had resulted in a Big Ten title and NCAA tournament bid, with eight additions – five graduate transfers and three freshmen.

OSU lost one of its top players in Cleveland State graduate transfer guard Ashanti Abshaw, who was expected by the coaching staff to step into a top role on offense, after a torn ACL in late October before the season began. Ohio State then stumbled out of the gate in its grueling nonconference schedule, starting 4-5 while staring down the Big Ten gauntlet.

On the fly, McGuff and company retooled. Freshman forward Dorka Juhasz developed into a double-double machine, and graduate guard Carly Santoro emerged as a go-to scorer, among other improvements, resulting in the Buckeyes coming together and going 14-13 overall with a 10-8 conference mark in the regular season.

OSU finished fifth in the Big Ten standings, earning a first-round bye in the March 6-10 conference tournament at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis. Ohio State starts

its Big Ten championship defense March 7 against the winner between 13th-seeded Wisconsin and 12th-seeded Penn State, conference foes McGuff's squad swept in the regular season.

"I just think that one thing we've emphasized is making sure we continue to get better," McGuff told BSB. "I think anyone who's watched us knows that we're significantly better now than we were when we started the year, and I think it's a credit to our kids. But that's just what we've talked about (in practice) when we huddle up before we leave, was that, 'Hey, man, this time of year, it's going to be about playing really hard and playing with great focus, and anything short of that's going to leave us very vulnerable.' We don't have a great margin for error, so that's what we've got to continue to hang our hat on."

Although the Buckeyes backpedaled into the bracket March 3 when they blew their 16-point lead over Rutgers and fell 66-56 to the Scarlet Knights after getting outscored 20-6 in the fourth quarter, McGuff's players were upbeat about the postseason.

"I just think it fuels our fire to go into the Big Ten tourney and just make some noise," said Santoro, who graduated from Bowling Green last spring and transferred to OSU over the offseason for an opportunity to elevate her competition as she chases a postseason in Columbus. "We're not going to hang our heads on this game. We're just going to learn from it and prepare for the



Carly Santoro

OSU Women's Basketball Signees & Verbal Commits

Players in the class of 2019 who have signed letters of intent to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings via ESPN.com.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School/Hometown
Kierstan Bell	G	6-1	★★★★★	Canton (Ohio) McKinley
Rikki Harris	G	5-11	★★★★★	Indianapolis North Central
Kaelynn Satterfield	W	6-0	★★★★★	Middle Village (N.Y.) Christ The King
Jacy Sheldon	G	5-7	★★★★★	Dublin (Ohio) Coffman
Aixa Wone	F	6-2	★★★	Pamplona, Spain

Players in the class of 2020 who have issued verbal commitments to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings via ESPN.com.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School
Gabby Hutcherson	F	6-2	★★★	Westerville (Ohio) South
Anyssa Jones	G	5-9	★★★	Westerville (Ohio) South

next team that we have and just get better. A loss like this just isn't fun, but we're going to use it to motivate us."

Around the program for the past five years, including the past season's Big Ten title, forward Makayla Waterman echoed those sentiments.

"I'm excited," Waterman said. "It's my last one, and most of these guys haven't been there. I just will probably tell them 10 times, 15 times before then – teams are completely different when they get to the Big Ten tournament. So whatever team you think you played in the beginning of the season,

they're not the same at the beginning of the tournament. The Big Ten's such a tough conference anyway. I just think that if we go into each game, game to game, we'll be pretty good."

With its win over Ohio State, Rutgers secured the third seed and second-round bye. The Scarlet Knights are joined by fourth-seeded Michigan, second-seeded Iowa and top-seeded regular-season champion Maryland atop the bracket.

Should the Buckeyes beat the winner of the Badgers and Lions, they would

enter the quarterfinals March 8 against the Wolverines. OSU needs four victories to take the tournament entirely, its only legitimate hope for an NCAA tournament bid as the WNIT remains an option otherwise.

OSU Receives 'Positive Reception' From Recruits

Among the several-thousand people in attendance Feb. 17 at Value City Arena for Ohio State's 70-68 victory against Wisconsin were commitments and targets for the next two cycles.

Seated behind the OSU bench were Canton (Ohio) McKinley five-star guard Kierstan Bell (No. 6 overall), Indianapolis North Central five-star point guard Rikki Harris (No. 24 overall), Middle Village (N.Y.) Christ the King five-star wing Kaelynn Satterfield (No. 39 overall) and Dublin (Ohio) Coffman five-star guard Jacy Sheldon (No. 41 overall) – four of the five signees for 2019. Barcelona, Spain, three-star forward Aixia Wone remains overseas.

Sources confirmed to BSB that the recruits on hand for Ohio State's win over the Badgers also included the Buckeyes' two pledges from the 2020 class – Westerville (Ohio) South's three-star duo of guard Anyssa Jones (5-9) and forward Gabby Hutcherson (6-2).

Plank's Cafe



Dorka Juhasz
Freshman Forward
Pecs, Hungary

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Buckeyes Close Regular Season In Good Form

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Since BSB last went to press, the Ohio State women's basketball team won four straight games before closing the regular season with a loss to Rutgers.

During the stretch, the Buckeyes beat Rutgers once before falling in the finale and had two wins over Wisconsin sandwiched around a victory against Michigan State.

With the Big Ten tournament set to begin March 6, the Buckeyes hold a 14-13 overall record after going 10-8 in conference play.

What follows are recaps of each of Ohio State's five games played since the last print edition of BSB.

Ohio State 59, Rutgers 39

After its 26-point loss Feb. 10 against then-No. 16 Iowa, Ohio State bounced back Feb. 14 at Rutgers.

Before 1,849 at the RAC in Piscataway, N.J., the Buckeyes started strong as they ran away with a 59-39 win over the No. 23 Scarlet Knights.

Playing without fifth-year senior forward Makayla Waterman (knee), who did not make the trip and missed her first game on the season after she had started all 22 of OSU's previous contests, the Buckeyes started freshman forward Aaliyah Patty, and she stepped up with six points and six rebounds.

Patty's performance complemented double-digit scoring from a trio of guards in Adreana Miller (game-high 14 points), Carly Santoro (12 points) and freshman Janai Crooms (10 points).

"She played great," head coach Kevin McGuff said of Miller, who shot 5 of 7 and drilled three treys in a homecoming of sorts for the native of nearby Somerset, N.J. "Especially with (Waterman) out, we needed somebody like that to step up, and Adreana was fantastic."

Freshman forward Dorka Juhasz added nine points and a game-high 13 rebounds for Ohio State.

Leading 6-5 in the first, the Buckeyes (11-12, 7-7 Big Ten) ripped off a 21-1 run that

spilled into the second quarter, leaving the Knights (17-7, 9-4) down 27-6 with 8:00 to play before the half.

Rutgers stopped the drought on a layup from Victoria Harris at the 6:25 point, but Carmen Grande's three-pointer 30 seconds later put Ohio State in front 30-8.

Rutgers cut Ohio State's lead to 35-20 on Tekia Mack's layup at the 8:11 point of the third quarter before Crooms answered with a layup at the 7:04 mark. The lead fluctuated, but Ohio State still led 42-26 going into the final 10 minutes.

The Knights cut the deficit to 15 points twice – the last time coming at 47-32 with 6:11 left – before Ohio State pulled away down the stretch. Miller's make from long range with 5:43 to go created some separation at 50-32, and Crooms' pair of free throws put the Buckeyes back up by 20 points, 52-32, 18 seconds later. OSU never led by less than 17 the rest of the way.

Ohio State was 45.8 percent (22 of 48) from the field and 33.3 percent (5 of 15) on three-pointers. The Buckeyes could have made the margin of victory even greater, but they were just 10 of 21 from the line for a dismal 47.6 percent.

The real story, though, was the Buckeyes' defense. OSU kept the Knights to 26.2 percent (16 of 61) from the floor and 9.5 percent (2 of 21) from long range, holding former Ohio State guard Sierra Calhoun scoreless on 0-for-6 shooting.

Rutgers was led by nine points apiece from Arella Guirantes and Stasha Carey. The Knights suffered their third straight loss by double digits.

Ohio State 70, Wisconsin 68

When Ohio State returned to the hardwood Feb. 17 before 5,931 at Value City Arena in Columbus, McGuff had to wake the Buckeyes up before they scored a 70-68 win over Wisconsin.

"We just didn't have the right mental energy to start the game," McGuff said.

Ohio State (12-12, 8-7) opened the first quarter up 8-7 at the 4:35 mark, but the Badgers ended the final 3:20 of the frame on a 7-1 spurt, capped by Jasmine Hale's jumper

Ohio State 59, Rutgers 39

Feb. 14, 2019												
The RAC • Piscataway, N.J.												
	1	2	3	4	F							
OSU (11-12, 7-7)	23	12	7	17	59							
RU (17-7, 9-4)	6	12	8	13	39							
Ohio State	Total FG FT				Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	32	4-9	1-2	1-12	1	0	9					
Patty	34	3-8	0-1	1-5	1	1	6					
Grande	40	2-6	3-4	0-5	8	2	8					
Crooms	37	3-8	4-8	1-4	5	2	10					
Santoro	36	5-10	1-2	4-1	0	1	12					
Miller	21	5-7	1-4	0-3	0	3	14					
Totals	200	22-48	10-21	11-33	15	9	59					
Percentages: FG: 45.8%. FT: 47.6%. 3-point goals: 5-15 (Juhasz 0-2, Patty 0-2, Grande 1-1, Santoro 1-5, Miller 3-5). Team rebounds: 7. Blocked shots: 5 (Juhasz 3, Patty 2). Turnovers: 20 (Juhasz 8, Grande 5, Crooms 2, Santoro 2, TEAM 2, Patty). Steals: 11 (Crooms 6, Patty 2, Juhasz, Grande, Santoro).												
Rutgers	Total FG FT				Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Carey	32	4-10	1-1	3-7	1	3	9					
Broughton	11	0-2	1-2	1-0	0	1	1					
Pelc	20	2-6	0-0	0-1	0	0	6					
Wilson	14	0-5	0-0	0-1	0	3	0					
Guirantes	35	3-16	3-4	3-6	0	0	9					
Mack	16	3-5	0-0	2-2	0	2	6					
Calhoun	14	0-6	0-0	0-1	0	1	0					
Cryor	26	1-5	0-0	1-0	6	2	2					
Harris	24	3-4	0-0	1-2	1	3	6					
Gilles	8	0-2	0-0	2-1	1	1	0					
Totals	200	16-61	5-7	14-21	9	18	39					
Percentages: FG: 26.2%. FT: 71.4%. 3-point goals: 2-21 (Carey 0-1, Pelc 2-4, Wilson 0-1, Guirantes 0-6, Mack 0-1, Calhoun 0-4, Cryor 0-4). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 4 (Carey 2, Harris 2). Turnovers: 12 (Carey 3, Cryor 3, Broughton 2, Wilson, Guirantes, Mack, Calhoun). Steals: 8 (Carey 3, Cryor 2, Mack, Calhoun, Harris).												
Officials: Smith, McConnell, Garland. A: 1,849.												

Ohio State 70, Wisconsin 68

Feb. 17, 2019												
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
	1	2	3	4								F
WIS (12-14, 3-11)	14	22	13	19								68
OSU (12-12, 8-7)	9	21	23	17								70
Wisconsin												
	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Howard	28	8-16	2-3	0-8	2	4	18					
Laszewski	30	3-7	0-0	2-3	1	3	6					
Karlis	36	2-8	2-6	3-5	4	4	6					
Van Leeuwen	30	1-4	3-4	0-0	4	4	5					
Beverley	36	3-9	2-2	0-2	4	3	10					
Gilreath	25	5-9	4-4	0-1	1	5	19					
Hale	15	2-3	0-0	0-1	1	5	4					
Crowley	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	24-56	13-19	7-22	17	28	68					
Percentages: FG: 42.9%. FT: 68.4%. 3-point goals: 7-20 (Karlis 0-4, Van Leeuwen 0-2, Beverley 2-5, Gilreath 5-9). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 1 (Howard). Turnovers: 10 (Karlis 3, Howard 2, Van Leeuwen 2, Beverley 2, Gilreath). Steals: 9 (Howard 3, Karlis 2, Beverley 2, Laszewski, Van Leeuwen).												
Ohio State												
	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	37	9-12	3-6	6-9	1	2	21					
Patty	22	2-3	1-2	0-5	0	4	5					
Grande	40	3-11	5-7	1-5	5	3	13					
Crooms	29	5-9	3-3	0-3	2	4	14					
Santoro	34	3-10	5-9	0-2	0	4	12					
Miller	23	1-1	0-0	0-1	1	3	3					
Caretti	16	0-1	2-2	0-1	1	1	2					
Totals	200	23-47	19-29	8-28	10	21	70					
Percentages: FG: 48.9%. FT: 65.5%. 3-point goals: 5-18 (Juhasz 0-1, Grande 2-9, Crooms 1-1, Santoro 1-5, Miller 1-1, Caretti 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 1 (Juhasz). Turnovers: 16 (Grande 4, Crooms 4, Santoro 2, Caretti 2, Juhasz, Patty, Miller, TEAM). Steals: 5 (Santoro 2, Juhasz, Patty, Crooms). Officials: Statore, Marsh, Carry. A: 5,931.												

in the frame after four Suzanne Gilreath free throws, but OSU answered with a 10-2 run to lead 53-49 at the end of the period.

Buckets from OSU's graduate guard duo of Grande and Santoro started a 12-1 run for a 65-52 Buckeye lead with 4:14 to go in the fourth quarter. Wisconsin clawed back with a 16-5 stretch to close the game, highlighted by three-pointers from Niya Beverley at the 18-second mark and Gilreath with five ticks left to pull the Badgers within one. But Santoro drained 1 of 2 free throws on Ohio State's final possession, and the Buckeyes escaped with the two-point win.

Without Waterman for the second straight game as she remained day-to-day, Ohio State featured four players in double figures, led by Juhasz's game-high 21 points on 9-of-12 shooting with 15 rebounds. Crooms chipped in 14 points, while Grande (13) and Santoro (12) rounded out the Buckeyes' double-digit scorers.

OSU shot 48.9 percent (23 of 47) from the field and 27.8 percent (5 of 18) on three-pointers for the contest.

The Badgers (12-14, 3-11) went 24 of 56 (42.9 percent) from the floor and 7 of 20 (35.0 percent) from long range. UW was led by Gilreath's 19 points. Howard (18) and Beverley (10) were also in double figures.

Ohio State 77, Michigan St. 70

All five of Ohio State's starters scored double digits Feb. 21 and Michigan State went cold from the field as the Buckeyes beat the Spartans 77-70 before 4,857 at the Breslin Center in East Lansing, Mich.

Grande gave OSU (13-12, 9-7) 10 of her 17 points in the fourth quarter as she played all 40 minutes for the third straight game. With 2:26 left in regulation, she drilled a three-pointer to put Ohio State ahead 68-66 – a lead MSU (17-9, 7-8) couldn't overcome. The bucket doubled as Grande's 1,000th career point.

With nine ties and 18 lead changes, the tilt went back and forth before the Buckeyes pulled away down the stretch. Neither team led by more than five points in the first half, where OSU outscored the Spartans in each



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OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Ohio St. 77, Michigan St. 70

Feb. 21, 2019 Breslin Center • East Lansing, Mich.									
	1	2	3	4					F
OSU (13-12, 9-7)	20	15	15	27					77
MSU (17-9, 7-8)	19	13	20	18					70
Ohio State	Total FG	FT	Reb.						
Juhasz	32	3-8	2-2	1-6	3	2	10		
Patty	29	4-8	4-4	1-5	1	4	13		
Grande	40	4-9	7-8	1-2	6	0	17		
Crooms	36	7-8	4-8	0-7	3	5	20		
Santoro	31	5-11	3-6	0-1	2	3	15		
Caretti	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Miller	13	0-2	0-0	0-0	1	3	0		
Waterman	19	1-2	0-1	2-4	0	4	2		

Totals 200 24-48 20-29 5-26 16 21 77
Percentages: FG: 50.0%. FT: 69.0%. **3-point goals:** 9-20 (Juhasz 2-4, Patty 1-3, Grande 2-4, Crooms 2-2, Santoro 2-6, Miller 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 1. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Juhasz 2). **Turnovers:** 15 (Patty 3, Grande 3, Crooms 3, Juhasz 2, Santoro 2, Waterman 2). **Steals:** 6 (Patty 2, Juhasz, Grande, Crooms, Santoro).

Michigan State	Total FG	FT	Reb.						
Cooks	27	5-14	1-2	3-2	0	4	12		
Allen	20	2-5	0-2	2-7	2	4	4		
Colley	28	4-14	9-10	1-1	2	4	18		
McCutcheon	40	2-10	0-0	2-5	4	3	6		
Clouden	35	7-14	9-12	2-1	3	4	23		
Ozment	6	1-1	0-0	0-0	1	1	2		
Gaines	31	1-4	1-1	5-6	1	3	3		
Cook	13	1-3	0-0	2-1	0	1	2		
Hendrickson	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		

Totals 200 23-65 20-27 18-25 13 24 70
Percentages: FG: 35.4%. FT: 74.1%. **3-point goals:** 4-22 (Cooks 1-4, Allen 0-1, Colley 1-6, McCutcheon 2-8, Clouden 0-1, Gaines 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Allen). **Turnovers:** 10 (Colley 3, Cooks 2, Allen 2, McCutcheon, Clouden, Gaines). **Steals:** 6 (Colley 2, McCutcheon 2, Cooks, Gaines). **Officials:** Hall, Lukanich, Bird. **A:** 4,857.

quarter – 20-19 in the first and 15-13 in the second – to take a 35-32 lead at halftime.

Ohio State took the largest lead of the game to that point, 40-34, on a layup by Juhasz at the 8:28 point of the third. MSU closed the last 5:18 of the third period on a 14-6 run, fending off Ohio State's go-ahead triple from Santoro with 55 seconds left that made it 50-49 with an and-one layup from Victoria Gaines at the 15-second mark, giving the Spartans a 52-50 lead heading into the final stanza.

The Buckeyes retook a 54-53 lead at the 8:05 point of the fourth quarter on Juhasz's 1-for-2 free-throw trip, setting the stage for a back-and-forth battle before a late surge. OSU led 68-66 on Grande's milestone trey with 2:26 to go, igniting a 12-4 run to end the game.

After a Nia Clouden free throw with 2:10 left, Juhasz's three-pointer 12 seconds later put Ohio State up 71-67. Ohio State iced the 77-70 final at the charity stripe. Grande gave the Buckeyes five makes in the final 36 seconds, in addition to Crooms' 1-for-2 trip with 28 ticks left, as OSU prevailed.

"That's a really hard place to play," McGuff told BSB of the Breslin Center, where Michigan State had previously gone 13-0 on the season. "That's the only game they've lost this year at home and they've had some huge wins there, so they're really hard to beat there.

"But I just thought our kids played really hard, and especially down the stretch, we made some big plays. That was really the difference. We made some shots – we made some really big shots at the end – so I was really happy to see our kids step up and make those plays."

Ohio State has a team-high 20 points from Crooms, who added seven rebounds and three assists. Santoro scored 12 of her 15 points in the second half.

Patty (13 points) and Juhasz (10 points) rounded out the double-figure Buckeyes as the team shot 50.0 percent (24 of 48) from the field and 45.0 percent (9 of 20) on three-pointers.

Patty (six rebounds) and Juhasz (seven rebounds) combined for 13 boards for Ohio State, which overcame the Spartans' 43-31 advantage on the glass. Waterman was back in action for the Buckeyes but scored just two points in 19 minutes, though she pulled down six rebounds.

Ohio State 61, Wisconsin 50

Feb. 28, 2019 Kohl Center • Madison, Wis.									
	1	2	3	4					F
OSU (14-12, 10-7)	10	21	16	14					61
WIS (13-16, 4-13)	6	12	19	13					50
Ohio State	Total FG	FT	Reb.						
Juhasz	30	4-12	1-1	3-11	1	2	10		
Patty	27	2-8	1-1	3-3	0	4	5		
Grande	40	6-13	4-6	1-2	5	2	17		
Crooms	33	4-8	3-4	0-6	1	2	11		
Santoro	36	4-10	2-3	0-2	2	1	11		
Waterman	23	2-4	0-0	2-2	2	4	4		
Miller	10	1-4	0-0	1-0	0	0	3		

Totals 200 23-59 11-15 12-29 11 15 61
Percentages: FG: 39.0%. FT: 73.3%. **3-point goals:** 4-18 (Juhasz 1-5, Patty 0-2, Grande 1-3, Crooms 0-1, Santoro 1-3, Waterman 0-1, Miller 1-3). **Team rebounds:** 5. **Blocked shots:** 6 (Waterman 2, Juhasz, Patty, Crooms, Santoro). **Turnovers:** 14 (Grande 4, Juhasz 3, Crooms 3, Waterman 2, Patty, Santoro). **Steals:** 10 (Juhasz 4, Crooms 2, Waterman 2, Grande, Santoro).

Wisconsin	Total FG	FT	Reb.						
Karlis	37	5-12	2-2	2-4	4	4	12		
Howard	35	5-14	4-4	1-6	2	4	15		
Lewis	36	3-8	3-3	2-7	0	2	9		
Van Leeuwen	15	0-2	1-2	0-3	0	2	1		
Beverley	36	4-8	2-3	0-3	2	2	11		
Gilreath	27	1-6	0-0	0-1	1	0	2		
Laszewski	8	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0		
Hale	5	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	2	0		
Bragg	0	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	1	0		
Richardson	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		

Totals 200 18-53 12-14 7-25 9 19 50
Percentages: FG: 34.0%. FT: 85.7%. **3-point goals:** 2-12 (Karlis 0-2, Howard 1-3, Van Leeuwen 0-2, Beverley 1-1, Gilreath 0-4). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Lewis 2, Karlis, Howard). **Turnovers:** 15 (Karlis 4, Lewis 4, Van Leeuwen 2, Beverley 2, Gilreath 2, Howard). **Steals:** 8 (Karlis 2, Howard 2, Lewis 2, Beverley, Gilreath). **Officials:** Zentz, McConnell, Enlund. **A:** 3,529.

Clouden (game-high 23 points), Shay Colley (18 points) and Sidney Cooks (12 points) paced MSU, which shot only 35.4 percent (23 of 65) from the floor and 18.2 percent (4 of 22) behind the three-point arc.

Ohio State helped the Spartans stay in the game with 15 turnovers to only 10 for MSU.

Ohio State 61, Wisconsin 50

Led by Grande's game-high 17 points, four players out of Ohio State's starting five scored in double figures Feb. 28 when the Buckeyes went to Wisconsin and beat the Badgers 61-50 before 3,529 at the Kohl Center in Madison.

OSU finished the low-scoring opening period up 10-6 after Waterman's jumper with 1:05 left got the Buckeyes to double digits.

After the Badgers closed the gap to 12-11 on an and-one sequence from Imani Lewis at the 6:57 point of the second quarter, Ohio State responded with a 5-0 spurt capped by Juhasz's layup and free throw with 5:42 left to go up 17-11. The Buckeyes built their lead to double digits, ending the period with a 31-18 halftime advantage, capped by Grande's jumper to beat the buzzer.

OSU rolled into the third quarter, taking its largest lead of the game by opening the period on a 5-0 spurt to go up 36-18 at the 8:32 mark after buckets from Santoro and Patty in the paint and Patty's ensuing free throw. UW cut the deficit down to single digits, 36-28, with a 10-0 run, but Ohio State kept control, going up 47-37 at the end of the frame on Juhasz's layup at the horn.

The Buckeyes held on from there with a 14-13 edge of Wisconsin in the fourth quarter.

Neither team scored in the first 4:17 of the final period before Santoro's jumper, Grande's three and Waterman's layup to put the Buckeyes up 54-37 at the 4:25 mark. UW attempted to claw back from there with a 9-0 run that closed the gap to 54-46 as 2:05 remained, but Ohio State closed the door in the final minutes.

Grande's bucket in the paint put the Buckeyes back up by 10, 56-46, at the 1:42 mark and she did the same with 44 seconds left, knocking down two free throws to keep

Continued On Page 30

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By Craig Merz in Craig Merz

MEN'S HOCKEY: BIG THIRD PERIOD CARRIES NO. 4 OHIO STATE PAST MICHIGAN 4-2

The weather outside was frightful but inside Value City Arena on Saturday the scores heated for the second night.

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OSU Falls To Scarlet Knights On Senior Day

Continued From Page 29

OSU ahead 58-48. The Buckeyes made three more free throws down the stretch for the 61-50 victory.

Ohio State (14-12, 10-7) went 23 of 59 (39.0 percent) from the floor and 4 of 18 (22.2 percent) on triples but made its money with a 32-20 advantage on points in the paint for a season-high fourth win in a row.

"They were active and they did a good job when it went into the post to make it hard for Marsha (Howard) and Imani (Lewis) to operate," said Wisconsin head coach Jonathan Tsipis.

Juhasz recorded her 10th double-double of the season with 10 points and a game-high 14 rebounds, helping OSU outrebound UW, 41-32.

Crooms and Santoro chipped in 11 points apiece for the Buckeyes, while freshman forward Aaliyah Patty, who started in place of Waterman, had five points and six rebounds. Waterman contributed four points and four rebounds in 23 minutes off the bench.

Grande added five assists and three rebounds, shooting 6 of 13 from the field and 1 for 3 on three-pointers.

The Badgers (13-16, 4-13) were 18 of 53 (34.0 percent) from the field and just 2 of 12 (16.7 percent) on three-pointers. They were paced by Howard's team-high 15 points. Kelly Karlis (12) and Beverley (11) rounded out UW's double-digit scorers, while Lewis added nine points and a team-high nine rebounds.

Rutgers 66, Ohio State 56

Back on its home floor to close the regular

season March 3 at Value City Arena, Ohio State led until the fourth quarter of its 66-56 loss to Rutgers before 5,030. The Buckeyes missed a chance to sweep the Scarlet Knights after Feb. 14's 59-39 road rout.

OSU (14-13, 10-8) honored its six upperclassmen – Karlie Cronin, Grande, Miller, Najah Queenland, Santoro and Waterman – prior to the game for senior day. Grande (eight points), Santoro (team-high 13 points) and Waterman (nine points) started while Miller (three points) appeared off the bench.

"We just really came unglued with their pressure and our turnovers," McGuff said of the 30 turnovers committed by the Scarlet and Gray.

Ohio State opened the first quarter strong, going ahead 8-0 on threes from Crooms and Grande and a layup from Juhasz. Rutgers stopped the drought on Jordan Wallace's layup at the 6:59 point, but OSU struck back five seconds later with Santoro's layup at the other end to lead 10-2.

Ohio State created further separation on a 7-0 spurt to go up 17-4 with 2:13 left. The Buckeyes upped the lead to 22-9 at the end of the period.

In the second quarter, Rutgers cut OSU's lead to single digits, 24-15, at the 7:52 mark and got as close as five behind five straight points from Zipporah Broughton that brought the score to 28-23 with 3:49 left before Patty's layup 14 seconds later stopped the potential run and started one for the Buckeyes. The 10-2 spurt for OSU culminated with Santoro's three-pointer to give the Buckeyes a 38-25 lead at halftime.

The Knights came out fired up for the third quarter with a 7-0 run. Santoro seemed to give the Buckeyes an answer with a

triple at the 7:30 point, going up 41-32, but the Knights responded with buckets from Guirantes and Broughton for a 41-36 OSU margin with 6:47 left in the third.

Rutgers (21-8, 13-5) kept its foot down, hitting four free throws and cutting OSU's lead to 41-40 at the 3:47 point. Crooms stopped Ohio State's bleeding two seconds later with a pair of free throws, and Ohio State eventually led 50-46 going into the final 10 minutes.

Rutgers came out in the fourth quarter with a 13-1 run. The Knights took their first lead of the game with 6:14 left after Broughton's three put the Buckeyes down 53-51, followed by Charise Wilson and Broughton's makes from long range to make it an eight-point game, 59-51, with 4:34 left. The Knights closed out their 20-6 frame for the 66-56 comeback.

The visitors won despite shooting just 39.0 percent from the field (23 of 59) and 20.8 from beyond the arc (5 of 24) vs. Ohio State's 50.0 percent mark (16 of 32) from the floor and 53.8 percent accuracy from long range (7 of 13). The Knights benefited from OSU's staggering number of turnovers, which they converted into 21 points.

Broughton and Guirantes led all scorers with 19 points apiece, complemented by Tekia Mack's 14 to pace the Knights in double figures. Crooms added 12 points for the Buckeyes.

Rutgers was without head coach C. Vivian Stringer, who had announced Feb. 24 a leave of absence due to exhaustion. While the Knights anticipate Stringer's return for the postseason, assistant coach Tim Eatman served as the interim head coach for the final three games of the regular season.

Rutgers 66, Ohio State 56

March 3, 2019									
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio									
	1	2	3	4	F				
RU (21-8, 13-5)	9	16	21	20	66				
OSU (14-13, 10-8)	22	16	12	6	56				
Rutgers	Total FG		FT	Reb.					
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Carey	28	2-6	2-2	1-3	1	3	6		
Harris	16	1-2	0-1	2-2	0	4	2		
Pelc	9	0-2	0-0	1-0	0	1	0		
Wilson	23	1-6	1-2	1-0	3	1	4		
Guirantes	34	5-15	9-10	3-4	3	3	19		
Wallace	7	1-1	0-0	1-2	0	0	2		
Broughton	28	7-11	2-2	1-3	1	4	19		
Calhoun	23	0-5	0-0	0-0	1	4	0		
Gilles	5	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0		
Mack	27	6-11	1-2	4-0	2	1	14		
Totals	200	23-59	15-19	15-16	11	22	66		
Percentages: FG: 39.0%. FT: 78.9%. 3-point goals: 5-24 (Pelc 0-2, Wilson 1-4, Guirantes 0-5, Broughton 3-5, Calhoun 0-4, Mack 1-4). Team rebounds: 3.									
Blocked shots: 1 (Carey). Turnovers: 22 (Wilson 5, Guirantes 3, Pelc 2, Broughton 2, Calhoun 2, Mack 2, TEAM 2, Carey, Harris, Wallace, Gilles). Steals: 9 (Mack 3, Carey 2, Guirantes 2, Harris, Wallace).									
Ohio State	Total FG		FT	Reb.					
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Juhasz	25	2-5	2-4	0-1	1	2	6		
Waterman	30	2-4	4-4	1-3	2	4	9		
Grande	37	1-5	5-6	0-3	2	2	8		
Crooms	33	4-5	2-3	0-4	4	4	12		
Santoro	32	4-7	3-4	0-1	1	3	13		
Patty	23	2-3	0-0	0-3	1	2	4		
Miller	11	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	5	3		
Caretti	9	0-1	1-2	0-2	0	0	1		
Jayaraman	0	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Totals	200	16-32	17-23	2-23	11	22	56		
Percentages: FG: 50.0%. FT: 73.9%. 3-point goals: 7-13 (Juhasz 0-2, Waterman 1-1, Grande 1-1, Crooms 2-2, Santoro 2-4, Miller 1-1, Caretti 0-1, Jayaraman 0-1). Team rebounds: 7. Blocked shots: 2 (Juhasz, Patty). Turnovers: 30 (Crooms 11, Grande 7, Waterman 3, Santoro 3, Juhasz 2, Miller 2, Patty, Caretti). Steals: 10 (Waterman 3, Crooms 3, Grande, Patty, Miller, Caretti).									
Officials: Roberts, Daley, Thompson. A: 5,030.									

OSU will be in action next at the Big Ten tournament March 6-10 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.



SONNY BROCKWAY

ON THEIR WAY OUT – Ohio State honored six seniors on March 1, including (from left) guard Najah Queenland, guard Adreana Miller, forward Makayla Waterman, guard Carmen Grande, guard Karlie Cronin and guard Carly Santoro.

B1G Commish Delany Done At End Of Contract

Jim Delany won't be extending his term as Big Ten commissioner, the conference announced March 4. Delany will instead conclude his run with the league when his contract expires on June 30, 2020.

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

"Jim has had an extraordinary impact on the Big Ten Conference, its member institutions, administrators, students and coaches since 1989," said Morton Schapiro, the chair of the Big Ten Council of Presidents and Chancellors. "He has been a forward-thinking, collaborative and decisive leader in every aspect of conference proceedings. We thank him for his dedicated service to date and look forward to working with him through the conclusion of his contract."

Among other accomplishments, Delany was a key piece in the creation of the Big Ten Network. He also oversaw the league's expansion, adding Penn State in 1990, Nebraska in 2011 and Maryland and Rutgers in 2014. The conference was also among the pioneers in instant replay for college football under Delany's direction.

Delany called his time with the Big Ten an "amazing opportunity to serve."

"It is incredibly fulfilling to support the hundreds of thousands of young men and women who have been afforded an opportunity to obtain best-in-class educations as a result of the invaluable, one-of-a-kind lessons learned through the unique combination of athletic and classroom competition," he said. "I would like to recognize and thank each of my colleagues for being such invaluable members of, and contributors to, the Big Ten Conference team, while acknowledging that there is still plenty of work to be done. I look forward to continuing that work through the balance of my term."

According to the Big Ten's release, the Council of Presidents and Chancellors began a search process that will be directed by the executive committee and led by Schapiro, who is also the president of Northwestern University. The consulting firm Korn Ferry was retained to help with the search as well.

Wisconsin QB To Transfer

The winningest quarterback in Wisconsin history, Alex Hornibrook, is among the latest athletes to enter their names in the NCAA transfer portal. Wisconsin head coach Paul Chryst announced the news Feb. 27.

"Alex informed us of his decision to leave the team earlier today," Chryst said in a statement. "He contributed to a lot of our recent success, and we want to thank him for all he did for our program. We wish him the best of luck."

Hornibrook posted a 26-6 mark as the Badgers' starting quarterback, including a 20-4 record within the Big Ten. Although his .813 winning percentage is the highest in program history, Hornibrook's last season at Wisconsin did not meet expectations.

The West Chester, Pa., native completed 59.5 percent of his passes for 1,532 yards with 13 touchdowns and 11 interceptions in nine starts. However, the second half of his season was impacted by recurring concussion symptoms. Hornibrook started the first seven games before being side-



TIM MOODY

TIME FOR A CHANGE – Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany is set to step away after his contract expires in June of 2020.

lined by a concussion for the game against Northwestern on Oct. 27.

The then-junior quarterback came back for the next game against Rutgers but had to exit after hitting his head against the turf. After suffering recurring symptoms, Hornibrook missed the Badgers' next two games before playing in the regular-season finale against Minnesota.

Due to his ongoing health concerns, Hornibrook did not play against Miami in Wisconsin's 35-3 Pinstripe Bowl victory.

The veteran signal caller participated in winter workouts with the Badger football team throughout January and seemed poised to return at the helm.

However, given Hornibrook's inconsistency and history of head injuries, speculation arose that he might give way to junior Jack Coan, who was 3-2 as starter, or freshman Graham Mertz, a four-star recruit.

Hornibrook had not announced where he would be transferring when BSB went to press.

Former Iowa Tight Ends Star At Combine

The NFL Scouting Combine ran from Feb. 26-March 4 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, and the Big Ten was well represented at various positions.

In addition to the success of the former Buckeyes in attendance (more information on page 16-17) other notable players from across the conference made a name for themselves.

The highly touted Iowa duo of Noah Fant and T.J. Hockenson dominated the other tight ends at the combine.

Fant (6-4, 249) was the No. 1 tight end in the 40-yard dash (4.5 seconds), vertical jump (39½ inches), broad jump (10-7), three-cone drill (6.81 seconds) and 60-yard shuttle (11.49 seconds). The speedy tight end also finished third in the 20-yard shuttle (4.22 seconds) and sixth in the bench press (20 reps).

Hockenson (6-4¾, 251) finished second to his teammate in the vertical jump (37½ inches), broad jump (10-3) and three-cone drill (7.02 seconds). Hockenson took second in both the 20-yard shuttle (4.18 seconds) and 60-yard shuttle (11.55 seconds), and the

6-5, 251-pound tight end claimed seventh in the 40-yard dash (4.7 seconds).

Former Wolverine Defenders Impress

Former Michigan defensive end Rashan Gary also stood out at the combine, turning in the fastest 40-yard-dash time (4.58 seconds) and highest vertical leap (38 inches) among the prospective defensive linemen.

Gary (6-4, 277) also was fourth in the 20-yard shuttle at 4.29 seconds, fifth in the three-cone drill at 7.26 seconds and tied for second in the broad jump at 10 feet.

Former Michigan defender Chase Winovich ran the fourth-fastest 40-yard dash among prospective edge defenders at 4.59 seconds. Former Penn State edge Shareef Miller finished No. 11 at 4.69 seconds.

Winovich (6-2¾, 256) completed the third-least reps on the bench press among edges with 18, and Miller (6-4½, 254) was last with 16.

Winovich also took second among edges in the three-cone drill at 6.94 seconds and first in the 20-yard shuttle at 4.11 seconds.

Former Michigan linebacker Devin Bush displayed his athleticism as well, outleaping every prospective linebacker in the vertical jump at 40½ inches.

The versatile former Wolverine ran

the second-fastest 40-yard dash out of the linebackers at 4.43 seconds and had the third-longest broad jump at 10-3.

Bush (5-11, 234) did well overall, finishing fifth in the three-cone drill at 6.93 seconds and eighth in the 20-yard shuttle at 4.23 seconds. The speedy linebacker also put up 21 reps on the bench press.

Big Ten Running Backs Compete In Indy

In addition to the former Michigan defensive players competing at the combine, former Wolverine running back Karan Higdon went through drills and testing.

Higdon (5-9, 206) posted the seventh-fastest 40-yard dash among tailbacks at 4.49 seconds, which should help his draft stock. Higdon had a 34-inch vertical leap, and he finished seventh in the broad jump at 10-2½ and No. 10 on the bench press with an impressive 21 reps.

Another former Big Ten running back tried to make a name for himself in Indianapolis as well. Former Penn State tailback Miles Sanders (5-10, 211) showcased his speed and agility, finishing first among running backs in the three-cone drill (6.89 seconds), third in the 20-yard shuttle (4.19 seconds) and eighth in the 40-yard dash (4.49 seconds). Sanders also tied for sixth in the vertical jump at 36 inches and took sixth in the broad jump at 10-3.

PSU's McSorley Displays Speed

Sanders was not the only member of the Nittany Lion offense to put his speed on display at the combine.

Former Penn State quarterback Trace McSorley (6-0, 202) performed extremely well at the combine, running the fastest 40-yard dash by a quarterback at 4.57 seconds.

The dual-threat quarterback finished third in the 20-yard shuttle at 4.12 seconds and fifth in the three-cone drill at 7.09 seconds. His vertical leap of 33 inches ranked sixth among prospective quarterbacks.

While McSorley intends to stay at quarterback, he was reportedly asked to work out as a defensive back at the combine. He declined. McSorley was also compared to New England Patriots wide receiver Julian Edelman, who played collegiately as a quarterback at Kent State.

"When I looked at him, my first thought was, 'I wonder if he can be Edelman?' I wondered if he could be a versatile kind of guy," New Orleans Saints coach Sean Payton told NBC's Peter King.

BIG Men's Hockey Tournament			
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No. 3 Minnesota 7 p.m.; 5 p.m.; 5:30 p.m. No. 6 Michigan	Highest-Advancing Seed March 16 • TBA • BTN Second-Highest Advancing Seed		
No. 4 Penn State 8 p.m.; 6 p.m.; 6 p.m. No. 5 Wisconsin	Time TBA • BTN		

Bucks Clinch Rare Regular-Season Championship

There are a lot of things that could be going through the mind of a hockey player as he sits in the penalty box:

"I didn't deserve that call."

"I hope the other team doesn't score while I'm in here."

"Gee, I'm hungry."

Ohio State senior captain Mason Jobst, the student-athlete that he is, was doing math.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

He was called for a tripping penalty as the first five-minute overtime expired at Michigan on Feb. 23. During a brief break before the start of the second OT, he was computing in the sin bin before the Wolverines started their power play.

He knew going into the game at Yost Ice Arena in Ann Arbor, Mich., that the Buckeyes needed three points to clinch the outright Big Ten title, their first regular-season championship since winning the inaugural Central Collegiate Hockey Association title in 1972.

"I was sitting in the penalty box actually calculating points in my head what was going on around the league," Jobst said. "I knew Notre Dame, I believe, was playing at 5:30 (30 minutes before the OSU game started), so I knew they were playing before us."

"I thought two points might clinch a share."

A regulation or first-overtime victory is worth three points in the Big Ten standings. Because the game went beyond the first overtime, each team received one point. The winner of the second OT – which is 3-on-3 as opposed to 5-on-5 – or shootout, if needed, would get an additional point.

Thus, Jobst's thinking was to grab the two points and a share of the title for the moment. There were still two games left in the regular season and the Buckeyes had a comfortable lead over second place, so there was no need to panic.

His mind was put a little at ease when Michigan took a penalty six seconds into its power play to negate it.

With that in mind, Jobst stepped out of the penalty box when his two minutes were up, took a stretch pass from senior defenseman Sasha Larocque and scored the winner.

There it was, the two points that meant at the very least the Buckeyes were co-champs with a chance to clinch outright at home the next weekend.

Hold on. Little did Jobst and his teammates know that as soon as the first overtime ended, they were indeed the outright champs because Notre Dame, their closest pursuer, had lost to Minnesota.

Anyone watching on BTN knew, and family and friends of the Buckeyes in the arena might have been aware as well. As was learned later, assistant coach JB Bittner and director of hockey operations Layne LeBel were also in on the not-so secret.

But the players and head coach Steve Rohlik were the last to know.

"As far as I knew, I thought we needed an outright win (not two points)," Larocque said. "When we scored that goal, I was real excited but it wasn't till I got off the ice I knew we had secured the championship."

Bittner told Rohlik immediately after Jobst scored, and word was passed among some of the players before heading off the ice.

The Buckeyes received a trophy in the locker room to set off a celebration. There is no better place to clinch than at your biggest rival, except for at home.

The Buckeyes had blown that chance the previous weekend when they lost twice to Minnesota at Value City Arena. Going into the Feb. 15-16 series, OSU needed six points to clinch outright. Even after losing the opener, the magic number was reduced to three when other contenders lost.

Minnesota won the second game, and the Buckeyes headed to Michigan still needing those elusive three points. The Wolverines won the first game to hand the Buckeyes their first three-game losing streak of the season.

Technically, the winless streak reached

four despite Jobst's OT winner because the game goes down as a tie, not a victory, after 65 minutes.

That mattered little with a trophy in hand.

"To do something that hasn't been done in almost 50 years is pretty special," Rohlik said. "Like I told the guys, their names are etched in the history of OSU hockey forever. It's something that you can never take away, which makes it even more special for our program."

Spoilers

The Buckeyes split the final two regular-season games at home vs. Michigan State. They won the opener on March 1, but the Spartans took the rematch on Senior Night. Not only that, a championship banner was raised after the game.

"It's tough. It's not ideal (to lose) but at the same time it doesn't take away from what it means to us," Larocque said.

Rohlik said the defeat did not put a damper on the postgame experience.

"Sometimes as a player and a coach you get caught up in the grind of what's next, what's next," he said. "Sometimes you have to take a step back and realize what these guys did do this year."

The No. 7 Buckeyes (20-9-5, 13-7-4-3 Big Ten) finished with 46 points, nine more than Notre Dame.

OSU was the preseason favorite to win the conference.

"We lived up to the expectations," Jobst said. "We set pretty high expectations for ourselves as well."

As the top seed, the Buckeyes earned a bye into the conference semifinal set for March 17 at 3:30 p.m., in Value City Arena against the lowest remaining seed. If the Buckeyes win that game, they will play the title game there on March 24 at noon.

Regardless of the Big Ten tournament result, Ohio State will almost certainly qualify for the NCAA tournament for a third straight season.

The Big Ten best-of-three quarterfinals are No. 7 seed Michigan State at No. 2 Notre Dame; Minnesota (3) hosting Michigan (6); and Penn State (4) hosting Wisconsin (5).

The OSU seniors aren't ready to say goodbye to their home for the past four seasons.

"We're not done yet," Larocque said. "We still have two more games in this building to play."

(The Big Ten tournament bracket can be found on Big Ten Notes on page 31.)

Coming Home

Former OSU All-American Ryan Dzingel (2014) was traded to the Columbus Blue Jackets by the Ottawa Senators on Feb. 25.

"It's like a second home to me, and I love Columbus," the Wheaton, Ill., native said.

He will be free agent at the end of the season, and the Blue Jackets likely will be interested in keeping him.

"He's such a talented player and an even better person," Rohlik said. "He's a great fit for the Blue Jackets. Personally, I'd love to see him here. If things work out, I think the Blue Jackets would like to sign him and he'd like to be here, but there's a business side to everything. I certainly think in the long run we're going to see him here."

Also, Zac Dalpe, a 2010 All-American for the Buckeyes, signed a two-year, two-way contract with the Blue Jackets. He has spent most of the past three seasons with the Blue Jackets' American Hockey League affiliate in Cleveland.

BIG Men's Hockey

	Pts.	W	L	T	SW	GF	GA
Ohio State	46	13	7	4	3	79	52
Notre Dame	37	11	11	2	2	63	65
Minnesota	36	11	10	3	0	76	75
Penn State	35	11	12	1	1	101	96
Wisconsin	34	9	10	5	2	69	81
Michigan	34	9	10	5	2	76	75
Michigan State	30	8	12	4	2	68	88

Overall records – Ohio State 20-9-5, Notre Dame 18-13-3, Minnesota 16-15-4, Penn State 19-13-2, Wisconsin 13-16-5, Michigan 13-14-7, Michigan State 12-17-5.

Feb. 12 Score

Notre Dame 5, Michigan 2

Feb. 15 Scores

Minnesota 4, Ohio State 3

Michigan State 5, Penn State 3

Wisconsin 2, Notre Dame 1

Feb. 16 Scores

Minnesota 4, Ohio State 3

Notre Dame 5, Wisconsin 2

Penn State 5, Michigan State 3

Feb. 22 Scores

Penn State 8, Wisconsin 2

Michigan 4, Ohio State 2

Notre Dame 3, Minnesota 2

Feb. 23 Scores

Minnesota 2, Notre Dame 1

Ohio St. 3, U-M 3 (OT, OSU 3x3 W)

Wisconsin 7, Penn State 3

March 1 Scores

Ohio State 5, Michigan State 1

Notre Dame 5, Penn State 4 (OT)

Minnesota 5, Arizona State 1

Wisconsin 5, Michigan 4 (OT)

March 2 Scores

Michigan State 3, Ohio State 2

Penn State 3, Notre Dame 2

Minnesota 5, Arizona State 2

Wisconsin 4, Michigan 3 (OT)

Getting Back on Track

The Buckeyes went 1-4-1 since BSB last went to print. Part of the reason was the absence of key players.

Freshman Gustaf Westlund worked his way up to the top line in January but has missed the past nine games and 11 of the past 14 with an upper-body injury. His availability for the playoffs is unknown.

Senior forward Dakota Joshua did not dress for the past four games, and it was not because of an injury. Although the team won't comment on why he is not playing, he could return for the postseason.

Junior forward Tanner Laczynski missed six games with a shoulder injury but played in the past four.

Rohlik said having a weekend off before the semifinal is helpful.

"We're going to reset, come back to work and plan accordingly," he said. "We're going to make sure we're ready in two weeks. It doesn't happen too often when you get a two-week break."

Doing It All

Jobst is the Varsity Club Icer of the Month for February.

Scoring an overtime decider vs. Michigan should be enough to merit the award, but the Speedway, Ind., native also had six points (three goals, three assists) in eight games.

For a complete recap of Ohio State's action against Minnesota, Michigan and Michigan State go to BSB's BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For February



Mason Jobst
Senior Forward
Speedway, Ind.

OSU Heading To B1G Tourney With Momentum

After dropping a tough match to No. 1 Penn State, the No. 6 Ohio State wrestling team got back on track with a victory against Purdue and then followed it up with consecutive wins against ranked foes, No. 7 Nebraska and No. 9 Cornell.

ON THE MAT Joe Dempsey

After closing out the regular season with a comeback victory against Cornell, the Buckeyes will next compete at the Big Ten championships in Minneapolis, March 9-10. BSB will provide a detailed recap of the conference tournament on BuckeyeSports.com.

Martin Continues To Separate Himself From Competition

Myles Martin is 17-0 and has dominated his opponents throughout the run. The senior 184-pounder posted six major decisions, three tech falls and three pins during his final regular season as an NCAA wrestler.

Since coming to Columbus as a highly-touted recruit in 2015, it's been somewhat of an up-and-down ride for the Penns Grove, N.J., native – by his standards, at least. Martin began his Buckeye career by reaching the pinnacle of collegiate wrestling, winning an individual national championship at 174 pounds as a true freshman.

After moving up to 184 pounds, Martin continued his excellent wrestling but came up short at the NCAA championships as a sophomore and again as a junior.

The Owings Mills (Md.) McDonogh School product dominated as a junior, boasting a 31-3 record with 12 tech falls and seven major decisions. But unfortunately for Martin, each of his three losses were to eventual national champion Bo Nickal of Penn State.

Martin longs to regain a spot atop the podium at the NCAA championships, but a change of perspective has allowed him to refrain from getting bogged down by the pressure.

"It's driving me really hard, especially after last year," Martin said. "But I mean, that situation made me put wrestling in perspective, like it's a little bit more simple than how I was putting it my freshman year. And I think I'm 10 times better than my freshman year, and I feel like I could beat my freshman year in the finals."

"It helped me put it into perspective that it's just wrestling, and I feel like I've been wrestling like that, like I'm kind of just wrestling. But obviously, I want to win a national title. But for me to do that I have to put it in its perspective, if that makes any sense. I can't just win every match and have a 3-2 match and then get upset at Nationals – that's what I don't want to happen. So I just want to wrestle, keep having fun and not put too much thought into it."

Martin's mentality appears to have paid off. His undefeated record as a senior has improved his collegiate ledger to 113-18 overall. Even as a proven commodity in NCAA wrestling, Martin continues to grow while building on his strengths.

"I think I'm really fast," Martin said when asked what separates him from the competition. "I think it's the speed of my movement and my attacks, and how I just move differently than a lot of my opponents. I think

they're not used to the way I hand fight, the way my feet movement is. I try to be really unpredictable."

"I can shoot from both sides of the body, and I think some people just can't handle it. And when I do wrestle those guys who can't handle it, they try to slow me down. And I've learned – or I'm still getting better at – just being able to wrestle through the slow-down positions and just still be effective from the open and from the hand fall."

A tough competitor, Martin commands the respect of his teammates with his relentless work ethic and will to improve. He has also become a strong leader, earning trust through his genuine care for the team. The three-time All-American spends extra time working with freshman Malik Heinselman at 125, helping out with different techniques despite a difference of 59 pounds between the teammates.

Ohio State head coach Tom Ryan is familiar with the passion Martin has for wrestling and the care he shows for his teammates, watching him develop over the past four years. Ryan knows Martin is an exceptional talent on the mat but attributes much of his success to his lifestyle outside of the wrestling room.

"Just consistency," Ryan said of what makes Martin special. "I think anybody can be good for a little while and train hard for a little while and eat right for a little while and manage their life for a little while. But as humans, we often run into scenarios where you get in a rut, and I just haven't seen Myles do that since he's been here."

"He's got a really good foundation in his life, and I think he feels really blessed. His family really put him in a good spot in high school and then again in college, so I think he has gratitude. And he loves what he does. He loves the sport, so I expect him because of the way he trains and lives to have another good performance (in the postseason)."

Pletcher Gets Back On Track

Luke Pletcher has been a rock in the Ohio State wrestling lineup since coming to Columbus in 2016. The junior 133-pounder is a two-time NCAA qualifier who took second at the Big Ten championships and fourth at the NCAA championships as a sophomore.

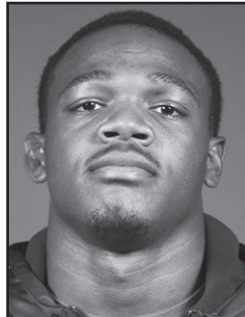
After a brilliant sophomore campaign in which he was 30-3, Pletcher was poised for a huge season with national title aspirations. The Latrobe, Pa., native, enjoyed a solid start to the season but hit a rough patch near the middle, which the All-American admitted was the worst stretch of his career.

Despite the struggles, the Ohio State coaching staff never wavered in its confidence in Pletcher. Ryan broke down Pletcher's film and realized the former three-time Pennsylvania state champ needed to focus on the fundamentals.

"I really liked his aggressiveness against Nebraska, and after Nebraska, we really focused on getting his mind back under control," Ryan said. "It was never physical. I mean, he has the same technique he had. He's stronger than he was last year or at the beginning of the year, he's more fit, so often it's none of that, but it's just your mind starting to unravel. So calming the mind down and just talking about your technique is great."

"Now, let's look at the match and look, 'You're too high, and you're grabbing his hand up above your head. Most of the match your fundamentals are off, and if you're out of position a little bit, the opportunities aren't there. It takes you .002 seconds longer to get to the leg – at this level, the leg's going to be gone.'"

"So I think just kind of slowing things down for him and really looking at the technical side of things more than anything else – it wasn't about trying harder, per se, it was about being smarter and just being better positioned. So hopefully that equates."



Myles Martin

BIG Wrestling

	Conf.			Overall		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	9	0	1.000	14	1	.933
Penn State	9	0	1.000	14	0	1.000
Michigan	8	1	.889	13	1	.929
Ohio State	7	2	.778	12	2	.857
Minnesota	7	2	.778	14	3	.824
Nebraska	5	4	.556	12	5	.667
Rutgers	5	4	.556	12	6	.667
Wisconsin	3	6	.333	9	6	.600
Michigan State	3	6	.333	10	8	.556
Purdue	3	6	.333	7	10	.412
Northwestern	2	7	.222	5	10	.333
Indiana	1	8	.111	6	12	.333
Illinois	1	8	.111	2	9	.182
Maryland	0	9	.000	2	12	.143

"He's looked really good in practice. We went back to the basics. It's hard to believe the elite recruit in the country who was fourth in the country last year – coming out of high school everybody loved him and wanted him – could actually need to focus on stance and level and hand placement and where your forehead's going. And he lost that a bit, but I think he's on the trail to recovery. So we'll see."

Pletcher said he feels like he's in a better place than he was midway through the season, expressing his excitement for the rest of the year. While many wrestlers stress about the pressures of becoming a national champ, Pletcher focuses on preparation and having fun.

"It's something you look forward to the whole year," Pletcher said when asked about getting back to the NCAA championships. "Now I'm just finding old YouTube videos of NCAA matches. That's just something I do. Even when I was in high school, I was watching old high school matches."

"Just hearing the announcer or whatever, just little things that get you excited. So I'm excited. I can't wait. I've got some work to do – a lot of work to do before the NCAAs – but it's going to be fun."

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Frosh Fielding Feels At Home Among Buckeyes

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State freshman diver Jacob Fielding is among the best in the nation, but his elite status is nothing new to him. Fielding medaled at the Junior National Championships, including a silver in 2018, so he is familiar with success. Diving at the NCAA level represents a different challenge, however.

Fortunately for Fielding, Ohio State diving coach Justin Sochor is also accustomed to success. Sochor has coached 22 national champions, and divers under his tutelage have won at various age groups, including Junior and Senior Nationals.

Sochor, who was a four-time conference champion at Cleveland State, has been impressed with Fielding's commitment to improvement.

"He's been progressing pretty well," Sochor told BSB. "We've been working a lot on getting stronger. A lot of divers that move from their club diving into college, a big adjustment is lifting and getting stronger. He's made a lot of improvements as far as just jumping high and spinning fast, and hitting the water. He hits the water really well."

His ability to hit the water really well does not necessarily come easy to Fielding, who shattered his elbow as a kid. Since the childhood injury, Fielding cannot completely straighten his arm, making it difficult to hit the water with a rip entry, which is accomplished by diving without splashing at all.

Despite his prior injury, Fielding enjoyed

immediate success in Columbus, earning three Big Ten Diver of the Week honors and one Big Ten Freshman of the Week award. The freshman diver has been a model of consistency for the Scarlet and Gray, placing within the top two in at least one event every time he has competed.

While enjoying success in the pool, Fielding admitted that diving at the D-I level is different than he expected. And while many might view his silver medal at the Junior National Championships as something to be proud of, Fielding uses the fact that he did not win as motivation.

"Going into college you kind of have this expectation that you're going to be getting better really quick, but it's not like that at all," Fielding said. "You will have your big improvements, but it's a grind. These practices are tough and it builds your character."

"But coming in second just made me really realize that I'm going to have to put my head down and go all out on trying to get better because if I'm unable to succeed in a Juniors event by winning, I'm going to have to really put my foot on the gas pedal."

Fielding might have seemed like an obvious recruiting target given his extensive success competing against other divers in his age range. Sochor wanted to get Fielding to Ohio State for more than just his excellence on the diving board, though.

"I brought him in because he sort of fits our culture," Sochor said of Fielding. "He likes to

train hard, he's a divehead, he loves to dive. He's one of those people that when you give them some free time, they may choose to just go diving. Not considering it a job, but more of what you do – it's your life. And my team loves him."

Fielding has already impressed with his meticulous work ethic and insatiable desire to get better, but his drive does not deter him from getting along with his teammates.

"I think Jake's gentle, he's a good dude," Sochor said of his freshman standout. "He's the kind of guy that you can just know him for one day and feel like you're his friend already. He's not intimidating to the people around him. He's a comfortable dude to be around, and that's kind of like our M.O. anyways. Our team is like that."

With such an impressive career as a prepster, Fielding had an abundance of options for where he would dive collegiately. There are quite a few institutions with more accomplished diving programs across the country, but the Los Angeles native was looking for more.

"When I decided to go to OSU, I wasn't looking at Justin Sochor as someone that could make me a champion," Fielding said. "Obviously, he has that résumé, and obviously, he's going to do his best to make me like that, but I came to OSU looking for a family."

"And you can go to different programs, not to name names, but they are factories. And a factory – you can produce champions, you can produce gold-medal winners, obviously that's on my mind."



Jacob Fielding

"But the first thing that I want when I go somewhere new is I want to be able to make a connection with the people, and I want to have a lasting relationship beyond diving. Because it's not going to last forever, and you know, I'd like to have friends after I'm done."

One way Fielding has been building a bond with his teammates is through an interesting form of communication. Having studied sign language in high school, Fielding teaches his teammates some of the signs. Some people might be curious as to why.

Pool decks at the D-I level can become so consumed with loud noise that it can be seemingly impossible for teammates to communicate across the pool. That goes for audible communication, of course. With Fielding's help, the Buckeyes can use sign language to communicate amid high-pressure situations in boisterous venues.

In addition to enjoying his time with his teammates, Fielding has stood out as a freshman. His top platform score ranks third in the Big Ten and sixth in the nation. With the Big Ten and NCAA championships looming, Fielding is preparing to put a fitting cap on a successful freshman campaign.

In order to better introduce BSB readers to Ohio State's Olympic sports teams and athletes, we have shifted to more feature-oriented coverage of the various squads. Buckeye Sports Bulletin will provide a roundup of all the games, matches and meets involving OSU's teams each Monday on our BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all print subscribers.



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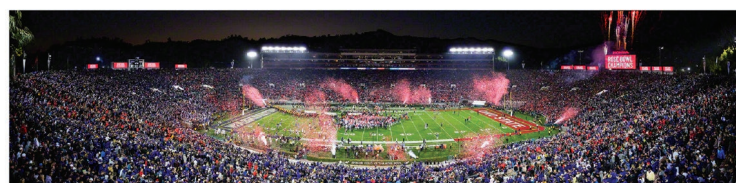
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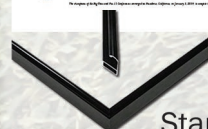
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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

2019 FOOTBALL (All Times TBA)

April 13 SPRING GAME, Noon.

Aug. 31 FLORIDA ATLANTIC.

Sept. 7 CINCINNATI; **14** at Indiana; **21** MIAMI (OHIO); **28** at Nebraska.

Oct. 5 MICHIGAN STATE; **18** at Northwestern; **26** WISCONSIN.

Nov. 9 MARYLAND; **16** at Rutgers; **23** PENN STATE; **30** at Michigan.

Dec. 7 Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (18-11, 8-10 BIG TEN)

Nov. 1 UNC PEMBROKE (exhibition), W 81-63; **7** at Cincinnati, W 64-56; **11** PFVW, W 107-61; **15** at Creighton, W 69-60; **18** SOUTH CAROLINA STATE, W 89-61; **20** SAMFORD, W 68-50; **23** CLEVELAND STATE at St. John Arena, W 89-62; **28** SYRACUSE, L 72-62.

Dec. 2 MINNESOTA, W 79-59; **5** vs. Illinois at Chicago, W 77-67; **15** BUCKNELL, W 73-71; **18** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 75-56; **22** vs. UCLA at Chicago, W 80-66; **29** HIGH POINT, W 82-64.

Jan. 5 (8) MICHIGAN STATE, L 86-77; **9** at Rutgers, L 64-61; **12** at Iowa, L 72-62; **18** (19) MARYLAND, L 75-61; **23** PURDUE, L 79-67; **26** at Nebraska, W 70-60; **29** at (5) Michigan, L 65-49.

Feb. 2 RUTGERS, W 76-62; **7** PENN STATE, W 74-70; **10** at Indiana, W 55-52; **14** ILLINOIS, L 63-56; **17** at (11) Michigan State, L 62-44; **20** NORTHWESTERN, W 63-49; **23** at (24) Maryland, L 72-62; **26** (22) IOWA, W 90-70.

March 2 at (14) Purdue, L 86-51; **6** at Northwestern, 9 p.m.; **10** WISCONSIN, 4:30 p.m.; **13-17** Big Ten Tournament at Chicago.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (14-13, 10-8 BIG TEN)

Oct. 28 IUP (exhibition), W 72-50.

Nov. 6 (22) USF, L 71-47; **9** DETROIT MERCY, W 55-41; **11** at (2) UConn, L 85-53; **16** at Sacramento State, canceled; **18** at Stanford, canceled; **29** NORTH CAROLINA, W 76-69.

Dec. 2 CINCINNATI, W 69-56; **5** at Washington, L 69-59; **16** FLORIDA at St. John Arena, W 46-41; **20** vs. Butler at West Palm Beach, Fla., L 66-53; **21** vs. Virginia Tech at West Palm Beach, Fla., L 81-73; **28** at Purdue, L 60-42; **31** NEBRASKA, L 78-69.

Jan. 5 at (4) Maryland, L 75-69; **10** (25) INDIANA, W 55-50; **14** (25) MICHIGAN STATE, W 65-55; **17** at Penn State, W 76-71 (OT); **20** at Michigan, L 62-58; **24** (11) MARYLAND, L 70-57; **28** at Minnesota, W 65-55; **31** ILLINOIS, W 78-70.

Feb. 3 at Northwestern, L 76-59; **6** PENN STATE, W 78-73; **10** (16) IOWA, L 78-52; **14** at (23) Rutgers, W 59-39; **17** WISCONSIN, W 70-68; **21** at Michigan State, W 77-70; **28** at Wisconsin, W 61-50.

March 3 RUTGERS, L 66-56; **7** Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis vs. Wisconsin OR Penn State, TBA; **8-10** Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS (1-2)

Jan. 12 Rocky Mountain Open at Colorado Spring, Colo., 4th/6 (398.500); **26** at (1) Oklahoma, L 423.950-395.400.

Feb. 2 at (4) Michigan, L 413.900-402.700; **15/17** Winter Cup at Las Vegas, NTS.

March 2 ARNOLD CHALLENGE vs.

(6) PENN STATE, W 413.150-409.000; **8** MINNESOTA/NEBRASKA, 6 p.m.; **16** at Iowa, 7 p.m.; **24** ILLINOIS, 5 p.m.

April 5-6 Big Ten Championships at Iowa City, Iowa; **19** NCAA Qualifier at Champaign, Ill.; **20** NCAA Championships at Champaign, Ill.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS (6-7, 3-6 BIG TEN)

Jan. 5 at (7) Georgia, L 196.600-194.900; **12** at (25) N.C. State, W 196.025-194.550; **19** at Penn State, W 196.075-194.850; **27** at Michigan State, W 196.200-195.225.

Feb. 2 IOWA, W 195.000-194.775; **8** at Maryland, L 195.950-194.250; **16** (17) NEBRASKA, L 196.400-195.750; **23** Big Five Meet at Toledo, Ohio, vs. Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois & Rutgers, 5th/5 (194.600).

March 2 (24) WEST VIRGINIA, W 196.850-196.100; TEMPLE, W 196.850-194.000; **9** BOWLING GREEN, 4 p.m.; **17** at West Virginia, 2 p.m.; vs. N.C. State at Morgantown, W.Va., 2 p.m.; vs. Penn State at Morgantown, W.Va., 2 p.m.; **23** Big Ten Championships at University Park, Pa.

April 4 NCAA Regional First Round; **5** NCAA Regional Second Round; **6** NCAA Regional Final; **19** NCAA Semifinals at Fort Worth, Texas; **20** NCAA Championships at Fort Worth, Texas.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (20-9-5, 13-7-4 BIG TEN)

Oct. 12-13 at Arizona State, W 3-2; W 3-0; **19-20** MASSACHUSETTS, L 6-3; W 3-1; **26** (15) BOWLING GREEN, L 8-2; **27** at Bowling Green, T 2-2 (OT).

Nov. 2-3 at (5) Notre Dame, W 1-0; L 2-1; **9-10** at Colgate, W 3-0; W 1-0; **16-17** WISCONSIN, W 4-0; W 3-1; **23-24** (6) PENN STATE, L 4-3; W 5-2; **30-Dec. 1** at Minnesota, T 2-2 (OSU 3x3 OT Win); T 2-2 (OSU 3x3 OT Win).

Dec. 28-29 MERCYHURST, W 3-1; W 5-4.

Jan. 4-5 at Michigan State, T 7-7 (OSU 3x3 OT Loss); W 6-0; **11-12** MICHIGAN, L 2-1; W 4-2; **18-19** at (13) Penn State, W 4-1; W 6-4.

Feb. 1-2 (11) NOTRE DAME, W 4-2; W 2-0; **8-9** at Wisconsin, W 2-1 (OT); W 4-1; **15-16** MINNESOTA, L 4-3; L 4-3; **22-23** at Michigan, L 4-2; T3-3 (OT, 3x3 OT W).

March 1-2 MICHIGAN STATE, W 5-1; L 3-2; **17** BIG TEN TOURNAMENT SEMIFINALS; **23** BIG TEN TOURNAMENT FINALS; **29-31** NCAA Regionals.

April 11/13 NCAA Frozen Four at Buffalo, N.Y.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (20-12-2, 12-10-2 WCHA)

Sept. 28-29 at Quinnipiac, W 3-2; W 3-2.

Oct. 5-6 COLGATE, W 4-3; L 5-2; **12-13** MINNESOTA STATE, W 4-0; W 2-1 (OT); **19-20** at Minnesota, L 3-0; W 3-2; **26-27** at St. Lawrence, L 3-2; W 6-1.

Nov. 2-3 ST. CLOUD STATE, W 3-2; W 3-2; **9-10** at Bemidji State, L 2-1; L 4-2; **16-17** MINNESOTA DULUTH, W 3-1; W 4-1.

Dec. 1-2 at Minnesota State, L 3-0; W 2-0; **15-16** MERCYHURST, W 2-1 (OT); W 9-2.

Jan. 5-6 MINNESOTA WHITECAPS (exhibition games), L 3-2 (OT); L 3-1; **11-12** (1) WISCONSIN, W 1-0; L 5-2; **18-19** at Minnesota Duluth, L 5-2; L 6-3; **25-26** (2) MINNESOTA, L 7-2; L 7-1.

Feb. 1-2 at St. Cloud State, W 4-0; W

5-0; **8-9** BEMIDJI STATE, L 3-2; W 5-1; **22-23** at (1) Wisconsin, T 1-1 (SOW); T 2-2 (SOW).

March 1-2 WCHA QUARTERFINALS vs. MINNESOTA STATE, W 3-2 (OT); W 3-0; **9** WCHA Final Faceoff Semifinals at Minneapolis vs. Wisconsin, 6:07 p.m.; **10** WCHA Final Faceoff at Minneapolis; **16** NCAA Quarterfinals; **22/24** NCAA Frozen Four at Hamden, Conn.

SWIMMING & DIVING

Sept. 27 ALABAMA, Men: W 156-144; Women: W 181-119.

Oct. 12/13 TEXAS A&M, Men: W 199-153; Women: L 209-142; **13** LOUISVILLE, Men: W 192- 161; **27** vs. Virginia Tech at Christiansburg, Va., Men: L 182-171; Women: W 225-128; vs. Penn State at Christiansburg, Va., Men: W 250-103; Women: W 231-122.

Nov. 2 DENISON, Men: W 221-75; Women: W 224-75; AKRON, Women: W 174.5-124.5; **9** KENYON (exhibition); **10-11** ACC/Big Ten Challenge at West Lafayette, Ind., Men: Big Ten wins 179-174; Women: Big Ten wins 251-102; **15-17** OHIO STATE INVITATIONAL, Men: 1st/9; Women: 4th/11.

Jan. 4-5 at Florida, Men: L 317.50-263.50; Women: L 403-178; vs. Kentucky at Gainesville, Fla., Men: W 336-245; Women: L 375-206; **19** at Michigan, Men: L 202-98; Women: L 196-104; **25-26** Shamrock Invitational at Notre Dame, Ind., Men: 1st/4; Women: 3rd/4.

Feb. 16-17 WINTER INVITATIONAL, NTS; **20-23** Women's Big Ten Championships at Bloomington, Ind., 3rd/12 (1,162.5); **27-March 2** Men's Big Ten Championships at Iowa City, Iowa, 3rd/10 (1,243.5).

March 3 LAST CHANCE MEET (women); **10** Last Chance Meet at TBA (men); **14-16** CSCAA National Invitational at Cleveland; NCAA Zone Diving at West Lafayette, Ind.; **20-23** Women's NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas; **27-30** Men's NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas.

MEN'S TENNIS (16-0, 1-0 BIG TEN)

Jan. 7 COLUMBUS CHALLENGER, NTS; **20** CLEVELAND STATE, W 5-0, W 4-0; XAVIER, Cancelled; **26** VCU, W 4-0; **27** ARKANSAS, W 4-1; TOLEDO, W 4-0.

Feb. 2 (9) STANFORD, W 6-1; **8** ARIZONA STATE, W 6-1; **10** (24) GEORGIA, W 4-0; **12** (5) SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, W 5-0; **15** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago vs. (19) Tulane, W 4-0; **16** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago vs. (13) Virginia, W 4-0; **17** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago vs. (6) Texas, W 4-0; **18** ITA National Indoor Team Championships at Chicago (Finals) vs. (1) Wake Forest, W 4-2; **20** KENTUCKY, W 4-0; **24** (12) NOTRE DAME, W 6-1.

March 1 at Penn State, W 4-1; **11** at Texas A&M, 7 p.m.; **14** at Texas, 6:30 p.m.; **22** MICHIGAN STATE, 6 p.m.; **24** at Michigan, Noon; **29** WISCONSIN, 6 p.m.; **31** MINNESOTA, Noon.

April 5 at Nebraska, 7 p.m.; **7** at Iowa, Noon; **12** at Northwestern, 7 p.m.; **14** at Illinois, 1 p.m.; **19** PURDUE, 6 p.m.; **21** INDIANA, Noon; **26-28** Big Ten Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich.

May 3 NCAA First & Second Round; **10** NCAA Regional; **16** NCAA Championships at Orlando, Fla.

WOMEN'S TENNIS (11-2)

Jan. 19 Michigan Tournament at Ann

Arbor, Mich., NTS; **26** ITA Kickoff at Atlanta vs. Georgia Tech, W 4-0; **27** ITA Kickoff at Atlanta vs. Kentucky, W 4-1.

Feb. 1 (6) TEXAS, L 4-3; **3** NOTRE DAME, W 6-1; **8** ITA National Team Indoors at Seattle vs. (4) Duke, L 4-3; **10** ITA National Team Indoors at Seattle vs. (10) Syracuse, W 5-2; **20** CLEVELAND STATE, W 7-0; AKRON, W 7-0; **23** at Arizona State, W 4-3; **24** vs. TCU at Tempe, Ariz., W 7-0; **28** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 6-1; W 7-0.

March 3 BAYLOR, W 5-2; **13** at UNLV, 1 p.m.; **17** PENN STATE, Noon; **22** at Nebraska, 5 p.m.; **24** IOWA, Noon; **29** at Michigan State, 5 p.m.; **31** at Michigan, 1 p.m.

April 5 WISCONSIN, 6 p.m.; **7** MINNESOTA, Noon; **12** PURDUE, 6 p.m.; **14** INDIANA, Noon; **20** at Northwestern, 11 a.m.; **21** at Illinois, Noon.

INDOOR TRACK & FIELD

Jan. 11-12 Kentucky Invite at Lexington, Ky., NTS; **19** Simmons-Harvey Big Ten Invitational at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; **24-26** New Balance at New York, NTS.

Feb. 1-2 Rod McCravy Memorial at Lexington, Ky., NTS; **7-9** Tiger Paw Invite at Clemson, S.C., NTS; **15** BUCKEYE TUNE UP, NTS; **16** Alex Wilson Invitational at Notre Dame, Ind., NTS; **22-23** Big Ten Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS.

March 8-9 NCAA Championships at Birmingham, Ala.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (6-12, 2-6 MIVA)

Jan. 4 CHARLESTON, W 3-0; **5** PENN STATE, W 3-1; **10** at (5) BYU, L 3-0; **12** at (11) Stanford, L 3-1; **18** GEORGE MASON, L 3-1; **19** ERSKINE, W 3-1; **26** at Ball State, L 3-1.

Feb. 1 SAINT FRANCIS, L 3-2; **2** LINCOLN MEMORIAL, W 3-1; **5** at (15) Purdue Fort Wayne, L 3-0; **8** at (6) U.C. Santa Barbara, L 3-0; **9** at (1) Long Beach State, L 3-0; **15** at Lindenwood, L 3-0; **16** at Quincy, W 3-1; **21** LEWIS, L 3-2; **24** LOYOLA CHICAGO, L 3-0.

March 1/3 MCKENDREE, W 3-1; L 3-2; **8** at UCLA, 8 p.m.; **9** at USC, 11 p.m.; **15** LEES-MCRAE, 7 p.m.; **19** at Penn State, 7 p.m.; **22** LINDENWOOD, 7 p.m.; **23** QUINCY, 7 p.m.; **29** at Loyola Chicago, 8 p.m.; **30** at Lewis, 8 p.m.

April 4 PURDUE FORT WAYNE, 7 p.m.; **6** BALL STATE, 7 p.m.; **13** MIVA Quarterfinals; **17** MIVA Semifinals; **20** MIVA Finals; **26** NCAA Play-In Match at campus sites; **30** NCAA Play-In Match at Long Beach, Calif.

May 2 NCAA Semifinals at Long Beach, Calif.; **4** NCAA Finals at Long Beach, Calif.

WRESTLING (12-2, 7-2 BIG TEN)

Nov. 3 vs. Navy at Owings Mills, Md., W 28-9; **11** Ohio Intercollegiate Open at Cleveland, NTS; **16** at California Baptist, W 42-0; **18** at Arizona State, W 22-17; **30-Dec. 1** Cliff Keen Las Vegas Invitational, 1st/43 (148).

Dec. 9 (19) WISCONSIN, W 23-13.

Jan. 6 (4) N.C. STATE, W 26-10; **11** at Indiana, W 43-3; **13** MICHIGAN STATE, W 37-4; **25** (5) MICHIGAN, L 19-17.

Feb. 1 at Illinois, W 23-14; **3** at Northwestern, W 27-15; **8** (1) PENN STATE, L 28-9; **15** at Purdue, W 34-3; **17** (6) NEBRASKA, W 21-12; **22** at (7) Cornell, W 25-9.

March 9-10 Big Ten Championships at Minneapolis; **21-23** NCAA Championships at Pittsburgh.

NCAA Still Holding Dance Card For Buckeyes

Maybe there is now something in the cosmos that says the Ohio State brand brings out the best in Purdue teams in West Lafayette, Ind.

Maybe if Kaleb Wesson had played, the Buckeyes would have lost by 25 points on March 2 instead of the 35-point drubbing (86-51) that occurred at Mackey Arena.

RAPP AROUND Jeff Rapp

Maybe, just maybe, despite all of the momentum-quashing moments this season and the totality of OSU's obvious flaws, this Ohio State team is still in position to make the NCAA Tournament field.

Maybe all of these things are true. Still, we need to dig a little deeper.

First of all, we live in the myopic world that bubbles around Ohio State athletics, but looking at it from the other side for a moment, there is no way not to be impressed with the Boilermakers (22-7, 15-3). They've been under the Big Ten radar all season but are in position to claim the title of outright Big Ten champions at 17-3 with likely wins at Minnesota (March 5) and at Northwestern (March 9). That shouldn't be a problem if Matt Painter's team plays anything like it did against the Buckeyes.

With Wesson glued to the bench because of an unexplained suspension (see below), the 14th-ranked Boilers were confident and loaded for bear. They shot over the OSU defense early, splashing four straight triples after an early 4-all tie, then really pulled away by exposing the Buckeyes' lack of strength inside.

The red-hot Boilermakers raced out to a 32-13 lead midway through the first half and went to the locker room with a halftime advantage of 48-20 – a score eerily similar to the beatdown the OSU football team experienced at Purdue back in October (49-20).

Superstar guard Carsen Edwards didn't care who was opposite him. He popped for 25 points, including 19 in the first half, strengthening his case for Big Ten Player of the Year. Matt Haarms, all 7-3 of him, enjoyed the extra room in the paint and added a dozen points.

Freshman Jaedon LeDee was a rare bright spot for the Buckeyes with a team-high 16 points in his second career start, but without the burly Wesson in tow, the Boilermakers torched the nets and enjoyed a 39-27 rebound edge.

Purdue turned Senior Day into a two-hour highlight reel, extending the lead to as much as 39 (86-47) before the Buckeyes scored the last four points. OSU's previous largest margin of defeat this season was 18 in a 62-44 setback at Michigan State on Feb. 17, but the Buckeyes led at halftime of that game. They never even factored in this one, causing Holtmann to publicly question his team's efforts.

"I was disappointed with how we performed," he said. "We should probably do a better job of getting our guys ready to go."

Worse than OSU's inability to slow down the Boiler train was its feeble display on offense – a 16-of-48 (33.3 percent) shooting display that included an awful 2-of-19 (10.5 percent) showing from behind the arc. Justin Ahrens, who earlier in the week had blasted Iowa with a dazzling 29-point explosion, posted a goose egg at Mackey.

Painter, for whatever reason, hasn't had much success against Ohio State as PU head coach. Thad Matta seemed to have his number over the years, and Holtmann won the only matchup last season, 64-63.

But the win on March 2 capped a season sweep of OSU and put the Boilers in the engineer's seat for the league crown. The Buckeyes, meanwhile, continued to leave us guessing about their tenacity and their postseason fate.

Ahrens' amazing breakout performance in the 90-70 romp of Iowa seemed to inspire trumpets and rainbows. The brash lefty reminded some of a young Chris Jent with his timely aerials and ability to fire up the crowd.

The 6-5 frosh hit 6 of 10 three-balls and added another field goal – a breakaway layup that led to a flagrant foul call and four-point play – on a night when OSU's fortunes seemed to turn.

With Luther Muhammad smashed into the freshman wall and Musa Jallow unable to provide any real offense of note, Ahrens was a breath of fresh air. His damage on the wing allowed veterans Andre Wesson and C.J. Jackson to put together solid all-around floor games while Kaleb Wesson manned the inside with 18 points and Keyshawn Woods found some midrange openings and added 13.

The Buckeyes dropped home 12 threes, actually made their free throws (22 of 24) and tallied 54 points in the second half in beating the nation's 22nd-ranked team. However, not all good teams are as forgiving as Iowa defensively, and no win, no matter how encouraging, seems to embolden the Buckeyes the way Holtmann would like.

After all, this is a team that flew out to a 12-1 record, opened the 2019 calendar year with five straight losses including one at Rutgers and began February with three important wins only to swoon at home against Illinois.

We've come to expect the seesaw, but the latest news felt more like a buzz saw.

What Now For Wesson, OSU?

The day before the bloodletting in West Lafayette, the program announced that Kaleb Wesson, OSU's leading scorer (14.6 points per game) and rebounder (6.7 rebounds per game), had been suspended "for a violation of Ohio State Athletics Department policy." It added that the sophomore center "will return this season."

In recent years, starters Marc Loving and Kam Williams endured suspensions related to athletic department policy, and each lasted two weeks. The expectation here is that Wesson's punishment will be the same, meaning he will return in time for the Big Ten tournament, which will be held March 13-17 in Chicago.

However, it should be noted that Wesson served a one-game suspension early last season at the outset of his career and did not play vs. Texas Southern. Holtmann made clear at the time that infraction had to do with a "time management" issue.

ESPN analyst Dan Dakich called Wesson's latest blunder inexcusable and also questioned why someone who had let down his entire team would even be allowed to join them on the bench. I disagree somewhat with the second part as Wesson clearly will feel the sting of sitting out while he's mere inches from the court, maybe even more than he would being stuck back in a dorm room.

Holtmann isn't obligated to elaborate and chose not to on March 1.

"As much as we can, we're trying to keep that a private matter," the coach said. "Obviously, there are some expectations that we have that he needs to meet and that he needs to follow through on. And he'll do that. I'm confident that he will do that, and then we'll take it from there."

The son of former Buckeye Keith Wesson and the younger brother of Andre, Kaleb certainly should feel ashamed for jeopardizing OSU's postseason outlook and being caught in his selfishness (remember, this very likely is not an academic-related transgression). Still, it should be pointed out that he is just 19 years old – and doesn't turn 20 until late July.

What's extra maddening for Holtmann and Ohio State followers is that Kaleb is an elite Big Ten commodity when he's not finding off-court trouble or spending too much of his time on the hardwood enveloped in foul trouble. Holtmann has spent a lot of his time with reporters trying to explain how "good Kaleb" sets everything in motion for the Buckeyes on both ends of the floor.

The kid is a load down in the block, has soft hands, is capable of being an effective passer out of double teams when he keeps his sharpness, is the team's most reliable rebounder and even can drain an occasional three to loosen up opposing defenses. His ceiling is still pretty lofty.

With the younger Wesson still out for a bit, the team will rely more heavily on the 6-9 LeDee and 6-8 classmate Kyle Young, who missed four games this season with a stress fracture. Andre Wesson also could continue to play yeoman minutes.

Still, the Buckeyes are now in scramble mode.

"We weren't really long to begin with across the board," Holtmann said. "Kaleb was the one guy who had positional size and length in our group. It's a great challenge when you don't have a player like Kaleb, who's really had a tremendous sophomore season."

Now Wesson will have to bide his time and jump right back into the fray with little rust as the Buckeyes need every win they can get.

How Soft Is The 'Soft Bubble'?

At this writing, the Buckeyes sit at 18-11 overall and 8-10 in conference play. While that would beckon an "N-I-T" chant most any other year, Ohio State is still projected to make the NCAA Tournament at this point thanks to an increasingly "soft bubble."

The current campaign is serving as a stark reminder that the elite 68-team field is indeed all relative. In other words, some conferences flat-out stink this year.

As evidence, ESPN bracketologist Joe Lunardi's most recent mash-up shows only four Big East teams in the field at the moment and just two – yes, two – from the Pac-12.

Most experts agree the only Pac-12 team that appears to be in solid shape for at-large status at the moment is Washington (23-6, 14-2). Arizona State could make a case with a strong closing run. The rest of the league, including the likes of traditional powers Arizona and UCLA, are going to have to catch lightning in a bottle in the Pac-12 Tournament.

As far as teams from non-Power 5 conferences with strong résumés, of course, there is Gonzaga (29-2, 16-0), the school that dumped Ohio State out of the Madness last year and is now bucking for a No. 1 seed.

Nevada (26-3, 13-3) also has emerged as a power out West and will be dancing in a couple of weeks. However, the only other Mountain West team on solid ground at the moment is Utah State (24-6, 14-3), a program Buckeye fans may recall – at least ones that date back to at least 2001. The Mountain West has been good to the NCAA Tournament over the years, but San Diego State, Colorado State and UNLV are likely to be watching on TV along with Joe Sixpack.

Meanwhile, Buffalo (26-3, 14-2), which has shot out to a gaudy record and a top-25 ranking, is good to go, even if the Bulls don't win the Mid-American Conference Tournament. A case also has to be made for Wofford (26-4, 18-0) the class of the Southern Conference. The Terriers, who hail from a tiny liberal arts college in Spartanburg, S.C., have jumped into the top 25 for the first time in school history. How could the selection committee pass on that story?

As always, there are other smaller schools who will have to draw consideration for at-large bids if they don't hold the fort in their conferences. Among those teetering in that position are Lipscomb (23-6, 14-2), Belmont (25-4, 16-2), Furman (24-6, 13-5) and St. Mary's (20-11, 11-5) – many of which having proved their worth in the tournament in prior years.

Still, it's not realistic to think that a bunch of those types of schools are going to burst into the field with at-large bids. And, as amazing as it sounds, the Buckeyes haven't even reached dire straits yet.

In his March 3 bracketology, Lunardi had Ohio State slipping only a spot to a 10-seed. Even more amazing, the Buckeyes may still have some more wiggle room. In fact, there is sentiment that the Buckeyes could still make the field of 68 with losses at Northwestern (March 6) and in the regular-season finale against Wisconsin (March 10).

The Lunardi bubble on March 3 listed N.C. State (20-9, 8-8), TCU (18-11, 6-10), Minnesota (18-11, 8-10) and Alabama (17-12, 8-8) as teams to make the field by way of the First Four games in Dayton. Also, he tabbed St. John's (20-10, 8-9), Seton Hall (16-12, 7-9), Arizona State (20-9, 11-6) and Temple (21-8, 11-5) as his "Last Four In."

While we "yeesh" through this 2018-19 OSU season, the numbers don't match the cynicism. Going into March's first weekend, the Buckeyes had a ranking of 40 in the NCAA's newly formed and somewhat confusing NET rankings. They also had an RPI ranking of 49 and were 4-7 against Quad 1 teams – a figure that is now 4-8. What is a Quad 1 game? Any contest where you face either an Associated Press top-10 team at home, an AP top-25 team at a neutral site or an AP top-30 team on the road.

Clemson, just to pick a random team with a similar dossier, entered March with a NET ranking of 41 and an RPI of 54 and was just 1-8 in Quad 1 games. The Tigers gave No. 5 North Carolina quite a fight on March 2 but lost 81-79 to fall to 17-12 overall and 7-9 in the ACC. Prior to that toughie, noted analyst Jerry Palm had Clemson on his "First Four In" list. A two-point loss to UNC may not change the metrics much at all.

Ohio State, meanwhile, holds up by comparison. Strange is it sounds, the Buckeyes are a lock to go dancing with a pair of wins in the final week of the regular season and are actually still in good shape if they can somehow overcome Ethan Happ and Wisconsin on Senior Day.

Like Kaleb Wesson, I plan to have a good seat for that contest.

Conley, Russell Highlight Crop Of NBA Buckeyes

With so much talk about the upcoming NFL draft and speculation that Ohio State could have two of the top five picks (Nick Bosa and Dwayne Haskins), I thought it was time to take a look at former Buckeyes in another pro league that doesn't get near the attention top to bottom.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Unless you live in an NBA market or are a close follower of the league, it's easy for the casual sports fans to lose touch.

So here's my annual update on Buckeyes in the NBA as the pro season winds down, both in how they are doing on the court and on pay day.

All of the stats listed below are through March 2. The stats and salaries are from basketball-reference.com.

Mike Conley – Perhaps thought to be the third prize in Thad Matta's 2006 recruiting class that included Greg Oden and Daequan Cook, Conley has outlived them all in the NBA.

The fourth pick in the 2007 NBA draft (after Oden, Kevin Durant and Al Horford) has played his entire career in Memphis. He was averaging 20.0 points and 6.3 assists this season, starting every game after missing all but 12 games a year ago with a heel injury.

With 11,478 points, he has scored

more points as a pro than all but four Ohio State alums all-time. Soon, Conley will pass Herb Williams (11,944 points) and Michael Redd (11,972 points). The top three are John Havlicek (26,395 points), Jerry Lucas (14,053) and Jim Jackson (12,690). All but Havlicek are within reach of Conley, who is on pace to score 1,644 points this season.

Conley is being paid \$30.5 million in 2018-19. He is due to make \$32.5 million next season.

Evan Turner – Now in his ninth year, Turner has played 57 games this season for Portland, though just two games as a starter. He's averaging 7.4 points a game and shooting a career-high 46.0 percent from the field.

Turner's NBA career, starting after he was the second overall pick (after John Wall) in the 2010 draft, has taken him from Philadelphia to Indiana, to Boston and finally to Portland, where he is now in his third season.

In 670 career games, he is averaging 10.0 points a game, including a career high of 14.0 points a game when he split the 2013-14 season between Philadelphia and Indiana.

Turner is making \$17.9 million this season.

D'Angelo Russell – In his fourth NBA season, Russell has yet to be on a team with a winning record or a playoff appearance. But both of those facts could change this season.

Through March 2, Russell's Brooklyn Nets were 32-33 and in sixth place in the Eastern Conference. The top eight make the playoffs.

Russell, the second overall pick (after Karl-Anthony Towns) in the 2015 NBA draft, is averaging a career-high 20.5 points per game while shooting a career-high 43.5 percent from the field. He was an NBA All-Star for the first time this year.

This follows seasons of averaging 13.2 and 15.6 for the Lakers, and 15.5 points last season for the Nets.

Russell, in the final year of his rookie contract, is making \$7 million this season.

Kosta Koufos – Journeyman big man Kosta Koufos is in his 11th NBA season and fourth with Sacramento.

In 32 games this season, just one as a starter, Koufos was averaging 3.5 points and 4.3 rebounds.

Koufos has made a lengthy career of pro basketball, though rarely as a starter, after being chosen 23rd in the 2008 NBA draft. Low first-round NBA picks are wild cards, with widely varying results. Koufos was taken just after Alexis Ajinca, Ryan Anderson and Courtney Lee, and just before Serge Ibaka, Nicolas Batum and George Hill.

The only years when Koufos has started more than half the games were in 2016-17 with Sacramento (62 starts) and 2012-13 with Denver (81 starts). The 2012-13 season was also when Koufos posted career highs of 8.0 points and 6.9 rebounds per game.

Koufos is making \$8.7 million this year.

Keita Bates-Diop – Bates-Diop, the 48th pick in last year's NBA draft after forgoing his last year of college eligibility, has appeared in just 10 games this season for Minnesota, scoring a total of 19 points.

Bates-Diop has spent time with the Iowa Wolves of the G-League, last being assigned there Jan. 4 after a brief recall to Minnesota.

He is averaging 17.8 points in 16 games for Iowa.

The three-year contract Bates-Diop signed last summer includes a salary of \$838,464 this season for Minnesota.

Those Ticket Prices

Every Division I school is required to file financial reports each year with the NCAA. What's on the reports from private schools such as Northwestern normally remains private. But details from the nation's public schools do become known after they are sent in each winter. I collect and analyze these reports each year.

It's no surprise that the latest batch, for the 2017-18 school year, shows Ohio State has the largest sports program in the Big Ten, taking in \$205.6 million and spending \$203.8 million. That's about double the size of schools such as Maryland and Purdue and just ahead of No. 2 Michigan, which took in \$195.8 million and spent \$183.4 million.

Somewhat surprising to me was the size of the ticket money gap, considering the size of the football stadiums at Michigan and Penn State.

Ohio State reported \$69.2 million in ticket revenue in 2017-18, with \$59.4 million of it from football. Michigan was second at \$46.3 million (\$39.8 million football), and Penn State third at \$38.2 million (\$34 million for football).

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New Coaches Need To Improve Ailing Defense

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

I don't think anyone would disagree that there was something wrong with the Ohio State defense last season. Something just didn't click. There was too much talent on the field and on the coaching staff to go from yielding 19.0 points and 300.9 yards in 2017 to giving up 25.5 points and 403.4 yards in 2018, including 49-point, 539-yard and 51-point, 535-yard debacles against Purdue and Maryland, respectively.

The secondary seems to have taken its share of criticism, and many fans and pundits continually pointed to the fact that the Ohio State defensive backs did not turn to look for the ball while in pass coverage.

Thus I found it interesting how excitedly new co-defensive coordinator and defensive backs coach Jeff Hafley responded when asked recently if he wants his cornerbacks to turn and look for the ball in coverage. It was as if he had seen last year's tape and was waiting for the question.

"Do you think that we as DB coaches sit there and say, 'Don't look back for the ball'? Like my wife used to come up to me after games and be like, 'Hey, why don't our guys turn back and look for the ball?'" Hafley said. "I'm like, 'Do you want to see my individual tape?' All we do is practice turning and looking for the ball. DB coaches teach to turn and look for the football.

"We promise you we will practice to teach – this is awesome that you asked this because now no one can tweet this out or say this. We are going to work on turning and looking and trying to intercept the football when we're in man."

As I read Hafley's enthusiastic quote, I thought back to an article we ran on returning cornerback Damon Arnette during the football season. Then-cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson seemed to acknowledge the problem while talking about Arnette.

"He has all the intangible things," Johnson said of Arnette. "But now once he continues to put his eyes in the right spot when he's in man, when he's in zone, being able to transition his eyes, I think you're going to see him take off even more."

Arnette echoed his coach.

"We're getting hands on dudes, we're battling dudes all the way up until the ball is being caught by the receiver," Arnette said. "So just as far as getting our head around, looking back for the ball and taking it out of the air – that's just something I feel like has to get better."

While Johnson and Arnette, a veteran defender, appeared aware of the problem, they didn't seem able to fix it. Johnson was not retained by new coach Ryan Day, so read into that what you will. It will be interesting to see if Hafley has better luck.

We should take note that Hafley talks about his wife complaining that his backs didn't turn and look for the ball. That is curious because Hafley has spent the last several years in the NFL. If pro defensive backs have the same problem, maybe we should be a little easier on college players struggling with this technique.

By the way, while Johnson seems to be one of the many scapegoats on last season's defense during his first year back at Ohio State, he has a solid record as a Buckeye coach, previously serving on the staff from 2007-11. Among his pupils at Ohio State were standout cornerbacks Malcolm Jenkins and Chimdi Chekwa.

In Johnson's first year with the Buckeyes, Ohio State led the nation in both total defense (233.0 yards) and passing defense (150.2 yards). In the next three seasons they were in the top five in total defense two more times and the top 13 in pass defense twice. Even in

the dysfunctional 2011 season, Johnson and the Buckeye defense were 19th in the country in total defense (323.5 yards) and 14th against the pass (182.0).

As I have said many times through the years, good coaches don't suddenly get bad. Pro coaching guru Bill Belichick, whose background is on the defensive side of the ball, would not have hired former Buckeye defensive coordinator Greg Schiano, an even greater scapegoat on last year's defense, if he thought the former college and pro head coach had lost his defensive touch.

As I said, there was something wrong with last year's defense. It seems like the players and assembled coaching staff just didn't mix. Let's see if the new staff and the current players have the remedy.

On The Other Hand

One of the regular posters on our Forum at BuckeyeSports.com, Terrier Buck, recently noted in a post that 13 Buckeyes on the 2018 squad had nine receptions or more for the season. He recalled that in Woody Hayes' day, there were seasons when the whole team had little more than nine receptions in a season. Some research by BSB editor Tim Moody determined that in 1956, the Buckeyes completed just 15 passes during the entire campaign.

I went on to post that fiery former Buckeye defensive coordinator Fred Pagac led Ohio State with nine receptions as recently as 1973. Archie Griffin was second on the team with five catches for 32 yards but rushed for 1,577 yards as the Buckeyes went 10-0-1 and soundly defeated USC in the Rose Bowl, 42-21.

While Pagac may have played offense in college, he must have learned a thing or two about defense playing for that 1973 team. I bring that Buckeye defense up to contrast it with the 2018 team.

In 1973 the Buckeyes gave up only 64 points in the *entire season*. Take away the 21 points the Trojans scored in Pasadena and the Buckeyes yielded an average of 4.3 points per game with four shutouts and a 10-10 tie with Michigan.

When the 2018 season was all said and done, I was surprised that the Buckeyes only gave up 25.5 points a game. After all, even in their signature win over Michigan, Ohio State gave up a whopping 39 points. The Buckeyes' defensive total was aided by the three points given up to Rutgers and the six points each to Tulane and Michigan State. Take those games away and the Ohio State defense averaged 31.1 points given up per contest.

I know that college football has changed a lot in 46 years. But the 1973 Buckeyes? That's defense.

To find an Ohio State team that gave up fewer points than that, you have to go all the way back to 1937, when Francis Schmidt's Buckeyes surrendered just 23 points in eight games, including six shutouts. The only points given up all that season were in OSU's two losses, 13-12 at USC and 10-0 against Indiana. Schmidt's Buckeyes won their gold pants that year, downing Michigan in Ann Arbor, 21-0.

The Ohio State team to give up the least points since that 1973 season was the 1975 team, which yielded 102 points. The best defensive effort in the 43 seasons since then was turned in by the 1996 Buckeyes, who

came within a Shawn Springs slip of winning the national championship and gave up just 131 points, a 10.9 per game average.

Jim Tressel had back-to-back years of the Buckeyes giving up 166 points in 2006 and 2007 (a 12.8 average), and the best defensive scoring season of the Urban Meyer era was 2015, when Ohio State gave up 196 points in 13 games (15.1).

Breakout Player

With the coming of spring football, many Buckeye fans and observers start to try to predict who the breakout players will be during the upcoming season. I don't usually engage in such speculation.

However, I recently addressed a group in Elyria, Ohio, and in the question-and-answer session, the conversation turned to Demario McCall from nearby North Ridgeville. As I thought about McCall, it occurred to me that he was a candidate to break out, based on his position – or positions – and his success in his limited action over three seasons.

Dating back to his freshman year of 2016, his action was actually not that limited as he carried the ball 49 times, and quite successfully, for 270 yards, three scores and a 5.5-yard average. He also caught four passes for 84 yards for a 21.0 average and another score.

That would make him the most experienced player in the running backs room not named J.K. Dobbins if Day and staff elect to use him as a running back.

He also could play H-back, and he has proved he can catch the ball effectively as well. In his limited action since that first season, he caught 11 more passes for 161 yards and another score, giving him a 16.3-yard average on 15 career catches.

His numbers would indicate that he almost *has* to play somewhere in 2019, when he will still retain junior status.

It will be interesting to see if Day is as enamored with the H-back position as Meyer, who seemed always in pursuit of the next Percy Harvin – one of his star pupils at Florida – to run and receive his way to stardom from the H.

Curtis Samuel was the last Buckeye to really both run and catch from that position. He had 97 carries for 771 yards and 74 catches for 865 yards in 2016.

Last season, Parris Campbell had a huge season with 90 catches for 1,063 yards but carried the ball only nine times for 24 net yards.

McCall would seemingly have the skill set to be used like Samuel if Day so chooses.

Either way, McCall seems set to see action somewhere in 2019, returning kicks at the least.

He was Ohio State's leading kickoff returner in terms of average last season with a 19.5 mark on 10 returns and a long of 42 that helped set up the touchdown that forced overtime against Maryland. He also had a 10.7-yard average on three punt returns with a long of 26.

So Demario McCall is my pick for a breakout year in 2019.

QB Reprints Wrap-Up

We recently wrapped up our series of reprints covering great quarterbacks who have faced Ohio State during the Buckeye Sports

Bulletin era as part of Reprint Thursdays at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com. We closed the series with a bang with coverage of games against Drew Brees, Peyton Manning and Philip Rivers. That's 201,933 NFL passing yards and counting, if you are wondering.

Manning faced the Buckeyes in the Florida Citrus Bowl following the 1995 season. That game is best remembered for the fact that it was played in a constant driving rain and that Tennessee players allegedly wore illegal cleats to better handle the soggy conditions.

The Vols won the game 20-14. Manning was 20 of 35 for 182 yards and a touchdown without an interception while OSU's Bobby Hoyer was 19 of 38 for 246 yards, a 32-yard TD pass to Rickey Dudley and an interception. The Buckeyes also lost three fumbles and committed numerous mental errors in the loss.

Given the conditions, Manning's lower yardage output may have been by design.

"Some of the timing passes were hard to execute," he said. "Mainly, we wanted to concentrate on the safe passes and take care of the ball."

Ohio State faced Brees twice. Most Buckeye fans remember the Purdue great hitting Seth Morales with a 64-yard scoring strike with 1:55 left to win the 2000 contest, 31-27 in West Lafayette. That was revenge for a game the previous year in Ohio Stadium that the Buckeyes won 25-22.

Brees had his team in position to win that game as well, driving the Boilermakers 68 yards to the Buckeye 12 where Brent Johnson blocked a 29-yard field-goal attempt with 53 seconds left to preserve the Ohio State victory. Brees caught a 12-yard touchdown pass in the game and was 24 of 39 passing without a score or pick for 205 yards, 250 yards less than he passed for in the victory the following year.

Rivers helped N.C. State overcome a 24-7 fourth-quarter Buckeye lead with a pair of final-quarter TD passes to take the game to three overtimes. Ohio State finally prevailed in a 44-38 win in Ohio Stadium in 2003.

Rivers was 36 of 52 for 315 yards and four scores, though he pitched a pair of interceptions. In overtime, it was OSU's Craig Krenzel who stole the show, going 10 of 12 for 70 yards and three scores in the extra sessions and running for the other 5 yards. For the game, Krenzel was 26 of 36 for 273 yards and four TDs against three interceptions.

Despite having Rivers under center, the Wolfpack elected to run on three of four downs from first down at the 4 in its final possession, including a pair of quarterback sneaks, and the Buckeyes held on for the win.

"We can analyze every play down there to death," Rivers said when asked about the play-calling on the final OT possession. "You just keep playing. We had our chances."

The quarterback reprints, from John Elway in 1981 and '82 to Rivers in 2003, are archived on BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers, for your information and entertainment. Reprint Thursdays will continue with other interesting stories from our 38-year archive of Buckeye Sports Bulletins.

Rapp Is Back

I am excited to note the return of Jeff Rapp's popular Rapp Around column after a several year absence. Jeff is one of the most tenured writers on the Ohio State basketball beat – and the Buckeye beat in general – and his insight into the OSU cage squad is a welcome addition to our coverage. Jeff first became affiliated with Buckeye Sports Bulletin in the early 1990s.

For his thoughts on Chris Holtmann's Buckeyes and more, see page 37 of this issue.

FOR ATHLETES

HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen when your brain gets bounced around in your skull after a fall or hit to the head.

• CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS •

- Headache • Nausea • Vomiting • Balance problems • Dizziness • Double or Blurred vision • Sensitivity to light or noise • Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy • Memory problems • Confusion • Just not "feeling right" or "feeling down"

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

REPORT IT. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

GET CHECKED OUT. If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a health care provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL. A concussion can make everyday activities, such as going to school, harder. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH & PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.healthy.ohio.gov/concussion>



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention