



More Of The Same



TIM MOODY

IN THE LEAD – Ryan Day directed his first practice as Ohio State's full-time head coach on March 6, the day the Buckeyes opened spring camp.

Day Not Making Wholesale Changes To Culture, Structure Meyer Built

By **TIM MOODY**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

When the Ohio State football team opened spring practice March 6, things were different.

Kind of.

Most notably, Urban Meyer was nowhere to be found. The former Buckeye head coach, who spent seven seasons guiding Ohio State to three Big Ten titles and a national championship, hung up his whistle after the Rose Bowl, transitioning into a role as an assistant athletic director in Columbus.

Dwayne Haskins, the quarterback who broke basically every single season passing record in program history last year, wasn't there either. He's preparing for the NFL draft, where he'll likely be a top-10 pick in April.

Also missing were such program stalwarts as receivers Parris Campbell and Terry McLaurin, kicker Sean Nuernberger and linebacker Dante Booker

– the last two remaining players who appeared in the Buckeyes' national title victory over Oregon back in 2014. A plethora of assistant coaches were gone, too. Alex Grinch is at Oklahoma while Greg Schiano, Billy Davis and Taver Johnson are all coaching in the NFL these days.

For all those changes and departures, though, things really weren't that different. It was still in many ways the Ohio State program that Meyer built: the program that has become an annual contender on the field and on the recruiting trail and, quite frankly, one of the best when it comes to off-field support for student-athletes.

That's just the way new head coach Ryan Day wants it.

"The infrastructure and the culture is what it is," Day said after his first practice officially leading the Buckeyes (of course, he also spent fall camp and the first three games of last season as interim head coach while Meyer was

**BSB'S 2019
SPRING
PREVIEW**

OSU Gets 2nd Straight NCAA Tournament Berth Under Holtmann

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

Ohio State men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann had it all figured out nearly three weeks before the March 17 NCAA Tournament selection show.

"I felt after the Iowa game that if we got one more win, we'd be in good shape," he said of the Feb. 26 game.

He paused for a moment, much like the Buckeyes' chances after they lost the next three contests before defeating Indiana in what turned out to be an NCAA elimination matchup in the Big Ten tournament.

"It took us a little while to get that one win," Holtmann continued. "It was dicey there for a while."

The important thing is that Ohio State (19-14) did get that single victory, 79-75 over the Hoosiers on March 14.

Despite a 77-70 loss the next day in the quarterfinals to eventual tourney champion and NCAA No. 2 seed Michigan State, the Buckeyes are in the NCAA Tournament for a second year in a row since Holtmann replaced Thad Matta as head coach.

"When you do this, you certainly understand it's not an entitlement getting to the NCAA Tournament, it's something that's got to be earned," Holtmann said. "And it's hard. It's hard to consistently earn those."

The Buckeyes enter as the 11th seed in the Midwest Regional and will play sixth seed and Big 12 tournament champion Iowa State (23-11) at BOK Center in Tulsa, Okla., on March 22 at approximately 9:50 p.m. on TBS.

The winner plays either No. 3 Houston (31-3) or No. 14 Georgia State (23-9) on March 24 with the right to advance to the Sweet 16 in Kansas City.

OSU will be the underdog vs. Iowa State, but that doesn't bother senior guard C.J. Jackson.

"We are here to actually win some games and make a run," he said. "Not winning any more games up to this point



Chris Holtmann

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To Mark Rea

I'm writing in response to Mark Rea's column (about OSU quarterbacks) in the most recent edition of BSB (Vol. 38, No. 17). As the public address announcer of Ohio State football and basketball from 1971-88, I especially enjoyed your wonderful article. Your facts were perfect and brought back a lot of memories.

Thanks again for the great article. Keep up your great work. Keep smiling and think positive. And when that's not working, you sprinkle in a little patience (and maybe sometimes a lot of patience).

Ron Althoff
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.



From The Message Board

Earlier in March, BuckeyeSports.com subscriber Terrier Buck started a thread on the BSB Forum stating that Vegas lists the Ohio State football team as being more likely to win fewer than 10 games than more than 10 games in 2019. He posed this question: Is that a reasonable projection? Here's what other subscribers and BSB staffers had to say.

Ask Art Schlichter!

I'd be comfortable saying the Bucks will win 10 games, but I wouldn't bet as there are too many unknown players. I am optimistic but I wouldn't make a bet this year. Maybe next year.

– **PeyoteBuck**

That's always how it goes when there's so much turnover. I wouldn't bet, but if I had to make a prediction, I'd say 10 or more is more likely.

– **Tim Moody, BSB**

With a new head coach, new QB, almost all new O-line and the way our defense played last year, I can see how they can say that. And I also say that if I were to make a bet I would bet on at least 10.

– **mrbigbux**

Our nonconference schedule is SUPER weak this year, and our conference schedule is quite favorable. I'd take the over 10.

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

Less than 10 is nine. Can you imagine 9-3? I cannot. I may be mistaken, but I anticipate that no team will put 22 better players on the field.

– **Terrier Buck**

Is it over or under because I would say 10 may be right IF I HAD TO BET. With no money on the line I would do the over, especially if they are including postseason.

– **Windy City Buck**

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1984

Pass defense had been a problem for Ohio State under head coach Earle Bruce, so the Buckeyes went out and hired Gary Blackney as the new defensive secondary coach.

Blackney came from Syracuse after Dom Capers left OSU for the USFL's Philadelphia Stars. In his four years with the Orangemen, Blackney's teams were consistently strong defending against the pass and supporting the run.

Prior to Syracuse in 1980, Blackney coached at Brown, Rhode Island, Wisconsin and UCLA. In 1971 at Brown, his alma mater, he coached the Ivy League's best pass defense. Blackney's secondary at Wisconsin in 1977 ranked third nationally.

30 Years Ago – 1989

Injuries plagued Ohio State as its spring camp started with six players ruled out for the duration of practices and two done after career-ending situations.

As the Buckeyes began camp March 28, they announced that eight players were out for the spring. Inside linebacker Brian Benio and wide receiver Wes Siegenthaler were sidelined permanently. Inside linebacker Andy Gurd (shoulder), running back Marc Hicks (wrist), fullback Chris Boddie (knee), tight end Chris Roy (knee), inside linebacker Tony Closson (ankle) and tight end Gary Lickovich (shoulder) were sitting out of practices but were set to return in the fall.

Benio, who started three games in 1988, suffered from a narrowing cervical spine. Siegenthaler, who ended preseason camp in 1988 as one of the starting wide receivers, sustained a career-ending shoulder injury in the fall.

25 Years Ago – 1994

Ohio State appeared set to keep two of its top assistants when the coaching carousel came to a close in March. Out of the running for the head-coaching job at North Texas, defensive coordinator Bill Young was returning to the Buckeyes.

The same was able to be said for OSU wide receivers coach Mike Stock, who had reportedly turned down an opening in the NFL with the Detroit Lions.

Young had reportedly been the front-runner for the Mean Green, but he was unable to secure a formal interview and removed his name from consideration.

"I think they're going to want a guy from Texas," Young, who was born in Texas but went to Oklahoma State, told BSB. "That's certainly their right. I would like to be a head coach someday, but the timing just isn't right."

20 Years Ago – 1999

Ohio State men's basketball ended its 31-year drought and punched a ticket to the Final Four – the first for the Buckeyes since 1968 – with a 77-74 win over St. John's on March 20. The comeback victory for OSU in the South Regional sent head coach Jim O'Brien's squad to Tampa Bay just one year removed from its 8-22 season in 1997-98.

"I don't think of us as a Cinderella team," O'Brien said. "I think that term typically applies to a team that keeps advancing through the tournament in an unlikely fashion."

"We've had a pretty good season. We did get a four seed, and we've played relatively well from beginning to end."

Connecticut, Duke and Michigan State rounded out the Final Four from Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Fla.

15 Years Ago – 2004

Two items typically not for sale to the public were sold to the highest bidder on Internet auction site eBay.

A gold pants charm from 1998 sold March 21 for a \$710 bid. The seller, who went by the eBay moniker of buck-04, kept the winner's identity private. It was the third Ohio State-related item sold by buck-04 in six weeks, after a 2002 program from the OSU-Washington State game and a Western Conference football charm, which was awarded to John Metejzik of the Buckeyes' 9-0 team that season. Ohio State records, however, showed no one by that name who ever lettered or coached for OSU's football team. The program went for \$4.80 while the gold charm sold for \$455.

At the same time the gold pants were being auctioned off, an Ohio State playbook from the late 1990s, supposedly belonging to former Buckeyes tight end Darnell Sanders, was also up for grabs. The seller, who went by the moniker susiedan, said the playbook was found in a box of junk purchased at a yard sale two years prior and covered everything from play formations to proper dress and discipline. The book had attracted eight bidders with a high offer of \$152.50 while less than two days remained.

10 Years Ago – 2009

While spring camp was under way at Ohio State, head coach Jim Tressel looked forward to a trip to the Middle East in May. Tressel had made a commitment to join college football coaches on an eight-day trip set up by Armed Forces Entertainment to visit United State troops stationed in Afghanistan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Mack Brown (Texas), Houston Nutt (Ole Miss), Rick Neuheisel (UCLA), Troy Calhoun (Air Force) and

former Auburn head coach Tommy Tuberville were among the group slated to join Tressel.

"It's a tremendous honor," Tressel said. "They'll see from us that we really believe they're the ones that people should take note of and they're the ones doing the tough duty."

Five Years Ago – 2014

Ohio State started spring camp March 4 with three hours of drills at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, where the attention was on head coach Urban Meyer's health. Three days before the Buckeyes began spring camp, he underwent surgery at Ohio State's Wexner Medical Center for a congenital arachnoid cyst on his brain.

Wearing a white Ohio State baseball cap – a rarity throughout the previous two years in Columbus – Meyer monitored the team's opening practice and fielded questions from reporters in the team room afterward.

"I feel good, not great," Meyer said. "I had it for several years. It's a cyst. It's surfaced a couple times – once in 1998, once in 2004 and a couple of other times. It's just something you have to manage."

Meyer added that doctors told him to watch how loud he screams and how long he blows his whistle.

"I'm not going to be ignorant like I was before," Meyer said. "If something happens, I'm going to get it fixed."

One Year Ago – 2018

In early March, former Ohio State running back Chris "Beanie" Wells revealed he was coping with brain trauma stemming from his football career.

Wells starred for the Buckeyes from 2006-08 before the Arizona Cardinals selected him with the 31st overall pick in the 2009 NFL draft. After an up-and-down professional career plagued by injuries, Wells retired in 2013 and joined Columbus sports talk station 97.1 The Fan. Wells, the co-host on the station's morning show "Tim and Beanie" with Tim Hall, shared his health update.

"At this present moment I'm OK," Wells said. "I did have some health issues going on. I went for an MRI scan of my head, and I saw some things on there that didn't quite look right. And I also had some symptoms that led to me going in for that scan. I had some headaches, my speech was getting a little bit indifferent and also I was forgetting the littlest things."

"I go in for the MRI and the brain has plaque. I have some plaque separation. And when you have that plaque separation, it shows that you've experienced some sort of traumatic brain injury. Obviously, that traumatic brain injury for me comes from playing football."

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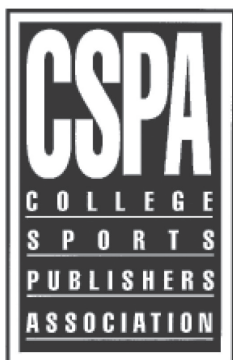
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Charter Member

College Hoops Doesn't Match Up With Football

Throughout the course of the last couple of calendar years, you might have noticed the disproportionate number of times Ohio State football is mentioned in this particular space vs. Ohio State basketball.

With no disrespect intended toward Chris Holtmann or his NCAA Tournament-bound Buckeyes, the plain and simple truth is that the way college basketball is played today means the game holds very little interest for me.

From pay-to-play scandals, foul-mouthed coaches and sycophantic analysts to the wildly uneven way any given game is officiated on any given night, you might find me watching a rerun of "The Andy Griffith Show" rather than suffering through a college basketball game these days. The cold, hard truth is that Andy, Barney and the gang from Mayberry are much more entertaining.

I know that I should be much more of a basketball fan than I am. My father, about whom I've written several times over the years, was a championship-winning basketball coach at the high school level, and he served as an official after his coaching days were over. He loved college basketball and would watch any game, anytime, between any two teams.

But I doubt even my dad would be able to stomach the depths to which the game has plummeted these days.

Yes, March Madness still provides more than its share of thrills, and Cinderella stories and buzzer-beating shots retain all their glory no matter who is playing. But it's difficult to get to the buzzer when forced to wade through a morass of poor shooting, questionable officiating and an abject disdain for the basic fundamentals of the game.

And that doesn't even include the mind-numbing total of play stoppages that rob most games of any semblance of continuity. As if four media timeouts per half and at least four more per team per game weren't enough, nowadays we have to wade through officials stopping play to check replay monitors every time they can't decide if they made the correct call.

"Getting it right" has gotten completely out of hand. Officials now routinely check replay to determine if a shooter's toe was on the three-point line, which player last touched the ball before it went out of bounds and if a foul was a flagrant 1 (perhaps unintentional but a technical foul nevertheless) or a flagrant 2 (an intentional foul that also carries immediate expulsion from the game).

Replay can also be used to look for something called a hook-and-hold foul, which carries the same penalty as a flagrant 1. It doesn't matter if officials missed the call during real time. If it shows up on replay, it's a foul.

I remember when officials called the game – good or bad – and didn't rely on replay as a crutch. Basketball is a game of ebb and flow, but incessant timeouts and officials continually strolling to the scorer's table to check the replay monitor have made it a game of too much ebb and not nearly enough flow.

I'm also kind of getting tired of watching officials give every team with a big-name coach the benefit of the doubt on every call. Case in point: Ohio State's 77-70 loss to Michigan State in the Big Ten tournament quarterfinals.

Tom Izzo was coaching his 831st game with the Spartans while it was game No. 67 for Holtmann as head coach of the Buckeyes. The number of games either man has coached with his respective team shouldn't matter, but apparently it does. Ohio State was whistled for 21 fouls to just 16 for Michigan State, and the Spartans shot 21 free throws to only 10 for the Buckeyes.

Just the way it happened, you say? That argument might hold some water unless you checked the stat sheets for the three games played this season between the two teams. MSU made 67 trips to the free-throw line during those games while Ohio State made only 35.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Let's make one thing clear: Seldom do I believe officiating actually dictates the outcome of a game. The Buckeyes certainly did themselves no favors against the Spartans when they missed 6 of 8 shots from the field and committed three turnovers during a 7½-minute stretch in the second half that allowed MSU to go on a 24-8 run and increase its lead to 75-54 with 4:21 remaining.

Before that stretch, however, there were two crucial calls that went against Ohio State sophomore forward Kaleb Wesson, and a third (perhaps the most crucial of all) that occurred during the stretch, and those three calls most definitely had an impact on the outcome of the game.

Questionable Foul Calls

With 16:30 remaining in a game that was tied at 40, Wesson drew a pushing foul from Michigan State guard Matt McQuaid. At that juncture, Ohio State was looking at possession of the ball under its own basket with a chance to take the lead and establish some momentum. However, in the skirmish that resulted in the foul, Wesson's elbow connected with McQuaid's head as the OSU sophomore went up for his shot.

As a result, Wesson was hit with a flagrant 1 foul – which was his third personal of the game – and the Spartans were rewarded with two free throws and possession of the ball. McQuaid made both foul shots, Michigan State canned a three-pointer on its ensuing trip down the court to take a 45-40 lead, and the Buckeyes got no closer the rest of the way.

Unfortunately, the flagrant foul had to be called although there was very little flagrant about it. The 6-9 Wesson was trying to put a spin move on the 6-4 McQuaid, and the smaller player was hit with an accidental elbow. It was a play that, for most of the time since Dr. Naismith hung his first peach basket in 1891, was deemed to be incidental contact. But within the rules of the game today, it was a flagrant foul and properly called as such.

Wesson later committed his fourth and fifth fouls on calls much more questionable.

His fourth came at the 12:27 mark when a barely-under-control Michigan State point guard Cassius Winston – who also happens to be Big Ten Player of the Year – came flying into the lane and crashed into Wesson. The Ohio State forward appeared to have established his defensive position, but the official saw things differently and called Wesson for a blocking foul.

Then with 9:42 remaining and the Buckeyes trailing 56-46, Winston had a call go his way again. After grabbing a defensive rebound, Winston began to dribble back toward his end of the court when he made contact with Wesson. The contact wasn't much, but apparently enough for Wesson to get rung up with his fifth foul and an early seat on the bench.

Perhaps you think I'm biased for Ohio

State, and perhaps I am. But less than two minutes later, at the 7:49 mark with Michigan State then leading by 14, Winston was called for an offensive foul when replay clearly showed the OSU defender had not established his defensive position.

Normally, one might view that as a make-up call – except no one really knows anymore what differentiates charging from blocking on any given possession.

Again, to be perfectly clear, I'm not suggesting poor officiating was the reason Ohio State lost its conference tournament game to Michigan State. Then again, I don't think the Buckeyes were afforded any favors, either.

Eye Of The Beholder

Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany announced in early March that he will retire later this year, marking the end of a 31-year run that was most notably marked by conference expansion as well as the launch of the Big Ten Network.

After the announcement, Delany was lauded as a visionary who expanded the Big Ten footprint – first to the foothills of Pennsylvania and later as far west as Nebraska and as far east as New Jersey and Maryland. Moreover, Delany gets credit for positioning the Big Ten as a financial heavyweight with some \$2.64 billion worth of media rights due the conference over the next six years.

(If you are the parent of a child attending one of the Big Ten schools and staring at escalating tuition costs, you might wonder where all that money is going. But I digress.)

Perhaps Delany was a visionary, but I think that might be overstating things a bit. Legacies, like beauty, are often determined by the eye of the beholder.

Conferences had been talking for years about launching their own networks, and it was only because of an impasse with ESPN on a contract extension that the Big Ten decided maybe its own network was the way to go.

Delany has often recounted a contentious meeting in 2004 with then-ESPN executive Mark Shapiro, who told the commissioner he would be "rolling the dice" if he didn't accept ESPN's offer.

"Consider them rolled," Delany supposedly replied.

Of course, Shapiro didn't know Delany was prepared to roll loaded dice.

Fox, which secured its first NFL package in 1994, had already sent out feelers to all of the major conferences because it wanted to expand its college football presence, and the deep-pocketed, flush-with-cash network became a partner in the 2007 rollout of the Big Ten Network.

However, if you want to give Delany credit for starting the network, then part of his legacy must also be the sloppy way the rollout was handled. The network was initially available on only a couple of cable providers, and even those required additional subscriptions on top of the basic cable sports packages. Production values were also just slightly above those produced by high school AV departments, and they really haven't improved much over the last decade.

With regard to expansion, bringing Penn State and Nebraska into the conference might have been a huge coup in the 1980s, but neither school has done much to elevate the Big Ten in terms of its national athletic standing.

As for Maryland and Rutgers, well, with the exception of expanding the conference's television market into the lucrative Baltimore and New York City markets, it's hard to see how either school is of much benefit to the Big Ten.



Assistant Coach Salaries Released

Ohio State on March 11 released contract information for all 10 assistant football coaches, which will total \$7.245 million in base salary for the 2019 season.

Head coach Ryan Day retained five assistants from Urban Meyer's Big Ten title- and Rose Bowl-winning staff, including co-offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson, running backs coach Tony Alford, wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, who was promoted after serving in an interim capacity last year, offensive line coach Greg Studrawa and defensive line coach Larry Johnson. New additions include co-offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mike Yurcich (from Oklahoma State), co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison (Michigan), co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley (San Francisco 49ers), linebackers coach Al Washington (Michigan) and assistant secondary coach and special teams coach Matt Barnes (Maryland).

New salary numbers for the staff are as follows: Mattison, \$1.1 million; Hafley, \$950,000; Wilson, \$950,000; Yurcich, \$950,000; Johnson, \$900,000; Alford, \$600,000; Studrawa, \$600,000; Washington, \$500,000; Barnes, \$350,000, and Hartline, \$345,000.

Mattison's salary is more than double his previous yearly earnings as the Wolverines' defensive line coach, while Hartline's tripled

with the removal of his interim tag. Every returning assistant received a raise of at least \$75,000, while every new coach saw their salary increase by at least \$150,000.

It's important to note the duration of the contracts, as Mattison, Wilson, Hafley, Washington and Hartline received two-year deals. One-year contracts are in place for Johnson, Alford, Studrawa and Barnes.

Each assistant is eligible for the following bonuses, which are tied to the Buckeyes' team success this season: Big Ten East championship – 8.5 percent of their base salary; Big Ten championship game win – 4.5 percent; New Year's Six bowl appearance – 17 percent; non-College Football Playoff bowl game and at least nine wins – 4.25 percent; College Football Playoff berth – 21.25 percent; and national championship game berth – 25.5 percent.

Day, meanwhile, is set to make \$4.5 million in the first year of his five-year contract with Ohio State. Former head coach Urban Meyer made \$7.6 million in his final season with the Buckeyes.

Meyer Hired By Fox

Meyer is no longer Ohio State's head coach, but the former leader of the Buckeyes will be back around college football for the 2019 season. Meyer, who retired after the Rose Bowl, has been hired by Fox as a college football studio analyst.

According to Andrew Marchand of the New York Post, Fox is bringing on Meyer and former Southern California running back Reggie Bush (2003-05) for a "yet-to-be-named Saturday morning pregame show" to air at 11 a.m. on network television in the fall.

Fox confirmed Marchand's report with an announcement acknowledging the one-hour show, set to start in week one of the college football season.

"With a head coach that won three national titles in 10 years, two of the most successful college quarterbacks in recent memory and one of the sport's most electric running backs, our new college football pregame show has the game covered from all angles," Fox Sports National Networks president Mark Silverman said in a statement. "Not only will this all-star cast resonate with viewers because of their recent on-field accom-

plishments, but this group is going to have a lot of fun discussing the games each week."

Former USC signal caller Matt Leinart and former Notre Dame quarterback Brady Quinn are also on the show.

Steelers Toll Shazier's Contract

The Pittsburgh Steelers announced on March 12 that former Ohio State linebacker Ryan Shazier's contract will be tolled into the 2019 season.

That means the 26-year-old Shazier will remain on the team's active roster and be placed on the reserve/physically unable to perform list. He will be paid a salary commensurate with his years of service in the league, continue to accrue seasons toward his pension and receive the same medical coverage as active players.

"We will continue to support Ryan's efforts to return to play," said general manager Kevin Colbert. "Although he won't be able to help us on the field in 2019, his leadership, insight, and emotional support have always been very valuable to us, and we look forward to his contributions in our pursuit of a championship."

Shazier was taken with the 15th overall selection (first round) of the 2014 NFL draft, and was voted to the Pro Bowl following the 2016 campaign. He was tied for the most tackles in the AFC with 68 and tied for the conference lead among linebackers with three interceptions when he suffered a spinal cord contusion in the team's Week 13 win at Cincinnati in 2017.

Thanks to spinal stabilization surgery, Shazier was able to walk back onto the field at Paul Brown Stadium under his own power just 10 months after the injury. He continues to rehabilitate his back with hopes of playing once again.

"Throughout this ongoing process, the Steelers have maintained their primary interest was to support Ryan Shazier, first in his quest to be able to live a normal life and then in his pursuit of a return to the field as a linebacker in the National Football League," Colbert said. "This move is another step the team has taken toward fulfilling that promise."

Carton Named Iowa's Mr. Basketball

Ohio State four-star point guard signee DJ

Lind Joins BSB Staff

Andrew Lind has joined the staff of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz announced. Lind most recently served on the staff of the Ohio State website, Eleven Warriors.

"Andrew brings an interesting and unique skill set to Buckeye Sports Bulletin," Moskowitz said. "He has a solid background in Ohio State sports and recruiting and also has skills in composition and photography. He also is an expert on Ohio State athletic logos and uniforms."

Lind, a 2014 Ohio State graduate, honed his journalistic skills during an award-winning tenure at The Tidewater News and the Windsor Weekly in the Tidewater area of Virginia, where he served in a variety of capacities.

"I am humbled and honored to join the Buckeye Sports Bulletin family," Lind said. "Some of my earliest Ohio State-related memories include picking up the latest copy of BSB from inside the old Holiday Inn on Lane Avenue before I watched the Buckeyes play in person, and I hope my work will have the same kind of impact on our readers for years to come."

Carton was named Iowa's co-Mr. Basketball on March 12, sharing the honor with Upper Iowa-bound point guard Jake Hilmer.

The 6-1, 190-pound Carton, who is considered the second-best point guard and No. 23 prospect overall in the Class of 2019, signed his letter of intent with the Buckeyes in November. He then averaged 24.4 points, 7.6 rebounds and 6.0 assists per game while leading Bettendorf to the Class 4A substate finals.

Carton is the second Ohio State signee to be named Mr. Basketball in his respective state, joining Illinois' E.J. Liddell. Both will participate in the Allen Iverson Roundball Classic on April 24 before enrolling in classes at Ohio State this summer.

Carton and Liddell – along with Garfield Heights native Alonzo Gaffney – combine to give the Buckeyes the top-ranked recruiting class in the Big Ten this recruiting cycle.

Bates-Diop's Role Expands With Timberwolves

Despite being named the Big Ten Player of the Year last season and numerous first-round projections, former Ohio State forward Keita Bates-Diop fell to the Minnesota Timberwolves with the 48th pick in the 2018 NBA draft.

Through the first 57 games of his short career, Bates-Diop saw very little playing time. He appeared in just six games for a grand total of 34 minutes, scoring just six points.

"It was hard not playing," Bates-Diop said. "It wasn't easy, because I'm used to playing at least a little bit. But that kind of comes with it. It kind of changed my mentality and just staying ready, working on my conditioning, lifting, skill work before and after, whatever it took to stay ready for the time I get."

But after starting recently in place of the injured Andrewiggins, who was briefly sidelined with a quad contusion, Bates-Diop now finds himself in the midst of the best stretch of his young career.

Over his last 13 games leading up to



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Spring Football Coverage Continues

Ohio State spring football practice will resume after spring break on March ??, and Buckeye Sports Bulletin will continue to follow the drills and position battles during Ryan Day's first spring as head coach.

The next print issue of BSB is scheduled to be mailed 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 and wrestling teams as they wrap-up their seasons as well as the baseball team 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.

If you are not already taking advantage of BuckeyeSports.com, BSB's 24/7 website, simply email your name, address and preferred email address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com and we will send back simple instructions on how to access the site. Don't forget, subscriptions@buckeyesports.com is our email address, not the website. We will send you directions on how to access the site.

If you are a current subscriber and have been unable to access all features on the site, please give us a call at (614) 486-2202 and we will help you gain access. Glitches do happen from time to time.

Readers who have been experiencing postal delivery problems can also read the complete edition of each issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin online at BuckeyeSports.com on Mondays during football season and Tuesdays the rest of the year. Your copy of the paper will still arrive in your mailbox at its usual time.

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

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)

the Bobcats' second-straight exit in the first round of the MAC tournament.

Various Buckeyes Ink NFL Deals

• **John Simon, New England Patriots** – Former Ohio State defensive end John Simon has re-signed with the Super Bowl champion New England, the team announced March 15. The deal is reportedly worth \$7.2 million over two years.

The 6-2, 260-pound Simon was the 2012 Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year and first-team all-conference during his senior year with the Buckeyes. He was selected by the Baltimore Ravens in the fourth round (129th overall) of the 2013 NFL draft but was released after just one season.

After brief stints with the Houston Texans and Indianapolis Colts, it appears Simon has finally found a home with New England. He appeared in 14 games last season, recording 21 total tackles and 2½ sacks as well as a pass breakup in the Patriots' Super Bowl LIII win over the Los Angeles Rams.

• **Johnathan Hankins, Oakland Raiders** – Though he was originally scheduled to be an unrestricted free agent at the beginning of the new league year on March 15, former Ohio State defensive tackle Johnathan Hankins instead opted to re-up with the Oakland Raiders. He'll earn \$8.5 million (\$5.4 million guaranteed) over the next two years.

The 26-year-old Hankins was selected by the New York Giants with the 49th overall pick (second round) of the 2013 NFL draft following an All-Big Ten junior season with the Buckeyes. He spent four years in the Big Apple and one year with the Indianapolis Colts before signing a deal with Oakland last September.

Hankins appeared in 15 games (14 starts) and recorded 36 tackles and two fumble recoveries in his first season with the Raiders.

• **Carlos Hyde, Kansas City Chiefs** – On March 9, less than 24 hours after he was released by the Jacksonville Jaguars, former Ohio State running back Carlos Hyde signed a one-year, \$2.8 million deal with the Kansas City Chiefs.

The 6-0, 229-pound Hyde spent his first four seasons in the NFL with the San Francisco 49ers, who took him with the 57th overall pick (second round) of the 2014 draft. He signed a three-year deal with the Cleveland Browns last March but was traded midseason to Jacksonville following the emergence of rookie running back Nick Chubb.

Hyde – who notably became the first running back to rush for 1,000 yards under Meyer – finished last season with a career-worst 3.3 yards per carry and five total touchdowns. He'll compete with sixth-year back Damien Williams for the starting spot this fall.

• **Bradley Roby, Houston Texans** – Former Ohio State cornerback Bradley Roby turned down a three-year offer from the Pittsburgh Steelers and a one-year offer from the San Francisco 49ers before agreeing to a one-year, \$10 million deal with the Houston Texans on March 14.

"It's a prove-it deal," Roby said on a conference call announcing his signing. "I feel like I should go back on the market while I'm still young."

The 26-year-old Roby played in 83 games (four postseason, including Super Bowl 50) in five seasons with the Denver Broncos, who drafted him in the first round (No. 31) of the 2014 NFL draft following an all-conference junior season with the Buckeyes. He's compiled 235 tackles, 60 pass breakups, eight tackles for loss, seven interceptions, seven forced fumbles, four fumble recoveries, three sacks and two pick-sixes in that time.

BSB's press time, Bates-Diop was averaging 6.2 points and three rebounds in 18.8 minutes per game. That includes three starts and a career-high 18 points in a 103-92 win over the New York Knicks.

"Seeing him start to fill that kind of role for us, I think, is something to be excited for," said Timberwolves interim coach Ryan Saunders.

Former Buckeye Moss Passes Away

Former Ohio State tight end, fullback, offensive tackle and defensive tackle Eric Moss died March 10 at age 44. The cause of death has not been revealed.

Moss, a native of Belle, W.Va., was a two-way standout at DuPont High, where he earned honorable-mention All-America honors from USA Today and Street & Smith. He signed with the Buckeyes in 1992 but failed to qualify and opted to spend a year at Fork Union Military Academy in Virginia.

Moss played in four games as a freshman at Ohio State, which included an 8-yard touchdown reception in a 63-28 win at Pittsburgh.

Moss was penciled in as the starting left tackle opposite All-American Korey Stringer following spring practice in 1995 but was replaced in the season opener by incoming freshman and future Pro Football Hall of Famer Orlando Pace. He played in parts of 10 games for the Buckeyes that fall but left the program in the offseason.

Despite being out of football for nearly three years, Moss was signed to the Minnesota Vikings' practice squad in 1997. He was joined in the Twin Cities one year later by his half-brother, Pro Football Hall of Fame wide receiver Randy Moss – though a high ankle sprain landed the elder Moss on injured reserve, and the two never took the field together.

Moss then spent one season with the Scottish Claymores of NFL Europe.

Boals To Lead Bobcats

Former Ohio State basketball assistant Jeff Boals has been named the 19th head coach in the history of the Ohio men's bas-

ketball program, director of athletics Jim Schaus announced March 17.


"I am incredibly grateful and honored to return home to my alma mater as the head men's basketball coach at Ohio University," Boals said. "My family and I are thrilled to see my coaching career come full circle with this opportunity. Sincere thanks to (university president Dr. M. Duane) Nellis and to Jim Schaus for their confidence in me to lead the young men of Ohio, both on and off the court."

Boals is a 1995 graduate of Ohio University, where he served as a two-time team captain and led the Bobcats to the 1994 Mid-American Conference regular-season and tournament championships and a berth in the NCAA Tournament.

While rising up the coaching ranks, Boals spent eight seasons (2009-16) as an assistant at Ohio State under Thad Matta. He helped the Buckeyes to seven postseason appearances – including a trip to the 2012 Final Four – and at least a share of three Big Ten titles. Ohio State went 193-62 overall with Boals sitting beside Matta on the bench.

A native of Magnolia in northeast Ohio, Boals returns to Athens following three seasons as the head coach at Stony Brook. He guided the Seawolves to an overall record of 55-41, and has the program headed to its second postseason tournament appearance of his tenure.

Boals replaces Saul Phillips, who spent five years at Ohio but was fired following



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Changes Will Come Gradually During Day Era

Continued From Page 1

suspended). “That’s like saying we’re going to change our inside-zone scheme. It’s been good and it’s time-tested, and I believe in it. So that’s going to be our culture and our infrastructure moving forward.”

Even practice itself was set up the same way it was under Meyer, right down to when media members were allowed to take pictures, what they were allowed to watch and at what point they were sent packing. As always, the Buckeyes started with stretching, moved on to punt-team practice then broke off for individual drills. As Day said, the infrastructure is time-tested so, even with new faces running the show, a complete overhaul wasn’t necessary. In fact, an overhaul might have been a disastrous mistake.

“The kids in the program came here for a reason,” Day said. “They love this culture, they love the program, they love the people around the program.”

The continuation of the culture Meyer built was always the plan. When Meyer announced his retirement Dec. 4, one of the first bits of breaking news was that Day was planning to keep key support staffers such as director of player personnel Mark Pantoni, strength coach Mickey Marotti, director of football operations Brian Voltolini and director of player development Ryan Stamper. They were the core of Meyer’s program, helping to build the culture that became a machine in Columbus.

In his opening remarks when he was first introduced as the next Ohio State head coach, Day focused on the strength of the culture already in place. There’s no reason he would try to change that.



TIM MOODY

NEW MINDS – Co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley is among five new assistants hired by first-year head coach Ryan Day.



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PLAYERS ON THE SPOT

• **Sophomore quarterback Justin Fields:** All eyes will be on Fields this spring as he looks to replace record-setting quarterback and probable top-10 pick Dwayne Haskins. Fields – who is technically Ohio State's highest-rated prospect ever – comes to Columbus following his transfer from Georgia with lofty expectations, and anything less than a berth in the College Football Playoff in year one under center would surely be a disappointment. But first, that involves learning an intricate offensive system and beating out redshirt freshman quarterback Matthew Baldwin to win the starting gig.

The 6-3, 223-pound Fields completed 27 of 39 passes (69.2 percent) for 328 yards and four touchdowns with zero interceptions, and he rushed for 266 yards and four more scores on 42 carries as a backup for the Bulldogs last season. But even he knows he still has a long way to go if he wants to be one of the best quarterbacks in college football and a Heisman Trophy finalist like his predecessor.

• **Junior running back Demario McCall:** Much like Dontre Wilson a few years back, McCall has been sort of an enigma through his first three seasons at Ohio State. The 5-9, 195-pounder flashed playmaking ability as a true freshman, was limited by a groin injury and redshirted the following year, then found himself buried on the depth chart at both running back and H-back last season.

The staff found a role for McCall late in the season as a kick returner and third-down back, and he essentially saved the Buckeyes' Big Ten title hopes with a long fourth-quarter return in an overtime win at Maryland. On the flip side, he also handed Michigan a touchdown one week later by fumbling a kickoff right before halftime.

With Mike Weber off to the National Football League, McCall finds himself in a battle this spring with redshirt freshman Master Teague and early enrollee Marcus Crowley for the backup running back spot. His skill set is designed to perfectly complement starter J.K. Dobbins, and his experience gives him the leg up on the other backs.

With that said, it feels like now or never for McCall.

• **Sophomore center Josh Myers:** For the fourth time in as many seasons, Ohio State is tasked with finding a new starting center. And seeing as Myers' three predecessors (Michael Jordan, Billy Price and Pat Elflein) were All-Americans – with

Price and Elflein winning the Rimington Award as the nation's most outstanding center – he has some rather large shoes to fill this season.

Myers has the athleticism and intelligence to be the Buckeyes' next great center. But if he doesn't lock down the position this spring, redshirt freshman Matthew Jones and incoming freshman Harry Miller will surely push for the spot in fall camp.

• **Junior linebacker Pete Werner:** With Ohio State co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison and linebackers coach Al Washington installing a new hybrid outside linebacker/safety position – known as the "Bullet" – this season, Werner may find himself on the outside looking in despite starting 13 games last season.

The 6-3, 236-pounder recorded 58 tackles, 7½ tackles for loss and three sacks, but he lacked the speed to cover more athletic running backs, tight ends and slot receivers and too often took undisciplined angles to the ball carrier in run support.

Werner's performance during the spring will either show those shortcomings were the result of the scheme employed by former defensive coordinator Greg Schiano or he simply lacks the talent to be a difference maker at the position.

Fifth-year senior cornerback Damon Arnette: Arnette was planning to enter the 2019 NFL draft until he received a call from Ohio State great and Pro Football Hall of Fame wide receiver Cris Carter, who advised the 6-0, 195-pounder to return for one final season and handle unfinished business.

Though Arnette struggled at times last season – particularly in one-on-one coverage, where he'd often get flagged for holding or pass interference – his presence will allow the staff to continue to rotate cornerbacks without sacrificing experience. And as someone who was thrust into the spotlight prematurely because of early entrants to the NFL, he surely sees the value of a senior leader in the secondary.

There's no doubt Arnette took a risk by returning to Columbus, especially since the new coaching staff isn't going to hand him a starting spot this fall. With players such as Shaun Wade, Marcus Williamson and Amir Riep looking for expanded roles on defense, and Sevy Banks, Cameron Brown and Tyreke Johnson more than willing and waiting in the wings, Arnette has no room for error.

It's time to be an All-American or get passed over.

– Andrew Lind

"We all are part of something special here at Ohio State," Day said Dec. 4. "And the culture that Urban Meyer has created here is strong. And my pledge to the players is that our staff is going to give you every opportunity to maximize yourself as a football player, as a student in establishing your career after football."

Meyer said that was his plan all along, too – to build something that could be passed off to a worthy successor and keep running smoothly. The strength of the program was part of the reason he was ready to retire, in addition to health concerns. He was also comfortable with Day as the man to lead the way into the future.

That counts for something, too.

"My goal has always been to make this one of the premier and most comprehensive programs in America," Meyer said the day he announced his retirement. "It's always been a goal to see a healthy, strong program handed to an elite coach and person to make it even better."

By spring practice No. 2 on March 8, it was even clearer that there wouldn't be a big disconnect between the program built by Meyer and the one run by Day. That's because Meyer himself was on the sidelines at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center – not with a whistle, not coaching or getting involved at all. He was just there, observing, joking with Marotti, one of his closest friends.

Instead it was Day on the field. But don't think he was running Meyer's program – Ohio State football starts and ends with Day now.

He's just building on a firm foundation left by the man from Ashtabula, Ohio.

The Changes

Many things will always be the same

at Ohio State. You can probably find similarities within the program between Day's young tenure and the times when Woody Hayes roamed the Ohio Stadium sidelines. But every coach wants to do things his way, so not everything will stay the same – and the changes will certainly go beyond the players on the field or the coaches on the staff.

There just won't be wholesale shifts – Day knows he has a chance to make a difference just as much as he knows that working with the culture already in place is a blessing for a first-time head coach.

"Along the way, there are different changes here and there," he said March 6. "And over time, those little changes add up. But for me to come in and just start making crazy changes just to say it's mine, I'm not going to do that."

Any changes that do happen will be calculated, and they'll be deemed necessary by Day. He calls the shots now. Some will happen soon – this spring, even. Some might

happen when the season begins. Some might happen 10 years from now – the powers that be at Ohio State would certainly like to see Day's tenure last that long.

It's going to be an ever-evolving process, and it won't always be easy to predict ahead of time.

"Every team takes on a different personality," Day said. "So as things go and the journey to this 2019 season happens, we make adjustments from there."

"And then my thought is that maybe in a couple years, there are quite a few changes. But the infrastructure and what's here is not going to change."

For now, the biggest, most glaring difference will be on defense. Day noted as much. Ohio State was – by Ohio State standards – terrible on that side of the ball in 2018. The Buckeyes allowed 403.4 yards and 25.5 points per game last season. The defensive issues played a huge role in the only loss of the year – 49-20 at unranked Purdue, a loss

that kept the Buckeyes out of the College Football Playoff. They played a role in some close calls, too.

The unit just wasn't up to Ohio State standards. Had Meyer stayed as head coach, he would have had to make changes, too. But he might not have made the changes that Day has implemented by replacing four of five defensive assistants.

"For one, our defense is going to look different," Day said. "We obviously made a change there and assessed the situation. Not an easy decision, but that was a major deal. We have a bunch of new guys in the program. That's major."

Schiano, who was defensive coordinator, was replaced by longtime Michigan assistant Greg Mattison. Co-coordinator/safeties coach Grinch was replaced by Jeff Hafley, an up-and-comer who coached with Day in the NFL with the San Francisco 49ers. Linebackers coach Billy Davis, another close friend of Meyer's, was replaced by Al Washington, who has deep Ohio and Ohio State ties and was also poached from Jim Harbaugh's staff in Ann Arbor. Johnson, who was the cornerbacks coach and special teams coordinator, was replaced by Maryland's Matt Barnes, who will run Ohio State's special units while assisting Hafley with the defensive backs.

With Mattison and Hafley running the defense, the Buckeyes have a longtime Big Ten assistant and a potent mind accustomed to working in the professional ranks. That combination will employ a defense that will look different and, in all likelihood, will be much improved.

No longer will the Buckeyes insist on running press coverage on basically every snap. Instead you can expect Ohio State to mix in different looks, different coverages and different lineups. The Buckeyes are even likely to employ a hybrid linebacker/safety position called the "Bullet," which should better utilize the skill sets of players such as junior Brendon White, who came on strong at safety as one of Ohio State's best defenders last year.

For the spring, at least, all of that is in the experimentation phase. Ohio State, led by a new slate of coaches (and a few holdovers who have proved their worth time and again), will find a way to maximize the assets on hand in order to win as many games as possible.

That's Day's job, after all.

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No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown/Previous School	No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown/Previous School
1	Justin Fields	QB	6-3	223	So.	Kennesaw, Ga./Georgia	43	Ryan Batsch	SAF	6-2	205	So.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Loveland
1	Jeffrey Okudah	CB	6-1	200	Jr.	Grand Prairie, Texas/South	44	Ben Schmiesing	LB	6-1	225	So.	Piqua, Ohio/Piqua
2	J.K. Dobbins	RB	5-10	217	Jr.	La Grange, Texas/La Grange	46	Cade Kacherski	LB	6-2	212	Fr.	Dublin, Ohio/Jerome
2	Chase Young	DE	6-5	265	Jr.	Upper Marlboro, Md./DeMatha Catholic	47	Justin Hilliard	LB	6-1	235	Sr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/St. Xavier
3	Damon Arnette	CB	6-0	195	Sr.	Fort Lauderdale, Fla./St. Thomas Aquinas	48	Logan Hittle	LB	5-11	210	Sr.	Nashport, Ohio/Tri-Valley
4	Jordan Fuller	SAF	6-2	205	Sr.	Norwood, N.J./Old Tappan	49	Xavier Johnson	CB	6-3	205	So.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Summit Country Day
4	Chris Chugunov	QB	6-0	208	Sr.	Skillman, N.J./West Virginia	49	Liam McCullough	LS	6-2	237	Sr.	Columbus, Ohio/Worthington Kilbourne
5	Garrett Wilson	WR	6-0	188	Fr.	Austin, Texas/Lake Travis	50	Nathan Brock	OL	6-4	290	Sr.	Powell, Ohio/Olentangy Liberty
5	Baron Browning	LB	6-3	248	Jr.	Fort Worth, Texas/Kennedale	52	Wyatt Davis	OL	6-4	313	So.	Bellflower, Calif./St. John Bosco
6	Taron Vincent	DT	6-2	293	So.	Baltimore, Md./IMG Academy	53	Davon Hamilton	DT	6-4	308	Sr.	Pickerington, Ohio/Central
7	Teradja Mitchell	LB	6-2	242	So.	Virginia Beach, Va./Bishop Sullivan	54	Matthew Jones	OL	6-4	299	R-Fr.	Brooklyn, N.Y./Erasmus Hall
9	Jashon Cornell	DE	6-3	280	Sr.	St. Paul, Minn./Cretin-Derham Hall	54	Tyler Friday	DE	6-3	260	So.	Ramsey, N.J./Don Bosco Prep
9	Binjimen Victor	WR	6-4	205	Sr.	Pompano Beach, Fla./Coconut Creek	56	Aaron Cox	DL	6-3	255	Jr.	Mantua, Ohio/Crestwood
10	Danny Vanatsky	QB	6-1	205	So.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Cincinnati Hills Christian Acad.	58	Joshua Alabi	OL	6-5	305	Sr.	Detroit, Mich./Cass Tech
10	Amir Riep	SAF	6-0	195	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Colerain	60	Zaid Hamdan	DT	5-11	260	So.	Mason, Ohio/Mason
11	Tyreke Smith	DE	6-4	267	So.	Cleveland, Ohio/Cleveland Heights	61	Gavin Cupp	OL	6-4	308	Jr.	Leipsic, Ohio/Leipsic
11	Austin Mack	WR	6-2	215	Sr.	Fort Wayne, Ind./Bishop Luers	62	Brandon Pahl	OL	6-2	299	Sr.	Cutler, Ohio/Warren
12	Matthew Baldwin	QB	6-3	215	R-Fr.	Austin, Texas/Lake Travis	63	Kevin Woidke	OL	6-6	305	Sr.	Cleveland, Ohio/St. Ignatius
12	Sevyn Banks	CB	6-0	200	So.	Orlando, Fla./Jones	64	Jack Jamieson	OL	6-2	280	So.	Cleveland, Ohio/St. Ignatius
13	Rashod Berry	TE	6-4	259	Sr.	Lorain, Ohio/Lorain	65	Phillip Thomas	LS	6-0	230	Sr.	Louisville, Ohio/Louisville
13	Tyreke Johnson	CB	6-1	195	R-Fr.	Jacksonville, Fla./Trinity Christian Academy	67	Robert Landers	DL	6-1	285	Sr.	Dayton, Ohio/Huber Heights Wayne
14	K.J. Hill	WR	6-0	195	Sr.	Little Rock, Ark./North Little Rock	68	Ryan Jacoby	OL	6-5	290	Fr.	Mentor, Ohio/Mentor
14	Isaiah Pryor	SAF	6-2	200	Jr.	Lawrenceville, Ga./IMG Academy	69	Chris Kuhn	DL	6-5	270	So.	Sandusky, Ohio/St. Mary Central Catholic
15	Jaylen Harris	WR	6-5	215	Jr.	Cleveland, Ohio/Cleveland Heights	70	Noah Donald	DL	6-1	265	Sr.	Uniontown, Ohio/Walsh Jesuit
15	Josh Proctor	SAF	6-2	205	So.	Owasso, Okla./Owasso	71	Josh Myers	OL	6-5	310	So.	Miamisburg, Ohio/Miamisburg
17	Kamryn Babb	WR	6-0	195	R-Fr.	St. Louis, Mo./Christian Brothers College	72	Tommy Togiai	DT	6-2	300	So.	Pocatello, Idaho/Highland
17	Alex Williams	ATH	6-6	270	R-Fr.	Pickerington, Ohio/North	74	Max Wray	OL	6-7	300	R-Fr.	Franklin, Tenn./Franklin
18	Jonathon Cooper	DE	6-4	257	Sr.	Gahanna, Ohio/Lincoln	75	Thayer Munford	OL	6-6	310	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Massillon Washington
19	Dallas Gant	LB	6-3	232	So.	Toledo, Ohio/St. John's Jesuit	76	Branden Bowen	OL	6-7	315	Sr.	Draper, Utah/Corner Canyon
19	Chris Olave	WR	6-1	185	So.	San Marcos, Calif./Mission Hills	77	Nicholas Petit-Frere	OT	6-5	295	R-Fr.	Tampa, Fla./Berkeley Prep
20	Pete Werner	LB	6-3	239	Jr.	Indianapolis/Catherdral	80	C.J. Saunders	WR	5-10	190	Sr.	Dublin, Ohio/Coffman
21	Marcus Williamson	CB	5-11	186	Jr.	Westerville, Ohio/IMG Academy	81	Jake Hausmann	TE	6-4	245	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Archbishop Moeller
23	Jahsen Wint	SAF	5-11	200	Jr.	Brooklyn, N.Y./Erasmus Hall	82	Garyn Prater	WR	6-4	210	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Wyoming
23	Marcus Crowley	RB	6-1	205	Fr.	Jacksonville, Fla./Trinity Christian Academy	84	Brock Davin	TE	6-3	240	Sr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/St. Xavier
24	Sam Wiglusz	WR	5-11	185	So.	Brecksville, Ohio/Brecksville-Broadview Heights	85	L'Christian Smith	WR	6-4	220	R-Fr.	Huber Heights, Ohio/Wayne
24	Shaun Wade	CB	6-1	194	So.	Jacksonville, Fla./Trinity Christian Academy	86	De'Shawn White	WR	5-9	172	Jr.	Canton, Ohio/McKinley
25	Brendon White	SAF	6-2	215	Jr.	Powell, Ohio/Olentangy Liberty	87	Ellijah Gardiner	WR	6-3	205	So.	Kemp, Texas/Kemp
26	Jaelen Gill	H-B	6-0	195	R-Fr.	Westerville, Ohio/South	88	Jeremy Ruckert	TE	6-5	250	So.	Lindenhurst, N.Y./Lindenhurst
26	Cameron Brown	CB	6-0	188	So.	St. Louis, Mo./Christian Brothers College	89	Luke Farrell	TE	6-6	250	Jr.	Perry, Ohio/Perry
28	Dominic DiMaccio	K	5-8	190	So.	Columbus, Ohio/DeSales	90	Antwuan Jackson	DT	6-2	299	Jr.	Ellenwood, Ga./Blinn College
28	Ronnie Hickman	SAF	6-1	200	Fr.	Wayne, N.J./DePaul Catholic	91	Drue Chrisman	P	6-3	220	Jr.	Cincinnati, Ohio/LaSalle
28	Amari McMahon	RB	6-0	205	Sr.	Dublin, Ohio/Scioto	92	Haskell Garrett	DT	6-2	295	Jr.	Las Vegas, Nev./Bishop Gorman
29	Zach Hoover	K	6-2	190	Jr.	Toledo, Ohio/Central Catholic	93	Jake Metzger	P	6-2	225	Sr.	Doylestown, Pa./Central Bucks West
29	Marcus Hooker	SAF	5-11	200	R-Fr.	New Castle, Pa./New Castle	94	Roan McCullough	LS	6-1	230	So.	Columbus, Ohio/Worthington Kilbourne
30	Demario McCall	RB	5-9	195	Jr.	North Ridgeville, Ohio/North Ridgeville	95	Blake Haubeil	K	6-3	230	Jr.	Buffalo, N.Y./Canisius
30	Kevin Dever	SAF	6-0	195	Jr.	Cleveland, Ohio/St. Edward's	97	Noah Potter	DE	6-6	252	Fr.	Mentor, Ohio/Mentor
32	Tuf Borland	LB	6-1	232	Jr.	Bolingbrook, Ill./Bolingbrook	98	Jerron Cage	DT	6-2	295	So.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Winton Woods
33	Zach Harrison	DE	6-6	255	Fr.	Lewis Center, Ohio/Olentangy Orange		Alec Koch	WR	5-11	170	Fr.	Lebanon, Ohio/Sinclair Community College
33	Master Teague	RB	5-11	220	R-Fr.	Murfreesboro, Tenn./Blackman							
34	Owen Fankhauser	SAF	5-11	195	Sr.	Stow, Ohio/Stow-Munroe Falls							
34	Mitch Rossi	RB	6-1	240	Jr.	Franklin, Tenn./Franklin							
35	Luke Donovan	SAF	5-10	190	So.	Scottsdale, Ariz./Desert Mountain							
35	Austin Kutscher	WR	6-0	200	So.	Massillon, Ohio/Massillon Washington							
36	K'Vaughan Pope	LB	6-1	231	So.	Dinwiddie, Va./Dinwiddie							
37	Derrick Malone	TE	6-5	245	Sr.	Dayton, Ohio/Thurgood Marshall							
37	Trayvon Wilburn	LB	6-0	220	So.	Cincinnati, Ohio/Mount Healthy							
38	Javontae Jean-Baptiste	DE	6-5	245	R-Fr.	Oradell, N.J./Bergen Catholic							
39	Malik Harrison	LB	6-3	245	Sr.	Columbus, Ohio/Walnut Ridge							
42	Bradley Robinson	LS	6-1	230	Sr.	Troy, Mich./Athens							
42	Lloyd McFarquhar	CB	5-10	170	So.	Cleveland, Ohio/Brush							
43	Robert Cope	RB	5-9	200	So.	Dublin, Ohio/Jerome							

Coaching staff – Ryan Day, head coach; Larry Johnson, associate head coach/defensive line; Greg Mattison, co-defensive coordinator; Jeff Hafley, co-defensive coordinator/secondary; Al Washington, linebackers; Tony Alford, assistant head coach for offense/running backs; Brian Hartline, wide receivers; Greg Studrawa, offensive line; Kevin Wilson, offensive coordinator/tight ends; Mike Yurcich, passing game coordinator/quarterbacks; Matt Barnes, special teams coordinator/assistant secondary. **Graduate assistants** – Kenny Anunike, Sean Duggan, Trey Holtz, Chandler Whitmer. **Quality control** – Corey Dennis (senior), Parker Fleming, Matt Thurin, Keenan Bailey. **Support staff** – Mickey Marotti, assistant AD/football sports performance; Diana Sabau, executive associate AD; Brian Voltolini, associate AD/GM; Quinn Temple, director of operations; Shaun Barnhouse, head trainer; Dr. Jim Borchers, head team physician; Justin Kume, assistant AD/compliance; Mark Pantoni, assistant AD/ player personnel; Ryan Stamper, assistant AD/player development; Kevin Ries, equipment manager; Joe Stanek, video coordinator; Tony Tucker, director of student well-being.

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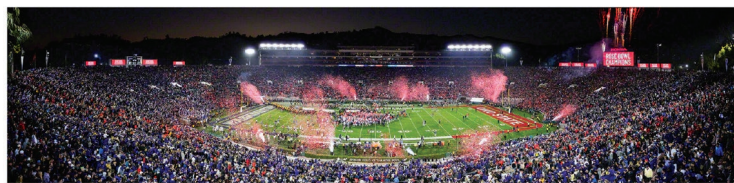
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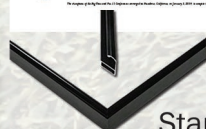
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OSU Focused On Key Position Battles This Spring

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

Ohio State opened spring practice earlier this month, which allowed the media to get a glimpse of which players were working with the first- and second-team offenses and defenses during a pair of hour-long viewing periods.

The Buckeyes return just four starters on offense from last year's Big Ten title- and Rose Bowl-winning squad, with record-setting quarterback Dwayne Haskins; running back Mike Weber; wide receivers Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin; and offensive linemen Michael Jordan and Isaiah Prince all expected to hear their names called during next month's NFL draft.

Offensive guards Demetrius Knox and Malcolm Pridgeon have also run out of eligibility, though neither is currently projected to be drafted.

The defense, meanwhile, returns nine starters – though, with four new defensive assistants installing a new scheme, they aren't all guaranteed to hold onto their spots by the time fall camp rolls around. But more on that in a bit.

The quarterback battle between sophomore Justin Fields and redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin will take center stage this spring – and likely continue into the fall. – but there are still several other positions with players competing for a starting spot. (A breakdown of the QB competition can be found on page 12.)

"The more competition, the better for



TIM MOODY

FIGHTING FOR A SPOT – Early enrollee Marcus Crowley has a chance to compete for playing time at running back this spring.

us – at all positions," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "Anytime you have competition, it's healthy. I don't think deciding on a starter needs to be done right off the bat. You just don't know how it will play out. Getting to that first game is a long journey, so we'll take it as we go. If one guy wins the

job and deserves to, then we'll do that. If not, we'll keep competing."

It's difficult to project which players will emerge at their respective positions after watching just a portion of two practices, so instead we've identified five key position battles that will shape Ohio State's depth chart this fall. We've also included a two-deep prediction based on individual drills, previous experience and the expected development of highly sought-after youngsters. BSB will continue to provide depth-chart projections throughout spring practice, including only those players currently on campus.

Offensive Line

Left tackle Thayer Munford is the only returning starter along the offensive line for Ohio State, but that's not to say the unit lacks experience across the board.

Branden Bowen earned the starting right guard position out of camp ahead of the 2017 campaign but missed the final eight games of that season – as well as all of last year – while recovering from a broken leg that required multiple surgeries and extensive rehabilitation. Now fully healthy, the fifth-year senior opened spring practice with the first-team offense at right tackle.

"He's going to provide some depth for us," Day said. "It was tough for him to come back. He had a couple surgeries and procedures done to make sure that he got right, and then we wanted to make sure before we put him out there that he was ready. We feel like he's ready now. He's had a good offseason. It's going to be really important for us, not just him playing, but also his leadership because he has been on the field and he has started games for us. We're going to need him to step up in a big way for us this spring."

Bowen's primary competition comes in the form of redshirt freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere, a former five-star prospect who is still relatively unproven after playing in just three games last season. There's no doubt Petit-Frere has the size and athleticism to develop into an elite offensive tackle, but he may have to wait one more year to crack the lineup.

Day also expressed a lot of confidence in sophomores Josh Myers and Wyatt Davis, who are almost assured starting spots at center and right guard, respectively, after a strong finish to the 2018 season.

"We were ready to have Myers play some center down the stretch for us in the bowl game and move Mike Jordan to left guard," Day said. "He worked all season for that opportunity. It never quite presented itself down the stretch, but this is a huge spring for him to go win a job."

"Wyatt came through and played a bit down the stretch for us, which was huge. We do have some guys with experience, but solidifying that front is going to be really important for us."

That leaves just one position to be addressed: left guard.

Junior Gavin Cupp has taken the first-team reps at the position so far this spring, but Rutgers graduate transfer Jonah Jackson will have every opportunity to take over the starting spot upon his arrival on campus this summer. Because of that, it's unlikely this battle will be determined until closer to the season opener on Aug. 31.

In the unlikely event that Jackson doesn't win the job, the former Scarlet Knights team captain and All-Big Ten honorable-mention selection will provide much-needed depth in the interior portion of the offensive line.

Linebacker

Linebacker is without a doubt the most difficult position to project, with new co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison and linebackers coach Al Washington set to hold an open competition this spring and into the fall as they look to retool what was arguably Ohio State's most disappointing unit over the last two seasons.

"For one, our defense is going to look different," Day said. "We obviously made a change there and assessed the situation. Not an easy decision, but that was a major deal. We have a bunch of new guys in the program. That's major."

Though the Buckeyes return all three starting linebackers, only senior Malik Harrison is likely to reprise his role on the outside. He could be backed up by sophomore Dallas Gant, who played in 13 games last season, mainly on special teams.

Middle linebacker is not so cut-and-dried, though, as junior team captain Tuf Borland will have to hold off classmate and former five-star prospect Baron Browning. The two have split first-team reps so far this spring, but the latter may be more talented and has a higher upside. It may just be a matter of him embracing playing inside rather than outside, where he's admittedly more comfortable.

"(I expect him to) step up, obviously, and have a great spring and become a starter," Day said of Browning. "I think, to your point, those guys are trying to figure out in this scheme where he best fits. He is an inside 'backer, but where does he fit moving forward based on his skill set? He is very talented. Hopefully we can get things to click this spring, and he can go and win a job."

Among the most notable characteristics the first-year assistants have carried over from their time at Michigan is the hybrid outside linebacker/safety position called the "Bullet." The free-roaming position – made somewhat famous by former Wolverine defender Jabrill Peppers – replaces the traditional strongside linebacker position and will most likely be filled by junior Brendon

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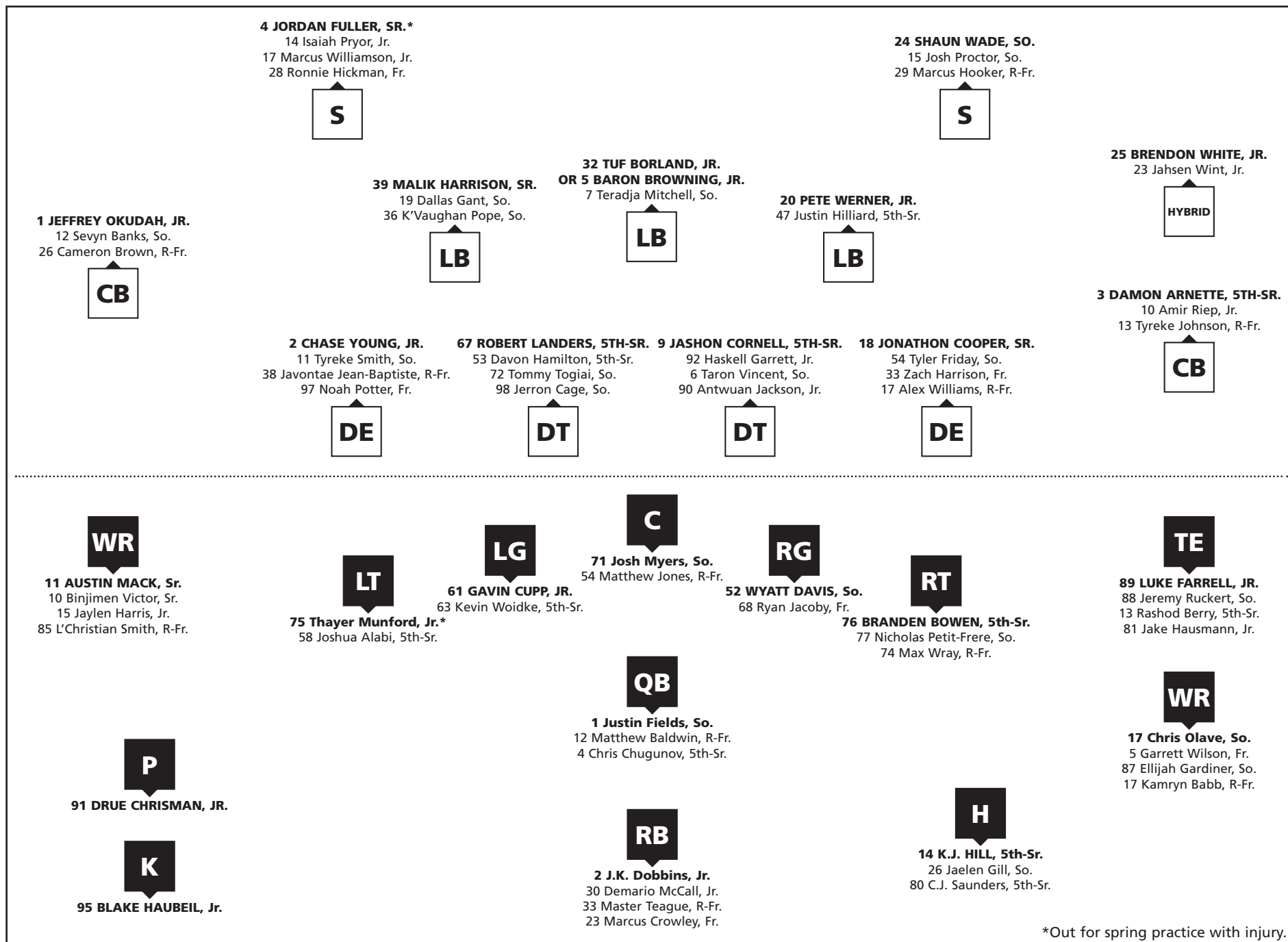
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PROJECTED 2019 SPRING DEPTH CHART



White, who emerged late last season to solidify the much-maligned safety position opposite senior Jordan Fuller.

"Brendon can do a bunch of things, and I think one of the things that we challenge our defense with is finding the guys on our defense, what they can do best," Day said. "If it's to come down and cover, if it's fit the run, if it's matched up on a tight end, if it's matched up on a running back, if it's playing corner ... whatever those skill sets of the guys we have. It's just like on offense - you assess what you have and then you try to fit the best scheme into it. So that's what they're in the process of. Day one, Brendon's going to do some different things for us. But there's a lot of guys that we're going to test the waters and see what they can do."

Incumbent Pete Werner is more of a traditional linebacker, though, so he's been taking first-team reps when Ohio State practices in a base defense. And since the coaching staff is still experimenting with the hybrid position, it wouldn't be surprising to see the Buckeyes situationally switch between a 4-3 defense and the hybrid lineup, allowing both Werner and White to flourish.

"Based on how we think that best fits our guys, that's yet to be seen," Day said. "Today, we're just installing and kind of running around. The good news is we're able to

do that where we have flexibility based on who we have, injuries, what they could do, who we think the best guys are to put on the field, how teams are attacking us in their personnel groupings."

Backup Running Back

After sharing the load with Weber during his first two seasons in Columbus, junior J.K. Dobbins is set to be the featured back for Ohio State in 2019. (More on Dobbins on page 13.)

But in order to keep Dobbins fresh - and, most importantly, healthy - late in the season, Day and running backs coach Tony Alford must find a suitable replacement to spell their workhorse back from time to time, particularly in blowouts.

Fields will surely get his fair share of carries as a dual-threat quarterback, which will take some of the pressure off Dobbins in short-yardage situations much the way former signal caller J.T. Barrett did during his freshman year. But the depth chart lacks experience behind Dobbins, and it will be important to establish some sort of pecking order before the season begins.

"There's a lot of guys behind him that haven't done anything," Day said. "They've got to prove themselves and win some backup positions. Then hopefully the more we can get those guys going this spring, we can

create more depth and take something off of his plate."

Redshirt freshman Master Teague rushed for just 106 yards and one touchdown on 17 carries in limited duty last season but showed flashes of why he was among the most coveted running backs in the class of 2018. His physicality and ability to finish runs would complement Dobbins well.

Junior Demario McCall is a do-it-all athlete who has seen his fair share of playing time as a running back, wide receiver and returner, though injuries and position changes have kept him from reaching his full potential. McCall started to make an impact

as a third-down back and in passing situations late last season, and there's an expectation that he'll have a similar role in 2019.

Teague and McCall have both been limited by injuries this spring, which has opened the door for early enrollee Marcus Crowley to get valuable repetitions with the second-team offense. If he can take advantage of their respective absences and the relatively light load Dobbins will receive the remainder of the spring, he may find himself in the conversation for meaningful carries this fall.

"I think he has a real chance," Day said. "As a running back, he has a real feel for the game."

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OSU's Fields, Baldwin Vying To Replace Haskins

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

Matthew Baldwin has seen a complete turnover in the quarterbacks room in a 12-month period with Joe Burrow, Dwayne Haskins and Tate Martell exiting and Justin Fields, Chris Chugunov and Danny Vanatsky arriving at varying times.

But the more things change, the more they stay the same.

In the spring of 2018, there was a battle among Burrow, Haskins and Martell to replace J.T. Barrett. The prohibitive favorite was Haskins because of his stirring emergency backup performance when Barrett got hurt during the 2017 Michigan game.

Haskins won the job out of spring ball last year, and the rest is history. Burrow moved on to LSU as a graduate transfer. Haskins finished third in the Heisman Trophy voting, setting numerous Ohio State and Big Ten passing records along the way, before opting to leave early for the 2019 NFL draft.

That left Martell as the heir apparent for 2019 based on his mop-up duty last season, and he said as much in a pre-Rose Bowl interview.

However, this is the new era of college football when athletes can more readily switch programs through the transfer portal, and former Georgia QB Justin Fields took the opportunity to relocate to Ohio State in January.

Martell took that as a sign that the job was not his, and he took his talents to the Miami Hurricanes.

The quarterback group now consists of Fields, Baldwin, Chugunov (who came from West Virginia as a graduate transfer last August) and sophomore preferred walk-on Vanatsky, who joined the program in the summer of 2018.

Baldwin, a second-year freshman from Austin, Texas, is the lone holdover from a year ago.

"It's different," he said. "We had a QB battle last year with Dwayne, Joe and Tate. I really joined at the tail end so it's a different thing. They were more veteran guys. We have a younger group now."

"I'm technically the most veteran guy. At least I've been here the longest. I know Chris is older, but it's a different dynamic than last year."

In more ways than one. Not only are three-quarters of the QBs different from last spring, but so is the man directly coaching them.

Ryan Day, of course, was elevated from offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach

to replace head coach Urban Meyer. While Day will still have a big role in how the offense operates, he hired Mike Yurcich from Oklahoma State to be the passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach.

Yurcich didn't go into specifics as to changes to the offense.

"Even if we were tweaking, even if there were some nuances, I wouldn't really lead onto that because it's an irrelevant kind of topic that really doesn't help us win football games," he said March 8. "So the basics of this offense – springtime is a great time to get back to the fundamentals of your offense, your base concepts, and those are the concepts that we're focusing on."



Justin Fields

He and Day will at some point have to address another quarterback competition. Like a year ago, there seems to be a favorite. After all, Fields didn't choose Ohio State to sit on the bench.

That might be obvious to many, but not to Day. At least that's what he told the media after the first practice on March 6.

"It's going to be a battle from day one," he said. "It's a progression along the way. Everyone's competing, but I thought it was a good start. It's exciting to see what this is going to be like."

Yurcich said there is no timetable for naming a starter for the Aug. 31 season opener vs. Florida Atlantic but that the practices and the spring game on April 13 at Ohio Stadium will likely provide a clearer picture.

"I don't think we have a definite timeline to say, 'Hey, it's got to be done by practice four,' or 'It's got to be done by practice five,'" he said. "I think, as you go through spring, you make those decisions. And whenever that time is, that's what it'll end up being. Usually, the more you get into some real live scrimmages, the more that sort of thing will unfold by itself."

Day wants his quarterbacks to be given every opportunity to show what they can or can't do.

"Let them compete, let them learn," he said. "Also, they have to feel like they're allowed to fail, because if you fail, you learn. If you're afraid to fail because you're going to win or lose the job, then you're not getting better at a fast enough rate."

Make no mistake, though, the competition is between Fields and Baldwin with Chugunov, a fifth-year senior, as an insurance policy if both get injured.

"I've sat down with Coach Day multiple times and talked about the position I'm in and the value it has fitting the team and the role I play. I've embraced it and come out here and work every day," Chugunov said. "I'm here. I have experience. I compete

every day and I also excel off the field and set myself up for when football's over, but when I'm here I'll do whatever I'm asked to do."

Fields has the star power. He was the rated the No. 2 overall prospect in the 2018 class behind quarterback Trevor Lawrence, who as a freshman last season led Clemson to the national championship while Fields lost the QB battle at Georgia to Jake Fromm, the incumbent.

With Fromm locked in for another season, Fields looked elsewhere and applied for a transfer as a hardship case so he could have immediate eligibility at his new school. Citing a racial slur directed toward him by a Georgia baseball player, Fields and his representatives successfully appealed to the NCAA that he was uncomfortable in a hostile environment.

Fields, a Kennesaw, Ga., native, enrolled for the spring semester at Ohio State on Jan. 4, two days after Day officially became head coach, and on Feb. 8 he was granted his eligibility beginning with the 2019 season.

"I think I've transitioned well in terms of just coming in here from a different place, so it's been good," he said after the Buckeyes' second practice on March 8. "I don't want to accomplish or prove anything. Just for me, my goal is to just become the best quarterback I can be and just keep improving every day."

"It's great being here. I'm definitely just trying to get my timing down and stuff with receivers. Just trying to get that, I guess, chemistry together and continue to get better every day."

Fields (6-3, 225) was the top-rated dual-threat quarterback in the class of 2018 and at Georgia played in 12 games last season as a freshman. He completed 27 of 39 passes (69.2 percent) for 328 yards and four touchdowns. He ran 42 times for 266 yards (6.3 per carry) with four TDs and even had one catch for minus-10 yards.

Yurcich said Fields is a special player but that it's too early to proclaim him the successor to Haskins.

"That 'it' factor thing? I surely think it's there," he said. "I think all of our quarterbacks have certain traits that make them special. And after two practices, what is that 'it'? I think we need more time to start high praise on any of them and over-evaluating based on a small sample size."

Baldwin (6-3, 200) would appear to be the underdog, but remember that Day recruited him out of Lake Travis, the same high school that produced 2017 Heisman Trophy winner and Cleveland Browns starting QB Baker Mayfield.

"I've never been afraid of competition," Baldwin said of Fields. "I know he's got a lot of, I would say, hype around him but he's lived up to it from everything I've seen about him, throwing with him. He's a great player."

"He probably went to Georgia with that same scenario to come in and start, and Jake Fromm held him off. He has his strengths and weaknesses. I have my strengths and weaknesses."

"I'm glad I get to compete against a guy like that. No one wants to be handed things, I don't think. You don't feel like you've earned it. You're not going to be handed things here, so I never expected that coming in."

Baldwin, the 12th-ranked pro-style quarterback in the 2018 class, according to



Matthew Baldwin

247Sports, sustained a torn ACL in the 2017 Texas playoffs that required surgery.

His injury put him behind Haskins, Martell and Chugunov on the depth chart as far as scholarship quarterbacks, so there was no reason to rush his return and he did not get into a game in 2018.

"It was probably six or seven games into the season that I felt 100 percent," Baldwin said. "I could have played earlier, I think. Coach Day, like the fourth game against Tulane, said I probably could have played but I wouldn't have been 100 percent."

He feels he will be given an equal shot to become the starter.

"Well, Coach Day is the one who specifically came out and recruited me," Baldwin said March 8. "Ohio State was really the first Division I big-time offer, so Coach Day found me, and he believes in me with all of his heart so I trust him."

Battling for a position at OSU is nothing new for Baldwin. Until Fields arrived, the competition was supposed to be between him and Martell.

"Tate was also a five-star, so I knew no matter what you're going to be competing against someone good," Baldwin said. "I was kind of chasing Tate. That was kind of my position so I had a fire under me. Now Tate leaves and Justin comes so I guess he's chasing or we're kind of fighting each other so it is different, but I think I have the same motivation."

If there is an advantage, it might go to Fields for having already played in college.

"It definitely helped me being at Georgia," Fields said. "I guess I can say here and Georgia, they run a lot of the same passing concepts so really what I have to get in tune is the terminology and just knowing the names of things. It's just the little things that are in the offense."

"I mean, as I begin to take more reps and just get more reps in, I'll become more comfortable in the offense."

He said Baldwin has been a mentor in helping him get acclimated even though they are fighting for the same job.

"Me and Matt are good friends," Fields said. "He's definitely a good quarterback, and I'm just learning from him every day because he was here last year. He's helping me out with the playbook and stuff like that."

Yurcich is not surprised by the camaraderie shown by all the quarterbacks.

"I think there's a nice blend of being competitive, and also, they're mature young men, and they also know how to be really good teammates to each other as well," he said. "They're a mature group. So, it's fun to be in that room, and I'm very fortunate to coach those young men."

As much as he wants them to get along, he also feels that the battle for No. 1 quarterback will benefit the team.

"Anytime you're able to create competition, it raises the level of play," Yurcich said. "And I think it's as simple as that. We're just trying to create competition and raise the level of performance. And as the saying goes, iron sharpens iron."

When the starting quarterback is named is not as important as making sure it's the right choice, and Day is in no rush.

"Getting to that first game is a long journey, so we'll take it as it goes, and if one guy wins the job that he deserves to, then we'll do that," Day said. "If not, then we'll keep letting them compete. That's not the focus right now. The focus is on the offense."

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Dobbins Ready To Be Workhorse Running Back

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State junior running back J.K. Dobbins is preparing for his junior year coming off back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons to begin his collegiate career.

Dobbins set the Ohio State freshman rushing record with 1,403 yards, and averaged 7.2 yards per carry in 2017. The per carry average ranked seventh in the nation and second in program history. Carlos Hyde averaged 7.3 in 2013. Dobbins' debut season earned him ESPN Freshman All-American honors and elicited comparisons to other talented tailbacks in Ohio State's illustrious history.

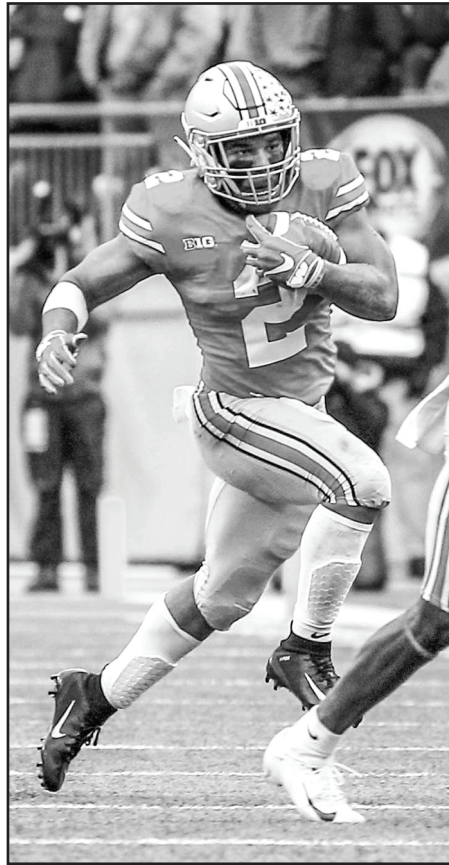
Splitting carries with Mike Weber as a sophomore, Dobbins rushed for 1,053 yards and 10 touchdowns, but his yards-per-carry average dropped to 4.6.

"I'm not going to make any excuses – it was me," Dobbins said. "I regressed last year. I didn't have the year that I needed to have, and so I put that on myself and I'll get back to that this upcoming year."

While a 1,000-yard, 10-touchdown season would typically be viewed as a success, the La Grange, Texas, native came away from his sophomore campaign feeling unsatisfied.

"Explosiveness, things like that," Dobbins said when asked how he regressed. "I didn't do what I needed to do."

With Weber leaving early for the NFL draft, Dobbins is in line to enjoy



JOSH WINSLOW

ONE-MAN SHOW – Junior J.K. Dobbins is set to be OSU's lead running back in 2019 after splitting time with Mike Weber last year.

increased opportunity as an upperclassman.

"His carries are going to be up," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "And he's going to be the lead dog."

Day's words would be music to any tailback's ears, but with the increased opportunity comes increased responsibility.

"He's the back now," Day said. "And so, I think he'll tell you, maybe a little bit last year he was looking for home runs because he was kind of splitting reps with Mike (Weber) or whatever."

"So he's going to have to make those 5 yards, 6 yards, hard runs where he's going to finish them for 7 or 8, and maybe not try to hit that home run. So I think that's going to be important."

Dobbins confirmed his coach's criticism. He added that while he liked staying fresh, there are benefits to being on the field more, like getting into a groove.

"I've never switched drives back to back, so I wasn't used to that," Dobbins said. "And so as a guy like me, you don't know when you're going to get your last carry. That's why I was doing that. So I'm going to work on that. That's my fault."

While Dobbins was quick to blame himself for his "regression," other factors might have played a role outside of splitting carries. Ohio State lost two of its top linemen from Dobbins' freshman season, Jamarco Jones and Billy Price, and the absence of their run-blocking presence was apparent.

Also, the Buckeyes boasted the nation's

No. 2 passing offense. Dwayne Haskins and company averaged 364.3 passing yards and 40.1 pass attempts per game, so the offense had a different dynamic.

Dobbins, who took 230 carries as sophomore compared to 194 as a freshman, did not think that those excuses held any merit.

"I put it all on me, it's not the offensive line's fault, it's not anyone else's fault except for mine," Dobbins said. "I didn't take advantage of my opportunities like I did my freshman year, and so the results were what they were. And I've just got to build on that and get better."

Overall, Dobbins (5-10, 217) enters his junior season with 2,876 yards from scrimmage and 20 total touchdowns, averaging 102.8 yards from scrimmage per game. Despite all his success, Dobbins expects to take the next step, becoming a more explosive back.

"Mentally, I know the offense even more," Dobbins said. "And then physically, I've been eating better and I just feel more in shape."

The back also noted that his body-fat percentage is down as he tries to get himself ready for a bigger role.

While the Ohio State offensive line still has question marks and Haskins has moved on to the NFL, Dobbins is poised to make the upcoming season his best one yet.

"I mean, I'm just going to keep doing what I've been doing since I've been here," Dobbins said. "Work hard and get better each day."

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ALWAYS WITH YOU

Buckeyes Made Late Push To Land OT Jones

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State signee Dawand Jones is far from the typical Division I recruit. He wasn't among those highly rated across the board and flooded with offers as a junior in high school.

Despite helping lead Indianapolis Ben Davis to a Class 6A state championship as a junior, Jones, a three-star offensive lineman, did not receive a Power-5 offer until Oct. 30, which was near the conclusion of his senior season.

Ben Davis head coach Jason Simmons said he thinks Jones' lack of recruiting clout was partially due to the fact that he did not put himself out there and attend recruitment camps.

"His recruiting process was really unique," Simmons told BSB. "When you think of recruiting in this day and age, he was kind of a throwback recruit in the sense that he didn't start getting recruited until his senior year from a football standpoint. He had basketball offers and was seriously considering those. He didn't really get recruited until late in his senior year and then didn't sign until February, so his recruiting was really unique."

Jones admitted to feeling some frustration with the lack of football offers, adding that he was close to signing a letter of intent to play basketball at Kent State. Simmons told Jones to remain patient, confident his time would come.

Mississippi State offered Jones first among Power-5 programs, opening the floodgates. Indiana, USC, Cincinnati, Florida State, TCU and Michigan quickly followed up with offers before Ohio State pulled the trigger, giving Jones a myriad of options. Prior to the onslaught of offers, his lone FBS scholarship opportunity came from Ball State.

"I just wanted to make sure I found the right fit," Jones said of his recruiting decision. "I didn't know where I was going to go. I just wanted to make sure I had the right fit, make sure it was just perfect for me."

Although the recently sought-after offensive tackle did not know where he wanted to go, Simmons advised him to see what he thought about Ohio State.

"I just really wasn't feeling Ohio State," Jones said. "So my coach was a big fan of it, and he was like, 'Just at least give them a chance, go look at them.' And once I went and looked at them, I just really fell in love ever since."

Jones visited Columbus during the week of The Game, hoping to get a real feel for what he would experience if he chose to don the scarlet and gray. The Indianapolis native came away impressed and comfortable with Columbus.

"When I went there I felt like at home," Jones said. "Most of the time when I went on visits I felt like I wasn't real comfortable and

I would just be antsy about it. And then that Ohio State visit, I wasn't antsy about that one."

Jones said he was high on Ohio State but felt uncertain when former head coach Urban Meyer stepped down. Meanwhile, Jones received offers from Louisville, Oregon, Auburn, Florida and Penn State. However, once Ryan Day took over for the Buckeyes, he assured the Ben Davis product that he was a top priority.

Jones (6-8, 360) is viewed as a project, and his high school coach thinks that is a fair assessment. Simmons said Jones still needs to improve his football IQ and fundamentals but has been progressing quickly, already showing the ability to use his footwork and length to his advantage.

"Ohio State is going to get a young man whose upside is limitless right now," Simmons said. "They're getting a young man who is raw when it comes to the sport of football. He has some natural abilities at tackle that come from just his overall athleticism and playing basketball."

Having nearly committed to play D-I basketball, Jones is adept on the court. He averaged 13.4 points and 6.9 rebounds, while shooting 75 percent in his first varsity season as a junior.

Taking his basketball game to the next level, Jones led Ben Davis to the Class 4A state championship, averaging 18.0 points

and 8.9 rebounds on 73percent shooting as a senior. Ben Davis will face off against Carmel High School in the state title showdown on March 23. The two-sport standout said playing both sports has paid dividends.

"It really helps me a lot," Jones said of playing basketball. "It helps me with footwork and stuff like that. It keeps me moving all the time, keeps me in shape, also. So basketball has always just helped me with football. My first love translated to my second love – football."

Like many recruits, Jones described himself as a hard worker who will do whatever it takes to reach his full ability. In Jones' case, there is proof in his improvement.

"Some of it speaks to the work, the commitment he made to making himself a better football player," Simmons said. "If you watch his junior tape, Ohio State's not going to recruit him based off of that junior film. The work that he put in to develop his game as a football player his senior season allowed him to get recruited by Ohio State."

Despite initially lacking attention in recruiting and being ranked outside of the top 1,000 players in the 2019 class, Jones did not let the negativity get to him. Instead, he insisted on becoming the best he can be, focusing on realizing his lofty potential.

"I always played with a chip on my shoulder," Jones said. "For me to be underrated – it's nothing to me. Ratings mean nothing. So for me to be underrated, it really didn't bother me. I was like, 'My time will come, and I'll just prove all my doubters wrong.'"



Dawand Jones

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12th Annual Buckeye Cruise Sets Another Record

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Another year, another milestone crushed by the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer.

Twelve months after the annual event raised \$3 million from Feb. 21-26 in 2018, the Feb. 23-28 voyage made history with \$3.25 million compiled to help fight the disease in support of the Urban and Shelley Meyer Fund for Cancer Research at the Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center (OSUCCC).

Lisa Cisco founded the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer in 2007. Twelve years later, she saw her vision of the event come full circle.

"That was our record and that put us over \$20 million raised in total, which is a huge milestone," said Cisco, who in 1987 became the president and founder of Travel Partners in Dublin. "It's a 'wow' because it took us the first four years to raise 1 million. So from year five to 12, we raised over \$19 million. So it's kind of crazy."

Guests spent the five-day stretch on Royal Caribbean's newly renovated Independence of the Seas cruise ship. The Buckeyes Cruise set out from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to Grand Cayman and CocoCay, Bahamas, Royal Caribbean's private island.

While the Meyers were unable to attend due to a prior commitment, Ohio State football was represented heavily between current coaches and former players. Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker Ryan Shazier, who has continued his remarkable recovery from the spinal injury he suffered in the fall of 2017, highlighted the former players on the cruise and served as a source of inspiration to the cancer survivors aboard.

"Ryan Shazier walked the whole aisle of the theater and then up on the stage," Cisco said of Shazier, who was honored with a \$100,000 scholarship – the "Shalieve" scholarship – in his name, raised solely through autograph signings. "He talked to people about how he had less than 10 percent of a chance of moving extremities, let alone walking, so he's telling people, 'Never give up, always believe.' His speech was incredible. We had 400 cancer survivors come up."



COURTESY OF CARRIE SCHMITT

FOR THE CAUSE – BSB contest winners Nate and Carrie Schmitt had a chance to take in the 2019 Buckeye Cruise.

Cincinnati Bengals center Billy Price, New Orleans Saints quarterback J.T. Barrett, Miami Dolphins linebacker Raekwon McMillan and Tennessee Titans defensive back Damon Webb headlined a wave of recent Buckeyes now in the NFL on the cruise for the first time. Former OSU quarterback and 1968 national champion Rex Kern also made the trip.

"All the new guys were amazing, including '68 national champion quarterback Rex Kern," Cisco said. "Then we had J.T., Billy Price, Raekwon McMillan and Damon Webb. I think it was definitely the best one ever. Everybody got it, from the new cruisers to the old cruisers, to the new athletes. There

was not anybody asking for autographs. Everybody was there for the right reason.

"They're doing it because they love their Buckeyes, but they're doing it because they know that they're trying to find a cure for cancer at a great university. So it's pretty amazing."

The long list of Ohio State fans and supporters on the trip included Carrie Schmitt, who won Buckeye Sports Bulletin's annual contest. She had been on cruises in the past with her parents growing up but never experienced one like the Buckeye Cruise.

"The biggest shock to me was walking on the boat and it was decked out (Buckeye) with decorations," Schmitt told BSB. "It

was so fun. I would be talking to the people next to us – you instantly have some good encounters everywhere, so that's really fun. It's really easy just to talk to everyone around you. Everyone's real friendly. Everyone's there for a good cause, good people. But it was just so nice. Everyone was so friendly."

Schmitt enjoyed the time she and her husband, Nate, spent on the boat, which followed with adventures from snorkeling in Grand Cayman to shopping at Atlantis in the Bahamas. But when they were on the cruise, one aspect stood out.

"There were people wearing shirts and people would post it on their door that they were a survivor, so that was kind of neat just to see that," Schmitt said. "There was definitely that feeling of camaraderie and support. There were people on the ship – not many – that may have been undergoing treatment. Some who said, 'We were supposed to come last year, but then my husband got cancer and was undergoing treatment and couldn't be here, so this year's extra special.' So I encountered some of that."

"It just makes me really proud of everyone who was involved in planning it. Really proud of Ohio State and the research being done. The fund that they were going for just sounds amazing, so I'm really excited about the future of cancer treatment based on what I was hearing about the funding. I'm really proud of Buckeye Nation for pulling \$3.25 million. That's pretty wonderful."

How popular has the Buckeye Cruise become? Next year's trip, which is set for Feb. 16-21, had already raised \$11,270.67 when BSB went to press.

"When people come on it, the cruise keeps getting better, so people are more wanting to be a part of it," Cisco said. "I just read two emails. Somebody wants to have a fundraiser in Atlanta and someone else wrote how they want to get involved. When they come back, they see it and they feel it and they just want to know how they can be a part of it. That's what helps, because it takes all of us."

"I didn't raise a million dollars. The Buckeye Cruise family did that. It's a true family, in every sense of the word."

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Ohio State Adds Another In-State O-Lineman

Before the Buckeyes took off for spring break, Ohio State opened spring camp March 6 and 8 with its first two practices of the month. In addition to action on the field, OSU's efforts from the trail trickled into the Woody Hayes Athletic Center with a handful of recruits watching the football team get back to work under new head coach Ryan Day for the first time.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Garrett Stepien

One key visitor from Ohio made the trip, resulting in an offer and a commitment that followed a few days later. When the Buckeyes resumed practice the week of March 18, another wave of prospects were expected to arrive in Columbus as well.

In-State OT Jumps On Buckeyes Offer

Three days after Ohio State offered Trey Leroux, the offensive tackle from nearby Norwalk, Ohio, pulled the trigger.

The 6-8, 320-pounder picked up an offer March 8 from the Buckeyes during an unofficial visit for the team's second practice of spring camp. On March 11, Leroux took to Twitter as he announced his commitment to OSU.

"I am proud to announce that I have decided to continue my academic and athletic career at The Ohio State University," he said in a tweet. "Thank you (Ryan Day) and staff for the opportunity."

Leroux is the seventh member of the 2020 recruiting class. He is the Buckeyes' fourth offensive lineman and the third from Ohio. He joins Cincinnati Xavier five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson (6-7, 285), Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional four-star offensive guard Luke Wypler (6-3½, 285) and Cincinnati Elder offensive tackle Jakob James (6-5, 275) in the group.



TREY LEROUX/TWITTER

STAYING IN STATE – Ohio State and head coach Ryan Day (left) picked up a commitment from Norwalk, Ohio, 2020 three-star offensive tackle Trey Leroux (right) on March 11, making him the third in-state OL commit in the class.

Leroux's recruitment gained steam Sept. 1 when OSU hosted him for the 2018 season opener against Oregon State. Ohio State followed up Jan. 11 in the form of a visit from senior offensive quality control coach Corey Dennis at Norwalk High School with Truckers head coach Todd Fox. The

Buckeyes brought Leroux back to campus for his spring visit, culminating with an offer in Day's office and a tour of facilities from assistant director of player personnel Weston Zernechel.

Leroux is a three-star recruit for 2020, according to the 247Sports composite, as the

No. 1,066 overall prospect, No. 102 offensive tackle and No. 46 player in Ohio. He holds 12 offers, highlighted by ones from Purdue (Oct. 21) and West Virginia (Dec. 5), among others.

Similar to Indianapolis Ben Davis three-star offensive tackle Dawand Jones (6-8, 360), who signed with Ohio State's 2019 recruiting class as a late-bloomer prospect, Leroux is a project in the trenches but an exceptional athlete. In addition to Leroux's multisport status as a varsity wrestler at heavyweight, he possesses unique bend and explosion for his size with a 39-inch box jump.

Leroux's commitment mirrors how Ohio State added James, previously its last pledge in the trenches (Jan. 21). The Buckeyes offered James during an unofficial visit, and he accepted his scholarship on the spot. Unlike past years, OSU appears to no longer be waiting on in-state prospects – particularly at an enormous position of need such as offensive line, where position coach Greg Studrawa needs six players for the 2020 haul.

2020 Colorado OL Announces Final 5

Ohio State entered Aurora (Colo.) Eaglecrest 2020 four-star center Reece Atteberry's recruitment June 24 with an offer, following with an Oct. 6 visit. The 6-5, 280-pounder made a sizable cut to his list of 20-plus options March 11 and included the Buckeyes among the final five.

Duke, Michigan, Nebraska and Notre Dame joined OSU in the mix. The trim came roughly two months after offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson stopped

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ASK AN ANALYST

With CBS Sports Network's Tom Lemming

Ohio State landed its seventh commitment for the 2020 recruiting class March 11 when Norwalk, Ohio, offensive tackle Trey Leroux (6-8, 320) gave his verbal. What are they getting in their latest pickup?

"He has a super-high ceiling because of his height and his length and his great feet. What I saw last year was a guy who was a work in progress. He wasn't the super-dominant tackle that you would see in (Cincinnati St. Xavier 2020 five-star offensive tackle commitment) Paris Johnson yet, but he has that type of potential. He has terrific athletic ability. I think it's just a matter of time. Ohio State does a really good job of developing offensive linemen. There's no hurry to put him into the lineup. Of course, he'd benefit from a redshirt year and maybe back someone up. But he could be a three-year starter."

Leroux is OSU's fourth offensive lineman for the cycle and the third from Ohio. What does his pledge as an in-state prospect mean for head coach Ryan Day's recruitment locally?

"It's a good year for offensive linemen (in Ohio). All three of these guys (Leroux, Johnson and Cincinnati Elder 2020 three-star offensive tackle commitment Jakob James) are good. Johnson is arguably one of the top two or three in the country. The other two have that kind of potential, too. So when you've got big-time players like

that right in your back yard with a need at that position, you take them.

"I know (former head coach Urban Meyer's) philosophy was to go nationally and only go after superstars in Ohio, which worked perfectly for him. I'd imagine Day's going to do the same thing. However, when you've got three really good ones at the position in Ohio, you can't overlook them.

"Urban learned to go national everywhere he's been. He has that Pete Carroll philosophy. Pete Carroll's was to only recruit potential first-round draft picks. Who knows what Urban would have done? I know that he obviously went after Paris. I think he had more of a mind-set of recruiting coast to coast constantly, just going after elites. You mark down the top 10 linebackers in the country and go after them no matter where they are. Probably not all three offensive linemen fit into the top 10 nationally, but all three are at least going to be four-star players."

Leroux's offer came during an unofficial visit March 8 while he was on a visit for spring practice. As the Buckeyes build a visitor list for the April 13 spring game at Ohio Stadium, what is the significance of prospects taking trips to Columbus for practices? How much more is the coaching staff able to get around the players as opposed to the fall and game days?

"They have more time to be with the player when it's only practice. Also, nowadays, kids are committing much earlier than they did in the past. And so the spring visits are super important now, much more than they had been in the past years, just because everybody's jumping at offers. So you've got to be on top of things.

"I can understand why schools are offering these guys early. Some people are getting mad, but for one thing, the thing that really changed the whole ballgame was they used to have – four years ago, you offered a kid in writing. Then the NCAA outlawed that until Sept. 1 of their senior year. So now, when it's verbal, it's in the air as soon as you say it. That's why some schools are offering 300-400 guys.

"And Ohio State offers a lot too, but locally, they don't – and the reason is because those offers in-state go out immediately and they're going to accept them. They've got to be a lot more close to the vest when it comes to local offers than national offers when you're going after, say, the top quarterback in the country. But locally, you've got to be a lot more careful. That's why they don't have as many offers in Ohio. They know if they offer, they better love the guy because he's going to commit, more likely than not, to them early – within a few days like Leroux did."

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
Trey Leroux	OT	6-8	320	★★★	Norwalk, Ohio
Jack Miller	QB	6-4	210	★★★★	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral
Gee Scott	WR	6-3	211	★★★★	Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic
Jaxon Smith-Njigba	WR	6-1	188	★★★★	Rockwall, Texas
Luke Wypler	C	6-3½	285	★★★★	Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional

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

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

by Eaglecrest on Jan. 11, followed by Day and running backs coach/area recruiter Tony Alford the next week.

Atteberry is the 247Sports composite's No. 348 overall prospect, No. 4 center and No. 5 player in Colorado for 2020. He is slated to make his Columbus return March 23 for the fifth practice of spring camp.

2020 Kentucky OT Trims List To 6

Also in 2020, Louisville (Ky.) Christian

Academy four-star offensive tackle John Young included Ohio State among his top six schools March 11. He picked up an offer from the Buckeyes during an Oct. 13 visit for OSU's 30-14 victory against Minnesota at Ohio Stadium.

Georgia, Kentucky, Louisville, Michigan and Purdue joined Ohio State in the mix.

A return trip to see the Buckeyes is likely but not yet finalized. Young's process is worth keeping tabs on – although OSU reached four offensive linemen for the class

March 11 when Leroux committed. The 6-6, 280-pounder is the 247Sports composite's No. 306 overall prospect, No. 29 offensive tackle and No. 4 player in Kentucky for 2020.

Spring Camp Brings Abundance Of Visitors

Beyond the Ohio borders, Ohio State

brought an offer candidate to Columbus in Suffield (Conn.) Academy's Justin Barron. The 6-4, 210-pounder stopped by the Woody Hayes Athletic Center March 6 to see the Buckeyes' first practice of spring camp.

In the midst of multiple visits, Barron

Continued On Page 18

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4-Star WR Commit Set For All-American Bowl

Continued From Page 17

checked out OSU at the request of area recruiter and special teams coordinator/assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes before he took his subsequent visit March 8 at Pittsburgh. Prior to Pittsburgh, Barron made trips to Connecticut and Syracuse.

The three-star athlete holds four offers – Boston College (June 22), Southern Mississippi (Nov. 4), Syracuse (Dec. 11) and Connecticut (Feb. 16). Barron is the 247Sports composite's No. 1,068 overall prospect, No. 82 athlete and No. 8 player in Connecticut for 2020.

Also in attendance March 6 was Columbus Grandview Heights 2020 three-star tight end Luke Lachey. The 6-6, 215-pounder is in the mix among Ohio State's offer candidates at the position for the upcoming cycle.

Lachey is the son of former Buckeye Jim Lachey, who was a two-time All-America offensive guard before he started his NFL career in 1985 as the 12th overall pick in the draft by the San Diego Chargers. The elder Lachey, who is now on OSU's football radio broadcasts, had a 10-year run in the league that led to three Pro Bowls and a Super Bowl XXVI championship with the Washington Redskins.

Heading into his senior season with nearby Grandview Heights, Lachey is racking up the offers from Power-5 programs. He holds 18 offers to date, with the latest coming March 8 from Wisconsin.

Also a budding recruit in basketball with his first offer March 13 from Bowling Green, Lachey is an athlete to watch on the gridiron. He is the 247Sports composite's No. 704 overall prospect, No. 21 tight end and No. 26 player in Ohio for 2020.

From nearby Westerville Central, 2021 quarterback Judah Holtzclaw made the drive March 6 and experienced Ohio State's first practice of spring camp. The 6-5, 195-pounder checked out the Buckeyes at the invitation of Day and passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mike Yurcich.

Holtzclaw has yet to receive an offer, but his interests are expanding. Over the summer, he camped with several Power-5 programs.

As far as visits go, Holtzclaw took trips to Pittsburgh (Oct. 27), Kentucky (Nov. 3) and Clemson (March 16). At his high school, Miami (Ohio; Jan. 17), Pittsburgh (Jan. 23), Bowling Green (Jan. 26) and Toledo (Jan. 28) have stopped by to check on him.

After an offer Jan. 31 from Ohio State, Dedham (Mass.) Nobles 2020 three-star Cam Large checked in March 7-8 to visit the Buckeyes. The 6-5, 240-pounder possesses 26 offers – half of which have come since OSU entered the mix.

Most recently, he added offers from Penn State (Feb. 25) and TCU (Feb. 27). Those followed a trip to Notre Dame the weekend of Feb. 23-24, which resulted in an offer from the Fighting Irish.

Large is the 247Sports composite's No. 499 overall prospect, No. 12 tight end and No. 5 player in Massachusetts for 2020. He also plays defensive end for his high school team.

Local linemen rounded out Ohio State's visitors for the first week of spring practice, culminating March 8 with a pair of Ohio offer candidates for 2020 in Terah Edwards and Sam Rengert.

Edwards (6-4, 310) is a three-star offensive guard from suburban Groveport Madison, with 21 offers – the latest coming March

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1989

Tyrone Morrison wanted to follow in the footsteps of Chris Spielman and Eric Kumerow when he decided on his future at Ohio State. The linebacker from San Diego Samuel F.B. Morse became interested while watching Silver Bullets before him through the years and made things official when he signed his letter of intent Feb. 8, joining the Buckeyes' 1989 recruiting class.

The 6-4, 240-pounder arrived at OSU ready to go. With a 375-pound bench press and 4.60-second time in the 40-yard dash, Morrison built a reputation in high school as a big and speedy player in the box.

"I really don't have any problem as far as coming to Ohio State is concerned," Morrison said. "It's a long way from home but that doesn't bother me. I think it's going to benefit me in the long run, both on the football field and academically."

25 Years Ago – 1994

Considered one of the top wide receivers in the country, Springfield (Ohio) South's Dee Miller decided to become a Buckeye and announced his commitment to Ohio State's 1995 recruiting class. The 6-1, 200-pounder spurned Tennessee – his other finalist – before he chose OSU.

"I liked everything at both campuses," Miller said. "There were no disadvantages, but I think the degree from Ohio State would be better than one from Tennessee."

Miller added that he believed head coach John Cooper had the Buckeyes going in the right direction, which factored into his decision.

"I like the unity of the players," Miller said. "The coaches are nice, and it seems like Coach Cooper has a good relationship with his players. It's a great program, and I'm glad to be a part of it."

20 Years Ago – 1999

Ohio State's efforts to start its 2000 recruiting class came to fruition March 8 when Alliance, Ohio, offensive lineman

Larry Kinnard became the Buckeyes' first commitment.

The 6-8, 285-pounder picked OSU over Michigan and Indiana. Kinnard came away with an offer March 5 and wasted no time jumping on the opportunity presented by defensive coordinator Fred Pagac and recruiting coordinator Bill Conley.

"This was just the best choice I could make at this time," Kinnard told BSB. "It just seemed like one of the smartest things I could do. The distance down there isn't bad, the academics are good and the program is great."

15 Years Ago – 2004

With the exception of Detroit Cass Tech defensive lineman Vernon Gholston for the 2004 recruiting class, Ohio State had not attracted many players from up north in recent years.

Despite the proximity to Ann Arbor, Mich., Detroit DePorres wide receiver Talonnie Russell was warming up to the Buckeyes. He had no particular affinity for Michigan, and his interest tilted in OSU's favor to begin with.

"Ohio State is my first choice," Russell told BSB. "I've liked Ohio State since I was a little kid. I watched them on TV a lot."

The 5-11, 160-pounder had been a varsity letterman since his freshman year. He had been hearing from Ohio State and the Wolverines as recruiting heated up.

"I'm a playmaker," said Russell, who was slated to camp with the Buckeyes. "Coaches like that I catch the ball with my hands and have good feet."

10 Years Ago – 2009

As one of Ohio's top prospects for the 2009 recruiting class, it was no surprise to see Ohio State target Darryl Baldwin, a defensive end from Solon, listing Ohio State as his leader. Cincinnati, Duke, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame and West Virginia joined OSU among Baldwin's list of offers.

"Growing up in Ohio, I always followed Ohio State," Baldwin said. "I would watch them all the time, and they are only about two

hours from here. I definitely don't want to go too far away. I'd much rather stay close. I think Duke is the farthest I'd think about going."

Five Years Ago – 2014

With the arrival of defensive line coach Larry Johnson from Penn State, the door opened for Darius Slade in Ohio State's 2014 recruiting class. The three-star defensive end from Montclair, N.J., flipped from Michigan State on National Signing Day (Feb. 5) and followed Johnson to Columbus.

In an interview with BSB about a month after he signed his letter of intent, Slade broke down what made him become the Buckeyes' 23rd and final signee for the 2014 cycle. The answer directly correlated with the hire of Johnson, who left the Nittany Lions after PSU head coach Bill O'Brien left for the Houston Texans and took OSU defensive line coach Mike Vrabel with him to the NFL.

"Michigan State tried to talk me out of it, but I knew I couldn't sign anything (with them) until I went to Ohio State," said Slade. "Come signing day, I was talking to (head coach) Urban Meyer and Larry Johnson and had a strong feel for the program."

One Year Ago – 2018

Ohio State's 2019 recruiting class added its third member March 19 when Avon, Ind., four-star running back Sampson James announced his commitment to the Buckeyes.

The 6-1, 211-pounder was the 247Sports composite's No. 142 overall prospect, No. 8 running back and No. 2 player in Indiana for the cycle. He pulled the trigger on his pledge two days after an unofficial visit to campus in Columbus. In the announcement, James noted plans to enroll early at OSU.

James neared 20 offers from powerhouse programs around the country. Among others in his recruitment, he considered Michigan, Notre Dame and Tennessee. As a junior in 2017, James took 243 carries for 1,782 yards and 20 touchdowns while also catching 16 passes for 185 yards and two more scores.

11 from Missouri – to his name while the Buckeyes keep in touch. He is the 247Sports composite's No. 931 overall prospect, No. 53 offensive guard and No. 39 player in Ohio.

Rengert (6-7, 285) is a three-star offensive tackle from Milford Center Fairbanks, who holds 12 offers with OSU in contact. He is the 247Sports composite's No. 817 overall prospect, No. 73 offensive tackle and No. 29 player in Ohio.

2020 Texas OG Back On Market

On the topic of recent offers, Sugar Land (Texas) Kempner 2020 four-star offensive guard Akinola Ogunbiyi decommitted from Texas A&M on March 6, six months after he pledged his services to the Aggies. The 6-4, 310-pounder originally committed June 2 to Texas A&M before he added 10 more offers to his list.

"Firstly I want to thank God for putting me in the position I am in today," Ogunbiyi said in a note posted to a tweet. "Without his guidance I would be lost in this recruiting journey. Secondly I want to thank my mother for being supportive of me and praying with me throughout this process. Thirdly I would like to thank Texas A&M University and their coaching staff for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to play football at their university."

"With that being said I would like to announce I am opening my recruiting process back up and decommitting from Texas A&M University. Texas A&M will still be

integral in my recruitment. ... As of right now however I would like to be open to all schools and all opportunities to further my athletic and academic career. Please respect my decision."

Since the Buckeyes offered Feb. 14, Ogunbiyi picked up offers from Virginia Tech (Feb. 16) and Ole Miss (Feb. 27) as well. Georgia and Alabama headlined the list of Power Five schools to offer him after the Aggies pledge.

Surveying his options, Ogunbiyi took a Feb. 23 trip to Oklahoma, which offered May 26. He is the 247Sports composite's No. 216 overall prospect, No. 11 offensive guard and No. 29 player in Texas for 2020.

Top RB Target Sets Long-Awaited Visit

Over a year in the making, Buchanan (Calif.) Clovis 2020 five-star running back Kendall Milton has finally locked down his Ohio State visit for April 5 – the Buckeyes' 11th practice of spring camp.

Surging to the top of OSU's board at his position, Milton picked up an offer last January before he compiled 40 offers and became the 247Sports composite's No. 2 player at the position for the upcoming cycle.

The 6-2, 220-pounder is additionally the No. 15 overall prospect and No. 4 player in California for 2020.

WR Scott To Play In All-American Bowl

What has become an annual tradition

of future Buckeyes on display at the All-American Bowl will continue next January with the one of many potential Ohio State commitments in action for the 2020 game.

Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star wide receiver and Ohio State commitment Gee Scott announced March 12 his plans to play in the 2020 All-American Bowl, which takes place Jan. 5 of next year at 1 p.m. from the Alamodome in San Antonio.

The 6-3, 211-pound Scott, who committed Dec. 25 to the Buckeyes, joins Johnson as OSU's second pledge for 2020 slated to play in the annual all-star game.

2021, 2022 QBs Set OSU Visits

Dependent on numbers, Ohio State might be open to one more quarterback for its 2020 recruiting class, which has included Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral four-star commitment Jack Miller (6-4, 220) since July 1. In the meantime, as they look to build their depth at the position, the Buckeyes have placed some focus on getting ahead for the next two cycles.

The wave of visits starts March 22 with La Grange Park (Ill.) Nazareth Academy's J.J. McCarthy, who told Buckeye Grove's Marc Givler he plans to take his return trip to Columbus for a two-day visit into March 23 – OSU's fifth practice of spring camp. The 6-2, 180-pounder last came to campus Oct. 6 for Ohio State's 49-26 win over Indiana in Ohio Stadium.

In possession of 22 offers – Day

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

and company extended one Dec. 11 – McCarthy is among the few signal callers OSU has targeted for the 2021 class. Recruited by Yurchich at Oklahoma State before he joined the Buckeyes in his post as passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach, McCarthy has familiarity with Day and the coaching staff as he builds his relationship further.

“I was really interested in OSU prior to him being there,” McCarthy told Givler. “Now that Coach Yurchich is there, I couldn’t be happier. Between Coach Day and Coach Yurchich, the sky is the limit on how far this offense can go. I can’t wait to watch next season.

“I talked to (Yurchich) during the fall almost weekly. I now reach out to him at least once a week. I love talking ball and life with him. Coach Day and I had a great conversation a couple weeks ago. I cannot wait to hear more about his vision as head coach. Coach Dennis has been awesome to talk with also.”

Ohio State’s recruiting efforts at quarterback delve deeper than rising juniors such as McCarthy. For the 2022 class, the Buckeyes have already taken interest in several signal callers.

The prospects include two from Ohio in Jeffery Beverly of Columbus Franklin Heights and Chase Harrison of Centerville. Neither has an offer, but OSU is slated to host each for an upcoming date in the spring.

Beverly last visited Ohio State for its Sept. 22 game against Tulane, a 49-6 rout at Ohio Stadium. The 6-4, 195-pounder told BSB he makes his return March 23 for the Buckeyes’ fifth practice of spring camp.

Harrison (6-2, 185), on the other hand, holds an offer from Louisville (June 3) while powerhouse programs such as OSU watch closely. After he last took a trip to campus Nov. 24 for Ohio State’s 62-39 victory against Michigan at Ohio Stadium, his return visit is April 5 – the Buckeyes’ 11th practice of spring camp.

OSU discovered both 2022 arms last June during its one-day position camps over the summer. Harrison visited Louisville (Feb. 23) and Michigan State (March 16) before capping the spring slate with an April 6 trip to Alabama.

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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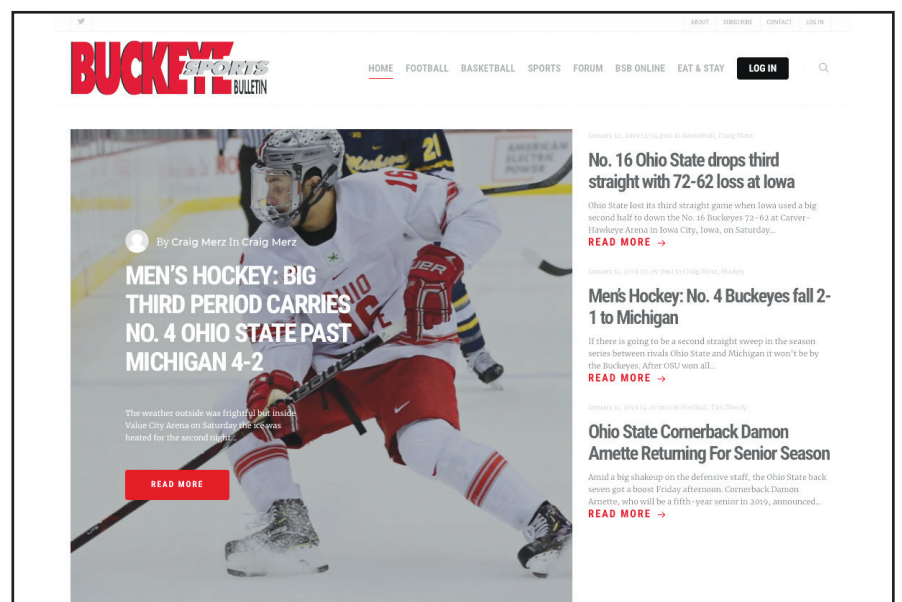
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'Unique' Senior Class Powers Bucks To Postseason

Ohio State men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann used a word that stood out at his March 8 press conference when he talked of his three seniors playing their final game at Value City Arena two days later: unique.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

Holtmann wasn't talking about the athletes, collectively or individually, but the circumstances that led to the trio reaching the closing stages of their OSU careers.

"Unique that you have three guys that have all come in at different times but three really special young men that come from fantastic families," Holtmann said. "There's been a situation where maybe you had a transfer, a four-year guy and a fifth-year guy, but I don't think I've had a year with one of each."

First there is former walk-on Joey Lane from Deerfield, Ill., the only one of the three to spend four years in the program and who quickly became a fan favorite.

He was followed to Columbus by C.J. Jackson, who played a season at Eastern Florida State where he was a National Junior College Athletic Association second-team All-American before joining the Buckeyes under former coach Thad Matta. Jackson is completing his third season for Ohio State.

Finally, Keyshawn Woods made OSU his final stop this season as a graduate transfer after beginning his collegiate career at Charlotte before playing two seasons at Wake Forest.

"Keyshawn is clearly the oldest, but Joey's the veteran," Holtmann said. "For four years here he's been a part of this program. I'm so grateful he came and Coach Matta and the staff added him.

"You have C.J. Jackson, who's really an incredible kid, as is Joey as is Keyshawn. They're terrific people. High, high level people."

Jackson is second on the team in scoring (12.2) behind Kaleb Wesson (14.4) and has started 29 of his 32 games. Woods averages 7.7 points and 3.0 rebounds in 26.8 minutes, mainly off the bench. Lane has played 14 games and scored 11 points.

Even though the three players did not spend as much time together as a "normal" senior class, it was evident at the same media availability that Holtmann spoke that they had developed a bond.

At the end, Lane broke down when describing how he remained upbeat in his career despite limited playing time.

"I was the same dude in high school even when I was playing all the time," he said as he fought back tears. "It's harder to be positive. It's definitely not easy. It's hard."

At that point, Lane draped one arm over Woods to his left and the other on Jackson to his right. He then finished his thought, "It's easy to be positive for these dudes. It's easy."

Holtmann understood why Lane was so emotional.

"He cares about the team, really wants Ohio State to win," the coach said. "There's a reason why he's so beloved by the students. He's a relationship guy. He's done an unbelievable job developing relationships with people. I think he makes people feel really welcome."

Added Jackson, "Having a teammate like that is unbelievable because you can kind of



TEAM LEADERS – Ohio State seniors Keyshawn Woods (32), C.J. Jackson (3) and Joey Lane (14) earned high praise from head coach Chris Holtmann (second from right).

lose yourself in the team, and that's what Joey does. He puts the team first no matter what."

Woods said Senior Day was significant to him even though he wasn't around as long as Lane and Jackson.

"It will be emotional knowing it's my last home game here," he said. "It would have been nice to be here all four years, but I'm just glad I was able to play with these guys for my final year."

All three seniors started against the Badgers. For Lane it was the first in his Ohio State career, and he opened the game by missing a three-pointer. Unfortunately for the Buckeyes, there was no Hollywood ending as they lost 73-67 in overtime.

The contributions of Woods and Jackson were evident against Indiana in the Big Ten tournament at the United Center in Chicago on March 14. Woods made a clutch late basket, and Jackson sealed the 79-75 win with a pair of free throws with three seconds left.

Even though OSU lost 77-70 to Michigan State in the quarterfinals the next day, the win vs. the Hoosiers was the boost needed to earn the Buckeyes an NCAA Tournament bid on March 17.

Holtmann noticed the added motivation by Woods and Jackson against the Hoosiers.

"There's a look that you get, and it's like, 'Hey, I want to keep playing for a while.'" Holtmann said. "Keyshawn's not played in a lot of NCAA Tournaments, and neither has C.J., for that matter."

Senior Moment

The three players were not the only ones recognized before the Wisconsin game. In addition to the student managers and trainers, some big, old guy was honored as well.

Greg Oden, 31, who as a freshman led the Buckeyes to the 2007 NCAA title game in his only season before becoming the NBA's No. 1 draft pick by the Portland Trailblazers, is student coach for the Buckeyes as he works toward his diploma.

He will graduate with a degree in education (sports industry) in May after going through the school's degree completion program for former student-athletes.

"To be a No. 1 draft pick is awesome as well, but then this, me getting my degree is more about me growing as a man and expanding my mind," Oden told The Columbus Dispatch.

He was presented a framed No. 20 Ohio State jersey.

Oden, whose career was marred by injuries, played only 105 NBA games before retiring in 2014 as a member of the Miami Heat. He averaged 8.0 points and 6.2 rebounds in 19.3 minutes for his NBA career.

Welcome Back

When Kaleb Wesson returned from a three-game suspension vs. Indiana, his teammates expressed no ill will toward the sophomore center even though the Buckeyes lost

all the games in his absence to jeopardize their NCAA Tournament chances for a while.

"It's always nice to have one of your teammates, one of the guys you're really close to, being able to play out there," Jackson said on March 12.

Wesson had 17 points and 13 rebounds vs. the Hoosiers. Against Michigan State he got in foul trouble and had seven points and three rebounds in 16 minutes of playing time before fouling out with just under 10 minutes left.

He had been suspended March 1 for violating athletic department policy.

"It was a lot of soul-searching during those two weeks, just really my priorities and what I really was about," Wesson said after the Indiana game. "I feel like in those two weeks it really hurt seeing my teammates out there and not being able to contribute, not helping them when I know I can contribute to that part of the game. So just being able to be out there again was great."

Better Than Nothing

Wesson was the only Buckeye recognized by the coaches and media in separate balloting for the Big Ten awards. He was an honorable mention by both groups.

Michigan State's Cassius Winston was the Player of the Year by each. The first team for both included Winston, Bruno Fernando (Maryland), Carsen Edwards (Purdue) and Ethan Happ (Wisconsin).

They differed on the fifth spot with the

BIG Men's Basketball

	Conf.			Overall		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Michigan State	16	4	.800	25	6	.806
Purdue	16	4	.800	23	8	.742
Michigan	15	5	.750	26	5	.839
Wisconsin	14	6	.700	22	9	.710
Maryland	13	7	.650	22	9	.710
Iowa	10	10	.500	21	10	.677
Minnesota	9	11	.450	19	12	.613
Ohio State	8	12	.400	18	13	.581
Indiana	8	12	.400	17	14	.548
Rutgers	7	13	.350	14	16	.467
Penn State	7	13	.350	14	17	.452
Illinois	7	13	.350	11	20	.355
Nebraska	6	14	.300	16	15	.516
Northwestern	4	16	.200	13	18	.419

March 5 Scores

Michigan State 91, Nebraska 76
Minnesota 73, Purdue 69

March 6 Scores

Penn State 66, Rutgers 65

Northwestern 68, Ohio State 50

March 7 Scores

Wisconsin 65, Iowa 45
Indiana 92, Illinois 74

March 8 Score

Maryland 69, Minnesota 60

March 9 Scores

Purdue 70, Northwestern 57
Michigan State 75, Michigan 63

March 10 Scores

Penn State 72, Illinois 56
Indiana 89, Rutgers 73
Nebraska 93, Iowa 91

Wisconsin 73, Ohio State 67 (OT)

2018-19 Ohio State Men's Basketball Statistics**19-14 Overall (8-12 Big Ten)
Statistics through Big Ten tournament**

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	30-29	769-25.6	145-290	.500	24-67	.358	118-161	.733	71-132	203-6.8	97-5	55	67	21	30	432-14.4
C.J. Jackson	32-29	977-30.5	129-314	.411	58-152	.382	73-95	.768	16-112	128-4.0	61-1	113	75	6	41	389-12.2
Andre Wesson	33-32	972-29.5	99-226	.438	36-105	.343	56-75	.747	42-90	132-4.0	95-3	57	58	14	17	290-8.8
L. Muhammad	32-28	882-27.6	82-217	.378	35-94	.372	56-74	.757	16-72	88-2.8	63-1	58	47	2	32	255-8.0
Keyshawn Woods	33-13	885-26.8	97-230	.422	23-79	.291	37-45	.822	12-88	100-3.0	74-1	80	45	5	22	254-7.7
D. Washington	33-2	582-17.6	90-238	.378	40-131	.305	19-30	.633	8-76	84-2.5	43-0	37	36	0	9	239-7.2
Kyle Young	29-14	609-21.0	78-114	.684	1-6	.167	28-48	.583	46-86	132-4.6	63-1	28	22	16	17	185-6.4
Justin Ahrens	24-4	238-9.9	25-61	.410	19-49	.388	10-11	.909	4-40	44-1.8	23-0	8	14	5	6	79-3.3
Jaedon LeDee	26-2	171-6.6	18-47	.383	0-3	.000	41-55	.745	18-27	45-1.7	27-0	6	12	6	3	77-3.0
Musa Jallow	33-11	478-14.5	29-77	.377	10-33	.303	17-24	.708	28-61	89-2.7	38-1	21	22	8	14	85-2.6
Joey Lane	14-1	38-2.7	4-7	.571	3-5	.600	0-0	.000	0-6	6-0.4	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									49-45	94-2.8				9		
Ohio State	33	6,623	797-1,824	.437	249-725	.343	455-620	.734	310-837	1,147-34.8	591-13	470	414	83	195	2,298-69.6
Opponents	33	6,619	765-1,820	.420	225-681	.330	430-578	.744	295-808	1,103-33.4	616-15	389	408	103	197	2,185-66.2

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

coaches voting for Lamar Stevens of Penn State while the media tabbed Minnesota's Jordan Murphy. Purdue's Matt Painter was selected as Coach of the Year by the media and coaches.

Recruiting Watch

While one big man, Wesson, did not play

against Wisconsin, another one also had a courtside seat but for a different reason.

Senegal-born 7-0, 200-pound center Ibrahima Diallo made an official visit to Ohio State that weekend. He is playing his senior season for Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep after transferring from Victory Rock Prep in Bradenton, Fla.

Prior to the game he was seen chatting with athletic director Gene Smith and Oden. Diallo was offered by Ohio State on March 18, and the Buckeyes and Pittsburgh are considered the current front-runners. He is viewed as a project and not ranked by 247Sports.

Ohio State has one scholarship remaining for the 2019 class after Micah Potter left the program before the season and later transferred to Wisconsin.

Already committed to the class are a trio of four-star recruits: point guard DJ Carton from Bettendorf, Iowa; Wolfeboro (N.H.) Brewster Academy forward Alonzo Gaffney; and Belleville (Ill.) West forward EJ Liddell.

OSU's class is ranked 12th nationally and first in the Big Ten by 247Sports.

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Buckeyes To Face Iowa State In 11-6 Matchup

Continued From Page 1

is not our approach and not what we are thinking.”

Proving skeptics wrong has been a rallying cry for the Buckeyes all season.

Last season was a Cinderella story for a program that had been trending downward under Matta. Holtmann arrived from Butler, and the Buckeyes surprisingly went 25-9 and reached the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

But key departures such as 2017-18 Big Ten Player of the Year Keita Bates-Diop left this season's team youthful and inexperienced.

“We knew coming into this year that a lot of people were going to count us out for different reasons,” Jackson said. “Good thing that this team didn't really let it affect us. We did what we had to do throughout the season to put ourselves in position to make the NCAA Tournament. With a young team, that's all you can ask for.”

The Buckeyes' four losses in the past five games were partly due to sophomore center Kaleb Wesson's three-game suspension, which began March 1 and was lifted prior to the Indiana game.

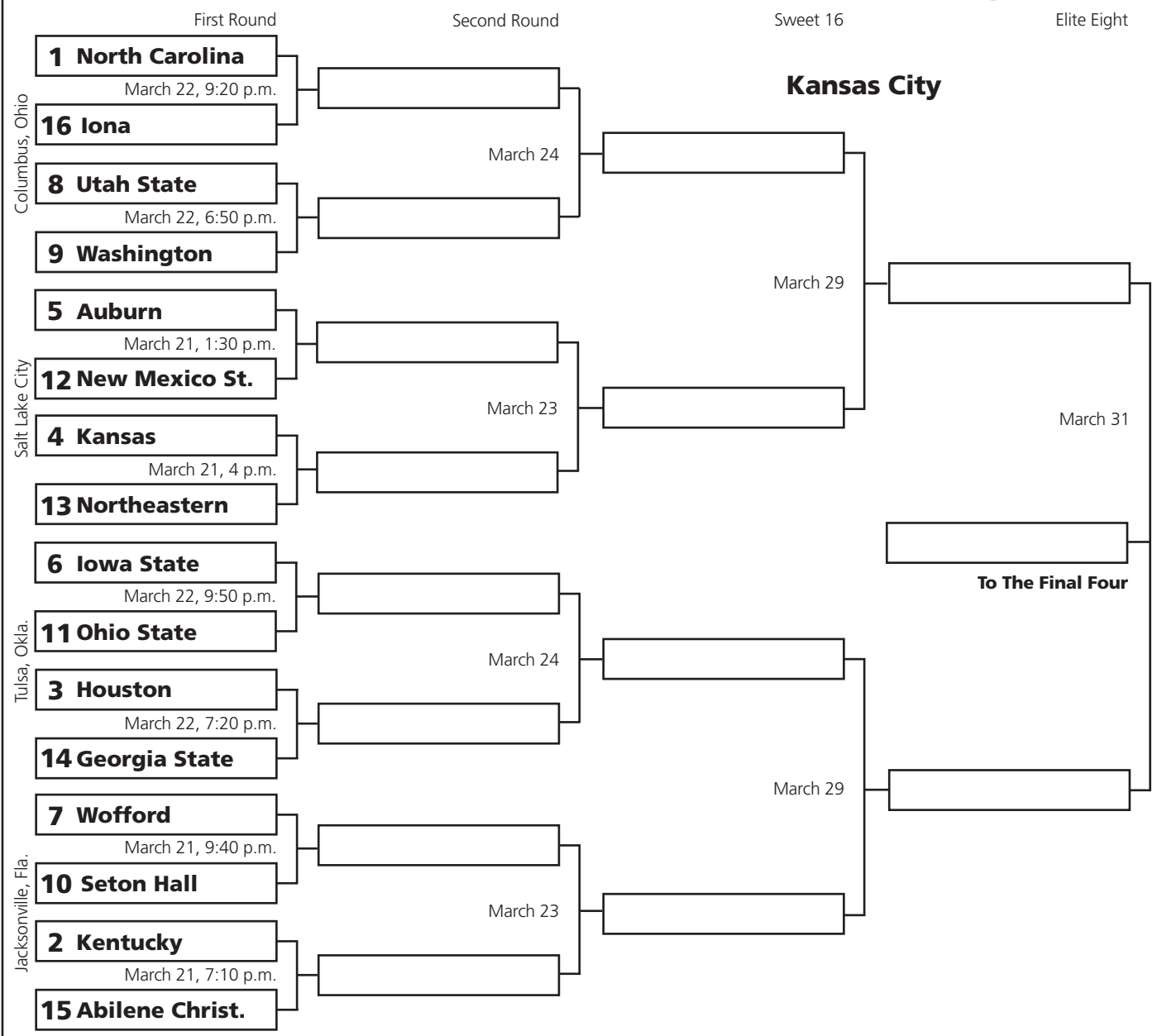
After beating Iowa, OSU, without Wesson, lost to ranked opponents Purdue and Wisconsin and was upset by Northwestern, but the Buckeyes had built their credentials earlier in the season when they won 12 of their first 13 games.

Included were victories at Cincinnati and Creighton, teams ranked ahead of them in the new NET rating system that replaces the RPI for help in determining the 68-team tournament field. Cincinnati (28-6) is the seventh seed in the South Regional. Creighton (18-14) will play in the NIT.

There were two keys to the Buckeyes earning a bid. The first was the 90-70 home victory against No. 22 Iowa – the last game before Wesson's suspension – that Holtmann alluded to earlier.

The signature win gave the Buckeyes an 18-10 overall record and an 8-9 mark

2019 NCAA Tournament Midwest Region



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in conference play. Considering that most experts viewed the Big Ten as the toughest conference, OSU was looking solid for an 8 or 9 seed at that point if it could finish strong.

The Buckeyes didn't, but beating Indiana was the difference. The Hoosiers landed in the NIT while the Buckeyes had to sweat out the selection show at a team viewing party.

“I was nervous,” graduate transfer Keyshawn Woods said. “I'm pretty sure everybody else was nervous because you're seeing all these teams get selected, and you hear the possibilities of where you're supposed to be placed. But then when your name doesn't come across, then you get worried. Then you get down to, ‘Oh, there's two more regions left,’ and you don't know.”

Holtmann joked that he was hiding under a couch as the regions were disclosed and the Buckeyes were still waiting.

“I said, ‘Just tell me good news,’” he said. “You could hear a pin drop.”

The room exploded in smiles, cheers and hugs after the announcement.

“We were just really, really happy that our name came across the screen,” Woods said. “We had a great moment as a family, as a Buckeye family.”

He joined that family after playing the previous two seasons at Wake Forest. Woods had other options but felt Ohio State gave him the best route to the NCAAAs.

“It was the whole reason why I chose to be a Buckeye,” he said. “The belief I had in the guys, C.J., Coach Holtmann, the staff, it's a great feeling, especially to see our name pop up there.”

Holtmann praised Jackson, Woods, fellow senior Joey Lane and junior Andre Wesson for guiding the team through rough patches.

“They have steered the ship and allowed us to be here,” Holtmann said. “Those guys deserve a lot of credit, and I bristle when I hear those guys are constantly getting criticized. They deserve to enjoy this moment.”

“It's meaningful to me. I think you just can't explain how happy you are when you see your seniors' faces happy. Keyshawn, the reason he came here was to play in the NCAA Tournament. You obviously want that for C.J. and Joey. I don't know if I can overstate how important that is. It's so much better than the alternative.”

The Cyclones lost five of six to end the regular season before beating Baylor (83-

66), Kansas State (63-59) and Kansas (78-66) to win their conference tourney.

Marial Shayok, a 6-6 transfer from Virginia, leads four Cyclones in double-figure scoring with 18.6 points per game. He makes 49.4 percent of his field goals, including 38.9 percent of his three-pointers.

Iowa State is one of 15 teams to make the NCAA Tournament in seven of the last eight seasons.

The Buckeyes and Iowa State met in the NCAA Tournament in 2013 in Dayton. OSU advanced to the Sweet 16 when Aaron Craft made a three-pointer with 0.5 seconds left for a 78-75 win.

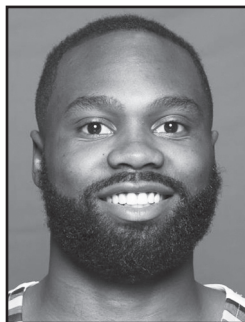
Holtmann said his staff in the days preceding the selection show had been preparing for possible opponents based on region seedings, and one of them was Iowa State.

As for Holtmann, he spent his time after the loss to Michigan State thinking of all the scenarios that would either get the Buckeyes in the NCAA Tournament or put them on the outside.

He had himself convinced OSU was safe until the announcement drew closer.

“As each hour passed today and I studied the numbers, I studied myself into absolute paranoia,” Holtmann said after the big reveal. “I just had to stop. Thank God we had practice so I could just stop looking at it.”

The uncertainty is over. Let the games begin.



Keyshawn Woods

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MARCH-APRIL 2019



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TUESDAY — 6:40

WEDNESDAY — 12:35

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Buckeyes Fall In 3rd Round Of B1G Tourney

By CRAIG MERZ & TIM MOODY
BSB Staff Writer & Editor

The Ohio State men's basketball team closed its regular-season slate since BSB last went to press then had a two-game run in the Big Ten tournament.

OSU slumped down the stretch, losing to Northwestern and Wisconsin (in overtime) before the conference tourney. The Buckeyes then topped Indiana in the second round of the Big Ten tournament before falling to No. 1 seed Michigan State a day later.

With the conference tournament wrapped up, the Buckeyes sit at 19-14 overall after finishing 8-12 in Big Ten play.

What follows are recaps of each of the four contests played since BSB last went to press.

Northwestern 68, Ohio State 50

The wintry blast that gripped the Midwest in the first week of the third month of the year had nothing on the cold shooting by Ohio State in a 68-50 loss to Northwestern at Welsh-Ryan Arena in Evanston, Ill., on March 6.

The Buckeyes made only four field goals in the first half to trail by 11 and never got closer than five the rest of the way for their fifth loss in seven games.

"We took some bad shots," OSU coach Chris Holtmann said. "At the same time, we missed some open ones."

It was their second defeat in a row without suspended center Kaleb Wesson, who was leading the team with 14.6 points and 6.7 rebounds per game. In the first meeting between the two teams in Columbus on Feb. 20, Wesson was the lone Ohio State player in double figures with 22 points in the 63-49 OSU victory.

Keyshawn Woods led the Buckeyes with 15 points and grabbed seven rebounds to tie freshman Justin Ahrens for the team-high of the boards. Freshman Duane Washington had 11 points and six rebounds. OSU outrebounded the Wildcats 45-39.

The Buckeyes (18-12, 8-11 Big Ten) were further hurt when forward Andre Wesson

picked up his fourth foul with 15:31 left in the game and OSU down 35-26. Also, sophomore forward Kyle Young, still recovering from a stress fracture in his right leg in January, resprained his right ankle that he had originally hurt two days before the Northwestern game. Young had seven points in 26 minutes.

"He was giving us as much as he could on one foot," Holtmann said.

Meanwhile, Andre Wesson missed all eight field-goal tries, including six from three-point range, and had two points in 30 minutes. Freshmen Luther Muhammad and Jaedon LeDee each went 0 for 4 from the floor.

Dererk Pardon had 20 points, 18 in the second half, and snared 13 rebounds for the Wildcats (13-16, 4-15) to the enjoyment of the 6,534 in the newly renovated Welsh-Ryan Arena.

"We just had no answer for him," Holtmann said.

Kaleb Wesson's absence was evident in the first half when the Buckeyes could not get the ball inside, freeing up the outside shot. The Buckeyes missed their first 13 shots and didn't make a field goal until C.J. Jackson's layup with 11:09 left made it 12-4.

Northwestern took a 28-17 halftime lead as Ohio State was 4 for 28 (14.3 percent) and made only 1 of 12 three-pointers (8.3 percent).

"Their size presented some problems for us," Holtmann said. "We tried to play inside-out. That didn't really work. I thought our turnovers (the Buckeyes had nine to Northwestern's five) really hurt us. It fueled some of their offensive plays in there in transition. That's what I was really most disappointed about."

Northwestern led by as many as 14 (31-17) early in the second half, but OSU cut it to 40-33 on a trey by Jackson with 11:57 to play.

The Wildcats then went up by 10 again but saw the margin fall to 47-42 when Washington hit a three at the 8:54 mark before the Wildcats started a 10-0 run to put the game away.

Pardon had a basket, A.J. Turner canned a trey, Miller Kopp made two free throws and Pardon made an old-fashioned three-point play for a 57-42 lead with 6:00 left. The Buckeyes were able to cut the deficit to 11 twice but never threatened to make a comeback.

Even though the Buckeyes were 13 of 36 (36.1 percent) in the second half, they were 17 of 64 (26.6 percent) for the game, including 4 of 26 (15.4 percent) from beyond the three-point line. Northwestern finished at 44.8 percent (26 of 58) and made 25 percent (5 of 20) of its threes.

Wisconsin 73, Ohio St. 67 (OT)

Ohio State pulled off a miraculous comeback to send the regular-season finale to

Northwestern 68, Ohio St. 50

March 6, 2019												
Welsh-Ryan Arena • Evanston, Ill.												
		1		2								F
OSU (18-12, 8-11 B1G)		17		33		-						50
NU (13-16, 4-15 B1G)		28		40		-						68
Ohio State		Total FG FT		Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Ahrens	23	1-7	0-0	1-6	0	1	3					
A. Wesson	30	0-8	2-3	1-0	2	4	2					
Young	26	3-5	1-2	3-1	2	3	7					
Muhammad	29	0-4	3-3	1-3	0	1	3					
Woods	34	5-11	4-6	0-7	1	3	15					
Jallow	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Jackson	25	4-11	0-0	1-0	2	0	9					
Washington	27	4-14	2-3	0-6	1	2	11					
LeDee	5	0-4	0-0	2-1	0	1	0					
Totals	200	17-64	12-17	18-27	8	15	50					
Percentages: FG: 26.6%. FT: 70.6%. 3-point goals: 4-26 (Ahrens 1-4, A. Wesson 0-6, Muhammad 0-2, Woods 1-3, Jackson 1-4, Washington 1-7). Team rebounds: 12. Blocked shots: 2 (Young 2). Turnovers: 9 (Young 3, Muhammad 2, Ahrens, A. Wesson, Jackson, LeDee). Steals: 2 (Young, Washington).												
Northwestern		Total FG FT		Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Law	34	5-10	0-0	0-6	3	1	10					
Kopp	26	2-7	2-2	0-1	4	3	6					
Pardon	28	8-10	3-3	6-7	1	2	20					
Gaines	27	3-11	3-4	1-4	2	3	9					
Taylor	10	1-3	0-0	0-1	0	3	3					
Greer	12	1-2	2-2	0-0	0	1	5					
Turner	32	4-8	0-0	0-1	2	1	10					
Nance	9	0-2	1-2	0-1	0	0	1					
Benson	9	2-3	0-0	0-3	0	2	4					
Falzon	13	0-2	0-0	0-4	3	1	0					
Totals	200	26-58	11-13	7-32	15	17	68					
Percentages: FG: 44.8%. FT: 84.6%. 3-point goals: 5-20 (Law 0-3, Kopp 0-4, Pardon 1-1, Gaines 0-3, Taylor 1-1, Greer 1-1, Turner 2-4, Nance 0-1, Falzon 0-2). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 7 (Law 2, Benson 2, Kopp, Pardon, Falzon). Turnovers: 5 (Pardon 2, Nance 2, Gaines). Steals: 6 (Law, Kopp, Gaines, Greer, Turner, Benson). Officials: Garrison, Riley, Scirotto. A: 6,534.												

Wisconsin 73, Ohio St. 67 (OT)

March 10, 2019												
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
		1	2	OT	F							
WIS (22-9, 14-6 B1G)		26	37	10	73							
OSU (18-13, 8-12 B1G)		16	47	4	67							
Wisconsin		Total FG		FT	Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Happ	39	6-14	4-9	2-12	8	2	16					
Reuvers	16	1-4	0-0	3-1	1	0	2					
Trice	40	2-11	2-2	0-1	0	4	8					
Iverson	35	10-14	2-3	4-10	1	2	22					
Davison	37	4-9	3-4	0-4	1	2	14					
Pritzl	28	2-4	1-2	0-4	0	1	6					
Ford	9	1-3	0-0	0-0	0	0	3					
Thomas	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
King	19	1-6	0-0	1-1	2	1	2					
Totals		200	27-65	12-20	10-37	13	73					
Percentages: FG: 41.5%. FT: 60.0%. 3-point goals: 7-21 (Trice 2-8, Davison 3-6, Pritzl 1-2, Ford 1-3, King 0-2). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 3 (Happ, Reuvers, Pritzl). Turnovers: 9 (Happ 4, Davison 2, Reuvers, Iverson, TEAM). Steals: 1 (Happ).												
Ohio State		Total FG		FT	Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
A. Wesson	23	2-9	0-0	2-1	0	5	5					
Young	33	3-8	0-0	1-7	0	2	6					
Jackson	40	7-12	6-11	0-5	5	2	22					
Lane	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Woods	34	4-11	0-0	1-4	4	5	9					
Muhammad	16	1-4	0-2	1-1	0	1	3					
Jallow	31	2-4	0-0	1-5	4	3	4					
Washington	20	3-9	0-0	0-1	1	1	7					
Ahrens	20	3-6	0-0	0-7	1	3	9					
LeDee	5	0-2	2-2	1-0	0	0	2					
Totals		200	25-66	8-15	8-33	15	67					
Percentages: FG: 37.9%. FT: 53.3%. 3-point goals: 9-25 (A. Wesson 1-3, Jackson 2-5, Lane 0-1, Woods 1-3, Muhammad 1-3, Washington 1-5, Ahrens 3-5). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 3 (Ahrens 2, Young). Turnovers: 7 (A. Wesson 2, Jackson, Woods, Jallow, Washington, Ahrens). Steals: 5 (Jackson 2, Woods 2, Young). Officials: Simpson, Boroski, Oglesby. A: 18,231.												

Jackson stopped the run with a bucket to make it 17-12, but the Buckeyes were outscored 9-4 over the final 6:23.

The Buckeyes in the opening half shot 6 of 29 (20.7 percent), including 1 of 8 (12.5 percent) from three-point range.

Andre Wesson picked up his third foul on a charging call with 2:48 remaining in the first half. He left the game but started the second half and committed his fourth foul just 12 seconds into it, which enabled Happ to complete an old-fashioned three-point play for a 29-16 advantage. Wesson fouled out with 5:36 left after scoring five points in 23 minutes of action.

The Badgers led 44-21 with 16:05 remaining and were ahead 62-47 with 3:57 to go before the Buckeyes' comeback.

"I just was really disappointed with our body language, and some of that was our youth and some of that was just, I don't know," Holtmann said of the attitude that allowed the deficit. "But man, did they show some serious guts there in the second half."

OSU made it 63-61 with 1:20 to play on a layup by freshman Musa Jallow, and Jackson tied it off the drive with a bank shot with 36 seconds left.

Happ then committed an offensive foul with 29 seconds left, but Jackson missed a three-pointer with three seconds left and the ball went out of bounds to Wisconsin with 1.3 left. Woods intercepted the throw-in by Davison, but his halfcourt toss was late and short.

Iverson scored Wisconsin's first four points of OT to counter a pair of free throws by Jackson to make it 67-65 with 2:05 remaining. Happ made two free throws to extend the lead before Woods' basket made it 69-67 at the 38-second mark.

Davison hit two from the free-throw line with 25 seconds left for a 71-67 score. Woods missed a three-pointer and committed a foul, and D'Mitrik Trice made two more from the line with 12 seconds left for the final margin.

The Buckeye made 56.3 percent (18 of 32) of their field goals and 57.1 percent (8 of 14) from beyond the arc in the second



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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Ohio State 79, Indiana 75

March 14, 2019									
United Center • Chicago									
1 2 F									
Indiana (17-15)	28	47	-	75					
Ohio State (19-13)	35	44	-	79					
Indiana	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Smith	15	0-5	0-0	0-2	2	0	0		
Morgan	29	4-8	4-6	1-6	1	4	12		
Langford	36	4-12	0-0	4-2	5	1	9		
Durham	31	3-8	3-3	0-3	3	3	9		
Phinisee	18	1-6	0-1	0-1	1	1	2		
Green	31	9-15	0-0	0-1	4	2	26		
McRoberts	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Davis	16	3-3	3-5	2-2	1	4	9		
Thompson	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Fitzner	18	3-5	0-0	2-2	1	3	8		
Totals	200	27-62	10-15	9-24	18	18	75		

Percentages: FG: 43.5%. FT: 66.7%. **3-point goals:** 11-27 (Smith 0-2, Morgan 0-2, Langford 1-5, Durham 0-3, Phinisee 0-2, Green 8-10, Fitzner 2-3). **Team rebounds:** 5. **Blocked shots:** 6 (Morgan 2, Green 2, Durham, Davis). **Turnovers:** 17 (Green 4, Davis 4, Morgan 3, Phinisee 3, Langford 2, Fitzner). **Steals:** 9 (Morgan 3, Green 2, Fitzner 2, Smith, Langford).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
A. Wesson	38	3-5	5-6	0-0	1	4	13		
K. Wesson	34	5-15	6-7	3-10	3	3	17		
Jallow	26	0-4	2-2	2-3	4	1	2		
Jackson	34	6-14	2-2	2-3	5	0	17		
Woods	32	9-13	0-0	1-6	4	2	18		
Muhammad	19	2-3	0-1	0-2	4	3	6		
Washington	9	2-4	0-0	0-1	1	0	4		
Ahrens	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Young	7	1-3	0-0	2-1	0	3	2		
Totals	200	28-62	15-18	11-27	22	16	79		

Percentages: FG: 45.2%. FT: 83.3%. **3-point goals:** 8-22 (A. Wesson 2-3, K. Wesson 1-4, Jallow 0-2, Jackson 3-6, Woods 0-1, Muhammad 2-3, Washington 0-1, Ahrens 0-1, Young 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 4 (K. Wesson 3, Woods). **Turnovers:** 16 (A. Wesson 4, K. Wesson 4, Washington 3, Jackson 2, Jallow, Woods, Muhammad). **Steals:** 12 (A. Wesson 3, Jackson 3, K. Wesson 2, Woods 2, Muhammad, Washington). **Officials:** Ek, Sciotto, Boroski. **A:** N/A.

half. OSU for the game was 25 of 66 (37.9 percent) from the floor and 9 of 25 (36.0 percent) on treys, and the Buckeyes committed just seven turnovers while being outrebounded 47-41.

Wisconsin made 27 of 65 (41.5 percent), including 7 of 21 (33.3 percent) of its three-pointers.

Ohio State 79, Indiana 75

The Buckeyes, led by 18 points from Woods, beat Indiana, 79-75, in the second round of the Big Ten tournament at the United Center on March 14.

"Tremendous. He was tremendous," Holtmann said of Woods. "I thought he was tremendous in every way."

Ohio State led by as many as 20 in the second half, but the Buckeyes saw that lead shrink back to three – 72-69 – with just under a minute remaining. Woods responded with a driving layup and Indiana's Evan Fitzner committed a charge on the other end, leading to a breakaway dunk for Washington.

Indiana's Devonte Green responded with a three-pointer. Then, after Andre Wesson split his trip to the free-throw line, Green hit another long ball to make it a two-point game with six seconds left. The Hoosiers fouled Jackson after that, and he made both free throws to ice the game.

Woods' big day was complemented by 17 points each from Jackson and Kaleb Wesson, who was playing for the first time since a three-game suspension to close out the regular season. Wesson added 13 rebounds for a double-double.

"Obviously it was good having him back," Jackson said of OSU's big man. "He's one of our key guys. And just having one of our brothers back that – we have been working all season long, all season long. It's always good to have one of our players back."

Green finished with a game-high 26 points on 9-of-15 shooting (8 of 10 from three) while Juwan Morgan tacked on 12 points for Indiana.

Ohio State led for most of the first half,

Michigan St. 77, Ohio State 70

March 15, 2019									
United Center • Chicago									
1 2 F									
Ohio State (19-14)	30	40	-	70					
Michigan State (26-6)	36	41	-	77					
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
A. Wesson	35	5-8	0-0	1-2	3	2	14		
K. Wesson	16	3-7	0-0	1-2	1	5	7		
Jallow	27	2-3	2-2	1-1	1	3	7		
Jackson	28	3-10	0-0	0-3	5	4	8		
Woods	27	5-8	4-4	0-1	1	3	16		
Muhammad	18	2-5	2-2	0-2	1	3	7		
Washington	14	2-6	0-0	0-3	2	0	5		
Ahrens	8	0-2	0-0	0-0	1	1	0		
Young	27	2-3	2-2	0-3	4	0	6		
Totals	200	24-52	10-10	5-19	19	21	70		

Percentages: FG: 46.2%. FT: 100.0%. **3-point goals:** 12-26 (A. Wesson 4-5, K. Wesson 1-1, Jallow 1-1, Jackson 2-8, Woods 2-4, Muhammad 1-3, Washington 1-3, Ahrens 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 4. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Young). **Turnovers:** 15 (Woods 4, A. Wesson 3, Jackson 2, Muhammad 2, Washington 2, K. Wesson, Jallow). **Steals:** 6 (Jackson 2, Muhammad 2, Woods, Young).

Michigan State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Henry	26	4-10	0-0	0-3	1	2	8		
Tillman	22	3-7	1-2	3-3	1	2	7		
Goins	34	3-9	0-0	0-3	6	1	8		
Winston	22	4-7	9-9	1-6	5	1	18		
McQuaid	27	3-4	6-6	0-1	4	4	12		
Ahrens	18	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0		
Loyer	18	5-7	0-0	0-1	3	1	14		
Brown	9	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Kithier	9	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	2		
Bingham	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Ward	14	3-4	2-4	1-1	0	4	8		
Totals	200	26-50	18-21	6-21	20	16	77		

Percentages: FG: 52.0%. FT: 85.7%. **3-point goals:** 7-17 (Goins 2-8, Winston 1-2, McQuaid 0-1, Ahrens 0-1, Loyer 4-5). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 3 (Tillman, Goins, Ward). **Turnovers:** 11 (Winston 4, Ward 2, Tillman, Goins, McQuaid, Loyer, Bingham). **Steals:** 8 (Tillman 2, Loyer 2, Henry, Winston, Ahrens, Ward). **Officials:** Riley, Szelc, Oglesby. **A:** N/A.

but never by more than seven points. The Buckeyes first took that advantage at 29-22 on a three-pointer from Andre Wesson with 3:48 to play, but Indiana responded 21 seconds later with a three from Green. The Buckeyes went ahead by seven again, 35-28, when Woods hit a turnaround jumper with a second on the clock to send the game to halftime.

Ohio State saw its lead grow to double digits for the first time less than three minutes into the second period at 40-30, and the Buckeyes started to pull away. Jackson had a bucket and a three-pointer while Kaleb Wesson nailed four free throws during a sequence that put Ohio State up 13, 49-36, with 13:58 to play.

After a jumper by Morgan made it 53-43 with 11:10 on the clock, the Buckeyes went on a 10-0 run to take a 20-point lead with 7:30 left. During the spurt, Muhammad had two three-pointers, Woods made a jumper and Andre Wesson connected on two free throws.

Less than three minutes later, though, the lead was back to single digits. Green hit two three-pointers, Evan Fitzner had a layup and a long ball, and De'ron Davis made a layup during a 13-0 Hoosier run that made it 63-56 with 4:20 on the clock before a Jackson three-pointer stopped the bleeding.

Indiana kept pressing, though, going on a 13-9 run to make it a one-possession game before Woods scored with 34 seconds left and Ohio State closed out the contest despite the late heroics from Green.

For the game, Ohio State shot 28 of 62 (45.2 percent) from the field and 8 of 22 (36.4) from deep. IU was 27 of 62 (43.5) overall and 11 of 27 (40.7) from beyond the three-point arc.

Michigan St. 77, Ohio State 70

Holtmann's squad fell to Michigan State, 77-70, March 15 at the United Center in Chicago in the third round of the Big Ten tournament.

The eighth-seeded Buckeyes (19-14) opened the second half on a 10-2 run to take a 40-38 lead, but Kaleb Wesson fouled out with 9:42 to play and No. 1 seed Michigan State (26-6) went ahead by as many as 21 before holding off a late surge from OSU after the Buckeyes pulled within five with less than 10 seconds to play.

"I'm proud of the way our guys battled, fought, kept fighting, kept battling all the way until the end," Holtmann said. "But we just didn't have enough today."

Michigan State's Cassius Winston led all players with 18 points, including a perfect 9-for-9 mark at the free-throw line. The Buckeyes were led by 16 points from Woods, while Andre Wesson added 14 points.

Ohio State struck first by way of a layup from Kaleb Wesson less than two minutes into the game, eventually taking a four-point lead at 10-6 on a Woods three-pointer with 14:13 on the clock.

The Buckeyes led by four on two other occasions in the first half, but never more

than that as Michigan State kept things tight before taking control of the opening frame. The Spartans took their first-half lead for good at 26-25 on a three-pointer from Foster Loyer, his third of the half. A Winston jumper eventually gave them a 36-30 lead at the break, thanks in part to a 63.6 shooting percentage (14 of 22) in the opening 20 minutes.

Ohio State turned things around early in the second half, going on that 10-2 run capped by back-to-back three-pointers from Andre and Kaleb Wesson to make it 40-38 with 16:51 remaining.

The Spartans quickly regained control after the run. Matt McQuaid connected on two free throws before he fouled Kaleb Wesson under the basket, but the Buckeye big man was simultaneously whistled for a flagrant 1. McQuaid connected on two more free throws before Loyer made his fourth three in a row to make it 45-40 with 16:11 on the clock.

That lead grew to eight by the under-12 timeout, at which point Kaleb Wesson was sitting with four fouls and Andre Wesson, who was second on the team with 11 points at the time, went to the locker room with what appeared to be a lower-body injury. Michigan State took the first double-digit lead of the game about a minute later. The Buckeyes called a timeout to sub Kaleb Wesson back in, but Kaleb was called for his fifth just 15 seconds later, putting him on the sidelines for the rest of the game.

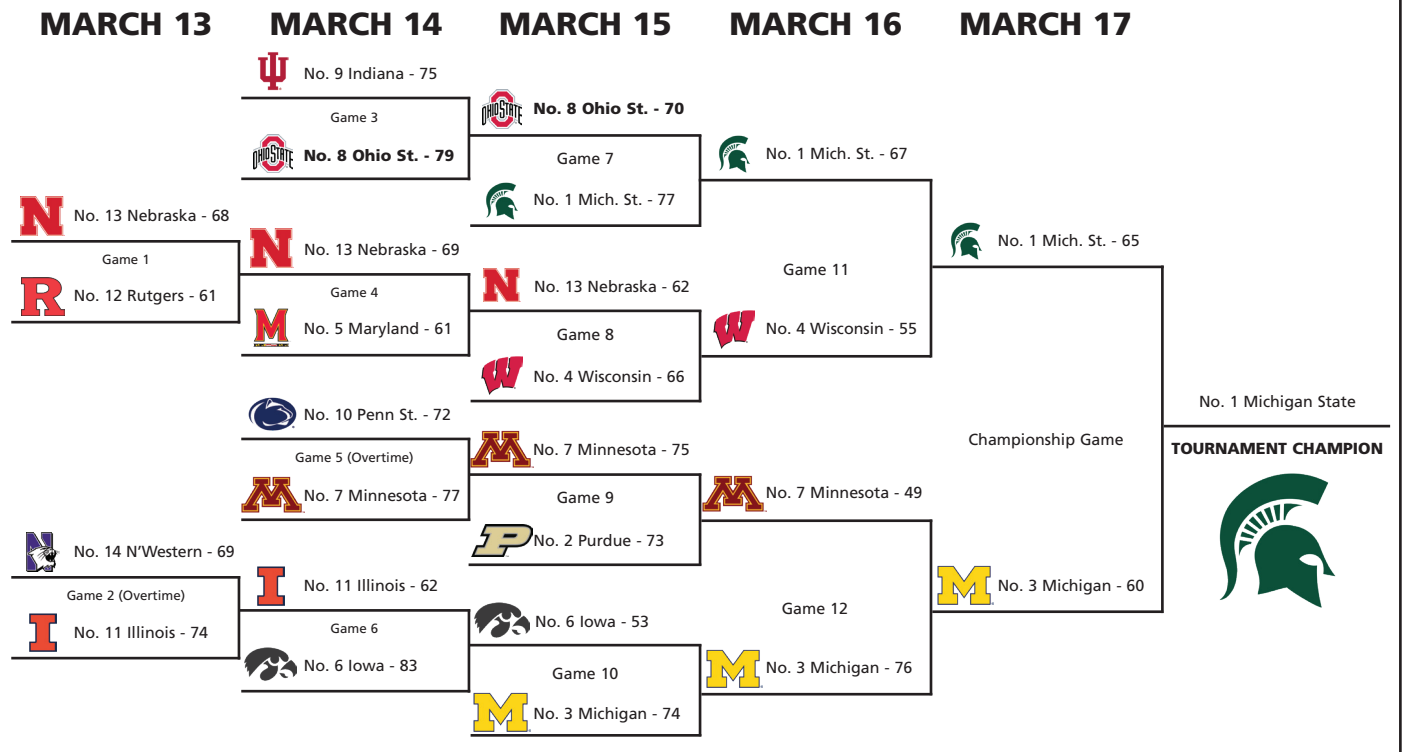
With Ohio State's leading scorer fouled out, the Michigan State lead grew to 21 by the 4:21 mark as the Spartans seemingly took complete control. The Buckeyes had one last burst to get back in the game, though, going on a 16-0 run to pull within five. The sequence was started by a Woods jumper and included three-pointers from Andre Wesson and Muhammad.

After Washington converted a layup with nine seconds left to make it 75-70, the Spartans iced the game at the free-throw line.

The Buckeyes shot 24 of 52 (46.2 percent) from the field in the loss, with half of their makes and attempts coming from beyond the three-point arc. The Spartans were 26 of 50 (52.0) overall and 7 of 17 (41.2) from deep.

BIG Men's Basketball Tournament

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Buckeyes Fall Short Of NCAAs In B1G Tourney

Any hope head coach Kevin McGuff's team had of sneaking its way back into the NCAA tournament dissipated March 7 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, where 13th-seeded Wisconsin derailed fifth-seeded Ohio State's tournament dreams with a 73-63 upset of the Buckeyes in the second round.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Garrett Stepien

With the loss to UW (15-17), which took fourth-seeded Michigan to overtime March 8 before its 73-65 defeat in the quarterfinals, OSU's conference tournament title defense ended at 14-14 overall.

The five-day frenzy in Indy ended March

10 with second-seeded Iowa's 90-76 win over top-seeded Maryland for the Big Ten tournament championship, leaving Ohio State on the outside of the conference's programs headed to the Big Dance.

From the Big Ten, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Michigan State and Rutgers made the NCAA tournament. The Buckeyes, meanwhile, have a different postseason on deck.

After the Big Dance announced its 64-team field March 18, the Women's National Invitation Tournament (WNIT) rounded up 64 programs of its own later that day as well. OSU made the field, but the Buckeyes' opponent and site for first-round action March 20-22 had not been announced as BSB went to press. For the latest details on Ohio State's destination, be sure to check out the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers.

Ohio State ended its 2018-19 regular

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
Anysa Jones	G	5-9	★★★	Westerville (Ohio) South

season and Big Ten tournament run with consecutive collapses in the fourth quarter, including its 13-point slip up against Wisconsin and the Buckeyes' 66-56 loss to Rutgers on March 3 – a game that they led

by 16 at one point. But from six seniors to three freshmen, the WNIT gives McGuff's squad one more chance to end a transitional year on a positive note.

"I think we should just give what we have left," freshman forward Dorka Juhasz told BSB on March 7. "After this painful loss, we just need to show that we're better than this and for the rest of the games just give our best and finish a great season together."

Ohio State's developmental campaign concluded with a 10-8 mark in conference play. The Buckeyes' road to the fifth seed in the Big Ten tournament came after a 4-5 start to the nonconference slate, followed by an 0-3 stumble out of the gate when the conference schedule began.

"I would think that this season was a great learning season for me, especially as a freshman," said Juhasz, who joined guard Janai Crooms and forward Aaliyah Patty as one of three freshmen to earn significant playing time. "I got a lot of playing time, and I think overall, after my (ankle) injury, it was a good year for me. In the nonconference games, we have to play hard and we have to win games there. So for the Big Ten, we have to be the best team that we can be. A tournament is just about focusing every game and step by step. Definitely it will be a good learning experience that didn't go our way."

Juhasz Headlines B1G Honors For Buckeyes

When associate head coach Patrick Klein told Juhasz the news, she had no idea how to react. Fresh off OSU's loss to Rutgers, her attention March 4 was squared solely on the Big Ten tournament. Then the conference announced its annual women's basketball honors, with Ohio State's efforts highlighted by Juhasz on the All-Big Ten second team and freshman team.

"It definitely was surprising because I wasn't even thinking about it, to be honest," Juhasz said. "And then I think it was Coach Klein who said to me, 'Oh, congrats.' I'm like, 'Oh, what happened?' We had just lost and I was trying to get better. Then he told me second-team All-Big Ten and freshman team. I was like, 'Whoa, no way.' I don't know. I wasn't even thinking about it, but it definitely was an honor and it's just exciting."

"It gives me a lot of motivation just to see my name on it," Juhasz said. "It's an accomplishment, but other than that, I don't really think much of individual goals. But it's definitely something that's a really nice accomplishment."

Graduate guards Carmen Grande, Carly Santoro and Adreana Miller joined Juhasz among Buckeyes honored by the conference. Grande and Santoro were Big Ten honorable mentions, while Miller was the team's sportsmanship award honoree.

Though Juhasz, who led OSU with 11.6



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points per game and 8.9 rebounds per game in 26 contests (24 starts), seemed surprised when she was made aware of her honors, the choice by the conference coaches came as no shock to McGuff.

"I thought she was capable," McGuff said. "I'm really happy for her, proud of her with the progress she's made, because as much as I knew she was a great player, it's a big adjustment. Especially coming from Europe, the game's a little bit different. You're not used to how we play. But I think she's made tremendous progress this year, and it's great to see her recognized for that."

Juhasz missed two of Ohio State's 28 games after she sprained her left ankle Jan. 20 at Michigan, subsequently sitting out Jan. 24 vs. Maryland and Jan. 28 at Minnesota. While she worked her way back from injury and developed down the stretch as a double-double machine with 11 on the season, Juhasz's rise had started Dec. 21 in an 81-73 loss to Virginia Tech.

Juhasz took over when the Buckeyes desperately needed a spark, scoring a career-high 27 points on 10-of-14 shooting (including 3 for 3 on three-pointers) while adding eight rebounds in 30 minutes. McGuff saw Juhasz's effort against the Hokies as the freshman's turning point.

"She had been playing well up until that point in spurts but kind of put it together – scored around the basket, made some threes," McGuff told BSB on March 5. "I think the biggest thing is in the beginning of the year, she was taking threes and I watch her make them all the time in practice, but they weren't going in and I think she lost some confidence from that. So once she made a few, it allowed her to be the versatile player around the basket and on the perimeter that she is. It didn't look like that early on, and I think that maybe shook her confidence a little bit. So I think that was the key, that was the turning point."

Despite the achievement, Juhasz has more room to grow. But from when she entered as a raw freshman out of Pecs, Hungary, to now, Juhasz's development has been evident to her teammates on a daily basis in practice.

"I think the biggest thing that I've seen is just maturity," fifth-year senior forward Makayla Waterman said. "Coming in, she's obviously a great player. We knew she was going to be good for us, but she stepped up in big games for us. When she hasn't had good games, she'd still come back the next game and get a double-double. She's really matured throughout the season. I think if she keeps doing that – she's a great basketball player, so that's never going to change – but if she keeps maturing, I think she'll be great for the Big Ten."

Grande Earns Academic All-America Honors

Grande transferred to Ohio State from Ball State last May for heightened competition in the Big Ten for the 2018-19 season, but the graduate guard's success went beyond the court.

On March 12, Grande earned Academic All-America honors from the College Sports Information Directors of America. Grande became a third-team Academic All-America honoree after she compiled a 3.92 postgraduate grade-point average in industrial and systems engineering.

The native of Madrid, Spain, was a first-team Academic All-America selection for the 2017-18 campaign while completing an undergraduate degree in mathematical sciences at Ball State.

On the court, Grande emerged as a key offensive player for the Buckeyes. She started all 28 of OSU's games, averaging 8.4

2018-19 Ohio State Women's Basketball Statistics

14-14 Overall (10-8 Big Ten) Statistics through Big Ten tournament

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.						
Dorka Juhasz	26-24	733-28.2	113-250	.452	18-70	.257	58-91	.637	61-171	232-8.9	48-0	22	60	18	33	302-11.6
Carly Santoro	28-28	888-31.7	102-254	.402	41-123	.333	77-122	.631	37-73	110-3.9	50-0	34	59	3	28	322-11.5
Janai Crooms	28-18	732-26.1	93-194	.479	19-40	.475	36-78	.462	9-88	97-3.5	62-2	58	85	15	31	241-8.6
Carmen Grande	28-28	972-34.7	73-238	.307	30-91	.330	60-73	.822	19-85	104-3.7	66-0	140	87	2	41	236-8.4
M. Waterman	26-24	797-30.7	68-183	.372	10-36	.278	57-78	.731	52-88	140-5.4	90-4	45	60	39	31	203-7.8
Aaliyah Patty	28-8	551-19.7	74-159	.465	6-31	.194	24-36	.667	24-85	109-3.9	87-5	8	48	25	19	178-6.4
Adreana Miller	28-9	448-16.0	44-123	.358	31-72	.431	19-29	.655	18-27	45-1.6	60-2	9	21	4	6	138-4.9
Jensen Caretti	22-0	207-9.4	22-62	.355	7-27	.259	12-16	.750	4-27	31-1.4	4-0	12	14	6	7	63-2.9
Najah Queenland	22-1	296-13.5	21-52	.404	6-19	.316	9-13	.692	13-27	40-1.8	33-0	17	26	1	11	57-2.6
Savitha Jayaraman	2-0	2-1.0	0-2	.000	0-1	.000	0-0	.000	0-0	0-0.0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0-0.0
TEAM									43-57	100-3.6				7		
Ohio State	28	5,626	610-1,517	.402	168-510	.329	352-536	.657	280-728	1,008-36.0	500-11	345	467	113	207	1,740-62.1
Opponents	28	5,625	634-1,617	.392	165-531	.311	385-523	.736	312-707	1,019-36.4	529-8	358	410	77	188	1,818-64.9

points with team-high marks of 5.0 assists and 34.7 minutes.

"I've had four great years (at Ball State), also here," Grande said. "But I definitely don't want it to end. If I could buy another year right now, I would."

Future Buckeye Makes History

An in-state signee of Ohio State's made history March 14, joining LeBron James as the only three-time winners of Ohio's top high school hoops honor.

Canton McKinley's Kierstan Bell is the 2019 Ohio Ms. Basketball, the Ohio High School Athletics Association (OHSAA) announced, becoming the first three-time recipient of the girls' award, as selected by the Ohio Prep Sportswriters Association.

James, who was Ohio's Mr. Basketball from 2001-03 at Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary before he embarked on his NBA career with the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2003-04 as the draft's No. 1 overall pick, is the only three-time honoree of the boys' award.

"I give it all to God," Bell told Joe Scalzo of The (Canton) Repository. "God put me on this earth for a reason. He gave me a good talent and a gift, so I owe it back. I put it all on the floor and tried to use that gift."

Since she committed Aug. 25 to the Buckeyes and signed Nov. 16 as the headliner for McGuff's 2019 recruiting class, which finished fourth nationally in ESPN's rankings, Bell carried her scholastic squad to a 25-2 record culminated by an appearance in the regional championship game.

The 6-1 guard averaged 27.0 points, 7.9 rebounds, 4.4 blocks, 3.8 steals and 3.0 assists per game. On Bell's career, she compiled 2,833 points, passing Ohio stars Katie Smith and Semeka Randall along her climb up the state's all-time scoring list. Bell's career points finished fourth in OHSAA history.

In her time with the Bulldogs, Bell led McKinley to a 93-14 record with three district titles and one regional title.

Other finalists for Ohio's Ms. Basketball included Dublin Coffman's Jacy Sheldon, who joins Bell at OSU in 2019-20. Sheldon became McGuff's first commitment for the 2019 class Nov. 19, 2017.

Jordan Brand Classic Selects OSU Signees

Two future Buckeyes from OSU's five-member recruiting class of 2019 are set to team up next month at an all-star game in Las Vegas. On March 9, the Jordan Brand Classic announced its selection of Ohio State signees Bell and Kaelynn Satterfield (6-0). The annual girls' contest tips off April 20 at 6 p.m. from T-Mobile Arena, followed by the boys' matchup at 8 p.m.

The Jordan Brand Classic becomes Bell's second showcase. The five-star guard was



SONNY BROCKWAY

A STAR OFF THE COURT – Ohio State guard Carmen Grande earned Academic All-American honors as a graduate transfer.

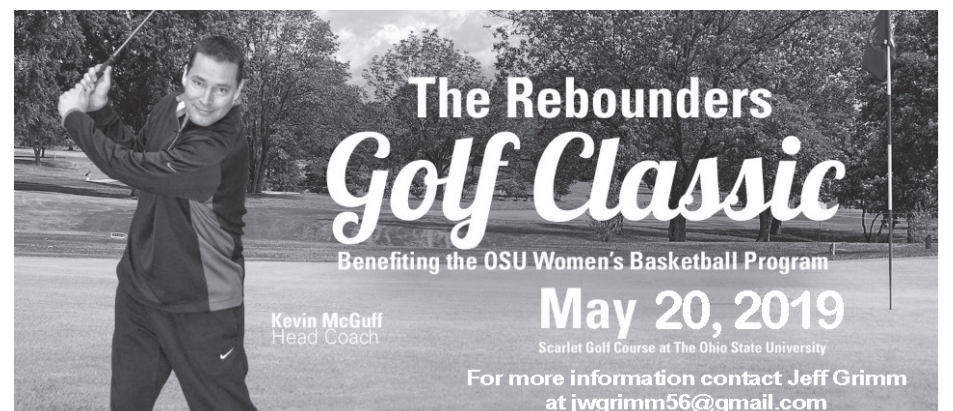
OSU's only recruit selected to the prestigious McDonald's All-American Game, which takes place March 27 at 5 p.m. at State Farm Arena in Atlanta.

During her senior year at Middle Village (N.Y.) Christ the King, Satterfield averaged 17.3 points and 6.5 rebounds per game as the Royals went 24-4 with a 67-45 victory against Bronx Monsignor Scanlan to win the Girls Catholic High School Athletic Association (GCHSAA) Brooklyn/Queens Championship on March 9 at Fordham University.

ESPN's 2019 HoopGurlz Recruiting Rankings, compiled by Collegiate Basketball

Report's Dan Olson, lists both Bell and Satterfield in its top 40 nationally. Bell is its No. 6 overall prospect. Satterfield is a five-star wing and the No. 39 overall prospect.

Indianapolis North Central five-star guard Rikki Harris (5-11), five-star guard Sheldon (5-7) and Pamplona, Spain, three-star forward Aixa Wone (6-2) join Bell and Satterfield to round out McGuff's incoming class of 2019. Harris (No. 24 overall) and Sheldon (No. 41) round out OSU's nationally ranked prospects. Wone is unranked on ESPN but considered a four-star recruit by ProspectsNation.com.



Buckeyes Fall To Badgers In B1G Tournament

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

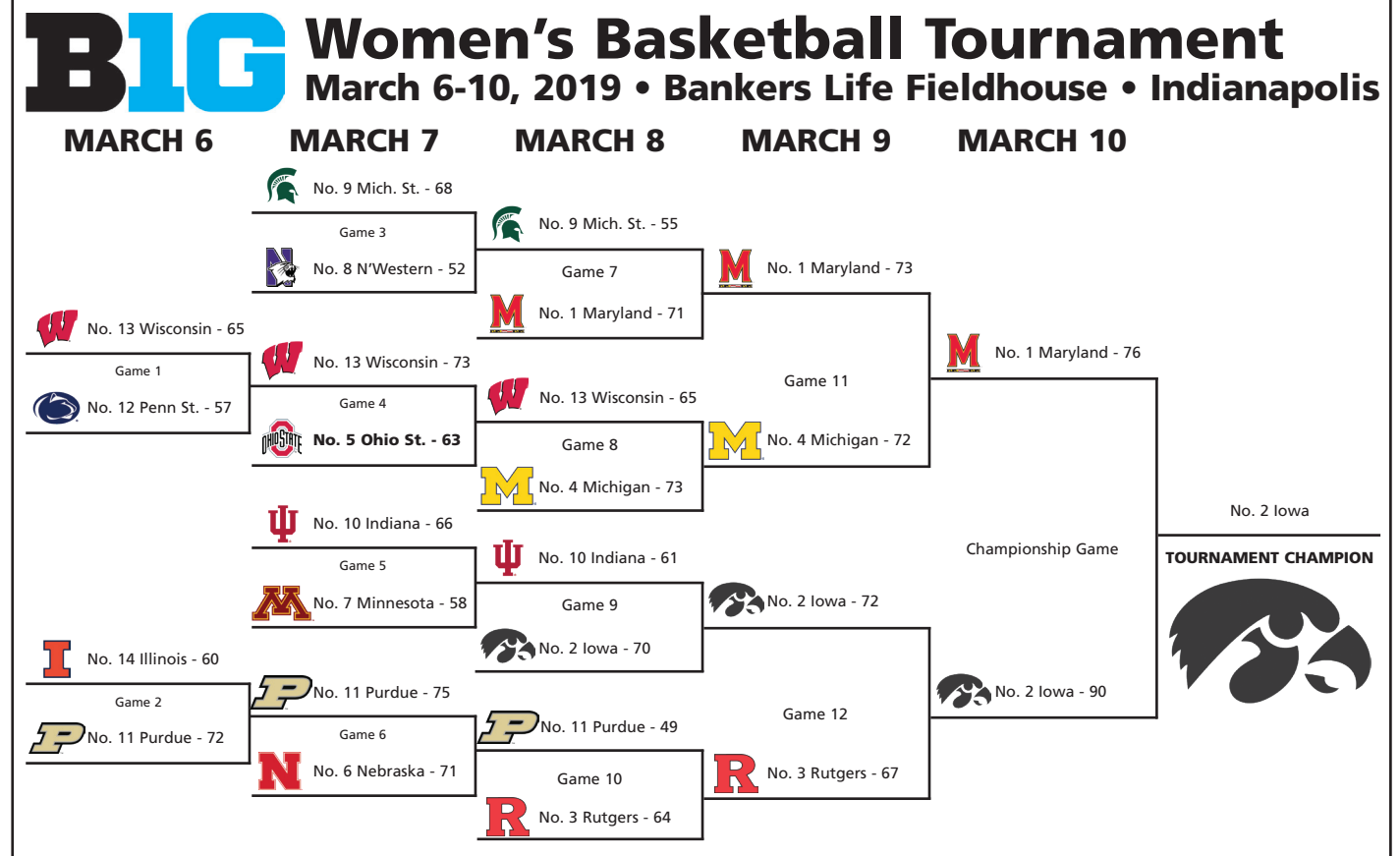
After holding a double-digit halftime lead, Ohio State failed to keep its foot down in its opening game of the Big Ten tournament on March 7. Wisconsin caught fire in the second half, where the 13th-seeded Badgers outscored the fifth-seeded Buckeyes by 20 and delivered a 73-63 upset before 3,173 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

The second-round victory for UW (15-17) sent OSU (14-14) home from the Big Ten tournament and possibly ended the Buckeyes' season.

"We had talked about before the game, 'We've got to be the hardest-playing team,'" head coach Kevin McGuff said. "And I think we were the hardest-playing team in the first half, but they played harder than we did in the second half. We quit defending, and that's what happens when you do that."

Carmen Grande led Ohio State with 12 points and eight assists. Freshman forward Dorka Juhasz added a double-double on 10 points and 16 rebounds, but the Buckeyes had no answer for the Badgers' senior duo of Kelly Karlis and Marsha Howard. Karlis (game-high 24) and Howard (23) combined for 47 of UW's 73 points, with 32 from the pair in the second half.

OSU's guard trio of Carly Santoro, Adreana Miller and Janai Crooms rounded



ed out the team's double-digit scorers. Santoro scored 11 points, while Miller and Crooms chipped in 10 apiece.

Ohio State led all the way until the

fourth quarter, including by as many as 13 – a similar story from its 66-56 loss to Rutgers in the Buckeyes' previous game March 3. After a 16-point collapse against the Scarlet Knights, a similar result followed the Buckeyes to Indianapolis.

"I definitely thought (the Rutgers result) was behind us," Grande said. "Coming into here, it was a fresh new game."

Ohio State was up early, taking a 13-5 advantage at the 3:12 mark, but led by just three, 15-12, heading into the second quarter.

The Buckeyes built the lead to 26-14 on a three-pointer by Grande, but Karlis answered with a triple at the 4:23 point of the second quarter. The Buckeyes struck back with three free throws from Juhasz and Santoro to go up 29-17 as 1:38 remained before taking a 32-22 halftime lead.

Ohio State led by 10 at the 8:53 mark of the third quarter, 34-24, but Wisconsin crept back on an 8-1 run, cutting the Buckeyes' lead to 35-32 at the 4:44 media timeout. The teams traded triples before Miller's three in the corner sparked OSU's 8-2 run, going up 46-37 with 1:26 left. UW answered with consecutive threes in the last 1:05, trailing 46-43 entering the final 10 minutes.

Wisconsin's surge spilled into the fourth quarter when the Badgers opened the first minute with back-to-back buckets from Howard, who gave UW its first lead – 47-46 at the 9:14 point. Juhasz initially gave the Buckeyes the response they needed with an and-one layup at the 8:46 mark, putting OSU back on top 49-47.

But a back-and-forth sequence ensued with Crooms' layup between consecutive Wisconsin threes, and Ohio State was left down 55-51 after Howard's two free throws at the 6:53 point. McGuff called timeout five seconds later as the Buckeyes tried to regroup.

Wisconsin 73, Ohio State 63

March 7, 2019										
Bankers Life Fieldhouse • Indianapolis										
	1	2	3	4	F					
WIS (15-17)	12	10	21	30	73					
OSU (14-14)	15	17	14	17	63					
Wisconsin	Total	FG	FT	Reb.						
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Karlis	36	7-12	6-6	1-2	3	2	24			
Howard	39	7-19	7-11	1-10	5	8	23			
Lewis	32	2-7	0-0	0-7	0	2	5			
Van Leeuwen	29	0-3	2-2	2-4	5	2	2			
Beverley	39	2-10	3-4	0-0	3	2	8			
Gilreath	12	3-5	0-0	0-1	0	2	9			
Laszewski	9	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	2			
Hale	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	2	0			
Bragg	0	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Totals	200	22-58	18-23	10-28	16	17	73			
Percentages: FG: 37.9%. FT: 78.3%. 3-point goals: 11-17 (Karlis 4-4, Howard 2-3, Lewis 1-1, Van Leeuwen 0-1, Beverley 1-4, Gilreath 3-4). Team rebounds: 10. Blocked shots: 3 (Karlis, Lewis, Van Leeuwen). Turnovers: 5 (Howard 3, Lewis, Beverley). Steals: 5 (Howard 3, Karlis, Van Leeuwen).										
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.						
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Juhasz	30	2-6	5-7	4-12	0	2	10			
Waterman	27	1-10	2-2	2-4	2	4	5			
Grande	39	5-15	0-0	1-4	8	1	12			
Crooms	34	4-9	1-6	0-3	3	2	10			
Santoro	29	4-10	1-3	2-1	0	2	11			
Patty	22	2-6	0-0	2-0	0	3	5			
Miller	16	4-6	0-0	1-2	2	4	10			
Caretti	4	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Totals	200	22-63	9-18	15-29	15	18	63			
Percentages: FG: 34.9%. FT: 50.0%. 3-point goals: 10-27 (Juhasz 1-3, Waterman 1-2, Grande 2-6, Crooms 1-4, Santoro 2-6, Patty 1-2, Miller 2-3, Caretti 0-1). Team rebounds: 6. Blocked shots: 8 (Patty 4, Waterman 2, Crooms 2). Turnovers: 10 (Patty 3, Grande 2, Juhasz, Crooms, Santoro, Miller). Steals: 2 (Grande, Crooms). Officials: Cross, Williams, Resch. A: 3,173.										

OSU came out with an offensive foul on Miller, handing the ball back to the Badgers. UW kept going, outscoring the Buckeyes 18-12 the rest of the way for the double-digit victory.

Ohio State shot 22 of 63 (34.9 percent) overall and 10 of 27 (37.0 percent) on three-pointers. Wisconsin went 22 of 58 (37.9 percent) from the field – 15 of 27 (55.6 percent) in the second half – with an 11-of-17 (64.7 percent) clip behind the three-point line and an 18-of-23 free-throw mark (78.3 percent).

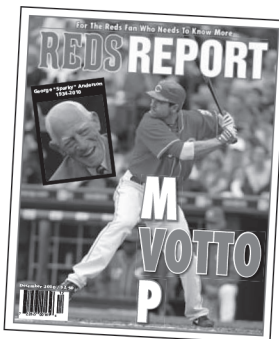
"They were tougher," Juhasz said. "It's hard to say, but they were tougher."

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Exhibit Delves Deep Into Ohio Sports History

By **DAVID BREITHAUP**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editorial Assistant

The Ohio History Center in Columbus will be the host of an exhibit, Ohio – Champion of Sports, from March 16 and until Sept 6, 2020. The exhibit touches on over 25 sports including e-gaming, roller derby and skateboarding. And of course there is a strong Buckeye flavor to the exhibit.

The collection is a sports lover's dream with artifacts that will amaze both history and sports enthusiasts alike. Highlights include a scorecard from a 1919 Cincinnati Reds game, the original programs from the 1936 Olympics in Berlin during which Jesse Owens infuriated the fuhrer, a signed jersey from LeBron James and the original contract joining Larry Doby with the Cleveland Indians on July 5, 1947. Doby was the first African-American to break into the American League and second in the Major Leagues when he signed with Cleveland.

The exhibit consists of items from the Ohio History Center's permanent collection (including the latest acquisition, the aforementioned 1919 Cincinnati Reds scorecard) as well as artifacts culled from the Smithsonian Collection in Washington, D.C., which is an affiliate of the Ohio History Center.

Ohio History Center spokesperson Emmy Beach told BSB that the exhibit should appeal to enthusiasts of many interests.

"It's really an exhibit of the human condition," she said. "The collection is not chronological but divided into categories including tradition, character, adversity, innovation and victory. You don't have to be a sports fan to love this exhibit. In many cases the history of sports in Ohio mirrors the upheavals of political transformation in the United States including the breaking of racial barriers as well as the rise of women and LGBTQ participants in major sporting events."

Beach went on to add, "You can't have a history of sports without a history of sports in Ohio. So many major contributions came from Ohio – the first professional baseball team, some of the world's best golfers, Buckeye Jesse Owens in the Berlin Olympics and the Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio and of course, the Soap Box Derby."

Curator Eric Feingold is excited about the exhibit.

"We have never done anything like this before," he told BSB. "We hope the exhibit will attract the entire family. The interactive aspect of Champion of Sports with the videos giving firsthand accounts from sports figures like Buster Douglas and Katie Smith help shape the content of what we are bringing to the public. It's a unique way to portray an era in history."

The interactive videos are scattered throughout the exhibit and called Voices of Character and Voices of Legend. Each monitor allows you several choices of important figures in Ohio sports history. You can watch former Buckeye great, two-time Big Ten Basketball Player of the Year and Olympic Gold Medal winner Katie Smith discuss how hard work brings success. Select Buster Douglas to learn how he grew confidence to become a champion. Cleveland Indians CEO Paul Dolan will tell you about the value of behind-the-scenes events and how they make a team great. A big favorite is sure to be coach Jim Tressel discussing the relationship he had with his father as well as the origin of his sweater vest tradition.



DAVID BREITHAUP

A PIECE OF HISTORY – Historic Illibuck trophies are among the objects on display at the Ohio History Center.

Visitors may also participate by testing their basketball skills at the Wall of Hoops or, if preferred, running an obstacle course. Do you have your own great sports moment? Record it for future generations at the One Minute Legends stand. Were you ever injured playing sports? Share it on the My Sports Injury wall and place a Post-It note with your injury description on the large human body outline where you were injured. If that isn't enough interaction for you, proceed to the Victory Dance monitor and record your own celebratory moves. Don't forget to bring your dancing shoes.

Staff members are extremely knowledgeable and readily available to answer any questions about specific exhibits. Staffer Mike Fouts told BSB about the history of football helmets. Models of years past are on display beginning with the first truly protective helmet made in the 1930s.

"The helmets from the '30s were the first sophisticated designs to come along with extra padding which was a big upgrade from the previous flimsy aviator type head protection of the Chic Harley era," he said. "The first padded helmets were expensive at the time and were made by MacGregor in Cincinnati, the company best known for making golf equipment. They progressed in various forms up into the plastic versions which began in the '60s. Since then they have evolved into the latest designs made to minimize head injuries."

Fans of the Cincinnati Reds will enjoy the jerseys of Pete Rose and Johnny Bench accompanied by programs and fliers from the turn of the century. The original Red Stocking programs are amazing to behold. Cleveland Indians fans will wish they had the classic early Indians jacket, emblazoned with a rendition of the ever controversial Chief Wahoo. And while we are on the subject of

sportswear, checkout Bobby Rahal's orange Indy uniform (he was a big guy) and a signed jersey donated by LeBron.

Buckeye fans should check out the Illibuck trophies and ask a staff member about their history and how they used live turtles in the beginning. Spoiler alert, that didn't work out well for the turtles. Proceed, then, to the showcase on high school football in Massillon, Ohio, because what history of football in Ohio is complete without the epic story of high school football in Massillon? Here you will see some ephemera you likely have never seen before, much from the 1930s, which will invoke the rich history of this school's football legends.

Let me take a timeout on a personal note and give a shout-out to fellow Gambier, Ohio, native Chuck Harris. Chuck pioneered the clip-on rearview mirrors which were easily attachable to any cyclist's helmet and increased biking safety immensely. I was surprised and extremely happy to see him included among the Ohio greats in this exhibit.

As a kid, I would see Chuck selling his clip-ons at the annual Gambier Craft Sale at Christmastime. Avid cyclist and Kenyon alum Paul Newman, who often returned to his alma mater, was a big fan of Chuck's rearview mirrors and bought dozens for himself and friends at the craft fair, probably keeping Chuck afloat for another year. In return, I suspect Chuck may have saved Paul's life by preventing a careless driver from flattening him on the highway. It was a win-win which still makes me happy every time I think about it.

I could go on. This exhibit is continually surprising and fascinating. Be prepared to spend some time observing, participating and reflecting on the history of sports in Ohio, without which well, life would be so much less exciting.

Admission for adults is \$12, college students with ID \$10 and \$6 for kids 4-12.

Parking is free. The Ohio History Center is located at 800 E. 17th Ave. and is open Wednesday-Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

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Big Ten Puts 8 Teams In NCAA Tournament

The Big Ten placed eight teams in the NCAA Tournament, more than any other conference in the nation.

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

The slate is led by Michigan State and Michigan, which each earned No. 2 seeds. Purdue is a three seed, Wisconsin is a five-seed, Maryland is a six seed, Iowa and Minnesota are 10 seeds and Ohio State earned an 11 seed.

Playing in the East Regional are Maryland, Minnesota and Michigan State. The Terrapins face either Belmont or Temple in Jacksonville, Fla., on March 21, the same day Minnesota is set to face seven-seed Louisville in Des Moines, Iowa, and Michigan State faces 15 seed Bradley in the same location.

Michigan is the only Big Ten squad in the West Regional with the Wolverines scheduled to face 15 seed Montana on March 21 in Des Moines.

In the South Regional are Wisconsin, Purdue and Iowa. The Badgers face 12-seed Oregon on March 22 in San Jose, Calif., a day after Purdue faces No. 14 seed Old Dominion in Hartford, Conn. Iowa plays Cincinnati on March 22 in Columbus.

The Buckeyes, set to face six seed Iowa State in Tulsa, Okla., on March 22, are the only Big Ten squad in the Midwest Regional.

Spartans Take BIG Tourney

Michigan State did not hold a lead in the second half until junior guard Cassius Winston delivered a go-ahead layup with just 28 seconds left to defeat Michigan, 65-60, and win the Big Ten tournament title.

Winston, the Big Ten Player of the Year, scored 14 points and dished out 11 assists, locking up the honor of the tournament's Most Outstanding Player. Senior guard

Matt McQuaid was monumental for the No. 6 Spartans in their comeback effort, setting career highs in three-pointers (seven) and points (27).

Michigan State scored the final 10 points of the game to capture its sixth Big Ten tournament title, the first since 2016. The victory prevented a Michigan three-peat in the conference tournament and marked the third time MSU knocked off Michigan this season.

"It's always big," McQuaid said. "Michigan's a really good team. Beating them three times – it's hard to do."

The Spartans suffered a litany of injuries throughout the season but found themselves one game away from a conference tournament title when head coach Tom Izzo posed a simple question.

"I asked them all today, 'What do you want to do?' " Izzo said. "Pregame meal, 'What do you want to do? You want to play for the (NCAA) Tournament or you want to play the game?' That sounds like a stupid question, but if you knew where my guys were at as far as physically, it was a good question to ask. Once they said, 'We want to play the game,' I said, 'You just gave me a license for 40 minutes of hell, so you better get going because I'm not letting up.'"

"They responded and I think they enjoyed it. So did I."

No. 10 Michigan held a 13-point lead early in the second half, but the Spartans used a 13-4 run to tie the game at 48 with just more than seven minutes remaining.

The Wolverines went up 60-55 on a three-pointer by sophomore forward Isaiah Livers with 2:29 left, but failed to score again. McQuaid answered with a trey of his own, starting the game-ending run. Michigan State sophomore forward Xavier Tillman tied the game with a layup.

After Michigan junior guard Xavier Simpson missed a three-pointer, Winston drove to his left for a layup, giving MSU a 62-60 advantage with 28 seconds left.

Michigan freshman forward Ignas Brazdeikis missed a jumper that was tipped by MSU freshman forward Aaron Henry

with only 14 seconds left. Michigan junior center Jon Teske and Tillman fought for the rebound, and the ball went out of bounds. After a review, the referees gave possession to Michigan State, and Michigan coach John Beilein screamed his displeasure on the sideline.

Henry split a pair of free throws, giving the Maize and Blue a chance down three points. Michigan sophomore guard Jordan Poole launched an off-the-dribble three-pointer after appearing to be bumped by Winston – MSU had a foul to give – but there was no call.

MSU fifth-year senior Kenny Goins knocked down two free throws with two seconds left, extending the Spartan lead to 65-60.

Brazdeikis led the Wolverines with 19 points, while Poole added 13. Teske – a Medina, Ohio, native – contributed 10 points and 10 rebounds, while Simpson – a Lima, Ohio, native – added 10 assists.

"You lose three times in a season to your rival, it's going to hurt," Livers said. "But we'll use it as motivation for the NCAA Tournament. I'm glad we don't have a week or two weeks to sit there and think about that last game. We can get right back to playing."

Michigan State's Ahrens Injured

Michigan State fourth-year junior forward Kyle Ahrens was relieved when X-rays showed his left ankle was not broken after he was taken from the court on a stretcher in the first half of the Big Ten tournament championship.

The extent of the injury was not clear, but the Versailles, Ohio, native expects to have an MRI once the softball-size swelling goes down.

Ahrens landed awkwardly after colliding with Goins in the air while going for a defensive rebound with 4:34 remaining in the first half.

Ahrens grabbed his lower left leg – near his ankle – while screaming in pain. Medical personnel put an air cast on his leg and his teammates, including already-sidelined

junior guard Joshua Langford, embraced him before he was wheeled away.

Ahrens pounded his chest while being taken off the floor for evaluation. He returned to the sideline on crutches in the second half.

Ahrens is the older brother of Ohio State freshman forward Justin Ahrens.

Hawkeyes Win Women's Title

Iowa senior center Megan Gustafson scored 45 points, leading No. 10 Iowa to a 90-76 victory against No. 8 Maryland to win the Big Ten tournament title.

The Hawkeyes' championship is their first since 2001, marking the longest gap between Big Ten titles for any program since the tournament became an annual event in 1995.

Gustafson's 45-point output ranks second in the tournament's history, behind only her 48-point effort in the Hawkeyes' loss to Minnesota in the 2018 quarterfinals.

Iowa earned an automatic NCAA tournament bid by defeating Maryland, which had won the Big Ten regular-season crown.

Maryland junior guard Kaila Charles put forth a valiant effort for the Terrapins in defeat, scoring a career-high 36 points and grabbing nine rebounds.

"Kaila played like she has all season for us," Maryland head coach Brenda Frese said. "She didn't want to be denied."

Gustafson dominated from the beginning, scoring 26 first-half points on 10-of-14 shooting and drawing seven fouls by halftime.

"She's just that good," Frese said of Gustafson. "All the supporting cast hurt us, and tonight was just trying to figure out who you couldn't guard. Iowa's a great team. If you stop one, they know how to go to their other options."

"I thought it was a game that had a lot of adversity for us, with a lot of foul trouble, but we continued to just keep putting our head down and keep battling."

The two-time Big Ten Player of the Year led the Hawkeyes to a double-digit lead for much of the first half. Iowa faltered to open the second half, missing seven consecutive shots and allowing Maryland to tie the game at 53.

However, Gustafson, who was voted the tournament's Most Outstanding Player, scored eight points on a 12-4 run by the Hawkeyes to close the quarter, giving them a 69-60 advantage.

Iowa senior guard Tania Davis, who finished with 14 points, knocked down a three-pointer to open the fourth quarter, and Maryland failed to come within single digits again.

The 6-3 Gustafson shot 17 of 24 from the field and 11 of 14 from the charity stripe, and she added 10 rebounds and three blocks to her efficient performance.

The 6-1 Charles shot 15 of 30 from the field and 6 of 7 from the foul line. The talented junior remained optimistic despite the disappointment.

"I came in a little later than everybody but they were all keeping their heads up, and I just basically said, 'We're good,' " Charles said. "Our season's not over. We still have the NCAA tournament."

"We fought hard for 40 minutes, never gave up even when we were down however many with a minute left. I just love the fight. Like I said, we're not done. We're not done. We're far from over."

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OSU Still Bound For NCAAs Despite B1G Loss

It's human nature to want to relax after accomplishing a goal. Whether that played a role in Ohio State's quick exit from the Big Ten tournament is debatable, although the evidence leans toward that.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

Whatever the case, the No. 6 Buckeyes need to regain their mojo if they want to return to the Frozen Four for a second season in a row.

With a 5-1 loss to No. 17 Penn State in the March 17 conference semifinal at Value City Arena, the Buckeyes (20-10-5) are 1-5-1 in the past seven games following a seven-game winning streak.

"It's really disappointing tonight to lose but we're still going to play, so that's a positive, I guess," Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik said afterward.

Therein is the rub. OSU got a big lead in the Big Ten standings and coasted to the regular-season title by nine points over Notre Dame.

Once the Buckeyes swept the Fighting Irish in Columbus on Feb. 1 and 2 and won twice at Wisconsin the following weekend, it was a foregone conclusion that the Buckeyes would clinch the conference and had done enough to earn an NCAA bid for a third straight season even without winning the Big Ten tournament and the automatic qualifier that goes with it.

In other words, there has been little urgency, and the Buckeyes have been fighting malaise for weeks. Unlike Penn State, the Buckeyes have had a fallback if they lose.

Four times during the four-minute, 50-second postgame press conference following the defeat to Penn State, either Rohlik or senior captain Mason Jobst referenced that OSU was headed to the NCAA tournament. The selection show is 7 p.m. March 24 on ESPNU.

"We talked about Penn State being desperate," Jobst said. "That's because if they lost tonight, their season was actually over. And as much as I hate to say it, maybe we didn't have that desperation because we kind of knew that we were in the tournament."

"Now as a senior class the true desperation is going to come out. Our lives are

on the line every game from here on out, so I think we are going to bottle this up. We had another chance for another ring and that's past us, and we have one more chance. That's desperate hockey in front of us."

Penn State was playing the last month of the season for home ice in the quarter-finals. Every game, every play mattered. The Buckeyes wrapped up first place with two games to play but hadn't been really challenged since the Notre Dame sweep.

The Nittany Lions, meanwhile, were staring the end of their season in the face when they lost the first of a best-of-three playoff series to Wisconsin. Penn State staved elimination with a win in the second game and won the third in overtime to advance to the semifinal vs. the Buckeyes.

There, the Nittany Lions (22-14-2) needed to beat the Buckeyes to keep their NCAA hopes alive. With the victory, they will play at Notre Dame for the title on March 23 with the winner entering the 16-team field and the loser likely done for the season based on the PairWise rankings.

OSU is comfortably in at No. 7. Penn State is 14th and Notre Dame 16th.

Penn State has been in playoff mode for a long time while Ohio State had an open weekend before hosting the Nittany Lions.

"We certainly weren't at our best tonight," Rohlik said. "It's something we and me as coach and our staff have to make sure we're prepared two weeks from now. Big picture, I think that we've done enough body of work to make the tournament."

"Sixteen teams are left in the country. We're one of them. That's the positive. At that point all we have got to do is get rolling. To me over the next two weeks we're going to be nothing but positive, work hard and prepare."

"Again, if you would have told me in August we'd have a chance to be in the 16-team tournament to go for a national title, I would have taken it every day of the week."

By not playing in the Big Ten title game, which OSU would have hosted March 24, there's another open weekend before the regionals are played March 29-31. If the Buckeyes can win two games there, they would have another open weekend before the Frozen Four on April 11 and 13 in Buffalo, N.Y.

That means if the Buckeyes reach the title game, they will have played five games in six weeks.

Lions In Wait

The Buckeyes weren't sharp, and the nation's highest-scoring team took advantage to stun the Buckeyes 5-1 before a crowd of 4,545 that contained about 50 hearty Penn State followers who outcheered the home fans from the first faceoff.

Everything went wrong for the Buckeyes:

- Penn State scored with less than a second left in the first period for a 2-0 lead.

- Ohio State senior Sasha Larocque was ejected for a contact-to-the-head penalty in the second period. The Buckeyes almost killed the five-minute major and the momentum shift to OSU was palpable in the building until Penn State scored with 10 seconds left in the power play to go up 3-0.

"If we could have just got that last little bit killed off, it would have given us a little boost of energy when you kill a five like that, and that was pretty disappointing," Jobst said.

- The Buckeyes finally got some good news when junior Tanner Laczynski scored with 2:24 left in the second to make it 3-1. Hold on, the Nittany Lions successfully challenged that OSU was offside. The goal was wiped out, and that was the game.

Nate Sucece extended the lead to 4-0 at 2:22 of the third before senior John Wiitala made it 4-1 at 15:38 with his ninth goal. Sucece then topped of the scoring with an empty-netter with 47 seconds left.

The Buckeyes had a full lineup for the first time in a while with the return of forwards Gustaf Westlund and Dakota Joshua. Westlund had missed the past nine and 11 of 14 games with an injury. Joshua had been suspended the past four games.

Peyton Jones made 31 saves for Penn State, the same number as sophomore Tommy Nappier for the Buckeyes.

Rohlik had to decide between Nappier and senior Sean Romeo after each made 17 starts in the regular season, evenly

splitting each game of a two-game series. He chose Nappier, who now has a 16-3-2 career record.

"I've got two really good goaltenders," Rohlik said of his reasoning. "He's lost two games in his career. His numbers are off the chart. He's played well against Penn State. I don't know if he's been beat by Penn State."

"As hard as it was to tell (Romeo) you're not playing, with everything in front of you it was an easy decision to make at that point."

Fortunately for the Buckeyes, he'll have to make that decision at least one more time.

And The Winner Is ...

Befitting their regular season, the Buckeyes led the seven schools with four finalists for the conference awards. The winners will be announced March 19 after BSB goes to press.

Jobst is among the three players contending for Player of the Year. The others are Quinn Hughes (Michigan) and Taro Hirose (Michigan State).

Larocque is up for the Defensive Player of the Year award. He is going against Hughes and Paul DeNaples (Penn State).

Nappier is vying for Goaltender of the Year. His goals-against average (1.82) is the second lowest in Big Ten history, with his save percentage (.936) ranking fourth all-time. The other goalies are Cale Morris (Notre Dame) and Mat Robson (Minnesota).

Nappier is also one of 10 finalists for the Mike Richter Award given to the top college goalie. Romeo was a finalist last season.

Rohlik has a chance for a second straight Coach of the Year honor. He was also runner-up for the national award last season.

For a complete recap of Ohio State's tournament action against Penn State, go to BSB's BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

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Notre Dame Wins, 2-0 Minnesota Wins, 2-0 Penn State Wins, 2-1	March 17 March 16 (Overtime)	Time TBA • BTN	

Buckeyes Take 2nd At B1G Championships

The No. 2 Ohio State wrestling team outscored every team besides powerhouse rival No. 1 Penn State to claim second place at the Big Ten championships at Williams Arena in Minneapolis on March 9 and 10.

ON THE MAT Joe Dempsey

Seniors No. 1 Myles Martin and No. 3 Joey McKenna led the way for the Buckeyes, notching individual Big Ten titles.

Following a first-round bye, Martin (20-0) earned a tech-fall victory against Purdue's Max Lyon, 25-10, in the quarter-finals. Martin then knocked off Illinois' Emery Parker, 8-3, to reach the 184-pound finals. However, Penn State's Shakur Rasheed elected to medically forfeit instead of wrestling Martin.

"It's good," Martin said after being crowned champion. "It's a pretty good feeling, it's just not the same feeling as actually wrestling and winning the Big Ten title. It kind of feels like I just got handed the Big Ten title. I only wrestled two matches in this tournament so it's a little weird, but I'll take it. I'm just looking forward to nationals now, so I'm excited about that."

McKenna (20-2) won his fourth conference title and second Big Ten title since transferring to Ohio State from Stanford. In round one, McKenna pinned Northwestern's Alec McKenna (no relation) in just 35 seconds. Then McKenna defeated No. 9 Mitch McKee of Minnesota via major decision, 8-0.

McKenna won a narrow showdown of the elite with No. 2 Nick Lee of Penn State, 5-4, in the semifinals. The Towaco, N.J., native then handled No. 20 Chad Red of Nebraska, 9-2, in the 141-pound finals.

"A lot of it right now is just staying calm, cool and collected," McKenna said. "I know I'm a really good wrestler, but I just need to trust in God, trust in my preparation and just go out there and let everything happen."

"I've held too much back before, so right now, I'm just trying to let it all out here and unleash."

In addition to the two champions, No. 2 senior Micah Jordan, No. 2 junior Kollin Moore and No. 10 junior Luke Pletcher finished as conference runners-up.

Jordan (25-2) started his run by defeating Maryland's Alfred Bannister via major decision, 16-6, then pinning Northwestern's Shayne Oster in 1:32. Next, Jordan defeated No. 13 Brady Berge of Penn State with another major decision, 13-4.

In a highly anticipated No. 1 vs. No. 2 showdown, Jordan came up short to top-ranked Anthony Ashnault of Rutgers, losing the 141-pound title match, 8-6.

Moore (19-2) pulled off two major-decision victories against Rutgers' Matt Correnti and Minnesota's Dylan Anderson. Then Moore defeated No. 5 Jacob Warner of Iowa, 5-2, in the semifinals. Moore's run came to an end against No. 1 Bo Nickal of Penn State, falling 10-3 in the 197-pound title bout.

Pletcher (23-5) started his Big Ten tourney by defeating Indiana's Paul Konrath via major decision, 12-4. Next, the Latrobe, Pa., native knocked off No. 9 Roman Bravo-Young of Penn State, 8-5.

"The first two matches I wrestled, I felt like I wrestled pretty good," Pletcher said. "I got to my attacks a little bit more."

Pletcher was set to face off against No. 1 Stevan Micic of Michigan in the semifinals, but the Wolverine 133-pounder medically forfeited. In the final, Pletcher lost to No. 4 Nick Suriano of Rutgers, 4-1.

"In the finals, (Suriano's) really strong," Pletcher said. "He was doing a good job of posting, keeping me away and he was taking ground. After I watched it, it didn't look as bad as what I felt in my head. I felt like I was giving up too much ground, so it kind of made me shoot when I probably shouldn't have. But I feel like, overall, I wrestled better than I have the past month."

Senior Te'Shan Campbell (20-7) and red-shirt freshman Ethan Smith (18-11) qualified for the NCAA championships with sixth-place finishes at 165 pounds and 174 pounds, respectively.

No. 8 junior Ke-Shawn Hayes (20-9) qualified for NCAAs by finishing seventh at 157 pounds with wins against No. 9 Eric Barone of Illinois and No. 17 John Van Brill of Rutgers.

Freshman Malik Heinselman (23-9) qualified for the NCAA championships with a ninth-place finish at 125 pounds.

No. 11 redshirt freshman heavyweight Chase Singletary (19-7) dropped a couple of tough matches to ranked opponents and failed to place at the Big Ten championships. However, Singletary's 19-7 record with four wins against top-20 opponents, including two against top-10 foes, earned him an at-large bid to the NCAA championships.



Myles Martin

10 Buckeyes Head To NCAA Championships

The Ohio State wrestling program is the only team to qualify for the NCAA championships in all 10 weight classes this season.

"It's obviously difficult," head coach Tom Ryan said. "When you look at some of the great programs in wrestling history that weren't able to get 10 out, it's just not an easy thing to do. It's certainly not the standard to get there – getting there is a small piece of it."

"But we don't want to overlook the fact that we've been able to – in a sport that is 9.9 scholarships in 10 weight classes – field somebody good enough to be at the tournament in every weight. So we're proud of that, but now it's time for more."

Although the Buckeyes will send a remarkable 10 wrestlers to the NCAA championships for the second straight year, only one of them holds a No. 1 seed – Martin. He also represents the only individual national champ on the roster.

In 2015 Martin became the 15th fresh-

man to ever win an individual national title, but he has not tasted that same success since.

The Buckeyes have had at least one individual national champion every season since 2011. Ryan was asked if there is any extra pressure for Martin to win it all at the NCAA championships being held March 21-23 at PPG Paints Arena in Pittsburgh.

"I hope not, but I think the reality is there probably is," Ryan said. "But we try to do the best we can to limit that. Myles does a really good job at staying very steady with his emotions, whether it's a big dual meet or not, whether it's a big test coming up or not, Myles is very steady, and that's a good thing."

"But as much as – as a staff – we try to dilute the reality of some of the pressures that can come with being at Ohio State and being in a program where the objective is to win it every year. It's another match – just go out there and really seek the perfect match – seek perfection."

After reaching the pinnacle of the sport as a freshman, Martin placed fifth at the nationals as a sophomore and lost in the NCAA finals to Nickal as a junior. The loss to Nickal of Penn State particularly stung because the Nittany Lions finished ahead of the Buckeyes for the team championship.

"The downs hurt more than the ups feel good," Martin said. "So, having mentors like Tom Ryan, Tervel (Dlagnev), Logan (Stieber), Kyle (Snyder), literally everyone on our coaching staff, (J) Jagers, (Anthony) Ralph, all these guys – they just helped me kind of get over losses kind of quickly. So even wins – a lot of this year when I win, I don't really celebrate much. I just kind of take it as another match, and that just helps me put it into perspective that it's just wrestling, I keep it simple. When I lose – forget about it, move forward, because life goes on."

In addition to Martin, the Buckeyes feature three No. 2 seeds in the tourney: McKenna, Jordan and Moore. Given their track records and high rankings, Ryan is confident in his guys to go for gold.

"I don't think four or five champs is an

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unfair thing to reach for," Ryan said. "I think that's very possible."

McKenna, a U.S. Open champion and U-23 World bronze medalist, is one of the world's best wrestlers, but an individual national championship has eluded him.

Earlier in his senior season, McKenna and the Buckeyes traveled to Ithaca, N.Y., to take on Cornell, largely for McKenna's benefit. The Big Red wrestling team features one of the world's best as well – the defending national champ at 141 pounds, sophomore Yianni Diakomihalis.

"Joey had a great match with Yianni," Ryan said. "We liked the way the match went. It was a lot of positions, we learned a lot from the match. He's got to finish some of the shots that he didn't finish."

While McKenna was grateful for the opportunity to attack Diakomihalis and better understand his strengths and weaknesses, he has altered his approach in his final collegiate season.

"I mean, I just know what I need to get to," McKenna said, "a lot more focused on

my wrestling, less on what guys are going to do. A little less scouting, just focus on me, what I can do out there, and just let wrestling happen."

Another accomplished senior without an individual title to his name is Jordan. After finishing fourth at 149 pounds as a sophomore and sixth at 157 as a junior, "The Mongoose" is back at his natural weight and hungry for a national title.

Jordan's top competition will be Ashnault of Rutgers, which could potentially be a No. 1 vs. No. 2 matchup for the title.

Like Jordan, Moore will likely have to overcome a conference opponent to become an individual national champ at 197 pounds. No. 1-seeded Nickal has defeated Moore twice this season and appears poised to win his third-straight national title.

While Ryan's team features a strong core of wrestlers vying for individual national championships, he stressed the importance of not getting ahead of oneself, especially in the NCAA championships.

"They've got to be really smart with the

tactics they use and the skill they use when they use it," Ryan said. "It's a meat grinder. It's obviously, never looking past anybody. We see first-round upsets all the time. So, these guys are ready one match at a time, control one position at a time and just really make good decisions."

"A lot of this, at times, boils down to just quality decision-making. You're a master at some positions, stay in those positions. Don't wander outside your comfort zone, stay in your comfort zone when it comes to the skill you use. And they have to wrestle well."

Pletcher (five-seed), Hayes (11), Singletary (16), Smith (19), Campbell (21) and Heinselman (26) are all less-favored to

reach the NCAA finals but will likely need to place for the Buckeyes to have a shot at defeating Penn State for the team title.

"I think they can all get on the podium," Ryan said. "And I don't think there's one guy that I would go to sleep at night saying, 'Listen, he has no chance.'"

"The key to us beating Penn State is going to be our studs doing what they're capable of, and some of our freshmen pushing deep into the tournament. Winning one match or two matches will not be enough. Two matches is going to get you two points — if you pick up a bonus point, you pick up three points there. So, we're going to need them on the podium."



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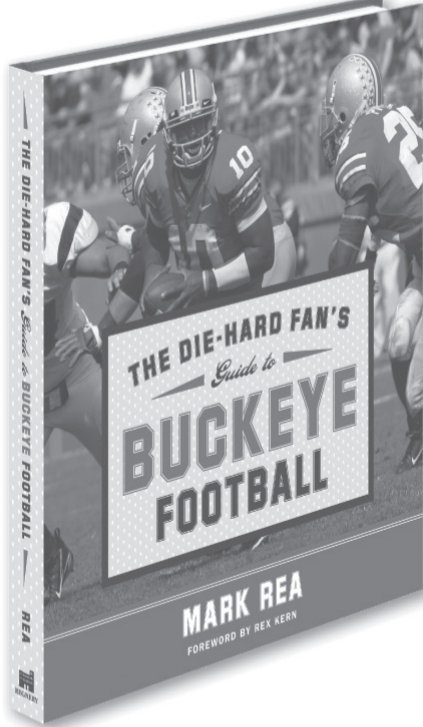


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Cherry Enjoying Strong Start To Senior Year

Ohio State senior utility player Brady Cherry has enjoyed a red-hot start to the season, leading Buckeye starters in hitting, on-base percentage and slugging percentage.

FROM THE STRETCH

Joe Dempsey

"I'm really happy for Brady," said Ohio State head coach Greg Beals. "Brady's worked hard his entire time here and just has struggled at times at game time within the season. So it's good for him to get off to a good start, help breed his confidence. He's very talented – he's been the whole time. And he's gotten a lot of chances here, and he's taking advantage of this chance now."

Cherry batted just .226 as a junior and ended up rarely seeing the field near the end of the season. Despite having posted a more respectable .260 average as a sophomore, the Pendleton, Ind., native entered his senior season with a career average of .238.

Changing the narrative of his collegiate career, Cherry is hitting .365 with four home runs, six doubles, 15 runs batted in and 16 runs scored.

"Early on I got a lot of fastballs, which is always nice," Cherry said. "But for the most part, I've just been relaxed and I'm just enjoying the games and trying to just let it come to me. And I've been lucky enough to put some good swings on some balls."

Cherry's tremendous .608 slugging percentage leads the Scarlet and Gray by a wide margin, and his on-base percentage of .429 indicates that he's reaching base in nearly half of his at bats as of March 18.

While some athletes go to extremes in search of improvement, the Buckeye utility man simplified his approach.

"Probably just my mentality, overall," Cherry said when asked what's different. "Not putting any pressure on myself, just enjoying the games and not thinking too much about mechanics or anything. And getting up to the plate and relaxing and just trying to get a good barrel on the ball."

Cherry added that the coaching staff has allowed him to do his own thing when working on his swing, allowing him to have more peace of mind at the plate.

In the past Cherry had struggled immensely in the field, highlighted by 18 errors and a rough .845 fielding percentage while primarily playing second base as a sophomore. Cherry spent most of his junior season as a designated hitter, but Beals gave him a new home as a senior.

"Maybe the change in scenery, putting him out in left field, has eased his mind a little bit from the defensive side of things to allow him to focus more offensively," Beals said, "and be more relaxed as an overall player being out in left field as opposed to being in the infield."

Thriving in his role in left field, Cherry will do anything to help his team win. Beals even mentioned the possibility of Cherry taking the mound to help out the inexperienced Buckeye pitching staff.

"At some point maybe, I don't know," Cherry said with a smile of possibly pitching. "The first weekend out guys did so well so I'm not really upset or anything about not getting on the bump. I'm excited about our other guys doing really well. But if they ever ask me to, I'll be ready to go."



COURTESY OF OSU ATHLETICS

STRONG START – Ohio State's Brady Cherry (1) is off to a hot start at the plate as a senior and has found a new home in left field defensively.

The 6-2 senior took the hill in a decisive, 14-3 Ohio State victory against Lipscomb on March 15. Cherry retired the side in order and recorded two strikeouts in the process. He struggled in his second outing of the season, allowing two runs in two-thirds of an inning against Lipscomb.

While the versatile Cherry continues to impress all over the diamond, he understands that all of the ups and downs he has endured can be used as teaching points for his younger teammates.

"I feel like I've been a part of a few really different teams here," Cherry said. "So I've had the experience of playing with really good, really talented players every year. But also being a part of teams that knew how to put that together and the teams who didn't know how to put that together, I think that I can use that kind of experience and help guys especially who are struggling right at the beginning, because I know I've been there a lot in my career."

"So just being able to let them know that it's not the end of the world, it's not the end of the season, that there's a long season ahead of us."

Smith Solid As Starter

Sophomore left-handed starting pitcher Griffan Smith has emerged as a key piece in the Buckeyes' starting rotation after spend-

ing his freshman season coming out of the bullpen.

"It hasn't been that much of an adjustment," Smith said. "Every time I step on the mound it's kind of the same mentality, even though starting and relieving are kind of different. But it hasn't been too hard of a transition for me, which has been nice."

Smith endured some of the natural ups and downs of being a freshman pitcher, finishing 2-2 with a higher-than-desired 5.34 ERA last year. Opposing hitters batted .307 against the Cincinnati native, and he allowed 43 hits and 15 walks over 32 innings while posting 21 strikeouts.

"I had high expectations for myself coming off last year," Smith said. "I didn't have a bad year, but it was all right and I definitely wanted to grow and improve my numbers. But I think the biggest thing for me, I was working on trusting my off-speed and working on location of my fastball and stuff like that, stuff that I was able to develop in the fall. And so, having done that, it's cool to now see it pay off."

The 6-2 southpaw spent the offseason honing his skills, hoping to take a big step forward. Through five starts Smith has looked solid in his new role with hitters batting .248 against him.

The Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy product was 3-1 with a 4.67 ERA, allowing 25

hits and 11 walks in 27 innings as of March 18. Smith has already bested his strikeout total as a freshman with 25 punch-outs.

"I've been feeling great," Smith said. "I feel like the biggest difference between last year and this year is just the experience I've had and the trust I've been able to grow – trust in myself and trust in my teammates as well. I have all the confidence in the world every time I step on the mound in my own abilities and in my defense."

After losing three starters and their top two relievers from a season ago, the Buckeyes knew they would have to work through some growing pains with an inexperienced pitching staff. Beals is proud of how Smith has emerged as a veteran, despite being only a sophomore.

"Well, we need that," Beals said of Smith's experience. "He's got some experience. A lot of the guys don't have experience, but Griff's got some experience coming into this season."

"So having his leadership in practice and in the locker room and in the dugout is critical. And those guys that are leading, it's also good to have them be successful when it's time for them to play."

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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 (19-14, 8-12 BIG TEN)

Nov. 1 UNC PEMBROKE (exhibition), W 81-63; **7** at Cincinnati, W 64-56; **11** PFW, W 107-61; **15** at Creighton, W 69-60; **18** SOUTH CAROLINA STATE, W 89-61; **20** SAMFORD, W 68-50; **23** CLEVELAND STATE at St. John Arena, W 89-62; **28** SYRACUSE, L 72-62.

Dec. 2 MINNESOTA, W 79-59; **5** vs. Illinois at Chicago, W 77-67; **15** BUCKNELL, W 73-71; **18** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 75-56; **22** vs. UCLA at Chicago, W 80-66; **29** HIGH POINT, W 82-64.

Jan. 5 (8) MICHIGAN STATE, L 86-77; **9** at Rutgers, L 64-61; **12** at Iowa, L 72-62; **18** (19) MARYLAND, L 75-61; **23** PURDUE, L 79-67; **26** at Nebraska, W 70-60; **29** at (5) Michigan, L 65-49.

Feb. 2 RUTGERS, W 76-62; **7** PENN STATE, W 74-70; **10** at Indiana, W 55-52; **14** ILLINOIS, L 63-56; **17** at (11) Michigan State, L 62-44; **20** NORTHWESTERN, W 63-49; **23** at (24) Maryland, L 72-62; **26** (22) IOWA, W 90-70.

March 2 at (14) Purdue, L 86-51; **6** at Northwestern, L 68-50; **10** (21) WISCONSIN, L 73-67 (OT); **14** Big Ten Tournament Second Round at Chicago vs. 9-seed Indiana, W 79-75; **15** Big Ten Tournament Third Round at Chicago vs. 1-seed Michigan State, L 77-70; **22** NCAA Tournament First Round at Tulsa, Okla., vs. 6-seed Iowa State, 9:45 p.m.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (14-14, 10-8 BIG TEN)

Oct. 28 IUP (exhibition), W 72-50.

Nov. 6 (22) USF, L 71-47; **9** DETROIT MERCY, W 55-41; **11** at (2) UConn, L 85-53; **16** at Sacramento State, canceled; **18** at Stanford, canceled; **29** NORTH CAROLINA, W 76-69.

Dec. 2 CINCINNATI, W 69-56; **5** at Washington, L 69-59; **16** FLORIDA at St. John Arena, W 46-41; **20** vs. Butler at West Palm Beach, Fla., L 66-53; **21** vs. Virginia Tech at West Palm Beach, Fla., L 81-73; **28** at Purdue, L 60-42; **31** NEBRASKA, L 78-69.

Jan. 5 at (4) Maryland, L 75-69; **10** (25) INDIANA, W 55-50; **14** (25) MICHIGAN STATE, W 65-55; **17** at Penn State, W 76-71 (OT); **20** at Michigan, L 62-58; **24** (11) MARYLAND, L 70-57; **28** at Minnesota, W 65-55; **31** ILLINOIS, W 78-70.

Feb. 3 at Northwestern, L 76-59; **6** PENN STATE, W 78-73; **10** (16) IOWA, L 78-52; **14** at (23) Rutgers,

W 59-39; **17** WISCONSIN, W 70-68; **21** at Michigan State, W 77-70; **28** at Wisconsin, W 61-50.

March 3 RUTGERS, L 66-56; **7** Big Ten Tournament Second Round at Indianapolis vs. 13-seed Wisconsin, L 73-63.

BASEBALL (9-10)

Feb. 15-17 Snowbord Classic at Port Charlotte, Fla., vs. Seton Hall, W 4-3; W 6-0; W 5-3; **18** at FGCU, W 2-0; **22** Kleberg Bank Tournament at Corpus Christi, Texas, vs. BYU, L 5-1; **23** Kleberg Bank Tournament at Corpus Christi, Texas, vs. Texas A&M Corpus Christi, L 8-7; **24** Kleberg Bank Tournament at Corpus Christi, Texas, vs. Oral Roberts, W 8-3; **25** Kleberg Bank Tournament at Corpus Christi, Texas, vs. Texas A&M Corpus Christi, L 3-2.

March 1-4 at Bethune-Cookman, L 4-3; W 6-0; W 16-9; L 8-3; **9** Greenville Drive 1st Pitch Invite at Greenville, S.C., vs. Michigan State, L 7-1; **10** Greenville Drive 1st Pitch Invite at Greenville, S.C., vs. Western Carolina, L 8-5; **11** Greenville Drive 1st Pitch Invite at Greenville, S.C., vs. Furman, L 11-10 (10 innings); **12** at Wofford, L 8-6; **15-17** LIPSCOMB, W 14-3; L 9-3; W 7-6; **19** NORTHERN KENTUCKY, 5:05 p.m.; **21-24** HAWAII, 5:05 p.m.; 5:05 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.; **27** TOLEDO, 6:35 p.m.; **29-31** at Rutgers, 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.; Noon.

April 3 CINCINNATI, 6:35 p.m.; **5-7** NORTHWESTERN, 6:35 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.; **9** at Ohio, 6 p.m.; **10** DAYTON, 6:35 p.m.; **12-14** MICHIGAN, 6:35 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.; **16** XAVIER, 6:35 p.m.; **19-21** at Maryland, 6:30 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **26-28** IOWA, 6:35 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.

May 1 at Miami (Ohio), 5 p.m.; **3-5** at Minnesota, 8 p.m.; 3 p.m.; 2 p.m.; **8** WRIGHT STATE, 6:35 p.m.; **10-12** PENN STATE, 6:35 p.m.; 3:05 p.m.; 1:05 p.m.; **14** at Youngstown State, 6 p.m.; **16-18** at Purdue, 6 p.m.; 6 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **22-26** Big Ten Tournament at Omaha, Neb.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS (2-3)

Jan. 12 Rocky Mountain Open at Colorado Spring, Colo., 4th/6 (398.500); **26** at (1) Oklahoma, L 423.950-395.400.

Feb. 2 at (4) Michigan, L 413.900-402.700; **15/17** Winter Cup at Las Vegas, NTS.

March 2 ARNOLD CHALLENGE vs. (6) PENN STATE, W 413.150-409.000; **8** MINNESOTA/NEBRASKA, 2nd/3 (405.550); **16** at (9) Iowa, L 400.650-396.400; **24** 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 (7-7, 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, W 195.875-194.875; **17** vs. West Virginia, Penn State & N.C. State at Morgantown, W.Va., 4th/4 (194.925); **23** Big Ten Championships at University Park, Pa.

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 (20-10-5, 13-7-4 BIG TEN)

Oct. 12-13 at Arizona State, W 3-2; W 3-0; **19-20** MASSACHUSETTS, L 6-3; W 3-1; **26** (15) BOWLING GREEN, L 8-2; **27** at Bowling Green, T 2-2 (OT).

Nov. 2-3 at (5) Notre Dame, W 1-0; L 2-1; **9-10** at Colgate, W 3-0; W 1-0; **16-17** WISCONSIN, W 4-0; W 3-1; **23-24** (6) PENN STATE, L 4-3; W 5-2; **30-Dec. 1** at Minnesota, T 2-2 (OSU 3x3 OT Win); T 2-2 (OSU 3x3 OT Win).

Dec. 28-29 MERCYHURST, W 3-1; W 5-4.

Jan. 4-5 at Michigan State, T 7-7 (OSU 3x3 OT Loss); W 6-0; **11-12** MICHIGAN, L 2-1; W 4-2; **18-19** at (13) Penn State, W 4-1; W 6-4.

Feb. 1-2 (11) NOTRE DAME, W 4-2; W 2-0; **8-9** at Wisconsin, W 2-1 (OT); W 4-1; **15-16** MINNESOTA, L 4-3; L 4-3; **22-23** at Michigan, L 4-2; T3-3 (OT, 3x3 OT W).

March 1-2 MICHIGAN STATE, W 5-1; L 3-2; **17** BIG TEN TOURNAMENT SEMIFINALS vs. 4-SEED PENN STATE, L 5-1; **29-31** NCAA Regionals.

April 11/13 NCAA Frozen Four at Buffalo, N.Y.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (20-13-2, 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, L 3-2.

MEN'S LACROSSE (6-0)

Feb. 2 CLEVELAND STATE, W 12-9; **9** BOSTON, W 17-10; **16** at UMass, W 11-7; **23** BUCKNELL, W 16-13.

March 2 vs. Marquette at Dallas, W 13-9; **9** at Hofstra, W 14-8; **16** DENVER, Cancelled; **23** at Notre Dame, 1 p.m.; **31** RUTGERS, Noon.

April 7 at Penn State, 7 p.m.; **14** at Johns Hopkins, Noon; **20** MARYLAND, 1 p.m.; **26** at Michigan, 6 p.m.

WOMEN'S LACROSSE (6-3, 0-1 BIG TEN)

Feb. 8 at Cincinnati, W 16-6; **10** DETROIT MERCY, W 19-5; **18** BROWN, W 15-14 (OT); **22** NOTRE DAME, L 19-10.

March 1 MARQUETTE, W 11-9; **3** NIAGARA, W 16-12; **9** BINGHAMTON, W 13-7; **11** vs. UMass at Deland, Fla., L 15-14; **16** at (2) Maryland, L 16-1; **21** MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; **24** SAN DIEGO STATE, Noon; **30** US Lacrosse at Sparks, Md., vs. Oregon, Noon.

April 4 at Penn State, 7 p.m.; **9** at Louisville, 1 p.m.; **13** JOHNS HOPKINS, 1 p.m.; **20** at Rutgers, Noon; **25** NORTHWESTERN, 4:30 p.m.

May 3/5 Big Ten Tournament at Baltimore.

SOFTBALL (15-9)

Feb. 8 Friends of Jaclyn Tournament at Orlando, Fla., vs. George Mason, W 7-0; vs. Ole Miss, W 4-2; **9** Friends of Jaclyn Tournament at Orlando, Fla., vs. North Florida, W 3-0; vs. UCF, L 3-2; **10** Friends of Jaclyn Tournament at Orlando, Fla., vs. Ole Miss, cancelled; **15** ESPN Elite Invitational at Clearwater, Fla., vs. Florida State, L 3-1; **16** ESPN Elite Invitational at Clearwater, Fla., vs. LSU, L 7-2; vs. Utah, W 10-2 (5 innings); **17** ESPN Elite Invitational at Clearwater, Fla., vs. Notre Dame, L 3-2; **22** Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. Army, W 4-0; **23** Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. Utah, W 2-0; vs. Duke, W 2-0; **24** Mary Nutter Classic at Palm Springs, Calif., vs. New Mexico State, W 5-1.

March 8 Husky Classic at Seattle vs. Seattle, W 6-4 (8 innings); vs. (6) Washington, L 3-0; **9** Husky Classic at Seattle vs. Seattle, L 3-0; vs. Idaho State, W 9-3; **10** Husky Classic at Seattle vs. NIU, W 3-2; **12** at Portland State, W 8-4; W 7-0; **15** GCU Invitational at Phoenix vs. Weber State, L 4-0; vs. Lehigh, W 2-0; **16** GCU Invitational at Phoenix vs. Lehigh, W 12-3 (6 innings); vs. Grand Canyon, W 8-7; **17** GCU Invitational at Phoenix vs. Grand Canyon, L 4-3 (8 innings); **22-24** INDIANA, 6 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **27** at Kentucky, 6 p.m.; **29-31** at Maryland, 6 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.

April 3 at Pittsburgh, 4 p.m.; **5-7** RUTGERS, 6 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **9** at Penn State, 5 p.m.; 7 p.m.; **12-14** MICHIGAN, 6 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **16** OHIO, 6 p.m.; **19-21** at Michigan State, 6 p.m.; 11 a.m.; 1 p.m.; **26-28** ILLINOIS, 6 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.

May 3-5 at Ioa, 6:30 p.m.; 2 p.m.; 1 p.m.; **9-11** Big Ten Tournament at Bloomington, Ind.

SWIMMING & DIVING

Jan. 4-5 at Florida, Men: L 317.50-263.50; Women: L 403-178; vs. Kentucky at Gainesville, Fla., Men: W 336-245; Women: L 375-206; **19** at Michigan, Men: L 202-98; Women: L 196-104; **25-26** Shamrock Invitational at Notre Dame, Ind., Men: 1st/4; Women: 3rd/4.

Feb. 16-17 WINTER INVITAIONAL, NTS; **20-23** Women's Big Ten Championships at Bloomington, Ind., 3rd/12 (1,162.5); **27-March 2** Men's Big Ten Championships at Iowa City, Iowa, 3rd/10 (1,243.5).

March 3 LAST CHANCE MEET (women), NTS; **10** Last Chance Meet at TBA (men), NTS; **14-16** CSCAA National Invitational at Cleveland, NTS; NCAA Zone Diving at West Lafayette, Ind., NTS; **20-23** Women's NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas; **27-30** Men's NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas.

MEN'S TENNIS (16-2, 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, L 4-3; **14** at (4) Texas, L 4-1; **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 (12-2, 1-0 BIG TEN)

Jan. 19 Michigan Tournament at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; **26** ITA Kickoff at Atlanta vs. Geogia Tech, W 4-0; **27** ITA Kickoff at Atlanta vs. Kentucky, W 4-1.

Feb. 1 (6) TEXAS, L 4-3; **3** NOTRE DAME, W 6-1; **8** ITA National Team Indoors at Seattle vs. (4) Duke, L 4-3; **10** ITA National Team Indoors at Seattle vs. (10) Syracuse, W 5-2; **20** CLEVELAND STATE, W 7-0; AKRON, W 7-0; **23** at Arizona State, W 4-3; **24** vs. TCU at Tempe, Ariz., W 7-0; **28** YOUNGSTOWN STATE, W 6-1; W 7-0.

March 3 BAYLOR, W 5-2; **17** PENN STATE, W 6-1; **22** at Nebraska, 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: T-41st/58 (5); Women: 4th/68 (28).

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (7-14, 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 (5) UCLA, L 3-0; **9** at (11) USC, L 3-2; **15** LEES-MCRAE, W 3-0; **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, 2nd/14; **21-23** NCAA Championships at Pittsburgh.

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From 'Absolute Paranoia' To A Renewed Hope

Chris Holtmann has done a very good job of keeping his cool in his two years as Ohio State's men's basketball coach. However, on St. Patrick's Day, which also happened to be Selection Sunday, he was a bit of a basket case.

RAPP AROUND Jeff Rapp

His Buckeyes defeated Indiana on March 14 at the Big Ten tournament in Chicago but lost to eventual tourney champ Michigan State in the quarterfinals the following day, giving him the full weekend to contemplate if OSU's 19-14 record and strength of schedule ranking of 47 were enough to land his team in the NCAA Tournament field. Soon after returning, he told OSU athletic director Gene Smith he believed the Buckeyes were "solidly on the 11 line, maybe even a 10 (seed)."

Then came Sunday, a day Holtmann said was filled with "absolute paranoia." CBS started to unveil the bracket spot by spot and schools such as Belmont and Temple arose. Eventually, the words "Ohio State" emerged. The Buckeyes were indeed an 11-seed in the Midwest Regional. They'll face sixth-seeded Iowa State, the Big 12 tournament champion, on March 22 (9:50 p.m., TBS) in Tulsa, Okla.

It was later learned the Buckeyes were tabbed the overall No. 41 seed, meaning they just avoided having to play in a First Four game in Dayton before joining the party. It turns out Ohio State's most important wins of the season were the first one (at Cincinnati) and the last one (over Indiana). Holtmann said he felt after the Buckeyes took down a ranked Iowa squad 90-70 on Feb. 26, they likely were a win away from being assured of making the tournament. That win took a while but was worth the wait – Ohio State made the Big Dance for the second straight year; IU was left out.

"When you do this you certainly understand it's not an entitlement," Holtmann said. "Getting to the NCAA Tournament has got to be earned – and it's hard."

He then rattled off the program's NCAA tourney history and pointed out it had never been part of the Madness more than three consecutive years until Thad Matta led the Buckeyes to the Big Dance seven times in a row from 2009-15.

Holtmann said OSU's second straight appearance is "a real credit to our players" and "our upperclassmen who have kind of steered the ship."

A Big Impact

I hear you, Joey Lane – and when your time at Ohio State has ended, I will still see you.

It's not often that a walk-on can make a real impact on a major athletic program, but that is exactly what Lane has done over the past few years, mostly by reaching icon status with the fans in the Buckeye NutHouse.

The beaming senior's energy and antics on the bench have been infectious over the years, enabling him to be an easy choice as team representative and the one player who always draws a gleeful reaction when he checks into the game.

Ohio State's familiar No. 14 hasn't played more than six minutes in a game this season and entered the campaign with career highlights such as "went for two points and three

boards vs. The Citadel," but he still manages to have a regular gameday presence. A product of Deerfield, Ill., Lane actually has been on scholarship for a couple of years now, but he'll always be remembered in OSU circles as a beloved walk-on, maybe the most beloved (apologies to Mark Titus).

Not only is he a proud benchwarmer, Lane also has been pegged as a team leader and captain. He's the self-appointed point man of the "Towel Gang" which riles up the faithful and those playing in scarlet and gray.

There have been guys like Lane who have been rewarded for their dedication and patience when holes in the roster arose. A couple who come to mind are Otis Winston and Eric Hanna. Holtmann honored Lane by starting him on Senior Day, but the 6-1 guard went back to his cheerleading role at the conference tourney, busting out some air guitar when a Keyshawn Woods three-point-er gave Ohio State a 20-point lead against Indiana.

His lack of playing time in Chicago didn't matter, because days earlier Lane was able to pour out his heart to those who stuck around after OSU's overtime loss to Wisconsin. Once the microphone was pushed into his hand, Lane just had to tell his story and share his sentiments in a nearly 10-minute speech that Holtmann teased was the longest in the history of Senior Day.

He started out by sharing he didn't even play his junior year at Deerfield High School and appeared relegated to being a Division III prospect after making all-state as a senior.

"Then I thought, no, no. I'm better than that," he said. "I'm destined for better things."

Lane got to showcase his talent and high energy at OSU's team camp in the summer and was asked if he would consider becoming a walk-on with the Buckeyes.

"They gave me the opportunity to play at the greatest university in the world and make a little Jewish boy's dreams come true," he said.

Lane then had to endure a coaching change and the uncertainty that comes with it.

"When they first got here," he said, "I met with (assistant coach Mike) Schrage for an hour, and I said, 'Schrawg, things have got to change here, man. I need your help.' And he said, 'It starts with you. Change this culture.' Me and C.J. (Jackson), J.T. (Jae'Sean Tate), Keita (Bates-Diop), I think we did a pretty good job of doing that."

Those remaining in the stands approved with applause.

Moments later, when he began to express his appreciation for "Coach Holt," Lane broke into tears and struggled to finish his sentence, which prompted Holtmann to approach him for a heartfelt embrace. The crowd roared again.

"The fact that you realized my value and let me excel in my own way, it means the world," Lane said, choking up again.

Then Lane turned his eyes to his teammates standing near the east basket.

"I can't even look at you guys," he said, turning away and putting his famous towel over his eyes. "I love you guys, man."

"I love you, too, Smoke," a teammate shot back.

"From the bottom of my heart, thanks for allowing to be part of your journeys, thanks for allowing me to be your captain, for believing in me," Lane added.

The players responded by mobbing Lane in a group hug right atop the Ohio State logo affixed to midcourt, a Kodak moment that suddenly washed away the disappointment

that had just occurred on the very same hardwood.

The Buckeyes still have a little work to do, but Lane already has trailed off into the sunset in a way. Not only was he the highlight attraction of Senior Day, he also got to join his team at the Big Ten tournament inside the United Center, a dream locale for a kid who grew up a mere 30 miles away.

Boals Back To Buckeye State

Speaking of former walk-ons, Jeff Boals is back at Ohio University where he once worked his way up the ladder as a player and, like Lane, became a team leader known for his hustle. Boals, of course, also relates to Ohio State in that he was a trusted assistant coach under Matta from 2009-16. The Buckeyes, as previously mentioned, made it to the NCAA Tournament seven of those eight seasons and racked up a mark of 193-62. Boals was instrumental in that success, helping to lure and develop such talented players as Jared Sullinger, Deshaun Thomas and Aaron Craft.

I recall the first time I interviewed Boals in the summer of 2009. He said he was shocked when Matta called him about the job.

"It was Easter Sunday," he said. "I was driving to my mom's house, and I get a private call. The only private call I ever got was from a recruit's assistant coach who was in the FBI, so I thought it was him."

When the caller identified himself as Matta, he thought it was a friend playing a joke on him.

"I thought it was him messing with me for about a minute and a half," Boals said. "After that, I realized it was Coach Matta."

Ironically, Matta hired Boals as he was still searching for a top aide to replace John Groce, who left OSU in 2008 to become the head coach at Ohio U. In 2012, when the Buckeyes were en route to the Final Four, Groce led OU to the Sweet 16 and a near-upset of top-seeded North Carolina.

Now the Bobcats have Boals in place as their 19th head coach in the history of the program in hopes he can catch lightning in a bottle as Groce did. Boals earned their interest after posting a record of 55-41 as the head coach at Stony Brook.

A native of Magnolia, Ohio, Boals is a 1995 graduate of OU. He earned four varsity letters in Athens under the late Larry Hunter despite enduring multiple knee injuries and playing just 39 total minutes his first season.

"It was kind of funny, we had our 'DNP crew,'" he said, referring to the box-score acronym that stands for Did Not Play. "In layup lines, whoever scored the most points always got to sit closest to the head coach. That was kind of our deal."

Boals displayed his humility and grit throughout his young adult life, which enabled him to earn the respect of others.

"I drove vans, cranked baskets, swept the floor, did laundry," he said years ago when he arrived at OSU. "I don't think anything is beneath me. I don't think I'm better than (anybody). I think my role here is just roll my sleeves up, be who I am, do a great job recruiting in the state and try to continue the excellence that's happened here."

Time for Boals to put his hardhat back on and try to lead the Bobcats back into the winner's circle.

Time To Step Up, SJA

Despite the lovefest above, I have to zing my alma mater a little bit. As a longtime follower of local high school hoops as well as

Ohio State basketball, it pains me to realize that there isn't an ideal venue to showcase the top prep teams in central Ohio.

Local high school basketball – boys and girls – has been on a major uptick for years now. The only problem is, as we get closer to determining which of the nearby schools deserves to represent the area at the state tournament, we're left with a handful of teams that have to play in squished-in gyms.

Ohio State officials claim they can't alleviate the problem. OSU hosts the state wrestling championships at the Schottenstein Center the same weekend as boys districts and girls regional tournament games beckon; and The Schott is home to the girls basketball state tourney as the boys get to regional final fours.

The Taft Coliseum on the Ohio State fairgrounds also apparently is no longer an option as it instead is home to various events including the Arnold Gymnastics Challenge and other moneymakers.

St. John Arena is still home to Ohio State's wrestling, gymnastics and volleyball teams and has hosted first- and second-round games of the women's NCAA tournament for basketball in recent years. Still, as I understand it, OSU simply does not want the hassle of hosting boys basketball regionals at SJA, which for decades was the setting for the state championships. Despite the historical venue, 13,000-plus seats and the need for a larger venue, OSU isn't interested in helping out.

There are plans in the works for a multi-sport facility to be built in nearby Dublin's new Bridge Park area. In fact, former Ohio State quarterback Bobby Hoving of the commercial real estate company Crawford Hoving is spearheading the project and has shown plans to local investors and city management in hopes of receiving the proper funding for the project. But even if it comes to fruition, the athletic complex won't be a reality for years.

That's a shame, because in just the last few years alone, one can only wonder how many fans would have been drawn to some of the marquee matchups involving local boys basketball teams instead of the roughly 1,800 that have been stuffed into the gymnasium at Ohio Dominican University. This year's regional final matched Powell Orlentangy Liberty vs. Pickerington Central, and the number of available seats simply wasn't sufficient. Liberty knocked off Pickerington North to ruin an All-Picktown regional final – how many fans would that have drawn? – and then took care of Central to reach the state final four.

Just a few years ago, the Wesson brothers and Westerville South emerged from a regional at ODU that also included loaded teams from Upper Arlington (featuring former OSU commit Dane Goodwin), Gahanna Lincoln (featuring future Michigan State center Nick Ward) and Pickerington Central (featuring future North Carolina players Jeremiah Francis and Sterling Manley) – each of them entering play with at least 22 wins. That epic foursome easily would have drawn an excess of 10,000 fans. Instead, a mere 2,000 were shoehorned into ODU's sweatbox while thousands were turned away at the door.

Cleveland Regional games are staged at the Wolstein Center on the campus of Cleveland State. The Cincinnati Regional is at Xavier's Cintas Center. The other regional, which has shifted between Toledo and Akron in recent years, also is housed at a much larger university site. It's time for Ohio State to work out a deal with the Ohio High School Athletic Association and get central Ohio up to speed. More than time, actually.

Deserving Or Not, Ohio State Is Dancing Again

It was funny to hear all of the message board chatter and social media posts decrying Chris Holtmann, saying that he massively under-achieved this season and that the Ohio State men's basketball program is heading downward after a big first year under the former Butler boss.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

Um, did people miss the memo that had OSU as a lower-level Big Ten team this season? After losing the core of its team – including conference Player of the Year Keita Bates-Diop to the NBA – OSU was going to be hard-pressed to contend in a Big Ten that was as good as it's been at any time in recent memory.

Are OSU fans so shortsighted that they can't see the forest for the trees? Do they really think that it's a bad year if the Buckeyes don't make the NCAA Tournament?

Holtmann actually did a bang-up coaching job, taking a team with mid-level talent – save for Kaleb Wesson – and guiding it to the Big Dance. Whether the Buckeyes deserve to be there will be touched upon in a minute. But the fact is, the committee saw Ohio State as one of the most deserving 68 teams in America and rewarded them with an NCAA Tournament berth. If that's underachieving, then sign me up every year.

The Buckeyes received an 11 seed, meaning

they were firmly on the bubble until their Big Ten tournament win over Indiana, and will face an explosive Iowa State team that was a thorn in the side of more than a few foes in the Big 12 – the nation's second-best conference according to folks who analyze that kind of thing.

The teams met in the third round in 2013, the Buckeyes winning a 78-75 thriller as a second seed in Dayton. That bunch came up a rung short of the Final Four, losing 70-66 to Wichita State in the Elite Eight.

Not sure that a win over Iowa State is going to happen this year, though if it does a long run looks unlikely.

The Buckeyes have been an underwhelming bunch most of the season, going 4-10 in Quad 1 games (games against top-30 foes or big wins on the road against top-50 teams) this season. Their best win came in the season opener against Cincinnati, and there really weren't many highlights between that game and the league tournament loss to Michigan State.

If it sounds like a case is being made against the Buckeyes' NCAA inclusion, you would be right.

Call me old school, but I don't believe an average team should be rewarded with a trip to the most prestigious tournament in college basketball. Ohio State went 8-12 in league play – side note, when I am made college hoops czar, one requirement for making the tourney will be a .500 record in league play – was offensively challenged for most of the season (69.6 ppg, 258th of 353 teams) and couldn't do anything without Wesson. The Buckeyes limped to three losses when he was on the sideline serving a school-imposed suspension

and became extremely one-dimensional when Wesson would get into foul trouble – which was far too often.

OSU did show a little bit of life and fight in coming back against Michigan State in the Big Ten tourney, cutting a 21-point deficit down to five late in the game – all of it without Wesson on the floor. So maybe the Buckeyes have learned how to play without their star and might actually pull off an upset or two.

From this corner, it might have been better for Ohio State to go to the NIT, where the competition isn't as fierce and building can begin for next season. Some view the NIT as a consolation prize, and some would rather just skip the postseason altogether if their team doesn't make the Big Dance. But getting more game action is never a bad thing, and the NIT could have afforded the Buckeyes that opportunity.

Should the Buckeyes find a way to get past the Cyclones, they would likely face third-seed Houston, which has its best team since Guy Lewis went to three straight Final Fours in the 1980s. Kelvin Sampson is the boss now and led the Cougars to a 31-3 mark. So OSU would definitely have an uphill climb.

But the tournament is always madness because there are unlikely upsets. Who says the Buckeyes can't pull one or two?

This makes two straight years in the Big Dance for the Buckeyes, which is a change from the latter portion of the Thad Matta era. Matta will (and should) always hold a special place in the OSU coaching pantheon as he showed himself to be a master recruiter and made the Buckeyes a national brand, much the way Urban Meyer did with football. For a time, it could be said that Ohio State had the best combination of football and basketball programs in the country. But that faded, which is why Holtmann was brought in.

He has reshaped the culture and always expected this season to be one of fits and starts. Now he has a chance to start with a clean slate in the NCAA Tournament.

Regardless of whether Ohio State's postseason stay is long or short, things are looking up in Columbus.

With the Big Ten's best recruiting class coming in, and Wesson serving as the anchor

point, Ohio State would be in pretty good shape to move back to contender status in 2019-20.

That may just stem the tide of negativism that some fans have when it comes to the basketball program. Then again – this is Ohio State, after all – it may not.

Quick Hits

I had occasion to cover the state wrestling tournament, which allowed me a chance to look at four of Ohio State's incoming recruits.

All are ranked among the top 10 nationally in their weight class, and all four won state crowns in one of the toughest states – if not the toughest – in America for wrestling.

Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy brothers Jordan and Jacob Decatur each repeated as state champs, Jacob at 113 pounds and Jordan at 132. While neither is a ball of energy or truly aggressive on offense, they are next to impossible to score upon. Both are very strong and take good advantage of opportunities – each waited until the final minute of his championship bout to get the decisive takedown, as though they had been thinking out the entire six minutes before the match even began. Jordan was caught up in the moment after winning, turning to the crowd and throwing up his arms to make an O-H. The crowd finished it in proper fashion.

Dylan D'Emilio of Genoa won at 138 as part of a record-setting performance by his school. Genoa broke the Division III mark for team points with 172 and went 6 for 6 in championship matches. D'Emilio, who won over 200 matches in high school, is a ball of energy who wrestles as if the score is 0-0 the entire time. He is aggressive, will take chances and forces opponents out of their comfort zones. He is in perpetual motion, which should serve him well at the next level.

The other champ, Olentangy Liberty's Carson Kharchla, was dominant at 170 pounds, finishing the season as a winner of all 31 of his matches. He's a combination of strength, quickness and technical proficiency, making it nearly impossible for an opponent to dictate terms. Kharchla used two first-period takedowns and ground down Shaker Heights' Najee Lockett – who also entered the meet unbeaten – to win the crown.

The Buckeyes are getting four excellent Ohioans, and throw in Minnesota senior Greg Kerkvliet, the nation's top overall prospect, and it's apparent that Ohio State will be right there challenging for national honors for years to come.

Just Like LeBron

One incoming Ohio State basketball recruit is in the same stratosphere as LeBron James, which should bode well for the future.

Canton McKinley's Kierstan Bell won a third Ohio Ms. Basketball honor after a senior season in which she put up 27.0 points, 7.9 rebounds, 4.4 blocks, 3.9 steals and 3.0 assists per contest. Bell finished her career with 2,833 points, passing legends Katie Smith and Semeka Randall on the way to finishing fourth all-time in points in Ohio prep annals.

James is the only other athlete to be Ohio Ms./Mr. Basketball on three occasions.

The Buckeyes have a decorated class coming in for the 2019-20 season, and it isn't out of the question that OSU could contend not only in the Big Ten but nationally as well. The Buckeyes welcome the nation's No. 3 recruiting class, highlighted by Bell (ranked No. 6 overall) and also featuring Indianapolis point guard Rikki Harris (No. 24), New York City's Kaelynn Satterfield (No. 39), Dublin Coffman's Jacy Sheldon (No. 41) and Spain's Aixa Wone (No. 15 international).

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QB Battle, OL Lineup Among Key Spring Storylines

If the lead to this column seems a little mixed – maybe even garbled – you need to have some background.

I had a couple of topics in mind sitting down to write this column. I wanted to give you a sense of what I will be looking for from the football team in Ryan Day's first spring as head coach at Ohio State. And as I frequently do, I wanted to comment on reprints from past Buckeye Sports Bulletins that were posted on our electronic BuckeyeSports.com as part of our weekly Reprint Thursdays feature.

In the past few weeks, in light of Day's first spring, we have been running reprints chronicling the first springs of other coaches during the BSB era. Earle Bruce was already coach when we started publishing in 1981, so the first inaugural spring coverage that we featured was that of John Cooper in 1988. We reprinted stories from that spring on March 7.

Bear with me now.

When I pulled the April 1988 issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin to choose the stories to reprint, I was surprised to see that we had stories on each position group with quotes from each of the assistant coaches. This was so far in the past, both chronologically and in the evolution of the relationship between football coaches and the media, that I had forgotten that Coop would allow you to speak to his assistants whenever and wherever you wanted. In fact, you could call them at home. And watching practice was no big deal.

This made for much better coverage of the team, especially with Cooper, who was frequently characterized as a "coach of coaches." In other words, you could get more relevant material from his assistants because they were more hands-on with the players than he was.

Fast-forward to today. Access to the head coach, assistant coaches and players is completely controlled. You get to speak to whom ever the sports information staff – I assume with the input of the football staff – decides to trot out for the media masses and *when* they decide to trot them out. When it comes to players, generally the ones made available are the ones that the coaches and media relations people know will toe the party line, whatever it may be. Don't look for anything controversial from any of the players made available regularly!

This practice started under Jim Tressel and was perfected by Urban Meyer. I find it ironic that the birth of the internet age, with its 24/7 news cycle that requires reporters to constantly come up with new material, coincides with the birth of the football media lockdown.

By the way, if he is aware of today's limited access, it must drive Coop batty. One of his complaints after things had sadly gone sour between the coach and the press was that he was always cooperative with the media, as noted here, and he was left wondering, "This is what I get in return?"

So how does this tie in with what I will be looking for this spring? It's the whole "looking" part. That's a bit inaccurate. Because, other than the spring game, we are not going to see a whole heck of a lot unless Day departs radically from the ways of Tressel and Meyer.

So let me rephrase this exercise as "what I hope to learn," rather than what I will be hoping to see.

Obviously, like everyone else, the first position I will be watching is quarterback. I worry that the expectations from Buckeye fans may be too great for the highly regarded Justin Fields. I lived through the Terrelle Pryor phenomenon, the last time such a highly rated quarterback set foot on campus, and I honestly feel that Buckeye fans dislike him more for the fact that

he didn't live up to their expectations (despite a solid career, especially in bowl games) than the fact he was a central figure in Tattoogate.

Fields has the added burden of having to fill the shoes of Dwayne Haskins, who arguably, in just one season, proved to be the greatest quarterback in OSU history. Pryor was only replacing Todd Boeckman.

Fields comes to Columbus with not only the lofty recruiting rankings but solid statistics from the limited time he saw the field with Georgia last season. Assuming that is the direction Day wants to head, Fields should provide more of a running threat than Haskins did in 2018.

What I will be trying to figure out is whether Day has already made up his mind about Fields as his starter or if Matthew Baldwin has a legitimate shot at ending up behind center when Florida Atlantic comes to town Aug. 31. Baldwin was also highly regarded coming out of the prep ranks and was also hand-chosen by Day. At the least he should have enough talent to push Fields.

"I've never been afraid of competition," Baldwin said of battling Fields. "I know he's got a lot of, I would say, hype around him, but he's lived up to it from everything I've seen about him, throwing with him. He's a great player."

Whoever wins the QB battle will have plenty of weapons to help him excel.

J.K. Dobbins should have the bulk of the carries to himself this season after having to split them with the departed Mike Weber the past two years. I will join coaches, fans and other observers in expecting a huge season in 2019 – and a likely early departure to the NFL – after, by his own admission, he "regressed" as a sophomore last season. The only drama in the running backs room will be if Demario McCall is in that room or the receivers room and who ends up with the role of the primary backup.

I don't worry about receivers either. Even with the loss of such firepower as Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin, the receiving cupboard is still well stocked.

If someone emerges at quarterback, I have confidence in the surrounding players at the skill positions.

The offense will not thrive, however, if Day and the offensive staff cannot build a solid offensive line. Four of five starters from a line that was not necessarily the best in recent memory need to be replaced, including Michael Jordan at center. Center has been the marquee position along the line the last few seasons, featuring two Rimington winners. Josh Myers was a highly touted recruit a couple of years back, but it's showtime for him now.

Others have shown ability along the line, including Branden Bowen, who earned a starting spot at guard in 2017 before being felled by injury. But this is a position group that I will really be keeping tabs on. Not only do the Buckeyes need players to emerge as starters, but they need to make sure those five then mesh as a cohesive unit.

On defense, my first focus will be on the new coaches. As I have stated in this space before, something was just not right with the staff last season, and it showed with the porous product on the field. Will the new group click better among themselves and with the players?

Most people will probably be looking at how

the staff uses the linebackers and who those linebackers are. All three starters return from a much-maligned group, but with everyone beginning fresh with the new staff, there are no guarantees those same three will top the depth chart when all is said and done.

One player whose fate I will be following is middle linebacker Tuf Borland. He is a hard-nosed defender who took a lot of heat last season after receiving a ton of praise as a freshman the year before. Which is it? A positive answer would be a bonus for the Buckeyes.

A wild card to the group is the potential use of a hybrid safety/linebacker by Michigan defectors Greg Mattison, the co-defensive coordinator, and linebackers coach Al Washington. The position seems possibly suited to last season's breakout safety, Brendon White.

Which brings me to my other concern on the defensive side of the ball.

All sorts of players showed flashes in the secondary last season, but it seemed that the staff had a hard time settling on the proper combination. Players such as White and Jeffrey Okudah did not get a chance to shine until later in the season. The talent is there. Picking the right group from that pool and picking it early will be key.

I never worry about Larry Johnson's group in the trenches. Even with the loss of such star power as Nick Bosa and Dre'Mont Jones, I am counting on the defensive line to be the defense's anchor for yet another season.

Although I won't be watching all these battles as they play out this spring, I will be trying to read the tea leaves that are presented, and I look forward to seeing the spring game on April 13 with my own eyes.

Looking At Past Springs

As mentioned, there was no shortage of information in the BSB covering Cooper's first spring of 1988. All assistant coaches were interviewed at length. See how well you remember Cooper's first staff.

The offense was led by coordinator Jim Colletto, who also coached tackles and tight ends. Bob Palcic, a holdover from Earle Bruce's staff, coached guards and centers. Bill Dudley coached quarterbacks, Ron Hudson coached running backs and Gene Huey coached receivers.

On defense, coordinator Bill Young also coached the D-line. Gary Blackney coached the inside linebackers, and Fred Pagac oversaw the outside linebackers. Both were holdovers from Bruce's staff. Ron Zook was brought in from Virginia Tech to coach the secondary.

Cooper and his staff seemed to have their hands full that spring.

"We need a quarterback, a punter, a tight end, receivers, linebackers, people in the secondary and depth in the defensive line," Cooper said. "We need help, but we're not discouraged a bit."

Cooper would go on to make the type of comment that, while probably Coop just being honest, got him off on the wrong foot with many Buckeye fans.

"I've been a little disappointed in what I've seen talent-wise," he said. "I know we've lost a lot of great players. I'm not crying the blues and I'm not trying to downplay the players we've got here, but I would have thought coming in

here that Ohio State would have had stronger linemen. I think we've got some good backs and the offensive line will be good," he conceded, "but we need to get stronger."

He then directed a somewhat backhanded compliment toward Bruce: "As I've said before, Earle Bruce did a great job of coaching here. I'm telling you, Earle can flat coach, unless the talent here was a hell of a lot better in the past than it is now."

As is the case this year, the new coach had to replace the starting quarterback, though in Cooper's case it was one-year starter Tom Tupa, better known for his punting, as opposed to Day having to replace the record-setting Haskins.

Greg Frey, Scott Powell, John Wagoner and Chris Stablein were the players battling it out in the spring, with Frey seen as the favorite, though QB coach Dudley said at the start of spring that it was too early to "throw around names."

"He's making the fewest mistakes through the first week of practice," Dudley admitted of Frey. "He's the one that's really further along mentally, as well. He's very good and can play at this level. He has a lot of confidence in his ability."

Frey, a sophomore, would go on to win the job and become a three-year starter for the Buckeyes.

We also ran reprints from the March 31, 2001, BSB chronicling Tressel's first spring. Those stories were posted on March 14.

"A wise man told me once you can't win the national championship in spring practice, but you can lose it," Tressel said. "If you don't make those steps of finding out who you are, building those relationships, learning those terminologies and systems, learning more about expectations, then we can't progress quickly enough by the fall to win the national championship."

A national championship might have seemed a little ambitious for that first spring, but little did we know that that goal would become a reality just a season later.

Tressel had the advantage over Cooper and Day that first spring because he had a two-year returning starter at quarterback in Steve Bellisari. That was the good news and the bad news as staff writer Mike Wachsman called Bellisari "a lightning rod for criticism in his time as OSU quarterback."

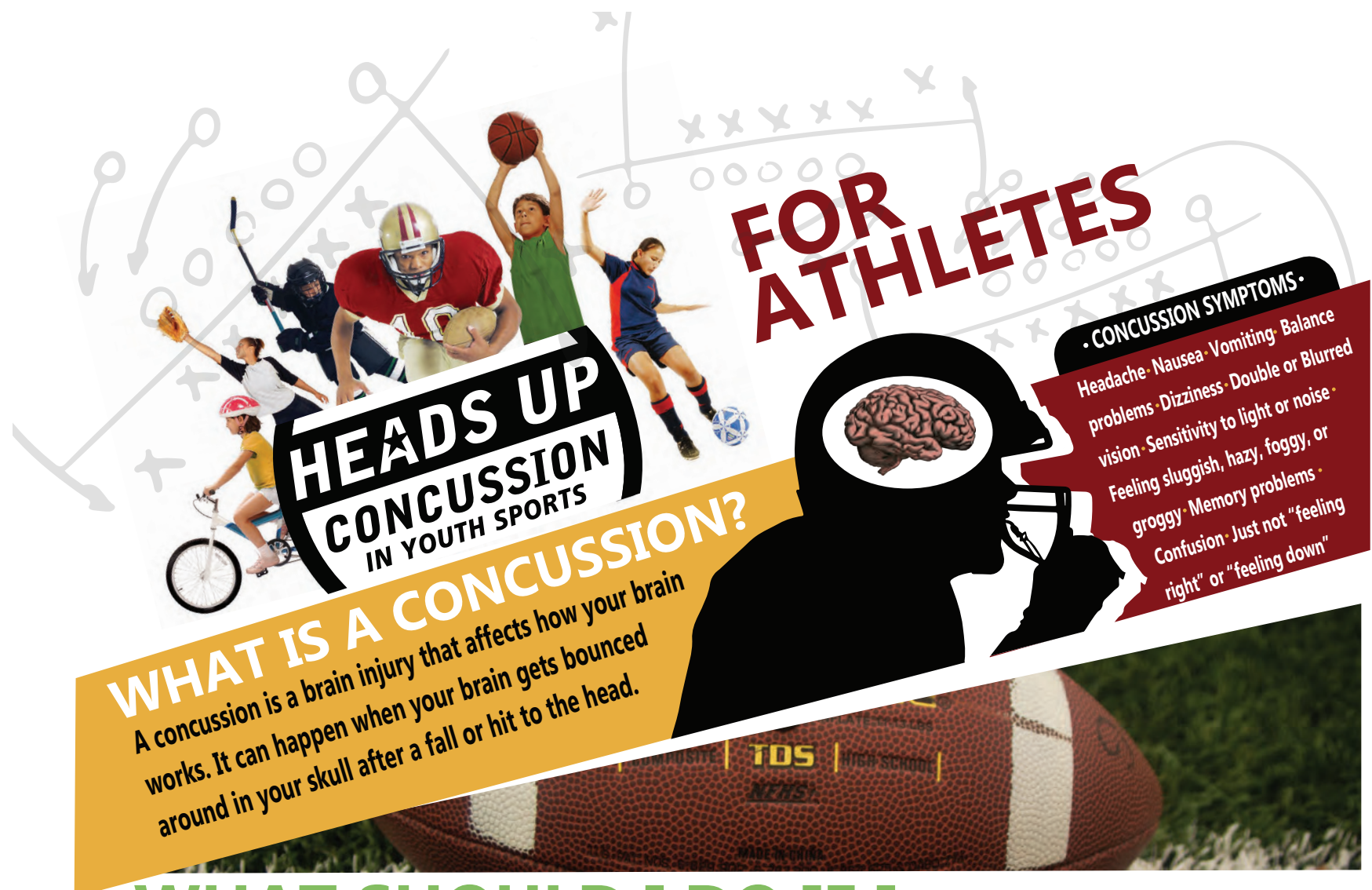
"Steve is definitely a competitor," new offensive coordinator Jim Bollman said of Bellisari. "He's been through some tough battles before, and that has to count for something. I know he wants to win, and we want the same thing."

Sophomores Craig Krenzel and Scott McMullen were in camp to do battle with Bellisari, along with redshirt freshman Rick McFadden, who had earned rave reviews from practice the previous season.

"Jim (Tressel) has a keen eye for quarterbacks, so you can bet he'll be watching all those guys closely," Bollman said. "We have to get production out of that position, whoever plays there."

Coaches on Tressel's first staff in addition to Bollman, who also coached the offensive line, included Bill Conley (tight ends/recruiting), Joe Daniels (QBs and receivers) and Tim Spencer (running backs) on offense. The defense was led by Mark Dantonio, with Jim Heacock (defensive line), Mark Snyder (linebackers) and Mel Tucker (defensive backs) joining him. Ken Conatser coached special teams.

We will look back to Meyer's first spring with reprints at BuckeyeSports.com posted on March 21. The articles from Cooper's and Tressel's first springs are archived for your convenience.



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?

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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.

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