

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 39, No. 1

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Sept. 7, 2019



ANDREW LIND

STELLAR DEBUT – Sophomore quarterback Justin Fields, who scored five touchdowns in his first career start, smiles after running back J.K. Dobbins scored from 1 yard out to give Ohio State a 42-14 lead in the fourth quarter.

Quarterback Justin Fields Shines Early, Sets Scoring Record In Ohio State Debut

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ryan Day era at Ohio State officially began with a relatively easy 45-21 win over Florida Atlantic on Aug. 31, but the ebb and flow of the game was certainly much different than anyone expected.

The Buckeyes jumped out to a 28-0 lead just 8:10 into the first quarter under the direction of sophomore quarterback Justin Fields.

Fields – who transferred from Georgia this offseason and earned his first career start following a lengthy quarterback battle throughout the spring and well into fall camp – ran for a 51-yard touchdown on his first drive. He then completed touchdown passes to sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert, senior wide receiver Binjimen Victor and sophomore wideout Chris Olave on the Buckeyes' next three possessions.

No one would have blamed the Owls if they started warming up the buses and packing their bags for the airport at that point in the game. But then the offense cooled off considerably.

Ohio State failed to score on its next seven possessions (including the end of the half), with two series ending with turnovers. True freshman Garrett Wilson

dropped a backward pass, and junior running back J.K. Dobbins fumbled on a carry up the middle, the latter of which contributed to a Florida Atlantic field goal.

"We came out to a great start early on," Day said. "We were kind of clicking on both sides of the ball. We hit a little bit of a lull there, but overall, a great start."

"I don't know if I've been in a game like that. It was kind of strange. We came out to such a quick lead, and maybe we took a deep breath there. I'm not sure, but we can't let that happen. We have to keep the pedal to the metal on that, keep going."

Defensively, the fifth-ranked Buckeyes showed significant improvement from their play one season ago. The Owls went three-and-out on each of their first four series, were scoreless on their first eight drives and finished the first half with a net total of minus-14 yards.

"I was seeing guys running to the ball and hitting," Day said. "I felt that. I was watching Pete Werner, Malik Harrison and Jeff Okudah coming to the ball, and you could feel the violence on the field, and that's what we want."

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Buckeye Leaves

After a red-hot start, Ohio State took its foot off the pedal en route to a 45-21 victory against Florida Atlantic, while earning a win in Ryan Day's first game as full-time head coach, and Justin Fields' first game as a collegiate starter.

The Buckeyes put up 469 yards of total offense, and only allowed 228 yards on the defensive side, but were outscored 21-17 after jumping out to a 28-0 lead within the first 10 minutes of the game.

There were a handful of players who stood out throughout the game, and the BSB staff and readers on the buckeyesports.com forum each picked players to give their Buckeye Leaf to in week one.

Wyatt Crosher, BSB: While not without some growing pains in the second quarter, and for some of the third, quarterback Justin Fields came out in his first career collegiate start and showed why he has been such a highly regarded player.

Fields ended his first start completing 18 of his 25 throws for 234 yards and four touchdowns, while also rushing for 61 yards on 12 carries with a score. Of those, 115 passing yards and 54 rushing yards, as well as four of the touchdowns, came in the first quarter. From there, he had some issues getting it going again in the second, but the offensive line did not help him out much, often letting Florida Atlantic defenders through the gaps.

The sophomore quarterback started to turn it around in the third quarter, relying on his mobility more to gain some first downs while finding Jeremy Ruckert in the end zone for the second time in the game.

His major highlight came on Fields' first drive, though, when he found a huge hole and exploited it for a 51-yard rushing score.

There are plenty of areas to improve, mainly staying composed in the pocket, but Fields showed what all the excitement was about in week one.

Joe Dempsey, BSB: I am giving my Buckeye Leaf to fifth-year senior defensive lineman Jashon Cornell for his performance against Florida Atlantic in the season opener.

With defensive ends Jonathon Cooper, Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday and defensive tackle Taron Vincent out with injury, Cornell was called upon in a bigger role and delivered.

The St. Paul, Minn., native made an impact when he was on the field, recording four tackles (three solo), two tackles for loss, one sack and one forced fumble. Despite moving to three-technique in the offseason, Cornell filled in at defensive end due to injury.

The 6-3, 285-pound defensive lineman did not disappoint, disrupting the Owls' passing and rushing attempts frequently, including his strip sack on second-and-12 to close the first quarter.

Andrew Lind, BSB: With starter Rashod Berry sidelined with an undisclosed injury, sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert caught four passes for 38 yards and two touchdowns.

At 6-5 and 250 pounds, Ruckert will continue to be a matchup problem in the red zone this season. And if he gets enough opportunities, double-digit touchdown receptions does not feel out of the question.

Ruckert will have to battle with Berry and junior Jake Hausmann when the former comes back from the injury, while Luke Farrell remains the primary starter, but Ruckert should be a prominent part of the offense moving forward.

Not to mention, it was nice to see Ohio State actually get the tight end involved after years claiming it was a priority.

Patrick Mayhorn, BSB: After serving as the lone bright spot at linebacker for Ohio State last season, Malik Harrison started off this season much like he ended last season.

The senior linebacker had five tackles on the game, including two for a loss and a sack, but his impact was much larger than his stats indicate.

Harrison served as the enforcer across the middle for much of the game and kept FAU from finding any traction underneath, both on the ground and on passing routes to tight ends John Raine and Harrison Bryant. Almost all of the Owls' success came on the outside, and that can be largely attributed to Harrison and his ability to roam in the middle of the field.

Nothing showed this better than his big play in the third quarter in the Ohio State red zone, when he knocked the ball out of Bryant's hands with a vicious hit.

BSB Subscribers

I have to pick Justin Fields for his poise, confidence and fighting back in the 3rd and 4th quarters, Chase Young for being Chase Young (is he going to be better than the Bosas!?), Jeremy Ruckert for his super tight-end play, Malik Harrison for his tackles and the whole defensive line and Coach Larry Johnson for another great showing by them and many others including Brendon White, Jeff Okudah, Chris Olave.

– AnthonyBuckeye

I'm choosing Jeremy Ruckert. Played excellent today! It was awesome seeing a TE get involved.

– Tiffin Buckeye



From The Message Board

Following Ohio State's 45-21 win over Florida Atlantic on Aug. 31, Buckeyes Sports Bulletin asked the readers on BuckeyesSports.com what they thought of quarterback Justin Fields' performance in his first career start. Here are some of the responses:

"Thought it looked like a typical first start – some highs some lows. He should've kept a few zone reads and I'd like him to try and throw some players open and try and stay in the pocket a little bit. Think his stock is up though."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"That's the first time I've seen him play other than the spring game. I was certainly impressed with his raw skills. He is only going to get better as he gets more experience as a starter and – hopefully – his offensive line gets better. I give him a B-minus for the game and an A for the future."

– Frank Moskowitz, BSB

"Off to a good start, still very green. His passing seems accurate but he had plenty of time in the pocket to decide where to throw or whether to run. I wonder how he will do in a pinch. I think we will know more about him after we play Cincinnati. I hope they notch up their game before then."

– Peyote Buck

"I didn't think my heart was going to be able to take it in the first quarter, he had me so excited. He came down to earth in the second quarter and so did I, but there is a lot to be excited about going forward. With Ryan Day and his offensive staff in charge, he can only get better."

– Poster That Harley Built

"I was especially impressed with his play in the first quarter, as I likened him to the 99-overall dual-threat quarterback I used to create on NCAA Football videos games. He wasn't asked to do anything out of the ordinary, though, and I'm looking forward to seeing how he reacts when receivers aren't wide open or when there's actually somebody

between him and the end zone when he tucks the ball and runs."

– Andrew Lind, BSB

"I think he looked about how we expected. He has loads of arm talent and athletic ability, but he's still very much a work in progress. Certainly wasn't helped out by the offensive line, but he struggled with reading openings when FAU started throwing man coverage at him. That'll come with time."

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

"Justin Fields showed why he was so highly rated coming out of high school with his athleticism and arm strength, but also showed signs of being a first-time starter like taking a sack instead of throwing the ball away and botching protection calls. With the instruction of the Ohio State offensive staff, including Ryan Day and Mike Yurcich, Fields will correct his mistakes quickly and continue to improve."

– Joe Dempsey, BSB

"Justin Fields had a good game overall, and a great one for someone making his first collegiate start, but he also was not asked to do anything spectacular when he was firing on all cylinders. In those first 10 minutes, his four touchdowns were all completely wide open, but he did make the right reads and got the ball where it needed to go.

"The pressure started to get to him in the middle of the game, but I think as the game went on, he started making more of the right reads for when to run and when to make the throw. Cincinnati is going to be a tough, tough defense for him to work around, so I think that will tell me a lot about him, but for an opener, Fields showed why he is the quarterback to get excited about."

– Wyatt Crosher, BSB

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No. 11	Nov. 30	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 7	No. 24	August

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Highs And Lows For Bucks In Season Opener

There was a lot to like about the 2019 season-opening performance by the Ohio State football team – at least during the first eight minutes.

First-year head coach Ryan Day and first-year quarterback Justin Fields led an initial explosion that had the Buckeyes enjoying a 28-0 lead against Florida Atlantic at the 6:50 mark of the first quarter on their way to a 45-21 victory.

What occurred after that fast start was a sort of mishmash of good things, not-so-good things and cringeworthy throwback moments – most notably on defense – to some of last season's lowlights. All things considered, however, it was the kind of performance not wholly unexpected from a team that realized almost from the opening kickoff that its opponent had absolutely no chance to engineer an upset.

Still, the Buckeyes seemed to have trouble focusing on the business at hand after those first four almost ridiculously easy scoring drives, and if Ohio State is truly intent upon winning another Big Ten championship and returning to the College Football Playoff, keeping one's collective head in the game is certainly something everyone from Day and his coaching staff through Fields and his teammates are going to have to address moving forward.

In terms of how the game unfolded, Fields enjoyed a fairytale kind of debut to his Ohio State career. After completing his first pass attempt in scarlet and gray on his first play from scrimmage, the 6-3, 223-pound sophomore three plays later turned a relatively simple read-option into a 51-yard touchdown romp to give the Buckeyes a 7-0 lead in a game not even two minutes old.

The next time OSU had possession of the football, Fields connected on the first of his four touchdown passes in the game, a 25-yard strike to sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert that gave the Buckeyes a 14-point lead at the 11:05 mark of the opening quarter.

Fields went on to complete each of his first four pass attempts and seven of his first eight, and he finished his afternoon's work with an 18-for-25 performance worth 234 yards and four scores. Add an additional 61 yards and another touchdown on the ground, and you might begin to understand what all the hype was about.

In addition to attempting 25 passes and running the ball 12 times, Fields also showed he can take a punch. He was the victim of several hard hits, none harder than late in the first quarter when he was leveled by FAU middle linebacker Akileis Leroy, who planted Fields into the Ohio Stadium turf on a perfectly legal third-down hit just after the Ohio State quarterback had gotten rid of the football.

It was the kind of hit to their quarterback that makes head coaches hold their breath and wince in terror, but Fields quickly popped up and headed to the sideline, showing no aftereffects.

In fact, Fields later showed he could stand in the pocket under pressure when he delivered his fourth TD pass of the game, a 3-yarder to Ruckert late in the third quarter with two Florida Atlantic defenders in the quarterback's face.

There were a couple of bothersome things about Fields' performance, including a penchant for trying to make something out of nothing and winding up absorbing unnecessary punishment to his body. But that is something nearly every good quarterback has to learn during the early portion of his career – because if he doesn't, the early portion of his career might be the only portion of his career.

Also bothersome was the way the Buckeyes

seemed sort of perplexed after their fast start. It was almost as if Day and passing game coordinator Mike Yurcich accomplished everything they wanted out of those first four possessions and spent the rest of the afternoon in a sort of disjointed, throw-this-against-the-wall-and-see-if-it-sticks mode.

As a result, the team seemed to lose its focus late in the second quarter and never fully regained it.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

The defense played lights-out early while holding a pretty good Florida Atlantic offense to minus-14 total yards and just three points in the first half – and those points came courtesy of a short field following junior running back J.K. Dobbins' fumble that gave the Owls possession at the OSU 25.

But after that, the defense fell into some of its old, bad habits. One particularly frustrating moment came early in the fourth quarter when backpedaling FAU quarterback Chris Robison heaved a two-point conversion pass into the air, only to have it come down in the hands of receiver John Mitchell in the end zone while four seemingly bewildered OSU defenders stood around in apparent awe.

The Buckeyes wound up surrendering 21 points, which in the grand scheme of things really doesn't matter much, but it did give Day a dubious honor on his first game day as full-time head coach. It was the most points surrendered by OSU in a coach's debut game since Jack Ryder presided over a 40-4 loss at Oberlin in 1892.

Fields probably threw the ball more than he needed to, and the running game maybe didn't receive the kind of attention one might have thought heading into a season opener with a rebuilt offensive line.

That might sound a bit strange since the Buckeyes ran the ball 48 times against the Owls, representing nearly 65 percent of their offensive snaps. It just didn't seem that the running game had much continuity.

Dobbins accounted for 91 yards and a touchdown on 21 carries, and youngsters Master Teague III and Marcus Crowley had some nice moments. But the running attack – at least where the running backs were concerned – seemed to be an afterthought at times. Dobbins didn't run the ball on consecutive plays in the first half until his number was called three straight times late in the second quarter.

There was one defining moment for the running game, however, and it came right before Fields' fourth touchdown pass.

Facing a third-and-3 situation at the FAU 7-yard line, the Buckeyes lined up in a robust package with three tight ends and Fields under center. He stepped back and handed off to Teague, who burst through the right side of the line for a 4-yard gain and a first down.

It was the kind of control-the-line-of-scrimage, power play with which Ohio State has sometimes struggled in recent years, and it was kind of refreshing to see the Buckeyes can play some smashmouth football when the situation warrants it.

All in all, it was a performance filled with enough highlights for a three-touchdown victory and enough mistakes to keep the No. 5-ranked team in the nation fully grounded as it heads into a week two showdown against

Cincinnati, arguably the toughest in-state opponent Ohio State has faced since it began playing Ohio schools again in the early 1990s.

First Things First

That Fields completed the first pass attempt of his OSU career doesn't seem to be anything special.

Dwayne Haskins completed his first pass in scarlet and gray, a 14-yard toss to C.J. Saunders during a 38-7 victory against Army in 2017. J.T. Barrett also completed his first attempt as a Buckeye, flipping a 14-yarder to Devin Smith during a 34-17 win against Navy in 2014.

As it turns out, Terrelle Pryor, Todd Boeckman, Justin Zwick, Steve Bellisari, Bobby Hoying, Kent Graham, Kirk Herbstreit, Tom Tupa and Art Schlichter each completed their first career pass attempts at Ohio State.

Getting your first touchdown pass as early as your second career attempt? That seems to have been a little more difficult. Since 1968, there have been only three other OSU quarterbacks in addition to Fields who have thrown a touchdown pass that early during their careers.

Troy Smith, the 2006 Heisman Trophy winner, was a lowly backup in 2004 when he connected with Santonio Holmes for a 23-yard score during a 27-6 win against Cincinnati. The TD came on Smith's second career pass attempt and counted as his first career completion.

Besting Fields and Smith were Scott McMullen and Ron Maciejowski, who threw touchdown passes on their very first career attempts in an Ohio State uniform.

McMullen heaved a 44-yard strike to Ricky Bryant on the final play of a 43-10 win against Fresno State in the 2000 season opener at Ohio Stadium, and Maciejowski connected with Bruce Jankowski for a 55-yard score in 1968 during the Buckeyes' 21-6 win against Oregon.

Braxton Miller's first touchdown, a 14-yarder to Devin Smith in a 42-0 win against Akron in the 2011 season opener, came on his fifth career attempt, while it took Haskins seven attempts before his first touchdown came on a 28-yard strike to Saunders in the 2017 UNLV game, a contest the Buckeyes won by a 54-21 final.

Barrett didn't throw a touchdown until his 13th career attempt, and it took Pryor 18 attempts before getting his first TD pass.

Meanwhile, Schlichter – who held the program's career touchdown pass record for 14 years before Hoying broke it in 1995 – went 39 attempts before throwing his first touchdown, a 51-yard scoring pass to Doug Donley during a 34-28 win against Baylor in the third game of the 1978 season.

A Little Housekeeping

Two issues ago, in a short preview of Ohio State's Sept. 21 contest against Miami (Ohio), I wrote that no in-state opponent had beaten the Buckeyes since Akron took a 12-7 decision during a game played at the Ohio State Fairgrounds in 1894.

That was incorrect, of course.

While Akron holds the distinction of being the last team currently a member of the Mid-American Conference to beat Ohio State, the last Ohio school to beat the Buckeyes was Oberlin College. The Yeomen claimed a 7-6 victory against the Buckeyes at old Ohio Field in 1921.

The folks at the College of Wooster also like to claim the fact that their football team is the most recent in-state rival to play Ohio State and not lose. That's because the Fighting Scots fought the Buckeyes to a 7-7 tie at Ohio Stadium in 1924.



Ohio State Adds To Future Schedules

Ohio State on Aug. 22 announced the completion of its football schedules for the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

Arkansas State will travel to Columbus on Sept. 10, 2022, while San Jose State and Western Kentucky will come to Ohio Stadium on Sept. 9 and 16, 2023.

The Buckeyes have never played the Red Wolves or Hilltoppers, while their only previous meeting with the Spartans came during the 2002 national championship season. Ohio State won that game 50-7.

Arkansas State fills the final vacancy on the Buckeyes' 2022 schedule, which also includes nonconference home games against Notre Dame and Toledo. San Jose State and Western Kentucky round out the 2023 schedule, which also includes the back end of the home-and-home with the Fighting Irish.

Ohio State will pay Arkansas State \$1.8 million for their matchup, while terms of the other two games were not disclosed.

True Freshmen See Field In Season Opener

Running back Marcus Crowley, wide receivers Garrett Wilson and Jameson Williams, center Harry Miller and defensive ends Zach Harrison and Noah Potter were among the true freshmen to see playing time in Ohio State's 45-21 win over Florida Atlantic on Aug. 31.

Crowley carried the ball four times for 27 yards, while Wilson was targeted just once on offense – an incomplete backward pass that counted as a fumble and was recovered by the Owls.

Williams appeared on special teams, while Miller replaced starting center Josh Myers in the fourth quarter. Neither Harrison nor Potter recorded a tackle on defense.

DT Zaid Hamdan Sheds Black Stripe

Ohio State redshirt freshman defensive tackle Zaid Hamdan on Aug. 24 became the 12th player to shed his black stripe this fall, which signaled his status as a full-fledged member of the Buckeyes' football program.



Zaid Hamdan

The 5-11, 260-pound Hamdan walked on to the program in 2018 following a stellar high school career in Mason, Ohio. He earned all-state honors in football during his junior and senior seasons and qualified for the state wrestling tournament his senior year.

"I want to shout out my unit. Thank you guys for getting me through everything," Hamdan said in a video posted by Ohio State's official Twitter account. "All my old heads – Robert Landers, Chase Young, Davon Hamilton and Jashon Cornell. I want to thank coach Mickey Marotti for getting me right in the weight room every day, too."

Other Buckeyes who had their stripes removed this fall include offensive guard Jonah Jackson on Aug. 6; center

2019 Ohio State Football Schedule

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

* 2018 bowl team

** at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

Fickell To Be Featured On Reprint Thursday

Former Buckeye player and coach Luke Fickell, current coach at the University of Cincinnati, Ohio State's upcoming opponent, will be featured as part of the electronic BuckeyeSports.com's Reprint Thursday on Sept. 5. Reprint Thursday features stories of interest from the archives of Buckeye Sports Bulletin each week. In anticipation of Fickell's return to Ohio Stadium, we will be reprinting Fickell's candid interview from the July 2017 BSB Interview Issue as well as some other Fickell related stories.

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

Don't miss news from Ryan Day's Tuesday press conferences or practice during the week. The BuckeyeSports.com website is available 24/7/365 with all the breaking news posted, including the latest in recruiting, and then discussed by readers and staff on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum. Subscribers can also read the entire print issue of BSB before it has even hit the post office.

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Harry Miller and wide receiver Jameson Williams on Aug. 8; offensive guard Ryan Jacoby and running back Marcus Crowley on Aug. 12; linebacker Cade Stover on Aug. 13; safety Bryson Shaw, defensive end Noah Potter and running back Steele Chambers on Aug. 15; and linebacker Craig Young and quarterback Danny Vanatsky on Aug. 19.

Wide receiver Garrett Wilson and defensive end Zach Harrison shed their stripes in the spring, becoming just the third and fourth early enrollees in program history to have their stripes removed in spring camp since former head coach Urban Meyer implemented the tradition upon his arrival in 2012.

On-Field DJ Among New Gameday Features

Ohio State is constantly looking for ways to improve the gameday experience for fans, so the university added several new features to Ohio Stadium ahead of the Aug. 31 season opener against Florida Atlantic.

In addition to the previously announced free WiFi for fans throughout the stadium, the Buckeyes now have a D.J. on the sideline "playing everyone's favorites to enhance the environment," a new assortment of concession items and free refills on all soft drinks.

In week one, D.J. Axxess played songs from artists such as Kanye West, Lizzo, Linkin Park and The Rolling Stones,

complementing the sounds of The Ohio State University Marching Band.

Ohio Stadium, now in its 98th season, also has a new official capacity of 102,780. That's up from 102,082 following the completion of new premium seating in "B" deck.

Other improvements include the installation of seat-back chairs and new LED boards, speakers, televisions and directional signage.

OT Michael Jordan To Start For Cincinnati Bengals

Cincinnati Bengals head coach Zach Taylor on Aug. 25 named former Ohio State center Michael Jordan the team's starting left guard for the season opener against the Seattle Seahawks on Sept. 8.

The 6-5, 315-pound Jordan – who was selected by Cincinnati in the fourth round (136th overall pick) of the 2019 NFL draft – is not unfamiliar with starting early in his career. He came to Columbus in 2016 as a four-star prospect from Canton (Mich.) Plymouth and became the first true freshman offensive lineman to start the Buckeyes' season opener since All-American Orlando Pace in 1994.

Jordan began his career at left guard but transitioned to center for his junior season with the departure of All-American Billy Price. It was somewhat of a trend for Ohio State at that point, with Price moving from guard to center

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1984

Linebacker Chris Spielman came to Ohio State touted as one of the finest high school football players in the land. His picture even appeared on a Wheaties box.

“Expectations, I love. I love to live up to them” Spielman said. “There’s nothing older than yesterday’s headlines. It’s time to make new ones”

That’s exactly what Spielman did with his opening-day performance in Ohio State’s 22-14 come-from-behind win against Oregon State – live up to all expectations and make plenty of new headlines.

Spielman didn’t start. In fact he was in for only two plays in the first half. But once he entered the game in the third quarter, he established himself as a player. The 6-2, 223-pounder ended up with 10 tackles, including two behind the line of scrimmage, and a forced fumble.

30 Years Ago – 1989

Faced with a four-point deficit with less than 30 seconds to go in the first half, the Buckeyes stormed back to score 28 unanswered points and blow by Oklahoma State in their 1989 season opener, 37-13.

The offensive output represented Ohio State’s biggest point total since a 42-point effort against Minnesota in 1987 and its biggest margin of victory in an opener since a 31-6 whupping of Oregon in 1983.

Perhaps even more important for the Buckeyes was their defensive effort. Despite playing more than a dozen first-year defensive players during the afternoon, OSU held the Cowboys to just 259 total yards, the lowest total for an opponent in 14 games.

“I thought it was a good opening win,” said second-year head coach John Cooper. “We need to give our young defensive team an awful lot of credit. They certainly didn’t play a perfect ballgame, but we got a chance to play all those freshmen on defense that we anticipated playing. Obviously, they made some mistakes, but I thought they made some good plays.”

Ohio State benefited from some big plays involving quarterback Greg Frey, who finished the day with 16 completions in 21 attempts for a career-high 285 yards and two touchdowns.

25 Years Ago – 1994

He was 60 years old and didn’t quite have the same scoot he used to, but Howard “Hopalong” Cassady, one of the most adored athletes in Ohio State history, still wore a jersey to work every day.

Only Cassady no longer toiled on a football field, where he had become a school legend, Heisman Trophy winner and member of the College Football Hall of Fame. Instead, the Columbus native was making a living in his other love – baseball.

“I may be getting older, but I still get the same thrill being around the ball yard,” said Cassady, who was finishing up his third season as first-base coach for the Columbus Clippers’ minor league baseball team, the Class AAA affiliate for the New York Yankees.

“I was always very passionate about the game of baseball. It’s great to be around young men who are learning to become good players.”

20 Years Ago – 1999

It was a classic matchup, even if it didn’t look like a classic.

Miami (Fla.), regaining some of the swagger and – more importantly – the big-play bravado it had shown while dominating in the 1980s, proved it could be ready for a prolonged return to the top 10.

On the flip side, Ohio State, a top-10 fixture the previous several years, showed the ill effects of sending so many play-making stars to the NFL. Turnovers and penalties – instead of touchdowns and pounding defense – were the order of the day as the Buckeyes fell to Miami 23-12 in the Kickoff Classic before 73,037 Aug. 29 in East Rutherford, N.J.

“This was a great way to start our season, and I’m very proud of our kids,” said Miami coach Butch Davis, whose 12th-ranked Hurricanes outgained OSU 398 yards to 220. “I thought our effort was there and that our kids competed and played hard.”

Cooper, tasting defeat in a season opener for the first time in his 12 years with the Buckeyes, was impressed with the ‘Canes.

“You have to give Miami all of the credit,” he said. “They have some real fine athletes.”

15 Years Ago – 2004

As if a season-opening game for Ohio State didn’t have enough going for it, the added element of former defensive coordinator Mark Dantonio returning as head coach of Cincinnati after leaving Columbus after the 2003 season raised the level of interest even higher.

Typically, home openers for the Buckeyes – played well in advance of the return to campus by university students for fall classes – are played before less-than-capacity crowds in Ohio Stadium.

However the buzz – at least among Cincinnati fans, who last got to see their Bearcats play in the Horseshoe in 1999 – helped drive up demand for tickets.

Dantonio’s homecoming also helped to create a lot of interest, particularly in pregame features leading up to the contest. But according to most of the principals who participated in the game, that angle was hyped a little too much.

“You know, it really didn’t feel that different from a jersey scrimmage,” said Mark Snyder, who had taken over as OSU defensive coordinator. “Coach Dantonio and I would always be on separate sides for those scrimmages, so it had that kind of feel to it today.”

10 Years Ago – 2009

A summer of discontent, briefly interrupted by roughly three weeks out of the spotlight, continued into the regular season when Ohio State senior receiver/punt returner Ray Small turned up missing from the sideline Sept. 5 when the Buckeyes opened the season against Navy.

Small was the subject of much preseason speculation after he missed the beginning of camp while straightening out an academic issue. However, he quickly regained his eligibility

and began practicing with the team Aug. 14. He worked his way back up the depth chart at receiver by the final week before the opener but was nowhere to be seen on game day.

Initial speculation ran rampant on Internet message boards that he had left the Buckeyes, but Small’s father, Ken, told BSB his son was not with the team because he was feeling under the weather the day before the game.

“Ray has some kind of virus or something,” the elder Small said Sept. 4. “He was vomiting everywhere. He’s OK now. He said he’ll be ready (for the opener). He hasn’t thrown up in a couple hours. He should be OK. As far as him being out (against Navy), I have no idea.”

Asked if the Ohio State coaches were aware of the situation, Small’s father said they were before adding, “He can’t even get sick and have peace.”

Five Years Ago – 2014

The Ohio State football team was far from perfect during its 34-17 season-opening win against the U.S. Naval Academy, but there were some mitigating circumstances.

It marked the first time in a decade and a half the team opened a season on the road and the first time in 36 years it had started a freshman quarterback (J.T. Barrett) in a season opener.

For a team with more than a dozen first-year players sprinkled throughout the two-deep, one that played against an opponent with a unique offensive scheme, and one whose franchise quarterback went down for the season less than two weeks before the first game, it was a victory whose importance was not lost on third-year head coach Urban Meyer.

“I have a lot of respect for Navy,” Meyer said, “but the best thing about this game is that we won it. It happened, we won, show great respect and get out of Dodge – fast, before they change their mind.”

One Year Ago – 2018

Meyer was handed a three-game suspension Aug. 22 in the wake of a two-week investigation into his handling of domestic abuse allegations against former receivers coach Zach Smith. Meyer had been on paid administrative leave since Aug. 1, meaning he had no contact with his coaching staff or players throughout fall camp.

The day after his suspension was handed down, Meyer was allowed to visit the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to meet with the staff and team, an Ohio State spokesperson confirmed to BSB.

Meyer was at the Woody for about 45 minutes Aug. 23 and also had “limited conversations” with members of the program between then and Aug. 25. Those conversations were not in a violation of his suspension because he did not receive the terms of his punishment until Aug. 26.

Those terms – which were delivered to Meyer in a notice from Susan M. Basso, the senior vice president in the Office of Human Resources at Ohio State – prevented Meyer from performing any of his duties as head coach, including attending practices, meetings and other events. He was prohibited from communicating with members of the coaching staff, players, recruits or others within the program as well.

to replace departed All-American Pat Elflein one year earlier.

Despite early-season struggles, particularly with snapping the ball, Jordan was named a first-team All-American by the Walter Camp Football Foundation. He was expected to return for his senior year but surprised many when he announced he would forgo his final season of eligibility and enter the draft.

Price, meanwhile, has had a much more difficult start to his career. He was taken by the Bengals with the No. 21 overall pick despite suffering a torn pectoral at the NFL combine one month before last year’s draft. Then he started the first two games of the season before missing the next six with a foot injury.

Price returned in week 10 and started at center for the remainder of the season, but the foot issues flared up once again in fall camp. He missed some time, which allowed six-year veteran Trey

Hopkins to gain valuable repetitions and seize the position.

“It’s what happens sometimes when you miss time with an injury,” Taylor said. “It’s nobody’s fault. If someone comes in and steps their game up, they earn that spot. It gives more opportunity. There’s nothing anybody could have done to control that other than Trey. He took advantage of it. We’re in a great position with Billy. He can step up in a moment’s notice and (can play like) a starter for us. It’s good, as a coach, that we’re in this position.”

Price will serve as Hopkins’ backup to begin the season and hopes to use the demotion as motivation.

“You could sit there and sulk and be upset with yourself and go get a bottle of whiskey and put yourself in a dark, dirty hole, or you can get out here, practice and try to get better on the things that

Continued On Page 6

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Continued From Page 5

you need to improve on, get back to being fully healthy and just go help this team, because that's what it's about," Price said. "It's about helping the team in whatever direction, whatever way, whatever facet I can."

QB Dwayne Haskins Begins Career As Backup

Despite a solid preseason for the Washington Redskins, former Ohio State quarterback Dwayne Haskins will start his professional career with a clipboard in hand.

Head coach Jay Gruden named eight-year veteran and NFL journeyman Case Keenum the starter on Aug. 25, noting it won't be a week-to-week competition between the two quarterbacks.

The Redskins selected Haskins with the No. 15 overall pick in April's draft but also traded for Keenum this spring to compete with incumbent Colt McCoy.

Haskins played in all four of Washington's preseason games and completed 32 of 58 passes for 409 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions. He flashed his exceptional arm on numerous occasions but also struggled with the speed of the game at times.

"He's a young player, obviously, just learning the system for the first time," Gruden said. "As far as Dwayne is concerned, you just have got to continue to work and get these reps – mental and physical reps – and just continue to build on his performance day after day."

The Redskins have a tough slate to open the season, with games against the Philadelphia Eagles, Dallas Cowboys, Chicago Bears, New York Giants and New England Patriots. Allowing Keenum to start saves Haskins from facing four playoff teams from a year ago in the first five weeks of his career.

Several Former Bucks Among NFL Cuts

While Haskins still has a promising career ahead of him, several former Ohio State players have reached a crossroads in their respective careers after being cut on Aug. 31.

The NFL requires teams to trim their rosters to just 53 players before the season, which begins on Sept. 5, and 14 former Buckeyes are now looking for new homes.

That includes linebacker Dante Booker (Arizona Cardinals); safety Kurt Coleman (Buffalo Bills); tight end Marcus Baugh (Carolina Panthers); wide receiver Braxton Miller (Cleveland Browns); running back Mike Weber and safety Tyvis Powell (Dallas Cowboys); wide receiver Johnnie Dixon, offensive guard Malcolm Pridgeon and defensive tackle Tracy Sprinkle (Houston Texans); wide receiver Terrelle Pryor (Jacksonville Jaguars); quarterback Cardale Jones (Los Angeles Chargers); linebacker Chris Worley (Philadelphia Eagles); quarterback J.T. Barrett (Seattle Seahawks); and defensive end Noah Spence (Tampa Bay Buccaneers).

Baldwin Granted Immediate Eligibility Upon Appeal

According to TCU head coach Gary Patterson, former Ohio State quarterback Matthew Baldwin has been granted immediate eligibility by the NCAA.

The NCAA denied Baldwin's initial hardship waiver request following his transfer from Ohio State this spring. But TCU filed an appeal on his behalf earlier this month and received word on Aug. 30 that he would be eligible this season.

Baldwin, who competed with Justin Fields for the starting quarterback spot this spring, cited a desire to be closer to his home in Austin, Texas, as a reason for his transfer.

It remains to be seen if Baldwin's winning appeal will have any impact on the 2019 season. He missed all of fall camp after undergoing surgery to clean up his knee this summer. He tore his ACL in the final game of his high school career and missed his entire redshirt season with the Buckeyes as he rehabbed that injury.

The Horned Frogs played two quarterbacks in the season-opening win over Arkansas-Pine Bluff on Aug. 31.

Neither senior Alex Delton nor true freshman Max Duggan took hold of the job, and Patterson has made it clear the competition will remain open until a candidate separates himself, seemingly giving Baldwin a chance.

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WEDNESDAY — 6:40

THURSDAY — 12:35

- Senior Days, presented by Humana

Fans 50 and older may purchase tickets at half-price* and get free same-day admission to the Reds Hall of Fame and Museum presented by Dinsmore



SEPT. 6-8

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FRIDAY — 7:10

- Fiesta Rojos, presented by Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Toyota Dealers
- Fireworks Friday, presented by Adams Recovery Center

SATURDAY — 4:10

- Ken Griffey Jr. 150 Series Bobblehead, presented by Kroger (first 20,000 fans)
- Ohio Lottery Post-Game Concert featuring The Avett Brothers - Free to all fans with a game ticket



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- Jesse Winker Fathead®, presented by Nathan's Famous (Kids 14 & younger)
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Fields Has Room To Improve Following First Start

Continued From Page 1

"We want that toughness, and I felt that. I mean, I felt those guys flying around, and it was – to me – it was intimidating. It was downhill. It was what we want."

With such a big lead, it wouldn't have been a surprise to see Fields exit the game to not only preserve his health but also to get backups Chris Chugunov and Gunnar Hoak some much-needed game repetitions. But Day – who succeeded former head coach Urban Meyer following last season's Rose Bowl win – had other plans all along, especially considering Fields saw only limited playing time as a true freshman backup at Georgia last season.

"I hope our players didn't think that," Day said. "That worries me a little bit. We score that fast, that many points. Does our team think that that's happening? That can't happen. We're going to play, and those guys have to play until we pull them back, and we're going to address that this week. It's a great start, but we've got to keep going."

"We've got to keep pushing, and then we'll make the decision on when we take guys out. We don't want guys to think about that. Obviously, we've got to be smart in what we do. The situation didn't come up today. Justin is a guy who hasn't played a lot – the more snaps he can play, I think he played 74 snaps. He needs them all. Wish it was 174, but at the same time we have to be smart and take care of him."

Fields – who completed 18 of 25 passes



ANDREW LIND

IN SYNC – Although both are first-time starters, neither center Josh Myers (left) nor quarterback Justin Fields had any difficulties getting the snap down pat in the win over Florida Atlantic.



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for 234 yards and four touchdowns with 61 yards and another score on the ground – set a school record for touchdowns in a debut.

“I think I did pretty good overall,” he said. “Of course, there’s always room to improve, but we just have to keep working as a unit and keep getting better in all aspects of the game.”

Day echoed those sentiments while acknowledging that Florida Atlantic threw some unique looks at Ohio State’s offense, particularly with only three down linemen and eight in the defensive backfield.

“I thought Justin performed well,” Day said. “Playing with great energy, making good decisions, but more importantly, managing the game, taking care of the ball. That’s the biggest thing and the big plays will come, but I didn’t think they would come that fast. There’s still some things protection-wise we have to clean up. We’ve got a long way to go, but for a first start it was well done.”

Day is fond of saying a team – or player – doesn’t improve if it doesn’t fail, and he

was asked if Fields had failed enough in his first start.

“Oh yeah,” he said. “Protections, reads, decisions. There’s a lot to build off of today, though. There was a time where he scrambled out and took a sack (when he) could have just thrown it away.”

“As you look at the film, we’re going to be able to teach off of those 74 plays. There’s a lot to learn from.”

There’s no doubt Day was more pleased with Fields’ performance than not, but he wasn’t going to gush over one start or one win over an inferior opponent. He’ll instead challenge his signal caller to be at his best each week, especially with a much more difficult test coming from Cincinnati on Sept. 7.

“We got a really good team coming in here that is well-coached,” Day said. “Those guys are going to be prepared. We’ve got our hands full, but the good news is we’ve got a lot to learn from in this game. There are a lot of first-time starters and young guys we can build from but a lot of confidence to build off, too.”

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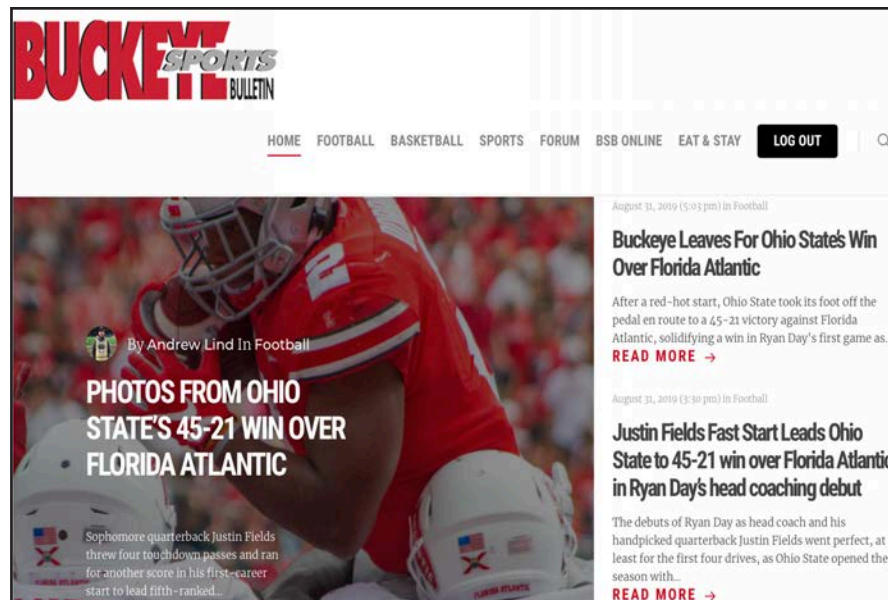
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Defensive Line Flashes Depth, Potential In Win

Ohio State has prided itself on having a dominant defensive front since Larry Johnson – whom coaches and players refer to as the best defensive line coach in the country – took over in 2014.

To open the 2019 season the Buckeyes faced off against Florida Atlantic without three of their top defensive linemen: senior Jonathon Cooper and sophomores Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday.

GAME NOTEBOOK

Joe Dempsey

Most programs would be in disarray with multiple talented D-ends missing a game, especially the first one. However, at Ohio State the wealth of starter-caliber players allows for the Scarlet and Gray to insert backups into games without much drop-off in production.

“Our motto is next man up,” said junior defensive end Chase Young. “If somebody’s hurt, the next man is going to step up. That’s what we did today.”

Young, an Associated Press Preseason First-Team All-American, led the defensive line with five tackles (three solo) and 1½ sacks against FAU, also adding a pass breakup.

Opposite Young, fifth-year senior Jashon Cornell started at defensive end in place of the injured Cooper. The former consensus top-100 recruit from St. Paul, Minn., did not disappoint.

Cornell came to Columbus as a defensive end but has played at three-technique, transitioning fully into that role during the offseason.

When the three Buckeye defensive ends went down with injury, however, Johnson called on Cornell to move back out to end to fill the void.



ANDREW LIND

STEPPING UP – With senior starter Jonathon Cooper and sophomore backups Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday sidelined with undisclosed injuries, junior defensive end Chase Young (left) led the Buckeyes’ defensive efforts against Florida Atlantic. He recorded five tackles and 1½ sacks in the 45-21 win.

The 6-3, 285-pounder impressed his teammates with his performance, including Young, who is projected to be a top-five pick in the 2020 NFL draft.

“We always knew Jashon had that in him, and today he just brought it out,” Young said. “I feel like he always had the D-end in him. He made a move to three-technique, but I feel like once you play something, you can always play it after you get the rust off. He did what he had to do.”

Cornell recorded four tackles (three

solo), one sack and one forced fumble, while tying senior linebacker Malik Harrison with a game-high two TFL. Disrupting the Owl offense early, Cornell made an impact from the jump, much to the pleasure of fifth-year senior cornerback Damon Arnette.

“Part of our culture is called competitive excellence,” Arnette said. “When your number’s called, what are you going to do when you get in? And Jashon definitely stepped up to his challenge and his calling, and I’m very proud of him.”

Under-Center Offense

For the first time in a long time, Ohio State ran offensive plays with the quarterback under center.

During Urban Meyer’s historic seven-year tenure as head coach in Columbus, the Buckeyes did not take under-center snaps, not even on the goal line or for quarterback sneaks. While inclement weather might sometimes make shotgun snaps more difficult, Meyer did not find taking under-center snaps to be worthy of practice time.

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

The Ohio State starting defense played excellently against Florida Atlantic, particularly in the first half. The Buckeyes were flying around making plays, breaking up passes and stifling the Owls' rushing offense before it even started. Remarkably, FAU possessed the ball for 8:04 and ran 17 plays in the first quarter but totaled minus-4 yards of offense. The Ohio State run defense was especially solid, shutting down 11 first-quarter carries for minus-3 yards. Picking up where they left off, the Buckeyes shut down the Owls in the second quarter as well. FAU gained just 9 yards passing and took eight rushes for minus-19 yards in the second quarter.

What Didn't Work

While the Buckeyes played a pretty well-rounded game against Florida Atlantic, they did struggle at times in the run game, particularly on interior running plays. Although rushing for 237 yards is solid, the Buckeyes' yard-per-carry average of 4.9 could have been better. And if sophomore quarterback Justin Fields hadn't broken off a 51-yard touchdown run, Ohio State's per-carry average would have been 4.0 yards. Junior

running back J.K. Dobbins, the team's workhorse, carried 21 times for 91 yards and a less-than-desirable 4.3 yards per carry average and coughed up a fumble. The offensive line could have done a better job opening up holes for the running game and will surely be a point of emphasis moving forward.

Play Of The Game

Ohio State received the ball to start the game and quickly gained a first down in two plays. Then, a 6-yard Demario McCall run moved the Buckeyes up to their 49-yard line. Facing second-and-4 near midfield, Ohio State ran a read-option play, fooling the majority of the Florida Atlantic defenders, who thought Dobbins had the ball. Fields pulled the fake hand-off out of Dobbins' gut when he saw the defensive end stick to the tailback. Then Fields quickly hit the hole, picking up a powerful pancake block from sophomore center Josh Myers. After Myers' block helped release Fields to the next level, the dual-threat signal caller saw a lot of open turf in front of him and outran the secondary to the end zone for his first touchdown as a Buckeye.

— Joe Dempsey

Meyer's successor, Ryan Day, has a different approach to offensive game planning, with an importance placed on being versatile.

"I think when you look at college football today, I think it's important to have a balance," Day said. "I think it's important to be able to line up under center, run the football, play-action pass and do some things, and also run the spread and run with tempo.

"And I think when you can mix those two things and you're good at both those things, it's not easy to do. But I think our quarterbacks can do that and Justin (Fields) can do that.

"We're lucky enough to have some tight ends with some experience. And we can put those guys in there and do some things with them as well. I think it brings a different level of preparation for the defense, and it's something we really haven't done a bunch of here. So I think it's an edge for us."

Ohio State used its under-center offense against FAU, and it worked quite well. The Buckeyes had some success running the ball, and sophomore quarterback Justin Fields even made some plays in the passing game while taking snaps under center.

"We've been working on that a lot this offseason," Fields said. "I think we did a good job doing it."

Tight Ends

The Ohio State offense actually featured the tight end and had great success doing so against Florida Atlantic.

Despite fifth-year senior Rashod Berry

missing the game due to injury, the tight end unit stepped up against the Owls, led by sophomore Jeremy Ruckert.

Ruckert reeled in all four of his targets for 38 yards and two touchdowns, which marked the first two of his young Buckeye career.

Fifth-year senior tackle Branden Bowen, who often lines up next to Ruckert, was asked if he was surprised by the sophomore tight end's production in the passing game.

"Not at all. He's had a great preseason

camp, and he's improved a lot, specifically in his blocking," Bowen said of Ruckert. "When you block well, we're going to throw you the ball more. It was nice to see him really get after it."

Ruckert, who hails from Lindenhurst, N.Y., certainly got after it, hauling in a 25-yard touchdown with 11:05 left in the first quarter. The touchdown strike was Fields' first as a Buckeye as well as Ruckert's.

In addition to Ruckert, junior Luke Farrell and senior Jake Hausmann saw

a lot of snaps in the first game of the season, primarily serving as blockers. At times, all three tight ends lined up in the same formation together. Fields was asked if he was surprised to see the tight ends be used so heavily, as many spectators were.

"Coach Day does a great job scheming for the team," Fields said. "And our tight ends are very talented. So that wasn't surprising for me at all. It happens in practice a lot. I think those guys did a great job today."

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Buckeyes' Fast Start Enough To Defeat FAU

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

Ryan Day had officially been head coach of the Ohio State Buckeyes for one game, but he already knew the coach-speak used so often by his predecessor Urban Meyer.

Day watched OSU get off to a torrid four-touchdown lead in the first quarter then meander its way to a 45-21 win over Florida Atlantic in the season opener for both at Ohio Stadium on Aug. 31.

A lot of questions were answered, but there was a feeling the Buckeyes should have done more to beat down the Owls.

"It's hard to be 1-0," Day said afterward. "It doesn't matter how you shake it. When you're in college football, there's a lot of good coaches, a lot of good programs."

The debut of Day and his handpicked quarterback, Justin Fields, went perfectly, at least for the first four drives, to the delight of the 103,228 in attendance on the cloudy, 72-degree afternoon.

OSU led 28-0 after just 8:10 of play with Fields, the sophomore transfer from Georgia, having three touchdown passes and a 51-yard TD on the first carry of his Buckeye career.

Even though Ohio State did not sustain that frenetic pace the rest of the way, it was a smooth transition for the 40-year-old Day, who replaced the retired Meyer on Jan. 2. Day had a 3-0 record last season while Meyer served a three-game university-imposed suspension for his mishandling of domestic violence charges against former receivers coach Zach Smith.

Fields, who played in 12 games for Georgia last season as a backup, finished 18 for 25 for 234 yards and four TDs but was sacked twice. He ran for 61 yards and the long score on 12 carries.

Junior back J.K. Dobbins augmented the attack with 91 yards and a TD on 21 rushes, and sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert had two TD catches.

Having A Fields Day

Ohio State wasted little time taking a 7-0 lead on the game's first possession. Starting at their own 30 after a 26-yard kickoff return by junior Demario McCall, the Buckeyes went 70 yards in four plays in 1:53 with Fields streaking through a gaping hole from 51 yards for the score.

The drive started with 5-yard pass to Ruckert. Dobbins ran for 8, and McCall rushed for 6 to the OSU 49. On the ensuing snap, Fields faked a handoff to Dobbins going right, pulled the ball back and raced up the gut to pay dirt with 13:07 left in the first quarter.

OSU increased the lead to 14-0 only 2:02 later after an FAU three-and-out. Once again, McCall helped set up the score. He had a 35-yard return to the FAU 26 on a 37-yard punt. Dobbins had a carry for a yard before

Fields found an open Ruckert at the goal line for a 25-yard TD at the 11:05 mark. The drive was all of 36 seconds.

The Owls went backward their next series when junior defensive end Chase Young had a 12-yard sack of quarterback Chris Robison to the FAU 14.

Following a punt and a McCall return of 5 yards to the OSU 42, Fields found senior K.J. Hill for 9, and Dobbins toted the ball for 17 to the FAU 32. From there, Fields lofted a pass down the left side to senior Binjimen Victor, who didn't have a defender within 10 yards of him, for the easy score on the end of the three-play, 58-yard, 37-second series for the 21-0 lead at 9:12.

It was more of the same when OSU got the ball again at the Florida Atlantic 46 following an Owls' personal foul on a punt return. It took four plays and 1:02 to make it 28-0 when Fields connected with sophomore Chris Olave on a post pattern from 29 yards with 6:50 to play in the quarter. To that point, Fields was 5 of 6 for 100 yards.

"He's just a baller out there," Ruckert said. "He's so athletic and such a good quarterback."

"The decisions not to throw the ball or not force it, not taking the sack and just running and scrambling, his athleticism really coincides with his decision making and made him have such a good first half."

Later, on OSU's third straight series without a score, Fields committed his first turnover when his backward pass on a bubble screen from the FAU 37 to freshman Garrett Wilson was recovered at the Owls' 49 by Quran Hafiz.

The OSU defense was overwhelming and forced the Owls to punt on 4th-and-29.

A Dobbins fumble at the OSU 32 allowed FAU to get on the board with 33 seconds left in the half on a 28-yard field goal by Vladimir Rivas.

The Buckeyes at the half had 280 total yards and FAU minus-14, including negative-22 on the ground.

Sluggish Second Half

Florida Atlantic finally got on the plus side in yardage with a 65-yard, 10-play drive on the first series of the third quarter that included a roughing-the-passer penalty on senior defensive tackle Davon Hamilton that gave the Owls a first down at the OSU 11. Three plays did little, and Rivas again kicked a 28-yard field goal to make it 28-6 at 12:23.

OSU had gone seven possessions without a score counting the end of the half, but on the eighth Fields guided the Buckeyes 52 yards, using 10 plays and 3:27 for a 35-6 lead at 2:37 of the third thanks to a 3-yard toss to Ruckert. Fields had runs of 11 and 10 yards, and Hill had an 11-yard grab along the way.

FAU converted a fourth-and-5 from the OSU 20 on the first play of the fourth quarter when Chris Robison hit James Charles for 8 yards. Three plays later, Larry McCammon ran 3 yards for the score, and Robison com-



ANDREW LIND

PICKING UP WHERE HE LEFT OFF – Sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave hauled in five catches for a team-leading 68 yards and one touchdown.

pleted the two-point conversion to John Mitchell to make it 35-14 with 13:23 left in the game.

The Owls kept the Buckeyes on the field for 15 plays and 4:14 on the 75-yard drive.

A failed onside kick enabled the Buckeyes to go 40 yards in 2:40 with the seventh play being a Dobbins 1-yard run into the end zone with 10:43 to go to up the score to 42-14.

Olave had an 11-yard reception, Fields rushed up the middle for 4 and Dobbins got 7 more on the ground. Dobbins would later cap the drive by running for 8 and then 1 yard for the score.

Robison passed 2 yards to John Raine with 8:16 left to make it 42-21. The drive was eight plays and 76 yards in 2:19.

The Buckeyes chewed up 5:09 over nine

plays and got a 46-yard field goal by junior Blake Haubeil with 3:01 left to extend the margin to 45-21. Master Teague helped keep the clock moving with 37 yards on four carries.

Numbers

The Buckeyes had 469 total yards (232 passing, 237 rushing) and 24 first downs.

Olave (five catches, 68 yards) and Ruckert (four, 38) led the OSU receivers.

Senior free safety Jordan Fuller topped the Buckeyes with seven tackles (four solo).

After the horrible first half, FAU gained 228 yards, 206 of it passing, for the game.

Robison was 22 of 34 for 178 yards and a touchdown.

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 45, Florida Atlantic 21

Aug. 31, 2019 – Ohio Stadium; Columbus, OH.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4		F
FLORIDA ATLANTIC (0-1)	0	3	3	15	–	21
OHIO STATE (1-0)	28	0	7	10	–	45

First Quarter

- OSU** – Fields, 51 yard run (Haubeil kick), 13:07; 4 plays, 70 yards, 1:53 TOP.
- OSU** – Ruckert, 25 yard pass from Fields, 11:05; 2 plays, 26 yards, 0:36 TOP.
- OSU** – Victor, 32 yard pass from Fields, 9:14; 3 plays, 58 yards, 0:37 TOP.
- OSU** - Olave, 29 yard pass from Fields, 6:50; 4 plays, 46 yards, 1:02 TOP.

Second Quarter

- FAU** – Rivas, 28 yard field goal, 0:33; 6 plays, 15 yards, 1:06 TOP.

Third Quarter

- FAU** – Rivas, 28 yard field goal, 12:23; 10 plays, 65 yards, 2:37 TOP.
- OSU** - Ruckert, 3 yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 2:37; 10 plays, 52 yards, 3:27 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

- FAU** – McCammon, 3 yard rush (Robison pass to Mitchell good), 13:23; 15 plays, 75 yards, 4:14 TOP.
- OSU** – Dobbins, 1 yard run (Haubeil kick), 10:43; 7 plays, 40 yards, 2:40 TOP.
- FAU** – Raine, 2 yard pass from Robison (Rivas kick), 8:16; 8 plays, 76 yards, 2:19 TOP.
- OSU** - Haubeil, 46 yard field goal, 3:01; 9 plays, 45 yards, 5:09 TOP.

Att. – 103,228

Weather – 72 degrees, cloudy; wind NE 7 mph.

Team Statistics

	FAU	OSU
First Downs	17	24
Rushing	4	14
Passing	12	9
Penalty	1	1
Rushes-Yards	33-22	48-237
Passing Yards	206	232
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	26-40-1	19-26-0
Offensive Plays	73	74
Total Net Yards	228	469
Third Down Efficiency	5-17	7-14
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-1	0-0
Punts-Avg.	9-47.2	4-43.8
Fumbles-Lost	3-0	2-2
Penalties	5-35	7-62
Time of Possession	27:57	32:03

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **FAU:** James 10-25; McCammon 11-22; Emmons 1-1; Wright 1-(-1); Davidson 1-(-1);, Robison 9 (-24). **OSU:** Dobbins 21-91; Fields 12-61; Teague 8-49; Crowley 4-27; McCall 2-11.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **FAU:** Robison 22-34-0-178-1; Agner 3-5-1-30-0; Charles 1-1-0-(-2)-0 **OSU:** Fields 18-25-0-234-4; Chugunov 1-1-0-(-2)-0

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **FAU:** Bryant 6-79; Raine 6-29; Harrison 4-57; McCammon 3-15; Cousart 2-18; Wright 2-(-10); Mitchell 1-12; Charles 1-8; Emmons 1-(-2). **OSU:** Olave 5-68; Ruckert 4-38; Hill 3-21; Mack 2-21; Dobbins 1-14; McCall 1-7; Gill 1-(-2).

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – **FAU:** Browning 9-47.2-70.; **OSU:** Chrisman 4-43.8-59.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **FAU:** Cousart 2-5; Dotson 1-0 **OSU:** McCall 2-40; Hill 2-13.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **FAU:** Antoine 1-20; Dotson 1-10 **OSU:** McCall 2-52, Olave 1-15.

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

FORCED FUMBLES – **FAU:** Leroy. **OSU:** None.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds) – **FAU:** Smith 1-7; Hafiz 1-0. **OSU:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – **FAU:** None. **OSU:** Proctor 1-0.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – **FAU:** Leroy 1.0-5; McCarthy 1.0-1. **OSU:** Young 1.5-17; Harrison 1.0-13; Cornell 1.0-8; Landers 0.5-5

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – **FAU:** Pierre 1.0-5; Leroy 1.0-5; Dotson 1.0-2; McCarthy 1.0-1; Brown 1.0-1. **OSU:** Cornell 2.0-16; Harrison 2.0-15; Young 1.5-17; Werner 1.0-3; Jackson 1.0-2; White 1.0-2; Togiai 1.0-2; Browning 1.0-1; Okudah 1.0-1; 0.5-5.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **FAU:** Smith 7-4-11; Brown 6-2-8; Hafiz 3-4-7; Leroy 5-1-6; Barnwell 3-3-6; Puerre 2-3-5; Bonner 3-1-4; Tooley 3-1-4; Davis 1-3-4; Gilbert 2-1-3; Smith 2-1-3; Helm 2-0-2; McCarthy 1-1-2; Vigille 1-0-1; Horton 1-0-1; Dotson 1-0-1; Dean 1-0-1; Ellis 1-0-1; Ross 1-0-1; Jefferson 1-0-1; Adams 1-0-1; Young 1-0-1; Joyner 1-0-1; Bryce 0-1-1. **OSU:** Fuller 4-3-7; Okudah 4-2-6; Young 3-2-5; Werner 3-1-4; Cornell 3-1-4; Browning 2-2-4; Jackson 3-0-3; White 2-1-3; Pryor 2-1-3; Pryor 2-1-3; Borland 2-1-3; Landers 1-2-3; Olave 2-0-2; Wade 2-0-2; Wint 2-0-2; Banks 2-0-2; Jean-Baptiste 1-1-2; Togiai 1-1-2; Mitchell 1-0-1; Riep 1-0-1; Williams 1-0-1; Hamilton 1-0-1; Garrett 1-0-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – **FAU:** Offense, Wright, Robison, McCammon, Emmons, Rivas, Hayball, Raine, Agner, Antoine, Davidson, Dean, Lewis, Charles, Bryant, Harrison, Mitchell, Cousart. Defense, Ellis, Vigillie, Ross, Smith, Hafiz, McCarthy, Dotson, Bryce, Pierre, Gilbert, Tooley, Brown, Smith, Adams, Young, Helm, Leroy, Davis, Bonner, Joyner, Barnwell, Horton, Jefferson **OHIO STATE:** Offense, Fields, Dobbins, Mack, Victor, Farrell, Ruckert, Munford, Jackson, Myers, Jackson, Bowe, Haubeil. Defense, Young, Landers, Hamilton, Cornell, Werner, Borland, Harrison, Arnette, Okudah, Fuller, White, Chrisman. Reserves, Olave, Gill, Crowley, Teague, McCall, Chugunov, Browning, Mitchell, Jean-Baptiste, Riep, Banks, Hill, Williams, Wint, Wade, Pryor, Proctor, Togiai, Garrett, Cage, Chrisman.

Season Statistics

2018-19 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 31	(5)FLORIDA ATLANTIC	45-21	103,228
Sept. 7	CINCINNATI	12 p.m.	
Sept. 14	at Indiana	12 p.m.	
Sept. 21	MIAMI (OHIO)	TBA	
Sept. 28	at Nebraska (24)	TBA	
Oct. 5	MICHIGAN STATE (18)	7:30 p.m.	
Oct. 18	at Northwestern	8:30 p.m.	
Oct. 26	WISCONSIN (19)	TBA	
Nov. 9	MARYLAND	TBA	
Nov. 16	at Rutgers	TBA	
Nov. 23	PENN STATE (15)	TBA	
Nov. 30	at Michigan (7)	12 p.m.	

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

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	24	17
Rushing	14	4
Passing	9	12
Penalty	1	1
Average Per Game/Rush	237	22
Average Per Game/Pass	232	206
Total Offense	469	228
Total Plays	74	73
Average Per Game	469	228
Average Per Play	6.3	3.1
Penalties-Yards	7-62	5-35
Fumbles-Lost	2-2	2-0
Third Down Efficiency	7-14	5-17
Percentage	50%	29%
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	1-1
Percentage	0%	100%
Sacks-Yards	4-43	2-6
Time Of Possession Avg.	32:03	27:57

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	28	0	7	10	0	45	45
Opponents	0	3	3	15	0	21	21

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
J.K. Dobbins	21	91	4.3	1	17
Justin Fields	12	61	5.1	1	51
Master Teague	8	49	6.1	0	21
Marcus Crowley	4	27	6.8	0	8
Demario McCall	2	11	5.5	0	6
TEAM	1	-2	-2	0	-2
OSU Totals	48	237	4.9	2	51
OPP Totals	33	22	0.7	1	9

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
J. Fields	18	25	72.0	234	4-0	203.4
Chris Chugunov	1	1	100	-2	0-0	83.2
OSU Totals	19	26	73.0	232	4-0	143.3
OPP Totals	26	40	65.0	206	1-1	90.6

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Chris Olave	5	68	13.6	1	29
Jeremy Ruckert	4	38	9.5	2	25
K.J. Hill	3	21	7.0	0	11
Binjimen Victor	2	65	32.5	1	33
Austin Mack	2	21	10.5	0	12
J.K. Dobbins	1	14	14.0	0	14
Demario McCall	1	7	7.0	0	7
Jaelen Gill	1	-2	-2.0	0	-2
OSU Totals	19	232	12.2	4	33
OPP Totals	26	206	7.9	1	38

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jeremy Ruckert	2	–	–	–	–	12
Blake Haubeil	–	6-6	–	–	1-1	9
Justin Fields	1	–	–	–	–	6
J.K. Dobbins	1	–	–	–	–	6
Binjimen Victor	1	–	–	–	–	6
Chris Olave	1	–	–	–	–	6
OSU Totals	6	6-6	–	–	1-1	45
OPP Totals	2	2-2	–	1-1	2-2	21

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

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Drue Chrisman	4	175	43.8	0	59
OSU Totals	4	175	43.8	0	59
OPP Totals	9	425	47.2	0	70

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Joshua Proctor	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	1	0	0.0	0	0
OPP Totals	0	0	0.0	0	0

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Demario McCall	2	40	20.0	0	35
K.J. Hill	2	13	6.5	0	16
OSU Totals	4	53	13.25	0	35
OPP Totals	3	5	1.6	0	5

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Demario McCall	2	52	26.0	0	26
Chris Olave	1	15	15.0	0	15
OSU Totals	3	67	22.3	0	26
OPP Totals	2	30	15.0	0	20

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Jordan Fuller	4	3	7	–	–
Jeff Okudah	4	2	6	1.0-1	–
Chase Young	3	2	5	1.5-17	1.5-17
Malik Harrison	3	2	5	2.0-15	1.0-13
Pete Werner	3	1	4	1.0-3	–
Jashon Cornell	3	1	4	2.0-16	1.0-8
Baron Browning	2	2	4	1.0-1	–
Antwuan Jackson	3	0	3	1.0-2	–
Brendon White	2	1	3	1.0-2	–
Isaiah Pryor	2	1	3	–	–
Tuf Borland	2	1	3	–	–
Robert Landers	1	2	3	0.5-5	0.5-5
Chris Olave	2	0	2	–	–
OSU Totals	47	20	67	12.0-64	4.0-43
OPP Totals	50	26	76	5.0-14	2.0-6
Fumbles Forced: 2 – Jeff Okudah, Jashon Cornell					
Fumbles Recovered: 0.					

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 45, Florida Atlantic 21

Ohio State sophomore quarterback Justin Fields on taking hard hits in the game: "That was my first time getting hit in a while, so I have to get used to that one. But I think overall I did a good job so I'm just getting ready for next week."

Ohio State fifth-year offensive lineman Branden Bowen on the offensive line's showing against FAU: "I think we played great. Of course there's a lot of mistakes that we can fix, but I mean it's the first game and we're going to make mistakes and the only way we can learn is to play. So I'm excited for the offensive line moving forward. Bodies were flying today. I think we were coming off the ball, and I'm really proud of my guys."

Ohio State junior defensive end Chase Young on if the defense was tested enough: "I don't really think that even matters. We're in the 'Shoe, first time this year, and I think it was just a test overall for us how we were going to react and step up on the field and play the person we don't know. But I think we played pretty well."

Young on if the defense showed what it was capable of against FAU: "Definitely. I feel real good today. The whole defense felt real good today, everybody. We probably made

some mistakes here and there, but today it felt real good just knowing what we have to offer in the future."

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on when he took a second to embrace his first game as head coach: "In the tunnel. I gave a little dap to Quinn (Temple) on the way out, looked up at the stands and looked up at the full house running out of the tunnel and the smoke comes out. That's my time to enjoy it. It's unbelievable. The hair stands up on your arms and on the back of your neck, and you really feel fortunate to be in that situation. That's my time, and I'll try to make sure we do that every game."

Day on the victory against Florida Atlantic: "It's hard to be 1-0. Doesn't matter how you shake it. When you're in college football, a lot of good programs, a lot of good coaches. We're proud to be 1-0, but we know what we have ahead of us. This journey: We looked at it the first six weeks, bye week, those two games, a bye week and four games. The goal is to be 1-0 on Saturday. I know it's cliché, but it's real."

Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley on what he saw from the defense against Florida Atlantic: "I think the way we ran to the ball,

the way we tackled looked to me, at least from upstairs, like there were seven guys around the ball-carrier on every single play. So from that regard, which was probably the thing that I was most anxious about, I'm really proud of those guys. I think they did a really good job."

Hafley on Ohio State slowing down after the big lead: "I think it's a good learning moment. You come out like we did – you've just got to do it all four quarters and you've got to finish. They showed what they're capable of, and hopefully we'll learn from that. You have no preseason games so you never know what you're going to get. Now we see it, now we have stuff to learn from and usually, you take your biggest jump – at least in my experience – between week one and week two."

Florida Atlantic head coach Lane Kiffin on Ohio State and the two sections of the game Saturday: "They're a very talented team. If you play a top-five team like that, you're going to have to do everything right just to have a chance, and it's unfortunate because as the game was going I was saying, 'Man, if we would have done A, B and C early, we'd be sitting here in the fourth quarter having a very interesting game putting the pressure back on them.' Obviously we didn't do that with the 28-0 start."

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Day Uses Three 2018 Games At Helm To Benefit

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

"Coming out of the tunnel that first time and seeing the Ohio State fans there going crazy, I mean it was like, you had chills all over you and tingling in your scalp, like just to see those guys going crazy for us.

"It was a really cool experience, something I won't forget."

This was what then-quarterbacks coach Ryan Day had to say on Sept. 21 of last year about his three-game head-coaching trial. During those three weeks, while Urban Meyer was suspended and forced to watch from his couch, Day comfortably led the Buckeyes to three wins, two of which were decisive and the other a 12-point victory on a neutral site against a then-ranked opponent.

The three games were enough for Meyer and athletic director Gene Smith to feel comfortable with choosing Day as Meyer's successor, making him one of the youngest coaches in program history.

Now, with a game under his belt as the permanent head coach, that experience from 2018 is one he won't be forgetting.

"I can't wait for the season to start," Day said the Tuesday before the Florida Atlantic matchup. "When I'm with the team in the tunnel, looking up to see the Horseshoe and everybody that supports the Buckeye Nation, how cool that is take it in, take a deep breath. I'm excited to get going – run out of the tunnel and go play. What an unbelievable opportunity this is."

Just like in 2018, Day comes into the season leading the No. 5 team in the country, according to the AP poll, but plenty has changed between when he took over a season ago and now.

Last year, Day took the helm as a safe pick for the interim job, according to many outsiders, with Greg Schiano and Kevin Wilson, both former head coaches, having baggage that could have led to extra controversy.

That baggage included Schiano's time at Penn State during Jerry Sandusky's tenure – the same controversy that lost him a job at Tennessee – and allegations that Wilson verbally abused his players at Indiana, allegations that forced him to resign.

But Day was more than just a safe pick: He was seen as a future option for the permanent job as Meyer's health concerns increased, and the wins against Oregon State, Rutgers and TCU only strengthened his already impressive résumé that included a handful of seasons in the NFL.

All of that helped him to get where he is now, a first-time head coach on a top-five team in the country. And even though he got a test trial back in 2018 of how his game day will change, the stress of Saturdays is not going to get any easier.

"The nerves and anxiety, that's not going to go away," Day said. "Understanding what's at stake every time you step on that field, that's part of it. It doesn't matter if I'm game one or game 300, it's always going to be that way because there's an expectation here. We've walked in those shoes already. So that's good to know, it's a little comforting that way. But at the same time, we've got to produce."

This time two seasons ago, Ryan Day was likely a name that many Ohio State fans knew only generally, if that. Under the new quar-



ANDREW LIND

FAMILIAR FEELING – First-year Ohio State head coach Ryan Day looked comfortable as he led the Buckeyes onto the field prior to their 45-21 win over Florida Atlantic. It wasn't the first time Day was in this position, though, as he coached the team during Urban Meyer's three-game suspension last fall.

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Continued On Page 16

Columbus Only College Town For Ryan Day

Continued From Page 15

terbacks coach in 2017, J.T. Barrett threw for the most yards and touchdowns that he had in any season in his collegiate career.

This time a season ago, Day became a name through his hiring as interim coach. The first two games against the Beavers and Scarlet Knights didn't do much to change the general opinion of him. A victory against the Horned Frogs proved that Day was able to handle the pressure at the helm.

But now, Day is the guy at the helm for the foreseeable future. He is now prepared for whatever comes his way heading into his first full season as head coach.

"You know what to expect," Day said. "You've walked through it before. We've gone through pregame. We've gone through Friday. We've gone through the skull session. We've gone through the pregame. We've run out of the tunnel. We've done all those things together."

As for a change in tradition, there won't be any. Day said that all of the pregame rituals that Ohio State is known for are part of what makes the program what it is and that he will not be the one to change them.

"In terms of the traditions that have been before, we want to keep all those going. That's one of the great things about Ohio State – the skull sessions and the walk, the quick calcs with the students," Day said. "All those things are what make Ohio State great. We sang the fight song in the locker room after (a recent) mock game. We love the traditions. We have to keep them going."



JOSH WINSLOW

A SPECIAL PLACE – Ohio State head coach Ryan Day had no plans to leave the NFL until Ohio State and Urban Meyer came calling in 2017.

Ryan Day is the head coach at Ohio State, and he is taking over for one of the most successful coaches in the history of college football. He is 40 years old, and is, so far, undefeated in his head coaching career.

Sure, it has only been four games, but it is the start of a potentially long career for someone who three seasons ago was an assistant in an entirely different league.

As for going back to that league – the National

Football League – it is not in Day's plans.

"The only place that I would have left the NFL for was to come to Ohio State, because this is just the greatest organization in all of America," Day said. "Only Columbus."

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Bowen's Recovery From Injury Leads To Start



ANDREW LIND

LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY – Ohio State 5th-year senior right tackle Branden Bowen suffered a devastating knee injury in the Buckeyes' win over Maryland in 2017, but persevered through multiple setbacks to start his first game in nearly two years.

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

The announcement came in a matter-of-fact manner during the Aug. 27 press conference by Ryan Day leading to Ohio State's season opener against Florida Atlantic four days later.

Day, in his first season as head coach after replacing Urban Meyer, was asked about the rotation at the offensive tackle positions and the overall depth on the line.

"I think we're going to have our starters," Day said. "So, Thayer (Munford) and Branden (Bowen) will start at tackle."

It was no surprise that Munford would get the nod at left tackle as he was the only

returning starter on the line. Yes he was coming off an injury that had limited his repetitions in preseason camp, but once he was ready to go, his spot was cemented.

The start for the other guy, graduate Branden Bowen, was newsworthy for several reasons. First, he was in battle with red-shirt freshman and former five-star recruit Nicholas Petit-Frere.

Secondly, being on the field for the first-team snaps was a long time coming for Bowen. He had not played since Oct. 7, 2017, in the sixth game of the season against Maryland when he sustained a fractured tibia and fibula.

He underwent three surgeries and several setbacks, both physically and mentally, along the way and did not play in 2018. That's why a



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few minutes after Day stepped away from the lectern in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center an expressive Bowen addressed the media.

He explained that he was in a massage chair at the "Woody" when Day was speaking.

"It's definitely emotional, just seeing the news a few minutes ago," Bowen said. "It was hard not to break down and cry, because it's been a long road. It's definitely been very, very difficult."

"Having the time that I did to start (in 2017) and then having that taken away from me through an injury was eye-opening. It really gives you a different perspective on how important it is to value your time that you have. Going into this year, I think I just value everything and everybody around me a lot more."

Bowen (6-7, 315 pounds) said his experiences since the injury have made him stronger.

"I'm happy I went through it," he said. "It's made me a much better person, a much better player and much better man."

Bowen, 22, provides maturity that goes beyond the normal college student. He is engaged to Kate Lindsey and they have a son, Booker, who was born on March 21, 2019.

"He's taken a mature approach to this thing," Day said. "He's shown some leadership. He's more an example guy than a vocal guy, but this is a guy who I think is going to have a great year."

"I think anytime you have guys like him who have been in the program for a while, it's like having a man, it's like having a professional on the team. They're almost player/coaches, I call them. That's the approach he's had. You don't have to worry about what Branden is doing at night, don't have to worry about him going to classes. He's graduated and done all those things. He's all about making sure he's ready to roll, taking care of his body and he's producing."

"He can take a meeting to the field. He's very serious about it, and his approach is contagious."

Bowen was born in Tennessee, but his family moved to Utah when he was 8. He was a three-star prospect and rated a top-100 offensive lineman by 247Sports in the class of 2015.

He earned the starting job at right guard in 2017 and was leading the offensive line with 388 plays at the time of his injury.

Bowen said on Aug. 8 that he was avail-

able to play wherever the team needed him if needed when healthy late last season but that he likes where he lines up now.

"Tackle is my natural position," he said. "I feel more natural there than I do at guard. I feel fast. I've got my weight up. It also makes it super easy to play tackle when you have a center like Josh Myers and a guard like Wyatt Davis right next to you. It gives you that confidence and trust that they know what they're doing."

Bowen, who received his degree in human development and family studies on May 5, had a chance to reflect on his career and decided that he wanted more out of it.

"In the week leading to camp, we had some time off. I was sitting at home thinking, 'Man, this is it. I've got to go now,'" he said. "I don't have a choice. I've got no choice but to come in and compete for a starting job and keep pushing for it."

He didn't shy away from the competition with Petit-Frere.

"I love it," Bowen said. "It's just another opportunity to compete not only each play against the defense but I'm competing against one of my teammates, one of my fellow

O-linemen. It just adds to the motivation. In turn it makes each other better."

Bowen knows he can improve by going against junior defensive end Chase Young in practices. Young is projected to be a first-round pick if he enters the 2020 NFL draft.

"He's one of the best defensive ends in the country if not the best," Bowen said. "It's awesome to compete against him because it makes me better because if I can block him, I can block whoever I want."

"To be able to practice with him, we talk back and forth what we could have done better and what we saw in each other and how we beat each other in certain reps. He helps a lot."

Running down the tunnel onto the Ohio Stadium field prior to kickoff against Florida Atlantic was the next step in the journey back for Bowen.

"A lot of players tend to get down on themselves when something bad happens or something like that, but over the past couple years, I've been able to really learn that something bad happens, shake it off, next play," he said. "And I've also been able to help our other offensive linemen with that mind-set as well."

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A Healthy Munford Ready To Lead The Way

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State left tackle Thayer Munford suffered a season-ending injury as a sophomore in 2018 but still earned honorable-mention All-Big Ten honors for his performance.

Although Munford did not miss time until the final stretch of the season, he admitted to playing through injury for most of the season, adding that he was around 75 percent.

"I was injured, I'm not going to lie about that, but I still was trying to dominate players," Munford said during fall camp. "Even beginning from (game 10) Michigan State, (the defensive end) got the up-and-under move and he got me a couple times, I'm not going to lie about that. But at the same time, I didn't give up."

Despite missing all of spring camp recovering from surgery, Munford had a spot reserved at left tackle on the Ohio State offensive line upon his return. When he came back healthy and ready to go for fall camp, Ohio State offensive line coach Greg Studrawa liked what he saw.

"I think he's done really good with his weight, he's 313," Studrawa said during camp. "He looks like a million bucks, and that's going to take some of the stress of his back. But right now, we're limiting him till he gets back into the swing of things."

The Cincinnati native was medically cleared to play, but his coaches held him back from going all out in practice since he hadn't played since November. Munford was asked if it was difficult to refrain from practicing full go.

"It's hard, but at the same time, I know if I do go hard and I go hard every play and go with the ones every time, I'm bound to reinjure it," Munford said. "I don't want that. I also don't want to let down my teammates, either, if I do that."

Very much a team-first guy, Munford



ANDREW LIND

LEADER OF THE SLOBS – Junior left tackle Thayer Munford's return from an injury was important for an inexperienced group of linemen breaking in four new starters.

is familiar with success. Before becoming a starter for the most potent offense in Ohio State football history, he excelled at the high school level.

As a sophomore and junior at Cincinnati powerhouse La Salle, Munford won back-to-back state titles while collecting All-Ohio honors before transferring to Massillon (Ohio) Washington for his senior season.

A former four-star recruit, Munford faces high expectations from himself and others. The 6-6 left tackle said he

still improved despite missing so much time to injury.

"I do feel 100 percent, and I feel a lot better than I did last year," Munford said. "And I'm just happy to be back with my brothers and happy to compete and happy to be with them on the field. That's really the important thing for me. I'm just happy just to be out there."

Munford's teammates have noticed his drive to get back on the field, particularly fifth-year senior right tackle Branden Bowen, who suffered his share

of injury woes himself.

"He's hungry," Bowen said. "That's the biggest word I'd use to describe him. He absolutely has had a fire to get back because he's been out, and it's pushed him every day to get better and to get back to where he needed to be."

The Buckeyes need Munford to be a force among their offensive front. His contributions have been pivotal each of the past two seasons.

He took part in only 202 plays as a true freshman in 2017, but one of Munford's plays included a pivotal block against Michigan to spring Dwayne Haskins' 22-yard run to the Michigan 1-yard line, where the Buckeyes punched it in to take the lead and propel them to victory against their archrival.

Ohio State broke school and Big Ten records with Munford leading the way as a starter in 2018, including total yards per game (535.6) and passing touchdowns (51).

With his weight down and a healthy back, Munford is poised for a big junior season. The powerful left tackle thought he played well in the Buckeyes' season opener against Florida Atlantic.

"I felt strong, I felt great," Munford said. "I'm a little bit lighter than last year, and that played a whole part in how I played today."

Offensive linemen historically do not garner the same type of media attention or fanfare as skill players, but Munford's value is not lost in the mind of Ohio State head coach Ryan Day.

"He's really important because he's one of the returning guys up front," Day said. "... Branden played a little bit, but he's not a returning starter. (Munford) is really the only returning starter we have out there. His experience is critical, especially being at left tackle."

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Buckeyes Get Set To Face Physical Bearcats

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

So much has been made this offseason of Cincinnati head coach Luke Fickell's connections to Ohio and, more importantly, to Ohio State. It is pretty easy to understand why. The former Buckeye player and longtime coach is still relatively new to head coaching, entering just his third year at Cincinnati, in addition to a year as interim coach at OSU, and his time in Columbus serves as an easy entry point to understanding his program.

After all, the connections between Fickell's Cincinnati and Jim Tressel's Ohio State, or even Urban Meyer's Ohio State, are strong. Fickell wears his influences on his sleeve and has made it a point of pride at Cincinnati to recruit Ohio and use those Ohio players to win with elite defense and a strong rushing attack. Fickell's teams make very few mistakes, and they can grind out wins with their physicality. That sounds a whole lot like the Ohio State of the 2000s, and that is by design. The system works, and Fickell knows that.

Fickell's Cincinnati, however, cannot be defined by Fickell's influences. Cincinnati is not exclusively a Tressel clone, a program built on the Ohio players who slip through the cracks, or a program that can be neatly summed up in a sentence as more of the same from a familiar face. In his first two years at Cincinnati, Fickell established himself as more than just his influences and proved that his program is much more than many expected it to be early on.

That rise for Cincinnati came almost completely out of nowhere. After starting the rebuild in 2017 with a 4-8 campaign, Fickell entered 2018 with a still young team. Things only got worse when starting running back Gerrid Doaks, defensive end Kevin Mouhon and safety Chris Murphy went down with injuries that sidelined the latter two for the season and the former for all but four games.

Pair those injuries with replacements that indicated a youth movement – including sophomore halfback Michael Warren taking over for Doaks, six underclassmen contributing on the defensive line, two sophomores (Jarrell Wright, Joel Dublanko) and freshman RJ Potts all seeing time at linebacker, a defensive backfield

with just two upperclassmen (junior cornerback Cam Jeffries and senior nickelback Tyrell Gilbert), and a true freshman quarterback in Desmond Ridder – and another tough year would have made a lot of sense.

The Bearcats, of course, rallied around their youth and won a whopping 11 games in 2018, including wins over UCLA, Ohio, USF and Virginia Tech in the Military Bowl. When a coach pulls something like that off with such an inexperienced team, he deserves to rise above his influences and become his own man, and Fickell has hit that level. With that success does, of course, come expectations.

Cincinnati returns eight offensive starters from its 2018 team, not counting Doaks, who started in 2017, center Jakari Robinson, who played six games last season, or halfback Tavion Thomas, who carried the ball 89 times for 499 yards and seven scores. Youth movements pay off, and finding so much success last season just means higher expectations for what that youth movement could yield for the Bearcats.

The defense is in an almost equally ideal spot. Seven starters are back from last year's group, including the entire backfield, two linebackers and edge rusher Michael Pitts. With so much experience and talent, Cincinnati has exactly what it needs to serve as a serious challenge for Ohio State's mostly inexperienced offense and mostly unproven defense.

Players To Watch

Of the players to look for on Cincinnati's two-deep, none is more dangerous or more impressive than Warren. Warren took over as the starter last season and never looked back, racking up 1,329 yards and 19 touchdowns on 244 carries. His power, vision and ability as a receiver out of the backfield make him one of the best running backs on Ohio State's schedule, behind perhaps only Jonathan Taylor of Wisconsin. He is the heart and soul of this Cincinnati offense, and if Ohio State cannot stop him early and often but instead allows him to grind out first downs, the Buckeyes would legitimately be on upset alert.

Next to him is Ridder. Ridder was solid enough in year one, especially for a true freshman, throwing for 2,445 yards and 20 touchdowns with just five interceptions on 194-of-311

Get To Know ... Cincinnati

About Cincinnati

- **2019 record:** 1-0 (0-0 American Athletic Conference)
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Multiple; Defensive Formation – 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 8, Defense 7, Specialists 2.
- **Head Coach:** Luke Fickell, third year, 16-10 (all at Cincinnati).
- **Series History:** 16th meeting; Ohio State leads 13-2.
- **School Facts:** Location – Cincinnati, OH; Enrollment – 44,000; Nickname – Bearcats; Color – Red; Conference – American (East Division); Stadium – Nippert Stadium (Surface, FieldTurf; Capacity – 40,000).

Top Offensive Returners

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Michael Warren	26	92	3.5	1 15
Gerrid Doaks	10	53	5.4	0 13
Desmond Ridder	9	34	3.8	0 15

Passing	Comp.-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Desmond Ridder	18-26	69.2	242	2-1

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Josiah Deguara	4	53	13.3	1 16
Jayson Jackson	3	36	12.0	0 17
Michael Warren	3	27	9.0	1 21

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 24.0
Rushing Yards Per Game – 181.0
Passing Yards Per Game – 242.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 423.0

2019 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 29	UCLA	W, 24-14
Sept. 7	at Ohio State	12 p.m.
Sept. 14	MIAMI (OHIO)	12 p.m.
Sept. 28	at Marshall	5 p.m.
Oct. 4	UCF	8 p.m.
Oct. 12	at Houston	12 p.m.
Oct. 19	TULSA	12 p.m.
Nov. 2	at East Carolina	12 p.m.
Nov. 9	UCONN	11 a.m.
Nov. 16	at USF	11 a.m.
Nov. 23	TEMPLE	11 a.m.
Nov. 29	at Memphis	11 a.m.
Dec. 7	AAC Championship	TBA

Top Defensive Returners

Def. Leaders	Solo-Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Darrick Forrest	5-4	9	0-0	0
Bryan Wright	4-3	7	1.0-7	0
Coby Bryant	3-3	6	0.5-1	0
Perry Young	2-1	3	0.5-1	0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Ja'Von Hicks	1	15	15.0	0 15	
Perry Young	1	0	0	0 0	

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 14.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 62.0
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 156.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 218.0

passing (62.4 percent). When Cincinnati lost, it was because Ridder was pressured and fell apart, and that could be a real concern for the Bearcats in this one.

That concern becomes even more real when you look at the offensive line, which will be breaking in a new left tackle and left guard, along with a true sophomore center (Jakari Robinson) who played just six games last season. Against Ohio State's defensive line, Cincinnati will need to keep Ridder upright, both to help out the rushing attack and to keep drives from being blown up by sacks or turnovers caused by pressure.

Outside of Warren, Ridder has plenty of help, and chief among that group is tight end Josiah Deguara, who pulled in 38 catches for 468 yards and five scores last season. He isn't a huge play threat, but he's easily the consis-

tent target for Ridder and will see plenty of targets out in the flats and underneath to test Ohio State's new-look defense. The Buckeyes will likely take a similar approach to covering Deguara as they did against FAU's Harrison Bryant, with a rotation of Brendon White, Shaun Wade, Pete Werner and even Jordan Fuller.

Defensively, Cincinnati is just loaded with elite talent. Up front, Michael Pitts (34 tackles, 7½ tackles for loss, four sacks in 2018), Ethan Tucky (24 tackles, four TFL, two sacks) and defensive end Myjai Sanders (seven tackles) are all back and present Ohio State's offensive line with much more pass-rushing danger than FAU did.

At linebacker, Ohio State's primary concern is likely with converted lineman and now middle linebacker Bryan Wright. Wright was Cincinnati's best pass rusher in 2018, racking up five sacks along with 8½ tackles for loss and 55 total tackles on the year.

At 6-3, 238, Wright is both a big body in the middle of the field and an excellent athlete. He'll likely be responsible for containing Justin Fields and locking down the middle of the field, and with him there, Ohio State may need to work outside for most of the game rather than going with its usual underneath routes and mesh concepts.

That could also be an issue, because the entire secondary is back, and it was outstanding in 2018. Coby Bryant and Jeffries serve as the two corners. Bryant should handle Ohio State's number one receiver because of his size (6-1, 195), while Jeffries, at just 5-10, could key on K.J. Hill out of the slot.

Safety James Wiggins was one of the best safeties in college football last season, but is out for the season with a knee injury. Wiggins led the team in interceptions with four, picked up 54 tackles including two for a loss, and forced a fumble. Sophomore Ja'Von Hicks will start in his place.

Forrest had just one interception but picked up 49 total tackles and will serve as the enforcer in the backfield while the other three players look to roam and make plays in the passing game.

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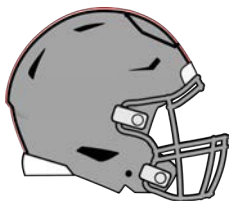
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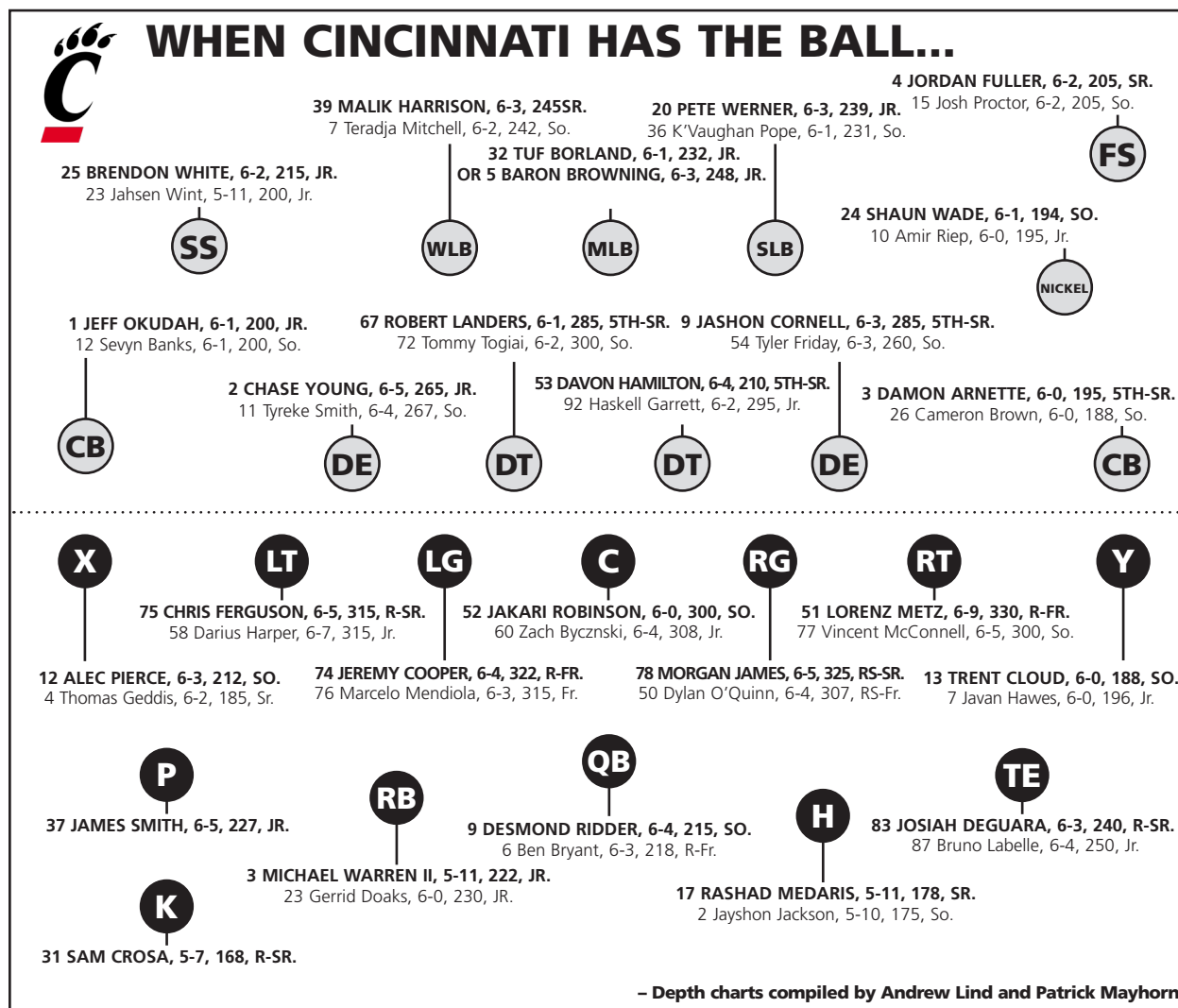
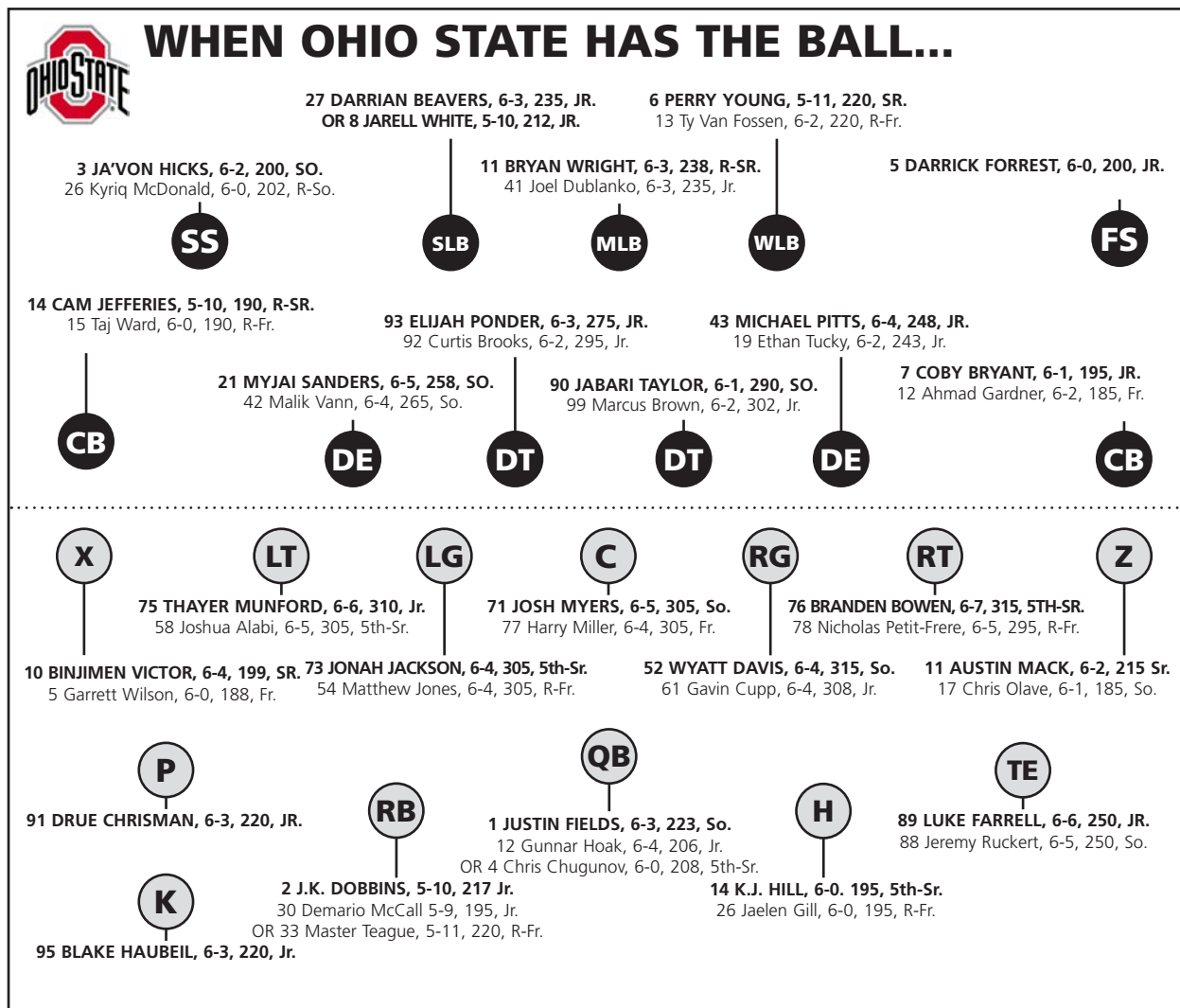


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Projected Depth Charts



- Depth charts compiled by Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn

How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. CINCINNATI RUSH DEFENSE

The Buckeyes averaged 4.9 yards per carry in the 45-21 win against Florida Atlantic in the season opener, but the number was both deceiving and good. It's a positive because quarterback Justin Fields in his first carry for Ohio State raced 51 yards for a score. His ability to be a game-breaker with his feet was missing with Dwayne Haskins last season but hearkens to the days of J.T. Barrett and Braxton Miller. Fields' run inflated the per-carry average, and workhorse J.K. Dobbins had 91 yards on 21 carries (a rather lackluster 4.3 average) with a TD and a fumble that coach Ryan Day mentioned several times in his postgame remarks. The offensive line is still a work in progress, and OSU will be tested against a Cincinnati front that allowed 62 rushing yards on 36 attempts (1.7) in a 24-14 season-opening win over UCLA. **EDGE: EVEN**

CINCINNATI RUSH OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Bearcats rely on Michael Warren II for their ground yards. As a sophomore last season, he became the first UC 1,000-yard rusher since 2012 (1,329 yards in 12 games). The 5-11, 222-pounder from Toledo Central Catholic had seven 100-yard games, including four in a row, last season. He began his 2019 campaign with 92 yards off 26 carries (3.5) with a long of 15 yards and touchdown. Gerrid Doaks chipped in with 53 yards on 10 tries as the Bearcats rushed for 175 yards (3.6). The Buckeyes stuffed Florida Atlantic to the tune of 22 net yards for a measly 0.7 average on 33 carries. The Owls' longest run was 9 yards, and three runners - including quarterback Chris Robison - had negative yardage. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. CINCINNATI PASS DEFENSE

Fields, who played all but the last series, connected with eight receivers, and backup Chris Chugunov had a pass to Jaelen Gill that went for negative-2 yards. Fields was 18 for 25 for 234 yards and four TDs, three in the first eight minutes. He had a couple of misfires, was sacked twice and didn't check off the main receiver enough. Those are not unexpected problems for the sophomore QB in his first collegiate start after four games as a backup at Georgia last season as a true freshman. UCLA quarterback Dorian Thompson-Robinson was just 8 for 26 for 156 yards but did toss two TDs vs. the Bearcats, who were without star safety James Wiggins, who suffered a season-ending torn ACL prior to the game. Wiggins led UC with four interceptions last season, three of which were game-clinchers. In what could be the key matchup, the bevy of talented OSU tight ends could be the difference as Jeremy Ruckert had two TD catches vs. Florida Atlantic. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

CINCINNATI PASS OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Bearcats sophomore quarterback Desmond Ridder was an efficient 18 of 26 for 242 yards and two scoring strikes, one of them to Warren to show the many facets of the attack. Ridder guided UC to 417 total yards but he threw an interception to thwart one scoring threat. Florida Atlantic had 8 yards passing vs. the Buckeyes in the first half but padded the stats against mainly OSU's second unit for a game total of 206. Josh Proctor had the lone Buckeye interception. OSU's defense had four sacks and one QB hurry and should be able to put pressure on Ridder the whole game. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Demario McCall's 26-yard return of the opening kickoff put the Buckeyes in good position for the first score, and his 35-yard runback of a punt to the FAU 26 led to the second TD. He totaled 92 yards on four total returns. Ryan Montgomery had a punt return for 25 yards for Cincinnati. The real fun will be watching the punters (if needed). OSU's Drue Chrisman was a Ray Guy Award semifinalist for the best punter in the nation last year and was sixth nationally in net punting. Cincinnati's James Smith was a Ray Guy finalist and second in net punting. **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

Former Buckeye defensive great Luke Fickell returns to Columbus after doing a wonderful job rebuilding the UC program. Fickell was a longtime Buckeye assistant, and he coached the Buckeyes to a 6-7 record in 2011 as the buffer between the firing of Jim Tressel after the 2010 season and the hiring of Urban Meyer for 2012. There is zero chance Fickell's Bearcats won't be fired up to win the Battle of Ohio. **EDGE: CINCINNATI**

STAFF PREDICTION

This game has the feel of Virginia Tech in 2014 when a young quarterback (Barrett) struggled against an upstart in Ohio Stadium. Cincinnati is legit, but the Buckeyes showed glimpses of being dangerous on offense and ruthless on defense in the first game. The only thing missing for this surefire barn burner is a prime-time atmosphere. **OHIO STATE, 34-24**

2002 Game Stands Out In OSU-UC History

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State and Cincinnati may reside in the same state and their campuses may be only a little over 100 miles apart, but the football history shared between these two teams is not extensive.

In a series that spans three different centuries and 126 years, the Sept. 7 matchup between the Buckeyes and the Bearcats will be the 17th time the two teams have faced off on a football field. Ohio State holds a commanding lead in the series, winning 14 of the 16 previous matchups.

Of those 14 wins, the past 11 have been in a row, with the Buckeyes winning every matchup since a 24-0 beatdown all the way back in 1897.

That season, first-year head coach David Farragut Edwards led Ohio State to a 1-7-1 record, defeating Ohio Medical 6-0 to start the season, tying Otterbein 12-12 in the fourth game and getting shut out in every other matchup on the schedule.

From the 20th century on, the Buckeyes have dominated the matchup, winning each game by an average margin of 26.6 points.

The Bearcats have been held to seven points or fewer in eight of the past 11 games. Only two games since 1897 have been decided by one possession or less, and only one of those was in the past 100 years.

But that one game, on Sept. 21, 2002, nearly shut down a national championship run.

After three dominant victories against Texas Tech, Kent State and No. 10 Washington State, Ohio State had moved up from No. 13 to No. 6 in the country and had a date in Paul Brown Stadium against the Bearcats.

Quarterback Craig Krenzel had not been the key against the Cougars, with running back Maurice Clarett rushing



JOSH WINSLOW

A NEW POINT OF VIEW – Former Ohio State player, assistant and interim head coach Luke Fickell will lead his Cincinnati Bearcats into Ohio Stadium for the first time on Sept. 7.

31 times for 230 yards and a pair of touchdowns in the victory. But Clarett was out for the matchup against the Bearcats due to arthroscopic knee surgery, leaving backup Lydell Ross to be the primary back.

Ross ended up not being a problem in this game for Ohio State – he rushed for 130 yards on 23 carries. Cincinnati's offense was, jumping out to an early 9-0 lead off a touchdown and a field goal.

The Bearcats led throughout the first

half and held a 19-14 lead late in the third quarter, potentially ending a possible OSU title run before it even really began.

But Krenzel came through late, rushing for a 6-yard score with 3:44 to

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go to give the Buckeyes a 23-19 lead. Cincinnati quarterback Gino Guidugli did not give in, however, leading the Bearcats on a drive from the Cincinnati 20 to Ohio State's 15-yard line with just over a minute to play.

Guidugli found two of his receivers – Jon Olinger and George Murray – open in the end zone with catchable balls. Both balls fell to the turf as drops.

With 32 seconds to go and fourth down deciding the game, Guidugli's throw was tipped by Ohio State linebacker Matt Wilhelm and intercepted by safety Will Allen.

The game was not even close to the only tight game the Buckeyes would play in 2002 – six of its next 10 matches of the season after this one were decided by one possession – but it wouldn't matter. Ohio State went 14-0 that season, defeating Miami (Fla.) in double overtime to take the national title.

But in one game, amid a record crowd at Paul Brown Stadium, Cincinnati went pound for pound with the eventual national champions, nearly putting the Buckeyes in a dire situation twice on throws to the end zone on its final drive of the game.

Since then, there has not been the same fortune for the Bearcats, losing by at least 21 points on each occasion. On Sept. 7, it will be seen if Cincinnati will have enough to create another situation like 2002, if it will be like the other recent matchups, ending in brutal defeat, or if the Bearcats can find a victory for the first time since the 19th century.

Fickell Looks Back At 2011 Coaching Stint

Following the resignation of Jim Tressel, who left after helping to cover up the Tattogate scandal, Ohio State football was a program left in the midst of controversies and allegations, and it was not a time when many head coaches could have just come in and helped lift the team up for the following season of football.

Enter Luke Fickell, Ohio State's co-defensive coordinator and linebackers coach, who was named interim head coach for the 2011 season.

Unlike Day, who is getting his first head coaching opportunity after a three-game test run, and after Urban Meyer and Gene Smith carefully selected him, Fickell was thrown into the madness with not much to help him.

Starting out at Ohio State – one of the most esteemed programs in the country – sounds like a dream scenario for any coach looking for his first opportunity to step up.

But Fickell, now the head coach at Cincinnati, talked about the one-year interim head coaching gig he had at Ohio State recently on the Ain't Played Nobody podcast, and he did not have many positives to say about his experience in the role.

"I mean that was seven or eight months that was, I don't know if there was anything positive," Fickell said. "I can't remember much of anything about that whole season other than the ups and the downs and the emotional roller coaster. But it changed me in the sense that, you know what, I didn't enjoy being a head coach of the seven or so months, maybe more than a day or two."

Fickell went 6-7 in his lone season as Ohio State head coach, including a

33-29 win against No. 10 Wisconsin, and four straight losses to end the season, including a 40-34 loss to Michigan – the Wolverines' most recent victory against the Buckeyes – and a 24-17 defeat to Florida in the Gator Bowl.

But none of those wins resulted in much of a positive feeling for someone who just wanted to go back to being the positional coach he had been prior to the promotion.

"I'm just like, 'You know what, I really enjoyed doing what I do, coaching linebackers and being a defensive coordinator and, you know, kind of dealing with those things,'" Fickell said. "You don't have, to me, some of those intimate relationships on a daily basis with a group of guys."

The experience was enough for Fickell to not actively search for another head coaching gig elsewhere, instead going back to the same position he held before when Meyer was named the head coach the following season.

"I just said, 'You know what, I don't

want to do that,' " Fickell said. "I didn't enjoy that difference to things."

It took time, but Fickell said he eventually started reading up on certain things that head coaches shine at, and eventually, he came around to the idea of giving it another opportunity when the time came for it.

That all led to him getting the job at Cincinnati, a place where he turned the Bearcats into an 11-2 team in just his second season.

Not out to make 2018 look like a fluke, Fickell is already off to a strong start this year, opening the season with a 24-14 victory over UCLA, which is now coached by former NFL head coach Chip Kelly.

There is a whole lot looking up for the head coach now, but even after eight years have passed, Fickell will always have 2011 on his résumé, even if it is a time that he said is now a blur in his mind.

"Everything that went on in those seven or eight months was negative in a lot of ways," Fickell said.

ALL TIME RESULTS

Date	Location	Result
9/27/2014	Columbus	W, 50-28
9/16/2006	Columbus	W, 37-7
9/4/2004	Columbus	W, 27-6
9/21/2002	Cincinnati	W, 23-19
9/25/1999	Columbus	W, 34-20
10/3/1931	Columbus	W, 67-6
10/11/1919	Columbus	W, 46-0
10/26/1912	Columbus	W, 45-7
11/30/1911	Columbus	W, 11-6
10/8/1910	Columbus	W, 23-0
10/13/1900	Cincinnati	W, 29-0
11/13/1897	Cincinnati	L, 24-0
10/10/1896	Cincinnati	L, 8-6
11/9/1895	Cincinnati	W, 4-0
11/17/1894	Cincinnati	W, 6-4
11/18/1893	Columbus	W, 32-0



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Secondary Solid In OSU's New Defensive Scheme

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Eight passing yards.

That's all Florida Atlantic and offensive mastermind Lane Kiffin could muster in the first half against the new-look Ohio State defense.

"They played really fast, they were physical and I'm really proud of them," co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley said following the game.

Despite returning the main five defensive backs from last season, the Ohio State secondary did not look the same. And that was a good thing after the defensive debacle of 2018.

Junior cornerback Jeff Okudah posted six tackles (four solo), one tackle for loss and one pass breakup. The Grand Prairie, Texas, native closed on receivers and runners with ferocity, using his 6-1, 200-pound frame to make some hard hits in the secondary.

Junior safety/bullet Brendon White notched three tackles (two solo), one TFL and one pass breakup, despite giving way to junior outside linebacker Pete Werner when the defense went to a three-linebacker look.

One thing that was on par with the past two seasons for the Buckeye secondary was senior safety Jordan Fuller leading the way in tackles. The two-time captain from Old Tappan, N.J., recorded a team-high seven tackles (four solo), and while proud of the first-half effort, Fuller said there's a lot of room to improve.

"The first half we came out and did our thing, did what we wanted to do," Fuller said. "On the back end we wanted a little more action at times, but it was definitely amazing in the first half. We've got a lot of things to shore up."

Fifth-year senior Damon Arnette and Okudah manned the cornerback positions for the vast majority of the game, and Hafley was asked why this was the case and if it should be expected to continue.

"I felt comfortable with them out there," Hafley said of Arnette and Okudah. "It looked like they were doing a good job, and it didn't really seem like they threw to their receivers very much. I wanted them to try to get into some action. I thought they tackled really well."

"Damon had a nice pass breakup – he almost had that pick. I couldn't tell how close he was honestly from up there. I just wanted them to play football a little bit together, and that's why it could change next week."

The Buckeyes' corners will surely be tested by more formidable opponents than FAU, but it was a good start, nonetheless.

Overall, Hafley was proud of what he saw out of his secondary, who spent countless hours working on new techniques and learning new coverages. After the Buckeye defenders had played press-man coverage for the vast majority of their Ohio State careers, Hafley and co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison introduced different zone coverages and techniques to the defense.

It was just one game, but Hafley liked what he saw.

"They played with good fundamentals and technique, they know what they're doing, their eyes are in the right place and they're running to the ball," Hafley said. "We showed today that we can do it, especially in that first half."

Head coach Ryan Day said, "You can feel the violence on the field," referring to his defense with words like "toughness," "intimidating" and "downhill."

It was evident the Ohio State defense played faster than in the past, flying to the football and delivering numerous powerful hits.

"Within the rules of the game, you've got to play fast, got to play violent," Fuller said. "That's what we did for most of the game. I think it only benefits us. And what our opponents see on film, they take that into account as well."

While FAU totaled only the 8 passing yards in the first half, the Owls ended the game with 206. This discrepancy did not go unnoticed among the defensive backs, including Arnette, who mentioned the need to study the film and analyze what went wrong.

"We played all right," Arnette said "I feel like we need to, as a whole, finish better. Anybody can start off good – it's about how you finish. But overall, I feel like we definitely made huge improvements, and I'm very proud of how we played."

Day expressed a similar sentiment as Arnette, disappointed in the letup that happened when Ohio State began entering more reserves into the game.

"On defense, again, I thought we ran to the ball early on. And then our second team came

in a little bit and let them come down the field, and we can't let that happen. We've got to play with depth this season."

A player who may become an important part of the necessary depth Day mentioned is sophomore safety Josh Proctor, who intercepted a pass near the end of the game.

"He's got the ability, he's got great athleticism back there," Hafley said of Proctor. "It was a great play. I'm excited to watch it on tape. It got me excited at the end."

Fuller, a fellow safety, is used to seeing Proctor make plays and was more surprised FAU backup quarterback Justin Agner tested the Buckeyes like that.

"If a quarterback wants to loft the ball up there, our mind-set is that it's ours, too," Fuller said. "Josh has been great at that all camp, and he showed it again today. I wasn't surprised at all."

"I was really happy for him to get that kind of payday in the stadium. That was really special to me. If the ball's in the air, we've got to make them pay for it."

Proctor's pick in mop-up time was one of the highlights of the Buckeyes' performance in game one. But a shaky second half showed they have a lot of work ahead of them to improve.

"We just need to go out there and just think every play we need to dominate every single play," Arnette said. "I feel like maybe because of the lead in the first game we kind of got at ease, but something that we all need to understand is it's a battle every snap. Once we get those first-game jitters out or whatever, we're locked in more for this next game next week."

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Alford Still Confident Despite RB Misses

Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford was all but done with the 2020 recruiting class this summer, as the Buckeyes were widely expected to land commitments from a pair of top-rated prospects in Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star Jaylan Knighton.

Then things suddenly changed.

Knighton took an unexpected unofficial visit to Florida State for the Seminoles' Saturday Night Lights recruiting extravaganza then pledged his services to the program just a few days later on July 30. Robinson, meanwhile, informed the staff he was no longer interested in going to college far from home and committed to Texas on Aug. 2.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

Alford cannot speak about either prospect or the situation directly because of NCAA regulations, but he was recently asked during a media availability about similar but hypothetical situations.

"This is a very transparent program," Alford said. "You're not going to have to guess how I feel (about missing out Robinson and Knighton). It happens. That's life. It happens in every walk of life and in every job. Is it frustrating? Yes. But at the end of the day, people have to do what they've got to do. It is what it is."

With the running back board wiped clean, Alford had to refocus his recruiting efforts on the current cycle. He reached out to a number of former targets, including Akron Archbishop Hoban four-star DeaMonte Trayanum – who

remains solid in his commitment to Arizona State – and Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star Sam Adams, a teammate of four-star wide receiver commit Gee Scott who recently pledged his services to the home-state Huskies.

The Buckeyes also ramped up their recruitment of Dublin (Ohio) Coffman four-star all-purpose back Michael Drennen, who seemingly no longer had a spot in the class following a commitment from St. Louis four-star wide receiver Mookie Cooper – as the two would conceivably play the same slot receiver position at the next level.

Now it appears the staff is open to using Drennen in ways similar to junior running back Demario McCall, who will get his fair share of carries out of the backfield but also be an option to catch passes in the slot.

Ohio State also recently offered Lancaster, Texas, four-star running back Kevontre Bradford, but that relationship is still fairly new, and the Buckeyes have ground to make up compared to programs that got in the door much earlier in the process.

That said, Alford feels very confident in his recruiting acumen – even if that means it takes several months to fill the vacant spots on the recruiting board.

"We'll be fine," Alford said. "I'll put it that way. And we're going to get the guys that want to be here."

Ohio State Welcomes Several Commits to Campus

As is the case with any game throughout the course of the season, Ohio State hosted several prospects for unofficial and official visits the weekend of Aug. 31.

Among the notable names was the aforementioned Scott, who took an official visit because his high school's regular-season schedule will prevent him from visiting again this season. He was joined by a number of fellow commits, including 2020 Cincinnati Princeton five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson; 2020

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

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

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

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

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

Warren (Mich.) De La Salle Collegiate three-star offensive tackle Grant Toutant; 2020 Beech Grove, Ind., three-star offensive guard Josh Fryar; 2021 Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer; and 2021 Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star offensive tackle Ben Christman, all of whom were on campus in an unofficial capacity.

WR Commit Mookie Cooper Transfers School

Speaking of Cooper, his senior year is now in flux after he withdrew from St. Louis Trinity Christian and enrolled at Maryland

Heights (Mo.) Pattonville on Aug. 29.

The 5-9, 183-pound Cooper – who is considered the 14th-best wide receiver and No. 75 prospect overall in the 2020 recruiting class – did so of his own accord in order to graduate from high school early and enroll at Ohio State in January.

Many private schools do not allow high school seniors to finish high school early, a situation the Buckeyes have already had to deal with this cycle when the aforementioned Johnson transferred from Cincinnati St. Xavier to Cincinnati Princeton.



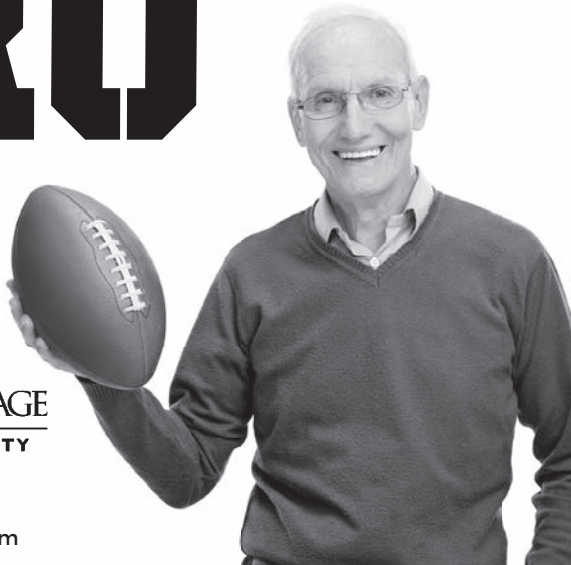

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ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

Ohio State was essentially forced to reset the running back board in early August after Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star Jaylan Knighton committed to Texas and Florida State, respectively.

With most of the country's top-rated running backs now committed elsewhere, how do you anticipate the Buckeyes will move forward as they look to land a pair of running backs in this recruiting cycle?

"I think the key for Ohio State right now is to make sure they don't panic and chase a kid that isn't going to be a real difference maker in the offense. While losing out on a pair of top talents they felt were coming to Columbus is a tough pill to swallow, the staff can't exacerbate the issue by bringing in players that aren't the right fit.

"The last month – and the next month – is key for re-evaluating prospects they've already offered and searching high and low to find new guys that fit the program like Lancaster, Texas, four-star Kevontre Bradford, and then building relationships that are strong enough to overcome the time they lost when the Buckeyes believed they were done recruiting the position."

Speaking of running backs, we've seen a number of 247Sports Crystal Ball predictions recently placed in favor of Kentucky for Dublin (Ohio) Coffman four-star Michael Drennen.

Is that simply a product of Ohio State not making him a priority or more so a result of the Wildcats' recruiting efforts, and do you think the Buckeyes will turn up the heat soon so as to not fall behind?

"The recruitment of Drennen is interesting. He received an early Ohio State offer but never seemed to be in a hurry to make a decision. In

doing so, he was left behind as Brian Hartline and Tony Alford – the coaches who would utilize his skill set – found other players that have since committed or changed their minds, in the case of Alford.

"For the month of July, it was believed there was not going to be any room at Ohio State for Drennen. Then suddenly, things changed. Was the relationship damaged because of that? Is he on the list of guys that need to be re-evaluated? Or maybe he just wants a chance to get away from home in college?

"There are a lot of people still bullish on the idea of Drennen ending up with the Buckeyes, but I am not one of them. I think the fit for both sides is lacking, but the longer he lets his recruitment play out, the more time he allows Ohio State to evaluate. If that's where he wants to be, I think – personally – that is a good idea."

Sanford (N.C.) Lee County five-star defensive end Desmond Evans and Chattanooga (Tenn.) McCallie School four-star defensive end Jay Hardy recently left Ohio State off their respective top schools lists.

Assuming the Buckeyes are looking to add one or two more players at the position, where does defensive line coach Larry Johnson turn?

"There are four positions left with needs to be filled in the 2020 recruiting class, and defensive end is one of them. The Buckeyes want to add another pair of linemen, and there aren't any slam-dunk answers out there right now.

"Johnson has stayed in regular communication with Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School four-star Jacolbe Cowan and Knoxville (Tenn.) Catholic four-star Tyler Baron, but each of those players is going to be a difficult battle to win. There are a host of very good players close to home for the

Buckeyes that could be worth monitoring in the months to come, though.

"Lima (Ohio) Senior three-star Brandon Taylor – a Penn State commit – and Hilliard (Ohio) Davidson three-star Gage Keys – a Minnesota pledge – are interesting prospects. In general, though, Johnson is a patient recruiter who isn't likely to make any dramatic moves if he's not 100 percent sold on a prospect as a person and a player. There will be a number of prospects that make their way to Columbus this fall to determine if there's a fit."

Ohio State hasn't landed a commitment for the class of 2020 since Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star linebacker/safety Kourt Williams made the call on July 29, which is understandable given the limited number of spots remaining in the class.

Who do you think will be the next #BOOM for the Buckeyes, and how soon is that likely to happen?

"The beauty of what the Buckeyes have done throughout the summer is that there is no need for panicking about the 2020 class and its lack of visible momentum right now.

"There are 21 verbal pledges in the class – not counting Cincinnati La Salle three-star kicker Jake Seibert, who will grayshirt his first year on campus – and I think the goal from here is to find another quarterback, a pair of running backs, a pair of defensive linemen and one more defensive back, preferably a cornerback.

"Who those players are is anyone's guess, but with three months until the December signing period, you can expect the Buckeyes to stay busy finding guys that make the most sense in 2020 while working to launch the 2021 class on the backs of that group's talented early commitments."

Both prospects hope to make an immediate impact in Columbus, so being on campus for winter workouts and throughout spring practice is invaluable.

Hafley Proving Worth On Recruiting Trail

During a recent media availability, Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley made it a point to tell reporters he was a college coach at heart despite spending the last seven years in the NFL.

Hafley had to quickly reacclimate himself to the recruiting portion of the gig, especially the time he spends away from his family while searching the country for the nation's top prospects. He's done a great job so far, as evidenced by his No. 4 spot in the 247Sports recruiter rankings.

Hafley played a key role in the Buckeyes landing commitments from La Habra, Calif. four-star cornerback Clark Phillips; Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic four-star safety Lathan Ransom; Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep four-star linebacker Cody Simon; and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star athlete Kourt Williams, as well as re-securing a pledge from Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star cornerback Lejond Cavazos.

Not bad for someone who admitted he had no clue what to say when he

Continued On Page 30

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Ohio State Wisely Invests In Recruiting Department

Continued From Page 29

picked up the phone to call a recruit for the first time after being hired by Ohio State and passing his NCAA-mandated recruiting test.

"To be honest with you, I had no clue what to expect when I came back recruiting," Hafley said. "I didn't have much expectation. I knew I had a job to do, and then with the support people we had and recruiting for this place, I just went out and tried the best that I could. Hopefully some good things continue to happen."

There's no doubt Hafley was just being modest, though. After all, he'd earned a reputation as one of the nation's best recruiters while coaching at Rutgers and Pittsburgh. During his seven-year stint in the NFL with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Cleveland Browns and San Francisco 49ers, the 40-year-old Hafley was praised for being one of the game's young innovative minds.

"Jeff has always been a tremendous recruiter," head coach Ryan Day said. "People ask me if he can recruit, and I think that is one of the best things that he does. Now, because he was in the NFL for seven years, people don't know that. But when he was at Pitt and when he was at Rutgers, he was one of the best recruiters in the entire country. He was recruiting some of the best players to those schools."

"I knew that about him from a long time ago, and when we worked together at the 49ers, I told him that he was going to be an unbelievable head football coach someday. I believed in him from the get-go."

Despite the immediate success, Hafley knows he can't rest on his laurels or let Ohio State's brand and knack for producing pro defensive backs speak or do the work for him. He must instead continue to build strong, lasting relationships with prospects and their families.

"You just be yourself, be honest," Hafley said. "Keep it real and show them what you

can do for them, show what the university can do for them. Don't lie to them and don't sell them on things that aren't true. And at the end of the day, if they want to come here, let's go. And if they don't? Then hey, you know, go somewhere else."

"I'm having a blast. It's been great. The guys that we get a chance to recruit and talk to? It's been a lot of fun. I'm just doing everything as hard as I can, whatever they tell me to do. Hopefully things work out well."

Ohio State Has Middle-Of-Pack Recruiting Budget

Recruiting is the lifeblood of every college football program, which is why it's no surprise that schools spend a lot of money to lure the nation's top-rated recruits to their respective campuses.

You might be surprised as to which blue-blood programs open the checkbooks and which are most selective in their incurred costs on the recruiting trail.

Georgia (\$2.63 million) reportedly has the nation's largest recruiting budget, while Alabama (\$2.34 million), Tennessee (\$2.00 million), Texas (\$1.82 million) and Clemson (\$1.79 million) round out the top five according to the Stadium website. Michigan spends a Big Ten-leading \$1.4 million – which is good for eighth overall – while Ohio State sits at No. 22 with at \$944,354.

In addition to the Wolverines, the Buckeyes spend less than Penn State, Nebraska and Minnesota and only \$125,000 or so more than Rutgers, Michigan State and Illinois, among others.

That's not to say Ohio State doesn't put the utmost emphasis on recruiting, as evidenced by the overall level of talent on the team and second-place recruiting finishes in 2013, 2017 and 2018. But the Buckeyes have long been a trend-setter when it comes to creative recruiting pitches, which include – but are not limited to – impressive graphics, creating personal brands for recruits and players and so forth, and that may ultimately go farther than cash.

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A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1989

Cleveland St. Ignatius quarterback Joe Pickens may have been the best-known Ohio high school player at his position this year. But there were several other excellent quarterbacks finishing their prep careers in 1989 whom Ohio State would undoubtedly attempt to lure to Columbus.

The Buckeyes had signed no quarterbacks the previous season. Franklin's Lance Harp and Newark Catholic's Doug Wollenberg were not heavily recruited by Ohio State. Harp went to South Carolina, while Wollenberg eventually ended up at OSU on a baseball scholarship.

The Buckeyes actively sought quarterbacks Glenn Foley of Cherry Hill, N.J., and Adrian Jarrell of Athens, Ga., but wound up telling both players as signing day neared they could not offer them a scholarship.

Foley eventually signed with Boston College, while Jarrell was at Notre Dame.

25 Years Ago – 1994

The Ohio State football coaching staff appeared to have made a very important early stride in the year's recruiting effort.

In Ohio, the talent-laden northeastern part of the state had been a priority seemingly every year for John Cooper's crew. That venture seemed to be on course as OSU was very close to locking down Eastlake North tight end prospect Steve Wisniewski, generally regarded as the top recruit in the area.

The Buckeyes had several able-bodied tight ends in the fold already with D.J. Jones, Rickey Dudley, Bob Houser and John Lumpkin all vying for playing time. But by getting the 6-5, 235-pound Wisniewski, OSU could get the ball rolling in northeast Ohio once again. The recent landing of such players as Korey Stringer, Mike Vrabel, Eric Gohlstein and Pepe Pearson had started the trend in that area.

20 Years Ago – 1999

As Ohio State faced Miami (Fla.) in the Kickoff Classic, a number of players on both sides admitted they had had interest in the other school during recruiting.

In fact, OSU's Jerry Westbrook, Courtland Bullard, Fred Sturup, Steve Bellisari and Ryan Pickett were Florida natives who felt a tug toward Miami at some point during

their recruitment.

Likewise, the Buckeyes coveted a number of the Hurricanes, including Dan Morgan, Al Blades, Sheven Marshall and Markese Fitzgerald.

Behind recruiting coordinator Bill Conley, OSU had stepped up its efforts in the Sunshine State. Just the previous year, OSU had signed three of the state's top 25 prospects, as ranked by SuperPrep, in offensive tackles Bryce Bishop and Maurice Harris and defensive end Sturup. Roshard Gilyard also nearly signed with the Buckeyes before heading to Auburn.

15 Years Ago – 2004

His time at the EA Sports Elite 11 quarterback camp provided Cincinnati St. Xavier quarterback Rob Schoenhofst a forum to make two statements.

The first announcement came aloud on the second day of the camp, held July 21-25 in San Juan Capistrano, Calif., when Schoenhofst said he would attend Ohio State in 2005, choosing the Buckeyes over Michigan.

Schoenhofst's play – and improvement – at the camp then answered why he was there in the first place and why he was so highly ranked and sought-after despite a rather pedestrian junior season.

Though his statistics the previous season as a junior – a 45 percent completion rating for 1,200 yards, 12 touchdowns and four interceptions – certainly didn't stand out, Schoenhofst was nonetheless rated the No. 4 pro-style quarterback in the nation by Rivals.com.

10 Years Ago – 2009

In a move that surprised absolutely no one, the Buckeyes offered Braxton Miller of Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne a scholarship as soon as they were allowed to do so.

Viewed as the heir apparent to Terrelle Pryor in Columbus if he became a Buckeye, the 6-1, 174-pound Miller was on track to be a four-year starter for head coach Jay Minton. He had landed written offers from West Virginia, Michigan, Cincinnati, UCLA, Georgia, Illinois, Purdue, Miami (Fla.) and LSU, among others.

"I'm looking for a program that will fit me and have all the things I'll need after football," he said. "There is no guarantee anyone will play in the NFL, and I want to make

sure I have all the things in place to be successful off the field as well. I'll also be looking at the atmosphere and the people that will be around me."

Five Years Ago – 2014

Although the 2015 recruiting cycle was heating up, one of the more intriguing Ohio State recruiting storylines that was developing was the 2016 quarterback battle that was taking shape.

The Buckeyes were believed to be the leader for Potomac (Md.) Bullis four-star quarterback Dwayne Haskins (6-2, 180), the No. 11 quarterback in the country, but they were also on top for the player ranked right above him in that class.

Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star quarterback Jarrett Guarantano named a final four of Alabama, Clemson, Ohio State and Oklahoma and put the Buckeyes on top at that point.

"Ohio State's probably my favorite right now," he said. "They're the favorite, but I really like everything about them – the coaching staff, the facilities, the campus. Everything struck me. I didn't think it was going to be as good as it was, but now that I went there it really amazed me."

One Year Ago – 2018

Buford, Ga., 2019 five-star Ohio State commit Harry Miller, a center, and his mother, Kristina, showed public support for Meyer on Aug. 25 through a series of tweets and statements. In the wake of a university investigation involving Meyer's handling of domestic abuse allegations against former wide receivers coach Zach Smith, Kristina Miller revealed her story as a survivor of abuse when she stood by Meyer in a statement.

"If I thought for one second that Urban Meyer would not only condone that kind of behavior, but turn a blind eye to it, as he's been accused of doing, he most certainly would not be a dear friend and you could bet our son would not be spending the next four years of his life with him ... he doesn't and he didn't," a part of Kristina Miller's statement read. "His biggest fault was in trying to help someone (Zach Smith) who obviously had too many problems, some never proven and many unknown, a choice now I imagine he deeply regrets. I know this man well. He is imperfectly human but not malicious or unkind. If you ask anyone who truly knows him, they will tell you the same."



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New Quarterbacks All Over The Big Ten Conference

This year could be considered one of transition in the Big Ten, thanks in large part to turnover at some of the usual top schools in the conference.

BIG TEN NOTES Patrick Mayhorn

Ohio State, Penn State and Wisconsin all had quarterback changes to make this offseason, and outside of that upper echelon, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Northwestern, Purdue and Rutgers all have new signal callers this season. That's a whopping 10 new starters at the most important position in football in one conference.

While a few of the schools – namely Maryland, Ohio State, Penn State and Purdue – all had pretty obvious picks to make, almost every school held off on naming its starter until near the start of the season, as they ramped up for week one action.

To start at the top, alongside Ohio State selecting Justin Fields on Aug. 19, Penn State announced sophomore Sean Clifford as its starter on Aug. 23, while Wisconsin chose junior Jack Coan on Aug. 25.

All three impressed in their first games



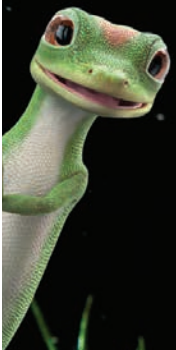
MARYLAND FOOTBALL/TWITTER

ON THE MOVE – Quarterback Josh Jackson transferred to Maryland after starting the first three games for Virginia Tech last season.

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FOOTBALL (1-0)

April 13 SPRING GAME, Gray 35, Scarlet 17.
Aug. 31 FLORIDA ATLANTIC, W 45-21.
Sept. 7 CINCINNATI, 12 p.m.; **14** at Indiana, 12 p.m.;
21 MIAMI (OHIO); **28** at Nebraska.
Oct. 5 MICHIGAN STATE, 7:30 p.m.; **18** at Northwestern, 8:30 p.m.; **26** WISCONSIN.
Nov. 9 MARYLAND; **16** at Rutgers; **23** PENN STATE;
30 at Michigan, 12 p.m..
Dec. 7 Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis, 8 p.m.

CROSS COUNTRY

Aug. 30 Miami (Ohio) at Oxford, Ohio.
Sept. 14 Commodore Classic at Nashville, Tenn.; **28** Ohio State Invitational at Columbus, Ohio.
Oct. 18 Nuttyscomb Wisconsin Invitational at Madison, Wisc.;
Nov. 3 Big Ten Championships at Columbus, Ohio;
15 NCAA Regional Championships at Madison, Wisc.; **23** NCAA Championships at Terre Haute, Ind.

FIELD HOCKEY (1-0)

Aug. 17 OHIO (exhibition); **25** at Michigan (exhibition); **30** UMASS, W 7-0.
Sept. 2 BOSTON, Noon; **6** at James Madison, 6 p.m.;
8 at Virginia, 1 p.m.; **13** CENTRAL MICHIGAN, 4 p.m.; **15** LOUISVILLE, 1 p.m.; **20** NORTHWESTERN, 3 p.m.; **27** at Iowa, 3 p.m.; **29** at Indiana, Noon.
Oct. 6 at Ohio, 2 p.m.; **11** MICHIGAN, 4 p.m.; **13**

STANFORD, 3 p.m.; **18** RUTGERS, 3 p.m.; **20** MARYLAND, Noon; **25** at Penn State, 6 p.m.; **27** at Kent State, 1 p.m.

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

MEN'S SOCCER (1-1)

Aug. 17 XAVIER (exhibition), T 1-1; **20** MT. VERNON NAZARENE (exhibition), W 7-1; **24** at Butler (exhibition), L 2-1; **30** WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. CSUN, L 4-3.

Sept. 1 WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. UIC, W 1-0; **6** Dayton Classic vs. Dayton, 7:30 p.m.; **8** Dayton Classic vs. EIU, 5 p.m.; **13** at Bowling Green, 7 p.m.; **17** at South Florida, 7 p.m.; **21** PENN STATE, 7 p.m.; **24** WEST VIRGINIA, 7 p.m.; **27** at Northwestern, 8 p.m.

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

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

WOMEN'S SOCCER (3-1)

Aug. 22 LOUISVILLE, L 2-1; **25** MISSOURI, L 3-1; **28** at UCF, Cancelled.

Sept. 1 at South Florida, 6 p.m.; **6** at Texas A&M, 9 p.m.; **8** at TCU, 8 p.m.; **13** MIAMI (OH), 7

p.m.; **15** OHIO, 6 p.m.; **19** MICHIGAN STATE, 8 p.m., **22** MICHIGAN, 2 p.m.; **27** at Wisconsin, 6 p.m.; **29** at Minnesota, 2 p.m.

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

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (2-1)

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

Sept. 6 at Pittsburgh, 8 p.m.; **7** vs. Duquesne at Pittsburgh, Penn., 11 a.m.; vs. Green Bay at Pittsburgh, Penn., 6 p.m.; **13** vs. Tulane at Bowling Green, Kent., 2 p.m.; vs. Western Kentucky at Bowling Green, Kent., 8 p.m.; **14** vs. Bowling Green at Bowling Green, Kent., 5 p.m.; **19** MIAMI (OH), 6 p.m.; **20** ILLINOIS STATE, 10 a.m.; DAYTON, 8 p.m.; **25** at Maryland, 6 p.m.; **29** at Michigan, 2 p.m.

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

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

of action this past weekend. Fields threw for 234 yards and four touchdowns on 18 completions and added a 51-yard touchdown run in Ohio State's 45-21 win over Florida Atlantic. Clifford and Penn State rolled to a 79-7 win over Idaho, with Clifford throwing for 280 yards and two scores on 14 completions, though he played limited minutes. Coan's 199 yards on 19 completions is the lowest number of the bunch, but he impressed in Wisconsin 49-0 win over South Florida.

From outside of that top group, Indiana surprised many by naming redshirt freshman Michael Penix Jr. the starter over incumbent Peyton Ramsey. Penix Jr. paid on that gamble in Indiana's 34-24 win over Ball State, where he flashed a strong arm on his way to 326 yards and a score.

Illinois selected Michigan transfer Brandon Peters on Aug. 21 despite a challenge from freshman Isaiah Williams. Peters tossed for 163 yards and three scores while adding one on the ground in Illinois' 42-3 blowout win over Akron.

Maryland's choice was an obvious one, but new head coach Mike Locksley still waited until Aug. 26 to name Virginia Tech transfer Josh Jackson the starter. Jackson was very good in his first showing, putting up 245 yards and four scores against Howard on the way to a 79-0 win.

Minnesota and Northwestern selected highly touted youngsters, but neither Tanner Morgan (Minnesota) nor Hunter Johnson (Northwestern) looked the part in his first action as a starter. Minnesota struggled mightily with FCS-opponent South Dakota State but was able to slip away with a 28-21 win. Morgan threw for 176 yards and one score but also tossed an interception. Johnson had no luck finding traction in Northwestern 17-7 loss to Stanford. The Clemson transfer threw for just 55 yards on 6-for-17 passing and was briefly replaced by T.J. Green, who looked good until sustaining a severe concussion.

Purdue had an easy decision to choose Elijah Sindelar, but the senior was up and down in a 34-31 loss to Nevada in a Friday night game, Aug. 30. He threw for 423 yards and four touchdowns, but he also had two interceptions, including one that set up Nevada's game-winning, last-second field goal.

Lastly, Rutgers picked Texas Tech transfer McLane Carter over incumbent Artur Sitkowski and seemed justified in doing so when Carter led the Scarlet Knights to a 48-21 win over UMass. Carter tossed two scores and 340 yards on the day, but he did have three interceptions.

Donovan Peoples-Jones Misses Opener

Michigan was without star receiver Donovan Peoples-Jones for its Aug. 31 matchup with Middle Tennessee State. The junior missed the game with an undisclosed injury.

Peoples-Jones was seen in a walking boot on his right foot during the Wolverines' 40-21 victory over the Blue Raiders, and Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh had yet to make an official statement on Peoples-Jones' timeline as of press time.

Injury troubles are not new for Peoples-Jones. He struggled with a groin injury for

much of the offseason and was on and off the field consistently in his first two years in Ann Arbor. He was the leading receiver for Michigan last season and is expected to retain that title this season if he can make a quick return to the field.

Michigan was missing a few other key players, including defensive lineman Donovan Jeter, offensive lineman Jon Runyan Jr. and defensive tackle Michael Dwumfour.

"There was a few guys, more than that, that were working through something, that we didn't have play in this game," Harbaugh said.

When asked if he sees Jeter and Dwumfour playing in week two against Army, Harbaugh said, "Yeah, I do. I don't know. We've got to see on Mike Dwumfour. Expect Donovan Jeter, expect, perhaps Jon Runyan. And we'll see on Donovan Peoples-Jones as well. Don't know for sure."

B1G Players Of The Week

While the quarterback changes were the most consequential pieces of Big Ten news this week, Wisconsin's Jonathan Taylor, a strong contender for the Heisman Trophy, ran for 135 yards and two scores on just 16 carries along with two receptions for 48 yards and two touchdowns against South Florida.

Purdue receiver Rondale Moore and Michigan State defensive end Kenny Willekes also excelled.

Moore was easily Purdue's best player, picking up 124 yards and a 39-yard touchdown on 11 receptions in a 34-31 loss to Nevada, though he saw just three receptions in the second half. Willekes led a Michigan State defense that gave up just seven points to Tulsa and held them to minus-73 rushing yards. He had a team-high seven tackles including two for loss and one sack. Willekes was named a Walter Camp Player of the Week.



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Chris Holtmann Seeks Chemistry For Young Roster

The 11-day trip to Spain in August of 2018 was credited by Ohio State men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann with forging the chemistry and brotherhood that helped the Buckeyes start the season strong.

Spending time together and playing three games was crucial in the development of a young team that included seven new players who were either transfers or incoming freshmen.

Not only did the trip provide bonding

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

and cultural enlightenment, but Holtmann was able to put his charges through 10 extra practices before leaving for Madrid.

The players returned to Columbus, began classes less than two weeks later and were off and running in their preseason conditioning and training.

"What that does is expedite the process a little bit," Holtmann said Aug. 27 as he looked back to the venture a year ago. "You've got more practices, obviously, but more than anything it's the time spent together. You get a little bit of a feel overseas how guys are in game action. Sometimes that can be a little bit deceptive, too, based on the competition."

The Buckeyes opened the season on the road by defeating Cincinnati 64-56 and won 12 of their first 13 games before reality hit with the heart of the Big Ten schedule.

OSU finished 20-15 and made an exit in the second round of the NCAA Tournament for the second straight season.

There was no trip this summer, as international excursions of that type are limited per NCAA rules, so Holtmann and his staff had to plan accordingly for a roster that for the 2019-20 season will again have four freshmen and junior transfer forward Justice Sueing (he won't be eligible to play until 2020-21).

"This is the more traditional summer," Holtmann said. "That (overseas trip) only happens once every four years, so you try to expedite the growth process. You try to expedite the process of your team growing together and learning about each other, learning each other's strengths. You're really trying to work toward having a connected group."

In addition to the offseason workouts, Holtmann noted that he is finding ways to cement the harmony.

"You try to spend a lot of time together" he said. "We've continued to do that. Our group went paintballing on (Aug. 23). We try to do as much as we can here, and that will continue to be the process. I think the group likes each other, but we've still got a long way to go in a lot of areas in terms of this group coming together, which is normal when you have new faces."

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commits

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

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

Holtmann, by the way, said he was absent that paintball day because of a doctor's appointment, "Or I would have been the main target, that's for sure."

Apparently, the players turned their umbrage to strength and conditioning coach Quadrian Banks.

"They took it out on Q a good bit," Holtmann said. "Q returned the favor from what I understand. We've got some paintball fanatics. Our trainer, Jeff Deits, if you got paid to paintball, he might change professions."

On The Mend

Holtmann gave updates on several players who sustained injuries during the summer beginning with sophomore forward Justin Ahrens' back problems that kept him sidelined most of the summer and junior guard Musa Jallow having a swollen ankle.

"We've had some bumps and bruises that have held some guys out of some things," Holtmann said. "All in all, for the most part we've been healthy. I'd love to be a little less banged up than we were, but that's part of it."

Junior forward Kyle Young, who missed time last season due to a stress fracture in his right leg, gave the staff a scare when he had pain that they feared was appendicitis. Young went to the emergency room, but it was a false alarm.

"He's healthy now outside of that little hiccup there," Holtmann said. "He looks good. He's recovered, rested. He might have come out of the summer - we had a lot of guys who had good moments, but Kyle consistently performed well in the summer workouts we had."

Let The Games Begin

The Buckeyes' 20-game Big Ten schedule was announced Aug. 23.

Ohio State opens against Penn State at Value City Arena on Dec. 7 followed by a game at Minnesota on Dec. 15.

The Buckeyes play home-and-home series with Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Maryland, Nebraska, Penn State and Wisconsin. They play Iowa, Michigan State and Northwestern solely on the road while Illinois, Purdue and Rutgers will face the Buckeyes only in Columbus.

OSU will play 15 games against teams that made the NCAA Tournament, including nonconference foes Cincinnati, Kentucky, North Carolina and Villanova.

"It's a terrific schedule, a great home schedule," Holtmann said. "I'm excited for our fans that they're going to get to see some games that so many of our great fans have been wanting to see. As a coach, that's exciting. I hope we perform well. That's my job and our responsibility."

Bring Them In

As much as football dominates the landscape sometimes to the chagrin of

other sports, a home football weekend is a valuable tool.

Such was the case when Holtmann brought in a pair of 2020 recruits for the Buckeyes' season opener against Florida Atlantic in Ohio Stadium on Aug. 31.

Burlington (N.J.) Camden four-star power forward Lance Ware (6-9, 215) and four-star shooting guard Moses Moody (6-5, 180) from Little Rock (Ark.) Montverde Academy each made official visits to Ohio State the last weekend of August.

Moody, the No. 43 recruit, seventh at his position according to 247Sports.com, has put the Buckeyes in his final seven along with Arkansas, Florida, Kansas, Michigan, Oregon and Southern Cal.

Ware is rated 35th overall, sixth at his position and the top prospect in New Jersey. In addition to OSU, he is considering Kentucky, Miami, Michigan and Providence.

The Buckeyes have one spot as of now for 2020.

"I think we're going to run the race with a lot of guys, whatever that looks like," Holtmann said. "We obviously have had some visits planned, some visits scheduled, some visits coming up."

Also, three-star forward Donovan "Puff" Johnson (6-7, 185) from Moon Area High School near Pittsburgh took an unofficial visit Aug. 22 and is expected to make an official one sometime in the fall. He's the No. 38 prospect and 13th strong forward in the class of 2020.

On Aug. 3 he named his seven finalists as Arizona, Louisville, Miami, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Ohio State and Pittsburgh. Johnson transferred to Phoenix (Ariz.) Hillcrest Prep on Sept. 3 for his senior season.

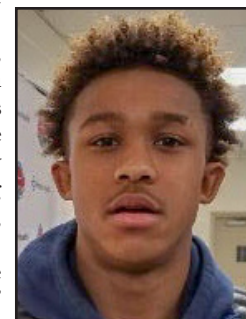
Speaking of transfers, Meechie Johnson, a 2021 commit, will switch to the Willoughby (Ohio) International Sports Academy from Cleveland Garfield Heights for his final two academic years and sit the 2019-20 season to continue rehabilitation on his right knee after a torn anterior cruciate ligament sustained before a playoff game on March 7.

Moving On

Holtmann made his first comments on former OSU player Scoonie Penn being hired away from the program on Aug. 5 to be an assistant coach with the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies.

Penn was Ohio State's director of recruiting and player development the past two seasons.

"Scoonie was great for us," Holtmann said. "He was great to have around. We loved him and his family. We loved having him a part of the program these two years, but it was really something, even though he was debating because it was a move, I think it was a decision he definitely had to make."



Meechie Johnson

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McGuff Ready To Start Over Again In 2019

The 2018-19 season for Ohio State women's basketball was a peculiar one.

On one hand, there was the departure of the vast majority of the contributions from the season before with Kelsey Mitchell, one of the greatest players in program history, leaving as well as Stephanie Mavunga, Asia Doss, Linnae Harper and Sierra Calhoun, all of whom were big-impact players who played a whole lot of minutes.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

But there was also a belief that the 2019 recruiting class was something special, something worth building on when looking to the future.

With all that in mind, head coach Kevin McGuff and his staff built a team filled with graduate transfers, all of whom were giving their last hurrah with the Buckeyes while also providing leadership and experience for the new freshmen in the 2018 class who showed promise.

That team finished No. 5 in the Big Ten, much higher than many expected Ohio State to finish, before fizzling out with a loss to Wisconsin – a team the Buckeyes had beaten twice during the regular season, with both victories coming only a month prior – in the Big Ten tournament and then falling to Morehead State in the Women's NIT.

But all in all, McGuff looks back at that season as a positive experience, especially with what is coming this year.

"I think in general we had a successful year," McGuff said. "We had a stretch of time where we had a lot of great players and a lot of success. We kind of had a transitional year last year, but I felt like we laid the foundation for a great culture moving forward, and we were able to recruit really well and kind of set up for what this year and the coming years can be with this group."

That foundation will now be passed to the

seven incoming freshmen the Buckeyes are bringing in this season. They include Aixa Wone Aranaz, Kierstan Bell, Madison Greene, Rikki Harris, Rebeka Mikulasikova, Kaelynn Satterfield and Jacy Sheldon.

As far as veteran leadership, Jensen Caretti is the only senior on the team, with Savitha Jayaraman being the only junior, aside from guard Braxtin Miller, who is a transfer from Oklahoma State and will likely have to sit out the 2019-20 season due to transfer rules.

Regarding Miller's transfer, Ohio State has sent an appeal to allow Miller to play this season, but the NCAA has not approved or denied the appeal.

With both Caretti and Jayaraman being featured minimally in game time throughout their respective collegiate careers, it may be up to sophomores Dorka Juhasz, Aaliyah Patty and Janai Crooms to step up and become leaders in only their second year.

Juhasz was the team's leading scorer and rebounder in her true freshman season, averaging 11.7 points and 9.0 rebounds per game, while shooting 45.8 percent from the field.

Crooms was No. 3 on the team in scoring but was Ohio State's most consistent shooter from deep. Crooms averaged 8.8 points a game on 48.0 percent shooting while hitting 20 of her 43 attempts from three, good for a 46.5 percent rate.

Patty didn't find the score sheet as often, but she still put in a respectable 6.2 points and 3.8 rebounds per game in 19.4 minutes per game.

"They have to grow up quickly," McGuff said of the second-year players. "The sophomores played a lot of minutes last year, so they've got to be really great leaders and set a great example for all the new faces we have."

As far as the seven first-year players go, McGuff said that all of them have had flashes, but that there is still too much time before the season starts to see any of them really standing out at this point.

"I think they all have a chance to be successful here and really contribute," McGuff said.

With the early practices – games don't start for the Buckeyes until Nov. 3, with an exhibition against Urbana – McGuff isn't try-

ing to throw anything complicated in as far as schemes or plays, at least not yet.

He said that the wide variety of new faces coming in has made him go back to the simplicities of the game before going to anything more in depth.

"With so many new people, we've kind of gone slow and really tried to lay the fundamentals of what we're going to do offensively and defensively," he said.

Although there was an influx of veteran players last year, this year it is an influx of seven first-year players, which allows the seventh-year head coach to plan more for the future and to do it with a loaded recruiting class that is ready to compete now.

"It was starting over last year. It's starting over again this year, but we have so many young people now," McGuff said. "Last year we had so many new faces, but it was sort of temporary with the fifth-years. This year it's really building towards something really special."

OSU's Full Season Schedule Released

It may still be a few months before the team shows what it has on the court, but Ohio State's full season schedule was released this week with the announcement of the Big Ten slate for the 2019-20 season.

With the nonconference games already decided – and that part of the schedule looking seemingly daunting with matchups against UConn, Louisville and Stanford – the Buckeyes now know where they will be playing in conference.

Some highlights from the Big Ten sched-

ule for Ohio State include a Dec. 28 game at home against Purdue to open conference play. Two games later, the Buckeyes travel to College Park for the first of two matches this season against Maryland, a team that finished No. 11 nationally last season.

The Jan. 23 road matchup against Iowa should also stand out, with the Hawkeyes finishing No. 8 in the country. Ohio State plays Michigan only once in the regular season, in a Jan. 9 matchup at home. The Buckeyes close the conference schedule as they started it, with a matchup against the Boilermakers, this time on Feb. 29 on the road.

McGuff expects the schedule to be a challenge, but he also said that this is nothing new to the program.

"It's hard, and we've always played a pretty difficult nonconference schedule," McGuff said. "I believe in that. I think it helps your team grow and get better and to be challenged, but I think it's going to be a real challenge for us."

A difficult schedule can make or break a team that is filled with so much inexperience, and McGuff is aware of that. As far as how he believes his team will fare when it comes time for the regular season, he said only time will tell.

"Well, we'll see how we handle it," McGuff said. "That's on us to handle it the right way. We're looking at it as something where we want to really learn and grow, regardless of the wins and losses that we just keep getting better through that and take the information that we get from these tough games and apply it to getting better and improvement."

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Kovach Schoenly Continues Legacy At OSU

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Kelly Kovach Schoenly was hired as the Ohio State head softball coach in 2012, she inherited a program that had gone 45-60 during the previous two seasons, but she expressed her excitement to try to get it back on track.

"I am honored and humbled for the chance to lead the Buckeye softball program, one I have respected for decades," Schoenly said at the time of her hiring. "I would like to thank (athletic director) Gene Smith, (associate athletic director) Heather Lyke and the entire search committee for this incredible opportunity. What makes this university special are the people, the tradition and the excellence. My goal is to continue that legacy within our softball program."

Seven seasons later, Schoenly holds a 234-141-1 record at the helm in Columbus. Twenty-one of her players have earned All-Big Ten or National Fastpitch Coaches Association All-Midwest Region honors, and her team has gone to the NCAA tournament four straight seasons, the longest streak in school history.

"Honestly, if you're not a good person, you're probably not going to make it here," Schoenly told BSB. "We've had some kids come in the program and if they're not really up to the standard, their teammates will make sure they know that. And I think those kinds of kids just don't make it. And they wouldn't make it anywhere because you've got to be about the team."

"As far as the tradition goes, so many teams, before we even arrived here, were fantastic. But I think this senior class, their four straight regionals, that was the excellence part that they got to that no other senior class has done. So that was kind of cool for them."

"But we want to push, and we want to get fur-

ther next year and in years in the future. Honestly, Ohio State is a great place to work, it's a great place for the kids to have their careers, and Gene Smith has done an amazing job of building the structure around us, and then we just fall in line."

Before coming to Ohio State, Schoenly spent six seasons as head coach at Miami (Ohio) and was the program's all-time winningest coach with 188 career victories, leading the RedHawks to their first MAC tournament title in 2009. She also led the team to another MAC tournament title in 2012, earning NCAA tournament berths in both of those seasons.

Prior to her stint at Miami, Schoenly served as an assistant coach at Penn State from 1998-2006, helping guide the Nittany Lions to seven Big Ten tournament appearances and six NCAA tournament berths.

Before her time at Penn State, Schoenly worked as an assistant at her alma mater, Michigan, for three years (1996-98), helping the squad reach the NCAA Women's College World Series three consecutive times. She was honored as part of the NFCA Great Lakes Coaching Staff of the Year in 1998 with the Wolverines.

A standout pitcher when she donned the maize and blue from 1991-1995, Schoenly earned NFCA First-Team All-America honors. A two-time Big Ten Pitcher of the Year and three-time all-conference selection, she was a member of three Big Ten championship teams and finished seventh at the NCAA Women's College World Series as a senior.

While Schoenly can use her firsthand experience to help her players who might be going through similar situations, she doesn't harp on her successes as a dominant collegiate pitcher. The former Wolverine has come to take pride in being a Buckeye.

"I love it here," Schoenly said of Ohio State.

"Let's be real, this is a great place. I always take away from my experience in college because that was my time, but now it's my players' time. It's not about me anymore so I tell them all the time, it doesn't matter what I did in 1993. Like who cares? And they don't care. They just want to have their best experience, and I just want them to have the opportunity to have a great experience. It's not really about me at all, and I enjoyed my college years, don't get me wrong, but this has been so fulfilling to continue building on a great program and keep it going. I've enjoyed my time here immensely so far."

When evaluating a coach's impact on his or her players, it can be difficult to determine if current players are just sucking up to earn their coach's favor, with the hope of earning more playing time. BSB tracked down two of Schoenly's former players, Emily Clark and Lilli Piper, who no longer need to worry about earning their college coach's favor.

Clark and Piper were both selected by the Cleveland Comets in the 2019 National Pro Fastpitch Draft following their senior season. They credited Schoenly for bolstering their confidence in themselves and making them believe they could be professional softball players.

Clark, who became a first-time All-American in the spring, said she and Schoenly have known each other for years because her former coach recruited her while she was still at Miami.

"Going four years with her, she just taught me to believe in myself," Clark said of Schoenly. "She always told Lilli and I how good we are and stuff like that. And I think that's developed me into the kind of player that I am and the way that I carry myself. I think that just goes along with the team, and I thought our team this year had a lot of belief for the most part."

"She will always have an impact on my life

because she did tell me that I need to enter the draft, 'You're good enough.' And she will always catch up on us, once a week, twice a week and just asking how things are so she's just always been a person that cares about you personally, not even about you as a softball player. She wants you to succeed in everything that you do, and she wants to be that person to get you to where you want to go. She's just an awesome person outside of coaching, but she is an awesome person any way."

Piper, a three-time All-American, became one of the most feared hitters in the country after transferring from Akron following her freshman year. The only Buckeye to bat over .400 every season she was here, Piper lauded her former coach for her inspiration.

"I know that she has a lot of belief in us, and I think that's really important," Piper said. "When she puts you out there it's because she 100 percent believes that you can get the job done. And that's important. You don't want to ever have someone look at you not thinking that you can get it done. We've gone through our adversity, and she's always believed in us no matter what the situation was, and I think that's something that's so awesome. Because every single time that she called you over in a tough situation or to talk to you, it was, 'You can do this. You can be that hero of that game. You can make that play.' And I think that's something that's so awesome."

In order to better introduce BSB readers to Ohio State's Olympic sports teams and athletes, we have shifted to more featured-oriented coverage of the various squads. Buckeye Sports Bulletin will provide a roundup of all games, matches and meets involving OSU's teams each Monday on our BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all print subscribers.

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Buckeyes Very Impressive In Season Opener

Going into the 2019 game against the Florida Atlantic Owls, it was easy to identify several areas of concern for Ohio State that needed to be addressed and analyzed starting with this season's opener. Some of these issues revolve around team performance, and others center around coaching. One of the most obvious performance concerns is focused on the Buckeye defense that has a huge chip on its shoulder. Last year's defensive unit endured heavy criticism due to giving up a combination of too many points and too many big plays. It seemed as if the "Silver

The Buckeye offense has enough talent up front, at the wide receiver position and at running back to be dangerous to opponents via the air and on the ground. The question becomes, can Justin Fields handle the demands and pressure that go with being the starting quarterback at Ohio State? Justin has a tremendous supporting cast around him, but he is the lead actor on stage, and he must come to perform at a high level each and every Saturday.

Ryan Day has assembled a fine coaching staff, and most have Big Ten experience and knowledge. Throughout spring practice and August camp, the players have seemed to buy into the system, philosophy and scheme the coaches have been preaching both offensively and defensively. From meeting structure to practice organization, everyone seems to be on the same page. Game day is different than practices and intrasquad scrimmages, and no matter how similar a coach tries to make the two, the real measure is how everything clicks when the pressure is on and every play counts. That's why it was important for the Buckeye staff to get one under their belts then analyze what went right and what needs to be tweaked before game number two.

Tenacious Defense

Buckeye fans who were concerned if the Ohio State defense would take on a new look in 2019 got their prayers answered Aug. 31. It was a hard-nosed and tenacious group that attacked the wide-eyed and startled Owls from Boca Raton from the opening snap. Florida Atlantic couldn't muster positive yards until well into the third quarter due to the aggressive and swarming nature of the Buckeye defenders who played with a renewed confidence in each other as well as themselves.

Linebackers made their reads quickly then flew to the football with reckless abandon, making punishing and sure tackles. The secondary took great converge and pursuit angles to the ball and weren't left flat-footed in the open field, missing in space like last season. Buckeye defensive backs tallied only one interception but blanketed Owl wide receivers, forcing numerous incomple- tions. Adding to the outstanding performances of the linebacking and secondary units was the ever-intimidating defensive front that kept pres-

sure on Owl quarterback Chris Robison early and often. Defensive line coach Larry Johnson showed so much confidence in his guys that he went well into his three-deep lineup.

The first-unit defense held the frustrated Owls to just two first downs in the first half and one third-down conversion in 10 attempts. The statistic that may best exemplify the tenacity of the Buckeye defense is four quarterback sacks and twelve tackles for loss in this opening contest. A very solid and welcome performance by the starting defense, but it's almost assured the Buckeye defensive coaching staff will demand the second- and third-stringers play up to standards set by the front-liners.

Fields is for Real

Justin Fields probably didn't grade out to an A-plus performance Saturday, but he played exceptionally well for a first-time starter in Ohio Stadium. He proved he is an outstanding athlete who will be a thorn in the side of opponents as a runner and a passer. Fields accounted for four passing touchdowns and a 51-yard scamper for another. He displayed good command of the offense and made no major errors in his debut.

Even though he has yet to prove he can put the football in tight windows as Haskins did, he can throw accurately from the pocket and when on the move. Even though Justin has to learn when to throw the football away so as not to take a big loss along with making the correct protection calls, he showed remarkable poise under pressure. It should be a treat for Buckeye fans to watch this young quarterback develop right before their eyes throughout the season.

Coaching Staff Passes First Test

Ryan Day and his new coaching staff war-

rant praise in the victory over Florida Atlantic. Communication and overall organization seemed solid. Except for a couple of delay-of-game penalties, players and coaches meshed the way you would expect at a program such as Ohio State. Day and the offensive staff didn't ask Justin Fields to do too much or make tough decisions early in the ballgame.

They called a game that allowed Justin to be successful and grow with every snap, including several tosses to the tight ends, another position where the Buckeyes have plenty of depth. In all, the coaching staff functioned with precision for a group that is still getting to know and trust in each other.

Early Look at Cincy Game

Luke Fickell will bring a Bearcat team to town that has a lot to prove. Arguably, the second-best college football program in the state of Ohio hopes to "make their season" by beating the Buckeyes. I am certain the Cincinnati players and coaching staff believe they can compete and even beat Ohio State in their own back yard.

Even though the Bearcats beat a UCLA team that obviously doesn't have the type of talent Bruin teams have had in the past, to beat an Ohio State team that is bigger, faster and much deeper in talent would be a monumental achievement. One thing is for sure: It will be the first time Luke Fickell will be in Ohio Stadium on the wrong side of the field.

Known as one of the top recruiters in college football, Bill Conley is a national championship-winning coach and player at Ohio State who suited up for Woody Hayes and spent 17 years on the staffs of Earle Bruce, John Cooper and Jim Tressel.



Reynolds Travel "On the Road Again" for 2019 Ohio State Football Away Games

OSU vs. Indiana: Sept. 13-15 – 2-night motorcoach trip with accommodations at the French Lick Resort and Casino, breakfast daily, game tickets and en-route to French Lick enjoy a cruise on the Ohio River in Louisville with lunch. \$699 pp based on two to a room. Land-only package available also.

OSU vs. Nebraska: Sept. 25-30 – 5-night motorcoach trip with 1 overnight in each direction: 1 night at Juner's Castle Casino in Rock Island, Ill.; 3 nights at the Embassy Suites in Omaha, Neb., with breakfast daily, city tour of Lincoln, game tickets and transportation; and 1 night on return at the Marriott Pere Marquette in Peoria, Ill. \$1,199 pp based on two to a room. **Also offering air trip Sept. 26-29** with roundtrip air from Columbus to Omaha and 3 nights at the Embassy Suites in Omaha with breakfast daily, game tickets and transportation, and city tour of Lincoln. \$1,449 pp. Land only package available for Omaha portion.

OSU vs. Northwestern: Oct. 17-20 – 3 nights motorcoach trip to Chicago with game on Friday nights permitting extra free time in Chicago with 3 nights in downtown Westin Magnificent Mile Hotel in the center of downtown Chicago with breakfast daily, game tickets and transportation and Mafia themed tour of Chicago. \$979 pp based on two to a room. **Also offering air trip Oct. 17-20** with 3 nights in Chicago at the

Westin Magnificent Mile Hotel in the center of downtown Chicago with breakfast daily, game tickets in Ohio State section with transportation, roundtrip airport transportation and Mafia themed tour of Chicago. \$1,289 pp based on two to a room. Land only package is available.

OSU vs. Rutgers: Nov. 14-17 – 3 night motorcoach trip to New York with 3 nights accommodations in the heart of Manhattan at the Sheraton Times Square with breakfast daily, Tour of Hudson River Valley, game tickets with transportation. \$1,149 pp based on two to a room. **Also offering air trip from Nov. 14-17** with 3 nights at the Sheraton Times Square with breakfast daily, airport transportation roundtrip, tour of the Hudson River Valley, game ticket and transportation. \$1,589 pp based on two to a room. Land only package is available.

OSU vs. Michigan, "Big Game in the Big House": Nov. 29-30 – 1 night motorcoach trip with accommodations for Friday night at the MGM Resort and Casino in Detroit including breakfast on Saturday and game ticket with return to Columbus after the game. \$609 pp based on two to a room.

Reds vs. Indians trip: July 6-7, 2019 – motorcoach trip and overnight in Cincinnati including two games with club seating. \$489 pp based on two/room.

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COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

Bullets" were "silver blanks".

The defensive scheme came under constant fire for emphasizing more man schemes than zone coverages, thus making run support from the secondary more difficult to execute. Too many times missed tackles in the open field resulted in huge gains and even touchdowns for opposing offenses. This year's defensive personnel have vowed to make amends for their 2018 performance and have promised to put the swagger back in a unit that prides itself on being fundamentally sound, physically tough and adept at creating turnovers.

Offensively, the loss of Dwayne Haskins to the NFL along with the exodus of other quarterbacks through the last few seasons has left a huge void in that position in terms of numbers and in terms of depth. Justin Fields, hopefully, is as good as advertised, and fellow transfers Gunnar Hoak along with Chris Chugunov can provide the much-needed depth at the quarterback position. It is doubtful that Fields will have the immediate passing prowess of Haskins, but his dual-threat potential can give the Buckeye offense a weapon they didn't have last season.

The high expectations of J.K. Dobbins at running back and the multiple talents of Fields may be just what the Ohio State offense needs in establishing a more balanced attack this season.



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A Win Is A Win, No Matter How You Look At It

Perspective is something that's needed in sports today but is unfortunately in short supply.

Ohio State fans will look at the Buckeyes' opening 45-21 victory and think, "How could the defense have allowed 21 points to a team picked third in Conference USA?" or, "Why couldn't we hang 60 on 'em? Polls matter and you have to blow teams out." There will be very little happiness, because grouching is what Buckeye Nation does best.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

Coaches, however, will take a different view.

They will be happy with the win, because that's the first order of business. Doesn't matter if you've been outgained all night, if you've turned the ball over four times, if you've been sloppy the entire game — as long as you win. They will, however, add that there are things to work on coming out of said win, which is why the Buckeyes' victory over the Owls was just about perfect.

After racing out to a 28-0 first-quarter lead, OSU put it in neutral for the rest of the afternoon. Oh, don't get me wrong, it was never in danger of losing. Most of the yardage FAU rolled up — is it really rolling up yardage when you average 3.1 yards per play? — came with a bunch of Buckeye second-teamers in the game on defense. Sure, the Owls coaching staff got creative and took advantage of the Buckeyes' zone coverage, but it was too little too late.

For a first game, it was fine. Not earth-shaking, fine. But there was just enough there to keep the players from getting fat and happy.

"I thought we came out to a great start early on," Buckeye coach Ryan Day said. "We were clicking on both sides of the ball. We hit a bit of a lull there. But overall a great start. We wanted to play clean. We watched a lot of football the last week. And there's been a lot of teams out there who haven't played as clean as they like."

I often get the question "why aren't you more upset?" Like I'm supposed to be frustrated about a victory? I will take an ugly win over a pretty defeat any day of the week. Anyone who would do otherwise is not someone I want in my corner.

Social media is a fun place to be during the first week of the season. Teams are alternately the worst ever or national champions. Florida is "hot garbage" for struggling with Miami, UCLA "might as well pack up the season" after losing to Cincinnati, Wisconsin looked "awesome" in blanking USF, and Nebraska is "so overrated it's not funny" after beating South Alabama by just two scores.

I have long since realized that anyone making a judgment about a team after one game is a

fool. There has yet to be a team that hasn't transformed — for better or for worse — from week one.

Heck, using the above logic, the 2014 version of Ohio State should have gone home after week two. You remember that bunch, right? Looked average against Navy then got its doors blown off against Virginia Tech — which was praised as a team to watch out for, while the Buckeyes were "struggling to save their season." Only it didn't work out that way. As we all know, the Hokies went 7-6 and Ohio State won the national championship. So forgive me if I don't join in the hand-wringing.

"When you're coming out of preseason, one of the things is you spend so much time going against your defense," Day said. "Whether it's bowl practice, spring ball, preseason, you're about at the same looks over and over again. And in first games you're getting something that's different. So it's new and I think that's why you see a lot of teams play sloppy in that first game."

The Buckeyes averaged nearly 6½ yards per play, converted 50 percent on third down and, most importantly, didn't throw any interceptions. Yeah, there were a couple of fumbles, and those have to be fixed. But first-time starter Justin Fields more than passed the test and should give OSU fans a lot to look forward to in the coming weeks and seasons.

"Lots to build off of today," Day said of his quarterback. "I thought overall, game management was decent. There was one time where he scrambled out and took a sack, could have just thrown it away. It would have been second-and-10. I think it was second-and-14. A lot of little things going on there. But again, overall pretty solid. But there's a ton to learn from. And especially when you look at the film, you're sitting there with 74 plays. You've got to be able to teach off those 74 plays."

"And when you're not live it's hard to get a feel for the decisions that are being made and whether to hang on to a ball, throw it, those types of things. So overall a lot to learn from."

For his part, Fields was thrilled to be in the middle of things, taking live bullets and showcasing his freakish athletic ability. That was never more on display than during his nifty 51-yard touchdown run that opened the scoring. Fields faked a handoff, rolled left and cut up through a massive hole between tackle and guard before turning on the jets and hitting pay dirt. The smile on his face upon returning to the bench spoke volumes about how happy the Georgia transfer was to simply be playing.

Fields put up an impressive 92.8 Total QBR rating from ESPN, which ranked seventh nationally. QBR measures every play from a quarterback, whether it be a run or pass. It accounts for whether the pass was a deep, on-the-money throw or a short pass taken to the house by the receiver. It is more of a qualitative measure than quantitative, which is what the standard passing efficiency is all about.

"When you get to know more stuff and just

be able to anticipate what they're going to do, the game definitely slows down," said Fields. "When I was running it, I was like thinking to myself that was kind of easy. But it definitely surprised me a little bit (that the run was so open)."

While Fields was doing his thing, the defense was also playing well — a marked contrast to last year's disaster. OSU couldn't stop anyone in 2018, consistently giving up big, explosive plays and keeping vastly inferior teams in games until the end. So there was naturally a lot of curiosity about the switch from Urban Meyer's favored man scheme to Day's preference for zone. The Buckeyes kept everything in front of them and ran to the football. The confused looks and missed tackles in space were few, if any, and it was easy to see why the coaches are excited about this unit.

"What I was looking for was guys running to the ball and hitting," Day said. "I felt that. I was watching Pete Werner and Malik Harrison and Jeff Okudah come into the ball, and you could feel the violence on the field. That's what we want. We want that toughness. And I felt that. I felt those guys flying around. And it was intimidating. It was downhill. It was what we want."

Day showed off the depth of his playbook by using a bunch of pro-style sets against FAU. There were a few new wrinkles on old formations and some things that were brand spanking new.

"I think when you look at college football today, I think it's important to have a balance," Day said. "I think it's important to be able to line up under center, run the football, play-action pass and do some things, and also run the spread and run with tempo. And I think when you can mix those two things and you're good at both those things, it's not easy to do. But I think Justin can do that."

"We're lucky enough to have some tight ends with some experience. And we can put those guys in there and do some things with them as well. I think it brings a different level of preparation for the defense, and it's something we really haven't done a bunch of here. I think it's an edge for us."

Day admitted to being awed when bringing the team out of the tunnel just before game time, but if there were nerves on the sideline he didn't show them.

The game management things — getting the right personnel groups on the field, deciding on the fly whether to punt or go for it on fourth down, sending in plays quickly — seemed to go smoothly, for the most part. There may have been a couple of hiccups, but it was a first game.

It was nice to see the run game featured, and J.K. Dobbins looked more like his freshman self than last year's version. He ran hard, was back to his lethal jump cuts and even displayed a great stiff-arm on one run. His 4.3 yards per carry average wasn't eye-popping, but some of that had to do with the one aspect of the game that was worrisome to me — the offensive line.

After coming out like gangbusters and opening holes big enough to drive a truck through, the Buckeyes bogged down. FAU adjusted, slanting and stunting its D-line and beating OSU at the point of attack. The Owls linebackers were more active and got into gaps, blowing up plays that had been working earlier. It wasn't until late in the third quarter that the Buckeyes got their protections figured out — evidenced by two touchdowns spanning the end of the third and start of the fourth quarters.

"There were a couple things in the zone game where we didn't fit it quite right up front," Day said. "A couple guys came free on that. We've got to get that fixed."

It was nice to see Master Teague get some work as the Buckeyes will need a reliable backup for Dobbins on occasion. Maybe it was just me, but on a few of his runs Teague reminded me of another powerful 33 — Joe Montgomery. Teague wasn't afraid to run to contact but also had the wheels to get to the outside. He should help the Buckeyes' ground game immensely.

Once the game was safely tucked away, Day could exhale and enjoy. That 60 minutes was a sprint that felt like a marathon, but he likes where his team stands.

"Right after we sang with the student section, walking off the field and getting in there with the team and we celebrated all the warriors," he said. "And we are going to enjoy this. It's hard to be 1-0. It doesn't matter how you shake it. When you're in college football, there's a lot of good coaches, a lot of good programs. And we're proud to be 1-0, but we know what we've got ahead of us."

That would be none other than beloved Buckeye Luke Fickell and his Cincinnati Bearcats, fresh off of an 11-win season and one victory in 2019. Cincinnati plays the way its coach did — hard, to the whistle and with maximum effort. The Bearcats are much better than FAU and will be a test for Ohio State.

"We've got a really good team coming in here next week which is well-coached, and you guys know Luke and those guys are going to be prepared," Day said. "We've got our hands full."

Like many coaches, Day has broken the season down into one-week increments. The Buckeyes took care of business against FAU but have a clean slate moving forward.

"We looked at it with the first six weeks, we got a bye week, those two games, a bye week and then four games," Day explained. "The goal is to be 1-0. If we can just be 1-0 on Saturday night — I know it's cliché, but it's real. We are going to sleep on this tonight. But we know in the back of our minds that we have a really good team coming in here, a hungry and well-coached team. And we have to play real good to beat them."



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Room For Improvement, Reason For Optimism

Are you a glass half full or a glass half empty kind of Buckeye fan?

There was plenty of glass filling or emptying for both types of fans in Ohio State's 45-21 victory over Florida Atlantic that opened both the Ryan Day and Justin Fields eras for the Buckeyes.

What's interesting is that it was the glass overflowing in the first quarter that led to the feelings of half emptiness later in the game. The Buckeyes came out like such gangbusters on both sides of the ball in jumping out to a 28-0 lead that I felt like a 100-0 win was possible. Wow! is all I can say about the start of the 2019 Ohio State football season.

It took just 4:08 of possession time and 13 plays for the Buckeyes to score their first 28 points. Meanwhile, the defense held the Owls to three-and-outs on their first four drives, which produced minus-5 yards.

I loved the way Ohio State came out of the gate.

Demario McCall, who solidified his spot as a solid return man against FAU, started the game with a nifty 26-yard return to the OSU 30. On the first play from scrimmage, Fields threw a pass to the tight end! It went for only five yards, but it was something that Buckeye fans have been calling for years. And it was to Jeremy Ruckert, no less. The 6-5, 250-pounder was billed as a pass-catching phenom coming out of high school but had been kept pretty much under wraps by Urban Meyer.

Three plays later, Fields capped off his first drive as Buckeye field general with a 51-yard scoring run. Was there a better way to start an Ohio State career?

Fields followed up with a 25-yard scoring strike to Ruckert – Buckeye fans were jumping for joy – and well-thrown scoring strikes to Binjimen Victor (32 yards) and Chris Olave (29 yards), while all the while the Ohio State defense was dominating, leading to a 28-0 lead with just 8:10 played.

All was right in Buckeye Nation.

OK. So things slowed down after that – for Fields and the Buckeyes. But after 60 minutes of play and the ultimate 24-point victory, was the glass really half empty? I'm going to have to say that at the worst, the game was glass neutral.

If I had offered you a final stat line for Fields, sight unseen, of 18 of 25 passing for 234 yards, four scores and no interceptions, along with 61 yards rushing and a 51-yard score in his first game as a starter, regardless of opponent, would you have taken it? Most likely. Our expectations were raised quite a bit after that fast start, but we were left with a good enough sample of Fields that we have to be optimistic for the future as he learns and grows. Glass more than half full. He showed enough to get us excited about the future before tailing off a bit.

After helping Fields launch his career on such a high note in the first quarter, the offensive line struggled for much of the remainder of the game, so that was a bit half empty. But I have tried to remind anyone who would listen that the Buckeyes were replacing four of five starters up front so that should be an area of concern. Given that they did play well to start, I am going to give them some time to develop some more chemistry before I write them off. Glass neutral – for now.

Something that Meyer would have been proud of and should please Day is the balance of the offense. The Buckeyes gained 237 yards rushing and 232 yards passing for their 469 yards. That's a glass half full.

Where Buckeye fans should really see the glass half full is on defense. This was the defense that was one of the worst in Ohio State history last season, most notorious for giving up not big but huge plays. The Silver Bullets – a moniker I would not have used last season – gave up only two pass plays of more than 25 yards (38 and 26) and no run longer than nine yards against the Owls. Think back to last year's opener against

Oregon State, when the Buckeyes gave up a 49-yard scoring pass and TD runs of 80 and 78 yards, both by Artavis Pierce in a 77-31 win.

Against the Owls, Ohio State allowed a total of just 228 yards to a highly-touted offense led by an offensive guru in head coach Lane Kiffin, and the Buckeyes recorded four sacks and 12 tackles for loss, all this while sprinkling in reserves for much of the second half and while getting little help from the Buckeye offense as far as controlling the clock in the middle part of the game. Beyond half full!

I thought J.K. Dobbins – who I figured would dominate against a suspect FAU defense – was glass neutral. He gained 91 yards on 21 carries, hardly chump change. But that worked out to just 4.3 yards per carry, and he lost a fumble that set up a field goal, not what I think any of us were expecting from Dobbins, who had been touting himself after what he deemed a subpar season in 2018. Some of his "struggles" should be tied to the inconsistent play by the line and some to the fact that Florida Atlantic seemed to be selling out to stop him.

I still believe Dobbins will have a big junior season before heading off to the NFL. Glass neutral.

The one thing that I was hoping for after Ohio State got off to such a fast start was a chance to get some work for reserve quarterbacks Chris Chugunov and Gunnar Hoak. Chugunov got some limited mop-up work, and Hoak remained on the sidelines. They will have to wait for serious game action, and we will have to wait to evaluate the pair in preparation for the possibility of Fields going down, as will the coaches.

To Ryan Day, I say this. Welcome to the world of head coaching. The win is a good one for a coach, however (all wins are actually good ones). There were enough good things to win by more than three touchdowns, but enough bad things to catch the team's attention in advance of what is sure to be a stiffer challenge against Luke Fickell and his UC Bearcats. Glass half full.

Linebackers Return

The linebacking trio of Malik Harrison, Tuf Borland and Pete Werner received its share of criticism from Buckeye fans last season, especially Borland and Werner, with Borland a particular target. Thus I found it interesting that a virtually new defensive staff trotted out the same three 'backers to start against Florida Atlantic.

Harrison, whom fans declared the best of the bunch last season, didn't disappoint against FAU. He had five stops with two TFLs and a 13-yard sack. Werner had four tackles and a TFL, while Borland added three stops.

While those three took the field to start the game, Baron Browning, one of the linebackers whom fans wanted to see, saw plenty of action and recorded four tackles and a quarterback hurry.

As I mentioned in this space in the last issue, I was eager to see if Brendon White, one of the better Buckeye defenders after working into the rotation later in the 2018 season, would be fully utilized in the new hybrid "bullet" position. His stat line did not particularly stand out with three tackles, one for loss, and a pass breakup. I am keeping my eye on White and this position.

Perusing The Stat Sheet

Defensive end Chase Young was so dominant against FAU that his statistics from the game seemed almost modest upon review. He was credited with a very loud five tackles, a 17-yard sack and a pass breakup.

If you are someone who believes in the impor-

tance of special teams, there was a lot to like there. McCall averaged 26.0 yards on two kick returns and 20.0 yards on a pair of punt returns with a 35-yarder he almost broke, while K.J. Hill added a 16-yard punt return among two tries.

Punter Drue Chrisman picked up where he left off last season, averaging 43.8 yards on four punts, putting two inside the 20 with one pinning the Owls at their own 4.

On coverage, the Buckeyes yielded just five yards on three FAU punt returns.

Other Debuts

How did Fields' first start stack up against the starting debuts of other recent Buckeye quarterback standouts? Quite well.

Terrelle Pryor was probably the most recent quarterback to come to Columbus with the type of hype that preceded Fields. He started in the fourth game of the 2008 season, a 28-10 victory over Troy.

Pryor was 10 of 16 passing for 139 yards and four touchdowns with only one interception, and he was sacked once. He added 66 yards on 14 carries for a 4.7 yard average and a long of 18.

Braxton Miller also got his first start in a game four, taking over for Joe Bauserman. Miller was only 5 of 13 passing for 83 yards but had two TD passes without a pick and looked good on the ground with 83 net yards (he was sacked three times) on 17 carries with a 4.9 yard average and a long of 16.

When Miller went down shortly before the start of the 2014 season, J.T. Barrett had a fine debut in the season opener against Navy. He completed 12 of 15 passes for 226 yards and a pair of scores with one pick and only one sack. He led all Buckeye rushers with 50 yards on nine carries for a 5.6-yard average and a long of 19 in a 34-17 win.

Dwayne Haskins had probably the best first start of the bunch in last year's opener against Oregon State. He completed 22 of 30 passes for 313 yards and five touchdowns with only one interception, and he was not sacked in the previously mentioned 77-31 victory. While Haskins showed a reluctance to run with the football later in the season, he carried two times for 24 yards with a long of 17 vs. the Beavers.

Remember that Barrett, Haskins and Fields all had the benefit of either a redshirt or true freshman year before starting, while Pryor and Miller took over early in their true freshman years.

Summer Grads

The eyes of many Buckeye fans will be on Damon Arnette this season. He returned for his senior year after contemplating turning pro. Whether NFL scouts saw him as pro-caliber we don't know, but it seems to a consensus within Buckeye Nation that he has underachieved at Ohio State so far.

But Buckeye fans need to give him his due, because Arnette highlighted the list of football players who received their degrees during the recent summer commencement. This is an especially impressive achievement when you consider that Arnette recently admitted that his off-field habits may not have been the best.

"Truly I feel like a lot of it with me has been off-field things that reflect on the field," Arnette was quoted as saying in BSB's Football Preview issue. "So once I cleaned up everything, everything else started to shine a little bit more. And other things are being noticed once I got certain things right in my life."

Getting his degree is getting "something

right" in his life, and it will be interesting to see if his newfound maturity shows up on the field, as he suggests it might.

He did not show up on the stat sheet against Florida Atlantic, but secondary coach and co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley indicated that may have been because the Owls were avoiding him.

"It looked like they were doing a good job, and it didn't really seem like (FAU) threw to their receivers very much," Hafley said of Arnette and fellow corner Jeff Okudah. "Damon had a nice pass breakup – he almost had that pick."

Another notable football player among the 22 student-athletes who graduated was Reid Fragel, who played for the Buckeyes from 2009-11 and was with several teams in the NFL.

I also like to make note of former athletes who graduate after an extended absence from campus.

Marrita Porter, a two-time team captain and All-Big Ten selection for the women's basketball team in 1998-99, finished her bachelor's degree through the university's degree completion program. She ranks in the top 20 in school history in scoring, rebounds, free throws made and field-goal percentage.

A complete list of the summer graduating student-athletes appeared in the August issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, which is archived at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com.

Your Private Highlight Reel

Be sure to hop on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum's game thread each Saturday. Intern Patrick Mayhorn did a fine job of posting highlight clips of most of the big plays in the game with Florida Atlantic and will continue to do so throughout the season. This gives you a chance to easily replay the game's most exciting action.

You can also jump in with your thoughts on the game, along with those of your humble publisher and other members of the BSB staff. Readers who are locked in on the game should at least check in between quarters, at the half or after the game.

Access to BuckeyeSports.com and The Forum are free to all current BSB print subscribers. If you are not already enjoying this feature, see the simple instructions on page 4. Joining in on The Forum will also give you the opportunity to weigh in on our Fan Forum topic, as published in each print issue.



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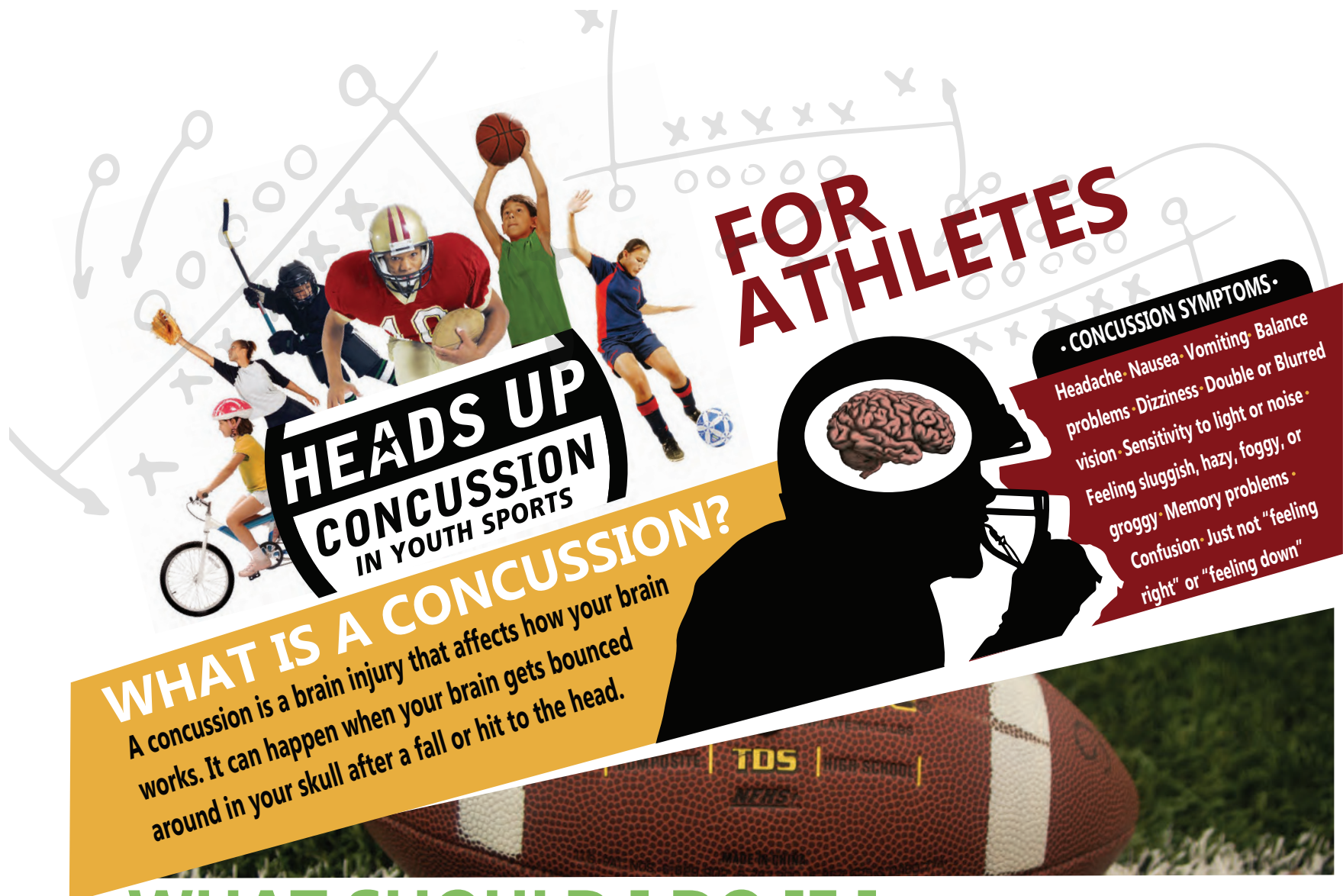
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HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen when your brain gets bounced around in your skull after a fall or hit to the head.

CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

Headache · Nausea · Vomiting · Balance problems · Dizziness · Double or Blurred vision · Sensitivity to light or noise · Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy · Memory problems · Confusion · Just not "feeling right" or "feeling down"

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

REPORT IT. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

GET CHECKED OUT. If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a health care provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL. A concussion can make everyday activities, such as going to school, harder. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH & PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

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