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ANDREW LIND

BACK TO THE DESERT – Although Ohio State won the Big Ten with a 34-21 victory over Wisconsin on Dec. 7, the Buckeyes dropped to the No. 2 spot in the College Football Playoff rankings behind LSU thanks to a sluggish start. Rather than take on fourth-seeded Oklahoma in the Peach Bowl, they'll face No. 3 Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl.

Ohio State To Face Familiar Foe In The 2019 Fiesta Bowl

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Three years ago, Ohio State and Clemson met in a No.2-vs.-No. 3 matchup at the Fiesta Bowl with a berth in the College Football Playoff National Championship on the line.

It didn't go well.

The Tigers dominated the Buckeyes from start to finish, shutting down Ohio State's offense and forcing three turnovers in a 31-0 win at University of Phoenix Stadium – now known as State Farm Stadium – in Glendale, Ariz.

It was a historically bad loss for former head coach Urban Meyer, who suffered the first shut-out of his legendary career. It was also the first time the Buckeyes had been held scoreless since a 28-0 defeat at Michigan in 1993 and the first shutout in a bowl game since a 28-0 loss to California in the 1921 Rose Bowl.

"I think I was in shock at how it went," said Ohio State starting center Josh Myers, who had

just wrapped up his senior year at Miamisburg, Ohio, and was set to enroll in classes just a few days later. "I definitely didn't expect it to go that way."

He wasn't alone, as fifth-year senior defensive tackle Robert Landers – a redshirt freshman who appeared in all 13 games that season – felt the work the Buckeyes put in before the game didn't match the result.

"It was rough," Landers said. "We just fell short. We asked the questions on our end, 'What did we not do?' We put in all the blood, sweat and tears and got on the big stage. We just didn't play the way we wanted to."

"It was a moment I would never forget. It was more disappointment than shock. We want to write a new chapter in this book and see what happens."

The one-sided loss forced Meyer to make several changes on the offensive side of the ball. He replaced co-offensive coordinators Tim Beck and

Burrow Wins Heisman While Fields And Young Finish 3rd, 4th

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

As expected, LSU quarterback Joe Burrow was named the 2019 recipient of the Heisman Trophy on Dec. 14, receiving a record 90.7 percent of the total first-place votes to break the mark set by former Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith in 2006.

But before he headed to the stage at the PlayStation Theatre in New York City to give his acceptance speech, Burrow made an unexpected detour.

He shared congratulatory hugs with the other finalists –

including Oklahoma quarterback Jalen Hurts and Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields and defensive end Chase Young – as well his parents, Jim and Robin; LSU head coach Ed Orgeron; and a handful of assistants who also made the trip to see Burrow win the second Heisman in program history along with running back Billy Cannon in 1958.

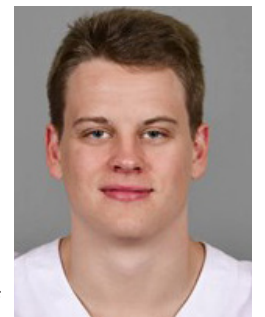
Burrow then made his way across the room to where Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and director of sports performance Mickey Marotti were sitting and gave each of them a hug.

Then, after lifting the trophy, he expressed his gratitude for his time with the Buckeyes.

"I'm just so thankful for LSU and Ohio State, two of the great programs in the country," Burrow said while fighting back tears. "Great coaches at both places. My journey ... I wouldn't have traded it for anything in the world."

Burrow – who played for the Buckeyes from 2015-17 before pursuing a graduate transfer – threw for 4,715 yards and a nation-leading 48 touchdowns to lead the Tigers to a 13-0 record and the No. 1 seed in this year's College Football Playoff. He received 841 first-place votes and 2,608 total points, outdistancing Hurts (762 points), Fields (747) and Young (643).

"It was so awesome to have Coach O and all my LSU coaches here, and then Coach Day and Coach Mick," Burrow said. "It was super special for me. I love Coach Day and Coach Mick with



Joe Burrow

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Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State trailed Wisconsin 21-7 at halftime of the Big Ten Championship Game, but the Buckeyes came back swinging. After outscoring the Badgers 27-0 in the second half, the Scarlet and Gray showed why they were the No. 1 team in the country.

The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff, along with BSB readers, awarded Buckeye Leaves to a handful of deserving Ohio State players for their part in the comeback win.

Wyatt Crosher, BSB: It was a record-breaking performance for fifth-year senior wideout K.J. Hill, but it also was his most impactful game of the season on the field for Ohio State.

Hill finished the game with a game-high seven catches for 83 yards and two touchdowns en route to passing David Boston as the player with the most receptions in Ohio State history.

The catches came at big moments for the Buckeyes, with his two touchdowns coming in the second half to give Ohio State its first lead of the game, 24-21, and then also to extend it to 31-21, a lead that the Buckeyes would add a field goal to on the way to a victory.

The 83 yards were a season high for Hill, and the redshirt senior was able to get open often for Justin Fields and made a huge impact late in his final Big Ten championship.

Joe Dempsey, BSB: J.K. Dobbins deserves a Buckeye Leaf for his dominant performance against a tough Wisconsin defense in Ohio State's 34-21 comeback victory.

The junior tailback rushed for 172 yards on 33 carries and scored the Buckeyes' first touchdown of the game, sparking their come-from-behind victory. With just 42 seconds left until halftime, Dobbins put Ohio State on the board with a 2-yard touchdown run.

Dobbins gained 75 yards in the first half, averaging 5.0 yards per

carry with one touchdown. The junior co-captain carried a bigger load in the second half, averaging 5.4 yards per carry on 18 carries for 97 yards to put the Badgers away.

Fifth-year senior cornerback Damon Arnette deserves an honorable mention for his team-leading seven tackles (all solo) and two pass breakups while playing with a broken wrist.

Andrew Lind, BSB: With Ohio State trailing Wisconsin 21-7 coming out of the half, the Buckeyes mounted a five-play, 75-yard drive that was capped off by a 16-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Justin Fields to tight end Jeremy Ruckert that pulled them within one score.

The touchdown itself was enough to give Ohio State momentum after a lackluster first half, but the fact that Ruckert pulled in the pass that would have been out of reach for even the most talented receivers made it even more of a game-changer. It was the start of the Buckeyes outscoring the Badgers 27-0 in the second half.

Ruckert has been primarily used as a blocker this season, but he's shown in limited opportunities how he can be as much of a weapon in the passing game as any receiver on the team – even if that was his only catch on the evening.

Patrick Mayhorn, BSB: Ohio State's shaky first half that led to a 21-7 deficit against Wisconsin, the largest of the season for the Buckeyes, could be attributed to quite a few things. One of them was allowing big plays to Badger wideout Quintez Cephus.

In the second half, Ohio State cleaned up every problem. The offensive line was able to slow down a Wisconsin pass rush that had badgered Justin Fields all half while establishing a more consistent rushing attack. Meanwhile, the defense ended up holding Wisconsin to 432 yards and 21 points, including holding the Badger scoreless and allowing just 138 yards in the second half, thanks in large part to the return of cornerback Jeff Okudah. Okudah's performance in the

second half is deserving of a Buckeye Leaf.

After concerns about a head injury swirled in the first half, keeping the junior cornerback out of the game for much of the half, Okudah found his way onto the field in the final 30 minutes and made his mark early and often. He held Cephus to just three receptions and 37 yards in the half after four catches for 85 yards in the first 30 minutes, forcing the Badgers to play one-dimensional football with the run game and allowing Ohio State to focus on Jonathan Taylor.

From there, it was just a matter of time. Okudah's addition back into the lineup gave to Ohio State the luxury of a talent advantage and changed the dynamic of Ohio State's third straight Big Ten title.

Mark Rea, BSB: Ryan Day for having a bucket full of guts for calling the fake punt in the first quarter. Justin Fields for toughing it out. J.K. Dobbins for being J.K. Dobbins. Jeremy Ruckert and Austin Mack for first-class, highlight-reel catches. The coaching staff for second-half adjustments.

Frank Moskowitz, BSB: You could go with the stars every week. To be different I will go with Malik Harrison on defense for his overall outstanding play (moving up the draft boards as we speak) and Binjimen Victor for some key catches. Separate leaves for fourth-quarter play only. Chase Young for coming out of hibernation and being his old dominant self and J.K. Dobbins for eating clock. Special iron man leaf for Justin Fields. One tough customer.

BSB Subscriber

The coaching staff. Great adjustments in the second half. My favorite moments were that amazing Austin Mack catch and the toss by Drue Chrisman. The whole team deserves leaves for arriving at this point. The Badgers were fighters. They came ready to fight but J.K. Dobbins wore them out.

– **PeyoteBuck**



From The Message Board

Following the announcement of the final College Football Playoff rankings of the season on Dec. 8, Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked the readers on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as staff members, for their predictions for Ohio State's PlayStation Fiesta Bowl matchup with Clemson.

Here are some of the responses:

"A Big XII shootout-type game? Ohio State 48, Clemson 44."

– **bigbigbux**

"I think we squeak by 42-38. Just think we hold the advantage because we have been battle-tested. Clemson has not faced a team even remotely on our level this season."

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

"I'm wondering how good Justin Fields' leg will be. If everyone's bumps and bruises are fairly well healed by then, I think we stand a good chance. I have not seen Clemson play all that much but what I have seen did not impress me. I'll say Bucks win, 48-31."

– **PeyoteBuck**

"I think this will be a dominating win for the Buckeyes for several reasons. The last beatdown by the Tigers and the snub for the No. 1 position will serve as fuel for Buckeye anger. Ryan Day has shown the ability to put up 55-65 points on a very good defensive coach like the TTUN's DC. He will have a game plan and game management plan from the sidelines that are very effective. He also has a QB who believes in him implicitly. A healthy Buckeye D will be hard to beat as well, and last but not the least, the two Buckeye lines' physical strengths will surprise the Tigers as they have not faced any difficult opposition this year. TTUN's offensive line performance against the Buckeyes and the performances of the Penn State, TTUN and UW D-Lines against the Buckeyes have also provided the Buckeyes with experience and lessons-learned. Hopefully, three weeks are enough to heal everybody, especially the QB and the secondary. Don't forget the award snubs of J.K. Dobbins, Jeff Okudah and the

wide receivers either. This is an angry Buckeye team that is ultra-talented. I will take the Buckeyes by 3 scores or more!! Go Bucks!!"

– **AnthonyBuckeye**

"I expect a close game but almost any result, either positive or negative, will not surprise me. For example, in 2014, OSU was not 59 points better than Wisconsin. Sometimes when two really good teams meet, things get out of hand. Maybe my wishy-washy feelings about the possible outcomes are a reflection of my thought that I won't be horribly disappointed if OSU finishes this season with a worse record than 15-0. Beating TTUN for 15th time in 16 years, having to beat a top 20 team twice to win the B1G championship and going 13-0 are going to leave me satisfied no matter what happens from here on out. Three-time B1G undisputed champions for the first time, also. Even if OSU loses a game in CFP, I will continue to think that this team is as good as any team."

– **Terrier Buck**

"This feels like one of those games that could truly go either way for me. Clemson has been nothing short of dominant in every game it has played since almost falling to North Carolina, but it also hasn't played a truly good team (sorry, Virginia). Ohio State on the other hand has "struggled" more than it has all year as of late, but it came in a stretch against three top-15 teams. The Tigers are a complete team without a real weakness and have the experience of multiple playoff runs, but Ohio State is going to come in with multiple chips on its shoulder from being placed No. 2 and the 31-0 loss to Clemson fresh in its mind. This game feels like a coin flip right now, but as it stands, I will lean Ohio State heading to the national title with a 38-34 win."

– **Wyatt Crosher, BSB**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin (USPS 705-690, ISSN 0883-6833.) is published 24 times a year (weekly September through November, biweekly mid-March through May and January through early March and monthly June through August and December) by:

Columbus Sports Publications
1350 W. Fifth Ave., Suite 30
P.O. Box 12453
Columbus, Ohio 43212
(614) 486-2202
bsb@buckeyesports.com

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$99.95/year.

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The next issue will be mailed on Jan. 14 or Jan. 21.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a privately owned newspaper and is not affiliated directly or indirectly with The Ohio State University.

Wachsman Elite Donor:



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Quarterbacks Benefited Greatly From Transfers

Those who oversee the annual balloting for the Heisman Memorial Trophy frown upon voters who publicize their ballots before the awards ceremony. They don't even like it when voters reveal their ballots after the ceremony. It ruins the mystery beforehand and takes away some of the mystique afterward.

This year, however, I doubt the committee will make too much of a squawk when most of us reveal that we placed LSU quarterback Joe Burrow at the top of our ballots. After all, Burrow received 841 first-place votes from 927 electors, breaking records for the largest percentage of first-place votes, largest margin of victory and being named on the highest percentage of ballots.

Not to take anything away from Burrow, who so far this season has thrown for 4,715 yards and 48 touchdowns and added another 239 yards and three scores on the ground for the Tigers. He has enjoyed one of the finest seasons a college quarterback has ever had and deserved to win the Heisman by such a lopsided margin.

But those who look at what Burrow has done at LSU and wonder how in the world Ohio State let him escape are guilty of revisionist history. Burrow wouldn't be the quarterback he is now had he not transferred to LSU, and he wouldn't be the reigning Heisman Trophy winner had the Tigers not upgraded their offensive coaching staff during the last offseason.

Burrow threw for 2,894 yards and 16 TDs during the 2018 season – good numbers, to be sure, but nothing approaching what he has done so far this year. That is because LSU head coach Ed Orgeron somehow pried away Joe Brady from the New Orleans Saints and made Brady his new passing game coordinator.

Brady made some changes to LSU's passing attack and tweaked Burrow's game a little, and the result has been a juggernaut of an offense that averages 47.8 points and a best-in-the-nation 554.3 yards per game.

Just as Burrow would likely have been sitting home watching the Heisman ceremony had Brady not found his way to Baton Rouge, the same can be said for Justin Fields, this year's third-place Heisman finisher who simply would not be the same quarterback had he stayed at Georgia.

Let's say, for the moment, that Fields had chosen to remain with the Bulldogs and he somehow supplanted Jake Fromm as UGA's starting quarterback. Fields would have been exposed to the same spotty offensive line play that Fromm had to endure for much of this season, reducing him to a one-legged quarterback in the SEC title game against LSU.

Fields has thrown for 2,953 yards and 40 touchdowns against only one interception so far this season, but he has also been sacked 27 times, many of those the result of a first-year starting quarterback holding the ball too long. He, too, was essentially a one-legged quarterback in the Big Ten title game against Wisconsin but still managed to throw for 299 yards and three touchdowns vs. the Badgers.

Fromm is a three-year starter who knows when to cut his losses and as a result was sacked only 12 times all season. But after completing 77.5 percent of his passes and enjoying a passer rating of 182.69 after this season's first five games, Fromm's performance leveled off as his offensive line often struggled to protect him. He completed only 52.5 percent of his passes, pitched all five of his interceptions for the season, and watched his rating dip to 120.10 over his final eight games. Not coincidentally, the Bulldogs lost two of those final eight games.

Does anyone really think Fields would have performed just as well at Georgia as he did at Ohio State under the tutelage of Ryan Day and Mike Yurcich? If you do, I've got a bridge in Brooklyn for sale at a bargain price.

Airing Of Grievances

You will be reading this column right about the time of Festivus, the made-up holiday celebrated during an episode of the TV sitcom "Seinfeld" back in 1997.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

For the uninitiated, part of the observation of the "holiday" includes a dinner, a Festivus pole – an undecorated aluminum pole in a conventional Christmas tree stand – and the "Airing of Grievances," which consists of lashing out at others and the world about various disappointments that have occurred during the past year.

The older I get, the more grievances I seem to accumulate, but one of particular bother is the fact that Ezekiel Elliott and J.K. Dobbins are two of the most talented and productive running backs in the history of Ohio State football, and neither of them got even the sniff of an invitation to the Heisman award ceremony.

Elliott's great mistake was the fact that he played out the seminal moments of his college career during the 2014 College Football Playoff – games that occurred long after that season's Heisman votes had been counted and Oregon QB Marcus Mariota had won by a landslide.

In case you have forgotten, Elliott followed his 220-yard performance during a 59-0 annihilation of Wisconsin in the Big Ten title game with 230 yards and two touchdowns against supposedly invincible Alabama and 246 yards and four TDs against Oregon and Mariota.

The following year, Elliott rushed for 1,672 yards and 19 TDs during the regular season but watched while Alabama running back Derrick Henry took home the 2015 Heisman with a narrow victory over Stanford RB Christian McCaffrey. Henry rushed for 1,986 yards and 23 touchdowns that season while McCaffrey totaled 1,847 yards and scored eight touchdowns.

I'm not grouching about Elliott not winning the award because Henry and McCaffrey each had great seasons. That fact that Henry got 77 more carries and McCaffrey had 57 more during that regular season than Elliott, and respectively averaged 5.9 and 5.8 yards per carry to Zeke's 6.4, is immaterial.

What aggrieves me is the fact that out of 929 Heisman electors that year, only five placed Elliott atop their ballots. Just seven others placed him No. 2. And yet, when it came time for the 2016 NFL draft, Elliott was the slam-dunk first choice among college running backs, going to the Dallas Cowboys with the No. 4 overall selection. Henry was the next running back taken, going to the Tennessee Titans in the second round with the 45th overall pick.

This year, Dobbins was slighted in much the same way as Elliott.

There is no doubt that Fields had a superlative regular season, and Master Teague has looked ready, willing and more than able to become the next great running back at Ohio State. But Dobbins had a season much like the one Elliott had in 2015, a season during which there were times when he did much of the

heavy lifting. Early in the year, it was during the first half when OSU was piling on points by the boatload. Down the stretch, Dobbins allowed the Buckeyes to jump on his back and he literally carried them – 36 times against Penn State, 31 times against Michigan and 33 times against Wisconsin. It's rare for an Ohio State running back to carry 30 or more times twice during an entire season, and Dobbins has done it in three straight games.

And for that, he received just two first-place Heisman votes and 114 total points to finish sixth in this year's balloting. Those of us who watch and cover the Buckeyes on a regular basis know that's tantamount to a slap in the face.

Like Elliott, though, the salve for Dobbins will come pretty soon. The 2020 NFL draft begins April 23.

And Another Thing ...

As long as I'm airing grievances, I might as well admit that I had no problem whatsoever when Ohio State was bumped to No. 2 in the final College Football Playoff rankings.

That is because I actually wanted the Buckeyes to take on third-ranked Clemson with a chance for some good, old-fashioned revenge for Woody and Braxton, and maybe to knock that kooky, cocky grin off Dabo Swinney's face.

It used to be borderline comical the way former Notre Dame head coach Lou Holtz would poor-mouth his own team before a big game, claiming the other team was bigger and stronger and faster, and that he didn't know why his Fighting Irish were even bothering to show up. And then Notre Dame would come out and, more often than not, flatten its opponent.

But Swinney has taken the sad-sack act to such a new level that even the smugly detestable Paul Finebaum of the SEC Network can't stand him.

Swinney's team has the nation's longest winning streak at 28 straight games, blew the doors off Alabama in last year's national championship game, and is the only active coach in major college football not named Nick Saban to have more than one national championship ring to show to prospective recruits. Swinney also happens to be the highest paid coach in college football after signing a 10-year deal worth \$93 million last April.

But ol' Dabo – whose given name is William Christopher – feels slighted because everyone from coast to coast has criticized Clemson's schedule (rightfully so, I might add) with the additional slight of slotting the defending national champions as the No. 3 seed in this year's playoff.

Weak schedule or not, Clemson is the real deal and any team that doesn't give the Tigers their full attention will never know what hit it. The defending champs are 68-4 over the past five seasons, and that's a better record than Alabama (65-6), Ohio State (61-6), Oklahoma (58-9) – better than anyone else playing in the Football Bowl Subdivision.

The Tigers are among the nation's top five in scoring offense and total offense, and they have a 1,500-yard running back, a 1,000-yard receiver, and a 3,000-yard passer. They're also No. 1 in the country in total defense as well as scoring defense. They're tough, and they're not going to give up their title without a fight.

Former pro wrestler Ric Flair used to say, "To be the man, you've got to beat the man," and the man in college football right now is Clemson. So, to be the champion, you ought to have to beat the champion.

That's why I have no problem with Ohio State dropping to No. 2 to take on Clemson and poor ol' Dabo.



Hafley To Take Over At Boston College

After just one year in Columbus as co-defensive coordinator, Jeff Hafley is set to depart from Ohio State for Boston College's open head coaching job. Hafley was officially introduced as the head coach on Dec. 14.

"Well, it was more than just football," Hafley said when explaining why he accepted the job. "I grew up in north Jersey, and I've known about Boston College for my entire life. It's one of the teams you root for growing up as a family – the university, the values that I talked about. And then when I started to watch the tape, I saw

a good team. This is not a rebuild. This is not something that is going to start from scratch. They've done a good job with good players, and it's our job to get it better, but that's one of the things that attracted me to this place."

Hafley, along with Greg Mattison, has been credited with a major turnaround for Ohio State on the defensive side of the ball in 2019. After struggles in 2018 saw the Buckeyes finish 50th in points allowed per game (25.5) and 71st in total yards allowed per game (403.4), Hafley's zone-focused defense has completely changed the way the Buckeyes play defense this season.

That change paid off, with Ohio State checking in at third in points per game allowed (12.5) and second in yards per game allowed (247.6) heading into the CFP Playoffs.

Hafley came to Ohio State as a relatively unknown name in college football, given his time as an NFL position coach from 2012-2018, with his lone college experience coming as secondary coach at Albany, Pittsburgh and Rutgers. Hafley was no unknown to Ryan Day, however.

The two knew each other from time coaching on the East Coast in the 2000s but became close when they were both members of Chip Kelly's staff with the San Francisco 49ers in 2016.

"We had several conversations about coaching in college, and that's where we both wanted to end up," Day said. "He's somebody I had a connection with right

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"Those who can afford to do so can help those who are less fortunate but share the same passion for Buckeye Sports Bulletin," Moskowitz said.

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2019 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2019 Record, Bowl Game
Aug. 31	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	W, 45-21	FOX	10-3, Boca Raton vs. SMU
Sept. 7	CINCINNATI	W, 42-0	ABC	10-3, Birmingham vs. Boston College
Sept. 14	at Indiana	W, 51-10	FOX	8-4, Gator vs. Tennessee
Sept. 21	MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 76-5	BTN	8-5, LendingTree vs. Louisiana
Sept. 28	at Nebraska	W, 48-7	ABC	5-7, not eligible
Oct. 5	MICHIGAN STATE	W, 34-10	ABC/ESPN	6-6, Pinstripe vs. Wake Forest
Oct. 18	at Northwestern	W, 52-3	BTN	3-9, not eligible
Oct. 26	WISCONSIN	W, 38-7	FOX	10-3, Rose vs. Oregon
Nov. 9	MARYLAND	W, 73-14	FOX	3-9, not eligible
Nov. 16	at Rutgers	W, 56-21	BTN	2-10, not eligible
Nov. 23	PENN STATE	W, 28-17	FOX	10-2, Cotton vs. Memphis
Nov. 30	at Michigan	W, 56-27	FOX	9-3, Citrus vs. Alabama
Dec. 7	vs. Wisconsin*	W, 34-21	FOX	10-3, Rose vs. Oregon
Dec. 28	vs. Clemson**	8 p.m.	ESPN	13-0, Fiesta vs. Ohio State

* Big Ten Championship at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

** Fiesta Bowl at at Glendale, Ariz. (State Farm Stadium)

away, had a lot of respect for. I think he's a tremendous coach, relates well with players, and he's a great recruiter, and that was somebody I always wanted to be around."

In October, Hafley explained his reasoning for coming to Columbus, though he did note a desire to be a head coach someday.

"I wanted to coordinate," Hafley said. "I wanted to work for a good guy. I wanted to work in a place I believed we could win. I wanted to work in a place my family would be comfortable living. And then certainly you have to think about your goals.

"I'd like to be a head coach one day. So, certainly, that factored into it, to come to a place like Ohio State to learn from the guys who have been here and have the opportunity to win games and play good defense, that's certainly a factor as well."

Hafley's impact at Ohio State wasn't just felt on the field. He was widely regarded as an excellent recruiter and has been

credited with landing eight commitments in Ohio State's 2020 class.

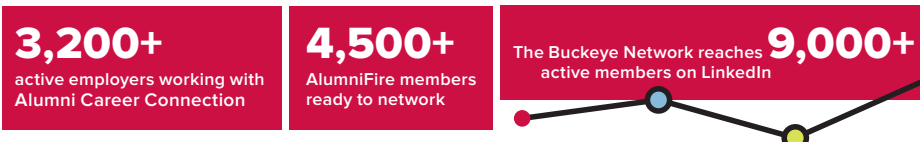
Headlining that group are six four-star defensive backs, including cornerbacks Lejond Cavazos, Clark Phillips, Ryan Watts, safety Lathan Ransom, and athletes Cameron Martinez and Kourt Williams, though Phillips and Martinez were yet to officially sign with the Buckeyes as of publication. Hafley also went outside of his position group, serving as the top recruiter for Ohio State in New Jersey and reeling in a duo of four-stars from his home state in linebacker Cody Simon and center Luke Wypler.

Hafley will coach the remainder of the season at Ohio State as the Buckeyes enter their playoff matchup with Clemson. He isn't expected to take any coaches from Ohio State's staff, though defensive quality control assistant Matt Thurin is rumored

Continued On Page 6

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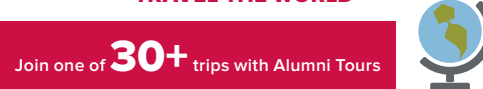
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From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1984

Ohio State was set to make its 12th appearance in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1, 1985. The matchup with USC would be the seventh battle between the Big Ten and Pac-10 stalwarts in the Rose Bowl, with the series split at 3-3 entering the game.

The two had last played in Pasadena in 1980, a 17-16 win for the Trojans.

One of the most interesting aspects of the game looked to be the matchup between Ohio State tailback Keith Byars and USC weakside linebacker Jack Del Rio.

“College football is blessed with an array of outstanding linebackers in 1984, but one of the most imposing and dominant is Jack Del Rio,” said Gil Brandt, the Dallas Cowboys’ vice president for personnel. “Look for Jack to be one of the dominating forces in the NFL in the mid-1980s.”

30 Years Ago – 1989

Ohio State was ready to make its first postseason appearance in three seasons Jan. 1 with a visit to Tampa, Fla., to take on ninth-ranked Auburn in the Hall of Fame Bowl.

The Buckeyes, ranked 21st in The Associated Press final regular-season poll, had not played in postseason competition since earning a trip to the 1987 Cotton Bowl, a 28-12 win over Texas A&M following the 1986 season.

OSU earned its trip to Tampa by virtue of an 8-3 record, a mark which included a string of six consecutive victories in Big Ten play. It was the Buckeyes’ best regular season since 1986, which had ended 9-3.

They were going to take on a tough Auburn team, which finished the season with a 9-2 record and a third straight Southeastern Conference championship.

“We think the Hall of Fame Bowl is one of the finer bowls,” said Ohio State head coach John Cooper. “It is an accomplishment for our football team to have the opportunity to play on New Year’s Day.”

25 Years Ago – 1994

Cooper made a clear point during Ohio State’s Dec. 2 announcement that he had agreed to a new five-year contract with the school.

“I think stability is very, very important in any program, and certainly it’s important in the decision here now,” said the often-embattled Cooper. “The message is loud and clear. Those schools that have been using this against us the last two or three years ... it’s over. I’m going to be here. And that’s one of the exciting things about it for me and our coaching staff, the fact that we do have stability in this program and, hey, let’s

get on with it.”

The seventh-year OSU head coach had churned out highly rated recruiting classes in the years preceding the extension despite heavy speculation that his contract would not be renewed. That conjecture finally ended two weeks after Ohio State’s first win over Michigan in the Cooper era with a renewal that would secure the coach through the end of the 1999 season.

20 Years Ago – 1999

Coming off the worst season since his initial campaign in 1988, Cooper decided to make some changes with his staff.

Cooper met with the media Nov. 29 – just nine days after his team ended the year 6-6 with a loss at Michigan – to announce that he had decided to not renew the contracts of offensive coordinator Mike Jacobs and defensive ends coach Shawn Simms.

In addition to letting Jacobs and Simms go, Cooper promoted defensive coordinator Fred Pagac to assistant head coach, secondary coach Jon Tenuta to defensive coordinator and receivers coach Chuck Stobart to offensive coordinator.

“I just felt that some changes needed to be made on our coaching staff,” Cooper said. “I wasn’t happy with the play of our team this year, in all areas – offense, defense and special teams. I just felt in this case it was in the best interest of our program to do this.”

15 Years Ago – 2004

Seated side by side during a Dec. 9 press conference on campus, university president Karen Holbrook and athletic director Andy Geiger announced that the school had self-imposed a ban from the forthcoming postseason for basketball, in light of an ongoing investigation into the program.

Former head coach Jim O’Brien’s had told Geiger of a \$6,000 payment to the family of former Buckeye signee Aleksandar Radojevic, causing the program to launch the investigation that ultimately cost O’Brien his job and led to the hiring of first-year head coach Thad Matta.

“We feel that this action is imperative,” Geiger said. “Delaying this decision to later in the year would likely render it meaningless. It is a meaningful decision at this time.”

Under Matta, the Buckeyes were off to a 6-2 start prior to the announcement of the postseason ban.

10 Years Ago – 2009

Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel told reporters Dec. 14 during his team’s annual bowl media day that he was

excited to get the opportunity to lead his team against one of the best teams from another major conference in a Bowl Championship Series game.

After taking on SEC champions Florida and LSU after the 2006 and ‘07 seasons, the Buckeyes locked horns with Big 12 co-champion Texas the next season. On Jan. 1, 2010, the Buckeyes would get another shot at a champion, this time against Pac-10 winner Oregon.

“It’s a great feeling to go (to the Rose Bowl) and go against a team like Oregon,” Tressel said. “We’re like eighth or ninth in the country, and they’re like sixth or seventh. This is a pretty neat deal.”

Five Years Ago – 2014

As the Ohio State football team danced, high-fived and screamed its way joyously throughout its locker room Dec. 6 in Indianapolis, there were a lot of emotions in play after the team’s 59-0 slaughter of Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game.

There was jubilation. There was relief. There was excitement for what was likely to come.

And in some ways, there was astonishment at the lopsided final score of the game, a drubbing that went down as one of the largest demolitions of a ranked team in college football history.

“If you would have told me earlier this week that we would shut them out 59-0, I wouldn’t have believed you,” senior Michael Bennett said after OSU won its first-ever league title game. “I think it would have been a hard-fought battle, but we would have come out on top.”

One Year Ago – 2018

When Urban Meyer was placed on administrative leave before fall camp, Ohio State selected Ryan Day to be the interim head coach instead of elevating defensive coordinator Greg Schiano, a former collegiate and NFL head coach, or offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson, whose last job was as head coach at Indiana.

That showed a trust in Day from the start, and it also served as a chance for athletic director Gene Smith to evaluate the coach and, in the long run, played a role in him being named Meyer’s successor when Meyer announced his imminent retirement Dec. 4, the same day Ohio State named Day the next man up and gave him a five-year contract worth an initial \$4.5 million annually.

“We all know the tremendous job he did and the challenging time,” Smith said Dec. 4. “He led our program through unbelievable adversity earlier in the year. He offers us a terrific, terrific skill and talent. We’re just so fortunate that he was here.”

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Continued From Page 4

to be a person of interest for Hafley in building his staff, potentially as a defensive backs coach.

"I wish that I could stay here and start working right now," Hafley said during his introductory press conference on Dec. 16, "but I have to go win a national championship. I owe it to Ohio State, to Coach Day, to the players, and I'm excited. So, I'm going to go do that."

Brendon White In The Transfer Portal

Ohio State safety/linebacker Brendon White entered the transfer portal on Dec. 13. His status for the remainder of the season is up in the air, though Ryan Day indicated that there's still a conversation to be had.

"I don't know (his Fiesta Bowl status), we'll kind of get that figured out this week," Day said on Dec. 8, prior to the portal news. "We'll sit down, have a conversation, kind of go from there. But I don't really have an update right now."

White, who won the 2019 Rose Bowl MVP after Ohio State's 28-23 win over Washington, saw his role substantially diminished in the 2019 season under a new defensive coaching staff. After taking over as a starting safety against Nebraska in 2018, White racked up 46 tackles, including four for a loss, and served as a bit of a revelation for a struggling defense.

He seemed to be the ideal fit for Ohio State's new Bullet position that Mattison brought with him from Michigan, but fall camp reports indicated that linebacker Pete Werner had been better in practice and fit the new position more than the Buckeyes had expected.

With Werner spending the majority of the season on the field, and with Ohio State switching primarily to a one-high safety look, there was no longer room for White in the back end of the defense.

That was reflected in his stats on the year: just 19 tackles, two for a loss, and only 10 games played.

The entrance to the portal seemed to be

Ohio State Has Record 112 Academic All-Big Ten Honorees

Ohio State set a new school record with 112 fall student-athletes being recognized as academic All-Big Ten honorees, the conference announced on Dec. 11. That surpassed the 106 recognized each of the last two falls.

The fall honorees include athletes from field hockey, football, men's and women's cross country, men's and women's soccer and women's volleyball. To be eligible for academic All-Big Ten selection, student-athletes must carry a cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 or higher. The football team led the Buckeyes with 38 selections.

The following is a complete list of Ohio State's fall academic All-Big Ten honorees, including their class year and major. The list is in alphabetical order by sport.

Men's Cross Country – Steven Bauers, Sr., finance; Paul Bete, Jr., finance; Noah Corbett, Jr., actuarial science; Eric Halford, So., data analysis; Peter Hayden, Jr., economics; Luke Landis, Sr., finance; Nick Miller, So., finance; Nick Regas, So., business administration; Aaron Wood, Sr., civil engineering.

Women's Cross Country – Alexa Jankowsky, So., architecture; Gabby Dillick, So., nursing; Emma Hoellrich, Jr., chemistry; Devon Leahy, Sr., biology; Hannah Moulton, Jr., microbiology; Abby Nichols, Sr., speech and hearing science; Julia Rizk, Sr., mathematics; Kalee Soehnen, Jr., exercise science education; Lainey Studebaker, Sr., exercise science education; Grace Thomas, Sr., health promotion, nutrition and exercise science; Ellie Weber, So., nursing.

Field Hockey – Esther Clotet-Alsina, Sr., operations management; Julia Dickinson, So., communications; Kennedy Feritta, So., exploration; Emma Goldean, So., exploration; Whitney Harris, Sr., communications; Aaliyah Hernandez, So., biology; Jessica Hourihane, So., marketing; Mara Hunter, Jr., public management, leadership and policy; Jennica Jonovich, Sr., communications; Tess Maloney, So., finance; Adelaide Penzone, Sr., marketing; Genevieve Penzone, Sr., biology; Katie Pyle, So., early childhood education; Sina Schwinn, So., psychology; Samantha Stone, Jr., marketing; Julianna Sweeney, Jr., animal sciences; Nicole Trzaska, Jr., marketing.

Football – Kamryn Babb, So., management and industry exploring; Ryan Batsch, So., exploration; Tuf Borland, Sr., human development and family science; Drue Chrisman, Sr., consumer and family financial services; Chris Chugunov, Gr., kinesiology; Gavin Cupp, Sr., human development and family science; Brock Davin, Sr., finance; Kevin

Dever, Jr., finance; Noah Donald, Sr., industrial and systems engineering; Owen Fankhauser, So., human development and family science; Luke Farrell, Sr., human development and family science; Jordan Fuller, Sr., marketing; Dallas Gant, So., management and industry exploring; Jaelen Gill, So., communication; Zaid Hamdan, So., criminology and criminal justice; Blake Haubeil, Jr., communication; Jake Hausmann, Sr., communication; Logan Hittle, Sr., sport industry; Jonah Jackson, Gr., sports coaching; Jack Jamieson, So., management and industry exploring; Xavier Johnson, So., management and industry exploring; Cade Kacherski, So., finance; Chris Kuhn, So., construction systems management; Liam McCullough, Sr., consumer and family financial services; Roen McCullough, So., finance; Amari McMahan, Sr., biology; Jake Metzger, Sr., electrical and computer engineering; Teradja Mitchell, So., management and industry exploring; Bradley Robinson, Sr., human development and family science; Mitch Rossi, Jr., finance; Jeremy Ruckert, So., exploration; C.J. Saunders, Gr., kinesiology; Ben Schmiesing, So., finance; Tyreke Smith, So., sport industry; Master Teague, So., exploration; Danny Vanatsky, So., English; Taron Vincent, So., sport industry; Pete Werner, Jr., real estate and urban analysis.

Men's Soccer – Mitch Bergman, Jr., industrial and systems engineering; Brennon Davis, Sr., finance; Christian Harter, Jr., biology; Jack Holland, Sr., air transportation; Joshua Jackson-Ketchup, Jr., communication; Matt Kiley, Jr., communication; Leo Kossaka, Sr., finance; Jake Scheper, Sr., accounting; Parker Siegfried, Sr., kinesiology; Chaise Thiel, So., psychology; C.C. Uche, Sr., economics.

Women's Soccer – Alyssa Baumbick, Jr., communication; Marissa Birzon, Jr., marketing; Blair Cowan, So., exploration; Kayla Fischer, So., biology; Meghan Kammerdeiner, Gr., public policy and management; Bailey Kolinski, Jr., information systems; Taylor Lisevick, Jr., biology; Maddy Lowe, Jr., sport industry; Marike Mousset, Sr., biology; Izzy Rodriguez, Jr., finance; Maggie Samanich, Jr., human resources; Jordan Silkowitz, So., marketing; Emaly Vatne, So., pre-exercise science; Selina Vickery, Sr., neuroscience; Haley Walker-Robinson, Sr., sport industry.

Women's Volleyball – Vanja Bukilic So., civil engineering; Ana Beatriz Franklin, Sr., marketing; Jordan Fry, Sr., biology; Hannah Gruensfelder, Jr., biomedical engineering; Mia Grunze, So., exploration; Camry Halm, Sr., logistics management; Becca Mauer, Jr., health sciences; Camryn Moeller, So., accounting; Adria Powell, So., biology; Madison Smeathers, Sr., communication; Lauren Witte, Jr., health sciences.

in the cards when White didn't travel with Ohio State to the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 7, a move that Day cited as being made for "personal reasons."

White had struggled with the adjustment to less time on the field, telling reporters in October that he was still getting used to serving as more of a role player than a full-time starter.

"We always talk about the brotherhood of trust," White said. "If I'm worried about not playing, then I'm being selfish and not caring about the team, putting the team first. In order for us to win, I can't be selfish. I have to put the team first and respect the brotherhood and respect my plays and snaps."

While White served primarily as a backup for Ohio State in 2019, he likely won't be lacking for suitors on the transfer market. He has one year of eligibility remaining and would be able to play right away, wherever he lands.

Wilson, Alford Interviewed For Colorado State Job

While Hafley is moving on, two Ohio

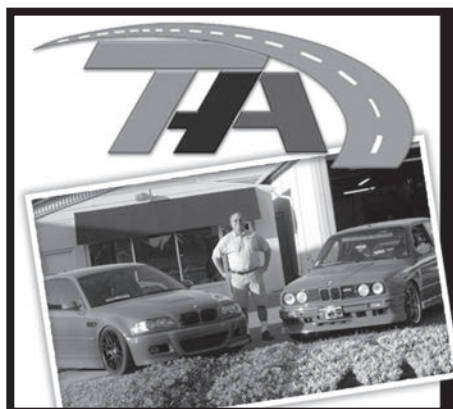
2019 Big Ten Individual Award Winners

Dungy-Thompson Humanitarian Award: J.J. Watt, Wisconsin
Ford-Kinnick Leadership Award: Doug Schlereth, Indiana
Graham-George Offensive Player of the Year: Justin Fields, Ohio State
Nagurski-Woodson Defensive Player of the Year: Chase Young, Ohio State
Thompson-Randle El Freshman of the Year: David Bell, Purdue
Hayes-Schembechler Coach of the Year (coaches vote): P.J. Fleck, Minnesota
Dave McClain Coach of the Year (media vote): Ryan Day, Ohio State
Griese-Brees Quarterback of the Year: Justin Fields, Ohio State
Richter-Howard Receiver of the Year: Rashod Bateman, Minnesota
Ameche-Dayne Running Back of the Year: Jonathan Taylor, Wisconsin
Kwalick-Clark Tight End of the Year: Brycen Hopkins, Purdue
Rimington-Pace Offensive Lineman of the Year: Tristan Wirfs, Iowa
Smith-Brown Defensive Lineman of the Year: Chase Young, Ohio State
Butkus-Fitzgerald Linebacker of the Year: Micah Parsons, Penn State
Tatum-Woodson Defensive Back of the Year: Antoine Winfield Jr., Minnesota
Bakken-Andersen Kicker of the Year: Keith Duncan, Iowa
Eddleman-Fields Punter of the Year: Blake Hayes, Illinois
Rodgers-Dwight Return Specialist of the Year: Javon Leake, Maryland

State assistants on the other side of the ball will be staying put, or at least they won't be heading to Fort Collins to fill the open Colorado State head coaching vacancy.

Those two assistants, co-offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson and running

backs coach Tony Alford, were passed up for the job, with former Boston College head coach Steve Addazio being named the head coach on Dec. 11. Both coaches interviewed for the job, along with former Tennessee head coach Butch Jones and LSU defensive coordinator Dave Aranda,



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2019 All-Big Ten Football Teams

Here is a look at the All-Big Ten football teams as selected by the coaches and media. Ohio State players are in bold, while unanimous selections are in all caps.

Coaches Team

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE:

QB – Justin Fields, Ohio State
RB – J.K. Dobbins, Ohio State
RB – Jonathan Taylor, Wisconsin
WR – Rashod Bateman, Minnesota
WR – Tyler Johnson, Minnesota
C – Tyler Biadasz, Wisconsin
G – Ben Bredeson, Michigan
G – Wyatt Davis, Ohio State
T – Tristan Wirfs, Iowa
T – Jon Runyan, Michigan
TE – Brycen Hopkins, Purdue

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE:

DL – A.J. Epenesa, Iowa
DL – Joe Gaziano, Northwestern
DL – Chase Young, Ohio State
DL – Yetur Gross-Matos, Penn State

LB – Malik Harrison, Ohio State

LB – Micah Parsons, Penn State
LB – Zack Baun, Wisconsin
DB – Lavert Hill, Michigan
DB – Antoine Winfield, Minnesota
DB – Jordan Fuller, Ohio State
DB – Jeff Okudah, Ohio State

FIRST-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

K – Keith Duncan, Iowa
P – Blake Hayes, Illinois
Returner – Javon Leake, Maryland

HONORABLE MENTION: ILLINOIS:

Kendrick Green, Doug Kramer, Jake Hansen, Haydon Whitehead; INDIANA: Peyton Hendershot, Caleb Jones, Simon Stepaniak, Micah McFadden, Tiawan Mullen; IOWA: Tyler Linderbaum, Ihmir Smith-Marsette, Nate Stanley, Chauncey Golston, Cedric Lattimore, Kristian Welch; MARYLAND: Dontay Demus, Javon Leake, Nick Cross, Ayinde Eley, Keandre Jones; MICHIGAN: Zach Charbonnet, Nico Collins, Nick Eubanks, Hassan Haskins, Jalen

BIG TEN SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

HONOREES: Dre Brown, ILL; Nick Westbrook, IND; Nate Stanley, IOWA; Ellis

Media Team

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE:

QB – Justin Fields, Ohio State
RB – J.K. Dobbins, Ohio State
RB – JONATHAN TAYLOR, Wisconsin

WR – Rashod Bateman, Minnesota

WR – Tyler Johnson, Minnesota
C – Tyler Biadasz, Wisconsin
G – Ben Bredeson, Michigan
G – Wyatt Davis, Ohio State
T – Tristan Wirfs, Iowa
T – Jon Runyan, Michigan
TE – Brycen Hopkins, Purdue

FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE:

DL – A.J. Epenesa, Iowa
DL – Kenny Willekes, Michigan State
DL – CHASE YOUNG, Ohio State
DL – Yetur Gross-Matos, Penn State
LB – Dele Harding, Illinois
LB – Micah Parsons, Penn State
LB – Zack Baun, Wisconsin
DB – Lavert Hill, Michigan
DB – Antoine Winfield, Minnesota
DB – Jordan Fuller, Ohio State
DB – Jeff Okudah, Ohio State

FIRST-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

K – Keith Duncan, Iowa
P – Blake Hayes, Illinois
Returner – Javon Leake, Maryland

HONORABLE MENTION: ILLINOIS:

Kendrick Green, Josh Imatorbhebe, Doug Kramer, Alex Palczewski, Sydney Brown, Stanley Green Jr., Jake Hansen, Nate Hobbs, Jamal Milan, Dre Brown; INDIANA: Peyton Ramsey, Demarcus Elliott, Tiawan Mullen; IOWA: Tyler Linderbaum, Ihmir Smith-Marsette, Chauncey Golston, Geno Stone, Kristian Welch, Michael Sleep-Dalton; MARYLAND: Javon Leake, Ellis McKennie, Keandre Jones; MICHIGAN: Ronnie Bell, Nico Collins, Nick Eubanks, Hassan Haskins, Sean McKeon, Michael Onwenu, Donovan Peoples-Jones, Jordan Glasgow, Brad Hawkins,

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE:

Tanner Morgan, Minnesota
 Stevie Scott III, Indiana
 Rodney Smith, Minnesota
 Whop Philyor, Indiana
 K.J. Hamler, Penn State
 Cesar Ruiz, Michigan
Wyatt Davis, Ohio State
 Steven Gonzalez, Penn State
Branden Bowen, Ohio State
Thayer Munford, Ohio State
 Pat Freiermuth, Penn State

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE:

Kwity Paye, Michigan
 Kenny Willekes, Michigan State
 Carter Coughlin, Minnesota
 Shaka Toney, Penn State

Khaleke Hudson, Michigan

Josh Uche, Michigan
 Chris Orr, Wisconsin
 Geno Stone, Iowa
 Antoine Brooks, Maryland
 Lamar Jackson, Nebraska
Damon Arnette, Ohio State

SECOND-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

Logan Justus, Indiana
 Adam Korsak, Rutgers
 Aron Cruickshank, Wisconsin

Mayfield, Sean McKeon, Aidan Hutchinson, Cam McGrone, Josh Metellus, Donovan Peoples-Jones, Giles Jackson; MICHIGAN STATE: Elijah Collins, Cody White, Joe Bachie, Mike Panasiuk, Josiah Scott, Antjuan Simmons, Jake Hartbarger; MINNESOTA: Curtis Dunlap Jr., Daniel Faalele, Conner Olson, Sam Schlueter, Coney Durr, Kamal Martin, Sam Renner; NEBRASKA: Brenden Jaimes, Dedrick Mills, JD Spielman, Darrion Daniels; NORTHWESTERN: Rashawn Slater, Blake Gallagher, Travis Whillock; **OHIO STATE: K.J.**

McKennie, MD; Carlo Kemp, MICH; Raequan Williams, MSU; Winston DeLattiboudere, MINN; Ben Stille, NEB;

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE:

Tanner Morgan, Minnesota
 Stevie Scott, Indiana
 Rodney Smith, Minnesota

K.J. Hamler, Penn State

David Bell, Purdue
Josh Myers, Ohio State
Jonah Jackson, Ohio State
 Steven Gonzalez, Penn State
Thayer Munford, Ohio State
 Cole Van Lanen, Wisconsin
 Pat Freiermuth, Penn State

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE:

Raequan Williams, Michigan State
 Carter Coughlin, Minnesota
 Joe Gaziano, Northwestern
 George Karlaftis, Purdue
 Paddy Fisher, Northwestern
Malik Harrison, Ohio State
 Chris Orr, Wisconsin
 Michael Ojemudia, Iowa
 Josiah Scott, Michigan State
 Lamar Jackson, Nebraska
Damon Arnette, Ohio State

SECOND-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

Logan Justus, Indiana
 Will Hart, Michigan
 Aron Cruickshank, Wisconsin

Cam McGrone, Ambry Thomas, Jackson Giles; MICHIGAN STATE: Cody White, David Dowell, Mike Panasiuk, Antjuan Simmons, Matt Coghlin, Jake Hartbarger; MINNESOTA: Curtis Dunlap Jr., Daniel Faalele, Conner Olson, Sam Schlueter, Thomas Barber, Coney Durr, Kamal Martin, Sam Renner, Benjamin St. Juste; NEBRASKA: Brenden Jaimes, Dedrick Mills, Wan'Dale Robinson, J.D. Spielman, Mohammed Barry, Dicaprio Bootle, Khalil Davis, Cam Taylor-Britt; NORTHWESTERN: Rashawn Slater, Jared Thomas, Blake Gallagher; **OHIO STATE: Luke Farrell, K.J. Hill, Tuf**

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE:

Shea Patterson, Michigan
 Reggie Corbin, Illinois
Master Teague, Ohio State
Chris Olave, Ohio State
 David Bell, Purdue
Josh Myers, Ohio State
 Michael Onwenu, Michigan
 Blaise Andries, Minnesota
 Alex Palczewski, Illinois
 Alaric Jackson, Iowa
Luke Farrell, Ohio State

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE:

Carlo Kemp, Michigan
 Raequan Williams, Michigan State
 Khalil Davis, Nebraska
DaVon Hamilton, Ohio State
 Robert Windsor, Penn State
 Dele Harding, Illinois
 Paddy Fisher, Northwestern
 Cam Brown, Penn State
 Sydney Brown, Illinois
 Michael Ojemudia, Iowa
 Ambry Thomas, Michigan
Shaun Wade, Ohio State

THIRD-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

Blake Haubeil, Ohio State
 Will Hart, Michigan
 Dre Brown, Illinois

Hill, Tuf Borland, Baron Browning, Jashon Cornell, Robert Landers, Pete Werner, Drue Chrisman; PENN STATE: Sean Clifford, Will Fries, Michal Menet, Tariq Castro-Fields, Jan Johnson, John Reid, Garrett Taylor, Lamont Wade, Blake Gillikin, K.J. Hamler, Jake Pinegar; PURDUE: Matt McCann, Derrick Barnes, Ben Holt, George Karlaftis, J.D. Dellinger; RUTGERS: Tyshon Fogg; WISCONSIN: Logan Bruss, Quintez Cephus, Jake Ferguson, Cole Van Lanen, Eric Burrell, Matt Hennigsen, Faion Hicks, Isiahh Loudermilk.

Justin Hilliard, OSU; Blake Gillikin, PSU; Jackson Anthrop, PUR; Zach Venesky, RU; David Moorman, WIS.

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE:

Shea Patterson, Michigan
 Reggie Corbin, Illinois
 Zach Charbonnet, Michigan
 Elijah Collins, Michigan State
Master Teague, Ohio State
 Whop Philyor, Indiana
Chris Olave, Ohio State
 Cesar Ruiz, Michigan
 Simon Stepaniak, Indiana
 Blaise Andries, Minnesota
 Alaric Jackson, Iowa
Branden Bowen, Ohio State
 Peyton Hendershot, Indiana

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE:

Oluwole Betiku Jr., Illinois
 Aidan Hutchinson, Michigan
 Kwity Paye, Michigan
Davon Hamilton, Ohio State
 KhaVeke Hudson, Michigan
 Josh Uche, Michigan
 Joe Bachie, Michigan State
 Antoine Brooks, Maryland
 Josh Metellus, Michigan
Shaun Wade, Ohio State
 Tariq Castro-Fields, Penn State

THIRD-TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS:

Blake Haubeil, Ohio State
 Adam Korsak, Rutgers
 Donovan Peoples-Jones, Michigan

Borland, Baron Browning, Jashon Cornell, Robert Landers, Pete Werner, Drue Chrisman; PENN STATE: Journey Brown, Sean Clifford, Will Fries, Michal Menet, Cam Brown, Jan Johnson, John Reid, Shaka Toney, Garrett Taylor, Lamont Wade, Robert Windsor, Blake Gillikin, K.J. Hamler, Jake Pinegar; PURDUE: Matt McCann, Ben Holt, Cory Trice, J.D. Dellinger; RUTGERS: Tyshon Fogg, Willington Previlon; WISCONSIN: Logan Bruss, Quintez Cephus, Jack Coan, Jake Ferguson; Eric Burrell, Faion Hicks, Isiahh Loudermilk, Rachad Wildgoose.

according to Banner Society's Steven Godfrey.

Alford's connection to Colorado State is strong, making his inclusion a fairly obvious one. The Buckeye assistant was a running back at Colorado State from 1987-1990 and is considered one of the best backs in school history.

Wilson's consideration was less understandable, given that he has no natural ties to Colorado State. His tie, instead, was with the man reportedly helping with running Colorado State's search, former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer.

According to Godfrey, Meyer served as an adviser for Colorado State's coaching search through the entire process and was in the room for interviews with prospective coaches. Three of the five options were former Meyer assistants, and Meyer's son-in-law, Corey Dennis (an Ohio State staffer), is expected to go to CSU with Addazio.

CSU athletic director Joe Parker has downplayed Meyer's impact, though he did confirm involvement from the FOX analyst to the Denver Post, stating that Meyer was advising and that "there was no way where he was trying to shape the decision for us."

Day To Receive Playoff Bonuses

As is customary with coaches who qualify for major postseason events such as conference championships or the College Football Playoff, Day is reportedly set to receive hefty bonuses in his contract due to Ohio State's success in his first season as head coach.

Day will receive \$450,000 worth of bonuses for various accomplishments throughout the season, with the chance to earn quite a bit more if the Buckeyes are able to beat Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl, with a \$350,000 price tag put on a national championship game berth.

The majority of the \$450,000 came from Ohio State's most recent win over Wisconsin, which secured a Big Ten title (worth \$100,000) and a playoff berth (worth \$250,000), with the leftover \$100,000 coming from winning the Big Ten East and being named Big Ten Coach of the Year.

While there's no listed bonus for winning the championship in Day's contract, a significant extension could be expected, given Ohio State's recent history. When the Buckeyes won the inaugural playoff in 2014, Meyer gained no title bonus but instead had his contract restructured, extending it through 2020 from 2017 and increasing his annual pay from \$4.9 million to \$5.8 million. With increases each year that he remained, Meyer's contract rose all the way up to \$7.6 million in 2018, his final year in Columbus.

Day could be in for a similar extension, with his base salary sitting at just \$4.5 million for five seasons.

Marcus Hooker Earning More Time

Ohio State relied on a group of defensive backs for much of the season and rarely departed from the group. With Damon Arnette, Jordan Fuller, Jeff Okudah and Shaun Wade generally serving as starters, the Buckeyes have usually looked to bring Sevn Banks, Cameron Brown and Josh Proctor in as the primary replacements off the bench.

Late in the season, however, with Arnette, Wade and Proctor struggling with injuries, Ohio State turned to a new face

who could find himself in the contributing group next season, with all four starters expected to leave following the 2019 season: redshirt freshman safety Marcus

Hooker, the brother of former All-Big Ten safety and first-round draft pick Malik Hooker.

Hooker, who had spent much of the

season on special teams, played 18 snaps in Ohio State's win against Michigan, his

Continued On Page 8



Continued From Page 7

second-highest snap total of the season. He recorded just one tackle during his time on the field, but he was able to deflect a pass as well.

In speaking to the media leading up to Ohio State's win over Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game, Hafley explained the decision behind getting Hooker on the field more, saying that he had excelled in practice and that he deserved to play. He went on to say that Hooker is "just another guy you're so happy for (to see succeed)."

While Hooker saw his playing time dwindle against the Badgers (six snaps) with the return of Proctor and Wade, he figures to factor into Ohio State's future moving forward – especially with the transfers of Isaiah Pryor and White

Championship Contingencies

There are two possible publishing dates for the next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin. If Ohio State defeats Clemson and advances to the College Football Playoff championship game on Jan. 13, BSB will be published Jan. 21. If the Buckeyes lose to the Tigers, BSB will be published on the regulary scheduled date of Jan. 14.

– and a member of Ohio State's present in the backfield sees the potential in Hooker and all of the young defensive backs.

"I think it was great, because I see them growing up in practice and making plays in practice," Fuller said after the Michigan game. "They just hadn't got to do it in a game yet. I'm so happy for Amir, Sevyn, Cam – even Marcus Hooker stepped in there and did a great job, had a great pass broken up at the end of the game.

"Those guys had a ton of plays, and I'm really proud of those guys for stepping up and not missing a beat in that second half. It was amazing."

Ohio State Awards Recap

The college football awards season may not have culminated with a Buckeye claiming the

Next BSB Print Will Be Mailed On Jan. 14 Or 21

The next print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin does not come out until Jan. 14 or 21, depending on how Ohio State fares against Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl. However, there is no need to miss any of the Buckeye action. Members of the BSB staff will be reporting from the Phoenix area on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com website as the Buckeyes take on Clemson, and if the Buckeyes knock off the Tigers, the staff will move on to New Orleans to keep you informed from there. In between there will be plenty of Buckeye news as Ohio State searches for a new coach to replace Jeff Hafley and several of the star Buckeyes ponder their NFL futures.

The BuckeyeSports.com website is available 24/7/365 with all the breaking news posted. Also enjoy Reprint Thursdays, with stories from the BSB archives, and discuss the Ohio State sports topics of the day with other readers and staff members on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum. Subscribers can also read the entire print issue of each BSB before it has even hit the post office.

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

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Heisman trophy, despite quarterback Justin Fields and defensive end Chase Young both being in attendance to see former teammate Joe Burrow crowned. However, the past few weeks have still been very fruitful for the Buckeyes, with a number of players being

named award winners, all-conference players, and even the end of a 40-year streak.

Starting with the All-Big Ten teams as selected by media, released on Dec. 3 and 4,

Continued On Page 10

2020



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Ohio State placed 16 players on the first, second and third teams, with seven total on the defensive side of the ball and nine on offense. Leading the way on the first team were Fields, running back J.K. Dobbins, right guard Wyatt Davis, Young, cornerback Jeff Okudah and safety Jordan Fuller. The Buckeyes had four players on the second team (left tackle Thayer Munford, center Josh Myers, left guard Jonah Jackson and cornerback Damon Arnette) and five on the third team (running back Master Teague, wide receiver Chris Olave, right tackle Branden Bowen, defensive tackle DaVon Hamilton and cornerback Shaun Wade). Wide receiver K.J. Hill, tight end Luke Farrell, defensive tackles Jashon Cornell and Robert Landers and linebackers Tuf Borland, Baron Browning and Pete Werner were all named honorable mentions.

Ohio State didn't just place a majority of its starters on the Big Ten teams. It also swept the major awards. Day was named by the media as Big Ten Coach of the Year (Minnesota's P.J. Fleck won the coaches vote), the first time a Buckeye head coach has won the award since Earle Bruce's first season in 1979. Part of that sweep was at offensive and defensive player of the year, where Fields and Young were selected, marking the first time a Big Ten team has won all three awards in one season.

Staying in the Big Ten, Ohio State linebacker Justin Hilliard, who was granted a sixth year of eligibility by the NCAA in response to

his request for a medical hardship waiver, was given a Big Ten sportsmanship award. Young claimed another trophy as he won the Chicago Tribune Silver Football, given to the best player in the conference.

Outside of the Big Ten, Fuller was named as one of four finalists for the Lott IMPACT Trophy, awarded to the nation's best defender, both on the field and academically. He was listed alongside Derrick Brown of Auburn, Isaiah Simmons of Clemson and Evan Weaver of California. Brown was announced as the winner on Dec. 16.

Fuller also found himself on the Academic All-American list for the third straight year and was an Academic All-Big Ten selectee, one of 38 Buckeyes in that group (see page 6). To qualify, players had to maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA, while being enrolled at their school for at least one calendar year.

Young continued to pick up the hardware, winning the Ted Hendricks Award, given to the nation's top defensive end, while also reeling in the Bronko Nagurski Award and Chuck Bednarik Award, both given to the best defensive player in the country.

He was the first Buckeye to win the Bednarik and the first since 2006 (James Laurinaitis) to win the Nagurski. He won 90 percent of the first-place votes for the Hendricks, the largest total since its inception in 2002. Young was also one of the five Ohio State players recognized as Walter Camp Football Foundation All-Americans.

Okudah joined him on the first team, while Fields, Dobbins and Wyatt Davis all made the second team.

Ohio State was also announced as a finalist for the Joe Moore Award, given to the best offensive line in the country. Ohio State's unit is one of four finalists, along with Alabama, LSU and Oregon. The winner will be announced via a surprise visit to the winning group's campus later this month.

With nearly every one of his starters gaining recognition for their play, Day was also included as a finalist on two national coach of the year lists: the George Munger Collegiate Coach of the Year and the Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year.

In the former list, Day is joined by LSU's Ed Orgeron, Clemson's Dabo Swinney, Oklahoma's Lincoln Riley, Baylor's Matt Rhule and Minnesota's P.J. Fleck. The winner will be announced Jan. 3.

57 Student-Athletes Earn OSU Degrees

Fifty-seven current and former Ohio State student-athletes received their degrees during fall commencement at the Schottenstein Center on Dec. 15.

Notable graduates include distance runner Julia Rizk, the 2019 NCAA indoor mile champion who holds school records in the indoor mile and the outdoor 1,500-meter run; Anthony McCollum, an All-American who won the free pistol national title in 2017 and the standard pistol national title in 2018; Samantha Prahalis, a member of the women's basketball team from 2009-12 who finished her career as the Big Ten's all-time leader in assists with 901; gymnast Alec Yoder, a two-time Big Ten champion on pommel horse; and 13 members of the current football team, which is set to play in the College Football Playoff semifinal on Dec. 28.

A complete list of Ohio State's 57 student-athlete graduates, as well as their majors, can be found below in alphabetical order by sport.

Baseball – Ryan Feltner, communication; Malik Jones, sport industry; Ryan Riga, studio art.

Women's Basketball – Samantha Prahalis, criminology.

Women's Cross Country – Julia Rizk, finance.

Men's Diving – Aaron Daniels-Freeman, studio art; Christopher Law, economics.

Men's Fencing – De Yang One, marketing.

Football – Josh Alabi, family resource management; Rashod Berry, family resource management; Tuf Borland, human development and family science; Drue Chrisman, family resource management; Jonathon Cooper, family resource management; Jashon Cornell, hospitality management; Gavin Cupp, human development and family science; Mike Doss, master's in operational excellence; Doran Grant, sociology; Davon Hamilton, sociology; Logan Hittle, sport industry; Robert Landers,

criminology; Austin Mack, family resource management; Jake Metzger, electrical and computer engineering; Blake Pfenning, civil engineering; Isaiah Pryor, family resource management; Kevin Woidke, real estate.

Men's Gymnastics – Chris Coombs, biology; Alec Yoder, sport industry.

Men's Lacrosse – Jack Jasinski, exercise science; Carter Kistler, agribusiness and applied economics; Logan Maccani, accounting; Michael Viera, finance.

Pistol – Zachary Dahmen, finance; Anthony McCollum, mechanical engineering; Emily Rust, sport industry and business marketing.

Rifle – Michael Steinel, international studies.

Men's Soccer – Jack Holland, air transportation; Michael Prosek, sport industry.

Women's Soccer – Marike Saint-Pierre Mousset, biology; Haley Walker-Robinson, sport industry.

Softball – Kallie Boren, technical education and training.

Men's Swimming – Nick Hogsted, geology; Wyatt Jager, studio art; Michael Lynch, computer science and engineering; William Matz, physics; Kevin Musterait, studio art; Michael Salazar, marketing.

Women's Swimming – Maria Coy, actuarial science; KayLee Witkiewicz, textiles and clothing.

Synchronized Swimming – Kaitlyn Carbone, political science; Alex Meredith-LeRoux, health science program.

Men's Track and Field – Jared Ballenger, construction systems management; Daniel Soehlen, human nutrition.

Men's Volleyball – Chase Moothart, sport industry.

Women's Volleyball – Madison Smeathers, communication.

Wrestling – Te'Shan Campbell, communication; Sal Marandino, sport industry; Seth Williams, construction systems management.

In the latter, Day is one of nine finalists, along with Eliah Drinkwitz (Appalachian State), Sonny Dykes (SMU), Fleck, Bryan Harsin (Boise State), Mike Norvell (Memphis), Orgeron, Rhule and Swinney. The winner will be named on Dec. 20.

Burrow Raises Money For Southeast Ohio

Former Ohio State quarterback and current LSU Heisman trophy winner Joe Burrow had no plans to forget where he came from on Dec. 14, during his acceptance speech after winning the award.

Originally from Athens, Ohio, where his dad coached at Ohio University under head coach Frank Solich for 13 years from 2005-2018, Burrow was sure to mention his home during his speech.

"Coming from southeast Ohio, it's a very impoverished area and the poverty rate is almost two times the national average," Burrow said. "There's so many people there that don't have a lot. And I'm up here for all those kids in Athens and Athens County that go home to not a lot of food on the table, hungry after school. You guys can be up here, too."

Burrow's heartfelt speech inspired quite the groundswell of support. It inspired Athens resident Will Drabold to start a fundraiser for the Athens County Food Pantry. In the days since Burrow's speech, and thanks to some signal boosting by Burrow and LSU, that fundraiser has raised a whopping \$432,356 as of publication. The Athens County Food Pantry released a statement via Facebook on Dec. 16.

"For the fundraisers inspired by Joe Burrow, we are simply overwhelmed by the generosity of so many people! Our board will be having in-depth conversations about the best ways to use these funds. This is very new to us. We have never received an

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3.	Clemson	13-0
4.	Oklahoma	12-1
5.	Georgia	11-2
6.	Oregon	11-2
7.	Baylor	11-2
8.	Wisconsin	10-3
9.	Florida	10-2
10.	Penn State	10-2
11.	Utah	11-2
12.	Auburn	9-3
13.	Alabama	10-2
14.	Michigan	9-3
15.	Notre Dame	10-2
16.	Iowa	9-3
17.	Memphis	12-1
18.	Minnesota	10-2
19.	Boise State	12-1
20.	Appalachian State	12-1
21.	Cincinnati	10-3
22.	USC	8-4
23.	Navy	9-2
24.	Virginia	9-4
25.	Oklahoma State	8-4

outpouring of financial support of this magnitude. We seek to be careful and deliberate in making these decisions, as the opportunities to further address food insecurity and hunger are numerous and the possibilities are nearly endless.

“On behalf of the board and our clients, merely saying thank you for this amazing show of support for our work cannot accurately reflect the depth of our appreciation! But those are the words we have so THANK YOU EVERYONE!!!”

Burrow’s former coach was as impressed with the speech as everyone else.

“To be there and experience that was one of those things I’ll remember till I’m 80 years old,” head coach Day said. “That was as cool a night and moment as I’ve ever been around. Although he thought that out, that was just him being himself. For him to go through what he’s been through, play the way he’s played, see the emotion of what this has meant to him and his family, unbelievable. Talk about class. There’s not a classier guy out there. I was just, you know, humbled to be in the room, to be part of his journey.”

Ash Hired As Texas Defensive Coordinator

Ohio State’s coordinators from the 2014 national championship run that culminated in a 42-20 win over Oregon are reuniting. Former Buckeye offensive coordinator Tom Herman, now the head coach at Texas, officially confirmed his hire of former Buckeye defensive coordinator Chris Ash on Dec. 17.

“After taking a hard look at a lot of options at defensive coordinator, Chris was the one that continued to stand out,” Herman said in a statement. “We couldn’t be more excited about what he’ll add to our staff.”

Ash had been out of work since Sept. 29, when he was removed from his position as Rutgers head coach following a 52-0 loss to Michigan.

“I have a great deal of respect for Coach Herman as a coach and a person,” Ash said. “If I didn’t believe in him, I wouldn’t be making this move. I have complete confidence and faith and trust in his ability to lead and to coach, and I’m excited to be a part of this program.”

Ash and Herman aren’t the only former Buckeye coaches on the Longhorn staff. Former Ohio State offensive coordinator Tim Beck is the quarterbacks coach, while former Ohio State running backs coach Stan Drayton fills the same role in Austin.

2019-20 Bowl Schedule

Date	Bowl	Site	Matchup	Time (ET)	TV
Dec. 20	Bahamas	Nassau, Bahamas	Buffalo vs. Charlotte	2 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 20	Frisco	Frisco, Texas	Kent State vs. Utah State	7:30 p.m.	ESPN2
Dec. 21	Celebration	Atlanta	Alcorn State vs. North Carolina A&T	12 p.m.	ABC
Dec. 21	New Mexico	Albuquerque, N.M.	Central Michigan vs. San Diego State	2 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 21	Cure	Orlando, Fla.	Georgia Southern vs. Liberty	2:30 p.m.	CBSSN
Dec. 21	Boca Raton	Boca Raton, Fla.	Florida Atlantic vs. SMU	3:30 p.m.	ABC
Dec. 21	Camellia	Montgomery, Ala.	Arkansas State vs. FIU	5:30 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 21	Las Vegas	Las Vegas	Boise State vs. Washington	7:30 p.m.	ABC
Dec. 21	New Orleans	New Orleans	Appalachian State vs. UAB	9 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 23	Gasparilla	Tampa, Fla.	Marshall vs. UCF	2:30 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 24	Hawai’i	Honolulu	BYU vs Hawaii	8 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 26	Independence	Shreveport, La.	Louisiana Tech vs. Miami (Fla.)	4 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 26	Quick Lane	Detroit	Eastern Michigan vs. Pitt	8 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 27	Military	Annapolis, Md.	North Carolina vs. Temple	12 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 27	Pinstripe	Bronx, N.Y.	Michigan State vs. Wake Forest	3:20 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 27	Texas	Houston	Oklahoma State vs. Texas A&M	6:45 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 27	Holiday	San Diego	Iowa vs. USC	8 p.m.	FS1
Dec. 27	Cheez-It	Phoenix	Air Force vs. Washington State	10:15 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 28	Cotton	Arlington, Texas	Memphis vs. Penn State	12 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 28	Camping World	Orlando	Iowa State vs. Notre Dame	12 p.m.	ABC
Dec. 28	Peach (CFP Semifinal)	Atlanta	LSU vs. Oklahoma	4 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 28	Fiesta (CFP Semifinal)	Glendale, Ariz.	Clemson vs. Ohio State	8 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 30	First Responder	Dallas	Western Kentucky vs. Western Michigan	12:30 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 30	Music City	Nashville, Tenn.	Louisville vs. Mississippi State	4 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 30	Redbox	Santa Clara, Calif.	California vs. Illinois	4 p.m.	FOX
Dec. 30	Orange	Miami Gardens, Fla.	Florida vs. Virginia	8 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 31	Belk	Charlotte	Kentucky vs. Virginia Tech	12 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 31	Sun	El Paso, Texas	Arizona State vs. Florida State	2 p.m.	CBS
Dec. 31	Liberty	Memphis, Tenn.	Kansas State vs. Navy	3:45 p.m.	ESPN
Dec. 31	Arizona	Tucson, Ariz.	Georgia State vs. Wyoming	4:30 p.m.	CBSSN
Dec. 31	Alamo	San Antonio, Texas	Texas vs Utah	7:30 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 1	Outback	Tampa, Fla.	Auburn vs. Minnesota	1 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 1	Citrus	Orlando, Fla.	Alabama vs. Michigan	1 p.m.	ABC
Jan. 1	Rose	Pasadena, Calif.	Oregon vs. Wisconsin	5 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 1	Sugar	New Orleans	Baylor vs. Georgia	8:45 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 2	Birmingham	Birmingham, Ala.	Boston College vs. Cincinnati	3 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 2	Gator	Jacksonville, Fla.	Indiana vs. Tennessee	7 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 3	Famous Idaho Potato	Boise, Idaho	Nevada vs. Ohio	3:30 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 4	Armed Forces	Fort Worth, Texas	Southern Miss vs. Tulane	11:30 a.m.	ESPN
Jan. 6	LendingTree	Mobile, Ala.	Louisiana vs. Miami (Ohio)	7:30 p.m.	ESPN
Jan. 13	CFP National Championship	New Orleans	TBA	8 p.m.	ESPN

Ohio State Club Football Wins First National Title

The Ohio State club football team completed an undefeated, 9-0 season and captured its first national championship on Dec. 9.

Led by head coach James Grega, a Buckeye Sports Bulletin alumnus, the Buckeyes took down Oakland in the National Club Football Association Championship, 36-9, at West Family Stadium in Wheeling, W.Va.

Ohio State saw excellent individual performances from safety Sam Frank and quarterback Kellyn Gerenstein. Frank had a 46-yard fumble recovery returned for a touchdown, an interception and nine tackles, enough to earn him player of the game honors.

Gerenstein, meanwhile, capped an excellent season with a 12-of-26 passing day for 200 yards and added three scores.

The Buckeyes finished the year having allowed just six scores on the season while averaging a league-high 36.8 points per game on the other side of the ball.

In the days after the title game, the team recognized some of brightest stars.

Defensive coordinator Dylan Barron was unanimously selected as assistant coach of the year, quarterback Spencer Moore was named scout-team player of the year, running back Ryan Scianna was honored as the 12th man of the year, safety K.C. Cress was named most improved player, and center Ryan Walsh and defensive tackle Chase Gasser were co-linemen of the year.

Gasser was also named defensive player of the year. Wide receiver/defensive back Casey Scroggins won platoon player of the year,

Xavier Thayer was special teams player of the year, and Gerenstein captured offensive player of the year.

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OSU Aims To End Streak

Continued From Page 1

Ed Warinner with Ryan Day and Kevin Wilson – a pivotal moment in school history given that Day is now running the show.

But since Day wasn't on the staff at the time, he refuses to use the loss as a motivational tactic for this year's team.

"I think we'll use it as a reference point, but that's two very different teams," Day said. "I mean, I wasn't here, and a lot of guys weren't here. But we'll definitely use it as a reference point, but I don't think it's very relevant here."

Given the turnover on both the coaching staff and the roster, in addition to a brand-new offensive philosophy, Landers agreed with Day's game plan.

"When we played Clemson in 2016, it was a different era of Ohio State," Landers said. "I feel like the team that we are now is completely different from the team that we were in 2016. Yes, it's in the history books, but that's it. It's history. We have to focus on the present."

Ohio State entered that December 2016 meeting with one of the nation's top defensive units, ranking among the top six in total and scoring defense. It was the offense – which mustered a meager 215 total yards against Clemson – that doomed the Buckeyes against the Tigers

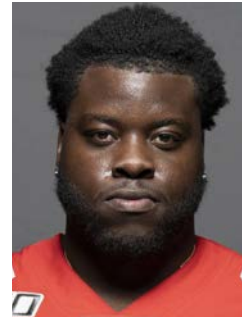
and their aggressive front seven.

This year's team is much more well-equipped, however.

Led by quarterback Justin Fields and running back J.K. Dobbins, who finished third and sixth, respectively, in the 2019 Heisman Trophy vote, Ohio State's offense sits in first nationally with 85 touchdowns and fourth in total yards with 6,903.

If you ask fifth-year senior defensive tackle Jashon Cornell, though, the Buckeyes won't win this game because of their elite offensive attack or their second-ranked defense, led by another Heisman finalist in defensive end Chase Young.

"That's one thing that's so different about this team now is that we're willing to lay it down for one another," Cornell said. "We're willing to die for our brothers. We're willing to do anything to win the game."



Robert Landers

Since Ohio State and Clemson last shared a field, the Tigers have won two of the past three national titles. They also carry a 28-game win streak into the desert, and many view them as the team to beat despite being the lower seed in the matchup and No. 3 seed overall.

"At the end of the day, you've got to beat the best to go win the national championship, and Clemson is certainly that," Day said.



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In Defeat, Buckeyes Have Historic Heisman Finish

Continued From Page 1

all my heart. I'm also forever grateful for them because they gave me opportunities when not a lot of people were going to. They'll forever hold a place in my heart, and I hope they know that."

With J.T. Barrett firmly established as the starter during his tenure in Columbus, Burrow had limited opportunities to shine at Ohio State.

A broken hand in 2017 preseason camp dropped him to third on the depth chart behind Dwayne Haskins, who then beat him out for the starting spot upon Barrett's departure the following spring.

Shortly after the quarterback competition concluded, Burrow announced his decision to transfer to LSU.

"I wouldn't be here without (Ohio State)," Burrow said. "I really wanted to make sure that I mentioned them, because a lot of times people transfer and there's hard feelings, but there's no hard feelings. And they know that, too. I try to go back there as much as I can, and I still

have best friends on the team now and stay in contact with everybody there, so I just wanted to make sure they knew that I haven't forgotten about them. They helped me become the player I am today."

Had he stayed at Ohio State, it's possible Burrow – who is widely expected to be the first pick in the 2020 NFL draft – would be behind center for the Buckeyes this fall instead of Fields. But that hypothetical situation was certainly a topic for another time, as the Buckeyes, led by their sophomore signal caller, had a historical night of their own.

Fields became the second straight Ohio State quarterback to finish third in the Heisman Trophy voting, joining Haskins last fall. And with Young finishing fourth and running back J.K. Dobbins – although he wasn't invited to the ceremony – finishing sixth, this year's Buckeyes became just the third team in college football history to finish with three of the top six vote-getters (1946 Army and 1973 Ohio State).

"I think it's a testimony to everybody at Ohio State and the coaching staff, how they develop players," Young said. "I think it's a testimony to them when you look back at your freshman year and to where you are a junior and what's possible. Then Justin, he transferred in, but you can still see how they developed him in the offseason. To have two Heisman finalists, that's just a tribute to our coaches."

Fields echoed those sentiments.

"Coming here after getting to Columbus in January, I never would have thought I would be here," he said. "Just seeing myself here right now, it's a dream come true. It just goes to show you that everything happens for a reason, really. I didn't think it would happen, at least not this year. Next year? Maybe. But this is a blessing."

While Young will likely join Burrow as one of the top picks in April's draft, Fields has at least one more chance at the trophy.

"Obviously, Justin will be back next year," Burrow said, "and I think he'll win it."



OHIO STATE FOOTBALL/TWITTER

THE RYAN DAY EFFECT – Justin Fields became the second straight Ohio State quarterback to finish third in Heisman Trophy voting (Dwayne Haskins, 2018).

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Ohio State's Top Plays Came In Big Moments

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

This season, Ohio State won its eighth straight game against Michigan, knocked off Wisconsin for its third consecutive Big Ten championship and, for the first time since 2016, has punched its ticket to the College Football Playoff.

But before the second-ranked Buckeyes take on No. 3 Clemson in the PlayStation Fiesta Bowl on Dec. 28 (8 p.m. on ESPN), the staff of Buckeye Sports Bulletin takes a look back at the 10 plays that helped Ohio State get to this point – just two wins from a national title in head coach Ryan Day's first season.

10. Wilson's Acrobatic TD (Miami, Ohio – Sept. 21)

With nine minutes left in the third quarter of Ohio State's 76-5 win over Miami (Ohio) and the Buckeyes leading the RedHawks by 44 points at the time, backup quarterback Chris Chugunov dropped back and launched a 38-yard pass to true freshman wide receiver Garrett Wilson, who was streaking down the sideline toward the end zone.

The ball was a bit underthrown, but Wilson – a former five-star prospect from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis – leaped into the air and pulled the ball down with one hand over the outstretched arms of the trailing cornerback. Wilson bobbed the ball on his way to the ground, which popped it in the air, and then caught the ball once again while lying on his back in the end zone.

It marked the second touchdown catch of

the season for Wilson, who has 26 receptions for 385 yards and five touchdowns through 13 games while splitting time with senior wideout Binjimen Victor.

9. Dobbins Breaks Free (Michigan State – Oct. 5)

Ohio State's first true test of the season came against a Michigan State defense that entered the Oct. 5 matchup ranked fourth in the nation, allowing just 55.8 rush yards per game.

While the Spartans limited the Buckeyes to just 16 total yards in the first quarter, they could not contain running back J.K. Dobbins for the remainder of the game.

With Ohio State leading 17-10 late in the second quarter, Dobbins – a junior from La Grange, Texas – took the handoff from quarterback Justin Fields up the middle behind right guard Wyatt Davis and right tackle Branden Bowen and raced 67 yards for a touchdown, shaking off a last-ditch tackling effort from cornerback Josiah Scott at the 15-yard line.

Dobbins finished the game with 172 yards and one touchdown on 24 carries, while the Buckeyes finished with 323 total yards on the ground in the 34-10 win – more than the Spartans had allowed in their first five games combined (279).

8. Okudah's Acrobatic INT (Nebraska – Sept. 28)

Ohio State junior cornerback Jeff Okudah waited 30 games before hauling in his first career interception in the aforementioned 76-5 win over Miami (Ohio).

He topped that the next week, picking off

two passes in a 48-7 win at Nebraska. And while the first came on the Cornhuskers' opening drive and set up a 15-yard touchdown run for Fields just a few plays later, it was his second that ended any hope for an upset bid.

Trailing 14-0 late in the first quarter, Nebraska was threatening to cut into the lead with its first sustained drive of the evening. Quarterback Adrian Martinez dropped back and lofted a pass just outside the reach of wide receiver Wan'Dale Robinson, who tipped the ball up into the air. Okudah, who was downfield covering wide receiver J.D. Spielman, slid across the turf and snagged the ball out of the air while lying on his back at the 4-yard line.

7. Hilliard's Clutch Pick (Penn State – Nov. 23)

Having dealt with a litany of injuries throughout his career – including tearing both biceps, his meniscus and his Achilles tendon – few expected Ohio State fifth-year senior linebacker Justin Hilliard to make an impact for the Buckeyes this season.

But with just over 10 minutes remaining in Ohio State's 28-17 win over Penn State and the Nittany Lions driving on the Buckeyes' side of the field, Hilliard stepped in front of a pass from quarterback Will Levis to thwart the upset bid.

Hilliard, who did not participate in Senior Day festivities that afternoon after applying for a sixth year with the NCAA (which has since been approved), saw additional playing time that week as Ohio State turned to a four-linebacker package against Penn State's pro-style offense. Up to that point, he had recorded a modest seven tackles in 10 games (two starts)

on the season.

"How about Justin Hilliard, somebody who spent a lot of time in this program, put his heart and soul into it," Day said after the game. "And to have the play of the game with that interception, I couldn't be happier for him. We had a lot of guys who made a lot of great plays in this game, but he was one that really stuck out to me."

6. Haubeil's Career-Long Kick (Northwestern – Oct. 18)

With just 59 seconds to play in the second quarter of Ohio State's 52-3 win over Northwestern on Oct. 18, junior punter Drue Chrisman pinned the Wildcats at their 1-yard line. And while the Buckeyes could have been content with heading into the locker room with a 25-point halftime lead, Day was aggressive and countered three straight runs with three timeouts of his own.

That forced Northwestern to punt out of the back of its own end zone, giving Ohio State the ball at the 36-yard line in plus territory. The Buckeyes actually went backward 2 yards over the next three plays, which put Day in quite the predicament – throw a Hail Mary in hopes that a receiver came down with it or ask junior kicker Blake Haubeil to attempt a career-long 55-yard field goal.

Day chose the latter, and Haubeil put it right between the uprights as his teammates erupted on the sideline.

"We had to make a decision," Day said of the field-goal attempt, which put the Buckeyes ahead 31-3 at the half. "He made one before the game, so we said we'll give him a shot to make

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it. It was good to see the team rally behind him like that.

"It goes to show you the confidence the team has in him and also just the chemistry of our team in general. I think it kind of put an exclamation point on the whole half."

Haubeil's kick tied Dan Stultz (1997) and Mike Nugent (2004) for the second longest in school history. It trails only Tom Skladany, who kicked a 59-yarder against Illinois in 1975.

5. Olave's Shoestring Catch (Rutgers - Nov. 16)

Ohio State entered the Nov. 16 matchup with Rutgers as a 53-point favorite, and it didn't take the Buckeyes long to jump out to an insurmountable lead thanks to the connection between Fields and sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave.

The two hooked up for 23 yards on Ohio State's first drive of the game, setting up an 18-yard touchdown run for running back J.K. Dobbins. It was more of the same two possessions later, when Olave slipped behind the secondary and hauled in a 58-yard bomb that led to another Dobbins score.

Then, with the Buckeyes leading 35-7 in the third quarter, Olave streaked along the Scarlet Knights sideline for a 42-yard circus catch despite an underthrown ball from Fields and defensive pass interference on senior cornerback Damon Hayes, catching the ball inches from the ground and pinning it on the back of his thigh as he fell to the ground.

The pass interference penalty was declined, of course, giving Olave his first career 100-yard game.

"I always tell (Fields) to just throw the ball. I'll make the play," Olave said after the game. "Early in the season, it wasn't working out for us, but we kept working on it, and today, it showed."

4. Arnette's Pick-Six (Indiana - Sept. 14)

Ohio State fifth-year senior cornerback Damon Arnette nearly left school after last season to enter the 2019 NFL draft but had a last-minute change of heart and opted to return for one final year following a conversation with Hall of Fame wide receiver Cris Carter.

Arnette's decision was validated when he stepped in front of an ill-advised pass from Indiana quarterback Peyton Ramsey and returned it 96 yards for a touchdown, giving the Buckeyes a 51-10 lead over the Hoosiers.

"That's the biggest play I've made in my life," Arnette said after the game.

Arnette, who graduated from Ohio State in July with a degree in communications after taking 18 credit hours during both the spring and summer semesters, finished the game with two tackles and two pass breakups.

"I'm really proud of that kid," Day said. "You know, he's been through a lot. He had to pass a bunch of classes academically last spring and this summer (in order to graduate on schedule). And to press reset, he's given himself completely to Jeff Hafley. And now he's practiced really, really well. He's prepared well, and then to see



ANDREW LIND

SECOND-HALF SPARK - Tight end Jeremy Ruckert's 16-yard touchdown reception in the third quarter of Ohio State's 34-21 win over Wisconsin helped the Buckeyes overcome an early deficit in the Big Ten Championship Game.

him make that play was awesome.

"Just a few plays before he was out. He got banged around. And at that point in the game, he could have taken himself out, and he went right back in and makes that play. So I'm really happy for him. He deserves that play. He's been through a lot, and it's great to get that play for him."

3. Young Sets Sack Record (Penn State - Nov. 23)

In his first game back from a two-game suspension for accepting a loan from a family friend, Ohio State junior defensive end Chase Young set a new school record for sacks in a single season during the win over Penn State.

It didn't take long for Young - who entered the game with 13½ sacks on the season - to make his presence felt against the Nittany Lions, as he recorded a tackle for a loss and combined with linebacker Baron Browning for a sack on consecutive plays in the first quarter.

That tied him with Vernon Gholston's single-season mark of 14, which was set in 2007. Young then added another half-sack in the third quarter when he and fifth-year senior defensive tackle Jashon Cornell met at the quarterback, giving him sole possession of the school record.

"I was itching to get back on the field, just not being on there for two weeks," Young said after the game. "I just tried to give it all I had today, and we won the game, and that's all we care about."

Young finished the game with nine tackles, four tackles for loss, three sacks and two forced fumbles, bringing his season total to 16½ sacks.

"If there's a more dominant player on defense, bring me the tape," Hafley said. "We can watch it together."

2. Air Ruckert (Wisconsin - Dec. 7)

Ohio State trailed 21-7 after two quarters of play in the Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin, the largest deficit the Buckeyes had faced all season.

The offense quickly marched down the field on the opening drive of the second half, however, as sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert capped a five-play, 75-yard drive with a one-handed, 16-yard touchdown reception in the back of

the end zone to cut the lead to one score.

On the play, Ruckert lined up in a two-point stance outside of junior tight end Luke Farrell on the right side of the line. He ran a crossing route but cut upfield and found himself all alone as Fields threw the ball. It was a bit high, but Ruckert pushed off with his left foot, leapt into the air and pulled the pass down with his right hand - somewhat reminiscent of basketball great Michael Jordan's famous "Air Jordan" logo.

It was Ruckert's only catch of the game, but it sparked Ohio State's 27-0 second-half run.

"It was definitely a great feeling for the team in general," Ruckert said after the 34-21 win. "You just want to help the team in any way you can. To do it like that, it's very special."

1. Fields Shakes Off Injury (Michigan - Nov. 30)

For the second weekend in a row, Fields was down on the turf clutching his left knee as athletic trainers rushed to his side.

Ohio State was ahead 35-16 in the third quarter when Michigan defensive end Aidan Hutchinson bull-rushed Farrell into Fields, who limped to the medical tent on the sideline.

There, Fields - who revealed after the game that he had suffered a sprained MCL in the win over Penn State one week earlier - was outfitted with a bulkier brace than the fabric version he was already wearing. He went back into the game after just seven plays, took the snap, rolled left and threw a 30-yard touchdown pass to Wilson to extend the Buckeyes' lead over the Wolverines.

"I thought it was a magical moment," Day said after the 56-27 win. "I thought it was a Heisman moment, for him to go down, take that injury, put the brace on and then come back out and make a throw that we didn't design that way."

"You talk about tough? Wow. I've never been around a tougher quarterback than this guy. He's competitively tough. He's physically tough. Then to come in and make that play like that? That kind of throw? That was one of the best throws I've seen in a long time. In that spot, after taking that hit, after just putting a brace on? I don't even know what to say."

Fields completed 14 of 25 passes for 302 yards and four touchdowns in the win. He also added 25 yards on six carries, helping Ohio State capture its eighth straight victory in the series with Michigan.

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Buckeyes, Tigers To Meet Again In The Desert

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Ohio State has been operating on a level that very few teams in the country could match in recent years. Since the hire of Urban Meyer in 2012, the Buckeyes have a 99-9 record, one national title and four Big Ten championship belts. First-year head coach Ryan Day picked up right where Meyer left off, rattling off a 13-0 regular season and securing the fourth of those Big Ten titles.

During that period of dominance, very few teams have been able to match the

Buckeyes for four quarters, let alone topple them. There's an even smaller group of teams to beat the Buckeyes multiple times since 2012: Michigan State (2013 and 2015) and Clemson (2013, 2016).

The former hasn't played a huge role in challenging the Buckeyes since that 17-14 win in 2015, as the program has dropped off from its usual Big Ten contender form. The latter, however, has continued as a nationally relevant force, winning national titles in 2017 and 2019 and making the playoff in the past five seasons.

That five-year streak will have a direct impact on the Buckeyes for their third playoff

berth, as it was announced on Dec. 8 that Ohio State and Clemson would meet in the No. 2 vs. No. 3 game in the Fiesta Bowl, just as it did in the 2016 playoff.

Dabo Swinney's Tigers enter the game as reigning national champions, riding a 28-game win streak and a 13-0 season that culminated in an ACC title win over Virginia, 62-17. Clemson has been rolling since a 21-20 scare against North Carolina on Sept 28., beating its opponents by an average score of 51.3 to 9.8 since then.

Despite the domination, the Tigers spent much of the year behind the Buckeyes and top-seeded LSU in the polls, drawing the ire

of Swinney.

"Obviously, if we lose this game, they are going to kick us out," Swinney said prior to the ACC title game. "They don't want us there anyway. We'd drop to 20 (had Clemson lost to South Carolina). Georgia loses to this very same team, and it's, 'How do we keep Georgia in?'"

"We win, against the team that beat (Georgia), and it's, 'How do we get Clemson out?' It's the dadgummed thing."

He went on to defend his team's performance on the year.

"It's been that way all year long. Some guy said the other day on the radio, 'Y'all are pre-North Carolina.' What season has (he) watched? It's like, 'You want me to agree with that?' We've dominated 11 out of 12 games. Dominated. We're not any different. There's no pre-North Carolina. We just had one close game where we stunk. We turned it over, gave up a big play, but we won. There's nobody that's been more consistent than us."

Players To Watch

Sophomore quarterback Trevor Lawrence was considered a heavy favorite to win the Heisman in 2019 after he led Clemson to a title as a true freshman, but he's suffered a bit of a sophomore slump this season. He still has outstanding stats, racking up 3,172 yards on 232 of 337 passing while tossing just eight interceptions, but he hasn't quite lived up to the expectations put upon him, with LSU's Joe Burrow and Ohio State's Heisman trio of Justin Fields, Chase Young and J.K. Dobbins overshadowing the Heisman hopeful for much of the season.

"I was still having fun," Lawrence told reporters, reflecting on his early-season struggles. "But I do think I was just thinking a little too much about what I needed to do to live up to the expectations."

In the eyes of his coach, Lawrence has returned to fully operational.

"He is twice the quarterback right now that he was in the national championship game when everybody was crowning him the king of football," Swinney said.

Lawrence is joined in the backfield by Travis Etienne, who has quietly put up strong stats on a roster packed to the brim with talent. He has 1,500 yards and 17 touchdowns on 182 carries on the year and can break loose for a huge gain at any time. Clemson likes to use him in similar ways to how Ohio State uses Dobbins, with plenty of zone blocking and outside running.

While Lawrence and Etienne are both excellent players in their own right, Clemson's stars are on the outside of its offense, in the form of wideouts Tee Higgins and Justyn Ross.

Higgins (6-4) and Ross (6-4) serve as two of the biggest deep threats in the country and follow in a long line of talented Clemson receivers defined by their size and athletic ability, from Sammy Watkins, Deandre Hopkins, Martavis Bryant and Mike Williams to the current duo who has terrorized defenses all season.

Of the two, Ross is slightly more consistent, while Higgins is more of a big-play threat. Ross has 55 receptions, 742 yards and eight touchdowns, which is still obviously excellent, but he boasts just a 13.5 yards per reception average. Higgins, on the other hand, has reeled in fewer passes with 52 receptions but has accounted for 1,082 yards and 13 scores, averaging 20.8 yards a reception.

These are two NFL-caliber wide receivers

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the likes of which Ohio State really hasn't seen since the last time it played Clemson in the 2016 playoffs, when Mike Williams pulled in six receptions for 96 yards, gashing Ohio State's defense deep and across the middle.

"I know it's going to be pretty hard for the defenders now with both of us on the field at the same time," Ross said.

"There is no selfishness in our receiving room, period. Everybody wants everybody to go out there and make plays. I don't think that will be a problem. It's definitely the coaching that Coach (Dabo) Swinney and Coach (Jeff) Scott (co-offensive coordinator) give us. This is Wide Receiver U, and you are going to have a lot of great receivers."

Up front, Clemson has one of the best offensive lines in the country, allowing just 13 sacks on the season, tied for sixth best with Army. Ohio State, meanwhile, has allowed 31, tied for 103rd. Former five-star recruit and Ohio native Jackson Carman has been as stout as they come in run blocking, and guard John Simpson was an Outland Trophy finalist (given to the best interior lineman).

That latter stat could be an issue for the Buckeyes against Clemson's defensive line, which has taken a step back with the departures of Clelin Farrell, Dexter Lawrence and Christian Wilkins in the past offseason, but is still 13th in the nation in total sacks, with 38, down from first with 54 in 2018.

Leading the new look line has been edge rushers, which is a bit of a switch for a program known for interior pressure as opposed to speed rushing. Xavier Thomas (23 tackles, 6½ for a loss and two sacks in 10 games) and Justin Foster (33 tackles, eight for a loss and three sacks) bookended the lines, with K.J. Henry (20 tackles, four for a loss, two sacks) serving as the first man off the bench outside.

Thomas might have the highest ceiling on the defense as a former five-star recruit, but Swinney says he's still improving.

"Unbelievably productive," Swinney said of Thomas in October. "I mean like production points. You know he makes plays when he's in the wrong spot. When he does the wrong thing."

There is still plenty of talent on the inside, mostly coming from freshman tackle Tyler Davis, who has 44 tackles, seven for a loss and 4½ sacks.

The star of Clemson's defense is at line-

About Clemson

- **2019 record:** 13-0 (9-0).
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 8, Defense 4, Specialists 2.
- **Head Coach:** Dabo Swinney, 129-30 in 12 years at Clemson.
- **Series History:** Fourth meeting, Clemson leads 3-0-0.
- **School Facts:** Location – Clemson, SC.; Enrollment – 23,406; Nickname – Tigers; Color – Orange; Conference – ACC (Atlantic division); Stadium – Memorial Stadium (Surface, Natural Grass; Capacity – 81,500).

backer, in Butkus Award winner and projected top-10 pick Isaiah Simmons. Simmons is the heart of the defense, with 93 tackles, 14 for loss and seven sacks, all team highs. He's lightning quick for a linebacker and excels in both run and pass coverage. He's the key to Clemson's aggressive defense, led by long-time coordinator Brent Venables.

"He literally could make All-American in four different spots," Swinney said. "There's just not a box you can't check. In fact, he adds boxes that aren't even a necessity. He's a beautiful football player."

Star safety Tanner Muse (65 tackles, five for a loss, two sacks) agrees with the assessment of Simmons as the star of the defense, even as he's put up his own excellent season.

"He's our centerpiece," Muse said. "You never really know what he's doing – spying the quarterback, blitzing off the edge, covering a guy in the slot. In today's football, he's big enough to fill up holes, and when they go five wides, he can cover his man. He's special."

In the backfield, there aren't quite as many elite defenders as usual, but Muse, safety K'Von Wallace (62 tackles) and cornerback A.J. Terrell (26 tackles, four passes broken up, two interceptions) are still very good.

There are very few weaknesses on Clemson's roster, but if needed, kicker B.T. Potter could prove troublesome, as he's hit just 12 of 19 field goals on the season, though he is a perfect 74 of 74 on extra points. Punter Will Spiers has been in an ongoing battle with Steven Sawicki but has been the primary starter this year, booming 37 punts for an average of 42.5 yards.

Clemson Season Statistics

2019-20 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 29	(1) GEORGIA TECH	52-14	79,118
Sept. 7	(1) TEXAS A&M (12)	24-10	81,500
Sept. 14	(1) at Syracuse	41-6	50,248
Sept. 21	(1) CHARLOTTE	52-10	81,500
Sept. 28	(1) at North Carolina	21-20	50,500
Oct. 12	(2) FLORIDA STATE	45-14	80,500
Oct. 19	(3) at Louisville	45-10	51,015
Oct. 26	(4) BOSTON COLLEGE	59-7	81,081
Nov. 2	(4) WOFFORD	59-14	81,500
Nov. 9	(4) at NC State	55-10	57,886
Nov. 16	(3) WAKE FOREST	52-3	80,875
Nov. 30	(3) at South Carolina	38-3	80,580
Dec. 7	(3) Virginia (Charlotte) (22)	62-17	66,810

Clemson's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics		
	CLEM	Opp
First Downs	349	161
Rushing	153	73
Passing	169	75
Penalty	27	13
Average Per Game/Rush	252.9	106.2
Average Per Game/Pass	294.8	138.5
Total Offense	7120	3181
Total Plays	948	803
Average Per Game	547.7	244.7
Average Per Play	7.5	4.0
Penalties-Yards	72-572	68-629
Fumbles-Lost	9-4	20-11
Third Down Efficiency	74-156	61-198
Percentage	47%	31%
Fourth Down Efficiency	6-12	7-20
Percentage	50%	35%
Sacks-Yards	38-258	13-106
Time Of Possession Avg.	30:55	29:05

Score							
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Clemson	170	197	129	109	0	605	46.5
Opponents	17	32	49	40	0	138	10.6

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Travis Etienne	182	1,500	8.2	17	90
Lyn-J Dixon	102	619	6.1	6	32
Trevor Lawrence	77	407	5.3	7	28
Chez Mellusi	44	276	6.3	3	57
Michel Dukes	32	150	4.7	2	24
Darien Rencher	26	135	5.2	2	24
Chase Brice	14	105	6.7	1	18
T. Phommachanh	12	56	4.7	0	12
Amari Rodgers	2	50	25.0	1	29
Ben Batson	10	20	5.0	0	6
Patrick McClure	2	12	6.0	0	9
Will Swinney	2	8	4.0	0	8
Ty Lucas	1	3	3.0	0	3
John Simpson	1	1	1.0	0	1
Xavier Thomas	1	1	1.0	0	1
Sylvester Mayers	1	0	0.0	0	0
TEAM	5	-20	-4.0	0	0
CLEM Totals	509	3288	6.5	40	90
OPP Totals	465	1380	3.0	8	53

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Trevor Lawrence	232	337	68.8	3172	34-8	176.5
Chase Brice	50	85	58.8	581	4-1	129.4
T. Phommachanh	6	12	50.0	56	0-1	72.5
TEAM	0	2	0	0	0-0	0
Travis Etienne	1	1	100.0	23	0-0	293.20
Ben Batson	1	1	100.0	0	0-0	100.0
CLEM Totals	290	439	66.1	3832	38-10	163.4
OPP Totals	170	338	50.3	1801	8-17	92.8

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Justyn Ross	55	742	13.5	8	59
Tee Higgins	52	1,082	20.8	13	65
Travis Etienne	29	298	10.3	2	27
Amari Rodgers	27	380	14.1	4	87
Diondre Overton	20	322	16.1	3	63
Joseph Ngata	16	229	14.3	3	37
Cornell Powell	15	122	8.1	2	26
J.C. Chalk	13	60	4.6	0	10
Lyn-J Dixon	12	117	9.8	0	55
Will Swinney	12	94	7.8	0	30
Frank Ladson	9	128	14.2	3	57
T.J. Chase	7	70	10.0	0	15
Davis Allen	5	53	10.6	0	15
Luke Price	4	41	10.2	0	19
Darien Rencher	4	26	6.5	0	12
Brannon Spector	3	16	5.3	0	8
Drew Swinney	2	11	5.5	0	11
Jaelyn Lay	1	20	20.0	0	20
Carter Groomes	1	8	8.0	0	8

Will Brown	1	8	8.0	0	8
J.L. Banks	1	5	5.0	0	5
CLEM Totals	290	3832	13.2	38	87
OPP Totals	170	1801	10.6	8	79

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Travis Etienne	19	-	-	-	-	114
B.T. Potter	-	74-74	-	-	-12-19	110
Tee Higgins	13	-	-	-	-	78
Justyn Ross	8	-	-	-	-	48
Trevor Lawrence	7	-	-	-	-	42
Lyn-J Dixon	6	-	-	-	-	36
Amari Rodgers	5	-	-	-	-	30
Joseph Ngata	3	-	-	-	-	18
Chaz Mellusi	3	-	-	-	-	18
Frank Ladson Jr.	3	-	-	-	-	18
Diondre Overton	3	-	-	-	-	18
Michel Dukes	2	-	-	-	-	12
Cornell Powell	2	-	-	-	-	12
Darien Rencher	2	-	-	-	-	12
Steven Sawicki	0	-	-	-	1-2	9
John Simpson	1	-	-	-	-	6
Derion Kendrick	1	-	-	-	-	6
Logan Rudolph	1	-	-	-	-	6
Chase Brice	1	-	-	-	-	6
K'Von Wallace	1	-	-	-	-	6
CLEM Totals	81	80-81	-	-	13-21	605
OPP Totals	16	15-15	0-1	0-0	9-9	138

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
B.T. Potter	4-5	3-6	3-6	2-2	12-19
Steven Sawicki	1-1	0-0	0-1	0-0	1-2
OSU Totals	5-6	3-6	3-7	2-2	13-21
OPP Totals	4-4	3-3	2-2	0-0	9-9

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Will Spiers	37	1571	42.5	0	64
Steven Sawicki	6	263	43.8	0	53
Aidan Swanson	2	58	29.0	0	30
CLEM Totals	45	1892	42.0	0	64
OPP Totals	99	4570	46.2	0	75

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Tanner Muse	4	13	3.2	0	13
K'Von Wallace	2	66	33.0	1	66
A.J. Terrell	2	65	32.5	0	37
Derion Kendrick	2	52	26.0	1	38
Isaiah Simmons	2	39	19.5	0	22
Chad Smith	1	10	10.0	0	10
Nolan Turner	1	0	0.0	0	0
Mario Goodrich	1	0	0.0	0	0
Keith Maguire	1	0	0.0	0	0
CLEM Totals	17	251	14.8	2	66
OPP Totals	10	112	11.2	0	41

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Amari Rodgers	14	148	10.6	0	53
Derion Kendrick	8	15	1.9	0	9
Will Swinney	3	8	2.7	0	8
Will Brown	2	16	8.0	0	13
Justyn Ross	1	-6	-6.0	0	0
CLEM Totals	28	181	6.5	0	53
OPP Totals	5	48	9.6	0	30

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Joseph Ngata	14	325	23.2	0	40
Travis Etienne	3	82	27.3	0	32
Derion Kendrick	2	51	25.5	0	32
Lyn-J Dixon	1	8	8.0	0	8
Logan Rudolph	1	1	1.0	0	1
CLEM Totals	21	467	22.2	0	40
OPP Totals	25	439	17.6	0	38

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Isaiah Simmons	73	20	93	14.0-83	7.0-47
James Skalski	61	29	90	6.0-37	3-21
Chad Smith	35	33	68	4.5-41	3.5-37
Tanner Muse	44	21	65	5-21	2-16
K'Von Wallace	50	12	62	2-11	1-10
CLEM Totals	633	336	969	102-440	38-258
Fumbles Forced:	8 – Smith (2), Jones, Foster, Johnson, Simmons, Skalski, Turner.				
Fumbles Recovered:	11 – Davis, Jones, Kelly, Maddox, Pinckney, Rudolph, Simmons, Smith, Spector, Thomas.				

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Projected Depth Charts

How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. CLEMSON RUSH DEFENSE

The Buckeyes are fifth nationally at 272.2 yards per game on the ground. Clemson is No. 9 against the run (106.1 ypg). OSU is led by Heisman-snubbed J.K. Dobbins, the junior workhorse who is second all-time in Ohio State career rushing with 4,113 yards. In the past three games vs. Penn State, Michigan and in the Big Ten title game vs. Wisconsin, he totaled 540 yards and seven touchdowns on 100 carries. He is third nationally with 1,829 yards (6.5 yds/carry), sixth with 20 touchdowns and fourth at 140.7 yards a game. QB Justin Fields will have time to heal his sprained knee. He had 47.1 net yards rushing and 10 touchdowns. Clemson's shutdown D is led by Isaiah Simmons, who won the 2019 Butkus Award as the nation's top linebacker. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

CLEMSON RUSH OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Tigers can nearly match the Buckeyes stride for stride. They are 10th at 252.9 yards per game while OSU has the No. 7 rush defense (99.5 ypg). Travis Etienne was recently named the ACC Player of the Year and Offensive Player of the Year. He has 1,500 yards on a glittering 8.2 yards per carry and 115.4 yards per game. The junior's 17 touchdowns made him the first Clemson player to rush for at least 15 touchdowns in multiple seasons. Etienne has 19 runs of 20 or more yards this season to rank No. 3 nationally, a spot behind Dobbins, who has 22. **EDGE: EVEN**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. CLEMSON PASS DEFENSE

Fields, who has passed for 2,953 yards with 40 touchdowns against one interception, will face his sternest test against the No. 1 total defense (244.7 ypg) and No. 1 pass defense (138.5 ypg). The Tigers have allowed eight passing TDs while making 17 interceptions, led by Tanner Muse with four picks. Fields averages 227.2 yards per game and completes 67.5 percent of his throws. OSU's pass protection is vulnerable. Wisconsin twice had five sacks vs. the Buckeyes this season, and Ohio State is 95th of 130 schools with 31 sacks allowed (2.38 per game). Clemson has 38 sacks (2.92 per game) to rank 13th. **EDGE: EVEN**

CLEMSON PASS OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Trevor Lawrence was the top-ranked QB in the 2018 recruiting class, a spot ahead of Fields, and as a true freshman he led the Tigers to the national title. Critics say he regressed this season because he is seventh in QB rating (176.44) compared to Fields, who is No. 4 (190.28). Lawrence has a 68.8 percent completion rate, 34 touchdowns, eight interceptions and 3,172 yards. His favorite targets are Justyn Ross (55 catches, 742 yards, 13.5 avg., and eight TDs) and Tee Higgins (52, 1,082, 20.8, 13 TDs). The Buckeyes are second in total defense (247.6 ypg) and second in pass defense (148.1 ypg). They have 15 interceptions, three by Jeff Okudah. OSU is first in sacks with 51 (3.9 per game), led by Heisman finalist Chase Young, the national leader with 16½. Clemson is No. 13 with only 13 sacks, one a game, allowed. **EDGE: CLEMSON**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Will Spiers has done most of the punting for the Tigers. He averages 42.5 yards with a long of 64 and 10 downed inside the 20. B.T. Potter has made 12 of 19 field goals (63.2 percent) with a long of 51. He is 2 for 2 from 50-plus and 3 of 6 from the 40 to 49. Amari Rodgers' best punt return went for 53 yards, and the team average is 6.5. Clemson averages 22.2 yards on kickoff returns. Drue Chrisman averaged 44.1 yards per punt for OSU with 15 inside the 20, and he threw for a first down off a fake punt in the title game. Blake Haubeil has made 10 of 12 FGs (83.3 percent), including seven in a row, with a best of 55 yards. The Buckeyes average 7.7 yards on punt returns with Garrett Wilson going for 52 yards, and 21.8 yards on kickoff returns. **EDGE: EVEN**

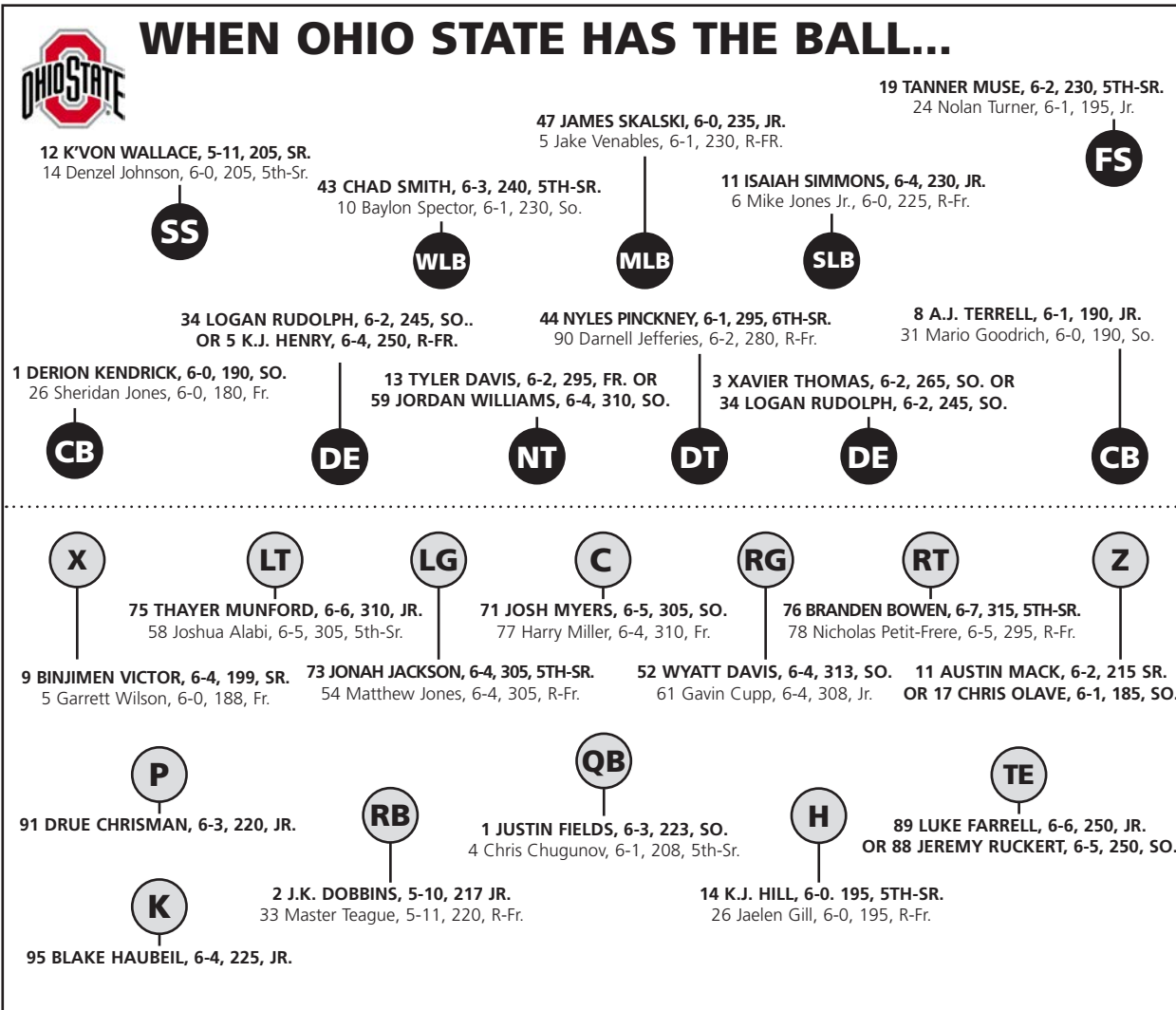
INTANGIBLES

The Battle of the Disrespected. Clemson feels it has been dished the entire season for playing a soft ACC schedule. The Tigers have won 28 straight games, and their margin of victory (35.2) is second to OSU's 36.2. However, Clemson's average the past three games is 45.0 compared to 17.7 for the Buckeyes, although that reflects its competition (Wake Forest, South Carolina and Virginia). OSU believes it deserved the No. 1 seed over LSU and a date with Oklahoma. It will use that slight, as well as Clemson being favored, for fuel. **EDGE: EVEN**

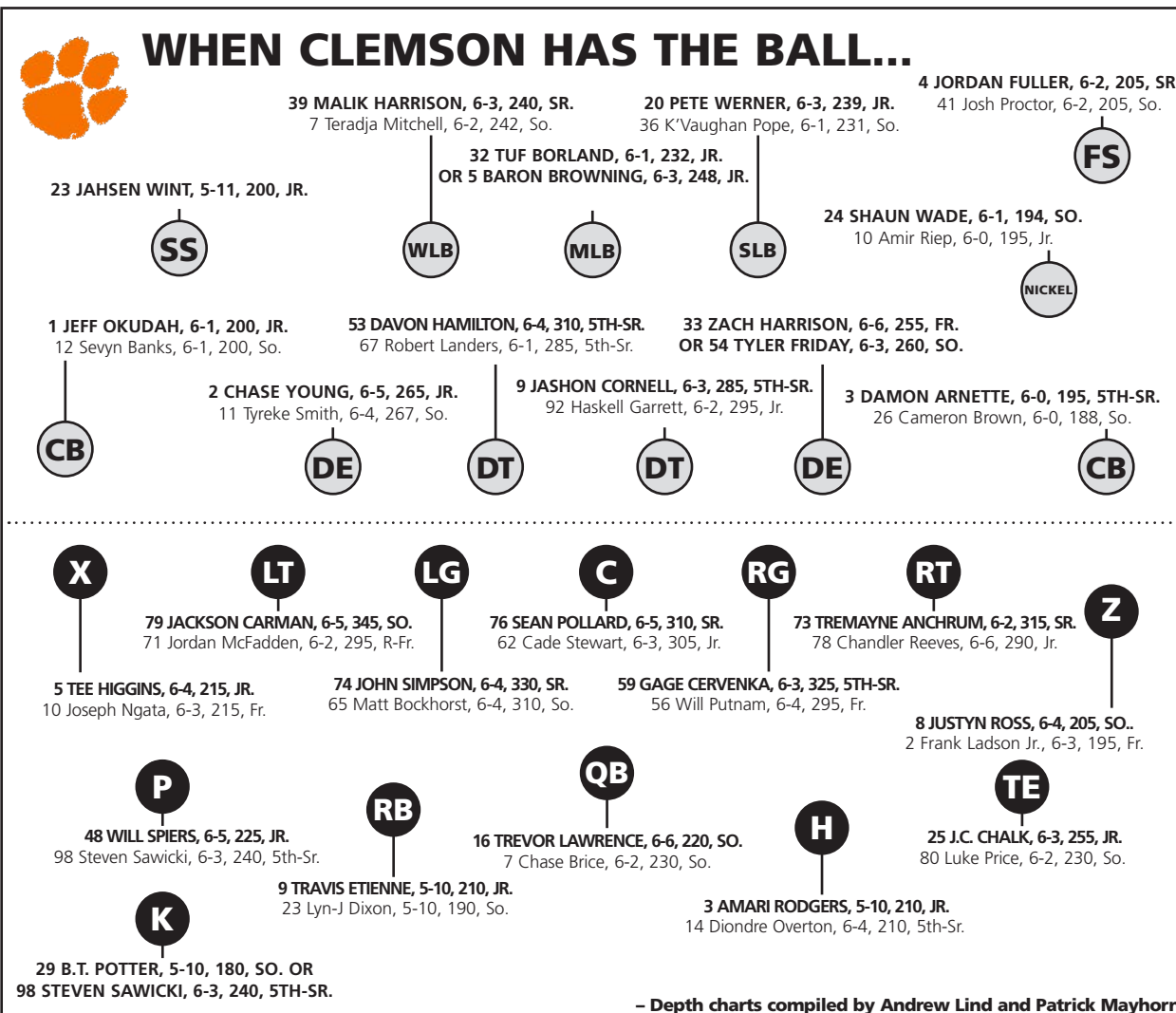
STAFF PREDICTION

The matchup has everything – great players, great offenses, great defenses. Clemson has the experience of being in the College Football Playoff the past four seasons, winning two, including a 44-16 demolition of Alabama last season in the championship game. The Buckeyes need to play the entire 60 minutes like they did in the second half of the Big Ten title game vs. Wisconsin when they rallied from a 21-7 deficit. Another slow start and it's a Clemson blowout, plain and simple. **OHIO STATE, 38-35**

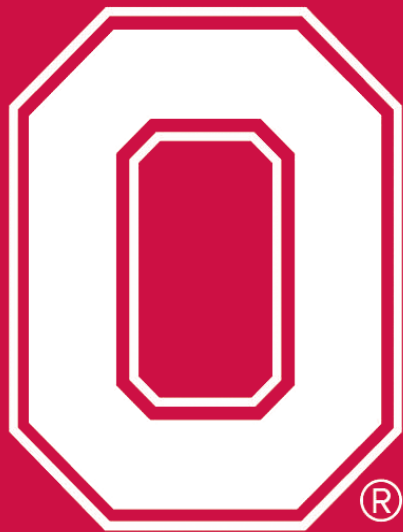
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WHEN CLEMSON HAS THE BALL...



- Depth charts compiled by Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn



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FIESTA BOWL INSIDER



INSIDER

Ohio State, Clemson Rematch In Fiesta Bowl

Ohio State is returning to Glendale, Ariz., for the ninth time in program history and for the second time against Clemson.

After the Buckeyes survived a 14-point deficit and defeated Wisconsin 34-21, they dropped a spot from No. 1 to No. 2 in the CFP rankings, allowing LSU to jump after a dominant victory over Georgia.

With the jump, LSU plays Oklahoma in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl, while Ohio State goes back to the Fiesta Bowl against the Tigers. The last time the teams faced off in Arizona, Clemson prevailed 31-0, eventually winning the national championship over Alabama.

"I feel like we should have been the one seed, but LSU has had an unbelievable season," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "I think what Joe (Burrow) has done and what that team has done, they've done an unbelievable job. What Clemson has done, I could see that argument, as well. They're the defending national champs, and they haven't lost a game since and played great football."

"At the end of the day, you've got to beat the best to go win the national championship, and certainly Clemson is that. What matters at the end of the year is who's won, not right now."

The Buckeyes are 5-3 in the Fiesta Bowl overall, which includes a double-overtime win against Miami in the 2003 national championship game. Clemson, on the other hand, has been in only one Fiesta Bowl, the 2016 Fiesta Bowl, in its history.

The Tigers are 3-0 against Ohio State all time, matching Florida State for the best record against the Buckeyes of any team, and Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney is 2-0 in those games, both coming against former head coach Urban Meyer.

Swinney and Day have never faced off as head coaches, but Swinney, who has been Clemson's head coach since 2008, did match up against Day while he was the offensive coordinator at Boston College in 2013 and 2014. In those two matchups, Clemson won close over the Eagles 24-14 and 17-13.

"The impression is they're the defending champs and they have haven't lost since," Day said. "They have a veteran quarterback now who has played a lot of football and is playing really good. (Travis) Etienne is one of the best backs in the country. Tee Higgins and some of the wideouts they have are some of the best in the country, and what they do on defense and what defensive coordinator Brent Venables has done year in and year out, they're the best defense in the country. If you look over the last five to 10 years, you can make a case that they are the best."

Buckeyes To Wear Throwback Home Uniforms

Just like in the 2014 national championship run, as well as the last time Ohio State matched up with Clemson, the Buckeyes will be wearing their 1968 throwback uniforms with the Diamond Quest Nike Swoosh for the Fiesta Bowl.

Because Ohio State is the No. 2 seed and Clemson is No. 3, the Buckeyes will now be in the home version of the throwback uniform, the opposite of the last time the two teams met.

Ohio State has worn the throwback jerseys in multiple variations since the title run – the home and away jerseys were seen against Virginia Tech, Hawaii, Michigan State and Michigan in 2015 and Oklahoma, Penn State and Michigan in 2016 – but none has had the Diamond Quest Swoosh besides the three times the Buckeyes have worn them in the playoffs.

After wearing them in a variety of games, the Buckeyes have not brought them out in any form since the 31-point defeat in the last matchup against Clemson.

Herbstreit Has Matchup Of Sons Vs. Alma Mater

It won't be difficult for most Ohio State alums to decide whom to root for in the semifinal matchup between the Buckeyes and Clemson. But former quarterback Kirk Herbstreit must choose between family and his former school.

Herbstreit, who played for Ohio State from 1989-93, has two sons – cornerback Jake Herbstreit and wide receiver Tye Herbstreit – who are both true freshman walk-ons at Clemson. Both have played in four games this season and will likely red-shirt in their first year with the Tigers, but coming to the Tigers meant going against their extreme fandom growing up.

"They are completely brainwashed Ohio State fans," Kirk Herbstreit said. "They have been their whole lives, all four of my boys. When they got into high school football, decided to go to camps over their high school career, they went to an Ohio State camp, Alabama, they went to Clemson this past summer. They did well enough for Dabo and for his staff to kind of reach out to us and talk about a preferred walk-on to have an opportunity to go there."

"It was completely up to them. I had no idea if they were going to play football in college or not. After that camp, I think they were more confident that they might have an opportunity."

The Herbstreits are not alone in having a recognizable father while playing on the Clemson roster. Swinney himself has two of his kids – junior wide receiver Will Swinney and freshman wideout Drew Swinney – on the roster, while Venables has his son Jake on the roster as a freshman linebacker.

Freshman quarterback Ben Batson is the son of strength coach Joey Batson, while junior punter Will Spiers is the son of senior special teams assistant coach Bill Spiers.

Herbstreit's inner battle will not stop him from broadcasting the game, as he and fellow ESPN commentator Chris Fowler have been selected to call the matchup.

Clemson Co-OC Scott Becomes USF Head Coach

Clemson offensive coordinator Jeff Scott has accepted the head coaching job at South Florida.

The 38-year old Scott has been the co-offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach for the Tigers since 2015 and has been a part of Swinney's staff since Swinney

FIESTA BOWL INSIDER

became the interim head coach in 2008.

While Scott has been a major factor in Clemson's success on the field, he has been just as impactful in recruiting, ranking as one of the top 20 recruiters in the 247Sports rankings each of the past three seasons, helping the Tigers to the top-rated recruiting class in 2020.

Scott will remain in Florida through Dec. 18 and will rejoin the Tigers on Dec. 19 before Clemson heads to Arizona on Dec. 22 for the Fiesta Bowl.

He will stay with the Tigers for the remainder of their playoff run before officially moving on to South Florida.

The Bulls are coming off a 4-8 season in which they averaged only 20.8 points per game, No. 112 in the NCAA.

Ohio State Underdogs For First Time This Season

After an entire season of coming in as the favorite, Ohio State, even as the higher seed in the matchup, is currently being listed as a two-point underdog to the defending national champions in Clemson, according to Odds Shark.

This is the first time the Buckeyes have been listed as an underdog since the matchup against Michigan last season, when they handily defeated the Wolverines 62-39.

After starting the year by failing to cover a 27-point spread in a 45-21 victory over Florida Atlantic, Ohio State covered the spread in eight straight games before the run came to an end with a 56-21 victory over Rutgers (OSU was favored by 52).

Since starting 8-1 against the spread, the Buckeyes have failed to cover in three of their past four games, covering only in the 29-point victory over Michigan (OSU was favored by 9).

Clemson is 10-3 against the spread, including covering in its past four games. The 10-3 record against the spread is the best in college football, while Ohio State's 9-4 record is tied for No. 8.

The over/under for the game is currently set at 63 points, a number that both Ohio State and Clemson hit five times in the combined scores in their games.

Fiesta Bowl Sells Out

The fourth installment of Ohio State against Clemson is officially sold out, according to the Fiesta Bowl's twitter account.

As of Dec. 13, tickets can still be found on other websites, with Ticketmaster having tickets ranging in price from \$114 all the way to \$1,289. Vivid Seats had similar pricing for the tickets it had available, going from seats in the upper level priced at \$113 to club level seating that went as high as \$1,679.

StubHub had many of the same results, with prices going as low as \$119 to as high as \$1,870.

Fiesta Bowl Part Of Packed Bowl Weekend

The 49th edition of the Fiesta Bowl is being played at 8 p.m. Eastern, 6 p.m. local time, and is one of four games that will be played on Dec. 28.

Also taking place that Saturday is the Camping World Bowl between No. 15 Notre Dame and Iowa State that takes place at noon and the Cotton Bowl between No. 10 Penn State and No. 17 Memphis, which is also at noon.

The other game on Dec. 28 is the other semifinal, which involves No. 1 LSU and No. 4 Oklahoma. That matchup takes place in Atlanta at the Peach Bowl, and kickoff is

set for 4 p.m., with the Buckeyes and Tigers capping off the night.

The day before Ohio State takes the field has five bowl games of its own: the Military Bowl between North Carolina and Temple at noon, the Pinstripe Bowl between Michigan State and Wake Forest at 3:20 p.m., the Academy Sports + Outdoors Texas Bowl between No. 25 Oklahoma State and Texas A&M at 6:45 p.m., the San Diego County Credit Union Holiday Bowl between No. 22 USC and No. 16 Iowa at 8 p.m. and the Cheez-It Bowl between Air Force and Washington State to end the night at 10:15 p.m.

No games take place on Dec. 29, the Sunday following the Fiesta Bowl. All bowl times are listed in Eastern Standard Time unless specified.

Fiesta Bowl Parade To Honor Female Athletes

With the Fiesta Bowl comes the annual Fiesta Bowl Parade, which takes place the morning of the Ohio State-Clemson game on Dec. 28 at 9 a.m. local time on N. Central Avenue and Montebello Avenue.

The theme this year is "Women in Sports," and with that, the Fiesta Bowl will honor five female athletes, all of whom have ties to the state of Arizona. The Grand Marshals for the parade include Special Olympics golfer Amy Bockerstette, U.S. Women's Soccer Team members Julie Ertz and Jessica McDonald, U.S. Paralympic gold medalist Allysa Seely and one of the all-time greats in women's basketball, Diana Taurasi.

Along with the star power that is involved, the parade offers a multitude of floats, balloons, marching bands and charitable groups, all of which travel along a two-mile route that goes through central Phoenix.

For those travelling to the game, the parade is free to view, but there is also reserved seating that is available for \$30.

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OSU Looks To End Winless Bout With Clemson

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Zero and three.

There are only two teams in the history of college football that can say that they have played at least three games against Ohio State and won all of them.

One of those teams is Florida State, which won a pair of games against a Buckeyes in 1981 and 1982, both of which were in Columbus, and then followed it up with a 31-14 victory over Ohio State in the 1998 Sugar Bowl.

Bobby Bowden ended his 34-season run with a 3-0 record against Ohio State, something that can be accomplished again by a new head coach when the Buckeyes face off against Clemson on Dec. 28 for a spot in the national championship.

The Tigers also hold that 3-0 record, but with two of the games coming this decade under the leadership of Dabo Swinney and the first taking place more than 40 years ago.

But unlike Florida State, Clemson has managed to accomplish this feat through three Bowl games, with each one just as crushing as the next, and one of which may be giving the Buckeyes an extra boost heading into this upcoming matchup.

Gator Bowl, 1978

Ohio State's first matchup against the Tigers came on Dec. 29, 1978, after a 7-3-1 season led by head coach Woody Hayes in his 28th season at the helm.

On the other side, 30-year-old Danny Ford was leading a Clemson group that had gone 10-1, but not under his primary tutelage. The Gator Bowl was Ford's first

game moving up from assistant coach to head coach after Charley Pell left Clemson for a head-coaching gig at Florida following the regular season and Ford's first game as a head coach at any level.

On the surface, the game was quite an impressive feat. Ford managed to go toe to toe with one of the best coaches in the sport and come out of it with a two-point victory that was capped off by Clemson linebacker Charlie Bauman's interception on quarterback Art Schlichter with 1:59 remaining.

But that interception not only ended Ohio State's season with a loss, it also was a moment that led to the end of an era. Bauman was tackled out of bounds on the Ohio State sideline, and when he got up, he looked toward the OSU bench for just a moment, enough time for Hayes to lose his cool and punch Bauman.

The moment ended with a 15-yard

unsportsmanlike penalty that didn't amount to much as the Tigers ran out the clock and won the game 17-15, but it was the final straw that ended Hayes' nearly three-decade-long tenure as Ohio State's head coach.

The next morning, Ohio State athletic director Hugh Hindman fired Hayes, who ended his Ohio State career with a 205-61-10 record.

Orange Bowl, 2014

After a 36-year gap, Ohio State once again had a shot to get its first ever win against Clemson, and again it was on a major stage in the form of the Orange Bowl on Jan. 3, 2014. This time around, it was the No. 12 Tigers against the No. 7 Buckeyes in a shootout that had multiple lead changes and went down to the final minutes to ultimately decide it.

Clemson's Tajh Boyd and Ohio State's Braxton Miller each exchanged long quarterback runs for touchdowns – Boyd's from 48 yards and Miller's from 33 – to open up the scoring before Clemson's offense scored on two of the next five drives, both of which were Boyd touchdown passes. There was also a safety in favor of Ohio State after an intentional grounding penalty occurred in the end zone.

A 57-yard touchdown from Miller to tight end Jeff Heurman, as well as a block on the ensuing extra point, made the score 20-15 before Miller ran another one in to give Ohio State a 22-20 lead at the end of a wild half of football.

Ohio State scored again to make it 29-20 before the Tigers came storming back with a pair of Boyd touchdown passes to make it 34-29 after three. In the fourth, Miller found running back Carlos Hyde for a touchdown with 11:35 left to again give the Buckeyes a lead, but it would all be for naught.

Boyd threw his fifth touchdown pass on the evening with 6:16 to play, and a Miller interception late officially sealed Clemson's second victory in program history over the Buckeyes.

The game was a heartbreaker for Ohio State, but it was something that occurred on the first OSU possession that would make the largest impact. On the opening possession, Miller injured his shoulder but played through it the rest of the game, finishing with 269 total yards and four total touchdowns in the loss.

In August 2014, just weeks before the season was ready to get under way with Miller at the helm, he reinjured that shoulder, tearing his labrum in an injury that would have him miss the season, giving J.T. Barrett an opportunity to step into the starting role.

Barrett, and eventually Cardale Jones, would lead Ohio State to a national title in the first season of the College Football Playoff.

Fiesta Bowl, 2016

The other two matchups had pivotal moments that ended up shaping the program with the Hayes punch and Miller injury, but the 2016 matchup between Clemson and Ohio State is what is still in the minds of most when thinking about the history between these two teams.

It is also still in the minds of some of the remaining players from that team, including fifth-year defensive tackle Robert Landers, while other members, such as fifth-year defensive tackle Jashon Cornell, have tried



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OHIO STATE VS. CLEMSON

to forget it entirely.

"To be honest, I can't even remember," Cornell said. "I can't remember, I blocked it out."

"I do. It was rough," Landers said. "It was one of those moments where, for me, I'll never forget."

The matchup is eerily similar to the game this year: the Fiesta Bowl, Ohio State and Clemson, a 2-3 matchup for a spot in the national championship, with the only key difference being that the Tigers came in as the No. 2 seed in the previous game.

The game started off well enough for the Buckeyes, with an interception by Gareon Conley on Clemson's first drive that gave Ohio State the ball on the Clemson 33. But after the offense stalled, gaining only 3 yards, the Buckeyes decided to attempt a 47-yard field goal, one that Tyler Durbin missed, keeping the game scoreless early.

The Tigers would go down and hit a field goal to make it 3-0 before Ohio State again got into prime position to score but went backward, leading to a fourth-and-18 that led to another 47-yard field-goal attempt by Durbin and another miss.

Clemson would score a touchdown on the next drive to make it 10-0, and from there, Ohio State's possessions went like this: punt, punt, punt, punt, halftime, fumble, punt, punt, interception, interception, turnover on downs, end of the game. Clemson won the game in dominating fashion, 31-0, and eventually took down Alabama to win the title.

"I just remember we put in so much hard work, and especially with the group of guys that we had, and it was just like we just fell short, and it was one of those things where we kind of asked the question 'All right, what did we not do? What did we miss? What did we take for granted?'" Landers said. "We put so much blood, sweat and tears into it to get to that moment and just get on the big stage and just didn't play the way that we wanted to."

"At the end of the day, it's history. You try to rewrite a new chapter in this book and see what happens."

The new chapter will come on Dec. 28, when the same stakes will be on the line for both Clemson and Ohio State.

This time around, Swinney will be fresh off a national title and have to face a new

head coach in Ryan Day who has yet to lose in his head-coaching career.

For Day, he is not reading too much into the matchup from three years ago.

"I think we'll use it as a reference point, but that's two very different teams," Day said. "I mean, I wasn't here, and a lot of guys weren't here. But we'll definitely use it as a reference point, but I don't think it's very relevant here."

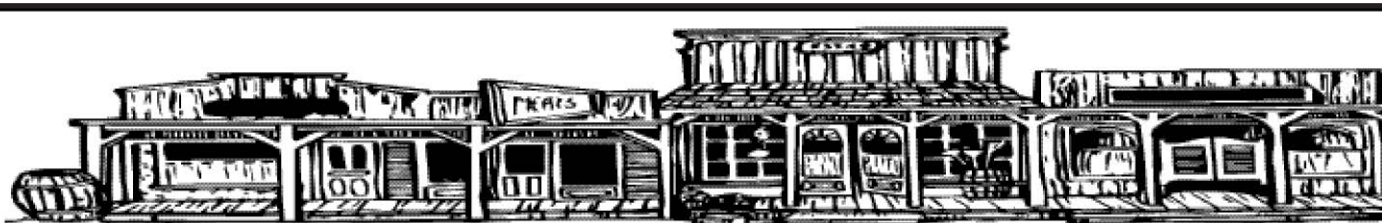
Relevant or not, beating Clemson will mark a first for the Ohio State program following a trilogy of matchups, each heartbreaking for much different reasons. But Landers and Cornell, two redshirt freshmen at the time of the last matchup, believe in the 2019 version of the Ohio State Buckeyes against the newly modeled Clemson Tigers.

"We know what we have on our team, and we know Clemson's a great team," Cornell said. "That game that we played four or five years ago, it's a whole different team – whole new scheme, whole new players, and we're just going there to play our ball, play Ohio State football."



FILE PHOTO

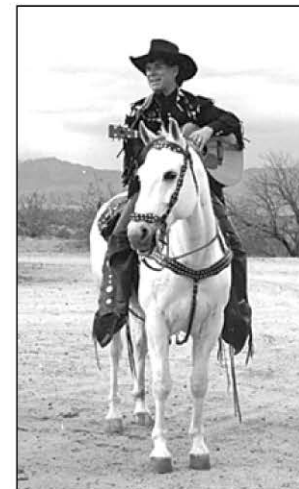
ANOTHER ROUND – Ohio State's Ryan Day hopes to do something his predecessor Urban Meyer (left) couldn't: defeat Clemson's Dabo Swinney (right).



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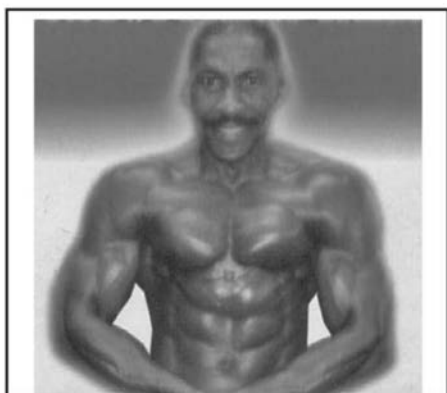


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Ohio State Boasts Most Trips To Fiesta Bowl

By **JOE DEMPSEY**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State makes its ninth trip to the Fiesta Bowl, making it the most trips to the game for any team. The Buckeyes are 5-3 with a mix of season-salvaging finishes and end-of-season disappointments.

The most notable Fiesta Bowl appearance for Ohio State came in the 2003 Fiesta Bowl, when the Buckeyes shocked the world and No. 1 Miami (Fla.) to become BCS national champions.

On Dec. 28, the Buckeyes seek to win the bowl in Glendale, Ariz., for the sixth time in program history and avenge their 2016 loss to Clemson. What follows are details from each of the Buckeyes' eight previous Fiesta Bowl experiences.

1980 Fiesta Bowl (1980 season): Penn State 31, Ohio State 19

Thirty-nine years ago, the Buckeyes ventured to Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, Ariz., for their first Fiesta Bowl, where they fell 31-19 to Joe Paterno's Penn State.

The matchup between the Buckeyes and the Nittany Lions marked the only time the teams have met in a bowl game. With both teams being in the Big Ten East Division, they have met each other each season since 1993.

In just Earle Bruce's second season at the helm, No. 11 Ohio State had a chance to upset No. 10 Penn State but collapsed in the second half.

After a three-and-out from Ohio State, Penn

State's Curt Warner gashed the Buckeyes for a 64-yard touchdown on PSU's first play from scrimmage, and the Lions went up 7-0.

Ohio State quarterback Art Schlichter answered with a touchdown pass to Doug Donley, but Ohio State missed the extra point and trailed 7-6. Schlichter hit Gary Williams for another score and a missed conversion attempt gave the Buckeyes a 12-7 advantage.

Schlichter kept firing and found Donley for another touchdown. The Buckeyes finally nailed the extra point and led 19-7. The Nittany Lions knocked a field goal through to cut OSU's lead to 19-10 just before halftime.

Through the first half, Schlichter had completed 15 of 22 passes for 244 yards and three scores, and outside of the Lions' first play, the Scarlet and Gray had dominated PSU.

Second-half rushing touchdowns from Todd Blackledge, Jon Williams and Booker Moore helped Penn State outscore Ohio State 21-0 in the final 30 minutes and seize the victory. Schlichter struggled after the intermission, completing just 5 of 13 passes for 58 yards.

Overall, Ohio State threw for 302 yards compared to 117 for Penn State, but the Nittany Lions outgained the Buckeyes 351-110 in the ground game and proved to be superior in Tempe.

1984 Fiesta Bowl (1983 season): Ohio State 28, Pittsburgh 23

The 1984 Fiesta Bowl between No. 14 Ohio State and No. 15 Pittsburgh was an instant classic, coming down to the wire in dramatic fashion.

Ohio State quarterback Mike Tomczak

scored the game's first points on a 3-yard keeper, but Pitt quarterback John Congemi answered with a 6-yard touchdown pass to Clint Wilson.

Buckeye running back Keith Byars scored on an 11-yard run before the half, sending the Scarlet and Gray into the locker room with a 14-7 lead.

After a scoreless third quarter, the game ramped up in the fourth. Wilson recovered a fumble in the end zone for a Pitt touchdown, tying the game at 14. Then Byars returned the ensuing kickoff to the house for a 21-14 Ohio State advantage.

Congemi connected with Dwight Collins for a touchdown, but the ambitious Panthers attempted a two-point conversion and failed, leaving OSU in front 21-20.

With just 2:39 left, Pitt kicker Tom Everett hit a 37-yard field goal, giving Pitt a 23-21 lead, and the Panthers appeared to have clinched the game. But with 39 seconds left, Tomczak threw to Thad Jemison for a game-winning 39-yard touchdown, and Ohio State won 28-23.

2003 Fiesta Bowl (2002 season): Ohio State 31, Miami (Fla.) 24 (2OT)

No. 2 Ohio State entered the 2003 Fiesta Bowl, which also served as the BCS National Championship Game, against No. 1 Miami (Fla.) as 11½-point underdogs.

The Hurricanes took the first lead on a Ken Dorsey 25-yard touchdown pass to Roscoe Parrish with 4:09 left in the first quarter.

Buckeye safety Mike Doss snagged Dorsey's second interception of the day and returned the ball 35 yards to the Miami 17-yard line. The Hurricane defense stiffened near the

goal line, but Ohio State quarterback Craig Krenzel punched the ball in on fourth-and-goal from the 1-yard line.

On Miami's first play from scrimmage after the touchdown, Dorsey fumbled, and Darrion Scott recovered for the Scarlet and Gray. Ohio State freshman running back Maurice Clarett scored a 7-yard touchdown to give the Buckeyes a 14-7 halftime lead.

On a third-and-15 in the third quarter, Krenzel connected with Chris Gamble for a 57-yard reception down to the Miami 6-yard line. Then the Buckeye signal caller was picked off by standout Miami safety Sean Taylor, who returned the ball 28 yards before Clarett chased him down, stripped the ball and recovered it. Ohio State capitalized with a Mike Nugent field goal to make it 17-7 at 8:33 of the third.

Miami running back Willis McGahee scored on a 9-yard touchdown to make it a 17-14 game late in the third quarter. The Hurricanes and Buckeyes both missed field goals to keep it a three-point game in the fourth quarter.

Todd Sievers finally connected on a field goal from 40 yards out to tie the game at 17 with one second showing on the regulation clock and send it to overtime.

Miami started with the ball in the extra period, and Dorsey hit Kellen Winslow Jr. for a 7-yard touchdown and a 24-17 lead.

Facing fourth-and-14 from the Miami 29 and needing a touchdown to tie, Krenzel found Michael Jenkins for a 17-yard completion. The stout Hurricane defense forced another fourth down, and this time the Buckeyes needed 3 yards. Krenzel threw incomplete for Gamble in the end zone, but Miami defender Glenn Sharpe

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was called for pass interference. Three plays later, Krenzel punched the ball in from 1 yard out to tie the game.

Clarett scored on a 5-yard touchdown run to open the second overtime, and Nugent's extra point gave Ohio State a 31-24 lead. The Buckeye defense buckled down, forcing a fourth-and-3, where Dorsey hit Winslow Jr. for a 7-yard gain and a face-mask penalty set up Miami with a first-and-5 from the 6-yard line.

Dorsey tried to throw to Andre Johnson, but a pass interference gave the Hurricanes a first-and-goal opportunity from the 2. Ohio State's defense dug in and held Miami to 1 yard on three plays, setting up fourth-and-goal from the 1.

Dorsey dropped back and the Buckeye pass rush led by Cie Grant forced him to throw incomplete, ending the double-overtime thriller with Ohio State winning the BCS national championship 31-24.

Despite throwing for only 122 yards with two picks, Krenzel was Fiesta Bowl Offensive MVP because of his game-high 81 rushing yards and two touchdowns. Doss was Defensive MVP with nine tackles (three solo), including a half tackle for loss, one interception and one pass breakup.

2004 Fiesta Bowl (2003 season): Ohio State 35, Kansas State 28

The season did not go as expected for the 2003 Buckeyes as they went 10-2 with regular-season losses at Wisconsin and at Michigan following their 14-0 national title run the prior year.

No. 7 Ohio State met No. 8 Kansas State, which was 11-2 following an upset 35-7 win over No. 1 Oklahoma in the Big 12 Championship Game.

The Wildcats' went three-and-out on their first three possessions of the game, including during their third drive when they had to punt from their own 7-yard line. Ohio State's Harlen Jacobs blocked the K-State punt and John Hollins returned it for a 7-yard score, putting the Buckeyes up 7-0 early.

Later in the first quarter, Krenzel connected with Santonio Holmes on a 6-yard score, pushing the lead to 14-0. In the second quarter, Krenzel fired a 17-yard pass to Jenkins for another touchdown pass, giving the Scarlet and Gray a 21-0 lead.

The Wildcats would not go away, with stand-out running back Darren Sproles rushing for a 6-yard score to cut the Buckeyes' lead to 21-7 before halftime.

Kansas State quarterback Ell Roberson scrambled 14 yards for a touchdown, closing the gap to 21-14 at the 8:59 mark of the third. Krenzel responded with his second touchdown to Jenkins, this time from 8 yards out.

Later in the third quarter, Krenzel hooked up with Holmes again for a 31-yard touchdown, giving Ohio State a 35-14 advantage heading into the final frame.

Kansas State's Ayo Saba answered with a 3-yard rushing touchdown, cutting the deficit to two scores. Roberson scored again on another rushing touchdown, making it 35-28 with 2:47 to play, but the Buckeyes were able to hold off the Wildcats.

Krenzel was named the Fiesta Bowl Offensive MVP with his four touchdown passes, while A.J. Hawk earned Defensive MVP with 10 tackles (six solo), including 1½ tackles for loss and one pass breakup.

2006 Fiesta Bowl (2005 season): Ohio State 34, Notre Dame 20

Two years later, No. 4 Ohio State met No. 5 Notre Dame in the 2006 Fiesta Bowl.

The Fighting Irish struck first with a 20-yard touchdown run by tailback Darius Walker, but Ohio State answered with a 56-yard touchdown pass from Troy Smith to Ted Ginn Jr.

In the second quarter, Ginn took a wide



FILE PHOTO

ENDED THE DROUGHT IN THE DESERT – Ohio State captured its first national title in 34 years with a 31-24 double-overtime win over top-ranked Miami (Fla.) in the 2003 Fiesta Bowl.

receiver reverse 68 yards for a score. Then with 2:21 until halftime, Smith found Holmes for an 85-yard touchdown pass, giving the Buckeyes a 21-7 halftime lead.

Walker scored again for the Fighting Irish, but after a missed extra point, Ohio State still led 21-13.

Notre Dame's defense held the Scarlet and Gray to two field goals, and with five minutes left Walker's third rushing score made it a one-score game at 27-20.

While the Buckeyes were trying to run out the clock, tailback Antonio Pittman gashed the Fighting Irish for a 60-yard touchdown run, securing the 34-20 Ohio State victory.

Smith won Fiesta Bowl Offensive MVP with 342 passing yards and two touchdowns along with 66 rushing yards, while Hawk earned another Defensive MVP honor with 12 tackles (nine solo), including 3½ TFL and two sacks of his future brother-in-law Brady Quinn.

2009 Fiesta Bowl (2008 season): Texas 24, Ohio State 21

After Texas was passed over in the selection for the 2009 BCS National Championship Game, the Longhorns were selected to represent the Big 12 in the Fiesta Bowl.

The Buckeyes were selected as an "at-large" school from among the eligible teams. When the bowl bids were announced, the sports betting line opened with Texas as 10-point favorites, marking the most of any of the 2009 BCS bowls.

Ohio State led the game first with a first-quarter, 51-yard field goal by Aaron Pettrey. Hunter Lawrence answered with a 27-yard field goal in the second quarter, and Ryan Pretorius knocked home a 30-yard field goal for the Buckeyes for a 6-3 halftime lead.

Longhorn quarterback Colt McCoy helped Texas take the lead on a 14-yard rushing touchdown in the third quarter. Later in the frame, McCoy connected with Quan Cosby for a 7-yard touchdown pass to make it 17-6.

Pettrey nailed another field goal from 44 yards out early in the fourth quarter to cut the Longhorn lead to eight. Todd Boeckman threw a 5-yard touchdown to Terrelle Pryor, but the Buckeyes' two-point try failed.

Ohio State running back Daniel "Boom" Herron scored on a 15-yard touchdown run with 2:05 left. The Buckeyes went for two again and failed but led 21-17.

McCoy rose to the occasion, hitting Cosby for a 26-yard touchdown and beating the Buckeyes with just 16 seconds left with a final of 24-21.

2016 Fiesta Bowl (2015 season): Ohio State 44, Notre Dame 28

Ohio State running back Ezekiel Elliott scored the game's first touchdown on a 2-yard rush, putting the No. 7 Buckeyes up 7-0 on the No. 8 Fighting Irish.

Buckeye quarterback J.T. Barrett added to the lead with a 15-yard touchdown pass to Michael Thomas. In the second quarter, Notre Dame cut the lead in half with a 3-yard rushing score by Josh Adams.

A pair of 1-yard rushing touchdowns from Elliott pushed Ohio State's first-half lead to 28-7 with the game looking like it might get out of hand.

Notre Dame quarterback DeShone Kizer scored on a 1-yard touchdown with 29 seconds until halftime.

Kizer kept the momentum going in the second half, finding Chris Brown for a 4-yard score to cut the Scarlet and Gray lead to 28-21. Elliott found the end zone for the fourth time on a 47-yard touchdown run to push the lead back to two scores.

Sean Nuernberger nailed a 37-yard field goal to put Ohio State up 38-21 early in the fourth quarter.

Kizer quickly responded with an 81-yard touchdown pass to Will Fuller. The Buckeyes held on with two more Nuernberger three-pointers, winning 44-28.

The Buckeyes dominated the Fighting Irish on the ground, outrushing them 285-121. Barrett earned Fiesta Bowl Offensive MVP with 211 yards and one touchdown through the air and 96 yards on the ground. Eli Apple won Defensive MVP with five tackles (four solo) and one pass breakup.

2016 Fiesta Bowl (2016 season): Clemson 31, Ohio State 0

The winner of the 2016 Fiesta Bowl between No. 2 Ohio State and No. 3 Clemson would advance to the CFP National Championship Game.

Clemson became just the second team in college football history to shut out the Buckeyes in a bowl game, joining U.C. Berkeley from the 1921 Rose Bowl. The game also marked the first and only time that Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer was shut out in his 219-game career.

The Tigers dominated the Buckeyes, out-gaining them 470-215. More on this matchup can be found in the Ohio State-Clemson history found on pages 22-23.

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Plenty Of Things To Do Before Fiesta Bowl

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Fiesta Bowl for many Ohio State fans is like visiting an old friend in Arizona every few years because the Buckeyes have been a participant seven times since 2003, including the first and last days of 2016, with varying degrees of success.

Whether it's winning the national championship with a 31-24 double-overtime victory over Miami on Jan. 3, 2003, at Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe or the 31-0 loss to Clemson in the 2016 national semifinal in the current home of the Fiesta Bowl in Glendale, familiar faces and places will greet those who follow the Buckeyes.

Even so, it doesn't hurt to check with the Glendale Visitor Center by phone (623-930-4500) or online at visitglendale.com.

This year's College Football Playoff semifinal pitting the No. 2 Buckeyes vs. No. 3 Clemson at State Farm Stadium (formerly University of Phoenix Stadium) on Dec. 28 is unique in its timing and could affect travelers' plans. It will tie for the third earliest post-Christmas date that OSU has played a bowl game.

What follows is a list of things to do and places to go during your visit to the Fiesta Bowl.

Scarlet And Gray Happenings

First stop for Buckeye fans is the Fiesta Bowl Welcome Mixer put on by the OSU

Alumni Club of Phoenix on Dec. 26 from 5-8 p.m. local time (Arizona is on Mountain time, two hours behind Columbus) at the **Bottled Blonde Pizzeria and Beer Garden**, 7340 E. Indian Plaza in suburban Scottsdale. The event is free and open to the public, and former OSU football players are expected to attend.

The Alumni Club of Phoenix will also be hosting a game watch party on Dec. 28 at Bottled Blonde as well as a Buckeye Day Party on Dec. 29 hosted by noted rapper, actor and Cleveland native Machine Gun Kelly and professional skateboarder Ryan Sheckler. For more information visit osuphx.com or contact Bottled Blonde at (480) 970-1112 or online at bottledblondeaz.com. You can also contact Maggie Sweeney at sweeney.186@osu.edu or 614-292-3811.

Bottled Blonde offers a contemporary Italian menu featuring gourmet stone-oven pizza as well as local and craft beers. Enjoy sporting events on the 42 TVs and two 25-foot HD projection screens.

If you are a Buckeye and in Glendale for the Ohio State game, then **McFadden's Restaurant and Saloon** is the place for you. McFadden's Glendale is an Irish-themed sports bar located in the Westgate Entertainment District and is home to the Ohio State Alumni Club of Phoenix. As your Buckeye headquarters for the Fiesta Bowl, McFadden's will be hosting a special meet and greet Dec. 27 from 5-9 p.m. featuring player appearances, raffles and ticket giveaways.

McFadden's menu features classic Irish staples such as shepherd's pie and corned beef & cabbage as well as a variety of burgers, wraps and pizzas, and they offer daily drink and food specials. For more information and menu items, visit www.mcfaddensglendale.com or call (623) 872-0022.

There are two events planned by the Ohio State Alumni Association.

The first will be the Buckeye Bash on Dec. 27, also at Bottled Blonde from noon to 3 p.m. The free event features Brutus Buckeye, Ohio State cheerleaders, the marching band and special guests. The pep rally starts at 2 p.m.

Registration is required to receive important day-of-event information. All registered attendees will be entered to win two suite tickets for Ohio State's 2020 home opener on Sept. 5 vs. Bowling Green. Contact osuaa@osu.edu or call (800) 762-5646 for more information.

The other activity is the Pregame Huddle on the Road on Dec. 28 from 2-5 p.m. at Lawn B at State Farm Stadium. Cost is \$100 per attendee, which includes an exclusive gameday menu, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, tailgate games and more, all within walking distance to the stadium. For more information contact advancementevents@osu.edu or call (800) 678-6011.

To keep track of all happenings, visit the OSU alumni association's home page (osu.edu/alumni) and click "Go Bowling" in the "Fiesta frenzy!" section.

Where To Eat

Dave & Buster's in Glendale, located at 9460 W. Hanna Lane in the Westgate Entertainment District, offers a fun atmosphere and an extensive menu. Let your inner kid loose in Dave & Buster's arcade room, with classics like Pop-A-Shot, Pac-Man, and Skee-Ball as well as the newest games. With a menu featuring everything from snacks and shareables to burgers, sandwiches and entrees, there is sure to be something to please everyone in your crowd. Call (623) 759-7800 or visit daveandbusters.com to find out more.

Want a taste of the Southwest? Try **Old Town Tortilla Factory** at 6910 E. Main St. in the heart of Old Town Scottsdale for homemade tortillas, fresh Southwestern cuisine and some of Arizona's best margaritas in an upscale atmosphere. The property boasts an award-winning, 1,400-square foot patio, which is heated for the (relatively) chilly winter months. The bar offers more than 120 premium tequilas and a complete selection of beers, wine and liquors.

With house specialties such as Shawnee Seabass and Pollo Margarita Chicken and regional favorites like Old Town Tacos and Carne De Fuego, Old Town Tortilla Factory has options for everyone. For more info call (480) 945-4567 or visit oldtowntortillafactory.com.

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to stay through Dec. 29 when the NHL's Arizona Coyotes host the Dallas Stars at 6 p.m. at Gila River Arena in Glendale. Otherwise, the Coyotes and the Phoenix Suns of the NBA are not home during the three days after Christmas.

For non-sports activities, "A Magical Cirque Christmas" will have two performances at 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 26 at ASU Gammage performing arts center on the campus of Arizona State in Tempe. The box office number is (480) 965-3434 or visit asugammage.com.

If you're looking to spend a day shopping, eating or just walking around, **Old Town Scottsdale** is a pleasant diversion. With a Western vibe, there are plenty of unique shops like the Poisoned Pen Bookstore, the Old Town Scottsdale Farmer's Market, Old Town Candy and Toys and the Sphinx Date Ranch that sells locally grown dates and other treats. Find out more at experiencescottsdale.com.

Need to get a late Christmas gift or want to bring home a souvenir for a friend or loved one? Be sure to visit the **Affordable Elegance Gift Shops** in Old Town Scottsdale. Scottsdale Southwest at 3937 N. Brown Avenue (480-949-9521) and Southwest Reflections at 7221 E. First Avenue (480-949-1442) offer a variety of Arizona themed gifts including jewelry, home décor, tee shirts and more, as well as Southwestern foods and candy.

Try your luck at the **Desert Diamond Casino**, located at 9431 W. Northern Ave. in Glendale. The Desert Diamond West Valley Casino offers better odds, bigger jackpots and more winners every day. Here you'll find 35,000 square feet of winning right in the middle of all the action, with 1,089 of the hottest games around with longer play times and better odds with over \$6.9 million in jackpots in November. Call (833) 332-2946 to find out more.

For something completely different, there's Christmas in the Rainforest at Butterfly Wonderland in Scottsdale that runs 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Dec. 28. The exhibit combines holiday elements with thousands of butterflies in the largest glass conservatory in the country. The cost is \$24.95 per person or save \$3 by ordering a day in advance. For more information call (480) 800-3000 or link to butterflywonderland.com.

If you're still in the Christmas spirit,

OdySea Aquarium in Scottsdale is hosting Winterland (\$34.95) 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Jan. 5. Email info@odyseaaquarium or call (480) 291-8000 to find out more.

For outdoor activities there's rinks and links. Yes, the Phoenix area, with a December average high of 67 and a low of 44 degrees, has ice skating options for those Northerners who enjoy a small reminder of back home. Skate Westgate (westgateaz.com/skate) in Glendale's Westgate Entertainment District is one option. Another is CityScape Phoenix (phxicerink.com).

Looking for something else? Go to VisitPhoenix.com.

Phoenix and surrounding communities are home to more than 200 golf courses. Near the top of the list is TPC Scottsdale, which hosts the PGA Tour's Waste Management Phoenix Open each season. For tee times and costs see tpc.com/Scottsdale.

Another course in Scottsdale is Troon North Golf Club (troonnorthgolf.com). Its Monument and Pinnacle courses are must-play, especially after renovations by original designer, British Open Champion and former Ohio State golfer Tom Weiskopf.

For the more adventurous, take a hike. Really, take a hike. The iconic Camelback Mountain, 20 minutes from downtown Phoenix, offers a stunning view of the area free of charge. The peak sits at 2,704 feet. The Echo Canyon Trail is more popular while the Cholla Trail is described as slightly longer and slightly easier to navigate and less crowded. More information can be found at www.climbcamelback.com or by calling (612) 599-3616.

If sitting for long stretches is your style and you have a full day then the Grand Canyon is about a 230-mile, four-hour drive from Phoenix. You might consider getting a group and chartering. One transport is National Bus Charter (www.nationalbus-charter.com/phoenix-charter-bus) at (480) 626-4711.

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BSB Staff Reflects On Season, Previews CFP

Ohio State is headed back to the College Football Playoff for the first time since 2016, and the Buckeyes will face a familiar opponent at the PlayStation Fiesta Bowl in Clemson, the defending national champion.

With the semifinal matchup fast approaching, Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members Wyatt Crosher, Joe Dempsey, Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn sat down to reflect on the year that was and make a few bold predictions for the playoff.

Looking back at your preseason conference and player predictions in the August edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin and online at BuckeyeSports.com, where were you most right and where did you go wrong?

Wyatt Crosher: "Oh man. There are plenty of things that I got wrong in my preseason predictions, but there are two that were truly horrible takes. The first comes with my College Football Playoff, in which I had Texas winning the Big 12 and making the playoff.

"I listened to quarterback Sam Ehlinger and truly believed the Longhorns were back, and I paid the price for it as I watched Texas finish 7-5 and eke into a lackluster bowl game.

"That was bad, but not nearly as bad as the one where, oh I don't know, I picked Northwestern to go 10-2 and win the Big Ten West. I really bought into former five-star quarterback recruit Hunter Johnson panning out and Pat Fitzgerald really turning the program around, but instead, the Wildcats were an offensive nightmare and finished the year a pitiful 3-9.

"As far as good picks go, I did pretty well outside of the Big Ten, correctly guessing Ohio State, Memphis, Clemson, Boise State, Oregon and Appalachian State as conference champions, but my two big wins in conference came with both the Buckeyes and Wolverines.

"With the former, I accurately selected Ryan Day to be the first Ohio State coach in 40 years to win Big Ten Coach of the Year, and I also predicted that Michigan would not legitimately compete for a Big Ten title and instead would finish 9-3.

"There were plenty more I was wrong on – I had Jonathan Taylor and Yetur Gross-Matos for offensive and defensive players of the year instead of Justin Fields and Chase Young – but

in the broader landscape, I am glad to say my early picks were not a total disaster."

Joe Dempsey: "I, too, gave the reigning champs of the Big Ten West too much credit, predicting Northwestern would win nine games. I also predicted Nebraska would win twice as many games as they did and claim the Big Ten West crown, which was another laughable mistake.

"While I didn't come close on the winner of the Big Ten West, I hit on the East champion. I had Ohio State finishing the regular season 12-0, winning the Big Ten title and claiming one of the four spots in the College Football Playoff.

"I also correctly chose Clemson and Oklahoma to claim CFP spots, while I wrongly selected Alabama instead of LSU. I mistakenly marked Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa and Clemson's Trevor Lawrence as Heisman finalists but also got two right in Oklahoma's Jalen Hurts and Ohio State's Justin Fields.

"As far as Big Ten award winners, I looked foolish passing over Chase Young, who was not only the top defensive player in the conference but in the entire FBS. Before the season, I was worried Larry Johnson's propensity to rotate his linemen and limit their snaps would hurt Young's chances come award season – I was wrong. Young thrived whenever he was on the field.

"The best calls I made in the Big Ten were Fields for Offensive Player of the Year and Ryan Day for Coach of the Year. Fields had never started a collegiate game and 'experts' had Ohio State finishing fourth or fifth in the conference because of it. Also, like Wyatt said, no Ohio State coach had won coach of the year in 40 years, so predicting a first-year coach to win it for the Buckeyes was a bold call."

Patrick Mayhorn: "As my counterparts did, I probably gave Northwestern too much hype preseason, though a 7-5 prediction and fourth in the West is a bit easier to swallow than calling for a second straight Big Ten Championship Game appearance. I missed quite badly, however, on Nebraska (called for 8-4), Minnesota (called for 6-6) and Illinois (called for 3-9), though I'll give myself some slack on the latter two because I doubt anyone saw Minnesota's rise or Illinois' hot streak coming.

"However, of all my conference predictions, the most egregious is probably assuming that

Ohio State would suffer some sort of drop-off and predicting a 10-2 season. Ryan Day and his staff did a phenomenal job in 2019, and while there's only a two-game difference between prediction and reality, those two games are pretty massive.

"Luckily for me, it isn't all bad. I nailed Chase Young as Defensive Player of the Year and Ohio State as Big Ten champions while finding quite a bit more success nationally than I expected. I got four conference champions right (Ohio State, Clemson, Oklahoma and Appalachian State) and was just one bad Pac-12 Championship Game off from hitting on Utah in the playoff."

Andrew Lind: "Looking back, it appears I also put too much stock in a Big Ten West team. But instead of Northwestern, which I picked to finish at a respectable 8-4 overall and 6-3 in the Big Ten, I had Purdue making it to the Big Ten Championship Game with a 9-3 overall record and 7-2 in conference play.

"Given what the Boilermakers did to Ohio State last season, I was completely sold on their offensive attack. But the team was bitten by the injury bug very early in the season and never recovered. Wide receiver Rondale Moore, a freshman All-American in 2018 whom I predicted to be the Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year, played in just four games before suffering a nasty leg injury that sidelined him the rest of the season. And by the end of the year, Purdue had a third-string walk-on as its starting quarterback.

"That doesn't excuse an unthinkable loss in the season opener at Nevada or a blowout to TCU in Week 3, though, so my prediction about the Boilermakers went off the rails fairly quickly.

"As for what went right, I successfully predicted three of the four teams in the College Football Playoff – Clemson, Ohio State and Oklahoma – and had the Buckeyes playing their semifinal game in the Fiesta Bowl, though I anticipated quarterback Justin Fields would get his shot at revenge against Georgia.

"I also successfully predicted that Appalachian State, Clemson, Memphis and Oklahoma would win their conferences, as well as that Ohio State defensive end Chase Young would be the Big Ten Defensive Player of the

Year."

Ohio State sent two players to the Heisman Trophy ceremony in quarterback Justin Fields and defensive end Chase Young, who finished third and fourth respectively. Do you feel like running back J.K. Dobbins – who finished sixth – should have joined them in New York, or did the voters make the right choice in keeping him home?

WC: "This one is tough for me to answer, because it will come out as sort of a cop-out. From what the rules are currently with how players get nominated for the Heisman Trophy, which is by earning a specific qualifying percentage of the votes, then I think that it is fair that Dobbins missed the cut.

"The group of four that is Joe Burrow, Jalen Hurts, Justin Fields and Chase Young is a fair group of candidates, in my opinion, even though Hurts turns it over way too much to actually be considered a winner. My problem instead lies in that only four get to go. Why?

"Almost every other major college football award has a set amount of nominees each year who get put up for it, so why can't the Heisman do that? If it did do that with five spots, we would get a definitive answer on who the hundreds of voters think is the best between Dobbins, Wisconsin's Jonathan Taylor and Oklahoma State's Chuba Hubbard, but instead all the voters were able to cop out and not pick any of them.

"The four nominees all had great seasons and I think they are all deserving of recognition – and Burrow is absolutely the right choice for winning it – but the fact that there are only four and not that fifth nominee is stupid, and something that doesn't seemingly have any purpose besides making it an overly exclusive nomination.

"Did Dobbins deserve a spot? Maybe. I have a tough time choosing between the three backs, but if I was one of the 870 Heisman voters, I would have wished that I was forced to make that choice."

JD: "I agree with Wyatt that the Heisman voters copped out by not including the best running back in the country. Not including the nation's best tailback, who is often the best athlete on the field, is not a good look for the

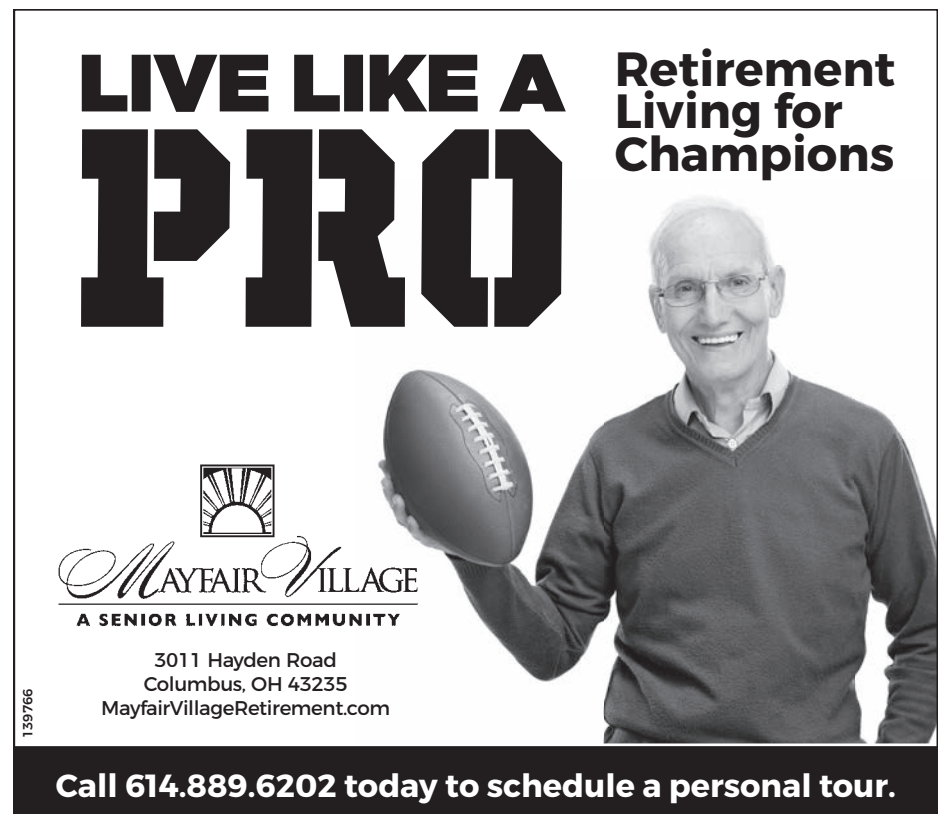


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Heisman Trophy, especially in a season with such astounding backs.

“Jonathan Taylor and J.K. Dobbins were both worthy of being Heisman finalists, and if I had to pick one, it would be Dobbins because of his performances against the stout rushing defenses of Penn State, Wisconsin and Michigan State. For comparison, Dobbins rushed for more than twice as many yards against the Spartans as Taylor and outgained him significantly in two head-to-head matchups.

“There is no doubt that either Dobbins or Taylor belonged as a Heisman finalist, and I’d pick Dobbins if I had to choose one. I understand why the four finalists were selected, however.

“Joe Burrow was a no-brainer. He had an electric season, boasting out-of-this-world stats and beating numerous ranked teams while leading the Tigers to an undefeated season.

“Justin Fields and Chase Young were also easy choices in my mind. Fields also led his team unblemished through a tough schedule with ridiculous stats, which would have been even better had Ohio State not blown out so many of its opponents. Young is the most dominant player in college football, and the fact that he led the country in sacks despite missing two games is absurd.

“If you had to take any of the four out it would be Jalen Hurts, but I knew he’d be a finalist before the season even started because he runs Oklahoma’s offense and faces Big 12 defenses. But with nearly 5,000 yards of total offense and 51 total touchdowns, I understand why Hurts was there.”

PM: “I think I feel more strongly about this than Joe and Wyatt, mainly because of my views on Jalen Hurts. He’s fine. He’s a perfectly serviceable quarterback, in an excellent offense that can and will inflate numbers for perfectly

serviceable quarterbacks like Hurts. However, I don’t see the performances he’s put on as being Heisman worthy this year.

“Does that mean Dobbins should be there? I’m still not entirely sure about that. I do think that his impact on this Buckeye team is being underrated a bit, but it’s hard to say that he would deserve to be there more than Burrow (certainly not), Young (probably not) or Fields (probably not), meaning that the fourth spot would come down to Dobbins or Jonathan Taylor.

“Despite his struggles in his first meeting with Ohio State, it’s very hard to pick against Taylor in that competition. Wisconsin’s offense inflates halfback stats in a similar way to Oklahoma’s with passers, but it’s very difficult to look at what Jonathan Taylor has done at Wisconsin and justify him never being invited to New York for the Heisman ceremony.

“Still, Dobbins likely deserves more recognition than he has received during the awards cycle. He’s a tremendous back, and I expect that Ohio State will show off just how valuable he is during the playoff, though that unfortunately doesn’t do much for his Heisman hopes.”

AL: “I tend to agree with Patrick in that nothing Hurts did this year was worthy of being a Heisman finalist, especially not worthy of finishing second. He simply plays in an offense that is designed to inflate his stats, as evidenced by the fact that three straight Oklahoma quarterbacks have been invited to the Heisman ceremony and two of them won the award.

“The reason Baker Mayfield and Kyler Murray won, though, was the fact that they both willed their teams to a number of wins during their Heisman-winning seasons of 2017 and 2018, respectively, the former doing so in a statement game at Ohio Stadium, no less.

“Now, when it comes to Dobbins, I really do

think the voters copped out. Instead of choosing among Dobbins, Hubbard and Taylor, they simply chose none of them. It’s disappointing, too, because I think all three were worthy of being Heisman finalists this year.

“If I was a voter, I would have left Hurts off and sent Burrow (who would have received my vote as the winner), Young, Fields and Dobbins instead. Dobbins would get my vote over the two other running backs because – like Joe said – of his performances in big games against Michigan State, Penn State and Wisconsin and head-to-head against Taylor.

“Hubbard, meanwhile, was spectacular for an average team, and that’s never been a recipe for Heisman success.”

Do you think the College Football Playoff committee was correct in ranking LSU ahead of Ohio State in the final rankings?

JD: “The committee has a tough job to do, and I understand why LSU was chosen ahead of Ohio State, but I still disagree with the decision. The Tigers’ wins against Alabama, Auburn, Florida and Georgia stand out on their résumé, but so does their inconsistent defense. LSU allowed 38 points to Vanderbilt, who won three games, and 37 to Ole Miss, who only won four times.

“The Buckeyes have not allowed more than 27 points in any game, while the Tigers have given up at least that much five times. Such a disparity in defensive performance gives Ohio State the edge over LSU, especially considering the Ohio State offense scores more than LSU’s.

“The committee had Ohio State No. 1 but dropped the Buckeyes after they beat Wisconsin for the second time, while LSU handily beat Georgia. Both teams were undefeated conference champions, but the score margin in the final game does not change the fact that OSU had a better season-long résumé.

“In my mind, LSU is the third-best team behind Ohio State and Clemson, with the second-best résumé after the Buckeyes.”

PM: “I agreed with LSU being given the top spot, though ultimately, I think either choice would have been perfectly fine. Both teams have been tremendous all season, and the two résumés stack up almost completely evenly.

“When two teams are as close as these two were, the only thing the committee really has to go off of is momentum, or, in harsher terms, recency bias. The momentum is behind LSU after a blowout win over Georgia, and fair or not, Ohio State’s first-half struggles against Wisconsin were enough to close the deal and place the teams where they landed in the playoff.

“I do, however, agree with Joe that LSU is probably the third-best team, behind Clemson and Ohio State. Rankings can’t be done based on gut feeling though, and LSU did what it needed to do to earn the nod.”

AL: “If you took the name of both schools away from their respective résumés and simply compared their schedules and margins of victory, you’d see that Ohio State deserved to be No. 1. The Buckeyes had five wins over opponents that finished the season in the top 25 of the final College Football Playoff rankings, while LSU had only four. The Tigers also played an FCS team, Northwestern State, and were given too much credit for a win over Texas – which was a top-10 team during their matchup in early September but struggled to a 7-5 finish.

“Ohio State’s three nonconference opponents – Florida Atlantic, Miami (Ohio) and Cincinnati – either won their respective conferences or lost in the championship game. It’s so easy for the media to suggest that the Buckeyes played a weaker schedule than LSU

Continued On Page 30

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Assessing Ohio State's Chances Of Winning Title

Continued From Page 29

just because they don't play in the SEC, but the numbers show they're pretty even.

"From there, the best way to break a tie is to simply watch the games. Ohio State dominated every game except for the first half of the Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin then proceeded to shut out the Badgers in the second half. LSU was also impressive offensively, as evidenced by Burrow's Heisman trophy, but struggled mightily on defense and won a handful of games by seven points or less.

"To me, Ohio State should have been the No. 1 seed. But in the end, the fact that everyone wanted to avoid a semifinal matchup with Clemson just proves to me the purple and orange Tigers – the defending national champion, I might add – are the team to beat in the playoff, rendering the seeds moot. For the Buckeyes, it was either play Clemson now or play them in New Orleans."

WC: "I tend to agree with Patrick a little more than Andrew and Joe, because I think the CFP committee didn't really have a wrong answer between LSU and Ohio State.

"Ohio State has been the team that has had a stronger defense all season, and I certainly think it is being overlooked how hard it is to beat a team twice in the same year, especially a team that went 10-1 against any team not named Ohio State.

"But I also don't think that first half against Wisconsin was the only time the Buckeyes showed weakness, a.k.a. in the second half against Penn State when they almost blew a 21-point lead. On the other hand, LSU abso-

lutely torched Georgia who, right or not, is still ranked as a top-five team in the country.

"The blowout win over the Bulldogs, along with the Buckeyes struggling for half a game, opened up a solid case for LSU to get the top spot, even though I think if recency bias was taken out, Ohio State had the stronger case.

"I understood the jump that LSU made, even if it wasn't one I necessarily would have done."

Do you like Ohio State's chances of knocking off Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl, or do you think the Tigers will beat the Buckeyes once again?

JD: "Ohio State is one of the all-time winningest teams in the history of college football and has always seemed to hold its own against even the toughest competition. The Buckeyes have never beaten Clemson, though, with the Tigers playing the role of Kryptonite to the Buckeyes.

"If any team were to end Ohio State's slump against the Tigers, it would be the Ryan Day-led Buckeyes that defeated their opponents by more than 36 points per game through 13 games. Beating Clemson is easier said than done, however, as the Tigers have not lost since dropping the CFP semifinal to Alabama following the 2017 season.

"Clemson has only one ranked win and hasn't been as battle-tested as the Buckeyes, but the Tigers are still talented, very talented. They returned most of their team from their 15-0 national-title season a year ago besides their defensive line and top cornerback, and as annoying as Dabo Swinney has been about being overlooked, he has a point.

"I think this year's Fiesta Bowl features the nation's top two teams and whoever wins will

secure the national championship against LSU. I could see it going either way, but I'll pick the Buckeyes to beat Clemson with their balanced offensive attack and stifling defense."

PM: "Firstly, given Ohio State's recent history with Clemson, I expect that this rendition will be a close game, regardless of winner. No 31-0 this time around. These are two extremely evenly matched teams and will be challenged to move the football by excellent defenses.

"No matter how close the two teams are, I'm still not sure that I see Ohio State winning. The Buckeyes are electric running the football and have what may be the nation's best defense, but pass protection worries me. Justin Fields has been on the ground far too often as of late, and that won't change if Clemson's defensive line (young as it may be) has anything to say about it. If the Buckeye passing game can work consistently, I would feel a lot better about Ohio State's chances.

"More concerning for the Buckeyes is the return of Trevor Lawrence to his elite form. He has been spectacular lately, and I'm not sure that Ohio State has played a quarterback anywhere near his caliber this season – though the same could be said for the kind of defenses Lawrence is accustomed to.

"In the end, I see a Clemson win, by one score. I think Ohio State can and will keep it close, but Clemson is just too good at doing the few things Ohio State has been weak against this season."

AL: "This year's playoff reminds me a lot of Ohio State's run to the inaugural College Football Playoff national championship. The Buckeyes faced top-seeded and seemingly unbeatable Alabama in the first round then cruised to a win over offense-oriented Oregon in the title game.

"In essence, the Sugar Bowl served as the de facto national championship that season, and

I get that feeling again in this matchup between Ohio State and Clemson. The teams are very evenly matched, with both offenses full of five-star talent that's able to take it the distance on every carry or throw. Both defenses, particularly along the line, are able to get pressure on the quarterback quickly.

"So, what's the difference? I said before the season I thought the Tigers would beat the Buckeyes in the national championship, and I thought it was because Lawrence would be able to pick apart the secondary. But with Damon Arnette playing better than any point in his career, Shaun Wade looking to cement his status as a first-round pick and Jeff Okudah angry about missing out on a Jim Thorpe Award, Ohio State now holds the upper hand in that matchup.

"With that said, I think the game will be a back-and-forth affair with the Buckeyes taking a late fourth-quarter lead. Lawrence will throw an interception shortly after Clemson crosses midfield, however, and Ohio State will head to the national championship, finally breaking the curse against the Tigers with a 38-35 win."

WC: "Well Andrew, if Lawrence were to throw an interception, it would be his first in seven games. In that same span, he has thrown 20 TDs.

"As Patrick said, Lawrence has quietly been an absolute monster in the second half of the season after his start made many wonder if he had lost some of his touch. His success against Ohio State's secondary may be the thing that makes or breaks this game, but the same can be said about a multitude of areas when considering that these two teams are pretty much good at everything.

"Clemson is stacked and has a title run last year to work with as experience, but is that more valuable than a regular season of experience against a variety of ranked teams? Because

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if not, that is the advantage Ohio State brings to the table, especially with as brutal a stretch as the Buckeyes faced to earn the Big Ten title.

"Like everyone before me has said, this matchup should be an incredibly close one, and I really could see it go either way depending on who comes out there with more of a chip on their shoulder.

"There's not a true area I think either team has a major advantage in, but I think Ohio State might come out there feeling just a little bit more slighted due to the betting odds and lack of some major awards they were right there for, as well as being the No. 2 seed, and I will pick the Buckeyes to head to New Orleans with an incredibly close 34-30 win over Clemson."

If Ohio State makes it past Clemson, do you think they'll be able to beat No. 1 LSU or No. 4 Oklahoma to win the national title?

AL: "I think LSU is going to take care of Oklahoma in the Peach Bowl with ease, which means Ohio State will have a chance to avenge its loss in the 2008 BCS national championship – and in the same building, no less.

"The Tigers certainly pose a threat on offense, with former Buckeyes quarterback Joe Burrow leading the aerial attack. He's shown exactly why I thought he would be Ohio State's quarterback in 2018 instead of Dwayne Haskins, and his arm poses a significant threat against the Buckeyes' defensive backfield, which has dealt with its fair share of injuries in recent weeks.

"Luckily for Ohio State, LSU's defense has been extremely inconsistent all season despite featuring stars like junior safety Grant Delpit and freshman cornerback Derek Stingley. The Tigers have allowed 30-plus points in four games and allowed 614 yards (402 rushing and 212 passing) in one of those games, a 58-37 win over Ole Miss.

"Simply put, LSU's offense can score with the best of them because their defense makes it a necessity. With that, Ohio State should be able to attack in multiple ways, taking advantage of the lack of a rush defense and then throwing over the top when the defensive backs creep up in run support.

"Either game would be a shootout, but Ohio State should be able to capture its seventh national title regardless of opponent."

WC: "While I do think LSU has the edge, I don't think that the Tigers are even nearly as close of a lock as Andrew – and many others – have said. Both teams are high-powered offenses with questionable defenses. In fact, while LSU's total offense is ranked No. 1 to Oklahoma's No. 2, the Tigers have the No. 32-ranked defense, allowing 341.3 yards per game while the Sooners allow 330.6 yards per game, good for No. 24.

"So, because I think this, I will give the scenario for either matchup, starting with Oklahoma. If the Buckeyes make it past the Tigers into a final against the Sooners, again everyone will talk about Ohio State being a lock. This time around, though, I do think the Buckeyes would have a significant advantage on the fact that their defense is legit while Oklahoma's is less so.

"I also would trust Justin Fields to play error free over Jalen Hurts in crucial stretches, but the extra motivation for Alex Grinch against his former employer would be fun to see, though I'd still pick Ohio State by at least 10, maybe by two scores.

"The more likely matchup in LSU would go similar to what Andrew said above. I think a shootout favors Joe Burrow and that high-powered offense, but if Ohio State can get a few stops, the Buckeyes would be in good shape to win their second playoff title.

"I see either matchup as one that favors Ohio State, as neither team feels quite as complete on both sides of the ball."

JD: "As I've said, I think the best two teams in the country will be playing in the Fiesta Bowl

between Ohio State and Clemson. I could see either team winning and then besting LSU in the national championship.

"Oklahoma is no slouch, and the Sooner offense features one of the most talented and exciting players in the nation in wide receiver CeeDee Lamb. But LSU has won battles against tougher opponents than Oklahoma has faced, and the Tigers' experience in tight games against top-tier opponents coupled with their high-octane offense gives them the edge.

"When it comes to a matchup between the Buckeyes and Tigers in the national championship, emotions will be running high for former Ohio State quarterback and current LSU starter Joe Burrow. The Buckeyes' composure will be tested as well, especially considering they have a first-year head coach and many first- and second-year players in prominent positions like quarterback and wide receiver.

"Ohio State's impressive offensive line would lead the way against LSU with a dominant performance from J.K. Dobbins out of the backfield and a much healthier Justin Fields showing why he deserved his Heisman nomination.

"The Buckeyes' defense is significantly better than LSU's and would help secure the national title in Ryan Day's first season."

PM: "I like Ohio State's chances against either of the teams from the other semifinal, though Oklahoma would certainly be an easier foe to take on than LSU. The Sooners are not on the same level that they have been as of late on offense, and while the defense is improved, it's still far from good enough to keep up with the Buckeyes. Ohio State would blow Oklahoma out in a title fight.

"LSU, however, is quite the interesting matchup. Joe Burrow is the best player in the country, and he happens to excel at the kind of throws that Ohio State really struggles against, as he's made a living this year off passes across the middle and to the intermediate boundaries. Ohio State could game plan for it, but I think LSU's offense could put some serious points on anyone, including Ohio State.

"With that being said, LSU's defense can't hold up against a rushing attack like Ohio State's. It struggled greatly against every run-heavy team the Tigers played this year, and I see no way that J.K. Dobbins would be slowed down in that matchup.

"An Ohio State-LSU title game would be a delight to watch, almost certainly a shootout, and in that case, a Buckeye win. The Tigers can score, but I don't think they could keep up with the Buckeyes' physicality for 60 minutes."

Do you have one bold prediction for Ohio State in the College Football Playoff?

AL: "If Ohio State wins the national championship, it won't be because of Heisman finalists Justin Fields or Chase Young. Instead, it'll be following the same blueprint as the 2015 national title run and relying heavily upon running back J.K. Dobbins.

"Dobbins has shown time and time again that he's a workhorse back, and the lack of second-half carries he's received this season – in addition to the handful of weeks off between the Big Ten championship and Fiesta Bowl – will have him fresh as can be. I fully expect the Buckeyes to lean on him time and time again to the point that he's going to top Eddie George's single-season rushing record against Clemson and then rush for another 200-plus yards in a national championship win over LSU.

"Dobbins has played with a chip on his shoulder all season, and he'll cement his status as the top running back in the country and first-round draft pick over these next two games. And if that happens, we'll be discussing him in the same breath as George, Archie Griffin, Ezekiel Elliott, Keith Byars and Howard 'Hopalong' Cassady as one of the best running backs in school history."

WC: "My bold prediction on the playoff as

a whole is what I said in the previous question: Oklahoma is going to give LSU a real fight, and I think the Sooners have a very real chance of winning that game and heading to the national title game, but if we are talking on something more Ohio State based, let me go really bold.

Ryan Day unleashes Garrett Wilson.

"Here's a stat for you: Wilson had the second-most snaps of any wideout in the Big Ten Championship Game for Ohio State, behind only Chris Olave. This shows the head coach's trust in the first-year wideout, something that will continue moving forward into the team's most important games of the season.

"Wilson is the most talented receiver the Buckeyes have, and he has proven enough to find his way into the offense more and more as the season has progressed. I expect him to get some big numbers in the playoff for Ohio State, and his impact may be the difference maker against Clemson and certainly in a potential shootout against LSU or Oklahoma.

"J.K. Dobbins will certainly be a factor, but I think the teams left, especially Clemson, are going to game plan hard on slowing down the Buckeyes' run game, which will leave opportunities for Justin Fields through the air, which will open up Wilson as a key target that can make some truly remarkable plays."

JD: "First, for a not-so-bold prediction, I'll say the winner of Clemson-Ohio State will be crowned national champion over No. 1 LSU.

"For my super bold prediction, I'll say an Ohio State tight end will make a game-changing play for the Buckeyes. Although the tight end has rarely been used in Ohio State's offense in recent years, I see one of the unsung heroes hauling in a second-half touchdown in a one-possession game in the CFP.

"Rashod Berry, Luke Farrell, Jake Hausmann and Jeremy Ruckert have contribut-

ed just a small fraction of the Buckeyes' receiving production this year, but the group will still be trusted when it matters most.

"Berry showed he could be trusted with a game-saving catch and run against Maryland in 2018, while Farrell and Ruckert showed why they were trusted in the 2019 Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin. Farrell made a big play on a fake punt on fourth-and-9, while Ruckert snagged a one-handed touchdown to get the Buckeyes back in the game.

"Though they rarely see targets in the passing game, Ohio State's tight ends have proven to be reliable when called upon. When the competition is elevated and teams like Clemson and LSU try to take away what the Buckeyes do best, they can turn to their trustworthy tight ends. And as they've shown in their limited opportunities, the Ohio state tight ends will be ready."

PM: "It feels almost unfair to choose this, given the fact that Clemson seems to be the odds-on favorite to win the playoff in some places, but I think that the three-seeded Tigers will knock off two higher-rated seeds on the way to a second straight national title.

"Regardless of a weak schedule and some early-season hiccups, Clemson is just such a balanced, deep, talented team, and it seems to be hitting its stride at the perfect time. Trevor Lawrence has been excellent in the last month, Travis Etienne is great and that young defense is really starting to look like the Clemson defenses of years past.

"I expect the Tigers to slip past Ohio State in the first round in a hotly contested matchup to the very end, but to make this extra bold, I'll say that the semifinal will be the tougher of the two games. Clemson cruises past LSU in the title game for a second drubbing of the best from the SEC in a national title game in as many seasons."



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Buckeyes Win Third Consecutive Big Ten Title

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State played like a champion when it needed to and as a result won its third straight Big Ten title.

The top-ranked Buckeyes were tested like they hadn't been this season, but they scored 27 unanswered points in the second half for a 34-21 victory over No. 8 Wisconsin in the conference championship game before 66,649 fans at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Dec. 7.

Sophomore quarterback Justin Fields threw for three second-half touchdowns – 16 yards to sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert, 16 yards to senior K.J. Hill for a 24-21 lead and again to Hill for a 13-yard reception with 12:09 left in the fourth quarter to make it 31-21.

Junior Blake Haubeil made it 34-21 with 4:39 left on a 24-yard field goal for the Buckeyes (13-0), who have won 19 straight games.

Wisconsin (10-3) raced to a 21-7 halftime lead on two TD runs by QB Jack Coan and a 44-yard run by Jonathan Taylor to open the scoring.

Fields was 19 of 31 for 299 yards. J.K. Dobbins rushed for 172 yards, and Hill had seven catches for 83 yards.

Taylor had 148 rushing yards but only 13 in the second half. The Badgers had 294 yards of total offense in the first half (194 rushing) but were limited to 138 total yards in the second half, including just six on the ground.

Ohio State had 492 yards (320 passing, 172 on the ground).

"Wisconsin, give them credit, they played their tails off in this game," said Ohio State

coach Ryan Day. "But we said at halftime we're going to find out what this team is made of, we're going to find out about the character of our team. They were unbelievable. This team is unbelievable."

How It Happened

The Badgers stunned the Buckeyes' defense by going 83 yards in five plays and 2:03 on the first drive of the game. Taylor, who had 52 yards on 20 carries in the Oct. 26 game between the two teams, raced 44 yards for the 7-0 lead at 12:57.

On the Badgers' first play from scrimmage at their own 17, Coan hit Quintez Cephus for 27 yards to the 44. Taylor rushed for 3 and after an incompleting, Coan scrambled for 9 to the OSU 44, setting up Taylor's jaunt on the next play.

The Buckeyes' first drive ended on downs at the Wisconsin 34 when Fields ran for 11 on a third-and-18 after he was sacked for a 10-yard loss on the previous play. He was then stopped for no gain on fourth-and-7.

After a Wisconsin punt to the 8, the Buckeyes moved to a first down on the Wisconsin 44 with the help of a 34-yard one-handed grab by senior Austin Mack, but after Dobbins converted a fourth-and-1, Fields on third down was sacked for 8 yards, forcing a punt by junior Drue Chrisman that went for a touchback.

The Badgers marched 80 yards on 14 plays in 6:39 for the 14-0 lead at 9:41 of the second quarter.

Wisconsin kept the drive alive on third-and-9 from its 42 when Cephus made a 17-yard catch to the OSU 41. The Badgers extended the series again when Danny Davis gained 5 to



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STUFFED – After allowing Wisconsin running back Jonathan Taylor to rush for 135 yards and one touchdown on 13 carries in the first half, Ohio State limited him to just 13 yards on seven carries after halftime.

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the 30 on fourth-and-4.

Coan later escaped the rush for a 9-yard gain on third-and-9 for another first down to the 20. After Taylor ran for 6, Coan faked a handoff and ran through open field for the 14-yard TD.

On the next possession, the Buckeyes faced a fourth-and-9 from their 26 when Chrisman threw a 21-yard pass to junior tight end Luke Farrell to give OSU a lifeline. Senior Binjimen Victor had a 21-yard reception on the next play, and two plays later, Dobbins ran for 24 to the 8.

The Buckeyes got nothing for their efforts when Isaiahh Loudermilk forced Fields to fumble at the 6 and Matt Henningsen recovered it at the 4.

Ohio State got the ball back late in the second and made it 14-7 with 42 seconds left on a Dobbins 2-yard run. Hill had an 11-yard catch, sophomore receiver Chris Olave had another for 16 and Hill's 27-yard haul put the ball on the 3 where Dobbins scored two plays later at the end of a 71-yard, 10-play, 2:36 drive.

But the Badgers shocked the Buckeyes again by scoring with 10 seconds left on a 1-yard run by Coan. Wisconsin needed only four plays to go 75 yards. Taylor went 45 yards on first down to the OSU 30. He then ran for 5 and Cephus made a brilliant catch of 24 yards to the 1. From there, Coan kept it for the score.

Second-Half Surge

The Buckeyes got the ball to start the second half and promptly went 75 yards in five plays and 1:39 to pull to within one possession at 21-14 on a 16-yard TD pass to Ruckert at the 13: 21 mark. Ruckert made a phenomenal one-handed snare at the back of the end zone.

The big play was a 50-yard strike to Olave on the second play to the Badgers 22. Fields then hit Victor for 6 before the score.

UW had to punt on its next possession, and

punter Anthony Lotti fumbled the snap at the Wisconsin 16 to put the Buckeyes in prime position.

The Buckeyes made it 21-17 with 10:45 left in the third but might have had more if not for a drop by Farrell, causing them to settle for a 27-yard field goal by Haubeil.

OSU gifted the Badgers 30 yards on two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties on Wisconsin's next drive, but the Buckeyes got a break when Zach Hintze missed a 48-yard field-goal try.

The Buckeyes took their first lead, 24-21, with 2:23 left in the third on a seven-play, 69-yard, 3:13 series featuring Hill, who had three grabs for 30 yards, including a 16-yard touchdown. During the drive he became OSU's all-time leader in career catches, surpassing the 191 of David Boston. Hill has 195.

Dobbins had a 17-yard run to the Wisconsin 32, and two plays later a pass interference penalty put the ball on the 16. Fields' throw to Hill went for six points on the next play.

Hill extended the lead to 31-21 with 12:09 to go in the game with a 13-yard TD catch at the end of a nine-play, 65-yard, 3:02 drive. A key play was a 28-yard catch-and-run by Victor to the UW 34 on third-and-18. Dobbins then gained 7 and Olave had a 12-yard catch to the 15. Hill made a catch for 2 then had the score.

Haubeil made it 34-21 with 4:39 left on a 24-yard field goal on a possession that consumed 12 plays, 62 yards and a vital 5:57.

Dobbins had eight carries for 45 yards, freshman Garrett Wilson had an 11-yard catch, and a pass interference set OSU up for first-and-goal from the 2. Dobbins rushed for no gain followed by an incompleteness, a false start penalty and another incomplete pass to end the threat.

The Badgers had a late chance, but on fourth-and-2 from the Buckeyes' 32, junior

Chase Young tackled Taylor for a 6-yard loss with 2:39 left.

UW got the ball one more time, but Coan ran for 7 before being stopped at the OSU 3 by sophomore safety Josh Proctor on the last play of the game.

Numbers

Fields was sacked five times for 34 yards in losses. The Buckeyes had two sacks (fresh-

man defensive end Zach Harrison and senior defensive tackle Jashon Cornell) for 11 yards. ... Senior cornerback Damon Arnette led the Buckeyes with seven tackles, all solo ... Olave had five catches for 94 yards. Cephus had 122 receiving yards on seven catches. ... OSU has won three straight outright Big Ten titles for the first time in history. ... Fields has 40 TD passes to become the first Big Ten player with 40 touchdown passes and 10 running TDs.




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Buckeyes Come Alive In Second Half To Win

Ohio State, even with 12 games under its belt in the 2019 season, faced entirely new challenges the second time around against Wisconsin, challenges that the Buckeyes had not dealt with against any team they had gone up against.

After 15 minutes, new ground was broken when the Badgers took a 7-0 lead into the second quarter, the first team to lead Ohio State after 15 minutes all season.

GAME NOTEBOOK Wyatt Crosher

Fifteen minutes later, and Wisconsin had doubled its lead, going up 21-7 into halftime, the first time the Buckeyes trailed at the half and the largest Ohio State trailed at any point, in any game, throughout its 2019 campaign.

Wisconsin had outgained Ohio State 294-232, and Badgers running back Jonathan Taylor was winning the battle against the Buckeyes' starting back, J.K. Dobbins, outrushing him 135-75, even with two fewer carries.

At the half, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and the rest of the team knew they needed a spark to start the third quarter. But the Buckeyes did not panic, even with the deficit in front of them.

"I think we just had to go back in and re-focus, just do the simple things like tackle, do our assignments," said junior defensive end Chase Young. "Coach Day, he just kept saying, 'Just

keep swinging.' We just kept swinging, kept swinging, kept swinging. We turned it out. It turned out for the best."

The Buckeyes immediately went on a five-play, 75-yard drive to open up the second half that was capped off by a highlight-reel one-handed grab from sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert on a ball that was overthrown by sophomore quarterback Justin Fields.

Fields struggled with his accuracy for much of the game, missing on throws the Georgia transfer has consistently hit throughout the season. Because of this, Fields finished the first half completing only 50 percent of his throws – 7 of 14 – for 127 yards.

"I struggled a little bit in the first half, but I just knew to myself that I was a better player than what I was actually playing," Fields said. "Just kind of going back to my roots, getting confidence back, getting a rhythm. I think that kind of helped me a lot in the second half."

Going back to his roots, getting a rhythm and getting his confidence back showed up in a big way in the second half for Fields. The Ohio State signal caller completed 12 of his 17 attempts in the final 30 minutes for 172 yards and three scores to bring himself to 299 yards through the air on the night.

It wasn't always perfect, including on his overthrow to Ruckert, but Fields continued to avoid turnovers in the second half and finished the game with a 40-to-1 touchdown-to-interception ratio on the season.

Day said Fields, nursing a knee injury, was unable to get as many reps during the week as he would like and that contributed to the slow start from his starting quarterback.

"He didn't get a chance to practice as much as he would have liked to this week," the coach

said. "I think early on it was a combination of our protection and maybe him just being a little rusty, not getting the amount of reps, live reps that he needed during the week. The way that he played today without having a full week of practice is incredible. His heart is like I've never seen before. The way he came out to play today goes to show you that."

Fields received help in the backfield all game from Dobbins, who finished with 33 carries for 172 yards and the one touchdown. After Taylor had his dominant 135-yard first half, the Wisconsin back was held to 13 yards on seven carries in the second half, allowing Dobbins to outgain the Big Ten Running Back of the Year for the second time this year.

"Three weeks in a row now, 172 yards rushing on 33 carries," Day said of Dobbins and his play against Penn State, Michigan and the Badgers. "Wow, he ran hard. The offensive line, that's a good defense, they kept swinging and swinging and swinging. We were going uphill. We knew we weren't going to run Justin in this game. That makes a huge difference. When you can't run your quarterback, we're not reading guys at the line of scrimmage, that changes everything."

"We knew going into the game we weren't going to be able to do that. We knew it was going to be hard, tough sledding. They kept swinging, playing hard. I'm proud of these guys, the way they responded."

Even with the lackluster performance in the final two quarters, Day had nothing but praise for Taylor following the victory.

"Man, what a back," Day said of Taylor. "I've not seen many guys who have the combination that he has of size and change of direction, body control, power. He's a talented

back. It's been great to watch he and J.K. go back and forth here. He ran hard, broke some tackles in the game. Nothing but credit for not only their scheme, the way they're coached, but their talent. He's one of the best backs in – I guess in Big Ten history. He's deserving of all the credit he gets."

Following the Ruckert score and a 27-yard field goal by Blake Haubeil, Fields relied on fifth-year senior wide receiver K.J. Hill for crucial plays in the third and fourth quarter. And, in his final Big Ten championship, Hill delivered, scoring a pair of touchdowns to give Ohio State a lead and then extend it in his first multi-touchdown performance of the season.

"On that drive, we knew we needed to score," Hill said of his first TD catch to make it 24-21 for Ohio State's first lead. "I remember Ben (Victor) making a big third down (on a previous scoring drive) and Chris (Olave) before that. Being a leader, I told them we had to make plays, and I feel like we did that. I give credit to them. Then, we ran a play where I had to wiggle out of it with Justin scrambling and we scored."

"It was a good feeling to score that touchdown and put the team up."

Hill finished with seven catches for a season-high 83 yards and the two scores in a performance that came in a game where he broke the program record for receptions in a collegiate career, a record previously held by David Boston, who had 191.

After being held to just seven points in the first half, Ohio State exploded for 27 points in the final two quarters, but it wasn't just the offense that picked it up.

The defense, after giving up the most points it has allowed in any half this season,



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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Coming out of halftime, Ohio State trailed 21-7 against Wisconsin, the largest deficit the team had faced all season.

From there, the Buckeyes scored 27 unanswered points against the Badgers in the second half, leaving Wisconsin scoreless while sophomore quarterback Justin Fields threw a trio of touchdown passes, one to sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert and the other two to fifth-year senior wide receiver K.J. Hill.

Fields completed 19 of 31 passes for 299 yards and the aforementioned three touchdowns and was helped mightily by junior running back J.K. Dobbins, who finished with 172 rushing yards and a touchdown on the ground.

Defensively, Ohio State allowed just 138 yards in the second half. The success primarily came from the Buckeyes' ability to stop Wisconsin's star running back, junior Jonathan Taylor, who ran for only 13 yards on seven carries in the final two quarters.

Ohio State also earned a boost from its special teams when junior punter Drue Chrisman successfully connected with junior tight end Luke Farrell for a 21-yard gain on fourth-and-9 in the second quarter to give the Buckeyes a fresh set of downs.

What Didn't Work

In order to make an impressive rally, that meant that Ohio State had to have dug itself a hole.

Wisconsin's offense was firing on all cylinders in the first half, scoring triple the amount of points it did the first time these two teams played thanks to 135 yards from Taylor as well as a pair of

rushing scores by quarterback Jack Coan.

The Badgers racked up 294 yards of total offense in the opening half and were averaging 9.2 yards per carry on 21 rushes.

On the other end, the Buckeyes struggled to get the offense clicking as it was against Michigan. Fields completed only half his passes in the opening pair of quarters for 127 yards while also fumbling the ball in the red zone, costing the team at least a field-goal attempt to get on the board early on after the fake punt.

Fields and the offensive line also struggled early, with the Buckeyes allowing three sacks in the opening half to the stingy Badgers defense.

Play Of The Game

To open the third quarter, Ohio State went on a five-play, 75-yard drive to cut the deficit to 21-14, and the drive was capped off by the highlight play of the night.

As Fields dropped back in the pocket, Ruckert flew past the defender covering him and found himself wide open in the end zone for what should have been an easy six points.

Instead, Fields overthrew the sophomore tight end, seemingly costing the team the easy touchdown. But Ruckert somehow managed to haul in the overthrown ball with one hand extended out and got a foot inbounds to secure the touchdown and bring the Buckeyes to within one score.

From there, Ohio State would score 20 more points to come back and seal the win, but it all started on the highlight snag by Ruckert in the end zone.

– Wyatt Crosher

shut out Wisconsin in the second half, allowing only 138 yards total.

"After we made our corrections, what we tried to do is get three-and-outs. I feel like we for the most part succeeded," Young said. "I feel like when plays had to be made, they were made. I feel like really that's the only thing you can ask, when a play has to be made, we make it, get off the field for the offense. I think that's the best thing we can do."

The first half was one that Ohio State had not had yet this season, but once it looked like the Buckeyes could lose their first game of the season, they turned into the team they had been all season, scoring 27 unanswered for the 34-21 win and the Big Ten title for the third straight season.

"We knew that we didn't play our best half of football, so we regrouped at halftime and came out with energy and got back to our normal ways of playing," Dobbins said. "We were very positive. We knew they gave us their best shot and we knew that we had a bad half, so we just encouraged each other that we knew what to do."

"We have to play all four quarters. We got back to our ways of playing football. We didn't do anything different. We just executed better."

For Day, this was only his second win as a head coach that has come after trailing at the half. The other was in his third game at the helm in 2018, when the Buckeyes overcame a 14-13 deficit against TCU to win 40-28 when Day was acting as interim head coach.

He said this win, his 13th of the year and 16th as head coach, is at the top of his list.

"The way that we came off of these last two games, they were both emotional wins. Three back-to-back wins like this, it shows you what this team is made of," Day said. "To go down the way we did, come back and play in the second half, I think you've seen our talent, our execution, a lot of things. But today showed our team's heart. I think that's what makes this the best win of the year."

Ohio State Goes For Trickery To Spark Team

In the second quarter with Ohio State down 14-0 and 8:05 left in the half, the Buckeyes sent out the punting unit on fourth-and-9 from the Ohio State 26-yard line. But instead of going for the punt, Day and special teams coordinator Matt Barnes decided to get tricky in an attempt to gain some momentum.

"I felt like we needed a spark at that moment,"

Day said. "Something that Matt Barnes had recognized that we thought we had a shot at."

The spark came in the form of a fake punt that had junior punter Drue Chrisman drop back for a pass, with the target being junior tight end Luke Farrell.

Chrisman, who played quarterback in high school, connected with Farrell for a gain of 21 yards and a first down.

"I was more surprised than anything else that we actually called it," Chrisman said. "We have a fake about every week going into the opponent, and I was even joking with Luke leading up to it. I was like, 'Hey, we got that fake this week, it's going to work,' kind of snickering because we always have a fake, and we end up never running it."

"Obviously we ran it, and I felt like it was a big momentum shift in that first half."

Chrisman said it was the first time he had thrown a pass in a live game in about five years.

"I was a quarterback in high school, bringing

out the old cannon a little bit, and it was good to know that I've still got it," Chrisman said. "This was one we'd learned from playing them earlier in the year, so we knew it would work."

The trick play ended up not mattering much after a fumble by Fields stopped the drive, but Day was confident in his punter's arm, even with the fake happening so deep in

Ohio State territory.

"We practiced it during the week. Drue actually throws a pretty good ball," Day said. "We always want to be aggressive. We felt like we had it. We felt like we needed it at that point. Kind of had to get a spark going. I thought that gave us a little juice there in the first half when we needed it."



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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 34, Wisconsin 21

Ohio State sophomore quarterback Justin Fields on if Ohio State deserves to be No. 1 in the College Football Playoff rankings: "Really just looking at it, knowing the guys on our team, I feel like a lot of guys just have heart. Of course, outsiders can't really see that. In my heart, I think we should be No. 1. I hope we are."

Ohio State junior running back J.K. Dobbins on if the Buckeyes deserve the No. 1 spot in the playoff rankings: "Yes. It would be cool to be No. 1 and I think we've earned it. We played some tough teams these past few weeks, and we are a complete team."

Ohio State junior defensive end Chase Young on if the Scarlet and Gray deserve to be No. 1: "Definitely. I think we're No. 1, point-blank, period. I mean, I just feel like a team like this, that hit a lot of adversity, has been tested many times, times like today. To see us come back and not just come back but we came back and we dominated. I feel like a team that can flip the switch like that is a No. 1-worthy team."

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on if the Buckeyes deserve to be No. 1: "Yes, I think when you look at our résumé, what we've done, beating Wisconsin when they're a top-10 team twice in one year, and then again this three-game stretch was unlike I think any team has had in the country. The committee does a great job of ranking these teams. These are top-15 teams, top-10 teams that we played three weeks in a row. If there's anything else that shows what this team is made of, you saw it here today. The fact that we went down and played the way we did in the first half, but then to come back and play the way we did in the second half not only shows you our talent but shows you the heart of this team. Again, if there's a better team out there, I'd like to see them."

Day on the message to his team with a matchup with likely either Clemson or Oklahoma looming: "I told the guys to enjoy this right now. We finished the race. It was tough at the end. It was like neck-and-neck. We finally finished this race. They need to enjoy it. Tomorrow we'll come up for air, figure out where we are in all this. But we need to enjoy this. This was a long road. These last three weeks were hard, tough, emotional. I think our team is blown out right now. They need a little break, get away from this thing, take a deep breath. That took everything we had to win that game."

Day on when it occurred to him that he may have a national championship-caliber team: "That's a great question. I think after the first Wisconsin game, you hoped that maybe we have a shot at this thing. Then as we go, we play Penn State, kind of work your way through it. Then last week, as we started to pull away in the rivalry game, you start to think you might have a shot at this thing. Now that we've won

this game here, I mean, we're two games away. It's real now. We deserve to be in it. I think we've done an unbelievable job of staying in the moment, not getting too far ahead of ourselves. But now it's real. We're in it now. I'd say after this game, now is when you can at least say, 'Hey, we've got a chance on this thing.' "

Day on how it felt to raise the Big Ten championship trophy: "It felt great for our coaching staff. It felt great for the leaders, this team, who we've been through a lot together. I'm just proud of them. There were so many expectations put on us this season going into the season. Our ability to stay locked in week in, week out, play together as a team, and then for the first real time face adversity, we're losing in a game. Because that was the big question mark in my mind. What were we going to do down two scores at halftime? We don't know. The way we responded in that third quarter was unbelievable. You could feel the electricity in the stadium. We imposed our will. I think that goes to show you how special this team is. Again, after these three weeks, three emotional wins. To get this championship, it was a just a great feeling."

Fields on if the Buckeyes needed to be tested like they were against Wisconsin: "I just think the team knew we already had it in us. I'm just glad the world got to see what this team was made of. I'm glad it happened."

Ohio State fifth-year senior H-back K.J. Hill on being down at the half: "I feel like we need that. It was motivation. It brought the energy back. We're in the Big Ten championship and we didn't come this far to go out like that. The older guys led the team and let everyone know that wasn't going to happen."

Young on the Buckeyes' locker room at halftime down 21-7: "Halftime we went back in the locker room, and I just said there wasn't no need for any yelling. It was the simple things that we just weren't doing, like tackling, doing our jobs. I feel like the second half we made those corrections, and you see what happened. We didn't give up any points."

Hill on the Buckeyes' energy in the second half: "I could feel the energy pick up in the second half. The first half we got punched in the mouth. We had our backs against the wall. Our captain, C.J. Saunders, said that we were going to swing out of this hole that we were in and if you're not swinging, then you need to stay in the locker room. Everybody came out swinging as hard as they can. That's why he's a captain right there."

Young on if he had seen junior punter Drue Chrisman's fake punt in practice and how it impacted the game: "Maybe once. I'm trying to think. Maybe. I don't remember. When he threw it, everybody was confused: Whoa, what happened? He floated it out there. It was a pretty pass. It definitely got us excited.

Definitely got the crowd excited. I feel like that just continued our momentum throughout the game."

Dobbins on winning the Big Ten title and looking ahead to the College Football Playoff: "This is what we've been working for all season long, and we were counted out at the beginning so now we have a chance to prove everyone wrong."

Dobbins on if this was the team's best possible performance: "No. We're not even close. We haven't had that yet."

Wisconsin junior center Tyler Biadasz on what Ohio State did differently in the second half: "They played well, no doubt. They're a good team, but we didn't convert on some stuff and I got a penalty and we gave up some yards where we could have seized some opportunities. We just didn't seize our opportunities when we needed to. They did a decent job coming off the ball and gave us some hard looks we didn't see in the first half. We didn't play our best ball in the second half."

Biadasz on the frustration of the second half: "It sucks. You know, you want to score but sometimes it's not that simple. That's just the game. It does suck when you can't score, can't get a drive moving, can't get them on their toes. Three-and-outs are hard to overcome, and that's on us as an offense, too. We were putting our defense back out there and putting ourselves in punting situations. It can always be prevented, but we have to play better, gain yards for a first down, and we were struggling with that the second half."

Wisconsin junior running back Jonathan Taylor on playing Ohio State again: "I definitely did think we played better than the first time we played those guys. We hit them on all cylinders, making sure that we were spreading the field out, creating those one-on-one matchups and winning our fair share of them. And I think we didn't do a good job of that the first time we played those guys."

Wisconsin head coach Paul Chryst on the momentum shifting from the first half to a snowball effect in the third quarter: "That's the game of football. What is momentum? It's making plays, right? They did a good job in their opening drive of the second half, and I'm pretty sure on that one we had them. They had a big play and had some opportunities. It's a good football team. And I mean football is always a game of momentum and how do you get momentum back? It's executing and they executed better than we did on enough plays to make the difference."

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 34, Wisconsin 21

Dec. 7, 2019 – Lucas Oil Stadium, Indianapolis, IN.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
WISCONSIN (10-3, 7-3)	7	14	0	0	21
OHIO STATE (13-0, 10-0)	0	7	17	10	34

First Quarter

UW – Taylor, 44 yard rush (Hintze kick), 12:57; 5 plays, 83 yards, 2:03 TOP.

Second Quarter

UW – Coan, 14 yard rush (Hintze kick), 9:41; 14 plays, 80 yards, 6:39 TOP.

OSU – Dobbins, 2 yard run (Haubeil kick), 0:42; 10 plays, 71 yards, 2:36 TOP.

UW – Coan, 1 yard rush (Hintze kick), 0:10; 4 plays, 75 yards, 0:32 TOP.

Third Quarter

OSU – Ruckert, 16 yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 13:21; 5 plays, 75 yards, 1:39 TOP.

OSU – Haubeil, 27 yard field goal, 10:45; 4 plays, 6 yards, 1:11 TOP.

OSU – Hill, 16 yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 2:23; 7 plays, 69 yards, 3:13 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Hill, 13 yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 12:09; 9 plays, 65 yards, 3:02 TOP.

OSU – Haubeil, 24 yard field goal, 4:39; 12 plays, 62 yards, 5:57 TOP.

Att. – 66,649

Weather – Indoors.

Team Statistics

	UW	OSU
First Downs	23	28
Rushing	10	10
Passing	10	16
Penalty	3	2
Rushes-Yards	37-200	46-172
Passing Yards	232	320
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	17-34-0	20-32-0
Offensive Plays	71	78
Total Net Yards	432	492
Third Down Efficiency	7-15	6-14
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-3	2-3
Punts-Avg.	4-40.2	2-43.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-1
Penalties	4-41	4-40
Time of Possession	28:14	31:46

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **UW**: Taylor 20-148; Coan 8-27; Cruickshank 1-17; Davis 1-5; Pryor 2-5; Groshek 4-2; Lotti 1-(-4). **OSU**: Dobbins 33-172; Fields 12-34; Team 1-(-1).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **UW**: Coan 17-33-0-232-0; TEAM 0-1-0-0-0. **OSU**: Fields 19-31-0-299-3; Chrisman 1-1-0-21-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **UW**: Cephus 7-122; Davis 3-38; Ferguson 2-33; Pryor 2-22; Taylor 2-8; Groshek 1-9. **OSU**: Hill 7-83; Olave 5-94; Victor 3-55; Wilson 2-17; Mack 1-34; Farrell 1-21; Ruckert 1-16.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – **UW**: Lotti 4-40.2-44. **OSU**: Chrisman 2-43.0-44.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: None. **OSU**: Wilson 1-1.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: Cruickshank 2-28. **OSU**: None.

MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.) – **UW**: Hintze (48). **OSU**: None.

FORCED FUMBLES – **UW**: Loudermilk. **OSU**: None.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: Henningsen 1-0. **OSU**: None.

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: None. **OSU**: None.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: Benton 1.0-10; Loudermilk 1.0-8; Henningsen 1.0-8; Baun 1.0-7; Sanborn 1.0-1. **OSU**: Cornell 1.0-9; Z. Harrison 1.0-2.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – **UW**: Benton 1.0-10; Loudermilk 1.0-8; Henningsen 1.0-8; Baun 1.0-7; Sanborn 1.0-1. **OSU**: Young 1.5-7; Cornell 1.0-9; Brown 1.0-4; Wade 1.0-3; Harrison 1.0-2; Togiaj 1.0-2; Smith 1.0-1; Hamilton 0.5-0.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **UW**: Sanborn 6-3-9; Baun 6-3-9; Pearson 4-5-9; Hicks 4-2-6; Burrell 4-1-5; Loudermilk 3-2-5; Chenal 3-1-4; Williams 3-0-3; Wildgoose 2-1-3; Burton 2-1-3; Rand 1-2-3; Wilder 1-1-2; Bell 1-1-2; Maskalunas 1-1-2; Benton 1-0-1; Johnson 1-0-1; Krumholz 1-0-1; Henningsen 1-0-1; Currens 1-0-1; Burks 0-1-1; Orr 0-1-1; Melvin 0-1-1; Cone 0-1-1. **OSU**: Arnette 7-0-7; M. Harrison 4-2-6; Young 4-2-6; Borland 2-4-6; Werner 4-1-5; Okudah 4-0-4; Fuller 2-2-4; Z. Harrison 2-2-4; Cornell 2-1-3; Brown 2-1-3; Hamilton 0-3-3; Wade 2-0-2; Browning 2-0-2; Smith 1-1-2; Williams 1-0-1; Proctor 1-0-1; Hilliard 1-0-1; Togiaj 1-0-1; Landers 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – **UW**: Offense, Van Lanen, Lyles, Biadasz, Erdmann, Bruss, Ferguson, Sampson, Pryor, Coan, Taylor, Cephus. Defense, Loudermilk, Melvin, Rand, Baun, Orr, Sanborn, Burks, Williams, Hicks, Burrell, Pearson. Reserves, Burton, Cruickshank, Wildgoose, Davis, Currens, Smith, Watson, Lotti, Dunn, Wilder, Guendo, Krumholz, Volpentesta, Mais, Cone, Stokke, Groshek, Hintze, Franklin, J. Chenal, L. Chenal, Bell, bay, Maskalunas, Johnson, Beach, Roberge, Moorman, Vopal, Seltzner, Furtney, Allen, Henningsen, Dietzen, Benton, Goetz, Mullens. **OSU**: Offense, Fields, Dobbins, Victor, Olave, Hill, Farrell, Munford, Jackson, Myers, Davis, Bowen. Defense, Young, Hamilton, Cornell, Friday, Werner, Borland, M. Harrison, Hilliard, Arnette, Okudah, Fuller. Reserves, Harris, Berry, Mack, McCall, McCullough, Browning, Wilson, Williams, Mitchell, Jean-Baptiste, Riep, Smith, Banks, Gant, Williamson, Wint, Wade, Brown, Hooker, Z. Harrison, Rossi, Pope, Proctor, Kacherski, Jackson, Landers, Togiaj, Petit-Frere, Ruckert, Chrisman, Garrett, Haubeil.

Season Statistics

2019-20 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 31	(5)FLORIDA ATLANTIC	45-21	103,228
Sept. 7	(5)CINCINNATI	42-0	104,089
Sept. 14	(6)at Indiana	51-10	47,945
Sept. 21	(6)MIAMI (OHIO)	76-5	103,190
Sept. 28	(5)at Nebraska	48-7	89,379
Oct. 5	(4)MICHIGAN STATE (25)	34-10	104,797
Oct. 18	(4)at Northwestern	52-3	47,330
Oct. 26	(3)WISCONSIN (13)	38-7	102,998
Nov. 9	(3)MARYLAND	73-14	101,022
Nov. 16	(2)at Rutgers	56-21	33,528
Nov. 23	(2)PENN STATE (8)	28-17	104,355
Nov. 30	(2)at Michigan (10)	56-27	112,071
Dec. 7	(2) WISCONSIN (10)	34-21	66,649

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

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	369	196
Rushing	183	92
Passing	156	79
Penalty	30	25
Average Per Game/Rush	272.2	99.5
Average Per Game/Pass	258.8	148.1
Total Offense	6903	3219
Total Plays	984	819
Average Per Game	531.0	247.6
Average Per Play	7.0	3.9
Penalties-Yards	73-693	70-618
Fumbles-Lost	21-13	20-10
Third Down Efficiency	94-165	55-192
Percentage	57%	29%
Fourth Down Efficiency	7-12	7-20
Percentage	58%	35%
Sacks-Yards	51-329	31-195
Time Of Possession Avg.	31:39	27:57

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	136	231	142	124	0	633	48.7
Opponents	38	37	51	37	0	163	12.5

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
J.K. Dobbins	283	1829	6.5	20	68
Master Teague	128	780	6.1	4	73
Justin Fields	123	471	3.8	10	51
Marcus Crowley	25	237	9.5	1	53
Steele Chambers	19	135	7.1	1	15
Demario McCall	18	122	6.8	2	32
Amari McMahon	1	10	10.0	0	10
Chris Olave	2	5	2.5	0	4
K.J. Hill	1	1	1.0	0	1
Gunnar Hoak	4	-6	-1.5	0	3
Chris Chugunov	4	-10	-2.5	0	0
TEAM	16	-35	-2.2	0	0
OSU Totals	624	3539	5.7	38	73
OPP Totals	459	1294	2.8	12	56

Passing Comp. Att. Pct. Yds. TD-INT Effic.

Justin Fields	208	308	67.5	2953	40-1	190.3
Chris Chugunov	26	43	60.5	286	6-0	162.4
Gunnar Hoak	6	6	100.0	104	1-0	300.6
TEAM	0	2	0	0	0-0	0
Drue Chrisman	1	1	100.0	21	0-0	276.4
OSU Totals	241	360	66.9	3364	47-1	187.9
OPP Totals	182	360	50.6	1925	7-15	93.6

Receiving Rec. Net Avg. TD Long

K.J. Hill	51	569	11.2	10	53
Chris Olave	46	799	17.4	11	58
Binjimen Victor	32	535	16.7	6	60
Garrett Wilson	26	385	14.8	5	47
Austin Mack	21	307	14.6	3	38
J.K. Dobbins	17	200	11.8	2	28
Jeremy Ruckert	13	136	10.5	4	25
Jameson Williams	6	112	18.7	1	61
Luke Farrell	6	108	18.0	2	22
Jaalen Gill	6	51	8.5	1	32
Master Teague	4	60	15.0	0	28
Demario McCall	4	28	7.0	0	11
Rashod Berry	2	20	10.0	0	16
Jake Hausmann	2	13	6.5	1	9
Sam Wiglusz	1	11	11.0	0	11
Elijah Gardiner	1	10	10.0	0	10
Mitch Rossi	1	8	8.0	0	8
Marcus Crowley	1	7	7.0	1	7
Jaylen Harris	1	5	5.0	0	5
OSU Totals	241	3364	14.0	47	61
OPP Totals	182	1925	10.6	7	49

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
J.K. Dobbins	22	-	-	-	-	132
Blake Haubeil	-	83-83	-	-	-10-12	113
Chris Olave	11	-	-	-	-	68
Justin Fields	10	-	-	-	-	60
K.J. Hill	10	-	-	-	-	60
Binjimen Victor	6	-	-	-	-	36
Garrett Wilson	5	-	-	-	-	30
Master Teague	4	-	-	-	-	24
Jeremy Ruckert	4	-	-	-	-	24
Austin Mack	3	-	-	-	-	18
Demario McCall	2	-	-	-	-	12
Luke Farrell	2	-	-	-	-	12
Marcus Crowley	2	-	-	-	-	12
Damon Arnette	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jameson Williams	1	-	-	-	-	6
Steele Chambers	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jake Hausmann	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jaalen Gill	1	-	-	-	-	6
D. DiMaccio	0	2-3	-	-	-	2
OSU Totals	86	85-86	-	-	10-12	633
OPP Totals	19	16-17	1-1	1-1	9-12	163

FG Distance 0-29 30-39 40-49 50+ Total

Blake Haubeil	4-4	2-4	3-3	1-1	10-12
OSU Totals	4-4	2-4	3-3	1-1	10-12
OPP Totals	5-6	2-3	2-3	0-0	9-12

Punting No. Yds. Avg. Bk Long

Drue Chrisman	40	1765	44.1	0	61
TEAM	1	13	13.0	1	13
OSU Totals	41	1778	43.4	1	61
OPP Totals	95	3845	40.5	2	70

Interceptions No. Yds. Avg. TD Long

Jeff Okudah	3	0	0.0	0	0
Jordan Fuller	2	26	13.0	0	26
Amir Riep	2	11	8.0	0	16
K'Vaughan Pope	2	4	2.0	0	3
Damon Arnette	1	96	96.0	1	96
Tuf Borland	1	42	42.0	0	42
Josh Proctor	1	0	0.0	0	0
Sevyn Banks	1	0	0.0	0	0
Shaun Wade	1	0	0.0	0	0
Justin Hilliard	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	15	184	12.3	1	96
OPP Totals	1	34	34.0	0	34

Punt Returns No. Yds. Avg. TD Long

Garrett Wilson	12	83	6.9	0	52
Demario McCall	8	65	8.1	0	35
K.J. Hill	5	38	7.6	0	16
Chris Olave	1	18	18.0	0	18
Sevyn Banks	1				

Dobbins Bounces Back During Junior Season

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Not many running backs would consider 1,053 rushing yards and 10 touchdowns a disappointing season, but most running backs are not Ohio State's J.K. Dobbins.

The Buckeyes went 13-1 and won the Rose Bowl, but Dobbins was left unsatisfied after averaging just 4.6 yards per carry following a phenomenal freshman campaign when he totaled 1,403 yards and averaged 7.2 yards per carry.

"Last year, J.K. and I were like, 'That was not good,' junior left tackle Thayer Munford told Buckeye Sports Bulletin after Ohio State's Big Ten championship win on Dec. 7. "And me, coming back as the only offensive lineman who actually started all year last year – we were like, 'We've got to fix that (stuff).'

"We've got fifth-year and third-year guys that know the offense. We were like, 'We've got to get J.K. the year that he wants, so he won't be disappointed again.' Everybody took it on their backs, like, 'Look, we have to make J.K. look good. We have to make everybody else look good as well.' That's why we're here now, undefeated."

With Ohio State entering the College Football Playoff as 13-0 Big Ten champs, Dobbins is just 99 rushing yards shy of Eddie George's single-season program record. The junior co-captain from La Grange, Texas, is on the brink of a historic season, and it started with the talented

tailback holding himself accountable.

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

Dobbins didn't blame the fact that the Buckeyes attempted a program-record 561 passes in 2018 or the fact that he split carries with Mike Weber. Instead, he shouldered the blame, pointing to the fact that he was trying to hit home runs and gained only three to four yards when he could have had seven or eight.

"Of course, I loved having Mike here, it kept me fresher," Dobbins said in March. "But I think playing more, being on the field more, you get into a groove, so it'll be great."

In the offseason, Dobbins trimmed down his body-fat percentage and improved his conditioning in hopes for an increased workload. In Weber's absence, Dobbins became a bell-cow back for the Buckeyes and his production soared with the extra touches.

Through 13 games, Dobbins ranked third in the country with 1,829 rushing yards, and his 22 total touchdowns ranked fifth nationally. Even though the junior tailback has received more carries, he has still done more with his touches, averaging nearly two more yards per rush (6.5 average) than he did as a sophomore.

"There are so many things that make us want to block for him," third-year sophomore center Josh Myers said of



ANDREW LIND

FINISHING STRONG – J.K. Dobbins (2) rushed for 172 yards and one touchdown in the Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin, following a 260-yard, four-touchdown overall performance at Michigan.

Dobbins. "He is the best running back in the country. Seeing everything he went through to put together this kind of a season has just been so fun to watch and so special. Everyone sees him score touchdowns, no one sees him eating food that he hates to eat, working out extremely hard. No one sees any of that, but we do,

and we just respect it so much."

Beyond his work ethic, Myers admires the physical nature with which Dobbins carries the rock, often barreling through the second level like a bowling ball.

"The way he runs the ball," Myers continued. "It doesn't matter who we're playing, it doesn't matter who is coming



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to make the tackle, it doesn't matter if the hole is huge or if the hole is small, he's running through it as hard as he possibly can. And as an offensive line, that's all we can ask for."

Myers and the entire Ohio State offensive line agree that Dobbins is the best back in the nation, but when the Doak Walker Award was given out, voters did not confirm that belief.

For the second year in a row, Wisconsin's Jonathan Taylor won the honor given to the best running back in the country, but that does not stop Dobbins from thinking he's the nation's best.

"I can do it all," Dobbins said. "If you go check the numbers against the best rush defenses, I mean - but hey, that's not my decision."

Ohio State played nine of its 13 games against top-50 rush defenses, and Dobbins averaged 157.9 rushing yards in those contests. He was even better in the five games against top-25 rush defenses, averaging 175.0 yards.

"I'm not speaking for J.K., you have

to ask him, but I know if it was me, I'd ask, 'What else do I need to do?' " head coach Ryan Day said after Dobbins didn't receive Big Ten Running Back of the Year. "He deserves to be considered the best running back in the country. That hasn't really necessarily been the case. I know that bothers him. I know he runs with a chip on his shoulder because of that. You have to ask him how he feels. I know it bothers me. He still has more opportunities to prove himself here."

Day said that about Dobbins prior to the Buckeyes' 34-21 win in the Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin, where the co-captain led the comeback effort.

Dobbins finished with 172 rushing yards and one touchdown on 33 carries against a defense that allowed an average of only 81.4 rushing yards against teams not named Ohio State.

Always quick to credit the big men in front of him, Dobbins knows his offensive line deserves credit for his historic season.

"They're very important. They're

blocking so well," Dobbins said of his O-line. "I appreciate them for it. They are very aggressive. They block for me, and I run for them."

Munford, who battled through injuries earlier in the season, said he and his fellow linemen are happy to give extra effort when blocking for Dobbins because he's giving it his all, too.

"Just his love for the game, his love for his teammates. That's all it is," Munford said of Dobbins. "He keeps saying 'the brotherhood,' and that is actually real."

Dobbins' success has not come by accident. True freshman Steele Chambers is a fellow running back with a firsthand perspective of Dobbins' work behind the scenes.

"The guy's a warrior," Chambers said of Dobbins. "Just watching him play every single down, how he fights, how he prepares, how he does everything. It's just amazing being able to sit back and watch that. He's always watching film. Always taking care of his body. He works harder, he prepares better than anyone on the team."

Day, who has called the plays in each of Dobbins' first three seasons, has noticed a difference in the 5-10, 217-pound back this year.

"He's run with an edge. He's run with a chip on his shoulder all season," Day said of Dobbins. "He's been running harder. Those 4-yard runs are becoming five and six. Then the big plays take care of themselves."

A more consistent approach for the hardworking Dobbins has allowed him to hit on bigger runs this season. He is tied for the lead among running backs nationally with 18 rushes of 20 or more yards after recording just four such runs a year ago.

In the Buckeyes' biggest games against their toughest opponents, Dobbins has risen to the occasion.

"We have a saying that Coach (Urban) Meyer started, and we still carry it on: 'When I need you the most, I need you to give me your very best,'" Myers told BSB. "And that's kind of the epitome of what J.K. is - the bigger the game, the bigger he plays."

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Hill Has The Most Catches In School History

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

He's rarely been the flashiest player in the offense – see his one-handed catch against Minnesota as the exception, not the norm – but K.J. Hill has been as consistent as any receiver Ohio State has seen, and that consistency officially came to fruition in the Big Ten Championship Game.

Against Wisconsin, Hill brought in a team-high seven catches for 83 yards and two key second-half touchdowns, one of which gave the Buckeyes a 24-21 lead that they would not give up the rest of the way.

The fourth of those seven receptions – a 10-yard catch on a 3rd-and-7 in the third quarter – was not the most important catch of his career, or the game, or even the quarter, but it was the one that put Hill in the Ohio State history books permanently. The reception gave Hill his 48th catch of the season but, more importantly, the 192nd catch of his collegiate career, which passed David Boston for the most catches in Ohio State history.

For Hill, it was a bit of relief to finally have the record after a season with many wondering if or when he would reach it.

"It feels great," Hill said. "You all always remind me of how many catches I need, so I knew during the game I had broken it, but I couldn't really think about it because we were behind, so I was trying to do anything I could to help this team win. That's the best way I could go out

– with the Big Ten championship, in the championship game breaking the record."

While the record was a major accomplishment for the senior, his ability to score the pair of crucial touchdowns was just as important for him, as they gave him his third straight Big Ten title.

"It feels good. I get asked this every week, and now I've finally got it. I feel blessed and just want to thank God and my teammates for making it possible," Hill said. "I worked hard for it, and I'm trying to make a legacy here. I came back to school to do that.

"I scored two times in the Big Ten championship. We were down and had to come back, and I wanted to lead the team to a championship. I know how it feels to stand on the podium with confetti falling, and I wanted to do it again my senior year."

Hill leads the team with 51 catches and has 569 yards with 10 touchdowns on the season. While the double-digit scores are an area of improvement, Hill's numbers are down from his campaign in 2018, when he finished with 70 catches for 885 yards and six touchdowns.

Instead of reaching those heights, Hill's numbers in his final season with Ohio State are more comparable to his sophomore year, when he caught 56 passes for 549 yards and three touchdowns.

That drop in production is something Hill said was hard to deal with, but eventually, he knew that if it was what the team needed, then he would have to be



ANDREW LIND

STILL NOT DONE – Ohio State fifth-year senior wide receiver K.J. Hill can tie Gary Williams' school record of 48 games with a catch in the Fiesta Bowl against Clemson.

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"It was kind of hard, because I came back, I had some high expectations with what I did last year and what I was going to do this year being the only guy, not having to share with Parris Campbell, but I just had to, I guess, set that aside," Hill said before the Wisconsin matchup. "We're 12-0, we're going to play for a Big Ten championship, and if we win that we're going to play for it all, so I guess I have to put that aside and do what's best for the team."

Hill named Campbell as one of the leaders who helped show him the way at Ohio State, along with the other fifth-year senior receivers in the 2018 class in Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin, as well as current New Orleans Saints standout Michael Thomas.

But now Hill has accomplished what none of those players, or what no player to ever put on an Ohio State uniform, have ever done.

"My name being in that category just feels great," Hill said. "I never would have thought it, but I just thank God. I've been blessed."

After a down year statistically for Hill – a year that started with him thinking he would not reach the record because of the change in the offense from Dwayne Haskins' pass-first mentality to Justin Fields' dual-threat ability – he managed to have his best statistical performance of the season in the most important game of the year against the Badgers, something that will certainly help build his legacy.

"I'm trying to make a legacy here," Hill said. "I came back to school to do that. So I hope I did that."

He still has opportunities to build on that legacy even more, with a rematch against Clemson – a team against which he had a reception for 8 yards as a red-shirt freshman – that, with a catch, would tie him for No. 1 with Gary Williams for the most consecutive games with a reception in program history.

If the Buckeyes defeat the Tigers, Hill could have an opportunity to break the record with a catch in a 49th straight game. But more records or not, more big games or not, Hill has cemented

his place in the history books, and his crucial performance against Wisconsin proved what has made him so valuable over his Ohio State career.

The Rest Of The Record Chasers

Junior running back J.K. Dobbins rushed 33 times for 172 yards and a touchdown in the game against Wisconsin.

With 1,829 rushing yards on the season, Dobbins passed Archie Griffin (1,695), Keith Byars (1,764) and Ezekiel Elliot's 2015 season (1,821) to move to No. 3 on the single-season rushing yards list. Dobbins is now 50 yards from passing Elliot's 2014 campaign and 99 yards from passing Eddie George for the most yards on the ground in one season in Ohio State history.

The third-year back notched his 42nd career touchdown in the game, which placed him one score behind J.T. Barrett for fifth place in school history. Pete Johnson holds the program record with 58 total touchdowns.

Dobbins also now has 4,285 rushing yards in his Ohio State career, firmly placing him at No. 2 all time. He still trails Griffin (5,589) by more than 1,000 yards.

Fields' three passing touchdowns gave him 40 passing touchdowns on the season which, when matched with his 10 rushing scores, makes him the only player in Big Ten history to throw for 40 touchdowns and run for 10 in the same season.

The 50 total touchdowns also moved Fields to within five of passing a record that was set last season, when Dwayne Haskins tallied 54 (50 pass, four rush) total touchdowns in 2018.

The 40 touchdown passes in a single season is also ranked No. 2 only to Haskins. With 299 passing yards against the Badgers, Fields has 2,953 passing yards on the year, which is No. 5 in program history for one season, trailing Barrett (3,053), Bobby Hoying (3,269), Joe Germaine (3,330) and Haskins (4,831).

The 190.28 passer efficiency rating Fields currently holds would be the best in Ohio State history, while the 67.5 completion percentage would trail only Haskins' 70.0 percent rate last season.

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Williams Remains Humble As Hill Closes In

By MARK REA
BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

As his Ohio State football career comes to a close, fifth-year senior receiver K.J. Hill has continued his assault on some of the most long-standing program records on the books.

Hill, after making seven catches against Wisconsin during the Big Ten Championship Game, passed the OSU career record total of 191 receptions held by David Boston since 1998 and also became only the sixth Ohio State player to catch at least 20 scoring passes during his career. Additionally, Hill still has an outside shot at reaching 2,500 career receiving yards, a plateau accomplished by only five other Buckeyes in history.

But the longest-standing record Hill is chasing involves a mark that has endured for more than 3½ decades.

Gary Williams recorded at least one reception in each of the 48 games in which he played in scarlet and gray, and that consecutive-game streak has stood as a school record since Williams played his final game in the 1982 Holiday Bowl.

Hill was set to go into the Dec. 28 College Football Playoff semifinal game against Clemson having caught at least one pass in 47 consecutive games, meaning the Buckeyes will have to advance to the College Football Playoff championship game for the OSU senior co-captain to have a chance to eclipse Williams' record.

"I never really thought much about it at all when I was playing," Williams told BSB about his consecutive-game streak record. "You know, you just go out and try to do the best you can for your team and your teammates, and the individual stuff has a way of taking care of itself."

Williams remains one of the most unsung players of his era since he was on Ohio State teams that included the likes of Art Schlichter, Doug Donley and Marcus Marek. But while he didn't possess the brashness of Schlichter, the flashiness of Donley or the hard-nosed, lunch-pail mentality of Marek, there is no doubt that Williams brought a tremendous amount of athleticism to the field.

"Gary was one of the most gifted athletes I have ever coached," former OSU head coach Earle Bruce told BSB in 2017. "He had great hands, ran like a deer and caught nearly every ball that was thrown to him."

"And he was tough. Boy, was he ever tough. There were a lot of times when he played hurt, but he never said anything about it. Just went out and got the job done. Any coach would like to have one or two players like Gary Williams on his team every year."

A three-sport star at Wilmington (Ohio) High School, Williams was blessed with a physique straight out of a bodybuilding magazine even though he reportedly never touched a weight until he arrived on the Ohio State campus. He won all-conference and all-district honors in basketball and competed at the state track meet, and his football team was the only one ever to hand Schlichter a loss during the quarterback's high school career.

But when the sinewy 6-2, 212-pounder with 4.5 speed got to Ohio State, head coach Woody Hayes didn't know exactly what to do with him. Williams had played quarterback, running back, flanker and safety in high school and even handled his team's placekicking duties, and he was equally adept at each of those positions.

Not that he was going to make an immediate impact with the Buckeyes anyway due

to a knee injury suffered in the annual Ohio North-South All-Star Game earlier that summer and then exacerbated in his first fall camp with the Buckeyes. He underwent surgery six days after Ohio State's 1978 season opener against Penn State but rehabbed quickly enough to join the scout team as a defensive back later in the season.

His speed and range of motion had not yet fully returned, but Williams was eager to prove he was worthy of the scholarship Hayes had given him. The veteran coach, however, was not so sure. According to Schlichter in his 2009 book, "Busted – The Rise & Fall of Art Schlichter," Hayes never really warmed to Williams.

"For some reason, Woody didn't like Gary," Schlichter wrote. "In fact, he treated him like a dog. During the postseason banquet that followed the regular season, as Woody passed out Gator Bowl watches, he insulted Gary in front of the team, saying, 'You really don't deserve this watch, young man.' If there was anyone happy about the coaching change, it was Gary Williams."

That coaching change was precipitated when Hayes slugged an opposing player on the OSU sideline near the end of the Buckeyes' 17-15 loss to Clemson in the 1978 Gator Bowl. The legendary coach was fired shortly thereafter, and the university undertook an exhaustive nationwide search for his successor.

Bruce, who was then head coach at Iowa State and had been an assistant on Hayes' staff from 1966 to 1971, was named to lead the Ohio State program. As part of his new staff, Bruce hired Fred Zechman as his quarterbacks and wide receivers coach. Zechman had been Schlichter's coach in high school and also knew Williams well enough to know he was being wasted as a defensive back.

"It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure that one out," Zechman told BSB. "I took one look at our roster and could see we had all four starting defensive backs returning. At the same time, I think Doug Donley was about the only receiver we had coming back with any kind of playing experience. Gary was a natural, and I knew that he and Art would have a built-in confidence factor with one another. It was a no-brainer, really."

Donley said one of the first things he did when Bruce named Zechman his quarterbacks and receivers coach was lobby to have Williams move over from defense.

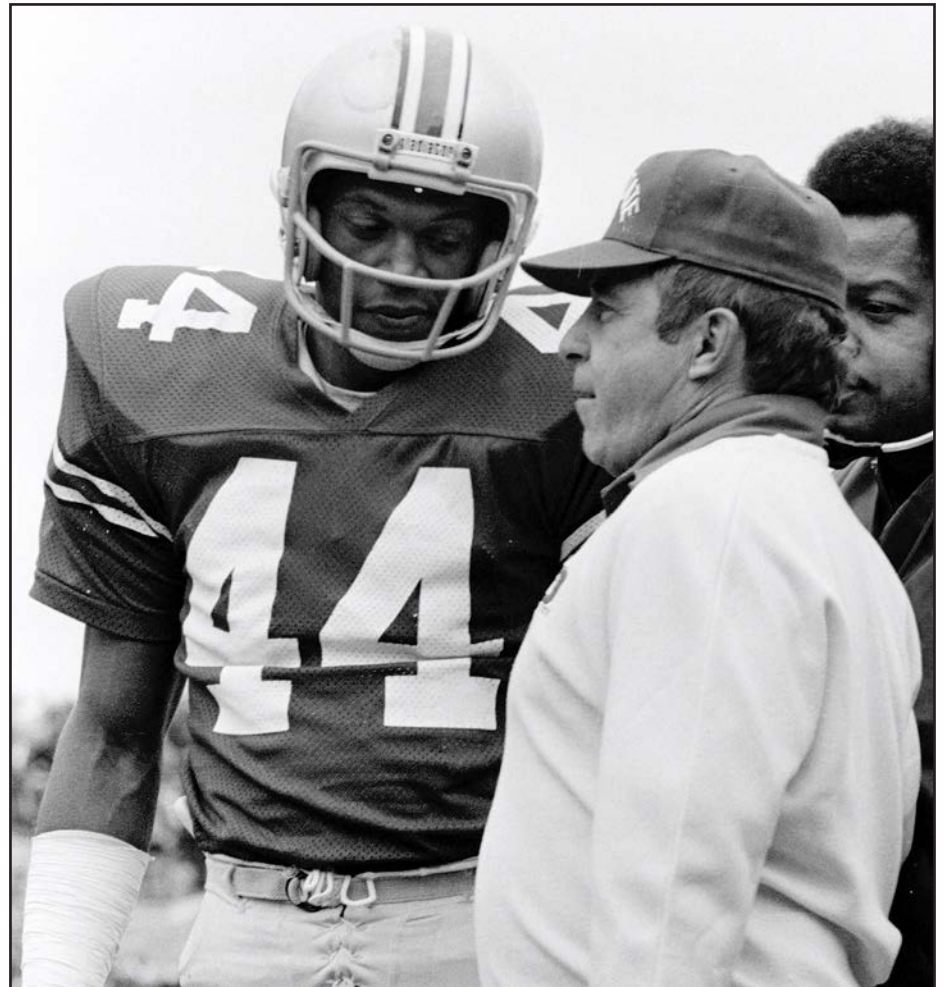
"The first thing that comes to mind when I remember back is Gary's size," Donley told BSB. "His hands were huge, and being 6-2 or 6-3, he was such a big target. He didn't have blazing speed, but he was certainly plenty fast enough. And anything you threw near him, he was catching the ball."

Williams made the switch to receiver in spring ball and performed well enough throughout fall camp that he was just behind senior Chuck Hunter on the depth chart at split end. But after Donley, who manned the flanker position, banged up his knee late in camp, Bruce decided he needed more speed in his lineup and Williams got his first college start in the 1979 season opener against Syracuse.

"I'd known Art since the eighth grade and played against him all through high school," Williams said. "I knew and liked his family, so having a chance to work with him at Ohio State was great. Then to start that first game of the season – I knew the hard work I was putting in was paying off."

Streak In Jeopardy

Williams' first taste of college football was mostly as a decoy. In the 1979 opener, Schlichter's first five passes were short tosses



COURTESY OF GARY WILLIAMS

RELIABLE RECEIVER – Former Ohio State wide receiver Gary Williams hauled in 154 passes for 2,792 yards and 16 touchdowns during his four-year career with the Buckeyes (1979-82).

to tailback Calvin Murray before Williams was finally targeted late in the first quarter. The pass was off the mark and too low for the redshirt freshman receiver to catch, and then one play later, Schlichter connected with tight end Ron Barwig for an 11-yard touchdown, the Buckeyes' first score of the season.

Williams finally got first career reception, good for an 11-yard gain, early in the second quarter. It came on a simple inside hook route with Schlichter delivering a perfect ball this time and Williams making the catch for a first down.

It was his only catch of the day to begin a modest redshirt freshman season that included 25 catches for 479 yards and two touchdowns. It also began his streak of 48 games in a row with at least one catch – a streak threatened five times that first season.

After recording just one reception in the opener against Syracuse, Williams experienced four other games during which he had only one catch. That included a 45-29 win against Washington State when he had just one reception that netted zero yards – a wide screen on the second play from scrimmage that left Williams with a twisted knee. He managed to walk off the field after the play but sat out the remainder of the game.

Two weeks later, during a 16-7 win against Northwestern, Williams was targeted only three times and again had just one catch. It went for 26 yards during a second-quarter touchdown drive that gave Ohio State a 13-0 lead.

The streak's closest call that first year came in week eight during a 42-0 blowout of Michigan State. Williams had to wait until the third quarter before hauling in an 18-yard pass from Schlichter on a third-and-6 play at the OSU 12. It helped sustain what would eventually become a 92-yard touchdown drive to give

the Buckeyes a 35-0 lead at the 4:58 mark of the third period.

Williams waited until the Rose Bowl to have the breakout game of his freshman season. His best outputs to that point had been four catches for 73 yards during a 17-13 win at UCLA and four receptions for 66 yards against Illinois during a 44-7 rout. But against second-ranked USC in the Rose Bowl, Williams tallied three catches for a then career-best 131 yards, including a 53-yard catch late in the first quarter and a 67-yard touchdown just before halftime.

Unfortunately, the Buckeyes couldn't hold onto a fourth-quarter lead of 16-10 and wound up losing a 17-16 decision – and with it a national championship – to the Trojans.

Ohio State would never again come close to winning a national title during Williams' career, but he turned into one of the most reliable receiving threats in college football.

Williams increased his production in 1980 with 39 receptions for 682 yards and six scores, but the consecutive-game streak had a couple of tense moments. He was targeted only three times during the season opener against Syracuse, and his lone catch came midway through the third quarter – a 23-yard reception that helped set up an OSU touchdown.

Later in the season, during a 21-0 win at Wisconsin, Williams caught a short pass for just 2 yards on the team's initial possession of the game. Despite being targeted four more times during the afternoon, he never had another reception.

The streak nearly ended in mid-October during a 63-0 rout at Northwestern. Williams had been bothered again by a bad knee, and the Buckeyes didn't figure to need his services much against the hapless Wildcats, who had lost 14 consecutive games and were on their way to an 0-11 season in 1980.

Williams started at his regular split end position, but after Ohio State had jumped out to a 28-0 lead early in the second quarter, he figured to take the rest of the afternoon off. That was when longtime OSU assistant coach Bill Myles whistled another tune in his ear.

"Coach Myles came up to me on the sideline," Williams remembered, "and he said, 'You've got to go back in there.' I just kind of looked at him, and he said, 'Don't you know you've had a catch in every game you've played? You've got to go back in there. We've got to get you a catch.' I'm sure I had some kind of dumb look on my face because I honestly didn't know what he was talking about. That's how much I was paying attention to the streak."

When the Buckeyes got the ball back, Williams gingerly jogged back onto the field, and on the second play of the drive, he converted a second-and-7 with an 8-yard reception.

"And that was it for me in that game," Williams said. "I didn't really think much about it, but it made Coach Myles happy and that was good enough for me. I would have done anything for that man."

Long-Standing Records

Once his knee began to feel better, Williams flourished down the stretch of the 1980 season. During his final five games, he totaled 23 catches for 470 yards and five touchdowns. That included seven receptions for 112 yards and a touchdown during a 31-19 Fiesta Bowl loss to Penn State. At the time, the seven catches established a new record for the most receptions by an Ohio State player in a bowl game.

Williams got even better during his junior season when he had 50 catches for 941 yards and six touchdowns. He had three more 100-yard games in 1981, including a 13-catch, 220-yard performance during a 36-27 loss to Florida

State. The yardage figure stood as an OSU single-game record until Terry Glenn had 253 yards during a 54-14 win at Pittsburgh in 1995, and the receptions total remained an OSU record until Boston caught 14 balls during a 31-27 loss at Penn State in 1997.

Schlichter threw for a career-best 458 yards during that 1981 loss to Florida State, a single-game mark never approached until last year when Dwayne Haskins threw for 455 yards during a 49-26 win against Indiana. Haskins later broke that mark with 470 yards during a 49-20 loss at Purdue and then broke his own record again with 499 yards during a 45-24 win against Northwestern in the Big Ten Championship Game.

Schlichter's four-year reign as starting quarterback of the Buckeyes came to an end after the 1981 season, paving the way for sophomore Mike Tomczak to take over, but Williams continued to be the go-to receiver on the team. During the 1982 campaign, he caught three or more balls in eight of 12 games and had season highs of five receptions for 104 yards in a rematch against Florida State, a game that ended in a 34-17 loss for the Buckeyes.

Williams even got to showcase his quarterbacking skills one final time during his senior year.

During a 23-20 loss to John Elway-led Stanford in late September, Williams took a fourth-quarter backward pass from Tomczak and threw a strike to fellow receiver Cedric Anderson, who turned it into a 63-yard gain. Two plays later, the Buckeyes scored to take a 20-13 lead with 8:47 remaining before falling to an Elway-fueled comeback.

Five weeks later, Williams – again nursing a knee injury – didn't expect to play much against Purdue, a team headed for a 3-8 season. After testing the knee on Ohio Stadium's old

artificial turf – "That stuff was like playing on concrete," he said – Williams played through one possession and thought he might sit out the remainder of the game.

That was until he passed Myles wearing his trademark scowl on the sideline.

Williams returned to the lineup during Ohio State's second series, and on the third play of the possession, he hooked up with Tomczak for a 21-yard gain along the sideline. It was Williams' lone catch of an eventual 38-6 victory against the Boilermakers.

Williams ended his senior season with 40 receptions for 690 yards and two touchdowns and finished his career with 154 catches for 2,792 yards and 16 TDs. At the time, the reception and yardage totals were program records, and his total touchdowns tied Donley for the OSU career record.

Since that time, a multitude of players have caught more touchdown passes, but Williams' receptions total still remains fifth in OSU history and his yardage figure third only to Michael Jenkins (2,898, 2000-03) and Boston (2,855, 1996-98).

Williams also remains fourth in career 100-yard receiving games with eight and sixth with his career average of 18.1 yards per catch. He also totaled 17 catches for 367 yards and three TDs in four bowl game appearances, and the yardage total remains the most ever for an OSU player in postseason play.

"The thing about Gary Williams – and you could say the same about Art Schlichter and Doug Donley and Cedric Anderson – they got all their yards in an offense that wasn't exactly geared to a great passing game," said OSU football historian Jack Park. "Give Coach Bruce credit for trying to upgrade the offensive mentality in those days, but deep down, Earle was mainly a Woody disciple who thought that the

most effective way to win was to control the line of scrimmage with the running game.

"In my opinion, the fact that Art Schlichter and Gary Williams and all of those players who set records during that era, records that lasted for years and years – some of which are still records some 30 and 40 years after they played – can be explained only because they were great, great athletes. Had they played in today's sophisticated offenses, there's no telling how many yards and touchdowns they would have been responsible for."

Donley added that in addition to his athleticism and quiet leadership, Williams was always a genuine pleasure to be around.

"Gary was such a humble, quiet guy and a great teammate," Donley said. "He was a rare talent."

In recent years, Williams, who turned 60 in September, has been slowed by the same knee problems that plagued him throughout his college career and shortened his NFL career to a mere eight games in 1984 with the Cincinnati Bengals. But he remains a staunch supporter of his alma mater, watches every game with enthusiasm, and praised the way that Hill has gone about chasing his streak of consecutive games with at least one reception.

"I don't know him personally, but he looks to me like the kind of guy you would want as a teammate," Williams said. "Keeps his head down, goes about his business, leads by example, comes up big in the clutch – those are the kinds of guys I like. Those kinds of guys win you games. Those kinds of guys win you championships."

And if Hill ultimately breaks his record?

"I'll be happy for him," Williams said. "If he does have a chance to break it, that will mean the team is playing in the national championship game, and that would be outstanding."

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Ohio State Signs Yet Another Top-Rated Haul

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day introduced a significant 2020 recruiting class on Dec. 18, the first day of college football's early signing period. The group of 24 signees is highly regarded by recruiting analysts, ranking No. 3 in the 247Sports composite team rankings, and is highlighted by 15 players who earned either four- or five-star designations.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

"There are a lot of families here that jumped on board here before we won a game at all this year, and they believed in what we were talking to these families about and the philosophies and what was going to go on," Day said.

Day's first full recruiting class features eight in-state prospects, including six from the greater Cincinnati area. That includes five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson and four-star defensive tackle Darrion Henry, who were teammates at Princeton.

The Buckeyes also signed two players from Arizona in Scottsdale Chaparral four-star quarterback Jack Miller and Tucson Salpointe Catholic four-star safety Lathan Ransom; two from California in Bellflower St. John Bosco four-star athlete Kourt Williams and Rancho Cucamonga four-star quarterback C.J. Stroud; two from New Jersey in Jersey City St. Peter's Prep four-star linebacker Cody Simon and Montvale St. Joseph Regional four-star center Luke Wypler; and two from Texas in Little Elm four-star cornerback Ryan Watts and Rockwall four-star wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

Other states represented include Florida (Bradenton IMG Academy four-star cornerback Lejond Cavazos), Indiana (Beech Grove three-star offensive guard Josh Fryar), Maryland (Olney Good Counsel three-star linebacker Mitchell Melton), Michigan (Warren De La Salle three-star offensive guard Grant Toutant), Missouri (Maryland Heights Pattonville Senior four-star wide receiver Mookie Cooper), North Carolina (Charlotte Providence Day School four-star defensive tackle Jacolbe Cowan), Pennsylvania (Catawissa Southern Columbia five-star wide receiver Julian Fleming) and Washington (Sammamish Eastside Catholic four-star wide receiver Gee Scott).

"This is exciting," Day said. "This is a great day for us. The amount of work that gets put into putting a class together – the phone calls, the traveling, the meetings. You can't imagine the amount of time it takes in recruiting, and to put together a class like this, it's just great. And we have great people, too."

QB Stroud Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State landed a commitment from one of the nation's top-rated signal callers when Stroud pledged his services to the Buckeyes on Dec. 18.



ANDREW LIND

THE SLOBS – Ohio State addressed a need along the offensive line by signing, from left to right, three-star guards Josh Fryar, Jakob James and Grant Toutant; five-star tackle Paris Johnson; and four-star center Luke Wypler.

The 6-3, 194-pound Stroud – who is considered the second-best pro-style quarterback and No. 83 prospect overall in the class of 2020 – landed an offer from the Buckeyes following his unofficial visit for the 34-10 win over Michigan State on Oct. 5 then returned for an official visit with his mother the weekend of Dec. 14. He picked the Buckeyes over finalists Georgia and Michigan despite what likely would have been a quicker path to playing time with the Bulldogs and Wolverines.

Ohio State already held a commitment from Miller, who also signed with the Buckeyes that same afternoon. It marks the first time the program signed two quarterbacks in the same cycle since Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star Braxton Miller and Cleveland Glenville three-star Cardale Jones faxed in their letters of intent in 2011.

Ohio State needed to sign two quarterbacks this cycle for depth purposes, with just two scholarship signal callers returning next fall in starter Justin Fields and graduate transfer Gunnar Hoak. But the fact that both Miller and Stroud are highly regarded prospects makes the haul even more impressive.

"You like to have four quarterbacks," Day said on Dec. 16. "It's almost impossible now to have four quarterbacks on your roster that are on scholarship because they all want to play right now. The great thing about coming to Ohio State is you know you're going to get developed at a high level."

The Buckeyes have had their fair share of turnover at the position in recent years, starting when Dwayne Haskins beat out Joe Burrow for the starting spot in 2018. In the year and a half since, Day

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2020 who have signed a letter of intent to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Paris Johnson	OT	6-7	290	★★★★★	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	WR	6-3	207	★★★★	Sammamish (Wa.) Eastside Catholic
Jakob James	OG	6-5	285	★★★	Cincinnati Elder
Trey Leroux	OT	6-8	355	★★★	Norwalk, Ohio
Lejond Cavazos	CB	6-1	196	★★★★	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	OG	6-7	320	★★★	Warren (Mich.) De La Salle
Ty Hamilton	DE	6-3	250	★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) Central
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
Josh Fryar	OG	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
Jacolbe Cowan	DT	6-5	262	★★★★	Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School
Ryan Watts	CB	6-3	187	★★★★	Little Elm, Texas
Miyan Williams	RB	5-10	210	★★★	Cincinnati Winton Woods
C.J. Stroud	QB	6-2	194	★★★★	Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Clark Phillips	CB	5-11	178	★★★★	La Habra, Calif.
Cameron Martinez	ATH	5-11	183	★★★★	Muskegon, Mich.

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	6-5	220	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North
Kyle McCord	QB	6-3	204	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep
Jayden Ballard	WR	6-2	175	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Ben Christman	OT	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield (Ohio) Revere
Reid Carrico	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Ironton, Ohio
Marvin Harrison	WR	6-4	184	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1989

All-Ohio linebacker Trevor Walker, a blue-chip prospect and top Buckeye target in the Chris Spielman mold, was having trouble accepting the fact that his high school football career was over.

"I just really can't believe I am a senior," Walker told BSB in early December, shortly after the end of a 10-2 campaign for Lancaster High School. "It has all gone by so fast,"

As a 6-0, 236-pound middle linebacker for the Gales for 2½ seasons, Walker exhibited an uncanny instinct for the football which unnerved opposing coaches and earned him interest from the likes of Indiana, Penn State and Ohio State.

25 Years Ago – 1994

Ohio State, riding a wave of enthusiasm from its win over Michigan and a five-year extension of coach John Cooper's contract, appeared to be on its way to an outstanding recruiting class in 1995.

The Buckeyes had received verbal commitments from 12 players as of December.

The good news began with the early commitments of Percy King of Columbus Marion-Franklin High School and Maumee, Ohio, linebacker Matt LaVrar. Then Cooper was awarded his contract extension on Dec. 2 – the same day the first batch of recruits was scheduled to arrive for official visits.

Six of the players scheduled for visits that weekend issued commitments shortly after. They included defensive end Tony Eisenhard of Tiffin (Ohio) Columbian; running back Matt Keller of Cincinnati Moeller; defensive backs Ahmed Plummer of Cincinnati Wyoming and Freddie Hammonds of Peterson (N.J.) Catholic; and offensive linemen Rob Murphy of Cincinnati Moeller and Eric Smith of Columbus Walnut Ridge.

Defensive back Antoine Winfield of Akron Garfield committed to Ohio State without making an official visit.

The momentum continued during the weekend of Dec. 9 as wide receiver Jimmy Redmond of Blue Springs (Mo.) South, running back Charlie Sanders of Rochester (Mich.) Adams and linebacker Kevin Johnson of Northeast Oklahoma A&M Junior College issued verbal commitments after making official visits.

20 Years Ago – 1999

Ohio State's recruiting effort kicked into high gear in late

November and early December, as the Buckeyes locked up four more verbal commitments to push their class total in 2000 to 18.

Wide receiver Brandon "Bam" Childress from Bedford (Ohio) Chanel, kicker Josh Huston from Findlay, Ohio, quarterback Rick McFadden from Struthers, Ohio, and linebacker Jack Tucker from Cerritos (Calif.) Community College all committed to the Buckeyes.

In addition to those four in the class of 2000, Ohio State landed a pledge from class of 2001 standout Reggie Arden, a linebacker from Ironton, Ohio.

15 Years Ago – 2004

Ohio State landed three verbal commitments who looked to fill vacancies at safety and linebacker that would come open following the 2005 season, when no fewer than three linebackers and a pair of safeties were set to depart from the program.

The first of the bunch, safety Anderson Russell, an Atlanta, native, chose the Buckeyes over Duke.

"I felt like I fit in well up there (at Duke), and I wanted to make sure I fit in well at Ohio State too," Russell told BSB. "I felt like I did that at Ohio State. I always wanted to play big-time college football. That's been a dream of mine. It will be a challenge to get out on the field and I'll have to work really hard, but that's what I wanted to do."

The second, linebacker James Laurinaitis, had been committed to his home-state Minnesota since April but seemed to be wavering as Minnesota stumbled to a 6-5 record. A visit to Ohio State ultimately swayed him.

The final commitment came from an Ohio prospect, linebacker Austin Spittler. A longtime Buckeye target, Spittler had yet to receive an Ohio State offer as of late November and looked primed to choose Wisconsin, which had offered.

However, the Buckeyes extended an offer the day before Thanksgiving, putting to rest any chance of Wisconsin landing the 6-2, 225-pounder from Bellbrook, Ohio.

10 Years Ago – 2009

Ohio State broke a dry spell of nearly three months by landing verbal commitment No. 14 for its 2010 class, though the commitment didn't come from a new face.

Several months later than he initially thought, running back Carlos Hyde was set to join the Ohio State football

program. The four-star member of OSU's class of 2009 was unable to gain admittance to the university the fall prior due to an insufficient ACT score and wound up going the prep school route.

After a season at Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy, the 6-1, 230-pounder told BuckeyeSports.com following an official visit during the Dec. 5 weekend that he was cleared for admission and would enroll in January.

"I had a great visit at Ohio State – even better than my last visit," Hyde said Dec. 7. "I met with all the coaches and they're excited for me to get up there. I had such a better feeling for Ohio State this time because I saw a lot more of the campus and talked to more of the players."

Five Years Ago – 2014

With Ohio State looking to wrap up its 2015 class, December brought forth much-needed help at three different positions. Ohio State picked up its fifth offensive lineman when Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy three-star offensive guard Mirko Jurkovic pledged to the Buckeyes on Dec. 4.

That was followed by a commitment from Detroit Cass Tech four-star running back Mike Weber on Dec. 10.

Lastly, the Buckeyes locked up the help they desperately needed at defensive tackle when Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star prospect Robert Landers flipped from West Virginia to OSU.

One Year Ago – 2018

With head coach Urban Meyer announcing his retirement and Ohio State announcing the hire of Ryan Day as his replacement, Buckeye recruiting went on a bit of a roller coaster in early December.

Ohio State picked up a commitment from Cleveland St. Ignatius four-star linebacker Tommy Eichenberg, a one-time Boston College commitment who had added an Ohio State offer on Sept. 26. He was the 16th pledge of OSU's 2019 class.

While the 2019 class was adding players, the 2020 class lost two, as Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star cornerback Lejond Cavazos, just hours after the announcements, declared his recruitment open. Less than 24 hours later, four-star Marietta, Ga., offensive tackle Jake Wray followed suit.

has seen Burrow (LSU), Tate Martell (Miami, Fla.) and Matthew Baldwin (TCU) transfer out, and Fields (Georgia) and Hoak (Kentucky) transfer in, so keeping the quarterback room intact despite so many moving pieces has been a top priority for Day and his staff.

"The hard thing about that is as you develop these guys, if they can't play at Ohio State, they feel like they can play somewhere else," Day said. "They go on, possibly try to play somewhere else. It's frustrating."

CB Pledge Phillips To Choose Between OSU, Utah

When Boston College announced the hiring of Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley as its next head coach on Dec. 15, several defensive back commits – including Ransom, Watts and Cavazos – took to social media to reaffirm their respective pledges to the Buckeyes.

"The response has been good," Day said during his media availability on Dec. 16. "It's been great. They're certainly disappointed that they're not going to get coached by Jeff, but they're excited to sign."

"They understand this is an unbelievable program that's on the rise. We have a great defensive system. There's great opportunity in the back end next year. Guys are going to be coming in with an opportunity to play."

However, one notable omission from the list was La Habra, Calif., four-star

cornerback Clark Phillips, who was on an official visit to Utah at the time.

The Utes were among the first to offer a scholarship to Phillips – who is considered the fourth-best cornerback and No. 47 prospect overall in the class of 2020 – and his relationship with head coach Kyle Whittingham and cornerbacks coach Sharrieff Shah is a big reason that he's giving the program one last look.

Phillips, who committed to Ohio State during his official visit in June, is set to make a final decision on his birthday, Dec. 19, the second day of the Early Signing Period.

If he remains in the Buckeyes' class, Phillips will enroll in classes next month in order to participate in winter workouts and spring practices. He'll have an opportunity to compete for playing time in the secondary right away, too, with starting cornerback Damon Arnette out of eligibility and his counterpart Jeff Okudah likely to leave early for the NFL.

But in spite of Ohio State's knack for developing first-round cornerbacks, it appears the continuity at Utah – with Whittingham in his 15th season and Shah in his eighth year – may lead to a flip.

Check BSB's electronic BuckeyeSports.com for new of Phillips' decision.

ATH Commit Martinez Holds Off On Signing

Although he's been committed to Ohio State since July 4, Muskegon, Mich., four-star athlete Cameron Martinez did not sign with the Buckeyes on Dec. 18.

Martinez's decision, which was first reported by Rivals recruiting analyst Josh Helms on the eve of the Early Signing Period and subsequently confirmed by Buckeye Sports Bulletin, wasn't exactly a surprise following Hafley's departure because the soon-to-be former Ohio State assistant was Martinez's primary recruiter and presumptive position coach at the next level. He'll now wait to see whom the Buckeyes hire as Hafley's replacement before making a final decision before the traditional National Signing Day on Feb. 5, 2020.

The 5-11, 183-pound Martinez – who is considered the 14th-best athlete and No. 322 prospect overall in the class of 2020 – was not planning to enroll in college classes in January because he wants to play one final season of high school basketball, so his decision gives him a little more time to make sure Ohio

State is where he wants to continue his academic and athletic career. On the other hand, it allows programs such as Michigan, Michigan State, Minnesota, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Penn State, West Virginia and Wisconsin to reopen the lines of communication.

As a senior, Martinez was named MLive's Michigan Player of the Year and Michigan's Mr. Football for the second consecutive season after he rushed for 2,124 yards and 36 touchdowns on 264 carries and completed 64 of 109 passes for 1,258 yards and 11 more scores compared to just four interceptions while leading the Big Red to an appearance in the state championship game. His performance on the offensive side of the ball will make him a coveted prospect late in the cycle, though the Buckeyes

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Big Ten Championship Delays Recruiting Efforts



ANDREW LIND

A GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE – By making it to the Big Ten Championship Game, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and his staff were unable to hit the road to recruit when the two-week contact period opened on Dec. 1.

Continued From Page 45

plan to use him at the Bullet position – a hybrid outside linebacker/safety spot implemented by Hafley and co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison this fall.

Ohio State signed Williams on Dec.

18, which would alleviate some of the sting if Martinez eventually signs elsewhere. But there's no doubt he'll be a top priority for whomever Day hires in the coming weeks to fill Hafley's shoes.

"They'll find out who is going to coach them in time," Day said. "I promised them I'm going to give them the best situation possible to make sure they can reach their dreams and goals. That's the whole idea. They committed to me as the head coach, to Ohio State. They understand that."

RB Gibbs Sets Official Visit

On a similar note, one of Ohio State's top remaining targets also opted to not sign on Dec. 18 despite his longtime commitment to Georgia Tech.

Dalton, Ga., four-star running back Jahmyr Gibbs has been committed to the Yellow Jackets since May but has garnered attention from some of the nation's top programs during a stellar senior season in which he rushed for 2,554 yards and 40 touchdowns. He took unofficial visits to Alabama, LSU and Ohio State in November and is scheduled to take official visits with the Crimson Tide on Dec. 21 and Buckeyes on Jan. 17 before making a final decision on National Signing Day on Feb. 5.

While Ohio State signed Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star Miyon Williams on Dec. 18, the Buckeyes have long hoped to land a pair of running backs this cycle – dating back to their courtship of Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-

star Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star Jaylan Knighton, who both silently committed to running backs coach Tony Alford in June and changed their minds only a few days later.

With Robinson now off to Texas and Knighton signing with the hometown Hurricanes, Gibbs is the only realistic target left on the board. But getting him to leave the South could be a challenge.

Staff Balances Big Ten Championship, Signing Period

While most coaches across the country were able to hit the road for a pivotal two-week recruiting period that began on Dec. 1, Day and his staff were stuck in Columbus preparing for Ohio State's Big Ten Championship Game matchup with Wisconsin.

Surely the Buckeyes' two dozen-plus commits would have loved to spend some time with their future coaches that week, but – as Day recalled during his weekly press conference leading up to the 34-21 win over the Badgers on Dec. 7 – they all seemingly understood the bigger picture.

"Talking to recruits this week and last night, 'I apologize, we're not going to see you this week.' Almost everyone to a person said, 'No, that is a good problem to have, Coach. We're glad you're playing in that championship game. We get it.'"

Ohio State landed most of its commitments for the 2020 cycle during the summer months, so Day and his staff were able to focus all of their recent recruiting efforts on the previously mentioned Stroud, in

addition to visiting those pledges.

"That's why you put so much work into recruiting leading up to this point," Day said. "We recruit these kids so early on, the relationships are there. Then we'll do everything we can next week to get out there and hustle around and see these guys."

January Decision Looms For OT Jackson

Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal four-star offensive tackle Donovan Jackson took to Twitter on Dec. 5 to announce that he will make his college decision on Jan. 8.

The 6-4, 308-pound Jackson is considered the 11th-best offensive tackle and No. 57 prospect overall in the class of 2021. He included Ohio State in his top 12 back in July alongside Alabama, Georgia, LSU, Michigan, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Stanford, Tennessee, Texas and Texas A&M, though the Aggies have long been considered the biggest threat to the Buckeyes' chances.

Jackson landed an offer from offensive line coach Greg Studrawa following a strong camp performance in June 2018. He returned for an unofficial visit for the spring game last April, as well as an unofficial visit for the 28-17 win over Penn State on Nov. 23.

"Ohio State is unique because you not only graduate with a great degree, but they provide so much after football," Jackson told Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

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ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

With 24 players faxing in their letter of intent during the Early Signing Period and limited spots available on the roster for 2020, how will Ohio State proceed toward National Signing Day on Feb. 5?

"The Buckeyes did a remarkable job addressing the majority of their needs for the 2020 recruiting class, and because of that, anything that gets added moving forward isn't a necessity but rather a cherry on top of head coach Ryan Day's first full recruiting class.

"There will still be some movement from now until February, though, because Draper (Utah) Juan Diego Catholic four-star defensive end Xavier Carlton and Dalton, Ga., four-star running back Jahmyr Gibbs (a Georgia Tech commit) will not sign anywhere until February. Carlton took his official visit for the win over Penn State on Nov. 23, while Gibbs is slated to take his official visit with Ohio State over the weekend of Jan. 17. He's the lone official visitor scheduled between now and the classic signing day, however."

How did or will senior defensive end Jonathon Cooper's decision to redshirt this season and return for one final year at Ohio State next fall

coupled with freshman Cade Stover's move from linebacker to defensive end impact the Buckeyes' pursuit of prospects at that position, particularly Carlton and Knoxville (Tenn.) Catholic four-star Tyler Baron, who committed to the home-state Volunteers on Dec. 18.

"The return of Cooper and the move for Stover didn't end Ohio State's recruitment of Baron or Carlton as far as the Buckeyes are concerned, but those personnel decisions absolutely removed some of the pressure for Larry Johnson to land another defensive end this cycle. Either would be welcome to sign with Ohio State, but Cooper and Stover turned that possibility from a need to a luxury.

"As mentioned, Carlton is planning to sign his letter of intent in February, and while he is a long shot for the Buckeyes right now, there is at least some extra time for pursuing him after the Early Signing Period wraps up."

Ohio State sits at No. 3 in the 247Sports composite team rankings at the Early Signing Period, so it's safe to say the Buckeyes did well this cycle. But that said, is there one prospect the staff really wanted but missed out on, and how did they address that position instead?

"The Bijan Robinson chronicles have been well-documented, and while I try to avoid beating dead horses, it's pretty clear that losing out on the country's No. 2-ranked tailback is something that still stings – and will sting – the Buckeyes for a while. Robinson, who hails from Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic, was not just the primary target for the staff but he also issued a private commitment to the Buckeyes at the end of June before rescinding it and flipping his verbal to Texas.

"Ohio State had a plan in place at the running back position and was close to executing it perfectly before Robinson's change of heart, and it took a little bit of time to reorganize the efforts when the summer ended.

"Eventually, it was Cincinnati's Winton Woods three-star tailback Miyan Williams who became the Buckeyes' tailback commitment in the class of 2020.

"There is still a chance another running back could get in the mix to help mitigate the loss of Robinson, as the aforementioned Gibbs will make his second trip to Columbus in mid-January before signing in February, so his story isn't entirely wrapped up yet and that means the running back recruiting isn't either."

Continued From Page 46

Jackson's interest in the Buckeyes should not come as a surprise given that his parents are originally from Ohio, his grandmother still lives in Cincinnati and he grew up rooting for Ohio State.

If he commits to the Buckeyes, Jackson would become the seventh member of Ohio State's second-ranked 2021 recruiting class, joining Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer; Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star quarterback Kyle McCord; Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star offensive tackle Ben Christman; Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star wide receiver Marvin Harrison; Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star wide receiver Jayden Ballard; and Ironton, Ohio, four-

star linebacker Reid Carrico.

Ohio State is looking to land as many as six linemen in the cycle, with Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star tackle J.C. Latham; Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary four-star tackle Tristan Leigh; Clarkston, Mich., four-star guard Rocco Spindler; and Lexington (Ky.) Frederick Douglass four-star guard Jager Burton among the staff's top remaining targets.

Ohio State Among Top Schools For 2021 Prospects

While the current recruiting cycle gathered most of the attention in recent weeks Ohio State made the cut for several of the nation's top-rated underclassmen. Among them, Pinson (Ala.) Valley five-star cornerback Ga'Quincy McKinstry included the Buckeyes in his top eight on Dec. 11 alongside Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Florida, Georgia, LSU and Miami (Fla.).

The 6-0, 172-pound McKinstry – who is considered the third-best cornerback and No. 27 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – landed an offer from Ohio State on Sept. 15. He's never been to campus but is likely to make his way to Columbus when juniors can take official visits starting on April 1.

Pulling him away from Alabama may prove difficult because the Buckeyes haven't signed a player from the Yellowhammer State since Montgomery Robert E. Lee defensive lineman Donte Wheat in 1981.

The following day, Omaha (Neb.) Westside four-star cornerback Avante Dickerson listed Ohio State in his top three alongside LSU and Nebraska.

The 5-11, 159-pound Dickerson, who is considered the eighth-best cornerback and No. 79 prospect overall in the 2021 cycle after pulling down four interceptions during his junior season, landed an offer from the Buckeyes following an impressive performance at a one-day camp in June.

The Buckeyes – who have never signed a prospect from the state of Nebraska – face an uphill battle against the heavily favored home-state Cornhuskers.



COURTESY OF DONOVAN JACKSON

ANOTHER BOOM COMING SOON – Texas four-star offensive tackle Donovan Jackson would give Ohio State its second commit along the line for the class of 2021, joining Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star tackle Ben Christman.

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FROM ONE GROUP OF SENIORS TO ANOTHER

SENIOR STRONGSM

To all Buckeye seniors,

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OSU Manages Expectations Amid Historic Run

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State men's basketball team is the No. 5 team in the country with a 10-1 record and the highest margin of victory in the country, as of Dec. 17.

That's right – Ohio State men's basketball – not football.

The Buckeyes boasted a pair of wins against AP top-10 teams in Villanova and North Carolina through their first 11 games.

Not only did Ohio State defeat two perennial powers early in the season, but it became just the fourth team with multiple victories of 25 or more points against top-10 opponents in an entire season. The other teams to have done that were 2015-16 Villanova, 2000-01 Duke and 1967-68 UCLA, who all went on to win the national championship.

The Wildcats were the first top-10 opponent on Ohio State's schedule, coming into Columbus for just the third game of the Buckeyes' season on Nov. 13.

Chris Holtmann's team dominated Villanova, who had won two of the past four NCAA national championships, with a 17-3 start that pushed to a 76-51 victory.

Freshman guard D.J. Carton was asked what the team learned about itself after beating such a prominent program in such convincing fashion.

"I feel like we found out that we're very hungry," Carton said. "We've been very hungry all season long, and we have things

to prove. We've got a lot of things to learn and a lot of things to build upon, but we're playing pretty good basketball right now. And we're playing together as a unit. I'm having a great time on the floor with my teammates. As long as that keeps going forward, we'll continue to learn and continue to progress from there."

Junior guard C.J. Walker, who joined the team in 2018 but had to sit out a season after transferring from Florida State, was asked what kind of message the Buckeyes' blowout win sent to the rest of the college basketball world.

"We just kind of have a chip on our shoulder right now," Walker said. "We're focused, and we're just trying to get better each and every day in practice and games and just come together as 1-15 that's on our roster. And we just want to keep getting better and keep proving that we can play at a high level."

The Buckeyes have been playing about as well as they can, outscoring opponents 79.9-56.7 on a per game basis. Despite the nation-leading and all-time great statistics, they have not garnered nearly as much buzz as the football team, who will play against Clemson in the first round of the College Football Playoff on Dec. 28.

Holtmann is not worried about being overshadowed by the powerhouse football program because he knew what he was getting into when he came to Columbus. The third-year Buckeye coach even said that Ohio State's success on the gridiron can serve as an inspiration to his team on the



SONNY BROCKWAY

LEADING THE WAY – After leading Ohio State to the second round of the NCAA Tournament in each of his first two seasons, head coach Chris Holtmann has the Buckeyes atop the nation in scoring margin at plus-23.2.

hardwood.

"When you sign up here in my position, you realize that's the position you're in. And I'm completely comfortable with that,"

Holtmann said after Ohio State beat Penn State 106-74 on Dec. 7. "I hope over time people appreciate – I know they have – how we play, who our kids are, the way we go



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about it.

"We've had a really special start. I'm not trying to diminish winning nine games and some of our performances. I just think it's a long season and we're going to run into some issues. It was a tie game with eight minutes to go vs. Kent State two weeks ago. We've got to just stay as grounded as possible.

"We've got really good players who are in a good place right now. I think they also appreciate the fact that there are other programs here, in particular football, that are on the path toward achieving something special."

It is clear that the goal for Ohio State football each season is to contend for a national title. Why can't that be the expectation for the men's basketball program as well?

"I don't know if we're mature enough to handle all of that," Holtmann said of this year's squad. "We've got outstanding leadership. It remains to be seen if we are. And that's where winning comes into play and staying committed to get better on a day-to-day basis. Our older guys understand that well. Collectively, do we understand that as well?"

Holtmann pointed to the ups and downs of a long season that runs from October to April when considering how his team could handle those types of expectations.

"People who follow college basketball know that there are a ton of ebb and flow in most seasons," Holtmann continued. "We're going to go through some rough patches, and that will really determine who we are as a group and how we handle that. We're in a really good place right now, we've played pretty well – really well – in stretches. But for us, it's all about can we stay on the path toward growth and whatever happens, happens.

"In terms of people talking about our program, you work every day in this job with the idea that you're building toward hopefully people talking about your program and have an optimism about what you can be. We're not building toward something else. What that looks like, who knows? But that's what we are working toward every day as a staff. If that brings pressure, then we'll try to manage it in the moment."

Perhaps more impressive than the

Buckeyes' rout of Villanova at home, they went into Chapel Hill, N.C., and defeated North Carolina 74-49 on Dec. 4. Senior wing Andre Wesson was pleased with the team's performance but left hungry for more.

"Anytime you get a top-10 victory and the way that we did it, you definitely feel good about yourself, but as a team we know that we have goals, big goals," Wesson said. "That's just a steppingstone to the goal we've got to get to."

Just like the Buckeyes shocked the Wildcats and Tar Heels, they know they are susceptible to the same fate.

"I think it's easy to get complacent when you have some big victories and stuff like that, but that's something that the coaching staff has been preaching to us," junior forward Kyle Young said. "Us as a team understands that we need to come to work every day ready to work, because anything can happen on any given night."

Young was a part of the Ohio State team that started 12-1 in 2018-19 but did not maintain the same success throughout the year. Those players from last season have carried their experiences over to this team with them.

"We're going to enjoy it while it lasts for the rest of the night, and obviously, we've got to get back to work," sophomore guard Duane Washington said after beating UNC. "We're going to take everything that we had done well and run with it but also look at everything that we did bad tonight, and we're going to learn from that and analyze it, learn from it and then forget about it and move on.

"Last year we were 12-1 and it was pretty high. During the season, there are ups and downs – that's the main thing I learned from last season. You've just got to stick with it and stick to it every day in practice. Go hard, follow what Coach is saying and do it together as one."

Unlike the Ohio State football team, Holtmann's squad has kept its personal expectations under wraps. The Buckeyes exude confidence out on the floor, but they understand it's a long season and their ranking in December doesn't mean their

"We have this thought in our heads and we like to keep it in between the team. But everyone has their thoughts on what we were going to accomplish this year, and

we haven't accomplished anything," guard Washington said. "It's December. We're talking now, we hopefully want to be talking in March and so on. For us right now, we're just trying to take it day by day. We're going to stay where our feet are and get better every single day and attack the day."

When Holtmann recruited his first class to Ohio State, including Young, he knew turning the program around might take some time. Getting the program back to national prominence would not be an overnight turnaround.

"Just working to get back there," Young said of Holtmann's message to him in recruitment. "It wasn't going to be a thing that's like instant gratification. It's not going to happen right away. It's something we're going to have to work for. This is my third year now and we're making some big strides. We previously had two good years, but right now we've got bigger goals, and that's something we're working towards, so just keep getting better every day."

As Young mentioned, the Buckeyes have experienced success under Holtmann, winning games in the NCAA Tournament in each of his first two seasons and being ranked in the top 25.

But it's clear Ohio State's goals go beyond being highly ranked.

"I can appreciate the fact that our three years here we've at some point spent time in the polls, and that's been more in January and February after you've played a certain number of games, which adds more value," Holtmann said. "I don't want to discount that. I think anytime that you have that, that's good for your program. That's good for recruiting. That's healthy.

"I think for me it's pretty far down the list if you said, 'Hey, why did you come here? Why were you brought here?' It's probably one of a number of things that you want your program to be relevant – that's a part of that. I look at some of the programs that I have respect for that maybe couldn't say they've had a three-year run where they've been ranked. But it's pretty far down the list.

"We want to be playing better and better as the season goes on. We want to be playing in March. We want to be preparing ourselves to advance in March. Those are the things that we really want to do as a program. We want to develop young men and develop pros. There's a long list of things that would be ahead of that."

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Games In December Set Up Rest Of The Season

All good things must come to an end, including Ohio State men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann's perfect December record in Big Ten games.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

His 5-0 mark since taking over the program in June 2017 ended with a resounding thud as a result of an 84-71 defeat at Minnesota on Dec. 15 that topped the last remaining unbeaten conference team (10-1, 1-1 Big Ten).

It had to happen sooner or later in this topsy-turvy season with the Associated Press poll already having five top-ranked teams before New Year's Day, which has never happened in the history of the voting. In fact, the record for most No. 1s in an entire season is seven.

Holtmann and his players knew they were entering a tough December stretch regardless of who the opponent was. First, there's the final exams leading into the Minnesota game.

"It's always an interesting week balancing academics and preparing for your next opponent," he said.

Then there's the holiday season with

gift buying and, for some, travel arrangements to spend a little time with friends and families – all while trying to maintain focus on basketball. Holtmann, for example, said that other than getting something online for his wife, he has put off any Christmas shopping until after the Dec. 21 game vs. No. 6 Kentucky.

Put it all together and concentration can be lost during the stretch of games before the calendar turns to 2020 for the fifth-ranked Buckeyes.

"December is a time where a lot of teams can become complacent," junior forward Kyle Young said on Dec. 14. "That's what the coaches were saying. It's easy for teams to become relaxed and not focus on getting better. We're kind of taking the opposite approach to where we need to get better here in December and January and keep improving."

Prior to the Minnesota game, the Buckeyes were receiving universal praise for their start, which included wins over Cincinnati (64-56), Villanova (76-51), North Carolina (74-49) and Penn State (106-74).

The loss to the Golden Gophers was a reality check.

"I think that's a constant challenge for any coach," Holtmann said. "The ability to handle success is often harder than being able to deal with adversity. Both present challenges equally in different ways."

Before anyone panics, losing to

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commits

Players in the class of 2020 who have signed a letter of intent to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Eugene Brown	SG	6-6	185	★★★★	Decatur (Ga.) Southwest DeKalb
Zed Key	PF	6-7	215	★★★	Glen Head (N.Y.) Long Island Lutheran

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	★★★★	Willoughby (Ohio) Andrew Osborne

Minnesota was not a sign that the Buckeyes were living on borrowed time as was the case last season when a 12-1 start was inflated by a soft nonconference schedule.

Minnesota was 4-5 overall and had lost its Big Ten opener 72-52 at Iowa before playing OSU, but the Golden Gophers had played the 17th-toughest schedule to that point.

Meanwhile, the Buckeyes were without second-leading scorer Duane Washington Jr. because of a rib injury.

Put it all together and OSU was unable stop a curious trend: Through the first 13 Big Ten games, the home team was victorious every time.

"We play in the best, deepest league in the country, no doubt about it," Holtmann said. "It has been proven again."

Stacked Conference

To Holtmann's point, the Big Ten led all conferences with five teams in the AP top 25 poll for the week of Dec. 16.

Besides the Buckeyes, who fell two spots from third, Maryland was seventh, Michigan sat at 14th, preseason No. 1 Michigan State was voted 15th, and Penn State checked in at No. 23.

For the Nittany Lions, it was their first ranking in the poll since 1996. Their blowout loss to the Buckeyes was offset by a 76-69 win over then No. 4 Maryland.

Washington is unfazed by what the Buckeyes have done so far.

"We haven't accomplished anything," he said. "It's December. We want to be talking in March and so on. We're just going to take it day by day, stay where our feet are, and attack the day and the next game."

Of note, Villanova was voted 18th and West Virginia, the Buckeyes' opponent Dec. 29 in Cleveland, is 25th.

North Carolina (6-4) dropped out of the rankings for the first time in six years after three straight losses.

Net Result

The metrics didn't put much stock in OSU losing to Minnesota. The NCAA's NET (NCAA Evaluation Tool), which last season replaced the RPI (Rating Percentage Index), for the second straight season had Ohio State No. 1 in its first ranking on Dec. 16.

"I don't really spend one moment thinking about rankings this early in the season," Holtmann said.

Eye On Vegas

As mentioned earlier, the Buckeyes and Kentucky meet in Las Vegas. The game will be at T-Mobile Arena as part of the CBS Sports Classic.

Sin City is a popular destination for OSU's athletic teams. The men's hockey team will also play in that arena, home of the NHL's Vegas Golden Knights, on Jan. 3 and 4. Also, men's gymnastics competes in Vegas from Feb. 21-23.

Women's basketball had a two-game tourney Nov. 29 and 30; wrestling competed in the Cliff Keen Las Vegas Invitational on Dec. 6 and 7; and women's hockey split two games with Princeton Dec. 14 and 15.

Quotable

Young on how this season might play out differently than the past two when the Buckeyes lost in the second round of the NCAA Tournament:

"This is my third year now, and we're making big strides. We've had two previously good years, but right now I just think we've got bigger goals and that's something we're working towards."

Recruiting

Being the No. 1-ranked recruit in Ohio for the 2021 cycle usually means drawing a lot of attention, but Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary four-star guard Malaki Branham – who holds an Ohio State offer – was overshadowed with good reason.

His Fighting Irish lost 59-56 to Los Angeles' Sierra Canyon in the Ohio Scholastic Play-By-Play Classic at Nationwide Arena on Dec. 14, but the big story was the appearance by LeBron James to watch his freshman son, LeBron Jr. (better known as Bronny), score the winning basket for Sierra Canyon.

St-Vincent-St. Mary is LeBron's alma mater.

Bronny and his teammates visited the basketball facilities at Value City Arena the day prior, and he got to see the locker the program provided for his father, a proud follower of Ohio State sports.

As for the game, Branham, the 24th recruit nationally according to 247Sports, had 13 points in a losing effort. Holtmann was in attendance as were representatives of Florida, Louisville, Missouri and Wisconsin.

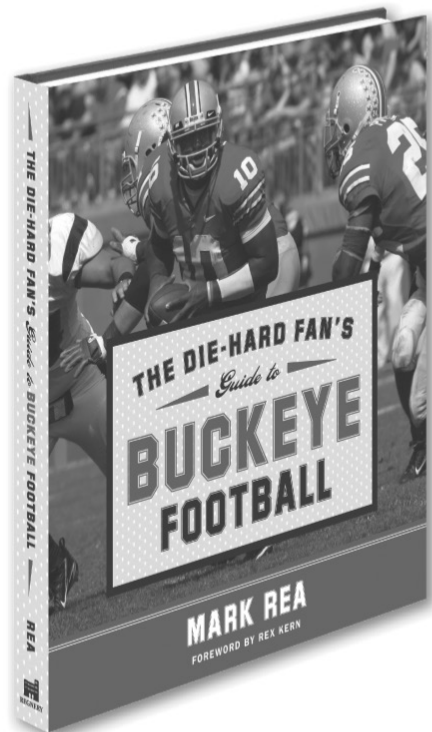
In other recruiting news, Ohio State offered Wichita (Kansas) Sunrise Christian 2021 four-star forward Kendall Brown on Dec. 9. Brown (6-7, 190) is 35th nationally, ninth at his position and the top recruit in his state.

Also, 2020 commit Zed Key, a three-star power forward from Glen Head (N.Y.) Long Island Lutheran, was averaging 14.7 points, 9.2 rebounds and 3.7 blocks after his first three games.

His school's official Twitter account said he is shooting 89 percent from the floor.

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"Your Head to Toe Buckeye Source"

Stifling Defense Leads OSU Past North Carolina

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State men's basketball team (8-0) knocked off North Carolina (6-2) 74-49 with lockdown defense in front of 21,115 at the Dean Smith Center in Chapel Hill, N.C. on Dec. 4.

"We're getting there," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said of his team's defensive ability. "We've got a lot of guys that are dialed and locked in. We've got a lot of good individual defenders, and we've embraced the idea of being collectively good."

Sophomore guard Duane Washington and junior forward Kaleb Wesson paced the Scarlet and Gray starters with 18 points and five rebounds and 10 points and nine rebounds, respectively.

Senior forward Andre Wesson and freshman forward E.J. Liddell led the charge off the Buckeye bench with five points, nine rebounds and five assists, and 12 points, five boards and two blocks, respectively.

The Buckeyes struggled offensively to start the game, failing to score through the first 2:51, but Andre Wesson and Washington helped bring them back from an early 5-0 deficit. Wesson found Washington for a three-pointer with an excellent cross-court pass, marking his first of three assists in just 2:25. The bucket sparked a 12-3 Ohio State run, where Washington hit three triples and Kaleb Wesson added another.

The Buckeyes battled back and forth with the Tar Heels for most of a physically played first half, where both teams played excellent defense before heading to the locker room with the Buckeyes up 29-27. Ohio State held UNC to 28.6 percent shooting from both the field (10 of 35) and three-point range (4 of 14), while the Tar Heels pressured OSU into 10 turnovers and recorded five blocks in the first 20 minutes.

Ohio State outrebounded North Carolina, 26-17, in the first frame while shooting 35.7 percent (5 of 14) from three, but the turnovers kept the contest close. The Tar Heels also missed the presence of 6-10 freshman forward Armando Bacot, who suffered a leg injury early in the first half after recording four rebounds, one block and one steal.

Coming out of the halftime break strong, Ohio State ripped off a 10-3 run with three points from Kaleb Wesson, five more on an and-one

by Washington as well as a jumper, and two on a layup by Kyle Young off a Washington assist, making the score 39-30.

The Tar Heels' freshman standout guard Cole Anthony, who led UNC with 15 points, fired back with back-to-back three-pointers to cut OSU's lead to 39-36. The visiting Buckeyes responded with nine straight points to push their lead to 12, 48-36 with 12:43 to play.

"I was really pleased with the first six minutes of the second half," Holtmann said. "That was maybe our best basketball. We settled down, we made smart decisions, we attacked them in certain areas, we made them work. That was probably our best six- to seven-minute stretch of the game. That was critical."

North Carolina head coach Roy Williams was visibly upset with his team's effort, pulling all five players during near the 10-minute mark and inserting a new group that included two walk-ons. The Tar Heels' reserve group gave them an energy boost, rallying on a quick 7-3 run to make it 57-47.

Freshman guard D.J. Carton helped rally the Buckeyes, leading them on a 14-0 run of their own with five points and two assists to give OSU a 71-47 lead with 3:40 to play, helping them cruise to victory.

Liddell credited the team's extra emphasis on boxing out in practice for the 48-32 rebounding advantage over North Carolina, along with protecting the rim.

"The plan defensively was to keep them out of the paint and stop their offensive rebounding," Liddell said. "And that's what we did. We beat them on the rebound battle, and we just kept working. We worked a lot on rebounding in practice, and that's what really helped us out because their second offense is rebounding."

Overall, Ohio State shot 46.4 percent (26 of 56) from the floor, including 53.6 (15 of 28) in the second half and 38.5 percent from three-point range (10 of 26), while clamping down the Tar Heels, who shot a meager 27.4 percent (17 of 62) on field goals and 30.4 percent from distance (7 of 23).

"It's been the same approach all year," Washington said of the team's defense. "Attention to details – play really, really hard and be the tougher team. We came out and had a chip on our shoulder as we always do and fought hard. They're a good team."

Ohio State 74, North Carolina 49

Dec. 4, 2019										
Dean Smith Center • Chapel Hill, NC										
	1		2		F					
Ohio State (8-0)	29		45		74					
North Carolina (6-2)	27		22		49					
Ohio State	Total FG FT		Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Young	30	4-6	1-2	2-3	0	2	9			
K. Wesson	28	3-7	3-4	3-6	2	4	10			
Muhammad	9	1-2	0-0	1-1	1	3	2			
Washington	24	6-15	2-3	0-5	2	0	18			
Walker	33	4-8	0-0	1-2	1	2	10			
Gaffney	5	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	2	0			
Carton	19	2-4	2-2	1-1	4	1	8			
Ahrens	3	0-2	0-0	0-2	1	0	0			
A. Wesson	31	2-6	0-0	1-8	5	4	5			
Liddell	16	4-6	4-4	1-4	1	0	12			
Hummer	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Hookfin	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0			
Totals	200	26-56	10-26	12-15	17	14	74			
Percentages: FG: 46.4%. FT: 80%. 3-point goals: 10-26 (K. Wesson 1-3, Muhammad 0-1, Washington 4-8, Walker 2-4, Carton 2-4, Ahrens 0-2, A. Wesson 1-4). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 4 (Liddell 2, Young, K. Wesson). Turnovers: 15 (K. Wesson 6, Walker 2, Carton 2, Muhammad, Washington, Gaffney, A. Wesson, Hummer). Steals: 5 (Carton 2, Walker, A. Wesson, Liddell).										
North Carolina	Total FG FT		Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Bacot	7	1-2	0-0	3-1	0	1	2			
Brooks	28	3-7	2-2	5-2	0	3	8			
Black	25	2-9	0-0	1-2	2	0	5			
Anthony	30	4-15	3-4	0-2	3	3	15			
Robinson	31	3-9	2-2	1-2	3	3	9			
Platek	12	0-2	1-4	0-0	0	0	1			
Rush	6	0-1	0-1	0-0	0	0	0			
Miller	7	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	1	0			
Ellis	3	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0			
Smith	7	0-2	0-0	0-1	1	0	0			
Pierce	23	3-8	0-0	1-2	1	0	7			
O'Han	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
McAdoo	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Huffman	7	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	3	0			
Keeling	9	1-4	0-0	0-1	0	1	2			
Totals	200	17-62	8-13	13-19	10	15	49			
Percentages: FG: 27.4%. FT: 61.5%. 3-point goals: 7-23 (Brooks 0-1, Black 1-3, Anthony 4-8, Robinson 1-5, Rush 0-1, Smith 0-1, Pierce 1-4). Team rebounds: 6. Blocked shots: 5 (Bacot, Brooks, Black, Robinson, Huffman). Turnovers: 10 (Anthony 3, Robinson 2, Brooks, Black, Smith, Huffman, Keeling). Steals: 6 (Pierce 3, Bacot, Anthony, O'Han). Officials: Driscoll, Eades, Valentine. Attendance: 21,115.										

Ohio State 106, Penn State 74

Dec. 7, 2019										
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio										
	1		2		F					
Penn State (7-2, 0-1)	35		39		74					
Ohio State (9-0, 1-0)	46		60		106					
Penn State	Total FG FT		Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Stevens	18	4-8	2-2	0-3	1	5	11			
Watkins	17	3-8	0-0	2-1	0	4	6			
M. Jones	25	3-7	1-1	1-1	0	1	9			
Dread	23	1-6	2-2	1-1	1	2	5			
Wheeler	25	0-1	2-4	1-1	2	3	2			
Lundy	21	3-4	2-4	0-1	0	3	10			
C. Jones	17	2-8	2-2	0-1	0	1	8			
McCloskey	2	0-1	0-1	0-0	0	0	0			
Brockington	30	7-13	3-4	1-0	1	3	19			
Buttrick	3	1-1	0-0	1-0	0	1	2			
Harrar	19	1-2	0-0	1-2	2	2	2			
Totals	200	25-59	14-20	11-14	7	25	74			
Percentages: FG: 42.4%. FT: 70%. 3-point goals: 10-29 (Stevens 1-3, M. Jones 2-5, Dread 1-6, Lundy 2-3, C. Jones 2-7, Brockington 2-5). Team rebounds: 6. Blocked shots: 3 (Watkins, Lundy, C. Jones). Turnovers: 11 (Watkins 3, Wheeler 2, Brockington 2, Stevens, M. Jones, Dread, TEAM). Steals: 5 (Brockington 3, Stevens, Dread).										
Ohio State	Total FG FT		Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Young	24	3-3	3-4	2-4	0	2	9			
K. Wesson	25	9-16	6-6	0-10	2	3	28			
Muhammad	26	4-6	2-2	1-1	3	3	14			
Washington	30	5-7	0-0	0-2	0	0	14			
Walker	24	2-5	5-6	0-2	7	2	9			
Gaffney	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0			
Carton	20	1-3	6-7	0-0	2	4	8			
Ahrens	3	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	3			
A. Wesson	31	5-9	4-6	2-3	1	2	15			
Liddell	11	1-3	3-4	1-3	0	0	5			
Hummer	3	0-0	1-2	0-0	0	0	1			
Totals	200	31-54	30-37	9-28	15	18	106			
Percentages: FG: 57.4%. FT: 81.1%. 3-point goals: 14-26 (K. Wesson 4-6, Muhammad 4-5, Washington 4-6, Walker 0-2, Ahrens 1-2, A. Wesson 1-3, Liddell 0-2). Team rebounds: 6. Blocked shots: 2 (K. Wesson, Liddell). Turnovers: 9 (Carton 4, Young, Muhammad, Washington, A. Wesson, TEAM). Steals: 5 (K. Wesson, Muhammad, Walker, Liddell, Hummer). Officials: Kueneman, Green, Wymer. Attendance: 12,901.										

looking like they might bury the Nittany Lions in the first half, but a 10-2 Penn State run cut the lead to seven. Ohio State closed the half with a 6-2 jolt, taking a 46-35 lead into the intermission.

Ohio State outshot Penn State 58.3 percent (14 of 24) to 39.3 percent (11 of 28) from the field and 84.2 percent (16 of 19) to 81.8 percent (9 of 11) from the free-throw line, while the Nittany Lions hit 4 of 14 triples (28.6 percent) and the Buckeyes hit only 2 of 8 (25 percent) in the first half.

Stevens, who is Penn State's leading scorer, fouled out with 13:26 left in the game and the Nittany Lions trailing 60-50.

Curtis Jones hit a three-pointer and John Harrar threw down a dunk to cut the Buckeyes' second-half lead to 63-55, but that was the closest the Nittany Lions would get. Ohio State caught fire from deep, rolling on the 37-9 run, which included a 15-0 spurt and eight triples.

Washington drilled the three-pointer that sparked the onslaught, which came on an assist by junior guard C.J. Walker off an offensive rebound by Andre Wesson.

"I was about to get back," Andre Wesson said. "I'm glad I didn't. I got the board and C.J. made a great pass to Duane in the corner, and it kind of got us going with that energy play. Once you see that and the crowd getting into it, you feed off that energy and just try to keep it going."

A pair of Buckeye juniors, Walker and Young, gave the team great energy on offense and defense. Walker scored nine points with seven assists, while Young grabbed six rebounds with nine points on 3-of-3 shooting and 3 of 4 free throws.

"We put up a lot of points and held a very good Penn State team to what they had, so it's good," Andre Wesson said. "We made a statement victory, but we're not really worried. We know that we have bigger goals, and we're just going to attack every day the same way."

Izaiah Brockington led the Nittany Lions with 19 points.

Ohio State Rides 37-9 Run To Beat Penn State

Ohio State ignited on a 37-9 second-half run, raining in three-pointers on the way to a 106-74 victory against Penn State in front of 12,901 fans at Value City Arena on Dec. 7.

After shooting 25 percent (2 of 8) from beyond the arc in the first frame, the Buckeyes (9-0, 1-0) knocked down 12 triples at a 66.7 percent clip in the second half. Washington shot 4 for 4 from deep in the final 20 minutes, Kaleb Wesson hit 3 of 3 and sophomore guard Luther Muhammad drained 3 of 4 from distance.

Kaleb Wesson led the way for the Scarlet and Gray, scoring 28 points and grabbing 10 rebounds along with a block and a steal in just 25 minutes.

"I thought he looked like who he is today," Holtmann said of Kaleb, "and that is one of the best players in the country."

Andre Wesson added 15 points and five boards, while Washington and Muhammad pitched in 14 points apiece.

The Nittany Lions (7-2, 0-1) battled the Buckeyes early on with a layup by senior forward Mike Watkins cutting an early Ohio State lead to 11-9. The home team went on a 9-0 run, holding Penn State scoreless for five minutes and 18 seconds.

Senior forward Lamar Stevens answered with a three-pointer to end the drought for the Nittany Lions and Penn State then cut the deficit to 22-15, but Ohio State responded with a quick Wesson-led 8-2 rally, where Andre scored six points and Kaleb added two.

"He settled us down on a number of occasions," Holtmann said of Andre Wesson. "He gave us a basket when they cut it to seven. His performance in those moments was really good."

The Buckeyes pushed their lead to 38-23,



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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

OSU Suffers First Loss At Minnesota

The No. 3 Ohio State men's basketball suffered its first loss of the season, dropping an 84-71 contest to Minnesota in front of 9,854 at Williams Arena in Minneapolis on Dec. 15.

Minnesota sophomore guard Marcus Carr, a Pitt transfer, led the way for the Gophers, scoring a career-high 35 points, knocking down 12 of 17 shots.

"I thought he was outstanding," Holtmann said of Carr. "He had an outstanding night. He was tremendous. He was a real difficult matchup for us. Credit to him, I thought he played a whale of a game."

The Gophers (5-5, 1-1) led by nine early in the second half before Carr fired off six points during a Minnesota 10-1 run to bury the Buckeyes (9-1, 1-1) in a deep hole, 55-37, with 12:29 to play. The 18-point margin would equal the Gophers' largest lead of the game.

Carton led Ohio State with 19 points, but the team was held to just 38.3 percent shooting (23 of 60) and hit 7 of 20 three-pointers (35.0 percent). Minnesota excelled at home, converting 54.4 percent of its shots from the field (31 of 57) and 36.8 percent (7 of 19) on threes.

Kaleb Wesson scored just 12 points on 4-of-13 shooting and committed six turnovers. The Westerville, Ohio, native dealt with foul trouble after having three fouls in a less than five-minute span in the second half, leaving him with four for the final 13:47.

Washington missed the game with a rib injury, and his absence was felt by the previously unbeaten Buckeyes. Andre Wesson started in his place and scored six points while also committing four fouls.

"I'm not sure that with Duane we'd win this game tonight," Holtmann said. "They were physically tougher, and we've got to get better in that area. I've got to coach that better; we've got to play better. His absence obviously leaves a scoring vacancy, but I don't think it was ever really one of those games where it was within reach enough."

Liddell contributed 14 points and five boards with two steals and two blocks in 20 minutes off the Buckeye bench.

The Buckeyes battled through a bad first half, where they trailed 38-29 after committing eight turnovers at the break. The Gophers' starters each scored at least six points in the half and they shot 51.7 percent (15 of 29) from the field as a team.

Ohio State shot just 34.5 percent from the floor (10 of 29) with Kaleb Wesson leading with eight points and Carton adding seven in the first 20 minutes.

The Scarlet and Gray led 14-11 after a Carton triple and Liddell jumper at 13:15 in the first. However, Ohio State then went more than six minutes without a field goal, giving way to a 13-2 Minnesota run and a 24-16 lead at the 7:15 mark.

"They were just physical," Holtmann said. "They got into us and bothered us with their physicality."

Kaleb Wesson answered for the Buckeyes with an old-fashioned three-point play then hit a shot from beyond the arc shortly after to cut the Gopher lead to 27-23. That was the closest the Buckeyes would get from that point, though, as Minnesota would push its lead to nine by halftime.

Ohio State closed the deficit to single digits on multiple occasions in the second half, but it wasn't enough.

Carton stole the ball and dunked, and freshman forward Alonzo Gaffney knocked down a midrange jumper. Then, Carton knocked down a pair of foul shots and added a layup to trim Minnesota's lead to 69-58 with 4:17 remaining before a pair of Liddell free throws trimmed the deficit to nine, but that was as close as the Buckeyes would get and students

rushed the floor after the Gophers upset the third-ranked Buckeyes.

"Give their players a lot of credit," Holtmann said of Minnesota. "I thought they really played well, really deserved to win. We've got to figure out how to coach better and play better moving forward, and that's the challenge for us."

Ohio State continued the Big Ten's winless streak in conference road games, pushing the drought to 0-13.

OSU Overcomes Sluggish Start, Wins Big

Despite a slow start, Ohio State defeated Southeast Missouri State 80-48 at in front of 13,177 fans at Value City Arena on Dec. 17.

Kaleb Wesson led the way for Ohio State (10-1, 1-1), scoring 18 points and grabbing 10 rebounds on 6-of-8 shooting, while adding two assists and two blocks. Young also gave the Buckeyes a spark with 10 points and nine rebounds on 4-of-4 shooting.

Holtmann received excellent production from his point guards. Walker scored seven points, making 2 of 3 three-pointers with a team-high six assists, while Carton contributed 10 points and five assists on 4-of-9 shooting off the bench.

Washington missed a second game with his rib injury, and senior wing Andre Wesson again replaced him in the starting lineup, drilling 3 of 5 triples and scoring 14 points.

After the Scarlet and Gray started the game with a 7-2 spurt, the Redhawks answered with a 7-0 run to take the lead.

"We just weren't playing Ohio State basketball," Kaleb Wesson said. "We were pressing a lot instead of moving the ball and playing like we've been playing the whole year. We got out of our ways a little bit."

The Buckeyes and Redhawks battled back and forth until the visitors took a 16-12 lead with 9:39 left in the half. Ohio State answered with a 9-0 run, sparked by back-to-back triples from Young and Kaleb Wesson.

While they struggled with turnovers offensively, the Buckeyes locked in defensively and held the Redhawks without a field goal for more than eight minutes down the stretch of the first half.

The visitors hit five free throws during that span.

"Our coaches put us in great spots on defense to play their personnel and be able to close out on their shooters and play their drives," Kaleb Wesson said of the team's defense. "In that one-day prep, our coaches prepared us pretty well."

They were able to push their first-half lead to nine points, but the Buckeyes struggled with turnovers and fouls through the first 20 minutes. Despite shooting 63.6 percent from the field and 45.5 percent from three-point range and holding the Redhawks to 28.6 percent shooting, Ohio State led only 35-26 at the break due to 13 turnovers.

"We just felt like we were out there playing too frantic, not really doing us," Young said. "We had way too many turnovers starting off, so that was one thing we knew. Just take care of the ball. It was just a matter of passing and catching because it was just simple stuff for us. Once we were able to do that, we were back to playing basketball like we do in the second half."

The Buckeyes led 37-28 in the second half before erupting offensively. Ohio State fired off a 22-2 run highlighted by four three-pointers and a pair of and-one conversions. After that run, the closest the visitors would get was 27 points, and Ohio State won by 32.

Overall, Ohio State shot 58.8 percent (30 of 51) from the floor and 48.1 percent from beyond the arc (13 of 27), while Southeast Missouri State knocked down just 26.7 percent of field goals (16 of 60) and 21.1 percent of triples (4 of 19).

Minnesota 84, Ohio State 71

Dec. 15, 2019												
Williams Arena • Minneapolis, MN												
	1		2		F							
Ohio State (9-1, 1-1)	29	42	71									
Minnesota (5-5, 1-1)	38	46	84									
Ohio State	Total FG FT		Reb.									
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
A. Wesson	29	2-5	1-2	0-0	1	4	6					
Young	20	2-4	2-2	2-3	1	1	6					
K. Wesson	28	4-13	3-5	0-6	3	4	12					
Muhammad	29	2-7	1-2	0-0	2	2	7					
Walker	34	2-10	0-0	1-1	2	3	5					
Gaffney	3	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	2					
Carton	26	6-12	5-6	1-1	2	1	19					
Ahrens	11	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	2	0					
Liddell	20	4-7	6-6	4-1	0	3	14					
Totals	200	23-60	18-23	11-17	11	20	71					
Percentages:	FG: 38.3%	FT: 78.3%	3-point goals:									
	7-20 (A. Wesson 1-3, K. Wesson 1-4, Muhammad 2-3, Walker 1-4, Carton 2-4, Ahrens 0-1, Liddell 0-1).											
Team rebounds:	7. Blocked shots: 3 (Liddell 2, K. Wesson). Turnovers: 14 (K. Wesson 6, Carton 5, A. Wesson, Muhammad, Liddell). Steals: 8 (Walker 3, Liddell 2, Muhammad, Carton, Ahrens).											
Minnesota	Total FG FT		Reb.									
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Demir	23	2-4	2-2	0-3	2	3	7					
Oturu	38	6-12	2-2	7-6	1	4	14					
Willis	19	2-4	0-0	0-6	3	0	6					
Carr	38	12-17	8-9	0-3	7	1	35					
Kalscheur	35	7-15	0-1	1-2	1	3	15					
Williams	27	2-5	2-4	0-3	1	4	6					
Omersa	19	0-0	1-2	1-4	1	2	1					
Hurt	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	31-57	15-20	11-29	17	84						
Percentages:	FG: 54.4%	FT: 75.0%	3-point goals:									
	7-19 (Demir 1-1, Oturu 0-1, Willis 2-4, Carr 3-6, Kalscheur 1-7). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 4 (Oturu 2, Carr, Williams). Turnovers: 16 (Carr 5, Oturu 3, Kalscheur 3, Williams 3, Demir, Willis). Steals: 8 (Willis 2, Carr 2, Williams 2, Demir, Kalscheur).											
Officials:	Szelc, Sciotto, Oglesby. Attendance: 9,854.											

Holtmann was pleased with his team's defensive effort and used some of the mistakes as teaching moments for his younger players in what became a lopsided affair.

"We had pretty consistent effort for the most part," Holtmann said. "We had a couple of situations where we lost track of guys and we got beat to the outside. We had a couple times where they ripped baseline in the post on us, but that gives us an opportunity to talk to our guys. I subbed a couple guys out and had that conversation. But overall, our effort on that end was fairly consistent."

Although the Buckeyes turned the ball over 21 times, the Redhawks were able to score only three points off those errors. Ohio State scored 15 points off 12 Southeast Missouri State turnovers.

Kaleb Wesson gave the Buckeyes and their fans a scare when he went down with an injury less than three minutes into the game. The

Ohio State 80, SEMO 48

Dec. 17, 2019												
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
	1		2		F							
SEMO (3-8, 0-0)	26	22	48									
Ohio State (10-1, 1-1)	35	45	80									
SEMO	Total FG FT		Reb.									
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Tolbert	22	1-7	1-2	3-3	0	2	3					
Agnew	15	2-4	0-0	0-1	0	4	4					
Caldwell	24	1-9	0-0	1-1	0	2	2					
Hogan	32	0-8	2-2	1-1	1	0	2					
Nicholas	32	3-6	4-5	1-2	1	0	10					
Love	5	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Kao	24	3-13	2-2	0-2	0	2	9					
Wilson	19	1-3	3-3	1-2	2	3	5					
Morrison	3	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	3					
Gable	21	4-8	0-0	0-0	0	4	10					
Russell	3	0-0	0-0	0-1	1	0	0					
Totals	200	16-60	12-14	8-17	5	17	48					
Percentages:	FG: 26.7%	FT: 85.7%	3-point goals:									
	4-19 (Agnew 0-1, Caldwell 0-4, Hogan 0-4, Nicholas 0-1, Kao 1-4, Morrison 1-1, Gable 2-4).											
Team rebounds:	4. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 12 (Agnew 3, Tolbert 2, Caldwell, Hogan, Nicholas, Wilson, Gable, Russell, TEAM). Steals: 3 (Tolbert, Caldwell, Kao).											
Ohio State	Total FG FT		Reb.									
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
A. Wesson	27	5-7	1-1	0-2	3	0	14					
Young	21	4-4	1-2	0-9	1	1	10					
K. Wesson	27	6-8	3-4	2-8	2	4	18					
Muhammad	17	1-3	0-0	0-0	2	3	3					
Walker	26	2-3	1-2	0-2	6	1	7					
Gaffney	12	3-6	0-0	0-3	1	2	6					
Carton	23	4-9	0-0	1-4	5	4	10					
Ahrens	19	1-3	0-0	1-0	2	0	3					
Diallo	3	0-1	0-0	1-1	0	0	0					
Liddell	21	4-6	1-3	0-5	0	1	9					
Hummer	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	1	0	0					
Hookfin	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	30-51	7-12	7-37	23	16	80					
Percentages:	FG: 58.8%	FT: 58.3%	3-point goals:									
	13-27 (A. Wesson 3-5, Young 1-1, K. Wesson 3-4, Muhammad 1-3, Walker 2-3, Gaffney 0-2, Carton 2-5, Ahrens 1-3, Hummer 0-1). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 6 (K. Wesson 2, Liddell 2, Gaffney, Ahrens). Turnovers: 21 (K. Wesson 5, Walker 5, A. Wesson 3, Carton 2, Young, Muhammad, Gaffney, Diallo, Liddell, TEAM). Steals: 4 (Young, Walker, Liddell, Hummer).											
Officials:	Wells, McJunkins, Riley. Attendance: 13,177.											

big man walked off the court under his own power and went straight to the locker room for evaluation. He returned just more than two minutes later.

Holtmann and the Buckeyes left the game feeling uneasy about all their turnovers, knowing they would have to turn it around four days later against No. 6 Kentucky in Las Vegas.

"We didn't play with enough force or strength," Holtmann said. "It's just stuff we need to work through and get better at, honestly. I love the 23 assists, but this is now two games where we've had a lot of turnovers. We're playing the best defensive team I've seen on film since I've been here on (Dec. 21). We're going to need to be better, for sure."

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OSU Finishes One Of Nation's Toughest Starts

The Ohio State women's basketball team came into the season one of the youngest in the country, and before this group of almost entirely underclassmen even had played a conference game together, they had to go through one of the most difficult schedules in the country.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

After games against Stanford, UConn and Louisville, teams that combined to start the season 27-1 and are ranked No. 1, 2 and 6 in the country respectively, the Buckeyes already knew what it was like to handle adversity.

But Ohio State didn't just handle the difficult schedule. It managed to pull off one of the largest upsets of the season by defeating then-No. 2 Louisville 67-60. This came just 10 days after a closer-than-expected 11-point loss to the Huskies, and 10 days before a 71-52 defeat to the Cardinal.

Coming out of this stretch with a 1-2 record was more than anybody expected from a team that relies on six freshmen, three sophomores and one junior transfer, and it showed just how much potential

this Ohio State squad holds.

"It felt pretty good knowing that we beat somebody that was ranked No. 2," freshman guard Kierstan Bell said after defeating Louisville on Dec. 5. "People were doubting us, and we showed them that we can play and brought energy."

Ohio State's victory over Louisville was the only win an unranked team – or a team ranked below Indiana at No. 12 – has over any opponent in the top 10 and was enough for the Buckeyes to earn six votes in the AP poll, putting them at No. 30 and sitting just outside the top 25 as of Dec. 10.

Following the loss to Stanford, the Buckeyes still earned a lone AP vote in the following rankings.

But, according to Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff, there is plenty more that the Buckeyes still have left to accomplish this year.

"As I told the team, if this is the pinnacle of our season, then we didn't have the season we were capable of having, because we have a long way to go," McGuff said after the Louisville win. "We can get better in pretty much all phases of the game, but we competed really hard tonight, we defended, we rebounded against one of the best rebounding teams in the country, and so I'm really happy with the win."

This difficult schedule may end up being advantageous down the stretch for the Buckeyes, both with the amount of experience gained and for now having a marquee nonconference win under their belt come NCAA tournament time. But the

brutally tough schedule before Big Ten play hits was all a complete accident.

"Louisville was part of the ACC/Big Ten Challenge, which we don't get a choice on that one, and I thought we were the younger team, we might get somebody different, but that's fine," McGuff said. "We were supposed to play Stanford last year, but then the (California) fires didn't allow us to do it, so we would have been past that game, probably wouldn't have scheduled it knowing how young we are, and then the same thing with Connecticut. We were supposed to play them here three years ago. We were supposed to play them at Nationwide (Arena) initially, the year the Final Four was here, and then we were going to return there, but then the game was moved around because of TV, so then that pushed it back two years."

"Both Stanford and UConn, we were already supposed to be past those, so there you go. So, we have a natural disaster and a TV snafu that led to them being on the schedule this year."

Ohio State, with a team younger than almost any, and with a schedule that never was meant to be created, has managed to make all of it a positive, and that was one of the reasons the major upset against Louisville happened in the first place.

"I think it gave us some confidence that we can play with the best teams in the country," McGuff said following the Louisville victory. "I thought the difference tonight was we executed down the stretch better, we made more shots and we made free throws."

Sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz,

who led the team in scoring against the Cardinals, said the tough matchups have just proved that the Buckeyes can really compete with any team in the country.

"UConn is a really great team and they play really well together, but we were so close, even if we are so young," Juhasz said. "This (Louisville win) was another really good, important thing to show that we're a tough team, and any doubters, we're going to fight and compete against anyone, No. 2, No. 100, and I think it's really good for our confidence."

With Big Ten play starting on Dec. 28, only time will tell how much the challenging nonconference slate helped prepare the team for conference play.

Kierstan Bell Wins B1G Freshman Of The Week

Bell rode a strong performance against Louisville into another efficient game against Radford, and the pair of performances was enough for the first-year guard to win her first Big Ten Freshman of the Week honor.

In the victory against the No. 2 Cardinals, Bell put in 14 points, 12 in the second half, on 4-of-9 shooting with six rebounds, an assist and a steal.

Three days later against Radford, Bell put in 15 points, this time on 6-of-7 shooting, which included hitting all three three-point attempts.

"She's getting better," McGuff said. "The biggest thing is she obviously came in with a lot of talent, but like all of (the freshmen), they haven't done what we do, and so she's getting a little more comfort-



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Sophomore Guard
Cranston, Rhode Island

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OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

able in our system, and we're seeing her start to flourish a little bit. She's been much more efficient."

The pair of performances, even after being shutout against Stanford, gives Bell 9.9 points per game through the first 10 games of her collegiate career, a strong start that does not surprise her teammate, sophomore guard Janai Crooms.

"I've always known Kierstan was a bucket, so I feel like she's just continuing to get better and better," Crooms said. "Defense, offense, her shooting is improving a lot, so I'm really excited for her because she's going to have a really good season for us."

Reactions To Buckeyes At No. 2 In CFP

Ohio State had its Dec. 8 matchup against Radford a little over an hour after the Buckeyes were placed behind LSU at No. 2 in the final rankings of the College Football Playoff.

After the 13-point victory over the Highlanders, a few of the players, as well as McGuff, had thoughts on where Ohio State was placed and its chances in the upcoming matchup against Clemson.

McGuff: "I thought that we deserved to be No. 1, and I think just our overall résumé was a little stronger, and I know it was very close, kind of splitting hairs, but I thought we should have been No. 1."

"It's going to be tough, they (Clemson) are good, but I really believe in this team, and I also think a couple weeks for some of those guys to get healthy is going to go a long way for us. I think we'll be ready."

Juhasz: "I mean we have to beat everyone if we want to be champions, right? I



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIG-TIME FRESHMAN – Guard Kierstan Bell earned her first Big Ten Freshman of the Week award following a 14-point performance against Louisville and a 15-point outing against Radford.

think the guys are ready."

Bell: "Nah, I'm still going with my dawgs. They always start off slow, though. I don't know why they do that."

Plank's Lady Buck Of The Month

With the Buckeyes having such a wide

cast of scorers and spreading the wealth throughout the roster, it would only make sense that the main facilitator for the offense in Crooms should be selected for the Plank's Lady Buck of the Month for November.

Crooms only averaged 7.7 points per game in the seven games during the month,

but her 5.4 assists led the team, while also averaging 5.0 rebounds per game.

In the first month of the season, Crooms managed a pair of double-doubles, tallying 10 points and 12 assists in an overtime victory against Cincinnati, as well as an 11-point, 11-rebound performance against Kent State just two games later.

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Unranked Bucks Stun Second-Ranked Cardinals

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After hanging tough in an 11-point defeat to UConn, it was clear that Ohio State had the capabilities to compete with some of the best teams in the country. But on Dec. 5, the Buckeyes proved more than that.

Against Louisville, the No. 2 team in the country that was coming off a 10-point win against the former top-ranked team in the nation, Ohio State took a five-point lead into the fourth quarter and held on the rest of the way, stunning the Cardinals with a 67-60 victory in front of a home crowd of 3,807 in Value City Arena and giving Louisville its first loss to an unranked opponent in 103 games.

"I thought we beat a great team," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "Louisville, they're an excellent team. I thought they played really hard, and it's a great win for us."

Ohio State held a 62-53 lead with 4:36 to play in the fourth quarter, but a pair of baskets by Norika Konno cut the lead to five with 3:47 to go.

But after a multitude of stops on the defensive end, a made free throw by Braxtin Miller with 35 seconds to play made the lead six points, and Kierstan Bell shut the door entirely with two more free throws with 25 seconds left to seal the game.

"When it comes to crunch time, you know you have to knock it down," Bell said. "I wasn't really thinking about anything. I was just like, 'Make these two free throws and close them out,' and that's what we did."

Bell was a major spark for the Buckeyes in the second half, scoring 12 or her 14 points in the final 20 minutes, while also adding four rebounds, giving her six for the game.

"I knew the team needed me, so you know I had to step up and take part, so that's what I did and it worked out," Bell said. "That's a team win right there."

Freshman forward Rebeka Mikulasikova continued her hot stretch of games, finishing with 11 points on a perfect 3-of-3 shooting, including a pair of makes from three.

Another European forward was key for the Buckeyes in sophomore Dorka Juhasz. Juhasz played 33 minutes and ended with 15 points and seven rebounds on 6-of-9 shooting.

Juhasz said that loss to the Huskies less than two weeks ago was a major influence in pulling out the victory over Louisville.

"I feel like after the really close UConn

game, this one was more of a chance to prove what we are capable of, so we were really motivated to beat Louisville," Juhasz said. "It was that feeling when we have some adrenaline and we were fighting for each other, so it was a really great game and we were really happy after."

After holding a 19-17 lead at the end of the first quarter, Ohio State went down two at the half, 33-31 thanks in part to a 10-0 run that put Louisville up 29-21 with 3:58 left before the break.

The Buckeyes shot 47.6 percent (10 of 21) in the opening two quarters and held Louisville to 42.4 percent shooting (14 of 33), but a 10-to-5 turnover margin in favor of the Cardinals helped make the difference in the first 20 minutes.

Louisville's Dana Evans led the way for the Cardinals in scoring, finishing with 18 points.

The Buckeyes held the Cardinals to 36.9 percent shooting (24 of 65) on the night and made significant improvements at the free-throw line, hitting 19 of 23 attempts from the charity stripe for 82.6 percent.

"We're working on it every day, I'm telling you, we're in practice every single day," McGuff said of the team's free-throw shooting. "We're working on it, and it was great to see our kids step up, and that was - you know we weren't going to win unless we made those free throws."

Buckeyes Continue Winning Ways Against Radford

In its next game following the stunning upset, Ohio State let a less talented Radford team hang around for much of the game, but the Buckeyes eventually prevailed, defeating the Highlanders 70-57 in front of a crowd of 3,902 in Value City Arena on Dec. 8.

"I didn't think we had the same focus and energy that we had (Dec. 5), and that's going to leave you vulnerable in these games," McGuff said. "I think we've shown the ability to bounce back after a tough loss and just keeping fighting through and getting better. This was our first test to handle success, and I would say we didn't quite necessarily handle it the way I wanted to."

Juhasz was the primary scorer for the Buckeyes all afternoon, using her height advantage to finish with 21 points and six rebounds.

"I was able to use my length, so I got a lot of points in the post, which I have to credit for the guards that passed it inside," Juhasz said.

Bell also turned in another strong performance for Ohio State, tallying 15

Ohio State 67, Louisville 60

Dec. 5, 2019 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
		1	2	3	4	F						
Louisville (8-1)		17	16	12	15	60						
Ohio State (5-3)		19	12	19	17	67						
Louisville												
	Min.	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.				
Shook	24	2-8	2-2	0-5	2	3	6					
Dunham	31	4-10	2-5	7-4	2	3	10					
Evans	36	6-18	3-4	1-0	0	0	18					
Balogun	30	2-7	0-0	1-3	3	1	6					
Jones	20	1-8	0-0	0-1	3	5	2					
Dixon	18	4-5	0-1	2-1	0	1	8					
Konno	27	4-7	0-0	2-1	1	3	8					
Robinson	4	0-0	0-0	0-1	1	0	0					
Diop	5	1-1	0-0	1-0	0	1	2					
Duvall	2	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	2	0					
Lockhart	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Totals		200	24-65	7-12	15	19	20	60				
Percentages: FG: 36.9%. FT: 58.3%. Three-point field goals: 5-17 (Shook 0-2, Evans 3-7, Balogun 2-5, Jones 0-1, Konno 0-1, Duvall 0-1). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 1 (Balogun). Turnovers: 11 (Dunham 4, Evans 2, Balogun, Jones, Dixon, Konno 2). Steals: 9 (Dunham 2, Evans 3, Jones 2, Konno, Diop).												
Ohio State												
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	33	6-9	1-2	0-7	1	2	15					
Patty	18	1-2	0-0	1-4	0	2	2					
Crooms	35	5-9	0-0	0-5	2	1	11					
Miller	34	2-7	5-7	0-2	4	1	9					
Bell	22	4-9	5-5	1-5	1	2	14					
Sheldon	22	0-3	3-4	0-1	2	1	3					
Mikulasikova	19	3-3	3-3	0-4	1	1	11					
Greene	10	0-0	2-2	0-0	0	1	2					
Wone	6	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Totals		200	21-43	19-23	3-29	11	12	67				
Percentages: FG: 48.8%. FT: 82.6%. Three-point field goals: 6-19 (Juhasz 2-4, Patty 0-1, Crooms 1-2, Miller 0-1, Bell 1-5, Sheldon 0-3, Mikulasikova 2-2, Wone 0-1). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 3 (Juhasz, Patty, Crooms). Turnovers: 17 (Juhasz 2, Patty 2, Crooms 4, Miller 3, Mikulasikova 3, Greene 1, Wone 2). Steals: 5 (Juhasz 2, Crooms 2, Bell).												
Officials: Zentz, Cross, Morris. Attendance: 3,807.												

points, 11 of which came in the second half. Bell and Juhasz combined to shoot 16 of 20 from the field.

"Just getting in the open windows," Bell said as the reason for her success. "Some of the plays I was just wide open, and they looked at me and they gave it to me, and I knocked down big shots, and that's probably about it, just getting in the open areas."

A pair of Bell threes in the fourth quarter, the second at 6:24, helped push the Ohio State lead to 58-43, the largest advantage in the game to that point. But Radford didn't give in, with sophomore guard Makaila Wilson hitting a consecutive pair of threes herself to bring the Buckeye lead back down to nine.

Juhasz added a layup to make it 60-49, but Wilson kept attacking, hitting another shot from deep to make it an eight-point game.

Eventually, with a three from freshman guard Jacy Sheldon, another Juhasz layup and a bucket by Kaelynn Satterfield to cap a 7-0 run, the Buckeyes broke it open, 70-54, and held on for the 13-point win.

The turnover battle was fairly even in the game - Ohio State finished with 15 turnovers to Radford's 18 - but it

Ohio State 70, Radford 57

Dec. 8, 2019 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
		1	2	3	4	F						
Radford (2-5)		13	12	13	19	57						
Ohio State (6-3)		15	15	19	21	70						
Radford												
	Min.	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.				
Lindenfeld	36	5-6	0-0	0-1	1	2	15					
Rainford	25	2-5	2-4	3-4	1	3	6					
Ngwafang	25	1-4	0-4	2-3	0	2	2					
K. Johnson	35	4-17	6-8	1-3	5	0	16					
McClellan	26	1-5	0-0	0-1	4	1	2					
Corbin	5	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Wilson	26	5-8	0-0	0-2	0	0	14					
LaLonde	12	1-2	0-0	0-2	0	3	2					
T. Johnson	4	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	1	0					
Williams	7	0-3	0-0	0-0	2	0	0					
Totals		200	19-51	8-16	10	23	12	57				
Percentages: FG: 37.3%. FT: 50.0%. Three-point field goals: 11-19 (Lindenfeld 5-5, K. Johnson 2-4, McClellan 0-1, Wilson 4-7, LaLonde 0-1, Williams 0-1). Team rebounds: 7. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 18 (Lindenfeld 2, Rainford 1, Ngwafang 4, K. Johnson 3, McClellan, Wilson 3, LaLonde, Williams, Team 2). Steals: 5 (Rainford, Ngwafang, K. Johnson, Williams 2).												
Ohio State												
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	31	10-13	1-3	1-5	0	1	21					
Patty	12	2-4	0-0	0-5	0	0	5					
Crooms	26	1-3	0-0	0-5	1	3	3					
Miller	33	2-8	0-0	0-0	6	1	4					
Bell	24	6-7	0-0	0-2	1	2	15					
Sheldon	29	3-7	3-3	2-1	3	2	10					
Mikulasikova	14	2-6	0-0	2-1	1	1	6					
Greene	9	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Wone	12	0-1	0-0	1-2	2	4	0					
Satterfield	11	1-2	4-4	1-2	1	1	6					
Totals		200	27-52	8-10	7-24	15	15	70				
Percentages: FG: 51.9%. FT: 80.0%. Three-point field goals: 8-22 (Juhasz 0-2, Patty 1-2, Crooms 1-1, Miller 0-3, Bell 3-3, Sheldon 1-4, Mikulasikova 2-4, Greene 0-1, Wone 0-1, Satterfield 0-1). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 6 (Patty 2, Crooms 3, Bell). Turnovers: 15 (Juhasz, Patty, Crooms 4, Bell, Sheldon, Mikulasikova 3, Greene 2, Wone, Satterfield). Steals: 11 (Juhasz, Crooms, Miller 3, Bell 2, Sheldon 2, Mikulasikova, Greene).												
Officials: Enterline, Enlund, Forsberg. Attendance: 3,902.												

was what the teams did with those turnovers that made the difference. While the Highlanders scored only seven points off turnovers, the Buckeyes finished with 21.

Radford struggled to shoot the ball consistently most of the night, at least from inside the arc. The Highlanders shot 37.3 percent (19 of 51) overall, but only 25.0 percent (8 of 32) from two, while hitting 11 of 19 attempts (57.9 percent) from three.

Junior forward Tina Lindenfeld was the most efficient scorer for Radford, finishing with 15 points on a perfect 5-of-5 shooting from deep.

"That just means their confidence is really, really high, so that means they're going to knock down big shots, and that's what they did," Bell said. "There's nothing we could do about it but stop letting them shoot, and at the end we let off a little bit, but we kept it in the game."

Turnover-Heavy Buckeyes Fall To Stanford

In its third matchup against a top-10 team this season, Ohio State could not find the same magic that it did in its stun-

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OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

ning upset against Louisville, losing to No. 1 Stanford on the road 71-52 in front of a crowd of 2,970 at Maples Pavilion. The defeat ended a three-game win streak for the Buckeyes.

"They executed at an incredibly high level, offensively and defensively and we just didn't match that execution," McGuff said. "We had too many breakdowns defensively and too many turnovers on our own end."

Turnovers were a problem for both teams in the game, with Ohio State committing 24 compared to Stanford's 21. Sophomore guard Janai Crooms committed seven of the Buckeye turnovers, while Stanford guard Lexie Hull finished with seven steals, all of which came in the first half.

The Cardinal turned those turnovers into 28 points compared to Ohio State's 23 points off turnovers.

"I think that when we got down early, we just tried to create plays in the first five to 10 seconds of the shot clock and Stanford is just too good defensively to do that and we just ended up turning the ball over," McGuff said. "It was just kind of an epidemic for us tonight."

Though Crooms struggled with holding onto the ball, she was a primary scorer for the Buckeyes on the evening, finishing with team highs of 15 points and six rebounds while hitting seven of her 10 shots.

A Crooms runner at the end of the third quarter kept Ohio State close to striking distance, putting the score at 56-42 heading into the fourth after the hosts' lead had ballooned to as much as 20 points, 45-25, at the 7:21 mark. Stanford kept the Scarlet and Gray contained in the final 10 minutes, outscoring Ohio State 15-10.

As a team, the Buckeyes shot 38.6 percent from the field (22 of 57), and with that returned struggles at the free-throw line, where they only hit four of their nine attempts (44.4 percent). Stanford, on the other hand, shot exactly 50.0 percent (30 of 60) from the field for the evening.

The Cardinal began to pull away from Ohio State with an 11-0 run that started at the end of the first quarter and continued into the second.

Stanford outscored the Buckeyes 20-10 in the second quarter, which gave the Cardinal a 37-23 lead at the half.

Bell had a night to forget for Ohio State, finishing with zero points, missing all eight shot attempts and turning the ball over four times.

"She had some shots and she just couldn't get anything to fall," McGuff said. "We need her, we need her on offense, we need her to score the ball, and it just didn't happen tonight."

Hull, Haley Jones, Francesca Belibi and Kiana Williams were the major scorers for Stanford, all of whom ended the

night in double figures and who combined for 54 points with Jones scoring 15 and the others chipping in 13 each.

Bucks Down Sacramento State With Seven-Player Rotation

Following a loss to the top team in the country, Ohio State finished off its West Coast road trip by rolling to a 104-74 road victory against Sacramento State in front of a crowd of 318 to end its nonconference slate with a 7-4 record.

This is the first time the Buckeyes surpassed 100 points during the current regular season, as they were able to put up 131 points against Urbana in a pre-season exhibition. It was the 34th 100-point game in program history and the first since a Dec. 15, 2017, matchup against Dartmouth when Ohio State put up 103 points.

The Buckeyes were able to handily defeat the lesser opponent that came in with only one victory on the season, and managed to do so with a undermanned roster.

Crooms, Bell and Satterfield did not play for Ohio State against Sacramento State (1-7) because of a violation of team rules, according to an Ohio State spokesman.

McGuff did not comment further on why the three did not play and said he could not comment or if this will be the only game any of them will miss.

"It's just a violation of team rules, and I'll just kind of let that stand," McGuff said.

Crooms and Bell were the only two players to have started in all 10 games this season.

The duo was replaced in the starting lineup by a pair of freshmen in Sheldon and forward Aixa Wone, and their absence gave Ohio State only seven dressed players to use in the game.

"You just have to step up and play, and I thought our kids did a great job at staying together," McGuff said. "They really were great teammates tonight, and they really stepped up in a tough situation."

Sheldon took advantage of the opportunity. In her second career collegiate start, she finished with a career-high 23 points on 9-of-11 shooting in 33 minutes.

"Jacy was really, really quick up the court today," McGuff said. "She got a lot of baskets in transition just because she was running so hard."

Juhasz may be used to starting for the Buckeyes, but she was crucial for Ohio State in the win, tying her career high with 27 points, 12 of which came during a pivotal third quarter, and also brought in 16 rebounds.

"Dorka did a great job," McGuff said. "She had good balance, she scored from the perimeter, but more importantly is she had a great presence around the basket and her teammates did a good job

Stanford 71, Ohio State 52

Dec. 16, 2019										
Maples Pavilion • Stanford, Calif.										
	1	2	3	4	F					
Ohio State (6-4)	13	10	19	10	52					
Stanford (9-0)	17	20	19	15	71					
Ohio State	Total FG FT		Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Juhasz	26	5-6	0-3	1-1	1	0	10			
Patty	21	2-6	0-0	2-3	0	3	5			
Crooms	26	7-10	0-0	3-3	2	2	15			
Miller	25	1-6	0-2	1-3	4	1	2			
Bell	23	0-8	0-0	0-2	1	0	0			
Sheldon	23	3-6	0-0	0-2	0	0	7			
Wone	13	1-1	0-0	1-2	0	0	2			
Mikulasikova	19	2-6	0-0	0-0	0	1	5			
Greene	16	1-6	2-2	0-1	1	2	4			
Satterfield	8	0-2	2-2	1-1	0	0	2			
Totals	200	22-57	4-9	11-21	9	9	52			
Percentages:	FG: 38.6%	FT: 44.4%	Three-point field goals: 4-19 (Patty 1-3, Crooms 1-3, Miller 0-3, Bell 0-3, Sheldon 1-3, Mikulasikova 1-1, Greene 0-1, Satterfield 0-2). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 24 (Juhasz 3, Patty, Crooms 7, Miller 2, Bell 4, Sheldon, Wone 3, Mikulasikova, Satterfield, Team). Steals: 15 (Juhasz 2, Crooms 2, Miller 2, Bell 2, Sheldon 3, Wone, Greene 2, Satterfield).							
Stanford	Total FG FT		Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Fingall	28	4-5	0-0	1-2	0	1	8			
Jerome	15	0-2	0-0	0-1	1	0	0			
Hull	30	5-13	1-1	2-1	0	1	13			
Williams	31	6-10	0-0	0-6	2	1	13			
Jones	35	6-9	3-4	2-5	6	1	15			
Belibi	21	6-10	1-2	4-4	1	1	13			
Pretchel	6	0-0	0-0	0-3	0	1	0			
Jump	17	3-7	0-0	0-1	0	1	9			
Wilson	14	0-3	0-0	1-2	5	2	0			
Brown	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Moschkau	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Totals	200	30-60	5-7	10-27	15	9	71			
Percentages:	FG: 50.0%	FT: 71.4%	Three-point field goals: 6-24 (Fingall 0-1, Jerome 0-1, Hull 2-6, Williams 1-5, Jones 0-1, Jump 3-7, Wilson 0-2, Moschkau 0-1). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 2 (Fingall, Jones). Turnovers: 21 (Jerome, Hull 3, Williams 5, Jones 7, Belibi 4, Wilson). Steals: 15 (Fingall 4, Hull 7, Jones 2, Belibi, Pretchel). Officials: Pantoja, Flores, Woods. Attendance: 2,970.							

Ohio St. 104, Sacramento St. 74

Dec. 18, 2019										
The Nest • Sacramento, Calif.										
	1	2	3	4	F					
Ohio State (7-4)	36	14	27	27	104					
Sacramento St. (1-7)	20	22	16	16	74					
Ohio State	Total FG FT		Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Wone	28	2-5	0-0	2-4	3	2	5			
Juhasz	31	11-17	5-9	4-12	3	0	27			
Patty	24	4-7	4-4	3-7	4	2	13			
Sheldon	33	9-11	4-4	1-4	2	2	23			
Miller	35	5-15	2-2	2-5	7	1	13			
Greene	28	2-11	3-4	2-1	3	4	9			
Mikulasikova	22	7-11	0-0	1-2	3	3	14			
Totals	200	40-77	18-23	17-37	25	14	104			
Percentages:	FG: 51.9%	FT: 78.3%	Three-point field goals: 6-27 (Wone 1-2, Juhasz 0-2, Patty 1-3, Sheldon 1-3, Miller 1-6, Greene 2-8, Mikulasikova 0-3). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 8 (Juhasz 3, Patty 4, Mikulasikova). Turnovers: 18 (Wone 4, Juhasz 2, Patty, Sheldon, Miller 5, Greene 4, Mikulasikova). Steals: 14 (Wone, Juhasz 2, Sheldon 2, Miller 7, Greene 2).							
Sacramento St.	Total FG FT		Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Nicholas	18	2-7	3-4	3-4	0	4	8			
Enger	25	1-4	0-0	0-2	3	4	3			
King	24	2-11	4-4	2-1	2	0	8			
Menke	26	2-11	2-4	2-0	0	0	8			
Johnson	19	3-11	1-1	4-2	1	4	7			
Bade	25	6-13	2-2	1-2	3	2	16			
Gibson	16	2-4	0-2	1-3	2	1	5			
Panfili	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Wilson	14	2-9	0-0	0-2	2	0	6			
Olivares	10	2-2	0-0	0-2	0	0	5			
Abney	10	2-2	0-0	1-1	0	0	6			
Coe	10	2-4	0-0	0-3	0	1	2			
Enochs	2	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Totals	200	25-77	12-17	16-24	13	16	74			
Percentages:	FG: 32.5%	FT: 70.6%	Three-point field goals: 12-43 (Nicholas 1-1, Enger 1-4, King 0-5, Menke 2-9, Johnson 0-3, Bade 2-8, Gibson 1-1, Wilson 2-7, Olivares 1-1, Abney 2-4). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 2 (Nicholas, Coe). Turnovers: 20 (Nicholas 2, Enger 4, King 2, Johnson, Bade 3, Gibson, Panfili 2, Wilson, Olivares 2, Coe, Enochs). Steals: 9 (Enger, King, Menke 2, Bade, Wilson, Olivares 2, Abney). Officials: Scofield, Bird, Flores. Attendance: 318.							

getting her the ball there."

Even without a full roster, Ohio State still managed to come out of the gates quickly, amassing a 36-20 lead after the first quarter.

But after leading by as much as 19 points, a pair of strong spans for Sacramento State – an 11-0 run and a 6-0 run, the latter of which came at the end of the second quarter on three-pointers by Milia Gibson and Summer Menke – shortened the Buckeye lead to 50-42 by halftime, with Sheldon's 16 points leading all scorers. Juhasz added 12.

The Hornets continued on that run early in the third quarter, scoring seven of the first eight points to cut Ohio State's lead to two. But Ohio State immediately went on an 10-0 run from there and didn't look back.

After bringing the deficit to 51-49, Sacramento State was outscored 26-9 in the rest of the third quarter, and 53-25 overall the rest of the way.

"I thought we stayed together, and we didn't fracture when they made a run at us," McGuff said. "We started guarding

the ball a little bit better and contesting shots and then also making some really good decisions in transition."

On the night, Ohio State shot 51.9 percent from the field (40 of 77) and only 22.2 percent from three (6 of 27) but held Sacramento State to 32.5 percent shooting (25 of 77) overall on the other end. As a team, the Buckeyes also finished with a season-high 25 assists.

Though she wasn't able to fully get her shot going, Miller finished the game with seven rebounds, seven assists and seven steals to go with her 13 points.

With the win, McGuff now has 399 in his head coaching career. He will have an opportunity for win No. 400 when the Buckeyes open conference play against Purdue at noon on Dec. 28 at St. John Arena.

"They did a great job," McGuff said of his seven-player rotation. "We rotated quite a bit tonight with our lineups, but the kids did a great job really playing hard, and especially with just seven people and this style of play, it was really great to see."

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Legendary Iowa Football Coach Fry Passes Away

Legendary Iowa coach Hayden Fry died Dec. 17 at age 90 after a lengthy battle with cancer.

"Iowa Athletics has lost an icon, a man that raised the bar for every Hawkeye program, and every member of our athletics department," Iowa athletics director Gary Barta said. "Hayden was respected by everyone who knew him. His passing creates a void for all those who played for, coached with, and supported his successful tenure as our head football coach."

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

Fry posted a 143-89-6 record at Iowa, including a 96-61-5 ledger in the Big Ten. He led the Hawkeyes to three Big Ten championships, three Rose Bowl appearances, 14 bowl games and 10 AP top-25 finishes. He was inducted into college football's Hall of Fame in 2003 and the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame in 2010.

His influence on Iowa extended far beyond his coaching tenure, having been responsible for the Tigerhawk logo that all Iowa sports teams use, the "swarm" entrance to the field, the pink visitors locker room at Kinnick Stadium and the Pittsburgh Steelers-themed football uniforms. Barry Kemp, the creator of the television show "Coach," attended Iowa and drew inspiration for the show's title character from Fry.

Before Iowa, Fry coached North Texas for six seasons and SMU for 11 seasons, recording a 232-178-10 overall record. He won coach of the year honors in three leagues, the Southwest Conference, the Missouri Valley Conference and the Big Ten, where he received the award three times. Fry also won Sporting News' national coach of the year in 1981.

"Hayden Fry is a college football icon and an Iowa legend," Hawkeyes coach Kirk Ferentz, who was a longtime Fry assistant who succeeded Fry after the 1998 season, said in a statement. "His Hall of Fame career is well known, but

personally, he will always be the man who took a chance on me at the start of my coaching career. I was proud to coach with him and honored to succeed him when he retired. He's been a great mentor and a true friend. I am forever grateful to him."

Perhaps Fry's biggest impact on the gridiron came with numerous successful coaches who played for and/or coached under him. His coaching tree includes former Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops, former Wisconsin coach Barry Alvarez, former Kansas State coach Bill Snyder, former Wisconsin coach Bret Bielema, former Iowa State and North Texas coach Dan McCarney and current college coaches Mark Stoops (Kentucky), Bo Pelini (Youngstown State) and Jay Norvell (Nevada).

"His vision included hiring coaches who would be forward-thinking and challenge each other," Ferentz continued. "If you look across college football, you will see a part of his legacy in the coaches who he hired and mentored – coaches like Barry Alvarez, Bill Snyder, Dan McCarney, Bob, Mike and Mark Stoops and many more."

Penn State Extends Franklin Through 2025

Penn State head coach James Franklin received a contract extension that will run through 2025.

Franklin said the deal is important because it ensures recruits that he will be the head coach for the duration of their careers. He explained that it was gratifying to see former players and fans tweeting "We Are Better," which is Franklin's phrase for when the program lands a new commitment, in celebration of his contract extension.

"We have a bunch of recruits on campus today, and that's been a major point of conversation, recruits knowing that I have a contract that is going to last throughout their career," Franklin explained. "Whenever we get a new commitment, I tweet out 'we are better,' and it was really cool to see people tweeting that out with a connection to my contract. That was really cool and meant a lot to me and my wife."

Penn State finished at No. 10 in the final College Football Playoff rankings and will face

No. 17 Memphis in the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 28, with kickoff set for 12 p.m. ET on ESPN.

"James and his staff have done an exceptional job with our football student-athletes and in all aspects of the football program," Penn State AD Sandy Barbour said. "His values are Penn State's values, and they resonate throughout every member of the organization and team he has built."

Michigan Wide Receiver Enters Transfer Portal

Michigan junior wide receiver Tarik Black entered his name into the NCAA transfer portal, allowing coaches from other teams to recruit him. Black plans to pursue a graduate transfer for the 2020 season and will have two years of eligibility remaining.

"I would like to thank the University of Michigan coaching staff, training staff, my teammates, administration and true fan base for embracing me during my time in Ann Arbor," Black wrote in a post on Instagram. "I have built life-long friendships and bonds that will follow me the rest of my life and I'm truly thankful for this experience!"

"After speaking with my family and a lot of praying, I've decided to focus on completing my degree and pursue a graduate transfer for the 2020 season. I'll have two years of eligibility remaining and I'm excited to see what God has planned for the next chapter of my life."

"I will forever consider myself a Michigan Man and will continue to cheer on my brothers!"

Black's likely departure adds to the uncertainty in the Wolverines' receiver room, with junior wideouts Donovan Peoples-Jones and Nico Collins considering a move to the NFL.

The career of Black was hampered by injuries after he came to Ann Arbor as a consensus four-star recruit with a top-100 ranking from both ESPN and Rivals.

The Connecticut native suffered a fractured left foot as a freshman, ending his season with 11 receptions for 149 yards and one touchdown in three games.

Before his sophomore season, Black suffered a fractured right foot, forcing him to miss the first seven games of the season. He hauled in only four passes for 35 yards in six games.

After returning for his junior campaign in 2019, Black caught 25 passes for 323 yards and one touchdown. Black served as Michigan's fourth option at receiver, behind Peoples-Jones, Collins and sophomore Ronnie Bell, who led the team with 44 catches for 705 yards.

The Wolverines have young receivers awaiting their opportunity, including a trio of true freshmen in Mike Sainristil, Giles Jackson and Cornelius Johnson.

Black became the fourth Michigan player to enter his name into the transfer portal since the start of the season, joining safety J'Marick Woods, tight end Mustapha Muhammad (Houston) and linebacker Jordan Anthony.

Indiana Gives Allen A 7-Year Extension

Indiana and head coach Tom Allen agreed to a seven-year contract extension following an 8-4 regular season. The deal includes an average annual salary of \$3.9 million.

"I am humbled and thankful that President (Michael A.) McRobbie and (Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Fred) Glass continue to believe in our staff and the winning culture that we are creating," Allen said. "I love our staff and appreciate their tireless efforts as we continue to build this program into a winner the right way. Thank you to Indiana University, our fans, the Bloomington community and all of Hoosier Nation for their support. I am so appreciative of the young men who represent IU in such a first-class manner."

"We have a tremendous group of players. I am proud to be their head coach, and I am 100 percent committed to their success on the field, in the classroom and in life. It's no secret Indiana University is a special place to me. I was born a Hoosier, raised a Hoosier, and I am thrilled with the opportunity to remain a Hoosier for a long, long time to come."

Allen replaced former Hoosier head coach Kevin Wilson before the 2016 Foster Farms Bowl. Indiana lost in Allen's head-coaching debut, but the Hoosiers went 5-7 in each of his first two seasons (2017 and 2018).

Indiana roared to a 7-2 start in the 2019 season before losing two of its final three games. Three of its four losses (No. 1 Ohio State, No. 10 Penn State, No. 14 Michigan) have come against opponents who are ranked in the top 14 of the CFP rankings.

Allen and the Hoosiers are headed to a bowl game for just the fourth time since 1994. Indiana will play against Tennessee in the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl at 7 p.m. on Jan. 2 on ESPN.

Glass spoke highly of the progress Allen has made at the helm.

"When I hired Tom to be our head football coach, I said I was doing so because he is a leader of men who is demanding without being demeaning and a proven, successful coach on a national scale with deep Indiana ties who cares about his players, and they care back," Glass said of Allen. "In his three seasons, he has proven to be all of that and more, which is why I believe the future of Indiana football is in great hands."

Hoosier AD Glass Plans To Retire

Glass announced that he will retire at the end of this academic school year as Indiana's AD. Glass helped rebuild the men's basketball program after an NCAA scandal and turn around the football program in addition to renovating athletic facilities.

"It's time," Glass said. "It's an all-in, all-consuming role and I've loved it, but I'm ready to step back and do something that keeps me closer to home with more time with my grand-

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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (13-0, 10-0)

Aug. 31 FLORIDA ATLANTIC, W 45-21.
Sept. 7 CINCINNATI, W 42-0; **14** at Indiana, W 51-10;
21 MIAMI (OHIO), W 76-5; **28** at Nebraska, W 48-7.
Oct. 5 MICHIGAN STATE, W 34-10; **18** at Northwestern,
W 52-3; **26** WISCONSIN, W 38-7.
Nov. 9 MARYLAND, W 73-14; **16** at Rutgers, W 56-21;
23 PENN STATE, W 28-17; **30** at Michigan, W 56-27.
Dec. 7 Big Ten Championship Game vs. Wisconsin
at Indianapolis, W 34-21; **28** Fiesta Bowl vs. Clemson at
Glendale, Ariz., 8 p.m.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (10-1, 1-1)

Oct. 30 CEDARVILLE (exhibition), W 95-52.
Nov. 6 CINCINNATI, W 64-56; **10** UMASS-LOWELL, W
76-56; **13** VILLANOVA, W 76-51; **18** STETSON, W 86-51;
22 PURDUE FORT WAYNE, W 85-46; **25** KENT STATE, W
71-52; **29** MORGAN STATE, W 90-57.
Dec. 4 North Carolina, W 74-49; **7** PENN STATE,
W 106-74; **15** Minnesota, L 84-71; **17** SOUTHEAST
MISSOURI STATE, W 80-48; **21** Kentucky at Las Vegas,
5:15 p.m.; **29** West Virginia at Cleveland, 12 p.m.
Jan. 3 WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; **7** Maryland, 7 p.m.;
11 Indiana, 12 p.m.; **14** NEBRASKA, 6:30 p.m.; **18**
Penn State, 12 p.m.; **23** MINNESOTA, 6:30 p.m.; **26**
Northwestern, 6:30 p.m.
Feb. 1 INDIANA, 12 p.m.; **4** Michigan, 7 p.m.; **9**
Wisconsin, 1 p.m.; **12** RUTGERS, 7 p.m.; **15** PURDUE
12 p.m.; **20** Iowa, 7 p.m.; **23** MARYLAND, 4 p.m.; **27**
NEBRASKA, 9 p.m.
March 1 MICHIGAN, 4 p.m.; **5** ILLINOIS, 7 p.m.; **8**
Michigan State, 4:30 p.m. **11-15** Big Ten Tournament at
Indianapolis.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (7-4, 0-0)

Nov. 3 Urbana (exhibition), W 131-50; **10** Valparaiso
in Springfield, Ohio, W 89-38; **13** Cincinnati, W 78-73
(OT); **17** OHIO, L 74-68; **21** Kent State, W 75-65; **24**
UCONN, L 73-62; **29** South Dakota in Las Vegas, L 68-53;
30 Northern Iowa in Las Vegas, W 64-46.
Dec. 5 LOUISVILLE, W 67-60; **8** RADFORD, W 70-57;
15 Stanford, L 71-52; **17** Sacramento State, W 104-74; **28**
PURDUE, 12 p.m.; **31** Minnesota, 5 p.m.
Jan. 6 Maryland, 7 p.m.; **9** MICHIGAN, 6 p.m.; **12**
PENN STATE, 2 p.m.; **16** Michigan State, 6 p.m.; **19**
ILLINOIS, 2 p.m.; **23** Iowa, 8 p.m.; **30** MARYLAND, 6:30
p.m.

Feb. 2 Nebraska, 3 p.m.; **6** Illinois, 8 p.m.; **9**
WISCONSIN, 2 p.m.; **13** MINNESOTA, 7 p.m.; **16** Indiana,
2 p.m.; **19** NEBRASKA, 7 p.m.; **22** Rutgers, TBA; **25**
NORTHWESTERN, 6 p.m.; **29** Purdue, 4 p.m.

MARCH 4-8 Big Ten Tournament in Indianapolis.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (10-4-2, 6-3-1)

Oct. 6 WESTERN (exhibition), W 5-2; **11** Western
Michigan at Toledo, T 2-2; **12** RIT at Toledo, W 3-1; **18**
OMAHA, W 3-2; **19** OMAHA, L 2-1; **25** Mercyhurst, W 7-2;
26 Mercyhurst, W 3-1.

Nov. 1 MICHIGAN, W 3-2; **2** MICHIGAN, W 2-1; **8**
Notre Dame, L 3-2 (OT); **9** Notre Dame, L 2-1; **22** Penn
State, L 5-4; **23** Penn State, W 4-3; **30** MICHIGAN STATE,
W 3-1.

Dec. 1 MICHIGAN STATE, W 2-0; **6** MINNESOTA, W
3-2 (OT); **7** MINNESOTA, T 1-1 (L 3x3); **27** COLGATE, 7
p.m.; **28** COLGATE, 4 p.m.

Jan. 3 Cornell at Las Vegas, 11 p.m.; **4** Army at Las
Vegas; **10-11** Wisconsin; **17** NOTRE DAME, 6 p.m.; **18**

NOTRE DAME, 5 p.m.; **24-25** Minnesota; **31** Michigan.

Feb. 1 Michigan; **7** PENN STATE, 7 p.m.; **8** PENN STATE,
5 p.m.; **21-22** Michigan State; **28** WISCONSIN, 6 p.m.; **29**
WISCONSIN, 8 p.m.

March 6-8 Big Ten Tournament First Round; **14**
Big Ten Tournament Semifinals; **21** Big Ten Tournament
Championship.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (11-5-4, 6-3-3)

Sept. 27-28 ST. LAWRENCE, W 4-1; W 3-2.

Oct. 4 St. Cloud State, W 5-2; **5** St. Cloud State, W 6-2;
11 WISCONSIN, L 3-0; **12** WISCONSIN, L 3-1; **18** Minnesota
State, T 1-1; **19** Minnesota State, T 3-3; **25** MINNESOTA, W
4-3; **26** MINNESOTA, L 4-2.

Nov. 1 Bemidji State, W 4-3 (OT) **2** Bemidji State, W
3-1; **15** MINNESOTA DULUTH, W 3-1; **16** MINNESOTA
DULUTH, T 1-1; **22** Colgate, W 6-2; **23** Colgate, T 1-1; **29**
CORNELL, W 3-1, **30** CORNELL, L 5-1.

Dec. 14 Princeton at Las Vegas, L 6-2; **15** Princeton at
Las Vegas, W 5-2.

Jan. 10-11 MINNESOTA STATE; **17-18** Minnesota;
24-25 QUINNIPIAC; **31** BEMIDJI STATE.

Feb. 1 BEMIDJI STATE; **7-8** Minnesota Duluth; **15-16**
Wisconsin; **21-22** ST. CLOUD STATE; **28-29** WCHA First
Round.

March 1 WCHA First Round; **7-8** WCHA Final Faceoff;
14 NCAA Quarterfinal; **20** NCAA Frozen Four; **22** NCAA
Championship.

SWIMMING & DIVING

Oct. 18-19 Texas A&M, Men, L 153-147; Women,
L 174-124.

Nov. 1 Virginia Tech & Penn State at State College,
Pa., Men L 97-70, W 91.70-74.50; Women L 174-124, L

102-65; **2** Virginia Tech & Penn State at State College, Pa.,
Men L 185-168, W 193.50-158.50; Women W 247-106,
W 198-155; **8** KENYON, Men, W 207-87 **8** KENYON &
AKRON, Women W 213-85, W 254-40; **15** DENISON,
Men, W 215-80.5; Women, W 214.5-78; **21-23** OHIO
STATE INVITATIONAL, Men 1/5; Women 1/9.

Dec. 4-7 AT&T Winter National Championship at
Atlanta, NTS.

Jan. 3-4 KENTUCKY; **18** MICHIGAN; **24-25** Shamrock
Invitational at South Bend, Ind.; **31** Pittsburgh.

Feb. 14-16 OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL;
19-22 Women's Big Ten Championship at Iowa City, Iowa
26-29 Men's Big Ten Championship at Bloomington, Ind.

March 1 LAST CHANCE MEET (women's); **8**
LAST CHANCE MEET (men's); **14-16** CSCAA National
Invitational at Cleveland & NCAA Zone Diving at West
Lafayette, Ind.; **19-21** NCAA Championships (women's);
25-28 NCAA Championships (men's).

WRESTLING (3-1)

Nov. 2 Michigan State, NTS; **10** STANFORD, W 29-6;
15 Pittsburgh, W 23-12; **17** VIRGINIA TECH, L 21-15.

Dec. 1 CORNELL, W 23-9; **6-7** C.K. Invitational at Las
Vegas, 2/32.

Jan 3-5 ARIZONA STATE, 7 p.m.; **10** RUTGERS, 7
p.m.; **17** Wisconsin, 9 p.m.; **19** ILLINOIS, 1 p.m.; **24** Iowa,
9 p.m.; **26** Minnesota, 8:30 p.m.; **31** MARYLAND, 7 p.m.

Feb. 2 Nebraska; **9** NORTHWESTERN, 2 p.m.; **15** Penn
State, 7:30 p.m.

March 7-8 Big Ten Championship; **19-21** NCAA
Championship.

daughters and the rest of my family.”

Glass leaves the Hoosiers in a good place,
with the men's basketball team back on the
rise, the women's basketball team posting
the highest ranking in school history and the
football team with its best season in more than
25 years.

He also oversaw renovations to both the
basketball and football facilities, Assembly Hall
and Memorial Stadium, as well as constructing
new venues for other sports.

“His legacy will be one of strong and com-
petitive athletics programs and teams that
play by the rules, a pervasive commitment
to compliance and integrity, a commitment
to excellent academic performance, record
fundraising and magnificent new or renovated
facilities,” McRobbie said. “He is also widely
respected as one of the best athletic directors
in the Big Ten.”

Former U-M Standout,
Iowa AD Passes Away

Former University of Iowa athletic director
Bump Elliott died Dec. 7 at age 94. Elliott was
a standout halfback for Michigan, winning the
Big Ten's MVP award in 1947. He became
Michigan's coach in 1959 and won the Rose
Bowl in 1964, highlighting a 10-year run.

He was elected to the College Football Hall
of Fame in 1989.

“Bump Elliott was one of the great gentle-
men in the history of the game,” said former
Michigan coach Lloyd Carr. “He was one of
the legendary players that represented the U
of M as a player and coach. He was a beloved
figure who was admired and respected by all
who knew him.”

Elliott served as Iowa's athletic director
from 1970-91, hiring football coach Hayden
Fry, wrestling coach Dan Gable and basketball
coach Tom Davis among others.

Fry helped Iowa become a Big Ten con-
tender after years of struggle. Davis guided
the Hawkeyes to the Elite Eight in 1986-87 and
was named national coach of the year. Gable
won 15 national titles, including nine straight
from 1978-86.

“At first, he didn't make any promises, but
he said, ‘You do well, and I will do well for
you,’ and he honored that,” Gable said. “Even
though it could have, it never got old for him
to see Iowa wrestling win, and that is one of the
reasons for our success, because the guy at the

top of the department continued to be excited.”

The Elliott family released a statement fol-
lowing Bump's passing.

“For over 75 years, Bump epitomized the
best values of the Big Ten athletic conference
and its member institutions,” the Elliott family
said. “His fundamental beliefs in academic
excellence, gender equality, diversity, honesty
and athletic achievement guided his life and
career as a student-athlete, coach and admin-
istrator.”

Nebraska Makes Frost's
Contract Extension Official

Nebraska head coach Scott Frost's two-year
contract extension became official after origi-
nally having been announced in November.
The Cornhuskers released the addendum to
Frost's contract on Dec. 10. Frost signed it
on Dec. 8 and Nebraska athletic director Bill
Moos signed it Dec. 9.

The extension runs Frost's contract through
Dec. 31, 2026. His base salary remained at \$5
million, although the university reserves the
right to pay him more money without a written
amendment.

If Nebraska terminates Frost's employ-
ment, the school would owe him \$5 million per
year for any years left on the contract through
2024, and \$2.5 million each for 2025 and 2026.

Nebraska has begun construction of a \$155
million football facility set to open in 2022. In
an interview in December, Moos said that
Nebraska may not fully get back on its feet
until four or five years into the Frost era.

“We're in it for the long haul in building a
program,” Moos said. “And it's going to take
several years. I've said that all along. Scott
knows it. We're all working very hard.”

Carollo To Return As
Coordinator Of Officials

The Big Ten announced on Dec. 13 that
Bill Carollo will continue in his role as coordi-
nator of officials for the Collegiate Officiating
Consortium (COC), which includes the Big
Ten, Mid-American and Missouri Valley con-
ferences.

Carollo has been working with the Big Ten
and COC since 2009, following careers as an
official in the National Football League and an
executive with both IBM and Manpower, Inc.

Carollo served as a Big Ten football offi-
cial from 1980-88 and then served as an NFL

official until 2008. He officiated Super Bowls
XXX and XXXVII, was selected as an alternate
referee for Super Bowl XXXVIII and officiated
eight AFC or NFC championship games in his
career.

“We are pleased to announce that Bill
Carollo will remain in his current role and con-
tinue to provide guidance and leadership to our
football officiating program,” Big Ten commis-
sioner Jim Delany said. “Bill's vast experience
at both the collegiate and professional levels as
well as his great integrity have helped the Big
Ten remain the standard in college football
officiating.”

The man who will replace Delany as Big
Ten commissioner, Kevin Warren, also high-
lighted Carollo's experience when discussing
the decision to bring him back.

“Bill has done a terrific job over the past
decade and has a credible, proven track
record, having officiated at the highest levels
of the sport,” Warren said. “His outstanding
leadership, integrity, vision, professionalism
and experience have positioned the Big Ten
and the COC at the forefront of collegiate foot-
ball officiating. I look forward to working with
Bill and continuing to elevate the officiating
program as he continues in this role.”

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Men To Continue To Play At Value City Arena

Finally, there is finality. Or, at least the appearance of it.

That's the conclusion after Buckeye Sports Bulletin and other media outlets met with representatives of Ohio State's athletics department on the morning of Dec. 4 to discuss facilities for the men's and women's programs.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

If you had hoped to see a new hockey-only rink for the men's program, forget about it. However, the women will eventually get a 2,500- to 3,000-seat facility that will also become a secondary practice rink for the men.

For followers of the men's team back to the days at the ancient OSU Ice Rink (opened 1961) through the move to cavernous Value City Arena at the Jerome Schottenstein Center in 1999 (17,500 capacity), it might seem like a bitter pill, but former Buckeye player Bill Davidge thinks plans to reduce the seating to a maximum of 7,700 in the lower bowl by completely draping the upper deck can be a positive for the men.

There would be no expanding seating for games against Michigan, for example, that could draw five-figure crowds.

"First come, first served. I like that," Davidge told BSB on Dec. 12. "That's what you want. You want it to be a bandbox. You want the volume. If it's going to be that intimate, that'll be great, 7,700 would be ideal."

Still, the news from deputy athletics director Diana Sabau and Shaun Richard, senior associate AD for sport administration, when they spoke to BSB, The Athletic and The Columbus Dispatch means the end of nearly a half-century of talk about building a rink for the men.

It was January 1973 when Davidge met with the coaching staff at the old Jai Lai restaurant on Olentangy River Road near campus.

"There were the blueprints for where the Schott is now," he said. "There were a couple of us on the recruiting trip, and we signed the papers right there. We were told when you come

to Ohio State you're going to be playing in a new rink. It finally happened about 25 years later."

Value City Arena proved to be a boon for recruiting – just the announcement of it being built is credited with attracting players who led OSU to its first NCAA tournament and Frozen Four appearance in 1998 – but the large capacity has proved to be a detriment.

Ohio State averaged 6,437 fans last season, including 7,263 for 12 Big Ten games. The Buckeyes are drawing 4,967 for eight games overall this season, but attendance always picks up after the holiday break.

A recent study commissioned by the university recommended a 4,000-seat arena because of cost and land space considerations. Richard said that would not meet the needs of the men's team. He said crowds are up 46 percent since 2013 and season tickets have increased by 60 percent.

"If we continue that trend up, we're going to be in a really good spot in the next couple of years," Richard said. "As we've gone through the studies of where we are, what we've realized is that the Schott is an amazing experience for our men's program."

Once it was determined that the men would stay at Value City Arena, the need to address the women's situation was apparent. Having 7,700 seats for their games is not an option.

"We can't sacrifice the women's student-athletes' experience by putting them into an arena that's six- and seven-thousand seats," Sabau said of some games drawing several hundred spectators. "That's why we don't have them playing in the Schottenstein Center right now because it would be this little raindrop in a big lake with fans coming to our games."

The OSU Ice Rink is home to the women's program for practices and games, and the men practice there when other events are in VCA. It seats 1,000 and has standing room for 200.

The plan calls for a rink to be built near, possibly adjacent to Value City Arena. A likely choice is the corner of Lane Avenue and Fred Taylor Drive.

"We feel it's going to add not only to the women's program but the men's program because that will give them the benefit of having a second sheet of ice in the very, very close proximity of the Schottenstein Center," Sabau said.

There is no timetable for when the project will start, and there are plenty of hurdles, including

funding. Neither Sabau nor Richard had a cost estimate for the new hockey arena. The recently opened 4,000-seat Covelli Center for fencing, gymnastics, volleyball and wrestling cost \$49 million, Richard said.

"We will be looking for donors," Sabau said. "It's expensive. We're hoping it's not going to take a long time to fund it, but in the reality of cost and concrete and building things, we'll have to see what that looks like."

Patience

The women would appear to be the losers in the short term because there is only so much capital that can be spent on renovations at the OSU Ice Rink, which will likely be torn down when plans to develop the area on and around the adjacent St. John Arena are firming someday.

Sabau said ideally concrete plans for the new rink will be announced in the spring along with a formal fund-raising campaign.

"I don't know where that direction will go," she said. "Maybe we'll have something we can present, and it will be tweaked or just approved, or maybe we're real close and have to go back and work on a few more things."

With nothing finalized, it could be at least five years before the building is ready for use.

But again, it's important to remember that the women will be getting a new home and once ground is broken it will be a boon to a program that reached its first Women's Frozen Four in 2018.

"The best thing about that for the women's program right now is we're still talking about it and we're committed to making this happen," Sabau said.

As for the men, they will be getting an extensive renovation of the locker room and adjoining space. That project is already in the pipeline for capital improvements.

"The locker rooms and everything else is first class there. The Schott as a building is as good as it gets," Davidge said. "The problem was you have to dress and drive on a bus to the practice rink and come back. I think that kind of hurt the recruiting."

That has been a problem and will continue to be until the new arena is built.

It puts the planning in a precarious spot if it's determined that the rink is not feasible adjacent to Value City Arena. Davidge said the arena must be linked or getting donations from former men's players as well as supporters would be difficult because the practice situation would remain status quo for the men.

"It goes back to recruiting and a kid sees what he's got," he said. "I can dress in my locker room, walk up to the women's rink to practice if need be. If not, I turn right and go right back into the Value City rink."

"As long as the coaching staff and the people in charge are going to do it right, and it's not going to be an inconvenience to practice, it's not going to be an inconvenience to the players, not be an inconvenience for both teams to be able to coexist with the basketball teams in the main arena, then where do you take it from there?"

Men's coach Steve Rohlik said VCA will always be the main practice ice when available, but it will be nice in the future to possibly have an option for his players to walk down a hallway to practice.

"Would anybody want a brand-new arena (for the men)?" he said. "Yes, of course. Otherwise, people would be lying to you. On the other hand, the plan they have in place and the vision they have, I think it's going to be a really good thing."

"Everybody wants to talk about the negatives sometime. To me it's such the opposite right now. Their investment in all athletics is to

BIG		Men's Hockey				
	Pts.	W	L	T	OTL	
Penn State	24	8	4	0	0	
Michigan State	19	6	3	1	0	
Ohio State	19	6	3	1	0	
Notre Dame	18	5	3	2	1	
Minnesota	13	2	4	4	3	
Wisconsin	8	2	7	1	1	
Michigan	7	2	7	1	0	

try and make it the best athletic department in all of college sports, and we're part of that."

Making It Work

In order to have a more intimate feel with the reduced capacity to 7,700, the hockey press box at the top of the arena on the north side will be relocated to a lower spot so the draping can be closed and the upper deck fully covered instead of having nearly half the seating exposed. Richard said there is no time frame for implementing the smaller capacity, although it's unlikely for the 2020-21 season.

"A hot ticket – that's exactly what we want," Rohlik said. "If we have some team in town and expect 10,000, nope. It's 7,700. That's a sellout. I really think that's a positive."

A party deck will be installed at the east end of the lower level opposite the Zamboni entrance by pushing back the seats bleacher-style. After spending \$30 million on redoing the concourse in the past several years, expect changes in the arena area in the coming years with brighter lighting, a new video board and possibly replacement of seats.

Golden Goals

The No. 6 men's hockey team took four of six points from Minnesota (5-9-4, 2-4-4-3 Big Ten) in a pair of extra-session games at VCA on Dec. 6 and 7.

The Buckeyes (10-4-2, 6-3-1-0) won the opener 3-2 in overtime on a goal by sophomore Quinn Preston with 25 seconds left in the 5-on-5 overtime to earn all three points. They got a point the following night when the game went beyond the 5-on-5 to a sudden-death 3-on-3, won by the Golden Gophers after the 1-1 tie.

In the first game, junior defenseman Grant Gabriele and senior Carson Meyer also scored, and junior Tommy Nappier made 25 saves before 5,321 fans. Sophomore Gustaf Westlund scored the lone OSU goal in the rematch and Nappier made 33 saves, but Ben Meyers gave the Gophers the added point at 1:34 of the second OT in front of a turnout of 3,816.

OSU, 4-0-1 in the past five games, resumes play when it hosts nonconference foe Colgate on Dec. 27 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 28 at 4 p.m., the latter moved up an hour because the football team plays Clemson at 8 p.m. in the College Football Playoff semifinals.

The Buckeyes then go to Las Vegas for the Fortress Invitational to play Cornell at 11 p.m. ET on Jan. 3 and will face either Army or Providence the next night at a time to be determined.

So Swede

Westlund is the November Varsity Club Icer of the Month. The Stockholm, Sweden, native had four goals and one assist in six games. He has 15 points (nine goals, six assists) to tie Tanner Laczynski (5-10) for the team lead this season.

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

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For November



Gustaf Westlund
Sophomore Forward
Stockholm, Sweden

Romero Hitting Stride

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Losing was never part of the equation for Kaleb Romero. The wrestler from Mechanicsburg, Ohio, just northwest of Columbus was always the one doling out defeats, no matter what he was doing. He went a stunning 202-3 as a four-year varsity wrestler at 170 pounds, winning four state titles and rattling off 52-0 records in both his junior and senior seasons.

When he capped his senior campaign with a championship victory in less than a minute, Romero sealed a season in which he didn't surrender a single point, while helping to secure a state title for Mechanicsburg High School, its first ever.

Romero wasn't just a star on the mat, where he ranked No. 12 nationally among all recruits in the class of 2017. He was also a first-team All-Ohio quarterback, operating an option offense masterfully on the way to a 12-1 record his senior season.

He rode his success to a scholarship at Ohio State, joining Tom Ryan's wrestling program as one of the most highly touted members of a packed 2017 class, expected to find his footing and continue his success right away.

In a way, he did. Romero went 11-1 during his freshman year in 2017-18, learning the ropes of the college game through tournaments and practice with a team that won a Big Ten championship. He learned under middleweight stalwart Bo Jordan and looked to contribute as a redshirt freshman in the 2018-19 season.

While he did contribute, starting in eight duals and competing in 17 total bouts, something was different. The redshirt year had slowed Romero's development, and early losses sapped the redshirt freshman's confidence. He went just 3-5 in duals wrestling at 165 pounds, though an 11-6 record overall did serve as some salvation and as a point of motivation for the young Buckeye.

Perhaps more important in Romero's struggles than his lack of confidence was his physical ability. Wrestling at 165, lower than his natural weight, Romero struggled with his strength, feeling drained and underweight entering bouts.

"Last year it was pretty hard to make 165," Romero said. "I was kind of draining myself every week."

The drop in weight contributed to a lack of strength, and that, paired with the consistent losing for the first time in Romero's athletic career, started to impact him mentally.

"Last year I lost confidence in myself," Romero explained. "I didn't really believe in myself so I struggled a little bit."

After battling all year with the 165-pound weight class, Ohio State told Romero to make the move up to 174, closer to his natural weight which floats around 170 pounds. The decision started paying dividends even before the season started.

"(The confidence boost) kind of started last year after the season, when U23s rolled around," Romero said. "It's an offseason tournament, not a lot of pressure or anything, and I just went out there and opened up and wrestled. I wrestled really well there. Obviously I didn't quite end up how I wanted there. I ended up finishing fourth, but just knowing that I could compete at that high of a level kind of boosted my confidence, and luckily that's kind of rolled into this year and I hope to keep wrestling like that."

Just as he hoped, the success has rolled into the season. A loss in wrestle-offs to Rocky

Jordan stood as a setback, but Romero was still included on the tournament roster at the Michigan State Open on Nov. 2, where he was one of five Buckeyes to win a title, going a perfect 5-0, including three straight wins over conference foes. His success there helped secure a spot in the starting lineup for Ohio State's first dual match of the season, against Stanford on Nov. 10.

A 16-7 major decision win over Foster Karmon brought Romero to 6-0, before a 7-2 decision over Pitt's Gregg Harvey made it seven straight – a better start than Romero could have dreamed about. His confidence was back.

"I think this year I've just really kind of had a boost of confidence," he said, "just going out there and opening up and wrestling. Last year I lost confidence in myself. I didn't really believe in myself so I struggled a little bit. This year, I'm just going out with nothing to lose, just going out and wrestling, trying to make things happen. So far, it's doing me pretty well, so I'm going to try to keep working hard to keep that up."

Romero was replaced in the lineup for Ohio State's 23-16 loss to Virginia Tech, the lone dual loss of the season so far, but returned for a bounce-back effort against Cornell, where he notched his biggest achievement of the season. Ranked No. 13 in his weight class, Romero secured a top-tier win, earning a 6-5 decision against No. 11 Brandon Womack, his eighth straight. It gave the Buckeyes a 13-3 team score lead and provided a crucial three points out of the 174-pound spot that Ohio State didn't expect to have entering the season. The Buckeyes would go on to win the dual, 23-9.

"We knew this year was going to be different than maybe the last two or three years," assistant coach J Jagers said. "When you graduate six guys in the last two years that are three- or four-time All-Americans, they're hard guys to replace, but I think we have some guys that are stepping up and doing well. Romero and [Ethan] Smith, they've gotten to that conversation of being top-10 guys, which is where we thought they would be when we recruited them, and sometimes everybody's trajectory is a little different."

"I think we've been spoiled a little bit with the [Nathan] Tomasello's and [Kyle] Snyder's and Myles [Martin's] where they win it as a freshman, they're in the hunt right away, so we think that everybody should be on that trajectory, and everybody's different. So, credit to Romero and Smith, who last year took some lumps, and they're still progressing, they didn't lose confidence, they didn't give up. They're still fighting and now look, they're both in that conversation of that top tier of guys. I'm excited for that. I'm excited for progress."

Even as Romero finds his rhythm, he's keeping his focus.

"I try not to think about the big picture of a lot of things, because I kind of overwhelm myself," Romero said. "I get too caught up in the moment so I try not to think about that stuff too much, but it's awesome. I was born a Buckeye, and it's just a great feeling going out and putting it all out on the line for the state of Ohio."

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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The screenshot shows the Buckeye Sports Bulletin website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for HOME, FOOTBALL, BASKETBALL, SPORTS, FORUM, BSB ONLINE, EAT & STAY, and a LOG IN button. Below the navigation bar, there's a main content area featuring a large image of a player in a red jersey. Overlaid on the image is the text: "OHIO STATE'S EARLY 2019 SIGNING PERIOD PROFILE: THREE-STAR K JAKE SEIBERT". To the right of the image, there are three article teasers for early signing period profiles: "Ohio State's 2019 Early Signing Period Profile: Four-Star WR Jaxon Smith-Njigba", "Ohio State's 2019 Early Signing Period Profile: Five-Star OT Paris Johnson", and "Ohio State's 2019 Early Signing Period Profile: Four-Star OL..." Each teaser includes a "READ MORE" link.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin has expanded its online presence to a full-service website to complement the 24 annual print editions. Access to BuckeyeSports.com is free to all print subscribers and includes numerous great features like:

- Daily features, analysis and breaking news stories
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Clemson A Concern In Fiesta Bowl Matchup

Clemson concerns me. Alabama would have concerned me. No one else concerns me when it comes to an opponent for this year's Ohio State Buckeyes – as long as OSU plays up to its ability.

Why, you may ask, considering that LSU also is undefeated, and Alabama is out of the playoffs with two losses?

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Because I believe Alabama has OSU-level talent or beyond deep into its roster, even if Alabama doesn't deserve to be in the playoffs this year.

The same might be the case for Clemson. I don't know. I have to admit that I didn't watch a single Clemson regular-season game – other than a few moments of the Tigers' nail-biter against North Carolina – because Clemson didn't have any marquee opponents this year.

But I do know that Clemson hasn't lost a game in two years and that Clemson has so much playoff experience that the Tigers' fifth-year seniors are in their fifth playoffs.

As for LSU and Oklahoma, both are definitely good teams. But my confidence level in watching a lot of Ohio State, a lot of LSU and a lot of Oklahoma this year is that Ohio State at its best should beat LSU or Oklahoma.

The Crimson Tide would be a scary opponent for a single game, considering the depth Nick Saban has built.

And as for Clemson, we do know that the Tigers are back with the same starting quarterback (Trevor Lawrence) who led them to a 44-16 victory over Alabama in last season's title game.

The initial betting line installed Clemson as a two-point favorite. To many people this is a coin-flip game.

On Dec. 28, we're going to find out if Ohio State is really as good as indicated from the regular season.

Home-Field Advantage?

It was fascinating to see how large the home-crowd advantage was for Ohio State in the Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis.

Since both OSU and Wisconsin fans were mostly wearing red, it was difficult to get an idea of the split at first. But when Badgers fans stood to cheer their team as it left the field after an impressive first half, it was easy to see how tiny the Wisconsin group was.

Then, when things turned in the Buckeyes' favor in the third quarter, the OSU energy could be felt in the building – overwhelmingly so.

My guess in watching from the upper deck: 90 percent Ohio State, 5 percent Wisconsin, 5 percent neutral. (Side note: Indianapolis does everything right in putting on the title game, with the only drawback being a tiny stadium of 66,649 by big-time college football standards.)

Not surprisingly, in taking a trip to Northwestern this season, I witnessed much the same. Guessing the split in Evanston was about 60-40 in favor of Ohio State fans.

This brings us to Arizona, an almost regular postseason venue for the Buckeyes and the home state of many, many transplanted Ohioans. I wouldn't be surprised to see Ohio State control 75 percent of that crowd.

Fiesta Bowl Memories

On the downside, the last time the Buckeyes played in the Fiesta Bowl, they were a 31-0 playoff loser to Clemson in 2016. But the Fiesta Bowl was also the site of OSU's national championship victory over Miami at the end of the 2002 season.

It's also where the Buckeyes beat Notre Dame (2016 and 2005 seasons), Kansas State (2003 season) and, going way back, Pitt (1983 season).

That Pitt game was my first trip to Arizona, covering the game for the Lantern. Sophomore Keith Byars had a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown, junior Mike Tomczak threw a 39-yard TD pass to Thad Jemison for the winning points with 39 seconds left, and the OSU MVP was linebacker Rowland Tatum.

Many Will Watch On TV

Ohio State's 2014 title win over Oregon

drew what is still the largest playoff TV audience – 34.6 million viewers, including 34.1 million on TV and the rest streaming, according to Sports Media Watch. OSU's semifinal that year against Alabama (28.3 million on TV) still ranks third most in the playoffs.

Number 2, according to Sports Media Watch, is the 2018 season Georgia-Alabama national title game that drew 28.4 million on TV and streaming.

All the playoff games have been on ESPN. When Ohio State won the 2002 national title game against Miami, the ABC audience was 29.1 million. The college football record TV audience of 35.6 million was set when ABC aired the 2005 season national title game/Rose Bowl between Texas and USC.

So far this season only seven games nationally have drawn at least 9 million TV viewers, including Ohio State's last three games.

Tops for were the LSU-Alabama game on CBS (16.6 million), the SEC title game on CBS (13.7 million) the Big Ten title game with Ohio State on Fox (13.6 million), the Alabama-Auburn game on CBS (11.4 million), the Ohio State-Penn State game on Fox (9.4 million), and the Notre Dame-Georgia game on CBS (9.3 million).

Heisman Wrap

Who honestly could have predicted the Heisman results back in August – Joe Burrow as the runaway winner and a then-untested quarterback (Justin Fields) and largely unknown to the nation defensive end (Chase Young) finishing third and fourth.

That's the way it should be. Let the play on the field decide the Heisman, not a preseason publicity machine.

Also interesting about the Heisman this year is that J.K. Dobbins was the third-best Buckeye vote-getter, despite having a great shot to set the OSU single-season rushing record in his next game.

Dobbins enters the playoffs with 1,829 yards on the season, currently the third-best all-time. An average game by Dobbins will make him No. 1.

The current top two are Ezekiel Elliott (1,878 yards in 2014) and Heisman winner

Eddie George (1,927 yards in 1995).

Dobbins needs 99 yards to pass George. Against ranked teams the last three games, Dobbins has averaged 180.0 yards – 157 against Penn State, 211 against Michigan and 172 against Wisconsin.

But one consolation prize in the Heisman voting for Dobbins is that he is part of a rare trio. Fields, Young and Dobbins became just the third grouping of three players from the same school to finish in the top 10 of the Heisman voting since 1969. It's been Ohio State every time.

The others were Rex Kern, Jim Otis and Jack Tatum in 1969, and Chris Ward, Archie Griffin and Randy Gradishar in 1973.

Over this time period, Ohio State has had 30 top-10 finishers in the Heisman voting, more than any other school. This includes winners Griffin (twice), George and Troy Smith.

Passing Really Does Matter

Oklahoma's Jalen Hurts (1,255 yards) is the biggest runner among the playoff quarterbacks, but Fields (471 yards), Burrow (289 yards) and Lawrence (337) all are capable of taking off out of the pocket.

Yet more in common is their efficiency in directing a passing offense. Burrow is second nationally for passing efficiency, Hurts third, Fields fourth and Lawrence seventh. (No. 1 is injured Alabama QB Tua Tagovailoa.)

Among quarterbacks who averaged at least 15 attempts a game, no one threw fewer interceptions this year than Fields (one). Burrow was second in the country for passing yards (4,715) and Hurts sixth (3,634). And Burrow was first for TD passes (48), with Fields third (40).

Eye-Popping OSU, Clemson Stats

Among the most impressive national rankings for Clemson: first for fewest first downs allowed, third for most first downs by an offense, third for interceptions, first for fewest passing yards allowed, first for pass-efficiency defense, first for fewest yards allowed and fourth for scoring offense.

For Ohio State, some standout areas: first for third-down conversions, fourth best for preventing third-down conversions, first for first downs, second for passing yards allowed, first for red-zone defense, third for scoring defense, first for scoring offense, second for pass-efficiency defense, second for sacks, and second for fewest yards allowed.

My Top 10

- 1. Ohio State (13-0) – Best résumé with the most convincing victories.
- 2. LSU (13-0) – Impressive wins, but a few tight games.
- 3. Clemson (13-0) – Untested and uncontested but likely very, very good.
- 4. Oklahoma (12-1) – Clear choice here.
- 5. Oregon (11-2) – Closed out with a solid win, just like the top four teams.
- 6. Baylor (11-2) – Two very close losses to a playoff team (Oklahoma), something no other two-loss team can say.
- 7. Alabama (10-2) – Lacks a win over a ranked opponent, but the two losses to LSU (by five points) and Auburn (by three points) were very close.
- 8. Wisconsin (10-3) – This team lost three games, but two of those were to the top-ranked team in these rankings. Plus, the Badgers dominated Michigan and Minnesota.
- 9. Florida (10-2), Penn State (10-2) and Georgia (11-2) – Cases can be made for and against each of these teams at this point in the rankings, so put them together in a tie.

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Buckeyes Must Go Through Defending Champs

It was noted philosopher Ric Flair who famously said, "To be the man, you've gotta beat the man."

Clemson is currently The Man in college football, and Ohio State is tasked with beating the Tigers in this year's edition of the Fiesta Bowl, which also serves as a College Football Playoff semifinal matchup.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

The Tigers enter the CFP as the third seed but could be the most dangerous team in the entire thing. Clemson has done nothing but roll opponents after a midseason one-point escape at North Carolina, and Trevor Lawrence is finally playing the way many expected him to play. Throw in Travis Etienne in the backfield, Tee Higgins and Justyn Ross on the outside and a back seven that's as good as any in college football and you see that Ohio State definitely has a tough hill to climb.

Tough, but not impossible.

You have to believe OSU will enter the game with a massive chip on its shoulder, for a couple of reasons. The committee dropped the Buckeyes from the top spot despite them scoring 27 unanswered points in the second half of the Big Ten Championship Game, beating Wisconsin 34-21. It was the final game in a trio of consecutive ranked foes, and you have to believe OSU was feeling the grind. At the same time, LSU was laying waste to an offensively challenged Georgia squad, and its 37-10 victory was apparently eye-popping enough to the committee that it elevated the Tigers to the top spot, and the "easier" matchup with No. 4 Oklahoma.

Vegas installed Clemson as a small favorite right after the matchup was announced, which some could see as another sign of disrespect. You think the players don't know about this? Rest assured they want to show Clemson, and America, that they are more than capable of bringing home the trophy.

If you want to debate whether the committee erred in dropping Ohio State, there are many who would side with you. OSU had more ranked wins, boasted a better opponent winning percentage and led the Tigers in efficiency metrics. Playing three ranked teams in a row and beating all three by double digits should count for something, shouldn't it?

The committee apparently disagreed, and this is where we are.

OSU coach Ryan Day, who has done a masterful job in making the transition from Urban Meyer a seamless one for the Buckeyes, thinks his team will definitely be a motivated bunch.

"Yeah, do I feel like we should have been the one seed, but LSU has had an unbelievable season," he said. "I think what Joe (Burrow) has done and what that team has done, they've done an unbelievable job. What Clemson has done, I could see that argument, as well. They're the defending national champs, and they haven't lost a game since and played great football.

"At the end of the day, you've got to beat the best to go win the national championship, and certainly Clemson is that. What matters at the end of the year is who's won, not right now.

"So we've got a big challenge ahead of us as we start to prepare for Clemson."

Ohio State has a lot of familiarity with the

Fiesta Bowl, making eight previous appearances. Its most recent showdown with Clemson was in 2016, in the Fiesta Bowl – a game most of Buckeye Nation would rather forget. The Tigers blistered the Buckeyes 31-0, leading many to question why OSU got into the playoffs over Big Ten champion Penn State. That's another memory Ohio State would love to be able to erase.

Day knows that the Buckeyes will need to pay attention to detail and not allow themselves to get blitzed by a Clemson team that scores point in bunches. The fact that nearly everyone on the Tigers roster has performed on this big stage matters, as does the fact that very few of OSU's players were around for the 2016 debacle.

"They have a veteran quarterback now who has played a lot of football and is playing really good," Day said. "Etienne is one of the best backs in the country. Tee Higgins and some of the wideouts they have are some of the best in the country, and what they do on defense and what (defensive coordinator) Brent Venables has done year in and year out, they're the best defense in the country. If you look over the last five to 10 years, you can make a case that they are the best. They change up looks. They're aggressive. He's aggressive, and they're very, very talented."

The Buckeyes have had a pretty substantial talent edge over most of the teams they have played this season, but that won't be the case with Clemson.

That means Day may need to rely a little more on coaching, tweaking the offense and digging into his bag of tricks to come out victorious.

"I think you've just got to do a good job schematically," the coach said. "If it makes sense and you think you can do something here and there, then you do it. But it has to be a calculated risk, and it's all about the schematics at this point because talent is equated. Both teams are going to play really, really hard. Who executes better, who's more prepared and who has the right game plan is going to win the game."

Clemson coach Dabo Swinney often tells his team it isn't getting respect, and he used the No. 3 CFP ranking as evidence. The Tigers had a subpar schedule, leading many to believe they may be fool's gold. But they

have been destroying teams, and analytics love them.

It may be hard to convince his team that it lacks respect after being installed as a favorite, but he believes the Tigers will perk up once they see the tape of the Buckeyes in action.

"They've been unbelievable," Swinney said, "just one of the most dominant teams every week all year long. And that's an unbelievable accomplishment. Talented on both sides of the ball. Just two great programs that I know that will have great will to win, and it's going to be an awesome environment and a great game. No doubt about it."

While LSU may be stealing the headlines with its offense, the Peach Bowl is seen as a potential blowout, with Oklahoma lacking the requisite defensive chops to put the brakes on the Tigers' attack.

But OSU and Clemson should regain the spotlight once fans delve deeper into the game.

Clemson owns the longest winning streak in college football, 28 games. OSU is right behind at 19. And this is just the second time in 2019 when a pair of top-three teams face off. LSU-Alabama was the other.

Interestingly, both Swinney and Day were promoted from within, and both proved quickly that they belonged. Actually, LSU's Ed Orgeron and Oklahoma's Lincoln Riley were also internal promotions, which marks the first time in the admittedly short history of the CFP that all four coaches were "program" guys.

Should the Buckeyes take care of business against Clemson, they could very well be starting at former teammate Burrow and another hungry bunch of Tigers. LSU's leap to prominence has been startling, especially when you consider how pedestrian the offense was last season, even with Burrow in charge.

The addition of former New Orleans Saints assistant Joe Brady to the coaching staff brought an entirely new dynamic to the Tiger offense, allowing Burrow to put together one of the most amazing passing seasons in college football history. For that, he was rewarded with the Heisman Trophy, an award that had two Buckeyes – Justin Fields and Chase Young – as finalists, and probably should have had another in running back J.K.

Dobbins.

But worrying about LSU is putting the cart before the horse.

The Buckeyes know what's ahead, and they intend to silence the doubters who think that this game will be a repeat of 2016 – and in the process show that they have a heavyweight champion pedigree.

"Our guys see ourselves as being the best in the country," Day said. "The moment won't be too big for our guys. It's just a matter of keeping our emotions in check and just doing a good job of staying focused.

"It's just being ready for that moment, and I thought we showed something in the second half (vs. Wisconsin) that we could overcome a game and just impose our will on teams, and we have to carry that over into this game and show that we can do that and have enough confidence to do that against a team like Clemson."

Bowling For Dollars

While I am of the belief that there are far too many bowl games, rewarding far too many mediocre teams, I do get why people like them. It's a chance for teams to get 15 more practices, which coaches love, and sometimes it's a chance to take off for a warm climate in December, when much of the nation is frozen solid, so fans like it.

Athletic departments like it because most of the games are a windfall for the schools, and there is a part of me that says it's neat that Indiana and Illinois, who haven't been to the postseason in years, get to take part in another game.

The Big Ten will be on display a great deal this bowl season, with varying degrees of difficulty in their matchups. Here are my conference picks:

Pinstripe Bowl – Wake Forest 28, Michigan State 21

Holiday Bowl – Iowa 33, USC 31

Cotton Bowl – Memphis 34, Penn State 27

Redbox Bowl – Illinois 26, California 23

Citrus Bowl – Alabama 38, Michigan 26

Outback Bowl – Minnesota 28, Auburn 20

Rose Bowl – Wisconsin 35, Oregon 34

Gator Bowl – Tennessee 29, Indiana 27

Fiesta Bowl – Clemson 34, Ohio State 31

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Buckeyes Display Mettle To Win B1G Hardware

Wisconsin showed up Dec. 7 at Lucas Oil Stadium intent on making a statement. Trying to bounce back from a devastating loss to Ohio State in Columbus earlier in the season and not having been able to beat the Buckeyes since 2010, the Badgers had something to prove. They had just defeated Minnesota the previous week to capture the Big Ten West division and play for the conference title for the sixth time since the inception of the Big Ten Championship Game, more than any other team.

with the toughness and talent of the Badgers. If the Buckeyes could dominate Wisconsin once more, it should be enough to prove to the committee that Ohio State has proved to be the best college team in America at that point.

The venue was perfect, the teams outstanding and the goals apparent. The fans were rewarded with one of the most exciting games in Big Ten football history.

Wisconsin Explodes

It was the Badgers who seemed the most inspired early in the game. Wisconsin came out of the locker room as if shot out of a cannon by taking the first drive the length of the field for a touchdown in just five plays. They went 83 yards in just a little over two minutes of play. Wisconsin's great running back Jonathan Taylor, who had never crossed the goal line against the Buckeyes, rocketed through scarlet and gray defenders for a 44-yard score, and the Badger fans, though highly outnumbered, went into a frenzy.

Wisconsin's defense started out just as impressively as their offense by sacking Justin Fields in each of Ohio State's first two possessions. Taylor, who had never rushed for 100 yards against the Buckeyes, was already over halfway there with 56 yards in just the first quarter. It was apparent that Paul Chryst's warriors from Madison came ready to play.

Things didn't get much better for the Buckeyes in the second quarter when the Badgers put together another scoring drive capped off by a Jack Coan 14-yard keeper off a Taylor counter-fake to put the underdogs up by two touchdowns. The Badgers were owning

the Buckeyes up front, on both sides of the ball.

Ohio State would put together a drive of its own, and J.K. Dobbins would score from the 2 yard-line for the Buckeyes first points of the game with just 42 seconds left before halftime, but Wisconsin would answer by going 75 yards in four plays in only 32 seconds to give the Badgers a 21-7 lead at the break.

The Buckeyes were in a hole they hadn't been in all season. How would they respond in the second half?

Buckeyes Regroup

Who knows for sure what happened in the Buckeye locker room at halftime, but one thing is certain: It was a different, resurrected football team that took the field in the third quarter. The Wisconsin team that had embarrassed the Buckeyes in the first 30 minutes of play would feel the full wrath of a squad that was destined to prove they were the cream of the crop of college football.

Throughout the season the Ohio State coaching staff has been excellent at making in-game adjustments, and this game was no exception. The same offense that had stopped themselves by mistakes and the same defense that had seemed unable to halt the Wisconsin onslaught in the first half completely turned the tables on the Badgers in the second.

Better pass-protection schemes allowed Fields, the game's most valuable player, to stay clean in the pocket and throw three touchdown strikes. Defensive pressure and adjustments in coverages stymied the Badger passing attack that had picked the Buckeyes apart with slants and crossing patterns earlier in the game. Taylor, who would end up surpassing 6,000 career yards and had netted 135 rushing yards in the first half alone, would be held to just 13 yards in the last two quarters. Ryan Day once again proved he has one of the best coaching staffs in the country.

But it wasn't the staff alone that created the great Buckeye turnaround. Determined athletes electrified the partisan fan base with an energy that rocked Lucas Oil Stadium during the third quarter. Momentum was now wearing a different uniform as Fields dispersed the football to seven different receivers during the biggest comeback of the season for the Buckeyes.

K.J. Hill would become the leading receiver in Ohio State history with his seven receptions for the day with two being for touchdowns. Dobbins would end up with 172 yards on the ground and, again, besting Taylor in head-to-head production. Most impressive was the renewed surge up-front by the Buckeye offensive line that has been so characteristic this season.

Second-half domination wasn't just apparent offensively.

Damon Arnette was superb in open-field tackling, recording seven solos for the day along with two pass breakups. Chase Young and the defensive front increased pressure on Coan along with shutting down the running game of the Badgers, which had blistered Ohio State in the first half. The Wisconsin offense that had controlled the tempo of the game early only had the football for just over five of 15 minutes in the fourth quarter. Most importantly, the Badgers didn't score a single point in the second half.

Playoff Disappointment

Despite putting together one of the most impressive comebacks in Ohio State football history, the College Football Playoff committee bumped LSU ahead of the Buckeyes in the final rankings. Dropping Ohio State to No. 2 means a first-round matchup against Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl in Glendale, Ariz., on Dec. 28. It was apparent on the faces of the players and coach Ryan Day they were not happy with the decision made by the committee.

They have no fear in playing Clemson, but being put in the No. 2 slot bothered them to the point they now have a chip on their shoulder, much like the chip the Buckeye defense had at the beginning of the year when they had something to prove to themselves and Buckeye Nation. Being ditched by the playoff committee just might be what the doctor ordered in terms of an added incentive for the players and staff to take into their preparation for the playoffs.

The Buckeyes have proved to have the right formula, the right attitude and the right focus each and every game this season. This Buckeye team is special in so many ways, and no one should count on them coming up short in accomplishing their ultimate goal, winning a national title.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

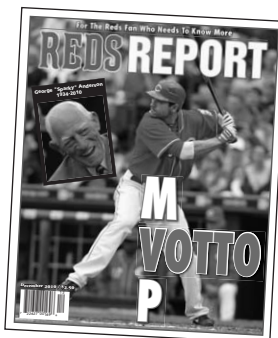
Ohio State had its own reasons for coming into the game inspired. A win for the Buckeyes would guarantee a conference title, an undefeated regular season and a chance to put an exclamation mark on the year by locking up a spot in the College Football Playoffs. An impressive victory over Wisconsin would hopefully be enough to convince committee members to retain Ohio State at the No. 1 position going into the playoffs.

After all, they had defeated Penn State, Michigan and Wisconsin earlier by double digits in the regular season, three of the most physical teams in the conference. Beating the same team twice is very hard to do, especially one

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Day Has Chance To Rewrite Buckeyes' Tiger Tale

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

When Urban Meyer announced his retirement about this time last year, one of the things that bothered me was that the legendary coach would not have a chance to defeat Clemson and Dabo Swinney. Meyer has accomplished nearly everything a coach can accomplish, but he was unable to knock of the Tigers in two tries while at Ohio State, continuing a string of Buckeye futility in bowl games against Clemson that dates back to 1978 and one of the most famous games in Ohio State history, the Gator Bowl that marked the end of the career of another legendary coach, Woody Hayes.

In the process of defeating Meyer and his Buckeyes twice, Swinney had crept into the discussion as to who was the best coach in college football, a discussion that had, for several years, been limited to Meyer and Alabama's Nick Saban.

Now, just a year later, the Tigers and Buckeyes are squaring off again, but it will be left to first-year coach Ryan Day to try to end Clemson's dominance over the team from Columbus. Barring some surprising developments, we will never know if Meyer could defeat Swinney.

If Ohio State wins in the desert, scene of the 31-0 disaster under Meyer following the 2016 season, Day will get the credit. But make no mistake about it. Meyer's fingerprints will be all over the victory, which would come as a result of the foundation he built, the players he recruited, and his hiring of Day and recognizing that his protégé was the right coach at the right time to lead Ohio State on to its next chapter.

Clemson seems to have an almost mythical reputation of dominance over the Buckeyes. Much of this is based on the thrashing the Tigers administered the last time the teams met, also as part of the CFP Playoff. It wasn't like Clemson was dominant in the other two victories.

The Gator Bowl was ages ago, first of all, so it shouldn't have any bearing on this year's matchup. Day wasn't even born yet in 1978, and Swinney was but 9. The Buckeyes lost the game only 17-15, and they had driven to the Clemson 24 when Art Schlichter threw his ill-fated interception with 1:59 to play. You can see why Hayes was so on edge after losing the football.

Fast-forward to the 2013 season, and the Buckeyes played Clemson nip-and-tuck before losing 40-35. Ohio State's defense that season, especially the pass defense, rivaled the Buckeye defense of last season in its ineptitude, and the stop troops lived up to their billing, allowing Clemson 576 yards, including 378 yards through the air. Sammy Watkins caught 16 passes for 227 yards and two scores.

Unfortunately, the Buckeyes struggled to counter the Tiger offense with their strength, their offense, as star quarterback Braxton Miller was bruised and battered from pretty much the beginning of the game and was guilty of a pair of interceptions. That left some Buckeye fans wondering if Meyer and his staff should have gone with super-sub Kenny Guiton at some point during the game.

I was of a mixed mind afterward about whether the Buckeyes should have gone to the bench, conceding in this space, however, that "sometimes you go with the guy who got you there, the guy with the magic – and that's Miller. One of his patented highlight-reel plays instead of one of his turnovers, and it's a completely different ballgame."

This year's matchup is also a completely different ballgame, and it's hard to handicap.

Much has been made of Clemson's not-so-challenging schedule this season. As I have said so many times during my career, you can only play the schedule you have in front of you. The Tigers took care of business against

the teams on their slate, with only a scare against North Carolina many weeks ago to present even the slightest blemish, and that was a win.

I can see the gaudy numbers Clemson put up. I know they are the defending national champions. This is hardly a team to be taken lightly, regardless of who they may have played.

On the other hand, some are saying that Ohio State may have tapered off down the stretch, while Clemson was accelerating against the likes of Wake Forest (8-4), South Carolina (4-8) and Virginia (9-4). In those same weeks, the Buckeyes were playing Penn State (10-2), Michigan (9-3) and Wisconsin (10-3; 10-1 against teams other than Ohio State).

As John Cooper used to say, "Sometimes we don't give enough credit to the other team. Their players are on scholarship too."

The Buckeyes beat the Lions, Wolverines and Badgers (the second time) by 11, 29 and 13 points, respectively. There were difficult moments in those games, but OSU went on to win all three of these challenging games handily.

While it would be foolish to underestimate Clemson, schedule or not, it would also be foolish to take the Buckeyes lightly. They have met every challenge so far this season, and there is no reason to think they won't be up to the challenge come Dec. 28.

Don't Forget Dobbins

Voters for various awards, most notably the Heisman Trophy, may have forgotten about J.K. Dobbins, but I haven't. He seems to have been playing with a chip on his shoulder all season, and that chip seems to get bigger with each snub of him or his team.

I love the fact that Dobbins is old-school, lugging the ball 36, 31 and 33 times during the three-game gantlet leading up to the playoffs, never seeming to tire, just continuing to bang. He turned those old-school trips into 540 yards and a 5.4-yard average.

In a stat that doesn't show up in the Big Ten championship box score, on an OSU drive in the fourth quarter Dobbins carried eight times for 45 yards. The drive resulted in only a field goal to make it the final score of 34-21 with 4:39 to play, but the Buckeyes ate up just shy of six minutes, with Dobbins helping not only kill the will of the Badgers but kill the clock.

Is Dobbins in the midst of a run like the one Ezekiel Elliott put together to help Ohio State to the national championship in 2014?

By the way, if Dobbins had averaged the number of carries he had in the last three games for the 13 games Ohio State has played so far, he would have 433 carries, easily besting Keith Byars' school-record 336 in 1984. But aren't you glad now that Dobbins sat out all that time during the team's various blowouts this season? It saved a lot of wear and tear in preparation for the stretch run.

Beat The Badgers, Part II

I have never been completely sold on the now widely accepted strategy of deferring to the second half if a team wins the opening coin toss. If I had a good offense, my inclination would be to try to go down and score right away and take the early lead.

In the Big Ten Championship Game, Wisconsin defied conventional logic and took the ball after winning the flip. All they did was march 83 yards in five plays to take a quick 7-0 lead, just like I would have drawn up if I had won the coin

toss. The Badgers would extend that lead to 14-0 in the second quarter.

But I never panicked. Not only did I think the Buckeyes had the superior team, but now the shoe was on the other foot for me. I knew that Ohio State was getting the ball to start the second half and that was going to be the game-breaker.

My winning scenario started to play out when Ohio State marched 71 yards to its first touchdown with just 42 seconds to play before the break.

But the Badgers threw a monkey wrench into my scenario by scoring in just 32 seconds to go back up by 14. That was the only time I was really concerned the entire game. But I still knew that the Buckeyes were going to get the ball to start the second half.

They took the kick, marched 75 yards in five plays to pull back to 21-14, and stopped Wisconsin on a three-and-out, and I knew Ohio State was going to win the ballgame and a third straight Big Ten championship.

Maybe I should change my thoughts about deferring to the second half.

Checking In On Martell

Staff writer Joe Dempsey had a nice piece on the trials and tribulations of former Buckeye quarterback Tate Martell since his transfer to Miami on our BuckeyeSports.com website. Joe caught up with my good friend Gary Ferman at CaneSport.com, the bible of Miami sports, for his thoughts on Martell.

Things started off well enough for Martell after the transfer, according to Ferman, but soon soured.

"The fans took him in and were excited about him coming, just based on the hype and everything, but there was no substance to it once he got here," Ferman said of Martell. "He clearly from day one was not good enough to play here.

"Football-wise, he's just not good enough. He's never going to play here. He's just not close to good enough, and they're not even good at the quarterback position. He can't throw."

That's a pretty harsh assessment on Ferman's part, but obviously I haven't seen Martell play recently.

I absolutely recall similar excitement when Martell committed to Ohio State. The guy has always had a certain flair. He added to his reputation once he hit Miami by very publicly dating a model.

"The only good thing about his coming to Miami is he likes it at Miami and he's got a freaking drop-dead gorgeous Brazilian swimsuit model as a girlfriend," Ferman said.

In his limited action at Ohio State, I thought Martell showed more than he apparently has for the Hurricanes. Maybe he's not a Burrow, Haskins or Fields, but he's a quarterback good enough to play somewhere.

He completed 23 of 28 passes for the Buckeyes, good for an 82.1 completion percentage, with a TD and no interceptions. Not bad for a guy who "can't throw." He added 128 yards on 22 carries for a 5.8 yard average and another two scores. All the while, he displayed that certain "it" factor that can't be taught.

Day obviously made it clear that Martell was not his guy, but you have to wonder if Martell wouldn't be happier if he had stayed here (minus the supermodel, sadly), playing for a national championship, and with all those blowouts this season, he certainly would have played more.

College can be difficult for just a run-of-the

mill student, and even more so for a high-profile athlete who goes from big man on the high school campus to just one of 85 big men on campus.

I hope things work out for Martell.

The story is archived at BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers, for your enjoyment. Just click on the "Football" tab and scroll through the stories.

Why BuckeyeSports.com?

The story on Martell is just a sample of what you are missing if you are not enjoying BuckeyeSports.com. There are stories posted every day that are not found in the print edition of BSB.

Heading into the early signing period, there were features on each of Ohio State's verbal commitments. And the Ohio State career of Heisman Trophy winner Joe Burrow, from his recruitment to his transfer to LSU, was chronicled through reprints of stories from the print BSB as part of our Reprint Thursdays. This feature offers reprints of BSB stories that are either relevant or just entertaining.

Upcoming installments will have reprints from Ohio State's previous matchups with Clemson.

Don't forget that the next print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin does not come out until Jan. 14 at the earliest and Jan. 21 if Ohio State advances to the playoff final. Members of the BSB staff will be reporting from the Phoenix area as the Buckeyes take on Clemson at the Fiesta Bowl, and if the Buckeyes knock off the Tigers, the staff will move on to New Orleans to keep you informed from there. In between there will be plenty of Buckeye news as Ohio State searches for a new coach to replace Jeff Hafley and several of the star Buckeyes ponder their NFL future.

If you have not already signed up for access to BuckeyeSports.com, simple instructions can be found on page 8 of this issue or give us a call at (614) 486-2202 and we will help get you started.

Legendary Coach Passes

Longtime Iowa football coach Hayden Fry passed away on Dec. 17. Fry was truly a Big Ten titan, doing as much as any coach to put an end to the Big Two, Little Eight status of the Big Ten conference in the '70s.

In his time at Iowa from 1979-1998, he led the Hawkeyes to three Rose Bowls (when that meant something). When his team earned the trip to Pasadena following the 1981 season, it snapped a string of 13 straight Rose Bowls where the Big Ten was represented by either Ohio State or Michigan.

Fry was involved in many memorable games with the Buckeyes.

He was on the losing end in one of my all-time favorite Buckeye games, when Ohio State knocked off the top-ranked Hawkeyes, 22-13, in the rain in Ohio Stadium in 1985. That was one of Chris Spielman's best and most colorful games.

Fry also became part of Ohio State football history when his team converted a fourth-and-23 for a touchdown with six seconds left to drive the final nail into Earle Bruce's Ohio State coaching coffin with a 29-27 victory in 1987.

Holiday Promos Available

By now, most of you should have received some sort of holiday promotion. Just a reminder that all holiday promotions are good at least until Jan. 31 and, if you ask nicely, a little bit longer. I know some of you worry that these offers are not valid after Christmas.

Welcome to the many new subscribers or past subscribers who have jumped back on the Buckeye Sports Bulletin bandwagon with this issue.



HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

FOR ATHLETES

- 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 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.

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

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>



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