



ANDREW LIND

SAME OLD STORY – Ohio State fifth-year senior offensive guard Jonah Jackson walks off the field following Ohio State's 29-23 loss to Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinals, moving the Buckeyes to 0-4 all-time against the Tigers.

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Controversial Calls Go Against Ohio State In College Football Playoff Loss To Clemson

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

There's no doubt fans will debate the controversial calls in Ohio State's 29-23 College Football Playoff semifinal loss to Clemson for years to come, much the same way Miami (Fla.) fans still argue about the defensive pass interference that helped the Buckeyes knock off the top-ranked Hurricanes in the 2003 Fiesta Bowl to win the national title.

But even with cornerback Shaun Wade ejected for targeting, a questionable roughing-the-kicker penalty that allowed a 99-yard scoring drive and safety Jordan Fuller's fumble return for a touchdown overturned by replay, Ohio State still had a chance to win the game late.

After surrendering the go-ahead touchdown with 1:49 left in the fourth quarter, the Buckeyes quickly drove down the field under the direction of quarterback Justin Fields. But

a self-admitted mistake by wide receiver Chris Olave to break off his route led to an interception in the end zone that sent the Tigers to the national championship game instead.

"I thought our guys left it all on the field," head coach Ryan Day said after the game. "We played hard and played bold. But certainly, there were a lot of plays in that game that didn't go our way. It's very hard to swallow right now. We're going to have to really take a look at the film and figure out what really happened on some of those plays, because in a game like this where the margin for error is so tiny, one play can alter the game. It didn't seem like we got any of those plays."

Ohio State was dominant early in the game, driving deep into Clemson territory on four of its first five possessions – including a 68-yard touchdown run by running back J.K. Dobbins – while holding the Tigers scoreless. But the Buckeyes settled for field goals on three of those possessions, turning what could have been a commanding 28-0 lead into a two-score

game that was easy for the defending national champions to overcome.

While Dobbins was an early spark for the Buckeyes' offense, adding a 64-yard run at the end of the first quarter to break Eddie George's school single-season rushing record of 1,927 yards, set in 1995, he also dropped a pair of potential touchdowns.

The first was a diving attempt that was initially ruled a score but overturned after replay showed he did not possess the ball all the way to the ground. The second was on a perfectly devised screen pass with a clear path to the end zone.

"That was tough," Day said. "You score touchdowns there, then it's huge. When you're playing against a good defense, things like that happen. I thought we made some good calls. We were just a little bit off."

The turning point in the game came on Clemson's second possession of the second

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Buckeye Leaves

Even in Ohio State's first loss of the season – a 29-23 defeat to Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl – there were a few players who were able to show up as major highlights. Here are the picks that the BSB staff, as well as subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com website, selected for their Buckeye Leaves from the College Football Playoff semifinal.

Wyatt Crosher, BSB: He may have tripled his career collegiate interception number, but Justin Fields still put together a tremendous performance in his first loss as a college starter.

Fields completed 30 of his 46 passes for a career-high 320 yards and a touchdown with two interceptions. Of those 320 yards, 200 of them came in the second half with the game on the line, and if it weren't for a miscommunication with Chris Olave, he might be well on his way to a national title game.

Still, Fields made some terrific throws, including an earlier dart to Olave on a fourth-and-1 to give Ohio State a lead in the fourth quarter. Knee brace and all, Fields put together a gutsy performance, a performance which became even more impressive when he was forced to work without the full health of his star running back, J.K. Dobbins.

Joe Dempsey, BSB: J.K. Dobbins showed why he is the best running back in the nation against Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl.

The junior tailback suffered an ankle sprain that was severe enough to send him to the locker room in the first half, but the Buckeye back returned to play through the

pain. Dobbins did not just show toughness by coming back and playing with a brace on, but excelled.

The La Grange, Texas, native amassed 221 yards from scrimmage against a tough Clemson defense with one touchdown. Dobbins extended Ohio State's first-quarter lead to 10-0 on a first-down carry that he took 68 yards to the house with an excellent jump cut and burst of speed.

The team co-captain gained 174 yards on 18 carries with the one score, averaging 9.7 yards per carry, and added a career-high six receptions for 47 yards in the passing game.

Andrew Lind, BSB: True freshman wide receiver Garrett Wilson saw his role within the Ohio State offense expand over the last few weeks of the season, and his first-quarter catch against Clemson showed exactly why should be considered one of the nation's top wideouts next year.

On first-and-10 from the Clemson 27-yard line on the opening drive of the game, quarterback Justin Fields found Wilson in single coverage and lofted the ball into the air. The freshman soared over cornerback Derion Kendrick to make a ridiculous catch. While the play was initially ruled incomplete because his foot landed out of bounds, replay revealed Wilson's left elbow was inbounds.

The Buckeyes settled for an early field goal, but the play gave the offense confidence that it could move the ball against the Tigers' defense.

Wilson finished the game with four catches for 47 yards.

Patrick Mayhorn, BSB: Ohio State may not have gotten the result that it wanted against Clemson, falling 29-23 in an epic, historic playoff battle, but that doesn't mean that the Buckeyes were without star performers. J.K. Dobbins, Justin Fields, Garrett Wilson and many others made their

final marks on the season, giving their all for the Buckeyes with big play after big play.

The defensive side of the ball had fewer stars, with Chase Young likely ending his Ohio State career with very little impact in the stat book, and Shaun Wade leaving the game by way of ejection in the second quarter, but there is one key player to talk about.

Cornerback Jeff Okudah played an incredible game against one of the best receiving corps in the country, especially given that he was tasked with man coverage for much of the game.

He had five tackles on the day but was nearly unbeatable in coverage, with several deflections. Clemson's Justyn Ross and Tee Higgins, the stars of the team, totaled just 80 yards on 10 catches.

With this being Okudah's final game as a Buckeye, he truly went out in a fitting way, locking down elite receivers and putting on a show for the Silver Bullets.

BSB Subscribers

The Buckeyes fit the true definition of a team, which is a group of people all working together, doing their part. Some performances stood out over others, but some were handicapped by injury. In this very physical game, all of the Buckeyes battled even with physical setbacks, so I am giving leaves to everyone. They gave us a great season as did the coaches.

– PeyoteBuck

I'll say J.K. Dobbins. He gutted out an injury to be out there for the team even though he clearly wasn't 100 percent. Very selfless player. Going to miss him.

– Tiffin Buckeye



From The Message Board

Following Ohio State's 29-23 loss to Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinal on Dec. 28, Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked the readers on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as staff members, to share their favorite moment of the 2019 season.

Here are some of the responses:

"Really enjoyed that no matter who we played we always played as a team and stuck together no matter what. It sucks to go out the way we did but I'm telling you right now we will be back!"

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Being in Ann Arbor and seeing the clock hit 0:00 with the scoreboard reading 56-27, Bucks."

– mrbigbux

"There was no one favorite moment for me, but seeing 12-0, 13-0, was very gratifying to see especially after OSU was not even picked to win the East. An historic season."

– Terrier Buck

"Definitely it was J.K. Dobbins having his shoe removed during the Michigan game. That moment highlighted how desperate Jim Harbaugh was, a new low even for TTUN! Dobbins' expression was priceless. Very weird."

– PeyoteBuck

"It has to be the Justin Fields touchdown pass off of the injury against Michigan. It was such a triumphant and shocking play, and I don't think I've seen anything else like it."

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

"Fields' pass against Michigan. It was a great play, it was against Michigan and it showed how tough Fields is. I learned this season, and in

that game, that his ability is only surpassed by his toughness. While it is not a moment, I would also say Chase Young's play against Penn State after coming back from suspension. Great game. I actually enjoyed the whole season. A great bunch of guys coached by a great staff. Sorry they didn't go all the way, but a great season by any measure."

– Frank Moskowitz, BSB

"I agree with Fields' touchdown against Michigan being the key highlight of the season. If I were to pick another, it would likely be Jeremy Ruckert's insane one-handed grab against Wisconsin to give Ohio State its first lead of the game, or maybe even Chris Olave's shoestring catch against Rutgers. One with more stakes, but one was even more impressive, in my opinion."

– Wyatt Crosher, BSB

"There were so many plays that stand out to me, and the Fields play is undoubtedly the most memorable. The overall situation, the toughness he displayed and how that stadium went silent when he found Garrett Wilson in the end zone – aside from the Ohio State sideline and the fans in attendance. Just a play I'll never forget. That said, in an effort to change it up a bit, my favorite moment of the season was watching Dobbins' 64-yard run in the first quarter of the Fiesta Bowl. He broke Eddie George's single-season record on that run, and he put the Buckeyes in a position to potentially go up 17-0 on Clemson after just a little more than a quarter of play. Of course, that drive – much like the game – didn't end as expected, but the reaction from his teammates on the sideline and the overall feeling in that stadium at that moment was special."

– Andrew Lind, BSB

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OPINION

Buckeyes Fall Just Short Of Greatness ... Again

To be a fan of the Ohio State football team is to bask in a rich history that includes legendary players and coaches as well as a host of thrilling victories, nearly 40 Big Ten championships and six national titles.

To be a fan of the Buckeyes, however, is also to travel a landscape littered with the memories of national championship trophies that somehow managed to slip through the fingers of talented teams that seemed destined to wear the crown only to fall short in excruciating fashion.

Eight times now over the storied history of its football program, Ohio State has lost for the only time in the final game of the season, robbing the program of who knows how many more national championships for its trophy case. It first happened in 1919, and then history repeated itself in 1920, 1969, 1970, 1975, 1979 and 2006.

Such will be the fate of the 2019 team, a squad that rattled off 13 consecutive victories before myriad missed opportunities conspired with a handful of questionable officiating calls to deal the Buckeyes a 29-23 loss to defending national champion Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl serving as one of the College Football Playoff semifinals.

For a team that scarcely made a misstep throughout the regular season, Ohio State suddenly couldn't get out of its own way despite outplaying the Tigers for much of the game. Three early trips to the red zone resulted in field goals rather than touchdowns, missed opportunities that came back to bite the Buckeyes and bite them hard.

A second-quarter targeting call (we'll discuss that in a moment) created a sudden change in the momentum of the game, but even after that controversial penalty, Ohio State still held a 16-0 lead with 4:42 remaining until halftime. Unfortunately, the defense – which had been pretty much lights-out to that point – stumbled down the stretch of the first half and allowed Clemson to score two quick touchdowns.

OSU quarterback Justin Fields, hobbled by a knee injury that rendered him practically useless in the running game, still threw for a career-best 320 yards and directed an up-tempo attack that seemed to confuse the talented Clemson defense almost from the get-go. The Tigers entered the game No. 1 in the country in total defense and gave up 516 yards to the Buckeyes.

But while Ohio State was moving the ball almost at will between the 20s, it couldn't cash in when it got into the red zone. The Buckeyes had a first-and-goal at the 5-yard line on their first possession of the game and couldn't punch the ball into the end zone. Two more possessions early in the second quarter – the first featuring a first-and-goal at the Clemson 8-yard line, the other containing a first down at the 11 – also resulted in field goals.

There were other hiccups such as a punt block attempt early in the third quarter that resulted in a roughing-the-kicker penalty and total defensive breakdowns on three of Clemson's touchdown plays: a 67-run by quarterback Trevor Lawrence just before halftime and short passes from Lawrence that running back Travis Etienne turned into scores of 53 and 34 yards. Those three plays alone represented more than one-third of the Tigers' total yardage for the game.

The offensive play-calling was suspect at times, especially when Ohio State insisted upon running the ball to the short side of the field rather than using its speed advantage to try to get to the edge. And, of course, Fields and receiver Chris Olave being unable to stay on the same page at the end of the game was the final dagger as Clemson safety Nolan Turner grabbed the game-clinching interception.

Still, the entire game could likely be distilled down to just two plays.

On the final play of the first quarter, Dobbins broke loose on a 64-yard burst but was tripped up just short of the goal line by Clemson safety Tanner Muse. The Buckeyes then proceeded to squander a first-and-goal situation at the 8-yard line and had to settle for a field goal.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Then, late in the second quarter, Lawrence broke free on a long run of his own, but he somehow eluded a couple of (supposedly) speedy OSU defenders on his way to a 67-yard touchdown.

One play a near-touchdown; the other a real touchdown. Dobbins gets tripped up short of the end zone and Lawrence does not.

Those two plays might be an oversimplification of what happened in a game that otherwise featured 145 other offensive snaps, but not much of one. Clemson converted when it had a chance, and Ohio State often did not.

About That Officiating

Football officiating – or at least what passes for football officiating these days – will ultimately cause the demise of the sport. I understand that those who run the game want to make it safer, but the truth is that football is a violent, contact sport, and unless tackling is eliminated altogether, football will never be “safe.”

Therefore, the so-called targeting rule with regard to how it is enforced on the college level is what happens when good intentions cross paths with bad implementation.

No player should be allowed to launch himself at an opponent's head or neck area and not suffer the consequences of a 15-yard penalty and subsequent suspension. A perfect example occurred in the College Football Playoff semifinal between LSU and Oklahoma when Sooners linebacker Brendan Radley-Hiles propelled himself headfirst into Tigers running back Clyde Edwards-Helaire instead of chasing LSU quarterback Joe Burrow.

The ACC officiating crew immediately flagged Radley-Hiles for a personal foul, and then after replay confirmed targeting, Radley-Hiles was ejected.

Then came the CFP semifinal between Ohio State and Clemson, and one of the most pivotal plays in the game came in the second quarter. The Buckeyes were holding a 16-0 lead, and the defending national champions were on the ropes.

OSU cornerback Shaun Wade came free on a blitz and sacked Lawrence with a teeth-chattering hit, causing an 8-yard loss and forcing the Tigers to punt. Except that when the SEC officiating crew decided to replay the hit Wade laid on Lawrence, they decided it was targeting. Officials didn't notice two Clemson offensive linemen holding Chase Young most of the night (sometimes by the face mask), but when Wade crashed into Lawrence – something that for most of the past century would have been lauded as an outstanding defensive play – suddenly the sanctity of the game and the safety of the players had to be upheld.

Wade was ejected, Clemson got a new set of downs, and four plays later the Tigers were in the end zone with their first touchdown of the game. It was a momentum-changing play, and one from which the Buckeyes never

really recovered.

Officials on the field and in the replay booth had access to the same replay that I watched, and while Wade's helmet indeed made contact with Lawrence's helmet, the Clemson quarterback contorted his 6-6 frame into almost a sitting position to absorb the blow. When he did that, Lawrence lowered his head right before impact, making it level with the oncoming Wade, who is five inches shorter than the Clemson QB.

At the very most, it could have been called roughing the passer, and I'm not convinced it even rose to that level since no flag was thrown on the play. Only when the replay officials took a second (and maybe third and fourth) look at the hit was the targeting call levied against Wade.

If targeting is going to continue to be a part of college football, then college football is going to have to have some kind of uniformity in the way it is called. If there is malicious intent involved, then by all means level a 15-yard penalty and eject the offending player from the game.

But when there is no apparent intent – such as with the Wade hit on Lawrence – there should be no ejection. And as long as we're on the subject of making the game safer, why does Clemson defensive tackle Tyler Davis, the guy who twisted Dobbins' ankle at the bottom of a pile late in the second quarter, get to keep playing but Wade doesn't?

I learned a long time ago never to blame the officiating for a loss. Your team ought to play well enough that one or two calls should never make the difference between winning and losing. The cold, hard fact is that Ohio State made too many mistakes to dethrone the defending national champions.

Still, when you take Wade's ejection for targeting and couple it with Dobbins' TD catch early in the second quarter, and especially Jordan Fuller's third-quarter fumble return for a touchdown – two other critical plays overturned in the replay booth – it sure seemed that the Buckeyes got the short end of the zebras' stick against Clemson.

Same Old, Same Old

There is no doubt the Ohio State defense improved dramatically from 2018 to this season, and part of that improvement must be credited to co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley, who left the Buckeyes shortly after the Fiesta Bowl to become head coach at Boston College.

That said, some of the same problems that plagued the OSU defense a year ago followed the Buckeyes into 2019 and reared their ugly heads again during the loss to Clemson – missed assignments at crucial junctures, being out of position too many times, and missing tackles.

Ohio State pretty much stymied the potent Clemson offense for the first 27 minutes of the first half but tired in the waning moments and allowed the Tigers to grab two quick scores before the break. The first came on an 8-yard touchdown run by Etienne that should have been a 2-yard loss, and the second came on Lawrence's 67-yard run on a simple quarterback draw.

On what became the eventual winning touchdown, Lawrence took full advantage of Ohio State linebackers cheating toward the line of scrimmage to stop him from running and dumped the ball to Etienne over the middle.

The Clemson running back made the catch and ran untouched until knifing between two defenders at the goal to give the Tigers a lead they would not relinquish.



Dennis Promoted To Quarterbacks Coach

Ohio State football coach Ryan Day tabbed Corey Dennis, a longtime OSU staffer, as the next quarterbacks coach at Ohio State, making the promotion official on Jan. 10. Dennis had been rumored to be accepting the same position at Colorado State under Steve Addazio but never signed anything to officially leave Columbus, possibly in anticipation of this opening.

“Corey is a talented young coach and someone I’ve worked closely alongside for three seasons,” Day said. “He knows our system and he knows how we teach. I think he is going to allow us to develop some continuity in the quarterback room, and that’s important. I also believe that he is going to be an excellent recruiter for us.”

Dennis is a familiar face at Ohio State. A former Georgia Tech receiver, Dennis came to Columbus as an intern in the spring of 2015 under the tutelage of his father-in-law, head coach Urban Meyer (Dennis and Meyer’s daughter Nicki have been married since 2015).

From there, Dennis rose up the ranks, taking over as a graduate assistant coach on offense for the 2016 and 2017 seasons, where he spent most of his time working with the wide receivers.

He was elevated to a senior quality control coach position in July of 2018 and spent the past two seasons working primarily with quarterbacks under Day. In

his two years as a quality control assistant, Dennis has garnered quite a bit of praise, primarily from players he’s worked with, including former Buckeye signal caller Dwayne Haskins.

“He’s like my personal quarterbacks coach when Coach Day is not around,” Haskins said of Dennis in 2018. “I can ask him about looks, coverages and different pressures, and he has everything that Coach Day teaches him. He helps me throughout practice, throughout meetings. He helps out a lot.”

Sophomore quarterback Justin Fields echoed similar sentiments, mentioning Dennis in November as a part of the developmental process along with Day and the recently departed Mike Yurcich.

“I got more consistent,” said Fields. “Coach Day has really emphasized taking care of the ball. I’ve watched a lot of film. Just getting in the film room with Coach Day, Coach Yurcich and Corey, they’ve helped me out a lot. Taking the conversations from the film room to the field has really helped me a lot.”

The three-coach quarterback room approach was all but confirmed by Yurcich.

“It’s a collective effort,” Yurcich said. “Day won’t offend me if he says something, just like if Corey Dennis has something to say in our meeting room. It’s all three of us coaching the quarterbacks.”

Even the 2019 Heisman winner, former Buckeye quarterback Joe Burrow, had plenty of good things to say about Dennis upon the announcement of his promotion.

“I think Corey is going to be a really good coach for a long time,” Burrow said in a teleconference prior to the national championship game.

“I texted him as soon as I saw the news and was fired up for him. He’s worked for that for a long time, and there’s nobody more deserving. He’s going to be a really good coach. I’m excited for him.”

Burrow also mentioned the influence Day had on Dennis during his rise to the position.

“I think the best thing for Corey was learning under Coach Day for a couple of years,” Burrow said. “I think that really helped him, and I think he’s going to be one of the best recruiters in the country, as well. He works his tail off, and he has for a long time.”

“I’m excited to get on the phone with him next week and talk a little ball and see his mind-set, but he’s a really good coach, really good person, and he’s going to do a really good job.”

Dennis’ promotion to quarterbacks coach means the title of passing game coordinator will be filled by someone else on the staff, potentially wide receivers coach Brian Hartline. Day will continue to call plays, as he has since 2017.

Off the field, Dennis isn’t an experienced recruiter, but he has been mentioned as a key factor in the recruitment of 2020 four-star quarterback signee C.J. Stroud.

QB Coach Yurcich Headed To Texas

Dennis’ opportunity became available when, after just one year in Columbus, quarterbacks coach and passing game coordinator Yurcich headed to Texas to take over the vacant offensive coordinator position. He will take over for another former OSU OC in Tim Beck, who was demoted to quarterbacks coach in December prior to his departure on Jan. 1, when it was announced he would take over as the OC at North Carolina State.

2019 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2019 Record, Bowl Result
Aug. 31	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	W, 45-21	FOX	11-3, 52-28 win over SMU (Boca Raton)
Sept. 7	CINCINNATI	W, 42-0	ABC	11-3, 28-6 win over BC (Birmingham)
Sept. 14	at Indiana	W, 51-10	FOX	8-5, 23-22 loss to Tennessee (Gator)
Sept. 21	MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 76-5	BTN	8-6, 27-17 loss to Louisiana (LendingTree)
Sept. 28	at Nebraska	W, 48-7	ABC	5-7, not eligible
Oct. 5	MICHIGAN STATE	W, 34-10	ESPN	7-6, 27-21 win over Wake Forest (Pinstripe)
Oct. 18	at Northwestern	W, 52-3	BTN	3-9, not eligible
Oct. 26	WISCONSIN	W, 38-7	FOX	10-4, 28-27 loss to Oregon (Rose)
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	11-2, 53-39 win over Memphis (Cotton)
Nov. 30	at Michigan	W, 56-27	FOX	9-4, 35-16 loss to Alabama (Citrus)
Dec. 7	vs. Wisconsin*	W, 34-21	FOX	10-4, 28-27 loss to Oregon (Rose)
Dec. 28	vs. Clemson**	L, 29-23	ESPN	14-0, 29-23 win over Ohio State; CFP vs. LSU

* Big Ten Championship at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

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

Next BSB Print Edition Mails Jan. 28

The next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, with a cover date of Feb. 1, will be mailed on Jan. 28. However, there is no need for readers to miss any late-breaking recruiting news as we head toward the traditional National Signing Day on Feb. 5. The BSB staff will be monitoring the recruiting activity, and any news will be posted at our electronic BuckeyeSports.com website. We also will be covering the men’s and women’s basketball teams, the wrestling team and all of the other Buckeye action.

The BuckeyeSports.com website, free to BSB subscribers, 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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There is still plenty of Ohio State flavor on the Longhorn staff with one-time offensive coordinator Tom Herman serving as the head coach and former Buckeye defensive coordinator Chris Ash serving in that same capacity in Austin.

“I talked with a number of coaches as we tried to find the best fit at offensive coordinator, and Mike is a guy who really stood out,” Herman said in a news release. “I’ve admired his work for many years. He’s very highly regarded and respected in the coaching world, and in talking at length with him, I was extremely impressed with what he’ll bring to our staff.”

“He knows our conference well from his time at Oklahoma State and, including the run he had with Ohio State this year, has played a big part in some of the nation’s best offenses for the past several years. All of that said, what impresses me most about him is how he works with and develops players and the creative ways he utilizes all of his weapons on offense.”

In his one year at Ohio State, Yurcich helped put together the nation’s third-best scoring offense, averaging 46.9 points per game, while putting up 529.9 yards per game, good enough for fifth. The passing game – his forte – wasn’t the leader of the offense it had been in 2018, with the Buckeyes putting up 263.1 passing yards per game (36th nationally).

Under Yurcich’s tutelage, Fields had an excellent debut season, passing for 3,273 yards, while completing 67.2 percent of his passes and tossing 41 touchdowns to only three interceptions.

Yurcich stated in a press release that

the decision revolved primarily around familiarity.

“When looking at offensive coordinator positions, Texas is a no-brainer career move,” Yurcich said. “I’m excited to work with Coach Herman and the entire staff. Having recruited the state of Texas and having coordinated in the Big 12, I’m excited and proud to represent UT Football as its next offensive coordinator.”

Prior to his time at Ohio State, Yurcich had served as Mike Gundy’s offensive coordinator at Oklahoma State from 2013-2018, helping to coordinate some of the nation’s best offenses. An Ohio native, Yurcich had stints at Shippensburg (2011-2012) and Edinboro (2005-2010) as an offensive coordinator, both in Pennsylvania, as well as in Indiana, as a graduate assistant for Indiana in 2003-2004 and an offensive assistant at St. Francis from 1999-2002.

“When you look at his résumé, I think the year at Ohio State is kind of like the icing on the cake,” Herman said. “This is a guy that in his six years at Oklahoma State, you look at the numbers, they’re off the charts.”

“I mean, I couldn’t have dreamed of a better fit in terms of similarities, the way that we believe in offensive football.”

Yurcich is expected to take over play-calling duties from Herman and will have senior quarterback Sam Ehlinger to work with in year one, as he announced his return to Texas on Dec. 7.

“I know for me, you feel like you become a jack-of-all-trades and master of none, and I don’t ever want to rob Peter to pay Paul and diminish my ability as a head coach to



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From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

While Ohio State was set to graduate quarterback Mike Tomczak and starting offensive linemen Jim Lachey, Kirk Lowdermilk, Scott Zalenski and Mark Krerowicz and defensive linemen Dave Crecelius, Anthony Giuliani and Dave Morrill, there was still plenty of hope to be had around the program.

That hope was, in large part, a result of some fine performances turned in by some returning Buckeyes in a 20-17 Rose Bowl loss to USC. The most outstanding performance came from freshmen Cris Carter and Chris Spielman. Carter had nine catches for 172 yards, while Spielman had 15 tackles.

Carter and Spielman were two of six Buckeye freshmen to start in the Rose Bowl. Also drawing starting assignments were freshman defensive backs Greg Rogan and William White, linebacker Eric Kumerow and punter Tom Tupa.

Head coach Earle Bruce wasn't ready to look to the future quite yet though, after the Rose Bowl loss.

"I'm not thinking about the future right now," he said. "I'm thinking really hard about this football game."

30 Years Ago – 1990

Old demons came back to haunt Ohio State as sixth-ranked Auburn handed OSU a 31-14 defeat in the Hall of Fame Bowl.

The Buckeyes reverted to their old ways against the Tigers, suffering from self-inflicted wounds. They allowed a big punt return that set up a touchdown with just 11 seconds left in the first half, turning a 14-3 OSU lead into just a 14-10 lead.

In the second half, blown assignments, missed tackles and more poor kick coverage led to 21 unanswered points for Auburn.

"Our football team played hard," head coach John Cooper said. "I told them after the game that we lost to a real fine Auburn team."

25 Years Ago – 1995

Ohio State went into the CompUSA Florida Citrus Bowl on Jan. 2 in Orlando, Fla., with little to lose. The 9-3 Buckeyes were stepping up in class to take on sixth-ranked Alabama.

After extending 'Bama to the game's final minute before allowing the winning score and falling to the Tide 24-17, Ohio State had little to be ashamed of.

"I am proud of this football team," Cooper said. "I thought we played really hard, and you couldn't ask a

team to give a better effort than they did today.

"We were playing an outstanding football team in Alabama. They find ways to win. They've done it game after game."

20 Years Ago – 2000

With close friends and family members by his side, OSU linebacker Na'il Diggs declared his intention to enter the 2000 NFL draft during a Jan. 4 press conference at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

Diggs, a fourth-year junior in 1999, was touted as one of the nation's best linebackers. He ended the season as OSU's top tackler, but with Ohio State finishing the season eighth in the Big Ten with a 6-6 record, Diggs was just a second-team all-conference pick.

"After careful consideration and weeks of research, I have decided to make myself eligible for the NFL draft," Diggs said. "The fact that I will not be returning for my senior season at Ohio State has been the toughest part of this whole decision.

"Some of the best times of my life have been realized as an Ohio State Buckeye. The friendships and relationships I have formed with the faculty, the students, the fans, coaches and players will always have a special place in my heart."

15 Years Ago – 2005

A tearful and self-described "bone-weary" Andy Geiger announced his retirement as Ohio State director of athletics on Jan. 5, stressing that no one was forcing him out and that the decision was his and his alone.

"It is my decision after months of thinking about this," Geiger told reporters at a packed press conference attended by several members of his staff. "I find that my work is no longer fun and that I don't look forward with enthusiasm to each day. Thus, it is time for me to change directions and time for Ohio State to seek new leadership for its department of athletics."

Geiger's retirement, which came one year into a two-year contract extension that he had signed in 2002, was set to become effective on June 30, 2005.

10 Years Ago – 2010

Ohio State brushed aside national predictions and put away Oregon 26-17 on New Year's Day in the 96th Rose Bowl, memorably putting to an end a grating streak of three straight Bowl Championship Series losses that left fans and media pundits across the country doubting whether the Buckeyes could compete at the national

level against a high-caliber opponent.

At the conclusion of a picture-perfect day capped by a stunning sunset on the San Gabriel Mountains that left the crowd abuzz, the final few moments of the game were just as welcome a sight as the natural beauty to the Buckeyes and their fans.

"I can't even begin to describe the feeling," said OSU sophomore center Michael Brewster. "I'm tired as hell, and both my ankles are hurting like hell. I'm going to wake up tomorrow with a smile on my face."

Five Years Ago – 2015

"The Chase is complete."

The words of Urban Meyer rang true as confetti came down at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, after the Ohio State football team completed an unlikely run with a 42-20 victory against No. 2 Oregon in the inaugural College Football Playoff National Championship.

It was Ohio State's eighth claimed national title, its sixth of the consensus variety and the first crown since 2002. The head coach since 2012, Meyer instituted the motivational message known as The Chase after his initial season and in year three at Ohio State delivered the national championship to his home state.

"I love these guys," said Meyer. "I'll never forget what (legendary NFL coach) Bill Parcells said – it's like a blood transfer. We're officially brothers for the rest of our lives because we're champions."

One Year Ago – 2019

In addition to Greg Mattison and Al Washington, new Ohio State head coach Ryan Day hired three more assistant from outside programs in building his first staff in Columbus.

First, on Jan. 2, Day hired Oklahoma State offensive coordinator Mike Yurcich to be passing game coordinator and quarterbacks coach in Columbus. Yurcich signed a two-year deal worth \$950,000 annually.

Along with Mattison, Day also named Jeff Hafley as co-defensive coordinator. Hafley, who worked with Day with the San Francisco 49ers in 2016, would also serve as defensive backs coach in Columbus.

Day rounded out his defensive coaching hires Jan. 10 when he named Matt Barnes special teams coordinator and assistant secondary coach. Barnes most recently had served as linebackers coach and special teams coordinator at Maryland, where he coached for three years.

try to be the best offensive play caller that I can be," Herman said of passing on play calling to Yurcich. "And so you never want to say never, but hopefully this will be the last time for a while."

Spring Game, Practice Dates Announced

According to a release from the university, Ohio State fans will get their first chance at seeing the 2020 Buckeyes on April 11 for the annual spring game.

With 14 early enrollees from the 2020 class (QBs C.J. Stroud and Jack Miller; WRs Mookie Cooper, Julian Fleming, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Gee Scott; OTs Paris Johnson and Trey Leroux; OG Luke Wypler; DE Jacob Cowan; DT Darrion Henry; DBs Lejond Cavazos and Ryan Watts; ATH Kourt Williams) set to be in the program come spring practice, it could be a youth showcase of sorts.

In addition to the spring game, Ohio State announced that its spring practices will open on March 2, taking a short break from Mar. 9-13 for spring break and concluding after 15 total practices with that scrimmage in April.

Hartline Has No Interest In Leaving Ohio State

With a potential promotion likely in his future and one of the nation's best recruit-

ing classes locked up, Hartline doesn't expect to be anywhere but Columbus in the near future. With his first year as the full-time receivers coach at Ohio State in the books, early returns on the 33-year-old former Buckeye wideout couldn't be better.

Since his promotion from quality control assistant to interim receivers coach in the wake of Zach Smith's firing in July of 2018, Hartline has flexed his coaching muscles both on and off the field, and it was his success in that interim year that led to his full-time promotion in December of the same year.

In that interim year, Hartline helped coach one of the nation's best passing attacks and produced four receivers with 35 receptions or more (Parris Campbell, K.J. Hill, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin) as well as Ohio State's first 1,000-yard receiver since Michael Jenkins in 2002, with Campbell racking up 1,063 on 90 receptions.

With McLaurin and Campbell finding early success in the NFL, Hartline continued his impressive start in 2019, producing another elite receiving corps, led by Hill (57 receptions, 636 yards), Chris Olave (49 receptions, 849 yards), Binjimen Victor (35 receptions, 573 yards) and breakout freshman Garrett Wilson (30 receptions, 432 yards).

In those first two years, Hartline has

also established himself as one of the nation's best recruiters, securing pledges from the five-star Wilson and four-star Jameson Williams in the 2019 class before following it up with what may be the best receiver haul in the country in 2020. Five-star Fleming headlines the group, but four-stars Scott, Smith-Njigba and Cooper all checked in as top-100 players in the 247Sports composite rankings when they signed with Ohio State on Dec. 18.

"These guys where I can't speak enough about is how coachable they come off and how much of a dire need they want to be great and how they talk about contributing to the room," Hartline said of his new receivers. "And that's where I fall in love."

With so much success at such a young age, Hartline seems like a natural fit for the "rising star" tag that so many assistant coaches at top schools such as Ohio State garner, but as Hartline tells it, he has no interest in a jump from Columbus.

"I'm very passionate about Ohio State," Hartline said. "At this point, it's really early, I don't want to sound ignorant to the fact – I don't know what would get me out of the city, frankly, unless I'm just not good."

With one of the best young receiving groups in the country entering the 2020 season and two blue-chip receivers already committed in the class of 2021 in Jayden

Ballard and Marvin Harrison, along with a new title expected soon, Hartline's hot start looks primed to continue.

"Hopefully I can control that and keep getting better," Hartline said. "But I think my passion lies in this receiver room. I love coaching the wide receivers. There are a lot of coaches who say they'll never leave, and never is a long time. But being honest, realistically I don't see a situation where I'm out of here anytime soon. Hopefully I'm here for a long time and that I've earned it year in and year out."

Buckeye Assistants See Large Playoff Bonuses

After taking a trip to the College Football Playoff for the first time since 2016, Ohio State's football staff saw significant pay bonuses across the board and will likely be in for salary raises in the coming weeks.

No one on the staff reeled in more in bonuses throughout the season than first year co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison. Mattison accumulated \$374,000 in bonuses for his efforts, added on to his \$1.1 million salary, the highest of any coach on the staff. Behind him, co-offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson and Yurcich and co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley all

Continued On Page 6



OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

earned \$323,000 in bonuses.

Defensive line coach Larry Johnson added \$306,000, followed by running backs coach Tony Alford and offensive line coach Greg Studrawa, who are both set to make an extra \$204,000.

Linebackers coach Al Washington Jr. earned \$170,000, while special teams coordinator Matt Barnes and Hartline rounded out the staff with \$119,000 and \$117,300 bonuses, respectively. Day is set to add \$450,000, as reported prior to the playoff.

The bonus totals are derived from salary percentages, with each assistant earning 34 percent of his salary in bonuses, with 21.25 percent coming for the CFP berth, 8.5 for the Big Ten East title, and 4.25 for a win in the Big Ten Championship Game. The staff combined for \$2,463,300 in bonuses.

Had Ohio State knocked off Clemson in the semifinal and advanced to the national championship, the staff would have earned an additional 4.25 percent of their salaries, while Day would have been in for another \$100,000.

Pair Of Buckeye Staffers Headed To Boston College

As is often the case when an assistant moves into a head coaching spot, a little bit of staffer turnover was expected at Ohio State as Hafley packed up to head to Boston College. Hafley had quite a few quality control staffers whom he worked closely with

in Columbus, and when taking over a program, that kind of familiarity is important.

In Hafley's case, it looks as though Ohio State will lose just two staffers and no members of the coaching staff, despite rumors that linebackers coach Washington could be interested in returning to his alma mater with Hafley as a defensive coordinator.

The first staffer is associate director of strength and conditioning Phil Matusz, who had worked under Ohio State strength and conditioning director Mickey Marotti since 2014. A Pennsylvania native with ties to the East Coast, Matusz will be taking over as the director of strength and conditioning under Hafley.

"Being able to work alongside Phil at Ohio State, I was able to see the positive impact he had on the development of our student-athletes and our football program," said Hafley. "We could not be more excited to have Phil leading our strength and conditioning program here at BC Football, and we welcome him and his wife, Jillian, to our BC football family."

After joining Ohio State as an assistant in 2014, Matusz was promoted to associate director of strength and conditioning in 2017 and spent the last three seasons serving as one of Marotti's top assistants, along with Ryan Stamper and Christopher Fenelon.

"This comes with a heavy heart and an immense amount of gratitude," Matusz said in a statement. "Over the past six years, this journey has been unbelievable and truly shows that God is good! I'd like to say thank you to all of those who have helped in this process, especially to Coach Mick and Susie (Marotti) for the opportunity to be a Buckeye."

Along with Matusz, Hafley is bringing Buckeye graduate assistant Sean Duggan to Chestnut Hill with him, promoting the staffer to linebackers coach at BC.

"After working with Sean at Ohio State, he was a guy who jumped out that if I ever landed a head job, I have to hire this guy," Hafley said. "He is smart, reliable, sees things on game day and really understands the big picture. He is well advanced beyond his years and has a chance to be a superstar in our profession."

Duggan spent just one year at Ohio State, joining the program in February of 2019 and serving primarily as a defensive assistant who worked directly with Hafley.

This marks not only a promotion for Duggan but also a homecoming. He played his college ball at Boston College, suiting up in 45 games from 2011-2014 as a linebacker and being named a captain as a senior.

Fresh off graduation, Duggan remained at BC as a defensive graduate assistant in 2015 before moving on to Hawaii as linebackers coach in 2016 and 2017 and to UMass in the same position in 2018.

Brendon White Transferring To Rutgers

Former Ohio State safety Brendon White has found a new home after entering the transfer portal shortly after Ohio State's 34-21 win over Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game. The junior safety announced on Dec. 27 that he would be heading to Rutgers to play out his final year of eligibility. He's the second former Buckeye to head to Piscataway this off-season, along with defensive tackle Malik Barrow, who originally transferred from OSU to UCF in 2018.

White and Barrow will be joining their former coach at Rutgers, as former Buckeye defensive coordinator Greg Schiano was announced as the next head coach for the

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Scarlet Knights on Dec. 3.

For White, the move back into Schiano's defense could serve as confirmation that Ohio State's new-look defensive staff was never able to find a place for him, if his dwindling snaps weren't enough to indicate it. After a 2018 campaign that had White slide into a starting role halfway through the season, racking up 46 tackles as a breakout starter, 2019 was anticipated to be a big year for him.

However, Ohio State's new single-high safety look left no room for White in the backfield, and he was unable to beat out Pete Werner for the new "bullet" position, touted as a mixture between safety and linebacker. White played in just 10 games, recording 19 tackles and spending the final four games of the season on the bench.

With White's playing time declining, Ohio State found safety production from younger players such as Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker.

"Sometimes when you have a different scheme, some guys don't fit like they did before," Mattison said of White at the Fiesta Bowl. "Usually what happens is when you have a big, strong Sam linebacker in passing situations, you put in an athlete that is like a strong safety. Well, if you notice, Pete Werner's had a pretty good year this year and he's proved that he could be that guy at the same time, so you didn't get that as much. As the season went on, the same thing happened, and it just kept happening where Pete kept getting better, kept doing it and I think that's really what happened."

White will be immediately eligible to

play and is expected to take over as a star of a young defense from day one.

"I wish him the best of luck," Mattison said. "He's a tremendous young man. And he's going to be very successful. We just wish him the very best of luck."

Bosa Named Rookie Of The Year Finalist

Former Ohio State defensive end Nick Bosa is already making waves in his first year in the NFL, helping to build one of the league's best defenses on a 13-3 San Francisco 49ers team. After starting the final 14 games of the season for the 49ers, Bosa was named a rookie of the year finalist on Jan. 3. He's one of five finalists for the honor, along with Tennessee wideout A.J. Brown, Oakland halfback Josh Jacobs, Arizona quarterback Kyler Murray and Philadelphia halfback Miles Sanders.

The winner will be selected through an online fan vote, with the polls closing on Jan. 20.

Along with being named among those finalists, Bosa was selected to the NFC Pro Bowl roster. Bosa isn't alone on the roster as a former Buckeye. He is joined in the defensive trenches by his brother, Joey, from Los Angeles and Pittsburgh's Cameron Heyward from the AFC, along with New Orleans wideout Michael Thomas, Dallas running back Ezekiel Elliott and New Orleans defensive back Marshon Lattimore for the NFC.

Nick Bosa finished the regular season with 47 tackles and nine sacks. His 16 tackles for loss placed him fifth in the league.



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Familiar Ending For Buckeyes In Fiesta Bowl

Continued From Page 1

quarter, however.

With the Tigers facing 3rd-and-5 from the Ohio State 45-yard line, the Buckeyes dialed up a corner blitz and sacked quarterback Trevor Lawrence. But Wade was called for targeting and disqualified from the game, giving the offense a fresh set of downs.

Clemson scored four plays and a pass interference call against Wade's replacement, Amir Riep, later on an 8-yard run by running back Travis Etienne.

Wade's tackle fit the textbook definition of targeting because he led with the crown of his helmet, though Lawrence dropped his head into the tackle. Momentum quickly shifted as a result, and the Tigers scored 21 consecutive points to take their first lead midway through the third quarter.

"You talk about a change of events when they threw Shaun out of the game," Day said. "He's out of the game, it's fourth-and-15. They get the first down and score. That was a huge change."

Even so, it appeared Ohio State had quelled that momentum with a game-changing play of its own when cornerback Jeff Okudah forced a fumble on a catch by Clemson wide receiver Justyn Ross that was recovered by Fuller and returned 29 yards for a go-ahead touchdown.

That was overturned to an incomplete pass, though, when replay determined

that Ross never fully possessed the ball before Okudah knocked it free.

"I know there were some plays that were called on the field and then overturned, and when they overturn it, there has to be indisputable evidence," Day said. "I think when we look back on it, it is going to be overwhelming. Those game-altering plays that happen in a game, you need those things to go beat a team like Clemson where you're playing in a semifinal game. You need those one or two plays. Then to miss a couple of them, that hurts you."

"I just know when two great teams get together, it comes down to a few plays, and it did again tonight."

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith, Big Ten officiating coordinator Bill Carollo and former NFL referee Terry McAulay were among those who criticized the officials' decision to overturn the call after the game.

"There is absolutely no way replay should have reversed," McAulay posted on Twitter. "Indisputable video evidence' is simply not there."

Carollo added he "hasn't talked to anybody who thought it was an incomplete pass. To reverse it, it has to be really obvious."

The Buckeyes still had opportunities to win the game from there, however, taking a 23-21 lead early in the fourth quarter when Fields found Olave in the end zone after Day opted to go for it on 4th-and-1 at the 23-yard line.



SONNY BROCKWAY

MISSED OPPORTUNITY – Sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave kneels in the end zone after Ohio State's final pass attempt is intercepted.



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The teams traded possessions before the Tigers responded with a 94-yard touchdown drive of their own with just under two minutes remaining.

Ohio State then drove all the way to Clemson's 23-yard line before Fields was intercepted by safety Nolan Turner in the middle of the end zone with just 37 seconds left.

Olave, who was supposed to run the same route on which he had scored earlier in the corner, thought that Fields was going to scramble out of the pocket and ad lib as he had done so often throughout the season.

"It was my fault," a dejected Olave said after the game. "I was supposed to run a post, but I thought he was scrambling, so I just tried to work the second part of the route. But it ended up he wasn't scrambling. He trusted me to run that post. I didn't. So, it's a mistake on me."

In the end, Ohio State played well enough to beat Clemson. If one of the disputed plays had gone their way, the Buckeyes probably would have won the game. But while it's easy to single out the overturned touchdown, the targeting penalty or the final play, Ohio State also left points on the field.

The Buckeyes also finished with eight penalties for 77 yards, including the 15-yard roughing the kicker on cornerback Cameron Brown, all of which cost the team in the end.

"I'm so proud of the way our team responded," Day said. "We kept swinging all the way to the end. I couldn't be prouder of the way we responded because that was hard to swallow."

"I thought our guys played really well. It wasn't like our guys didn't play hard or our guys didn't execute well, we didn't make big plays. We did all of those things and we just came up short in the end. We

were right there all the way to the end. That's the way it goes."

Now, rather than be listed among the greatest teams in Ohio State history, this year's group will join the likes of the 1969, 1998 and 2015 teams – along with several others – that came up just short of a national title.

"(It's) tough to go into a locker room with such a great team who played their hearts out and not be able to celebrate a victory, but our guys played hard," Day said. "(I'm) certainly feeling a range of emotions right now: proud, sad and certainly angry."

NCAA Targeting, Catch And Replay Rules

Controversial calls played a key role in Clemson's 29-23 victory over Ohio State at the Fiesta Bowl. The following are the rules in question:

Targeting

ARTICLE 3. No player shall target and make forcible contact against an opponent with the crown of his helmet. This foul requires that there be at least one indicator of targeting (See Note 1 below). When in question, it is a foul.

ARTICLE 4. No player shall target and make forcible contact to the head or neck area of a defenseless opponent (See Note 2 below) with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulder. This foul requires that there be at least one indicator of targeting (See Note 1 below). When in question, it is a foul.

Note 1: "Targeting" means that a player takes aim at an opponent for purposes of attacking with forcible contact that goes beyond making a legal tackle or a legal block or playing the ball. Some indicators of targeting include but are not limited to:

- Launch – a player leaving his feet to attack an opponent by an upward and forward thrust of the body to make forcible contact in the head or neck area
- A crouch followed by an upward and forward thrust to attack with forcible contact at the head or neck area, even though one or both feet are still on the ground
- Leading with helmet, shoulder, forearm, fist, hand or elbow to attack with forcible contact at the head or neck area
- Lowering the head before attacking by initiating forcible contact with the crown of the helmet

Note 2: Defenseless player (Rule 2-27-14). When in question, a player is defenseless. Examples of defenseless players include but are not limited to:

- A player in the act of or just after throwing a pass.
- A receiver attempting to catch a forward pass or in position to receive a backward pass, or one who has completed a catch and has not had time to protect himself or has not clearly become a ball carrier.
- A kicker in the act of or just after kicking a ball, or during the kick or the return.
- A kick returner attempting to catch or recover a kick, or one who has completed a catch or recovery and has not had time to protect himself or has not clearly become a ball carrier.
- A player on the ground.
- A player obviously out of the play.
- A player who receives a blind-side block.
- A ball carrier already in the grasp of an opponent and whose forward progress has been stopped.
- A quarterback any time after a change of possession
- A ball carrier who has obviously given himself up and is sliding feetfirst.

Catch

ARTICLE 3. a. To catch a ball means that a player:

1. Secures firm control with the hand(s) or arm(s) of a live ball in flight before the ball touches the ground, and
 2. Touches the ground in bounds with any part of his body, and then
 3. Maintains control of the ball long enough to enable him to perform an act common to the game, i.e., long enough to pitch or hand the ball, advance it, avoid or ward off an opponent, etc., and
 4. Satisfies paragraphs b, c, and d below.
- b. If a player goes to the ground in the act of catching a pass (with or without contact by an opponent) he must main-

tain complete and continuous control of the ball throughout the process of contacting the ground, whether in the field of play or in the end zone. This is also required for a player attempting to make a catch at the sideline and going to the ground out of bounds. If he loses control of the ball which then touches the ground before he regains control, it is not a catch. If he regains control inbounds prior to the ball touching the ground it is a catch.

c. If the player loses control of the ball while simultaneously touching the ground with any part of his body, or if there is doubt that the acts were simultaneous, it is not a catch. If a player has control of the ball, a slight movement of the ball, even if it touches the ground, will not be considered loss of possession; he must lose control of the ball in order for there to be a loss of possession.

d. If the ball touches the ground after the player secures control and continues to maintain control, and the elements above are satisfied, it is a catch.

e. An interception is a catch of an opponent's pass or fumble.

f. A catch by any kneeling or prone inbounds player is a completion or interception (Rules 7-3-6 and 7).

g. A player recovers a ball if he fulfills the criteria in paragraphs a, b, c, and d for catching a ball that is still alive after hitting the ground.

h. When in question, the catch, recovery or interception is not completed.

Replay Procedure, Targeting

ARTICLE 5 a. The replay official shall review all targeting fouls, Rules 9-1-3 and 9-1-4. For a player to be disqualified and the Targeting foul to be enforced, all elements of a Targeting foul must be confirmed by the Instant Replay Official. There is no option for stands ??? as a part of a Targeting review. If any element of Targeting cannot be confirmed, then the Replay Official shall overturn the targeting foul.

Targeting elements include:

1. Rule 9-1-3:
 - (a) A player takes aim at an opponent for the purposes of attacking with forcible contact with the crown of the helmet.
 - (b) An indicator of targeting is present.
 2. Rule 9-1-4:
 - (a) A defenseless opponent (Rule 2-27-14).
 - (b) A player takes aim at a defenseless opponent for the purposes of attacking with forcible contact to the head or neck area.
 - (c) An indicator of targeting is present.
- b. The replay official may create a targeting foul from the booth when the targeting action is clear and obvious and the foul is not called by the officials on the field. Such a review may not be initiated by a coach's challenge.

Replay Procedure, Catch

ARTICLE 3. Reviewable plays involving potential dead balls and loose balls include:

- a. Loose ball by a potential passer ruled a fumble.
 - b. Loose ball by a passer ruled incomplete forward pass when there is clear recovery or the ball goes out of bounds in the immediate continuing action after the loose ball.
1. If the replay official does not have indisputable video evidence as to which team recovers or the ball going out of bounds, the ruling of incomplete pass stands.
 2. If the replay official rules fumble and the ball is recovered, the ball belongs to the recovering team at the spot

of the recovery and any advance is nullified.

c. Live ball not ruled dead in possession of a ball carrier.

d. Loose ball ruled dead (Rule 4-1-2-b-2), or live ball ruled dead in possession of a ball carrier, when the clear recovery of a loose ball occurs in the immediate continuing football action.

1. If the ball is ruled dead and the replay official does not have indisputable video evidence as to which team recovers, the dead-ball ruling stands.

2. If the replay official rules that the ball was not dead, it belongs to the recovering team at the spot of the recovery and any advance is nullified.

e. Ball carrier's forward progress, spot of fumble, or spot of out-of-bounds backward pass, with respect to a first down or the goal line.

f. Catch or recovery of a fumble by a Team A player other than the fumbler before any change of possession during fourth down or a try.

g. Ball carrier in or out of bounds. If a ball carrier is ruled out of bounds, the play is not reviewable, except as in Rules 12-3-1-a and 12-3-3-d.

h. Catch, recovery or touching of a loose ball by a player in bounds or out of bounds.

i. A loose ball touching on or beyond a sideline, goal line, or end line, touching a pylon, or breaking the plane of a goal line.

j. Catch or recovery of a loose ball in the field of play or an end zone.

k. Forward fumble that goes out of bounds with respect to a first down.

l. Live ball declared dead under Rule 4-1-2-b-2 and b-3 (inadvertent whistle).

Replay Process

ARTICLE 1. Instant replay personnel shall consist of the number of persons needed to operate the replay equipment within the necessary time constraints. There shall be a minimum of three persons to ensure that all plays are reviewed in an efficient and timely manner. Such persons are normally referred to as replay official, communicator and technician. Additional personnel may be used as needed.

ARTICLE 2. The type of equipment used to carry out necessary instant replay duties shall be determined by each conference or member institution using instant replay.

ARTICLE 3. a. All equipment used to review a play during the replay process and the personnel using that equipment shall be located in a separate, secure location in the press box. This room shall not be available or accessible to any person not directly involved in instant replay. As an ongoing experiment, a collaborative decision-making model during instant replay reviews that is in full compliance with Rule 12 is not limited to the press box of a stadium.

b. Additional telephonic equipment needed to allow instant replay personnel to communicate with the game referee when a game has been stopped for a play review shall be located on a sideline near the field of play and preferably outside a team area. Such equipment shall provide the game referee and the replay official a secure and private means of communication.

Criteria To Overturn

ARTICLE 1. To reverse an on-field ruling, the replay official must be convinced beyond all doubt by indisputable video evidence through one or more video replays provided to the monitor.

Controversial Calls, Mistakes Down Ohio State

Facing third-and-5 from the Ohio State 45-yard line, sophomore Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence dropped back to pass with just 4:47 until halftime trailing 16-0. Sophomore Ohio State cornerback Shaun Wade came through on a blitz and drilled Lawrence for an eight-yard sack.

However, when the Clemson quarterback crouched to avoid contact, Wade hit him helmet to helmet and drew a targeting call, disqualifying him from the game.

"The play with Shaun Wade, that was

GAME NOTEBOOK

Joe Dempsey

a fourth-down play," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "It was such a huge play in the game. I'm not crying about it. But at the same time, those were big plays that didn't go our way. And certainly again, a range of emotions about that.

"We had all of the momentum. Then when we got the sack and then the penalty was called on Shaun, the momentum swung right there. We thought we really were doing a great job on defense."

Wade was not available for interviews after the game, but Ohio State senior safety Jordan Fuller relayed what Wade had told him about the hit.

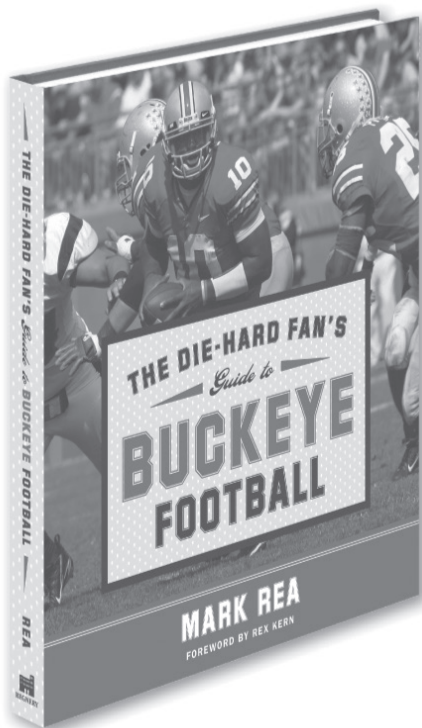


ANDREW LIND

GAME CHANGER – Cornerback Shaun Wade (24) was ejected for targeting after sacking Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence (16) in the second quarter of Ohio State's 29-23 loss to Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl.

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Ohio State junior running back J.K. Dobbins persevered through a painful first-half ankle injury and put together an excellent performance in what was his final game as a Buckeye. Dobbins gained 221 yards from scrimmage, surpassing 200 yards for the fourth time in the 2019 campaign.

Dobbins gashed Clemson in the first quarter, scoring on a 68-yard touchdown, where he juiced and burst past the Tiger defense. He also set up the Buckeyes at the Clemson 8-yard line with a 64-yard run later in the frame.

On the game, the La Grange, Texas, native gained 174 yards on 18 carries for a 9.7 yards-per-carry average with one score. He also snagged a career-high six receptions for 47 yards in the Buckeyes' loss to Clemson.

Also performing well for Ohio State was junior punter Drue Chrisman. After his first punt traveled just 38 yards, Chrisman responded with punts of 53, 51, 44, 52 and 34 yards respectively. The 44- and 34-yard punts downed Clemson at the 1- and 6-yard lines, respectively.

What Didn't Work

Ohio State struggled to stop Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence on the ground, with the sophomore signal caller rushing for a team-high 107 yards and one touchdown on 16 carries.

With the Tigers trailing 16-7, the 6-6, 220-pound quarterback made one of the plays of the game. Lawrence broke through the Buckeye defense to the second level, faked sophomore safety Josh Proctor and outran a slew of Ohio State defenders on his way to a game-changing 67-yard touchdown.

Lawrence completed 18 of 33 passes for 259 yards and two touchdowns with no interceptions, but his performance in the running

game brought the Tigers back from behind and kept the Ohio State defense off-balance all game. Even though he suffered a stinger in the second quarter that took him off the field, Lawrence showed toughness and composure in the Tigers' come-from-behind victory.

Lawrence led Clemson on a four-play, 94-yard drive in just 1:18 late in the fourth quarter to beat the Buckeyes. On the game-winning drive, Lawrence rushed for 11 yards and threw for 83 more, including a 34-yard touchdown pass to talented tailback Travis Etienne.

Play Of The Game

The play of the game is one that will live in infamy in Ohio State history. With Clemson trailing 16-0 and just 4:47 until halftime, Ohio State had all of the momentum on its side.

The Tigers had the ball at the Ohio State 45-yard line facing third-and-5, where a stop would likely force them to punt. Lawrence dropped back to pass and did not see a blitzing Shaun Wade until the last moment.

The third-year sophomore cornerback drilled Lawrence with a helmet-to-helmet hit, although it appeared the 6-6 quarterback ducked when the 6-1 corner went to deliver the hit, prompting the head-to-head collision. Wade sacked Lawrence for an eight-yard loss, which would have forced Clemson to punt down 16-0, but the play was reviewed for targeting.

The officials called Wade for a targeting penalty, disqualifying him from the remainder of the game and giving the Tigers first-and-10 at the Ohio State 30. Clemson went on to score a TD on the drive and added another score before the half, cutting the deficit to just two points.

After that penalty, Clemson seized all momentum and carried it into a 29-23 victory against the Wade-less Buckeyes.

– Joe Dempsey

“He said he was going for his shoulder area,” Fuller said of Wade, “but the quarterback crouched as soon as he saw Shaun, and he ended up hitting him in the head.”

Referee Ken Williamson was asked about the targeting call after the game and firmly defended the ruling.

“This was a crown-of-the-helmet targeting foul,” Williamson said. “So it did eliminate a lot of other factors. Initial contact was with the crown of the helmet. Then he wrapped up for the tackle. So at that point, targeting was properly called.”

Lawrence did not sugarcoat just how important that targeting call was in flipping the script of the game.

“We knew we had to score there,” Lawrence said. “The game was getting a little out of hand. We just had to put a drive together, and we can take anything we can get. That targeting call was huge. Being able to finish that drive and score and then the next drive put it in again really gave us some momentum going into halftime.”

Fuller agreed with Lawrence's perspective of how important that drive was for Clemson and gave credit to junior cornerback Amir Riep for stepping up when his number was called.

“It changed a lot,” Fuller said of the call. “Amir did great, but I think that penalty in general – we were going to be off the field – and then they score that drive. I think the penalty hurt us.”

Beyond giving Clemson life and setting up the Tigers' first touchdown, the targeting call cost Wade the remainder of the game. Fuller and the Buckeyes missed the standout defensive back, who became a spectator after his ejection.

“He's really valuable,” Fuller said of Wade. “Obviously, he's one of our best players, but Amir did phenomenal. When Amir's in the game, I have no doubt that he's going to get the job done. You saw they tried to throw deep on him a few times, allowed no completions. It just sucked not being able to be at full strength and have our full arsenal, having one of our guys in the locker room.”

Overtured Scoop And Score Pivotal

Ohio State appeared to have seized momentum and the lead in the third quarter when junior cornerback Jeff Okudah stripped Clemson sophomore wideout Justyn Ross and Fuller scooped and scored with the fumble.

Instead of a touchdown that would have put the Buckeyes up 23-21, Clemson got the opportunity to punt the ball out of its territory. When Ohio State gained possession, sophomore quarterback Justin Fields threw an interception.

“It is too close right now, and I'm probably too emotional to really talk about those,” Day said of the overturned fumble and the targeting call. “I'll have to look at the film and see what that was. But I know there were some plays that were called on the field and then overturned, and when they overturn it, there has to be indisputable evidence. If that's what they deemed it was, it's going to be something we'll have to take a look at.”

“The thing about those plays were certainly that the catch that was returned for a touchdown was such a huge play in the game.”

A visibly upset Fuller fielded questions following the game and was left without an answer to why his touchdown was overturned.

“I heard no explanation,” Fuller said. “I just heard we didn't get the call.”

Williamson explained the officials' ruling following the game.

“After the video, instant replay in the stadium as well as back at the video center, they both looked at it slow and fast and they determined when he moved, the ball was becoming loose in his hands and he did not complete the process of the catch,” Williamson said.

Dobbins Sets Tone, Toughs It Out

Ohio State junior running back J.K. Dobbins erupted for 141 rushing yards on six carries in the first quarter alone, including runs of 68 and 64 yards, with the first ending in the end zone.

Dobbins suffered an ankle injury in the second quarter, however, sending him to the locker room, where he received a tape job. The talented co-captain showed toughness returning to the game and finishing with 221 yards from scrimmage.

BSB asked Thayer Munford, Ohio State's left tackle, what Dobbins' return from injury showed about the talented tailback.

“That he's the best,” Munford said. “I love him to death. We all love him to death. We all love each other to death. Just seeing him coming back after a really bad ankle sprain, it shows the heart he has for the game, and we appreciate him for that.”

The La Grange, Texas, native totaled 174 rushing yards on 18 carries with the one score, averaging 9.7 yards per carry. Dobbins displayed his versatility by adding a career-high six receptions for 47 yards in the passing game, including three catches for 31 yards on Ohio State's final drive.

“He had an ankle (injury) there,” Day said of Dobbins. “He had to fight through that. He got it taped up. He came in, he came out. He was really working through that. But I think it did affect his play a little bit.”

“He didn't have that explosion. On a couple of those first runs in the first half, he came out of the back end of those things, he looked powerful. What a gritty

performance by him to come back in the game and play.”

Fifth-year senior right tackle Branden Bowen echoed the sentiment of Munford and Day, pointing toward Dobbins' ability to practice what he preaches when it comes to the brotherhood.

“I was just happy to see him back,” Bowen said. “It's a testament to his toughness and what he would do for his brothers. I would go to war with him any day.”

Third-year sophomore right guard Wyatt Davis, a classmate of Dobbins, hinted to the fact that Dobbins could have packed up his stuff and started thinking about the NFL draft once he went down. Instead, the junior running back risked further harm to his body by toughing it out for his teammates.

“He just showed his toughness and the love that he has for everyone on the team,” Davis said of Dobbins. “He could have easily just gone in the locker room and protected himself. But he's selfless, and that's why we love him.”

Final, Fatal Interception

After Clemson drove 94 yards for the go-ahead touchdown in just 1:18, Ohio State received the ball at its 25-yard line with just 1:49 to play.

The Buckeyes, down 29-23, quickly drove down the field, setting up a second-and-7 from the Tigers 23-yard line with 43 seconds left.

Fields looked to find sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave in the end zone, but the speedy wideout wasn't where Fields thought he'd be. Instead of a game-winning touchdown, Clemson junior safety Nolan Turner picked off Fields' pass, ending the Buckeyes' season.

“Chris played a great game,” Day said. “He's very upset in the locker room right now. He thought Justin was scrambling. He was running a post route right there. Actually, we had exactly the call on that we wanted. He felt like Justin was in a scramble mode.”

“Justin does a lot of creating, so they weren't on the same page. They're playing football, and they're competing. Things like that happen. Unfortunately, that happened to us on the last play of the game when we needed it the most.”

“Chris Olave is an unbelievable competitor. He loves his teammates. Nobody feels worse than Chris right now. When you play games like this, you put yourself out there, and that's what happened at the end of the game. Our guys were competing all the way down to the end.”

Fields agreed with his coach's perspective, and even though he thought he had a chance at a score, he emphasized the fact that it does not do him or the team any good to dwell on the miscue.

“Like Coach Day said, it was the look we wanted,” Fields said. “Then Chris, it was basically just a miscommunication. That happens in life, and you really can't do anything about it now. You just have to move on.”

Roughing-The-Kicker Penalty Damaging

With the Buckeyes leading 16-14 in the third quarter, they forced Clemson to punt on fourth-and-6 from its own 15-yard line.

Ohio State had been successful earlier in the season with punt blocks and tried to get another one to swing the momentum back in its favor. However, sophomore cornerback Cameron Brown crashed into Clemson punter Will Spiers after he booted the ball, drawing a roughing-the-kicker penalty.

The penalty gave the Tigers life with a fresh set of downs at their 30-yard line, and they capitalized, scoring two plays later on a 53-yard receiving touchdown by tailback Travis Etienne.

“We were trying to be aggressive,” Day said. “We thought we could get after the punt, and we've done a good job of staying off the punter and being aggressive. We didn't there. That was a big play in the game as well.”

Ohio State Loses Heartbreaker To Clemson

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Difficulties scoring six in the red zone, miscues, several controversial calls that went against them, and a quarterback named Trevor Lawrence conspired to end Ohio State's national title hopes in stunning fashion with a 29-23 loss to No. 3 Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinal in the Fiesta Bowl at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Ariz., on Dec. 28.

Instead of playing top-ranked LSU, a 63-28 winner vs. No. 4 Oklahoma in the Peach Bowl in Atlanta on Dec. 28, in the title game Jan. 13 in New Orleans, the No. 2 Buckeyes suffered one of the more stinging defeats in program history.

Lawrence passed 34 yards to Travis Etienne for the go-ahead score with 1:49 left in the game, and the two-point conversion provided the final margin for the Tigers.

No. 2 OSU (13-1) drove to the Clemson 23, but Justin Fields threw his second interception of the game – just his third of the season – with 37 seconds remaining. Nolan Turner had the game-sealing pick.

"A lot of disappointment," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said after his first career loss as a college head coach in his 17th game. "There's a lot of people angry in that locker room right now. There's a lot of throwing helmets. A lot of just 'Can't believe it's over.'"

Clemson had overcome a 16-point deficit to take the lead midway through the third quarter on an Etienne catch-and-run for 53

yards to make it 21-16.

The Buckeyes then rallied for a 23-21 lead on a 23-yard pass by Fields to Chris Olave on fourth-and-1 with 11:46 left in the fourth quarter to cap a 13-play, 84-yard, 4:52 drive.

A targeting call and ejection of OSU sophomore nickel back Shaun Wade was the key play of the game. He had just sacked Lawrence to seemingly force a Clemson punt with the Buckeyes up 16-0 with under five minutes left in the second quarter.

The momentum completely shifted, and the Tigers (14-0) scored twice to trail 16-14 at the half.

It got worse for the Buckeyes when junior J.K. Dobbins, whose 141 first-quarter yards included a 68-yard TD and a 64-yard run, injured his ankle late in the second quarter before a largely pro-OSU crowd of 71,330.

Playing with a heavily taped ankle in the second half, Dobbins finished with 174 yards and a score on 18 carries and a career-high six catches for 47 yards. He finished the season with a school record 2,003 rushing yards.

Fields was 30 of 46 for 320 yards (all career highs), a TD and the two interceptions, and K.J. Hill (67 yards) and Austin Mack (54) also had six receptions.

Lawrence was 18 of 33 for 259 yards and two touchdowns plus the two-point conversion to Tee Higgins. Lawrence also ran for 107 yards. Etienne had three catches for 98 yards and two TDs, although he was held to 36 yards on 10 rushes.

The Buckeyes amassed 516 total yards (320 passing, 196 rushing), while the Tigers gained 417 yards (259 passing, 158 rushing).



ANDREW LIND

SOARING THROUGH THE AIR – True freshman wide receiver Garrett Wilson made an acrobatic catch on Ohio State's first possession of the game to move the Buckeyes into the red zone.

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OHIO STATE VS. CLEMSON

How It Happened

Ohio State came away with three points on the game's first possession but was disappointed it wasn't more.

Starting at its 25, OSU quickly reached first-and-goal at the 5-yard line on an acrobatic 22-yard catch at the right sideline by freshman Garrett Wilson on a play that was initially ruled incomplete.

Prior to that, Fields came out throwing. On the first play he hit Hill for nine yards, enabling the senior receiver to tie Gary Williams' school record of a reception in 48 straight games.

Binjimen Victor had an eight-yard catch for a first, Dobbins ran for four and tight end Luke Farrell gained 11 on a grab. Fields then hit Olave for 16 to the Clemson 27-yard line before Wilson's reception.

Dobbins lost two yards on a backfield catch and rushed for three to the 4-yard line. On third down, Fields scrambled and threw incomplete to Olave to set up a 21-yard field goal by Blake Haubeil and the 3-0 lead at 12:03 of the first.

Clemson's first drive ended with a missed 49-yard field-goal try by B.T. Potter at the 8:44 mark.

Just nine seconds later, Dobbins was in the end zone after a 68-yard TD run on the first play. He took the handoff, went up the middle, juiced a defender and raced untouched to make it 10-0.

Later, after Clemson punted twice and OSU once, the Buckeyes faced a third-and-2 from their 28 when Dobbins slashed and gashed his way for 64 yards to the 8-yard line before being tripped up by Tanner Muse.

On the play, Dobbins surpassed Eddie George's single-season school rushing record of 1,927 yards, set in 1995 when he won the Heisman Trophy.

But once again, the Buckeyes could not cash it in for six. A Fields' incomplection to Hill and a Dobbins run for three set up a third-down diving catch in the end zone by Dobbins, but it was overturned upon review and Haubeil made a 22-yard field goal at 14:11 in the second quarter at the end of a seven-play, 75-yard, 1:42 drive to make it 13-0.

Following the Tigers' third punt to the OSU 14-yard line, the Buckeyes went on the attack with a 24-yard highlight-reel catch by Mack to the OSU 45. On third-and-1 from the Clemson 46, Fields gained three yards on a QB sneak, and two plays later he avoided the blitz and ran for 21 to the 23-yard line.

The Buckeyes would reach the 11-yard line, as Master Teague gained five yards on third-and-3 from the 16.

But Clemson would not concede the end zone. A false start on first down pushed OSU back to the 16-yard line. Fields couldn't connect with Mack on first, and Dobbins dropped what possibly could have been a TD pass on second down. Another incomplection to Victor led to a 33-yard field goal by Haubeil for a 16-0 lead at 7:20 of the second.

Clemson's comeback began on the ensuing series with the targeting call after Wade's third-down sack of eight yards at the Clemson 47.

Instead of another Tigers punt on fourth-and-13, the Buckeyes lost a pivotal player and the Clemson got a first down. Two plays later Lawrence, who had missed one play when he was shaken up on the apparent sack, got a pass interference on Wade's replacement, Amir Riep, to put the ball at the OSU 16.

Etienne scored on a bruising run from the 8 to make it 16-7 with 2:45 left for a 10-play, 75-yard, 4:35 drive.

Clemson forced OSU into its first three-and-out and Drue Chrisman put the Tigers

deep with a 53-yard punt to the 17. A 16-yard third-and-10 catch by wide receiver Justyn Ross moved Clemson to its 33, and Lawrence spun his magic to pull the Tigers to within two at 16-14 with 1:10 left on a 67-yard gallop.

Rough Second Half

Clemson took the lead on its second series of the third quarter. Chrisman again pinned the Tigers with a 44-yard punt to the 1-yard line but a roughing the kicker penalty kept the drive alive.

The Tigers faced a fourth-and-6 from their 15, and the Buckeyes went for the block only for Cameron Brown to be penalized 15 yards.

Lyn-J Dixon immediately ran for 17 yards to the 47. On the next play, Etienne took a short flip from Lawrence and outran everybody for a 53-yard TD and a 21-16 lead at the 7:54 mark. The drive was 99 yards in seven plays and 2:45.

Like the targeting on Wade, another controversial call went against the Buckeyes later in the third quarter. Cornerback Jeff Okudah stripped Ross after an apparent catch and safety Jordan Fuller returned it 29 yards for a TD and a 22-21 lead, but after review, it was ruled to be an incomplete pass.

"I thought it should have stood," Fuller said, "but I'm not paid to be a referee."

Clemson punted, but Fields was intercepted for only the second time this season when All-America linebacker Isaiah Simmons stepped in front of his pass at the Tigers' 33 and returned it three yards. It was Fields' first INT in 190 throws.

The OSU defense forced a punt, and Fields, starting from his 16-yard line, made amends by helping the Buckeyes retake a 23-21 lead. Needing nine yards on third down, he hit Dobbins for 11 yards to the OSU 43 on the first play of the fourth quarter. After a 5-yard sack, Fields found Victor for 17 and Mack for nine to the Clemson 36.

Dobbins earned four on the ground for a first at the 32. He then had a catch for seven yards and a run for two with an incomplection by Fields in between to set up a fourth-and-1. The Buckeyes went for it, and Fields hit Olave for a 23-yard TD strike at 11:46 to cap the 13-play, 84-yard drive in 4:52.

After making Clemson punt, the Buckeyes started at their 11 with 9:59 remaining. A pair of holding calls by the Tigers helped OSU move the sticks and negated an interception, and a 12-yarder to Mack gave the Buckeyes a first at the Clemson 45.

Dobbins gained a total of five yards on two carries before a pass to Mack netted just a yard. Clemson got the ball back at the 6 after a Chrisman punt of 34 yards and a yard return.

There was 3:07 remaining after the Buckeyes used 10 plays to go 50 yards in 6:52.

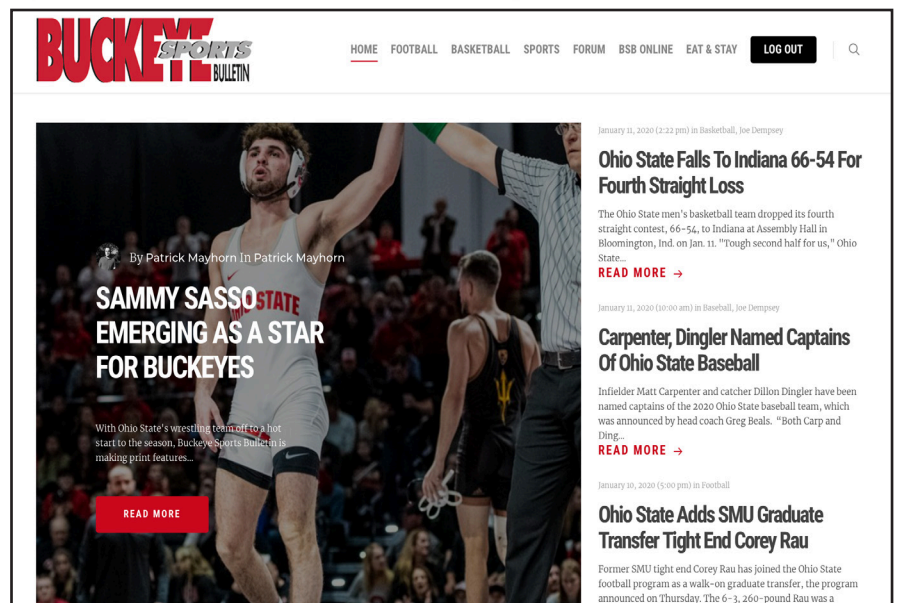
Ross began the drive with a catch for 11, and Lawrence ran for 11 to the Tiger 28. Amari Rodgers had a grab-and-go for 38 to the OSU 34, and Etienne took a pass and scored from there with 1:49 left to finish a 94-yard, four-play, 1:18 drive.

The Buckeyes had one final chance, driving to the Clemson 23-yard line from their own 25. Dobbins had three catches for 31 yards and Hill one for 13 to move the Buckeyes to the Clemson 31.

Fields gained eight yards on two carries to the 23-yard line. After an OSU timeout, he looked for Olave on a crossing pattern in the end zone, but Olave thought Fields would run and broke his route, leaving Turner to make the interception to crush OSU's dreams.

Clemson took a knee to end the game and run its record to 4-0 vs. Ohio State, all in bowl games.

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BSB Quotebook: Clemson 29, Ohio State 23

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on how he had to adjust the offense with the injury to junior running back J.K. Dobbins: "Well, they made some good adjustments up front. We were throwing the ball a lot in the second half. Receivers and the protection and (sophomore quarterback) Justin (Fields), they made some big plays. But it was hard to run the ball. They were kind of coming at us different ways. (Clemson defensive coordinator Brent) Venables does a good job. He made some good adjustments."

"J.K. (Dobbins) had an ankle there. He had to fight through that. He got it taped up. He came in, he came out. He was really working through that. But I think it did affect his play a little bit. He didn't have that explosion. A couple of those first runs in the first half, he came out of the back end of those things, he looked powerful. What a gritty performance by him to come back in the game and play."

Day on if he thought about going for it when junior punter Drue Chrisman lined up under center on 4th-and-4: "I thought the defense was playing good at the time. I felt if we could pin them inside the 10-yard line, that would give our defense a chance to get a stop. Then in a four-minute drill, we could end the game. I felt confidence in the defense. I would still make the same decision now."

Day on what the locker room was like and what he told his team after the first loss of his head coaching career: "A lot of tears. A lot of disappointment. A lot of people angry in that locker room right now. There's a lot of throwing helmets. A lot of just 'Can't believe it's over.' So, what do you say to a bunch of guys like that, other than you love them? And the older guys, the seniors have left a legacy, and the younger guys have to learn from it. Wake up in the morning, the sun will come up and we'll regroup."

Day on how much not scoring touchdowns on early red-zone trips ultimately played a factor down the stretch of the game: "That was tough. You score touchdowns there, then it's huge. And the one to J.K. that they called a touchdown first and then they overturned, that was a tough one. That was four points there. And then the one to Austin (Mack) in the back of the end zone, we just missed it. When you're playing against a good defense, things like that happen. I thought we made some good calls. The one to K.J. (Hill) there we had and Justin got scrambled a little bit. We were just a little bit off."

Fields on where his health was coming into this game: "I felt pretty good going into the game. There really wasn't any pain in my knee, but it was just the knee brace actually being there. But I felt pretty good going in."

Ohio State sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave on what went wrong on the final offensive play that led to a Clemson interception: "It was a one-on-one with me on the safety, and I was supposed to run the post, but when I looked back, I thought he scrambled, so I tried to work the second part of my route. He ended up throwing it, and that's how the game ended."

Ohio State junior linebacker Tuf Borland on what caused the big plays on defense and if the running ability of Clemson sophomore quarterback Trevor Lawrence came as a surprise: "I give Clemson a lot of credit. They've got a lot of good players. They made plays. As far as Lawrence running, it was not really a huge surprise. We saw that on film, extending plays and being able to find open guys. So, credit to them."

Ohio State senior safety Jordan Fuller on the overturned fumble return: "I'm not paid to be a ref, but it looked like he caught it to me. But I'm not paid to do that. I'm not even paid to play football."

Fuller on the targeting penalty that ejected sophomore defensive back Shaun Wade: "It shifted momentum, but at the end of the day, we had a chance to win regardless of that."

Lawrence on his experience during, and following, the Wade targeting call: "I just got a bad stinger, so it kind of scared me a little bit. I hadn't gotten one in a while and couldn't really move my arm for a second. That's why I laid there. Then just got kind of mad and popped up. I didn't know it was targeting, either. I thought it was – I don't know if it was a three-and-out. We would have had to punt. So I was kind of pissed off."

"We're off the field, and I see it is targeting then had to sit out one play and just came back. We knew we had to score there. The game was getting a little out of hand. Just had to put a drive together, and we can take anything we can get. That targeting call was huge. Being able to finish that drive and score and then the next drive put it in again really gave us some momentum going into halftime."

Referee Ken Williamson on how many angles he looked at on the overturned fumble recovery that would have gone for an Ohio State touchdown and if it was viewed in slow motion: "We had a lot of good looks on it. We put on fast motion and slow motion. The player did not complete the process of the catch, so, therefore, the pass was incomplete."

Ohio State fifth-year senior wide receiver K.J. Hill on the emotions of losing his final game with the Buckeyes: "I just feel like I ripped my chest open, gave Ohio State everything I had in me. I wanted it bad. One of my goals was to play in the national championship and win a national championship. I fell short of that. I feel like I left it all on the field."

Ohio State junior left tackle Thayer Munford on the motivation next year's Ohio State team is going to draw from the Fiesta Bowl defeat: "Just know that it's going to be a different mind-set. It's going to be the same, kind of like this, what we had this past year, but it's going to be really different."

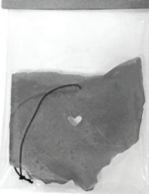
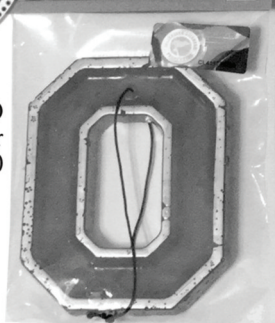
Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney on what his game plan for the Fiesta Bowl was coming into the matchup: "I wrote two things down on my call sheet this morning. I wrote down 'quarterback run' and 'running back pass.' And as it turns out, Trevor had 107 yards rushing. (Junior running back) Travis Etienne had three catches for 98 yards and two touchdowns receiving. It is just amazing how it all kind of came together, like I hoped it would."

Swinney on why the quarterback run became such a key for the Clemson offense against the Buckeyes: "They're a one-safety team and we knew that – and they're really good in the secondary. Probably everybody on that defense is going to be drafted, literally – probably every single one of those guys, and most of the backups. That's a really good defense and really good guys on the outside. We felt like Trevor would be an equalizer a little bit for us. We knew they would play a lot of man coverage. The quarterback draw, they have to run with us."

Swinney on what he thought of Ohio State after the six-point win: "Congratulations to Ohio State on an unbelievable season. Their quarterback, that defense, their running back – is special. It was a back-and-forth game. A tough one for either team to lose, but in the end, these guys found a way to get it done."



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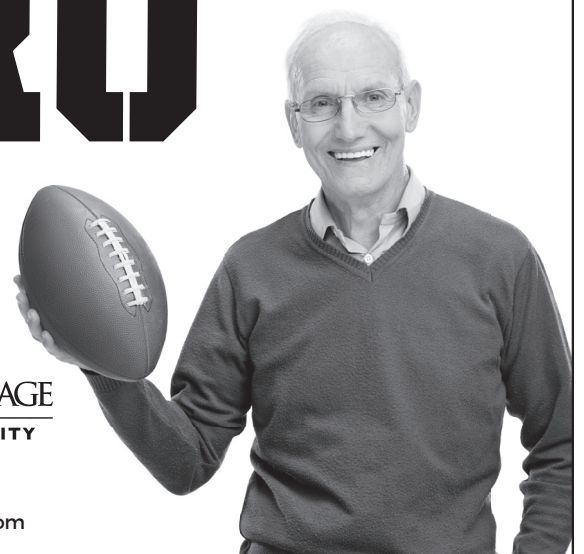
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The Numbers Game

Clemson 29, Ohio State 23

Dec. 28, 2019 – State Farm Stadium, Glendale, Ariz.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
CLEMSON (14-0, 9-0)	0	14	7	8	29
OHIO STATE (13-1, 10-0)	10	6	0	7	23

First Quarter

- OSU – Haubeil, 21-yard field goal, 12:03; 10 plays, 71 yards, 2:57 TOP.
- OSU – Dobbins, 68-yard rush (Haubeil kick), 8:35, 1 play, 68 yards, 0:09 TOP.

Second Quarter

- OSU – Haubeil, 22-yard field goal, 14:11; 7 plays, 75 yards, 1:42 TOP.
- OSU – Haubeil, 33-yard field goal, 7:20; 14 plays, 70 yards, 4:55 TOP.
- CLEM – Etienne, 8-yard rush (Potter kick), 2:45; 10 plays, 75 yards, 4:35 TOP.
- CLEM – Lawrence, 67-yard rush (Potter kick), 1:10; 5 plays, 83 yards, 0:45 TOP.

Third Quarter

- CLEM – Etienne, 53-yard pass from Lawrence (Potter kick), 7:54; 7 plays, 99 yards, 2:45 TOP.

Fourth Quarter

- OSU – Olave, 23-yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 11:46; 13 plays, 84 yards, 4:52 TOP.
- CLEM – Etienne, 34-yard pass from Lawrence (Potter kick), 1:49; 4 plays, 94 yards, 1:18 TOP.

Att. – 71,330
Weather – Indoors.

Team Statistics		
	CLEM	OSU
First Downs	21	28
Rushing	7	9
Passing	10	16
Penalty	4	3
Rushes-Yards	29-158	39-196
Passing Yards	259	320
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	18-33-0	30-46-2
Offensive Plays	62	85
Total Net Yards	417	516
Third Down Efficiency	5-14	7-18
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	1-1
Punts-Avg.	7-44.9	6-45.3
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties	6-47	8-77
Time of Possession	26:33	33:27

Individual Statistics		
RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – CLEM:	Lawrence 16-107; Etienne 10-36; Dixon 1-17; TEAM 2-(-2).	
OSU:	Dobbins 18-174; Fields 14-13; Teague 7-9.	
PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – CLEM:	Lawrence 18-33-0-259-2.	
OSU:	Fields 30-46-2-320-1.	
RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – CLEM:	Ross 6-47; Higgins 4-33; Etienne 3-98; Overton 2-30; Rodgers 1-38; Ngata 1-11; Dixon 1-2.	
OSU:	Hill 6-67; Mack 6-54; Dobbins 6-47; Wilson 4-47; Olave 3-50; Victor 3-38; Farrell 1-11; Ruckert 1-6.	
PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – CLEM:	Spiers 7-44.9-53.	
OSU:	Chrisman 6-45.3-53.	
PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – CLEM:	Rodgers 2-3; Kendrick 1-1.	
OSU:	Wilson 2-3.	
KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – CLEM:	Etienne 1-16.	
OSU:	None.	
MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.) – CLEM:	Potter (49).	
OSU:	None.	
FORCED FUMBLES – CLEM:	None.	
OSU:	None.	
FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – CLEM:	None.	
OSU:	None.	
INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – CLEM:	Simmons 1-3; Turner 1-0.	
OSU:	None.	
SACKS (No.-Yds.) – CLEM:	Spector 2-12; Wallace 1.0-11; Skalski 0.5-3; Foster 0.5-3.	
OSU:	Hamilton 1.0-10; Browning 1.0-8; Friday 1.0-7.	
TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – CLEM:	Spector 2.0-12; Foster 1.5-4; Thomas 1.5-2; Wallace 1.0-11; Davis 1.0-2; Kendrick 1.0-2; Skalski 0.5-3.	
OSU:	Hamilton 1.0-10; Browning 1.0-8; Friday 1.0-7; Landers 1.0-1; M. Harrison 0.5-1; Werner 0.5-0.	
TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – CLEM:	Smith 8-4-12; Kendrick 8-1-9; Skalski 5-4-9; Terrell 5-1-6; Spector 4-1-5; Foster 4-1-5; Wallace 4-1-5; Davis 4-0-4; Simmons 3-1-4; Thomas 1-3-4; Muse 3-0-3; Williams 2-1-3; TEAM 1-0-1; Turner 1-0-1; Johnson 1-0-1; Rudolph 1-0-1.	
OSU:	Harrison 5-1-6; Werner 2-4-6; Okudah 4-1-5; Fuller 3-2-5; Proctor 3-1-4; Borland 2-1-3; Browning 2-1-3; Hamilton 2-1-3; Riep 1-2-3; Young 1-1-2; Harrison 1-1-2; Hausmann 1-0-1; Olave 1-0-1; Hilliard 1-0-1; Friday 1-0-1; Arnette 1-0-1; Landers 1-0-1; Smith 0-1-1; Cornell 0-1-1.	

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – CLEM: Offense, Carman, Simpson, Pollard, Cervenka, Anchrum, Chalk, Higgins, Lawrence, Etienne, Ross, Rodgers. Defense, Foster, Davis, Pinckney, Thomas, Simmons, Skalski, Smith, Kendrick, Wallace, Muse, Terrell. Reserves, Spector, Johnson, Swinney, Phillips, Ladson, Henry, Jones, Mascoll, Brice, Ngata, Overton, Venables, Powell, Rencher, Dixon, Turner, Jones, Potter, Goodrich, Rudolph, Zanders, Spiers, Upshaw, Phibbs, Williams, Bockhorst, McFadden, Price, Allen, Galloway, Jefferies. **OSU:** Offense, Fields, Dobbins, Victor, Olave, Hill, Farrell, Munford, Jackson, Myers, Davis, Bowen. Defense, Young, Hamilton, Cornell, Z. Harrison, Werner, Borland, M. Harrison, Arnette, Okudah, Wade, Fuller. Reserves, Berry, Mack, Teague, McCall, Wilson, Browning, Jean-Baptiste, Riep, Smith, Banks, Harris, Gant, Williamson, Wint, Brown, Hooker, Rossi, Proctor, Hilliard, Friday, Landers, Togiai, Hausmann, Ruckert, Chrisman, Haubeil.

Season Statistics

2019-20 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result	Crowd
Aug. 31	(5)FLORIDA ATLANTIC	W, 45-21	103,228
Sept. 7	(5)CINCINNATI	W 42-0	104,089
Sept. 14	(6)at Indiana	W, 51-10	47,945
Sept. 21	(6)MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 76-5	103,190
Sept. 28	(5)at Nebraska	W, 48-7	89,379
Oct. 5	(4)MICHIGAN STATE (25)	W, 34-10	104,797
Oct. 18	(4)at Northwestern	W, 52-3	47,330
Oct. 26	(3)WISCONSIN (13)	W, 38-7	102,998
Nov. 9	(3)MARYLAND	W, 73-14	101,022
Nov. 16	(2)at Rutgers	W, 56-21	33,528
Nov. 23	(2)PENN STATE (8)	W, 28-17	104,355
Nov. 30	(2)at Michigan (10)	W, 56-27	112,071
Dec. 7	(2) WISCONSIN (10)	W, 34-21	66,649
Dec. 28	(2) vs. Clemson (3)	L, 29-23	71,330

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	397	217
Rushing	192	99
Passing	172	89
Penalty	33	29
Average Per Game/Rush	266.8	103.7
Average Per Game/Pass	263.1	156.0
Total Offense	7419	3636
Total Plays	1069	881
Average Per Game	529.9	259.7
Average Per Play	6.9	4.1
Penalties-Yards	81-770	76-665
Fumbles-Lost	21-13	20-10
Third Down Efficiency	101-183	60-206
Percentage	55%	29%
Fourth Down Efficiency	8-13	7-20
Percentage	62%	35%
Sacks-Yards	54-354	35-224
Time Of Possession Avg.	31:47	27:51

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	146	237	142	131	0	656	46.9	
Opponents	38	51	58	45	0	192	13.7	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
J.K. Dobbins	301	2003	6.7	21	68
Master Teague	135	789	5.8	4	73
Justin Fields	137	484	3.5	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	663	3735	5.6	39	73
OPP Totals	488	1452	3.0	14	67

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Justin Fields	238	354	67.2	3273	41-3	181.4
Chris Chugunov	26	43	60.5	286	6-0	162.4
Gunnar Hoak	6	6	100.0	104	1-0	300.2
TEAM	0	2	0	0	0-0	0
Drue Chrisman	1	1	100.0	21	0-0	276.4
OSU Totals	271	406	66.7	3684	48-3	180.5
OPP Totals	200	393	50.9	2184	9-15	97.5

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
K.J. Hill	57	636	11.2	10	53
Chris Olave	49	849	17.3	12	58
Binjimen Victor	35	573	16.4	6	60
Garrett Wilson	30	432	14.4	5	47
Austin Mack	27	361	13.4	3	38
J.K. Dobbins	23	247	10.7	2	28
Jeremy Ruckert	14	142	10.1	4	25
Luke Farrell	7	119	17.0	2	22
Jameson Williams	6	112	18.7	1	61
Jaelen 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	271	3684	13.6	48	61
OPP Totals	200	2184	10.9	9	53

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
J.K. Dobbins	23	–	–	–	–	138
Blake Haubeil	–	85-85	–	–	–13-15	124
Chris Olave	12	–	–	–	–	74
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
Jaelen Gill	1	–	–	–	–	6
D. DiMaccio	0	2-3	–	–	–	2
OSU Totals	88	87-88	–	–	13-15	656
OPP Totals	23	19-20	1-1	1-1	9-13	192

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Blake Haubeil	4-4	3-5	3-3	1-1	13-15
OSU Totals	4-4	3-5	3-3	1-1	13-15
OPP Totals	5-6	2-3	2-4	0-0	9-13

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Drue Chrisman	46	2037	44.3	0	61
TEAM	1	13	13.0	1	13
OSU Totals	47	2050	43.6	1	61
OPP Totals	102	4159	40.8	2	70

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Jeff Okudah	3	0	0.0	0	0
Jordan Fuller	2	26	13.0	0	26
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
Amir Riep	2	11	5.5	0	11
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	3	37	12.3	0	34

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Garrett Wilson	14	86	6.1	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	5	5.0	0	5
OSU Totals	29	212	7.3	0	52
OPP Totals	12	36	3.0	0	7

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Demario McCall	10	232	23.2	0	38
Xavier Johnson	1	19	19.0	0	19
Marcus Crowley	1	17	17.0	0	17
Chris Olave	1	15	15.0	0	15
OSU Totals	13	283	21.8	0	38
OPP Totals	43	770	17.9	0	70

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Malik Harrison	49	26	75	16.5-53	4.5-27
Pete Werner	39	25	64	5.5-11	–
Jordan Fuller	42	20	62	–	–
Tuf Borland	27	28	55	3.0-13	1.0-9
Chase Young	32	14	46	21.0-129	16.5-117
Baron Browning	26	17	43	10.0-30	5.0-25
Damon Arnette	27	8	35	1.0-3	–
Jeff Okudah	29	6	35	1.0-1	–
Jashon Cornell	16	14	30	6.5-33	4.0-23
DaVon Hamilton	18	10	28	10.5-52	6.0-45
Shaun Wade	16	9	25	4.0-18	2.0-14
Zach Harrison	14	10	24	5.0-20	3.5-18
Dallas Gant	9	12	21	3.0-7	1.5-5
Amir Riep	10	10	20	–	–
Brendon White	15	4	19	2.0-3	1.0-1
Tommy Togiai	8	8	16	2.0-4	–
OSU Totals	515	311	826	124-494	54-354
OPP Totals	593	444	1037	80-317	35-224
Fumbles Forced:	13 – Chase Young (6), Shaun Wade (2), Jeff Okudah, Jashon Cornell, Dallas Gant, Marcus Williamson, Damon Arnette.				
Fumbles Recovered:	10 – Pete Werner (2), Malik Harrison (2), Jerron Cage, Tyler Friday, Jordan Fuller, DaVon Hamiton, Robert Landers, Marcus Williamson.				

College Football World Stunned By Fiesta Bowl

By **PATRICK MAYHORN**
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Ohio State's 29-23 loss to Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinal was an instant classic, marked by big-time plays made by big-time players, a true heavyweight fight. However, it was not without its fair share of controversy.

Questions around a targeting call that ejected defensive back Shaun Wade and a Clemson fumble call that was determined to actually be an incomplete pass have painted the discourse around the game, and media in Ohio and around the country were quick to share strong opinions about the polarizing matchup.

"The Buckeyes were itching to get back on this stage after a three-year hiatus, and despite the targeting penalty and a questionable overturned call by the SEC officiating crew, it still had a chance to win in the final minute – before Justin Fields threw an interception to Clemson's Nolan Turner in the end zone.

"If Wade doesn't get called for targeting, or Justyn Ross' fumble isn't ruled an incomplete pass, then maybe the Buckeyes win. Running back J.K. Dobbins' ankle injury was also a huge factor.

"This game was different than the 31-0 beatdown the Buckeyes took against Clemson three years ago. Ohio State under (head coach Ryan) Day proved it belonged on the big stage, and

chances are this team will be back next year with Fields and a defense that has owned the Big Ten for the past three seasons."

– **Bill Bender,**
The Sporting News

"Ohio State fans will debate the calls for years, the same way Miami fans still curse the infamous end-zone pass interference in 2003 and Michigan devotees insist J.T. Barrett came up short of a first down in 2016.

"Ohio State benefited from those two borderline calls. But the Buckeyes got done in Saturday night by two monumental rulings that went to Clemson's way. One was valid, the other perplexing.

"The valid one: With Ohio State leading 16-0, cornerback Shaun Wade came free on a third-and-5 blitz. He sacked Trevor Lawrence but used the crown of his helmet.

"The replay review ended Wade's night and flipped the game. The Tigers, then down 16-0, outscored Ohio State 29-7 the rest of the way.

"The perplexing one: Justyn Ross received a pass from Lawrence – 'caught' would be more accurate – and took several steps with the ball. Cornerback Jeff Okudah pried it loose, and Jordan Fuller scooped it up and ran 29 yards.

"Touchdown? Not in the eyes of the replay officials."

– **Teddy Greenstein,**
Chicago Tribune

"Ohio State football let a golden opportunity to play for a national championship slip through its fingers. What else is new?

"After losing the Fiesta Bowl 29-23 to Clemson on Saturday night, the 2019 Buckeyes will not be known as one of the best Ohio State teams of all time.

"Instead of rivaling the 1968 and 2014 squads (among others) that got the job done, the '19 Buckeyes' peers will be the teams of '69, '73, 2015 and more than a dozen others that came up just short."

– **Marcus Hartman,**
Dayton Daily News

"There were many plays in that game that the Buckeyes will rue for a long time. Shaun Wade's targeting ejection was a game-changer, as was the reversal of Jordan Fuller's scoop-and-score and the final interception. But Clemson is a great program led by a superstar quarterback in Trevor Lawrence. Still, the Buckeyes allowed the Tigers to go 94 yards in four plays for the winning drive. It was a magical season that won't be forgotten. But it will always be bittersweet.

"The targeting rule is a tricky one because the intent – preventing helmet-to-helmet contact – is so important. But inadvertent or unavoidable hits like that are an unfortunate part of the game. There was no malicious intent with Wade's hit; Lawrence lowered his head. The fumble forced by OSU's Jeff Okudah

should have stood. Ross had made the catch."

– **Bill Rabinowitz,**
The Columbus Dispatch

"Though it launched a thousand conspiracy theories in the great state of Ohio, the targeting call in the second quarter of Saturday's Fiesta Bowl was 100 percent correct. A replay official noticed something he had been trained to watch for. As he is required to, he stopped the game. He looked at the play again, applied the rule to the situation and found the officiating crew had no choice but to eject Ohio State defensive back Shaun Wade, who had hit Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence in the head with the crown of his helmet on a third-down sack.

"The call was correct, but the result was still wrong. That's why something needs to change.

"A rule designed to make the game better has worked as intended in spite of one major side effect, and it's time to find a better way to enforce it."

– **Andy Staples,**
The Athletic

"This is the type of game that will keep talk radio buzzing for months, overload the message-board servers and prompt enough conspiracy theories that it could be memorialized in Roswell. But the primary feeling for Ohio State dovetailed with (wide receiver Chris) Olave's emotion – emptiness from missed opportunity, rage for one crucial overturned touchdown call and the aching void of unfulfilled potential."

– **Pete Thamel, Yahoo Sports**

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Local Media, Historian Share Reactions To Season, Loss

Following Ohio State's 29-23 loss to Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinal, the staff of Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked members of the local media – including The Athletic's Ari Wasserman and Lettermen Row's Tim May – as well as historian Jack Park for their thoughts on the Buckeyes' season and the controversial Fiesta Bowl.

Below is what they had to say.

What were your thoughts on Ohio State's season, which included an eighth straight win over Michigan and third consecutive outright Big Ten title?

JP: "This was the 130th season of Ohio State football, and I think without question this is one of the greatest seasons and one of the greatest teams of all time. And I think everybody expected a good team this year. There were a lot of transitions happening: Urban Meyer retiring after seven very, very successful seasons, and Ryan Day taking over, 40 years old, had never been a head coach before. But he made some very, very insightful and very important changes in the coaching staff, particularly on the defensive side. I think a lot of the success of this season started with basically what he did soon after he became head coach.

"He has brought a togetherness in this program, at least for right now. And I don't mean that to say that it won't be there forever. But he's brought a togetherness that's pretty unique. And that in no way is saying that the team wasn't all together under Meyer. But I think it's a little bit different culture right now. It's maybe a little bit less intense and yet just as difficult to achieve greatness. He just – he's his own personality. Every head coach I've ever followed and studied, and some of them I've gotten to know pretty well, every one of them has a different personality and the team to a certain extent reflects that personality.

"Mike Vrabel is a pretty good friend of mine. And if you're following Tennessee, I think that Tennessee team is taking on his personality and he's a strong guy. I mean he's a no-nonsense guy and a good guy, just a really good guy. Fair but very strong and demanding. And that Tennessee Titans team is, I think to a certain extent, taking on that personality. And I think we're seeing that here at Ohio State.

"Now obviously another thing that really, really may (have helped) make this season so successful is the tremendous amount of talent that Urban Meyer left. He was here seven seasons. He did not have a bad recruiting class. And I don't know if this is the best Ohio State team of all time. It's certainly one of the best. But I don't remember an Ohio State team that had the depth that this one has. I mean there's kids that were there – we had several third-stringers who could be playing first team on some other Big Ten teams.

"And then I guess the third thing you'd have to say is basically – and this goes partly to coaching – but we had so many really excellent players step up and have their best seasons. And certainly, the three of them that come to mind obviously are J.K. Dobbins, Justin Fields and, of course, Chase Young. I have never seen a better defensive lineman at Ohio State than Chase Young. I just haven't. And I've seen a lot of great ones over the years, and Vrabel would be one of them. There's no question about it."

AW: "I think people have to understand

that there are so many programs in America that are struggling to find the right leadership and the right coach, and if you look back at just like what Tennessee did, or every other program in the country that is hiring and recycling and firing coaches every three or four years, how hard it is to find an identity and maintain it.

"For Ohio State to lose one of the best coaches in the game in Urban Meyer and then turn around and hire a 40-year old coordinator who's never been a head coach, and then for them to go undefeated and beat the crap out of everybody on their schedule and make the playoff in their first year. Like I think they underachieved for what this team was good enough to do, but I also think that just making the playoffs in any shape or form makes it a successful season from here on out.

"So not only did Ohio State make the playoff in a playoff-or-bust era, they also feel good about the fact that they have the right coach leading the program, which is an invaluable thing, maybe even more valuable than winning a national championship. Because you've seen coaches win national championships and they get fired a few years later because they're not the right person."

TM: "I thought they would win the Big Ten for the third straight time back when everyone was picking Michigan – are you kidding me? Are you paying attention or are you just going whimsically? A lot of sportswriters in those preseason polls wanted anybody other than Ohio State, it looked like. I understand that, something new to talk about. But they had Michigan playing Nebraska for the Big Ten championship. Whoops.

"The bad thing about the BCS and now the College Football Playoff is if you don't win it all, you could have done better. Without a doubt, the members of this team will look back and won't have the huge, glorious reunions like the 2014 team or the 2002 team, because they got beat by Clemson. I do believe they had a great chance to win it all. I thought they were going to do well against LSU.

"That's what's too bad, because otherwise they won every other game – they won every other game by double figures – are you kidding me? I've never covered an Ohio State team like that. The closest one might have been 1998; 1996 was like that team but one loss kind of sullied it all; 2015, without a doubt, that's one of the great assemblages of talent in Ohio State history, didn't get it done. As Archie Griffin said on my podcast, the 1975 team – that was a helluva team – they beat UCLA soundly in the regular season, then got upset by UCLA in the Rose Bowl and they didn't win a national championship. Even though that was a ridiculous collection of talent, they fall into that second-tier category of what could have been but was still a great team."

What are your thoughts on Ohio State's 29-23 loss to Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl, which ended the Buckeyes' season and sent the Tigers to the national championship?

JP: "Well, I think this is the first time I've ever said this about a game that I've covered for Ohio State, because I'm not a complainer and I realize that people in life make mistakes and I've made mistakes. And you know, you're going to have officials. They're human, they're going to make a bad call once in a while.

"I have never seen a game where there were so many bad calls that all went against Ohio State. And it's to the place that I somewhat question if it was deliberate. I just can't understand how everything, every time Ohio State has made a big play – not every time, but many times that they made a key play, all of a sudden, they find a way to turn the thing around.

"And, to me, there was so much holding by the Clemson (line). There was so much holding by the Clemson players that in my opinion was never called. And I think, and again, I've never said this before but you could make a pretty strong argument that basically the officiating took that game away from Ohio State.

"I feel as strong about the holding and some things that weren't called as I am the things that were called, that I thought were called incorrectly. I mean, you've got, what, six officials on the field. I mean, it's like playing against 17 men out there. I mean, there was just something about that that didn't meet the test of reasonable to me in terms of fairness. I don't know. I don't know. I would hate to think that this has ever gotten to the place that – ESPN obviously has an interest with the SEC and the games on ESPN.

"I mean, a lot of people have written about that. This is not coming from me originally. You've read about it. I've read about it and I understand that. I would hope that's not the situation, but it just seemed that the Big Ten teams seem to never get a break that way. Is there a bias against the Big Ten? I think that's a very legitimate question. I really do."

AW: "I think it was pretty evident to me that Ohio State was the better football team. It's one of the oddest games I think I've covered in 10 years on the beat. You know, if you could take 10 instances or 10 plays in that game, and they all went against Ohio State, if you change the outcome to go for Ohio State in any one of those 10 plays, Ohio State arguably wins the football game.

"I mean the two J.K. (Dobbins) drops, the targeting penalty, which shifted the momentum, I would say, even more than that quarter. The ball bounced off the return man at the end of the game for Clemson before they went 94 yards, and of course the questionable fumble that they overturned. The scoop and score they overturned.

"So, I think that it was a successful season overall, but I think that might have been one of the most gut-wrenching, unsatisfying losses Ohio State's endured on the football field in the last 20 or 25 years.

"I'm not a penalty-first person, I'm an opportunity-first person, so I think that had J.K. Dobbins caught a touchdown pass instead of dropping it, I think the complexion of the game changes. If Ohio State's defense didn't give up 94 yards in four plays or whatever it was at the end of the game. And of course (Chris) Olave would have caught a touchdown pass if he didn't break off the route at the end of the game.

"Ohio State had its opportunities to win the football game, regardless of all the things that occurred, and I think that's a testament to how much better of a football team they were than Clemson. To get those 10 breaks not going their way and still having the ball at the end with a chance to win is a testament to how good they are."

TM: "I thought Ohio State was ready to play. Ohio State played very hard in that game. There is no doubt that having to settle for three field goals in the first half,

when they could have stretched the lead to 28- or at least 24-0, that would have put that game away without a doubt. But the bottom line was they were still up 16-0.

"What also stands out is the fact that a defense that had pretty much put the big-play bugaboo behind them from the previous season, they lost that game in terms of giving up points because they gave up a huge number of big plays to Clemson. And Clemson just had the skill guys that at the right moment made huge plays, not the least of which was Travis Etienne, and definitely not the least of which was Trevor Lawrence.

"Lawrence can flat run, and that long touchdown run he had was remarkable in two ways. No. 1, he got Clemson back in the game. No. 2, it was Trevor Lawrence just saying he was willing to do whatever it takes to win the game. And then of course, when they got the ball back at their 6-yard line when Ohio State's trying to run out the clock and they go 94 yards in four plays – are you kidding me? I think everybody that had thought the Ohio State defense finally had its act together was stunned by that.

"And then, of course the last offensive play of the game where it looked like Ohio State was going to reciprocate was just a head-scratcher that Chris Olave looks over his shoulder, thinks Justin Fields is scrambling and cuts off his route. Wow, that was crazy the way that game ended because I really thought Ohio State was about to pull it out of the fire.

"But, all that said, there is no doubt about it that this game will be known as the Fiesta Fiasco when it comes to the officiating, and by that, I mean the replay official. I can see the Shaun Wade targeting call, although I thought that was iffy, and a couple other calls. But what should have been a catch, strip, scoop and score by Jordan Fuller when they take six points off the board will go down in infamy as one of the great wrong replay review calls in college football history. Because that was a joke. A flat joke. And at the moment, I just want to blame it on incompetence, not anything else, but man, that was borderline blaming it on something else."

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Some Fans Passed On Bowl Travel And Tickets

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Justin Fields' last-gasp pass was intercepted in the Clemson end zone, sealing Ohio State's 29-23 loss in the College Football Playoff semifinal on Dec. 28, collective groans could be heard throughout the Buckeye world.

For the players, coaches and those directly connected with the program, it was a stunning end to what was supposed to be a championship season. For the hundreds of thousands of followers worldwide, it was a defeat that will go down as one of the most stinging in memory.

Every Ohio State game is an event for the fans, and every loss is taken personally.

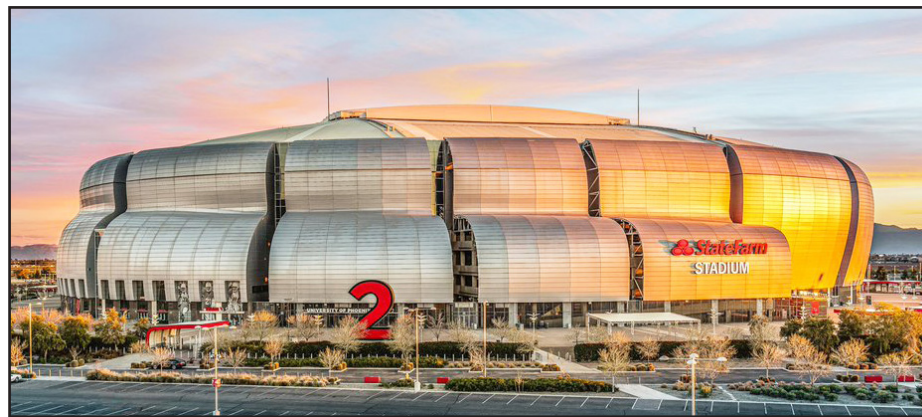
Matt Colahan's anguish went beyond personal. As proprietor of Tickets Galore, he is like others in the ticket brokerage and travel agency industries that were directly impacted by the defeat.

"Oh, it was hard," he said.

If the Buckeyes had gotten by Clemson at the Fiesta Bowl in Glendale, Ariz., they would have played LSU and its 2019 Heisman Trophy winner, former OSU quarterback Joe Burrow, in New Orleans on Jan. 13.

"It would have been the next level of interest for tickets," Colahan said.

A robust demand for tickets and travel packages would have helped offset a soft market for the Fiesta Bowl because fans with fixed budgets were put in the posi-



OHIO STATE FOOTBALL/TWITTER

VALLEY OF THE BUCKEYES – This season, Ohio State made its ninth trip to the Fiesta Bowl, the most of any bowl game outside of the Rose Bowl.

tion of going to either the Phoenix area for the Fiesta Bowl or to New Orleans, but not both games.

"That's the changing landscape of college football," Colahan said.

Many gambled on the Buckeyes beating Clemson and stayed home for the semifinal while planning for a trip to the Big Easy.

"It is the reality. People just can't do both," said Jamie Kaufman, president of Dream Seats ticket service. "It was most noticeable for sure. We know people who chose not to go (to the Fiesta Bowl) because they felt they couldn't afford both trips, whether it was financially or being able to get the time away."

What's apparent from interviews BSB

had with representatives from travel planning companies and ticket brokers is that the College Football Playoff that was implemented for the 2014 season (of which Ohio State was crowned the first champion) has changed the way fans looks at the bowl system.

The Rose Bowl, the Holy Grail for the Buckeyes for decades, is still alluring for the older crowd but has lost luster among the younger set, especially when it is not part of the CFP schedule for a semifinal game.

Also, there's a sense that it's the play-offs or bust in the eyes of many. There wasn't much excitement for a one-loss OSU vs. Southern Cal in the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 29, 2017, because the Buckeyes

weren't among the final four teams.

"For the Cotton Bowl we may have taken 150 people. We took 300 to the Rose Bowl last year," said Reynolds Travel owner Ike Reynolds.

Lisa Cisco, owner of Travel Partners, said her company had 500 customers for the Rose Bowl game vs. Washington on Jan. 1, 2019, compared to about 250 for the Fiesta Bowl, a sign that some fans were saving themselves for New Orleans.

Fiesta Bowl packages ranged from around \$2,500 to nearly \$4,000 per person depending on amenities.

"You're asking a couple to spend five-to six-thousand for the Fiesta Bowl and then go to New Orleans on top of that?" Colahan said.

The national title game would have been even more expensive, Cisco said, because hotel rates are controlled by an entity working under the auspices of the College Football Playoff.

"You had no negotiating for prices as a group," she said. "It's what the CFP says. Instead of getting a \$279 rate (at the Fiesta Bowl) you have to pay \$600 a night."

It's no wonder hard choices had to be made as to which game to attend.

"You're talking for two people, \$7,000 for a three-night package to fly to that game and stay in downtown New Orleans," Reynolds said.

His company was aware in advance that the Fiesta Bowl might not be popular.

"We did a little survey by e-mail blast

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between the Michigan win and the Big Ten championship game (Dec. 7) asking people if they had an idea what they might do," he said. "It was overwhelming in skipping the first round of the football playoffs with the idea that the championship game was going to be expensive and they couldn't afford to do both games.

"I'm not saying everybody did that, but the percentage of our returns was in the 70th-percentile of people who were going to skip the first game."

The Fiesta Bowl drew 71,330 fans with the capacity at State Farm Stadium listed as 72,158. It was a pro-Ohio State crowd, but even that comes with a caveat.

"We had more West Coast customers that are Ohio State people that went to the Fiesta Bowl than from (Columbus)," Kaufman said. "A lot of tickets we sold were from California because it's easier and cheaper for them."

He and Colahan each said ticket demand was underwhelming for the Fiesta Bowl.

"Low end get I could get you in the door for \$100, which is unbelievable for a playoff game," Kaufman said. "We were able to do so many seats that were all yard-line seats in that \$500 range, and face value alone was \$320."

By comparison, some tickets for Ohio State's Nov. 23 home game vs. Penn State were selling for at least \$650 and weren't at the 50-yard line like those at the Fiesta Bowl. Face value tickets for the PSU game were \$198 for reserved seating and \$223 for box/club.

There were other factors that led to sluggish ticket and travel sales for the Fiesta Bowl: repetitiveness and location. Simply put, the trip to Phoenix has become monotonous because the Buckeyes have played there seven times since 2003, including three times since the 2015 season.

"When they announced where we were playing, the response to us was, 'Enough is enough with Phoenix,'" Kaufman said.

If the selection committee had ranked OSU first, as many Buckeye fans expected, instead of second to LSU, then Ohio State would have played Oklahoma in the semifinal in Atlanta, about an eight-hour drive.

"That would have made a difference, absolutely," Colahan said.

Cisco agreed, "We could have done a two-night there (instead of three). We would have had a lot bigger numbers."

Reynolds said his company for the first time was offering motor coach service to a game if the Buckeyes had been headed to Atlanta.

In turn, with more Ohio State fans seeking tickets, business would have been better for Kaufman.

"If we would have been in Atlanta, there would have been a lot more people that would have just said, 'All right, I'm going to get in my car and drive there,'" he said.

It's part of the whole narrative of would have and could have that will haunt Buckeye backers for years.

What if Ohio State beat Clemson to set up the showdown in the Mercedes-Benz?

"Everybody and their mom would have gone to that," Cisco said.

Kaufman joked that he still gets depressed thinking about the scenario.

"It would have been the biggest ticket so far that we've ever seen in a college football or championship game. Period. It was already getting there. We knew it going in," he said. "It already would have been starting around \$1,500 apiece range,

and that was quickly going to go away. It probably would have been \$2,000 and up to get there."

That figure might get you in the door, but the record average ticket price was for the 2018 championship between Alabama and Georgia in Atlanta (\$4,040).

Tickets in New Orleans in the lower level along the sidelines had a face value of \$875, according to the LSU ticket office.

TicketIQ, a site that analyzes the best seats and prices for fans, said as of Jan. 10 the average cost for the title game was \$2,093, making it the fourth-most expensive championship game this decade. The site estimated 4,300 tickets were available on secondary markets. TicketIQ said the average ticket price projections for the title game dropped 19 percent the moment the Fiesta Bowl ended because Ohio State lost.

Reynolds Travel did a preregistration for New Orleans and had 250 people committed prior to the Fiesta Bowl.

"We all know how great Buckeye Nation travels, and I think it was going to be a little bit of, 'Last one out of Columbus turn out the lights,'" he said. "That matchup was going to be phenomenal."

With the Buckeyes getting their first playoff action since 2016 (a 31-0 loss to Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl, by the way), other bowl games for the Buckeyes would seem to be a letdown.

An outlier would be the one in Pasadena, Calif.

"It's still the Rose Bowl, it's the most beautiful place. When I go there, I cry when I walk in," Cisco said. "I don't know if the younger generation has that feeling."

There was a time when going to the Rose Bowl meant you were the conference champ and had a successful season to that point.

"It's the old Big Ten tradition that it's a bowl game you can go to," Reynolds said. "Secondly, people absolutely love that Rose Bowl parade, and thirdly, all that sightseeing you can do in Los Angeles is overwhelming."

Colahan said the attraction of the Rose Bowl is age dependent for OSU fans.

"It doesn't have the same meaning for someone who's not in their 50s or older and can remember when it was a big deal to go there," he said.

That could change next year if the Buckeyes earn a playoff spot because the 2021 New Year's Day Rose Bowl will be home to a semifinal game, as will the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans. The championship game will be at Hard Rock Stadium, in Miami Gardens, Fla., north of Miami.

It gets interesting in 2022 because the title game is at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, the same venue that hosts the Big Ten Championship Game.

Kaufman said it would be a dream for ticket brokers if the Buckeyes reached the CFP title game there.

"They could spend all their money on tickets and get in their car on a Monday morning day of the game and drive there," he said. "That would be fantastic."

Reynolds said local travel agencies would have to adjust but could still profit despite offering less expensive and expensive plans.

"The mode would be a bunch of motor coaches or selling land packages with people driving themselves," he said. "The volume would make up for it because it's so accessible for the Buckeyes."

"Buckeye fans are going to show up for a championship game."

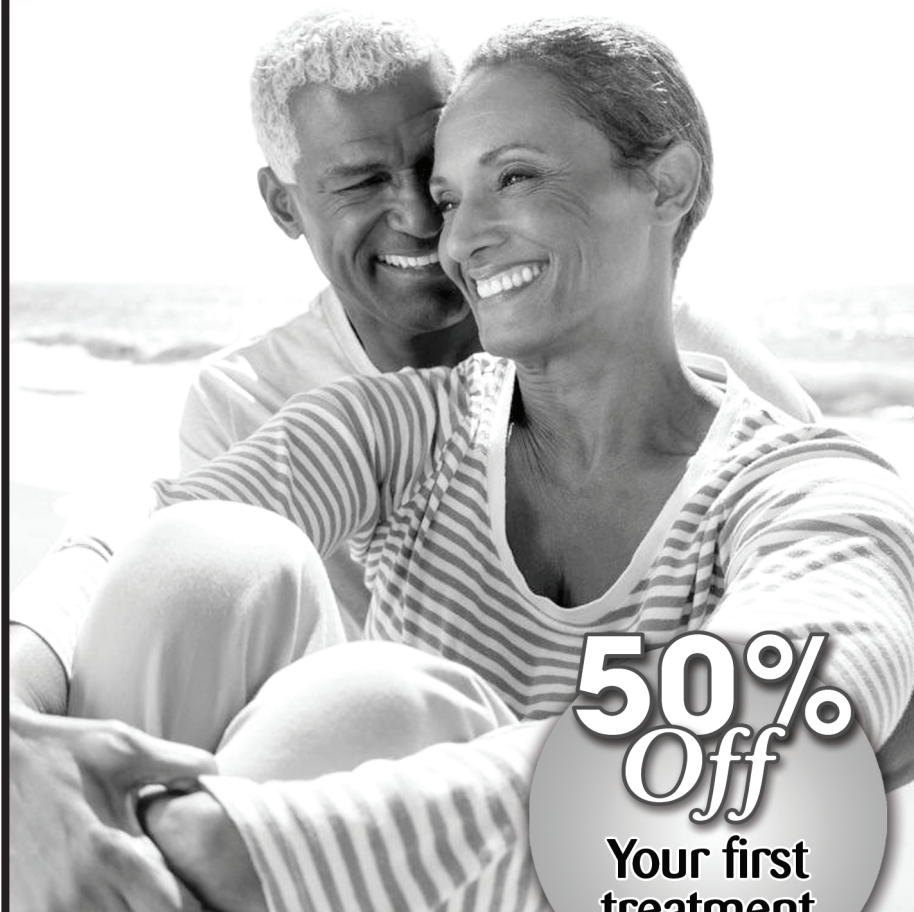
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Trio Of Underclassmen Head To NFL Draft

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Shortly after Ohio State's 29-23 loss to Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinal on Dec. 28, running back J.K. Dobbins, cornerback Jeff Okudah and defensive end Chase Young announced their respective intentions to enter the 2020 NFL draft.

That's tied with 2017 for the fewest underclassmen to depart the program in the last five years. That year, cornerback Denzel Ward, defensive end Sam Hubbard and linebacker Jerome Baker turned pro following the campaign.

Dobbins was the first to announce his decision with a post to Twitter on Dec. 30.

"Thank you for everything," Dobbins said. "Coming to Ohio State from Texas has been nothing short of a dream. I've built relationships that will last a lifetime at this great university. I've created bonds with my brothers on the teams for the last three years that will never be broken."

Dobbins rushed for 4,459 yards in three seasons at Ohio State, which ranks second in program history behind two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin, who racked up 5,589 yards in four seasons with the Buckeyes (1972-75). They are also the only two players in school history to rush for more than 1,000 yards in three consecutive seasons.

A former four-star prospect from La Grange, Texas, Dobbins set the school

freshman rushing record with 1,403 yards and scored seven touchdowns in 2017, followed that up with 1,053 yards and 10 scores during his sophomore campaign and then set the school single-season rushing record with 2,003 yards and 21 touchdowns this season. He also added 71 career catches for 645 yards and five touchdowns.

Named a first-team All-American by the Football Writers Association of America, Dobbins – who also finished sixth in 2019 Heisman Trophy voting – will have a tree planted in his honor at Buckeye Grove outside of Ohio Stadium.

"The state of Ohio and the city of Columbus will always have a special place in my heart," Dobbins said.

With the makings of a workhorse back at the next level, early draft projections have Dobbins slated to be a late first-round to early second-round pick. He'll be heavily compared in the coming months to Georgia's D'Andre Swift and Wisconsin's Jonathan Taylor, who are also considered among the best running backs available in the draft.

Sophomore Master Teague is the front-runner to replace Dobbins as Ohio State's starting running back, having rushed for 789 yards and four touchdowns in 2019. Sophomore Marcus Crowley and redshirt freshman Steele Chambers will battle to be Teague's backup, while incoming freshman Miyan Williams will compete for immediate playing time upon his arrival in the summer.

Okudah, meanwhile, revealed his decision in a letter penned to his late mother on The Players' Tribune on Jan. 1. She passed away after a lengthy battle with lymphoma shortly after he enrolled in college.

"I'm ready to take my place within the lineage of elite Ohio State cornerbacks and proud Ohio State alums," Okudah said. "I'm ready to keep challenging myself, to keep grinding for more, to keep working as hard as it takes to accomplish my goals."

Okudah earned unanimous first-team All-America honors and was a first-team All-Big Ten selection after he recorded 35 tackles, nine pass breakups, three interceptions and two forced fumbles this season. He was also a finalist for the Jim Thorpe Award – which annually honors college football's best defensive back – though LSU's Grant Delpit was this year's recipient.

A former five-star prospect in the class of 2017 from South Grand Prairie, Texas, Okudah finished his three-year career with the Buckeyes with 86 tackles, 18 pass breakups and three interceptions and will also be enshrined at Buckeye Grove.

"I'm writing with a heavy heart, as we just went through one of the most brutal losses ever to Clemson in the College Football Playoff semifinals," Okudah said in his letter. "It really could have gone either way – one bounce here or there, Mom, and I swear, I'd be getting ready for the national championship game. To leave this program without winning a national title, it hurts a lot."

"But I'm also trying to keep some perspective. And the truth is, I'm leaving with so much more to be proud of than to feel hurt about. Think about it: three straight Big Ten championships, three straight top-five national rankings, three straight wins over the team up north and a roster full of guys projected to play in the NFL. That's a pretty good run for our class."

Okudah is widely expected to a top-10 pick in the upcoming draft, and when selected, he will become the Buckeyes' sixth first-round pick at defensive back in the last five years, joining Eli Apple (New York Giants) in 2016; Marshon Lattimore (New Orleans Saints), Malik Hooker (Indianapolis Colts) and Gareon Conley (Oakland Raiders) in 2017; and Denzel Ward (Cleveland Browns) in 2018.

With Okudah off to the NFL and Damon Arnette having exhausted his eligibility, Ohio State must now replace two of its three starting cornerbacks. That leaves seniors Amir Reip and Marcus Williamson; juniors Sevn Banks and Cameron Brown; sophomore Tyreke Johnson; and incoming freshmen Lejond Cavazos and Ryan Watts fighting for two spots alongside veteran Shaun Wade.

Young was the final underclassmen to declare for the draft, doing so with a statement released on Twitter on Jan. 3.

"I am extremely grateful to everyone who helped me make it to this point," Young said. "I give thanks and praise to God for blessing me with the ability to play football and the opportunity to be a part of something bigger than myself. I love my family and am forever grateful for the unconditional love and support they have given me my entire life. I also couldn't be more grateful to my coaches for all their leadership and constantly challenging me to get better. I wouldn't

be here without them.

"Finally, I can't say enough about my teammates, who are the hardest working guys I've ever known. They will always be my brothers."

A former five-star prospect from powerhouse Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic, Young set the Ohio State single-season sack record with a nation-best 16½ sacks in 12 games. Despite a late-season suspension for accepting a loan from a family friend that forced him to miss blowout wins over Maryland and Rutgers, he became the first defensive player to earn a trip to New York City as a finalist for the Heisman Trophy since Notre Dame linebacker Manti Te'o in 2012.

Young finished fourth behind LSU quarterback Joe Burrow, Oklahoma quarterback Jalen Hurts and Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields, marking just the third time in the history of the award that a team finished with three of the top six vote-getters (Army in 1946 and Ohio State in 1973).

A unanimous All-American who will also have a tree planted in his honor at Buckeye Grove, Young won a handful of national awards including the Chuck Bednarik Award and Bronko Nagurski Trophy, both of which are given annually to the nation's best defensive player, and the Ted Hendricks Award, given annually to the best defensive end in the country. He was also the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year and the Chicago Tribune's Silver Football winner, which honors the conference's best player as voted on by coaches.

"Thank you to this great university and the entire state of Ohio for making me one of your own. I will never forget my time here and consider myself a Buckeye for life," Young said. "I am excited for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. I look forward to joining a new family in the NFL this spring and being part of something special."

Young finishes his Ohio State career with 99 tackles, 42½ tackles for loss and 30½ sacks, which trails only former defensive lineman Mike Vrabel, who recorded 36 sacks from 1993-96. Young is considered one of the top prospects in the upcoming draft and is widely expected to be selected by the Washington Redskins with the No. 2 overall pick.

If that comes to fruition, Young would be the second Ohio State defensive end to be taken with the No. 2 pick in as many years, joining Nick Bosa (San Francisco 49ers) in 2019. He would also be reunited with former Buckeye quarterback Dwayne Haskins and wide receiver Terry McLaurin.

Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson will now be tasked with replacing arguably the nation's most disruptive player, but the Buckeyes have plenty of depth at the position moving forward, led by fifth-year senior Jonathon Cooper; juniors Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday; and sophomores Zach Harrison and Javontae Jean-Baptiste.

The deadline to declare for the 2020 NFL draft is Jan. 17, but with Wade; offensive linemen Wyatt Davis, Josh Myers and Thayer Munford; linebacker Baron Browning; and punter Drue Chrisman already announcing their respective decisions to return, the number of early departures should remain at three.



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Wade Highlights OSU's Returning Players

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In the days following Ohio State's crushing 29-23 loss to Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl, it received some added crushing but expected news from three of its stars.

On Dec. 30, it was running back J.K. Dobbins who announced he was leaving to enter the NFL draft. On Jan. 1, it was cornerback Jeff Okudah. And on Jan. 3, it was defensive end Chase Young.

And on Jan. 4, many expected the fourth piece of bad news for Ohio State heading into 2020, as redshirt sophomore cornerback Shaun Wade had set his date to announce his decision as well.

But Wade made the surprise decision to forgo the NFL draft and return to the Buckeyes for another year, giving Ohio State a crucial returning cog who will help what was already a depleted secondary regardless of Wade's decision.

Wade, a former five-star in Ohio State's coveted 2017 class who was the No. 2 corner and No. 17 prospect overall, told Lettermen Row that the decision came because he had both personal and team goals still left to achieve.

"I want to do it to show I can play outside corner, I want to do it for the team, and I want to win a national championship," Wade said. "I feel like we're going to have a great team next year, and I feel like we're going to be elite. I want to be part of it."

"It was tough, but at the end of the day I feel like I made the right decision for me."

In 13 games of action, Wade finished with 25 tackles, four tackles for loss, two sacks and an interception, as well as eight pass breakups and a forced fumble. His final play for the Buckeyes was a sack on Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence that was eventually ruled as targeting. The controversial call removed Wade from the game, a game Ohio State was leading 16-0 at the time before eventually falling by six.

Ending the year without a national championship – or "natty," according to Wade – is going to be a big motivator for the third-year corner heading into the upcoming season.

"We lost the Fiesta Bowl," Wade said. "I know next year's going to be a big year for us. We have Justin (Fields), we have (Chris) Olave on the outside at receiver. Defensive side, we're going to be good, so I'm just trying to get this natty."

The lack of Wade in the secondary in the College Football Playoff semifinal was apparent, but it would have been more apparent in 2020, with the Buckeyes losing every other major starter – Okudah, cornerback Damon Arnette and safety Jordan Fuller – in the secondary.

Wade was a key piece in an Ohio State defense that went from the worst statistical group the program has ever had to a unit that ranked in the top four in passing defense (156.0 yards per game), scoring defense (13.7 points per game) and total defense (259.7 yards per game).

"This year, we built it back up," Wade said. "Now, from me to Sevnyn (Banks) to Tyreke (Johnson) to Cam (Brown) and (Josh) Proctor to all the defensive backs we have, we definitely have to keep that legacy going."

But Wade was not the only key contributor to put a hold on a spot in the NFL. Two days before the five-star corner made his decision, junior linebacker Baron Browning also decided he would be returning for his fourth year with the Buckeyes.

Browning is a fellow five-star from the 2017 class and found success splitting reps in 2019



ANDREW LIND

ROUND THREE – Cornerback Shaun Wade announced his decision to return to Ohio State for his redshirt junior season during a ceremony in his hometown of Jacksonville, Fla., on Jan. 4.

with fellow middle linebacker Tuf Borland. He finished the year with 43 tackles, sixth on the team, as well as 10 tackles for loss and five sacks.

Borland, a redshirt junior, is also expected to return in 2020.

"Thank you for the support over the last few years," Browning wrote in a statement announcing his return on Twitter. "We have shared many great moments, but there is more work to be done. I cannot wait to get back to work and grind with my brothers, every day, until we reach our goal."

This season, Browning missed two games due to injury and played only one snap against Maryland. He finished with 368 snaps compared to Borland's 425, but he finished with more snaps than Borland in six of the 12 games he played.

The defense was not the only side helped out by players returning.

The Buckeyes received a huge boost to their offense before the game against Clemson even took place when three of their starting offensive linemen – Wyatt Davis, Thayer Munford and Josh Myers – all announced they would be returning in 2020.

Davis enjoyed a breakout 2019 season, where he was named as a first-team All-American by both The Associated Press and the Walter Camp Football Foundation. Davis was also first-team All-Big Ten by the media and second team by coaches. Munford was a consensus second-team All-Big Ten member, while Myers was second team by the media and third team by coaches.

As a unit, Ohio State's offensive line thrived, earning a nomination for the Joe Moore Award,

which goes to the best O-line in the country, and helping lead an offense that ranked in the top five in scoring offense (46.9 points per game), rushing offense (266.8 yards per game) and total offense (529.9 yards per game).

The offensive line will now have to fill a hole only at guard with Jonah Jackson and at tackle with Branden Bowen, both of whom are leaving as fifth-year seniors.

Ohio State received another returnee on Jan. 2 with the announcement that punter Drue Chrisman will be back for his senior season in 2020.

A member of the Ray Guy Award watch list at the beginning of 2019, an award given to the best punter in the country, Chrisman considered leaving early to join an NFL team before ultimately deciding to come back for a fourth year.

"After thoughtful prayer and consideration about declaring for the 2020 NFL Draft, I'll keep it short and sweet for you," Chrisman wrote in his statement on Twitter. "Buckeye Nation, I'm not going anywhere! Excited for one more year of flipping the field in front of the best fans in the country."

Chrisman regressed slightly from his 2018 campaign, in which he led Ohio State to a 41.8-yard net punting average, which ranked No. 1 in the Big Ten and No. 6 in the country. That year, of Chrisman's 61 punts, 29 landed inside the 20-yard line, 16 went 50 yards or more and only one punt went for a touchback.

In 2019, Chrisman punted 46 times, and while 15 of them went more than 50 yards, only 18 landed inside the 20, while eight went into the end zone for a touchback.

Other Players Returning

Aside from Wade, Browning, Davis, Munford, Myers and Chrisman, the other non-underclassmen who are expected to return to Ohio State in 2020 from the two-deep depth chart last season include quarterback Gunnar Hoak, running back Demario McCall, wide receiver Jaylen Harris, tight ends Luke Farrell and Jake Hausmann, defensive tackles Antwan Jackson and Taron Vincent, linebackers Borland and Pete Werner, cornerbacks Amir Riep and Marcus Williamson, safety/linebacker Jahsen Wint and kicker Blake Haubeil.

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Arnette Rewrites OSU Legacy In Final Season

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Damon Arnette broke his wrist during fall camp and played through the pain before discovering the bone had snapped. Upon discovering his wrist was broken, not much changed for the senior cornerback, who returned to Ohio State for a fifth season with the hopes of changing how he was viewed in Buckeye lore.

"When I found out it was broken, I didn't even think twice about it," Arnette said. "I was just like 'Oh OK,' because I was already playing with it."

Despite having to play with a cast on his right hand, his dominant hand, Arnette performed better than he ever had in scarlet and gray.

A highlight of Arnette's final season in Columbus came in the Buckeyes' third game of the season at Indiana, where he somehow snagged an interception despite the cast. The former three-star corner from Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas picked off Hoosier quarterback Peyton Ramsey's pass near the goal line and ran it back 96 yards for an Ohio State touchdown, weaving past would-be tacklers for his first career score.

"It's really commendable what he's been able to do," fellow cornerback Jeff Okudah said of Arnette. "He's been playing with a lot of pain, but he's putting the team before himself. He's been in a lot of pain this year, and for him to go out there and have his best season yet with those circumstances is crazy."

"It's just a testament to the brotherhood, and

he kind of sets the mentality for the defense – really even the whole team. Without him, we'd be a completely different team."

Okudah's point about the value of Arnette on the Ohio State defense is proven with the stats, which show Ohio State finished its season second in the nation against the pass, allowing only 156.0 yards per game. Arnette developed into one the Buckeyes' primary leaders, visibly firing up his teammates with his physical play and fearless nature.

Arnette, who is affectionately known by the moniker "Rico" to teammates and friends, made an impact in the locker room as a senior, even looking out for offensive players, which he admits was not always the case.

"Rico is real tough," freshman wide receiver Jameson Williams said of Arnette. "Rico was actually one of the older guys that looks out for me. He makes sure I'm doing well all the time, like he'll check up on me. If I need something, Rico is one call away. Rico is real tough. He's going to develop to be a great player in the NFL and be one of the best corners to ever play because his mind-set and his toughness are going to take him far."

The toughness of Arnette inspired his teammates to battle through injuries all season, including fellow corner Shaun Wade, a sophomore, junior left tackle Thayer Munford, sophomore quarterback Justin Fields and more.

"This team, a lot of guys are playing for each other," Arnette said. "A lot of the younger guys, I know they're playing for guys like me – last-year guys, guys like Malik (Harrison), like (Binjimen Victor)."

"Since I know they're playing for me, I'm

playing for them, so little injuries like this are not going to stop us."

His Buckeye teammates would have heard Arnette's message loud and clear, even if the vocal corner hadn't said a word, because his actions showed them everything they needed to know.

"That he cares. He loves us, he trusts us," Munford said of Arnette's demeanor.

"It just shows that this is his last year," Wade told BSB, "and any other senior probably would have just said, 'Bump it, I'm not playing anymore.' Him, he wants to play. That shows the love for the game, the love for this team and the love for this university."

Arnette, who missed only the Rutgers game following midseason surgery, tried to describe his pain to reporters.

"I have a screw in my bone, so it's more like that feeling like, if you have like a molar or something and your tooth is real hurt and you drink something cold, that 'Aah,' that feeling, that's that feeling times five on my wrist," Arnette said.

Throughout interviews Arnette always downplayed the injury, making it seem like it wasn't a big deal. Meanwhile, the three-year starting cornerback was not just suiting up but thriving.

After struggling at times in the past, Arnette became a lockdown corner the Buckeyes needed. The 6-0, 195-pound defensive back was sound against the run and pass, recording 35 tackles (27 solo), including one tackle for loss, with one forced fumble, one interception and eight pass breakups.

While his injury limited him in some ways, it may have actually helped him in a weird way. Arnette said the cast hindered him in press man coverage and with hauling in interceptions, but it forced him to emphasize his footwork to put himself in better covering positions.

After earning honorable-mention All-Big Ten honors the previous two seasons, Arnette entered his final collegiate season with his third defensive backs coach in as many years. He credited first-year secondary coach and co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley for helping convince him to return for one more season and praised his teaching throughout the year. The impact went both ways.

"A guy like Damon, I appreciate him so much," Hafley said of Arnette, who earned second-team All-Big Ten laurels in 2019. "He's playing with one hand and getting off blocks with one hand. He saved a touchdown on the right sideline where he got off a block with one hand and made a tackle. You want to talk about toughness? That's what this place it all about, guys like Damon."

Although the season did not end as Arnette had hoped when he decided to return, which would have been with a national championship ring, he became more than just a talented player.

"Rico is a real leader of this team," Williams said. "The things he's been through and prevailed through, it's tough. It's not easy to come out on top after all that."

The freshmen on the team, such as Williams, cannot fully appreciate the 180-degree turnaround Arnette made in his time in Columbus. Fifth-year senior defensive tackles Jashon Cornell and Robert Landers came in with Arnette, however, and saw him transform from an immature troublemaker to a team leader, college graduate and positive role model.

"Rico has matured," Cornell said. "When we first got here in 2015, we had a lot of guys on our team that just weren't ready to be in that college football scene. We weren't prepared to go to class, play football – people had that mind-set

like, 'I'm a college football player now, I can do whatever I want.' And they didn't know about the extra things that went with that like going to school, focusing on class and football and being able to split everything up being in a big city and big college team."

"One thing Rico has done this year is he's become a leader of the whole team. Not just his unit, the whole team. You can feel him anywhere in the facility. When Rico walks in the room, we know it's all about business now. I think in previous years, he wasn't strictly about his business, but I can see this year that he's just a whole different person. He's all about the team, he's all about the brotherhood, he's all about playing for one another. He's not selfish. He's not thinking about what he's going to get. He's thinking about the whole picture, what the whole team is going to get at the end of the day."

Landers emphasized the fact that everyone in the 2015 class, which Urban Meyer deemed a class of misfits, needed to mature.

"I give my hats off to Rico," Landers said. "I appreciate him for everything he's done. He's playing his tail off, and I appreciate him. He knows and he makes us know that it's not about him. It's not about Jashon and I. It's about us as a team, us as a unit, us as a defense. It's all love, and we all grind together, develop together and went through our process with Coach Meyer together for the '15 class. It's been a unique journey. It's been a special journey. I'm proud of him, I'm proud of our class, and I'm proud of our team for what we've done over these five years."

Not only did Arnette decide to return for his fifth and final season on the gridiron, but he committed himself to getting his academics in order. He graduated with a degree in communications prior to the season after completing 18 credit hours in both the spring and summer semesters. While managing a heavy course load and helping lead summer workouts, Arnette also made time to visit elementary schools and use his platform to inspire kids.

From becoming a team leader to getting his degree to playing at a high level with a screw in his wrist, Arnette made a statement in 2019. It was one that made Okudah proud to be his teammate.

"It just speaks to the kind of person he is, that he puts the team before himself every time," Okudah said of Arnette. "He came back his senior year to prove to Buckeye Nation that he wants to change the perception of him. And the things he has done as far as becoming a leader and maturing, he's done a really good job of changing that perception."

In his 53-game Ohio State career, Arnette recorded 140 tackles (104 solo), including four TFL, with two forced fumbles, one fumble recovery, five interceptions and 22 pass breakups.

Unprompted and unscripted, Arnette bid adieu to Ohio State with the authenticity he had become known for with an Instagram post.

"Would also like to thank my teammates/brothers," Arnette wrote. "Without you guys I never would have known what it means to play for the man next to you. Every snap that I played this year was for you guys and it hurts that we came up short, but I gave you guys everything I had. You all helped me in more ways than you'll ever know."

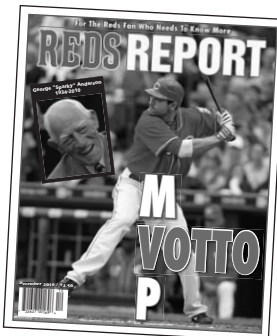
"Lastly, I would like to thank Buckeye Nation. You all are the definition of tough love, but love is love. All I wanted since playing my first snap here was being accepted by you guys. We locked in forever."

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Okudah Ready For Next Challenge In NFL

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On Jan. 7, 2017, Ohio State earned one of its most important recruits of the upcoming class when five-star cornerback Jeff Okudah out of Texas' South Grand Prairie High School made it official at the U.S. Army All-American Bowl that he would be on his way to Columbus.

But on that same day, the then-high-school star released a letter to his mother on The Players Tribune. Jeff's mom, Marie Okudah, was battling with lymphoma at the time, a battle she had faced since Jeff was 2 years old.

"Dear Mom, I'm going to start by telling you something you already know: I love you," Okudah wrote. "Now I'm going to tell you something that the rest of the world just found out: For the next four years, I'm going to be attending Ohio State."

The letter discusses his journey through the recruiting process, between making the ultimate selection and seeing a variety of programs that he liked but didn't feel were the right fit.

Eventually, Okudah revealed what drew him to the Buckeyes and how his experience with former defensive coordinator Greg Schiano made all the difference.

"Mom, of all of the memorable experiences I had, there's one in particular that stands out. I think you'll understand why," Okudah said. "Last June, Coach Schiano at Ohio State said something that really stuck with me. In fact, I think it ultimately played a big part in

my decision to go there. He told me, 'Jeff, you've had a tough life up to this point. It's time for some good things to happen to you.'

"When I was growing up, I never had the power to change my circumstances – our circumstances. I tried to give you as much support as I could, but a lot of the time I felt so helpless. I wish that you never had to spend one more second in the hospital. I feel so bad about the opportunities you've been robbed of because of your health, but I'm also so thankful for everything you've given me in spite of it."

Six days after Jeff Okudah made his way to Ohio State's campus as an early enrollee, Marie Okudah lost her long battle with cancer. He was told the news by Schiano in a moment he described in depth in his Players Tribune letter from Jan. 1 of this year.

"I remember when Coach Schiano brought me into his office and told me you'd passed. And I could tell right away from that meeting – how he spoke to me, how he comforted me – that he wasn't just doing his job," Okudah said. "Coach was there for me, really there for me, as a father figure. He knew I was a long way from home in Texas ... and he did everything he could to let me know that, while Ohio State might not feel like home yet, it was a place that I could count on. It was a place where I could show my emotions, and that would be OK. It was a place where I could grieve, however I needed to, and no one would judge me. It was a place where everyone would have my back."

"I hope knowing that makes you smile a little, Mom – just knowing that we really did



ANDREW LIND

LOCKDOWN CORNER – Jeff Okudah was one of the nation's top defensive backs in 2019, becoming a unanimous All-American and a finalist for the Jim Thorpe Award.

end up choosing the right school. It's probably not very often that someone can know they picked the right college to go to after only a week of being there ... but for me that's what it was like with Ohio State.

"I'd barely even gotten settled there. I'd only been to a few classes. Hadn't played a down. Hadn't done anything yet for the program. But there everyone was, even still, stepping up when I needed them to, and treating



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me like I was family, no questions asked. It felt like the entire school was there for me.”

About three years after the most tragic moment of his life, Jeff Okudah is headed to the NFL as a unanimous All-American and likely top-10 pick in the 2020 draft.

But before he had any of those major accomplishments with the Buckeyes, Okudah's personal – and team – expectations were through the roof.

“When I was in Coach (Kerry) Coombs' office after our 2017 spring game, for player evaluations, and Coach asked me, straight up, ‘What do you want to be?’ – I would not be shocked if he was expecting a more humble answer than the one I gave,” Okudah said. “I said, ‘I want to be the best DB in America, Coach. And I want us to be the best DB group in America. That's my goal – Best In America. BIA.’”

He did not turn into the BIA overnight, though. Okudah started out his collegiate career slowly, racking up 17 tackles, a pass breakup and a fumble recovery in his freshman season while playing a larger role on special teams than as a corner.

Okudah doubled his tackle numbers in 2018, finished with 34 to go along with eight pass breakups and another fumble recovery. But behind a struggling defense overall – a defense that finished with historical lows for the program, ranking No. 50 in scoring defense (25.5 points per game) and No. 71 in total defense (403.4 yards per game) – the second-year corner with loads of potential never really garnered significant attention for his play.

That is, until the Rose Bowl.

Against Washington, in a game that was also highlighted by it being head coach Urban Meyer's final game, Okudah flourished. The cornerback finished with five tackles, four of which were solo, and a pair of pass breakups but was much more disruptive than the box score could show.

“I think I've taken a big step mentally,” Okudah said following the Rose Bowl victory. “I have a lot of confidence. Whenever a guy catches a ball, I don't get too down on myself. It's part of the game. We play a lot of great players. So just having the confidence out there every single play is healthy. Make plays. I don't really second-guess myself.”

The breakout game set the stage for a potential breakout season for a cornerback who came into Ohio State with high expectations from others, but the highest of expectations for himself.

He didn't let the others or himself down.

Okudah was a dominant force in 2019 for Ohio State in the secondary. He finished with similar stats to his time in 2018 in a lot of areas – 35 tackles, nine pass breakups and two forced fumbles – but he also earned collegiate interceptions No. 1, 2 and 3 and was, again, much more of a significant contributor than his stats would show.

The performances helped to improve Ohio State's defense from below average to one of the very best in college football, and Okudah was awarded with a Jim Thorpe Award nomination for the best defensive back in the country.

But another accomplishment he earned this season was one that meant the most to him and showed he was able to reach those lofty goals he had told Coombs about after his first ever spring game.

“In December of 2019, I became a unanimous first-team All-American at defensive back. BIA,” Okudah said. “That meant everything to me.”

It was also never just about football for Okudah when it came to choosing Ohio State. In his 2017 letter, he talked about wanting to take challenging classes, as well as gaining the knowledge to one day start a business that will help build a sustainable life after football.

“I've been told I have the talent to one day achieve my dream of playing in the NFL, and that's great,” Okudah said, “but that's not all that I think I have the talent for.”

The communications major was a 2017 Academic All-Big Ten member and also was seen wearing a “More Than An Athlete” sweatshirt at interviews in 2019. During his junior season, he talked about his desire to help other children who have to deal with the same struggles Okudah went through in his childhood with his sick mother.

“I'm really passionate about cancer, people that have cancer,” Okudah said. “I want to get into kids who are dealing with parents that have cancer and just providing for them if I'm ever able to have that financial ability. That's always been something for me, helping out people that are affected by maybe siblings or parents with cancer.”

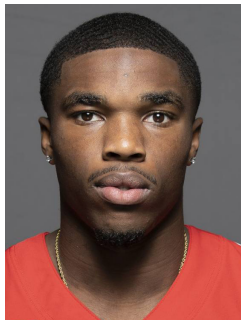
Back at the start of 2017, before he became the unanimous All-American he is today, before he even had the opportunity to tell Coombs about his dreams and aspirations, he already had his head in the stars for what he was hoping to get out of Ohio State.

His head was there because he had an extra layer of motivation to do it for his mom.

“Now that I've finally chosen a school, I know that the work is just starting,” Okudah said in the letter. “I don't want to be just another student-athlete while I'm at Ohio State. I really want to one day be remembered for what I accomplished while I was there. I know that's saying a lot given all the great players who have come through the program, but that's exactly the kind of challenge I'm looking for.”

“I know that college will be tough. At the next level, I'm going to be competing against the very best players in the nation. But I'm ready, because I'm doing this for so much more than just me.”

Now he is off to the next level for whichever NFL team selects him.



Jeff Okudah

Three years after his original Players Tribune letter, Okudah's draft letter is still directed to his mother. Three years later, his desire to play for something more than just himself has led him to become one of the best defensive backs Ohio State has had in recent memory in a list that has plenty of star-studded names on it.

“Dear Mom, I'm going to start by telling you something you already know: I miss you,” Okudah said. “Now I'm going to tell you something nobody's known until right at this moment: I'm officially declaring for the NFL draft.”

Okudah leaves as one of the BIA at his position, and he leaves Ohio State's secondary among the BIA as a collective, with the group allowing 156.0 passing yards per game, the second-fewest in the country only to Clemson.

Now, he is off to the NFL after fulfilling what he set out to do in Columbus, and he is ready to prove to his mom that he can be the BIA at the highest of levels.

“Mom ... thank you for everything. I still

can't believe how quickly life goes by. How it's already been three whole years, almost, since the day that you passed,” Okudah said. “And how even right now, as I try to finish this letter, it's only going to be a few more months until that moment we always talked about: when some team calls my name, and announces me as their pick, and officially makes me a part of the NFL.”

“I'm excited and I'm ready. I'm ready to take my place within the lineage of elite Ohio State cornerbacks and proud Ohio State alums. I'm ready to keep challenging myself, to keep grinding for more, to keep working as hard as it takes to accomplish my goals. I'm ready to provide for (my sister) and for the rest of my future family – to help these next generations of Okudahs reach their full potential, like you helped me reach mine.”

“But most of all? Looking back, when you left ... I was just a kid. And now I'm ready to be a man. Now I'm ready for greatness. I'm ready to be my mother's son. Forever and always, Jeff.”

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Ohio State Boasts More Than 50 Alums In NFL

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State was represented by an impressive 53 alums on the NFL rosters of 26 of the 32 teams this fall. Buckeye Sports Bulletin researched the performances of each former Buckeye in the league, and what follows is a player-by-player breakdown.

AFC EAST Buffalo Bills

Kurt Coleman, S – In his 10th NFL season, Coleman played in 14 games for the Buffalo Bills. The former Buckeye safety recorded three solo tackles, including one tackle for loss, two of which all came in week 17 against the Jets. The Clayton (Ohio) Northmont product made the NFL playoffs for the sixth time and with his fourth different team.

Miami Dolphins

Jerome Baker, LB – Baker led the Miami Dolphins with 126 tackles in his second NFL season. He played in all 16 games, including 15 starts. The Cleveland Benedictine product showed his versatility with one interception and four pass deflections along with 1½ sacks, three tackles for loss, two forced fumbles and five quarterback hits.

Raekwon McMillan, LB – Starting alongside Baker in Miami, McMillan finished fourth on the team with 72 tackles (35 solo) in 13 games, including 12 starts. The former first-team All-Big Ten selection and national champion added three tackles for loss, two quarterback hits and one pass deflection.

Isaiah Prince, OL – Another former first-team All-Big Ten honoree for the Dolphins, Prince played in four games, including two starts, as a rookie this season.

New England Patriots

Nate Ebner, Specialist – Ebner, a special teams specialist, made eight tackles (seven solo) for the AFC East champion Patriots.

Mike Nugent, K – Nugent, a two-time All-America kicker, was signed in an effort to replace an injured Stephen Gostkowski that only lasted four games. The Centerville, Ohio, native hit 15 of 16 extra-point attempts and 5 of 8 field-goal tries in his 15th NFL season.

John Simon, DE – A former Ohio State defensive lineman, Simon recorded 44 tackles (28 solo), including four sacks and three tackles for loss. The Youngstown (Ohio) Cardinal Mooney product added one interception, one forced fumble, seven quarterback hits and a career-high four pass deflections in 16 games, including a career-high 12 starts.

AFC CENTRAL Cincinnati Bengals

Sam Hubbard, DE – Hubbard broke out in his second NFL season with the Bengals, starting all 15 games he played in for Cincinnati. Hubbard had 76 tackles (46 solo), including 10 tackles for loss and 8½ sacks. The Cincinnati Moeller product added 13 quarterback hits, three pass deflections and one forced fumble.

Michael Jordan, OL – Jordan started 9 of 13 games in his rookie season for the Bengals. The Cincinnati native played every offensive snap in seven of the games, including the final five of the season.

Billy Price, OL – Price played in all 16 games (eight starts) for the Bengals after starting all 10 of his appearances as a rookie.

Cleveland Browns

Denzel Ward, CB – Ward started 12 games

for the Browns while missing the other four due to injuries but still turned in a solid season. The Nardon, Ohio, product recorded 44 tackles (38 solo), including one TFL, one quarterback hit and one fumble recovery. Ward added 11 pass deflections with two interceptions, including one he ran back 61 yards for a touchdown.

Pittsburgh Steelers

Cameron Heyward, DE – Heyward had one of the best years of his career for the Steelers, earning All-Pro honors and finishing third on the team with a career-high 83 tackles (51 solo). Heyward recorded 11 tackles for loss and nine sacks, along with one forced fumble, one fumble recovery and six pass deflections.

Ryan Shazier, LB – Two years following a serious spine injury, Shazier can not only walk, but he can run. The former All-American linebacker has also begun taking classes at the University of Pittsburgh, with plans of earning his master's degree in business. The Steelers still paid for Shazier's 2019 season even though he spent it on their Reserve/Physically Unable To Perform list for the 2019 season, and the organization has also provided his regular medical insurance.

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

Nick Vannett, TE – Vannett hauled in 17 receptions for 166 yards at tight end on the season. The Westerville (Ohio) Central product was traded from the Seattle Seahawks for a 2020 fifth-round pick on Sept. 24.

AFC SOUTH Houston Texans

Gareon Conley, CB – Conley started the season with the Oakland Raiders, where he started six games, recording 23 tackles (16 solo), two pass deflections and one interception, which sealed a 27-24 win over the Chicago Bears. Conley suffered a neck injury in the first game of the season, which caused him to be carted off the field in a stretcher, but he was released from the hospital that day.

The Massillon (Ohio) Washington product was traded to the Houston Texans on Oct. 21 for a 2020 third-round pick. Once in Houston, Conley stepped up his game, posting 27 tackles (20 solo) and 11 pass deflections in eight games, including six starts. In the NFL wild card round, Conley made six tackles (five solo) against the Buffalo Bills in a 22-19 Houston victory.

Carlos Hyde, RB – Hyde led the Texans in rushing with 1,070 yards on 245 carries (4.4 yards per carry) and scored six touchdowns. The Cincinnati native also added 10 catches for 42 yards in the passing game.

Bradley Roby, CB – In his first season with the Texans, Roby finished with 38 tackles (35 solo), one sack and one forced fumble in 10 starts. The former All-American also tallied eight pass deflections and two interceptions, including one for a 27-yard touchdown. Roby's first interception of the season came in his first game back from a serious hamstring injury which cost him six contests. Not only did he pick off six-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady, but Roby set up the Texans for a go-ahead touchdown with a 22-yard return to the New England 6-yard line in a 28-22 Houston victory.

Roby recorded a second interception off former Heisman Trophy winner Jameis Winston and returned it for a 27-yard touchdown, mark-

ing one of Winston's NFL-record seven pick-sixes thrown in 2019. Roby played well in the Texans' wild card win against the Bills, making seven solo stops.

Indianapolis Colts

Parris Campbell, WR – In his rookie season, Campbell snagged 18 receptions for 127 yards and one touchdown in seven games, while adding four rushes for 34 yards and one touchdown. The speedster from Akron St. Vincent St. Mary also returned seven kickoffs for a 25.0-yard average. Campbell's best game of his injury-hampered rookie campaign came in a 26-24 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers, where he hauled in 5 of 5 targets for 53 yards, carried the ball three times for 27 more yards and returned two kicks for a 31.0-yard average.

Malik Hooker, S – In his third season in the NFL, Hooker started 13 games for the Colts and recorded 51 tackles (30 solo), one TFL, one fumble recovery, three pass deflections and two interceptions. The former consensus All-American missed three games with a knee injury, and his best performance of the season came against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Dec. 8 when he contributed 10 tackles (nine solo), one pass deflection and one interception.

Tyquan Lewis, DE – Lewis played in just nine games for the Colts, and the former Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year had five tackles (three solo) with one TFL and one quarterback hit.

Jacksonville Jaguars

Andrew Norwell, OL – For the third time in four seasons, Norwell did not miss a single offensive snap for the Jacksonville Jaguars. The season did not go well for the 6-10 Jaguars, but the Cincinnati native recovered from a 2018 ankle injury and better resembled his All-Pro form from 2017.

AFC WEST Denver Broncos

Jeff Heuerman, TE – After hauling in four of his five targets for 21 yards against the Bears in week two, Heuerman appeared poised to remain a part of the Broncos' offense despite the team's selection of tight end Noah Fant in the first round of the 2019 NFL draft. Heuerman gave way to the Iowa product, however, as the season progressed, and the former Ohio State tight end caught just 14 passes for 114 yards and one touchdown on the year.

Dre'Mont Jones, DE – The Broncos drafted Jones in the third round of the 2019 NFL draft, and selecting him No. 71 overall proved to be a wise decision. Jones had an impact in 14 games for Denver, turning in 14 tackles (eight solo), three TFL, 3½ sacks, six quarterback hits, two pass deflections and one interception.

The Cleveland St. Ignatius product's best game came in week 16 after missing the prior game due to an ankle sprain. Jones decided to give it a go although he was below 100 percent. Jones did not just play, but he earned AFC Defensive Player of the Week for his effort, becoming just the third Bronco rookie to earn the honor. Jones logged a career-high five tackles (three solo), with two TFL, 2½ sacks and three quarterback hits in a 27-17 Denver victory against the Detroit Lions.

Kansas City Chiefs

Darron Lee, LB – Lee did not have the same impact in his first season in Kansas City as he did with the Jets during his first three seasons. The New Albany, Ohio, product posted 31 tackles (22 solo) in 16 games for the AFC West champion Chiefs.

Mike Weber, RB – The Dallas Cowboys

cut Weber on Sept. 1, but the Chiefs added him to their practice squad on Jan. 8. Weber was likely tasked with impersonating Hyde, a fellow former Ohio State tailback.

Los Angeles Chargers

Joey Bosa, DE – Bosa recorded 67 tackles (47 solo), with 18 TFL, 11½ sacks, one forced fumble and 31 quarterback hits. The two-time All-American started all 16 games for the Chargers and earned his second Pro Bowl nod.

Oakland Raiders

Johnathan Hankins, DT – Hankins started all 16 games for the Oakland Raiders, recording 50 tackles (28 solo), seven TFL, 1½ sacks, six quarterback hits and one pass deflection.

Rod Smith, RB/Specialist – Smith was cut by the Titans on Nov. 13 but found his footing with the Raiders on Dec. 10. Smith finished the season with three tackles and one forced fumble.

NFC EAST Dallas Cowboys

Noah Brown, WR – Brown began training camp on the PUP list due to an offseason surgery on his left knee. The former seventh-round pick was placed on the reserve list to start the season.

Ezekiel Elliott, RB – For the third time in four seasons, Elliott was named a Pro Bowler, gaining 1,357 rushing yards on 301 carries (4.5 yards per carry) and 12 touchdowns. The former All-American added 54 receptions for 420 yards and two more scores through the air. A former special teams standout at Ohio State, Elliott also made two solo stops following turnovers.

Although the two-time NFL rushing champ did not lead the league again, he had four multi-touchdown outings and eclipsed 100 yards from scrimmage on nine occasions. Elliott finished fifth in the NFL in rushing yards per game (84.8), marking a career low and the first time in his career Elliott did not lead the league in yards per game.

Devin Smith, WR – Smith came out strong in his first season as a Cowboy, snagging all three of his targets in week two against Washington for 74 yards and one touchdown. However, the Massillon Washington product did not catch another pass after week three and concluded his campaign with five receptions for 113 yards and one score.

Philadelphia Eagles

Malcolm Jenkins, S – Jenkins started all 16 games for the sixth time in as many seasons for the Eagles. The dependable two-time All-American led Philadelphia with 81 tackles (63 solo) and played well in a 17-9 wild card loss to Seattle, where he had nine tackles (seven solo), one TFL, one sack and three quarterback hits. The two-time Super Bowl champion forced a career-high four fumbles, tied his career best with 2½ sacks and added six TFL, nine quarterback hits, eight pass deflections and one fumble recovery.

Cameron Johnston, P – Johnston averaged 46.4 yards per punt on 71 punts for the Eagles in his second NFL season in 2019.

Washington Redskins

Dwayne Haskins, QB – It may not have been the rookie season Haskins envisioned, but the No. 15 overall pick in the 2019 NFL draft did lead Washington to two victories, which at times seemed like a nearly impossible task. Haskins threw for 1,365 yards with seven scores and seven picks, while completing 58.6 percent of his passes. The former Big Ten Player of the

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Year played in nine games, including seven starts.

Terry McLaurin, WR – Washington drafted McLaurin in the third round (No. 76 overall) of the 2019 NFL draft, and the Ohio State product had one of the best seasons of any rookie. McLaurin reeled in 58 receptions for 919 yards and seven touchdowns in 14 starts.

His highlight-filled first year featured a 100-yard, two-touchdown performance at Miami and a pair of standout games against the NFC East champion Eagles. In week one at Philadelphia, McLaurin caught 5 of 7 targets for 125 yards and one touchdown. Then, in a week 15 divisional matchup, McLaurin hauled in all five of his targets for 130 yards and one score against the Eagles.

NFC NORTH Detroit Lions

Taylor Decker, OL – Decker missed only one game with a back injury, starting 15 games for Detroit and playing nearly every snap in his fourth NFL season.

Green Bay Packers

Corey Linsley, OL – For the third consecutive season, Linsley started all 16 games at center for the Packers. Green Bay won the NFC North behind Linsley's sound blocking.

Minnesota Vikings

Pat Elflein, OL – Despite suffering a knee injury, Elflein started 15 games at center for the Vikings. The Pickerington (Ohio) North product recovered his first fumble in his three-year NFL career for Minnesota, who defeated the Saints in the NFC wild card round.

Jalyn Holmes, DT – Holmes saw the field in just six games for Minnesota in his second NFL season. Holmes had four tackles (two solo) and one TFL after recording his first sack and suffering a broken hand injury as a rookie. In the NFC wild card round against New Orleans, Holmes recovered a fumble for the Vikings.

Atlanta Falcons

Michael Bennett, DT – Bennett suffered a broken ankle during the Falcons' first practice of training camp. The Centerville, Ohio, product had signed a reserve/future contract with Atlanta on Jan. 10, 2019, after recording five tackles (four solo) and one TFL with the Falcons in two games in 2018.

Kendall Sheffield, CB – The Falcons chose Sheffield with the No. 111 overall selection in the fourth round of the 2019 NFL draft, and the speedy Buckeye quickly became a key component of the Atlanta defense. Sheffield played in all 16 games, including 11 starts, and recorded 46 tackles (33 solo), one forced fumble and three pass deflections. Sheffield struggled in his limited time as a kick returner, averaging 17.7 yards per return on six kickoffs.

Carolina Panthers

Curtis Samuel, WR – In his third NFL season, Samuel enjoyed a career year, corraling a career-high 54 catches for 627 yards and six touchdowns and taking 19 carries for 130 yards (6.8 yards per carry) and one rushing score. Samuel became a bigger part of the Panthers' offense, partaking in 86 percent of the team's offensive snaps, nearly double his previous high of 44 percent. The former All-American gained a remarkable 36 first downs on receptions and seven on rushes, moving the chains on 58.9 percent of his touches.

New Orleans Saints

Eli Apple, CB – Apple started all 15 games he played in for the Saints, recording 58 tackles (53 solo), one forced fumble, one quarterback hit and four pass deflections. The former No. 10 overall pick missed the Saints' final game of

the season and NFC wild card matchup with Minnesota due to an ankle injury.

Vonn Bell, S – Starting at safety for the Saints, Bell finished second on the team in tackles with 89 (66 solo) despite missing three games with a knee injury. The former All-American forced two fumbles and recovered five, including a scoop and score for his first career touchdown. Bell also added 1½ sacks, four TFL, four quarterback hits, five pass deflections and his first career interception to his impressive 2019 résumé.

Ted Ginn Jr., WR – The speedy Ginn caught 30 receptions for 421 yards and two touchdowns, playing in all 16 contests for the Saints. The Cleveland Glenview product also added three rushes for 18 yards. Ginn hauled in one of his two targets for 18 yards in New Orleans' NFC wild card loss to Minnesota, which was the three-time All-American's 15th playoff game.

Marshon Lattimore, CB – Lattimore made 57 tackles with one TFL in 14 starts for the Saints. The Cleveland native picked off one pass and deflected 14 on the season.

Michael Thomas, WR – It was a historic

year for Thomas, who broke Marvin Harrison's single-season reception record by bringing in 149 catches. The two-time All-Pro wideout also led the NFL in receiving yards with 1,725 and added nine scores. Thomas took seven catches for 70 yards in the playoff loss to the Vikings.

NFC WEST Arizona Cardinals

Dante Booker, LB – Booker, an Akron St. Vincent St. Mary product, spent time on the Cardinals' practice squad under former Ohio State linebackers coach Bill Davis, who works with the same position in Arizona.

Johnnie Dixon, WR – Dixon began the season with the Houston Texans but concluded his first NFL season with the Arizona Cardinals, where he signed a future contract, locking him into the 90-man offseason roster.

Los Angeles Rams

Jake McQuaide, LS – Cincinnati Elder product McQuaide played in all 16 games for the Rams. The long snapper played a pivotal role in a kicking unit that connected on 24 of 33 field goals and 42 of 42 extra-point attempts.

San Francisco 49ers

Nick Bosa, DE – The No. 2 overall pick in the 2019 NFL draft, Bosa thrived for the NFC West champion 49ers, notching 47 tackles (32 solo) with 16 TFL, nine sacks and 25 quarterback hits. The former Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year made the Pro Bowl as a rookie, also posting one forced fumble, two fumble recoveries, two pass deflections and one interception, which he returned for 46 yards in a three-sack effort against the Panthers.

Seattle Seahawks

Jamarco Jones, OL – After missing his rookie season due to ankle injury, Jones became an instrumental part of the Seahawks' offense in year two after his teammates suffered injuries. The former fifth-round pick played in 15 games for Seattle, including three starts. Jones also played every snap in the Seahawks' NFC wild card win over the Eagles.

Demetrius Knox, OL – In his first year in the NFL, Knox was put on the injured reserve with a knee injury during the preseason.



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Three 2021 Prospects Commit To The Buckeyes

While Ohio State is still putting the finishing touches on its 2020 haul ahead of the traditional National Signing Day on Feb. 5 – particularly holding onto a commitment from Muskegon, Mich., four-star athlete Cameron Martinez – the staff has shifted most of its attention to the 2021 recruiting cycle.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

That was especially apparent when Aurora, Colo., Cherokee Trail three-star tight end Sam Hart pledged his services to the Buckeyes on Dec. 30.

The 6-5, 225-pound Hart is considered the 15th-best tight end and No. 366 prospect overall in his class. He hauled in 31 catches for 562 yards and seven touchdowns to lead the Cougars to the state playoffs last fall. He picked Ohio State over a long list of offers from programs such as Arkansas, Colorado, Colorado State, Georgia Tech, Iowa, LSU, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Oregon, Penn State, Tennessee, Texas, USC, Utah, Virginia Tech, Washington and West Virginia, among others.

Hart landed an offer from the Buckeyes and running backs coach/area recruiter Tony Alford last May, and he visited campus for the first time shortly thereafter to meet offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson. He then made his way back to campus for Ohio State's 28-17 win over Penn State on Nov. 23, a visit that seemingly catapulted the Buckeyes to the top of his list.

Even with Hart in the fold, Ohio State is expected to pursue another tight end in 2021. The Buckeyes initially wanted two in the current cycle but chose to sign just one in Cincinnati Elder three-star Joe Royer. Players to keep in mind moving forward include Needham (Mass.) St. Sebastian's four-star Louis Hansen; Savannah (Tenn.) Hardin County four-star Hudson Wolfe; and Bowling Green, Ky., three-star Jordan Dingle.

Cincinnati Safety Johnson Announces Commitment

Although he previously planned to make his college decision on May 22 – his father's birthday – Cincinnati La Salle three-star safety Jaylen Johnson announced his commitment to Ohio State on Jan. 7.

The 6-1, 205-pound Johnson is considered the 18th-best safety and No. 422 prospect overall in the class of 2021, recording 46 tackles and a forced fumble while leading the Lancers to the Division II state championship this past season. He picked Ohio State over more than a dozen offers from programs such as Cincinnati, Indiana, Iowa State, Kentucky, Louisville, Michigan State, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Purdue and West Virginia, among others.

Johnson – who landed an offer from the Buckeyes following a strong performance at a one-day camp last June – altered his decision timeline follow-

ing an unofficial visit to Columbus in mid-December, during which he spent a considerable amount of time with head coach Ryan Day and linebackers coach Al Washington, thus probably closing the door for Alexandria (Va.) Episcopal three-star Bryce Steele, who has significant interest in the Buckeyes but was earmarked for the same hybrid linebacker/safety spot as Johnson.

Texas Lineman Jackson Commits To Buckeyes

Ohio State landed its second commitment in as many days when Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal four-star offensive lineman Donovan Jackson pledged his services to the Buckeyes on Jan. 8.

The 6-4, 308-pound Jackson is considered the top-rated offensive guard and No. 57 prospect overall in the class of 2021. He was named the offensive line MVP at The Opening Finals last summer and then led the Knights to the 4A state title in the fall. He picked Ohio State over finalists Georgia, Stanford, Texas and Texas A&M.

Jackson's relationship with the Buckeyes dates back to middle school, when he attended a one-day camp in Columbus as an eighth-grader. He landed an offer from offensive line coach Greg Studrawa just a few months later, which marked his first from a Power Five school.

Jackson's affinity for the Ohio State football program goes back much further, however.

His parents, Todd and Melanie, are originally from Ohio and met while attending Miami University, while his maternal grandmother still lives in Cincinnati. He grew up rooting for Ohio State despite living 1,000 miles away in Texas, and as a result he called his unofficial visit for the spring game last April "a dream come true."

However, the Aggies were long considered the favorite in Jackson's recruitment thanks to their proximity to home. But the Buckeyes turned the tables during his unofficial visit for the above-mentioned win over Penn State, after which he silently committed to the staff.

Jackson is the second offensive lineman to commit to Ohio State for the 2021 recruiting cycle, joining Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star tackle Ben Christman. The Buckeyes are hoping to land as many as four more, 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.

Long-Time CB Commit Phillips Flips To Utah

Ohio State officially signed 24 players from the 2020 recruiting class when the Early Signing Period began on Dec. 18. But one notable absence was La Habra, Calif., four-star cornerback Clark Phillips, who flipped his commitment and signed with Utah the following day.

The 5-11, 178-pound Phillips had been committed to the Buckeyes since late June. But on Dec. 15, the same weekend that former co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley was named the head coach at Boston College, he took an unexpected official visit with the Utes.



COURTESY OF JAYLEN JOHNSON

FROM ONE POWERHOUSE TO ANOTHER – Cincinnati La Salle three-star safety Jaylen Johnson committed to Ohio State on Jan. 7.

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
Miyon 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
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
Sam Hart	TE	6-5	225	★★★	Aurora (Colo.) Cherokee Trail
Jaylen Johnson	S	6-1	205	★★★	Cincinnati La Salle
Donovan Jackson	OT	6-4	308	★★★★	Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal

ASK AN ANALYST

With Buckeye Grove's Marc Givler

Of Ohio State's school-record 14 early enrollees, which player(s) do you believe will have the greatest impact during the 2020 season?

"I think you have to look at wide receiver. Yes, Ohio State returns a couple of difference makers in junior Chris Olave and sophomore Garrett Wilson, but there is a lot of opportunity there for young guys to get in the rotation.

"Ohio State is generally going to play five or six receivers, and with guys like Julian Fleming, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Gee Scott Jr. having college-ready bodies, you would have to think at least two of those guys see significant time this fall."

What is the latest with 2020 Muskegon, Mich., four-star athlete Cameron Martinez, who remains committed to Ohio State but did not sign with the Buckeyes during the Early Signing Period?

"Martinez is weighing some other Big Ten options, including Northwestern and Minnesota, as those schools are not only selling the offensive side

of the ball but are also selling him being a cornerstone type of player for those programs.

"Until Ohio State is able to announce a new hire as secondary coach, this will likely remain in a holding pattern until Martinez can meet and get to know that new hire – which could very well be former assistant Kerry Coombs.

"From there it will be all about how that new coach is able to sell Martinez on his vision for him and his fit within the program."

Does Ohio State have a shot to flip Dalton, Ga., four-star running back Jahmyr Gibbs from his pledge to Georgia Tech during or following his official visit the weekend of Jan. 17?

"Gibbs is scheduled to make official visits beyond that weekend, so while I give Ohio State a chance to ultimately flip him on Feb. 5 when the late signing period opens up, it is very unlikely that Gibbs would end his recruitment on or shortly after his trip to Columbus.

"Georgia Tech has a very real chance of keeping

Gibbs through all of this and will likely get his final official visit at the end, but right now I believe that the Buckeyes could very well be the biggest threat to Tech in flipping Gibbs."

If Ohio State looks to the transfer portal to address any needs, who are some players to keep in mind?

"Most of the names at this point have already come and gone. Guys like former Miami running back Lorenzo Lingard and Temple grad-transfer defensive end Quincy Roche had interest from Ohio State, but Lingard recently committed to Florida and it doesn't look likely that the Buckeyes will be able to make it work with Roche – though it's still worth watching until he makes his next destination official.

"UCLA cornerback Darnay Holmes was a player that Ohio State had interest in as well, but he chose to enter the NFL draft.

"At this point, it looks like if the Buckeyes are going to hit the portal this offseason, it's going to be a name that isn't yet in said portal."

Utah was among the first programs to offer Phillips a scholarship early in the recruiting process, and the coaching continuity in Salt Lake City – where head coach Kyle Whittingham is entering his 16th season and cornerbacks coach Sharrieff Shah is entering his ninth year – was a major selling point to him and his

family.

"The coaches, they're super stable," Phillips told reporters gathered at his announcement on Dec. 19. "The stability is definitely appealing, of course. For me, I love the players. I love the guys, and then they're super genuine dudes. They're really, really good guys, I think,

and even away from the football piece, I feel like those are guys I want to spend three to four years with."

By comparison, Hafley's departure means Ohio State will have its fourth defensive backs coach in as many seasons when the team takes the field on Sept. 5 against Bowling Green – that is, unless

the Buckeyes hire Tennessee Titans secondary coach Kerry Coombs, who was with the program from 2012-17. But even if that happens, as multiple reports suggest it will once the Titans win the Super Bowl or are eliminated from the NFL

Continued On Page 30

2020



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Johnson Earns Awards At All-American Bowl

Continued From Page 29

playoffs, Phillips has no prior relationship with Coombs to fall back on.

"A couple of things happened with the other university that I was committed to that kind of allowed me to see that door open for Utah," Phillips said. "It really just made me feel really, really comfortable with the staff and realize that the guys that are at Utah and the staff and everything that's in place. I feel really, really comfortable with the stability, the players and then the opportunity that's at hand."

Offensive Tackle Signee Johnson Wins National Awards

Cincinnati Princeton five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson became the second Ohio State signee in as many years to be named the All-American Bowl Man of the Year during the high school all-star game's annual awards ceremony on Jan. 3.

The 6-7, 290-pound Johnson follows wide receiver Garrett Wilson in winning the award that "epitomizes a high standard of excellence in community service and athletic distinction."

Wilson beat out center Harry Miller and defensive end Zach Harrison last year, while Johnson fended off future teammate Kourt Williams – a four-star athlete from Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco – to bring home the hardware.

Other finalists included Stanford four-star cornerback signee Ayden Hector, Michigan State three-star kicker signee Jack Olsen, North Carolina three-star defensive tackle signee Clyde Pinder and Purdue three-star center signee Gus Hartwig.

In addition to putting in more than 1,000 hours of community service throughout the greater Cincinnati area, Johnson has started his own nonprofit foundation to



COURTESY OF THE ALL-AMERICAN BOWL

MAN OF THE YEAR – Ohio State five-star offensive tackle signee Paris Johnson was named the All-American Bowl Man of the Year and the Anthony Munoz Lineman of the Year on Jan. 3.

serve disabled veterans.

The same evening, Johnson was also named the Anthony Munoz Lineman of the Year, given annually to the nation's best offensive or defensive lineman. The award is named after the Hall of Fame offensive lineman who played 13 seasons with the Cincinnati Bengals.

"He's been with us all along," Day said during his Early Signing Period press conference on Dec. 18, referring to Johnson's early and unwavering commitment through the Buckeyes' recent coaching transition. "He helped us in recruiting. He and his mom, Monica, were a huge part of this thing. I owe them everything because they've kind of kept this thing together for us. They've been a huge part of it, and he's going to have an unbelievable career here."

Several Players Include OSU Among Top Schools

The next few months on the recruiting calendar are especially important as prospects from the class of 2021 begin to trim down their list of offers in anticipation of spring official visits.

A handful of top-rated recruits have

already done so – some inconsequential and some very important – including Valrico (Fla.) Armwood four-star athlete Charles Montgomery, who included Ohio State in his top five on Dec. 20 alongside Florida State, Maryland, Nebraska and Penn State. The 5-10, 185-pounder was on campus in an unofficial capacity last November and plans to take an official visit before making his college decision on May 24.

Similarly, Katy (Texas) Tompkins five-star defensive tackle Tummise Adeleye announced a top six of Alabama, Florida, LSU, Ohio State, Oklahoma and Texas A&M on Dec. 24. The nation's third-best defensive end was originally scheduled to make a decision in the weeks thereafter but now plans to take official visits in the spring before announcing his college intentions. It remains to be seen if the Buckeyes will receive one of those official visits, however.

That same afternoon, Washington (D.C.) St. John's four-star defensive tackle Taizse Johnson placed Ohio State in his top six, also listing Alabama, Florida, Maryland, South Carolina and Texas A&M. The 6-1, 290-pounder has never

been to campus but has formed a strong bond with Buckeyes defensive line coach/area recruiter Larry Johnson from afar.

The following day, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Cardinal Gibbons three-star wide receiver Troy Stellato gave Day and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline a Christmas present of sorts, naming Ohio State in his top six alongside Alabama, Clemson, LSU, North Carolina and USC. The Buckeyes have long been considered the favorite in the 6-0, 172-pounder's recruitment following a pair of visits last fall, and he could very well end his recruitment at any given time.

Gaithersburg (Md.) Quince Orchard four-star defensive end Demeioun Robinson, meanwhile, trimmed his list of offers to 13 schools on Jan. 7, listing Ohio State alongside Georgia, Georgia Tech, Kentucky, LSU, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Penn State, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas A&M and Virginia. The 6-3, 220-pounder attended the Buckeyes' win over the Nittany Lions in late November and hopes to visit campus again soon.

Staying in Maryland, Germantown Northwest four-star wide receiver Kaden Prather also dropped a rather extensive top-schools list on Jan. 8, putting Ohio State among the 11 schools competing for his signature. But with the Buckeyes already holding commitments from Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star Marvin Harrison and Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star Jayden Ballard and heavily pursuing Stellato; Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco five-star Beaux Collins; and Steilacoom, Wash., five-star Emeka Egbuka, it's much more likely he ends up with Alabama, Maryland, North Carolina, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Rutgers, South Carolina, Virginia, Virginia Tech or West Virginia instead.

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A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1990

It was still considered early in the 1990 recruiting cycle, but things were beginning to heat up quickly.

Ohio State had two verbal commitments as of Jan. 13 from Hamilton, Ohio, offensive lineman Mike Dully and Pasadena (Calif.) City College linebacker Mick Barsala and hoped to land two dozen more before National Signing Day on Feb. 14.

Among the list of players Ohio State was interested in were a number of top Ohioans, including tailback Robert Smith of Euclid, quarterback Joe Pickens of Cleveland St. Ignatius, quarterback Preston Harrison of Columbus South, quarterback Johnny Mattress of Cincinnati Princeton, tailback Darin Ford of Cambridge, quarterback Jonathan Allen of Cleveland John Adams, wide receiver Joey Galloway of Bellaire, defensive lineman Matt Bonhaus of Cincinnati Elder, defensive lineman Pete Beckman of Chesterland West Geauga, running back Jeff Cothran of Middletown and quarterback Jermaine Richardson of Warren Western Reserve.

All 11 of those players were considered top college prospects by national recruiting expert Tom Lemming.

25 Years Ago – 1995

A winter storm on Jan. 6 stopped some of the nation's top recruits – including All-USA wide receiver Randy Moss of West Virginia – from visiting Ohio State, but the OSU recruiting effort pushed ahead with four more verbal commitments over the weekend, bringing the school's total to 18.

The biggest news of the weekend was the visit of tight end prospect Steve Wisniewski of Eastlake (Ohio) North. Wisniewski, rated the number two prospect in Ohio by Bill Kurelic of The Ohio Football Recruiting News, had committed to Wisconsin in December, but the OSU coaching staff persuaded him to visit the campus.

After that visit, Wisniewski was no longer considering Wisconsin, looking just at Boston College and Ohio State.

Issuing verbal commitments over the big visit weekend were Chris Kirk, a linebacker from Westerville (Ohio) South; Greg See, a linebacker from Radnor (Pa.) Archbishop Carroll; Darren Hester, a linebacker at Dallas Hillcrest; and Mark Willis, a defensive back from Phoenix Community College and a native of the Cleveland area.

20 Years Ago – 2000

Ohio State's football recruiting effort picked up steam in December and early January with three new commitments, bringing the total to 21 in the class of 2000.

Those commitments came from Jacksonville (Fla.) Raines defensive back Bobby Britton; Harrison, N.Y., running back Sam Maldonado and Tampa (Fla.) Leto wide receiver Michael Jenkins.

The Buckeyes figured to be able to sign as many as 26 players in the class of 2000 and still had eyes on a number of uncommitted prospects. Among those key players were Canton (Ohio) McKinley offensive lineman Antonio Hall; Long Beach, N.Y., offensive lineman Shane Olivea; Beaufort, S.C., running back Greg Jones; and Toronto, Ontario, defensive end Nautyn McKay-Loescher.

15 Years Ago – 2005

The first official visit weekend of 2005 was a good one for the Ohio State football team as it secured a verbal commitment from Cleveland Glenville all-purpose athlete Freddie Lenix. But it was almost as notable for who was not on campus as for who was.

Originally scheduled to be among the official visitors for the Jan. 7 weekend was Mission Viejo, Calif., offensive lineman Kevin Bemoll, who had been committed to the Buckeyes since the summer. But an accumulation of allegations and controversies surrounding the program caused Bemoll to rethink his decision, and he called up the coaches in the week leading up to his official visit to voice his concerns and let them know that he would be considering other schools.

When asked if he still considered himself committed to Ohio State, Bemoll said, "As of now, no. It wouldn't be right for me to say that. That wouldn't be fair to the school."

10 Years Ago – 2010

Ohio State netted two more verbal commitments in the weeks leading up to the upcoming National Signing Day, bringing the class of 2010 to 16 members. The two newest members seemed to fit the mold of under-the-radar prospects from the Midwest often targeted by head coach Jim Tressel.

Columbus Marion-Franklin athlete Verlon Reed, a three-star prospect as ranked by Scout.com who also played quarterback for

the Red Devils, offered his commitment to the Buckeyes on Dec. 16.

Then, five days into 2010, Detroit Southeastern defensive tackle Johnathan Hankins spurned his home-state dream school in Ann Arbor, issuing his pledge to Ohio State. Hankins was ranked the No. 52 defensive tackle in the country.

Five Years Ago – 2015

With a single tweet, The Plains (Ohio) Athens four-star quarterback Joey Burrow ended a week of speculation that his OSU commitment may have been in jeopardy.

After meeting with head coach Urban Meyer and new offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Tim Beck on Jan. 15, Burrow posted "Freakin go bucks" to his Twitter account.

There had been rumors that Burrow was unsure of working with Beck after the then-Nebraska assistant didn't show much interest in the QB while with the Huskers. However, there didn't appear to be any lingering issues between Beck and Burrow, the son of a former Nebraska defensive back and brother of two other Huskers players.

"It's been very stressful the last week or so," Burrow said. "Our visit went very well, and I'm happy with everything that went down. I was already sold on Ohio State but just needed to sit down and get to know Coach Beck better and get a feel for him."

One Year Ago – 2019

From sunrise to sunset, early signing day took twists and turns – some expected and others unexpected – as Ohio State inked 15 letters of intent in the 2019 class, headlined by the five-star trio of Austin (Texas) Lake Travis wide receiver Garrett Wilson; Buford, Ga., center Harry Miller; and Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy Orange defensive end Zach Harrison.

Harrison was among two signing day commitments, along with Wake Forest, N.C. three-star defensive tackle Jaden McKenzie.

"I think when you look at this class, some of the things that come to mind are loyalty," head coach Ryan Day said. "Some of the things that come to mind are great families and quality student-athletes. And we're very, very excited about the future as these guys will be a foundation moving forward into the next few years."

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Buckeyes In Midst Of Another January To Forget

The Ohio State men's basketball team has reached nearly the same juncture as it did a year ago but through a different route.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

It was 12 months ago that the Buckeyes endured a five-game losing streak, the longest for the program in 21 years, after a blistering 12-1 record that included a 2-0 Big Ten mark and a No. 14 ranking in the AP poll.

A slump of that nature was not wholly unexpected because head coach Chris Holtmann had repeatedly mentioned that the Buckeyes' stature was inflated by a weak non-conference record. Fast-forward to January 2020 and OSU is once again struggling, but this time it's come as a surprise after a bevy of big-time wins in November and December earned a No. 2 ranking.

A 66-54 loss at Indiana on Jan. 11 was the Buckeyes' fourth in a row and dropped them to 11-5 overall and an ugly 1-4 in the conference.

All this after Ohio State had wowed round-ball experts with a 9-0 start that included blow-out wins over Villanova (76-51) and at North Carolina (74-49) when each was in the top 10.

Even after OSU's first loss at Minnesota (84-71) on Dec. 15, the Buckeyes rebounded six days later to down No. 6 Kentucky (71-65) in Las Vegas.

What followed were ugly losses to No. 22 West Virginia (67-59) in Cleveland, a home loss to Wisconsin (61-57), a defeat at No. 12 Maryland (67-55) and the setback vs. IU.

"Sure, there's some similarities," Holtmann said after the latest loss when asked to compare the losing streaks. "Young guys struggling through January, a little bit of injury issues. I'm sure there's some similarities. I've not spent a whole lot of time looking at the two."

Now that he is in his third season coaching the Buckeyes and has a real feel for the Big Ten, he knows the true challenges lie ahead.

"We don't really know how good you are until you get well into January," Holtmann said. "Teams change and grow. Assumptions are made that are not always accurate."

What the Buckeyes need is a "checkup from the neck up" as former pro wrestler and noted philosopher Booker T was fond of saying. In other words, get your head straight and find some confidence.

"I feel like we had a different energy from the beginning of the season," junior guard C.J. Walker said. "We've got to get that swagger back, and it all starts in practice. We've obviously played a lot of great games against teams, so we know what we're capable of doing if we stay focused for 40 minutes. We know what we have to do in those situations. The Big Ten is hard. Everybody is going to make shots, everybody is going to come to play."

Where's The Blame?

When things were going well, the Buckeyes were a smooth, efficient scoring machine that hit shots from everywhere, found the open man, played clean with possessions and was tough defensively.

The Buckeyes averaged 79.2 points per game through the first 12 games before facing West Virginia and had not allowed more than 60 points in the first eight.

In the past four outings, they've averaged 56.3 points and have had some real clunkers along the way. In the second half vs. West Virginia, the Buckeyes let a six-point halftime lead slip away by scoring 22 points while making 5 of 24 (20.8 percent) from the floor and committing 12 turnovers.

OSU scored 20 second-half points on 6-of-28 shooting (21.4 percent) vs. Indiana and hit 5 of 27 (18.5 percent) three-pointers against Maryland. The Buckeyes during the losing streak are averaging 16.5 turnovers, 9.5 assists and are making 33.6 percent of field goals, 28.9 percent from the arc and 70.7 percent from the free-throw line.

"It's a work in progress right now," Holtmann said. "We definitely have some offensive issues that we have to work out. Some of it were concerns we had going into the season about were we going to take the next step in terms of our efficiency offensively,

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

in particular our perimeters.

"So, it's not a complete surprise to me. I thought we had made some improvements. Obviously, we've got to do a better job coaching them to make sure we are making improvements."

The guard play has come under scrutiny.

Walker, sophomores Luther Muhammad and Duane Washington and freshman D.J. Carton have been struggling.

"They're capable of making some open shots," Holtmann said prior to the Indiana game. "They've got to make some open shots, and they've got to stay aggressive. I think it's been different in different situations."

"In (Washington's) case, it's been a little bit more a shot selection that has created some inefficiency for him. Luther and C.J., maybe not as much. But they need to stay confident and take good ones."

Washington was in an 8-for-30 slump (26.7 percent) from the floor heading to Bloomington, Ind., and the Buckeyes' second-leading scorer (11.4) didn't take a shot and played only seven minutes while apparently being benched for his lax defense.

Carton looked unstoppable with 15 points vs. Kentucky but has made 10 of 30 shots (33.3 percent) since with nine assists and 19 turnovers, including seven giveaways vs. the Hoosiers.

"I think we've got to try and get him in better positions," Holtmann said. "As coaches, as with all of our guys, we have to figure out the best way we can help our guys. Some of it we have to play through."

Turning It Around

The Buckeyes rebounded from last season's losing streak to make the NCAA Tournament for a second straight season. That experience will help them this season as they rely on senior forward Andre Wesson and junior forwards Kyle Young and Kaleb Wesson to guide them.

It may be no coincidence that the tailspins both seasons occurred in part with Young out of the lineup. Young sustained a stress fracture in his right leg in January 2019 and was hampered the rest of the season.

He was healthy this season until he had his appendix removed after playing against West Virginia. Young missed the next two games and returned against Indiana to have a point and three rebounds in 22 minutes.

"It was great of him to come back in two weeks," Holtmann said. "It's pretty impressive. He just looked a little rusty out there."

Andre Wesson had a team-high 15 points plus seven rebounds vs. IU.

"Our senior was terrific today, as he's been, but we've got to get more (offense) across the board," Holtmann said afterward.

That includes Kaleb Wesson, who was leading OSU with 14.5 points per games through Jan. 11 but had only 11 vs. Indiana. He shed about 35 pounds in the offseason, and the extra mobility increased his range, enabling him to make 23 of 54 (42.6 percent) from three.

"He's made himself into a really complete player," Wisconsin coach Greg Gard said. "He's changed his body a lot. You can tell that from his endurance and his stamina. He's added the three-point shot. He's a tough cover. He's one of the better big men in the country."

There's Hope

Don't fret, yet, Buckeye fans. The Big Ten looks like it will be wide open and unpredictable.

"We feel like (OSU) has all the pieces to make a deep run in March," Indiana coach Archie Miller said. "Those guys will find their way back. This league is just too impossible to go through and not have some ups and downs."

Drawing A Crowd

The Buckeyes' early play has drawn a lot of interest, and the program announced Dec. 30 that five of the remaining nine conference games were sellouts at Value City Arena.

The first was 19,049 for Wisconsin on Jan. 3. The others are Indiana (Feb. 1), Purdue (Feb. 15), Maryland (Feb. 23) and Michigan (March 1). There were a limited number of tickets available for Nebraska (Jan. 14), Minnesota (Jan. 23), Rutgers (Feb. 12) and Illinois (March 5).

"I love it," Holtmann said. "I think our players appreciate it, and we hope that we can earn the right for that to continue and to grow even more with these last remaining games that aren't sold out."



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OSU Knocks Off Kentucky In CBS Sports Classic

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The No. 5 Ohio State men's basketball team defeated No. 6 Kentucky 71-65 in the CBS Sports Classic at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas on Dec. 21.

In a neutral-site showdown between two of the nation's top teams, the Buckeyes (11-1) showed why they belonged in the conversation of the best of the best.

Junior big man Kaleb Wesson and junior forward Kyle Young set the tone for the Scarlet and Gray, excelling with flawless shooting in the first half, shooting a combined 5 of 5 from the floor and 6 of 6 from the line in the first 20 minutes. Wesson and Young finished the game with 10 points and eight rebounds, and 10 points and six boards, respectively.

"Poised possessions – I feel like we just came out and we tried to get the best shot on every possession," Wesson said. "I feel like that helped us get the win today."

Through the first 27:17 of the Buckeyes' matchup with Kentucky (8-3), the biggest lead held by either team was just four points. Freshman forward E.J. Liddell finished on a feed from senior wing Andre Wesson to go up five, 49-44, with 12:43 remaining, and freshman guard D.J. Carton pushed the lead to seven with a pair of free throws with 10:47 left.

"The counterpunches, teams going back and forth for a 40-minute grind is what we try to talk about at the beginning of the game," Kaleb Wesson said. "And I feel like we went out there with that mind-set and that mentality and came out with a win."

The Wildcats cut that lead to 55-54 with 6:46 to play, but the Buckeyes held off their final push with strong play from the guard trio of Carton, sophomore Luther Muhammad and junior C.J. Walker down the stretch.

"We know what kind of player D.J. is," Young said. "We know what he can bring to us. We know he was able to stay poised tonight, make some big plays for us down the stretch, and we're just happy to have him out there."

Carton finished with 15 points on 5-of-6 shooting along with five rebounds, two assists, two blocks and one steal, while Walker added nine points and five assists and Muhammad posted seven points and two steals.

The No. 5 vs. No. 6 showdown proved to be an extremely even matchup, with Ohio State taking a narrow 37-36 lead into halftime.

"They had great competitive spirit," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said of Kentucky. "Our guys certainly did as well, and they responded to every minute. I think about the three in the first half that Andre Wesson hit (to break a 31-31 tie with 1:56 before the half), where the momentum of the game could have gotten away a little bit, maybe if they had gone up a point or two."

"There were a lot of those plays where we were able to stymie their momentum just enough. The game had a really good life and competitiveness to it."

In the back-and-forth first half, the Buckeyes outshot the Wildcats 52.2 percent (12 of 23) to 50.0 percent (15 of 30) from the field, while both teams went 23.1 percent (3 of 13) from distance. Ohio State committed nine turnovers to

Kentucky's six, but the Scarlet and Gray knocked down 10 of 12 free throws (83.3 percent) while the Wildcats only made 3 of 4 (75.0).

Kentucky's 6-9 forward, Nate Sestina, kept Kentucky in the game all evening by hitting 5 of 8 three-pointers for 17 points. Sestina also played well against the Buckeyes last year for Bucknell before he transferred, hitting two triples and scoring 10 points in 13 minutes.

"He's a great player," Young said of Sestina. "We've played him previously, so we knew what his game was about. We knew he's a player who made big shots."

Overall, Ohio State put 50.0 percent (22 of 44) of its shots through the hoop and connected on 31.6 percent of triples (6 of 19). Kentucky knocked down 42.4 percent (25 of 59) of its field-goal attempts and 30.4 percent (7 of 23) of three-pointers.

The Buckeyes also won the battle of the boards, outrebounding the Wildcats 33-25. Ohio State held a big advantage at the free-throw line, making 21 of 27 attempts (77.8), while Kentucky went 8 for 13 (61.5) at the charity stripe.

Buckeyes Fall To Mountaineers In Cleveland Classic

Ohio State did not hold the nation's No. 2 ranking for long, dropping its first and only game in that spot, 67-59, to No. 22 West Virginia (11-1) in front of 16,781 spectators at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse on Dec. 29.

"Coming in, I thought they were probably the best team we were playing right now in the nonconference," Holtmann said, "just because of how they had been playing. So give them credit. First and foremost, you've got to give them credit. We've got to shore up some things and get much better."

Carton connected on a triple with 11:49 left in the game to give Ohio State a 43-41 lead, but the Mountaineers held Ohio State (11-2) without a field goal for more than seven minutes until Andre Wesson hit a clutch three-pointer to put the Buckeyes up 54-53 with 4:40 on the clock. Eight makes at the free-throw line kept Ohio State close in that span before Wesson came off a solid screen from his brother, Kaleb, and drained the go-ahead shot from deep.

However, Ohio State floundered down the stretch, committing two turnovers before scoring another point and giving the ball away three times in the final 2:06.

"We took three poor shots in the last four-minute stretch," Holtmann said. "There was a part where I thought about calling a timeout in a specific situation, but I think as a coach there is part of your thinking where I want to see how our guys respond in this moment when they're forced to make plays in the last few minutes. What we learned is we've got to coach them better and we've got to be better offensively and defensively in those situations because our quality of shot was poor after Andre's open three."

"We really did not get a quality shot until Kaleb's open three (with 51 seconds left to cut WVU's lead to 61-57), which was another set call from the bench."

The Scarlet and Gray coughed the ball up 22 times, while forcing 17 West Virginia turnovers, and the Mountaineers outscored them 22-10 off turnovers.

The Buckeyes hit six of their first eight

Ohio State 71, Kentucky 65

Dec. 21, 2019												
T-Mobile Arena • Las Vegas, Nev.												
				1		2		F				
Ohio State (11-1)		37		34		71						
Kentucky (8-3)		36		29		65						
Ohio State		Total FG FT		Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
A. Wesson	30	1-4	0-1	1-1	3	4						
Young	33	3-4	4-4	1-5	1	1	10					
K. Wesson	23	2-6	5-7	2-6	2	5	10					
Muhammad	27	3-6	0-0	0-1	2	1	7					
Walker	28	3-4	2-4	1-1	5	2	9					
Carton	28	5-6	4-4	0-5	2	1	15					
Washington	14	2-7	3-4	0-1	0	1	8					
Liddell	17	3-7	3-3	1-4	0	1	9					
Totals	200	22-44	21-27	7-26	15	16	71					
Percentages: FG: 50%. FT: 77.8%. 3-point goals: 6-19 (A. Wesson 1-2, Young 0-1, K. Wesson 1-2, Muhammad 1-4, Walker 1-2, Carton 1-2, Washington 1-5, Liddell 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 7 (A. Wesson 2, Carton 2, Young, K. Wesson, Washington). Turnovers: 14 (A. Wesson 3, K. Wesson 2, Muhammad 2, Walker 2, Washington 2, Young, Carton, Liddell). Steals: 5 (Muhammad 2, Young, Walker, Carton).												
Kentucky		Total FG FT		Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Whitney	10	1-3	0-1	1-0	0	1	2					
Richards	12	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	4	2					
Montgomery	28	2-4	0-0	2-3	1	3	4					
Hagans	37	2-4	0-0	2-3	9	2	14					
Maxey	34	5-13	4-6	0-6	3	5	15					
Sestina	32	6-11	0-0	3-1	1	4	17					
Quickley	30	4-11	0-0	1-2	2	3	9					
Juzang	8	1-3	0-0	0-3	0	3	2					
Brooks	9	0-3	0-0	1-0	1	0	0					
Totals	200	25-59	8-13	9-16	17	25	65					
Percentages: FG: 42.4%. FT: 61.5%. 3-point goals: 7-23 (Whitney 0-1, Hagans 0-2, Maxey 1-6, Sestina 5-8, Quickley 1-5, Juzang 0-1). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 3 (Brooks 2, Richards). Turnovers: 11 (Maxey 3, Richards 2, Hagans 2, Whitney, Quickley, Brooks, TEAM). Steals: 7 (Hagans 3, Richards 2, Maxey, Quickley). Officials: Shows, Harris, Curry. Attendance: 18,800.												

shots but shot poorly throughout the contest, connecting on just 31.3 percent of their field-goal attempts (15 of 48) and 8 of 24 tries (33.3 percent) from beyond the arc.

"It's unique, playing a team that tries to be this disruptive," Holtmann said. "It's really unique. We tried obviously to do some things to prepare our guys for their length and size and physicality. They throw a lot of bodies at you, and they really don't care if they foul."

The Mountaineers entered Cleveland shooting just 31.1 percent from distance but knocked down 8 of 20 three-pointers (40.0 percent) to help propel them to victory over Ohio State.

West Virginia 67, Ohio State 59

Dec. 29, 2019												
Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse • Cleveland, Ohio												
		1		2		F						
West Virginia (11-1)		31		36		67						
Ohio State (11-2)		37		22		59						
West Virginia		Total FG FT		Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Culver	24	3-5	1-2	1-9	0	4	7					
McCabe	9	0-2	4-4	0-1	0	0	4					
Haley	17	2-4	1-4	2-3	3	2	5					
Matthews	28	2-8	2-3	1-3	0	3	6					
Tshiebwe	8	0-1	0-0	1-2	0	4	0					
Knapper	8	2-4	0-0	0-1	0	1	5					
Osabuohien	31	1-7	1-3	1-1	3	3	3					
McBride	25	6-12	6-8	1-1	2	1	21					
Sherman	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Harler	24	4-6	0-0	0-0	0	0	10					
McNeil	12	2-4	0-0	0-0	0	0	6					
Routt	11	0-0	0-1	0-2	0	5	0					
Totals	200	22-54	15-25	8-26	8	24	67					
Percentages: FG: 40.7%. FT: 60%. 3-point goals: 8-20 (McCabe 0-2, Hsley 0-1, Matthews 0-3, Knapper 1-1, McBride 3-4, Sherman 0-1, Harler 2-4, McNeil 2-4). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 5 (Culver, Matthews, Tshiebwe, Osabuohien, Harler). Turnovers: 17 (Haley 4, Culver 3, Knapper 2, McBride 2, Matthews, Tshiebwe, Osabuohien, Sherman, Routt, TEAM). Steals: 7 (Osabuohien 3, Haley, Tshiebwe, Knapper, McBride).												
Ohio State		Total FG FT		Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Muhammad	28	2-9	5-6	0-1	3	1	10					
Walker	32	4-7	0-0	0-4	1	3	10					
A. Wesson	20	1-3	0-0	1-2	0	5	3					
Young	22	1-4	0-2	5-6	0	3	2					
K. Wesson	36	3-11	10-15	2-7	1	3	17					
Gaffney	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Carton	22	1-5	0-0	1-3	2	3	3					
Washington	21	3-8	4-4	1-0	1	4	12					
Liddell	18	0-1	2-2	1-3	2	3	2					
Totals	200	15-48	21-29	12-29	10	25	59					
Percentages: FG: 31.3%. FT: 72.4%. 3-point goals: 8-24 (Muhammad 1-5, Walker 2-3, A. Wesson 1-3, Young 0-1, K. Wesson 1-4, Carton 1-2, Washington 2-5, Liddell 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 2 (Muhammad, Liddell). Turnovers: 22 (Carton 5, Walker 4, A. Wesson 4, K. Wesson 4, Liddell 2, Young, Washington, TEAM). Steals: 6 (Walker 2, Washington 2, Muhammad, Carton). Officials: Warner, Smith, Wells. Attendance: 16,781.												

The Buckeyes led 37-31 at halftime, with Walker (10), Muhammad (9), Duane Washington Jr. (8) and Kaleb Wesson (8) carrying the load offensively.

Ohio State Suffers Fourth Straight Defeat At IU

Continued From Page 33

days, snagged a game-high 11 boards, though he scored just two points.

The Mountaineers responded well to the six-point halftime deficit, outscoring Ohio State 21-10 to open the final frame and taking a 52-47 lead.

Despite the tough loss, Holtmann indicated his team could learn from being bested by a formidable foe.

"I know tickets sold more than we even anticipated," Holtmann said. "West Virginia, they always draw very well and they travel, but we had a lot of Buckeyes there, too. It was really loud. I felt like it's one of those second-weekend NCAA Tournament feels where there's a lot at stake and a lot on the line. You're really angry and frustrated after the loss, but a takeaway is you put yourself out there against a good team after Christmas and that's a good thing.

"You hope we can take it and learn from it and move forward," Holtmann continued. "We play a really challenging nonconference, but we all know the Big Ten's the best league in the country. It's not going to get any easier, starting (Jan. 3 against Wisconsin)."

Bucks Battle Back But Lose To Badgers

The No. 5 Ohio State men's basketball team fell to Wisconsin 61-57 in front of 19,049 fans at Value City Arena on Jan. 3.

Kaleb Wesson led the way for the Scarlet and Gray with 22 points and 13 rebounds on 7-of-10 shooting and hitting 7 of 9 free throws.

Holtmann was asked about the team's inability to play well offensively outside of Wesson.

"OK, spotty at times," Holtmann said of the offense. "I'm concerned about our turnovers, our passing, which was again an issue, but confident we've got guys that can step up and not be so reliant on Kaleb. But he generated a lot on offense tonight."

After a shaky first half which left them

trailing 29-25, Ohio State (11-3, 1-2) found its groove in the second half. The Buckeyes opened the second frame on a 13-2 run, sparked by triples from Washington and Andre Wesson to start the spurt.

The rally gave the Scarlet and Gray a seven-point lead, 38-31, but the visitors did not go away, taking a 52-51 lead on a bucket by Nate Reuvers and extending that edge to 55-51 with 1:08 left when Brevin Pritzl hit a three.

Washington kept the Buckeyes alive with a three-pointer to cut the Badger lead to one with 57 seconds remaining. Wisconsin (9-5, 2-1) was able to hold off Ohio State in the end, however, hitting all six of its free throws before Washington hit a triple at the buzzer.

"We've got to get back in the gym and practice these situations," Kaleb Wesson said. "Things like this come down to preparation and older guys keeping poise and everything like that. I feel like tonight they took us out of some of our stuff and credit to them, they're a good team."

Kaleb Wesson began the game with seven unanswered points, including an and-one and strong left-handed finish over former Buckeye big man Micah Potter.

Ohio State took a 15-9 lead but gave it up on back-to-back Badger three-pointers. After the game was tied at 15, the Buckeyes and Badgers battled back and forth with the home team leading 25-21 with 1:33 until halftime. Then, the visitors knocked down consecutive shots from beyond the arc to cap off an 8-0 run and take the four-point lead into halftime.

Washington re-entered the starting lineup in Young's (appendix) absence. The second-year guard out of Los Angeles Sierra Canyon struggled, shooting just 2 of 10 in the first half. Despite the rough start, Washington finished with 18 points on 6-of-19 shooting, including 4 of 10 from deep.

Holtmann was asked about how the team filled in for Young.

"Given the fact that (freshman forward Tyler Wahl) had five offensive rebounds and we had trouble matching up with him, I'm sure he would have helped,"

Wisconsin 61, Ohio State 57

Jan. 3, 2020

Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio

		1	2	F						
Wisconsin (9-5, 2-1)		29	32	61						
Ohio State (11-3, 1-2)		25	32	57						
Wisconsin	Total FG FT	Reb.								
	Min. M-A M-A	O-D A PF Pts.								
Ford	17 2-4 0-0	0-1 1 1 5								
Reuvers	27 3-12 10-12	4-5 1 3 17								
Trice	31 2-10 2-2	0-3 2 3 6								
King	22 6-7 0-0	0-0 0 0 13								
Davison	28 0-4 0-0	0-5 1 2 0								
Pritzl	29 3-8 1-2	1-2 0 3 9								
Wahl	25 2-5 0-0	5-2 2 2 4								
Potter	11 2-4 0-0	0-3 0 2 4								
Anderson	10 1-2 0-0	0-1 1 0 3								
Totals	200 21-56 13-16	12-22 8 16 61								
Percentages: FG: 37.5%. FT: 81.3%. 3-point goals: 6-23 (Ford 1-3, Reuvers 1-4, Trice 0-4, King 1-1, Davison 0-2, Pritzl 2-5, Wahl 0-1, Potter 0-1, Anderson 1-2). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 10 (Reuvers 2, Potter 2, TEAM 2, Trice, King, Davison, Wahl). Steals: 5 (Wahl 3, Davison, Pritzl).										
Ohio State	Total FG FT	Reb.								
	Min. M-A M-A	O-D A PF Pts.								
A. Wesson	32 3-6 2-2	2-3 3 4 9								
K. Wesson	33 7-10 7-9	3-10 2 4 22								
Muhammad	33 1-4 0-0	0-2 0 1 2								
Washington	34 6-19 2-2	0-3 0 2 18								
Walker	32 2-5 0-0	0-4 1 2 4								
Carton	21 0-1 0-2	0-1 1 0 0								
Ahrens	2 0-1 0-0	1-0 0 0 0								
Liddell	13 0-1 2-2	0-0 1 4 2								
Totals	200 19-47 13-17	8-24 8 17 57								
Percentages: FG: 40.4%. FT: 76.5%. 3-point goals: 6-20 (A. Wesson 1-2, K. Wesson 1-3, Muhammad 0-3, Washington 4-10, Ahrens 0-1, Liddell 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 1 (K. Wesson). Turnovers: 14 (Carton 4, A. Wesson 2, K. Wesson 2, Muhammad 2, Washington, Walker, Ahrens, Liddell). Steals: 4 (Muhammad 2, K. Wesson, Carton). Officials: Green, Oglesby, Wymer. Attendance: 19,049.										

Holtmann said of Young. "But listen, we've got good enough players to limit that, and we've got to coach them to be better and play better."

The Buckeyes struggled offensively against the Badgers in the first half, shooting just 36.0 percent (9 of 25) from the field and 10 percent (1 of 10) from three-point range. Their defense kept them in the game, though, holding Wisconsin to just 38.5 percent shooting (10 of 26) through the first 20 minutes.

Potter finished with four points and three rebounds in 11 minutes for Wisconsin, while Reuvers led the team with 17 points and nine boards on 3-of-12 shooting and 10 of 12 from the charity stripe.

Overall, Ohio State shot just 40.4 percent (19 of 47) from the floor and 30.0 percent (6 of 20) from distance, while holding Wisconsin to 37.5 percent (21 of 56) and 26.1 percent (6 of 23) respectively.

A noticeably distressed Holtmann was asked about dropping consecutive losses to West Virginia and Wisconsin and what the Buckeyes need to do to get back on track.

"Two good teams, league play. It's incumbent upon us as coaches and players to figure it out and get better with it," Holtmann said. "Obviously, nobody likes this feeling."

OSU Suffers Third Straight Loss, Stifled By Maryland

The No. 11 Buckeyes suffered their third straight loss, 67-55 against No. 12 Maryland in front of 16,192 fans at the Xfinity Center in College Park, Md., on Jan. 7.

"It was one of those games where we just struggled making shots," Holtmann said. "That's the biggest thing coming from this game. We had some decent looks by some guys and some clean threes that we'll make. We just did not make them tonight."

Maryland 67, Ohio State 55

Jan. 7, 2020												
XFINITY Center • College Park, Md.												
					1	2	F					
Ohio State (11-4, 1-3)					22	33	55					
Maryland (13-2, 3-1)					28	39	67					
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
A. Wesson	35	6-11	0-0	4-1	2	2	14					
K. Wesson	31	5-13	4-5	3-6	3	4	15					
Muhammad	24	0-6	0-0	0-3	2	1	0					
Carton	29	6-15	0-0	0-1	3	2	14					
Washington	30	2-11	3-3	1-3	1	2	7					
Gaffney	5	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	3	0					
Ahrens	5	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Walker	25	1-6	1-2	1-4	1	5	3					
Liddell	16	1-4	0-0	2-2	0	3	2					
Totals	200	21-67	8-10	17-22	22	55						
Percentages: FG: 31.3%. FT: 80%. 3-point goals: 5-27 (A. Wesson 2-3, K. Wesson 1-4, Muhammad 0-6, Carton 2-4, Washington 0-5, Ahrens 0-1, Walker 0-4). Team rebounds: 8. Blocked shots: 4 (A. Wesson, Carton, Gaffney, Liddell). Turnovers: 14 (K. Wesson 4, Carton 3, Washington 3, Gaffney 2, Muhammad, Ahrens). Steals: 6 (A. Wesson 2, K. Wesson 2, Muhammad, Walker).												
Maryland	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Scott	33	3-5	0-0	2-3	2	1	7					
Smith	35	4-9	1-2	0-7	0	3	11					
Cowan	35	4-9	10-12	0-6	2	1	20					
Wiggins	32	3-6	1-3	1-3	2	2	7					
Morsell	24	4-7	1-2	0-3	3	4	10					
Tomaic	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0					
Lindo	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Ayala	23	2-7	4-5	1-3	4	1	9					
Smith	9	1-3	0-0	0-1	0	0	3					
Marial	4	0-0	0-0	1-1	0	1	0					
Totals	200	21-46	17-24	6-30	13	16	67					
Percentages: FG: 45.7%. FT: 70.8%. 3-point goals: 8-18 (Scott 1-1, Smith 2-2, Cowan 2-5, Wiggins 0-1, Morsell 1-1, Ayala 1-6, Smith 1-2). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 5 (Smith 2, Marial 2, Lindo). Turnovers: 16 (Cowan 3, Wiggins 3, Lindo 3, Morsell 2, Marial 2, Scott, Smith, Lindo). Steals: 3 (Morsell 2, Wiggins).												
Officials: Boroski, Walton, Wymer. Attendance: 16,192.												

Despite the loss, Andre Wesson played exceptionally with 14 points, five rebounds and two assists with stellar defense, including two steals and one block, while Kaleb Wesson added 15 points, nine boards, three assists and two steals.

Carton made his first career start with Walker being limited to due to illness and scored 14 points while dishing out three assists.

After the Buckeyes trailed 28-22 at the break, Andre Wesson trimmed Maryland's lead to two, 31-29, with a layup on a feed from his brother just 1:45 into the second half. Less than a minute later, Holtmann was hit with a technical foul, and an ensuing layup pushed the Terrapins' lead to seven.

After the Andre Wesson layup, Ohio State (11-4, 1-3) did not make another field goal for more than six minutes, with a pair of foul shots from Kaleb Wesson and a technical free throw by Washington the visitors' only points until Washington scored on a layup to pull the Buckeyes to 41-34 at the 11:59 mark.

"We had a stretch there where they had three or four empty possessions," Holtmann said, "but we could not get enough conversion at the other end where we could get it down to a one-possession game."

The Terrapins (13-2, 3-1) were able to hold off the Buckeyes at home, keeping their lead at seven or more points and extending their perfect start to the season in the Xfinity Center.

"They're really good," Holtmann said of the Terrapins. "Their length provides, obviously, a lot of problems, and it's not just the length inside – obviously (sophomore forward) Jalen Smith (6-10, 225). And (Maryland head coach) Mark (Turgeon) does a really good job. They're disciplined,



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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

they don't foul. I've always felt like Mark's teams are really smart in how they defend you. Even their young guys make a lot of smart plays. He's got terrific length, but he and his coaching staff deserve some credit for that."

Ohio State opened the game on an 8-0 run with back-to-back three-pointers by Kaleb and Andre Wesson on Carton assists and a Kaleb Wesson bucket in the paint.

"We did make a couple threes in that stretch, and we defended them well," Holtmann said. "They have some lulls in their offense, too. As gifted as they are, they have some stretches where they can struggle to score. We were able to jump out to a little bit of a lead there early."

Maryland scored its first point on a free throw by sophomore guard Eric Ayala at 14:32 and did not hit a field goal until a three-pointer by Smith 6:01 into the game.

The Terrapins recovered from the slow start with what ultimately became a 12-3 run to take a one-point lead over the Buckeyes, 12-11, sparked by six points from Ayala.

The Big Ten opponents battled through an ugly first half, which reared its head during a 33-second stretch when Ohio State committed three turnovers and Maryland gave it back twice in a two-point game. The Buckeyes did not commit a turnover in the game's first 8:25, then gifted the Terps with eight free possessions in the next 6:20.

Carton made back-to-back layups around a pair of foul shots from Maryland senior guard Anthony Cowan to make it 19-17 Terps before Smith and Cowan knocked down consecutive triples to push the lead to eight points with 3:22 left in the first frame. The Buckeyes did not get closer than five before the break.

Holtmann liked what he saw out of Carton in his first start at Ohio State, filling in for the typical starter Walker.

"He was really sick yesterday, so that was the reason that D.J. started," Holtmann said of why Carton started over Walker. "Eventually we'll go back to our traditional lineup, we'll see. I like the idea of D.J. seeing the game a little bit. He did some great things tonight, particularly after that first stint. He came back in and was aggressive and ran the team well in a game like this."

Maryland outshot Ohio State in the first half, 40.0 percent (8 of 20) to 29.0 percent (9 of 31) from the floor and 63.6 percent (7 of 11) to 23.1 percent (3 of 13) from beyond the arc.

Cowan led Maryland to victory, scoring 20 points with six boards. Smith controlled the paint, posting 11 points and seven boards with two blocks and solid defense against Kaleb Wesson.

Overall, Ohio State shot just 31.3 percent (21 of 67) and 18.5 percent (5 of 27) from beyond the arc. The Terrapins hit 45.7 percent (21 of 46) of their shots and 44.4 percent of their triples (8 of 18).

Young missed his second straight game while continuing to recover from an appendectomy.

Buckeyes Drop 4th Straight In Road Loss To Hoosiers

Ohio State dropped its fourth straight contest, 66-54, to Indiana in front of 15,456 fans at Assembly Hall in Bloomington, Ind., on Jan. 11.

"That was a tough second half for us," Holtmann said. "Give Indiana credit for making timely shots and really defending well. I want to begin by giving them credit here first, and we've got to find a way to figure some things out here quickly."

The Buckeyes failed to score through the first 6:05 of the second half, surrendering an 8-0 run which gave the Hoosiers a 39-34 lead. Andre Wesson connected on a three-pointer at the end of the shot clock to end the drought.

A Carton triple gave the Scarlet and Gray a 45-43 lead with 10:24 left, but the Hoosiers responded with a 10-0 run to seize the momentum and propel them to victory.

"Credit to them, they're a good team," Kaleb Wesson said. "They got disruptive in the second half and took us out of some of our stuff and made us turn the ball over."

Indiana senior guard Devonte Green led the Hoosiers with 19 points and five rebounds on 5-of-8 shooting, while sophomore guard Rob Phinisee added 13 points and seven boards.

Despite the loss, Andre Wesson played well for Ohio State, leading the team with 15 points on 5-of-9 shooting and adding seven rebounds. Kaleb Wesson struggled from the floor (3 of 11) but pitched in a double-double effort with 11 points and 10 boards.

"Our senior was terrific today, as he's been," Holtmann said of Andre Wesson, "but we've got to get more (offense) across the board."

Indiana started strong at home with a 5-0 lead, which the Hoosiers pushed to 13-5 on back-to-back Phinisee three-pointers.

Andre Wesson responded with a 5-0 run by himself to cut Indiana's lead to three. After another Hoosier bucket, Carton cut the lead to 15-13 with a three-pointer.

After Ohio State made it a two-point game, the Hoosiers fired off a 10-3 run, and it appeared as though the game could get away from the Buckeyes in the first half.

However, Andre Wesson changed the course of the game with an exceptional play. With his brother, Kaleb, looking to make a pass off the block, Andre cut into the lane, but the pass was intercepted.

Andre sprinted down the floor and caught Phinisee from behind, blocking his shot into his teammate Walker's hands. Then, Andre dashed back down the court, trailing Walker, who missed a layup, where Andre grabbed it off the rim and dunked it for a much-needed Buckeye basket that made it 25-18 with 8:10 left in the half.

The put-back dunk sparked a 15-1 stretch for the visitors and a 31-26 lead at the 3:32 mark.

"I'm not trying to lose four in a row," Andre Wesson said of his effort. "That's it. This is my last year. I'm not trying to lose four in a row. That's the approach I came in with."

Stiff defense by Ohio State held Indiana to only one made field goal in the final 12:45 of the first half, and it was a put-back on a missed free throw with 9:57 left. The Hoosiers were able to hit 7 of 14 foul shots in that span, however, tying the game at 31 on a pair by Jerome Hunter before Kaleb Wesson knocked down a triple with 37 seconds left for a 34-31 OSU halftime lead.

The Hoosiers entered the game No. 290 in three-point percentage at 30.2 percent. They started red-hot from distance against the Buckeyes, however, hitting four of their first five triples. Indiana finished the game 6 of 12 from deep.

In the first half, Ohio State outshot Indiana from the field (45.8 to 32.1 percent) and three-point line (58.3 to 50.0 percent), while hitting 7 of 12 triples compared to 4 of 8 from the Hoosiers.

But the Buckeyes turned it over eight times in the first frame, while Indiana coughed it up only four times. Although Ohio State was much more efficient on free throws (83.3 to 52.9 percent) during the game's first 20 minutes, it made only 5 of 6 while the Hoosiers hit 9 of 17.

Ohio State was completely outplayed in the second half, however, shooting just 21.4 percent from the field (6 of 28) and 14.3 percent (2 of 14) from beyond the arc.

Indiana 66, Ohio State 54

Jan. 11, 2020												
Assembly Hall • Bloomington, Ind.												
		1	2	F								
Ohio State (11-5, 1-4)		34	20	54								
Indiana (13-3, 3-2)		31	35	66								
Ohio State	Total FG	FT	Reb.									
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
A. Wesson	37	5-9	2-2	2-5	2	1	15					
Young	22	0-2	1-3	1-2	0	2	1					
K. Wesson	35	3-11	3-6	3-7	1	3	11					
Washington	7	0-0	2-2	0-1	0	0	2					
Walker	28	3-11	0-0	0-4	2	4	7					
Gaffney	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Muhammad	19	1-6	0-0	0-1	0	5	3					
Carton	29	3-9	2-2	1-0	3	4	10					
Ahrens	3	1-3	0-0	1-0	0	1	2					
Liddell	17	1-1	1-4	0-2	0	4	3					
Totals	200	17-52	11-19	10-26	8	24	54					
Percentages: FG: 32.7%. FT: 57.9%. 3-point goals: 9-26 (A. Wesson 3-6, K. Wesson 2-4, Walker 1-6, Muhammad 1-4, Carton 2-4, Ahrens 0-2). Team rebounds: 6. Blocked shots: 3 (A. Wesson, Young, Liddell). Turnovers: 16 (Carton 7, K. Wesson 4, A. Wesson, Young, Muhammad, Liddell, TEAM). Steals: 3 (Walker 2, Carton).												
Indiana	Total FG	FT	Reb.									
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Smith	30	2-11	2-4	1-1	3	1	6					
Jackson-Davis	28	1-3	4-6	1-2	2	4	6					
Brunk	26	3-5	1-2	1-4	1	4	7					
Durham	17	1-2	1-4	0-3	1	3	3					
Phinisee	29	5-12	0-2	0-7	1	3	13					
Franklin	5	1-3	0-1	0-0	0	1	2					
Green	30	5-8	7-11	1-4	1	0	19					
Davis	11	1-3	0-0	0-3	0	1	2					
Hunter	19	0-1	5-6	0-1	1	1	5					
Thompson	5	1-1	0-0	0-2	0	1	3					
Totals	200	20-49	20-36	8-27	10	19	66					
Percentages: FG: 40.8%. FT: 55.6%. 3-point goals: 6-12 (Smith 0-2, Phinisee 3-4, Franklin 0-1, Green 2-3, Hunter 0-1, Thompson 1-1). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 4 (Jackson-Davis 2, Phinisee, Thompson). Turnovers: 11 (Durham 4, Jackson-Davis 2, Davis 2, Brunk, Phinisee, TEAM). Steals: 11 (Phinisee 4, Smith 2, Durham 2, Jackson-Davis, Brunk, Davis). Officials: Curry, Green, Sciroto. Attendance: 15,456.												

Meanwhile, the Hoosiers hit 52.4 percent (11 of 21) of their second-half attempts, including 2 of 4 triples.

After an 11-1 start and early-season wins against Villanova and Kentucky, the Scarlet and Gray continued their losing skid with their fourth Big Ten loss.

"It's a work in progress right now," Holtmann said. "We definitely have some offensive issues that we have to work out."
















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Fixing Inconsistency Is Buckeyes' Top Priority

The Ohio State women's basketball team has already picked up a pair of marquee wins against then-No. 2 Louisville and No. 24 Minnesota. But the Buckeyes have also had their share of résumé-crushing losses with home defeats to Ohio and Purdue.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

This inconsistency has found ways to both help and harm Ohio State early on in the season, something that junior guard Braxtin Miller, the only player with two years of prior experience, believes comes down to figuring out the little things.

"We just try to say that we need to stay disciplined to what we know how to do and execute those things because we can be really inconsistent," Miller said. "We need to be more consistent about the things we control, maybe not always shots and things like that, but our defense, effort, getting back and stuff like that."

"We work really hard in practice, and we just have to keep getting better to be more disciplined."

Miller has had her personal struggles shooting, making only one of her past 29 three-point attempts before connecting on a three against Michigan on Jan. 9. The slump had dropped her to sixth on the team in scoring with 7.2 points per game on a team-low 32.1-percent shooting.

"I'm just trying to keep my confidence up,"

Miller said ahead of the Michigan matchup. "I think my confidence can be a really big factor. So just keep confidence and keep working on my shot, and hopefully it will come back at some point, but in the meantime, just try to do other things for my team that will help us win."

Staying disciplined may be just one key factor for Ohio State moving forward.

According to sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz, the team's leading scorer (13.2 ppg) and rebounder (7.9 rpg), it also comes down to having the right attitude.

"For this team, it's more like how we show up that day, and it's more mentally and just how we prepare," Juhasz said. "I think we always get prepared for every game. We always are motivated to go, but when that day comes, sometimes we can see in the warmup how we're going to show up and how we start the game. So, I think for this young team we should have a lot of energy every game, and we just have to stay hungry for every game."

"When we're playing ranked teams, we are maybe more energetic than when we're not playing a ranked team, so we have to prepare for every game like it's a championship game."

But with a young team, leadership is also a key to helping build that consistency. Miller and Juhasz are aware of that, and both said they have taken steps to become stronger, louder leaders this season.

"I feel like it was mostly like, for me, it's just being vocal, trying to help people in different things of like helping them know where they need to be, things like that, and to just try to keep everyone together as much as possible," Miller said.

Juhasz agreed, saying she thinks she "just became more vocal than last year."

"Last year obviously I was a freshman, so I have (assistant Makayla Waterman) who has my back all the time now. I'm one of the oldest, so now it's my job, and I still have Braxtin who is older than me so she can always help me, but it's fun. It's challenging, but it's fun."

For Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff, looking for more consistency in his team also means finding the players he can rely on down the stretch of these crucial games.

"I think the biggest thing is just still, just searching for consistency," McGuff said. "I'm saying that because I've seen, they've all had great moments, but we're still trying to figure out who's going to be that consistent player night in, night out."

The difficult games do not end here, with Ohio State still having to face off against teams either ranked or receiving votes in the AP poll five times during conference play. It is also playing in a Big Ten conference that McGuff believes is the best in the country.

"It's incredible," McGuff said. "This is the best start (the Big Ten) has ever had from a statistical standpoint. There is great depth and parity in the league, and it's going to be a fight every night."

The Buckeyes managed to earn a major nonconference win to boost their résumé come the end of the season, but consistency, or lack thereof, that this team has in the back half of the year could determine its NCAA tournament fate.

Harris To Redshirt Season For Recovery

Ohio State's star-studded freshman class is now officially down one member for the remainder of the 2019-20 season.

McGuff said Dec. 30 that Rikki Harris, a five-star guard out of North Central High School in Indianapolis, will not play this season and is going to redshirt in order to properly rehab from a shoulder injury.

"She'll be out this year and redshirt for sure," McGuff said.

Harris was the No. 6 point guard and No. 24 prospect overall in the 2019 class but has dealt with a variety of injuries throughout her basketball career.

"I feel like whatever happens, I've been through the worst, I feel like nothing can get any worse than what it already has," Harris told Buckeye Sports Bulletin before this season. "I already know whatever happens, I can come back from it better."

The five-star guard was wearing a shoulder sling for much of the year but did not have it on while she was on the bench Jan. 8 against Purdue, or in the following practices.

"She's making great progress, working really hard with her rehab," McGuff said. "Trainers and doctors both say she's on schedule and doing a great job."

Harris will now have four more years of eligibility and will be a redshirt freshman next season.

The Buckeyes currently have three commits for the 2020 class: three-star guard Anyssa Jones and three-star forward Gabby Hutcherson, both from local Westerville South High School, and five-star guard Kateri Poole from South Shore High School in New York.

Caretti No Longer In The Program

Senior guard Jensen Caretti, who had not played yet for Ohio State this season, is no longer with the team and is no longer enrolled in classes with the university, according to an Ohio State spokesman.

"No, she's not with the team or enrolled at this point," McGuff said.

Caretti has struggled since coming to Ohio State as a five-star prospect and the No. 31 overall recruit in the 2016 class. While at River High School in Hannibal, Ohio, Caretti was named Ms. Ohio Basketball and the Gatorade Player of the Year in the state for 2016.

In her freshman season with the Buckeyes Caretti saw action in 17 games, averaging 2.4 in both points and rebounds. Caretti again averaged 2.4 points a game in her sophomore season but played in 29 of those contests, including against Idaho, where she scored a career-high 14 points.

Those first two years had Caretti behind Kelsey Mitchell, the star Ohio State guard who is one of the most prolific scorers the program has ever had.

But after Mitchell departed, Caretti still could not get it going in the 2018-19 campaign, where she averaged 2.8 points per game on 35.4 percent shooting in 23 appearances.

Caretti was one of two seniors on the team, along with forward Savitha Jayaraman, who also has not seen any time for Ohio State this season. The only upperclassman to receive minutes for the Buckeyes has been Miller, a junior who transferred in from Oklahoma State during this past offseason.

Juhasz Snags Player Of The Month Award

December's Plank's Lady Buck of the Month award goes to the most consistent piece of a very inconsistent Ohio State team.

Of the six December games Ohio State played, Juhasz reached double figures in scoring for five of them and had six or more rebounds in four of them. Her 27-point, 16-rebound outing against Sacramento State tied career highs and earned her a Big Ten Player of the Week award in the progress.

Juhasz's consistency has allowed her to lead the team in points and rebounds through the first half of the season, something she did in the 2018-19 campaign as well.

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Dorka Juhasz
Sophomore Forward
Pecs, Hungary

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Ohio State Drops Big Ten Opener Against Purdue

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In the first game of conference play for Ohio State, the Buckeyes could not deal with Purdue's stifling defense, falling to the Boilermakers 66-50 in their first and only game in St. John Arena this season, on Dec. 28.

But it did not get out of hand right away.

Ohio State (7-5, 0-1) trailed Purdue 30-23 at halftime, and though the Buckeyes shot nearly the same percentage as the Boilermakers – Ohio State shot 37.0 percent to Purdue's 39.3 percent – it was a 22-11 rebounding advantage for the opposition that gave it the seven-point advantage in the game played before 4,212.

"They were tougher," said sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz. "We just gave them really easy turnovers sometimes, like literally just gave it to them into their hands. We have to work harder and we have to compete for 40 minutes because I felt like there were stretches when we were just on the court and just letting them do whatever they wanted."

That advantage bubbled to 53-36 after three quarters, with Purdue's 11-4 rebounding advantage in the period again being the key.

On the game, the Boilermakers (10-3, 1-0) outrebounded Ohio State 45-26.

"It was just the same story throughout the game," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "We got killed on the boards and turned the ball over too much. They went, they were hungry, we weren't physical on the boards and they were, and they made us pay."

The Buckeyes turned the ball over 19 times.

Free throws were another difference-maker in the game, but not because the Buckeyes couldn't hit them, something that had been an issue earlier in the season. Ohio State made 7 of 9 attempts on the day, but Purdue got to the line for 20 free-throw attempts, making 18 of them for a sizzling 90.0 percent.

Juhasz started out strong for Ohio State, leading the team with nine points on 4-of-6 shooting in the first 20 minutes. But in the second half, she was held to only three points, finishing the game with 12 points and eight rebounds.

Sophomore guard Janai Crooms as well as freshman guards Kierstan Bell and Kaelynn Satterfield all returned for Ohio State following their one-game suspensions for the Sacramento State matchup. All three came off the bench and combined for only seven points – all of which were from Bell – on 3-of-13 combined shooting.

Crooms and Bell, both primary starters at this point in the season for the Buckeyes, were replaced by Jacy Sheldon and Aixa Wone in the starting lineup for the second straight game.

"We had had some success with that lineup at Sacramento State and we stuck with it," McGuff said. "We'll still be in flux with the lineups for a long time. I'm not settled on anything, and people will have a chance to play themselves into the lineup or out."

Purdue used a very balanced attack, with five players scoring eight points or more but none scoring more than 15. Kayana Traylor had the 15, while Ae'Rianna Harris and Dominique Oden had 12 each.

The Buckeyes never led in the game and were tied with the Boilermakers only for the first 36 seconds of the matchup before Purdue scored the first basket.

"We did not play well. I didn't coach well. I didn't prepare well," McGuff said. "Purdue played well, played great, so give them all the credit, and we have to get better and have to get better quick."

Ohio State Upsets Gophers For McGuff's 400th Win

Consistency has been a struggle for Ohio State all season long, and the game against No. 24 Minnesota (11-2, 1-1) was no different.

Just three days after the 16-point home loss against Purdue, Ohio State went on the road against the Gophers, blew a 14-point second-quarter lead, came back from down seven in the fourth, and ended up upsetting Minnesota 66-63 on Dec. 31.

The win was the 400th of McGuff's career.

"I'm not much for nostalgia, especially during the season," McGuff said on his milestone. "Maybe I'll reflect another day, but it's just mostly a reflection of that I've had a chance to coach a lot of great players. I was really happy for the team because down the stretch we really stayed together, we played together and we had great chemistry, and it was evident on the court."

Minnesota came into the game shooting 40.6 percent from three, No. 7 in the country. But in the game, Ohio State was able to contain the Gophers in the first half, holding them to 2-of-9 shooting from deep (22.2 percent). But the shots started falling in the latter 20 minutes, with Minnesota making 4 of their 8 shots from three in the second half.

The Buckeyes did not capitalize on their three-point attempts much at all, shooting 5 of 26 from behind the arc (19.2 percent) in the game played before a crowd of 3,982.

Ohio State led by as much as 14 in the first half, taking a 32-18 lead on a Braxtin Miller basket at 1:40 before Minnesota scored 10 of the final 12 points in the second quarter to make it a 34-28 Buckeye lead going into the second half.

But a 10-0 Minnesota run to start the third quarter gave the Gophers a four-point lead, and they led 46-44 going into the fourth quarter after the teams combined for a dreadful 7-of-27 shooting in the third stanza.

Bell was the lone bright spot for the Buckeyes in the third, scoring eight of the team's 10 points in the frame, her first eight points of the contest. She ended the game with 13 points on 4-of-10 shooting.

The score was 52-51 Minnesota with 8:11 to play when the Gophers went on a 6-0 run, which was immediately followed by a countering 6-0 run by Ohio State, keeping it a one-point game with 4:31 to go after another Miller basket.

The two teams then traded threes with just under 3:00 to play before sophomore Aaliyah Patty hit a layup with 1:40 to go to give OSU a 64-63 lead. Patty finished a perfect 6 of 6 from the field, tallying a double-double with 13 points and 10 rebounds.

Guard Destiny Pitts and forward Taiye Bello were the stars for Minnesota, with Pitts' game-high 26 points and Bello's 14 rebounds pacing the team. On the whole, the Gophers relied heavily on their starting five, scoring only two bench points com-

Purdue 66, Ohio State 50

Dec. 28, 2019												
St. John Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
	1	2	3	4	F							
Purdue (10-3, 1-0)	15	15	23	13	66							
Ohio State (7-5, 0-1)	10	13	13	14	50							
Purdue	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Harris	32	4-13	4-6	1-6	1	2	12					
McLaughlin	35	3-9	2-2	1-1	2	1	9					
Oden	33	4-6	4-4	3-5	2	0	12					
Traylor	29	3-5	6-6	0-3	3	2	15					
Farquhar	31	1-6	2-2	0-8	2	1	4					
Whilby	13	4-6	0-0	0-1	0	2	8					
Diagne	3	0-0	0-0	0-2	0	2	0					
Woltman	6	0-1	0-0	1-0	0	0	0					
Grant	9	2-3	0-0	2-1	0	0	4					
Hardin	6	0-2	0-0	0-2	2	0	0					
Makolo	4	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	2					
Totals	200	22-52	18-20	13-32	12	10	66					
Percentages: FG: 42.3%. FT: 90.0%. 3-point field goals: 4-13 (McLaughlin 1-6, Traylor 3-4, Whilby 0-1, Hardin 0-2). Team rebounds: 8. Blocked shots: 2 (Harris). Turnovers: 23 (Harris 3, McLaughlin 3, Oden 5, Traylor 5, Farquhar 2, Diagne, Makolo, Team 3). Steals: 10 (Harris 2, McLaughlin 4, Oden, Traylor, Farquhar, Whilby).												
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Wone	9	0-1	0-0	2-0	1	0	0					
Juhasz	28	5-10	1-1	3-5	1	1	12					
Patty	27	3-10	0-0	0-3	3	2	8					
Sheldon	25	1-6	1-1	0-0	2	0	3					
Miller	27	3-8	0-1	1-0	2	0	6					
Mikulasikova	16	1-5	0-0	1-2	1	5	2					
Bell	17	3-9	1-2	0-2	1	2	7					
Crooms	20	0-1	0-0	0-1	1	3	0					
Greene	25	3-7	4-4	2-2	3	1	12					
Satterfield	5	0-3	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Totals	200	19-60	7-9	9-17	15	15	50					
Percentages: FG: 31.7%. FT: 77.8%. 3-point field goals: 5-20 (Juhasz 1-1, Patty 2-5, Sheldon 0-2, Miller 0-3, Mikulasikova 0-1, Bell 0-4, Greene 2-3, Satterfield 0-1). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 6 (Juhasz 2, Patty 2, Bell, Crooms). Turnovers: 19 (Wone 2, Juhasz, Patty 5, Sheldon, Miller, Mikulasikova 2, Bell 3, Crooms 2, Greene, Team). Steals: 9 (Juhasz, Patty 3, Sheldon, Miller, Crooms, Greene 2).												
Officials: Zentz, Pethtel, Thompson. Attendance: 4,212.												

Ohio State 66, Minnesota 63

Dec. 31, 2019												
Williams Arena • Minneapolis, Minn.												
	1	2	3	4	F							
Ohio State (8-5, 1-1)	16	18	10	22	66							
Minnesota (11-2, 1-1)	12	16	18	17	63							
Ohio State	Total FG FT			Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	27	4-11	0-0	1-1	1	3	8					
Patty	23	6-6	0-0	3-7	1	4	13					
Greene	17	3-6	0-1	0-0	1	1	6					
Sheldon	32	4-9	1-2	2-2	3	2	10					
Miller	38	2-10	0-0	0-5	4	0	4					
Crooms	26	3-9	2-4	1-2	6	3	8					
Mikulasikova	15	0-1	4-4	1-4	0	3	4					
Bell	17	4-10	2-2	0-1	0	4	13					
Wone	5	0-0	0-0	0-3	0	1	0					
Totals	200	26-62	9-13	9-28	16	21	66					
Percentages: FG: 41.9%. FT: 69.2%. 3-point field goals: 5-26 (Juhasz 0-4, Patty 1-1, Greene 0-2, Sheldon 1-5, Miller 0-4, Crooms 0-2, Bell 3-8). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 6 (Juhasz, Miller 2, Crooms, Bell 2). Turnovers: 14 (Juhasz 2, Patty 4, Sheldon, Miller, Crooms 2, Mikulasikova, Wone 2, Team). Steals: 7 (Juhasz, Patty 2, Greene, Sheldon, Miller, Bell).												
Minnesota	Total FG FT			Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
T. Bello	38	3-7	5-6	3-11	1	2	11					
Pitts	38	8-18	5-6	0-7	2	3	26					
Scalia	35	2-8	2-2	2-3	2	1	7					
Brunson	34	6-8	1-1	1-1	1	3	13					
Hubbard	34	0-8	4-6	0-5	2	2	4					
Powell	13	0-5	2-2	0-1	0	3	2					
Adashchik	5	0-2	0-0	1-0	0	0	0					
K. Bello	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	19-56	19-23	11-30	8	14	63					
Percentages: FG: 33.9%. FT: 82.6%. 3-point field goals: 6-17 (Pitts 5-10, Scalia 1-2, Hubbard 0-3, Adashchik 0-2). Team rebounds: 6. Blocked shots: 1 (T. Bello). Turnovers: 16 (T. Bello, Pitts 8, Scalia 1, Brunson 4, Hubbard, Adashchik). Steals: 4 (Brunson 2, Hubbard, Powell).												
Officials: Roberts, Morris, Cruse. Attendance: 3,982.												

Ohio State's most veteran player, Miller, a junior guard, continued her shooting struggles in this game. Miller came into the game 1 of 20 on her last 21 three-point attempts and finished with four points on 2-of-10 shooting, including 0 for 4 from three.

"She's playing a lot of minutes, so it could be fatigue a little bit, but you know as long as she keeps taking good shots, they're going to fall," McGuff said. "She's a great shooter, she can really score the ball, and I've got a lot of confidence in her. She's going to make a couple and then she's going to explode."

Ohio State headed into 2020 with an 8-5 record, 1-1 in the Big Ten, and with its second-biggest win of the season.

"If we will stay together and play together, then we can kind of play through a lot of mistakes because we made a lot of mistakes tonight," McGuff said. "Minnesota is a really good team and this is a tough environment to play in, but I think that's the thing. If we stay together and play together, we will be a much more consistent team."

Ohio State Falls At Ranked Maryland

Ohio State, searching for its second

Continued On Page 38



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Buckeyes Blow Halftime Lead Against Terrapins

Continued From Page 37

straight win against a ranked road opponent, came up short, blowing a seven-point halftime lead in a 72-62 loss to No. 17 Maryland in front of a Terrapin crowd of 4,427.

The Buckeyes came in as the worst three-point shooting team in the Big Ten, making only 28.4 percent from deep on the season.

The Terrapins came in averaging 24.2 turnovers forced per game, tied for No. 5 in the country.

Both of those statistics were key in the matchup on Jan. 6, with Maryland forcing 25 Ohio State turnovers, while the Buckeyes turned their deep struggles around in the first half, hitting 6 of 13 attempts from three.

"We played really well the first half," McGuff said. "I thought we handled their pressure and we moved the ball offensively. We got great shots, and we played really stout defensively, but then in the second half we just turned the ball over way too much to give ourselves a chance to win."

That deep shooting eventually went cold, with Ohio State hitting only 2 of 13 attempts in the second half.

After committing only one turnover in the first quarter, the Buckeyes committed 21 over the next 17:33, which allowed Maryland to take a 51-49 lead late in the

third quarter. On the night, the Terrapins scored 26 points off turnovers compared to Ohio State's 13.

That two-point lead kept expanding for Maryland, almost completely due to the play of its star player.

Maryland senior guard and preseason Big Ten Player of the Year Kaila Charles had a standout performance, finishing with a season-high 28 points on 13-of-19 shooting to go along with seven rebounds and four steals.

"She's a great player, and I thought when we kept her in front and kept her off the boards, we did a decent job," McGuff said. "She's one of the best players in the country, and she played like it tonight. In the second half she was just driving by us and offensive rebounding, and we didn't have an answer for it."

After leading 42-31 at 2:09 of the second quarter, Ohio State was outscored by the Terrapins 41-20 the rest of the way, including a 13-0 Maryland run in the fourth quarter after Ohio State had tied the game at 55, leading to the 10-point loss. In the final 20 minutes, the Buckeyes shot 28.6 percent (8 of 28) and committed 15 turnovers.

The shift in momentum was much in part to Maryland's full-court press defense that continually stymied Ohio State's offense and led to turnovers.

"We knew they were going to do it and



SONNY BROCKWAY

BACK ON TRACK – Led by junior guard Braxtin Miller, Ohio State earned back-to-back wins at home against Michigan and Penn State to move to 10-6 (3-2 in the Big Ten) on the season.

we prepared, and I thought we did a great job in the first half," McGuff said. "I think the thing in the second half is we allowed too many mistakes to then turn into two and three and four mistakes instead of just limiting it to one and moving on to the next play."

The Buckeyes continued to start freshman guards Sheldon and Greene, the first of whom had a strong game in the role. Sheldon ended the night with 12 points on 5-of-9 shooting and was tied for the team lead in scoring with Juhasz, who added eight rebounds to go with her 12 points.

Miller also had one of her best games of the season, finishing with 11 points, three assists and three steals on 5-of-11 shooting.

Greene Leads OSU Past Rival Wolverines

Ohio State took down Michigan behind a dominant fourth quarter, defeating the No. 24 Wolverines 78-69 at Value City Arena on Jan. 9. Michigan had come into the game with back-to-back 30-point wins and was the third straight ranked opponent for the Buckeyes.

Michigan held a 61-59 lead at 7:46 of the fourth quarter, but Ohio State (9-6, 2-2) went on an 11-1 run to go up eight with 2:25 to play, capped off by a second-chance bucket by Bell and a layup by Greene.

Michigan (11-4, 2-2) attempted to rally with five straight points to cut the deficit back to a one-possession game, but Greene hit another big shot and then one final contested layup with 26 seconds to go to allow Ohio State to hold on for the

win played before 4,230.

"She's just growing by leaps and bounds right before our eyes, and she's a great kid, she's a really high-character kid, and just tonight her performance in a game of this magnitude was just incredible," McGuff said of Greene. "I see her play really well in practice, but tonight she was spectacular, she really was. She showed a lot of poise, and she ran the team, and she made sure that the ball kept moving and kept everybody organized, and then she made shots."

Greene earned her third straight start for Ohio State and was huge for the Buckeyes all night. She finished with a career-high 23 points on 8-of-10 shooting in 36 minutes of play.

"It means a lot," Greene said. "It feels really good just to have this performance in front of a lot of – like I know a lot of these people here, family and friends. It's really huge, and in a big game, too with Michigan, it's really exciting."

After scoring just five points in the loss against Maryland, Bell came back in a big way, scoring 15 points and adding six rebounds and three assists.

Three-point shooting and turnovers have been two major issues for Ohio State for much of the season, and the team managed to improve dramatically on both fronts, finishing hitting 50.0 percent from deep (11 of 22) and turning the ball over only nine times.

"That certainly was the key," McGuff said of limiting turnovers. "We really did a good job taking care of the ball, and they have a good press, very active, and I thought our execution against their pres-

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OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

sure was really critical tonight."

Rebounding was an area of struggle for Ohio State, with the Wolverines holding a strong advantage over Ohio State, 39-25, in that category.

Michigan sophomore forward Naz Hillmon was a major reason for the difference and was a problem all night for the Buckeyes, finishing with a game-high 24 points and 15 rebounds on a perfect 8-of-8 shooting night.

"She's a great player," McGuff said. "She plays as hard as any post player in the country. I said, 'Hey, if we're going to let her dominate in the second half, we're not winning, so it better start with better defense.'

"I told our team, 'Hey I don't care if you get the ball, she can't get it,' and we did a better job."

Miller had a strong performance for the Buckeyes, ending the game with 13 points on 6-of-12 shooting, including making her only three-point attempt. She had missed 28 of her previous 29 attempts from deep before the make.

The junior guard said getting the shooting down, both with her and the team on the whole, is key moving forward.

"That's huge," Miller said. "I think that it helps us when teams think that we can't do it. We're a team that is big on having confidence. We're all trying to have a lot of confidence in ourselves and each other, so when a team thinks we can't do it, we want to do it even 10 times more."

As has been the case all season long, Ohio State relied on its depth to gain an advantage, outscoring the Wolverines 28-6 in bench points.

Ohio State trailed Michigan 38-35 at halftime, despite turning the ball over only four times and shooting 7 of 15 from three (46.7 percent). The problems came from rebounding, where the Wolverines outplayed the Buckeyes 25-10 over the first 20 minutes.

Greene led Ohio State at the break with 12 points on perfect 4-of-4 shooting. She said a win like this could be the one to help stop the inconsistencies within a team that had alternated wins and losses for the past seven games.

"It was very important," Greene said of the victory. "We've been kind of up and down this whole season, but it feels really good to get this big win."

Ohio State Downs Nittany Lions For Second Straight Win

The past seven games for Ohio State had been as up and down as they could be: win, loss, win, loss, win, loss, win.

On Jan. 12, the Buckeyes bucked that trend, winning a second straight game with an 80-70 home victory over Penn State (7-9, 1-4) in front of a crowd of 5,428 that McGuff thought was closer than it should have been.

"We did some really good things, but I don't think that we sustained our focus for long enough stretches and couldn't really impose our will on the game because of that," McGuff said. "If we're going to continue to improve and be the team we're capable of being, it has to be great focus for 40 minutes."

Juhasz led the way with 23 points and 12 rebounds, making 9 of 16 from the field and 3 of 5 from three.

"I was trying to help the team with my height, and also I was feeling good in the warmup with three-point shots, so that's why I was really confident to shoot them," Juhasz said. "They were passing me the ball, they were finding me, and I got real-

Maryland 72, Ohio State 62

Jan. 6, 2020												
XFINITY Center • College Park, Md.												
	1	2	3	4	F							
Ohio State (8-6, 1-2)	25	17	9	11	62							
Maryland (11-3, 2-1)	24	11	18	19	72							
Ohio State												
	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.					
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	35	5-10	0-0	1-7	0	1	12					
Patty	22	2-6	1-2	1-8	3	3	7					
Greene	15	2-5	0-0	2-1	2	3	4					
Sheldon	30	5-9	0-0	0-1	4	2	12					
Miller	38	5-11	1-1	1-1	3	3	11					
Mikulasikova	14	2-3	0-0	0-2	0	0	5					
Crooms	32	1-6	2-4	1-0	3	3	4					
Bell	12	2-7	0-0	0-0	0	1	5					
Satterfield	2	1-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	2					
Totals	200	25-58	4-7	10-24	15	16	62					
Percentages: FG: 43.1%. FT: 57.1%. 3-point field goals: 8-26 (Juhasz 2-3, Patty 2-6, Sheldon 2-5, Miller 0-3, Mikulasikova 1-2, Crooms 0-2, Bell 1-5).												
Team rebounds: 7. Blocked shots: 5 (Juhasz 2, Patty, Miller, Crooms). Turnovers: 25 (Juhasz 4, Patty 3, Greene 2, Sheldon 3, Miller, Mikulasikova 4, Crooms 6, Bell 2). Steals: 13 (Patty 3, Greene, Sheldon 3, Miller 3, Crooms, Bell, Satterfield).												
Maryland												
	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.					
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Austin	27	1-5	2-4	2-7	1	2	4					
Charles	31	13-19	2-4	3-4	2	3	28					
Mikesell	39	1-7	4-4	0-4	6	0	7					
Owusu	24	4-8	0-0	0-1	2	1	8					
Watson	31	4-11	0-0	3-4	2	4	8					
Miller	14	2-5	1-2	0-1	2	0	5					
Jones	27	4-10	0-1	2-2	0	2	8					
Masonius	7	1-1	2-2	1-0	1	0	4					
Totals	200	30-66	11-17	13-24	16	12	72					
Percentages: FG: 45.5%. FT: 64.7%. 3-point field goals: 1-12 (Mikesell 1-5, Watson 0-6, Miller 0-1).												
Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 2 (Austin, Jones). Turnovers: 18 (Austin 3, Charles 3, Mikesell, Owusu 3, Watson 3, Miller 2, Jones, Masonius 2). Steals: 16 (Austin, Charles 4, Mikesell, Owusu, Watson 7, Miller, Jones).												
Officials: McConnell, Forsberg, Brooks.												
Attendance: 4,427.												

ly nice assists from Janai too. I was just trying to help and maybe use my height advantage."

Ohio State (10-6, 3-2) had key contributions from several players in the victory. Bell played only 15 minutes, but she finished with 17 points and was a major spark plug off the bench. Crooms was the same, with the sophomore guard adding 10 points, six rebounds and nine assists.

The depth showed up big in the box score, with the Buckeyes' bench outscoring Penn State's 32-4.

"Kierstan came in and gave us some electric minutes offensively, and we really needed her baskets, and Janai was outstanding with the ball in her hands," McGuff said. "Really kind of controlled the game when she was out there, so they both were outstanding."

After finishing the last game with a season-low nine turnovers, Ohio State again held onto the ball more than it has for much of the season. It finished with 14 turnovers compared to Penn State's 22 and scored 26 points off the Nittany Lions' turnovers, while Penn State managed only 13 points.

Ohio State took a 33-26 lead into halftime thanks to a 15-point, six-rebound performance by Juhasz in the opening 20 minutes.

But Penn State came out strong to open the third quarter, going on a 7-2 run to immediately cut the deficit to 35-33. The Nittany Lions were keeping it close early in the third thanks to Kamaria McDaniel. The junior guard, who came into the game as Penn State's leading scorer (19.5 ppg), scored 11 points in the first five minutes of the second half. She ended the game with 22 points.

Senior guard Siyeh Frazier was the other major scorer for the Nittany Lions, finishing with 22 points as well. The rest of the team not named McDaniel or Frazier scored just 26 points.

"They're great players," McGuff said. "They play fast. I thought we were a little lethargic getting back in transition, make or miss, but those two guards are as good

Ohio State 78, Michigan 69

Jan. 9, 2020												
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
	1	2	3	4	F							
Michigan (11-4, 2-2)	18	20	17	14	69							
Ohio State (9-6, 2-2)	14	21	20	23	78							
Michigan	Total FG FT Reb.											
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Hillmon	38	8-8	8-12	9-6	1	4	24					
Robbins	30	7-11	3-6	1-5	1	4	17					
Brown	28	3-6	0-0	0-3	2	1	8					
Dilk	38	3-16	1-2	0-4	3	3	7					
Johnson	35	2-7	3-4	0-4	2	3	7					
Smeenge	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Varejao	5	1-1	0-0	0-1	0	1	2					
Kiser	9	1-2	2-2	1-0	0	2	4					
Rauch	4	0-0	0-0	1-1	0	1	0					
Sidor	10	0-2	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Totals	200	25-53	17-26	13-26	9	19	69					
Percentages: FG: 47.2%. FT: 65.4%. 3-point field goals: 2-12 (Robbins 0-1, Brown 2-5, Dilk 0-2, Johnson 0-2, Sidor 0-2). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 2 (Dilk, Kiser). Turnovers: 15 (Hillmon 2, Robbins, Brown, Dilk 4, Johnson 3, Smeenge, Varejao 2, Kiser). Steals: 4 (Robbins, Brown, Dilk, Johnson).												
Ohio State	Total FG FT Reb.											
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	37	3-6	0-2	1-5	1	4	9					
Patty	17	2-7	1-2	0-1	0	4	5					
Greene	36	8-10	5-5	1-2	2	1	23					
Sheldon	11	0-0	0-2	0-1	1	2	0					
Miller	36	6-12	0-0	0-2	2	3	13					
Crooms	20	1-4	1-4	0-2	2	1	3					
Mikulasikova	14	2-5	2-2	0-1	0	4	8					
Bell	22	5-9	2-2	1-5	3	1	15					
Satterfield	2	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Wone	5	1-1	0-0	0-0	1	0	2					
Totals	200	28-55	11-19	5-20	12	20	78					
Percentages: FG: 50.9%. FT: 57.9%. 3-point field goals: 11-22 (Juhasz 3-4, Patty 0-4, Greene 2-3, Miller 1-1, Crooms 0-1, Mikulasikova 2-4, Bell 3-5). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 3 (Mikulasikova 2, Bell). Turnovers: 9 (Juhasz 2, Patty, Miller, Crooms 2, Mikulasikova 2, Bell). Steals: 9 (Juhasz, Greene 3, Miller, Crooms, Bell 2, Wone). Officials: Napier, Roberts, Tobin. Attendance: 4,230.												

as any in the league, and they're very special, and they played really well."

Ultimately the Buckeyes began to pull away later in the frame, going on a 13-2 run to end a 33-point third quarter, taking a 66-50 lead into the fourth.

Ohio State 80, Penn State 70

Jan. 12, 2020												
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
	1	2	3	4	F							
Penn State (7-9, 1-4)	15	11	24	20	70							
Ohio State (10-6, 3-2)	13	20	33	14	80							
Penn State	Total FG FT Reb.											
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Smith	24	1-3	2-2	3-1	0	3	4					
Frazier	36	9-13	3-6	0-5	1	3	22					
McDaniel	34	7-16	6-10	0-3	3	4	22					
Marisa	37	4-9	0-0	0-8	1	4	9					
Hagans	29	4-7	0-0	1-4	0	1	9					
Ebo	26	2-2	0-0	1-4	0	1	4					
Bembry	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Camden	5	0-3	0-0	1-1	0	1	0					
Wallace	6	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	1	0					
Totals	200	27-54	11-18	7-29	5	18	70					
Percentages: FG: 50.0%. FT: 61.1%. 3-point field goals: 5-14 (Frazier 1-3, McDaniel 2-3, Marisa 1-3, Hagans 1-2, Camden 0-3). Team rebounds: 3.												
Blocked shots: 2 (Smith, Marisa). Turnovers: 22 (Smith, Frazier 6, McDaniel 6, Marisa 3, Hagans, Wallace, Team). Steals: 3 (Frazier 2, Hagans).												
Ohio State	Total FG FT Reb.											
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	34	9-16	2-4	3-9	1	2	23					
Patty	26	5-9	3-5	2-4	1	4	13					
Greene	15	0-4	1-2	1-1	3	3	1					
Sheldon	33	2-7	0-0	1-0	0	1	5					
Miller	31	2-9	0-0	1-1	3	2	6					
Crooms	27	4-7	2-4	2-4	9	1	10					
Mikulasikova	15	2-4	0-0	0-0	2	1	5					
Bell	15	6-12	2-2	2-1	3	3	17					
Wone	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Satterfield	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	30-68	10-17	13-24	22	17	80					
Percentages: FG: 44.1%. FT: 58.8%. 3-point field goals: 10-31 (Juhasz 3-5, Patty 0-1, Greene 0-3, Sheldon 1-5, Miller 2-6, Crooms 0-2, Mikulasikova 1-2, Bell 3-7). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 5 (Juhasz, Patty, Crooms 2, Bell). Turnovers: 14 (Patty, Greene 2, Sheldon, Miller 2, Crooms 4, Mikulasikova, Bell, Team 2). Steals: 12 (Juhasz 4, Patty 2, Greene, Sheldon, Miller, Crooms 3).												
Attendance: 5,428.												

Former Michigan State Coach Perles Passes Away

George Perles, the outspoken former Michigan State football player, coach, athletic director and Board of Trustees member, died on Jan. 7.

Perles was born July 16, 1934, on Detroit's west side, where he was an all-state football player before attending the University of Tennessee. After a brief stint in college, he joined the Army, where he served from 1954-56.

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

After returning from active duty, Perles joined Duffy Daugherty's football team at Michigan State as an offensive and defensive tackle in 1956. He lettered for the Spartans in 1958 before a knee injury ended his playing career.

After Perles received his bachelor's degree from Michigan State in 1960, he joined Daugherty's staff as a graduate assistant. He received his master's in educational administration in 1961 and went on to coach high school football at St. Rita's in Chicago and St. Ambrose High School in Grosse Pointe Park, Mich., where he won the 1962 City League championship.

After a two-year stint as an assistant coach at the University of Dayton, Perles returned to Michigan State and Daugherty's staff, coaching defensive line from 1967-71.

Pittsburgh Steelers head coach Chuck Noll poached Perles in 1972 to coach his defensive line. He became Noll's defensive coordinator in 1978 and assistant head coach from 1979-82 and helped the Steel Curtain win four Super Bowls during his tenure in Pittsburgh.

His success in the NFL primed Perles for a head-coaching job with the Philadelphia Stars of the up-and-coming United States Football League, where he helped build the team but never coached a game.

Instead, Perles took his dream job at Michigan State, replacing Muddy Waters on Dec. 3, 1982, with a five-year contract just three years after he was bypassed by Waters for the job.

"That's the only college job in the country I would be interested in," Perles said in 1976. "I think anybody is interested in going home if he's not running away from something. And I'm definitely not running away from anything."

The Spartans were coming off a 2-9 season in Waters' final year, but Perles promised to bring the program back to national prominence.

"If we make all decisions based on winning the Rose Bowl," Perles told the Detroit Free Press in late 1982, "we won't make a poor decision."

He led the Green and White to the 1988 Rose Bowl, which was their first in 22 years, and to the 1987 Big Ten title that was their first in nine seasons.

In 12 seasons at Michigan State, Perles went 73-62-4 overall with a 58-37-2 ledger in the Big Ten. However, he was forced to vacate five wins in his final season due to the NCAA finding major violations during his tenure, even though Perles was never implicated in the NCAA's charges of academic fraud and payments to recruits. The Spartans received four years of probation, and Perles' eventual replacement Nick Saban, who had served as Perles' defensive coordinator for the 1987 team, lost nine scholarships.

Saban, who considered Perles a mentor, has gone on to win six national championships, including one at LSU and five at Alabama.

"George Perles meant a tremendous amount to not only me, but the entire Saban family," Saban said. "He was one of my mentors in this profession, and he gave me my first opportunity to be in a position of leadership as the defensive coordinator at Michigan State. George was always a great friend and someone who I turned to for advice on many occasions. I learned an incredible amount of both football and life from him over the years."

"George did an outstanding job at Michigan State building that program. He was a great leader who impacted that transformation at Michigan State from the top down. Those five

years at Michigan State, which culminated with a Rose Bowl victory at the end of the 1987 season, showed us the type of foundation necessary to build a program. We are so very close to his family, his wife, Sally, and their children, Kathy, Terry, John and Pat, and they are in our thoughts and prayers. It is a sad day for the Sabans when it comes to losing one of our great mentors and the fantastic memories that we had with them."

Big Ten Standouts Declare Early For 2020 NFL Draft

The Big Ten had 19 notable players forgo their remaining NCAA eligibility and declare for the 2020 NFL draft as of press time.

Wisconsin led the conference with four early entrants, with center Tyler Biadasz, wide receivers Quintez Cephus and Aron Cruikshank and running back Jonathan Taylor.

Ohio State and Michigan had the second-most student-athletes decide to leave early with three apiece. While J.K. Dobbins, Jeff Okudah and Chase Young decided to leave Columbus early, wide receiver Donovan Peoples-Jones, center Cesar Ruiz and linebacker Josh Uche left the Wolverines for the professional ranks.

Two Maryland playmakers decided to leave early in running back/returner Javon Leake, who won the Rodgers-Dwight Return Specialist of the Year as the Big Ten's best, and talented tailback Anthony McFarland. Penn State will lose two of its best players in defensive end Yetur Gross-Matos and wide receiver K.J. Hamler.

Iowa and Michigan State also had two players take their talents to the NFL. The Hawkeyes will lose safety Geno Stone and offensive tackle Tristan Wirfs, who won the Rimington-Pace Offensive Lineman of the Year as the conference's best lineman, while Spartans cornerback Josiah Scott and wide receiver Cody White will also enter the draft.

Minnesota will lose Antoine Winfield Jr., who is the son of the former Buckeye of the same name and won the Tatum-Woodson Defensive Back of the Year as the Big Ten's top defensive back.

Ole Miss Hires Former Maryland Coach As Assistant

Ole Miss hired former Maryland head coach D.J. Durkin as an assistant coach under head coach Lane Kiffin.

Durkin was fired by Maryland in October 2018 after the university reviewed his staff's handling of the death of offensive lineman

Jordan McNair, who collapsed on the practice field May 29, 2018, and eventually died of a heatstroke more than two weeks later. Durkin was suspended and placed on administrative leave in August 2018 while the culture of Maryland's football program was being investigated. He was eventually reinstated and then fired approximately 24 hours later.

"As part of our standard vetting process for all hires, the university conducted a thorough background check on Coach Durkin, and we connected with several highly respected college football coaches, administrators and school officials about their experiences working with him," Ole Miss athletic director Keith Carter said in a statement. "We received consistently strong feedback about Coach Durkin's strong character and work ethic and his positive impact on the communities and institutions where he was previously employed. Once we had the chance to spend time with Coach Durkin, we were even more convinced that he is exactly the type of accomplished coach with strong football credentials who is also a proud and committed family man that will make a great addition to our new staff."

Big Ten Goes 4-5 In Bowl Games

The following is a recap of the Big Ten's bowl action:

New Era Pinstripe Bowl: Michigan State 27, Wake Forest 21: Michigan State quarterback Brian Lewerke threw for 320 yards and one touchdown while running in another to lead the Spartans (7-6) to a 27-21 victory against Wake Forest in the Pinstripe Bowl at Yankee Stadium on Dec. 27.

Lewerke threw a 10-yard pass to White in the third quarter to give the Green and White a 27-21 advantage, and they held off the Demon Deacons down the stretch, giving head coach Mark Dantonio his sixth bowl win.

San Diego County Credit Union Holiday Bowl: No. 16 Iowa 49, No. 22 USC 24: Iowa wide receiver Ihmir Smith-Marsette stole the show against USC in San Diego, scoring on a 6-yard run, a 98-yard kickoff return and a 12-yard reception – all in the second quarter – to lead No. 16 Iowa to a 49-24 victory against No. 22 Southern California in the Holiday Bowl on Dec. 27. Hawkeye quarterback Nate Stanley threw two touchdown passes, and the Hawkeyes (10-3) won their fourth straight game for their sixth 10-win season in head coach Kirk Ferentz's 21-year tenure.

Goodyear Cotton Bowl Classic: No. 10

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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (13-1, 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., L 29-23.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (11-5, 1-4)

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, W
71-65; **29** West Virginia at Cleveland, L 67-59.
Jan. 3 WISCONSIN, L 61-57; **7** Maryland, L 67-55;
11 Indiana, L 66-54; **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 (10-6, 3-2)

Nov. 3 Urbana (exhibition), W 131-50; **10** Valparaíso
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, L 66-50; **31** Minnesota, W 66-63.
Jan. 6 Maryland, L 72-62; **9** MICHIGAN, W 78-69;
12 PENN STATE, W 80-70; **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 GYMNASTICS

Jan. 18 ARIZONA STATE & OKLAHOMA, 5 p.m.; **25**
Penn State, 8 p.m..
Feb. 1 MICHIGAN, 1 p.m.; **8** Arizona State & California
at Phoenix, Ariz., 2 p.m.; **21-23** Winter Cup at Las Vegas;
29 NAVY, 2 p.m.

March 7 IOWA & NORTHERN ILLINOIS, 1:30 p.m.; **13**
Minnesota & Nebraska at Minneapolis, Minn., 6 p.m.; **21**
Illinois, 1:30 p.m.

April 3-4 Big Ten Championships at Minneapolis,
Minn.; **17-18** NCAA Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS (1-0)

Jan. 11 North Carolina State, W 194.025-193.800;
18 Michigan State, 7 p.m.; **25** CENTRAL MICHIGAN &
MARYLAND, 4 p.m.
Feb. 1 MINNESOTA, 7 p.m.; **9** Michigan, 4 p.m.; **14**
PENN STATE, 6 p.m.; **21** Big Five at Toledo, 6 p.m.; **28**
Missouri, 7 p.m.
March 8 Arizona, 2 p.m.; **14** PITT, 4 p.m.; **21** Big Ten
Championship at Columbus.

April 4 NCAA Regionals; **16-18** NCAA Nationals.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (14-6-2, 7-4-1)

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, W 3-2;
28 COLGATE, W 3-0.

Jan. 3 Cornell at Las Vegas, L 5-2; **4** Army at Las Vegas,
W 2-1 (OT); **10** Wisconsin, W 4-2; **11** Wisconsin, L 5-2; **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 (13-5-4, 8-3-3)

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 MINNESOTA STATE, W 6-0; **11** MINNESOTA
STATE, W 8-4; **17-18** Minnesota; **24-25** QUINNPIAC; **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, Men, W 175.5-142.5; Women,
W 163-156; **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).

MEN'S TENNIS

Jan. 15 NORTHERN KENTUCKY, 10 a.m.; **15** DAYTON,
4:30 p.m.; **19** XAVIER, 11 a.m.; WRIGHT STATE, 2 p.m.;
25-26 ITA KICKOFF; **26** TOLEDO, 6 p.m.

Feb. 1 TEXAS, 1 p.m.; **7** ARIZONA STATE, 6 p.m.; **9**
USC, 12 p.m.; **11** TEXAS A&M, 6 p.m.; **14** National Indoor
Team at Madison, Wisc.; **22** Notre Dame, 12 p.m.

March 1 Georgia, 12 p.m.; **4** Stanford, 6 p.m.; **8**
PENN STATE, 12 p.m.; **15** Michigan State, 12 p.m.; **20**
MICHIGAN, 6 p.m.; **27** NEBRASKA, 6 p.m.; **29** IOWA,
12 p.m.

April 3 Purdue, 4 p.m.; **5** Indiana, 12 p.m.; **10**
NORTHWESTERN, 6 p.m.; **12** ILLINOIS, 12 p.m.; **17**
Wisconsin, 4 p.m.; **19** Minnesota, 12 p.m.; **23** Big Ten
Tournament.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Jan. 17 Michigan Invitational at Ann Arbor, Mich.; **25**
ITA Kickoff at Stillwater, Okla., 12 p.m.; **31** DUKE, 5 p.m.

Feb. 8 National Indors at Chicago; **16** Vanderbilt, 12
p.m.; **21** KENTUCKY, 6 p.m.; **23** ARIZONA STATE, 10 a.m.;
27 Purdue, 4 p.m.

March 1 Florida State, 4 p.m.; **7** NORTHWESTERN,
12 p.m.; **13** MICHIGAN STATE, 6 p.m.; **15** MICHIGAN, 12
p.m.; **27** Wisconsin, 5 p.m.; **29** Minnesota, 10 a.m.

April 3 Baylor, 6 p.m.; **5** Penn State, 12 p.m.; **11** Iowa,
12 p.m.; **12** Nebraska, 12 p.m.; **17** MARYLAND, 6 p.m.;
19 RUTGERS, 12 p.m.; **23** Big Ten Tournament at West
Lafayette, Ind.

May 1 NCAA Regionals; **8** Super Regionals; **14** NCAA
Championships at Stillwater, Okla.

INDOOR TRACK & FIELD

Jan. 10 Kentucky Invite at Lexington, Ky., NTS; **17-18**
Michigan Invite at Ann Arbor, Mich.; **23-25** Columbia
Challenge at New York; **30-31** Texas Tech Invitational at
Lubbock, Texas.

Feb. 1 Texas Tech Invitational at Lubbock, Texas; **7**
Midwest Open at Geneva, Ohio; **13-15** Iowa State Classic
at Ames, Iowa; **14-15** Tiger Paw Invite at Clemson, S.C.;
22 Kent State Tune Up at Kent, Ohio; **22** Alex Wilson
Invitational at South Bend, Ind.; **28** Big Ten Championships
at Geneva, Ohio; **29** Big Ten Championships at Madison,
Wisc.

March 13 NCAA Championships at Albuquerque,
N.M.; **27-28** Power-5 Trailblazer Challenge at Oxford,
Miss.; **27-28** Raleigh Relays at Raleigh, N.C.

April 4 Battle On The Bayou at Baton Rouge, La.; **9-11**
Tennessee Relays at Knoxville, Tenn.; **17-18** Gamecock
Invitational at Columbia, S.C.; **24-25** JESSE OWENS
CLASSIC.

May 1-2 Kentucky Open at Lexington, Ky.; **15-16**
Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wisc.; **29-31** NCAA
Regional Championships at Lexington, Ky.

June 10-13 NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (3-0)

Jan. 4 North Greenville, W 3-0; **7** Urbana, W 3-0; **9**
Saint Francis, W 3-0; **16** LINCOLN MEMORIAL, 6 p.m.; **17**
KING, 7 p.m.; **24** USC at University Park, Pa., 4:30 p.m.;
26 UCLA at University Park, Pa., 1 p.m.; **31** Saint Francis,
7 p.m..

Feb. 1 Penn State, 7 p.m.; **7** UCSB, 7 p.m.; **8** LONG
BEACH STATE, 7 p.m.; **13** LEWIS, 7 p.m.; **15** McKENDREE,
7 p.m.; **21** Loyola Chicago, 8 p.m.; **22** Purdue Fort Wayne,
7 p.m.; **28** Quincy, 7 p.m.; **29** Lindenwood, 8:30 p.m.

March 4 BALL STATE, 7 p.m.; **8** PENN STATE, 3 p.m.
12 NJIT, 6 p.m.; **14** George Mason, 5 p.m.; **21** Ball State,
7 p.m.; **27** LINDENWOOD, 7 p.m.; **28** QUINCY, 7 p.m.

April 2 McKendree, 8 p.m.; **4** Lewis, 8 p.m.; **9**
PURDUE FORT WAYNE, 7 p.m.; **11** LOYOLA CHICAGO, 5
p.m.; **18** MIVA Quarterfinals, 7 p.m.; **22** MIVA Semifinals,
7 p.m.; **25** MIVA Finals, 7 p.m.

May 1 NCAA Play-In Match, 7 p.m.; **5** NCAA First
Round at Fairfax, Va., 6 p.m.; **7** NCAA Semifinals at
Fairfax, Va., 6 p.m.; **9** NCAA Finals at Fairfax, Va., 8 p.m.

WRESTLING (4-1)

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 6 ARIZONA STATE, W 17-16; **10** RUTGERS, W
22-13; **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.

Penn State 53, No. 17 Memphis 39: On Dec. 28,
Penn State running back Journey Brown ran
for 202 yards with two long touchdowns while
safety Garrett Taylor returned an interception
15 yards for a score to lead No. 10 Penn
State over No. 17 Memphis, 53-39, in the
highest-scoring Cotton Bowl ever. All-America
linebacker Micah Parsons finished the game
with 14 tackles, including two sacks.

**College Football Playoff Semifinal –
PlayStation Fiesta Bowl:** No. 3 Clemson 29,
No. 2 Ohio State 23: Ohio State fell 29-23 to
Clemson in the PlayStation Fiesta Bowl Dec.
28, which served as a College Football Playoff
semifinal game. More on this game can be
found throughout this issue of BSB.

Redbox Bowl: California 35, Illinois 20:
Illinois made its first bowl appearance since
2014 and fell 35-20 to Cal on Dec. 30 in the
Redbox Bowl. Although the Fighting Illini (6-7)
outgained the Golden Bears, 450-395, they did
not force a turnover on defense for the first
time this season. Illinois quarterback Brandon
Peters threw for 273 yards and one touchdown,
completing 22 of 37 passes and adding a team-
high 68 rushing yards.

Vrbo Citrus Bowl: No. 13 Alabama 35,
No. 14 Michigan 16: Michigan built a 16-14
halftime lead at the Vrbo Citrus Bowl on New
Year's Day, but Alabama scored 21 unan-
swered points in the second half to defeat the
Wolverines, 35-16. The Maize and Blue (9-4)
scored on their final four possessions of the
first half on the back of a strong rushing attack,

scoring a touchdown and knocking through
three field goals to take a two-point lead into
the intermission. Michigan rushed for 135
yards on 27 carries and totaled 286 yards in
the first half.

Outback Bowl: No. 18 Minnesota 31,
No. 12 Auburn 24: Minnesota wide receiver
Tyler Johnson hauled in 12 receptions for
204 yards and two touchdowns in the Golden
Gophers' 31-24 victory against Auburn on Jan.
1. Running back Mohamed Ibrahim gained
140 rushing yards on 20 carries with one score
for the Gophers (11-2).

"We challenged every one of our players:
You want to be a blue blood, you've got to beat
the blue bloods," Minnesota head coach P.J.
Fleck said following the Outback Bowl victory.

**Rose Bowl Game Presented By
Northwestern Mutual:** No. 6 Oregon 28, No.
8 Wisconsin 27: The 106th Rose Bowl provid-
ed football fans with a thrilling back-and-forth
battle, with Oregon winning the Granddaddy
of Them All, 28-27. In the Badgers' fourth Rose
Bowl appearance in 10 years, Cruickshank
opened scoring for the Badgers with a 95-yard
kickoff return for a touchdown. The Big Ten
runner-up Badgers (10-4) could muster only
three points in the fourth quarter.

Taxslayer Gator Bowl: Tennessee 23,
Indiana 22: In a thrilling Gator Bowl on Jan.
2, Tennessee scored two touchdowns in a
30-second span, recovering an onside kick to
help erase a double-digit deficit and holding
on to beat Indiana 23-22. The Hoosiers (8-5)

appeared to be on their way to victory after
scoring two touchdowns in a 1:03 span in the
third quarter and adding a pair of field goals.

The second score in the 1:03 span came on
safety Jamar Johnson's 63-yard interception
return for a touchdown.

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Flyers
PIZZA & SUBS

Freshman Ahac Takes A Liking To Las Vegas

Layton Ahac is becoming a regular visitor to Las Vegas, and it has nothing to do with the numerous entertainment options in Sin City.

The Ohio State freshman defenseman was selected 86th overall (third round) by the Vegas Golden Knights in the NHL draft

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

in June and the following month made a trip there for the team's development camp for prospects and free-agent invitees. He returned to Las Vegas with the Buckeyes for the Fortress Invitational Jan. 3 and 4.

"What are the chances we'd be playing there after I was drafted by Vegas?" Ahac said. "It was pretty cool to be able to play there."

"It's an unbelievable place, a very exciting city. You can tell there's a hockey vibe around the city."

Ahac (6-2, 195) has played in all 22 games for the Buckeyes and has two assists. He is a team-best plus-11 on the plus/minus ledger, which is tied for ninth nationally among freshmen and eighth for rookie defensemen.

He is a plus-5 in the past four games despite a pair of 5-2 losses for the No. 7 Buckeyes (14-6-2, 7-4-1-0 Big Ten).

Ahac was considered a late bloomer last season playing the second of two seasons for Prince George in the British Columbia Hockey League. He was particularly noticeable in the postseason when he had 17 points (five goals, 12 assists) in 17 games to help the Spruce Kings win the league championship.

His improvement came as a result of a different mental outlook.

"It was my confidence," he said. "I was too worried about the whole draft buzz. As the season went on, I had some big events, some tournaments and big games. I gained

confidence from that."

Last season he had 32 points (four goals, 28 assists) in 53 regular-season games and was second team All-BCHL and a finalist for the league's defenseman of the year award.

His play was rewarded when he was drafted by Vegas. He was home in North Vancouver, British Columbia, when he heard his name announced.

"I had family, friends, coaches there," he said. "It was great to celebrate with them because they helped me get where I am today. It was a super nerve-racking day, but once my name was called it was a big relief."

He got invited to the development camp and found Las Vegas interesting.

"It's not at all like Prince George or Vancouver," he said.

His time spent on the ice gave him a greater appreciation for what he needs to do to advance his career.

"I got to play with a ton of great players," he said. "I'm even watching some of them on TV now. It's good to compare yourself to them and see how far you have to go."

Ahac never wavered from his commitment to the Buckeyes even as his draft stock rose and other schools pursued him.

"My first year in Prince George they were one of the early teams to reach out to me," he said. "I talked to the coaches. I liked all of them. I got to talk to them when I came here for a visit."

"I toured a bunch of universities. This one stuck out, so many things – the academics, the hockey program. It was the complete package. It was a no-brainer for me."

Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik likes what he's seen from Ahac.

"The one thing about him is he's such an unbelievable kid. He is so determined to be a great player, and that's one characteristic we saw right away when we talked to him," he said. "He is going to do whatever it takes to be the best player possible."

"You can see the guy on the ice and see he's a good player, but when you hear those traits, it's all about the culture, all about trying to train and do the right thing. There's a lot of good players out there. There's not a lot that have the character he does."

That quality extends beyond the rink.

Ahac was instrumental in helping the Prince George players stage fundraisers for the Humboldt (Saskatchewan) Broncos junior hockey team.

A bus crash on April 6, 2018, killed 16 people, including 10 Humboldt players ranging in age from 16 to 21, and injured 13 players. Bus travel is a way of life in junior hockey and Ahac, who did not know any of the Humboldt players personally but had friends who did, said the tragedy hit home.

"It was tough because we had a road trip that week," he said. "We're one of the teams that travels the farthest. Our closest travel is six hours on the bus."

"I know some guys were kind of shocked to get on the bus after that, but we did as much as we could to help. We were sharing things on social media, doing community events all over Prince George. We did some in Kelowna (B.C.) as well."

"When something like that happens, you have to look out for each other regardless if I knew them directly or not. The whole hockey community has to come together, and I think we did a pretty good job for the most part."

A Look Back

The Buckeyes went 4-2-0 since BSB last went to print, including four nonconference games and a split at Wisconsin on Jan. 10-11 that was noteworthy for two injuries.

The most serious was in the series opener vs. the Badgers when OSU freshman defenseman C.J. Regula was checked headfirst into the boards by Linus Weissbach while retrieving the puck during the Buckeyes' 4-2 win.

Regula sustained a neck injury and was stretchered off the ice and taken to a local hospital for observation. Regula had movement in his hands and feet and was released later that night.

He did not play the next night, and there was no further update from Ohio State as of press time. Weissbach, who received a major penalty and game misconduct, was suspended for the rematch.

Wisconsin (8-11-1, 3-8-1-1) won that game 5-2 with four second-period goals on freshman goalie Ryan Snowden, who made his first road start and played his third game overall.

He played because junior Tommy Nappier, the 2019 Big Ten Goaltender of the Year, was injured. Nappier had made 26 saves playing the entire game vs. the

BIG		Men's Hockey				
	Pts.	W	L	T	OTL	
Penn State	24	8	4	0	0	
Ohio State	22	7	4	1	0	
Michigan State	22	7	4	1	0	
Notre Dame	18	5	5	2	1	
Minnesota	16	3	5	4	3	
Michigan	13	4	7	1	0	
Wisconsin	11	3	8	1	1	

Badgers the previous night.

The Buckeyes opened their post-Christmas schedule with 3-2 and 3-0 wins over Colgate at Value City Arena on Dec. 27 and 28. Sophomore Quinn Preston had two goals and senior Tanner Laczynski tallied a goal and an assist in the first game.

Senior defenseman Gordi Myer had a goal and assist, Preston scored again, and freshman Tate Singleton tallied to complete the sweep.

The following weekend in Las Vegas, the Buckeyes were beaten 5-2 by No. 2 Cornell (11-1-0) before senior Carson Meyer scored at 1:17 of overtime to defeat No. 20 Army (13-7-1) 2-1 in the consolation game.

"It was a learning lesson for us where we need to be to compete at the end of the year," Myer said. "Come tournament time, and hopefully we make it to another regional if we get that opportunity, that's the kind of teams we're going to be playing."

A Look Ahead

The Buckeyes (22 points), tied for second in the Big Ten with Michigan State at two points back of Penn State, host Notre Dame at 6 p.m. on Jan. 17 and 5 p.m. the next day.

OSU plays at Minnesota Jan. 24 and 25.

Icer Of The Month

If he's good enough for the Hockey Commissioners Association, he's good enough to be the Varsity Club Icer of the Month for December.

Nappier was named the HCA's top goalie nationally for December for his 4-0-1 record with two shutouts, a 0.97 goals-against average and a .970 save percentage. The St. Louis native had a 23-save blanking of Michigan State on Dec. 1 then earned his seventh career shutout, tying for fourth in program history, with 25 saves vs. Colgate.

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For December



Tommy Nappier
Junior Goaltender
St. Louis, Mo.



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Covelli Provides Home For Buckeye Athletics

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

As cheers rang out on Jan. 6 for Ohio State heavyweight wrestler Gary Traub, who was putting the finishing touches on a marquee 17-16 win for No. 7 Ohio State over No. 4 Arizona State, there may not have been anyone happier than Buckeye head coach Tom Ryan. This was, after all, his dream, realized.

Ryan, in his 14th year in Columbus, had just seen a top-10 Buckeye team pull off an upset and reintroduce itself into the national title picture after a challenging loss to Virginia Tech a month prior. Perhaps more importantly, he had seen it done in a facility built specifically to house events like this. Ohio State was winning a crucial match in an arena that felt not like a hand-me-down but like a home.

"That crowd was incredible," Ryan said. "I mean that crowd, the energy. This facility is fantastic. It's going to become a really tough place to wrestle, and it is already. I'm so grateful for the fans showing up tonight, and on a Monday night, giving a lot of our guys a boost."

This was everything he had envisioned when he, with Ohio State brass, began to think out what the next step for wrestling facilities might look like after what had been a successful but difficult decade in St. John Arena.

"2009 was kind of the inception and the thinking of what we're going to do to put ourselves into a position to have a training center and a facility that's one of the best in the country," Ryan said.

Seven years later, Ohio State broke ground on what it hoped would become one of the finest new facilities in the country. Named for Caryn and Sam Covelli, who donated \$10 million of the \$48.9 million that went toward the privately funded arena, the Covelli Center was set to provide a home for fencing, gymnastics, wrestling and volleyball.

It was also expected to serve as a much-needed update for programs that had been in a basketball-specific arena since 1998, after the basketball teams moved to the Schottenstein Center.

"Since St. John Arena was designed and built over 50 years ago, the standards of competition have changed considerably," Ohio State said in its statement announcing the arena. "So too has the use of technology in coaching and teaching. Practice and competitive facilities are important evidence of an institution's commitment to excellence. To remain competitive at the national level, a modern facility is needed for Ohio State student-athletes."

In June 2019, the Covelli Center opened its doors to the world. More than 100,000 square feet, the state-of-the-art facility is home to seven varsity sports and seats 3,700 around a multipurpose center court.

It also plays home to offices for each sport, training areas and locker rooms.

With it came two more additions to Ohio State's ever-growing list of facilities: the Jennings Wrestling Facility, where Ryan's program does its training, and the Schumaker Complex, for all-sport training and wellness. The three were designed to work in tandem, all coming as part of a new focus at Ohio State on Olympic sports.

"When you have a facility to the standard that this one is going to be, it screams value; it screams importance; it screams that when you come here, you are going to be treated in a first-class way," Ryan said of the Jennings Wrestling Facility during its reveal.

The gem was always, however, the Covelli Center. Because it's still so young, Ohio State has yet to truly see its impact on results, but

Ryan isn't the only coach on campus who sees big things in the future.

"I think it's a plus for everything," first-year men's volleyball coach Kevin Burch said of the new arena. "It definitely increases our ceiling because now – I always thought this was the best program in the country. Now it's going to be really easy for other potential student-athletes recruited to come in here and see that right away. I think that's the big difference. Sometimes facilities can be a blocker to what the program really is. I think now that you see the facility that matches the people, it's so much easier for recruits to see that right off the bat."

Coaches aren't the only ones to pick up on the differences between the old and the new. Ohio State wrestling freshman Jordan Decatur, who made his Covelli debut against the Sun Devils, was in awe after the match.

"Walking out and hearing everyone scream and stand up, there's no feeling like it," Decatur said. "All the fans are so passionate, they really love wrestling, there's just no feeling like it. I've never actually felt that before, walking out and feeling so passionate, walking out with the singlet on and putting on for the Buckeyes. I wouldn't want it any other way."

Kaleb Romero, a 174-pounder who secured a critical 7-3 victory over No. 8 Anthony Valencia, had a similar experience.

"The crowd helps a lot," Romero said. "That's all you hear when you're out there wrestling. It inspires you to push harder, work more, do more things, shoot more, push the pace, so that's obviously a big factor."

While it's easy to be washed away by the ultra-modern, sleek design of the new arena, the most impressive features may actually be the details. From the video board that streaks around the north end, showcasing a digital trophy case, to the fire display at the entrance for each wrestler, even down to the black seats, which seem to almost inspire a sense of dread. Every part of the building was purposeful and designed to create a true home environment for each Buckeye team.

"It was very well planned, very well thought out," Burch said. "Everything looked sweet up in the locker room for matches too. The way that the seating was, black seating, to where the locker rooms are located to the practice space with multiple courts. There's so many little details. It's one of those buildings where, the longer that we're in it, the more we realize how much thought and planning went into this. Not just for the fans, but for us as a team. That was very, very well thought out."

As Burch alluded to, the key to the Covelli Center may be time, above all else. As the shine wears off and Ohio State starts to settle into its new home, word will spread. Recruiting will become easier. Facilities are often described as the entry point for a program, and more chances to show off that entry point will only be good news for Ohio State.

For the first years, however, the primary feeling around the Covelli Center is joy. The fencers, gymnasts, wrestlers and volleyball players have an arena to call home. Ryan described it as "the world's finest wrestling complex ever built." Burch called it "unbelievable." Decatur, the starry-eyed freshman, may have said it best. "There's no feeling like it."

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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Loss To Clemson Doesn't Overshadow Season

Sometimes the better team doesn't always win, and that was exactly the case in the first-round college playoff game between Ohio State and Clemson. I am thoroughly convinced that the 2019 Buckeyes would beat the Tigers the vast majority of times in head-to-head competition. Hand it to Clemson, they did win the one that counted, and the Buckeyes left a lot of points on the field that night.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

Missed opportunities, questionable officiating and injuries to key personnel all played a part in the loss for a Buckeye squad that had performed during the regular season as well as any Ohio State team in the past. Unfortunately, in the world of college football playoffs, it's not how you start but how you finish.

The Buckeyes did have their chances, but in a close game it's only a small handful of plays that determine the outcome and Clemson made the critical plays that mattered, especially down the stretch. A disappointing end to a season that was truly outstanding in so many ways.

Missed Opportunities

Throughout 2019, the Ohio State offense was one of the very best units in the country in scoring red-zone touchdowns. The frustration from the 2018 team that too many times had to settle for three points instead of six seemed ancient history this year. An offense that put the ball in the end zone via hard-nosed power runs, play-action passes and quarterback run-pass options seemed unstoppable this season.

Clemson rose to the occasion in terms of red-zone defense, but it was mistakes and poor execution by the Buckeyes that were the ultimate factors in not getting the ball into the end zone. The Buckeye offense had first downs from the 5, 8 and 11-yard lines but had to settle for field goals all three times. The math is easy: 12 more points would have made all the differ-

ence in the world and would have changed the entire complexion of the game and the strategies for both coaching staffs.

Another crucial sequence of plays that was very costly to the Buckeyes came in the third quarter with Ohio State leading 16-14 and Clemson punting from its own 15-yard line. The Buckeyes went for a punt block but ran into the Clemson punter, resulting in a Tiger first down. This extended the Clemson drive, which resulted in a touchdown and a 21-16 lead for the Tigers. Without the penalty for roughing the punter, the Buckeyes would have taken possession around midfield, still on top with a chance to put a short drive together for another score and a chance to extend their lead.

Arguably the most devastating missed opportunity for the Buckeyes was the chance to put Clemson away late in the fourth quarter. Ohio State punter Drue Chrisman landed the football inside the Clemson 10-yard line with only 3:07 left to play and Ohio State holding a two-point lead. One more defensive stop and the Buckeyes would likely have secured victory. Instead, the Clemson offense took the ball 94 yards in just four plays to take the final lead of the game. The Buckeyes did get the ball back with a chance to win, but a Clemson interception with 37 seconds left sealed the Buckeyes' fate and Clemson would go on to play for the national championship.

Banged-Up Buckeyes

One of the very things which got the Buckeyes to the playoffs was one of the things that also brought about the loss to Clemson. That particular element was the toughness of the schedule the last three weeks of the regular season. The Big Ten is the most physical conference in the country, and the Buckeyes finished with Penn State, Michigan and Wisconsin.

These three opponents ended their seasons with 30 wins and just 10 losses. It was apparent Justin Fields and J.K. Dobbins did not enter the playoff game at 100 percent. Getting banged up is part of college football, and it is no excuse for losing but obviously was a factor for the Buckeyes. The decreased mobility of Fields took away some of the offensive options for the coaching staff in terms of play calling. A healthy Ohio State team is a tough one to beat.

Unfortunately, that was not the case after a grueling season-ending schedule.

Clemson's last three opponents were Wake Forest, South Carolina and Virginia. The combined season records for these teams was 21-18. Going into the playoffs, the only other ACC team that was ranked was Virginia, and they were at the bottom of the top 25. Compare that to the Big Ten that had six of the top-ranked teams in the country. Taking nothing away from a Clemson program which has earned the national recognition it deserves in the last decade, but it is apparent the Big Ten is a tougher grind than the ACC week in and week out.

Questionable Officiating

As a former head coach, I told my teams to not let officials determine the outcome of the game. As a team, you must strive to put the opponent away early so that one or two calls by the officials won't make a difference. That's the philosophy but not always the reality in college football. There were specific calls made in the playoff game that did change the complexion and the momentum of a truly great and exciting match between the Ohio State and Clemson.

The targeting call against Shaun Wade late in the second quarter was crucial. The call not only allowed Clemson to keep the drive alive leading to its first score, but it eliminated one of the Buckeyes' very best players for the remainder of the game. The targeting rule must be revisited in terms of intent and punishment. In Wade's case, a quarterback who is five inches taller than the defender should not be allowed to draw a foul by dropping his head into the onrushing defender.

The second crucial call that went against the Buckeyes occurred in the third quarter when an Ohio State defensive touchdown after an apparent Clemson fumble caused by Jeff Okudah and a Jordan Fuller scoop and score was overturned. After review, the SEC officiating crew said the Clemson receiver never had possession of the football. Multiple video playbacks showed that receiver Justyn Ross indeed caught the ball and took several steps before Okudah stripped him of the football.

Clemson did have to punt the football away, but taking six points off the board was bad enough. It also was a severe blow to the psyche of the entire Buckeye squad.

In every football game there are always times at which the officials can call penalties for things like holding, pass interference or hands in the face. Oftentimes even the questionable spotting of the football can stop or keep drives alive. Teams must respond to those things as part of the game, but those two calls in the playoff game were not just part of the game, they were game-changers, and that is a shame when so much is at stake.

Very Special Season

The disappointing loss to Clemson in no way negated a tremendously successful season

for the Buckeyes. This Buckeye squad treated Ohio State fans to an exciting brand of football as a team and with some outstanding individual performances throughout the year. Too many gridiron heroes to mention set multiple records in various categories. Two Buckeyes would be voted in the top four of the Heisman Trophy rankings, and numerous different players would be recognized as All-Big Ten and All-Americans. Most notably, however, were the accomplishments of the team as a whole. So much improved from a year ago in so many ways even though the 2018 squad was exceptional in its own right.

The 2019 Ohio State Buckeyes were one of the most balanced teams offensively in all of college football in terms of the run and the pass. Ohio State opponents were unable to stop the onslaught of big plays by the Buckeye depth of talent at the skilled positions and the physicality of its offensive line. So many times, the explosive Buckeyes put the opposition in a hole, point wise, that was impossible to dig out of by the second half. It was an offense that was led by a first-year quarterback who really knew little of Ohio and its love of college football before he transferred from Georgia just a year ago. The good news is Ohio State fans will be treated to his exceptional talents for another season.

As good as the offense was in 2019, the defense was just as spectacular. A defense that yielded numerous big plays in 2018 was replaced by a stingy and aggressive 2019 unit that dominated opposing offenses. The defensive staff introduced a scheme that was perplexing to whomever they played and a scheme that matched the wealth of defensive talent. Opposing running backs were swarmed when they carried the ball, and opposing quarterbacks looked for cover as the most intimidating defensive front in college football came after them in passing situations. The Ohio State secondary was exceptional against the pass, sound in run support angles and confident and sure open-field tacklers. Even in the playoff game, the defense held the Clemson offense to its third-lowest point total of the season.

A program that went through an embarrassing suspension of its head coach the year before, a team that had to replace a ton of talent that went on to the NFL, and a squad with an untested new head coach at the helm went on to declare itself not only one of the best teams in all of college football but also one of the very best football teams in the storied history of Ohio State football. The Buckeyes were special in so many ways and a team that all of us should be very proud of in 2019 and years to come.

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



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Buckeyes Reloading For Another Run In 2020

Another football season is in the books, and it's kind of hard to believe that it went by so quickly.

It feels like it wasn't all that long ago that the Buckeyes were charging out of the tunnel against Florida Atlantic, rife with expectation and intrigue due to the number of new faces taking more prominent roles.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsmann

Yet here we are, sifting through the remains of a 13-1 season – a season that by nearly all accounts was excellent yet left us wanting more. OSU was this close to toppling defending national champ Clemson but failed to make plays down the stretch. Even so, few would say that Ohio State wasn't one of the top two or three teams in college football in 2019. We know how it goes – the best team doesn't always win it all.

Fans wouldn't have been wrong to enter the year with at least a little apprehension – after all, the new guy in charge was only following a legend, one of the best ever at his craft, Urban Meyer. It wasn't a stretch to think that maybe Ryan Day would have some growing pains, especially with a first-year starter under center in Justin Fields. Having continuity at quarterback is usually a portent of good things, and even though Fields was thought to be supremely talented, doing it in practice and doing it in games are two very different things. No one knew how Fields would do until he was taking live bullets in a game.

Fields' success was probably the biggest story of the season and sets a really good foundation for 2020. With a year already under his belt and the offense nearly mastered – and a return to full health after dealing with a late-season knee injury – Fields should be the leader and player the Buckeyes need to make another run at the 2020 national title. There will be some key pieces gone – J.K. Dobbins, K.J. Hill, Ben Victor among them – but he'll have the benefit of getting most of his experienced protectors back. Wyatt Davis, Thayer Munford and Josh Myers could have all opted for the NFL draft (though truth be told, only Davis would have been a high pick), and their return as much as anything means the offense should have minimal issues. It's much easier to replace skill positions than it is offensive linemen, and when you can get talent to go along with the experience, it's even better.

Buckeye Nation has to like what it saw from Garrett Wilson, especially late in the season, and he should – along with hold-over Chris Olave and a ridiculously talented group of incoming freshmen – make a huge jump with more playing time. Ohio State's receiving corps will be as good and as talented as any in America next season, so look for the Buckeyes to lean a bit more on the pass, especially early on as the running back picture sorts itself out.

Let me say this about the running game – I like Master Teague. I really do. He reminds me a lot of former Buckeye

Joe Montgomery, running with anger and physicality and not afraid to take on contact. But he isn't terribly elusive, and if the hole isn't there, he doesn't appear to have the vision or footwork to create something the way Dobbins did. He should get a lot of time this spring to hone his craft, and maybe he will become more than just a straight-ahead runner. Look for more of a committee approach in 2020, with Marcus Crowley and Steele Chambers involved. Where 2019 was run to set up the pass, it's not hard to envision 2020 being the opposite.

The defense will be different without Chase Young, DaVon Hamilton, Jeff Okudah, Jordan Fuller and Jeff Hafley. That last name could be the biggest loss as he was a big reason that the Buckeyes returned to defensive prominence in 2019 after a horrible 2018. Hafley injected new life into the unit and tweaked a few things the old crew leaned on. Hafley had the look of a future head coach, though few thought the future would arrive so quickly.

He was named the new boss at Boston College and took over for real the day after Ohio State's Fiesta Bowl loss to Clemson. Most reports have Day looking to the past to shape the future, in Tennessee Titans assistant Kerry Coombs. Nothing has been made official, and Coombs wouldn't be able to come aboard until the Titans are eliminated from the NFL playoffs – which may not be anytime soon given how well the Titan defense (and especially the secondary) is playing.

Assuming it is Coombs who replaces Hafley, there shouldn't be much of a learning curve. He's a tireless recruiter, players seem to love playing for him and his secondaries were always known for their aggression and ability to make big hits.

That secondary will be mostly new look, though getting Shaun Wade to return was something of a minor miracle. Tabbed as a mid- to late-first-rounder, Wade decided to put off the big time for another season in Columbus, which should do nothing but enhance his draft stock. With a season as the unquestioned leader and lockdown corner, Wade should be a top-10 selection in the 2021 draft. He also likely felt that he didn't want his final memory as a Buckeye to be leaving the Clemson game after a targeting call and may have believed that his presence on the field late in the game could have meant a different outcome. So having Wade back is huge for the defense. The rest of the secondary will fight during the spring, and it's one area that fans should be really intrigued about.

Malik Harrison was Ohio State's best linebacker all season, showing the ability to grab running backs attempting to get around the corner as well as dropping back into coverage. He's one of the better all-around linebackers available in the draft, and his versatility should allow him to have a pretty long professional career. Not bad for a three-star recruit from Columbus' City League.

Baron Browning really came on late and staked a claim toward a starting job in 2020. He was playing more instinctively and wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty. Tuf Borland and Pete Werner also return, making this one of the more experienced units on the team. Throw in Teradja Mitchell and Dallas Gant, talented kids who should see a spike in playing time, and it may be Ohio State's top defensive unit.

The natural reaction to the departure of Chase Young would be that the Buckeyes won't be able to affect opposing passers as much in 2020. But Ohio State went from 41 sacks in 2018 to a nation's best 54 in 2019, and that was with the loss of Nick Bosa. While it's true that OSU was really without Bosa for the majority of 2018, the fact that number went up so much shows that Young isn't the only guy to worry about.

It still amazes me that Young led the nation in sacks (16½) despite missing a pair of games and being double-teamed for the final three contests of the season. His 18.8 percent pressure rate was the best in college football for defenders who played more than 100 snaps in 2019, and he was such a joy to watch as games unfolded because he usually saved his best for the biggest moments. There were many occasions when I took to watching him alone instead of the defense as a whole because I didn't want to miss anything. It was similar to watching Orlando Pace during his 1996 season at Ohio State.

Young's departure paves the way for Zach Harrison to be the next phenom, and the fact the coaches had his snap count increase as the season progressed says something about his playmaking ability. He is still raw, but under the guidance of Larry Johnson, he should become an absolute monster.

Let's not forget about the return of Jonathon Cooper, either. He brings experience to the edge and will make teams regret it if they ignore him. Tyreke Smith had a 5 percent win rate, so he could also be in line for a lot of playing time in 2020. Tommy Togiai, Tyler Friday and newcomer Cade Stover should all be in the rotation next season and give Ohio State potentially one of the best groups in college football.

Next season's schedule sets up very well for a run at the whole thing – a pair of MAC home games sandwiching a Sept. 12 trip to Eugene to take on an Oregon squad that will be highly thought of but breaking in a new quarterback. Make no mistake about it, that game will shape Ohio State's 2020 fortunes. The Buckeyes

won't leave Columbus again until Oct. 17 when they play the first of consecutive road games against Michigan State followed by a trip to Happy Valley to take on a Penn State that should be their biggest threat to another East Division crown. The traditional showdown with Michigan is at home, and nothing has been shown that says the Wolverines have the chops to pull the upset. Maybe that changes between now and Nov. 28, but I wouldn't count on it.

As I write this on Jan. 12, there are 237 days until the Buckeyes' 2020 season opener. Fortunately, it is much less time until spring football, which commences March 2 and ends April 11 with the annual spring game. So much will be written between now and the season kickoff, which is why the offseason can often be as interesting as the actual campaign.

Tying Up Loose Ends

Though it is already well in the past, it would be a disservice to skip the Fiesta Bowl entirely – though rest assured you can read as much (or as little) as you want about that game in the pages of this latest issue.

There was understandable anger emanating from Columbus and beyond after Clemson's 29-23 victory, though much of that anger was misplaced. OSU fans seemed more concerned with perceived injustices carried out by the officials than by plays the Buckeyes failed to make.

Yes, the overturn on the Buckeyes' fumble return for a TD was egregious – but it was also the only call that truly falls into that category. It affected the game, but certainly wasn't the reason the Buckeyes lost. There was still most of the third and all of the fourth quarter to play when that call was made – OSU even took a lead early in the fourth quarter. So it wasn't that call, but rather the Buckeyes' inability to make a defensive stop in the final three minutes, and a miscommunication between Fields and Olave on what turned out to be the final offensive play of the game for Ohio State. Of the many "what could have beens," those are the two that had a real impact on the game's outcome.



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Playoff Proves Better Team Doesn't Always Win

Losses are easier to take when you know the other team was better. That's why this year's loss in the national semifinal will linger so long for the Buckeyes and their fans. Ohio State was the better team, not Clemson. Maybe three touchdowns better. But the better team does not always win.

That's not taking anything away from

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

Clemson. That's just the reality of sports.

If the better team always won, the 1972 Miami Dolphins would have plenty of company as an undefeated Super Bowl champion. Instead, Miami is the only undefeated Super Bowl champion. The national champion in college football every year would be undefeated.

It took a lethal combination of many things going wrong for Ohio State to lose to Clemson. There were untimely penalties at critical, critical times, extending Clemson drives with targeting and roughing-the-kicker fouls.

There were questionable calls by the referees, most notably negating Jordan Fuller's touchdown on a fumble recovery. So bad was the call, national and Big Ten officiating leaders took the unusual step

of speaking out to say it was a blown call. Three times key plays went to replays, and three times Ohio State came out on the losing side.

And there were injuries, forcing Justin Fields (knee) and J.K. Dobbins (ankle) to do the best they could injured, instead of full go.

All that, and it still came down to an interception with 37 seconds left for Clemson to seal its 29-23 win over Ohio State.

For all those things to work against Ohio State on one night, and still to be within a touchdown of winning? That's why this loss will hurt for a long time.

But I'll still remember this team as the best Ohio State team I've seen in the 41 seasons in the post Woody-Hayes era – just not one that won a national championship.

Tough Times

My theory is that the very best teams are better than before. The talent has become so stacked at the top of college football (Ohio State, Clemson, Alabama, and maybe LSU this year) that there is a bigger than usual drop-off to the rest.

For example, Oklahoma probably really was the fourth-best team this season, ahead of Oregon, but Oklahoma was no match for LSU, down 49-14 by halftime of their semifinal loss to the Tigers. And I don't think that score was a fluke. Ohio State and Clemson may very well have done the same to Oklahoma.

In this era, it seems it takes more talent than usual to win a title.

Incredible Stats

Point differential: The 2019 Buckeyes ended up outscoring their opponents by 464 points, an average of 33.1 points a game. That's the widest margin in school history, breaking the record of 32.7 set way back in 1916. In modern times, the top scoring margin was 32.2 points per game by the 1969 Buckeyes. The widest scoring margin for an Urban Meyer team at Ohio State was 23.9 points in 2016.

Scoring: OSU averaged 46.9 points a game, breaking the school record of 45.5 points a game set in 2013.

Running: J.K. Dobbins had the first 2,000-yard rushing season in Ohio State history, finishing with 2,003 yards. Yes, Dobbins did benefit from a 14-game season, but his 143.1 yards per game still ranked fourth best in school history, behind Eddie George in 1995 (148.2), Keith Byars in 1984 (147.0) and Archie Griffin in 1973 (143.4).

Heisman voting: The Buckeyes had so many big stars that in the Heisman voting they finished third (Justin Fields), fourth (Chase Young) and sixth (Dobbins). One school hadn't had three top-10 finishers since Ohio State in 1973 (John Hicks, second; Griffin, fifth; and Randy Gradishar, sixth).

Targeting?

Kicking Shaun Wade out of the game for targeting seemed harsh, especially since he wasn't even flagged by the officials on the field. The replay booth made the call.

Was the call correct? It seems most people believe it was correct. Others, of course disagree. But it left me wondering that in this day and age, why defenders ever lower their heads. It must be harder to avoid than it seems, or we wouldn't see so many targeting calls.

Should the harshness of the penalty be reduced by the rule makers? Don't bet on it. For the NCAA to lighten the penalty on such plays, the NCAA would be saying it's more concerned about keeping players in the game than the risk of head injuries.

So, like it or not, controversial calls like the one on Wade will likely remain part of the game.

The Rest Of The Big Ten Bowls

Despite big-game losses by Ohio State and Wisconsin, the Big Ten did a nice job in the bowl games, considering the matchups.

Though Wisconsin lost to Oregon, the Badgers played a tough and close game as the Big Ten runner-up against the Pac-12 champion, losing 28-27.

Iowa had a solid, 49-24, win over USC. Michigan State won a game it should have won, 27-21, against Wake Forest. Likewise, for Penn State, a 53-39 winner over Memphis.

But the biggest win, a surprise of sorts, was by Minnesota, which beat Auburn, 31-24. Questions surrounded Minnesota all year, despite its solid record. Wins over both Auburn and Penn State sealed the deal that this Gopher team really was good. Minnesota has gone 5-7, 7-6 and 11-2 in its three seasons under coach P.J. Fleck.

And, to some degree, Michigan overperformed in keeping its game close much of the way against Alabama. Michigan was within five points of Alabama into the fourth quarter, and the final was closer than the 35-16 score indicated. It was widened by the classless move by Alabama coach Nick Saban to run it in for a TD with 26 seconds left, instead of taking a knee.

My Top 10

Heading into the national title game, this is how I had the teams ranked:

1. **LSU (14-0)** – Best résumé through 14 games and appearing to get better.

2. **Ohio State (13-1)** – Yes, the Buckeyes lost to Clemson, but the body of work (five wins vs. top-25 teams for OSU and just two for Clemson) gives the Buckeyes the edge for now. This is subject to change if Clemson beats LSU.

3. **Clemson (14-0)** – It will take a win over LSU to move up.

4. **Oklahoma (12-2)** – As bad as Oklahoma looked against LSU, I'm hard-pressed to say anyone listed below deserves to be ranked above Oklahoma.

5. **Oregon (12-2)** – Hand it to the Ducks for closing out with victories over Utah and Wisconsin.

6. **Minnesota (11-2)** – Unlike Georgia, didn't lose to a team with a losing record.

7. **Georgia (12-2)** – Give the Bulldogs, despite their loss to 4-8 South Carolina, the slight edge over Penn State because of one more win.

8. **Penn State (11-2)** – Solid season, only losses to Ohio State and Minnesota.

9. **Florida (11-2)** – Another two-loss team.

10. **Baylor (11-3)** – The three losses came to teams ranked higher, Georgia and Oklahoma twice.

Basketball Buckeyes

The Ohio State basketball team remains intriguing as the meat of the season arrives.

On one hand, big wins against Villanova, North Carolina and Kentucky made a No. 2 national ranking at the time legitimate.

Then there were back-to-back losses to West Virginia, Wisconsin, Maryland and Indiana plus an earlier loss to Minnesota. Wisconsin was just 8-5 when it beat OSU. Minnesota was only 4-5.

The common thread of course is that Ohio State was not at full strength in any of its losses.

Duane Washington (rib injury) missed the Minnesota game, and Kyle Young (appendix) missed the Wisconsin and Maryland games and likely was limited against West Virginia and Indiana because of the problem that led to the surgery and recovery.

Maybe what we've learned is that Ohio State can make a run at the Final Four, if healthy.

Visiting Cleveland

By the way, the West Virginia game played in Cleveland was a rare opportunity for northern Ohio Buckeye fans to see their team without a trek to Columbus. And they turned out in big numbers.

The crowd of 16,781 was probably split with about 55 percent Ohio State fans and 45 percent for West Virginia.

The game brought back memories of two not-so-good earlier December trips to what is now Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland. A depleted OSU team lost to Cleveland State, 75-73 in 1994 in what was then called Gund Arena. And in 1996, Ohio State lost to Kentucky at Gund Arena, 81-65. But in 2007 in what was by then called Quicken Loans Arena, OSU beat Cleveland State, 80-63.

Also, at the same arena in Cleveland, the 2010-11 Buckeyes scored NCAA Tournament victories over Texas-San Antonio, 75-46, and George Mason, 98-66.

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Loss Doesn't Diminish Great Season For OSU

At some point during this recently completed Ohio State football season, I started telling people that regardless of the final outcome, I was going to have thoroughly enjoyed this version of the Ohio State Buckeyes. It must have been before what was going to be a season-defining, regular-season-ending gantlet of Penn State and archrival Michigan on the road.

Regardless of the outcome in those final two games, I was still going to enjoy this team and this season, and I let anyone who would listen to me know it. I loved the group of guys, the team's camaraderie, the coaching staff, the great defense, the stars on the team (big stars, who were all so humble), the team's grit – everything about the team made watching them and covering them enjoyable.

Of course, the Buckeyes knocked off the Nittany Lions and Wolverines, as well as Wisconsin for a second time, and it was becoming clear that a national championship was really the only fitting end for this team.

We all know what ultimately happened, as the Buckeyes lost in excruciating fashion to their postseason nemesis Clemson in the College Football Playoffs semifinals.

And I remain true to my word. I thoroughly enjoyed this season and am clearly less despondent than many in Buckeye Nation.

In the days just before the game, some savvy Buckeye fans had started to tell me that they were concerned that the defending national champion Clemson might be too much for Ohio State. Working on Saturdays in football season, I hadn't really seen the Tigers play. But I had seen Ohio State play 13 games and I knew that if Clemson was better than the Buckeyes, it was a darn good football team.

Win or lose, I think Ohio State proved that it was every bit as good as the Tigers. If the teams played 10 times, the Buckeyes would win a minimum of five and probably seven games. I spoke to Greg Powers, proprietor of the Shade Restaurant group who is a more savvy observer than me, who completely unprompted said he that he thought "if the teams played 10 times, the Buckeyes would win eight."

As well as they might have played, however, and as crippling as some of the calls that went against them might have been, Ohio State did enough on its own to lose the ballgame. Yes, it seemed like the Tigers got a little bit of a boost from the booth, but I don't think there was an Ohio State fan watching who, while excited that the Buckeyes were leading 16-0, didn't have in the back of their minds that those three field goals in the first half might come back to haunt them.

In the context of those field goals, what about the surefire touchdown pass that J.K. Dobbins – in my mind the best player on the team other than Chase Young – dropped, leaving the Buckeyes to settle for one of those threes. No controversy there.

And there was the roughing-the-punter call in the third period that gave the Tigers new life and ultimately their first lead of the game. That one was on the Buckeyes, though my first reaction was that I hoped the play wouldn't cause Ryan Day to shy away from his aggressive style going forward.

And what about after the Buckeyes, despite everything seemingly going against them, took the lead back with 11:46 to play? They stopped Clemson on a three-and-out and then milked 6:50 off the clock before Drue Chrisman buried the Tigers back at their 6-yard line with only 3:07 remaining.

That's when one of the best defenses in the country, and maybe in Ohio State history, allowed Clemson to march 94 yards in just four plays to take the lead with only 1:49 to

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

play. Again, that was on the Buckeyes, not the officials.

That should have been the backbreaker.

But despite all the adversity in the game with the Tigers – some self-inflicted, some otherwise – there was Ohio State at the end, driving down the field like a team without an ounce of quit in its collective body.

On Ohio State's final offensive play of the season, Chris Olave zigged, Justin Fields zagged and suddenly it was all over. In a big game like that, one team is going to win and one is going to lose. That doesn't take anything away from the incredible seasons that Olave, Fields and the Buckeyes had.

And let me repeat. This was one of my most gratifying seasons covering the Buckeyes, despite the difficult loss against Clemson.

Let's take a look at some of the controversial plays Buckeye fans will be talking about as long as there are Buckeye fans.

The most pivotal play in the game, to my way of thinking, was the targeting call in the second quarter. The Buckeyes were up by 16 and had appeared to stop Clemson for the fifth straight time on a sack by Shaun Wade that, as managing editor emeritus Mark Rea says elsewhere in this issue, was "something that for most of the past century would have been lauded as an outstanding defensive play."

Upon further review, Wade was called for targeting. Not only was Clemson's drive extended, but one of the Buckeyes' best defenders was tossed from the game.

Wade's value was shown almost immediately when Tiger quarterback Trevor Lawrence went after his replacement, Amir Riep, who was called for pass interference, putting Clemson in business at the OSU 16. Three plays later the Tigers had their first score, and the game was never the same.

As a public service, we have printed the rules pertaining to several of the controversial plays on page 9 of this issue. If you follow the letter of the law, I can see how officials made the targeting call. It is the rule with which I have a problem.

I am all for player safety. Very much so. But I am concerned about the way defense is being legislated out of football. Pretty soon all of the great sport of college football will look like the Big 12, with 52-49 scores the norm.

I think if you are going to maintain this rule you have to look at intent. The only intent I saw on Wade's part was to make a good – no, great – defensive play. The fact that Lawrence lowered his head into the path of Wade's helmet makes the Buckeye defender's intent even more questionable. In fact, if I read the rule right, you could have tossed Lawrence for "lowering the head before attacking by initiating forcible contact with the crown of the helmet."

Tossing Lawrence would have evened things up!

Turning to Rea again, "the so-called targeting rule with regard to how it is enforced on the college level is what happens when good intentions cross paths with bad implementation."

This is really a rule that needs to be reviewed, and I felt the same way when Joey Bosa was thrown out of this same Fiesta Bowl vs. Notre Dame after the 2015 season for what was another outstanding defensive play.

But as the rule reads, "When in question, it is a foul." Off to the showers, Shaun.

As for Dobbins' catch crossing the goal line

that was overturned, I think that was the right call. Buckeyes fans seem 50-50 on that one.

"If a player goes to the ground in the act of catching a pass (with or without contact by an opponent) he must maintain complete and continuous control of the ball throughout the process of contacting the ground, whether in the field of play or *in the end zone* (my italics)."

But the one that every Buckeye fan and most football fans and observers seem to agree on is the negated scoop and score.

According to the rules, a catch occurs when a receiver "maintains control of the ball long enough to enable him to perform an act common to the game, i.e., long enough to pitch or hand the ball, *advance it*, avoid or ward off an opponent, etc. (again, my italics)."

I looked at every angle they showed on that play and I had to wonder what the replay officials were looking at. In each replay it appeared that Justyn Ross caught the ball and was heading upfield, "advancing" it, before Jeff Okudah knocked it away. I always ask myself if I am just being a homer, but at the very least there was not enough evidence to overturn the call on the field.

One other rule we printed was one concerning the process of a replay. After the game, a couple of different people told me that they were surprised to hear that it was the official on the field who ruled on a replay. I had never heard of such a thing either. In fact that seemed quite strange to me.

"To reverse an on-field ruling, *the replay official* must be convinced beyond all doubt by indisputable video evidence through one or more video replays provided to the monitor (again, my italics)."

That sounds like the decision is made in the booth.

I just hope that 20 years from now, Buckeye fans don't sound like Miami Hurricane fans who are *still* (my italics) complaining about that pass-interference call in the 2002 national championship game. Despite all the controversy, the Buckeyes, like the Hurricanes before them, had their chances to win that game.

It was a great game and a great season, and as promised, I am going to savor it.

Easy Way To Miss The End

With all the big plays, controversial plays and twists and turns in the Fiesta Bowl, action on our BuckeyeSports.com "Official Game Thread" was lively during the game. Interestingly, much of the chatter had to do with former Buckeye quarterback Kirk Herbstreit's repeated mention of Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables.

The old drinking game of having to drink a shot every time a name or phrase is mentioned was brought up and it was noted that if you downed one each time Herbstreit mentioned Venables, you would have passed out in the first quarter or shortly thereafter and would not have had to endure the painful ending of the game.

Conspiracy theorists might point out that one of Herbstreit's sons is a walk-on defensive back, playing under Venables.

For the record, Venables and his Clemson defense entered the game yielding 244.7 yards per game. Despite all of Herbie's props to the DC, Ohio State racked up 516 yards of total offense, more than double what the Tigers had been giving up.

In fairness to Venables, the Tiger defense did stiffen when it had to, yielding only the three pivotal field goals in the first half. Many Buckeye fans, however, would point out Clemson's red-zone defense was aided by Dobbins' butterfingers as much as Venables' coaching.

Herbstreit has come a long way from his early days on the national television scene, when he seemed to go overboard in his intent to prove he was not a homer for his alma mater, a demeanor that caused many Buckeye fans to turn against him. I believe most in Buckeye Nation now find him a source of pride.

But if ESPN does any sort of quality control of their broadcasts and Herbstreit reviews his call of the game, he may find, indeed, that he was a little caught up in Venables-mania.

Speaking of defense, the Buckeye defense held Clemson to 131 yards less than it had gained per game up to that point and better than 17 points below their scoring average.

However, last year's ugly problem reared its head at the Fiesta Bowl as Ohio State, seemingly for the first time all season, was vulnerable to the big play.

Most visible was Lawrence's 67-yard touchdown run to pull Clemson within two before the break. But the Tigers put the game away with touchdown receptions of 53 and 34 yards by Travis Etienne. In fact, on the game-winning touchdown drive, Lawrence had a 38-yard pass to Amari Rodgers to set up Etienne's 34-yard score.

When not yielding those long plays, the Ohio State defense clicked, forcing four three-and-outs and six total drives of 21 yards or under, not counting running out the clock at the end of the half and the game. The Buckeyes put on one of the hardest-hitting displays of defense that I can remember. I kept waiting for all that pounding to take its toll on Lawrence, but it never did. He proved as tough as the Buckeyes who faced him.

By the way, heading into the national championship game between Clemson and LSU, Ohio State was No. 1 in the country in total defense, giving up 259.7 yards a game as compared to the 264.1 by No. 2 Clemson.

In fairness to Venables and his troops, Clemson was leading the country in scoring defense, giving up 11.5 points a game, while Ohio State checked in at No. 4 with 13.7.

But despite all of Herbstreit's babbling about the master Clemson defensive coordinator, I think most Buckeye fans were perfectly content with the defensive staff of Jeff Hailey, Greg Mattison, Larry Johnson and the rest of the crew. How about a little love for them, Kirk?

My Surprise, Disappointment

The Buckeye who most surprised me in the Fiesta Bowl was Chrisman, a weapon for Ohio State who had been somewhat of a nonfactor down the stretch this season.

Chrisman averaged 45.3 yards on six punts with three inside the 20 and did his job to try to secure the victory when, as mentioned, he buried the Tigers at their 6-yard line to start their game-winning drive.

My biggest disappointment was Master Teague, who had been masterful all season but gained just nine yards on seven carries with a long of five. A big game from Teague might have eased the pressure on the gimpy Dobbins to produce and paved the way to a Buckeye victory.

On the two drives between the time Dobbins left the game late in the second quarter and hobbled back on the field in the third, Ohio State had a three-and-out and a drive that stalled at the Tiger 45 with Teague carrying a combined four times for three net yards.



FOR ATHLETES

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HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

You may have a concussion if you have any of these symptoms after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body:

- Get a headache
- Feel dizzy, sluggish or foggy
- Be bothered by light or noise
- Vomit or feel sick to your stomach
- Have trouble focusing or problems remembering
- Feel more emotional or problems remembering
- Feel more emotional or "down"
- Feel confused
- Have problems with sleep



HOW CAN I HELP MY TEAM?

PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

Avoid hits to the head and follow the rules for safe and fair play to lower your chances of getting a concussion. Ask your coaches for more tips.

BE A TEAM PLAYER

You play an important role as part of a team. Encourage your teammates to report their symptoms and help them feel comfortable taking the time they need to get better.

Concussion symptoms usually show up right away, but you might not notice that something "isn't right" for hours or days. A concussion feels different to each person, so it is important to tell your parents and doctor how you are feeling.

The information provided in this document or through linkages to other sites is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for concussion should be directed to a physician or other health care provider.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>



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