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Vol. 39, No. 15

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Feb. 1, 2020

## Ohio State Basketball Searching For Identity

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

Coming off a victory over Kentucky Dec. 21, the Ohio State men's basketball team stood on top of the world at 11-1 and No. 2 in the Associated Press top 25 poll at Christmas.

A dominant start to the season, with wins against Cincinnati, Villanova, North Carolina and Penn State, along with the Wildcats, put Ohio State in the conversation concerning the nation's best teams. Then the Buckeyes proceeded to drop four straight games and six of seven contests in a span of less than a month.

"Bottom line, we just have got to find a way to play tougher and smarter," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said on Jan. 22. "And that may seem like an oversimplification, but there's a lot that goes into it."

With a young roster that is not laden with talent, Holtmann's squad caught the college basketball world by surprise with its hot start, particularly given its lack of expe-

When a team's talent level and experience are not up to par with its competition, it needs to build its identity around toughness and defense.

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Senior wing Andre Wesson has displayed competitive toughness all season long, playing through multiple injuries and making winning plays with relentless effort. A play that encapsulated both what Wesson provides (and what the Buckeyes need more of) came in a loss at Indiana.

With Ohio State trailing by nine points, Wesson cut through the paint looking for a pass, but junior big man Kaleb Wesson's dish was deflected and stolen by the Hoosiers. Andre Wesson chased down speedy Indiana guard Rob Phinisee and blocked his shot into the hands of junior guard C.J. Walker. Andre kept his motor churning as he trailed Walker down the court, resulting in a put-back dunk off a missed layup, which ignited a 15-1 Scarlet and Gray run.

"Those are winning plays, especially made by a senior," junior forward Kyle Young said of Andre Wesson's effort. "He's a dude that's going to give us everything he has. When you see him giving his all, and especially this being his last

**Continued On Page 8** 



SONNY BROCKWAY

SENIOR LEADER – Ohio State wing Andre Wesson is shooting a team-leading 44.6 percent from three-point land while chipping in 9.1 points per game for the Buckeyes this season.



## From The Message Board

The Ohio State men's basketball team elevated as high as the No. 2 spot in the AP poll on Dec. 23. Since that point, the Buckeyes dropped 6 of 8 games, plummeting out of the rankings. Following Ohio State's 62-59 loss to Minnesota on Jan. 23, Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked our readers for their input on what went wrong with the Scarlet and Gray from their perspectives. Here are some of their thoughtful responses:

"1) Kyle Young went out with the appendectomy. 2) The poor talent in the backcourt got exposed once B1G play started and the competition got tougher. 3) E.J. Liddell and Alonzo Gaffney adding little off the bench. 4) Kaleb Wesson not being the scorer this team needs. 5) Consistently scoring in the 50-60 point range."

– mrbiabux

"I wonder if their morale is low, kind of like what happened at the end of the Thad Matta years. Their attitude seems lackluster."

- PeyoteBuck

"I really don't know what specific thing has caused the Buckeyes to go into their tailspin – probably multiple things like mrbigbux has pointed out. I think the fact that this team just can't consistently hit shots from outside the paint area has been their biggest weakness."

- BRENT A GREATHOUSE

"The most important factor in my estimation is that almost every team in the B1G is much better than anybody expected when the season began. Some bracketology has 11 teams making the NCAA Tournament. I think the seventh-place B1G team could be very good, and at this point, seventh might be OSU's ceiling."

Torrior Puck

"I think they lack a true scoring threat. One guy that can get everything going."

- Tiffin Buckeye

"Ultimately, it seems to just be a poorly constructed roster. The leading scorer is a big man that isn't prone to big outbursts of points, and the second-best scorer is a guard that has spent the last month in the doghouse and has little interest in defense. It's a roster designed to be balanced that has no ability to hit extremes on either side of the ball when it needs to, almost like a triple-option team in football."

- Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

## From The Pages Of BSB

## 35 Years Ago - 1985

Ohio State was officially back in contention for the 1985 Big Ten basketball title.

After dropping road games to Michigan State and Michigan the first week of the Big Ten season, Ohio State returned to St. John Arena and notched consecutive victories against Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana.

The 86-84 win over Indiana Jan. 19 raised the Buckeyes' Big Ten record to 3-2 and put them into a tie with Iowa, Indiana and Minnesota for third behind Illinois and Michigan (4-2) in the conference. Having that last win come against the Hoosiers served as a plus for guard-forward Dave Jones.

"It's always fun beating Indiana," Jones said. "It's just like the Michigan game in football. We beat them when they were number one in the country when I was a sophomore. This ranks right up there with that win."

## 30 Years Ago - 1990

OSU center Perry Carter's 18-point output against Wisconsin on Jan. 13 was the latest turn in a season that had been a roller-coaster ride for the 6-8 junior.

Carter's season began with a lingering kidney bruise that kept him out of action for three weeks, before the OSU captain returned to play and produced two stellar efforts – an 18-point showing against Mount St. Mary's and a 17-point, eight-rebound game against Oklahoma State

Then Carter survived through lackluster performances against North Carolina State, American University and South Carolina before breaking loose against La Salle at the Sugar Bowl Classic in New Orleans with 23 points and 13 rebounds.

"I don't see any game as being a rough game for me because my attitude is to go out and play hard and accept the result," the OSU center said.

## 25 Years Ago - 1995

A report in The Columbus Dispatch had Ohio State head coach John Cooper close to hiring Tennessee defensive backs coach Lovie Smith, a former player of Cooper's at Tulsa, to fill a vacancy on his staff.

Cooper refused to confirm that report, saying, "There is no urgency on hiring coaches at this moment. When the time is right, you'll know what we're doing."

The Buckeyes had two vacancies on the staff after tackles and tight ends coach Lee Owens accepted the head coaching job at Akron in December, while quarterbacks coach Ron Hudson was fired by Cooper on Jan. 8.

The report indicated that Cooper was looking to move defensive backs coach Larry Coker to quarterbacks coach, creating a natural spot for Smith.

## 20 Years Ago - 2000

Throughout the 2000 season, Ohio State men's basketball coach Jim O'Brien had prefaced statements with "If we can just hit shots ..."

That had proved to be somewhat elusive as the Buckeyes, despite their start (11-3, 3-1) and national ranking, were connecting on just 44.6 percent of their field-goal attempts and averaging 64.8 points in conference games, not exactly awe-inspiring totals.

"We have a goal chart in our locker room, and we have very few of our offensive goals circled," OSU guard Brian Brown said. "It's hard. Everybody's playing pressure defense all up and down the court. Guys are missing shots, but I think you have to credit the defense."

## 15 Years Ago - 2005

Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith used money he accepted from a booster to pay for a cell phone his mother had obtained for former tailback Maurice Clarett, according to The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer. The report indicated that Smith had received the money from booster Robert Q. Baker.

booster Robert Q. Baker.

Ohio State athletic director Andy Geiger told the newspaper that Ohio State had investigated Clarett's use of multiple cell phones but "we did not know anything about that particular cell phone."

Geiger said federal student privacy laws prevented him from commenting on whether the Smiths got a cell phone for Clarett during the summer of 2003, after Clarett had been suspended from the team for a season.

## 10 Years Ago - 2010

Evan Turner proved that he who laughs last laughs best.

Facing a hostile environment Jan. 12 on the road at No. 6 Purdue, the Ohio State junior point guard watched as Robbie Hummel put up 29 points in the first half. Then in the final 20 minutes, Turner put up 23 of his own to finish with a career-high 32 and key unranked OSU's 70-66 upset of the Boilermakers.

As the final seconds ticked off, the formerly boister-

ous crowd of 14,123 at Mackey Arena was reduced to silence.

"It felt absolutely great," Turner said of the hotly contested game. "All the controversial stuff that happened throughout the night, it didn't matter. That all got washed out the window."

## Five Years Ago - 2015

Twelve days after Ohio State was crowned national champion and celebrated with its fans who made the trip to Texas, the Buckeyes got a chance to do the same thing in a more familiar environment.

Ohio Stadium played host to the first-ever College Football Playoff champions and approximately 45,000 of the Buckeyes' biggest fans Jan. 24 for Ohio State's official championship celebration. The team and coaching staff entered the stadium with smoke and fire creating a spectacle on a cold Saturday morning.

After remarks from local politicians, athletics director Gene Smith and university president Michael Drake, head coach Urban Meyer took the microphone.

"I'm very humbled and honored on behalf of our players and coaching staff to be able to bring back to the great state of Ohio the Big Ten championship trophy, the Sugar Bowl trophy and the first-ever College Football Playoff National Championship trophy," the three-time national championship coach said.

## One Year Ago - 2019

Rising sophomore quarterback Tate Martell took to Twitter Jan. 16 and announced his transfer from Ohio State to Miami (Fla.), where he would reunite with two Las Vegas Bishop Gorman teammates in tight end Brevin Jordan and safety Bubba Bolden.

Martell entered the NCAA transfer portal earlier in January, taking a visit to West Virginia before arriving in Miami. Prior to the announcement in favor of the Hurricanes, he was reportedly slated for a visit to Louisville.

After making his decision, Martell was greeted with plenty of fanfare in the Sunshine state.

"He's been received great," said Gary Ferman of CaneSport.com. "Miami very badly needs to upgrade its level of talent at quarterback, and I think that there's anticipation that he can do that. So he's been received very well and will continue to be, and from this point it's up to him."

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No. 3	Sept. 21	No. 15	Feb. 1
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No. 5	Oct. 5	No. 17	March 7
No. 6	Oct. 19	No. 18	March 21
No. 7	Oct. 26	No. 19	April 4
No. 8	Nov. 9	No. 20	April 18
No. 9	Nov. 16	No. 21	May
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## **OPINION**

## Various Items Left On The Cutting Room Floor

It's time for my third annual "Column of Leftovers" in which I share some of the material that was trimmed from columns written during the most recent Ohio State football season.

Here is some of what you missed over the last couple of months.

## **Early Passing Success**

After Justin Fields completed the first pass attempt of his Ohio State career – a modest 5-yard toss to tight end Jeremy Ruckert in the season opener against Florida Atlantic – I wondered how many other quarterbacks had completed their first pass attempt as a Buckeye.

It's actually a longer list that I had anticipated. Dwayne Haskins, J.T. Barrett, Terrelle Pryor, Bobby Hoying and Art Schlichter are among the starting quarterbacks who completed their first attempts as Ohio State quarterbacks.

Haskins hooked up with C.J. Saunders for a 14-yard gain against Army in 2017, and Barrett connected for 14 yards to Devin Smith against Navy in 2014. Pryor's first attempt wound up as a 9-yard reception for Lamaar Thomas in the 2008 season opener against Youngstown State, Hoying completed a 4-yard flip to Joey Galloway against Bowling Green in 1992, and Schlichter completed a 6-yard throw to Doug Donley in the 1978 season opener against Penn State.

While those QBs enjoyed success in terms of their initial career pass attempts, it took some of them much longer to record their first touchdown pass as Buckeyes.

Schlichter didn't throw the first of his 50 career touchdown passes until a 51-yard strike to Donley during a 34-28 win against Baylor. It was OSU's third game of the 1978 season and came on Schlichter's 39th career attempt.

Pryor's first TD came on his 18th attempt, a 13-yard score to tight end Rory Nicol against Troy in 2008, while Barrett threw 12 times before hooking up with Smith on an 80-yard bomb against Navy in 2014. Meanwhile, Hoying threw a 2-yard scoring pass to tight end Joe Metzger in the 1992 Northwestern game, the touchdown coming on Hoying's 11th career attempt.

Haskins' first touchdown came on his seventh attempt, a 28-yarder to Saunders against UNLV in 2017. And Fields beat them all, hitting pay dirt on only his second career attempt at Ohio State, a 25-yard score to Ruckert against FAU.

Troy Smith also threw a touchdown pass on his second career attempt, a 23-yard pass to Santonio Holmes during a 27-6 win against Cincinnati in the 2004 season opener. The TD pass also served as Smith's first career completion

Since 1960, there have actually been two Ohio State quarterbacks who have thrown touchdown passes on their first career attempts.

Early in the fourth quarter against Oregon in 1968, Ron Maciejowski – subbing for starter Rex Kern – tossed a short pass to Bruce Jankowski that the OSU receiver turned into a 55-yard touchdown romp. It was the final score in an eventual 21-6 victory for the Buckeyes.

More than three decades later, Scott McMullen took full advantage of the first meaningful snap of his Ohio State career. Entering the 2000 season opener against Fresno State with just 0:02 remaining in the game, McMullen eschewed a traditional kneel-down and instead fired a 44-yard touchdown strike to Ricky Bryant to set the final score at 43-10 in favor of the Buckeyes.

## **Covering Earle**

The truth is that it used to be a little more fun covering Ohio State football back when the university didn't hold such a tight rein on

interviews and coaches and players seemed more willing to share their true feelings rather than quote chapter and verse from the book of

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

sports clichés.

That also included some spirited give-and-take in the locker room after games.

One example of what I mean occurred following Ohio State's 21-0 victory against Wisconsin at Camp Randall Stadium in 1980. The Badgers weren't very good back then, and the Buckeyes pretty much just went through the motions, scoring all of their points in the first half before putting things on cruise control.

After the game, it didn't take long for head coach Earle Bruce to butt heads with some inquisitive reporters.

When Bruce was asked if the game was his team's worst outing of the season, the coach replied, "We won, 21-0, didn't we? I don't like this negative approach. It's very annoying to me. Don't you guys want me to come to these things?

"We won, 21-0. We shut them out. Do you expect us to beat them 59-0 every year? Don't you think that game last year (when OSU indeed defeated the Badgers by a 59-0 final) gave them incentive to get better? And we're playing at Wisconsin this year to boot."

Bruce's mood didn't improve any when the next questioner asked if he thought his team was improving at the halfway point of the season

"I don't know," the coach shot back. "We beat Northwestern, 63-0, a couple of weeks ago, and then last week against a very good Indiana ballclub ... we won, 27-17. Today, we go on the road and play a fine defensive football game and win 21-0. That's not bad."

In hindsight, the assembled reporters had a point with their questions. The Buckeyes fumbled four times against the Badgers, normally reliable kicker Vlade Janakievski missed three field goals, and Schlichter completed only 9 of 21 passes for 89 yards with no touchdowns and one interception. He was also sacked six times.

Still, the final straw for Bruce came when a reporter said he overheard a fan say it was a dog of a game.

"You're right, that's a fan. They're fickle," a red-faced Bruce said through clenched teeth while channeling his inner Woody Hayes. "You've got your story. That ought to keep you guys going for two or three days."

Imagine that kind of exchange in today's social media-driven world. Yet, back in 1980, the entire episode was forgotten by the time the Buckeyes traveled to Michigan State the following week and stomped their way to a 48-16 victory.

## **Record-Setting Quartet**

Among the many offensive milestones Ohio State has established over the past few seasons is an unusual one regarding 1,000-yard receivers

When Austin Mack and Chris Olave totaled a respective 54 and 50 receiving yards in the Fiesta Bowl against Clemson, it gave the Buckeyes four players on its roster with 1,000 or more career receiving yards. It marked the second consecutive year OSU had accomplished such a feat, as Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin, Johnnie Dixon and Hill surpassed 1,000 career yards in 2018.

By the time the Fiesta Bowl had ended, Mack (1,046) and Olave (1,042) had joined teammates K.J. Hill (2,332) and Binjimen Victor (1,350) as receivers who had eclipsed the 1,000-yard mark for their careers.

Hill had become OSU's all-time leading pass-catcher with seven catches against Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game, and six more against Clemson gave him 201 receptions for his career – the Buckeyes' first-ever 200-catch receiver.

Hill's career yardage figure also ranks him sixth all-time in program history, and his 20 career TD catches make him only the sixth OSU player to reach that plateau.

## **What Might Have Been**

Ohio State fans aggrieved about the Fiesta Bowl officiating might want to save some of their anger for North Carolina head coach Mack Brown and a decision he made in late September.

Back on Sept. 28, Brown, who has more than 250 wins and a national championship during a College Football Hall of Fame coaching career that dates back more than 30 years, instructed his underdog North Carolina team to go for two after pulling to within one point of then top-ranked Clemson with 1:17 remaining.

The Tar Heels inexplicably called for an option play that Clemson easily snuffed out, and the Tigers escaped with a 21-20 victory.

Had Brown elected to send the game into overtime, perhaps his team could have emerged with the upset of the century and forever altered the course of the 2019 college football season.

Unfortunately, we'll never know.

## **Saying Goodbye**

This isn't a leftover, but I would remiss if I didn't note the passing of a dear friend.

I first met Vince Koza in late October 2003 on the wind-swept campus of Indiana University, stopping by his tiny, tailgate tent for a few minutes of pregame radio analysis offered in subfreezing conditions. I couldn't tell you what he asked that day, or what (if anything) I added to his show, but it was the beginning of a friendship I cherished until Koza's untimely Jan. 3 death following a brief but courageous battle against cancer.

Koza was a longtime television and radio fixture in Lima, Ohio, where he became as well-known for his fun-loving personality as for such catchphrases as "I loooooove it!" when his local teams were winning and "Ooosh, ouch, eeesh!" when things were going south.

His distinctive, high-pitched voice was the soundtrack for more than three decades of Friday and Saturday night football and basketball games throughout his beloved "Limaland," and the fundraisers and charity events he either lent his name to or emceed over the years numbered in the hundreds.

Above all, though, Koza was a devoted husband and father, and one of the greatest, most loyal friends anyone could ever have.

And if it was a good time you were looking for, The Koz was your man. Time spent prowling around Columbus during the annual state boys' basketball tournament, or my many excursions to Lima when he and I were chauffeured around town by our mutual friend Tom Offenbacher, are some of my fondest memories.

Some say one of the curses of getting older is that you have to learn to say goodbye. The trouble is, no matter how many times I have had to say goodbye over the past few years, I don't seem to be getting any better at it.

All I guess I can say is that I loved Vince Koza and I'll miss him.



### Coombs Returns To OSU As Defensive Coordinator

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day filled the second of Ohio State's two coaching vacancies on Jan. 20, just a day after new defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs' Tennessee Titans were eliminated from the NFL playoffs. What's old is new again for the Buckeyes with the hire, as Coombs has plenty of experience with Ohio and served as Ohio State's defensive backs coach for six seasons under Urban Meyer, from 2012 to 2017.

"Kerry Coombs is the coach I was really hoping we could hire and bring back to Ohio State," Day said in Ohio State's announcement of the hire. "He is an excellent coach, and he has had two outstanding seasons in the NFL on Mike Vrabel's staff with the Tennessee Titans."

Ohio State director of strength and conditioning Mickey Marotti expressed a similar sentiment at a Jan. 22 press conference.

"It's awesome," Marotti said of Coombs being back to Ohio State. "He brings an energy level. You guys know what he is."

Marotti went on to compare Coombs to the "Energizer Bunny" and said that the co-defensive coordinator had already returned to his routine of arriving at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center at 5:30 a.m. every day.

Coombs spent the first 35 years of his career in Ohio, serving as a high school football stalwart from 1983 to 2006 and coaching one of the state's top programs at Colerain from 1991-2006. He moved to the college level when he was hired at Cincinnati as a defensive backs coach

in 2007, where he stayed until Ohio State came calling after the 2011 season.

Known for his high-energy demeanor and on-field antics, Coombs was a fan favorite during his time in Columbus. On top of that, he was considered one of the nation's top recruiters, reeling in 21 blue-chip defensive backs during his six years in Columbus, headlined by Eli Apple, Vonn Bell and Gareon Conley in 2013, Marshon Lattimore and Damon Webb in 2014, Denzel Ward in 2015, Jordan Fuller in 2016 and Jeff Okudah and Shaun Wade in 2017.

Coombs also helped to find eventual stars in Malik Hooker and Damon Arnette, both of whom came to Ohio State as three-star prospects.

"I've spent a season on staff with Kerry, and I really like his coaching and knowledge of the game, but I also like that he knows Ohio State and he knows how to recruit to Ohio State," Day said of Coombs' recruiting. "He's recruited some of the players currently on the team, and he coached a handful of Buckeye defensive backs who went on to become first-round NFL draft picks."

After they arrived at Ohio State, those top recruits usually left as future NFL players, including an impressive five first-round cornerbacks: Bradley Roby (2014, Denver Broncos), Apple (2016, New York Giants), Lattimore (2017, New Orleans Saints), Conley (2017, Oakland Raiders) and Ward (2018, Cleveland Browns). Every starting cornerback at Ohio State under Coombs went on to play in the NFL, with Travis Howard the only one who went undrafted.

Just as Day did, Coombs' former players were quick to praise the 58-year-old, as was his former employer, Vrabel.

"Coach Coombs coming back to Ohio State is going to bring back that spark," former safety Damon Webb told The Columbus Dispatch. "He's real ready (to be a defensive coordinator). I know he's ready to take that next step."

"I never want to be the coach that keeps people from doing what they want to do," Vrabel said of Coombs' departure during a press conference on Jan. 20. "I'm happy for Kerry, and he's on his way to Columbus."

With his return to Columbus comes a change in title and a hefty salary increase for the former cornerbacks and special teams coach. Coombs will be taking over officially as Ohio State's new co-defensive coordinator and defensive backs coach, a spot filled by now Boston College head coach Jeff Hafley in 2019.

## **2020 Ohio State Football Schedule**

Date	Opponent	Time (ET)	TV	2019 Record
Sept. 5	BOWLING GREEN	TBA	TBA	3-9 (2-6 Mid-American)
Sept. 12	at Oregon*	TBA	TBA	12-2 (8-1 Pac-12)
Sept. 19	BUFFALO*	TBA	TBA	8-5 (5-3 Mid-American)
Sept. 26	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	2-10 (0-9 Big Ten)
Oct. 10	IOWA*	TBA	TBA	10-3 (6-3 Big Ten)
Oct. 17	at Michigan State*	TBA	TBA	7-6 (4-5 Big Ten)
Oct. 24	at Penn State*	TBA	TBA	11-2 (7-2 Big Ten)
Oct. 31	NEBRASKA	TBA	TBA	5-7 (3-6 Big Ten)
Nov. 7	INDIANA*	TBA	TBA	8-5 (5-4 Big Ten)
Nov. 14	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	3-9 (1-8 Big Ten)
Nov. 21	at Illinois*	TBA	TBA	6-7 (4-5 Big Ten)
Nov. 28	MICHIGAN*	TBA	TBA	9-4 (6-3 Big Ten)
Dec. 5	Big Ten Championship*	* 8 p.m.	TBA	
* 2019 k	oowl team			
** at In	dianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadiu	m)		

## **Recruiting Wrap-Up Mails Feb. 11**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin's traditional Football Recruiting Wrap-up will be mailed on Feb. 11. There is no need to miss any late-breaking recruiting news between now and then, however, as the BSB staff will be posting any updates on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com. The first reports from the traditional signing day, Feb. 5, will also be posted there.

The BuckeyeSports.com website, free to BSB subscribers, is available 24/7/365 with all the breaking news posted for all the Buckeye sports, including men's and women's basketball, with additional features not found in the BSB print edition. 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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If you have any questions about BuckeyeSports.com or your mail service, feel free to call us at the above number.

The salary increase will have Coombs paid \$1.2 million per year, making him Ohio State's highest paid assistant on staff, and marking an increase from Hafley's \$950,000 in 2019. Coombs made \$500,000 in 2017 with the Buckeyes.

The raise doesn't make Coombs the highest paid assistant in Buckeye history, though it does make him the highest paid since that record was set by defensive coordinator Greg

Schiano in 2018, when the new Rutgers head coach pulled in \$1,500,000.

## DE Williams In The Transfer Portal

Redshirt freshman defensive end Alex Williams officially entered the transfer portal on Jan. 15, likely marking the end of his short career in Columbus.

Williams, a former three-star recruit from nearby Pickerington, Ohio, had seen the field only sparingly in his two years at Ohio State. After a year on the bench as a true freshman, Williams played in three games in 2019 – 64 snaps in total – and recorded eight total tackles. He had his best game against Miami (Ohio), when he notched two solo tackles and assisted on another two.

A one-time West Virginia commitment, Williams could still remove himself from the portal and return to Ohio State, but he will likely look to make a move to a school with a friend-lier depth chart than the one Ohio State offers. The Buckeyes have Jonathon Cooper, Tyler Friday, Zach Harrison, Javontae Jean-Baptiste and Tyreke Smith all set to return.

On top of that, the Buckeyes have brought in five young defensive ends since 2018 in redshirt freshmen Noah Potter and Cade Stover and freshmen Jacolbe Cowan, Ty Hamilton and Darrion Henry-Young.

With Williams off the books, Ohio State will be down to 87 scholarship players entering 2020 (including unsigned 2020 commitment Cameron Martinez), two over the 85-man roster limit.

## **Dennis' Promotion Provides Stability**

The promotion of Corey Dennis from senior quality control assistant to quarterbacks coach





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Does not include alcoholic beverages. Dine in only. Not valid with other offers. Tax not included. Expires 3/5/20 on Jan. 1 didn't come as a big surprise. The 27-year-old had worked for Ohio State since 2015 and was familiar both with the program and with head coach Day, whom he had worked directly under since 2017.

Although it wasn't a surprise, Day did still have to face a few questions about the promotion of the youngest coach on staff, given Dennis' résumé and age, the former of which is made up entirely by his experience as a staffer at Ohio State. Day met those questions head on, explaining what he called an "easy decision" on Jan. 15.

"Since I've got here, Corey's kind of been my right-hand man," Day said, speaking publicly for the first time since Dennis' promotion. "We've spent a lot of time in that meeting room, and he knows exactly how we teach things."

Along with familiarity with Ohio State's style in coaching quarterbacks, Day cited Dennis's familiarity with the quarterbacks on Ohio State's roster. Dennis worked directly with Justin Fields in 2019 and helped secure the commitment of incoming freshman C.J. Stroud in December.

"He's got a tremendous relationship with the quarterbacks here," Day said of Dennis. "He's done a good job in recruiting, he's had a hand in a lot of stuff and so I feel great with not only the fact that he can teach the way we teach it, but also, it leaves some continuity in that room."

Despite Dennis' young age, Day also sees the potential for some stability in a quarterbacks room that will be on its third coach in as many years after Day's promotion to head coach in 2018 and Mike Yurcich's move to Texas in December.

"Corey's a young coach who's got a really

bright future," Day said. "And I think everything that you put into Corey, you're going to get back and invest because he's so bright.

"I really want to solidify that room and have some stability in there, so I think that was critical too, because I know Corey is invested in Ohio State and his family," Day said of the son-in-law of Meyer. "Recruits want to go to someplace that is going to have that continuity, that, 'Hey, I'm recruiting you, but I'm going to be here when you graduate. I'm going to see you through this thing.' I think that more than anything is a huge selling point."

In the hire, Day looks to be hoping for a repeat of Brian Hartline, who has excelled in his role as wide receivers coach after taking over in 2018 and said in December that he has no plans to depart from his alma mater.

Perhaps most importantly for Day, a longtime quarterbacks coach in his own right with a specific style, is that Dennis won't look to rock the boat schematically.

"When you're dealing with a quarterback, for me, it has to be done the way that we've done it here," Day said. "And when someone else starts bringing in their different opinions or we read it this way, we don't have time for that. We know what works here. We have a system in place that is really efficient.

"We feel pretty strongly that we know how to develop quarterbacks. And one thing that I felt like I couldn't have conversations with is like 'No, we're going to read this differently or teach this differently.' We have so many other things that we need to focus on, we feel great about that, and Corey's bought into that and he's going to enhance it."

## 2021 Opener Moved To Thursday Night

Ohio State will be opening its 2021 season against a Big Ten foe in Minnesota, marking a change from the traditional nonconference season opener, though that much is not new information.

The Big Ten has looked for conference games to open new seasons in recent years, and Ohio State had one such game in 2017, a 49-21 win over Indiana.

However, Ohio State's road trip to Minnesota in 2021 won't be kicking off on Saturday, as had previously been announced. The matchup will move from Saturday, Sept. 4, to Thursday, Sept. 2, meaning that Ohio State will be playing just its first Thursday night game since the 2017 season-opener at Indiana.

Ohio State had a non-Saturday game in 2019, as well, with the Buckeyes taking on Northwestern on a Friday night on Oct. 18.

Ohio State confirmed the change on Jan. 21, a day after Minnesota changed its future schedules to reflect the weeknight kick.

It will be Ohio State's first trip to Minnesota since 2014, when J.T. Barrett led the Buckeyes to a 31-24 victory. The Buckeyes and Golden Gophers last faced off in 2018, a 30-14 win for Ohio State.

In addition to the 2021 change, Ohio State confirmed on Jan. 24 that a future series with Texas would be undergoing a change. The Longhorns will be traveling to Ohio State for a season-opening Aug. 30 matchup in 2025, and the Buckeyes will make a return trip to Austin on Sept. 12, 2026, a week later than the original date.

Originally, the series plan had Texas hosting in 2025, with Ohio State hosting the return trip a year later.

Texas and Ohio State have played just three times. The first of which was in 2005, a 25-22 win for the Longhorns in Columbus. Ohio State returned the favor a year later with a 24-7 win, but Texas took the series lead in the 2009 Fiesta Bowl, 24-21.

## OSU Finishes Third In Final Polls

Ohio State finished third in both of the final major polls, checking in behind national champion LSU and runner-up Clemson in the AP poll, as well as the coaches poll. The Buckeyes finished with 1,426 points in the AP poll, trailing Clemson by 61 points and LSU by 124. The coaches poll broke down similarly, with LSU receiving 1,625 points, followed by 1,558 for Clemson and 1,497 for Ohio State.

The Buckeyes are trailed in both polls by Georgia and Oregon, with the AP poll placing Florida, Oklahoma, Alabama, Penn State and Minnesota in the remainder of the top 10. The coaches poll swapped Oklahoma and Florida, while maintaining the same final three schools.

Ohio State is joined in representing the Big Ten by the Nittany Lions, Golden Gophers, Wisconsin (11th in the AP, 13th in coaches), Iowa (consensus 15th) and Michigan (18th in AP, 19th in coaches). No other Big Ten schools received votes.

In addition to Penn State, Wisconsin and Michigan, Cincinnati finished at No. 21 consen-

**Continued On Page 6** 





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sus, giving Ohio State five ranked wins (two over Wisconsin) on the season.

This is just the third time in Ohio State history that the Buckeyes have finished third in the final AP poll, with the first coming in 2012 and the second just a season ago in 2018. It's tied for the 13th-best finish in school history.

## **Dobbins Named Earl Campbell Tyler Rose Award Winner**

Running back J.K. Dobbins was named the winner of the Earl Campbell Tyler Rose Award – given to the best offensive college football player hailing from Texas – on Jan. 15. Dobbins had been one of five finalists, along with Baylor quarterback Charlie Brewer, SMU quarterback Shane Buechele, Oklahoma quarterback Jalen Hurts and Oklahoma wideout CeeDee Lamb.

"I'm honored to present the award to J.K. Dobbins," Earl Campbell said. "All of these players had an amazing season. They all deserved their place as a finalist."

Dobbins had a record-setting junior season for the Buckeyes that could catapult him into the first round at the NFL draft in April. The La Grange, Texas, native ran for 2,003 yards on 301 carries and found the end zone 21 times. He was the first Buckeye to top the 2,000-yard mark in a season, surpassing the previous single-season record of 1,927 yards set by Eddie George in 1005

"First off, I want to thank you all for having me here today," Dobbins said. "It's such an honor to be in your presence today, Earl Campbell. It means a lot to me to be here today. There are a lot of great players from the state of Texas in college football – Shane, Charlie, everybody here is a great player. It's a great feeling to win this award with all the big players that are playing right now in college football.

"It's such an honor to be a part of this community now. This award means so much to me."

Dobbins is the first Buckeye to win the award in its seven years of existence. He was Ohio State's first finalist since former quarterback Barrett in 2017.

## Matt Thurin, Jason Kwon Headed To BC With Hafley

Boston College head coach Hafley wasn't done plundering from Ohio State's list of staffers, after marking quality control assistant Sean Duggan and associate strength and conditioning director Phil Matusz for his staff at BC. Hafley dipped back into the well on Jan. 17, adding defensive quality control coach Matt Thurin and Jason Kwon, a member of Mark Pantonio's recruiting staff.

Thurin will be filling the vacant special teams coaching spot on Hafley's staff.

"Matt's knowledge of the game is as good as any coach I have been around at any level," said Hafley. "He is an outstanding teacher, and the student-athletes truly loved and respected him. He has a bright future and will be great fit to our staff and to Boston College. We are excited to have Matt, his wife, Elizabeth, and their daughter, Adaline, to our Boston College football family."

Thurin had spent the past five seasons as a defensive quality control coach with Ohio State, working primarily with defensive backs. He came to Ohio State after a three-year stint as secondary coach and special teams coordinator at Columbia University. He spent time as a staffer at Colorado, Akron and Walsh, as well.

Kwon will be taking over as Boston College's director of player personnel for defensive recruiting, serving as a significant promotion from his role at Ohio State. He is a native of Los Angeles and was often one of the first coaches to reach out to prospects in that area, such as Los Alamitos quarterback Malachi Nelson, the only player from the class of 2023 to hold an offer from the Buckeyes.

Kwon also played a significant role in welcoming prospects to campus for official and unofficial visits.

### Holtz Moving To Louisiana Tech

Another Ohio State staffer is on the move, raising Ohio State's tally of staffers changing jobs to seven in the offseason. The latest, Trey Holtz, will be heading to Louisiana Tech, where he will be taking over as the inside wide receivers coach.

Holtz is joining a program run by his father, Skip, after three seasons as an offensive graduate assistant at Ohio State. He is the grandson of legendary head coach Lou Holtz, who served as one of Meyer's mentors during Meyer's time as a wide receivers coach at Notre Dame. In fact, it was Skip who helped Meyer break into big-time college football.

"I hired Urban Meyer at Notre Dame because of my son," Lou Holtz said. "I was at a convention, and Skip said, 'You need to talk to Urban Meyer.' I said, 'I don't know Urban and don't want to talk to him.' Then he said, 'Will you have lunch with me?' and I said yes, so I go to lunch and he said, 'Dad, I want you to meet Urban Meyer.'

"That's how I met Urban Meyer and (eventually) hired him."

The youngest Holtz served as an assistant running backs coach in 2017 before making a move to the tight end room, where he served his final two years in Columbus.

A former quarterback at Texas, Holtz had been considered for several jobs this offseason and was rumored to be a candidate for Steve Addazio's staff at Colorado State, but the tight ends coaching job went instead to another former Buckeye staffer and Addazio's son, Louie.

Holtz will be taking over for yet another familiar face for Buckeye fans, former quarterback Kenny Guiton, who spent just a year at Louisiana Tech before accepting the same position with Colorado State in January.

## **Drue Chrisman Raises** \$15,000, Sets World Record

Ohio State rising senior punter Drue Chrisman set an unofficial world record and raised more than \$15,000 for the World Wildlife Fund on Jan. 20 through the use of his unique talent: water-bottle flipping. The Cincinnati La Salle High School product flipped bottles on a 24-hour livestream, successfully flipping 16-ounce bottles 22,067 times in the span of his day and raising \$15,134 in total.

There was no previous record for bottles flipped in a day, meaning that Chrisman's record is unofficial, but it's hard to imagine anyone has topped him in such a specific category.

"I did a bunch of research and I can't find where anyone has flipped more bottles in a 24-hour period," Chrisman said on Jan. 22.

Chrisman's accomplishment was not simply for the sake of the record, as he looked to raise

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money for the World Wildlife Fund's Australia bushfire relief efforts, in response to fires across the nation that have resulted in the destruction of 10.7 million hectares of Australian land.

Chrisman cited David Goggins' book "Can't Hurt Me" as the inspiration for his efforts.

"David Goggins, whose spirit and determination were studied by the team this year, was always engaged in efforts to help various causes, and I started to question what could I do." Chrisman said.

One donor chipped in \$10,000 upon the completion of the 24-hour goal, right before 5 p.m. on Jan. 20. Chrisman shared his thoughts shortly after his final toss.

"Thank you to everyone who tuned in and donated," Chrisman said on Twitter. "It was one of the most mentally draining experiences I've had but totally worth it. Time for a hot shower and a long nap."

### Pelini Named LSU Defensive Coordinator

Former Ohio State defensive back Bo Pelini accepted an offer to become LSU's defensive coordinator on Jan. 27, as announced by the university.

"We are privileged to have one of the top defensive coordinators in all of football in Bo Pelini join our staff," Tigers coach Ed Orgeron said in a statement. "Bo has had some of the best defenses in football during his career, and we are looking forward to him bringing his tremendous amount of knowledge and expertise back to LSU to continue to win championships."

Pelini had been the head coach at Youngstown State since 2015. He led the Penguins to an FCS Championship berth in his second season after a 5-6 start but stumbled in the years since, putting up a 45-30 record overall. Pelini worked under Youngstown State president and former Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel.

This marks a return to Baton Rouge for the former Buckeye, as he coached under former Tigers head coach Les Miles as defensive coordinator from 2005 to 2007, helping LSU win the 2008 BCS National Championship game over Ohio State. 38-24.

"Culturally, with my prior experience at LSU, I know it is a great fit for me," Pelini said. "The chance to work with Coach Orgeron, the ability to take charge of the Tigers defense, is something that I'm extremely excited about."

LSU is coming off a 42-25 national title victory over Clemson but has seen quite a bit of coaching turnover in recent weeks. Pelini will be taking over for Dave Aranda, who accepted Baylor's vacant head coaching position. LSU also has co-offensive coordinator Joe Brady (who left for the same position with the Carolina Panthers) to replace.

Pelini is reportedly set to make a similar salary to that of Aranda, who made \$2.5 million in 2019.

"The past five years have been terrific," Pelini said. "I can't thank President Jim Tressel and (athletic director) Ron Strollo enough for the opportunity here and support along the way. For all of the people, honestly too many to name, who were part of my YSU experience, I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you.

"The experience for me professionally to coach my hometown university and to appear in a championship game is something I will always treasure."



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## Buckeyes' Mettle Being Tested In Big Ten Play

**Continued From Page 1** 

year, it just makes us want to work that much harder for him to send him out on a good note. That's why we're working hard now, just to turn this thing around and get back on track."

Holtmann and his players are not oblivious to their deficiencies and the need to hang their hats on energy and effort. Young was asked what the Buckeyes' identity was before trying to get back on track against Nebraska following four consecutive losses.

"Toughness, that's got to be our identity," Young said Jan. 13. "And that's something we've lacked a little bit in this stretch. We're trying to work on getting our edge back, our mojo. And that's going to come with putting practice days

The Buckeyes were able to beat Nebraska at home but suffered another setback when they surrendered 90 points on 53.7 percent shooting in a loss at Penn

"It just wasn't good enough," Holtmann said, disturbed by his team's lack of defensive effort. "It's my fault and our players' faults. It begins with me. It just wasn't good enough.

'What I've got to do as a coach is honestly figure out who our toughest guys are and roll with those," Holtmann said, "and the other ones are going to have to learn in practice before they can play."

Following the disappointing 14-point

loss to the Nittany Lions, the Buckeyes returned home to take on Minnesota, looking to avenge their first loss of the season. Ohio State played better than it had since the Kentucky game, but Golden Gopher standout guard Marcus Carr hit a game-winning three-pointer before the

Despite Ohio State suffering yet anoth-

er loss, Holtmann saw positives in his team's performance against Minnesota, which easily could have been a win with a couple of better bounces.

"I just thought we played tougher and harder," Holtmann said. "People on the outside always evaluate it in wins and losses. We're evaluating on how we played. I thought we took a step forward in some areas today.

The Buckeyes battled the Gophers down to the wire, and

even though they lost, tightly contested games help build toughness. Ohio State has not played in many of those contests, however.

Beating Kentucky by six and Cincinnati by eight were impressive feats, but the game against the Wildcats was at a neutral site and the Buckeyes beat the Bearcats at home

The other impressive wins on Ohio State's résumé include 25-point victories against Villanova and North Carolina and a 32-point thrashing of Penn State. Although those wins earned the Buckeyes respect and helped them soar up the rankings, they did not test the toughness of the team in tight situations.

"We just didn't get tested in that way," Holtmann said. "We didn't get tested on the road in that way. We didn't get tested in neutral situations in that way. As soon as we got into Big Ten play, we've gotten

tested in it, for sure.'

The young and inexperienced Buckeyes have struggled through growing pains, and while the losses may sting, progress comes from competing in close games.

"The only way I think you get tougher is you do tough things on a regular basis,' Holtmann said. "And some groups are different. Some groups are older. Some groups you just naturally have some tougher and tougher-minded

guys. That's still a question that we have to answer. I'm not sure it was answered early. But right now, it's certainly a question that's in front of us that we've not answered in a positive way."



D.J. Carton

## **Buckeyes Seeking Chemistry**

In addition to a lack of toughness plaguing the Buckeyes, lapses in team chemistry also caused the squad to slip so severely.

"We started off pretty hot, and I knew we weren't going to be perfect all season, I knew we were going to hit a wall at some point," said freshman guard D.J. Carton. The whole overall team chemistry needs to become better. We need to be more connected on the floor, and we need to bring more of a passion to this game. And that's what we kind of miss. We miss that passion that we were playing with at the beginning of the season. Overall, just being more connected on the floor and playing for each other is the biggest thing we need to switch up."

The confidence exuded by the Scarlet and Grav was evident through the 11-1 start, outscoring their opponents by a nation-leading 21.8 points per game.

"We lost that swagger we had, and the team got lost in individual (success) too much," Carton said. "Us, being more connected as a team on and off the court will help. Sometimes I feel like we're not connected out there, and it just doesn't feel the same as it did in the beginning. We all notice all that and we're such a close team, we're becoming closer every day. Putting that work in the gym, the teammate chemistry should come along."

After the loss at the hands of Penn State, the young Ohio State team was reeling, in desperate search for answers. The Buckeyes' student-athletes sat in the visitor locker room at Penn State and finally aired out their perspectives on the problems.

For the most part, it was just the team talking after the game," Carton said. "That was good for us to connect as a team and



## **COVER STORY**

talk with no coaches there. It was good for us. Everybody on the team had something to say after that game. This isn't easy for us going into practice every day, putting in this time, and then performing like that. That's not easy on anybody's

'We've got to be there for each other and stay confident throughout this run, otherwise it can lead to longer losing streaks. We need to keep the team atmosphere positive in this area and continue to stay motivated throughout this season so we can come ready in March.

"It was a good talk, and we got to hear guys' different perspectives. Overall, it helped this team, and I definitely see us growing every day.'

Kaleb Wesson emphasized how losing magnifies every little negative aspect of a team, whereas when the Buckeyes were blowing teams out, it was easier to let some things slide.

"You see it little by little, and then you get this stretch where they start losing games and people start getting frustrated," Wesson said. "But when you're winning, people overlook things like that, little frustrations that you get. Like D.J. said, we're so close to where we can have those discussions after a game, and nobody takes it to heart, and you move on. I feel like that's how we're going to respond.'

Despite suffering a heartbreaking loss against Minnesota via Carr's game-winner, the Buckeyes played much better basketball. The hustle and toughness displayed by those in scarlet and gray showed a glimpse into why Ohio State had so much early success.

Following the crushing Carr triple, the Buckeyes bounced back with a 71-59 comeback victory at Northwestern for the team's first road win in the Big Ten. Carton scored 17 points on 75 percent (6 of 8) shooting to lead Ohio State to its second win since Dec. 21, with Kaleb Wesson limited due to foul trouble.

"That's a great feeling," Carton said following the win at Northwestern. "We've gone through a lot of adversity with this team and we fight, and Coach believes in us and that's a big thing here. We all believe in each other and our chemistry is so close. We know that when one guy comes out, another guy is going to step up.'

## **Connection To Kobe**

Ohio State was finishing its pregame film session when the coaching staff delivered the shocking news of Kobe Bryant dying in a tragic helicopter accident on Jan. 26. The players were unaware because their phones were turned off while preparing for the game, which is a

The news stung Duane Washington to his core. Washington is the nephew of longtime Los Angeles Lakers guard and Bryant teammate Derek Fisher and even referred to Bryant as "Uncle Kobe.'

"I remember going to my uncle's games and (Bryant) always coming up to me and calling me 'neph' (nephew) and giving me a hug and telling me I'm getting bigger every time I saw him," Washington said, according to The Columbus Dispatch. "It's Kobe Bryant, man. I looked up to him as a role model. It's just heartbreaking to have an unfortunate accident like that.

Upon hearing the devastating news, the Buckeyes canceled their pregame shootaround. Instead, they went through a walk-through at the hotel before taking a walk to Lake Michigan.

"We really wanted to just talk through it with our guys," Holtmann said. "More than anything, this is a poignant moment in their life, and they're always going to remember where they were when they heard the news that Kobe Bryant passed. The brevity of life is a hard thing for 18to 22-year-olds to understand, much less anybody else.

"We just talked through that for a moment, talked through how grateful we were for this opportunity to do this with each other, and that was it.

Washington wrote "R.I.P. Uncle Kobe" on his game shoes and "Proverbs 3:5-6" on his wrist tape, which reads, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Bryant also held an important place in Andre Wesson's heart.

The senior wing committed to Ohio State on the same day Bryant announced his retirement, and Wesson took No. 24 to honor the all-time great Laker after wearing No. 5 during his high school career Westerville (Ohio) South.

Carton, who consoled Washington during postgame interviews, also spoke about the influence Bryant had on him as a player.

"I really looked up to that man," Carton

said. "One of the reasons I'm here, one of the reasons I play this game is just to be able to go out and put it all on the floor.

"Things like this happen, and you never know when your last day could come. Things like that really put some perspective on life.'

Washington finished with eight points, three assists, three rebounds and zero turnovers in 28 minutes, and he did not give any thought to sitting out while mourning.

"Basketball has always been my get-away," Washington said. "I didn't think it was fair for my brothers for me to miss out on a game that we felt like we had a great chance of winning. They need me out here and I need them, so I pushed through it and focused in for an hour and a half, and we came out with the (win).

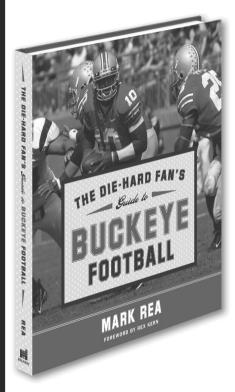
Carton thrived in the game, scoring 17 points with four rebounds, two assists, two steals and one block in only 21 minutes. The true freshman guard elevated his game with Washington clearly grieving after losing an uncle.

"I know how tough my guy is here," Carton said of Washington. "He has a love for this game, and he has a love for us, so I knew he was going to play. I knew it wasn't up for debate.

"You never want to see one of your brothers down. It hurts all of us. That's kind of what pushed us. When we see someone down, it takes people to step up, and that's what we did today. And it's going to have to continue if we want to keep winning games."

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## **Coombs Brings More Credibility In Recruiting**

As had been speculated for weeks, Ohio State officially announced on Jan. 20 that it was bringing back Kerry Coombs as its defensive coordinator and secondary coach to replace the departed Jeff Hafley.

The always energetic Coombs, who served as the Buckeyes' cornerbacks coach from 2012-17, wasted no time reacquainting himself with the program after spending the last two seasons with the NFL's Tennessee Titans

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

"He was there first thing in the morning," Ohio State assistant athletic director for football sport performance Mickey Marotti said during a press conference on Jan. 22. "It's awesome. We love him. He brings an energy level. He's in there at 5:30 a.m., lifting weights, drinking his coffee, you know, being around the boys and talking to everybody. He's just an Energizer bunny."

Coombs has long been regarded as one of the nation's best cornerbacks coaches, producing numerous first-round picks during his first stint in Columbus, and Marotti believes his two years with the Titans – who reached the AFC Championship Game this season – will only enhance his credibility on the recruiting trail.

"He's seen that side, and most of these kids want to get to that level," Marotti said of Coombs, whose primary recruiting areas in the past included Atlanta, Cincinnati, Florida and Michigan. "He's just putting more tools in his toolbox, and that's a big hammer that he's got now."

## Coombs Visits Commit Martinez

While Ohio State would have preferred to announce Coombs' addition weeks ago to aid its efforts in retaining a commitment from Muskegon, Mich., four-star athlete Cameron Martinez, the Buckeyes were forced to wait until the Titans were eliminated from the playoffs to do so.

To make matters worse, had Tennessee knocked off Kansas City on Jan. 19 to make it to Super Bowl LIV, the Buckeyes wouldn't have been able to hire Coombs until Feb. 3, just two days before the traditional National Signing Day.

Luckily for their sake, the Chiefs won, 35-24. And just a few days later on Jan. 22, Coombs was sitting in Martinez's living room, making his pitch as to why the two-time defending state player of the year should stick with his pledge.

The day began with Coombs meeting with Muskegon's coaching staff. He also spent time with Martinez's teachers and guidance counselor, who is also his aunt.

After several hours at the high school, Coombs then made his way to the Martinez family home in time for dinner. They spent roughly four hours getting acquainted and discussed Ohio State's plan for Martinez at great length – and that includes finding a way to utilize Martinez on offense.

Coombs is set to return to Muskegon with wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, even though the Buckeyes signed four wide-



COURTESY OF CAMERON MARTINEZ

ON THE TRAIL – Kerry Coombs' first order of business as Ohio State's new defensive coordinator and secondary coach was to travel to Muskegon, Mich., for an in-home visit with four-star athlete commit Cameron Martinez.

outs on Dec. 18. Martinez, meanwhile, will continue to contemplate taking an official visit to Notre Dame over the weekend of Feb. 1, just days before National Signing Day.

## **Bucks Keep Tabs On Local Athlete**

Sources within the Ohio State football program have shared with Buckeye Sports Bulletin their confidence in Martinez sticking with his commitment. But rather than put all their eggs in one basket, the Buckeyes do have a contingency plan in case he flips his pledge to the Fighting Irish.

Linebackers coach Al Washington made his way to Columbus Walnut Ridge on Jan. 18, where he watched three-star athlete Qian Magwood play basketball.

Ohio State has been keeping tabs on the 6-1, 185-pound Magwood – who is considered the 150th-best wide receiver and No. 1,023 prospect overall in the class of 2020 – for more than a year. But, like Martinez, he's torn between his desire to play offense at the next level and the advice from many college coaches that his future should be on the defensive side of the ball.

Magwood is not expected to make his college decision until Feb. 5, and the Buckeyes should know Martinez's fate by then. Current offers from Ball State, Cincinnati, Eastern Kentucky, Kent State, Miami (Ohio), Toledo and Youngstown State would not be difficult to overcome.

Michigan State could throw a wrench in those plans, though, as a number of recruiting analysts anticipate the Spartans will offer.

## **Buckeyes Cancel Gibbs' Official Visit**

Hoping to pair another running back with Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star Miyan Williams, Ohio State was set to host Dalton, Ga., four-star running back Jahmyr Gibbs on

## **OSU Football Signees & 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	ОТ	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
<b>Grant Toutant</b>	OG	6-7	320	***	Warren (Mich.) De La Salle
Ty Hamilton	DE	6-3	250	***	Pickerington (Ohio) Central
Cody Simon	OLB	6-1	218	****	Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep
Darrion Henry	DT	6-5	279	****	Cincinnati Princeton
Joe Royer	TE	6-5	225	***	Cincinnati Elder
Mitchell Melton	OLB	6-3	235	***	Olney (Md.) Good Counsel
Josh Fryar	OG	6-6	305	***	Beech Grove, Ind.
Mookie Cooper	WR	5-9	193	****	St. Louis Trinity Catholic
Lathan Ransom	S	6-1	193	****	Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic
Kourt Williams	ATH	6-1	216	****	Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco
Jacolbe Cowan	DT	6-5	262	****	Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School
Ryan Watts	CB	6-3	187	****	Little Elm, Texas
Miyan Williams	RB	5-10	210	***	Cincinnati Winton Woods
C.J. Stroud	QB	6-2	194	****	Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

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

Player	POS.	Hτ.	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

Holding onto a commitment from Muskegon, Mich., four-star athlete Cameron Martinez is Ohio State's prime priority as it looks to put the finishing touches on the current class. Do you believe the addition of Kerry Coombs as defensive coordinator will help solidify his pledge, or do you believe his desire to play offense will be too much for the Buckeyes to overcome?

The in-home visit between Coombs and Martinez this past week went very well, and it feels like the Buckeyes are the safe pick here to hold on to his

"Martinez and his family were really impressed with Coombs, and while he'll likely still take this next week and a half to contemplate his options, there is optimism here that Ohio State will be able to keep him in the fold. This has been really their only 2020 recruiting priority as we head toward the traditional signing day on Feb. 5.

Ohio State recently promoted offensive quality control coach Corey Dennis to quarterbacks coach after Mike Yurcich left to become the offensive coordinator at Texas. What do you think Dennis will bring to the table when it comes to recruiting?

"Dennis is a young and energetic guy that seems to relate well to every quarterback he has worked with at Ohio State. Whether it's Dwayne Haskins or Justin Fields, some very big names in the sport are already on his résumé and have vouched for him as a very talented coach. I'd expect him to develop into a really strong recruiter as he has the personality for it and has learned under two of the best in Urban Meyer and Ryan Day.

After striking out with several of the top-rated running backs in the class of 2020, Ohio State must place extra importance on the position in the 2021 recruiting cycle. Who are some players to keep in mind early in the process, and where do the Buckeyes stand with each?

"Ohio State has a wide variety of options at running back in 2021. The Buckeyes are probably in the best shape for Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough four-star Evan Pryor and Cincinnati Roger Bacon four-star Corey Kiner right now, but they are on the short list for several others, including West Bloomfield, Mich., four-star Donovan Edwards.

'Garland (Texas) Lakeview Centennial five-star Camar Wheaton, meanwhile, is a bit of a mystery as he doesn't say much publicly, but he has some interest in the Midwest with schools like Notre Dame and Ohio State in the hunt.'

Ohio State already holds commitments from two wide receivers from the class of 2021 in Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star Marvin Harrison and Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star Jayden Ballard. How many wideouts are the Buckeyes looking to take this cycle, and who are the staff's top-remaining targets?

"Ohio State had really zeroed in recently on Steilacoom, Wash., five-star Emeka Egbuka; Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star Beaux Collins; and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Cardinal Gibbons three-star Troy Stellato, though Collins is now off the board after pledging to Clemson on Jan. 25.

"There are certainly other guys on the periphery like Monroe (N.C.) Sun Valley four-star Gavin Blackwell and Lexington (Ky.) Frederick Douglass four-star Dekel Crowdus, but Egbuka and Stellato are going to be the immediate priorities in the short term.

"Attrition will factor in here but I ultimately see this being another four-man class at receiver, three if there are no transfers or nobody leaves early for the NFL, such as rising junior Chris Olave."

an official visit the weekend of Jan. 18.

But with 86 scholarship players already on the roster and Martinez's possible signature putting the Buckeyes even further over the 85-scholarship limit, the staff abruptly decided to end its pursuit of Gibbs just days before he was set to arrive on campus.

"The numbers are pretty tight right now, so probably not," head coach Ryan Day said when asked during his press conference on Jan. 15 if Ohio State would add another running back in 2020. "But we'll kind of see how things go.'

That leaves Williams - who will join the program in June - as the lone addition to a running back room that features presumed sophomore starter Master Teague, fifth-year senior Demario McCall, sophomore Marcus Crowley and redshirt freshman Steele Chambers.

### **Top Receiver Target Commits To Clemson**

While most programs across the country hold a Junior Day in late January or early February, that is no longer the case for Ohio State

After all, the unpredictable winter weather can turn travel plans into a logistical nightmare in a hurry - and prospects from warmer locales aren't exactly jumping at the chance to visit Ohio when temperatures dip into the teens.

That puts the Buckeyes at a disadvantage compared to programs such as Clemson, where there's milder weather this time of year. As a result, the Tigers put a lot of stock into Junior Day and have reaped the rewards in recent years.

This year was no different, as Clemson landed a commitment on Jan. 25 from Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star wide receiver Beaux Collins, who was one of Ohio State's top targets at the position.

The 6-3, 195-pound Collins - who is considered the third-best wide receiver and No. 34 prospect overall in the class of 2021 had been to Columbus three times in the last year. But the Buckeyes are already facing a numbers crunch of sorts, given they hold commitments from Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star Marvin Harrison and Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star Jayden Ballard and are among the favorites to eventually land Steilacoom, Wash., fivestar Emeka Egbuka and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Cardinal Gibbons three-star Troy Stellato.

Simply put, when there are five players aiming for four spots, someone is bound to be left on the outside looking in.

The Tigers followed Collins' pledge up on Jan. 26 with commitments from Corona (Calif.) Centennial five-star defensive end Korey Foreman; Lakeland (Fla.) Christian School four-star defensive end Cade Denhoff; and Brentwood (Tenn.) Ravenwood four-star tight end Jake Briningstool, all three of whom held an offer from the Buckeyes.

With that, Clemson - which is likely to finish the current recruiting cycle with the nation's top-rated class - moved from ninth to first in the 247Sports composite team rankings for the class of 2021, just percentage points ahead of Ohio State (203.62 to 203.40). Both teams lead the country with nine commits apiece.

### **OSU Among Running Back's Top Schools**

Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-

star running back Lovasea Carroll narrowed down his list of nearly two dozen scholarship offers on Jan. 17 to a top five of Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Ohio State and South Carolina.

**Continued On Page 12** 

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## Running Back Includes OSU Among Top Schools

**Continued From Page 11** 

The 6-1, 189-pound Carroll – a native of Warrenton, Ga. – is considered the seventh-best running back and No. 102 prospect overall in the 2021 recruiting cycle, after he rushed for 571 yards and nine touchdowns on 57 carries for the Ascenders last season.

Running backs coach Tony Alford extended an offer to Carroll, a former Gamecock commitment, last August, and he reopened his recruitment one week later. But of his top-five schools, the Buckeyes are the only one he has yet to visit.

Carroll is set to make his college decision on Aug. 6, which leaves plenty of time for a trip to Columbus in the spring or summer.

The only issue with that is he's told numerous outlets that the gameday environment will be a key in his decision-making process.

On the other hand, Carroll has also

said he's looking for a college with a great engineering program. Ohio State is the highest rated of the group, coming in at 29th in the U.S. News & World Report's rankings of undergraduate engineering programs, while Florida (34th), Auburn (54th), Georgia and South Carolina (tied for 108th) lag behind.

While the Buckeyes hold the nation's second-rated recruiting class for the 2021 cycle, they do not yet have a running back committed. And given that they had hoped to sign two – but landed only one – in the class of 2020, expect Alford to once again pursue a pair of topflight prospects.

Top targets include Garland (Texas) Lakeview Centennial five-star Camar Wheaton; Matthews (N.C.) Weddington five-star Will Shipley; West Bloomfield (Mich.) four-star Donovan Edwards; Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough four-star Evan Pryor; Cincinnati Roger Bacon four-star Corey Kiner; and Lilburn (Ga.) Parkview four-star Cody Brown.

### Buckeyes Add Legacy Walk-On

Ohio State added to its rosters on Jan. 24 when New Albany, Ohio, tight end Patrick Gurd announced his decision to join the Buckeyes as a preferred walk-on.

The 6-4, 215-pound Gurd is the son of linebacker Andy Gurd, who played for the Buckeyes from 1987-91. The younger Gurd recorded 42 tackles, eight tackles for loss, three sacks, two forced fumbles and one fumble recovery and added 104 yards receiving and one touchdown while playing both ways for the Eagles last season.

Gurd chose the walk-on opportunity at Ohio State over a scholarship offer from Akron. He is the second tight end to join the program as a walk-on as the Buckeyes announced the addition of SMU graduate transfer Corey Rau in early January.

## OSU Extends New Offers

Ohio State has handed out several schol-

arship offers since BSB's last publication, five of which went to prospects from the class of 2021.

That list includes Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic four-star defensive end Colin Mobley; Kernersville (N.C.) Glenn four-star defensive end Jahvaree Ritzie; Rosenberg (Texas) Lamar Consolidated four-star running back Brandon Campbell; Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas three-star cornerback Ja'Den McBurrows; and Seffner (Fla.) Christian Academy tight end Michael Trigg.

The Buckeyes also offered a pair of prospects from the 2022 recruiting cycle, including Humble (Texas) Atascocita fourstar offensive tackle Kam Dewberry and Reading (Pa.) Governor Mifflin running back Nicholas Singleton.

For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB print subscribers. daily.

## A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

### 35 Years Ago - 1985

Tom Lemming of Tom Lemming's Prep Football Report expected Ohio State to harvest a good crop of prep football players in 1985.

"I think Ohio State is going to have another good year, and a lot of it is going to come in-state," Lemming said in the lead-up to February's National Signing Day.

"It probably won't be the kind of year like they had last year, where they got a lot of superstars – Chris Spielman, Tom Tupa, Cris Carter, Alex Higdon. But it's a real good, steady year."

Lemming put Dayton linebacker Brent White at the top of Ohio State's wish list, and he felt that the Buckeyes had an excellent shot at landing the 6-5, 225-pound linebacker.

"It will have to be a fantastic visit at either Michigan or the other schools he's visiting – Tennessee, West Virginia or Michigan State – for them to get him away from Ohio State."

## 30 Years Ago - 1990

Lemming had ranked Ohio State's recruiting class the fourth best in the nation in 1989. In 1990, the Buckeyes looked to do even better, according to Lemming.

"I think it depends upon how they do out of state, but I think it's going to be another great year for Ohio State," said Lemming.

Although the Buckeyes had but two announced verbal commitments through Jan. 14, Lemming said it was still very early in the recruiting season.

"When you're in on as many top-name kids as Ohio State is this year, you're not going to get a lot of commitments right away," he said. "Traditionally, the top names, the blue-chip players, wait until near the end of the recruiting season to issue commitments.

"Some of them even wait right up until signing day and beyond. It's a big decision for these kids, especially the ones who have heard from 300 or 400 schools. They've narrowed it down to four or five choices, and it's the biggest decision of their lives. They usually want to take all the time they can."

## 25 Years Ago - 1995

With two weekends left of official visits before the Feb. 1 national signing date, the Ohio State football recruiting effort had moved into the homestretch.

In one week, Ohio State had obtained verbal commitments from three players, bringing the class of 1995 total up to 21 commitments. Issuing verbal commitments to OSU were inside linebacker Randy Homa of Pottsville, Pa; wide receiver Gerald Williams of Tucker, Ga; and tight end Steve Wisniewski of Eastlake (Ohio) North.

Ohio State was still looking to secure commitments from several top players, including wide receiver Randy Moss of Belle (W.Va.) DuPont; defensive end Antwon Jones from Piqua, Ohio; running back Benny Butler of Del City, Okla.; fullback Nick Williams of Farmington Hills (Mich.) Harrison;

wide receiver Peerless Price of Dayton Meadowdale; and wide receiver Vanness Provitt of Warren (Ohio) Harding.

## 20 Years Ago - 2000

Ohio State got one big fish over the weekend of Jan. 14-17, but another got away. The Buckeyes received good news Jan. 14 as Cedarhurst (N.Y.) Lawrence offensive lineman Shane Olivea committed to the Buckeyes over Georgia Tech.

But, a day later, news broke out of Lexington, Ky., that Canton (Ohio) McKinley offensive lineman Antonio Hall – the Buckeye state's top prospect and the nation's No. 1-ranked offensive lineman – had issued a verbal commitment to Kentucky.

In what qualified as a major surprise, Hall picked the Wildcats over a pair of Big Ten schools steeped in football tradition in Ohio State and Michigan.

The Buckeyes also got a commitment over the weekend from Ft. Lauderdale (Fla.) Dillard linebacker Thomas Matthews

## 15 Years Ago - 2005

While Ohio State fans came away from the U.S. Army All-American Bowl festivities with something to smile about, it was an anticlimactic weekend at best for the Buckeye coaching staff.

The best news for OSU came just before the All-American Bowl's kickoff, when Jacksonville (Fla.) Sandalwood running back Maurice Wells – a longtime target of the Buckeyes – announced that he would be playing his college ball at OSU.

It was good news for head coach Jim Tressel and company, but Wells' decision was something that the coaching staff had known about since Thanksgiving.

## 10 Years Ago - 2010

In landing the latest member of Ohio State's class of 2010, head coach Jim Tressel plucked a player from another coach's tree.

On Jan. 13, the Buckeyes received a verbal commitment from three-star cornerback prospect Bradley Roby of Suwanee (Ga.) Peachtree Ridge. He was the third consecutive three-star prospect to join the class and the eighth overall, but he was the first member of the class to have been previously committed to another program.

The 6-1, 171-pounder initially committed to Vanderbilt in late July, picking the Commodores over the likes of Auburn, Purdue, Wake Forest and West Virginia, all of which had offered scholarships.

"I've known for a while that Ohio State was the place for me, and I told both schools today of my decision," he told BuckeyeSports.com.

## Five Years Ago - 2015

Ohio State was still putting the finishing touches on its class of 2015, but with a national championship win still in the minds of many, the Buckeyes were able to nab two commitments

beyond the class of 2015 in the weeks leading up to National Signing Day.

The commitments came on Jan. 25, when 2016 Cincinnati Moeller four-star tight end Jake Hausmann (6-5, 235) and 2017 Miamisburg, Ohio, five-star offensive tackle Josh Myers (6-5, 285) both committed to Ohio State.

Hausmann was the No. 80 overall prospect in the country and the No. 5 tight end. The fact that the depth chart at the position appeared to be favorable in the years to come was one of the selling points the Buckeyes used. Senior Jeff Heuerman had no more eligibility, and junior Nick Vannett would also be gone by the time Hausmann enrolled.

"That's a big thing for me," Hausmann said before committing. "They only have three tight ends on the roster right now. It's a big deal to go in with limited players at your position. You get more playing time. That's what is really intriguing me with Ohio State right now."

Myers was one of three prospects already to have earned five-star status in the class of 2017, giving the Buckeyes a top prospect

"We got up to Ohio State and watched some hype videos and then spoke with some of the coaches and checked out the facilities," Myers said. "It was all things I've done several times but is still neat to do. After that, I got the chance to go to Coach Meyer's office with Coach (Tim) Hinton, and that was when I told Coach Meyer the news that I wanted to be a Buckeye and

## One Year Ago - 2019

As the clock ticked with the Feb. 6 National Signing Day approaching, Ohio State's priorities for the 2019 recruiting class had been well known for a month and change.

Before he officially took over as head coach of the Buckeyes on Jan. 2, Ryan Day directly pointed to one position group in his early signing period press conference on Dec. 19: the offensive line.

Ohio State secured two of its must-sign commitments down the stretch in December, as Mentor, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Ryan Jacoby and Buford, Ga., five-star center Harry Miller inked letters of intent with the Buckeyes.

But between misses on Springfield (Ill.) Sacred Heart Griffin three-star offensive tackle Nick Broeker, who stuck with his Ole Miss commitment and signed with the Rebels in December, and Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley four-star offensive guard Doug Nester, who remained committed to OSU but delayed his final decision until February, the offensive line's depth concerns became glaringly obvious.

"It's important to go identify them," Day said of the offensive linemen. "We've got to go identify them. We've got to do a really good job obviously in the 2020 class. We're a little bit down in the O-line, so we've got to do a great job moving forward to get that addressed. So into January we'll keep looking at it."

## Wide Receiver Signees Excite Ohio State Coaches

By ANDREW LIND Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's passing attack has reached new heights under the direction of head coach (and former offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach) Ryan Day, as the Buckeyes have amassed 8,784 yards and 99 touchdowns through the air over the last two seasons.

Those numbers were undoubtedly attractive to the four wide receivers from the class of 2020 who signed their letter of intent with Ohio State on Dec. 18, including Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star Julian Fleming; Rockwall, Texas, five-star Jaxon Smith-Njigba; Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star Gee Scott; and Maryland Heights (Mo.) Pattonville Senior four-star Mookie Cooper.

All four were listed among the top 16 wide receivers in the 247Sports composite rankings, with Fleming considered the nation's top-rated player at the position. Smith-Njigba (fifth), Scott (10th) and Cooper (16th) rounded out the haul.

"This is probably the strongest class (of wide receivers) I've seen in a long time," Day said during his Early Signing Day press conference on Dec. 18.

Fleming is widely considered the crown jewel of the Buckeyes' third-ranked recruiting class after finishing his high school career with 188 receptions for 4,058 yards and 56 touchdowns with three straight state championships.

"Julian Fleming had an unbelievable high school career and comes in highly decorated," Day said. "He's a great young man. His family is awesome. That was a hard decision for him to leave Pennsylvania to come here, but he's going to have a great career here, and we think that he has a chance to be a great one."

Wide receivers coach Brian Hartline was also complimentary of Fleming, who became Ohio State's third highest-rated signee of the Internet era, trailing only dual-threat quarterback Terrelle Pryor (2008) and Ted Ginn Jr. (2004), who was recruited and ranked as a cornerback.

"He's 6-2 (and 199 pounds), runs really well, really fast and has really great ball skills," Hartline said. "He's very physical in the run game. What's great about Julian is he comes from a run-heavy offense, so the expectation on targets should be pretty low

"When he gets here, hopefully he's not like, 'Hey, man, I need the ball.' You didn't get it a whole lot in high school. But with that said, he'd get like three targets and it would be with two touchdowns. So that's good. I expect a great blocker. He sends me all of his blocking film before he sends me any kind of catch, so he loves it."

The 6-1, 188-pound Smith-Njigba, on the other hand, put up video game-like numbers in one of Texas' most pass-happy offenses. He caught 296 passes for 5,384 yards and 63 touchdowns in three years as a starter, including 109 receptions for 2,132 yards and 34 scores as a senior.

"Talk about having an unbelievable season," Day said. "It's exciting when you see stuff like that, when you just see the numbers, one-handed catches and releases where guys fall down on the ground. That gets exciting. I can't wait to see him on the field."



OHIO STATE FOOTBALL/TWITTER

**ZONE SIX** – Ohio State coaches Brian Hartline, holding child, and Keenan Bailey, far left, welcomed wide receiver signees (from left) Gee Scott, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Mookie Cooper and Julian Fleming to campus in early January.

A regular on ESPN SportsCenter's Top 10 plays because of his highlight-reel catches last fall, Smith-Njigba finished high school just 40 yards shy of breaking the Texas record for receiving yards in a career, which was held by Brownwood native and former Texas Longhorn wide receiver Jaxon Shipley.

Interestingly enough, the record was broken just a few hours later by Frisco Lone Star four-star wide receiver Marvin Mims, an Oklahoma signee who also broke the state single-season receving record in 2019.

"It's pretty profound," Hartline said. "I mean, the career he's had in Texas, and that's a great football state, and for him to be among the best of all time is just astounding.

"I think that he plays great competition, runs great routes, is a smart guy and understands the offense. You don't really know until you get your hands on them, but he feels really coachable. There are lot of unknowns with that part of it, but he's a playmaker. He plays at a different speed, has a lot of good twitch and tracks the ball really well."

Scott, meanwhile, has been just as impressive off the field as he has been on it, which says a lot considering he caught 175 passes for 3,137 yards and 36 touchdowns and won back-to-back state titles.

"He's one of this guys that everybody has unbelievable things to say about him," Day said. "He's not only a great player, but he's a great person. He's been loyal from the get-go.

"This is a young man from Seattle who has had a lot of people say, 'Hey, why don't you stay closer to home?' He stayed loyal the whole time. He's a big, strong and physical receiver that has a chance to be great."

Examples of Scott's generosity are plentiful, particularly those that involve him befriending a homeless Ohio State fan in his hometown who used to scrape together just enough change to pay for bus rides and tickets to attend Scott's games.

"He's got a huge heart," Day said. "We saw that early on. He comes from a great family, and I can't say enough about who he is. Also, as a player, you talk about a dominant, physical player. When you watch his film, it just jumps off the screen. I'm super excited he's a Buckeye."

Hartline believes that Scott – already standing 6-3 and 200 pounds – could make an instant impact for the Buckeyes.

"You know, he's big and physical and a great blocker," Hartline said. "He does a great job in the run game. I would say he tracks the ball. He swallows the ball. He's got huge hands, and every time there's a high point I feel like he goes and gets that ball. He's a great jump-ball guy. He's pretty polished and has a pretty good top end, but he'll tell you, too, one thing will be to get him to (strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti) and work his tail off seeing how fast he could potentially get. At that point, I don't know what he can't do, so he'll keep working on that."

Last but not least, Cooper flew a bit under the recruiting radar after he was ruled ineligible for his senior season after his transfer from St. Louis Trinity Catholic was deemed to be athletically motivated. Even so, he recorded 49 receptions for 1,239 yards and 13 scores in his two-year varsity career.

"He's more of a slot receiver who is going to work inside a little bit and has great short-area quickness," Day said. "I know he's looking forward to getting back on the field and playing again." At 5-9 and 193 pounds, Cooper has drawn comparisons to Purdue slot receiver Rondale Moore, who torched Ohio State to the tune of 12 catches for 170 yards and two touchdowns in a 49-20 upset win in West Lafayette, Ind. in 2018.

"He's a smaller guy but really stocky," Hartline said "When he goes to block, he tries to knock you out, and that's one of the biggest things I love about him. He can do some speed sweeps, plays down the field, he does a lot. I think that he played a little more running back maybe than receiver at times, so there might be a transition there, but I think his skill set is through the roof. He's going to provide mismatches that I'm thrilled to have. He does have a skill set in our room that we don't have a ton of, and it will add to that."

The Buckeyes are set to break in three new starters at wide receiver next fall with K.J. Hill, Binjimen Victor and Austin Mack off to the NFL, and with a bevy of talented players such as Garrett Wilson, Chris Olave, Jameson Williams and Jaelen Gill returning for another season, the incoming freshmen will be hard-pressed for significant playing time.

But all four receivers enrolled in classes in January and will participate in winter workouts and spring practices. Given their individual track records, it wouldn't be a shock to see each of them find early success.

"With all of these guys, there is so much potential," Hartline said. "It's all about between the ears. How can you handle adversity? How fast can you learn the offense? That's all an unknown, but I can't speak enough about how coachable they come off and how much of a dire need they have to want to be great and how they talk about contributing to the room. That's where I fall in love."

## Ohio State Offense Among The Nation's Elite

By ANDREW LIND Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State scored at a dizzying pace in 2019, averaging a school-record 46.9 points per game on its way to a third straight Big Ten championship and a berth in the College Football Playoff.

That surpassed the previous program high of 45.5 points per game set during the 2013 campaign, while the Buckeyes' 88 total touchdowns fell just two short of tying the record set during the 2014 season, despite playing one fewer game with that team making a run to the national championship.

But of those 88 touchdowns, 87 came on offense, with the lone defensive touchdown being a Damon Arnette pick-six. In 2014, only 83 of the 90 touchdowns were offensive, while four came via fumble returns, two from interception returns and one from a Jalin Marshall punt return.

Those lofty numbers were a big reason that Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields and running back J.K. Dobbins finished third and sixth, respectively, in the Heisman Trophy race. They also serve as a disappointing reminder of how the Buckeyes failed to capitalize in the red zone on numerous occasions in a 29-23, season-ending loss to Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl.

What follows is a position-by-position breakdown from the Northwestern game on, as well as the midterm, second-half and final grades for each unit.

## Quarterback

While Fields was nothing short of spectacular in his first 10 games as a starter, one could argue he did not face any real adversity until a cold and rainy day against Penn State on Nov. 23.

The Buckeyes were clearly the better team that afternoon, as had been the case throughout the course of the season. But Fields fumbled three times, turning it over twice, including once at the goal line as he dived into the end zone in the first quarter and the other in Ohio State territory, leading to seven points for the Nittany Lions in the third quarter.

The final fumble – which Fields recovered as he was tackled to the ground by Penn State safety Lamont Wade – had no impact on the final score, as the Buckeyes held on for a 28-17 win. It was a changing point in the season, however.

Fields lay on the turf in pain following the hit, later revealing he had suffered a sprained MCL on the play. It limited his mobility in the 56-27 win over Michigan one week later, which included him exiting the game for one series to be outfitted with a bulkier brace, as well as in practice leading up to the Big Ten Championship Game



ANDREW LIND

LIVE AND DIE BY DOBBINS – Junior running back J.K. Dobbins broke Ohio State's single-season rushing record in 2019 but also dropped a pair of would-be touchdown passes in the Fiesta Bowl loss to Clemson.

against Wisconsin.

The Buckeyes' slow start in the latter ultimately cost them the No. 1 seed in the College Football Playoff and a date with fourth-ranked Oklahoma in the Peach Bowl.

Instead, Ohio State got a much-tougher task in facing defending national champion Clemson.

"I think it's very hard for a college quarterback to play at a high level without practicing," head coach Ryan Day said during his press conference on Jan. 15. "I think if you're (Green Bay Packers quarterback) Aaron Rodgers and you've been doing it for a number of years, it's OK. But the timing and everything is very hard. And the way (Fields) played says a lot about who he is as a competitor."

Fields wasn't 100 percent in the loss to the Tigers either but nearly willed the Buckeyes to victory before throwing the game-sealing interception in the final minute after some miscommunication with wide receiver Chris Olave.

"He played good against Clemson," Day said. "He played good. He made some really good throws. Some throws we just missed. And he competed, and I'm really proud of the way he came along this year."

Fields completed 67.2 percent of his throws for 3,273 yards and 41 touchdowns compared to just three interceptions this season. He also rushed for 484 yards and 10 touchdowns on 137 attempts. But, as mentioned, turnovers became an issue late in the season and his mobility was limited by the injury, and that severely hampered Ohio State's offense at the most important time of the year.

Backup Chris Chugunov, meanwhile, had limited opportunities as the Buckeyes played more difficult games down the stretch. He performed admirably in mopup duty in blowout wins over Maryland and Rutgers in early November, though, and finished the season with 286 yards, six touchdowns and zero interceptions.

BSB Midterm Grade: A
BSB Second-Half Grade: B+
BSB Final Grade: A-

## **Running Back**

Dobbins, meanwhile, rushed for 2,003 yards this season to break Eddie George's single-season rushing record of 1,927 yards set in 1995. He averaged 6.7 yards per carry and scored 21 touchdowns, the fifth-highest single-season total in program history.

While Wisconsin's Jonathan Taylor won both the Big Ten Running Back of the

Year and the Doak Walker Award, it was Dobbins who made his case for being the nation's best running back in the biggest games of the year – including their two head-to-head matchups. He racked up 221 all-purpose yards and two touchdowns in a 38-7 win over the Badgers on Oct. 26; 157 rushing yards and two touchdowns in the aforementioned win over Penn State; and 211 rushing yards and four touchdowns in Ohio State's eighth straight win over Michigan.

"I think he deserves to be considered the best running back in the country," Day said prior to the Big Ten Championship Game. "That hasn't really necessarily been the case. I know that bothers him. I know he runs with a chip on his shoulder because of that. You have to ask him how he feels. I know it bothers me."

Dobbins then proceeded to rush for 172 yards and another score in the 34-21 win over the Badgers on Dec. 7, while Taylor added 148 yards and a touchdown of his own. He played every offensive snap of the game, too, helping the Buckeyes overcome a 14-point halftime deficit.

That determination carried over into the Fiesta Bowl, where Dobbins' 68-yard touchdown and subsequent 64-yard run in the first quarter helped Ohio State jump out to a 16-0 lead. But he also dropped two catches that should have been touchdowns, forcing the Buckeyes to settle for field goals on both drives.

Dobbins battled through an ankle injury suffered late in the first half to finish the game with 174 rushing yards and the



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## **FINAL GRADES: OFFENSE**

above-mentioned score. He also added six catches for 47 yards, but it simply wasn't enough.

"I didn't play good enough," Dobbins, who will forgo his senior season to enter the 2020 NFL draft, said after the game. "It's very hard. Any loss is hard for me. (The season) didn't go as planned. It's a failure."

While Dobbins – who was tougher on himself than any outsider would be – leaves Ohio State without a Heisman Trophy or national championship, this season undoubtedly cemented his legacy among the greatest running backs in school history.

His increased workload down the stretch meant fewer opportunities for back-up Master Teague, who finished seventh in the Big Ten with 789 rushing yards this season but recorded only 21 carries for 45 yards in the final four games.

BSB Midterm Grade: A BSB Second-Half Grade: A BSB Final Grade: A

### **Offensive Line**

Coming into the season, Ohio State's offensive line may have been its biggest question mark. The Buckeyes were forced to break in four new starters in the trenches with only left tackle Thayer Munford returning.

But that group developed into one of Ohio State's biggest strengths by the end of the year and was named a finalist for the Joe Moore Award – which honors the nation's best offensive line – as a result.

Behind a starting five of Munford, left guard Jonah Jackson, center Josh Myers, right guard Wyatt Davis and right tackle Branden Bowen, the Buckeyes rushed for 266.8 and 5.6 yards per carry, good for fifth and sixth in the country, respectively.

"Ohio State has always had talented players up front, but this year that talent was matched by a desire to bury their opponent on each and every play," an unnamed committee member for the Joe Moore Award said of the unit led by offensive line coach Greg Studrawa. "An incredibly athletic group who imposed its will while leading one of the nation's top rushing attacks."

Davis and Jackson were named first-team All-Big Ten, while Bowen, Myers and Munford earned second-team All-Big Ten recognition after the unit combined for 339 total knockdowns through the first 13 games of the season.

"This group excels at run blocking by creating movement and working well together, up to the second level," another unnamed committee member said. "(They) look like angry dancing bears at times in their stretch game. Their physicality shines in the varied run schemes that include everything from midline read option to traditional stretch and split zone. They do a nice job of running off the ball and have very good contact power on one-on-one base blocks. No hesitation and they play with heavy, solid, deliberate feet."

Ohio State's offensive line struggled to create holes in the Fiesta Bowl loss to Clemson, however. Aside from Dobbins' 68- and 64-yard runs, the Buckeyes recorded just 64 yards on 37 carries (1.73 yards per) against the Tigers.

The unit also allowed an average of 2½ sacks per game, which was tied for 99th nationally and was arguably the group's only weakness.

Moving forward, Bowen and Jackson –a graduate transfer from Rutgers – have exhausted their eligibility, while Davis, Munford and Myers opted to put their NFL



ANDREW LIND

ELECTRIC CONNECTION – Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields found wide receiver Chris Olave (pictured above) 49 times for a team-high 849 yards and 12 touchdowns in 2019, which included a go-ahead score in the Fiesta Bowl.

dreams on hold for at least one more shot at a national title.

"There's a lot of stuff here I still haven't done yet," said Davis, who was also named a first-team All-American by The Associated Press and Sporting News. "I just personally feel like another year through (director of sports performance Mickey Marotti)'s training and going through everything in this program, that I would be a lot better prepared than I would be if I were to leave this year."

BSB Midterm Grade: B+ BSB Second-Half Grade: B+ BSB Final Grade: B+

## Tight End

Despite the offseason talk about this being the year that Ohio State finally gets the tight end involved in the passing attack, the Buckeyes' plethora of weapons turned a more-than-capable group that included fifth-year senior Rashod Berry; juniors Luke Farrell and Jake Hausmann; and sophomore Jeremy Ruckert into blockers more often than not.

Fields averaged 17 completions per game, with a majority of his passes spread out among Dobbins, five primary receivers and the four-man tight end rotation. That gave the tight ends limited opportunity to make an impact.

Ruckert made the most of each target, however, hauling in 14 receptions for 142 yards and four touchdowns. And few plays were more important this season

than his one-handed grab in the Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin, which sparked Ohio State's second-half rally

"The goal is obviously to make it to the next level, and if you're a one-dimensional player, there's only so many things you can do," Ruckert said after the game. "With all the cuts they have and the small rosters they have, I think that coming to a place like this, getting developed as a complete tight end was the best option for that."

Farrell, Berry and Hausmann, meanwhile, combined for 11 catches for 152 yards and three scores on the season, with Berry even trying his hand on defense when defensive end Chase Young was suspended for the early-November wins over Maryland and Rutgers.

BSB Midterm Grade: B+ BSB Second-Half Grade: A BSB Final Grade: A

## Wide Receiver

Early in the season, much of the conversation surrounding the wide receiver position was the lack of targets for its veteran players, including fifth-year senior K.J. Hill and seniors Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor.

After all, that group figured to play a prominent role in the offensive attack following Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin and Johnnie Dixon's departure for the NFL. Yet they combined for only 56 catches for 780 yards and eight touchdowns

through six games.

Instead, it was sophomore Chris Olave (49 receptions for 849 yards and 12 touchdowns on the season) and true freshman Garrett Wilson (30 catches for 432 yards and five scores) who were stealing the spotlight on offense. They would eventually become Fields' go-to wide receivers in tight spots late in the season, while the production from the veterans dropped even further, as Hill, Mack and Victor combined for just 119 receptions for 1,570 yards and 19 touchdowns in 14 games.

That overreliance on Olave ultimately led to the Buckeyes' downfall in the Fiesta Bowl, however.

With Ohio State driving for the game-winning score late in the fourth quarter, Olave broke off his route and Fields threw an interception to seal the game for Clemson.

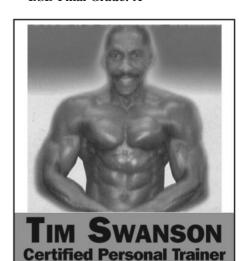
"He's very upset in the locker room right now," Day said after the game. "He thought Justin was scrambling. Justin does a lot of creating, so they weren't on the same page. They're playing football, and they're competing. Things like that happen. Unfortunately, that happened to us on the last play of the game when we needed it the most.

"Chris is an unbelievable competitor. He loves his teammates. Nobody feels worse than Chris right now. So 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."

Olave will have even more on his shoulders next season, as he steps into the leadership role vacated by Hill, who quietly set the school record for career receptions this season. Now, Olave will be the veteran in a wide receiver room that includes early enrollees Julian Fleming, Gee Scott, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Mookie Cooper.

"It's crazy," Olave said before the Fiesta Bowl. "Especially having those four receivers coming in. I'm only 19 years old, so having that role is crazy. And having to lead guys like Garrett and Jameson, who are very, very, very talented. It's a big role to step in."

BSB Midterm Grade: A-BSB Second-Half Grade: A-BSB Final Grade: A-



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## **OSU Defense Finishes Among Nation's Best**

By JOE DEMPSEY Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After allowing 25.5 points and 403.4 yards per game a season ago in one of the worst statistical seasons for an Ohio State defense in program history, the Buckeyes became one of the best defenses in the country in 2019.

Led by first-year co-defensive coordinators Jeff Hafley and Greg Mattison, Ohio State gave up the fewest yards and fourth-fewest points per game in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS).

"It was a success," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said when asked by BSB to evaluate his defense. "We installed that new scheme. And I thought it was really well done across the board. I wish we had done a couple more things in that last game that would have helped us win the game. But at the end of the day, I thought it was a great start, and now we've got to build on it."

One of the biggest reasons for such a drastic shift in defensive success for the Buckeyes was their ability to prevent big plays. In 2018, the Ohio State defense allowed 39 plays of 30 or more yards, which was tied for No. 118 in the country. Just one season later, the Scarlet and Gray surrendered only 16 such plays, which was tied for No. 5 nationally.

The 2018 Ohio State defense run by Alex Grinch and Greg Schiano also afforded seven plays of 70 or more yards, which was tied for No. 127 out of 130 FBS schools. After losing only two defensive starters in defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones and cornerback Kendall Sheffield, the Buckeyes thrived under new coaches and the new scheme.

Essentially the same group of players from 2018 did not give up one play of 70 or more yards throughout the 2019 season. In fact, Ohio State allowed only one play of 60 or more yards, and it came on a 67-yard touchdown run by Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence in the College

Football Playoff semifinal game.

Overall, Ohio State was extremely sound defensively, allowing only 4.1 yards per play, which led the nation. The Buckeyes also boasted the country's second-best red-zone defense and fourth-best third-down defense. Opponents scored on only 65.5 percent of their red-zone possessions against Ohio State, while converting on just 29.1 percent of third downs.

What follows is a position-by-position breakdown of the Buckeyes' performance on the defensive side of the ball, with Buckeye Sports Bulletin's midterm, second-half and final grades.

## **Defensive Line**

Down the stretch, the Ohio State defensive line continued its excellence from the first half of the season. The Larry Johnson-led unit did this despite missing standout defensive end Chase Young for two games due to a suspension for accepting a loan from a family friend.

During the Buckeyes' final eight games of the year, the defensive line accounted for 21½ of the team's 26 sacks. The big men up front played like one of the best units in the country throughout the 2019 campaign, wreaking havoc in opponents' backfields and altering games with their pass rush.

Young won both the Nagurski Trophy and the Bednarik Award as the best defensive player in the country, and despite his two-game absence, he shone for Ohio State. Although Young saw double- and triple-teams consistently throughout the second half of the season, he still performed at a high level. His second half was highlighted by a four-sack performance against Wisconsin on Oct. 26 and three sacks against Penn State on Nov. 23 in his return from suspension.

"I don't know if there's a particular example of what happened, but just the consistency and the ease of which he beats people," Ohio State linebacker Tuf Borland said of Young, who led the



ANDREW LIND

RELENTLESS PREDATOR – Although he missed two games last season, Ohio State defensive end Chase Young led the nation with 16½ sacks.

nation with 16½ sacks. "These guys are all Division I football players, and he's making them look that bad. He's just a great player."

Despite the extra coverage, Young still recorded 1½ tackles for loss against the Badgers in the Big Ten Championship Game, and the extra attention helped his teammates thrive.

"I feel like it's a respect thing," said Young, who also forced six fumbles on the season. "As you watch the game, I was getting double-, triple-teamed every play. I feel like that's a respect thing. And it definitely gives my guys on the other side a chance to get the one-on-one and make the play."

One of the biggest beneficiaries of the extra emphasis the opposition put on Young was defensive tackle DaVon Hamilton. After he did not record a single sack through seven games, Hamilton excelled with six sacks in the final seven contests of the season.

Jashon Cornell also thrived among the interior of the Ohio State defensive line, finishing his final season with 30 tackles, including 6½ TFL and four sacks, one of which came in the Big Ten title game.

Jonathon Cooper entered his senior season with high expectations, but an ankle injury cost him most of the year. The defensive end from Gahanna, Ohio, played in just four games and will return for a fifth year after redshirting. He decided to play in his last game of the year against Michigan instead of postseason play and recorded a sack in the Big House.

In his first collegiate season, Zach Harrison recorded five TFL and 3½ sacks, including one in the Big Ten Championship Game. Tyreke Smith posted five TFL and three sacks, while Tyler Friday made three TFL and two sacks, including one against Clemson.

Overall, the Johnson-led Ohio State defensive line continued its excellent tradition with a historic season. The big men up front set the tone for the Buckeyes' elite pass rush, accounting for 38 of the program-record 54 sacks recorded in 2019.

BSB Midterm Grade: A BSB Second-half Grade: A-BSB Final Grade: A

## Linebackers

Stopping the run is a primary responsibility of any linebacking corps, and the Ohio State linebackers excelled in this role

Borland, Malik Harrison and Pete Werner all returned as starters from the abysmal 2018 Buckeye defense, and under first-year linebackers coach Al Washington, they all looked like different players.

Borland posted 55 tackles, with three TFL and one sack for the Buckeyes, while Harrison led the team with 75 tackles (49 solo). Harrison also led the linebackers with 16½ TFL and four pass breakups and finished second in the room with 4½ sacks.

Werner finished second on the team with 64 tackles (39 solo), highlighted by a 10-tackle performance against Penn State. He added 5½ TFL and three pass breakups to a solid season.

Baron Browning often filled in for Borland, adding more speed and pass-rushing ability to the Buckeye defense. Browning boasted 43 tackles (26 solo), including 10 TFL and five sacks, with 1½ against Penn State and one against Clemson.

When the Scarlet and Gray went to a 4-4 front, Justin Hilliard was the fourth linebacker implemented and did well in that role. Hilliard recorded three TFL and one interception on the season, which sealed a Buckeye victory by end-

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## **FINAL GRADES: DEFENSE**

ing Penn State's comeback effort.

Collectively, the Ohio State linebackers helped lead a stout rush defense, which allowed only 103.7 rushing yards per game, ranking ninth in the nation. Even more impressively, the Buckeyes yielded only 3.0 yards per carry, which represented the sixth-best mark in the county.

However, the second half of the season was less impressive than the first for the Buckeye 'backers. After allowing only two rushing touchdowns through eight games, Ohio State gave up 12 in the final six. Also, in their last two games, the Buckeyes surrendered 5.4 yards per carry against both Wisconsin and Clemson, who ran for 200 yards and three scores, and 158 yards and two scores, respectively.

BSB Midterm Grade: B+ BSB Second-half Grade: B-BSB Final Grade: B

## **Defensive Backs**

Last, but certainly not least, the Ohio State secondary excelled under Hafley, who also served as secondary coach, and Mattison.

Throughout the season, various Buckeye defensive backs claimed their group was the best in America, or "BIA." Confident proclamations from cornerbacks and safeties can generally be taken with a grain of salt, but the 2019 Ohio State secondary backed it up.

Ohio State boasted the nation's No. 1 pass defense, stifling opposing passing attacks to an average of 156.0 passing yards per game. Fifteen interceptions tied Ohio State for No. 13 in the country, and 11 of those 15 picks were made by defensive backs.

A major reason for the Buckeyes' success was the lockdown coverage of Jim Thorpe Award finalist Jeff Okudah. While the standout corner led the team with three interceptions and nine pass breakups, Okudah would be the first to admit that he was not the only Buckeye defensive back who deserved credit, nodding to the performances of Shaun Wade, Damon Arnette and Jordan Fuller.

"Shaun and Damon Arnette and Jordan Fuller should all get the same attention," Okudah said of his fellow defensive backs. "They've made great plays throughout the whole year. They've been really consistent with their play. They've all been doing a remarkable job, and they should get the same amount of attention."

Wade did a little bit of everything for the Scarlet and Gray, recording four TFL, two sacks, one forced fumble, one interception and eight pass breakups.

Arnette served as an emotional leader of the team, playing through the pain of a broken wrist and turning in the best season of his three as a starter. The fifth-year senior corner recorded 35 tackles (27 solo), with one TFL, one forced fumble, eight pass breakups and one interception, which he returned 96 yards for a touchdown against Indiana.

Fuller, who had led the team in solo tackles as a sophomore and junior, finished second with 42 solo stops as a senior. The two-time captain picked off two passes and tallied four pass breakups, but two of his biggest plays were called back due to penalties.

Not only did Fuller have an interception return for a touchdown called back against Michigan State, but he had a game-altering scoop and score infamously overturned in the CFP semifinal matchup with Clemson.

"Jordan's been unbelievable," Day said of Fuller. "He's a Campbell Trophy finalist. What he's done off the field, what he's done on the field. As that free safety, he's kind of been the quarterback back there. He gets us into the right stuff.

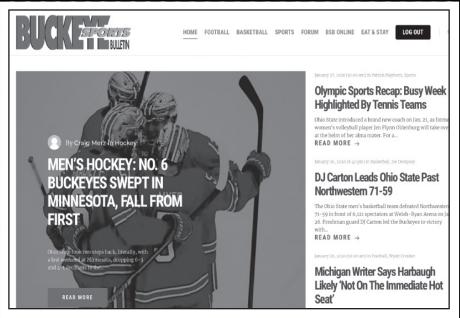
"He's a mature – he's like having a coach out there. He's as close to a coach player as I've been around. He just handles business the right way. He does everything the right way and he's had a great year on the field, played at a high level.

"When it comes to on-the-field production, off the field, the way he handles himself, the way he's in the meeting room getting guys aligned, he's been a huge part of our success on defense this year."

BSB Midterm Grade: A BSB Second-half Grade: A BSB Final Grade: A

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## Haubeil's Dominance Leads Special Teams

By WYATT CROSHER Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

There has always been an added emphasis on special teams at Ohio State, and the results have often shown through in the product. In 2018, it was all about the punt team, where Drue Chrisman was able to pin opposing defenses deep in their own territories with the help of gunner Terry McLaurin, who was consistently able to get down the field to help with the pinning.

This year, while the punting game still stayed somewhat strong, it was the kicking that took center stage, especially in the second half

Special teams coordinator Matt Barnes said the successes have come throughout multiple areas and have been mostly due to players who may not be getting their opportunities elsewhere but have bought into what has been working on the kickoff and punt-block units.

"That's one of the great things about special teams is it doesn't take as long to get on the field, there's not as much learning," Barnes said. "With special teams, a lot of it is just kind of run and hitting, so it gives the opportunity for young guys who may not understand all the ins and outs of an offensive or defensive playbook but just know how to go play the game really fast and make plays."

Though not every area had complete success for the Ohio State special teams unit this season, there were plenty that performed well enough to earn strong grades for the second half of the season as well as for overall grades for the entire year.

## **Punt, Field-Goal Block**

After starting out the year hot with three blocks in the first four games of the season – two punts blocked by cornerback Sevyn Banks and wide receiver Chris Olave, as well as a field-goal block by defensive end Chase Young – neither the punt block nor the field-goal block was able to get to the opposition to make any more blocks in the final 10 games of the year.

The most important thing that the punt block did in the final half of the season came

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against Clemson in the College Football Playoff Semifinal, and it was something that became a crucial turning point for the Tigers.

Facing a fourth-and-6 from its own 15-yard line, Clemson was set to give Ohio State the ball, still trailing the Buckeyes 16-14 with over half of the third quarter still to play. But on the ensuing punt, Ohio State's Cameron Brown ran into Clemson punter Will Spiers with enough contact to merit a roughing-the-punter penalty, which gave the Tigers 15 free yards and an automatic first down.

Clemson scored a touchdown two plays later on a 53-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Trevor Lawrence to running back Travis Etienne to take a 21-16 lead.

"We were trying to be aggressive," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "We thought we could get after the punt, and we've done a good job of staying off the punter and being aggressive. That was a big play in the game."

Day later said on Jan. 15 that the roughing the punter was one of the key plays that cost Ohio State the victory.

"There were a lot of great moments," the coach noted. "We came out and played really well early on. We established the run. There were so many good plays. The roughing of the punter was a huge mistake that we made."

Still, on the season, those three blocks were tied for No. 14 in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) and showed how much of an impact the Buckeyes were capable of making early on in the year on special teams.

BSB Midterm Grade: A BSB Second-Half Grade: C BSB Final Grade: B

## **Punt Team**

Chrisman had been as stable as can be for much of his tenure as Ohio State's punter, but his junior season saw more slipups than ever before.

In 2018, Chrisman, then a sophomore, punted 61 times with a 43.2-yard average, downing 29 of his punts inside the 20-yard line with just a single touchback. His 42.2-yard net punt average was No. 6 in the country.

Those numbers dipped in 2019, but not in Chrisman's yards per punt, which moved up to 44.3 yards. Elsewhere, it was not as strong, with Chrisman putting eight kicks into the end zone as touchbacks, tied for the fourth most in the FBS. He also had only 14 punts land inside the 20

"Obviously you want to treat every punt the same, but a couple times last year we had times where I punted over nine times, and you kind of get in the game a little more," Chrisman said. "Here, when you don't punt until the second half, your mind starts to wonder, and all you're doing is holding, so it's just a little different on your body, but I'd like to treat every punt the same."

These regressions allowed Ohio State's net punting average to slip to 39.5 yards per punt, No. 41 in college football. But the Buckeyes also were able to keep the punting unit off the field more than most, ranking No. 16 with only 47 punts on the season.

"It's been pretty quiet for me," Chrisman said following the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 7. "I do most of my work on the sideline. There hasn't been much need for me thus far"

The punt team also did a great job of avoiding any big returns, allowing only 36 yards on 12 returns. The 3.0 yards per return was the 10th-fewest yards per return in the nation.

But the highlight of the punt team's season came on a play during the first half of the Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin.

Down 14-0 to the Badgers with 8:05 to go in the second quarter, Chrisman took the snap on a fourth-and-9 deep in Ohio State territory and threw a fake punt pass.

"I was more surprised than anything else that we actually called it," Chrisman said. "We have a fake about every week going into the opponent, and I was even joking with (junior tight end) Luke (Farrell) leading up to it. I was like, 'Hey, we've got that fake this week, it's going to work,' kind of snickering because we always have a fake, and we end up never running it.

"Obviously we ran it, and I felt like it was a big momentum shift in that first half."

Chrisman wheeled to the right and found his tight end in Farrell, who made the contested grab to gain 21 yards and give the Buckeyes some much-needed momentum to help spur the comeback.

"I was a quarterback in high school, bringing out the old cannon a little bit, and it was good to know that I've still got it," Chrisman said. "I haven't thrown a ball in a game in like five years, so it was fun to do it again."

BSB Midterm Grade: A BSB Second-Half Grade: B BSB Final Grade: B+

## **Kickoff Return Defense**

Much like the first half of the season, Ohio State fared well on defending opposing kick returns.

Though the average yards allowed did go up, it went up only slightly, with the Buckeyes allowing 17.9 yards per return, No. 19 in the FRS

On the whole, Ohio State allowed 770 return yards on 43 attempts, while the team managed 33 touchbacks to just two kicks out of bounds.

Barnes said these numbers are due to a mind-set that the entire team holds about the importance of pinning your opponent deep.

"We preach the battle of field position, and we know how important it is to win that battle," Barnes said. "Anytime you can pin a team on kickoff or knock a punt down inside their territory, you're making them drive the field, and that's one of those things, along with the turnover battle, that's tried and true that that will help you win football games."

The kickoffs were not the deepest in the country, ranking No. 74 with 60.3 yards per kickoff. But junior kicker Blake Haubeil did have a highlight moment against Maryland.

Against the Terrapins, Haubeil delivered a perfect kick in a spot where no Terrapin could receive it, allowing Olave to catch the ball in stride out of bounds, recovering the onside kick.

"There was something that we saw on film, Matt Barnes saw, and we thought that we had a real shot at it," Day said. "And the guys practiced it during the week. It wasn't one of those things that was a home run every time we did it. You talk about competitive excellence – that couldn't have been executed any better. That was as clean as it could be. It was cool to feel the excitement in the stadium about that kick.

"It was executed well and there was just a feeling in the stadium, you could feel it was executed. And then from then on, I just felt like the game kind of went like this. So anytime you can steal a possession in any game it's a game-changer. Whether it's a blocked punt or something like that, you still hold possession from somebody, it flips the scoreboard. We saw it, executed it, and I thought it was well done all across the board."

BSB Midterm Grade: A BSB Second-Half Grade: A BSB Final Grade: A

## **Punt, Kick Return**

Halfway through the season, Ohio State had been putting up lackluster results in the return game, earning the lowest grade – a C-minus – of any position group on the team. The group has not improved much, or at all, since then.

Ohio State averaged 21.8 yards per kick return in 2019, good for only No. 45 in the country, and though that ranking is above average, it came on only 13 returns, tied for the 10th fewest in college football.

Demario McCall took the bulk of the returns, managing only 23.2 yards per return on 10 attempts with a long of 38 yards. Between the three other returns by K.J. Hill, Xavier Johnson and Marcus Crowley, no one else amassed a return longer than 19 yards.

After showing a lot of promise in the punt-return game early in the season, especially after a 52-yard return against Miami (Ohio), freshman wide receiver Garrett Wilson was given the bulk of the returns in the second half.

He did not do much with them, averaging only 6.1 yards per return even with the 52-yarder in his back pocket.

Wilson also fumbled twice on punt returns, once against Rutgers and once against Michigan. Both times the opposition recovered

Ohio State's 7.3 yards per return was No. 72 in the FBS and will be a clear area that the Buckeyes will look to improve in 2020.

BSB Midterm Grade: C-BSB Second-Half Grade: D+ BSB Final Grade: C-

## Field Goal, PAT

The largest improvement from the special teams came through Haubeil, who was perfect on his kicks after the first six games.

Haubeil connected on all eight field-goal tries, including a trio of makes in the College Football Playoff that – even if they could have been turned into touchdowns to help truly extend the lead – helped Ohio State get to its initial 16-0 lead.

The kicks against the Tigers were from 21, 22 and 33 yards out, none of which really can compare to the 55-yard kick Haubeil made against Northwestern to give the Buckeyes a 31-3 lead at the end of the first half.

That make was followed by a huge celebration for the junior kicker on the Ohio State sideline.

"He had made one before, so we said we'll give him a shot to make it," Day said. "It was good to see the team rally behind him like that. It goes to show you the confidence the team has in him and also just the chemistry of our team in general. It kind of put an exclamation point on the whole half."

The make was tied for the eighth-longest field goal in 2019 and tied Mike Nugent, Dan Stultz and Gary Cairns for the second-longest make in program history. Only Tom Skladany's 59-yard connection in 1975 topped it.

Haubeil also hit all three of his attempts from 40-49 yards on the season, and his 86.7 percent success rate put Ohio State tied for No. 14 in the nation in that category.

Not only excelling from distance, Haubeil also made all 85 of his extra-point attempts. His 124 points on the season were second on the team only to running back J.K. Dobbins' 138 points on 23 touchdowns.

Dominic DiMaccio remained the lone kicker with an extra-point miss but added two makes in the back half of the season.

BSB Midterm Grade: B-BSB Second-Half Grade: A-BSB Final Grade: A-

## Lions And Ducks Present Challenge For Bucks

By CRAIG MERZ Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The 2020 Ohio State football schedule features a major test early, a chance for revenge, several challenging road games and the opportunity to inflict further misery to its bitterest rival in front of the home fans.

If all goes according to what the experts predict and the fans expect, the Buckeyes should once again be in the mix to win the College Football Playoff championship.

So, what are the top games and potential stumbling blocks to OSU having another perfect regular season and a shot at its fourth straight Big Ten title?

First, the schedule with home games bolded:

**Sept. 5: Bowling Green** Sept. 12: At Oregon

Sept. 12: At Oregon Sept. 19: Buffalo Sept. 26: Rutgers

Oct. 10: Iowa

Oct. 17: At Michigan State
Oct. 24: At Penn State

Oct. 31: Nebraska

Nov. 7: Indiana

Nov. 14: At Maryland

Nov. 21: At Illinois

Nov. 28: Michigan

As much as any coach would say all games are equal, some have more gravitas than others, especially when it comes to the all-important CFP rankings at the end of year.

BSB looked at the Athlon, CBSSports. com, Pro Football Focus (PFF), The Sporting News (TSN) and the Washington Post for their predictions for the 2020 season as a guide. Of the five, four had Clemson first, a spot ahead of Ohio State, while PFF had them flipped.

In rating the marquee games, a useful tool is using the three I's: impact, intrigue and interest. Using those standards, here's the guide to the top games:

1. At Penn State (11-2 in 2019, No. 9 in final Associated Press poll): This is almost a toss-up with the Oregon game, but the feeling is that the Buckeyes could survive an early loss against the Ducks but not to the Nittany Lions, particularly if it keeps OSU out of the Big Ten title game.

Losing both games? That would not go over well.

The Sporting News views Penn State as the No. 9 team for the 2020 season: "Road trips to Virginia Tech and Michigan in the first five weeks won't be easy, but it still comes down to Ohio State."

CBSSports.com puts the Nittany Lions 12th, while PFF slots them 16th, saying: "The quarterback position ultimately drives success, though, so Sean Clifford's 69.6 passing grade won't cut it if Penn State wants to have a chance at a Big Ten upset."

Playing in Happy Valley is never easy, and the Nittany Lions have lost three straight in the series, including 27-26 at home in 2018.

Athlon (sixth) sees another double-digit win season for coach James Franklin, although the Washington Post predicts PSU will be ninth.

"The Nittany Lions have a bit of rebuilding to do on defense, which loses more than half of the starters from a unit that allowed 16.5 points per game. That prevents something closer to a top-five nod at this point, though there's no question there are enough

pieces to make a run at a Big Ten title."

2. At Oregon (12-2, No. 5): This September showdown in Eugene could go a long way in deciding the playoff field. The Buckeyes will be going to the hometown of their sponsor, Nike, but won't be paying a social visit.

Even with the loss of quarterback Justin Herbert, a possible top-five pick in this year's NFL draft, the Ducks are loaded according to PFF, which has them fourth: "Taking quarterbacks out of the conversation, Oregon has arguably the best roster top to bottom in college football."

If coach Mario Cristobal doesn't find a transfer QB, Tyler Shough (12 of 15 for 144 yards in 2019) could be the starter, although several freshmen could challenge.

Athlon sees the Ducks as the 11th-best team heading into next season: "A backfield that features C.J. Verdell, Travis Dye and Cyrus Habibi-Likio is the strength of the offense in 2020, and this trio will be running behind the best offensive lineman in college football in left tackle Penei Sewell. However, Cristobal will have to find four new starters to join Sewell up front."

TSN has Oregon No. 6, while CBSports. com and the Washington Post place the Ducks seventh.

3. Michigan (9-4, No. 18): It's a testament to how Michigan has flailed under Jim Harbaugh that The Game isn't higher. The Buckeyes have won eight straight and 15 of the past 16 vs. the Wolverines.

CBSSports.com slots U-M at 14 with a dim view: "Michigan has entered a sort of football purgatory. Jim Harbaugh has a ceiling, but it's a high ceiling. He's averaging 9.4 wins per year. However, the Wolverines are 9-6 in their last 15 games. Which way, Jimmy? Another blowout loss to Ohio State. Another bowl loss. Michigan lacks elite playmakers against elite competition. Watch the quarterback battle. Little experience now that Shea Patterson is gone."

PFF, an analytical site, is a bit more positive in ranking the Wolverines seventh: "There isn't one single player who jumps out on Michigan's roster – instead, they have a group of solid guys who generate positive value."

Athlon (12th) sees another so-so season: "The Wolverines appear to be a step behind Ohio State and Penn State in the Big Ten East Division next fall, but another nine-win season should be within reach for coach Jim Harbaugh's team .... Michigan's defense has to play better in big-time matchups, as this group allowed at least 28 points in all four of the team's losses last year."

The Washington Post rates U-M at 15: "The Wolverines will be good, but not great, and they'll lose to Ohio State in the regular-season finale to add a familiar layer of disappointment to an otherwise solid season. Basically, count on status quo in Ann Arbor."

TSN also picks Michigan 15th: "It's the same old story in Ann Arbor for sixth-year coach Jim Harbaugh."

4. Iowa (10-3, No. 15): 55-24. That's all you need to know. That was the score in favor of the Hawkeyes from Nov. 4, 2017, in Iowa City. That shocker was cited as a reason to keep the Buckeyes out of the final four, and OSU fans have been pining for a chance at revenge.

The Hawkeyes will make their first trip to Columbus since Oct. 19, 2013, a 34-24 win for OSU

Iowa gets some love nationally heading

into this season with a No. 20 ranking from the Washington Post: "Not flashy but usually effective, the Hawkeyes could play a low-scoring game that clocks in at less than three hours during the noon television window in their sleep. Iowa won't be sending a thank-you note to the Big Ten office after getting dealt back-to-back visits to Ohio State and Penn State in mid-October."

CBSSports.com and Athlon have the Hawkeyes 21st.

5. Rutgers (2-10, not ranked): Surprised?

This game won't be impactful, but it is intriguing with the return of former OSU defensive coordinator/associate head coach Greg Schiano (2016-18). He's in his first season of his second stint as head coach of the Scarlet Knights, replacing former Ohio State defensive coordinator Chris Ash.

The Buckeyes have pummeled Rutgers by an average score of 54.5-8.0 in six games since the Scarlet Knights joined the Big Ten, although last season it was a mere 56-21.

**6.** At Michigan State (7-6, NR): The Spartans have struggled to stay relevant in the past few seasons, and it's reflected in three straight losses to the Buckeyes, including 34-10 in Columbus in 2019.

Going to East Lansing is always an adventure, but the schedule gives OSU a break with the mid-October game. The past two games there in late November resulted in a 17-16 win for the Buckeyes in 2016 and a 26-6 triumph two years ago when OSU punter Drue Chrisman was the offensive player of the game.

7. Illinois (6-7, NR): Some will point to this as the proverbial "trap" game, coming on the road a week before playing Michigan. Add the possibility of inclement weather and this indeed could be one to watch as former Ohio State assistant Lovie Smith seems to have the Illini program going in the right direction.

OSU's most recent game in Champaign was a 52-14 win in 2018.

**8. Indiana (8-5, NR):** The Hoosiers are coming off their most wins since 1983 but were battered by the Buckeyes 51-10 last season.

Athlon lists IU as a team to watch for 2020: "Coach Tom Allen's squad doesn't lose a ton of senior starters, and quarter-back Michael Penix is back from injury. The opener at Wisconsin will be a huge test for this team in its quest to match the 2019 win total."

**9. Nebraska (5-7, NR):** Much like Michigan, the Cornhuskers are a program living on past glory. They were supposed to be a great addition to the conference but have been middle-of-the-pack for several years running.

OSU's 48-7 win in Lincoln last season was its fifth straight in the series, with the Buckeyes surpassing 60 points twice and 50 once.

**10. At Maryland (3-9, NR):** The Terrapins are trying to get better, they really are, but progress has been slow.

OSU beat them 73-14 last season in Columbus, but Maryland will claim that there is hope and point to 2018 when the Buckeyes escaped with a 52-51 double-overtime win in College Park. This could be the trap game before the trap game.

11. Bowling Green (3-9, NR): The interest in the season opener is how the Buckeyes respond to their heartbreaking

loss to Clemson in the national semifinal.

There's a definite chip for the Buckeyes even now, so the Falcons could be in for another long afternoon as was the case in their last visit in 2016, a 77-10 pounding.

BG will unveil QB Matt McDonald, who – unlike OSU's Justin Fields when he came from Georgia – had to sit out the 2019 season per NCAA rules after his transfer from Boston College.

12: Buffalo (8-5, NR): Coming a week after the Oregon game, there's no telling what the Buckeyes mind-set will be.

The Buckeyes won the only meeting 40-20 in 2013, but the star that day was Buffalo standout linebacker Khalil Mack, who had 9½ tackles, 2½ sacks and a 45-yard pick-six of Braxton Miller.

The Bulls, by the way, beat Bowling Green 49-7 last season.

## **Bonus games**

If the Buckeyes reach the Big Ten championship Dec. 5 in Indianapolis, it is hard to predict how the West will be won. After all, who saw Minnesota's ascension in 2019?

Here are two favorites:

Minnesota (11-2, No. 10): The Golden Gophers for 2020 have been tabbed for 11th by CBSSports.com and PFF, 12th by TSN and 13th by Athlon, and the Washington Post sees them 17th: "Minnesota will face Iowa, BYU, Wisconsin and Michigan by Oct. 17. The Gophers will need to be sharper in the season's early stages to replicate their '19 success."

**Wisconsin (10-4, No. 11):** Two of the Badgers' losses were to Ohio State, including the conference championship game.

Athlon and PFF pick Wisconsin 10th. The Washington Post places the Badgers 11th, TSN puts them 14th, a spot ahead of CBSSports.com.

## Down the Line

If the Buckeyes earn a playoff berth, they will play a New Year's Day 2021 semifinal at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif., or the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans.

The championship game is Jan. 11 at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Fla.



## Buckeyes' Return To Playoff Highlights 2019

By WYATT CROSHER Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State sports ended the 2010s off strong with a 2019 that was filled with multiple storylines, plenty of success and more than a few records that were broken.

Of course, football had the brightest spotlight for much of the year, as 2019 also marked the end of an era for a legendary head coach as well as the beginning for a new head coach who had one of the best starts Ohio State has ever seen.

On the way, he picked up a transfer quarterback and coached a pair of Heisman Trophy finalists and one of the best running backs, if not the best, in college football.

Football was not the only sport to make waves this year, as basketball managed to overperform for the second straight season, a track star broke a historic mark and baseball made one of the most improbable runs in quite a long time.

And all of this happened within just one calendar year. So here is a breakdown of the top 10 stories from 2019, as voted on by the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff.

## 1. Ohio State Finishes Season Undefeated, Returns To Playoff

Following a win against Wisconsin Dec. 7 for the second time on the season, Ohio State headed into bowl season 13-0, essentially sealing its position as a team in the College Football Playoff for the third time in program history and the first time since 2016.

The next morning only confirmed it, with the Buckeyes dropping out of the No. 1 spot to No. 2, giving them a trip to Glendale, Ariz., for a rematch against Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl.

To get to 13-0, the Buckeyes had to overcome their first halftime deficit of the season and their largest deficit overall. The Badgers came out firing just over a month after Ohio State had handily defeated them 38-7 in Ohio Stadium. This time, with the Big Ten championship



ANDREW LIND

FOLLOWING URBAN'S BLUEPRINT – Ryan Day won the Big Ten title in his first year as Ohio State's head coach.

on the line in Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium, Wisconsin took leads of 14-0 and 21-7, the latter of which the Badgers took into halftime behind 135 rushing yards and a score from Jonathan Taylor and a pair of rushing touchdowns by quarterback Jack Coan.

But from there, Ohio State outscored Wisconsin 27-0 on the way to a 34-21 victory.

"To go down the way we did, come back and play in the second half, I think you've seen our talent, our execution, a lot of things, but today showed our team's heart," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "That's what makes this the best win of the year."

Against Clemson, it was the Buckeyes who came out hot, scoring the first 16 points on a J.K. Dobbins rushing touchdown and a trio of Blake Haubeil field goals.

But after a controversial targeting call ejected Ohio State cornerback Shaun Wade, Clemson started to gain momentum, scoring on the same drive as the Wade targeting to cut the lead to nine.

The Tigers ended up scoring 21 unanswered to take a 21-16 lead, but Ohio State almost countered with a strip and score, but another controversial call cost Ohio State safety Jordan Fuller six points. A pass by Clemson signal caller Trevor Lawrence was initially ruled a fumble on the field after Tigers wide receiver Justyn Ross was stripped by corner Jeff Okudah, which Fuller recovered and ran into the end zone.

Instead, the call was overturned and ruled an incomplete pass.

Still, the Buckeyes managed to retake the lead, scoring on a gutsy fourth-and-1 call that resulted in a 23-yard touchdown pass by quarterback Justin Fields to wide receiver Chris Olave.

But with just 3:07 to go, Clemson put

But with just 3:07 to go, Clemson put together a four-play, 94-yard drive that gave the Tigers a 29-23 lead. Ohio State threatened on its final drive, but after a miscommunication by Olave, Clemson intercepted a Fields pass and sealed the game.

"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," Day said immediately after the game. "But our guys played hard. I'm certainly feeling a range of emotions right now: proud, sad, and certainly angry. I thought our guys left it all on the field. We played hard and played bold. But certainly, there were a lot of plays in that game that didn't go our way. Very hard to swallow right now."

## 2. Meyer Caps OSU Career With Rose Bowl Victory

Before Day officially took over as the new head coach, the year started with the final game for Urban Meyer, Ohio State's head coach from 2012-18 who led the team to a national championship, two Big Ten titles and five bowl wins overall.

The last of those five bowl wins came in the "granddaddy of them all," the Rose Bowl.

It was Meyer's lone trip to Pasadena, Calif., and he left it 1-0 after a 28-23 Ohio State win over Washington on New Year's Day 2019.

Sophomore quarterback Dwayne Haskins, in what would turn out to also be his final game for Ohio State after he declared for the NFL draft, threw for 251 yards and three touchdowns and helped build a 28-3 Buckeye lead after three quarters.

The Huskies would score 20 unanswered points in the final quarter in an attempt to spoil the party, but Ohio State held on for the five-point win and gave Meyer his proper sendoff.

"This has always been a bucket list. It's something I've dreamed about as long as I've been watching Ohio State football, which is as long as I've been around," Meyer said. "It was everything and more."

## 3. Fields Transfers In, Earns Starting Gig, Shines In Role

When 2019 started, the player who eventually would become Ohio State's starting quarterback for 2019 was on a different team 589 miles away.

But on Jan. 4, Fields announced he would be leaving Georgia to come to Columbus and play for Ohio State. With the announcement, Fields – a five-star prospect who was tied for the eighth highest 247Sports Composite Ranking since the rankings were created in 2000 – became the highest-rated recruit to ever be in the Ohio State program.

A little over a month later, on Feb. 8, Fields was granted immediate eligibility by the NCAA, and on Aug. 19, he was named the starter for the opening game against Florida Atlantic.

Without the transfer, or the immediate eligibility, the Buckeyes' 2019 campaign might have looked a lot different.

"I'm really proud of the way he came along this year," Day said. "I thought from game one all the way to the last game he really improved. It's exciting that we're going to have him back."

Instead of having to potentially sit out a season, Fields – who amassed 3,273 passing yards, 484 rushing yards, 51 total touchdowns and just three interceptions in his first games as a starter – led the Buckeyes to a playoff game and finished No. 3 in Heisman Trophy voting.

His 51 total touchdowns trail only Haskins' 54 from 2018 in the program's record books.



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## YEAR IN REVIEW

## 4. A Pair Of Ohio State Legends Pass Away

Not everything was positive in the world of Ohio State sports. The year also brought with it the death of two former Buckeyes who are icons in their respective sports.

On April 25, Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame member John Havlicek died at the age of 79 after a battle with Parkinson's disease.

Havlicek played for the Buckeyes from 1959-62 and helped the team win its only national title in 1960. He was drafted seventh overall by the Boston Celtics in 1962 and didn't stop earning championships at the professional level, winning eight with Boston on his way to becoming a 13-time All-Star.

Ohio State also lost one of the program's best football players when Howard "Hopalong" Cassady died on Sept. 20 at 85 years old.

Cassady also helped the Buckeyes win a national championship, with his coming in 1954 when Ohio State went 10-0 and was named the consensus national champion. In his stint with the Buckeyes, Cassady dominated at running back as well as defensive back, and he earned two All-America selections and the Heisman Trophy in 1955.

He is one of six Buckeyes to ever win the Heisman.

## 5. Young Breaks Records, Wins Bednarik Despite Suspension

Junior defensive end Chase Young's first eight games of the season could not have gone better.

Along with Ohio State going 8-0, Young had 13½ sacks and was a single sack shy of breaking Vernon Gholston's single-season sack record. But then, before the Maryland matchup, Young was suspended indefinitely for accepting a loan from a "family friend," a loan that Young said he repaid in full.

"Unfortunately, I won't be playing this week because of an NCAA eligibility issue," Young wrote on Twitter on Nov. 8. "I'm working with the University and NCAA to get back on the field as soon as possible."

After sitting out the game against the Terrapins, it was announced that Young would also miss the matchup against Rutgers but then would be able to return for the Penn State game.

That two-game suspension seemed to knock Young out of possibly winning the Heisman, something just one primary defender in Charles Woodson has ever done, but the third-year end took out his aggression on the Nittany Lions, when he finished with three sacks to break Gholston's record and once again put the country on notice.

Though Young would not record a sack the rest of the season against Michigan, Wisconsin or Clemson, he still finished No. 4 in Heisman voting and took home both the Bronko Nagurski Award and the Chuck Bednarik Award, awards given to the best defensive player in college football.

## 6. Day Makes All-Star Coaching Staff Hires

Day did not take long to find replacements for his coaching staff, making four key hires within 10 days of the Rose Bowl win

First, he hired Mike Yurcich from Oklahoma State to be the passing game coordinator, a coach who had a part in helping Fields earn a Heisman Trophy nod.

He also brought in Jeff Hafley from the NFL as secondary coach and co-defensive coordinator. Hafley helped turn the secondary from a major weakness to a safety blanket and was half of the mind behind transforming the overall defense from program-worst numbers to one of the most successful defenses in college football.

Hafley's efforts earned him a nomination for the Broyles Award, which goes to the best assistant coach in college football.

The other half of the new defensive brain trust was Greg Mattison, whom Day hired from Michigan to be the other coordinator of the defense. Mattison was also joined by another Michigan staffer in Al Washington, who took over the linebacker room that also went from a con to a pro of the team.

Hafley, Mattison and Washington were all pieces of the Buckeye defense that finished the season ranked No. 4 in scoring defense (13.7 points per game) and No. 1 in total defense (259.7 yards per game) in the Football Bowl Subdivision.

## 7. Transfer Portal Makes Its Presence Known

Ohio State gained its star quarterback through the transfer portal but also lost plenty of key pieces in a portal that only grew in size as the year progressed.

With the Fields arrival came the departure of a pair of other Buckeye quarterbacks – Tate Martell and Matthew Baldwin – who now reside at Miami (Fla.) and TCU, respectively.

Linebacker Keandre Jones also left Ohio State early, joining fellow Big Ten opponent Maryland. Wide receiver L'Christian "Blue" Smith decided to stay in the state, transferring to Cincinnati, while defensive lineman Malik Barrow transferred to UCF before transferring again to Rutgers at the end of this season.

The Buckeyes also lost two contributors in the secondary from 2018 to the portal in safety Isaiah Pryor and safety/linebacker Brendon White.

Pryor headed for Notre Dame while White, the former Rose Bowl defensive MVP, also went to the Scarlet Knights, who are now coached by former Ohio State defensive coordinator Greg Schiano.

The Buckeyes did also gain a key piece from Rutgers early in 2019, though, when offensive lineman Jonah Jackson transferred in. Jackson started every game for the Buckeyes and was an All-Big Ten member in his lone season in Columbus.

## 8. Day, Fields, Young Sweep Major Big Ten Awards

For the first time in 40 years, an Ohio State head coach won Big Ten Coach of the Year.

Day was honored with the Dave McClain Coach of the Year award, which is selected by the media. The Hayes-Schembechler Coach of the Year award, given out by the coaches, went to Minnesota's P.J. Fleck.

In his first full season at the helm, Day won his first 13 games and had Ohio State the No. 1-ranked team in the country on multiple occasions.

Day is the first recipient of a Big Ten Coach of the Year honor for Ohio State since Earle Bruce in 1979.

But Day was not the only person in Columbus who won some hardware. Fields and Young, who would both go on to be nominated for the Heisman, took home Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year and Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year for their respective efforts.

## 9. Dobbins Bounces Back In Junior Season

Dobbins, a junior running back, came into the 2019 campaign with something to prove after a down 2018 season when he ran for just 1,053 yards and 10 rushing touchdowns on 230 attempts while splitting carries with Mike Weber.

"I just want to be legendary," Dobbins said in March. "I want to be like Ezekiel Elliott and Archie Griffin and guys like that. Write my name in stone."

By the time 2019 ended, Dobbins certainly put his name into the Ohio State record books.

Dobbins rushed 301 times this past season amassing 2,003 yards and 21 rushing scores on those carries, becoming the first Ohio State running back in history to rush for more than 2,000 yards in a single season.

The third-year back also became the first running back in program history to

rush for 1,000 yards in his freshman, sophomore and junior years.

"J.K. is a Buckeye legend for everything he's done for this program and the heart and soul that he poured into it," center Josh Myers said after the Fiesta Bowl.

Dobbins elected to forgo his senior season and enter the NFL draft in 2020. He leaves with 4,459 rushing yards, the second most by a Buckeye only to Griffin (5,589).

## 10. Gray breaks Owens' 83-year-old record

Jesse Owens is a legend in the sport of track and field. The four-time gold medalist is also a legend at Ohio State, where he set a multitude of records, one of which was his 100-meter dash time.

His record of 10.2 seconds was set in 1936 and was not touched for 83 years. That is, until Nick Gray clocked in a time of 10.17 seconds on at the Gamecock Invitational on April 13.

Gray actually lost the event to South Carolina's Demek Kemp, who finished in a blazing 10.03 seconds, but the record was still broken.

The then-senior also went on to break Ohio State's 200-meter record later that day with a time of 20.2 seconds. That time broke Chris Nelloms' record of 20.23 seconds that was held for 26 years.

### **Honorable Mentions**

- Ohio State men's basketball earned a bid in the NCAA Tournament with a 19-14 record and upset Iowa State as an 11-seed in the round of 64 with a 62-59 victory. The Buckeyes would then be eliminated by three-seeded Houston 74-59 in the round of 32.
- During the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 7, K.J. Hill brought in career reception No. 192, passing David Boston for the most catches by an Ohio State player in program history. Hill finished the season with 201 career receptions.
- On May 26, the Ohio State baseball team defeated fifth-seeded Nebraska 3-1 as a seven seed to win the Big Ten tournament and earn an automatic berth in the NCAA tournament. The Buckeyes were the lowest-seeded team to ever win the tournament.



## Snyder Is Ohio State's Athlete Of The Decade

By WYATT CROSHER Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Over the past 10 years, there have been loads of storylines and major moments throughout all of Ohio State's sports. And with those highlight moments came big plays and levels of dominance that only the best athletes in college sports could possibly have achieved.

The 2010s provided a wide variety of championships for Ohio State, and there are plenty of athletes who have stood out among the rest of their peers as truly special talents who will forever be remembered in their respective sports.

But none of them displayed that level of dominance and success more than Kyle Snyder.

Snyder, a four-year wrestler at Ohio State, was as consistent as it gets for the Buckeyes, amassing a 75-5 record and winning three individual national titles.

But what separates Snyder from even the very best Ohio State athletes this decade is what he managed to accomplish outside of Columbus.

The wrestler out of Woodbine, Md., won a pair of gold medals at the World Championships in 2015 and 2017 and took silver in another. Snyder said that first gold in 2015 - which he won when he was 19 years old – was when the attention he was getting started to really grow.

Nobody really knew how I was going to do, being so young on the team," Snyder told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "After I won the senior world championships and came back to wrestle my sophomore season after pulling my Olympic redshirt, that's when everything really started to pick up in regards to people talking about me.'

His largest accomplishment, though, came with a different gold medal. At the age of 20, Snyder took down Khetag Gazyumov from Azerbaijan in the 97-kilogram (214 pounds) division to win a gold medal at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio

Before all of that, and before Snyder



COLIRTESY OF KYLE SNYDER

AT THE TOP – With three national titles and an Olympic gold medal, wrestler Kyle Snyder was the easy choice for BSB's Athlete of the Decade.

out to Ohio State was they had a really strong regional training center when committed, they had Tervel Dlagnev, who's now a coach there, he was training and was a multiple-time world medalist," Snyder said. "They had J.D. Bergman, who was a world team member; Keith Gavin, who was a world team member; Angel Escobedo, Reece Humphrey, Logan Stieber: there were a lot of guvs that were competing at the world and Olympic level stage, which is what I wanted to do.

Snyder's freshman season with Ohio State featured 80 percent of his total collegiate losses, four, but he still managed to put together a 30-4 record and had a chance to win his first individual title with a bout against Iowa State's Kyven Gadson in the 197-pound final.

But Snyder lost that fight via pin, and even though the Buckeyes went on to win their first team national championship in that tournament, Snyder was not satisfied.

"At that point in my life, I didn't really have a strong enough faith to handle that the correct way," Snyder said. "It broke me, so looking back on it now, it's amazing to have been a part of a national championship team, and I'm really happy for everybody who was a part of that team.

'But in the moment, I wasn't happy.' Following that defeat, Snyder, who cur-

rently weighs about 214 pounds, moved up to the heavyweight class, where the maximum weight is 285 pounds.

That didn't matter. Snyder won 45 of

his final 46 collegiate matches, which included a trio of individual national titles. His only loss was to Michigan's Adam Coon as a senior.

But after winning the gold medal in Brazil, Snyder had to decide if he wanted to return to Ohio State for another two seasons, or if he wanted to leave and get the financial benefits of being an Olympic gold medalist. At first, there wasn't really much of a decision.

"My junior season, I didn't really even consider not coming back because I talked to my dad after the Olympics, and I was like 'What do you think? You think I should wrestle? Or do you think I should just stop and take advantage of the financial opportunities?' "Snyder said. "My dad told me, well he asked me a question. He said, 'I didn't know that you were wrestling to be the richest man in the world. I thought you were wrestling to be the best wrestler in the world.' And I was like, 'All right, that's true.' "

But after another successful year his junior season, in which Snyder went 17-0 and won another individual title, the decision became a little more difficult.

"My senior season is when I did think about it a little bit, and I had a discussion with my coaches," Snyder told BSB. "It was for a similar thing, like the only reason why I wouldn't wrestle is because there was the financial opportunities available for me because of what I had accomplished, and we just decided that they would still be there after I was done competing and just wrestle this last season."

Snyder did come back for round four, and even with a loss (to Coon) this time around, he won 17 of his 18 matches and earned his third individual national title.

He is now currently training at Penn State for the 2020 Olympic Trials, which are on April 4-5, where he will compete to represent the United States, once again in the 97 kg weight class.

He said the decision to go to Penn State to train - a program that has won eight of the past nine team national titles, with its only loss being to Ohio State in 2015 - came down to trying to find a new competitive edge.

"I've always been somebody who thrives in environments with training partners who can really push me, and Penn State has a lot of those guys," Snyder said. They have really intelligent coaches who have a lot of belief in the way that they do things, and that also has an impact on their athletes and the way that they can

But by the end at Ohio State, Snyder became the most recognizable wrestler the program has ever had, won a variety of championships, and proved he was the best wrestler in the world before he could legally drink a beer.

He was also the best Ohio State athlete of the decade.

Everywhere that I go I want to leave it better than when I originally got there, and Ohio State was a strong wrestling team before I got there with a lot of history and great wrestlers, and now I feel like they're in a stronger place, so that's cool to have been a part of it, and it's not just me, but it's the other guys that I was able to be on the team with," Snyder said. "It's nice to have been able to have had success there and to impact people through the way that I've competed and trained



and all that, but everybody had just as much of an impact on me, so more so, I'm just thankful for that."

## **Honorable Mentions**

Logan Stieber (Wrestling, 2012-15) – Stieber wrestled 122 times with the Buckeyes and won 119 of them, and he finished his Ohio State career with four individual national championships, as well as the team national title in 2015. Wrestling in the 141-pound class, Stieber also won a gold medal at the 2016 World Championships, as well as at the Wrestling World Cup in 2018.

"He had a huge influence on me," Snyder said of Stieber. "He led by example. He was extremely hardworking, he was humble enough to listen to the coaches and continue to receive corrections so that he could improve, and even the way that he competed, the most inspiring thing was the way he wrestled in competition. He didn't have any fear. He just went out there and tried to destroy everybody he competed against, and it gave me a lot of a confidence just that I could do a similar thing.

"He's a beast. I really am thankful that I was able to be on the team with him."

Kelsey Mitchell (Women's Basketball, 2014-18) – Mitchell was the star on an Ohio State women's basketball team that made four NCAA tournaments, and she was rewarded with four All-Big Ten honors and three selections as Big Ten Player of the Year.

Mitchell averaged 23.9 points per game, 3.3 rebounds per game and 3.9 assists per game during her four seasons, all while shooting 43.8 percent from the field and 38.6 percent from three.

Her 3,402 total points is No. 2 in NCAA history, trailing only Washington's Kelsey Plum (3,527). Against Maryland on Jan. 25, 2018, Mitchell passed Laura Malernee

of Division-II's West Liberty for the most three-pointers in history, hitting her 442nd shot from deep. She finished her Ohio State career with 497 three-point makes.

J.T. Barrett (Football, 2013-17) – After redshirting in his first season, Barrett was hurled into the starting quarterback position following a season-ending injury to Braxton Miller, and Barrett responded by winning 11 of his first 12 games, putting Ohio State in a place to win a national championship after Barrett too went down with an injury.

After a rocky 2015 campaign battling for the starting job with Cardale Jones, Barrett put together 23 wins with just four losses in 2016 and 2017 and finished both of those seasons with more than 3,000 total yards from his dual-threat ability.

Barrett ended his Ohio State career winning 38 of his 44 starts and with 9,434 passing yards, 104 passing touchdowns, 3,263 rushing yards and 43 scores on the ground.

The passing yards and touchdowns are both Ohio State and Big Ten records, while his rushing yards (No. 8) and rushing touchdowns (tied for No. 4) rank in the top 10 in program history.

Evan Turner (Men's Basketball, 2007-2010) – Though he played only one season this decade, Turner's production in the 2009-10 season for Ohio State is some of the best the program has ever had.

Finishing the year with 20.4 points, 9.2 rebounds and 6.0 assists per game, Turner won both the Naismith and the Wooden Awards, which honor the best player in college basketball, and helped Ohio State become a No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament and reach the Sweet 16 before falling to Tennessee.

Over his three-season Buckeye career, Turner averaged 15.0 points, 6.8 rebounds and 4.1 assists per game and shot 50.2 percent from the field.



COURTESY OF KYLE SNYDER

**ROUND TWO** – Former Ohio State wrestler Kyle Snyder is currently training for the 2020 Olympic trials.

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## Buckeyes Finding It Tough To Be Tough In Big Ten

The Ohio State men's basketball team has twice attained a level most didn't see coming this season. Unfortunately for the Buckeyes, that's not a good thing.

## COURT REPORT Craig Merz

Raise your hand if you expected them to reach a No. 2 ranking by late December with a nonconference slate that included Cincinnati, Villanova, a trip to North Carolina and a Las Vegas matchup against Kentucky.

Now that no one extended their arms for that, who among us expected the Buckeyes to plummet from a possible No. 1 seed when they were cruising to nine straight wins at the start of the season to a point where they had to win at Northwestern on Jan. 26 to avoid dropping into the cellar of the Big Ten.

The Buckeyes defeated the Wildcats, 71-59. Talk about going from the penthouse to the outhouse, or, in OSU's case, out of the top 25 following a 90-76 setback at Penn State on Jan. 18 – the same Nittany Lions who were beaten 106-74 in Columbus on Dec. 7.

"This game takes a lot of toughness, and that's one thing that we started off well," freshman guard D.J. Carton said one day before the Buckeyes' 62-59 home loss to Minnesota on Jan. 23 that sent them to their seventh loss in



KFVIN DYF

FAMILIAR FEELING – After climbing all the way to No. 2 in the national polls, Ohio State and big man Kaleb Wesson have fallen out of the rankings after losing six of their next eight games.

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## 2019-20 Ohio State Men's Basketball Statistics

## 13-7 Overall (3-6 Big Ten) Statistics through games of Jan. 26

							_		Rebo	unds						
Player	G-GS	MinAvg.	FG-FGA	Pct.	3P-3PA	Pct.	FT-FTA	Pct.	O-D	T-Avg.	PF-FO	Α	то	BS	ST	PtsAvg.
Kaleb Wesson	20-20	568-28.4	85-192	.443	27-66	.409	80-111	.721	48-143	191-9.6	59-1	43	57	24	8	277-13.9
Duane Washingt	ton17-11	1 392-23.1	64-150	.427	36-84	.429	26-31	.839	3-39	42-2.5	22-0	21	19	1	4	190-11.2
D.J. Carton	20-3	478-23.9	71-149	.477	24-60	.400	41-54	.759	10-46	56-2.8	38-0	58	52	8	13	207-10.4
Andre Wesson	18-12	520-28.9	54-116	.466	29-65	.446	27-33	.818	23-47	70-3.9	47-3	36	23	8	6	164-9.1
Kyle Young	18-18	408-22.7	53-88	.602	2-8	.250	27-45	.600	34-77	111-6.2	30-0	16	8	11	7	135-7.5
C.J. Walker	20-19	536-26.8	55-123	.447	18-50	.360	21-29	.724	6-52	58-2.9	49-1	62	36	2	25	149-7.5
E.J. Liddell	20-0	315-15.8	42-85	.494	3-17	.176	41-58	.707	16-53	69-3.5	38-0	10	16	18	8	128-6.4
Luther Muhamm	nad19-17	7 430-22.6	35-98	.357	19-58	.328	30-38	.789	6-25	31-1.6	28-1	26	20	1	17	119-6.3
Justin Ahrens	15-0	154-10.3	16-40	.400	14-37	.378	1-2	.500	5-14	19-1.3	15-0	4	8	1	1	47-3.1
Alonzo Gaffney	14-0	107-7.6	12-22	.545	1-6	.167	3-8	.375	5-19	24-1.7	20-1	2	12	3	0	28-2.0
Ibrahima Diallo	6-0	37-6.2	4-11	.364	0-0	.000	0-2	.000	7-6	13-2.2	6-0	0	4	2	0	8-1.3
Danny Hummer	9-0	34-3.8	2-8	.250	2-6	.333	1-2	.500	1-2	3-0.3	4-0	5	3	0	4	7-0.8
Harrison Hookfir	n 6-0	21-3.5	1-5	.200	0-1	.000	0-0	.000	3-2	5-0.8	0-0	0	5	0	1	2-0.3
TEAM									41-34	75			10			
Ohio State	20	4000	494-1087	.454	175-458	.382	298-413	.722	208-559	767-38.3	356-7	283	273	79	94	1461-73.1
Opponents	20	4000	433-1138	.380	138-424	.325	225-346	.650	201-444	645-32.2	382-7	202	251	53	95	1229-61.5

10 games. "We were a really tough team in the beginning. It showed in our defensive numbers. but now we've lost the identity of toughness.'

Toughness. That word has been thrown out there a lot lately when trying to dissect what's gone wrong with the Buckeyes. When it comes to crunch time, often it's Ohio State that's

The Buckeyes led West Virginia by six at the half but were outscored 36-22 in the final 20 minutes of a 67-59 defeat on Dec. 29 in the first of four straight losses. In the following game, Wisconsin trailed 51-49 with 3:47 left but went on a 12-3 run en route to a 61-57 win at Value City Arena.

Two games later, OSU was up 45-43 midway through the second half at Indiana before the Hoosiers scored 10 straight and went on to win 66-54. In the Minnesota defeat, the Buckeyes had an 11-point lead early in the second half but lost when Marcus Carr, who had scored 35 points when the Golden Gophers handed OSU its first loss, 84-71 on Dec. 15, made the tiebreaking three-pointer with 3.3 seconds left.

"I take pride in being a clutch player," Carr said afterward. "We just wanted to get this big one on the road."

The Gophers ended a 10-game losing streak in Columbus thanks to Carr's trey.

"He made a tough shot," Minnesota coach Richard Pitino said. "He's a really tough kid. He's got that it factor."

Whatever it is, the Buckeyes don't seem to have it. There is not a go-to player, and the most inspirational is blood-and-guts junior forward Kyle Young, who is still regaining his form after an appendectomy on Dec. 29.

OSU coach Chris Holtmann was asked the day before hosting Minnesota if his team was lacking mental or physical toughness.

"I think we've struggled in both areas right now," Holtmann said. "Some of it is a younger team lacking some physical strength or maybe overall size. But more than anything, I just think we are lacking in really both areas. A resilient mind-set that you need, which is what you're talking about, the mental approach, the ability to move on to the next play and make the next right play and do it with a toughness about you."

Despite losing to the Gophers a day later, Holtmann was less critical of his players concerning their toughness.

"We took a step forward," he said postgame. "We'll see if we can be consistent with that."

## **Too Good To Be True**

Holtmann offered an interesting, maybe unique, explanation for why the Buckeyes have not been able to close out games in the Big Ten. He said that the Buckeyes may have been hurt by their nonconference games. Holtmann wasn't talking about the lack of quality opponents as he did last season when OSU started 12-2.

No, he referenced that beating Villanova and

## **OSU Men's Basketball Signees & 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 Lutherar

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 Meechie Johnson					Convoy (Ohio) Crestview
Meechie Johnson	CG	5-11	160	***	Willoughby (Ohio) Andrew Osborne

North Carolina each by 25 points and downing Cincinnati (64-56) and Kentucky (71-65) didn't prepare the Buckeyes for the Big Ten.

We just didn't get tested in that way," Holtmann said. "We didn't get tested on the road in that way. We didn't get tested in neutral situations in that way. As soon as we got into Big Ten play, we've gotten tested in it, for sure.

"Bottom line, we just have got to find a way to play tougher and smarter.'

Junior guard C.J. Walker didn't mince words. We've just got to figure it out. That's the only thing that I can pretty much say," he said. "We did have it rolling those first 10, 11 games

and we just somewhere hit a slump, so we've just got to get out of it." The task for Holtmann and his staff is to pinpoint the hard-nosed players. In his defense, the Buckeyes are a young team still searching

for an identity. "I think we've got a competitive group," Holtmann said. "What I've got to do as a coach is figure out who our toughest guys are and roll with those. And the other ones are going to have to learn in practice before they can play.'

## **Wesson Lesson**

Being the biggest (6-9, 270) and best player (13.9 points per game, 9.6 rebounds per game) leaves junior forward/post Kaleb Wesson open to criticism when the team struggles.

He was fair game after scoring just two points in the most recent Minnesota game after shooting 1 of 10 from the floor. He was 0 for 3 from three-point range, including a miss that would have broken a 59-59 tie with 16 seconds left.

Holtmann said Wesson was the secondary choice, but he had no problem with the shot

"Hindsight is always 20-20," the coach said. "But I'm at peace with where we were at with that possession.'

He also made sure to praise Wesson for tying his career high in rebounds.

"Fourteen rebounds for Kaleb and I thought his ball screen defense was outstanding," Holtmann said. "He really had to work for the better part of the game. He had a couple around the basket that he would normally make. He created some opportunities for other guys because of the attention they were giving him.

"Overall, it was a tough floor game for him. But I was pleased with Kaleb's effort."

Wesson is expected to head to the NBA after this season, but he faced a formidable foe in Minnesota standout sophomore center Daniel Oturu (6-10, 240), who entered the game averaging 20.2 points and 11.9 rebounds.

In their first meeting this season, Oturu had 14 points and 13 rebounds while Wesson had 12 and 6. In the rematch, Oturu, like Wesson, was scoreless in the first half but finished with 11 points and six rebounds.

## Take A Seat

Sophomore guards Luther Muhammad and Duane Washington Jr. were suspended prior to the Jan. 14 Nebraska game for "failing to meet program standards and expectations," Holtmann

The Buckeyes defeated the Cornhuskers, 80-68.

Wesson, who was suspended for the final three regular-season games last year, supported the sanctions.

"This is just a learning step," Wesson said. "We went through the same thing last year. You learn from it, you move on."

Muhammad and Washington were reinstated for the Penn State game.

## On The Mend

Holtmann said one of the reasons the Buckeyes have lacked grit is the absence of injured sophomore guard Musa Jallow, who has not played this season.

Jallow underwent reconstructive surgery on his right ankle on Jan. 24 and will take a redshirt. He is expected to be recovered in time for offseason activities.

The same is true for junior forward Justice Sueing, who had foot surgery on Jan. 14. He was already sitting out this season per NCAA rules after transferring from California.

## Men's **Basketball**

	w	on L	f. Pct.	W	)ver L	all Pct.
Illinois Michigan State Maryland Rutgers Iowa Indiana Wisconsin Minnesota Penn State Purdue Ohio State Michigan Nebraska Northwestern	7 7 6 6 5 5 5 5 4 4 <b>3</b> 2 2 1	2 2 3 3 3 4 4 5 4 5 <b>6</b> 6 7 8	.778 .778 .667 .667 .625 .556 .500 .500 .444 .333 .250 .222	15 16 15 14 15 12 11 14 11 <b>13</b>	5 5 4 5 5 5 8 9 5 9 <b>7</b> 8 3 13	.750 .750 .800 .750 .737 .750 .600 .550 .737 .550 .650 .579 .350

Jan. 12 Scores

Purdue 71, Michigan State 42 Minnesota 75, Michigan 67 Jan. 14 Scores

Ohio State 80, Nebraska 68 lowa 75, Northwestern 62

Wisconsin 56, Maryland 54

Jan. 15 Scores Rutgers 59, Indiana 50 Minnesota 75, Penn State 69

**Jan. 17 Scores**Michigan State 67, Wisconsin 55

lowa 90, Michigan 83 **Jan. 18 Scores** Penn State 90, Ohio State 76 Maryland 57, Purdue 50 Illinois 75, Northwestern 71 Indiana 82, Nebraska 74

**Jan. 19 Score** Rutgers 64, Minnesota 56

**Jan. 21 Scores**Maryland 77, Northwestern 66
Illinois 79, Purdue 62 Wisconsin 82, Nebraska 68

Jan. 22 Scores Penn State 72, Michigan 63

lowa 85, Rutgers 80

Jan. 23 Scores

Minnesota 62, Ohio State 59 Indiana 67, Michigan State 63 Jan. 24 Score Purdue 70, Wisconsin 51

Jan. 25 Scores Illinois 64, Michigan 62

Rutgers 75, Nebraska 72

Jan. 26 Scores

Maryland 77, Indiana 76

Michigan State 70, Minnesota 52

Ohio State 71, Northwestern 59 Jan. 27 Game

Wisconsin at Iowa, 8:30 p.m. Jan. 28 Games Michigan at Nebraska, 7 p.m.

Purdue at Rutgers, 8 p.m. Jan. 29 Games

Northwestern at Michigan State, 6:30 p.m. Indiana at Penn State, 8:30 p.m.

Jan. 30 Games

Minnesota at Illinois, 7:30 p.m. lowa at Maryland, 8:30 p.m. Feb. 1 Games

Indiana at Ohio State, 12 p.m. Michigan State at Wisconsin, 1 p.m. Michigan at Rutgers, 4:30 p.m. Penn State at Nebraska, 7 p.m. Purdue at Northwestern, 9 p.m. **Feb. 2 Game** 

Illinois at Iowa

wa, 1 p.m. **Feb. 4 Games** Rutgers at Maryland, 7 p.m.
Ohio State at Michigan, 7 p.m.

Penn State at Michigan State, 8 p.m. **Feb. 5 Games** lowa at Purdue, 7 p.m. Wisconsin at Minnesota, 9 p.m.

Feb. 7 Game Maryland at Illinois, 8 p.m.

Feb. 8 Games Michigan State at Michigan, 12 p.m.

Purdue at Indiana, 2 p.m. Minnesota at Penn State, 4 p.m. Nebraska at Iowa, 6 p.m. **Feb. 9 Games** 

Ohio State at Wisconsin, 1 p.m. Northwestern at Rutgers, 6:30 p.m. Feb. 11 Games

Penn State at Purdue, 6:30 p.m Nebraska at Maryland, 8:30 p.m. Michigan State at Illinois, 9 p.m.

**Feb. 12 Games Rutgers at Ohio State, 7 p.m.**Michigan at Northwestern, 9 p.m.

## Bucks End Losing Streak With Win Over Huskers

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

The Ohio State men's basketball team ended its four-game losing streak with an 80-68 victory against Nebraska in front of 12,954 fans at Value City Arena on Jan. 14.

Starting guards D.J. Carton and C.J. Walker stepped up in the absence of suspended sophomores Luther Muhammad and Duane Washington.

Walker led the Buckeyes with 18 points on 7-of-12 shooting and was 2 of 3 from beyond the arc, while Carton scored 13 points with a team-high five assists and two blocks. Walker also added five rebounds, four assists and two steals in 38 minutes.

"I most definitely was in a rhythm today," Walker said. "I was able to make shots today. I haven't been able to make shots in conference play so far, so today was really good for me to make some threes, get to the basket and make plays."

Walker went 1 for 6 in the first half before a 6-for-6 second half.

"I did not think he played well in the first half," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said of Walker. "He really struggled, opening with tying his shoelaces there. He's an older guy, he's got to be better than that. He's got to be better at making some of the decisions he made early. And at times, he was forcing the issue with his offense too much.

Second half, he really played well. Good defensively and let it come to him more. His play and leadership in the second half were really good."

The experienced Scarlet and Gray trio of senior wing Andre Wesson, junior big man Kaleb Wesson and junior forward Kyle Young also rose to the occasion without Muhammad and Washington.

Kaleb Wesson gave the Buckeyes (12-5, 2-4 Big Ten) a double-double performance with 13 points and 14 boards, while dishing four assists and blocking two shots. Young scored 10 points with six boards and two blocks as well.

Andre Wesson contributed 11 points, three rebounds and three assists and left the game after taking a hit to the head, but he later returned.

Carton opened the second half with an impressive drive into an and-1 finish before converting the foul shot for the old-fashioned three-point play to give Ohio State a 40-25 lead. The Buckeyes never led by fewer than 12 for the remainder of the game, and that came in the final minute, 78-66.

The Cornhuskers (7-10, 2-4) closed to 56-43 at the 11:54 mark when Nebraska junior

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guard Thorir Thorbjarnarson knocked down a triple. The Buckeyes responded with a 12-0 rally to put the game out of reach, highlighted by a putback dunk by Kaleb Wesson and eight Walker points, including two three-pointers.

"It feels good," Walker said. "It feels good to be back on the winning side and being able to make those runs that we haven't been able to make in the past four games. It just feels really good to be back on top and win.

Ohio State overcame an opening-possession backcourt violation and a 4-0 deficit thanks to Andre Wesson, who hit three unanswered three-pointers to put his team up five.

"It gave us a big jolt of confidence," Holtmann said. "I mean, a big jolt of confidence, because we didn't have a good couple possessions there, to say the least.

The Cornhuskers cut the Buckeyes' lead to two points, but Holtmann's squad would not be deterred in its quest for its first win since Dec. 21. Ohio State ripped off an 8-0 run with four different players scoring to push its lead to 17-7.

Nebraska and Ohio State battled back and forth until the home team led 24-15 and Young went on a 6-0 streak by himself, giving the Scarlet and Gray a 15-point lead and double the Huskers' point total.

Stifling defense and good shooting gave the Buckeyes a 38-25 halftime advantage, shooting 53.6 percent (15 of 28) from the floor and 50 percent from beyond the arc (5 of 10) in the first frame. They shut down the Huskers through 20 minutes, holding them to 31.4 percent (11 of 35) and 11.1 percent (1 of 9) from three.

Overall, Ohio State shot 54.5 percent (30 of 55) from the field and 45.5 percent (10 of 22) from distance, while Nebraska connected on 42.4 percent (28 of 66) of field goals and 40.9 percent (9 of 22) of three-pointers.

Freshman forward E.J. Liddell pitched in 10 points off the Ohio State bench, making 3 of 5 field goals. Thorbjarnarson led Nebraska with 15 points.

## **Buckeyes Fall To Host Nittany Lions**

The Buckeyes fell 90-76 to Penn State in front of 14,785 fans at the Bryce Jordan Center in University Park, Pa., on Ian, 18.

"Our effort wasn't quite what it needs to be, for sure," Holtmann said, "We'll have to fix that, certainly going into Jan. 23 (against Minnesota). But give Penn State credit for the win."

Senior forward Lamar Stevens led the Nittany Lions (13-5, 3-4) to victory with 24 points on 7-of-12 shooting, while sophomore guard Myreon Jones added 20 points and four assists.

## Ohio State 80, Nebraska 68

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Kaleb Wesson scored 19 points and grabbed five rebounds in the loss, with his brother, Andre, adding 12 points and five boards.

Washington and Muhammad returned to the team following a one-game suspension and came off the Buckeye bench. Washington tied his career high with 20 points on 6-of-10 shooting, hitting 3 of 5 triples and 5 of 6 free throws, while Muhammad scored six points by making 6 of 6 foul shots.

"He was able to make some shots, but the game was a little bit always out of reach," Holtmann said of Washington. "Defensively, Luther gave us some deflections. Duane made some shots, but it's hard to look at it individually in this case right now.

Ohio State (12-6, 2-5) took a 4-3 lead on a fastbreak layup by Kaleb Wesson from Walker 2:30 into the game. Penn State responded with an 11-0 run, with five points from senior forward Mike Watkins, while holding the Buckeyes scoreless for 4:43.

Washington ended the scoring drought with a three-pointer, but the Nittany Lions clamped down defensively again and went on a 7-0 run, led by five from Stevens and spanning another 4:33.

We just didn't come out with enough

## Penn State 90, Ohio State 76

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Ohio State	Min.	otal Fo		Reb. O-D	A PF	Pts.
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Young	14	0-4				1 0
K. Wesson	33					2 19
Carton		3-9	2-2	1-2	6	
Walker	22	1-4	0-1	0-2		3 9 4 2
Muhammad	9	0-2	6-6			5 6
Washington	26		5-6			3 20
Ahrens	12		0-0		0	2 0
Liddell		2-4		1-2		3 8
Totals			21-29		14 2	
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goals: 9-20 (	A. Wes	son 3-	4. K. V	Vesson	2-4. (	arton
1-3, Walker	0-1, M	uhamm	nad 0-2	2, Wash	ingto	n 3-5,
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Penn State	Т	otal F	G FT	Reb.		
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A P	F Pts.
Lundy	27	3-7	3-5			4 12
Stevens	22	7-12	8-8			4 24
Harrar	21	3-5	0-0			2 6
M. Jones	29	6-12	6-7	1-0		1 20
Wheeler	23	1-3				1 2
Dread	28		5-6			3 10
Clones	a	1_2	0-0	∩_1	1 .	4 3

Wheeler 0-2, Dread 1-1, C. Jones 1-2, Brockington 0-1). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 7 (Lundy 2, Stevens 2, Watkins 2, Buttrick). Turnovers: 10 (Stevens 3, Wheeler 2, Lundy, M. Jones, Dread, Brockington, TEAM). Steals: 9 (Watkins 3, M. Jones 2, Wheeler 2, Lundy, Harrar).

Officials: McJunkins, Pfeifer, Carstensen. Attendance: 14 785 energy to begin with and dug ourselves in a hole, and it's tough to climb out of those, especially in road environments," Washington

200 9-54 23-28

Percentages: FG: 53.7%. FT: 82.1%. 3-point goals: 9-19 (Lundy 3-6, Stevens 2-3, M. Jones 2-4, Wheeler 0-2, Dread 1-1, C. Jones 1-2, Brockington

Brockington

Buttrick

shots.' Penn State dominated on its way to a 42-27 first-half lead, outshooting Ohio State 53.3 percent (16 of 30) to 34.5 percent (10 of 29) from the floor.

said. "And they were making some tough

Stevens paced the Nittany Lions in the first half, scoring 10 points on 4-of-8 shooting with two blocks and two triples. Kaleb Wesson led the Scarlet and Gray with 12 points on 5-of-9 shooting with three rebounds.

Stevens picked up where he left off to open the second half, scoring just 18 seconds into the final frame. However, the Nittany Lions' standout forward picked up his third foul 21 seconds later and took the bench with his team up 17 points. Stevens sat out for nearly six minutes, checking in at 13:43 with Penn State leading by 14, 56-42.

Immediately after Stevens checked out, Andre Wesson hit back-to-back triples to cut the Penn State lead to 11, but that was the closest Ohio State would come. Penn State pushed its lead to as many as 20, and Ohio State could not string enough stops together

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## OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

to close the gap.

"They played harder than us today and made more shots," Andre Wesson said. "When you're on the road, you know they're going to be comfortable, so making that team uncomfortable is key. And we didn't do that today."

Carton, who started again, and fellow freshman Liddell made some plays for the Buckeyes, with Carton scoring nine points and dishing a career-high six assists and Liddell posting eight points.

Overall, Ohio State shot 42.6 percent (23 of 54) from the floor, 45.0 percent (9 of 20) from beyond the arc, and 72.4 percent from the free-throw line (21 of 29). Penn State connected on 53.7 percent (29 of 54) of field goals, 47.4 percent (9 of 19) triples, and 82.1 percent (23 of 28) on foul shots.

"That was our worst defensive effort of the year, but give them credit," Holtmann said. "They made a lot of shots, and they made it difficult for us. It certainly was (difficult)."

### Ohio State Loses On Last-Minute Three-Pointer

Ohio State fell 62-59 to Minnesota at the hands of standout guard Marcus Carr in front of 13,234 fans at Value City Arena on Jan. 23.

"We felt like we were competing, like we were playing hard," Young said. "Our energy was good. Our energy was better than it has been, but that's why it's disappointing. It's a tough loss, because we felt like we were in it, and we felt like we were going to win that game."

The Buckeyes trailed the Gophers 57-55 with less than two minutes left in the game when Young threw down a dunk and made a layup on a pair of assists from Kaleb Wesson.

But Carr, a third-year sophomore, tied the game and then hit a clutch three-pointer off the dribble with 3.3 seconds left for the win. He finished with 21 points for the Gophers (11-8, 5-4).

"It was a guard-to-guard switch, he hesitated, I contested, and he made the shot," Walker said of Carr's shot.

The Buckeyes (12-7, 2-6) had a balanced attack in the loss, with Young leading the way, scoring 14 points with six rebounds, Washington scoring 12 and Walker adding 11 points.

"Bottom line is we had other guys that were able to make plays with the attention (Kaleb Wesson) was given," Holtmann said.

Kaleb Wesson opened the second half with a dunk off an offensive rebound for his first and only points, giving the Buckeyes a 39-28 lead. However, the Golden Gophers cut that lead to three with a quick 8-0 run, led by four points from Carr.

"We knew it was going to be a tight game," Holtmann said when asked about the run. "I don't think any of us went into it thinking it was going to be different than the way it turned out to be."

After a Washington basket made it 48-43 near the midway point of the half, Minnesota used a 6-0 stretch to take its first lead since leading 22-21 with 7:30 left in the first half.

Washington then drilled a shot from deep to regain the lead for Ohio State, but Minnesota sophomore big man Daniel Oturu answered with a game-tying hook shot. Then Muhammad stole the ball and pushed it in transition until dishing to Walker for a reverse

Minnesota sophomore guard Gabe Kalscheur connected on a clutch triple, seizing a 54-53 lead for the visitors with 4:52 remaining. Oturu extended the lead to three with a jumper from the foul line. Young converted a layup and drew a foul but missed the and-1 free throw that would have tied the game before he responded with the two key

finishes down the stretch.

"He's getting his energy back," Holtmann said of Young. "He played off other guys. He finished around the rim. Defensively, he was good when he was on Oturu. He's slowly but surely getting his energy back."

The Buckeyes and Golden Gophers had battled throughout a back-and-forth first half with Minnesota's biggest lead coming at 15-10 with 13:41 on the clock.

Ohio State responded with an 11-2 run. The rally was highlighted by five points from Washington coming on a smooth left-handed finish off the glass and a three-pointer.

The Golden Gophers answered with a quick 5-0 run, taking a 22-21 lead on a Carr triple. The teams went back and forth with Ohio State leading 24-23 with 6:01 until halftime.

The Scarlet and Gray ripped off an 11-2 run to take a 10-point lead, sparked by five points from Carton and four from Walker, and the Buckeyes eventually led 37-28 at the intermission.

In the first half, Ohio State outshot Minnesota from the field (50.0 to 37.0 percent) from beyond the arc (44.4 to 36.4 percent) and from the charity stripe (73.3 to 50.0 percent). But the Buckeyes committed seven turnovers in the first 20 minutes while forcing only a single Gopher giveaway, which helped keep the visitors in the game.

In the second half, Ohio State shot only 37.0 percent (10 of 27) from the field and 14.3 percent (1 of 7) from three-point range, while Minnesota hit 48.1 percent (13 of 27) of its field goals and 30.0 percent (3 of 10) of its triples. The Buckeyes finished with 12 turnovers and the Golden Gophers had only four.

"In some ways we took a step forward in some areas," Holtmann said. "Right now, we're just not good enough in enough areas to win in this league. But I thought our guys competed, battled, played hard, were locked in, had a few errors that happened that get you in this league. We've got to find a way to answer the bell late in situations."

## **Carton Leads Buckeyes Past Northwestern On Road**

Ohio State defeated Northwestern 71-59 in front of 6,121 spectators at Welsh-Ryan Arena on Jan. 26.

Carton led the Buckeyes with 17 points on 6-of-8 shooting and scored eight of Ohio State's final 14 points in the game's final 6:14.

"He competed," Holtmann said of Carton. "He really competed tonight. In a game like this when you're playing on the road, players are going to have to step up and make plays, and they did that."

Kaleb Wesson scored 11 points and grabbed nine rebounds with two blocks, but Carton carried Ohio State (13-7, 3-6) once Wesson picked up his fourth foul with 7:35

Northwestern fifth-year senior guard Pat Spencer had erased Ohio State's 38-35 half-time lead with a triple to open the second-half scoring. Kaleb Wesson answered with a triple of his own, but the Wildcats were able to use a 6-0 streak to take a 44-41 lead.

Carton and Kaleb Wesson then both scored back-to-back baskets for Ohio State's third 8-0 run of the game to go up by five. For his second score of the stretch, Carton stole an inbound pass and the lefty raced down the floor, finishing strong with his right hand.

Then, Kaleb Wesson made a layup despite being fouled after an excellent post feed from his brother, Andre. Kaleb missed the free throw, but Andre tipped it up and Kaleb corralled it before putting in another Buckeye bucket.

Sophomore wing Justin Ahrens hit back-toback triples – sandwiched between a jumper by Northwestern's Miller Kopp, who led all

## Minnesota 62, Ohio State 59

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				1	2		F
Minnesota				28	34		62
Ohio State	(12-7,	2-6)		37	22		59
Minnesota	Т	otal F	G FT	Reb.			
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A P	PF	Pts.
Demir	22	3-6	0-0	0-3	2	4	6
Oturu	39		3-7			3	11
Willis		2-6				1	
Carr		7-13				4	21
Kalscheur		5-13					13
Williams				0-2		1	
Omersa				1-1		2	
Ihnen		1-1				0	
Totals				4-27		18	
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<b>goals:</b> 7-21 (							
3-5, Kalscheu							
1. Blocked sl						alsc	heur
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Ohio State	٦	otal F	G FT	Reb.			
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A. Wesson	27	3-5		0-1	2	2	6
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Ohio State	Т	otal F	G FT	Reb.			
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	Α	PF	Pts.
A. Wesson	27	3-5	0-0	0-1	2	2	6
Young	30	5-8	4-8	2-4	1	2	14
K. Wesson	32	1-10	0-0	4-10	3	2	2
Muhammad	23	1-4	2-2	0-3	2	2	4
Walker	35	4-5	2-4	0-2	0	4	11
Gaffney	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Carton	20	2-4	2-2	1-3	1	2	8
Washington	26	5-12	0-0	0-3	0	1	12
Diallo	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Liddell	5	0-1	2-2	0-1	0	2	2
Totals	200 2	21-49	12-18	7-30	9	17	59
Percentages:	FG: 42	2.9%.	FT: 66.				
5-16 (A Wes	son 0-	.1 K	Wesson	າ 0-3 ໍ	Muk	nam	mad

Percentages: FG: 42.9%. FT: 66.7%. 3-point goals: 5-16 (A. Wesson 0-1, K. Wesson 0-3, Muhammad 0-1, Walker 1-2, Carton 2-3, Washington 2-6). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 2 (K. Wesson, Carton). Turnovers: 12 (K. Wesson 3, Walker 3, A. Wesson 2, Carton 2, Washington, Liddell). Steals: 2 (K. Wesson, Muhammad).
Officials: Dorsey, Wymer, Boroski. Attendance:

**Officials:** Dorsey, Wymer, Boroski. **Attendanc** 13,234.

scorers with 20 points, and a three from Pete Nance – to allow Ohio State to maintain a 55-49 lead.

"Justin gave us great minutes," Holtmann said of Ahrens, who scored 12 points on four triples. "Stay ready – that's what that kid does. And I'm proud of him. We had great bench lift. We knew they were really going to shrink the floor on Kaleb, and guys stepped up and made plays."

After Nance's triple with 10:53 to play, Ohio State held between a four- and eightpoint lead for 6:58 until consecutive treys from Walker and Washington pushed a seven-point lead to 13, 69-56. The Wildcats would never get closer than 10 after that.

The highlight of the nearly seven-minute stretch came on a fastbreak when Washington threw a tough alley-oop lob to Carton, who acrobatically snagged the pass with his off hand and punched in the dunk.

Coming off a heartbreaking loss to Minnesota on a game-winning three-pointer, Ohio State struggled out the gate at Northwestern, falling down 7-0 and failing to score until 4:17 into the game.

Turnovers plagued the Buckeyes early, as they tallied four in the first 5:37 of the game and seven in the first half.

"We had to play better offensively than what we did to start," Holtmann said. "We really shared the ball in this game as well as we have all year. Opening the floor a little bit helped us do that. Our ball movement was tremendous outside of the first four minutes. We just were not very good in the first four minutes, but the last 36 we were terrific offensively."

The Buckeyes battled out of early deficits to cut the Wildcats' lead to five on two separate occasions (9-4 and 13-8). After a Kopp jumper pushed Northwestern's edge to 15-8, Ohio State responded with an 8-0 run to take the lead, sparked by triples from Washington and Ahrens and capped by a basket from Kaleb Wesson.

Northwestern (6-13, 1-8) answered with four straight points, but Ohio State regained momentum and a 23-19 lead with a 7-0 spurt coming on an Ahrens triple and four Andre Wesson free throws.

The Wildcats cut the Ohio State advantage

## **Ohio State 71, Northwestern 59**

	Ja	n. 26	, 2020	)		
Wels	h-Ryar	n Aren	a • Ev	anston, 1	, III. 2	F
Ohio State	(13-7.	3-6)		38	33	71
Northwest			-8)	35	24	59
Ohio State	Т	otal F	G FT			
	Min.					
A. Wesson	34	3-10	4-4	1-4		
Young K. Wesson	22 27	1-2 5-10	0-0 0-2	2-3 3-6	1 3	11
	1/1	2-6	0-2		1 0	5
Muhammad Walker	30	1-4	0-0	2-0 0-3	1 0 6 2 2 3	3
Carton	21	6-8	4-4	1-3	2 3	17
Washington Ahrens	28	3-12	0-0	0-3	3 1	8
Ahrens	13	4-5	0-0	0-1	0 1	12
Liddell	300 3	1-Z	9.10	1-3	0 0	2
Totals Percentages	· EG: /	1 1 %	6-10 FT: 80	% 3-n	oint o	/ I
11-29 (A. We	esson 1	-5 K	Wesso	70. <b>д-р</b> n 1-3 l	Muhan	nmad
1-3, Walker 1	-3. Car	ton 1-3	3. Wash	ninaton	2-7. A	hrens
4-5). <b>Team</b>	rebou	nds: 1	. Bloc	ked sh	nots:	5 (K.
Wesson 2,	Young,	Walk	er, Ca	rton).	Turno	vers:
13 (K. Wess	on 3,	Young	1 2, Li	ddell 2	, IEA	M 2,
A. Wesson, (Muhammad	4 Carl	r, Car	ton, A	inrens).	Stea	IS: 0
Northweste						
Northweste	Min.		M-A		A PF	Pts.
Корр	36			2-1	0 0	20
Turner	29	0-1	2_2	0-5	2 2	2
Nance	29	2-7	1-4		2 2	6
Young Spencer	31	4-7 5-11	0-0		3 1	8
Spencer Buie	33 25	5-11	2-2 2-4	2-3 0-1	4 1	8 13 10
Greer	23		0-0	0-1	0 0	0
Jones	8	0-3	0-0	1 2	0 3	
Beran		0-0		0-1	0 0	0
Totals	200	22-58	8-13	11-24	-12 12	59
Percentages goals: 7-23	: FG:	37.99	%. <b>FT:</b>	61.59	6. <b>3-</b>	ooint
goals: 7-23	(Kopp	3-9,	Nance	1-4,	Young	0-1,
Spencer 1-2,	shots:	-⊃, JON √√	es U-Z)	. ieam	repol	un <b>as:</b>
6'. <b>Blocked</b> (Spencer 5, E	3110 <b>13.</b> Buie 3	Young	2 lor	es Ber	an) Si	teals:
	raic J,	rouning	2, 501	ics, DCI	uii). 🥦	cuij.

to two points twice, but the Buckeyes fired off another hot streak, scoring eight unanswered points to take a 10-point lead with 3:57 before the break, 33-23 and Ohio State led Northwestern 38-29 with 1:58 to go in the first half following a smooth Kaleb Wesson right-handed hook shot.

2 (Nance, Spencer).
Officials: Eppley, Daily, Oglesby. Attendance: 6,121

The Wildcats ended the half on a 6-0 streak, however, trailing just 38-35 at the intermission.

Despite being outshot by Northwestern from the floor (50.0 to 43.3 percent), Ohio State led at halftime largely due to its solid three-point shooting. The Buckeyes connected on 6 of 14 shots (42.9 percent) from beyond the arc, while the Wildcats made 3 of 9 triples (33.3 percent).

Ohio State ended up outshooting the Wildcats on field goals (44.1 to 37.9 percent) and three-pointers (37.9 to 30.4 percent).



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## Hot Stretch Increases Reliance On 3-Pointers

Throughout nonconference play, the Ohio State women's basketball team lacked any real blueprint for how it was going to utilize its offense. But one thing seemed clear: The team was not ready to fully utilize its three-point capabilities.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Grosher

With every one of their 10 players with minutes on the season shooting at least nine attempts from three during the 11 nonconference games, the Buckeyes were making just 29.5 percent of their attempts from behind the arc.

This 29.5 percent total, which came on 70 makes over 237 attempts, would be No. 234 in the nation over the course of the season in games through Jan. 26. And three games into conference play, those numbers did not look to be improving.

Against Purdue, Minnesota and Maryland, the Buckeyes shot 72 total three-pointers and made just 18 of them (25.0 percent).

The continued rough shooting from the perimeter, which then stood at 28.5 percent on the season – No. 269 in the country if done through Jan. 26 – resulted in an uneven offensive team that still was firing



SONNY BROCKWAY

HEATING UP – Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff's squad has shot 29.5 percent from beyond the arc this season, but that mark has slightly improved over the Buckeyes' last five games.



## 2019-20 Ohio State Women's Basketball Statistics

## 11-8 Overall (4-4 Big Ten) Statistics through games of Jan. 23

									Rebo	ınds						
Player	G-GS	MinAvg.	FG-FGA	Pct.	3P-3PA	Pct.	FT-FTA	Pct.	O-D	T-Avg.	PF-FO	Α	TO	BS	ST	PtsAvg.
Dorka Juhasz	18-18	538-29.9	95-192	.495	18-50	.360	27-59	.458	51-100	151-8.4	24-0	18	29	20	22	235-13.1
Kierstan Bell	18-10	368-20.4	73-175	.417	29-93	.312	15-20	.750	14-49	63-3.5	25-0	26	35	12	24	190-10.6
Jacy Sheldon	19-10	482-25.4	60-126	.476	23-66	.348	22-27	.815	15-31	46-2.4	33-0	28	19	0	24	165-8.7
Janai Crooms	18-10	468-26.0	51-112	.455	6-32	.188	24-42	.571	14-57	71-3.9	46-1	70	62	20	24	132-7.3
Rebeka Mikulasikova	a 19-0	294-15.5	50-100	.500	15-32	.469	23-26	.885	13-40	53-2.8	35-1	13	28	5	8	138-7.3
Madison Greene	19-7	378-19.9	43-98	.439	15-39	.385	31-41	.756	11-15	26-1.4	40-1	37	29	2	20	132-6.9
Aaliyah Patty	19-17	388-20.4	51-112	.455	12-42	.286	18-31	.581	23-83	106-5.6	53-1	17	32	21	17	132-6.9
Braxtin Miller	19-18	576-30.3	49-157	.312	13-56	.232	14-23	.609	14-48	62-3.3	32-0	65	26	5	30	125-6.6
Kaelynn Satterfield	16-0	130-8.1	16-39	.410	2-11	.182	6-7	.857	7-20	27-1.7	14-0	5	20	0	3	40-2.5
Aixa Wone	18-5	203-11.3	16-42	.381	2-13	.154	5-9	.556	12-20	32-1.8	23-0	15	23	1	7	39-2.2
TEAM									25-38	63			9			
Ohio State	19	3825	504-1153	.437	135-434	.311	185-285	.649	199-501	700-36.8	325-4	294	312	86	179	1328-69.9
Opponents	19	3825	439-1130	.388	121-401	.302	232-324	.716	212-484	696-36.6	273-0	234	325	36	143	1231-64.8

from three for more than one-third (36.5 percent) of its attempts.

But over the five games that followed. Ohio State started to grow into the threepoint shooting team head coach Kevin McGuff knew it could be all along.

"I think we have really good shooters," McGuff said. "We just didn't make enough early, and they needed to see those shots go in and gain some confidence from it."

Starting with an 11-for-22 outing against Michigan on Jan. 9 from deep, Ohio State had made, and attempted, more three-pointers in the past five games than at any point prior in the season.

Over those five games, the Buckeyes shot 125 threes and made 47 of them, good for a 37.6 percent rate that would be No. 18 in the country in games through Jan. 26.

The 25 three-point attempts per game over the last five contests was just under three shots more than Ohio State had been averaging prior (22.1). The Buckeyes were making the most of those extra attempts, averaging a little more than three extra makes a night (9.4) as compared to the first 14 games (6.3).

'Definitely earlier on we were struggling with that as a team," freshman guard Madison Greene said on the three-point shooting. "But I just feel like we've been focusing on that more in practice, and I think it's showing in the games.'

Greene was the team's second most-effective three-point shooter through Jan. 23, making 38.5 percent of her attempts (15 of 39). Seven of those 15 makes had come during the past five games, a stretch when she shot 43.8 percent (7 of 16) from behind

She said her improvements on the perimeter have come with extra work besides what is being done in team practices.

"For me personally, I just feel like outside of practice I come in with my dad or come in with my family and we like to shoot in here just to get the vibe and get the feel of the ball," Greene said. "I've been trying to improve my shot as much as I possibly can because that's what my team needs me to do, that's what the coach is asking me, to hit open shots when I have them.'

Greene's three-point percentage trailed only another freshman, forward Rebeka Mikulasikova, who had hit 15 of her 32 shots from deep this season. At 6-4, Mikulasikova has been an offensive presence for the team on all fronts, which is shown by her also leading the team in overall field-goal percentage at 50.0 percent (50 of 100) thus far.

"I'm trying to be a dangerous player on both sides, either outside or inside, and being more balanced so it's harder for a defender to expect what I will do," Mikulasikova said. "I always liked to shoot three-point shots, but this season I gained

## **OSU Women's Basketball Signees**

Players in the class of 2020 who have signed letters of intent to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the ESPNW rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School
Gabby Hutcherson	F	6-2	***	Westerville (Ohio) South
Anyssa Jones	G	5-9	***	Westerville (Ohio) South
Kateri Poole	G	5-8	****	Bronx (N.Y.) South Shore

more confidence in it."

The 37.6-percent success rate over the previous five games brought the team's three-point percentage up to 31.1 percent on the season and 33.0 percent in Big Ten play.

Ohio State, which was ranked No. 178 in three-point percentage for the season through Ian, 26, was also No. 40 in threepoint attempts, a number that has only gone up with the improved play from behind the perimeter.

McGuff's idea of a successful percentage was met in this crucial five-game stretch, but above all he was just hoping his team will take the smart shots when given the opportunity.

"I'm hoping No. 1 we take good shots, that's the biggest thing," McGuff said. "No. 2, I'm hoping we don't just fall in love with the three and we get balanced in the offense, and if we can be in the mid-30s to 40 percent, that would be fantastic.

Not falling in love with the three might be the next issue to deal with.

In Ohio State's most recent game before BSB went to press, a 77-68 loss to Iowa on Jan. 23, because of the Hawkeyes' use of zone defense that stuffs the paint, 11 of the Buckeyes' first 13 attempts from the field were from three. Ohio State finished with 32 shots from three, a season high, making just eight of them.

"You just kind of have to coach them through it, because it's really easy to, I mean you can get threes pretty easily, McGuff said. "We have to show some discipline and some patience to, if we've missed a couple in a row that maybe we need to throw it inside or get to the free-throw line.'

## **Program Departure**

Former Ohio State guard Jensen Caretti, who left the team at the end of fall semester, went to Facebook to discuss

"Everyone has been asking why I have not been playing basketball this year," Caretti wrote on Jan. 4. "To make the story short, a female and I had an encounter where my brother went to compliment/ flirt (with) her and she shoved him telling him to get away then I confronted her (about) being disrespectful to my brother and she shoved me, so I grabbed her arm and told her if she puts her hand on me

"With that being said, this female switched my words around and made a police report saying I threatened to SHOOT her. Therefore, student conduct has suspended me until August 2020. Sorry to everyone I have disappointed, but in life, we can only control what we can control and I had no control over what that girl falsely claimed to the feds.

"I WILL be back to finish my degree, whether I get the opportunity to come back and play basketball or not.

Caretti did not play in any game for Ohio State this season, which would allow her another year of eligibility with a redshirt if the Buckeyes did want to bring her back on the roster.

forward Savitha Jayaraman leaving the team after this season, Caretti, a former five-star prospect, would be the 15th and final member of the roster if she were to

## Caretti Speaks On

what happened to result in her departure.

or my brother again, 'I will beat your a\*\*

With three incoming freshmen and only return next year.

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## Women's **Basketball**

	C	on	f.	C	)ver	all
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
lowa	8	1	.889	17	3	.850
Northwestern	7	2	.778	17	3	.850
Maryland	7	2	.778	16	4	.800
Indiana	6	3	.667	16	5	.762
Rutgers	5	3	.625	15	4	.789
Nebraska	5	4	.556	15	5	.750
Purdue	5	4	.556	14	7	.667
Michigan	4	4	.500	13	6	.684
Ohio State	4	4	.500	11	8	.579
Michigan State	4	5	.444	11	9	.550
Minnesota	2	7	.222	12	8	.600
Wisconsin	2	7	.222	10	10	.500
Illinois	1	7	.125	10	9	.526
Penn State	1	8	.111	7	13	.350

### Jan. 12 Scores

Maryland 77, Michigan 49 Ohio State 80, Penn State 70

Rutgers 69, Nebraska 65 Illinois 74, Minnesota 71 Michigan State 69, Wisconsin 52 Iowa 91, Indiana 85 Northwestern 61, Purdue 56

Jan. 16 Scores Michigan State 68, Ohio State 65

Northwestern 71, Indiana 69 Rutgers 62, Penn State 57 Purdue 81. Illinois 67 Maryland 87, Nebraska 69 lowa 76, Minnesota 75 Michigan 68, Wisconsin 56'

Jan. 19 Scores Ohio State 77, Illinois 47

Minnesota 72. Purdue 59 Northwestern 85, Penn State 59 lowa 85, Wisconsin 78 Nebraska 74, Michigan 71

Jan. 20 Scores

Michigan State 66, Rutgers 55 Maryland 76, Indiana 62

Jan. 22 Scores

Wisconsin 72, Minnesota 62

Purdue 76, Nebraska 68 Jan. 23 Scores

Indiana 76, Penn State 60 Northwestern 76, Michigan State 48 Maryland 79, Illinois 60

Iowa 77, Ohio State 68

Jan. 25 Score Nebraska 72. Wisconsin 71

Jan. 26 Scores Maryland 70, Northwestern 61

Michigan 71, Rutgers 57 Purdue 81, Penn State 68 Iowa 74, Michigan State 57 Jan. 27 Game

Indiana 65, Minnesota 52

Jan. 30 Games

Maryland at Ohio State, 6:30 p.m. Wisconsin at Indiana, 7 p.m. Purdue at Michigan State, 7 p.m. Michigan at Northwestern, 7 p.m. lowa at Penn State, 7 p.m. Illinois at Rutgers, 7 p.m. Nebraska at Minnesota, 8 p.m. **Feb. 2 Games** 

lowa at Michigan, 12 p.m. Northwestern at Penn State, 12 p.m. Wisconsin at Illinois, 3 p.m. Rutgers at Minnesota, 3 p.m.

Ohio State at Nebraska, 3 p.m. Feb. 3 Games

Indiana at Purdue, 6 p.m. Michigan State at Maryland, 8 p.m. Feb. 6 Games

Purdue at Michigan, 6 p.m. Penn State at Rutgers, 7 p.m. Nebraska at Iowa, 7:30 p.m.

Ohio State at Illinois, 8 p.m. Maryland at Indiana, 8 p.m. Minnesota at Wisconsin, 8 p.m

Feb. 9 Games Rutgers at Maryland, 12 p.m. Wisconsin at Ohio State, 2 p.m. Illinois at Penn State, 2 p.m.

lowa at Purdue, 2 p.m. Indiana at Nebraska, 3 p.m. Feb. 10 Games

Michigan at Minnesota, 7 p.m. Michigan State at Northwestern, 9 p.m.

## Buckeyes Falter In Final Seconds Against Spartans

By WYATT CROSHER Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State has been searching for consistency. It was less than 25 seconds away from getting closer to that, earning a third straight win heading back home.

Instead, in a back-and-forth game that came down to the final possession, it was Michigan State (10-7, 3-3) that bested Ohio State 68-65 on Jan. 16 to stay undefeated at home on the season in front of a crowd of 3,700, while the Buckeyes had their two-game winning streak ended.

"I thought we just, for stretches in the game, we allowed them to get to the paint, whether it be off-ball screens or just straight-line drives, and when they did, they really made us pay," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "When we guarded the ball, I thought we had the game where we wanted, but we just didn't do it enough tonight."

After taking a five-point lead into the second half, Ohio State allowed Michigan State to get out to a 20-7 run to open the third quarter, scoring only one basket over the first 8:03 of the quarter.

But the Buckeyes trailed by only four, 48-44, heading into the fourth thanks to a trio of layups, two of which from freshman forward Rebeka Mikulasikova.

After again taking a large lead, this time 58-49 with 7:51 to play, the Spartans let Ohio State (10-7, 3-3) come back, using a 9-0 run to tie the game with 4:42 to go.

The teams then traded threes, with Mikulasikova burying an open corner three with 3:15 to play to tie the game at 61

Mikulasikova finished the game going 4 of 4 from the field for 11 points in 13 minutes off the bench.

Again tied, this time at 63, both the Spartans and the Buckeyes went cold down the stretch until freshman guard Madison Greene, the hero of Ohio State's victory over Michigan, went to the freethrow line with 23.8 seconds to go.

Greene hit both - her ninth and 10th

points of the game – to give Ohio State the lead late.

Sophomore guard Nia Clouden, Michigan State's leading scorer coming in, did not shoot the ball well early, going 0 for 6 in the first half. But she was a key in the second half for the Spartans, ending the game with 20 points, three of which came with a clutch and-1 with 13.4 seconds to go to give MSU the one-point lead.

"I think the biggest thing is we needed to get a stop," McGuff said. "Clouden drove the ball and got it too deep on the other possession, and that's where we should have won the game."

Clouden then hit two more free throws, and when a desperation three from freshman guard Jacy Sheldon didn't fall, it kept Michigan State perfect at home, moving to 8-0 with the win.

"We quit guarding the ball," McGuff said. "I mean she's really good. You allow her to get to the basket, she's going to make you pay, and she did tonight."

The Buckeyes led 31-26 at halftime, much in thanks to Sheldon, who hit all four of her shot attempts, three of which were from behind the arc, for a game-high 11 first-half points. As a whole, Ohio State shot 5 of 10 from three in the opening 20 minutes, while Michigan State attempted only four from deep, hitting just one.

Sheldon went scoreless and the Spartans hit 5 of 8 from deep in the second half.

At halftime, Ohio State's No. 1, 2 and 4 scorers on the team – sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz, freshman guard Kierstan Bell and junior guard Braxtin Miller – had gone a combined 0 for 15 from the field, including seven misses by Juhasz. The rest of the team shot 13 of 19.

"They were good defensively, and we weren't executing really well, so that's a had combination." McGuff said

bad combination," McGuff said.

The Spartans' No. 2 scorer, senior guard Taryn McCutcheon, who was playing with a fractured index finger on her dominant right hand, stepped up despite the injury. She finished with nine points, seven assists and a pair of steals.



## Michigan State 68, Ohio State 65

Breslir	Ja n Cent	an. 16 er • Ea	, 2020 st Lan	) sing, I	Vlich	١.
OSU (10-7, 3 MSU (10-7,	3-3)	15			4 21	65
		14			20	68
Ohio State		otal F			_	
to de element	Min.	M-A	M-A 3-4	O-D		PF_Pts.
Juhasz Patty	33 27	2-10 5-8	3-4 1-2	6-4 2-7	4	2 7 4 12
Greene			3-4		2	4 10
Sheldon	26 25	4-6	0-0	1-2	1	1 11
Miller	21	0-5	1-2	0-2	2	1 1
Crooms	14	2-5	0-0	0-0		2 4
Bell	24	2-7	0-0	2-3		
Mikulasikova	13 3		2-3 0-0	0-2 0-0		2 11 0 2
Wone Satterfield		1-2 1-5	0-0		0	0 2 0 2
Totals		24-60	10-15	15-24	119	16 65
Percentages	FG: 4	0.0%.	FT: 66	.7%. <b>3</b>	-poi	nt field
Percentages: goals: 7-18	(Juhas	z 0-1,	Patty	1-3, (	Gree	ne 1-3,
Sheldon 3-3,	Mille	r 0-1,	Croor	ms_0-1	I, B	ell 1-3,
Mikulasikova	1-1, V	Vone 0	-1, Sat	terfield	0-1	). Team
rebounds: 4 Turnovers: 1	. BIOC	kea sn	iots: 3	(Juna:	SZ Z Ilor	Crooms
5, Bell, Miku	lasikov	.ty 4+, t ra Tear	n 2) (	teals:	6 (	Patty 2
Sheldon, Mille					0 (	ratty Z,
Michigan Sta	ate T	otal FO	FT	Reb.		
	Min.		M-A	O-D	Α	PF Pts.
Hollie	27	2-3	0-0	1-2	2	1 4
Belles	30	4-8	0-1	2-4	1	4 8
McCutcheon Joiner	38 20	4-8 3-6	0-0 7-7	0-1 1-2	7 2	0 9 2 9
Clouden	3/1	6-17	7-7 7-7	0-2	6	3 20
Ozment	15	2-4	1-2	0-3	0	0 6
			1-2	1-2	Ō	2 10
Cook	14	4-8	1-2			
	6	1-2	0-0	0-0	1	0 2
Cook Winston <u>Parks</u>	6 10	1-2 0-0	0-0 0-0	0-0 0-3	1	0 0
Cook Winston Parks <b>Totals</b>	6 10 <b>200</b>	1-2 0-0 <b>26-56</b>	0-0 0-0 <b>10-14</b>	0-0 0-3 <b>7-24</b>	20	0 0 12 68
Cook Winston Parks Totals Percentages:	6 10 <b>200</b> <b>FG:</b> 4	1-2 0-0 <b>26-56</b> 6.4%.	0-0 0-0 <b>10-14</b> <b>FT:</b> 71.	0-0 0-3 <b>7-24</b> 4%. <b>3-</b>	20 poir	0 0 12 68 nt field
Cook Winston Parks Totals Percentages:	6 10 <b>200</b> <b>FG:</b> 4	1-2 0-0 <b>26-56</b> 6.4%.	0-0 0-0 <b>10-14</b> FT: 71.	0-0 0-3 <b>7-24</b> 4%. <b>3-</b> ner 2-4	20 poir	0 0 12 68 nt field
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Cook Winston Parks Totals Percentages: goals: 6-12 (I 1-4, Ozment Blocked shot 4, Joiner 2, Cl	6 10 200 FG: 4 McCut 1-1, Co ts: 4 (B louden	1-2 0-0 <b>26-56</b> 6.4%. I cheon ook 1-2 selles 4) 3, Ozn	0-0 10-14 FT: 71. 1-1, Joi ). Tear . Turne nent 3,	0-0 0-3 <b>7-24</b> 4%. <b>3-</b> ner 2-4 <b>n rebo</b> <b>overs:</b> Cook	1 20 poir 1, Cl und 16 ( 2, Te	0 0 12 68 nt field ouden s: 4. Hollie eam 2).
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## OSU Bounces Back For Dominant Win Over Illini

After the hard-fought road loss to Michigan State that came down to the final possession, Ohio State was in need of a new source of momentum.

But with 5:04 left in the third quarter in Value City Arena on Jan. 19, Illinois threatened to give the Buckeyes their first losing streak since dropping games to UConn and South Dakota on Nov. 24 and 29, by tying the game at 37.

Instead, Ohio State finished the third quarter on a 14-0 run and outscored the Fighting Illini 26-10 in the final frame to get the 77-47 win in front of a home crowd of 5,143 and move to 4-3 in the Big Ten and 11-7 overall.

The mediocre start, and hot finish, is something that McGuff said was typical of the season Ohio State has had this year.

"This game's very emblematic of our whole season in that we showed such great moments and a great stretch at the end, yet before that, we were not guarding the ball and rebounding and moving the ball for great shots as much as I'd like," McGuff said. "Really it's just about what do we have to do to get longer stretches of being the team we're capable of being, and that's what we need to work on, that's what we need to figure out."

The 14-0 run featured the two five-star freshmen currently playing: Sheldon and Bell.

Sheldon broke the 37-37 tie with a layup and three-point make, which led to Bell's personal 9-0 run to give the Buckeyes a 51-37 lead heading to the fourth quarter.

"Definitely just pick our energy up, go out there and play like we want to win, and that's what we did," Bell said on what helped spark the big run. "That's what made our consistency come, and when the subs came in, they kept the

## Ohio State 77, Illinois 47

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Rice	20	2-5	0-0	0-1	2	1 4
Terry	25	2-9	0-1	1-6	3	4 5 2 1
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same pace."

Bell finished with a game-high 19 points and eight rebounds on 7-of-11 shooting, while Sheldon tallied 10 points, hitting 3 of 7 shots, including both of her three-point attempts.

"She's obviously a great player, she has a lot of talent, she was really locked in today," McGuff said of Bell. "Not only was she scoring the ball, but she was rebounding. She had eight rebounds and played great defense, so it was a really great performance by her."

For the game, the Buckeyes shot 48.1 percent from the field (26 of 54) and hit half (11 of 22) of their three-pointers while also hitting 14 of 18 attempts from the free-throw line (77.8 percent). They also held Illinois (10-8, 1-6) to 31.1 percent shooting (19 of 61), 28.0 percent shooting from deep (7 of 25) and only two free-throw makes on five attempts for the day.

"I think early in the year we had good shooters taking pretty good shots, they just weren't going in," McGuff said on the improved shooting output of his team in recent games. "We're starting to see it go in a little more, and I think our kids are gaining some confidence."

Of Ohio State's 77 points, 46 of them came from players on the bench. Bell was the primary contributor from the non-starters, but Mikulasikova's 12 points were also enough to be one of four Buckeyes to end the game in double figures.

The fourth double-digit scorer was Greene, who once again started and hit 4 of 7 shot attempts for 11 points in 23 minutes

The Buckeyes were able to earn their most dominant Big Ten win of the season with little scoring from two of their most important contributors: sophomore forward Aaliyah Patty and Miller. Patty didn't attempt a shot in 20 minutes on the court,

## **OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL**

finishing with a pair of free-throw makes and three rebounds. Miller did not score on the day, finishing 0 of 3 from the field in 23 minutes, though she did pass out three assists.

With three wins in its past four games, Ohio State continued to push toward finding what makes this team capable of putting together a strong performance for 40 continuous minutes.

"As we get to the middle of January, when our defense is good and our rebounding's good, that seems to fuel everything else," McGuff said. "We get in transition off the stops, and we seem to make enough plays on offense when our defensive rebounding is good, so that's where I think we have to really lock in and make sure that we are extremely consistent in that area."

## **Buckeyes Fall Short Against Hawkeyes**

Looking to win its second straight game, this time against a difficult opponent in one of the toughest places to play in the country, Ohio State started out hot against No. 19 Iowa on Jan. 23.

Threatening to end a 30-game home win streak – the second-longest home win streak in the NCAA to Baylor's 49 that dates back to a 92-74 loss to Nebraska on Jan. 28, 2018 – the Buckeyes led 45-39 at 7:29 of the third quarter, but the Hawkeyes responded with a 14-4 run to take a 53-49 lead.

Ohio State scored three at the end of the frame to make it just a one-point game at 53-52 heading into the fourth. From there, the teams went back and forth throughout the final frame before Iowa (16-3, 7-1) began to pull away, taking the 77-68 victory in front of a Hawkeyes crowd of 6,490.

"We didn't guard the ball real well down the stretch and allowed Iowa to get to the free-throw line and get too many easy baskets," McGuff said. "Offensively I thought we had a lot of good opportunities, but we just didn't knock down some of the shots we got late in the game."

The Buckeyes couldn't find much momentum in the fourth quarter, as well as throughout the second half, not making a field goal for a 3:54 stretch in the middle of final 10 minutes. In the second half, Ohio State shot just 26.3 percent (10 of 38) from the field.

"I actually thought in the second half we got better shots around the basket, we just didn't make them," McGuff said. "Hey, you want to come on the road and beat Iowa? You're going to have to capitalize on those opportunities."

Senior guard Kathleen Doyle was the big factor in the Hawkeyes' win, finishing with 26 points, eight rebounds and seven assists, all of which were at least tied for team highs, in a strong all-around performance.

"She's a great player, and we just didn't guard the ball very well," McGuff said. "We didn't keep her in front. You have to keep her in front and make her score over you. She was getting by us and getting easy shots at the basket."

On the other end, Juhasz was crucial for the Buckeyes all night, finishing with a double-double on 22 points and 16 rebounds. She also was 5 of 6 from the free-throw line after entering the game hitting only 41.5 percent of her attempts.

"She played hard, she really did a great job on the boards, she moved well on offense," McGuff said. "She got some threes (3 of 7), but she also got some shots in the paint, so a really good performance by her."

Juhasz hit a three with 3:02 to play to make it a four-point game, 66-62, but Doyle kept pushing inside and scored 11 of the final 15 Iowa points down the stretch to keep the lead, and the win, intact.

Following a recent stretch of hot shooting from three, 11 of the first 13 shots Ohio State attempted against Iowa were from behind the arc. Four of those 11 went in, and the Buckeyes finished the first half making 7 of 17 threes (41.2 percent) against the Hawkeyes.

But Ohio State went ice cold from deep in the final 20 minutes, hitting just 1 of 15 attempts, including missing its first eight shots.

"When they play zone, they really try to crowd the paint," McGuff said. "You're going to have to make some shots."

The Buckeyes took a 39-35 lead into halftime thanks to 12 points and seven rebounds by Juhasz, both of which were game highs for the half.

Sheldon also got off to a strong start, finishing the opening half with seven points and three assists on 3-of-4 shooting. She ended the night with 13 points, five rebounds and three assists.

Also with a big performance for the Buckeyes was sophomore guard Janai Crooms, who finished with 16 points on 7-of-13 shooting.

On the night, Ohio State (11-8, 4-4) shot 35.2 percent from the field (25 of

## Iowa 77, Ohio State 68

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Sevillian 26 1-7 0-0 1-4 1 0 3
Doyle 36 8-12 9-9 2-6 7 2 26
Warnock 17 1-4 2-2 0-7 1 1 4
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Perrentages: EG: 81 % ET: 90 5% 3-point field

goals: 6-24 (Meyer 3-10, Sevillian 1-7, Doyle 1-3, Warnock 0-2, Marshall 1-2). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 5 (Ollinger 4, Meyer). Turnovers: 13 (Ollinger 2, Meyer 4, Sevillian, Doyle 2, Warnock, Team 3). Steals: 3 (Doyle, Marshall, Taiwo). Officials: McConnell, Hall, Thompson. Attendance: 6,490.

71) and 25.0 percent from three (8 of 32). Despite the loss, the team committed a season-low seven turnovers.

"That was big," McGuff said. "We took care of the ball, and that was a big deal. Hopefully that's an encouraging sign that we did a better job with that tonight."

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## Pooley Has Hockey And Caffeine In His Blood

It wouldn't come as a surprise to find out that Ohio State junior forward Austin Pooley was born with a hockey stick in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other because there's never a dull moment when the effervescent member of Buckeye hockey royalty is present.

'He's all over the place, right?" senior defenseman Wyatt Ege said. "He's always moving around, flying around.

## IN THE CREASE **Craig Merz**

"That's one thing with our team. When we're struggling, we tend to get quiet, so it's nice to have a guy like that on the team that is always bringing the energy whether we're down by 10 goals or up by 10 goals. That guy is always talking so that's good.'

Pooley makes no apologies for his enthusiasm.

"I love what I do, going to school here. I love playing hockey," he said. "I have a lot of energy as it is. I love being around people with energy and I think it's a contagious, and that's something I try to bring to this team every day."

Ege offered two other tidbits about his teammate. He sometimes wonders if Pooley ever sleeps, a notion Pooley sort of refutes: "I need to sleep more, that's one thing. I try to get at least seven, eight hours a night.

The other Ege thought had to do with a certain beverage that Pooley consumes. Pooley loves Starbucks, especially Pike Place and Christmas blends.

"We had a nutritionist conversation last year, and (Pooley) had to ask the question, obviously, how many coffees is too many?" Ege said.

Pooley said he's down to an average of two cups a day but admitted he was a little concerned about his caffeine intake

last year when he met with the nutritionist.

"Yeah, my heart rate was a little high," he said. "I've tried to cut it back a little bit, but our family is a big coffee-drinking family. When we get together it's 'turn the pot of coffee on and let's talk hockey' and whatever else.'

Yes, the family.

Pooley is the son of former OSU great Perry Pooley, a second-team All-American in 1984 who is tied for 10th on the

Ohio State career points list (174) with Peter Bartkiewicz. Pooley had 85 goals (fifth all-time) and 89 assists.

Perry's twin and Austin's uncle, Paul Pooley, was a first-team All-American and national player of the year in 1984 for the Buckeyes. He is the program's leader in goals (114), assists (156) and points (270) and is in the OSU Athletics Hall of Fame. His number (22) is the only one retired by the men's hockey team.

Austin's cousin, Scott Pooley (Paul's son), scored 51 goals in four seasons for Holy Cross (2014-18) and is playing in the Toronto Maple Leafs organization.

To add to the family affair, Paul Pooley is the associate head coach for Notre Dame, which competes against the Buckeyes in the Big Ten's hockey conference.

Austin had an assist in each game at Notre Dame on Nov. 8-9 and scored at

> home vs. the Fighting Irish on Jan. 17 to spark a comeback tie.

> Pooley has not been blessed with the scoring prowess of others in the family (two goals, three assists for five points in 26 games this season), but he contributes in other ways.

> "I know what I'm going to get every day," Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik said. "As a coach it's a comforting aspect that he's going to bring his voice, he's going to bring his work ethic, he's going to com-

pete in all zones and bring some stability.

"He knows I'm not depending on him to score three goals a game but I'm depending on him for energy, to kill penalties, dig for pucks. I think he understands that."

Pooley (6-2, 210) knows where he must

"I need to continue to make more plays with the puck," he said. "I think I can contribute more offensively. I've had a lot of chances. I can definitely add more offense, but I like my game. I play a heavy game, a 200-foot game, so I've been really reliable in those areas."

Pooley, from the Columbus suburb of Dublin, played for the Ohio Blue Jackets AAA youth program and as an alternate captain this season is the first central Ohio native to wear a letter for the Buckeyes.

"It's something I've dreamed about," he said. "Just because I have a letter on my chest I haven't really changed. I try to be the same person every day. That's a reason I was voted captain. It's a great honor and something I don't take lightly.

Rohlik said it's a deserved honor.

"To get a player like Austin to come here and be a leader means everything," he said. "Sometimes a player like that is overlooked because he's not out there scoring a gazillion goals. To me he's just as important as a guy who scores.

Pooley's popularity goes beyond the rink.

"One thing I've noticed," Ege said, "whether I'm at school, class, Easton (shopping and entertainment district), maybe I go shopping or something, he always seems to have somebody that knows him."

Pooley explains.

"I'm a pretty friendly guy. I like to build relationships," he said. "My opinion is that's what life is all about, relationships. Relationships with people, relationships with coaches, if you're a religious person, relationships with your god.

You never want to burn a bridge, and I enjoy meeting people and kind of understanding their background. I think I've done a good job of communicating over the years and staying in touch with people, so that might be a reason why."



## **Reality Check**

The No. 6 Buckeyes (15-8-3, 8-6-2-0 Big Ten) went 1-2-1 since the last issue of BSB.

OSU took an improbable four of six points from Notre Dame at Value City Arena on Jan. 17 and 18, earning a 4-4 tie (the Fighting Irish got the extra conference point by winning the shootout) with a furious third-period comeback and then taking a 2-1 victory the next night.

Sophomore Quinn Preston had two goals and two assists and senior Tanner Laczynski tallied four assists in the two games

Both games were without injured junior Tommy Nappier, the 2019 Big Ten Goaltender of the Year. Freshman Ryan Snowden made 14 saves in the first game and 28, including 16 in the third period, of the series finale.

Nappier returned for the series at Minnesota on Jan. 24-25. The Golden Gophers (10-10-4, 5-5-4-3) won 6-3 and 4-1 to drop the Buckeyes from first to third in the conference with 26 points. Michigan State and Penn State have 28.

Against No. 18 Notre Dame (10-10-4, 5-6-3-2) in the first game, the Buckeyes overcame a three-goal deficit in the final 8:01 of regulation.

Senior defenseman Gordi Myer scored, and Pooley followed with 6:20 to play to make it 3-2 before Notre Dame made it 4-2 with 3:43 remaining.

Preston pulled the Buckeyes to within 4-3 with 1:37 left, and sophomore Gustaf Westlund scored another with 1:05 remaining to make it 4-4.

Preston scored in the rematch to make it 1-1 in the first period, and Westlund notched the winner on the power play 1:42 into the second.

At Minnesota, the Buckeyes held a 2-1 lead in the middle period of the series opener, but the Golden Gophers scored four straight.

Preston gave the Buckeyes a 1-0 lead at 11:06 of the first and freshman Tate Singleton made it 2-1 at 6:39 of the second before Minnesota scored twice before the end of the period and upped the lead to 5-2 late in the third.

Senior Carson Meyer made it 5-3 with 1:10 left, but the Gophers got an empty-netter with 24 seconds to play.

Nappier finished the game with 22

Meyer had the lone OSU goal in the second game to make it 3-1 at 6:30 of the third period, and Nappier made 34 saves.

The Buckeyes play at Michigan on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 before hosting Penn State on Feb. 7 (7 p.m.) and 8 (5 p.m.).

For a complete recap of Ohio State's series against Notre Dame and Minnesota, go to BSB's BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



**Austin Pooley** 

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## **Buckeyes Looking To Cement Contender Status**

Ohio State started its Big Ten season on a hot streak just as it had expected to, coming off a major nonconference victory over top-10 Arizona State just four days prior to the opening of the conference campaign. On Jan. 10, the Buckeyes secured their first conference win, 22-13, against visiting Rutgers, and they followed that up with impressive performances against Wisconsin (24-13) on Jan. 17 and Illinois (28-6) on Jan. 19.

## ON THE MAT Patrick Mayhorn

Against the Fighting Illini, Ohio State managed to bounce back from a 6-0 deficit that had both Malik Heinselman and Jordan Decatur defeated before the Buckeyes ripped off 28 unanswered points.

Ohio State couldn't turn that hot start into a victory over the nation's top team, however. The Buckeyes fell to No. 1 Iowa in a hostile road environment, 24-10.

It was not a night without victories for the Buckeyes, as the three OSU stars – Luke Pletcher, Kollin Moore and Sammy Sasso – each continued to look like title contenders in wins. Pletcher toppled Carter Happel in a 14-5 major decision, while Moore was forced to settle for an 8-3 win over unranked Cash Wilcke after his projected opponent, No. 4 Jacob Warner, was removed from the lineup prior to the start of the dual. Iowa head coach Tom Brands said it was "the best thing for him" as he likely looked to avoid a defeat for his wrestler.

The star of the show was Sasso, who went into Iowa with his eyes exclusively on upsetting the top-ranked wrestler at 149 pounds, Iowa's Pat Lugo. After three periods of time and two sudden-victory periods, Sasso won on tiebreak, 2-1, thanks to some outstanding late defense to avoid a near takedown.

OSU returned to its winning ways on Jan. 26, rattling off a 22-13 victory at No. 5 Minnesota thanks to excellent performances from Moore, Pletcher, Sasso and Decatur.

Decatur's 16-6 major decision over Jake Gliva served as the turning point for the Buckeyes, as it wasn't an upset, but it did provide crucial bonus points to recover from a 13-12 deficit after back-to-back Golden Gopher victories. With two likely wins in Pletcher and Sasso behind him, Decatur's win essentially sealed the conference victory for the Buckeyes.

In addition to Decatur, Ethan Smith registered a major decision of his own against Bailee O'Reilly, 12-4, while Moore found a tech fall victory against Hunter Ritter, 19-3.

## **Traub, Decaturs Recognized**

Ohio State announced on Jan. 16 that three wrestlers – the Decatur brothers, Jordan and Jacob, along with Gary Traub – would be rewarded with scholarships after originally walking on to the program.

In a video posted to the Ohio State Wrestling Twitter account that's been seen over 100,000 times, assistant coach J Jaggers told the team that the three had earned their way onto the list of scholar-

ship wrestlers on the team.

"One thing – when we've sat in most of your living rooms or had you on an official or unofficial visit – we've said that there will always be opportunity," Jaggers said. "Opportunity to chase your dream. Opportunity to be a part of an elite team. Opportunity to earn a scholarship, which is kind of what today is about. I want to highlight some guys that we were able to put on scholarship for the first time, so I want the Decaturs to come up, and Gary Traub.

"We weren't able to offer them scholarships on their way in the door here, and they said, 'We still want to be Buckeyes.' We're able to put them on scholarship for the first time, so we're proud of these guys, and we thank them for taking the chance and coming here and earning what we think they deserve."

For the Decatur brothers, the action serves as validation for a move that many questioned when it was made. The twins from Cuyahoga Valley (Ohio) Christian Academy were both top recruits, with Jordan coming to Ohio State as the best 120-pounder in his class. They had plenty of interest from schools that could have offered scholarships but chose instead to stay home and walk on with the home-state school.

While both were expected to redshirt as freshmen, Jordan, the more refined of the two, has found his way into Ohio State's starting lineup as the team looks for an answer at 133 pounds. With Dylan Koontz struggling and looking to increase his weight to a more comfortable class, Jordan took over, burning his redshirt against Arizona State on Jan. 6 and notching an impressive upset against No. 15 Josh Kramer, 5-3.

It's been an up-and-down ride for the new starter since his debut, as he dropped a bout against Rutgers' No. 11 Sammy Alvarez, 6-1 on Jan. 10, followed that up with another tough loss against the nation's top 133-pounder, Wisconsin's Seth Gross, 15-6 on Jan. 17, and was unable to bounce back against Illinois' No. 8 Travis Piotrowski on Jan. 19, falling 6-2.

He was given a nearly impossible task against No. 1 Iowa on Jan. 24, losing to No. 2 Austin DeSanto 27-12, but there's no wavering in the belief in his potential from the staff.

Traub's ride from walk-on to scholar-ship has even more twists and turns. The 2019-2020 season has served as a surprising breakout for the redshirt junior from Cincinnati. With Ohio State in desperate need of a heavyweight as highly touted Chase Singletary struggles with injury, Traub has become a fan favorite on his way to a 17-5 start overall and a 4-4 record in duals.

Due to his grind-it-out style and frequent position as an underdog against larger wrestlers, Traub has drawn the nickname "Gas Tank Gary" and spends his home matches being serenaded by chants of "Gary! Gary! Gary!"

"Coming into the year – even when I first got here – I didn't think I'd make the lineup, so now being in the position that I am and having the opportunity that I do, having (fans chanting my name) consistently, it's incredible."

Off the mat, Traub works 18 hours a week bagging groceries to help pay for his tuition, though after Jaggers announced him as the newest scholarship Buckeye,

he may have a bit more free time to focus on his wrestling.

"So he came here, and obviously he's worked and he's getting an opportunity, and we're seeing him come to life," Jaggers said, in front of a beaming Traub. "It's a phenomenon across Columbus. Gas Tank Gary could probably open up his own car dealership or gas station, but we're proud of him and he's getting on scholarship.

"He goes to school, he wrestles, he also works part time, and for us to be able to alleviate some of that financial stress and put him on some scholarship, we're proud of him and we thank him."

## **Cleary Finding Rhythm**

Ohio State spent much of the early stages of its season in search of answers at three key weight classes: 125-pounds, where Heinselman has struggled to catch on, 133-pounds, with Decatur appearing to be the answer, and 157-pounds. At 157-pounds, Ohio State has turned primarily to redshirt junior Elijah Cleary.

Through the first six duals of the season, Cleary's struggles signaled that 157-pounds would be a continuous issue for Ohio State. He went 1-5 to start the season, frequently stymied by his opponents whenever he attempted to attack. He was rarely beaten badly but found little success scoring crucial points in competitive matchups.

Then, against Wisconsin, a breakout. Cleary defeated Drew Scharenbrock 7-3, showcasing the potential that had kept him in the starting lineup through the rocky start, while securing a crucial three points for Ohio State in the road victory.

Against Illinois, Cleary won again, this time against a ranked foe. He knocked off No. 22 Eric Barone on a tiebreak, 4-3, helping to spark Ohio State's 28 unanswered points against the Fighting Illini. He took a step back against Iowa, returning to his old ways a bit in a 4-1 loss to No. 4 Kaleb Young, but the momentum he gained with those two wins remains.

"It's been an ongoing process of trying

BI	3		Wr	es	tl	ing
	w	L	Pct.	w	L	Pct.
Iowa	5	0	1.000	8	0	1.000
Penn State	4	0	1.000	7	1	.875
Purdue	4	1	.800	11	2	.846
Ohio State	4	1	.800	8	2	.800
Michigan	4	1	.800	5	3	.625
Rutgers	3	3	.500	8	4	.667
Illinois	2	2	.500	5	3	.625
Minnesota	2	2	.500	7	5	.583
Wisconsin	1	3	.250	8	3	.727
Nebraska	1	3	.250	6	3	.667
Northwestern	1	3	.250	3	4	.429
Michigan State	1	4	.200	6	6	.500

Indiana

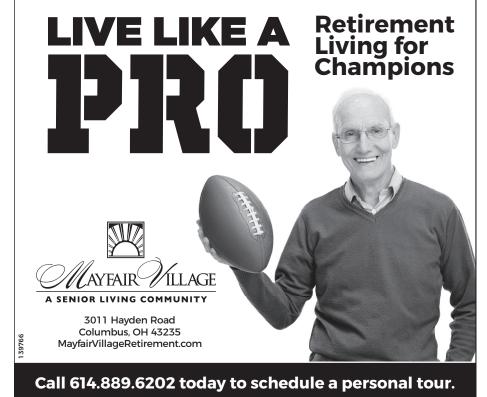
to get my practice to look a lot like my matches," Cleary said. "I know that I'm making daily gains, but it was taking a minute to come out and show. The coaches have been pushing shooting a lot. The more I'm getting the legs the better, going to the top, that's the main mission."

1 5 .167

Cleary was unable to return to winning form against Minnesota, though he was again close against a top opponent, falling to No. 21 Ryan Thomas, 3-2. The lack of offense was an issue, but Cleary will have a chance to regain some confidence against Maryland, one of the Big Ten's worst teams, on Jan. 31.

With four matches left before the Big Ten championships start on Mar. 17, Cleary has a chance to establish himself not just as an improving wrestler with one year still left to take the final steps in Columbus, but to add a strength to Ohio State's lineup. As Kaleb Romero at 174-pounds and Smith at 165 have both done already this season, Cleary will look to sustain his improvement and serve as yet another top-25 wrestler on the Buckeye roster.

With top-ranked Iowa likely standing between Ohio State and a Big Ten title, the Buckeyes may need that exact sort of improvement from the Winter Park, Fla.,



## Former Player Files Federal Lawsuit Against PSU

Former Penn State football player Isaiah Humphries filed a federal lawsuit against the school, accusing former teammates of committing hazing acts that simulated sexual assault and making threats of "I'm going to Sandusky you."

Humphries named the school, head football coach James Franklin and defensive tackle Damion Barber as defendants in the lawsuit. The suit named as parties three other play-

## **BIG TEN NOTES**Joe Dempsey

ers – linebacker Micah Parsons, defensive end Yetur Gross-Matos and linebacker Jesse Luketa.

Humphries said the hazing and the ensuing retaliation he allegedly received from the school forced him to transfer from Penn State. He is currently a student at the University of California, Berkeley, and a member of the Golden Bears football team.

During his only fall semester at Penn State in 2018, Humphries said he and other underclassmen were frequently targeted for hazing acts that simulated sexual assault.

According to Humphries, players would allegedly regularly pin younger teammates to the floor and simulate "a humping action while on top" or place their "genitals on the face of

the lower classmen." One of the players would place a "penis on the buttocks of the lower classmen and stroke his genitalia, simulating the action of ejaculation," among other acts alleged in the lawsuit.

Penn State was where the Jerry Sandusky scandal made national headlines in 2011 and 2012, when the former assistant coach to long-time head coach Joe Paterno was arrested and convicted for a string of sexual assaults against young boys. Both the university and football program were accused of covering up for Sandusky, which led to harsh penalties against the Nittany Lions from the NCAA.

"At all relevant times material hereto, the harassment and hazing ritual undertaken by defendant Damion Barber, Micah Parsons, Yetur Gross-Matos and Jesse Luketa included the participants stating to lower classmen, such as the plaintiff, 'Tm going to Sandusky you,' "the lawsuit said.

Penn State said it investigated all of Humphries' allegations and passed on the findings to Centre County prosecutors.

"The DA reviewed the case and decided that no charges would be pursued," Penn State vice president Rachel Pell said in a statement.

Barber's case was also taken to the school's Office of Student Conduct, and he was "determined ... to have committed prohibited behavior ... and sanctioned," according to the lawsuit.

Humphries' lawsuit did not detail how Barber was punished, but the defensive tackle was suspended and sat out the 2019 season opener against Idaho for an unspecified violation of team rules.

When Humphries announced he was leav-



ANDREW LIND

UNDER FIRE – Penn State linebacker Micah Parsons (11) was named in a law-suit alleging he and several teammates hazed underclassmen.



## **BIG TEN NOTES**

ing Penn State, he thanked the school, but his message seemed to imply that all was not well with his departure.

"I have made many friends here that I will dearly miss, and it's going to be hard to leave them here," according to a statement on Humphries' verified Twitter page on Nov. 28, 2018. "But in order for me to grow and not lose the passion that I have for football and for everything that I value, I unfortunately will be transferring from this place."

## Northwestern OC McCall Joins Iowa State After Firing

Offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Mick McCall was fired after Northwestern's offense struggled during the 2019 season

Not long after McCall was relieved of his duties, however, he received a phone call from a familiar face in Iowa State head coach Matt Campbell. McCall and Campbell had previously worked together at Bowling Green, and although Campbell did not currently have any openings on his staff, he wanted to bring in McCall.

"He just said, 'We'll kind of see what we can come up with, but I'd really like you to be a part of our program,' "McCall said. "As time went on, we continued to communicate. It was great."

Campbell went as far as reshuffling his staff to allow him to hire McCall as the new running backs coach for the Cyclones.

"He's done a great job here, and I want to be part of the next step that we're going to take," McCall said of Campbell.

McCall boasts 41 years of collegiate coaching experience, including stints at Southern Colorado, Idaho State, Oregon State, Wyoming, Bowling Green and Northwestern.

While McCall was at Bowling Green from 2003-07, he first met Campbell, who was a graduate assistant at the school in 2003 and 2004 and an assistant coach from 2007-08. Although Campbell was quite young, McCall said he knew right away that Campbell had what it took to lead a program.

"I knew the first day he came back and started working with us," McCall said of Campbell. "I knew that he was going to be a special person because he cared about young men and he wanted to do the right thing and he was a great teacher."

McCall had made an impression on Campbell as well, with the Iowa State head coach being one of the first to reach out to McCall after he had been let go by Northwestern.

When Iowa State tight ends coach/recruiting coordinator Alex Golesh left for UCF, Campbell moved his offensive coordinator Tom Manning, who had been coaching the running backs, over to tight ends. Then Campbell brought McCall in to coach the running backs.

McCall took some time to reflect and considered stepping away from coaching but could not pass on the opportunity to be reunited with Campbell and Aaron Hillmann, Iowa State's director of player development, who was also at Bowling Green with him.

"He wants to do the right thing for the young men, and then he's a great communicator and he really cares about the people that are involved in the program," McCall said of Campbell. "I think those are things that he had right off the bat."

## Cronk Transfers From Indiana To Iowa

Coy Cronk, a four-year starting left tackle at Indiana, transferred to Iowa.

Cronk suffered a season-ending ankle injury in September, which required surgery and cost him his season. The former three-star

recruit from Lafayette (Ind.) Central Catholic was on the Outland Trophy watch list before the ankle injury ended his Indiana career.

The 6-5, 320-pound offensive tackle joins the Hawkeyes with one year of eligibility remaining. Cronk will be eligible to play immediately and has enrolled in the spring semester at Iowa, giving him the opportunity to participate in spring practices.

While with the Hoosiers, Cronk was named to the Big Ten All-Freshman team in 2016 and was a 247Sports Freshman All-American. He started 40 games for the Hoosiers, all at left tackle.

With the Hawkeyes getting Alaric Jackson back for his senior year, it is unlikely Cronk will have an opportunity at left tackle. But with right tackle Tristan Wirfs leaving early for the NFL, there should be a starting spot for Cronk to fill.

Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz had discussed the possibility of the Hawkeyes adding a transfer to their roster prior to Cronk's decision.

"Anything we can do to help our football team – as long as it fits," Ferentz said. "It's got to fit."

Despite staying within the Big Ten, Cronk won't face his former teammates in his final collegiate season since Iowa does not appear on the Hoosiers' schedule, unless the two face off in the Big Ten Championship Game.

## **Shorter Chooses Florida After Leaving Penn State**

The No. 1 wide receiver from the 2018 recruiting class, Justin Shorter, will transfer from Penn State to Florida.

Shorter made an unofficial visit to Florida on Dec. 26 and an official on Jan. 24, helping convince him that Gainesville was the place for him. Shorter is set to be a redshirt sophomore in 2020 but may need to sit out a year due to transfer rules.

His Nittany Lion career did not pan out for many reasons, including injuries, but Florida provides Shorter with a fresh start as he works to get back into shape.

Shorter's former head coach, Franklin, had made a comment in the spring of 2019 about how he was a "cheeseburger away from 250 pounds," indicating that the highly touted receiver had a lot of work to do in terms of his conditioning.

Shorter was the top wideout in his class for a reason, though, running the 40-yard dash in 4.5 seconds and measuring in at 6-4. His hands have been criticized at times, but Shorter dropped only two passes in 2019, according to Pro Football Focus.

Whether Shorter will be granted immediate eligibility remains to be seen, but the No. 8 overall prospect from 2018 could have an argument. After all, the Penn State coaching staff has undergone major changes, including the departure of offensive coordinator Ricky Rahne and several assistants for Old Dominion.

## Castleberry Transfers From Michigan To Maryland

Jim Harbaugh and his Michigan football team lost another transfer with running back Jordan Castleberry announcing his move to Maryland.

"Proud to announce that I will be transferring to the University of Maryland to continue my academic and athletic career. Go Terps," Castleberry wrote on Twitter.

The Lakewood, Ohio, native spent one season at Michigan before deciding to leave. The 5-8, 185-pound running back held three Football Championship Series offers out of Lakewood St. Edward, receiving interest from Morgan State, Morehead State and Georgetown. Castleberry decided to walk on at Michigan instead.

Castleberry did not appear in any games for the Wolverines in 2019. He will have four years of eligibility remaining, unless he's forced to sit out a season due to NCAA transfer rules, which would give him three years left.





## Oldenburg Connects OSU's Past And Present

By PATRICK MAYHORN Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Jen Flynn Oldenburg could hardly hold back tears as she gave an opening statement at her first press conference. It's hard to blame her. She had, after all, just been officially introduced to the world as Ohio State's sixth women's volleyball head coach.

On top of that, it was the official return for Oldenburg to a program that has been a large part of her life, the place that started it all. The Ohio State alumna once donned the scarlet and gray as a student and member of the women's volleyball program, starring under legendary head coach Jim Stone from 1996 to 1999.

As a player, Oldenburg left her mark on both the program and Ohio State's record books. She recorded 3,213 career assists and 1,138 digs during her time as a Buckeyes, good enough for seventh and 12th respectively in the school career record books. She was a member of four consecutive NCAA tournament teams and an All-Big Ten selection at both setter and outside hitter (the first Big Ten player to be selected at two positions).

As a coach, Oldenburg will look to return a traditionally elite program to the heights from which it has fallen in recent seasons. In 12 seasons under former head coach Geoff Carlston, who took over for Stone in 2007, Ohio State put up a 235-170 record, qualifying for the NCAA tournament seven times and advancing to the Sweet 16 five times.

However, quite a bit of that success came early in Carlston's tenure. The head coach

hit a regular-season peak in his second season, going 28-10 in 2009, tied for fourth in the Big Ten. Carlston led the Buckeyes to three straight Sweet 16 berths from 2014 to 2016 but suffered through three straight losing seasons to end his tenure, going 15-16 in 2017, 12-20 in 2018 and 15-17 in 2019.

In those final years, Carlston struggled with the kind of problems that tend to stem from tremendously young rosters, a trait the program will still hold as it turns over to new management. Ohio State relied heavily on freshmen Gabby Gonzales and Jenaisya Moore in 2019 and looks to have just eight upperclassmen in 2020 (barring transfers).

While a lack of roster experience may have spelled trouble for her predecessor, Oldenburg is looking forward to the chance to work with a talented but inexperienced group.

"Whether it was young or old, I'd be excited to work with the team," Oldenburg said. "The fact that we had a younger team on the court last year is, I think, a huge benefit because they have that time in the Big Ten, in the biggest conference in the country. That's exciting to me because they've gone through those battles and, like I've said at the beginning, they're hungry for more, and I think that's a good thing."

While Ohio State hopes that the new hire can serve as a transitional force for a program entering what appears to be a new era in a new home arena, the brass behind the choice is hoping to marry Ohio State's past with its future, as exemplified by the presence of several former Buckeye players at Oldenburg's introduction.

"Jen is very representative of our past,



OHIO STATE WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL/TWITTER

NEW DIRECTION – The Ohio State women's volleyball program named former Buckeye player Jen Flynn Oldenburg, pictured with her husband and children, its next head coach on Jan. 17.





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### 2020 FOOTBALL

April 11 SPRING GAME

Sept. 5 BOWLING GREEN; 12 at Oregon; 19 BUFFALO; 26 RUTGERS

Oct. 10 IOWA: 17 at Michigan State: 24 at Penn State; 31 NEBRASKA

Nov. 7 INDIANA; 14 at Maryland, 21 at Illinois;

Dec. 5 Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis

### MEN'S BASKETBALL (13-7, 3-6)

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 -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

**Jan. 3** WISCONSIN, L 61-57; **7** Maryland, L 67-55; **11** Indiana, L 66-54; **14** NEBRASKA, W 80-68; **18** Penn State, L 90-76; **23** MINNESOTA, L 62-59; **26** Northwestern, W 71-59.

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** lowa, 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 (11-8, 4-4)

Nov. 3 Urbana (exhibition), W 131-50; 10 Valparaiso in Springfield, Ohio, W 89-38; 13 Cincinnati, W 78-73 (OT); **17** OHIO, L 74-68; **21** Kent State, W 75-65; **24** UCONN, L 73-62; **29** South Dakota in Las Vegas, L 68-53; 30 Northern Iowa in Las Vegas, W 64-46.

Dec. 5 LOUISVILLE, W 67-60; 8 RADFORD, W 70-57; 15 Stanford, L 71-52; 17 Sacramento State, W 104-74; 28 PURDUE, 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, 68-65; **19** ILLINOIS, W 77-47; **23** Iowa, L 77-68; **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.

## FENCING

Jan. 4 January NAC at Charlotte, N.C., NTS; **12** Detroit Mercy Invitational; NTS; **15** DENISON, NTS; **18** St. John's Duals at New York, N.Y., NTS; **19** Philadelphia Invitational: NTS.

Feb. 1-2 Northwestern Duals; 22-23 MIDWEST CHAMPIONSHIPS

March 7-8 NCAA Quarterfinals at Detroit, Mich.; 19-22 NCAA Championships at Detroit, Mich.

## MEN'S GYMNASTICS (0-1, 0-1)

Jan. 18 ARIZONA STATE & OKLAHOMA, 2nd

(398.600); 25 Penn State, L 405.900-405.000.

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 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,

### WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS (2-1, 1-1)

**Jan. 11** North Carolina State, W 194.025-193.800; **18** Michigan State, L 195.450-195.275; **25** CENTRAL MICHIGAN & MARYLAND, 1st (195.500).

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 (15-8-3, 8-6-2)

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, T 4-4 (L SO); **18** NOTRE DAME, W 2-1; **24** Minnesota, L 6-3; **25** 

Minnesota, L 4-1; 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

### WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (16-6-4, 9-4-3)

**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 Bemidii State. W 4-3 (OT) 2 Bemidii 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,

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** Minnesota, W 4-1; **18** Minnesota, L 2-1; **24** QUINNIPIAC, W 2-1; **25** QUINNIPIAC, W 3-2; **31** BEMIDJI STATE. **Feb. 1** BEMIDJI STATE; **7-8** Minnesota Duluth;

15-16 Wisconsin; 21-22 ST. CLOUD STATE; 28-29

March 1 WCHA First Round; 7-8 WCHA Final

Faceoff: 14 NCAA Ouarterfinal: 20 NCAA Frozen Four; 22 NCAA Championship.

SWIMMING & DIVING (4-3, 1-1)

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 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, Men L 190-110; Women, L 165-135; **24-25** Shamrock Invitational at South Bend, Ind., Men 3/4; Women 2/4: **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 (6-0, 0-0)

Jan. 15 NORTHERN KENTUCKY, W 7-0; 15 DAYTON, W 5-0; 19 XAVIER, W 7-0; WRIGHT STATE, W 7-0; **25** PURDUE, W 6-0; **26** TULSA, W 6-0; **26** 

Feb. 1 TEXAS, 1 p.m.; 7 ARIZONA STATE, 6 .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** 

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 (1-0)

Jan. 17 Michigan Invitational at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS: 25 ITA Kickoff at Stillwater, Okla., W. 4-0; **31** DUKE, 5 p.m.

Feb. 8 National Inodors 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 lowa, 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., Men 2/3; Women NTS; 23-25 Columbia Challenge at New York, NTS: 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, Kv. Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wisc. 29-31 NCAA Regional Championships at Lexington Ку.

June 10-13 NCAA Championships at Austin Texas.

### MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (6-1)

Jan. 4 North Greenville, W 3-0; 7 Urbana, W 3-0; 9 Saint Francis, W 3-0; 16 LINCOLN MEMORIAL, W 3-1: 17 KING, W 3-0: 24 USC at University Park Pa., W 3-0; 26 UCLA at University Park, Pa., L 3-1; 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 OUINCY, 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.,

## WRESTLING (7-2, 3-1)

Nov. 2 Michigan State, NTS; 10 STANFORD, W 29-6; 15 Pittsburgh, W 23-12; 17 VIRGINIA TECH

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, W 24-13; 19 ILLINOIS, W 28-6; 24 Iowa, L 24-10; 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.

our current and where we hope to be in the future," said deputy director of athletics Janine Oman. "For us, Jen's passion for Ohio State and for our student-athletes that are here - and really developing them as young women, but providing them the same opportunities that she had - were really what made her the best fit for Ohio State."

To have the opportunity to come back and be the leader is a dream," Oldenburg said. "To be here as an alum and start this journey with this group of athletes that are hungry and ready for more – I think with the passion that (the players) have, it's going to be a great team, and I am excited for what this future is going to be."

The sentiment is not lost on the new head coach, who spoke fondly of the hours spent in St. John Arena during her time as a player but preached the importance of developing new tradition while continuing to appreciate those that came before.

"To go where we want to go, we need to compete with the best," Oldenburg said. "The athletes and families that are looking to see what kind of support you have in a program, they are going to see that here.

We are going to build a lot of tradition in this facility."

On paper, there may not be a stronger candidate to manage the blending of past and present. As a former player, Oldenburg has connections to Ohio State volleyball that go deeper than the surface. She mentioned Stone directly as a mentor for her through this process, and she worked with him directly in 2019 as an assistant on his staff with the USA Volleyball Girls Youth National Team.

Aside from relationships, her ties to the area as well as the Big Ten are strong. After graduating from Ohio State and spending time on the United State National Team. Oldenburg accepted a position as assistant coach at Illinois in 2003, where she stayed until 2012 under two head coaches, Don Hardin and Kevin Hambly. Hambly spoke positively of his former assistant upon the news of her hiring.

"Jen is the best! I am so happy she will be back in collegiate volleyball," Hambly, now the coach at Stanford, said. "She will do a great job at OSU. She will operate with integrity, the athletes will have a great experience and she will be a consummate professional.

The young women she works with will become better volleyball players, but more importantly they will develop as people.'

Despite her deep history with Big Ten and Ohio State volleyball, the move is not without risk. As Oldenburg stated in her press conference, this was an "outside of the box" decision for Ohio State. After leaving Illinois in 2012, Oldenburg spent six seasons as the club/associate director of the Pittsburgh Elite Volleyball Association. outside of the college game.

This will serve as her first experience as a head coach in the college game, which means she'll be the second volleyball coach in the Covelli Center taking over a major program for the first time, joining first-year men's volleyball coach Kevin Burch, another former Buckeye player. That much youth in a coaching room can provide a high ceiling, but it could also require quite the leap of faith from the university.

Oldenburg is well aware of what she has to accomplish to prove herself as a head coach in the nation's deepest women's vollevball conference.

"I feel like there is a lot I need to learn.

and there is a lot of things that (players) need to learn about me," Oldenburg said. "The volleyball will come. It's going to be about getting to know (them) and understanding what that path is going to be this spring.'

Still, the excitement around the program is palpable. Several current players in attendance jumped at the opportunity to ask questions of their new coach, and they appeared just as ready for the future as Oldenburg. When asked about her immediate expectations, there was no holding back.

"I think with the work ethic that I have and what my staff would be, I am expecting big things," Oldenburg said. "There are storied programs in the university, and I think it is time that volleyball is one of them as well."

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.

## Season Over But Players Just Getting Started

Now the real work begins.

With the college all-star games over, prospects will now focus on training for the April sideshow known as the NFL draft. This year it's in Las Vegas, and first-rounders will be taken to the stage on a boat. Anything to gimmick it up, right, NFL?

## THE FACTS MAN Mike Washsman

Most observers will tell you that what you put on tape is the most important thing. But it seems more and more that how you do at your Pro Day and at the NFL Combine has a huge influence on NFL teams. We have routinely seen guys move way up on draft boards because of a phenomenal 40 time or an unbelievable number of reps on the bench press. Never mind if the film says you can play, right?

Fortunately for Ohio State's draft prospects, the tape doesn't lie.

It's all but a given that Chase Young will be the second pick of the draft, behind LSU's Joe Burrow. Greedy Buckeyes can count Burrow as their own if they want to, which would make it the top two picks in the draft for the first time in school history. But officially Burrow is a Tiger,

so it will be up to Jeff Okudah – rated by most observers as a top-five player and a very possible top-five pick – to see that two Buckeyes get selected in the top five.

It would be the fifth straight year for Ohio State to have two first-round picks, which includes 2016, when Joey Bosa (third) and Zeke Elliott (fourth) both went in the top five. That was a great draft for the Buckeyes, who had five players selected in the first round. You have to go back to 1997 to find two OSU players drafted in the top three – Orlando Pace (first) and Shawn Springs (third).

Young is actually atop many analysts' draft boards after putting together a season that netted 16½ sacks – best in the nation despite missing two games – and a pass-rush win rate of 27.2, easily the best figure in the country. He received the highest grade ever for an edge defender from Pro Football Focus, which has been charting and grading college players since 2014. Young finished 2019 with 56 total pressures, including 31 hurries.

There was a lot of chatter on social media that he was invisible late in the season, and the raw numbers would appear to back that up. However, lost in the numbers is the fact that Young was double-teamed for most of the game by Michigan and Wisconsin, and while he didn't have any sacks against Clemson, he did tally five hurries against Trevor Lawrence. Those shouting that hurries aren't a thing haven't been paying attention as they are a real, charted stat, and

they impact a quarterback. Young had 31 hurries and added 33 additional pass rushes that beat the defender but the QB got rid of the ball before a pressure could be registered.

There are people out there – mostly fans of other teams who don't watch or understand football – who feel Young is overrated, that he isn't the "generational talent" many are touting him to be. He has more natural talent than either of the Bosas. And given how well those two have done in their short time in the NFL, it seems folly to bet against Young being an instant impact type. Larry Johnson knows what he's doing in preparing guys for the next level, so doubt Young at your own peril.

To wrap up Young's season with a nice, shiny bow – he had 133 positive plays to just 17 negatively graded, a ratio that the folks at PFF have never before seen.

Okudah is a physical, lockdown corner, the likes of which OSU hasn't seen since the days of Springs. Teams really didn't throw his way very much, and when they did it was with very little success – opponents managed just a 46.6 percent catch rate targeting Okudah. He didn't allow a completion of over 30 yards all season and – maybe most impressively – had just one penalty called all season. That's something to note from a guy who routinely gets into a receiver's face and plays close for the entire route. There is a trick to hand placement for defensive backs, and Okudah seems to have that down.

Many top-end cover corners don't like to tackle, but Okudah is an exception. He shows a willingness in the run game, didn't miss many tackles and can hit, forcing two fumbles in 2019. He lived up to the promise many forecast for him as an elite recruit coming out of Texas, and he should add to the rich history of Ohio State corners in the NFL.

There probably weren't many of you out there who watched the various college all-star games, but yours truly did – and was mostly impressed with what he saw from Ohio State players.

K.J. Hill showed polish running routes and was always open during the week of Senior Bowl practice. Analysts showered him with praise on his ability to get inside release and spin defensive backs around, and he also showed decisiveness as a punt returner in the game, immediately taking the ball upfield after the catch and breaking off a 15-yard return up the sideline.

Observers were impressed during the week with guard Jonah Jackson, some going as far as moving him up to the top available guard in the draft. They love his balance and hand strength and believe he can lock down a few minor issues with technique.

Malik Harrison went up high for an interception, which should surprise no one. He is freakishly athletic, and his work in coverage during the week may have allayed fears that he was simply a two-down defender.

DaVon Hamilton and Austin Mack also played in the Senior Bowl, tight end Rashod Berry played in the NFLPA Collegiate Bowl, and Branden Bowen and Ben Victor participated in the East West Shrine Bowl – Victor even made an athletic touchdown grab and likely increased his draft standing with a good week of work in practice.

## **Tying Up Loose Ends**

• The 2019 football season just ended, yet we are already seeing a number of way-too-early top 25 projections for 2020. Not surprisingly, Ohio State fares very well.

Pro Football Focus actually has the Buckeyes in the top spot, just ahead of Clemson. It's the other way around for CBS Sports, ESPN and Athlon, while Sports Illustrated and USA Today have Ohio State slotted third. SI touts Clemson and Georgia, and USA Today has Clemson and Alabama in the top two spots.

Justin Fields gets most of the renown, but Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson are seen as potential breakout stars on offense. Defensively there are questions, but many believe Zach Harrison is next up in the Buckeyes' proud pass rushing lineage.

• Kudos to OSU freshman grappler Sammy Sasso, who knocked off No. 1-ranked Pat Lugo of Iowa in Carver Hawkeye Arena Jan. 24. The Buckeyes lost the match 24-10, but Sasso had people buzzing after edging the previously unbeaten Lugo 2-1 in the second tiebreaker.

The Buckeyes are currently ranked fourth in the nation and have a pair of top-ranked wrestlers in Luke Pletcher (141) and Kollin Moore (197), but there is a lot of youth dotting the remainder of the lineup. Still, OSU has been a very good tournament team under Tom Ryan, and while the Hawkeyes are currently top dogs, it wouldn't be surprising to see Ohio State right in the hunt for the Big Ten title.

• A once-proud program may finally be ready to rise again after Ohio State announced it was bringing home one of its own

Jen Flynn Oldenburg is the Buckeyes' new women's volleyball coach, and she will be looking to right a ship that had hit the rocks, suffering three straight losing seasons under former coach Geoff Carlston.

Carlston, hired from Ohio University, never truly got things going despite making the NCAA tournament seven times in 12 years.

OSU never advanced past the Sweet 16 in his tenure, and 2018 saw the most losses since 2008, his first season.

In her career, Oldenburg finished seventh in assists and 12th in digs in school history and helped Ohio State to four straight NCAA tournament appearances. She was the first player in league history to be named All-Big Ten at two different positions (setter and outside hitter) and was also a three-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree.

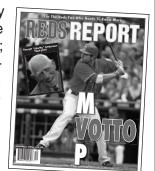
Oldenburg started at setter for the U.S. National Team and helped win a silver medal at the 2002 World Championships, and she already has an impressive coaching résumé – nine seasons as an assistant at Illinois (NCAA runner up in 2011) as well as helping former coach Jim Stone as an assistant on the USA Girls Youth National Team (Under 18).

Stone had set a strong foundation in his 26 seasons at the helm, but unfortunately Carlston wasn't able to build on that. Here's hoping that a look to the past signals a bright future for one of the most tradition-laden programs on campus.

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## 2019 Comparable To 2002, Even Without Ring

It's been two weeks since I last checked in with you, and little has changed for me.

The loss to Clemson still stings. I still hate the targeting rule as currently written. I still think Justyn Ross caught the ball, Jeff Okudah knocked it away and Jordan Fuller scooped and scored

And I still believe Ohio State had a great season, despite falling short of what should always be the Buckeyes' ultimate goal of a national championship.

One thing that I didn't have space to get to in our last issue was Ohio State's go-ahead touchdown in the fourth quarter of the Fiesta Bowl, when Justin Fields connected with Chris Olave for a 23-yard TD pass on a fourth-and-1. I can't be the only one who thought about the famed Holy Buckeye pass from Craig Krenzel to Michael Jenkins against Purdue on another fourth-and-1 that preserved Ohio State's undefeated season on the way to the national crown in 2002.

In order to win a national championship, everything has to go just right, and you, like me, were probably thinking upon viewing the TD pass to Olave that, as in 2002, this was the year. The 2019 Buckeyes, like those in 2002, were a team of destiny, we were thinking.

Any Buckeye fan will recall that Ohio State lived virtually the entire 2002 season on the edge, with no edge greater than the one in West Lafayette that year. You could make the case that the 2019 Buckeyes never faced true adversity – even in their toughest games of the season – until the Fiesta Bowl with the Tigers and thus were not prepared for a fight to the finish.

But there was Ohio State, with a full season's worth of adversity packed into one game, driving at the end of the Fiesta Bowl with a possible victory still within grasp right down to the final seconds. A different turn by Olave on Ohio State's last play and I am writing a different column.

I just think in order to win a national championship, regardless of how good your team is, everything has to go your way – every bounce, every official's call, every injury. It's a long season and funny things happen. In Ohio State's case, the funny things all seemed to happen in the game against Clemson.

In preparing for this column, I was of the mind that the 2019 team was markedly better than the 2002 championship bunch. In looking over the rosters, the talent gap (if there was one) may not have been as great as I initially recalled.

This year's team had J.K. Dobbins at running back. The 2002 squad had Maurice Clarett. This year's team had Chase Young on the defensive line. In '02 they had Will Smith with, perhaps a slightly stronger supporting cast of Tim Anderson, Kenny Peterson and Darrion Scott.

Once Jim Tressel and his staff moved Chris Gamble to the defensive backfield, the secondaries were comparable. I'd give a slight edge to the 2019 offensive line, an edge at linebacker to 2002's Cie Grant, Matt Wilhelm and Robert Reynolds. I'll call tight end a draw with Ben Hartsock a better starter, but the 2019 team featuring more depth.

I think where the 2019 team would really get the edge would be with its depth at wide receiver – remember that Gamble had to play both ways in 2002 – and, most importantly at quarterback where I would give the edge to Fields over Krenzel. Krenzel was a national championship-caliber quarterback and has the ring to prove it. But I think Fields, gimpy knee and all, was a greater all-around threat and a greater challenge to opposing defenses.

But here's what I said in this space about Krenzel after that famous win over Purdue:

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

"This game and the big play at the end were more proof that – as people have been saying all season – Krenzel's play may not always be pretty, but he does what he has to do to win."

The bottom line? Two great football teams of which Ohio State fans should always be proud.

## If Day Had A Time Machine

While on the topic of "Who is better," I posed this question on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum: "If Ryan Day could go back to the spring of 2018 and choose between Dwayne Haskins and Joe Burrow all over again, who would he choose?"

I immediately made the question to our readers unscientific by expressing my opinion and backing it up with stats of my choosing:

"I maintain he made the right choice back then, even with Burrow deservedly winning the Heisman this season," I posted. "Here's why. We are looking at Burrow in his second year as a starter. Compare their stats as first-year starters last season."

For the record, Haskins was 373 of 533 for a 70.0 completion percentage and 4,831 yards and 50 TDs against eight interceptions in 2018. By comparison, Burrow completed 219 of 379 passes for a 57.8 percentage, 2,894 yards, 16 TDs and five interceptions.

"Haskins' numbers for a first-time starter were incredible," I went on to say. "Burrow's were solid. If Haskins had made even modest improvement in a second year as starter, he could have easily equaled Burrow's Heismanguaranteeing numbers."

Burrow's numbers with the champion LSU Tigers this season were 402 of 527 for a 76.3 percentage, 5,671 yards, 60 TDs and six picks.

Our BuckeyeSports.com Forum posters pretty much agreed with me. At a football power such as Ohio State, you have to win and you have to win now. Day and head coach Urban Meyer must have deemed that Haskins was more equipped to win immediately, and if you believe the stats alone, they may have been right. The thread is still available at BuckeyeSports.com under the heading "If Ryan Day Had a Time Machine" – you may have to scroll down a little bit – if you want to put your two cents' worth in.

One thing is indisputable. There have been a lot of great quarterbacks in the Ohio State "room" in the last few years.

## **Right Back Where We Started**

Funny. After all the excitement about the 2019 Buckeyes and all the hand-wringing about the 2018 Buckeyes and disappointment within Buckeye Nation last season, the two Buckeye squads finished in exactly the same place – Big Ten champions, ranked No. 3 in the country in the final AP poll.

So why the difference in reputation of the two teams? I think it comes down to three things, two of which are directly linked to the most important reason – defense. The view of the 2018 team will forever be tarnished by the awful defense that the Buckeyes played, which played a huge part in the other two black marks, the loss to Purdue and what should have been a loss to lowly Maryland. It's hard to get over those two games, even when the Buckeyes lost only once and defeated Penn State, rival Michigan, Northwestern in the Big Ten Championship Game and Washington in the Rose Bowl.

It was obvious from the get-go that the

revamped defensive coaching staff had turned things around on that side of the ball in 2019, and fans enjoyed the play of the stop troops immensely. The Buckeyes' defense, led by Young, would have been exciting in any season, but it was especially enjoyable when juxtaposed against 2018's complete defensive disaster.

## Where's The Defense?

Speaking of defense and Burrow's amazing 2019 numbers, in this space last issue, I noted how much of the chatter on the BuckeyeSports. com Forum during the Fiesta Bowl had to do with Buckeye alum Kirk Herbstreit's incessant mention of Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables during the television broadcast.

It should be noted that in its two playoff games, Venables' defense gave up 516 yards to Ohio State and 628 yards against LSU for a College Football Playoff average of a whopping 572.0 yards per game. Projected out over the course of the season, that figure would rank dead last behind No. 130 Massachusetts' 561.2.

I don't know that much about Venables because I work on football Saturdays and don't see many of the other games, but it's hard to be impressed with those defensive numbers. Maybe Venables' reputation and stats have been aided by playing in the ACC. Or maybe Herbstreit didn't realize that he was being annoying to some by being so repetitive.

## **Athlete Of The Decade**

Normally when we at Buckeye Sports Bulletin choose something like Ohio State's Athlete of the Decade, we would have a staff vote, just as we always do for the Top 10 Stories of the Year, also published in this issue. It was a little bit different when we went about choosing the athlete for the decade of the 2010s.

When we discussed this story in an editorial meeting everyone, including me, blurted out "Kyle Snyder!" There really wasn't much of a reason to vote, and we didn't. Snyder's achievements on the world stage, while still competing – successfully, I might add – for the Buckeyes made him not just a great for the decade, but one of the all-time great Buckeyes. Athlete of the Decade is an honor well earned by Snyder.

And speaking of voting on the big stories of 2019, how often do two Buckeye titans like Howard "Hopalong" Cassady and John Havlicek pass away in the same year? Not only did each of these players rise to the top of their sports, but they also accomplished the ultimate goal of anyone in team sports. Both of them helped lead their team to a national championship – Cassady with the football Buckeyes in 1954 and Havlicek with the basketball Buckeyes in 1960, still the only basketball crown in school history.

Losing the two was a great loss to Buckeye Nation.

## Congratulations, Graduates!

I did not get a chance to mention the fall graduates in this space last issue, as is my habit after each commencement.

The football team had a solid contingent receive their diplomas in December. Among those who graduated were Josh Alabi, Rashod Berry, Tuf Borland, Drue Chrisman, Jashon Cornell, DaVon Hamilton, Robert Landers and Austin Mack. I

saiah Pryor also graduated, paving his way to immediate eligibility after he transferred to Notre Dame. I always like to give special mention to those football players who earn their degrees well after their Buckeye playing days are over. Among those this year were Mike Doss (1999-2002) and Doran Grant (2011-14), as well as OSU women's basketball star Samantha Prahalis (2009-12). The complete list of graduating athletes was published in the Dec. 21 issue of BSB.

### Not As Hot As You Think

If you recall all the negative frenzy among Buckeye fans when former coach John Cooper was in the midst of his 2-10-1 record against archrival Michigan, you might be surprised at the atmosphere in Ann Arbor surrounding Wolverine coach Jim Harbaugh, who is 0-5 against Ohio State and has not lived up to the expectations that he brought with him when he replaced Brady Hoke.

BSB staff writer Wyatt Crosher caught up with Aria Gerson of The Michigan Daily to discuss this past season and fan reaction to Harbaugh after his team failed to meet preseason expectations for a story posted on BuckeyeSports.com.

According to Gerson, much of the high preseason expectations for the Wolverines was based on Ohio State as much as it was on Harbaugh and his Michigan club.

"A lot of Michigan's expectations were tied to Ohio State's expectations because Ohio State had a new coach and people were thinking, Well you know most teams, they get a new coach, they take a step back at first, so this is the year that there's a door open for Michigan to beat Ohio State.' So that was kind of where I think a lot of that was coming from," Gerson said

"I think that if people had known that Ohio State was going to be that good, I don't know that Michigan would have been picked to win the Big Ten."

While it seems there is not the kind of uproar in Ann Arbor that there was in Columbus during the Cooper years, Gerson says fans still care about the rivalry.

"Fans definitely care a lot about it," she said.
"Obviously there is a lot of fan complaints about it. I do sort of think that there's a sense of it kind of being between a rock and a hard place with how good Ohio State has been. If Ohio State is going to be playoff level or near-playoff level every year, it's hard to beat them. At the same time people are like 'You can't even have beaten them once in this entire time?'

"Rich Rod (Rodriguez) and Brady Hoke also did not beat Ohio State, and neither did Lloyd Carr at the end of his tenure, so you know obviously this problem spans before Harbaugh."

So is Harbaugh on the hot seat?

"I think that he's not on the immediate hot seat," Gerson said. "I think if he continues to do what he's been doing, then he'll be fine. The (2020) schedule sets up pretty well to have that New Year's Six bowl-level season, and if that's the case, then he's safe. I think the main issue would be if Michigan suddenly fell off a cliff. Like if they went 6-6 or something, then you might be talking about 'OK, what's next here?' I don't really see any immediate indications that that will happen, but I think that would be when you'd be on the lookout for 'What's going to happen with Harbaugh?'"

Wyatt's story on Harbaugh is archived at BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers, and has been discussed at length on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum. If you are not already enjoying the many additional stories posted each week or joining the discussion with the BSB staff and readers on the Forum, see the simple instructions on page 4 of this issue.



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







