

Drama-Free Signing Day

Bucks Add Final Piece To 2020 Recruiting Haul

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The first Wednesday in February used to be full of excitement for college football fans, similar to waking up on Christmas morning and suddenly having 25 presents waiting under the tree downstairs. But since the introduction of the Early Signing Period in 2017, what was once viewed as a national holiday has become more of an afterthought.

"Signing day is very different now than it used to be," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said during a press conference on Feb. 5. "We had one guy sign today, which is just (unfathomable). The landscape of recruiting has changed a lot."

The Buckeyes received letters of intent from 24 players during the Early Signing Period, which ran from Dec. 18-20. Fourteen of those players enrolled in classes in early January and have been partaking in winter workouts with hopes of making an impact early in their respective careers.

As a result, National Signing Day was substantially less stressful for Day, as evidenced by his calm and cheerful demeanor as he stood at the lectern at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center discussing his first full recruiting class. But that doesn't mean there aren't downsides to the current process, particularly as it relates to Ohio State's pursuit of a Big Ten and national championship late in the season.

"I think what (the Early Signing Period) has done, it's just changed a lot of things," Day said. "I think anytime you make a change like that, the ripple effects, you don't know them until about four or five years out. So I think we're still working through that. So then, that moved official visits to the spring. And then what that did is it took a little pressure off of January. Put a ton of pressure in December, I mean, an unbelievable amount of pressure."

"I think with you playing a (conference) championship game and you have one week to go out on the road as the head coach, and one of those or two of those are going to be some of those award nights, and you have to go see 14 midyear guys from coast to coast when you recruit nationally like we do, it's almost impossible. So, I think that's very hard. But what it's done is it's taken a lot of pressure off of January, and what January has become is what old spring recruiting used to be."

Day agreed when asked if the Early Signing Period should take place in late June or early July, as was initially proposed before the 2017 recruiting cycle. But he also cautioned against any sort of knee-jerk reactions based on this year's experience, in which nearly 90 percent of the nation's committed prospects signed – up from 72.8 percent in year one, as reported by 247Sports.



AMONG THE NATION'S BEST – Ryan Day signed a top-five class in his first full recruiting cycle as Ohio State's head coach.

ANDREW LIND

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Buckeyes Can Break Your Heart

Except for the 1919 and 1920 seasons, I am old enough to remember quite well all of the other soul-crushing, disappointing seasons listed by Mark Rea in his column (Editor's Notebook, Jan. 18). Along with those years, I would add the 1973, 1996, 1998 and 2015 seasons as ones in which greatness was within our grasp and we let it slip away. The parallels between this year and 1979 are particularly troubling. Like Earl Bruce that year, Ryan Day looks very good right now, but will he turn out to be just the latest version of 9-3? Let's hope not. Time will tell.

All of this unpleasant reflection brought to mind a quote attributed to Daniel Patrick Moynihan. "To be Irish," he said, "is to know that the world will ultimately break your heart." Well, far too often, to be an Ohio State fan is to know that the Buckeyes will ultimately break your heart. The joy of great victories never matches the pain of cruel defeats. Time and again, our hopes have been raised, only to be crushed once more. To be an Ohio State fan is to know that, ultimately, your heart will be broken. That life is cruel. But what can we do? We can't help ourselves. We are Buckeyes, and we care deeply about our teams. We can't turn our feelings and our loyalty off, and we wouldn't even if we could. We love those guys.

As a postscript, I cannot end without saying how very moving Jeff Okudah's letters to his mother were. To find such maturity and eloquence in one so young is very rare. I will remember Jeff's letters long after my memory of his accomplishments on the field have faded. Best wishes and good luck to you, Jeff. We're proud to claim you as a Buckeye. Thanks for the memories.

Terry Walrath
Hinckley, Ohio

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From The Message Board

After Ohio State put the finishing touches on its 2020 recruiting class on Feb. 5, Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked the readers on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as staff members, which player they thought was the most important signee and who was the biggest miss this cycle? Here are some of the responses:

"Biggest miss: Bryan Bresee. No. 1 defensive lineman out of Maryland who visited several times and really seemed to like Ohio State. Eventually committed to Clemson. I liked the thought of Larry Jonson plugging him into the middle. Biggest get: Julian Fleming. No. 1 receiver. Add him to Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson. Wow! Plus, to steal him from under Penn State's nose is special."

– **mrbigbux**

"I've been anticipating Fleming for quite awhile having watched his tapes, so he is my pick. As for the misses, I don't have one. If they don't want to be here, we don't want them."

– **PeyoteBuck**

"Biggest loss is Bijan Robinson by a mile. Had him silently committed, and then he was gone. Biggest

get is C.J. Stroud. We needed the quarterback depth badly."

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

"It's hard to not say Fleming as the biggest get of the 2020 cycle. He is the top-rated receiver in the class and he came from an area that screamed for a Penn State commitment. For the biggest miss, I'd go with Robinson. The five-star running back seemed all but locked in for Ohio State and then landed at Texas. The Buckeyes had to change their plans and go for Miyan Williams instead."

– **Wyatt Crosher, BSB**

"I agree 100 percent with Wyatt. These two players are fairly obvious candidates for biggest get and biggest miss, in my estimation."

– **Terrier Buck**

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

Brad Sellers wasn't actually missing in the physical sense, but his game was.

The 7-0 Warrensville Heights, Ohio, native had begun playing for Ohio State coach Eldon Miller in the 1984-1985 season, after transferring from Wisconsin and sitting out a year, and immediately established himself as the Buckeyes' leading scorer and rebounder.

The first sign that something was amiss was his performance in OSU's win over Indiana on Jan. 19. Sellers collected 10 rebounds but was held to nine points, the first time all season that he had not scored in double figures.

Sellers' woes continued against Illinois, as the Buckeyes lost 84-66 and Sellers totaled six points and three rebounds.

"They were subpar games for me," Sellers said of his showings against Indiana and Illinois. "But we came out with a victory against Indiana and that pleased me. (At Illinois), I can't account for anything I did personally, it was so terrible."

30 Years Ago – 1990

For the second time in three days, the Ohio State men's basketball team came up just short of knocking off a nationally ranked Big Ten team on the road.

The Buckeyes (8-7, 3-3) fell 83-78 to 22nd-ranked Minnesota at Williams Arena. The loss followed a heart-breaking 90-88 defeat at Michigan.

Despite the two losses, OSU head coach Randy Ayers was pleased with his team's competitiveness during the unsuccessful two-game trip.

"Once again, our players gave us effort for the full 40 minutes, and we've got to be pleased with that," he said. "But we must find a way to win the close games."

25 Years Ago – 1995

Ohio State head football coach John Cooper filled one of the vacancies on his coaching staff by hiring a familiar face on Jan. 17.

Lovie Smith, a former player and coach under Cooper at Tulsa, was hired as OSU's new defensive backs coach. Larry Coker, who had held that post for the two prior years, moved over to take the quarterbacks coaching spot vacated by the firing of Ron Hudson in January.

"Lovie and I go back a long time, and I'm glad we'll be working together again," Cooper said. "He is a talented young coach who has gained a lot of experience since his playing days, and I look forward to him joining our staff."

20 Years Ago – 2000

The Buckeyes, and head coach Jim O'Brien in particular, had spent several months reminding fans that the newest rendition of the team was entirely different from 1998-1999's Final Four team.

But in an exciting week, the Buckeyes jumped into the top 19 in the polls and seemed to recapture their old magic. OSU's action could be summed up thusly: three days, two games with ranked teams, two dramatic wins.

O'Brien's suddenly formidable wrecking crew dumped 10th-ranked Michigan State, 78-67, then rubbed out No. 19 St. John's, 65-64.

"This says that the preseason hype about us being contenders in the Big Ten is true," OSU point guard Scoonie Penn said seconds after dribbling out the clock in the win over the Spartans. "I really think we're one of the teams that's going to be around the top throughout the Big Ten season. To remain there, we're going to need to win big games like this tonight."

15 Years Ago – 2005

Robert Q. Baker, the Ohio State booster who allegedly gave a cash-filled envelope to quarterback Troy Smith, met Jan. 21 for the first time with OSU athletic department officials and NCAA investigators. According to Baker's attorney, the meeting was a cordial one.

"It was very conversational, a very collegial, cordial sort of meeting," attorney Jim Savage told The Columbus Dispatch of the session, which lasted approximately 90 minutes in the Schottenstein Center.

"(Baker) wants to answer whatever questions they have so they can put it behind them. Now, that doesn't suggest anything about what needs to be put behind them."

Smith was suspended for the Alamo Bowl contest after he admitted taking cash from Baker in the spring of 2004.

10 Years Ago – 2010

Duron Carter promised he had made what would prove to be a one-time mistake.

The Ohio State receiver, who played in all 12 regular-season games as a true freshman in 2009 but missed the Rose Bowl after being declared academically ineligible, told BSB that he had righted his ship and expected to be able to participate fully when spring drills rolled around.

"I want everyone to know I'm not running from my mistake with my grades," Carter said. "I feel I owe it to the

Ohio State fans to let them know I'm doing really well now, and I will be glad to be back next season. And I appreciate the support I've received from our fans."

Carter caught 13 passes for 176 yards and a touchdown during his first season in Columbus.

Five Years Ago – 2015

After the 2014 season, offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Tom Herman took the head coaching job at the University of Houston and was replaced as QBs coach and co-OC by Tim Beck. It was another change, however, that surprised onlookers and created controversy when running backs coach Stan Drayton left for the Chicago Bears the day after National Signing Day, to be replaced by Notre Dame RBs coach Tony Alford.

The controversy came because Drayton was instrumental in the signing of four-star back Mike Weber before leaving Ohio State, but the appointment of Alford, which was confirmed by multiple sources, gave the Buckeyes a more-than-capable replacement.

Alford had spent the previous six years at Notre Dame, coaching the running backs (2009, 2012-14), wideouts (2010-11) and slot wide receivers (2012-13) and also serving as recruiting coordinator (2012-14) at different stages of his career in South Bend.

One Year Ago – 2019

Even before he officially took over as head coach, Ohio State's Ryan Day knew he'd have a huge hole to fill for 2019.

Quarterback Dwayne Haskins hadn't announced his decision to leave for the NFL just yet, but the writing was on the wall. Haskins was projected as the top quarterback in the draft, meaning his stock wouldn't improve with another year in school.

After succeeding Urban Meyer on Jan. 2, Day needed just two days to secure his quarterback of the future. The problem was that there was still no guarantee Georgia transfer Justin Fields, the highest-rated prospect ever to enroll at Ohio State, would be allowed to play in 2019.

By Feb. 8, Day's most important recruit became official when the NCAA granted Fields' waiver request for immediate eligibility.

"I am so happy for Justin and his family," Day said in a statement. "I also want to express my appreciation to the NCAA for its assistance in getting this manner resolved efficiently and with such a positive outcome for Justin."

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Decade-By-Decade Look Back At OSU Football

Before we get too far into 2020, I thought it might be a nice exercise to revisit each of the 13 complete decades of Ohio State football and rank the top three teams over their respective 10-year periods.

Of course, some purists – so-called experts from such divergent entities as the U.S. Naval Observatory and the Farmers' Almanac – insist that because there was no Year Zero, each decade technically begins with the year ending in “1” (2011, for example) and ends with the year ending in “0” (in this case, 2020).

But there is a guy named Konstantin Bikos, lead editor of the TimeandDate.com website, who insists you can look at your decades beginning and ending either way.

In any event, I doubt whether Alexander Lilley, Paul Brown, Woody Hayes or Urban Meyer ever gave the matter much thought. Still, after you've taken a look at some of the following seasons, you'll agree the Buckeyes have enjoyed more than their share of success no matter the decade.

1890s

1899 – Head coach John Bernard Christian Eckstorm leads the Buckeyes to a 9-0-1 record, the program's first undefeated season. OSU outscores its opponents by a 184-5 margin with the only points surrendered coming in a 5-5 tie at Case in mid-October.

1892 – Program's first winning record (5-3) includes the first-ever win in three tries against in-state rival Kenyon, a 26-10 home victory on Thanksgiving Day.

1890 – First team in program history kicks off inaugural season with a 20-14 win at Ohio Wesleyan.

1900s

1900 – Eckstorm's second team begins the season with six consecutive shutout victories on the way to an 8-1-1 finish. The only blemishes are an 11-6 loss to Ohio Medical and a 0-0 tie at Michigan, one of only six times in the history of the rivalry that the Buckeyes have shut out the Wolverines in Ann Arbor.

1906 – The Buckeyes finish with an 8-1 record with the only loss a 6-0 defeat at home to Michigan in late October. The team out-scores its opposition by a 153-14 margin.

1907 – OSU finishes with 7-2-1 record, six of the wins by shutout.

1910s

1916 – Behind sophomore All-American Chic Harley, the Buckeyes go undefeated and win their first Western Conference championship

1917 – OSU runs its conference winning streak to 10 games, captures its second straight league title and out-scores the opposition by a 292-6 margin.

1919 – Harley leads the team to its first-ever victory in the series with Michigan, wins his third All-America honor and helps spark a fundraising campaign that leads to the construction of Ohio Stadium.

1920s

1920 – Buckeyes complete an undefeated regular season and earn the program's first-ever Rose Bowl berth. OSU proves no match for California in Pasadena, however, losing a 28-0 decision.

1926 – A 17-16 loss to Michigan is the only blight on a 7-1 finish. Ohio State squandered an early 10-0 lead and then lost the game in the final two minutes when kicker Myles Clark missed an extra point.

1921 – OSU gives up only 14 points all season but finishes 5-2. The only losses are a

7-0 defeat to Illinois and a 7-6 decision against Oberlin, the program's most recent loss to an Ohio school.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

1930s

1934 – The Francis A. Schmidt era begins with only a one-point loss to Illinois in mid-October preventing the first national title in program history.

1935 – Déjà vu from the year before. This time, only a five-point loss to Notre Dame in an early November contest dubbed “The Game of the Century” prevents that elusive first national title.

1933 – Another near-miss. The Buckeyes finish 7-1 with the lone loss a 13-0 defeat at Michigan.

1940s

1942 – The team shatters the program record by scoring 334 points, and second-year head coach Paul Brown leads the Buckeyes to their first national championship.

1944 – Les Horvath wins the program's first Heisman Trophy, and the team finishes with a perfect 9-0 record and finishes No. 2 in The Associated Press rankings, the only non-military team among the final top six.

1949 – OSU wins its first post-World War II conference title and notches its first Rose Bowl berth in nearly three decades.

1950s

1954 – The Buckeyes go undefeated, including a 20-7 Rose Bowl win against USC, and capture their first national championship in 12 years. The season likely saves the job of fourth-year head coach Woody Hayes, whose record to that point had been a decidedly pedestrian 16-9-2.

1957 – One of Woody's best defenses, the Buckeyes allow only six fourth-quarter points all season on their way to a 9-1 record and second national title in four years.

1955 – Despite heavy graduation losses, the team goes undefeated in Big Ten play to win a second straight league title, something not accomplished since 1916-17.

1960s

1968 – Arguably the best team in program history. The Buckeyes finish a perfect 10-0 season with a 50-14 demolishing of Michigan and a 27-16 victory in the Rose Bowl against defending national champion USC.

1961 – Behind an all-star backfield of Bob Ferguson, Matt Snell and Paul Warfield, Ohio State rolls to an 8-0-1 record but is robbed of a Rose Bowl berth when the university's Faculty Council votes to deny the trip due to the perception that too much emphasis is being placed on the football program.

1969 – Every bit as good as the 1968 team, but an inexplicable loss to Michigan and first-year head coach Bo Schembechler prevents back-to-back national titles.

1970s

1970 – This team would be in the argument for the best team in program history if not for the Rose Bowl loss to Stanford. The team has six first-team All-Americans and five future members of the College Football Hall of Fame – John Hicks, Rex Kern, Jim

Stillwagon, Jack Tatum and Woody Hayes.

1973 – The only blemish on a 10-0-1 record is a 10-10 tie at Michigan. The team has three players finish among the top six in Heisman voting. Hicks finishes second behind Penn State running back John Cappelletti, sophomore tailback Archie Griffin is fifth, and linebacker Randy Gradishar places sixth.

1975 – Ranked No. 1 for eight straight weeks before an upset loss to No. 11 UCLA in Rose Bowl, the team has four first-team All-Americans (Griffin, guard Ted Smith, safety Tim Fox and punter Tom Skladany), and Griffin wins his second Heisman.

1980s

1984 – Quite possibly Earle Bruce's best team. OSU's record was 9-3, but the three losses were by a total of 10 points. Keith Byars finishes second in Heisman voting.

1986 – After beginning the season with two losses for the first time since 1894, the Buckeyes win 10 of their last 11 games, including a convincing 28-12 win against No. 8 Texas A&M.

1982 – The team is 2-3 after three straight early-season losses and then rolls to seven straight wins, including a 24-14 win over Michigan and a 47-17 pounding of a Steve Young-led BYU in the Holiday Bowl.

1990s

1998 – John Cooper's best team. Only a 28-24 home loss to Michigan State in early November costs OSU the national championship.

1996 – The team finishes No. 2 in the final AP poll after a thrilling, come-from-behind Rose Bowl win against undefeated and second-ranked Arizona State.

1995 – The Buckeyes boast four first-team All-Americans – receiver Terry Glenn, offensive tackle Orlando Pace, defensive end Mike Vrabel and running back Eddie George, who outdistances Nebraska QB Tommie Frazier to win the Heisman Trophy.

2000s

2002 – The Buckeyes win a school-record 14 games and earn the program's first consensus national championship in 34 years. Seven of the victories are by seven or fewer points, including a 31-24 win in double overtime against defending national champion Miami (Fla.) in the title game.

2006 – Behind Heisman winner Troy Smith, Ohio State is ranked No. 1 all season and out-scores its regular-season opponents by a 436-125 margin before a crushing 41-14 loss to Florida in the national championship game.

2009 – The team fashions an 11-2 record (with its two losses by a total of 11 points) and finishes No. 5 in national polls following a Rose Bowl win against No. 7 Oregon.

2010s

2014 – After a week-two loss to Virginia Tech, the Buckeyes run the table with 13 straight victories, including season-ending wins against top-ranked Alabama and No. 2 Oregon to capture the national championship.

2019 – First-year head coach Ryan Day's team reels off 13 straight victories and captures a third consecutive Big Ten Championship Game win, eighth straight division title or co-title, and unprecedented eighth consecutive win against Michigan.

2012 – Urban Meyer's first year as head coach produces an improbable undefeated season on the heels of a 6-7 campaign. Only the sixth perfect season in program history.



New Buckeyes Adjusting To New Training Regimen

Ohio State saw an unusually high number of its 2020 signees enroll in January, with 14 of the 25 members of the class joining the program at the start of the year rather than the traditional June start. The early enrollees get the benefit of winter workouts, which have been under way since early January, much to the delight of Mickey Marotti, Ohio State's director of strength and conditioning.

"They came mentally ready for what's coming," Marotti said. "They came focused. They're into it. It's a really good group. We just had a meeting, and everybody in our department talked about how well the freshmen were doing taking care of their business. You're talking about the largest midyear group that I've ever been a part of."

While the extra time on campus can serve as a way for Ohio State to work new players into the program at a slower pace than usual, the learning

curve of a new workout regimen has still been steep for the true freshmen.

"They're definitely challenging," cornerback Lejond Cavazos said of the workouts Marotti has put his new pupils through so far. "They push you to a level that you didn't know you had. It's really intense and it's really competitive."

Some players have already seen a significant change in their body makeup, including offensive lineman Trey Leroux, who has lost 30 pounds in the month since he's been at Ohio State.

"He's a great guy, he's an amazing coach to be working with," Leroux said of Marotti. "I can't say enough about what he's done for me. I've lost 30 pounds since I got here. I'm at 330 (pounds) right now."

Leroux chalks up his transformation to simply following instructions.

"Do the workouts and eat right," Leroux said. "The nutrition staff here is amazing. Doing cardio and everything else and the pounds just fall off. There's no secret to it. It's just following the plan. That (330) is my goal weight right now."

Leroux wasn't the only new Buckeye impressed by Ohio State's comprehensive nutrition program, which provides unique nutrition plans for each player.

"It's really hard, I've been trying to eat as much as I can," cornerback Ryan Watts said. "I know in the long run it's going to help me put on some more muscle and get bigger, so I try to do what I can."

While the most difficult transition for many has been the increase in workload physically, others have been tested by the change in coaching and intensity that comes with big-time college football.

"I mean, I'm going to say it's not going to be too much different (from high school) because what I expect for myself is to always be able to compete at the highest level," wide receiver Julian Fleming said of what he expects from the

No BSB Print For Three Weeks

Per Buckeye Sports Bulletin's traditional post-Recruiting Wrap-Up schedule, the next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin will not be mailed until March 3, a three-week gap.

However, the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff will still be hard at work, providing all the Ohio State sports news at our electronic BuckeyeSports.com website, free to BSB subscribers.

Football recruiting is ongoing and covered at BuckeyeSports.com, and readers will also want to follow both basketball teams, the hockey and wrestling teams and much, much more. Additionally, subscribers can talk about recruiting and other events of the day with members of the BSB staff and other Buckeye fans on BuckeyeSports.com's Forum. Reprint Thursdays are also a popular feature with an interesting mix of stories from the archives of Buckeye Sports Bulletin reprinted each week.

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college level. "From that standpoint it's not going to be different, but from a coaching standpoint, it's a very different set of coaches from high school into college. It's a transition, but I'm looking forward to it."

There isn't a position with more to learn at the next level than quarterback, especially under a former quarterback in head coach Ryan Day. Both of Ohio State's new signal callers, Jack Miller and C.J. Stroud, spoke about the challenges of picking up the playbook.

"I spend every single night – I'll get in bed at like 8 p.m. and probably study it for a couple hours," Miller said. "It's a pretty huge playbook and there's a lot of different things that go with it. So, it's definitely going to take some time to get down, but with some time it will be fine."

"I feel like really these two months are just for getting fast, getting in shape and doing everything that I need to do. Eating right and

also learning the playbook. You're going to get thrown in and you have to know everything right away. Like, there's not a teaching period. They expect you to know everything. So, that's the goal. That's where I want to be at by March, and I think I'm going to get here."

"We often meet after workouts," Stroud said of the quarterback room. "We will go over things, like we started off going over protections and now we're going over plays, going over the run game. So, we have barely put our feet in the water, but we're getting used to things."

Williams To Transfer To Vanderbilt

Former Ohio State defensive end Alex Williams found a landing spot on Jan. 29, just a little over two weeks after his announcement that he was entering the transfer portal. Williams posted a statement to his Instagram, along with

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the announcement that he would be heading to Vanderbilt.

"The Ohio State University has given me tools as a young man to grow, and I thank everyone who's been a part of said journey," Williams said. "I've been here my entire life and grew up being in this position, but life has audibles."

Williams played sparingly during his time at Ohio State, redshirting in 2018 and finding the field in five games in 2019, recording eight tackles and playing 64 total snaps. He was likely to enter 2020 stuck behind several older players on Ohio State's depth chart.

At Vanderbilt, Williams could compete for immediate playing time, though he will not be immediately eligible without a waiver from the NCAA.

Interestingly enough, Williams won't be the only familiar face for Ohio State who will be making his way to Vanderbilt this offseason.

On Feb. 5, one-time quarterback commitment and Massillon, Ohio, native Danny Clark announced that he would be playing out his college career with the Commodores.

The one-time Kentucky quarterback was unable to catch on as a starter in Lexington and transferred to junior college stalwart Copiah-Lincoln Community College in Mississippi. As a starter with the Wildcats, Clark played nine games and completed 51.6 percent of his passes for 2,166 yards and 18 touchdowns while tossing just five interceptions.

Clark will be eligible immediately at Vanderbilt and is expected to have two more years of eligibility.

Spring Game Tickets On Sale Feb. 13

Tickets for Ohio State's annual spring game go on sale on Feb. 13 at 10 a.m., according to a release from the university.

The tickets can be purchased at

Publisher Announces Reverse Green Banana Special

After what may have been Buckeye Sports Bulletin's most successful subscription promotion ever, the Green Bananas Special, which rewarded readers for how long they had been a Buckeye fan, BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz is pleased to announce the Reverse Green Bananas Special, aimed at attracting a younger reading audience.

With the Reverse Green Bananas Special, readers will pay an annual price based on their age. A readers who is 50 will pay \$50 a year, a \$49.95 savings over the regular rate. A reader who is 35 will pay \$35 a year. If you are 21, you pay just \$21. Whatever your age, that's your price.

And here is a bonus especially for parents and grandparents. Buy a gift for any Buckeye or future Buckeye under the age of 21 and pay just \$14.95.

"That's not even enough to pay for the annual postage to mail BSB," Moskowitz said of the \$14.95 price, "but it is an investment in the future of Buckeye Sports Bulletin and of newspapers. Many young people have never experienced the joy of reading newspapers, nor the excitement of receiving something in the mail each week. We call on our loyal readers to introduce

the experience of reading BSB to children, grandchildren or any young Buckeye fan you know."

Readers can lock in on Reverse Green Bananas savings for up to three years, so the savings opportunities are substantial.

"I have to be quite candid," Moskowitz said. "Sadly, many of our longtime readers are passing away and we are simply not attracting younger readers to replace them. We are going to make a targeted effort to reverse that trend."

To take advantage of the Reverse Green Bananas Special, just take your age or the age of the person you are giving a gift to (just \$14.95 for those under 21), multiply it by the number of years you wish (up to three years) and send a check or credit card information in that amount to Buckeye Sports Bulletin at P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. If you are giving a gift, be sure to send the name and complete address. For even easier service, simply call (800) 760-2862 or (614) 486-2202 and order with your credit card during regular business hours.

OhioStateBuckeyes.com, through Ticketmaster or in person at the ticket offices in the Schottenstein Center.

General admission tickets will be on sale for \$5, while a limited number of club seats are available for \$15. Parking for the event is free.

The game will kick off on April 10, and while no time has been announced yet, an early afternoon kick can be expected.

In 2019, the game started at noon, while 2018 had a 1:45 p.m. start.

Ohio State students with a valid BuckID and children under 6 years old will be allowed free entry, though the latter are eligible only for general admission seating.

Ohio State announced that 61,102 fans were in attendance for the 2019 spring game.

Zach Smith Sentenced To Prison Time

Former Ohio State wide receivers coach Zach

Smith was sentenced to 180 days in prison in Delaware Municipal Court for first-degree misdemeanor count of violation of a protection order. Judge Marianne Hemminger determined that 160 of those 180 days would be suspended, meaning that Smith will serve just 20 days.

Smith was also ordered to pay a \$750 fine and will be on probation until December of 2022 and must participate in 40 hours of community service and mandatory anger management training.

Smith's sentence is tied to a May 9, 2019, arrest, stemming from a confrontation as Smith attempted to pick up his kids from school. Because his ex-wife, Courtney, was present at the school, Smith was found to be in violation of her protection order against him.

The grandson of former Buckeye coach Earle Bruce, Smith spent six years as Ohio State's wide receivers coach under former head coach Urban Meyer.

His tenure came to an abrupt end in July of

2018 after criminal charges were levied against him, along with allegations of domestic violence. Meyer was suspended for Ohio State's first three games of the 2018 season for his handling of the Smith affair.

OSU Adds Billy Fessler, Loses Chandler Whitmer

Ohio State continued its run of transition in the staff ranks, with yet another graduate assistant departing the program on Jan. 27, though the Buckeyes were quick to find a replacement.

Graduate assistant Chandler Whitmer was the eighth staff departure of the offseason for OSU. The former UConn quarterback and Yale graduate assistant announced that he had accepted a graduate assistant position with Clemson.

Whitmer worked with offensive line coach Greg Studrawa and co-offensive coordina-

Continued On Page 6

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tor Kevin Wilson during his single season in Columbus, though he was initially brought on to work with receivers. Day and Whitmer worked together in 2015 during Whitmer's time as a player, when he caught on briefly with the Philadelphia Eagles' rookie minicamp when Day was quarterbacks coach.

OSU was quick to find a replacement. Just two days later, former Penn State walk-on quarterback Billy Fessler announced that he had accepted a graduate assistant role with the Buckeyes.

This is the latest step in what has already been a decently packed career for the 2017 graduate. After leaving Penn State, Fessler took a GA role with FCS powerhouse Slippery Rock on the offensive side of the ball in 2018 and served in a similar role under Joe Moorhead (his offensive coordinator at PSU) at Mississippi State in 2019.

Now, he'll be working closely with new quarterbacks coach Corey Dennis and wideouts

coach Brian Hartline. The decision to head to Ohio State was an easy one, Fessler told the Erie Times-News.

"To me, it was a no-brainer," Fessler said. "To come to Columbus to be a part of an organization and a program that has seen nothing but success, it's pretty special. It's definitely something I couldn't turn down.

"The opportunity to be (at Ohio State) and be part of a historic program is incredible. I couldn't be more excited to get to work and be a Buckeye."

Fessler's familial ties to Penn State are deep, given his time there, as well as his brother Henry, who currently plays receiver for the Nittany Lions. However, Fessler said that there's no feeling of rivalry between him and his family.

"My family is supportive of me and understand no matter where my career path takes me," Fessler said. "This is a great move for me and my future."

Russell, Turner, Bates-Diop All Traded

Three former Buckeye basketball stars were on the move at the NBA trade deadline on Feb. 6, including two to the same team, for the time being. The first of the two Ohio State-related moves came on Feb. 5, with shooting guard Evan Turner and small forward Keita Bates-Diop included in a four-team trade involving Houston, Minnesota, Atlanta and Denver.

Turner, who played for Atlanta prior to the trade, was sent to Minnesota, while Bates-Diop will make the move from Minnesota to Denver. Turner is expected to work out a buyout deal with the Timberwolves so that the veteran can play for a title-contending team. Turner was averaging 3.3 points, 2.0 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game, while Bates-Diop was at 6.8 points and 3.0 rebounds per game.

A day later, point guard D'Angelo Russell was

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 bowl team				
** at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)				

dealt from Golden State with Jacob Evans and Omari Spellman for forward Andrew Wiggins and several draft picks. For Russell, the trade can serve as a fresh start after his lone season in Golden State was marred by injuries to star teammates Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson.

It will also be a reunion of sorts with center Karl Anthony-Towns, whom Russell has been close friends with for years. Russell is averaging 23.6 points and 6.2 assists per game this season.

Women's Volleyball Adds Two Assistants

New women's volleyball head coach Jen Flynn Oldenburg added several new faces to her first staff at Ohio State.

The first of two hires came on Jan. 31, when Ohio State announced the addition of associate head coach Jill Wilson.

"Jill is the ultimate professional. The knowledge, passion and energy she will bring to our program will be contagious," Oldenburg said. "My respect for her as a person has only grown during this process as she fits our values as a program and university. I am eager to get her on

campus to start this journey."


Wilson was a longtime assistant at LSU before taking over as Virginia Tech's head coach for the last three seasons. She resigned from that role on Jan. 21 after struggling to a 35-57 overall record.

"I am grateful for the chance to coach and recruit with not only one of the best coaches that I know, but also an incredible person," said Wilson.

The next hire came on Feb. 4, with former TCU associate head coach Brian Wright joining the staff as an assistant coach.

"During this process, his name was mentioned multiple times, and from the first conversation, I knew he would be a great fit for our program" Oldenburg said. "His experience, work ethic, technical skills and approach to teaching the game were huge draws. I'm excited to get him on campus to join our Buckeye family."

Wright spent the last six seasons as an assistant in Fort Worth, Texas, responsible for defensive systems, scouting reports and middle blockers. Prior to his time at TCU, Wright was a volunteer with Texas and spent 16 years at the club volleyball level.



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Coombs Instrumental In Keeping Martinez In Fold

Continued From Page 1

"I think we're still trying to adjust the calendar," Day said. "I think we have to be careful about making any more adjustments until this kind of gets settled and we figure out what this model looks like here, and really, a five-year window is my opinion."

Martinez Signs With Buckeyes

It took a bit longer than expected, but Ohio State received a letter of intent from Muskegon, Mich., four-star athlete Cameron Martinez at 9:51 a.m. on Feb. 5.

The 5-11, 183-pound Martinez was the lone holdout from the Buckeyes' 25-man recruiting class – which finished fifth in the 247Sports composite team rankings – because he had second thoughts after co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley was named the head

coach at Boston College. But after meeting with new defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs, Martinez reaffirmed his commitment to Ohio State on Jan. 28.

"We're very excited to have Cam," Day said. "I thought he and his family handled things really well with Jeff leaving and then Kerry jumping in. (Martinez) really handled it like a pro. The family was unbelievable, and we're really excited to have him."

Most of Martinez's success at the high school level came while playing quarterback, as he led Muskegon to back-to-back appearances in the state championship game. He was named Michigan's Mr. Football and the state's Gatorade Player of the Year in 2019, in addition to becoming the first two-time winner of the MLive Player of the Year, after he rushed for 2,124 yards, passed for 1,258 yards and scored 47 total touchdowns as a senior.

The Buckeyes have long viewed Martinez as a defensive back at the next level, and his desire to play on the offensive side of the ball – coupled with Hafley's departure – allowed programs such as Minnesota, Northwestern and Notre Dame to get back in the picture late in the process.

It also forced Ohio State to reassess its own stance on Martinez's future.

"We'll give him an opportunity to play on either side of the ball when he first gets in, which is unique, but this is somebody who played quarterback in high school, is very, very productive and doesn't have a lot of experience playing any other position," Day said. "So we're going to allow him to do both when he gets here, do some returning and kind of figure out where that goes."

"We're excited about that because we think he's really competitive. I think he's one of the most under-recruited kids in the

entire country. I'm really excited for him and his family to be joining us."

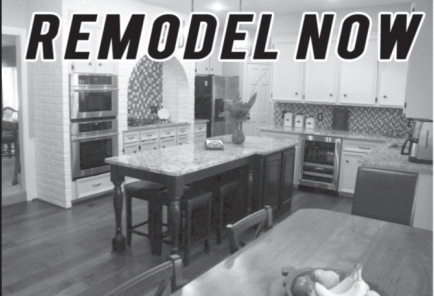
Much in the same way he encouraged five-star offensive tackle signee Paris Johnson to take visits elsewhere following Urban Meyer's retirement, Day took a relaxed approach with Martinez.

"I told him if he needs to go look at other places, that he can do that," Day said. "I said, 'I'm not going to like that too much, but at the same time, I respect your family enough that you can go ahead and check some places out.'"

"Now, he never really ended up doing that, but I think he really understood that and respected the fact that we didn't hold him to the fire, anything like that. We said, 'Listen, you want to go check out some schools, feel free. Once we get the secondary coach and coordinator in place, I know you're going to love it.' And he did. It all

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worked out.”

What hasn't been worked out just yet is the position at which Martinez will begin his career. It's likely he'll split his time this fall between slot receiver and outside corner, and the staff will ask him for feedback throughout the process as he attempts to find the position that fits him best.

“I think that's what's exciting about Cam,” Day said. “We want him to have a bunch of say in what he likes and what he feels most comfortable with. I think in today's day and age, if the kid's not happy or doesn't really pick the school for the right reasons, he's going to end up in the transfer portal and leave anyways. It's not just about getting the kid to sign on the dotted line. It's not that way anymore. Now, it's having trust and having the relationship with the family and common respect for each other that things are going to go in a certain way.”

“I think that's the way it is with Cam, and I think that's the way it is with all the recruits in that they know they're going to be treated the same way when they're here as when they were recruited.”

Coombs Seals The Deal

The biggest obstacle Ohio State faced when it came to keeping Martinez in the fold was how long it took to name Hafley's replacement.

Although Coombs was Day's top target all along, the Tennessee Titans – his former employer – were in the midst of a deep playoff run and his hiring could not be made official until they were eliminated.

The Titans made it all the way to the AFC Championship, where they fell to the eventual Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs on Jan. 19. The Buckeyes tabbed

Coombs as their defensive coordinator just two days later, and he wasted no time in building a relationship with Martinez.

“You can't coach without a relationship,” Coombs said, noting he hit the road to visit with Martinez his first day on the job on Jan. 21. “The hardest thing about recruiting Cam Martinez was the time frame was so tight. How do you develop trust in that short window of time? Well, you'd better spend a lot of time with him in person and on the phone, whatever the rules allow.”

Now that he's officially signed with Ohio State, Coombs – whose primary recruiting responsibilities in the past included Atlanta and Cincinnati, as well as Florida and Michigan – will have to recruit Martinez all over again as the player looks to find his place on offense or defense.

“We've been down this road before with a lot of really good players,” Coombs said. “I recruited Parris Campbell, and I thought Parris Campbell was going to be a first-round corner. I walked by his locker for three years saying, ‘Parris, come on. Come in my room. You're going to be a first-round corner.’ He never did. He was a great wide receiver. Gareon Conley played wide receiver in high school. Bradley Roby played wide receiver and was committed to Vanderbilt as a wide receiver. You get them here and they start to see and they start to feel comfortable doing one or the other, and their career takes off.”

“I watched a nine-minute highlight film of Cam Martinez, and every time he touched the ball, he scored or he threw the ball to somebody who scored. So if Ryan Day says he's going to be dynamic on our offense, I'm all in because scoring points is really good for the defense. If he comes

here and he says, ‘Coach, I want to play defense,’ I'm all in. I'm going to fight like crazy to have him because we want to have great players in our room. But I also think a player and a kid plays the best when he's happiest and he's doing the things he's most passionate about.”

Coombs isn't conceding anything just yet, though. In fact, he noted a strong resemblance between Martinez and Damon

Arnette, a two-year starting cornerback who is widely expected to be drafted in the first few rounds of the NFL draft this April.

“He's special,” Coombs said. “I went and watched him play basketball (on Jan. 31), and I told him it's like a flashback to when I was watching Damon Arnette play basketball at (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas. He is going to be a good football player for Ohio State.”

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Martinez Signs With Ohio State After Delay

Although he had been committed to Ohio State since the summer, Muskegon, Mich., four-star athlete Cameron Martinez did not sign with the Buckeyes during the Early Signing Period in December.

That decision was driven by the sudden departure of co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley, who was named the head coach at Boston College on Dec. 14 – just four days before Martinez was set to fax in his letter of intent – and allowed him to reevaluate his recruitment before putting pen to paper during the traditional National Signing Day on Feb. 5.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

“It was just another chance to think everything through,” Martinez told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. “(Hafley) was my lead recruiter throughout the whole process and my future position coach, so I wanted to see who they would hire.”

On Dec. 17, the day before the 72-hour Early Signing Period began, Martinez called Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and told him the news.

“He understood,” Martinez said, noting how Day told him he was going to hire the best coach in the country to replace Hafley.

The Buckeyes’ top priority was former cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs. But unfortunately, he was in the midst of a deep playoff run with the NFL’s Tennessee Titans and could not be hired until they were eliminated. That allowed programs such as Minnesota, Northwestern and Notre Dame back into the picture, and all three were offering Martinez the opportunity to play offense at the next level.

Despite accumulating nearly 6,500 yards of total offense and 145 touchdowns in his career as a quarterback, Martinez was recruited by Hafley to fill a need at the Bullet position – a hybrid linebacker/safety spot that gives the

Superlatives For Ohio State’s 2020 Recruiting Class

Most Likely To Succeed: Standing 6-7 and 290 pounds with skinny ankles and 35½-inch arms, five-star signee Paris Johnson is considered by many to be the prototypical offensive tackle prospect. His frame and overall athleticism will only continue to improve, too, under the direction of Ohio State strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti.

Johnson’s attitude is also extremely impressive, as he was the first member of the Buckeyes’ 2020 recruiting class and stuck with his pledge through the Zach Smith fiasco and Urban Meyer’s retirement to take a leadership role among the other commits. Off the field, Johnson – who hails from Cincinnati – was named the All-American Bowl Man of the Year on Jan. 3 for starting his own nonprofit foundation to serve disabled veterans.

Future Captain: When it comes to selecting a future captain, we’re going to defer to Ohio State head coach Ryan Day, who gushed over four-star athlete signee Kourt Williams (6-1, 216) during his Early Signing Day press conference on Dec. 18.

“I’ll be surprised if he’s not a captain when he’s here,” Day said. “I’ve said that to him and his parents a million times. They’re probably tired of hearing me say that.”

Day cited Williams’ ability to play multiple positions in the defensive back seven – whether it’s at linebacker or safety, similar to how the Buckeyes deployed Pete Werner in 2019 – and his state championship pedigree at Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco as big reasons that he can develop into a leader among his classmates.

“Those are the kind of guys you want,” Day said.

First To The Field: With Jeff Okudah and Damon Arnette off to the NFL, there will be an opportunity for young cornerbacks Ryan Watts and Lejond Cavazos to make an early impact in the secondary. Although players such as Sevn Banks, Cameron Brown, Tyreke Johnson, Amir Riep and Marcus Williamson should have a leg up given their overall experience, expect new defensive coordinator and secondary coach Kerry Coombs to hold an open competition during spring practices and into fall camp. That’s where Watts – a native of Little Elm, Texas – could shine. At a rangy 6-3 and 187 pounds, Watts is already college-ready physically, and he possesses all the tools needed to make a sudden push for playing time. It’s truly just a matter of how he develops once the pads go on.

Fan Favorite: They say the backup quarterback is always the favorite

player on the roster, though that’s really only the case when the starter is struggling. And while Ohio State will be in good hands with Justin Fields at the helm for at least one more season, the battle to be his eventual replacement will be a sight to behold.

The Buckeyes brought in a pair of four-star signal callers in Jack Miller (6-4, 210) and C.J. Stroud (6-3, 194), and both were among the program-record 14 players who enrolled in classes in January. They’ll battle throughout the spring and fall with fifth-year senior Gunnar Hoak to be Fields’ backup this season, and then whoever finishes the year higher on the depth chart will be the odds-on favorite to be the starter upon Fields’ departure for the NFL, presumably following the 2020 season. The fan allegiance will soon follow.

Biggest Recruiting Win: If you take a drive down the winding, mountainous roads near Catawissa, Pa., you’ll bypass cars with Penn State license plate covers and homes with blue and white flags hanging from their porches. To say Ohio State faced an uphill climb in its recruitment of five-star wide receiver Julian Fleming (6-2, 199) would be a huge understatement. But Fleming, the third highest-rated prospect to sign with the Buckeyes during the Internet era behind only quarterback Terrelle Pryor and cornerback Ted Ginn, wanted to forge his own path despite growing up roughly 90 minutes from the Nittany Lions’ campus.

In the end, his connection with Day and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, as well as the opportunity to make an early impact on a national championship contender, made the difference.

Underrated (For Now): Ohio State missed on several higher-rated prospects at the running back position this cycle, but don’t think for one second the staff settled when it signed Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star Miyan Williams. The 5-10 210-pounder rushed for 5,823 yards in three seasons as a starter, which puts him at No. 31 overall on the Ohio High School Athletic Association’s career rushing list. Williams’ running style has been compared to that of former Buckeyes Carlos Hyde and Mike Weber, and his 68 career touchdowns speak to his physicality in the red zone. He is set to enroll in classes in June, at which time he’s expected to compete with senior Demario McCall, sophomore Marcus Crowley and redshirt freshman Steele Chambers for the backup running back spot behind presumed starter Master Teague.

– Andrew Lind

Buckeyes flexibility on defense. But now he’ll get a chance to choose which position he wants to play, as he’ll start fall camp working as both a slot receiver and an outside cornerback.

“I like both sides of the ball, so it was tough to decide during the recruiting process,” Martinez said. “My mind-set after picking Ohio State was defense, but Coach Day recently gave me a plan to do both and see which one I’m comfortable with.”

The Buckeyes were finally able to name Coombs their defensive coordinator on Jan. 20, and the energetic coach wasted no time in getting acquainted with Martinez and his family. They spent several hours together that evening, and the conversation rarely centered around football.

“It was great,” Martinez said, noting how Coombs was more focused on building their relationship. “That’s what I was waiting for, and

I definitely feel comfortable with him.”

After several days of deliberation – as well as another visit from Coombs and wide receivers coach Brian Hartline – Martinez called the coaching staff on Jan. 28 to inform them he would be sticking with his commitment and signing with Ohio State.

“They were fired up, excited and just ready to get to work,” Martinez said.

Martinez then shared the news on Twitter that afternoon, ending the month-long speculation that he would flip to another school.

“I feel good,” Martinez said. “I’m happy to be a Buckeye, and I’m excited to get down there.”

In-State Defensive Tackle Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State landed a commitment for 2021 on Feb. 1 from Streetsboro, Ohio, four-star defensive tackle Mike Hall, who was on an unofficial visit that afternoon with his parents.

“The way they develop their players on and off the field, the atmosphere and the community of Ohio State all stand out,” Hall told Buckeye Sports Bulletin shortly after making his decision. “I didn’t want to go away from home because I love the community and people in Ohio, and I really couldn’t see myself playing for any other team but the Buckeyes.”

The 6-3, 290-pound Hall is considered the 19th-best defensive tackle and No. 230 prospect overall in the class of 2021. He recorded 72 tackles, five sacks and two fumble recoveries while leading the Rockets to the Division III regional semifinals last season. He picked Ohio State over more than a dozen offers from programs such as Arizona State, Cincinnati, Florida State, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan State, Minnesota, Penn State and West Virginia, among others.

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ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

What kind of challenges does Ohio State first-year quarterbacks coach Corey Dennis, who was previously a quality control coach, face on the recruiting trail?

"The biggest thing for Corey Dennis is proving to recruits and coaches that he's capable of carrying the weight of his job. Head coach Ryan Day and former passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mike Yurcich are known commodities, and despite working with them, Dennis will have to show he's capable of teaching and developing on his own. We know he's a qualified recruiter, but can he show prospects he's capable of developing the players already on campus?"

What are the greatest positions of need for Ohio State as it shifts its focus to the 2021 recruiting class?

"I think the defensive backfield will be priority No. 1 for the Buckeyes with the running back position coming in a close second. It's a big year for new defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs and running backs coach Tony Alford

because the secondary will be experiencing a lot of turnover and the running backs on the current roster are unproven. Questions about whether or not any of that group are home-run hitters are valid, as well."

Of the 29 five-star prospects in the current 247Sports composite rankings, which players do you believe Ohio State has a realistic shot with?

"Ohio State has a real opportunity with a number of five-star prospects, especially along the defensive line. Pickerington (Ohio) North defensive end Jack Sawyer is firmly entrenched as the cornerstone of the group, and his influence could go a long way toward helping land Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive tackle J.T. Tuimolou; Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star defensive end Tunmise Adeleye; and Texarkana (Texas) Pleasant Grove five-star defensive end Landon Jackson.

"Steilacoom, Wash., five-star athlete Emeka Egbuka and

Virginia Beach (Va.) Princess Anne five-star cornerback Tony Grimes are legitimate targets for Ohio State, as well. So, too, is Garland (Texas) Lakeview Centennial five-star running back Camar Wheaton. The key to having a real chance to land any of those kids? Get them on campus soon."

How does the new February month-long dead period positively impact Ohio State's recruiting efforts?

"The Buckeyes are definitely in favor of the break because they're not usually bringing out-of-state recruits to campus in January and February because of weather and/or logistical complications. This break affords them a month to evaluate, build relationships and get key visits – from the guys listed above – scheduled.

"Ohio State is as impressive as any campus in the country but being able to bring them into town during a warmer month, and to do it without losing ground on recruits who spent February on the road elsewhere, is a very good thing."

Final 2020 247Sports Composite Ohio Rankings

Rank	Name	Position	High School	College
1.	Paris Johnson	OT	Cincinnati Princeton	Ohio State
2.	Darrion Henry-Young	DE	Cincinnati Princeton	Ohio State
3.	Evan Prater	QB	Wyoming	Cincinnati
4.	Michael Drennen	APB	Dublin Coffman	Kentucky
5.	DeaMonte Trayanum	RB	Akron Archbishop Hoban	Arizona State
6.	Jaheim Thomas	OLB	Cincinnati Princeton	Cincinnati
7.	Luke Lachey	TE	Grandview Heights	Iowa
8.	Jutahn McClain	APB	Fairfield	Kentucky
9.	Joe Royer	TE	Cincinnati Elder	Ohio State
10.	Torrance Davis	RB	Cleveland Garfield Heights	Kentucky

Hall's relationship with Day and Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson dates back to when he attended a camp last summer. He then landed an offer from the staff in October.

"It was a great feeling," Hall said. "Just having Coach Day come into my school and saying those words really made me feel like all the work I put in was starting to pay off."

Hall returned to campus for the 28-17 win over Penn State on Nov. 23 and nearly committed to the Buckeyes on the spot.

"The experience was crazy," Hall said. "The fans and the atmosphere were great. I knew right then I didn't want to go anywhere else, but I had a talk with my family, and they told me to just look at all of my options and make sure this was the right place."

After the visit, Hall publicly named Ohio State his leader and set a commitment date for June 13 – his 17th birthday. But then the staff invited him to campus for an unofficial visit, and a two-hour chat resulted in his pledge.

"Coach Day told me what Ohio State had to offer me on and off the field and really answered my and my family's questions and concerns," Hall said. "I feel like I can ask them anything, and I feel as if they'll always have my back. Another thing I like about them is that they always keep my family involved on my recruitment and they always answered any questions or concerns my family had along the

way."

Hall becomes the sixth in-state member – and 10th member overall – of Ohio State's top-rated 2021 recruiting class, joining Pickerington North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer; Massillon Washington four-star wide receiver Jayden Ballard; Richfield Revere four-star offensive tackle Ben Christman; Ironton four-star linebacker Reid Carrico; and Cincinnati La Salle three-star safety Jaylen Johnson. He plans to return to campus for his official visit during the weekend of the spring game (April 11) to help the staff recruit some of the nation's elite prospects, including Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star defensive end Tunmise Adeleye and Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough four-star running back Evan Pryor.

Defensive End Sets Commitment Date

Speaking of Adeleye, the five-star defensive end will be making his college decision on Aug. 1. He will choose among a top six of Alabama, Florida, LSU, Ohio State, Oklahoma and Texas A&M.

The 6-3, 260-pound Adeleye is considered the third-best strongside defensive end and No. 26 prospect overall in the class of 2021, recording 50 tackles, four sacks and one forced fumble at Katy (Texas) Tompkins last fall. He

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

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
Jayden Ballard	WR	6-3	175	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Reid Carrico	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Ironton, Ohio
Ben Christman	OT	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield (Ohio) Revere
Michael Hall	DT	6-3	290	★★★★	Streetsboro, Ohio
Marvin Harrison	WR	6-4	184	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's
Sam Hart	TE	6-5	225	★★★	Aurora (Colo.) Cherokee Trail
Donovan Jackson	OT	6-4	308	★★★★	Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal
Jaylen Johnson	S	6-1	205	★★★	Cincinnati La Salle
Kyle McCord	QB	6-3	204	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Pre
Jack Sawyer	DE	6-5	220	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North

transferred to Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy in January, where he'll team up with four-star running back target Lovasea Carroll and four-star offensive tackle target J.C. Latham.

Adeleye landed an offer from Ohio State last May and took an unofficial visit a few weeks later, which put the Buckeyes among the favorites in his recruitment. He hasn't been back since, though, which has allowed the Sooners

to become the perceived leader.

Adeleye set up another unofficial visit for March following a recent visit from Day on Jan. 31. He also plans to take an official visit over the summer, which gives Ohio State ample opportunity to turn the tide in his recruitment.

The Buckeyes already hold a commitment

Continued On Page 12

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Change To Recruiting Calendar Benefits Ohio State

Continued From Page 11

from one defensive end in the previously mentioned Sawyer, and Adeleye is among the staff's top remaining targets. Other notable names at the position include Texarkana (Texas) Pleasant Grove five-star Landon Jackson; St. Louis Lutheran North four-star Travion Ford; Gaithersburg (Md.) Quince Orchard four-star Demeioun Robinson; Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall four-star Jahzion Harris; and Solon, Ohio, four-star Najee Story.

Michigan Defensive Tackle Includes Buckeyes In Top 10

Belleville, Mich., four-star defensive tackle Damon Payne included Ohio State in his top 10 on Feb. 4 alongside Alabama, Arizona State, Kentucky, LSU, Michigan, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State and USC.

The 6-4, 297-pound Payne is considered the fifth-best defensive tackle and No. 31 prospect overall in the class of 2021 after he recorded 22 tackles for loss and eight sacks to help the Tigers to the state semifinals last season.

Payne landed an offer from Larry Johnson in April 2018 and has been a regular visitor in the nearly two years since. Most prognosticators believe it to be a two-team race between the Buckeyes and the Crimson Tide as a result.

Even with Hall's recent decision, Ohio State wants to take at least one more defensive tackle this cycle. Payne and Sammamish Eastside Catholic five-star J.T. Tuimolalo are far and away their top priorities moving forward.

Hartline Named Nation's Top Recruiter

Ohio State wide receivers coach Brian Hartline was named the national recruiter of the year by 247Sports on Feb. 5 for his efforts during the 2020 recruiting cycle.

"I purely got into coaching because I love helping young men reach their dreams," Hartline told 247Sports. "I realize what happened for me and how my life changed with such a great coach (former Ohio State wide receiver coach Darrell Hazell) that helped me get where I'm at today in more ways than one. I try to use the recruiting period as a time to forge our good relationships because to me the relationship tells you how hard you can coach a young man.

"I can only coach him as hard as the relationship allows. I want to build relationships that are meaningful and have a great foundation so when the young man shows up, we are off and running."

Hartline landed some of the nation's top-rated wide receivers during his first full recruiting cycle, including Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star Julian Fleming; Rockwall, Texas, four-star Jaxon Smith-Njigba; Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star Gee Scott; and Maryland Heights (Mo.) Pattonville Senior four-star Mookie Cooper.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

With less than two weeks to go before National Signing Day, little was known about the makeup of the 1985 Ohio State football recruiting class.

Ohio State had commitments locked up from seven prospects, including defensive lineman Karl Coles, linebacker Dee Dee Howard, linebacker Derek Isaman, middle guard Charles Keenon, offensive lineman Tim Moxley, wide receiver Everett Ross and wide receiver Paul Soltis.

The Buckeyes still had plenty of targets left, though.

"I think they're going to get Chuck Eberton out of San Jose, Calif., one of the best linemen in the country," recruiting expert Tom Lemming said. "I think he's already committed, in fact."

Defensive lineman Ray Huckstein and offensive linemen Ken Kushner, Bill Smith, Gardner Sorrell and Dante Williams all remained top options for an Ohio State team that was on the prowl for linemen.

30 Years Ago – 1990

Ohio State's 1990 recruiting class doubled as the Buckeyes grabbed commitments from three prep football stars. The class was expected to increase by one more before another round of weekend visits.

The week began when the Buckeyes received a verbal commitment from wide receiver Chris Sanders of Montbello High School in Denver.

That was followed by weekend commitments from a pair of blue-chip prospects, quarterback Johnny Mattress of Cincinnati Princeton and offensive lineman Aaron Jackson of Penn Hills High School in Pittsburgh.

Then, just before press time, Buckeye Sports Bulletin learned that one of the nation's top-ranked defensive backs, Larry Kennedy of Riverview High School in Sarasota, Fla., was set to publicly announce that he would play his football at Ohio State.

25 Years Ago – 1995

The suspense with Ohio State's football recruiting push was starting to build as the days rolled toward the Feb. 1 national signing date.

Ohio State welcomed one recruit for an official visit during the weekend of Jan. 20. The Buckeyes, looking to recruit at least one more strong running back prospect, had tailback Dyrall McMillan of Bradenton (Fla.) Southeast on campus to visit.

McMillan, a 5-10, 200-pound back with 4.5 speed,

was considering a host of schools including Kansas State, Miami, Northwestern and Tennessee.

20 Years Ago – 2000

Ohio State inched toward signing day, set for Feb. 2, with one more verbal commitment over the week leading up to it.

The Buckeyes received a commitment from Utica (N.Y.) Proctor defensive end Will Smith on Jan. 17. Smith's commitment raised the total in the class to 23. Ohio State was looking to land as many as 26 signees.

Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas wide receivers Tony Brown and Joseph Bruce; Detroit Cass Tech linebacker Marco Cooper; Atlanta Douglass defensive back Harlen Jacobs; Hoboken, N.J., wideout Carlos Perez; and Bowling Green, Ky., linebacker Robert Reynolds all remained options for Ohio State.

15 Years Ago – 2005

With Ohio State's recruiting efforts narrowed down to a precious few remaining uncommitted prospects, attention on those players was sure to intensify as each day passed leading to the Feb. 2 National Signing Day.

One of the players under the most national scrutiny was Jason Gwaltney, a star running back out of Long Island (N.Y.) North Babylon. Gwaltney attempted to end the speculation early, originally committing to West Virginia in the spring of his junior year. But as his national profile rose, he began to be open to the other possibilities available to him.

The 6-0, 234-pound back eventually visited, in order, Ohio State, Central Florida, Southern Cal, Michigan State and West Virginia. In the weeks leading up to the final stretch, he moved Ohio State in front, but his pledge remained up in the air.

10 Years Ago – 2010

Ohio State may have been a victim of its own success on the recruiting trail.

In the two prior seasons, the Buckeyes boasted two top-five recruiting classes that contained a combined nine five-star prospects. While the talent helped them compile two more Big Ten championships, it may have also been affecting the class of 2010 on which the coaching staff was still putting the final touches.

With the Feb. 3 National Signing Day rapidly

approaching, OSU was set to welcome its second-lowest rated class in the Jim Tressel era. With 17 verbal commitments through Jan. 25, the Buckeyes' class was ranked No. 19 nationally by Scout.com.

Five Years Ago – 2015

It had taken until May 27, a time at which most elite programs were already hitting double digits on the commit totals, for Ohio State to collect its third verbal commitment. But when the final fax rolled in at around 11 a.m. on Feb. 4, head coach Urban Meyer had compiled the nation's No. 8 class and the top group of recruits in the Big Ten.

He was aided by a 5-for-5 finish on National Signing Day that not only added two uncommitted recruits but also kept three wavering verbal commits in the fold. Greenbelt (Md.) Eleanor Roosevelt four-star offensive tackle Isaiah Prince chose Ohio State over Alabama and Maryland, while North Little Rock, Ark., four-star wide receiver K.J. Hill chose the Buckeyes over the Crimson Tide and Arkansas. Both decommitted in January (Hill from Arkansas and Prince from Alabama) before winding up in Columbus.

"Prince was a battle," Meyer said. "It was a street fight until signing day. I think he's a great fit – a great player that a lot of people wanted."

Meanwhile, Ohio State held onto pledges from Detroit Cass Tech three-star defensive tackle Joshua Alabi; Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage four-star quarterback Torrance Gibson; and Alabi's prep teammate, four-star running back Mike Weber.

One Year Ago – 2019

Ohio State's second time through the early signing period was supposed to bring a better sense of what to expect on National Signing Day, but the Buckeyes had anything but ordinary circumstances between December and February.

Despite the Dec. 4 announcement of head coach Urban Meyer's retirement and offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Ryan Day's promotion, OSU overcame a potential disaster and kept its 2019 class, for the most part, intact.

In the nine weeks after Day's introduction as Meyer's replacement, Ohio State lost three commitments but signed 17 prospects, adding two at the buzzer in four-star guard Enokk Vimahi and three-star tackle Dawand Jones.

period throughout February.

From Feb. 3-29, prospects are not allowed to take official or unofficial visits to campus. Coaches are also not allowed to have in-person contact with recruits. They can, however, message prospects and their family electronically so long as the recruit is beyond Sept. 1 of their junior year of high school.

Previously, only the first Monday through the first Friday of February were part of a dead period.

The rest of the month was considered a quiet period, which allowed prospects to visit campus but restricted coaches from hitting the road for recruiting purposes.

Sources from within the Ohio State football program have told Buckeye Sports Bulletin they like the calendar change, as its evens the playing field a bit against schools in warm-weather locales since the Buckeyes often have difficulty getting out-of-state prospects on campus for unofficial visits during the winter months.

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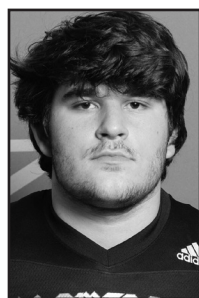

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JOSH FRYAR

OL • 6-6 • 305

Beech Grove, Ind.

Rank: OG 28, Overall 506, IN 4



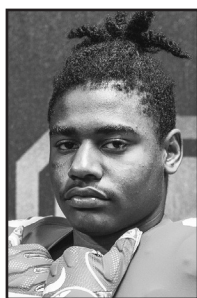
ACCOLADES: Fryar was selected to play in the All-American Bowl on Jan. 4 and was named to the All-Marion County first team as a senior.

FRYAR SAYS: (On why he selected Ohio State) "Their offensive line, I didn't realize how many players and former players they had in the NFL, and I didn't realize that Coach (Greg Studrawa) coached back-to-back Rimington Trophy winners. I mean that just says it all for you."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Has a big body and long arms, but athletic lower body. Rare prospect as far as having the body type and the skills to play almost any spot along the offensive line. Good athlete with a multi-sport background and flexible/skilled enough to be an outstanding high school punter as well. Bends well, gets good leverage and plays with good balance in pass protection. Solid punch and power, but can still get stronger. Has the bend to get leverage, but can play lower with more consistency." – Allen Trieu, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Fryar is a three-sport athlete who also played basketball and track and field.

COMMIT DATE: July 4, 2019



TY HAMILTON

DL • 6-3 • 260

Pickerington (Ohio)

Central

Rank: DE 33, Overall 758, OH 24



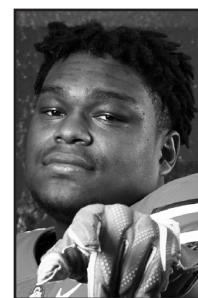
ACCOLADES: Hamilton played both inside on the defensive line as a defensive tackle and outside as a defensive end as well as some linebacker during his career at Pickerington Central. As a junior in 2018, he was first-team All-Ohio as a linebacker, as well as second-team All-Ohio Capital Conference. Hamilton was also a member of The Columbus Dispatch All-Metro first team.

HAMILTON SAYS: (On comparisons to his brother, DaVon Hamilton) "DaVon is thicker than me ... I'm slimmer and faster. I like (all of the defensive positions I've played), but defensive end is my favorite, just being able to get to the passer all the time and having the one-on-ones to get to the quarterback."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "The best thing you can say about Ty Hamilton is that while some kids plateau early in high school, he has improved every single year both from a technical standpoint and from a physical standpoint. He has added a little bit more to his game each and every year and is the type of kid that will maximize his potential. A year one contribution is probably not in the cards given the depth that the Buckeyes will be bringing back at defensive end, so he'll have a chance to continue to mature physically and learn the defense." – Marc Givler, Rivals

PERSONAL: Hamilton is the brother of Ohio State defensive tackle DaVon Hamilton, a primary starter and All-Big Ten member on the defensive line for the Buckeyes who is headed to the NFL Scouting Combine and is likely to be an NFL draft pick.

COMMIT DATE: June 16, 2019



DARRION HENRY-YOUNG

DL • 6-5 • 279

Cincinnati Princeton

Rank: DT 16, Overall 153, OH 2



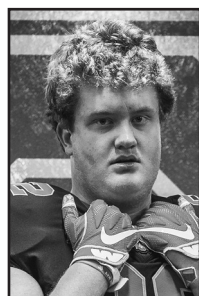
ACCOLADES: Henry-Young was a member of the Southwest Ohio Football Coaches Association Division I first team for his senior year and was named first-team All-Ohio. He led the Greater Miami Conference with 8½ sacks as a junior and also had a team-high 61 tackles and three forced fumbles.

HENRY-YOUNG SAYS: (On his time at Ohio State so far) "It's been good, just working out a lot. I'm trying to get used to what Coach (Mickey Marotti) does now, so everything has been pretty good."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Traits to function on the edge in all fronts with room to grow into an interior defender. Plays defensive end and defensive tackle. Shows good initial quickness and flexibility. Can get offensive linemen off balance with his twitch. Uses hands well to detach from blockers. Shows athleticism and coordination as a tight end, too. Should impact the two-deep right away evolving into a disruptive player at the point of attack." – Steve Wiltfong, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Henry-Young was a teammate of five-star offensive tackle and Ohio State commit Paris Johnson at Princeton High School.

COMMIT DATE: June 29, 2019



JAKOB JAMES

OL • 6-5 • 285

Cincinnati Elder

Rank: OG 55, Overall 848, OH 28



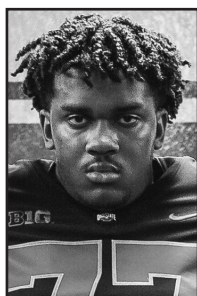
ACCOLADES: James was selected as a first-team All-Ohio pick in 2019 and helped Cincinnati Elder advance to the Division-I state championship game. He has shown the versatility to play multiple spots on the offensive line at center, guard or tackle.

JAMES SAYS: (Of playing at Ohio State) "It's an honor and a privilege that I have grown up learning about, having family that have both worn the scarlet and gray and are fans."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Once he gets to where he needs to be physically, he's one of those guys you just don't want to bet against. He's kind of an old-school lineman in the sense that he's a blue-collar, tough, gritty lineman who is willing to line up against anyone and try to knock their teeth in. He may not be as tall, as strong, or as fast as the guy across from him, but somehow, whether it be via technique or out-toughing them, he'll get the job done." – Alex Gleitman, Rivals

PERSONAL: James was a teammate of three-star tight end and Ohio State commit Joe Royer at Cincinnati Elder.

COMMIT DATE: Jan. 21, 2019



PARIS JOHNSON

OL • 6-6 • 290

Cincinnati Princeton

Rank: OT 1, Overall 9, OH 1



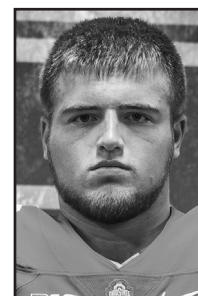
ACCOLADES: Johnson was the offensive MVP in 2019 for his high school, Cincinnati Princeton, after he tallied 106 pancake blocks. He is a two-time Ohio High School Athletic Association first-team All-Ohio selection and was twice named a USA Today All-American.

JOHNSON SAYS: "My expectations right now for this offseason and these winter workouts is that I want to come in, and I want to be known as one of the hardest working people. I was on the phone with my mom and I was telling her, coming out of high school a lot of people said I was the toughest tackle in the country. But I want to come in here and I want to be seen as one as one of the hardest workers."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Prototypical left tackle frame. Long and lean with a plenty of untapped physical upside. A late bloomer that added several inches and mass in high school. Has adjusted well to his growth. Was 6-3, 205 as a freshman. Nimble-footed at the point of attack, has the flexibility and body control along with the explosiveness and strength coveted at the position. Athletically there isn't a block he can't make in today's fast-paced game." – Steve Wiltfong, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Johnson played at St. Xavier for his first three years of high school before playing his final season with Henry-Young at Princeton in order to enroll early. He was a member of the National Honor Society and had high academic honors in his time in high school, while also being an active volunteer in his community.

COMMIT DATE: June 28, 2018



TREY LEROUX

OL • 6-8 • 330

Norwalk, Ohio

Rank: OT 91, Overall NA, OH 43



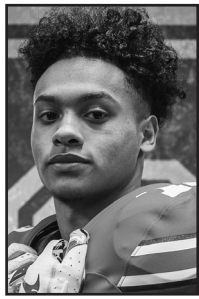
ACCOLADES: Leroux was selected as the Ohio Prep Sportswriters Association Northwest District Lineman of the Year, as well as earning a nod to the All-Ohio first team as both a junior and senior. He was credited with 37 pancakes at Norwalk and was a starting tackle for an offense that averaged 37 points and 397 yards per game.

LEROUX SAYS: "I love it here. Just working out every day, kind of having the freedom of going to class whenever I need to. Having that sense of freedom but still working is great."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "There is always concern with guys who are 6-7 and how they'll be able to avoid playing too high and understanding leverage, but Leroux's wrestling background has been a huge help for him in that area. He has a good strong base and will enter Ohio State more adept at run-blocking than pass-blocking, so he'll need to continue to work on his pass sets and his footwork. The frame and strength are there and like most high school offensive linemen, it will be important that he invests himself fully in the strength and conditioning program." – Marc Givler, Rivals

PERSONAL: Leroux said he has lost 30 pounds in just over a month since arriving at Ohio State and working under Mickey Marotti. He is now listed at 330 pounds. He also said he is flexible enough to do the splits.

COMMIT DATE: March 11, 2019



CAMERON MARTINEZ

ATH • 5-11 • 183

Muskegon, Mich.

Rank: ATH 14, Overall 322, MI 7



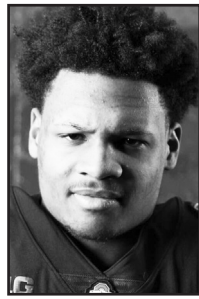
ACCOLADES: Martinez won Michigan's Mr. Football award and the state's Gatorade Player of the Year award in his senior year, and he won the MLive Player of the Year award twice, in 2018 and 2019. His team went 48-4 in his four-year career, with two of those losses coming in state championship games.

MARTINEZ SAYS: "Coach (Kerry) Coombs wants me to play corner, start me out at corner and then go to inside and be the nickel. If it all goes well, then maybe talk about some safety spots. It will all figure that out. But we're going to start out at corner just to see how that all goes. And then Coach (Ryan) Day's plan is for me to start out on both sides of the ball, just see which one I like the best, and whichever one I have success with or whatever one I feel most comfortable with, I'll just go with that."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Fantastic football player and competitor who has been productive since his freshman year of high school. Shifty, elusive, and runs tough in the open field. Has excellent balance and breaks arm tackles. Will grind for tough yardage when needed. Despite not having played much receiver, he shows the short-area quickness and burst to be a great route-runner and has excellent ball skills. Could be a safety, and the same ball skills and his willingness to be physical translate to that side of the ball." – Allen Trieu, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Martinez played both sides of the ball in high school and was recruited as an athlete, though Ohio State has him listed as a defensive back. He was the only Ohio State commit to sign his letter of intent on the February National Signing Day.

COMMIT DATE: July 4, 2019



MITCHELL MELTON

LB • 6-3 • 235

Olney (Md.)

Good Counsel

Rank: OLB 24, Overall 345, MD 15



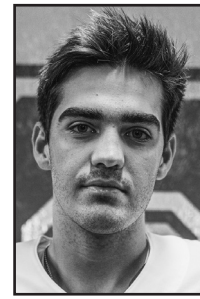
ACCOLADES: Melton won the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference championship at Good Counsel and finished with 19 sacks in his senior season. He ran a 4.87-second 40-yard dash and a 4.27-second shuttle at The Opening Regional on May 5, 2019.

MELTON SAYS: "I chose the school because I couldn't see myself anywhere else. Even though I was visiting other schools, in the back of my mind, I just always envisioned myself at Ohio State because of everything they do there and who they are as a university. It aligned with who I am as a person. It made the most sense for me and my family."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Excellent frame with length. Can easily play at 240 pounds. Position flexibility to develop into outside linebacker or defensive end in 4-3 or outside linebacker in 3-4. Shuttle is 4.27 seconds. Accelerates well. Gets to top speed within a few steps. Changes direction well. Has good body control. Able to sift through traffic to locate ball carrier. Possesses closing speed. Has athleticism to play in space. Good blitz in passing situations. Adding upper-body strength needed. Work on stack-and-shed technique must continue. Has to show more of a willingness to plug run gaps." – Brian Dohn, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Melton made an official visit to Ohio State on June 15, coming in between a June 7 visit to Notre Dame and a June 21 visit to Michigan. The Wolverines seemed to have a good chance at signing Melton, but after they received commitments from several other linebackers, Melton decided on the Buckeyes.

COMMIT DATE: July 3, 2019



JACK MILLER

QB • 6-4 • 215

Scottsdale (Ariz.)

Chaparral

Rank: PRO 13, Overall 332, AZ 9



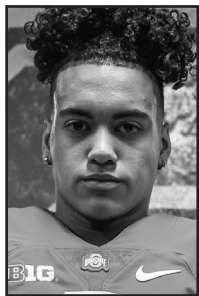
ACCOLADES: Miller was the 2017 offensive MVP and 2019 offensive player of the year at Chaparral, where he threw 115 career passing touchdowns, as well as 3,653 passing yards and 53 touchdowns in a season, all of which are high school records in the state of Arizona. He finished his high school career averaging 285 all-purpose yards and 248 passing yards per game.

MILLER SAYS: "Everybody that comes through here gets developed in a way that you really don't see many other places or just with all the first-round draft picks, if you look at all the Heisman winners. And it's really just where I think we all felt comfortable with the way they recruit, the way they talk to us, the way they treat us. I mean it was just special."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Miller had a bit of a tough senior year with injuries hindering his ability to compete on the camp circuit in the summer and taking him out of a few games this fall. But when he was healthy, he was extremely productive as always. He'll arrive at Ohio State as one of the most prolific passers to ever come out of Arizona. Miller has plus arm strength and has always proven to be an accurate thrower of the football. He spots the deep ball well and can also make the tough throws into tight windows." – Marc Givler, Rivals

PERSONAL: Miller is one of two quarterbacks, along with four-star C.J. Stroud, in Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class. When asked about the incoming battle he would have with Stroud and the potential it had for him to waiver on his commitment, Miller said he "never really thought it was a big deal. I think we're both here for the same goal ... to win a national championship."

COMMIT DATE: July 1, 2018



LATHAN RANSOM

S • 6-1 • 193

Tucson (Ariz.)

Salpointe Catholic

Rank: S 11, Overall 167, AZ 4



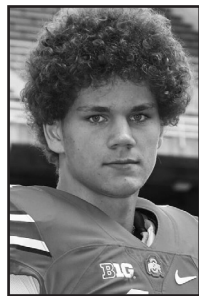
ACCOLADES: Ransom was named AllSportsTucson.com's Athlete of the Year in 2019 and was the 2019 4A Kino Region Defensive Player of the Year. He was also on The Arizona Republic's All-Arizona Team in his junior season, when he finished with 82 tackles, two sacks, six interceptions and eight pass breakups.

RANSOM SAYS: (After visiting Ohio State): "I'm excited. I can't wait to get out there. I was getting itchy when they were doing the seven-on-seven and 11-on-11. I just wanted to be out there and be a part of it, but I can't wait. I'm excited is all that I can explain to this."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Athletic build with length. Frame to add weight without sacrificing flexibility. Highly instinctual defensive back with tremendous range. Hard hitter that looks for loud tackles. Covers ground in the back half. Reacts well to plays in front of him. Smooth in his backpedal and closes on the football. Versatility to contribute at nickel and make an impact near the line of scrimmage. Could improve tackling technique to avoid leading with his head." – Blair Angulo, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Ransom also ran track and field at Salpointe Catholic and has a third- and seventh-place finish at the 100 meter and 4x100 meter events to his name, according to MaxPreps.

COMMIT DATE: July 16, 2018



JOE ROYER

TE • 6-5 • 225

Cincinnati Elder

Rank: TE 13, Overall 403, OH 9



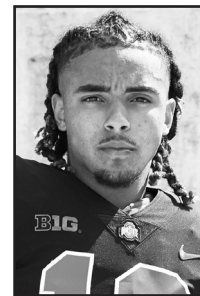
ACCOLADES: Royer was named first-team All-Ohio by the Ohio Prep Sportswriters Association and was part of a team that reached the Division I state finals. He finished his senior season, including the playoff run, with 70 catches for 1,258 yards and 15 touchdowns after having 31 catches for 612 yards and five scores as a junior.

ROYER SAYS: "Ohio State was the right school for me because the more I thought about things, the more I realized it's the best opportunity for me as a player and as a person. I loved everything about the program. The coaches and the players were all great people."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Has a lean, muscular build with no bad weight. Good stature and should be able to add a fair bit of mass once he enters a college-level strength and conditioning program. Is an above-average athlete for the position, running in the 4.8 range at college camps. Productive and a standout player in a highly competitive high school league in the Cincinnati area. Has a talented skill set as a pass catcher. Flexes out into the slot and does an excellent job at creating separation and finding holes in the defense. Is a very nuanced route runner with the ability to change speeds in and out of his breaks." – Charles Power, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Royer was a teammate of Ohio State commit Jakob James, and it took a strong camp performance to earn an offer from the Buckeyes after the tight end already had offers from Michigan, Michigan State, Penn State and Wisconsin.

COMMIT DATE: July 2, 2019



GEE SCOTT

WR • 6-3 • 207

Sammamish (Wash.)

Eastside Catholic

Rank: WR 10, Overall 65, WA 2



ACCOLADES: Scott finished his 2019 senior season with 76 receptions for 1,453 yards and 15 touchdowns and also had a strong junior campaign, when he had 52 catches for 755 yards and six scores. He was an All-Metro League Mountain Division selection for his efforts.

SCOTT SAYS: "You see a Mike Thomas come in, not a highly recruited guy, and now you see what he's doing in the NFL. Same thing with Chris Olave. Not the highest recruited guy, but he comes in here and they develop him. Once you go through this system, you come out on a different level."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "One of the most technically sound receivers in his class. Polished route runner, sure-handed. Best in midrange routes, but can take the top off. Difficult to press. Superb body control and ability to adjust to throws. Doesn't have elite top-end speed, but can still stretch the field. Very good run blocker and enjoys that aspect of the position. High football IQ." – Brandon Huffman, 247Sports.

PERSONAL: When Scott was only 8 years old, he lived with his mother while his dad was temporarily homeless and forced to live in his car for six weeks. During that time, Scott Sr. got help from former Ohio State offensive lineman Rob Sims and also moved into Sims' home for a couple nights on every other weekend when Scott's children came for visits.

COMMIT DATE: Dec. 25, 2018



JAKE SEIBERT

K • 6-1 • 190
Cincinnati La Salle

Rank: K 2, Overall 1,412, OH 58



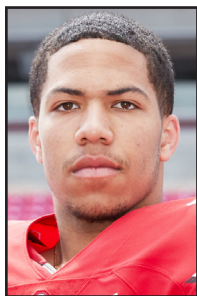
ACCOLADES: Seibert helped La Salle win the Division-II state title with field goals from 38 and 43 yards out, the latter being the longest in OHSAA Division II football state championship history. Seibert went 9 of 12 on field goals in his senior year with a long of 48 yards, and he made 63 of his 65 extra points and had 45 touchbacks on kickoffs.

SEIBERT SAYS: "I just need to work on my flexibility and my leg strength. I also need to work on consistency with both my kickoffs and the field goals. I have been heckling (Ohio State wide receivers coach Brian) Hartline about playing me at wide receiver, but I think those days are now over."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Jake is a special kicking talent. He is an amazing athlete with a big-time leg and natural ability. He hits a great ball off the ground on field goals. He has 60-plus yard range and gets excellent lift on his ball. His kickoffs are D1-ready right now. Jake drives the ball deep into the end zone with 4.0-plus hang time. He is a competitor that thrives under pressure. The sky is the limit here. Jake is a fine young man with a great attitude and work ethic." – Chris Sailer, Chris Sailer Kicking

PERSONAL: Seibert is coming to Ohio State from the same high school as current Buckeye punter Drue Chrisman, a fifth-year senior. Seibert also started at wide receiver while at La Salle.

COMMIT DATE: June 4, 2019



CODY SIMON

LB • 6-1 • 218
Jersey City (N.J.)
St. Peter's Prep

Rank: ILB 4, Overall 74, NJ 1



ACCOLADES: Simon recorded 106 tackles (62 solo) in his senior season at St. Peter's Prep, including six tackles for loss, 4½ of which were sacks. He also had four interceptions. Over three seasons, Simon had 229 total tackles (152 solo), 23½ TFL and 11 sacks.

SIMON SAYS: "They have a lot of guys go into the NFL draft so I think it would be a good transition to play early. They value having the best players play. If I compete to my abilities, I think I can play early there."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Good frame with length. Can hold 10 more pounds easily. Athletic and quick. Ran a 4.53 in 40. Changes direction well and is physical. Highly productive player who excelled against best teams. Accelerates to top speed in few steps. Has shown plus body control. Sound tackler. Diagnoses plays well. Has good closing speed. Plays well in traffic. Can disengage. Good in coverage depth. Needs to show he can cover running back out of backfield. Increasing upper-body flexibility important." – Brian Dohn, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Cody's brother, Shayne, is heading into his junior season at Notre Dame. He was also a four-star and was the No. 90 overall prospect in the 2018 class. He has 13 tackles (four solo), a TFL and a pass deflection in 19 games for the Fighting Irish.

COMMIT DATE: June 29, 2019



JAXON SMITH-NJIGBA

WR • 6-1 • 188
Rockwall, Texas

Rank: WR 5, Overall 28, TX 5



ACCOLADES: Smith-Njigba had big stats while at Rockwall, finishing with a total of 5,364 receiving yards and 82 touchdowns in 44 games. In his senior year, he broke the 2,000-yard barrier with 104 catches for 2,094 yards and 35 scores.

SMITH-NJIGBA SAYS: (On the wide receiver group) "Merging together, we all have different talents, we're all better at one thing than the other. So coming together I just feel like we honestly could be one of the best groups to ever come through Ohio State, and I'm very serious about that."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Owns above-average size with a solid build. Technically sound receiver with good size and massive production against strong competition in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex playing against teams in the largest classification in Texas (Class 6A). Adjusts impressively to the ball in flight. Shows encouraging hands-catching consistency. Fairly quick off the line and effectively subtle in downfield routes. Often gets defender leaning and sells the DB one way to get separation. Possesses adequate top-end speed verified in a combine environment." – Gabe Brooks, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Smith-Njigba's 65 touchdowns were the third most by any wide receiver in the history of Texas high school football. He earned his fifth star late in the process, making it the first time in the modern era of recruiting that Ohio State earned a commitment from two five-star wide receivers, the other being Fleming.

COMMIT DATE: Nov. 4, 2018



C.J. STROUD

QB • 6-3 • 194
Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

Rank: PRO 2, Overall 41, CA 4



ACCOLADES: Stroud got on the map of many by earning an MVP award at the Elite 11 Finals this past summer. He then followed up that buzz with 3,878 passing yards and 47 touchdowns in his senior season while competing 66 percent of his passes in 13 games.

STROUD SAYS: "That's what I wanted in my recruiting. I wanted to be developed not just for this level only but the next level as well. That's one of my goals is to be able to play in the NFL one day, and I think Coach (Ryan) Day is definitely somebody who can help me get there."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Stroud has a solid frame and will have no problem packing on good weight and filling out when he gets to college. He has one of the strongest arms in the country, a smooth, tight release and shows the athleticism to make plays outside the pocket. He throws the deep ball with touch and accuracy, plays with poise and calmness in the pocket and is only scratching the surface of how good he can be. He's a late bloomer, and his junior year was his first as a starting varsity quarterback. He's a two-sport athlete and is a talented basketball player. Once he can focus on just football in college, his game should take off to another level." – Greg Biggins, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Stroud's late commitment made it only the second time this decade that the Buckeyes earned the commitments of two quarterbacks in the same recruiting class (Braxton Miller, Cardale Jones in 2011).

COMMIT DATE: Dec. 18, 2019



GRANT TOUTANT

OL • 6-7 • 290
Warren (Mich.)
De La Salle

Rank: OT 35, Overall 459, MI 13



ACCOLADES: Toutant missed half of his senior season due to injury, but in 2018 he was voted De La Salle's Most Improved Offensive Player by his teammates. He helped that offense average 32.2 points per game in his junior season.

TOUTANT SAYS: "OSU has a history of being a top team with top athletes, no question about that."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Did not play offensive tackle early in his high-school career and has improved considerably the more he worked on the position. Gets out of his stance quick enough to handle speed rushers and moves well enough laterally to take away inside counter moves. Finishes in the run game and can make blocks in space. While he has improved, technique is still a work in progress. Getting stronger and being more violent in his punch will be key for him. Overall consistency in his game is something we want to see from him, but his upside is high." – Allen Trieu, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Toutant was previously committed to Penn State but flipped to Ohio State because of its automotive engineering program, something that would assist him with his ultimate goal of developing high-powered engines for race cars and sport cars. Despite his size, Toutant was also formerly a gymnast.

COMMIT DATE: June 9, 2019



RYAN WATTS

CB • 6-3 • 187
Little Elm, Texas

Rank: S 18, Overall 202, TX 31



ACCOLADES: Watts was selected as Little Elm's Most Valuable Player as a senior, and he played both cornerback and wide receiver. He was also a member of the MaxPreps Texas Preseason All-State team.

WATTS SAYS: "At first, I was scared if I would be able to fit in with everybody. But right when I got here, all the DBs took me in as one of theirs and the brotherhood. It's really been all love with everybody – not only Amir Riep. Marcus (Williamson), Tyreke (Johnson), just everybody to me is brothers, so it's been really comfortable and an easy transition."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Huge cornerback prospect with elite frame relative to the position. Possesses outstanding height and length. Owns college-ready size, yet still plenty of space to add more bulk. Built like a basketball player. Flashes impressive turn-and-bail ability, especially relative to frame. Fairly light and nimble in his backpedal. Large wingspan aids in disrupting passing windows and catch point. Almost limitless ceiling as a jammer because of size/length/strength potential. Should present a tough customer in the red zone." – Gabe Brooks, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Watts worked with the same trainer as Ohio State corner Jeff Okudah, who also comes from the state of Texas. He was originally committed to Oklahoma before flipping to the Buckeyes. Watts said he initially committed to the Sooners because of their proximity to home, but he said he "had to find another school that was real far but also felt like home," and that ended up being Ohio State.

COMMIT DATE: Oct. 13, 2019

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: OSU'S 2020 CLASS



KOURT WILLIAMS

ATH • 6-1 • 216

Bellflower (Calif.)

St. John Bosco

Rank: OLB 12, Overall 164, CA 19



ACCOLADES: At St. John Bosco, a school that is ranked the best in the country according to MaxPreps, Williams had 74 total tackles and a pair of sacks in his junior season and helped lead his team's defense that gave up 10 points or fewer in over half (eight) of its games.

WILLIAMS SAYS: (On being called a natural leader by Ryan Day): "It means everything. To hear that and just being at this school is nothing but a blessing. And hearing Coach Day say that means everything and just the fact that one day I'll be able to be a captain is just a dream and I'm going to keep working hard and try to get there."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "With a 4.6-second 40-yard dash, Williams has plenty of athleticism to play the strongside spot, which requires somebody to cover tight ends and running backs, drop deep at times as a safety, blitz and play the run at different times. Experience at a program the size of St. John Bosco should allow him to pick up the responsibilities quicker than most." – Colin Hass-Hill, Eleven Warriors

PERSONAL: Williams enters the program coming from the same high school as Ohio State guard Wyatt Davis, a former five-star prospect who was an All-American in 2019 and is returning for his junior season.

COMMIT DATE: July 29, 2019



MIYAN WILLIAMS

RB • 5-10 • 225

Cincinnati Winton Woods

Rank: RB 45, Overall 624, OH 17



ACCOLADES: Williams rushed for 992 yards and 10 touchdowns in his senior year, which was enough to finish his career at Winton Woods with 5,823 rushing yards and 68 scores. The rushing yards total is No. 31 on the Ohio High School Athletic Association's all-time rushing list. He was named Ohio Prep Sportswriters Association Southwest District Division II Offensive Player of the Year for his efforts.

WILLIAMS SAYS: (On his mother's thoughts on his commitment): "She really loved it and she's happy with where I'm going." (On Day and running backs coach Tony Alford's thoughts on his commitment) "They were fired up."

EXPERT'S TAKE: "He is only about 5-9, but he is incredibly strong and runs very low to the ground which makes it difficult for defenders to get clean hits on him. What Williams lacks in breakaway speed he makes up for with power and balance. Ohio State's running back room is probably more talented than given credit for so seeing the field early could be a challenge, but he comes into college pretty much ready to go and should provide immediate depth." – Marc Givler, Rivals

PERSONAL: Williams was one of the later commitments for Ohio State. Williams decommitted from Iowa State to join the Buckeyes.

COMMIT DATE: Nov. 23, 2019



LUKE WYPLER

OL • 6-3 • 280

Montvale (N.J.)

St. Joseph Regional

Rank: C 2, Overall 107, NJ 2



ACCOLADES: In Wypler's junior season, he helped St. Joseph reach a 10-2 record and also helped it win the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association's Non-Public Group IV state championship. His school had a rushing attack that averaged over 200 yards on the ground per game, and his efforts made him a 2018 MaxPreps Junior All-American.

WYPLER SAYS: (On what attracted him to Ohio State) "The winning culture for sure. My first visit here when Urban Meyer was still the head coach, got to see what he built here and how everybody in the building is just focused on winning. And at first, I was like, 'Ah, this is somewhere I want to be and something I want to build, even further.' "

EXPERT'S TAKE: "Frame built to play center but plays tackle in high school. Strong, athletic, ability to move laterally. High football IQ. Bends well at knees. Plays with great leverage. Fires off ball well. Quick hands. Strong and accurate with initial punch. Has strength to sustain blocks. Plus foot speed. Targets defenders when pulling because of body control. Patient in pass pro. Comfortable in base. Competitive. Adding flexibility is needed. Length is a question. Must learn to deal with quickness of playing inside." – Brian Dohn, 247Sports

PERSONAL: Wypler is from New Jersey and immediately said the food was the thing he missed the most about being at Ohio State. "Oh my god pizza and bagels."

COMMIT DATE: July 7, 2018

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Quarterbacks Miller, Stroud Ready To Compete

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

With Heisman Trophy finalist Justin Fields returning for at least one more season, Ohio State will not have a highly publicized battle for the starting quarterback job this spring as it has the last two seasons. A competition will instead rage on behind the scenes, as early enrollee quarterbacks Jack Miller (6-4, 215) and C.J. Stroud (6-3, 194) will compete with fifth-year senior Gunnar Hoak to be Fields' backup and put themselves in position to be the starter when he eventually leaves for the NFL.

Signing a pair of quarterbacks in the same recruiting class is rare for the Buckeyes. In fact, it hasn't happened since Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star Braxton Miller and Cleveland Glenview three-star Cardale Jones committed to the program during the 2011 cycle.

Though Jones ultimately led Ohio State to a national title a few years later, he was an afterthought in the Buckeyes' sixth-ranked haul and spent one year at Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy before enrolling in classes.

That's certainly not the case when it comes to Miller and Stroud, who are among the most highly regarded signal callers in the country and will be the first freshman quarterbacks to go through a season together since Troy Smith and Justin Zwick in 2002.

The two took very different paths to get to Columbus, however.

Miller – a four-star from Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral – saw his recruitment take off early in the process after he set state records for passing yards and touchdowns as a freshman. He then committed to Ohio State in July 2018, citing his relationship with former head coach Urban Meyer and then-offensive coordinator/quarter-

backs coach Ryan Day.

Miller, whose father is the general manager at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess Resort where the Buckeyes have stayed during their last three trips to the Fiesta Bowl, saw his junior and senior seasons cut short by a torn MCL and separated shoulder, respectively. He was also hampered by a back injury at the Elite 11 Finals last summer, and his recruiting rankings plummeted as a result – falling from the third-ranked pro-style quarterback at the time of his commitment to No. 13 when he signed with Ohio State during the Early Signing Period in December.

Stroud, meanwhile, came onto Ohio State's radar late in the process thanks to the unforeseen lack of depth at the quarterback position because of the increasing popularity of college football's transfer portal.

A four-star prospect from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., Stroud flew under the recruiting radar for most of his high school career. He was ranked in the mid-200s by the 247Sports composite rankings until he hit the camp circuit before his senior year, at which time he was named the MVP of the Elite 11 and The Opening Finals.

Schools such as Baylor, Georgia, Michigan, Oregon and USC all threw their hats into the ring in the months thereafter. But it was at those premier recruiting events where Stroud first met several Ohio State commits, including Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star wide receiver Julian Fleming, Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star wide receiver Gee Scott and Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star cornerback Lejond Cavazos, and they encouraged him to take a hard look at the Buckeyes.

The rest is history, as Stroud – who shares the same personal quarterback coach as Fields and former Ohio State quarterback Dwayne Haskins in Quincy Avery – eventually decided Columbus was the best place for him, even with

Miller already in the fold.

"I didn't base my decision off someone else," Stroud said on Feb. 5, marking his first media availability since he enrolled in classes. "I just always had the feeling from the first time I got here that Ohio State was the place for me."

Recruiting is a risky business, especially at quarterback, where landing two highly touted players in the same class is nearly impossible, given they both want to start as soon as possible.

So how did the Buckeyes do it? First off, they kept Miller in the loop.

"(Day and former passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mike Yurcich) were great at communicating with me about everything that was going on," Miller said that same afternoon. "They just said, 'Hey, we're probably going to end up offering this guy. If you have any problems with it, let us know.' I always said, 'No, you can offer whoever you want.' I'm not that type of guy. You can bring in whoever you want, and I'm going to compete with them."

"I've been committed here for two years, and I really never wavered. I never really thought about going anywhere else and just have always known this was the place for me."

And when it came to identifying and landing a second signal-caller, the staff simply pointed to back-to-back successful seasons from Haskins and Fields, who combined to throw for 8,104 yards and 91 touchdowns in their lone (so far) seasons as the starter, both finishing third in the Heisman Trophy voting.

"I think if you're a high school quarterback right now, it's an exciting time," Day said during his Early Signing Day press conference on Dec. 18. "Just look what we've done the last couple years. Look what Justin has done, look what Dwayne has done. When you combine that all up, there's some great excitement."

"Regardless of how it all plays out for either of them, they're going to get developed at a high level. They're going to be exposed to a high level of offense and they're going to be coached the way that they want. They get a chance to compete against really good players and they get a chance to sit in there with Justin and see what it's like to be around a Heisman Trophy finalist and be in an offense that has two Heisman Trophy finalists in the last two years."

There's no doubt Ohio State has seen a bit of turnover at the quarterback position in the last few years, with Haskins beating out Joe Burrow to win the starting job in 2018. Burrow transferred to LSU, where he won a national championship and Heisman Trophy in 2019. Fields transferred in from Georgia, which essentially forced Tate Martell (Miami, Fla.) and Matthew Baldwin (TCU) elsewhere. The Buckeyes also added a graduate transfer in Hoak, a former Kentucky quarterback who will exhaust his eligibility following the 2020 season.

But that just means that Miller and Stroud find themselves in a unique position as early-enrollee freshmen, where every offseason workout, every rep in practice and every second of game

action will be compared by Day, offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson and quarterbacks coach Corey Dennis as they look to find a starter upon Fields' eventual departure.

"We've had our shares of guys competing for spots," Dennis said. "When I first got here, I saw J.T. Barrett and Cardale Jones (in 2015). And then obviously Dwayne and Joe, and so I've seen a quarterback competition in itself. More importantly, though, I'm just excited that those guys want to be here, if that makes sense. You want guys that want to come to Ohio State. You want guys that want to be here, that want to compete, that aren't looking for handouts. I think that's both of those guys. They knew what they were getting themselves into, and they want to be here and they want to compete."

Dennis – who was recently promoted from senior quality control coach – fondly remembers the friendly competition between Barrett and Jones and hopes a similar situation unfolds over the next few years with Miller and Stroud.

"We're trying to build a unit," Dennis said. "We're trying to build a group to where everyone can lean on one another. It's just kind of that atmosphere where 'Hey, you have my back. I have your back.'"

Just one month into their college careers, it appears Miller and Stroud seem to be on a similar path.

"I'm going to be friends with all my teammates no matter what, and now obviously we're competing for the same thing, but it's a friendly competition," Miller said. "We're friends and we're cool. There's not a beef, as people think."

Stroud echoed those sentiments. "Me and Jack are like brothers," Stroud said. "We hang out all the time, we go out to eat, we watched the Super Bowl together. It's just the little things people don't see. They think we may just argue with each other, but it's never like that. We're brothers. We compete every day, but it's all love."

However, the current climate in college football would suggest whoever doesn't win the starting job, presumably in 2021, will transfer shortly thereafter. But neither Miller nor Stroud is looking for a way out, especially this early in their careers.

"I think we're both here for the same goal, which is to win a national championship here," Miller said. "That's the goal, whatever it takes. If he's the guy or if I'm the guy, it doesn't really matter. We're both going to just work our tails off and do whatever we can for the team."

Stroud had a similar perspective. "No matter what happens, Jack is going to have a great career in football and I'm going to have a great career in football. I think both of us will help each other throughout the way and everything will take care of itself."

"With anything in life, if you have your foot in one thing and you're thinking about something else, it's never going to work out. Right now, I am focused on being the quarterback at Ohio State. I think everything is going to work itself out."

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Program-Record 14 Recruits Enroll Early

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The option for college football players to enroll in classes early has been around, and it has been seen in previous Ohio State classes. But never has it been seen to this extent.

Of the 25 commits in the Buckeyes' 2020 recruiting class, over half of them have enrolled early and are around for early training and conditioning that may prove to be beneficial moving forward.

In total, there are 14 players who are already on Ohio State's campus: cornerback Lejond Cavazos, wide receiver Mookie Cooper, defensive tackle Jacob Cowan, wide receiver Julian Fleming, defensive tackle Darrion Henry-Young, offensive tackle Paris Johnson, offensive tackle Trey Leroux, quarterback Jack Miller, wide receiver Gee Scott, wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba, quarterback C.J. Stroud, safety Ryan Watts, linebacker Kourt Williams and center Luke Wypler.

Each of them was available for a media availability on National Signing Day, and almost every one of them discussed what they believe is the benefit of having the first half of the year in Columbus to prepare for the upcoming season.

Cavazos, who comes to Ohio State out of Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy, said a lot of why he ended up at that high school was to have the ability to leave and enroll early.

"That was a big part of the reason I went to IMG," Cavazos said. "Because I knew what I wanted was bigger than just going to high school proms, high school dances and everything. I have a vision for myself and my family. So I knew I had to do this so I could get ahead."

The 6-1, 196-pound cornerback also said the workouts have been something he has had to adapt to early on.

"They're definitely challenging. They push you to a level that you didn't know you had. It's really intense, and it's really competitive."

Cooper hails from Maryland Heights (Mo.) Pattonville Senior and had to sit out his senior football season after he attempted to transfer schools with the idea of leaving to enroll early.

"No lie, I walked out of the office, I just walked out and I cried for probably like four weeks straight," Cooper said. "After school, I'd just go sit in the car and just sit there and just cry, then I go work out. That used to make me work harder. I used to cry a lot though. I thought I was depressed for a moment."

The 5-9 wideout said the year off from football has shown how much he wants to succeed because of how much he has worked in the meantime. But all that training does not compare to what sport performance coach Mikey Marotti has put him, as well as the rest of the team, through early on in workouts.

"About 20 times harder," Cooper said of the difficulty of Marotti's workouts compared to what he has known. "It's worth it. You've got everybody yelling at you. You just can't get too much in your own head, you just have to take it in. Everybody here loves us. They yell at us, everybody's loud. It's for the best though."

Cowan is out of Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School, and he said he left early with the idea of getting used to Columbus and all that comes with it, as well as getting an advance start on his academic goals.

"Just getting the head start of everything in terms of academically, getting that semester so I can potentially graduate early in like three and a half years," Cowan said. "That's the end goal. And of course, getting acclimated to the weight room as well. Just getting stronger and giving

me the best shot to play come fall."

Cowan has also had to get used to the difficulty of Marotti's conditioning, but he said he has done fine with getting used to the school-work that has come with the college life thus far.

"The pace of things and just the intensity of everything," Cowan said on what he is adjusting to. "In high school you get pushed but don't get pushed to these limits with Coach Mick and his strength and conditioning program. So that's been our biggest thing."

"Coming from a college preparatory school, academically I've been pretty good and been pretty well-off."

Fleming, from Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia, is the highest-rated prospect in Ohio State's class and is at the top of a very highly regarded wide receiver class. But Fleming is excited to be at Ohio State to remove that rating from his name and truly prove that he is capable of becoming the top-tier player at the college level that many are projecting.

"It's gone, all the stars are gone, all the rankings are gone," Fleming said. "It's starting from scratch. It's kind of build your way up and you have to earn everything."

The 6-2, 199-pound receiver was less surprised by the intensity of the workouts he has seen so far. Fleming said that, while he has not dealt with something like it before, it was a change he was prepared for.

"It's not going to be too much different because what I expect for myself is always just being able to compete at the highest level," Fleming said. "But from a coaching standpoint, you know it's a very different set of coaches from high school into college so it's a different transition."

Leroux might be a lesser-known commodity than Fleming, but the 6-8, 330-pound tackle out of Norwalk, Ohio, said the plan was really always to enroll early and get that early training in with the Ohio State coaching staff.

"Pretty much as soon as I got my offer," Leroux said on when he decided he was going to enroll for the spring semester. "It was the best idea not only for me, but for the university to get me in here working early."

Leroux called Marotti a great guy and said he has been most surprised with how much he has been in the training facilities. But he

said that amount of time has built camaraderie between him and his teammates.

"It doesn't seem like work because you have that team aspect," Leroux said. "Everybody is going through it together. If I had done this on my own it would have been a struggle. But doing it together is amazing and I actually enjoy workouts and everything like that."

The results have already been showing for a tackle who came in at around 360 pounds.

"(Marotti's) an amazing coach to be working with," Leroux said. "I can't say enough about what he's done for me. I've lost 30 pounds since I got here. I'm at 330 right now."

Miller was one of the first commits Ohio State earned for its 2020 class, with the four-star quarterback verbally committing on July 1, 2018.

The pro-style signal caller from Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral said that having a record-high number of early enrollees has made for more immediate chemistry within the new freshman class.

"I think we're all super close," Miller said. "I mean, we all live right next to each other, so we spend a lot of time together on the weekends and even just after class every day, so we're always with each other, always getting food and always hanging out."

Smith-Njigba is part of that coveted wide receiver group and is a five-star commit who put up big numbers while at high school in Rockwall, Texas. But like Fleming, Smith-Njigba is focused on moving forward and keeping a similar level of production up at the collegiate level.

"The high school career was great, but it's in the back of my mind," Smith-Njigba said. "I try not to think of it too much because it's a different animal up here. I'm coming in here to just push, watch the older guys and I should be good."

Though Smith-Njigba wants to push, he also said there is a line where some players could push too much and try too hard in order to make a good first impression.

"You just have to be yourself, honestly," Smith-Njigba said. "Whatever these coaches ask you to do, you just have to do it and do it to your best ability. There's not really much to it. I come in here every morning, of course I make

mistakes, we all make mistakes, especially as freshmen, but I just come in here and I do my best, work my hardest and go full speed."

Stroud was the second quarterback to commit to the Buckeyes, making his commitment the day he signed his letter of intent on Dec. 18. The Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., product has appreciated the decision to enroll early, saying it has been "a blessing to get a head start and get used to everything before the summer comes."

The only thing he has left to get used to is the Ohio weather.

"It's been different," Stroud said. "It's cold, but it's not been too bad. Some days it's kind of weird because it will be like sunny and then it will be snowing and then you'll get like 10 straight days of clouds. I'm used to it always being kind of sunny, but it's been a good transition."

Watts, like Smith-Njigba, comes from Texas, with the four-star safety playing his high school ball at Little Elm. He said he has no regrets about leaving high school early to be at Ohio State and said it was something he has planned to do for years.

"Not at all," Watts said when asked if he had any regrets. "Since I was a freshman, I wanted to come in midyear. I had my mind-set already, and I'm really not even homesick. Not yet."

"But I thank everybody on my support staff from back at home (for) helping me be able to leave early. I miss my friends, but I've made new friends here, and I've met new people. I try to go out and meet new people so I can just feel like myself and feel at home. No regrets at all."

As many in this historically large group also echoed, Watts said that being with 13 other freshmen and going through those growing pains with such a large group have helped make the whole process easier.

"I've seen a couple schools that only have a couple of guys," Watts said. "I feel like if that was the case, it would have been harder on me because now we have so many different personalities that I can lean on. It really helps me. That's probably another main reason I'm not homesick. I'm a friendly person. I like to have a lot of friends and be cool with everybody. So, having so many people to come to and hang out with, it's really been good."



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Buckeyes Return To Top 5 In Consensus Poll

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After what could be labeled a “down year” for Ohio State in recruiting, finishing No. 15 in Buckeye Sports Bulletin’s consensus poll after signing just 17 players last year, the Buckeyes are back to being at an elite recruiting level.

In the 2020 edition of the consensus poll, Ohio State moves up to No. 5, ranking in the top five in all four major recruiting rankings, reaching as high as No. 4. This comes in the first recruiting class that was primarily put together by head coach Ryan Day after he was moved to the head-coaching position late in the recruiting process last season when Urban Meyer announced he would be retiring following the Rose Bowl.

After maintaining most of Meyer’s commitments in 2019, Day managed to build relationships with many of the early 2020 commits, while also getting some major victories of his own on the recruiting trail.

The result is the top class in the Big Ten, up from No. 3 a season ago, and a class that features three five-star recruits, according to the 247Sports Composite Rankings. The rest of the conference has just one total in wide receiver Rakim Jarrett, a prospect who visited and was offered by the Buckeyes but ultimately ended up at Maryland after decommitting from LSU.

Those three five-stars – wide receiver Julian Fleming out of Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia, offensive tackle Paris Johnson from Cincinnati Princeton and wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba out of Rockwall, Texas – bolster a class that trailed only Georgia, Clemson, Alabama and LSU in three of the polls and just the Bulldogs, Clemson and the Crimson Tide in the fourth. That leaves Ohio State at

a solid fifth, five points ahead of sixth-ranked Texas A&M.

The Bulldogs earned the top spot in three out of the four rankings, thanks in part to four five-star commitments: cornerback Kelee Ringo, offensive tackle Broderick Jones, defensive tackle Jalen Carter and athlete Darnell Washington.

Those four players rank No. 4, No. 11, No. 18 and No. 23, respectively among all prospects in the class, according to 247Sports composite rankings. Ohio State sent out offers to both Ringo and Washington during the recruiting process.

Georgia had a total of 25 commitments, the same as the Buckeyes and the Crimson Tide, and had 15 four-star prospects and six three-stars commit. The 247Sports website gave Georgia’s recruits an average rating of 92.96, slightly higher than Ohio State’s 91.80 average rating.

While Clemson has two fewer commits than Georgia, Alabama or Ohio State, it also has the most five-stars in the country with five, including the No. 1 prospect in the 247Sports composite rankings, defensive tackle Bryan Bresee. The Tigers also now possess the likely suitor for quarterback Trevor Lawrence’s position once he leaves for the NFL in D.J. Uiagalelei, the No. 10 prospect overall and No. 1 pro-style quarterback in 2020.

Clemson also bolstered its backfield with Demarcus Bowman, a five-star out of Lakeland, Fla., who is the No. 20 recruit in the class. The other two five-stars are defensive end Myles Murphy, the No. 7 prospect in 2020, and outside linebacker Trenton Simpson, the No. 26 prospect.

Ohio State gave offers to three of these five-stars: Bresee, Uiagalelei and Bowman, with Bresee being projected by some to commit to the Buckeyes before ultimately select-

ing to join Dabo Swinney at Clemson.

Alabama, which ranked either No. 2 or 3 on each ranking, also has four five-stars for the incoming class and also comes in with 17 four-star and four three-star commits.

Five-star dual-threat quarterback Bryce Young highlights the group, as he comes in as the No. 2 prospect in the country behind only Bresee. The quarterback out of Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei is joined by defensive ends Will Anderson and Chris Braswell, as well as athlete Drew Sanders as the other five-stars, who rank No. 17, 19 and 22 nationally, respectively.

Anderson and Braswell are the No. 1 and No. 2 weakside defensive ends in the class, while Sanders is the No. 1 athlete. Young and Braswell both received offers from the Buckeyes.

LSU has one fewer commitment than Ohio State with 24, but its 92.84 average rating per recruit gives the Tigers an edge for every major ranking aside from Bleacher Report’s that puts the Buckeyes at No. 4 and LSU at No. 5.

The Tigers have a major task ahead of themselves after losing a ton of production on both sides of the ball, the fifth-fewest returning production in the Football Bowl Subdivision according to ESPN’s Bill Connelly, while also losing both their offensive and defensive coordinators to either NFL or head-coaching gigs.

But LSU will look to get the ball rolling under head coach Ed Orgeron once again through three five-stars, 14 four-stars and seven three-stars. The headliner is five-star tight end Arik Gilbert out of Marietta, Ga., the top tight end in the class and No. 5 prospect overall. He will help fill the void that Thaddeus Moss leaves at the position after he left early for the NFL.

With Justin Jefferson gone to the pro-

fessional level early as well, five-star wide-out Kayshon Boutte out of New Iberia (La.) Westgate – the No. 2 wide receiver in 2020, trailing only Fleming – could step in.

Ohio State did send an offer to Gilbert, but LSU’s other five-star commit, cornerback Elias Ricks, was one of the Buckeyes’ primary targets and someone the team thought they could flip from the Tigers. Ricks was expected to visit for Ohio State’s game against Penn State this season, but when he canceled, the attempts to flip went dry, and he remained in LSU’s camp.

Ricks attended IMG Academy with another highly rated cornerback, four-star Ohio State commit Lejond Cavazos.

The top five teams in the consensus poll make sense considering each of their records. Each of these teams finished with 11 wins or more, and three of the five made the College Football Playoff. But the Aggies’ ranking at No. 6 despite an 8-5 record is an impressive feat.

In two seasons under head coach Jimbo Fisher, Texas A&M has managed to overperform on the recruiting end, finishing tied for No. 5 last season in the consensus poll after a 9-4 record.

Also overperforming in the top 10 of the consensus poll are Texas at No. 9 and Tennessee at No. 10, two teams that both also finished 8-5 on the season.

The Longhorns have the lone consensus five star between the two teams in running back Bijan Robinson out of Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic. Robinson is the top running back in the class and No. 15 recruit overall and was a major loss for Ohio State in the recruiting process. The Buckeyes were hoping to have two running back commits in the 2020 class, and Robinson was silently committed before ultimately deciding to stay closer to home and commit to the Longhorns.

Ohio State ended up staying local, signing just one running back in 2020 with three-star Miyan Williams out of Cincinnati Winton Woods.

The Buckeyes were one of just four Big Ten teams in the top 25 of the consensus poll and one of five that received votes. They were also significantly higher than any other

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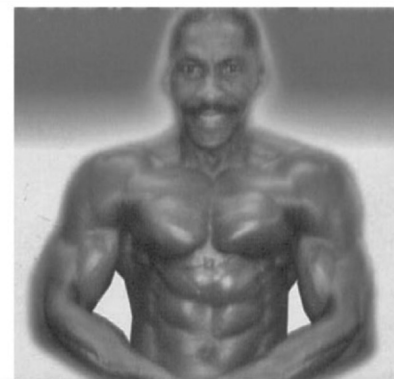
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BSB Consensus Poll

Rk.	Team	Pts.
1.	Georgia (3)	99
2.	Clemson (1)	96
3.	Alabama	93
4.	LSU	87
5.	Ohio State	85
6.	Texas A&M	80
7.	Auburn	73
8.	Florida	72
9.	Texas	63
10.	Tennessee	60
11.	Oregon	59
12.	Oklahoma	56
13.	Michigan	55
T-14.	Miami (FL)	48
	Penn State	48
16.	Washington	39
17.	North Carolina	35
18.	Notre Dame	33
19.	South Carolina	27
T-20.	Florida State	23
	Nebraska	23
22.	Kentucky	21
23.	Stanford	15
24.	Arizona State	9
25.	Georgia Tech	3

Teams received points based on their placement in four top-25 polls. Points assigned to teams are in inverse proportion to their placement in a poll (25 points for first, 24 for second, etc.). First-place votes are in parentheses. Also receiving votes in the poll were Mississippi State (1) and Wisconsin (1).

team in the conference, ranking eight spots higher and earning 30 points more than No. 13 Michigan.

Though they lack a five-star commit, the Wolverines made up for it with 14 four-star commits, tied for the fifth most in the country.

Penn State ranks just behind the

National Recruiting Experts' Rankings

247SPORTS	RIVALS	ESPN	BLEACHER REPORT
1. Georgia	1. Georgia	1. Clemson	1. Georgia
2. Alabama	2. Clemson	2. Georgia	2. Clemson
3. Clemson	3. Alabama	3. Alabama	3. Alabama
4. LSU	4. LSU	4. LSU	4. Ohio State
5. Ohio State	5. Ohio State	5. Ohio State	5. LSU
6. Texas A&M	6. Texas A&M	6. Texas A&M	6. Texas A&M
7. Auburn	7. Tennessee	7. Auburn	7. Auburn
8. Florida	8. Florida	8. Florida	8. Florida
9. Texas	9. Oregon	9. Texas	9. Tennessee
10. Tennessee	10. Auburn	10. Oklahoma	10. Texas

Wolverines at No. 14, tied with Miami (Fla.). And while the Hurricanes are looking to dramatically improve following a 6-7 season, the Nittany Lions had a successful 11-2 year and are looking to take that next extra step. Like Michigan, Penn State lacks a five-star, but it does have two top-100 players: outside linebacker Curtis Jacobs and tight end Theo Johnson.

Nebraska comes in tied with Florida State for No. 20 in the consensus poll and is in much more of a building phase than either Ohio State, Michigan or Penn State. The Cornhuskers finished a disappointing second year under head coach Scott Frost with a 5-7 record, missing out on bowl eligibility.

They bring in a 2020 class with 24 commits, nine of which are four-stars, including offensive tackle Turner Corcoran, the No. 47 recruit in the class.

Wisconsin did earn a lone point for being ranked as the 25th-best class by 247Sports. The Badgers have 20 commits – five four-stars and 15 three-stars – and their two primary offensive tackle commits in Trey Wedig and Jack Nelson are the major gets for head coach Paul Chryst's team.

Consensus Poll Fast Facts

- The SEC handily leads all conferences with nine teams in the consensus poll and 10 that received votes. Of those nine teams, seven are in the top 10, with only South Carolina (19th) and Kentucky (22nd) ranking between No. 11 and No. 25.

- The ACC has five teams – Clemson, Miami (Fla.), North Carolina, Florida State and

Georgia Tech – in the consensus poll, which is good for second. The Big Ten and Pac-12 (Oregon, Washington, Stanford, Arizona State) are tied for third with four teams apiece.

- The Big 12 has just Texas and Oklahoma in the rankings. Notre Dame is the only team that does not come from a Power Five conference to make the consensus poll.

- Along with the Cornhuskers and Hurricanes, there are four other teams to be in the top 25 of the consensus poll despite a losing record in the 2019 season: Florida State (6-7), South Carolina (4-8), Stanford (4-8) and Georgia Tech (3-9).

- Of teams in the consensus poll both years, Miami made the largest jump from 2019's poll to now, finishing at No. 26 with two votes just outside of the poll last year all the way to 14th this season. Ohio State made the next largest jump, moving up 10 spots from No. 15 to No. 5, likely helped by new coaching stability in the picture with Day.

- Clemson was next with an eight-spot

increase, followed by Auburn (six spots).

- Oklahoma dropped the most spots of any team that remained in the poll from last season, falling from No. 4 to No. 12. The Sooners were joined by conference foe Texas (six spots), Michigan (five spots), Oregon (four spots) and Notre Dame (four spots) as the largest fallers.

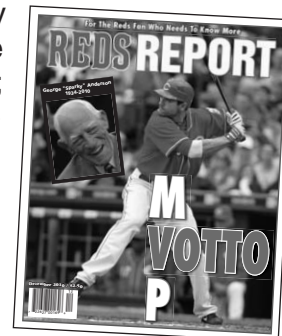
- In Mack Brown's second year returning as head coach for North Carolina, the Tar Heels finished No. 17 in the poll just a year after not being mentioned in the top 25. It is the highest ranking for a team not mentioned in 2019, followed by other newcomers Kentucky (22nd), Arizona State (24th) and Georgia Tech (25th).

- USC makes the largest drop out of the list entirely, going from No. 19 in 2019 to unranked this time around. SEC teams Arkansas (21st in 2019) and Ole Miss (22nd) both also dropped out, while 24th- and 25th-place Mississippi State and Wisconsin fell to just honorable mentions in 2020.

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Big Ten Boasts 11 Top-50 Recruiting Classes

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After finishing third in the Big Ten in recruiting rankings in 2019, Ohio State re-established itself at the top of the conference in 2020. Beyond the Buckeyes, several other Big Ten programs solidified themselves as national forces on the recruiting trail.

Four Big Ten teams finished within the top 20 of the 247Sports composite rankings, while nine of the conference's 14 teams landed in the top 40.

Nebraska continued its recent recruiting success with a No. 20 finish nationally, while Maryland made a big jump to No. 31 from No. 47.

What follows is a rundown of each Big Ten program's recruiting class – excluding Ohio State – listed in order of final team ranking. Each team's number of commits is listed in parentheses.

No. 14 Michigan (23 commits)

Following Ohio State with the second-highest rated recruiting class in the Big Ten was Michigan, which went 9-4 in 2019. The Wolverines did not bring in any five-star prospects, but their 14 four-star commits tied the Buckeyes for the most in the conference. Head coach Jim Harbaugh also secured nine three-star commits.

Frankfort (Ill.) Lincoln-Way East wide receiver A.J. Henning represents Michigan's top commit, ranking No. 101 in the nation as the No. 18 wideout. The Maize and Blue may

need Henning to contribute sooner rather than later with Donovan Peoples-Jones leaving early for the NFL and Tarik Black entering the transfer portal.

Although Michigan did not secure a single top-100 commit, it brought in seven top-200 prospects. Port Huron (Mich.) Northern defensive end Braiden McGregor; Baltimore St. Frances Academy running back Blake Corum; Milton (Mass.) Academy outside linebacker Kael Mullings; Belleville, Mich., cornerback Andre Seldon; Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic safety Jordan Morant; and Harbor City (Calif.) Narbonne cornerback Darion Green-Warren joined Henning as the other six commits within the top 200.

No. 15 Penn State (27)

Amid allegations of hazing and severe mistreatment of underclassmen by upperclassmen, Penn State finished third in the Big Ten in recruiting following an 11-2 year. The Nittany Lions' average player rating (89.55) trailed just Ohio State (91.80) and Michigan (90.35), falling just 0.8 points behind the Wolverines' average.

Despite the issues surrounding the program, head coach James Franklin finalized his 2020 class with 27 commits, including 11 four-star prospects and 16 three-stars.

Owings Mills (Md.) McDonogh School four-star outside linebacker Curtis Jacobs represents the top Nittany Lion commit as the No. 3 outside linebacker and No. 35 overall prospect nationally.

In addition to Jacobs, Penn State brought in three more top-200 commits in Canadian tight

end Theo Johnson from Windsor, Ontario; Oak Park, Mich., safety Enzo Jennings; and Cocoa, Fla., all-purpose back Caziaiah Holmes.

No. 20 Nebraska (24)

For the second straight year, head coach Scott Frost secured a top-20 recruiting class nationally. Despite finishing 5-7 last season, the Cornhuskers continued their recent recruiting successes with their 24-man class.

Lawrence (Kan.) Free State four-star offensive tackle Turner Corcoran, who is the No. 4 offensive tackle and No. 47 overall recruit in the nation, marks the top commit for Nebraska.

Nebraska locked up the top recruit in its state in Bellevue (Neb.) West four-star wide receiver Xavier Betts, who is the No. 111 overall prospect nationally. The Huskers' third top-150 commit is Crawfordville (Fla.) Wakulla four-star outside linebacker Keyshawn Greene.

Frost found talent in less-traditional ways as well, bringing in the No. 2 JUCO prospect and the No. 1 prep school player across America.

Lancaster (Texas) Kilgore four-star wide receiver Omar Manning possesses a lot of talent as the No. 1 JUCO wideout at 6-4, 225 pounds, while Chicago Simeon three-star wide receiver Alante Brown (6-0, 190) represents the top-ranked prospect from a prep school.

No. 25 Wisconsin (20)

Despite signing only 20 prospects in the 2020 cycle, Big Ten West champion Wisconsin ranked No. 5 in the Big Ten and No. 25 nationally. Head coach Paul Chryst signed just five four-star recruits, but those top commits came at positions of need and importance.

The Badgers' top two commits were the top two offensive tackles in the state of Wisconsin. Wales (Wis.) Kettle Moraine product Trey Wedig (6-8, 320) and Stoughton, Wis., product Jack Nelson (6-7, 273) represent the No. 7 and No. 10 offensive tackles in the nation, respectively.

Perhaps the most important addition for Chryst and the Badgers is Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep four-star tailback Jalen Berger. The nation's No. 15 running back and No. 135 overall recruit steps into a run-heavy offense that lost one of the best backs in FBS history in Jonathan Taylor.

Rounding out Wisconsin's four-star signees are outside linebackers Nick Herbig of Honolulu St. Louis School and Kaden Johnson of Minneapolis Minnehaha Academy, who are the No. 9 and No. 13 outside 'backers in the country.

No. 31 Maryland (27)

Maryland represents the only Big Ten program not named Ohio State to haul in a five-star commit in the 2020 class. Head coach Mike Locksley flipped the nation's No. 4 wideout, Washington (D.C.) St. John's five-star wide receiver Rakim Jarrett, from national champion LSU.

In addition to Jarrett, who is one of the best gets in the country, Maryland brought in two four-star commits. Hollywood (Fla.) McArthur outside linebacker Ruben Hyppolite is the No. 17 player at his position nationally. Detroit Martin Luther King running back Peny Boone joins the Terrapins as the No. 26 tailback in the nation, with an opportunity to make an impact with the early NFL departure of former starter Anthony McFarland.

Coming off a 3-9 season, the Terrapins tied Penn State for the most signees in the 2020 class with 27, which included 24 three-star commits.

Big Ten Team Rankings

Rk.	Team	Signees
5.	Ohio State.....	25
14.	Michigan.....	23
15.	Penn State	27
20.	Nebraska.....	24
25.	Wisconsin	20
31.	Maryland	27
33.	Purdue	21
34.	Iowa	21
37.	Minnesota.....	24
43.	Michigan State.....	22
47.	Northwestern.....	17
58.	Indiana.....	19
64.	Rutgers	20
87.	Illinois.....	13

*247Sports composite rankings

No. 33 Purdue (21)

Coming off a disappointing 4-8 campaign, head coach Jeff Brohm and the Boilermakers brought in five four-star prospects, who all play offense.

Although they did not lock up a single top-150 recruit, the Boilermakers' four-star signees could have a significant impact on the future of the program with their playmaking abilities.

Oak Park, Mich., tight end Maliq Carr is the highest-rated commit for Purdue, ranking No. 4 at his position and No. 173 overall nationally. Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph quarterback Michael Alaimo played with Ohio State offensive-line signee Luke Wypler in high school and is the No. 12 pro-style quarterback in the nation.

Middle Village (N.Y.) Christ the King running back Terek Murphy, Walled Lake (Mich.) Western wide receiver Abdur-Rahmaan Yaseen and Zionsville, Ind., center Gus Hartwig round out the four-star signees for Purdue.

No. 34 Iowa (21)

Iowa went 10-3 last season, which was significantly better than the three sub-.500 teams ahead of the Hawkeyes in recruiting rankings. Head coach Kirk Ferentz continued to trust his staff's evaluations as he's done for more than two decades.

The top signee and only four-star for the Hawkeyes in 2020 is Council Bluffs (Iowa) Lewis Central defensive tackle Logan Jones, who is the No. 1 prospect in the state and No. 235 nationally.

The Culver Academies, Ind., defensive end Deontae Craig, Columbus Grandview Heights tight end Luke Lachey and Byron, Ill., offensive guard Tyler Elsbury are the Hawkeyes' top three-star signees. Lachey's father, Jim, was a first-team All-American at offensive tackle for Ohio State in 1984.

No. 37 Minnesota (24)

Minnesota surprised the Big Ten and the rest of the country with an 11-2 season that began 9-0, placing them among the nation's elite. Head coach P.J. Fleck has quickly turned around the program in three years, which makes Minnesota's No. 9 finish in Big Ten recruiting rankings somewhat of a disappointment for an 11-win team.

Mission (Kan.) Bishop Miege four-star wide receiver Daniel Jackson is the Gophers' top signee, ranking as the No. 51 wideout and No. 305 overall prospect nationally. St. Louis Lutheran North outside linebacker Itayvion Brown is Minnesota's only other four-star signee, ranking No. 309 in the country and No. 21 at his position.



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Topeka, Kan., three-star running back Ky Thomas adds another talented piece to the Minnesota backfield as the No. 28 tailback and No. 406 overall recruit. The Gophers' 24 signees tied them with Nebraska for the fourth most in the conference behind Penn State (27), Maryland (27) and Ohio State (25).

No. 43 Michigan State (22)

Michigan State has been disappointing on the field and disappointing in recruiting, with neither looking upward in the immediate future following the somewhat abrupt resignation of head coach Mark Dantonio on Feb. 4.

Coming off a 7-6 season in East Lansing, Mich., the Spartans finished No. 10 in Big Ten recruiting rankings and did not land a single four- or five-star signee. All 22 of the incoming freshmen for Michigan State are three-star recruits, including three in the nation's top 500.

Marietta, Ga., wide receiver Ricky White is the nation's No. 68 wideout and No. 412 overall prospect, representing the top signee for the Green and White.

Carrollton (Texas) Hebron outside linebacker Darius Snow, the nephew of former Spartan great Percy Snow, is the No. 28 player at his position and No. 434 overall recruit, while Grand Rapids (Mich.) East Kentwood offensive guard Dallas Fincher is the No. 24 guard and No. 467 overall prospect nationally.

No. 47 Northwestern (17)

After winning the Big Ten West in 2018, the Wildcats took a major step back in 2019 with a 3-9 finish at the bottom of their division.

Northwestern finished the 2020 cycle with the second-fewest signees (17) behind Illinois (13). Head coach Pat Fitzgerald signed 16 three-star recruits and one four-star, who is one of the best linemen in the nation.

Park Ridge (Ill.) Maine South four-star center Peter Skoronski is the No. 3 player at his position and No. 122 overall prospect in the country, as well as the third-best recruit in Illinois.

Edwardsburg, Mich., three-star offensive guard Josh Priebe and Rye (N.Y.) Country Day School three-star outside linebacker Cullen Coleman represent the top three-star signees for Northwestern. The Wildcats' fourth-highest rated signee is bruising Cincinnati La Salle three-star running back Cameron Porter.

No. 58 Indiana (19)

The Hoosiers exceeded the expectations of many in head coach Tom Allen's third full season at the helm with an 8-5 finish. Despite the relatively successful season, Indiana dropped from its No. 8 finish in the 2019 Big Ten recruiting rankings to No. 12 in 2020 and from No. 36 to No. 58 nationally.

Detroit Martin Luther King four-star wide receiver Rashawn Williams represents the lone four-star signee in the Hoosiers' class, ranking No. 58 at his position and No. 349 overall in the country.

Of Indiana's other 18 signees, only five of them ranked within the top-1,000 recruits in the country. Griffin, Ga., three-star defensive tackle Damarjhe Lewis and Southaven, Miss., offensive guard Kahlil Benson represent the Hoosiers' second- and third-highest rated signees.

No. 64 Rutgers (20)

Greg Schiano replaced Chris Ash as head coach of the Scarlet Knights on Dec. 1 and began to build toward the future of his program.

Schiano has secured the commitment of six transfers already, including three who were former four-star prospects in former Baylor quarterback Peyton Powell and former Buckeyes Malik Barrow, a defensive tackle,

and Brendon White, a safety.

In recruiting, Rutgers brought in five prospects in the top 1,000, including its highest-rated signee in Willinboro, N.J., three-star athlete Chris Long, who is the No. 41 athlete and No. 703 overall recruit nationally. All 20 of the Scarlet Knights' 2020 signees are three-star prospects.

No. 87 Illinois (13)

The Fighting Illini went 6-7 in 2019, including a 24-23 upset win against then-undefeated Wisconsin and victories over Michigan State and Purdue. The success of head coach Lovie Smith's team did not necessarily carry over to recruiting, though.

Although the Illini signed only 13 recruits, the class is not devoid of talent. Smith brought in five prospects ranked in the top 1,000, including two in the top 500.

The highlight of Illinois' 2020 class is the St. Louis Trinity Catholic duo of wide receiver James Frenchie and running back Reggie Love. Frenchie is the No. 65 wideout and No. 404 overall prospect nationally, while Love is the No. 31 tailback and No. 425 overall recruit.



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Buckeyes Seek Top Recruits Across Country

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class ranked No. 5 in the country, largely because of the elite out-of-state talent Ryan Day and his staff were able to corral. The talent-laden non-Ohio portion of the class included two of Ohio State's three five-star players and 13 of its 14 four-stars.

Looking ahead to the 2021 class, the Buckeyes have already secured verbal commitments from several standouts outside of Ohio. The four-star quarterback-wide receiver combo from Philadelphia St. Joseph's of Kyle McCord and Marvin Harrison shows that Ohio State plans to remain a force on the national scene.

Four-star offensive guard Donovan Jackson from Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal is the top guard in the country and continues the success of the Scarlet and Gray as recruiters in the Lone Star State. Three-star Aurora (Colo.) Cherokee Trail tight end Sam Hart also demonstrates the reach of Ohio State's early recruiting efforts for 2021.

Beyond the four commitments they have locked up from out-of-state recruits, the Buckeyes are in pursuit of the nation's top prospects at every position, with an emphasis on team needs.

The following are some of the premier targets that Ohio State is pursuing, grouped by position and listed in order of 247Sports' composite ranking:

Camar Wheaton, RB Garland (Texas) Lakeview Cent.

Wheaton is the No. 1 running back in the nation for 2021, ranking No. 6 overall and No. 2 in the talent-rich state of Texas.

Through three seasons at Lakeview Centennial, the 5-11, 190-pound tailback has totaled 3,344 yards from scrimmage and 42 touchdowns.

The Midlands region recruiting analyst for 247Sports, Gabe Brooks, evaluated Wheaton, who holds offers from national powerhouses such as Alabama, Georgia and LSU in addition

Class Of 2021 National Prospects

Ten of the top players OSU is pursuing in the 2021 class from around the nation, as rated in the 247Sports composite rankings.							
Overall Rk.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School	Top Colleges
6.	Camar Wheaton	RB	5-11	190	★★★★★	Gardland (Texas) Lakeview Centennial	ALA, OSU, OU
9.	Emeka Egbuku	ATH	6-1	190	★★★★★	Steliacoom, Wash.	CLE, OSU, UW
10.	Tony Grimes	CB	6-0	180	★★★★★	Virginia Beach Princess Anne	OSU, PSU, VT
26.	Tunmise Adeleye	DT	6-3	260	★★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy	OSU, OU, UT
31.	Damon Payne	DT	6-4	297	★★★★	Belleville, Mich.	ALA, UK, OSU
40.	Rocco Spindler	OT	6-5	295	★★★★	Clarkston, Mich.	UM, ND, OSU
49.	Donovan Edwards	RB	5-11	190	★★★★	West Bloomfield, Mich.	UM, MSU, OSU
51.	Jakailin Johnson	CB	6-0	168	★★★★	St. Louis DeSmet	ND, OSU
79.	J.C. Latham	OT	6-6	285	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy	LSU, OSU, WIS
86.	Evan Pryor	RB	5-10	190	★★★★	Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough	UGA, UNC, OSU

to Ohio State.

"Dynamic running back prospect with requisite body type," Brooks said. "Adequate height with close to prototypical frame relative to projected position. Long-striding sprinter in the open field who can shorten steps to elude tacklers in the hole. Dangerous one-cut player with explosive straight-line acceleration. Flashes outstanding top-end speed verified on the track (10.67 second 100-meter dash as a freshman).

"Slippery strong. Not afraid of contact. Shows encouraging balance upon contact. Serious home run-hitting ability. Displays encouraging patience to allow blocks to materialize. Gears down a bit when asked to change direction or string moves together. Sometimes runs high and presents a bigger target. Among the top offensive prospects in Texas for the 2021 class. Possesses early-round NFL draft potential thanks to physical profile and legitimate track speed."

Donovan Edwards, RB West Bloomfield, Mich.

Edwards is the No. 2 running back in the country for 2021, listed as Michigan's No. 3 prospect and the No. 49 recruit nationally.

Michigan is favored to land the five-star tailback, leading 247Sports' Crystal Ball predictions at 86 percent, while Ohio State possesses the remaining 14 percent. In addition to the Wolverines, he holds offers from Alabama, Georgia and Michigan State.

Allen Trieu of 247Sports analyzed the electric potential of Edwards.

"Strong, muscular build. Compact and has prototypical size. Explosive runner with good burst and can hit the home run," Trieu said. "Will run tough between the tackles. Great pass-catcher who can function as a receiver out of the backfield or in the slot. Good, willing blocker with good strength. Does not have many glaring weaknesses but can still keep improving timed speed and continue recovery from an injury which ended his sophomore season. He is a complete back who can play in any scheme though and should be a lead-back early in his college career. Should hear his name called around the second round of the NFL draft."

Evan Pryor, RB Cornelius (N.C.) W. A. Hough

Pryor is the nation's No. 6 running back for 2021, as well as the No. 5 recruit in North Carolina and No. 86 overall prospect across the country.

The Crystal Ball predictions by 247Sports have Pryor to Ohio State at 50 percent. The four-star tailback also holds offers from Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Oregon and Penn State.

After measuring in at 5-9½ and 190 pounds at the Opening Regional on April 28, 2019, Edwards finished the 20-yard shuttle in 4.31 seconds.

Emeka Egbuka, WR Steilacoom, Wash.

Egbuka is a consensus top-10 recruit in the country as well as the No. 1 athlete for 2021. The five-star athlete starred at wide receiver for Steilacoom at 6-1 and 190 pounds.

The Washington native has interest in Alabama, Clemson, Stanford and Washington in addition to Ohio State. The Crystal Ball predictions have Washington at 50 percent, Ohio State at 25 percent and undecided for the final 25 percent.

The No. 9 overall prospect for 2021, Egbuka ran the 40-yard dash in 4.42 and finished the 20-yard shuttle in 4.19 seconds.

National recruiting editor Brandon Huffman evaluated Egbuka.

"Has elite size and strength to go with speed," Huffman said. "Plays to his size and shows good physicality. An elite two-way prospect, he answered any questions about his speed with a 4.4 laser time at the All-American Combine. Tremendous body control, can adjust to any throw, going up and getting it in traffic. A physical and aggressive runner after the catch and elusive in the open field. Also, a stellar return specialist. Projects as immediate Power Five starter and future first-round NFL draft pick."

Rocco Spindler, OT Clarkston, Mich.

Spindler is the second-best prospect in Michigan, and the Wolverines are the favorites to bring him in, but the Buckeyes will still push for the No. 6 offensive tackle in the country.

Michigan has a 71 percent chance to land Spindler, while Notre Dame comes in at 14 percent and 14 percent is undecided, according to 247 Crystal Ball predictions.

Spindler visited Ohio State on Nov. 23, 2019, witnessing the Buckeyes' 28-17 victory over Penn State. The 6-4½ and 295-pound lineman is the No. 40 overall recruit in the country for 2021.

Spindler's father, Marc, played at Pitt in the late '80s and became a third-round pick in the 1990 NFL draft by the Detroit Lions.

247Sports' Trieu had a lot of good things to say about Spindler, who carries a first-round projection despite not being a five-star talent.

"Does not carry a lot of bad weight," Trieu said. "Naturally stocky. Has room to add weight, but frame and style of play suggest he will not need to add a lot more mass. Could play offensive or defensive line in college. Has played varsity against strong competition since his freshman season. Will come into college ready to work and compete at that level. Plays tough and aggressive. Has a wrestling background, and that shows in his strength and ability to use leverage. A good athlete who can pull and make blocks in space on offense and track plays down on defense. Adding more weight to his frame will be the key for him in playing early, but he has all the other needed qualities to be an impact player in college and a potentially early impact player."

J.C. Latham, OT Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy

Latham is a four-star offensive tackle from Wisconsin, who plays for the prestigious IMG Academy in Florida. He is the No. 13 offensive tackle and No. 79 overall prospect in the country for the 2021 class. Latham also represents the No. 13 recruit in the talented state of Florida.

At 6-5½ and 285 pounds, Latham is an imposing presence on the offensive line and showed solid footwork with a 4.87-second 20-yard shuttle on Feb. 24, 2019.

Crystal Ball predictions have Ohio State as the early favorite at 62 percent, while 25 percent is undecided, and his home school Wisconsin is in the mix at 12 percent.

John Garcia of 247Sports raved about Latham's size and athleticism in his evaluation of Latham.

"Towering height and length with mature, muscular build," Garcia said. "Filled out with minimal bad weight early in high school career. Powerful trench talent with upside on either side of the ball. More experience on defense, also the position of preference at this stage. Wingspan combines with power to stress blocker in short order. Counter and redirection ability above average relative to size. Effective hands to disengage."

Tunmise Adeleye, DE Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy

Florida's third-best recruit is a five-star standout from IMG Academy. Adeleye is the

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nation's No. 3 strongside defensive end and No. 26 overall prospect.

Crystal Ball predictions have Oklahoma as the favorite to land the 6-3, 260-pound end at 43 percent, with 14 percent chances for Alabama, Ohio State and Texas, with the last 14 percent undecided.

Adeleye picked up his Ohio State offer on May 22, 2019, and made an unofficial visit to Columbus nearly a month later on June 21.

As a junior, Adeleye recorded 53 tackles, with eight TFL, four sacks and one forced fumble, following his sophomore campaign when he notched 56 tackles with 12 TFL, eight sacks and one safety.

"Stout defensive lineman who could potentially provide position flexibility," Brooks said. "Thick core and thin-ankled. Possesses adequate to above average height and solid build. Owns virtually college-ready size as a four-man end but could slide inside with added bulk. Flashes impressive strength at the point of attack. A bull in the phone booth who can drive offensive linemen into the pocket. Consistently gets hands inside blockers to steer where he wants. Shows power to punch and shed in the run game. Plays with good pad level and leverage. Strong tackler and closes fast in pursuit. Improved explosiveness as a junior. Active, violent hands, but still learning how to use them. Can be more consistent in get-off quickness. Can also improve body control, particularly in pursuit."

Damon Payne, DT Belleville, Mich.

Michigan's No. 1 recruit is one of the most college-ready juniors in the country. Payne is a four-star defensive tackle with excellent strength and size at 6-3½ and 297 pounds. He is the No. 5 defensive tackle and No. 31 overall recruit in the nation, drawing interest from many of the best programs, including SEC powers Alabama, Georgia and LSU.

Ohio State and the Crimson Tide each have a 25 percent chance of landing Payne, while Crystal Ball predictions are 50 percent undecided. The Belleville two-way star visited Columbus for the Buckeyes' 38-7 demolition of Wisconsin on Oct. 26.

In addition to the great size Payne possesses, he ran a 4.59-second 20-yard shuttle.

"Big-framed kid and has filled out a lot," Trieu said. "Looks like a college-ready player despite how young he is. Naturally gifted

Class Of 2021 In-State Prospects

The top 10 players in the state of Ohio for the 2021 class, as rated in the 247Sports composite rankings.

Overall Rk.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School	Top Colleges
2.	Jack Sawyer	DE	6-5	220	★★★★★	Pickerington North	Committed to Ohio State
56.	Ben Christman	OT	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield Revere	Committed to Ohio State
72.	Jayden Ballard	WR	6-2	175	★★★★	Massillon Washington	Committed to Ohio State
103.	Lorenzo Styles	WR	6-1	170	★★★★	Pickerington Central	Committed to Notre Dame
106.	Corey Kiner	RB	5-10	205	★★★★	Cincinnati Roger Bacon	UM, ND, OSU
119.	Reid Carrico	ILB	6-3	225	★★★★	Ironton	Committed to Ohio State
204.	Jaylen Anderson	RB	5-11	205	★★★★	Perry	UK, UL, UNL
212.	Najee Story	SDE	6-4	235	★★★★	Solon	ALA, UM, OSU
230.	Mike Hall	DT	6-3	290	★★★★	Streetsboro	Committed to Ohio State
311.	A.J. Kirk	S	6-0	200	★★★★	Dublin Coffman	UC, UM, OSU

athlete who moves around better than the vast majority of kids his size. Strong, powerful kid who can drive blockers back into the backfield. Is improving his technique. Has a good push-pull move and a solid rip but is still adding more hand technique and other moves to his arsenal. He is also a very good offensive lineman, and some schools may look at him on that side of the ball. Big enough to play nose, athletic enough to play a three-tech or maybe even an end in some schemes, he has a chance to be an early contributor at the high-major level if he keeps progressing at this rate."

Tony Grimes, CB Virginia Beach Princess Anne

Grimes is a five-star cornerback who is flat-out one of the nation's best recruits. The 6-0, 180-pound corner is the nation's No. 1 player at his position and No. 10 overall.

Part of what makes Grimes so special is his elite speed and quickness, evident by his 4.2-second 20-yard shuttle on April 8, 2018.

All the top teams in the Football Bowl Subdivision have offered Grimes, but Crystal Ball predictions have Texas A&M and Virginia Tech at 50 percent apiece.

"Wide shoulders and good length," 247Sports' Brian Dohn said. "Frame of safety with cornerback skills. Instinctual player with high skill level. Physical and smooth. Tracks ball well and has great timing. Opens hips and runs with ease. Long strider who can cover on long crossing routes and deep throws. Strong upper body helps re-route receivers with jams. Comfortable in backpedal and explodes forward out of it. Good tackler and asset in run defense. High IQ on and off field. Leadership qualities. Must get stronger in lower body. Ready to play at elite program when he steps on campus. First-round NFL draft pick potential."

Jakailin Johnson, CB St. Louis DeSmet

Johnson is a four-star cornerback from St. Louis who showcased his sensational speed at DeSmet. The 6-0, 168-pound corner is the nation's No. 5 player at his position and No. 51 overall recruit in the country.

The Buckeyes have a 100 percent chance of landing Johnson, according to Crystal Ball predictions. They are hoping to keep the recent St. Louis-Columbus trend going with Johnson, who would join cornerback Cameron Brown and wide receivers Kamryn Babb, Jameson Williams and Mookie Cooper.

Solidifying The Home State

While it is evident that Ohio State will continue to extend its reach and excel in coast-to-coast recruiting, there is no doubt Day wants to keep the best talent in Ohio at home.

In addition to the Buckeyes' four talented out-of-state commits, Ohio State has secured six commitments from some of the best that the state of Ohio has to offer.

Pickerington North defensive end Jack Sawyer is the nation's second-highest rated recruit and represents the jewel of the 2021 class as the only five-star committed. Joining Sawyer are several four-star commits: Richfield Revere offensive tackle Ben Christman, Massillon Washington wide receiver Jayden Ballard, Ironton linebacker Reid Carrico and Streetsboro defensive tackle Mike Hall. Three-star Cincinnati La Salle safety Jaylen Johnson rounds out the six in-state commits for the Buckeyes, who have a handful of other Ohio high-school standouts high on their board.

That said, the following in-state players (listed by position) hold an offer from Ohio State and are worth monitoring throughout the remainder of the 2021 recruiting process.

Corey Kiner, RB Cincinnati Roger Bacon

Kiner is a four-star running back and the No. 5 overall prospect in Ohio for 2021. He is the No. 8 tailback and No. 106 overall recruit in the country.

The 5-10, 205-pound running back possesses power and athleticism, which was displayed in the spring of his freshman year when he completed the 20-yard shuttle in 4.33 seconds on May 5, 2018.

Kiner took an unofficial visit to Ohio State for the Buckeyes' 42-0 beatdown of the premier university in his city, Cincinnati. The Crystal Ball predictions have Michigan leading at 50 percent, with Ohio State at 25 percent and the remaining 25 percent undecided. Notre Dame is also in the mix for Kiner.

Najee Story, DE Solon

Story is a four-star defensive end and the No. 8 recruit in Ohio. The 6-4, 235-pound end from Solon holds offers from Alabama and Notre Dame as well as from Michigan and Penn State.

Story is the No. 14 strong-side defensive end and No. 212 overall prospect in the nation. Crystal Ball predictions have Ohio State at 50 percent with the other 50 percent undecided.

AJ Kirk, S Dublin Coffman

Kirk, who is the brother of Ohio State great Mike Doss, is one of the most exciting recruits in the state. The four-star safety is the nation's No. 11 safety and No. 311 overall prospect.

According to the Crystal Ball predictions, Ohio State has a 25 percent chance of bringing in Kirk, while the other 75 percent remains undecided.








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Buckeyes Taste Victory, Defeat In Super Bowl

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

When quarterback Patrick Mahomes led the Kansas City Chiefs to a 31-20 comeback victory over the San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl LIV (54) on Feb. 2, it ended the possibility of Nick Bosa joining an exclusive club.

Bosa, the defensive end who was named the 2019 NFL Rookie of Year, might have joined Antonio Holmes as the only Buckeye to be named the Most Valuable Player in a Super Bowl (XLIII in 2009). National sports talk show host Dan Patrick was among those the next day who thought Bosa would have been if not for the Chiefs' 21-point splurge in the final eight minutes.

Bosa had five tackles (three solo), a sack, a quarterback hit and one pass defended, and he forced a fumble as the 49ers throttled the high-powered KC attack until the decisive fourth quarter.

Instead, two other former Buckeyes can call themselves Super Bowl champions, although neither contributed directly to the first title for Kansas City in 50 years. Linebacker Darron Lee was on the Kansas City inactive list, and running back Mike Weber was on the Chiefs' taxi squad.

In a way, it's come full circle for Buckeyes in the Super Bowl. Ohio State's participation began in the first of what was then called the World Championship Game pitting the champions of the National Football League and the American Football League in a true

grudge match before the leagues merged.

Ex-Buckeye Jim Tyrer was the starting left tackle for the AFL Chiefs in their 35-10 loss to the Green Bay Packers at a less-than-packed Los Angeles Coliseum on Jan. 15, 1967. The game, which was televised by CBS (the NFL's network) and NBC (AFL) drew 61,946 – more than 33,000 below capacity.

The victory gave the NFL bragging rights, as did the 33-14 win by the Packers – under legendary coach Vince Lombardi and QB Bart Starr – over the Oakland Raiders the following year.

Two former Buckeyes were prominently involved in the third championship, which was gradually being referred to as the Super Bowl. AFL co-founder and Chiefs owner Lamar Hunt is credited with naming the game after seeing his children playing with a Super Ball, a small rubbery ball with an enormous bounce.

On Jan. 12, 1969, in Miami the New York Jets stunned the Baltimore Colts 16-7 to back the victory guarantee of flamboyant quarterback Joe Namath. It was a seismic event for the upstart league over the established NFL.

In that game, former Buckeyes Matt Snell of the Jets and the Colts' Tom Matte became the first and only players from the same school to rush for more than 100 yards each. Snell had 121 yards on 30 carries with a 4-yard TD to open the scoring. He also had four catches for 40 yards. Matte had 116 yards, including a 58-yarder, on 11 runs and added 30 yards on two grabs.



COURTESY OF CANDICE LEE

SUPER BOWL CHAMP – Former Ohio State linebacker Darron Lee and his mother, Candice, celebrate after the Kansas City Chiefs' 31-20 win over the San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl LIV on Feb. 2.

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BUCKEYES IN THE NFL

Many of Matte's runs were aided by ex-OSU left tackle Bob Vogel.

Matte would get his ring two years later when the Colts downed the Dallas Cowboys, 16-13, on Jan. 17, 1971. Unfortunately, he was injured and did not play, but Vogel started for Baltimore.

That Super Bowl was mostly forgettable, but it was the first to officially use Roman numerals as suggested by Hunt. In letter to NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle on July 10, 1970, he opined that adding the designations would add a bit of "class" to an "unclassy" name for the title game.

Tyrer had become a Super Bowl winner for Kansas City in the prior Super Bowl, the last before the leagues merged when the AFL tied the series at 2-2 with a 23-7 victory over Minnesota on Jan. 11, 1970.

On the losing side that day was defensive end Jim Marshall, a member of the famed "Purple People Eaters" D-line. Being on the wrong end of the score would become a habit for Marshall and his Vikings teammates, who also experienced Super Bowl defeats in 1974, 1975 and 1977 without ever hoisting the Lombardi Trophy.

At the other end of the spectrum, linebacker Mike Vrabel and special teams player/defensive back Nate Ebner are the only Buckeyes to win three Super Bowls. Not surprisingly, they each accomplished their hat tricks for the New England Patriots and coach Bill Belichick.

Vrabel, the current head coach of the Tennessee Titans, was victorious in Super Bowls 2002, 2004 and 2005. In 2004, he caught a 1-yard TD pass from Tom Brady, and the following Super Bowl he had another scoring catch from 2 yards.

Ebner's most recent title came in 2019 in Super Bowl LIII when the Patriots downed the Los Angeles Rams (and Buckeye long snapper Jake McQuaid) 13-3. Defensive end John Simon was also a member of the Patriots.

Ebner was a champion after Super Bowl wins in 2015 (28-24 over the Seattle Seahawks) and 2017 (34-28 vs. the Atlanta Falcons). He also had a 41-33 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles in 2018.

He and Vrabel are among the eight for-

mer Buckeyes with multiple rings.

The most famous is likely wide receiver Paul Warfield. He was a first-round pick of the Cleveland Browns in 1964 and played six seasons there, winning an NFL championship his rookie year, two seasons before the first Super Bowl.

He was traded to the Miami Dolphins in 1970 and helped them to three straight Super Bowl appearances.

They lost 24-3 to the Dallas Cowboys in the 1972 Super Bowl, but the following year a 14-7 victory over the Washington Redskins capped the only perfect season (17-0) in NFL history. The Dolphins repeated the following season, 24-7, over the Vikings.

Warfield had limited success in the three games, combining for nine catches for 108 yards.

He was a six-time All-NFL choice and an eight-time Pro Bowl selection. The Warren, Ohio, native was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1983.

Others with more than one title are wide receiver Morris Bradshaw for the Raiders (1977, 1981); tight end John Frank of the 49ers (1985, 1989); safety Malcolm Jenkins with the New Orleans Saints in 2010 and the Philadelphia Eagles eight years later; and linebacker Pepper Johnson and guard William Roberts. Each played for the New York Giants in 1987 and 1991.

Bradshaw's 1977 win - 32-14 vs. the Vikings - was interesting because the game also had ex-Buckeyes in defensive back Neal Colzie and safety Jack Tatum for Oakland going against Marshall and wide receiver Len Willis.

Although Holmes has only one Super Bowl title to his credit, the 2006 first-round pick of the Pittsburgh Steelers was instrumental in the 27-23 victory over the Arizona Cardinals on Feb. 1, 2009.

He had nine catches for 131 yards and a 6-yard touchdown, which came on a per-

fectly thrown ball by Ben Roethlisberger to the right corner of the end zone with 35 seconds left. Holmes kept both feet in to make the catch. He had four catches for 73 yards on the winning drive.

Other notable Buckeyes to claim Super Bowl titles include DB Shaun Gayle and quarterback Mike Tomczak (Chicago Bears, 1986), left tackle Jim Lachey (Redskins, 1992), left tackle Orlando Pace (St. Louis Rams, 2000), linebacker A.J. Hawk (Packers, 2011) and cornerback Bradley Roby (Denver Broncos, 2016).

Some greats never won a Super Bowl.

Two-time Heisman Trophy winner

Archie Griffin; his brother, defensive back Ray; and fullback Pete Johnson lost to Joe Montana and the 49ers 26-21 in 1982. Johnson lost a second time in 1985 when the Dolphins were beaten 38-16 by the 49ers.

One of the best linebackers in OSU history, Denver's Randy Gradishar, came up short, 42-10, to the Redskins in 1988. Running back Keith Byars and wide receiver Terry Glenn were with the Patriots for a 35-21 loss to the Packers in 1997.

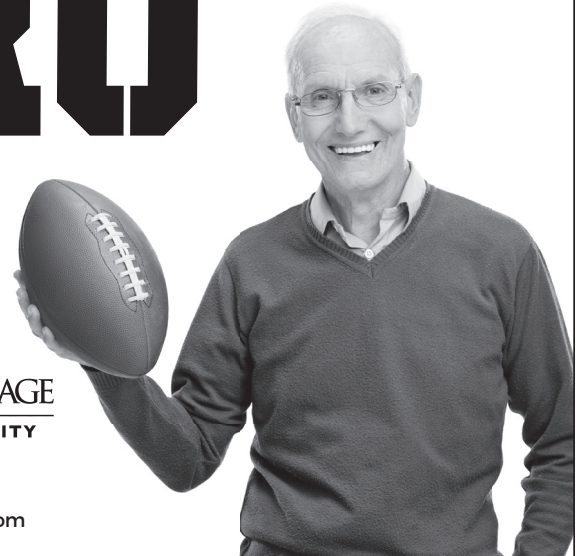
Wide receiver Ted Ginn played for the 49ers when they lost 34-31 to the Baltimore Ravens in 2013 and 24-10 to Denver in 2016.

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OSU Has Dealt With Adversity Since Start Of Season

The topsy-turvy Ohio State season should not have come as a surprise for team that features five freshmen or sophomores among its top nine players.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

Inconsistencies were expected, and the Buckeyes have delivered in maddening fashion from being poised to ascend to the top of the polls if they had beaten West Virginia on Dec. 29 (they didn't), to avoiding dropping to the cellar of the Big Ten with a win at Northwestern four weeks later.

They went from an 11-1 record to losing four straight and six of seven before bouncing back with three consecutive wins only to end that streak with a 70-57 loss at Wisconsin on Feb. 9 that left them at 15-8, 5-7.

Along the Buckeyes' wild ride, they have had to endure, absorb and learn from adversity. All teams face challenges, but the Buckeyes' problems have been particularly bountiful whether it be because of injuries, suspensions or personal issues.

The latter is at the forefront of conversation after freshman guard D.J. Carton

announced via Twitter on Jan. 30 that he was taking a leave of absence because "I have been suffering with mental health issues for a couple years."

It would be Pollyanna to suggest support for him being so open was universal. Obviously, there are always a few who think differently, and OSU coach Chris Holtmann, who has publicly discussed seeing a therapist for mental health issues, took a stand after the Buckeyes defeated Indiana 68-59 on Feb. 1.

"For the rare few that tweeted at me (that) this is somehow a reflection of our program, a reflection on me personally, guilty," he said. "Guilty. So be it. You can take your antiquated thinking somewhere else. There is nothing, nothing more important in our program than our players' physical, mental health and overall growth. Nothing."

Carton's mom, Jennifer Carton, made it clear through her Twitter account that her son's problems did not start at Ohio State:

"As D.J. noted, he has been dealing with mental health issues since his senior year. This means he has had these issues throughout the season, contrary to what some believe. We also cannot thank Coach Holtmann, the rest of the coaching staff, the players, their families, and the medical staff enough for their compassion, under-

standing, support and treatment they have provided D.J. thus far."

She ended the Feb. 1 posting with, "He will be back stronger than ever in a Buckeye uniform. I guarantee that."

Carton returned home to Bettendorf, Iowa, and Holtmann said Feb. 7 that he was taking online courses to stay eligible but that there was no time frame for his return.

The former five-star prospect was third on the Buckeyes in scoring at 10.4 points per game and second in assists with 3.0. His departure for the time being is the latest hardship for the Buckeyes.

Junior guard Musa Jallow was unable to play this season after he underwent ankle surgeries on Oct. 18 and Jan. 24. Senior forward Andre Wesson sustained a fractured eye socket in the season opener vs. Cincinnati and missed two games.

Sophomore guard Duane Washington suffered a rib injury in mid-December and lost his starting job that he got when Wesson was injured.

Washington returned vs. Kentucky on Dec. 21 after missing two games, but eight days later junior forward Kyle Young underwent an appendectomy. He was out two games, and it took several weeks for him to fully recover.

Young's first game back was the 66-54 loss at Indiana on Jan. 11 to run the losing skid to four games. The Buckeyes bounced back with an 80-68 home win vs. Nebraska on Jan. 14 without Washington and sophomore guard Luther Muhammad after each was suspended one game for "failure to meet team expectations."

Muhammad separated his shoulder in practice on Jan. 30. He played two days later vs. Indiana, but Holtmann limited his minutes at Michigan on Feb. 4 due to the injury. Holtmann said afterward that he was unaware that Muhammad had removed his shoulder brace at halftime.

"It's not healthy enough for him to take it off," Holtmann said. "He probably doesn't like it because it affects his shooting."

With Muhammad below 100 percent, the Buckeyes finished off a 61-58 victory in Ann Arbor with two scholarship guards – redshirt junior C.J. Walker and Washington.

"We've grown a lot in these last couple weeks," Young said afterward.

Holtmann amplified that comment at his Feb. 7 press conference.

"I think it says something about the character of the group," Holtmann said. "I think it says something about their resolve. It says something to the leadership we have in there from a couple of the older guys. I've seen progress with our guys in the last couple weeks."

Adding to the woes this season was an



D.J. Carton

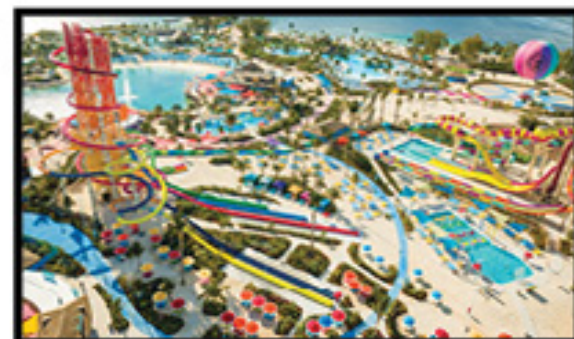


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2019-20 Ohio State Men's Basketball Statistics

15-8 Overall (5-7 Big Ten)
Statistics through games of Feb. 9

Player	G-GS	Min.-Avg.	FG-FGA	Pct.	3P-3PA	Pct.	FT-FTA	Pct.	Rebounds		PF-FO	A	TO	BS	ST	Pts.-Avg.
									O-D	T-Avg.						
Kaleb Wesson	23-23	662-28.8	103-229	.450	31-78	.397	86-118	.729	58-163	221-9.6	68-1	48	59	26	11	323-14.0
Duane Washington	20-11	463-23.2	74-181	.409	39-99	.394	30-38	.789	3-46	49-2.5	22-0	27	23	1	6	217-10.9
D.J. Carton	20-3	478-23.9	71-149	.477	24-60	.400	41-54	.759	10-46	56-2.8	38-0	59	52	8	13	207-10.4
Andre Wesson	21-15	613-29.2	60-133	.451	35-75	.467	30-37	.811	24-53	77-3.7	53-3	40	30	8	6	185-8.8
C.J. Walker	23-22	639-27.8	62-146	.425	21-59	.356	29-37	.784	6-59	65-2.8	55-1	72	42	2	29	174-7.6
Kyle Young	21-21	476-22.7	63-103	.612	2-9	.222	29-47	.617	39-83	122-5.8	40-0	21	9	12	8	157-7.5
E.J. Liddell	23-0	361-15.7	48-99	.485	4-19	.211	43-62	.694	19-60	79-3.4	44-0	11	20	21	8	143-6.2
Luther Muhammad	22-20	505-23.0	40-113	.354	21-66	.318	32-40	.800	7-30	37-1.7	34-1	31	24	2	20	133-6.0
Justin Ahrens	18-0	197-10.9	21-49	.429	18-44	.409	1-2	.500	8-18	26-1.4	18-0	5	8	1	1	61-3.4
Alonzo Gaffney	16-0	113-7.1	13-23	.565	1-6	.167	3-8	.375	5-19	24-1.5	20-1	2	12	4	1	30-1.9
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	10-0	35-3.5	2-8	.250	2-6	.333	1-2	.500	1-2	3-0.3	4-0	5	3	0	4	7-0.7
Harrison Hookfin	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									44-40	84-3.7				14		
Ohio State	23	4600	562-1249	.450	198-522	.379	325-447	.727	234-627	861-37.4	402-7	321	305	87	108	1647-71.6
Opponents	23	4600	496-1298	.382	167-499	.335	257-385	.668	229-513	742-32.3	424-8	239	285	68	109	1416-61.6

offseason injury to sophomore forward Justin Ahrens, who sustained two herniated disks while weightlifting last summer. The three-point specialist has struggled to find his shots and get playing time for much of the season, but he came off the bench to hit four triples for a season-best 12 points in the 71-59 win at Northwestern on Jan. 26.

He can be a game-changer as evidenced by his career-high 29 points, 25 in the second half, when the Buckeyes beat Iowa 90-70 last season.

"We know he has the ability to shoot the ball," Holtmann said. "We continue to stress: Be aggressive and take good ones, and he's done that."

More Love

As mentioned earlier, Carton received encouragement and support from many people, including Indiana coach Archie Miller. He addressed the media in Bloomington, Ind., the day after Carton's announcement and a day prior to facing the Buckeyes.

Miller talked of coaching Matt Derenbecker for the 2012-13 season at Dayton before the player transferred to New Orleans. Derenbecker had dealt with bipolar disorder since his senior year of high school and was found dead in a swimming pool in August 2014.

"As a coach, I've had a few experiences with some guys that have had some trouble and lost

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 Lutheran

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

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

a player, Matt Derenbecker, a few years back to a death, and you think about the times that he was with you and the times that he wasn't, and you just wonder to yourself could you have done more," Miller said. "Now, times have really sped up since 2014 or '15. Four or five years later now, you're much more prepared and you're much more equipped as a university and as a staff, and it's more serious when somebody has something.

"Nothing is more important, and nothing should be taken more serious when it comes to that type of stuff. You just never know."

Miller recruited Carton and had him on campus for several unofficial visits and an official visit.

"Our thoughts go out to D.J. and his family, and we need to get him back as soon as possible," Miller said. "He's a great kid. He's a great player."

Also, Cleveland Cavaliers forward Kevin Love, who has discussed his mental health issues, was among those who reached out to Carton.

Quotable

Holtmann said when he recruited Washington that he was told to stay on top of him because he would sometimes lose focus: "Love coaching him. He drives me batty, but very few days have I not enjoyed coaching him."

BIG Men's Basketball

	Conf.			Overall		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Maryland	9	3	.750	19	4	.826
Penn State	8	4	.667	18	5	.783
Illinois	8	4	.667	16	7	.696
Iowa	8	5	.615	17	7	.708
Rutgers	8	5	.615	17	7	.708
Michigan State	8	5	.615	16	8	.667
Purdue	7	6	.538	14	10	.583
Wisconsin	7	6	.538	14	10	.583
Minnesota	6	7	.462	12	11	.522
Indiana	5	7	.417	15	8	.652
Ohio State	5	7	.417	15	8	.652
Michigan	5	7	.417	14	9	.609
Nebraska	2	10	.167	7	16	.304
Northwestern	1	11	.083	6	16	.273

Jan. 27 Score

Iowa 68, Wisconsin 62

Jan. 28 Scores

Michigan 79, Nebraska 68
Rutgers 70, Purdue 63

Jan. 29 Scores

Michigan State 79, Northwestern 50
Penn State 64, Indiana 49

Jan. 30 Scores

Illinois 59, Minnesota 51
Maryland 82, Iowa 72

Feb. 1 Scores

Ohio State 68, Indiana 59
Wisconsin 64, Michigan State 63
Michigan 69, Rutgers 63
Penn State 76, Nebraska 64
Purdue 61, Northwestern 58

Feb. 2 Score

Iowa 72, Illinois 65

Feb. 4 Scores

Maryland 56, Rutgers 51
Ohio State 61, Michigan 58
Penn State 75, Michigan State 70

Feb. 5 Scores

Purdue 104, Iowa 68
Minnesota 70, Wisconsin 52

Feb. 7 Score

Maryland 75, Illinois 66

Feb. 8 Scores

Michigan 77, Michigan State 68
Purdue 74, Indiana 62
Penn State 83, Minnesota 77
Iowa 96, Nebraska 72

Feb. 9 Scores

Wisconsin 70, Ohio State 57
Rutgers 77, Northwestern 73

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.

Feb. 13 Game

Iowa at Indiana, 8 p.m.

Feb. 15 Games

Purdue at Ohio State, 12 p.m.
Northwestern at Penn State, 12 p.m.
Wisconsin at Nebraska, 2:15 p.m.
Illinois at Rutgers, 4:30 p.m.
Maryland at Michigan State, 6 p.m.

Feb. 16 Games

Indiana at Michigan, 1 p.m.
Iowa at Minnesota, 1 p.m.

Feb. 18 Games

Illinois at Penn State, 6:30 p.m.
Purdue at Wisconsin, 7 p.m.
Northwestern at Maryland, 8 p.m.

Feb. 19 Games

Michigan at Rutgers, 7 p.m.
Indiana at Minnesota, 9 p.m.

Feb. 20 Games

Ohio State at Iowa, 7 p.m.
Michigan State at Nebraska, 8:30 p.m.

Feb. 22 Game

Michigan at Purdue, 2 p.m.

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Ohio State Scores Big Home Win Against Indiana

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For the first time in 2020, the Ohio State men's basketball team won back-to-back games, besting Indiana 68-59 in front of 18,809 fans at Value City Arena on Feb. 1.

"I've got great respect for the team we played, how hard they play and how well they're coached," said Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann. "It was a great win for our guys. Players win games. We had great leadership, in particular, between Kaleb (Wesson) and C.J. Walker on both ends."

The Buckeyes (14-7, 4-6) turned to the veteran trio of junior big man Kaleb Wesson, senior wing Andre Wesson and junior guard Walker to lead the team to victory over Indiana (15-7, 5-6).

Kaleb Wesson scored a game-high 15 points on 7-of-12 shooting and grabbed a game-high 11 rebounds, while Andre Wesson added 10 points and four assists while going 3 of 6 from the floor and 3 of 5 from deep in the win.

"Kaleb was terrific today," Holtmann said. "He was terrific on both ends. He had the one foolish foul in the second half, but Kaleb Wesson was terrific on both ends."

The Buckeyes were without freshman guard D.J. Carton, who stepped away from the team for personal reasons, and Walker rose to the occasion in his absence. The junior transfer from Florida State tallied 14 points, four assists and three steals while hitting 5 of 9 shots and 2 of 5 three-pointers.

"D.J. brings a lot to the table," Walker said. "He can get to the basket, create his own shot

and others', so we just try to figure out another way where everybody else can step up and do that."

The Hoosiers cut the Buckeyes' early 33-22 second-half lead to six points with a 5-0 streak on a triple by sophomore guard Rob Phinisee and a layup by freshman forward Trayce Jackson-Davis off an assist from Phinisee. Kaleb Wesson answered with a 4-0 spurt by himself to push Ohio State's lead to 37-27.

Ohio State and Indiana battled back and forth until the Buckeyes pushed their lead to 14 on an Andre Wesson three-pointer, 51-37, with 10:53 to go. Indiana redshirt freshman forward Jerome Hunter, a native of Pickerington, Ohio, seemed to give the Hoosiers a spark by converting an and-1 finish in response, but 11 points was the closest they would get until a Devonte Green three made it a nine-point game with 13 seconds left, the eventual final margin of victory.

The Buckeyes rallied on a 10-2 run after the Hunter three-point play, highlighted by three triples from sophomore wing Justin Ahrens, who finished with 11 points in 13 minutes off the bench. The burst gave Ohio State its largest lead of the game at 61-42 with 6:06 to play.

"You can't leave Justin or he's going to kill you," Kaleb Wesson said of Ahrens. "That's what he did today. He hit shots for us, and that was big."

In the opening minutes, Indiana junior forward Joey Brunk threw down a dunk to give IU a 7-6 lead with 17:06 left in the first half. From that point, the Buckeyes held the Hoosiers without any points for 6:30.

Ohio State used a 9-0 run to take a 15-7

lead before Phinisee made a layup to end the Indiana drought. Following the lay-in from Phinisee, the Buckeyes responded with a 7-1 stretch to extend their lead to 12 points with 8:56 to play before the half.

The Scarlet and Gray led by as many as 14 in the first half, but the visiting Hoosiers cut that lead to nine, 31-22, at the half.

In the first half, Ohio State shot 42.9 percent (12 of 28) and 23.1 percent (3 of 13) from beyond the arc while hitting all four of its free-throw attempts. Indiana hit 40.0 percent (8 of 20) of its shots, including 3 of 5 triples (60.0 percent), as well as 3 of 6 foul shots.

In the second half, Ohio State shot 50.0 percent (14 of 28) from the floor, 50.0 percent (7 of 14) on three-pointers and 50.0 percent (2 of 4) on free throws. The Hoosiers hit 50.0 percent (11 of 22) of their field goals, 57.1 percent (4 of 7) of their threes and 91.7 percent (11 of 12) of their foul shots, but their solid second-half shooting was not enough to come back against the Scarlet and Gray.

With Carton out for the foreseeable future, Walker is not overwhelmed by the increased expectations.

"I'm ready for this," Walker said. "Once he told us, I had to change what I have to do, it's created a little bit more weight on my shoulders, but I feel like I'm ready for it. And I'm just going to continue to do what I do and make the right plays for our team."

Kaleb Leads Ohio State Over Michigan 61-58

The Ohio State men's basketball team carried its momentum from back-to-back Big Ten wins to a 61-58 victory against Michigan at the Crisler Center in Ann Arbor, Mich., in front of 12,707 on Feb. 4.

Kaleb Wesson led Ohio State (15-7, 5-6) over the Wolverines (13-9, 4-7) with 23 points and 12 rebounds while shooting 9 of 14 from the field and 3 of 6 from beyond the arc.

"Kaleb was fantastic tonight leading the way," Holtmann said. "He imposed himself in a lot of ways."

The 6-9 forward credited the rest of the Buckeyes for his success, but he was the one who carried the team in a dominant performance.

"My teammates were finding me in the

right spots," he said. "The coaches were putting me in the right spots to succeed, and my teammates found me."

Sophomore guard Duane Washington provided a spark off the Buckeye bench with 17 points on 7-of-14 shooting, including 3 of 6 from three.

This rivalry game featured a play that one rarely will see on a basketball court. With Ohio State leading 57-56 with 33 seconds left, Michigan senior guard Xavier Simpson drew a shooting foul on Ohio State junior forward Kyle Young, but while Simpson was coming down, he grabbed Young's jersey and tore a hole in it. Upon review, the officials called a flagrant foul on Simpson following the shooting foul on Young.

Simpson and Young both knocked down a pair of free throws, forcing the Wolverines to foul Walker with 17.9 seconds left. The fourth-year junior guard calmly knocked down both foul shots to secure the Ohio State victory.

Earlier, Kaleb Wesson had converted a traditional three-point play to give the visiting Buckeyes a 54-53 lead with 2:21 left in the game. Michigan junior guard Eli Brooks responded with a three-pointer 30 seconds later, which Washington answered with a clutch triple of his own on a kick-out from Wesson with only 54 seconds remaining.

"Kaleb was making great plays toward the end of the game," Washington said. "He had two on the ball and found me at the top of the key, and I was just ready to knock it down."

Neither team had scored for more than two minutes (2:07) to open the second half until Michigan freshman guard Franz Wagner gave his squad a 30-28 lead with a triple. Washington then scored five points before the rivals battled back and forth for most of the final frame. There were eight ties in the final 20 minutes.

The Buckeyes took the biggest lead of the second half when they went up 46-42 on back-to-back layups from Washington and Young with 7:05 to play. Simpson, a Lima (Ohio) Senior product and cousin of former Buckeye Greg Simpson, then scored five straight points to give the home team the lead.

Michigan junior forward Austin Davis and Young exchanged offensive rebound put-backs to keep the difference at one before

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OHIO STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Washington drilled a three-pointer with 4:50 on the clock. Then Davis grabbed another offensive board and put it in to tie the game at 51.

Lockdown defense helped Ohio State defeat Michigan despite being outrebounded 42-31 and 12-5 on the offensive glass. The Buckeyes held the Wolverines to 33.3 percent (20 of 60) shooting and 32.3 percent (10 of 31) from deep, while shooting 42.1 percent (24 of 57) from the floor and 38.9 percent (7 of 18) from beyond the arc.

Neither team scored for the first 1:50 to open the game before Michigan sophomore forward Brandon Johns hit a three-pointer off an assist from Simpson. After Ohio State and Michigan exchanged baskets to make it 5-2, Kaleb Wesson ripped off a tone-setting 7-0 run that spanned 2:46 with a triple, hook shot and turnaround fadeaway.

Simpson ended the run with a jumper to make it 9-7, but the Buckeyes quickly responded with another 7-0 streak, sparked by a make from Washington and capped by Kaleb Wesson's rebound put-back and subsequent three-pointer with 8:52 until halftime. The run pushed the Buckeyes' lead to nine points, but Michigan used a 9-2 rally, starting with an old-fashioned three-point play by Davis, to cut the lead to 18-16.

After Kaleb Wesson and Johns traded makes from beyond the arc, Wagner hit a triple to give the Wolverines a 22-21 lead. The Scarlet and Gray answered with a 7-2 spurt, sparked by a lead-changing three-pointer from Ahrens, before a Brooks' triple made it 28-27 heading into halftime.

Ohio State led by only one point at the half, largely because it gave up seven offensive rebounds, and the Wolverines shot 5 for 5 on free throws, while the Buckeyes did not even attempt one.

The Scarlet and Gray shot 41.4 percent (12 of 29) from the floor and 44.4 percent (4 of 9) from three in the opening 20 minutes, while the Maize and Blue connected on just 31.0 percent (9 of 29) of their field goals and 25.0 percent (4 of 16) of their triples.

Kaleb Wesson had 15 of his points in the first half on 6-of-9 shooting and 3 of 5 from deep.

"It was a tough one," Washington said. "We knew it was a Big Ten road game, especially here against the team up north, you knew it was going to be a battle. It's a rivalry for us and we knew it was going to be a very physical game going into it."

Simpson led the Wolverines with 15 points, and Wagner pulled down 14 rebounds.

Ohio State Falls At Wisconsin For 2nd Loss Against Badgers

Failing to avenge its Jan. 3 home loss, Ohio State dropped a 70-57 loss to Wisconsin in front of a crowd of 17,287 at the Kohl Center in Madison, Wis., on Feb. 9.

After surrendering a 16-0 run to end the first half, Ohio State (15-8, 5-7) opened the final frame with a 7-0 run to cut Wisconsin's lead to 38-27. The Badgers responded to the

Ohio State 68, Indiana 59

Feb. 1, 2020 Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
	1	2	F									
Indiana (15-7, 5-6)	22	37	59									
Ohio State (14-7, 4-6)	31	37	68									
Indiana	Total FG	FT	Reb.	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Smith	28	1-4	3-3	0-2	1	3	5					
Jackson-Davis	34	2-6	3-4	2-5	2	1	7					
Brunk	22	1-3	2-4	0-2	1	2	4					
Durham	27	3-4	2-2	0-3	3	2	8					
Phinisee	27	4-7	1-2	0-2	3	0	11					
Franklin	7	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Green	18	4-8	2-2	1-1	0	0	13					
Davis	9	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	3	2					
Hunter	28	3-8	1-1	1-3	0	0	9					
Totals	200	19-42	14-18	4-20	10	12	59					
Percentages: FG: 45.2%. FT: 77.8%. 3-point field goals: 7-12 (Durham 0-1, Phinisee 2-3, Green 3-4, Hunter 2-4). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 5 (Jackson-Davis 3, Brunk, Phinisee). Turnovers: 13 (Davis 3, Jackson-Davis 2, Phinisee 2, Green 2, Durham, Franklin, Hunter, TEAM). Steals: 4 (Smith 2, Hunter 2).												
Ohio State	Total FG	FT	Reb.	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
A. Wesson	35	3-6	1-2	0-2	4	2	10					
Young	15	3-3	0-0	2-1	2	4	6					
K. Wesson	31	7-12	0-0	5-6	2	4	15					
Muhammad	28	2-8	0-0	0-0	3	1	5					
Walker	36	5-9	2-2	0-2	4	2	14					
Gaffney	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Washington	20	1-9	2-2	0-2	3	0	4					
Ahrens	13	4-6	0-0	1-2	0	0	11					
Liddell	19	1-3	1-2	1-2	1	3	3					
Totals	200	26-56	6-8	11-20	16	68						
Percentages: FG: 46.4%. FT: 75%. 3-point field goals: 10-27 (A. Wesson 3-5, K. Wesson 1-2, Muhammad 1-5, Walker 2-5, Washington 0-5, Ahrens 3-5). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 1 (K. Wesson). Turnovers: 10 (A. Wesson 3, Muhammad 2, Walker 2, Washington 2, Liddell). Steals: 6 (Walker 3, K. Wesson, Gaffney, Washington). Officials: McDunkins, Pfeifer, Boroski. Attendance: 18,809.												

Buckeye run with an extended 18-6 streak, pushing its lead to 56-33 with 10:43 to play.

The Badgers led by as many as 24 in the second half, cruising to the easy home victory. Wisconsin fifth-year senior guard Brevin Pritzl led all scorers with 19 points, while fourth-year junior guard D'Mitrik Trice, a Huber Heights, Ohio, native, added eight points and eight assists.

"We didn't defend well enough," Andre Wesson said. "They were hitting a lot of shots. They're real comfortable at home. We talked about it. We had to make them uncomfortable. And they just got in a rhythm, and they're a tough team when they get in a rhythm."

After Wisconsin took its biggest lead of the game, 63-39, at the 7:51 mark, Ohio State answered with a 16-4 run, showing some resiliency in the lopsided affair.

"Anytime you get down bad like that in a game, it's kind of hard," said Andre Wesson, who led the Buckeyes with 11 points and three triples. "You've just got to keep fighting back. Our guys did fight back toward the end. We tried to cut it down a few times but just couldn't keep it rolling."

Sophomore guard Luther Muhammad provided a spark as well, scoring nine points and snagging three steals despite playing through a separated shoulder injury.

Former Ohio State big man Micah Potter, a junior, drew his first start as a Badger and opened the game with a three-pointer. Walker put the Buckeyes on the board 2:10 into the

Ohio State 61, Michigan 58

Feb. 4, 2020 Crisler Center • Ann Arbor, Mich.												
	1	2	F									
Ohio State (15-7, 5-6)	28	33	61									
Michigan (13-9, 4-7)	27	31	58									
Ohio State	Total FG	FT	Reb.	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
A. Wesson	26	0-4	0-0	0-1	0	3	0					
Young	33	5-9	2-2	1-4	0	0	12					
K. Wesson	36	9-14	2-3	2-10	3	3	23					
Muhammad	18	0-3	0-0	0-1	1	1	0					
Walker	31	0-6	2-2	0-3	5	3	2					
Washington	31	7-14	0-3	0-3	2	0	17					
Ahrens	14	1-2	0-0	1-0	1	2	3					
Liddell	11	2-5	0-0	1-2	0	2	4					
Totals	200	24-57	6-10	5-26	12	14	61					
Percentages: FG: 42.1%. FT: 60%. 3-point field goals: 7-18 (A. Wesson 0-1, Young 0-1, K. Wesson 3-6, Muhammad 0-1, Walker 0-1, Washington 3-6, Ahrens 1-2). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 3 (Liddell 2, Muhammad). Turnovers: 8 (TEAM 3, Muhammad 2, Walker, Washington, Liddell). Steals: 3 (K. Wesson 2, Walker).												
Michigan	Total FG	FT	Reb.	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Johns	25	3-5	0-0	2-1	0	4	8					
Teske	35	1-7	1-2	1-5	1	1	3					
Simpson	35	5-14	2-2	1-6	5	3	15					
Wagner	38	2-12	2-2	3-11	1	3	8					
Brooks	31	3-12	0-0	0-1	1	0	8					
DeJulius	17	2-5	0-0	0-3	2	1	5					
Castleton	5	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Davis	14	4-4	3-3	2-1	0	2	11					
Totals	200	20-60	8-9	12-30	10	58						
Percentages: FG: 33.3%. FT: 88.9%. 3-point field goals: 10-31 (Johns 2-3, Teske 0-3, Simpson 3-7, Wagner 2-8, Brooks 2-8, DeJulius 1-2). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 5 (Johns, Teske, Wagner, Castleton, Davis). Turnovers: 12 (Simpson 4, Teske 2, Brooks 2, Davis 2, Wagner, DeJulius). Steals: 3 (Teske, Simpson, Wagner). Officials: Szelc, Cartensen, Wymer. Attendance: 12,707.												

game with a three of his own. But neither team scored again until Wisconsin freshman forward Tyler Wahl ended the drought with 14:24 until halftime to break the 3-3 tie.

Wisconsin pushed its lead to 7-3, but Ohio State answered with a 10-0 run capped by consecutive three-pointers from Andre Wesson to make it 13-7 Buckeyes with 10:38 until halftime.

"My teammates put me in great positions, got me the ball in great spots," Wesson said. "And I was able to knock some shots down, so it felt good."

After Wesson's threes, Wisconsin fired off a 13-2 stretch spanning to take a five-point lead with 6:38 on the clock.

After Washington and Potter traded baskets, Andre Wesson knocked down his third three-pointer in as many tries to cut the Badger lead to 22-20. The Badgers rallied behind their home crowd, holding the Buckeyes scoreless for the final 4:37 of the

Wisconsin 70, Ohio State 57

Feb. 9, 2020 Kohl Center • Madison, Wis.												
	1	2	F									
Ohio State (15-8, 5-7)	20	37	57									
Wisconsin (14-10, 7-6)	38	32	70									
Ohio State	Total FG	FT	Reb.	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
A. Wesson	32	3-7	2-2	1-3	0	1	11					
Young	20	2-3	0-0	2-1	3	3	4					
K. Wesson	27	2-11	4-4	3-3	0	2	8					
Muhammad	29	3-4	2-2	1-4	1	4	9					
Walker	36	2-8	4-4	0-2	2	4	9					
Gaffney	3	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	2					
Washington	20	2-8	2-2	0-2	1	0	6					
Ahrens	16	0-1	0-0	1-2	0	1	0					
Liddell	16	3-6	1-2	1-4	0	1	8					
Hummer	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	18-49	15-16	10-22	7	16	57					
Percentages: FG: 36.7%. FT: 93.8%. 3-point field goals: 6-19 (A. Wesson 3-4, K. Wesson 0-4, Muhammad 1-2, Walker 1-3, Washington 0-4, Liddell 1-2). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 4 (Young, K. Wesson, Gaffney, Liddell). Turnovers: 14 (A. Wesson 4, Walker 3, K. Wesson 2, Liddell 2, Young, Washington, TEAM). Steals: 5 (Muhammad 3, Young, Washington).												
Wisconsin	Total FG	FT	Reb.	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Ford	32	3-8	2-2	4-5	3	3	10					
Reuvers	23	3-8	3-3	1-2	1	5	9					
Potter	23	3-7	2-2	2-3	1	3	9					
Trice	32	3-8	0-0	1-2	8	1	8					
Davison	27	2-7	0-0	0-0	1	1	4					
Pritzl	33	7-13	0-1	0-5	2	0	19					
McGrory	1	0-1	1-2	0-0	0	0	1					
Higginbottom	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Wahl	11	1-3	0-0	2-0	0	2	2					
Anderson	14	2-3	2-2	0-1	1	1	8					
Cuevas	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Qawl	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Ballard	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	24-58	10-12	12-19	16	70						
Percentages: FG: 41.4%. FT: 83.3%. 3-point field goals: 12-32 (Ford 2-6, Reuvers 0-2, Potter 1-3, Trice 2-6, Davison 0-4, Pritzl 5-6, Wahl 0-2, Anderson 2-3). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 5 (Reuvers 3, Potter 2). Turnovers: 9 (Potter 3, Trice 3, Ford, Wahl, TEAM). Steals: 7 (Pritzl 2, Wahl 2, Reuvers, Potter, Trice). Officials: Pfeifer, Riley, Boroski. Attendance: 17,287.												

first half as part of the 16-0 run.

"That was a big momentum turn," Holtmann said. "They shoot it really well at home. Our close-outs weren't very good, but give them credit. They made a lot of shots."

Three-point shooting and turnovers made the biggest difference in the 38-20 first half. While Ohio State shot a respectable 4 of 10 from deep, Wisconsin hit eight first-half triples at 44.4 percent. The Buckeyes also gave the ball away nine times with only four assists, while the Badgers dished 10 assists with only four first-half turnovers.

"Riding on a three-game winning streak, to drop this one definitely hurts," Andre Wesson said. "But we've just got to get back in the gym and get back to work."

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OSU Reflects On Deaths Of Kobe, Gianna Bryant

On Jan. 26, the basketball world lost a legend in a helicopter crash that killed nine people, including former Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant, as well as his daughter Gianna.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

Kobe, an 18-time all-star, five-time NBA champion and former most valuable player, was 41 years old. Gianna was 13.

But Kobe was also more than one of the best players in NBA history. Because of his children – all four of whom are daughters – Bryant was also a major advocate for women's basketball, something that Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff was very aware of.

"Man, just to see him evolve as a person and as a parent and just how into his children he was and how into women's basketball he was, it felt like we lost obviously an amazing ambassador for our sport," McGuff told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "He would have been for a long time with his daughters and just his interest in the sport. It would have been really cool to see him really interject himself in such a positive way."

Gianna's favorite women's college basketball team was UConn, and she was likely to go there, assuming all her potential turned into an offer from one of the best programs in the sport. UConn honored one of its biggest fans by putting a jersey and flowers on one of its chairs before a matchup against Team USA.

As much of a strong advocate as Kobe already was, McGuff knows it would have only grown stronger once his daughter made her way into the college game.

"It probably pales in comparison to what it could have been over time, especially as his children grew and then were in college and beyond, and just to have him have a chance to be involved in all those levels, and that's a guy that can move the needle with support and so forth and just interest in our game," McGuff said. "Obviously the saddest thing is just the loss of life and how that's going to impact their family. But also for women's basketball, it's a huge loss."

The loss of Kobe and Gianna was equally tough for Ohio State's players. McGuff said that, while the team did not have a meeting specifically about it, the deaths did have a strong effect on his entire roster.

"I mean everybody's really sad," McGuff said. "It really had a profound impact on everybody that I know. You didn't have to even know him as a person to just be really sad about that tragic event."

One of those players is Janai Crooms. The sophomore guard said the loss of both Kobe and Gianna really hit her hard and that there are multiple areas of Kobe's game that she will continue to bring with her.

"He was at I think the UConn game and the reporter was like 'Why don't you have a boy?' or something like that, and (Gianna) was just like 'Nah, I got this.' That really touched me because she really just filled in her dad's shoes and just keep the legacy going," Crooms said. "His work ethic, just the things he did with his footwork, his hard work, it played a really big role in a lot of, not even just athletes, a lot of human beings

in the world, and just seeing a person like that, with that work ethic, it's really big.

"I want to do that also, just come in the gym, getting shots up no matter what, just conditioning, getting shots up, working on my footwork, just the little things because that's what matters."

Freshman guard Kierstan Bell was also impacted when she heard the news after shooting around in the practice gym. She said she saw the news on Twitter and "just started crying."

"I was hurt," Bell said. "As a basketball player, you look up to players like that and you want to meet them. He was one of the NBA players that really cared about women's basketball. A lot of people really don't look into girls' basketball, or sports in general."

Bell wears No. 24 for Ohio State, one of the two numbers that Kobe wore in his Lakers career. The other number is 8, which cannot be worn at the college level due to an NCAA rule that restricts any jersey number with a digit between six and nine.

"I grew up and I watched him. My stepdad's favorite player is Kobe Bryant, so when I was younger, we used to just sit down in the living room and watch him and watch his games and, you know, he's just inspiring," Bell said. "Wearing that number, you know it means a lot, because he was inspiring to me. His work ethic, oh my gosh, like nobody worked harder than him."

McGuff, Crooms and Bell each had a favorite Kobe memory from his career.

Crooms said it was Kobe's 60-point outing in his final NBA game against the Utah Jazz, a performance that ended with him making key shots down the stretch in order to secure the comeback victory.

McGuff also mentioned that game as one of his favorites but noted a different Kobe story he had heard about the legendary guard behind the scenes.

"At some point, the team wasn't playing well and there's a bunch of guys wearing Kobe's (sneakers) on the team and he said, 'You guys can't wear my shoes if you're going to play like

that,' " McGuff recalled, "which I thought was amazing leadership."

McGuff also mentioned another memory, one that Bell said was her absolute favorite in Kobe's storied tenure.

In a game on April 12, 2013, Kobe put up 34 points on the way to a 118-116 victory on the back of some difficult three-point makes while battling some clear ailments, but no two points were more difficult than his last two.

While getting fouled, Bryant was in clear pain for what ended up being a torn Achilles that would end his season. But before he left, he walked under his own power to the free-throw line, sank both attempts to tie the game, and then walked under his own power to the locker room.

"He tore his Achilles and he just still got out there and made his free throws, and that was just something that stood out to me because nobody's going to do that. He was very inspiring," Bell said. "He broke a lot of things on his body, but I know a lot of NBA players that wouldn't stay out there and shoot free throws. I know anybody else would have just went off and got off the court, but him, just standing there and shooting his free throws for his team."

"He thought about his team first, and that's what I am, a team player, so I mean I would have done it for my team, too."

McGuff said that if any Kobe Bryant moment were to exemplify what type of player he was, and what type of player he will always be remembered for, it is those two shots at the line.

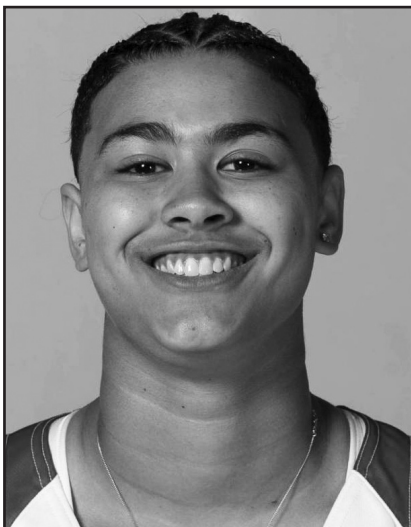
"I mean, that just kind of encapsulates everything you need to know about him as a basketball player," McGuff said.

Satterfield Enters Transfer Portal

One of the seven members of Ohio State's coveted 2019 class will be headed elsewhere. Freshman guard Kaelynn Satterfield has entered the transfer portal and will leave the Ohio State women's basketball program, according to a press release.

"I appreciate Kae's time and contributions this year," McGuff said in the release. "I wish

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Kierstan Bell
Freshman Guard
Canton, Ohio

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2019-20 Ohio State Women's Basketball Statistics

14-9 Overall (7-5 Big Ten)
Statistics through games of Feb. 9

Player	G-GS	Min.-Avg.	FG-FGA	Pct.	3P-3PA	Pct.	FT-FTA	Pct.	Rebounds		PF-FO	A	TO	BS	ST	Pts.-Avg.
									O-D	T-Avg.						
Dorka Juhasz	21-21	630-30.0	108-220	.491	24-60	.400	34-72	.472	60-119	179-8.5	28-0	21	32	24	28	274-13.0
Kierstan Bell	22-10	465-21.1	94-235	.400	38-126	.302	18-26	.692	22-76	98-4.5	35-1	35	51	18	33	244-11.1
Jacy Sheldon	23-14	599-26.0	69-150	.460	26-79	.329	29-35	.829	21-41	62-2.7	45-0	38	29	0	29	193-8.4
Aaliyah Patty	23-21	487-21.2	73-154	.474	14-51	.275	20-34	.588	31-101	132-5.7	65-1	22	36	25	23	180-7.8
Rebeka Mikulasikova	23-13	59-15.6	63-128	.492	18-41	.439	29-33	.879	18-48	66-2.9	45-1	14	34	7	9	173-7.5
Janai Crooms	22-10	551-25.0	66-146	.452	7-36	.194	24-46	.522	23-72	95-4.3	49-1	79	70	23	25	163-7.4
Braxtin Miller	23-22	712-31.0	61-191	.319	20-75	.267	23-37	.622	17-59	76-3.3	41-0	79	33	6	34	165-7.2
Madison Greene	23-11	488-21.2	51-120	.425	17-47	.362	37-49	.755	13-19	32-1.4	47-1	45	36	3	26	156-6.8
Kaelynn Satterfield	18-0	145-8.1	16-43	.372	2-11	.182	10-11	.909	10-22	32-1.8	16-0	5	21	0	3	44-2.4
Aixa Wone	20-5	214-10.7	17-45	.378	2-14	.143	5-9	.556	12-20	32-1.6	25-0	15	23	1	8	41-2.1
TEAM									35-41	76				9		
Ohio State	23	4650	618-1432	.432	168-540	.311	229-352	.651	262-618	880-38.3	396-5	353	374	107	218	1633-71.0
Opponents	23	4650	547-1390	.394	141-473	.298	287-410	.700	263-599	862-37.5	334-0	289	394	58	173	1522-66.2

her nothing but great success moving forward."

Satterfield had seen action in 18 games and averaged 2.4 points and 1.8 rebounds per contest, shooting 37.2 percent from the field in a team-low 8.1 minutes per game.

"We've had discussions throughout the year," McGuff said on Satterfield. "She's a great kid. I enjoyed getting to know her and having her. I just think she's looking for, maybe an opportunity to have a little more impact on the court, and I'm sure she'll find it."

"She's a really good player, and I'm wishing her all the best."

Satterfield was one of three players, along with Bell and Crooms, to face a one-game suspension earlier this season against Sacramento State, though the details of the suspension were never specified.

As of press time, Satterfield has yet to announce where she will be transferring.

Satterfield was a four-star prospect out of Christ the King High School in Middle Village, N.Y., and was the No. 16 wing and No. 88 overall recruit in her class, according to ESPN.

Wone Misses Illinois, Juhasz Gets Injured

Already down a player due to Satterfield's transfer, Ohio State played with just eight when it was announced that freshman forward Aixa Wone would miss the game against Illinois on Feb. 6 for personal reasons.

Wone opened the season as a starter but has fallen to just a role player lately, averaging 2.1 points and 1.7 rebounds per game in 19 contests

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

while averaging just 10.9 minutes per game heading into the matchup with Illinois.

McGuff said following the win over the Illini that he was not sure of the timetable for her return, but when asked on Feb. 7, he was more confident it would be soon.

"I think we're in a good place with that," McGuff said. "I don't want to say for certain, but I think we should be in a good place."

Wone returned to the lineup against Wisconsin, scoring two points in eight minutes.

Sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz's availability was also in question for the Wisconsin matchup on Feb. 9 after being banged up against Illinois. Juhasz started the game out strong, scoring 11 first-half points, but she scored just two points in the second half while the team picked up the slack for a 20-point win.

"It got swollen and I mean it's hurting, I'm not going to lie about that, but I'm trying to play against Wisconsin on Sunday," Juhasz said on Feb. 7 of her right ankle injury. "We'll see if I'm trying to move around a little bit today and tomorrow, and we'll see on Sunday."

McGuff did not seem concerned that the

injury to his leading scorer and rebounder would lead to an extended absence.

"She kind of tweaked something, I don't really know what it was because she went back in," McGuff said. "Hopefully with a couple of days here in between, we should be OK."

Even without the long-term concern, Juhasz was left out of the lineup against the Badgers, though McGuff said she likely could have played but was left out as a precaution.

Bell's Energy Earns Lady Buck Of The Month

Bell molded into her bench role with plenty of success in the month of January and earns Plank's Lady Buck of the Month for her efforts.

Bell averaged 11.0 points per game, 4.4 rebounds and 2.3 assists in Ohio State's seven January matchups, and she has consistently changed the game with her increased energy and spark that she provided off the bench.

As a freshman, Bell has had her cold spells from the field, but she has also helped pick the team up from slumps at a variety of points throughout the season.

BIG Women's Basketball

	Conf.			Overall		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	11	2	.846	20	4	.833
Maryland	11	2	.846	20	4	.833
Northwestern	9	2	.818	19	3	.864
Indiana	9	4	.692	19	6	.760
Rutgers	7	5	.583	17	6	.739
Ohio State	7	5	.583	14	9	.609
Michigan	6	5	.545	15	7	.682
Purdue	6	7	.462	15	10	.600
Minnesota	5	7	.417	15	8	.652
Nebraska	5	8	.385	15	9	.625
Michigan State	4	7	.364	11	11	.500
Wisconsin	3	10	.231	11	13	.458
Illinois	2	10	.167	11	12	.478
Penn State	1	12	.077	7	17	.292

Jan. 30 Scores

Maryland 85, Ohio State 65

Indiana 75, Wisconsin 65

Purdue 76, Michigan State 66

Northwestern 81, Michigan 73

Iowa 77, Penn State 66

Rutgers 72, Illinois 41

Minnesota 67, Nebraska 61

Feb. 2 Scores

Michigan 78, Iowa 63

Northwestern 82, Penn State 59

Wisconsin 73, Illinois 64

Minnesota 73, Rutgers 71

Ohio State 80, Nebraska 74

Feb. 3 Scores

Indiana 66, Purdue 54

Maryland 94, Michigan State 53

Feb. 6 Scores

Michigan 66, Purdue 63

Rutgers 72, Penn State 39

Iowa 76, Nebraska 60

Ohio State 78, Illinois 58

Maryland 79, Indiana 69

Minnesota 73, Wisconsin 64

Feb. 9 Scores

Maryland 79, Rutgers 50

Ohio State 82, Wisconsin 74

Illinois 70, Penn State 66

Iowa 83, Purdue 71

Indiana 57, Nebraska 53

Feb. 10 Games

Michigan at Minnesota, 7 p.m.

Michigan State at Northwestern, 9 p.m.

Feb. 13 Games

Iowa at Maryland, 6 p.m.

Northwestern at Michigan, 7 p.m.

Rutgers at Michigan State, 7 p.m.

Minnesota at Ohio State, 7 p.m.

Indiana at Illinois, 8 p.m.

Penn State at Nebraska, 8 p.m.

Purdue at Wisconsin, 8 p.m.

Feb. 16 Games

Michigan at Rutgers, 12 p.m.

Ohio State at Indiana, 2 p.m.

Maryland at Penn State, 2 p.m.

Purdue at Illinois, 3 p.m.

Wisconsin at Iowa, 3 p.m.

Nebraska at Northwestern, 3 p.m.

Feb. 17 Game

Minnesota at Michigan State, 6:30 p.m.

Feb. 19 Games

Illinois at Michigan, 7 p.m.

Nebraska at Ohio State, 7 p.m.

Rutgers at Northwestern, 8 p.m.

Maryland at Wisconsin, 8 p.m.

Feb. 20 Game

Michigan State at Purdue, 7 p.m.

Feb. 22 Games

Ohio State at Rutgers, TBA

Indiana at Minnesota, TBA

Illinois at Nebraska, TBA

Northwestern at Wisconsin, 12 p.m.

Penn State at Iowa, 3 p.m.

Feb. 23 Game

Michigan at Michigan State, 5 p.m.

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Buckeye Women Lose Big To Terrapins At Home

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It was fitting that Ohio State's first possession ended in a turnover. The sloppiness continued for the Buckeyes for much of the game, as they eventually fell to No. 17 Maryland 85-65 on Jan. 30 despite a comeback effort in the third quarter in front of a home crowd of 5,380.

"Pretty disappointed," junior guard Braxtin Miller said of the loss. "We have to be better though. It's really on us. We can't really blame anybody but us."

Maryland led Ohio State 45-23 at halftime, shooting 51.4 percent (19 of 37) from the field, led by 13 points from sophomore forward Shakira Austin. The Terrapins also held the Buckeyes to 26.9 percent shooting (7 of 26) and just two makes on seven three-point attempts. They also outscored Ohio State 28-8 in the paint and 13-4 on fastbreak points in the opening 20 minutes.

"Nothing was really clicking," Miller said. "We at least normally have one – offense or defense – and both were really not matching up. And we didn't make adjustments probably quick enough. We just got down a little too fast."

But the Buckeyes came out firing in the second half, scoring 13 of the first 19 points, five of which came from Miller, as the Buckeyes closed the gap to 51-36 at the 5:48 mark of the third.

After multiple games of struggling from the field (2-of-22 shooting in the past four games), Miller finally got it going, finishing with 15 points on 5-of-11 shooting.

The improved play did not end there, with Ohio State ending the third quarter on an 8-2 run

to make it 59-46 in favor of Maryland heading into the final frame. The Buckeyes began to make a dent into the big Terrapins lead thanks to a 16-7 rebounding advantage in the third.

Eventually, Maryland took the game back over, going on a 12-4 run to extend its lead to 19 points, 73-54 with 4:55 to play, and seal the win.

"They played really well, were really prepared," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said. "Their defense was really good early on, and we didn't get a lot of good shots and I don't think we reacted to that real well. And you have to play a lot better against Maryland if you want to have a chance to beat them."

Kaila Charles, who led the Terrapins with 28 points the last time the two teams met, was again a matchup nightmare for the Buckeyes, finishing with 19 points on 8-of-12 shooting.

Another problem that reared its head once again for Ohio State was the turnovers. After a 25-turnover performance against Maryland last time out, the Buckeyes again coughed up the ball frequently, finishing with 20 turnovers on the evening.

"They switch off screens and they push us to the half court, they apply a lot of pressure," said sophomore forward Aaliyah Patty. "That's very impactful on our turnovers and us trying to get to the basket and then finding the right people to kick it out to."

Maryland initially took charge of the game on an 18-3 run to end the first quarter up 23-8. The Terrapins forced nine turnovers in that quarter and committed only three, outscoring the Buckeyes 11-0 off those turnovers.

On the night, Ohio State shot 33.8 percent from the field (22 of 65) and 26.3 percent from

three (5 of 19). It could not contain Maryland, which ended with 55.7 percent shooting (34 of 61) on the night.

"I have to help them be a lot better on offense, that's my responsibility," McGuff said, "and then they have to make sure we show up in the next couple of days and have great energy and focus to move on to the next game."

Both Ohio State and Maryland were hit with key technical fouls in the fourth quarter. Austin was given a technical that moved her to four fouls early on in the final 10 minutes, while Ohio State freshman guard Kierstan Bell was given a personal foul, followed by a technical after disagreeing with the call, which gave her five and removed her from the game. Bell finished the game with six points and six rebounds.

The Buckeyes fell to 11-9 on the season and 4-5 in the Big Ten, while Maryland moved to 17-4 and 8-2 in the conference.

OSU Bounces Back With Overtime Win Over Huskers

Ohio State trailed big to a Big Ten opponent heading into the third quarter for the second straight game. This time, against a host Nebraska (15-7, 5-6) team in the middle of the Big Ten pack, it was in a game between two bubble teams for the NCAA tournament, and the Buckeyes again attempted to respond in the second half after trailing 49-34 at the break.

The Buckeyes did exactly that, outscoring the Cornhuskers 14-4 to open the third, holding Nebraska to 0-of-8 shooting from the field to trail 53-48 at 4:20 of the third.

After Ohio State managed to bring it all the way back to tie it heading into an extra frame, the Buckeyes (12-9, 5-5) finished the comeback, defeating the Cornhuskers 80-74 on Feb. 2 in front of 4,189 at Pinnacle Bank Arena.

"We really locked in there in the second half and played really hard on the defensive end of the floor and we did a great job," McGuff said. "It was a great win for our team though, because we really – obviously we had plenty of chances to go away and not keep fighting, but we stayed together, and we kept fighting and came away with a great win."

A Bell make with 1:44 to go in the fourth quarter brought Ohio State within two points, 68-66, and another basket from the freshman guard tied the game with just 63 seconds remaining.

Neither team scored from there to end regulation tied at 68.

A three by senior guard Hannah Whitish put Nebraska up 73-72 with 3:18 to go, and a split pair of free throws put the Cornhuskers up by two. The scored stayed the same until the 1:06 mark, when Patty hit a crucial and-1 to give Ohio State a 75-74 lead.

Freshman guard Madison Greene then forced a turnover before the Buckeyes' most veteran player hit the biggest shot of the game. Miller, who stepped up with 17 points, hit a crucial three to put Ohio State up four with 34 seconds to go.

"She played a great game," McGuff said of Miller. "Not only was that shot huge, but she displayed great leadership throughout, great poise. It was really an excellent game from Braxtin."

The Buckeyes got a stop on defense, then a pair of free throws by sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz officially sealed the game and gave Ohio State a solid road win to add to its résumé.

Despite another poor start to a game, the Buckeyes outscored Nebraska 46-25 in the second half and overtime to earn the victory.

After not attempting a free throw the entire first half, while the Cornhuskers hit 9 of 11 from the charity stripe, Ohio State hit 7 of 14 attempts in the third quarter to help make it a six-point game, 59-53, with just a quarter left to play.

The Buckeyes may have outscored Nebraska 19-10 in the third quarter, but they did not shoot well, hitting 5 of 21 attempts (23.8 percent) in the quarter. But Ohio State's defense stepped up, allowing Nebraska to hit just one of its 12 attempts (8.3 percent) from the field in the third.

Defense was the key for the Buckeyes throughout the second half, holding the Cornhuskers to 6-of-38 shooting (15.8 percent) in the final 25 minutes of regulation and overtime.

"No question," McGuff said on if defense was the key to the comeback. "Our transition defense was really bad in the first half, so we got that cleaned up. We talked about it at halftime, and then our ball-screen defense got a little bit better, and those were the biggest things in the first half that we weren't really doing well."

"Once we started doing that, now we're getting more stops and we can get in transition. But it really started with our defense for sure."

Three players finished with double-doubles for the Buckeyes for the second time in school history (Feb. 21, 2015, against Iowa): Juhasz (12 points, 13 rebounds), Patty (12 points, 12 rebounds) and Bell (16 points, 12 rebounds), the latter of which was Bell's first double-double of her collegiate career.

On the game, Ohio State shot just 33.0 percent (29 of 88) and held Nebraska to 33.3 percent shooting (23 of 69). And with a 64-49 rebounding advantage, 44-28 after the break, it was enough to overcome the 15-point halftime deficit.

"I just thought our effort and our toughness around the basket with our rebounding was really good, and that's what we need," McGuff said. "I loved seeing Kierstan get in there with 12 rebounds. I thought that was excellent."

Nebraska made five of its first seven three-point attempts and shot 60 percent (6 of 10) from deep in the first half to take a 49-34 lead in the opening 20 minutes.

After leading by just two, 25-23, coming into the second quarter, the Cornhuskers outscored Ohio State 24-11 in the final 10 minutes of the opening half, while the Buckeyes shot 4 of 19 in the quarter (21.1 percent), while also turning it over six times.

Part of that disastrous second quarter was a 10-0 Nebraska run that extended the lead to 44-29 with 2:14 to go in the half.



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OHIO STATE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Maryland 85, Ohio State 65

Jan. 30, 2020												
Value City Arena • Columbus, Ohio												
	1	2	3	4	F							
Maryland (17-4, 8-2)	23	22	14	26	85							
Ohio State (11-9, 4-5)	8	15	23	19	65							
Maryland	Total FG FT				Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Austin	18	6-12	3-8	1-6	0	4	15					
Jones	31	5-7	0-0	4-4	0	3	10					
Charles	30	8-12	3-7	2-3	1	3	19					
Mikesell	33	4-11	5-6	0-2	2	1	15					
Watson	36	4-7	1-2	1-8	7	1	9					
Owusu	11	0-1	2-2	0-0	1	2	2					
Miller	27	6-8	0-0	1-5	1	4	13					
Masonius	11	1-3	0-0	1-0	1	1	2					
Vujacic	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	34-61	14-25	12-29	13	85						
Percentages: FG: 55.7%. FT: 56.0%. 3-point field goals: 3-13 (Mikesell 2-7, Watson 0-3, Miller 1-3). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 9 (Jones, Charles 3, Watson 4, Miller). Turnovers: 17 (Austin 3, Charles 3, Mikesell 3, Watson 4, Owusu, Miller 2, Masonius). Steals: 8 (Austin 3, Charles, Mikesell, Watson 2, Miller).												
Ohio State	Total FG FT				Reb.							
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	31	5-10	2-3	5-4	1	1	14					
Patty	19	3-9	1-2	1-5	0	4	7					
Greene	22	0-4	4-6	1-1	2	2	4					
Sheldon	33	3-6	2-2	1-0	0	2	9					
Miller	32	5-11	3-5	1-4	2	1	15					
Crooms	23	3-8	0-2	1-1	0	1	6					
Mikulasikova	10	0-1	0-0	1-0	0	1	0					
Bell	15	3-11	0-0	2-4	0	5	6					
Satterfield	11	0-4	4-4	3-1	0	2	4					
Wone	4	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	2	0					
Totals	200	22-65	16-24	19-20	5	21	65					
Percentages: FG: 33.8%. FT: 66.7%. 3-point field goals: 5-19 (Juhasz 2-3, Patty 0-2, Sheldon 1-3, Miller 2-5, Crooms 0-1, Bell 0-4, Wone 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 3 (Juhasz 2, Mikulasikova). Turnovers: 20 (Patty 2, Greene 2, Sheldon 5, Miller 2, Crooms, Mikulasikova 3, Bell 4, Satterfield). Steals: 8 (Juhasz, Patty, Greene, Sheldon, Miller, Mikulasikova, Bell 2). Officials: Roberts, Napier, Zentz. Attendance: 5,380.												

Freshman forward Rebeka Mikulasikova led the way for the Buckeyes in the first half with 10 points on 4-of-7 shooting, hitting two of her three attempts from behind the arc.

Whitish paced the Huskers with 16 points for the game, while Kate Cain added 14 points and 13 rebounds.

Following the victory, McGuff noted the importance of a win like this one while still saying that every game is important the rest of the way for a team fighting for its NCAA tournament life.

"We're kind of going one day at a time, but this is a huge win," McGuff said. "I have a lot of respect for Nebraska. They've got a great team and this is a really hard place to play, so a great win for our team."

Ohio State Pulls Away Late From Illini

Halfway through the third quarter, Ohio State and Illinois found themselves in almost the exact same situation as last time they played.

On Jan. 19, the Buckeyes and the Illini were tied 37-37 with 5:04 to go in the third frame. Ohio State would end that game on a 40-10 run to win by 30. On Feb. 6, Illinois took a 40-39 lead with 5:02 to go in the third quarter. And again, Ohio State pulled away, this time with a 20-point win, 78-58, in front of a road crowd of 2,388.

"It was weird," McGuff said. "The same thing as last time. They played well and we were kind of going back and forth, and then finally we just kind of broke away late. It was probably a little bit of a closer game than the final score indicated, but I'm just happy we got going."

After going down by one on a three by Brandi Beasley, the Buckeyes immediately went on an 8-0 run and eventually led by seven, 52-45, heading into the fourth. But the Illini (10-12, 1-10) did not go down without a fight, scoring five straight to start the final frame to make it a 52-50 game. Still, one variable remained the same: Bell.

The Ohio State freshman guard hit a pair of threes 40 seconds apart to put the Buckeyes up eight, and then a fellow freshman guard, Jacy Sheldon, buried another to give Ohio State an 11-point lead that would never again be in doubt.

En route to the 20-point win, the Buckeyes scored 15 of the final 20 points and outscored Illinois 26-13 in the fourth quarter.

The scoring was even throughout the lineup

Ohio State 80, Nebraska 74

Feb. 2, 2020

Pinnacle Bank Arena • Lincoln, Neb.

	1	2	3	4	OT	F						
Ohio State (12-9, 5-5)	23	11	19	15	12	80						
Nebraska (15-7, 5-6)	25	24	10	9	6	74						
Ohio State	Total FG FT			Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	37	4-13	2-6	1-10	1	2	12					
Patty	33	5-15	1-1	3-9	2	2	12					
Greene	31	4-8	0-0	1-1	2	3	8					
Sheldon	19	0-4	0-0	1-1	2	4	0					
Miller	36	5-12	4-5	1-3	4	4	17					
Mikulasikova	17	4-8	3-4	2-1	0	4	13					
Crooms	19	1-10	0-2	5-3	1	0	2					
Bell	30	6-18	2-2	3-9	1	2	16					
Satterfield	4	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Totals	225	29-88	12-20	25-39	13	21	80					
Percentages: FG: 33.0%. FT: 60.0%. 3-point field goals: 10-36 (Juhasz 2-5, Patty 1-5, Greene 0-2, Sheldon 0-4, Miller 3-6, Mikulasikova 2-3, Crooms 0-1, Bell 2-10). Team rebounds: 7. Blocked shots: 9 (Juhasz, Patty, Greene, Mikulasikova, Crooms, Bell 4). Turnovers: 14 (Greene, Sheldon 2, Miller 3, Crooms 2, Bell 6). Steals: 13 (Juhasz 5, Patty 2, Greene 3, Miller, Crooms, Bell).												
Nebraska	Total FG FT			Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Veerbeek	18	0-5	2-2	1-4	0	3	2					
Cain	35	6-8	2-2	2-11	0	3	14					
Whitish	36	4-8	5-5	0-5	1	3	16					
Haiby	28	2-10	2-2	0-6	7	1	7					
Eliely	33	3-11	1-2	1-2	3	0	9					
Brady	10	1-2	1-2	0-1	0	0	4					
Brown	28	3-11	3-6	1-4	3	3	9					
Bourne	27	4-14	4-5	1-3	0	1	13					
Mershon	10	0-0	0-0	1-1	0	1	0					
Totals	225	23-69	20-26	11-38	14	15	74					
Percentages: FG: 33.3%. FT: 76.9%. 3-point field goals: 8-23 (Veerbeek 0-1, Whitish 3-7, Haiby 1-2, Eliely 2-6, Brady 1-2, Brown 0-2, Bourne 1-3). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 12 (Cain 8, Eliely, Bourne 3). Turnovers: 18 (Veerbeek 3, Cain 6, Whitish 4, Brady, Brown 2, Bourne 2). Steals: 9 (Whitish 4, Haiby, Eliely 2, Bourne 2). Officials: Resch, Enlund, Cross. Attendance: 4,189.												

for the Buckeyes, with five players finishing in double figures. Juhasz and Patty led the way, finishing with 13 points apiece while adding 11 total rebounds. Juhasz shot 4 of 5 from the field, while Patty hit six of her seven attempts.

McGuff said a lot of the success had to do with an improved ball movement on the offensive side of the court.

"Tonight, we really moved the ball well," McGuff said. "They played a lot of zone. Our ball movement was really good, we were making the extra pass. We had 19 assists, which is indicative of how well we were moving ourselves and the ball vs. their zone."

Bell was less efficient, making four of her 14 shots, but she finished with 12 points and seven rebounds and made all her offense from behind the arc.

Ohio State led Illinois 33-29 at halftime behind the play of its two primary bigs: Juhasz and Mikulasikova. Juhasz had a team-high 11 points with four rebounds, while Mikulasikova added six points and three boards. The duo was a perfect 7 of 7 from the field in the half, while the rest of the team was a combined 6-of-19 shooting.

Beasley, a senior guard, kept the Illini in it before the break with 13 points on 5-of-8 shooting, including 3 of 6 from three.

Ohio State was very effective from the field overall, hitting 49.1 percent (28 of 57) of its shots, including 46.2 percent (12 of 26) from deep. The Buckeyes also held Illinois to 31.7 percent (20 of 63) overall and 32.1 percent (9 of 28) from three on the night.

The Buckeyes dressed only eight players for the game against the Illini and will likely be dressing only nine for the near future. Freshman guard Kaelynn Satterfield entered the transfer portal prior to the game, and freshman forward Aixa Wone missed the game due to personal reasons (see Double Dribble, page 33).

On Wone, McGuff said there was no immediate timetable on when he expected her back in the lineup.

"No, but hopefully sooner rather than later," he said.

The win was the second straight for the Buckeyes (13-9, 6-5).

"We just won two straight, and we've shown this year that we can really bounce back after a tough loss," McGuff said. "But now we have to show that we can handle a little bit of success."

Ohio State 78, Illinois 58

Feb. 6, 2020												
State Farm Center • Champaign, Ill.												
	1	2	3	4	F							
Ohio State (13-9, 6-5)	16	17	19	26	78							
Illinois (10-12, 1-10)	15	14	16	13	58							
Ohio State	Total FG		FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Juhasz	24	4-5	3-4	1-5	1	1	13					
Patty	26	6-7	0-0	3-2	2	2	13					
Greene	28	2-6	0-0	0-0	2	2	6					
Sheldon	31	3-7	4-4	2-6	5	3	11					
Miller	32	1-6	1-2	0-3	3	2	4					
Mikulasikova	16	4-6	2-2	1-3	0	3	10					
Bell	26	4-14	0-0	1-6	2	1	12					
Crooms	18	4-6	0-0	1-7	4	1	9					
Totals	200	28-57	10-12	10-34	19	15	78					
Percentages: FG: 49.1%. FT: 83.3%. 3-point field goals: 12-26 (Juhasz 2-2, Patty 1-1, Greene 2-4, Sheldon 1-3, Miller 1-4, Bell 4-11, Crooms 1-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 3 (Juhasz, Patty, Crooms). Turnovers: 17 (Juhasz 3, Patty, Greene 2, Sheldon, Miller 2, Mikulasikova 2, Bell 3, Crooms 3). Steals: 9 (Greene, Sheldon 3, Miller 2, Bell 3).												
Illinois	Total FG		FT	Reb.								
	Min.	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.					
Myles	27	2-3	3-5	4-3	2	2	7					
Andrews	30	3-7	1-2	3-1	3	5	8					
Beasley	32	6-14	0-0	1-4	0	1	16					
Terry	23	0-6	0-0	0-3	4	1	0					
Holesinska	31	6-15	1-2	0-3	0	4	17					
Peebles	16	0-5	1-2	0-1	1	0	1					
Joens	23	2-11	2-3	2-3	0	0	6					
Ephraim	12	1-1	1-2	1-3	1	1	3					
Rice	6	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Totals	200	20-63	9-16	13-20	11	14	58					
Percentages: FG: 31.7%. FT: 56.3%. 3-point field goals: 9-28 (Andrews 1-4, Beasley 4-11, Terry 0-1, Holesinska 4-9, Joens 0-3). Team rebounds: 15. Blocked shots: 1 (Myles). Turnovers: 16 (Myles, Andrews 2, Beasley 5, Holesinska 2, Peebles, Joens 2, Ephraim 3). Steals: 10 (Myles, Andrews, Terry 2, Holesinska 2, Peebles, Joens, Ephraim 2).												
Officials: Morris, Bird, Herriman-Camarota.												
Attendance: 2,388.												

Healthy Meyer Is Making Most Of Senior Season

Better late than never, and better of late has been the career of Ohio State senior forward Carson Meyer.

The sixth-round pick (No. 179) of the Columbus Blue Jackets in the 2017 NHL draft has endured illness, injuries and a transfer from Miami (Ohio) after his sophomore season to become one of the Buckeyes' most productive players in the second half of this season.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

"I definitely feel like I'm starting to come into my own and starting to play like I know I can," he said. "The more I do it the better I feel about my game. Success breeds success, you know."

Meyer, from the Columbus suburb of Powell, has 21 points (11 goals, 10 assists) in 29 games.

It's a far cry from this time two years ago when a mysterious illness sapped his strength while playing for Miami when he had 10 points (6-4) in 34 games. By his estimation he underwent 10 blood tests and was treated for mononucleosis and a low B12 level among other things.

Eventually it was discovered he had a 25-inch tapeworm that caused his problems by robbing him of proteins and other nutrients. Yes, it was scary and disturbing.

He decided to transfer after he felt the coaching staff at Miami didn't take his medical issues seriously. Meyer was successful in his appeal to not sit a season after transferring and had 22 points (nine goals, 13 assists, 36 games) in an uneven 2018-19 season for the Buckeyes.

"We were just talking about that as coaches the other day," said Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik. "It's like he figured it out now. How much of that up and down last year, maybe some this year, was just coming into a new program?"

"Essentially missing a whole year of playing his last year at Miami, none of us can understand the difficulties he had and what he went through. But I know it was a struggle physically, mentally and it took him a long time to work through that.

"Off the ice, he was in great shape and in great condition but to suddenly go through all those things on the ice again for a different program, a different team, you know it took him a little while. It was almost like he was a freshman again."

Meyer wanted to make the most of his senior season before turning pro but had several setbacks along the way. He had a sprained ankle, recovered, then sprained it again and also suffered a concussion from an illegal hit against Michigan on Nov. 1 and was forced to sit the next night.

He could have been frustrated but instead relied on his previous experiences.

"I think just having faced some adversity in the past probably better prepared me for overcoming these minor injuries my senior year," Meyer said.

Rohlik said the Buckeyes are finally getting the benefit of a healthy Meyer.

"His role is to come out and be that kind of energy player that you know can score goals," he said. "He's got a great shot, but I think his physical attributes are an asset to him. If he brings that intensity, he can get himself in the right areas to score."

Meyer (5-11, 185) understands that his future after Ohio State is playing solidly at both ends of the ice.

"You know you're not going to play at the next level if you're not a two-way forward," he said. "It's not just about scoring. The coaches here have been great. I mean I can't thank them enough. They'll harp on me when they have to, but when they get on me and coach me, they've really molded me into a much better player than when I got here."

He said he doesn't feel added pressure knowing the Blue Jackets development staff is just down the road and always keeping tabs on him.

"It's not really something I think about very much," Meyer said. "I just go into the

game and try to play well and execute our game plan. If I start thinking about who's in the stands or that stuff, I'll start to play worse and not focus on the right things."

Making Up Lost Time

Freshman forward Jaedon Leslie (6-1, 187) is another Buckeye who's had to overcome injuries and is contributing now.

The St. Albert, Alberta, native missed the first 17 games and didn't debut until Dec. 28 vs. Colgate. One game later he got his first assist. Leslie's first goal came in his seventh game Feb. 1 at Michigan, and it proved to be the winner in a 4-1 victory.

"He'll remember that for the rest of his life," Rohlik said. "Your first goal against the Team UP North and it's a game-winner. Too bad their guy shot it up in the crowd, so he won't get that puck back. But it's great for him, and it does help your team."

Leslie netted his second goal of the season the following game on Feb. 7 in a 2-2 tie with Penn State and added an assist in the second game of the series the following night.

He said it was difficult having to sit the first part of the season.

"I had great support from my teammates and coaching staff and along with the training staff so it made that period a little bit easier for myself," he said.

It's A Miracle

Feb. 22 marks the 40th anniversary of the "Miracle on Ice" when a group of American college players defeated the vaunted Russians 4-3 in a semifinal at the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y.


The upset, called the greatest in American sports history by many, came against the backdrop of a toxic political environment with Russia and a dim outlook on the home front. The game was immortalized in the 2004 Disney docudrama "Miracle."

Coincidentally, Rohlik watched the movie on his iPad on the bus back from the Michigan series.

Rohlik was a 12-year-old at hockey practice in St. Paul, Minn., when he heard that the United States had somehow won. The game was not shown live in America (5 p.m. Friday) and there was no Internet to follow the action live.

"My dad picked me up after practice, and I think we picked up some things on the radio," he said.

About six years later he had a chance



Men's Hockey

	Pts.	W	L	T	OTL
Penn State	33	10	7	3	0
Michigan State	31	10	7	1	0
Ohio State	31	9	8	3	1
Minnesota	31	8	6	4	3
Notre Dame	28	7	7	4	3
Michigan	27	8	8	2	1
Wisconsin	17	5	14	1	1

to play for legendary Olympic coach Herb Brooks (played by Kurt Russell) in an all-star game in Minnesota.

"Everything you see in the movies is exactly what he was like," Rohlik said. "I really got to know him, and I'm just very thankful to have the opportunity to play for a guy like Herb Brooks."

Tough Times

The No. 13 Buckeyes (16-10-4, 9-8-3-1 Big Ten) went 1-2-1 in four games since the last issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

OSU split the series in Ann Arbor. A 3-2 loss in the Jan. 31 opener extended the Buckeyes' losing streak to three games before Leslie helped secure the 4-1 win the second night.

The Dec. 7 series opener vs. Penn State was officially a tie but the Buckeyes earned the extra conference point when senior Sam McCormick scored in the second round of the shootout.

Penn State took the rematch 6-3, jumping to a 3-0 lead. OSU got to within 4-3 late before allowing two empty-net goals.

The Nittany Lions lead the conference with 33 points. OSU, Michigan State and Minnesota are tied for second at 31.

Ohio State has an open weekend Feb. 14-15, so the Buckeyes could drop before playing at Michigan State on Feb. 21-22.

The regular-season finale weekend is Feb. 28-29 at Value City Arena vs. Wisconsin. The first game is at 6 p.m., the second 8 p.m.

Meyer On Fire

Meyer is the Varsity Club Icer of the Month for January. He had eight points (five goals, three assists) in nine games, including the overtime goal to beat Army on Jan. 4.

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

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For December



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Buckeye Grapplers Cap Home Season With Win

Ohio State celebrated senior night on Feb. 9 with a 28-10 win over Northwestern, improving to 10-3 on the season and 6-3 in the Big Ten. The Buckeyes have just five seniors, and the two in the starting lineup shone against the Wildcats.

Luke Pletcher won his bout with Alec McKenna at 141 pounds, with a 13-4 major decision. Kollin Moore found a similar result against No. 13 Lucas Davison, rallying for a 14-9 decision, meaning that the top-ranked senior duo both sit at 23-0 on the year entering the regular-season finale against Penn State on Feb. 15.

ON THE MAT Patrick Mayhorn

Ke-Shawn Hayes has struggled with injuries for years and didn't get the chance to wrestle in his final home match, but he was recognized before the dual. Joining Hayes were Kevin Snyder (the brother of OSU great Kyle) and Hunter Lucas, both of whom are redshirt juniors who have graduated and will not be returning for a fifth season.

Pletcher and Moore weren't the only Buckeyes who showcased elite form in the win against Northwestern. Fritz Schierl, Rocky Jordan, Gary Traub, Jordan Decatur and Sammy Sasso helped the Buckeyes overcome losses from Ethan Smith, Dylan Koontz and Elijah Cleary. The win over Northwestern was a return of sorts for the Buckeyes, who dropped a dual to Nebraska on Feb. 2, 19-14.

Against the No. 6 Huskers, Ohio State had trouble finding its offense, securing just two bonus points on the match: one from Sasso (13-4 major decision against No. 15 Collin Purinton) and one from Pletcher (10-1 major decision against No. 6 Chad Red).

Nebraska had similar struggles, securing just two bonus points and losing a team point because of an unsportsmanlike conduct at 174 pounds. However, the Huskers took six bouts and secured the win with a pin from No. 4 Isaiah White against No. 13 Smith at 165 pounds. The Buckeyes fell to No. 7 in the nation after the loss.

That said, coach Tom Ryan remains high on his team's chances entering the final stretch.

"I think we're in a good place," Ryan said. "I like the energy of the team, I like the toughness of this team, I like the camaraderie of this team."

Kinner Debuts At 157 Pounds

Redshirt freshman Quinn Kinner made a second debut of the season of sorts in Ohio State's 43-3 win over Maryland on Jan. 29. The New Jersey native had made his initial collegiate duals debut as a 133-pounder against Stanford, defeating Brandon Kier, 7-1.

However, struggles early in the season with keeping his weight down sparked a change for Kinner, who originally competed with Pletcher for the starting role at 141 pounds. After roughly two months of work, Kinner re-debuted, 24 pounds heavier than he was during his last showing at 133 pounds (a 7-1 loss to Virginia Tech's No. 17 Collin Gerardi on Nov. 17).

In his 157-pound debut, Kinner made quick work of Maryland's backup, Lucas Cordio. He delivered a 16-1 tech fall victory, grabbing two bonus points for the Buckeyes on the way to the blowout victory over the Terrapins.

While it was an encouraging showing for Kinner at a weight that Ohio State has struggled greatly with this season, the inconsistency returned against Nebraska. Kinner was defeated

by Peyton Robb, 8-3. He spent much of the match playing defense after a start that saw him beaten badly. Against Northwestern, Kinner returned to the bench, replaced by the usual 157-pounder Cleary, who was defeated by No. 1 Ryan Deakin against the Wildcats in an 11-2 major decision.

Still, Ohio State's staff saw signs to build on from Kinner, who may be the future at 157 for the Buckeyes, as Cleary is a redshirt junior.

"He hasn't been there long," assistant coach J Jagers said. "He got the nod at Maryland but it wasn't against their starter, so we didn't get to learn as much as we hoped. Against (Robb), who I think is really good, he got thrown to his back right away and he was in a hole, 6-0. Match ends, 8-3, so it was even for the last six minutes but I still didn't learn as much as I had hoped."

It seems that Kinner's duals season is likely over, but OSU will continue grabbing as much info as it can on his ability at a heavier class.

"That weight class is still in flux a little bit," Jagers said. "We're still looking for consistency at the weight class. Cleary has been pretty consistent, but he's lost a few tight ones that we've got to see him jump levels and get those wins. That's still a question."

Sasso Rises To No. 1

Ohio State entered the season as a team with plenty of top-tier talent but lacking in proven depth, due in large part to a tremendously young roster. With only a few experienced upperclassmen on the team, including a few who had yet to prove they could compete at an elite level, there were questions about significant gaps in the Buckeye lineup.

While some of those gaps have yet to be filled, others have been filled admirably, with one spot – 149 pounds – providing what seems to be Ohio State's next star in Sasso.

Sasso started the season strong, rattling off wins in early duals while dropping just two matches: one to Virginia Tech's Brent Moore by way of pin, a loss he avenged at the Cliff Keen Invitational; and one to Minnesota's Brayton Lee at the Cliff Keen finals.

Since that loss to Lee however, Sasso has been untouchable. He's risen to 21-2 on the season, knocking off top-tier opponent after top-tier opponent in a run that peaked with wins over Iowa's then No. 1 Pat Lugo and Minnesota's Lee

two days later, giving Sasso revenge for his loss to Lee in December. Although he was sure to say that it wasn't the only guiding factor, the chance to avenge his loss to Lee played heavily in Sasso's mind entering the fight.

"Of course it's going to be there, but you can't let that control you, you can't go all in on that," Sasso said. "You still have to focus on the task at hand, and that's going out there to compete for seven minutes. I'd be lying if I said it wasn't extra motivation. He's a tough competitor, and we have a long history. I know he's tough, but it definitely was in my mind."

His excellent weekend moved him to No. 2 in his weight class, just behind Oklahoma State's Boo Lewallen, who was undefeated at the time. A loss for Lewallen to Missouri's Brock Mauller changed that. Sasso toppled another ranked foe, Nebraska's Purinton on Feb. 4.

Sasso found himself atop his weight class, leaping Lewallen and announcing himself not just as a title contender, but as the potential favorite entering the final stretch of the season. He isn't alone as a top-ranked Buckeye. He joined Moore, who has spent nearly the entire season as the best 197-pounder, and Pletcher, who jumped into the top spot after defeating Oklahoma's then-No. 1 Dom Demas at the Cliff Keen.

Ohio State's three top-ranked wrestlers put it in a class of its own. Iowa has the next most top-ranked wrestlers with two.

Neither Moore nor Pletcher has shown any signs of faltering throughout the season, and they appear to be strong favorites for Big Ten and national championship consideration.

Sasso, on the other hand, is in what may be

BIG Wrestling

	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Iowa	8	0	1.000	11	0	1.000
Penn State	7	1	.875	10	2	.833
Ohio State	6	2	.750	10	3	.769
Illinois	6	2	.750	9	3	.750
Michigan	5	2	.714	6	4	.600
Nebraska	4	3	.571	9	3	.750
Minnesota	4	3	.571	9	6	.600
Purdue	4	4	.500	11	5	.688
Wisconsin	3	5	.375	10	5	.667
Rutgers	3	5	.375	9	6	.600
Northwestern	2	5	.286	4	6	.400
Michigan State	2	7	.222	7	9	.438
Indiana	1	8	.111	1	9	.100
Maryland	0	8	.000	2	14	.125

the nation's most crowded division. Lugo, North Carolina's Austin O'Connor, Mauller, Lewallen, Lee and Iowa State's Jarrett Degen have all shown championship potential throughout the season, putting each in strong contention when the March national championships roll around.

"No one really stands out, and when you watch Sammy he looks like he has a chance," Ryan said.

"We're in a position now with three number ones, that gives us a chance to win (the national title). We're in it, we just need the support at a few other weights. We need those three to be what they are, win some tight matches, tight positions down the road, and we need some other guys to step up. If we can do that we're in the hunt, and we're excited."

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Dantonio Resigns As Michigan State Head Coach

The winningest coach in the history of Michigan State football, Mark Dantonio announced his resignation from his post as head coach on Feb. 4.

"Every February since 2007, I have reset this program in preparation for the next year's challenges," Dantonio wrote on Twitter. "After much reflection and discussion with my family, I feel that it is now time for change as we enter into a new decade of Michigan State football."

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

With Dantonio at the helm, the Spartans went 114-57, won three Big Ten championships and made an appearance in the 2015 College Football Playoff after handing Ohio State its only loss of that season.

The Green and White have struggled recently, however, finishing just 7-6 in each of the past two seasons. Had Dantonio resigned one month earlier, he would not have received a \$4.3 million retention bonus.

He resigned shortly after lawyers representing former Michigan State staff member Curtis Blackwell alleged Dantonio had committed multiple recruiting violations, including the arrangement of jobs for the parents of former player Auston Robertson, who signed with the Spartans in 2016. Robertson was accused of sexual assault

in April of 2017 and suspended from the team.

"No relevance whatsoever," Dantonio said when asked if the allegations had any impact on the timing of his announcement.

Michigan State athletic director Bill Beekman said the school was aware of Blackwell's allegations and said the school would defend Dantonio in court if necessary.

"To the best of our knowledge, as I understand it, the allegations are patently false," Beekman said.

Dantonio plans to "stay on within the university and the athletic department in a role involving special projects, especially transitioning our players, both current and incoming, to their next challenges."

The two-time Big Ten Coach of the Year served as a graduate assistant at Ohio State from 1983-84 and later returned as the Buckeyes' defensive coordinator from 2001-03, helping lead the Buckeyes to their first national championship in 34 years in 2002.

Spartans defensive coordinator Mike Tressel, the nephew of former Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel, has been named interim head coach.

Fickell Turns Down Michigan State Opening

Former Ohio State player, defensive coordinator and interim head coach Luke Fickell will not be returning to the Big Ten, despite reported mutual interest between the Cincinnati head coach and Michigan State. The Spartans, who are without a head coach following Dantonio's resignation, looked to Fickell as a top candidate.

However, Yahoo's Pete Thamel reported on Feb. 10 that Fickell, who had interviewed

with Michigan State, would be staying put at Cincinnati, where he has been the head coach since 2017. In his three seasons with the Bearcats, Fickell has put together a 26-13 record, including back-to-back 11-win seasons after a 4-8 start to his tenure.

Prior to his departure for Cincinnati, Fickell served as a member on Ohio State's staff under Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer from 2002-10 and 2012-16. Following Tressel's resignation, Fickell took over as interim head coach, leading Ohio State to a 6-7 season before returning to co-defensive coordinator and linebackers coach under Meyer.

According to the Detroit Free Press, Fickell's interest in the open Michigan State job was legitimate, but he and his wife, Amy, had "concerns about campus culture at MSU, including lawsuits roiling the football department." Those concerns ultimately played a major role in Fickell's decision to remain at UC, along with his team's recent success.

"I had to make a selfish decision, but this selfish decision was what was right for my family," Fickell said, "and that is to be here, to be with you guys, and continue to do what it is we've done."

Fickell was not the only former Buckeye assistant to receive interest from Michigan State. Colorado head coach Mel Tucker, who spent four seasons in Columbus as a defensive backs coach from 2001-03 and co-defensive coordinator in 2004, turned the Spartans away Feb. 8.

With Fickell and Tucker out of the equation, Mike Tressel looks to be a potential candidate to run the ship for at least a season. Tressel was a graduate assistant at Ohio State under his uncle for two seasons in 2002-03 before heading to Cincinnati to join Dantonio's staff and eventually Michigan State in 2007.

Michigan Standout Suspended For Crashing AD Family Car

Michigan senior point guard Xavier Simpson was given a civil infraction for speeding too fast for conditions following a crash on Jan. 26, according to police Sgt. Bill Clock of Ann Arbor, Mich.

The former Lima (Ohio) Senior, standout had played in a 64-62 loss to Illinois just hours before police were called to a vehicle crash in Ann Arbor. Police found a vehicle crashed into a pole at approximately 3 a.m.

The car was found without a driver, but Simpson and another person walked up after officers had arrived. Simpson initially gave police a false name and denied involvement in the crash.

"They figured it out – didn't take long," Clock said of Simpson's identity, which he claimed was "Jeff Jackson."

Police tracked down the owner of the vehicle, Chrislan Manuel, who is married to Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel. Officers were able to determine through Chrislan Manuel and her son, Evan, who is a student manager for the men's basketball team, that Simpson was the driver.

Simpson, who is a cousin of former Ohio State basketball player Greg Simpson, did not smell of intoxicants, Clock said. The student-athlete told police the car slipped on ice before striking the pole. The crash was initially listed as a hit-and-run incident, Clock said.

Michigan announced a one-game suspension for its multiyear captain for violating team policies on Jan. 27.

"Well, he violated our curfew," said Michigan head coach Juwan Howard. "That right there was something that he's aware of as well as all his other teammates. Being out at that time of the evening is not acceptable."

"While we are disappointed with what has transpired with Xavier, we know there are always lessons to learn and grow from. We take these matters and consequences very seriously."

Simpson returned from his suspension on Feb. 1 for a home win against Rutgers.

Knight Returns to Indiana For 1st Time In 20 Years

For the first time since he was fired in 2000, legendary Indiana men's basketball coach Bob Knight returned to Assembly Hall in Bloomington, Ind.

Knight was led onto the court by Quinn Buckner and Scott May, who were the captains of his 1976 national title team, in addition to another former 1970s star in Steve Green and Knight's son Pat. On the opposite end of the floor were dozens of other former players.

"This is one of the greatest and most emotional things ever for me," said Randy Wittman, who played for Knight from 1978-83 and was instrumental in making the reunion happen. "I don't know if we'll see something like this again in college basketball. This is where he belongs. I'll go to my grave with my memory of this today."

In his 29 years at the helm in Bloomington, Knight won a school-record 662 games, earned 11 Big Ten championships, made five Final Four appearances and won three national titles.

"We were just happy as hell he decided to come back here today," said former Indiana great Mike Woodson of Knight, who had helped Ohio State win the 1960 NCAA championship as a player.

Knight addressed the Hoosiers before they took the floor for their Feb. 8 matchup with in-state rival Purdue, a game that Indiana lost 74-62.

"I was standing there, and he was Coach Knight," Wittman said. "It was like he hadn't left that locker room. The words he gave to those players before they went out on the floor, it was fabulous."

With tears in his eyes, Knight displayed the fiery passion that made him famous, shaking his fist and shouting for this Indiana team to "play defense!" He even grabbed former guard Keith Smart, hero of the 1987 national championship game, and ordered him into a defensive stance and incited a "de-fense!" chant throughout Assembly Hall.

"This state still loves this guy," Wittman said. "And he still loves these fans."

Penn State RB Slade Enters Transfer Portal

Penn State brought in both the No. 1 all-purpose back and No. 1 wide receiver in the 2018 recruiting class and may not have either for their upcoming junior seasons.

Rising junior running back Ricky Slade entered the transfer portal, following wideout Justin Shorter's transfer to Florida.

After serving as a backup running back to Miles Sanders in 2018, Slade was expected to become the starter prior to last season. The Penn State coaching staff used a running back-by-committee approach, however.

As a freshman, Slade was benched for more than a month after fumbling three times in the first four games of the season. Despite that, Slade finished the season with 257 yards on 45 carries (5.7 average) and six touchdowns in nine games.

His fumble issues plagued Slade again in 2019, as he fumbled twice against Buffalo in the Nittany Lions' second game. Slade finished his sophomore season with just 47 rushes for 214 yards (4.6 average) and two touchdowns, along with 12 receptions for 105 receiving yards.

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Oct. 10 IOWA; **17** at Michigan State; **24** at Penn State; **31** NEBRASKA.

Nov. 7 INDIANA; **14** at Maryland, **21** at Illinois; **28** MICHIGAN.

Dec. 5 Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (15-8, 5-7)

Oct. 30 CEDARVILLE (exhibition), W 95-52.

Nov. 6 CINCINNATI, W 64-56; **10** UMASS-LOWELL, W 76-56; **13** VILLANOVA, W 76-51; **18** STETSON, W 86-51; **22** PURDUE FORT WAYNE, W 85-46; **25** KENT STATE, W 71-52; **29** MORGAN STATE, W 90-57.

Dec. 4 North Carolina, W 74-49; **7** PENN STATE, W 106-74; **15** Minnesota, L 84-71; **17** SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE, W 80-48; **21** Kentucky at Las Vegas, W 71-65; **29** West Virginia at Cleveland, L 67-59.

Jan. 3 WISCONSIN, L 61-57; **7** Maryland, L 67-55; **11** Indiana, L 66-54; **14** NEBRASKA, W 80-68; **18** Penn State, L 90-76; **23** MINNESOTA, L 62-59; **26** Northwestern, W 71-59.

Feb. 1 INDIANA, W 68-59; **4** Michigan, W 61-58; **9** Wisconsin, L 70-57; **12** RUTGERS, 7 p.m.; **15** PURDUE 12 p.m.; **20** Iowa, 7 p.m.; **23** MARYLAND, 4 p.m.; **27** NEBRASKA, 9 p.m.

March 1 MICHIGAN, 4 p.m.; **5** ILLINOIS, 7 p.m.; **8** Michigan State, 4:30 p.m. **11-15** Big Ten Tournament at Indianapolis.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (14-9, 7-5)

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, L 68-65; **19** ILLINOIS, W 77-47; **23** Iowa, L 77-68; **30** MARYLAND, L 85-65.

Feb. 2 Nebraska, W 80-74 (OT); **6** Illinois, W 78-58; **9** WISCONSIN, W 82-74; **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 at 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, NTS; **22-23** MIDWEST CHAMPIONSHIPS.

March 7-8 NCAA Quarterfinals at Detroit, Mich.; **19-22** NCAA Championships at Detroit, Mich.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS (0-2, 0-2)

Jan. 18 ARIZONA STATE & OKLAHOMA, 2nd (398.600);

25 Penn State, L 405.900-405.000.

Feb. 1 MICHIGAN, L 409.600-408.500; **8** Arizona State & California at Tempe, Ariz., 2/5; **21-23** Winter Cup at Las Vegas; **29** NAVY, 2 p.m.

March 7 IOWA & NORTHERN ILLINOIS, 1:30 p.m.; **13** Minnesota & Nebraska at Minneapolis, Minn., 6 p.m.; **21** Illinois, 1:30 p.m.

April 3-4 Big Ten Championships at Minneapolis, Minn.; **17-18** NCAA Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS (2-2, 1-2)

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, L 197.400-195.550; **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 (16-10-4, 9-8-3)

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, L 3-2.

Feb. 1 Michigan, W 4-1; **7** PENN STATE, T 2-2 (OTW) **8** PENN STATE, L 6-3; **21-22** Michigan State; **28** WISCONSIN, 6 p.m.; **29** WISCONSIN, 8 p.m.

March 6-8 Big Ten Tournament First Round; **14** Big Ten Tournament Semifinals; **21** Big Ten Tournament Championship.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (17-8-5, 10-6-4)

Sept. 27-28 ST. LAWRENCE, W 4-1; W 3-2.

Oct. 4 St. Cloud State, W 5-2; **5** St. Cloud State, W 6-2; **11** WISCONSIN, L 3-0; **12** WISCONSIN, L 3-1; **18** Minnesota State, T 1-1; **19** Minnesota State, T 3-3; **25** MINNESOTA, W 4-3; **26** MINNESOTA, L 4-2.

Nov. 1 Bemidji State, W 4-3 (OT) **2** Bemidji State, W 3-1; **15** MINNESOTA DULUTH, W 3-1; **16** MINNESOTA DULUTH, T 1-1; **22** Colgate, W 6-2; **23** Colgate, T 1-1; **29** CORNELL, W 3-1; **30** CORNELL, L 5-1.

Dec. 14 Princeton at Las Vegas, L 4-2; **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, W 7-2.

Feb. 1 BEMIDJI STATE, T 2-2; **7** Minnesota Duluth, L 5-4

(OT); **8** Minnesota Duluth, L 4-1; **15-16** Wisconsin; **21-22** ST. CLOUD STATE; **28-29** WCHA First Round.

March 1 WCHA First Round; **7-8** WCHA Final Faceoff; **14** NCAA Quarterfinal; **20** NCAA Frozen Four; **22** NCAA Championship.

SWIMMING & DIVING (4-3, 1-1)

Oct. 18-19 Texas A&M, Men, L 153-147; Women, L 174-124.

Nov. 1 Virginia Tech & Penn State at State College, Pa., Men L 97-70, W 91.70-74.50; Women L 174-124, L 102-65; **2** Virginia Tech & Penn State at State College, Pa., Men L 185-168, W 193.50-158.50; Women W 247-106, W 198-155; **8** KENYON, Men, W 207-87 **8** KENYON & AKRON, Women W 213-85, W 254-40; **15** DENISON, Men, W 215-80.5; Women, W 214.5-78; **21-23** OHIO STATE INVITATIONAL, Men 1/5; Women 1/9.

Dec. 4-7 AT&T Winter National Championship at Atlanta, NTS.

Jan. 3-4 KENTUCKY, Men, W 175.5-142.5; Women, W 163-156; **18** MICHIGAN, Men L 190-110; Women, L 165-135; **24-25** Shamrock Invitational at South Bend, Ind., Men 3/4; Women 2/4; **31** Pittsburgh, NTS.

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 (8-0, 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 4-0; **26** TULSA, W 4-0; **26** TOLEDO, W 4-0.

Feb. 1 TEXAS, W 4-1; **7** ARIZONA STATE, W 7-0; **9** USC, W 4-2; **11** TEXAS A&M, 6 p.m.; **14** National Indoor Team at Madison, Wisc.; **22** Notre Dame, 12 p.m.

March 1 Georgia, 12 p.m.; **4** Stanford, 6 p.m.; **8** PENN STATE, 12 p.m.; **15** Michigan State, 12 p.m.; **20** MICHIGAN, 6 p.m.; **27** NEBRASKA, 6 p.m.; **29** IOWA, 12 p.m.

April 3 Purdue, 4 p.m.; **5** Indiana, 12 p.m.; **10** NORTHWESTERN, 6 p.m.; **12** ILLINOIS, 12 p.m.; **17** Wisconsin, 4 p.m.; **19** Minnesota, 12 p.m.; **23** Big Ten Tournament.

WOMEN'S TENNIS (4-1)

Jan. 17 Michigan Invitational at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; **25** ITA Kickoff at Stillwater, Okla., W 4-0; **31** DUKE, W 4-2.

Feb. 7 National Indoors at Chicago vs. Georgia Tech, L 4-1; **8** National Indoors at Chicago vs. Michigan, W 4-3; **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.; **20** Penn State, 2 p.m.; **27** Wisconsin, 5 p.m.; **29** Minnesota, 10 a.m.

April 3 Baylor, 6 p.m.; **5** Penn State, 12 p.m.; **11** Iowa, 12 p.m.; **12** Nebraska, 12 p.m.; **17** MARYLAND, 6 p.m.; **19**

RUTGERS, 12 p.m.; **23** Big Ten Tournament at West Lafayette, Ind.

May 1 NCAA Regionals; **8** Super Regionals; **14** NCAA Championships at Stillwater, Okla.

INDOOR TRACK & FIELD

Jan. 10 Kentucky Invite at Lexington, Ky., NTS; **17-18** Michigan Invite at Ann Arbor, Mich., Men 2/3; Women NTS; **23-25** Columbia Challenge at New York, NTS; **30-31** Texas Tech Invitational at Lubbock, Texas, NTS.

Feb. 1 Texas Tech Invitational at Lubbock, Texas, NTS; **7** Midwest Open at Geneva, Ohio, NTS; **13-15** Iowa State Classic at Ames, Iowa; **14-15** Tiger Paw Invite at Clemson, S.C.; **22** Kent State Tune Up at Kent, Ohio; **22** Alex Wilson Invitational at South Bend, Ind.; **28** Big Ten Championships at Geneva, Ohio; **29** Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wisc.

March 13 NCAA Championships at Albuquerque, N.M.; **27-28** Power-5 Trailblazer Challenge at Oxford, Miss.; **27-28** Raleigh Relays at Raleigh, N.C.

April 4 Battle On The Bayou at Baton Rouge, La.; **9-11** Tennessee Relays at Knoxville, Tenn.; **17-18** Gamecock Invitational at Columbia, S.C.; **24-25** JESSE OWENS CLASSIC.

May 1-2 Kentucky Open at Lexington, Ky.; **15-16** Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wisc.; **29-31** NCAA Regional Championships at Lexington, Ky.

June 10-13 NCAA Championships at Austin, Texas.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL (8-3, 0-0)

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, W 3-0.

Feb. 1 Penn State, W 3-0; **7** UCSB, L 3-1; **8** LONG BEACH STATE, L 3-1; **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, 8 p.m.; **29** Lindenwood, 8:30 p.m.

March 4 BALL STATE, 7 p.m.; **8** PENN STATE, 3 p.m. **12** NJIT, 6 p.m.; **14** George Mason, 5 p.m.; **21** Ball State, 7 p.m.; **27** LINDENWOOD, 7 p.m.; **28** QUINCY, 7 p.m.

April 2 McKendree, 8 p.m.; **4** Lewis, 8 p.m.; **9** PURDUE FORT WAYNE, 7 p.m.; **11** LOYOLA CHICAGO, 5 p.m.; **18** MIVA Quarterfinals, 7 p.m.; **22** MIVA Semifinals, 7 p.m.; **25** MIVA Finals, 7 p.m.

May 1 NCAA Play-In Match, 7 p.m.; **5** NCAA First Round at Fairfax, Va., 6 p.m.; **7** NCAA Semifinals at Fairfax, Va., 6 p.m.; **9** NCAA Finals at Fairfax, Va., 8 p.m.

WRESTLING (10-3, 6-2)

Nov. 2 Michigan State, NTS; **10** STANFORD, W 29-6; **15** Pittsburgh, W 23-12; **17** VIRGINIA TECH, L 21-15.

Dec. 1 CORNELL, W 23-9; **6-7** C.K. Invitational at Las Vegas, 2/32.

Jan 6 ARIZONA STATE, W 17-16; **10** RUTGERS, W 22-13; **17** Wisconsin, W 24-13; **19** ILLINOIS, W 28-6; **24** Iowa, L 24-10; **26** Minnesota, W 22-13; **31** MARYLAND, W 43-3.

Feb. 2 Nebraska, L 19-14; **9** NORTHWESTERN, W 28-10; **15** Penn State, 7:30 p.m.

March 7-8 Big Ten Championship; **19-21** NCAA Championship.



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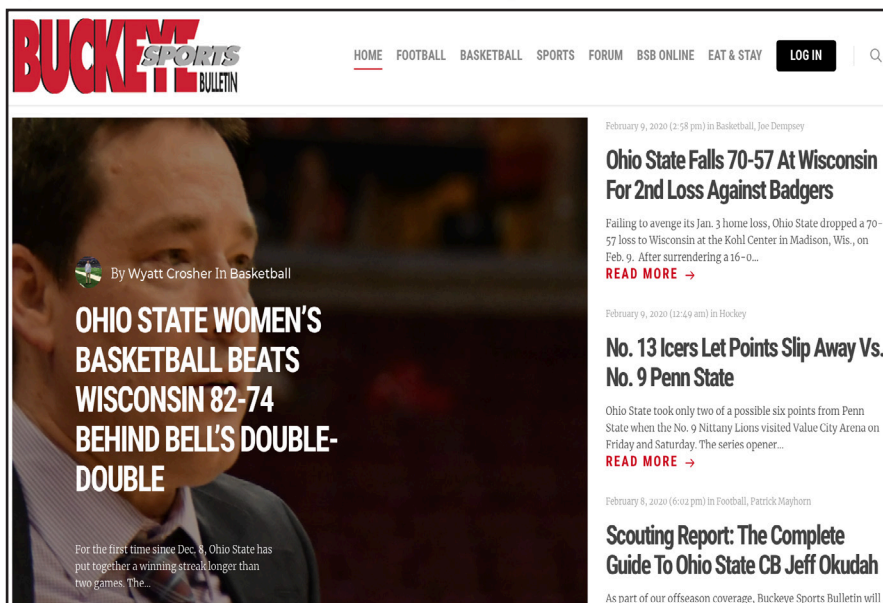
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OHIO STATE MEN'S TENNIS

Cash Leads OSU Upset

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Robert Cash ran the gauntlet like a senior. With a chance to secure a win for No. 6 Ohio State over No. 1 Texas in front of a sold-out home crowd at Ohio State's Indoor Tennis Facility, Cash was calm and collected. His teammates had helped supply a lead, and all Cash had to do was finish off Texas' Chih Chi Huang.

He did just that, securing a 6-4, 6-3 victory that also locked up a 4-1 win over the Longhorns for an Ohio State team that has suddenly found itself right back in the thick of the national title competition, despite a roster packed with five freshmen, a sophomore and just four upper-classmen, including one senior, a fact that head coach Ty Tucker was keen on mentioning shortly after the win.

"We feel good but we still have plenty of work to do," Tucker said. "That's the good thing about having five freshmen on the team is that guys are young and guys are learning and they love it. It's been a great first four or five months with these guys, and we look forward to trying to build on it."

Given the way Cash went about handling his business, one could easily confuse him for one of those four upperclassmen. In the chaotic aftermath of his win, Cash celebrated with his team, handled the customary media requests after a great showing, and sauntered his way into a locker room chanting his name, met by a barrage of water cheers from his teammates.

He's no hardened vet, though. The 6-3, 180-pound New Albany, Ohio, product is still very much growing into his own, despite his demeanor indicating otherwise. On Feb. 1, Ohio State completed an upset of the nation's top team with an exclamation point and a signature victory for a true freshman getting his first real taste of indoor college tennis.

If the win over Chi Huang wasn't enough, Cash also got involved in doubles, helping to secure the crucial doubles point for Ohio State. He teamed up with junior John McNally to knock off Christian Sigsgaard and Yuya Ito, 6-4. The Texas duo entered the match as the nation's fourth-best doubles partnership.

"If you have to give the game ball to anybody today, it goes to Robert Cash," Tucker said. "Beating the No. 4 team in the country at doubles and beating the guy at court six and clinching the match. That's something that he'll remember forever, and he got some great ranking points too."

While the win over a top-tier team such as Texas certainly served as motivation in its own right for Ohio State, the Buckeyes also entered the match with quite the home record on the line. Since April 2003, Ohio State has lost just one home match, to No. 1 Oklahoma in 2015. Entering the battle with Texas, that 17-year-old record stood at 288-1.

While that speaks highly of Ohio State's home-court advantage, it also added some extra pressure to its newfound star to rise to the occasion. That made the win so much sweeter for the Buckeye freshman.

"The crowd was electric," Cash said. "I've never played in or seen a bigger match than the one we had today. Every single point, the crowd was there, the crowd was cheering you on whether you win a point or lose a point. I think everyone felt the crowd's presence, and they really helped us pull through in this match."

"It was just a surreal feeling," Cash said of securing the win for Ohio State. "It's a dream come true for me to play for the Buckeyes. When the No. 1 team in the country comes here to our house, I know we've only lost one home

match in the last (17) years, and I actually know the exact moment of the loss. I didn't want to be known as the team that lost the second home match in 17 years."

Obviously, Cash didn't win the match on his own. Senior Kyle Seelig defeated Siem Woldeab, 6-0, 6-2, and sophomore James Trotter toppled Cleeve Harper, 6-4, 6-3 in singles to set up the chance for Cash to seal the deal on court six. For the doubles point, Cash and McNally weren't the only contributors, with Seelig and Cannon Kingsley securing a 6-4 win over Chi Huang and Harper.

"The whole team knew that it had to be a team effort the whole time," Cash said. "Everyone just had to focus on their court and just play with everything they had and give everything they've got. I think I did a good job of just staying calm the whole match, not doing anything crazy, playing good enough, playing smart and just doing what the coaches told me."

With the doubles point being awarded before singles points, it's frequently a major factor in closely contested matches between top teams. For the Buckeyes and for Cash, winning it was a crucial priority, but it wasn't the sole focus.

"It was incredible," Cash said of the doubles win. "In college tennis, doubles point is probably one of the biggest things, but then again, once you win the doubles point the match isn't over. Anything can happen in the singles. You're excited after you win the doubles point, but you know you've got to come right back out and play hard in singles."

"I actually served four out of five to him in the second set, but I lost a deuce point. I got a little tight, but I knew I had my team on the court with me cheering me on, the crowd was phenomenal, had my back the whole way. I knew I couldn't let them down and had to give everything I had."

"We lost a break early on court two in doubles but got it back," Tucker said. "Obviously a lot of tennis goes through that doubles point, and we were able to pull through that doubles point and grab that lead"

Just as Cash wasn't alone in notching a win for the Buckeyes, he wasn't alone on court six as he looked to secure that singles win. Tucker kept his focus on Cash and his young teammate Trotter on the final two courts for much of the day.

"I've spent a lot of time with Robert Cash," Tucker said. "He's a Columbus boy. Started in June – a lot of practice with him. I've spent a ton of time with him, so (watching court six is) a little bit of my responsibility. (Assistant coach Justin Kronauge) does a good job with the guys, (assistant coach Dave) Schilling does a good job, but I've spent a lot of time with Robert Cash. I probably need to spend time with him on the court, especially as a freshman."

"I've seen a lot of guys wilt in that situation. Playing the No. 1 team in the country and you've got to hold serve three or four times in a row down the stretch."

In what Cash described as a bigger match than he's ever seen or played in, he embraced the moment, steadied himself and helped to deliver a signature win for his young career and the young Buckeyes.

There was no wilting on court six.

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.

Top-Notch Class For OSU; Dantonio Resigns

Football recruiting is more intense, more competitive, and more scrutinized than ever before. There is never a day off for college football coaches in terms of recruiting. Every means of social media along with the constant barrage of phone calls to high-profile recruits is used by coaches to sell their programs. A day lost in recruiting is one that is tough to make up for a college recruiter. Limited only by the specific recruiting calendar as set by the NCAA, college coaches know their job security is based just as much on the talent they bring to campus as the win and loss record of their team.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

As expected, the 2020 Ohio State recruiting class is loaded with talent. Ranked in the top five of all classes in the country, the Buckeyes kept up the reputation of being a national recruiting powerhouse. Replacing the constant loss of talent to the NFL is not easy, but the coaching staff realizes that loss is also one of its greatest recruiting tools and selling points to high school players. The chance to play early, be on national television each week and get some of the best football coaching in America attracts players to a top program such as Ohio State. Success breeds success as typified in this year's class.

Offensive Front

The Buckeye offensive line was one of the most dominant fronts in the country. They helped Ohio State regain its reputation for being physical and able to pound nearly every opponent into the ground with its strong running attack. Opening up huge holes in the defense to establish the run game while being just as effective in pass protection gave Ryan Day the balance and versatility all head coaches are looking for in game planning. This balance in offense gave opposing staffs a lot to prepare for going into a game against the Buckeyes.

The return of Josh Myers, Thayer Munford and Wyatt Davis is a big plus going into the 2020 season. Backups such as Nicholas Petit-Frere and Harry Miller got plenty of offensive reps last season and will again give the offensive line both depth and experience. Of the six freshmen in the 2020 class, look for five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson out of Cincinnati Princeton to have the best chance of seeing the field early. He is very athletic with long arms, which should help in pass protection. Johnson is raw but his quick feet and 6-7 frame give him a huge upside.

Offensive Skill

The Ohio State football program has blessed the NFL with some outstanding receivers, tight ends, running backs and quarterbacks the last few years. Of the 52 Ohio State players who were on the active or practice squad rosters of the NFL as of September 2019, nearly one-third were at offensive skilled positions. The pros will continue to add Buckeye talent to their ranks with players such as K.J. Hill, J.K. Dobbins, Binjimen Victor, Austin Mack and Rashod Berry coming into the draft this year.

The Ohio State staff again went national

in the 2020 recruiting class by signing eight skilled athletes representing seven different states. Two of these signees were ranked five-star recruits: receivers Julian Fleming from Pennsylvania and Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

Four-star signees C.J. Stroud, from Southern California, along with the other freshman quarterback signee, Jack Miller from Arizona, will both compete with returner Gunnar Hoak to be the backup to Justin Fields next fall. Stroud has a very strong arm along with great touch on the long ball. Miller also has great trajectory and isn't afraid to put the ball away and pick up yards with his feet. Add two more freshman receivers and a tight end to the mix, and the OSU passing game should remain strong.

The only recruiting shortage in the offensive skill area is Miyan Williams from Cincinnati Winton Woods being the only running back in the class.

Defensive Front

The loss of a player like Chase Young can be devastating to a defense, especially with a defensive end like Young who draws so much attention in terms of pass protection. He was simply unable to be blocked with just one person, and sometimes two, by opposing offenses. His departure to the NFL along with defensive tackle DaVon Hamilton will definitely be felt up front. The cupboard is far from being bare, however, but time will tell if any defensive lineman can be as dominant as Chase Young.

The incoming freshman class features three defensive linemen – two interior tackles and one defensive end. The most touted of the three is Darrion Henry, another recruit out of Cincinnati Princeton High School. Standing nearly 6-5, Henry is both strong and athletic. He's quick off the ball and uses his hands like a seasoned veteran to get off blocks. He has a great motor and is versatile enough to play either defensive tackle or end.

Linebackers

One of the big highlights of the past season for the Buckeyes was the improvement of the linebacking corps. This group had a chip on its shoulder from a year ago, and they played inspiring football all season. They were stout against the run, solid pass defenders and sure tacklers in the open field. Hats off to linebacker coach Al Washington and the entire defensive staff for their fine work. Fortunately, the Buckeyes return two starters in Tuf Borland and Pete Werner and a third player who saw substantial playing time in Baron Browning. Malik Harrison, the most versatile linebacker on last year's squad, will be sorely missed and hard to replace.

Three impressive linebackers are part of the 2020 class, and all have four-star rankings. Of the three, Kourt Williams is the closest to a Malik Harrison. Williams, from California, is very athletic and plays in space. He can cover man to man and is an excellent blitzing from the outside. Cody Simon comes to Columbus from New Jersey and, like Williams, is a versatile linebacker. Simon is a fast filler on the run with good lateral movement. The third 'backer, Mitchell Melton, is the most physical of the three. At 235 pounds, Melton really packs a punch and has a great change of direction for a big 'backer. There is no doubt this is one of the strongest position groups in the class.

Secondary

Eleven former Ohio State corners and safeties were on NFL rosters this fall. Three

more Buckeyes, led by Jeff Okudah, will be added to the ranks this year. Any college football coach will tell you that a team can't have too many corners and safeties. The ability to play man and zone coverage, make good open-field tackles and make quick decisions are all characteristics of the best secondary players. Besides their main position, they are instrumental in terms of special teams. Kickoff coverage, punt coverage, punt return and punt-block units all need the fastest and most athletic players on the team. It is the area where most defensive backs first make their mark and get the eyes of the coaching staff.

The Buckeye coaching staff signed three secondary players this year. All three are physical players who have good cover skills and are solid tacklers in space. Of the three, it may be Lathan Ransom from Tucson, Ariz., who has the best chance to see the field early. He is a multi-position player who was recruited as a corner but can also play safety, wide receiver and return kicks. He is tall and has great range but also is athletic enough to play press man coverage. He is one of the most versatile athletes in the 2020 class.

Ryan Day, knowing the importance of special teams, topped off the class with placekicker Jake Siebert out of Cincinnati La Salle. The Buckeyes will lose Blake Haubeil next season, and Siebert along with Missouri transfer Dominic DiMaccio will compete for the spot.

Mark Dantonio Resigns

After 13 years at Michigan State University Mark Dantonio abruptly resigned as head football coach. Shortly after receiving a 4.3-million-dollar longevity bonus mid-January, Dantonio decided to hang up his whistle and clipboard. Whether the resignation was due to alleged NCAA violations, other issues within the Spartan athletic program the past few years, or he felt it was just the right time to go doesn't really matter, but the timing was strange.

Dantonio's resignation came just 24 hours before national signing day. The Spartan recruiting class ended up ranked 10th in the Big Ten and 43rd nationally. Whatever the reason for him deciding to step down may be,

no one can deny Dantonio did a very good job during his tenure at Michigan State.

In his 13 years, Dantonio won three Big Ten championships and defeated in-state rival Michigan eight of those 13 times. Dantonio is best known as a defensive coach, and the Spartans became a physical and intimidating defensive football team under him. At the same time, however, the Michigan State offense did not fare as well. The heavy concentration on defense took priority over the offense both in recruiting and emphasis.

Due primarily to a lackluster offense, the Spartans struggled to back-to-back 7-6 seasons the last two years, and the coaching staff received a ton of criticism as a result. Without a premier quarterback, the Spartans averaged just 20.5 points per game for those past two seasons. Their stout defense kept them in most games, but with a total of just nine conference wins in two years, Michigan State never was in the hunt for the Big Ten title.

Even though he is not a native of Ohio, Mark Dantonio has strong coaching ties to the state. He was a graduate assistant coach at Ohio University and then served in the same capacity at Ohio State under Earle Bruce in the mid-'80s. Later he would become the secondary coach at Youngstown State under Jim Tressel before rejoining Coach Tressel at Ohio State.

I had the pleasure of being on staff with Dino, as he is called, for two seasons until he took the head coaching position at the University of Cincinnati. Dino is a dedicated coach with an outstanding defensive mind. In 2006 Dantonio was hired to lead the Spartans and has left the program in much better shape than the one he inherited. Don't be surprised if Dantonio resurfaces at some other university that needs a rebirth within the next few years.

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



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Young Can Be Better Than Both Of The Bosas

Joey Bosa has been very good in the NFL. Nick Bosa looks like he could be even better. But could Chase Young end up being the best of this bunch of topflight defensive ends from Ohio State? Yes.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

That's not a guarantee. Just a possibility. But it will be fun to watch and debate over the next several seasons.

Young most certainly will follow the Bosa brothers as a top-three NFL draft pick on the night of April 23 in Las Vegas.

Joey Bosa was the third pick in 2016, behind a pair of quarterbacks – Jared Goff

of California and Carson Wentz of North Dakota State. Nick Bosa was the second pick a year ago, behind quarterback Kyler Murray of Oklahoma.

Nearly every mock draft for this year has Young going second overall to the Washington Redskins, after the Cincinnati Bengals use their first pick on Young's former teammate, LSU-OSU quarterback Joe Burrow.

One mock draft I came across, from walterfootball.com, has Young going third to the Detroit Lions. That mock predicts that the Miami Dolphins will trade into the second spot to take Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa.

Whether he goes second or third, no one will debate that Young – like the Bosas – seems to be an almost sure thing in the NFL.

Both Bosas were NFL rookie defensive players of the year. Both have been Pro Bowl picks. And both have been key parts of their defenses. However, they are not

– at least yet – in the debate as the best player or two at their position in the NFL.

Still Not All-Pro

Don't confuse Pro Bowl with the higher honor of All-Pro team. A lot of players make the Pro Bowl, especially with alternates filling out the rosters. The AP All-Pro team is for the very best.

Neither Bosa has yet to make All-Pro.

The first-team All-Pro "edge rushers" this past season were Aaron Donald and T.J. Watt. Second-team honors went to Shaq Barrett and Cameron Jordan. The Bosa brothers – Joey from the Los Angeles Chargers and Nick from the San Francisco 49ers – tied for seventh in the voting among edge rushers.

And among sack leaders, though the Bosa brothers have posted impressive numbers, they lag others. Nick Bosa was tied for 22nd in the NFL this past season with nine sacks. The leader, Barrett of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, had 19½.

Joey Bosa's 11½ sacks tied him for ninth in the league last season. His best season for sacks was 2017, when he had 12½, seventh in the NFL.

Better Than The Bosas?

That leaves room for Young to achieve even higher success.

The point here is that although the Bosa brothers have been very solid pros, they're not All-Pro caliber, at least yet. And that's what should be the goal with the second or third pick in the NFL draft.

Seven of the last 20 second overall picks have eventually made All-Pro; same for the third overall picks. Of those 14 second or third picks who made All-Pro, 10 have done so in multiple seasons.

Of course, the chances go up for each player the longer he is in the league, and both Bosas are early in their careers.

But looking back to the 2016 draft, when Joey Bosa was taken third, six of the top eight picks have already been All-Pro at least once; Bosa and Goff are the exceptions.

The All-Pros from the top of that draft are second pick Wentz (2017), fourth pick Ezekiel Elliott (2016, 2018), fifth pick Jalen Ramsey (2017), sixth pick Ronnie Stanley (2019), seventh pick DeForest Buckner (2019) and eighth pick Jack Conklin (2016).

Young's Potential

Young, like the Bosa brothers, dominated at the college game. He has the speed, strength, quickness and technique to dominate at the NFL level. And as a defensive end (more often being called an edge nowadays), he'll have the opportunity to excel

regardless of where he ends up.

Quarterbacks need blocking and receivers need solid quarterbacks. Playing on the outside of a defensive front, sack guys can do it on their own more than any other position.

12 Buckeye All-Pros

All-Pro is a high bar. For example, just one quarterback is first-team All-Pro and one second-team each year, unless there are ties.

Over the last 20 seasons, there have been only 11 All-Pros from Ohio State. They are Orlando Pace (2000, 2001, 2003), Eddie George (2000), David Boston (2000), Mike Vrabel (2007), Antonio Winfield (2008), Nick Mangold (2009, 2010, 2011), Malcolm Jenkins (2010), Nate Ebner (2016), Ezekiel Elliott (2016, 2018), Cam Heyward (2017, 2019) and Michael Thomas (2018, 2019).

In case you're wondering about Ebner, he made it as a special teamer for the New England Patriots.

Top 10

Since we don't have a top 10 in college football teams to offer in this issue, here's an offbeat top 10 – the top 10 colleges of all time for picks in the NFL draft.

1. USC, 505 (81 first-rounders)
2. Notre Dame, 504 (70)
3. Ohio State, 450 (81)
4. Oklahoma, 391 (45)
5. Michigan, 369 (47)
6. Alabama, 362 (62)
7. Nebraska, 356 (33)
8. Penn State, 356 (37)
9. Tennessee, 348 (45)
10. Florida, 346 (52)

Those totals are from the 25,389 players who have been chosen since the first draft in 1936. The handful of players chosen in supplemental drafts, such as Cris Carter, are not included, but that number is small.

These totals, however, are weighted toward earlier years, because there were as many as 32 rounds in the draft in the 1940s. The draft lasted 12 rounds as late as 1992.

The NFL switched to its existing seven-round format in 1994. Here is the college top 10 since then:

1. Ohio State, 163 (43 first-rounders)
2. Florida State, 150 (34)
3. Alabama, 142 (34)
4. Florida, 141 (30)
5. Miami, 139 (37)
6. USC, 136 (29)
7. Georgia, 131 (23)
8. LSU, 127 (23)
9. Notre Dame, 117 (16)
10. Tennessee, 115 (21)

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Early Signing Period Dampens NSD Drama

I hope you are enjoying Buckeye Sports Bulletin's annual Football Recruiting Wrap-Up. Some may say this longtime staple of our publishing calendar is obsolete, and I certainly have given that a lot of thought in the past few weeks and in the past few years since the Early Signing Period debuted back in December of 2017.

I think the Recruiting Wrap-Up is still viable and enjoyable for the readers. I encourage your feedback on the matter. We offer plenty of coverage of the Early Signing Period both online at our electronic BuckeyeSports.com and in our December Bowl Preview issue. The fact that coverage is in the Bowl Preview issue is part of the reason that maintaining our traditional Recruiting Wrap-Up is important.

Football recruiting is a beast unto itself for Buckeye fans. To mix it in with bowl coverage, frequently a Big Ten Championship Game recap, and all the other things we do as football season overlaps basketball season is to do recruiting a disservice. For some Buckeye fans, football recruiting is more important than the games themselves – hard to believe, I know, but true.

But there is more to it than just having recruiting get lost in the December shuffle. Players *do* still sign on the traditional Signing Day – not just at Ohio State, but elsewhere – so our coverage would be incomplete without the Recruiting Wrap-Up and rankings would be incomplete. By February, we also have a better feel for the next year's class, and by then, many of the newest Buckeyes have already enrolled in school and are frequently made available to the media on the traditional signing day, making our coverage even more complete (see page 19 of this issue).

No, I don't think our Football Recruiting Wrap-Up is obsolete. But I question the timing of the Early Signing Period as currently scheduled. With roughly half of all teams now playing in bowl games, coaches have to juggle assembling their classes while also preparing for their upcoming bowl game, which would seem to be more than enough to keep them occupied. I am also not wild about having a signing period in the days leading up to the holidays. This is a time when people should be thinking about their families, not fretting over a college decision.

And recruiting draws a tremendous amount of interest from college football fans. Why take away from the buildup to the College Football Playoff and other bowl games by plopping one of college football's biggest days right before some of college football's biggest weeks?

Buckeye coach Ryan Day seemed to indicate at his Feb. 5 signing day press conference that the NCAA will soon have enough information to evaluate the current recruiting calendar and signing dates and perhaps make changes.

"I think anytime you make a change like (the Early Signing Period), the ripple effects, you don't know them until about four or five years out," Day said. "So I think we're still working through that."

But Day acknowledged that the current setup makes for a hectic December, especially for the nation's elite.

"I think with you playing a (conference) championship game and you have one week to go out on the road as the head coach, and one of those or two of those are going to be some of those award nights, and you have to go see 14 midyear guys from coast-to-coast when you recruit nationally like we do, it's almost impossible."

So changes are probably ultimately in the making. One need only look to our "A Look Back at Recruiting From the Pages of BSB"

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

feature on page 12 of this issue to see how recruiting has changed over the years. Note that heading into the signing day of 1985, Ohio State had just seven commitments for what would ultimately become a 21-man class. Can you imagine that today?

But despite all the changes, I think we will stick to the traditional February Buckeye Sports Bulletin Football Recruiting Wrap-Up – at least for the time being!

Keeping Up With Meyer

One need only look at that same Recruiting From the Pages of BSB feature to see one of the challenges that Day faces as he tries to maintain the high standards set by Urban Meyer before him.

I think Day has quickly proved that he can handle the X's and O's and game management aspect of the game. In fact, if anything, I think he has shown that he is less stubborn than Meyer may have become and he is certainly less intense, which at times can also be a blessing. But I don't care if you are Urban, Woody, Jim Tressel or Nick Saban or Dabo Swinney. You can't win if you don't have the players.

The 2015 entry of our recruiting look-back feature is a prime illustration of Meyer's well-known recruiting skills.

On that signing day, Meyer and his staff not only held on to wavering Josh Alabi, Torrance Gibson and Mike Weber, but they also added Isaiah Prince after a battle with Alabama and home-state Maryland as well as K.J. Hill, who was also considering the Crimson Tide and home-state Arkansas. Both would become staples for the Buckeyes.

Now that's a strong signing day.

Day's first full class of his own finished a solid fifth in the BSB consensus recruiting poll. But you have to consider the teams that finished ahead of the Buckeyes – Georgia, Clemson, Alabama and LSU. These are some of the teams that Ohio State is consistently battling for playoff berths. Day needs to consistently put together elite recruiting classes, as Meyer did for seven years, and as these other schools do. Time will tell if Day is able to maintain that level.

By the way, despite that big signing day in 2015, Meyer and his Buckeyes finished fifth in BSB's consensus poll, behind Alabama, USC, Florida State and Tennessee. In retrospect, that ranking may have proven low.

Among those to sign in addition to the signing day commits were Damon Arnette, Jerome Baker, Rashod Berry, Brandon Bowen, Jashon Cornell, DaVon Hamilton, Justin Hilliard, Dre'Mont Jones, Robert Landers, Denzel Ward and, oh, a quarterback out of Athens, Ohio, named Joe Burrow.

Looking Back At LSU

With Burrow and his LSU Tigers winning the national championship, we decided to take a look back at Ohio State's three meetings with LSU as part of our Reprint Thursdays feature at BuckeyeSports.com on Jan. 23.

Obviously, one of those meetings was the national championship game following the 2007 season, a game the Tigers won 38-24. As I have stated many times before, despite claims that this contest was a classic example of SEC superiority over the Big Ten and other conferences, the game, played in New Orleans, was much closer than the score indicated. If just a couple of plays had gone the Buckeyes' way, we would

be talking about another Ohio State national championship. I suppose you could say a lot of games are determined by just a couple of bad breaks – think Ohio State vs. Clemson. With a bit of luck, the game with LSU would have at least been closer, not the rout that legend now has it.

The two teams also met in 1988 in what was one of quarterback Greg Frey's most notable games. The Buckeyes trailed 33-20 in Ohio Stadium with 4:29 to play, but Frey, with help from Carlos Snow and Bobby Olive, engineered the comeback win in John Cooper's third game as Buckeye coach.

Frey drove the Buckeyes 59 yards in 10 plays, primarily through the air, with Snow running it in from the 5-yard line to make it 33-27 with just 1:56 to play. The Buckeye defense held, and LSU elected to take a safety, making it 33-29. Olive, who had fumbled a punt earlier in the game which led to the Tigers' first points, returned the free kick to the LSU 38-yard line with 1:24 remaining. Frey had completions of 15 yards to Jeff Graham and three to Snow to set up the game-winning 20-yard pass to Olive with 38 seconds left.

But the game between the Tigers and Buckeyes that still intrigues me the most is the game played the year before in Baton Rouge. In a game that was described as "a real war" in the Oct. 3, 1987, Buckeye Sports Bulletin, the teams almost literally slugged it out to a 13-13 tie.

"It was a hard-hitting game," star Buckeye linebacker Chris Spielman said. "It wasn't clean. I'm not going to sit here and lie to you. There were shots going on and guys grabbing and pinching on the pile. If that's the way people want to play, then we'll play that way too."

I recall vividly that Bruce had started the game with some gamesmanship, refusing to let his team come out of the tunnel before LSU because a Tiger cheer had been scheduled after the Buckeye were slated to take the field.

"Now I've never been involved in any place where we are going to have to stand out there while they have a cheerleading session and a pep rally before they play," Bruce, dressed in his trademark suit and Fedora, said after the game. "And I'm not going to be a part of that baloney."

LSU ultimately took the field first.

While I recalled Bruce's antics, I had forgotten that Spielman was involved in a week-long war of words with Tiger running back Harvey Williams. Williams had wondered what the big deal was about Spielman and claimed he faced to better "backers at practice in teammates Nicky Hazard and Eric Hill.

Spielman replied simply, "He better be ready for some serious collisions. I know I am."

Williams kept it up, as late as the day before the game.

"I just don't know what all the commotion about him is all about," he said. "I hear this talk about teams running away from him. We don't have to do that."

But they did.

"They just ran the ball away from me," Spielman said after the game, in which Williams split time with senior Sam Martin and rushed for 55 yards on 15 carries. "I'm getting used to that now. It's two weeks in a row. I'll just run and make the play when I can. That's the way it is."

"I don't know how many yards (Williams) rushed for, and I know I hit him about eight times and I knocked him into the bleachers one

time," Spielman said.

Williams had a different version of the battle. "He never really hit me that hard," Williams said. "He hits hard, but not enough to shake me. I hit the ground harder than he hit me a few times."

"Harvey, he's so good he alternates with Sam Martin," said Spielman, who finished with 11 tackles and a pass breakup.

Spielman added that the teams were ready to rumble from the outset.

"I go out there (for the coin toss) and try to say, 'Have a good game' and the guy gives me a shove. What the heck. You want to play that way, let's throw the teeth out and play."

You've got to love Chris Spielman.

Despite all the back-and-forth between the teams, and some questionable officiating by the SEC crew according to Bruce – "That was seven real fine gentlemen out there today," the coach said sarcastically of the officials – Ohio State had a chance to win the game after a Greg Rogan interception with 27 seconds remaining (his second pick in the final five minutes). The Buckeyes would run one play before Matt Frantz would hastily try a 47-yard field goal which was partially blocked, preserving the tie.

What's interesting about this "war" in retrospect is that LSU, particularly playing at home, was such a highly-regarded opponent that most Buckeye fans probably figured that the tie portended a big season for Ohio State. But the Buckeyes would be upset by Indiana and later lose three in a row down the stretch, including a stunning last-minute loss to Iowa in Ohio Stadium, and Bruce would be fired the week of the Michigan game.

The reprints of stories covering the LSU games are archived for your information and enjoyment at the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all BSB subscribers. Simply click on the "BSB Online" tab and then click on "BSB Reprints" on the drop-down menu. If you are not already enjoying BuckeyeSports.com, see the simple sign-up instructions on page 4 of this issue. Now is an especially good time to take advantage of BuckeyeSports.com because the next print issue of BSB will not be out for three weeks.

For The Younger Set

After the wild success of our Green Bananas Special last winter, which rewarded readers for being longtime Buckeye fans, we are going a different direction this year. I am proud to announce the Reverse Green Bananas Special, aimed at attracting younger readers. The younger you are, the less you pay, with a special gift-giving component.

Those wishing to take advantage of the Reverse Green Bananas Special can pay their age. For example, if you are 50, you pay \$50, a \$49.95 savings over the regular \$99.95 rate. If you are 36, you pay \$36 and so forth. And you can lock into your Reverse Green Bananas Special price for up to three years, which could add up to substantial savings.

But here's the best part of this offer. Anyone under the age of 21 pays just \$14.95 for a year of BSB, for up to three years. We don't expect a lot of youngsters to take advantage of this offer themselves, but this is a great way for parents and grandparents to introduce the joy of newspapers to young family members and to help bring down the median age of BSB readers. Hey, the kids might even put down their devices for a few minutes each week!

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