

What Might Have Been

Epic Losses, Attrition Muddy '88 Class Legacy

By MARK REA
BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

The old Horseshoe was really rocking.

The preceding 12 months had been a roller-coaster ride for the Ohio State football program, beginning with the firing of head coach Earle Bruce just six days before the 1987 Michigan game. In Bruce's place, the Buckeyes had hired John Cooper, a rural Tennessee native who blew into Columbus with a good-old-boy twang in his voice and a swagger in his step.

Cooper's first few months on the job had been anything but smooth, however, and his first season as head coach of the Buckeyes was not exactly the stuff of which dreams were made.

After a nearly flawless performance against Syracuse in the 1988 season opener, the team was blown out by a 42-10 final at Pittsburgh. A few days later, team co-captain and starting tailback Vince Workman was declared ineligible for accepting money from an agent, and the Buckeyes proceeded to lose four of their next six games.

Still, there was a chance to salvage a .500 record with the traditional finale against Michigan – the game that defines every Ohio State football season – but everything that could go wrong did go wrong during the first half as the Buckeyes trudged to their locker room, egos equally bruised by a 20-0 deficit and the cascade of boos raining down from most of the home crowd of 90,176.

"At halftime, nobody gave us a chance," remembered Chris Roy, the former Columbus DeSales star and member of Cooper's first recruiting class at Ohio State who was redshirting in 1988.

"Nobody outside that locker room thought we had a chance to come back and take the lead. And then ..."

The Buckeyes, whose six first-half possessions had ended in five punts and a fumble on their own 17-yard line, suddenly transformed into an offensive juggernaut. They stormed back to pull in front by a 24-20 margin, and then after Michigan scored a touchdown to regain the lead, Ohio State marched 92 yards in just six plays to take a 31-27 advantage with 2:02 remaining in the game.

"You literally could not hear the guy standing next to you on the sideline, and he was screaming at the top of his lungs," said Brent Johnson, who hailed from nearby Bexley, Ohio. "I remember looking up in the stands, listening to that noise, and thinking to myself, 'Yeah, this is why I came here. This is what I want to be a part of.' And then, well, you know what happened."

Michigan return man John Kolesar – an Ohio expatriate who had prepped at Westlake High School near Cleveland – ran the



JOSH WINSLOW

MOST NOTABLE NAME – Kirk Herbstreit, who now works as a college football analyst for ESPN, was one of three quarterbacks in Ohio State's 1988 recruiting class, John Cooper's first. He threw for 1,904 yards and four touchdowns in his only season as a starter, leading the Buckeyes to an 8-3-1 record in 1992.

ensuing kickoff back to the OSU 41 and two plays later, caught a 41-yard touchdown in the corner of the south end zone to give the Wolverines a 34-31 victory.

It was an emotional gut-punch for the Ohio State football team and its first-year head coach, and although no one could have known it at the time, the 1988 version of The Game produced a result that ultimately set the tone for what would be a tumultuous 13-year tenure for Cooper as head coach of the Buckeyes.

By the time Cooper's reign at OSU ended following the 2000 season, he had won 111 games, earned three Big Ten co-championships, coached the team to their first Rose Bowl victory in 23 years, and produced Heisman, Outland, Biletnikoff and Thorpe award winners as well as more than a dozen first-round NFL draft picks.

But Cooper's legacy at Ohio State also contains a 2-10-1 record against Michigan, a ledger seemingly forged by that 1988 game that many in his initial OSU recruiting class take personally despite the fact most of them were redshirting at the time and didn't even play in it.

"I don't think I could honestly say that game set the tone for the rest of our careers at Ohio State," longtime ESPN personality Kirk Herbstreit told BSB. "But at the same time, I don't think I could honestly say it didn't."

Long before becoming one of college football's most recog-

nizable analysts, Herbstreit was fresh off a high school career as an award-winning quarterback at Centerville High School near Dayton. He was the son of former OSU team captain and assistant coach Jim Herbstreit, and he was the first to officially commit to Cooper after the coach's hiring was announced on New Year's Eve 1987.

As the son of a former team captain, and a man who served two years as an assistant on Woody Hayes' coaching staff, Herbstreit knew all too well the importance placed upon the traditional season finale.

"When you're a member of the Ohio State football program, that's a given," Herbstreit said. "I think it was Woody who said the priorities at Ohio State were to beat Michigan, win the conference and go to the Rose Bowl – in that order."

"But after that loss our first year, and maybe how that loss happened, I think we got into a situation where we began to put too much pressure on ourselves to win that game. It seemed to become a self-fulfilling prophecy that the more we wanted it, the harder that goal became to achieve."

Johnson has a slightly different take, citing the fact that Cooper's lack of ties to the Ohio State program – and relative lack of knowledge regarding the tradition of the OSU-Michigan

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ohio State Needs To Treat Men, Women Equally

Although there are roughly an equal amount of men's and women's sports teams, the ratio of national champions for men to women is 11 to 3. Why? Simple! The decisions made for the highest-profile sport for men – football – are based on extremely high standards for coaches. Same for any men's program.

The standards for the highest-profit sport for women – basketball – are much lower. Same for many women's programs. With unequal standards, Ohio State condones inferior quality for women. That is not right.

Neither pistol nor synchronized swimming is an officially recognized NCAA sport, with championships conducted by the NRA and Team USA, respectively. Only about four Division-I colleges have synchronized swimming teams. Regardless, we are still proud of the women's pistol and synchronized swimming championships.

Football, basketball, baseball, swimming and diving, outdoor track and field, golf, wrestling and indoor tennis are major NCAA sports with numbers of Division-I colleges ranging from 78 to 299 competing. Same with women's rowing (89 Division-I colleges competing) and many women's sports for which Ohio State lacks a national championship.

How can the board of trustees or the department of athletics justify such a discrepancy?

Women should be outraged. So should we men. There's no equality here. Ohio State is shortchanging women's sports. That's not fair to women. It's wrong, wrong, wrong! The time for change is now. Raise the coaching standards in women's sports now. So long as the good people stay silent, there will be no change. That's just not right.

Richard Rhoad
Westerville, Ohio

If you would like to express an opinion concerning Ohio State University sports, please send your letter to BSB Letters, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212, or email it to bsb@buckeyesports.com. Letters must be signed and include the writer's hometown and a daytime telephone number for verification. Publication priority will be given to those letters that are brief, and we reserve the right to edit letters for publication.



From The Message Board

After Ohio State saw 10 players selected in the 2020 NFL draft, Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked readers on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as staff members, for their input on which former Buckeyes they're most excited to follow at the next level.

Here are some of their responses:

"I'll name two because I think Damon Arnette may have been drafted too high, and DaVon Hamilton, because I think he may have been drafted too low."

– Terrier Buck

"I'll say J.K. Dobbins in Baltimore. As a Browns fan I'm terrified of a combination of Dobbins/Ingram/Jackson."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"For me, I am most interested to see the top picked players, Chase Young and Jeff Okudah. They both feel like such surefire stars, even at the NFL level, and I just want to see that development and all of that skill work out in a big way for both of them."

– Wyatt Crosher, BSB

"It depends on your definition of 'watch.' I'd like to see how Jonah Jackson does in the NFL, just because of the roundabout way he got to being a reasonably high

pick in the NFL draft. If I were watching a game, however, I'm not sure I would focus on an offensive lineman. While that can be fascinating, you can miss a lot of the action, not to mention if you are watching on TV that's not where the camera is always focused.

"If you define 'watch' the other way, I'd say Young/Okudah with Dobbins close behind."

– Frank Moskowitz, BSB

"Personally, purely from an entertainment perspective, I'm going to have my eyes glued to Dobbins and the Ravens, because that backfield is going to be as electric as any that I can remember. The Lamar Jackson/Mark Ingram pairing was already lethal, and adding a 2,000-yard runner to that just feels unfair. I'm excited to see what offensive coordinator Greg Roman does to scheme for having that much talent in one backfield, because he did some really cool two-back stuff in 2019."

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

With Mike Tomczak off to the Chicago Bears of the NFL, Ohio State entered the 1985 offseason with a quarterback battle on its hands. The heir apparent seemed to be Jim Karsatos, a junior-to-be who had served as Tomczak's backup in 1984. He had filled in for Tomczak on three occasions in the previous two seasons, leading Ohio State to wins, and completed 23 of 38 passes for 334 yards and two touchdowns as a sophomore.

However, sophomore Tom Tupa was making a push in spring practice and outperformed Karsatos at the annual spring game, completing 19 of 28 passes for 195 yards and a touchdown while leading the Gray team to a 17-14 win. Karsatos was 14 of 25 for 153 yards and a score.

"Tupa's coming on a little bit," head coach Earle Bruce said after the spring game. "It's evident that he's really competing for that position. Not taking anything away from Jim Karsatos, but I really believe Tupa's in the running now. He seems to be getting better every game he plays."

30 Years Ago – 1990

After being opposed just a month prior to having a spring football game, Ohio State head coach John Cooper was lamenting skipping the annual intrasquad contest.

"I would have liked to have had a spring game," Cooper said after the Buckeyes wound up 20 days of spring practice with a controlled scrimmage. "I would have liked to have gone in the stadium and had 40,000 or 50,000 people there watching us play."

"With that in mind, we might just play an intrasquad game this fall in the stadium just to give our young players a chance to go over there and play before a few of our fans."

25 Years Ago – 1995

An injury to starting quarterback Bobby Hoying and an announcement that tight end D.J. Jones would miss the entire 1995 season due to a medical condition put a damper on what was otherwise a beautiful day to watch football at Ohio Stadium.

An announced crowd of 28,000 baked in the 71-degree warmth as the Buckeyes closed spring practice with the annual spring game on April 29. But the game took a back seat to Hoying's injured index finger on his throwing hand, as well as the word that Jones' ailment, which was constricting blood flow to his heart, would require open heart surgery to correct. However, Hoying was optimistic after the game that he would be OK for his upcoming senior season.

"They say it looks good on the X-rays. They don't think it's broken, so hopefully in 2½ weeks or three weeks I can be throwing again," he said.

20 Years Ago – 2000

New offensive coordinator Chuck Stobart got the chance to debut Ohio State's new offense at the April 29 spring game and showcased the changes that he had made to what was an anemic group in 1999.

There were rollouts from quarterback Steve Bellisari, screen passes to the running back, sprint draws out of the backfield, a little option – things that hadn't been seen much, if at all, the year prior.

Still, the ideology of Stobart wasn't exactly a new one to Columbus, even if his system looked different from the previous one in Columbus.

"We want to control the football, move the chains and get first downs," Stobart said. "I spent a lot of time with the quarterbacks telling them to check down and take what they have. They have to be in tune with down and distance and when you should go for the home run."

15 Years Ago – 2005

Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel met with media to discuss the April 28 hire of new defensive assistant Tim Beckman as well as some responsibility shifting on the staff among coaches who remained in Columbus.

Much of that change revolved around the departure of former defensive coordinator Mark Snyder to Marshall. To replace Snyder, Tressel promoted defensive line coach Jim Heacock to coordinator while keeping him in charge of the line and transferred his assistant head coach title to wide receivers coach Darrell Hazell.

"Jim Heacock took on some additional duties as our assistant head coach, a lot of which was because he's been a head coach and done those things before," Tressel said. "Now with Jim's plate being full and only having four guys on his side of the ball and taking over the coordinator role, we thought the best was to have someone step up and take on his assistant head coach responsibilities."

Tressel also explained Beckman's role with the Buckeyes, after hiring him away from Bowling Green, where he had been tasked with stopping spread offenses as the defensive coordinator.

"It's an up-and-coming offense you're seeing throughout college football," Beckman said. "It's given the Mid-American Conference a chance to compete. It is something to be reckoned with and something that you as a defensive coordinator and defensive position coach better find a way to stop because more and more people are going to it."

10 Years Ago – 2010

Ohio State senior vice president for administration and planning Jeff Kaplan and senior associate athletic director for finance and

operations Ben Jay told BSB that the end appeared to be approaching for St. John Arena.

The athletic department's 2008 facilities plan recommended either a massive renovation to the building or its demolition within the next 10 to 15 years, and Jay indicated to BSB in a May interview that the latter was looking far more likely than the former.

"There's just no reason to put a lot of money into it," said Jay. "It just doesn't make sense. St. John Arena has served its purpose."

Still, the demolition didn't appear to be on the horizon imminently, because teams still playing in the arena would need a new home.

"There's still much that needs to be done before any of that can happen," Jay said. "You can't put the cart before the horse. We still need St. John Arena. Nobody is going anywhere until the newer facilities are built."

Five Years Ago – 2015

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer answered a few questions on April 29 about the rehab progress of quarterback Braxton Miller, who had a second surgery on his shoulder in August that forced him to miss the 2014 season.

"I think he is (throwing) up to 35 yards," Meyer said. "They are monitoring it very closely. He is very aggressive up to 25 I would say right now. We can't be out there watching, but our strength coach is out there and he has good zip on the ball. He's working his tail off. He is in the best shape he has ever been in in his life. I don't know if you have seen him but he is kind of tight, he has lost a little bit of weight, he's real muscular. He's done a great job."

Meyer went on to say he was very confident that Miller would be physically ready to compete with Cardale Jones and J.T. Barrett for the starting quarterback spot in fall camp. He also said he didn't pay attention to any rumors of Miller transferring, adding the two have not discussed the possibility of Miller playing another position.

"The objective is to get him healthy and get him ready to be a quarterback at Ohio State," Meyer said

One Year Ago – 2019

When the dust settled on the 2019 NFL draft, Ohio State had nine players selected. The Buckeyes finished second among all schools in total draft selections behind only Alabama (10).

Though Oklahoma quarterback Kyler Murray was the first prospect off the board to the Arizona Cardinals, the San Francisco 49ers selected Ohio State defensive end Nick Bosa with the No. 2 overall pick.

"It means everything," Bosa said. "It's a storied franchise, they know how to win and I think they're on the right track, so I'm just excited to be a part of it."

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Will There Be Football This Fall? No One Knows

Perhaps one of the most unusual aspects of the pandemic and its accompanying stay-at-home lockdown has been that it has made for such strange bedfellows. Case in point: I found something upon which ESPN college football analyst/longtime SEC cheerleader Paul Finebaum and I can actually agree.

As conferences and their member universities continue to wrestle with what they will do with regard to the 2020 college football season, NCAA president Mark Emmert felt the need to weigh in on the subject. Emmert took his usual ham-handed approach to a delicate situation, making it clear that no students on campus this fall equates to no student-athletes in locker rooms or playing fields.

"All of the commissioners and every president that I've talked to is in clear agreement," Emmert said May 1. "If you don't have students on campus, you don't have student-athletes on campus. That doesn't mean (the school) has to be up and running in the full normal model, but you have to treat the health and well-being of the athletes at least as much as the regular students. ... If a school doesn't reopen, then they're not going to be playing sports. It's really that simple."

Apparently no one has informed Emmert that the NCAA – at least as a governing body of collegiate athletics in general, and football in specific – is on its last legs.

Gone are the days when the NCAA could instill fear in its member institutions just by giving the faintest of hints that it was prepared to initiate an investigation into improprieties. A handful of basketball programs, most notably Kansas, are currently facing allegations of major violations in the wake of a longtime FBI investigation.

It is an investigation that has been ongoing for the better part of the last two years, but does anyone believe there will be any sort of harsh punishment doled out by the NCAA?

Since the hammer fell nearly a decade ago on Ohio State and Jim Tressel for "Tattoogate" – viewed by many (including Finebaum) as violations worthy of the so-called death penalty – the NCAA has been largely reduced to a toothless entity.

That's because while Ohio State appeared to cooperate with the NCAA and suffered the consequences, many other universities took notice and decided that noncooperation and obfuscation were their best defense. As a result, many escaped the most serious of punishments.

Remember the scandal surrounding the football program at the University of Miami, where players were wined, dined and sometimes even concubined over a period lasting more than a decade? The Hurricanes self-imposed a two-year postseason ban (during seasons when they weren't very good anyway) while the NCAA sanctions amounted to the loss of nine scholarships spread out over three years. That, and players on unofficial visits were allowed only one complimentary ticket to one home game.

When the kinds of bald-faced transgressions Miami committed are met with slaps on the wrist, Emmert and his governing body will excuse us if we give his opinion (on any subject) the equal weight of a grain of salt.

Finebaum was a little more to the point. "Mark Emmert has no more authority or influence over college football than Bozo the Clown," Finebaum said May 11. "He is an innocent bystander in all of this, and I think that's why he put out a statement. This wasn't an interview. ... We moved, three weeks ago, from no students on campus, no fans in the stands, no football, to a modification of that. Emmert had to be heard, so he was, and he was not heard very loudly, because the five Power Five commissioners don't give a rip."

And the chrome-domed analyst was just getting started.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

"The bottom line is nobody cares what he says," Finebaum said a day later. "Whether he's right or wrong, we can debate that. Maybe he has some good points and maybe he doesn't. The five commissioners don't really care. That ship passed back in early March when he decided to announce that college athletics were done for the spring – basketball, baseball, softball and everything else that transpired. And he did that without consultation with the five commissioners who run the biggest conferences and the majority of the important programs in college athletics – mostly football.

"I know a lot of people reacted like, 'Wow, this is news.' That was not news. Mark Emmert has less influence on what happens in college football than the four of us (sitting at this table)."

Is the 2020 college football season at risk? Based upon what we know at this point in time, I would have to answer in the affirmative. But who knows how things will look by the beginning of July, a time when most experts agree the conferences and universities will have to have some sort of plan formulated for the upcoming season?

Will the season begin on time? Will there be a reduced number of games? Will travel be restricted? Will teams be quarantined among themselves? Will there be fans in the stands?

I could offer my opinion on each of those questions, as well as a hundred more, and my opinion wouldn't be any more prescient than your own. The bottom line is that it all remains conjecture at this point. No one can predict the future, and therefore no one knows what is going to happen.

I can tell you this, however. If a majority of the 64 institutions that constitute membership in the ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC – the so-called Power Five – decide they're going to play football in the fall, whether or not students return to campus for face-to-face classes, there is going to be football. And there will be nothing Emmert or the NCAA can do about it.

It's All In Perception

One of the interesting pursuits I have enjoyed during this stay-at-home period was chatting with several members of Ohio State's 1988 recruiting class for a story that appears on the cover and pages 10 and 11 of this issue.

I have interviewed hundreds of former Buckeyes over the years for one flashback feature or another, and my experience has been that – with very few exceptions – players enjoy reminiscing about their time in scarlet and gray.

Most have the same kinds of recollections about specific games, coaches, teammates and locker room camaraderie, but every so often, a former Buckeye offers a slightly different view of history.

Former OSU linebacker Brent Johnson, who was a four-year letterman from 1989-92, provided just such a perspective.

Johnson was Ohio's Division III running back of the year as a senior at nearby Bexley, but he spent his entire Ohio State career on defense and as a special teams performer. And it was in the latter capacity that Johnson believes he achieved a measure of fame that not only will outlive him, but continues to provide him with a curious sense of pride.

"You can talk about Ohio guys like (Charles)

Woodson and (Desmond) Howard – guys who couldn't cut it here and had to go 'up there' – but Ohio State recruited me and recruited me hard, and that's something you can never take away from me," Johnson said.

"And another thing you can't take away is the fact that I had the first shot at Desmond on his famous punt return. Go back and look at that play, and there I am, being the first person shook off by Desmond."

Sure enough, a replay of the 93-yard punt return for a touchdown during Michigan's 31-3 victory in 1991, a play punctuated by Howard's Heisman pose in the end zone, clearly shows Johnson in the middle of the field, whiffing at the Michigan return man as he motors past on his way to the end zone.

When asked if that is really something he should be bragging about, Johnson just laughed.

"Why not?" he said. "It literally was like, well, someone had to make a play, take a chance. Maybe I hit him and knock him off his stride. Honestly, my only thought was that he's going to fair-catch, I'm going to hit him and get a penalty, and Coach Pug (linebackers coach Fred Pagac) is going to choke the living you-know-what out of me.

"Well, I can't be that dude, so I eased up just enough that when he didn't fair-catch it, he was just out of my reach. Still, I had a chance to go do something most people will never get a chance to do."

And while the incessant replay of Howard's touchdown romp continues to make most Ohio State fans sick to their collective stomachs, Johnson's reaction is a direct opposite.

"They're still running that play on ESPN almost 30 years later, and I'm right there," he said. "Whenever it comes on, I yell for people to come and watch because that's me. I'm right there. I'll take it."

Careful What You Wish For

When Alabama quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa announced May 8 that he had entered the transfer portal and then decided a week later to transfer to Maryland, I thought the younger brother of former Alabama and current Miami Dolphins QB Tua Tagovailoa had taken leave of his senses.

Maryland? You want to play in the same Big Ten division as Ohio State and Michigan? For a team that hasn't had a winning season since 2014? For a program that is 14-38 in conference play since joining the Big Ten? For a guy with a 6-40 career record as a head coach?

Then I remembered the guy with the dismal record as a head coach is Mike Locksley, who was Alabama's offensive coordinator when the younger Tagovailoa was being recruited.

Tagovailoa enters Maryland through the same transfer portal that former Terrapins QBs Tyrrell Pigrome and Max Bortenschlager used to exit the program. Over the past four seasons, both quarterbacks saw action against Ohio State, and perhaps the Buckeyes had a hand in them seeking greener pastures.

Pigrome saw action against OSU in 2016, and again during each of the last two seasons, and in those three games completed 17 of 32 pass attempts for 327 yards and a touchdown. He also pitched one interception and was sacked a total of 10 times.

Bortenschlager started in 2017 for the Terrapins against the Buckeyes and connected on only 3 of 12 attempts for 16 yards in his team's 62-14 loss that season. He was also sacked five times.

In case you're interested, Pigrome wound up at Western Kentucky as a graduate transfer while Bortenschlager remains on the market. After redshirting in 2019, he has two years of eligibility remaining.



Big Ten Extends Suspension Through June 1

The Big Ten announced on May 4 that all team activities will be suspended until at least June 1. The conference “will re-evaluate again at that time,” a statement from the conference reads. May 4 was the original end of the first suspension announced back in March, but as a statement from the league indicates, a lack of significant change in the climate surrounding the coronavirus pandemic has created the need for a longer suspension. The suspension includes on- and off-campus recruiting, as the NCAA’s dead period rules dictate.

“This is an additional measure to the previously announced cancellation of all conference and nonconference competitions through the end of the academic year, including spring sports that compete beyond the academic year. The conference also has previously announced a moratorium on all on- and off-campus recruiting activities for the foreseeable future,” the statement said.

“The Big Ten Conference will continue to use this time to work with the appropriate medical experts and institutional leadership to determine next steps relative to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The main priority of the Big Ten Conference is to ensure the health, safety and wellness of our student-athletes, coaches, administrators, faculty, fans and media as we continue to monitor all developing and relevant information on the COVID-19 virus.”

Several schools have indicated, either directly or through recruiting visit scheduling, that an early June return date would be ideal. Iowa president Bruce Harreld said publicly in a question-and-answer session with Iowa’s board of regents that he’s hoping for that June 1 end date to stick, though he later walked that back.

He also echoed what many coaches, including Ohio State’s Ryan Day, have said about the need for more than a month of practice time to make up for the lost spring.

“Our plan of record in the Big Ten is to get back to – we need about six to eight weeks of good practice to keep our players safe,” Harreld said. “Once again, I’m sure our coaches would love a lot more time than so that they can make them winners, but the key issue here is safety. We need six to eight weeks.”

The Big Ten has created a task force to determine the correct time to allow teams to reconvene.

“These are unprecedented times in our world, and the focus of any conversation taking place in college athletics right now is the health, safety and welfare of students and the public,” said Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren. “We are truly blessed to have a collection of world-class research institutions with the resources and talented medical experts on campus that allowed us to quickly assemble this task force to address a global pandemic.

“We are thankful to have the task force in

place moving forward to allow the Big Ten Conference to position itself at the forefront of this issue and to share best practices for the management of and response to emerging infectious diseases now and in the future.”

Ohio State seemed to be eyeing an early June date as well. Several top recruiting targets in the class of 2021 have had a June 12 official visit to campus planned for months now, and there has yet to be a significant effort to move those back. The Buckeyes hosted a June barbecue with top recruits in 2019 and could be hoping for a repeat this summer, though that will all rely on when the Big Ten’s suspension ends.

While team activities could see a return as soon as June 1, at least in the Big Ten, that recruiting event will have to wait. The NCAA announced on May 13 that it is extending the recruiting dead period through June 30, with a review on May 27 to revise or extend the dead period further.

If several of the world’s top professional leagues are to be believed, a return could be in the cards sooner than later. The Bundesliga, Germany’s top soccer division, returned to play on May 16, as did the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) on May 9. The KBO League, South Korea’s baseball league, has been playing since May 5. The NBA, MLS and MLB have all expressed a desire to return in June, though none of those leagues have put forth any solid date.

Oregon Governor Calls For No Fans At Games

While schools and college football programs across the country are hoping to get clearance to return to business, there is movement in the other direction in Oregon that may have a direct impact on the Buckeye football team. On May 7, Oregon Governor Kate Brown announced that fans likely won’t be in the stands for any sporting events in the state through at least September.

“There is some difficult news to share,” Brown said. “Large gatherings, including live sporting events with audiences, concerts, festivals and conventions will not be able to return until we have a reliable treatment or prevention like a vaccine.

“The Oregon Health Authority is advising that any large gathering, at least through September, should be canceled or significantly modified.”

While the governor named September as the month to watch, she wasn’t clear on the exact date that fans will be allowed to gather again, which means that Ohio State’s scheduled Sept. 12 trip to Eugene to face off with Oregon could be played without fans in the stands.

Brown went on to explain the reasoning behind the decision, citing the risk of extended exposure to potential disease that would come with any sort of reopening.

“Reopening any part of our state comes with risk,” said Brown. “This virus is still very dangerous and poses a great threat. Until there is a vaccine, unfortunately, we can’t go back to life as we know it. Not here in Oregon, and frankly anywhere. I know this can be a really tough reality to face. Physical distancing is and will remain a part of our lives for many months to come.”

While Brown has recommended against large gatherings, the University of Oregon does still plan to open its doors for fall semester, meaning that the Buckeyes and Ducks could still be able to play this fall.

“Given the realities of the COVID-19 crisis and the fact that there are numerous variables outside of our control, it is unlikely that our fall quarter will look just like last fall,” president Michael H. Schill said. “But I am committed to doing everything in my power to enable us to

Former Associate AD Myles Dies At 83

Former Ohio State assistant football coach and associate athletic director Bill Myles passed away on May 12. He was 83 years old. According to Steve Davis, who helped write Myles’ autobiography “Myles Traveled: Story of My American Journey,” Myles “was ill with lung issues and in the OSU hospital for the last several weeks.”

Davis, a close friend of Myles, released a full statement on the book’s website, mylestraveled.com, sharing memories of their time together.

“There are a handful of people in all our lives that have an outsized influence on who we are, what we believe, what we become. Your parents, your family, your spouse. A teacher, a coach, a pastor. A boss, a mentor, a friend,” Davis wrote. “Bill Myles was in that rarefied group, not only for me but for the hundreds of people whose lives he touched over his years.

“Bill Myles. He just showed us all so much love. Rest In Peace My Friend.”

Bill Conley, who coached alongside Myles with the Buckeyes in 1984, had similar feelings.

“He was a great listener,” Conley said of his fellow assistant under Earle Bruce. “Player or coach could go to him and he’d make time and really want to help you out in any way possible.”

Myles spent more than three decades at Ohio State. He was hired by Woody Hayes in 1977 as an offensive line coach, a role that he filled under Hayes and Bruce until 1984. He then moved into the administrative side of the athletic department. There, he served as associate athletic director for 22 years, until his retirement in 2008.

“He carried that same dedication and hard work to the administrative side,” Conley recalled. “He was great with cooperation. He did a great job making all those behind-the-scenes preparations, bowl games, travel, things like that.”

A Kansas City, Mo., product, Myles played football at Drake University, where he was a center and linebacker. After a successful career as a high school coach in the Kansas City area, he coached at Nebraska under head coach Tom Osborne prior to his time in Columbus. As a coach at Ohio State, he helped produce several All-Americans, including Chris Ward and Jim Lachey. As an administrator, he helped to launch the degree completion program for student-athletes. Lachey reflected on his coach in an interview with The Columbus Dispatch.

“He was a good cop,” Lachey said. “A lot of guys are yellors and screamers, but he wasn’t a guy that swore. He just found a way to use better words. Guys enjoyed being around him. He was a guy that everybody on both sides of the ball trusted.

“They would talk to Coach Myles if they had problems because he was a go-to guy. Everybody in my era had tons of respect for Coach Myles.”

Conley backed Lachey up.

“Bill was what I call a player’s coach,” he said. “He really did a great job coaching his position, got really close to his players. They all respected and liked him. He was a really good technical coach too, a guy who believed in the little details and doing things right. His players performed at a high level because of it.”

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith also issued a statement.

“Bill’s impact on student-athletes and coaches was immeasurable,” Smith said. “My first introduction to Bill was when he was an assistant coach and he recruited me. To come full circle and have an opportunity to work with him at OSU was truly a blessing. Our hearts are filled with sadness. Bill will be missed.”

Myles is survived by his wife, Lorita, and his two children, Deb and Bill.

Bill Myles’ installment of the Michigan Memories series, first published in the Nov. 24, 2001, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, was reprinted on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com on May 14. Myles was 4-4 as an assistant coach against Michigan, and his thoughts on those games have been archived for your enjoyment.

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)

return to the type of residential university that is so special for all of us.

“Our fall plans will comply with Governor Kate Brown’s emerging strategy to reopen Oregon and will be informed by guidance from the Oregon Health Authority and Lane County Public Health,” he said. “Our planning will also continue to put student, faculty and staff health and safety at the forefront.”

Schill also spoke during an interview with CNN about the likelihood of fans in the stands this fall.

“I doubt, very much, we’re going to have a packed stadium watching our Ducks play football,” Schill told anchor Kate Bolduan. “We’re hoping our football games will be played, but we’re not going to take any chances with the

health and safety of our student-athletes or the people who come to watch them.”

Brown isn’t the only governor to speak publicly about fans in stands this fall, be it for college football or any sport. Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer said in a radio interview on March 12 that she doesn’t expect teams to be filling stadiums this fall.

“There is reason to feel some confidence here,” Whitmer said in an interview on the “Mojo in the Morning Show” on WQKI-FM (95.5). “But we also have to measure (people’s) expectations and say life’s going to be different. We’re not going to be filling stadiums in the fall.

“Medical experts have made it clear that COVID-19 spreads when people are in close

contact with one another, and without a vaccine, our best strategy in combating the virus is to practice social distancing. In regard to stadiums, our administration will continue to make informed decisions on re-engagement based upon data and medical expertise.”

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine made a similar statement to Dave Briggs of The (Toledo) Blade.

“I would certainly think they could figure out how to do a season,” DeWine said of the upcoming college football season. “Can we go watch them? I think it’s much too early to be making that (decision).”

DeWine has also said publicly that he has renewed his tickets for the upcoming Buckeye football season and that he “(hopes) we see some baseball this year, and football, too.”

While no fans in the stands may make for an odd experience this fall, at least two Ohio State players are on board, as both Wyatt Davis and Josh Myers told media on May 14 that as long as they’re allowed to play, they can adjust to playing without a crowd.

“Yes, absolutely,” Myers said when asked if he would play without fans. “I would do anything really to play this season. I don’t know what I would do without football. With that would come sacrifices, and I’m willing to sacrifice whatever, whether it is to quarantine myself or whatever.”

“I definitely would do anything to have this season,” Davis said. “Whether or not that would be self-quarantine. Would it suck not having fans? Yes. But would that affect me not playing the season? No. Fans or no fans, I would want to play.”

NCAA Supports Players Profiting From Likeness

The NCAA announced on April 29 that its board of governors supported “rule changes to allow student-athletes to receive compensation for third-party endorsements both related to and separate from athletics.”

According to a statement, the board “also supports compensation for other student-athlete opportunities, such as social media, businesses they have started and personal appearances within the guiding principles originally outlined by the board in October.”

As part of those guiding principles, players will be allowed to identify themselves by sport and school but may not use school or conference licensing, and schools will not be asked to provide any additional funding to athletes.

“While student-athletes would be permitted to identify themselves by sport and school, the use of conference and school logos, trademarks or other involvement would not be allowed,” the statement reads. “The board emphasized that at no point should a university or college pay student-athletes for name, image and likeness activities.”

The group is now looking for feedback from all three college athletics divisions.

“Throughout our efforts to enhance support for college athletes, the NCAA has relied upon considerable feedback from and the engagement of our members, including numerous student-athletes, from all three divisions,” said Michael V. Drake, chair of the board and president of Ohio State. “Allowing promotions and third-party endorsements is uncharted territory.”

The statement establishes that divisions are “expected to adopt new name, image and likeness rules by January to take effect at the start of the 2021-22 academic year.”

“The NCAA’s work to modernize name, image and likeness continues, and we plan to make these important changes on the original timeline, no later than January 2021,” said Gene Smith, Ohio State senior vice president and athletics director and working group co-chair. “The board’s decision today provides

further guidance to each division as they create and adopt appropriate rules changes.”

Still, this does not mean that players will be free to accept any and all endorsement opportunities.

“The board is requiring guardrails around any future name, image and likeness activities,” the statement continues. “These would include no name, image and likeness activities that would be considered pay for play; no school or conference involvement; no use of name, image and likeness for recruiting by schools or boosters; and the regulation of agents and advisors.”

“As we evolve, the Association will continue to identify the guardrails to further support student-athletes within the context of college sports and higher education,” said Val Ackerman, commissioner of the Big East and working group co-chair. “In addition, we are mindful of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education, college sports and students at large. We hope that modernized name, image and likeness rules will further assist college athletes during these unprecedented times and beyond.”

While the board of governors recommendations appear to have the NCAA firmly on track toward player endorsements, an NCAA working group has decided against group licensing rules that would allow for the potential return of a licensed NCAA football video game, replica jerseys or trading card collections.

“It was the group’s conclusion that group licenses which would combine school trademarks with student-athlete NIL (name, image and likeness) and products like video games, replica jerseys and trading card collections are unworkable in college sports, largely because of the absence of a recognized bargaining agent to manage the terms of group NIL use on behalf of the student-athletes,” said Ackerman.

The group also decided not to recommend any changes that would eventually allow for group licensing, though it did recommend that the NCAA continue to explore the possibility of group licensing moving forward.

Wideout Jaelen Gill Enters Transfer Portal

Ohio State may not have had a ton of time this spring to watch its players in practice, with the spring session cut short after just three practices, but at least one member of the team saw enough. Former four-star Westerville South wide receiver Jaelen Gill announced on April 22 that he had entered the transfer portal and would be leaving Ohio State after two seasons.

“Growing up as a Buckeye fan, my childhood dream was to play for The Ohio State University and I’m thankful and blessed I was able to live that dream,” Gill said. “It was after careful consideration with my family that I decided that I’d like to explore other options as a student and athlete going forward and entered the transfer portal.”

During his two years with the Buckeyes, Gill struggled to find playing time, playing in just five games and reeling in seven total catches for 62 yards and a touchdown. Despite coming to Columbus as an all-purpose back, Gill was moved into the hybrid H-back role as a freshman and switched to wideout full time in 2019. There, he was caught behind K.J. Hill in the slot and served exclusively in late-game situations, when the Buckeyes held a large lead.

He spoke at the Big Ten Championship Game about struggling with his lack of playing time.

“You definitely get frustrated, you definitely get down on yourself, but I try to have my close ones by me help me with that, talk to them, talk to (wide receivers coach Brian Hartline)

BuckeyeSports.com – It’s That Easy

With Buckeye fans spending more time at home these days, they have also been spending more time on Buckeye Sports Bulletin’s electronic BuckeyeSports.com website. However, many readers still have not taken advantage of this free service to all subscribers, with the typical excuse of “I’m too old for that stuff.” BSB staffer Dave Breithaupt, who spends much of a typical day helping people who are “too old for that stuff” get online, encourages all readers to enjoy the many new stories and the abundant recruiting news, and most of all he encourages you to interact with members of the BSB staff and other Buckeye fans on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum. The following is the affable Dave’s advice on how to jump on board. If you are still struggling or too timid to try, give him a call at (614) 486-2202 and he will be glad to help you with any questions.

I don’t think I’ve ever met a Buckeye who didn’t have an opinion. Whether you are talking about the 10 best quarterbacks in OSU history or Ryan Day vs. Urban Meyer or even what makes the best tailgate food, there is no gray zone – only scarlet and gray.

In this time of lockdown we are all getting a bit antsy. How many times have you watched the 1975 World Series or 1968 Rose Bowl? It’s becoming a little old. And will there even be a football season? Where can a fan turn?

The answer is the Buckeye Sports Bulletin online site, BuckeyeSports.com. I know what you are saying. I’ve heard it before: “I’m 78, I can’t do that!” To which I say, yes you can!

The BSB website has new stories posted every day. Do you want to know the latest in football recruiting, who is in the transfer portal and what the Big Ten updates about COVID-19 are and what might transpire this fall? Are you missing talking about Justin Fields at your favorite sports bar?

BSB knows you are.

In addition to our daily stories, we have a Forum in which you may participate in any of the ongoing conversations on sports topics and sometimes the so-called OT, or off-topic conversations. We want to hear your thoughts. BuckeyeSports.com also archives the most recent and past issues of our paper for you to read or reference. The website comes free with your print subscription, so follow along with me. Don’t be shy – you are a Buckeye after all.

Visit Our Website

BuckeyeSports.com can be found at www.buckeyesports.com. Type that into the address bar of your browser (Chrome, Internet Explorer, etc.) then click on “log in” at the top right. Here you will see our logo and two boxes for entering your username and password. Your username is your record number and is above your name on all your mailing labels. Call us at (614) 486-2202 if you can’t find it, and we will look it up.

Your password is your last name, and be sure to type it in lower-case letters only. Your login will look something like this for example: username 16502, password smith. Type your last name as it appears on your mailing label. If it says Smith Jr or Smith MD then type your password as smith jr or smith md in lower case and include the spacing. Then hit login.

You Made It. Now What?

When you are logged in you will see a greeting on the top right side of our page. It will say for example, “Howdy, Joe Smith.” That means you have successfully logged in.

The first thing you will see are the most recent stories we have posted. Just click on “read more” to check them out. You will also notice a menu bar across the top of our home page when you log in. It will say Home, Football, Basketball, Sports, Forum, BSB Online, Eat and Stay. Click on whichever one you are interested in pursuing.

If you scroll down the page you will see our print issues. Click on one if you wish to read it. You have the option of reading our issues online or downloading them as a PDF file. Email us at subscriptions@buckeyesports.com if you’d like more detailed instructions on how to navigate both the online and PDF versions.

Don’t Be Shy

Check out our Forum if you wish to chime in on any one of the different conversations going on about sports. This is a great outlet if you are stranded at home. Simply click on Forum at the top of the home page, and it will take you to our message board.

If you have never used it before, start off by registering. Right below “Join the conversation,” click on the black button that says “Edit profile.” Now scroll down until you see an overview of your account and click on “Edit profile” in the menu on the left to choose the name that will be displayed when you post. Give yourself a nickname (for example CrazyBuck or No1Buck, you get the idea) or use your regular name, then click on “Update Profile” at the bottom right. The name or nickname you choose will show up on all your posts.

To read a post, simply click on the headline you are interested in. You will see all the other comments from others who have responded to the subject. When you are done you may click on FORUM at the top of your page to return to the main Forum page. Keep in mind the format may vary slightly when using a mobile phone or iPad. As I said, we are only a phone call away should you find yourself stuck.

Not interested in any of the current conversations going on? Start your own by clicking on New Topic on the right side above the conversations on the Forum home page. Feel free to check in anytime, day or night. Please join us. As I said, there isn’t a Buckeye who doesn’t have an opinion. Don’t prove us wrong.

Forum Tips

Some conversation threads may go on for several pages. There are page numbers at the top of each thread if it is longer than one page. Click on the last page number to see the latest posts. No need to scroll forever through a thread.

To respond to a thread, simply click on Reply beneath the post. If you want to include a specific post in your reply, click on Quote and it will appear with your reply. Make a mistake? For every post you make there is an Edit option. Make your changes then save it.

Once you use our website a few times you will be able to do it in your sleep. We strive to keep our online site current with whatever breaking news is happening. What better way to weather these difficult times than being in touch with your fellow Buckeyes? Be safe and Go Bucks! And if you think you are too old or too technologically challenged for this, give me a call at (614) 486-2202.

– Dave Breithaupt

Continued On Page 6



Continued From Page 5

and stuff like that and just keep faith, just keep praying to God," Gill said. "I just got to take everything day by day, keep learning from the older guys like Austin (Mack), like Ben (Victor), like K.J., Coach Hart and (assistant wide receivers coach Keenan Bailey)."

Gill was expected to battle for a starting spot in 2020, though the introduction of four top-100 receivers in the 2020 class made for a very crowded wide receivers room entering spring practice.

He has yet to announce his next school, though Kentucky has been rumored as a potential leader in his recruitment. He'll likely have to sit out a year wherever he lands before having two remaining years of eligibility.

Marotti Working To Keep Players Busy

There may not be an Ohio State staffer more impacted by the separation of players and coaches than director of strength and conditioning Mickey Marotti.

Marotti is responsible for the training and development of Ohio State's players in the weight room and would generally be the man in charge as soon as spring practice ended, working with players through the summer before delivering them back to the coaching staff in August for fall practice.

However, without a spring practice, and with Ohio State's athletes sheltering in place at their homes all over the nation, Marotti's job has been made much more complicated this spring. Now, instead of just coordinating workouts, he has to work within the boundaries of what his players have at their disposal, and with gyms closed across the nation, that means improvising. Marotti detailed in a call with media on May 13 what that process has looked like.

"We might have 30 players training at one time (under normal circumstances), and it's easy. You give them a message and they get it, they know what's going on for the next day, they move on. And then here come the next 30. And then you're done," Marotti said. "Now it's 30 separate different messages, and 30 separate different calls and 30 separate different emails and texts. It's no doubt twice as busy as if we were still in the Woody (Hayes Athletic Center).

"You can't make an excuse about a circumstance that we all have to deal with," Marotti said. "There's other people, our competitors, our teams that we're going to play, are they working harder than you are? I know you don't have equipment, I know you don't have weights, I get it. I know it's raining outside. But at some point, this thing's going to be over, and again, you're either better or you're worse. So, we pretty much have led that message, and just make sure our leaders are permeating throughout the team when they talk to each

other."

Marotti has also been tasked not just with assigning work, but with keeping players busy who have nothing to do but sit around at home.

"I'd call (Justin Fields), FaceTime him, and he'd be walking around in circles in his living room. Like Justin, sit down, relax, man. And then as time has gone on, he's really gotten himself into a routine, and that's what we've preached to our players during this time," Marotti said. "You have to get into a routine. You can't stay up all night playing video games. You can't be all over the place. You have to be in a pretty accountable routine of getting up and having breakfast and working out and doing your schoolwork and doing your meetings and just having those things throughout the day.

"As time has gone on, you can really see and hear the maturity of some guys that nine weeks ago or 10 weeks ago, whatever it's been, it was like despair almost. An anxious despair of 'What's happening?' But it's actually kind of promising."

While Marotti called this the "most difficult endeavor of my professional coaching career," he did mention several players that he's been impressed with and estimated that 30 percent of the team is currently in the best shape they've ever been in.

"We made an analogy of the 10-80-10 rule Coach (Urban) Meyer used to talk about all the time. Right now, we're probably in my mind maybe 30-50-20," Marotti said. "Thirty percent are just probably in the best shape of their life, and then 50 percent in good shape, and then you got the last 20 percent maybe that has fallen behind a little bit. So, I think you're going to have to train those athletes when they come back differently, because they're going to be in different spots. You can't have a program based on the top 30 percent and then have everybody else expected to keep up. That's unsafe."

Of that 30 percent, Marotti mentioned specifically a few standouts, including veteran linebackers Justin Hilliard, Tuf Borland and Pete Werner.

"I feel pretty good about the three linebackers who are leading that group," Marotti said.

He also mentioned wide receiver Garrett Wilson; center Matthew Jones, who has been working out with milk jugs filled with dirt and sand; and tight end Jeremy Ruckert, who built a squat rack with his dad.

"He was so proud of it," Marotti said of Ruckert.

Marotti singled out the offensive line group as being in a good place and mentioned that every member of it now has access to weights, which was an issue at the beginning of the quarantine.

"Right now, we're in a good spot," he said of the line. "I feel good about those guys."

Still, while things seem to be trending in the right direction, making sure that the Buckeyes are training the right way is a constant battle for Marotti and his staff, and a battle that will continue for the foreseeable future.

"We can't mandate that they do this training," he said. "I really do think it's a test of their character when they're away from their teammates. I think it's a concern every day when I go to bed."

UCLA Hires Former OSU Deputy AD

One of the most significant branches from the Gene Smith tree is headed out to the West Coast. Former Ohio State deputy athletic director Martin Jarmond was officially hired by UCLA on May 16, three years removed from his departure from Columbus in 2017.

Jarmond left Ohio State to take over as the athletic director at Boston College, a role he filled the past three years. During his time with

Become A Buckeye Sports Bulletin VIP

Now is the time for loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers to show their support through our VIP subscription program as we all work through the coronavirus crisis.

As most of you know, the newspaper business these days is challenging in the best of times. BSB is facing a double whammy with the recent events.

"Many of our readers are senior citizens, relying heavily on their savings to live life comfortably in their golden years," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "To see large shares of their savings disappear in a matter of days or even hours can be rattling. Spending money on things like subscriptions can suddenly seem frivolous.

"At BSB we are also looking at another consequence of these troubling times. As any BSB reader knows, a large share of our advertisers are either restaurants or hotels, and they, too, are bearing a heavy brunt of the crisis which trickles down to us.

"If you have been thinking about becoming a BSB VIP subscriber and have the means to do so, now would be a helpful time to show your support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin."

A VIP subscription can easily pay for itself each year with special VIP discounts.

VIP subscribers enjoy a 20 percent discount at the new Conrads College Gifts at Easton. VIP subscribers also enjoy a 5 percent discount on any Ohio State football trip booked through Reynolds Travel. Watch for 2020 trips to be posted soon. And VIP subscribers receive a certificate good for \$10 dollars off at Roosters restaurants, the "Fun, Casual Joint."

With the \$50 Brutus VIP upgrade, Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers will have their names and cities listed in the annual Football Preview issue and the Michigan issue as supporters of BSB. Those who add \$100 to their subscription will have their names and cities listed in all 24 issues each year as BSB Scarlet patrons. Those who donate \$125 or more will be designated as Elite patrons in each issue.

To upgrade your existing subscription to VIP status, with all the benefits that come with that designation, go to buckeyesports.com/vip-memberships to pay by credit card, or call us at (614) 486-2202 during regular business hours. If readers have questions on this program, they can call the same number.

The following are our charter Elite Wachsman, Elite and Scarlet VIP subscribers. Brutus donors will next be listed in the 2020 Football Preview issue of BSB.

Elite Wachsman Donor (in honor of late BSB assistant publisher Karen Wachsman): Roosters Restaurants Foundation.

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June Issue Slated For June 16 Mailing Date

The next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, the JUNE issue, is scheduled to be mailed on June 16. We are once again planning many interesting feature stories, as well as any updates on the Ohio State sports schedule.

We suggest you keep up with any Buckeye activity at our website, BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers. The BSB staff will continue its electronic recruiting coverage, daily stories and updates, as well as presenting reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives to fill the Buckeye information void.

Additionally, staff members will be manning the BuckeyeSports.com Forum, interacting with subscribers as we all get through this situation together.

If you are not already taking advantage of BuckeyeSports.com, BSB's 24/7 website, simply email your name, address and preferred email address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com and we will send back simple instructions on how to access the site. Don't forget, subscriptions@buckeyesports.com is our email address, not the website. We will send you directions on how to access the site.

If you are a current subscriber and have been unable to access all features on the site, please give us a call at (614) 486-2202 and we will help you gain access.

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

If you have any questions about BuckeyeSports.com, the upcoming print schedule or your mail service, feel free to call us at the above number.

the Eagles, he played a major role in the hiring of former Ohio State defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley as their next head coach, thanks partially to his ties in Columbus.

Yahoo's Pete Thamel broke the news, stating that BC fought hard to attempt to keep Jarmond in town.

"BC made a strong push to keep Jarmond the past 48 hours after UCLA's interest became clear the past few days," Thamel reported. "BC valued Jarmond's performance and the way he'd modernized the athletic department after

arriving at BC as the youngest athletic director in the Power Five.

"Jarmond will replace Dan Guerrero, who is retiring after nearly 18 years of service in Westwood. Jarmond beat out Penn's Grace Calhoun and UNLV athletic director Desiree Reed-Francois for the job."

Jarmond spent eight years with Ohio State, from 2009-2017. He was hired originally as the associate athletic director for development and rose in the ranks, all the way to second-in-command prior to his departure.

Ohio State Has Double-Digit NFL Draft Selections

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

The 2020 NFL draft was handled remotely on April 23-25 amid the worldwide coronavirus outbreak, which meant the annual event lacked the pomp and circumstance that would have come from the planned host city of Las Vegas. But aside from the virtual venue, the draft felt the same as ever.

League commissioner Roger Goodell – who announced picks while reclining in his living room chair – was heckled by fans who joined him via video chat, particularly those who root for the New York Jets, while Ohio State had enough players picked that the seven-round draft essentially doubled as a three-day recruiting infomercial for the program.

Quarterback Joe Burrow, who transferred to LSU after losing a close competition to Dwayne Haskins in spring 2018 and then won the Heisman Trophy and a national championship last season, was selected by the Cincinnati Bengals with the No. 1 overall pick. He was immediately followed by defensive end Chase Young, who went second to the Washington Redskins, and then came cornerback Jeff Okudah, who was taken with the third overall pick by the Detroit Lions.

All three played for the Buckeyes during the 2017 season, meaning that this year's draft marked the first time in the common era (since 1967 when the two leagues began holding a combined draft) that the first three picks were teammates in college at one point in time.

"That's why we do what we do," Ohio State director of player personnel Mark Pantoni said during a teleconference in the weeks leading up to the draft. "Guys we recruit early on, hopefully they come here, develop and accomplish their dreams. And you couldn't ask for better situations for those three guys."

"Everything Joe put into this program here and to see our players rooting him on publicly is awesome to see. Jeff losing his mom (to lymphoma) in high school before he gets here and overcoming that adversity. And then Chase, continuing to develop and being able to step up when Nick (Bosa) went down (in 2018) and build his platform from that point on. All three of those guys are deserving. They're all elite competitors, they're all great kids, and they all have great futures ahead in the NFL."

The biggest surprise of the draft, at least where the Buckeyes were concerned, may have come later in the first round when the Las Vegas Raiders selected former cornerback Damon Arnette with the No. 19 overall pick. Draft experts widely criticized the decision, but Ohio State head coach Ryan Day wasn't too keen on their projections.

"I was more surprised that leading up to it people had him projected into the second round," Day said during a teleconference with reporters on April 26. "I think when you look at his body of work and versatility and the fact that you are getting a fifth-year senior that has played a lot of football and who competed at a high level – he showed toughness, playing with a broken hand. He is definitely a first-round talent, and I think he is going to play really well."

This year's draft marked the first time since 2017 that Ohio State has had three first-round picks, but it is the fifth consecutive draft in which the Buckeyes have had at least two first-round picks. Ohio State also passed USC for the most first-round picks of all time, as the Buckeyes and Trojans both entered the draft with 81 apiece, with the latter producing only one first-rounder (offensive tackle Austin Jackson) this year.

"I'm not interested in being around anybody who doesn't want to be the absolute best in the world at what they do," said Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs, who recruited Arnette and Okudah during his first stint with the Buckeyes from 2012-17. "The measuring stick for us in this profession is to be chosen by the group at the next level at being the best at what you do. That's what a first-round draft pick represents."

Running back J.K. Dobbins, who broke the Buckeyes' single-season rushing record with 2,003 yards last season, was projected to be a late first- or early second-round pick as well but fell to the Baltimore Ravens with the 55th overall pick late in the second round. Asked if he thought Dobbins made a mistake by leaving school after his junior season, Day pointed out that his stock couldn't have been any higher than it was this offseason.

"He will get his opportunity, and he will make it work," Day said. "It's a good fit. All that being said, I think J.K. felt like it was his time. Sometimes a running back, you only have so many carries in that body. J.K. is not a big, 6-2 and 240-pound back. I totally understood that and support him in his decision."

"Would we have loved to have him back? Of course we would have. I think it made sense. It could have gone either way. I'm glad for him and I think his career will go great."

Three more former Buckeyes came off the board in the third round, as defensive tackle DaVon Hamilton was selected by the Jacksonville Jaguars with the No. 73 overall pick, offensive guard Jonah Jackson went to the Lions with the No. 75 overall pick and linebacker Malik Harrison was taken by the Ravens with the 98th overall pick.

Entering the draft, Baltimore did not have a single former Ohio State player on its active roster. But in selecting Dobbins and Harrison, Ravens head coach John Harbaugh – the brother of Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh – joked that his team is an equal-opportunity employer.

"I don't love the school they come from, but I like everything else about them," Harbaugh said in an interview with ESPN during the draft. "We don't hold any grudges on that. We'll be happy to have those guys. They're great players. Ohio State's a great program."

The selections of safety Jordan Fuller by the Los Angeles Rams in the sixth round (No. 199 overall) and wide receiver K.J. Hill by the Los Angeles Chargers and defensive tackle Jashon Cornell by the Lions in the seventh round at No. 220 and No. 235 overall, respectively, put the Buckeyes at double-digit selections for just the third time since the draft was shortened to seven rounds in 1994. Ohio State's 10 draftees were also tied with Michigan for the second most this year

behind LSU, which tied the modern draft record set by the 2004 Buckeyes with 14 picks in all.

Five Sign Free-Agent Deals

Five additional former Buckeyes signed free-agent deals on April 25 after they did not hear their names called in the seven-round draft, including tight end Rashod Berry (New England Patriots); wide receivers Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor (New York Giants); offensive tackle Branden Bowen (Carolina Panthers); and long snapper Liam McCullough (Raiders).

That leaves defensive tackle Robert Landers as the only draft-eligible player who has yet to sign with a team as of May 19, though he is widely expected to land a deal once teams can conduct in-person physicals to assess a nagging leg injury.

Berry, who began his Ohio State career at defensive end, caught just 17 passes for 198 yards and four touchdowns in three seasons at tight end. He excelled as a blocker, however, and showed his overall versatility when he played on both sides of the ball in late-season wins over Maryland and Rutgers last fall, becoming the first Ohio State player to accomplish that feat since Zach Boren played both fullback and linebacker against Indiana in 2012.

It will be an uphill battle for Berry to make New England's roster, though, as the Patriots also selected UCLA tight end Devin Asiasi and Virginia Tech tight end Dalton Keene in the third round of this year's draft.

Mack and Victor both came to Ohio State as four-star prospects in the class of 2016, and now they'll compete against one another to make the Giants' roster.

Mack caught 79 passes for 1,050 yards and six touchdowns in his four-year career with the Buckeyes, though the most notable play of his career is undoubtedly the third-down conversion that sparked Ohio State's come-from-behind win at Michigan in 2017.

Victor, meanwhile, caught 83 passes for 1,340 yards and 18 scores. His highlight moment came in the 2018 win at Penn State, when he weaved through several defenders on his way to a 47-yard touchdown that pulled the Buckeyes within one score late in the game.

Bowen played in 32 games, including 19 starts, in his five-year career with the Buckeyes. He was named the starting right guard coming out of fall camp in 2017, then suffered a severe leg injury in the sixth game of the season that forced him miss the rest of the year, as well as the 2018 season, as he underwent a significant rehabilitation that included multiple surgeries.

Fully healthy last fall, though, Bowen moved to right tackle, where he started 13 games along an offensive line that was a finalist for the Joe Moore Award, which rewards the best line in the country. He hopes to follow in the footsteps of former Ohio State offensive guard Andrew Norwell, who signed an undrafted free-agent deal with Carolina in 2014 and has since developed into one of the league's highest-paid players at his position.

"It's difficult, but I think all of these guys just want their opportunity," Day said. "Certainly, when you look at the offensive line, there are a lot of guys who make good careers in the NFL who were undrafted. But it is hard, it's very difficult."

"I thought (Bowen) played very, very well this season. He certainly had his injuries along the way, but he was healthy this season and played really well for us. I mean, he's an NFL-caliber talent. Now that he gets his opportunity, it's all about making the best of that opportunity. I think when Branden gets his opportunity, he's going to make it count."

Last but not least, McCullough – who was just the second long snapper in school history to land a scholarship offer out of high school, following Bryce Haynes in 2011 – has been the Buckeyes' starting long snapper for the last four seasons. He'll compete with Trent Sieg, the Raiders' incumbent starter, to earn a spot on the roster.

With that said, Ohio State will have 66 former players on NFL active rosters when training camp begins in the fall, second only to Alabama with 74.

"Ohio State is a part of the process because it's the best place in the country to play," wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, who played for the Buckeyes from 2006-08 and was taken by the Miami Dolphins in the fourth round of the 2009 NFL draft, said on April 22. "The draft takes care of itself. Everyone knows that."

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Stroke Claims Former OSU Athletic Director Jones

By MARK REA
BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

By the time Jim Jones was thrust into the athletic directorship at Ohio State in November 1987, he had already served the university in a variety of capacities – several that never appeared on his impressive résumé.

Jones, who died April 22 at the age of 83 after suffering a stroke at his winter home in Bonita Springs, Fla., was a math teacher and high school coach by trade. But after becoming a member of the Ohio State faculty in 1965, and two years later joining the university's football staff as "brain coach," he soon found out what most of his fellow assistants already knew.

Coaching for Woody Hayes was often a 24/7/365 enterprise.

"I obviously didn't know exactly what I was getting into," Jones said in 2014. "There were days when I would come to work at 7, join the other assistants for their morning meeting with Coach Hayes, then go back to the office and work until 5 or 6. Then I'd head over to study table and stay over there until about 10. I'd get home about 11, go to bed, get up the next morning and start that routine all over again.

"That sounds like a long, full day, and it certainly was. But let me tell you something. I enjoyed every minute. Well ... maybe not every minute."

Jones couldn't help laughing as he remembered his myriad duties as "brain coach" didn't stop at academic counseling.

There was the time in the spring of 1968 when freshman roommates Jack Tatum and Phil Strickland had a late-night misunderstanding that resulted in Strickland laid out semiconscious in the Morrill Tower lobby and Tatum with a gash over his eye that later required nine stitches.

So, who got called?

"Well, they couldn't very well have called Woody, could they?" Jones said. "So I get over there and there's Phil stretched out on the floor and Jack with blood gushing from a cut on his face. I asked what the hell was going on, and let's get you to the hospital. Just then, Phil jumps up, pushes me away and says, 'You're not taking him to the hospital. I'm taking him.'"

Jones said he later discovered that Tatum had decided to take a nap on Strickland's bed, and when Strickland came back to the players' 10th-story dormitory room, a fight ensued when the 6-1, 217-pound Strickland picked up the 6-0, 204-pound Tatum and threw him across the room.

The two combatants stopped in mid-fight, apparently unwilling to trash their dorm room, accompanied one another in the elevator down



FILE PHOTO

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN – Jim Jones, who served as Ohio State's athletic director from 1987-94, died on April 22 at the age of 83.

to the lobby, and continued the battle. As Strickland drove Tatum to the hospital, however, the two patched up their differences and remained the best of friends until Tatum's death in 2010. Strickland even named his oldest son after his college roommate.

The same year as the Strickland-Tatum throw-down, Jones was attending one of those early-morning assistant coaches' meetings when Hayes suddenly stopped in mid-sentence.

"He asked if I liked to read in my spare time, read books for pleasure," Jones said. "When I said, yes, he took this thick psychology book, slid it across the table toward me and said, 'Good. Read this book from cover to cover and get familiar with it. We have a freshman quarterback who could be damned good, but he needs to pass this class. Make sure he does.'"

That freshman quarterback was Rex Kern, and one of Jones' ideas was to acquire the services of a tutor for the youngster.

"I wasn't used to that level of study, and I wasn't doing very well in Psychology 101," Kern told BSB. "I was being tutored by the nephew of our freshman coach, Tiger Ellison, but that didn't seem to be doing the trick because I was still in trouble in that class.

"Woody always told us that if we went to class, sat near the front and asked questions, as football players we'd get the benefit the doubt from the professor. Well, I wasn't getting any benefit of any doubt because all of our tests were multiple choice, and I was picking the wrong answers."

About a week before finals, Kern was still underwater in the class.

"The story goes that Woody was in a meeting with his coaches, and he looked at Jim Jones and asked him if he had 20 dollars," Kern said. "That, in itself, wasn't that unusual because 'The Old Man' never carried any money. So, Jim pulled out a 20 from his wallet and handed it to Woody, but then Woody grabbed it, wadded it up and threw it in the trash can.

"('Bleep' it,' Woody said. 'We have a freshman quarterback who's flunking psychology, we're throwing away money on a tutor who isn't worth a damn, and I'm going to tell you something: If Kern flunks psychology, you're fired.'"

"After that, Jim Jones and I were yoked at the hip, and with his help, I passed that psychology final. He was just terrific in that capacity. He took care of us, would always come around to make sure we were studying and to find out if we needed any help. I think he dearly loved what he was doing."

'Brain Coach' To AD

Born in Akron, Jones grew up in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, and graduated from Kent State University in 1958 with a degree in mathematics. He returned to his hometown after graduation to teach math as well as coach football and basketball on the junior high level before spending five years as a math teacher and coach at Boston High School in Summit County.

In 1964, Jones attended Ball State University and earned a master's degree, and the following year, he found himself on the campus at Ohio State in pursuit of a doctorate. During that postgraduate work, Jones joined the OSU faculty as a physical education instructor and eventually caught the eye of Hayes, who was looking for a new assistant to head up his program's academic counseling.

"(Woody) and Darrell Royal, who was the longtime football coach at Texas, were very good friends (and) they had been talking," Jones told BSB last summer. "Each of them had the idea that they'd like to have somebody on their staff to worry about the academic side.

"And so Woody beat Darrell to the punch, it turns out, because I was Woody's first what he called 'brain coach.' They didn't even have such a thing in the university's staff directory."

At first, Jones' duties were limited to working with the freshman coaching staff to help youngsters make the transition from high school to college studies. As time went on, Jones became academic counselor to the entire football team while dealing with a variety of other issues as they presented themselves.

"Unbeknownst to Woody, behind his back, I helped in two or three other sports," Jones said. "So, eventually, I made the job into something more than just football."

Longtime OSU academic counselor Larry Romanoff credited Jones with helping to steer his career.

"He's the reason I got into the athletic counseling side of things," Romanoff told BSB. "I had graduated from Ohio State, got my master's in athletic administration at Ohio University, and then came back to Ohio State and began serving in the ticket office. That's when Jim asked me if I'd like to be an academic counselor."

Romanoff spent the next 19 years in the academic counseling division and, in 1991, was named assistant athletic director for academic counseling. He retired in 2007 but returned to the athletic department in a variety of capacities until retiring for good in 2018.

"I don't think people understand how much Jim was a mentor to a lot of people who ended up going into athletic department," Romanoff said. "A lot of guys who worked with Jim and for Jim went on to become athletic directors at other schools. He was a mentor, even a father figure. I don't know if you could accurately measure what he did for a lot of us."

Jones spent four years on Hayes' staff, a tenure during which the Buckeyes won three Big Ten titles, played in two Rose Bowls and captured the 1968 national championship. In 1970, he joined the athletic department as assistant director of athletics with responsibilities that included eligibility, compliance, travel and scholarships.

Seven years later, upon the retirement of athletic director J. Edward Weaver, Jones was elevated to associate director for new AD Hugh Hindman, who had served as an assistant on Hayes' staff with Jones. On Dec. 29, 1978, Jones was sitting beside Hindman in the press box at the Gator Bowl when Hayes slugged Clemson middle guard Charlie Bauman on the sideline near the end of the game.

Hindman was forced to fire the legendary coach and later said of the situation, "The only thing I've had to do that was tougher was bury my dad. I still had great admiration and respect for him."

The historic implications of that late December night were not lost on Jones, but he never seemed comfortable talking about it.

On the 30th anniversary of the firing, when contacted by BSB for his memory of the event, Jones replied, "I'm not even sure why this has to be rehashed. You're asking me how I felt when it happened? You're talking about a guy who was where he was because of Coach Hayes. How in the world do you think I felt? Not very good."

Jones was also in proximity to another high-profile firing in 1987 when university president Edward Jennings instructed athletic director Rick Bay to dismiss Earle Bruce just six days before that season's Michigan game. Bay carried out the president's wishes and then resigned in protest.

As a result, Jones was named director of athletics at Ohio State, only the sixth man to hold that position since it was created in 1912.

"(When Bay abruptly resigned) it hap-

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JIM JONES

pened so fast,” Jones told BSB last summer. “There wasn’t an opportunity to sit around and think about, ‘Well, do you want this job?’ Or, ‘How do you want to do this job?’ Or, ‘What would you like to ask for?’ It just happened so fast that I’d all of a sudden ended up there.

“(Becoming athletic director) wasn’t the plan. When Ed Weaver moved me from the football staff – which I thought was probably going to be the pinnacle of what I accomplished in my life – I got moved into administration and ... everything happened pretty fast after that. ... I didn’t anticipate, one, I was going to be the director of athletics, and two, it was going to happen the way it did.”

Jones’ first order of business was to find Bruce’s replacement, a nationwide search that included several big-name coaches before the hiring of Arizona State head coach John Cooper was announced on Dec. 31, 1987. Jones also was tasked with steering the athletic department through some choppy waters in the wake of the way the Bruce firing was handled.

Criticism of the firing was widespread while the situation played itself out like a soap opera in the Columbus media. Meanwhile, Bruce filed a \$7.44 million lawsuit against Jennings and the university for breach of contract, a suit that was quickly settled when the coach accepted \$471,000, which covered his salary for the remaining year of his contract as well as some retirement benefits.

“What was done was done, and I don’t think there’s much of anything I could add,” Jones said in 2014. “I will say this. I think a lot of that was blown out of proportion. But there’s really no point to going over it again.”

Jennings left Ohio State in 1990, and the university hired in his place Dr. E. Gordon Gee from the University of Colorado. Gee,

who at one time clerked for Chief Justice of the United States Warren Burger, had previously been president at Colorado as well as West Virginia University, and he came to Columbus with the reputation of being a noted academic and prolific fundraiser.

But he had never before presided over a university that had such a robust athletic department fronted by a traditional college football powerhouse.

“Jim was very savvy about athletic issues, and I was still quite fresh in understanding athletics in general and certainly the particular power of the Ohio State athletic department,” Gee told BSB. “Jim did a very nice job in acclimating me to Ohio and to Ohio State athletics. For that, I am grateful.”

Later Life

Jones remained director of athletics until 1994 when, at the age of 57, he accepted an early retirement package. At the time, it was suggested that Gee had been eager to install his own management in the athletic department and forced Jones out, an inference the athletic director discounted at the time.

Last summer, however, Jones admitted the situation with Gee was becoming untenable while stressing the decision for him to leave was entirely his own.

“It was my decision to leave,” he said. “I just couldn’t get on the same wavelength as the president. Therefore, it was up to me to leave. My predecessor, if you recall, got into a catfight with the board of trustees and the president, (and) I was determined I wasn’t going to be one of those kinds of people.”

Jones’ tenure as director of athletics was marked by several high-profile coaching hires including Cooper, men’s basketball coach Randy Ayers and track coach Russ Rogers.

Additionally, the women’s soccer program was initiated in 1993, and Jones was behind several aggressive marketing and fundraising programs that kept the OSU athletic department’s coffers filled far beyond the revenues generated by the football and basketball programs.

Jones was also well-liked and respected among his peers, serving as president of both the Division I-A Athletic Directors Association and the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics. In 2013, he was honored with the James J. Corbett Memorial Award, presented annually by the NACDA to a collegiate administrator who “through the years has most typified devotion to intercollegiate athletics and worked unceasingly for its betterment.”

In 2018, Ohio State’s Varsity “O” organization created the Jim Jones Award to recognize male letter-winners who, through their careers, contributed to the honor and fame of the university.

There were missteps as well.

In 1993, the men’s basketball program landed under NCAA investigation for recruiting violations, and Jones’ tenure as athletic director overlapped that of Dr. Richard Strauss, a former wrestling team physician who served the university from the mid-1970s into the late 1990s.

Strauss, in recent years, has been at the center of a sexual misconduct investigation that includes more than 300 former male student-athletes who allege they were assaulted by the doctor between 1978 and 1998. Ohio State announced May 8 that it had reached a \$40.9 million settlement with 162 survivors in 12 lawsuits related to sexual abuse by Strauss, who committed suicide in 2005.

Jones never discussed the case, repeatedly refusing comment about his knowledge of

Strauss’s actions and his dealings with him.

During his retirement, Jones was a regular fixture on the golf course and enjoyed wintering in Florida with his wife, Linda. The couple also attended Ohio State home football games each fall, occupying seats in a press box suite.

“He was a Buckeye,” said Dan Wallenberg, Ohio State associate athletic director for communications. “He was always the AD. He was always thinking about what should have been done and always had an opinion on what was going on at the time. Just a great person with a wealth of experience and knowledge.

“He always knew who you were. He always made you feel like you were special to him and his family.”

Jones also represented what remains of a dying breed at Ohio State, the old guard tied to the Woody Hayes era when the university’s football program and athletic department began to build a foundation toward preeminence in college athletics.

“I don’t think you can fully measure what Jim Jones did for the university,” Romanoff said. “He was always full of ideas – ideas on how to make improvements, whether that was in the way we approached things or in facilities. He was talking about expanding Ohio Stadium more than 20 years before it actually happened. He was a great ideas guy.

“And as a leader, he would listen to you. That’s what I liked about him. He wouldn’t always agree, but he would listen, and that’s all you can ask from a leader. Above all, though, he loved Ohio State. There was no bigger fan of Ohio State than Jim Jones.”

Several stories with or about Jim Jones from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives were reprinted in his memory on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com on April 23 and are available for your information and enjoyment.

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Cooper Quickly Pieced Together His First Class

Continued From Page 1

rivalry – conspired against him and his fledgling program.

"I don't know if you can totally blame Coach Cooper, but honestly, in the beginning, he just didn't really get it," Johnson told BSB. "He came from Arizona State, which was kind of a mini-Hollywood in those days. Everything there was super-nice from a marketing standpoint and representation of the university, but it just wasn't that kind of thing at Ohio State. Marketing took a back seat to beating Michigan.

"And there was Coach Cooper's style of coaching. It was so much different to anything that Ohio State had ever seen – at least where Woody and Earle were concerned."

Cooper was always consistent that as head coach, he was CEO of the program. In other words, he coached the members of his coaching staff and not individual position players.

"Coach Cooper honestly believed that was why he hired assistants," Johnson said. "He hired them to coach. The offensive coordinator

coached the offense, the defensive coordinator coached the defense, and the position coaches coached their individual positions. Coach Cooper stayed abreast of what was going on, of course, and in the end, how the team performed was his responsibility.

"So, really, if you look at it that way, I think what happened in those early days was more on the coaches and players. It was not his fault."

Even in the wake of the heart-wrenching loss to Michigan in 1988, most within the program saw better days ahead.

"This might sound crazy, but I wasn't discouraged – not at all," Roy told BSB. "As bad as it was to lose, I think everybody that was part of the program at that time was still bullish after that game. At halftime, nobody gave us a chance to come back and take the lead, and I think we came out in the second half and proved we could compete. We proved that we were obviously good enough to beat that team.

"We didn't, of course, and that was difficult to accept, but we played well – especially in the second half – and I took that as a positive sign moving forward. I think everybody did."

Recruiting On The Fly

To say the Ohio State football program was in transition during the winter of 1988 would be an understatement.

Bruce had been fired as head coach in November, less than a week before the Michigan game, and Cooper had been hired away from Arizona State. Cooper had won Missouri Valley Conference championships in each of his final five seasons at Tulsa from 1980-84 before adding a Pac-10 title with the Sun Devils in 1986, but he had no previous ties to the Buckeyes and was faced with a daunting task as he neared his first National Signing Day in Columbus.

Several things were working against the new coach. First and foremost, the team was facing the loss of several veteran starters to graduation, including linebackers Chris Spielman and Eric Kumerow, defensive backs William White and Greg Rogan, defensive lineman Ray Holliman, tight end Alex Higdon and quarterback/punter Tom Tupa. Additionally, linebacker Derek Isaman was going to sit out the 1988 season while trying to make the U.S. Olympic boxing team,

Making matters worse, Cooper's Dec. 31 hiring put his program behind the recruiting curve as many potential players either didn't care for the way Ohio State treated Bruce or were unsure about where they fit into the Buckeyes' plans under a new head coach who was largely unknown in Big Ten country.

In that latter group were a pair of highly rated Ohio running backs – O.J. McDuffie of Gates Mills Hawken, who signed with Penn State, and Chuck Webb of Toledo Macomber, who opted for Tennessee.

McDuffie, who set a host of records at Hawken School, including an unofficial state record of returning an interception 108 yards for a touchdown, went on to become an All-America receiver at Penn State before spending nine seasons in the NFL with the Miami Dolphins.

Webb was a prep All-American at Macomber, but he tore up a knee early in his sophomore season at Tennessee and was never really the same. He wound up a third-round selection by the Green Bay Packers in 1991, but his pro career consisted of only two games before injuries forced him to retire.

Neither McDuffie nor Webb played against Ohio State during their college careers, but two other notable Ohio high school stars did and wound up becoming considerable thorns in the side of the Buckeyes.

Cleveland St. Joseph quarterback Elvis Grbac, who had indicated he was on his way to Ohio State before Bruce was fired, helped lead Michigan to three Rose Bowl appearances before an NFL career that lasted eight seasons with three different teams. Meanwhile, Grbac's St. Joe teammate, Desmond Howard, joined him in Ann Arbor where he won the 1991 Heisman Trophy and eventually had his jersey No. 21 retired. Howard went on to enjoy an 11-year pro career that included being named MVP of Super Bowl XXXI.

Despite the defections of some homegrown talent, Cooper and his new staff managed to sign 21 high school prospects on National Signing Day and even pulled off a class that ranked among the top 20 nationally.

Was that a testament to Cooper's recruiting ability or did he and his staff simply reap what had already been sown?

"I know we're technically considered his first class, but I don't know if we really were," said Joe Metzger, an athletic linebacker/tight end from Kettering Alter who at one time held his high school's record in the both the 100-

and 200-meter dashes. "I think he basically just picked up a list of names of guys from the previous staff, guys that were good enough to play at Ohio State, and he ran with that.

"I think he went into it not knowing the guys as well, trying to make it work with guys he didn't really know that much about. And then you had his personality, which was much different from the traditional Midwestern coach."

But while that personality, complete with the aw-shucks attitude and Southern accent, might have produced awkward moments for some prospects, it helped in the recruiting process of others.

Corey Pargo was an all-everything defensive tackle from Toledo Rogers who was being heavily courted by Michigan State head coach George Perles and his defensive coordinator, Nick Saban. Perles and Saban also had what they thought was an ace in the hole. Pargo's parents were natives of Benton Harbor, Mich., a town of about 10,000 residents situated on Lake Michigan almost equidistant from Ann Arbor and East Lansing.

"They were letting me make up my own mind," Pargo told BSB of his parents. "I liked Ohio State, but I would say Michigan State was right up there. They had (future College Football Hall of Fame linebacker) Percy Snow and Harlon Barnett on their defense at that time. Both of them were from Ohio, and they really sold you on Michigan State.

"But when I visited Ohio State, I knew there was something about the place. I remember my dad saying, 'It's up to you, of course, but these people really care about you.' Coach Cooper just made my parents feel like he was going to take care of their son. He won them over as much, if not more, than me."

The clincher for Cooper, believe it or not, was his knowledge of soul food – more specifically, the Southern delicacy of boiled or stewed hog intestines known as chitlins or chitterlings.

"It was always a holiday tradition for us to have chitlins around Thanksgiving and Christmas," Pargo said. "When Coach Cooper came for his in-house visit, he was going through all the normal stuff that you expected him say, and then he stopped and said something like, 'It smells like this house has had some chitlins.'

"Well, my jaw kind of dropped because I didn't think a white man would know anything about chitlins. But I found out that he was from Tennessee, and when my mom asked him if he liked chitlins, Coach Cooper said, 'Sure, I'll take a bowl if you've got some.'

"My mom motioned for me to come into the kitchen with her and that's when she said, 'You're going to Ohio State.' That was about all it took."

Meanwhile, other members of the 1988 recruiting class didn't need any coaxing at all.

"Michigan recruited me pretty hard, but I grew up a Buckeye and pretty much knew that was where I was going to go," said Judah Herman, a prep All-America linebacker from Kenston High School near Chagrin Falls. After a high school career that included 578 total tackles, including 180 during his senior season, the 6-2, 210-pound Herman was ranked high on just about every major college program's list.

That was especially true for longtime Michigan head coach Bo Schembechler, who was about to lose four linebackers from his 1987 team to graduation.

"In fact, at Earle's last game, I was an official guest of Michigan," Herman told BSB. "I was supposed to meet the Michigan coaches and stand on their sideline, but I spent most of the pregame hanging out with the Ohio State players. I think there were like 48 of us that day who

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were guests of Michigan, and I was the only one down there watching Ohio State warm up.

"I really liked Earle and felt bad for him the way things went. But it really didn't sway my decision. It didn't have much of an impact at all really because I knew they'd get somebody in there who was a good coach."

Others had more personal reasons for picking Ohio State.

"I was actually committed to USC and head coach Larry Smith," Roy said. "Growing up in Columbus, Ohio State was always the dream spot, but you know when you're young, you think maybe it's a good thing for you to get away and experience other places. So I was recruited by Coach Smith – who was also from Ohio – and I had decided I was going to SC."

"But I'd also had contact with Coach Cooper when he was at Arizona State. I remember him telling me how Columbus weather was so rotten compared to Tempe. Then, when he came to Ohio State, he told me, 'Hey, Columbus weather isn't so bad,' and I was like, 'Come on, man.'"

"But even though I was committed to USC, I always still had Ohio State in the back of my mind. When I visited there, Coach Smith made a point of showing me the Rose Bowl and telling me of all the great SC teams that had played there. But all I could think of was when Ohio State played in the Rose Bowl and how I had always rooted for them to win. My family was in Columbus, and my mom wasn't in the best of health at that time, so I decided to stay home. And I've never second-guessed that decision. I would do the same 100 times over."

Too Tight, Too Conservative

As the recruiting class of 1988 assimilated itself into the Ohio State football program, there were growing pains.

Pargo failed to meet minimum academic requirements required for freshmen and was forced to sit out the entire 1988 season. Likewise for running back Ronald "Buster" Howe of Zanesville, another highly touted prospect who was the recipient of the first-ever "Mr. Football" in Ohio as awarded by The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, Roy underwent the first of four knee surgeries that effectively ended his OSU career before it got started, and similar injury problems befell the likes of linebacker Dave Bals of Willoughby (Ohio) South and quarterback Jason Frank of Anaheim, Calif., as well as in-state offensive line prospects John Schilling of Massillon Washington and Paul Sherrick of Middletown.

Still others, such as linebacker John Martin of Watseka, Ill., and quarterback Nick Cochran of Girard, Ohio, found Ohio State not to their liking and decided to transfer. Martin transferred to Illinois, where he earned a letter in 1992, while Cochran switched to Youngstown State, a team he quarterbacked to the 1992 Division I-AA national championship game for head coach Jim Tressel.

Other players such as running back Tony Goodgame of Roxbury, N.J., and linebacker Patrick Rogan of Urbana left the program for various other reasons.

Every program has a certain amount of attrition in each of its recruiting classes, but for Cooper, who was trying to get his program off the ground in Columbus, the loss of so many members of that first recruiting class set progress back several years.

The Buckeyes finished with a 4-6-1 record in 1988 – one of only three losing seasons at OSU over the past 60 years – and it wasn't until 1993 that Ohio State won its first Big Ten championship under Cooper. And it took seven tries against Michigan before the coach finally notched his first victory in the series, a 22-6 victory in 1994.

"Some of us got hurt or weren't available for

whatever reason," Roy said, "and I think you have to look at that and say that contributed to the lack of success early in Coach Cooper's time at Ohio State. The more people you have, the better off your program will be. Everyone would have contributed, and the deeper we would have been at certain positions, so sure, I think that would have helped."

"Look at it this way. When you have 20 guys in your class, and you take five or six out for whatever reason, that's the difference between an eight-cylinder engine and one with only six cylinders. Which is the more powerful? That's not to say the guys on the field in place of whoever (was unavailable) represented a huge step-down. I'm just saying if we had been available to play, the team would have been just that much stronger."

But some of Roy's teammates have a different take.

"There was no doubt we had the talent, but it was harnessed," said Pargo, who has been an Ohio high school football coach for the better part of the last 20 years. "I'm not saying that was all on Coach Cooper, but he was always trying to make sure everything was perfect, and you really can't be perfect all the time. Football isn't a perfect game, and I think the coaches got tight on things like that."

"Rather than trying to make things perfect, they should have just relied on guys to make plays. I mean, no one could catch a guy like Bobby Olive, who had 4.3 or 4.4 speed. Get him the ball. I look at things these days and see Urban Meyer and Ryan Day shooting from the hip. No disrespect toward Coach Cooper because he is an awesome, awesome man. But Meyer and Day? They just let their guys go."

Others believe it was the pressure-cooker environment of Ohio State football that got to Cooper early – that, and the added pressure of trying to beat Michigan as losses to the Wolverines piled one on top of another.

"A lot of it was expectation – kind of what Michigan is going through today," Metzger said. "They expect to lose that game. We got to the point where we expected something bad to happen. I mean, in that first game, we were winning and kicked off, and the guy runs it back to midfield and then catches some crazy pass in the end zone. Then, two years later, we're driving for a winning touchdown or field goal and we couldn't convert a fourth-and-1."

"Those two games just shouldn't have turned out the way they did. They were totally within our control, and when you don't come out with the win in a situation like that, as a kid, you really don't know what to think. If we win both of those games – or either one of them, really – I think there would have been more confidence in the program and more confidence in Coach Cooper moving forward."

Bryan Cook, who played only one year of varsity football at Youngstown Ursuline before signing with Ohio State, played free safety as a freshman and strong safety as a sophomore for the Buckeyes before starting at cornerback during his final two seasons.

"All of those early games against Michigan, yes, we lost them, but it wasn't like we were getting blown out," Cook told BSB. "If you go back and look at those games, we were right there more often than not. In '92, we dominated that game against Michigan and ended up with a 13-13 tie. We lost another game we dominated that year (to Illinois) because we lost a fumble on the 4-yard line and it got run back 96 yards for a touchdown. And we lost a game to Wisconsin by four points that we just as easily could have won. We fumbled at our own 3 in that one. We really could have been undefeated in '92."

"The first three losses for our class against Michigan were by a total of 16 points, and then we had the tie in '92. If just one play in any of those games goes our way, it would have set the tone

OSU's 1988 Recruiting Class

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School
Dave Bals	LB	6-2	225	Willoughby (Ohio) South
Greg Beatty	WR	5-11	175	Sugar Land (Texas) Willowridge
Tony Closson	LB	6-0	230	Delphos (Ohio) Jefferson
Nick Cochran	QB	6-2	185	Girard, Ohio
Bryan Cook	DB	6-4	185	Youngstown (Ohio) Ursuline
Derrick Foster	LB	6-5	220	Dayton Patterson
Jason Frank	QB	6-5	225	Anaheim (Calif.) Servite
Rich Frimel	DL	6-3	230	North Olmsted, Ohio
Tony Goodgame	RB	6-2	210	Roxbury, N.J.
Lenny Hartman	OL	6-2	265	Leavittsburg (Ohio) LaBrae
Judah Herman	LB	6-2	210	Chagrin Falls (Ohio) Kenston
Kirk Herbstreit	QB	6-3	200	Centerville, Ohio
Buster Howe	RB/DB	5-11	182	Zanesville, Ohio
Brent Johnson	RB	6-1	205	Bexley, Ohio
John Martin	LB	6-3	220	Watsseka, Ill.
Joe Metzger	LB	6-4	220	Kettering (Ohio) Alter
Corey Pargo	OL	6-5	300	Toledo Rogers
Patrick Rogan	LB	6-2	218	Urbana, Ohio
Chris Roy	TE	6-4	235	Columbus DeSales
John Schilling	OL	6-4	260	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Paul Sherrick	OL	6-8	285	Middletown, Ohio

moving forward. Who knows what might have happened?"

Pargo said the difficulty of beating Michigan often seeped over into other performances. Likewise, other failings tended to creep into the team's consciousness as it prepared for the traditional game against its archrivals.

"You look at the game we lost that first year at Pitt, or that (butt-whopping) we took at USC in '89 when Junior Seau had about four sacks by halftime," Pargo said. "There were also a bunch of times during those years when we lost to Illinois."

"You have to win those games, too, because if you don't, then the doubt creeps in. You get to that last game – The Game – and when things start going against you, suddenly you start thinking about what happened against USC or Illinois or Pitt. The pressure is tremendous, and then everybody is even tighter going forward in the bowl game or the following season because you didn't beat Michigan."

Johnson agreed, taking Pargo's reasoning a step further.

"When you get into a stressful situation," Johnson said, "coaches get a little bit tight, and then you play too conservatively on offense. Look at those early games. We were shut out in the first half in '88 and never scored more than 18 points in any of the next four games against them."

"And it wasn't like we didn't have good players on the offensive side of the ball. We had great players on offense. I think the coaches just got a little bit tight, and got too conservative. But if you ask me about our mentality going into the games – the mentality of the players – there were zero times that I thought we wouldn't win."

Johnson isn't the only one of his teammates who thought the OSU offense in those days just didn't measure up.

"My senior year, I think we were fourth in the country in defense, but we just weren't where we needed to be offensively," Herman said. "About 1994 or '95, I think, was when they really started to open up the offense."

"I look back and see some of the guys I played with on defense – there were a lot of guys who played in the NFL, but we just didn't score enough points. We were a little too smashmouth, and the other team pretty much knew what was coming."

Success After Football

Although the 1988 recruiting class never won a pair of Gold Pants symbolic of a victory against Michigan, never experienced what it was like to win a bowl game, and never won a Big Ten championship, its members make up for those shortcomings in camaraderie as well

as success after leaving school.

Herbstreit, who now lives near Nashville, Tenn., has been a fixture on ESPN college telecasts for nearly 25 years.

Johnson has been a longtime personal trainer in the Columbus area, while his roommate Cook graduated from OSU's prestigious Fisher School of Business and works for Nationwide Financial Services.

Herman is a regional manager with nationwide car auto retailer CarMax in the Cincinnati area; Roy currently lives in the Dallas area and works for AT&T; and Metzger is in the health-care business as a Denver-area sales representative for medical devices.

Several others went into coaching, including Pargo and Howe.

Pargo has been the head football coach at such schools as Toledo St. John's and Stark High School as well as his alma mater Toledo Rogers, and Howe has spent several years coaching girls basketball at the AAU level. In 2009, Howe was inducted into the Zanesville City Schools Hall of Fame, and the Blue Devils retired his No. 3 – one of only two retired jersey numbers in school history.

Last fall, before the Buckeyes took on Michigan State in early October, several members of the class of 1988 got together for a tailgate party and to reminisce. It was the first time in many years they had met as a group, and the memories began to flow at full velocity.

"It was the first time that we had decided to meet in a long, long time, and it was awesome," Herman said. "Guys flew in from all over, and we picked right up like we'd just seen each other. One of the great things was that we got a chance to catch up and get introduced to the other guys' families."

"I introduced my son, Julian, who is a freshman at Ohio State, to (wide receiver) Allen DeGraffenreid, who told Julian, 'Man, your dad was a beast. One time, he hit this guy so hard, he knocked him into next week.' My son looked at me, and I just said, 'Yeah, yeah. Did you hear that?' It was nice for him to hear that from a teammate rather than just from his dad."

Some of the memories were slightly more bittersweet, however.

"One of the things we did was walk through the new facility," Cook said of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, where a multiyear, multimillion-dollar renovation project was completed last year. "You see all of the trophies and pictures of great classes – but there's nothing from our class. And that makes you feel ... I don't know, makes you feel kind of sad, I guess."

"I wouldn't trade anything for those days and the memories I have, but if the ball bounces a different way just a time or two, we're up there in the facility, too, and not a forgotten class."

Raiders Don't Believe Arnette Was First-Round Reach

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Las Vegas Raiders surprised most observers when they selected former Ohio State cornerback Damon Arnette with the No. 19 overall pick in the 2020 NFL draft on April 23.

After all, most prognosticators predicted Arnette to come off the board in the late second or early third round. But the Raiders – who had two first-round picks and a significant need in the secondary – believed him to be the perfect fit for their system, and they were fearful he would no longer be available by the time they were back on the clock with the No. 80 overall pick in the third round.

“The reason he’s not a reach is because of his grade in our system,” Las Vegas general manager Mike Mayock said in a conference call with reporters after the first night of the draft. “Did I think we could have moved down and still got him? Maybe. But we didn’t want to lose him.”

“What distinguishes him (from the other cornerbacks still available at that point) is No. 1, he can run, and No. 2, he’s tough as nails. When you talk about competitors, he played most of the season with a cast on his arm. He can play inside, he can play outside, he can play on the left and he can play on the right. We feel like this is one of the most competitive players in the entire draft, so we don’t feel at all like it was a reach.”

While Arnette’s former teammate, Jeff Okudah, was the first cornerback off the board to the Detroit Lions with the third overall pick, Raiders head coach Jon Gruden said he actually liked Arnette more. He specifically pointed to Arnette’s production opposite Okudah, where he allowed a Big Ten-low 37.9 percent completion rate and broke up eight passes, which was good for second in the conference.

“I think he’s an old-school, bump-and-run Raider cornerback that’s physical and nasty,” Gruden said. “He reminds me a lot of – and I’m not going to guarantee this – but he reminds me a lot of (12-year NFL veteran) Aqib Talib, a guy who we drafted in Tampa

several years ago.

“He’s a guy that has great confidence in himself. He comes from a big arena at Ohio State, and the bigger the game, the better he played. He’s matured, he’s grown up and this guy has learned some difficult lessons, and I think he’s responded.”

Arnette’s path from a three-star recruit at Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas to first-round pick wasn’t easy by any means. He found himself in former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer’s doghouse ahead of his redshirt junior season, notably being forced to wear No. 46 in the 2018 spring game, and then struggled in man coverage as well as with penalties that fall.

In spite of that, following Ohio State’s Rose Bowl win over Washington last year, Arnette planned to enter the 2019 NFL draft, where he was likely to be a late-round pick. But conversations with his father, Hall of Fame wide receiver Cris Carter and then-incoming defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley changed his mind.

“I chose to go back to school to rewrite my legacy at Ohio State,” Arnette said. “I felt like I wasn’t the best player I could be on or off the field, so I decided to come back to regather myself and start over.”

With an entirely new mind-set, Arnette put forth his best season in 2019. In addition to the eight pass breakups, he recorded 35 tackles, one forced fumble and one interception – which he returned 96 yards for a touchdown in Ohio State’s Sept. 14 win at Indiana – despite wearing a cast on his right hand, protecting a broken wrist he had suffered when he tried to knock the ball out of running back J.K. Dobbins’ hand in preseason camp.

“I’d say what improved is my mentality on how I approach certain situations on the field, off the field, everything,” Arnette said. “Once I got my mind right, everything else just fell in line. I’ve been the same player. I’m not faster than I was a year ago or things like that. I’m the same person. I just had to get some things right, and everything else just fell in line.”

Ohio State has had a nation-leading eight defensive backs selected in the first round of the last seven drafts combined, a list that



ANDREW LIND

BEST IN AMERICA – Ohio State has had a nation-leading eight defensive backs selected in the first round of the last seven NFL drafts, with cornerbacks Jeff Okudah and Damon Arnette (pictured) taken by the Detroit Lions and Las Vegas Raiders, respectively, in this year’s draft.

includes Bradley Roby in 2014; Eli Apple in 2016; Marshon Lattimore, Malik Hooker and Gareon Conley in 2017; Denzel Ward in 2018; and Arnette and Okudah this year. That would not have been possible if Arnette had left school early as he originally planned to do.

“If you love a redemption story, you respect Damon Arnette a lot,” Okudah said at the NFL combine in February. “He’s someone that had a lot of doubters his first four years at Ohio State. A lot of guys like to cower and blame other people, but he just put his head down and kept working. Through a broken wrist, he put his head down and kept working. I think he’s really going to reap the benefits of resiliency.”

The Raiders also stand to benefit from the chip on Arnette’s shoulder, and they hope his size, ball skills, physicality and overall

mentality help fix a pass defense that finished last in the league in a variety of defensive statistics, including yards per attempt (10.4), receptions of at least 20 yards (37) and touchdown passes allowed (23) against perimeter receivers. By comparison, Arnette allowed just three touchdowns in coverage over 38 collegiate starts.

“I’d say I’m a physical corner, competitive corner, dog, all the above,” Arnette said. “I feel like the Raiders, we’re going to do the same thing. We are going to go out there, run fast, hit hard and execute. That’s the type of football player I am. Bring some juice, you know what I’m saying?”

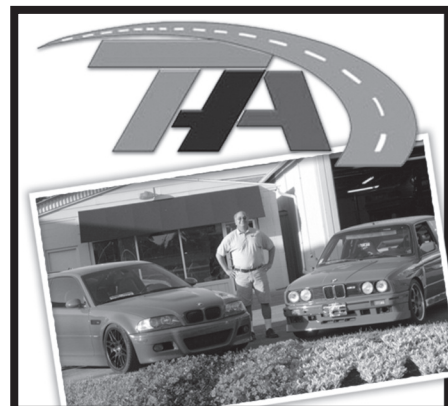
“I consider myself one of the best players in the draft. I feel like the best players go in the first round, so I wouldn’t say I’m surprised. But I’m definitely thankful for it and grateful for the opportunity.”

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Hill Slips To Chargers In Seventh Round Of NFL Draft

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On April 23, Ohio State saw three of its players find NFL teams in the first round of the NFL draft. The next day, four more Buckeyes went in the second and third rounds. But in that third day, with the final four rounds taking place, that was supposed to be K.J. Hill's day.

It was also supposed to be his day pretty early on, with many draft experts putting the Ohio State wide receiver as a fourth-round projection. But then the fourth round came and went. And then the fifth round, and then the sixth, and Hill's name was still not called.

Then finally, in the seventh round with the 220th pick in the draft, the Los Angeles Chargers selected Hill, making him the 20th Ohio State wide receiver to be drafted since 2000 and the ninth in the past six drafts.

"It was real hard seeing other receivers go before you, but I got my name called, and that's the most important thing on this day that I've dreamed of," Hill said in a conference call with the Chargers following his selection. "My dream came true, and I'm just so happy and so blessed."

Hill was the 34th wide receiver taken in the draft, and despite the deep talent at the position in this year's draft class, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day could not believe that Hill fell all the way to pick No. 220.

"That one I don't understand," Day said. "All he does is get open, catch the ball, make great plays. The most productive receiver in Ohio State history. I don't get that one at all. Certainly, there are a lot of guys that I could comment on, but that's the one that sticks out to me."

"The Chargers got a complete steal, and I think a lot of guys missed on him."

The Chargers seemed to agree with Day that they did not expect Hill, who broke Ohio State's program record with 201 career receptions, would still be there when it was time for their seventh-round selection.

"Every year in the draft, there's always so many receivers that it just seems like every year, a couple guys kind of fall a little bit further down than you would expect," Chargers general manager Tom Telesco said. "K.J. had a great career at Ohio State. Four-year player, four-year production. He's super smart and instinctive. Just a great feel to get open, which a lot of inside receivers need to have. Excellent hands, he's done some punt returns too. So it was nice that he was still there in the seventh round that we could take a shot at that."

Hill leaves with the all-time receptions record, as well as with a reception in his final 48 games, which also tied Gary Williams' Ohio State record, and he reached those totals after a 2019 season in which he caught 57 passes for 636 yards and 10 touchdowns.

After coming back for his fifth year, Hill said that he is simply honored to be mentioned among some of the best wide receivers to come through the Ohio State program.

"It meant a lot, I was blessed, definitely a blessing to be named that at a big school like that at Ohio State," Hill said. "There's

a lot of receivers that have come out of Ohio State, and my name being with all those – Michael Jenkins, Cris Carter, Michael Thomas – my name being in that category just makes it 10 times better to accomplish."

Hill's draft stock decline could be attributed to his performance at the NFL Scouting Combine, where he put up mediocre numbers in the 40-yard dash (4.60 seconds), vertical jump (32.5 inches) and broad jump (114.0 inches).

But Day does not think that what Hill did at the combine should overshadow the major accomplishments that he achieved in his time at Ohio State.

"I'm not sitting here telling anybody how to do their business, but I just know that some great coaches said, 'The best receivers, they get open and they catch the ball,'" Day said. "So it doesn't really matter what you run or anything like that. Do you get open? Do you catch the ball?"

"If you're not fast enough to get open or you can't catch the ball, then that's a problem. But I've never seen anybody cover K.J. Hill on a consistent basis. So I think it will be the same way once he gets to the NFL."

Regardless of where he was selected, Hill is now on to the next level and has an opportunity to prove the teams that passed on him wrong. He is joining a Chargers team that will likely be trotting out a rookie quarterback as their starter to go along with their new rookie wideout.

That quarterback is Justin Herbert, the signal caller from Oregon who finished his senior season completing 66.8 percent of his passes for 3,471 yards and 32 touchdowns to just six interceptions.

"I'm coming in a rookie, and I'm coming in with a highly touted quarterback, too, so we can definitely get a good connection with us coming in, being rookies and being new to the system," Hill said. "We're going to have to talk to each other, we're going to have to figure things out. We're both going down the same path, so I feel like that's a good thing to have."

Hill also said that working with three different starting quarterbacks in his time at Ohio State – J.T. Barrett, Dwayne Haskins and Justin Fields – will help him with learning and changing his game in order to fit what Herbert brings to the table.

"I feel like with different quarterbacks, it comes with different spins on the ball, different touch on the ball, accuracy and all that. So me being able to play with a lot of quarterbacks at Ohio State just adds that to my game of adjusting, being quick with adjusting," Hill said. "Just like me coming to a new team, I have to adjust to a new quarterback, so I feel like that enhances my game and makes me more valuable."

The draft did not go according to plan for Hill, who had to wait late into that final day to hear his name called. But his name was called, and now, after all that he accomplished at Ohio State, he is ready to take that next step in Los Angeles and ready to live out his lifelong dream of playing in the NFL.

"The draft process was crazy, but it was a great thing to go through," Hill said. "That's what you dream about. That was a moment I cherished, and with the receiver depth, I feel like I'm coming into a good position to come compete for a spot."



ANDREW LIND

FREE FALL – Despite finishing his career as Ohio State's all-time leader in receptions with 201, wide receiver K.J. Hill slipped all the way to the seventh round of April's NFL draft, where he was selected by the Los Angeles Chargers.

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NCAA Council Extends Recruiting Dead Period

The NCAA Division I Council Coordination Committee on May 13 approved an extension of the current recruiting dead period through June 30.

The continuation of the dead period – which was put in place in mid-March amid the worldwide coronavirus outbreak – will have a significant impact on Ohio State's recruiting efforts this summer, as the Buckeyes were scheduled to conduct one-day camps on June 3, 6 and 15 and a 7-on-7 camp on June 18. The staff was also set to welcome more than a dozen committed and uncommitted prospects to campus for a major recruiting weekend on June 12-14.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

Committed players who were expected to take official visits that weekend included Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer; Hopewell, Va., five-star running back TreVeyon Henderson; Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal five-star offensive guard Donovan Jackson; Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep five-star quarterback Kyle McCord; Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star defensive end Tunmise Adeleye; St. Louis De Smet Jesuit four-star cornerback Jakailin Johnson; Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star wide receiver Marvin Harrison; Ironton, Ohio, four-star linebacker Reid Carrico; Streetsboro, Ohio, four-star defensive tackle Mike Hall; Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough four-star running back Evan Pryor; Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star offensive tackle Ben Christman; Bowling Green (Ky.) South Warren four-star cornerback Jantzen Dunn; Cincinnati La Salle three-star safety Jaylen Johnson; and Cincinnati La Salle three-star cornerback Davonta Smith.

Uncommitted prospects who also planned to take official visits that weekend include IMG Academy five-star offensive tackle J.C. Latham; Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Cardinal Gibbons four-star wide receiver Troy Stellato; Lexington (Ky.) Frederick Douglass four-star offensive guard Jager Burton; and Savannah (Tenn.) Hardin County four-star tight end Hudson Wolfe.

Ohio State is widely considered the favorite to land commitments from Burton, Latham and Wolfe, and that weekend might have sealed the deal in their respective recruitments. It also could have swung things back in the Buckeyes' favor when it comes to Stellato, who is perceived to be a Clemson lean.

Now Ohio State – which currently holds the nation's top-rated class in the 247Sports

composite team rankings with 18 total commitments – must rely on phone and video calls to continue to build on those relationships.

It remains to be seen when prospects will be allowed back on campus or when coaches can once again hit the road to conduct off-campus evaluations, though the NCAA will reassess the current situation on May 27.

If the dead period is lifted, the committee may look to alter the recruiting calendar to allow official visits to take place in July, which is normally a dead period. If not, prospects may continue to make their respective decisions without the added benefit of on-campus visits.

The pandemic has already led to an increase in early commitments this cycle, with more players making a verbal pledge through May 6 than the last two years combined (627 to 545), according to a report from 247Sports.

This news will likely accelerate the process even more for recruits who are hoping to take official visits in June and make a decision shortly thereafter, and that could be good news for the Buckeyes.

Four-Star Defensive End Commits To Ohio State

Ohio State added to its top-ranked 2021 recruiting class on April 15 when Adeleye picked the Buckeyes over finalists Alabama, Florida, Oklahoma and Texas A&M.

The 6-3, 240-pound Adeleye is considered the fourth-best strongside defensive end and No. 33 prospect overall in his class after recording 50 tackles, four sacks and one forced fumble at Katy (Texas) Thompkins last fall. He transferred to IMG Academy in January, where he'll team up with the aforementioned Latham this season.

Adeleye landed an offer from Ohio State last May and took an unofficial visit just a few weeks later for the program's inaugural Buckeye Bash and Barbecue. He planned to return to campus and attend a practice this spring, but that was obviously put on hold when the NCAA halted team organized activities due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Interestingly, Adeleye's commitment went against the 247Sports crystal ball predictor, where the Sooners were widely regarded as the favorite in his recruitment. He admitted after his announcement that he kept things close to the vest on purpose, though, and that playing for Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson has been his goal since he watched the Buckeyes knock off Oregon for the 2014 College Football Playoff national championship.

Cornerback Target Picks Buckeyes

Though he had been trending toward Oklahoma for several weeks, Bowling Green (Ky.) South Warren's Dunn announced his commitment to Ohio State on April 20.

The 6-2, 178-pound Dunn is considered the

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
Tunmise Adeleye	DE	6-3	240	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Jayden Ballard	WR	6-2	175	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Reid Carrico	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Ironton, Ohio
Ben Christman	OT	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield (Ohio) Revere
Jantzen Dunn	CB	6-2	178	★★★★	Bowling Green (Ky.) South Warren
Michael Hall	DT	6-3	290	★★★★	Streetsboro, Ohio
Marvin Harrison	WR	6-4	184	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep
Sam Hart	TE	6-5	225	★★★	Aurora (Colo.) Cherokee Trail
TreVeyon Henderson	RB	5-11	195	★★★★★	Hopewell, Va.
Donovan Jackson	OG	6-4	308	★★★★★	Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal
Jakailin Johnson	CB	6-0	168	★★★★	St. Louis De Smet Jesuit
Jaylen Johnson	S	6-1	200	★★★	Cincinnati La Salle
Kyle McCord	QB	6-3	204	★★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep
Jesse Mirco	P	6-3	200	N/A	Fremantle, Western Australia
Evan Pryor	RB	5-10	190	★★★★	Cornelius (N.C.) W.A. Hough
Jack Sawyer	DE	6-5	220	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North
Devonta Smith	CB	6-0	185	★★★	Cincinnati La Salle
Andre Turrentine	CB	6-0	175	★★★★	Nashville (Tenn.) Ensworth

Players in the class of 2022 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jyair Brown	CB	6-0	165	★★★★	New Orleans Warren Easton
C.J. Hicks	ATH	6-4	214	★★★★	Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter
Tegra Tshabola	OT	6-6	320	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West

New Series Tracks Ohio State's Recruiting Rivals

With the Ohio State sports schedule on hold, the leading spectator sport for Buckeye fans is football recruiting, and the staff at Buckeye Sports Bulletin has ramped up its recruiting coverage on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers.

Of special note is a new feature, "Behind Enemy Lines," which follows the efforts of Ohio State's key recruiting rivals. The first installments in the series included reports on Alabama, Clemson, Michigan and Rutgers. These stories have been archived at BuckeyeSports.com for your information and convenience.

If you are not already taking advantage of BuckeyeSports.com, see the simple instructions on page 5 of this issue.

12th-best athlete and No. 208 prospect overall in the class of 2021. He recorded 37 tackles and an interception to help the Spartans to the state playoffs last season.

Dunn made his first trip to Columbus for the win over Penn State last November and finally landed an offer from the Buckeyes when he attended a spring practice on March 4. He then listed Ohio State in his top seven on March 28 alongside Georgia Tech, Louisville, Miami (Fla.), Oklahoma, Tennessee and USC.

The Buckeyes were considered the favorite in Dunn's recruitment from the moment he received an offer from head coach Ryan Day and defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs, but a string of commitments earlier this spring – coupled with a few higher-rated targets looking to take an official visit once the recruiting dead period comes to a close – made it seem unlikely he'd end up in the class and allowed the Sooners to make a move.

Sources have indicated to Buckeye Sport

Bulletin that Dunn actually issued a verbal commitment to Oklahoma on April 18, with Sooners head coach Lincoln Riley tweeting out his patented eyes emoji as a way to signal a looming pledge, only for Dunn to change his mind when Ohio State made his offer committable that same evening.

Ohio State Lands First 2022 Pledge

Ohio State landed its first commitment for the 2022 recruiting cycle on April 22 when New Orleans (La.) Warren Easton four-star cornerback Jyair Brown pledged his services to the Buckeyes.

The 6-0, 165-pound Brown is considered the 16th-best cornerback and No. 122 prospect overall in his class. He recorded 25 pass break-ups and two interceptions to help the Eagles to the state championship game last fall.

A Cincinnati native who moved to New Orleans when he was 4 years old, Brown land-

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ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

From Ohio State's standpoint, what do you believe has been the most challenging part of the NCAA-mandated recruiting dead period? Conversely, where has the staff benefited?

"The biggest challenge for Ohio State, and I assume every other program in the country, is just navigating through the unknowns. There is more time than ever to talk to kids and their parents but, in most cases, the things that matter, like getting families on campus, are still up in the air. How do you get kids and families to feel comfortable in a very uncomfortable time? That's the hard part.

"As for the benefits, there's no doubt that the Buckeyes' status among college football's truly elite programs allowed Ohio State to land the rush of commitments it did in early March and April. A lot of prospects, when faced with the possibility that it could be months before visits are allowed again, have decided to make earlier-than-expected commitments. If there's a chance to commit to a program like the one Ryan Day has, doing so quickly makes a lot of sense."

With the dead period recently being extended through June 30, Ohio State will not be able to conduct in-person evaluations during summer camps. At what position does that hurt the Buckeyes the most?

"The class of 2021, for the most part, has already been identified, but certainly losing the chance to see up-and-com-

ing offensive linemen and defensive linemen will hurt Ohio State if the Buckeyes miss out on their top targets. Those positions are the most difficult to evaluate, and to do so effectively, you really need to see those kids move in person.

"It's also likely to set back the entirety of the 2022 class because the summer between sophomore and junior year is without question the most important for a young player's recruitment."

Given the number of early commitments nationwide this cycle, particularly those who made a decision without taking visits, some experts are predicting a significant number of decommitments once the recruiting moratorium ends. Do you think that will impact any of Ohio State's current pledges?

"I don't think that the Buckeyes will really be impacted by what is likely to be a very active decommitment season this coming fall. Ohio State's brand is kind of 'recession-proof,' and the kids who committed to the Buckeyes, with maybe the exception of Hopewell, Va., five-star running back TreVeyon Henderson, weren't making decisions any sooner than they would have otherwise.

"The Ohio State staff had been building toward a commitment avalanche for a while, and a number of the top remaining targets, like Steliacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka; Sammamish (Wash.)

Eastside Catholic five-star defensive tackle J.T. Tuimolou; Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star offensive tackle J.C. Latham; and Lexington (Ky.) Frederick Douglass four-star offensive guard Jager Burton have not jumped into a choice yet."

Given the makeup of the current roster, linebacker will be a major position of need in the 2022 recruiting cycle. Who are some of the early names to keep in mind as options alongside Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter four-star athlete C.J. Hicks, who will likely play outside linebacker at the next level?

"Linebacker in 2022 is one area that has seen a major uptick in recruiting attention, and Hicks' early addition allows the Buckeyes to focus on that spot without a ton of early pressure and with a well-liked, personable prospect helping lead the way.

"One of the biggest challenges with recruiting any player as early as these kids are being recruited is not knowing exactly how they'll grow and develop physically, but a few of the early offers certainly look like outside linebackers down the road. Included in that group are Olathe (Kan.) Blue Valley North four-star Dasan McCullough; Manassas (Va.) Stonewall Jackson four-star Shawn Murphy; and, of course, Marysville, Ohio, four-star Gabe Powers. It's a class that is likely to end up with a total of three or four linebackers."

ed an offer during a phone conversation with Coombs on April 17. The two were actually connected by Warren Easton's offensive coordinator, Munchie LeGaux, who was a freshman quarterback at Cincinnati during Coombs' final season as the Bearcats' defensive backs coach in 2011.

That common ground is one reason Brown

chose Ohio State without ever visiting campus and over scholarship offers from programs such as Alabama, Arkansas, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Texas A&M and Utah, among others. He could become the first player from the state of Louisiana to sign with the Buckeyes since Metairie Archbishop Rummel defensive tackle

Nader Abdallah in 2004.

Brown became the fifth defensive back to commit to Ohio State since Coombs' return following a two-year stint with the NFL's Tennessee Titans, joining 2021 Nashville Ensworth four-star cornerback Andre Turrentine and the above-mentioned trio of Jakailin Johnson, Dunn and Smith.

In-State Tackle Commits To Bucks

Ohio State landed its second commitment for the 2022 recruiting class in as many days when West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star offensive tackle Tegra Tshabola pledged

Continued On Page 16



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Buckeyes Go Down Under For Another Punter

Continued From Page 15

his services to the Buckeyes on April 23.

The 6-6, 320-pound Tshabola is considered the sixth-best offensive tackle and No. 69 prospect overall in his recruiting class. He picked Ohio State over more than a dozen offers from programs such as Arizona State, Florida, Kentucky, Louisville, LSU, Michigan, Oklahoma, Penn State, Tennessee, Texas A&M and USC, among others.

The Buckeyes have been keeping tabs on Tshabola for more than a year, and he became the first in-state prospect in his class to land an offer from the staff on Nov. 2 – one week after his unofficial visit for Ohio State's 38-7 win over Wisconsin. He returned for the 28-17 win over Penn State a few weeks later and had maintained constant contact with Day, offensive line coach Greg Studrawa and linebackers coach Al Washington ever since.

State's Top-Rated Athlete Chooses OSU

Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter four-star athlete C.J. Hicks became the third member of Ohio State's 2022 recruiting haul when he announced his commitment on May 1.

The 6-4, 215-pound Hicks is considered the 15th-best athlete and No. 162 prospect in his class, having spent his time at both running back and safety for the Knights last season. The Buckeyes plan to play him at outside linebacker, however.

Hicks has been on Ohio State's radar for roughly a year now, dating back to when he attended a one-day camp last June. He's maintained contact with Washington and offensive coordinator/tight ends coach/area recruiter Kevin Wilson in the meantime, and they invited him to campus for multiple unofficial visits last fall.

Hicks, the cousin of former Buckeyes defensive tackle Robert Landers, finally landed an offer from the staff on April 7. He wasted little time in making a decision on his future, committing to Ohio State over offers from programs such as Cincinnati, Florida State, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Michigan State, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Oregon, Penn

State, Tennessee, Texas A&M, West Virginia and Wisconsin, among others.

Another Australian Punter Picks Buckeyes

Ohio State's 2021 recruiting class added a bit of international flavor on May 6 when Fremantle, Western Australia, punter Jesse Mirco announced his commitment to the Buckeyes.

The 23-year-old Mirco has never been to Columbus but comes from the same program (Prokick Australia) that produced former Ohio State punter Cameron Johnston. He is set to take an official visit with the Buckeyes in October, however,

Johnston punted 211 times for an average of 44.9 yards during his four-year career with the Buckeyes (2013-16). He helped the program to a win in the inaugural College Football Playoff national championship in 2014 and then earned first-team All-Big Ten honors and won the Eddleman-Fields Punter of the Year award as a senior in 2016. Johnston is now the starting punter for the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles.

The 6-3, 200-pound Mirco, meanwhile, has been punting for only four months and as a result is not yet ranked by any recruiting services. But he comes from a program that has produced numerous college and NFL prospects since 2006, most notably Johnston, Pittsburgh Steelers punter Jordan Berry, San Francisco 49ers punter Mitch Wishnowsky and Seattle Seahawks punter Michael Dickson.

With that, assistant secondary and special teams coach Matt Barnes reached out to Prokick founder Nathan Chapman to see if they had any prospects coming through the pipeline. That – combined with a few chats with Day, director of player personnel Mark Pantoni and strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti – quickly led to Mirco's commitment.

Mirco became the 18th member of Ohio State's 2021 recruiting class and will likely be the only specialist in the class after the Buckeyes added Cincinnati La Salle three-star kicker Jake Seibert last cycle. He will compete with walk-on Michael

O'Shaughnessy for the starting spot as a true freshman, as current starting punter Drue Chrisman is entering his final season of eligibility this fall.

University Study Determines Value Of Five-Star Prospects

A study conducted by The Ohio State University shows that five-star college football recruits are worth an average of \$650,000 to their schools.

Using data from the Rivals recruiting rankings from 2002-12, the study – which was released in April – also determined that four-star and three-star recruits increased their schools' revenue by \$350,000 and \$150,000, respectively, while two-star recruits decreased revenue by \$13,000 per year.

"There have been a lot of numbers put out there about how much college athletes should get under various compensation proposals," Ohio State economics professor Trevon Logan, who co-authored the study with former student Stephen Bergman, said in a statement. "But it's hard to do that when you don't know how players affect the bottom line. That's what we're trying to do here."

The figures were calculated by the team's regular-season performance and postseason revenue, with a five-star prospect increasing a program's chances of making the Bowl Championship Series – the predecessor of the College Football Playoff and the New Year's Six bowl games, which were introduced for the 2014 season – by more than 4 percent, thus bringing additional revenue to the school.

"The best recruits had a significant impact on team performance and their ability to appear in the most lucrative postseason bowls," Logan added.

The revenue value of a top-rated prospect wouldn't be as high at a program like Alabama or Ohio State as it would at other schools because the Buckeyes and Crimson Tide attract top talent every year.

In those cases, each five-star prospect increased revenue by just \$200,000, while four-star recruits netted the school just \$90,000 per year.

Commits To Play In All-American Bowl

Ohio State is typically well-represented at the All-American Bowl each January, and next year's game will be no exception after several commitments recently announced their intentions of playing in the nation's premier high school showcase.

A total of six future Buckeyes have committed to play in the game, including Carrico, Henderson, Jackson, Jakailin Johnson, McCord and Pryor. And with several additional targets, including Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive tackle J.T. Tuimoloau and Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka also set to play in the game, that number is likely to grow in the future.

The 2021 All-American Bowl is scheduled to take place at the Alamodome in San Antonio on Jan. 9. It will be broadcast live on NBC.

Other Notes From Around The Country

- Pasadena (Calif.) John Muir four-star cornerback Jamier Johnson listed a top seven of Arizona State, Colorado, Nebraska, Ohio State, Oregon, Texas and USC on April 13. He's never been to campus but hopes to take an official visit when the recruiting restrictions are lifted.

- Lititz (Pa.) Warwick five-star offensive tackle Nolan Rucci included Ohio State in his top nine on April 20 alongside Alabama, Clemson, LSU, Michigan, Notre Dame, Penn State, Stanford and Wisconsin. The Nittany Lions are the overwhelming favorite in his recruitment, especially considering his dad played for the program from 1988-92.

- Kernersville (N.C.) Glenn four-star defensive end Jahvaree Ritzie named a top five of Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio State, South Carolina and Tennessee on April 26. The Tar Heels hold 100 percent of the 247Sports crystal ball predictions heading toward his June 12 announcement.

- Though Ohio State was once considered the favorite in his recruitment, IMG Academy four-star cornerback Kamar Wilcoxson committed to Tennessee on April 27. His decision was directly linked to Dunn's, whose pledge one week earlier ended hope of Wilcoxson ending up in Columbus.

- Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus Hall four-star defensive end Jahzion Harris committed to Texas A&M on April 28 over finalists LSU, Michigan, Ohio State and Rutgers.

- Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater four-star wide receiver Christian Leary dropped a top six of Alabama, Auburn, Florida, Ohio State, Oklahoma and West Virginia on May 1. The Sooners are considered the favorite to land his commitment on his planned announcement date of June 6.

- Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star defensive tackle Tywone Malone included Ohio State in his top 14 schools on May 2 along with Alabama, Florida, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Michigan, Ole Miss, Penn State, Rutgers, Tennessee, Texas A&M, USC and Virginia Tech.

- Solon, Ohio, four-star defensive end Najee Story pledged his services to Northwestern on May 3, less than two weeks after he listed Ohio State among his top five schools.

- Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary five-star offensive tackle Tristan Leigh placed Ohio State in his top 15 schools on May 9 alongside Alabama, Clemson, Florida, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Maryland,



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A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1990

BSB learned that six members of Ohio State's 1990 recruiting class had yet to receive minimum scores on the SAT or ACT to qualify for freshman eligibility: running back Jeff Cothran of Middletown, Ohio; defensive back Larry Kennedy of Sarasota, Fla.; quarterback Johnny Mattress of Cincinnati; defensive back Tim Patillo of Aliquippa, Pa.; tight end Craig Robinson of Jackson, Miss.; and wide receiver Chris Sanders of Denver.

25 Years Ago – 1995

Warren (Ohio) Harding wide receiver Vanness Provitt, a high school senior, remained unsigned entering May.

Provitt had yet to receive a Prop 48 qualifying grade of 17 on the ACT, falling a point short on the April test. Provitt told BSB he had narrowed his college choices to Ohio State and Illinois.

"Right now, I'm probably leaning toward Ohio State," he said.

But if he failed to pass the test again in June, he would have to enroll at a prep school. Provitt said he could attend Fork Union Military Academy in Virginia, the same school OSU tailback Eddie George had attended.

"Right now, I believe he is looking into (prep school)," said Harding coach Phil Annarella. "We should have a decision in the next week or so."

Provitt was rated one of the Midwest's top five receivers by Bluechip Illustrated after catching 23 passes for 400 yards with six touchdowns.

20 Years Ago – 2000

A small but talented group of football prospects attended Ohio State's Scarlet and Gray Game April 29 at Columbus Crew Stadium.

Many of the region's top prospects who were interested in OSU had already been to the school for junior day on April 1 or for the Nike Camp on April 15. Plus many athletes had track and field conflicts on April 29.

But there were a few notable players in attendance, including Ohio defensive ends Simon Fraser of Upper Arlington and Pat Massey of Cleveland St. Ignatius. Each was judged among Ohio's top

three prospects by The Ohio Football Recruiting News.

15 Years Ago – 2005

Ohio State was focused heavily on landing some blocking in the class of 2006 to help block for Akron Garfield superstar tailback Chris Wells.

While much of that effort went toward the offensive line, Ohio State also expressed interest in Jasper, Ind., fullback Luke Schmidt, considered one of the nation's best fullbacks.

Starting in a run-dominant offense for his high school, Schmidt rushed for 2,592 yards and 41 touchdowns as a junior. However, at 6-3, 230 pounds, he was seen by Ohio State as an even better blocking option than a runner. Other teams, however, had a different view.

"It's been kind of spread out," Schmidt told BSB in May of his recruitment. "It's kind of between fullback and halfback, with tight end and some defensive end."

Ohio State had yet to offer Schmidt, but he considered the Buckeyes among his top schools, along with Indiana, Louisville, Notre Dame, Oklahoma and Purdue, all of whom had already extended offers.

10 Years Ago – 2010

A 2011 recruiting class that was expected to top out around 20 members moved past the halfway point for Ohio State.

On May 16, the Buckeyes received their 11th verbal commitment when four-star defensive tackle Michael Bennett joined the fold. A 6-3, 275-pounder from Centerville, Ohio, Bennett made his final decision between Ohio State and Northwestern.

For Bennett, Northwestern's academics had a strong pull, but Ohio State was ultimately able to convince him that he could have success in Columbus on and off the field, where he planned to enter the medical field.

"I really liked Northwestern and their academic program a lot, but I can still enter the medical field from Ohio State and become prepared to play NFL football," Bennett told BSB. "I know Ohio State can give me everything I need to succeed in life. I want to play pro football if I am good enough, but I know football ends at some point,

so my career after football means the most to me. I've wanted to be in the medical field all my life, and Ohio State can make that happen."

Five Years Ago – 2015

Ohio State suffered a setback in late April when it lost Cleveland St. Ignatius four-star offensive tackle Liam Eichenberg to Notre Dame. OSU head coach Urban Meyer responded in one of his favorite ways – he took another talented prospect from enemy territory.

The Buckeyes landed a commitment from Michael Jordan on May 7. The Canton (Mich.) Plymouth four-star offensive tackle was the fourth Michigan native to sign with Ohio State in three years, joining Detroit Cass Tech products Damon Webb (2014), Mike Weber (2015) and Joshua Alabi (2015).

"Ohio State is a great place to be, and everything lined up academically," Jordan told BSB after competing at The Opening Columbus Regional on May 31.

Jordan (6-6, 265) was the No. 16 offensive tackle and No. 147 overall prospect in the class of 2016. He held offers from Boston College, Michigan, Michigan State, Nebraska and Notre Dame in addition to Ohio State and was listed by Scout.com recruiting analyst Allen Trieu as the No. 2 prospect in the state of Michigan.

One Year Ago – 2019

Ohio State swung southeast April 23 for one of its 2021 targets on defense with an offer to Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett's Barrett Carter. The Buckeyes extended a scholarship offer to the 6-1, 205-pound outside linebacker, joining Notre Dame as the second school doing so that day.

The bid from Ohio State was Carter's seventh. After he picked up his first offer from Temple in May of 2018, Carter saw his recruitment start to take off in January, when Kentucky and Vanderbilt entered the mix, followed by Appalachian State on March 16 and Duke on April 3.

According to 247Sports, Carter was a four-star recruit – the No. 210 overall prospect, No. 37 outside linebacker and No. 17 player in Georgia for 2021.

Miami (Fla.), Oklahoma, Penn State, UCF, USC, Virginia and Virginia Tech.

- Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguro four-star athlete Denzel Burke named Ohio State one of his five finalists along with Colorado, Oregon, USC and Washington. While some evaluators believe his future is at wide receiver, the Buckeyes view him as a cornerback at the next level.

- Clarkston, Mich., four-star offensive tackle Garrett Dellinger dropped his top four schools on May 13, with LSU, Michigan, Ohio State and Penn State making the cut. He is the teammate of four-star offensive guard target Rocco Spindler, though the two are not expected to end up at the same college.

- The aforementioned Egbuka, who is considered the nation's top-rated wide receiver, announced a final four of Clemson, Ohio State, Oklahoma and Washington on May 15. The Buckeyes hold 10 of the 11 crystal ball projections, with the other expert currently listed as undecided.

- Though he's yet to visit Ohio State, Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star cornerback Jaylin Davies listed the Buckeyes in his final four on May 16 next to Arizona State, Oregon and USC. He's expected to take an official visit in the fall.

- Virginia Beach (Va.) Princess Anne five-star cornerback Tony Grimes will reveal his final three schools on May 31. Georgia, Ohio State, Penn State, Texas A&M and Virginia Tech are among the programs vying for those final spots ahead of his planned Dec. 1 decision.

- There's been no shortage of scholarship offers handed out by the Ohio State staff in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, with nearly two dozen players from the class of 2022 announcing their offers on social media in recent weeks.

That list includes Fond Du Lac (Wis.)

St. Mary's Springs four-star defensive tackle Billy Schrauth and Lake Wales (Fla.) Seffner Christian Academy four-star athlete Tony Livingston on April 14; Houston North Shore four-star cornerback Denver Harris on April 16; Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star offensive tackle Earnest Greene on April 19; St. Louis Cardinal Ritter Prep four-star wide receiver Luther Burden on April 20; Traverse City (Mich.) Central four-star linebacker Joshua Burnham and Olathe (Kansas) Blue Valley North four-star athlete Dasan McCullough on April 21; Grosse

Pointe (Mich.) South four-star cornerback William Johnson on April 23; Beaumont (Texas) West Brook four-star safety Bryce Anderson and Strongsville, Ohio, three-star offensive tackle Blake Miller on April 24; Lynchburg (Va.) Liberty Christian Academy three-star offensive tackle Zach Rice on April 29; and Duncanville, Texas, three-star offensive tackle Cameron Williams on April 30.

On May 1, Zionsville, Ind., four-star offensive tackle Joey Tanona; Dickinson, Texas, four-star tight end Donovan Green; and Fort Wayne (Ind.) R. Nelson Snider three-star

offensive guard Demon Moore were offered. That was followed by Las Vegas Bishop Gorman four-star safety Zion Brach on May 3; Manvel, Texas, three-star linebacker Justin Medlock on May 7; Houston Klein Cain four-star running back Jaydon Blue on May 12; Philadelphia Imhotep Institute four-star defensive end Enai White, Aledo, Texas, four-star safety Bryan Allen and Mission Hills (Calif.) Bishop Alemany four-star safety Ephesians Prysock on May 13; and Salisbury, N.C., four-star linebacker Jalon Walker on May 14.

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BSB Staff Talks Draft, Recruiting And Season

Although there is plenty of uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, there's been no shortage of news in the sports world over the last few months.

That's why Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members Wyatt Crosher, Joe Dempsey, Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn sat down to discuss their thoughts on April's NFL draft, Ohio State's recent recruiting tear, the likelihood of a college football season and much more in the latest BSB roundtable.

Former Ohio State and LSU quarterback Joe Burrow went to the Cincinnati Bengals with the No. 1 overall pick in the 2020 NFL draft, which took place April 23-25. Seeing as he'll be forever linked with Washington Redskins quarterback Dwayne Haskins following their battle to be the Buckeyes' starting quarterback in spring 2018, who do you believe will have the better professional career?

Wyatt Crosher: Dwayne Haskins has taken too much heat for his so-so performance during his rookie year. The Washington Redskins were terrible, and the offensive line was not doing him any favors, plus he actually put together some pretty good performances late in the season.

Still, what Joe Burrow developed into at LSU makes him a once-in-a-decade type of talent at quarterback, and I think that his ability to show poise and always keep his eyes downfield, even with pressure, proved to me he has what it takes to be a great quarterback at the NFL level.

Even beyond what these two quarterbacks can do, I liked what Cincinnati has done in getting Burrow more weapons, including drafting Clemson wideout Tee Higgins, while Washington seems to be relying heavily on Haskins' connection with Terry McLaurin, even with a later selection in Liberty's Antonio Gandy-Golden.

The jury is still out on Haskins, and Burrow has not yet proved anything, but if I were to put my money on one of them, it would be Burrow.

Andrew Lind: I think most people forget that Haskins started just one year in college, too. And while he was easily the most talented player in the country in terms of his arm strength, there was still room for him to grow as a leader, in his ability to read defenses and so on. That showed during his rookie season.

I do agree with Wyatt that Burrow feels like a once-in-a-decade prospect based on the tremendous growth he showed over the last 2½ years, from losing the battle with Haskins to winning a national championship and the Heisman Trophy. But they're both 23 years old and essentially on the same footing at this point in time, though, and Haskins has the added benefit of a year in the NFL under his belt.

I think both players have the talent to become perennial Pro Bowlers, but their overall success will be dictated by their respective franchises putting talent around them. And while both teams drafted well this year, I don't know that I trust the Bengals or Redskins to do right by them over the long term, and that's why I can't really pick one or the other.

Joe Dempsey: You guys bring up some great points about both Haskins and Burrow and their respective situations. Haskins' situation in Washington last season was far from ideal, with such a poor offensive line and not much of a running game. The best thing for him is that he gained some experience against NFL defenses and managed to stay healthy.

I like Washington's addition of rookie wideout Antonio Gandy-Golden, like Wyatt mentioned, and I'm even more interested in early third-round pick Antonio Gibson, who projects as a running back but played receiver at

Memphis. Hopefully for Haskins' sake, the offensive line will give him more time to find his dangerous new targets.

For Burrow, the weapons should definitely not be a concern in Cincinnati with Tyler Boyd, A.J. Green and Higgins at wide receiver. I am a little worried about the Bengals' ability to protect the passer, though, as they really struggled last season.

I expect both Burrow and Haskins to have success, but if I had to pick one, I'd pick Burrow because I have even less faith in Washington's front office than Cincinnati's to build a winning franchise around its young quarterback.

Patrick Mayhorn: I'm going to have to echo what Wyatt and Joe said and say that if I was forced to choose one, I would pick Burrow. The level that he was operating on in 2019 was unlike anything I've ever seen before, and it's very hard for me to pick against someone playing with as much confidence as he has.

There is some risk in that, because Burrow does still have to make the transition into the next level, which, as we saw with Haskins, is far from easy. There's a chance that confidence could dip, or that his ability to make plays outside of the pocket will disappear without a great line in front of him. Football is fickle, and it's hard to know for sure what will and won't transfer from college to the pro level.

That said, while Burrow is a bit of a mystery, we know at least a little bit of what Haskins can do in the NFL, and more importantly, we know what he has around him. I wasn't particularly impressed with his first season in Washington, and it really doesn't seem like the franchise has done a ton to surround him with talent. McLaurin will help, but the buy-in with Burrow at Cincinnati already seems stronger than what Haskins has in Washington.

When it comes to picking, that makes a big difference. Haskins still has all the talent in the world, and I could still very easily see him developing into a great NFL quarterback, but as it stands right now, I think that Burrow is in a much better position to shine.

Ohio State had 10 players selected during the draft. Of those players, who do you think was picked earlier than you expected? Who was taken later than you anticipated?

WC: The first surprise of the draft, at least when it came to Ohio State players, was Damon Arnette going 19th overall to the Las Vegas Raiders. I think Arnette was being underrated by many analysts and I expected him to go early in the second, but Raiders head coach Jon Gruden stunned many by taking the Ohio State corner in the middle of the first round.

The other big surprise came with K.J. Hill, as the wide receiver fell all the way to the seventh round, with the Los Angeles Chargers finally taking Hill with the 220th pick. Hill was someone I expected to go in the fourth or fifth round, certainly not the seventh.

Past those two, I was also quite stunned to see Jashon Cornell find a spot in the draft, also going in the seventh round to the Detroit Lions. I think Cornell is a solid defensive tackle, but I would have expected Robert Landers to get drafted before him, if Cornell was drafted at all.

AL: Arnette is really the only answer here, not because he lacks the talent of a first-round pick, but because most mock drafts had him going in the second or third round.

That said, I understand why Las Vegas picked him that high. The Raiders had two first-round picks (they picked Alabama wide receiver Henry Ruggs at No. 12) and didn't have another selection until the third round, and they knew Arnette would be off the board by the time they were back on the clock. Sometimes

you have to reach for the player you really like.

I was even more shocked that Hill fell to the seventh round, meanwhile. Much like McLaurin one year ago, Hill dominated at the Senior Bowl and was widely expected to come off the board early on Day 3. But his 4.60-second 40-yard dash apparently hurt his stock, which is why he fell into the Chargers' lap.

I think every team that has a need in the slot but passed on Hill is going to regret that decision. Especially when he quickly steps into a starting role as a rookie alongside Keenan Allen and Mike Williams this fall.

JD: What's most interesting to me about the Raiders shocking experts by taking Damon Arnette with the No. 19 overall pick was that they said they had clocked a different 40 time for him at the combine. Arnette's official 40-yard dash time was 4.56 seconds, which isn't quite on-par with typical first-round corners. However, the Raiders came out and said they and a few other teams had clocked Arnette in the low 4.4s, and when rewatching his run, it's clear the clock started before Arnette took off.

To me, Hill falling to the seventh round was the most shocking draft selection for a Buckeye. I thought that his lack of straight-line speed might possibly set him back to the fifth round, but the fact that 219 players were picked before him is shocking.

I thought pick No. 55 was pretty low for J.K. Dobbins, who I thought was the best back in college football last season. Dobbins sliding was not the most surprising aspect, though, because of how NFL teams have been avoiding running backs early in drafts in recent years.

Malik Harrison was not projected to be drafted high, so his selection at No. 98 was not much of a surprise. But with his combination of size and athleticism compounded with a productive Ohio State career, I thought he would garner more attention as a possible late first- or second-round pick.

PM: Just to switch things up for the first question, I'll stray from the group and say that Jonah Jackson being selected by the Detroit Lions in the third round caught me by surprise.

That isn't to say that the recognition isn't deserved. Jackson was spectacular in his one season with Ohio State and served as a great leader for a young offensive line. His work in the passing game was great, and he played a big role in helping to establish the zone running game that the Buckeyes leaned so heavily on.

However, his testing wasn't exactly amazing, and he's already 23 years old, making him one of the older players in the draft. Hyper-productive college players without the elite physical profiles usually seem to fall into the later rounds, and I figured that Jackson would join that group. A third-round pick for him makes me think that the Lions really loved what they saw in his tape.

On the other side of the coin, I'll split from the group again and bend the rules a bit to say defensive tackle Robert Landers who, as of publication, has still yet to sign with an NFL team.

I assumed that his smaller frame would push Landers into the final rounds or out of the draft entirely, but to see him still without a team several weeks removed from the draft is just bizarre. He was another super productive player in Columbus, and I figured that some team would be willing to take a flier on a guy like that.

I would assume that he finds a team at some point, but the further away from the draft we go, the less likely that seems.

If you included those who signed undrafted free-agent deals, a total of 15 Buckeyes are headed to the NFL. Which player do you believe will have the best rookie season? What about overall career?

WC: There are some easy choices here, but sometimes easy is the correct one. Chase Young and Jeff Okudah went in the top three for a reason, and I expect both of them will be some of the best at their respective positions for a very long time.

If I were to pick one, I think I would actually lean that Okudah might have the stronger career, as he really is one of the most sound corners I have ever watched at the college level, and I think that he will continue to show that dominance right away, while Young might take a little bit to get there with NFL offensive linemen.

If I were to go with a dark horse, I would pick DaVon Hamilton. The fifth-year senior defensive tackle really impressed me down the stretch of the season, and I think he could be one of those consistent starters in the NFL for the Jacksonville Jaguars.

AL: I also have to go with Okudah, Wyatt. He's the most technically sound cornerback I've ever seen, and he has the size, athleticism, toughness and drive to be the best player in the league at his position.

Young may win defensive rookie of the year honors because it's easier to be disruptive and pile up stats as a defensive end, but I feel like NFL quarterbacks will purposely avoid throwing the ball to whichever side of the field Okudah is on. If they don't, he'll rack up the interceptions like Marshon Lattimore did during his rookie season in New Orleans.

I do want to point out Dobbins might be in the best position of any Ohio State draftee, though. He might not win the rookie of the year while sharing the carries with quarterback Lamar Jackson and running back Mark Ingram, but the Ravens are among the favorites to win the Super Bowl.

JD: I definitely agree about Dobbins. It might not have been possible for him to land in a better situation than Baltimore. Reigning unanimous MVP Lamar Jackson is the Ravens' quarterback and elevates those around him. And while he and Ingram will take touches away from Dobbins, the rookie may benefit from it in the long run. Like Andrew mentioned, they will likely be competing in the AFC playoffs.

To answer the question, though, I think Young will have the best rookie season. I expect him to garner a lot of attention from opposing offenses, but I think he'll still find a way to be disruptive.

And I think Okudah will have the best career for all the reasons Andrew mentioned, as well as the fact that he steadily improved his entire Ohio State career. Not many were talking about Okudah before the Rose Bowl victory to end his sophomore season, and 15 months later he was the No. 3 overall pick. If he keeps getting better like that, there's no limit to his potential.

PM: If this was a draft, I would feel like I hit the lottery with Young falling right into my lap as the answer to this question. I agree with everyone else that Okudah should be in for an excellent career and has all the tools to become an All-Pro caliber cornerback, but I think that Young is the answer here, for both parts of the question.

Firstly, he's heading to a team with a very strong line around him, and he's going to be playing for a coach in Ron Rivera who knows how to produce elite pass rushing defensive ends. If Young is able to refine his game just a little bit more, he has all of the talent and athletic ability to develop not just into an elite player, but into the most dominant defensive end in the league.

I think that's going to show up in year one, when Young wrecks lines all season on his way to a rookie of the year award, and from there

I think that he's only going to get more lethal as he matures and develops. There's a reason that Young set the single-season sack record in Columbus, and I don't see that edge that he has suddenly disappearing or becoming less of a factor at the next level.

Ohio State junior quarterback Justin Fields is widely expected to be among the first few picks in next year's draft, provided he opts to forgo his final season of eligibility. Aside from his status, what are some of your way-too-early predictions for next year's draft?

WC: Fields will almost certainly be a top-five pick next year, maybe even top two. Past him, I think there are still a handful of players on Ohio State's roster that I think have the potential to be first-round picks.

The most obvious one to me is Shaun Wade, who, with a year in the slot, should become a first-rounder, maybe even a top-15 pick. I think Wyatt Davis can continue forward from his All-American sophomore year into a first-round spot, and I think there are outside chances for players like Chris Olave and Josh Myers to shine through and increase their stock.

There are other players past these who will certainly get drafted, with names like Thayer Munford, Pete Werner, Baron Browning, Jonathon Cooper and Oklahoma transfer back Trey Sermon all seeming like strong options.

Past them, there are opportunities for whoever is going to step up in the secondary, as well as players like Tuf Borland, Luke Farrell and Tyreke Smith among others to have a strong season and make a run at a late-round selection, while I think special teams stars Drue Chrisman and Blake Haubeil both have a shot at getting drafted.

AL: I actually think Wade would have been a first-round pick this year based on talent alone, maybe even going as high as No. 9 overall to his hometown Jacksonville Jaguars. But his decision to come back will put him in the conversation to be the first cornerback off the board next year, just like Okudah at No. 3 this year.

If I have to make one bold prediction, though, it's that Ohio State will have a whopping six first-round picks next year – Fields, Wade, Davis, Myers, Olave and Thayer Munford.

Olave is probably a surprise name on that list, given he was a three-star prospect and the third-lowest rated prospect in the Buckeyes' 2018 recruiting class ahead of Alex Williams and Marcus Hooker. But he's a skilled route-runner and has the overall athletic ability that is necessary to make big-time plays in the NFL.

If that happens, Olave will be the first Ohio State wide receiver to be selected in the first round since Ted Ginn and Anthony Gonzalez in 2007.

JD: For a way-too-early bold prediction, I'll say that Ohio State once again produces two of the top five picks. Those two would most likely be Justin Fields and Shaun Wade, who I think will continue to prove his immense value.

Beyond that, I'll be interested to see how the rest of the Buckeyes stack up in the draft. Olave definitely intrigues me, because I think he's already flashed first-round ability but doesn't possess the size that attracts NFL scouts.

And offensive linemen can be difficult to predict for the draft, so it will be interesting to see where Davis, Munford and Myers will fall. I think they will all have success in the league, though, particularly Davis, who looked the part of a first-rounder down the stretch as a third-year sophomore.

I'm glad Wyatt mentioned Baron Browning and Tyreke Smith, because I think both of them have the size and athleticism that will give them an edge with scouts. A big-time season for either of them could jump them up draft boards, and if they can leave their injuries in the past, I expect them both to succeed.

PM: As for first-round selections, I have

to agree with Andrew and say that Ohio State is going to be in for a massive showing, with as many as seven players selected, including Fields, Wade, Davis, Munford, Myers, Olave and a wildcard in Browning if he can make a smooth transition to outside linebacker this fall.

To put it simply, this team is loaded. Past that first round, I think that Werner, Cooper, Smith and Sevn Banks could all find their ways into a day-two selection, while some players like Farrell, Sermon, Tommy Togiai, Antwan Jackson or Haskell Garrett could slip into the later rounds, either as developmental prospects or productive depth picks.

Overall, this could be a class that rivals the legendary 2016 draft class, which saw 12 Buckeyes selected, including five in the first round.

Switching gears, Ohio State's 2021 recruiting class is currently sitting at No. 1 in the 247Sports composite team rankings with 18 commits. Of those players, who do you believe is the biggest get?

JD: This is a difficult question to answer, which definitely bodes well for Ohio State. A few commits stand out immediately: the five-stars in Jack Sawyer, TreVeyon Henderson and Kyle McCord, and four-star offensive lineman Donovan Jackson.

Sawyer is the nation's third-highest ranked prospect and set the tone for the class early. Henderson is the No. 1 running back in the country and would likely have come back to hurt the Buckeyes in a College Football Playoff down the road had they missed. McCord is a top-tier quarterback prospect and Ryan Day's top choice, which should mean something by now. And while he's not a five-star recruit nor Ohio State's most glamorous commit, Donovan Jackson is the No. 1 guard in the country and a massive get. All the speedy and talented playmakers don't mean much without sound blocking up front, so that's why Jackson came to mind too.

Put a gun to my head, though, and I'll pick the five-star tailback, TreVeyon Henderson. He has game-changing abilities, and he could have easily ended up at Clemson or Alabama, so Ohio State will be fortunate he'll be changing games in its favor.

PM: I'll go with Henderson as well, though I don't have as much trepidation about it. Henderson is just about the perfect fit at halfback for Ohio State's offense, and while running backs have been slowly losing value over the past several decades, having a player that really fits that zone scheme is a big deal.

On top of that, it's going to be a position of need very soon. The 2020 class misses are well-documented, and they would come back to bite Ohio State if it wasn't for a player like Henderson in this class. He'll be able to play early and serve as a multiyear starter in Columbus to cover for the lack of a top-end back in the class before.

I think that there's certainly a case to be made for McCord, who plays the most important position on the field, or any of those guys near the top of the class, but Henderson is just too talented at a position of need for me to pick anyone else.

WC: I would probably also have gone for Henderson, who I think is doubly important considering the losses that occurred in the 2020 class. But I will mix it up and say that it is, at this time, four-star defensive end Tunmise Adeleye.

Adeleye may not be a five star, but he has the buzz and the national recognition as one of the best players in this class, and this is a prospect that was not favored to go to Ohio State in the 247Sports Crystal Ball predictions, with many having him going to Oklahoma.

This type of get for the Buckeyes just, to me, showed Ryan Day's ability to dominate across the country and get a high-caliber player from anywhere simply by a pitch and by what he was

able to accomplish in 2019.

There have been so many impressive commitments thus far for Ohio State, but currently, Adeleye's commitment may have impressed me the most.

AL: These are all really good answers, but I'm going to go with Sawyer. As one of the top-rated players in the entire class and as a local prospect, his early commitment and his overall recruiting efforts really set the tone for Ohio State this cycle. Not to mention he's a game-changing player on the field, as well.

I specifically remember Sawyer working out with Larry Johnson at a summer camp alongside Zach Harrison a few years back, and it was clear from that moment how much of a priority he was. Though he's long been considered the Buckeyes' to lose, I don't think his proximity to campus should undervalue his commitment or Larry Johnson's role in bringing him into the fold.

After all, he has the talent to be just as good as or better than Joey and Nick Bosa, Sam Hubbard, Tyquan Lewis, Jalyn Holmes and Chase Young.

A handful of the nation's top-rated uncommitted prospects have the Buckeyes among their top schools. Who would you say is the biggest fish left in the sea, and how confident are you that player ends up in Columbus?

JD: Ohio State is in the mix for a handful of the top recruits in the whole country, so it's very difficult to pick just one. For me, the biggest fish in the sea for the Buckeyes is also the biggest recruit left on their board, physically. Standing at 6-6 and 305 pounds, J.C. Latham is 247Sports' No. 1 offensive tackle and No. 3 overall recruit in the country.

Ohio State already has some of the best playmakers in the country lined up for years to come, but a college football program can never have too many top-tier offensive linemen. That point is part of what makes Latham the best remaining target for Ohio State to me. It's possible that defensive end J.T. Tuimolou and wide receiver Emeka Egbuka could be better individual talents than Latham, but the value of an excellent offensive tackle is enough for me to give him the edge.

PM: I'll go with Tuimolou, again because of need above anything else. Ohio State isn't lacking for defensive line talent by any means, but for whatever reason, the Buckeyes just don't seem to roll through five-star defensive tackles every year like they do with just about every position. Tuimolou would be a rarity at the position for Ohio State and has the talent to play immediately, if not battle for a starting role.

With all of the other top guys remaining, I just see too much talent at their positions to consider them the biggest fish left in the sea. Latham would be joining a group of quite a few former blue-chippers on the line, and Egbuka would be one of about 30 five-star wide receivers in Brian Hartline's room.

With that said, I'm very confident that Tuimolou lands with Ohio State. It's going to take a visit at some point to lock him down, and because he's so far from Ohio, this is never going to be the most solid recruitment in the world, but I think Ohio State has a strong lead that will only grow. This recruitment may drag out a bit, but I doubt that OSU will ever relinquish that lead.

WC: Again, I will go with a different option than maybe what I think is really the top option in Tuimolou to talk about how ridiculous it is to me that Ohio State might end up with Emeka Egbuka.

Egbuka is the top-ranked receiver in the 2021 class. He is from Washington. He would be joining a group of, what, 10 receivers that were in the top 100 in their classes? What on Earth could Brian Hartline be pitching him?

And yet, here Ohio State is, firmly in the

lead for Egbuka. This, to me, is insanity, and just shows how strong Hartline is as a recruiter and how impressive he has been in his ability to develop talent. Egbuka knows he likely won't be the top receiver for at least two seasons, but he still wants to come to Ohio State, and that is something that I have nothing but respect for as far as how Hartline has been recruiting.

AL: To seemingly echo what Patrick said, I think Tuimolou is the most important remaining target for Ohio State. The Buckeyes don't really have the need along the offensive line or at wide receiver that they do on the interior of the defensive line, and I get the sense that they're firmly in the lead for Latham and Egbuka as is.

Garrett and (Antwan) Jackson are entering their final seasons of eligibility, and Togiai could very well test NFL waters with a strong junior season. Junior Jerron Cage and former five-star Taron Vincent haven't quite lived up to their potential, though injuries have been a big part of that for the latter. That means Tuimolou could come in and compete for immediate playing time as a freshman.

The distance is worrisome, as with any player who lives on the other side of the country. But Tuimolou's relationship with Ohio State freshman wide receiver Gee Scott – his former teammate at Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic – helps the Buckeyes' chances, as does the fact that Johnson convinced Togiai to leave his home state of Idaho in 2018.

Ohio State has jumped out to a seemingly insurmountable lead in the aforementioned recruiting rankings, leading second-ranked Tennessee by 43.29 points as of May 18. Do you see any way the Buckeyes don't finish the cycle with the nation's best class?

JD: I think Ohio State will finish the 2021 cycle with the best recruiting class in the country, and I think some of its remaining targets will commit and bolster its lead even more. I am more interested to see if the Buckeyes finish No. 1 in the country in average rating per commit, however, as Ohio State (95.37) trailed Clemson (95.38) for the national lead when BSB went to press.

When it's all said and done, Ohio State will end up leading all of college football in the overall team recruiting rankings and will have the highest average rating per commit, thanks

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Assessing Ohio State's 2021 Recruiting Haul

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to a few prospective commitments. The Tigers certainly are not done recruiting either, so it will be interesting to follow who comes out on top. Perhaps a win over Clemson on the recruiting trail could signal a turn in the tide and Ohio State will be able to beat the Tigers for the first time ever, which would likely be a playoff matchup.

PM: No way. Ohio State has more points right now, with 18 commitments, than it did in the entire 25-man 2020 class, and that was a group that finished in the top five. It would take a catastrophic collapse or several massive misses to keep Ohio State from that top spot when signing day rolls around.

For me, the bigger question is if Ohio State will be able to top the all-time record, set by Florida in 2010, of 324.6. If Ohio State ends its class with offensive guard Jager Burton, cornerback Jaylin Davies, safety Derrick Davis, defensive tackle Tywone Malone, Egbuka, Latham and Tuimoloau, that would be good enough for 327.52, just enough to topple the record.

As it stands in May, none of those names feels unrealistic. Obviously, there's quite a way to go still in this class, but at this point, I think that Ohio State's only competition in this class is history, and I think the Buckeyes are on pace to break that record.

WC: I don't see a world in which Ohio State falls from the top spot. This class has been a blazing inferno that has not stopped burning for months now, and there are still some huge names that are highly favored to land in Columbus that will only boost it further.

As stated by Patrick, the Buckeyes have already leaped their ranking from last year, and that was a top-five class! It would take Ohio State missing on a few of these five-star recruits that are currently favored, and even then, I think it would be a close call at the top.

I never doubt Clemson or Georgia to make it interesting and normally wouldn't doubt Alabama if it wasn't for its very slow start, but this lead Ohio State holds is a remarkable feat in modern recruiting, and I personally don't think it can be topped.

AL: I truly don't see any way Ohio State relinquishes its lead unless something drastic occurs, such as a string of unexpected commitments or Clemson suddenly lands half a dozen five-star prospects who are currently leaning elsewhere.

The Buckeyes currently sit at 18 commitments following the recent announcement from Australian punter Jesse Mirco, which leaves them with enough room for seven more players, provided the staff doesn't want to go above the 25-player threshold that would result in a smaller class in 2022.

So, let's add tight end Hudson Wolfe, Burton, Davis, Egbuka, Latham, Malone, Tuimoloau to the fold – as Ohio State is currently the favorite to land each of those prospects, according to the 247Sports crystal ball. That puts them at 326.24 points, also topping the record Patrick mentioned, and with three fewer signees.

The gap between Ohio State and the rest of the Big Ten only continues to grow, as evidenced by the separation in the recruiting rankings. But is there another school in the conference that has caught your attention with its efforts on the recruiting trail?

JD: Minnesota has caught my attention in the 2021 recruiting cycle more than any other Big Ten team. The Gophers found success on the field in 2019 and have turned it into recruiting victories, including four four-star commits and the seventh-highest rated class in

the country.

Minnesota's top commits will fill particularly important roles for head coach P.J. Fleck, who got his quarterback of the future in four-star Athan Kaliakmanis, a pair of four-star corners in Avante Dickerson and Steven Ortiz, and a playmaker in four-star athlete Sam Jackson.

Maryland also has impressed me with its ability to haul in some excellent commitments, including three four-stars, despite struggling on the gridiron last season. The Terrapins' 13th-ranked recruiting class is exceptional when considering they went 3-9 last year in Mike Locksley's first season.

Former Ohio State defensive coordinator Greg Schiano returned as Rutgers head coach in December and has already built a top-22 recruiting class in the country, so that's worth recognition as well. I'm not necessarily as surprised by Schiano's success as Fleck's or Locksley's, though, because of his name recognition and connections in recruiting.

PM: I think that Minnesota is probably the answer, but I'll toss out another Big Ten West team that's currently flying under the radar: Iowa. The Hawkeyes are sitting at No. 9 in the nation.

Almost more impressive is that this is a class with just three four-stars: David Davidkov, an offensive tackle ranked at No. 138, Connor Colby, a guard ranked No. 228, and Justice Sullivan, an athlete ranked at No. 265. Behind them are 11 three-stars, seven of them in the top 500. That's quite a bit of quality depth.

This is all made more surprising by Iowa's history, which, in the last five years, includes the No. 35 class in 2020, No. 41 in 2019, No. 39 in 2018, No. 41 in 2017 and No. 47 in 2016. I doubt that this will finish as a top-10 class, but to be there at all at this point is relatively new ground for the Hawkeyes and could be the foundation for another Rose Bowl run like they made in 2015.

WC: Iowa and Minnesota have been impressive to start this recruiting cycle, but those make sense to me considering each of their strong seasons on the field in 2019.

But there's another Big Ten West team that is recruiting well, and that one finished with just three wins last year. Oh yes, I am talking about Northwestern.

The No. 36 spot in the recruiting rankings for 2021 does not stand out on first glance, sure, but the Wildcats currently hold commitments from three four-star recruits, the same amount of four-stars as their past four recruiting cycles combined.

Included in that is defensive end Najee Story, who was looked at by Ohio State, but ultimately chose Northwestern after the Buckeyes seemingly were looking elsewhere. That is a big get for the Cats, and especially after what was one of their worst seasons under head coach Pat Fitzgerald.

And though this isn't necessarily recruiting, Northwestern has also gained transfers from Indiana quarterback Peyton Ramsey and Florida Atlantic tight end John Raine, two big gets for the worst offense in college football last season.

The Big Ten West, on the whole, looks up from this recruiting cycle, and Northwestern is no different.

AL: I've gone on record before in saying that Mike Locksley is the perfect coach for Maryland, even if his overall record doesn't reflect it, because of his ties to the area. Had he been the coach when Haskins and Young were coming through the ranks as highly sought-after prospects, I'm convinced they would have stayed home to play for the Terrapins.

In fact, Haskins was actually committed to

Maryland when Locksley was the Terrapins' offensive coordinator and interim head coach. It's no surprise then that Locksley was able to keep four-star defensive end Demeioun Robinson and four-star defensive tackle Marcus Bradley home despite significant interest from Ohio State and other big-time programs.

Now, those two players won't be enough to make Maryland competitive in the Big Ten East, but it's a step in the right direction.

Obviously, the coronavirus pandemic looms large over sports as a whole. It's purely speculation at this point, but do you believe there will be a college football season this fall? If so, will it look any different than what we're used to?

PM: I've gone back and forth on this quite a bit, because everything is just so up in the air right now, but as we're sitting here in May, I do think that there will be a season in the fall. It seems as though there's a focus at the college level of trying to get players back to campus around June, and that would provide just enough time for a preseason buffer to get players ready to go.

Now, as for the latter question, I don't think there's any doubt that things are going to look very different, regardless of when the season starts. Even if things are improving by the time August rolls around, having 100,000 people in a stadium feels like as catastrophic an idea as there could possibly be right now. Losing the fan culture of college football for a year will certainly make things weird, but sacrificing lives so that all of those people can gather in close quarters in a stadium is horrifying to even consider.

My guess is that college football will return this fall, without fans, as well as with some modifications to the way that other things are done. Those changes may be on the sidelines, with essential workers in the stadium or with media in the press box that will allow the people who do have to be there to spread out more.

WC: Like Patrick, I have also had a wide variety of opinions on this as the days have gone by. Weeks ago, I was of the thought that the season would exist but would not start on time and may be shortened.

But currently, I also think that there's a good chance that the college football season will be able to begin at its normal time, but without fans. There are still plenty of areas that would need to be modified in order to ensure the safety of the college football players themselves, so I still have my concerns about it.

Still, there are more voices coming out every day that seem to be saying that there is a potential June starting point, and they certainly know more than I do on the time frame, so I will listen to them and assume the best for the future of the 2020 season.

AL: I'm in agreement with you two in believing there will be full college football season, but it'll either happen without fans or with fans in an extremely limited capacity and proper social distancing protocols.

I've long been optimistic about the likelihood of a season, and I think the money that is involved with college athletics will force university presidents and athletic directors to do everything in their power to have a season. Their athletic department's fate simply depends on it, and forgoing the advertisement and television money would lead to disastrous consequences for schools – especially those that already run at a deficit or receive limited funding.

Luckily, we're still months away from the beginning of the season, and things appear to be trending in a positive direction in terms of how we're handling the spread of the virus, how businesses are reopening and how other sports

leagues are forging ahead with their own plans to begin or restart their respective seasons. If that continues without an unforeseen setback, I truly believe the college football season will begin on time and will be completed in full.

JD: You guys bring up some great points, and I appreciate the optimism because I really, really want a football season.

The way things have been progressing makes me think that they will play football this fall, but I'm still somewhat apprehensive about the concept of large gatherings during these uncertain times. And I think the Ohio State football team gathered together in the locker room or the practice facility may still be considered too large of a gathering come time for fall camp.

I'm trying to be optimistic, though, and like Andrew mentioned, athletic programs rely on the money made from football games. Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith and his team prioritized the safety of the student-athletes in response to the virus, and I hope others do the same when these decisions are being made.

Hopefully safety won't be an issue and we'll be able to gather like normal to enjoy the great sport of football this fall, but if not, I think there are other possibilities like playing in the spring.

The pandemic cut spring practice short and could potentially impact preseason camp. Where do you think the missed time will impact Ohio State the most?

PM: On the offensive line. Nowhere in football is preparation and cohesion more important than up front, and the lost practice time is going to have a serious impact on not just Ohio State's line, but on just about every college football team.

Offenses in general are going to take more time than usual to get in sync, and that's going to be felt more than anywhere up front, specifically in the passing game, where all five linemen have to work cohesively to prevent any mistakes.

Now, for Ohio State, it may not hit as hard because of the personnel up front. Three returning starters, all three of whom were All-Big Ten caliber players last year, aren't going to just suddenly forget how to play together. The Thayer Munford, Josh Myers and Wyatt Davis core should still be strong for the Buckeyes, and that will absorb some of the blow.

However, for players like Harry Miller or Nicholas Petit-Frere, who are both expected to move into the starting spots, this could be an issue. Those guys need time with the first-team line, and that time either isn't going to come or is going to come much later than it's supposed to. Having veteran leadership in the group will help them as well, but I'm not sure that the general public realizes how sloppy college football might be this season, for just about every single team.

WC: I think that in a usual year, the offensive line may be the answer. But because of the immense talent that Ohio State is returning there, I think the answer will go somewhere else, and I think it is with the defensive backs.

Past Shaun Wade, this is a very raw and very unproven group, and even further, they are entering the season with a new position coach in Kerry Coombs. Now, Coombs might not be "new" to all of them, but he still has to transition back into the college game, and the roster left for him just recently adapted to Jeff Hafley's style.

There are a lot of question marks that go past Wade in the secondary, and I think that the loss of this crucial time will only make that needed development more difficult. There's a lot of talent with Sevnyn Banks, Josh Proctor, Tyreke Johnson and the rest of that room, but not as much in-game experience, and that can

be tricky to work with, especially with a limited time frame.

AL: Those are both great answers, but I think the most important battle Ohio State faced this spring was identifying Justin Fields' backup at the quarterback position.

The Buckeyes welcomed a pair of four-star quarterbacks to campus this offseason in Jack Miller and C.J. Stroud, and they were going to compete with fifth-year senior Gunnar Hoak in practices and the spring game. That's no longer the case, though, and that hurts their early development. Sure, they're going to be able to dig deep into the playbook and take mental reps this offseason, but there's nothing they can do at home and away from their teammates that will replicate live reps.

Now if fall camp starts on time, they'll essentially move forward as if they were mid-summer enrollees. But they purposely enrolled in classes in January in order to benefit from 15 spring practices, and the missed time will make it more difficult to supplant Hoak on the depth chart. And if the Buckeyes ever need to call on Fields' backup, the lack of experience will surely show.

JD: I think you guys hit on the top three position groups that will be impacted by reduced reps due to the virus.

Patrick, I think you brought up a great point about the offensive line and how that group needs reps together to jell into a cohesive unit. The importance of their reps together is something that may be overlooked by many.

Like Wyatt, the first position group I thought of was the defensive backs. They lost an All-American in Jeff Okudah and a pair of three-year starters in Damon Arnette and Jordan Fuller, plus there is a different secondary coach, albeit a familiar one. Beyond Shaun Wade, I'm most interested to see who steps up at corner, whether it's Banks, Cam Brown, Johnson or someone else.

And although the quarterbacks are battling for a backup spot, I agree with Andrew about how difficult a QB battle can be with limited reps. Perhaps no position group benefits from practice reps more than the quarterbacks, because of how much everything they do is based on timing.

I think there will be concerns regarding receivers developing timing with the quarterbacks as well, and Ohio State must replace K.J. Hill, Austin Mack and Ben Victor. I'll be interested to see how that develops once football returns.

Running back Master Teague suffered an unspecified injury on the first day of spring practice, which prompted the Buckeyes to bring in Oklahoma graduate transfer Trey Sermon through the transfer portal. The two are likely to compete for carries into the fall, so how do you foresee that battle playing out?

PM: I don't think that Sermon transfers to Ohio State if he isn't very confident in the workload that he'll be getting. This is his final season after all, and after three years of being passed up at Oklahoma, I don't imagine that Sermon would have considered any school where he thinks that could happen again.

That means one of two things. Firstly, it could mean that Teague's injury is worse than we think and that he won't be ready to go by the time to season rolls around. The turnaround for Achilles injuries varies wildly based on the severity of the tear, and while other Buckeyes like linebackers Tuf Borland and Justin Hilliard have both been able to make summer recoveries from spring Achilles injuries, it may not be the same story for Teague. A lack of confidence in having Teague back this fall could have led to the move to bring Sermon in.

The second option is that Ohio State just likes Sermon better and has told him such. He is more experienced than Teague, and while Teague impressed during the time that he

played in 2019, I don't think it's out of the realm of possibility that even when healthy, Ohio State prefers the veteran back over Teague.

With either option, the final answer is essentially the same: I don't see anyone but Sermon winning the starting job and taking the plurality of the carries. He won't be alone in the backfield, but I don't think that Sermon came to Ohio State to be a backup.

WC: I'm with Patrick completely here. Trey Sermon is an extremely talented back and only has one season left to fully prove that after never fully becoming the starter at Oklahoma thanks to Kennedy Brooks, as well as Jalen Hurts.

Sermon is definitely coming to Ohio State not just for a chance to win a title, but for a chance to be the starting running back at a team with the caliber of the Buckeyes. I suspect some downplaying on the Teague injury, and regardless, Achilles injuries can be nasty ones that cause potential limitations.

Teague is a very talented running back in his own right, but I suspect Ohio State will take his recovery slowly, and with Sermon coming in, a powerful runner with strong experience and an impressive stat line across three good seasons with the Sooners, it will be able to take that recovery as slow as needed.

AL: I honestly don't think Ohio State promised Sermon anything, Patrick. With the overall level of talent on the Buckeyes' roster from top to bottom, I don't think you can tell someone the job is his before he even steps on campus.

Ohio State could have simply said their presumed starting running back is rehabbing from an injury, which gives him a chance to come in and compete for the job and then go to the NFL after just one season. Then, all Sermon had to do was look at J.K. Dobbins' production last season and get starry-eyed.

It's impossible to know where Teague is in his recovery process, meanwhile, as Ohio State keeps those kinds of things close to the vest. But given Borland and Hilliard's quick recoveries and his own personal work ethic, I'm confident he'll be back to full strength by the time preseason camp rolls around.

If that's the case, I actually think they'll have complementary roles in the fall.

JD: Who wouldn't want to run the ball for Ohio State next to Justin Fields right now? Any running back would have to be oblivious to not realize the benefits of playing next to such a dangerous dual-threat talent in Fields and behind a powerful Buckeye offensive line.

I think Andrew's right that Ohio State would not straight-up guarantee a starting spot to Sermon, who will have the opportunity to be the lead back with nothing set in stone. Of course, Sermon's role will be largely impacted on how Teague can recover.

You guys brought up good points about Borland and Hilliard overcoming Achilles injuries from last spring, but I think the nature of the position may require more time to recover. It's difficult to imagine Teague fully regaining his speed and quickness in just a few months, and while that can be somewhat hidden at inside linebacker, it may not cut it at tailback.

I really like Sermon's strength as a runner and his mean stiff-arm, but I'm not sure he possesses the same top-end speed as a fully healthy Teague. I also think they'll complement each other well and both have success, largely because of the strong O-line in front of them.

Though it's difficult to evaluate players and project a depth chart after just two spring practices, how do you think the backup quarterback battle between Hoak, Miller and Stroud shakes out?

PM: I think that Hoak wins the job on experience, which will be at a premium without the benefit of those spring practices. I have no doubt that both of the freshmen are more talented options, but Hoak has played in the offense for a year and knows what he's doing to keep the team afloat if he's needed to replace Justin Fields.

The true freshmen, on the other hand, are both complete wild cards at this point. Ohio State hasn't seen enough of either to really know what they have, and while I do think that they'll both see playing time once games are out of hand throughout the season, I just don't see either being trusted in high-pressure situations without the kind of practice time that a regular freshman would get.

Hoak certainly isn't a long-term solution, but I do think that he can get the job done in a pinch and that Ohio State is going to be a lot less willing to trust the young players than usual, which will benefit Hoak.

WC: I hear everything that Patrick is saying, I really do. That said, I think the talent gap between C.J. Stroud and Jack Miller compared to Gunnar Hoak is so stark that the experience won't matter.

I think this for two reasons. One, from watching the film on Stroud and Miller, with an added emphasis on Stroud, these two are some

really impressive signal callers, and I think they can prove that quickly, especially if they can get some late-game action in some early-season blowouts.

The other reason I think this is that, for one, Hoak has not impressed me anytime I have seen him, and I don't think he has impressed Ohio State, with the Kentucky transfer being one of the only scholarship players to not get his black stripe removed at any point last year.

Experience is important, but it can only take over for a certain level of a talent gap. I think that the talent and potential that the two freshman quarterbacks have is substantial enough to beat out Hoak, and I suspect one of them will back up Justin Fields.

AL: I sort of previewed this question with my answer above. The lack of spring reps will make Hoak the first quarterback off the bench when the season opener against Bowling Green gets out of hand, but I don't think the depth chart stays that way the entire season.

Fields will undoubtedly play most if not all of the road opener at Oregon out of necessity, but presumed blowouts against Buffalo and Rutgers will allow the Buckeyes to get the true freshmen plenty of reps.

You have to remember that Hoak is in his final season of eligibility. Miller and Stroud are the future, meanwhile, and getting them in the game now will pay dividends when they battle for the starting spot upon Fields' departure, which is likely to come next offseason.

JD: There's no doubt that Hoak's experience in the program and in the offense will give him an early edge in the battle, but Stroud and Miller will continue to catch on quickly. Both freshman quarterbacks are highly competitive as well as intelligent, so they'll be working overtime to put themselves in the best position to win the spot.

If I had to pick a backup in May, I think Stroud will eventually win the job, but Miller will do more than hold his own. From our limited viewing sessions, we saw solid arm strength and accuracy from both quarterbacks firsthand. I was most impressed with how confidently the young signal callers stepped up when it was time for their reps and commanded the offense.

My reasoning for picking Stroud to win the job is that I think he offers more versatility with his ability to run the football. If Fields had to miss time, it would make sense to plug in Stroud and continue to keep the defense off balance with the full playbook.

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Pearson Opens Up About Playing, Coaching Career

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Since the NFL draft's inception in 1936, the Ohio State football program has been a mainstay. The Buckeyes have had a whopping 477 players selected, including a nation-leading 84 first-round picks, across 85 drafts.

A quick glimpse at the long list of players would reveal the 1997 Buckeyes as an anomaly, however.

After falling to Florida State in the Sugar Bowl, all of Ohio State's draft-eligible juniors opted to put their NFL dreams on hold for another shot at a national title. Running back Pepe Pearson didn't have a choice, however, as he was one of the few starters who had exhausted his eligibility that season.

Despite receiving a late-round grade from NFL personnel, Pearson went unselected in the 1998 draft. He signed a free-agent deal with the San Francisco 49ers and bounced around the league for three seasons, also spending time on the offseason roster or practice squads of the Chicago Bears, Cleveland Browns, Detroit Lions, Jacksonville Jaguars, Pittsburgh Steelers and Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Pearson, who weighed in at 5-10 and 209 pounds during his playing career, also had brief stints with the Rhein Fire of NFL Europe, the Las Vegas Outlaws of the XFL and the Dayton Warbirds of the National Indoor Football League. If you ask for the highlight of his career, Pearson will quickly point to the Fire's 13-10 win over the Scottish Claymores in World Bowl 2000, the eighth installment of NFL Europe's championship game.

"I was able to say that I made it to and contributed at every level, but the highlight of my career has to be winning an NFL Europe title," Pearson told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "I was given the ball six times on the final drive, and I was prepared for that situation and I ended up scoring the game-winning touchdown with a little over a minute remaining to win the World Bowl."

Pearson credits several of his former Ohio State teammates for his professional success, while also acknowledging how unlikely it was that he ended up playing for the Buckeyes in



COURTESY OF PEPE PEARSON

TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW – Tasked with replacing Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George, Ohio State running back Pepe Pearson rushed for 1,484 yards and 17 touchdowns to lead the Buckeyes to the 1997 Rose Bowl.

the first place.

Despite growing up in Euclid, Ohio, Pearson actively rooted for Michigan and Notre Dame, which featured such notable running backs as Tyrone Wheatley and Jerome Bettis, respectively, in the early 1990s. He initially wanted to follow in their footsteps until he took an official visit to Ohio State during his

senior season of high school.

"I never really thought about Ohio State until I got into the recruiting process," Pearson said. "I wanted to stay in the Midwest, so I took visits to Michigan and Michigan State and had another set up for Notre Dame. But once I went on a visit to Ohio State, it was over with."

"Just the way they did things, I fell in love with Ohio State and the people there. I felt like I could be teammates with the players there for four years. I just really felt at home once I stepped on campus. It was a no-brainer after that."

Pearson, who rushed for nearly 4,500 yards and 43 touchdowns during his prep career, hailed from the same high school as former Ohio State running back Robert Smith, who played two seasons in Columbus (1990 and 1992). That connection also helped the Buckeyes' recruiting efforts.

"He had a short but great career at Ohio State, and that piqued my interest," Pearson said.

As a true freshman in 1994, Pearson competed with junior Eddie George for the starting running back spot. Although George ultimately won that battle, setting the scene for his Heisman Trophy campaign one year later, Pearson will forever cherish the lessons he learned in two seasons as George's backup.

"Coming out of high school, I thought that I was a great player," Pearson said. "I felt that I had a lot of confidence in myself. But the thing I learned most from watching him was the work ethic part. I got a chance to see it firsthand with Eddie, who we all know was the 1995 Heisman Trophy winner. He deserved to win it because of the effort he put in day in and day out. I got a chance to see that, and it helped

me develop into a better player. He showed me how to work and get to the level they were playing at."

"That legacy of running backs at Ohio State was something that I really wanted to uphold. I wanted to make sure that my name was in the same sentence as Eddie George, Robert Smith and Raymont Harris and the other great running backs that have come through Ohio State. It was really a sense of pride and duty to uphold what Ohio State running backs represented."

Pearson was notably a part of a 1994 recruiting class that was rated as high as No. 2 by expert Tom Lemming and included players such as offensive tackle Orlando Pace, interior lineman Eric Gohlstein, wide receiver Dee Miller and safety Damon Moore, among others. He credits Pace, specifically, for making him a better running back.

"We came in together as part of the same recruiting class and we played in a couple all-star games together, so I got to know him prior to going to Ohio State," Pearson said. "As soon as 'Big O' stepped on campus, he was a monster as a freshman."

"It made me better as a player because I knew if I was running to the left side of the line that nobody would touch me for at least 5 yards. It was great. He's a Hall of Famer, and it was a privilege to play on the same team as Orlando, even if I didn't know it at the time. We still have a friendship today. He's was a great player and is still a phenomenal person."

As a first-year starter in 1996, Pearson rushed for 1,484 yards and 17 touchdowns to lead the Buckeyes to a Big Ten championship and a 20-17 win over Arizona State in the Rose Bowl.



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"That's the best bowl game that a person can play in," Pearson said. "It really is 'The Granddaddy of Them All.' Just being out at the Rose Bowl was spectacular, and then the game in itself was great.

"You know, they had Jake 'The Snake' Plummer at quarterback and Pat Tillman, who is no longer with us, on the other side (at linebacker). It was back and forth all the way down to the last second, and we ended up winning it. I had a really good game and was a big part of the win, but it was – to this day – the best game that I've ever played in my life. It was just an awesome atmosphere."

Ohio State regularly flipped between junior quarterback Stanley Jackson and sophomore Joe Germaine throughout the season, and the Rose Bowl was no exception. Trailing 10-7 early in the third quarter, head coach John Cooper called Germaine off the bench in hopes of igniting the stagnant offense.

The move instantly paid off, as Germaine led Ohio State on a quick two-play drive that included a 72-yard touchdown pass to Dimitrious Stanley that put the Buckeyes back in front.

The Sun Devils regained the lead when Plummer scrambled and slithered his way into the end zone with 1:40 remaining in the game. But Germaine calmly marched Ohio State down the field on a 12-play, 65-yard drive that ended with him finding wide receiver David Boston from five yards out for the game-winning score.

The win snapped the Buckeyes' four-game losing streak in the Rose Bowl while Germaine's MVP performance caused a quarterback controversy in Columbus as Cooper stuck with a two-quarterback system to mixed results the following season.

"They were two different quarterbacks with

two different techniques," Pearson said. "The way they handed the ball off was a little bit different, for example, so you really had to concentrate on the little things, the fundamentals and the ball-handling.

"People might not think of that when you're talking about a quarterback change, but for a running back and an offensive line, it's difficult. There's a different cadence each quarterback gave and just the way they enunciated the plays. We all had to be tuned in 10 times more than what you would normally be because we had two different individuals coming into the game at any given point."

Ohio State finished the 1997 season at 10-3 overall with losses at No. 2 Penn State, at top-ranked Michigan and against No. 4 Florida State in the aforementioned Sugar Bowl.

Pearson admitted there were factions of the team who wanted Jackson to remain the starter on a full-time basis or for Germaine to unseat him. But at the end of the day, they trusted the coaching staff to put them in the best position to win each game.

"That's what we were all concerned about," Pearson said. "We all just bought into the coaches making great decisions on who needed to be in the game to win, and we really just focused on doing our job. That was one reason why we were able to be successful despite having a two-quarterback system. Everybody was focused on what they needed to do individually at their position and trusted the coaches to make the right decisions."

Pearson finished his college career with 3,121 yards, which is 11th most in school history behind Archie Griffin, J.K. Dobbins, Ezekiel Elliott, Eddie George, Tim Spencer, Beanie Wells, Braxton Miller, J.T. Barrett, Keith Byars and Carlos Hyde.

Pearson hasn't been able to pay as close

attention to the Buckeyes as he'd like in recent years but was thrilled to see Dobbins – who broke Ohio State's single-season rushing record with 2,003 yards in 2019 – also surpass his career total.

"I loved his play," Pearson said. "He reminds me of myself a little bit. He's a smaller back with quickness that can make you miss in the secondary and had the speed to finish off his runs. He was totally impressive. Just to see his maturity over the course of three year was special. I know his performance in 2018 (1,053 yards and 10 touchdowns) wasn't up to his standards, but I think he did the right things to bounce back last season.

"To see the progression of who he became was great. Him not being satisfied just speaks to his mentality that he developed over time. Even when I was at Ohio State, I learned to have a certain mentality because of Eddie George. In order to be great, you have to put in the extra work. So that's what happened with Dobbins. The great ones are always looking for something to give them the edge or the advantage over his competition, and that really allowed him to have a great season."

Having that mentality is something Pearson now preaches every day as a coach.

Shortly after his playing days were over, Pearson was offered a spot as the running backs and special teams coach at Ohio Dominican University in Columbus. He spent 11 seasons with the Panthers (2004-14), several of those years under former Buckeye assistant coach Bill Conley, before joining former Ohio State safety Bo Pelini's staff at Youngstown State in 2015.

"I didn't really want to be done with the game," Pearson said. "I figured, well, what better way to help young men along than to be a coach and help give back my experiences to

help them become the best they can be?"

"It's been a tremendous experience for me because I'm able to be an example for the young men that I coach."

Pearson spent just one year with the Penguins before he was hired to the same position at Marshall, where he remains to this day. His star pupil, Brenden Knox, was named Conference USA's Most Valuable Player last fall after he rushed for 1,284 yards and 11 touchdowns, leading the Thundering Herd to an 8-5 record and an appearance in the Gasparilla Bowl.

If his players continue to have that kind of success, Pearson will undoubtedly field offers in the coming years to be the running backs coach of a larger program. Perhaps he'll even have the chance to run a program of his own.

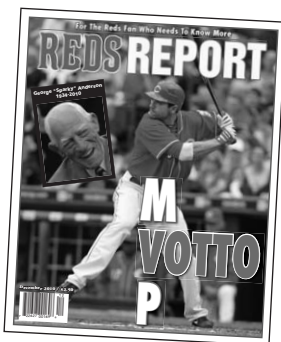
"I feel like I've learned a lot throughout my entire coaching career, and I do have goals and aspirations that exceed being here," Pearson said. "Marshall has been a great place, and it still is for me. But I do want to possibly be a head coach one day. I always think about what it would be like to come back and coach at my alma mater, too. Those things do cross my mind.

"I will say that even though those things cross my mind, I always strive to be great at whatever I'm doing and wherever I am. I've learned, as time has gone on, that's how you create success, so I continue to just focus in and locking in on the things that I can control. I can't say that I want to be a head coach or go back to Ohio State because I have to be given that opportunity. I'll be ready if that opportunity comes, but for right now, I'm going to continue to be great here as a coach. I want to continue to impart my wisdom to my athletes and to help them become the best that they can become."

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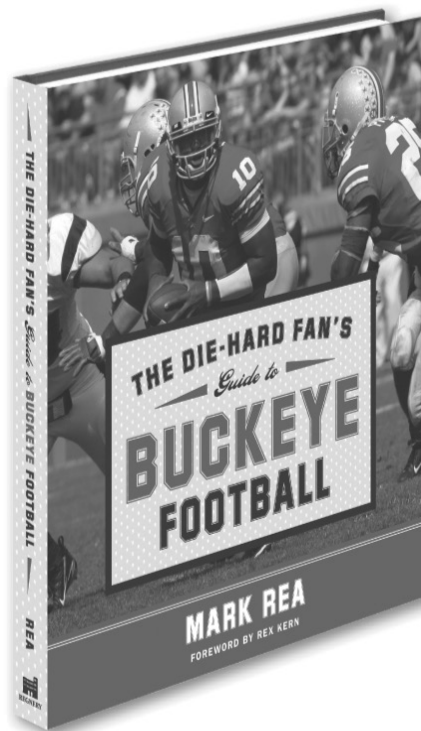
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The Best Men's Basketball Teams In Ohio State History

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

There have been 121 teams in Ohio State men's basketball history, including one national champion squad in 1960.

In a two-part series, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be taking a look at some of the greatest teams in program history. In Part I, we look at the best of the best with Ohio State basketball historian Lee Caryer, author of the Golden Age of Ohio State Basketball, and Dick Furry, who was a captain of the lone championship team in school history.

When discussing the best teams ever, consistency, tournament success, future NBA players and the competition they faced were emphasized as the most important components.

1959-1960: 25-3, 13-1 Big Ten NCAA Tournament Champions

There is no other way around it – the 1959-60 Ohio State team was a dominant force. Not only did the squad lead the nation in both scoring and efficiency with 90.4 points per game and 49.7-percent shooting, but it held opponents to 69.8 points per contest and a 38.8-percent mark from the field.

The Buckeyes' 20.6 average scoring margin showed their domination throughout a nearly flawless season. They lost two games in December by a combined eight points, falling at Utah, 97-92, and at Kentucky, 96-93. The only other loss came to Indiana, 99-83, on Feb. 29, but Ohio State had already locked

up the Big Ten title and No. 1 seed in the tournament.

One of the biggest reasons the Buckeyes were so superior to their opponents was Big Ten Player of the Year Jerry Lucas, who averaged 26.3 points and 16.4 rebounds on an NCAA-leading 63.7 percent shooting during his sophomore season in 1959-60.

Lucas was one of Ohio State's five double-digit scorers along with junior Larry Siegfried (13.3), sophomore Mel Nowell (13.1), sophomore John Havlicek (12.2) and senior captain Joe Roberts (11.0). Furry was the first man off the bench, averaging 5.1 points and 3.3 rebounds per game.

Siegfried, who was known as "Sig," and Furry sacrificed the most for the sake of the team once Lucas, Nowell and Havlicek became eligible as sophomores (freshmen could not play at that time). Siegfried had led the Buckeyes with 19.6 points per game as a sophomore in 1958-59, while Furry averaged 11.5 points and a team-leading 10.7 boards as a junior.

Siegfried, Furry and the rest of the team embraced the selfless culture promoted by Hall of Fame coach Fred Taylor, and those sacrifices helped separate the 1960 team from its competition.

"That was a great asset for this group," Lucas said at the team's 60th reunion on March 5. "We were friends. We were close. We played the game the way it should be played. There was no selfishness on our team."

When it came time for the 1960 NCAA Tournament, the Scarlet and Gray were oper-

ating like a well-oiled machine. The Buckeyes' cohesion manifested itself on the court as they stomped every team in their path, outscoring opponents by 19.5 points on average, including a brilliant performance in the championship game.

"Their closest margin of victory was 17 points, and they played the championship game on the home court of the defending championship team from California," Caryer recalled. "Nobody thought they'd win, and they beat California by playing very nearly perfect in the first half and outstanding for the whole game. They beat California on the road before a partisan crowd by 20 points."

Though the Golden Bears were favored, the Buckeyes controlled the championship game from the start, building a 37-19 halftime lead. They continued their efficient play, shooting 67.4 percent (31 of 46) on the game to win 75-55 at the Cow Palace in San Francisco.

The 20-point margin of victory represented the largest in the then-22-year history of the NCAA Tournament and stood until Lew Alcindor, who later would go by the name Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and his UCLA team won by 23 against UNC in the 1968 NCAA title game.

"When we won that national championship ... I wasn't even able to feel it until that clock made its last tick," Nowell said. "I felt for the first time in my life, and the only time athletically, what elation felt like. I saw myself run around and do things that looked like a little kid. Like a little 3-year-old running around, jumping and having a great time."

"What I experienced is something that I had never experienced prior to or again athletically, and I had a lot of success athletically even after that. That has lasted in terms of what I feel about what we accomplished. It was simply the best that you can feel."

The 1960 team had a national title to its name, but since its four leading scorers returned in '61, could it be possible the subsequent squads were better?

"It certainly is possible, and in some ways, they might have been better at different stages," Caryer told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "However, it's important to look at what they lost from the '60 team. No. 1 was senior co-captain Joe Roberts, a very versatile forward. He could score, he could defend, he could certainly rebound – real, real good player. And like all the other four seniors besides himself, he was an excellent leader."

"Dick Furry is one of the most unappreciated players in Ohio State history – he had started with Roberts at forward the year before on a very good team. And Furry did something that very few people in Big Ten history have done – he got more than 20 rebounds in a game, and he did it twice."

Furry, who is not one to toot his own horn, referred to the supreme basketball intelligence of Hall of Fame coach Bob Knight, who was a part of the dynamic sophomore class on the '60 team.

"One of the reasons was that we got along so well together and never had any serious differences," Furry told BSB. "I used to go on golf trips with Bobby Knight, and one day I said, 'Bob, which of the three teams that you played on do you think was the best?' And he said, 'Clearly, the '60 team.' I said, 'OK, you tell me why you think so,' figuring he probably has an analysis better than me."

"First of all, if you looked at it by position, Lucas was there all three years. So that position had the same person the whole time, and he got better but not enough to compensate for other things. The forwards on the '60 team

– they had Havlicek, Roberts and (Furry). And the next year they had Havlicek, Knight and Richie Hoyt. That clearly was an enormous drop-off. And then the next year, Hoyt was gone, and they had Havlicek, (Knight) and Doug McDonald.

"At the guard position, in '60, they had Sig and Mel. They also had Sig and Mel in '61. And in '62, Sig had graduated, and they had Richard Reasbeck and Gary Gearhart, who weren't the same type of a ballplayer that Sig was. And I had never thought of it that way."

So, why was the 1960 team the only one to get over the hump of becoming national champions?

"Joe and I always kidded that the reason they couldn't win the next two years was that we graduated," Furry said.

1960-61: 27-1, 14-0 Big Ten NCAA Tournament Runner-Up

The 1960-61 Buckeyes earned the bitter-sweet title as the best regular-season team in program history. That group represents the only Ohio State team to go undefeated in either the Big Ten or the entire regular season, and it was the first team to go unbeaten in the conference since 1943 Illinois.

"No matter how you look at it, they were a very good team," Caryer said. "And they were clearly the best regular-season team in Ohio State history, because they were undefeated. They were No. 1 in the nation from start to finish, every single week until the last game of the season, when they were tied at the end of regulation. And then they were outplayed in overtime – lost by five points in overtime, lost the national championship that a lot of us thought they'd won already."

In the 1961 NCAA Tournament, the Buckeyes beat Louisville, 56-55, in the first round and Kentucky, 87-74, in the second round. Then, they topped St. Joseph's, 95-69, in the Final Four, before falling to Cincinnati, 70-65, in overtime of the national championship game.

Had Ohio State held on to defeat the Bearcats and won back-to-back titles with a perfect season in 1961, then it would have surpassed the prior team as the most accomplished in school history.

While there may be more talented players across the college basketball landscape today, the talent is spread out much thinner than back in the '60s, with the Division-I field more than tripling in size since then.

With that being said, the Buckeyes' 1960-61 schedule was brutal, facing 12 teams ranked in the top 20 at some point during the season. And since they faced Indiana and Illinois twice, 14 of their 28 matchups were with ranked opponents.

Evaluating talent across such different eras is an extremely tall task, but the NBA draft provides a measuring stick for the best of the best. The NBA had only nine teams in 1961, while it has 30 today, but despite that drastic difference, many of Ohio State's opponents had players selected.

A total of 24 student-athletes that the 1961 team played against became top-30 picks (which would be modern-day first-rounders) after their respective senior seasons. Since there are so many more college programs today and so many early departures, Caryer argues the concentration of talent in 1961 was far greater than it is today.

1961-62: 26-2, 13-1 Big Ten NCAA Tournament Runner-Up

The 1961-62 Buckeyes came off their national title loss highly motivated, winning

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22 straight games to open the season. For the second straight year, Ohio State spent the entire season as the No. 1-ranked team in the country.

Though it was the senior year of the dynamic trio of Lucas, Nowell and Havlicek, who became an All-American, Siegfried's graduation proved to mark a significant loss.

"They lost an outstanding player from the '61 team in Larry Siegfried," Caryer said. "He was the No. 3 choice in the NBA draft and had been an All-American. He was a very physical guard who was a good ball handler and had matured a great deal during his Ohio State career. He was an outstanding talent and was on five championship teams in the NBA with the Boston Celtics playing with John Havlicek.

"Most of the people around the program will tell you that the '60 team was the best. The '61 team was a very close second, and the '62 team was not as good as the '61 team or the '60 team."

After the 22-0 start to the 1961-62 campaign and with the Big Ten crown already clinched, Ohio State lost at Wisconsin, 86-67, for its lone regular-season loss.

The Buckeyes once again excelled in the tournament, defeating Western Kentucky, 90-65, and No. 3 Kentucky, 74-64, in the first two rounds. In the Final Four, Ohio State topped Wake Forest, 84-68, before dropping its second straight national title bout with Cincinnati, 71-59.

Perhaps the players lost from the previous two teams became too much to overcome, even with a stacked senior class.

"Different people did different things at different times," Caryer said. "The main difference in my mind is that the replacements were not as good as the guys who left, by and large."

2006-07: 35-4, 15-1 Big Ten NCAA Tournament Runner-Up

Prior to the 2006-07 season, former Ohio State head coach Thad Matta brought in the highest-rated recruiting class in school history.

The group known as the "Thad Five" included Mike Conley, Daequan Cook, David Lighty, Greg Oden and Othello Hunter.

The "Thad Five" thrived in year one, with Oden leading the team in scoring (15.7) and rebounding (9.6) and Conley ranking third in scoring (11.3) and first in assists (6.1). Cook was the team's fourth-leading scorer (9.8) and third-leading rebounder (4.3), while Hunter ranked second on the team in boards (4.5).

Beyond the dynamic duo of Conley and Oden, perhaps the most important part of the 2006-07 team was sharpshooting senior Ron Lewis, who had transferred from Bowling Green following the 2003-04 campaign.

"He was at Bowling Green and then walked into Thad Matta's office and said, 'Coach, I'm going to transfer, and I think I could help Ohio State.' Matta said he was the easiest recruit he'd ever brought in," Caryer said. "He was a four-year man, and he knew how to play college basketball."

Lewis averaged 12.7 points per game and 3.6 rebounds per game, serving as the primary complementary piece to Oden and Conley. Jamar Butler, who averaged 7.6 points and 3.6 assists, and Ivan Harris, who averaged 7.6 points and 3.3 boards, also helped provide Ohio State with a well-balanced attack. Butler, a junior, shot 37.6 percent from three-point range, while Harris, a senior, knocked down 39.2 percent of his attempts from deep.

Conley and Oden came to Columbus together from Indianapolis Lawrence North as five-star prospects. However, Oden was

sidelined to start the season while recovering from surgery on torn ligaments in his right hand.

The Buckeyes won their first six games of the season without Oden, which were all at home, before falling to then-No. 7 North Carolina, 98-89 at Chapel Hill, N.C. The next game, Oden suited up against Valparaiso for a 78-58 victory, and he finished the season for the Buckeyes but was forced to use his off hand.

With Oden in the lineup, Ohio State won 29 of its next 31 games, and the big man looked well worth the hype, even with an injured shooting hand. Oden's toughness and selflessness caught the attention of former Ohio State standout center Bill Hosket.

"Bill Hosket watched the center play pretty closely, and he said Oden only took one right-handed shot his whole year, because he had the hand wrapped up and he shot left handed most of the time or dunked the ball," Caryer said. "And he even shot free throws with one hand, which always caught my attention because you don't want to embarrass yourself when you're on television, doing anything. And if you're a basketball player you don't want to embarrass yourself playing basketball."

"But here's a guy who worked on not only his overall game, he worked on learning how to shoot free throws left-handed so that he could help the team win games."

The only losses for the Scarlet and Gray came to teams ranked in the top seven, including then-No. 7 UNC, then-No. 5 Florida and then-No. 3 Wisconsin in the regular season and the third-ranked Gators again in the national title game.

Many other years, Ohio State may have been good enough to win the national cham-

ionship, but 2007 was the peak of Florida's greatness. The Gators were the reigning NCAA champs and featured future All-NBA players Al Horford and Joakim Noah along with longtime NBA fixtures Marreese Speights and Corey Brewer, who was named the most outstanding player of the tournament.

For the Buckeyes, Oden and Conley were selected No. 1 and No. 4 overall, respectively, in the 2007 NBA draft. Oden's career was plagued by injuries, playing in only parts of three seasons in a seven-year career. Conley has enjoyed much more success, becoming the all-time leading scorer in Memphis Grizzlies history prior to being traded to the Utah Jazz in July 2019.

Cook was picked No. 21 overall in the '07 draft and played six seasons in the NBA before taking his talents overseas, while Hunter played two seasons for the Atlanta Hawks after being signed as an undrafted free agent prior to his overseas career.

The 2006-07 team was clearly one of the most talented in Ohio State history, but a loss in the national championship and a lack of success in the NBA beyond Conley hurts its chances at being considered the best.

While Conley is undeniably one of the great talents in the history of the school, Lucas and Havlicek will forever be enshrined in the NBA Hall of Fame, with a national championship ring to boot. No matter how you spin it, it is tough to top that.

In Part II of the series, set to run in the June issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, we will look at some of the other great teams in Ohio State men's basketball history, including a team that appeared in the very first NCAA Final Four as well as more recent Final Four teams.

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New Season Will Bring Plenty Of Changes For OSU

When (being optimistic) the Ohio State men's basketball assembles this fall for the 2020-21 season, the Buckeyes will have a team much different than the one that, along with the rest of the sporting world, had its season abruptly halted on March 12 by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of course, changes are expected from season to season with players exhausting their eligibility or leaving early for professional careers. But what coach Chris Holtmann and his staff experienced were a couple of unexpected departures coupled with quick remedies to fill some of the holes.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

The result could be a starting lineup vs. Oakland University in the Nov. 11 season opener in Value City Arena that has fifth-year senior C.J. Walker and junior Duane Washington at the guard positions, junior graduate transfer Seth Towns and sophomore E.J. Liddell as the forwards, and senior Kyle Young manning the power forward/post spot.

Compare that to the five who started at Michigan State on March 8 in the regular-season finale that turned out to be the last game of the season for the Buckeyes (21-10, 11-9 Big Ten): Walker and Washington were joined by then-sophomore guard Luther Muhammad, senior forward Andre Wesson and junior post Kaleb Wesson.

Since then, Muhammad transferred to Arizona State on April 14 and Kaleb Wesson has stated his intention to opt for the NBA draft, whenever that may be.

Washington likely would have come off the bench if freshman D.J. Carton had been available, but Carton had been on a leave of absence to address mental health issues since Jan. 30. Carton waited one week after the season was canceled to announce he was transferring. He landed at Marquette on April 15.

Also, seldom-used freshman center Alonzo Gaffney put his name in as an early entrant for the NBA draft. Unlike Walker, who also is exploring the NBA but is expected to return to the program, Gaffney's time in Columbus is over.

Despite all the outward movement of players, Holtmann is confident he will have a fourth NCAA Tournament-worthy team in as many years because of the incom-

ing talent beginning with Towns, the Ivy League Player of the Year as a sophomore at Harvard before missing the past two seasons with knee injuries. He has two seasons of eligibility remaining.

"I feel as good about this roster leading into the offseason as I've felt in any offseason," Holtmann said during an April 14 conference call with the media. "I just feel really good about the young guys, our older guys, the leadership."

Towns, from the same Columbus Northland High School that produced former Buckeye center Jared Sullinger (2010-12), was officially added to the team on April 14.

"Seth is obviously a really mature young man, having graduated from Harvard," Holtmann said. "That's a tremendous honor and a tremendous accomplishment. He brings maturity and has been coached really well."

"His shooting provides a real opportunity and need for us. We all know he has to get to a place of full health, but provided that happens, we're really excited for his addition the next couple of years."

Another grad transfer with immediate eligibility is Abel Porter, who joined the Buckeyes on May 4 from Utah State and is expected to be the backup point guard to Walker. Porter started 54 of 95 games and averaged 19.2 minutes in his Aggies career, blossoming last season when he averaged 5.6 points, 3.2 assists and 2.4 rebounds in 25.6 minutes as a starter for the Mountain West tournament champion. He has one season of eligibility.

The third player to transfer in, albeit ineligible this season, is Bucknell guard Jimmy Sotos, who will be a senior for the 2021-22 season. He was added to the roster on April 3.

A new face to the lineup but not to the program is California transfer Justice Sueing, who can play wing and fill in at guard if needed. He sat out last season per NCAA transfer rules. He also underwent ankle surgery but is expected to be ready for the start of the preseason camp.

He averaged a team-high 14.3 points and 6.0 rebounds as a sophomore for Cal and was second on the team in those categories his freshman year with 13.8 and 5.4, respectively.

"He'll have to transition to Big Ten basketball," Holtmann said. "It's different than the (Pac-12) league he came from."

Holtmann added two freshmen in Long Island (N.Y.) Lutheran four-star center Zed Key and four-star shooting guard Eugene Brown from Conyers (Ga.) Southwest DeKalb.

Key (6-7, 215), who ranked 138th nationally in the 247Sports composite when he

OSU Men's Basketball Signees & Verbal Commits

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

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

Players in the class of 2022 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
Bowen Hardman	SG	6-3	160	★★★	Cincinnati Princeton

averaged 18.9 points and 10.1 rebounds as a senior, will provide depth at power forward and center in the absence of Kaleb Wesson, who led the Buckeyes last season with 14.0 points and 9.3 rebounds per game.

Young is the lone experienced player in the post but at 6-8, 205 he is an inch shorter and at least 50 pounds lighter than Wesson. The Buckeyes also have sophomore Ibrahim Diallo (6-10, 220) but he's a project who played just 40 minutes in eight games last season.

"We're going to be playing differently offensively and defensively, there's no question," without Kaleb Wesson, Holtmann said. "It's a major question mark for us going forward how we're going to answer that."

Brown (6-6, 185) is the No. 118 player in the 2020 class and will be given an opportunity for minutes on the wing. He will be competing against juniors Justin Ahrens and Musa Jallow. The latter took a medical redshirt for the 2019-20 season to have reconstructive ankle surgery.

That's a lot of new pieces to the Buckeyes' puzzle, and the inability for the players to bond through offseason conditioning because of stay-at-home rules due to COVID-19 present a problem.

"We're going to have to hit the ground running as soon as we can get together in terms of our ability to connect as a group and figure out each other's strengths," Holtmann said. "We'll have to get to that early. It's a concern for us, like I'm sure it is with every coach."

First In Class

The Buckeyes got their initial commitment for the 2022 cycle when Cincinnati Princeton three-star shooting guard Bowen Hardman (6-3, 160) announced his decision via Twitter on May 13, saying in part, "All my life it has been a dream for me to play on the highest collegiate basketball level. I've been blessed to have that opportunity to be able to pursue those dreams and make them a reality."

He chose the Buckeyes, who offered May 12, over Cincinnati, Ohio and Xavier. Hardman shot 45.9 percent from the field and 95.7 percent from the free-throw line while averaging 12.1 points last season.

On The Trail

The Buckeyes will lose three seniors (Porter, Walker and Young) after the 2020-21 season, freeing a trio of scholarships for the recruiting class of 2021. Of course, in the new topsy-turvy world of transfermania that number is likely to change.

While OSU has commitments from Convoy (Ohio) Crestview three-star power forward Kalen Etzler and Willoughby (Ohio) Andrews Osborne Academy four-star guard Meechie Johnson, the pursuit

continues with Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary four-star guard Malaki Branham the top target.

Branham (6-4, 175) is the No. 4 shooting guard nationally and second overall in Ohio to Andrews Osborne Academy center Charles Bediako, who is an Alabama lean. Marquette, Michigan, and Xavier are among the schools vying for Branham.

No One Better

Liddell, a two-time Illinois Mr. Basketball for Belleville West, was named the St. Louis metro area boys player of the decade by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. If that's not impressive enough, among those he was chosen over were current NBA standouts Jayson Tatum of the Boston Celtics – the No. 3 pick in the 2017 draft and a 2020 NBA All-Star – and Bradley Beal, the Washington Wizards' third pick in 2012 who was named to the 2018 and 2019 NBA All-Star teams.

On The Slate

The Buckeyes will have a rematch with North Carolina in the CBS Sports Classic on Dec. 19 in a site to be determined. Ohio State defeated the Tar Heels 74-49 in Chapel Hill, N.C., last season.

OSU will also play three games Nov. 25-27 in the Bahamas in the Battle 4 Atlantis with the other participating schools being Creighton, Duke, Memphis, Texas A&M, West Virginia, Wichita State and Utah.

As for the remainder of the nonconference schedule, the opponent for the Dec. 2 ACC/Big Ten Challenge has not been named, and the Buckeyes will host games at Value City Arena vs. the previously mentioned Oakland in the opener, Niagara (Nov. 15), Akron (Nov. 19), Towson (Dec. 9), Morehead State (Dec. 22) and Alabama A&M (Dec. 30).

After a game in St. John Arena in each of the past two seasons, there is not one scheduled there yet. Holtmann has said in the past he would like to play a Big Ten game there. The conference schedule has not been released, so stay tuned.

In the Lane

Men's basketball strength and conditioning coach Quadrian Banks was named May 13 the Master Strength and Conditioning Coach by the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches association (CSCCa), the highest honor given in the profession. ...North Carolina freshman guard Jeremiah Francis, son of former Buckeye player Jerry Francis (1985-89), entered the NCAA transfer portal after playing in only 16 of 33 games for the Tar Heels. Jerry Francis was also an assistant coach at Ohio State from 1994-97. ... Jersey numbers were issued May 11-12 to the newcomers: Porter (0), Sotos (1), Brown (3), Key (24) and Towns (31).

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Banks Ready For New Challenge In Leaving OSU

On April 7, it was announced that Ohio State women's basketball assistant coach Carrie Banks would be leaving the Buckeyes to take the head-coaching job at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. After spending four years at Ohio State, as well as three seasons as an assistant at Northwestern, Banks will be making her first jump to a head-coaching position.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

"It was always kind of a dream of mine to be a head coach, and what was really exciting about this position was the potential in the program," Banks told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "The vision of the leadership of the athletics department, I really feel like they have a lot of great things in store there and have accomplished just a lot with the facilities, planning and supporting student athletes, so I thought they had some really good things in place and the opportunity just really excited me."

Banks accepted the position in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, which meant she was not able to get an official in-person tour of the campus or the facilities. Because of this, after some video conferences, the former Ohio State assistant decided to take it into her own hands to see where she was potentially deciding to take the next step in her career.

"I did something that was probably very out of the box," Banks said. "On Saturday (April 4) morning, I just decided to get in my car and drive straight through. After spending about an hour just walking the campus, and then driving around the downtown, obviously there weren't many people out. So, it was great. I was still able to social distance and all that. But I just wanted to get a vibe."

"We did a couple of Zoom calls and the administration there was, it really felt like family. I just needed to visually see with my own two eyes, so I did that. And I'm happy to say that 11-hour drive both ways is behind me, for now."

Following successful runs as an assistant, both at Ohio State and Northwestern, Banks will be headed to Omaha to become head coach for a team that struggled in the 2019-20 season, finishing with a 7-23 record while being outscored by its opponents by 10.1 points per game.

But Banks will be bringing with her experience from Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff, who has made 10 NCAA tournaments in his head-coaching career and would have made 11 had it not been canceled this season, as well as Northwestern head coach Joe McKeown, who was named Big Ten Coach of the Year this past season.

"One of the really big things for me is diversity of experience," Banks said. "I've got to work under some really, really good basketball minds, alongside some really good people. I've gotten to learn a lot of different things as an assistant. And I'll bring some of those things with me to Omaha, and I obviously have ideas of my own as well, too. But I just am really fortunate for the people that I've had the opportunity to work under."

"I really like the style of play that we had at Ohio State - I hope to bring that with me. There's just so many things along the way,

whether it's something on the court, whether it's a story, whether it's experience that all my bosses have shared with me that I just think are little nuggets that will come out at certain times, and again, like I said, I'm just fortunate for my experiences. And I felt like that's what ultimately is preparing you for this step."

In her last season with the Buckeyes, Banks helped one of the youngest teams in college basketball reach 21 wins, three of which came in the Big Ten tournament on an impressive run to the championship game.

Banks, who primarily worked with the forwards on the team, said that her final season with Ohio State showed the amount of growth that roster was able to make from game one to the abrupt end to its campaign.

"We had a really young team, so we knew it would take a little bit of time. I think what you saw at the end of the year was the result of a young team really coming together and just figuring things out," Banks said. "There were some ups and downs early, but I feel like they figured it out at the right time. January, February and going into the Big Ten tournament, the run we had there, I just think we would have been a team in March that kind of surprised a lot of people."

After four seasons and three NCAA tournament-worthy teams, Banks is off to a new challenge in Nebraska-Omaha. But what will she remember most about the time she spent at Ohio State?

"It's always the people for me," Banks said. "Ohio State is an amazing place for a lot of different reasons. But I think the people, the student-athletes, the people I've gotten to work alongside, that's always what's going to resonate with me anywhere I spend time."

Crooms, Wone Both Depart From Buckeyes

Ohio State had its third and fourth departures from the 2019-20 roster, with forward Aixa Wone signing a grant-in-aid with Georgia Tech on April 20 and guard Janai Crooms announcing on Twitter on April 23 that she will be entering the transfer portal.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ohio State University for allowing me to fulfill my dream of playing Division-I basketball," Crooms said in a statement. "However, after much thought, prayer, and consideration, I feel it is in my best interest to enter the transfer portal and explore other options."

"I would also like to express my appreciation to my coaches, professors and Buckeye Nation for welcoming me with open arms and supporting me every step of the way. I want to send a final thank you to my teammates, for becoming my sisters for life. I love each and every one of you and am so grateful for everything you've done for me over the past two years."

Crooms finished her sophomore year averaging 6.8 points and 3.3 assists per game, with the assist total finishing second on the team to junior guard Braxtin Miller. She shot 46.7 percent from the field but struggled to get her three-point shooting up, hitting just 20.8 percent of her attempts from deep. The second-year guard started the first 10 games of her sophomore campaign, but after missing the Sacramento State matchup due to a suspension, she continued to come off the bench for the remainder of the season.

McGuff told BSB on May 6 that he wishes Crooms the best and believes that her decision ultimately came down to a desire to want to play more minutes.

"She's a good kid," McGuff said. "I hope

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

she finds the right spot. I thought she did a lot of good things for us over her two years, and I just think in general, we had a lot of good, young talent on the team this year, and everybody wants to play a lot, and that's what makes these kids good.

"They're competitive and they want to play a lot of minutes and contribute, and people want to have the opportunity to start, but it just can't happen for everybody at the same level. So I just think we got in a little bit of a numbers crunch, which is mostly a good thing. It means we had good, young players on the team."

But Crooms did say on March 8 during the Big Ten tournament that she grew into her role as a spark plug off the bench.

"I take that on a lot. That's kind of my role in practice and games," Crooms said. "All throughout the season, that's just been my role. And I think I've lived up to that."

In her freshman year, she averaged 8.8 points and 2.2 assists per game, starting in 19 of the 29 games. She was highly effective from the field in her first year, hitting on 48.0 percent (98 of 204) of all attempts and 46.5 percent (20 of 43) of her shots from three. Both of those percentages led the team.

It was officially announced by Georgia Tech on April 20 that Wone would be moving on from the Buckeyes to play for the Yellow Jackets after just one year with Ohio State.

In her first season for Ohio State after being recruited out of Spain, Wone struggled to find her footing, averaging 1.5 points and 1.3 rebounds per game while playing just 9.1 minutes per game. She shot just 34.0 percent from the field.

Crooms and Wone join freshman guards Kaelynn Satterfield and Kierstan Bell as the players from this past season's roster to

leave the team. Crooms, Satterfield and Bell were the three players who were suspended against Sacramento State due to a violation of team rules.

Ohio State now has six players who earned minutes last season returning, as well as five-star guard Rikki Harris, who redshirted due to injury. The Buckeyes are also bringing in three recruits in the 2020 class in three-star guard Anyssa Jones, three-star forward Gabby Hutcherson and five-star point guard Kateri Poole.

Dayton Five-Star Prospect Puts Ohio State In Top Schools

Ohio State women's basketball could be looking for a start to its 2021 recruiting class with Dayton Wayne five-star guard Bree Hall listing the Buckeyes among her top seven schools, along with Kentucky, Mississippi State, N.C. State, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

Hall is ranked the 10th-best guard and No. 26 overall prospect in the 2021 class according to ESPN. She is also the highest-rated prospect in the state of Ohio for the class.

According to ESPN's Dan Olson back in April 2019, Hall is an "athletic big-guard" who "rises on jumper in mid-range game and delivers; defends, traps in pressure, converts plays from turnovers."

"Emerging offensive game to the arc is key to next level impact; back court size, versatility brings Power Five interest."

Ohio State has yet to add a recruit to its 2021 class after bringing in seven freshmen in 2019 and being set to bring in three in 2020 with a class that includes Poole, Jones and Hutcherson.

Hall is listed as a 5-11 guard, and there is no set timetable for her commitment.



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Ohio State Puts New Emphasis On Overseas Talent

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

From Ohio State women's basketball head coach Kevin McGuff's second season in 2014-15 to the end of the 2017-18 campaign, there were a few similarities that each of those teams shared.

First, it was the reign of Kelsey Mitchell, who broke a multitude of records during those four seasons on the way to winning three Big Ten Player of the Year awards. In this stretch, she was helped by a core of Sierra Calhoun, Asia Doss, Linnae Harper and Stephanie Mavunga that reached four straight NCAA tournaments but fell short of making the Elite Eight each time.

There was also another thing that those four rosters from 2014 to 2018 had in common: Every player on the team came from the United States. With Mitchell, Mavunga and the rest of Ohio State's starting five all set to graduate, McGuff knew a rebuild was under way, so he looked internationally to help fill the void left in their absence.

And that, along with a variety of graduate transfers and some U.S. commitments from Janai Crooms and Aaliyah Patty, led to Ohio State signing forward Dorka Juhasz out of Pecs, Hungary.

"She was a really good fit from the standpoint of we had a great run of teams and we were sort of in a quick rebuild," McGuff told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "She could kind of come in on the front end of that and really be an important part of our program from day one, which she was last year, and then you saw her blossom even more this year."

Juhasz was one of three European players on Ohio State's 2019-20 roster, as she was joined by forward Rebeka Mikulasikova from Nitra, Slovakia, and forward Aixa Wone from Pamplona, Spain. That trio of players out of Europe was tied with Minnesota for the most in the Big Ten and represents a shift in mind-set for where Ohio State is searching for talent.

"There are a lot of really talented international players coming to the United States to play," McGuff said. "We've just kind of taken a philosophy a few years back that we didn't want

to miss on the opportunity to get some talented kids in the program, and so we started looking at this more closely."

When starting off looking internationally, there is an added layer of unknown when it comes to initially finding players who are worthy of looking deeper into and eventually offering a scholarship.

McGuff said a lot of the European prospects that Ohio State has recruited initially came almost on accident, with he and his staff attempting to watch some American talent play in some tournaments overseas.

"(Recruiting internationally) coincided with more tournaments where teams from the United States, let's say a young USA basketball team, was going and playing abroad," McGuff said. "Like we're going to watch them anyway, so why not start to investigate some of these international students while we're there? And so that's kind of how it started."

Another hurdle that is met comes with gauging interest. In the United States, it is a safe bet to assume most high school women's basketball players are looking for a spot at the college level, but internationally there are plenty of professional leagues that could take a college scholarship's place.

To deal with that, McGuff said it often takes conversations with both the player and the important figures around her to get a clarification and understanding of what she wants to do.

"That's important to know because not everybody will want to do it," McGuff said. "Usually, let's say we go to a tournament and we see somebody we like. Then we have to find somebody, usually their coach or somebody around them that can kind of give us some guidance on what their thought process is going to be in terms of coming over or not coming over."

Juhasz, who was playing on the PEAC-Pecs Professional Basketball Club in Hungary as well as on her country's national teams since she was 16 years old, said she didn't fully make the decision that she wanted to travel across the ocean for a full year after initially receiving collegiate interest.

"I believe it was around my Under-16 European Championship when I first actually got emails and messages from college coaches from Division I," Juhasz told BSB. "Then, I



SONNY BROCKWAY

ACROSS THE OCEAN – Ohio State has landed commitments from three European players since 2018, including Dorka Juhasz from Pecs, Hungary.

wasn't really paying attention to it because I didn't really know if I wanted to go to the United States or not. So I kind of left those, and then like after, I think it was maybe my last European Championship, Under-18 in 2017, when I got injured as well, that was the summer when I realized that I'm really interested. So, I started opening up messages, and basically that's how I decided that actually I was interested in going."

After finding out which players want to make that transition to the United States, most of the time there are visits, both by the coaches as they travel back across the Atlantic Ocean and by the players who may be making their first trip across the same ocean in order to visit the programs they have interest in.

For the former, McGuff said it is a more difficult procedure than visiting someone who is simply across the country, not just because of distance but because of conflicting schedules.

"That gets a little harder obviously with the logistics of it, but it's doable," McGuff said. "Like let's say in September maybe we'll go do a home visit with somebody, because that's the home-visit time, or occasionally, I've had assistant coaches go kind of during our season when we had a little bit of a window."

"For example, during exam week, when we're going to be off for a few days, they may go over and watch somebody play in a high school game overseas. And it's hard because it's really kind of tough to travel quick over there and then turn around and come back. But we primarily do a lot of it in the summer during these

tournaments where we see the kids, and then we start to develop a relationship with them."

That developing of a relationship worked out for Ohio State when it came to recruiting Juhasz. The 6-4 forward said that it was the Buckeyes' coaching staff, specifically former assistant coach Patrick Klein, who has since resigned from his position, that initially put Ohio State at the top of the list for her.

"They were one of the first ones that conversed with me, and I was talking to Coach Klein for a long time," Juhasz said. "I don't know, Ohio State always stood out from those schools. There were many great schools, but I felt like I had the deepest connection with the Ohio State coaches."

Juhasz said McGuff and Klein came to visit her in Italy for a game, as well as other times prior, and would see her in the European Championships, whether that would be in-person or on a live stream because of scheduling issues.

"Usually, the American teams are going to visit around November, that's when our season starts in Europe, so it was pretty hard for me and also for the school to leave and come visit the school in November, like whenever Janai and Aaliyah visited," Juhasz said. "They just watched it online, so we were emailing each other and everything and talking on the phone."

Regardless, after Ohio State piqued the interest enough for Juhasz, as well as Mikulasikova or Wone, the next hurdle in the team's path came with scheduling the player's



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visit to Columbus. Visits from international players become unique because it often requires multiple competing programs to work together in order to make a schedule that fits for all the teams the prospect is hoping to see.

"Usually what happens is when most kids who are definitely going to come to the United States, they're going to want to take a couple visits," McGuff explained. "So what you end up doing is, let's say they're going to come do three official visits, they usually do that in one trip, and so you have to coordinate with the other universities about travel and when they're leaving there and when they're getting here. There are ways where you can kind of split some of the travel with the other universities that they're coming to see, so it takes coordination with the other universities at that point."

Juhasz, who was the 12th-best overall international prospect and fifth-best forward in her class, according to Prospects Nation, took visits to Ohio State as well as Louisville and Missouri before ultimately committing to the Buckeyes on March 5, 2018.

"I think it was January or February when I could come on a visit and visit Ohio State because that was the time I was done with the major exam in my senior year," Juhasz said. "It was a little hard because I couldn't experience all those things like I didn't go to a football game because it was snowing, the girls were playing away I think Saturday, and then I saw one home game, but it was just challenging."

"It's pretty hard to leave your professional team in Europe just to go and visit, but I mean, it turned out well for me, so it was great."

Along with all the struggles of finding the player, figuring out the interest of a player, making trips overseas to see the player, getting the player to visit the campus and then having a player commit to the program, there is another hurdle in the way: academics.

Megan Leitnaker, assistant director of the student athletic support service office, or SASSO, at Ohio State, worked closely with Juhasz, Mikulasikova and Wone. She said that she usually comes into the recruitment pretty early on to figure out what exactly these international prospects will need to do in order to transition to the United States.

"Usually when they're talking to those players, they'll kind of loop me in," Leitnaker told BSB. "They'll send me an email and kind of say, 'Hey, we're talking to the student-athlete from whatever country.' And if they have any academic information, if it's a transcript or if the student has taken an SAT or ACT, they might send that my way. They kind of get some feedback from me on if I think their grades look strong enough or if their test scores are strong enough, or if they need to look at trying to test again."

There are other added steps when it comes to international students to ensure their English-speaking ability, something that is made more difficult due to the differing qualification of each university nationwide.

"They obviously fall under the NCAA in terms of initial eligibility, but this is where it gets a little tricky. Each university kind of has different standards in terms of admitting international students," McGuff said. "You really have to have a great feel for what your university, where they're at with the admission standards, and for those that aren't in a country where they've learned English."

According to Leitnaker, Ohio State's admission's office requires English proficiency, which can be proved through typical standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT. Past that, there are other tests, which include the TOEFL, or Test of English as Foreign Language, as well as the IELTS, or International English Language Testing Service, that require certain scores in order to be admitted.

"From my standpoint, kind of the main focus

is just making sure they meet that requirement," Leitnaker said. "From an admission standpoint, that's the hard number, like they have to meet a certain English proficiency number. Otherwise, it's a holistic view of their grades, their other test scores, their community involvement, special talents, all that good stuff."

Juhasz, who became a scholar athlete at Ohio State for the second straight year in 2020, said she was most stressed to take the SAT when attempting to enroll in the university.

"Obviously they looked at my grades from high school and everything, but I think the most challenging part was, obviously, just prepare for the SAT, and just reading and critically thinking in English," Juhasz said. "That was probably the most challenging for me as an international student."

Despite the stress that Juhasz felt, Leitnaker said that the fear of those tests is very much dependent on the student.

"Dorkastresses about everything," Leitnaker said. "That's just who she is. Like she'll be stressing out about a test and then she'll get like an A on it, so it kind of depends. I'm working with another incoming student-athlete right now from Cyprus. And he's not stressed about anything. He's very calm, relaxed. And, you know, he doesn't even have English proficiency right now, so it kind of depends on the student. I think it maybe creates a little more stress on me, because we've had students in the past that struggle with that English proficiency."

"They'll talk about why they feel prepared to attend an English-speaking university. But if I think about all the international student-athletes that I've worked with, probably the majority of them are able to meet the English proficiency in that first go-round. It's more often than not that they're able to meet it."

After going through the entire process for three players, Ohio State heads into the 2020-21 season with two international players after Wone decided to leave for Georgia Tech.

So, what did this European talent bring to the Buckeyes? Well, Juhasz, Mikulasikova

and Wone combined for 28.6 percent of the team's total points and 33.0 percent of its total rebounds in 2019-20.

Juhasz said that her time in Europe playing professionally, before she ever got to college, allowed her to have a leg up on other freshmen coming in at the same time.

"I definitely think just experience that I got from other players playing overseas was a huge advantage of my first two years," Juhasz said. "Just like how you have to be professional on and off the court, even if you're not a professional player. It's the discipline that I learned over the years and just learning from older players helps a lot with basketball IQ and everything. I think that was definitely a big advantage for international students that are coming to the United States."

It is also clear that Juhasz and Mikulasikova show a skill set that goes past what a prototypical 6-4 forward from the States may have. This past season, the duo, who are the two tallest members on Ohio State's roster, were the two strongest shooters from three-point range on the team. Mikulasikova shot a team-high 46.3 percent (25 of 54) from deep, and Juhasz ranked second, hitting 39.6 percent (40 of 101) from behind the arc.

This comes from an increased emphasis on learning skills at all five positions in Europe, regardless of height, something that McGuff said can make the European prospects more well-rounded than some who are found in the United States.

"Not that this blanket statement would cover all international students, but I think they've kind of grown up in a different way of doing things where they've worked more holistically on their game from an early age," McGuff said. "Even though they were tall, they didn't just put them around the basket and make them post players. They kind of developed their whole skill set. It's the way they both grew up, whereas traditionally in the States when you have the bigger kids, they develop more around the basket. But that's been good for us, and it's allowed

us to do some very unique things."

Juhasz agreed, saying she grew up learning all facets of the game at a young age. The all-around strengths she possessed have led to a pair of strong seasons for the Buckeyes, leading the team in points per game and rebounds both years. This past season, her efforts were rewarded with a spot on the first-team All-Big Ten roster.

"I was the same height, basically, and I was playing more outside. Since I was a kid, they were always teaching me how to be a point guard," Juhasz said. "I think it's just a mentality of European coaches, like probably everybody starts and teaches their kids to be point guards, to have those point-guard skills with ball handling and vision on the court and everything and also three-point shooting."

"Rebeka and I were shooting a lot in the national teams from outside as well as in the professional teams. I feel like we had more base of freedom with shooting and just going to the outside, not just putting us in and playing us as a center."

Ohio State is not alone in putting a new eye on European prospects, with the Big Ten combining for 13 total European players. But no team in the conference had more of those prospects than the Buckeyes, and that extra attention overseas helped boost a very young team to the Big Ten tournament championship and to what would have been a strong NCAA tournament seed.

There might be significantly more steps, hurdles, pitfalls and effort required to track down and offer these international players, but in looking at Ohio State's current trajectory the past two seasons, it might all be worth it in the end.

"Dorka is one of my favorite people ever," Leitnaker said. "She's the best. And Rebecca and Aixa, they had some ups and downs this year, for sure. But those girls were very resilient and handle a lot of things quite well. They are definitely three very resilient, determined young ladies who work really hard."

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Olympic Sports Awards Roundup

While student-athletes may be spread across the nation, staying at home during the COVID-19 pandemic that put an end to all collegiate sports, there's still plenty of recognition to go around for the athletes who excelled when they could play. Through awards, those athletes are still receiving praise for their play.

Sitting atop that list of OSU athletes to earn some hardware this spring is junior track and field standout Anavia Battle, who was named Big Ten Indoor Track Athlete of the Year on May 12. Battle also won the Big Ten's Track Athlete of the Championships back in March.

She's the second Buckeye to win Big Ten Indoor Track Athlete of the Year, following Christina Clemons (née Manning), who won it back-to-back in 2011 and 2012.

It was a dominant campaign for Battle that propelled her to the award. She took first-place in both the 60 meters (7.29) and 200 meters (22.79) at the Big Ten championships Feb. 28-29. Earlier in the season, she put up the nation's second-fastest 200-meter time of the season (22.66) at the Clemson Tiger Paw Invitational on Feb. 14.

Battle wasn't the only person involved with the women's indoor track squad to be recognized by the conference. Head coach Karen Dennis was unanimously selected as Big Ten Women's Indoor Coach of the Year. This is the fourth time

in her career that she's won the award.

Elsewhere, the Ohio State wrestling team had six members named to a National Wrestling Coaches Association All-America team. Eight wrestlers in each class were chosen for the first team, four for the second team and four as honorable mentions. Ohio State had four first-team selections: senior Kollin Moore at 194 pounds, senior Luke Pletcher at 141 pounds, sophomore Kaleb Romero at 174 pounds and redshirt freshman Sammy Sasso at 149 pounds.

Ethan Smith was named to the second team at 165 pounds, and Rocky Jordan was included as an honorable mention at 184 pounds.

"During difficult times there are always people who rise to the occasion, and I'm proud of the action (of) the NWCA Division I Leadership Group in providing direction for honoring the 2020 Division I All-American team," said Mike Moyer, NWCA executive director. "It's important that these athletes' efforts and successes during the season are recognized. Congratulations to each of this year's honorees and National Qualifiers."

"I want to thank the passionate fans, alumni and contributors to Buckeye wrestling," Pletcher said. "Without you none of this would be possible. The transition from wrestling in the Steelwood Athletic Facility to the magnificent Jennings Center and Covell Arena was a real blessing. Being able to compete and practice in that building is something that brought the team together in many ways."

Sasso picked up another individual honor as well, adding the Flowrestling Freshman of the Year award to go with the Intercollegiate Freshman of the Year title that he won in March.

He beat out Iowa's Tony Cassioppi, Stanford's Shane Griffith, North Carolina State's Trent Hilday and Stanford's Real Woods for the title. At 24-3 on the year, and with All-American and Freshman of the Year honors under his belt, Sasso will look to make a national title run in 2020 as a sophomore.

Sasso wasn't the only freshman Buckeye to earn some acclaim, as on April 21, men's volleyball star Michael Wright was selected to Off the Block's 10-member Freshman All-American Team.

Wright, a setter, started 15 of Ohio State 18 matches, shining as a distributor with 10.20 assists per set, good enough for seventh overall in the NCAA.

Wrapping up the individual awards, men's

golfer Felix Kvarnstrom was named to the Ping All-Region team on April 21 following his first season with the Buckeyes.

The Sweden native and graduate transfer from Lynn University led the Buckeyes all season, putting up a 72.94 scoring average and securing four top-20 finishes. He competed in every event for OSU. Kvarnstrom's inclusion means the continuation of quite the streak for OSU, which has had at least one player named to the All-Region Team each of the last 12 seasons.

Kvarnstrom's time in Columbus isn't yet complete, either. He announced on April 27 via an open letter that he'll be returning to Ohio State next season.

"My original plan was to turn professional this upcoming summer and try to qualify for a major tour in the fall," Kvarnstrom said. "But during these unprecedented times, the idea of turning pro this year isn't very appealing. With all of the uncertainty around the professional tours this year, not having to worry about which events I am able to get into is a relief. Instead, coming back to campus, taking advantage of the extra year of eligibility, and having another year to prepare and plan for my professional debut is a blessing."

Ohio State's fencing team was honored with All-America nods, with 12 members of the squad included by the United States Fencing Coaches Association, tied for the most of any team in the nation.

Freshman Bence Bende, sophomore Henry Lange, freshman Julieta Toledo, sophomore Roscoe Swartz and freshman Montserrat Viveros were all included on the first team. Senior Gabriela Cecchini, senior Domenik Koch, senior Sarah Merza, junior Camilla Rivano and junior Alexanne Verret made the second team, while freshman Diego Cervantes and sophomore Nathan Wriedt rounded out the group as honorable mentions.

Lastly, six teams – men's cross country, men's and women's golf, women's gymnastics, women's soccer and men's tennis – received public recognition awards, given out based on which teams finish in the top 10 percent in each sport based on their most recent multiyear Academic Progress Rates (APR).

The total of six teams recognized is tied for the most in an academic year in school history with 2011-12 and 2012-13.

"This is genuinely a reflection of the attention paid to academics right from the outset," said Dr. John Davidson, the Ohio State faculty athletics representative. "Coaches make it a central focus in recruiting and maintain that focus in planning and programming. Athletics leadership dedicates itself to providing every opportunity that can advance the cause of education. And the dedication of our academic support staff in SASSO is unparalleled. But ultimately, of course, it is the hard work and ability of these remarkable young student-athletes that makes all the difference."

Baseball, Softball To Return Senior Duos

Ohio State's baseball and softball teams got big news in April, shortly after the NCAA's move to allow for an extra year of eligibility for seniors in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both teams will be bringing back two seniors for one more year of play, as announced on Ohio State's website via letters written by the athletes.

For the baseball team, pitcher Jake Vance and infielder Connor Pohl will be back in 2021.

"I am so thankful for the opportunity to be back for another year, and I am really excited to get back to the grind with the guys," Vance said. "It was a very emotional day when the season ended early, so having the chance to come back was a no-brainer."

"I had always dreamt of playing baseball at the collegiate level, but I never received much interest," Pohl said. "In the spring of my senior year, Coach (Greg) Beals and his staff gave me

the opportunity of a lifetime, and I am forever grateful for that. Being a part of this outstanding University and baseball program for the last four years has not been short of life-changing. With the ability to return for another year, it was without a doubt the easiest decision of my life. I am very thankful and honored to represent this exceptional University one more time."

Vance put up a 4.26 ERA as a relief pitcher in 2020, making just three appearances and pitching in 6⅓ innings. He allowed six hits and three runs while striking out six batters. In 2019, he went 3-2 with a 6.37 ERA with 35 strikeouts and 20 walks in 41 innings pitched.

Pohl, meanwhile, hit .245 in 2020, slugging .388 with a .362 on-base percentage. He notched seven RBI and tied for the most doubles on the team with four.

For the softball team, outfielder Spencer Sansom and infielder Carley Gaskill will both return for the 2021 season.

"Ohio State has become my home filled with a built-in family and the sport I love," Sansom said. "Softball has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. Being on the field is where I feel most at home. This sport has provided me with people, relationships, growth and opportunities that have all helped to make me a stronger person on and off the field."

"I have one more opportunity to wear Ohio State across my chest and to play alongside others who have the same ambition and heart as me. I am so thankful that I did not have to give up this sport just yet. Softball is what brought me to Ohio, and it's what's keeping me here for another year."

"A lot went through my head when I found out that the NCAA had chosen to reward all spring athletes with another year of eligibility," Gaskill said. "I had this new opportunity to finish my career how I wanted, but there was also the fact that I'm graduating soon and had been thinking about my life after college for quite some time. There was more than softball to consider."

"It was extremely appealing that the NCAA was giving us the opportunity to finish on our own terms. I love Ohio State and I love playing softball."

"I can't wait to get back to Buckeye Field and show Buckeye Nation why I chose to stay. I hope you're ready, Buckeye Nation. I'm coming back."

Sansom will get the chance to return to the field in 2021 after missing all of the abbreviated 2020 season with an injury. As a junior, she started in 11 games, drove in seven runs, connected on six hits and stole two bases.

Gaskill will look to build on her newfound power going into next season. She started all 17 games at shortstop for the Buckeyes, putting up a .178/.245/.311 slash line for the season while knocking out two home runs and batting in four runs for the year. While she had some troubles on offense, she excelled defensively, with 40 assists, 25 putouts and a .929 fielding percentage.

Buckley Signs With Boston Cannons

The men's lacrosse team may be returning three of its stars (see page 33), but at least one senior is moving on to the next level. Midfielder Lukas Buckley, a fifth-year senior, signed with the Boston Cannons of Major League Lacrosse on May 9. Buckley, a native of Walpole, Mass., grew up just 20 miles from where Boston plays its home games.

"We've had a long connection to the Cannons," Buckley explained in an interview with the (Quincy, Mass.) Patriot Ledger. "Marty Bowes, a Quincy guy, was a friend of our family who had played with the Cannons for a couple years, and he was kind of a mentor to me. Once I got my 'dream job' in Boston this year, he had been speaking to me about the possibility of playing. Then I got a call from Cannons coach Sean Quirk, who told me the team was very interested, and soon after we worked out a deal. Obviously,

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172 Ohio State Student-Athletes Receive Degrees

I'm very lucky to get this opportunity.

"It has always been a dream of mine, since at least the third grade," Buckley said with a laugh. "And playing in Major League Lacrosse is as much about love of the game as anything, because we don't get big bucks. And I grew up watching the Cannons play. I can remember, when I was really little, seeing them play in Lowell at Cawley Stadium during their first few years. Then, when I was a bit older, my family had one of my birthday parties at a game of theirs at Boston University. I can still remember us all having that party along the back wall at (Nickerson Field) and thinking about playing there someday."

Buckley served as a captain for the Buckeyes in 2020 and played in all seven games, racking up two goals and two assists. His fourth-quarter goal against Notre Dame in the final game of the season helped the Buckeyes ultimately down the Fighting Irish, 13-11.

Over his five years in Columbus, Buckley played in 55 games, putting up 29 goals and 21 assists while winning 26 ground balls. He starred off the field as well, as a four-time Ohio State Scholar-Athlete, two-time Academic All-Big Ten selection and two-time Big Ten Distinguished Scholar. He graduated in May of 2019 with a bachelor's degree in finance and again in 2020 with a specialized master's degree in business/finance.

Burch Set To Coach National Training Team

Ohio State men's volleyball head coach Kevin Burch was selected to fill the head coaching role with the 2020 U.S. Men's Junior National Training Team and will look to lead the side to the NORCECA U21 Pan American, set to take place from Aug. 31-Sept. 9.

This will be far from Burch's first experience with U.S. volleyball. He served as an assistant coach at a USA A3 Camp in 2011, as an assistant with High Performance Youth Continental teams in 2012 and 2013, as a tech coordinator with the Youth National Team in 2015 and 2016, and as an assistant with the Youth National Team in both 2018 and 2019.

Now, Burch will be leading the team. He took his first steps in his new role, working to select a 20-man team with his assistant coaches, Pat Shawaryn of Princeton and Grand Canyon University's Matt Werle.

"I had the opportunity to work with the youth team and this age group over the past two summers, and I've really enjoyed getting to know these guys," Burch said. "The experience only made the selection process that much more difficult.

"Coach Werle, Coach Shawaryn and I had a lot of tough decisions, but we ultimately selected a group we know will be competitive internationally. We'll have a ton of international experience, elite athleticism and size, outstanding leadership and competitiveness."

Among that group of 20 is a face that will become familiar to Ohio State fans in the coming years: Buckeye signee Jacob Pasteur, a 6-4 outside hitter from Westminster, Md.

The team will begin training in August.

Men's Soccer Adds Two For 2020

Ohio State's men's soccer team is looking to build on its roster heading into the fall and did some bolstering in early May with the addition of two players.

On May 4, OSU announced that former Cincinnati goalkeeper Noah Lawrence will be playing his final season as a transfer in Columbus, taking over for Parker Siegfried, a senior who started 18 games for the Buckeyes in 2019. Cincinnati cut its soccer program on April 14 in response to COVID-19, forcing Lawrence and his teammates to relocate in order to continue their college careers.

Despite the commencement taking place virtually, 172 current and former Ohio State student-athletes earned their degrees.

Among that group was a pair of track stars in Nick Gray, who broke Jesse Owens' 80-year-old record in the 100-meter dash with a time of 10.20 seconds, as well as Sade Olatoye, who was a two-time Big Ten Indoor Field Athlete of the Year and a five-time Big Ten champion as well as the 2019 Ohio State Female Athlete of the Year. Gray earned his degree in biology, while Olatoye earned hers in health sciences.

Another notable recipient of an Ohio State degree was Tanner Laczynski, an All-American and three-time All-Big Ten selection in men's hockey. He is graduating with a degree in sport industry.

Here is the complete list of the 172 student-athlete graduates, as well as their majors, listed in alphabetical order by sport:

Baseball – Brett McKinney, sports and leisure studies; Scott Seymour, finance and economics; Jalen Washington, operations management; Noah West, logistics management.

Women's Basketball – Savitha Jayaraman, operations management.

Cheerleading – Valerie Celentano, operations management; Austin Cook, sport industry; Ante-Tonci Dejanovic, neuroscience; Olivia Gutentag, human nutrition; Ashley Handley, human development and family sciences; Alyssa Jacobs, journalism; Taylor Kuhn, nursing; Madeline Lake, accounting; Jordan Lukens, zoology; Alexa Miehls, neuroscience; Adriana Pierleoni, marketing; Megan Schmidt, communications; Darren Smith, health sciences program; Maria Wisman, finance.

Men's Cross Country/Track and Field – Paul Bete, finance and economics; Luke Landis, finance and economics.

Women's Cross Country/Track and Field – Brittany Atkinson, accounting; Devon Leahy, biology; Kelsey Sandlin, medical dietetics; Grace Thomas, health promotion, nutrition and exercise science.

Men's Diving – Quinlan DeVal, computer science and engineering.

Men's Fencing – Ahmed Al-Tayeb, pharmaceutical sciences; Leon Cao, electrical and computer engineering; Andrew Choi, electrical and computer engineering; John Culpepper, political science and economics; Frank Ditullio, human development and family sciences; Nicola Sirito, marketing; Liam Smith, industrial design.

Women's Fencing – Gabriela Cecchini, economics and political science; Natalia Falkowski, international business and finance; Alexa Laskaris, health sciences program; Sarah Merza, psychology; Emma Montgomery, biochemistry; Emma von Dadelszen, health and sciences program.

Field Hockey – Yolanda Cabello Izquierdo, biology; Esther Clotet Alsina, operations management; Whitney Harris, communications; Jennica

Jonovich, communications; Adelaide Penzone, marketing; Genevieve Penzone, biology; Ellen Westfall, environmental policy and decision making.

Football – Nathan Brock, communications; Chris Chugunov, kinesiology; Brock Davin, finance; Noah Donald, industrial and systems engineering; Owen Fankhauser, human development and family sciences; Jake Hausmann, communications; Zach Hoover, sport industry; Hayden Jester, operations management; Derrick Malone, human development and family sciences; Amari McMahon, biology; Brandon Pahl, history; Marcus Williamson, history.

Men's Golf – Jeg Coughlin, family resource management; Caden Orewiler, human development and family sciences; William Voetsch, finance; Justin Wick, marketing.

Women's Golf – Adeena Shears, human development and family sciences.

Men's Gymnastics – Michael Chan, accounting; Robert Costea, history.

Women's Gymnastics – Nevin Adamski, biology; Olivia Aeppli, marketing.

Men's Hockey – Miguel Fidler, communications; Ronnie Hein, real estate and urban analysis; Tanner Laczynski, sport industry; Carson Meyer, sport industry; Gordi Myer, economics.

Women's Hockey – Rebecca Freiburger, exercise science education; Elise Riemenschneider, communications; Olivia Soares, sport industry.

Men's Lacrosse – Brandon Barker, sport industry; Chasen Bunce, accounting; Lukas Buckley, specialized major in finance; Christian Feliziani, sport industry; Josh Kirson, finance; Tre Leclair, sport industry; Caleb Mahoney, civil engineering; John Mancinotti, specialized major in finance; Nick Musci, finance; Joey Salisbury, accounting; Ryan Terefenko, sport industry; Brendan Wallace, political science.

Women's Lacrosse – Kimberly Apuzzo, speech and hearing; Sage Darling, speech and hearing; Sara Dickinson, health sciences program; Sarah George, child and youth studies and communications; Elizabeth Hernandez, human resources; Meghan Matey, communications; Jaclyn Moxley, exercise science education; Jillian Rizzo, marketing; Emily Skrzypczak, health sciences program.

Pistol – Patrick Sardo, architecture.

Rifle – Jacob Buchanan, sport industry; Alexandra Kissell, athletic training.

Rowing – Anjali Fernandes, English; Simone Fishel, food science and technology; Olivia Kwiecinski, environment, economy, development and sustainability; Grace Libben, public health; Kendall Massier, speech and hearing; Madeline Perrett, biology; Sierra Tiede, international studies.

Men's Soccer – Brennon Davis, real estate and urban analysis; Leonardo Kossaka, finance.

Women's Soccer – Selina Vickery, neuroscience.

Softball – Katya Duvall, language arts and English education; Andrea Farrah, health sciences program; Spencer Sanson, physical education.

Men's Swimming – Alexander Dillman, political science; Daniel Gloude, biology; Henrique Gomes Pereira Painhas, computer and information science; Calvin Koethke, biology; Andrew Loy, marketing; Ryan Vander Meulen, marketing; Augustus Whiteman, mechanical engineering.

Women's Swimming – Rebeka Bradley, biochemistry; Josephine Fike, public health; Emma Fish, health promotion, nutrition and exercise service; Lucija Jurkovic Perisa, hospitality management; Lauren Kurzydlo, accounting; Devin Landstra, marketing; Hannah Whiteley, human development and family sciences; Katie Wright, communications.

Synchronized Swimming – Kaitlyn Carboun, international studies; Phoebe Coffin, human development and family sciences; Wenjing Deng, electrical and computer engineering; Breanna Malone, art education.

Men's Tennis – Kyle Seelig, child and youth studies.

Women's Tennis – Andrea Ballinger, psychology and Spanish; Taylor Wolf, communications.

Men's Track – Reginald Browley, family resource management; Asa Burke, human development and family sciences; Davion Fisher, sport industry; Nick Gray, biology; Matthew Hurley, criminology; Daniel Mastropalo, finance; Kyle McKinney, marketing; Cody Stine, finance.

Women's Track – Halimah Barlow, human development and family sciences; Meghan Hoffman, speech and hearing; Abigail Nichols, speech and hearing; Sade Olatoye, health sciences program; Karimah Senior, applied economics; Bliss Soleyn, air transportation; Sarah Stanley, real estate and urban analysis and finance; Lainey Studebaker, exercise science education; Anne Ubbing, communications.

Men's Volleyball – Tyler Alter, family resource management; Reese Devillbiss, health sciences program; Jake Hanes, economics; Paul Henken, finance; Andrew Hillman, finance; Shawn Hughes, aerospace engineering; Kyle Skinner, film studies; James Wolmering, civil engineering.

Women's Volleyball – Camry Halm, logistics management; Ana Rodrigues Franklin, marketing; Elizabeth Sandbothe, human development and family sciences.

Wrestling – Troy Caldwell, construction systems management; Cody Dingess, food, agricultural and biological engineering; Brendan Fitzgerald, accounting; Ke-Shawn Hayes, specialized major in finance; Luke Pletcher, sport industry; Clay Ragon, operations management; Kaleb Romero, marketing; Frederick Schierl, family resource management; Kevin Snyder, finance; Zachary Steiner, agricultural communication.

"Noah is a very explosive goalkeeper who can make the game-changing save," head coach Brian Maisonneuve said. "Noah comes to us from Cincinnati where he got some tremendous experience. He is extremely hardworking and a true competitor. He will fit into our culture very nicely."

At UC, Lawrence was the primary starter as a sophomore and as a junior, getting the nod in 28 games over the two seasons. In 2019, Lawrence notched 63 saves on the year with two shutouts. He's a product of the D.C. United (2016-17) and New York Red Bulls (2013-14) academies and part of the U.S. National U-19 pool.

Three days later, the Buckeyes added another new face for 2020: midfielder Laurence Wootton, who will be a freshman in the upcoming season.

Wootton comes to Ohio State from Cardiff City Academy, the reserve side for Cardiff City, which competes in England's second soccer divi-

sion. Prior to the three years that he spent with Cardiff City, Wootton spent 10 years with Stoke City Academy.

"Laurence is a big-time player, and we are so happy to add him to our roster," Maisonneuve said. "He comes to us from Cardiff City's Reserve Team (U23's) and has incredible versatility. We have seen him play the 6, 8, and 10 at a very high level, and he's played them all very well. He has an incredible engine, very good in possession and tactically has a great feel for the game. His maturity and attitude will add to our locker room. He will definitely make an impact on our program. We are extremely excited to add Laurence to our roster."

Vondran Transferring To Ohio State

Josie Vondran, a setter who spent two years with the Dayton women's volleyball team, will

play out the rest of her career in Columbus. She's set for immediate eligibility and has two years remaining to play for the Buckeyes.

For Vondran, this serves as a chance to pick up where her parents left off, as her mom, Tracy, played on Ohio State's women's volleyball team from 1989-92, while her dad, Chris, was on the men's swimming team from 1990-91.

"We are so excited to welcome Josie to our Buckeye volleyball family," head coach Jen Flynn Oldenburg said. "To say her roots run deep with the university and our program would be an understatement. I am looking forward to what Josie can bring to the team, both on and off the court, and can't wait to see her represent the Scarlet and Gray."

In 2019, Vondran played in 24 matches for the Flyers, leading the team with 4.67 assists per set. Dayton won back-to-back Atlantic 10 championships while Vondran was on the team.

Icers Learning To Cope In New World Without Ice

This offseason has been unlike any other for the Ohio State hockey players with the disruption of every aspect of life due to the COVID-19 pandemic that shuttered most of the U.S. from mid-March through April, with some parts of the country still in lockdown mode.

In the wake of a death toll that is closing in on 100,000 in America, playing games seems trivial. Still, the consequences of not being able to finish the season because of the coronavirus outbreak resonates for those players who saw their athletic

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

dreams evaporate in an instant.

One moment, the Ohio State men's hockey team on March 12 was preparing for a Big Ten semifinal vs. Michigan scheduled three days later at Nationwide Arena in downtown Columbus. Then, the players hear that the NCAA had immediately canceled all winter and spring sports.

That meant the Buckeyes would not participate in a school-record fourth straight NCAA tournament with a shot at their first national title.

"It was a bit of a shock," then-sophomore forward Quinn Preston told BSB.

"When it first happened, everyone thought it was weird. It was sad we missed an opportunity and we were sour, but I'd rather have everyone be safe and be precautionary than have something bad happen to one of us."

Forward Austin Pooley, a junior at the time, felt bad for the seniors who did not get a proper sendoff when the coaching staff assembled the team that fateful March afternoon and relayed the sobering news.

"I looked around the locker room and thought this could be the last time for a very long time our whole team would be together because the next morning the guys were driving home or flying and school was already online," he said. "There was no reason for guys who were from out-of-town to stay in Columbus. It was heartbreaking."

But life goes on, even as the fate of fall college sports remains in limbo. Being sheltered at home for the past two months has been difficult for the players without the ability to skate. They were either forced to stay inside except for essential activities or their ice rinks were closed.

"Usually when I come from school I'd get with my buddies from high school that played hockey and get on the ice a little bit even though the season's over, but to not have any ice at all is crazy," said Preston, a native of Trenton, Mich. "Usually there's ice right down the street. There's nothing right now."

Pooley has tried to stay in shape uti-

lizing a small gym in the basement of his parents' home in the Columbus suburb of Dublin. The facilities at Ohio State are closed as are gyms and fitness centers in Ohio until May 26.

"A few guys have actually bought equipment," he said. "Some other guys have stuff at their parents' house where they are now. Everybody is working out in their own way."

Coach Steve Rohlik calls these trying times surreal.

"Everything's pretty much voluntary as far as workouts on their own back home," he said. "If they get out, they go for a run or a bike ride or rollerblade. Those are really the only activities. A few guys have limited weights and stuff. Not a lot of us have a home gym."

Pooley said the situation will really hit him later in May when the freshman players were supposed to arrive on campus.

"We get to know them, they get to know the culture and we work out together," he said. "That experience is probably not going to happen with everything that's going on."

If there is a glimmer of positive in the timing of the pandemic, it's that this is the offseason for hockey players.

Preston said he elevates his training in mid-June with an eye on the start of the season in the fall. It remains to be seen how soon he and his teammates will be able to resume skating, dependent on state and local mandates.

As to whether the season will be played, delayed, or shortened, the timing once again favors hockey with the Buckeyes' first games likely planned for Oct. 9-10 based on past seasons.

Compare that to college football and the NFL, which crank up the action the first week in September and may face the possibility of canceling or moving games to a later time.

The hockey team normally has only one week of official practices before the start of the season so there's a chance its routine may not be disrupted as much as other fall sports with earlier starts.

The Buckeyes have not announced their schedule, and it will be interesting to learn if contingencies are in place in case a full slate is not possible or some non-conference away games that would require flying will be replaced by regional matchups that can be bused.

Take A Bow

Four Buckeyes received conference

honors on May 11 with senior forward Tanner Laczynski leading the way by being named second-team All-Big Ten. He was on the first team in 2018 and received an honorable mention nod in 2019. He led OSU last season in points (34) and assists (23).

Senior defensemen Wyatt Ege and Gordi Myer and junior goalie Tommy Nappier received honorable mention. Myer played all 36 games for the No. 10 Buckeyes (20-11-5, 11-9-4 Big Ten) and had a career-high five goals and 14 points for the 2019-20 season. He also received the Big Ten Sportsmanship Award for Ohio State.

Ege in 35 games had a career high four goals, including a hat trick vs. Mercyhurst, and added eight assists for 12 points, helping the Buckeyes to a 2.28 goals-against average to rank 13th nationally.

Nappier, the 2019 Big Ten Goaltender of the Year when he was a first-team All-Big Ten pick, started 32 games this past season and recorded a 2.04 goals-against average and a .932 save percentage to rank 11th and eighth, respectively, among NCAA goalies.

Laczynski (sports industry) and Myer (economics - business) joined seniors Miguel Fidler (communication), Ronnie Hein (real estate) and Carson Meyer (sports industry) as spring graduates. Ege (family resource management) earned his degree in the spring of 2019 and was enrolled in graduate school (sports coaching master's) for 2019-20.

Nappier was named the team's Most Valuable player and Myer the Best Defensive Player. Forward Tate Singleton was tabbed Rookie of the Year and junior forward Eugene Fadyeyev was chosen as the Unsung Player. Fadyeyev, sophomore forward Matthew Jennings and freshman forward Jaedon Leslie shared Most Improved Player honors.

Miller's Time

OSU associate head coach Steve Miller has been named an assistant coach for the USA Hockey Staff for the World Junior Championship for the fifth consecutive year.

Miller has been a part of three medal-winning teams - a gold in 2017 (with Laczynski on the roster), a bronze in 2018 and a silver in 2019.

The International Ice Hockey Federation World Junior Championship in Edmonton and Red Deer, Alberta, runs from Dec. 26, 2020, to Jan. 5, 2021.

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Lacrosse Trio To Return

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

On March 10, the 18th-ranked Ohio State's men's lacrosse team snagged a signature victory, the one that it had been waiting for through the first half of the season, with a 13-11 upset of Notre Dame, ranked No. 14 at the time. It was the second straight win for the Buckeyes over the Fighting Irish, who have served as one of the best programs in the Midwest for years.

For Ohio State, it felt like an arrival, and like the lofty expectations of the season were ready to be met. A 4-2 start to the year with close losses to UMass (9-7) and Cornell (17-16) had sparked some questions, but the win over Notre Dame looked to be a momentum builder for Ohio State.

"That was something that was really special to us being able to beat them two years in a row," said defensive midfielder Ryan Terefenko. "Having that moment in the locker room where we had a big win under our belt, and just being able to share that with all the freshmen that had never experienced it and all of the team. We didn't feel like we had that kind of signature win yet on the season."

The joy was short-lived. Two days later, after what Ohio State hoped would be a season-defining win, the season was over. Team activities were shut down, first by the Big Ten and then nationally, ending every spring sport prematurely, including the final six games of the season for the men's lacrosse team.

"For me, the highlight of my season was that win against Notre Dame," defender Jeff Henrick said. "Like Ryan said, at that moment we really started to find the vibe of the team and everything was positive. Then, moving forward, we found out that we were no longer going to have a season. It was a tough pill for me to swallow because you think of all the work that you put into that season, it was tough to hear."

Terefenko described the days after the Notre Dame win.

"It's been a roller coaster because you have the highs of that, and then the following day or so, we realize that our season is about to get postponed, and our season is going to get canceled eventually," Terefenko said. "That was definitely tough to take. The first feeling that you get is confusion. There was a lot of information that was coming out, and we didn't really know what was going on."

While the sudden end of the season created quite a bit of confusion, the players and coaching staff weren't left without answers for long. On March 30, the NCAA approved legislation that allows spring senior athletes an optional extra season of eligibility. The extra year decision didn't just give Ohio State reason to look forward to next season, it also allowed for the coaching staff to reestablish a sense of calm and create a plan for moving forward.

"That first week there was so much unknown and transition, and it was really a scramble to create a new normal, to get everybody settled, get everybody safe," head coach Nick Myers said. "The unknown of what was to come with some eligibility statuses was one of a few things that was weighing heavy on my heart. I think where we are today, a week out from the NCAA decision (to allow an extra year of eligibility for spring seniors), there's a lot of positive energy, a lot of juice."

"We had a leadership council call, which was amazing. We have a leadership council of 14 guys, which (Tre LeClaire, Terefenko and Henrick) are a part of, that was right on point."

While the majority of senior athletes aren't planning to take that extra season, Ohio State

lacrosse is going to be a significant beneficiary of the rule, because three senior stars, Terefenko, Henrick and LeClaire, an attacker, all plan to return for a fifth season.

"The last few weeks have been kind of weird, until we got that call (about extended eligibility)," LeClaire said. "That cleared up a lot of emotion and thoughts for all three of us."

"Everything after that Notre Dame game, not knowing what was going to happen next until we got the news, it was pretty odd for all of us. Everything happened really fast. I was kind of in shock, but it all worked out and I'm thankful for that and excited to be back next year."

For Henrick, the decision to return was an easy one, especially when he knew that he wouldn't be alone.

"The decision to come back was easy for me," Henrick said. "Being a part of such a great program, it really wasn't a question. I knew these guys were coming back and I knew that I was going to have the opportunity to play again, so it was really a no-brainer."

The trio isn't just interested in the chance to play together one last time, either. All three are planning to use the extra year to pursue master's degrees.

"The opportunity to come back for a fifth year and go after a master's degree was something that I couldn't pass up," Terefenko said. "Coach Myers made it very clear that if you want to come back, you're going to come back and better yourself, and the opportunity to do this along with Jeff and Tre is really special and I know it's going to pay off in the long run."

"There are a lot of opportunities for us in the next year academically," Henrick said. "It is really exciting to think of where we can take it academically. I have to thank Gene Smith for this opportunity for a fifth year and to pursue the master's (degrees) that we want to do. That's something that's super exciting to me, to further my education. Going into college, I never thought that I was going to have the opportunity to get a master's degree, so it's something really special and something really unique to add to the résumé."

In LeClaire's case, the chance to pursue further education played a major role in his decision to return, and he didn't make the call until he knew that he could continue down his academic path.

"It was a deal maker for me to come back and obviously play another year of college lacrosse, but also to pursue a master's in sports management," LeClaire said. "That's something that I've always dreamed about, but I never thought that I would be in grad school in five years, so it's pretty much a dream come true. It worked out perfectly for all of us."

With one last season to play, the Buckeye seniors have big plans. They'll be expected to lead a young team and will have to do so without much other veteran leadership. Several fellow seniors aren't expected to return, and there were only nine juniors on the 2020 team. Still, they're excited about the chance to help new players and make one more title run.

"It was twofold," Terefenko said of his decision. "There was some unfinished business, where you have that feeling where you want to come back and end on your own terms, and that was definitely a part of it. But, for me, the thing that I really thought about was the opportunity to come back and teach the Buckeye way to another incoming group of freshmen and teach what I've learned through my years here to a completely new team. To me, that was just an opportunity that I couldn't really pass up. I want my legacy to be as a guy who tried to live as close to the blueprint as I could, but also someone who teaches it to the younger guys."

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The screenshot shows the Buckeye Sports Bulletin website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for HOME, FOOTBALL, BASKETBALL, SPORTS, FORUM, BSB ONLINE, EAT & STAY, and a LOG OUT button. Below the menu is a large featured article titled "FORMER OHIO STATE FORWARD MARC LOVING JOINS GREAT LAKES ELITE IN THE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT" by Wyatt Crosher. To the right of the main article are three smaller article teasers: "Four-Star 2021 Offensive Tackle Garrett Dellinger Includes Ohio State In Top Four", "Michigan Quarterback Battle 'Dead Even,' Per OC Josh Gattis", and "2021 Kansas Five-Star Forward Kendall Brown Puts Ohio State In Top 10".

Buckeye Sports Bulletin has expanded its online presence to a full-service website to complement the 24 annual print editions. Access to BuckeyeSports.com is free to all print subscribers and includes numerous great features like:

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Big Ten Announces Mental Health Initiative

The Big Ten announced the Big Ten Mental Health and Wellness Cabinet, which includes representatives from all 14 Big Ten institutions, as well as sport-affiliate members Johns Hopkins (men's and women's lacrosse) and Notre Dame (men's hockey).

In conjunction with the announcement of the cabinet, the conference added that all of its staff members, student-athletes, coaches and full-time members of university athletic departments will receive free, unlimited access to Calm, which is the No. 1 mental fitness app for helping individuals experience lower stress, less anxiety, improved focus and more restful sleep.

BIG TEN NOTES

Joe Dempsey

"When I was hired as the commissioner of the Big Ten Conference, a core pillar of my vision was to make sure that we educate, embrace, engage and empower our more than 9,500 student-athletes," said Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren. "This is a complex and stressful time in our society, and the mental health and wellness of our Big Ten family is a critical component of our focus. The Cabinet will be instrumental for us both short- and long-term, as we pursue our goal of creating and maintaining the most comprehensive mental health and wellness platform in college athletics.

"Our hope is that the Calm mental fitness app will provide an immediate resource for all Big Ten student-athletes, coaches, athletic department staff members and conference staff during these unprecedented times and is only the first of many steps that we will take in the area of mental health and wellness. We are fortunate to have so many professionals on our campuses who have dedicated their lives to tackling mental health issues. We were driven to supplement their inspiring work with additional resources, important

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under normal circumstances, but even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic."

Although it was announced on May 4, the Big Ten Mental Health and Wellness Cabinet was initially established in December 2019 by Warren to promote optimal mental health for student-athletes. It consists of 31 individuals representing a wide range of disciplines, including mental health educators, medical doctors, faculty athletic representatives and senior woman administrators. The cabinet members will take a comprehensive, systemic and interdisciplinary approach to establishing mental health programs while also providing counsel, advice and expertise to the Big Ten office, according to the conference.

"I think the work the Big Ten Conference is doing with regard to mental health initiatives is incredibly important," said Ohio State head football coach Ryan Day. "Forming a Mental Health and Wellness Cabinet is a reflection of the conference's leadership, engagement and support for mental health initiatives. These efforts will help bring much-needed attention and awareness to the subject of mental health."

Michigan HC Harbaugh Calls For Draft-Eligibility Changes

Michigan head football coach Jim Harbaugh has never been afraid to speak his mind, and he did just that in an open letter to the NFL and NCAA.

Harbaugh is urging the organizations to change their rules so that college football players can enter the NFL draft at any point during their college career, with the option to return to school if they aren't drafted.

Harbaugh's proposal would require an agreement between the NFL and the NFL Players' Association to change the rule that players must be three years removed from high school to be draft-eligible. His plan would also need the NCAA to tweak football eligibility rules to be more like basketball, which allows underclassmen to return to school after the draft within certain guidelines.

"By my 30th birthday, I was blessed and fortunate to have played professional football for seven years and accumulated enough money to put my family in a good place, with a degree that presented opportunities outside of football as well," Harbaugh wrote. "While that was great for me and can be for many current football athletes, it may not be best for all. There are 'early bloomers,' capable of competing in the NFL and earning a livelihood at an earlier age. The goal would be to create a scenario that makes adjustments for all current and future student-athletes that puts the timeline for transition to professional football at their discretion and that of their family. I propose an option that allows them to make the decision that is best for them."

Harbaugh is not the first to question the NFL's eligibility rules. Former Ohio State running back Maurice Clarett filed a lawsuit seeking to lower the age restriction, but he was denied by a federal appeals court in 2004.

Whether Harbaugh's proposal gains traction remains to be seen, but the outspoken coach will at least pressure the rule makers to consider change. In the summer of 2019, Harbaugh frequently supported a free one-time transfer for all college athletes without the need to sit out a year, and the NCAA is now seriously considering the idea.

Harbaugh also proposed a five-year eligibility clock for football players, removing the need for a redshirt and lifting the hard cap of 25 incoming recruits and transfers per year. He said he wants to give players and their



OHIO STATE WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL/TWITTER

PUTTING MENTAL WELLNESS FIRST – Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren, pictured with Ohio State women's volleyball director of operations Caitlin Insana (left) and head coach Jen Flynn Oldenburg, recently announced a conference-wide initiative to promote mental health among coaches and student-athletes.

families more freedom to seek advice from agents.

According to the proposal, every student-athlete who goes pro early would be "entitled to complete his degree" during or after his NFL careers at the expense of the school.

"The proposal described above would allow the individual to pursue his dream as a student and as a professional athlete in the time frame that best suits his best interests of his own free will and ability," Harbaugh wrote.

Charges Against Former MSU President Dismissed

A judge dismissed criminal charges against former Michigan State University President Lou Anna Simon arising from the Larry Nassar sexual assault scandal.

Simon was ordered to trial in 2019 on charges that she had lied to police about her knowledge of a sexual misconduct complaint against Nassar, who was a campus doctor and is serving decades in prison. However, Eaton County Judge John Maurer dismissed the case.

The charges against Simon centered on a 2018 interview with investigators who wanted to know exactly what Michigan State officials knew about complaints regarding Nassar in the years prior to when it came to light.

Authorities said Simon knew in 2014 that Nassar had been accused of molesting a patient at a campus clinic and that she knew of the nature of the complaint. Simon insisted that she knew only that a complaint had been filed against a sports doctor, and not the nature of it, however.

"The prosecution did not provide evidence sufficient to give a reasonable person probable cause to believe that Dr. Simon knew during her 2018 interview that her purported knowledge in 2014 of Dr. Nassar's name and the 'nature' and 'substance' of the complaint against him" were relevant to the 2018 investigation, Judge Maurer said.

Simon resigned as Michigan State president in January 2018, hours after Nassar was sentenced to prison following days of testimonies from his victims.

Former PSU Standout Barkley Provides COVID-19 Assistance

Saquon Barkley, who is best known as one of the top running backs in the NFL, used his status to help an important cause amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The former Nittany Lion standout teamed up with the FedEx Company to help deliver critical medical supplies to health care workers on the front lines of the crisis in the New York and New Jersey metropolitan area.

"(FedEx) responded by working around the clock to deliver critical medical supplies to the healthcare community, delivering over four million masks, over one million pieces of protective equipment," Barkley said on SiriusXM NFL Radio's Opening Drive. "It's especially needed during this time."

Barkley's home state of New York and the neighboring state of New Jersey, where the Giants organization is based, have been the two hardest-hit states in the United States by the pandemic.

As of May 17, New York had over 350,000 confirmed cases, with 22,619 deaths, while New Jersey had 146,000 confirmed cases, with 10,356 deaths.

This is not Barkley's first experience with FedEx and the FedEx Cares charity. He won 2018 FedEx Ground Player of The Year, beating out finalists Ezekiel Elliot and Todd Gurley, as a rookie.

FedEx donated a total of \$40,000 in the names of Barkley and fellow winner Patrick Mahomes to USO, which is a military support organization dedicated to connecting service members and their families to family, home and country throughout their service time.

Locksley Lands Alabama's Tagovailoa In Maryland

Head coach Mike Locksley and Maryland picked up a key transfer in former Alabama quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa.

The former Crimson Tide signal caller entered the transfer portal on May 8, and he found his new home with the Terrapins on May 15.

"Thank you to Coach (Nick) Saban & The great U of A staff for giving me an opportunity

to stay in sweet home Alabama my first year in college,” Tagovailoa posted on Twitter. “This decision has not been easy and has been prayed on nonstop.”

Tagovailoa is the younger brother of former Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, who was selected fifth overall in the 2020 NFL draft by the Miami Dolphins. Locksley coached Tua at Alabama during his time as Crimson Tide offensive coordinator, and while he did not coach Taulia, the family knows Locksley well.

“Taulia has outstanding field vision and excellent pocket awareness,” Locksley said in a statement. “He’s a twitchy passer that has the ability to make and extend plays in and outside of the pocket because of his above-average athleticism. Taulia has terrific touch and trajectory on his throws and delivers the ball with above-average accuracy. He’s a highly competitive player that will bring great competition to a good quarterback room.”

The younger Tagovailoa was the nation’s No. 180 overall prospect and No. 5 pro-style quarterback in the 2018 class. Taulia played in five games last season for Alabama, completing 9 of 12 passes for 100 yards and one touchdown.

Because he competed in more than four games, Taulia did not preserve his redshirt and has three years of eligibility remaining. The Alabaster (Ala.) Thompson product will need to receive a waiver in order to play in 2020.

The addition of Taulia helps bolster a Terrapin quarterback room that lost Max Bortenschlager and Tyrrell Pigrome to the transfer portal. Maryland had only 2019 primary starter Josh Jackson and Lance LeGendre, who was in the 2019 class, left on the roster.

Jackson, who has one year of eligibility remaining, played in 10 games last season for Maryland, which did not add a quarterback in the 2020 class.

Adding Taulia helps with depth if nothing else, especially because the Terps lack a 2021 commit at quarterback as well.

In 2019, Maryland quarterbacks combined for a 32.9 total quarterback rating, which was the second worst among Power Five teams, ahead of only Northwestern.

Illinois Adds Miami (Fla.) Transfer WR Hightower

Brian Hightower, a former four-star 2018 wide receiver prospect from Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy, announced his decision to transfer to Illinois from Miami (Fla.).

The 6-3, 210-pound wideout reeled in eight receptions for 88 yards last season for the Hurricanes.

Coming out of IMG Academy, Hightower was a consensus four-star prospect, ranking No. 154 among all recruits and No. 27 among wide receivers for 2017. He chose Miami over scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Florida, Michigan, Notre Dame, Ohio State and Southern California.

Unless Hightower receives a transfer waiver, he must sit out the next football season with two years of playing eligibility remaining.

“I’ve been in the dark, but I promise you’ll see a brighter me,” Hightower posted on Twitter after announcing the move.

Former Michigan WR Black Transfers To Texas

Former Michigan wide receiver Tarik Black announced his transfer to Texas, giving former Ohio State coaches Tom Herman, who is Texas’ head coach, and Mike Yurcich, who is the Longhorns’ offensive coordinator, a weapon to use in the passing game.

Black was the nation’s No. 116 overall recruit and No. 15 wide receiver in the 2017 class when he came out of Cheshire (Conn.)

Academy. The 6-3, 215-pound wideout spent three seasons in maize and blue, though two of them were plagued by injuries.

In 21 appearances and nine starts, Black hauled in 40 receptions for 507 yards and two touchdowns. As a graduate transfer, Black is immediately eligible and could even apply for a medical waiver to gain another season of eligibility in 2021.

“Tarik is a big target, an athletic receiver and a player who has displayed the ability to catch the ball in traffic,” Herman said. “He has competed against a lot of tremendous players in the Big Ten and at Michigan for three years, so he brings a great deal of knowledge and experience to our team. Tarik is a really talented player who will be a valuable veteran influence and can bring added leadership to our wide receiver room.”

Former Indiana RB Walker Headed To Virginia

Former Indiana running back Ronnie Walker will return to his home state to continue his college career, transferring to Virginia. The Hopewell, Va., native will have to sit out the 2020 season because of his transfer, but he will have two years of eligibility left for the Cavaliers.

The 5-11, 210-pound tailback played in 22 games for the Hoosiers, working primarily as a backup but helping in third-down situations. Walker did not want to sit third on the Hoosier depth chart behind junior Stevie Scott and sophomore Sampson James.

Walker, who was the nation’s No. 19 running back in the 2018 class, rushed for 221 yards and two touchdowns on 59 carries during his Indiana career. He also snagged 12 catches for 112 yards and one touchdown.

Nebraska QB Vedral Transfers To Rutgers

Rutgers added another player through the transfer portal in former Nebraska and UCF quarterback Noah Vedral, who is a graduate transfer with two years of eligibility left.

Vedral started two games in 2019 for the Cornhuskers, and he replaced injured starter Adrian Martinez during a victory against Northwestern.

The Wahoo (Neb.) Bishop Neumann product followed Scott Frost to Nebraska from UCF, where he began his college career and appeared in eight games for the Knights in

2017. Vedral received an immediate-eligibility waiver for the Cornhuskers and appeared in one game in 2018.

On his career, Vedral has totaled 723 passing yards and one score, along with 196 rushing yards and six touchdowns on the ground.

The 6-1, 200-pound signal caller will compete with Scarlet Knight sophomores Johnny Langan and Artur Sitkowski for Rutgers’ starting quarterback job.

“I am all in!” Vedral posted on Twitter. “Can’t wait to join the F.A.M.I.L.Y. and get to work!”

Michigan QB Battle ‘Dead Even,’ ‘Nowhere Near Front-Runner’

Michigan football is “nowhere near having a front-runner” in its starting quarterback battle, according to offensive coordinator Josh Gattis.

In a zoom meeting with reporters, Gattis addressed the quarterback competition between the Wolverines’ returning scholarship quarterbacks Dylan McCaffrey, Joe Milton and Cade McNamara.

“They’re all dead even,” Gattis said. “There’s nobody out front. There’s nobody left behind. Each guy’s different. Each guy has a different strength and a different weakness than the other guys. So, it’s a really interesting battle, because we’ve got to be able to decide who is going to give us the best opportunity to win games. And I think they all three can give us opportunities to win games, and so we’re just going to have to catch them up.”

The Maize and Blue must replace Shea Patterson, who started every game the past two seasons. McCaffrey, a redshirt junior, served as Patterson’s backup for each of the last two seasons, while Milton, a redshirt sophomore, was third in line and McNamara redshirted this past season.

“We had one quarterback who was our starter,” Gattis said. “So, it doesn’t matter who was listed as the two, it doesn’t matter who was listed as the three. Shea Patterson was our quarterback. So, when you’re getting into what the listings are of backup guys, that’s totally irrelevant to this battle moving forward this year. Now we just have to be able to get the battle going once we get back.”

McCaffrey, who missed a large part of the season with a concussion, completed 10 of 20 passes for 116 yards and one touchdown while rushing for 67 yards and one score on

13 attempts in 2019.

Milton played in just three games, where he completed 3 of 7 passes for 59 yards with one touchdown and one interception while adding 16 yards and one score on the ground.

Maryland Basketball Adds Alabama Transfer Smith

The Maryland men’s basketball team signed forward Galin Smith, who transferred from Alabama with one year of eligibility left.

The 6-9 forward started 20 of the 94 games he played in during the past three seasons for the Crimson Tide, shooting 56.4 percent and averaging 12.8 minutes per game for his career.

“Maryland fans can expect to see hunger, passion and effort from me every time I step foot on the court,” Smith said in a statement.

The Terrapins expect Smith to help fill the void left by forward Jalen Smith, who entered the NBA draft following a breakout sophomore season.

“Galín is exactly what we were looking for in a veteran five-man with great strength and size,” Maryland head coach Mark Turgeon said. “He is an experienced post player who will help us right away. He can score and defend effectively in the low post and has the ability to get out on the break.”

Maryland Women’s Hooper Mikesell Transfers To Oregon

Taylor Mikesell, who was a guard on the Maryland women’s basketball team, announced her intent to transfer to Oregon for her final two years of collegiate eligibility.

“Everything happens for a reason. Go Ducks,” Mikesell wrote on Twitter.

The former Terrapin guard won Big Ten Freshman of the Year honors in 2018-19 after averaging 13.4 points and 3.3 assists per game. Mikesell also earned All-Big Ten accolades while shooting 41.1 percent from beyond the arc in 34.7 minutes per contest.

Mikesell, who hails from Massillon (Ohio) Jackson, improved her three-point stroke to 42.5 percent as a sophomore in 2019-20. She played fewer minutes (29.8), though, but still managed to average 11.2 points and 2.3 assists per game.

Mikesell has not graduated from Maryland, meaning she will not qualify to play immediately without a waiver from the NCAA, though it is expected she will play for one.

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Getting Read On 2020 Season Proving Difficult

So here we are, in mid-May, just under four months away from the 2020 college football season. And already decisions are being made that could have a major impact on said football season.

The Pac-12 has discussed potentially dropping nonconference games and going to a conference-only schedule for 2020. That would not only fundamentally alter the season and the College Football Playoff chase, it would greatly affect Ohio State.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

The Buckeyes are slated to travel to Oregon to face the Ducks in one of the top nonleague matchups of the 2020 campaign. Oregon's lethal defense against Ohio State's potent offense is a matchup anyone would love to see, and there's no doubt that the winning team would be in good shape for a berth in the CFP. The Buckeyes are one of a few legit contenders for the national championship, so getting rid of the Oregon game could be a major blow to a team that won't have a ton of opportunities to prove just how good it is, as the Big Ten schedule doesn't offer much resistance.

If the Oregon game isn't played, some radical tweaking would need to be done.

And substituting Northwestern for Rutgers is not going to provide the kind of bump or legitimacy the Buckeyes might need if they want to secure a spot in the CFP.

The fact that schools are making decisions now seems a bit foolish. Considering that the overwhelming fear and dread over deaths from COVID-19 has been overblown and considering that high school and college kids are in the lowest risk group, to decide now that games in September shouldn't be played is presumptuous.

It was noted in an Arizona Republic article that a final decision from the Pac-12 won't come for another six to eight weeks, but the very fact that things are being projected so far into the future, when the methodology of the pandemic has been questionable at best, seems like overkill.

The Big Ten is on the same timeline, with commissioner Kevin Warren outlining a structure during an interview with CNBC on May 6th.

"I'm looking to be in a position in the next six to eight weeks to see if we will have sports in the fall," he said. "But even bigger than sports in the fall is we're collectively focusing on what we need to do to have school in the fall. If we don't have school in the fall, we don't have sports in the fall."

Nearly all schools nationwide moved to online learning for their students, and that would appear to be a viable option for the upcoming fall term. So, to posit that there might not be school in the fall is just silly. There will be school – maybe not the tradi-

tional, on-campus version, but it will take place. There is too much money involved for colleges to simply cancel upcoming semesters and quarters.

Should the unthinkable happen, you will see many universities begin cutting costs by slashing Olympic sports. It's already been done at Bowling Green, which is dropping baseball, and Akron, which slashed women's tennis, men's golf and men's cross country. With no money coming in in the fall, other schools will almost certainly follow suit.

In contrast, much of the SEC is having assistants return to work in early June, with players expected to follow shortly after.

Think about this – players could actually be safer and better protected under direct supervision of coaches, trainers and nutritionists than they would be on their own. Isolating the players by having them and the entire football staff stay in one location for the balance of the season would have them come in contact with fewer people, and the school would control the environment. That would mean an immaculate weight room and practice facility. It would allow for rigorous and daily testing of athletes and coaches, without a worry of coming into contact with people outside who could have symptoms of COVID-19. Travel might be a bit tricky, but charter flights that taxi into university airports would minimize the number of people a team would encounter. And without fans in the stands – a harsh reality but one that would need to be done, at least early in the season – the

regular gameday routine could be followed without much worry.

The Big Ten has placed a moratorium on organized team activities through June 1, as well as placing a hold on recruiting activities. The NCAA is expected to mandate teams have six weeks of training/preseason practice before opening the season, so the league would need its teams to reconvene by roughly July 23. That would leave six weeks before the league's first game, Sept. 3, when Minnesota takes on Florida Atlantic. Those six weeks would be very important in light of the fact that nearly every Big Ten team had no or very limited spring practice.

In a perfect world we would have an uninterrupted, full scale football season. Right now, we just don't know whether that will happen. An alternative is to go to conference-only – not optimum, but better than nothing. Having no football in the fall is an absolute last option for many and really shouldn't be thought of until or unless there is absolutely no way around it.

You know how the weather folks always have their models, the ones that predict intense storms? They say that you shouldn't make plans for this day because it's going to get dicey – only the storm never happens. It may change course, may fizzle out, whatever. That's what all of this talk about football season is right now.

It would be best for schools to focus on the now, and the very near projections, rather than planning for something that may not happen.



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"Your Head to Toe Buckeye Source"

Draft Dominated By College Football Blue Bloods

Opening night of the 2020 NFL draft was a glorious time for the Buckeyes and the Crimson Tide.

Counting Ohio State graduate/LSU Heisman winner Joe Burrow, the first three players chosen were from Ohio State. Four of the first five were from Ohio State or Alabama, five of the first 10, six of the first 12, seven of the first 15, and eight of the first 19.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

It cemented the notion of where the best players these days choose to play college football and are molded into NFL talent.

Four Buckeye recruits – Burrow, Chase Young, Jeff Okudah, Damon Arnette – were considered by NFL teams to be among the 19 best players available. Add to that Tua Tagovailoa, Jedrick Wills, Henry Ruggs and Jerry Jeudy from Alabama, and you have eight of the top 19 from just two schools.

Remember, there are 64 schools in the five major conferences and 130 playing in the top division level for college football. Plus, a handful of others are chosen each year from lower-division schools.

Yet four of the top five players and eight of

the top 19 were part of two programs – Ohio State and Alabama. Great work by Nick Saban and Urban Meyer on the recruiting and development trails.

But what's good for a couple of schools is not necessarily good for college football. This year's NFL draft was the latest example of how concentrated the talent has become in college football. Or put another way, how uncompetitive the sport has become for so many schools.

Toss Notre Dame into the mix of those from the Power Five conferences and there are 65 schools theoretically that should be in the mix for the national championship over a given period of time. But in reality, how many really are in the mix? The playoff tells us not many.

Four schools have gobbled up 17 of the 24 slots for the first six playoffs: Alabama (5), Clemson (5), Oklahoma (4) and Ohio State (3). Seven other schools have been there once each – Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oregon and Washington.

It seems that during the playoff era, things have become more concentrated – perhaps a result of more of the top recruits becoming more focused on choosing a school that repeatedly is in the playoffs. But are we being fooled by recent memory, forgetting the past?

The graybeards among us certainly recall the days of the 1970s of the Big Two in the Big Ten. Those seasons were almost waiting games to the end, waiting for Ohio State to play Michigan for the Big Ten title, Oklahoma

and Nebraska in the Big Eight, USC and UCLA in the Pac-12. Then came along the years of domination by the three Florida schools – Miami, Florida and Florida State.

So, I decided to use the NFL draft as a test for this playoff era to other periods of time.

I lumped the last five drafts together (2016 through 2020 for the most recent). To keep things consistent from one era to the next, I looked at the top 25 players taken each year (the number of first-rounders or total picks have changed over time). For a five-year period, this means 125 picks. And I counted just the player's last school, so Burrow is counted only under LSU, not Ohio State.

Nearly one out of every four top-25 picks in the last five drafts has been from Ohio State (15) or Alabama (14) – 29 of the 125 overall picks. Five schools accounted for 48 of the top 125, adding in picks from Clemson (8), LSU (6) and Oklahoma (5).

The 29 players from just two schools illustrate the domination Saban and Meyer held in the recruiting and development game. (Early indications are that Ryan Day will continue it at Ohio State.)

Breaking the last half-century of college football into five-year segments, I couldn't find another time when two schools had so many players taken in the top 25.

The closest was in 2001-05 when there were 26 picks from two schools.

Here's how it broke down

2016-20 – 29 between Ohio State (15) and Alabama (14).

2011-15 – 20 between Alabama (13) and Texas A&M (7).

2006-10 – 14 between the top two among Florida, USC and Ohio State with seven each.

2001-05 – 26 between Miami (18) and Texas (8).

1996-2000 – 17 between Florida State (9) and Ohio State (8).

1991-95 – 15 between Notre Dame (8) and either Tennessee (7) or Colorado (7).

1986-90 – 13 between Miami (7) and Florida (6).

1981-85 – 18 between USC (10) and Pitt (8).

1976-80 – 12 between the top two among Texas, USC and Alabama with six each.

1971-75 – 17 between Ohio State (10) and USC (7).

It will be interesting to see if this recent trend continues, with the top few schools accounting for more and more of the very top picks in the NFL draft.

50-Year Look Back

Over the last half-century, Ohio State has had more top-25 picks than any other school, with a total of 58 from 1971 through the 2020 draft. (This doesn't include supplemental draft picks such as Cris Carter.) USC is second with 54, followed by Alabama (51), Miami (47), Florida (41), Florida State (38), Notre Dame (33) and Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas with 30 each.

Next best in the Big Ten are Penn State with 28, though this includes picks before PSU was in the conference, as well as 28 from Michigan, followed by Iowa (18) and Michigan State (17). In other words, Michigan, Iowa and MSU combined to have 63 vs. 58 for OSU alone.

For total picks in any round over the last 50 drafts, the top five are USC (310), Ohio State (303), Miami (272), Nebraska (266) and Notre Dame (265).

But several of those earlier drafts had many more rounds, finally reducing to seven rounds in 1994. For players chosen in the first seven rounds from 1971 through 2020, the top five are USC (254), Ohio State (248), Miami (224), and Florida and Alabama with 216.

Since Tressel's 2002 Title

Ohio State returned to the very elite of college football with the national championship in 2002, Jim Tressel's second year as head coach. The next draft was in 2003. Here's how the drafts add up from 2003 through 2020.

Top-25 picks – Alabama (30), Ohio State (24), LSU (19), USC (18), Florida (16) and Florida State (16). Next highest from the Big Ten were Iowa (10), Michigan (9) and Penn State (7).

Total picks – Ohio State (120), Alabama (118), LSU (115), USC (102), Florida (99). Next highest from the Big Ten were Michigan (78), Penn State (72), Iowa (69) and Wisconsin (69).

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Transfer Shines Spotlight On OSU's H-Position

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

This is the honest truth. When Urban Meyer announced that he was retiring as Ohio State's football coach, one of my first thoughts was that we wouldn't be hearing about which Buckeye would be the next Percy Harvin anymore. Harvin played "H-back," a hybrid position that allows for a player to both run and catch the football, for Meyer at Florida, and the coach brought the position to Columbus with him when he arrived in 2012.

Harvin played three years for Meyer in Gainesville and helped the Gators win two national championships before heading off to an eight-year career in the NFL. As a freshman he played against the Buckeyes in the 2006 title game, and though he didn't dominate, he showed his versatility with five carries for 22 yards and a score and nine receptions for 60 yards, part of a first-year effort that ended with 41 carries for 428 yards (10.4 average) and 34 receptions for 427 yards (12.6 average).

In his three years, Harvin's production was incredibly balanced with 1,852 yards on the ground for a 9.5-yard average and 19 scores and 1,929 yards receiving, good for 14.5 yards a catch and 13 scores.

Almost like clockwork, heading into each season, Meyer would dub some fleet and versatile Buckeye the next Harvin at the Buckeyes' version of the H. Dontre Wilson had some success there, as did Jalin Marshall. It was a perfect position for a lame-armed Braxton Miller, who carried 42 times for 260 yards and his famous spin move for a touch-down and caught 26 passes for 341 yards and three scores in 2015.

But the only Buckeye who really approached Harvin-like numbers was Curtis Samuel, who came to Ohio State as a running back but became Meyer's next future Harvin and posted a huge year in 2016 with 97 carries for 771 yards (7.9 average) with eight scores and 74 catches for 865 yards (11.7 average) and another seven TDs. Samuel parlayed that season into a second-round selection by Carolina as a receiver, and he has been there ever since. He started 15 games in 2019 and caught 54 passes for 627 yards and six scores. In true H-back fashion, he added 19 carries for 130 yards.

This all came to mind for me when one of the more spirited threads on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum since we last published involved Jaelen Gill, who was recruited to Ohio State as a potential H-back and recently entered the transfer portal.

There was a camp that felt that Gill was misused at Ohio State and that he should have been a running back from his arrival. Trying to plug him in at the H-back was like trying to force a square peg in a round hole. Others said he was too small to be an Ohio State running back, while those who say he was misused said that if he had been a running back from the start, Gill, who arrived at OSU in 2018 listed at 6-0, 185, could have physically developed into the position.

Others pointed out – and no one seems to dispute this – that once Ryan Day came on board in 2017, the hybrid position was phased out and basically became a slot receiver position (K.J. Hill started there last year, with Gill listed as his backup, and caught 57 passes but carried just once), thus leaving Gill as a man with no position. The Gill backers again pointed out that he should have been working with the running backs and he would be contending for playing time now instead of transferring.

It was a lot of back-and-forth over a player who, though highly recruited, had a total body of Ohio State work of seven receptions for 62

yards, 32 of which came on an albeit dazzling catch late in the game against Rutgers last season. The debate became so lively that we ended up losing one of our best Forum posters over it, though he has been memorialized in an ongoing thread, kind of like being the first member of our Forum Hall of Fame.

In my 40 years on the Ohio State beat, I've seen all sorts of surefire recruits fizzle. I was never exactly sure how Gill's defenders were so completely confident that Gill would have thrived if he had simply been inserted as a running back upon his arrival on campus. Now, we will never know.

One person who might have known is former BSB staffer James Grega, who coached Gill when he was at Westerville (Ohio) South. Grega was fairly pragmatic about Gill's situation in a story that was posted on BuckeyeSports.com.

"I thought Jaelen was going to fit right in at Ohio State," Grega said. "I believed Urban Meyer's vaunted H-back position was going to be perfect for him, but when Ryan Day came in, the position that had seen Percy Harvin and Curtis Samuel thrive disappeared and became more of a traditional slot position. Offenses change and so does personnel. I thought he could still push for the slot receiver starting job this fall, but he ultimately decided he needed a change of scenery."

There are a couple of things I know. Coaches generally play the best players. And sometimes a player ends up playing at a position he didn't visualize when he was being recruited.

"As a coaching staff, we've made decisions on putting guys in position to be the most successful," said wide receivers coach Brian Hartline – who seems to have settled on Garrett Wilson as his choice in the slot – shortly before Gill's transfer announcement.

Mike Lanese, a receiver for the Buckeyes back in the '80s, was famously reluctant to move from tailback, where he had starred at Mayfield (Ohio) High School and where Keith Byars and John Wooldridge were firmly entrenched, to wide receiver, where the Buckeyes were thin.

"I was reluctant to move, I guess primarily because that was my position for so many years," Lanese told BSB heading into his junior season of 1984. "I hadn't done anything else. There was some ego involved. That tailback position is glamorous, particularly at Ohio State."

"My body frame is more suited to receiver, I think," the 6-0, 190-pounder conceded. "You take a beating at running back."

"I think the coaches wanted me at receiver. Sometimes they see things better than you do. They step back and see things objectively. I'm happy now. I think I've found my niche."

He proved himself correct about finding his niche when he made a pivotal reception to help defeat Michigan and send the Buckeyes to the Rose Bowl that 1984 season.

It seems Gill was left with two choices heading into this season. Battle for time as a receiver or transfer. He chose the latter. Sometimes a change of scenery works wonders for a player. Sometimes it doesn't.

Will Gill be the next Joe Burrow or the next Tate Martell?

Time will tell. I am sure all Buckeye fans will be rooting for him.

Big Name On 1973 Defense

Our Patrick Mayhorn has been doing an interesting ongoing feature called "Throwback Film Study," where he breaks down game film for classic Ohio State games.

As of press time he had done the 1958 Rose Bowl, the 1969 Rose Bowl, the 1974 Rose Bowl, the 1981 Ohio State-Stanford game and the 1984 Ohio State-Illinois game on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com. Aside from Patrick's insightful analysis, these features are worth checking out for the highlight clips alone.

I particularly enjoyed the 1974 Rose Bowl, with the requisite clips of Archie Griffin. Through the years, I've seen many clips of the two-time Heisman Trophy winner, so the clips of his exploits did not surprise me. But there is a burst from Big Pete Johnson on which he looks more like a fleet tailback than a rumbling fullback, and I was really impressed with the play of Cornelius Greene. There is one intricate play that I had to watch several times to see Greene actually hand a ball off to Brian Baschnagel.

This team, which beat USC 42-21, was so ground-oriented that future longtime Buckeye assistant coach Fred Pagac led the team with nine receptions on the season. Ironically, four of those grabs came in the Rose Bowl, and Patrick captures two of them.

This "Throwback" caused us to dig into the BSB archives for stories on that 1973 team, dubbed the 18th-best college team of all time among USA Today's recent top 150 college teams, for our BuckeyeSports.com Reprint Thursday, with the stories posted on May 7. That Buckeye team came within a 10-10 tie with Michigan of being national champions, finishing 10-0-1, and its calling card, despite all the running production, was defense.

In fact, the 1973 Buckeyes allowed just 20 points total in their first eight games. In comparison, the 2019 Buckeyes, lauded (and rightfully so) for their defense, gave up more points than that in their season opener against Florida Atlantic (21).

This impressive defensive feat caused me to check on just who was on the 1973 Ohio State defense. Among the defenders on that team were linebackers Vic Koegel and Rick Middleton, defensive lineman Van DeCree and defensive backs Neal Colzie, Tim Fox and Steve Luke. But the leader of the pack was none other than senior linebacker Randy Gradishar, who totaled 134 tackles and a pair of interceptions.

This led me to do a little research on Gradishar, who went on to a successful NFL career after being selected by Denver in the first round of the 1974 draft. He spearheaded the famed Orange Crush defense that helped the Broncos to their first Super Bowl appearance (XII) following the 1977 season. While he is a member of the College Football Hall of Fame, did you know that Gradishar is not a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, just 63 miles from his hometown of Champion, near Warren, Ohio?

I was surprised by this omission and became even more so after doing a little research into Gradishar's professional accomplishments.

He played in the NFL for 10 years (1974-83), all with the Broncos. In that time, he was All-Pro six times, All-AFC seven times and selected for the Pro Bowl seven times. He was the NFL Defensive Player of the year in 1978.

"If you ask me to name the five best line-

backers I played against, or had a chance to cover in my broadcasting career, Randy Gradishar would be on that list," said Merlin Olsen, a longtime NFL player and broadcaster and a Hall of Fame member himself. "There is no question about his credentials. Randy Gradishar belongs in the Hall of Fame."

Pro Football Weekly's Joel Buchsbaum acknowledged Gradishar's credentials and attempted to explain why he might not be enshrined in Canton.

"Maybe the smartest and most underrated ever," Buchsbaum said of Gradishar. "Had rare instincts, was faster than (Pittsburgh Hall of Fame linebacker Jack) Lambert and very effective in short-yardage and goal-line situations. The fact he is not in the Hall of Fame is a shame and may be attributed to the fact he was a sure tackler but not a lights-out hitter or look-at-me type of player."

However, running back Tony Dorsett, another Hall of Famer, might beg to disagree. In "The Truly Great," a book by Rick Korch, Dorsett recalled a 1980 game with Dallas against the Broncos and a hit by Gradishar.

"I ran a pass pattern and was wide open, but Danny White did not see me," Dorsett recalled. "I go back to the huddle and tell Danny that I am wide open. I ran the same route again but this time I was almost decapitated. My eyes were only partially open when I hit the ground. Trainers and doctors came running onto the field. They thought I was dead. Hey, I thought I was dead, too."

And in case there was any question, in 1981 Sport Magazine named Gradishar one of the top five hardest hitters in the NFL, quoting him as saying: "The chance for a real good shot comes very seldom, but when it's there I take full advantage of it."

I will be watching to see who is selected for the Pro Football Hall of Fame next year.

Veteran Buckeye Fans

Buckeye Sports Bulletin continues to offer a free year of Buckeye Sports Bulletin to any Buckeye fan who is 100 or older. Recently checking in were Don Hodge and Herman Hartman.

Mr. Hodge turned 100 in April. His all-time favorite OSU athlete is Tippy Dye.

"I met him and his wife at a baseball game when I was getting my degree under the G.I. Bill and he was the basketball coach," said Hodge, who now lives in Knoxville, Tenn. "He had been a tough little guy on the football field in his day."

Mr. Hartman, who now lives in Florida, was born in September of 1919. He recalls coming up from the Lancaster, Ohio, area as a youth to watch his favorite player, Wes Fesler, who would later coach the Buckeyes. Mr. Hartman's favorite Ohio State coach, however, is Woody Hayes.

If you or a Buckeye fan you know have reached the 100-year plateau, send us your/their name, address and birth date, along with your/their all-time favorite Buckeye and we will add a year to existing subscriptions or start a new one. The promotion is in response to our Reverse Green Bananas Special, where readers pay by their age and all readers except those 100 or older save. If you want to take advantage of the Reverse Green Bananas Special, you can subscribe or renew for up to three years at the price of your age. If you are 52, for instance, you pay \$52 per year, a 47.95 savings over the regular rate.

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FOR ATHLETES

**HEADS UP
CONCUSSION
IN YOUTH SPORTS**

**HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE
A CONCUSSION?**

You may have a concussion if you have any of these symptoms after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body:

- Get a headache
- Feel dizzy, sluggish or foggy
- Be bothered by light or noise
- Vomit or feel sick to your stomach
- Have trouble focusing or problems remembering
- Feel more emotional or problems remembering
- Feel more emotional or "down"
- Feel confused
- Have problems with sleep



**HOW CAN I
HELP MY TEAM?**

PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

Avoid hits to the head and follow the rules for safe and fair play to lower your chances of getting a concussion. Ask your coaches for more tips.

BE A TEAM PLAYER

You play an important role as part of a team. Encourage your teammates to report their symptoms and help them feel comfortable taking the time they need to get better.

Concussion symptoms usually show up right away, but you might not notice that something "isn't right" for hours or days. A concussion feels different to each person, so it is important to tell your parents and doctor how you are feeling.

The information provided in this document or through linkages to other sites is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for concussion should be directed to a physician or other health care provider.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention