

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 40, No. 2

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 3, 2020



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

BACK AT IT – On Sept. 16, a little more than a month after the Big Ten decided to postpone fall sports until the spring amid the coronavirus pandemic, the conference announced plans to resume the football season the weekend of Oct. 24.

Big Ten Reverses Course, Will Begin 2020 Football Season In Late October

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

Ohio State will have the chance to compete for a national championship this fall after the Big Ten announced on Sept. 16 that its council of university presidents and chancellors had voted unanimously to resume the 2020 football season the weekend of Oct. 24.

The decision to reverse course came a little more than one month after the Big Ten announced on Aug. 11 that it was postponing fall sports until the spring amid the coronavirus pandemic. Commissioner Kevin Warren subsequently said the conference would not reconsider, as well, but the Big Ten received substantial backlash from players, coaches, parents, fans and the media for its lack of transparency regarding the decision, particularly as the ACC,

Big 12 and SEC each moved forward with their respective seasons.

With the College Football Playoff also announcing it would hold its semifinal and championship games as scheduled, pressure continued to mount for the Big Ten. But things changed drastically when the council of presidents and chancellors met remotely with the conference's return to competition task force on Sept. 13 to discuss new testing programs that weren't available when the conference decided to postpone fall sports in mid-August.

During that meeting, the Big Ten's medical subcommittee – co-chaired by Ohio State team physician Dr. Jim Borchers and Penn State athletic director Sandy Barbour – presented the council with four new rapid-response antigen tests that would allow programs to conduct daily tests and decrease contact tracing. They also

shared the latest information about myocarditis, a viral inflammation of the heart muscle found in some people who have contracted and recovered from COVID-19.

The council, which also met with the conference's scheduling and television committees that afternoon, adopted stringent medical protocols and then unanimously voted to resume the season – a drastic turn of events from the initial 11-3 vote to postpone the season, with Iowa, Nebraska and Ohio State as the only schools wanting at that time to proceed with the planned conference-only season.

"Everyone associated with the Big Ten should be very proud of the groundbreaking steps that are now being taken to better protect the health and safety of the student-athletes and surround-

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Presidential Influence

Thank you, President Trump, for taking time out of your very busy schedule to call the Big Ten commissioner to implore him to let the kids play this fall. Until your call, he was not listening to the players, parents, coaches and fans. After you assured him in your call that you would provide the daily testing to allow for a safe return to the field, he finally began to listen and eventually change his mind. Thank you for pushing to #LetThemPlay!

**Gary Burkle
Hilliard, 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@buckeye-sports.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.

BUCKEYE SPORTS .COM

From The Message Board

With several new Buckeyes shedding their black stripes early in fall camp, we asked the readers on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as staff members, which freshman they think will make the biggest impact on the field this fall. Here are some of their responses:

"I would go with Julian Fleming at WR. I have watched his tapes and am excited to see him on the field. There is a lot of freshman talent coming in but Fleming is my pick. We certainly have some big talent at WR so there will be some good competition."

– **PeyoteBuck**

"I think Fleming is the 'safest' pick, but with depth at WR, it might be somebody else."

– **Terrier Buck**

"I've been hearing good things about Kourt Williams so I'm going to choose him! He's already being mentioned as a future captain so that's already high praise."

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

"Based on talent alone, my answer would be Fleming, Smith-Njigba or Gee Scott. Fleming is the highest-rated receiver to ever come to Ohio State, Smith-Njigba set the Texas state record for career receiving yards (though it was broken just hours later) and Scott physically looks like an NFL receiver. But with Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jameson Williams ahead of them on the depth chart and Kamryn Babb finally healthy, I'm not sure they'll be on the field in critical spots. With that, I'm going to echo Tiffin's sentiments and say Williams. I've heard nothing but good things about his approach to practice, and I think his versatility will allow him to make an impact at both safety – where there isn't much depth – and the Bullet position, where he can spell linebacker Pete Werner."

– **Andrew Lind, BSB**

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1985

Washington State came to Columbus on Sept. 28 with a bag full of offensive fireworks designed to tear the Ohio State defensive unit to shreds.

The Cougars, instead, got their fuses doused in the second and third quarters as the fourth-ranked Buckeyes put on their own show and went on to beat WSU 48-32.

"Washington State was just what we expected them to be – a very tough offensive football team," said OSU coach Earle Bruce. "They give you a lot of problems."

So it was only natural that the Buckeyes returned the favor. Ohio State's offense and defense so overwhelmed the Cougars in the second period with 28 points in the frame that WSU never recovered after the Buckeyes went to the locker room with a 35-17 lead.

30 Years Ago – 1990

John Cooper, offensive coordinator Jim Colletto and quarterbacks coach Ron Hudson insisted there would be no quarterback controversy at Ohio State in the 1990 season.

Greg Frey and Kent Graham weren't so sure.

In the aftermath of a 31-10 victory over Boston College, Frey and Graham seemed to be deadlocked for the Buckeyes' No. 1 quarterback position.

But Cooper, Colletto and Hudson said there would be nothing to equal the Mike Tomczak-Brent Offenbecher mini-battle of 1982 or the Art Schlichter-Rod Gerald major controversy of 1978.

"I never said anything about a quarterback controversy," Cooper said after giving Frey the hook for the first time ever and dividing the two quarterbacks' playing time approximately half and half during the 21-point victory.

"There's no controversy. You guys (reporters) aren't going to get me involved in that. We just need a lot of help, that's all. We're going to play a lot of players, including quarterbacks. Right now, our starter is Greg Frey, but we don't play again for two weeks."

25 Years Ago – 1995

Ohio State's nationally televised win over Notre Dame drew an overnight rating of 8.0 and a 20 share on ABC.

It was the largest regular-season college football rating since the 1994 SEC championship game, according to an ABC spokeswoman. With an 8.0 rating, the game was seen by about 7.6 million viewers.

On top of that, the game was also a sell-out and attracted an Ohio Stadium-record crowd of 95,537, eclipsing the old mark of 95,357 for the 1991 Iowa game, a 16-9 loss for the Buckeyes.

With the win over the Fighting Irish, the Buckeyes also saw a two-spot rise in the Associated Press poll, moving into a fifth-place tie with Southern California, as well as a one-spot rise to No. 5 in the USA Today/CNN poll and a pair of first-place votes.

20 Years Ago – 2000

There were a lot of dynamics surrounding Ohio State's Sept.

23 Big Ten opener with Penn State.

Although the Buckeyes were coming in off a 3-0 start, there were still plenty of questions that needed to be answered on both sides of the ball. OSU, certainly, wanted to make a better impression than it had a week earlier when it squeaked by Miami (Ohio) 27-16.

And, of course, this was Penn State which, despite its 1-3 record, was still the talent-rich, tradition-laden program built by venerable coach Joe Paterno that had humbled OSU 23-10 in 1999.

But after the dust had settled and a torrential downpour had fallen, the Buckeyes had put together their best effort of the season in smothering the Nittany Lions 45-6 before an Ohio Stadium-record crowd of 98,144 and a national television audience.

"We worked hard all week for this," said OSU defensive end Rodney Bailey. "If you look at the score, this is a game you figure would be your best game. But we still have a lot of work to be done."

15 Years Ago – 2005

Suffering the slings and arrows from hard-to-please fans and still smarting a bit from a 2004 loss in Iowa City, Ohio State made a statement Sept. 24 with a 31-6 home blowout of Iowa.

The Buckeyes piled up 530 yards of total offense against the Hawkeyes, breaking the 500-yard mark for the first time since 2003, and had a pair of players rush for more than 100 yards for the first time since 2000 in Troy Smith and Antonio Pittman.

The defense allowed less than 100 yards total to the Hawkeyes before a meaningless drive in the fourth quarter got Iowa over the century mark.

Still, the Buckeyes' statement could have been far bolder. Despite the offensive fireworks, Ohio State fumbled twice inside the Hawkeyes' 10-yard line and had a punt return for a touchdown by Ted Ginn Jr. nullified by a penalty.

Those three opportunities alone could have easily put OSU's scoring output in the 50s – a lofty perch that hadn't been visited since '02 – and several of the 105,225 fans in attendance let head coach Jim Tressel know how they felt with a lusty chorus of boos when he seemed to turn to a ball-control attack in the final stages of the game.

10 Years Ago – 2010

Ohio State touched off an unprecedented fireworks display Sept. 25 at Ohio Stadium, exploding for its highest point total in 60 years with a 73-20 blowout of nonconference foe Eastern Michigan.

The outburst represented the most points scored by the Buckeyes since an 83-21 win over Iowa in 1950 and eclipsed the highest total for any Tressel-coached team. The previous high in Tressel's previous 312 games as a head coach came during a 63-20 win over Alcorn State during Youngstown State's march to the 1994 Division I-AA national championship.

Tressel seemed a little sheepish when asked about the bloat-

ed point total against his outmanned opposition from the Mid-American Conference.

"Well, we got a fast start," he said. "We weren't looking to – you know we had a lot of opportunities. We moved the ball OK, but we didn't come in saying we were coming to go after X amount of points. I don't know how many times we punted. Once? But there have been times when we have not punted and not scored this many points."

Five Years Ago – 2015

With one-third of the regular season in the books and conference play on the horizon, Ohio State did not resemble the outfit that had embarrassed Wisconsin, dismissed Alabama and punished Oregon to win the national championship the previous season. A 38-12 home victory against Western Michigan on Sept. 26 was the latest example, although it was still a noticeable step up in quality from the previous week's crisis against Northern Illinois, a 20-13 win for the Buckeyes.

In the postgame interview room, Ohio State offensive coordinator Ed Warinner issued a refrain that had become a familiar one. That these Buckeyes were not the 2014 Buckeyes. But, more importantly, they were still miles away from what they could become.

"It's frustrating, because everybody assumed that after seven months you should just pick up where you left off, and that isn't the case," Warinner said. "There's new pieces on the coaching staff, there's new pieces on the offense and things change. You're never the same. You have to earn your way, and you have to develop a team. Every season is different. So nothing we did last year is helping win any games this year."

One Year Ago – 2019

It was supposed to be No. 5 Ohio State's first road test, but instead the Buckeyes made themselves at home to silence the red-clad crowd of 89,759 for the prime-time showdown at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb., on Sept. 28.

The Buckeyes, aided by three first-half interceptions that led to 17 points, rolled to a 38-0 halftime lead and pounded Nebraska 48-7.

Junior cornerback Jeff Okudah had two of the picks, his second and third in two games, and the combination of sophomore quarterback Justin Fields and junior running back J.K. Dobbins overwhelmed the Cornhuskers.

Fields was 15 of 21 for 212 yards and three touchdown passes and ran for 72 yards and a TD on 12 rushes for the Buckeyes. Dobbins had 114 of his 177 yards in the first half. Redshirt freshman Master Teague had 12 carries for 77 yards and two touchdowns.

"Our defense did a tremendous job," Fields said. "Our offense did a tremendous job. The O-line did tremendous and also the coaches with the play calling. We clicked on all cylinders today."

It's Back To Football For Big Ten, Ohio State



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2020-21 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 40)

No. 1	Sept. 19	No. 5	Nov. 14
No. 2	Oct. 3	No. 6	Nov. 28
No. 3	Oct. 17	No. 7	Dec. 12
No. 4	Oct. 31	No. 8	Dec. 26

The 2021 schedule will be determined based on the Big Ten's winter or spring schedule.

The next issue (Oct. 17 cover date) will be mailed on Oct. 15.

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Thirty-six days after announcing it had postponed the 2020 season due to concerns stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Big Ten reversed course and announced Sept. 16 that its 14 member schools would indeed play football this calendar year.

After the prerequisite amount of tut-tuts from worried health experts and columnists such as Christine Brennan of USA Today criticizing the decision, describing it as “the darkest day in Big Ten sports history,” the conference released its 2020 schedule with games to begin Oct. 24, including three-time defending champion Ohio State hosting Nebraska in a noon contest at Ohio Stadium.

With all due respect to the health experts, it appears the Big Ten has adopted some of the most stringent protocols for keeping athletes healthy and safe. Those protocols include daily antigen testing, with any player who tests positive being sidelined at least 21 days – after which they can return only upon approval from a cardiologist.

As for Brennan, well, I would humbly suggest she consult the victims of Jerry Sandusky, Larry Nassar and Richard Strauss. They might have a different view of what constitutes “the darkest day in Big Ten sports history.”

Hand-wringing and breathless hyperbole aside, this is going to be a college football season unlike any other in at least a century, and the Big Ten has already painted itself into a rather tight corner. The eight-game, all-conference schedule is to be played over the course of just eight weeks, leaving no room for error much less any possibility for makeup games that could arise from possible virus outbreaks.

There is also no room for error on the field if any team from the Big Ten expects to earn consideration for the College Football Playoff. With only an eight-game résumé to showcase, any conference team will likely have to go undefeated to qualify for the playoff tournament – and it wouldn't hurt if each victory was a decisive one.

Members of the ACC (including Clemson and one-year, free-agent rental Notre Dame) are scheduled to play 11 games while the Big 12 and SEC have slated 10 games each. Meanwhile, the Pac-12, which won't kick off its seven-game season until early November, has even less wiggle room than the Big Ten.

The CFP selection committee is scheduled to announce the football version of the Final Four on Dec. 20. Imagine the conundrum that might arise if the panel has to decide between a 10-1 Notre Dame team – whose only loss is to unbeaten Clemson – and an undefeated Ohio State, which can be 9-0 at best counting a win in the Big Ten Championship Game. Then imagine Alabama is upset in the SEC title game to finish at 10-1, and USC finishes 8-0 with a Pac-12 championship, and you understand the potential for utter chaos.

As for the Buckeyes, they're simply eager to prove last year's loss to Clemson in the playoff semifinal was a referee-fueled fluke, and that is why everyone from head coach Ryan Day and quarterback Justin Fields to a spirited bunch of players' parents led the charge against Big Ten powerbrokers to reinstate the season.

Let's face facts. There is one reason and one reason only why Ohio State players and coaches lusted so heartily for a 2020 season. They know they're loaded – on offense, at least – and to idly sit by while most of the rest of the nation's colleges and universities forged ahead with their football seasons seemed ludicrous.

Now, all the Buckeyes have to do is take care of business – not only on the field, but off it as well with such practices as wearing

masks and social distancing.

“This is a small sacrifice – not going to parties or hanging out with people,” Fields insisted when he talked with reporters via teleconference on Sept. 18. “A small sacrifice for a bigger reward. The COVID protocol, if you test positive you're out for at least 21 days (and) that's three games right there. You might as well sit the rest of the season out.”

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Fields and his teammates are ready to begin their pursuit of another title on Oct. 24 against Nebraska, a game that will be televised by Fox to a nationwide audience. A week later, OSU travels to Penn State to play the Nittany Lions, who must believe they are snake-bitten against the Buckeyes.

Penn State has lost three in a row and seven of its last eight to Ohio State – including kicking away golden opportunities by squandering late fourth-quarter leads in both 2017 and 2018. The Lions return eight starters on offense, including quarterback Sean Clifford, but only five on defense. That's never good news for a team going against an offense that possesses the kind of firepower at OSU's disposal.

After that, the Buckeyes really shouldn't break much of a sweat until they round out the regular season at Michigan State on Dec. 5 before returning home to host Michigan on Dec. 12. Since the 2001 season, Ohio State has a combined 29-5 record against the Spartans and Wolverines, and that includes an 11-1 mark since 2014.

Assuming all of the aforementioned goes according to plan, and no virus-related occurrences derail things, the Buckeyes can show up for an unprecedented fourth straight Big Ten Championship Game against Wisconsin (or maybe Minnesota) as the odds-on favorite to win another conference title and move on to the College Football Playoff.

OSU has won 11 of its last 12 meetings with the Badgers, including victories in the 2014, 2017 and 2019 conference title games, and is working on an 11-game win streak against the Golden Gophers.

Pro Wrestling Connection

You might think Buckeye Sports Bulletin shares very little in common with the world of professional wrestling, but you would be mistaken.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, when professional wrestling was at its peak in popularity, BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz served as ring announcer at several Midwest wrestling shows, including those staged by World Championship Wrestling. In those days, the WCW was every bit on par with the glitzier World Wrestling Federation (now the WWE) and was home to such stars as “The Nature Boy” Ric Flair, Ricky “The Dragon” Steamboat and “The American Dream” Dusty Rhodes as well as the tag team duo known as the Road Warriors.

The Road Warriors, also known as the Legion of Doom, featured a pair of muscular wrestlers named Hawk and Animal who entered the ring adorned in distinctive face paint and spiked shoulder pads – like something out of the 1981 film “Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior” which helped introduce

American audiences to a young actor named Mel Gibson.

Playing the role of Hawk was a former Minnesota butcher named Michael Hegstrand, while his partner, Animal, was Joseph Laurinaitis. If Animal's last name sounds familiar, it's because his son is former Ohio State linebacker James Laurinaitis.

With the exception of seeing him in the ring a couple of times over the years, I didn't have any contact with Joe Laurinaitis until he generously consented to an interview a couple of years ago for a book I was writing on Ohio State football. Rather than his grunting, snarling wrestling alter ego, Laurinaitis – who died Sept. 22 just 10 days after his 60th birthday – was a thoughtful family man whose pride in his son's accomplishments was unbridled.

In addition to stories about James, he recounted to me old stories including one when his son came face to face with one of wrestling's most popular champions.

“One time, I brought James and his hockey team down to the Civic Center one afternoon to watch some of the wrestling matches,” Laurinaitis said. “This is long before the show started, and the kids are down in the ring, wrestling around, and as I was sitting in the back, I looked around and who's there sipping a cup of coffee? Stone Cold Steve Austin.”

Austin, who was the hottest thing in professional wrestling at the time, casually nodded and made small talk with Laurinaitis before saying, “Hey, Joe. Is that your boy down there? Flick that switch right there.”

Suddenly, a spotlight hit the ring and the arena's loudspeakers belched the sound of breaking glass, signaling the beginning of Austin's theme song. As each of the other wide-eyed youngsters scrambled away to safety, Austin barreled into the ring, threw young James against the ropes and then administered what was known as the “Stone Cold Stunner.”

The stunner was Austin's patented finishing move in which he throws his opponent against the ropes, catches him by the neck on the rebound, and then twists himself around before dropping to his knees while the opponent's head is jammed into Austin's shoulder.

“I think all of my friends thought I was dead,” James Laurinaitis later said with a laugh.

The youngster wasn't afraid of the intimidating world champion wrestler because his father had schooled him in the finer points of how professional wrestling worked.

In addition to studying his father's professional wrestling moves, the son became a student of football at an early age.

“Since James could walk, I just knew there was something special about this kid,” his father said. “We would sit and watch football, and he would study every move. I used to say, ‘Watch those guys in the middle,’ and he would say, ‘Who are those guys, Daddy?’ I'd say, ‘Those are the linebackers,’ and he would just nod.”

Of course, James Laurinaitis went on to become a two-time Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year and three-time All-America linebacker at Ohio State before spending eight seasons in the NFL, mostly with the St. Louis Rams.

When he was a second-round draft choice by the Rams in 2009, father and son shared a moment that became forever etched in Joe Laurinaitis' memory.

“James says to me, ‘Dad, our dream is coming true.’ Well, I get choked up at that because it ain't our dream,” Joe Laurinaitis said. “I'm here living his dream, and to be able to live his dream and live it alongside him, that just makes it even better.”



Ohio State Won't Cut Any Sports

Despite a projected \$107 million deficit in the 2021 fiscal year for the athletic department, Ohio State announced on Sept. 23 that it will not be cutting any of its 36 varsity sports. The move serves as a break from the consensus in the athletics community, as several top departments including Iowa, Minnesota and Stanford have resorted to program cuts to mitigate losses related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our student-athletes are our primary responsibility," said athletics director Gene Smith. "They have and will continue to come first. We have put together a responsible and conservative budget for this fiscal year, which assumes full support for our student-athletes. In the midst of this devastating pandemic, we remain committed to providing a safe and excellent academic and athletic experience for all of our student-athletes."

Although Ohio State won't be cutting any programs, it is still set to make drastic cuts elsewhere to lower the deficit, while also adding media rights revenue from the Big Ten Conference, though those figures have yet to be determined.

Included in the budget restriction measures is the elimination of 25 full-time jobs within the department, 84 employees on 60-day furloughs, 10-day furloughs for 213 staffers, and five-day furloughs for 48 members of the training and strength and conditioning staff. Along with that, 47 staffers will be asked to take a 5 percent voluntary pay reduction between Oct. 1 and Jun. 30, 2021.

Included in that group is head football coach Ryan Day, as well as men's and women's head basketball coaches Chris Holtmann and Kevin McGuff.

"Like our colleagues in the Big Ten, and across the country, intercollegiate athletics at Ohio State will have to significantly adjust as the pandemic will have a long-term impact," Smith said. "We will implement a long-term deficit recovery plan but will continue to focus on serving our student-athletes at the highest level."

Fall Olympic Sports Moving To Spring

Ohio State will follow the NCAA's lead and move its fall Olympic sports into the spring of 2021 to align with the new fall Olympic championship dates, as the university announced on Sept. 19.

"Ohio State's additional fall sports – men's and women's cross country, men's and women's soccer, field hockey and volleyball – are planning for a spring season consistent with the NCAA decision to move their championships to the spring," an OSU statement reads. "Updates regarding Big

Ten fall sports other than football, as well as winter sports that begin in the fall including men's and women's basketball, men's hockey, men's and women's swimming and diving and wrestling, will be announced at a later date."

This comes after the NCAA announced on Aug. 13 that it would not be conducting fall championships this fall, citing safety concerns and a desire to focus on conducting full seasons for winter and spring programs that had their championships canceled in the spring.

"We cannot now, at this point, have fall NCAA championships because there's not enough schools participating," NCAA president Mark Emmert said. "The Board of Governors said, 'If you don't have half of the schools playing a sport, you can't have a legitimate championship.'... sadly, tragically, that's going to be the case this fall, full stop."

"I've been talking to all the commissioners in Division I, and there are ways to do this. I'm completely confident that we can figure this out. If schools and conferences want to move forward, let's do it. We can use the fall to keep kids healthy, keep them engaged with their coaches and their athletic departments, focus on their academic success, and let them practice and stay ready to play. Then let's go compete at that time."

"We have to give highest priority to the winter and spring sports, because they lost their championships last March. We made that horrible, awful but necessary choice to shut down."

However, on Sept. 21, the NCAA Division I Council approved a package of proposals to move the canceled fall championships into the spring. That decision will be voted on by the Division I Board of Directors at a later date but is expected to pass.

"While no one wanted to see fall championships impacted by the pandemic, the Competition Oversight Committee put a thoughtful proposal in front of the council which was resoundingly endorsed," said council chair M. Grace Calhoun, athletics director at Pennsylvania. "We believe we have an appropriate and considerate plan to move fall championship events to the spring, and I look forward to presenting this plan to the board of directors next week. The plan gives maximum opportunities to fall student-athletes to participate in NCAA championships, while preserving access to conferences through automatic qualifications."

Included in the council recommendations are also start dates for all potential relocated spring championships and guidelines for those championships. Cross country will hold its championships on March 15, the earliest of the spring season, featuring 255 runners from each gender.

Also in March is the men's water polo championships on March 20-21, though Ohio State doesn't field a varsity water polo team.

Women's volleyball is the lone April championship, scheduled for April 23-25 and featuring a 48-team bracket, down from the usual 64.

Field hockey will play a 12-team tournament from May 7-9, while men's and women's soccer will close out the new spring season in championships held from May 13-17. The men's tournament will feature 36 teams, while 48 will participate on the women's side.

All programs are allowed to practice with hour limitations through the fall and winter semesters prior to the start of their spring seasons.

Next BSB Scheduled To Print On Oct. 15

The next print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, our annual Football Preview issue with a cover date of Oct. 17, is scheduled to be mailed on Oct. 15. BSB will return to weekly publishing after the Oct. 24 game with Nebraska.

"I think we finally have a print schedule through the end of the year," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "As we have learned several times recently, however, the schedule is always subject to change. Watch your Buckeye Sports Bulletin or the BuckeyeSports.com website for any updates on the publishing schedule."

"Please note that the Oct. 17 issue will be mailed a couple of days later in the week than normal for the staff to get the latest updates possible in the Football Preview," Moskowitz continued. "With football press availabilities starting to pick up, we suggest you check out the BuckeyeSports.com website daily for progress with practice and the team."

Readers can keep up with any Buckeye activity at BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers. The BSB staff provides electronic recruiting coverage, daily stories and updates, as well as presenting reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives. We will be featuring reprints covering games from our 40th Anniversary Football Season as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays.

Additionally, staff members man the BuckeyeSports.com Forum, interacting with subscribers on the hot topics of the day.

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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 immediately upon completion. 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.

Wilson Sees Even Split At Halfback

After leaning heavily on star running back J.K. Dobbins in 2019, Ohio State is looking to return to more of a running back by committee system in 2020 according to offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson, featuring equal carries for Oklahoma transfer Trey Sermon and redshirt sophomore Master Teague.

"I think it'll be a 50-50 ballpark (split between Teague and Sermon) as we start," Wilson said on Sept. 25.

Even past those two, Ohio State has running backs on the roster whom Wilson expects to get on the field this year, including second-year backs Steele Chambers and Marcus Crowley, and true freshman Miyan Williams, who enrolled at Ohio State over the summer.

"We've got five guys who are getting a lot of work, the bulk of it being split between Master and Trey with the ones and then Steele (Chambers) and the other guys are managing our second team right now," Wilson said.

A lack of significant separation between Sermon and Teague played a role in the move according to Wilson, but the fourth-year Buckeye assistant was also quick to note that the days of true workhorse running backs are mostly in the past for college football.

"I think every year you've got to have more than one," Wilson said. "It's even getting to the point in the college game with tempo you need to maybe have more than two – you need to maybe have three."

In its co-starters, Ohio State has a duo who racked up solid stats in recent memory, but two players who have also struggled through severe injuries. Sermon rushed for 947 yards and 13 touchdowns on 164 carries in 2018 but missed most of the 2019 season with a torn lateral collateral ligament (LCL), the latest of multiple leg injuries that Sermon has suffered in his career.

Since his arrival, Sermon has been working on getting back to health and has been a full participant in fall practice for Ohio State, though the Buckeyes have not yet started contact practices.

"Trey has come in and he's very smart, looks very good, catches it well, understands what we have," Wilson said. "I hav-

en't seen him with pads in the hard practice environment or the game environment. You feel comfortable there."

Teague is in a similar boat. He put up strong numbers as Dobbins backup in 2019, toting the ball 135 times for 789 yards and four touchdowns before an Achilles injury in spring practice put Teague's season in jeopardy. However, Buckeye Scoop's Tom Orr reported on Aug. 29 that Teague is fully healthy and ready to play this fall.

"Dr. Corey Teague says his son, RB Master Teague has recovered from the injury he suffered this spring, and could play now if the season was happening," Orr wrote.

Noticeably missing from that top group is Crowley, who suffered a torn ACL last season and was expected to contend for a starting role in 2020. Wilson claimed that he's not "quite full speed" and will need further recovery to return to play.

Multiple ball carriers or not, Wilson doesn't expect a significant style change in Ohio State's rushing attack moving from 2019 to 2020, because he feels that both backs can do a little bit of everything.

"It's one thing to say they complement each other – 'Hey, you know, this guy is a good pass blocker, this guy is a good inside runner, this guy is a good outside runner, this guy is a good pass-catcher,'" Wilson said. "In reality you want them to be pretty good at all things. You don't want to put a guy in and never throw him the ball. We'll keep enhancing and developing."

"I think we can run the offense with all those guys. I don't think it changes a great deal."

The Buckeye players don't expect a major shift either.

"With the (running backs) we have now, I really don't think we're going to skip a beat," tight end Jake Hausmann said on Sept. 25. "We have the O-line to do it. We have the running backs to do it. We have two or three really talented running backs back there that can share the role. They can split the load. And then we have a veteran O-line that just loves mauling people. It's awesome seeing them work."

"J.K. was a great running back last year, but I really don't think we're going to skip a beat. It's going to be fun to watch those two guys."

2020 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time (ET)	TV	2019 Record
Oct. 24	NEBRASKA	12 p.m.	FOX	5-7 (3-6 Big Ten)
Oct. 31	at Penn State*	TBA	TBA	11-2 (7-2 Big Ten)
Nov. 7	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	2-10 (0-9 Big Ten)
Nov. 14	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	3-9 (1-8 Big Ten)
Nov. 21	INDIANA*	TBA	TBA	8-5 (5-4 Big Ten)
Nov. 28	at Illinois*	TBA	TBA	6-7 (4-5 Big Ten)
Dec. 5	at Michigan State*	TBA	TBA	7-6 (4-5 Big Ten)
Dec. 12	MICHIGAN*	12 p.m.	FOX	9-4 (6-3 Big Ten)
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	FOX	

* 2019 bowl team
** at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

Garrett Expected To Return For Season

Ohio State senior defensive tackle Haskell Garrett is still recovering after being shot in the face while reportedly breaking up a fight on Aug. 30 and released from the hospital the following day, sustaining severe injuries to his cheeks, teeth, tongue and jaw.

However, Day and defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs spoke about the defensive tackle and indicated that his recovery process may not be as long as expected and that he could see a return to the field in 2020. Coombs told media on Sept. 23 that Garrett is recovering well, against the odds.

"I think he's probably not as far away as many of us would have thought when you get shot in the face," Coombs said. "I mean, I would have thought season over, career over and I don't think that's true."

Day echoed those sentiments on Sept. 24, noting that Garrett is not yet able to practice but is working toward a return to the field.

"He's doing well, all things considered," Day said of Garrett. "He's very, very lucky. It was a very tough moment for all of us, very scary moment, but we're happy to say that he's doing well and he's on the road to recovery."

"We're hoping to get Haskell back here pretty soon so he can start practicing. It's going to be a little while before he can actually go through contact, but we think we're going to get him back too, so that will be huge."

Without a set return date for the senior, Day mentioned that the Buckeyes will need to find production at tackle elsewhere. Garrett was expected to serve as a major contributor in the middle of the defensive line alongside Tommy Togiai, Taron Vincent and several others.

"Antwan Jackson's got to step up, Tommy's got to step up, for sure," Day said. "Those are guys that they've played a little bit now, they've been in the program for a couple years. They're going to have to step up. And then we have some younger guys in there. Ty Hamilton is somebody that has already early on shown that he can do some really good things. So we've got some bodies in there, but they're going to have to step up. We're going to need some guys to heal up a little bit, too. We've got a couple guys, just a couple of nagging injuries here and there, but we'll get them back soon, and once we get the pads on, we'll have a better feel."

While Garrett's recovery is going well, he's still dealing with the fallout of his injuries elsewhere. According to a GoFundMe page started on behalf of Garrett's mother, Maria Key, Garrett required "extensive surgery and dental implants as his teeth and tongue were severely damaged due to the bullet wound impact." The fundraiser is designed to raise money to help Garrett pay off lofty medical bills, and currently sits at \$35,775 at the time of publication, just topping the \$35,000 goal.

Coombs Updates Status Of Defensive Backs Room

Ohio State defensive coordinator and secondary coach Kerry Coombs spoke to the media at length on Sept. 22 about his defense, specifically in the secondary, where the Buckeyes have three spots to fill this season following the departures of cornerbacks Jeff Okudah and Damon Arnette and safety Jordan Fuller to the NFL.

With the return of senior preseason All-American Shaun Wade, Coombs has one built-in answer, but he explained that Ohio State is still very much working toward filling those remaining spots opposite Wade, in the slot and at safety and finding confidence in his secondary.

"It's very early in camp for me to say 'confident,' but at the same time I really like these kids," Coombs said when asked how he feels about his secondary. "I love Shaun Wade. I'm thrilled he came back. I think we've got a lot of talent back there in the back end. It's just young talent, it's inexperienced talent. But that's what happens when you have great players. I mean, we lost a bunch of really good players off the defense, but we recruited a bunch of really good players to take their place and guys that have been working extremely hard to have that opportunity. So I'm excited. We're ready to play. We'll be fine."

Although Coombs wasn't quick to show his hand regarding potential personnel when laying out what he wants to see from his defense this season, he did elaborate on what he likes to see from a defensive back.

"More than anything, I'm looking for a gritty competitor, a kid that refuses to lose and plays with a fearless mentality of 'my man catches no balls,'" said Coombs. "That's really the mind-set that we have to have play in and play out."

"Physically, I love long, fast corners, and we all know that. But more than anything, I want a mentally tough guy who's going to line up day in, day out, play in, play out, and have the confidence that his guy is not going to get open. He's going to be in on-body coverage, and he's going to deny that reception."

"We're developing that mentality, and I'm excited about these guys and their development of it. But that is really what I'm looking for. It's what I look for when I recruit. I like to recruit winners. I like to recruit guys that their guy doesn't catch the ball, and if we do that, we've had good days."

Interestingly, one of Coombs' favorite cornerbacks through fall practice has been Ohio State's smallest defensive back, senior Marcus Williamson (5-10, 186). Williamson addressed the media as well and seems to have fully embraced the Coombs mindset, which has led many to believe that he stands as the leader in the race to replace Wade in the slot.

"Every day, we go out with that thought process that we come here and want to be first-rounders and we want to win championships," Williamson said. "And he's not afraid to say it, we're not afraid to say it."

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That's the standard here, and that's what we always try to uphold."

Coombs singled out the Westerville native as a player who matches up well with quicker slot receivers.

"It's a matchup business, right? And so, he's playing more in the slot than he is outside simply because more of the slots we'll play against will be similar size and stature players," Coombs said of Williamson. "Slot corner is going to major in short-space quickness, whereas the long corner on the outside is going to have probably a little bit more long speed and have some length at the line of scrimmage and press man-to-man against taller wide receivers. And so that's been, to me, an easy transition for Marcus, and I have a comfort level with that."

"I recruited Marcus out of high school. I've always found him to be a thoughtful, intelligent player who plays really, really

hard. I think he's had an extraordinary off-season. I think he's playing really well right now. I'm excited to watch him continue to grow and compete as the season goes forward. But I think he's had a really, really good fall and spring."

On the outside, Coombs was a bit more willing to name names, saying that he's been impressed with presumed starter Sevn Banks, who saw significant playing time in the back end of the 2019 season.

"Well, he's got to be consistent in his performance and his preparation," Coombs said of Banks. "But at the same time, I've been very, very pleased with Sevn. I think he's an explosive athlete. I think he's big and long and very much in the tradition of the corners that we've had here at Ohio State. So I'm excited to coach him and see how it fares out there."

Continued On Page 6



Continued From Page 5

At safety, junior Josh Proctor is expected to take over for Fuller after working his way onto the field as a sophomore, but Coombs hinted that Ohio State may not rely as heavily on single-high safety looks as it did last year, which could open the door for a player such as Marcus Hooker to find his way onto the field.

"I think a big thing is having the ability to play in multiple personnel groupings on defense," Coombs said. "I don't think that's something that is necessarily common throughout college football. But having the ability to play and have packages with different personnel groupings, I think has been an offensive thing for a long time, but I think it's bleeding over to the defensive side of the game. I think you're going to see that continue to grow and develop.

"I think more than anything for us right now it's going to be ability based. It's going to be based on the talent of the roster and frankly the health of the roster. You're going to have to be flexible this year. You're going to have to be able to adapt to a lot of situations based on who's healthy and able and ready to go. And so those are things that may evolve more this year than any other."

Several New Buckeyes Lose Black Stripes

As fall camp gets into full swing, Ohio State has started officially introducing new players to the team, with the annual "removing of the black stripe" tradition.

Every new Buckeye, be it a first-year player or a transfer, enters his Ohio State career with a black stripe on his helmet covering the usual scarlet stripe, and he has to earn the removal of that stripe with solid performances in practice.

Through the early days of fall practice, Ohio State added six new players as official members of the team, opening up on Sept. 16 with Sermon, the Oklahoma transfer and projected co-starter at halfback.

"I appreciate y'all boys welcoming me in, man," Sermon told his teammates in a video shared on Twitter. "We invested so much into this. I'm ready to get it rolling. Go Bucks."

Without a true spring camp, Sermon's stripe removal was the first in more than a year, going back to Zaid Hamdan, who shed his stripe on Aug. 24, 2019.

Next up were a pair of blue-chip freshmen, five-star wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba and four-star safety Kourt Williams, the first two freshmen to earn the removal.

Smith-Njigba, a product of Rockwall, Texas, came to Ohio State as the No. 5 receiver and No. 29 player in the 247Sports composite rankings.

"I appreciate everybody, I appreciate

the best corps in the nation – Zone-6, man," Smith-Njigba said. "Happy to be out here, blessing. Go Bucks!"

Williams was the No. 166 overall player in the 2020 class. The Bellflower, Calif., native has earned rave reviews from his coaches since arriving on campus as an early enrollee.

"A young guy who I think has a chance to be a really, really good player," Day said of Williams on Sept. 24. "His approach has been excellent. He's versatile, he can do a lot of things. So that's someone to keep an eye on."

Sammamish, Wash., wide receiver and the former No. 66 player in the country Gee Scott was up next on Sept. 23, the second of three from Brian Hartline's position room within the first five freshmen selected to shed their stripes.

"Man, I appreciate y'all welcoming me in right away and making me one of your own," Scott said. "I'm just blessed to be a part of this. Shoutout to Zone 6, Coach Hartline. Appreciate y'all, man. Buckeye."

The latest of that wideout group was the most highly touted of the bunch. The one-time No. 3 player in the nation, Julian Fleming, out of Catawissa, Pa., joined former three-star Pickerington, Ohio, product Ty Hamilton in shedding the black stripe on Sept. 26. The younger brother of 2020 third-round selection DaVon Hamilton, Ty has already made an impression on his new coaching staff.

"Ty Hamilton is somebody that has already early on shown that he can do some really good things," Day said.

OSU At No. 6 In Both Polls

Though the Buckeyes won't take the field until late October, it was a big week in the polls for Ohio State, with a significant rise in the coaches poll and a return to the AP poll after dropping out due to the original delay of the Big Ten season.

With multiple losses in the top 10 over the weekend, Ohio State jumped from No. 10 up to No. 6 in the latest coaches poll, sitting behind Clemson, Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Notre Dame while checking in ahead of Auburn, Miami, Texas and Penn State.

The Buckeyes and Nittany Lions are two of the four Big Ten teams in the top 25, along with No. 18 Wisconsin and No. 21 Michigan. Penn State rose three spots from last week, while Wisconsin fell one, Michigan dropped two, and Minnesota fell entirely out of the top 25, from No. 22 down to the second spot in the "others receiving votes" section, picking up 106 votes. Iowa and Nebraska join the Golden Gophers in that list, with 32 and four votes respectively.

Ohio State's rise is a direct result of two major losses in the top 10. No. 16 Oklahoma fell 13 spots after losing to Kansas State 38-35, while No. 17 LSU plummeted 12 spots following a 44-34 defeat at the hands of Mississippi State, which is making its poll debut at No. 14. The Buckeyes also jumped over No. 9 Texas, which needed overtime to beat Texas Tech, and No. 7 Auburn, which moved up just one spot after a win over Kentucky.

In the AP poll, Ohio State didn't see a complete return to its lofty top-five pre-season standing, but the Buckeyes are back among the ranked, checking in at No. 6. Along with Ohio State, Penn State (No. 10), Wisconsin (No. 19) and Michigan (No. 23) represent the Big Ten in the poll, with Minnesota and Iowa among the other schools picking up votes.

Ohio State sits behind Clemson,

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Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Notre Dame and ahead of Auburn, Miami, Texas and Penn State, making the two top-10 lists identical.

Buckeyes Are Heavy Favorites To Win Big Ten

With Big Ten football back on the schedule this fall and set to kick off on Oct. 24, gambling outlets hoping to make some money off the conference have also returned. The popular sportsbook Bovada released its Big Ten champion odds for this season on Sept. 21 and placed the Buckeyes well out ahead of the pack.

In Bovada's odds to win the conference, Ohio State sits at -260, meaning that a \$260 wager would win \$100.

That's significantly ahead of the No. 2 team on the listing, Michigan, which stands alone at +550. Penn State and Wisconsin are even for the No. 3 spot at +900 each, followed by Nebraska +2000, Iowa and Minnesota +2500, Michigan State +4000, Indiana and Northwestern +5000 and Illinois, Maryland and Purdue at +8000.

Rutgers, headed up by former Ohio State defensive coordinator Greg Schiano, is off the board.

Ohio State also sits near the top on Bovada's national champion odds at +260, behind only Clemson, which sits at +210. Penn State (+2800), Wisconsin (+5000) and Michigan (+6000) are the only other Big Ten teams within the top 15, with Minnesota (+8000) just outside at No. 16.

Elsewhere, SportsBetting.ag released win totals projections for the conference that also see the Buckeyes well out in front, sitting at 8½ projected wins. Win totals are designed to be bet as an over/under, meaning that Ohio State would need to win all nine of its Big Ten games to hit the over.

Next up is Penn State at 7½, Wisconsin at 7, Michigan and Minnesota at 6½, Indiana at 5½, Iowa and Nebraska at 5, Northwestern at 4, Illinois, Michigan State and Purdue at 3½, Maryland at 2½ and Rutgers closing out the conference at 1½.

Bosa, Hooker Suffer Season-Ending Injuries

It was an abrupt end to the 2020 NFL season for two former Buckeye standouts, as San Francisco 49ers defensive end Nick Bosa and Indianapolis Colts safety Malik Hooker both suffered season-ending injuries on Sept. 20 in week-two matchups.

For Bosa, an MRI shortly after he left the game against the New York Jets confirmed what many around the league expected: a torn ACL, with additional damage to cartilage, all of which will require surgery according to ESPN's Adam Schefter.

"San Francisco 49ers standout defensive

end Nick Bosa is scheduled to undergo surgery to repair a torn ACL and cartilage damage in his left knee this week in Los Angeles, sources told ESPN," Schefter reported on Sept. 27.

"The 49ers are optimistic Bosa will return in time for next season, but much still will depend on the surgery and the rehab.

"There was additional cartilage damage in the knee, but the 49ers hope that won't hinder Bosa's comeback.

"Bosa also has to pass a COVID-19 test before undergoing surgery. He isn't the only Niners defensive lineman who needs knee surgery; 2017 first-round draft pick Solomon Thomas does as well. The Niners want to let the swelling in Thomas' knee go down first before he undergoes surgery."

Hooker also suffered a leg injury, as the Colts confirmed that he tore his Achilles against the Minnesota Vikings, ending his season as well.

"I just talked to Malik a little bit ago, and I feel awful for him," said Colts head coach Frank Reich. "He had a great offseason and was playing well in many respects. So it's tough news for him, but Malik's best football is ahead of him, and he'll get through his recovery very quickly."

This is the latest in a long line of injuries for Hooker since his arrival in the NFL. He tore his ACL in 2017, his rookie season, ending his year early, and has struggled with nagging injuries in each of the last two seasons.

Unable to consistently stay on the field, Hooker entered this season hoping to earn a second contract after the Colts declined his fifth-year offer.

"I mean, I really wouldn't say disappointment," Hooker said about the Colts declining his option. "It was more so like a motivation call for me. I just have to go out there and prove myself type of thing. That's how I feel like it is. It's more so me just having to show the consistency that I've had for the majority of last year and just show it more often."

Without the chance to showcase his ability, Hooker will likely have to hope to catch on somewhere else following this season in free agency, so long as he's able to return to the football field at some point down the line.

Several other Buckeyes, including Colts wideout Parris Campbell and Denver defensive tackle Dre'Mont Jones, sustained injuries as well on Sept. 20, but both players are expected to return this season in 4-6 weeks.

Campbell reportedly injured his MCL and was placed on injury reserve, meaning that he's out for at least three weeks. Jones suffered a posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) injury and bone bruise on his knee.

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Conference Adopts Stringent Medical Protocols

Continued From Page 1

ing communities,” Borchers said in a press release. “The data we are going to collect from testing and the cardiac registry will provide major contributions for all 14 Big Ten institutions as they study COVID-19 and attempt to mitigate the spread of the disease among wider communities.”

Starting on Sept. 30, every player and coach in the Big Ten will undergo daily antigen testing. Anyone who tests positive for the virus will face comprehensive cardiac screening and will be unable to participate in practice or games for at least 21 days, meaning they would miss a minimum of three games. They must also receive clearance from a cardiologist before returning to action.

“From the onset of the pandemic, our highest priority has been the health and the safety of our students,” said Northwestern president Morton Schapiro, who also chairs the council of presidents and chancellors and the return to competition task force. “The new medical protocols and standards put into place by the Big Ten were pivotal in the decision to move forward with sports in the conference.”

Each of the Big Ten’s 14 athletic departments will appoint a chief infection officer to monitor the results and determine whether or not it’s safe to continue practicing or playing games based on the team positivity rate (number of positive

tests divided by the total number of tests administered) and population positivity rate (number of positive individuals divided by the total population at risk). If the team positivity rate is greater than 5 percent or if the population positivity rate exceeds 7.5 percent, the program must stop playing or practicing for a minimum of seven days.

“Our focus with the task force over the last six weeks was to ensure the health and safety of our student-athletes,” Warren said. “Our goal has always been to return to competition so all student-athletes can realize their dream of competing in the sports they love.”

Third Time’s A Charm?

The Big Ten announced its revised football schedule during a special two-hour edition of FOX’s “Big Noon Kickoff” on Sept. 19, revealing the matchups on a week-by-week basis.

The eight-game regular season will begin on Oct. 24 with Ohio State hosting Nebraska. It will be the third time the two schools meet in the season opener, with the Buckeyes knocking off the Cornhuskers to begin the 1955 and 1956 campaigns.

Ohio State will then travel to Penn State on Halloween for a game that could eventually decide the Big Ten East Division before returning home to face Rutgers on Nov. 7. Continuing to alternate home and road games, the Buckeyes will head



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to Maryland on Nov. 14 and play host to Indiana on Nov. 21.

Ohio State will then hit the road for two straight games, with trips to Illinois and Michigan State on Nov. 28 and Dec. 5, respectively.

The rivalry game against Michigan – which is typically held the weekend following Thanksgiving – will be played on Dec. 12, continuing the streak that dates back to 1935 of being the final game of the regular season for both teams. It will also mark the first time the Buckeyes and Wolverines meet in December.

Additionally, every Big Ten team will be involved in a ninth cross-divisional game the same week as the conference championship, which will be held at Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium on Dec. 19.

"We will play eight games plus one (in) a very unique championship week where the teams from the East and the West (divisions) will match up and play one another, two vs. two, three vs. three, with the championship game being played at the end of that week," Wisconsin athletic director Barry Alvarez said during a teleconference on Sept. 16. "It gives everyone an opportunity to play nine games."

Had this format been in place last year, the championship week would have not only included Ohio State vs. Wisconsin battling for the conference title, but also Penn State vs. Minnesota, Michigan vs. Iowa, Indiana vs. Illinois, Michigan State vs. Purdue, Maryland vs. Nebraska and Rutgers vs. Northwestern.

Though the schedule release included specific dates, Ohio State noted in a subsequent press release that special date games, such as Friday games, will be determined and announced at a later date.

"This year is going to be strange," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said during an appearance on "Big Noon Kickoff." "We knew that from the get-go. It wasn't going to be a normal season. And I think there's going to be a lot of games that are postponed throughout the fall, so who knows how many games each team is going to play. We can't really control the events of any of that. What we can control is the response. When we get an opportunity to go to play, we're going to play as hard as we

can, as physical as we can and be as tough as we can."

The Buckeyes were initially scheduled to open the 2020 season against Bowling Green on Sept. 5. That was changed to a Thursday, Sept. 3 trip to Illinois when the Big Ten announced its 10-game, conference-only slate on Aug. 5, only to be canceled when the conference opted to postpone the season six days later.

"Even though I felt so happy and so blessed to have this season and everything, I know that everybody fighting for a season, everybody working so hard to get us a season will be for nothing if we don't take care of business and get the job done," fifth-year senior defensive end Jonathon Cooper said during a Zoom meeting with reporters on Sept. 18. "That just means we have to work harder and be prepared for everything and keep practicing, keep going harder. Go harder than ever before, honestly, because everybody fighting and all our coaches and our president and our athletic director, everything they did for us will be for nothing if we don't go out there and take care of business."

No Home-Field Advantage

As part of the decision to resume the season, the Big Ten announced it will not sell tickets to the general public this fall. The conference is looking at the possibility of allowing family members of student-athletes and staff members to attend both home and road games on a campus-by-campus basis, however.

"Let's mitigate the risk," Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said during a teleconference on Sept. 16, expressing his support for the Big Ten's decision. "Let's make sure we get the games played in a safe way."

Ohio State had previously planned for a reduced capacity at Ohio Stadium this fall, sending a letter to season-ticket holders in July that said the historic venue would be limited to "no more than 20 percent."

Season-ticket holders will now have the option of receiving a refund, receiving a credit toward future ticket purchases or donating the payments to support student-athlete scholarships.



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

ADJUSTING ON THE FLY – Quarterback Justin Fields has started preparing for Ohio State's third different season-opening opponent of the 2020 schedule.

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Wade, Davis Return To Buckeyes After Opting Out

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It appeared that Ohio State football was taking a big hit on Sept. 14 when cornerback Shaun Wade announced he was opting out of the upcoming football season to enter the 2021 NFL draft.

At that time, there was no new word on what the Big Ten would be doing, even a month after the Aug. 11 decision to postpone the season for the remainder of 2020. Wade's decision also marked the second opt-out in three days for the Buckeyes, with guard Wyatt Davis entering the draft on Sept. 11.

The two departures signaled the loss of two team captains, two preseason All-Americans, two All-Big Ten members and two of the most important players on each side of the ball. Or at least, that is what it appeared to signal, until the Big Ten made the decision on Sept. 16 to reverse its initial decision and play football in 2020 starting on Oct. 24.

Within the same day of the Big Ten's statement, Davis announced on Twitter that he would be trying to make his return to the Buckeyes to play this season.

"I was incredibly happy to learn today about the Big Ten's decision to play football this fall. Thank you President (Kristina) Johnson, (athletic director) Mr. (Gene) Smith, Dr. (Jim) Borchers and all who worked so hard for our safe return," Davis wrote in the statement. "I want Buckeye Nation to know that I want to play this season for Ohio State, and I am working now to make that a reality. Thank you for

the support. Go Buckeyes."

Sept. 16 was also a big day for Wade, but not because he made his decision. Instead, the day of the Big Ten's announcement to bring back football for this year also happened to be on Wade's 22nd birthday, and he elected to celebrate that birthday and talk to his family instead of immediately making a decision to return or not.

The next day, Wade announced on ESPN that he, too, would be coming back to Columbus to play for Ohio State this season.

"First off I want to thank Buckeye Nation and all the Buckeye fans. I want to thank President Johnson, the AD, and Coach Day and Coach Coombs for everything," Wade told ESPN. "It was a long day yesterday being with family and friends, taking the time to talk to them and really make the right decision for myself. I'm going to come back and be a Buckeye and go strive for this national championship like I was way back in January."

The pair of returning players meant that Ohio State, despite a whirlwind of storylines and a tumultuous offseason capped off by a messy scenario within the conference, is currently set to survive it all without a single player opting out.

For Wade, this is the second time he has held off on his desire to go pro in order to return to Ohio State, the first time coming after the 2019 season, when the redshirt sophomore elected to stay with the Buckeyes despite the option to enter the 2020 NFL draft.

But the former five-star prospect out of Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy decided back in January to come back for a



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

HE'S BACK – On Sept. 17, just one day after the Big Ten decided to resume the fall season, Ohio State offensive guard Wyatt Davis, left, announced he would return to the team after he originally opted out of the season.

fourth year, due in large part to what he saw as unfinished business at the college level.

"Back in January, I didn't go to the draft, and my goal was to come back, be a captain, get my degree, and the Big Ten for football now is back," Wade said. "We've got a chance to win a national championship. That's been my goal since day one. So that's what we're striving for, and that's what we're going to strive for when we get back in October."

Although Davis has not spoken to the media since his decision to return, much of what he said earlier in the offseason would seem to indicate he agrees with much of what Wade said.

Davis, like Wade, also made the decision to stay with Ohio State instead of leaving after his redshirt sophomore season. And back in May, Davis talked about a speech he gave to the team in a workout after the College Football Playoff semifinal loss to Clemson on Dec. 28.

There, Davis spoke about the importance of working hard now in order to be ready once the season got under way. It was also there where he showed his abilities as a vocal leader for the team.

"Essentially what I was just saying during that speech was just, there's a lot of guys in the world that say they want things and they want all this stuff for them to happen. There's not many of them that are willing to put in the work for it," Davis said. "Coming off of that loss this past season, I don't ever want to experience that again. I was saying that the look in the seniors' eyes and they were crying, it's something I will never forget for the rest of my life. Some of those guys it was their last time ever even playing a football game, and that's how we went out."

Now, both Davis and Wade are back at Ohio State and have been practicing with the team, ready to come back, right their wrongs from 2019 and leave their mark in what is likely to be each of their final seasons with the program.

"We had a sour taste last year with Clemson, but this year, we've got a great team, great leadership on this team, and we're just looking forward to it," Wade said. "I can't go out like that, on that last targeting play. I've got to come back and do great things for the Buckeye Nation and just for my teammates. So

I'm really looking forward to it."

Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs said he talked with Wade once he elected to opt out. While Coombs joked that him singing "Happy Birthday" to Wade likely reversed the cornerback's decision, he was serious when he said that his goal in conversations was never to persuade Wade to come back to the Buckeyes.

Coombs recruited Wade to Ohio State and coached him for the 2017 season before moving on to the NFL to coach the Tennessee Titans secondary under head coach Mike Vrabel. He said that the two have had a strong relationship ever since.

"We've had a great relationship the entire time that we've known each other, even when I was in Tennessee and I would text these kids and communicate back with them and encourage them and those kind of things," Coombs said. "I just feel like I've had a great relationship with them all along. And to be honest with you, the reality is, when a kid says to you, 'I need you to talk to me like I'm your son,' then there's a lot of responsibility that goes with whatever you're going to say to him. And I don't take that lightly."

"And so our conversations, I tried in every way, shape and form to talk to him as if he was one of my two sons in the same situation and give him the advice that I would have given them, and at the same time, making sure that he was very comfortable understanding that I loved him regardless of what he decided. That was unconditional, and it had nothing to do with whether or not he played for us or somebody else or whatever he did in this season."

"This is a kid that loves his team. He loves his university. You guys remember, he committed all the way back when we won a national championship in 2014. He loves to win. I just think he's an extraordinary kid."

Both Davis and Wade, two of the best players at their respective positions in college football and two likely first-round picks regardless of whether they play this season, are coming back to Ohio State for the same purpose, a goal that is driving the whole team as football sits less than a month away.

"At the end of the day, we both came back for a reason," Wade said, "That's to get that natty."

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Fields Stays At Ohio State For Shot At Title, Heisman

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On Dec. 28, 2019, Ohio State fell to Clemson 29-23, missing out on a spot in the national championship game.

Then-sophomore quarterback Justin Fields threw for a career-high 320 yards and threw one touchdown and two interceptions, the second of which came on a miscommunication on a route between him and Chris Olave that sealed the win for the Tigers.

"It was the look we wanted," Fields said on the interception immediately following the game. "It was basically just a miscommunication. So that happens in life, and you really can't do anything about it now. You just have to move on."

Moving on for Fields was supposed to be as simple as coming back to Ohio State in 2020 and making amends for coming up short in the College Football Playoff semifinal the season prior. But when the Big Ten postponed the football season on Aug. 11 for the remainder of the year with sights set on a winter or spring season, moving on appeared to take on a new meaning.

But, despite many speculating that Fields could opt out of this season and still remain a high first-round pick in the 2021 NFL draft, the Ohio State quarterback never wavered, going another step by becoming a major voice in the college football world in the push for playing this season.

Eventually his resilience paid off as the Big Ten reversed course and decided on an Oct. 24 start date, and Fields will now have his chance to lead Ohio State back to the playoff and win a national championship.

"I wanted to give myself an opportunity to come back and show the world what I can do and what I've improved on, because I feel like I've improved a lot on my game and I've learned a lot this off-season and I know the talent we have on offense and defense," Fields said. "We're just all excited to be able to get on the field and show how hard we've been working, show our talents really, and play the game we love."

During the uncertainty of the off-season, Fields said it was his love of the game, as well as the love of his teammates and coaches, that caused him to fight so passionately for a season to begin. Despite the buzz surrounding the Georgia transfer at the professional level, head coach Ryan Day said there was just one single talk between him and Fields about if he would remain with the Buckeyes this season.

"He could have packed his bags and left," Day said. "He never wavered once. He never even thought about leaving. He looked me in the eye and said, 'Coach, the NFL will come one day. I want to win a national championship with this team, and I want to win a Heisman Trophy.' And that was it. We didn't have another conversation."

While other players around the country opted out, even two of his teammates in Shaun Wade and Wyatt Davis before ultimately opting back in, Fields remained strong in his desire to be patient and hope that a season would get under way. He said that has a lot to do with Ohio State as



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

IN NO HURRY – While several other prominent student-athletes opted out when the Big Ten initially decided to postpone the fall football season, Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields was among those pushing hardest for the conference to reconsider.

a whole and the amount of team chemistry and desire to win that is with this current group.

"The brotherhood is real," Fields said. "I think seeing a lot of different teams and players opting out and for whatever reason, I'm not saying that they don't love their teammates, they might have different situations going on at home. But I just think Wyatt and Shaun coming back, that just shows you guys how much love there is on this team and how much of a brotherhood we really are and how close we really are."

Fields is coming off his first season as a starter, in which he threw for 41 touchdowns, rushed for 10 more, amassed 3,757 total yards and had just three interceptions. He was a Heisman Trophy finalist and Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year, and he had one of the most efficient seasons a quarterback has ever had in college football.

But Fields is still without the top individual and team trophies, and he has used that as motivation throughout the off-season to continue to improve and develop. He has impressed the coaches with his continued effort to grow, especially his head coach.

"What can you say about Justin Fields?" Day said. "The way that he's gone about his business, the way that he's been a leader, the way that he's spoken and been classy about it. His work ethic this off-season, if you ever get a chance to ask (strength) Coach Mick (Marotti) about it, it's been off the charts. He's changed his

diet, he's put extra work in.

"And then to see his leadership and the way he's handled it, I can't say enough about who he is."

On his diet, offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson said Fields has taken on a vegan diet as one of his many ways to continue to make improvements in any way he can.

"He made a commitment, because he wanted to be a little bit leaner, wanted to take care of himself even better, wanted to be faster, he just made a commitment to a style of diet," Wilson said. "He's had a great off-season. It's been a weird off-season, but it's been great."

Wilson said one of the more noticeable improvements Fields has made from year one to year two with the Buckeyes is in his leadership. The offensive coordinator and tight ends coach said that he has really turned into more than just the signal caller for the team, something that was also highlighted by Fields being named one of seven team captains.

"A year ago, he came in as a quarterback, but as a new guy," Wilson said. "I don't think he tried to force being a little bit more of a leader. Now that he's had a great year and he has some great leadership skills, I just think he's doing a really good job of being a little bit more of what you think that a quarterback is going to be as a strong leader."

Fields' leadership has come through to the tight end room, where players said that the quarterback has gone to the lengths of running the routes in order to

show exactly what he is looking for when he is in the pocket.

"He's a really hands-on guy, and he's vocal about it," said fifth-year senior tight end Jake Hausmann. "He's giving us all these coaching points about what angle we want to break it off at and how we're supposed to be coming out of it. He's always been a natural leader, but I think within the past six months or so, he's been a lot more vocal and guys have been following his lead."

Fields had plenty of reasons to leave Columbus after just one season with the Buckeyes. After a dominant campaign in his first season as a starter, the five-star prospect from Kennesaw (Ga.) Harrison is set to be one of the first names called in Cleveland at the upcoming NFL draft.

But for now, that does not matter to Fields, who has made clear that he wants to be at Ohio State to earn the two most important pieces of hardware that the college game has to offer. Now, after staying patient through one season post-ponement, a month of unknowns and a new, nine-game slate that gives the Buckeyes a shot at the playoff, Fields will get his chance.

"We want to play," he said. "They're not forcing us to play. We want to play. And Coach Day has given us the option to opt out if we don't want to play. But everybody on this team wants to play and hopes to win a national championship, so that's our goal and that's what we're focused on. I don't think there are words to describe how determined I am."

No Fans In Stands Removes Important Game Element

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After the rapid spread of COVID-19 forced college athletics to shut down in the spring, Ohio State was unsure if a fall football season would happen at all.

If the season were not canceled, the question of whether fans would be permitted loomed large. Fourth-year junior offensive lineman Wyatt Davis was asked back in May about the possibility of having no fans in the stands.

To no one's surprise, Davis, who is a team captain, expressed his desire to play regardless of whether fans could attend games or not.

"Would I want fans there? Yes. But will that affect me playing the season? No, just because I love the game of football and I miss being in that type of competitive atmosphere," Davis said. "So fans or no fans, I would want to play."

The Big Ten abruptly postponed the season due to COVID-19 concerns on Aug. 11, and more than a month later, the conference reinstated it once improved tests were available. The schedule was shortened to nine conference games that will be played without fans in attendance.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin discussed how much of an effect fans can have on a game with former Ohio State players Jim Laughlin (1976-79), Kelvin Bell (1981-83), Stanley Jackson (1994-97), and Pepe Pearson (1994-97).

"I think it's terrible," Laughlin told BSB. "I mean that's the whole reason, God, when I went to my first Ohio State game back in 1973, man, that was what excited me and made me want to play at Ohio State – the crowd, the tradition and all that stuff. That's what makes college football what it is. That's why college football is better than the NFL, and that's why it's more fun to play in college."

Laughlin likened a fan-less game to an exhibition game in the NFL, where he spent eight seasons as a member of the Atlanta Falcons, Green Bay Packers and Los Angeles Rams.

"There's no intimidation factor," Laughlin said. "There's no advantage to playing at home. It's just like you're playing at a neutral site, like with a bunch of golf clubs or something. There's nobody around. It's just strange."

Though he played in plenty of big games during his Ohio State career, Laughlin remembers certain games where the lack of a large crowd was noticeable. A true competitor, Laughlin said he actually invited boos and negativity from opposing fans, so a lackluster audience disappointed him.

"We used to have more fans at Indiana than they did when we played at Bloomington," Laughlin said. "And I think it's been like that lately too. Northwestern was like that back then because they didn't get big crowds. I remember playing at SMU on a Saturday night in the Cotton Bowl, and it seemed like it was almost empty and that's lousy."

With no fans in the stands, Laughlin said that home-field advantage will be negated. Big Ten programs such as Michigan, Penn State and Wisconsin are

known to be tough places to play, so the absence of fans could have a significant impact in the conference.

Back in the late '70s, Laughlin said that traveling to Ann Arbor was always a challenge given the noise generated by massive crowds in The Big House.

"Michigan was probably the toughest. That place was rocking in '77 and '79 when we played up there," Laughlin said. "We were kicking their butts all up and down the field in '77, but every time we got down inside the 15, we pissed up a rope as Woody used to say. It was rocking that day."

"And man, in '79, oh my god, when Anthony Carter caught that 59-yard bomb, that place was shaking. I mean, you couldn't even think it was so loud. But it was great, I loved it. Even though they had just scored, I was just like, 'Man, this is the greatest thing in the world. This place is going nuts.' Even though it was a 59-yard bomb for a touchdown, it was still great to be out there in the middle of it."

After losing at Michigan 14-6 in 1977, Laughlin and the Buckeyes avenged their loss when they returned to Ann Arbor in '79. Trailing the Wolverines 15-12 with 11:21 left in the fourth quarter, Laughlin blocked a punt and Todd Bell returned it for the game-winning touchdown.

Laughlin's punt block in the Big House forever etched his name in Buckeye lore, and more than 20 years later he was invited to talk to the team ahead of Jim Tressel's first matchup with Michigan as head coach.

"Tressel had me speak to the team his first year and we were up there, so I was out on the 50-yard line and he let me have my son on the sidelines," Laughlin said. "When it got started and The Game was going on, my son, who was only like 13 years old at the time, he was like, 'Dad, this is unbelievable.' And I said, 'Son, there's nothing like it in the world.' And there's not, there's nothing like college football."

The rivalry game against Michigan is a big deal to every Ohio State team throughout the years, but toughest environments for certain players can change from year to year. For Bell, the matchup at Michigan was not as hostile as an environment as Michigan State or Wisconsin.

"We went to Wisconsin my freshman year, and prior to going there, the upperclassmen we're like, 'Watch this, man, they're going to do this and that, those fans are nasty, they're dirty,'" Bell told BSB. "And what I mean by nasty is there is a fish wire cage that goes across the tunnel. I guess they had to put it up for the years of the fans doing stuff to the opposing team. You'd be out there, and you'd hear that 'ting' on your helmet. Somebody had thrown a marshmallow with a nut and bolt in it or throwing beer when you're walking through the tunnel. At least I hope it was beer. I hope it wasn't piss."

The Badgers' Camp Randall Stadium has become famous, or infamous (depending on whom you ask), for a rowdy gameday environment. Even when Wisconsin has struggled on the field, the Badger fans have brought enough energy to make it a memorable place to play.

"We used to like going up there to play because they used to get big crowds, even though they weren't any good – we used to destroy them," Laughlin said. "And now they get really raucous crowds up there in Wisconsin. Woody used to always say, 'We're going to go to Madison and play those damn Bolsheviks up in Madison.'"

On the other side, the Buckeyes feed off their home crowd's energy when opponents have to travel to Ohio Stadium and play in front of 100,000-plus fans.

"It just gets you so pumped up," Laughlin said. "You're almost too pumped up when you come out when you're playing Michigan or when we played Oklahoma back when I was there."

Bell, who was a three-year starter at safety for the Buckeyes, offered an interesting perspective on how fans can affect the game for defensive backs beyond positive reinforcement.

"When you're actually out there playing, you're so tuned in with the type of competition you're playing against, you really don't notice the fans. But then on the other hand, as a defensive player, particularly a defensive back, when it comes down to the talent that you're playing against, you can't afford to peek at the quarterback like you did in high school," Bell said.

"You've got to concentrate on your man. For me, especially if I was in man-to-man coverage, two keys I would get – when I heard the fans yelling, I knew the ball was in the air – between that and looking at the receiver's eyes and his eyes getting big. If I heard the fans yelling and his eyes got big, I knew the ball was coming toward my man. So the fans can help with the flow of the game."

Ohio State fans are among the most passionate in the world, and during his career in scarlet and gray, Bell experienced both the ups and downs.

In 1982 when John Elway-led Stanford came to Columbus, the fans had the Horseshoe quaking. Despite such a strong crowd presence, Elway threw for 407 yards and engineered a game-winning touchdown drive. Former Ohio State defensive backs coach Dom Capers, who has spent the past 25 years coaching the NFL, picked up on an improvisation Elway had to make due to crowd noise, but not until after the game.

"When John Elway came into Ohio Stadium and threw for like 400 yards and threw that last-second touchdown pass on us, he couldn't really hear because of our fans," Bell said. "But whatever side he would tug his jersey on, that's the side he was throwing the quick routes to the receiver. But hell, it didn't do us any good once the game was over."

"Our fans could shut an offense down. They could confuse the hell out of an offense as far as them not being able to communicate."

After losing to the Cardinal 23-20 following Elway's heroics, the '82 Buckeyes dropped a 34-17 contest to Florida State and fell to Wisconsin 6-0 in the rain. Despite wins at Illinois and Indiana, the next time Ohio State took the field at Ohio Stadium, the players did not receive a warm welcome.

"We lost three home games in a row, and when we came out of the locker

room, we got booed as the home team," Bell said. "That might be the first time in Ohio State history that, coming out of the locker room, you're getting booed as the home team. We won, but I can remember us as a team we rallied together like, 'F the fans.' That's how you have to feel. I mean, they're really booing us. This is pregame warmups. We come out of the locker room and our fans are booing us. I was like, 'Damn.' That was a different environment."

Bell and his teammates responded well, bonding together and bashing the Boilermakers 38-6. After the loss to the Badgers at home, the Buckeyes won their final seven games by an average score of 37.0 to 17.3 to finish 9-3.

That experience helped teach Bell about just how important the success of the football team is to Ohio State fans.

"You better win," Bell said. "Being a young person, you think that no matter what they're going to stick with you. And then you see like, hey, man, if you don't win, they're going to turn on you. Their expectations were totally different."

Bell learned what every player to ever don scarlet and gray has had to learn. At Ohio State, winning is an expectation.

Like Bell, Jackson has much appreciation for the Ohio State faithful. However, the former quarterback acknowledges that the high expectations perpetually tied to the program can sometime affect how hard the home crowd cheers.

"The Horseshoe, as intimidating as it can be, sometimes when our fans feel like it's a team you should beat, they don't really cheer like other stadiums," Jackson told BSB.

"We sell too many tickets to rich folks who expect us to win. We don't have the student population like some of these schools do. The atmosphere can be a little underwhelming, honestly, unless they rise to the occasion because it's a big game."

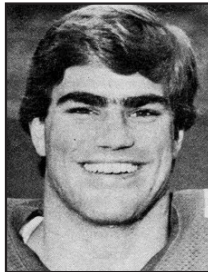
Jackson added that when the stakes are high, Ohio State fans can give the team an exceptional home-field advantage like when the '95 team beat Notre Dame in Columbus.

Pearson played against the Irish in Ohio Stadium in '95, and he vividly remembers the fans helping propel the Buckeyes to a 45-26 win after trailing 20-14 in the second half.

"We always talk about Ohio State having the best fans in the land, and I can remember it rocking that day," Pearson told BSB. "It was so loud in there when that momentum shift happened, and it got our team going. We had great players, and at that point, it was going to be hard for them to stop us from getting that victory."

Now a color analyst on the Big Ten Network, Jackson remains an avid Buckeye supporter. He said that while it will be odd to not have fans in Ohio Stadium, the absence of fans at places like Penn State's Beaver Stadium could benefit the Buckeyes, who play there Oct. 31.

"The good news about that is, we've got to go to Penn State. And not having that 'White Out' when the Buckeyes come to town is a big deal for them. So on the flip side, it's also going to help us when we go down to Happy Valley."



Jim Laughlin



Pepe Pearson

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DICK WILLIAMS
President of Baseball Operations



Dead Period Extended Through End Of Year

As expected, the NCAA Division I Council has extended the ongoing college football recruiting dead period through Jan. 1, 2021.

"While the council acknowledged and appreciates the growing desire to resume in-person recruiting by select coaches' associations, council members ultimately concluded the primary concern right now must be protecting the current student-athletes on our campuses," council chair and Pennsylvania athletic director M. Grace Calhoun said in a statement. "We encourage our coaches to interact with prospective student-athletes virtually in this time period."

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

The dead period – which was originally put in place in March amid the coronavirus pandemic – prevents prospective student-athletes from conducting on-campus visits and coaches from attending their games or practices this fall. Phone calls and virtual meetings are still allowed, however.

"We're able to stay in contact with a lot of the recruits," Ohio State head

coach Ryan Day said during his weekly appearance on the IMG Sports Network's Buckeye Roundtable radio show on Sept. 15. "Some of the recruits don't have a season either, so they're able to share in some of the things that they're doing. Some of them do. We're just continuing with the Zoom calls and the communication. We're not allowed to have them on campus yet, and I know that they're very anxious to get on campus. But until that opens up in terms of recruiting, we're just going to continue to use phone calls and Zoom calls and teleconferences to keep the communication open and continue to build those relationships, even though it's virtually."

The council also adopted emergency legislation prohibiting schools from giving complimentary game tickets to prospects during the dead period, which could have been an issue after the Big Ten announced it would not sell tickets to the general public but is working on a plan to allow families of the players or coaching staff to be in attendance.

Without official and unofficial visits, programs are going to have to get creative with their recruiting pitches. Some recruiting analysts, including 247Sports' Blair Angulo, have suggested placing a GoPro camera on top of a walk-on's helmet to help the prospect visualize what a game day is like – including the pregame warmups, running out of the tunnel, the view of the game and the postgame celebration in the locker room.

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2021 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jayden Ballard	WR	6-2	175	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Denzel Burke	CB	6-0	189	★★★★	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguardo
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
Jordan Hancock	CB	6-1	170	★★★★	Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett
Marvin Harrison	WR	6-3	190	★★★★	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	6-1	175	★★★★	St. Louis De Smet Jesuit
Jaylen Johnson	S	6-1	200	★★★	Cincinnati La Salle
Kyle McCord	QB	6-3	215	★★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep
Jesse Mirco	P	6-3	200	★★★	Fremantle, Western Australia
Evan Pryor	RB	5-10	190	★★★★	Cornelius (N.C.) W.A. Hough
Jack Sawyer	DE	6-5	248	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North
Andre Turrentine	S	6-0	175	★★★★	Nashville (Tenn.) Ensworth
Tyleik Williams	DT	6-3	330	★★★★	Manassas (Va.) Unity Reed

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
Jyaire Brown	CB	5-11	165	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Bennett Christian	TE	6-6	235	★★★	Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona
C.J. Hicks	LB	6-4	218	★★★★	Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter
Dasan McCullough	ATH	6-5	220	★★★★	Overland Park (Kan.) B.V. North
Gabe Powers	LB	6-4	220	★★★★★	Marysville, Ohio
Tegra Tshabola	OT	6-5	340	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West

It also remains to be seen if the extension of the dead period will impact the Early Signing Period, which is set for

Dec. 16-18. As of now, though, that will continue as scheduled.

"Some (recruits) may have visited



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ASK AN ANALYST

With Buckeye Scoop's Marc Givler

Ohio State extended an offer to Floyd's Knobs (Ind.) Floyd Central three-star offensive tackle Zen Michalski on Sept. 8. What does that offer mean for the Buckeyes' pursuit of Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary five-star offensive tackle Tristan Leigh, and do you think the staff can flip Michalski from his pledge to Louisville, to whom he's been committed since April?

"I think at this point you have to put Leigh into the major long-shot category. LSU continues to be the team that everyone else is chasing, and Oklahoma is probably running second. Without a visit, a real official visit, not a virtual visit or some drive around campus, it's hard to envision Ohio State winning this battle.

"As for Michalski, oftentimes Ohio State even offering a prospect this late in the game is a tell that the Buckeyes feel good about a flip. There is certainly a chance that happens. A visit would be more helpful and may not be possible at this point, but Michalski seems generally interested in looking at some of his new offers, including Ohio State. I could certainly see him ending up in the class."

With visits off the table through the end of the year and Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star defensive tackle Tywone Malone set

to make his college commitment during the Under Armour All-America Game on Jan. 7, do you think the Buckeyes have done enough to this point to land his pledge or is there another front-runner in his recruitment?

"I think Ohio State has as good of a shot as anyone with Malone under the current conditions. The interesting thing to watch here is that baseball is definitely a factor for him but he hasn't had a chance to visit some of the southern schools who can really push that component, so that could be a net positive for Ohio State. Right now, I see Ohio State and Texas A&M as the top two, but this should be interesting down the stretch."

Do you think the extended dead period has hurt Ohio State's chances with Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau and Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, who might have already committed to the Buckeyes if they were able to take official visits earlier this year? Furthermore, how do you see their respective recruitments ending?

"Logic might dictate that the extended dead period would hurt Ohio State with Tuimoloau, but that hasn't been the case from everything that I have

been told. I continue to hear that while it is by no means a done deal, Ohio State is in the best shape for Tuimoloau. It would be very fitting for the year 2020 to land a player of his caliber from thousands of miles away without a visit.

"As for Egbuka, this probably only solidifies the Buckeyes with him. He has visited a couple of times, and the one school that has tried to push the most over the summer is Oklahoma, and now it looks like the Sooners won't get an official and Egbuka has never been there in any capacity."

Clayton (Ohio) Northmont three-star wide receiver Markus Allen decommitted from Michigan on Sept. 9 and has been in contact with Ohio State wide receivers coach Brian Hartline in the weeks since. Do you believe the Buckeyes have serious interest in Allen and vice versa, or do you think the staff views him as an option only if they miss out on Egbuka?

"I believe they'll watch Allen as they liked him and wanted him to camp before his Michigan commitment and the dead period extension. But right now, I think they are pretty well set with just focusing primarily on Egbuka. He will definitely have his senior film evaluated though, if for no other reason than to be thorough."

in person, some may not," SEC commissioner Greg Sankey, who is a member of the Conference Commissioners Association that governs the National Letter of Intent program, said during a radio interview on Sept. 23. "Right now, the signing periods are planned to be conducted as scheduled."

Defensive Tackle Target Sets Commitment Date

While Ohio State remains hopeful of hosting its top remaining prospects on official visits before they make their respective decisions, that will be highly unlikely after Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star defensive tackle Tywone Malone told Buckeye Grove's Joseph Hastings he'll make his college decision at the Under Armour All-America Game on Jan. 7, 2021.

Aside from listing his top 14 schools back in early May, the 6-4, 300-pound Malone – who is considered the fifth-best defensive tackle and No. 55 prospect overall in the 2021 recruiting class – has kept his recruitment close to the vest. Florida State, Ohio State, Ole Miss, Rutgers and Texas A&M are widely believed to be his top contenders, however.

While defensive line coach Larry Johnson has impressed upon Malone the lack of a one-technique nose guard on the current roster, the biggest thing working against the Buckeyes, who welcomed Malone to campus for last season's 28-17

win over Penn State, is his desire to play baseball at the next level, as well. Ohio State doesn't often allow players to play two sports in college, unless it's a skill-position player running track.

The Buckeyes do, however, have a fellow Crusader on the roster in the form of sophomore defensive end Javontae Jean-Baptiste. He's been extremely involved in Malone's recruitment, and their relationship might help Ohio State win the battle against programs offering him the chance to play baseball.

The Buckeyes already have a pair of commitments at defensive tackle in Streetsboro, Ohio, four-star Mike Hall and Manassas (Va.) Unity Reed four-star Tyleik Williams, but they want to finish strong along the defensive line with pledges from Malone and Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, whom most project to move inside in college.

Commits Flip To All-American Bowl

Williams and Philadelphia St. Joseph's four-star wide receiver Marvin Harrison became the latest Ohio State commits to announce their intentions of playing in the 2021 All-American Bowl, doing so on Sept. 20 and 21, respectively.

Both players had previously accepted

invitations to participate in the Under Armour All-America Game, but the two high school showcases happen during the same week and the All-American Bowl is widely considered the more notable event.

The 6-3, 330-pound Williams – who is considered the 10th-best defensive tackle and No. 160 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – committed to the Buckeyes on Aug. 27, filling a need on the interior of the defensive line. The 6-5, 203-pound Harrison, on the other hand, is one of the Buckeyes' longest-tenured commits. He chose Ohio State in October 2019. The son of the Pro Football Hall of Famer by the same name, Harrison is listed as the 21st-best wide receiver and No. 115 prospect overall in the 2021 recruiting class.

With Harrison and Williams in the fold, the All-American Bowl will now feature a nation-leading 12 future Buckeyes. That includes Hall; Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer; Hopewell, Va., five-star running back TreVeyon Henderson; Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep five-star quarterback Kyle McCord; Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal five-star offensive guard Donovan Jackson; St. Louis De Smet four-star cornerback Jakailin Johnson; Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star wide receiver

er Jayden Ballard; Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star cornerback Jordan Hancock; Ironton, Ohio, four-star linebacker Reid Carrico; and Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough four-star running back Evan Pryor.

Their respective decisions also leave Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star offensive guard Ben Christman as the only Ohio State pledge set to play in the Under Armour All-America Game.

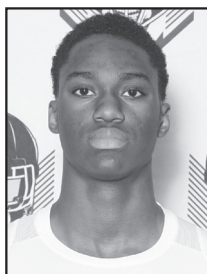
The All-American Bowl is held annually at the Alamodome in San Antonio. Kickoff is scheduled for Jan. 9, 2021, at 1 p.m. EST on NBC. The Under Armour All-American Game, meanwhile, will take place at Camping World Stadium in Orlando on Jan. 7 at 6 p.m. EST. It will be broadcast live on ESPN.

Defensive Tackle Commit Breaks Hand

Hall – who has been pulling double duty at offensive tackle this season – suffered a broken hand during practice on Sept. 17 that will sideline him through the end of the regular season, though he plans to play with a cast on his right arm when Streetsboro opens the playoffs on Oct. 9.

"I went to pancake the defensive back, and he rolled over me," Hall told cleveland.com. "I heard it pop, but I really didn't think about it when it happened. I

Continued On Page 16



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Commits Looking To Hold Unofficial Get-Together

Continued From Page 15

talked to my trainer, and she was saying it didn't look broken, but she was just saying that to be optimistic, really."

The 6-3, 290-pound Hall – who is considered the fourth-best defensive tackle and No. 54 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – committed to Ohio State on Feb. 1. He had recorded 24 tackles and nine tackles for loss in three games for the Rockets this season.

Ohio State Commits Eye Buckeye Bash

As a result of the extended dead period, Oklahoma five-star quarterback Caleb Williams organized an unofficial gathering of the Sooners' pledges and top targets on campus in early August. And while the football facilities were locked and they could not meet with the coaching staff, it offered those prospects a chance to hang out and take an unguided tour of campus.

Naturally, several Ohio State commits caught wind of the event and are now in the process of scheduling their own version of the Sooner Summit this fall.

Not to be confused with the program's inaugural Buckeye Bash and BBQ, which was a program-sponsored event held inside Ohio Stadium in June 2019, the Buckeye Bash will be hosted by Sawyer. The hope is for him to host as many 2021 commits as possible at home in Pickerington, as well as several out-of-state targets, including Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka; Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary five-star Tristan Leigh; and Tuimolouau.

At its core, the Buckeye Bash would not be all that different from the visit conducted by 2022 Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona three-star tight end Bennett Christian in August. He toured campus with his father and had lunch with freshman cornerback and family friend Lejond Cavazos then committed to Ohio State on Sept. 1.



ANDREW LIND

LEADERSHIP ROLE – Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer is hoping to host several other Ohio State commits and top targets at his home in the near future.

Michigan Legacy High On Ohio State

Grosse Point (Mich.) South five-star cornerback Will Johnson trimmed his long list of scholarship offers on Sept. 16, listing Ohio State in his top 10 alongside Alabama, Arizona State, Georgia, Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Penn

State, Stanford and USC.

The 6-3, 190-pound Johnson is considered the third-best cornerback and No. 8 prospect overall in the 2022 recruiting cycle after he recorded 21 tackles, eight pass breakups and two tackles for loss for the Blue Devils last season. He also added 600 yards and eight touchdowns

as a receiver, as well as a punt return for a touchdown.

Day and defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs extended an offer to Johnson during a virtual tour of campus in April, and the Buckeyes are very much in the thick of his recruitment despite him being the son of former Wolverines

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cornerback Deon Johnson (1991-94) and growing up with Michigan paraphernalia around his house.

Johnson hopes to take his first physical visit to Ohio State when the extended dead period comes to an end.

St. Louis Receiver Trims List To Five

St. Louis Cardinal Ritter College Prep five-star wide receiver Luther Burden listed Ohio State in his top five on Sept. 19 alongside Alabama, Georgia, Missouri and Oklahoma.

The 6-2, 194-pound Burden – who is considered the second-best wide receiver and No. 14 prospect overall in the class of 2022 – landed an offer from wide receivers coach Brian Hartline in April. He has never been to campus, but it's no surprise to see the Buckeyes make the cut given their ties to his hometown.

Ohio State has landed a prospect from the St. Louis area in three consecutive recruiting cycles, including Christian Brothers College four-star wide receivers Kamryn Babb and Cameron Brown in 2018; Burden's former teammate, Cardinal Ritter College four-star wide receiver Jameson Williams in 2019; and Maryland Heights (Mo.) Pattonville Senior four-star Mookie Cooper in 2020. The Buckeyes also hold a commitment from Jakailin Johnson.

Wide receiver isn't a position of significant need after Ohio State signed four top-100 receivers last cycle and subsequently landed commitments from Harrison and Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star Jayden Ballard, so Hartline can be selective in his pursuit of players at the position in 2022.

That said, Burden is expected to make his college decision in the coming weeks, and that doesn't bode well for the Buckeyes.

The Sooners currently hold 100 percent of the 247Sports crystal ball predictions, including one from director of recruiting Steve Wilfong.

If Ohio State does miss out on Burden, the staff will turn its attention to players such as Del Valle, Texas, five-star Caleb Burton; Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star C.J. Williams; Chicago St. Rita four-star Kaleb Brown; and Lewisville, Texas, four-star Armani Winfield.

Offensive Tackle Target Reveals Top Schools

Daleville (Va.) Lord Botetourt five-star offensive tackle Gunner Givens listed Ohio State in his Top 12 on Sept. 20 alongside Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Penn State, South Carolina

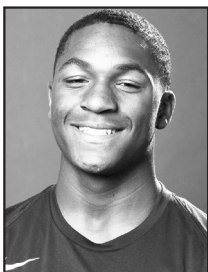
and Virginia Tech.

The 6-6, 275-pound Givens is considered the top-ranked offensive tackle and No. 21 prospect overall in the class of 2022, though he has yet to take a snap at the position after transitioning from tight end this offseason. Still, the Buckeyes have been in contact with him since April and extended a scholarship offer on Aug. 10.

Givens has never been to campus but has family in nearby Miamisburg, Ohio. He FaceTimes with offensive line coach Greg Studrawa and offensive graduate assistant Kennedy Cook almost daily, and their growing relationship is the main reason he holds Ohio State in such high regard.

The Buckeyes already hold a commitment from West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star Tegra Tshabola, but offensive tackle will remain one of the staff's top priorities for 2022 – especially after they missed out on Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star J.C. Latham, who picked Alabama in June, and with Leigh trending toward LSU.

Other names to keep in mind at the position include Lynchburg (Va.) Liberty Christian Academy five-star Zach Rice; Strongsville, Ohio, four-star Blake Miller; and Charlestown, Ind., four-star Kiyaunta Goodwin.



Luther Burden

Recruiting Department Unaffected By Budget Deficit

Despite Ohio State's athletic department facing a projected \$107 million deficit for the 2021 fiscal year, athletic director Gene Smith stressed the importance of maintaining its edge on the recruiting trail, particularly when it comes to keeping up with the likes of Alabama and Clemson.

"You have to keep up relative to recruiting, first and foremost," Smith said during a teleconference with reporters on Sept. 24. "You never touch your coaches (or) recruiting that – at the end of the day – are critical (to the Buckeyes' competitive edge)."

Ohio State announced that morning that it was cutting 25 full-time positions, placing 345 staff members on a furlough of some length. Forty-seven contracted workers were also asked to take a 5 percent pay cut, including football coach Ryan Day, men's basketball coach Chris Holtmann and women's basketball coach Kevin McGuff.

More on Ohio State's projected budget shortfall can be found on page 4 of this issue.

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

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1990

With one year of eligibility remaining for Carlos Snow, two for Dante Lee and three for Robert Smith and Raymont Harris, Ohio State fans had plenty of reasons to wonder why the Buckeyes were courting multiple tailbacks in the 1990 recruiting season.

The answer for Ohio state was fairly simple: Any team that wants to win cannot have too many talented tailbacks.

For that reason, OSU coach John Cooper and his staff were making big pushes for tailbacks Ki-Jana Carter of Westerville (Ohio) South and Stephen Pitts of Middletown (N.J.) South.

Carter wasn't a new name on Ohio State's radar, as he was largely considered one of the best backs in America right out of OSU's back yard. Pitts, the second-ranked back in the nation, was new to the Buckeye board.

"I would have to say he is the most complete high school running back I have ever seen," Middletown South head coach Robert Generelli told BSB. "He has exceptional speed, he can cut on a dime, he can catch the ball and he blocks with authority."

When asked if Ohio State would be on his eventual list of favorites, Pitts told BSB that there was no doubt about it.

"Oh yes, definitely," he said. "Ohio State is a school that I am very interested in. I know a lot about the school, and I'd like to know even more."

However, as Pitts was just kicking off his senior campaign in late September, he had yet to narrow down his interest to a definitive list.

"But seriously, I'd like to know more about a lot of other schools, too. I just don't want to commit to a certain number right now. I've got the season to think about. The time will come later for choices as far as college is concerned."

25 Years Ago – 1995

Close to 50 of the top high school football recruits from Ohio and as far away as North Carolina and Georgia were on hand as Ohio State dismantled Notre Dame 45-26 on Sept. 30 at Ohio Stadium.

Of course, topping the list of players at the game were several of Ohio's brightest stars, including Westerville South linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer, Dublin Scioto running back Nick Goings, Columbus DeSales running backs Gary Berry and Cincinnati Colerain offensive lineman Jefferson Kelley.

Coming from out of state were Muncie (Ind.) Central running back Eddie Faulkner; Indianapolis Warren Central linebacker Damian Chaubet; Norcross, Ga., linebacker George Harper; Clemons (N.C.) West Forsyth wide receiver Titcus Pettigrew; and his teammate, defensive back Donny Williams.

20 Years Ago – 2000

Heavy rains put a damper on festivities for the OSU-Penn State game, which was attended by at least 20 high school football prospects.

Easily the top name at the Penn State game was Columbus Brookhaven running back Maurice Hall. The 5-10, 183-pound Hall was enjoying a monster senior season through five games, racking up 1,086 yards and 20 touchdowns on 105 carries.

Rated Ohio's fourth-best prospect by Bill Kurelic of The Ohio Football Recruiting News and the nation's No. 9 running back by Rivals100.com, Hall was considering Florida State, Georgia Tech, Notre Dame, Ohio State and Penn State and planned to take visits to all five schools following the end of his high school season. However, he decided to slip in an unofficial visit to Columbus to see the Buckeyes dominate the Nittany Lions 45-6.

15 Years Ago – 2005

Three visitors stood out from among the crowd of prep football players on hand in Ohio Stadium to watch Ohio State's shelving of Iowa. There was the usual array of Buckeye commitments and in-state stars in attendance for the home matchup, but three out-of-staters on OSU's wish list highlighted the afternoon.

The top name from the group was Lemoore, Calif., star David Ausberry, a prototypical wide receiver at 6-4 and 213 pounds. Rivals.com rated him the nation's third-best receiver in the class of 2006 and the No. 23 overall player regardless of position.

Also making an official visit for the game was Clearwater (Fla.) Catholic linebacker Colin McCarthy. Rated by Rivals.com as the nation's No. 21 outside linebacker, McCarthy made Ohio State the first of his official visits.

Finally, Merrillville, Ind., defensive tackle Dexter Larimore took in the action on an unofficial visit, having recently received a scholarship offer from the Buckeyes.

10 Years Ago – 2010

As Ohio State played host to lowly Eastern Michigan, it did the same to cornerback prospect Jabari Gorman. The three-star prospect from Monsignor Pace High School in Miami was accompanied by his mother, Carolyn, for a surprise official visit to Columbus.

Although Gorman departed Sept. 26 without having issued a verbal commitment, the weekend was an overall positive one for him and his mother. While on the OSU campus, the Gormans got to spend time with head coach Jim Tressel, safeties coach Paul Haynes, cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson and receivers coach Darrell Hazell.

"The visit was great, and my mom and I enjoyed it a lot," Gorman told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "I got a chance to talk

to all the coaches, and my mom and I got to sit down with Jim Tressel this morning. We both were very impressed by him. He talked about the type of people they produce and about me as a man more than just a football player. That was the main point of his talk.

"My mom liked it a lot, and we will be talking more about things on the way home and when we get home. It was nice seeing all the coaches again, like Coach Haynes, Coach Johnson and Coach Hazell. They're all really good guys."

Five Years Ago – 2015

It had been reported Sept. 9 that defensive tackle Malik Barrow planned to enroll early at Ohio State, but a Twitter post sent by OSU head coach Urban Meyer on Sept. 18 made it official.

"Congrats to Malik Barrow for signing his midyear agreement and joining the family! Go Bucks!" Meyer wrote.

The midyear agreement, which allowed schools to have unlimited contact with the player and publicly mention them as well, was the equivalent of a national letter of intent for players who were enrolling early. It bound the school to the player but not the player to the school, meaning Ohio State had to give Barrow a scholarship if he wanted it, but also that Barrow would still technically be able to enroll elsewhere if he so desired.

When Barrow inked his deal, he became the fourth such player in Ohio State's class to do so, joining Gahanna (Ohio) Lincoln defensive end Jonathon Cooper, Fort Wayne (Ind.) Bishop Luers wide receiver Austin Mack and Bolingbrook, Ill., linebacker Tuf Borland.

One Year Ago – 2019

Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral four-star quarterback Jack Miller had been one of the more vocal members of Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class in an effort to get some of the best prospects in the country to join him in Columbus.

However, Miller fielded questions through September about the strength of his pledge with the Buckeyes actively looking to add another signal caller in the 2020 class for depth purposes. He took to Twitter on Sept. 27 to shut down any rumors of discontent between the two parties.

"All the speculation, I'm solid," Miller wrote.

Miller's father, Jack Sr., also weighed in on the situation.

"All of the talk about another 2020 (quarterback) was inevitable," the elder Miller wrote... "Jack will compete with all comers, and we have been informed of prospects. Doesn't change anything, the trust in the process or his coaches. He is ready to compete."

Buckeyes, Fighting Irish Finally Meet After 60 Years

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Throughout the fall, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be "playing" its 40th Anniversary football season with recaps of the biggest Ohio State games of each corresponding week in our publishing history. The following is coverage of the 1995 clash with Notre Dame, one of the most highly anticipated college football games since the 1935 "Game of the Century" between the two traditional powers. Anticipation was so high that we are reprinting this preview of the game along with game coverage. Additional features about the game will be posted at BuckeyeSports.com on Thursday, Oct. 1.

After years of anticipation, it is finally here: It is Notre Dame week.

The Fighting Irish will invade Ohio Stadium for only the second time ever Sept. 30, primed for a showdown with Ohio State.

The two tradition-rich Midwest football powers have been kept apart since a pair of games played in 1935 and '36. Notre Dame won both of those games, including the '35 game labeled as "The Game of the Century."

The Irish rallied on that fateful day to score three fourth-quarter touchdowns and knock off a powerful Ohio State team 18-13 before a then record crowd of 81,018.

Now, some 60 years later, another Ohio Stadium record crowd well in excess of 95,000 is expected for the latest chapter of this rivalry.

This OSU-Notre Dame series – the Buckeyes will complete a two-year contract by visiting South Bend, Ind., next year – was announced by then-OSU athletic director Rick Bay in the mid-1980s.

Ever since that point the anticipation of who will win the showdown has raged. Ticket brokers are commanding upwards of \$1,000 for good seats. OSU-Notre Dame hats, T-shirts and other souvenirs have literally been flying off local shelves since they were introduced last spring.

For Ohio State, this heavily hyped showdown with 15th-rated Notre Dame (3-1) is almost a double-edged sword. OSU (3-0) is seventh in this week's Associated Press poll after posting a 54-14 win at Pittsburgh on Sept. 23.

The Buckeyes seemingly need an impressive showing to maintain their national ranking. But their real season – the Big Ten season – begins the following week with a trip to defending champion Penn State. That game has immediate Rose Bowl implications.

And, throughout the preseason and the first three games, OSU coach John Cooper has worked hard to keep his team focused on the task at hand and not worrying about the Notre Dame game.

Now, with the game just hours away, Cooper and his players alike are excited about the prospect of teeing it up against Notre Dame, certainly the nation's pre-eminent college football program.

When asked whether his team's emphatic win at Pitt would serve as a message to the Irish, Cooper replied:

"I don't think we sent a message at all, other than we hope there'll be two good football teams playing in Columbus next week. They had a great victory over Texas, which I thought would happen. You're going to see them get better and hopefully we'll get better."

"The message is loud and clear that the place will be rocking over in Columbus next week," he said.

The Buckeyes, who oddsmakers have installed as an early 6½-point favorite, are also pumped about the chance to lock up with the Irish.

"I think from a player's standpoint, it's a relief to be able to talk about that game," said OSU quarterback and co-captain Bobby Hoying. "(Before) you were so afraid that if you even said something about the Notre Dame game, people would say you're looking ahead."

"The game is here finally. We're undefeated. We've done our part to make it as big a game as we can and we're just looking forward to it."

The Buckeyes go into the Notre Dame game on a roll as they scored 34 unanswered points in the second half to squash Pitt. Wide receiver Terry Glenn racked up a school-record 253 yards receiving and four touchdowns to key the win.

But OSU tailback and co-captain Eddie George, a vital cog in OSU's previous wins over Boston College and Washington, said the Buckeyes still have room to improve.

"We still haven't shown everything we can do," George said.

When asked if the Notre Dame game would be the time to show it, he replied: "Hopefully. It wouldn't be a bad time. Notre Dame just beat Texas bad. We're going to have our hands full."

Coming off a dismal 6-5-1 season last year, Notre Dame was hyped as a national championship contender in the preseason. Some polls had the Irish in the top five, while AP had ND ranked ninth headed into its season opener at Northwestern.

But the Wildcats, longtime Big Ten doormats, jumped up and bit the Irish 17-15 on Sept. 2 at Notre Dame Stadium.

Notre Dame rebounded with a 35-28 win at Purdue, but the excitement from that win was tempered by the news that ND coach Lou Holtz needed immediate spinal surgery at the Mayo Clinic to correct a disk problem in his neck.

Holtz underwent the operation on Sept. 12 and was to miss coaching the Irish for at least three-plus weeks. In his absence, defensive coordinator Bob Davie was appointed as the acting head coach.

Holtz watched ND's easy 41-0 win over Vanderbilt on Sept. 16 from his home in South Bend, but he recovered enough to attend the Irish's 55-27 win over 13th-ranked Texas on Sept. 23.

Now, with the OSU-Notre Dame game approaching and Holtz looking forward to a chance to return to Ohio Stadium for the first time since he served as an assistant coach on OSU's 1968 national championship team, he said he will attend the game but will likely watch from the press box.

"I really and truly want to be on the sideline for that game, and the only reason I want to is because the crowd is going to be so loud and the environment very hostile," Holtz said.

Holtz wandered down to the sideline for the closing moments of his team's win over Texas.

"I went down there for the final minute and I was very uneasy about it. But a week can make a big difference. At the present time, I don't plan on being down there."

"I'm just, what, 12 days from major surgery. I promised Notre Dame and our doctors that I'm not going to do anything foolish," he said.

Davie said Holtz's presence has served as an inspiration for the Irish.

"Just having Coach Holtz back is important to all of us," Davie said. "The football team responded to that and I know the coaches did. More important than just the football part of it is the fact that he's back and he's healthy, the surgery was successful and you got a chance to see that firsthand."

The Holtz ailment struck the Irish at a tough time: The OSU game is the second of three straight ND has against ranked opponents. The Irish visit Washington on Oct. 7.

"We're at a point right now in our schedule where I don't think anybody in the country would have the kind of schedule we have," Davie said. "We've got our hands full, but everybody feels a lot better about themselves now."

But Holtz, who contributed to the Irish legend on his own with a national title in 1988, is bewildered by his team's showing this year.

"This game means a lot to me coming from the state of Ohio, but this game means a lot to us because we're just trying to get up off the ground," said Holtz, who earned his 200th coaching win in the victory at Purdue.

Notre Dame boasts a nice passing combination of junior quarterback Ron Powlus and senior split end Derrick Mayes.

Last year, Powlus set a school record with 19 touchdown passes. This year, he has begun to live up to a lot of his hype, completing 64.9 percent of his passes for 900 yards and six touchdowns against three interceptions.

"I think there are certain situations that happened last year that were the first time for him," said ND offensive coordinator Dave Roberts. "He's starting to react to those situations better."

Mayes has been borderline spectacular with the Irish. This year, he has already hauled in 24 passes and scored twice.

"I don't know if he is the most talented receiver I've ever seen, but he may be the most productive," Holtz said.

The problem for the Irish is Mayes sees double coverage everywhere he goes. Relieving the burden from his is an ongoing problem, Holtz said.

"We don't have the big-play capabilities," Holtz claimed. "We don't have anybody on our team right now (other than Mayes) that will require double coverage or has the speed to go deep."

Sophomore tailback Randy Kinder has become the star of the running attack. He began the year platooned with junior Robert Farmer, but Farmer tore ligaments in his knee in the Vandy game and will miss a month.

Kinder, meanwhile, broke open the Purdue game with an electrifying 52-yard touchdown run and followed that up with 110 yards against Vandy and 129 yards against Texas.

Defensively, Notre Dame came into the season with just four returning starters, two on the line (end Renaldo Wynn and nose guard Paul Grasmanis) and two in the secondary (cornerback Shawn Wooden and strong safety Brian Magee).

"We know we have a problem there and we're trying to address it," Holtz said. "We've given up more big plays than we've ever given up, and yet we've been in less man (coverage) than any other time also."

The match-up between his defensive front and OSU's massive offensive line, which averages 295 pounds, concerns Holtz. George, who is averaging 26 carries and 144 yards rushing per game, has also caught Holtz's eye.

"Ohio State is very big up front (offensively) and we are very small up front. With George, they may have the premier back in the country. He's proven."

Prior to the season, Holtz and his coaching staff took the Irish to nearby Culver Military Academy for a leadership seminar/boot camp that Holtz referred to as "Camp Mea Culpa." But the result – the stunning first loss to Northwestern in 33 years – was not favorable.

"We put a lot into this preseason when we went down to Culver and then we lost to Northwestern and that was just devastating to our emotions," Davie said.

But ND's acting head coach believes the Irish are about to turn the corner.

"From where I sit, quite honestly, I see us

becoming a pretty dominant offensive football team," Davie said. "Defensively, I see us being about where I thought we would be. I see it as a week-to-week situation based on who we're playing and how we match up sizewise and talentwise."

Cooper agrees that Holtz and his staff are close to putting all the pieces together again at South Bend.

"Lou's done a great job everywhere he's coached – at Arkansas, Minnesota and Notre Dame," the OSU coach said. "Obviously, Notre Dame's got great talent. You guys (the media) every year say Notre Dame has the best recruiting class. They're going to be a quality football team, no question about it."

Holtz said he relishes the memories he has of his one season with the Buckeyes, although if he had his way he would never have coached at OSU.

"I didn't want to come to Ohio State," he said. "The day I got the offer to come there I also got an offer to go to Georgia Tech, which would have been better for my family. But my family in Ohio found out I had an offer from Ohio State and they wanted me to look into it."

Holtz left OSU in 1969 to become head coach at William & Mary. He then moved on to North Carolina State and was at Arkansas when Woody Hayes was fired after the 1978 season.

"When Coach Hayes was relieved of his duties, I was contacted by Hugh Hindman, the athletic director there who I had coached with on that staff in '68. He called me and said they would like for me to apply for the job. They were very interested in me and would like to interview me."

"But they were also going to interview five other people, and I said I didn't think that would be fair to the people at Arkansas to go through an interview process. I had coached there, they knew me and they knew what I was all about. They said it would definitely be an interviewing process along with five other guys, and that's the closest I ever came," he said.

For now, though, he is content to coach the Irish. And while Notre Dame may be enduring a maddening year and Holtz is up to his usual sandbagging self, you can be sure he and his assistants will have the Irish ready for what could be called "Game of the Century II."

"The thing I remember the most – I'm sort of a history buff – was when I found out that my college coach (at Kent State), Trevor Rees, was a starting end on the 1935 Ohio State football team that lost to Notre Dame, I went to his office and said, 'Coach, they tell me you were the starting end in that great game.'

"He got so mad he wouldn't even talk about it, and that was like 40 years later. I know Ohio State has looked forward to this game."

"When they were getting ready for Boston College, I would have articles sent to me where John Cooper would say, 'We can't worry about Notre Dame. We're playing a team that devoured Notre Dame.' But I think it's pretty obvious. The demands for tickets for this game have been incredible."

"There will be an air in this stadium that I don't think will be duplicated very many times in your career. But the irony of it is, this is the best Ohio State team John Cooper has had. This may be the best Ohio State team since '68 when they won the national championship."

"I mean, with George, (Terry) Glenn and Hoying and a great defense and a great kicking game they're definitely one of the top teams in the country. Our players should be pretty excited about it," he said.

This story originally appeared in the Sept. 30, 1995, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Notre Dame Game Sheds Light On The Unexpected

By STEVE HELWAGEN

The big games, it seems, always hinge on the little things and unexpected heroes.

Ohio State's first-ever win over Notre Dame, a 45-26 decision played before a record crowd of 95,537 on Sept. 30 at Ohio Stadium, was no different.

Notre Dame (3-2) committed three costly turnovers in a span of six minutes in the third quarter, opening the door for Ohio State (4-0) to come from behind and score the mega win.

"We had turnovers, and turnovers lose ball games," said ND quarterback Ron Powlus, who threw an interception and fumbled a snap during the game's critical moments.

OSU had at least a trio of unexpected heroes. They would include:

- Backup wide receiver Dimitrious Stanley, who curled around ND's Shawn Wooden to make a miraculous grab of a much-needed touchdown pass from Bobby Hoying that trimmed the Irish halftime lead to 17-14.

- Punt snapper Dean Kreuzer, a walk-on who raced downfield to recover a muffed punt by ND's Emmett Mosley at the Irish 19-yard line. That set up OSU's go-ahead touchdown, coming on a 15-yard pass from Hoying to tight end Rickey Dudley.

- Defensive tackle Matt Bonhaus, a sixth-year player and co-captain who pounced on the botched center exchange between ND's Rick Kaczynski and Powlus. That set up a five-yard TD run by Eddie George, which gave the Buckeyes breathing room at 35-20 with 14:55 left in the game.

Ohio State also had some expected heroes make an impact as the Buckeyes won the first meeting between these two tradition-rich schools in 59 years.

Topping that list would be George, who carried for 207 yards and two touchdowns on 32 attempts. He extended his own mark in rushing for his fourth career 200-yard game, two more than any other player in Ohio State history.

"In the first half, they were moving the ball against our defense and offensively we hadn't settled down and played our game," George said. "We didn't panic. We're a veteran ball team. We had been in that situation before we just had to relax and play our game."

"In the second half, they were making mistakes and we capitalized on them," he said.

Hoying also shone brightly before the packed house and a national television audience, completing 14 of 22 passes for 272 yards and four touchdowns with no interceptions.

"We're just playing really smart right now," Hoying said. "We're not trying to do too much, and when we got our breaks in the second half we did take advantage of them."

And Terry Glenn, OSU's emerging threat at flanker, had another big day. After setting a school record with 253 yards receiving the week before at Pittsburgh, Glenn came back with four catches for 128 yards and a pair of scores against the Irish. Glenn's 82-yard TD catch from Hoying gave OSU a 28-20 lead late in the third quarter.

"I was worried about that with Notre Dame coming in and giving me double coverage, but they didn't," Glenn said. "They didn't give me double coverage at all. They stayed single coverage on me."

Ohio State fell behind Notre Dame by deficits of 10-0 and 17-7 in the first half. But the Buckeyes beat the Irish by wearing them down up front. OSU outscored ND 31-9 after intermission to seize the game.

"Ohio State played a great football game," said Notre Dame coach Lou Holtz, a former

OSU assistant coach under Woody Hayes and a key story surrounding this match-up. Holtz, who underwent spinal surgery on Sept. 12, originally planned to coach the game from the press box. But he actively coached the Irish from the sideline wearing a neck brace.

"I thought their offense was outstanding," Holtz said. "They didn't have a penalty that was called. I'm not inferring that there were penalties that weren't. I'm just saying they didn't have a penalty, they didn't have a turnover and they converted on third down."

After one quarter, the expected shootout between Ohio State and Notre Dame had not materialized. Through 15 minutes of this titanic struggle, the Buckeyes and Fighting Irish had played to a scoreless tie.

The Buckeyes threatened on the second possession, moving the ball 60 yards to the ND 3-yard line. But Hoying could not connect with Dudley on a fourth-down pass into the end zone and the Buckeyes lost possession.

"That's the kind of play where you want the ball back in your hands right away," Hoying said. "I think I could have run it, at least for the first down. We were lucky. We were able to come back from that. If we put that in, that changes the complexity of the first half."

Notre Dame then moved almost the entire length of the field, almost exclusively on the ground behind tailback Randy Kinder and fullback Marc Edwards, but had to settle for a 20-yard Kevin Kopka field goal and a 3-0 lead with 14:50 left in the first half.

After an OSU punt, Powlus went to work. Powlus, who ended up 13 of 26 passing for 243 yards, hit Edwards for a 30-yard gain down the middle of the field. A roughing-the-passer penalty on OSU moved the ball to the OSU 9. Three plays later, Kinder, who finished with 143 yards on 28 carries, scored the first of his three touchdowns to give ND a 10-0 lead with 11:25 left in the first half.

Ohio State, now 0 for 3 on possessions, needed an answer. Better yet, they needed a big play to get the antsy crowd back into the game.

They got both as split end Buster Tillman hauled in a short Hoying pass and rolled for a 51-yard gain to the ND 28. Five plays later, Hoying hit Glenn on a 10-yard slant for OSU's first touchdown, cutting the ND lead to 10-7 with 8:08 left in the half.

Notre Dame went back to the ground, and it seemed like it had OSU's number by pounding Kinder and Edwards. The Irish put together what looked like an easy eight-play, 65-yard drive, capped by Kinder's seven-yard TD run, to take a 17-7 lead with 4:31 left in the half.

"I thought we would be able to play with them as long as we could mix it up between the pass and the run," Holtz said.

Ohio State then engineered a critical 12-play, 76-yard scoring march just before halftime. Hoying converted one third-down situation by scrambling for eight yards and then converted a fourth-down predicament by passing to Glenn for 10 yards. The touchdown came on a 17-yard pass from Hoying to Stanley, where he broke around Wooden and made the diving play to cut ND's lead to three at the break.

"We needed a touchdown," said Stanley, who has now caught eight passes in four games. "We couldn't go in like it was. That was a big play."

"It wasn't a bad throw. It was in the end zone, and when you're in the end zone, you can expect there is going to be a defensive back on you and you have to go up and get the ball. That's all that happened. I just turned a little quicker than the defensive back. I was there and I was ready to catch the ball."

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 45, Notre Dame 26

Sept. 30, 1995 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, OH

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
NOTRE DAME	0	17	3	6	26
OHIO STATE	0	14	14	17	45

Second Quarter

ND – Kopka, 20-yard field goal, 14:50 (16 plays, 95 yards).
ND – Kinder, 3-yard run (Kopka kick), 11:25 (7 plays, 61 yards).
OSU – Glenn, 10-yard pass from B. Hoying (Jo. Jackson kick), 8:08 (7 plays, 80 yards).
ND – Kinder, 7-yard run (Kopka kick), 4:31 (8 plays, 65 yards).
OSU – Stanley, 17-yard pass from B. Hoying (Jo. Jackson kick), 0:44 (12 plays, 76 yards).

Third Quarter

ND – Kopka, 22-yard field goal, 9:14 (17 plays, 76 yards).
OSU – Dudley, 15-yard pass from B. Hoying (Jo. Jackson kick), 5:06 (3 plays, 19 yards).
OSU – Glenn, 82-yard pass from B. Hoying (Jo. Jackson kick), 1:20 (3 plays, 89 yards).

Fourth Quarter

OSU – George, 5-yard run (Jo. Jackson kick), 14:55 (3 plays, 14 yards).
ND – Kinder, 13-yard run (run failed), 12:55 (6 plays, 65 yards).
OSU – George, 3-yard run (Jo. Jackson kick), 11:24 (4 plays, 80 yards).
OSU – Jo. Jackson, 35-yard field goal, 6:09 (7 plays, 13 yards).

Att. – 95,537

Team Statistics

	ND	OSU
First Downs	21	24
Rushing	12	15
Passing	9	9
Penalty	0	0
Rushes-Yards	47-204	48-261
Passing Yards	243	272
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	13-26-1	14-22-0
Offensive Plays	73	70
Total Net Yards	447	533
Third Down Efficiency	7-15	7-14
Punts-Avg.	3-39.3	3-35.3
Fumbles-Lost	5-2	0-0
Penalties	1-5	2-14
Time of Possession	28:23	31:37

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – **ND**: Kinder 28-143; Edwards 12-49; Powlus 4-6; C. Stokes 1-4; Mosley 1-3; Denson 1-(-1). **OSU**: George 32-207; Pearson 7-29; B. Hoying 4-14; Je. Jackson 3-8; Sualua 2-3.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – **ND**: Powlus 13-26-1-243-0. **OSU**: B. Hoying 14-22-0-272-4.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – **ND**: Mayes 5-125; Mosley 3-21; Edwards 2-48; Chryplewicz 2-41; Denson 1-8. **OSU**: Glenn 4-128; George 3-22; Tillman 2-61; Dudley 2-35; Sualua 2-9; Stanley 1-17.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – **ND**: H. Smith 3-39.3-48. **OSU**: Bartholomew 3-35.3-41.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Avg.-Long.) – **ND**: Mosley 1-0.0-0. **OSU**: Springs 1-4.0-4.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Avg.-Long.) – **ND**: Mosley 3-16.7-23; Denson 3-8.3-22. **OSU**: Springs 3-24.7-28; Glenn 1-14.0-14.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES – **ND**: None. **OSU**: Bonhaus, Kreuzer.

INTERCEPTIONS – **ND**: None. **OSU**: Springs.

TACKLES FOR LOSS – **ND**: Berry, Grasmanis, Bennett, Team. **OSU**: Vrabel (2), Team (2), Fickell, Johnson, Finkes.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – **ND**: Cobbins 5-9-14; Wynn 6-4-10; Berry 5-5-10; Tatum 4-5-9; Grasmanis 2-6-8; Magee 4-2-6; Moore 0-6-6; Covington 3-2-5; Rossum 2-3-5; Wooden 2-3-5; Bennett 2-3-5; Minor 3-0-3; McLaughlin 1-0-1; Carretta 1-0-1; Wagasy 1-0-1; Mitoulas 1-0-1; Team 1-0-1; C. Stokes 1-0-1. **OSU**: Bellisari 4-8-12; Fickell 6-4-10; R. Miller 5-5-10; Springs 7-1-8; Gwinn 5-3-8; Howard 3-5-8; Vrabel 3-5-8; Johnson 4-3-7; Kelly 1-6-7; Finkes 2-2-4; Moore 1-2-3; Bonhaus 0-3-3; Team 2-0-2; Winfield 1-0-1; Malfatt 1-0-1; Colson 0-1-1; Baird 0-1-1.

Players In The Game

ND – Mayes, Johnson, Clevenger, Zeigler, Kaczynski, Leahy, Leahy, Rosenthal, Chryplewicz, Wallace, Mosley, Sollmann, Stafford, Powlus, Edwards, Thorne, Kinder, Denson, C. Stokes, Wynn, Grasmanis, Quist, Bennett, Minor, McLaughlin, Berry, Wagasy, Cobbins, Tatum, Wooden, Covington, Moore, Monahan, Magee, Rossum, H. Smith, Kopka, Carretta, Foes, McCullough, Babey, Mitoulas, Howard, Kramer, Goode.

OSU – Tillman, Stanley, D. Miller, Carter, Pace, Burris, Sumner, Porter, Daniels, Kuszmaul, Gohlstein, Dudley, Houser, B. Hoying, S. Jackson, Sualua, Calhoun, Jenkins, George, Pearson, Je. Jackson, Glenn, Finkes, Bonhaus, Garnett, Fickell, Vrabel, Johnson, Bellisari, R. Miller, Springs, Winfield, Gwinn, Moore, Kelly, Bryant, Howard, Bartholomew, Jo. Jackson, Malfatt, Kreuzer, Jacobs, Lumpkin, Heinen, Shavers, Stoughton, Stillwell, Connery, Willis, Colson, Baird, McClellion.

Notre Dame had the ball to start the second half and again looked poised to run over the Buckeyes. Powlus completed a pair of passes each to Mosley and his top target, Derrick Mayes. But, as ND neared the OSU goal line, the Buckeye defense stiffened. OSU's Mike Vrabel popped Edwards on third-and-goal at the 2, causing a fumble. Edwards recovered it at the 4, but the Irish were forced to settle for a 22-yard Kopka field goal and a 20-14 lead with 9:14 left in the third quarter.

The Irish defense forced an Ohio State punt. Mosley signaled for a fair catch but at the last second had to adjust to the ball as OSU

special teams whiz Alonzo Shavers whizzed by. Mosley muffed the punt and Kreuzer, hustling down after snapping the ball, pounced on it at the ND 19.

"They punted and it looked like Emmett was interfered with," Holtz said. "He had to adjust to it and he waved for a fair catch, but I don't know and I'm not saying (he was). But that was a big play."

Even bigger, though, was OSU's impending third-down conversion. Facing third-and-six at the Irish 15, Hoying hit Dudley over the

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Comeback Against Notre Dame Marks Turning Point

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State had not faced off against Notre Dame on the gridiron since 1936 until the Irish came to Columbus for a showdown between two teams ranked in the top 15 in 1995.

"The hype was unbelievable," former Ohio State quarterback Stanley Jackson told BSB. "It had been, I don't know, 60 years or so since Notre Dame had been in the Horseshoe. So it was pretty significant hype around that. I remember ticket prices being ridiculous. I remember that the secondary market was unbelievable like \$1,000 a ticket or something like that."

The No. 7 Buckeyes were 3-0 and coming off a 54-14 blowout of Pitt, while No. 15 Notre Dame was 2-1 but riding high after a 55-27 demolition of No. 13 Texas.

"It's probably the biggest home non-league game that they've won in decades," said 247Sports' writer Steve Helwagen, who covered the game for BSB. "It was as big of a nonconference game as I can remember."

Coming off a four-loss season in 1994, Ohio State head coach John Cooper entered his eighth season with the program with aspirations for more. In order to become as respected as they wanted to be, the Buckeyes had to go through Notre Dame, which was coached by Hall of Famer Lou Holtz.

"We hadn't played Notre Dame for some years, so it was built up as an iconic game that way, because it was kind of like a rivalry at one point, with two great schools or two great traditions," former Buckeye running back Pepe Pearson told BSB. "But we hadn't played them in a while. And then you have a great coach on the other side, Lou Holtz. And we had John Cooper, who was also a great coach. So you had two great traditions, two powerhouses going against each other, so there was a lot of built-up anticipation of that game."

After a 9-4 season, Ohio State faced a nonconference slate that featured Boston College, Washington, Pitt and Notre Dame to open the season. Eager to prove themselves after what they viewed as a disappointing '94 campaign, the Buckeyes entered the season with high expectations for themselves.

"We were looking for national respect and recognition," Jackson said. "Going back to the '94 season, we only lost four games. We were embarrassed by Penn State. We lost on the road out in Washington earlier in the year. Illinois came into the Horseshoe and beat us. So there weren't a lot of people who felt like we were going to be good. And we lost some key guys defensively that left early to go into the draft, like Lorenzo Styles and Craig Powell, so we had to fill some big shoes."

"Not a lot of people believed that we could beat teams like that on a national level. And so we did have somewhat of a chip on our shoulder going into the beginning part of that season."

The Scarlet and Gray came into their ultra-hyped matchup with the Irish having outscored their opponents 40.7-13.3 on average. Gaining confidence, the Buckeyes were ready to show the college football world that they belonged in the top tier of football programs.

Notre Dame carried its momentum

from its dismantling of Texas into the first half, however, holding a 17-7 lead until the Buckeyes' final drive before halftime. Ohio State scored to cut the Irish lead to three points at intermission, but Notre Dame drove 76 yards on 17 plays to open the second half and went up six on a field goal.

The Buckeyes picked up one first down on the ensuing drive but had to punt after stalling at their 47-yard line. A high, 34-yard punt changed the entire makeup of the game. Instead of taking over in a decent spot, Notre Dame muffed the punt and Ohio State recovered.

"At that point the student section and the band were all in the northwest corner of the stadium, and I'm looking back across the field when the guy recovered the punt. And it was like everybody in that corner was pointing to the north end zone and the sound was just, I mean, it was as loud of a pop as you could ever imagine," Helwagen told BSB. "And they turned the ball over, and Ohio State had the short field. It was just crazy."

Starting at the Irish 19-yard line, quarterback Bobby Hoying found tight end Rickey Dudley for a touchdown in three plays, converting a third-and-6 from the 15. The score and extra point gave the Buckeyes a 21-20 advantage, and they did not look back.

Following a poor kick return, Notre Dame started on its own 12. Irish quarterback Ron Powlus hit wide receiver Derrick Mayes for a 56-yard pass to set his team up at the OSU 32. Only down one point and in Buckeye territory, Notre Dame had a chance to change the game.

Ohio State defensive tackle Luke Fickell took Powlus down 6 yards in the backfield to set up a third-and-10 opportunity. The pass rush got to Powlus, forcing him to rush his throw, and standout defensive back Shawn Springs intercepted it at the OSU 11.

"With all the top corners that have been taken from Ohio State, I still don't know if we've had a better cornerback than Shawn Springs, to be honest with you," Jackson said. "That's how good he was."

Eventual Heisman Trophy winner Eddie George took two carries for 7 yards to set up a third-and-3 from OSU's 18, which led to the play of the game. If the Buckeyes had failed to convert, they would have needed to punt the ball back to the Irish, giving them good field position.

Instead, standout wide receiver Terry Glenn took a short curl route 82 yards for a game-changing touchdown.

"We had great players like Terry Glenn, who ended up making a play to change the momentum of the game with his long touchdown pass," Pearson said. "I can remember seeing that vividly myself because he caught a curl, and the next thing I know, he turned, and I could see his foot kick up the dirt. And he was gone."

"And they had a big-time defensive back Allen Rossum, who was supposed to be this track star and really fast. And Terry took that curl to the house, and that just changed the whole momentum. It got us going and we started rolling at that point."

Notre Dame elected not to double-cover Glenn, who was coming off a breakout performance against Pitt when he reeled in nine receptions for a school-record 253 yards and four touchdowns the week before. According to Jackson, attempting to defend Glenn one-on-one was more of a

Other Big 40th Anniversary Games

There were several other big games at this time throughout the years, including the following:

1987: The No. 7 Buckeyes traveled to the Bayou and slugged it out with No. 4 LSU before settling for a 13-13 tie. Greg Rogan had two interceptions in the final four minutes, including one with 27 seconds left to give the Buckeyes a chance at the win. However, Matt Frantz missed a 47-yard field goal as time ran out.

1996: In the rematch in South Bend after the Buckeyes defeated Notre Dame for the first time ever the year before, No. 4 Ohio State made it two in a row over the No. 5 Irish. Pepe Pearson carried 29 times for 173 yards and two scores, and the OSU defense stifled QB Ron Powlus in a 29-16 Buckeye victory. Powlus was just 13 of 30 for 154 yards, and he was intercepted twice and sacked four times.

2006: Top-ranked Ohio State passed a key Big Ten road test by downing No. 13 Iowa, 38-17. Troy Smith passed for four touchdowns, including two to Anthony Gonzalez, without an interception to help the Buckeyes hand the Hawkeyes their first loss in five games.

necessity for Notre Dame than negligence.

"For any defensive coordinator, you have to pick your poison," Jackson said. "You're always going to say, 'Well you know what, we're going to make you throw the football.' Woody Hayes would even tell you, 'When you throw the ball, three things can happen and two of them are bad.' Eddie George is in the backfield with his offensive line. Every one of those guys had a shot to play in the NFL, and most of them were drafted."

"Most defensive coordinators are always going to say, 'We have to stop the run first.' And that's what they did, and it created some opportunity to get Terry into some zones and, in man-to-man coverage, to get into space. And he was electric once he was in space. Eddie George also popped a big run in that game too. That offense was a top-five offense in the history of college football."

Putting on such an impressive performance in a hyped-up, nationally televised game against Notre Dame helped open the general public's eyes to just how good the Buckeyes were in '95.

"People remember the big Terry Glenn play," Helwagen said. "I was actually on the sideline taking pictures and was standing right where Lynn Swann and Regis Philbin were doing a quick interview, and then they had the Terry Glenn play happen right during that. They came back to Regis, and he had that look on his face like, 'Oh here we go.' It was hilarious."

"That was as big a game at Ohio Stadium as anything in a long time just because Ohio State hadn't been a top-five or top-10 team in so long, and the opponent, and all the buildup to it. It was a spectacle, that's really what it was."

Following Glenn's 82-yard burst for a score, the Horseshoe was still shaking in excitement with the Buckeyes leading 28-20. On the Irish's first play from their own 15, Powlus fumbled the snap, and Matt Bonhaus recovered it for the home team.

"It was kind of an avalanche, and I think you have to put that on the crowd," Helwagen said. "The fumbled snap probably had to do with how loud the stadium was, and it just fed one big play after another after another. And the stadium was just rocking. Notre Dame plays in a lot of big games, a lot of places, etc., but I don't think anybody had ever seen anything quite like that. And I think that really factored into the final result."

Three plays later, George found the end zone on a third-and-1 rush from the 5, extending the Ohio State lead to 35-20 with 14:55 remaining. Pearson, who served as George's primary backup in '95, praised

the heart shown by the talented back.

"His relentless work ethic and his relentlessness in that game for us not to lose," Pearson said of George. "I remember there was at one point during that game, he had tweaked his ankle, and I was getting ready to go into the game. And he was so into the game that he waved them off to have me come in the game, because he wanted to lead the team and that was one of his greatest characteristics. We had guys like Eddie, who have that attitude, and I think it rubbed off onto our whole team."

The Irish finally answered back with a score of their own on their next drive, but the Buckeyes quickly bounced back. George, who finished with 207 rushing yards, busted a 61-yard rush on the first play after OSU got the ball back, and then he scored three plays later to push the lead to 42-26.

"I don't think anybody saw that coming," Helwagen said. "I don't know what the line on the game was. I'd assume Ohio State was probably favored by 4-7 points, just with it being at home and Notre Dame having lost a game. But I don't think anybody saw Ohio State blowing Notre Dame out. It wasn't a start-to-finish type thing. It was more of just a tidal wave that hit them in that second half. It was just one big play after another, and the crowd just kind of feeding off one to another to another, and it was just an amazing day."

For Pearson, who helped the Buckeyes run out the clock on their final possession, the victory over Notre Dame put them back on the map.

"It's one of those victories that helps, even though Ohio State has always had tradition, but it helps to make sure people understand that you're a powerhouse in the game of college football," Pearson said. "So it's like a staple to your program to be able to go beat a program like Notre Dame who had all that tradition as well. It was just a stamp on our programs saying that we're here and we're an elite team."

To Jackson, beating Notre Dame in '95 was about more than showing the nation that OSU should be taken seriously that year.

The former signal caller indicated the win had a significant effect on the future of football at Ohio State.

"I really felt like that was a turning point for Ohio State football getting back to greatness, to be honest with you," Jackson said. "The roster was unbelievable, if you think about the players that were on that team: Eddie George, Terry Glenn, Orlando Pace, Shawn Springs, Mike Vrabel, Luke Fickell. The amazing cast of guys that were on that team was pretty spectacular."

Buckeyes' Defense Keeps Nittany Lions At Bay In Win

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Throughout the fall, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be "playing" its 40th Anniversary football season with recaps of the biggest Ohio State games of each corresponding week in our publishing history. The following is coverage of the 1996 game in which the No. 3 Buckeyes demolished visiting No. 4 Penn State. Additional features about this game will be posted at BuckeyeSports.com on Thursday, Oct. 8.

They billed it as a showdown between third-ranked Ohio State and fourth-rated Penn State.

It should have been promoted, though, as a match-up between Ohio State's offense and Penn State's defense because that's what it became.

Ohio State held the ball for close to 35 minutes and rolled to a rather easy 38-7 win in its Big Ten opener on Oct. 5 at Ohio Stadium.

"Today was our day," OSU coach John Cooper said. "This was a great victory. I don't know if we can play much better than this."

The Buckeyes (4-0, 1-0) outgained Penn State (5-1, 1-1) 565 yards to 211 in a game eerily similar to the Nittany Lions' 63-14 dismantling of OSU during PSU's Rose Bowl run two years ago at Happy Valley.

Just as it was in that game – and OSU's win at No. 5 Notre Dame one week prior – the winning team handled the opponent up front.

"I have to give credit to the rest of our offensive line," said OSU tackle Orlando Pace. "Those guys went out there and played with a lot of heart. It was another physical match-up, and that's what we wanted."

Pace and his line mates gave quarterback Stanley Jackson plenty of time to throw the ball or run with it. He completed 11 of 22 passes for 169 yards and two touchdowns and picked up 53 yards on the ground. Tailback Pepe Pearson had his fourth 100-yard game in as many chances, collecting 141 yards and a score on 28 carries.

"Pepe saw the holes, he took the opportunity

and ran hard," Pace said.

Defensively, OSU all but shut down Penn State sophomore tailback Curtis Enis. The Union City, Ohio, native ripped USC for 241 yards in the season-opening Kickoff Classic, but against the Buckeyes he was a non-factor, finishing with 34 yards on 11 carries.

"That's a tribute to our coaches," said linebacker Greg Bellisari. "They came up with some blitzes, and I think that confused their line a little bit."

It must have been massive confusion when you consider the Buckeyes held Penn State to one late touchdown and about half of its average yardage in total offense.

"When you say it in that context, it's a shock," Bellisari said. "But we went in, played our game, played aggressive, played smart and came out on top."

After the teams exchanged punts to open the game, the Buckeyes used a pair of big plays to light up the scoreboard.

Beginning with a first down at the OSU 31, Jackson dialed up tight end John Lumpkin on a pass deep down the middle. Lumpkin was popped by Penn State safety Shawn Lee but held on for the 25-yard gain.

"I got down the middle, got hit and held on to the ball," Lumpkin said. "That kind of set the tone for our offense. We were able to take it in after that and take the lead."

A play later, Jackson threw deep down the left sideline to Dimitrious Stanley. Somehow, Penn State had a breakdown with corner Brian Miller letting Stanley go by and Lee failing to rotate over. Stanley hauled in the pass and coasted into the end zone for the 42-yard touchdown and a 7-0 lead with 9:12 left in the first quarter.

"It was a busted coverage," said Stanley, who finished with five catches for 105 yards and two scores. "The corner was in Cover 2 and the safety was in Cover 3. The first thing I thought was 'Catch this damn ball.'"

After holding Penn State to another punt, OSU drove 49 yards on 11 plays before settling for Josh Jackson's 30-yard field goal and a 10-0 lead with 3:08 left in the first quarter.

Ohio State pushed the lead to 17-0 on its next possession, moving 80 yards in 14 plays. This drive was marked by Penn State's insertion of almost an entire new defense, a sign that the Buckeyes were beginning to wear the Nittany Lions down.

"You can definitely tell that kind of thing," Pearson said. "They brought their second team in and we went 50 yards on them, so they brought in their first team again, and we went the last 30 yards. We did a great job of wearing them down today."

That drive saw Jackson convert a pair of third downs with passes and then hit Stanley for a 6-yard gain to move the chains on a fourth-and-3 at the Penn State 30.

"The coaches made a nice call there on fourth down," Jackson said. "All I had to do was get the ball out to Dimitrious."

Two plays later, Jackson threw underneath to wide open fullback Matt Keller. He sprinted to the outside untouched on a 24-yard TD, giving OSU a 17-0 cushion with 9:03 left in the first half.

"That's a sneak route," Keller admitted. "They blitzed the linebackers inside, which opened it up. Stanley delivered a good ball and it was wide open after that."

OSU's next scoring opportunity was set up by Shawn Springs' 38-yard punt return to the Penn State 45. It took the Buckeyes, now directed by backup quarterback Joe Germaine, just two plays to convert. After Pearson carried for an 11-yard gain on first down, Germaine hit Stanley on a post pattern with a perfect pass for the 34-yard touchdown and a 24-0 lead with 6:26 left in the first half.

"It was a quick hitter because they were in Cover 3," Stanley said. "I can't go too far across the middle because the safety is sitting in the middle, so (Joe) threw it right on me as soon as I beat the corner."

Penn State had three more possessions in the first half but was forced to punt each time. The Nittany Lions then had the ball to start the second half and drove to the OSU 30, where kicker Brett Conway's 47-yard field goal attempt struck the left upright and was no good.

Ohio State extended its advantage later in the third, marching 72 yards in 10 plays. Again, Jackson converted a fourth down situation, hitting Keller for a 20-yard gain down to the Penn State 5. Two plays later, Pearson leaped into the end zone from the 1, pushing the lead to 31-0 with 2:34 left in the period.

Ohio State tacked on another score on Germaine's 3-yard TD toss to fullback Matt Calhoun, moving the lead to 38-0 with 9:43 left in the game.

Penn State's second offensive unit closed the scoring as Anthony Cleary plowed in from 1 yard out, capping a 68-yard scoring match with 6:03 left in the game.

Also Worth Noting

- Ohio State's three leading tacklers in the game were not starters for that unit last year.

Sophomore safety Damon Moore followed up a good performance at Notre Dame by notching 11 tackles, including one for loss, to lead OSU against Penn State.

Freshman linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer chipped in with nine tackles, including a sack, and also broke up a pass.

Sophomore cornerback Antoine Winfield, playing in place of Ty Howard who went down early with a knee injury, finished with six tackles and broke up one pass.

- The OSU win closed Penn State's lead in the all-time series to 7-5.

The Buckeyes have won three of the four Big Ten games played between the schools since Penn State joined the conference in 1993. Penn State still leads the series 5-3 in games played in Columbus.

Ohio State also moved to 5-4 in Big Ten openers under Cooper, including wins in those games the past four years.

- The announced crowd of 94,241 is the seventh largest in Ohio Stadium history. The record is 95,537 for last year's Notre Dame game.

This story originally appeared in the October 12, 1996, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Ohio State Finally Registers Win Over Notre Dame

Continued From Page 19

middle. He accelerated away from linebacker Lyron Cobbins and carried ND's Brian Magee and Allen Rossum to the goal line for the touchdown. When Josh Jackson tacked on the extra point, Ohio State had its first lead at 21-20 with 5:06 left in the third.

"It was an exciting feeling because it took us up a point and it was kind of like a turning point for us," Dudley said.

Suddenly, Ohio Stadium – calm for much of the first half – was rocking, and the Irish were reeling.

Holtz called for his kickoff return men, Mosley and Autry Denson, to execute a reverse on the kickoff. They fumbled the exchange, and although Denson recovered, ND was pinned back at its own 12.

Powlus responded with perhaps his biggest play of the day, though, hitting Mayes with a pass between a pair of OSU defenders down the left sideline for 56 yards to the OSU 32.

Notre Dame was driving for a go-ahead score, but their opportunity was snuffed out three plays later when Powlus overthrew Mayes and OSU's Shawn Springs made a diving interception at the OSU 11 with 2:50 left in the third quarter.

"I just made the play," Springs said. "Now

that I think about it, we needed a stop there."

OSU game-breaker Glenn then hit full stride, catching a short pass from Hoying after his cover man, free safety LaRon Moore, slipped. Glenn then sprinted away from Rossum on an 82-yard touchdown play that gave the Buckeyes a 28-20 lead with 1:20 left in the third quarter.

"That was a 12-yard hook," Glenn said. "The key to that was Bobby threw the ball early. As soon as I turned around, I caught the ball. I guess they said the DB slipped. When I turned around, I saw the end zone and two guys coming to tackle me. I was just thinking I better get on my horse and take it from there."

With the stadium now at a fever pitch, Notre Dame was experiencing difficulty communicating. Perhaps that contributed to the fumbled snap, which came on first down after the ensuing kickoff at the ND 14-yard line. Bonhaus fell on the loose ball and, again, the stadium was rocking.

"We had a problem (with the noise)," Powlus said. "I couldn't hear myself. I talked to him, and the official said we had to run the play or we would get a delay of game. It was a little bit of a surprise. I did ask him to give us a little bit of leeway because we couldn't hear."

Ohio State capitalized on the ND miscue as George carried for runs of five, four and

five yards on the three-play TD drive. On the touchdown run, George took a pitch left and watched as fullback Nicky Sualua pancaked an ND defender to open the hole. That score gave OSU a 35-20 lead with 14:55 left in the game.

Notre Dame did not die quietly, though, Powlus connecting with tight end Pete Chryplewicz on a 28-yard gain, which set up Kinder's easy 13-yard TD run to cap a lightning-quick six-play, 65-yard scoring drive.

ND then went for a two-point conversion, but Powlus was stuffed on his option run attempt. He was hit initially by OSU linebackers Greg Bellisari and Ryan Miller with Bonhaus and linebacker Kevin Johnson cleaning the play up just inside OSU's 2-yard line. Still, the OSU lead had been cut to 35-26 with 12:55 left.

No worry, though. After Kopka's kickoff sailed into the end zone for a touchback, George took a pitch left on first down at the 20 and raced through a gaping hole cleared by fullback Matt Calhoun to pick up 61 yards before he was knocked out of bounds by Wooden.

"That was a toss sweep, 'Student Body Left,'" George said. "They got the blocks, I read the hole and I just tried to go for the flag."

Three plays later, George followed left tackle Orlando Pace, fought off Magee and dove for the goal line and a three-yard TD to give OSU a 42-26 lead with 11:24 left.

"Playing against a team like that, obviously we saw that they scored right after we did," George said. "We couldn't relax and let them back into the game."

The Irish then attempted a fake punt with Edwards taking a short snap. But he was forced out of bounds just inches shy of the first-down marker at ND's 31-yard line.

From there, Ohio State moved 13 yards and melted close to four minutes of clock time before Jackson nailed a 35-yard field goal to give the Buckeyes a 45-26 lead with 6:09 left.

OSU took over for the last time after a punt with 4:56 left and ran out the remaining time. The only suspense that was left was to see if George would surpass the 200-yard mark, which he did on a seven-yard run with 3:30 left.

Ohio State's record against Notre Dame improved to 1-2. Of course, the only other meetings between the two schools came in 1935 and '36.

Ohio State will have a chance to even the series at 2-2 when the Buckeyes visit South Bend next year. That game, the last one scheduled between the two schools for now, is set for Sept. 28, 1996.

This story originally appeared in the Oct. 7, 1995, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Jackson, Stanley Team Up As OSU Crushes Penn State

By STEVE HELWAGEN

Between Stanley Jackson and Dimitrious Stanley, Penn State was probably Stanleyed-out after its Oct. 5 visit to Ohio Stadium.

Jackson, the Ohio State quarterback, and Stanley, his No. 1 receiving target, did serious damage to the Nittany Lions in OSU's stunning 38-7 win in its Big Ten opener. Both of these players had big shoes to fill, Jackson taking over for Bobby Hoying at quarterback and Stanley replacing Terry Glenn at receiver. But after four games of the 1996 season, these guys are making their own names.

"I think they have done a great job with them," said Penn State coach Joe Paterno after the third-ranked Buckeyes routed his fourth-rated Nittany Lions. "I think Jackson, obviously, has come on. All they really needed was a quarterback."

Jackson was named the Big Bear Buckeye of the Week after perhaps his best overall performance. He completed 11 of 22 passes for 169 yards and two touchdowns. He also bedeviled Penn State's front seven, tucking the football and picking up 53 yards on eight carries.

The knock on Jackson in the past was his penchant to free-lance within the framework of the offense. But his play in OSU's early season wins over top-five powers Notre Dame and Penn State has made the coaching staff optimistic they have a winner on their hands.

"I saw that a long time ago," said OSU coach John Cooper. "Stanley Jackson can win football games for us with his athletic ability. He moved the chains three or four times today when he kept the ball on the corner.

"Matter of fact, we got a little bit upset with him because we felt like he probably should have ran the ball a couple more times than he did."

Wisely, Jackson is following the advice of offensive coordinator Joe Hollis and quarterbacks coach Walt Harris – almost to a fault.

"I'm just sticking within the program," Jackson said. "The coaches make great calls and I know they're going to work as long as I do what I'm coached to do."

Although Jackson has split time with junior college transfer Joe Germaine in all four of OSU's games this year, it has become clear that when the big games are on the line, Jackson will be under center.

"He has a tremendous burden on his shoulders," Harris recognizes. "He has tremendous ability, athletic ability, and, at times, throwing ability. It's a real challenge for him to harness himself. If he does, we'll have a chance to be a real fine football team."

The key, Harris says, is heady play.

"That's what that guy has to do," he said of his quarterback. "He has to play smart football within the situation he's in all the time.

"But bottom line, Stan is trying hard to do the right thing all the time. He's just young and inexperienced."

Jackson said he will not remember the Penn State game as his best performance, choosing to dwell on what he needs to improve on.

"By far, this wasn't my best game," he said. "I had way too many incompletions. That's something I need to work on because in the long run that could hurt us. That shouldn't happen."

But upon further examination, Jackson was razor sharp to open the Penn State game. He hit on eight of his first 13 passes for 138 yards and two scores as the Buckeyes built a quick 17-0 lead midway through the second quarter. Two of those incompletions were dropped by his receivers.

The Nittany Lions made a point to stack up the line of scrimmage early in the game to stop

tailback Pepe Pearson. That put Jackson in the position of having to make some plays, and he did. The comfortable environs of Ohio Stadium didn't hurt, either.

"A week ago was a championship-caliber game with Stan playing on the road, and he had not been in that situation before," Harris said. "There we took advantage of one of our strengths, which is running the football, and we didn't put a lot of pressure on him.

"This week we opened it up a little more."

Jackson seemed in command of the game early, mixing pinpoint passes with scrambles for good yardage. His play also seemed to lift the offense.

"It's important for Stanley to get out to a good start, and he did that today," said OSU offensive tackle Orlando Pace. "Our offensive line also got off to a good start."

The OSU signal caller credited Pace and his fellow linemen for giving him time to operate.

"The protection was tremendous," Jackson said. "I think a couple times I was back there I was able to take three or four hitches. The protection is so good that if somebody gets back there and hits me, they come back and get them off of me.

"As long as they are going to continue to play well, we're going to be hard to beat."

OSU fullback Matt Keller, a recipient of one of Jackson's TD passes, said the junior has truly progressed over the past 12 months.

"You can't say enough about Stanley the last couple of weeks," Keller said. "Having to come in and fill Bobby Hoying's shoes, Stan has just done a great job."

Stanley said he has always had confidence in Jackson's abilities, which are starting to come out.

"Stan has always been a good quarterback," Stanley said. "He's just never had a chance to show it. There's no doubt in my mind he can do the job and take us all the way."

Stanley Is The Man

Just as Jackson has begun to emerge as an OSU offensive leader, Stanley has also stepped forward as the team's top receiving and big-play threat.

A week ago at Notre Dame, he opened the game with an 85-yard kickoff return. Against Penn State, Stanley caught five passes for 105 yards with two touchdowns.

After playing the role of the third receiver behind the likes of Joey Galloway, Chris Sanders and Terry Glenn in years past, Stanley is now Option A in OSU's passing attack.

"I knew my time was going to come because I knew I was working behind some good people and I was working really hard," Stanley said.

"The coaches noticed and everybody else noticed. I knew my time would eventually come because I knew Terry (Glenn) was going to be gone after last year. That was my biggest problem – having him in front of me."

Cooper has said the Buckeyes must make it a point to get Stanley the football with room to work.

"Dimitrious Stanley is a winner," Cooper said. "He does things to help you win football games. He blocks, he runs precise routes, he catches the ball. I'd say he's one of the most underrated players who has played around here in a long time."

Against Penn State, Stanley got behind the Lions secondary on a busted coverage to haul in a 42-yard TD pass from Jackson. Then after Jackson gave way to Germaine with a 17-0 lead, Stanley ran a post pattern and hauled in a 34-yard bullet from the backup to essentially put the game away at 24-0 with 6½ minutes left to go in the first half.

Stanley's mastery of the veteran Penn State

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 38, Penn State 7

Oct. 5, 1996 – Ohio Stadium; Columbus, Ohio.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
PENN STATE	0	0	0	7	7
OHIO STATE	10	14	7	7	38

First Quarter

OSU – Stanley, 42-yard pass from S. Jackson (Jo. Jackson kick), 9:12.

OSU – Jo. Jackson, 30-yard field goal, 3:08.

Second Quarter

OSU – Keller, 24-yard pass from S. Jackson (Jo. Jackson kick), 9:03.

OSU – Stanley, 34-yard pass from Germaine (Jo. Jackson kick), 6:26.

Third Quarter

OSU – Pearson, 1-yard run (Jo. Jackson kick), 2:34.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Calhoun, 3-yard pass from Germaine (Jo. Jackson kick), 9:43.

PSU – Cleary, 1-yard run (Conway kick), 6:03.

Att. – 94,241

Weather – Sunny, 63 degrees; wind, 5 mph from the South

Team Statistics

	PSU	OSU
First Downs	13	31
Rushing	4	19
Passing	8	12
Penalty	1	0
Rushes-Yards	26-68	58-350
Passing Yards	143	215
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	17-37-0	14-31-0
Offensive Plays	63	89
Total Net Yards	211	565
Third Down Efficiency	3-16	9-18
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-1	2-2
Punts-Avg.	10-46.1	5-39.6
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	1-0
Penalties	1-5	2-12
Time of Possession	25:05	34:55

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – PSU: Enis 11-34; Fields 4-24; Eberly 4-20; Cleary 3-13; A. Harris 1-2; C. Jones 1(-)-10; Richardson 2(-)-15. **OSU:** Pearson 28-141; Montgomery 9-86; Je. Jackson 8-54; S. Jackson 8-53; Hoying 2-8; Keller 1-8; Calhoun 2-0.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – PSU: Richardson 14-30-0-105-0; McQueary 3-6-0-38-0; Enis 0-1-0-0-0. **OSU:** S. Jackson 11-22-0-169-2; Germaine 3-8-0-46-2; Hoying 0-1-0-0-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – PSU: Nastasi 5-37; Enis 3-17; A. Harris 2-19; Olsommer 2-8; C. Jones 1-28; Campbell 1-15; Jurevicius 1-12; Cu. Brown 1-5; Fields 1-2. **OSU:** Stanley 5-105; Pearson 3-14; Keller 2-44; Lumpkin 2-37; Boston 1-12; Calhoun 1-3.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – PSU: Kania 10-46.1-55. **OSU:** Bartholomew 5-39.6-55.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Avg.-Long.) – PSU: Campbell 1-3. **OSU:** Springs 4-70; Boston 3-10.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Avg.-Long.) – PSU: Fields 3-36; Watson 1-24. **OSU:** Stanley 1-15.

FUMBLE RECOVERIES – PSU: None. **OSU:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS – PSU: None. **OSU:** None.

TACKLES FOR LOSS – PSU: Nelson 1(-)-3; Tate 1(-)-2; Seace 1(-)-1; Aaron Collins 1(-)-1; King 1(-)-1. **OSU:** Finkes 2(-)-17; Vrabel 2(-)-17; Katzenmoyer 1(-)-8; Bellisari 1(-)-8; Moore 1(-)-1; Winfield 1(-)-1; Garnett 1(-)-1.

TACKLE LEADERS (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – PSU: Herring 10-4-14; Lee 6-3-9; Nelson 5-4-9; Adams 5-2-7; Seace 2-5-7; Daniels 5-1-6; Aaron Collins 3-3-6; King 4-1-5; Fox 3-2-5; Morrison 2-3-5; Tate 4-0-4; Snyder 3-1-4; B. Miller 3-1-4; Short 3-1-4. **OSU:** Moore 8-3-11; Katzenmoyer 2-7-9; Winfield 5-1-6; R. Miller 4-2-6; Finkes 3-2-5; Bellisari 3-2-5; Kelly 2-3-5; Fickell 1-4-5; McClellion 4-0-4; LaVrar 2-1-3; Bell 2-0-2; Bryant 2-0-2.

secondary was not a surprise, Jackson said.

"He runs every day in practice against Shawn Springs and Ty Howard, who have to be two of the best cornerbacks in the country right now," the quarterback said. "He was just waiting for his game to step up, and today was his day."

Bucks Keep Feet On The Ground

Amid all of the Rose Bowl and national championship talk, this Ohio State team seems grounded in the reality that it must go out every week and produce.

"We know how good we can be," Jackson said. "We just can't get complacent. It was good to kick off the Big Ten like this and let teams know we're for real."

The national championship would be nice, but the Buckeyes just want to think about their next game, Oct. 12 against Wisconsin.

"We're not thinking about that," Pearson said. "The media and everybody else has to worry about that. All we have to worry about is playing football.

"We approach things like we're going to prepare our best for Wisconsin, and we'll be

prepared to beat Wisconsin. We don't expect a letdown."

And as much as the youngsters on offense have progressed, Ohio State's defense is also turning heads after all but shutting off Notre Dame and Penn State in consecutive weeks.

"We have a great defense, and I talk about our defense a lot because they did such a great job today," Pace said.

"We went out there and executed, and I think that was the big thing. I think we can beat any team in the country if we go out there and execute."

OSU linebacker Greg Bellisari, the defensive captain, said the Buckeyes can keep the goal in the back of their heads as they prepare to clear each weekly Big Ten hurdle.

"I think it's too early (to think Rose bowl), but we shouldn't be scared of the reality," he said. "This is something we've dreamed about. I've been here four years and I haven't been to the Rose Bowl. It's definitely attainable."

This story originally appeared in the Oct. 12, 1996, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.

Ohio State Dominated Penn State In 1996 Meeting

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After dropping disappointing games to Michigan and Tennessee to finish the 1995 season at 11-2, Ohio State entered the '96 campaign with high expectations and something to prove.

With Stanley Jackson at quarterback and Joe Germaine rotating in, the Buckeyes began the year about as well as they could have with a 70-7 victory over Rice before a 72-0 pummeling of Pitt. Then, No. 4 Ohio State went to South Bend and beat No. 5 Notre Dame 29-16.

The following week, the No. 3 Buckeyes welcomed the No. 4 Nittany Lions to Ohio Stadium for a highly anticipated Big Ten showdown.

"You could debate, 'Great, it was wonderful you beat Notre Dame on the road, but if you don't beat Penn State at home, then you may not win the Big Ten, you may not go to the Rose Bowl,'" 247Sports' writer and Buckeye Sports Bulletin alum Steve Helwagen told BSB. "That was a big game for them in terms of winning the Big Ten, and they hadn't been to the Rose Bowl in 12 years.

"And obviously it was an early-season game, it didn't determine the Rose Bowl, but it was pretty clear those were going to be two of the top contenders for it. This was a really good rivalry at this point between Ohio State and Penn State, and they were arguably the two best teams in the Big Ten during this stretch."

Although the Buckeyes had won 28-25 in a down-to-the-wire battle with the Nittany Lions in 1995, the 63-14 beatdown suffered in '94 had stuck with the members of that team.

"We had always been champing at the bit since '94 to get ahold of Penn State," Jackson told BSB. "Even now to this day for Ohio State, I think that '94 beatdown always put a sour taste in our mouths. We felt like every time we got to play, that we wanted to put it on them."

Despite the fact that Jackson, like many of his teammates, had been a backup in '94, he still felt the pain of that loss. Just like Jackson, former Ohio State running back Pepe Pearson had revenge on his mind.

"We still had thoughts of that day," Pearson told BSB. "I know I did, and I was a freshman. We really got beat up pretty bad at Penn State. And those thoughts, and that feeling, never leave. So it was time for me to represent for the team during my tenure as the running back, and I think I went in and represented myself well in that game vs. Penn State."

On their first drive of the game, the Buckeyes drove the ball to Penn State's 47-yard line, but the offense stalled out and was forced to punt. Instead of becoming frustrated and panicking, Jackson simply prepared for the next drive.

"They were always very tough defensively, especially their linebacker corps," Jackson said. "Honestly, the punt took some pressure off us. Because we had scored on almost every possession when I was in, and it started to become a big deal. So that was one of the first times where, as a starter, we didn't score. And it kind of took a little pressure off us actually. (Quarterbacks coach) Walt Harris always talked about how punting is not a bad thing."

Penn State picked up one first down but punted from its own 40, giving the ball back to Jackson and Co. at the OSU 31. Following a 35-yard completion to tight end John Lumpkin and a 2-yard rush by Pearson, Jackson took advantage of broken coverage to put the Buckeyes on the board first.

"The first touchdown to Dimitrious Stanley,

it was a broken coverage," Jackson said. "The corner played Cover 2 and the safety was in Cover 4, and (Stanley) was wide open down the sideline. I just remember thinking, 'He's wide open, don't miss the throw.' That sticks out. Dimitrious Stanley in that game sticks out a lot to me. He made some unbelievable catches."

The scoring play went for 42 yards.

After Penn State regained possession, it earned only one first down before facing another punting situation. When the Buckeyes got the ball back, they continued to wear down a talented Nittany Lions' defense with long, effective drives behind stellar offensive line play.

"Once you start to have success, and you know you're going to get the ball and now you know it works, and their defense was on the field longer," Jackson said, "that momentum builds, and that confidence builds and the trust in each other.

"There were a lot of new starters on that team. We had really good skill guys. Some of them were young, but that was a veteran offensive line group. And our line really was the heart and soul, they were our anchor. We typically had a lot of time to throw, and we had great rushing lanes. We felt really good about our chances of winning most games."

The Buckeyes went 59 yards in 12 plays before settling for a field goal in the red zone to go up 10-0 in the first quarter. After starting at their 18, the Nittany Lions moved the ball near midfield prior to punting from their 46.

How much Penn State's defense was on the field was noticeable as the Buckeyes methodically racked up first downs on their way to a 14-play, 80-yard touchdown drive.

Now trailing 17-0 with nine minutes left in the first half, the Nittany Lions were reeling from aggressive, dominant play from the home squad. Penn State's drive stalled out, forcing the visitors to punt from their own 30.

Ohio State standout cornerback Shawn Springs returned the punt 38 yards, setting up backup quarterback Joe Germaine at the PSU 45 for his first drive. Following an 11-yard run on a draw by Pearson, Germaine hit Stanley for his second receiving score of the day.

Even though Penn State was the fourth-ranked team in the country, Jackson had confidence that a 24-0 lead at halftime would be enough to win.

"We were never worried about what our defense was going to do," Jackson said. "We had to go against those guys all that time. We knew teams were not going to score against them. We knew no one was going to score more than 21 points, and because of it, we knew that all we needed was three possessions to score and we'd win every game."

Neither team scored again until there was 2:34 left in the third quarter when Pearson punched in a 1-yard touchdown. Ohio State covered 72 yards in 10 plays, including 27 rushing yards from Pearson and 13 rushing yards and 32 passing yards from Jackson.

The dynamic backfield duo of Jackson and Pearson wore down Penn State's vaunted defense, with Pearson totaling 155 yards from scrimmage and one score.

"In the ranks of all-time Ohio State running backs, he gets a little bit underrated for everything that he accomplished and the teams he played on," Helwagen said of Pearson. "He was very good.

"He's a guy that people may not think of among the top five or six all-time running backs at Ohio State, but they won a lot of games when he was running back and he had some good games for them as well."

Jackson put forth perhaps his best effort as a Buckeye against Penn State. In addition to

Other Big 40th Anniversary Games

There were several other big games at this time throughout the years, including the following:

1984: The second-ranked Buckeyes took a step back in their quest for the Rose Bowl with a 28-23 loss at unranked Purdue. The Buckeyes still had a chance to win the game in the final seconds, but quarterback Mike Tomczak threw the ball out of bounds on fourth down to stop the clock, turning the ball over to the Boilermakers in Purdue territory. The loss overshadowed another stellar performance by Keith Byars, who gained 191 yards rushing and 102 yards receiving.

1995: In a game that was more important, in the grand scheme of things, than the blockbuster game with Notre Dame the week before, No. 5 Ohio State downed No. 12 Penn State 28-25 in Happy Valley to kick off the Big Ten season. The Lions had crushed the Buckeyes the year before, 63-14. Bobby Hoying completed 24 of 35 passes for 354 yards and three scores, two to Terry Glenn and another to tight end Rickey Dudley.

1998: The No. 1-rated Buckeyes started their projected march to the Rose Bowl with a Big Ten-opening victory over visiting No. 7 Penn State, 28-9. The Buckeyes held the Lions to just 181 total yards and only 79 rushing yards on 30 carries. Damon Moore and Na'il Diggs each had seven tackles and two for loss to pace the Buckeye defense. Ohio State had 12 total tackles for loss.

passing for 169 yards and two scores, Jackson added 53 rushing yards on 6.6 yards per carry.

"I saw the best of Stan Jackson," Pearson said of his quarterback's performance against PSU. "It was a perfect combination that day of me running the ball, and then Stan was making passes. And he made one run where he gave a guy a move that I had never seen a quarterback make up until that point.

"During that Penn State game, Stan Jackson was at his best both running and throwing the ball, and he was showing the nation just how dynamic of a quarterback he was."

While Jackson and Pearson shone and rightfully received praise for their performances, the Buckeye defense did not even give the Nittany Lions a chance to get started.

"It was tremendous," Jackson said of the '96 Ohio State defense. "When you don't have to score every possession, when you don't have to get into a shootout, and you can just protect the ball and put your defense in a good position, it gives you a bunch of comfort.

"I mean, think about this from a defensive perspective. Antoine Winfield was coming off the bench. He was our nickel guy. As good as he was at Ohio State, he had to come off the bench because Ty Howard and Shawn Springs were our starting cornerbacks. Not only was that team physical and athletic, it was smart."

With how elite both Penn State and Ohio State were at the time of the matchup, many expected a back-and-forth slugfest between Big Ten heavyweights. The '96 showdown demonstrated just how good the Buckeyes were becoming in the mid-'90s.

"When those teams played each other, you were assured it was going to be a high-caliber game," said Helwagen. "It's just Ohio State caught Penn State on that day and played almost a perfect game against a good opponent."

"And so for them to win that game was huge. And the way that they won, I mean, they dominated 38-7. I can remember Joe Paterno when the game was over, he came over from his sideline and shook John Cooper's hand and said, 'You've got a heck of a team there.'"

Just how dominant were the Silver Bullets against Penn State? The Nittany Lions had 12 drives overall with 10 ending in punts, one with a missed field goal and one with a touchdown on their final drive.

Although Penn State picked up only 13 first downs and totaled just 211 yards to 31 first downs and 565 yards from Ohio State, the Buckeyes' defensive coordinator, Fred Pagac, was infuriated that the backups blew the shut-out.

"Coach Pagac, who was promoted to defensive coordinator and was outstanding – he should have gotten the job sooner – was so mad at the backup defenders who let that score happen," Jackson recalled. "He was not happy.

Here we are up big, and they give up a score late, and he was livid about that."

Even if it did not always please the perfectionist nature of Pagac, Ohio State's defense led the team to an 11-1 record by stifling opposing offenses. The Buckeyes surrendered more than 17 points only once all year, and that came in a 38-26 victory at Iowa.

Pearson was not surprised the '96 Buckeyes had as much success as they did because, to him, they were their own toughest competition.

"We practiced hard," Pearson recalled. "The players that we played against in practice we always said were normally players that could start anywhere else in the country. We were playing and practicing against the best players in the country every day. So when we went and played other teams, it was kind of like we're practicing against better players than we were playing. And that's what made us great."

Ohio State was nearly flawless in 1996, but a 13-9 loss to rival Michigan marked the only blemish on what could have potentially been an undefeated national title season. Even if they came up short of their ultimate goal, the Buckeyes solidified the program's spot among the national powers once again.

"It was a long time between when they were considered a national championship-caliber team," Helwagen said. "There's a lot of people who thought that they should have had a split championship that season with Florida. Florida only lost one game as well, but Florida came back and beat the team that beat them. They had a rematch with Florida State in their bowl game, and they beat them, so it was kind of like, give it to Florida but Ohio State was every bit as good.

"Had they played on a neutral field, that Ohio State team would have been toe-to-toe with Florida, I don't think there's any doubt in my mind, because the defense was just dominant. You had a bunch of guys on that defense that were drafted and played in the NFL for years."

When Jackson thinks about it today, he cannot believe the loaded '96 roster did not reach the pinnacle of college football. Nonetheless, he looks back fondly on the dominant force that was the '96 Ohio State football team.

"That '96 team was built for a championship because the offensive line was phenomenal and the defense was spectacular," Jackson said. "If you've got those two components, you should win most of your games, and we only lost one. A lot of that has to do with the fact that we switched quarterbacks at the last minute, but that's something for another day. I'm sure John (Cooper) was kicking himself about that. But it was a really good group with some great leadership on the offensive line and some phenomenal talent."

D-Line A Dominant Position For Buckeyes In 2010s

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

BSB is continuing an eight-part series where, in each issue, the staff writers will come to a consensus on one player or a group of starting players who are deserving of being named the best at that position for Ohio State from 2010-19. Part two is on the best members of the defensive line in the 2010s.

One of Ohio State's more fruitful position groups of the 2010s was the defensive line. In that time, 14 Buckeyes from the D-line were selected in the NFL draft, including four in the first round. Three Ohio State linemen have also earned the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year honor over the past 10 seasons, showing just how much of an impact the Buckeyes have made in the trenches while the offense was on the sidelines.

The Nominees

There were more than a handful of difference makers throughout the decade for Ohio State, not all of whom can be named here, but it started with Cameron Heyward, who saw time at both defensive end and defensive tackle during his tenure with the Buckeyes. Heyward played just one year in the decade but had 48 tackles, 13 tackles for loss, 3½ sacks and an interception in 2010, numbers good enough to make first-team All-Big Ten.

John Simon was an impressive end for the Buckeyes early in the decade, amassing 97 tackles, 30½ TFL and 16 sacks during his final two seasons in 2011 and 2012. He was named to the conference's first team both of those years, while being named Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year in 2012. That same year was the final one for defensive tackle Johnathan Hankins, who went in the second round of the draft after totaling 122 tackles (15 TFL) in his final two seasons.

The 2014 team that ultimately won a national championship was full of stars on the defensive line, starting with tackle Michael Bennett, a leader on the line who

had 111 tackles, 31½ TFL and 18 sacks in his four-season career. Also on the inside was Adolphus Washington, who had similarly impressive stats – 142 tackles, 25 TFL, 13½ sacks – during his collegiate career.

Outside, a sophomore by the name of Joey Bosa had his most dominant year with the program in 2014, which included 21½ TFL, 13½ sacks and four forced fumbles. He would go on to be selected No. 3 overall in the 2016 NFL draft.

In the second half of the decade, a new Bosa, first name Nick, continued right where Joey had left off, racking up seven TFL and five sacks in his freshman season then 22 TFL and 12½ sacks in his next 17 games, while also adding two forced fumbles along the way. But Nick Bosa's Ohio State career was cut short with an injury against TCU in the third game of the 2018 season, leaving an unknown as to what he would have accomplished with the Buckeyes.

Picking up the slack for him in 2018 was tackle Dre'Mont Jones who, after a breakout redshirt freshman campaign, had a strong junior season with 43 tackles, 13 TFL, 8½ sacks, a forced fumble, three fumble recoveries and an interception returned for a touchdown.

Also helping make up for the loss of Bosa was Chase Young, who had 10½ sacks that season before moving on to break the Ohio State record with 16½ sacks in 2019. He was drafted No. 2 overall in 2020.

Defensive tackle DaVon Hamilton was also taken in that same draft, and though he didn't put up numbers that were as flashy with 66 total tackles, 20 TFL and seven sacks in four seasons, he was one of the more consistent members of the Buckeyes' defense during his 54 career games played.

The Discussion

When asked who they believe were the best defensive linemen – two defensive tackles and two defensive ends – over the past 10 years, here is what the BSB staff had to say:

Wyatt Croser: "There's one clear-cut answer when looking at this question, and that is Young. Any way you slice it, Young had the most impressive individual perfor-

mance of any player on the defensive line this decade for Ohio State, and you can probably argue he had one of the very best as far as any defensive player on any team in the country over these past 10 seasons.

"The other end is a Bosa battle, and while Joey Bosa accomplished more, I do think I would give the edge to Nick Bosa when it comes to pure talent and ability. Nick didn't get a chance to put it all together after getting injured less than three games into 2018, but even in those 2½ games, he was an absolutely dominant end who was ready for a truly monstrous final season in college.

"The interior linemen are tricky, but I think one spot has to go to Bennett for all he brought to the 2014 title-winning group, both on the field and off it. My other choice, by a narrow margin, will go to Jones, who started out hot as a redshirt freshman and was incredibly impressive in 2018, stepping up in a big way once Nick Bosa went down."

Joe Dempsey: "Selecting the top two defensive ends and defensive tackles from the past decade of Ohio State football is an incredibly daunting task because of the excellent players who will surely be left off the list.

"It seems like a crime to exclude former standouts like Nick Bosa, Jashon Cornell, Hamilton, Hankins, Heyward, Jalyn Holmes, Sam Hubbard, Robert Landers, Tyquan Lewis, Simon and Washington from the list, but none of these stalwarts made my first team.

"For the starting defensive ends, I chose Joey Bosa and Young largely because they were the most productive players at the position in the past decade. Joey Bosa's 26 sacks and 50½ tackles for loss both rank fourth in school history. Young exceeded the elder Bosa's gaudy sack total with 30½ sacks to rank second in program history, while his 42½ TFL put him at No. 11.

"Stats only tell part of the story, and like Joey Bosa and Young, my first-team defensive tackles impacted the game in ways that go beyond the box score. Michael Bennett was a menace to opposing backfields from 2011-14, constantly pressuring quarterbacks into poor decisions. Despite being an inte-

rior lineman, Bennett still totaled 18 sacks, 31½ TFL and seven forced fumbles while donning scarlet and gray.

"My other first-team defensive tackle is Jones. The converted end may be overlooked in Buckeye lore, but that is because of all of the stars he played with. Jones' third-year sophomore season was still one of the best by a Buckeye defensive tackle, recording 8½ sacks and 13 TFL in addition to scoring on a scoop-and-score and a pick-six before declaring for the NFL draft."

Andrew Lind: "Young is one of the most decorated defensive linemen in college football history, having been named a unanimous All-American and Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, as well as the winner of the Chuck Bednarik Award, Ted Hendricks Award, Bronko Nagurski Trophy and the Chicago Tribune's Silver Football after setting the school record for sacks in a season with 16½. He was also a Heisman Trophy finalist while exclusively playing defense. Need I say more?"

"Joey Bosa, on the other hand, set the standard for Ohio State defensive ends under the guidance of defensive line coach Larry Johnson. He was a two-time consensus All-American and the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year while guiding the Buckeyes to the national title. An argument could also be made that without his stellar play, it's possible his younger brother, Nick, and Young never make their way to Columbus.

"Hankins made an impact as soon as he stepped on campus, appearing in 38 games during his three-year Ohio State career. He was first-team All-Big Ten and a first-team All-American as a junior, opting to forgo his final year of eligibility to enter the NFL draft.

"Bennett, meanwhile, was equally accomplished during his career with the Buckeyes. He was named a team captain as a senior and earned second-team all-conference and first-team All-American honors while leading the Buckeyes to the 2015 College Football Playoff national championship."

Patrick Mayhorn: "For the defensive end portion of this question, I think the selections are as straightforward as any on the Ohio State all-decade team. A case could be made for Heyward, Hubbard or even Lewis, but I think the answer here is pretty cut and dry: Joey Bosa and Young.

"Bosa was an instant-impact player from the moment he stepped on campus at Ohio State and served as the most destructive member of the 2014 national title team's defense, a title that I don't think Ohio State wins without Bosa's contributions. It always felt like he could have done a little more at Ohio State had he garnered a starting role sooner, but his career stats are still among the best in school history.

"Then you have Young, who I expect will be remembered as the best edge rusher to come through Columbus by the time his football career comes to a close. He had the single most dominant season from an end in Ohio State history and set the school record for sacks despite not logging a sack in his final three games, on top of two games missed due to a suspension. This is a no-brainer.

"As for the tackles, I'm less confident, but I'll go with Bennett and Hamilton. Bennett was another crucial piece of that 2014 defense and played a major role in creating openings in the middle of the defense that allowed his teammates to shine around him. Hamilton's story was similar, and he and Bennett both flew under the radar because



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BSB'S PLAYERS OF THE DECADE

of it, but those two gave offensive coordinators nightmares every time they stepped on the field."

The Choices

Michael Bennett, DT: As Jim Tressel departed from Ohio State, one of his final remnants was the 2011 class, the No. 6-ranked class in the country that was led by a pair of five-stars in Curtis Grant and Braxton Miller. The highest four-star commit in that class was Bennett, who came out of Centerville, Ohio, as the No. 6 defensive tackle and No. 49 prospect in the class.

After two seasons with just 28 tackles, six TFL and four sacks combined, Bennett improved his play significantly in year three. During that 2013 campaign, Bennett finished with 42 tackles, 11½ TFL and seven sacks while also forcing three fumbles. But even with some gaudy numbers in his junior season, Bennett brought more to the table for the team in 2014.

"He was a senior leader that the team needed, because that team was a whole bunch of second-year guys, you can go up and down the list," Tony Gerdeman, Ohio State writer at BuckeyeScoop, told Buckeye Sports Bulletin about Bennett. "You have that guy, his leadership, his ability to calm the defense. I don't think we can overstate that because that was a pretty young team."

And despite the youth on the roster, Ohio State rebounded from a 1-1 start to win its last 13 games, ultimately earning the national title following wins in the College Football Playoff against Alabama and Oregon.

When also including the 59-0 win against Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game, Bennett had 10 tackles, 5½ TFL, three sacks and two forced fumbles in the three most important games of his collegiate career. Those key performances, along with his leadership, made the senior captain an invaluable piece of Ohio State's title run.

This all came from a player who, according to Gerdeman, butted heads with his head coach to start his Ohio State tenure.

"Bennett was huge, and he was a guy that Urban Meyer really didn't like at first, because Bennett, I think the knock on him was he's too smart," Gerdeman said. "I think he's one of these intelligent guys and maybe questions why some things have to be done or just wants more answers. And so I think they kind of clashed a little bit early on."

In his final year with the program, Bennett was named second-team All-Big Ten after finishing with 41 tackles, 14 of which were for loss, including seven sacks. He also forced three fumbles and was drafted in the sixth round by the Jacksonville Jaguars the following offseason.

Joey Bosa, DE: Another member of that title-winning team was Bosa, a four-star end from Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas who got a chance to see meaningful reps in his freshman year with the Buckeyes and never looked back.

"Joey Bosa started as a true freshman after Adolphus Washington went down in game two," Gerdeman said. "He was in there, game three, starting as a true freshman at defensive end for the Buckeyes and never really left."

Bosa became a staple of the defense in year one, amassing 13½ TFL and 7½ sacks, while also recovering a fumble. He built on that in the 2014 season, jumping up to 21 TFL and 13½ sacks along with four forced fumbles on the way to a championship win.

That season, Bosa had four games with two or more sacks, with the last one coming in a six-tackle, two-sack effort during a win over Michigan.

Randall Joyner, who currently is the



ANDREW LIND

MOST-DECORATED DEFENDER – Defensive end Chase Young won multiple national awards after finishing the 2019 season with a school-record 16½ sacks.

defensive line coach at SMU but worked as a graduate assistant for the Buckeyes in 2016 and 2017, did not coach Joey Bosa but had an experience with him as Bosa was working out in preparation for the 2016 NFL draft.

"I remember one day, we were in a meeting and we were doing some scouting, and it was in the spring. We hear a knock on the door, and it was Joey Bosa and he's like, 'Coach (Larry) Johnson, can you just work me out,'" Joyner told BSB. "He's already penciled in to be a top-five pick, and he's like 'Coach Johnson, can you work me out?' And this is after he killed pro day and everything. So I had to go work out because Coach Johnson couldn't leave, and there was nobody in the indoor, and he was working."

Bosa ultimately was selected third by the then-San Diego Chargers, but it came following what many had thought was a lackluster third year from the 2014 Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year.

In 2015, Bosa finished with 51 tackles, 15 TFL, five sacks, a forced fumble and an interception. While he was still named an All-American by two different organizations, Gerdeman said Bosa did not quite have the same edge that he had a season prior.

"I do have issues with the way Joey Bosa played as a junior," Gerdeman said. "I think he had like five sacks on the season, and I think many members of that team were kind of coasting at that point."

Still, Bosa was a focal point of Ohio State's defense from his first year with the program on and helped the Buckeyes emerge as national champions as a sophomore.

Dre'Mont Jones, DT: Jones came to Ohio State in 2015 as a four-star recruit out of Cleveland St. Ignatius. He also came in as a defensive end who was listed at 6-3, 266 on his 247Sports recruiting page.

But Jones ultimately found most of his time inside and made an impact right away for Ohio State following a redshirt season in 2015.

"The thing I like about Dre'Mont is when he came out his redshirt freshman year, he just basically exploded," Gerdeman said. "He had 44 tackles in Big Ten play in 2016. That same year, Jabril Peppers, Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, had 43 tackles in Big Ten play. So, this is a defensive tackle having more tackles than a linebacker/safety conference player of the year all-anything."

On the whole, Jones had 52 tackles in his first year playing with the Buckeyes, along with four tackles for loss. Joyner said that once he arrived in 2016 following Jones' redshirt year, the four-star prospect looked

ready to make a difference for the Buckeyes.

"When you come in as a highly recruited guy and you redshirt, I think that's the biggest adjustment for all college athletes is going from being the man and then finding your role in college," Joyner said of Jones. "When you're a young player, and he ended up starting as a redshirt freshman, you need those 'aha' moments, like I can play on this level. And he had an awesome redshirt freshman year, and I think those first few games, getting that aha moment was like, 'Yeah, man, I should ball out here.'"

Jones had a down 2017, finishing with just 20 tackles and one sack over 10 games, but he came back in a big way the season after. As one of the players who stepped up following the injury to Nick Bosa, Jones finished with 43 tackles, 13 TFL and 8½ sacks while claiming a spot on the first-team All-Big Ten team.

It all ultimately led to Jones getting selected in the third round by the Denver Broncos in the 2019 NFL draft, and while Joyner left before Jones' collegiate career was over, he was still more than impressed with how well the defensive lineman developed over his four seasons at Ohio State.

"Dre'Mont was always a freakish athlete. I mean, very God-given talent," Joyner said. "So his maturity and his development of just developing that, like, 'Man, I could be a big-time player' was awesome to see. Where he really improved was, he's always been a natural pass rusher, but in the run game, I saw him really, really mature. I think that was the biggest thing, I saw him really take pride in that."

Chase Young, DE: For as impressive and as deep as Ohio State was on the defensive line, there was one name that came up, without question, as the defensive end who stood out among the rest in the 2010s.

"When you say defensive lineman, I guess there's probably recency bias because of what Chase Young did last year and what he did the year before, so he's probably the first name that comes to mind," Gerdeman said. "For me, it starts with Chase Young and then goes to Nick Bosa and Joey Bosa. And there are so many great players that are almost forgotten because of how big just those three names alone were."

Young came to Ohio State as a five-star prospect out of Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic, ranking as the second-best weakside defensive end and No. 7 overall prospect in the 2017 class.

As the highest rated of the Buckeyes' five five-stars in 2017 – cornerback Jeff Okudah, linebacker Baron Browning, cornerback

Shaun Wade and guard Wyatt Davis ranked No. 8, 11, 17 and 24, respectively – there were some lofty expectations put on Young, especially after the success of other defensive ends at Ohio State earlier this decade.

But Joyner said that, even as just a freshman, Young showed the tools to become the next star end for Ohio State.

"I helped recruit, so I knew Chase for two years. Recruited him with Coach Johnson, and the first thing obviously, he's just blessed physically, but his desire was awesome," Joyner said. "He was driven because of all the past success, seeing a Nick Bosa, seeing a Joey Bosa. So he was so competitive. He wanted to one-up those guys in a sense, and he had a drive to be great."

Young had 19 total tackles in his freshman campaign, playing in 10 games and also grabbing six TFL, notching 3½ sacks and forcing a fumble. It was a strong start for a true freshman playing at a position that still had Nick Bosa, Hubbard and Lewis, who had a combined 22½ sacks between them in 2017.

The injury to Bosa in 2018, as well as the departures of Hubbard and Lewis, opened the door for Young to be the line's star, and he did not disappoint. Young finished his sophomore year with 34 tackles, 15½ TFL and 10½ sacks along with five pass breakups and two forced fumbles.

His biggest performance of the season came in a one-point win on the road against Penn State, where Young had six tackles, two sacks and three TFL, with one of those three tackles for loss coming on a fourth-down stop on running back Miles Sanders that sealed the win for Ohio State.

But even after a very impressive campaign in year two, not many expected Young to be able to completely top that in his junior season, especially Gerdeman.

"I remember saying before the season that everybody expecting another Bosa-type season, just don't because only Bosas can do what Bosas do. And then by about, I don't know game three or game four, I said, 'Ignore what I said before,'" Gerdeman said. "I did not expect it. I think we all expected him to be very, very good, but the assumption that, well, he's just going to continue this lineage of a bloodline that he is not part of, I kind of took exception to that. And then by the end of the season, I mean, how could you deny the impact that he had for Ohio State?"

Young played in only 12 of the 14 games for Ohio State in 2019 due to a two-game suspension and still finished with 21 tackles for loss and a program-record total of 16½ sacks, numbers that were good for fourth and first in the country. He also forced six fumbles and had more than one sack in half of his games, including a four-sack effort against Wisconsin and a three-sack performance against the Nittany Lions.

Those big numbers made Young the No. 2 pick in the 2020 NFL draft, the winner of the Chuck Bednarik Award, the Bronco Nagurski Trophy, and a finalist for the Heisman Trophy.

Did any of this production surprise Joyner, who left Ohio State after Young's first year with the program?

"No, not at all," Joyner said. "It was awesome to see his development, because he always had the tools, and then he always was competitive. Man, shoot, it was really, really cool to see that. It was no shock. It was no shock to me."

"We were at the Cotton Bowl, it was my last game and we knew a couple coaches from USC, and they say, 'Who is No. 2? That's the best-looking guy I've ever seen.' And I was like, 'Yeah, that's our freshman.'"

Fuller Makes Instant Impact With Los Angeles Rams

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

While Ohio State had two defensive backs selected in the first round of April's NFL draft in cornerbacks Jeff Okudah (No. 3 overall to the Detroit Lions) and Damon Arnette (No. 19 overall to the Las Vegas Raiders), safety Jordan Fuller waited until the 199th pick in the sixth round to hear his name called by the Los Angeles Rams.

"(Being drafted) was the best feeling ever," Fuller told Buckeye Sports Bulletin in a phone interview on Sept. 18, "but I did expect my name to be called earlier. Having to sit through those three days to almost not hear my name called was hard, and going pick by pick by pick, seeing guys get taken ahead of you, it's definitely motivating."

On one hand, it was a surprise to see Fuller – who was a first-team All-Big Ten selection in 2019, three-time academic All-American and Campbell Trophy finalist for his work in the classroom – fall that far. On the other, his time at Ohio State was undoubtedly overshadowed by the other defensive backs, including Okudah, Arnette and preseason All-America cornerback Shaun Wade.

"I was more of a team-first guy, so whenever they got publicity, I was happy for them," Fuller said. "Personally, I did feel like I was underrated a bit. But that's out of my control."

Rather than reflect on what could have been, Fuller plans to use his draft slide as motivation throughout his professional career and hopes to eventually be considered one of the best defensive backs to ever come from Ohio State.

That's a lofty goal, of course, especially with the likes of Malcolm Jenkins, Marshon Lattimore and Denzel Ward currently patrolling NFL secondaries and Jack Tatum and Antoine Winfield originally setting the standard for future Buckeyes. Then again, upholding that legacy is what Fuller signed up for when he came to Ohio State as a four-star prospect from Old Tappan, N.J.

"When you go to Ohio State you want to be developed into someone who can produce at the highest level," Fuller said. "The standard you have to hold yourself to every single day is



LOS ANGELES RAMS/TWITTER

WELCOME TO THE NFL – Former Ohio State and current Los Angeles Rams safety Jordan Fuller made a key fourth-down tackle of Dallas Cowboys wide receiver CeeDee Lamb in his NFL debut on Sept. 13.

very, very high. Our proof is in the pudding in guys that have been drafted and produced in the NFL. It's not by accident."

Fuller, a two-time team captain, felt he was a really good player during his first three seasons at Ohio State. But he credits former defensive coordinator and current Boston College head coach Jeff Hafley for taking his game to another level during his final year in Columbus.

"(Hafley) had a huge impact on my career," Fuller said. "He's somebody I still talk to every week, just about ball and checking in and seeing how each other are doing. He helped me see the game a lot differently than I did before and allowed me to play a little more freely. I think that's the biggest testament I can give

him. He kind of took the gloves off and wasn't worried about the result, but just going out and playing fast.

"He's very smart. We nicknamed him 'The Wizard.' Any kind of problem we were having or that a team would come at us with, he would come up with the answer. If we didn't have it right, then he'd figure out a way to fix it and get it right. I just think he does stuff the right way. He cares about other people, and people remember that. I can't say enough about Coach Hafley. He's a great man, great husband, great everything."

Initially projected to battle 2020 fourth-round pick Terrell Burgess for the backup safety spot, Fuller received a majority of the reps with the first-team defense in training camp when incumbent starter Taylor Rapp went down with a minor knee injury. He made a great impression on the coaching staff with an interception in consecutive practices and parlayed that into the starting spot in the Rams' season opener against the Dallas Cowboys on Sept. 13.

"I'm confident in myself, so it wasn't a surprise," Fuller said. "I felt like I was playing well throughout camp against NFL talent, and I think a lot of it was just understanding what they were asking me to do – not having too many mental errors and stuff like that. They had trust in me that way, and then I was able to make a couple of big plays early in camp. I had two picks the first two days, so they could see I could make plays and consistently do my job. I think that's what helped separate me."

Fuller played all but one of 72 defensive snaps in Los Angeles' 20-17 win and finished with a team-high eight tackles against an explosive Dallas offense. That includes one of the biggest plays of the game, when he tackled wide receiver CeeDee Lamb just short of a first down on a fourth-down play in the red zone in the fourth quarter.

"That was huge," Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald said after the game. "He's a young guy that stepped up for us and made a big play for us to help us win this game. He's out there on that field playing for a reason, to

make plays like that and help us."

Pro Bowl cornerback Jalen Ramsey also wasn't shocked to see Fuller make the tackle, which likely prevented the Cowboys from taking the lead late in the game.

"Jordan has been balling all camp," Ramsey said postgame. "We are happy to have him in our secondary, and he's been playing extremely well, so we expected him to do that again tonight. We're very proud of him, glad to have him a part of this team."

Though Donald and Ramsey are the unquestioned stars of the team, former Ohio State long snapper Jake McQuaide is the longest-tenured player on the roster. And though they never played together at the college level, McQuaide – who played for the Buckeyes from 2006-10 – was quick to welcome Fuller to Los Angeles.

"He texted me the day of the draft congratulating me," Fuller said. "He told me if I ever needed anything or had any questions about the area to let him know. He's a real cool guy, though. When we finally met up, we talked about our experiences at Ohio State. I've gotten some reps on special teams, too, so we're on the field at the same time and he's coaching me up."

"I can't really say enough about Jake. That's the thing about Ohio State. I feel like the people are what make it, and I have no doubt there are other guys who would take me under their wing if they were in his spot, too."

In McQuaide, who signed with the then-St. Louis Rams as an undrafted free agent in 2011, Fuller believes he's found a good role model for how to proceed with his career. And maybe in a few years, if he continues to make plays on the field, he will be the grizzled veteran taking another former Ohio State player under his wing.

"I feel like I've gained the trust of my teammates and coaches, but I still think I have a long way to go personally as a player," Fuller said. "I'm just focused every single day, really. I just try to attack every day and live with the results. Hopefully, I'll look back when my career is done and be proud of the way I handled business."

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Talking Fuller's Hot Start

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Jordan Fuller was a three-year starter at Ohio State, led the team in tackles in 2018 and was a third-, second- and first-team All-Big Ten member, moving up a team each of his final three seasons. He was also a two-time team captain, played in 53 total games and was a staple in the secondary for the Buckeyes as other pieces moved around him.

But Fuller was also valued lower than some of those other pieces he played with heading into the 2020 NFL draft, and the result was a selection in the sixth round by the Los Angeles Rams.

Jordan Rodrigue, Rams beat writer for The Athletic who wrote for the Charlotte Observer the year prior, said that, even when preparing for the draft from the view of the Carolina Panthers, she thought Fuller should have been looked at earlier than at pick No. 199.

"I liked Fuller a lot," Rodrigue told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "I was actually still covering the Carolina Panthers at the time and thought he should have been a target for them, too, but in the fourth or fifth rounds. I remember I had spent some time on his tape earlier in the spring and thought, 'Why aren't more people talking about this guy?' I knew I would be going to cover the Rams even before the Panthers draft was completed, so when Fuller got picked in the sixth round by Les Snead and his staff, I thought, 'Holy moly, did they get a steal here.'"

Rodrigue said she thought Fuller would be a strong option for the nickel position, and she believes that the Rams felt as though his draft grade was higher than the sixth-round pick that the team ultimately used on him.

"I get the sense that the Rams were absolutely delighted that he fell to them in that spot," Rodrigue said. "I would have assumed at lowest he was on their boards as a fifth-round pick, and honestly, that's only because safety is a lower-priority pick within most defenses as resources usually point toward edge rushers, cornerbacks and defensive linemen."

Beyond playing at safety, there were other reasons that Fuller fell as far as he did in the draft. According to Rodrigue, playing in the same secondary as a top-five prospect in cornerback Jeff Okudah didn't help his case, nor did his play style, which was less filled with highlights and more with consistency.

"Some of it was the fact that he just isn't flashy, or wasn't perceived as flashy, coming out of school," Rodrigue said. "Ohio State conversations almost always revolved around Jeff Okudah. I think many teams were hoping that Fuller stayed a well-kept secret because they hoped he would fall to them."

While Fuller may have fallen to the back of some minds when it came to defensive players in the NFL draft, the same did not happen when Fuller arrived at training camp. Because of an injury to returning starting safety Taylor Rapp, Fuller immediately came in and started taking reps with the first team.

But, even with the advantage of getting those starting reps in training camp while Rapp recovered, it was still the incumbent's job to lose, and Rodrigue said that Fuller proved himself worthy of being that starter as camp moved forward.

"The Rams knew they'd get Rapp back before the end of camp, but there was really nobody else who could fill in, so in went Fuller. And then he started making plays," Rodrigue said. "He's a quiet, reserved guy, so he flew a little under the radar in meetings, and then

staff started noticing how smoothly he picked up the brand-new playbook. Nothing seemed too big for him about being in the NFL. And then he started stacking together picks off Jared Goff and showed how well he was working in tandem with safety John Johnson, and right in front of our eyes we watched him play his way into the starting job.

"It's really, really rare for a rookie, let alone a sixth-rounder, to win a job when the starting player is actually healthy, which Rapp was by the time camp ended. Fuller isn't a fluke. He played his way into the role and then kept improving still. He's not letting go of that job."

Immediately, Fuller proved worthy of his starting spot in Week 1, making a highlight fourth-down stop on Dallas Cowboys wide receiver and first-round pick CeeDee Lamb as one of his eight tackles in the game. But he also made some mistakes, missing three tackles according to Pro Football Focus.

Fuller then improved on that in Week 2 against the Philadelphia Eagles, playing on all 71 defensive snaps and earning nine tackles in the 37-19 win. He also earned a PFF player grade of 74.8 for his efforts, which was tops among rookie safeties and No. 7 among all NFL safeties during the second slate of games.

"I'd say he had a little shaky of a start in Week 1, and they'd have liked to see him tackle better," Rodrigue said. "But by the end of the game, he had made the most crucial play: a stop on fourth-and-3 as the Cowboys attempted to mount a comeback. That play was incredibly smart. He diagnosed the traffic he would have to navigate through in order to get to his assignment and was not fooled by pre-snap movement.

"In Week 2, he played even better. Fuller is really just not ever noticeably out of position and already has the size to do battle in the NFL. He wasn't recognized as the fastest player back in college or as he was coming out for the draft, but the thing is, the way the Rams use him it's all about changing direction, keeping guys in front of him, being physical at the catch point and against the run, etc., and all of those things he does extremely well.

"He doesn't waste a lot of movement and he swarms to the ball. You really can't ask for anything better, especially out of a rookie."

Fuller was never the most talked about player on Ohio State's defense, or even in Ohio State's secondary. But he was a three-year starter, a three-year All-Big Ten member and the backbone of the top pass defense (156.0 passing yards per game) in the country in 2019.

After four years with the Buckeyes, Fuller was passed up 198 times before hearing his name called by the Rams.

However, his play was not overlooked by his coaches in Los Angeles, and he has already become a fixture on a defense that has started the year 2-0, though his team's pass defense sat around the middle of the pack (243.0 passing yards per game, 17th in the NFL) after two games.

Despite a shortened offseason, despite no preseason games and despite getting drafted late, Fuller has proved himself as a capable NFL player in just two games at the professional level, and Rodrigue said she is excited to see just how far Fuller will go in proving his low draft stock incorrect.

"It's hard to say after only two games," Rodrigue said on what her expectations are for Fuller, "so I'll say this: He far surpassed everybody's expectations after only four real weeks as an NFL player. So I am assuming he will far surpass any expectations we'll now place on his season and his career, too. I think he's special."



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NCAA Ready To Trot Out Hoops Thanksgiving Eve

Finally, there's a start date for the 2020-21 men's and women's basketball seasons after the Division I Council voted to begin Nov. 25, the day before Thanksgiving, with the caveat that nothing is set in stone.

In making the announcement on Sept. 16, the council noted that it will meet again Oct. 13-14 to reassess the plan and will adjust, if necessary, based on the spread of the coronavirus.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

The uncertainty extends to the scheduling with schools scrambling to fill their calendars after the original Nov. 10 start was delayed. As BSB went to print, Ohio State had not released schedules for its men's or women's teams.

That's no surprise with circumstances changing almost daily. For instance, on Sept. 24 the Pac-12 not only reinstated fall football for a seven-game season after postponing it in August, but the league also lifted the ban on winter sports, such as basketball, from competing before Jan. 1.

With that move, the Ivy League is the only conference that will not be playing basketball in November and December.

Its programs must wait until Jan. 1.

"There's still a lot of conversation about the schedule, what it would look like," Ohio State athletics director Gene Smith said in a Zoom call with the media on Sept. 23. "We have a subcommittee of the Big Ten and hopefully, within the next couple weeks, we'll have clarity on what that schedule looks like for men's and women's basketball and men's ice hockey that have a chance to start up in November."

One of the many questions needing answered is the number of conference games. Will it increase beyond the normal 20 or be reduced to cram in a few more nonconference games? The Pac-12, for example, is expected to jump to 20 conference games from its standard 18.

Another piece fell in place on Sept. 25 when the SEC announced Dec. 29 and 30 as start dates for its men's basketball conference schedule. Its women open play Dec. 31. The men will play 18 SEC games, the women 16. There are two open play dates built into each schedule just in case.

Also, how much money will a basketball season and the media rights that go with it generate to offset the budget shortfall caused by the pandemic?

"We don't have clarity on basketball," Smith said. "We made some assumptions there. Those numbers are guesstimates. The sponsorship numbers are guesstimates."

As for the number of fans to be allowed at home games, he said, "Zero or signifi-

OSU Men's Basketball 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
Malaki Branham	SG	6-4	175	★★★★	Akron (Ohio) St. Vincent-St. Mary
Kalen Etzler	PF	6-8	195	★★★★	Convoy (Ohio) Crestview
Meechie Johnson	PG	6-1	185	★★★★	Garfield Heights (Ohio)

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

cantly less depending on what's happening at that time with the virus."

The Division I Council made other changes as well by reducing the maximum number of regular-season games from 31 to 27 and lessening from 25 to 13 the minimum amount of games needed to be under consideration for the NCAA Tournament, which will remain at 68 teams for the men. The council recommended a minimum of four nonconference games.

Teams can start practicing 20 hours a week starting Oct. 14 but were allowed to work out 12 hours a week beginning Sept. 28. There will be no scrimmages or exhibitions.

Smith acknowledged these are crazy times caused by the pandemic, which forced the cancellation of the 2020 Big Ten and national tournaments.

When asked what college basketball will look like for 2020-21, he joked, "Five-on-five with a ball and officials."

Testing 1, 2, 3

The NCAA Sport Science Institute on Sept. 25 showed a pathway to a possible successful completion of the upcoming season by issuing guidelines for testing. Teams are recommended to test weekly from the start of official practices on Oct. 14 to the day before the Nov. 25 openers.

Once the season begins, it is suggested that testing be done three times per week on nonconsecutive days.

The guidelines could set a schism between the haves and have-nots. Major programs such as Ohio State will likely test more than once a week during the preseason and can afford the thrice weekly testing during the season.

Some of the mid- and low-majors may be placed in serious financial binds because of the testing and with limited or few fans for revenue may opt out of playing.

Wise Choice

In the last issue of BSB it was noted that some reports had the NCAA's oversight committee recommending a Nov. 21 start date. That was the case, according to Matt Norlander of CBS Sports.

The thought was that basketball could benefit from the exposure of an opening weekend instead of doing it on weeknight, but the council offered a differing opinion and its reasoning makes sense.

For one, the fear was that football - college and pro - would overshadow basketball over that opening weekend.

By starting on Thanksgiving Eve, which essentially is a weekend night with millions not working the next day, hoops will have the day to itself because there will be no football (disclaimer: the Mid-American Conference announced Sept. 25 its return

to football so there's a good chance of some Wednesday night MAction), nor will there be any pro basketball or hockey games to siphon the spotlight from college basketball.

Second, most campuses will have emptied of students for the semester by then with many offering online final exams post-Thanksgiving.

Running On Empty

An acronym which has leapt in significance is MTE, which stands for multiple-team events. In the old days they were called tournaments.

Programs looking to play in safe environments while reducing travel are looking at "bubble" tournaments where numerous schools will gather under strict coronavirus protocol to play a series of games. Most will be nonconference, but some leagues may look to create their own bubble.

Imagine a dozen teams from various leagues gathering for a week or 10 days for four or five games. Indianapolis, Orlando and Las Vegas have been frequently mentioned as possible destinations for these mega MTEs.

The Ohio State men's team will participate in the Battle 4 Atlantis at some point before the turn of the year. Originally slated for the Bahamas, the eight-team tournament was moved to the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls, S.D., because of the excellent coronavirus testing procedures.

OSU was scheduled to play three games, but it's unclear if the number will increase. Other schools entered were Creighton, Duke, Memphis, Texas A&M, Utah, West Virginia and Wichita State. Utah was on the brink of being replaced until the Pac-12 rescinded its restrictions on winter sports, though it's unknown if the Utes will still participate.

Just A Thought

Smith told BSB for the July issue that he didn't foresee any men's basketball games in St. John Arena this season because of potential lost revenue from smaller crowds than at Value City Arena.

That was then. This is now, and with compacted schedules due to season-opening delays for basketball as well as the other tenant in VCA - men's hockey - the old barn might be a viable alternative for hoops.

It could be valuable if games are postponed because of the coronavirus and it's not possible to play a rescheduled game in Value City Arena.

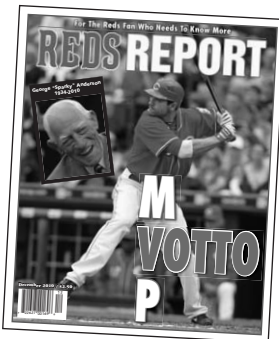
With few or no fans permitted, St. John Arena wouldn't create as much of a financial black hole.

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Start Date Gives Buckeyes A Goal To Strive For

On Sept. 16, the NCAA Division I Council announced that Nov. 25 will be the start date for college basketball heading into the 2020-21 season. With the announcement came excitement for the Ohio State women's basketball team who, after months of unknowns, finally had a date to look forward to on the calendar.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

"It's great," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "There's been so much uncertainty. Now we can start to talk about when official practice is going to begin, when we're going to have to start playing games. We can really get our mind wrapped around the best plan possible to make sure we're prepared on Nov. 25 to play."

Ohio State finished the 2019 campaign with a 21-12 record, with impressive regular-season wins against Louisville, Indiana and Michigan and then finishing off the year with a Big Ten tournament run to the championship game, taking down Minnesota, Iowa and the Wolverines before falling to Maryland.

It was a season with more highs than many predicted for an Ohio State team utilizing almost strictly underclassmen, but it also ended abruptly, with the Buckeyes not getting a chance to take the hot stretch of play into the NCAA tournament after it was canceled due to COVID-19.

The cancellation led to a longer-than-usual offseason for the Buckeyes, who were unable to get together and had to stay in contact through Zoom calls and group chats instead of face-to-face.

"It was tough because we couldn't be around each other at all, and so we did some Zooms just to stay on point with some things," McGuff said. "We had guest speakers coming in and talking to them and different stuff throughout the summer to kind of keep engaged and just at least talking to each other."

"Our kids do a really good job talking with each other, texting and whatever. It's just really nice that we all can be together now. Even though we have strict protocols that we're following, it is nice to have everybody here."

It was an especially difficult offseason for junior forward Dorka Juhasz and sophomore forward Rebeka Mikulasikova, who both were unable to travel to their homes in Pecs, Hungary, and Nitra, Slovakia, for the majority of the summer because of travel restrictions.

"It was so crazy that after the Big Ten tournament everything shut down, and I just had an empty feeling in my heart and my soul that we couldn't finish it," Juhasz told BSB. "So that was

already stressful, and then obviously they shut the season down and all my teammates were able to go home to their families, and me and Rebeka, we couldn't, so that was pretty hard. I tried to find ways to go home, but it was safer to stay here.

"I wasn't trying to risk my scholarship and my academics and everything, so I had to think about that, and then the day I finally heard the news that I'm able to come back with my student visa, I got my tickets and I was very excited to see my family."

Juhasz said she was finally able to go home at the end of July and was in Hungary for about a month before returning to Columbus for workouts and practice. She also said that, during the offseason, there was an increased emphasis on getting the new players acclimated to the rest of the team, making sure to add them to a group message and try to grow that team chemistry before even seeing each other in person.

"It's harder to start a conversation whenever you haven't really seen each other in person, but these guys are really good, we're all friends right now and it started really easy," Juhasz said. "That was a good point for me that this team will have great chemistry together because we were talking, asking how everybody's doing, so we definitely talked to each other during this whole craziness."

Another member of the team who dealt with the stresses of this unique offseason was guard Braxtin Miller, the team's lone returning senior from the 2019-20 team. Though Miller did not have to travel overseas to see her family, she did have to worry about all the unknowns regarding if there would be a season at all and if she would remain eligible if the season ultimately got canceled.

Miller told BSB that the Nov. 25 date allowed her to breathe a big sigh of relief and focus on making the best of her final season with the Buckeyes.

"I was asking questions like, 'If we don't have a season, am I still going to get another year?' At the time, I was the only senior in the Zoom, so I mean it's important for everyone, but I'm like, 'Am I done? Is this it for me?'" Miller said. "I feel like for so long we never really knew what was going to be happening."

"So many of us were like, 'We're practicing, we're working out, but are we even going to have a season? And if not, what does this mean for eligibility?' And there were just so many questions. So now that we know that we have a start date for Nov. 25, it just pushes us even more to try and work as hard as we can in this little amount of time that we have."

Juhasz said the start date also had an effect on the team in practices, with a more central goal and timeline allowing for some extra motivation in the workouts.

"I think it just makes a big difference because you know now that what you're working for," Juhasz said. "And when you actually have a

OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commits

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

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School
Kaitlyn Costner	PG	5-8	N/A	Mishawaka (Ind.) Penn
Taylor Thierry	SG	5-10	N/A	Willoughby (Ohio) Laurel

date, it's just like every day you're coming to the gym and you know you have to push very hard for that, and the countdown begins. It's very exciting. I think we're all very happy about it."

Juhasz and Miller are two of four upperclassmen on the team this season, with junior forward Aaliyah Patty and graduate transfer forward Tanaya Beacham coming in from Toledo. With another young roster in 2020-21 for McGuff and Ohio State, the head coach said he is excited about what he has seen from the upperclassmen, both during the offseason and from what they have done early on in workouts.

Both Juhasz and Miller said that they feel added pressure to be vocal leaders for the team this season, with Miller saying that it has been something talked about between her and the coaches.

"I've had a few, not meetings necessarily, but talks with some of the coaches about how I need to be that in this environment, and I think so far I'm doing an OK job, but it's definitely something that I have to fit into," Miller said. "But I feel like it's not too much of an adjustment this year opposed to last year because I was the only upperclassmen on the team last year, so there were a lot of times that it fell on me as well. It's definitely a topic of conversation that I have to have that (leadership) this year."

The team is currently focusing mainly on strength and conditioning, while also having groups of five or six on the court at once to do some skill work and to break down the offense and defense, according to McGuff. He also said on Sept. 23 that he was hopeful that he could have the whole team on the court at once the following week.

While the Buckeyes lost a chance to make a run in the NCAA tournament back in March, they have since had an extended offseason to retool and attempt to get back into the tourna-

ment in 2021. Miller knows what the expectations were for the team last season, and she is coming into the season hoping once again to prove how much ability there is on this Ohio State roster.

"I think we have so much talent and we showed that last year with how far we got, and we have a lot of people back and a lot of great talent coming in," Miller said. "I just think that so many people counted us out last year in a lot of ways. I feel like we proved ourselves at the end, and I just feel like we need to come back just as strong. That's definitely some pressure on myself, and all of us honestly as an organization, just to make sure that we do that successfully."

With a date set in stone, Ohio State now has two months to prepare to get back to the same levels it was at a season ago.

McGuff Takes Voluntary Pay Cut

McGuff told BSB that he would be one of the 47 contracted staff members who will be taking a voluntary 5 percent pay cut for the 2021 fiscal year.

"A lot of people lost jobs yesterday, which is very difficult, and other people have furloughs, some longer than others, and a lot of head coaches took 5 percent pay cuts, which I'm a part of that," McGuff said. "I think it's appropriate, given the pandemic that we're in and just all that the administration is trying to do to keep us financially solvent."

McGuff joins Ohio State football head coach Ryan Day and men's basketball head coach Chris Holtmann, who athletic director Gene Smith said would both also be taking those 5 percent cuts.

The cuts are an attempt to try to mitigate a projected \$107 million deficit for Ohio State that comes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Former Buckeye Defenseman Healey's App A Hit

Former Ohio State defenseman Josh Healey drew notoriety during his playing days with the Buckeyes for his hard-hitting and sometimes reckless approach that would occasionally warrant a suspension.

He's still drawing attention as a pro player but for more meritorious reasons because of the app he developed that allows players to rate hockey agents as well as review coaches they've played for.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

The Sports Aux (short for Auxiliary) is a first of its kind tool that guides players through the process of selecting agents through anonymous comments while also acting as a marketing tool for the players in hopes of signing professional contracts or being drafted into the junior hockey systems in Canada and the United States.

"We review the comments," Healey told BSB from his Edmonton, Alberta, home. "There's always going to be a few people who aren't in line with how they get rated or reviewed. At the end of the day, it's the players' forum and that's his opinion."

The Sports Aux, which was launched on Jan. 25, 2019, has taken on even more relevancy since then with stories of sexual and racial abuse in hockey making news, including the resignation of Calgary Flames head coach Bill Peters on Nov. 29, 2019, for using racial slurs in a previous job and allegations of sexual misconduct against the top Canadian junior organizations in a suit filed by several former players in June.

"It's not something you want to see in hockey; you hope it doesn't happen," said Healey, who played for the Buckeyes from 2013-17. "But for me, my app is a platform for players to voice their concerns, their opinions, or their positive reviews on their different experiences."

"With those abuses happening, if I can help correct some of that by getting them to voice their concerns, I'm happy."

Available on the Apple App Store, The Sports Aux has attracted about 5,000 users and has more than 1,800 verified players along with their statistics. Most players are in the top two minor leagues (American Hockey League and the ECHL) as well as European pro leagues, colleges and juniors.

"I've gotten a little bit of criticism from people who don't like what I'm doing, but we've done a very good job of screening all the players," Healey said. "Once they're in, they can only comment or review coaches that they've had so we kind of know who they've played for. We've put in a pretty good safeguard."

Healey, a finance major specializing in investments while at Ohio State, came up with the idea after an offhand comment by his mother.

As an 18-year-old player for Sherwood Park in the Alberta Junior Hockey League, Healey was being looked at for advancement to the higher-level Western Hockey League or going the college route. Hockey players can have agents/advisors and still maintain collegiate eligibility.

Healey and his parents were entertaining offers from two agents when his mom, Pam, was skeptical of some of the agents' claims.

"She joked about looking them up on 'RateMyAgent.com' and the look the one agent gave was like he was dumbfounded," Healey said. "I thought that was a weird response."

"Anyway, we didn't think much of it, and when he came back a few weeks later we sat down and one of the first things he brought up was there's no such thing as RateMyAgent.com."

"It kind of clicked after that. This was a big-time agent and he was relatively concerned about it so this was something we should look into. There's no accountability, there's no way to know what someone is telling us is true or not."

The idea fermented in his time at Ohio State along with the notion of starting a business that would make hockey sticks within

the buying grasp of anyone who wanted one.

"I was walking through a local store here and I saw a stick for I think it was \$340 in Canada," he said. "I said that's crazy. I know it's an expensive sport, an elitist sport, so I wanted to eventually give something back so everybody could afford to play."

"I'm still a little ways away from that, but I want to try to build up the company and when we get it going, I can put some money into a fund to make sticks affordable."

"Right now, with the free model, I'm obviously not involved in (making money), but eventually there will be a charge for coaches and agents and the players will be able to put their personal information on there and coaches and agents will pay for that information with a subscription."

His plan for the app came to fruition when he left Ohio State after four seasons to play for the Flames' AHL affiliate in Stockton, Calif.

"I have no background in app development or coding," he said. "Playing in Stockton, near Silicon Valley, I went to app companies there and did some interviews with them. I had my goals in mind and got some commitments."

He now has his family involved in the venture. Besides Pam, his father, Tim, and sister, Jess, are helping.

Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik said Healey never mentioned his plans while in school, but the coach gives a thumbs-up to the three-time Academic All-Big Ten selection and four-time Ohio State Scholar-Athlete.

"He's obviously got something that's out there that I think can be effective," Rohlik said.

Healey earned his initial entry-level, two-year contract with Calgary because of his physical play that sometimes was deemed excessive.

When asked how many times he was suspended for his play while with the Buckeyes, he said, "About five or six times. There were definitely a few that went over the line. I won't say I agree with all of them."

"It's not something I wanted to do. It's in my blood to take the opportunity to really line someone up and try to get the boys going that way."

He received three game misconducts

(ejections) and several suspensions as a senior, including for OSU's loss to Minnesota-Duluth in the 2017 NCAA regional semifinal. Healey was also suspended for a total of three games as a junior.

When he wasn't thumping guys along the boards and in front of the net, he could play, earning first-team All-Big Ten honors as a senior when he had 25 points (four goals, 21 assists) and a plus-17. In 133 career games he had 60 points (12-48), and his senior class had the first of what would have become a program-record four straight NCAA appearances in 2020 if not for the postseason being canceled in March because of the coronavirus pandemic.

He played three seasons in Stockton before signing with the Nashville Predators' farm team in Milwaukee (AHL) for 2019-20. Healey will return for a second season with the Admirals when it is scheduled to start in December.

"The goal is always to get to the NHL," he said. "I've got to keep working, keep fighting every day for an NHL contract and hopefully get a chance."

Waiting Game

Now that college basketball has gotten the go-ahead to begin the men's and women's season Nov. 25, college hockey, which had put its seasons on pause, is moving toward a return as well.

The OSU men were slated to open Oct. 9-10, but the Hockey Commissioners Association in mid-September issued a statement that play would not begin until at least Nov. 20.

However, a source told BSB that the Big Ten and National Collegiate Hockey Conference are pushing for an early November start while most other leagues are more comfortable with the last weekend in November (27-28) when most campuses will be empty after Thanksgiving.

The number of games and schedules are still to be determined.

For example, the Western Collegiate Hockey Association plans to play nonconference games in November and December before league games begin in January.

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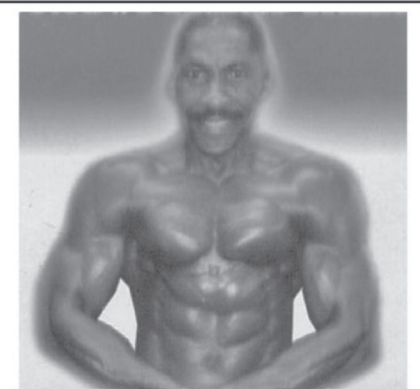
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Olympic Sports Coaches Grateful For Path Forward

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Ohio State's fall Olympic teams are going to have to wait a little bit longer than usual for a return to play after what has probably been the most chaotic offseason of all time. The university announced on Sept. 19 that its fall Olympic sport programs are preparing for a spring season, which will allow the Buckeyes to remain consistent with the Big Ten and NCAA, which have agreed to move non-football fall championships to the spring season.

Though the wait may not be ideal for athletes and coaches who have been living in uncertainty for months, the long-awaited arrival of a true path forward with an end point to plan for and look ahead to serves as a major weight lifted for the Buckeyes impacted. A spring season may not be ideal, especially for sports such as soccer and field hockey that are played outside and dependent heavily on fall weather, but a chance to play is a chance to play, especially in the wake of a devastating pandemic.

"I think that the biggest thing, for us, is just we're excited to have an end in mind right now," first-year women's volleyball head coach Jen Flynn-Oldenburg told BSB. "When things were canceled or postponed back in August, we continued to train and to get better because we needed that time that we didn't have in the spring, but it's still a little hard to have a road map and say, 'Let's go,' and not really know when and how we're going."

"In terms of preparation, now that we know the championships are in April, we have something to work back from and we're going to plan accordingly. We're going to continue to train and get better. The next couple of weeks are going to be really dialed in on our skill work and individual touches with the idea of, when we get back after the holidays, we're in team training and we're going to get after it."

The feeling of relief and of excitement for a way forward is one shared by just about every fall sport coach on campus.

While the opportunity to prepare for a season with an actual starting time in mind presents a return to normalcy, constant reminders of the bizarre circumstances remain an obstacle to be worked around in all ways that coaches and athletes interact.

"I think it's obviously been an adjustment," said field hockey head coach Jarred Martin. "This will be the first time

that field hockey or any of the fall sports will play in the spring. It's definitely memorable."

"It's been really helpful though, that the NCAA aligned with the fall championships and moved those to the spring. So our season moving into the spring actually helps us as we prepare. The Big Ten is one of the best conferences in the country for field hockey. So for us to be our sharpest going into an NCAA tournament, that's actually going to set us up nicely, I think, for us to do our best as a conference and obviously, for Ohio State."

Among those obstacles in a suddenly extended offseason is the need for safety precautions. Ohio State's largest programs, like the football and basketball teams, have no issues with keeping up with the social distancing and safety guidelines needed to ensure the safety of athletes. For the Olympic sports, however, fewer support staff members and more strenuous practice requirements have created a pretty steep learning curve for coaches who are already managing the longest offseason of their careers.

On top of that, these are sports that are traditionally completed by the time the fall semester ends, which gives athletes an opportunity to return home on break. That break is still in the calendar, meaning that fall coaches will need to take a cue from the winter sports and learn to reacclimate players after an extended off period.

"We have some restrictions, so we have to adhere to those, and there's some stuff that we can work on with that," men's soccer head coach Brian Maissonneuve said of the social distancing and safety requirements. "Also, we do have a handful of new guys, so we're getting them integrated and just working on the areas that we can in order to get better for the spring. Obviously when we come out of that Christmas break, it starts the new semester. We're not going to have a lot of time to get them going before our possible first game date. So whatever we can get accomplished in certain areas this fall, we're definitely going to do."

"The girls are together," Martin said of his team. "We want to make sure they're taking care of their academics obviously, as the online model and hybrid, it's a different format. So especially for our newcomers, making sure they know about the resources that are around Ohio State."

"And I think looking forward, it's about 'how do we finish up this semester?' Our season usually finishes up around

Thanksgiving. So what do we do up until the end (of the semester), but also, usually our holiday break is very low-key. It's a time where we don't have a spring season to prepare for. So I think that will look different with making sure that the athletes are able to go home, see their families, relax a little bit, but know that there's a season on the horizon that we need to stay focused and work hard for."

Even if everything goes exactly to plan for these programs in fall and winter practice, this season is not likely to ever reach a place of normalcy or comfort for anyone involved with it. The rescheduling of the NCAA fall championships for the spring provides these teams with something to play for, but nearly a year and a half spent away from actual, in-game action is taking its toll on teams that now have to wait for six more months to return to play.

"Probably every emotion you can think of went through them," Oldenburg said of her team when it received the news of a new start date. "They were so excited to start competing. We have a really competitive bunch that we could play little silly games, like minute-to-win-it games, and they're talking trash. They're very competitive, so I think taking that element out of the fall was tough for all of us. It took a day or two to give them time that they needed. Some wanted to come back in the gym right away and train, so we gave that opportunity for those that wanted, and then it's just, 'Let's get back to work. Let's use this time to get better and get stronger

and not rush into matches.'

"I think it's just having the right mindset. If the leaders – and I'll include our administration in that – our leaders are on that page, then you have people that will follow. I'm fortunate that I have players that are going to follow us, so they're doing okay."

"It was hard," Maissonneuve told BSB. "It was emotional. You spend all summer long getting prepared for the fall. And everybody knew there was a lot going on, but all we kept talking about is 'let's stay focused on what we know,' and back then, preseason was going to start on Aug. 11. So guys were focused and getting fit and getting sharp and getting excited for the season."

"Then to have it postponed, it was emotional. For sure it was emotional. And then the unknowns after that were really tough, especially for some of our seniors, but the guys handled it really well."

For the coming months, the name of the game for Ohio State's Olympic programs will be consistency, be it in practicing, workouts, messaging to athletes and even away from the field, in the (virtual) classroom. But finally having something to work toward is more important than anything else.

"I just want to play," Maissonneuve said. "I'm excited to get out there. Trainings have been a little bit different because we've had some restrictions, but just in terms of preparing for the spring, I just can't wait to get back out there."

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Purdue Receiver Rondale Moore Opts Back In

After opting out of the 2020 season due to COVID-19 concerns, Purdue standout wide receiver Rondale Moore decided he is comfortable with the Big Ten's protocols and rejoined the Boilermakers.

Moore initially said on Aug. 6 that he would opt out of the season to begin preparing for the NFL draft, citing "unprecedented circumstances" surrounding the coronavirus pandemic.

BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

When the Big Ten reinstated the season on Sept. 16 with a nine-game conference schedule and improved testing, Moore said the enhanced safety protocols, particularly daily antigen testing, made him comfortable enough to play.

"The Big Ten figured it out," Moore said. "Purdue was doing a great job of keeping us safe, and I felt safe coming back. For me, it was a no-brainer to come back to school and go prove what I think I'm worth."

"When I decided to leave, I couldn't get a lot of answers to the questions I was asking. Everyone was unsure. I'm a lot more comfortable than I was before I left."

After opting out in August, Moore went home to New Albany, Ind., but he remained enrolled in classes at Purdue and did not hire an agent.

Moore, who became the first true freshman consensus All-American in Big Ten history in 2018, said he was eager to return to practice with his teammates.

"I'll speak to the team briefly and let them know I can compete, share some of my goals with them," Moore said. "They're a big reason as to why I came back, so I'm excited. I'm a competitor, and I feel like I'm the best receiver in America. The Big

Ten's given me a chance to go show that, and that's what I'm going to go do."

When he emerged on the scene in 2018, Moore became the third Big Ten player to haul in 100 receptions in a season, totaling 114 catches for 1,258 yards and 12 touchdowns.

His 662 kick return yards helped him set the school record for the most all-purpose yards in a single season with 2,215. Moore earned first-team All-Big Ten recognition both for offense and special teams and also won the Paul Hornung Award as the most versatile player in the country.

Moore played in only four games as a sophomore before missing the rest of the season due to injury, totaling 29 receptions for 387 yards and two touchdowns in 2019.

The former four-star recruit is on target to receive a business degree in 2½ years, with nine classes for 27 credits on his slate and plans to graduate at the end of the semester.

Moore is rated the No. 46 prospect in the 2021 NFL draft by Todd McShay of ESPN.

"I came to school with a few goals, and for me, that was to get a degree and have a chance to go play in the NFL. I'm in a position to do both," Moore said. "No matter what it was, I knew I had to do it. For me, I see it as a challenge, and I'm going to get it done and hopefully graduate with a GPA over 3.6. That's the goal."

Minnesota Wide Receiver Bateman Wants To Return

When it did not look like the Big Ten would be playing this fall, Minnesota standout wide receiver Rashod Bateman decided to opt out and prepare for the 2021 NFL draft.

But since the season was reinstated, Bateman expressed his desire to return to the Golden Gophers to play for head coach P.J. Fleck, putting his NFL prep on hold for now and seeking a waiver from the NCAA after he had reportedly already signed with an agent.



PURDUE FOOTBALL/TWITTER

GAME-CHANGER – Purdue head coach Jeff Brohm, left, received good news on Sept. 24 when junior wide receiver Rondale Moore announced he was rejoining the Boilermakers this fall.

"I think there's a lot of players in the same boat as he is," Fleck said. "Rashod Bateman, one of the best players in the country, opted out for all the right reasons in a time where there was really uncertain times ahead of us. The narrative through the media and the narrative that everyone was saying was there wasn't going to be a season."

"Here's a young man with asthma, he's a young man that's got a really, really bright NFL future, talking tens of millions of dollars. And then there is no real hope to look at when you look at the safety precautions of that place. A lot of them were answered, rightfully so, by the doctors with 'I don't know.' And now he wants to return, so we'll see what happens in the next few weeks, but hopefully we'll find out something soon."

Bateman broke out as one of the top playmakers in the Big Ten as a sophomore in 2019, hauling in 60 passes for 1,219 yards for a 20.3 yards-per-catch average with 11 touchdowns.

The standout receiver shared the shine with fellow first-team All-Big Ten wide receiver Tyler Johnson, but with Johnson now in the NFL, Bateman could put up even better numbers with Tanner Morgan returning at quarterback.

The former four-star recruit from Tifton (Ga.) County reeled in 51 receptions for 704 yards (13.8 average) and six touchdowns through 13 games as a true freshman in 2018.

"Rashod and I have had many positive conversations since the Big Ten announced it was going to compete in football this fall," Fleck said in a statement.

"Rashod initially opted out because

of personal health concerns surrounding COVID-19 but now feels comfortable rejoining the team after the Big Ten announced the safety measures it was taking to protect student-athletes, which includes daily antigen testing. Rashod is enrolled in school and has been granted a waiver to practice with the team, which he did so today.

"The process for him to be granted a waiver to compete for the fall is a bit more complex, but our compliance office is working closely with the NCAA and Big Ten to come to this resolution. It is our hope that Rashod will be able to represent Minnesota as a student-athlete this fall."

Michigan QB Dylan McCaffrey Opts Out, Plans To Transfer

Michigan quarterback Dylan McCaffrey decided to opt out of the 2020 season with plans to transfer.

A four-star prospect, McCaffrey was highly touted as the No. 5 pro-style quarterback in the nation in the 2017 class.

With Michigan starting signal-caller Shea Patterson out of eligibility, the job appeared to be in line for McCaffrey, who was the most experienced returner.

In 13 games for the Wolverines, the Littleton, Colo., native completed 18 of 35 passes for 242 yards and three touchdowns, while adding 166 yards and two touchdowns on 23 rushes.

During the unusual offseason, McCaffrey competed for the starting gig with Cade McNamara and Joe Milton, the latter of whom is now the only quarterback in Ann Arbor with game experience. McNamara took a redshirt as a true freshman in 2019, and Dan Villari is a true freshman this year.

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BIG TEN NOTES

Michigan Starting Tackle Jalen Mayfield Opts Back In

Michigan offensive lineman Jalen Mayfield announced he is opting back in for the 2020 season after declaring for the NFL draft in August.

As a redshirt freshman, Mayfield won the starting right tackle job in 2019. Mayfield is the No. 7 offensive tackle in McShay's draft rankings, but the reinstatement of Big Ten football this fall brought him back to Ann Arbor.

Michigan had already lost four of its five starters from last year's offensive line to the 2020 NFL draft, so his return is important to the Wolverines, who are breaking in a new quarterback in the aforementioned Milton.

Both cornerback Ambry Thomas and wide receiver Nico Collins also originally opted out of the season. Head coach Jim Harbaugh and the Maize and Blue still await decisions on their returns.

Minnesota Cutting Four Sports Due To COVID-19 Impacts

Minnesota will be eliminating four sports – men's indoor track and field, men's outdoor track and field, men's gymnastics, and men's tennis – following the 2020-21 season, pending approval of the board of regents.

The school released a statement explaining that the cuts come from a projected \$75 million loss of revenue in the current fiscal year due to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The COVID-19 pandemic and the Big Ten's decision to postpone fall 2020-21 sports has greatly increased the finan-

cial concerns," the statement read. "Our athletic department is now facing a projected loss of revenue of approximately \$75 million just this fiscal year. This is a significant deficit and one that will have an impact for years to come.

"At the same time, we remain steadfast in our commitment to provide Title IX gender-equitable participation opportunities that are closely aligned with our male and female undergraduate enrollment percentages. We are mindful that our sport programs have worked to adjust their participation opportunities to keep pace with our growing female undergraduate population percentages.

"As a result, we have determined that Athletics is no longer able to financially or equitably sustain 25 varsity programs, and pending approval of the Board of Regents, we will discontinue men's indoor track and field, men's outdoor track and field, men's gymnastics and men's tennis at the completion of their 2020-21 competition season. Should health and safety precautions allow, these teams will have the opportunity to compete during the 2020-21 season."

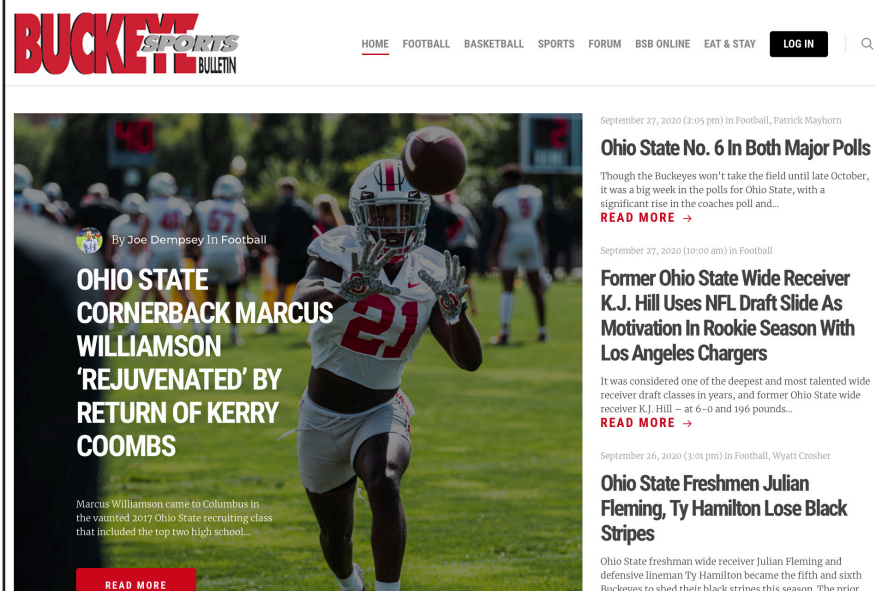
Additionally, Minnesota announced plans to eliminate eight positions "in addition to those that will be eliminated because of program discontinuation."

According to the university, the cuts are projected to result in \$1.3 million in savings for the current fiscal year.

The school announced the news after several prominent figures in the athletic department, including Fleck and athletic director Mark Coyle, volunteered for a 10 percent salary reduction.

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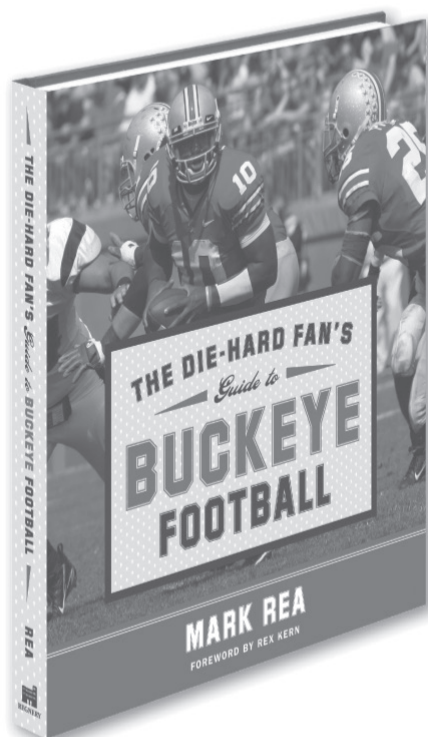
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Saturday Normalcy Back With Big Ten's Decision

If there's one thing I've learned over the years about sports, it's that its foundation is based on rituals.

Fathers and mothers grooming sons and daughters to love their teams, fans gathering at the stadiums hours and hours before kickoff, to participate in some Bacchanalian revelry in preparation for a three-hour festival of vocal cord abuse. It's part of the landscape of fandom.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

Even within the sport are rituals – players marching together to the stadium, coaches being fastidious in their pregame routines, some players even getting dressed the same way every week. It's just part of who we are and what we do.

Those rituals are evident in most sports, but especially on Saturdays in the fall. Drive or walk past any college football stadium on a Saturday afternoon or evening and you will see varying forms of it. But it isn't merely fandom. It's also community. Strangers who see each other six or eight times a year gathering as if they were old friends from high school, recounting their days in detention or English class. They may have nothing in common on a socio-economic basis, but they have plenty in common where rooting interests are concerned.

All of that looked like it wasn't going to happen this fall, until the Big Ten reversed course on its postponement announcement and decided to stage an abbreviated, conference-only season. Some looked at it as caving to the masses, as there are still real and present dangers. And that's not entirely incorrect. But the league offices felt safe in the knowledge that rapid testing would give them the ability to keep any potential infections at bay and act accordingly so that the season would continue. Without that testing in place, it's likely that the Big Ten would have stayed dormant.

Shortly after the league decided to resume its season, the Pac-12, Mountain West and Mid-American conferences followed. And that means that this will be a (mostly) normal autumn, with footballs flying and coaches coaching and fans cheering – albeit from the comfort of their own homes.

The rituals are ingrained into our psyches – as evidenced by a typical Saturday in the Facts Man household.

It's the same thing every week – go out for a walk in the cool fall air, have breakfast, take care of a few menial tasks around the

house and then plop down on the sofa for a smorgasbord of football. It starts with Fox's "Big Noon Kickoff" – a show vastly superior to ESPN's more well-known "College GameDay" – and ends around midnight or 1 a.m., depending on the kickoff time of the day's final contest.

Even while watching the games, there are rituals – switching channels to another game when a commercial comes on, trying to get a feel for the day's landscape and then focusing on the game that's the tightest or has the least amount of time left. All of this is done while maintaining a visible social media presence – dropping stats, opinions, reactions to big plays.

Once Saturday is over, it's time to look forward to it happening again in less than a week.

It may seem a tad silly to put that much energy into something, but to understand it is to understand the mind of a fan. They are ride or die with their teams and believe that they have an impact on the outcome. So, they do things the same way each week – until the team loses, in which case they change things up and begin a new ritual.

Ohio State fans will now have a chance to be like ACC, Big 12 and SEC fans, who have been able to follow their teams from the beginning.

They won't have to feel like there's a party being held that they weren't invited to. They can be part of the puzzle, one that looks a little bit different this year yet somehow still fits together in the end.

It happens every year but never gets old.

Breaking Down The Buckeyes

When the revamped 2020 Big Ten schedule was released, a few things were immediately evident – Ohio State has a pretty easy road to the league title game; Michigan got the short end of the crossover games; and Nebraska's lead role in the fight to return to play appeared to not go over well in the league offices.

The Buckeyes have what look to be only two potential land mines on their schedule – a week two showdown in Happy Valley and the finale at home against Michigan. A trip to Penn State is never fun, always nerve-racking and generally dramatic until the end. A lot of that is due to the Nittany Lions making the Buckeyes their "White Out" game. Well, that won't be an issue this year as fan attendance at games will be zero, or minimal. So it should be much easier for teams to keep their bearings should things get dicey.

That tilts the scales in favor of the team with more experience and better talent, in this case Ohio State. Getting Wyatt Davis and Shaun Wade back from opt-out was big, but even if they weren't back the Buckeyes would still be favored – against Penn State and everyone else. OSU has so much more

talent than the rest of the league that I would be shocked if it isn't at least a 14-point favorite in every game but Penn State and Michigan.

The fact that the Buckeyes are returning their quarterback and a good amount of veteran leadership is important, especially in a season where there wasn't the usual amount of practice and fall camp and doing things as they are typically done. Teams going through coaching changes or breaking in new quarterbacks could be up against it as they missed spring and will have to hit the ground running in fall camp. That's why OSU being at the top of the East Division heap is a pretty safe wager.

As far as the Wolverines are concerned, they are one of those teams breaking in a new quarterback – again. That's been the problem position for Jim Harbaugh in his time on the sidelines in Ann Arbor, and it's a big unknown whether or not that gets solved in 2020. Joe Milton looks the part – at 6-5, 243 pounds, and possessing a rifle right arm. But looking the part and playing it well are two different things, and thus far Michigan has not gotten the latter part right. It will need to be on point right away as the season opens at Minnesota.

The Gophers won't be able to surprise anyone this season, and they regained the services of dynamic receiver Rashod Bateman, who had originally opted out. Throw in experienced quarterback Tanner Morgan and Minnesota could once again be a player in the Big Ten West. They will certainly provide a test for the Wolverines, but not the only one.

November opens with a potentially tricky trip to Bloomington to face an improving Indiana squad, and should they get past that one then Wisconsin looms the following week. While not likely, it's possible that Michigan could enter its Nov. 21 game with Rutgers at 1-3 – yes, I am chalking up rival Michigan State as a win for the Maize and Blue. If there is a slow start in Ann Arbor you can bet the water-cooler talk will be plentiful all around the state.

And then there's Nebraska.

Like Ryan Day at Ohio State, Scott Frost was one of the leaders of the charge to get the league up and running again. He was passionate and smart and funny – and he also fired a shot at the league office, hinting that no matter what decision was eventually made, Nebraska was going to play.

"We want to play a Big Ten schedule," Frost said. "I hope that's what happens. Our university is committed to playing no matter what. No matter what that looks like and how that looks. We want to play no matter who it is or where it is, so we'll see how all those chips fall. We certainly hope it's in the Big Ten. If it isn't, I think we're prepared to look for other options."

Now, that was never really going to hap-

pen. Neither Ohio State nor Nebraska nor Michigan nor Penn State – none of them – was ever going to go rogue and play a schedule that wasn't approved by the Big Ten. There was too much money involved, in the form of TV contracts. There are also contracts that tie teams to the conference, so saying they would go independent for a year, or join the Big 12 or other nonsense, was never going to happen. Teams would be forfeiting in excess of \$50 million, and without fans in the stands to line the pockets of the universities that was definitely a no-go in 2020.

Nebraska was slated to have a rough end of season – facing Ohio State, Penn State, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota in its final five games. The Gophers are still the finale, but the league office decided to give the Huskers a present and have them face Ohio State and Wisconsin right out of the gate – and, after a date with Northwestern, Penn State. So that's three of the league's heaviest hitters in the first four weeks. Goodnight, and thanks for playing.

Big-Picture Goals

There is some concern that a nine-game schedule will put the Big Ten at a competitive disadvantage when it comes time to select teams for the College Football Playoff.

It's a legitimate worry, but one that in the end will likely be of little concern.

Many fans think that the playoff committee already uses too much subjectivity and leans toward brand names or matchups over teams that might have better résumés but lack prominence. That's not the case, though it could be this year. With an unequal amount of games between conferences and precious few nonconference opponents against which to compare teams, the eye test will play a much larger role in the selection process. If Ohio State and Alabama and Clemson all blast teams by 40 points each week, they are getting in. With conference-only play being the norm in 2020, it's not out of the realm of possibility that there are no unbeaten teams this season. This could even be the year when a two-loss team gets serious consideration – or maybe even an unbeaten Group of Five squad.

The process will be different, for sure. Just how different, and just what goes into it, is the great unknown.

But that's not something that should even be worried about until December.

For now, let's worry about the games. You know – those things that we crave every weekend, the things that make us crazy for three hours, that make non-fans wonder what in the world is wrong with us?

The games. Those are what's important right now.

The other stuff will, as it always does, sort itself out.

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Big Ten's Decision-Making Still Questionable

We finally have football. Or do we? Or will we?

That remains to be seen. For now, however, Ohio State football, the pandemic version, will start on Oct. 24 when Nebraska invades a virtually empty Ohio Stadium.

"From the onset of the pandemic, our high-priority has been the health and the safety of our students," said Northwestern president Morton Schapiro, who chairs the Big Ten's Council of Presidents and Chancellors, and the return to competition task force. "The new medical protocols and standards put into place by the Big Ten were pivotal in the decision to move forward with sports in the conference."

While I have no doubt that the new medical protocols were "pivotal" in the scheduled return to the gridiron, it gnaws in the back of my mind that relentless pressure from players, fans, parents, coaches, etc., may also have had something to do with the decision. I also think that the powers in the Big Ten and Pac-12 thought initially that the other major conferences would follow their lead and shut down as well. When that didn't happen, pressure for the two hold-out conferences to begin play only intensified. The fact that the initial football weekends went off with minimal disruption only turned up the heat even more.

Still, by my count, about two dozen games have already been canceled or postponed, which would mean the season hasn't gone off completely without a hitch, and that's with the SEC just getting under way on the weekend of Sept. 26. The fact that the Big Ten has not factored in any off weeks in its nine-game schedule amplifies the problem if a game must be canceled.

To get the leaders of a conference that originally voted 11-3 against playing to do an about-face, a stringent testing policy was put in place. The details can be found in the cover story of this issue. What if this heightened testing not only better protects the athletes and staff, but causes more cancellations?

We just don't know what's going to happen – with Big Ten football or across the nation.

But seeing as virtually everyone else has Monday morning quarterbacked with regard to how the Big Ten has handled things, let me put in my two cents' worth.

The conference portion of the Big Ten schedule was originally scheduled to start on Sept. 26. If, when it was determined that the league was going to play only a conference schedule, the powers that be had just picked up the existing schedule starting on that Sept. 26 date, they would have bought that much more time to see if there were innovations in testing, if the pandemic numbers would level off and how things went with those conferences that chose to start earlier than that. It might have headed off some of the chaos that we have seen in the last many weeks.

Instead, for reasons that I have yet to understand, they elected to initially kick off the conference-only schedule on Sept. 3. A couple of days later they were in full retreat. With more time to evaluate, they could have started as planned, or pushed the season even farther back – which they ultimately did – or still even cancel, if that's what word from the doctors and scientists dictated.

Having that later start on the books might have headed off the decisions of players such as Ohio State's Wyatt Davis and Shaun Wade to opt out of the season (which they had reason to think was not going to happen) to prepare for the NFL draft. Once it was announced that there would, indeed, be a Big Ten season, Davis and Wade opted to rejoin their teammates in a quest for the national championship.

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Which is a perfect way for me to segue into the 2020 season at hand.

When Davis and Wade elected to return, did anyone besides me think back to January of 2002, when Mike Doss elected to come back for his senior season? Many, me included, looked upon that as the first step toward the Buckeyes winning the national championship that year. Well, I guess in my mind it was the second step. The first came 310 days after Jim Tressel was hired as Ohio State's new football coach.

Will the return of the two veteran stars, along with Justin Fields' decision to not leave in the first place, provide the same type of catalyst toward the big prize?

I must admit that, with no spring ball this year, I've kind of lost track of the team. I know the returning stars, but I am eagerly looking forward to our annual Football Preview issue, now set to be mailed on Oct. 15, to refresh myself with some of the other players, the position battles and the incoming freshmen who might make an impact.

I know that as the team was preparing for the spring practice that never was, the sentiment was that this could be a team ripe to go all the way. With Davis, Fields and Wade back, I don't see why that sentiment should be any different now.

A couple of last thoughts about the revamped schedule.

I'm thrilled that The Game will still be the final contest of the regular season. And I love the Big Ten championship week with all teams playing their equal seed in the opposite division. I wish they would do that every year. Every team should have a shot at some bragging rights.

Anniversary Season Continues

As most of you have figured out by now, Buckeye Sports Bulletin was going to have a football season one way or another.

In honor of BSB reaching an important milestone, your Buckeyes were going to play our 40th Anniversary Season, whether the Big Ten elected to have football or not. We are choosing the most important game from each corresponding week over our first 39 years and running reprints from our actual game coverage, as well as periodically adding some current stories with players, coaches and media who were there.

So far the 40th Anniversary Buckeyes are 4-1, with wins over No. 2 Oklahoma (1983), No. 7 LSU (1988), No. 15 Notre Dame (1995) and No. 4 Penn State (1996). The only loss came in the season-opening Kickoff Classic against No. 5 Alabama (1986).

Coverage of one of this issue's games is a little different.

Normally, we have been running stories covering just the games themselves. However, as anyone who was around then knows, the anticipation for the 1995 Notre Dame game, which had been building for 59 years really, was so great that we have chosen to run a preview of that game in addition to the actual game coverage. The fact of the matter is that the '95 Penn State game, which opened the Big Ten season the following week, was probably a bigger game for the Buckeyes in the grand scheme of things.

But there have been few games in Ohio Stadium history that captured the imagination of Buckeye fans – and Irish fans, for that matter – more than this one.

In the Notre Dame preview, which appears on page 18, you get a sense of the lead-up to the game. You also get a sense of Lou Holtz. You hear Holtz, who a little more than two weeks prior had serious neck surgery, downplaying his Irish team – or "sandbagging" as then-BSB editor Steve Helwagen put it – in the way for which Holtz was famous.

I think, also, that there is a tendency for Buckeye fans to think that because Holtz is from Ohio and coached under Woody Hayes on Ohio State's famed 1968 national championship team, the former Notre Dame coach had a strong connection with Ohio State. After reading this preview I wonder about that.

"I didn't want to come to Ohio State," Holtz says of his one-season – albeit successful – stay in Columbus.

He goes on to talk about his interest – or lack thereof – in the Buckeye job after Hayes was fired. There is nothing not previously known here, but it is still enlightening to hear it in Holtz's own words. Be sure to check it out.

As for the game itself, a 45-26 Buckeye victory, the thing that struck me in reading the recap was the number of true Ohio State greats who were on that 1995 team and made an impact in the game. Among those players mentioned for their play in the story were Rickey Dudley, Eddie George, Terry Glenn, Bobby Hoying, Orlando Pace, Shawn Springs and Mike Vrabel. Those seven players would go on to combine for 75 years in the NFL.

That 1995 season was the start of the golden years of the John Cooper era. It was starting with that '95 season that the Buckeyes became players on the national scene, and they posted a 43-7 record over the next four years.

The 1995 season would end with losses to Michigan and a Peyton Manning-led Tennessee in the Florida Citrus Bowl. But the Buckeyes were back to their winning ways in 1996.

In our 40th Anniversary game for the week of Oct. 3-9, the Buckeyes crushed No. 4 Penn State, 38-7, as chronicled on page 22 of this issue, moving up to No. 2 in the country in the process.

People always talk about 1998 as the year that Coop could have won the national championship. But look at '96.

The Buckeyes opened the season with 70-7 and 72-0 demolitions of Rice and Pitt, respectively. That was followed by back-to-back wins over No. 5 Notre Dame, 29-16, in the rematch in South Bend and the destruction of the Lions. Later in the season the Buckeyes would knock off No. 20 Iowa, 38-26 in Iowa City, and No. 4 Arizona State in the Rose Bowl. Ohio State outscored its opponents 455-131 on the season.

There was just one small glitch.

The Buckeyes again lost to Michigan, this time 13-9.

Everyone recalls that game as the one where Shawn Springs slipped, allowing Tai Streets to score on a 69-yard touchdown pass from Brian Griese early in the third quarter to close the Wolverines to within 9-7 and completely take the momentum of the game. Upon closer look however, the game was really lost in the first half, when the Buckeyes, who held Michigan to just 62 total yards in the first 30 minutes, settled for three field goals after marching to the U-M 2-, 19- and 4-yard lines.

It kind of reminds me of last season against Clemson.

Everyone will remember the questionable

calls from the game with the Tigers, but three first-half field goals were just as pivotal in losing the game and a shot at another national championship. That's two more potential national crowns for the Buckeyes that were lost when Ohio State repeatedly settled for three points instead of six. The 1996 club was even closer to Cooper's elusive national title than the 1998 team.

However, as you consider some of the games in 1995 and 1996, you realize that there were plenty of really big wins in the Cooper era. But his legacy will always be 2-10-1.

While the archrival Wolverines had his number, Cooper had much more success against Penn State and the legendary Joe Paterno. His Buckeyes were 5-3 against Paterno's Lions, with Penn State in the top 12 in four of those five victories.

Once Ohio State failed again to win the national championship in 1998 after being upset by Nick Saban and Michigan State in week nine, the Buckeyes dropped to 6-6 the next season. The brilliant run was over, and the writing was on the wall for Cooper, who was let go after the 2000 campaign.

No Fans, No Noise

There is an entertaining story in this issue with former Buckeyes giving their thoughts on this year's games being played without any fans and recalling loud venues in their careers. Noise definitely played a factor in Ohio State's 1995 win over the Irish. The game's momentum shifted to OSU in the second half, and that swing ignited the crowd, helping force a key fumble on a snap to Notre Dame quarterback Ron Powlus. The botched exchange led to a George touchdown and a 35-20 OSU lead.

"We had a problem (with the noise)," Powlus said after the game. "I couldn't hear myself. I talked to him, and the official said we had to run the play, or we would get a delay of game. It was a little bit of a surprise. I did ask him to give us a little bit of leeway because we couldn't hear."

I'm not sure exactly what Powlus expected the official to do. The Irish come off as a little whiny, as you will see as you read the story on page 12, with Holtz also complaining about the officiating. When you get whipped 45-26 there is more going on than just officiating. Deal with it. And, by the way, come prepared to deal with the noise.

Just not this season.

Now More Than Ever

This is the time of year when we suggest that readers consider upgrading their BSB delivery to first-class mail for football season. We traditionally recommend it for out-of-state readers in particular, and many of you upgrade annually.

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- Feel more emotional or problems remembering
- Feel more emotional or "down"
- Feel confused
- Have problems with sleep



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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.

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The information provided in this document or through linkages to other sites is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for concussion should be directed to a physician or other health care provider.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>



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